

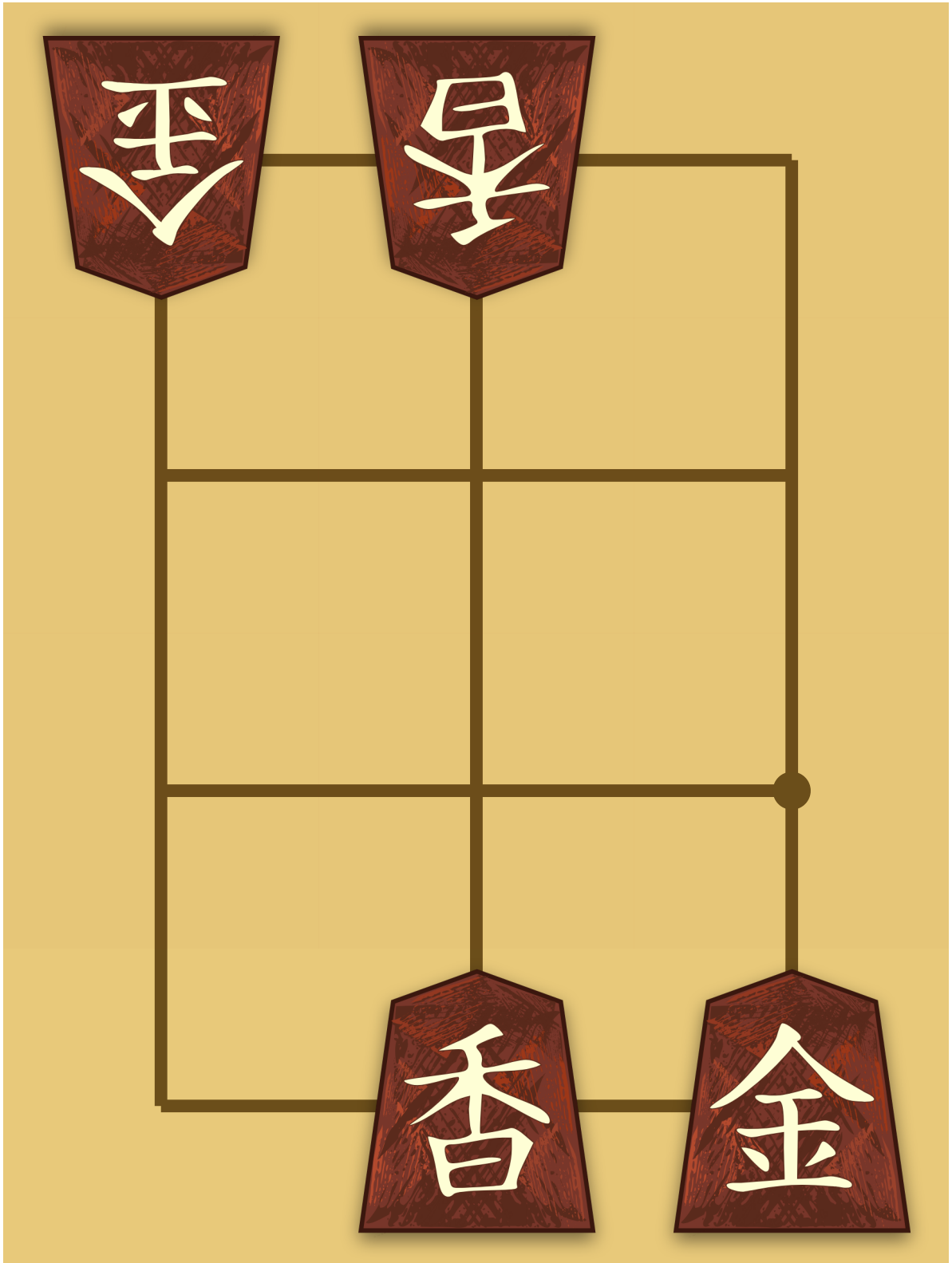
SHOGI · VARIANT 20 OF 24

Dobutsu Shogi

3×4
BOARD

2
PLAYERS

DOBUTSU SHOGI



Dobutsu Shogi — starting position

<https://engine.moddable.games/play/?game=shogi&variant=dobutsu>

Dobutsu Shogi (どうぶつしょうぎ, “animal chess”) is a Shogi variant for young children invented by female professional Shogi player Madoka Kitao, in part to attract young girls to the game. Played on a 3×4 board, it uses a minimal piece set with animal characters; each piece’s legal moves are printed on the piece itself. It is a **solved game** — optimal play by the second player guarantees a win — but remains engaging for beginners and young players.

SETUP

Board: 3 files (a–c) × 4 ranks. No river, no palace.

Pieces per player: 4 — one Lion, one Giraffe, one Elephant, one Chick.

Starting position:

	a	b	c	
1	GIR	LIO	ELE	← Gote (White)
2	·	CHI	·	
3	·	CHI	·	
4	ELE	LIO	GIR	← Sente (Black)

Sente (Black) moves first.

SFEN: g1e/1c1/1C1/ELG[-] b - 1

(G/g = Giraffe, L/l = Lion, E/e = Elephant, C/c = Chick, H/h = Hen.)

PIECES

PIECE	SYMBOL	MOVEMENT
Lion	L	One step in any of the 8 directions. Royal piece.
Giraffe	G	One step orthogonally (forward, backward, left, or right).
Elephant	E	One step diagonally (four diagonal directions).
Chick	C	One step directly forward only. Promotes to Hen on reaching the last rank.
Hen	+C	One step in any direction except diagonally backward (six directions).

RULES

Drops: Captured pieces go to the capturing player’s hand and may be dropped on any empty square on a later turn, exactly as in standard Shogi. There are no Chick drop restrictions — two Chicks may share a file, Chick drop checkmate is legal, and Chicks may be dropped on the last rank.

Promotion: A Chick reaching the last rank must promote to Hen. No other pieces promote.

Win conditions:

1 Capture the enemy Lion. If you can capture the Lion, you win immediately. (Checking the Lion is equivalent to check in chess; capturing it wins.)

2 Campmate. Move your own Lion to the opponent's last rank (rank 1 for Sente, rank 4 for Gote) without it being in a square the opponent can immediately capture it on their next move. This wins the game.

3 Stalemate. If a player has no legal move, that player loses.

Draws: Threefold repetition of the same position (including the same pieces in hand and the same player to move) is a draw. Perpetual check through repetition is also a draw.

ATTRIBUTION

Dobutsu Shogi was invented by Madoka Kitao (まどか). Public domain. Rules documented from pychess.org/variants/dobutsu.