

REINER KNIZIA

# TAJ MAHAL

## A GAME OF POWER AND INFLUENCE IN INDIA

*Control of India at the beginning 18th century is up for grabs. The 200 year-long rule of the Grand Moguls is collapsing, but they still have some power. Now is the time for the Maharishis and princes to take control of the Indian subcontinent. The players use strategy and cunning to win influence over northwestern India, province by province and city by city. The most successful player (and the winner) is the one who establishes the most magnificent palaces and has the most power in the end.*

### OVERVIEW

The board is divided into 12 Indian provinces. In the game, the players will visit each of the provinces just once. In each visit, the players compete, using their cards, for the influence available in the current province. Each visit consists of several rounds and in each round, the players, in turn order, can either play 1 or 2 cards or completely withdraw from the visit. When a player withdraws, he compares the cards he has played in the visit with those played by his opponents. The player wins influence in forces that he has more symbols for on his cards than any other player. There are two important targets for the players:

- Winning the right to rule the province, symbolized by the elephant, adds the economic power of the province to the player.
- Winning control over the prominent forces, like Vizier or Monk, gives the player rule of individual cities and their spheres of influence, which may extend beyond the borders of the province.

In both ways, players may score influence points in each province.

**After all twelve provinces have been visited, the player with the most influence points, is the winner.**

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|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 game board      | 1 gold ring (crown)         |
| 100 palaces       | 12 octagonal province tiles |
| 5 scoring markers | 24 oval influence tiles     |
| 2 black figures   | 16 bonus tiles              |
| 100 cards         | (15 square & 1 Taj Mahal)   |

Note: Before the first game, carefully remove the individual tiles from their frames. Sort out the 4 special cards (with a different back from the other 96).

### OVERVIEW

**The game is 12 visits long.**

**In each visit, the players compete for the influence in a province.**

**Winning the rule of a province.**

**Winning the rule of a city.**

**Players may score influence in each province.**

**The player with the most influence in the end is the winner.**

## PREPARATION

Unfold the **board** and place it on the table. It shows the northwestern area of the Indian subcontinent divided into 12 provinces. Each province has 4 cities except for the province with Agra (the site of the Taj Mahal), which has 5 cities. The cities are connected by a network of roads. 16 of the 49 cities are colored purple to indicate that they are fortresses. A scoring track runs around the board to enable the players to track their influence points.



Place the number 12 province tile on the province with Agra. Shuffle the remaining **11 octagonal province tiles** face down and then place one, randomly and face up, in each of the 11 remaining provinces. Place them so that they do not cover the roads and cities. The provinces are visited in the order shown on the tiles, starting with 1 and ending with 12, in the province with Agra.

Place the **Taj Mahal bonus tile** face up on the fortress city of Agra.



Shuffle the **15 square bonus tiles** face down and then place one, randomly and face up, on each fortress city.

Sort the **24 oval influence tiles** by their pictures and place them face up in four stacks beside the upper right corner of the board (court of the Grand Moguls). Place one of each type on the corresponding space in the court of the Grand Moguls.



Place the **gold ring** (the crown) in the court of the Grand Moguls.

Place the **4 special cards** face up beside the board.



## PREPARATION

Place the board on the table.

Place the number 12 province tile in the province with Agra.

Place a province tile in each other province.

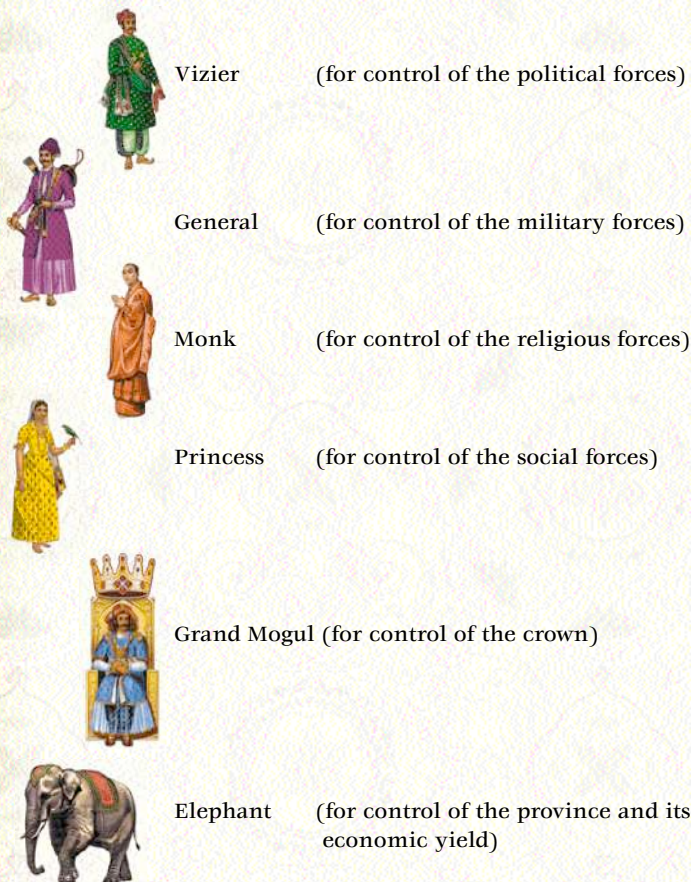
Place the Taj Mahal tile on Agra.

