

Title: Mechanics

Description: Rajas of the Ganges is a worker placement game in which players must accumulate prestige and wealth in order to trigger the end of the game and be declared the winner. Each of these two elements are accumulated on a track that progresses in opposite directions, so that the game will end when one of the players manages to have their markers cross on the board. Most of the actions will be aimed at obtaining resources, represented by dice, to later use them in other actions, the main one being building, which will allow us to place tiles with markets (providing coins) and buildings (providing prestige) on our personal board. On this board, in addition, a series of rewards can be activated if we manage to connect them to our palace (in one of the squares) through the paths shown on the previous tiles.

Title: Mechanics

Subtitle: Basic Concepts

Description: Let's start with the Main Board:

List:

- # Within the board we find two tracks, the prestige points track (which starts in the lower right corner and progresses clockwise) and the money track (which starts in the lower right corner and progresses counter-clockwise). In both tracks we find certain bonuses, among which is the bonus for obtaining new workers.

- # In the upper left area we find the karma track (which we will talk about later), with four rows.

- # On the right side we find the prestige tracks for building the four types of buildings, with three columns each.

- # In the left area we find the palace, with various actions.

- # In the central area we find the quarry, the market and the port, with more actions available.

- # Finally, surrounding the three previous sections we find the river, made up of a series of boxes with various benefits each.

On the money track, the Money Markers will progress. These markers will fluctuate on this track, since money will be one of the resources to be managed during the game. Upon reaching a bonus space, the player will receive the benefit instantly.

On the prestige track, the Prestige Markers will progress clockwise. Prestige points, unlike money, are automatically consolidated and cannot be lost in any way during the game. Upon reaching a bonus space, the player will receive the benefit instantly.

Since on the money track the marker can reach a certain position and then move back, there are benefit markers that determine which is the next space with a benefit that has not yet been reached. The main mechanic of the game will be the placement of Workers. Each player will have a series of pawns (3 initially) that can be placed in various actions on the board. These actions can show a cost consisting of money or resources, which must be delivered just at the moment of placing the pawn. The benefits of the action will be received instantly.

Resources are represented by 6-sided dice (with values from 1 to 6) and four colours. These resources will basically be used to feed certain actions and build tiles, with the value of each of these dice being very important, as there will be actions that require offering or exceeding a specific value and/or a specific colour. Each time a player obtains a resource, he/she must roll the corresponding die to assign it a value.

The number of resources that a player can store will be limited by the capacity of his/her Statue of the Goddess Kali, which can hold a die in each of its arms. The statue has two sides, one with two more spaces than the other. If a player receives more resources than he/she can store, he/she must return the excess to the reserve.

The tiles contain the roads and buildings that we can establish in our province. These tiles are separated into 12 piles (3 types of tiles in the 4 colours), so that there will always be 12 available to acquire. These tiles show paths that can connect 2, 3 or all 4 sides, an acquisition cost in the upper left corner (a die of the color associated with the tile with a numerical value). These tiles will show two types of elements:

List:

Markets: which provide coins and have an associated commodity (tea, silks or spices)

Buildings: which are one of the four existing types and which provide prestige points depending on the player's level in that type of building.

Marker Cubes will therefore be used primarily to indicate the level of prestige a player obtains by placing a tile with one or more buildings. A fifth cube is left over and will be used to mark the karma level. This concept will allow us to alter the value of the resource dice, since, for one karma point (up to 3 can be stored), we can flip a die to its opposite side (which added to the current one is 7).

The tiles will be placed on the Province Board that each player will have in their playing area.

These boards show 16 squares arranged in 4 rows and 5 columns (the 3 squares in the upper corners are cut out, and the central squares in the first and last row are blocked off). The first one shows the player's palace, from which three paths start to which the tiles must connect. And the one in the bottom row shows a series of bonuses, which are also present on the edge of the board. The basic rule when placing a tile is that it must be connected by a path to the palace (even if there are paths that are blocked). Additionally, when we manage to connect one of the bonuses to the castle, we will receive the benefit immediately.

