

*Small
Samurai
Empires*



Milan Tasevski

OVERVIEW

Daimyo! The mists of war are upon us. They bring fear, uncertainty, and destruction... our enemies' armies are marching on our provinces and it is up to you if we will emerge victorious, or become erased from history. Daimyo, are you ready to lead your samurai to glory?

- Map board of Japan
- 4 Player screens
- 44 Order tokens (11 per player)
- 64 Samurai meeples (16 per player)
- 12 Castle meeples (3 per player)
- 20 Destiny cards
- 30 Food tokens
- 30 Bushido tokens • 12 Resource seeding tokens
- Score board
- Influence board
- 16 Influence marker cubes (4 per player)
- 4 Score cubes (1 per player)
- 4 Turn track markers (1 per player)
- 16 Neutral action tokens (variant)
- 4 Region agenda tiles (variant)
- 16 Region agenda markers (variant)
- 9 Shrine Meeples (variant)



GAME OBJECTIVE

Small Samurai Empires is an action-programming, area-control strategy board game for 2-4 players.

In this game, players play as Daimyo - leaders of the great houses with the purpose of conquering Japan and becoming its most powerful emperor in history. In order to accomplish this, players will recruit samurai armies, move them across provinces to gain majority, harvest resources to enhance certain actions, attack enemy armies to take over provinces, and build castles to fortify their position in a province.

At the end of the game, players will score points for each province they controlled at the end of each era, depending on its final value in the last era. Whoever has the most points at the end of the game, becomes the Emperor of Japan!

GAME CONCEPTS

Before getting into the rules of the game, let's familiarize with the components and the game concepts:



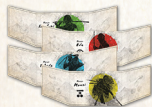
Samurai Meeples

Each samurai meeple represents one **samurai army** on the board. In the future, we will use the  symbol to refer to a **samurai army**.



Castle Meeples

Each castle meeple represents a **castle** on the board. In the future, we will use the  symbol to refer to a **castle**.



Player Screens

Players will use the screens to hide their order tokens, as well as bushido and food tokens.



Order Tokens

Throughout the game, players will place their order tokens on the indicated slots on the board to plan their actions.



Food and Bushido Tokens

Players will use these tokens to pay for actions and for covering opponent order tokens. In the future, we will use  to refer to **food** and  to refer to **bushido**.

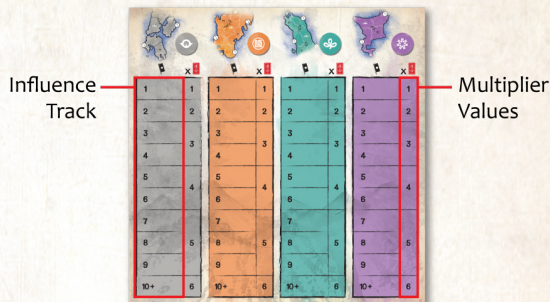


Destiny Cards

Each of these cards corresponds with one of the four regions on the board. Players will use these cards to raise the values of provinces for the end game scoring (explained in the Game End section, page 12). In the future we will use the  symbol to refer to destiny cards.

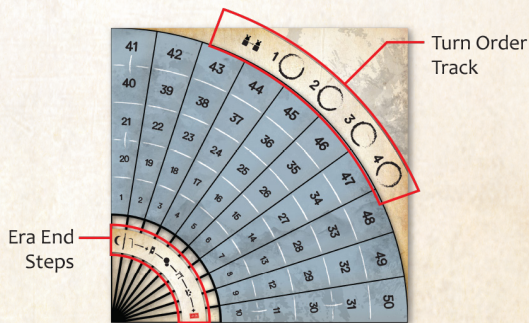
Influence Board

The influence board features four influence tracks, one for each region. The left column on each influence track is the amount of influence a player has gained throughout the game, while the right column is the corresponding multiplier value used for influence scoring at Game End.



