

ALFONSO X'S
BOOK OF GAMES
TRANSLATED BY
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f. 1: King Alfonso commands three of his subjects to write a book on games, and dictates to them the book of chess

[f. 1] Because God wanted that man have every manner of happiness, in himself naturally, so that he could suffer the cares and troubles when they came to them, therefore men sought out many ways that they could have this happiness completely.

Wherefore they found and made many types of play and pieces with which to delight themselves.

Some on horseback like throwing javelins and spears, taking up shield and lance, shooting with bow and arrow, or others games of whatever manner they be that can be played on horseback.

And although they are based on the use of and skill with weapons, because they are not that same thing they call it sport.

And the others that are done on foot are like fencing, fighting, running, jumping, throwing rocks or darts, hitting the ball and other games of many natures in which men use their limbs in order to make them strong and have fun.

The other games that are done sitting are like playing chess, tables and dice and other game pieces of many types.

And though all these games are each very good in the time and place where they belong, but because these latter games are played sitting they are everyday and they are done as well at night as in the day; and because women who do not ride and are confined are to use them; and also men who are old and weak, or those who like to take their pleasures separately in order not to be irritated or grieved by them; or those who are under another's power as in prison or captivity or who are at sea. And equally all those who have harsh weather so that they cannot ride or go hunting or elsewhere and have perforce to remain [f. 1v] indoors and seek some kinds of sport with which to amuse and comfort themselves and not be idle.



f. 1v [detail]: "We commanded that this book be made... in which those games are made most beautifully"

And therefore we don Alfonso by the grace of God King of Castile, Toledo, Leon, Galicia, Seville, Cordova, Murcia, Jaen and Algarve commanded that this book be made in which we speak about in which those games are made most beautifully, like chess, dice and tables.

And although these games may be divided in many ways, because chess is more noble and of greater mastery than the others, we speak of it first. But before we talk of this we wish to show some reasons, according to what the ancient wise men said, that these three types of games – chess, dice and tables – were invented. Because about this they gave many reasons, each one wishing to show why these games were invented but those which are most certain and most true are these.

As it is told in the ancient histories of India there was a king who greatly loved his wise men and had them always with him and he made them very often to reason over the nature of things. And of these he had three there who had various opinions. The one said that brains were worth more than luck because he that lived by his brain did things in an orderly fashion and even if he lost that he was not to blame in this because he did what suited him. The other said that luck was worth more than brains because if his fortune was to lose or to win, no matter how much brains he might have, he could not avoid it. The third one said that best was he who could live drawing upon the one and the other because this was prudence, because the more brains he had, the more care he could take to do things as completely as he could. And also the more he depended upon luck, the greater there would be his risk because it is not a certain thing. But truest prudence was to take [f. 2] from the brain that which man understood was most to his advantage and from luck man should protect himself from harm as much as he could and to help himself with what was to him advantage from it.



f. 2 [detail]: The Indian king and the three wise men

And after they had spoken their reasons very zealously the king ordered therefore that each one bring an example to prove that which they said and he gave them the time period which they requested. They went away and consulted their books, each according to his opinion. And when the time arrived, they each came before the king with their example.

And the one whose opinion was brains brought chess with its pieces showing that he that had more brains and who was perceptive could beat the other.

And the second whose opinion was fortune brought dice showing that brains mattered nothing without luck because it seemed through luck that men came to their advantage or their harm.

The third who said that it was best to draw from both brought the tables board with its pieces counted and placed orderly in their spaces and with its dice which move them in order to play, as is shown in this book which speaks separately about this and which teaches that through their play, he that knows how to play them well, even though the luck of the dice be against him, that because of his prudence he will be able to play his pieces in such a manner as to avoid the harm that may come to him through the rolls of the dice.



f. 2v [detail]: Chess, dice and tables

[f. 2v] And because chess is a nobler and more honoured game than dice or even tables, in this book it is spoken of first. And shows how the board is to be made and how many squares it has and what the pieces are and how many and what each one of them is called and in which squares they are to be and how they move them playing with them and capturing each other and what advantages some pieces have over the others. And how the players are to be perceptive to know how to play in order to win and not be beaten and how they give check to the king, which is the

greatest piece of all the other, which is a manner of confronting the lord appropriately and of how they give him checkmate which is a type of great dishonour, as if they were conquering him or killing him.

And there are other games of many kinds but all were made to resemble the things that happened according to the times that were, are or could be showing how kings in time of wars when armies are made are to make war on their enemies fighting to conquer them, by capturing them and killing them or throwing them off the land. And also as in the time of peace they are to show their treasures and their riches and the noble and strange things that they have. And according to this they made games. Some with twelve squares (per side), others with ten, others with eight, others with six and others with four. And thus they continued descending down to just one square, which they divided into eight parts.¹ And all this they did because of the great similarities according to the ancient knowledge, which the wise men used.

But among all the other games, they chose as best and most in common the one with the eight squares because it is not so slow as the one with ten or more nor is it as hurried as the one of six or fewer. And therefore men commonly use it [f. 3] in all lands, more than the other games. And the figure of the board is that it is to be square and it is to have eight horizontal ranks and in each flank eight squares which are in all sixty-four squares. And half of the squares are to be of one colour and the other half of another and likewise the pieces.



f. 3 [detail]: The creation of a chessboard and chess pieces

Of how many colours all the chess pieces are to be

There are to be thirty-two pieces. And the sixteen of one colour should be arranged on the first two horizontal ranks of the board. And the other sixteen of the other colour are to be arranged on the other end of the board in that same way, opposite the others.

¹ This description of one square divided into eight parts describes the board used for alquerque de tres.

And of these sixteen pieces eight are lesser, because they were made to resemble the common people who go in the army.

And of the other pieces which are greater one resembles the king, who is the lord of the army and he should be in one of the two middle squares.²

And next to him in the other middle square, is another piece which resembles the fers (*alfferez*) who carries the standard of the king's colours. And there are some men who do not know the name and call him "fersa" (*alfferza*).³ And these two pieces each one plays alone and does not have another in all the sixteen pieces that resembles them.

And in the two other squares beside these there are two other pieces which resemble each other and they call them fils (*alffiles*) in Arabic which means the same thing in our language as elephants, which the kings used to bring into battle and each one brought at least two so if one of them died, that the other one would remain.

And in the other two squares next to these there are two other pieces which resemble each other and everyone commonly calls them horses but their proper names are knights, which are placed as captains by order of the king, for the purpose of leading the ranks of the army.

And in the other two squares on the end [f. 3v] there are two other pieces which also resemble each other and they call them rooks and they are made wide and stretched because they resemble the ranks of the soldiers.

In the first rank are the major pieces that we said and in the second the pawns. And even though there are nine pieces in terms of squares, there are not more than six counting that they are doubled.

Because the fils and the knights and the rooks which are six, become three and with the king and the fers and the pawns, which each count as one, they make six. And they put them thus doubled so that when one of them is captured, that another of that type remains to give check and mate to the king or to shelter him.

Also they provided for the fers that when he should be lost, any one of the pawns managing to arrive at the furthest square on the opposite side of the board, where the major pieces begin, from then on they would be ferses and could play just like the former and move in that way. And this is because they rise from the status of the lesser pieces to that of the greater ones.

The king they made so that he could not be captured but that they could give him check in order that they could make him leave from that space which he held, as though dishonoured. And if they cornered him so that he did not have anywhere to go, they named it checkmate which is the same as dead and this they did in order to shorten the game. Because it would become very

² While this textual description does not specify that, as in the modern rule, the king should be played on a square that is not his same colour (i.e. the e-file), this rule appears to have been followed in all the *LJ*'s illuminations.

³ While this passage attempts to fix the *castellano drecho* term for the fers, the so-called incorrect latter term is the one used throughout the rest of the ms.

lengthy if all the pieces were to be captured until only the two kings remained alone or the one of them.

Chapter on the movement of the chess pieces

The movement of the pieces was established also for this reason that we will tell you, because just as the king should not rush into battles but go very slowly and gaining always from the enemies and fighting so as to beat them, likewise the king of the chessmen is not to move more than one square straight or diagonally as one who looks all around him meditating on what he is to do.

The fers moves one square diagonally and this is in order to guard the king and not leave his side and to shield him from the checks and checkmates when they are given to him and in order to go forward helping him to win when the game comes out well.

But he can also on his first move jump to the second⁴ straight or diagonal square and even if another piece is in between. And this is in the manner of a good captain who charges ahead in great feats and battles and rushes everywhere they need him. And in this movement he joins forces with his foot soldiers and becomes one with them as if forcing them not to leave his side and to be as one in order to do the best thing and thus he guards himself and them, having some before him and standing before the others. And therefore when the fers is thus joined with the pawns, they call it flanked.⁵

The fils jump to the second⁶ diagonal square like the elephants that the kings used to bring at that time because no one dared to stand in front of them and the ones who were on them made them move diagonally to wound the ranks of their enemies so that they were not able to guard themselves.

The knights jump three square counting one⁷ straight and taking the third diagonally in any direction. And this is like the good captains who lead the ranks turning their horses to the right and to the left in order to guard their men and conquer the enemies.

The rooks play straight as far as they can move before them or behind or to the right or to the left. And this is like the ranks of the soldiers which go forward as far as they can or in whichever direction they understand will be best in order to more quickly be able to conquer those with whom they are fighting.

[f. 4] The pawns do not go more than one square straight ahead of them like the foot soldiers of the army, they cannot move very far because they go on foot and they carry their weapons and the other things that they need on their backs.

⁴The original uses the word for third, which counts the square from which the piece begins as the first.

⁵*Alf(f)erzada* refers the triangular position of reciprocal protection created by a fers diagonally in front of two pawns. I have chosen to translate the *alf(f)erzada* position like the *alf(f)ilada* position as flank(ed) due to their resemblance to this type of military support.

⁶As with the fers's leap, here the original again uses the word for third, which counts the square from which the piece begins as the first.

⁷The original uses the word for second. See previous notes on square counting in the "Libro del acedrex".

But there are also some that play the pawns to the second⁸ square on their first move and this is until they capture because afterwards they cannot do it. And this is like when the common people steal some things, that they carry them on their backs.

Chapter on how the chess pieces capture

The pieces' capturing each other is in this manner.

The king captures in all the squares that we said he could go, any piece from the other side which is there unless there is some other piece from the other side of that piece which shelters it.

And the other major pieces do that same thing like the firs and the knights and the rooks but the fers cannot capture on the first move if it is played going to the second⁹ square but after it is played it will capture in the second diagonal square according to its movement.

The pawns also, even though they can move to the second¹⁰ square on the first move if they want, they cannot capture in it but rather they capture diagonally moving forward one square. And this is like the foot soldiers who cannot wound each other being faced off straight in front each other, but he wounds the other who is to his diagonal because he does not guard against him as much.

Chapter on the ranking of the chess pieces

The advantages which the chess pieces have over each other are great.

Because the king is protected in such a way that he can capture everyone and none can capture him. And this is like the king who can do justice on all those who deserve it but because of this none should place a hand on him in order to capture him nor wound him nor kill him even if he wounds or captures or kills. But rather they can shame him in three ways: by making him leave the square where he is or by blocking from him the square where he wishes to enter and by not letting him capture what he wants.

The fers also has great advantage because it guards the king more closely than the other pieces and it is better than the firs because it has more squares in which it can move and capture than they. And also it guards and captures forwards and back, which the pawns cannot do even if a flank is made with them, as is described above.

The firs have an advantage over the pawns because they capture at a farther distance and they also make a flank¹¹ in this way: when the fir is on the board if any pawn is behind him by one diagonal square, according to its movement the pawn guards the fir. And if another pawn guards the first in the square where the fir can go, he guards the fir. And in this way all three guard each other and this is called a flank.

⁸ The original uses the word for third, which counts the square from which the piece begins as the first.

⁹ The original uses the word for third, which counts the square from which the piece begins as the first.

¹⁰ The original uses the word for third, which counts the square from which the piece begins as the first.

¹¹ *Alf(f)ilada* refers the triangular position of reciprocal protection created by a fir diagonally in front of two pawns. I have chosen to translate the *alf(f)erzada* position like the *alf(f)ilada* position as flank(ed) due to their resemblance to this type of structural support. This position differs from *fianchetto*, Italian for little flank, where the bishop is between two pawns on the same rank.

The knight has a greater advantage than all the chess men except the rook because he who knows how to play well with the knight by moving him from the first square on the edge of the board will capture as many pieces as there may be in all the squares of the board which are sixty-three without the square from where he began, because he never fails to capture according to his movement.

The rook has a greater advantage than all the other chess pieces because he can go in one move from one end of the board to the other straight ahead of him anywhere he wants if there is not another of his own pieces on the row which blocks him or an opponent's piece that he captures because he will have to remain in the square of that one which he captured.

Chapter on how the king and all the chess pieces can move and capture, some in all the squares of the board and others in some of them

The king can move and capture in all the squares of the board in sixty-four moves. [f. 4v] and return to his square.

The fers can cover in thirty-two¹² moves all the squares of the board in which it should move and return to its square but not counting when it happens perforce to enter into the same square twice.

The fil can move and capture in six¹³ squares of the board, counting its own, and no more.

The pawn can be made a fers in six¹⁴ moves, because it moves one square at a time, and return to its square once it should be promoted to fers in as many moves as the regular fers moving in all the squares of the board in which it can move. And even though it enters twice in the same square, not being able to avoid it, that should not be counted more than once.

The movement of the rook cannot be counted because it moves far and near throughout all the board wherever it wants straight in any direction, according to its movement.

And these movements should be known by all those who wish to play chess well because without this they could not know how to do it nor understand the chess problems that men desire to know because of the annoyance given them from the lengthiness of the regular game when it is played out completely. Also they established for that reason the use of dice in chess so that it could be played more quickly.

And they assigned the six, which is the highest roll of the die, to the king, which is the most honored piece on the board. And the five to the fers. And the four to the rook. And the three to the knight. And the two, to the fil. And the one, which they call ace, to the pawn.

And because the games of chess are differentiated in many ways and problems are even made out of them, there are some in which take all the pieces are used and in others only some of them,

¹² The original uses the word for thirty-three, counting the initial square as one and then each of the total of thirty-two squares which the fers can enter despite the fact that this counts the initial square twice.

¹³ This is an error in the *LJ*; the fil can move to eight squares counting its own starting square. For example, a fil at c1 can also move to a3, e3, g1, c5, a7, g5 and e7.

¹⁴ This count is correct if the initial double-step rule is not observed. If a pawn moves two square for its first move it can become a fers in five.

we wish to talk to you here first of the game which is played with the all the pieces together and we will show how the board is made and the fashionings of the pieces. However those which are made best and most completely are to be made in this manner:

The King should be on his chair with his crown on his head and the sword in his hand as if he were judging or ordering justice to be done.

The fers should be made in the manner of the highest standard bearer of the King who carries the standard of the colours of the King when they are to enter into battles.

