

三才棋

XIANGQI SAN CAI

Official Rulebook

Play. Ascend. Live. — More Games. More Depths.

A three-dimensional evolution of classical Xiangqi across two stacked planes — Ren 人 below and Tian 天 above — with a new infiltration specialist, the Attenac.

A game by Nguyen Ngoc Lien (NNL)
lienus.de/spiele

Goal of the Game

You win in one of two ways:

- **Checkmate** — as in classical Xiangqi: the enemy General can no longer escape attack.
- **Infiltration** — your Attenac reaches a point in the enemy palace column and stays there for two consecutive moves of its own, untouched.

Stalemate counts as a loss for the side with no legal move. If the exact same position (pieces, turn, Attenac state, Soldier freedom levels, infiltration progress) occurs for the third time, the game ends immediately in a draw.

The Board

Play takes place on the intersections of the grid, not inside the squares — as in classical Xiangqi. Xiangqi San Cai extends the board across two stacked planes:

- **Ren** 人 (lower plane) — where the game begins.
- **Tian** 天 (upper plane) — reached by the pieces that can switch planes.

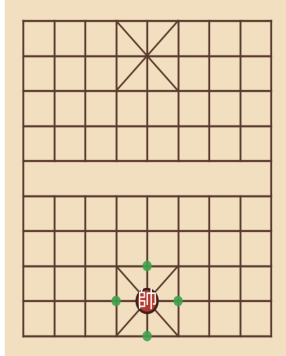
The river is a horizontal barrier, identical on each plane, and applies unchanged to every piece. The nine palace points on each side are thought of as a continuous **palace column** running through both planes. Each piece's individual **degree of freedom** (0 to 5) determines its class of movement, both horizontally and vertically — the higher the degree, the more freedom the piece has earned.

Two Generals may never stand on the same line with nothing between them ("flying general"). There is no soldier promotion and no castling.

The Pieces — Movement on One Plane

Every piece first follows its classical Xiangqi movement pattern on whichever plane it currently stands on. The diagrams below show legal destinations as green dots; blocking points are marked with a red ×.

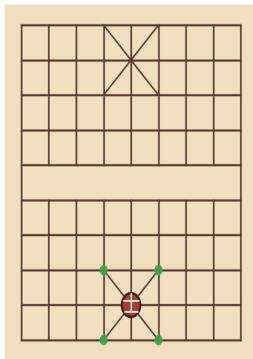
General (帥/將) — 1 point, palace only



General 帥 / 將 — Degree of freedom 0

Moves 1 point orthogonally, strictly within its own palace column. Stays on Ren permanently; the flying-general rule applies only within Ren.

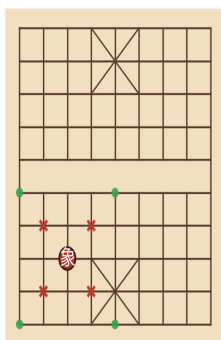
Advisor (士) — 1 diagonal step, palace only



Advisor 士 — Degree of freedom 1

Moves 1 point diagonally, strictly within the palace column. Stays on Ren permanently, like the General — no plane switch.

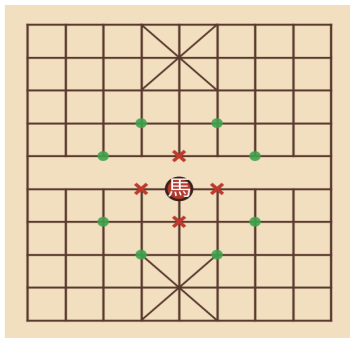
Elephant (象) — 2 diagonal, blocked at the "eye", never crosses the river



Elephant 象 — Degree of freedom 2

Jumps exactly 2 points diagonally. Blocked at the "elephant's eye" — the point directly between origin and destination. Never crosses the river, and stays on Ren permanently — no plane switch.

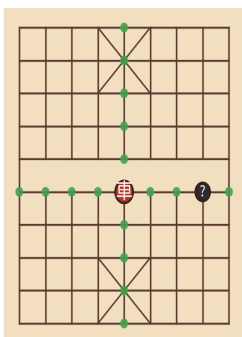
Horse (馬) — classic L-move, blocked at the "leg" (red ×)



Horse 馬 — Degree of freedom 3

Classic L-move: 1 point orthogonal plus 1 point diagonal outward. Blocked at the "horse's leg" — the point 1 step away in the orthogonal direction of the move. See the dedicated section below for its plane-switching variant.

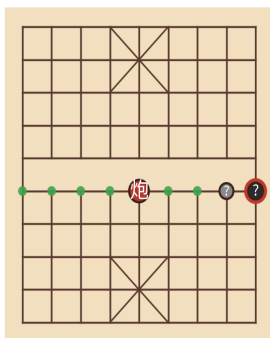
Chariot (車) — any distance in a straight line, blocked by any piece in its path



Chariot 車 — Degree of freedom 4

Any distance in a straight line, blocked by any piece on the line of movement — also true vertically between the planes.

