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Rattus

Artwork: alexandre-roche.com

Europe, 1347. A disaster is about to strike. The Black Death reaches Europe, and during the next 4 - 5 years, the population of Europe will be halved. The players settle in the various regions of Europe, while the plague spreads throughout all of the continent. The players gain help from the various classes of the middle ages: The Peasants provide population growth, the wise Monks keep the rats away, the rich Merchants flee when the plague approaches, the warfare conducted by the Knights spreads the plague to new areas, the Witches control the spread through magic and witchcraft, whereas the Kings avoid the plague by staying in their fortified palaces. But the plague does not make any distinction: When the rats arrive, no one can feel safe. When the plague withdraws and the game ends, the player with the highest surviving population wins.



Game Components



1 game board. The board depicts Europe in the middle ages, divided into 12 regions.

In 2 player games use the light coloured regions only.

In 3 player games use the light and middle coloured regions.

In 4 player games use all regions on the board.

Arrows indicate regions that are treated as neighbours, even though they have no common border.



Additionally, the board contains a palace area.



80 small wooden cubes (20 in each of the four player colours).



49 rat tokens, showing a rat on the back and a plague event on the front.



12 of these are marked with a purple circle, these are the starting rats to be used when setting up the game.



6 class cards (one for each of the 6 classes Peasantry, Bourgeoisie, Church, Chivalry, Magic and Royalty).



One «Plague piece»

Preparations

① The game board is laid out on the table. The six class cards are laid out beside it.



② Each player chooses a colour and receives all the wooden cubes of this colour.





③ The twelve starting rat tokens (the ones marked with purple circles) are mixed (face down), and one rat token is placed in each region of the board (still face down). In a 2/3-player game, only 8/10 regions are used, thus only 8/10 starting rats are placed on the board.

④ The regular rat tokens are mixed (face down) and kept as a supply beside the board.
With less than 4 players, some randomly drawn rat tokens (not the starting rats) are removed (unseen) from the game:

With 2 players, remove 12 rat tokens. With 3 players, remove 6 rat tokens.

The remaining starting rat tokens are mixed together with the regular rats



⑤ The Plague Piece is placed in a randomly chosen region.

⑥ The youngest player starts the game. Starting with him and going clockwise around the table, each player places two of his cubes in any region on the board. Thereafter, starting with the last player and going anti-clockwise around the table, each player places two more of his cubes in any region on the board.

⑦ Thereafter, the starting player makes the first turn, and the other players follow clockwise around the table.

Game play

The player on turn plays through the following phases:

A. Pick a new class card (optional)

B. Place new cubes on the board

C. Move the Plague Piece

Phase A and B may be done in any order, but phase C (moving the plague piece) must always be done at the end of the turn.

Ⓐ Pick a new class card (optional)



The player may take one class card, either one of the untaken ones beside the board or from another player. The class cards taken by the players are kept clearly visibly on the table in front of each player. Each of the six cards yield certain advantages to the player owning them (these will be explained later), but at the same time they increase the probability of the cubes of the player being killed by the plague. The player must keep his class cards until they are taken away by another player, once taken there is no other way of getting rid of them.

Even if the player already has one or more class cards on the table in front of him, he is allowed to take another card during each of his turns. Thus it may often happen that one player has more than one card at the same time, in this case he gains all the advantages of all the cards he has.

Ⓑ Place new cubes on the board



The player may place cubes of his own colour in any one region on the board. He places as many cubes as the number of rat tokens currently present in the chosen region. Thus, the player may not add any cubes to a region with no rat tokens (exception: the card «Peasant», see below).



Example: There are currently three rat tokens in Gallia, one in Germania and none in Italia. It is the red player's turn. He chooses to add one of his cubes to Germania. If he instead decided to add cubes to Gallia, he would be allowed to add three cubes, while in Italia he would not be allowed to add any cubes at all.

Ⓒ Move the Plague Piece



Finally, the player must move the Plague Piece. The Plague Piece must be moved to a neighbouring region of its current location. The player on turn chooses freely among the neighbouring regions, but he is not allowed to let the Plague Piece remain in its current region. In the following, the region moved to by the Plague Piece is called the «Plague Region».

Thereafter, the Plague ravages:

1. First, the Plague spreads.
If the Plague Region contains no rat tokens, nothing happens.
If the Plague Region contains one rat token, the player on turn places a new rat token from the supply in any region neighbouring the Plague Region.
If the Plague Region contains two or three rat tokens, the player on turn places TWO new rat tokens from the supply in any region(s) neighbouring the Plague Region (either two rats in one region or one rat in each of two different regions).

2. The Plague ravages the Plague Region.
If the Plague Region contains at least one wooden cube and one or more rat tokens, these rat tokens are revealed and evaluated one at a time, until either all rat tokens have been revealed or all the cubes in the region have been removed. All revealed rat tokens are removed from the game, any remaining face-down rat tokens remain in the region.

Note: The rat tokens must be placed face down, no players are allowed to look at the front sides!
Note: There may never be more than three rat tokens at the same time in any one region! Therefore it is not allowed to add rats in a region already containing three rats. In this case the player has to choose another of the regions neighbouring the Plague Region. In the rare event that all the neighbouring regions of the Plage Region contain three rats, no more rats are added.

The front sides of all the rat tokens show two kinds of information:



A limit value. If the total number of wooden cubes (regardless of colours) in the Plague Region is equal to or greater than the given limit value, the Plague will now have an outbreak. Otherwise, that is, if the number of wooden cubes is lower than the given limit value, the rat token is removed from the game without any further consequences.

One or more symbols. These symbols indicate which of the classes that are infected by the plague. For each given class symbol, the player currently owning the corresponding class card has to remove one of his cubes from the Plague Region and put it back into his supply. If the player does not have any cubes in this region, he is not affected.

