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v1.1

June 2020

Print on card (ensure you are printing at 100% scale) laminate and trim to size.

A WAR OF WHISPERS

SETUP

Each player chooses a matching **player board**, a set of **agents**, and a set of **loyalty tokens**. Place the **'1' turn marker** beside the **start** space on the board and the other turn markers near the turn tracker.

The 5 **empires** are each represented by a color and animal: Bear (blue), Lion (yellow), Horse (brown), Elephant (green), and Eagle (red). For each empire, place all **banners** (cubes) of that color beside the board in a pile near their associated councils to create the **banner reserve piles**.

Place a matching color banner on any region on the map that contains a small banner image.

Sort the **empire cards** into 5 empire decks and place each beside the corresponding empires.

Choose a first player and give them the **first player marker**.

Players place their initial **loyalty bets**: shuffle your 5 loyalty tokens and randomly place them facedown on the 5 loyalty slots on your player board. You may then peek at them, and may do so at any time during the game.

GAMEPLAY

1. DEPLOY AGENTS PHASE

Each empire council consists of 4 council positions (Sheriff, Steward, Marshal, and Chancellor) on which you can place **agents**. Starting with the first player and proceeding clockwise, remove 1 of your agents currently on the board (if any) and then take turns placing 1 agent on any open council position on the board until each player has placed 2 agents.

2 players: Each player places 3 agents instead of 2.

2. EMPIRE TURNS PHASE

This phase begins with the Bear empire's turn and proceeds clockwise around the board. During an empire's turn, each **council position** in that empire's council takes 1 available action determined by the player who controls it, starting with the Sheriff and following the arrows up to the Chancellor. You must take an action with an agent even if that action results in nothing happening.

The player who controls a council position is determined as follows:

- If a council position contains one of your agents, you control that council position.
- If a council position contains no agents, the player who owns the next agent to its right within this council controls that council position. If there are no agents to its right, no player controls it and it will choose to do nothing as its action.

COUNCIL POSITIONS

Each council position has one or more available actions.

Add Banner actions

x2   Add 2 banners to any region(s) controlled by this empire.

x   For each 🌾 icon present across all regions controlled by this empire, add 1 banner to any region(s) controlled by this empire.

x   For each ♟ icon present across all regions controlled by this empire, add 1 banner to any region(s) controlled by this empire.

x   For each ♜ icon present across all regions controlled by this empire, add 2 banners to any region(s) controlled by this empire.

Attack action

Attack an enemy army region adjacent to a region controlled by the active empire. Only 1 region may be attacked using this action.

Choose a region controlled by another empire. Move any number of banners from an adjacent region controlled by the active empire into the chosen region. You cannot attack across oceans or seas.

If any banners are being moved from a conquered region, you must leave at least 1 banner behind. **You can never completely abandon a conquered enemy region using an attack.**

You may never use the attack action to simply shift banners among an empire's controlled regions; it must be used to attack into an enemy-controlled region.

Combat occurs when banners from one empire move into a region controlled by another empire. Losses are then taken: each side discards banners at a 1:1 ratio until one (or both) side is depleted. If either side has any banners remaining, they have won the battle.

Regions with forts destroy 1 attacking banner when an attacking army enters this region.

Draw Empire Card actions

x1   Draw 1 card from this empire's deck and add it to your hand.

x   For every 2 🌾 icons present across all regions controlled by this empire, draw 1 card from this empire's deck and add it to your hand.

x   For every 3 🌾 icons present across all regions controlled by this empire, draw 1 card from this empire's deck and add it to your hand.

x   For every 2 ♟ icons present across all regions controlled by this empire, draw 1 card from this empire's deck and add it to your hand.

x   For every 3 ♟ icons present across all regions controlled by this empire, draw 1 card from this empire's deck and add it to your hand.

