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(54) **METHOD OF PLAYING A GAME**

(52) **U.S. Cl. 273/260**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

(21) **Appl. No.: 12/724,079**

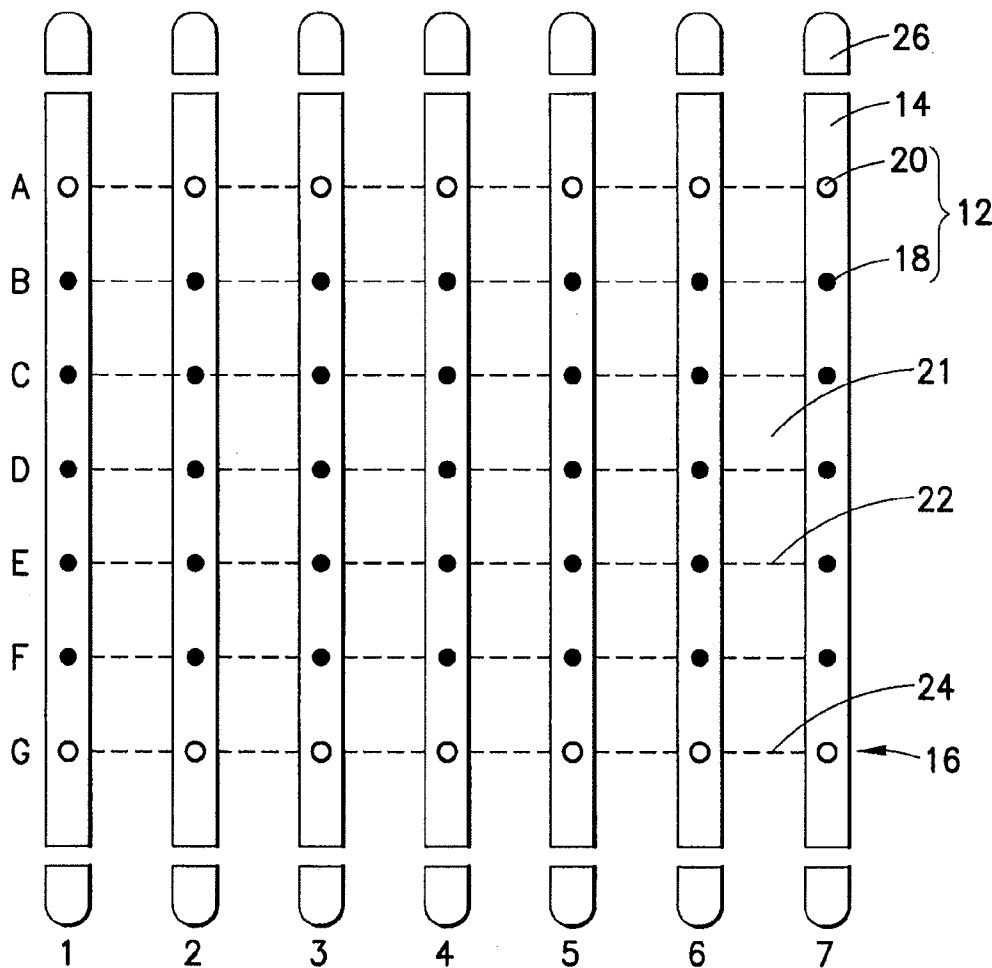
A method for playing a game of strategy and skill in which players move hunter pieces on a playing surface having an array of playing spaces, with each player designating one playing space as a treasure space. On each turn, a player may move his hunter piece or place a bridge piece on the playing surface for defining movements allowed by the hunter pieces. The players alternate turns until victory is achieved by occupying an opponents treasure space or capturing an opponent's treasure space hunter piece.

