

Caravans: Way of Silk

(Fate's Edge v0.1)

A plug-and-play module for long-haul trade, escort, and diplomacy across the Violet Steppe/Meadows and deserts toward Sihai and Dhahara. Built to run caravans of Fhara, Tulkani, Ashaani, Dhaharan, and Kuvani traders.

Design Goals

- Convoy as character. A caravan has strings, tags, and clocks that bite back.
- From road to court. Scenes flow between trail hazards, border posts, and negotiation halls.
- Low bookkeeping. Track a few clocks (Distance, Danger, Supplies, Morale); let strings and orders do the heavy lifting.
- Use the core. Keep Position/DV, SB, clocks, Favor/Leverage/Exposure, Strings. No new dice math.

Quickstart (2 minutes)

1. Make a Caravan Sheet (§1) with Supplies [6], Morale [6], Condition [6], Heat [6] (optional) and 1–3 Strings (wrists, water shares, waymarks).
2. Pick a Route Leg (§2) and mark Distance [4–8] and Danger [4–6]. Note Terrain and Season.
3. Assign Roles to PCs/followers (§3). Choose an Intent Dial for the leg: Speed / Stealth / Show.
4. Run scenes from the Caravan Deck (§6) and from fiction. All 1s generate SB; spend city/road flavored Social SB (§5.4).
5. End of Leg: Pay Upkeep, adjust tracks, trade at market, and advance projects/patrons.

1 Caravan Sheet (Template)

[CARAVAN NAME] — Way of Silk Convoy

Kind: Phara / Tulkani / Ashaani / Dhaharan / Kuvani / mixed

Wagons & Beasts: list (and tags) • Cohorts: outriders, guards, teamsters, cooks

Strings (1–3): waymark beads • water-right shares • coin-weigh seals • border writ • festival license

Tags (2–4): choose below (e.g., Fast Teams, Heavy Wagons, Shrine-Banner, Smuggler Compartments)

Tracks:

- Supplies [6]: food, fodder, lamp-oil, repair stock

- Morale [6]: grit and confidence of crew and clients

- Condition [6]: wear/tear to wagons, harness, and trains

- Heat [6] (optional): attention from tollmen, raiders, and rumor

Bandwidth (Orders per Leg): 2 + number of lieutenants (max 4)

Projects (0–3): route or asset improvements (4–8)

Patrons/Clients: names + what they expect this season

1.1 Caravan Tags (pick 2–4)

- Fast Teams (steppe ponies, spare yokes): Start Speed legs one Position higher.
- Heavy Wagons (armored sides): Expose/Rob against you starts one Position worse.
- Long Train (many clients): +1 Bandwidth, but a 1 on Operate may tick Heat +1 (gossip).
- Shrine-Banner (oath to a road-saint): Once/leg, Host Rite starts Dominant; breaking rites adds Exposure +1.
- Smuggler Compartments (false floors): Smuggle DV –1; on 1s, start Contraband Trail [4].
- Scout Eyes (trained outriders): Survey/Track DV –1 on open ground.
- Riverwise (barges/rafts carried/leased): Treat a canal/ford as neutral ground; Chase (boat) DV –1.
- Caravan Doc (apothecary wagon): Once/leg clear one minor Harm or tick Morale +1 after a rest scene.
- Ward-Woven Tents (sigils): Infiltrate against camp starts one Position worse.

1.2 Beasts & Wagons (examples)

- Steppe Travois: capacity 1; tag Fast; fragile in rocks.
- Desert Camels: capacity 2; tag Water-wise (Supplies loss –1 on drought checks once/leg).
- Dray Lizards: capacity 3; tag Sure-footed (mountains DV –1) but Hungry (Supplies –1 if a 1 shows in a danger scene).
- Covered Wagon: capacity 3; tag Shelter (Weather starts one Position higher).

2 Route & Leg Structure

A Route is made of Legs (days/weeks) between safe stops.

2.1 Set a Leg

- Distance [4–8]: how many progress segments to reach the next safe stop.
- Danger [4–6]: the leg's ambient pressure (raiders, terrain, ward-storms). GM advances on 1s or when fiction dictates.
- Terrain: steppe • desert • mountain pass • river flats • saltpan • reedmarsh.
- Season/Weather Clock [4–6]: rains • dust winds • fog • heat wave • freeze.

2.2 Pre-Leg Intent & Roles

Pick one Intent Dial (it sets default Position for travel scenes):

- Speed: make Distance faster; Broker/Petition at stops start one Position worse (rushed).
- Stealth: avoid Danger; Distance advances only on strong hits.
- Show: parade banners; +1 Favor opportunities at stops; Heat +1 on any 1.

Assign Roles (§3) to PCs/followers.

