

POLYNESIAN ISLANDS ...

BORA BORA

... HUTS, FISH, GODS

It seems that Stefan Feld was lighted by a long flow of good ideas in the last years as he was able to publish more and more good games: Year of the Dragon and Notre Dame in 2007, Macao and Arena in 2009, Luna and The Speicherstadt in 2010, Trajan, Strasbourg and Die Burgen von Burgund in 2011, etc. In 2012 we were surprised to get no real news, but then 2013 brought us Bora Bora and, recently, Bruges. At our club we particularly like Feld's games, as they all have in common the possibility to act in so many different directions (sometimes even too many!), giving you the opportunity to win with various strategies. In effect it happens often that as soon as one seems to have found a good strategy the others are able to counter it simply playing in a different way, and this means that the replay possibilities of Feld's games are higher than many others.

This happens also with Bora Bora which gives you the opportunity to "colonize" an exotic archipelago (composed of five islands) building huts, increasing population and getting the favor of Gods. I will describe mainly the four player's game as during our tests the table was always filled and we never succeeded in playing with 3 players. The box is well filled with wooden and cardboard components (as you immediately "feel" by its weight, even before opening the cover). In effect for your money you receive one 525x360 mm board, four 295x205 mm player boards, 60 God cards, 30 building materials (wooden tokens for sand, stone and wood), 12 wooden huts and 4 priests on each color, 7 action tiles, 36 woman tiles, 36 man tiles, 60 task tiles, 24 jewels tiles, 18 offering tiles, 36 cardboard "shells" (the money of this archipelago) and other extra cardboard components (12 fishes, 10 God tiles, 24 buildings, turn order, etc.). Each player select one color and get all his materials plus THREE six sided (D6) dice on his color (green, black, blue or red).

Depicted on the board you find everything that you need to play: the left part of the map shows the archipelago (one central island divided in four areas and 4 smaller islands, each divided in two areas) and the turn sequence; the right part is used to store the "jewels" and the "task" tiles, to display the men and women that will be available and to mark the temple and status tracks. We will analyze each of them later.

If you, like me, moved a little your nose up

when I named the three D6 dice ... please be assured that this is not a game of pure luck: dice are used to select the actions and if it is true that a bad series of "wrong" dice may be a problem to perform certain actions it is also true that the same dice may be a strong weapon for other actions or to block your opponents.

Set up is a little longer than usual and I strongly recommend to keep all the components perfectly divided inside the box, with the help of plastic bags or smaller plastic boxes: this will help you in setting the game quickly.

Fishes are placed first: around the archipelago there are 12 cases where you must randomly places those 12 fishes, whose value vary between 1 (four tokens in total) and 6 (just one token).

Then you randomly select 6 Men and 6 Women and place them on the right side of the board.

All the 24 jewels are also placed on the board (only 4 jewels are offered in each of the 6 turns of the game but the players may always see which ones will be available on the following turns).

Sort and place on side of the board the 7 large Action Tiles (when playing in three or two you will only use 6 or 5 of them)

Each player will receive his personal board together with 12 huts, 6 building tiles, 4 priests and 3 dice of the same color.

Give 2 God Cards to each player and put the remaining ones in a face down pile on the table.

Give 1 God Tile to each player (they are a sort of Jokers) and put the last 6 in the temple.

Give 2 Offering Tiles to each player (they are necessities to activate the God cards) and place the remaining ones aside the board.

Shuffle the TASK tiles and give ONE "light green" tile and TWO "dark green" tiles to each player: then place 6 extra "dark green" on the board (so player will know in advance which tasks will be available for the next turn). Those tiles show you how you can get extra VP if you perform the depicted "task": for example if you have 1 Man and 1 Woman on your personal board at the end of the turn, or were able to place a hut in "x" territories of the Archipelago, etc. The "light green" tiles are easier to accomplish, while the other have different tasks and you should play accordingly to be able to select the right one every turn.

Finally randomly assign 1 Turn Tile to each

player to determine the first turn order: in reverse order players must now place one of their huts on the board on an area next to one of the four "1" fishes. They immediately get the related resource (each area in the archipelago assign one of the three Resource or one Offering).

