

# POLITEIA



A GAME OF INTERNAL AND  
EXTERNAL STRIVES BETWEEN THE  
GREEK CITY STATES AND PERSIA

FOR 3-5 PLAYERS  
(PLAYING TIME 60 MINUTES)

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VERSION 1.98

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*It is the sixth century BC and the conflict between the independent-minded Greek city states and the mighty Persian empire is escalating. The Persian King Cyrus the Great has conquered the Greek-inhabited region of Ionia and appointed tyrants to rule them. However, the Greeks do not look kindly upon foreign rulers.*

*At the same time the Greek poleis (plural for polis or city-state) are locked into an internal strife for hegemony over Hellas. This is sometimes expressed peacefully, through trade with domestic and colonial resources or erection of buildings and monuments, and sometimes violently, through battles and revolts. Will the Greeks manage to unite against their common enemy or will they embrace each other in a fight to the death? Only history can tell...*

## 2. GAME COMPONENTS

- 1) 1 game board with 3 regions; Megale Hellas, Hellas, Ionia
- 2) 12 action tiles; Battle, Build, Colonize, Import, Intrigue, Levy, Produce, Revolt, Sacrifice, Support, Tax, Trade
- 3) 1 Elysion tile and 2 Hades tiles
- 4) 5 grain cards and 15 resource cards; 3 oil, 3 wine, 3 pottery, 3 marble, 3 metal
- 5) 12 double-sided building/monument cards
- 6) 10 Persian discs
- 7) 120 double-sided Greek polis discs (citizen/talent face); 24 per polis
- 8) 5 private action discs; 1 per polis
- 9) 15 double-sided public action discs (active/passive face)
- 10) 5 player aides
- 11) 2 action aides; Recover, War



### 3. GAME OBJECT

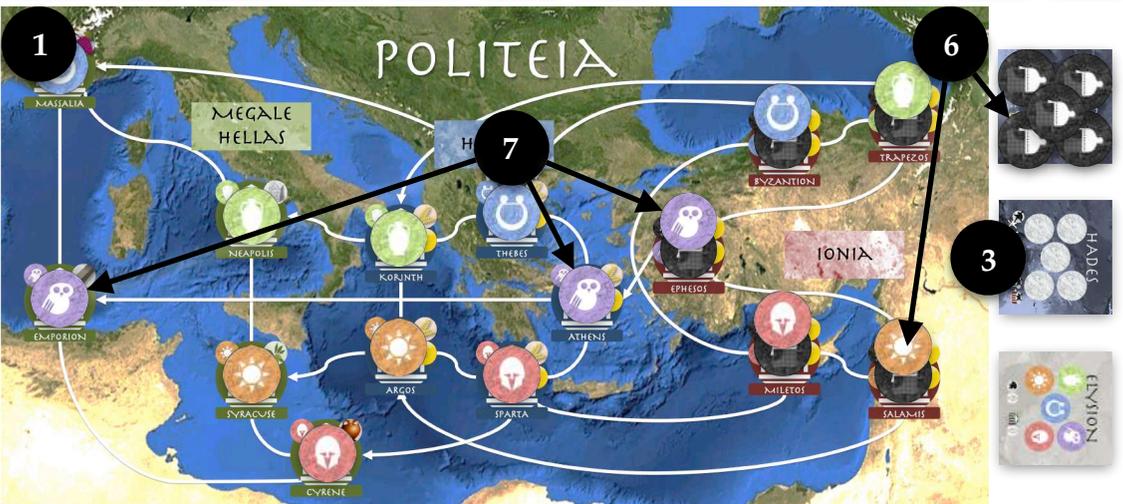
You play a leader of a *polis* (city-state) in Ancient Greece. Each turn, you select and pay for *actions*  in the struggle for hegemony over all the Greeks. The actions let you acquire *talents* (money)  or *resources* , invest in *buildings*  and *monuments* or *sacrifice* to the gods, and allocate *citizens*  to *cities* . But beware, the threat of a war with the *Persians*  hangs over your head like the sword of Damocles.

