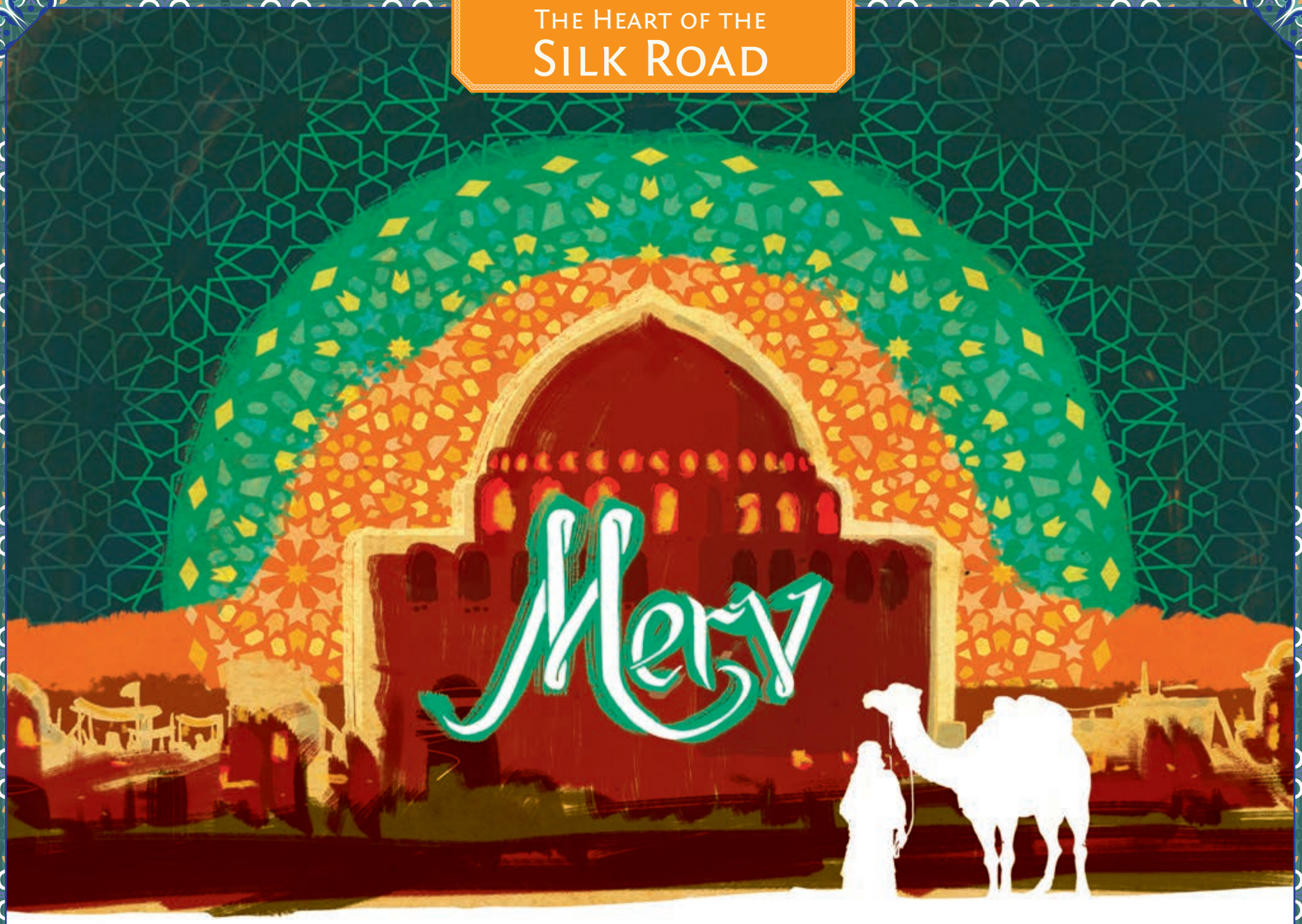
The Heart of the
Silk Road



Game Rules

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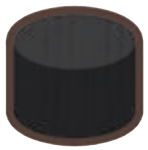
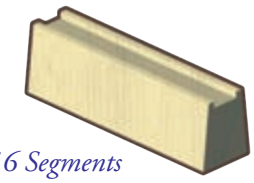
GAME COMPONENTS

You don't need to read this section first!
Skip ahead to page 4 to start learning the game and refer back to this section as needed.

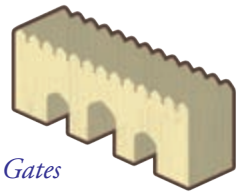


Year marker

This piece tracks the progress of the game, which is broken into three "years".



16 Segments



4 Gates

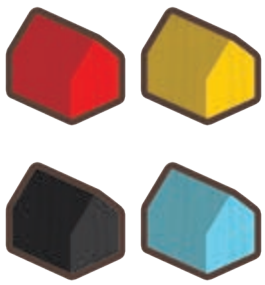
20× Walls

The pieces of Merv's outer wall. Each wall segment or gate you place protects buildings in the city and earns you prestige. Gates form the centre of each of the four city walls. You build wall segments and gates at the wall.



12× Camels

Valuable assets that you use to influence turn order, access rare spices in the caravansary, trade for rare goods in the marketplace, and sell in the camel market for various boons. You can get camels in the caravansary, the marketplace, the mosque, the camel market, and when another player advances past you in the turn order.



36× Buildings

(9 of each colour)

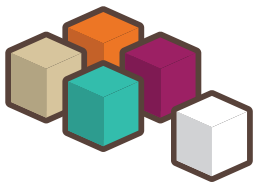
The pieces you place in the city to mark buildings you've constructed. Buildings give you access to actions, produce resources, and score points at the end of the year if they haven't been destroyed by the Mongols.



40× Disks

(10 of each colour)

The pieces you place on influence, favour, mosque, and score tracks to mark your progress on each. You also place these in the marketplace to indicate the trading posts you establish.



60× Resource cubes

(12 of each colour)

Resource cubes are the basic currency of Merv, which you produce in your buildings.

White resources are wild and can be used in place of any colour.



4× Master meeples

(1 of each colour)

The piece you use to construct buildings and take actions.



32× Servant meeples

(8 of each colour)

The pieces you place in the city as soldiers and in the palace as courtiers. Soldiers earn you influence and protect buildings from the Mongols. Courtiers spend your favour to score you points at the end of each round.





8 Cinnamon *6 Ginger* *6 Juniper* *4 Pepper*

24× Caravan cards

1. **Spice type:** either cinnamon, juniper, ginger, or pepper.
2. **Pair bonus:** the immediate boon received for collecting two of the same spice.
3. **Point value:** the points scored at the end of the game, depending on the size of the set collected.