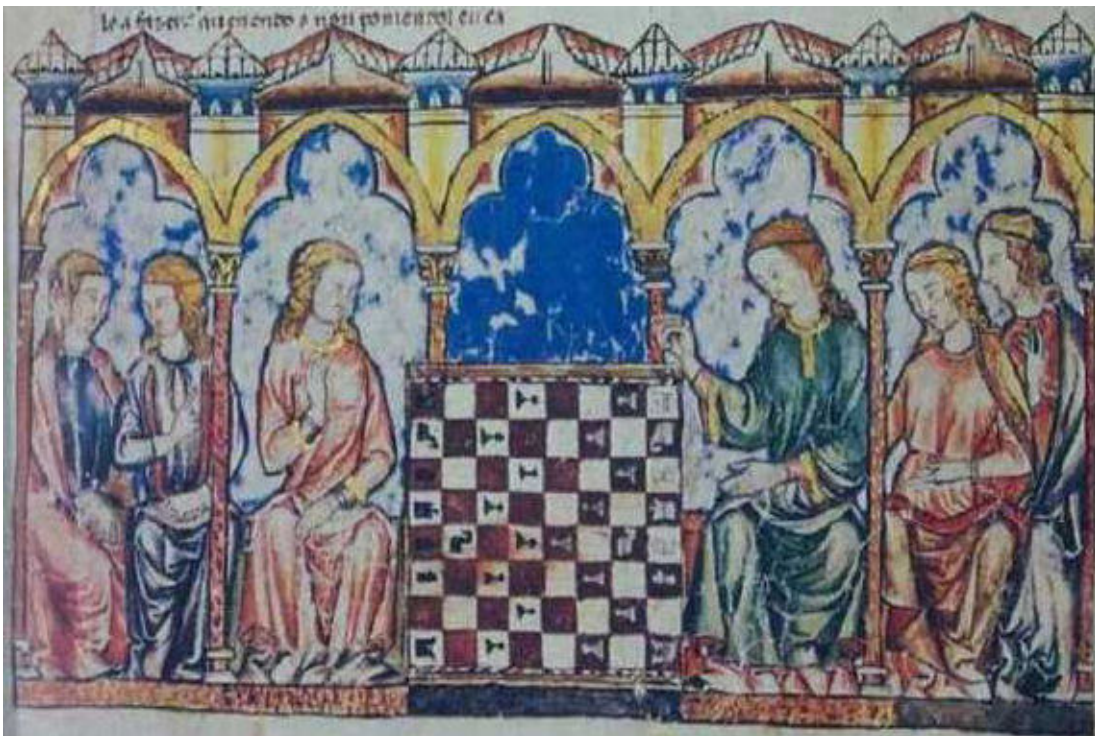
The fils are to be made in the manner of elephants with castles on top of them full of armed men, as if wanting to fight.

The knights are to be made in the manner of armed knights, like captains who are placed by order of the king to lead the ranks.

The rooks should be made like the ranks of armed soldiers which are very broad, holding on to one another.

The pawns are to be made in the manner of common people who are armed and outfitted when they want to fight.

But since in all the lands that play chess they would be very difficult to make, such pieces as these, men sought out a way in which they could be made more easily and with less cost, but that they should resemble in some small way those which we describe. And the figure of those which is the most used in all the lands, and especially in Spain, is that which is painted here.



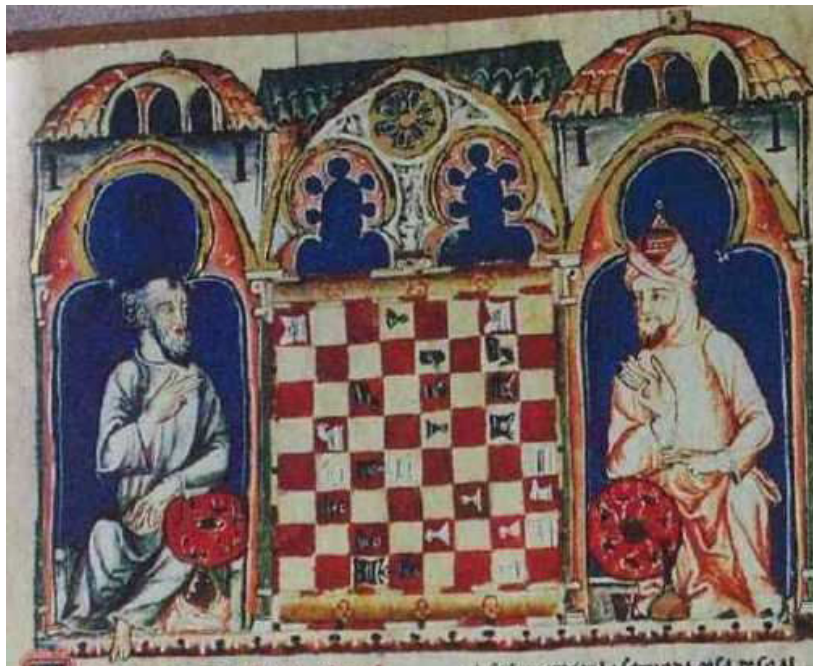
f. 5 [detail]: A game of "forced" chess, being played by six women

[f. 5] Since we have finished with how the greater game of chess is played completely, we wish to tell of the problems that men invented with it, which are like things new and strange to hear and therefore they are enjoyable, and also because they are played more quickly because they are counted and known moves and one knows how many moves after beginning that they are to end. But we will speak first of the larger problems which are played with all the chess pieces without removing any of them and afterwards we will tell of how they go decreasing down to the smallest number that they can be.

And we wish next to tell of the game which they call forced. And this is because even though it may be played according to each player's will, in it there is also to be an element of force because a man goes against his will losing his best piece to his opponent's worst, willing or not by putting it on a square where the other is forced to capture it, according to the movement of the piece against which it is put. And this game is arranged just the same as the first and the pieces move and capture each other in that same way except that there is in addition the forced capture. And therefore those that play it are to be knowledgeable so that they do not put their best pieces in a position where they are to give them up to lesser and more lowly pieces. Because in this lies all the wisdom of this game and its play. And because of this force which we described, they call it the forced game. But because some tell that the damsels first invented it overseas, they call it the game of the damsels.¹⁵

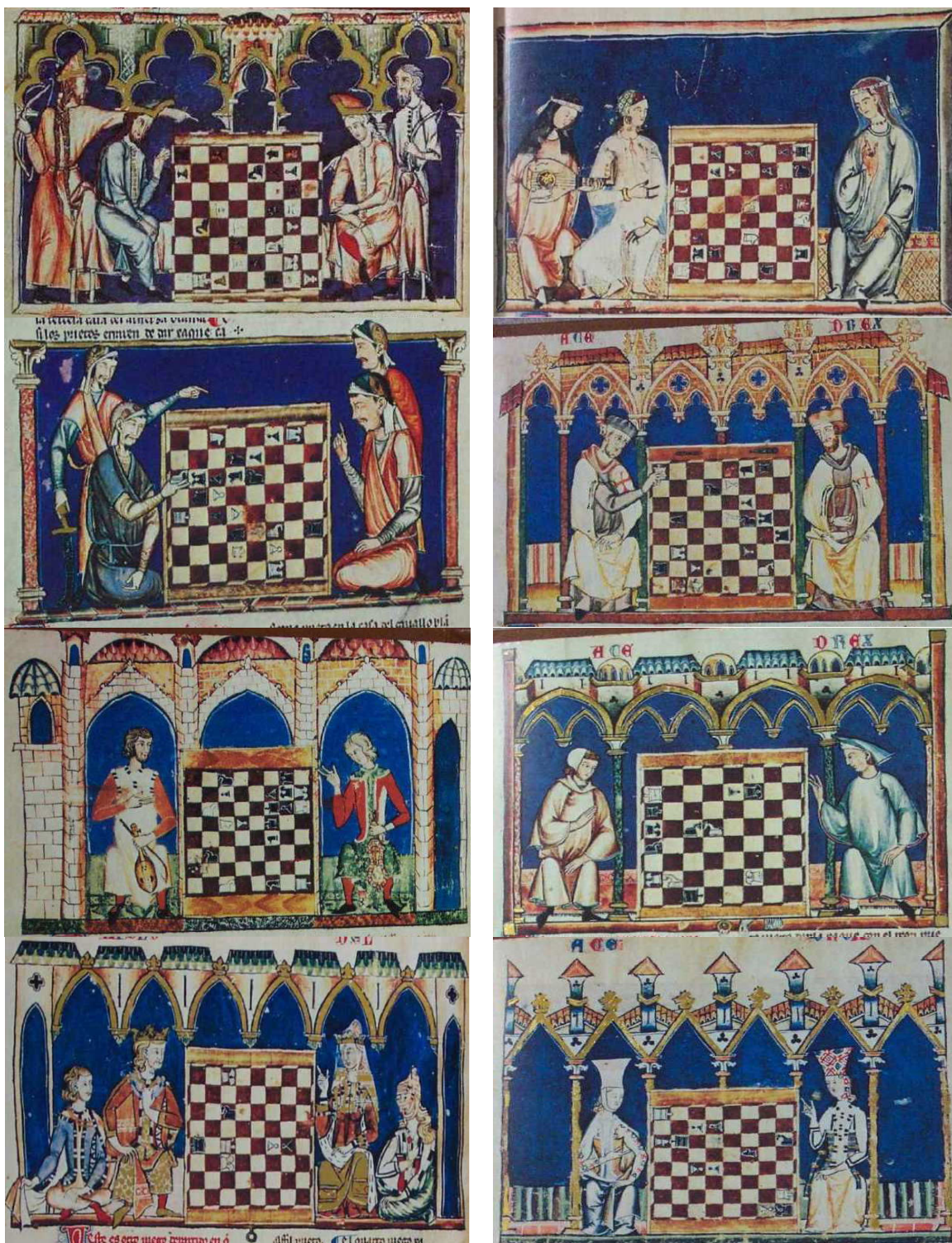
[ff. 5v – 64v]

The treatise now goes on to describe a variety of chess problems and their solutions. These are not translated in Sonja's work to date, perhaps because they are not necessary to better describe how the game of chess is played.



f. 10 [detail]: A chess problem (problem no. 7 of 103)

¹⁵ This forced game version of chess bears two similarities to modern checkers. First the name, *iuego de las donzellas* is similar to the modern (*juego de*) *damas*. And second, the rule of mandatory capture is similar to checker's modern rule requiring that all possible captures must be made or the loss (huffing) of the piece which should have made the capture(s).

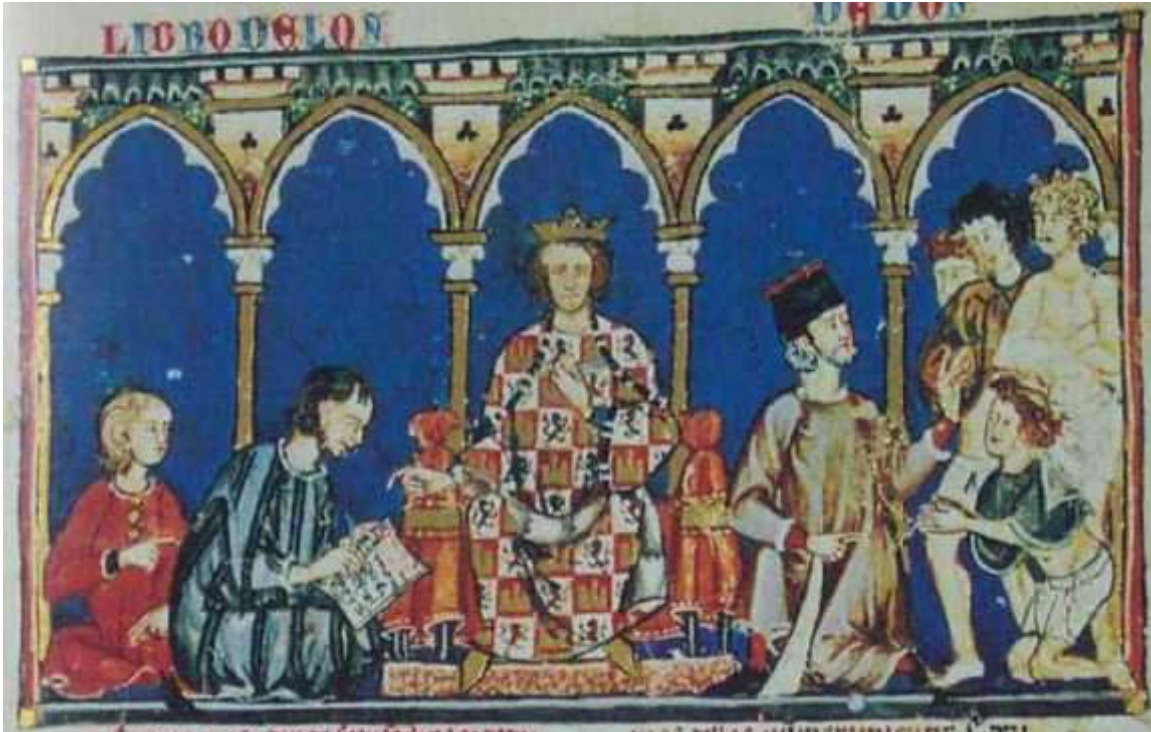


Selections of illustrations from the "Chess Problems" section of the manuscript. Details of, from left to right and descending: ff. 11v (problem no. 9 of 103), 18 (19), 20v (23), 25 (31), 31v (42), 39 (57) 54v (87), 60 (96)

[f. 65]

How dice should be made.

Since we have now spoken about the games of chess, which are played by brains¹⁶, as completely as we could, we want now to tell here about the games of dice for two reasons. The first, because the debate between the wise men, as we showed at the beginning of the book, was to between brains or luck, which was better. And on this matter, each one gave his example to the king; the first of brains, by the games of chess; the second of luck, by the dice. The other (reason) is that even though tables are greater and more respectable than dice, since they cannot be played without them, it is fitting that we speak of them first.



f. 65 [detail]: King Alfonso dictating the book of dice to his subjects

And we say that dice should consist of three squared shapes of six equal sides, all equal in size and perfectly square because otherwise they will not roll as often on one side as another and it would be trickery more than luck. And thus this is the first of the ways of cheating, as we will later tell¹⁷, in which those who wish to cheat make crooked dice.

And it is to have on each one of the six sides, pips¹⁸ in this manner: on the one side six, and on the other five, on the other four, on the other three, on the other two and on the other one, so that twenty-one pips come on each die, and so that sixty-three pips come on three dice.

¹⁶ *Seso*, literally brains, here also meaning knowledge or skill.

¹⁷ Further ways of cheating are not explained in the “*Libro de los dados*” or in the rest of the *LJ*. Perhaps it is meant that they are or will be described in the *Libro de las tafurerías*.

¹⁸ The ms. uses the word *puntos*, literally points. I give the more common English term “pips” instead to avoid confusion with the word for playing spaces (i.e. points) in the next book the “*Libro de las tablas*” where point dice points/pips and tables houses/points are used.

And the pips should be placed in this manner: opposite the six-side, the one; and opposite the five, the two; and opposite the four, the three.¹⁹

And these dice can be made [f. 65v] of wood, or of stone, or of bone, or of any metal, but especially are best the ones made of bone, the heaviest to be found, more than any other material and they fall more equally and more squarely on any type of surface.



f. 65v [detail]: Making the dice from bone shards

The game of mayores (high roll) & of tanto en uno como en dos (as many on one as on two).
The first game of those that men use is he who rolls the highest wins and this game they call mayores.

All the other types of games that there are with them, are wagers that men place among themselves, which are betting games, such as he who rolls the lowest wins.

Or tanto en uno como en dos that is in this way: if it should say in the one die six, the other two must say five and one, or four and two, or double threes. And if it should say five on the one, the other two must say four and one, or three and two. And if it should say four on the one, the other two must say three and one, or double twos. And if it should say three on the one, the other two must say two and one. And if it should say two on the one, the other two must say double ones.

[f. 66]

This is the game of triga (trios?).

