



## SIHARAN CHESS

A Chess Variant By Simon Edward Jepps  
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### Introduction

Siharan Chess, which gets its name from combining "Simon" with "Sahara", is an 8x8 variant employing one extra piece per player, namely the Siharan Knight.

Each player owns ONE Siharan Knight in addition to their regular classical pieces, which sits directly behind the King & Queen off-board, awaiting its deployment.

The Siharan Knight moves & captures like the historic Camel piece, which is in a 3,1 'L' pattern, effectively an elongated Knight move, yet also features a 2-square horizontal leap. As such the Siharan Knight is a colour-bound leaper piece.

◆ This new piece improves the classical game by:

1. Replenishing the balance of leapers & colour-bounds.
2. Augmenting & nourishing exhausted or indeed flank Opening lines.
3. Providing a fantastic new move, board-logic enhancement & point system.
4. Resurrecting & embracing an ancient piece of historic cultural significance.

Historically and academically, the Camel piece is not a particularly strong piece, argued by many to actually be less than a Knight due to its colour-boundness, but however likewise argued to be almost equal to a Knight due to its much longer and thus quite dangerous stride.

The Siharan Knight then, which is a compound piece of Camel + a 2-square horizontal leap, actually surpasses the Camel in prowess, indeed arguably equal to a Bishop or perhaps sometimes slightly more, depending on the position.

Yet vice versa of course, a Siharan Knight near the side of the board is somewhat weaker due to its primary reach stretching beyond the available arena and especially so along the board edge where its 2-square horizontal sideways leap, which helps the Siharan Knight evade unto alternative patterns, becomes greatly diminished.

Evaluating pieces is always a contentious issue, even today people cannot agree on the value of traditional pieces, of which opinions vary wildly!

Either way the Siharan Knight is a fantastically fun piece, since as I will explain shortly, in Siharan Chess it serves as a double-edged item of competition, somewhat akin to the King! So trust me, it is a most worthy piece.

### Into the game...

The Siharan Knight enters play via the *Seirawan* method - occupying the newly vacated square of any back-rank piece in the same move the back-rank piece first vacates. Thus should all eight back-rank pieces make their first move BEFORE the player enters his/her Siharan Knight into the game, then the player forfeits his/her right to do so.

Siharan Chess grants regular Knights an optional Camel move (3,1) 'sans capturing' from any of the four corner squares of the board. This doubles the number of squares available to the Knight from a corner square from 2 to 4 and of course increases its stride thereof also.

The reason for granting regular Knights an optional 'non capturing' Camel move from corner squares is because the Knight becomes significantly weaker at this far out realm of the board, whereas their comrades the Bishops maintain quite a prowess here regardless. Allowing these 2 extra squares replenishes the balance.

### Quarter Point

A *quarter point* is awarded to the player if he/she captures the opponent's Siharan Knight, regardless of who wins the game. For example, if White won the game but both players had captured each other's Siharan Knight, then the game would be scored *W 1.25 - B 0.25*.

The reason for this quarter point is twofold; firstly of course it provides an extra element of competition unique only to Siharan Chess, but secondly it replenishes the positivity sharply lost during a tournament whence chance and circumstance has left you void of a reasonable opportunity to catch up.

If a player's Pawn promotes to Siharan Knight the quarter point is no longer awardable to the opponent unless the opponent captures again. Players may only promote to a piece available from the set - this **NO DOUBLE-OVER** and NEVER more than ONE Siharan Knight per player in play.

### Notation

The Siharan Knight is notated with an 'S'. When entering one's Siharan Knight into the game, we first write the move of the piece first vacating its starting square, followed by a *forward slash* and then 'S'. For example, the very first move of a game could be notated *J. Nc3S*.

In the case of Castling, where there are TWO squares to choose from, the player would choose either the Rook or King square and write this *O-O/SR* for Rook or *O-O/SK* for King.

The Siharan Knight is pictured in diagrams as a regular Knight with a **diamond** about its chest (◆).

Figurines can of course be a myriad of designs, but the simplest idea which I have applied, is to glue a circular pedestal to an identical Knight's base to sit on. Mine are actually their opposite colours to give a two-tone prominence!

### Summary

Many years ago at my local(ish) Chess club, I was introduced to a Chess Variant called *Pocket Knight*; a simple game where each player owns one extra Knight which they can 'drop' into the game at any time.