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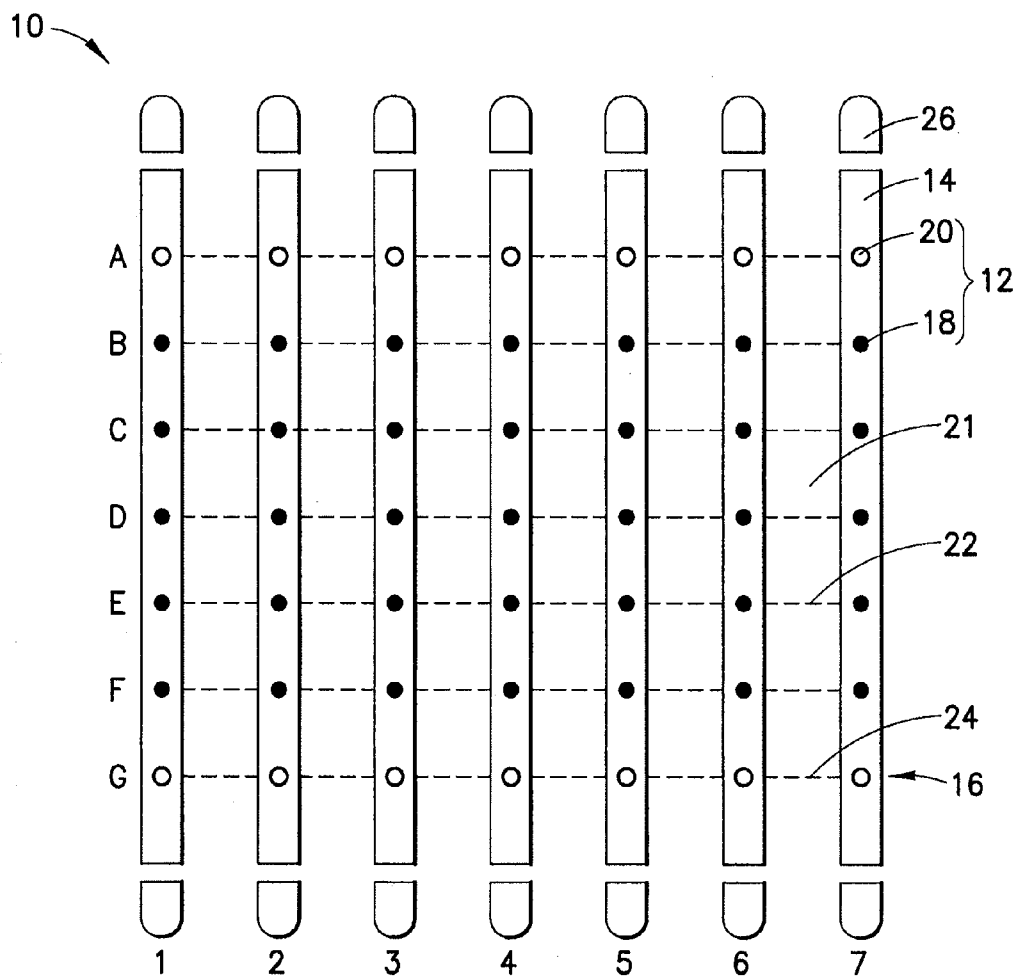


