



GNOSTIC CHESS

BY DIVINE SPARK

Gnostic Chess is a four-player chess variant in which two teams strive to capture both kings of the opposing team.

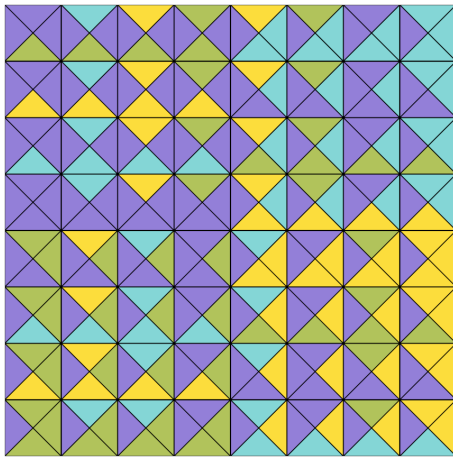
This chess variant has been called by other names...

- Enochian chess, named after the Biblical patriarch Enoch, father of Methusaleh.
- Rosicrucian chess, after the Order of the Rosy Cross, a continental mystic fraternity from which the Order of the Golden Dawn claimed descent.

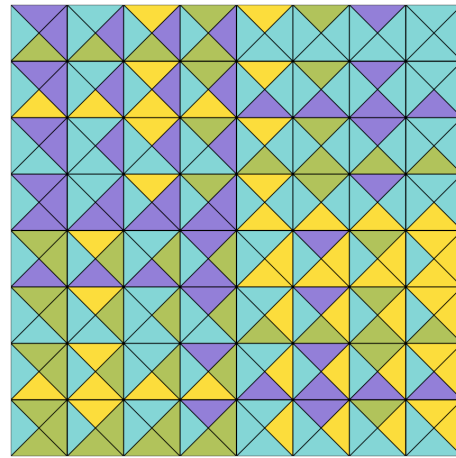
SETUP

BOARD

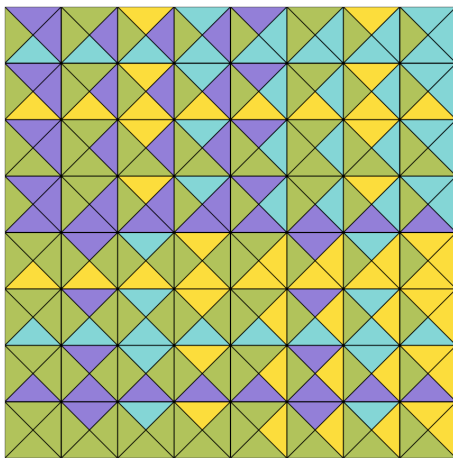
Gnostic Chess is traditionally played on one of four specially constructed boards. Each board represents one of the classical elements (air, water, earth, and fire). Each square of each board is divided into 4 triangles, which are painted one of four different colors (purple, blue, green, and yellow). These triangles are not game spaces themselves, merely components of the larger square cells used to play the game.



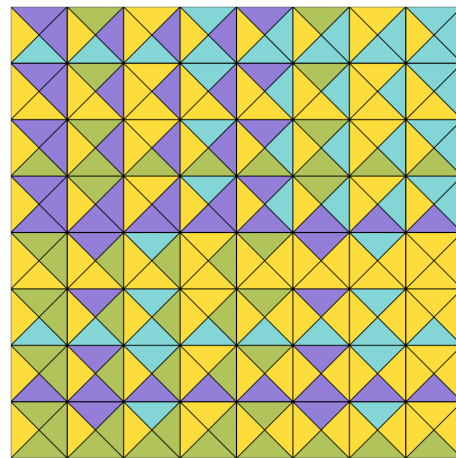
AIR BOARD



WATER BOARD



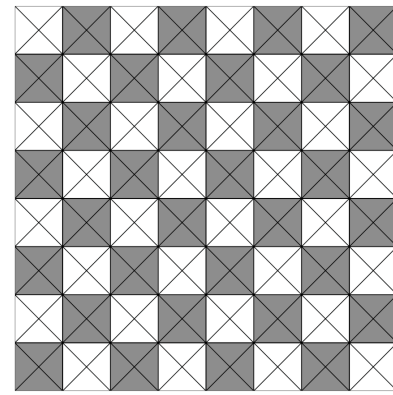
EARTH BOARD



FIRE BOARD

Although confusing to the eye, a Gnostic chessboard is functionally identical to a standard 8x8 board. However, play is facilitated by making the corner spaces of the board at least twice as large as the other squares. For simplicity, diagrams in this guide will resemble the standard chess board.

