

LONG TAU

The Chinese DRAGON Game

by Fred Horn

In the late 1970s, I was asked to make an inventory of all games stored in the attic of the Jumbo headquarters in Amsterdam. One of my discoveries was a game Mr. Thomassen had sent to Jumbo in 1943. He had apparently queried about the possibilities of getting it published, but that did not materialize and Jumbo did not return the Prototype.

When I tried to find out more about the game and its author, privacy rules made it impossible (for me) to get access to the files. An individual requesting such information had to either be a family member or had to have a declaration from a University that scientific research was being done.

The prototype is now in the Amsterdamsch Historisch Museum. The Speelgoed-Museum in Deventer also has a version of the game which could indicate that (probably in small numbers) the game had been published elsewhere.

The game rules presented here are translated in English from the original typed rules by Mr. Thomassen.

LONG TAU
Dragon game
from SPEEL-
GOED MUSEUM
in Deventer.



© M.J.G.Thomassen, Illustrator
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LONG TAU is an old Chinese game in which a dragon, who has to sit in the middle of the gameboard on his golden chair, presses his mark. The Chinese believe a dragon cannot be killed, only tied, so the aim of the game is not to "capture" opponents' pawns, but to "besiege or surround" their pawns to make them harmless.

Around the Golden Chair there are four play areas connected by straight lines, each consisting of 22 squares. When LONG TAU is played with two people, only the two opposite areas are used—each player placing 22 pawns on their squares. The author notes each player has his own color.

Players draw lots to see who starts. The pawns can only move along the straight black lines, as far as possible, which means: till the end of the line or when meeting one's own pawn or an opponent's pawn. (This unusual movement rule of the pawns is one of the 'enchancing things' of LONG TAU.)

Jumping over pawns during a move is not allowed. Players alternate turns.

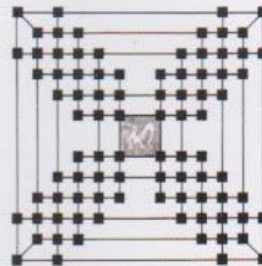
When a player succeeds in completely surrounding an opponent's pawn, on his next turn, that "besieged" pawn is removed from play, and the player moves one of his own pawns.

A pawn is besieged when it is completely surrounded by enemy pawns and cannot move. Sometimes a player needs 3 or 4 pawns for this enclosure, depending on the pawn's position on the board.

If a pawn is surrounded by 3 opposing pawns and one's own, and one's own pawn can still move, then the besiege is not complete and the pawn cannot be removed.

It is also possible to besiege a whole group of pawns. The one condition is that the surrounding is truly complete. In that case the complete group may be removed from the board.

If a player, during his turn, is able to occupy the 4 squares of the Golden Chair, then he, on his next turn, can remove 4 opponent's pawns situated the furthest from the Golden Chair.



If a player wanted to do this again he would first have to move one of his pawns from the squares around the Golden Chair, and then return back on his next move. However, this gives the opponent the opportunity to occupy this empty square and thus he can save his game.

The first player without pawns on the board, loses the game.

If LONG TAU is played with four people, each player starts in his area with 12 pawns, situated on the 12 squares nearest to the player's edge of the board. The two opposite players play against the other two players. The author notes that "partners" play with the same color pawns.

Four player version: 48 pawns, in two sets of 24 pieces, in two colors.

On May 29, 1943, the date the author notes for the copyright, Mr. Thomassen sent a letter to Hausemann & Hötte in which he outlined a summary of the game's rules. Unluckily for the game inventor, Jumbo never answered his letter. [AGPC](#)