

Themes and Expectations

If you've never played Cataphracts before, I hope this will be a good introduction to the game. If you have played Cataphracts, this game will be relatively small, short and low-information compared to many other games. Major themes are uncertainty, confusion, and the loneliness of command. There will be very little communication between players that does not first go through a GM until the game is over.

Players should not discuss events of the game with other players, on or off the server, until the game is over. There will not be enough public information to really talk about the game in an OOC manner. Even the information you have about the world will be from your faction's perspective.

Unlike other strategy games where you have a top-down view, in this game you are physically situated in a specific location. You can only see what your scouts can see. Aside from that, you have only rumours and letters. You start with a map of the region which is approximate, not to scale, and missing details.

Failures are likely to happen due to misunderstandings, miscommunication, or sheer bad luck, no matter how well thought out your plans. You will have to often take decisive action without enough information. Frustration is a key part of the game. However, all of these together can make for a very immersive game with great emergent stories.

Major changes in the rules

- It is now possible to die in battle, if you roll badly enough. The chance of being captured is slightly increased.
- There are no sieges, spells or raising of armies. Assaults on strongholds are now easier.
- Revolts have slightly different mechanics and are no longer controlled by commanders.
- Ships have been completely reworked and function more like regular detachments.
- Several commander traits have been reworked.

None of these rules have yet been tested, so there may be some rough edges.

This game is not based on a specific real world culture. Society is agricultural, writing has been invented, and the horse has been domesticated, but compared to other games, population densities are relatively low and so is the technology level. Boats, in particular, are mostly quite small.

Time commitment

It will likely be more fast paced than other cataphracts games, as the smaller scale means you will be running into other armies more often. You will probably need to spend at least a few minutes on it every day.

You should also read this document, the rules, and your character sheets at the beginning of the game and will probably want to continue to consult them throughout the game.

Content and safety

Like any other adversarial game, players are expected to be respectful of each other as players and as people, even as their characters fight, lie or backstab. If you have concerns about a player's behaviour, talk to the GM.

Content that is within the scope of the game:

- Lying and deception (including forms of deception illegal under international law in the modern era)
- Betrayal
- Killing other player characters
- Imprisoning other player characters, including for the remainder of the game
- Making bad decisions or being an ineffective ally
- Taunts and threats that are clearly in character

You can generally assume that other players are enthusiastic about playing a game of warfare and deception within agreed upon bounds, and that they signed up specifically because they wanted to do that. If you want to do something that you think needs out of character negotiation to safely do so beforehand, it is probably not within the scope of this particular game. If you have doubts, talk to the GM first.

Content that is excluded from the game (not a comprehensive or final list):

- Sexual assault
- Racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, even if period-appropriate

Note that while we don't need to dwell on the details, medieval warfare, foraging, etc is not something that could be done ethically according to today's standards. Commanders are generally not heroic and are assumed to not be in line with anyone's real world views.

While this game facilitates RP less than some Cataphracts games, you can RP to any degree that you want.

You may of course stop playing at any time and for any reason. I'd appreciate you letting me know but you don't have to give a reason.

Time

The game occurs in real time, but in practice we cannot be playing the game 24/7. So, the state of the real world and the state of the game world will be synchronized at 9 pm Pacific time (midnight Eastern time in North America, 5 AM in the UK, I'll do a hammertime). Orders for the day must be in by then. Depending on my schedule that day I'll aim to finish processing them sometime between 10 PM and midnight Pacific time. I will report on the events of the previous day, if any, to each commander, and then end by publicly posting the next day's weather.

Unless otherwise stated, I will assume orders were issued to troops first thing in the morning and resolve the events of the day accordingly. Each day consists of one night period followed by one daytime period. For instance, if by 9 pm on January 1 I receive an order to march 12 miles down the road north, then your army will have marched 6 miles north by noon on January 1 and 6 more miles north by the end of the day.

It may or may not be possible to rubberband for late orders. If you anticipate missing a day and you are able to do so, it's better to submit orders in advance.

If it becomes necessary to skip a day, we'll act like the day never happened. The calendar in this world simply has non-consecutive days.

Some advice

Don't just think of what the rules say, but also what makes sense based on the world as described. You may be able to do things not explicitly defined by the rules.

Messages

Messages are not automated (at least not yet). At the moment the number of messengers you have is abstracted but I may place a limit if you try and send too many at once.

Message failures may be correlated. Sending multiple identical messages simultaneously may not improve the chances of messages getting through.

Messages are in world objects. You can send information that can be written on parchment, or send small packages (less than one loot or one supply in size). You cannot send screenshots, but you can for instance sketch a rough version of a map and send that.

Messages contain *only* the information you send. Messengers might work by relay, and the messenger will generally drop the message off with your staff and depart, so questions like "who sent the message" or "when was it sent" might be unanswerable if not written on the letter.

Orders

Precise orders give better results. In the game world, you are directing orders to various officers who are then directing hundreds or thousands of people to follow your instructions. Likewise, the GM will have to interpret your orders and may not be able to reach you in a timely manner for clarification.

You may have standing orders, orders that span multiple days, or orders that are contingent on other factors.

Goals

Faction goals are meant to give a reason for conflict and a sense of direction. Some may be more achievable than others. If one of your goals becomes impossible, you can aim for a subset of your goals, but even in an apparently disastrous situation, victory may still be possible. Striving for your goals drives the game, more so than actually achieving them.

You may also decide to pursue other goals. For instance, if your ally was treacherously killed under a flag of truce, you might decide your first priority is to avenge them.

Only the initial commanders of a faction know its goals. If you are a subcommander, you will probably be given instructions by the commander who has recruited you. You are not obliged to follow these instructions.

GM Mistakes and Disagreements

The GM will definitely make mistakes. Please be patient.

The rules are also not comprehensive and rely heavily on GM rulings, which you may sometimes disagree with. In this game the GM is greatly outnumbered by players, and getting bogged down in debating rules can kill the game. Please point out if you think the GM made a mistake, or if there is something the GM did not consider, but if you find yourself going back and forth repeatedly with the GM, saying the same thing, you should probably stop.

Tactics

More often than not, you will not get a tactics bonus. The intention is less for you to research medieval tactics in detail, and more to reflect special circumstances, audacious plans, clever (or lucky) guesses of the other commanders' intentions, etc. You should describe what you intend to do in battle, but you don't need to write paragraphs of material if it isn't relevant.