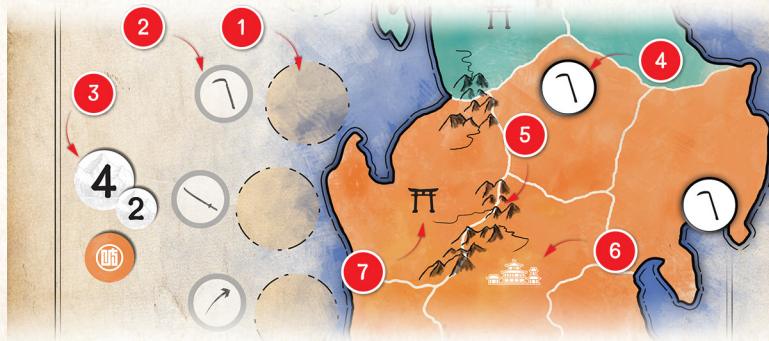
Score Board

Players will use the hand fan score track on the score board to track their points throughout the game. Additionally, above the hand fan score track, there is a turn order track that players will use to mark their turn order. Finally, the Era End steps are displayed in the corner of the board.



The map board of Japan consists of four regions, each with different number of provinces. Throughout the game, players will be playing different actions in order to control those provinces. A player controls a province if they have the most power among players in that province. In the future, we will use the symbol to refer to the **control** term.

Additional explanation of the map elements:



- 4

SETUP

1. Place the board in the middle of the table.
2. Each player chooses a color and gets the corresponding pieces: player screen, 16 , 3 , all order tokens of their color, 2 and 2 tokens. Then each player places all of their tokens behind their screen and the in front of their screen.
3. Next, prepare and deal (destiny cards). Shuffle the deck, and deal 3 cards to each player. Then place the Destiny deck near the board.
4. Take the 6 Bushido and 6 Food seeding tokens. Seed them randomly on each space of the map that has the symbol. Place the other resource tokens near the board to form a supply.
5. Each player places 2 in each province.
6. Place one cube of each player on each of the region pictures on the influence tracks.
7. Place each player's score track cube on the 0 space on the score track.
8. Determine first player at random and place that player's marker on the first slot of the Turn Track. Then in clockwise order place all of the players' markers on the next slots. For the first Era, turns will proceed in this order, while for the second and third Era turn order is determined differently (explained at the Era End section, page 11).

You are now ready to start the game!



GAMEPLAY

A game of Small Samurai Empires is divided into **3 eras**, and **each era is divided into 2 rounds**. Each round will have the following phases, but note that the two rounds in an era are played and resolved a bit differently from each other.

Quick overview of an era

1st round

Planning Phase:

- Play a destiny card
- Place order tokens

Resolution Phase:

- Resolve order tokens from **bottom upwards**

2nd round

Planning Phase:

- Place order tokens only (no destiny cards)

Resolution Phase:

- Resolve order tokens from **top downwards**

1st round of an era

Planning Phase:

Each player chooses one of their  in hand and places it face down. Then all players reveal them simultaneously, and put them next to the board.

2 player game only: Before both players reveal their destiny cards, draw the top card from the destiny deck and add it among the played destiny cards. Then both players reveal their chosen cards. Do this at the beginning of each **Planning Phase** for each era in a 2 player game.

Afterwards, players will start placing **order tokens** of their choice face down, one player at a time in clockwise order on any one of the empty slots on the board. Depending on the number of players in the game, this is the number of order tokens each player will place during the 1st round of each era:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{2 player icon} \\ \hline \text{2 player icon} \end{array} = 4 \text{ Order Tokens}$$

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{3 player icon} \\ \hline \text{3 player icon} \end{array} = 3 \text{ Order Tokens}$$

Additionally, whenever a player places an order token face down, they may play the **neutral action** that is printed next to the slot where they placed their token. **For example:**



1. The green player has decided to place one of their order tokens face down on this slot of the board.

2. Because of that, they have triggered the “Move 1 army” neutral action in that region and can resolve it immediately.

3. The green player decides to use that **neutral action** to move one army from the  province to the above province where there is a  resource.

Further explanation of the neutral actions as well as the regular player actions from order tokens can be found in the **Actions Overview** section (page 7).

When all players have placed the required number of order tokens on the board, play proceeds to the **Resolution Phase**.

■ Resolution Phase:

Starting from the **southmost (bottommost)** order token on the board and going upwards through all of the slots, players will turn their tokens face up and resolve their actions one by one. **Do not return** the order tokens to the supply after resolving them during the 1st round of each era.

Example:



It is the start of the Resolution Phase, and the bottommost token belongs to the blue player.

The blue player turns it face up and performs the action on the token, which in this case is "Recruit Armies".

They choose to recruit one army and place it in the Capital City province.



Next is the yellow player's token.

They turn the token face up and play the action on the token which in this case is the "Attack" action.

They choose to destroy the blue player's army in the marked province to secure its control.