FIG. 1

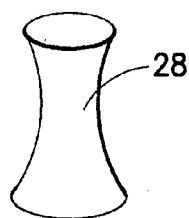


FIG. 2

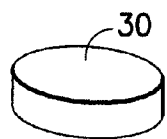


FIG. 3

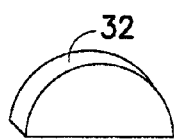


FIG. 4

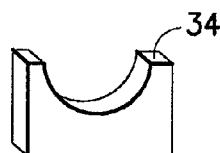


FIG. 5

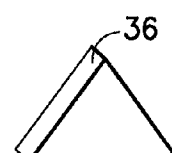


FIG. 6

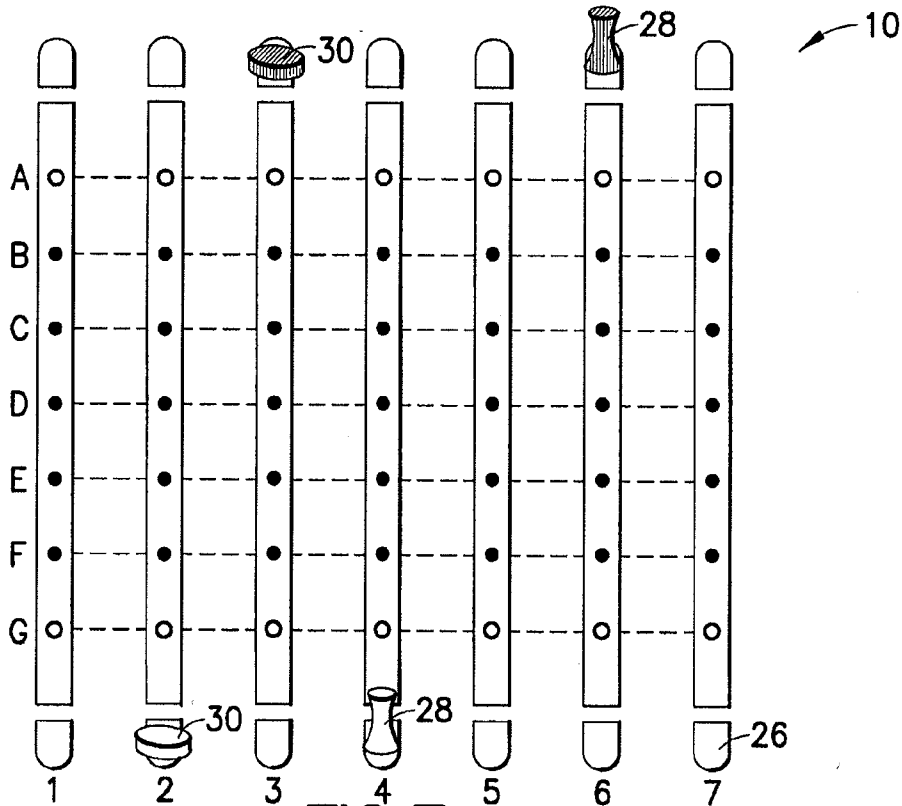


