KONTOR

A game for 2 or 4 players aged 12+
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The most powerful merchants contend for supremacy in 17th century Amsterdam. In a new harbour, each is building to their own plan, to gain control over the trade of three important commodities: tea, wine and spices.

The new harbour is divided into several areas. The merchants seek to place their warehouses and cranes cleverly so that they win superiority with their trading in the majority of areas. When the playing area is completed, the game ends. For each harbour area, the player in the lead there gains one victory point. The winner is the merchant with the most victory points.

To simplify your introduction to the game, the rules have been divided into two sections. Immediately following are the rules for the Basic Game. It is designed for the first time you play Kontor and is for two players. It is better to postpone reading the rules for the Advanced Game and the game for four players until you have become familiar with the Basic Game.

Components

There are dock cards and water cards. With these you will form a new harbour. All cards have a number in the top left corner. The colour of this number (red or black) denotes which player owns the card. The water cards are neutral. Some cards have a coin symbol in the top right comer. Others have a ship symbol, which will not be significant until the Advanced Game.

- 44 Dock cards: 22 each with red and black circles. Most display the commodities tea, wine or spices in varying combinations. Each player also has two dock cards with cranes, and one with a tavern.

- 44 Water cards: These differ only in their number and their symbol. Most water cards have higher numbers than the dock cards. The harbour centre card has no number, showing instead a large anchor.

- 2 Reference cards: On the front of these is shown the ranking of the commodities (Wine is worth more than spices; spices are worth more than tea; tea is worth more than wine).

- 6 Special cards: Two each of floods, bridges and customs houses.

- 20 Coins

- 48 Warehouses: Corresponding to the commodities depicted on the dock cards, there are three types of warehouses. The brown warehouses hold wine barrels, the beige warehouses hold tea chests, and the green warehouses hold spice sacks.

- 5 Red and 5 Black warehouse keepers.

- 1 Ship. The patrol ship of the Amsterdam authorities, is not used until the Advanced Game.

Preparation for the Basic Game for two players

- The six special cards and the ship are removed from the game.
- Each player takes a reference card.
- The cards are separated into dock and water cards.
- Remove the harbour centre card (marked with an anchor) from the water cards and place it face-up in the centre of the table. This will form the centre of the new harbour. Shuffle the remaining water cards and place them face-down in a stack where each player can reach it.
- From this stack draw eight cards face-down, and place them face-up in the middle of the table in a cross shape [as in the figure on p. 3 of the German rules].
- Next each player takes two water cards from the face-down stack into their hand. Now turn the stack upside-down, so that the first water card will always be visible.
- The dock cards are separated according to their red and black numbers, and each player takes the cards of one colour. Each player shuffles his dock cards and takes three face-down into his hand. The remainder form his own face-up draw pile next to him.
- The player with the red cards takes the five red warehouse keepers, and the other player the black ones.
- The warehouses are sorted by their colour and placed where both players can reach them.
- Each player takes four coins. The remainder form the city treasury of Amsterdam. A player's money must be visible in front of him at all times.

The Game Sequence

It is important to adhere to the following sequence of actions precisely. Each game round consists of:

1. Play a card face-down: Both players choose one of the five cards in their hand, andplaces it face-down in front of them.

2. Reveal it: The cards are turned over simultaneously.

3. Pay taxes: If the card played shows a coin symbol, the owner's opponent must pay one coin into the city treasury immediately. If he is unable to pay, he is denied building permission this round and must take his card back into his hand.

4. Determine starting player: The player whose card shows the higher number goes first. He goes through each of the following actions:

5. Place card: He must add his card to the cards on the table.

6. Place warehouses: If the card he places is a dock card showing commodities, he places warehouses of the appropriate colours on the card according to the commodities depicted.

7. Next he draws the first dock card from his draw pile if he has played a dock card, or the first water card from that pile if he has played a water card.

8. Receive money: If a player plays a water card, he receives one coin from the treasury as state grant from the city of Amsterdam for extending the canal system.

9. Next player: The next player in order takes his turn, following actions 5 to 8. Once each player has completed their actions, they move on to the next game round.

Basic principle: The playing of cards can cause the imposition of taxes. They also determine which player goes first; he goes through the action sequence; then the other player goes through the sequence.

