

Caravaneers

A Two-Player Game
BY ANDREW PERKIS

Equipment

The illustrated board on page 67 and 11 identical pieces.

Introduction

An unusual feature of Caravaneers is that one player is often able to take a number of turns in a row while the other player can only watch and wait until a legal move is possible. On these occasions, the attacking player has the chance to plan out his next few moves—just as a pool player does at the start of a run.

Scenario

The main playing area (colored yellow) represents a desert, and the pieces represent caravaneers or traders who will—unless they get lost in the desert—reach one of two possible destinations by nightfall (i.e., the end of the game). These destinations are the Southern Caravanserai (the green squares to the south) and the Eastern Caravanserai (the green squares to the east). These are owned respectively by the two players, "South" and

"East." The player who has captured (collected) more "guests" by the end of play is the winner.

The caravaneers in this game are incense traders, who were held in awe by superstitious people due to their supposed ability to hold Djinns at bay by burning frankincense. Thus they have no worries about being attacked and often travel alone, away from the security of a caravan. Occasionally they even get lost, perhaps in their search for new groves of Boswellia trees (the source of frankincense), which can be found in this part of the desert.

Play

To set up for play, place the pieces as shown in Figure 1. The three unoccupied corner squares represent mountains. These are not part of the playing area, and pieces can never be moved onto them.

South plays first, after which turns alternate. A player must move on a turn if a legal move is available; otherwise that player must pass his or her turn, and the other player moves again. A

player may need to pass for several successive turns if no move is available.

There are two types of moves: the singleton move and the caravan move. All moves are orthogonal (horizontal or vertical). All moves by South must be toward the Southern Caravanserai, and all moves by East must be toward the Eastern Caravanserai. The lines of play for East and for South are shown in Figure 2.

Singleton Moves

Players may move a single piece along one of their lines of play, provided it is the only piece currently lying along that line of play.

Caravan Moves

If more than one piece lie along a player's line of play, and all of these pieces form an unbroken line with no empty spaces intervening, then these pieces form a "caravan" for that player. Each piece in the caravan can be moved one space in the player's direction of play. (Note that in the starting position, the pieces form two large joined caravans. However,

Figure 1

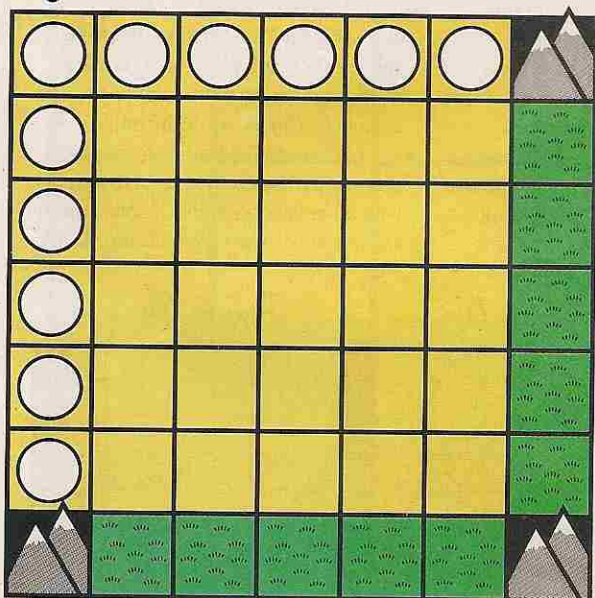


Figure 2a

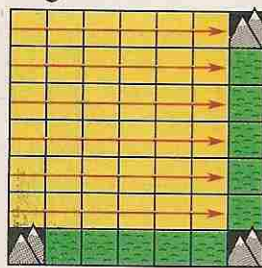


Figure 2b

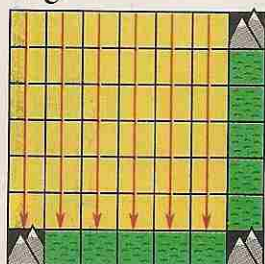
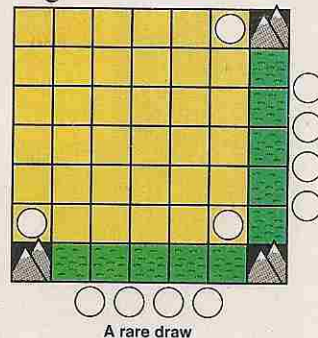
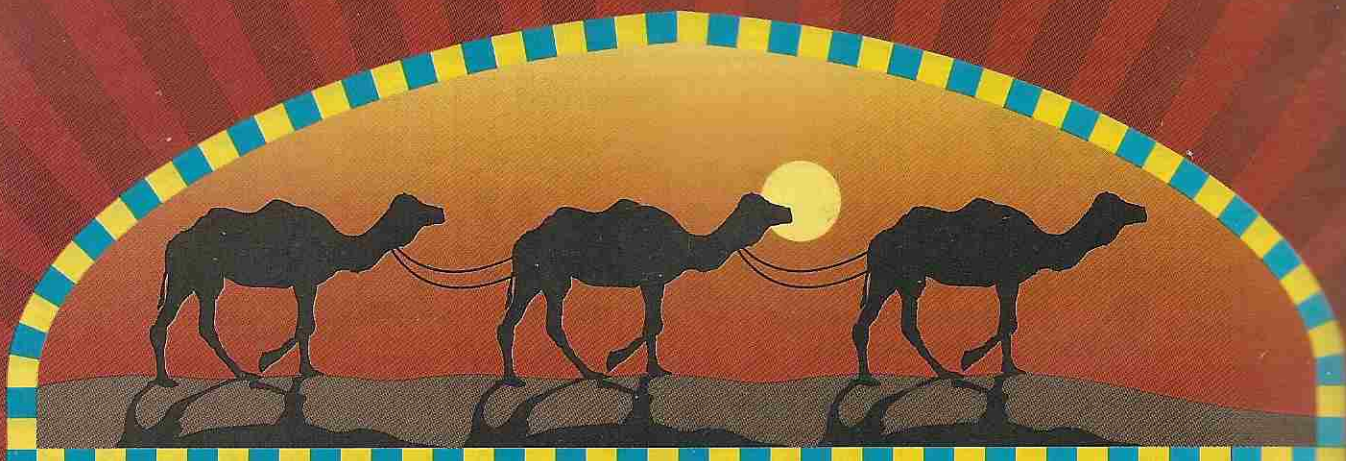


