

Eric B. Vogel



# FIRST EMPIRES™

*What if the entire history of the world had unfolded differently?  
What if the great empires of our history had never come into being?  
What if other early civilizations had risen to greatness instead?  
What if those civilizations never collapsed, but continued to grow  
throughout the centuries? The vanquished could have been the victors,  
and the colonizers could have been the colonized.  
After all, empires are won and lost on a roll of the dice!*



2-5



10+



45+

60+



SAND  
CASTLE  
GAMES



# CONTENTS

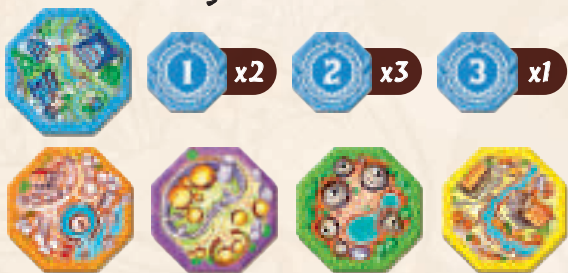


1 Game Board



1 Turn Track Board

30 City Tokens in 5 colors



1 Turn Track Marker



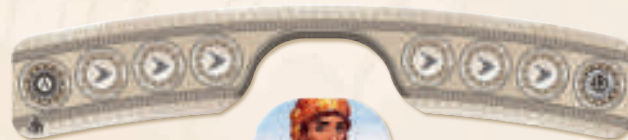
25 Civilization Markers (5 of each color)



50 Explorers (10 of each color)



5 Special Dice



45 Achievement Cards in 5 colors



5 Storage Boxes in 5 colors

5 Civilization Boards



# SETUP

**1.** Place the board in the middle of the table.

**In a 2-player game:** Use the 2-player side of the board.

**In a 3-player game:** Use the 3-5 player side of the board.

Do not use the board regions with the dotted borders marked with a 5 (the Americas) or a 4 (Malagasy and Ezu).

**In a 4-player game:** Do not use the board regions with the dotted borders and marked with a 5 (the Americas).

**2.** Give each player a civilization board at random, as well as a set of explorers (meeples) and city tokens in the same color.

**In a 2-player game:** Use only Karthadst (orange) and Etruria (yellow) civilization board.

**In a 3 or 4-player game:** Do not use the Wallmapu (green) civilization board.

**3.** Each player takes 5 civilization markers (cubes) and places them on their civilization board at the bottom space of each of the 5 advancement tracks (columns) of the matching color.

**4.** Randomly select a starting player. Give this player the turn track board, to place above their civilization board. Make sure that you



2 Players



3-5 Players

use the proper side of the turn track board (depending on the number of players). Place the turn track marker on the first space of the turn track board.

**5.** Each player places the number of explorers indicated on the bottom space of their yellow track ★ in their start region 🏰 (identified by the name indicated on their civilization board).

**6.** Each player takes the card deck matching the color of their civilization board, shuffles it, and places it face-down next to them. Each player draws the number of cards indicated on the bottom space of their green achievements cards track 🟩.

**7.** Each player turns their 6 city tokens face-down and shuffles them (each player has, 2 tokens worth 1 VP, 3 tokens worth 2 VP and 1 token worth 3 VP). Each player places 1 city token face-down in their starting region without looking at its number. Each player then places their remaining 5 city tokens face-down, without looking at them, in the spaces at the top of each track on their civilization board.



The starting player begins the game. The other players follow in clockwise order.





# OVERVIEW

*First Empires* is played over 7 turns with 5 players, and 8 turns with 2-4 players.

The different attributes of the players' civilizations (number of dice rolled each turn, number of times you can re-roll, movement points, cards drawn during the game and number of explorers on the board) are indicated by the advancement tracks (columns) on the players' civilization boards. The attributes of each civilization board are unique.

Dice	Re-roll	Movement	Achievement cards	Explorers
5	4	6	+1	10
4	3	5	+1	8
3	2	4	+1	6
	1	3	+1	5
	0	2	1	4
		1	0	3
		0	0	2
		0	0	1
		0	0	0

As the civilization marker (cube) on any advancement track is raised, the corresponding attribute and the player's victory points are both increased. In order to move up on an advancement track, a player needs both a die roll and a region on the board, with the same symbol/color as the track.



Points are awarded for advancement tracks, cards scored, and cities captured or retained at the end of the game.



Black rolls convey a special conquest bonus, and are not used for advancement.



# TURN SEQUENCE

Each player, in clockwise order from the starting player, takes their full turn, which consists of 3 phases:

- 1 - Rolling Dice,
- 2 - Movement & Conquest,
- 3 - Advancement.

## Phase 1 - Rolling Dice



The player begins their turn by rolling the number of dice indicated by the civilization marker on the orange track on their civilization board.