18× Contract cards

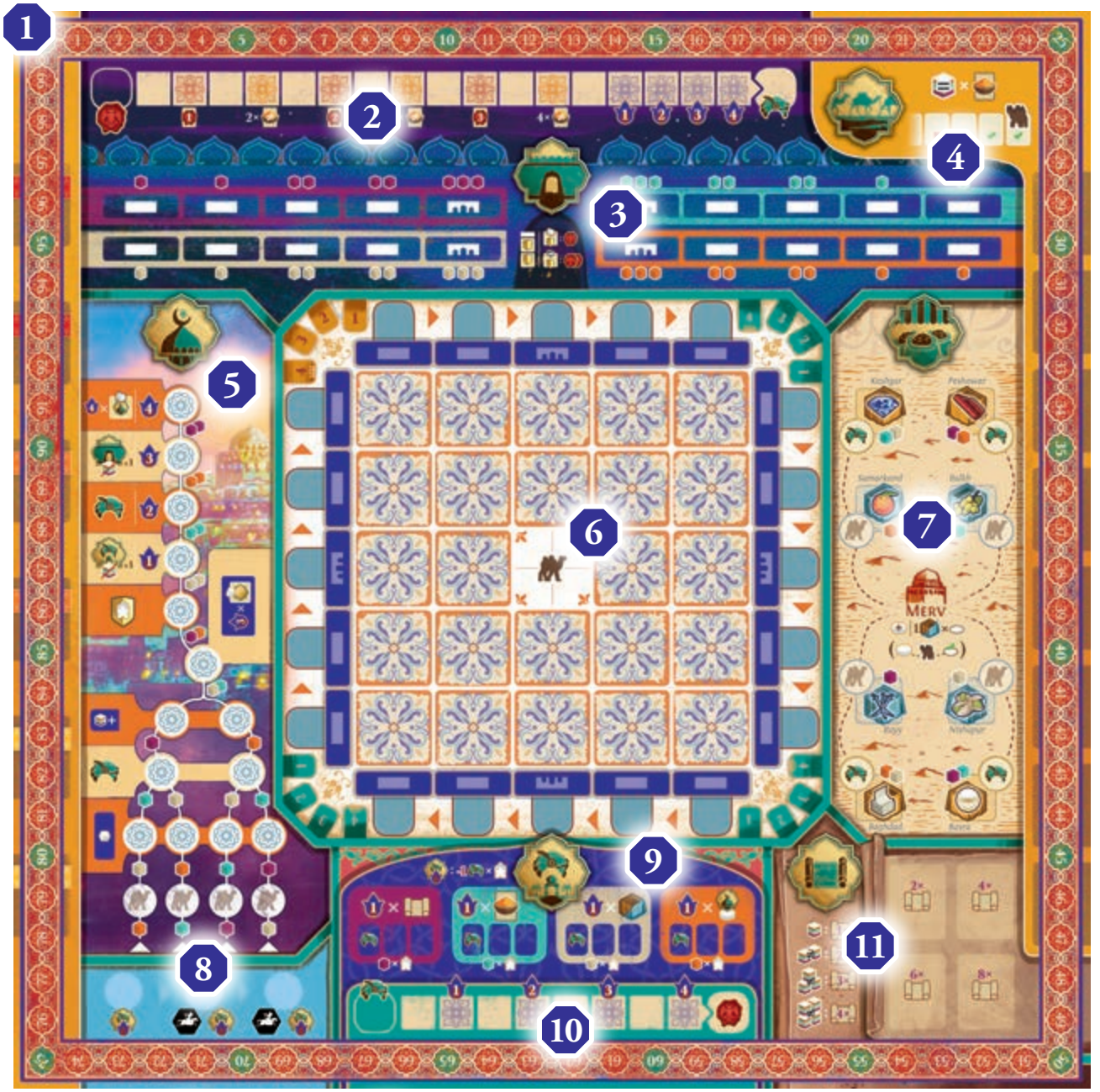
1. **Point value:** the points scored on fulfilling the contract.
2. **Contracted items:** the combination of resources, scrolls, common goods, and rare goods you need to commit to fulfil the contract. ***Note:*** *the scrolls and goods are committed but not discarded.*
3. **Fulfilment bonus:** the soldier or favour gained on fulfilling the contract.
4. **Prestige level:** the space on the prestige track you must reach or pass to fulfil this contract.





6× Solo cards

Cards used in the solo game only. They decide what the corrupt magistrate does on each turn.



Game Board

1. Score track.
2. Influence track.
3. **Wall:** the area where you build the city wall and earn prestige.
4. **Caravansary:** the area where you buy spices.
5. **Mosque:** the track where you contribute to the grand mosque for various boons.
6. **City:** the central area, where you construct buildings, earn cubes, and place the city walls.
7. **Marketplace:** the area where you establish trading posts and buy goods to fulfil contracts.
8. Year track.
9. **Palace:** the area where you use your favour to score points.
10. Favour track.
11. **Library:** the area where you collect scrolls and breakthroughs.



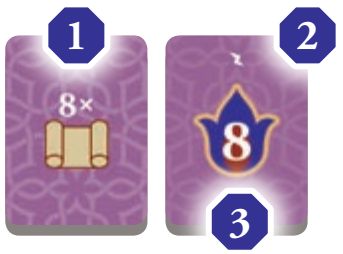
24× Building Sites

1. **Building slot:** where you place your building to claim the tile.
2. **Action:** the action you take when you choose this as the active building.
3. **Bonus slot:** where you place building upgrades or soldiers.
4. **Resource:** the resource cube that this tile generates.



1× Camel Market

The camel market sits in the middle of the city and is where you buy or sell camels for a variety of boons.



16× Breakthroughs

1. **Scroll requirement:** the number of scrolls needed to obtain the breakthrough. ***Note:*** *the scrolls are not spent.*
2. **Power type:** whether the breakthrough provides an immediate, single-use power ( ) or an ongoing boon (∞).
3. **Power effect:** the boon that the breakthrough provides.



6 White Upgrades *4 Bonus Upgrades*



10× Upgrades

Upgrades are modifications to existing buildings that improve the type of resources they generate or increase the number of resources produced.

A white upgrade replaces the building tile's normal resources yield with a white cube.

A bonus upgrade increases the normal resource yield by a cube of the depicted colour.

4× Scoring tiles

As rewards for supporting the grand mosque, scoring tiles earn you points in each scoring phase for the buildings you have constructed.



32× Scrolls

Scrolls are academic and cultural texts from around the world, which have been gathered at the library. You can use scrolls to fulfil contracts, score points at the palace, and earn breakthroughs for immediate or ongoing boons.

Scrolls may have different writing details, but they are all functionally identical.



24 Common Goods *24 Rare Goods*

48× Goods

Goods are valuable resources obtained through trade at the marketplace. You can use goods to fulfil contracts and score points at the palace.

Goods may have different illustrations, but only their type matters for gameplay.

GAME SETUP



Player Pieces

Each player chooses a colour. Give each player all the meeples, buildings, and discs of that colour 1.
If there are fewer than four players, return all the unused player pieces to the box.

Place all the players' master meeples in the queue in the north-west corner of the city in a random order 2.

Place a disc from each player on the first space of the favour 3, influence 4, and score track 5.

Two-Player

In a two-player game, set aside the master meeple and all the buildings of one of the unused colours for the high courtier.
The high courtier's master meeple starts on the last space of the turn order queue.

You can find the special rules for the two-player game on page 14.

Single-Player

In a single-player game, set aside the master meeple and all the buildings of one of the unused colours for the high courtier.
The high courtier's master meeple starts on the third space of the turn order queue.

Set aside all the player pieces of another unused colour for the corrupt magistrate. Place a disc of their colour on the favour, influence, and score tracks.

The corrupt magistrate starts on the first space of the turn order queue. The player starts on the second space of the queue.

Set aside the 'Palace' card and shuffle the remaining solo cards. Take the 'Palace' and two other solo cards at random and shuffle them into a deck. Then take one of the remaining solo cards and place one on top of the deck, and the final two on the bottom of the deck. This way, the 'Palace' card is the second, third, or fourth card down.

You can find the special rules for the single-player game on page 15.

The City

Randomly choose one side of the camel market and place it in the centre of the city 6.

Shuffle all the building sites and place them in the remaining spaces in the city 7.

The Library

Place all the scrolls near the library 8.

Sort the breakthroughs by their scroll prerequisites and place them as indicated in the library 9.

The Marketplace

Separate the common and rare goods, and place both stacks near the marketplace 10.

Place a camel on the four inner cities (Rayy, Samarkand, Nishapur, and Balkh) 11.

Contract Cards

Sort the contract cards into six stacks with matching card backs.

In each stack, sort the cards face-up in descending order by points value, with the highest-value card on top.

Place the stacks next to the spaces beside the Mosque 12.

The Mosque

Sort the upgrades by type and place them on their indicated spaces in the mosque 13.

Place the scoring tiles on their indicated space in the mosque 14.

Place a camel on the four bottom spaces of the mosque track 15.

The Caravansary

Shuffle the caravan cards into a face-down deck and place it next to the board 16.

Draw eight cards from the deck and place them face up on the indicated slots 17.

Place a camel on the two, three, or four cards furthest away from the deck, according to the number of players 18.
In a single-player game, place two camels.

Return any remaining camels to the box.

The Wall

Place all the wall segments and gates in their indicated spaces 19.

Remaining Pieces

Place the year marker on the first space of the year track 20.

Sort the resource cubes by colour and place them near the board 21.



Introduction

The 12th century city of Merv is a hub of trade along the Silk Road and a gateway between East and West. Filled with libraries, mosques, and palaces, it is a cultural and religious centre. It is the greatest city in the world.

You will build, trade, and politick your way into wealth and power. As the city grows under your direction, you will collect rare scrolls, pay your respects to the majesty of the grand mosque, and oversee the construction of the city walls.

Beyond the horizon, a threat approaches: the Mongols.
These ruthless conquerors seek to plunder Merv for all its riches.
Work together to protect the city, or collaborate with the invading forces, lest they burn everything you've built to the ground…

Historical Note

The city of Merv was founded in the 6th century BC by Cyrus the Great, though the area was already populated at that point. During its life, it changed hands many times, at different time ruled by Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, and Uzbeks.
It was a trade and cultural hub on the Silk Road, with thousands of caravans passing through every week and famous scholars studying in its libraries. Merv flourished between the 6th and 13th centuries AD, reaching a population of nearly one million - the largest city in the world at the time.

