A HENRI KERMARREC GAME

ekö

2 to 4 players
Ages 10 and up
45 minutes

THIS STORY TAKES PLACE IN THE DARK TIMES FROM WHICH LEGENDS COME.

There once was a powerful Emperor, the respected Ekö, who reigned over a vast and prosperous realm, full of magic and grandiose cities. The Gods honored the Emperor by giving him four children, who governed his provinces.

Then, after a life as full and long as several men might enjoy, Ekö died. His children, each of whom felt entitled to be his sole heir, revealed their true greedy nature. Each ordered his clan to take up arms against his brothers, and the country fell into a tragic and bloody war, against which no one could stand. The lands, once fertile, were ravaged by the fires of the battles. Emperor Ekö, whose ancient spirit lived on beyond his corporeal death, beset his children with a terrible curse: He shut their souls in the ruins and wasteland that his empire had become, and condemned them to wage war against one another, over and over, never able to find rest.

Century after century, the four descendents pursue their battles in the prison that the desert of Ekö has become. Without people to govern, they animate the rocks, the sand, and the wind, so these will carry the banners of their absent armies, rebuilding a defunct empire, and reliving the battles they have already lost.

You are one of these four cursed generals. Only one of you, at the end of this story, will become the one and only Emperor of the desert of Ekö... until it all starts anew, without end, forever.

CONTENTS

- 64 discs (16 per player, 1 of which is an Emperor).
- 36 buildings (1 castle, 3 towers, and 5 encampments per player).
- 13 large hexagonal tiles to construct the modular board + 11 small tiles required for the variants (see page 6).
- 4 player boards.
- The rules of the game.

GOAL OF THE GAME

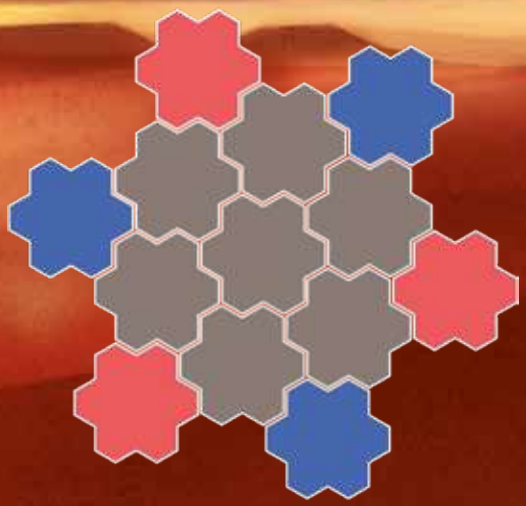
Either gain 12 victory points ( ) and control a capital, or eradicate all of your opponents' discs.

SETUP

Put the 11 small tiles back in the box; they are only used for the variants (see page 6).

Depending on the number of players, set up the board as indicated in the illustration below. The backs of the tiles indicate which tiles are used for which player counts:

- **2 players:** Shuffle and set up the appropriate tiles like the gray tiles are depicted below.
- **3 players:** Include the appropriate tiles, shuffle them all together, and set them up like the gray and blue tiles are depicted below.
- **4 players:** Shuffle all the tiles together, and set them up as depicted below (gray, blue, and red tiles).



Each individual tile can be oriented however you like, but make sure all the movement spaces (with circles) line up.



Mix all the discs together (including the Emperors), then place them randomly on the movement spaces of the board, all of which will be full when you are done. Each player then randomly draws a color of player board, and takes his buildings. Then randomly select a first player.

Before starting the game, each player in turn order (starting with the first player, then going clockwise) may swap his Emperor disc with another one of his discs.

THE GAME AT A GLANCE

GAME TURN

Play goes clockwise.

On your turn, you **must** do both phases in order: the Action phase, then the Reinforcements phase.