FIG. 7

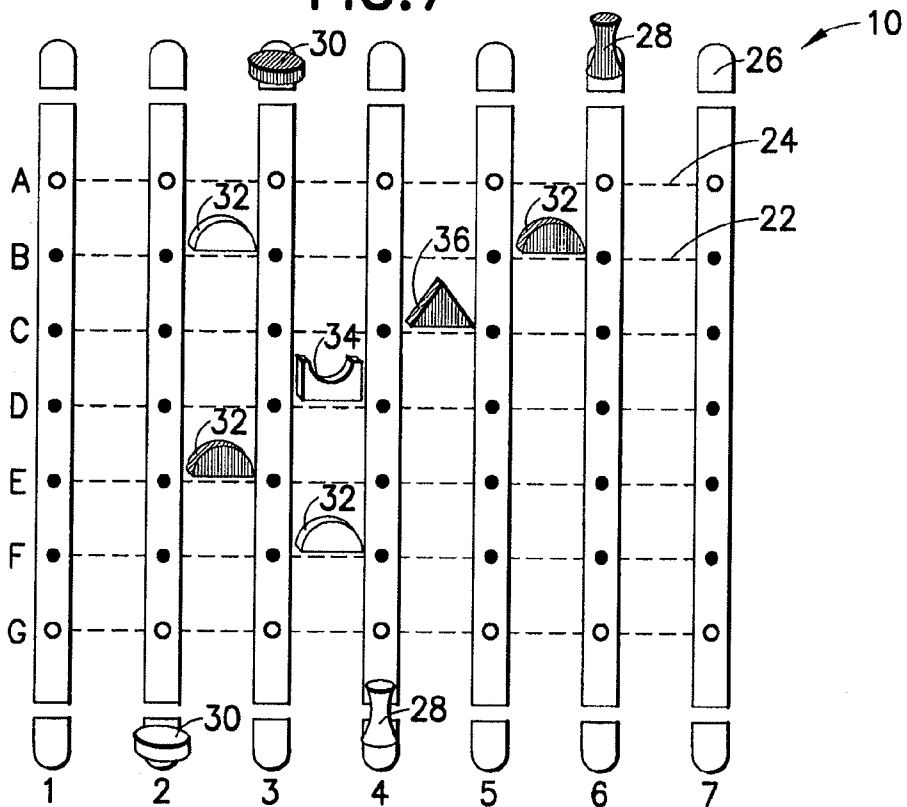
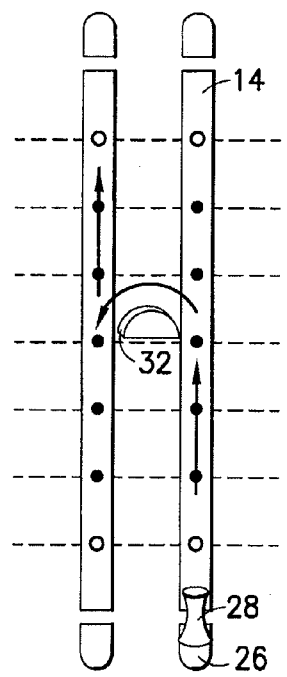
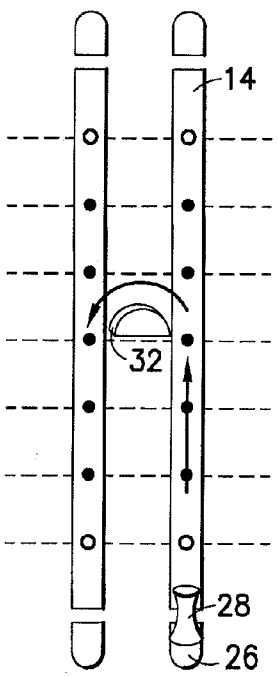
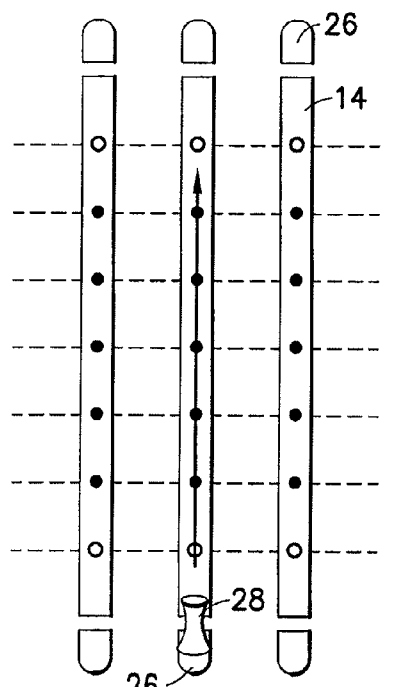
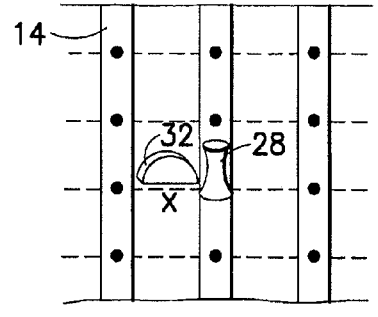
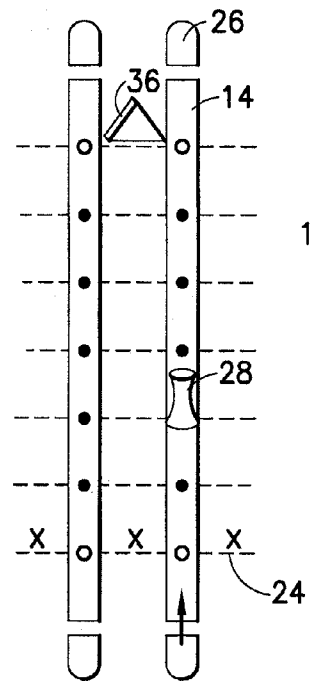
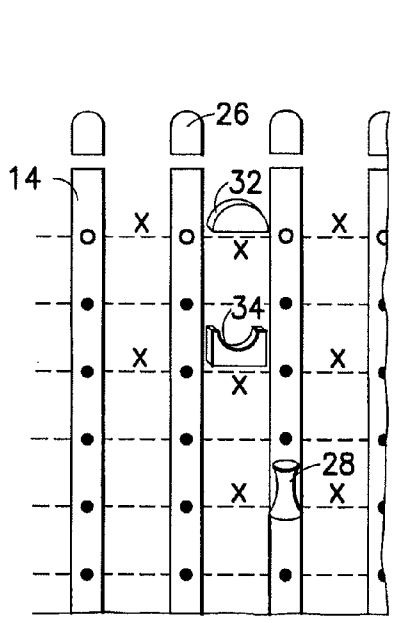