Players continue to reveal and play out the tokens in this manner until they reveal and play the **northmost (topmost)** token. After that, play proceeds to the 2nd round of the era.

Before we explain the actions from the order tokens and how the 2nd round of an era is resolved, please read these **important notes**:

I: in a 2 player game, some slots will remain empty after the Planning Phase. This is normal, and it happens only because each player can play 4 order tokens during the 1st round Planning Phase. Simply skip those slots during the Resolution Phase.

II: Each action from an order token can only be played out in the region where it is placed. **Example:** if you placed a "Attack" order token on one of the slots in the orange region, then you will be able to destroy one (or two) opponent armies only in that region.

III: The neutral actions are not resolved again during the Resolution Phase (they are resolved only in the Planning Phase).

ACTIONS OVERVIEW

Before we delve into the actions and how they play out, it is worth mentioning that each player has identical set of order tokens - meaning each player has the same actions available throughout the game.

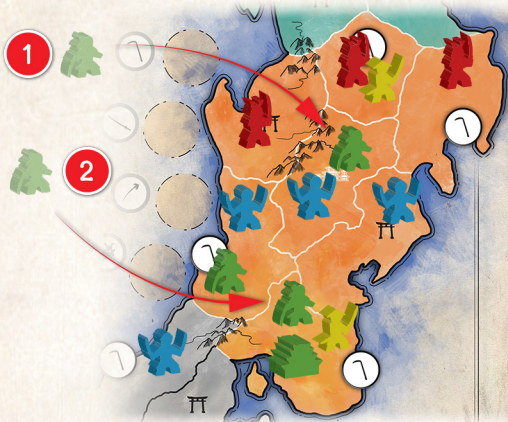


Recruit Armies:

Add one  from your supply in the  province in this region or at one province in this region where you have a .

Then, you may spend 1  to place another  in the  province in this region or at one province in this region where you have a .

Example: the green player revealed an order token with the “Recruit Armies” action in the orange region. They choose to place their first army on the capital city province (1). Then, the green player decides they will spend 1 🟢 in order to place another army in the province where they have a castle (2).



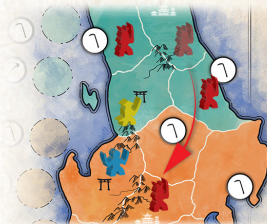
Example A: The red player revealed an order token with the “Move 3 armies” action. They choose to move 3 separate armies, of which 2 armies to one province, and the 3rd army to another province.



Example B: In this example, the same red player chooses to move 2 separate armies, of which one of the armies will move across two provinces, while the other will move to an adjacent province.



Example C: The same red player chooses to move one army across 3 provinces.



Move 3 Armies:

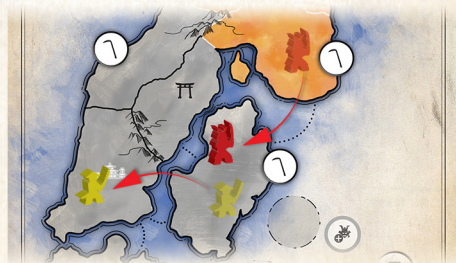
Gain 3 movement points to move armies in this region. You can use these points to either move 3 separate armies by one province, move 1 army by two provinces and another by one province, or move 1 army by three provinces.

Connected provinces by sea:

By using the move actions, players are also able to move armies across sea between provinces that are connected with dots.

Moving across regions:

Players can move their armies across regions. However, **please note:** once an army ends its movement in another region, it can only be affected by actions from order tokens played in the new region.





Move 2 or 3 Armies:

Gain 2 movement points to move armies in this region. Then, you may spend 1 to gain 1 additional movement point. The same movement rules apply as for the previous move action.



Move 2 Armies/Move by Ship:

With this action, you may either:

A) Move 2 armies: Gain 2 movement points to move armies in this region, same as you would with the previous move armies actions or;

B) Move by Ship: Spend 1 and move up to 2 armies from one single coastal province to another single coastal province anywhere on the board.

A coastal province is a province that has access to sea.

Example: The blue player has decided that they will use the Move by Ship action to move their 2 armies from a single coastal province in the teal region to a single coastal province in the orange region.



Example: The yellow player has decided that they will use the Attack action to destroy a blue player's army in a province where they also have at least 1 army. Then, the yellow player decides to spend 1 to destroy the green player's army, thus securing control over the province.

