

THE BEGINNINGS OF ROME

ROMOLO O REMO

THE LEGEND



The year is 753 BC and an old Roman tradition says that the twin brothers Romolo and Remo founded the city of Roma. Of course the Roman historians had to ennoble the "Caput Mundi" and to find something better than an handful of shepherds: a connections of the City with Gods was also good ... so they went back to the Trojan hero Enea who escaped from the Asia to North Africa (where he met the queen Dido) and then arrived on the Italian coast, where he defeated the local King of the Latins (a population that gave name to that region: Latium). He then founded the town of Lavinium (from his wife's name: Lavinia) while

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A nice Civilization game for expert players that demands high attention and a good planning. But it does not renew this genre

his son Ascanio, 30 years later, founded the city of Alba Longa, and so on for many years, until we arrive to the kingdom of Numitore, who killed his brother and obliged his daughter to become a "Vestale" (virgin priestess) so no children were expected (touching a Vestale was sure death at that time!). But the "bad guy" arrived under the appearance of Mars (God of War) and he took by force the "poor" Rea Silvia when she was walking inside a sacred wood! Unfortunately after some time she discovered to be ... pregnant and soon everybody was aware of this! We do not know if her uncle believed the story of Mars or not, but she was a Vestale and no more virgin, so she had to be killed. Silvia had just the time to give life to the twin brothers Romolo and Remo who, normally, had to be eliminated too, of course. But the "killer" refused to kill two babies and he put the twins in a basket instead, leaving them to the mercy of the river Tiberis (and, of course, of the related God). The basket stopped near the hill Palatino, sacred to Mars himself. A "lupa" (Latin name for she-wolf and, obviously, wolves were also sacred to Mars) arrived near the river, spotted the twins and nourished them, so they survived! (This is why the she-wolf is still the symbol of Roma but ... historically we have to remember that "lupa" was also the Latin surname of prostitutes, so it is probably one of them who spotted the babies and saved them). Fortunately, with time passing the two children were able to come back to their grandfather who gave

them permission to found a new city just near the river Tiberis where they were saved. Roma was born, but the first act was the assassination of Remo: his brother decided that the city could not have two leaders and used the shortest way to become the sole king of Roma: a "successful" system that was largely used for the following 1000 years ...

ROMOLO SACRIFICED TO THE GODS ASKING FOR A SIGN

The game ROMOLO O REMO has ... not too much to share with this legend but brings 1 to 4 players back to that time. The purpose of the game is to found a few towns and to create kingdoms, to populate it and to give the population the possibility to have a good living, temples, monuments, aqueducts, ports, etc. Kingdoms will therefore expand and may become in contact with other populations, so a good King has to calculate the right time to create an Army powerful enough to defend his Territory and nasty enough to eventually conquer some new areas.

When you open the box you will see a lot of components but no "standard" board and you have to create it with 44 large hexagonal tiles showing four different terrains: plain, hill, forest and sea. 83 wooden "Buildings" in eight different shapes are used to represent Farms, Warehouses, Temples, Aqueducts, Forums, Walls, Ports and Quarry/Sawmills. Each players will receive a Tower in his color (the Capital of his Kingdom), six Workers, four Soldiers and an Explorer. Eight black Mercenary pawns will be available to all players if they find enough money to "pay" them.

Resources created by the terrains are represented with colored wooden cubes: yellow for "Corn" (that will be cultivated on the Plain tiles), brown for "Wood" (on Forest tiles), white for "Stone" (on hill tiles), pink for "Salt" (on sea tiles) and blue for "Iron" (this is the only resource that you will not find on one of the territories and which must therefore be purchased, as we will see).

The remaining components are Money (coins of 0,5 = Bronze, 1 = Silver and 5 = Gold talents), Markers (penalties, battles, multipliers), Personality Tiles (that give certain advantages to their owners), a special D6 die (as an alternative to the standard battle resolution system), 4 summary charts and a mini-board that represent the Market.