## Re-rolling



Some or all of these dice may then be re-rolled the number of times indicated by the civilization marker on their blue advancement track; a player may choose **any number** of their dice to re-roll each time they choose to do so.

## Discarding Achievement Cards

After all re-rolling is complete, if the player has cards in their hand, they may choose to discard one achievement card from their hand to convert one of their die rolls to a black . The player may discard multiple cards to do this multiple times.



Cards discarded to convert dice may not be scored, or re-drawn.

## Phase 2 - Movement and Conquest

### Movement



After rolling, the player has the opportunity to move explorers on the game board. For each movement point indicated by the civilization marker on the player's purple advancement track, the active player may move 1 explorer across 1 land or ocean border on the board.

A player may not leave an explorer in either of the two ocean areas at the end of their turn. In other words, they must move all explorers that



have travelled by ocean onto a land region by the end of their turn. The active player may move explorers from multiple areas simultaneously, so that they arrive at the same destination region all at once.


Players may abandon a region containing one of their city tokens; in that case, the city token remains on the board. If the active player moves units back into a region that is empty except for their own city, the city token *remains* in the region.


**The dice rolled do not restrict where players may move or conquer during their turns**, although it is generally advantageous for players to try to occupy regions that match their dice.

## Conquest

Players may not move through regions occupied by enemy explorers. The active player may only move explorers into a rival's region if they bring enough explorers to conquer the region.

Conquest occurs whenever the active player moves a sufficient number of their explorers into a rival's region. Usually, a player must have **more** total explorers than their rival in order to conquer the region.

However, each black die  the active player has counts as **1 extra explorer** for each conquest of the active player on that turn.

Conquests must always be made with at least 1 explorer, regardless of the number of black  that a player has.

If a player holds **only 1 region** on the board, that region **may not be** conquered.

### REGIONS WITH CITIES

-  City tokens have no defensive value.
-  If the conquered region had one or more rival cities in it, the active player takes these rival cities and places them next to the board in their personal offboard supply.
-  If the active player moves explorers into a region with a rival city and no rival explorers, then the active player takes the rival city token and places it in their offboard supply.
-  These tokens must be kept face-down; you may not look at their number before the end of the game.

## Retreat

Immediately after a conquest, the defeated opponent must recover all of their explorers from the conquered region and move them to any **one** other region containing at least 1 of their explorers.

A player may not retreat to a region that does not contain any explorer (even if they have a city in that region).

After a conquest and retreat, the active player may continue their movement phase if they still have movement points to spend.

## Phase 3 - Advancement

### Discarding Achievement Cards

At the start of the advancement phase, if the player has cards in their hand, they may choose to discard one achievement card from their hand to convert one of their die rolls to **any die face of their choice**. They may discard multiple cards to do this multiple times.



Cards discarded to convert dice may not be scored, or re-drawn.

### Raise Civilization Markers


The active player now has the opportunity to raise the civilization markers on their advancement tracks.


Each die roll matching an advancement track's color allows the active player to move its marker **one space up**, as long as the player also controls a **region** of the matching color (or symbol).

Each movement of a civilization marker on an advancement track requires a **separate die and region** of matching symbol/color.





When they raise the green  achievement marker to the next +1, the player should draw 1 new achievement card from their deck (a new achievement card is only drawn when this track is advanced).

When they raise the yellow  population marker to a higher number, the active player distributes the indicated new explorers among the regions that they occupy, at their choice (the number on this track reflects the total number of explorers the player has on the board).

A region without explorers is not considered occupied by any player (even if there is a city in it) and cannot be used for advancement or the placement of new explorers.

## City Token Placement



At the conclusion of the Advancement phase, if the active player raised one or more of their markers onto or past a space with a city icon, then they must put the city token from the top of that column face-down into one of their regions on the board. The player must put it into a region with no city discs if possible; if not, they can place it in any of their regions.



## Achievement Cards Scoring




As soon as a player fulfills the requirements of any of their Achievement cards **during their turn**, and provided they can demonstrate it to the other players, they may score the card by placing it face-up below their civilization board. A card may be scored immediately after it is drawn if the player currently meets the scoring condition. Achievement cards are scored at the end of the game.



## End of the Turn


After all players have completed their turn, the starting player advances the turn track marker one space to the right, and takes their next turn.




## EXAMPLE PHASE 1



At the start of her turn Carmen occupies 3 regions (Scythia , Albion and Indus ). Her yellow  track is currently at 5 explorers, which are distributed among her 3 occupied regions.





### Phase 1 - Rolling Dice

Her orange  track allows her to roll *two dice*.

She rolls 1 yellow  and 1 blue . However, she wants a green  roll, so she can raise that track and gain an achievement card.

Her blue  track allows her to re-roll twice. For his *first* re-roll, she chooses to just re-roll the blue  die, but does not get the desired green roll.

For her *second* re-roll, she re-rolls both dice and ends up with a green  and a purple .