The game of Merv is set during the end of the 12th century AD, when the city is under Turkish rule. Around the corner in 1221 the Mongols raid the city, leading to the death of 700,000 inhabitants and the destruction of the dam that supplied the city with fresh water. The city never fully recovered, and by the 19th century the city was abandoned entirely.

How to Play

Merv is played over three years. In each year there is an action phase, which is divided into four rounds of turns. Thus, over the course of the game, each player will take twelve turns.

Each year also has a scoring phase, in which players earn points for their courtiers in the palace, their buildings in the city, and their advancements on the mosque track.

In the second and third year there is also an invasion phase, in which the Mongols attack the city.

Action Phase

The city is surrounded by a path of action slots along its sides, with a queue in each corner. In the first round of the action phase, players' master meeples start in the north-west (top left) corner of the city, move to one of the action slots along the north side, and end up in the north-east corner. In the second round, the master meeples do the same, this time moving from the north-east corner, along the east side, and finishing in the south-east corner. By the end of the fourth round, all players will have returned to the north-west corner.

In each round, starting with the player whose master meeple is furthest ahead in the queue, the players take their turn:

Turns

On your turn, always follow these steps in order:

1) Choose an Action Slot

Choose one of the five action slots along the side of the city you are on and move your master meeple there. You cannot choose a slot that's occupied.

2) Choose a Building Site to Activate

Choose to activate one of the building sites in the same row or column as your master meeple. You can choose any site, regardless of whether there's a building there. The camel market is not a building site.

In the first and third rounds of each action phase, you must choose a building site in the same column as your master meeple. In the second and fourth rounds, it must be in the same row.

The term **active row** refers to the row or column that your master meeple is in.

If you choose a building site with no building, you **must** place one of your buildings on it.

Remember that a building site refers to the tiles in the city, and a building refers to the your wooden playing piece.

3) Generate Resources

The building site you activate, along with any building sites in the active row with buildings of the same colour, generates resources.

Each building site generates one resource of the colour shown on it. If the building site has a white upgrade, it instead generates a white cube. If the building site has a bonus upgrade, it generates one cube of the colour shown on the upgrade, in addition to the cube that the site normally produces.

If the activated building site has another player's building on it, they also receive resources:

1. The other player receives all resources that the activated building site normally produces.
2. The other player receives one resource for each upgrade on their building sites in the active row, of the colour indicated by the upgrade. They do not receive the resources indicated by the building site itself.

4) Perform an Action

After generating resources, choose and perform **one** of the following actions:

1. **Perform the board action depicted on the activated building site**
2. **Gain favour**
3. **Deploy a soldier**

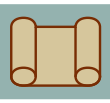
Actions are covered later in this rulebook, on page 9.

Trade at the Camel Market

If the camel market is in the active row, you may trade there. You may do so **before or after** performing an action.

When you trade at the camel market, you may either **(a)** collect all the camels in the camel market, placing them in front of you, or **(b)** place one camel in the camel market and gain the reward shown.

When you place a camel in the camel market, you must place it on a slot that is not covered by another camel. When you do, you immediately gain the depicted boon:

	Gain a white resource cube.
	Gain a scroll (this can earn you a breakthrough).
	Take any of the cards in the caravansary and restock the queue. If the card has a camel on it, you gain that camel.
	Gain favour.
	Gain a rare good.
	Advance one space along the mosque track and gain the associated boons. Do not pay the associated resource cost.
	Deploy a soldier.

Some of the boons refer to actions that are covered later in this rulebook.

Complete Contracts

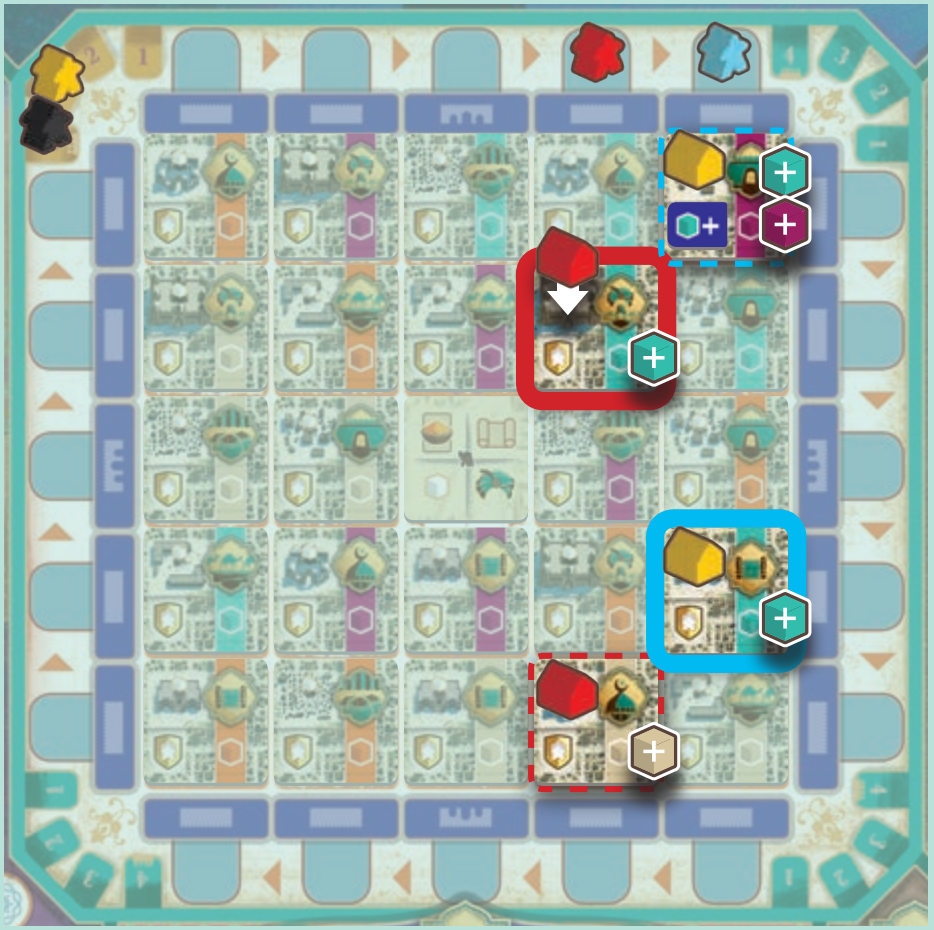
At any point during your turn, you may fulfil one or more available contracts in any of the stacks. Before you can fulfil a contract, you must reach or pass its required influence level on the influence track. If you have not reached the required influence level, you cannot fulfil that contract.

Each contract shows a combination of resources, scrolls, and common and rare goods required to fulfil it. To fulfil a contract, spend a resource cube as shown, place the contract card in front of you, and place the goods and scrolls required on the contract card. These goods and scrolls are now committed and cannot be spent on fulfilling other contracts. Committed scrolls still count towards a breakthrough, and committed scrolls and goods still score you points through the palace.

Once you have committed scrolls and goods to a contract, immediately score the points shown. In addition, gain favour or deploy a soldier as indicated by the card.

There is no limit to the number of contracts you can fulfil during your turn.

PLAY EXAMPLE: A TURN



Red places their master meeple in the fourth action slot from the queue. They choose the second building site down, placing a building there. They have another building in the same column, so together the buildings generate two resources: a teal cube and a tan cube. Rather than taking the building action, red decides to gain favour.

Blue places their master meeple in the fifth action slot from the queue. They choose the fourth building site down, where yellow already has a building. This generates resources for all yellow buildings in the column, so blue earns two teal cubes and a purple cube. Yellow earns a teal cube for their activated site and a teal cube for the bonus upgrade in that column. Blue then decides to take the building action shown on the tile to buy some scrolls from the library.

Round End

Once every player has taken a turn, move all the master meeples to the next corner. The player on the action slot furthest counterclockwise (that is, closest to the queue they were just in) places their master meeple on the space furthest to the back of the next queue. Then the player in the next slot clockwise places their master meeple as far back in the queue as possible. Repeat this process until all the master meeples are in the queue.

The fourth slot in each queue is used in a four-player game only and should not be used if playing with fewer than four players.