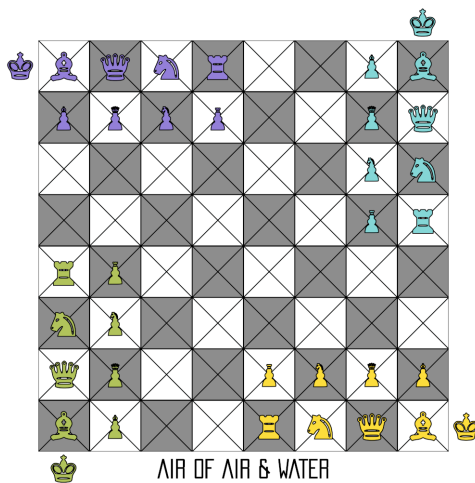
The four corner spaces are the throne squares and have special properties involving the four kings that will be explained below.



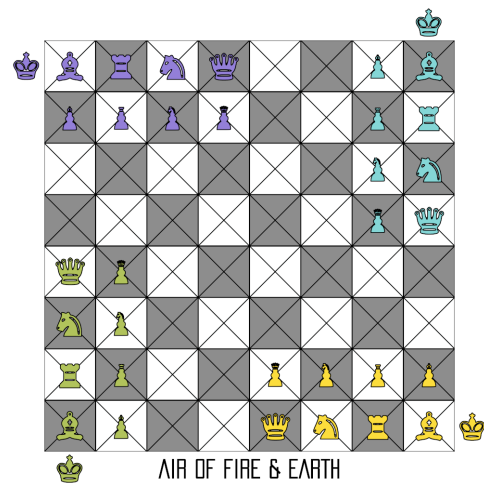
BASIC TEMPLATE

ARRAYS

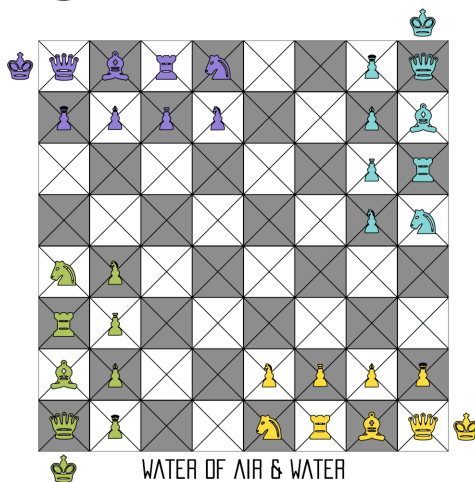
Gnostic Chess allows for eight different initial arrangements of the pieces, each designated by reference to a combination of the classical four elements. In all eight initial arrangements each throne square is occupied by two pieces, a king and another piece. This double occupancy is only allowed at the beginning of the game. Once either the king or the other piece moves off of the throne square then for the remainder of the game only one piece may sit on that particular throne square at any one time. Both pieces are captured if an enemy piece moves into a throne square while it is still occupied by the both original pieces.