These benefits can be increased thanks to Production Tokens, in four colors. Whenever we receive one of these tokens, we will place it on one of the spaces on the board, although they will not be activated retroactively, that is, if the space is adjacent to a square with a tile already placed, we cannot overlap the previous benefit with the new one and receive it. That space will no longer be available for bonuses.

Finally, each player will have a Boat that will move along the Ganges. The river displays a series of stages with various benefits. When a player advances along the river, he will receive the benefit of the space where his movement ends. With the exception of the starting space and the ending space, only one boat can remain on a space, so when progressing, occupied spaces will not be taken into account when spending advancement points (they will be skipped).

This is enough for us.

Title: Mechanics

Subtitle: Game Setup

Description: List:

The board is laid out with the side corresponding to the number of players.

In 3-player games, tiles are placed on the first building space and the last space in the first row of the river action.

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A general reserve is formed with the resource dice.

12 stacks of tiles are formed, separating them by color and type. The first tile in each stack is revealed.

Each player chooses a color and receives 6 workers, a province board, a ship, a statue of the goddess Kali, a profit marker, a money marker, a prestige marker, and five cubes.

The board is placed in the player's area.

The statue of the goddess Kali is placed on the side that does not show spaces in the center.

3 of the workers are placed on the marked spaces on the main board.

The profit marker is placed face up on the first marked space on the money track.

The boat is placed on the river exit space.

4 cubes are placed on the first row of each building track.

The remaining cube is placed on the second row starting from the bottom of the karma track.

The prestige marker on the first space on the prestige track.

The starting player is determined and the elephant is given to him. His money marker is placed on the value 3 space. The other players place their marker one space ahead of the player to his left.

Each player takes 4 dice (one of each color), rolls them, and places them on his statue of the goddess Kali.

The production tiles are shuffled and each player is dealt a brown one (which they must place on one of the brown spaces on their board). The remaining tiles are placed face up on the various buildings on the main board.

Now we can begin!

Title: Mechanics

Subtitle: Gameplay

Description: A game of Rajas of the Ganges consists of an indeterminate number of rounds until the end condition is met.

In each round, players take turns (starting with the starting player and continuing clockwise) in which they simply place one of their available workers on a free action on the board. If the action has a cost in resources or money, the player must be able to bear that cost in order to execute the action.

The available actions are:

List:

Quarry: Spaces in this area allow building tiles. The player must pay the money indicated on the space in addition to any resource dice whose sum equals or exceeds the value indicated on the tile he wishes to build. After this, he takes the tile and legally places it on his province board (connecting it to the palace by some path), receiving the benefits of the symbols that connect to the palace. If the tile shows markets, the player receives the money indicated on them. If the tile shows buildings, the player receives for each one as many victory points as indicated by his marker on that type of building on the main board.

Market: these are actions that provide money. There are two types:

Fixed Merchandise: a resource of any color is returned and as many markets of the corresponding type built in the province are activated as the value of the resource used (all markets will be activated if the value is equal to or greater than the number of markets).

Miscellaneous Merchandise: up to 3 markets are activated, one of each type of merchandise, but without the need to use any resources.

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Miscellaneous Merchandise: up to 3 markets are activated, one of each type of merchandise, but without the need to use any resources.

Port: Activated by paying the cost in coins and returning a resource with a value between 1 and 3 of any color. The player will advance his ship as many spaces as he wishes (at least one and maximum the value of the die given) and will receive the benefit indicated on the space where he stopped his movement. Occupied spaces are not taken into account when using advancement points (they are skipped)

Palace:

Grand Mogul: for a resource value of 1 of any color, you gain 2 prestige points and become the starting player in the next round (take the elephant marker).

Dancer: for a resource value of 2 of any color, you gain 2 resources of the color you choose (which you roll and place on your statue) and 1 bonus tile that you place on the board.

Yogi: for a resource value of 3 of any color, you gain 2 karma points and 1 resource of any color.

Raja Man Singh: for a resource value of 4 of any color, you gain an advancement in one type of building and 2 coins.

Master Builder: for a resource value of 5, you can build one of the available tiles on top of another one already on the board, paying only the difference between the value of the new tile and the one that will be overlapped in resources of the color of the new tile (the color of the overlapping tile is

irrelevant). They cannot be taken offline to tiles on the board, and the bonuses of a space are not received a second time.