The rules are not complex to learn, but the large range of possible tactics and strategies will require high attention during the game, therefore I suggest ROMOLO O REMO only to regular or expert gamers. Playing time is around 150-180 minutes.

WITH OX AND PLOW ROMOLO TRACED THE PERIMETER OF HIS TOWN

Set up takes a little longer than in any other standard game: you give two PLAIN tiles to each player and you set aside 9 SEA tiles. The players secretly select a third tile (Forest or Hill) and then the "board" can be formed: mix the remaining tiles and randomly place four of them in the center of the table, face-up, and provide each with a "multiply" marker (see victory conditions to know their role). Then the players will place their three tiles (face up, to form their initial Kingdom and in the position explained by the rules) and finally the remaining tiles are added (there is a different "layout" for 1, 2, 3 or 4 players).

You take all the wooden pieces of your color and place TWO workers in your kingdom and the TOWER on one of the two plain tiles: then you take your 6 "Battle Markers" and randomly discard one of them. Finally you place a FARM on a plain tile, a WAREHOUSE on a plain tile and take 2 talents and the following resources: 2 Corn, 2 Wood, 2 Stone and 1 resource of choice.

The game is played in ROUNDS and each round is divided in turns. On each turn the players have three phases: ACTIONS, COMBAT and MAINTENANCE.

In other word, you try to add new terrains and new workers to your kingdom, and your buildings that will allow you to influence more terrains, and so on. Sometimes you are obliged to acquire a few extra tiles by military conquest or to defend tile against external aggressions, so in the "middle" game it could be necessary to form a small Army ... at the expenses of your working population.

On your turn you must always perform the administrative phases and you may use the action phase or you may battle if you have hostile forces in the same location as some of your units.

The game ends when one of the following conditions is met:

- 1 - only one player survives (he is obviously the winner)
- 2 - all the Character Tiles are purchased
- 3 - three kind of Buildings are completely exhausted

ROMOLO POPULATED THE VILLAGE WITH NOMAD SHEPHERDS

The ACTION PHASE is obviously the most

important. Every unit has his own characteristics: Workers may perform two actions, Explorers have up to three movements/discoveries and Soldiers or Mercenaries have two movements available. But let's have a closer look at the different actions:

- **Movement** (all units): you may move a unit on ONE adjacent tile for each available action. If you enter a new Tile you turn it over on the front side and the unit is spent. If you find a "sea" tile there is a special sequence that you must follow to find out if more sea tiles will be connected to the one just discovered. You may move on a "sea" tile only if you have a Port on the starting tile or if you were already at sea. Otherwise the unit is spent on the previous tile.

- **Explore** (only Explorers): you may secretly look at 1-3 covered tiles adjacent to your Explorer leaving them in place (still covered). Or you may combine Exploration and Movement by looking at the tile and, if you like it, moving your Explorer on it).

- **Build** (Workers): you pay the necessary resources and you place the selected building on the tile of the performing worker. Buildings belong to the player who has units in that tile and they must be erected in their respective terrains (Factories on Plains, Ports adjacent to Sea tiles, Quarries on Hills, Carpentries of Forests, etc.): each tile may support a maximum of four buildings. Walls are built on the tile's borders and are used to protect the territories. Each Building also has special bonuses (Temples reduce the cost in resources of new buildings in that tile; Aqueducts allow you to place a 5th or 6th building in a tile; etc.).

- **Dismantle** (Workers): you may voluntarily destroy a building in a tile where you have one of your workers and you immediately gain a resource of your choice.

- **Transform** (Workers): you pay the cost of a new building and you erect it "in place" of an existing one (which is removed).

- **Produce** (workers): you get resources from the tile where you have the performing worker: Plains produce "Corn" (yellow cubes); Hills produce "Stones" (white); Forests produce "Wood" (brown) and Seas produce "Salt" (pink). You may perform this action only once per tile and per turn. Normally only 1 Resource per tile is produced each turn, but if you have a Quarry in a hill you produce 1 stone extra, and if you have a Carpentry on a forest you produce 1 wood extra. Resources must be immediately stored in a warehouse that is in the same or in an adjacent tile. If you do not have enough free warehouses you lose part or all of your production.