There is another game called triga that is played in this way: and if a man is playing against another and he first rolls "par"²⁰ on all three dice, or fifteen pips, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen or

¹⁹ Alfonso does not say it explicitly but this makes "good" dice the ones that have reciprocal sides that add up to the significant number 7.

²⁰ Par meaning either a pair of two dice rolled to the same number or par meaning even or simply the same number as in golf.

the flip-sides of these rolls which are six, five, four or three, he wins. And these rolls are all called trigas and they can be rolled in this way:

18 pips: 6+6+6

17: 6+6+5

16: 6+6+4 and 5+5+6

15: 6+6+3, 6+5+4 and 5+5+5

Also 6 pips can be rolled in this way: 4+1+1, or 3+2+1, or 2+2+2;

5 pips: 3+1+1 or 2+2+1

4: 2+1+1

3: 1+1+1

Also "par" on all three dice can be rolled in this way:

6+6+6, 5+5+5, 4+4+4, 3+3+3, 2+2+2, 1+1+1.



f. 66 [detail]: Two winning "Trigas"

Another version of triga.

In another way a man can roll in which he will have none of the rolls which we have described up to this point, and it will be triga, when if a man takes for himself seven pips, or eight, or nine, or ten, or eleven, or twelve, or thirteen, or fourteen, and the other with whom his is playing rolls the same this will be triga and the one who first took the number will win.

[f. 66v]

And if by chance he does not roll the other player's number and he takes another (number) for himself, they should both roll as many times until one of them hits upon one of those numbers. And rolling one's own number will be triga and he will win, and if he should roll the other's it will also be triga and he will lose.

And these rolls can come in so many ways:

7: 5+1+1 or 4+2+1 or 3+2+2 or 3+3+1

8: 6+1+1 or 5+2+1 [or 4+3+1]²¹ or 4+2+2 or 3+3+2

9: 6+2+1 or 5+3+1 or 5+2+2 or 4+4+1 or 4+3+2 or 3+3+3

10: 6+3+1 or 6+2+2 or 5+4+1 or 5+3+2 or 4+4+2 or 3+3+4

11: 6+4+1 or 6+3+2 or 5+4+2 or 5+5+1 or 3+3+5 or 4+4+3

12: 6+5+1, 6+4+2 or 6+3+3 or 5+4+3 or 5+5+2 or 4+4+4

13: 6+6+1 or 6+4+3 or 6+5+2 or 5+5+3 or 4+4+5

14: 6+6+2 or 6+5+3 or 6+4+4 or 5+5+4

And in as many ways as we have said above, can come the rolls on the dice, and not in more.



f. 67 [detail]: A game of Azar. The money bags on the table appear to be empty, so these people seem to have resorted to using their clothes to wager.

[f. 67]

The game they call azar (hazard).

There is another dice game that they call azar and it is played in this way: the one who first has to roll the dice if he should roll 15 pips, or sixteen, or seventeen, or eighteen or the flip-sides of these rolls which are six or five or four or three, they win.²² And any of these numbers in any of the

²¹ As Canettieri correctly observes, the game triga omits in error the combination 4+3+1 for the total 8 on f. 66v. Into my critical text, I have therefore inserted "o quatro tria & as" as this same combination is given on f. 69v for panquist and I insert it where I think it would most likely fall given the other series.

²² Modern craps also has opening winning rolls called naturals, but they are two of the easiest rolls: seven and eleven. The hard rolls of two, three, and twelve are opening-roll losers called craps.

ways that they may come according to the other games that we have described above is called azar.²³

And if by chance he does not roll any of these azares first, and gives to the other as a point number one of those which are from six pips and above or from fifteen and below, in whichever way that it may come, according to the other games we described in which they come. And afterward these (rolls) he rolls one of the rolls which we said here was azar, this roll will be called reazar²⁴ and the one who rolled first will lose.

And also if by chance he should not roll this number which becomes reazar, he must take for himself one of the other point numbers²⁵ which are from six pips and above or from fifteen and below in whatever way it may come. And they should roll as many times until one of these numbers comes, either his own by which he wins or that of the other by which he loses, except if he takes the same point number that he gave the other, which would be called match. And they must continue rolling as above.

And however any of these rolls should come that are called azar or reazar and until one of the point numbers comes, neither of them will win nor lose because of it until it is divided by the rolls, as it says above.



f. 67v [detail]: A game of Marlota. Money is being passed across the table.

[f. 67v]

This is the game of marlota.

There is another dice game that they call marlota in which there is no azar, re-azar, nor high rolls. And it is played for money in this way: he that rolls the dice is to give a point number to the other with whomever he is playing.

²³ HSMS' *Diccionario de la prosa castellana del Rey Alfonso X* (New York: HSMS, 2002) incorrectly gives this definition as only a losing role. (267)

²⁴ In modern craps, the player is said to have "crapped out".

²⁵ In modern craps these goal numbers are called points. I use the phrase point number to avoid confusion between point number rolls, dice points/pips and backgammon points/houses.

And the point numbers that he can give or take for himself are these: seven or eight or nine or ten or eleven or twelve or thirteen or fourteen, in any way that they may come according to the other games we described in which they can come. And if he rolls fourteen or above or seven or below, it is not a point number for either one or the other. But rather he should roll as many times until he hits a number of these aforementioned ones to (give to) that one with which he is playing and take another for himself. And of these numbers, the first one is to belong to whomever he is playing with and the other is his own.

And after the point numbers are divided in this way, he is to roll as much until his comes or that of the other, thus rolling his own he wins and rolling that of the other he loses.



f. 68 [detail]: A target roll for a game of Riffa

[f. 68]

This is the game of riffa (raffle?).

There is another kind of game which they call riffa that is played in this way: he who first rolls the dice should roll them as many times until he rolls a pair on two, then he should roll the other one. Then the pips of this third die are to be counter with the pips of the other first two dice.

And if the other who is playing with him, in rolling the dice in this same way rolls more points he wins, and if as many he ties, and if less he loses.

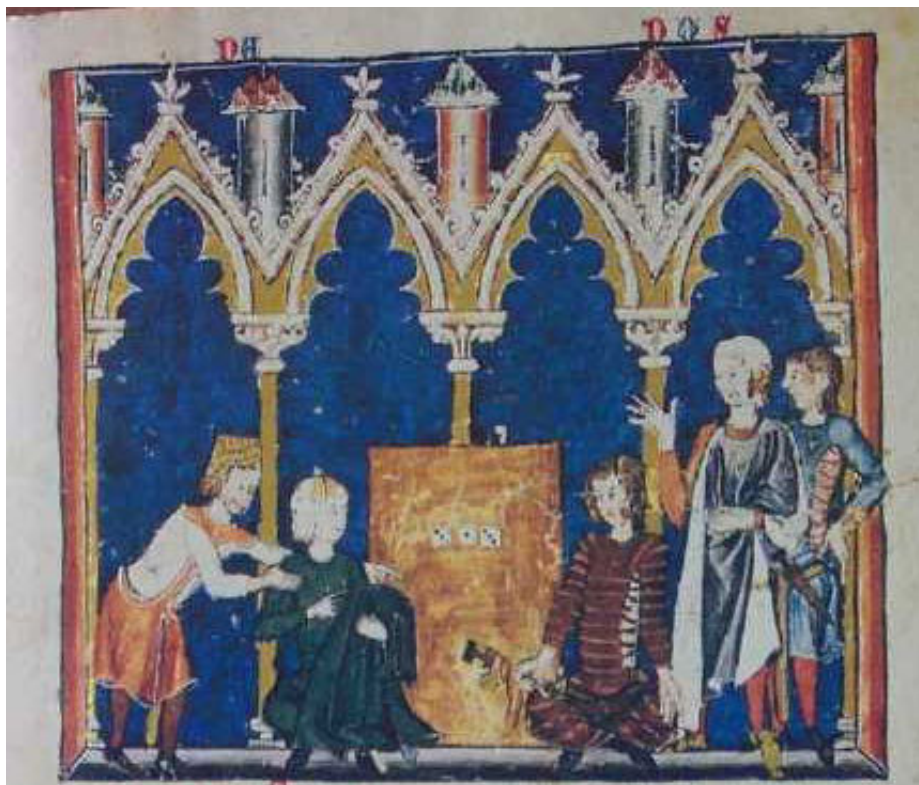
[f. 68v]

This game they call par con as (pair with an ace).

There is another game that they call par con as and it is played in this way: the one who wins the battle will play first. And if he rolls a pair on two dice and an ace on the other, he wins. And if not, the other must roll and in this way they play until one of them succeeds and he who should rolls it first, will win.



f. 68v [detail]: A game of dice being played by beggars. This is given as the illustration for the game Par Con As.



f. 69 [detail]: A game of Panquist. This roll wins all four bets when 7 is the player's point number, hence it is a "panquist".

[f. 69]

This game is called panquist.

There is another kind of game that they call panquist and it is played in this way: he who wins the battle will roll first and the other is to place four bets one in front of the other. And whichever one rolls will give the first point number to the other one and the second he will take for himself.

And the rolls which can be given are from seven pips to fourteen.

He who has seven pips for his point number, if he should roll $5+1+1$ or $4+2+1$, he will take the first two bets; and if he should roll $2+2+3$, he will take three; and if he should roll $3+3+1$ he will take all four. And this last roll they call panquist.

Also he who [f. 69v] should have 8 pips for his point number, if he should roll $5+2+1$, he will take the first one; and if he should roll $4+3+1$, he will take two; And if he should roll $6+1+1$ or $2+2+4$, he will take three; and if he should roll $3+3+2$, he will take four. And this last roll they call panquist.

Also he who should have 9 pips for his point number, if he should roll $6+2+1$ or $5+3+1$, he will take the first one; and if he should roll $4+3+2$, he will take two; and if he should roll $2+2+5$ or $3+3+3$, he will take three; and if he should roll $4+4+1$, he will take all four. And this last roll they call panquist.

Also he who should have 10 pips and should roll $5+4+1$ or $5+3+2$, he will take the first one; and if he should roll $6+3+1$, he will take two; and if he should roll $2+2+6$ or $4+3+3$, he will take three; and if he should roll $4+4+2$, he will take four. And this last roll they call panquist.

Also he who should have 11 pips for his point number and should roll $6+3+2$ or $5+4+2$, he will take the first one; and if he should roll $6+4+1$, he will take two; and if he should roll $5+5+1$ or $4+4+3$, he will take three; and if he should roll $3+3+5$, he will take four and this last roll they call panquist.

Also he who should have 12 pips, if he should roll $6+5+1$ or $6+4+2$ he will take the first one; and if he should roll $5+4+3$ he will take two; and if he should roll $5+5+2$ or $4+4+4$ he will take three; and if he should roll $3+3+6$ he will take four and this last roll they call panquist.

Also he who should have thirteen pips and should he roll $6+5+2$, he will take the first one; and if he should roll $6+4+3$, he will take two; and if he should roll $6+6+1$ or $5+5+3$, he will take three; and if he should roll $4+4+5$ he will take four and this last roll they call panquist.

Also he who should have 14 pips and should he roll $6+5+3$, he will take two; and if he should roll $6+6+2$ or $5+5+4$, he will take three; and if he should roll $4+4+6$ he will take four, and this last roll they call panquist.

And these are the rolls that win both for the one who places the bets as well as the one who rolls the dice to the one whose roll comes first.



f. 70 [detail]: A game of Medio Azar

[f. 70]

This game they call medio azar (half hazard).

There is another dice game that they call medio azar that is played in this way: those who want to play have first to roll battle and he who wins will roll first.

And if he rolls 14 pips or above or seven or below in any way that each one of these numbers may come it will be azar. And for each azar he will take a bet amount as agreed upon that may be worth from a *dinero*²⁶, a *sueldo*²⁷, or a *moravedí*²⁸ or however much more should be the bet.

And the rolls which are in the middle of these are called point numbers and they are these: eight or nine and ten and eleven and twelve and thirteen. And if by chance he should not roll azar and hit the other's point number and take a point number for himself, the one that should come first will win three amounts.

And if after he should give a point number to the other one he should then roll azar between he takes his own point number, that amount will go up to four. And if he should roll another azar it will go to five. And as many azares as he should roll each one after the other, will be worth an amount [f. 70v] until he takes a point number for himself.

²⁶ weight of 1.20 grams of silver (Simon & Schuster 1149)

²⁷ solidus (Simon & Schuster 1519)

²⁸ The *LT* calls the maravedí a gold coin.

And if by chance before he takes a point number for himself he should match the same point number as the other one, he will roll again for azar and if he should make it, he will win all the amounts that were there. And if not, hit the point number again and it will count on top of the other first amounts and in this way the game returns to start over again.



f. 70v [detail]: A game of Azar Pujado. A fight breaks out around the players, and knives are pulled.

This game they call azar pujado (raised azar).

The azar they call raised is played in same was as medio azar that we described above, where the stakes still are raised for azar as well as for any roll that is the point number of one or the other that should come. And therefore they call this azar puiado because the other one above is medio azar.

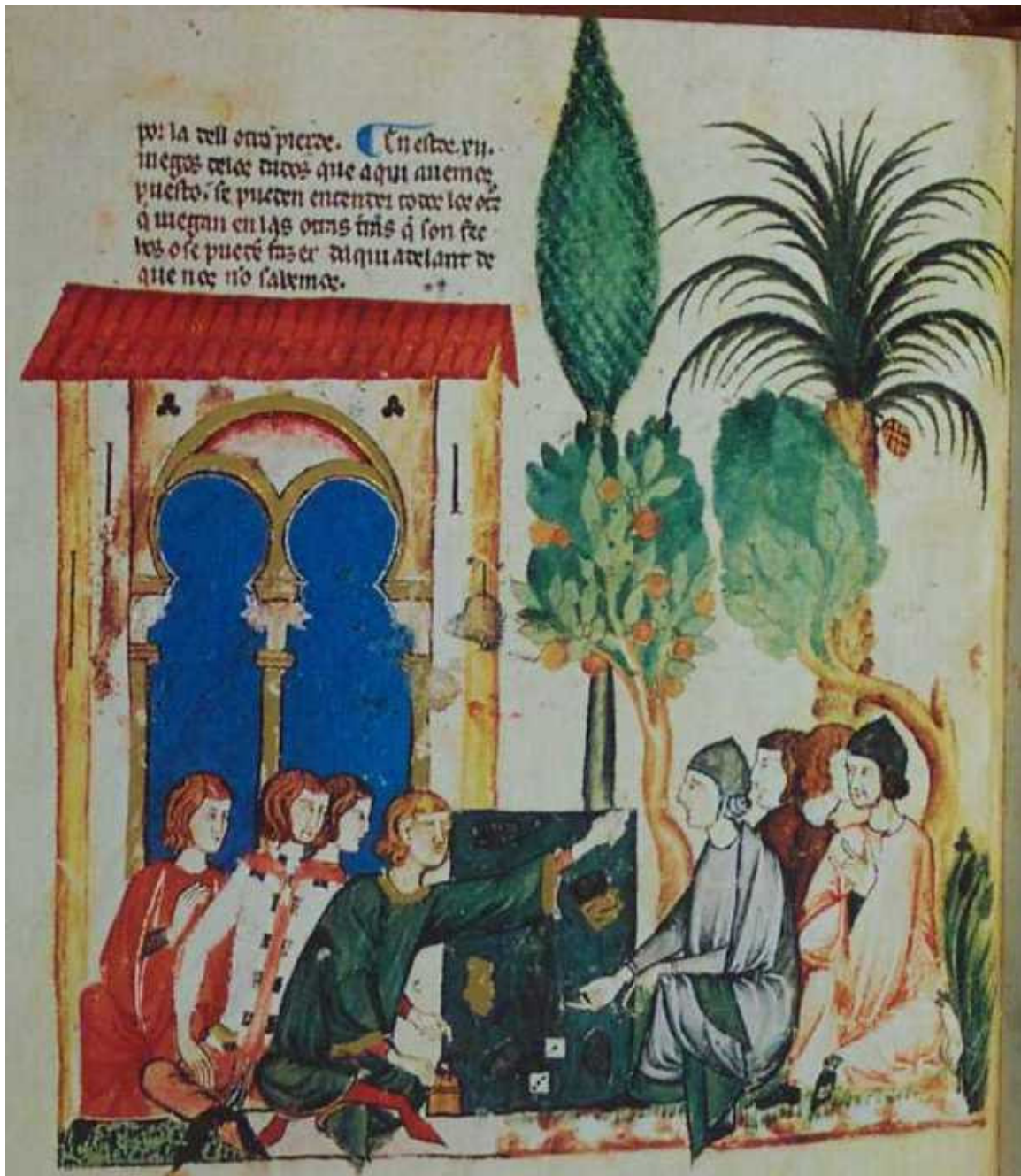
[f. 71]

This is the game they call guirguesca.

