

HERA, ATHENA OR APHRODITE?

OLYMPUS

BUILD YOUR CITY WITH THE FAVORS OF GODS

We are once again in ancient Greece, at the peak of the City State era and you are the leader of an ancient Greek Polis (Town) and you need the help of your Gods to make your city great!

At long last, an Italian player, have the opportunity to review an Italian Game for an Austrian magazine in an English language: this is something really exceptional, and for me it is also a little bit more difficult to remain really "impartial", but the game is a GOOD one and so the task will be much simpler.

The authors - Andrea Chiarvesio and Luca Iennaco - are already known in our hobby as the designers of KINGSBURG and the several expansions for it, but they also have some other games to their credit, so you may expect a very well tested game.

Let's immediately say that OLYMPUS is a strategy game without any chance element, based on the well used "worker placement" system to find the best resource management method that will allow you to make a lot of Victory Points with a series of special buildings. Sounds complicated? Well, this is not a game for families or casual players and you need to pay a lot of attention if you want to try to win this game. Fortunately, OLYMPUS is also a very interactive game so you will never be idle waiting for the others players to finish their turn. All in all, Olympus is a very challenging "card" game for expert players. Opening the box you will find a board showing 10 Gods (and their characteristics) and their "home", Mount Olympus itself, that lent his name to the game. Also available for everybody are three series of wooden colored cubes (the resources: Grain, Hunt and Fish) Every player will receive a smaller board (your Polis) with SIX different tracks used to record your progress on culture, population, army and the resources (the ones named before). You also get 5 priests (colored wooden pawns), a set of cards, showing different buildings that you may erect in your Polis, and 7 colored discs used to keep track of your progresses on the Polis. Please note that the tracks for Culture, Population and Army have some barrages: you may pass the barrage only if you buy the right buildings (for example you may pass from level 4 to level 5 on the Culture track only if you bought the School, or you may go from level 3 to level 4 of your Army track only if you built the Barracks, etc.)

12 special "building" cards are placed on Mount Olympus: they are at the disposal of

all the players and give special abilities to their future owners, as we will see.

You randomly select the First player and you may start play.

The turn is divided in two phases:

The WORSHIP phase, when you assign your priests to the different deities and you use the favors that each God grants to your Polis The UPKEEP phase, in which you verify the situation of your Polis, collect tributes, rise new priests and use the characteristics of some buildings

After that a new turn starts and a new First Players is selected.

Obviously the heart of the game is in the Priests phase: each player starts with 3 PRIESTS but the extra 2 may be added during the game if certain conditions are met. Each God is assigned TWO SPACES: the first (called "alfa") may host only ONE priest and a certain type of favors to the player; the second (called "beta") may host more than one priest but the favor is lower than in space "alfa".

The First Players decides which God to pray and take one of his Priests from the Polis (not from the board) placing him on one of this God's spaces (usually in "alfa"): if other players wish to pray the same God they must do it immediately or they will lose that opportunity as each God may be reached only once per turn. As soon as all the interested Priests have been assigned all the players receive the God's favor.

There are different "favors":

RESOURCES: You may select DEMETRA (grain) or ARTEMIS (hunt) or POSEIDON (fish). If you select the space "beta" you move your marker one space to the right on the corresponding resources' track in your board; ALTERNATIVELY you may produce the resources that your board shows (1 to 4) by taking the corresponding number of cubes from the reserve. But if you placed your priest in the space "alfa" you may increase the selected resource AND take the cubes for it.

If you select HERA you may increase OR produce TWO different resources (space "alfa") or just ONE (space "beta").

CULTURE: If you select space "alfa" of ATHENA you increase your "culture" marker by two spaces (one only in space "beta"). Culture is very important because you need it to erect the best buildings of your reserve or the special ones on Mount Olympus. Also if you reach space 8 on your Polis track you will get an extra Priest.

POPULATION: If you select APHRODITE (Goddess of Love) you obviously increase your population (by two spaces in "alfa" or just one in "beta")

WAR: If you select space "alfa" of ARES you have different possibilities. You may advance your Military marker two spaces; OR you may advance it one place only AND declare a war; or you may declare two wars (against two different opponents). If you are on the "beta" space you may only increase one space your military market OR declare a war. Once all players had the possibility to put a priest on Ares potential wars are declared and resolved: the attacker selects an opponent and adds up his military power (as indicated on his Polis track) plus potential bonuses from his buildings; the defender does the same and if the attacker's total is higher than that of the defender he wins the war and takes a number of resources from the defender equal to the difference between the two totals.