When the game ends, the player who has performed the most heroic deeds, as measured by **citizens** in **Elysion**, wins. There is also a bigger game where a Greek victory or loss against Persia in your turn will be your victory or loss in the history books.

### 4. GAME SETUP

- 1) Place the **game board** on the table.
- 2) Randomly lay out the 12 **action tiles** in the shape of a "fat cross" to form the *action board*.
- 3) Place the 1 **Elysion** and 2 **Hades** tiles next to the board.
- 4) Sort the **grain** and **resource cards** and place them next to the board. Spread them so that the number of cards is clearly visible.
- 5) Sort the **building/monument cards** and place them next to the board with the building face (1 symbol) up.
- 6) Place 1 **Persian disc** on each of the cities with a matching Persian symbol (5 in total). Place the remaining 5 Persian discs on Hades tile spaces.
- 7) Place 1 **Greek polis disc** on each of the cities with a matching Greek symbol (15 in total). Place them with the **citizen face up**, on top of any Persian citizens there.
- 8) Choose a **polis** and take its 1 **private action disc** and remaining 21 **polis discs**.
  - i) Place the 1 private action disc and 1 polis disc in front of you, the latter with the **talent face up**. They form your *hand*.

- ii) Place the remaining 20 polis discs in front of you with the **citizen** face up. They form your *supply* and should be kept separated from your talents.
  - iii) Take 1 resource card matching the symbol of your green city, e.g. "Metal" for "Emporion".
  - iv) If less than 5 players play, place a 2nd non-player polis disc at the bottom of each green and blue city with a matching symbol and 1 on a Hades tile space. In this way, each non-player polis has 6 polis discs in play. Return unused action discs and polis discs to the box.
- 9) Place 1 public action disc with the **passive (black)** face up on the **leftmost black space** (label " -1") of each of the 12 action tiles. Place a 2nd disc on the middle black space (label "0") on each of the 3 purple action tiles.



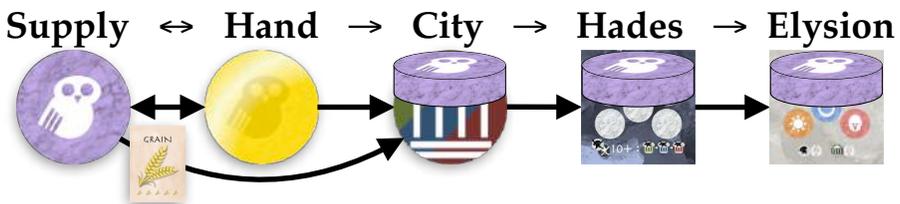
- 8iii METAL
- 8i
- Athens 20 x
- Sparta 20 x
- Thebes 20 x
- Korinth 20 x
- Argos 20 x

## 5. GAME OVERVIEW

The players take actions to acquire talents to develop and populate Greece. A player's turn consists of 4 phases:

- 1) **Planning Phase:** Select actions on the action board.
- 2) **Action Phase:** Pay for and execute actions in any order.
- 3) **Politeia Phase:** Check city majorities after each action.
- 4) **War Phase:** Check and resolve wars after each action.

Each player has an own set of polis discs with a *talent* face (gold) and a *citizen* face (polis color), which flow from the supply via the hand to the board.



- 1) To *receive* a talent, take a polis disc from your supply to your hand with its **talent face up**.
- 2) To *pay* a talent, return a polis disc from your hand to your supply with its **citizen face up**.
- 3) To *place* a citizen, take a talent from your hand to a city with its **citizen face up**. Alternatively, return 1 grain card to place a citizen directly from your supply.
- 4) To *move* a citizen, **reposition** a citizen in a city or **relocate** it to another city.
- 5) To *remove* a citizen, take a citizen from a city. Such a citizen first go to *Hades*, representing instability. This may cause a Greco-Persian war to break out, after which the Greek citizens go to *ElySION*, representing heroism. Citizens removed by Persians go directly to ElySION.