Place the other bonus tiles on the fortress cities.

Place one of each influence tile and the crown in the court of the Grand Moguls.

Place the special cards face up near the board.

Shuffle the **96 remaining cards**. Players use these cards to compete for influence points in the game. There are 21 cards each in red, yellow, green, and violet (= the colored cards) and 12 plain cards (= white cards). The cards have combinations of six different symbols:



Deal **6 cards** to each player face down. These are the players' starting hands and are kept secret from the other players.

Lay out the **card supply** for the first round. The number of players determines how many to draw and place face up to the left of the board.

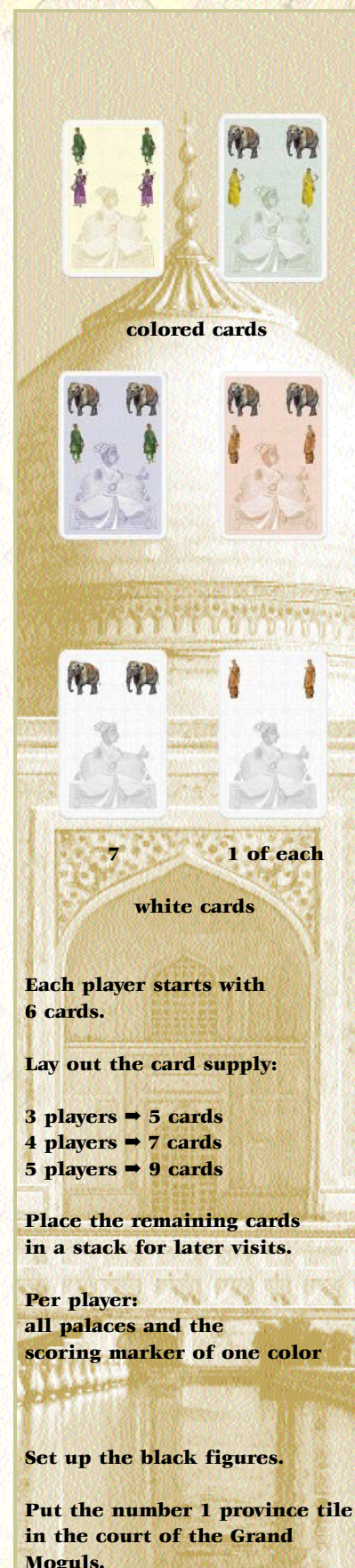
- three players ➡ 5 cards
- four players ➡ 7 cards
- five players ➡ 9 cards

Place the remaining cards face down in a stack on the left side of the board. This drawing deck will be used in later rounds. Used cards will be discarded to a face up discard pile next to the drawing deck.

Sort the **palace and scoring markers** by color. Each player selects a color, places all the palaces of that color before him on the table (his play area), and his scoring marker on the zero space of the scoring track.

Note: The number of palaces is unlimited. In the rare case that a player uses all of his palaces, he should continue the game with additional palaces of an unused color.

Set up the **2 black figures**. Place one (current province figure) in the first province (with the number 1 province tile). Move the number 1 province tile to the space provided in court of the Grand Moguls. Choose a starting player by any method you prefer; the starting player places the other black figure (starting player figure) in his play area.



## PLAYING THE GAME

The starting player begins the first visit. Play continues in clockwise order around the table. On a player's turn, he must:

⇒ **play 1 or 2 cards** to influence forces in the current province

or

⇒ **withdraw** from the competition and claim the rewards of his influence in the current province.

When a player withdraws, the visit is over for him and he may take no further turns in the current province. When all players have withdrawn, the visit ends and the next begins.

