

GRAND CONQUEST™

by Donald Benge

DESCRIPTION

GRAND CONQUEST™ is played on a game board printed with a land and water map. Each of four large islands has a cluster of five spaces enclosed in a fortress-like structure. These are the player's castles. A moat surrounds each castle. Drawbridges connect the castle spaces with the rest of the board. Between the spaces and roads are fields of various terrains. Some fields have paths that connect with spaces via three steps or other fields via bridges and under passes. On the center island there are five spaces edged in red, called the "Quests." Access to the center island and the Quests is the same from any side.

Each player starts with ten soldiers, four elephants, four knights, two camels, four ships and two galleons. Ships (triangular sails) and galleons (square sails) are called vessels. Chariots, catapults and siege engines are additional pieces that may be built by the players during the game.

All pieces and vessels move space to space following the roads and sea-lanes. Knights and camels may move into the fields from the spaces designated with three steps. Except where noted below, land pieces may move from one island to another across connecting bridges. Vessels may sail under these bridges. Sea spaces close to shore that are marked with anchors connect to land spaces, making seaports where land pieces may embark or disembark vessels.

HOW TO PLAY

Each player chooses a side and places his pieces in and around the castle and in the harbor as indicated on the game board. South begins by making five moves. West then makes ten moves, and North follows with fifteen moves, after which each player makes twenty moves per turn in clockwise rotation. Four consecutive turns are called a round.

A move is made by playing any piece or vessel from Each piece or vessel from one space to an adjacent space following the roads or sea-lanes. Each piece is limited to two, six, or eight moves per turn as described below. You may move twenty pieces once, four pieces five times, or move any combination of pieces to a total of twenty moves. The moves of the pieces need not be consecutive. You may pass your turn before making all of your allotted moves.

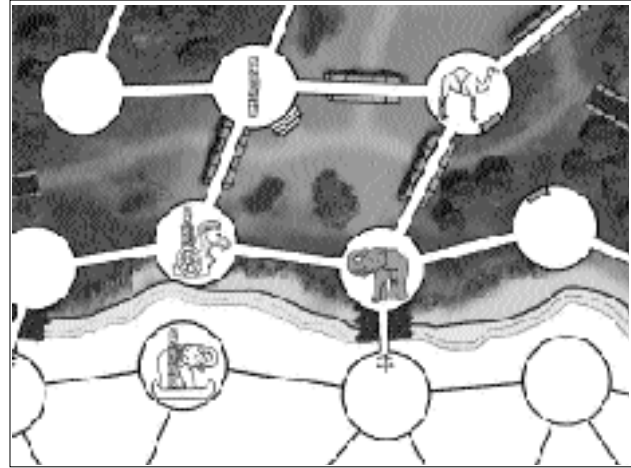
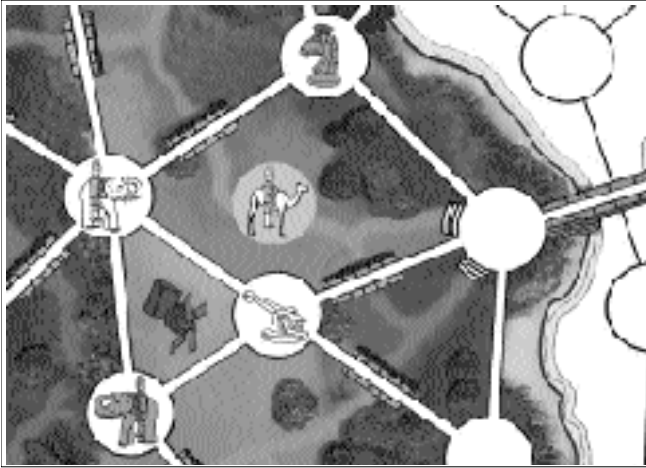
The object of the game is to capture the last two land pieces of any opponent or to move a siege engine into another player's castle. There are three other ways to win, which are explained below. There is only one winner per game. The other three will be equal losers.

CAPTURE AND RECAPTURE

You capture an opponent's piece by moving onto its space and replacing it with your own as in chess. Catapults and siege engines cannot make captures and soldiers cannot capture elephants. Vessels at seaports can be commandeered by enemy pieces that can move aboard them and convert them to their side. A soldier mounting an enemy camel temporarily takes command of it.