### 5.1 PLANNING PHASE



In your first turn, choose any action tile for your first action. Place your action disc in the tile's **white space** with its *active face up* (white background) face up as opposed to its *passive face* (non-white background). Your action disc gives you 1 action in the next phase (5.2 Action Phase).





In your following turns, pick up your action disc and all public action discs on the same tile. Move them onto adjacent tiles, dropping 1 disc on each tile as you pass through, until you run out of discs. Drop your action disc last. Each dropped action disc gives you 1 action in the next phase.

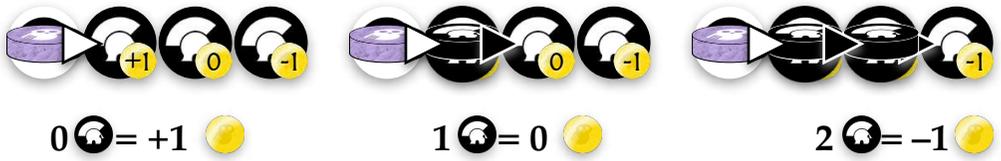
- Place all discs in the tile's **white space** with its **active face up**, to distinguish them from other discs.
- From the 4 **central** action tiles, drop **orthogonally**.
- From the 8 **edge** action tiles, drop **orthogonally** or **diagonally**.
- You may not immediately return to a previous tile
- You may not drop more than 1 disc per tile.

*Example: Athens is the first player and chose Build as her first action. In her second turn, she picks up her action disc together with the 1 public action disc. She drops the public action disc on the Levy action and her own action disc on the Produce action. Athens may now Levy and Produce in any order.*

*Example: Sparta chose Levy as her first action and since it now has 2 public action discs, she can take 3 actions. She drops 1 public action disc on the Support action, 1 public action disc on the Tax action and her own action disc on the Revolt action. Sparta may now Support, Tax and Revolt in any order.*

## 5.2 ACTION PHASE

Execute the actions in any order, ending one before starting the next. Before each action, receive (+1) or pay (-1) talents according to the **visible talent symbol**. If all talents symbols are covered, pay 2 talents. If you cannot pay, return any 1 citizen (from the board, Hades or Elysion) to your supply for each talent that you are missing.



 Flip the action disc to its **passive face** afterwards and slide all action discs one space to the right so that the white space is uncovered and only black spaces covered. If all the black spaces are covered, stack additional discs in the rightmost black space.

*Example: In the example above, Athens dropped an active action disc on the action Levy. There are two action discs there already, covering the +1 and the 0 symbols so Athens must pay -1. Afterwards, the discs slide to the right, covering the -1 symbol as well and increasing the cost to -2 until Sparta moves with the public action discs.*



 The 12 actions can be grouped into 4 types. (See chapter 7 for action details.)



- 1) **Receive:** 7.1 Import, 7.2 Produce, 7.3 Tax
- 2) **Pay:** 7.4 Build, 7.5 Sacrifice, 7.6 Trade
- 3) **Place:** 7.7 Colonize, 7.8 Levy, 7.9 Support
- 4) **Move:** 7.10 Intrigue , 7.11 Battle, 7.12 Revolt

*Beginner's option: In lieu of an action, you may Recover.*



- *Receive 3 talents minus the number of talents on the hand and citizens on the board OR*
- *Place 1 talent as citizen at the bottom of each starting city where you do not have any citizen.*

### 5.3 POLITEIA PHASE

For each city where the citizens have changed, check if the majority has changed. Ties are resolved in favor of the highest placed citizen.