⇒ **play 1 or 2 cards**

When a player chooses to play 1 or 2 cards, he must first play **exactly one** colored card from his hand face up on the table. On his first turn in a visit, a player may play a card of any color (red, yellow, green or violet). In all subsequent turns during a visit, the colored cards a player plays must be the same color as the first card he played in the visit. (exception: special change color card, see below).

*Note: in the next visit, a player may again choose any color on his first turn and then must use that color for the rest of that visit.*

In addition to the **one** colored card, a player may also play either **one** white card **or** **one** special card. White cards and special cards may never be played without a colored card (see also the rules below for the special cards.)



a)

or



b)

or



c)

A player should play his cards so that they overlap each other, but should make sure that all players see the symbols on all the cards played. This is important so that the players can easily see how much influence each player wields over each of the forces.



Once a card has been played, it may not be taken back into the player's hand. Player's may attempt to influence others in their card play, however, players must keep the cards in their hands secret from the other players.

## PLAYING THE GAME

**On a player's turn, he must:**

⇒ **play cards**

or

⇒ **withdraw**

**play cards:**

⇒ **only 1 colored card**  
**per player per turn**

⇒ **only 1 card color**  
**per player per turn**

*Different players may play the same color in a visit.*

⇒ **+ 1 white card**

or

⇒ **+ 1 special card**

*There are three possible ways a player may play cards in a turn:*

a) 1 colored card

b) 1 colored card + 1 white card

c) 1 colored card + 1 special card

## → withdraw

When a player withdraws, he may play no more cards during this visit, but immediately compares the cards he has played during this visit with those of his opponents:



- **Vizier, General, Monk or Princess:** When a withdrawing player has **more** symbols of one or more of these four types than any other single player, he takes the corresponding influence tile from the court of the Grand Moguls and places it face up on the table before himself. Then he places one of his palaces on an **empty** city space of his choice in the current province.

When a player places a palace on a fortress, he takes the bonus tile on it and scores it immediately (see points of influence below).

If a player has the majority with several of these four symbols, he takes all corresponding influence tiles from the court, places a palace for each, and takes and scores any bonus tiles he earns.



- **Grand Mogul:** When a withdrawing player has more Grand Mogul symbols than any other single player, he takes the crown from the court of the Grand Moguls, puts it on one of his palaces, and places this "crown palace" on **any** city in the current province. Unlike the above four symbols, he may place it on a city that already has a palace. In this case, he puts the crown palace next to the other palace. If the crown palace is placed on an **empty** city, **one** normal palace may be placed there later in the visit by another player.



*Note: A crown palace may be placed on a fortress, but the placing player may not take a bonus tile still there. In this case, he leaves the tile for the next player to place a normal palace there.*



- **Elephant:** When a withdrawing player has more Elephant symbols than any other single player, he wins power over the province and over its economic yield (represented by the four basic Indian goods: rice, tea, spices, and jewels). The player takes the province tile from the court of the Grand Moguls, puts it face up on the table before himself.

After the withdrawing player has taken the tiles and/or crown he has earned from the court and scored any appropriate influence points (see below), he discards the cards he has played during this visit.

*Note: once a tile or the crown has been won and taken from the court, of course no other player may win that same tile or crown on this visit.*

## withdraw:

### **Majority with Vizier, General, Monk or Princess:**

- take the corresponding influence tile from the court
- place a palace on an **empty** city of the current province

*For the same or fewer symbols of a type, a player gets nothing!*

### **Palace on a fortress:**

- take a bonus tile

*Note: palaces may only be placed on cities of the current province.*

### **Majority with Grand Mogul:**

- take the crown from the court
- place a palace on **any** city of the current province

*A second palace may be placed on the city with the crown palace.*

**The crown palace does not earn the player a bonus tile!**

### **Majority with Elephant:**

- take the province tile from the court

*Note: Of course, a player can win any combination of symbols in a visit. For example, a player could win the monk, crown, and elephant. Theoretically, a single player could win all six.*

*Of course, a withdrawing player might win nothing, choosing to save his cards for a later province.*



Anna

It is Anna's turn. She decides to withdraw since she has hoped for majority with the elephant. She takes the province tile from the court and scores the appropriate number of influence points (see points of influence below). Finally, she discards the cards she played to the discard pile (of course, Anna's cards no longer count for this example).