Swap Agent action

Swap this agent with any other agent within this council, then immediately take its action. *This does not reset the turn.*

CHECKING SUPPLY

A region may only contain 4 banners at the end of an empire's turn. If at the end of the turn there are more than 4 banners, return banners to the supply until there are only 4 left.

If a region contains a farm, it has a higher limit of 6 banners.

MARK THE TURN

Place the current turn marker on the next available space on the turn tracker. The first player marker now passes the first player token to the next player clockwise. If the last turn marker is placed, the game ends **without performing the Swap and Cleanup Phases**: proceed to final scoring.

3. SWAP PHASE

Starting with the first player and proceeding clockwise, you each have the opportunity to **swap any 2 of your** *unrevealed* **loyalty tokens**.

To swap 2 loyalty tokens, switch the loyalty slot in which the 2 tokens are currently positioned in and flip them faceup so the empire symbols are now visible. These are now revealed and cannot be swapped in subsequent turns.

4. CLEANUP PHASE

Each player must discard any empire cards in excess of the maximum hand size of 5.

REGIONS

A region is **controlled** by an empire if it has at least 1 banner there, or if it is one of their home regions and contains no enemy banners.

To control a **city**, an empire must control the region the city is in.

A **home region** is a region whose color matches the empire's color.

An **empty region** is any region that does not contain a banner. However, all regions (and any cities they contain) are always controlled by one of the empires. If there are no banners then the original owner (indicated by the colour of the region and its border) is the controlling empire.

A friendly army/banner is one of the same empire that currently controls a region (not necessarily the active empire). If the region is empty of banners, a friendly banner is one that matches the original controller of the region at setup (indicated by the colour of the region and its border).

EMPIRE CARDS

The empire cards you acquire can be played from your hand to affect the game in a variety of different ways. Each empire's cards have their own symbol at the top of the card.

You may add as many cards to your hand as you like, but during the Cleanup phase, you must discard down to **no more than 5 cards** in your hand.

To play a card, choose one, then choose one of the abilities listed on it. Then, pay its cost by discarding a number of cards of the empire equal to the cost listed beside the chosen ability. The card being played counts as one of the cards being discarded to pay the cost. Therefore, the first ability on each card can be played without discarding any additional cards.

You can play a card immediately before, during, or immediately after using one of your own agents, and the agent doesn't have to match the empire of the card(s) being played. You can play multiple cards in a single turn.

Any time a card is played or discarded, shuffle it back into the empire deck it belongs to.

ADVANCED RULE: ASSIGNING AGENTS TO REGIONS

When assigning agents during the Deploy Agents phase, instead of assigning an agent to a council position, you may choose to assign it to any region on the map, even if occupied.

A player's agent in a region counts as a city for that player in final scoring. Players can have a maximum of 2 agents deployed to the map. Regions can contain more than 1 agent, but not from the same player.

Agents played to a region can be retrieved at the start of the Deploy Agents phase, just like any other agent. Agents cannot be added or removed from the map in any other way.

FINAL SCORING

The game ends after the Reveal Loyalty phase of the 4th round. All loyalty tokens are scored and the player who scores the most points is the winner.

You have 5 loyalty tokens, one for each empire, and 5 loyalty slots on your player board: **devout** (x4), **dutiful** (x3), **affiliated** (x2), **unallied** (x0), and **opposed** (x-1).

Score loyalty tokens by multiplying the number of cities the corresponding empire controls at the end of the game by how loyal you were to that empire.

If 2 players are tied for equal points then the player that swapped loyalty the least during the game wins.

If both players are still tied, the player with the most empire cards in hand wins.

Loyalty tokens score you points based on the loyalty level they are bet on and the number of cities the corresponding empire controls.

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CHECKING SUPPLY

If at the end of an empire's turn there are more than 4 banners in a region, return banners to the supply until there are only 4 left.

If a region contains a farm, it has a higher limit of 6 banners.

MARK THE TURN

Advance the current turn marker to the next space on the turn tracker. The first player marker passes the first player token to the next player clockwise.

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