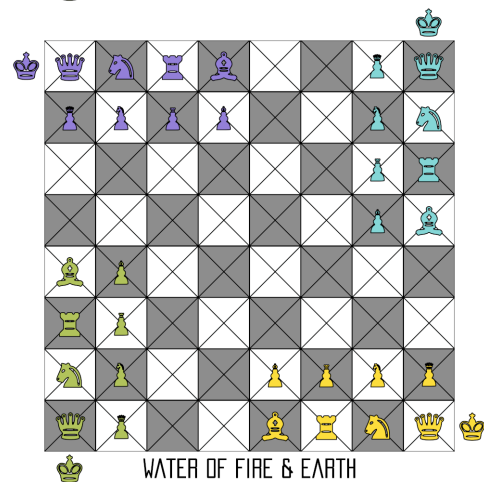
AIR OF AIR & WATER



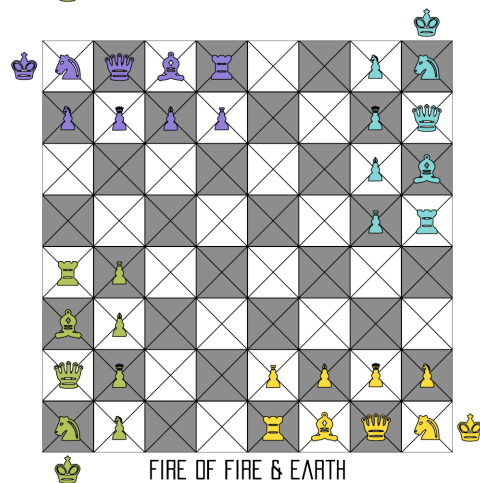
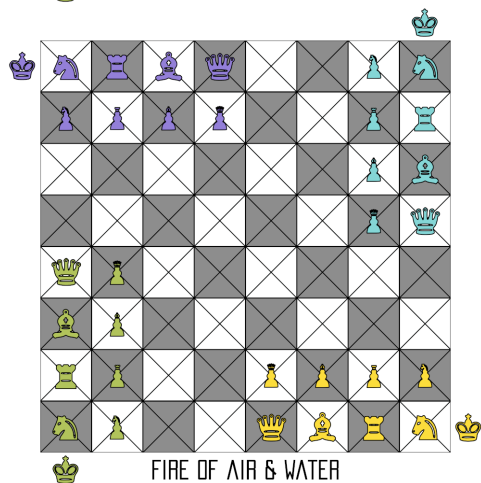
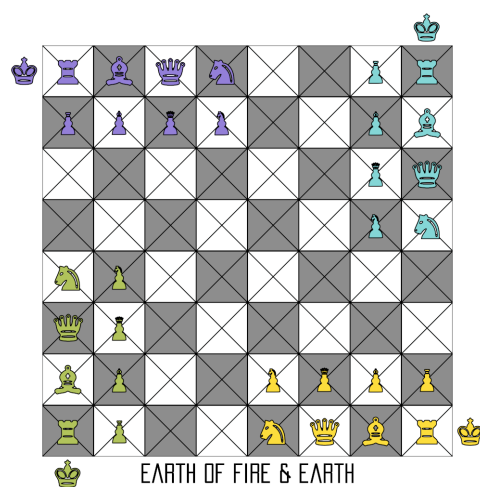
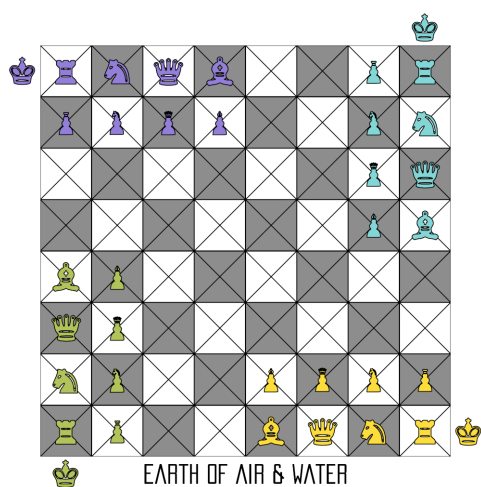
AIR OF FIRE & EARTH



WATER OF AIR & WATER



WATER OF FIRE & EARTH



BEFORE PLAY BEGINS

The first step to playing Gnostic chess is to select which of the four elemental boards will be used. This choice also determines which army moves first. On the air board purple moves first. On the fire board yellow moves first. On the water board blue moves first. On the earth board green moves first.

