

NINE MEN'S MORRIS · VARIANT 7 OF 7

Shax

Three concentric squares (24 intersections)

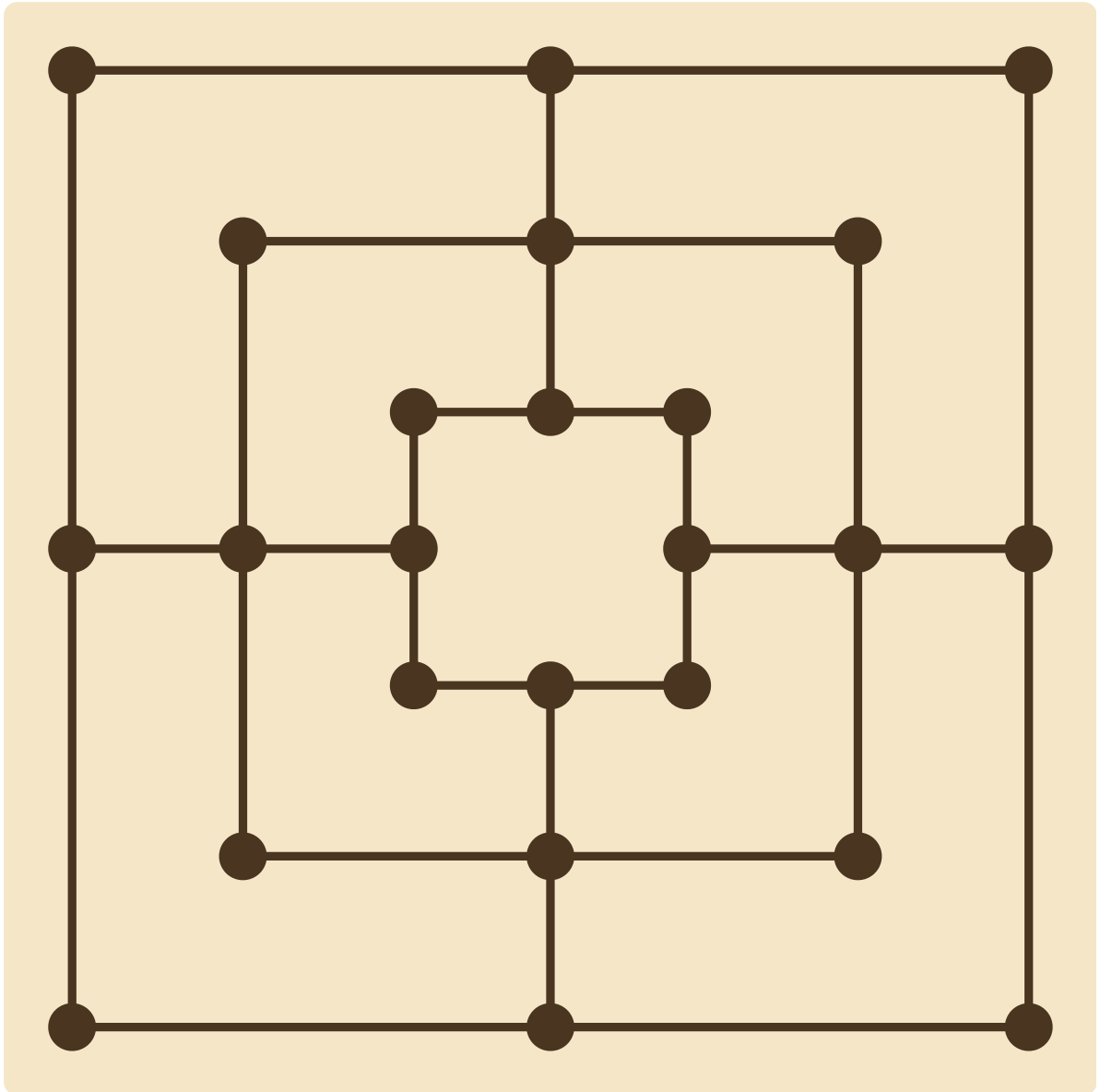
BOARD

2

PLAYERS

SHAX

The traditional board game of Somalia, played widely across the country and among the Somali diaspora. Shax uses the same three concentric square board as Nine Men's Morris but fundamentally changes the capture rule during the placement phase. In Shax, forming a mill during placement does not immediately remove an opponent piece — placement is completed peacefully by both players before any captures occur. Captures happen only during the subsequent movement phase.



Shax — board layout

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=morris&variant=shax>

ITEM	QTY	NOTES
Board	1	Three concentric squares joined at midpoints; 24 intersections
Pieces	24	12 per player in contrasting colours

PHASE 1 — PLACEMENT (DHIG)

Players alternate placing one piece per turn onto any empty intersection until each has placed all 12 pieces.

Key rule: Forming a mill during the placement phase does not trigger a removal. No pieces are captured during Phase 1. Players place all pieces before any combat begins.

If the board is full after placement: If all 24 positions are occupied and no moves are possible, the player who placed last loses one piece — the piece they placed on the last turn is removed.

PHASE 2 — MOVEMENT (DHAQAAJIN) AND CAPTURE

Players alternate moving one piece to an adjacent empty intersection.

Mill formation: Completing a mill during movement lets you remove any one opponent piece, including one in a mill (unlike standard Nine Men's Morris, mill protection does not apply in Shax).

Reopening mills: Breaking a mill and reforming it on subsequent turns triggers a new capture each time.

FLYING

When reduced to 3 pieces, a player may move to any empty intersection.

WINNING

A player wins when the opponent is reduced to 2 pieces or has no legal move.

STRATEGIC NOTE

Because no captures occur during placement, both players can plan their opening positions without the immediate tactical pressure of Nine Men's Morris. The movement phase, when captures begin, is correspondingly more intense — both players arrive with full strength and begin exchanging immediately.

ATTRIBUTION

Shax. Traditional game, Somalia. Public domain. Source: Wikipedia (CC-BY-SA); academic literature on East African board games.