1 ACTION PHASE — OBLIGATORY

MOVE
ONLY PREVENTED BY A OBSTACLE

MOVE — OR — MOVE TO REGROUP (4 DISCS MAXIMUM) — OR — MOVE TO ATTACK A SMALLER STACK (EXCEPTIONS: KAMIKAZE & EMPEROR; IF NECESSARY, IMMEDIATE EXCHANGE OF CAPTURED EMPERORS)

OR

CONSTRUCT
ENCAMPMENT, THEN TOWER, THEN CASTLE: CONSTRUCTION SPACES ARE RESTRICTIVE

BUILD ON AN EMPTY SPACE — OR — UPGRADE ONE OF YOUR BUILDINGS — OR — REPLACE AN ENEMY BUILDING = +1 DISC (BY AN EQUIVALENT BUILDING OR BY A HIGHER BUILDING)

FORCED MARCH = SACRIFICE 3 DISCS & PLAY A NEW ACTION OPTIONAL, ONCE PER TURN MAXIMUM

2 REINFORCEMENT PHASE — OBLIGATORY

REINTRODUCE MINIMUM ONE DISC AND FOREMOST THE EMPEROR

NEVER ON AN EMPTY SPACE + NOT ADJACENT TO AN OPPONENT'S BUILDING + ALWAYS ON A SINGLE SPACE

THEN, IT'S THE NEXT PLAYER'S TURN

END OF GAME & VICTORY

HAVE 12 ☀ AND OCCUPY A CAPITAL — OR — BE THE LAST TO HAVE DISCS ON THE BOARD

Clarification: During the game, the discs can be stacked. To keep things simple in the explanations below, the term "stack" encompasses both single discs and stacks of two, three, or four discs.

MOVE

A stack can move freely on the board, any number of spaces, even changing direction several times, as long as there are no obstacles between the stack and its destination. Obstacles are other stacks (friendly or enemy) and any space other than movement spaces.

There are three types of moves a stack can make:

- **Move** to an empty space.
- **Move to Regroup:** Move to a space that contains one of your stacks, adding it to the stack already in that space. **Note:** A stack can never have more than 4 discs in it. If regrouping would create a stack exceeding this number, that move cannot be made.
- **Move to Attack:** Move to a space that contains one of your opponents' stacks to destroy it and take its place. You can only attack a stack of enemy discs that contains strictly fewer discs than the attacking stack. Return the discs of the destroyed stack to their owner's reserve; they can be used again as early as her next Reinforcement phase.

Kamikazes: A stack of 4 discs (and only a stack of 4) can be attacked and destroyed by a solitary disc (a stack of 1 single disc). This solitary attacker is called a Kamikaze. The 4 discs in the attacked stack and the Kamikaze return to their respective owners' reserves. *Therefore stacks of 4 are the strongest, but must beware of kamikazes!*



You can never split a stack of discs in order to move some of them, and you can never attack your own stacks.



Examples of moves that are allowed (in green) and forbidden (in red):

Cyan wishes to move stack A.

He can:

- *Move to one of the B spaces,*
- *Regroup with stack C to form a stack of 3 discs,*
- *Regroup with stack D to form a stack of 4 discs,*
- *Attack one of the stacks E to take its place.*

He cannot:

- *Attack any of the stacks F, because they have an equal or greater number of discs,*
- *Regroup with stack G, because stacks higher than 4 discs are forbidden,*
- *Move to one of the H spaces, because these are not movement spaces.*

HENRI KERMARREC, THE DESIGNER

Henri Kermarrec is a game designer raised on role-playing games, Magic: The Gathering, Talisman, and Valley of the Mammoths. With time, he developed an appetite for refined mechanisms and simply ingenious games, whether family games or more "gamer's" games. As a result, he has rather eclectic ludography, from Wiraqocha to Sushi Dice, without limiting himself to a single audience or theme. **Henri Kermarrec** thanks Fayçal Lalmi for having faith in the game even in its larval stages; the Anti of Mordelles, and the furry Atemporels for their helpful playtests; Erwan Berthou, as well as the entire team of CNJ and the jury of the Boulogne design competition for having judged this game worthy of winning the prize.