There is another kind of game they call guirguesca that is played with two dice in this way: Those who want to play have first to roll battle, and he who wins it will roll first.

And if he should roll 6+6 or 6+5 or the flip-sides of these which are 2+1 or 1+1 it will be azar, and he will win one amount of such quantity as they agreed upon that it should be worth.

And if per chance he should not roll azar and he should roll four pips or five or six or seven or eight or nine or ten in whatever way that they should come, each one of these will be called a point number and that whomever he is playing with shall have it, and the other will bet upon it whatever amount he should wish and if the one who rolls the dice should then roll of it as many pips as he gave him, this will be called match and he will take whatever is there whether he had been assigned to that point or whether he had kept silent.



f. 71v: An unspecified game of dice, presumably Guirguesca, as it is played with two dice

And if by chance he should not roll a match and he should roll one of the numbers which we said above were azares, he will lose it all. And if he should roll neither match nor azar and he should roll one of the other point numbers, that one he will take for himself, and he will roll as many times until his (point number) or that of the other one comes. And rolling his own he wins and [f. 71v] for that of the other one he loses.

In this 12 games of dice that we have put here, can be understood all the others that they play in the other lands which are made or which can be made from here on which we do not know.



f. 71 [detail]: A game of Guirguesca, played with two dice instead of three, as for the others

[f. 72]

Here begins the book of the games of tables. And it speaks firstly about how the board should be made, the pieces²⁹ and how many they should be, what is the prime and tie of them. And also about how they need the dice to guide them and make their moves as subtly as they can. Since we have spoken there about the dice as completely as we were able, we wish now to speak here about the tables, that although they might need dice that show luck with which to be played, still they are to be played intelligently taking therefore from where it should be required, the brain. And also from luck. And therefore we wish now to talk about them here.

And we say thus: that the board on which they are to be played is to be square. And in the middle there is to be a mark so that four tables are made. And in each table there are to be six points.

²⁹ The pieces in tables are called *tablas* in the *LJ* whereas in most other languages the tables are quarters of the board itself. Each player has an inner and an outer table, the inner table being the one from which he bears off his pieces at the end of the game.



f. 72 [detail]: Alfonso dictates the book of tables to his subjects



f. 73 [detail]: A table and its pieces being made

And although in some lands they make the boards flat and painted and also the pieces with which they play square or round and they do not make a place into which they fit, for this reason it was discovered to be better to make the sides of the board from wood, carved out in half-wheels into which the pieces, which are to be round, can fit.

And also, one half of the pieces must be of one colour and the other half of another so that they can be recognized one from the other. And they are to be fifteen of each colour because in one quarter of the board can be placed two by two on each point and remain three outside (that quarter) so win the game by forming a prime and to tie when necessary. Because without these it could not be done.

And for this reason they place the pieces doubled up: because just as in the game of chess when one piece is found alone, separated from the others so that it does not have anyone to guard it and it can be captured, likewise that of tables. If they are not doubled up, the other player who should roll that number which corresponds to that point can take that single piece and there is no one there to defend it.

The prime of tables is when one player captures so many of the other's pieces that he then does not have points upon which to enter them and he therefore loses the game. And tying is that even if he has very few pieces and he enters them that neither one can play even if he wishes. Whence also for the prime because without these three pieces which are in addition to the first twelve, it could not be done.

The dice are perforce needed in tables. Because just as the body cannot move without the feet, so they cannot move without them to make any play, because by they are directly forced according to the pips on the dice to move to those points indicated by them.

And the board's marking is such that the points of the inner tables are ordered by the pips on the dice in this way: on that which is the first in the division of the board, near the bar is for the six, and the other next to it five, the other four, the other three, the other two and the other one.³⁰ So one who wants to move from that house that is near the side of the edge where there is no point, and count to [the first point on] the next table would have roll a six. And this is because you never count the first point from which a piece starts because if it were counted and a one were rolled, then the piece would stay on the same point. And therefore, the six and all other rolls are to be counted beginning with the second square that is next to and ahead of it. And in this way, the dice make the pieces run around the board. And they make the games as in this book you will see. And therefore those who would wish to learn to play well must first learn how many pips you must rolls for each point, not counting the point where the piece leaves.

[f. 73]

This is the first game that they call the quinze tablas (fifteen pieces). The first game of tables is this one that they call fifteen pieces or six and however many they can place there from fifteen to one.

³⁰ A scribal error, reversing the bar with the edge of the board in this sentence and the next, causes this description to be backwards.



f. 73v [detail]: A game of Quinze Tables



f. 74 [detail]: A game of Doze Canes/Doze Hermanos

[f. 73v]

This game they call the doze canes or doze hermanos (twelve dogs or twelve brothers).

The second game is that the pieces are doubled up on the points and they call it twelve brothers or twelve dogs. And this is because it is played with twelve pieces so that they may be arranged doubled up two by two on the six-points in one of the tables of the board, chosen by the one who is to play first.

And the one who can place his pairs the fastest, of the two players, will win because the other will not be able to capture one of his pieces once the point is doubled up.

But each one of those that would play should hold their pieces in their hand or on the board apart from the points on which they are to play and they should not place them until the roll of the dice comes for them to be placed.

And this is the play of this game.



f. 74v [detail]: A game of Doblet

[f. 74]

This game they call doblet (doublet).

And there is another game of tables that they call doblet which is played in this way. Each one of the players should have twelve pieces and put them doubled up, one on top of another, each one in his table of the board that is to be the one across from the other on the same side of the bar.

The one who wins the battle will roll first.

And they should unstack those twelve pieces that are on top of the others by the numbers of the pips of the dice.

And also they should bear off and the one who bears off first will win the game.

And if by chance either one of the players should make a roll that he does not have the pieces to play, either to unstack them or bear them off, the other player should do it. And in this way it happens many times that one player will win by the numbers that the other will roll.

And this is the explanation of this game and this is the diagram of its arrangement.



f. 75 [detail]: A game of Fallas

[f. 74v]

This is the game they call fallas (drop dead).

There is another game of tables that they call fallas and it is set up in this way: that thirteen of the fifteen pieces are placed on the six-point which is inside one of the quarters on the board. And the [other] two are placed on the first point that is against the outside edge of the table that is across from the other one on the same side of the bar. And he who has that table, sets up in this same way as the one in the other table as we described.

And when they are thus arranged each one of the two players should try to bring his pieces around through those two tables to his own table as fast as he can, because there he is to arrange them so that he can bear them off safely and in bearing off guard them so that the other does not hit them.

Because if not, he would have to return them to the table where they first began. And if he should find that the other [player] has placed his pieces there where he must enter, he would die because he could not enter and he therefore would lose the game.

Also, he who should roll in such a way that he would not have anywhere to go except for the point that the other had occupied, he will lose the game because he dies. So for this reason, they call this game fallas.

But you can either lose or win and in another way. If by chance each one of the players should conduct his pieces safely to his inner table so that neither hits the other, the one who bears them off more quickly will win the game.

And this is the explanation of this game.



f. 75v [detail]: A game of Seys Dos & As

[f. 75]

This is the game that they call seys dos & as (six two and one)

This is another game that they call seys dos & as.

And both players place their pieces in the same table of the board and he that wins the battle plays first and should put his fifteen pieces in this way on the six-point and on the inside of the board in the same table eight pieces and on the two-point in that same table four pieces and on

the one-point three. And the other player should put his in that same table on the five-, four- and three-points with five pieces on each one.

And because the one who wins the battle has the six-, two- and one-points they call this game thus. And he should play first and take as many points as he can in the other table that is contiguous along the track.

And the other one that plays after him also will take as many points as he can in that same table.

And if in taking those points one should hit one or more of the other's pieces, he must return them not to the table which is on the same side of the bar nor to the point which is next to it but to the one which is diagonally opposite. And once he places them in this table he must bring them around through all the tables to that table from where they must be borne off.

And he who should bear them off faster will win the game.

And this is the explanation of the game which we described above.

[f. 75v]

This is the game that they call in Spain emperador (emperor), because he made it.

There is another game of tables that they call in Spain emperor because he made it and it is set up and played in this way. The one player should place his fifteen pieces on the one-point in one table. And the other [places] his fifteen pieces in the other [one-] point that is in the table next to it on the same side of the bar.

And he that should win the battle is to play first and bring his pieces by the rolls of the dice around through the tables of the board until he brings them into the table where the other had his [pieces]. And the other player should do this same thing towards him in the opposite direction.

And if in passing the ones should hit the others, they must return to the table where they first were placed. And from there they must be taken again as before until they come to the table where they should be set up. And in passing by each other and being hit and returning again as above in order to play he that bring them around to the table where he should and bears them off safely, he wins the game.

But there are two things that good players do.³¹ One is a tie and the other is a prime.

And the tie is made in order to defend the player whose game [position] is worse so that he does not lose. And the prime in order to win by even more the player whose game is better.

And the tie is like this, that each one has as many pieces that he cannot enter into the other's table by the no matter what he rolls, all the points being held by his pieces or his opponent's. And they should stop while even one piece remains on the points of the [f. 76] table or is to enter that they not put it on top of their other one even though it be alone nor on top of the others which are

³¹ This advice about what good players do is the first of the only two strategy hints offered in the *LJ*, perhaps because it is a game so personal to Alfonso. Both appear in the *Book of Tables*. The second hint appears in a game with a rule comparable to a rule in the game Emperor.

paired even though the roll of the dice says that they could do it if it were another game and in this way because neither one nor the other can enter, they call this game a tie; because the damage is equal on both sides.



f. 76 [detail]: A game of Emperor, being played by two monarchs

What is the prime of this game

A prime in when one player has an advantage over the other and has twelve pieces set up so that the other even if can enter he cannot escape and of the other pieces that he has he must bring them down or make one [able] to be hit there.

And when he hits four or more pieces the game is “primed” because he can bare his pieces off safely or hit him more if he wishes. And he wins the game in this case.

This game they call medio emperador (half emperor)

There is another game that they call medio emperador and it has this name because just as the other game that we described above is played on the four tables of the board, so this one is played on two tables. And it is played with two or three dice but there is no prime like the other one but there can be a tie.



f. 76v [detail]: A game of Medio Emperador

And because the game emperor is played on the whole board and this one only on half of it and with two dice, therefore they call it medio emperador.

And this is the explanation of this game.

[f. 76v]

This game they call the pareia de entrada (paired entry)

There is another game that they call pareia de entrada that is played with three or two dice in this way. The players who play this game should have their pieces outside of the points and place them in one of the four tables of the board upon which they agree as in doce canes. And he who first places them there should bring them through the tables of the board to the other table that is across from it on the same side of the bar and there he is to place them if he can and bear them off.

And if each player in bringing his tables to the table where they are borne off, they hit one of them, it should return to that table where they were first placed. And he must strive to bring it as fast as he can to that table where they are to be borne off. And he that should bear them off the fastest will win the game.

And so much of an advantage has either one of the players who rolls the same number on the three or two dice, because he is to move the entire roll as soon as he rolls the doubles or triples. And in addition it is to be his turn to roll again.



f. 77 [detail]: A game of Pareia de Entrada

And because in the beginning of this game they enter their pieces as in doce canes and after when they roll a double they are to complete it all, therefore they call this game pareia de entrada.

[f. 77]

This game they call cab e quinal (alongside fives)

There is another game of tables that they call cab e quinal and it has this name because all thirty pieces are put in one table of the four tables of the board. The fifteen that are of one colour on the six-point and the other fifteen on the five-point that is beside it.

And the player on five is to roll first because if the player on six which are one point ahead of him played first, they would have two advantages, the first one point which they are ahead and the other rolling first.

And they play in this way, they should bring themselves around through the other points of the tables of the board to the other table which is across from and on the same side of the bar as the one where they were set up and from there they should be borne off.

And if any of them are should be hit in bringing them around they should return and enter with them on the points of the table where they began, if they should find (those points) empty or with blots or on top of their own, as many as can be. And in this way the game of cab & quinal with three dice differs from the game of emperor.



f. 77v [detail]: A game of Cab e Quinal. The player on the five-point always rolls first.

However if some wish to play it with two dice and count the other die as of whatever number they might agree upon and that they put as if the third die said six, it is set up in this way: they are to put the fourteen pieces on the six-point and the other one of that same colour ahead on the other six-point [of that table that is across from and on the same side of the bar as it]. And the other fifteen pieces they are to put fourteen of them on the five-point and the other one on the four-point that is next to it. And the movement and the capturing of these pieces is to bring themselves around just like the other game that we described above that is similar to this, that is played with three dice.

[f. 77v]

This game they call todas tablas (all tables)

There is another game that they call todas tablas because it is set up spread out through all the four tables of the board.³²

And in the two tables that are across from one another on the same side of the bar, one the first they place five pieces of one colour on the six-point. And of that same [colour] they place two on the one-point of the other table that is across from it on the same side of the bar, and in that same table [the other colour] also puts his pieces opposite it [the other colour] as we have said for this.

And in the other two tables that are across the bar from these, on the one-points they put five pieces of the colour that placed the other five on the sixth point. And on the five-points they put three pieces in each of these colours.

³² The explanation of this game's name highlights Alfonso's confusion over the name tables. In the introduction to the "Book of Tables", he explains that it is the pieces that are called tables. Everywhere else in the world it is the quadrants or leaves of the board are called tables. Several other variants use all fifteen playing pieces but are not called *todas tablas*. Only this variant that uses all of the quadrants or tables is called all tables.



f. 78 [detail]: A game of Todas Tablas. This is the most direct ancestor of modern Backgammon.



f. 78v [detail]: A game of Laquet

And it is played like this: the one to roll first will play whichever side he wishes bringing the two pieces from the one-point towards the six-point where he has five pieces. But if some pieces are taken, they are to be returned to the table where the two pieces are on the one-point. And from there they are to bring them to the table where the five pieces are on the six-point and from there to bear them off.

And this game is played with two dice.

[f. 78]

This game they call laquet (the quest).³³

There is another game of tables that they call laquet and it is played with two dice and set up in this way, fourteen pieces of one colour are placed in one table of the board on the one-point and the fifteenth is placed on the one-point of³⁴ the other table which is across from it on the same side of the bar. And the other fifteen pieces are placed in this way, fourteen in the same table where the other fourteen are on the six-point, two on the five-, four-, three- and two-points each one of these points three pieces. And the fifteenth in the third table on the one-point and there they are arranged.