*Example: In a 4 player game (without Thebes), Sparta's action ends with 5 Persians and 5 Greeks (of which 1 Thebian) in Hades and a war breaks out.*



- 1) The Ionia city Ephesos is already Persian so Persia proceeds to the Hellas city Athens.
- 2) The top Athenian in Athens moves to Hades and 1 Persian from Hades takes its place.
- 3) Persia does not reach Thebes but 1 non-player Thebian moves there from Hades so Thebes gains the relative majority in the Politeia phase.
- 4) Persia does reach Sparta so the top Athenian moves to Hades. However, the 2 remaining citizens deny Persia absolute majority so no Persian citizen is placed there.



## 6. END OF GAME

The game ends if a player is entitled to take a disc from the supply and has none left. Finish the **action** (not the whole turn), including a Greco-Persian War if any, but forego any missing discs or remaining actions. Move any player citizens in Hades to Elysion and count victory points (VP).



**Citizens in Elysion: 2 VP**



**Top citizens: 1 VP**

The player with the most **VP** has brought glory to his or her polis and wins. In case of a tie, count first non-top **citizens** on the board and then **talents** on the hand. If the tie still remains, the victory is shared.

The game ends immediately in the following two cases:

- After a Greco-Persian War if **all Persians** are in **Hades**. Greece conquers Persia. The player who ended the game gets **+1 VP** per citizen in Elysion when counting VP.
- At any time if **no Persians** are in **Hades**. Persia conquers Greece. The player who ended the game gets **-1 VP** per citizen in Elysion.

*Example: Athens exports a resource for 3 talents but has only 2 left in her supply. This does not cause a war to break out so the game ends immediately.*



- 1) Athens has 10 citizens in Elysion and 3 top citizens on the board. She scores  $10 \times 2 + 3 = 23$  VP (same as Sparta and Korinth).
- 2) Both Athens and Sparta have 6 non-top citizens. (Korinth has 5.)
- 3) Athens has 2 talents and Sparta has only 1 so Athens wins!

## 7. ACTION DETAILS AND EXAMPLES

The following pages provide action details and examples. but first there are some key concepts regarding actions.



**Own and Other Citizens:** *Own* citizens are citizens of your polis. *Other* citizens are citizens of opponent poleis or Persians.



**Leader and Pretender:** *Leaders* are citizens with no opponent citizens above them. *Pretenders* will become leaders if the current leaders go away.



**Occupied and Adjacent Cities:** *Occupied* cities have at least 1 of your citizens. *Adjacent* cities are linked to occupied cities. If you have no citizens in a starting city, it counts as adjacent. You may only take actions in occupied or adjacent cities.

*Example: Athens has no citizens on the board so her only adjacent city in Hellas is her starting city. Sparta on the other hand occupies Sparta and Thebes and thanks to them she has adjacency to all the other Hellas cities.*

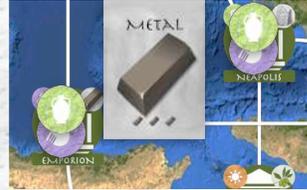


## 7.1 IMPORT

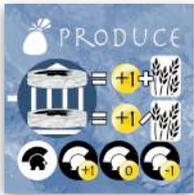


For each **Megale Hellas city**, take **1 resource card** if you are the **leader**. If you are the **pretender**, choose half of the cities rounded up and take 1 resource card for each of them. The city symbol tells which resource to take.

*Example: Athens imports and is the pretender of Emporion (metal) and Neapolis (marble). She may take a resource card for 1 of the 2 cities and chooses to take a metal card for Emporion.*



## 7.2 PRODUCE



For each **Hellas city**, take **1 grain card** and receive **1 talent** if you are the **leader**. If you are the **pretender**, choose 1 grain card or 1 talent.

*Example: Athens produces and taxes in the same turn. She takes 1 grain card and 1 talent for Athens. She takes another 2 talents for Ephesos.*

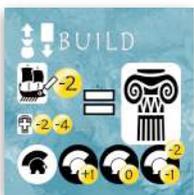
## 7.3 TAX



For each **Ionia city**, receive **2 talents** if you are the **leader**. If you are the **pretender**, receive 1 talent.