On the personal board are also printed icons to summarize the game actions. In the middle of your board you will place the resources that you get during the game and that you may transform in "building" when

Pietro Cremona

A highly strategic game in which your starting situation usually decides the strategy; tactic can be used to snatch opportunities offered for optimum use;

you perform the related action. On the right of the board you place your remaining 11 huts, one in each case. During the game those cases will be used also to host your population but you must first empty them, placing more huts on the islands in order to get more space for Male/Female tiles.

Your task is to select actions placing your dice on the Action Tiles in order to:

- collect men and women (each of them will grant you special actions, "shells" or "tattoos")
- build more huts on the islands and take the related resources
- construct your buildings with the collected resources (to get VP and extra actions)
- try to get the most "political" influence by tattooing your men (and advancing on the STATUS track)
- try to get the favor of Gods (to get VP and free actions and Offerings)
- purchase jewels (to get extra VP at the game's end)
- satisfy tasks (that will give you extra VP each turn)

If you are good enough to make A LOT of the above tasks you will get extra VP at the game's end, but I warn you: none of us ever succeeded in getting ALL those extras, so believe me, it is better to concentrate in 2-3 "targets" and follow this strategy all along the game (if your opponents will let you go, of course!) keeping always an eye open to jump on eventual "one time" possibilities during each turn.

The game is played in 6 turns, each one divided in three Phases: the winner will be the player with most VP at the end of the 6th turn and after the final scoring.

PHASE 1 - ACTIONS

All players throw their dice at the same time. Than the First player place one of his dice on an Action Tile, followed by all the other players in turn order, repeating this procedure three times. You can place a dice in an already occupied Action Tile only if

the number of your pips is lower than the lowest value of the other dice (alternatively you may use some God's help, as we will see later). In this way it is possible for a player to "block" an Action Tile using a "low" die: so if you play a "1" nobody is allowed to enter this tile anymore, unless is ... blessed by a God.

The available Actions are:

- LAND MOVE: you may expand your clan in a territory adjacent to your existing huts. Each "path" (from one area to an adjacent one) shows a die with a number of pips varying from "2" to "6". Thus to use one of this path you have to place on the MOVE Action tile 1D6 with at least the same number of pips.
- SEA MOVE: is similar to the above, but moving through the sea.
- TEMPLE: you take one of your three priests and you place him on the Temple track in a free case whose value has the same (or lower) pips that the die you placed on this Action Tile.
- BUILDING: you may build one of your six building on your display. You must already have two adjacent (and different) resources in your personal board that you will exchange for a building. Again you may select only buildings whose value is the same (or lower) than the number of pips of your die.
- WOMAN: you may take one "woman" tile whose value has the same (or lower) pips that the die that you used (so with a "4" you may select a woman positioned on the case 4-3-2-1 but not those in cases 5-6)
- MAN: similar to the above
- HELPER: if you select this Action Tile you

may "spend" the pips of your die to make some of the following special actions:

- (a) – Collect Tattoo Points: for EACH pip spent in this way you shift down on your board one of your "not yet tattooed" men and you mark the related number of tattoo points on the Status track in order to collect VP at the end of the turn.
 - (b) – Collect Shells: for EACH pip spent in this way you shift down on your board one of your "not yet used" women and you get the related number of shells (from 2 to 4). Shells are the "money" of this game, as we said, and are used to purchase jewels.
 - (c) – Victory Points (VP): for EACH pip spent in this way you get 1 VP (moving your colored pawn on the VP track)
 - (d) – Offerings: for TWO pips you get one Offering tile.
 - (e) – God Cards: for TWO pips you may randomly take one God Card from the deck
 - (f) – Resources: for TWO pips you may take one resource of your choice from the reserve.
 - (g) – Huts Displacement: for each TWO pips spent you may move one hut from your display to case Nr. 12 (Reserve) in order to free some extra cases (for Men or Women).
 - FISHING: if you are unable to place some of your dice on an Action Tile (sometimes it happens, especially when you do not have the right Gods to help you) you may use them to get 2 VP placing the dice on the Fishing case of the board
- All that is very "standard" and very "linear", but this ... damned Feld was not yet happy and introduced some extra rules beside the standard ones: Thanks to the editor, those

rules are marked with a special symbol in the rulebook and the note DON'T FORGET, as new players very often jump over those opportunities!

