

FROM ROME TO BRITANNIA

CONCORDIA

COLONIES, GODS AND RESOURCES

It took Mac Gerdt more than two years to arrive to this final version of the game. I had the opportunity to follow this project since the first version to the „almost“ finished one: in effect it was at PLAY 2012 in Modena (Italy) where Mac brought with him the prototype game that we started testing at the convention. Then Mac spent some days here in Cesena as my guest and we had the opportunity to make some walks at the beaches of the Adriatic Sea ... errr ... oopsss ... the opportunity to test POPULUS ROMANUS (this was his name at that time) at home with friends and at the club with different players: we all thought that the game was interesting but it was too long (more than 3 hours) and some „actions“ seemed „forced“, thus depriving it of some feeling. Mac was kind enough to mark those notes together with the others coming from different test groups, and he modified the basic game sending all the modifications for further testing.

At PLAY 2013 Mac came again in Modena with a new version of the game and again we all tested it and were all happy of the simplified version: now the playing time was more or less 2 hours and most of the little annoying problems were gone. And again Mac came to Cesena with Peter Dörsmann (publisher of the game) and we played a few test games at the club that brought Mac to some minor modifications to the cards. Once again the development continued in Germany, of course, until the game was really tuned.

Mac Gerdt is a very sturdy designer that pays a very high attentions to each detail of his games: every „critic“ is warmly accepted, deeply examined and eventually tested and every „suggestion“ find him available and very open. The name of the game changed many times, from Populus Romanus to Roma Caput Mundi (discarded because the Latin word „Caput“ (capital) could be misspelled with the German name Kaputt (broken) then to Oppida (not an interesting name for a game a development) and finally to Concordia (even if we, Italians, objected to this name as it means „peaceful life all together“, and it seemed ... not so appropriate). All in all it is really hard work and explain why Mac Gerdt's games are so detailed and well tuned and highlight also the reason of the high appreciation of the gamers.

Designing a game is not so difficult, but de-

signing a GOOD game that is balanced and nearly without bugs is a task for few and it takes a lot of time.

THE GAME COMPONENTS

All that said let's examine what we find inside the box:

A map of the Mediterranean ancient cultures: from Hispania to Syria, from Egypt to Britannia. Italia is in the middle and Roma is the starting point of the game. But ... surprise, on the back of the map there is a different one depicting only Italy and his very Ancient Regions (but with Roma still in the middle). Play is the same, but the Italian (Republican Rome) version is simpler and uses less resources so I will discuss here the IMPERIAL complete version only.

The map shows 12 different Provinces with more or less the real Roman name for them: playing necessities obliged the Designer to make minor changes but this is obviously not a problem. Each Province has 2 or 3 cities and each city is coded with a letter from „A“ (Britannia and Germania) to „D“ (Italia and Hellas). The game provides 30 City tokens with the same letters on the back: you randomly distribute the tokens on the cities with the same letters and then all tokens are turned up.

Each token shows one of 5 resources: Brick - Food - Tool - Wine - Cloth. Each of this resources has a value from „3“ (brick) to „7“ (cloth): players have to look inside each Province and see which is the highest value City: a „bonus“ marker of the same type is placed on the small case with the name of that Province in a track printed on the map. Cities are connected with „Ground“ roads (brown) or „Sea“ routes (blue): of course Land colonists may only travel along the brown roads while Sea colonists may only move on blue routes. Colonists never moves FROM or TO Cities, but on roads/routes between the Cities, so each unit is always adjacent to two cities. Each road/route may be occupied only by ONE colonist at a time, but a unit may move „over“ another one if it has enough Movement Points.

Each player receive 1 storehouse, a set of 3 Sea colonists, 3 Land Colonists, 15 Houses, 1 Scoring marker, 7 „Personality“ cards (with the back of the chosen color: red, green, black, blue or yellow) and some Sesterzi (the money of the game): 5 Sesterzi to the first player, 6 to the second, etc. The storehouse

has 12 cases and is loaded with 2 Land colonists, 2 Sea colonists, 2 Foods, 1 Brick, 1 Tool, 1 Wine and 1 Cloth: two cases remain free.

Each player also takes a summary card that shows the cost to build „colonies“ during the game. A card called „Praefectus Magnus“ is given to the last player and another card (showing the Concordia Goddess) is place aside to be used at the game's end.