And in this game the pieces do not hit one another. And the roll that one player cannot use; the other player is to use it. And he who first should bear off from that table where they should be arranged wins the game. And this game is now newly found and it does not agree with [the game of] its [same] name according to the other ancients.

Note: ff. 79 – 79v are missing in the facsimile. Their illustrations will be added if they appear online.

[f. 78v]

This game they call in other lands the buffa cortesa (courtly puff)

There is another game of tables that they call in other lands the buffa cortesa and it is like the game that they call pareia de entrada in bringing the pieces around and in bearing them off and in all ways except that it has such an advantage that the rolls that one player cannot use that the other player should use it.

And of these [tables] there is another smaller version that is played with twice dice.

And these are the greatest and most significant games of tables that the ancient players found.

And from these can be taken from now on however many they would like according to what understanding he has who wishes to play.

[f. 79]

This game they call the buffa de baldrac (common puff)

There is another game that they call the buffa de baldrac and it is played with three dice. And the roll battle and he who wins the battle plays first. And both players are first to set up the pieces in the pair of tables on one half of the board, according to the rolls of the dice.

³³ I have translated this French-sounding name laquet or laquete in terms of Scholasticism's "quæstio".

³⁴ Ms. has "and". "la quinzena en la casa dell as & la otra quadra que esta en derecho della." (f. 78)

And afterwards each one has places his pieces in the tables as we said, they bring them around according to the rolls of the dice, the one towards the other through all the tables of the board.

And if they meet and they are found unprotected they can hit each other if the wish. And the piece that is hit is to return to the table where it was first placed.

And in this way, the players bring their pieces towards each other until they pass each other to the other table of the board across from where they were first placed.

And if they throw rolls on the dice that they cannot entirely taken, they take the largest number they can.

And this game is played with three dice and both players are to hold their pieces in their hands and according to the rolls of the dice, thus place the pieces.

[f. 79v]

This game the Romans call reencontrat (rencontre)

This is another game that the Romans call reencontrat and it is played with three dice. And they first roll battle and he who wins the battle plays first.

And the black pieces in this game are places in the table of the board to the right hand of he who is to play with them on the other side of the board.

And the whites are set also on the opposite side of the board on the right-hand side of he who is to play with them.

And the players are each to bring their pieces around through the tables of the board to where they put them in the table of the opposite side of the board across from where they were first placed. And if they meet and hit each other they are to return to the piece that is hit to the table where it was first placed.

And in this game no two pieces can occupy the same point until after they have passed the middle of the board as in the game of the emperor.³⁵

And the strength of this game is in knowing how to double up the pieces well after the piece is past the middle of the board, according to the rolls of the dice.³⁶

And this is the explanation of this game and this is the diagram of its arrangement.

[ff. 80 – 80v]

The illustration shown on f. 80 is displayed on the following page. f. 80v is blank.

³⁵ This rule is not explicit in the text for the game of emperor, which may be why it was included here later in a game with a similar rule.

³⁶ This is the second of only two strategy hints offered in the *LJ*. The first is mentioned above in a note for the comparable game of emperor.



f. 80: An unspecified table game. The man on the right appears to be making an opening battle roll.

[f. 81]

Here begins the game of great chess that was made in India after the manner of how the old kings used to make their armies of knights and pawns and stand them in ranks to show their power and so that their enemies would fear them.

Also, by showing that among their troops were strange birds and beasts so that the men would obey them more willingly and regard them as that much more noble.

Just as the common chessboard is 8x8 squares, this one is 12x12. As the other chess has 16 pieces of each colour for 32 total, this one has 24 each side for a total of 48. As the other 16 chess pieces can be moved by a 6-sided die, these 24 can use an 8-sided die.

Because in this game there is a king who is head and lord of his whole army, he leaps like the fers to any square two steps forward on its file or the diagonals on which it stands, even if the intermediate squares are occupied, or moves to any adjoining square on the file, rank or diagonal(s) on which he stands. He captures, is shielded and is safe from check unless there is another piece in between.

Next to him is a bird greater than all other birds. This bird is known by many names according to the languages of different peoples, however in India where this game was first made, it is called aanca³⁷, which means a beautiful and fearsome bird.

The wise men tell in their books that when this bird flies no other bird dares to take off. Those birds hide in their trees and caves and do not dare to leave them; they strive to hide as well as they can. It is so large that it can carry an elephant and any other large beast it finds to its nest. This bird is very beautiful. Its chest and neck shine like gold. Its sides and wings are yellow. Its feet, eyes, and beak are scarlet. Its claws are very black. On its head is a spiked crown like a diadem.

This bird raises its young in the highest peaks it can find for two reasons. First, it always wants clear, clean air and second, because it has short legs and long wings and so cannot take off from a low place. Whenever it wants to fly it makes as if to jump and then flies straight to where it wants. Thus they ordered that its move is composed of two different steps. First, like the fers it makes one step of one single square to any adjoining square on the diagonal(s) on which it stands. It can remain on that square or may also continue to any square on the file or rank of that square, maintaining its movement in the same direction away from its starting square.

Its jumping movement is such that if it begins on a black square, then it will move one step of one square of the same colour along the diagonal like the fers and then continue straight ahead as far as it likes. And if it begins on a white square, it moves in the same way. Starting on a black square, [f. 81v] then it may not enter the four white squares that surround its starting square and likewise if it begins on a white square it may not enter those four surrounding black squares.

To the right of the [white] king is a crocodile, which is a beast and a fish like a lizard. It lives in fresh water, notably in the great river called the Nile. It is so strong that with two hind feet and its tail in the water that nothing it grabs on land can escape. Whenever it wants to grab something

³⁷ See the discussion of the aanca in this section's piece commentary.

it pretends that it is looking somewhere else to lull it into a false sense of security and then it turns quickly and obliquely and goes after it until it captures it. Thusly they made that its piece play in this chess. It moves to any square on the diagonal(s) on which it stands. And if it begins on a black square, then it moves only on black squares and cannot enter a white square; likewise the one which begins on a white square cannot enter a black square.

The giraffe is a large beast like a deer. It has a long neck and a small head with very beautiful eyes. Its front legs are very long and its hooves are cloven like a deer's. It has a short tail with long black hairs. It runs marvellously. Before it begins to run it gives a sideways jump and so does its piece in this chess. It leaps to any vacant square three steps on the diagonal(s) on which it stands so that when it begins on a black square it moves to a white one.³⁸ The other giraffe on the other side moves the same.

The rhinoceros³⁹ is a very large and very strong beast with two horns – one on its forehead and one on its nose. Its nose horn is so strong that it can spear an elephant in the gut and lift it from the ground. The forehead horn is very sharp and cuts powerfully. This rhinoceros is as large as an elephant and ash coloured. It has ears like a pig and when it is angry its eyes turn as red as ruby. When it begins to run it runs far after it gives a jump like a horse and so does its piece. The rhino's move is composed of two different steps. First, like leaps like a knight. It may remain on that square if it wishes or may also continue to any square on the diagonal(s) of that square, maintaining its movement in a forward direction from that square.⁴⁰

The lion is another very strong beast that jumps a great distance to the side or forwards, more than any other beast when it wants to capture something. And so its piece leaps to any square three steps away on its file or on its rank.⁴¹

The rook is like the ranks of soldiers and it plays like the rook in the other chess.

The pawns are made like the common people and play as we described before. When a pawn is promoted in this chess it then moves like the piece in whose square it was promoted. If it is promoted in the king's square, it becomes another aanca. Pawns are set up on the fourth rank.

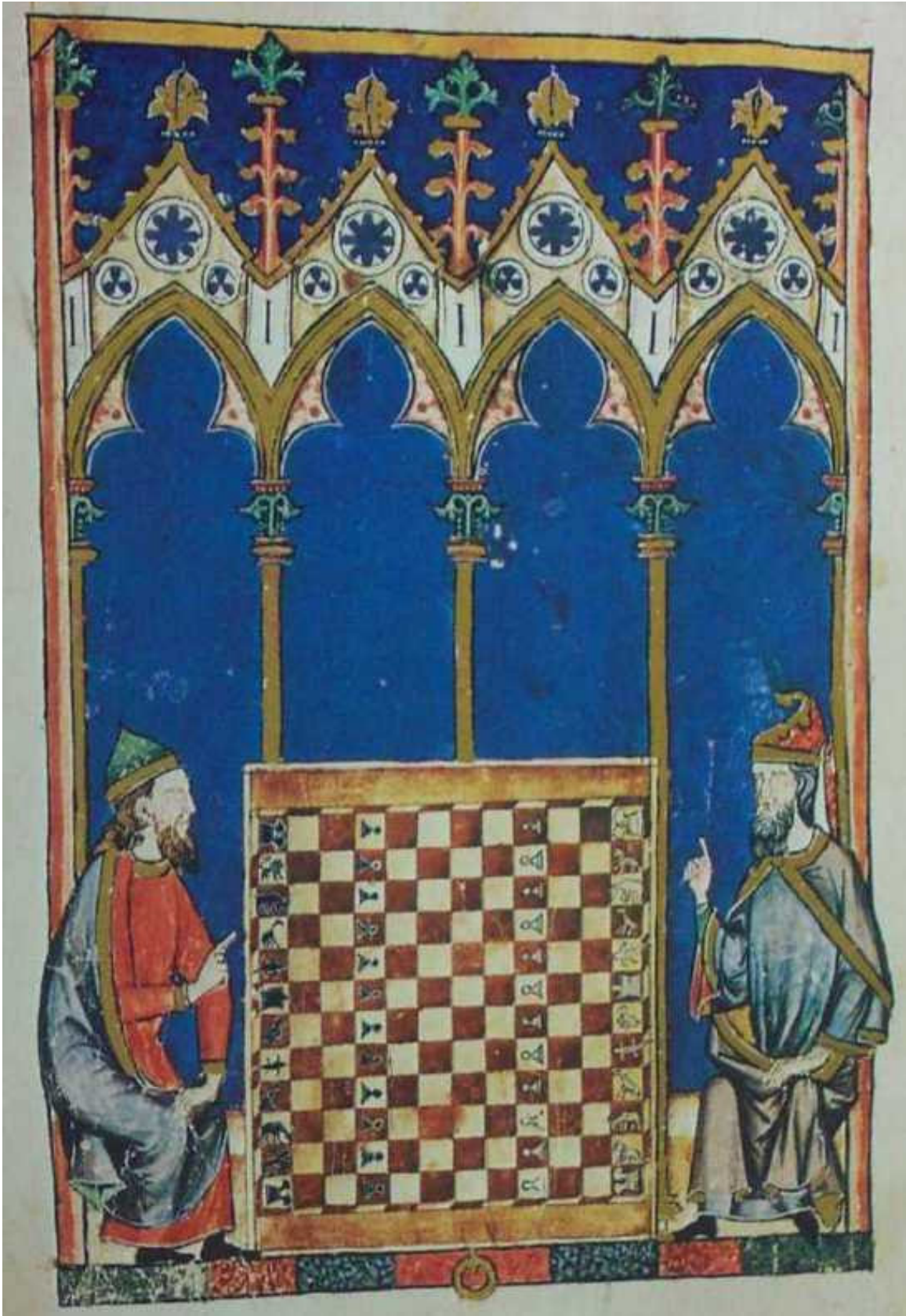
We want to show you the hierarchy [f. 82] of the pieces so that he who wishes to play with them will not sacrifice a greater piece for a lesser one. The king is the best and greatest piece as we said above. Beneath the king is the aanca, which is greater than the rhinoceros. The rhinoceros is greater than the rook. The rook is greater than the lion. The lion is greater than the crocodile. The crocodile is greater than the giraffe. The giraffe is greater than the pawn.

³⁸ The *LJ*'s description of the giraffe's move is so bizarre as to render it nearly unintelligible; no truly diagonal move can result in a change of square colour. What is meant here is an expanded knight's move of three squares in one direction and two in another. I am indebted to Jean-Louis Cazaux for his help with my translation of the moves for the giraffe, rhino and lion.

³⁹ Ms.: unicornio. See discussion of the rhinoceros in this section's piece discussion.

⁴⁰ Again, I thank Jean-Louis Cazaux for his help with my translation of the rhino's move.

⁴¹ Jean-Louis Cazaux disagrees and offers a more appealing move, discussed above, which I very much like but which I cannot reconcile with the original text.



f. 82v: A game of Great Chess, with all pieces in their starting positions

The hierarchy is shown by the dice, whose manufacture we will describe later in this book, when they are used to play. This is the figure of the board, the pieces and how they are set up on it, and the explanation of them.

[f. 82v]

The illustration on f. 82v is shown on the previous page.

[f. 83]

Here it speaks of eight-sided dice and how they are made

Because this great chess is very slow and long to play, we, King Alfonso, ordered dice to be made to speed its play and which show their hierarchy by the pips on the dice.

The dice are made in this way: they have eight triangular sides because they could not be made in another way for this game. Even though the triangle has an odd number of sides it has to fall flat side down; if it had an even number of sides it would fall on its edge. And so these dice were made with eight sides for the eight types of pieces.

On the first side there are eight pips, on the next seven, and so on down to one. And because the king is more important his is the 8, the anca the 7, the rhinoceros the 6, the rook is 5, the lion is 4, the crocodile is 3, the giraffe is 2, the pawn is one as we said above about their hierarchy.

The same games can be played with these eight-sided dice as we have given for the six[-sided]. And it is shown that as for six-sided dice that we use that 18, 17, 16, and 15 are naturals. And the reciprocals of these that are 6, 5, 4, and 3 are also naturals. And points are taken from under 15 and over 6. For eight-sided dice, natural means 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24; their reciprocals 7, 6, 5, 4, and 3 are also naturals. From under 20 and over 7, points are taken. And from here on you can play any game with these dice. And this is the explanation of these dice and this is the diagram of them that is painted here.

[f. 83v]

The illustration on f. 83v is shown on the following page.