Bob

Bob's turn: He also withdraws since he has little chance to win more than the Vizier. He takes the Vizier tile from the court, puts a palace in the current province and scores the appropriate points (see below). He also discards his cards to the discard pile (like Anna's cards, Bob's no longer count for this example).



Chris

Chris follows. He plays another card (not shown in this example, but it would not include a monk or a Grand Mogul), since he hopes that Doris will withdraw.

Chris gets another turn and withdraws. He takes the princess and general tiles, places two palaces, and scores the appropriate points (see below).



Doris

Doris withdraws as Chris hoped. She is content to win both the monk and the Grand Mogul. She takes the monk tile and the crown from the court, places two palaces and scores the appropriate points (see below). Also, she discards her cards to the discard pile. (like Anna's and Bob's cards, Doris' no longer count for this example)

## Influence points

After withdrawing and comparing his cards with the other players' cards, a player determines how many influence points he has earned and advances his scoring marker on the scoring track accordingly. Scoring should proceed in the following order:

**1) Bonus tiles:** when a player takes a bonus tile, he receives:



... 4 influence points. He then sets the tile aside; it is out of the game.



... 2 influence points and advances his scoring marker on the scoring track two spaces. He then sets the tile aside; it is out of the game.



... the topmost card from the drawing deck and puts it in his hand. He then sets the tile aside; it is out of the game.



... 1 influence point for the commodity on this bonus tile and 1 influence point for each occurrence of same commodity which he has on other bonus tiles and province tiles. He puts the bonus tile face up in his play area as it can earn him even more points later in the game.

If a player wins several bonus tiles in a visit, he scores each individually and sequentially.

### Example

just won:



+

from earlier visits:



1 + 1 = 3 points

1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 4 points  
total = 7 points

## Influence points

### 1) Points for bonus tiles

⇒ + 4 points

⇒ + 2 points

⇒ + 1 extra card

⇒ + x points

Remove any bonus tiles not won in a visit from the game.

Anna won two tea bonus tiles in a single visit. First, she scores one of the two tiles.

Then, she scores the second one (the first tile scores again!).

## 2) Province tiles:

When a player wins the current province tile, he puts it face up in his play area and receives 1 point for each commodity on it (the number 1 province tile has 1 commodity and is, thus, worth 1 point, all other province tiles are worth 2 points). In addition, he receives 1 point for each occurrence of the same commodities on province tiles and bonus tiles that the player has in his play area (earned earlier in the game).

Example: just won      already scored      from earlier visits



**8 points = 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1**

## 3) Palaces:

When a player places at least one palace in the current province, he receives 1 influence point. Note: even if he places several palaces, he receives only 1 influence point for the current province! In addition, he scores 1 influence point for each additional province (not city!) where he has a palace that is connected through an uninterrupted line of roads and his palaces to his own palaces in the current province. Each city with no palace or another player's palace, is considered an interruption. Except that, a city with two palaces counts as a connection for both players.

## 2) Points for province tiles

**Condition: win the current province tile**

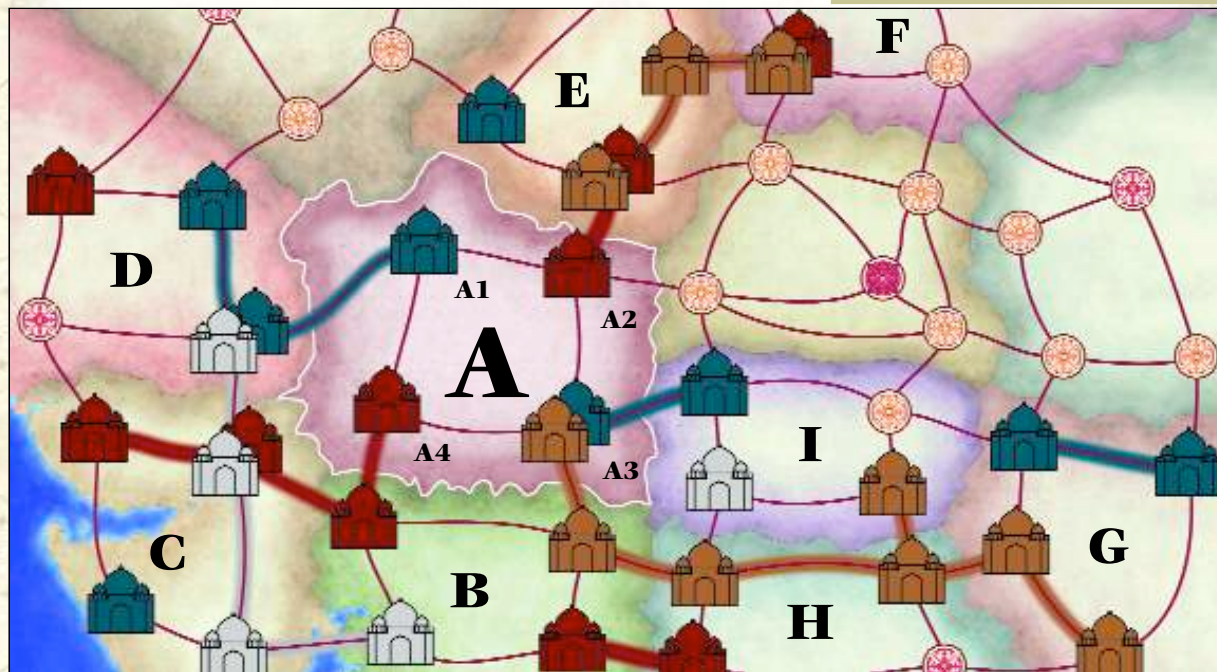
- ⇒ 1 point for each commodity on the province tile
- ⇒ 1 point for each matching commodity on other bonus and province tiles