- **Pick-up Resources** (Workers): Resources are usually collected at the end of the turns, but you may use an action to collect all the resources of a warehouse in a tile where you have an active worker. And you may immediately use the collected resources in your turn.

- **Produce Iron** (Workers): you may use a worker's action to "transform" two resources of the same kind in an "iron" cube (blue).

- **Create New Units** (Workers): you may create new Workers, Soldiers and/or Explorers. The maximum number of those units is determined by the "Power" of your Capital: if it has three buildings only you may have

max. 3 workers and 2 Soldiers in the fields; if you have 4-5-6 buildings you may arrive to 4-5-6 Workers and 3-4-5 Soldiers. To create a Soldier you must remove a worker, place the new unit on his place and pay two Iron cubes. You may also rent 1-2 Mercenaries (black wooden Soldiers) paying a silver coin each.

- **Market (Workers)**: you may always sell or buy resources in your turn using a worker's action. Prices are initially set at 1 talent for all resources. You may SELL one resource putting a cube of that color on the related spaces on the Market mini-board: the Bank will pay the actual value in coins. If you have a Port in the tile of your workers you may sell a second resource. If you have a Forum you will get extra coins based on the number of buildings of that tile. Sold cubes are positioned on the board but NOT in the column of the same color (Stone, for example, cannot be positioned on the "white" column). We will see later "why". You may also BUY 1 resource from the bank paying the respective price in coins. If a resource has value "0" you may buy two of them for 1 Talent. Each Port on that tile allows you to purchase 1 resource extra.

- **Take Personality Tiles**: each player may take a Personality tile (paying 2 talents for the first and 1 talent extra per tile for the following ones. So the first tile costs 2 talents, the second 3, the third 4, etc., and you use his bonus once per turn. Personalities are very important in this game and if you succeed to get the right ones for your planned strategy you are on the good way for winning. Unfortunately money is very scarce so you



must correctly plan your actions in order to be able to purchase Personality tiles as often as possible.

By having used a worker or having moved a Soldier you have "spent" him and you must lay that unit down in order to show that it cannot be used anymore in that turn.

ROMOLO HAD NOW TO DEVELOP HIS KINGDOM AND LOOKED AROUND

THE COMBAT PHASE is requested only if you have units of your color in the same tile with units of other players. Attacking is always voluntary. To solve a battle each player adds the Strength of his units (each Soldier gives you 3 SP, Mercenaries 2 SP, Workers 1 SP and Explorers 0 SP) and plays (face-down) one of his Battle Markers (that will add SP or cause damages, retreats, etc.). The player with the highest total wins the battle and eventually kills 1 or more units of his opponent (and/or destroys buildings) if the difference between the two totals exceeds a certain number of points. It is quite common to see that after a battle two enemy armies will remain in the same hex, so you have to accurately plan a battle in order to have a very high superiority and thus to be sure to eliminate the opponent. If you prefer to always have random results instead of the Battle Markers you may use the special die which shows the same symbols as the Markers; but, I do not suggest this option because it introduces a luck factor too heavy for this kind of game.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE PHASE is the final phase of your turn. You have to:

- **Take your resources:** you take the produced resources from all your warehouses

- **Pay the Mercenary:** you pay 1 Salt or 1 Coin for your first Mercenary Unit, plus 2 for the second, 3 for the third, etc. or lose a building for each non paid unit. Then you may discard one or more Mercenaries if you do not need them anymore.

- **Feed your Population:** each Farm may feed 2 units (Workers and/or Soldiers) that are in the same or an adjacent tile. If you don't have enough Farms or your units are too far away you have to pay one "Corn" per unit. So look carefully at your units during the movement phase as it is very easy to forget this rules in the first games.