A "recapture" is a defensive retaliatory capture made during an opponent's turn. If you capture or commandeer an opponent's piece or vessel, you must stop and allow that opponent to capture ("recapture") or commandeer on that space, provided he can do so in one or two moves. If he takes two moves to recapture, both moves must be necessary to the recapture. He cannot make a separate capture en route nor make a move to reposition a piece. If there is more than one way to recapture, it is your opponent's choice. Sometimes, refusing to recapture may be the best defense. Diagrams #2 and #3 illustrate different ways to recapture.

After the recapture, you go on with the rest of your twenty moves. If you capture a piece belonging to the player on your left on the last move of your turn, he is not entitled to a recapture as it is then his turn. He must immediately start counting his moves, allowing you to recapture if he then makes a capture.



Example 1:

The Black knight has just made a capture. The camel can come out of the field to make the recapture. White can also recapture with the elephant or the soldier on the elephant. White may not dismount the soldier and then play elephant takes knight as the soldier move is not relevant to the recapture. White can also move the catapult one space to the right and shoot the knight. If the Black elephant has only one move left, then White's best defense is to recapture the knight with the elephant. Very often the best defense may be to refuse to recapture. It will depend on how many moves the opponent has left on his turn.

Example #2:

The Black elephant has made a capture. White may now recapture with the chariot, or he may sail his ship one space to the right to recapture with his elephant. He can also recapture with his camel by first mounting it with his soldier. (Camels cannot capture unless mounted with a soldier.) He may not mount the soldier on the chariot as that would be an unnecessary move. If Black had made the capture with a knight instead of an elephant, White could then mount either the camel or chariot and then dismount to make the recapture. Or White could sail right to take with either the soldier or the elephant.

REGENERATION

If you make a capture, and your opponent fails to recapture, you may then continue to move your piece that made the capture as if it were its first move, provided you do not exceed your moves per turn limit. Thus, a capture regenerates the moves of your piece. It is possible for one piece to make all twenty moves by making captures without being recaptured.

MOVES

SOLDIERS move one or two spaces per turn. They may mount an elephant, chariot, camel, or siege engine, and get a free ride, or they may board a ship or galleon. They may also make a capture when dismounting. Mounting or dismounting an elephant, camel, chariot or siege engine is always a soldier move. The soldier must move to mount or dismount, while major piece remains in place. Mounting may be done from a dismounted position only.

Soldiers cannot capture elephants or siege engines.

A soldier may build a chariot, catapult, siege engine, ship or galleon as explained below. After building a new piece, the soldier cannot move until the next turn.

Two soldiers cannot occupy the same space unless they are on an elephant, siege engine or vessel.

ELEPHANTS move from one to six spaces per turn. Elephants may carry one or two soldiers. These are your most powerful pieces because soldiers cannot capture them and they are the only pieces that can capture siege engines.

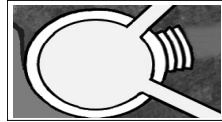
The rope bridges that connect North with East and South with West and the rope bridge on the center island leading to the Quests cannot support the weight of an elephant carrying a soldier. Elephants may only cross them without soldiers.

KNIGHTS move from one to six spaces or fields per turn and may move through spaces and fields occupied by your own pieces, counting those spaces and fields as they go. They must land on an unoccupied space, board a vessel, or make a capture on their last move. Knights may not move through a space occupied by an opponent.

Nine spaces on each of the main islands have three steps indicating where knights and camels may move into a field or come out of a field. Each field is separated by a bridge or underpass.

CAMELS move up to eight spaces per turn and may carry one soldier. Without a soldier, camels cannot make captures nor commandeer enemy vessels. You may commandeer an enemy camel by mounting it with your soldier. You cannot commandeer an enemy camel if it is already mounted with a soldier, but you may simply capture it.

Camels can move into a field from any of the spaces with three steps, where they may then move on to other fields following the paths, counting each move as it crosses a bridge or underpass. A soldier can ride a camel into or out of a field, but it cannot move into or out of a field on foot nor may it dismount in a field.



If your soldier dismounts a commandeered camel, that camel will immediately revert back to the original owner's side. A soldier may not dismount a commandeered camel from a ship or galleon. You may dismount a commandeered camel and then capture that camel with the same soldier or another piece. This is a good sneaky way to regenerate moves.