## 7.4 BUILD



Return **1 resource card** or pay **2 talents** to take **1 building card**. Pay 2 talents more for a 2nd building, 4 more for a 3rd etc. Each card gives you a bonus for executing its related action.

- **Building:** Ignore 1 passive action disc. At the end of your turn, flip the card to its monument face or exchange it for 1 other building.
- **Monument:** Ignore 2 passive action discs. At the end of your turn, exchange it for 2 other buildings.



Example: Athens builds and pays 1 metal to take the Produce building (Kerameikos).

In a later action she produces and this action has 2 passive action discs on it. Normally she would have to pay 1 talent but thanks to her building she ignores 1 action disc and pays no talents. At the end of the turn, she decides to flip the building to a monument. Next time she produces, she will ignore 2 passive action discs, return the monument, and take 2 buildings.



## 7.5 SACRIFICE



Return 1 resource card or pay 2 talents to place 1 citizen from your supply in Elysion. Pay 2 talents more for a 2nd sacrifice, 4 more for a 3rd etc.

Example: Athens sacrifices and returns 1 wine to place a 1st citizen in Elysion and 1 wine and 2 talents to place a 2nd citizen.



## 7.6 TRADE



Trade 1 grain card or 1 resource card for 4 talents minus the number of cards of that type on the market (next to the board) before the trade. You may both take and return cards. Pay/receive 1 talent more/less for a 2nd trade, 2 for a 3rd etc. The trading price cannot go below 0.

Example: Athens trades and all 5 grain are on the market. She takes 1 grain for free (4 talents - 5 cards) and a 2nd grain for 1 talent (4 talents - 4 cards + 1 talent for the 2nd trade).



## 7.7 COLONIZE

Place 1 citizen at the bottom of a Megale Helias city. Use 1 grain if occupied and 1 talent if adjacent. You may colonize each city once.

*Example: Argos colonizes and has a citizen in Syracuse. Thus, she may return 1 grain to place 1 citizen from her supply at bottom of Syracuse and place another 2 talents as citizens in the adjacent Neapolis and Cyrene. She may not colonize Hellas nor other Megale Hellas cities.*



## 7.8 LEVY



Place **1 citizen** at the **bottom** of a **Hellas city**. Use 1 grain if occupied and 1 talent if adjacent. You may levy each city once.

*Example: Athens levies but has no citizens at all on the board. Thus, only her starting city Athens is adjacent and she may only levy there. She may place 1 talent as 1 citizen at the bottom but may not return 1 grain to place a 2nd citizen in the same city.*



## 7.9 SUPPORT



Place **1 citizen** at the **bottom** of a **Ionia city**. Use 1 grain if occupied and 1 talent if adjacent. You may support each city once.

*Example: Athens supports but has no citizens in Ionia. However, thanks to her citizen in Sparta, Miletos is adjacent. Thus, Athens may place 1 talent as 1 citizen at the bottom of her starting city Ephesos and another 1 at Miletos.*



## 7.10 INTRIGUE



Replace **1 opponent leader** with **1 Persian** from Hades in an **occupied city**. Remove replaced leaders directly to Elysiion. If Persia gets **absolute majority**, receive **1 talent**. You may intrigue in 1 city per region.

*Example: Athens intrigues in Athens. The Spartan leader is removed to Elysion and replaced by 1 Persians from Hades. Persia gets absolute majority in the city and Athens receives 1 talent. Athens may not intrigue in Sparta too, since the city is in the same region.*



## 7.11 BATTLE



Move **any number of own leaders** to the **bottom** of an **adjacent city**. If you get **relative majority**, remove 1 previous leader to Hades and replace it with **1 citizen** from your supply. Optionally move back the leaders afterwards.

You may battle in 1 city per region but neither with the same leaders, nor with newly placed citizens.

