

ing your fellow players. In this end phase you need to decide where you make a final try to achieve majorities or to defend them; whereby you are always in danger of being outbid after all, if you are not the player who triggers the end of the game. In my test games the player who caused the game to end has usually done very well or was the best, as this player also has placed most scientists.

The mechanism itself is a bit unusual and offers lots of options out of which you need to find the most profitable one.

As the building cards are shuffled at the beginning and the buildings become available always in different order in each game, each game therefore takes a different course and so you can probably not rely on only one single strategy for winning.

The use of cards – you are limited to the use of one card for each action case – can be of immense importance.

Even if some of my test players denied to play another game, for me the replay value of the game is very high, and there surely are options for interesting expansions. ☑

Hans Mostböck

INFORMATION

Designer: Charles Chevallier

Artist: Dennis Lohausen

Price: ca. 35 Euro

Publisher: Argentum Verlag 2015

www.argentum-verlag.de

PLAYERS:

2-4

AGE:

10+

TIME:

90+

EVALUATION

Development, majorities

Users: With friends

Version: de

Rules: de en fr

In-game text: no

Comments:

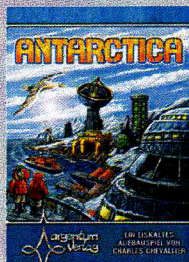
Functional components * Graphic design goes well with the topic * Unusual mix of mechanisms, especially the majority scoring

Compares to:

Development games with majority scoring

Other editions:

Argentum Verlag (en, fr)



My rating: ★★★★★

DYNASTIES AND ALLIANCES

SIGNORIE

CAREERS AND MARRIAGES

Introduction

This new game from the Italian designers Andrea Chiarvesio and Pierluca Zizzi brings us back to the 15th Century, during the Renaissance, and to the most powerful families of the biggest Italian cities of the era. At that time it was a sort of "necessity" to prepare the elder son to become the next "Signore" of the family and to push the other sons to the diplomatic and/or military career, while the youngsters were very often addressed to the ecclesiastic branch (the family needed to have her hands everywhere!). For the daughters it was simply a question of searching for good marriages with other powerful families in order to increase their own influence.

The game SIGNORIE uses dice to select actions combined with a new and interesting system of worker placement. The materials are all of good quality. The 25 plastic dice, in six colors, have numbers instead of pips. Meeples are made of colored wood and are divided in "men" and "women", while a handful of white wooden discs is used to mark the "Helpers" on the players' personal boards and some white "women" will become the wives of the four sons of the Signore of each Family.

(see Picture 1)

Finally SIGNORIE uses three kind of tiles :

- **Alliances:** at the start of the game two of those tiles are placed in each of the five Italian towns. During the game they will be taken by the players after a diplomatic action or a marriage and replaced at the beginning of the next round.

- **Tasks:** 10 tiles are randomly placed on the related cases on the board, two for each die color, and should be mixed and replaced at the beginning of each new round.

- **Rewards:** There are in total 14 of these tiles, but only 7 of them are placed on the board at the beginning. Five have various bonus (as we will see later) and two assign Victory Points (VP) at the game's end. The combination of these tiles therefore varies in each new game and grant a good variability.

(see Picture 2)

The board is divided in six different zones and each of them has a special use:

- Zone 1 is on the top left: four big cases to

stock the RESERVE of meeples.

- Zone 2 under Zone 1: 10 TASK cases in five colors (two cases for each die).

- Zone 3 is immediately under : here we see five DICE cases (yellow, red, violet, grey and blue) where all the colored dice are placed at the beginning of each turn. The white dice have a different task and are kept aside the board.

- Zone 4 is on the bottom left side and is used to place the 7 REWARD tiles.

Pietro Cremona

A good mix of dice and worker placement during the Italian Renaissance.

- Zone 5 is in the middle of the board and shows 5 cities: Milano, Venezia, Firenze, Roma and Napoli. Each of them has 2 boxes for the Alliance tiles and 8 small numbered cases (1-1-2-2-3-3-4-4) on which the players will place diplomats and brides.

INFORMATION

Designer: A. Chiarvesio, P. Zizzi

Artist: Mariano Iannelli

Price: ca. 45 Euro

Publisher: What's Your Game/Asmodee 15

www.asmodee.de

PLAYERS:

2-4

AGE:

12+

TIME:

150+

EVALUATION

Worker placement, dice

Users: For experts

Version: de

Rules: de en fr it pl

In-game text: no

Comments:

Good graphic design * Clear rules * Well-interlocking mechanisms * Strategy and tactic are equally in demand

Compares to:

Complex worker placement games

Other editions:

Ghenos Games (it), What's Your Games (en, fr, pl)



My rating: ★★★★★



Bild 1 - Picture 1

- Zone 6 is on the right side and shows 5 tracks: three of them (Diplomacy, Military and Church) are used for our sons careers, one (Initiative) will determine the order of play for each round, while the fifth one simply shows this order for the current round.

