



REVIVING THE GHOLA

A VARIANT ON THE BENE TLEILAXU IN DUNE

By Kirby Lee Davis

The game of *DUNE* skillfully mimics the book, with one exception – the inclusion of the Bene Tleilaxu. The presence of the *BT* (*Bene Tleilaxu*) in the game is rightfully tied to the dead, but the Bene Tleilaxu “tanks” are no more than a copy of *COSMIC ENCOUNTER*’s “warp”. This is a shame, for the BT are so much more. Their influence stretched into everything, yet they were never seen, never caught. Even the Reverend Mother Gaius appeared to regard the BT with a little fear.

DUNE commits two crimes against the Bene Tleilaxu. Although the game does include the main strength of the BT, the ghola, it does not permit the ghola to be subverted, i.e. become a traitor. Anyone who has read the books will remember the primary ghola, Duncan Idaho, and the turmoil he went through. The suspected loyalty of a ghola leader, whether paid for with spice or received via the “Tleilaxu Ghola” card does not carry over into the game. Thus the whole substance of the ghola is gone.

The game’s second crime is its exclusion of the BT influence upon the protagonists. Much spice travels to the spice bank in payment for reviving tokens and leaders. The profit is there, but the influence that should follow this is absent. The BT are as much the grand manipulators as the Bene Gesserit. They *should* be in the game as character.

Now they are. The following rules add a seventh character to *DUNE*, the Bene Tleilaxu, without disrupting the balance of the game or changing its rules. Indeed, the game is now even more true to the book.

The components of the BT are limited to a player shield. They have no tokens or leaders, for they are *unseen*. The BT is a manipulator in the true sense of the word. Their power stretches through the work of others.

That spells out the difference in play. The BT player has no player dot, so he cannot take part in the storm round. Nor can the BT be used in a two player game. In all other situations and rounds the BT plays an active role, not only with his own powers but with those of the other characters.

Here is a full inventory of the powers of the BT and how they fit into the game:

AT START: The BT begin the game with five spice and four Treachery cards. They have no tokens, player dot, or traitors (see Rule III. SETUP FOR PLAY, E. 2). On the brighter side, the BT can gain traitors as the game progresses. If the optional rules are used, the BT can also lay traps in strongholds before other players place tokens on the board.

ADVANTAGE: The BT control the revived dead.

1. Whenever a player revives tokens or leaders, he pays the spice to the BT layer instead of to the spice bank.
2. After all combat has been completed, the BT player can attack any one leader of any player. The BT can attack one leader per combat round. The leader must have just led tokens in battle, whether victoriously or not, and must be attacked in the territory where he led tokens. To attack, the BT player selects a weapon card and/or a discard. The defending player may play a defense card and/or a discard. The cards are then revealed and combat is resolved normally. The defending player can use his character advantages (e.g. Atreides prescience, BG Voice, etc.) Tokens in the territory are only affected if a lasegun/shield combination occurs.
3. Whenever a player revives a leader from the tanks, whether by spice payment, the Ghola card, or from alliance with the BT, the BT can make a traitor of the revived leader. The BT may make a traitor of only one revived leader per turn.

To make a traitor, the BT circles the leader's name on their Player Aid sheet the moment the leader is revived. The BT can wait only until the turn ends or until another leader is revived to make a traitor. The BT player cannot wait to see who the next revived leader will be.

Traitors to the BT may be revealed at any time by saying the name of the traitor. If the traitor was used in combat to gain a territory, the announcement sends the traitor and betrayed tokens to the tanks (the traitor must have been the last leader used with the tokens to betray them). The BT never gains their traitor's value in spice, but the BT player is considered to control the vacated territory. If the area contained spice, the BT player may collect all of the spice there during the collection round. The BT controls the territory until another player moves tokens onto it.

The BT can delay announcing the betrayal of stronghold tokens as long as no other tokens ship or move onto the stronghold and the betrayed tokens do not move. The BT may not announce the betrayal during the movement round or a player that makes such moves.

Unlike other traitors, a BT traitor stops being a traitor for the BT once he dies. Upon being revived, however, the BT can again make him a traitor.