FIG. 8



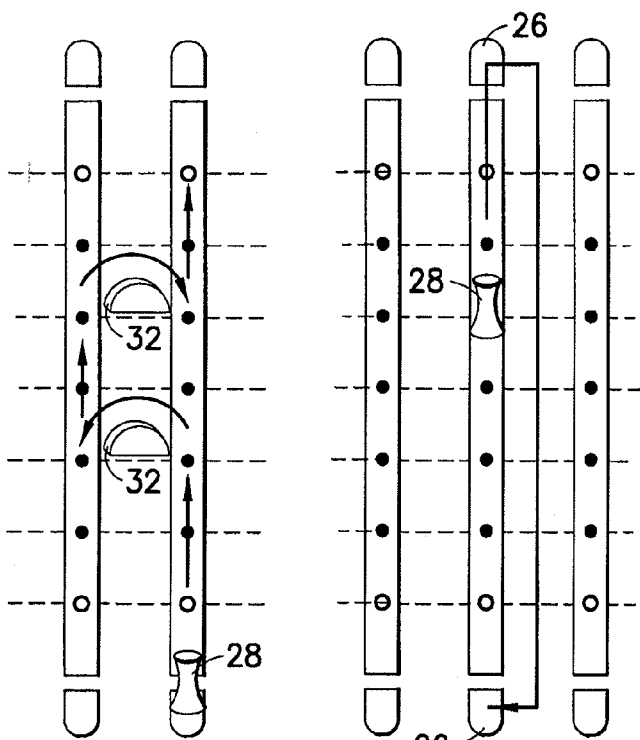


FIG. 15

FIG. 16

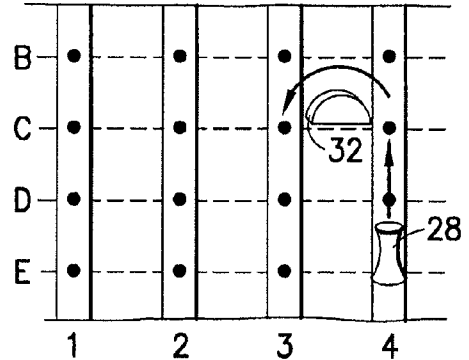


FIG. 17

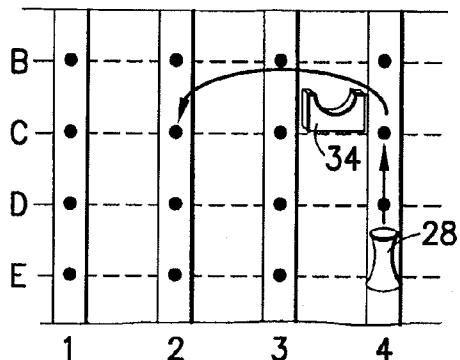


FIG. 18

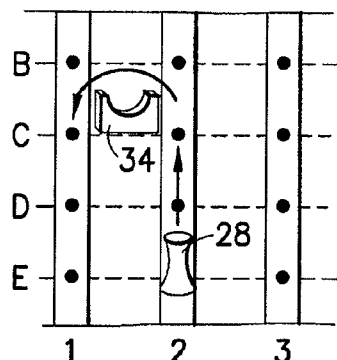


FIG. 19

METHOD OF PLAYING A GAME

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention
[0002] This invention is directed to the field of games of skill, and, more particularly, to strategy games in which chance plays only a very limited role.
[0003] 2. Description of the Related Art
[0004] Human beings love to play games. Games are diversions which have existed for millennia, dating back to the dawn of recorded time. For example, the game of senet was enjoyed by the pharaohs in predynastic Egypt, dating back to at least 3500 B.C. While many types of games exist, including games of chance (such as dice games) and combined games of chance and skill (such as card games), one very popular type of game is the strategy game, where luck has almost no part in the game.
[0005] Chess is perhaps the paradigm of a game of skill, where the only part luck plays in the game is in the decision of who plays first. Thereafter, the progress of the game is dictated solely by the skill of the players.
[0006] Even in this day of electronic games, there is a still a place for challenging games of skill and strategy. Chess is still played by millions of people, who can learn and enjoy the game at an early age, while spending a lifetime exploring its limits and subtleties.
[0007] However, the marketplace has not seen the development or introduction of many new games of skill and strategy recently, with more development being directed to electronic games or games of chance. There is therefore a need in the marketplace for new and challenging games of skill and strategy that do not depend on chance.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] It is therefore an object of the invention to provide a new game of strategy and skill that allows the player to play without relying on chance or happenstance, relying instead on an understanding of the game and its nuances.
[0009] In accordance with this and other objects of the invention, there is provided a new method for playing games of skill and strategy, in which players may move pieces about a playing surface following predetermined movement rules until one of the players meets a victory condition. Specifically, the play involves placing markers on a playing surface on which are arrayed established paths for movement of the pieces. Pieces may be moved along the paths either offensively or defensively, until a clear path is established from one player's home spaces to a specific space on the opponent's home spaces thereby allowing the first player to capture the opponent's treasure piece or hunter piece. The movement rules provide for strategic development of the paths both from an offensive standpoint and a defensive standpoint, so that a player may both attempt to gain victory and also frustrate the opponent from achieving it.
[0010] The movement rules permit different types of movement depending upon the location of different types of tokens or "bridges" which permit movement between the paths on predefined bases, with different bridges calling for different types of movement.
[0011] The rules, while simple, provide for a nearly endless variance and subtlety that may offer many years of entertaining play, at differing levels of skill and strategy as a player's understanding of the game deepens and matures.

[0012] These and other objects and features of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description considered in conjunction with the accompanying drawings. It is to be understood, however, that the detailed description and drawings are designed solely for purposes of illustration and not as a definition of the limits of the invention, for which reference should be made to the appended claims. It should be further understood that the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale and that, unless otherwise indicated, they are merely intended to conceptually illustrate the structures and procedures described herein.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0013] The present invention will be apparent from and elucidated with reference to the embodiments described hereinafter. The use of reference designators in the drawings or otherwise shall not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention, in which:
[0014] FIG. 1 is a plan view showing a playing surface in accordance with the invention;
[0015] FIG. 2 is a perspective of a player's hunter piece;
[0016] FIG. 3 is a perspective of a player's treasure piece;
[0017] FIG. 4 is a perspective of a first type of bridge piece;
[0018] FIG. 5 is a perspective of a second type of bridge piece;
[0019] FIG. 6 is a perspective of a third type of bridge piece; and
[0020] FIGS. 7-23 are schematic views of the inventive playing surface with various pieces arrayed thereon to illustrate stages of play and game action at those stages of play.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0021] The inventive method is played on a board, or playing surface, shown generally at **10** in FIG. 1. Playing surface **10** may be made of any suitable material, such as cardboard or plastic. In a preferred embodiment, playing surface **10** may be foldable for ease of storage and one of ordinary skill in the art will be able to determine a suitable material and form therefor depending upon the constraints, whether financial (costs, etc.), mechanical (size of box for packing, etc.) or otherwise, for any particular application.
[0022] In a two-player version of the inventive game, as will be described presently, playing surface **10** is generally rectangular, and includes an array of playing spaces **12** arranged in columns, or paths, **14** (extending top to bottom in FIG. 1) and rows **16** (extending side to side in FIG. 1). The intersections of columns **14** and rows **16** are referred to as "spots" **18**. The number of columns **14** and rows **16** are a matter of design choice, but in the preferred embodiment, they are equal in number, forming a generally square grid, and most preferably columns **14** and rows **16** each number seven. For reference below, columns **14** are numbered as 1-7 and rows **16** A-F. Individual spots will be identified by their specific row and column, e.g., F-3, in the following discussion.
[0023] The spots in the last row **16** at each end of playing field **10** are referred to as "territory spots" **20** and are depicted as white dots. All other spots **18** are referred to herein simply as "spots" or "playing spots", and are depicted as black dots on playing surface **10**. Each path is shown as a ribbon encompassing each spot **18** (whether territory or playing) in a single column **14**. The vertical space between adjacent columns **14** is referred to as a "canal" **21**. The portions of rows **16** which

