

SAMURAI AND MERCHANT

EDO**POWER AND INFLUENCE IN JAPAN**

Gamers today are very demanding, especially after having played beautiful games, with magnificent boards: with so many games distributed every year I think that graphics are more and more important as sometimes you give just a glance at a new title and you mentally discard it (without even testing it) only because it has a bad look.

I purchased EDO only because some friends told me that it was nice: something in the middle between family games and more complex games. So when I opened the box for the first time I was somewhat deceived by the map: a large cardboard square with some colored circles inside connected by a net of roads. The board mainly reminded me of the old "Flipper" machines that crowded the bars and cafés during my ... green years.

But the first look may be wrong, so let's try the game and then make criticism: I must immediately say that the result is not enthusiastic, but the game has some goals, and we will not care about the scenario, totally fictive and "pasted" to the game just to give it some exotic feel (Japan from 1603 to 1868).

Most of the components are "classic": each player (Daimyo) receives a set of 7 small colored wooden houses (same type as Power Grid), 1 Trading post and 5 meeples (officials/samurai), together with 10 coins (Ryo), 3 special Tiles (Authorization Tiles in the game), a summary tile, a Planning board (heavy cardboard sheets with a slit in the middle where players will put their authorization tiles) and a scoring marker.

The box is completed with 60 resources (wooden pieces to represent rice, wood and stones), 12 "Neutral" officials, 8 "neutral" fortresses, coins in different values (1-2-5-10-60 Ryo), 10 Merchant tiles, 12 Special Authorization Tiles, 24 Profit tiles and a some special markers (First player, Merchant, Cover tiles).

The board is double face: one side (for 2 or 3 players) shows four towns (Edo in the middle of the map and three other cities around it), 6 "entrance" spaces for the Samurai and 15 smaller colored circles (3 blue River spaces, 3 yellow Rice fields, 3 brown Forests, 3 grey Quarries and 3 white Roads). The back of the Map shows seven towns (with Edo in the middle, of course) and the same number of extra circles that are connected by a network of

roads. Each of the towns is surrounded by 10 cases where the players will build their houses and trading posts in order to gain money and Power Points (PP).

Before starting the first turn you have to turn on the first Merchant Tile (activate it for that turn) showing also the following one so everybody will know in advance which trading possibilities are available in the next turn.

Then players are allowed to either place a house in one empty city or select one of the 5 resource packages that are offered for free (with a mix of resources and/or money). If you selected a package you are then allowed (as a second free action) to place a house in an empty city, but if you already placed a house

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Edo is yet another worker placement game with some chrome that needs a learning curve of four to five games to be fully enjoyed.

in the first free action you have to select one of the remaining packages.

The sequence of play is very simple:

- Secretly program your THREE actions
- Perform those actions
- Collect resources and income

And repeat this sequence until one or more player gains at least 12 PP or if the Merchant Tiles deck is exhausted.

The PROGRAM PHASE is the most original of the game: you were initially assigned three square "Authorization tiles" and each of them has 4 different actions depicted, one in each side. To program your action you have to insert your three tiles into your Planning Board, knowing that you may only perform the actions depicted on the bottom sides. In order to activate the tiles and thus execute the related actions you must assign one or more of your officials to each of them. Some of the actions may be performed only once per turn, some more than once (this is clearly stated on the pictogram), and some require TWO officials to perform ONE action.

Of course the different actions have been cleverly printed on each Authorization tile: therefore you cannot perform three VERY GOOD actions, because they are all on the same tile (and you may select only one side, remember?). So you need to look very well at

the situation on the field in order to decide how to program your actions and sometimes it is better to try a snaking or bluffing approach in order to maximize your benefits, especially when you think that there will be high competition somewhere.

You secretly assign your officials to each tile (you may also leave some tiles empty and concentrate in just one of them with all your available officials) and then the first player reveal his first Action Tile, performing that action, followed by all the other players. After this phase the first players shows and performs his second action and so on.

The available ACTIONS are:

Authorization Tile nr. 1

- Money (max 4 activations): you get 5 Ryo per official
- Rice (max 4): you get 1 Rice per Official
- Building with 2 officials (max 2): you may build one house or one trading post in a city where you have a Samurai, but only if you use 2 officials on the tile (and 1 Samurai in the city) per building
- Wood (max 4): you get 1-2-3 "Wood" resources if you have a Samurai in a Forest case

Authorization Tile nr. 2

- Rice (max 4): you get 1-2-3 "Rice" resources if you have a Samurai in a Rice Field case
- Recruitment (max 1): you get 1 "Neutral" Official
- Stone (max 4): you get 1-2-3 "Stone" resources if you have a Samurai in a Quarry case
- Building with 1 official (max 4): you may build one house or one trading post in a city where you have a Samurai (using 1 official and 1 samurai per building).

Authorization Tile nr. 3

- Travel (max 3): you may send on Official to the map (he becomes a Samurai) or move up to 2 Samurai already on the map
- Rice (max 4): you get 1-2-3 "Rice" resources if you have a Samurai in a Rice Field case
- Development (max 1): You may purchase for 5 Ryo 1 Special Authorization Tile
- Trading (max 2): you may get 1 PP or receive 1 or more resources if you have one or more Samurai in the same case with the Merchant

As you see the only resource that you may find in EACH authorization is "Rice" and we will see later why rice is so important. You also have the "Building" action in two different authorizations. All the other items are available only once ... unless you buy (with the Development action) some Special Authorization tiles where you find the same actions but more powerful (for example: 10 Ryo instead of 5; double the stones and/or wood; take one extra rice when you get it; etc.) together with



some new opportunities (for example: sell 1 authorization for 30 Ryo; buy three Rice for 7 Ryo; etc.). Note that Special Authorizations have only TWO action printed on the tile instead of the usual four.

