



Master Merchant

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Art: Noboru Sugiura

Story

Merchants cannot only focus on earning gold. Sometimes they have to focus on getting powerful allies, and at other times they need to focus on trade. And sometimes they need to swallow their tears and abandon what they have built, for something better. To overcome all of these hardships, earn the trust of their surroundings, and make a fortune, such is the nature of a master merchant.

You are an apprentice working to earn your daily bread, while saving money to put up your own shop. You spend your days fighting to sell your products and planning your future, all the while keeping a sharp eye on your rivals, who will take all their chance to get you down.

You look at your gleaming coins and think. Should I save these for the day I want to open up shop? Or should I use them to create connections with people with power? Their help might be worth more than money one day. Your battle as a merchant has just begun. Still, you look at your poor wallet and dream. One day, you will be called the master merchant.

Game overview

Number of players: 3–4

Play time: about 15 minutes

The players take the roles of merchant apprentices, and compete with the other players to be the first to become a real merchant. At the start of the game, players have very few choices. Using the little money they have, they create friendships with other individuals in the city. Each individual has a specific ability. Some introduce the player to further acquaintances, some protect the player against attacks, and some simply steal finances from the others... The more people you know, the more choices you have. But the more people you know, the harder it is to

keep in control. There are only so many hours per day, and you must decide how to use your time.

The first player to earn a specific amount of money, or to create a specific amount of contacts, will be powerful enough to get a shop of his own and become one of the master merchants.

Contents

Everything needed for the game is included in this set

* 36 cards (8 starting cards, 28 character cards)

* 4 Money indicator cards

* This rulebook

Contents explanation

Starting cards (2 sorts)

These are the cards that all players start with: "Negotiation" and "Trick". They are in most ways similar to the character cards, but they have a cross in the top right corner and don't display a character.

1. Card name
2. Effect: What happens when you play the card
3. Symbol: The card effect in symbol form
4. Picture: Representing the card



Character cards (10 sorts)

These represent the inhabitants of the city. Each card has a specific effect. They are used in precisely the same way as the starting cards.

1. Card name
2. Cost – how much it costs to "buy" this card from city.
3. Effect – what happens when you play the card.
4. Symbol – The card effect in symbol form
5. Art – Representing the card

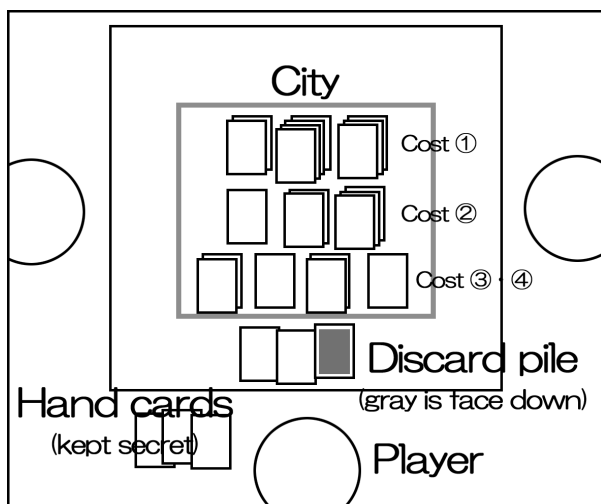


Money indicator cards (double sided)

Each player uses this to indicate how much money he has.

Preparations

1. Each player takes a set of 2 starting cards, and a money indicator card. The money indicator should be set to '0'. In a 3-player game, the surplus starting cards and money indicator are not used in the game.
2. Place all the character cards in 10 piles, accessible to all. This supply of the character cards is called "the city" (see image)
3. Decide starting player in any suitable fashion.



Flow of the game

In this game, players take turns clockwise around the table. Each turn, the turn player can play **up to 2 cards** from his hand. He may choose to play less than 2 cards.

Playing cards

When a card is played, its effect is applied. However, applying the effect is not mandatory. Cards are played in front of the turn player (see figure), and are immediately considered as part of that player's "discard pile". Once played, the cards won't return to the player's hand until he has run out of cards to play (see later in the rules). Discarded (played) cards should not overlap each other.

End of turn

Once the player has played 2 cards (or less) and applied their effects (or not), the turn goes to the player on his left.

"Multiplay"

Playing several cards with the same name counts as playing ONE card, but every single copy of the card has its effect. The effects are executed one at a time. (Example: Player A has two 'Kogarashi' in his hand. He plays them as one card, and executes their effects one at a time. He can steal 1 gold from one player and another gold from another player. It counts as he has only played 1 card, so he can still play another card if he wants to.)

Playing cards face down

All cards can be played face down. If a card is played face down, its inherent effect is replaced by "The turn player gets 1 gold". However, as the card names don't show, players cannot "multiplay" cards face down. Only one at a time. Just like when playing cards face down, the player may choose NOT to activate the card's face-down ability of "getting one gold". The player owning the face-down card can always check what it is. The other players, however, do not have this right.