Manipulating Turn Order

When it's your turn to place your master meeple in the queue, you may use camels to advance in the turn order. Before placing your master meeple, place one of your camels on each slot of the queue that you wish to skip. Then place your master meeple on the space next to the last one you skipped.

You may place camels to skip slots that already have camels in them – in that case, there will be more than one camel in those slots. If you place your master meeple in a slot that already has camels in, you gain those camels.

PLAY EXAMPLE: ROUND END (3 PLAYERS)



Yellow is the first to move their master meeple to the next queue. They don't want to go last, so they place one camel in the slot furthest back, which means they will go second next round. They could place another camel and go first, but they decide against it.



Next, red moves their master meeple. Normally, they would take the nearest available position to the back of the queue, which means they would go last (but also receive a camel). Instead, they decide to place a camel in that position, so they take the slot at the front – red will go first next round.



Finally, there is only one slot left for blue to take, so they place their meeple in the position furthest back. Blue will go last next round, but at least they get two camels for their trouble!



Invasion Phase

In the second and third year, the action phase is followed by the invasion phase. **In the first year, skip straight to the scoring phase.** During the invasion, Mongols will attack the city from every direction and destroy as many buildings as they can – unless a ransom is paid.

Mongols attack the first two building sites from the top and bottom of every row and column, unless they are protected by a wall segment or gate. Most building sites can be attacked from two directions, so you need two wall segments to protect them. Building sites in the middle column and middle row require only a single wall (a gate) to protect them. Building sites can be attacked only once, even if there are no wall segments in the way.

If a building has a soldier of any colour on it, the building is protected.

If your building site is attacked, return the building to your supply unless you can pay the ransom. The ransom for a building is one resource of the colour produced by that building. If the building has a bonus upgrade, you can pay the ransom with a resource of the colour indicated by the upgrade instead of the colour produced by the building. If the building has a white upgrade, you can pay the ransom with a resource of any colour. Place any ransom paid on the building site as a reminder that it has been paid.

If a building is removed from the board, any upgrade tiles remain on the building site.

Once all attacks have been resolved by either removing the building or paying a ransom, remove all resource cubes and soldiers from the city (even soldiers that weren't necessary to protect the building it was on).

Scoring Phase

After the action and invasion phase, you spend favour to score points for your courtiers in the palace, your presence in the city, and your advancements on the mosque track.

Palace Scoring

For each of your courtiers in the palace, regardless of which hall it is in, you **must** spend one favour, moving down the track. Then you score for each courtier according to which hall it is in:



Hall of knowledge	*Hall of spice*	*Hall of trade*	*Hall of faith*
Scores points for scrolls	Scores points for caravan cards	Scores points for goods	Scores points for the mosque track

If you have multiple courtiers in the same hall, you score for that hall multiple times.

If you have more courtiers than favour, you must spend all your favour, but you can only score for as many courtiers as you have spent favour. In this case, you choose which courtiers you score for.

Each courtier can only score once a year. You must spend your favour on a courtier even if it will earn you no points.

Bonus Scoring

After scoring for your courtiers, you will score bonus points for your presence in the city and your advancements on the mosque track:

- **Buildings**
  For each of your buildings in the city, score one point.
- **Scoring Tile**
  If you have a scoring tile, score three additional points for each of your buildings with the matching action symbol.
- **Mosque Track**
  If you have reached the final space on the mosque track, score four additional points for each of your buildings with the mosque action symbol.

PLAY EXAMPLE: SCORING ROUND



Red has one courtier in the palace, so they spend one favour during the scoring phase. Unfortunately, they have no scrolls, so they don't score any points for the courtier being in the hall of knowledge. However, they still need to spend the favour.

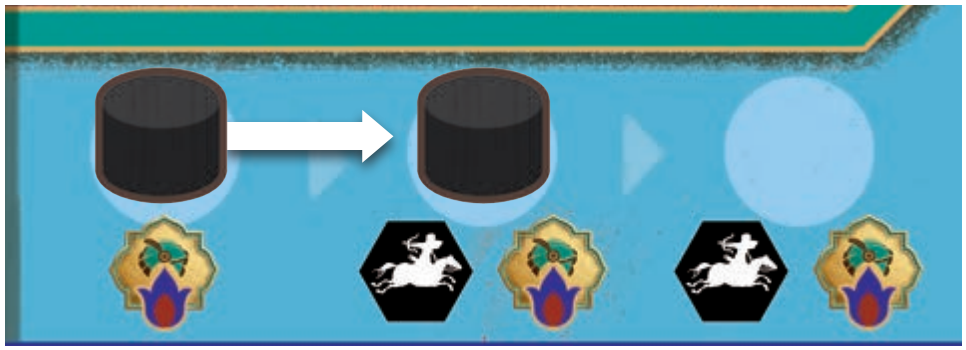
Blue doesn't have enough favour to spend for their two courtiers, so they spend one favour only. As such, they only get to score for one courtier. They choose to score for the courtier in the hall of trade, scoring one point for each common and rare good they have.

Yellow spends two favour for their two courtiers. As the courtiers are both in the hall of spice, yellow scores two points for each caravan card they have.

None of the players have advanced very far along the mosque track, so they earn no bonus points for the track or any scoring tiles. Red and blue each have four buildings and score four points each. Yellow has three buildings so scores three points.

End of The Year

At the end of the first and second year, move the year marker to the next space on the year track. Then start the action phase for the next year.



At the end of the third year, the game ends. Calculate end game points for caravan cards (explained on page 14). The player with the most points wins!

Actions

Gain Favour

As your action on your turn, you may gain favour. You may also gain favour from advancing along the mosque track, placing a courtier in the palace, advancing on the influence track, collecting pairs of juniper at the caravansary, establishing trading posts in the marketplace, making breakthroughs in the library, using the camel market, and completing contracts.

Whenever you gain favour, you advance one space along the favour track.

FAVOUR TRACK

Favour is your political currency in Merv. Your courtiers will use it to score you points in the palace.

Whenever you advance to a space on the favour track with a number of points printed on it, you score that many points immediately. Do not score these points when you move down the favour track.

If you gain favour but you are already on the last space of the favour track, you gain influence instead. If you are also on the last space of the influence track, gaining favour has no effect.



Deploy a Soldier

As your action on your turn, you may deploy a soldier. You may also deploy a soldier by advancing along the mosque track, collecting pairs of ginger at the caravansary, making breakthroughs in the library, using the camel market, and completing contracts.

Whenever you deploy a soldier, place a servant meeple on a building site with a building. **You cannot place a soldier on a building site that already has a soldier or an upgrade, or a site that is already protected from invasion by walls.** You may always choose to not place a soldier when you take this action.

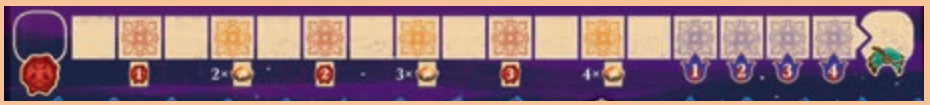
When you deploy a soldier, you gain one influence. If you placed the soldier on another player's building, you gain an additional influence (for a total of two).

INFLUENCE TRACK

Your influence is your reputation in the city. It enables you to fulfil higher-value contracts and collect more types of spices.

Whenever you gain influence, advance along the influence track. When you advance to a space on the track with a number of points printed under it, you score that many points immediately.

If you gain influence but you are already on the last space of the influence track, you gain favour instead. If you are also on the last space of the favour track, gaining influence has no effect.



Caravansary

If you activate a building site with the caravansary symbol, you can perform the caravansary action.

The caravansary is a queue of eight caravan cards on display (there may be fewer if the deck is depleted). The card furthest from the deck is at the front of the queue. Each card features one of four spices.

When you take the caravansary action, you can spend any number of resource cubes. All resource cubes must be of the same colour or white. For each resource spent, take a caravan card, one at a time.

Each card taken must either have a camel on it or be the next card in the queue after a card with a camel on it. You can always take the card at the front of the queue, even if it doesn't have a camel on it. Whenever you take a card with a camel on it, you gain that camel as well. To gain access to more caravan cards, you may place a camel on the frontmost card in the queue that doesn't already have a camel on it. You may do this any number of times during the caravansary action.

You may only ever take, or keep in front of you, as many different spices as allowed by your influence level.

At the start of the game, you can only collect one type of spice. Advancing on the Influence track will allow you to collect more:

Once you've reached or passed 2× you can collect two types.

Once you've reached of passed 3× you can collect three types.

Once you've reached of passed 4× you can collect all four types.

