

The Game of Triumphs

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MMXIX

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Chapter I

Preliminaries



The Deck

THE Tarot deck is comprised of the four usual suits – but with four, rather than three Court Cards – and a fifth suit that serves as permanent Trumps. The first Tarot decks used the same suits that are still used in Italy: Cups, Coins, Swords, and Batons.¹ In fact, the Tarot deck was originally simply the addition of a fifth suit, consisting of allegorical subjects, to the ordinary deck of cards. In the 18th century, cardmakers in the German-speaking world began producing Tarot decks with the French suits of Hearts, Spades, Clubs and Diamonds, and with animals or scenes on the trump suit rather than the traditional subjects. These French-suited Tarot decks are now used in France, Germany, Denmark, parts of Switzerland, and all the countries of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire.² The Italian suited decks persist only in Italy, parts of Switzerland, and Sicily.

The original deck contained 78 cards: 14 cards each in the ordinary suits, 21 Trumps, and a special card called ‘The Fool’, or later ‘The Excuse.’ This deck is still used in France and Denmark. In other areas, however, the deck is reduced in size by omitting the lower ranking pips in the ordinary suits. In Austria and countries influenced by it, the Excuse became the highest Trump, and the deck was reduced to 54 cards: 8 cards per suit (four Court Cards and four pips) and the 22 Trumps.

A peculiarity of the deck which goes back even before Tarot to the introduction of playing cards into Europe, and persists to

¹Current Italian-suited decks include: the Tarot de Marseille, the Swiss IJJ, and the Tarocco Piemontese.

²These decks include the Tarot Nouveau, the Industrie und Glück, and the Adler-Cego.

the present in almost all Tarot games, is that the pips in the Red or Round suits (Heart and Diamonds, or Cups and Coins) rank upside down. Those suits rank, from high to low: King, Queen, Knight, Jack, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

[name the courts, indexes, italian and french. Table]

Order of Play

Unlike most games in the English-speaking world, Tarot games are almost always played counterclockwise. The order of play, of course, makes little difference; but it is a feature of Italian card games that Tarot has always carried with it.

The Deal and Discard

The cards are usually dealt in groups, rather than singly. This *can* make a difference; in some games it is the convention (though not the rule) not to shuffle the deck between deals, but only to cut it. This is supposed to lead to more interesting hands.

The cards should not be touched until the deal is complete, and then counted. This way if any mistake was made during dealing, it can be corrected without having to redeal.

Tarot cards are usually larger than Poker cards, and there are usually more of them in hand. It can be easier to pick the cards up one or two at a time and add them to your hand, rather than picking up your entire hand at once and sorting it in place. If you're playing with a deck without indices, or with the full deck of 78, it might well be impractical to fan your cards out so that

you can see them all, as you might be used to in other games. Rather, glance through to get a general idea of your hand, and then fan out only the part that is relevant to each play. Note also that cards in the Marseille tradition have roman numeral indexes on the sides, rather than in the corners.

There will be a few cards left over after the deal. In older games these belong to the Dealer; in newer ones they will go to the eventual Declarer. That individual will pick them up and add them to their hand, and then discard the same number of cards. The cards in the discard will count for them in the end, thus it can sometimes be advantageous to discard point cards.

The usual rules of discarding are that one may *never* discard Honours (Kings, the I and XXI of Trumps, and the 'Scuse), and one may only discard other Trumps if necessary to avoid discarding an Honour.

Bidding

In Tarot games with bidding, the bids rarely alter the "target" of the play, they way they do in Spades or Bridge. Instead, they alter the *conditions* under which one is willing to aim for a set target—or, in the Austrian family, what the rules of the game itself will be. The eventual winner of the bidding will become the Declarer. She alone (or, perhaps with a partner) will attempt to win the game she has bid and will score accordingly. The other players – the Defenders – will attempt to thwart her.

Bidding is done in one round, and proceeds as follows. The Eldest player (the next in rotation after the dealer) will bid or pass. If he bids, the next in rotation may make a higher bid, or pass.

If she makes a higher bid, it goes back to the previous bidder, who may *match* the higher bid - or pass. As soon as one of the first two players has passed, bidding proceeds between the player who did not pass and the third player. Said another way, bidding is always between two players: either the first two who have not passed, or between the one who has not passed yet and the next in rotation.

Once you have passed, you may not reenter the bidding.

Tricks

Tarot games are all Trick-taking games. The most prestigious game of this family in the English speaking world is Bridge; perhaps the most common, due to its ubiquity on the Windows operating system, is Hearts.