Fuller details of the individual actions follow:

Paying Taxes
If your opponent plays a card with a coin symbol, then you pay one coin to the treasury (not the opponent). If you are unable to pay, you must take the card you played back into your hand; this is the end of your turn for this round. Cards [with coin symbols] taken back into your hand mean that your opponent does not have to pay tax. If both players are required to pay and have no money, both must pass this turn and instead each takes one coin from the treasury. There is no credit!

Placing a Card
The player whose turn it is must place his played card with the cards already on the table. The card must be played adjacent to the edge of an existing card either horizontally or vertically. It does not matter if the card is a water or a dock card, or if it belongs to the player or his opponent.

Example: [In the picture in the lower left of p. 4] a card may be placed only beside or above one of the existing two cards (spaces a-f); it may not be placed diagonally to them.

Tip: In the first two rounds of the first game, play dock cards and place them in the corners of the water card cross as shown in the picture [on the upper right of p. 4]. This strategy encourages the development of a small harbour area.

In the Basic Game cards cannot be moved once placed, and cards cannot be placed one on top of another.

Areas
Only dock cards connected to one another horizontally or vertically can form an area. It doesn't matter to whom they belong. An area is bounded by water cards or the edge of the game board, and so is always clearly distinct from other areas. New areas can be split off by playing water cards.

Example: in the picture [on the lower right of p. 4] the dock card numbered 7 is its own area, since it is bordered both vertically and horizontally by water cards. The dock cards numbered 3, 9 and 36 form another area; this area is not yet fully enclosed, and could still be extended.

Extent of the Game Board
The completed game will form a game board of 6x6 cards. However, the starting layout is only a 5x5 cross of cards. The location of the game board edges is thus not fixed at the beginning of the game. Once the width or height of the layout reaches six columns or rows, the extent of the game board in that direction is defined and no more cards may be played to extend it (see picture [on upper left of p. 5]). Otherwise the game continues normally. When both directions have been defined as 6x6, areas are considered bounded by the board edges.

Cranes
With the crane players can block spaces from opposing dock cards. It keeps clear the spaces directly adjacent vertically and horizontally); see the picture [on lower left of p.5j. The opposing player can, however, play water cards there. Previously played cards are not affected by the

crane. As a consequence of this, a space adjacent to two opposing cranes can only be filled by a water card.

Tavern
These are the highest-numbered cards in the Basic Game, and have no other special function.

Placing Warehouses
If a player has laid his first dock card with commodities in an area, he places on it warehouses corresponding to the pictured commodities.

Example: [picture on upper right of p. 5] The card shows a wine barrel (brown) and a tea chest (beige); so a brown and a beige warehouse are placed on the card.

This card will from now on be the player's distribution centre for this area. When he lays a further dock card with commodities in the same area, the warehouses corresponding to the card are placed on the distribution centre.

Example: [picture on middle right of p. 5] A spice sack (green) is shown on the card, and a green warehouse is placed on the distribution centre for the area.

By looking at the distribution centre for an area it can be seen at a glance how many commodities have been acquired by a player in that area.

Example: [picture on lower right of p. 5] The opponent has placed his first dock card showing commodities in this area, so this becomes his distribution centre and he places a warehouse on it accordingly.

In each area, each player with commodities there has exactly one distribution centre. If during the course of the game two areas are joined and a player has distribution centres in each, the warehouses are moved to one of them and the other ceases to be a distribution centre.

Scoring for Areas Through Commodity Advantage
A player earns a victory point when an area becomes fully enclosed and his stored commodities there are more valuable than his opponent's. For this purpose, the warehouses in this area only belonging to each player are compared, type for type.

1. A player that has the greatest single superiority in one type of commodity controls the area. A superiority is the difference between the number of commodities of that type owned by each player in a given area.

Example: [picture on upper left of p. 6] In this area Red has two more beige commodities than his opponent (+2). He also has two more in green (+2). Black however has three more than him in brown (+3); this is the highest superiority, and Black receives the victory point for this area.

2. Frequently both players in an area will have the same strength, such that neither has a single larger superiority of commodities than the other. The winner is the player who is ahead in more types of commodities, and so has the higher number of superiorities.