The players then agree upon an array to be used. If playing on the fire or earth boards then only "... of fire & earth" arrays may be selected. If playing on the air or water boards then only "... of air & water" boards may be used.

Then players throw dice. In order from highest total to lowest each player in turn selects which army they will play, thereby determining their teams in the process (always blue & green versus purple & yellow).

RULES

TEAM PLAY

Victories and losses are achieved as a team (blue & green vs. purple & yellow). If the blue army is vanquished and the green army goes on to capture the purple and yellow kings, then the team of blue and green have won the game.

Unless otherwise noted, team members are forbidden from capturing each other's pieces. Pieces belonging to armies on the same team do not threaten each other. (E.g. The blue and green kings can be adjacent without giving each other check.)

PIECES

Each of the four players begins with a king, a queen, a rook, a knight, a bishop and four special pawns.

The king moves one step in any direction as in standard chess.

The queen moves by leaping two squares in any direction, depicted in the illustration to the right.

The queen has a special form of capture only allowed against other queens (see: Concourse of Queens)

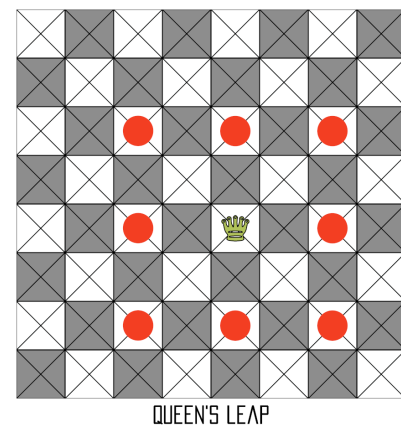
The rook moves orthogonally as in standard chess. Castling is not allowed in Gnostic chess.

The bishop moves diagonally as in standard chess, except that like the queen it has a special form of capture only allowed against other bishops (see: Concourse of Bishops).

The knight behaves exactly as it does in standard chess.

The four classes of pawn (pawn of queen, pawn of rook, pawn of bishop, and pawn of knight) behave much like standard pawns, moving one space forward or capturing one space in the forward diagonal.

Upon reaching the far rank/file, pawns can promote as in standard chess, except that promotion of pawns only occurs after a player has lost at least one pawn. Promotion must be delayed if all four of a player's pawn are uncaptured. Also, a pawn may only promote to its type. (A pawn-of-rook promotes to a rook, a pawn-of-knight promotes to a knight, etc.) Furthermore, pawns are not allowed an initial double step.



CAPTURE OF THE KING

Kings are captured rather than mated in Gnostic chess. Players still must warn their opponents that the king is threatened by declaring "check" as in standard chess. A king in check **MUST** be moved, even if that means putting the king in check again. The player with

the king in check may move another piece only if the king is blocked by friendly pieces so that it cannot be moved out of check.

When a king is captured all the pieces of that color become frozen. They remain on the board, but are unable to move, do not threaten other pieces, nor can they be captured. They simply sit on the board acting as blocking terrain.

SEIZING THE THRONE

Moving the king onto the throne square of a friendly player transfers control of the friendly army. The two armies still take separate turns, but are under the control of one player. Frozen pieces may be reactivated by this method. The player retains control of both armies even if the king that seized control is moved off of the throne square. If the usurping king is captured, control of the friendly army reverts to the original player, assuming that the army still has a king to lead it. Otherwise both armies are kingless and those players have lost the game.

