



AWALE



2 players



7 and up



20 min

BACKGROUND

Awele is originally from Ivory Coast where the Baoule called it “ale” and the Agni called it “wale.” Elsewhere it is called “wari” or “halusa.”

Awele belongs to the family of “mancala” games. The word “mancala” comes from the Arabic verb “naqala” for “to move.” It is used to describe games that involve placing stones, seeds or shells in holes, which are sometimes directly plotted in the soil without use of a board. Seeds from the Caesalpina Crista tree were typically used to play the game. These seeds resemble green olives and have a hard exterior. Upper classes would use diamonds and other precious stones. Mancala games are widely known in Africa, South Asia and Southeast America.

Awele dates back to Antiquity. There are various stories and theories around its birth:

-According to the Maasai people, Sindillo, the son of the first man Maitoumba, invented Awele over one thousand years ago.

-Some sources claim that the game was frequently played in Egypt and in India as early as the 5th century BC

-Other sources claim that it is an Arab invention because use of the word “mancala” is widespread

-The oldest found Awele is from the 7th century; it was discovered in Ethiopia.

Slaves introduced parts of Europe, North America, South America and Asia to Awele. Charles Beart made the game known in France in the 60s.

MATERIALS

-1 board with 12 holes and 48 seeds, stones or marbles

Object of the game : To harvest more seeds than your opponent.

PROGRESS OF THE GAMES

Initially there are 4 seeds in each hole and each player has 6 holes in his section. The first player removes all the seeds from any of the 12 holes and drops them one by one into the other holes in counterclockwise direction.

If the last seed falls into an opponent’s hole and if this hole already contains at least one other seed, the player collects all the seeds in that hole and places them aside. In addition to collecting all the seeds in that hole, the player can collect all the seeds in the previous hole (next hole over in clockwise direction) if the previous hole belongs to the opponent.

The game ends when one of the two players can no longer continue playing. The player who has gathered the most seeds wins the game.

Caveat:

-Your move must always leave at least one seed to the opponent—do not starve your opponent!