lie between adjacent spots **18** (i.e., in canals **21**) are referred to as “bridge sites” **22**, with those bridge sites which lie between territory spots referred to as “territory bridge sites” **24**. In the preferred embodiment, all bridge sites are illustrated as dotted lines.

[0024] At the end of each path **14** lies a “territory island” **26**. Territory islands **26** are not connected by bridge sites.

[0025] Each player is allocated a predetermined number of playing pieces: a “hunter piece” **28** (FIG. 2), a “treasure piece” **30** (FIG. 3) and different types of bridge pieces. In the preferred embodiment, players are provided at least one (most preferably three) round bridge piece **32** (FIG. 4), a square bridge piece **34** (FIG. 5) and a triangle bridge piece **36** (FIG. 6). The number and distribution of the various bridge pieces **32**, **34**, **36** is a matter of design choice, selected to provide an entertaining and challenging game play, and may depend on factors, such as the skill and experience of the players (more skilled players may require fewer pieces than less skilled players) and the size and shape of playing surface **10** (where larger or more intricate arrangements may require more pieces and even more types of pieces). In the preferred embodiment, the distributions are as indicated.

[0026] It will also be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that the graphical representations and appearances of each element of the game, whether a spot, a bridge site or a bridge, is completely a matter of design choice, and forms no part of the invention.

[0027] As is usual practice in games, each player’s pieces may be of a common color, to distinguish the pieces of one player from those of another.

[0028] There are two ways to win the game (“to achieve a victory condition”): by moving one’s own hunter piece so that it lands either on an opponent’s treasure piece or an opponent’s hunter piece.

[0029] To begin the game, the players chose which side of playing surface **10** is their side, and arrange playing surface **10** between them. Each player places his or her hunter piece **28** and treasure piece **30** on one of their territory islands **26** (FIG. 7). A preferred rule of the game is that, once placed, the treasure piece may not be moved. One of the players is selected to move first, by any desired means, e.g., by agreement or by chance. The players alternate turns. During the first (preferably) three turns, the players may be required to place their bridge pieces (of any type) on unoccupied bridge sites other than territory bridge sites (FIG. 8). During this phase of the game, the hunter pieces may not be moved.

[0030] As stated, a bridge piece must be placed on an unoccupied bridge site. Additionally, a bridge piece may not be placed on a bridge site if an adjacent bridge site in the same row is occupied by a bridge piece (of either player) or if a hunter piece (of either player) is located in one of the spots adjacent to the bridge site (see, FIG. 9, where “X” denotes a space where a bridge piece may not be placed during that move).

[0031] A player is permitted to place his or her own bridge pieces on an opponent’s territory bridge site only after moving his or her own hunter piece (as will be described presently) out of his or her own territory island. Players may not place their own bridge pieces on their own territory bridge sites (FIG. 10). Once a player has placed a bridge onto an opponent’s territory bridge site, that bridge may not be subsequently moved.

[0032] After each player has placed three bridge pieces on playing surface **10**, the players’ options expand, and they may

each choose an available option, in alternating turns. Preferably, there are three options at this point: a player may move his or her own hunter piece in accordance with the movement rules (described below); the player may place any remaining bridge piece onto playing surface **10**; or the player may move one of the previously placed bridge pieces onto another unoccupied bridge site, so long as it is not that player’s own territory bridge site or adjacent to any hunter piece (FIG. 11). Once played, players may move their bridge pieces, as provided, but may not remove them from playing surface **10** entirely.

[0033] If a player chooses to move his or her own hunter piece, the hunter piece must be moved towards the opponent and directly down the path on which it starts without stopping, unless movement rules (described below) dictate that stopping is required or permitted.

[0034] The movement of a hunter piece proceeds in a straight line down a path **14** (FIG. 12) unless a spot **18** in that path **14** lies adjacent to a bridge piece or the hunter piece reaches the opponent’s territory island. If the opponent’s territory island is unoccupied by that opponent’s treasure piece, the moving player’s hunter piece is returned to the player’s own territory island, in the same column as the column in which it was last moving.

