The Fallacy of Rank

A game for the piecepack by Keith Lacey, Will Schneeberger and Joshua Tempkin

Version: 1.0, June 29, 2004
Placed in the public domain to be used and reproduced freely.
For 2-4 players. Allow 15-20 minutes per player.
Components: 3 Piecepacks (2 players can get by with 2 piecepacks, using two suits each, but 3 is preferred)

OBJECT: Each player controls an army led by two commanders, represented by pawns. Your goal will be to eliminate the enemy leadership.

SETUP: For a 4-player game, take the 24 tiles from one piecepack, and lay them suit-side-down in a 5x5 grid with the center missing. For 2 or 3-player games, use an appropriate subsets of tiles, as shown here. In the 3-player game, arrows are shown which link the indicated sides. These sides are to be considered adjacent, just like those which connect players 1 and 2 (or 2 and 3).

2 Player Board   3 Player Board   4 Player Board
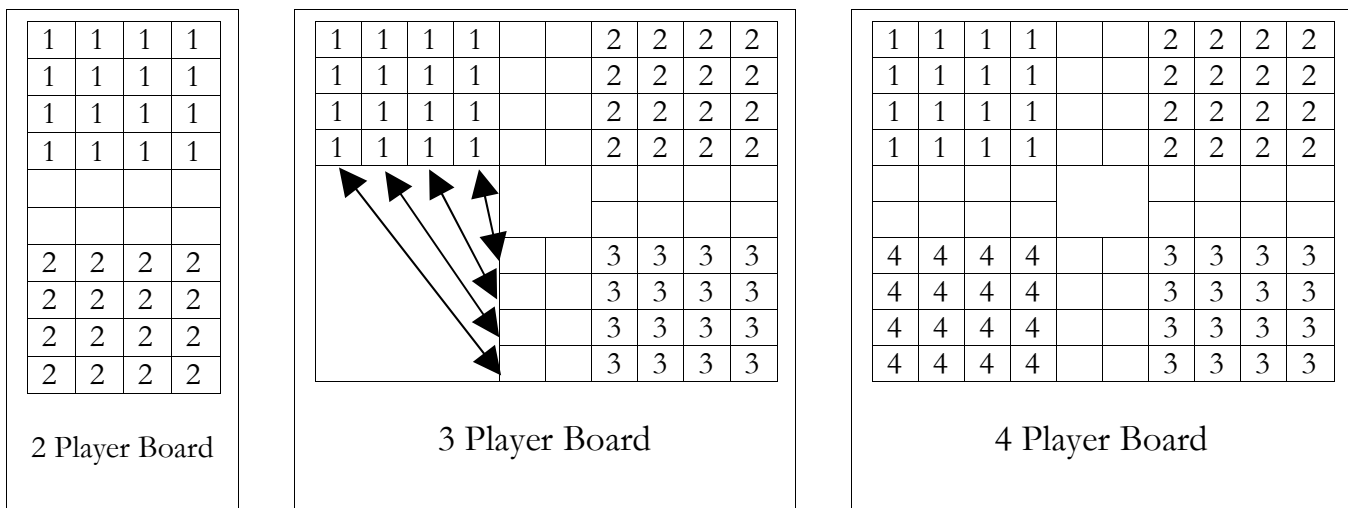
This creates a grid that will be the board. Each player chooses a suit and takes from that suit 1 die, all 18 coins, 2 pawns, and the remaining 12 tiles (2 each of rank, Null through 5) of that suit. Each player then chooses a 4x4 corner of the board.

THE PIECES: Each player will place 14 coins and 2 pawns within their 4x4 corner of the board. These will be the player's units. The Goal of the game is to be the last player with a Pawn. Players will alternate placing their units during the setup phase. During the setup phase, the player puts 14 coins and both Pawns onto the board suit-side-up (hiding the values of the coins). The remaining 4 coins (with hidden values) and 12 tiles (2 piecepack sets' worth of the player's suit) become the player's "hand." Coins on the board should always remain value-side down, unless revealed during a combat. At end of combat, flip any victorious coin to hide its value again.

