



Mai-Star



A Game by Seiji Kanai

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For 3-6 players, ages 14 and up

Story

In the Emerald Empire, a special place is set apart from the often-harsh realities of feudal life. Within the “floating world” of the geisha house, great artists are the center of attention: beautiful women who are masters of art, music, and conversation. The prettier and more skilled in her arts a geisha might be, the more popularity she gains and the greater her opportunities for success. But to win such a prize is not easy; a successful geisha must find ways to distinguish herself, to promote her own name over her rivals, or even sabotage rivals. Even within the Emerald Empire’s peaceful domain of the “floating world”, enmity between geisha can be as bitter as a samurai feud.

Game Overview

Players take on the roles of different geishas and compete to earn the title of **Mai-Star**. They play cards to raise the reputation of their geisha, and take guests to earn money, which is the measure of victory. Playing a card only raises the geisha’s reputation and will not earn any money. But without raising your reputation, you will not be able to serve the finest guests who can reward the most money or serve as powerful allies. Players must choose which customer cards to use as advertisers and who to use as guests. When one player runs out of cards, the round is over, and any cards remaining in hand will serve as penalty points, so it’s also a matter of using up your hand as quickly as possible. The player who has earned the most money after three festivals (rounds), is considered as the most skillful geisha, and will inherit the title of Mai-Star.

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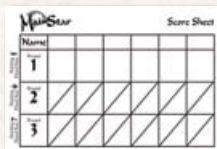
Goal

Earn the most money (victory points).

Components

This box contains everything you need to play.

- Rulebook (this book)
- 81 cards (6 Geisha cards, 75 Customer cards)
- 1 pad of score sheets



Score Sheet



Geisha cards



Customer cards

Setup

1. Randomly determine who goes first. This player chooses one of the six geisha cards to play and the other players choose one of the remaining geisha cards in counterclockwise order. The player who chooses last becomes the starting player. Return any geisha cards that were not chosen to the box as they will not be used during this game.
2. Shuffle all of the 75 customer cards and place them facedown in the middle of the table. This is the **draw deck**.
3. Each player draws 5 cards from the draw deck to form their starting hand.

Players are now ready to begin the game!

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Geisha card



Customer card

Geisha cards (gold backed) 6 cards

These cards represent the geishas the player plays. Geishas dance at parties to charm guests, pour drinks and compliment the guests, and at times impress them with their wit.

1. **Illustration:** What the geisha looks like.
2. **Name:** The geisha's name.
3. **Reputation:** How famous the geisha is in the three skills (red: performance, blue: service, green: intelligence). The higher the number, the more famous she is in that skill, making it easier to attract guests.
4. **Special Ability:** The geisha's special ability.

Customer cards (green backed) 75 cards

These are the customers visiting the geisha house. Sometimes they spread the fame of the geisha, and sometimes they invite her to their seats to become her guest. Geishas who meet customers' requirements will not only get money from them, but will also be able to use their special effects.

1. **Illustration:** What the customer looks like.
2. **Name:** The customer's occupation.
3. **Requirements:** The minimum reputation the customer requires to call on the geisha (be played as a guest). The higher the number, the more picky the customer is, but in return will pay more money and grant powerful effects. The requirements also include the card color (red: performance, blue: service, green: intelligence). The color specifies which area the guest is picky about. When the black cards (Monk, Shogun, District Kanryou) call on a geisha, they require the geisha to have the specified reputation in any one of the three attributes.
4. **Income:** The amount of money (VP) the customer will pay if he or she is played as a guest.
5. **Icon:** This icon represents the customer's special effect if played as a guest. Effects are also described in the card's text box.
6. **Effect:** The special effect the customer has if he or she is played as a guest. Some customers provide a beneficial effect to you, while others a detrimental effect for your opponents.
7. **Advertisement Power:** How much the customer will raise the geisha's reputation if he or she is played as an advertiser.

How to Play

A game of Mai-Star is played in three rounds. Each round represents a festival, and after the third round the game ends. Once each round has started, players take turns clockwise around the table.

Taking a Turn

During your turn you must choose **one** of the following five actions:

1. **Play a guest:** play 1 card as a guest.
2. **Advertise:** Play 1 card as an advertiser, then draw 1 card from the draw deck.
3. **Introduce:** Change up to 2 cards on your hand.
4. **Exchange:** Exchange 1 advertiser with a card from your hand.
5. **Search:** Draw 1 card from the draw deck.

(1) Play a Guest

Choose one card from your hand and place it **above** your geisha card, to the right of any previous guests. This card is now called a **guest**. The guest has invited the geisha to sit together and will pay her money. If the customer has a special effect, you may choose to use it (you may choose not to use the effect if you wish).

In order to play a card as a guest, the guest's requirement must be equal to or lower than your geisha's current reputation in the same color as the guest card. The guest will not accept a geisha who does not meet his or her requirements.

