

## OLD MANUSCRIPTS AND BOOKS

**BIBLIOS****TREASURES IN A MEDIEVAL MONASTERY**

This card game arrives packed in a very nice little box (195x140x40 mm) very similar to a small old book, with an "magnetic" folder that sticks on the side keeping the box perfectly closed.

Inside the "book" we find a deck of 87 cards, 5 colored dice and a mini board (175x115 mm) that will be used to display the dice and calculate de Victory Points.

Cards belong to three different types: BOOK cards, GOLD cards and special CHURCH cards.

BOOK cards are of five categories: Monks (brown), Pigments (blue), Holy books (green), Manuscripts (orange) and Forbidden tomes (red) and each type has a corresponding die of the same color. Dice are placed on the mini-board showing "3" pips, that is the basic evaluation of each category.

Not all the cards have the same values: Brown and Blue have two cards with a "4" value, plus three cards with a "3" value and four cards with a "2" value. The other three categories have two cards with a "2" value"

and seven cards with a "1" value.

It is absolutely necessary to remember this composition all along the game because this is a "majority" game and the player with most points in a category is the only one who will score points with it.

The deck also includes 33 GOLD cards (eleven cards with value "3", eleven "2" and eleven "1") and 9 CHURCH cards. The latter are a sort of Bonus/Malus cards as they allow the player to increase or decrease the value of one or two dice on the display (two of the cards increase TWO dice 1 point; two decrease 2 dice 1 point; two let you increase ONE die 1 point; two decrease 1 die 1 point and the last card let you decide if you prefer to increase OR decrease ONE die 1 point).

Those cards are VERY IMPORTANT if used properly: of course if you get them early in the game you will use them a little randomly, but if you get them when you have enough cards in your hand to judge which are good and which are dangerous you may increase the value of your colors or decrease that of your opponents. We will see later a

HOME MADE RULE that modify a little the standard game but that gives more importance to those cards for a more exciting match.

The game may be played and enjoyed by 2 to 4 players but small adjustments to the deck should be done: with TWO players you have to discard 6 gold (2 of each type) and another 21 randomly selected cards; with THREE players you have to discard 3 gold and 12 randomly selected cards; with FOUR players you have to discard only 7 randomly selected cards. With this system you cannot be mathematically certain of which cards

**Pietro Cremona**

*A felicitous mixture of mechanisms, you need tactical abilities as well as a good memory for cards to succeed in the auctions.*

are available in each game, thus it is impossible to make a "perfect" strategy. This will probably disappoint some of us that always try to find the best strategy in each game, but with this trick BIBLIOS remain exiting to the last card of the deck.

The game is played in TWO different phases: during the first the players, in turn, distribute all the cards, while in the second a certain number of cards is auctioned and the winners are checked.

Each player, on his turn, takes and allocate ONE BY ONE a number of cards that depends of the number of players (3 cards with two players, 4 with three and 5 with four). The player take a card, look at it and decides to:

- 1- Keep the card on his hand (only one per turn) without showing it to the opponents
- 2- Put the card visible on the table, at disposal of the other players (max one card per player)
- 3- Discard the card on a face down deck (named "auction" deck: only one card per turn)

At the end of this allocation the others players, in order, select and keep one of the cards available on the table: in this way in every turn each player adds a card to his hand (unless he picks-up a Church card, which must be played immediately) and one card is placed on a face down deck.

If you select 8 or are obliged to pick-up) a special "Church card" you must use it immediately (and thus you will have a card less in your hand) to modify the value of one or two dice on the display (but see the VARIANT suggested at the end of this review).





The aim of this first phase is to collect the most valuable cards of a few colors (usually not more than 2 if you wish to have a reasonable chance to mark points) and a good number of gold cards. Of course nobody can see the cards that you secretly selected during your turn, but everybody can see what you pick up from the table and thus they may have an idea of the colors that you are searching. For that reason it is suggested to pick up also 1-2 cards of different colors in this phase, if possible, in order to confuse your opponents and to have some "change" later on the auction.

Always remember that the Brown and Blue cards have high values (4-3-2) and thus you may have a majority with only 2-3 cards (if two of them have a "4" value, for example), while it will take 4-5 cards in the other three colors (values 2-1) to have a reasonable opportunity win. In the first 2-3 test we all tried to get the Brown and Blue cards, always discarding the "1" cards without a thought, but victory usually went to the player that collected those less valuable cards (sometimes because they were the only ones available on the table), and very often he was able to win with only 3 of them. Starting with our third game things changed, of course, and we all looked carefully to each card that was displayed and picked-up from the table.