Being unruly and obstreperous creatures, camels tend to wander off if left unattended. A player may use two moves of his turn to move an opponent's camel that is not mounted with a soldier.

SHIPS move from one to six spaces per turn. Ships capture other vessels at sea in the same manner as pieces do on land. Land pieces may board or disembark ships at the seaports only. Ships may carry an elephant, knight, camel, chariot or two soldiers. Elephants, camels and chariots may carry their soldiers on board the ships. If you have less than four ships in play, a standing soldier (not mounted or aboard a vessel) at a seaport may build a ship at a cost of ten moves.

GALLEONS move from one to eight spaces per turn and carry the same cargo as a ship. They may also carry a catapult, whereas ships cannot. If you have less than two galleons in play, a standing soldier at a seaport may build a galleon at a cost of ten moves. Newly built vessels cannot move on the same turn they are built.

When an opponent's vessel is at a seaport, you may commandeer it with a land piece by moving aboard. That vessel is immediately converted to your side and it remains yours after you disembark. If an enemy vessel at port is occupied, it can still be captured by your land piece, removing its cargo from the board and converting the vessel to your own use. The piece that commandeers an enemy vessel is regenerated. Soldiers cannot capture elephants on board vessels.

When one or two soldiers are on a vessel, another piece cannot move aboard until the soldiers have disembarked. An elephant may move to a port, two soldiers on a vessel may mount the elephant and the elephant carrying the soldiers may then board the vessel. A vessel carrying an elephant and two soldiers may come to a port, and either soldier may disembark. If the elephant disembarks, the soldiers are carried with it. Land pieces cannot swim or wade in the water nor move from one ship to another at sea.

CHARIOTS do not start on the board. They can be built on land by a standing soldier at the cost of ten moves, placing the chariot beneath the soldier. They move from one to eight spaces per turn and may carry one soldier. They cannot be built on the center island, on the starting position of an opponent, or in your castle. They cannot be moved on the same turn they are built. Unlike a camel, a chariot without a soldier may make a capture, and an enemy soldier cannot commandeer it. You cannot have more than two chariots in play at any time.

Please be careful to put your soldiers facing forward on the chariots. They like to see where they are going, not where they have been.

CATAPULTS do not start on the board. They can be built on a land space adjacent to a standing soldier at the cost of ten moves. Catapults cannot be built on the center island, on the starting position of an opponent, or in your castle. They cannot move or shoot on the same turn they are built. You may not have more than two catapults in play at any time.

Catapults move one or two spaces per turn, but have no capturing ability. Each catapult may shoot one shot per turn to hit any enemy piece or pieces that are one adjacent space away connected by a road or sea-lane. On the game board, some spaces are marked with a small yellow slot that point to non-connecting spaces that can also be hit by catapults. (See diagram)

A catapult may also shoot at any piece that is in an adjacent field. Any piece or vessel hit by your catapult is taken as prisoner and placed in your capture pile. A catapult may board a galleon and shoot at any enemy vessel one space away or at any land piece that is on a space that targets the galleon. Catapults may commandeer unoccupied galleons. A catapult shot at a vessel at port destroys the vessel and it's cargo.

A catapult shot is counted as a move against your twenty moves per turn, but not against its allotted two moves per turn. Thus, a catapult may make two moves and still shoot.

During your opponent's turn, a catapult may shoot any number of retaliatory shots in lieu of recaptures. A catapult may make one move only toward the targeted piece or vessel and then make its retaliatory shot, provided that the move was necessary to bring it within shooting range. A galleon carrying a catapult may also make one move toward the point of capture to allow the catapult a retaliatory shot.

You may not make a retaliatory shot or a recapture against a catapult that has hit one of your pieces. If a player captures a piece belonging to his left hand opponent on the last move of his turn, it is not subject to a free retaliatory catapult shot.

A catapult shot at a siege engine will knock off all of the soldiers on it, but it will do no damage to the siege engine itself. They are the only pieces catapults cannot destroy.

A catapult shot at a drawbridge will bring it down immediately but it cannot hit a piece in the castle if the drawbridge is up. A catapult in a castle can fire at either of the two adjacent castle spaces, also and out over a raised drawbridge.