Example: [picture on lower left of p. 6] In another area both players have superiorities of +1, and neither has more than this. However, Black has more superiorities than Red, and so receives the victory point for this area.

3. If both players are ahead in one type and have equal superiorities, the value of each commodity is the decider; wine is more valuable than spices, spices are more valuable than tea, and tea is more valuable than wine. This ranking order is printed on the reference cards.

Example: [picture on right of p. 6] In another area both players have one superiority of +1 and in one commodity neither has superiority. Comparing the values of the commodities, wine is worth more than spices, so Red wins the victory point.

4. In an exact tie the area is not scored. An area with no warehouses is also not scored.

The player who has gained control of an area by his commodity holdings paces one of his warehouse keeper pieces there. Each player then removes the warehouses from the scored area and returns them to the stockpiles.

At the end of the game each player counts the number of warehouse keepers he has on the board to determine his victory point score, one for each.

When an area is fully enclosed, it is scored immediately. After scoring, the current turn continues.

Drawing a Card
When a player has placed a card, he draws a corresponding card. For each round each player will have three dock cards and two water cards in his hand. If a player forgets to draw, he can make up for it as soon as it is noticed. If a card stack runs out, no more of that type of card may be drawn and the player will have fewer cards in hand accordingly.

Collecting Money
When a player lays a water card, he receives a subsidy from the city of Amsterdam and collects one coin from the city treasury. If there is no more money in the treasury, he receives nothing. If a player has forgotten to collect money by the time the next game round has begun, he loses the right to it.

There is another method of earning money. A player may, before cards are revealed at the start of a round, forego his play of a card; he receives one coin from the treasury. The other player may then play out the round on his own. If you pass in this manner, you need pay no taxes. This action is especially useful if you are running out of money or are already penniless.

[It is not clear if both players are allowed to pass and take a coin. Suggested house rule; allow one double pass, but then each player is obliged to play and may not pass on that round. - DO'D]

End of the Game
The game ends immediately when the 6x6 game board is completely full. It is possible that a player is unable to place his played card. Any areas fully defined are scored now.

For each area marked with his warehouse keeper the player scores one victory point. The player with most victory points wins. In the event of a tie, the winner is the player with the most money. In the event of a further tie, the game is declared a draw. Money thus only counts for a tie-breaker at the end of the game.

Money is extremely tight in the game. By timely playing of water cards, financial difficulties can be avoided. Otherwise your opponent has a point of leverage; you may be obliged to pass in order to acquire money.

Water cards are even more powerful when used to close off areas. Small areas allow you to acquire victory points relatively cheaply. In the first game there is often a tendency for players to build a few large areas, even though these produce no more victory points than small ones.
These are all the rules for the Basic Game. You can begin to play the game immediately with them.

The Great Rivalry: Additional rules for the Advanced Game for two players
When you have mastered the Basic Game, you should move on to the Advanced Game.
The ship adds a new excitement to the game. With it players can remove dock cards already played from the board. In addition, the game area is larger and now only the five largest areas are scored.

Unless otherwise stated, the rules of the Basic Game still apply.

Extent of the Game Board
The game board is 7x7 cards. The starting layout remains the same, a cross of five by five cards with the harbour center card in the middle.

Scoring and the Size of Areas
Enclosed areas are scored as before and occupied by warehouse keepers. However, at the end of the game, only count the five largest areas for victory points. The size of an area is the number of dock cards (of whatever colour) comprising it. If there are more than five areas and areas tie for size, count preferentially the areas nearer the harbour centre. Count the shortest route by orthogonal cards to the harbour centre card. If the areas tie for distance as well, neither area is scored; this may result in other areas being scored instead.

The Ship
A patrol ship of the Amsterdam authorities keeps unceasing watch - developments it does not approve must be demolished.

With the ship comes power to remove from the board cards that have already been played. At the beginning of the game the ship starts on the harbour centre card.

When a player plays a card with a ship symbol, then before he carries out the action "Place card", he may move the ship. When the ship is moved, it may be placed on any water card of his choice on the board except the one on which it currently stands.