2.3 Running the Leg

- At each scene, use district/terrain effects and caravan tags to set Position/DV.
- Progress: On relevant hits (Survey, Navigate, Drive, Scout, Broker, etc.), tick Distance by effect.
- Complications: 1s → GM spends SB with Caravan SB options (§5.4) or advances Danger/Weather.
- When Distance fills, the leg ends at a safe stop: run Upkeep & Market (§4).

3 Roles in the Caravan

Assign any number; one person can hold two if fiction allows.

- Caravan Master: final calls; Petition/Broker at posts/stops; can sacrifice 1 Favor to cancel one Social SB once/leg.
- Quartermaster: Supplies, repairs; rolls Wits+Tactics/Craft to prevent Condition ticks.
- Factor: contracts and customs; Audit/Broker; converts 1 Clue to Favor once/leg with proof.
- Scout/Vanguard: ride ahead; Survey/Track; can mark Ambush Signs (tag) once.
- Rearguard Captain: watches tail; Shield/Command during pursuit.
- Envoy/Interpreter: rites and tongues; Host Rite, Sway; cancels one tag flip in parley once/leg.
- Beast-Master: animal welfare; can clear one Supplies loss once/leg after a rest scene.
- Lore-Keeper: maps, omens; Research/Expose myths and ward lines; grants DV -1 vs Ward-storm once/leg.

4 Upkeep, Market & Stops

At leg's end (waystation, oasis, city gate, monastic house):

4.1 Upkeep

Pay one: coin • Favor • rite/appearance. If skipped → Supplies -1 and start Creditors [4] or Inspection [4].

4.2 Repairs & Rest

- Spend coin/Favor or a scene to reduce Condition -1.
- A positive public moment (feast, song) clears Morale +1.

4.3 Market (no heavy math)

Pick one cargo tag you carried (Common • Desired • Contraband • Sacred) and one market appetite tag at this stop (Hungry • Saturated • Pious • Lawful • Lax • Wary). Roll a single Broker/Petition action:

- On strong hit: gain coin + Favor (narrow) or Standing with a local office.
- On hit: choose coin or Favor.
- On partial: you gain coin but tick Heat +1 or a rival gains a String.
- On miss: coin lost or cargo seized; start Litigation [4] or Rival Claim [4].

4.4 Projects

If you worked a Project [4–8] this leg (e.g., “Open a new oasis”, “Bribe a toll chain”), mark it. On fill, add the new String or tag to the caravan.

5 Road Procedures & DV Ladders

5.1 Typical Actions on the Way

- Navigate (Wits+Survey): set course, find ford. DV 2–4 (terrain/weather).
- Drive/Handle Teams (Body+Tactics/Craft): keep pace or brake wagons. DV 2 steppe • 3 dunes • 4 pass road • 5 storm.
- Parley at Post (Presence+Sway/Diplomacy): get water, shelter, wrists. DV 2–4; –1 with Strings.
- Outride/Screen (Body+Ride): intercept scouts; DV 3–5.
- Ambush/Break Ambush (Wits+Tactics): DV 3–5; +1 Position with Ambush Signs tag.
- Broker (Wits+Diplomacy/Streetwise): sell cargo or buy feed. DV 2–5; –1 with Coin-Weigh Seal.

5.2 Chases & Skirmishes (Open Ground)

Use the chase ladders from city play, substituting:

- Foot/Horse: DV 2 (open steppe), 3 (gully), 4 (broken ground), 5 (stampede field).
- Wagon: DV 2 (road), 3 (ruts), 4 (switchbacks), 5 (dune crest).

Complications on 1s: dust cloud, dropped axle-pin, panicked team, toll chain snaps.

5.3 Weather & Terrain Pressures

When Weather advances or fiction says:

- Sand/Dust Storm: Position –1 for sight-based actions; Supplies –1 unless shelter tag present.
- Monsoon Flood: fords impassable; Distance doesn't move without a strong hit; wagons risk Condition +1.
- Ward-Storm: spirits along the old way; treat as Desperate unless rites observed or you have Ward-Woven.

5.4 Social SB on the Road (GM Menu)

- Leverage Leak: a client contract goes public → your Heat +1 or a rival gains a String.
- Camp Discord: tick Morale –1 unless a rest scene is spent.
- Toll Escalation: dues rise; accept a concession or start Litigation [4].
- Guide's Pride: your scout/officer demands a say; start Friction [4].
- Raider Rumor: band banners gather; Danger +1.

6 The Caravan Deck (52-card)

Draw at scene start or between legs: Spade (Hazard), Heart (Person), Club (Complication), Diamond (Boons/Route).