Catapults are too bulky to cross the wood planked rope bridges that connect North with East and South with West or the rope bridge leading to the Quests.

SIEGE ENGINES do not start on the board. They can be built on land by a standing soldier at the cost of ten moves, placing the siege engine beneath the soldier. They cannot be built on a starting position any opponent, on the center island or in your castle. You may build next to your castle but not in it. They cannot be moved on the same turn they are built. You may not have more than two siege engines in play at any time.

Siege engines move two spaces per turn but have no ability to capture an enemy piece. The only piece that can capture a siege engine is an elephant. Siege engines cannot move on board ships or galleons and they are too heavy to cross the wood planked rope bridges that connect North with East and South with West nor the rope bridge leading to the Quests. You may not move a siege engine into your capitol.

A siege engine may carry one, two or three soldiers. Soldiers must climb onto the siege engine from a dismounted position. When dismounting from a siege engine, a soldier may make a capture. A soldier may move from a siege engine into an enemy castle space, even if the drawbridge is up. In medieval times, this is what siege engines were designed to do... breach the enemy's city or castle walls. Siege engines cannot be commandeered.

CASTLES AND THE QUESTS

For each space you occupy in an opposing player's castle, that player loses four moves per turn. If your piece moves out of his castle or if that piece is captured, he will immediately regain those four moves.

For each Quest space you occupy in the center island, you will deprive each of your opponents of four moves per turn. Only soldiers, knights and camels can occupy the Quests.

Three roads leading to the Quests are marked with Vs that point to the Quests. These roads are one way only for elephants, chariots and camels. They may not move back against the Vs, not even to make a recapture.

If enemy pieces occupy any combination of five spaces in a player's castle and the Quests, that player is dormant and cannot move or recapture. He is not out of the game as some one may later move out of his castle or a Quest space, thus freeing him to move. It is possible for dormant player to get back into the game and win.

DRAWBRIDGES

You may raise a drawbridge using two moves, and thus deny access to that castle space by any enemy piece except a soldier from a siege engine. If a soldier moves over a drawbridge and into an enemy castle, he may then lower that drawbridge at a cost of one move. If a space in your capitol is occupied by an opponent, you cannot raise the drawbridge to that space.

A player's drawbridges are automatically lowered at the start of his turn. If you occupy a space in an enemy castle, you may raise that drawbridge at a cost two moves thus protecting your piece from attack for the next round. At the start of your next turn, the drawbridge comes down. You cannot lower a drawbridge to make a recapture.

FOUR WAYS TO WIN

1. Capture the last two land pieces of any opponent. The other players will then be equal losers.
2. Have the highest "count" when any player has only one land piece at the end of anybody's turn. A player's "count" is the total number of pieces and vessels he has on the board plus the number of pieces and vessels he has captured or commandeered, plus the number of spaces he has occupied in the Quests and his opponents' castles. A dormant player cannot be the winner even if he has the highest count.
3. Move a siege engine into any opponent's castle. The other players will then be equal losers.
4. You win if all three opponents are dormant.

If four consecutive rounds are played without a capture, the game is over and the player with the highest count is the winner. This should never occur, as any player who does not have the high count will make a capture.

Note that each condition of victory requires active aggressive play. If you want to win, you must not play passively. If you think you cannot win, you must make every effort to survive. It is considered very bad manners to commit suicide. Often an opponent who has little or no chance to win himself will want to ally with you. End games are full of surprises!

VULNERABILITY

A player is vulnerable when he has only two land pieces on the board. If a vulnerable player loses one of his last two pieces to a recapture, the game is over at the end of his turn and the high count determines the winner. A player may not make a capture that exposes him to a recapture or retaliatory catapult shot if it leaves him with just one land piece unless that capture leads to a win for him at the end of his turn. If a vulnerable player has the highest count, he may make any number of captures possible as he can then claim victory after any recapture.

FREE FOR ALL STRATEGY

Players should mobilize quickly to take strong positions near the center. On the first three rounds, it is vital that you get some of your vessels out to sea. If you concentrate on land maneuvers you will give your opponents a big advantage in mobility at sea which may be very difficult for you to overcome.