You cannot discard caravan cards, so once you've taken a card of a particular spice it becomes one of your allowed types of spice for the rest of the game.

Once you have finished taking caravan cards, resupply the queue by sliding the remaining cards towards the front of the queue and drawing cards from the deck to refill the queue to eight cards. If there aren't enough cards in the deck to do so, resupply the queue with as many cards as possible.

Once you have resupplied the queue, place all your taken caravan cards face up in front of you. For each pair of the same spice you've just completed, you immediately gain the associated boon. You'll gain the boon for the second, fourth, sixth, and eighth card of the same spice.

Remember: *caravan cards will score you points at the end of the game for having sets of different spices (see page 14). They also score you points in each scoring phase if you have courtiers in the hall of spice.*

Spice Boons

:	When you complete a pair of ginger cards, deploy a soldier.
:	When you complete a pair of juniper cards, gain favour.
:	When you complete a pair of cinnamon cards, gain a white cube.
:	When you complete a pair pepper cards, immediately place a white upgrade on a building site. If that building site has a soldier, remove that soldier. You cannot place an upgrade on a tile that already has an upgrade.

PLAY EXAMPLE: CARAVANSARY

Yellow is taking the caravansary action. They spend two purple cubes and a white cube, which means they can take three caravan cards.

They start by taking the frontmost ginger card, gaining the camel on the card:



They want to take the juniper card, but they haven't reached 2× on the influence track so they cannot collect a second type of spice.

They then take the next ginger card. It's the first card in the queue without a camel on it, so they can take it without any additional cost:



Finally, they take the last ginger card. It's not the first card in the queue without a camel on it, so yellow places the camel they gained earlier on the intervening pepper card, then takes the ginger card:



Having taken three cards, yellow slides all the remaining caravan cards towards the front of the queue and draws three more from the deck.

Finally, having completed a pair of ginger cards, yellow deploys a soldier in the city.



Palace

If you activate a building site with the palace symbol, you can perform the palace action.

The palace consists of four halls, which can each hold up to three courtiers. Each hall will earn you points for every courtier there, and each has a different associated cost.

When you take the palace action, place any number of servant meeples as courtiers in halls where there is space to hold them, one at a time. You must then pay the associated resource cost. The first courtier you place **in the game** costs one resource cube. The second courtier you place costs two, the third costs three, and so on.

The resources paid are determined by the hall your courtier is placed in:



Hall of knowledge	*Hall of spice*	*Hall of trade*	*Hall of faith*
Scores points for scrolls	Scores points for caravan cards	Scores points for goods	Scores points for the mosque track

You can always spend white resource cubes in place of the required colour.

If you place a courtier in an empty hall, place it on the space with the and immediately gain favour.

Remember: *courtiers will spend your favour and score you points in each scoring phase.*

FAVOUR TRACK

Whenever you advance to a space on the favour track with a number of points printed on it, you score that many points immediately. Do not score these points when you move down the favour track.

If you gain favour but you are already on the last space of the favour track, gain influence instead. If you are also on the last space of the influence track, gaining favour has no effect.

PLAY EXAMPLE: PALACE ACTION



Red is taking the palace action. They place a courtier in the hall of faith, so they must pay the resources cost in orange cubes. As this is their second courtier in the palace, they pay two orange resource cubes.

Red's courtier is the first in the hall of faith, so they gain favour for placing it there.

Red wants to place a courtier in the hall of trade as well, but doing so would cost three tan resources! They decide instead not to place any more courtiers.

Library

If you activate a building site with the library symbol, you can perform the library action.

When you take the library action, you can spend up to four resource cubes. Each cube must be of a different colour, though you may spend multiple white cubes. For each resource spent, take a scroll and place it in front of you.

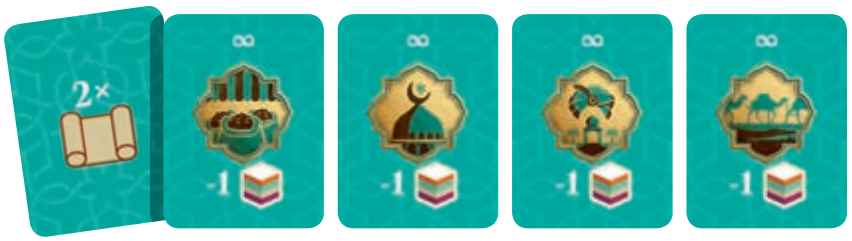
When you gain your second, fourth, sixth, and eighth scroll, you make a breakthrough (for a maximum of four breakthroughs over the course of the game). Remember to count all the scrolls in front of you, including any that are committed to fulfilled contracts.

Each breakthrough gives you a choice of four unique boons. Once you've chosen a boon, the other players can't choose the same one. Take the breakthrough and place it face up in front of you.

There's no limit to the number of scrolls you can collect over the course of the game, though once you've collected eight you cannot make any more breakthroughs.

Remember: *Scrolls help you fulfil contracts. They also earn you points in each scoring phase if you have courtiers in the hall of knowledge.*

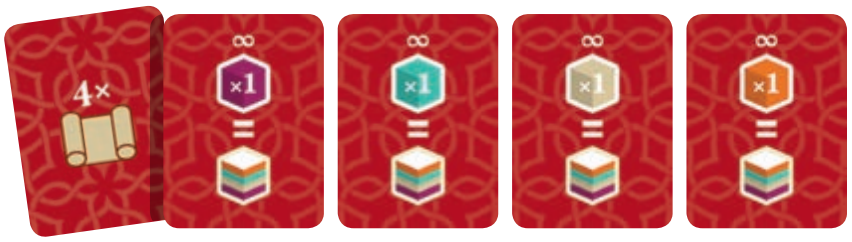
First Breakthrough (two scrolls)



The first breakthrough earns you a discount when performing the caravansary, palace, marketplace, or mosque board action. Whenever you take the action shown, you need to spend one less resource cube than you would otherwise need to spend. You may use the discount to take more cards, place more courtiers, buy more goods, or advance further than you would ordinarily be able to. The discount applies for the rest of the game.

The discount can only be used once per turn, not per card, courtier, good, or advancement.

Second Breakthrough (four scrolls)



The second breakthrough earns you the ability to use one resource colour as if it were any colour. This ability applies for the rest of the game.

You may only use this ability for one resource cube per turn.

Third Breakthrough (six scrolls)



The third breakthrough earns you a one-time boon. It has no further effect.

1. Take any one card from the caravansary and restock the queue, without paying the normal resource cost. If the card has a camel on it, you gain that camel. If this would give you a spice boon, gain it immediately.

   You may take any of the cards in the caravansary, without spending any camels to do so. However, you must still have enough influence to collect that many different spices.

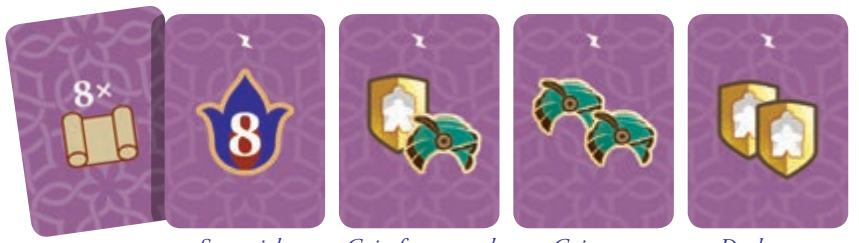
2. Establish a trading post (as if you'd taken the marketplace action). Gain a common good if your trading post is in an inner city, or a rare good if it's in an outer city without paying the normal resource cost. Also gain the camel or favour (as shown) if you are the first to establish a trading post in that location.

3. Advance one space along the mosque track and gain the associated boons. Do not pay the associated resource cost.

4. Choose and place any wall segment or gate and gain influence as normal. Do not pay the associated resource cost.

Fourth Breakthrough (eight scrolls)

The fourth breakthrough earns you a one-time boon. It has no further effect.



Score eight points. *Gain favour and deploy a soldier.* *Gain two favour.* *Deploy two soldiers.*

PLAY EXAMPLE: LIBRARY ACTION



Blue is taking the library action. They spend a purple, a tan, and a white cube, taking three scrolls and placing those scrolls in front of them.

Blue already has five scrolls, so they can now make their third and fourth breakthroughs. First, they choose the breakthrough that allows them to place a wall segment. They choose a gate and place it in the city, gaining the influence for doing so. Next, they choose the breakthrough that lets them score eight points immediately.

The breakthroughs have no further effect, but blue keeps them both in order to mark that they cannot gain any further breakthroughs.