- **Adjust the Market:** only if there are 4 or more "sold" cubes on the board. Each cube reduces the value of that color by one. Each cube positioned on a column increases the value of that resource by one. If, for example, we have 2 "stone" cubes on the yellow column, 1 "corn" cube on the blue column and 2 iron cubes on the brown column we have to: (a) decrease by 2 the white and blue values; (b) decrease by 1 the yellow column. Then we have to (c) increase by 2 the yellow

column (for the 2 stones) and the brown column (for the 2 irons), and (d) increase by one the blue column (for the corn). Sound complicate? It isn't once you play. Just try ...

At the game's end the surviving players have to calculate their Victory Points (VP):

(I) - **Personalities:** 1 VP per Personality tile (but note that some of those tiles also give extra VP if certain conditions are met).

(II) - **Control:** 1 VP per controlled hex tile. Control means that you have the highest "influence" on that tile. Influence is assigned with Cities (a four-buildings City has an influence only on the adjacent tiles, a five-buildings City goes up to two hexes, etc.) and Soldiers (each Soldier gives 1 Influence point on his tile)

(III) - **Dominion:** higher number of buildings on a tile adjacent to the Capital plus the number of buildings of the Capital itself

(IV) - **Population:** You get 1 VP every TWO workers and 1 VP per Soldier on the map

(V) - **Battle Markers:** 1 VP for each unused marker at the end of the game

(VI) - **Money:** 1 VP for each 4 talents that you own

(VII) - **Majorities:** 6 VP to the player that has a majority in each of the above 6 categories and 2 VP to the second.

A little complication at the end of the game that adds another 10-15 minutes to the gaming time.

BUT FINALLY ROMA WON AND BECAME "CAPUT MUNDI"

As I mentioned before, ROMOLO O REMO is not a game for everybody: you have to accurately calculate your possible income; to decide what you have to build and when; to evaluate potential treats of the other populations or to decide an aggressive policy by yourself; to invest your resources in the Market in order to have the precious money to spend to get the most important Personalities; etc.

Normally the game's flow is not too aggressive, also because you have to keep your Units adjacent to the Farms, if you wish to feed them easily, but the random distribution of tiles may force you to move towards another territory in order to get resources that you cannot collect at home.

This is my major criticism to the game, because very often it happens that a Capital is surrounded mostly by sea tiles and has very few good tiles for resources, while another population has everything close to the Capital and an easier life. Therefore we used this HOUSE RULE for most of our games and we bypassed the problem:

1 - Before placing the covered tiles on the table select 1 Forest and 1 Hill for each player.
2 - Then randomly pick up 4 tiles per player and add to them the Forest and the Hill

3 - Now mix the 6 tiles and place them around the Capitals

4 - Finally randomly fill all the other gaps in order to complete the board

This modification will guarantee that each Capital will have at least one tile of ALL the different types of terrains in the six adjacent positions, even if you still do not know where (and still you may have problems with the sea tiles).

The first half of the game will be used to "grow": you takes resources and you erect buildings that will help you to get more resources and influence. Then you may increase your population and this will give you more opportunities to get more resources and to pay for some Soldiers, etc.

Always try to have some money available, eventually selling some resources, as to win you need the help of some Personalities and sometimes it is necessary to take a tile just to avoid that one opponent may take it and have a strong benefit.

ROMOLO O REMO is another "civilization" game that hits the market but does not renew this genre. It is a pleasant game but a little too long to be played often. And surely is not families or occasional players. ☑

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INFORMATION

Designer: Michele Quondam

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www.giochix.it

PLAYERS:

1-4

AGE:

14+

TIME:

180+

EVALUATION

Civilization, development

Users: For experts

Version: multi

Rules: de en fr it

In-game text: no

Comments:

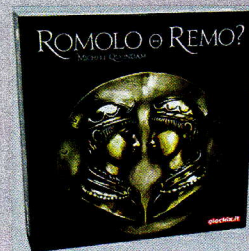
Long playing time * Good rules * Needs some experience * Standard mechanisms for the genre

Compares to:

All games on development of a civilization

Other editions:

Currently none



My rating:

