

Yut-nori: A Korean Board Game

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I have been interested in games for ages and with having a grandchild in the house, I decided to try making a portable gameboard for the first time.

Yut-nori also called Yut is a portable board game with binary dice set of four sticks and at least 2 sets of four playing pieces.

History: This is a game dating back to at least the Third century AD. If you trace back the origin of the name it is a fully constructed Sino-Korean without bleed over from Chinese or Japanese.¹ The game has several origin theories. The first one is that the game is based on the political structure of the Buyeo region, from which the word origin points to. Buyeo region is comprised of four administrative provinces. The large spots on the board also points to the 5-point battle formation.²

Another idea was that it was like a divination device for farmers to predict crop yields, because of the animal names used.³

The last theory is that the found board was patterned to represent the earth and the movement around the round board is comparable to the sun and the changing of the seasons. The twenty-eight spots(mal) on the board represent the constellations of the Korean traditional lunar year plus the North Star in the center.⁴ All of these could be true and could have been borrowed, muddled, or changed through the centuries. According to Buddhist tradition there are four guardian spirits representing the four major compass points and seasons. Each spirit controls seven constellations for a total of 28 constellations.⁵ The center spot is representative of the North Star.⁶

How to Play

Number of Players: two peoples or teams

Goal: To get all your pieces around and off the board.

How to start: High Roll wins.

Play goes counterclockwise on the board. The start point can be any of the large outer spots. The start point is also the finish point. The same start point is used by all players.

How Dice Rolling works

The dice, also called throwing sticks, are two-sided half round sticks. Various combinations of flat sides and the rounded sides make up the numbers one through five. To roll the dice toss them up and onto a space (not on the board area). The dice can get loud on hard surfaces so a mat can be used. This would make a great outside game.

 = 1 called Pig (Do) 돼

 = 2 called Dog(Gae) 개

 = 3 called Sheep(Geol) 겉

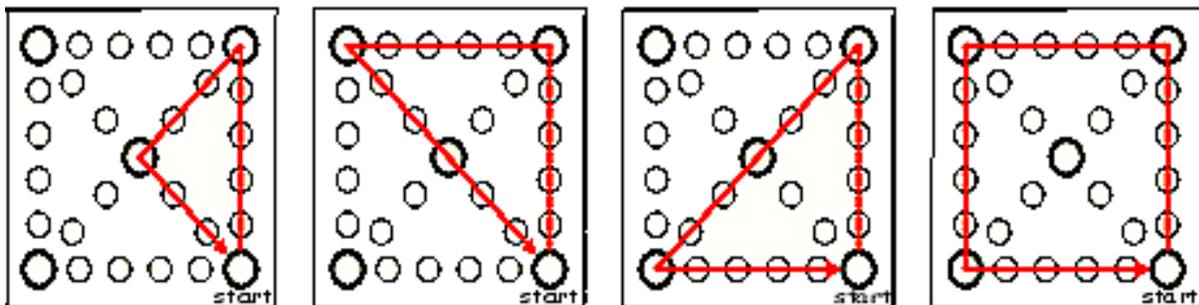
 = 4 called Cow(Yut) 뿔

 = 5 called Horse(Mo) 모

If you roll a 4 or 5 you roll again then move any pieces for each dice roll after the dice rolling is done. Ex: you roll a 5, roll again which is a 4, roll again and the last roll is a 2. You can move 1-3 pieces according to the specific number on each roll.

Another fun thing is that you can land on your own piece and then stack them. They now move as one piece. They can not move independently after this. If you land on your opponent that piece is bumped out of play and it starts over. If your opponent lands on your stacked pieces all the stacked pieces start all over again.

The large spots are shortcuts on the board if you land on them. You enter on the large spot but do not count it when you start off.



Optional Rules:(have not found if these are period rules)

-1 Move: One of the flat sides is marked. When this mark comes up on a Pig roll you move one piece back on spot.⁷

Seoul Move: One of the flat sides is marked (different one). When this is rolled you can bring a new piece on the board and place it on the large center spot. If all the pieces are already in play it counts as a 1 move.⁸

Busan Move: One of the flat sides is marked (different die piece from the two above). Similar move as with the Seoul rule but the new piece goes to the large spot diagonally across from the starting point.⁹

How I Made the Board and the Game Pieces

The Game Pieces

I decided that 1 inch diameter flat rounds would be a nice size for handling and stacking pieces. I made two sets of 4 pieces. I sanded them down with 400 grit sandpaper and used acrylic paint for its waterproof nature.



