

Review 1:

Appearance

The front of the box shows a beautiful landscape and river with a deity holding dice and is full of colour and detail. The back of the box shows a 2 player game in progress showcasing the majority of the components and gives a description of the theme of the game. The game has a good insert which holds the components well and makes setup a lot quicker. The player boards are well laid out but a little bland until you lay tiles on them during the game. The tiles are more detailed with various spices and buildings, along with a large number and colour to denote what they require to be built. The wooden coloured player components are easy to distinguish from one another and include some shaped meeples along with some bland cubes. The main board is a particular highlight of the components, it is very colourful and detailed and doesn't look overwhelming. Finally the dice are very good quality in bright colours with a nice weight to them.

Gameplay

The aim of the game is to make your fame and wealth track markers intersect one another, these run in parallel around the board in opposite directions. When a player's 2 markers intersect the end of the game is triggered, with the player with the biggest difference between the 2 markers winning if multiple player's tokens intersected. Each turn players will place workers, pay any costs associated with the spot and carry out the action listed. These costs vary from moving back on the money track to paying a specific colour or numbered dice. Players will continue to place workers until all workers have been placed and the board will then reset with players collecting back all their workers and the next round can begin as long as the end game hasn't been triggered.

There are 4 main different worker placement areas: the quarry, market place, palace and harbour. Using the quarry worker area you can build a province tile into your personal province. There are 12 different province tiles on offer at any time, 3 for each different coloured dice. You must pay the listed money cost when placing your worker along with matching coloured dice of equal to or greater pip value than the tile you are acquiring. You must place these tiles with a direct path back to your starting palace on your province. You gain any yields that you connect to on the edge of your province and receive the money from any markets on the tile. You also receive fame for any buildings on the tile based on your position on that buildings scroll track on the main board, so between 2 and 4 fame. There are various actions and bonuses on the board that allow you to move up on the 4 building scroll tracks.

The market worker area allows you to collect income from the markets in your province, either from the same type of market or different ones. When activating the same market you must pay a dice and can only activate as many markets as the pip value of the dice. The palace has 3 main areas the terrace, balconies and the chamber. In the terrace and balconies you can either collect a specific coloured dice of your choice or trade one coloured dice for 2 of a different coloured dice. Whenever you collect dice you roll them

and place them onto your Kali statue if you have room. You can always spend karma (if you have it) to flip a dice when you need to pay a cost. In the chambers you can spend a dice of a specific number to activate one of the characters for a specific action. These include gaining dice, karma, scroll movement, taking first player and building over province tiles in your area.

In the harbour you can move your boat 1 to 3 spaces on the river and take the listed bonus on the space you end your movement on. The amount of spaces you move depends on the value of the dice spent. Boats cannot be on the same space and you simply skip spaces opponents boats are present on. The bonuses are very similar to the other actions on the board but towards the end reward dice, money or fame based on a condition such as number of karma, scroll movement or markets built in your province. You start the game with 3 workers but can unlock up to 3 more from the fame, money and river tracks when your corresponding marker passes them. Play continues until the end of the game when one player's score markers intersect. Play continues until every player has played an even number of turns and then the winner is determined. The turns flow very naturally in this game with simple to resolve actions and costs to pay. The game plays 2 to 4 players and an unofficial solo automa is also available on bgg.

Theme and Game Length

The game has a good theme, different to many other Euro games of this weight but it doesn't really come through in the actions you are performing. Why are you trying to get wealth and fame to meet, who are these characters and why does the river give the bonuses it does. Gaining workers makes slightly more sense as when you get more famous on the 3 tracks more people are willing to work for your province. The game doesn't drag at all and is actually quite fast for the level of decisions offered. The game scales well with 2 different sizes of the board to tighten up the worker placement spots. The game takes about 20 minutes per player which is very good considering the weight of decisions you make.

Strategy

There are two main ways to score points in this game, wealth and fame. It is very hard to just work on just one of these and win so over the course of the game you will be earning both. Players will differ in their overall strategy but there is only the one way to win, intersecting your markers. A focus you must have is to get more workers as quickly as possible. The two workers that can be unlocked on the wealth and fame tracks are the easiest to obtain. The wealth track also offers multiple other bonuses so is the track you should target at the start of the game. If other players have more workers than you for too long you have no chance of winning with the yield tiles offering too little in compensation for the worker placement actions they are taking.

Each fame is worth 2 money so this obviously looks more appealing to try and race up but without the track bonuses this shouldn't be an early game focus. Instead you should look to increase your scrolls for the 4 building types. If you specialise in one or two

building types other players may build tiles with that building type to prevent you from building it. Also with 4 different building types the tiles that may come out may not be the ones you get extra fame for so it's probably best to spread your scroll movement out. A space that you cannot underestimate is the space to activate up to 3 different markets in your province. You want to make sure to build 3 different high value markets as soon as possible to take advantage of this space. This spot (or spots in the 3/4 player games) is usually the first spot players go to at the start of each round from the mid game onwards. It costs no dice and can yield anywhere from 3 to 9 money which is better than any other spot due to having no costs. Activating multiple markets of the same type can also be good but requires a lot of the same market to be built which depends a lot of the tiles that come out.

