

HUGO KASTNER RECOMMENDS

THE HIGH KINGS OF TARA

Project Kells

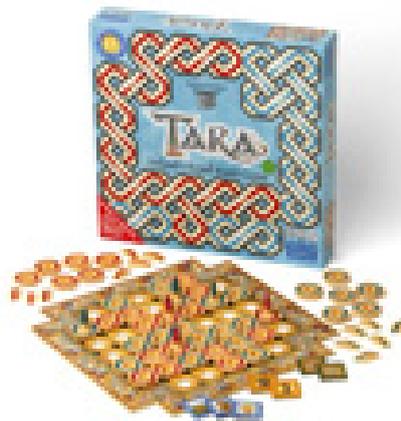
Dear readers! A game from Ireland – somewhat incongruous in our known games universe, dominated by a few publishers from Middle and Western Europe. What an elegant and challenging idea on top of that! In the middle of this decade a version was published under the name “Project Kells” combining “High Kings of Tara” that was already published in 1998 as well as the more simple of the two more current versions of “Sacred Hills”. Designer Murray Heasman, a trained archaeologist, tries to trace the fascinating history of the Irish High Kings. The project was expanded by and by with another game, called “Poisoned Chalice” as well as with double variations of earlier editions, which promise a special treat for experienced strategy players. If you want to experience interactively the World of the Irish High Kings, I do recommend to check out the excellent home page of Tailten Games with their so called “animated rules”. You will be rewarded with an outstanding strategy game with a historical background that lets you enter the depths of Celtic culture step by step. [adapted from WIN Issue July 2005] But you need not travel to Ireland to get acquainted with the game, a visit in the Austrian Games Museum in Leopoldsdorf is sufficient

Website: www.spielen.at

The history of the ring fortresses of Tara, many centuries old, is interlaced with strategic game elements. I have stood a few times myself reverently in the focal point of this circular hill fort and have mused on the puzzling significance of these constructs. Many aspects concerning the time of the Irish High kings must be deemed speculation, much is mirrored in Celtic Continental Europe, but Murray Heasman's game illustrations have managed for the first time to project the topography of the Tara landscape into the small and at the same time boundless world of board games. The centuries seem to have shrunk into a single moment. The board is framed by the no less impressive

knot patterns from the „Book of Kells“, the probably oldest gospel script (7th to 8th century) that each year fascinates hundred thousands of visitors in the Trinity College of Dublin. This paramount example of medieval illumination was probably created in the Monastery of Iona on the West Coast of Scotland and has found a new home in the heart of the Irish capital by many roundabout paths. The captions in this book are extremely elaborately executed and decorated with extreme fine detail. The capital letters are partly formed from very tiny patterns in luminous colours, often supplemented with gold. Very typical are the spiral and knot patterns that cannot be explained even today, as well as ornamental images of men and animals. But back to our game! Especially these ornaments from the Kells gospels not only decorate the frame of the board and the box cover, they are mirrored in the pattern that forms during the game on the 45 hills of the board. Tara and Kells are joined by these traditional Celtic Knot ornaments in an inimitably beautiful way. [adapted from: Win Issue July 2005]

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RECOMMENDATION #53

Designer: Murray Heasman

Price: € 35,00

Year: 1998/1999 (inkl. Sacred Hill / Poisoned Chalice)

Publisher: Tailten Games

www.tailtengames.com

PLAYERS
3-5

AGE
8+

TIME
60+

● Strategy ● Info+ ● Luck

All variants are empowered by tactical and strategic elements, which place circular hill forts in a first phase in a way that later on kingdoms as big as possible can be formed. On the other hand, a sufficiently high number of hills should remain occupied by those hill forts, so that the opponent is forced to besiege them and finally conquer them. Winning condition in this Irish network game in the end favour the player who owns fewer kingdoms. But take care! In case of a tie the territorial advantages can decide the outcome of the game. Each easily handed over hill fort can cost you dearly in this phase.

Hugos EXPERT TIP

Be sure to make your first steps into the world of the Irish High Kings with the assistance of the animated rules on the home page of the publisher. Game and thought patterns are so much easier to grasp this way than by studying the rule book. Do concentrate first on one of the many game variants, maybe on „Poisoned Chalice“. I especially recommend to try out any of Murray Heasman's ideas first with the help of the variant “Kingdoms” which is understood intuitively and much easier than the complex play on knots.

Hugos FLASHLIGHT

This Irish Project has the depth for a classic game, due to the wealth of ideas as well as from the optical realization and connection to historical events. For a long time no abstract game has reminded me so forcefully of a work of art as this game when placing the loops and rings to form unexpected Kells ornaments. Even more fascinating and exceedingly beautiful is the deluxe edition of the „Royal Game of Kells“. An aesthetical box made from brown leather, playing pieces made from clay that magic a three-dimensional landscape in muted colours onto the board, as well as elegant silk bags for the ring and bridge pieces resurrect the long gone days of and culture of the Celts. Easy to learn, yet taking a lifetime to master!

PREVIEW:

TROIA

Digging through 5000 years

IMPRESSUM

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