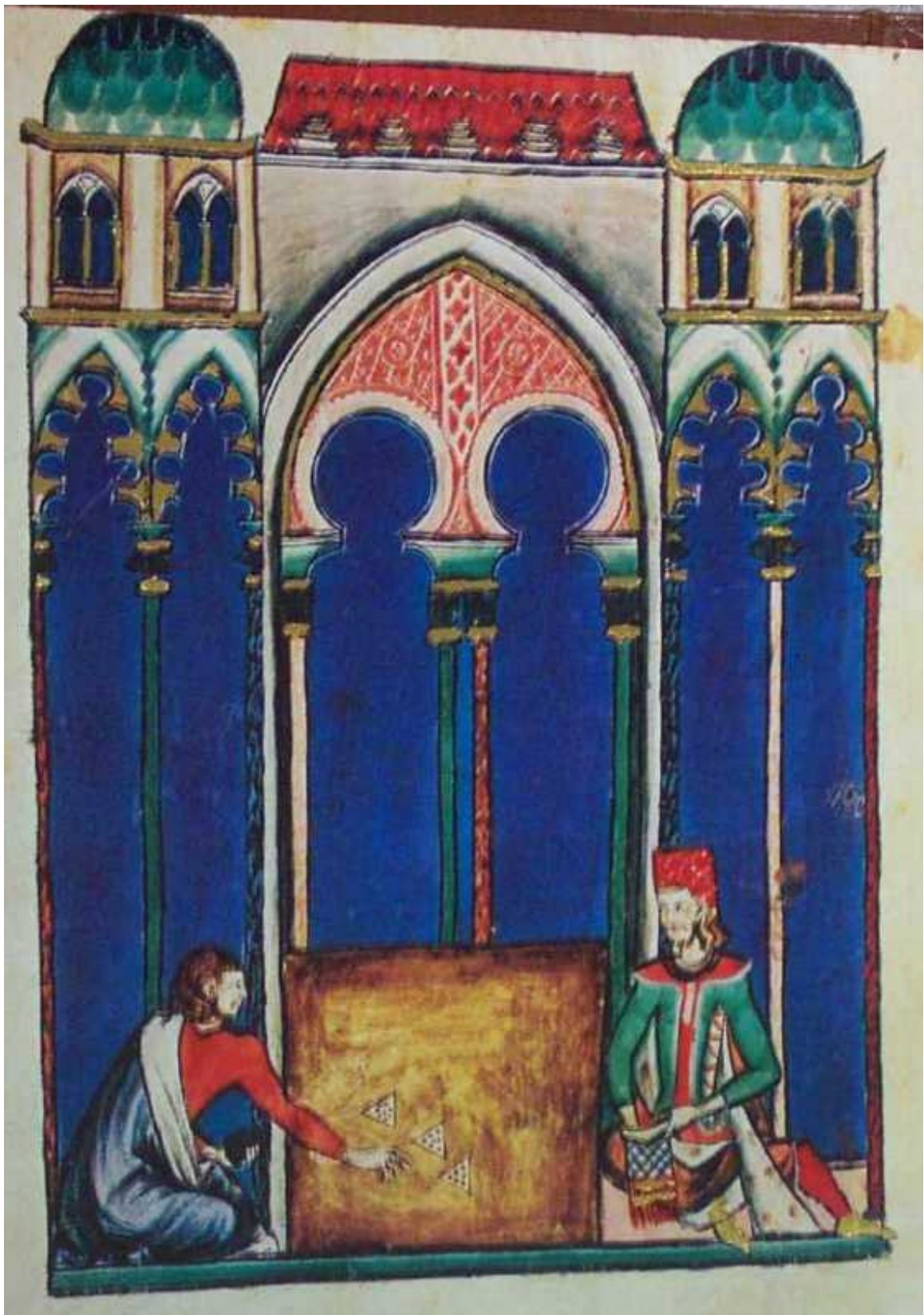
[f. 84]

Here is demonstrated how the dice for Decimal chess are made and how many pips they have. And because this chess needs dice to speed up its play, we ordered dice to be made to play it with. And also to show the hierarchy of the pieces.

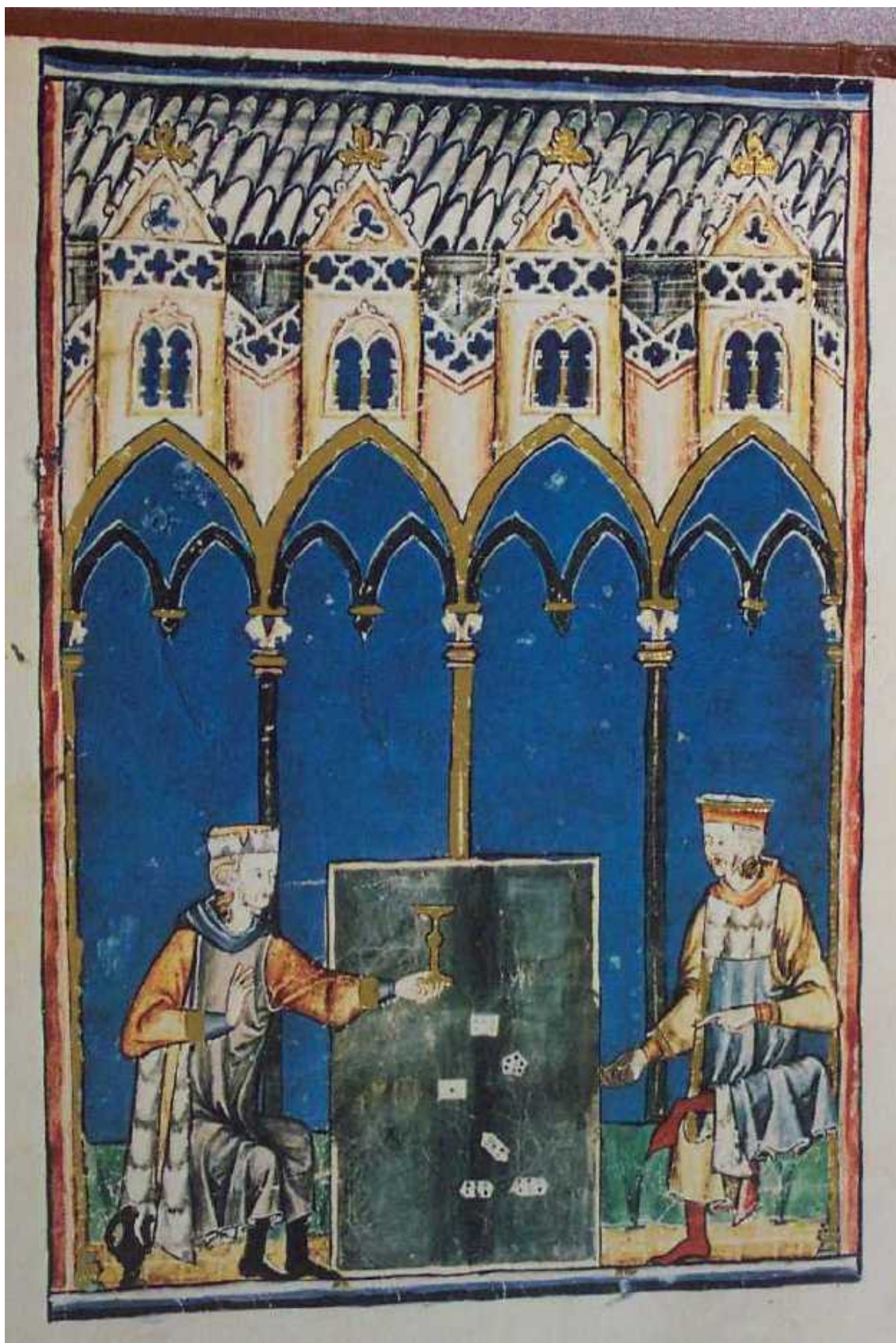
And these dice are made like this: they have seven sides and the side with the highest number of pips is seven. They could not be made in another way for this game.

Because the shape of this die is uneven it falls edge up, with two sides showing. The side closest to the shooter is his. If they fall so that it cannot be determined which face to use, they are to be thrown until it can.

As in the other larger chess the pieces are moved by an eight-sided die, in this chess the ten pieces are moved by a seven-sided die. Because it has seven on the first side, six on the second, and so on down to one.



f. 83v: Eight-sided dice



f. 84v: A game using seven-sided dice

And because the king is more important and better he is the 7, the fers 6, the rook 5, the knight 4, the judge 3, the fil 2, the pawn 1. And this is the explanation of these dice and this is their diagram.

[The next paragraph seems to have been added in later in another column.]

There are other seven-sided dice than the ones we describe above. And this is how they are: they have two flat ends, the upper end with seven and the lower with six. The sides have five faces and because the sides are odd in number they cannot help but fall edge up. And for these five sides the play is the same as we described before. And this is their diagram and how they are made.

[f. 84v]

The illustration on f. 84v is shown on the previous page.

[f. 85] Here begins the game of tables of decimal chess⁴² and how it is played with seven-sided dice. (base-seven tables)

Now that we have shown you the dice for decimal chess, how they are made, and how they are used as we were saying above to play this chess, we want to show you here and now the game of tables that use these dice.

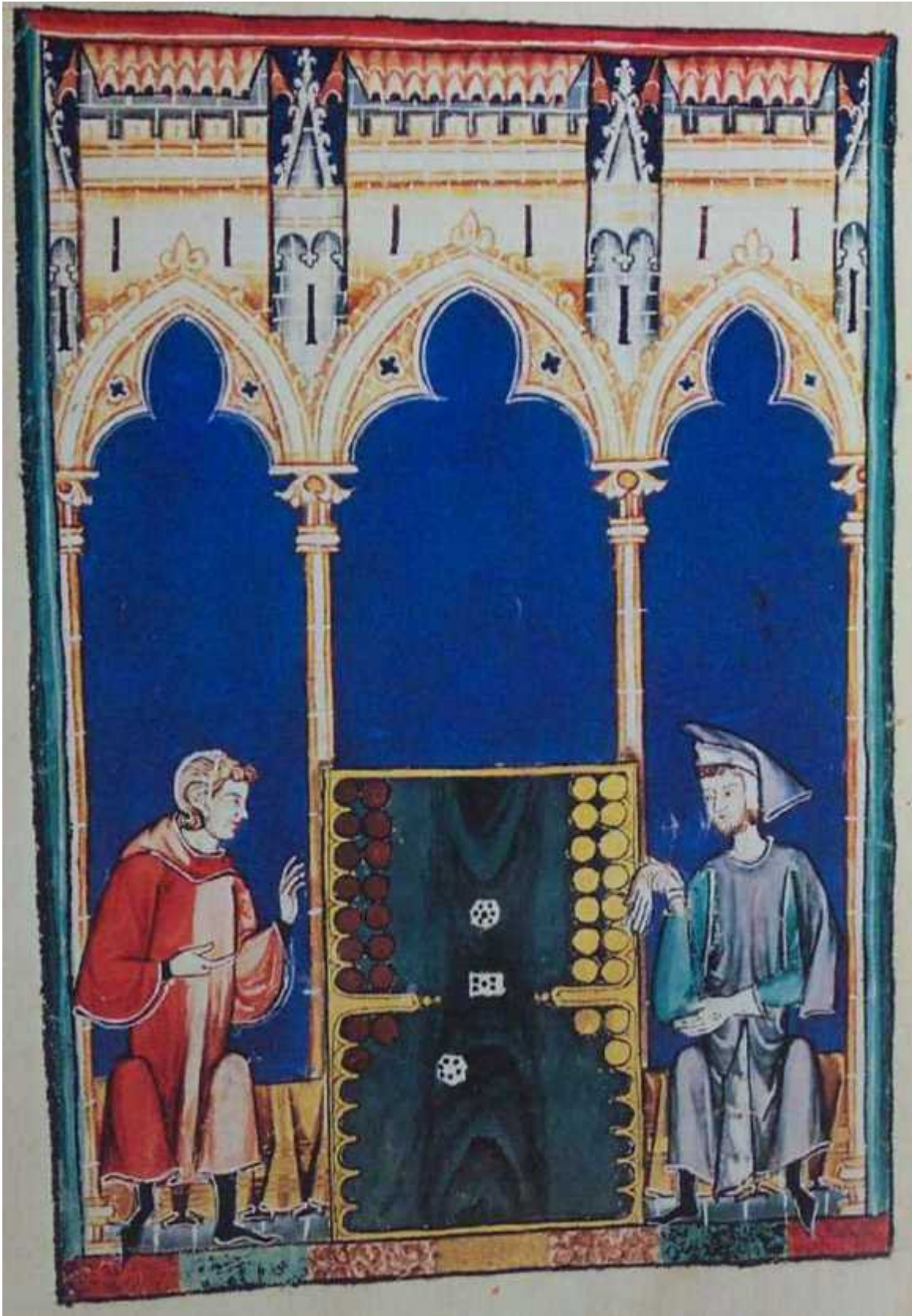
The board is to be squared with bars around it like the other boards and spaces for the pieces we have already said. In each quarter there are to be seven spaces, because that is the highest value on the dice, for a total of twenty-eight spaces.

The pieces are to be round and the spaces carved out like half-wheels to fit them better. Half of the pieces are to be one colour, the other half the other so they can be distinguished, for a total of 34. Seventeen of one colour and seventeen of another, so that if you put two pieces on each point of a quadrant, there are three left over to play or enliven the game because without them it could not be done. [$15 = 6 \times 2 + 3$... $17 = 7 \times 2 + 3$] This is why the pieces are paired because as in this game of chess which a piece is found all alone away from the other pieces without anyone to guard it and it can be taken, it is taken as we said before.

Also in this game of tables if they are not doubled up as we said, the other player who throws dice that correspond to that space is to capture it since there is no one to defend it.

And the prime is one player takes so many of the other's pieces that he then does not have spaces to enter them, he wins the game.

⁴² Decimal chess or *acedrex de las diez casas* is so named because each side has ten squares, for a total of one hundred. This chess is not described in Alfonso's book except indirectly through the seven-sided dice Alfonso ordered to be invented to speed its play. The move of the additional seventh type of piece, the Judge, is not described. It may have been part of Alfonso's original plan to include this larger-board variant of chess here in descending order after Great Chess (of 144 squares) but was eliminated in order to keep the count of total games at 144. It may have been included indirectly on purpose as a way to introduce dice of the significant number seven and the following tables board that uses seven as its base number and these dice. It may merely be missing, but the textual passages do not do not support this due to a lack of references made back to a previous section as most others do when a previous section contains related information.



f. 85v: A game of Decimal Chess using seven-point tables, seven-sided dice and seventeen pieces on each side. Alfonso is named as one of the players here.

On this board for tables can be played all the games for the other board which uses six-sided dice, as we said above, noting that on a six-sided die six is the highest roll and on the dice of great chess eight is the highest, that on these dice seven is the highest. And that with higher or lower rolls any moves can be made according to the roll of the dice.

This is the explanation of this game and the diagram of its arrangement and how the Emperor [i.e. Alfonso himself] plays on this board and therefore his figure⁴³ has been shown here.

[ff. 85v – 86v]

The illustration on f. 85v is shown on the previous page. ff. 86 – 86v are blank.

[f. 87]

Here begins another chess that was made after the four seasons of the year, which the ancient wise men divined.

There is another chess that the ancient wise men⁴⁴ made after the four seasons of the year and it was organized in this way: The first season is spring which begins in the middle of March and goes through the middle of June. The second season is summer which begins in the middle of June and goes through the middle of September. The third season is autumn which begins in the middle of September and goes through the middle of December. The fourth season is winter which begins in the middle of December and goes through the middle of March.

And these four seasons are divided like the four elements. Spring is air; summer is fire; autumn is earth; winter is water.

And because as we said above in the first season, spring, all things grow and men are refreshed and the trees and plants turn green the reason why air is its element is clearer than for any other season; therefore they made this season green. And the summer which is hotter and drier than the other seasons they made it like fire, which is of this nature. And therefore they made this season red for its element which also is. The autumn is dry and cold because its element is earth; it is more temperate than summer because it tends more toward cold than heat. The things that burn in summer, are born and refreshed in this season. And because its element is earth, its nature coldness and dryness therefore they made this season's colour black. Winter they gave the element water which is cold and wet because in that season there are great cold, ice, snow, and rains. And because its element is water they made its colour white.

And this similarity they made according to the four humours that grow in the body of man, like blood, which they gave to spring; and choler, to summer; and melancholy, to autumn; and phlegm to winter.

Of the humours which grow in each season

Of these four seasons we described above, the first is spring. And the blood grows in it more than in all the others. And in the summer, choler; in the autumn, melancholy; and in the winter, phlegm.

⁴³ This is the rare instance where the text explicates the identity of a person presented in the miniature. See Chapter II for a full discussion of this miniature.

⁴⁴ Cite Isidoro.