Marketplace

If you activate a building site with the marketplace symbol, you can perform the marketplace action.

The marketplace shows a map of eight cities that are linked to Merv's trade network. The four inner cities (Rayy, Samarkand, Nishapur, and Balkh) are all directly connected to Merv and produce common goods. The four outer cities (Baghdad, Kashgar, Basra, and Peshawar) are connected to Merv through one of the closer cities and produce rare goods.

When you take the marketplace action, establish a trading post by placing a disc in one of the cities. The first trading post you establish in the game must be in one of the inner cities. You can establish future trading posts either in another inner city or in an outer city that is connected to Merv through an inner city where you already have a trading post.

You can establish a trading post in the same city as other players' trading posts. The first player to establish a trading post in an inner city gains the camel there. The first player to establish a trading post in an outer city gains favour.

Buy Goods

After establishing a trading post, you may buy goods from cities in the trade network.

You may buy up to one common good from each inner city, and up to one rare good from each outer city, where you have a trading post by paying the resource cost shown. You need to spend resources of the exact colours shown, but you may use white resource cubes in place of any colour. Common goods cost one resource; rare goods cost two resources.

To buy goods from any city where you haven't established a trading post, you must also spend camels. To buy a good from an inner city, place a camel on the trade route between Merv and the city. To buy a good from an outer city, place a camel on the trade route between the outer and inner cities. You must either have a trading post in that inner city or have placed a camel connecting it to Merv.

Once you have completed the marketplace action, move all camels on trade routes to the caravansary and place them on the caravan cards, starting with the card furthest from the deck. If a card already has a camel on it, skip that card. In the rare case every card in the caravansary already has a camel on it, place any remaining camels on the camel market, starting with the top left space on going clockwise. In the extremely rare case that the camel market is also full, remove any excess camels from the game.

Remember: *Goods help you fulfil contracts. They also earn you points in each scoring phase if you have courtiers in the hall of trade.*

PLAY EXAMPLE: MARKETPLACE ACTION

Yellow is taking the marketplace action.

They first place a trading post in Samarkand and gain the camel there.

Next, they buy goods:

- They spend one orange resource to buy a common good from Samarkand.
- They spend one purple resource to buy a common good from Rayy. To do so, they place a camel on the path between Merv and Rayy.
- They spend one teal and one tan resource to buy a rare good from Kashgar. To do so, they place a camel on the path between Samarkand and Kashgar.

Yellow has finished buying goods, so moves the two camels they placed to the caravansary.



Mosque

If you activate a building tile with the mosque symbol, you can perform the mosque action.

The mosque track starts with four paths, which converge into two paths and finally into one path. Each path segment shows the resource cost of advancing along that path. Each space shows the boon granted when you reach it.

When you take the mosque action, you may advance any number of times along the mosque track. For each advancement, you must pay the resource cost shown on the path segment you are following. You need to spend resources of the exact colours shown, but you may use white resource cubes in place of any other colour. **You can advance to the same slot as another player.**

For your first advancement, choose one of the four paths to move along, paying the cost as normal. You may choose a path that another player has taken, but only the first player on each path gains the camel placed there during setup.

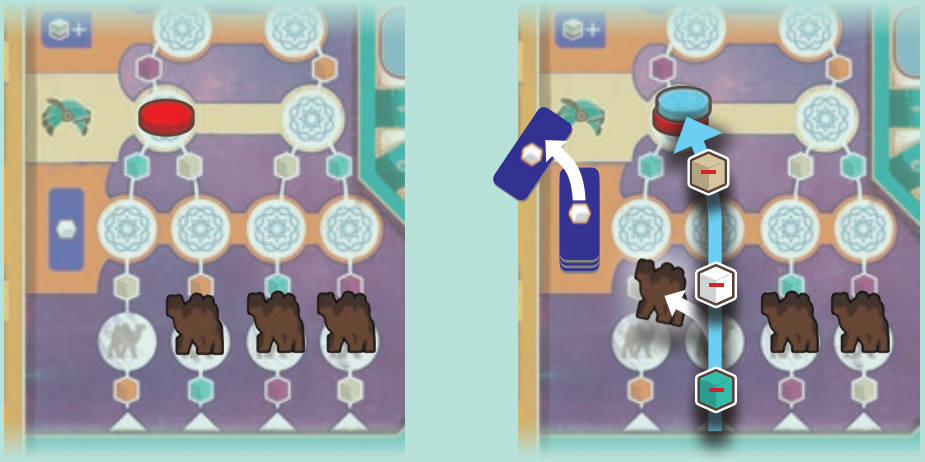
When you advance to a space, you immediately gain the associated boon, as well as any points shown.

Remember: *Your progress along the mosque track may earn you points in each scoring phase if you have advanced far enough or if you have courtiers in the hall of faith.*

Mosque Boons

	Gain the camel, if it's still there.
	Place a white upgrade on one of your building sites. If that building site has a soldier, remove the soldier. You cannot place an upgrade on a tile that already has an upgrade.
	Gain favour.
	Place a bonus upgrade on one of your building sites. If that building site has a soldier, remove that soldier. You cannot place an upgrade on a tile that already has an upgrade.
	Choose one of the available scoring tiles and place it face up in front of you. During each scoring phase, you will score three points for your buildings with the matching action symbol.
	Deploy a soldier.
	Gain favour.
×1	Place a courtier in the palace. Do not pay the associated resource cost.
×1	Choose and place any wall segment or gate and gain influence as normal. Do not pay the associated resource cost.
4×	In each scoring phase, score four points for each of your buildings with the mosque action symbol on it.

PLAY EXAMPLE: MOSQUE ACTION



Blue is taking the mosque action. They have a teal, an orange, and a tan cube that they want to spend on advancing along the mosque track. The camel for the first row has already been taken, and they can only advance once along the fourth row (and not at all along the third row) as they have no purple cubes. They decide to start on the second row.

First, they spend a teal resource to advance to the first slot of the second row, gaining the camel that's there.

Second, they spend an orange resource to advance to the second slot, immediately placing a white upgrade on one of their building sites in the city.

Finally, they spend a tan resource to advance to the third slot, gaining favour. Both blue and red can have their discs on the same space on the mosque track without penalty.



Wall

If you activate a building tile with the wall symbol, you can perform the wall action.

The wall consists of a supply of wall segments and gates. Each one has an individual resource cost shown next to it.

When you take the wall action, build any number of wall segments and gates for the resource cost shown. You need to spend resources of the exact colours shown, but you may use white resource cubes in place of any other colour. Wall segments cost either one or two resources, and gates cost three resources.

You may choose any combination of wall segments and gates.

All walls built must be placed around the city in the available slots. Gates must be placed in one of the middle slots along each side; wall segments must be placed in any other slot. You cannot place a wall segment or a gate in a slot where there is already a piece.

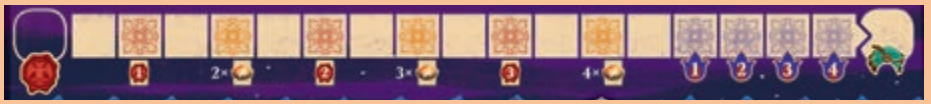
Each wall you build gains you influence. You gain **one** influence for each of your own buildings in the closest two building sites to the wall segment in the row or column where you placed it. For each building that belongs to another player, you gain **two** influence instead. Empty building sites earn you no influence. You can gain up to four influence from a single wall. You gain influence for buildings that are already protected by soldiers as normal.

Remember: *Walls protect your buildings from the Mongols during the invasion phase.*

INFLUENCE TRACK

Whenever you gain influence, advance along the influence track. When you advance to a space on the track with a number of points printed on it, you score that many points immediately.

If you gain influence but you are already on the last space of the influence track, gain favour instead. If you are also on the last space of the favour track, gaining influence has no effect.



PLAY EXAMPLE: WALL ACTION



Red is taking the wall action. First, they build a wall segment by spending a single tan resource cube. They place the wall segment on the north side of the fifth column so it protects two of their own buildings. They gain two influence for doing so.

Next, they build a gate by spending three teal cubes, placing it in the middle of the east side of the city. This protects one of their own buildings and one of yellow's buildings, so they gain another three influence.

They'd like to buy another wall segment, but they have only one purple resource remaining. All the wall segments that have a cost in purple resources require at least two cubes.

By advancing five spaces, red can now fulfil any type of contract and collect up to three different types of spices.