A Trick consists of every player playing one card to the center of the table. The first player to play is said to lead to the trick: the suit of the card they play is called the suit led. Every other player in rotation must, if they can, play a card of the same suit from their hand. If they have no cards of the suit led, they must play a card from the Trump suit. If they have no remaining trumps either, they may play any card. The highest trump, or (if no trumps were played) the highest card of the suit led wins. The player who played it collects the cards and places them facedown in a pile in front of him, and then leads to the next trick.

In the older forms of the game, the 'Scuse is the exception to the rules of following suit. The holder of the 'Scuse may play it at any point. It never wins a trick - but it isn't lost: the player of the 'Scuse, after showing it, takes it back and adds it to his trick

pile, and gives a worthless card in exchange for it. If the player never takes a trick, the 'Scuse is forfeited to the person who won the trick to which it was played. The 'Scuse is also forfeited to the winner of the trick if played to the last trick. If the 'Scuse is led to a trick, the next player may play anything, and their card counts as the lead.

In the Austrian games, the 'Scuse is simply the XXII of Trumps.

Tarot games are furthermore *Point Trick* games. Not only do the tricks have value, but certain cards carry a value in and of themselves. These cards are the Court Cards, and the Trull: the I and XXI of Trumps, and the 'Scuse.

Unless otherwise specified, the eldest player will always lead to the first trick.

Counting Points

The original method of counting points after the hand, which is still the easiest to start with, is to count the points for all Court Cards and for the Trull (the I and XXI of Trumps and the 'Scuse), and then to add one point per trick taken. In fact, in almost all variations the number of cards constituting the 'trick' is conventionalized, regardless of how many people are playing. Thus, each game will specify that the cards are counted 'in twos,' 'in threes,' or 'in fours.'

In other descriptions of Tarot games other counting methods will be described. Although they may seem rather different, they add up to the same values.

Card	Value
I, XXI, & 'Scuse	4 each
Kings	4 each
Queens	3 each
Knights	2 each
Jacks	1 each

Chapter 2

“Basic Tarot”

This game forms the core of all following games. It has been played most places where Tarot has permeated, under various names: in Switzerland it is played as *Troccas*, in Lombardy as *Tarocchi*, and in Piedmont as *Tarocchi* or *Scarto*, with slight differences.

A GAME is made up of as many deals as there are players. After the three or four deals of the game, whoever has the lowest score pays a small stake to the others, such as buying the next round of drinks.

Played with a 78 card deck. The 'Scuse serves as Excuse.

Three Player

The Dealer deals 25 cards to each player in batches of 5. She then takes the remaining 3 cards into her own hand and discards three. At the end of the hand, each player counts their cards in groups

of 3. There are 78 points total in the deck. Each player’s score is recorded as the difference between the card points they took and 26.

Four Player

The players sitting opposite each other are partners, and score as a team. The Dealer deals 19 cards to each player. He then takes the remaining 2 into his own hand and discards two. At the end of the hand, each team counts their cards in groups of 4. (The Dealer’s discard counts as a full trick.) There are 72 points total in the deck. Each player’s score is recorded as the difference between the card points they took and 36.

Chapter 3

Großtarock

The classic form of the game, played for over a hundred years in France, Germany, Italy, and Austria came to be known as *Großtarock* in German-speaking lands, to contrast it with the newer game played with only 54 cards. It is still played in Denmark, and similar games are played in northern Italy as *Mitigati*.

Three or Four Player

THREE players are active at a time. If four participate, the player opposite the dealer takes no part in a given hand. A game may consist of as many hands as desired, as long as each player is allowed to deal an equal number of times.

The Dealer deals 25 cards to each player in batches of 5. She then takes the remaining 3 cards into her own hand and discards three. The usual restrictions apply. Furthermore, no card that

would otherwise be part of one of the following Declarations may be discarded.

Declarations

Starting with the Dealer and going in order, each player must make any of the following Declarations of card combinations they hold.

	<i>Description</i>
Trump s	‘Ten Trumps’ is worth 10 points; more may be declared for 5 more each. (E.g., ‘Eleven Trumps’ is 15, ‘Twelve Trumps’ is 20, &c.) For the purposes of the declaration, the ’Scuse counts as a trump. It must be stated whether ‘with’ or ‘without’ the Pagat.
Matadors	‘Three Matadors’ consists of the three cards of the Trull, for 10 points. ‘Four Matadors’ adds the XX of Trumps for 15, ‘Five Matadors’ the XX and XIX for 20, &c.
Cavalry	A ‘Cavalry’ is a set of all four Court Cards in one suit for 10; a ‘Half Cavalry’ is any three Court Cards in one suit plus the ’Scuse for 5, and an ‘Abundant Cavalry’ is all four Courts plus the ’Scuse for 15. The suit (and missing card) must be named.
Kings	‘Kings’ is all four Kings for 10; ‘Half Kings’ is any three plus the ’Scuse for 5, and ‘Abundant Kings’ is all four Kings plus the ’Scuse for 15. The missing suit (for Half) must be named.