If you attack the weakest player and leave him with just a few pieces, you run the risk of having one of your other opponents win the game by capturing the rest of his pieces. Situations change rapidly and you must be prepared to revise your plans. No matter how bleak your chances, do not give up. In an end game situation, seemingly hopeless situations can quickly reverse if an opponent blunders.

If you find yourself down to two or three pieces, consider building a siege engine, chariot or catapult. Soldiers are much more important in this game than in the original Conquest, as they can build more pieces. A siege engine is especially dangerous against a player who has lost all of his elephants. Building a siege engine may also be the only way to save an isolated soldier in peril by enemy pieces.

You can avoid making some silly mistakes if you count out your twenty moves before you actually start to move. It is not fun to find yourself a move or two short of your objective when you get to twenty. You should be thinking during your opponents' turns, and concentrate on what they are doing as well as on your own moves. Keep in mind the order of turns and be especially alert to any threat on the Quests. If you have the highest count, look to trade off your pieces against the weakest player. Building a new piece increases your count. It may also save you from being annihilated.

It is sometimes to a player's advantage to allow a dormant opponent to move and recapture by vacating a space in his castle or the Quests. Occasionally, two players may occupy the Quests at the same time.

Alliances may be formed against the strongest (high count) player, but all should be aware that the strongest or most dangerous opponent might change several times in a few rounds. Generally, any agreement between players should be honored for a specified

time and be made conditional upon certain happenings during that time. Since there is only one winner, no player can afford to make the strongest player's game any easier. Agreements, like treaties, may be broken at any time. As in the real world, deceit is often part of a strategic plan. Nations may not care what others think, but in this game, where real friendships can be affected, treacherous actions should be avoided.

PARTNERSHIP PLAY

Partnership play is basically the same as in the regular game except that two teams of partners are playing to achieve victory over each other. Partners sit opposite one another and may not communicate with each other about the game. Otherwise, the strongest partner will be moving for both sides.

The partnership game is won when one team has captured the last remaining land piece belonging to either of their opponents, regardless of the strength of the surviving opponent. The game can also be won by making either opponent dormant on his turn or by moving a siege engine into either opponent's castle. If four consecutive rounds are played without a capture, the winner is the partnership that has occupied the greatest number of spaces in the opponents' castles and the Quests. If this total is the same for both partnerships, the winner is then determined by the partnership having the highest count.

You may not capture a piece or vessel belonging to your partner.

You may use your partner's piece or vessel to make a recapture, or use his catapult to make a retaliatory shot against a piece that has just made a capture, but you may not consult him about that action.

You may board your partner's vessel and move it as long as your piece remains on board. That borrowed vessel returns to the control of your partner after you disembark. You cannot sail your vessel if your partner is on board. Boarding your partner's vessel is not a capture and the boarding piece is not regenerated. A vessel carrying a soldier of each partner may be moved by either partner.

You may use two moves to move an opponent's camel that is not mounted but not your partner's unmounted camel. These two moves are not counted against the eight moves that the camel may make before or after you commandeer it. You may also commandeer your partner's camel, but your soldier is not regenerated.

A soldier may climb on a partner's siege engine. Either partner may move a siege engine that is carrying a soldier of each partner. Your partner cannot move his siege engine if you have a soldier on it and he does not.

Knights may jump over the heads of your partner's pieces on the five roads leading to the Quests, but at no other place on the game board.

A soldier may mount and dismount his partner's elephant or chariot on the center space adjoining the Quests only.

If you capture a piece belonging to your left hand opponent on the last move of your turn, he may make a recapture using one of his partner's pieces, or a retaliatory catapult shot with his partner's catapult. He may not recapture with one of his own pieces as it is now his turn, and he must immediately start counting his moves.

PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

Study what your partner can do as carefully as you consider what you can do. If you attack the opponent on your right and weaken his defense, your partner may be able to continue the assault to win material. Do not be afraid to sacrifice some pieces if it will result in a larger gain for your partner.

The first two rounds of play are crucial, much more so than in the free for all game. South should start by sailing a ship or galleon toward East. This will prevent East, who will be the first to have twenty moves, from sailing a loaded galleon to a forward position where it can inhibit South from moving toward the center on his second turn. Each player should make every effort to reach the Quests or prevent their opponents from getting there. Being one move closer to the Quests is very often the difference between victory and defeat. If you see that your partner can reach the quests on his next turn, look to occupy spaces in your opponents' castles.