The seasons are divided in this manner: spring is temperate because it is between winter which is very cold and summer which is very hot. According to the ancient wise men, it tends more towards warmth than cold because it takes more from summer which is coming than winter which is passed. Summer is hot and dry because of the warmth from the previous spring and the warmth of the coming autumn. Autumn is temperate and tends more towards cold than warmth because it is between summer which is [f. 87v] very hot and winter which is very cold, taking more from the coming season than the past. Winter, which comes between autumn and spring, is very cold because it takes coldness from the previous autumn and from the coming spring. And in this way the seasons all take from one another.

And like the four seasons and the four humours they divided the pieces of this chess into four parts, each with its own colour as you heard above, which suits each season.

How the four-seasons board is made and how many colours the pieces are and how they are arranged on it

This board should be made in this way: square with eight spaces per side for a total of sixty-four. It is to have four lines in the shape of an “x” that goes from the second [inside corner] square [b2, b7, g2, or g7] and goes to the second [inside corner] square diagonally across. The other line does the same. The one that goes through white squares is to be black and the one that goes through black, white in order to divide between the types of pieces. And these lines that cut through the squares mark the direction in which the pawns are to move first – those to the right move to the right and likewise for those to the left. They capture forward and diagonally as pawns should capture.

And these pieces are thirty-two in total and are to be set up in the four corners of the board. Each arrangement is to have eight pieces that are a king, a rook, a knight, a fil, and four pawns. All pieces are to move wherever they want according to their movements in the other chess that is more common.

And this is their arrangement: the kings are placed in the corner most squares on the board. The rook is next to the king⁴⁵, the knight is on the other, and the fil in front of him. Two pawns face one side of the board and the other two face the other. In this chess there is no fers until one of the pawns is promoted.

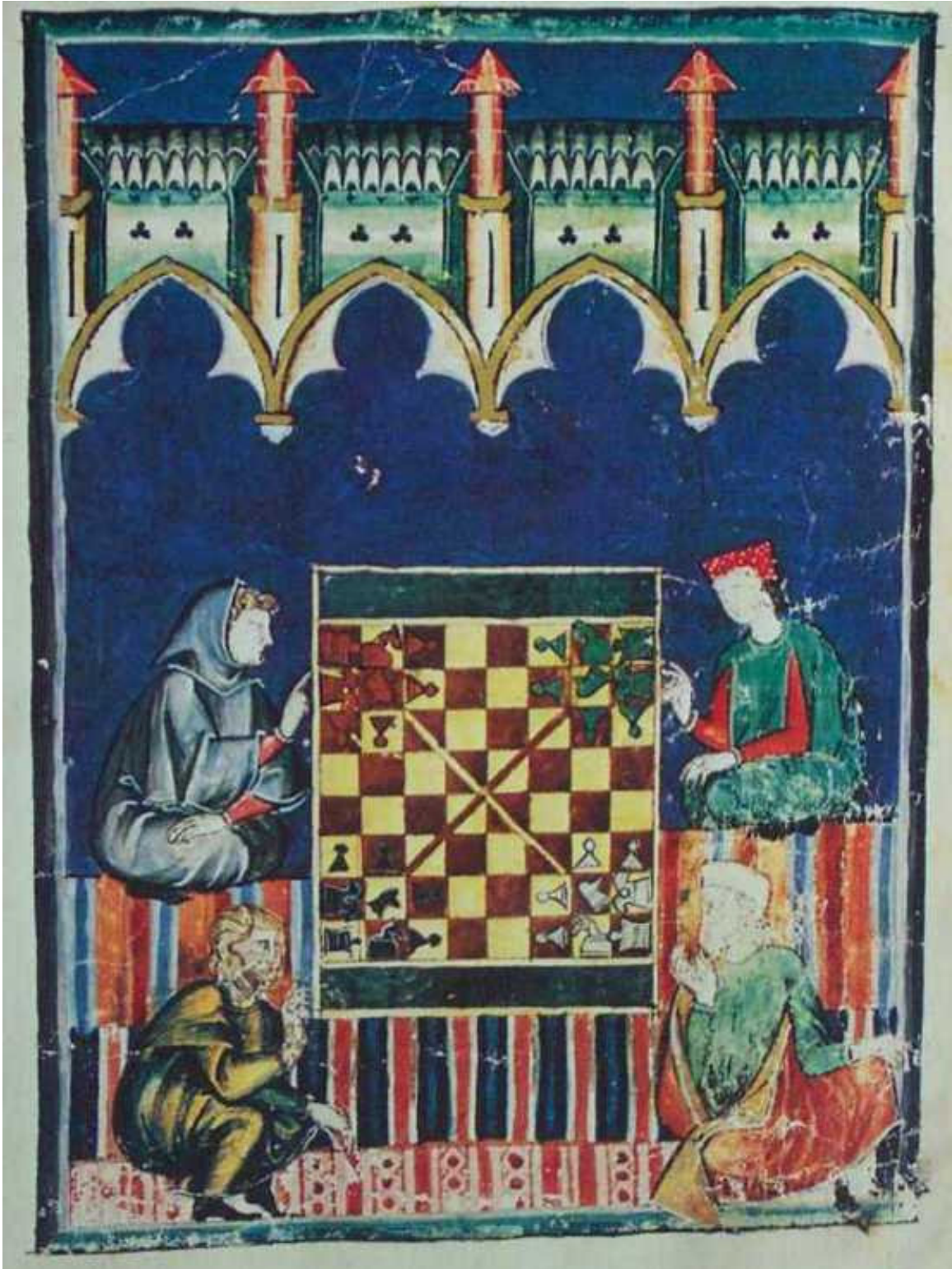
And there are four kings and four men each with his pieces of his colour are to play on it.

And the colours are these four that we have said correspond to the seasons. Spring's pieces are green; summer's are red; autumn's black, and winter's white.

On how they are to begin to play with these pieces

The player with the green pieces is to play first and he should move towards his right, towards the other player who has the red pieces. This is like spring moving towards summer. He who has the red pieces should also play towards the other player who has the white pieces at the same time defending himself from green. The one with the black pieces is to play also towards his

⁴⁵ Due to the mirrored positions of the four colours, for white and red the rook is to the right of the king; for black and green it is to the left.



f. 88v: A game of Four-Seasons Chess

right, against the player who has the white⁴⁶ guarding always from attack from the player with the red pieces. He who has the white pieces should do the same, guarding against attack from black. [f. 88] After [the first move] each player may move according to his will.

And thus in playing these four players take from one another like the seasons of the year which also take from one another.

And each of these four players should make an opening wager. Thereafter for each piece that a player loses he should pay an amount as well as for each check given to a king.

And when a player is checkmated he pays the victor an amount for as many pieces as he has on the board and then removes his pieces. Of the three players that remain thereafter, the first to be defeated leaves on the board as much as he has won and an amount for each of his pieces that remain when he is checkmated. Of the two remaining players, the one who wins takes all the money on the board plus the loser gives him an amount for each of his remaining pieces.

And this is what the board and pieces look like as well as their arrangement, painted here.

[f. 88v]

The illustration on f. 89v is shown on the previous page.

[f. 89]

This is the board of tables of the four seasons, called the world, which begins like this:

Since we have told about the board of the four seasons, as the ancient wise men ordered it, now it is fitting that we show the tables board that is played after that some manner.

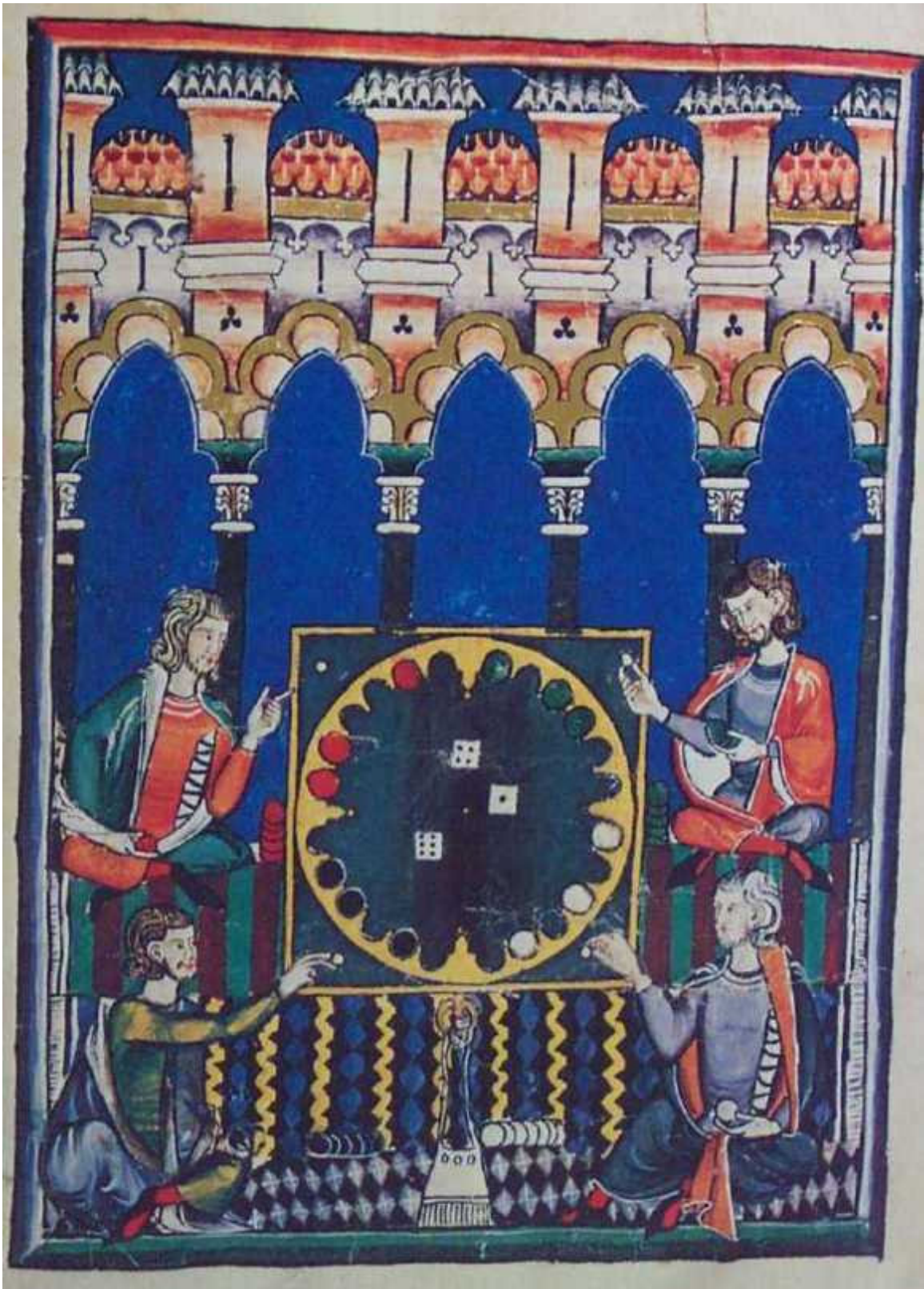
This board is squared and the points are placed in a circle. The circle is divided into four parts; each part has six spaces that are carved out in semi-circles in which the pieces fit.

And on this board four men are to play, each with his pieces of his colour according to the colours of the chess that we have named. And each one of these players is to have twelve pieces of the colours of the aforementioned chessmen which are these: green, red, white, and black – for a total of forty-eight. And they are played with the [7-sided] dice of this same chess and the players roll to see who plays first. And then the player to his right and so on around.

And the first to begin is to place his pieces according to the rolls of the dice as in doze canes and all the others do likewise.

And once they all have placed all their pieces each must bring his pieces to where the third player first entered which is across from his own, by playing around to his right according to the rolls of the dice.

⁴⁶ The ms. says black in error. Black, whose move is being described, cannot play towards himself. However, it is interesting to note that the two words used for black are different. In the first chapter, the “Libro del acedrex”, the word used for black is always *prieto* whether describing the black pieces or the black squares on the board. In this fifth chapter of four-player games the word used to refer to the black chess pieces is always *negro* while the black squares are described with *prieto*. In four-player tables the word used for black’s pieces is once again *prieto*. In the seventh and final chapter on astrological games, the word used for Saturn’s black piece is *negro* in both the chess and the tables.



f. 89v: A game of The World, using a special circular table

And when one makes a roll that he cannot use, let the player who to his right use it. And if he cannot, the third. And if he cannot, the fourth. And also in this game if a roll is made that allows the capture of an unguarded piece, it is to be captured. The one whose piece was captured must return it to where it was first placed.

And no pieces are to be borne off until each player has his pieces in the opposite quarter as is stated above.

And the player who first should bear off all his pieces will beat the player to his right and so on around.

And this is the explanation of this game. And this is the diagram of the board and of the pieces and of their colours and of the arrangement.⁴⁷

[f. 89v – 90v]

The illustration on f. 89v is shown on the previous page. ff. 90 – 90v are blank.

[f. 91]

This is twelve man's morris which is played with all its pieces.

Since we have spoken in the previous books of all the ways of playing chess, dice, and tables that those three wise men showed as examples to the king and then that intelligent men spread through play, we want now to tell about other games that men later found that are not among those discussed above. However, they have similarities like mill takes some from chess, dice, and tables. There are others that take from chess and tables but not from dice.

And we will begin first with twelve man's morris because it is larger and it is played with more pieces. And we will tell in how many ways it is played, with how many pieces, and why it has in it part of chess, tables, and dice. Chess has a part in it because it is played by intelligence and so is mill. The pieces⁴⁸ with which it is played resemble the pawns of chess. And it has some of tables because of the tie which ties the game in the same way and because of the lines on which the pieces are played. And it has part of dice in it due to luck, because as with the rolls of the dice that are luck so in mill players roll to decide who plays first.

And it is played in this manner: on the millboard there are to be twenty-five places where the pieces can be placed and there are to be twenty-four pieces. And they put twelve of one colour on one side and the other twelve on the other in a troop formation. And one place remains in the centre to allow play. And the one who plays first has a disadvantage because he is forced to play in that empty space.

And the other player moves his piece to the space the first left empty and captures the one that was first to move. That player captures the second player's piece by jumping over it from one space to another according to the straight lines on the board, and over as many pieces as he should jump in this manner he will capture them all. And the other player does likewise.

⁴⁷ The arrangement shown is a position achieved very early in the game when each player has so far only entered one roll's worth or three pieces. The roll of 6-4-1 shown has not yet been played but since green plays first it must be his turn to enter his pieces with these values.

⁴⁸ The word for pieces varies through the *LJ*. In all chess variants it is given as *trebeio* or *pieza*. For all tables it is *tabla*. For mill it is once again *trebeio* but not *pieza*.

And the one that plays first always moves first trying to capture some piece from the other side. And the other player guards himself well from attack because of and by understanding the move that he wants to make so that he guards that piece of his best. And the other does the same thing that his opponent plans to do to him and therefore he is at a disadvantage, the one who plays first.

And the one who guards his pieces worse and loses them more quickly, loses. And if both players known how to play it, they can both tie the game. And this is the mill, the pieces, and how they are placed in their spaces.



f. 91v [detail]: A game of Twelve Man's Morris

[f. 91v]

The game called corner the rabbit that is also played on the twelve man's morris board.

This is another game that is also played on the twelve man's morris board and it is called the corner the rabbit game and it is played like this: they take one piece and place it in the centre of the board and they put twelve of the other colour in a troop formation, or eleven or ten according to the wager between the two who are to play it.

And they play it like this: The single piece plays first and then the others, however many they are, go after him. And that single piece alone is safe from capture because they are not to remove but rather trap him in a space so that there is nowhere for him to go.