The Portuguese: for a resource of value 6, you can advance exactly 6 spaces on the river, receiving the benefit of the last space. If there are less than 6 spaces left to reach the last space, this action cannot be used.

Great Mogul: for a resource of value 1 of any color, you can gain 2 prestige points and be the starting player in the next round (you take the elephant marker).

Dancer: for a resource of value 2 of any color, you provide 2 resources of the color you choose (which you roll and place on your statue) and 1 bonus tile that you place on the board.

Yogi: for a resource of value 3 of any color, you provide 2 karma points and 1 resource of any color.

Raja Man Singh: for a resource of value 4 of any color, you provide an advance in one type of building and 2 coins.

Master Builder: for a resource value of 5, you can build a tile from the available ones on top of another one already on the board, paying only the difference between the value of the new tile and the one to be overlapped in resources of the color of the new tile (the color of the overlapping tile is irrelevant). You cannot leave tiles on the board without connection, and you do not receive the bonuses of a space a second time.

The Portuguese: for a resource value of 6, you can advance exactly 6 spaces on the river, receiving the benefit of the last space. If there are less than 6 spaces left to reach the last space, this action cannot be used.

Balconies: for a resource of blue/orange/violet/green, you receive 2 resources of orange/violet/green/blue.

Terrace: the player receives a resource of the corresponding color.

Outdoor Terrace: the player receives 2 coins and can re-roll as many dice as he wants that are in his reserve.

The round ends when all players have used all their pawns. If there are players with fewer pawns, for each turn they would have to take in the round to have the same number as everyone else, they will draw a bonus tile which they will place on their board. After this, the players take back their pawns and a new round begins.

Title: Mechanics

Subtitle: End of the Game

Description: The final round of the game is triggered when a player manages to have his prestige and money markers cross each other during his turn. The round is completed so that all players have had the same number of turns.

If only one player has managed to cross his markers, he is the winner. If several players achieve this milestone, the winner is the one who has managed to separate him from the money marker by the greatest number of prestige points. If the tie remains, the winner is the one who managed to cross his markers first.

Title: Mechanics

Subtitle: Variants

Description: List:

Simplified Game: The game is played with the reverse side of the province boards and the Kali goddess board (with 2 more spaces for resources) and only the white bonus tiles are used (which provide immediate benefits when drawn and then discarded later). Players can only choose to get 2 additional workers (when they get the fifth, the sixth one that is still on the board is returned to the box).

Ganga Module: allows you to vary the benefits of the river. The 8 river tiles are mixed and a die is rolled several times to replace the squares on the board with the tokens. For each roll, you count how many free squares there are from the initial square or the last covered square. The last river

space cannot be covered. When a tile can no longer be placed because it is out of range, it and the remaining ones are returned to the box.

Title: Personal Opinion

Description: Today we are going to analyze the game presented by the Brand couple at the Essen Fair in 2017. One of the games that was announced the earliest and about which we began to receive information with some consistency (not like many others that a few days before the beginning of the fair we only knew the name). A game that, curiously, uses the same setting as Agra (here is its long review), one of the titles that raised the most expectations before, during and after that same fair. We won't say that India was the hot topic, but the coincidence is, at the very least, striking. Let's see how it behaves on the table.

The Brand brothers touched the sky with a great design like The Villa (here is their long review) and, until last year, they had not managed to come close to that success in terms of impact and quality. It was not until 2016 when they managed to return to the covers of the gaming media with their particular series of Escape Rooms, Exit, winning the Spiel des Jahres and launching quite a few scenarios. In 2017 they returned to the field of medium-weight Eurogames with an apparently very conventional design.

In Rajas of the Ganges we seek to be the Raja or Rani with the greatest wealth and prestige. To do so we will have to develop the province that surrounds our palace. How? Through a main mechanic of placing workers with which we will obtain resources with which to obtain tiles that will contain the roads, markets and buildings that will shape our domains. It sounds unmotivating, right?

I'm not going to tell you. Rajas of the Ganges doesn't invent gunpowder, but it works well enough to make every game we play quite enjoyable. And this is mainly due to one factor that I'll talk about later. But first let's focus on the mechanics.