Cannon (炮) — moves like the Chariot, captures by jumping exactly one screen



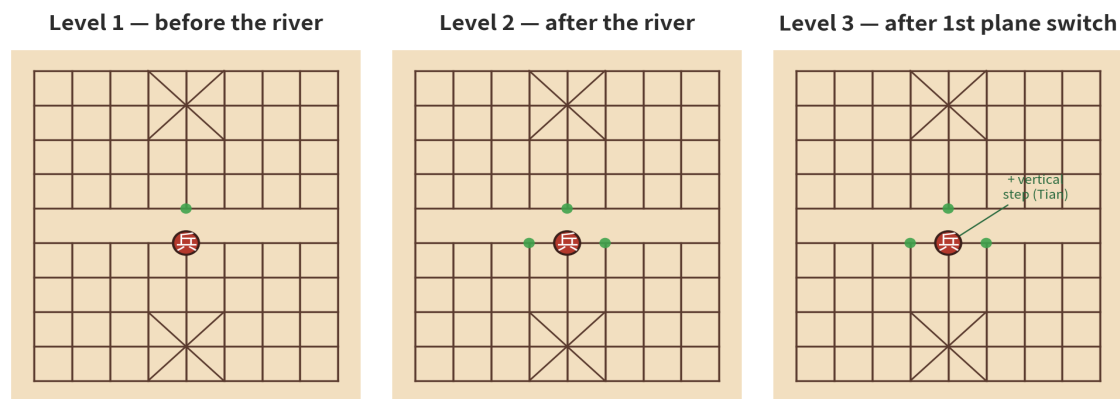
Cannon 炮 — Degree of freedom 4

Moves like the Chariot. Captures only by jumping over exactly one screen — a single piece, of either colour, anywhere along the line of movement.

Soldier 兵 / 卒 — Degree of freedom 1 → 2 → 3

Freedom is a cumulative, irreversible achievement: every threshold crossed stays earned, in the fixed order river → plane.

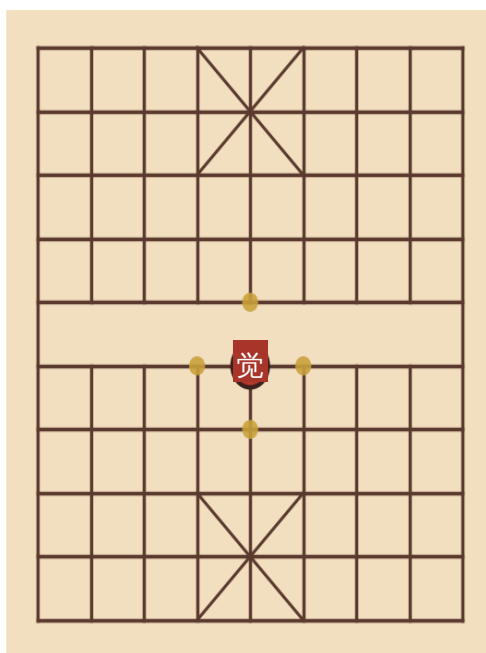
- **Level 1, before the river:** 1 point forward only.
- **Level 2, after crossing the river:** an additional 1 point sideways, permanently.
- **Level 3, after the first plane switch:** an additional 1 vertical step, permanently — plane switching is only possible once the river has been crossed.



The Attenac 觉 — Degree of Freedom 5

Your infiltration specialist. It never captures — contact only freezes. At the start of the game, each player freely chooses one of five marked lines (behind one of the soldier files a/c/e/g/i, on the cannon row) as the Attenac's starting point on Ren.

Attenac (觉) — 1 point, all 4 horizontal directions. Never captures — only freezes.



1 point in each of the 4 horizontal directions, no blocking, cannot capture.

Touch and Freezing

A touch can only happen through genuine adjacency — a piece must actually stand directly next to the Attenac on the *same plane*. A distant threat (a Cannon's long-range capture line, a Chariot's line of attack) does not count as a touch by itself; the piece must actually move into position. No piece other than the Attenac itself may land on the Attenac's own square — it cannot be captured there.

A touch is a mutual stand-off: the Attenac freezes (base value 3 half-moves, increasing with each further touch) and loses time from a reserve that starts at 3:00 minutes, at an increasing but degressive cost per touch. An exhausted reserve means permanent elimination on the next touch. The piece that moved into

position freezes as well, for a fixed 3 half-moves. Every touch resets the infiltration progress.

A touch while the Attenac is already frozen has no further effect on either side — it neither extends the freeze nor costs additional time, and the approaching piece does not freeze either. This prevents a stationary piece from repeatedly "re-touching" an already-incapacitated Attenac to drain its time reserve without it ever getting a chance to act.

