

BATTLE IN CONQUEST OF PARADISE

By

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Conquest of Paradise is a Civilization type of game where players build an island empire across the Polynesian part of the central Pacific Ocean. Players explore and discover islands and then build them up and establish an infrastructure in creating their empire. One aspect of this empire building is battle where players attack each other for possession of atolls, islands, or even empty sea hexes. Of course, battle is not always present in every game. In friendly games, players will usually carve out a section of the map where they will do their exploring and empire building. Battle is rare in these games as everyone sticks to their section and concentrate on developing their culture. Battle only occurs when one player has come up short in the exploration of his section with finding only a few small islands and atolls, which generally puts him in last place. He needs to attack his neighboring player in order to get better islands and remain competitive in the game. In tournament games, things get a whole lot uglier as players are expecting battle, especially at the game's end where players will attack each other in order to get enough Victory Points to declare victory. And finally, there is the Warmonger, a player who seems to take the word conquest from the game title to heart, and expand across the map, crushing opponents in his quest for a Pacific Reich, only to find his dreams stymied by the limitations of his counter-set. Battle is his bread and butter and he will use it to the hilt. Regardless on how the game is played, battle will always be an ever-present factor in the game.

Battle

Battle in 2nd Edition of Conquest of Paradise is a rather simple affair. Both sides put their respective forces in a two-line formation, with the units in the first line being the actual units conducting the combat, and the units in the second line being the support forces. In the first line goes the Warrior Bands and War Canoes, plus, for the defender, any Local Warriors he may have. The attacker is the player who initiated the battle and he should have an equal number of Warrior Bands and War Canoes in his front line because only Warrior Bands carried by War Canoes may be in the first line. Warrior Bands carried by Transport Canoes cannot go into the first line, they must go in the second line, along with any other spare Transport Canoes. So why bring a Warrior Band if you cannot use it? Well, the reason is to provide for an instant garrison for the island should the attacker win the battle or as a reserve to replace losses for future battles.

It is the attacker who rolls the die in the combat. The die is continuously rolled until one side has no more units in its front line. There are only two possible combat results in battle, these being Panic, where a unit is retreated back to the second line of his forces, and Removal, where a unit is destroyed and the counter placed back with the owner's unbuilt units. There is a 67% chance of Panic and a 33% chance of Removal in each die roll, with the chances being further divided evenly between the attacker and the defender. This means that both sides start the battle with a 50% chance of victory. Certain Arts & Culture cards can aid a player in each die roll in the battle, either in the attack or defense or both, thus altering the chances or effects of the combat results or even stopping the battle altogether. With each die roll, the defender gets first choice in playing an Arts & Culture card. If the defender chooses not to play a card, then the attacker gets to play one, but only one Arts & Culture card may be played to attempt to affect a die roll. Certain Random Events cards can also be played to add additional forces to a player's side in a battle or cancel out the play of an opponent's Arts & Culture card. When a player takes casualties in a battle, the general rule to follow is this, if the result is Panic, then to retreat your

War Canoes first. This is because of the greater economic cost of them. If the result is Removal, destroy your Local Warriors first (for the defender), then your Warrior Bands.

The battle is over when one side's first line is completely gone. The other player is the winner and may either take or retain possession of the hex being attacked. If the attacker is the winner, the defender retreats any surviving forces to a nearby friendly island and removes any villages if an island is in the battle hex. The attacker can then use each of his surviving units from his first line to place a village on the newly won island. If the defender is the winner, it is the attacker who must retreat.

In the First Edition of the game, no order of sequence was given in the rules on who could play an Arts & Culture card on a die roll first. This led to what amounted to a race between the attacker and the defender on who would lay their card down first. The Frequently Asked Questions sheet further complicated the matter by stating that a Pa card could trump the Tattoo, Haka, and Cannibalism cards if it was played after them in a die roll. Thus, both players could lay down Arts & Culture cards on a die roll in an attempt to trump each other. The addition of the Shaman Random Event card only added further confusion in the situation. There were situations where the attacker would lay down a Tattoo card, the defender would counter by laying down a Pa card, and then the attacker would counter that by playing a Shaman card to cancel out the Pa card. The end result was that one Arts & Culture card would indeed affect the die roll as the rules required, but it could at times lead to heated discussions on whose card trumped who (with the occasional use of bottles, chairs, and tables to add weight to one's argument). But the Second Edition rules put an end to all of that.