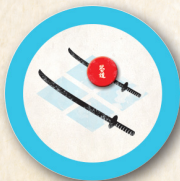


Harvest:

Gain and/or from the supply for each resource province in this region where you have at least one army. A resource province is a province that contains a resource token that was placed on setup.



Example: The green player has revealed an order token with the "Harvest" action in the orange region. Since they only have armies in the resource provinces on the north part of the region (1), they will only gain 1 and 1 from the supply from this action. They will not gain any resources from the resource provinces on the south part of the region, because they do not have any armies there (2).



Attack:

Destroy one opponent army in a province in this region where you have at least 1 army. Then, you may spend 1 to destroy another opponent army in the **same province**. The destroyed armies do not have to belong to one player. Return the destroyed armies to their players' supply.



Build Castle:

If you don't have a in this region, return 2 of your from a single province in this region to your supply to place a in that province.

However, if you already have a under your control in this region, you may add one from your supply to the province where your is located.

Other important Castle rules:

I: As previously mentioned, a  gives **2 power** to a player's presence in a province.

Example: The red player controls the province because they have one  (2 power total) and the green and blue players each have one  (1 power total for each).



II: Players cannot lose control of a .

III: Each  gives +1 influence on the influence track corresponding with the region color where the Castle is built in.

Neutral Actions



Move 1 army:

Gain 1 movement point to move an army in this region.



Attack:

Destroy one opponent army in a province in this region where you have at least 1 army.



Recruit army:

Add one army from your supply in the Capital City province in this region or at one province in this region where you have a Castle.



Harvest:

Gain  /  from any **one** resource province in this region where you have at least one army.

2nd round of an era

This round also has the Planning and Resolution phase, with these differences:

Planning Phase:

- No Destiny Cards are played during the 2nd round Planning Phase.
- When placing order tokens face down to plan their actions, each player places one order token **less** than the previous round. **Example:** In a 3 player game, players will place 4 order tokens face down during the 1st round Planning Phase, and then they will place 3 order tokens face down during the 2nd round Planning Phase.

Placing order tokens and covering opponents

Additionally, when players place their order tokens face down during the 2nd round Planning Phase, they may either:

- a) Place them on a free slot (usually in a 2 player game)
- b) On top of their own tokens that they have placed in the 1st round for free or;
- c) Place them on top of an opponent's face up order token that was placed in the previous round, by paying 1  if it is your first time covering an opponent token during this round, 2  if it is your second time, or 3  if it is your third covering an opponent token this round.

Other important rules about covering opponent tokens:

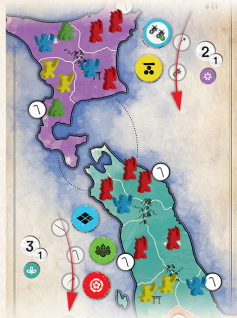
I: Each player can cover each of their opponents only once during an era. So, in a 2 player game, each player can cover only one order token of the opposite player, in a 3 player game each player can cover 2 opponent tokens (one of each opponent) and in a 4 player game each player can cover 3 opponent token (one of each opponent).

II: You cannot place an order token on another token that was placed this round (a facedown token).

III: Players may still play out the corresponding **neutral actions** when they place their order tokens, but only after they have paid the bushido cost for covering a token.

Resolution Phase:

Instead of starting from the **southmost** order token on the board and going upwards through all of the slots, players will now start turning their order tokens face up and resolve their actions one by one starting **from the northmost token and downwards to the bottom**.



The actions on the tokens that were placed in the 1st round of the era and were not covered by new order tokens will also be resolved during this phase, so there is a possibility that some actions will be resolved twice during an Era.

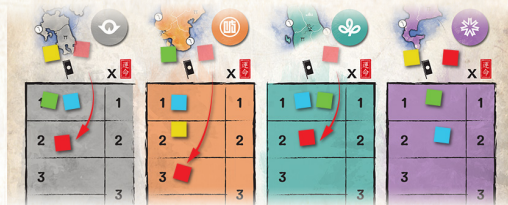
ERA END

After all the players have resolved all the actions from the order tokens in the 2nd round of an era, the era ends. Players then proceed to these steps:

- 1. Full Harvest** – Players gain a resource from the supply for each province they control that produces a resource.
- 2. Order Tokens Cleanup** - Players take back their order tokens from the board and put them behind their screens to be played during the next era.
- 3. Gain influence** - For each province and each Castle players control in each of the regions, they advance that many steps on the corresponding Influence track on the score board.