4. The BT may win the game by spice count. The process takes one full turn and requires an accumulated 35 spice by the BT. One the first turn, at the end of the collection round the BT player must place 35 spice in open view of all players keeping any extra spice behind his players shield. Play then proceeds to the next turn. If at the end of the next turn's collection round the BT still has 35 spice and no one else has won, the BT wins. IF the BT no longer has 35 spice after a turn, they can reclaim their spice pile. Spice from the open pile may not be spent until the BT has exhausted all other sources. A spice win can be predicted by the Bene Gesserit.

ALLIANCE: The BT can grant free revival of tokens and leaders to their allies. Up to six tokens and two leaders may be revived by each ally per turn. An ally's complete stock of leaders need not be in the tanks to revive leaders. An ally's leader can be made a traitor by the BT.

OPTIONAL ADVANTAGES: These should be used to provide a balanced BT character.

1. The BT can lay traps in strongholds which he controls or in unoccupied strongholds at the start of the

game. These traps are Treachery cards laid face down outside the board sector containing the stronghold. The first tokens moved or shipped onto the stronghold trigger the trap. These tokens frozen and may not move any farther that turn. At the beginning of the combat round, before all other combat, a leader of the triggering force is drawn at random. That leader is attacked by the trap. He may play a defense card. (NOTE: As the trap card has already been played, the Bene Gesserit CANNOT voice it. The Atreides player can, however, look at the card.) Combat is resolved normally, with the trap card being discarded afterwards. If the leader is killed, the BT gains his value in spice. Tokens in the stronghold are not harmed unless a lasegun / shield combination occurs.

2. In the Bidding round, AFTER Treachery cards are dealt face down but BEFORE bidding begins, the BT player can give Treachery cards in his hand to any other player. The BT cannot give a player more cards than he can hold. Opponents may not refuse to accept given cards.

3. Instead of playing a weapon card in a trap or leader attack, the BT may play a worthless card (Kulon, Trip to Gamont, etc.). The card either: (a) prevents the defender from shipping down any tokens during the next turn; or (b) prevents the defender from moving any on board tokens during the next turn. The BT can choose which power the card has when it is revealed.

ADDITIONAL KARAMA RULES

6. a. 7. prevents the Bene Tleilaxu from announcing a leader as a traitor. The leader reverts to his/her original allegiance. Or it taxes the BT ten spice which must be paid immediately to the spice bank. If the BT has less than ten spice he must pay what he has. Or (optional rule) it can destroy an untriggered trap.

6. b. 7. *Bene Tleilaxu* You may use a Karama card as a lasegun in an attack on a leader, or (optional rule) as both a lasegun and a shield when played as a trap.

STRATEGY

The strength of the BT lies in two areas. The first is obvious – they are unreachable. There are no BT tokens to blast to the tanks, no Tleilaxu leaders to turn traitor. The only ways the BT can be restrained are through Karama cards and the “voice” of the BG (Bene Gesserit). This strength is also a weakness. The BT has an incredibly hard time making their plans concrete. Their very intangibility makes the other players nervous and reluctant to freely go along with the BT whims. Association and alliance becomes a matter of cost, and even then the aloof mystique that surrounds the BT never diminishes.

The other unalienable strength is the tanks. As long as there is combat spice will flow into the hands of the BT. The basic problem here is one of attrition – only so much battling can be expected before players lose their combat potential. Luckily time has a way of solving these ills.

The most prominent problem with the BT is the multi-sided Tleilaxu paradox. This is first encountered through the BT's ability to ambush an opponent's leaders. This gives the BT the chance to fuel the tanks and doubly collect spice (once for killing the leader and again when the leader is revived). On the negative side, attacking leaders further alienates the player whose leader was liquidated. Such alienation cannot be avoided in the latter turns of the game, but as the game begins it can be damaging.

The strongest forte of the leader attack is the *threat* of a leader attack. The BT is not limited to movement and battle

– they can attack and withdraw unharmed no matter where or how strong the leader or his accompanying token force is. The defenders (all who participated in combat that turn) must be prepared. In this way the leader attack also becomes a diplomatic tool. The BT can become the professional hit man, the ultimate assassin. It is a staggering threat.

In many ways the backbone of the BT is its traitors. Although they can be used to gain any territory, their main targets should be spice and strongholds (the only other logical area of attack would be the shield wall). In this way they grant the BT the chance for a normal win via three strongholds. Therefore the BT should try to build up a large number of traitors.