Game End

The game ends after the scoring phase of the third year. Add up all the end of game points from your caravan cards as follows:

Divide your caravan cards into sets. Each set can include a maximum of one of each type of caravan card. Then score each set depending on the number of cards in that set.

Each set of one scores one point.

Each set of two scores three points.

Each set of three scores six points.

Each set of four scores ten points.

For example, if you have five ginger cards , two pepper cards, and one juniper card at the end of the game, you would score 6 points for a set of three, 3 points for a set of two, and 3 points for three sets of one.

The player with the most points wins.

Tiebreakers

If two or more players are tied for the most points, the tied player with the most favour wins.

If there is still a tie, the tied player with the most influence wins.

If there is still a tie, the tied player whose turn is first in the order queue wins.

Two-Player: the High Courtier

The high courtier is no threat to your status in the city but has an uncanny ability to get in your way…

When you play Merv with two players, you will use a third colour to represent the high courtier. The high courtier doesn't score points, but constructs buildings and takes up action slots. Control of the high courtier is shared between the two players.

The High Courtier's Turn

When it is the high courtier's turn, use the following procedure:

1) Choose an Action Slot

The player who had (or will have) the first turn this round chooses an available action slot for the high courtier.

2) Choose a Building Site to Activate

The player who had (or will have) the second turn this round chooses a building site for the high courtier. They must choose a building site without a building, if possible. Place one of the high courtier's buildings on that building site. If all the building sites in the active row are already controlled, the high courtier doesn't activate a building site.

The high courtier never takes actions or generates resources.

Round End and Turn Order

The end of the round during the action phase is resolved as normal. The high courtier receives any camels from the players' turn order manipulations, just as another player would.

If at the end of the round the high courtier has one or more camels, they will use as many as possible to manipulate the turn order.

The High Courtier's Buildings

You may activate the high courtier's building sites as if they belonged to another player. The high courtier does not generate any resources.

If you protect the high courtier's building sites with a soldier or a wall, you gain two influence – just as if the building site belonged to another player.

If the high courtier's buildings are attacked during the invasion phase, remove them from the board. The high courtier never pays the ransom.

Single-Player: The Corrupt Magistrate

The corrupt magistrate is a cunning powerbroker. They may not be as savvy as you, but they will leverage every advantage of their position against you…

When you play Merv as a single-player game, you will use another colour as the corrupt magistrate. The corrupt magistrate plays similarly to a human player, trying to gain favour, construct buildings, and score points, but their actions are governed by a set of solo cards.

When you play the single-player game, you will also use the high courtier – see the previous page.

When the corrupt magistrate chooses an action slot for the high courtier, it chooses the active row where you have the most buildings. In case of a tie, the magistrate chooses the tied row where they have the fewest buildings. If there is still a tie, they choose the row that is closest to the queue.

When the corrupt magistrate chooses a building site to activate for the high courtier, it chooses the building site in the perpendicular row where you have the most buildings. In the case of a tie, the magistrate chooses the building site in the perpendicular row where they have the fewest buildings. If there is still a tie, they choose the building site closest to the action slot.

The Corrupt Magistrate's Turn

When it is the corrupt magistrate's turn, use the following procedure:

1) Draw a Solo Card

Draw a solo card from the deck and place it face up in front of the corrupt magistrate.
This determines which type of building site they will activate this round: this is their **intended type**.

If there are no available action slots that would allow the corrupt magistrate to activate their intended type of building site, discard the solo card and draw a new one.

2) Choose an Action Slot

The corrupt magistrate chooses an action slot using Method A if able to:

Method A

Select an active available row with an **empty building site of the intended type**.

If there are multiple possible rows, select the available active row with most of the corrupt magistrate's buildings.

In a tie, select the tied row with most of the high courtier's buildings.

In a tie, select the tied row with the most of your buildings.

In a tie, select the row furthest from the queue.

If there are no available active rows with empty building sites of the intended type, the corrupt magistrate uses Method B instead:

Method B

Select an available active row with a **corrupt magistrate's or high courtier's building of the intended type**.

If there are multiple rows that meet these criteria, select the row with the highest total number of corrupt magistrate's and high courtier's buildings.

In a tie, select the tied row with most of the corrupt magistrate's buildings.

In a tie, select the tied row with the most of your buildings.

In a tie, select the row furthest from the queue.

If the corrupt magistrate has no houses left in their supply, use Method B.

PLAY EXAMPLE: THE CORRUPT MAGISTRATE



The corrupt magistrate (red) has drawn the marketplace as their intended type. There are no available rows with empty marketplace tiles, and so the magistrate selects an available row with a marketplace belonging to either the high courtier (yellow) or themselves. Rows 2, 4, and 5 all meet these criteria. Between them, the corrupt magistrate and high courtier have the most buildings in the row 2, so the corrupt magistrate selects the second row and places their master meeple there.

3) Construct a Building

If the action slot was chosen using method A, the corrupt magistrate now constructs a building on an empty building site of the intended type.

If there is more than one empty building site in the active row, the magistrate chooses the building site in the perpendicular row that has more of their own buildings in it. In the case of a tie, the magistrate chooses the building site in the perpendicular row with more of your buildings in it. If there is still a tie, they choose the building site furthest from the action slot.

If the action slot was chosen using methods B, the corrupt magistrate doesn't construct a building.

4) Perform an Action

The corrupt magistrate always takes the action shown on the solo card for their intended type.
They take the intended action as many times as the total number of the corrupt magistrate's and the high courtier's buildings in the active row.

How the corrupt magistrate performs actions is described later in this section.

5) Camel Market

If the camel market is in the active row, the corrupt magistrate trades at the camel market:

If there are two or more camels in the camel market, the corrupt magistrate takes all the camels there.

If there are fewer than two camels in the camel market, the corrupt magistrate places one camel there if they can and gains the benefit shown for the relevant slot. The magistrate tries to place the camel in the top left slot if it's available. If not, they place it in the top right slot.

	The magistrate takes the library action once.
	The magistrate takes the caravansary action once.
	The magistrate gains a rare good.
	The magistrate takes the mosque action once.

Round End and Turn Order

The end of the round during the action phase is resolved as normal. The high courtier and the corrupt magistrate receive any camels from any turn order manipulations, just as a player would.

If at the end of the round the high courtier or the corrupt magistrate has one or more camels, they will use as many as possible to manipulate the turn order.

At the end of each round, discard the current solo card.

Invasion Phase

The corrupt magistrate's buildings are never destroyed by the attacking Mongols.

The high courtier's buildings are destroyed if they are not protected by walls or soldiers.

Scoring Phase

The corrupt magistrate never spends favour in the scoring phase, but scores points for courtiers as normal, as well as any bonus points.

Once the scoring phase is over, shuffle all the solo cards in the discard pile and place them on the top of the deck.

Game End

The corrupt magistrate scores game end points for caravan cards just as a player does. If your score is greater than the magistrate's score, you win!

The Corrupt Magistrate's Actions

You may never activate the corrupt magistrate's buildings.

The corrupt magistrate will never activate your buildings.



Gain Favour

The corrupt magistrate never gains favour as an action but may earn favour from other actions.

The magistrate scores points for advancing along the favour track as normal. If they are already on the last space of the favour track, they gain influence instead. If they are on the last space of both tracks, they instead earn two points.

Note: *the magistrate never spends favour!*



Deploy a Soldier

The corrupt magistrate never deploys a soldier as an action but may deploy soldiers when performing other actions.

The magistrate always deploys a soldier to the northernmost unprotected building owned by the high courtier. If there are multiple buildings on the same row, they deploy the soldier to the building furthest west. The magistrate earns two influence for doing so.

The magistrate will not place soldiers on buildings that are protected from invasion by walls.

If there are no unprotected buildings belonging to the high courtier, the magistrate will place the soldier on one of their buildings, using the same criteria, and will earn one influence for doing so.

The magistrate scores points for advancing along the influence track as normal. If the magistrate is already on the last space of the influence track, they gain favour instead. If they are on the last space of both tracks, they instead earn two points.

Note: *the magistrate never needs influence for contracts or caravan cards!*

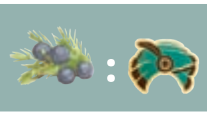


Caravansary

For each caravan action taken, the corrupt magistrate takes the caravan card that will score them the most points at the end of the game. In the case of a tie, they choose the tied card closest to the front of the queue. They gain any camels on cards they take.

The corrupt magistrate can choose any of the visible cards in the caravansary, ignoring the normal restrictions. They can collect all four spices, regardless of their influence level.