Every player has a personal board that is the real "heart" of the game as it is used to show the MAIN actions available in each turn (one per die color) and all the possible SUBSIDIARY actions (three per die color) generated by the Helpers. On the right of the personal board we see 3 cases used to take track of the Alliances (each case shows a combination of 4 crests in 3 different types) and 1 case for the weddings (with all 6 different crests). Collecting the "Alliance" tiles corresponding to those "shields" is very important for the final scoring and we found in our test that it is practically impossible to win the game without the VP granted by those tiles. Note: to be counted a combination must have at least THREE valid tiles.

(see Picture 3)

Set-Up

SIGNORIE needs a few minutes to prepare as you have to place seven rewards, ten tasks, ten alliances (crests) and other markers on the board. Then each player takes four boys and three girls and put all the remaining meeples on his reserve on the board. Finally the turn order is randomly determined, with the First Player that receives 6 Fiorini (the money of the game), while the

following ones get 7-7-8.

The Game

A game of SIGNORIE is played in 7 ROUNDS and each of them has 3 PHASES:

- Phase 1: the First Player takes all the "Task" tiles and randomly place them on the related cases of the board. Then he replaces the eventually missing "alliance" tiles with new ones and throws all the dice, placing them, without changing the result, on the cases with the same color.
- Phase 2: the players, in turn, select ONE die and place it on their personal board, executing the related MAIN action and, if they already have helpers, the subsidiary ones. Play proceeds in turn order until all the players finish their FOURTH action or pass. Selecting "pass" may be a necessity if you wish to get a Reward and therefore you cannot collect extra "pips".
- Phase 3: the next turn new order is determined looking at the "initiative track": if some players advanced far enough on the track to get some bonus VP they move the markers accordingly. Then all verify if they remained under the 13 "pips" with their dice in order to collect the end turn reward.

The ACTION PHASE is obviously the real heart of the game: players, in turn order, take one die from the main board and put it on the case of the same color on their personal boards. If the number on the die is the same or exceeds the number on the case ("1" for yellow, "2" for red, "3" for violet, "4" for

grey and "5" for blue) there are no penalties. If the number is lower players must pay the difference with money.

Each player have the possibility to select ONE of the following 3 "main" actions:

- 1 - Hire an HELPER: take one of the available white discs and place it on one case of the column immediately preceding the one where the die was placed. If, for example, the player selected a RED dice the helper may be placed on the yellow column, and so on. The player must always pay 2 to 4 Fiorine for a Helper.
- 2 - Select a TASK: select one of the 10 tasks available, pay 1-3 meeples (girls if the task is in the top case, boys if it is in the bottom one) and use the selected bonus: then advance on one diplomatic track, take neutral "alliance" tiles, start a marriage, etc.
- 3 - Use the color related action: each colored case has a different action. With "blue" the player gains 4 steps on the diplomatic tracks, with "grey" may place one diplomatic on a town, with "violet" he gets "N" sons (throwing 1-5 white dice and taking a girl with "1-2-3" and a boy with "4-5-6"), with "red" a marriage and with "yellow" 3 Fiorini.

Once the basic action has been taken the player may also use the subsidiary actions generated by the helpers previously placed on that column. If, for example, you selected the yellow die and you have an helper on case 2 and 3 you may take 3 Fiorini (Basic action), 3 steps on the diplomatic tracks (case



Bild 2 - Picture 2

2) and a number of steps on the Initiative track to match the pips of the yellow die (case 3). For that reason it is always a good idea, at least in the first turns, to select the colors in studied sequence, in order to create an Helper with the first dice, then select "that" die to immediately use the Helper, etc. If, for example, we selected the blue die and we paid 2 Fiorini to install an Helper

on the first case of grey, then we may select the grey die in the following turn and, after having performed the basic action, receive 3 Fiorini.

During our test we noted that the most used helpers were placed in: case 1 Grey (cost 2 Fiorini and gives a bonus of 3 Fiorini); 3rd blue (cost 4 Fiorini but gives you a 1 Task point for free) and 4th yellow (cost 4 Fiorini

but allows you to advance on the Initiative track); etc.

Every time that a player receives an "advancement bonus" he may place a new "boy" in one of the three "Career" tracks of the board (Diplomatic, Military or Church) or rise one (or more) of the existing ones increasing their "value" and "rank".



Bild 3 - Picture 3



Bild 4 - Picture 4

(see Picture 4)

Every city has eight cases available: Two for each "rank" (that vary between 1 and 4). The first two "pawns" will occupy the two "rank 1" cases, the following two the Rank 2 cases, with the last two that need to be at "rank 4" to be selected. Each of the three career tracks has a value from 1 to 14: when a boy of the right "rank" is placed on a City the player receives the Alliance tile available on the right case of the City (2 to 5 VP) and a number of VP corresponding to the value of the case from which the pawn was taken. Of course that the faster you are able to "rise" your boys on their career tracks, the more VP you will collect in each mission, but things are not so easy. As you remember each personal board has three different combos of alliance tiles so you need to rise your pawns in a programmed way in order to have the right ones ready for the right missions. Let's make an example: Milano has an alliance tile (value 4) of the type that is requested both by your Military and Church combos. So you need a pawn in one of these two tracks and you have to hope that none of your opponents will arrive in Milano before you in order to take the Alliance tile (and this, believe me, happens more often than it could seem). Never forget which tiles you need for your combinations and try to always have at least one pawn on each track in order to... jump on the necessary tiles as soon as you can. The situation is somewhat easier for the girls as each player may use up to 6 differ-