THE SETUP: Choose a starting player by arbitrary means. Setup will proceed in four waves. Each player, in clockwise turn, places four pieces of their 20 (18 coins and 2 pawns) on the board in their quadrant during each wave. Coins are placed value-side down. Both pawns must be placed by the end of setup, but needn't be placed in any particular wave. A player may shift pieces around while deciding on placement within a wave, but pieces are fixed at the end of each player's turn within the wave. Players may examine any pieces in their suit, at any time. Once all waves are completed, the starting player will take the first turn of actual gameplay.

GAME PLAY: On your turn, you may either move one piece of your suit (coin or pawn) one space (horizontally or vertically, along the gridlines), or you may take one "tile-action" (explained later). If the piece lands in an empty

square, then your turn is over and play passes to your left. If there is an enemy piece in that square, then a battle begins which will eliminate either one or both of the pieces. See "Combat" below. If you have no Pawns on the board you are eliminated and you may no longer move pieces, perform tile actions, or modify combat. Eliminated players' pieces remain on board and may still be attacked.

You do not have to reveal anything about your piece while moving it, and except during combat it should remain value-side down the whole game. You may, of course, still inspect your own pieces at any time. Courtesy dictates the attacker reveals first, but simultaneous revelation is allowed as it speeds game play.

Instead of moving, you can take a "tile-action." These actions correspond to discarding a tile (not a coin) from your hand for a particular benefit. The possible actions are:
- NULL: Get back 1 used coin (not tile) from your discard pile.
- ACE: Teleport any coin (not pawn) to any empty space on the board.
- 2-5: Move any coin or pawn up to the specified number of spaces (instead of their normal 1 space). If the piece ends in an occupied square, conduct combat as normal. You may not pass through occupied squares.

COMBAT: When one piece moves into the square occupied by an enemy unit, a battle ensues. The steps in a battle are:
1. Both players reveal their pieces. (Pawns need not be revealed as their value is fixed!)
2. If any piece is a Null or Ace, resolve the battle according to the following rules:
    - Aces defeat Nulls and Pawns. Aces tie other Aces. (See combat rule 4, **TIES**)
    - Nulls automatically tie every piece except Aces. (They leave "nothing" behind!) (Also see **TIES**)
3. All remaining pieces have numerical value equal to their rank, with Pawns counting as 7. Players may now boost the combat value of their piece. Boosting is accomplished by a player discarding *a single non-Null coin or tile* from their hand. To faciliate simultaneous revelation, the value of the boost will be revealed by each player selecting a die face hidden from view (say behind that player's hand). If the die face is null, they have chosen not to modify the combat. Otherwise, discard the coin or tile corresponding to the die's value, then add that value to the combat value of the piece (Aces count as 1). Non-combatants may not modify combat.
4. The player's piece that has the highest total combat value wins the combat and the opposing piece is moved from the board to the discard pile. **TIES:** In the event of any tie, both combatant pieces are discarded.

HOW TO WIN: Remove all other player's Pawns. If you have at least one Pawn on the board and no other players have any Pawns on the board, you win at the end of the combat that removed the last enemy pawn. Should the last two Pawns annihilate each other, the game is considered a draw.

EPILOGUE: Why "The Fallacy of Rank"? The name fell into place in the last moment at considerable expense. The rationale:
- Fallacy, in the first definition sense is deception – which can be a large component of game play.
- Pawns, which have the highest rank in the game, can be removed by *any other piece!* (with modifiers)
- Rank itself plays less of a role in combat than bulk – lone attacking units tend to be stopped very quickly.

APPENDIX I: Contributions, attributed to authors:
Board layout and design, 4P: {80% Keith, 10% Will, 10% Joshua} 3P: {10% Keith, 10% Will, 80% Joshua} 2P: {50% Keith, 10% Will, 40% Joshua} Setup: {20% Keith, 50% Will, 30% Joshua} Piece combat rules: {25% Keith, 25% Will, 50% Joshua} Tile abilities: {20% Keith, 40% Will, 40% Joshua} Win condition, especially fitness of design: {10% Keith, 70% Will, 20% Joshua} Name of the game: {40% Keith, 30% Will, 30% Joshua} Play testing: {33% Keith, 33% Will, 33% Joshua} Bull sessions, misc. revisions and play-test tweaks: {30% Keith, 40% Will, 30% Joshua} Final combat balancing: {10% Keith, 60% Will, 30% Joshua} Authoring of draft (secretary work): {50% Keith, 50% Joshua} N.B.: We relied on consensus and logical arguments to resolve rules conflicts and which original "optional" rules to make permanent.