

MacRonin: Automa For Clans of Caledonia

MacRonin is an unofficial solo variant for *Clans of Caledonia*. It is based on an Automa (unlike the official solo variant in the rulebook). The Automa, like the variant itself, is called MacRonin.

Components

Clans of Caledonia, and a bag (see Appendix).

Setup

As for two players, with the exceptions listed below. So the official solo variant is not the starting point for MacRonin (although her variant does borrow a mechanism from it).

Clans and Starting Tiles

Choose any clan for yourself. Randomly select a starting tile for yourself.

Randomly select a starting tile for MacRonin. You can adjust the difficulty level by giving her one or more additional starting tiles. If you do this, do not give her the £55 from any of the additional tiles.

Placing First Workers

Use blue and white (the colors of the Saltire! or use whichever two colors you want). Place two blue workers and two white workers. Then randomly decide whether you are playing blue or white.

The Boards and the Bag

Set up a player board for yourself. Pay for your first two workers.

Set up another player board for MacRonin. She pays for her first two workers. She starts with upgrades to both technologies (Woodcutter and Miner) and to shipping (so she starts with river-crossing). She will be starting player in the first round. She doesn't trade, so you don't need to set up merchants for her.

Prepare MacRonin's bag: see Appendix to these rules.

Game Structure

Phase 1: Preparation/Market

As for the official solo game (hence change market prices using the dice in the box in rounds 2-5, not in round 1), except: round 3 preparation includes adding to MacRonin's bag (see Appendix).

Phase 2: Action

Here's the decision tree MacRonin uses when it's her turn to take an action.

Does MacRonin have the goods necessary to fulfil a contract on the export board? If so, she immediately fulfils the contract. (So she does not go through a separate Obtain step.) She ignores the amount of money indicated on the export board. Fulfilling a contract may involve slaughtering animals. If MacRonin has a choice of which Cow or which Sheep to slaughter, she will choose randomly.

She gets any direct export bonus indicated on the contract: money, free space, or upgrade. She takes the latter as a shipping upgrade (since she doesn't have merchants, and starts with both tech upgrades, other upgrades are not relevant to her).

Does MacRonin have money? If not, Pass.

If MacRonin has reached this instruction, she will probably Expand (or, less probably, upgrade shipping), making her decision using the MacRonin bag (described in the Appendix). To provide an example: if MacRonin draws a Sheep from the bag, she must if possible place a sheep. She must follow the expansion rules: the sheep must be placed on grassland, and so on.

MacRonin will use make the cheapest legal placement of the unit corresponding to the one pulled from the bag. If there is a tie among hexes for cheapest legal, she resolves it randomly. If it is not possible to make a legal placement, draw again from MacRonin's bag.

If MacRonin decides to do something she can't afford, she still gets to do it. She pays all her money.

After resolving the unit drawn from the bag, put it into the game box. It will not be used again in this game.

For the Port bonus, MacRonin always receives £10 (whichever port tiles are in use).

For the Neighbourhood bonus, MacRonin gets one unit of the good produced by the neighbouring unit. She does not pay for this.

MacRonin does not get the building bonus.

Phase 3: Production

MacRonin will whenever possible produce processed goods from basic goods. If she has a choice of processing grain into either bread or whisky, she makes that choice randomly.

Phase 4: Scoring

No difference for this phase.

Final Scoring

No difference for final scoring.

If you find MacRonin insufficiently challenging (or too challenging) consider adjusting the difficulty level for your next game with/against her: see Setup.

Appendix: The MacRonin Bag

When MacRonin is to make a random Expand (or Upgrade Shipping) action, you will draw from a bag. The bag will contain wooden units in one of the unused player colours (Red or Black, if you and MacRonin are using the colours of the Saltire).

MacRonin will place from her player board a unit of the type drawn from the bag. Exception: a cube means Upgrade Shipping.

Unit	In bag at setup	Added later	Comments
Woodcutter	2/3/4	0	Distribution depends on workers placed during Setup
Miner	2/3/4	0	
Sheep	3	1*	
Cow	3	1*	Add a Cheese to bag
Field	4	0	Add a Bakery and a Distillery to bag
Merchant cube	1	2*	Upgrade shipping (acts as a shipwright rather than as a merchant)
Cheese	0	4 or fewer	See Cow
Bakery	0	4 or fewer	See Field
Distillery	0	4 or fewer	See Field

* Add to bag during Preparation for Round 3.

Notes

Clans of Caledonia is a fine game designed by Juma Al-Joujou and published by Karma Games.

MacRonin is an unofficial Automa variant designed by Andrew Watson. That's me, and I'm contactable as andrew@changingway.org or as AndAgainMA on BoardGameGeek.

This is V0.4 of MacRonin, December 10, 2017. I think that the major design decisions are in place, and it's testing and tuning from now on.

Main current concerns:

Is MacRonin too simple? Have I cut out too much? For example, there was a suggestion on BGG that MacRonin might not avoid trade altogether, but trade when a deal got too good to pass up.

Response. I'll tune what I have, and consider adding to it if and when it gets "good enough". One of the things I'd consider at that point is whether it would be possible for this variant to take more than one human player or more than one automa.

Can MacRonin "get stuck"? For example, there might be an export board from which she can't buy.

Response. If so, there are several ways around this, including: refreshing the export board during the preparation phase; giving her more starting tiles; having a separate “smuggler’s board” with contracts that she can fulfil but you can’t.

Testing.

- My own testing is very slow: I don’t have the game yet, so I have to use Tabletopia. This means that I cannot use the bag method of choosing for MacRonin.
- Lots of testing to do. I hope that my favorite design decisions survive testing!