Once all the cards are allocated phase 2 (the AUCTION) starts with the First player that mix the face down deck and turn the top card face up: the player on his left side must make an offer or pass, and the other players may bid higher and higher until only one remain active and keep the auctioned card, paying the amount offered. Note that if you pass you cannot bid anymore on this card and you must wait for the following auction.

If a BOOK CARD is auctioned the players must bet and pay gold, discarding these cards face up (please note that if you cannot pay the exact amount offered you must use cards whose total exceed the amount offered: if, for example, you offered 2 gold and you only have "3" gold you must discard a 3); if a GOLD CARD is auctioned the players must bet any number of cards (discarding them face down).

Again if you win an auction for a CHURCH card you must immediately take the related action and modify the value of the colored dice.

When the last card is auctioned all the players lay their cards down on the table, divided per color: the player with the highest total of points in a color wins and take the corresponding die from the display. Once all

the categories are assigned players total the point showed by their dice and the highest total win the game. In case of a tie the player with highest ranking card wins (each card in each color is ranked from "A" to "1")

To really enjoy BIBLIOS you need a couple of test games because it is not easy to understand immediately how to "act" during the first phase (distribution) and players initially tend to "hunt" for the highest value cards forgetting the money ... or concentrate on the money leaving aside the less valuable cards.

Both are mistakes: if you do not concentrate in 2-3 colors (at most) you risk to lose all the majorities at the end of the game. So as soon as you understand that someone else is interested in a color and that you cannot fight him ... do not take those cards, even if they have a "4" or "3" value. It is better to take some extra Gold cards and/or concentrate on other colors.

And if you are going for Gold do not forget that having a lot of "3" cards may be as expensive as having a good mixture of "1", "2" and "3" (remember? no change is possible: if you need to pay "1" and you only have "3" cards you must pay a "3"). A good hand before the auction phase should have 2-3 cards in two colors, a couple of spare cards to use to buy some extra gold and 5-6 gold cards of different values.

During the auction you have to try to rise the bidding in colors that you know that certainly interest a player (because he collected some of them during the allocation phase) in order to oblige him to bid higher and thus expend more Gold than necessary. When there are only 2-3 cards left to be auctioned remember that Gold does not give Victory Points, so you may bet very high to get an extra card or two.

If possible try to have in hand a couple of cards of a third color: in some of our test a player was able to win Victory Point with just 2 cards of a color that the other players discarded or used to bid for Gold.

In summary BIBLIOS is a very fast and tense game: easy to learn and to teach, hard to play well as you need some tactical skills together with good memory (at least for the colors that you fighting for). Suggested for families and for standard players. Experienced players may try it a few times but they will surely pass to more complex games.

## VARIANT FOR CHURCH CARDS

Playing BIBLIOS if ALL the available Church cards are in the auction deck should mean to increase the pleasure of the game as the "fight" for those cards will be much bitter and the dice modifications more frequent. Thus the idea to put all those cards in the auction deck.

Unfortunately you never know how many Church cards are available (as you remember at the beginning of each game a certain number of cards is randomly discarded) so it is not suggested to select them BEFORE the game. The only easy way to reach this goal is to play normally Phase 1 without assigning the Church cards: if a player picks up one of them he simply put it (face down) on the auction deck and take another card from the deck.

This will also solve the problem of some players having less card in hand (because they got one or more Church cards) and the auction will be much bitter, at least judging from our test: by consequence also the allocation phase becomes harder, as players now need some extra Gold cards for the following auctions. With this modification also expert players may come back to the game for a quick and bitter game before the main dish of the evening. ☑

Pietro Cremona

## INFORMATION

**Designer:** Steve Finn

**Artist:** David Palumbo

**Price:** ca. 20 Euro

**Publisher:** iello 2011

[www.iello.fr](http://www.iello.fr)

PLAYERS:  
2-4

AGE:  
10+

TIME:  
30+

## EVALUATION

Auction game on majorities  
With friends  
Version: en  
Rules: en fr  
In-game text: no

### Comments:

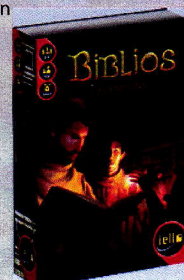
Random preparation of card mix  
This allows no fixed optimum strategy  
Good mix of mechanisms

### Compares to:

Abtei der Rätsel, Der Name der Rose  
for topic, all auction games on majorities for mechanisms

### Other editions:

French edition



My rating:  
★★★★★