

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 (writs, 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: Fhara / 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, writs. 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, enameled, 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.