BUILDINGS: If you select space "alfa" of HEPHAESTUS you may buy up to TWO buildings (one only in the "beta" space). You take the buildings from your deck or from Mount Olympus; you pay the requested resources

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A game that keeps you on your toes all the time, a challenging game for experts where you need to plan ahead and optimize your actions

(printed on the cards) and you lay the new buildings down in front of you. Note that every building needs a certain level of "Culture" for its use, so you always have to keep an eye on your culture level.

SUN/PLAGUE: If you select space "alfa" of APOLLO you have the possibility to mark TWO Victory Points (VP) OR to score just 1 VP and declare a Plague (from which you are protected). If you are on the "beta" space you may only score 1 VP OR get the protection from the plague. Plague is a nasty affair as it eliminates 1/3 of your population, so it is important to keep an eye on your opponents available priests and if you feel that a plague may hit you ... it is better to struck first and select Apollo yourself before using all of your priests.

ZEUS: If you prefer ZEUS you may select two different actions (one only in the "beta" space) between those that we already discussed above (advance the markers of your Polis one space, produce one kind of resource, declare a war, build one building, score VP).

This process continues in turns until all the players have exhausted their stock of priests. At this point the UPKEEP phase starts, a quick phase during which the players have to:

- discard potential extra resources, as they may keep a max of 5 cubes on their Polis

- reduce all the markers (if any) to the population level, if they are higher than the population
- resolve potential special effects of your buildings
- take your priests back from the Gods' temples, eventually add a new priest if you reached the requested levels (Population at level "6" or Culture at level "8")
- and eventually take one or more GLORY CARDS (you get a glory card if you are the first to reach the end of each track of your Polis).

The game ends when the fourth Glory Card is assigned and the players may calculate the VP of their Polis; for each track you HALF the level reached (Es: level 7 = 3 VP) and you add those values to the total of VP assigned by the buildings that you bought during the game. The higher total, obviously, wins the game.

OLYMPUS is an interesting game, very interactive and filled with nasty tricks, so I recommend it to expert players. After more than 20 games in our group we still do not find a "winning" strategy and for that reason we

like this game so much. For example, during the first test we all tried to buy as much of our population and resources as possible, but the game was easily won by the players who invested in "culture" and bought the powerful Mount Olympus cards. In the following few games everybody jumped on Mount Olympus, of course, but the victory went to the player who constantly moved his markers on the Polis tracks, without buying ANY of the Mount Olympus cards. The following games every player tried his own strategy and victory was usually achieved on the very last turn. One "safe" strategy for beginners could be collecting initially "culture", population and armies before passing to the resources and the buildings. Remember to maintain a constant "look" at Mount Olympus to try to get the Temple of Athena (that grants you an advance of one level on any one of your Polis tracks any time that you send a Priest to Athena space) or the Temple of Aphrodite (that grants you 2 resources for free at any time that you send a priest to Aphrodite space). Turn by turn the competition rise and dirty tricks (plague, wars, etc.) start to be used, es-

pecially if one player advanced a little more than the "average". The only real "defect" that I can see on OLYMPUS is that there are really "too many" building cards (and you will use only a few of them in each game): try to understand what to do on the following turn or what your neighbors are planning will take time and your brain will be constantly busy because you are obliged to look carefully to the resources that you need and also look what the enemy is collecting in order to have important information about the possible buildings that they will buy. And if you can't reach the necessary resources ... well, why you do not send a Priest to the Ares temple in order to steal as much of those resources as possible from an incautious neighbor?

One special dirty trick is Plague: if you are the last player with a priest in your hand you may send him to the Apollo temple and declare a plague that nobody can "counter" (as they do not have any priest left). You are immune but the other players lose 1/3 of their population: this means 2 levels if they are at "6-7-8" on the track and this loss may be a disaster if their resources and armies now have to be



reduced accordingly. If, for example your population has to go down from level "6" to level "4" you have to reduce to level "4" also the other tracks (culture excluded). As I wrote before, the only way to "counter" this problem, (if your population track is at risk) is to reach the Apollo temple before the others: you are safe and most of your enemies will follow you (spending one precious priest) to avoid the plague.

Between experienced players this game is really very well balanced, but the playing time will increase even to 150-180 minutes. Nobody wants to act in a hurry and each building's purchase will be accurately programmed as you have to select a chain of actions that will allow you to take the necessary resources before someone decides to go to Hephaestus' temple.

Well, here we are with another dirty trick: go immediately to Hephaestus if the opponents do not have enough resources to buy a building. You probably will be able to buy just ONE building, but your opponents will do nothing ...