Example A: At the end of the first era, the red player controls a total of 2 provinces in the grey region, 3 provinces in the orange region, 1 province and a Castle in the teal region and no provinces in the violet region. The red player moves their marker 2 steps ahead on

the grey region track, 3 steps ahead on the orange region track, 2 steps ahead on the teal track (one from controlling a province and one from controlling a Castle in that region), and finally they go 0 steps ahead on the violet region track because they don't control any province or Castle there.



Reminder: A Castle will give +1 influence on the influence track to the player controlling it regardless if the province where the Castle is located is under control of the same player or not.

4. Receive Region Bonus points - For each region, players in control of the most and second most provinces in that region, gain the corresponding amount of Region Bonus Points (the larger value for the player with most provinces while the smaller value for the player with second most provinces).

If players are tied for controlling the most provinces in a region, all tied players gain the second lower value of that region, and no other player receives the bonus points.

If there is no tie for controlling the most provinces but players are tied for controlling second most provinces in a region, each tied player receives the lower value.

5. Receive Shrine points - Players receive 1 point for each 神 province they control.

6. Draw new Destiny Cards - Each player draws one new 運命 from the Destiny deck.

7. Next era starts with the player that has the lowest amount of points, then going second is the player that is next in amount of points and so on.

GAME END

After the Third Era ends, players continue to resolve “End Era” steps 1-5. Then finally, players will calculate **Final Influence** points, as well as gain points from the resources that remained in their possession.

Influence points:

For each region, each player checks where their influence marker stopped on the **influence track** (left column) and moves the marker to the corresponding value box on the right column.

Then, they take the value where their marker finally ended and multiply that value with the number of Destiny cards that were played throughout the game and correspond with the region, to get their final **influence points** for that region.

Example: Let’s look at the green player on the left of this page.



For the gray region, their marker is on the 1st space of the influence track because they only controlled 1 grey province at some of the era endings. They look at the number on the left column and see that they have a Final Influence of 1. The green player multiplies that value with the amount of Destiny cards corresponding with that region (which is 3) to get 3 points from that region total ($1 \times 3 = 3$).



Then, for the orange region, they get 15 points total because they have 3 Final Influence there (from having controlled 3 orange provinces throughout the game), and there are 5 orange Destiny cards ($3 \times 5 = 15$).

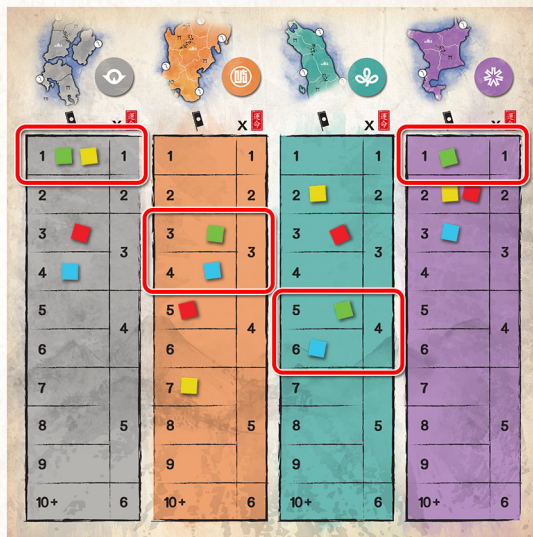


For the teal region, they get 8 points because they have 4 Final Influence and there are 2 teal Destiny cards ($4 \times 2 = 8$).



And finally, for the violet region, they get a total of 2 points because they have 1 Final Influence and there are 2 violet Destiny cards ($1 \times 2 = 2$).

The total points that the green player gets from Final Influence are: **28 points** ($3+15+8+2$).



Leftover resources:

For each 3 resources left in their supply of any combination of food and bushido, each player gains 1 point.

Finally, the player with the highest amount of points is the winner and becomes the eternal emperor of Japan!

VARIANTS

While we hope that the base rules make for a fun game, you can spice up your *Small Samurai Empires* experience by including our offered variants which were made possible thanks to our wonderful backers. You can choose to play with either one, several or all variants during a game. Here's an explanation of the rules associated with the variants:

Region Agenda Tiles

On setup: Shuffle the Region Agenda Tiles and randomly draw one for each region and place them beneath the base Region Bonus Points on the board.