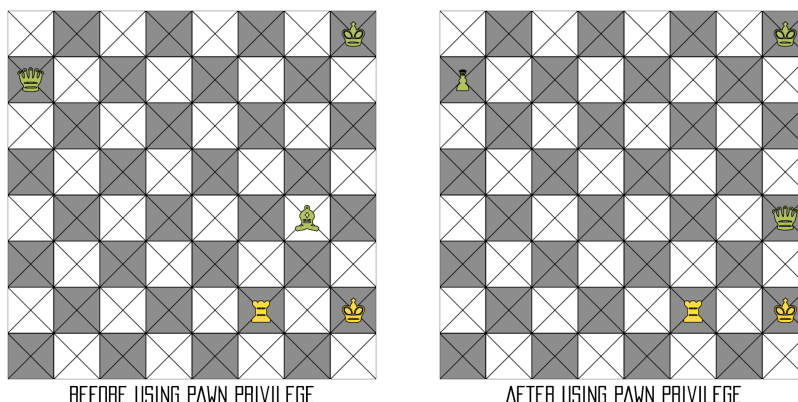
EXCHANGE OF PRISONERS

Two opposing players who have both captured enemy kings may agree to an exchange of prisoners. The exchange can only be made if both players with captured kings agree and neither have lost their own king. The kings are placed upon their own throne squares, or if a throne square is occupied, the nearest empty square. Frozen pieces revert to normal pieces when their king is brought back into play in this manner.

PRIVILEGED PAWN

If a player is reduced to a king, a queen, and a pawn; a king, a bishop, and a pawn or a king and a pawn, then the pawn is considered to be privileged.

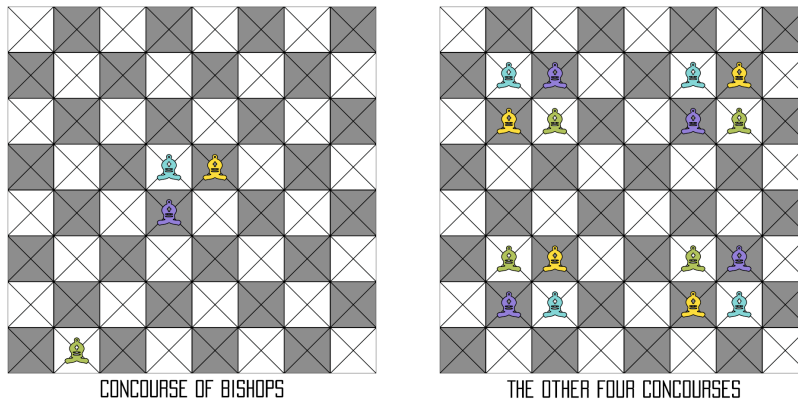
Upon reaching its normal promotion zone, a privileged pawn may be promoted to a queen, rook, bishop, or knight as the player chooses. In effect, the pawn becomes a normal standard pawn. However, if a privileged pawn is promoted to a piece still in play, the original piece is demoted to the pawn of its type.



Green has a pawn-of-bishop ready to promote and sees an opportunity to fork yellow's king and rook. Since the pawn-of-bishop is privileged, green promotes to a queen. Green already has a queen on the board, which is demoted to a pawn-of-queen.

CONCOURSE OF BISHOPS

Opposing bishops are bound on opposite colors. The special case known as the concourse of bishoping allows bishops to capture enemy bishops. By completing a 2x2 square formation involving all four bishops, the moving bishop takes all three other bishops. A concourse is a special case in which capturing a teammate's piece is legal.



In the illustration on the left, if the green bishop were to move to e4 it would complete the concourse, capturing all three of the other bishops. The concourse maneuver is legal in only five positions on the board; the other concourse locations are in the illustration on the right.

CONCOURSE OF QUEENS

Opposing queens are also bound on opposite colors. A concourse of queens occurs under the same circumstances as a concourse of bishops. Bishops and queens may not be combined in a single concourse capture; all pieces involved must be bishops or queens.

BARE KING

When two players on the same team are both reduced to bare kings the game is a draw.

WITHDRAWING

A player may withdraw from the game at any time, leaving their pieces in command of their teammate. If the withdrawing player has only a bare king, the remaining teammate is allowed to move either the bare king or their own pieces on BOTH colors' turns. If any other pieces remain in the army of the withdrawing player, then each color army may only be moved on its own turn.

STALEMATE

If a player has no move available except such that would put their unchecked king into check, that player is stalemated. Play continues, but the player is not allowed to take a turn until such time as a move by another player alleviates the stalemate condition. The game is drawn if a player is stalemated and their teammate is also currently out of the game (teammate also stalemated, teammate's king captured, teammate withdrawn or the stalemated king has seized a friendly throne).