The placement of workers couldn't be more standard. Each player has a series of pawns that they will place in alternating turns on the different action spaces, receiving the associated benefit immediately and leaving the action blocked until the end of the round. The most notable thing in this aspect is that the action spaces have variable costs, and there may be cases where there are actions that, even if available, we cannot activate because we don't have the necessary elements in our personal reserve.

On the other hand, we have a placement of tiles that draws directly from the king of kings in this genre, Carcassonne (here is its long review). Players must shape their province by placing tiles that will show a series of roads and, around these, markets and buildings, which will provide us with money and prestige. The only rule that must be followed is that the paths on the tiles must be connected to the palace by some route, although cutting paths is allowed (not respecting the drawings), as long as there is an alternative route to reach the tile. This is something we already saw in Isle of Skye (here is its long review) and it will drive those who consider what Alexander Pfister did in the game on the Scottish island to be sacrilege crazy.

These two central mechanics dominate the development of Rajas of the Ganges, which, as we have already said, do not seem particularly striking at first glance. However, the design includes two details that give it a certain freshness. The first of these is the shape given to the resources, with dice instead of the classic cubes or tokens. These dice will obviously be rolled to determine their value (between 1 and 6), restricting their possibilities. These resources will have two main purposes. The first will be to feed some of the actions. Some will ask for specific values (or an acceptable range), while others will require a specific color from the four possible.

Obviously, having given the dice, chance makes an important appearance, since, if we want to execute any of the actions that require a specific value and the fates refuse to grant it to us, we can

pray as much as we know that it will be impossible for us to activate said actions. Fortunately, by being so direct, we don't particularly notice the setbacks of the goddess of fortune, since the important end for the resources will be the purchase of tiles. And in this case, exact values are not required, our only concern being to reach the minimum value indicated on the tile we are looking for.

The second detail, and perhaps the most important, is the trigger for the end of the game. Rajas of the Ganges is presented to us as a race to be the first to accumulate enough prestige and money so that the markers on both tracks cross, since each one, the prestige track and the money track, progress in opposite directions. To give it some more flavor, money is also a resource, so it will be a fluctuating track, with the markers advancing and retreating in each round, while the prestige points are consolidated and progress can only be made in one direction.

To prevent players from finding it particularly attractive to enhance only one of the two tracks, certain aspects have been modulated that "force" players to have a relatively balanced development. In other words, I think it is difficult for a player to achieve victory only by accumulating money or fame. Firstly, because money is vital to activate the main actions, which would automatically rule out the strategy of accumulating mainly prestige points. But the opposite is true, since prestige points have a double value. If you look at the tracks, the width of a prestige point square occupies exactly 2 squares of the money track. Thus, a victory point is equivalent to 2 coins when looking for the crossing of the markers. The last addition to encourage development on both tracks is the presence of incentives for reaching certain squares, especially obtaining new workers. Falling behind in this aspect can be fatal.

Thus, the game becomes an exercise in optimization to see who is able to convert their actions and resources into a greater amount of prestige points and coins. This is where the differential element comes in, in addition to the order in which the tiles appear. I am referring to the river track, which works as a kind of string of fairly powerful bonuses that will allow players to make certain accelerations, as well as allowing them to obtain one of the additional workers during the game. In addition, these are actions that require low values to make use of those dice that are left behind. You have to be careful because the temptation to go all out for that worker thanks to the Portuguese action can cause us to leave important bonuses behind.

It is also very interesting to use the bonus tokens that we acquire when filling the edge of our province board, since they will determine, to a certain extent, the tiles that we will acquire, beyond looking for specific markets and buildings. Particularly important are the scoring bonus tiles (the brown ones), as they often provide a significant injection of prestige points. In fact, it is quite common for the game to end thanks to the connection of some of these bonuses.

As a final interesting detail to highlight, the use of karma as an element to alleviate the influence of chance. With these points we can rotate the dice to the parallel side of the current value. It may seem insufficient, but when one considers that the tiles whose value is higher than 6 necessarily require 2 dice, it is easy to get the combination of dice needed. Also very interesting is the use of actions that provide 2 resources in exchange for one, since both dice are rolled and received of the same color, so it is more than likely to be able to acquire at least one of the available tiles.