Many of the spots cost dice of various values with every value having a potential good use. If you get lots of high value dice you should be using these to build tiles, trying not to waste too much pip value. The lower value dice can be used for some of the characters or more likely the river. The river is sort of split into two halves by your unlockable worker with the first half offering small bonuses like dice, scroll movement and fame. The later half offers powerful one off bonuses like activating multiple markets or gaining fame and money based on a condition. It is perfectly viable to skip most of the early bonuses and plan to maximise these powerful one off bonuses instead. With so many spots costing dice you always want to make sure you don't run out. You should never take the terrace actions to gain one dice as it is so inefficient and should instead look to use bonuses to acquire dice or trade one dice for two. In the higher player count games you also want to make sure you are not 3rd or 4th in turn order for long due to some worker placement spots being clearly better than others and you can really fall behind if you are not careful.

There have been some runaway leader problems in the games that I have played of this. During the mid game it became obvious who was going to win generally because of the market setup they had on their board. This meant one worker could gain them 6 – 12 money with each action which was much stronger than the other players. Newer players will struggle with experienced players with both tracks to manage and not being able to distinguish which worker placement spots are better than others. The game has modest replayability as you are aiming to do the same thing each time and the way the tiles come out and what dice values you get will change each game. The game also comes with several modules which significantly help replayability and make the game better in my opinion with ways to customise your province. The game can end very suddenly and can be difficult to plan for so you need to be building towards the end of the game constantly.

Accessibility

The game is light to medium weight with simple to perform and resolve actions but some setup on your province tile required to do well. There is also some consideration needed for when and where to place your workers to maximise their benefits. The game is very easy to teach with obvious iconography and the main board layout also helps. The

rulebook is excellent, very clearly laid out rules with multiple examples and text descriptions of each worker placement spot. The game takes up a decent amount of table space with each player's province, the main board and places for tiles and dice.

Final Thoughts

Rajas of the Ganges is a good next step worker placement Euro game with simple to understand rules and great components. The game has good flow to it with your points increasing steadily before exploding towards the end. One of my main problems is the market space on the main board especially the activate 3 different ones in your province. This is way too strong due to having no cost and makes first player way too powerful in this game with players needing to shift it multiple rounds in a row to mitigate this. I really like the scoring in this game it's fairly unique and offers different considerations unlike normal Euro style games. I also like the fact that all values of dice have uses in this game so even though low numbers aren't good for building you can use them on characters and the river or to trade. A solid light to medium weight game.

Review 2:

Overview:

Power is where fame and wealth intersect. In "Rajas of the Ganges" [Rajas] you'll play the part of one of the minor nobles along the Ganges river seeking your fortune. By sending your representatives to build your estates, hobnob at the high mogul's palace, and trade on the Ganges River, you'll race to be the first to cement your power. Of course a little help from karma never hurts...

Hardware:

Rajas has mechanics present in other games, but what makes it unusual is the combination of mechanics present. This is reflected in the game's unusual collection of bits, including 48 dice (12 each of different colors). The meeples are pretty standard wooden fare but the art printed on the various boards helps to fuel the theme.

Gameplay:

It would have been easy for Rajas to degenerate into a much-maligned point salad of simple worker placement. Indeed, there are probably some players out there who would argue that's what it really is anyway. There were two things about Rajas that for me that pulled it ahead of the just-another-sad-Euro crowd: dice manipulation, and the scoring tracks.

Certain actions taken through Rajas will require dice showing certain numbers or dice of certain colors. It's not quite currency as there is a "money" track, but thematically I think of the dice as the ups-and-downs involved in the pursuit of fortune and glory. Among the actions you can take are turning in individual dice for two dice of a different color, or placing workers to gain individual dice if you're out of options and running out of dice. Running out of dice will severely handicap you so it always pays to think ahead as far as you can.

What's that you say? Dice hate you? In Rajas, having low dice is an advantage if you want to use them to sail the Ganges. And if you need a 6 when you rolled a 1, the "Karma" mechanic allows you to flip a die to its opposite side as you go to pay for an action. All in all, Rajas is far more skill based than the presence of dice might suggest.

Finally there's the scoring. This element of Rajas stands out perhaps more than any other. Two tracks surrounding the board represent wealth, which is fairly mercurial but easier to get (and must be spent on certain actions along the way), and fame, which is not as easy to get but can not be lost once it is acquired. The ultimate goal is to make the tracks pass each other as they move in opposite directions.

The goal is simple but as you may have already figured out, the gameplay is not. Besides sending representatives to the high mogul's palace you will also be building

your own estate on a separate board with an eye towards the wealth and fame that those buildings can bring.

Pros:

The dice and scoring tracks make for a rather unusual, if not unique, game overall.

If you're a fan of worker placement-style Euros, you'll probably slide right into Rajas quite comfortably.

Rajas does not rely heavily on text outside of the rulebook. That can help when trying to teach someone the game who isn't fluent in English.

Cons:

There can be something of a point-salad feel.

The limited number of actions you can take out of all the available actions in a turn can lead to some pretty severe analysis paralysis.

There can be a sense that the game is decided quite early when one player breaks out far ahead of the others. This tends to be less of a problem in 3-4 player games, though it can happen in any player count.

Final Thoughts:

Rajas of the Ganges is in some ways a natural evolution of the worker placement genre. It adds a layer of complexity when compared to some older worker placement games which I happen to like. It's now available for play at Yucata.de and I definitely recommend giving it a try.