Overview of a Region Agenda Tile:

Main agenda:

The main agenda is a custom objective that only corresponds to the region where the tile is placed. When completed, it awards extra points to the player or players that complete it (it can be completed by more than 1 players).



Regional Decree:

This part adds an additional cost or to some of the actions.



Main Agenda - Stability Factor:

Gain 5 points immediately if you control at least 4 provinces in this region.

Regional Decree - Dishonorable Fighting:

Pay no additional bushido if you want to destroy an additional army with the Attack action.

Main Agenda - Strength in Numbers:

Gain 4 points immediately if you have at least 7 armies in this region.

Regional Decree - Unrestricted Movement:

Pay no additional food if you want to move an additional army with the Move 2 or 3 armies action.



Tiles explanation:

Main Agenda - Strategical Control:

Gain 3 points immediately if you control least 2 provinces each with at least 2 armies.

Regional Decree - Dishonorable Fighting:

Pay no additional bushido if you want to destroy an additional army with the Attack action.



Main Agenda - Spread to survive:

Gain 3 points immediately if you have at least 1 army in at least 4 separate provinces each in this region.

Regional Decree - Unrestricted Movement:

Pay no additional food if you want to move an additional army with the Move 2 or 3 armies action.



Main Agenda - Shock Tactics:

Gain 4 points immediately if you have at least 3 armies in at least 3 separate provinces each in this region.

Regional Decree - Durable Recruits:

Pay no additional food if you want to recruit an additional army with the Recruit armies action.



Main Agenda - Land and People:

Gain 4 points immediately if you control at least 2 resource provinces and 1 city province in this region.

Regional Decree - No Shipping Fees

Pay no additional food if you want to move armies with the Move by ship action.

Main Agenda - Guardian of the Castle:

Gain 4 points immediately if you have at least 2 army in at least 2 separate provinces each and you control a Castle in this region.

Regional Decree - Durable Recruits:

Pay no additional food if you want to recruit an additional army with the Recruit armies action.



Path of the Mountain

In this variant, players will be able to journey through the mountains to discover their wonders - or dangers!

On setup: Shuffle the Mountain Tokens face down and put one on each of the mountain spaces on the board. There will be seven tokens on the board - return the rest to the box.

Overview of the Mountain Tokens:

When using a movement point to move an army to an adjacent province over a face down Mountain Token (which is connected to the province by road), players may instead first move that army to the Mountain Space, then reveal the Mountain Token. For purposes of this variant, that army is called expedition army.

When players turn the Mountain Token face up, they immediately resolve its effect and discard the Mountain Token. After that, the expedition army continues moving to the adjacent province if the effect was positive, or returns to the province where it came from, if the revealed effect was an Ambush.

Note: Players are allowed to send only one expedition army per move action.



Main Agenda - Land and Spirit:

Gain 4 points immediately if you control at least 2 resource provinces and 1 shrine province in this region.

Regional Decree - No Shipping Fees

Pay no additional food if you want to move armies with the Move by ship action.

Mountain Tokens Effects:



Ambush:

Your troops have fallen prey to an ambush! Return your expedition army to the province from where it started movement.



Mercenaries:

A mercenary band joins your cause. Add 1 army from the supply to the province from where your expedition army came.



Bushido Master:

Your army stumbled upon a martial arts master and he has decided to give you all of his knowledge. Gain 1 Bushido from the supply.



Highland Farms:

You have found a friendly highland farming village. They offer to give you food to make your journey easier. Gain 1 Food from the supply.



Independent Tribe:

An independent tribe joins your cause. Play out one of the Neutral Actions available in the region.



The Journey is the Destination:

Your army endured the harshness of the mountain and returned with high morale. You may spend 1 Bushido to destroy an opponent army anywhere in the region.

randomly. There will be seven shrines on the board - return the other two to the box.

Sacred Shrines Scoring:

At the end of an era, score 1 / 3 / 5 if you control 1 / 2 / 3 Sacred Shrines of a color.

Neutral Actions Randomization:

You can use the Neutral Action tokens provided to randomize the neutral actions on the board.

On setup: Simply place one token on each slot corresponding with the region. Return the other tokens in the box.

Sacred Shrines



This variant adds a set collection mechanic to the shrine provinces on the board. Control more shrines of one set at the end of an era, and score more points!

On setup: Shuffle the Shrine Meeples and place one on each of the shrine provinces