In addition to or instead of class symbols, the symbols M («Majority») or A («All») may also appear. For each given M, the player currently having most cubes of his colour in the Plague Region has to remove one cube. In the case of a tie for majority, all tied players have to remove one cube each. The M symbols are always evaluated first, that is, they always affect the player who has the majority of cubes in the region when the rat token is revealed, even if other symbols on the rat token would result in another player having more cubes than this player. For each given A, all players with cubes in the Plague Region have to remove one cube each.

As soon as the Plague Region either contains no more rat tokens or no more wooden cubes, the current turn ends, and the next player begins his turn.

Example

The yellow player currently has the card «Knight (Chivalry)», the green player has the cards «Peasant (Peasantry)» and «Merchant (Bourgeoisie)», and the blue player has the «Monk (Church)», «Witch (Magic)» and «King (Royalty)».

It's the red player's turn, and he is about to enter phase 3 («Move the Plague Piece»).

He decides to move the plague piece into Gallia. Gallia currently contains three rat tokens, two green cubes and one yellow cube.

First, the plague spreads. Since Gallia contains three rat tokens, two new rat tokens have to be placed in one or two of the neigbouring regions of Gallia. The red player choosed to place them both in Hispania.



Thereafter, the plague ravages Gallia. One by one, the three rat tokens are revealed:



The first revealed token shows the limit value 1. Gallia contains three cubes, therefore the plague will have an outbreak. The rat token shows one Bourgeoisie symbol and one Church symbol. Since the green player currently has the Merchant (Bourgeoisie) card, he has to remove one of his cubes and return it to his supply. The blue player has the Monk (Church) card, but since he does not have any cubes in Gallia, he obviously does not have to remove any.



Since Gallia still contains more cubes, the next rat token is revealed. It has the limit value 3. However, currently Gallia only contains two cubes (since one of the green ones was just removed), therefore this rat token has no effect.



Finally the last rat token is revealed. It turns out to have a limit value of 2, therefore the plague once again has an outbreak. The symbols given on this rat token are M («Majority»), Bourgeoisie and Church. The green and yellow player are currently tied for the Majority, therefore they both have to remove one cube each.

Consequently, Gallia is now completely devastated. According to this last rat token, the player holding the Bourgeoisie card (green) and the player holding the Church card (blue) should remove one cube each from the region, however, neither of them have any cubes in Gallia to remove.

The red player's turn now ends, with the following situation:



The Class Cards

Note: Only the player whose turn it is may use the special abilities of his class card(s). He may use the abilities of each card only once each turn , and only before phase C is played (exception: Knight).



King (Royalty)

A player holding this card may, at any time during his turn, move one of his cubes on the board to the palace area. This cube must be taken from a region containing no rats. Cubes in the palace area are safe for the rest of the game, and count as regular cubes when counting score at the end of the game.



Knight (Chivalry)

A player holding this card may move the plague piece up to two steps in phase C, before the effects of the plague are evaluated. Additionally, the player may, before the rat tokens are revealed, decide to let the plague piece count as two neutral population cubes in the affected region for the purpose of evaluating the population limits on the rat tokens.

Example: If the plague piece is in Italia, the player may for example move it to Scandia, if he holds the Knight card. If the player chooses to let the plague piece count as two extra cubes, and Scandia contains two wooden cubes, the plague will have an outbreak even if a rat with a limit value of 3 or 4 is revealed.



Merchant (Bourgeoisie)

A player holding this card may, at any time on his turn, move up to 3 cubes of his own colour from one region to one of its neighbouring regions.



Monk (Church)

A player holding this card may, at any time on his turn, move any one rat token from any region to a neighbouring region. This movement may be performed either before or after adding new cubes in phase B.

Example: A region contains 3 rat tokens. The player on turn may add 3 cubes into this region. If he holds the Monk card, he may thereafter move one of the rats into a neighbouring region.
Please note that no region is ever allowed to contain more than 3 rat tokens. Therefore a player holding the Monk may not move a rat into a region already containing 3 rats.



Peasant (Peasantry)

A player holding this card may add one cube more than usual when he adds cubes to a region in phase B («Place new cubes on the board»). For example, he may add 4 cubes to a region containing 3 rat tokens, or 1 cube to a region without rat tokens.



Witch (Magic)

A player holding this card may, at any time on his turn, look at any one rat token on the board. Thereafter, he may look at any other rat token on the board, either in the same or in a different region. Finally, he may, if he wishes, swap the two selected rat tokens (this obviously only makes sense if he looked at rat tokens in two different regions).

Game End

The game ends after the turn during which either

- **the supply of rat tokes is depleted, or**
- **a player manages to have all his cubes on the board at the end of his turn (this is rare).**

- Thereafter a final round follows, in which all players, except the player having the last regular turn, may use the abilities of their class cards one last time.
- This final round is played anticlockwise, beginning with the player sitting right of the player who had the last regular turn.
- In this final round the players are only allowed to use the abilities of the cards they currently hold.
- They are neither allowed to take any new cards, add cubes (exception: Peasant) nor move the plague piece (exception: Knight). The cards have their usual abilities, with the exceptions given in the frame on the right.

Peasant: A player holding this card may add a cube of his own colour in any one region.

Knight: A player holding this card may move the plague piece up to two steps. When the game ends, the plague piece counts as usual as two neutral population cubes in the affected region.

- Finally, the plague ravages all the 12 regions, that is, one at a time all the rat tokens are revealed and evaluated.

After this, the player with the most cubes still in play on the board (including any cubes in the palace area) wins. In the case of a tie between two or more players, the game is won by the player (among the tied players) that would have had the next turn if the game had not ended.

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