- Spades: dune ambush • flash-flood • cursed milepost • stampede • ward-storm • bridge collapse • tax spotters • plague rumor • raider parley • oasis poisoned • river pirates • mountain rockfall • Ace: border closes.
- Hearts: toll captain • road saint votary • rival caravan master • desert guide • steppe prince • customs factor • mummer troupe • shrine keeper • way-witch • exile noble • coin-weigh auditor • beast-doctor • Ace: a patron rides with you.
- Clubs: missing axle pin • scrip counterfeits • curfew at gate • water rights dispute • night theft • guide rivalry • forbidden cargo • client feud • fuel shortage • strike among teamsters • insulted chieftain • Ace: someone inside betrays you.
- Diamonds: fair wind • dry track • caravan fair • festival license • seal of safe-conduct • bridge opened • waymark rediscovered • oasis cleared • new buyer • debt forgiven • relic found • Ace: The Great Market convenes.

Clock Size by Highest Rank: 2–5 → [4], 6–10 → [6], J/Q/K → [8], A → [10].

7 Peoples of the Way (playset hooks)

Use these as cultural levers and Strings; tune to table canon. The analogues below are inspirations—not prescriptions.

Inspirations (GM shorthand): Fhara = Arab traders • Kuvani = Steppe peoples • Tulkani = Roma • Dhaharan = India • Sihai = China • Ashaani = Egypt (imperial ambition) • Pereshi = inland Persians • Sidhi = Levant/North Africa.

Portrayal guardrails (recommended):

- Show internal diversity (class, creed, region) in each culture; avoid single-note caricatures.
- Emphasize craft, contracts, rites, and strings over mystification or criminal tropes.
- When using divination/omens, frame them as social rituals or legal custom, not exotic power.
- Let conflicts be about interests and institutions, not “peoples are like this.”

7.1 Fhara (Oasis Caravaneers)

Vibe: incense routes, water-law, tent courts, call-and-response poetry.

Favored cargo: dates, glass lamps, wool, frankincense/myrrh.

Strings: Water-Share Tablets, Caravan Law Oaths, Escort Writs.

Etiquette: coffee/salt shared before business; three cups bind goodwill (hospitality rites).

7.2 Kuvani (Steppe Hosts)

Vibe: remount lines, felt tents, wind-bands across violet grass.

Favored cargo: remounts, leatherwork, smoked meats.

Strings: Pennon Right-of-Way, Remount Lines, Kurgan Oaths.

Etiquette: ride-in gifts; never unsaddle before greeting; insult duels are ritualized races.

7.3 Tulkani (Itinerant Courts & Crafts)

Vibe: master farriers, tinkers, enamelers, musicians; caravan courts arbitrate disputes.

Favored cargo: metalwork, vibrant dyes, instruments.

Strings: Caravan Court Writ, Bead-Chains of Passage, Safe-Haven Oath (neutral camp).

Etiquette: arrive with song; camp neutrality is sacred.

Notes for portrayal: highlight artistry, negotiation, and legal custom; avoid harmful stereotypes (e.g., criminalization, “curses”).

7.4 Ashaani (River Imperium)

Vibe: reed boats, monumental rites, temple bureaucracy, imperial roads.

Favored cargo: papyrus, natron, gold leaf, incense resins.

Strings: Festival Licenses, Harbor Warrants, Procession Rights.

Etiquette: offerings at household shrines; titles spoken before names.

7.5 Dhaharan (Monsoon Guilds)

Vibe: caravanserais, philosopher-merchants, monsoon trade cycles.

Favored cargo: textiles, spices, glass bangles.

Strings: Temple Tithe Stamps, Ghat Permits, Monsoon Schedules.

Etiquette: remove shoes at shrines; red mark for auspice.

7.6 Sihai (Mandarinate of Porcelain)

Vibe: flood-dikes and tea hills, kiln towns, exam halls, mandarins.

Favored cargo: porcelain, tea, lacquerware.

Strings: Censor's Seal, Silk-House Contracts, Inundation Schedules.

Etiquette: seal-stacking protocol; bows set order; chop-marks authenticate goods.

7.7 Pereshi (Plateau Satrapies)

Vibe: royal road relays, fire shrines, garden courts.

Favored cargo: carpets, saffron, warhorses.

Strings: Satrap Relay Posts, Fire-Temple Safe-Conduct, Waystation Keys.

Etiquette: bread and salt; signet rings bear authority.

7.8 Sidhi (Littoral Ports)

Vibe: caravan ports and spice bazaars, mosaic guilds, pilgrim routes.

Favored cargo: glass, citrus, purple dye, olive oil.

Strings: Dockage Rights, Pilgrim Hostels, Mosaic-Guild Seals.

Etiquette: clasp or cheek-kiss greetings; lamp-oil gifts seal deals.