Example: The geisha Spring Breeze has a reputation of 1 Performance (red), 3 Service (blue) and 5 Intelligence (green). She can play the Sumo-Wrestler who has a requirement of green 5, but she cannot play the red 5 or blue 5 Sumo-Wrestler since they require other skills than the geisha's Intelligence.

(2) Advertise

Choose one card from your hand and place it **to the right of** your geisha card, and to the right of any previous advertisers. This card is now called an **advertiser** and will increase your geisha's reputation with as much as the customer's advertisement power.

After advertising, you must draw a card from the draw deck. Taking an advertisement action is the combined action to first play a card as an advertiser, and then draw a card.

You may play any card as an advertiser, regardless of the customer's requirements. However, the advertiser will not bring any income for your geisha, nor will you be able to use any of the customer's special effects.

Example: The geisha Morning Star has 3 in all reputations. She plays the Actor (which grants +1 reputation in all three skills) as an advertiser. She now has a reputation of 4 in all skills, and on her next turn she can play any guest who requires 4 in any skill.



(3) Introduce

Choose up to two cards from your hand and discard them. Then draw the same number of cards that you discarded from the draw deck.

If there is only one card remaining in the draw deck, you may only discard one card from your hand. If the draw deck was already exhausted, you cannot select this action.

(4) Exchange

Choose one of your advertisers to return to your hand and exchange it with another card from your hand. The new advertiser must be placed in the same spot as the one you returned to your hand.

(5) Search

Draw one card from the draw deck. Generally, it is better to take an advertisement action but there are rare cases when increasing the number of cards in your hand is beneficial.

After you have taken your action and any special effects have been resolved, the next player clockwise takes a turn.

End of a Round

When a player ends his or her turn and no longer has any cards remaining in his or her hand, the round ends and the game proceeds to the **scoring phase**.

The round also ends if the draw deck is exhausted. In this case, the player finishes his or her turn and then proceeds to the scoring phase.

Scoring Phase

When a round ends, each player calculates his or her score using the following steps.

1. **Add income:** Add the total of the income from all guests (not advertisers)
2. **Subtract penalty:** Subtract 2 points for each card remaining in your hand (to a minimum of 0).
3. **Score VP:** The total is how many victory points (VP) you earned this round. Write this number down on the score sheet.

Main Star		Score Sheet					
NAME	Kali	Mark	Todd	John			
Round 1	6	3	0	10			
Round 2	+4 10	+12 15	+11 11	+0 10			
Round 3	+21 31	+18 33	+10 21	+26 36			

Scoring Example

Next Round

After scores have been calculated and noted on the score sheet, play proceeds to the next round using the following steps:

1. **New Draw Deck:** Take all of the 75 customer cards including any customers that were played as guests and advertisers, customers remaining in players' hands, customers remaining in the draw deck, and any discarded customers. Shuffle all of the customer cards and form a new draw deck.
2. **Draw Starting Hands:** Each player draws a number of cards according to the current round. For the second round each player draws 6 cards and for the third round each player draws 7 cards. Note that the starting hand size is listed on the score sheet for easy reference.
3. **Determine Starting Player:** The starting player is the player who currently has the lowest score. If two or more players are tied for the lowest score, the starting player is the player with the lowest score sitting closest to the left of the player with the highest score. If all players share the same score, determine the starting player randomly.

End of Game

The game ends after the third round is completed. All players add up the number of victory points they scored for each round. The player with the most total VP becomes the next Mai-Star and wins the game!

If two or more players tie for the most VP, the player with the least number of cards in hand for the third round is the winner. If this results in another tie, the tied players share victory.

Rule Clarifications

- The discard pile is open information to all players.
- If you must draw several cards and there are not enough cards in the draw deck, simply draw the remaining cards until the draw deck is exhausted.
- A card effect stating “target player” means that you may target yourself.
- The “newest” guest or advertiser is the rightmost guest or advertiser card, seen from the target player.



Card Clarifications

Geisha cards

Harukaze, Spring Breeze

If she takes an advertisement action when there are two or fewer cards in the draw deck, she draws all remaining cards and then must discard the number of cards she drew minus one. Note that the cards are discarded instead of being placed on the bottom of the draw deck.

Momiji, Maple leaf

Her ability to activate an effect twice means to resolve the effect two times, not to double the effect. For example, the Scholar's effect of forcing a player to draw one card may target two different players or target the same player twice.

The Ronin's effect of canceling an effect from another player will only cancel one of the effects. The player with the Ronin may decide to not cancel the first time the effect strikes, but cancel the second.

Suzune, Sound of Bell

Her ability to take an extra advertisement action may be activated either before or after her normal action. She may for example, first take her additional advertisement action and then play a guest.

Customer cards

Courtier

When a guest card is played as an effect of the Courtier, you may perform the guest's effects as if it was played normally.