If the ship is placed on a water card adjacent to a dock card with a ship symbol, this card may be removed. It is placed under the stack belonging to its owner. If more than one dock cards with ship symbols are adjacent to the ship, the player may choose which single one of them he wishes to remove.

It is permissible to remove one of your own dock cards with a ship symbol. There is no obligation to remove a card when moving the ship. In the following "Place card" action, the player may fill the space just created with his card.

If you do not wish to move the ship, it remains where it is. In this case, you may not remove a card; proceed to the "Place card" action.

Both players may move the ship during the course of a round if both players have played cards with ship symbols. Dock cards without ship symbols are untouchable, as are all water cards and all cards in an already enclosed area.

Protection from the Ship
Because of the threat of the ship, harbour construction will be a different matter. Dock cards with ship symbols should not be placed next to water cards, to reduce the risk.

Example: [picture on left of p. 8] Spaces marked with a tick are safe from the ship and with a cross are unsafe; at present the ship cannot be placed next to the spaces marked safe.

When placing a dock card with the ship symbol next to a water card, it can be initially protected as follows; you are able to move the ship to the neighbouring water card. When your opponent moves the ship, he must first move it away from that card and so cannot remove your dock card. This obviously does not work if you are bordering more than one water card.

If you play in this manner, your opponent will only rarely have the chance to remove dock cards.

Destroyed or Displaced Warehouses
When a dock card is removed, any warehouses corresponding to it must naturally also be removed. Possibly a new distribution centre must be designated, if the removal of a card creates two or more new areas or if an existing distribution centre is removed. If the removed card is the only one with commodities belonging to that player in that area, obviously all the warehouses are removed with it.

Example: [picture on lower right of p. 8] Black removes the 3 with the ship. Red must return the three warehouses to stock and take the 3 back into his stack. The 36 and 16 now form separate areas, and Black must split their warehouses. The green warehouse is thus moved to the 16.

Enclosed Areas
Enclosed areas are untouchable. No cards may be removed from them with the ship.

The Rivalry of Four: Additional rules for the game for four players
When you have mastered the Advanced Game for two players, you can also play with four. In this case the game is played with two partnerships of two players each. One takes the red cards and warehouse keepers, and the other the black.

Both players on a team use the same distribution centre in an area. The game board for the four-player game is 8x8.

Preparation
- The players of each team must sit next to one another.
- The players of each team divide the dock cards between them. The cards are shuffled in the usual way and dealt face-down into equal stacks. Each player then draws three dock cards from his own stack, and two water cards, facedown into his hand. The stacks are then turned face-up so that everyone can see the top cards.
- Each player takes four coins.
- The six neutral special cards are shuffled and each player takes one of them face-down into his hand. The remainder are removed unseen from the game.

The Game Sequence
The procedure for each round is basically the same as in the Advanced Game. All four players play a card of their choice and the numbers in the comer determines the turn order. The members of each team are pursuing a common goal, but they each have their own cards and own money. Players may not show their cards to their team-mate.

Taxes
The players sitting directly opposite one another form an opposing pair. Each opposing pair determines separately whether they have incurred taxes. Players on a team keep separate money stocks. If a player runs out of money, his partner may not give him more.

Placing Cards
When the played cards have been revealed, each team may discuss how to play its two cards. Discussion within a team is not allowed at any other time.

Scoring and Size of Areas
Only the five largest areas will be scored; each of these must consist of at least two dock cards, or they will not be scored.

Drawing Cards
Dock cards may only be drawn from your own stack. Water cards are drawn from the common water card stack. If a stack runs out, a player will be unable to draw more cards of that type and must play with fewer cards in hand.

Game with the Ship
If a player removes an opposing dock card with the ship, he may choose which of his opponents will place the card under his stack.

The Special Cards
With the flood card a player can overlay an already-placed bridge or a dock card with only one commodity, simply by placing it on top of the card. Water cards and other dock cards are untouchable. The flood counts as a water card, however no coin is granted for it.

With a bridge a player can overlay an already-placed water card or flood card, simply by placing it on top of the card. In this manner a player can combine two areas provided they have not already been scored. This areas become a single larger area. The bridge counts as a dock card.