The natural process of leader deaths to their revival and recirculation is long and tense. The manipulation powers of the BT must be used to spur early pitched battles that will quickly devastate at least one player's stable of leaders. A good byproduct of this is the filling of the tanks with tokens.

Revealing traitors can make or break the Tleilaxu cause. Ideally the BT could reveal three in stronghold victories all in one turn, but that is rare. The BT must face the unhappy prospect of defending his strongholds without tokens. He has three options: (1) laying a Karama trap to blast all who try to take the stronghold; (2) attacking the leader of one of the invaders and hoping for a lasegun/shield combination; or (3) manipulating the invaders so that they will wipe each other out or again use a BT traitor in victory. All three options should be utilized, if possible. A trap, whether a Karama or not should be played. It is a threat that probably will not deter determined players from the stronghold, but it may prompt a player to use another Karama to destroy it (and provide a good laugh when the player discovers it was a "shield" trap).

The second point, that of attacking a leader in hopes of a lasegun/shield combo, can be seen as a desperate act of guesswork. That does not have to be true. One of the coldest, yet most successful, agreements is that of a player who lost in the stronghold battle sacrificing his leader to a BT attack. The sacrificed leader plays a shield defense to the BT lasegun attack, thereby wiping out the tokens in the stronghold. This act of revenge does not return the stronghold to the control of the BT, but it further strengthens the tanks and thus future revenue through revival. This illustrates another facet of the Tleilaxu paradox, that of the failure of inking by strongholds strengthening the chance of winning by spice. The inverse of this is also true.

If the backbone of the BT is in traitors, the flesh is the BT's manipulative force. This has already been brought out through the threats of traps and leader attacks. The main strength of the BT arsenal of diplomatic plays is in Treachery cards; indeed, the cards are the physical extent of their power. It is also here that the Tleilaxu paradox strikes hardest. To attack leaders or to lay traps the BT must buy Treachery cards, thus draining their spice. Their main diplomatic tool also demands that they buy cards *to give them away*. The BT therefore continually needs to purchase cards. The costs of this, however, are not as damaging as it may seem.

First, it must be understood that the BT must give cards away. Out of the 33 cards in the deck, there are 14 the BT can use only as fake traps and discards. All are of value to the other players, and therefore bargaining power when the BT inadvertently buys one. Another result of the ability to give cards "AFTER Treachery cards are dealt face down but BEFORE bidding begins" is that it becomes easier to fill an opponents four card hand, leaving a Treachery card on the block that he can no longer buy. The card can then be picked up at a cheaper cost.

Still another result of the giving of cards is a knowledge of the other players' hands. Careful watch by the BT of how other players use their cards can lead to situations where the BT can guide players against each other and predict the results. The BT can also watch for defenses players have for their leaders in preparation for the BT leader attack.

The last factor to be observed in giving cards away is that it makes room for the purchasing of more cards, a good way to fill the BT hand with valuable cards. To this goal, it is also suggested that traps be laid during the bidding round if possible.

The cost of this is spice. To survive as a player the BT must buy Treachery cards, which then lowers his chance for a spice win. The giving of cards counters this by coaxing players to battle.

The last power of the BT, the use of worthless cards as movement impairs, is a futuristic one. Timed correctly, this can isolate a token force for accumulated assault not unlike Custer's Last Stand. Occasionally this can be used to keep players from moving onto a BT stronghold. The main pull of this power, however, is as a diplomatic tool. It should not be underestimated.

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AT START: Start with 5 spice and 4 Treachery cards. *The Bene Tleilaxu cannot be used in a two player game.*

ADVANTAGES: You control the revived dead.

1. Whenever a player pays spice to revive tokens or leaders, he pays it to you instead of to the spice bank.
2. After all other combat has been completed each turn, you may attack one leader of any player. The leader must have just led tokens in battle and must be attacked in the territory, of the battle.
3. You may make a traitor of any one revived leader per turn. When your traitor is used in combat to gain a territory, you may announce your traitor and gain control of the territory. You do not receive your traitor's value in spice, but if the territory has spice, you may collect it. You do not have to announce stronghold betrayals immediately (see Reviving the Ghola explanation).
4. You may win by spice count. At the end of any collection round you may place 35 spice in open view of all players. If at the end of the next collection round you still have over 35 spice and no one else has won, you win.

ALLIANCE: You may grant free revival of up to six tokens and two leaders (one may be made a traitor) per turn to each of your allies.