



Malawian student develops Bawo game software

FRIDAY, 31 DECEMBER 2010 11:49 WRITTEN BY ALLAN KAWALA 21 COMMENTS



A Malawian student in the United States has created software for a popular board game in his home country. **Fumbani Chibaka** explains to his colleague **Allan Kawala** what this 'Bawo Bantu' is all about.

THIS application, dubbed Bawo Bantu, is a cross-platform standalone application, playable on Windows, Macintosh and Linux; platforms, and it is also playable online. I launched the game on August 20 this year and since its release, the game has received incredible support with an average of five downloads per day.

In Malawi, this game is liked and played by people of all age groups be it the village or in town. You always find people under a tree, on verandas and at the marketplace playing this beautiful game. It's a favourite pastime for many.

We live in a world today where technology has done great things for us but at the same time there are things, like our traditional ways, which we still value and want to keep. Bawo is one part of our life I want to see preserved by using modern technology. I came up with idea of developing a computerized version of Bawo game that maintained an African touch and gave the millennial generation, especially urban children and people in Diaspora, a unique opportunity to play the game our people have enjoyed for generations.

Before committing to the development of the computerized version of Bawo, I had to learn playing Bawo since I didn't have any experience. With the help of a fellow Malawian, also studying at my school, Gettysburg College, and Bawo instructions I found on the Internet, I learned the game. I came to appreciate the game and couldn't suppress the revelation that it brought to me.

It's amazing how village children can play this game, which is the most complex of all mancala games. They quickly invent strategic moves, showing their intellectual capabilities and ingenuity. This is just a glimpse of the brainpower and potential that these children possess.

Just to digress for a moment, it's sad that poverty prevents most of the children in rural Malawi from progressing in their education at a very early age. I salute efforts by the Malawian government and NGO's as they try to provide free education to the Malawian child and I want to dedicate Bawo Bantu game project to the H.E.L.P Malawi foundation for the work they are doing in Malawi. Educating one child makes a big difference to the whole community.

Bawo (or Bao), a very famous traditional mancala game, is known for its complexity and mathematical depth. This game is played on a board or on the ground where hollows are created. It is commonly played in Malawi, Zanzibar, Tanzania, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Zambia, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Eastern Congo. Click here for the game.

Tags: Fumbani Chibaka Bawo Bantu

Comments

+1 = Blessing Kaluwa 2010-12-31 15:42
chi genius chakwathull!
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0 = chalo 2011-01-02 23:26
Can you tell chi genius chakwanu to reduce his nkhomu to 64 for bawo ya nkhomu and apply proper rules of BAWO.
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0 = Fumbani Chibaka 2011-01-03 01:27
[Profile Pic]
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0 = Edward Zombe 2011-06-27 04:38
Sorry I have not seen the bawo banthu. My question is; is he talking about bawo or ntchuwa? I know ntchuwa because I grew along the lakeshore, tongaland, and it played by more than ten players (three or more each side using machi/balls) and with fifteen or more sets of holes (magodi)and the playing techniques are kucheneta, kugoma and kusura. People make teams and invite each other to play (kumemesa) ntchuwa. Ntchuwa can be dug on the ground or chigombi(the base of an old canoe). Blessings should go to this generous of ours for promoting our culture. Thanks a million. I love ntchuwa and adore bawo.
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0 = Fumbani Chibaka 2011-01-03 01:26
Thanks for your feedback.
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-2 = John Malamba 2010-12-31 16:24
Bawo game was computerized at the Malawi Polytechnic 15 years ago. People were playing Bawo on the computer there at that time. This is not new!
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+1 = Young Weezy 2010-12-31 16:32
Yes John...that version was meant for Operating System of that time...you cannot play it on Windows Vista or Windows 7...and one thing you should know...this is a cross platform application...playable on Mac OS, Linux and Windows!
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0 = lazarus 2011-01-01 10:05
To make something cross-platform is not a big deal. What matters is the logic in the algorithm.
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+1 = Fumbani Chibaka 2011-01-03 01:11
I am not sure if you meant the search algorithm (which was alpha-beta pruning in this case). If you did, then I think that the algorithm does remain almost similar in structure regardless of who implements it. That being said, I am striving to improve the bawo game play experience while allowing gamers to run the app on any platform. Wouldn't it be nice to actually have bawo playable on mobile devices too?