The customs house may be played as any water card or dock card would normally be played. It may not however be played as a card that would complete an area's enclosure. An area with a customs house scores one extra victory point. An area with two customs houses thus scores three victory points in all.

Special cards may not be played on or in already enclosed areas. When you play a special card, you do not draw a replacement.

Scenarios for 2-player and 4-player games [See pictures on pp. 10-11 for initial layouts]
When not otherwise specified, the rules for the Advanced Game apply. The ship always starts on the harbour centre card.

Grand Canal (for 2 players)
The course of the Grand Canal defines the 4x12 game board. All areas are scored. It will be very difficult to place dock cards with ship symbols in invulnerable positions; as a result, this scenario leads to a very volatile game.

Always to the Small (for 2 players)
Initial layout: the harbour centre card only. Game board area: 6x6 spaces.
All cranes are removed from the game. Play without the ship. All territories smaller than 4 cards are scored. Areas of size 1 score 1 victory point, areas of size 2 score 2 victory points, and areas of size 3 score 3 victory points. Water is very important in this scenario. A 3-card area, for example, can be prevented from scoring by adding an extra dock card.

Water Game (for 2 players)
Game board area: 6x6 spaces. All areas are scored. All dock cards must border at least one water card. If a player cannot find a free place next to water to place a card, he must return it to his hand. Do not forget to place water at the right moment.

Tic Tac Toe (for 2 players)
The game board area of 8x8 spaces is already defined. Remove all cranes from the game. A player who obtains three areas in a row (horizontally, vertically or diagonally) wins. For this purpose the areas must be completely surrounded by water and belong to one player. If a player achieves this, the game ends immediately. If this result does not occur, the winner is the player with the most areas. Water cards may be played, but no new areas will be able to be split off. Don't forget to keep an eye on the money.

Baksheesh (for 2 players)
Normal initial layout. Game board area: 6x6 spaces. Each player receives only 3 coins. Before the game set aside 10 face-down water cards. Play without the ship. The five largest areas are scored. Before choosing cards each round, each player may "buy out' one dock card with commodities belonging to their opponent, of their choice, through bribery. A dock card with one commodity costs one coin, with two 2, and with three 3. Place the bribe into the city treasury and the targeted card is returned to the bottom of its owner's stack. Already enclosed areas are inviolate. Bribery is tempting, but it can lead you quickly into bankruptcy.

David and Goliath (for 2 players)
Normal initial layout. Game board area: 6x6 spaces. Only the three smallest areas will be scored. Here water has great importance. Areas admittedly have greater, as the name leads you to expect.

Giant (for 2 players)
Normal initial layout. Game board area: 8x8 spaces. Only the seven largest areas will be scored.

Gulliver's Travels (for 2 players)
Initial layout: the harbour centre card only. Game board area: 5x5 spaces. Each player starts with only 3 coins. Cranes without ship symbols, and taverns, are removed from the game. All areas will be scored. A fast and exciting game. One mistake can be decisive.

Justice (for 2 players)
Each player may choose the make-up of his hand at the start of the game, by selecting three dock cards. The water cards are drawn face down as usual. In addition, four dock cards each must be discarded from the game. In this game, the luck of the draw plays a smaller role.

Special Cards for 2 Players
All 6 special cards are shuffled and placed face-down in a stack. Before each round, a player may buy special cards at a cost of two coins. If both players wish to buy and there are not enough special cards left, the player showing the highest card from his hand may buy.

Big Island (for 2 and 4 players)
Game board area: 7x7 with 2 players, 8x8 with 4. With 2 the cranes without ship symbols are removed from the game. With 4, play without special cards. The inner area is worth two victory points; no water may be placed here. All areas are scored. The game can turn out very variably, depending on whether the island or the edges are developed first.

Poverty (for 2 and 4 players)
Normal initial layout. Game board area 7x7 spaces. Each player receives only three coins and the remainder are removed from the game. As a result, there will be only six coins in the game with 2 players, or 12 with four. If a player goes bankrupt and there is no money in the treasury, the game comes to a premature end and the other player or the opposing team has won.

Old Rope (for 2 and 4 players)
A player or team with a tavern on the board at the end of the game may decide whether or not the area containing it will be scored or not. If both taverns are in the same area, it is automatically scored.