A deck of 30 „neutral“ personality cards (divided in Periods: I-II-III-IV-V) is placed on side of the board together with the Sesterzi (in coins of 1-2-5-10 value) and all the resources (colored wooden tokens). The first 7 cards are turned and place them on their display, printed on the board. Each card has a „cost“ (in resources) but its position on the display may oblige you to pay extra costs: the first card has no extra; the second and third ask you for an extra resource (at your

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A surprisingly simple game with a lot of depth and many strategic options, but fortunately lacking the ultimate and Only possible winning strategy.

choice), etc.

Each Personality (colored of neutral) is associated to one of the Ancient Gods and this is VERY IMPORTANT to remember during the game as most of the Victory Points (VP) are scored at the game's end based on how many cards you have of the right God. In other words you should try to determine a strategy after 2-3 rounds and then to purchase the Personalities that belong to the Gods that favor your strategy.

If, for example, you want to follow JUPITER you have to try to collect the most possible of the Jupiter followers and put your houses on the Cities; if you prefer SATURNUS you will have to travel to and colonize most of the Provinces in order to maximize your score; etc. More on this later.

The game is very simple to explain and to understand: you have just to play one of your cards when your turn arrives and follow ... the instructions. Played cards remain in a deck in front of you and you may take all of them again in your hand playing the TRIBUNE card. New acquired cards are added directly to your hand (which of course will grow round after round).

The game ends in two ways: if all the „neutral“ personalities are sold or if a player places his 15th house on the board.

THE ACTIONS

In your turn you have to play a card and follow the related action:

- ARCHITECT: allows you to move your Units (Land colonists or Sea colonists) and build Colonies. You may move a number of „sections“ equal to the number of your

Units already on the board. At the beginning, for example, every player has only a Land colonist and a Sea colonist in Roma, so your Movement Allowance is just „2“ and you may use it to move a Sea colonist and a Land colonist 1 section each, or one Unit only for two sections. As soon as you place new units on the board your Movements Allowance increase accordingly.

To create a Colony you should have Units adjacent to cities: you then look at each City's type (Brick, Food, etc.) and you pay the amount of resources and money listed

on the Summary Card (For example you have to pay 1 Brick + 1 Food + 2 Sesterzi for a „Food“ City, etc.). Finally you place one of your houses on this City. You may also build more than one Colony per turn, if you have enough Units adjacent and resources. If you want to build a Colony in a City that already has one or more houses of different colors you must pay to the Bank 2-3-4-5 times the indicated amount of Sesterzi (one time more for each extra house).

- PREFECT: you have two options.

(a) - You name a Province and you take for

free the resource indicated on the related bonus tile which is immediately overturned, showing 1 or 2 coins. Then all the Colonies already established on that province also collect the resource indicated by the City type.

(b) - You need cash and you takes as many Sesterzi as are the coins shown on the already reversed bonus tiles: then you turn all those tiles again face up.

- MERCATOR: You immediately receive 3 Sesterzi from the bank (5 if you bought a „neutral“ Mercator) and then you may sell



and/or purchase up to two kinds of resources: the number of item of each type is not important, provided that you use only two types. Prices are always those printed on your storehouse.

- DIPLOMAT: the easiest card to use: you simply „copy“ the action of another player, provided that the related card is still visible on top of a discard deck.

- SENATOR: playing this card allows you to purchase one or two of the neutral cards in the display. You pay the cost of the card and the eventual extra resources requested. Then you move the remaining cards to the left and fill the empty spaces with new cards.

- TRIBUNE: this card allows you to recover all the previously played cards and to get also some money from the bank (count the number of cards, subtract „3“ and the final result is the number of Sesterzi that you take). In addition you may also purchase one new Unit (paying a fixed cost of 1 Food and 1 Tool) and you place it in Roma. In the „neutral“ card deck there are also some extra cards: we already met the Mercator (5 Sesterzi instead of 3) and the other ones are

- COLONIST: you have two possibilities
(a) - Purchase new Units to place in any City of the map where you already have one house.
(b) - Collect 5 Sesterzi plus 1 extra coin for each Unit already on the map.

- CONSUL: This card allows you to purchase another „neutral“ card without paying the extra costs of the display (you only spend the basic resources printed on the card): this is a very powerful card towards the end of the game.