Battle Cards

Battle Cards are a nickname I have given certain Art & Culture cards and Random Event cards that can aid a player in battle. In the case of the Arts & Culture cards, their various effects are in addition to the Victory Points that they give their owners. The following listing is the ranking of the Battle cards, in order of the power of their effects in battle;

1. Arioi Cards: These Arts & Culture cards are the most powerful as they can end a battle, causing the attacker to retreat to whichever island his battle force came from. These cards, of which there are two of them, are most powerful when played before the battle begins, as they cannot be trumped by any other Battle Card. If played during a battle, they can be nullified by a Shaman, but if none is present, then they are equally as powerful. These cards are usually saved for battles that the players are in, but they can also be used in battles that do not involve the owning player. The downside is that each of these cards can only be used once in a game.
2. Shaman Card: This Random Event card is the second most powerful battle card as it can nullify the effects of any Arts & Culture card played by the opponent during a battle. When a player receives a Shaman Event card, he places a Shaman counter among his forces and then discards the card. This counter rides free in canoes when moving to and from a battle. In battle, the Shaman is placed in the second row and acts as a deterrent against the opposing player's play of Battle Cards in the conflict. The downside is that the Shaman can only nullify one of the opposing player's Battle Cards in a battle. The player may keep the Shaman counter if he wins the battle, to use in future battles, but if the owning player loses the battle, then the Shaman counter is removed from the game.
3. Marae Card: This Arts & Culture card is the third most powerful and has the ability to force a re-roll of the die in any die-rolling situation in the game when revealed. Of course, most players save this card for battles as this is where most of the die-rolling in the game is going to occur.

The downside is that once the card is revealed, it cannot be used again in the game, so this ability is a one-time thing. If a Shaman nullifies its use in a battle, the Marae card's effect is lost for the rest of the game.

4. Pa Card: These Arts & Culture cards, of which there are two of them, rank as the fourth most powerful and have the effect of changing an attacker's die roll of 4 and 5 respectively, to a No Effect result. Thus, these cards can only be used when a player is the defender in the battle. Once revealed, they stay in effect for the rest of the game, meaning they can be used in every battle hereafter. If a defender has one of these cards, he reduces the attacker's chances of victory to 33%. If he has both of them, then the attacker's chances are reduced to 16%. The downside is that a Shaman on the attacker's side can nullify these cards for the rest of the battle. Also, if the battle is occurring in an open water hex, these cards have no effect.
5. Tattoo and Haka Cards: These Arts & Culture cards, which rank in fifth place, are listed together because they have the same effect. When played they cause the opponent to retreat two units when he receives a Panic result in combat. Each card, of which there are a total of three, can be used once per battle, and when revealed, stay in effect for the rest of the game. The downside of the cards is twofold; they can be nullified by a Shaman, and for the attacker, they can be prevented from play by Pa cards. However, this only affects them in the particular battle where they meet up with them. In other battles where those two factors are not present, these cards will work just fine.
6. Cannibalism Card: Coming in at number six, this Arts & Culture card has the effect of turning an enemy Panic result into a Removal result instead. This card can be used once per battle, and when revealed, stays in effect for the rest of the game. The downside of this card is that it can be nullified in the particular battle by a Shaman, and for the attacker, be prevented from play by Pa cards. Like the previously mentioned cards, this card will work fine in battle where those two factors are not present.
7. Kahuna Healing Card: This Arts & Culture card has the effect of turning one Removed result into a Panic result in combat. The downside is that once it is revealed and used, it cannot be used again in the game. It can also be nullified by a Shaman, meaning that it cannot be used at all in the game.
8. Warrior Leader Card: This Random Event card, of which there are two of them, has the effect of adding another Warrior Band to a player's forces in battle. When this card is played, a Leader counter is placed in the front row and acts as another Warrior Band and the card is discarded. The advantage here is that a Leader counter lasts the rest of the game, assuming it survives the combat, and can be used in future battles. The Leader counter rides free in canoes to and from the battle just like a Shaman, and being created from a Random Event card, it cannot be affected by a Shaman. The downside is that the Leader counter is susceptible to all results in combat and can be destroyed by a Removal result from the game.
9. Insurrection Card: This Random Event card is here as an honorable mention since it isn't even played in battle. When the card is revealed in the Turn Order Step of a Game Turn, the revealing player places an Insurrection counter on any face-up Island Group. The first player to attack this island afterward removes the counter and places an extra Warrior Band in the first line of his Battle force. Thus, this card is only beneficial to the attacker. The downside is that it comes with no extra transport and so it will usually be used as cannon fodder for a Removed result in combat or to make a village on the newly conquered island should the attacker win. Also, you may not be the first player to attack the island that the card was played on.