[0035] If a player’s hunter piece is moved along a column **14**, and encounters a bridge piece, the moving player has two options: either stop in the spot to which it is moved by the movement rules for the particular type of bridge piece (FIG. 13), or continue movement along the new path to which it has been directed by the intervening bridge piece (FIG. 14), following the same rules if a further bridge piece is encountered (FIG. 15). If movement of the hunter pieces causes it to land on either an opponent’s treasure piece or the opponent’s hunter piece, that is a victory condition and the game is over. If the movement causes the hunter piece to reach the opponent’s territory island without encountering either the opponent’s treasure piece or the opponent’s hunter piece, then the moving player’s hunter piece is returned to the moving player’s own territory island in the same column in which it was last moving, and the moving player’s turn is over (FIG. 16).

[0036] Each type of bridge piece has its own movement rule, and the rules may be selected in any manner to provide entertaining and challenging play. In the preferred embodiment, the rules are as follows:

[0037] The first type of bridge is the round bridge piece **32**. If a hunter piece **28** moves into a spot adjacent to a round bridge piece **32** (e.g., spot C-4 in FIG. 17), hunter piece **28** moves over round bridge piece **32** to the adjacent column (spot C-3 in FIG. 17).

[0038] The second type of bridge piece is the square bridge piece **34**. If a hunter piece **28** encounters a square bridge piece **34** (e.g., spot C-4 in FIG. 18), hunter piece **28** must move two columns in the direction of the square bridge piece **34** (spot C-2 in FIG. 18), unless square bridge piece **34** is only one column away from the boundary of playing surface **10** (FIG. 19), in which case hunter piece **28** only moves one column over and so the square bridge piece **34** operates as a round bridge piece **32**. A hunter piece **28** arriving at spot C-1 in FIG. 19, however, would move two columns over to the left in FIG. 19, i.e. to spot C-3 (not illustrated for clarity).

[0039] The third type of bridge piece is the triangle bridge piece **36**. If a hunter piece **28** encounters a triangle bridge piece **36**, the moving player’s hunter piece **28** takes three steps. First, hunter pieces **28** crosses over the triangle bridge

36 in the direction dictated by the placement of the triangle bridge **36** (FIG. 20). Then, hunter piece **28** proceeds two spaces further along the path to which it has been re-directed by triangle bridge piece **36**, regardless of whether that movement causes hunter piece **28** to pass by other bridge pieces. Once hunter piece **28** reaches that spot, the moving player has the option, regardless of the presence of any bridge piece, to move hunter piece **28** one column in either direction (FIG. 20). If the movement causes hunter piece **28** to reach the end of playing surface **10**, then the moving player has no option, and must move hunter piece **28** back to the path from which it originated (FIG. 21). Under either scenario, the hunter piece stops after the third movement.

[0040] If a player places a triangle bridge **36** on an opponent's territory bridge site, it acts as a round bridge **32** and hunter piece **28** moves accordingly (FIG. 22).

[0041] If a player places a triangle bridge **36** on a bridge site in a row that is adjacent to an opponent's territory spots **20** (e.g., Row A in FIG. 23), then the moving player may treat the opponent's territory island as a playing spot, and move the hunter piece onto either adjacent territory island once the end of the path is reached.

[0042] Play continues in this fashion, with alternating turns, until a victory condition is achieved.

[0043] There are many possible variations on the game, where different size playing surfaces may be used, and non-square grids may be used. For example, a variant of the game could involve three players, and a non-rectangular array of playing spaces, so that each player may have the opportunity to attack two opponents while having to defend against two attackers, or the playing surface could be made three dimensional, as in the case of so-called "3-D" chess. The players could also re-define the movements dictated by the various pieces, so that different types of game play could be enjoyed, including, perhaps, having a single bridge span more than one bridge site. The game could even be programmed into an electronic device, so that solitaire play could be enjoyed when no human opponent is available, or an opponent could be played remotely. All such variations are contemplated herein, and one of ordinary skill in the art could easily develop such variations without undue experimentation.

[0044] Thus, while there have shown and described and pointed out fundamental novel features of the invention as applied to a preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood that various omissions and substitutions and changes in the form and details of the devices illustrated, and in their operation, may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention. For example, it is expressly intended that all combinations of those elements and/or method steps which perform substantially the same function in substantially the same way to achieve substantially the same results are within the scope of the invention. Moreover, it should be recognized that structures and/or elements and/or method steps shown and/or described in connection with any disclosed form or embodiment of the invention may be incorporated in any other disclosed or described or suggested form or embodiment as a general matter of design choice. It is the intention, therefore, to be limited only as indicated by the scope of the claims appended hereto.