Returning cards to hand

If the player has no (zero) cards in hand *when his turn starts*, he picks up all cards in his discard pile, and proceeds with playing his 2 cards. (Cards that he played face down return to their normal state).

Please note that if a player starts with only 1 card in hand, he cannot play that card and then reclaim his discard pile. The discard pile only returns to his hand if he starts his turn with no cards in hand.

Other Rules

Keeping track of money

Each player has a money indicator card. When gaining gold, turn the card so that the number indicating the player's amount of gold faces the player. The card has 2 sides, one for 0–3 gold and the other for 4–7 gold. When a player has 8 gold, he wins.

Buying cards

Some cards have the effect of allowing the player to "buy" a card (most often from city). When buying a card, the player must first pay up the gold cost for the card (turn the money indicator), and then put the bought card in his discard pile.

*When buying using 'Sakuraya, Restaurant', the player who had to sell his card gets as much money as the card's cost (increase the money indicator).

Protected cards

Some cards can affect other player's cards in their discard areas. However, **the starting cards and face down cards cannot be the target of effects from other players.**

And, you may not return your start cards by the effect of 'Daimon, Yakuza family'.

Game end

The game ends as soon as any one player has achieved one of the following two goals at end of his turn:

- * someone has 8 gold or more
- * someone has 8 types of cards or more (including the 2 starting cards), discard area and hand both counted in which case that player wins.

Sub-victories.

The non-winners count their amount of card types and money, getting 1 point for each, and 2nd, 3rd and 4th place is decided in point order.
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Rule details

* "Target player" – you may always target yourself.

* "One card" – it is only when playing cards that several cards with the same name count as one card. Kanda's effect (you may play an additional card) can be used to play several cards with the same name, but Oboro's effect (choose a card in your discard pile and add to your hand) can not target several cards.

* Hiiragi, Bodyguard – When this card is used to block an effect, it can be used after the turn player has decided his action (Example: turn player has used the Daimyo and decided to steal Echigoya), in which case the turn player can't change decisions. Also, it can be used to nullify the effect of something affecting all players (Example: Trick), however in that case it protects only its owner.

* Kogarashi, Ninja team – you can't steal from a player who hasn't any money.

* Daimon, Yakuza family – The player whose card got returned gets 2 gold. You can't change targets.

Characters

Merchant Izumiya

A merchant famous for good-heartedness. He is known throughout the city, and helps budding merchants by introducing them to people.

Bodyguard Hiiragi

A silent yet skilled ronin. He'll protect you against any sort of attack. Also, he's handsome and very popular among the young women in city, but he himself doesn't have a clue.

Geisha Oboro

A mysterious, but exceedingly skilled geisha. With her at your side, a lot of people will rush to help you.

Ninja team Kogarashi

A ninja clan (consisting of a young girl and old keeper) secretly hiding away from the peaceful world. They sneak around city so as to not forget their skills.

Restaurant Sakuraya

An old restaurant in city. The owner is such a heartfelt lady, that she can persuade others to sell just about anything.

Yakuza family Daimon

The yakuza family in power. They rely on shady business but work with pride. Ask them for help, and they can make anyone cut bonds.

Wealthy merchant Echigoya

Earns money in any kind of ways, and has caused tears and agony in many places. He lends money only those he like, but is in fact a Scrooge.

Retainer Kanda

The family that policies the neighbouring farmers, and one with the deepest roots in city. A word from him, and others rush to help.

Magistrate Ueshima

A strict officer. Intelligent, wise and sparingly effective in getting people to work, but he's very busy and requires money to move.

Daimyo Tokunaga

The feudal lord. Still young, but a very skilled politician. He's hard to get to know, but once you have his help, he can tie bonds like no one else can.

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Card List

Name	Type	Amount	Cost	Effect
Trick	Start	4	—	Take 1 gold from all players who have 4 gold or more.
Negotiation	Start	4	—	Buy a card in the city.
Izumiya, Merchant	Character	4	1	Choose a card whose cost is 1 gold in the city, and add it to your discard pile.
Hiiragi, Bodyguard	Character	4	1	Target player choose a card in his/her hand and discard it. You may return this card in your discard pile to the city to prevent an effect to you from other player.
Oboro, Geisha	Character	4	1	Choose a card in your discard pile and add it to your hand.
Kogarashi, Ninja clan	Character	3	2	Take 1 gold from target player.
Daimon, Yakuza family	Character	3	2	Choose a card in target player's discard pile and return it to the city. Target player gets 2 gold.
Sakuraya, Restaurant	Character	3	2	Buy a card in the city or target player's discard pile (If you buy a card in a discard pile, you pay its cost to target player). You may add it to your hand.
Echigoya, Wealthy merchant	Character	2	3	You get 2 gold.
Kanda, Retainer	Character	2	3	You get 1 gold. You may play an additional card in this turn.
Ueshima, Magistrate	Character	2	3	Pay 1 gold (If you can't pay, you can't occur the effect). You may play 2 additional cards.
Tokunaga, Daimyo	Character	1	4	Choose a card in any discard pile and add it to your discard pile.