Before revealing one of your Actions you are allowed to move your Samurai (or the Merchant) on the map, paying 1 Ryo per case: this is fundamental as most of the resources are gained only if you have a Samurai on the case that you wish to use. Rice Fields, Forests and Quarries offers a number of resources proportional to the number of Samurai in the related cases: so if there is only 1 Samurai you get 3 resources, with 2 Samurai you get 2 resources and with 3 Samurai you get only 1 resource. Of course sometimes "kind" players move their Samurai in those cases just to reduce the "benefits" for the other players. Note that you may move your Samurai before an action, then you may move the same Samurai to a different case before executing another action, and so on.

It is fundamental to have at least 2 Samurais always on the map ... but they must be fed, so at the end of each turn you have to pay 1 Rice per Samurai or take some or all of them back in your hand (this may be a forced move if you do not have enough rice in your stock): for that reason rice is by far the most important resource (and this is the reason for which it is available on all the three basic authorizations)

To build a house (or the trading post) in a city you must play a Building Action and have a Samurai on that city for each construction: if, for example, you wish to build 2 houses in EDO you must play one of the Building Tiles with two (or four) Officials and move 2 Samurai to Edo. Then you must pay the building cost in resources and money: each house cost 1 Stone, 2 woods and 5 Ryo (while the trading post cost 5 woods and 15 Ryo). Then you put your building in the first available case around the selected city and you immediately get some PP (1PP for each house or 2 PP for the trading post). If a City already has at least two houses (the color is not important) each player may also build a Fortress that has a cost of 5 stones and 20 Ryo, but immediately grants 3 PP.

Trading may be a very interesting action: in order to use it you have to place the Trading Authorization on your Planning board and move the Merchant and/or one of your Samurai in the same case. Then for each Official you may perform one of the two available trading actions depicted on the merchant tile: pay Ryo in exchange for Resources or pay Ryo for 1 PP or pay resources for 1 PP. If you succeed in bringing the Merchant in a city where

you have your trading post AND your Samurai you may perform BOTH trading offers of the merchant tile.

When all the players finish their actions they have to decide if and how many Samurai to leave on the map, paying the related amount of rice. Then you may finally get some money. Each city grants money to the players that placed there one or more buildings: this money is shared between those players considering their INFLUENCE in the city. Each house grants 1 Influence Point (IP) to its owner and each trade post 2 IP. Fortresses do not belong to anybody (they are "neutral" and are used only to give those "heavy" 3 PP). The player with most IP gets the higher share of money and the other players receive a different share, according to the second and third rank. The total amount of available money and the shares are decided at the beginning of the game randomly selecting the PROFIT TILES for EDO (colored in pink) and for the other 3 cities (tiles colored in pale green). Example: EDO got a tile showing $12 / 10 + 4 / 8 + 6 + 2$: this means that if there is only one player in Edo he gets 12 Ryo; in case of two players the one with most IP will get 10 Ryo and the other only 4; if 3/4 players are in EDO the first will get 8 Ryo, the second 6 and the third only 2.

The turn ends discarding the current MERCHANT TILE, activating the following one and turning on another tile from the deck. And everything starts again as we have seen.

The game finish when, at the end of a turn, at least one player reaches 12 PP or if the last Merchant Tile is discarded. If you do not have at least 1 house in Edo you automatically lose the game.

All the other players add to their actual score:
- 1 PP for each samurai still on the map
- 1 PP for each amount of 50 Ryo that they own
The player with most PP obviously wins.

The first two or three games left us with a mixed feeling: "Another worker placement game with some chrome, OK, but nothing really special". Then we realized that the Merchant tiles are very important to gain extra resources at the beginning and extra PP in the middle and end-game phases.

Racing for those extra "Neutral" Officials initially seemed really important ... but we soon realized that 1 or 2 were enough and it was much better to fight to get the best Special Authorization tiles in order to give extra flexibility to our hand.

Then we discovered that being the first to build in a City with an interesting Profit Tile may grant some extra money to you before

the other arrive ... but also we understood that building at least one house in another's player city significantly reduced his own share of money.

Combos are also important: you may program your three Authorizations in order to make "chained" actions and thus maximize your profit (or your PPs).

In the middle of the game high competition arise for the control of the cities: not only you gain 1 PP for each house, but you may win the Influence on that city to get more money ... and so on.

We have to admit that EDO has a learning curve of at least 4-5 games before you may really enjoy it. And you must program your moves at the best every turn, always keeping an eye at what your opponents can do to slow you down consistently (example: you planned to take at least 2 wood from one forest, but when your turn arrives you find 3 Samurai inside and you only get 1 resource ... unless you used the Special action with +1 resource, etc.).

Ok, it is another worker placement game ... but with some chrome !!! ☑

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INFORMATION

Designer: Louis und Stefan Malz

Artist: C. Stephan, M. Fiedler

Price: ca. 45 Euro

Publisher: Queen Games 2012

www.queen-games.de

PLAYERS:

2-4

AGE:

12+

TIME:

60+

EVALUATION

Worker Placement

With friends

Version: de

Rules: de en es fr jp nl ru

In-game text: no

Comments:

Good concise rules * Several games needed to "learn" the game * Pure Worker placement * Rather forced topic

Compares to:

Yedo and other Worker placement games with a Japanese topic

Other editions:

International multi-language edition, Queen Games