Once the magistrate has finished taking cards, refill the queue as normal.

	For every pair of ginger cards the magistrate completes, they deploy a soldier.
	For every pair of juniper cards the magistrate completes, they gain favour.
	For every pair of cinnamon cards the magistrate completes, they **score three points**.
	For every pair of pepper cards the magistrate completes, they **score three points**.

If after taking the caravansary action there are no more available caravan cards, remove the caravansary solo card from the game.



Palace

If the magistrate takes 1-3 palace actions, they place one courtier in the available hall that would score them the most points.

If the magistrate takes 4-5 palace actions, they place two courtiers in the available hall/halls that would score them the most points. In the case of tie, they choose the tied hall that would score you the most points. If there is still a tie, they choose the tied hall that is furthest to the left.

Library

For each library action taken, the corrupt magistrate takes a scroll.

If after taking the library action the magistrate has eight or more scrolls, remove the library solo card from the game.

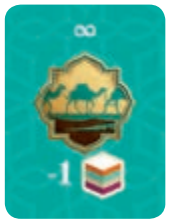
For every two scrolls they have, the magistrate makes a breakthrough, just as an ordinary player would. However, there are the following differences:

First Breakthrough

Count how many spaces the magistrate has advanced on the mosque track and how many caravan cards they have.



If they have more mosque advancements than caravan cards, they take the tile showing the Mosque action.



Otherwise, they take the tile showing the Caravansary action.

If only one of the two breakthroughs is available, they choose that one.

For the rest of the game, when the corrupt magistrate takes one or more actions of their chosen breakthrough, they take that action an additional time. Note: this applies only if the action is of their intended type.

Second Breakthrough

The magistrate takes one of the available breakthroughs at random. It has no effect. The magistrate then scores three points.

Third Breakthrough



The magistrate takes the tile showing the Marketplace action, if it is available. If it is, they establish a trading post in an outer city if possible and gain a rare good; otherwise, they establish it in an inner city and gain a common good. The magistrate chooses a city without a trading post if possible, gaining the camel or favour for doing so. If the magistrate has multiple options, they choose a city in the following order of preference: north-west (Baghdad/Rayy); north-east (Kashgar/Samarkand); south-west (Basra/Nishapur); south-east (Peshawar/Balkh). If they can fulfil a contract with the good they have obtained, they will do so (see the marketplace action).



Otherwise, the magistrate chooses the tile showing the mosque action, and takes the mosque action once.

Fourth Breakthrough



The magistrate takes the tile showing eight points, if available, scoring eight points immediately.



Otherwise, they choose the tile showing two favour, gaining two favour.

Marketplace

Regardless of the number of marketplace actions taken, the corrupt magistrate establishes one trading post – in an outer city if possible, in an inner city otherwise. The magistrate will choose a city without a trading post if possible, gaining the camel or favour for doing so. If the magistrate has multiple options, they choose a city in the following order of preference: north-west (Baghdad/Rayy); north-east (Kashgar/Samarkand); south-west (Basra/Nishapur); south-east (Peshawar/Balkh).

Then the magistrate gains one common good for each of their inner city trading posts, and one rare good for each of their outer city trading posts.

Finally, the magistrate will fulfil the most valuable available contract that they have the requisite goods and scrolls for, ignoring any resource costs. If tied, the magistrate will choose the contract with the highest influence requirement that lets them deploy a soldier. The magistrate ignores influence requirements but commits any goods and scrolls required by the contract as normal. If a contract lists either common or rare goods as a requirement, the magistrate will use common goods if possible.

The magistrate will keep fulfilling contracts until they can no longer fulfil any available contracts.

Mosque

For each mosque action taken, the corrupt magistrate advances by one space along the mosque track. The first time the magistrate does this, they place their disc on the topmost row of the track that has a camel available.
For each advancement, they gain as follows:

	The magistrate gains the camel.
	The magistrate scores three points.
	The magistrate scores three points.
	Choose the available scoring tile that would earn the magistrate the most points, and place them face up in the magistrate's play area. If multiple tiles would score the same amount, choose one of those tiles at random.
	The magistrate deploys a soldier.
	The magistrate gains favour.
	The magistrate takes a palace action.
	The magistrate takes a wall action.
	In each scoring phase, the magistrate scores four points for each of their buildings with the mosque action symbol on it.

The magistrate also scores any points listed on the space.

If, after taking the mosque action, the magistrate has advanced to the end of the mosque track, remove the mosque solo card from the game.



Wall

For each wall action taken, the corrupt magistrate builds one wall. The magistrate will always choose the walls with the lowest cube cost. If there are multiple options, they will choose based on the colour of resource it costs: first purple, then tan, then teal, then orange. This means that the magistrate will only build a gate if all the wall segments have already been built.

The magistrate chooses where to place the wall in the following order of preference, gaining the influence listed.

The corrupt magistrate places the wall to protect:

A) Two of the high courtier's buildings (4 influence)

B) One of the high courtier's buildings and one of the corrupt magistrate's buildings (3 influence)

C) Two of the corrupt magistrate's buildings (2 influence)

D) One of the high courtier's buildings (2 influence)

E) One of the corrupt magistrate's buildings (1 influence)

F) One of the high courtier's buildings and one of your buildings (4 influence)

G) One of the corrupt magistrate's buildings and one of your buildings (3 influence)

H) One of your buildings (2 influence)

I) No buildings (no influence)

If there is more than one option of the same priority level, the corrupt magistrate will choose the next slot clockwise from the westernmost slot on the north wall.

The corrupt magistrate never places a wall segment in the middle slot of a city wall (only gates).

The magistrate scores points for advancing along the influence track as normal. If the magistrate would gain influence but they are already on the last space of the influence track, they gain favour instead. If they are on the last space of both tracks, they instead earn two points.

Credits

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20 21 22 23 24 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year Overview

Action Phase

Each year has four rounds.

Each round, in turn order:

1) Choose an Action Slot

2) Choose a Building Site in That Row

Place building if empty

3) Generate Resources

Your building: gain resources for your buildings

Opponent's building: gain resources for their buildings
(they gain resources for that building and upgrades on other buildings)

4) Perform an Action

Gain favour / deploy soldier / take board action

Camel Market

Take all camels / place one camel to gain boon

Fulfil Contracts

Commit resources, scrolls, and goods to claim contract *(must have enough influence)*

Gain points and favour/soldier

Round End

Fill the next queue starting with the player whose meeple is furthest behind.

Place camels on slots in the queue to skip ahead

Invasion Phase

Skip in first year.

Mongols attack two tiles in from each direction.

Walls and soldiers protect buildings.

Unprotected buildings: pay ransom or remove *(ransom is one resource on the colour produced by the site, or a white resource).*

Remove all soldiers from city.

Scoring Phase

Palace Scoring

Each courtier: spend 1 favour, then score:

Hall of knowledge: 1 point / scroll *(including on contracts)*

Hall of spice: 1 point / caravan card

Hall of trade: 1 point / good *(including on contracts)*

Hall of faith: 1 point / space advanced along mosque track

Bonus Scoring

Scoring tile: 3 points / your building of the type indicated on the tile.

Mosque track: 4 points /mosque site with your building *(if you have completed the mosque track).*

Buildings: 1 point / building.

Icon Guide

	Resources
	White resource (wild)
	Any resource
	Common good
	Rare good
	Any good
	Scroll
	Caravan card
	Contract card
	Gain favour
	Deploy a soldier
	Gain influence

	Score X points
	Place a bonus upgrade
	Place a white upgrade
	Take a scoring tile
	Ignore the cost
	Sites of the depicted type with your buildings
	Scoring Phase
	Invasion Phase
	Your position on the Mosque track
	Your buildings that are protected by a wall, gate or soldier
	Your opponents' buildings that are protected by a wall, gate or soldier

Actions



Caravansary

Spend X resources of same colour to choose X caravan cards.

Place camels to choose cards out of reach.

Influence level determines how many types you can collect.



Palace

Spend X resources to place Xth courtier *(colour determined by hall).*



Library

Spend X resources of different colours to take X scrolls.

2nd / 4th / 6th / 8th scroll: choose breakthrough.



Marketplace

Establish trading post.

Buy goods from cities with trading posts.

Place camels to choose cities out of reach.



Mosque

Spend listed resources to advance.

Gain boons shown on all spaces passed, and on final space.



Wall

Spend listed resources to place walls.

Each **own** building protected: **1 influence**.

Each **opponent's** building protected: 2 influence.