

# Nine Men's Morris

The Book of King Alfonso X (1283) about medieval games includes the following words in the introduction:

"Because God wanted men to integrate all forms of joy, so that they may be able to address and solve all the concerns and problems arisen, men sought many ways to fully accomplish such happiness. Therefore they developed and made many types of games and pieces, to delight themselves" [1]

Games follow the history of mankind and can be amazing objects. Each different rule, purpose or context can become a rich element of cultural entity. It takes a long process of research to discover their origins and development, with advances and setbacks. Many ancient games appear unfinished. In many cases, the traces of the past lurk behind legends and myths. Others, based on minimal materials, disappeared or left no archaeological remains.

A chapter of the Book of King Alfonso X, essential source for the study of medieval board games, is dedicated to Nine Men's Morris, in Portuguese the Alquerque. There are records of various types of boards for this game in many places, namely in Portugal.

This month the Museum chose to celebrate Mathematics and to exhibit an object from the collection which is a high quality wooden replica of Nine Men's Morris, also known as Mill or Alquerque. Within mathematical games it is classified as a pattern game, in which the alignment of three pieces origins a capture of an opponent piece. To find out more about mathematical games, please visit the exhibition Mathematical Games throughout the Times, at MUHNAC since 2008.

[1]Silva, J.N. (2013), O Livro de Jogos de Afonso X, o Sábio, Tradução comentada, Lisboa: Apenas Livros, p.41.