*Example: Sparta battles and places 1 citizen from Sparta and 2 citizens from Ephesos at the bottom of Athens (3 Athenians).*

*The 3 Spartans have a relative majority so the top Athenian is removed to Hades and 1 Spartan from the supply is placed on the top. 1 Spartan stays at the bottom of Athens and 2 Spartans move back to Sparta and Ephesos. None of the engaged citizens may battle more.*



## 7.12 REVOLT



Move **any number of own citizens** in an **occupied city** 1 step upwards. If you get **relative majority**, remove 1 previous leader to Hades and receive **1 talent**. You may revolt in 1 city per region.

*Example: After the Battle example above, Athens occupies the 2nd and 3rd position in Athens and Sparta the 1st and 4th.*

*Athens revolts and moves her citizens to the 1st and 2nd position. The top position wins the tie against Sparta so the top Spartan moves to Hades and Athens receives 1 talent.*



## 8. ADVANCED RULES: ALLIES AND VASSALS

At the **start** of your turn, you may ally with **1 polis**. You must **pay 1 talent** and your ally **receives 1 talent**. For the rest of the turn, all the ally's citizens count as own citizens when determining **adjacent cities** (7. Action Details and Examples) and **majorities** (5.3 Politeia Phase). However, you may not act or count so that your ally loses a majority.

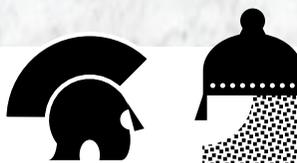
**Once** during your turn, you may turn **1 citizen** into a vassal of Persia (provided that there is no Persian in the city already). To do so, move **1 Persian citizen** from Hades to the position immediately beneath the yielded citizen. If the vassal was a leader, also receive **1 talent**.

- In the **Politeia phase**, the vassal counts as 2 citizens for majority.
- In the **Greco-Persian War phase**, the vassal counts as Persian and its city is not attacked.
- In **actions**, the vassal may not move in Move actions and receives **1 talent less** in Receive actions.
- In the **game end**, the vassal receives **1 VP less**.
- If you remove the vassal to **Hades**, remove the Persian too. (Place it face-down to remember the 1 VP less.)

*Example: Athens is not the leader in any city and pays 1 talent for an alliance with Sparta (who receives 1 talent).*

*Athens then levies in Athens and uses Spartan adjacency to levy in Argos and Thebes as well. Next, Athens yields the citizen in Thebes to Persia and moves 1 Persian from Hades to beneath her leader.*

*In the Politeia phase, Athens gains the relative majority in Argos (thanks to Sparta) and in Thebes (thanks to Persia) but not in Athens, since the Spartan citizen does not count against itself.*

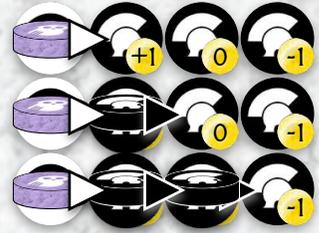


## TURN SUMMARY

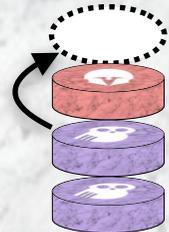
1) **Planning Phase:** Select actions on the action board.



2) **Action Phase:** Pay for and execute actions in any order.



3) **Politeia Phase:** Check city majorities. Move highest placed majority citizen to the top. Remove Persians who lose absolute majority to Hades.



4) **Greco-Persian War Phase:**

- Check if wars break out (10+ citizens in Hades).
- Replace the first Greek leader along each Ionia→Hellas→Megale Hellas path with a Persian.
- Most citizens in Elysion receive 1 talent, least citizens pay 1 talent.



*(Less than 5 players: 1 non-player citizen moves to the bottom of each starting city up to a maximum of 2 per city.)*

## Credits

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Game design: Nicholas Hjelmberg  
Artwork: Nicholas Hjelmberg  
Production: The Game Crafter  
Game testers: Stockholm Board Game Design Meetup  
Special thanks: My wife Su-San Oh for having to listen to my endless historical and game-technical considerations

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