The General and Advisor can never trigger a touch this way, since they never leave their own palace. The Elephant is exempt only while the Attenac stands within the Elephant's own palace.

Attenac vs. Attenac

An Attenac cannot block the enemy one. If it moves directly next to an active enemy Attenac on the same plane, that counts as touching itself — it freezes and loses time from its own reserve, while the enemy Attenac already standing there remains untouched and free to move. If the enemy Attenac is already frozen, it has lost its "contagion right" — approaching it is then safe. If the two Attenacs are on different planes, even directly above or below each other, that does not count as contact at all.

The Vertical Extension — Ren ↔ Tian

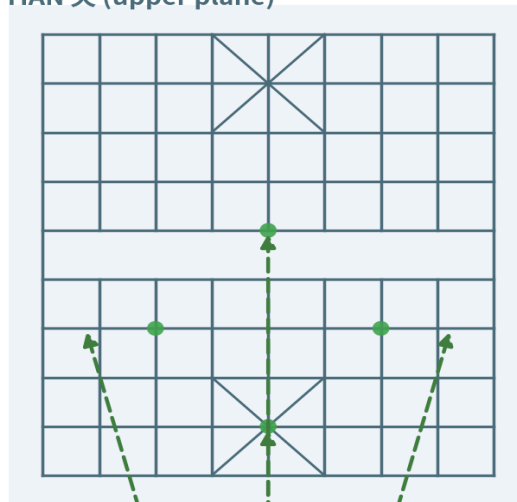
There is only the single vertical link between Ren and Tian. Only the **Horse**, **Chariot**, **Cannon**, and **Attenac** may switch planes — the General, Advisor, and Elephant remain on the plane where the game began (i.e. Ren) for the entire game.

Horse — the featured case

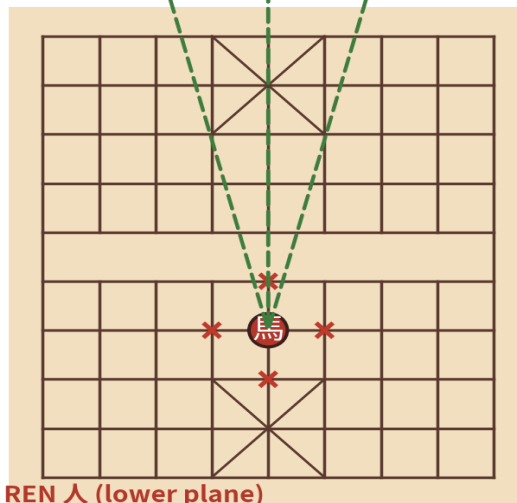
The Horse's plane switch is the most distinctive vertical move in the game: it combines 2 points of horizontal movement with the jump from Ren to Tian (or Tian to Ren), landing on the same square-pattern one plane away. The "horse's leg" for this move sits on the *origin* plane, 1 point along the same direction, and blocks the jump exactly as in the classical L-move if occupied.

This keeps the Horse's plane-switch grounded in the same logic as its ground move: it always combines the jump with horizontal movement and remains blockable — close-range adaptation, not a pure leap.

Horse (馬) — plane switch: 2 points horizontally combined with the Ren ↔ Tian jump TIAN 天 (upper plane)



Blocking "leg" (red ×) sits on the origin plane, 1 point along the same direction.
The move works identically in reverse: Tian → Ren.



REN 人 (lower plane)

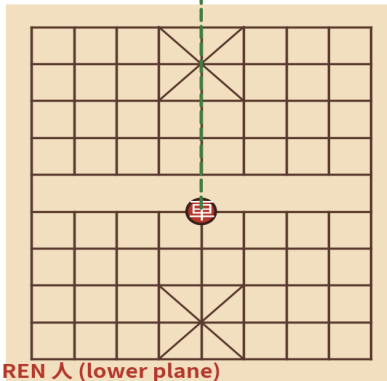
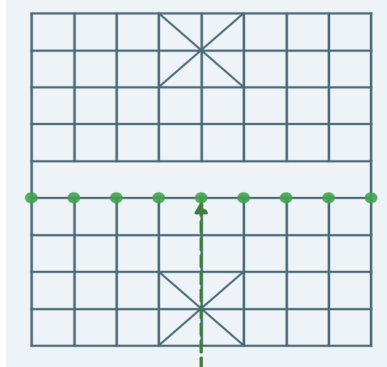
The Horse's plane-switching L-move: 2 points horizontally on the target plane, blocked by any piece on the leg point of the origin plane.

Chariot

Moves through any number of planes in a straight vertical line, blocked by any piece on the line of movement — exactly as it moves horizontally.