From the example on page 6: Anna won two tea bonus tiles and the province tile in this visit. She scores 15 points in the ninth visit for the two tea bonus tiles (7 pts.) and the province tile (8 pts.).

## 3) Points for palaces

**Condition: own at least one palace in the current province**

- ⇒ 1 point for this province
- ⇒ 1 point for each additional connected province



*A is the current province.*

- Red: 1 point (for at least 1 palace in province A)  
 2 points (for the A4 connection to provinces B & C)  
 1 point (for the A2 connection to province E)
- Blue: 1 point (for A)  
 1 point (for the A1 connection to province D)  
 1 point (for the A3 connection to province I)
- Brown: 1 point (for A)  
 4 points (for the A3 connection to provinces B, H, I, G)
- Gray: 0 points (gray has no palaces in the current province!)

The second palace in province A (like the second in province C) does not score an extra point!  
 The palaces in D, F and H are not connected.

The palaces in C, E and G are not connected.

The palaces in E and F do not score as they are not connected to a brown palace in the current province.  
 If gray had placed a palace on A1, he would score 4 points: 1 for A and 3 for D, C, and B.

### Finishing a withdrawal

After the withdrawing player has scored all his influence points, he discards the cards he used this turn, except for special cards, face up on the discard pile. Discarded cards have no further influence on the province, thus, deadlocks are often resolved in favor of the remaining players!

As his last action for the visit, the withdrawing player takes **two** cards of his choice from the face up card supply next to the board. These he adds to his hand. Note: the **last** player to withdraw takes only **one** card as that is all that remains! Such is the disadvantage for finishing last.

The visit continues in clockwise order around the table with players playing cards or withdrawing. When only one player remains, he plays as many turns as he wants (using the normal rules for playing cards) and then withdraws to score his influence points.

*A player may choose to withdraw in the first round of a visit without playing any cards. Of course, the player will place no palaces in this province and score no points for this visit. However, such a player draws the topmost card from the drawing deck and then takes two cards from the card supply. Thus, players may occasionally find it advisable to withdraw without playing cards.*

### Ending a visit and starting the next visit

When the last player in a visit has withdrawn and scored his influence points, discarded the cards he played to the discard pile, and taken the last card from the card supply, the visit ends. Each player, who has **two** identical oval influence tiles, returns them to the supply near the upper right of the board and takes the appropriate special card (see special cards below).

The next visit begins with the following:

- Move the **starting player figure** to the next player to the left. He is the starting player for the new visit.
- Move the **current province figure** to the next province in number sequence (from 1 to 12).
- Move the next **province tile** from the new province to the space provided in court of the Grand Moguls.
- Replace any **influence tiles** that were taken from the court of the Grand Moguls. Take them from the supply next to the board.
- Return the **crown** to the court of the Grand Moguls if it is not still there.
- Draw cards from the drawing deck to lay out a new **card supply**. Draw the same number of cards as in preparation. When the drawing deck is exhausted, shuffle the discard pile and place it face down as the new drawing deck.