All in all, an excellent game that you will like to play again and again: "revenge is a dish to serve cold" and OLYMPUS is an excellent way to achieve this! ☑

Pietro Cremona

INFORMATION

Designer: A. Chiarvesio, L. Iennaco

Artist: Antonio Dessì

Price: ca. 60 Euro

Publisher: Stratelibri 2010

www.stratelibri.it

PLAYERS:

3-5

AGE:

12+

TIME:

120+

EVALUATION

Ressourcen Management
Für Experten
Version: multi
Regeln: en it
Text im Spiel: ja

Comments:

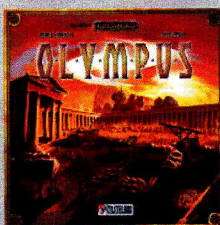
Bekanntes Thema * Dauernde Planung und Beobachtung nötig * kein Zufallselement

Compares to:

Civilization für das allgemeine Thema und Bedingungen, um eine Stufe zu überschreiten, Perikles für den Konflikt der Stadt-Staaten

Other editions:

Olympus, Fantasy Flight Games



My rating:

LET US WORSHIP GODS

PANTHEON

FEETS OFF THE TABLE

The game Pantheon transports player back into ancient times. In those times there were several important peoples, the Gaul, the Germans, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Carthaginians, the Iberians and the Romans. All these peoples believed in and worshipped different gods. To pay homage to the gods the most diversified monuments were built to express the belief in the gods.

Before we can start the game we must do some preparations: The most important are the 40 loot tiles, which can be acquired in the game, are placed into the black bag. The God cards are shuffled and stacked next to the board. The cards for the 8 peoples are also shuffled and stacked next to the board. The Sacrifice tiles are separated by sort and each sort is separated into stacks of 1/2 and 3/4 tiles.

The seven money cards of values between 2 and 5 are sorted by value and stacked in ascending order, 2 on top, 5 at the bottom, and set next to the board. Each player receives a marker for the victory point's scale, and all feet and columns in his color; 4 feet and 3 columns you take into your personal stock. Finally, each player draws five cards from the draw pile, a randomly drawn bonus tile and a rules summary.

In our tests of this game we have found that that an extensive explanation of all the rules does not really facilitate game play. To get the game across and to enable players to have you should reduce the rules to a minimum. This mostly due to the fact that the rules are not very clearly structured and that the lots of examples used to explain the rules within the rules do not really help to understand the game better. Thus we now give the minimum explanation, the other elements, especially the abilities of the gods, can be explained during the game when appropriate, this game is best approached on the principle of "learning by doing".

This approach is very important to make sure that all players will have fun with the game, because in many of our games players were more displeased with the game than pleased and that of course does not exactly do good for a game or the players, especially as it results in players refusing to pick up the game again, and this should not happen to Pantheon, because it is not a bad game at all. Aim of the game is to accrue most victory points at the end of the game. To give you ample opportunity to garner victory points the game comprises six rounds, aka six ep-

ochs. Within those epochs three distinct phases are played: First, you prepare the board for the epoch, then all players play the Turn Phase, and then the end of the epoch is administrated. These three phases are meant to relate to the development of the ancient peoples from rise to downfall of their empire. Phase 1 and Phase 3 of an epoch are just implemented once, the preparation of the current people at the start of the epoch and the administration of the results at the end of the epoch. The game features 8 different peoples, and as only a total of six epochs, each featuring one people, is played, two peoples do not come into play in each game; the peoples used are randomly selected.

To prepare an epoch the starting player

Isabella Schranz

If you have worked through the rules, Pantheon is a beautiful resources management game, albeit with little interaction.

chooses the people by turning up the top card from the peoples stack. The marker of this people is placed on the epoch track and then you place five randomly drawn loot tiles on the spots on the board that are marked with the insignia of the current people. Each people has a distinct characteristic which influences both the epoch and the flow of the game, this characteristic is now implemented. The temple marker is placed on the big insignia of the people and then you turn up God tiles and place them on the board, always one more than there are players participating. These preparations are identical for each round = epoch, the only feature that has any influence on the game at that point is the characteristic of the people which is activated for the turn phase.

In the turn phase a player can choose between for different actions in each of his turns. He can move, he can shop, he can acquire a god tile or he can draw three cards from the face-down draw pile. You decide on one of those four actions and implement it, than it is the turn of the next player. If you choose "movement", you take the big foot marker which gives you an extra step and then you play movement cards from your hand, each of those cards gives you two steps. Then you "move" the total of all steps from cards and big foot. For each of those steps you place one of your own feet or your columns on the board. Both feet and columns must come from your personal