8 Endpoints & Borderlands (sketch)

- Sihai: eastern entrepôt of silk and porcelain; mandarinate courts, ritual permits, flood dikes. Strings: Censor's Seal, Procession Routes, Inundation Schedules.
- Dhahara: desert capital; satrap gardens, coin-weigh halls, pearl markets. Strings: Coin-Weigh Seals, Oasis Compacts, Escort Writs.
- The Violet Steppe/Meadows: windswept caravan grass; way-shrines and storm beacons; Events: stampede moons, steppe prince weddings.

9 Cargo & Clients

9.1 Cargo Tags (choose 1–2 per lot)

- Common (grain, lamp-oil, linens)
- Desired (dyes, porcelain, rare herbs)
- Contraband (forbidden tracts, unsealed relics, untithed silks)
- Sacred (ritual items, saint bones, shrine bells)

Complications: Contraband adds Heat +1 on any 1; Sacred adds Obligation—a rite at arrival or Sanction +1 from its patron.

9.2 Client Types

House factor • shrine keeper • satrap's agent • guild compact • mummer troupe • exiled noble
• legion paymaster • university procurer.

Promised Terms: share of profit • safe escort • secrecy • ritual procession • price floor • exclusive rights. Turn any into a String on success.

10 Orders Between Legs

Each leg, choose up to Bandwidth orders:

- Operate: push Distance; risk Condition or Supplies on 1s.
- Scout: pre-empt hazards; reduce Danger -1 or create Ambush Signs tag.
- Charm the Post: improve next stop's Position by one step; on 1s, Heat +1.
- Smuggle: move forbidden cargo; on hit, gain Leverage (1); on 1s, start Contraband Trail [4].
- Rite of the Road: Host rite; on hit, clear Morale +1 or cancel one Ward-Storm penalty this leg.
- Repair: reduce Condition -1.

11 Generators & Tables

11.1 d66 Road Events

11 stampede at dawn	12 fallen way-shrine	13 counterfeit scrip	14 rain-bogged ford	15 rival's poisoned
21 raider parley	22 toll audit	23 tax farmer replaced	24 plague scare	25 saint's process
31 guide feud	32 axle break	33 desert mirage	34 trader wedding	35 night theft
41 court courier	42 border closes	43 floodgate opens	44 smugglers' cut	45 lost child in du
51 salt storm	52 way-witch offer	53 forest spirits	54 bridge collapse	55 coin-weigh stri
61 relic rumor	62 caravan fair	63 exile prince	64 mountain rockfall	65 sacred relic rec

11.2 Rivals & Threats

Band banners (Grey Hawks, Glass Jackals) • Toll captains on the take • Sand-road brotherhood splinters • Shrine zealots • Coin-weigh auditors • Ward-witches with a price • River pirates • Steppe princes with honor games.

11.3 Prices without Numbers (Boons)

On strong market hits, take two: coin, Favor (narrow), Standing, Clue, Leverage (1). On hits, take one. On partials, take coin but also Heat +1 or promise a String back to the buyer.

12 Example of Play (short)

Setup: Kuvani-led mixed caravan with Fast Teams and Scout Eyes runs the Steppe to Pass leg (Distance [6], Danger [4]; Season: dust winds [4]). Intent: Stealth. Roles: Scout/Vanguard, Quartermaster, Factor, Envoy.

Scene 1 — Survey the Dunes (Wits+Survey): Strong hit → Distance +2; a 1 shows → SB spent to tick Danger +1 (raider rumors).

Scene 2 — Parley at Pass-Beads (Presence+Sway): With Pass Bead-Chain (String), Position Dominant, DV 3. Hit → Distance +1 and Favor (narrow); partial → Heat +1 (a rival whispers).

Scene 3 — Ward-Storm: Weather clock fills; Envoy hosts a road rite under Shrine-Banner → cancels penalty; Quartermaster saves Supplies.

End of Leg: Upkeep paid with coin; Market: sell Desired dyes in a Hungry pass town → strong hit = coin + Standing. Start Project Open Oasis Annex [6].

13 GM Reference (one page)

- Tracks: Supplies [6] • Morale [6] • Condition [6] • Heat [6] • Distance [4–8] • Danger [4–6]
• Weather [4–6].
- Intent: Speed (faster Distance; worse petitions) • Stealth (safer; slower) • Show (Favor chances; Heat risk).
- Roles: Master • Quartermaster • Factor • Scout • Rearguard • Envoy • Beast-Master • Lore-Keeper.
- Orders: Operate • Scout • Charm the Post • Smuggle • Rite of the Road • Repair.
- SB Spends: Leverage Leak • Camp Discord • Toll Escalation • Guide's Pride • Raider Rumor.
- Market Boons: coin • Favor • Standing • Clue • Leverage (1).

Changelog

v0.1 — First pass: caravan sheet/tags, leg structure, roles, upkeep/market, road procedures, deck, peoples of the Way, endpoints, cargo/clients, orders, generators, example, GM reference.