

Ortus Regni - Thanes Variant

Additional Shire struggle variant for 2+ players, best with 3-4 players

Victory conditions:

Normal Ortus Regni victory conditions apply.

Thanes (colored cubes):

Each Earl starts the game with 10 of their colored cubes. These are their Thanes. Earls can send them out into the shires of the kingdom to further their efforts to rule the land.

Overview of Thanes gameplay

- Earls push out or pull back their Thanes as a free action during their turn.
- Earls can choose to attack (target) the Thanes of another Earl that are out in the shires.
- At the start of your turn, if you have more Thanes out than any other Earl you control the shires enough to use the special Thanes action, if you wish.
- When using the Thanes action you can pull any card that is left in your Earl card set, in your wooden tray, into your hand. This costs you your action that turn.

Thanes, usage rules:

All Earls start with 10 Thane cubes. Thanes can be killed in battle.

You cannot push Thanes out on your very first turn. This is similar and related to the rule that you cannot attack on your first turn either.

During your turn you can push out or pull back Thanes as you wish. This does not cost you your Action; in a similar fashion to Towering or placing Army cards in Garrison slots.

If at the very start of your turn you have more Thanes out than any other Earl, you can choose to use the special Thanes action.

Note that even if you are lucky enough to take advantage of this power, you can still pull back all your Thanes, after using the Thanes action, and before the end of your turn. They are not stuck out there, even if you take advantage of their control at the start of your turn.

There is no penalty if you lose all your 10 Thanes in battle. But they are not replaced when lost either.

Thanes, battle rules:

A new attack type is available in this variant.

You can now target another Earls Towers, or Raid one of their Fiefs, or Siege one of their Castles or Palaces... and now you can also declare an attack on another Earl's Thanes that are out in the shires.

After declaring an attack on an Earl's Thanes, and fielding your attacking forces, the defending Earl can then field their forces in defense.

Thanes are not protected by your Towers.

So, a Thanes attack is similar in practice to attacking someone's Towers. Each point that gets beyond the fielded defending forces will remove a targeted Thane from play. One damage point removing 1 Thane cube.

An Earl can direct the Vikings to attack another Earl's Thanes.

Thanes, special action rule:

If at the start of your turn you have more Thanes out than any other Earl this special action is available to you. Even if you only have a single Thane out, when no other Earl has any Thanes out, you win the struggle in the shires that turn and have this action available to you.

To utilize it you must spent your single action that turn.

You can go to your wooden card tray and select any single card you wish, and place it in your hand.

Keep in mind that the cards you built your 24 card Earl Deck with will not be available to you, as they will not be in your tray. But this power might effect how you design your deck prior to play.

Gameplay notes:

We simply push Thane cubes out into the center of the table, when we push them “into the shires.” And store our pool of available Thanes in a pile to the right of our Earldoms.

When Thanes are removed in battle, we allow the attacker to keep those cubes as a trophy.

Tactically, your total number of Thanes is important. So long as everyone has an equal number of cubes this serves as a potential “veto” to any other Earl who pushes Thanes out. But having a single Thane less, than others, means that you cannot block them by simply pushing all your Thanes out.

The Thanes variant is also interesting because Earls who are in a corner, whether facing Bequeathing problems, or desperately in need of an Allies card, have an avenue that allows them to solve this problem. If they can pull it off with their Thanes 😊

In practice you will still have plenty of colored cubes left (the remaining 10 that are not Thanes) for use as Emissaries in the Viking Bag.

Free Mulligan rule (always a popular option) – All Earls may reject their 5 card starting hand and reshuffle and redraw their hand once. This occurs just before play begins, in turn order, with each Earl taking a Mulligan, or not.