ent alliance tiles for the "marriage track" of his personal board. When he selects the action marriage he takes one of his available girls and will place it in the selected City: he does not need to look at the "rank" here, but MUST pay at least a "dowry" that match the actual rank value of the City. But as each father wish for his daughter the best the players are allowed to pay up to 4 Fiorini for each marriage (to get 2 VP for each coin spent). So if you wish to send your daughter to Venezia (which has still one rank 2 case available) you may pay a minimum of 2 Fiorini (4 VP) or a maximum of 4 Fiorini (8 VP). Then you take the Alliance tiles on the left case of the City. Players will also use actions or bonuses to rise their markers on the initiative track. This track not only decides the order of the next turn but also assign some VP if the marker is placed from case 4 (2 VP) up to case 10 (9 VP).

At the end of a turn the players check the number of pips used on their dice: if the total is 13 or less they receive a REWARD. They may select between getting 3 Fiorini (sometimes is a good move on the first turn) or the special bonus offered by that tile: send a pawn to a City for free, marrying one daughter, advance on the career tracks, place an Helper, etc.

(see Picture 5 on page 43)

The last TWO cases on the right (6th and 7th turns) offer instead VP based on the number of pawns already placed in the Cities or the number of Helpers already in the personal

board. It is highly recommended to try to get those points as they can make the difference on the final score.

A few final considerations

SIGNORIE is an interesting game even if the first time things seems complex or sneaky, with all those cases and tracks on the board. But after a few turns everything fits well and very rarely you need to go back to the rules for clarifications.

To try to win a game a certain "brain" engagement is necessary as it is impossible to run in every direction hoping to get all the available objectives: in other words try to decide a "provisory" strategy since the beginning of the game, but be prepared to modify it if the games conditions suddenly change.

A first possibility, for example, could be to get all the "alliance" tiles necessities to win points on the four categories, thus alternating diplomatic/military/church actions and weddings. 8 VP per wedding means that you may easily arrive to 45-50 VP at the game's end. This strategy needs also a good investment on the Initiative track in order to get the extra VP and, more important, to be the first or second in the following turns as this will guarantee the best selection of dice. Therefore you have to initially concentrate mainly on Helpers that give you money and track advances.

Another possibility is to... get rid of the Rewards and use dice with a lot of pips. Your Helpers should then be placed on cases 3 of the yellow, red, violet and grey dice because

Continued on page 43

Continued from page 13



Bild 5 - Picture 5

every time that you use one die of that color you will advance one or more of your pawns on the different "careers" tracks and you may get 10-14 points for each of them sent to the Cities. But do not forget to use sometimes the violet die to get more and more. .. children You simply toss as many WHITE dice as you have of wives and you get a girl with each 1-2-3 and a boy with 4-5-6).

After a dozen games I still do not have a favorite strategy and I tend to initially. .. follow the situation on the board (and the available dice), but I certainly try to put an Helper on the following cases as soon as possible: #1 grey (3 Fiorini), # 2 yellow (3 cases on the careers' track), # 3 yellow (for the Initiative track) and # 3 blue (1 free Task action that you may use very often to increase the level of pips from 13 to 16 or 19 in order to use high value dice).

The players have always enough time to program their next action while the others are playing, so the game has no "paralysis", but a minimum of program is necessary to guarantee a certain flow of money (specially to hire Helpers).

Unfortunately play between experts and newbie's is not balanced, but (hopefully) even if you realize that you cannot win because you made too many mistakes you will still find enough motivations to continue play in order to get the maximum from the following turns and/or to. .. put a spoke on the others' wheels!

Most of our games between expert players were decided at the last turn and after all the calculations: no sure winner was clear before. If you like games that may challenge your brain and your capability of getting all the possible opportunities offered in each turn this is for you. ☑

Pietro Cremona



IMPRESSUM

Offenlegung nach dem Mediengesetz: Medieninhaber, Eigentümer, Verleger und Hersteller: Verein „Österreichisches Spiele Museum“, vertreten durch Obfrau Dipl. Ing. Dagmar de Cassan, Raasdorferstrasse 28, 2285 Leopoldsdorf im Marchfelde, Österreich, Telefon 02216-7000, mail-to: office@spielen.at, Internet: www.spielejournal.at - www.gamesjournal.at - Chefredakteur: Dipl. Ing. Dagmar de Cassan

Blattlinie: Die Blattlinie ist die Meinung aller Redakteure, freien Mitarbeitern und Gastautoren. Die Spiele zur Erstellung der Rezensionen stellt das Österr. Spiele Museum für die Dauer der Arbeit kostenlos zur Verfügung. Niemand erhält Sach-, Service-, Geldleistungen von den Verlagen. (Alle nicht namentlich gekennzeichneten Rezensionen zu den Spielen sind von Dagmar de Cassan)

English Edition Version 1.0

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Icon explanation



GABIS explanation on page 5