

Pope Joan

Pope Joan is a very old card game that at one time was exceptionally popular in Scotland. The $\spadesuit 9$ is given the name of 'Pope' and as the Pope was hugely disliked by members of the Scottish Reformation, that might explain why the card was also given the nickname of 'Curse of Scotland'. Pope Joan is a type of gambling game.

Number of players

Any number from three to eight may play, with four to six being best.

Cards

The game is played with a standard pack of 52 cards from which the $\spadesuit 8$ is removed.

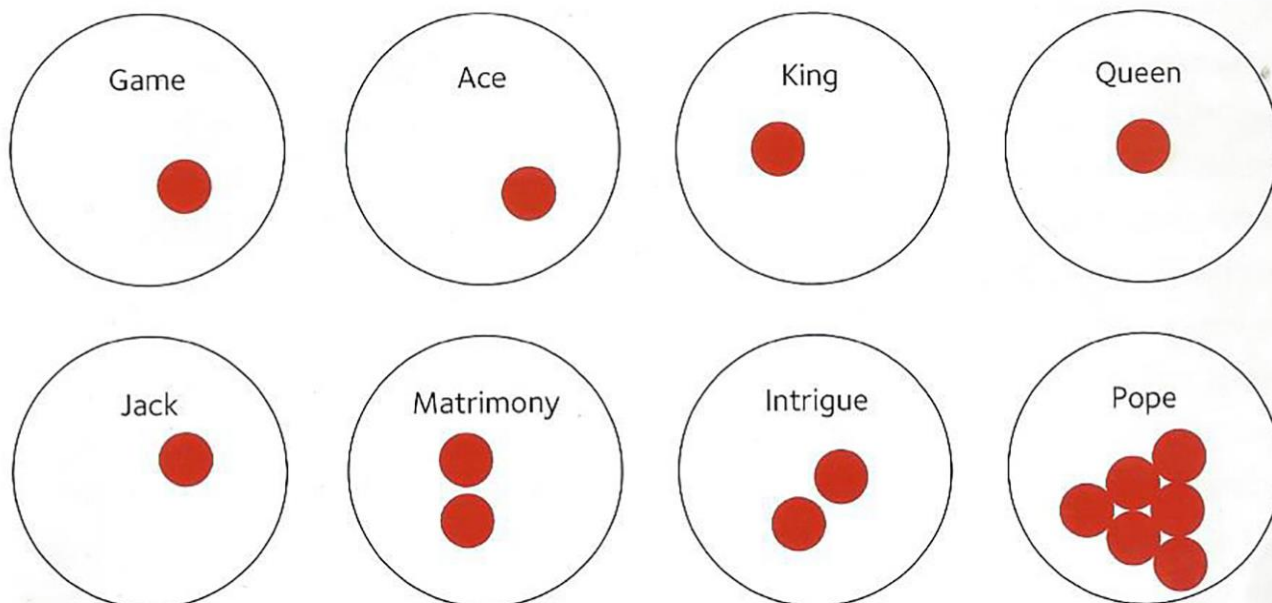
How to play

Originally a special board, consisting of a circular tray divided into eight compartments and revolving about a central pillar was used with counters. Today these boards are museum pieces,

and modern players must make do with eight saucers labelled: *Game, Ace, King, Queen, Jack, Matrimony, Intrigue, Pope*, placed in the centre of the table.

Each player begins with the same number of counters of an agreed value, and the dealer places six in the saucer labelled Pope ($\spadesuit 9$), two each in Matrimony and Intrigue, and one each in Game, Ace, King, Queen and Jack. It is called 'dressing the board'.

Cards are dealt to the players and to an extra hand (widow) in the centre of the table. The number of cards dealt to each player and the widow depends on



the number of players in the game. The players must each hold the same number of cards, so any over-cards go to the widow. The last card is turned face upwards to denote the trump suit, and if it is either the Pope (♦9) or an Ace, King, Queen or Jack, the dealer wins the counters in the corresponding saucer.

The player on the left of the dealer leads the first trick. He may lead any card he chooses, and at the same time he announces it. Suppose it is the ♣6. Then the player who holds the ♣7 plays it and announces it, the player who holds the ♣8 plays it and announces it, and so on, until the run comes to an end.

The four Kings are stop cards, and in the diamond suit the 7 is as well, because the ♦8 has been removed from the pack. In practice, of course, any card may be a stop card on account of the cards in the widow hand, and because the next higher card may already have been played.

When a run comes to an end, the player of the stop card starts a fresh run by leading any card he likes. In this way the game continues until one of the players has played all his cards. He is then entitled to the counters in the Game saucer, and, in addition, he receives from each player one counter for every card left in his hand. The player who is left with the Pope (♦9), however, is exempt from paying the winner so long as he holds the card in his hand. If he has played it in the course of the game he loses this advantage.

During the course of the game, any player who plays the Ace, King, Queen or Jack of the trump suit, or the Pope (♦9), wins the counters in the corresponding saucers; if the same player plays the King and Queen of the trump suit he wins the counters in Matrimony, and if the same player plays the Queen and Jack of the trump suit he wins those in Intrigue.

The deal passes round the table clockwise, and any counters that have not been won in a deal are carried forward to the next.