When you place a priest in the temple or when you erect a new building on your personal board you get a free FIRE BONUS: this means that you may select two bonuses, one each from a couple of possibilities:

- (I) – Get a God Card OR an Offering
- (II) – Take 1 Shell or Advance 1 case on the Status track

Both bonus are really important during the game, especially when there is a tie to be the first player in the following turn or you need that extra shell to purchase a new jewel.

Some GOD CARDS may be played during this Phase:

- BLUE Gods allows you to place one die on an Action Tile even if its value is higher of the lowest existing die
 - WHITE Gods allow you to add a die to an Action Tile (using the standard rules) and use it as if it had "6" pips
 - RED Gods allows you to score Fishes VP when you expand in a new region: you add the VP value of the fish that is adjacent to the new region. Of course you will play this God when you enter a "5" or "6" fish area.
- In order to play a God card you ALWAYS need to spend an Offering tile; otherwise you may also play TWO identical Gods (and an Offering) in order to play any God that you wish, even if you do not have his card in your hand. Finally you may use your GOD TILE as a Joker and without paying any Offering.



PHASE 2 - WORKERS

It is time to ask your population to wake up and go to work. Each Man/Woman tile has TWO bonuses: one is depicted on the right side of the tile and it is permanent. The second is "one shot" and is used only when you "promote" the tile using the action HELPER: promoting a Man or Woman means that you get tattoo points from Men (advancing your marker on the Status track) or Shells from Women (to purchase jewels).

The permanent bonus is used during this Phase: you may select ONE Man and ONE Woman and perform their actions: these vary between allowing you to place another hut on the Archipelago (getting the related resource) or erect a new building (if you have the resources), or getting free resources, or take a God Card or an Offering, etc.

If you have two identical population tiles you consider them as ONE but you get double bonus.

A good mix of Men and/or Woman on your

personal board may help you very much during the game, but selecting the right tiles is not an easy task: first you need to have the right number of pips on your dice and, second, your opponent do not have to take that tile before you !!!

This means that you have to continuously adapt your "game" to the opportunities that are offered at the moment of your turn. Strategies are still possible (you use all your opportunities in fixed directions) but tactics cannot be "scientifically" programmed and you have to react at your best at the different possibilities that your opponents leaves to you.

If you really need a specific tile you should try to be first on the next turn and "hope" that this tile will be extracted from the bag. Otherwise you have to change your tactic.

In Phase 2 you may also use some GODS, obviously paying the usual Offerings:

- GREEN Gods double the effect of a Man/Woman bonus

- RED Gods, as we have seen in Phase 1, may

allow you to score Fishes if a worker's bonus allows you to place a new hut.

PHASE 3: VP, JEWELS and TASK TILES

While the workers, tired, are going home for their diner and for a good rest ... the players still have to make some calculations:

(a) - STATUS TRACK must be checked to assign VP to the players. I badly lost a couple of games because I did not invest enough on this track. But attention: in my opinion is better to play on this track only when you may use "a lot" of tattoo points. The first and second case of this track only grant 1 VP ; the third and fourth 2 VP, and so on with 4-6-8 VP, while cases eleven and twelve assign 11 points and case thirteen 15 VP. You may advance on this track ONLY when you promote one or more Men: each tattoo depicted on the Man tile let you advance 1 case. So it is better to promote 2-3-4 men at the same time in order to reach the last cases of the track and gain many VP in the same turn. Example: if you promote 4 Men (with 3 tattoos each) for 4 consecutive turns you





will get, in total, 8 VP ; but if you promote the same four Men on turn 4 you will get 15 VP !!! The player most advanced on the track at the end of a turn will get Turn Oder Tile Nr. 1, the second Nr. 2, etc. Then all the colored tokens are put back to case zero of the Status track.