Probably the greatest virtue of the design is its great pace of play, since, unlike most games with placement of workers and/or tiles, maintenance is usually relatively cumbersome. But in this case the only thing to do at the end of the round is to remove the pawns and start over. There is no time to breathe.

It is also necessary to point out that, due to the relative simplicity of the objective and the way to achieve it, some players may find the pattern of action somewhat repetitive, depending on the situation on the board (available tiles, occupied spaces, resources in the personal reserve, etc.) the

decision making. But, in essence, we will spend almost an hour placing workers to obtain resources to use to get tiles. The fun of the game will be to obtain those that interest us the most in the most effective way possible to open a gap.

If you read the manual, you will see that the basic game is explained first and then the additional modules are included. I consider it essential to play directly with the first module that includes the rest of the bonus tiles and all the workers. The "basic" mode for a first game with inexperienced players may not be bad to relax the conceptual load a bit. But with a minimum background, the best thing to do is to play directly with the first module that completes the design.

It is inevitable to compare the game we are dealing with today with the most famous design by the Brand brothers. Personally, I prefer The Village, which I think is a game with greater depth and alternatives (as well as greater stress). However, as both are medium-weight, The Village has the problem that, in the first game, the explanation involves too many concepts and some are relatively confusing, such as what may seem like a placement of workers (when it is not), and the functioning of each area of the village. Rajas of the Ganges is much more to the point, although this implies less depth. For players who have been in the hobby for years and have a significant background, Rajas of the Ganges will not break any molds. But I do think it is a very good recommendation for those who are not yet fed up with so many worker placement games.

Scalability is the usual in this type of game. The board is adjusted, allowing a greater or lesser amount of actions depending on the participants. It is true that with two players there is a little less tension since the tiles available are the same and there are fewer suitors, so the margin for managing resources is widened. But the tension of the race is the same. The only bad thing is that, with two players, if one player gains enough of an advantage, it is possible that the rest of the game will be less interesting since it is difficult for the rival to catch up with him.

Replayability may be, perhaps, its biggest weak point. And it is still a game with not too many avenues to explore and in a few games it will be clear how to act, being the responsibility of the players to maintain the competitive tension, evaluating the available options (which are not many) and choosing the appropriate actions at each moment. Fortunately, the great pace of the game already mentioned favors the exit to the table, since it is a pleasant placement of workers and in a little less than an hour the game is finished.

As for production, HUCH & friends! offers us standard qualities, where the most notable thing is the large number of translucent dice in unusual colours such as violet, orange, turquoise blue, although, in my case, there are dice that are not completely well formed, showing certain imperfections that, although they do not affect the game experience, denote a lack of care in production. The wooden elements are standard, highlighting the workers' pawns with an original shape (with turban and slippers). The cardboard used in boards and tiles is also of a standard thickness, with adequate rigidity and can be easily punched out without any problems. Finally, the rules are structured in a somewhat confusing way, and important concepts such as receiving the benefits when placing a tile are somewhat hidden. With careful reading, nothing should escape us, but it is one of those manuals in which solving a specific doubt is not as simple as it might seem because it is difficult to find the specific section where the concept in question is referred to.

In the visual section, we have Mr. Lohausen again at the brushes in a somewhat overloaded work. When one sees photos of the game displayed on the table, it is impossible not to squint to distinguish the different elements. It is true that during the game the design is relatively clear and the symbology hardly leaves room for doubt. But it is not pleasing to the eye. Far from the harmony of The Villa or The Voyages of Marco Polo.

And we are closing. Rajas of the Ganges is a good medium-weight placement of workers and tiles that stands out for its peculiar system of game ending (getting two tracks that progress in opposite directions to cross as soon as possible), the use of dice as resources and that their value modulates the weight of the same and, above all, a spectacular game pace that hardly leaves time to breathe. It perfectly fulfills its function and the games are very pleasant. Perhaps the only notable problem with the design is that it can be relatively repetitive and that when a player gains an advantage it is difficult to snatch victory from him. But as I said, very entertaining and as a medium weight it does its job perfectly.