Play

Eldest leads to the first Trick. The 'Scuse serves as Excuse. If played to any of the last three tricks it is lost to the winner of the trick.

A player who loses a King or the Pagat to another player before the final trick pays **5** points to each of them.

At the end of the hand, one of the following conditions will be met:

	<i>Description</i>
Tout	One player has taken all tricks. He is payed 85 by each other player.
Nill	Exactly one player only has taken no tricks. She is payed 25 by each other player. Ultimos and card points are not scored, but Failed Ultimos are.
Ultimo	One player has taken the last trick with the Pagat or with a King. He is payed 45 for the Pagat, or 40 for the King, by each other player. Other players may score a Failed Ultimo at the same time.
Failed Ultimo	Any player who plays a Pagat or a King to the last trick, but does not win the trick. She pays 45 for the lost Pagat or 40 for the lost King to each other player.
Last Trick	If none of the above has occurred, the player who wins the last trick. He is payed 20 by each other player.

Finally, each player counts the card points they took. The total should always come to **78**

Scoring with Paper

For the above declarations, bonuses during play, and final outcome after the last trick, the value noted is recorded as positive for a player who ‘is payed’ or as negative for the player who ‘pays’. Only the subject player receives a score. For example, if a player declares ‘Ten Trumps’, he is payed 10: so 10 is added to his score. If a player loses a King on the last trick for a Failed Ultimo, she pays 40: so -40 is added to her score.

Finally, the positive or negative difference from 26 each player took in card points is added to the score (unless a Nill occurred)

Scoring with Counters and Pots

The use of counters and pots for scoring is more traditional, and makes the Ultimos much more exciting.

Each player begins with a set of counters: 20 units of 5 and 10 units each of 20 and 50 should be sufficient. Ideally each player’s counters are a different color, so that it’s easy to see who’s ahead and who’s behind.

There are two Ultimo Pots, one each for the Pagat and for a King. These might be a saucer for the Pagat and a small bowl in the center for Kings.

Whenever either pot is empty, including at the start of the game, every player (including the fourth, if four play) contribute 20 points to it as a foundation.

After dealing and discarding, the Dealer contributes 5 to each pot. Afterwards she moves the pots between her and eldest, to indicate that the discard is complete.

Payments for declarations or bonuses are made as described in the main rules. In addition, a player who loses a King or the Pagat before the last trick also adds 5 to the appropriate pot.

A winner of a Tout also receives the contents of both pots; a winner of an Ultimo receives the contents of the appropriate pot. A player who fails an Ultimo doubles the appropriate pot. If a failed Ultimo and an Ultimo or Tout concern the same pot, first the value is counted and given to the winner; then the same amount is contributed back in by the loser.

Unless a Nill occurred, each player then counts their card points, and pays the next dealer according to the following table:

9-13	pay dealer 15
14-18	pay dealer 10
19-23	pay dealer 5
24-28	no payment
29-33	receive 5 from dealer
34-38	receive 10 from dealer
39-43	receive 15 from dealer

At the end of play, the contents of both pots are distributed equally among the players.

Two Player

As above, except: Two hands of 25 are dealt, the dealer taking 3 extra cards. The remaining 25 cards, called the *Mort*, are set aside unused for that hand.

Players accumulate the points for Declarations, card points, and bonuses as above.

There is no award for Tout or Nill. The payents for Ultimos and the last trick are reduced to 15 for the Pagat, 10 for a King, and 5 for the Last Trick.

The Score may be kept on paper or a Cribbage board. The first to reach 100 wins.

Chapter 4

Tarock-l’Hombre

(6.7, 7.1) Droggn? (8.28) Chambéry?

Chapter 5

Le Jeu de Tarot

c. 1900 Petit en dedans (2000) Mouches Score of base + dif (no mult) 1977, Grenoble base of 10 + diff mult OR base of 10, 20, 30, 50 no mult

Chapter 6

Dreiertarock

Chapter 7

Strawman

Chapter 8

Königrufen

Chapter 9

Strategy

glossary?