And he captures as many of the others as he can by jumping over them. And once he has captured one of the others [if they begin with ten], they cannot trap him. But if there were twelve,

by capturing one eleven remain, and they can carry him with them wherever thy want. They will do the same with ten if they know how to play it well. But if one of the ten is captured, the nine that remain can never trap him in any way, and therefore lose the game.

And this is the explanation of this game and this is the diagram of the board and of the pieces⁴⁹.



f. 92 [detail]: A game of Corner the Rabbit

[f. 92]

This is nine men's morris that is played with dice and it is played like this:

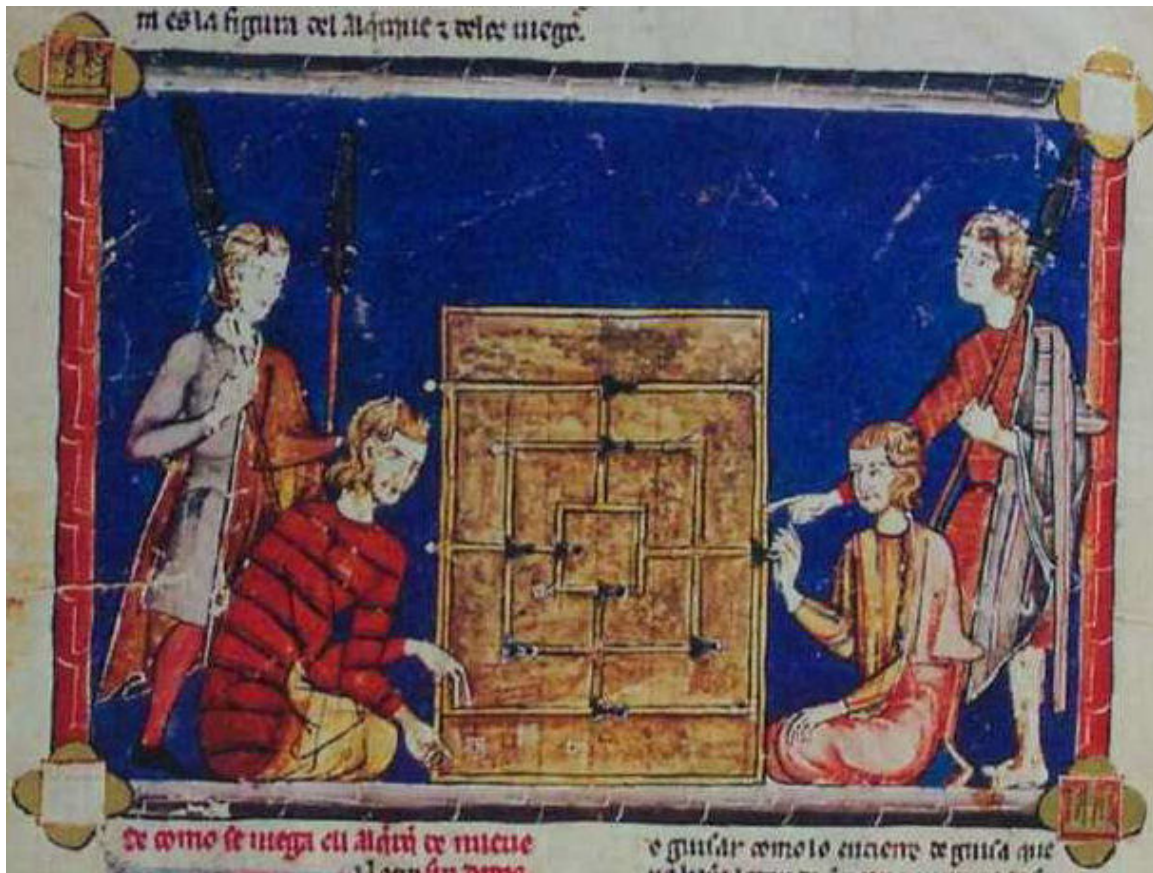
There is another mill game that is played with eighteen pieces – nine of one colour and nine of another. And it is played both with and without dice like chess. And it has part of tables in it because of the lines where the pieces are placed are similar to those because they have six and five and four and three and two and one like the millboard but there are played on the markings. And in the pieces. And in the play. On the markings they are played by the marks where the tables pieces are played which are made around the board which are called points or in those which are scalloped. The millboard is all marks inside as well as around. And the pieces are different because in tables the pieces are round and flat like wheels or square. The others are round and tall like chess pawns and these are used in mill. The placement is different for this reason.

⁴⁹ Here called *iuegos* instead of *trebeios* as before.

The first to play rolls the dice first, if they should say 6+5+4, 3+3+6, 5+2+2, or 1+1+4 because he wants to roll these rolls, he will place three pieces in a row and he will remove each time one of the pieces of the other player. And if he rolls so that he makes two mills he will remove two pieces. This mill is making a row of three as we said and as many times as one is made that many pieces are removed.

And this same thing [f. 92v] the other player does each time he can make a mill. And in this way mill is different from tables.

This is the diagram of the board and of the pieces.



f. 92v [detail]: A game of Nine Men's Morris with dice

On how nine men's morris is played without dice.

This nine men's morris is played in another way, without dice but brains.

The players take all their pieces in their hands and they roll to see who plays first. And the first to play has the advantage because in placing the pieces he always takes the first space he likes, the quicker to make a mill as we said and take one piece from his opponent each time so as to trap him so that none of his pieces have anywhere to move.

And if perchance the first player should err in placing his pieces well, he is defeated because the other player retains a piece and puts it wherever it will bother the first. And make his pieces equal in number as we said and thereby wins the game.

And this game is called nine men's morris because the pieces that it is played with are nine of each colour.

This is the diagram of the millboard, pieces, and this is its explanation.



f. 93 [detail]: A game of Nine Men's Morris without dice

[f. 93]

This is another alquerque of three (three men's morris).

There is another mill game and it is called three men's morris. It is called that because it is played with six pieces, three of one colour and three of another. In this one dice do not have a part. And this game is this:

And the first one to put his pieces in a row wins.

And since the one who plays first should place his piece in the centre of the millboard, the second player will place his wherever he likes. The first player should place his second piece in such a manner that the other player is forced to place his piece in a row with his opponents' [to block]. Since the first to play is forced to play the same on the first two turns and all his pieces are now placed.

And if in this way he placed them so that wherever the other player puts his remaining piece he loses. And if the first player does not play like that the other will be able to tie or to win.

And because of the tied game and the board markings where the pieces are placed it has part of tables and part of chess because the pieces with which it is played resemble its pawns.

And this is the figure of the board and of the pieces.



f. 93v: A game of Three Men's Morris, known to us today as Tic-Tac-Toe

[ff. 93v – 94v]

The illustration above is the only thing present on f. 93v. ff. 94 – 94v are blank.

[f. 95]

This is the board of the checkers that are played by astrology

Having shown all the three kinds of games that are explained in the books before this one, as well as in the play of chess, like that of dice and that of tables and explained all their differences and how they can be played according to the most beautiful ways men found in them, for understanding and use, it is fitting that another nature of game now be shown that is very noble, strange, beautiful, and of great understanding, for learned men and primarily for those who know the art of astrology.

And this new game is fashioned according to the seven heavens in which there are seven planets. And the eighth, in which are the twelve signs⁵⁰ and the other fixed stars. And showing for each one how it moves its movements and how they regard each other sending rays to one another,

⁵⁰ That is, of the zodiac.

some with favourable aspects, others with unfavourable. And this is according to the wise men who divided the heavens into twelve quadrants and show for each of them according to the movements of the planets which is their aspect, favourable or unfavourable.

On Sextiles

And these aspects are seven, two are called sextile, which are favourable and which are counted from that same sign to the third⁵¹, as if they were to count from Aries to Gemini which is the third ahead of it or from Aquarius which is the third behind.

On Trines

And also there are two trines, as from Aries to Leo, which is ahead, or from it (Aries) to Sagittarius, which is behind.

On Squares and on [op]position

Also there are two squares that are unfavourable as from Aries to Cancer or from it (Aries) to Capricorn. And there is opposition that is made from this same sign to the other which is opposite it as with from Aries to Libra or from Cancer to Capricorn.

On corporal conjunction

And besides that there is corporal conjunction, which is the coming together of two planets in one sign. And sometimes it is favourable and sometimes unfavourable. And this is stronger than any other favourable or unfavourable aspect. And after this which we have told is this game fashioned.

On the shape of the board and how it is to be made

This board is to be of seven sides around the outside because seven players are to play there, each one with his planet. And they are to have twelve amounts of whatever wager they might agree upon.

And it has in it eight concentric circles, after the eight heavens. The eighth circle is to be flat and the figures of the twelve signs put in it as they should be, which are: Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, Pisces. And it is divided into twelve section af-[f. 95v]-ter these twelve signs. And from out of the edge of the each sign comes a line and it cuts through the other seven circles, which the seven planets go and they are slightly scooped out and in each one them is a square piece⁵² which moves around.

And on these pieces there are places where they put the figures of the seven planets when they want to play and each one of these pieces is to be of the colour of the planet that is to be put on it.

And also there are to be four circles that are after the four elements, which are inside these eight. The first is red for the element of fire. The second is purple for the element of air. The third is white, for the element of water. The fourth is round like a ball and of brown that is for the element of earth.

⁵¹ The manner of counting here is the same used in the "Libro del acedrex" where the beginning sign is counted as the first.

⁵² Notably *tabla* and not *trebeio*, *iuego* or *pieza* as in other chess variants.

On the division of the seven circles and how many spaces there are in them

These aforementioned seven circles, the first is divided into eighty-four spaces, the second is divided into seventy-two spaces, the third is divided into sixty spaces, the fourth is divided into forty-eight spaces, the fifth is divided into thirty-six spaces, the sixth is divided into twenty-four spaces, the seventh is divided into twelve spaces. And even though the seven heavens are divided into more areas and they could not fit beautifully onto this board, we took from these divisions according to the smallest total that suits this game.

On the figure of Saturn

Saturn is first because he is the highest of all and they made him look like an old, thin man who walks bent over. He is naked except for underwear and a black cloak wrapped about his head. He is sad of face and he has his hand to his cheek like a troubled man.

On the figure of Jupiter

Jupiter, which is near him, looks like a middle-aged man. He has a happy face and is dressed in green clothes. He has an ultramarine blue hood and holds a book before him.

On the figure of Mars

Mars looks like a young man dressed in the armour of ancient Greece, all red. He holds in his right hand a sword, drawn from its scabbard, and in the other the head of a man, hanging by its hair, freshly beheaded.

On the figure of the Sun

The Sun looks like a young king with a crown of gold on his head. He wears clothes of shining gold. He holds in his left hand a round apple and in the other a bough with flowers like the Emperors when they crown them.

On the figure of Venus

Venus has the figure of a young woman. She is very beautiful with very blond, long hair hanging down her back. She has on her head a garland of roses and wears purple clothes. She holds a comb in her right hand and in the other a mirror in which she admires herself.

On the figure of Mercury

Mercury looks like a young man dressed in many-coloured clothes and he is writing in a book.

On the figure of the Moon

The Moon has the figure of a young woman, dressed in white clothes. She holds with both hands over her head the figure of the moon.

On how these seven planets should be placed on the board when they want to begin to play with them

In the first circle that is closest to the circle of the zodiac signs is to be the planet they call Saturn. In the second is to be the planet they call Jupiter. In the third is to be the planet they call Mars. In the fourth is to be the planet they call the Sun. In the fifth is to be the planet they call Venus. In the sixth is to be the planet they call Mercury. In the seventh is to be the planet they call the Moon.

And in this way they are to be placed in their spaces. And because most of them have two houses indicated in their signs, we place it in that one which is more powerful as with Saturn in Aquarius, Jupiter in Sagittarius, Mars in Scorpio, the Sun in Leo, Venus in Taurus, Mercury in Virgo, and the Moon in Cancer.

On how this game of checkers is to be played with one die and with no more

This game should be played in this manner: that each one of the players that they roll their luck with a 7-sided die with one to seven pips on it, so that each player knows with which planet he is to play.

And he who should have as his roll seven which is the highest number of pips, will have Saturn. And he who should have six, will have Jupiter. And he who should have five, will have Mars. And he who should have four will have the Sun. And he who should have three pips, will have Venus. And he who should have two, will have Mercury. And he who should have the one, will have the Moon.

And also they roll battle and he who wins the battle will play first. And he rolls the die and for as many pips as it shows he is to move his planet that many spaces. And if he does not move enough spaces to leave the sign he is in, he neither wins nor loses, but if he enters another sign he loses or wins according to the aspect he has with the other planets. And if this planet enters in the sextile of the other, he wins from it two of twelve. And if he enters in its trine, he wins three of twelve. And if he enters into its square, he loses three of twelve. And if he enters into its opposition, he loses six of twelve. And if he enters into a conjunction, he is to put up of twelve (of twelve). And in this way this game is to be played.

And this is the diagram of the board and of the seven planets as they are placed on it.

[f. 96v]

The illustration on f. 96v is shown on the following page.

[f. 97]

This is the board for tables, after the (same) nature of the checkers, which is played by astrology.

The board for these tables is to have seven sides, like the board for the checkers, both inside and out. And on the inner division it is to have seven spaces. And this should be on each one of the other divisions. And in between the one division and the other there is to be a divider that marks both sides. And from that divider there is to be a long line that goes to the middle of the board.

And each ones of the pieces of these sides, are to be of the colour of the planets. And the pieces are to be as many as the spaces. And over each side there is to be drawn the likeness of the planet to which it belongs, that side painted and coloured of that colour which suits. Saturn in black, Jupiter in green, Mars in red, the Sun in yellow, Venus in purple, Mercury in many different colours, the Moon white. And because the pieces belong to that planet, they are to be of its colour.

And the arrangement is to be in this manner: that all seven pieces be placed in the first and leftmost of the seven spaces and they are always to move to the right, according to the numbers that the seven-sided die show, as we said above. And neither is counted the space they occupy nor the space to their right which is the beginning space for the other seven pieces, unless there



f. 96v: A game of Astrological Checkers for seven players



f. 97v [detail]: A game of Astrological Tables for seven players

remains one lone piece which can be captured, leaving the space empty or occupying it according to astrology⁵³.

And play is in this way: that each one of the players has seven amounts of whatever wager they agree upon of *maravedí* or whatever coin they like. And if one captures the piece of another, he is not to return it and he should take one amount from him for it and for as many as he captures. And so on around until the whole game belongs to one of those that play it, because that one who remains is the winner.

And this is the diagram of the board and of the pieces.

[f. 97v]

The illustration on f. 97v is shown on the previous page.

This book was begun and finished in the city of Seville by order of the very noble King Alfonso, son of the very noble King Fernando and of the Queen Beatriz, lord of Castile and Leon and Toledo and Galicia and Seville and Cordova and Murcia and Jaen and Badajoz and Algarve in the 32 years that the aforementioned King reigned, in 1321⁵⁴.

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This work has been compiled by Alex Rossiter from the ms. facsimile posted by Charles Knutson at <http://games.renseekcentral.com/>, and the working translation by Sonja Musser Golladay at <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~smusser/ljtranslation.html>, © 2003. It is intended for personal research and educational purposes only.

⁵³ Ms.: *Astronomia*; HSMS: “?”. This word is now within seam repairing a tear to the folio. In the original it is discernible between the stitches; in the facsimile it cannot be read. Steiger as well as Crombach and Canettieri who follow him all give a mostly logical but incorrect reading of “suerte”.

⁵⁴ Spanish Era 1321 = 1283.