LUKY, THE ILLUSTRATOR

Luky is a freelance comic book illustrator and author. Parallel to her work in the publishing industry, she also works on commissions, notably for the Nucleus Gallery of Los Angeles, as well as for individuals, magazines, and advertising agencies. Just a few of her works: *Poèmes Érotiques* (*Erotic Poems*) (Petit à Petit), *La Danseuse Papillon* (*Butterfly Dancer*) with Alwett (Soleil), *Le Petit Prince, tome 3* (*The Little Prince, Book 3*) with Elyum (Glénat), *Les Dieux de l'Olympe* (*The Gods of Olympus*) with Béatrice Bottet (Casterman), *Communardes!, tome 1* (*Communards!, Book 1*) with Wilfrid Lupano (Glénat/Vents d'Ouest). **Luky** would like to thank Zed for his infinite patience.

GAME TURN

PHASE OBLIGATORY

SINGLE ACTION: EITHER MOVE OR CONSTRUCT.

R

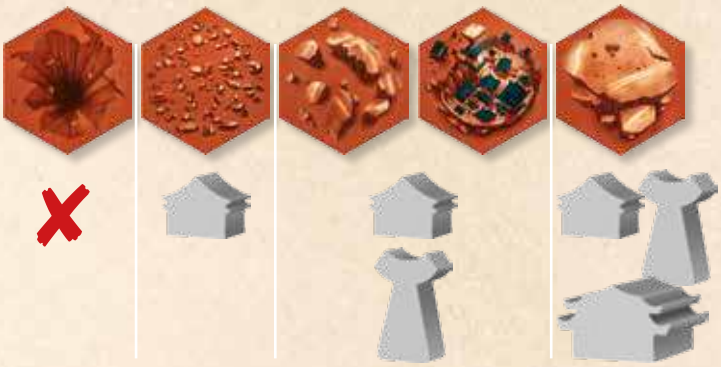
CONSTRUCT

Buildings must be constructed on construction spaces — regs*, canyons, mountains, or capitals — in order to earn at the end of the game. You can only construct one building per space; subsequent construction on the same space will **replace** the existing building, which will return to its owner.

If you have no more of a particular type of building in your reserve, you can no longer construct this type of building until one is replaced and returned to your reserve.

Each type of space has its construction specifications:

- **Chasms** are impassable, and **cannot be built on**,
- **Regs*** can only accommodate an **encampment**,
- **Canyons** and **capitals** can accommodate an **encampment**, and then a **tower**,
- **Mountains** can accommodate an **encampment**, then a **tower**, then a **castle**.



In order to construct a building (on an empty space or on a space already containing a building, you must **sacrifice one or more discs from a single stack adjacent** to this construction space. You must sacrifice...

- 1 disc to construct an **encampment**,
- 2 discs to construct a **tower**,
- 3 discs to construct the **castle**.

The discs you sacrifice for construction return to your reserve, and you can use them as soon as your Reinforcement phase.

The first building constructed on an empty space must **always be an encampment**. Thereafter, when you want to replace a **building of your color with another**, you can only construct a building with **a value precisely one greater**. If you wish to replace **an enemy building** with one of your color, you can only construct a building with **an equal value, or a value precisely one greater**.

You can decide to use any or all of the discs from a stack in order to construct a building.

In order to replace an enemy building with one of your color, you must sacrifice **1 disc more** than the number of discs normally required for the new building's construction, and this additional disc must still come from the same single stack adjacent to the space containing the enemy building.