1. A method of playing a game having first and second players, the method comprising:

- a) establishing a playing surface having columns and rows, said rows being transverse to said columns, said playing surface defining:

- spots at intersections of said rows and columns, and bridge sites between spots in adjacent columns;
 - b) placing a first player hunter piece on a first spot on said playing surface;
 - c) placing a second player hunter piece on a second spot on said playing surface;
 - d) placing a first player treasure piece on a third spot on said playing surface;
 - e) placing a second player treasure piece on a fourth spot on said playing surface;
 - f) the first player placing a first player bridge on a bridge site selected from among unoccupied ones of said bridge sites;
 - g) the second player placing a second player bridge on a bridge site selected from among unoccupied ones of said bridge sites;
 - h) alternately repeating steps f) and g) a predetermined number of times;
 - i) after step h), the first player performing as a further action one of:
 - placing a further first player bridge on an unoccupied bridge site, and moving said first player hunter piece;
 - j) after step h), the second player performing as a further action one of:
 - placing a further second player bridge on an unoccupied bridge site, and moving said second player hunter piece;
 - k) alternately performing steps i) and j), until a predetermined victory condition is achieved;
- wherein hunter pieces may be moved along a column of spots until encountering a bridge;
- wherein movement of a player's hunter piece to a spot adjacent to a bridge diverts said hunter piece to another column in accordance with predetermined movement rules; and
- wherein movement of a player's hunter piece to a predetermined spot without achieving a victory condition causes that player's hunter piece to move to another predetermined spot.

2. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein a player may take, as a further action in one of steps i) and j), moving a previously placed bridge to an unoccupied bridge site

3. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein said playing surface further defines

- a first plurality of territory islands at a first end of said columns for the first player, and
- a second plurality of territory islands at a second end of said columns for the second player; and

wherein said third spot is one of said first plurality of territory islands, and said fourth spot is one of said second plurality of territory islands.

4. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein said playing surface further defines

- a first plurality of territory islands at a first end of said columns for the first player, and
- a second plurality of territory islands at a second end of said columns for the second player; and

wherein said predetermined spot is one of an opponent's territory islands;

- 5. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein said playing surface further defines
 - a first plurality of territory islands at a first end of said columns for the first player, and
 - a second plurality of territory islands at a second end of said columns for the second player; and
 wherein said another predetermined spot is one of said territory islands of the player whose hunter piece failed to achieve a victory condition.
- 6. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein in step h) said predetermined number is three.
- 7. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein movement of a player's hunter piece to said another column permits that player to choose between stopping at the spot to which said player's hunter piece had been diverted or proceeding along said another column.
- 8. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein a bridge may not be placed on a bridge site that is adjacent to, and in the same row as, an occupied bridge site.
- 9. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein a bridge may not be placed on a bridge site that is adjacent to, and in the same row as, a spot occupied by any hunter piece.
- 10. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein said bridges are selected from first and second types of bridges; and wherein each type of bridge defines a different movement rule.
- 11. The method of playing a game of claim 10, wherein said type of bridge is represented by the shape of said bridge.
- 12. The method of playing a game of claim 10, wherein the number of said first type of bridges is different than the number of said second type of bridges.
- 13. The method of playing a game of claim 10, wherein a first of said movement rules is that movement caused by said bridge is movement over said bridge to the spot in the adjacent column.
- 14. The method of playing a game of claim 13, wherein movement caused by said first type of bridge follows said first movement rule; and wherein a second of said movement rules is that the movement of said hunter piece caused by said second type of bridge is movement over said second type of bridge to the spot lying in the same row that is two columns over from the spot reached by said hunter piece before applying said second movement rule, provided that if said second type of bridge does not lie at least two columns from the boundary of said playing surface then said hunter piece is moved to the spot that lies in the same row

- and is one column over from the spot reached by said hunter piece before applying said second movement rule.
- 15. The method of playing a game of claim 14, wherein there is a third type of bridge; and wherein a third of said movement rules is that the movement of said hunter piece caused by said third type of bridge is to move
 - (i) over said third type of bridge to an adjacent column, then
 - (ii) two spots in that column irrespective of the presence of any other bridge, and then
 - (iii) to a spot in the same row in an adjacent column irrespective of the presence of any other bridge.
- 16. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein a first of said movement rules is that the movement of said hunter piece caused by said second type of bridge is movement over said second type of bridge to the spot lying in the same row that is two columns over from the spot reached by said hunter piece before applying said second movement rule, provided that if said second type of bridge does not lie at least two columns from the boundary of said playing surface then said hunter piece is moved to the spot that lies in the same row and is one column over from the spot reached by said hunter piece before applying said second movement rule.
- 17. The method of playing a game of claim 16, wherein there is a second type of bridge; and wherein a second of said movement rules is that the movement of said hunter piece caused by said second type of bridge is to move
 - (i) over said second type of bridge to an adjacent column, then
 - (ii) two spots in that column irrespective of the presence of any other bridge, and then
 - (iii) to a spot in the same row in an adjacent column irrespective of the presence of any other bridge.
- 18. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein said victory conditions include having a hunter piece land on either an opponent's hunter piece or an opponent's treasure piece.
- 19. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein said first spot is one of said first plurality of territory islands and said second spot is one of said second plurality of territory islands.
- 20. The method of playing a game of claim 1, wherein the first player, in performing step i), may not move one of the second player's bridges, and the second player, in performing step j), may not move one of the first player's bridges.

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