## EXAMPLE PHASE 2

### Phase 2 - Movement and Conquest

Carmen wishes to invade Rus, the green region adjacent to her purple region. Rus is currently occupied by Dan with 2 explorers; Carmen has no black rolls, so she needs to invade the region with at least 3 explorers.

Her purple track gives her 4 movement points. She spends 2 movement points to move the two explorers from Scythia to Rus, abandoning Scythia completely. She simultaneously moves 1 meeple from Albion into the eastern ocean region, and then from the ocean into Rus. This leaves her with 3 explorers against Dan's 2 in Rus.



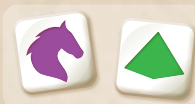
Dan must immediately retreat his 2 explorers to one of his other regions. While he does not have to retreat to his closest region, he chooses to retreat to his adjacent blue region, Huaxia.



## EXAMPLE PHASE 3

### Phase 3 - Advancement

Since Carmen does not occupy any purple region (her city in Scythia does not hold that region for her), she cannot use her purple die to raise her purple marker.



She chooses to discard a card from her hand to change her purple die to orange.

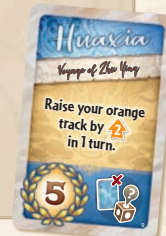


**Tip:** Place your dice directly on the board to pair each die with its matching region.



- She raises her orange marker 1 space up; as a result, she will roll 3 dice on her next turn.
- She raises her green marker 1 space up, which allows her to draw a card.

She draws her Voyage of Zho Ying card, which she could have scored immediately if she had raised her orange track twice this turn. In order to score it, she will have to occupy 2 orange regions and roll 2 orange dice the same turn.

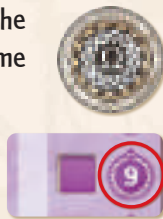




# GAME END AND SCORING

When the turn track marker reaches the last space of the turn track, the players play their last turn; then the game is over.

- Players score victory points (VP) for each of their advancement tracks. Check the VP value of the highest spot that you could reach with your marker in every column.



- Each player recovers the city tokens that they placed on the main board and the captured tokens from their supply. They reveal these tokens and add their cumulated value to their score.



**Note:** City tokens that still are on their civilization board do not score any VP.

- All players score the VP value of their completed achievements cards.



## The player with the most VP wins.

If there is a tie for most VP, then the tied player with the most cards left in their hand at the end of the game is the winner. If there is still a tie, then the tied player with the most scored cities and scored cards combined is the winner. If there is still a tie, then the tied players rejoice in their shared victory (or complain about the lack of an ultimate tiebreaker, as they prefer).

## Strategy Tips

- Early in the game, it is important to raise the markers of each of your advancement tracks by at least 1 or 2 spaces. Not doing so will considerably hinder your progress in the game.
- In your first turns, do not hesitate to re-roll dice and spend cards to get the die rolls that will help you develop your civilization.
- Black rolls are very useful to help you conquer the colors that you need, and that you can't get because of a limited movement or manpower capacity.

## EXAMPLE SCORING



- Civilization board scored:  $10+6+9+7+6=38$  VP
- Cities conquered and remaining on the board scored:  $3+2+2+1+1=9$  VP
- Achievement cards scored:  $5+4=9$  VP

**Huaxia final score is  $38+9+9=56$  VP**

## CREDITS

### Game Design

*Eric B. Vogel*

### Illustrations

*Jérémie Fleury*

### Graphic Design

Cyrille Daujean

### Production

Ted A. Marriotti

**Proofreading: Antoine Prono (Transludis)**

Playtesting and Advice

Thanks to Playtesters: Alexis, Shannon Appelcline, Aram, Gaëtan Beaujannot, Johan Borglin, Heather Boshears, David Boyd, David Brown, Cordell Brown III, Hey Cheng, Jeremy Cleveland, David Stuart, Evan Denbaum, Michael Economy, Dan Fernandez, Alex Francisco, Anna Gee, Terrence Gee, Brad Goodson, Ian Hanrahan, Jos Harrington, Fred Hicks, Carmen Ho, Laurel James, Nick Klumpp, Amelia Landesman, Seth Lavender, Eric Lyttle, Mak Mak, Paul Meyerholtz, Emily Moore, Andrew Nguyen, Jamison Noorlander IV, Eric Olander, Dan O'Neill, David O'Sullivan, Sam Owen, Haley Pitoni, Christina Robinson, Lydia Roth, Chris Ruggiero, Tin Sakulsiriwatna, John Sheck, Chris Specker, Jon Spinner, Stephen, Mackenzie Stuart, Tyler Wallpole, Aaron Waters, Ali Watson, and Martine Wargnier.



**Sand Castle Games**  
304 S. Jones Blvd #3342,  
Las Vegas NV 89107 - USA

First Empires © 2021 / Sand Castle Games Inc.



**FORGENEXT**  
THE FIRST BOARDGAME AGENCY