Battle Card Play Tips

1. The Arioi Card is best played before the playing pieces are set up for battle in the contested hex. This way it cannot be nullified by a Shaman. Alternately, it could be played during a battle if the player wishes to attrit his opponent's forces down before calling it quits, providing the Shaman is not present in the opponent's second line. If a Shaman is present, then don't bother playing the Arioi unless you have some other Battle cards to play in order to draw your opponent into using his Shaman on them. Another sneaky trick is to play it on someone else's battle, especially if it looks like the attacker is going for a win with this battle, a common occurrence late in the game.
2. The Shaman Card has gone through some changes between the editions. In the First Edition of the Random Event cards (which were found in C3I magazine #22 and used with the first edition of the game) the Shaman card was held in one hand until played. Play of the card was a one-time thing in the game and it was discarded after use. It was in the Second Edition (which comes in the second edition of the game) that it gained its own counter and the ability to be used in multiple battles until the end of the game. Thus, in the First Edition, its advantage was surprise, and in the Second Edition, its advantage is deterrence. During battle the Shaman is the most powerful unit, able to nullify any Arts & Culture card played and its play does not violate the one card per battle rule. The owning player has the choice on when to play it in battle on the opponent and does not have to play on the first Arts & Culture card that the opponent plays. But when played on an Arts & Culture card that is played on a die roll, no more cards may be played on that particular die roll.
3. While the Marae card can be played on any die roll during the battle, it is best saved for when the player only has one unit left in his front row. Granted, you only have a 50% chance of a favorable outcome on the re-roll, but it's better than nothing.
4. Of course, the obvious time to play a Pa card is when the die-roll number it effects comes up for the first time in a battle, but once it is revealed, in future battles you could expose it before the beginning of the battle as it will act as a deterrent to possible Haka, Tattoo, and Cannibalism cards from the attacker. However, if the attacker has a Shaman, it would still nullify it if that die-roll number comes up, so it is probably best to hold back and play another Battle card in hopes of the Shaman being used to nullify it, before playing your Pa card.
5. There is not much to say about Tattoo and Haka cards other than if your opponent has a Shaman, then one of those cards is going to get nullified when you play them. Also, if you are the attacker and are faced with a Pa card on the defender's side, you will only be able to use them half the time. If he has both Pa cards, give your Haka and Tattoo cards a rest this battle, unless you have a Shaman to nullify one of them.
6. What was said above, equally applies to the Cannibalism card, with one addition. When converting a Panic to a Removal, go for the unit whose loss will hurt your opponent the worst, namely War Canoes. Now an opponent will think twice about panicking his War Canoes if he knows you have this card. He may Panic a Local Warrior or Warrior Band instead in hopes you will kill it, so he can panic his War Canoes later.
7. The Kahuna Healing card is best used for saving a War Canoe or Warrior Band from Removal due to their economic cost. It is not worth saving a Local Warrior unit as they cost nothing and they are always available in each island battle.
8. The Warrior Leader Random Event card has also gone through some changes between the editions. In the First Edition, the play of the card created an additional Warrior Band counter to add to a player's front-line force. But it was a one-time play and it did not come with transport, so if you lost the battle, you could not take it with you unless you had a spare transport canoe in your back row. In the Second Edition, the Leader counter that is created by the play of the Warrior Leader Random Event card is valuable enough to consider giving priority to it when panicking in battle or to rescuing it from Removal with a Kahuna Healing card. It also ranks up there with War Canoes when playing a Cannibalism card to kill them.

Sea Battles

Sea battles are a rare event in Conquest of Paradise where the battle occurs in an open ocean hex. This usually happens when a player employs a picket line strategy in defending his island empire. The picket line is a chain of hexes between the player's islands and the next island empire which are each occupied by a player's War Canoe. These hexes are usually Open Ocean hexes, although Atolls may also be included in that chain as well. War Canoes will stop any opposing force entering those hexes during the Movement portion of the Movement & Battle Step of a Turn, causing a battle to occur during the Battle portion. These battles are handled in the same manner as those on an island group with two exceptions, one, the defender would not get any Local Warrior units (this would also apply to Atolls), and two, Pa cards cannot be played by the defender in Open Ocean hexes. It does not matter if the attacker wins the battle, all he possesses is open ocean, not the island he was aiming for. In fact, the defender would be hoping for a Defender's Panics result in the battle in order to preserve his War Canoe.

Conclusion

This article is meant for new players to the game as the old veterans of the game already know these tricks. But even though Conquest of Paradise is an old game, there are still new players who discover this hidden gem of a game and embrace its simplicity and ease of play. It is to them that this article is dedicated to.