**All cards played are discarded.**  
**Exception: the player keeps any special cards he played, returning them to his hand.**

**New cards chosen from the card supply.**

*Tip: players may want to take notice of which cards their opponents choose.*

**A player who withdraws before playing any cards in a visit, draws a card from the drawing deck.**

*If no player wins the province tile, remove it from the game. If no player wins the crown or one or more influence tiles, they remain in the court for the next visit.*

**To begin each new visit:**

- ➔ **Move starting player figure clockwise to the next player**
- ➔ **Move current province figure to the next province**
- ➔ **Move the new province tile to the court**
- ➔ **Replace used influence tiles in the court**
- ➔ **Return the crown to the court**
- ➔ **Lay out a new card supply (also for the 12th visit!)**

## The special cards

At the beginning of the game, the 4 special cards are placed face up beside the board. Players can win control of a special card by winning two of the Vizier, the General, the Monk, or the Princess influence tiles. At the end of a visit, after all players have withdrawn, players who have two identical oval influence tiles trade those tiles for the corresponding special card. The player takes the card from the table if it is still there or from the player who is holding it. The player adds the card to his hand.

Special cards are played just like the white cards. That is, they must be played with a colored card. Only one special card may be played by a player in a turn. They have the advantage that they return to the players hand instead of being discarded when the player withdraws. Of course, when another player has the two influence tiles corresponding to the special card, that player will take the card for himself at the end of the visit.

The special cards give a player, when they are played (they have no effect if they stay in the player's hand), the following advantages:



+ 1 Elephant

⇒ Just like the white Elephant cards.



+ 1 Grand Mogul

⇒ Just like the white Grand Mogul card.



+ 2 influence points ⇒ The player receives 2 influence points, immediately, when he plays this special card.



Free color change

⇒ The colored card, which the player plays with this special card, need not match the color required for this visit.

*Note: This special card applies only to the turn it is played. In the player's subsequent turns of this visit, he must use cards of the color he started the visit with.*

**At the end of a visit, players with two equal influence tiles trade them for the corresponding special card.**

*Note: If a player has the two influence tiles for a special card already in his hand, he discards the two tiles and keeps the special card (without additional effect!).*

**A special card is played like a white card:**

- ⇒ played only with a colored card (never alone!)
- ⇒ at most one per turn, but can use several in a visit

*When a player plays this special card in his first turn of a visit, the card color of his second colored card (and not the one played with this special card) is used for the rest of the visit.*

## GAME END

The game ends after the twelfth visit is complete. Each player receives additional influence points for the cards remaining in his hand, including the cards he took from the card supply when he withdrew on the last visit. He receives 1 point for:

- each special card,
- each white card, and
- each card of the color he has the most cards of (if two or more colors tie for most, the player gets just points for one color).

The player with the highest total score is the winner.

Example:



|               |           |
|---------------|-----------|
| special card  | +1        |
| white card    | +2        |
| longest color | <u>+3</u> |
|               | 6         |



|               |           |
|---------------|-----------|
| special card  | +1        |
| white card    | +1        |
| longest color | <u>+2</u> |
|               | 4         |



|               |           |
|---------------|-----------|
| special card  | +1        |
| white card    | +0        |
| longest color | <u>+5</u> |
|               | 6         |

## GAME TACTICS

• A player's strength comes from his cards and cards are scarce. It is less important to win many influence points in one specific visit, but rather to win some influence points in as many visits as possible. Remember that you also score by connecting to palaces in already visited provinces and by matching previously gathered commodities.

• Carefully consider when to play more cards and when to withdraw. Try to avoid long conflicts as they cost a lot of cards. Also, a player holding a lot of cards in his hand may encourage, just by this fact, other players to withdraw quickly so that he may win points with a small card expenditure.

• Plan ahead. Decide where and what you want to collect and score in the next provinces with the cards you have. Also, carefully choose cards from the card supply to give you the cards you need to accomplish what you have planned.

## GAME END

**1 point per**  
 ➔ special card  
 ➔ white card  
 ➔ cards of his "longest" color

**The player with the most influence points, is the winner**

*Any remaining colored cards and influence tiles are worthless.*

*Do not forget: you are not allowed to show other players your cards!*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author and publisher thank the many playtesters for their time and suggestions for this game. We especially want to thank: Iain Adams, Chris Bowyer, Christine & Peter Dürdoth, Dave Farquhar, Walburga Freudenstein, Dieter Habelitz, Markus Huber, Ross Inglis, Kevin Jacklin, Chris Lawson, Dominik Wagner and the game groups in Berlin, Bödefeld, Hannover and Rosenheim.

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