If you find your partner vulnerable to an attack from the opponent on your left, it is up to you to make a heroic effort to save him. You must either attack or create threats of your own which cannot be ignored. Sending a sacrificial piece into an opponents' castle may save your partner. You must always be aware that your opponents are also conniving to do you in. You may be safe from one, but not both if they choose to gang up on you. Often

you will make moves that rely on your partner following through with a coordinated plan. The real charm of partnership play is in finding the moves that reinforce and complement your partner's moves.

I cannot stress the necessity of non-communication between partners. All players have my permission to kick their opponents under the table if they violate this rule. Do not squirm, clench your teeth, groan, grimace, or roll your eyes when your partner goes wrong. Guiding your partner is worse than illegal, it is unethical. It also destroys the real essence of partnership play. Using great restraint while your partner gropes and blunders demonstrates strong moral character. Losing is never much fun, but you will get over it and you can always play another game. War is hell, but Grand Conquest is, after all, just a game.

Although you cannot talk to your partner, you may indeed cajole and tease your opponents. Cogent comments that are intended to endear you to your opponents are permissible as long as they do not give direction to your partner. Timely and appropriate sarcasm is appreciated at the game table, but try to avoid gloating when beating inexperienced players.

Playing two handed on the 4-player board is the best practice for partnership play. One plays both North and South while the other plays East and West. Each player is then his own partner and must think from both sides of the board. You will discover the many ways partners can synchronize their moves for a successful attack. If you have three players, use the partnership rules giving the weakest player the advantage of playing two sides.

I strongly recommend that players take the time to work through the problems in the Grand Conquest Puzzle Book. These problems are designed to teach you different ways to attack and win material. The problems are arranged in order of difficulty and each has only one optimal solution. You will learn how to spot weaknesses in your opponents' defenses and the advantage of having a balanced presence on land and sea.

ORIGIN OF GRAND CONQUEST

After publishing my first game in 1972, I had decided to go slow with it and keep focused on my regular business. That was the year Bobby Fischer created a sensation by winning the world chess championship. Role-playing games and fantasy games were not to make their mark until several years later and war gaming was just beginning to become popular. The timing would have been perfect for Conquest.

In 1984, I had made a 2-player game with siege engines and catapults. While it received rave reviews (OMNI Magazine's "Game of the Year") I was never quite satisfied with it. When I licensed a German game company to make my games they insisted on adding the advanced pieces to the 4-player game and rewriting the rules for their use. The catapult rules were dreadful and they also made a mistake with the siege engine rules. (I hate mistakes.)

Grand Conquest is a result of a lot of badgering by my game-playing friends who kept reminding me that I had promised to someday make the game with camels. Game designers tend to get carried away with their inventiveness and won't let go of any new ideas. The secret of making a good game is "KISS", which stands for "Keep it simple, stupid." Clever ideas are a dime a dozen. Making them work in a game is the hard part.

Moving camels and knights into the fields and introducing drawbridges are ideas I had a long time ago. I am really quite pleased with the result and I hope you will have as much fun playing this new game as I did designing it. Fair warning... it can be quite addictive. An alarm clock may be useful in getting players back to the real world.

Anyone who doesn't like to play games probably had a deprived childhood. My parents encouraged me to play at an early age. Maybe it was the easiest way to keep me out of mischief. Chess was my first obsession. When I was in the army, it became bridge. Now I find myself playing all kinds of games.

I must express my grateful appreciation to Patrick Stevens and Dietmar Gottschick who spent many long hours play testing this game and helped me get rid of some superfluous rules. Also, a big thank you to Harvey Lerman who wrote the program for the original two-player game that can be found on my website at: www.webstart.net/conquest. Harvey is probably the world's best Conquest player. He consistently beats me at my own game. What nerve!

I have always been a big fan of Sid Sackson's games. I was thrilled to meet him at the New York toy fair in 1974 and discover we had many common interests. Some of the most joyful moments in my life were spent visiting Sid and his wife, Berniece, every time I went to New York. Sid wrote the first review of Conquest in GAMES Magazine in 1979. It is to the memory of Sid Sackson that I dedicate Grand Conquest.

Thank you for buying my game.

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