Examples:

- ***In the example on the left**, Cyan can sacrifice a disc from stack A to build an encampment on space B, C, or D. Because they were empty, he was not allowed to directly built a tower on space C or D, or a castle on space D.*
- ***In the middle example**, Cyan can sacrifice two discs from stack A to replace one of the encampments in space C or D with a tower. He cannot replace encampment B because the terrain cannot support a bigger building. He is not allowed to directly replace encampment D with a castle.*
- ***In the example on the right:***
  - *Cyan can replace the brown encampment at C with a cyan encampment by sacrificing two discs from stack A. He cannot replace the brown encampment with a tower, because the terrain will not support it.*
  - *Cyan can replace the blue encampment at D with a cyan encampment by sacrificing two discs from stack A, or can replace it with a cyan tower by sacrificing all three discs of stack A.*
  - *Cyan can replace the cyan tower at E with the cyan castle by sacrificing all three discs from stack A. He cannot do this by sacrificing the one disc B plus two of the discs from stack A, because you must always sacrifice the discs from one single stack.*
  - *Cyan could replace the white tower at F with a cyan tower by spending the 3 discs from stack A. Even though the terrain at F supports replacing this tower with a castle, he cannot do it, because he would need to have a single stack of 4 discs adjacent to it (stack B is of no help).*

FORCED MARCH OPTIONAL

Once per turn, before the Reinforcement phase, you can take an extra Move or Construct action by sacrificing 3 discs (other than the Emperor) from your reserve. Return these discs to the box; they can no longer be used for the rest of the game.

* Stony deserts

THE EMPEROR

Each player has an Emperor disc. For the most part, this disc follows the same rules as all the others; however, there are a few differences...

- Always place this disc visible on top of its stack.
- A stack that contains the Emperor can **attack an enemy stack even if it contains an equal number of discs**, and even if it contains another Emperor. Therefore, an Emperor by itself can defeat a stack of 1, even if it is another Emperor.
- Whenever a stack with an Emperor is attacked by another stack, the discs of the stack are returned to their owner, as usual, **except for the Emperor**, who is considered to be "captured" and is held captive by the attacking player. **Each enemy Emperor you hold captive is worth 3** .

  A stack with an Emperor can thus be attacked by:
  - Any stack containing more discs,
  - A stack with the same number of discs, if it has an Emperor,
  - A Kamikaze, if the Emperor's stack is a stack of 4 discs.

Once your Emperor is captured by another player, the only way to get it back is to exchange another Emperor (any player's) for it. If your Emperor is a captive, then as soon as you capture anyone else's Emperor (no matter whose), you must make an exchange in order to rescue your own Emperor. Your opponent cannot refuse this exchange, and must give you your own Emperor immediately. Exchanging Emperors is not considered an action.

You can sacrifice your Emperor in order to construct a building. For this purpose, the Emperor is treated like any other disc (the construction cost is the same as indicated above; see "Construct"). The fact that your Emperor is on top of the stack does not imply that the Emperor must be spent first.

An Emperor by itself can be used as a Kamikaze.

REINFORCEMENT PHASE OBLIGATORY

This phase takes place every turn, directly after the Action phase; however, if you have no discs in your reserve, skip the Reinforcement phase.

If you have discs in your reserve, you **must** place at least 1 as a reinforcement, according to the following rules:

- **All the discs must be added to a single stack** of your color that is already on the board; and **never added to an empty space**.
- **You cannot add reinforcements to a stack if it is adjacent to an enemy building.** This constraint is always in effect, even if the stack is also adjacent to one of your own buildings. **Exception:** Only the Emperor can violate this placement rule. If the only locations available for reinforcement are adjacent to enemy buildings, only then can you add the Emperor to a stack that is adjacent to an enemy building, but never to an empty space beside an enemy building.

Remember: *A stack can never contain more than 4 discs!*

If these rules cannot be respected, then it is impossible for you to bring your discs back into play; you must skip your Reinforcement phase.

If your Emperor is in your reserve (following a prisoner exchange, or as a result of construction), your Emperor **must be returned to play** in the Reinforcement phase, if at all possible.

END OF THE GAME

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO WIN THE GAME:

- Each encampment is worth 1 .
- Each tower is worth 2 .
- The castle is worth 3 .
- Each captive Emperor is worth 3 .