- SPECIALIST: there are 5 „unique“ cards, one for each resource. They allow you, if played, to get one resource of the printed type per house that you have in Cities with the same symbol.

- PRAEFECTUS MAGNUS: this is a bonus card (typical of Mac Gerdts games) that is given to the last player in the turn order. If that player use a PREFECT to collect the Bonus Resource from a Region he takes TWO resources instead of one. Then the card is passed to his right.

The final scoring, as I anticipated, is based on the number of cards of Gods that you have, compared to what you performed on the field: „Vesta“ gives you 1 VP per card and per 10 Sesterzi accumulated, „Jupiter“ 1 VP

per card and per house placed on the map (excluding Brick Cities), „Saturnus“ 1 VP per card and per Province where you have at least one house, etc.

The game has also a couple of options:

(a) - the initial resources are not distributed, but the players get 25-26-27-28-29 Sesterzi instead

(b) - you may add an intermediate scoring system to get some extra Sesterzi: I tried it only once and immediately ... cancelled it from the options as it is not interesting, especially with expert players
Well, you are now ready to play CONCORDIA without even reading the rules: in effect the game is so simple to learn but quite demanding to play.

The first player has an initial advantage as he may usually build immediately two Colonies in Italy, obliging the other players to move further far from Roma to find free Cities to populate. But the 4th and 5th players have more money and may afford to build a Colony in the same cities of the first player. In the first few turns it is very important to build some Colonies in the Cities closest to Roma in order to slow down the expansion of the other players. It is very usual to see the first players moving mainly towards North Europe with their Land colonists while the last players take the sea and try to explore Hispania and/or Africa.

As soon as possible use your Prefect cards to collect bonus from any Province that offer an important resource (especially when you need it urgently) and try to select Provinces where you already have colonies in order to get more resources. It is a good strategy to try to make a Colony in a high class City (Wine or Cloth) in Provinces where an opponent already has a City: there are more opportunities to get goods when your opponent use a Prefect there.

After 3-4 turns you should concentrate on 2-3 possible strategies: trying to get anything anywhere is a losing tactic as you will finish with a few God cards of any type, getting an average score. If you concentrate on, say, a couple of Gods only you will try take most of these cards, getting a high score at the end.

An example: let's suppose that the situation of the game suggest you to select Jupiter (1VP per house): probably your better choice will be to go also for Saturnus (1 VP per Province where you have at least one house) because the goals are complementary: you must then build houses everywhere it will be possible (avoiding to have too many brick Cities) reaching most of the Provinces and purchasing extra Prefects, Consuls, Architects, Diplomats, etc. Other cards are not absolutely necessary and you do not waste resources or money: also if you have 2/3 Diplomats you will use them on

cards played by your opponents

We did not find a „winning strategy“ and I am happy as this means that the game is a very balanced one. Of course if you play for the first time against a „veteran“ of Concordia you will not have too many hopes, but hopefully you will not be bored for two hours watching the others playing: this game allows you in effect a lot of opportunities and ... next time you will be ready for a competitive match.

As I explained before even the first version of the game was very interesting and we were happy to play-test Concordia so many times because every new version was better than the preceding one, while the core of the game was never modified.

In conclusion my compliments to Mac Gerdts for the game and also to Peter, as it is not easy to maintain under control a Vulcan of ideas as his friend is: it was really amazing to see the hard discussions between the two when Mac wished to test new ideas and Peter objected that the game was right and finished, ready to be sent to the printer ... in time.

The game has in effect two extra options: this was a sort of „armistice“ between the two!!! ☑

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INFORMATION

Designer: Mac Gerdts	PLAYERS 2-5
Artist: Marina Fahrenbach	AGE 12+
Price: ca. 43 Euro	TIME 120+
Publisher: PD Verlag 2013 www.pd-verlag.de	

EVALUATION

Development
Users: For experts
Version: de
Rules: de en nl
In-game text: yes

Comments:
Beautiful components * Astonishingly simple rules as compared to the depth of the game * If you love Mac Gerdts game, you will love Concordia

Compares to:
All other Mac Gerdts Games

Other editions:
999 Games, Rio Grande Games





★
★
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★
★

My rating:

(2013) 778/807/377