The Dice

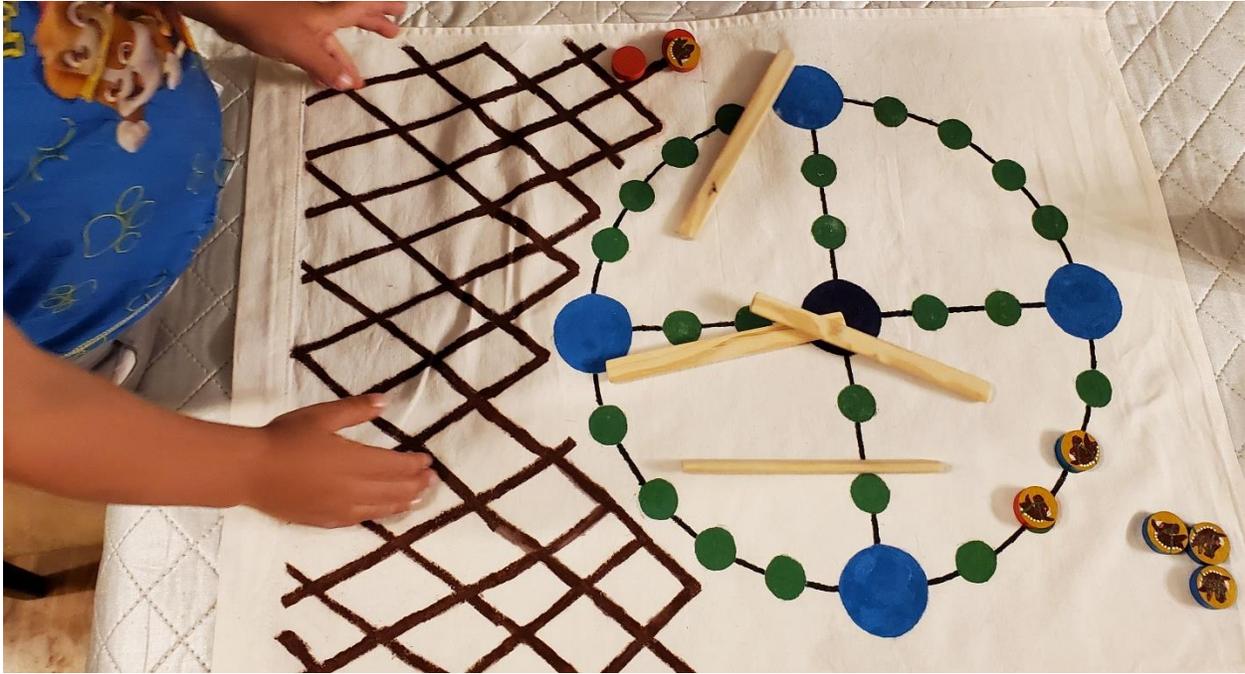
I found half round wood molding at the local hardware store. I cut 4 pieces out approximately 6.5 inches long. I rounded all the edges and sanded all surfaces down. I used a Dremel with a cut out wheel to mark the round sides and one flat side for the optional -1 Move. Then I inlayed the marks with acrylic paint.



Rounded sides, The ends, and the flat sides of the dice.

The Game Board

I used a premade canvas banner from Dharma Trading Company. I painted a circular board with twenty-four--1 inch spots and five--2 inch spots. On the side I did a lattice design to mimic a mat to toss the dice on to keep some of the clanking noise down during play. I also used acrylic paints on this so the board would be water resistant and able to go into the washing machine.



The entire game is folded into a bag for transportation and secured with a handmade braided cord.

Conclusion

Some time in the future I plan on making more ornate boards to reflect the various origin stories of this game. Also, a more interactive game rules, where two teams of four players on a human size board with the team players being the pieces.

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¹ Lee

² Lee

³ Lee

⁴ Morgan

⁵ Four Guardians of the Four Compass Directions

⁶ Twenty-eight constellations

⁷ Yut android game

⁸ The Game of Yut

⁹ The Game of Yut