Chariot (車) — moves any distance vertically too, blocked by any piece on the way

TIAN 天 (upper plane)

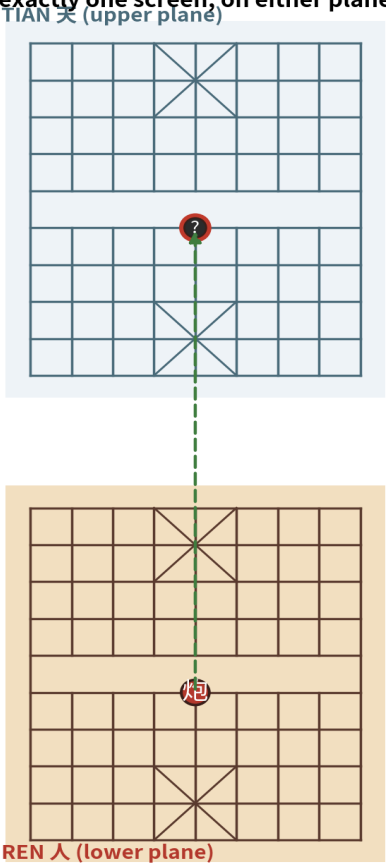


REN 人 (lower plane)

Cannon

Moves vertically like the Chariot, and captures by jumping over exactly one screen on any plane along the line of movement.

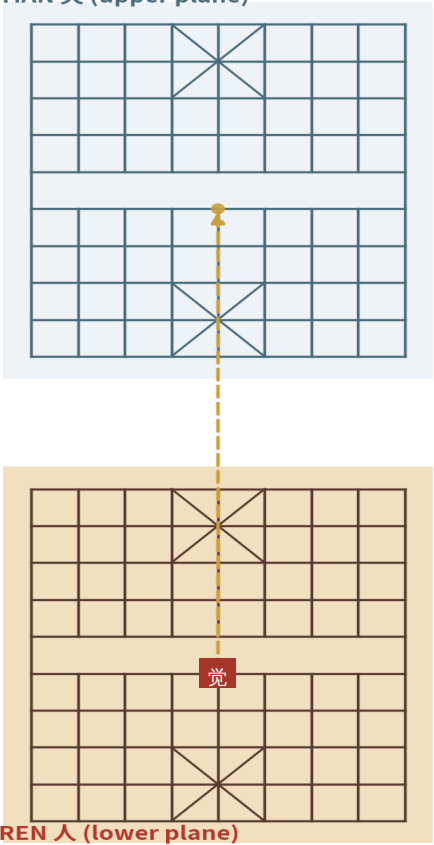
Cannon (炮) — captures vertically by jumping over exactly one screen, on either plane



Attenac

1 point up or down, counted equally among its 6 total directions of movement (4 horizontal + 2 vertical), with no blocking.

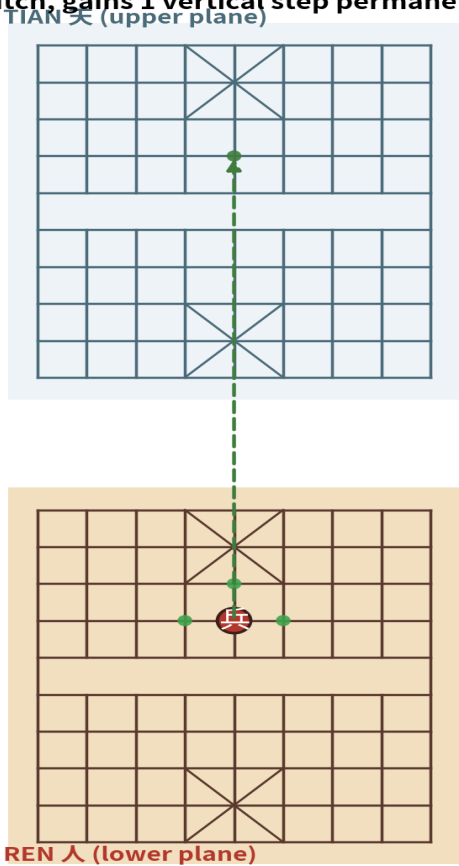
Attenac (觉) — 1 point straight up or down (6 directions total). Never captures.



Soldier — Level 3

Only after crossing the river *and* making its first plane switch does the Soldier permanently gain an additional 1-point vertical step, on top of its forward and sideways movement.

Soldier (兵) — Level 3: after the first plane switch, gains 1 vertical step permanently



Win Conditions — Summary

- **Checkmate** — the enemy General can no longer evade attack.
- **Infiltration** — the Attenac reaches a point in the enemy palace column and stays there for two consecutive moves of its own, untouched.
- **Stalemate** counts as a loss for the side with no legal move.
- **Threefold repetition** results in a draw.

Xiangqi San Cai 三才棋 — a game by Nguyen Ngoc Lien (NNL) · lienus.de/spiele