I was intrigued. Of course, it made perfect sense. Everyone loves their Knight and are saddened by its capture. Everyone also agrees, the modern game of Chess is imbalanced by too many sliding pieces compared to only the one leaper piece.

Likewise, as my younger studies would learn, the modern game is also imbalanced by too many colour-free pieces compared to only the one colour-bound piece.

Thus it has always been an idea of mine to create a new variant based on the same concept of *Pocket Knight*, but I have been simmering on its design for many years.

Aside from finding enjoyment in all my other games designs, I have always been undecided as to how the piece should move... "Well, like a Knight..." Actually, no.

I didn't want a third Knight and in truth I think many Chessicians would agree that a third Knight in the 64-square game is that all too familiar mathematical paradox of 'too much Knight whence too less Knight...'. What are we to do instead?

Of course much of game design is going to be entirely based on the designer's personal desires and mine... Well, it was a Camel. Don't you just love Camels?

Whence studying my Camel I realised, as cool as it is, the piece is vulnerable to a locked position on the 64-square board, since due to its footprint only reaching a long distance and often beyond the board edge, it had no "close-hand" means of negotiating its way out of a routeless scenario.

Thus my Camel piece required I provide it a colour-bound means of evasion & some pattern-plan changeability without overpowering or *over-confusing* the opponent. The new piece had to maintain an easily identifiable projected footprint, just as all traditional pieces do, whilst at the same time allowing itself to deviate "classically" from a locked position.

Allowing an additional forward movement would deem it too dangerous, making easy capture of Rooks and deliverance of Check far too swift. So in the end I decided to give my piece a short-range, colour-bound horizontal leap. This sideways leap is just enough grace to grant it a mediating short-range adjustment to its projected footprint without spoiling the cleanly balanced logic of the game.

Furthermore, this finished design actually portrays perfectly the behaviour of a long-range horse and its swift sideward bolt unto safer terrain!

You see, I wanted passionately a NEW piece, like a Knight but *not* a Knight and I wanted passionately to resurrect the ancient spirits of far-away lands, the people, their cultures and their joys, the legends and the treasures once lost unto the sands of time.

Herewith the Siharan Knight is not just a well designed Chess piece - it IS peace.

This is because it not only solves all the ailments of the dying 64-square game, but through the power of its command, delivers remedy to our ever-so beloved game as like a summoned doctor on horseback, crossing the desert to save the precious life of a most honoured sage.

Aye, this is not just Chess - this is a wizardry of love.

Thank you for reading.



Diagram 1

Initial board set-up. The one Siharan Knight of each player, which moves/captures like a Camel (3,1) or leaps 2 squares horizontally, sits off-board behind the King & Queen and enters play via the Seirawan method. Regular Knights (2,1) are granted an optional Camel move (3,1) 'sans capturing' from any of the four corner squares of the board. A quarter point is awarded to either player who captures their opponent's Siharan Knight, regardless of who wins the game. An extra element of competition unique only to Siharan Chess!

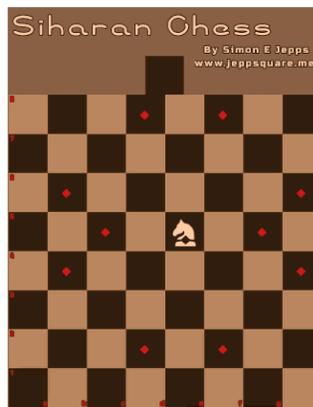


Diagram 2

The Siharan Knight moves & captures like the historic Camel piece, which is in a 3,1 'L' pattern, effectively an elongated Knight move, yet also features a 2-square horizontal sideways leap. As such the Siharan Knight is a colour-bound leaper piece. The Siharan Knight enters play via the Seirawan method - occupying the newly vacated square of any back-rank piece in the same move the back-rank piece first vacates. Thus each player has 8 opportunities to enter their S-Knight into play before else forfeiting their right to do so.



Diagram 3

The Siharan Knight is notated with an 'S'. Following 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Nc3 Bc5 4. b3 Bc5, White played 5. Bb2/S, entering the S-Knight to c1, here defending f2, d4, b4, a1 & e1! Black responded 5... 0-O/SK, entering the S-Knight to e3, here defending d5, f5, h2, b2, c8 & g8! The notation "/SR" means after Castling Black entered the S-Knight to the King square, whereas "/SK" would signify the Rook square. The S-Knight fluctuates or is equal to a Knight/Bishop.



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