Figure 3





neither can be moved, due to the mountain squares.)

Broken Caravans

If more than one piece lie along a player's line of play, but there is at least one empty space between two of the pieces, this counts as a broken caravan. The player may not move any of these pieces.

Passing

As already mentioned, a player who cannot move any of the pieces in play must pass. This will, of course, be due to broken caravans.

Capturing

When a player moves a piece onto one of his or her Caravanseraï squares, the player removes it from the board and retains it for scoring at the end of play.

Objective and End of Game

The game ends when neither player can move. This usually occurs when all the pieces have been captured. At this point the game is scored, and the player with the most captured pieces (or "guests") is the winner.

Alternatively, you may wish to end the game as soon as a player has captured a majority of the pieces (i.e., six guests).

On occasion a game ends when both players are forced to pass because, although there are pieces still left in the playing area, neither player can move them. When this happens, only captured pieces are scored—the other pieces being "lost in the desert."

Draws are rare, but may occur if an odd number of pieces are lost in the desert (see Figure 3).

Hints on Play

Two obvious ways to get ahead are through the use of caravans (to speed up your own progress) and the use of broken caravans (to slow down the opponent).

It is normally advantageous to play a caravan move, but be careful! It might enable your opponent to force you to pass your next turn—which might be a bad idea.

In Figure 4, East can play the caravan composed of two shaded pieces, but this sets off a chain of caravan moves for both players. Either East can play the caravan and see what happens, or try to visualize the possibilities.

Figure 5 shows another typical position. South can capture the piece in the third column immediately, but then East would be able to capture a piece in each of his next two moves. South can instead, within a couple of moves, set up broken caravans

for East, who will be forced to pass. With careful play, South should edge toward a win. In this case (and often during such an extended run, as is possible here), the attacking player will need to let the defender play some moves, but will try to ensure that each of these is a temporary reprieve. However, it is frequently impossible not to let the other player off the hook, and then it may be his or her turn.

An interesting resource is shown in Figures 6a and 6b. East, to play, has the choice of two pieces to capture. However, neither option will save the game: South would win 6-5 in either case. However, East can draw by moving the shaded piece. In reply, South has no choice but to move the four-piece caravan, leaving the position shown in 6b. Now all East has to do is capture the two shaded pieces, starting with the more southerly one. The result is a 3-3 draw, since the remaining pieces are "lost in the desert."

Such draws are rare, but this kind of resource adds tension to the game and means that a player who is ahead needs to stay alert. Other dimensions to strategy cannot be dealt with in this brief section. If you want more tips—or perhaps to be put in touch with an email opponent—contact me at ap.caravaneers@googlemail.com. ♣

Figure 4

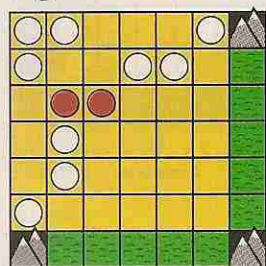


Figure 5

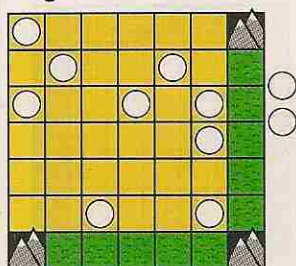


Figure 6a

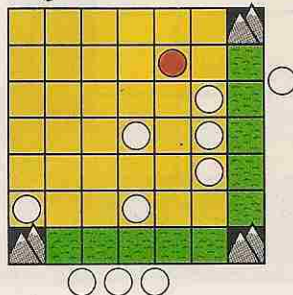
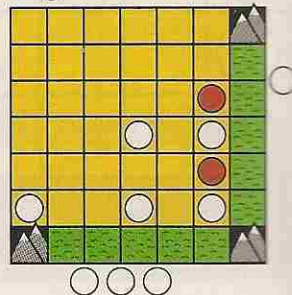




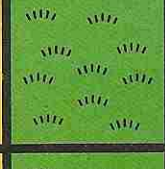
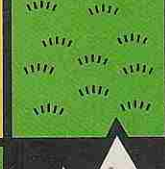
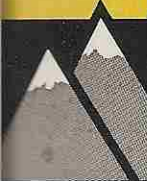
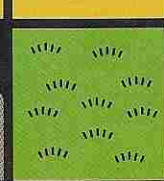



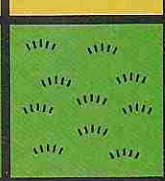
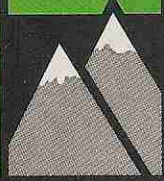


Figure 6b





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