(b) – TEMPLE: having some priests in the temple will grant you some VP too: 1VP per priest on turns 1-2, 2VP on turns 3-4 and 3VP for turns 5-6. The player with the priest on the higher case at the end of the turn (with case 6 being the higher) also gets one God Tile for free. The priests will always remain in the temple unless they are ... expelled: every time that a player send a new priest to the temple in an already occupied case the "old" priest is pushed on the right, to a lower level case, eventually pushing other priests, etc. A priest in the last case of the track, if pushed, is expelled and send back to his player's reserve.

(c) – JEWELS may be bought at the ... market. As I wrote before ALL the jewels are displayed on the board before the game may start. So players that have TASK tiles demanding for a certain combination of jewels may ... plan in advance how to get the Women that will give enough shells to pay the required jewels. They are placed (face down) on your personal board and will give you extra VP at the game's end.

(d) – TASK TILES. You got 3 of them at the game's set up: one (light green) is easy enough to be accomplished (but you should do the right actions, of course!); the other two (and all the following ones) are more or less difficult: keeping always an eye on those tiles during your play is very important. At the end of each turn you will get 6VP if you complete one Task (4VP if you ask the help of a God). Then, always in turn order, you replenish your "hand" with one new tile selected from the six showed on the board. It is clear that ... being the first to select will give you plenty of opportunities, while the last one has often to take bad or "near impossible" tasks.

When the turn is completed all the tiles remaining on the board (Men, Women and Tasks) are discarded and new ones are randomly selected to refill.

After the sixth turn the game is over, but players may still get some Extra VP for:

- Remaining God tiles (2VP each)
- Fishes adjacent to your huts (add the points of all those fishes)
- Jewels (add the points marked on your jewels tiles)
- And 6 VP for special combinations (having all your huts on the islands, if all your buildings were built, if you performed all 9 task cards, etc.)

In Phase 3 you may play the YELLOW Gods to reduce by one the number of the task requirements (but you will receive only 4 VP); of course an Offering tile is necessary, as usual

You may also play in any phase a GOD TILE (instead of a card) that is a sort of Joker and does not require any Offering. But God Tiles score 2 VP each at the game's end, so use them when you really need a specific and necessary action.

Bora Bora is addressed of course to the experienced and/or regular gamers despite its nice graphics that seems to invite you to a calm and relaxing tropical island visit: it takes a couple of games before you clearly understand how it "really" works and were you made your biggest mistakes. From game 3 and on play becomes more competitive and organized and you start to enjoy all the subtleties of Feld's work.

I am unable to give suggestions on "what is better" to win this game: I played it more than a dozen times before writing those notes and I was unable to find a good "winning" strategy. Fishes may be a good source of VP, but why not to send priests to the temple? Well, ok, but you need to have some tattoos to proceed on the status track, and shells to buy jewels, without considering your specific tasks ... you surely understand how different each game can be played.

I found that trying to perform many of the

above tactics will always bring you to the last positions on the game. So very often your initial task tiles and your first dice roll will decide which strategy to follow and you cannot change too much during the course of the game, even if you should take all the opportunities that eventually arise (a good 7 or 9 points jewel, a Man/Woman that may help you with is permanent bonus, etc.).

I strongly recommend this game to expert players that like to have a lot of "dilemmas" during their "ludic" evenings. ☑

Pietro Cremona

INFORMATION

Designer: Stefan Feld

Artist: Alexander Jung

Price: ca. 45 Euro

Publisher: alea / Ravensburger 2013

www.aleaspiele.de

PLAYERS:
2-4

AGE:
12+

TIME:
120+

EVALUATION

Dice, worker placement

Users: For experts

Version: multi

Rules: de en fr + it

In-game text: nein

Comments:

Very beautiful design * Lots of components * Complex mechanisms, learning games necessary

Compares to:

Troyes and other Worker Placement games using Dice

Other editions:

Uberplay, Italy