Thanks for your feedback.
Fumba.
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+1 = optimus 2010-12-31 18:49
Iwe John malamba,wanena kuti his new ndani?
that john is the one which has helped us Malawians to live in 2000 BC when everyone is the 21st century, the malnutrition of appreciation.
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0 = Fumbani Chibaka 2011-01-03 01:24
Am not very certain but I think he actually programmed his game application while he was doing his MphD at Carleton University.
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-1 = Jat 2010-12-31 21:18
Christopher Chimombo also developed bawu for his masters project in the UK about 7 years ago. Do I sense some plagiarism here?
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0 = Facts Finder 2010-12-31 22:48
@Jat...what plagiarism? I have google what Chris Zangaphe Chimombo did, and I give him thumps...implement a game like bawo in Java is not a joke...He deserves respect and if want to check what he did here is the link (http://bawo.sourceforge.net). I was checked what Fumbani did and here is how here project started (http://fumbani.blogspot.com/2009/11/bawo-gaming-adventure-in-java-and-adobe.html)...his version was done in Actionscript 3 and you can check on www.bawogame.com....
Now going back to the issue of plagiarism...how is that plagiarism? Teach me, maybe I'm so dumb!

By the way...Peter M. Nyasulu...was the first person to develop the bawo program and it was written in DOS...which means people it needs DOS emulator to run on recent Operating Systems!
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+2 = Blessing Kaluwa 2011-01-01 02:32
koma ndakayika if u've actually seen the game itself. Chonde download the game and check the game credits kaye osamangoyankhula zinthu. Moreover, ulenje umasimba wakol
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0 = chalo 2011-01-02 23:29
The Bawo is crap. It has 100 Nkhomo instead of 64, unless he is trying to invent his own BAWO it will not work. Tell him to apply rules of Bawo not his own.
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+2 = Fumbani Chibaka 2011-01-03 01:35
Chris is such an amazing person! He was actually one of the professionals that helped me understand Artificial Intelligence. I also got alot of advice and tips from professional Mancala programmers from the Netherlands who I met through the Yahoo Mancala group. Isurely got a warm welcome and they still do give me feedback on what needs to be improved in my software.
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0 = optimus 2011-01-01 12:13
eeeeeeeeeh koma fanz mwakwiyu tu. I agree with kalua check it out then start ma critiques.
a jat not very certain but I think he actually programmed his game application while he was doing his MphD at Carleton University.
Iwe fact finder nde waihatu,details,precision, guys check it out then tiyambe kuthoka
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+1 = chalo 2011-01-02 23:23
I have tried the. He is brilliant but I have never seen that version of BAWO with 100 NKHOMO for 32 holes.
The Bawo commonly played in Malawi has 32 holes with 64 Nkhomo. I think he needs to review this Bawo and ask some people who know what Bawo is. The one by Zangaphe is a real Bawo.
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+1 = Fumbani Chibaka 2011-01-03 00:58
Hi Chalo,
This might be an incompatibility issue between Adobe Flash Player and your computer. I would really appreciate if you shared with me the configuration of your system (esp. the version of Windows that you are using). It would be really helpful for me since I am in a process of developing a more stable version of the game.
You are not supposed to be getting 100 Nkhomo. You might also want to try the online version and see if it gives you the right amount of nkhomu.
Thanks for your feedback.
Fumba (e: fchibaka@acm.org)
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+1 = Kamazi 2011-01-16 09:43
Wow...good job. Attention: If you plan on releasing a new version, please consider including an online play..I think it would be great to play with someone without necessary having to be in the same location...it will definitely add a new flavor to Bawo Bantu...like playing under the shade of mango tree, uku mukudya mango...but this time, the people are in two different locations doing their own things. Anyways...I just love the brain behind the idea of this Bawo project. Keep it up!
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0 = Banonie Dubai 2011-02-08 01:09
Just try to put the real rules of Bawo to make it more professional. I like it only for that I can't play it because your roles seems strange to those that I know. Congrat Fumbani!!!
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