The game ends **immediately** when a player has amassed 12 total, by adding up the values of her buildings on the board and any Emperors she has captive, **and she has at least one building built on a capital**. She is then declared the winner.

OR

If a player is the only one with discs remaining on the board, she wins the game.

VARIANTS

The Ekö box includes 11 small tiles that add new options and effects to the game. You are free to decide whether to integrate any or all of these into your game. Note that other tiles exist, and will be made available occasionally. Visit www.sitdown-games.com to learn more.

Begin by taking the big, 7-space tiles appropriate for the number of players (see "Setup" on page 1), and add the tiles necessary for the variants you have chosen, as described below. Then set up your gameboard however you wish, with the only requirement being that no movement space or group of movement spaces is isolated from the other movement spaces. Then continue the setup as usual.

THE PORTALS



Two special tiles introduce a new type of space: the portal. It allows you to teleport a stack to a portal elsewhere on the board.

During the setup, add the Portal tiles to the other tiles when building the board, and place them wherever you like. A portal can only be entered or exited through one space; access to "the back" of the Portal is blocked by a chasm.

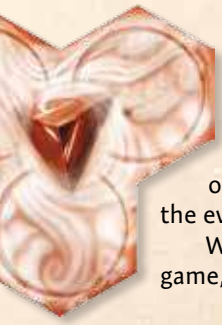
The portal's entrance/exit space must always be a movement space.

During the game, if a stack moves onto a portal, it immediately emerges from another portal onto the space adjacent to that portal, and can even continue its movement to an empty space, to regroup, or to attack.

A stack is never allowed to stop on a Portal space; however, even if the exit space adjacent to a portal is occupied, you can still step through that portal: If it is occupied by an enemy stack, you can attack it through the portal; if it is occupied by a friendly stack, you can regroup with it through the portal.

A Portal space is not a construction space.

THE PYRAMIDS



The spaces of the Pyramids tiles are tempest spaces (see "The Labyrinth of Tempests"). The pyramid depicted in the center does not affect your moves.

Each pyramid is worth 2 to the player who occupies the most of the three spaces around it. In the event of a tie, nobody gets these .

We recommend using only one pyramid in a 2-player game, and both pyramids with 3 or 4 players.

THE TEMPLE OF THE WIND

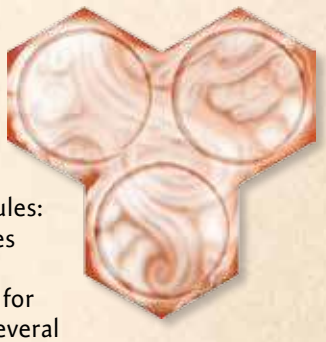


During the setup, add the Temple of the Wind tile to the other tiles when building the board, and place them wherever you like.

The Temple of the Wind space is a construction space, following the same constraints as a Reg.

If you have a building on the Temple of the Wind, then during your Reinforcement phases, when you return several discs to play, you are allowed to distribute them to several of your stacks, instead of just a single stack. All the other rules of the Reinforcement phase still apply.

THE LABYRINTH OF TEMPESTS



No discs are allowed to be placed on the tempest spaces during setup. The tempest spaces are unusual movement spaces, which are accessible during the game, according to the following rules:

- During its movement, a stack loses one disc (of the active player's choice — it can be your Emperor) for each tempest zone it traverses (several contiguous tempest spaces constitute a single tempest zone), i.e. moves through or stops in, during its move. During a single turn, if a single tempest zone is entered several times, you only lose one disc total to that tempest zone. Any discs lost this way return to your reserve.
- A stack that starts its move from a tempest space loses a disc at the start of the move.
- If you move into a tempest zone in order to attack an enemy stack, you lose the disc to the tempest before the attack takes place.
- You cannot reinforce a stack in a tempest space.

SIT DOWN! welcome on board

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