Daimyo

When you add your advertisers as guests as an effect of the Daimyo, be sure to keep the card order. Start by taking the oldest eligible advertiser and add it as your newest guest. Continue this process until all of your eligible advertisers are added as guests.

Doctor

Consider the Doctor as applying his effects at the end of your turn. Once you have fully finished your turn, you may immediately take another turn.

If you end the round during the turn you play the Doctor, you cannot take an additional turn.

District Kanryou

The District Kanryou cannot be played as a guest but he may be played as an advertiser.

The District Kanryou's effect is similar to that of the Ronin, but is activated from your hand. It may happen that the round ends at the end of the turn due to a player using the District Kanryou to cancel a card's effect and it was the last card in his hand.

The District Kanryou has no specified reputation skill. Instead, its requirement may be applied to any one skill of your choice.

Monk/Shogun

The Monk and Shogun have no specified reputation skill. Instead, their requirement may be applied to any one skill of your choice.

Ronin

The Ronin has no immediate effect when played as a guest. Instead, his effect is used as an interrupt during another player's turn when you are targeted by another player's card effect. You are never forced to use the Ronin's effect. Sometimes it's wise to keep the Ronin to protect you against something more dangerous later on.

Alternative Rules

Management Mode

This optional rule allows players take the role of geisha managers and are trying to earn as much money by sending out appropriate geishas to the right customers.

After cards have been dealt at the start of each round, each player chooses which geisha to use. During the first round, geishas are selected by the normal method. During the second and third rounds, the starting player chooses one of the six geisha cards to play and the other players choose one of the remaining geisha cards in counterclockwise order.

Limited Guests

If a player at any point has more guests than the starting hand size for that round (5 guests for the first round, 6 guests for the second round, 7 guests for the third round), the round ends when the player's turn is completed.

If the Doctor is played as the last allowed guest, the player cannot take an additional turn. However, playing a Courtier or Shogun may cause the player to exceed his guest limit.

Hazy's geisha ability of starting each round with two extra cards does **not** affect the rule for limited guests: she has the guest limit as all other players.

Longer 6-Player Games

In 6-player games the draw deck is often exhausted. This optional rule allows players to take more turns before the game ends.

If the draw deck is exhausted, the player finishes his or her turn, then every player (including the player who triggered the end of the round) takes one additional turn each.

Geisha Background Stories

Akenoshi, Morning Star

Akenoshi is in many ways the ideal geisha, a beautiful and talented young woman who is the star of her house. Charming and a skilled conversationalist, she can draw a smile from the most sullen and ill-tempered samurai. If she can be said to have a weakness, it is that she has no one special talent that stands out and distinguishes her above all others – she is gifted at every skill a geisha can possess, but does not have that one thing to make herself memorable.

Harukaze, Spring Breeze

Highly intelligent and self-educated to an even higher level than most geisha, Harukaze prides herself on being able to hold a conversation with the most sophisticated samurai scholars and courtiers. While this has earned her a reputation, it also means she can be intimidating to less sophisticated samurai, limiting her potential selection of patrons.

Momiji, Maple Leaf

Although she is among the most beautiful of geisha, Momiji is nonetheless troubled, for she faces the worst fear of every resident of the “floating world”: age. She is already well over 25 years of age, creeping closer to 30 every year. Each morning she checks her face in the mirror, searching for that first fatal wrinkle. If she does not find a patron soon, she fears her career may enter an inevitable decline... at which point the best she can hope for is to become the madam of her own geisha house.

Natsumi, Summer Sea

A young geisha who has only recently come of age, Natsumi still has a certain naive and innocent element to her character which most of her older fellows have long since shed. Skilled with the tea ceremony, Natsumi also thrives on her sweet-natured enthusiasm, but lacks the ruthless competitive drive which may be needed to secure the best patron. Most of the more experienced geisha do not consider Natsumi to be a real threat to their own designs – which may, in the end, be her strongest advantage.

Oboro, Hazy

Where many geisha seek to look younger than they are, Oboro instead embraces an atmosphere of serene womanly adulthood, a truly timeless beauty. She complements her looks with a soft-spoken, imperturbable character which many samurai find soothing, although her rivals believe there is a soul of steel beneath the gentle exterior. Oboro is particularly skilled at painting and calligraphy, and some rumors claim she is so talented that if she were a samurai, the Crane would welcome her into the legendary Kakita Artisan Academy.

Suzune, Sound of Bell

Although Suzune is a relatively inexperienced newcomer to the “floating world”, she does not share the other girl’s innocence. Despite her youth, Suzune already fully understands the competitive and sometimes cruel nature of a geisha’s life, and is determined to find a wealthy and powerful patron no matter who she must trample on to get there. Skilled with the biwa, she has composed many of her own songs and views her music as another potential route to fame and security.

Credits

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