

# ANCIENT EMPIRES 15

A PLAY BY EMAIL GAME  
FEATURING DIPLOMACY, PRODUCTION,  
ECONOMICS AND CONQUEST.  
VER 1.00

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Here We go....

“But Father, I am the third born. I will never be Regent of this realm, even if something should befall my brother, still there will be another before me. What role is there for me in this life?”

“Third born that is true and never shall you be Regent, alas that is true also. But you can support your brothers in their time of testing once I have passed into the mists on the other side. It will not be easy for them.”

“Father, as third born can I only expect to be a support for my kin? Surely there is more for me?”

“Alas in this realm, No. However, many miles to the West there is said to be a land with few peoples, a land where a leader may flourish and build a new Empire. If you go, you can build a great realm and show those that might doubt you what you can achieve.”

“Father, would you grant me this opportunity?”

“I shall, but I will not give you many of the resources of the Empire. You will be on your own with but a few gifts from me.”

“What Gifts father?”

“100 men and that troublesome friend of yours, a means to get you there and my best wishes.”

“Thank you Father, I will leave as soon as we are ready. Will I see you again?”

“I think not in this life.”

“Goodbye father, I will try to live up to your hopes.”

“Good luck my kin.”

1. THE GAME  
Ancient Empires is a play by Email game. It is based on a pre Roman economy and each Player position has a few villages with basic craft industry. Military units are 100 men strong and at the start of the game very basic and ill trained. Up to 12 player position feature on the map and the game is played until either an alliance or a single player controls most of the map. The survivors will then be graded on locations owned and put into order. This order will then be sent to all remaining players. The map covers many thousands of square miles and contains around 200 separate locations, many of them at sea. Naval and land forces are represented as well as production, transport, siege and command units. Many aspects contribute to successful play and just some of these include: Successful trading, diplomacy, espionage, assassination, planning, logistics, morale, strategy, communication, propaganda, military formations, sieges, naval combat and much more. This game has a free play format that lets you try anything. Now is the time to take control of your Ancient Empire.

2. INTRODUCTION  
Every Player Position in Ancient Empires starts with a few villages. The Border Patrol represents units deployed into the countryside around your villages to act as the first line of defence against invasion. At the start of the game, you will have under your command basic military units. A few hundred Irregular Infantry, the most numerous of the military units, skirmishers who are missile throwers and Irregular cavalry who represent basic mounted units. In addition to these fighting units you have a small number of production facilities. Workshops to build craft, the basis of all things, Hunting lodges to provide provisions to feed your people and troops. Stables to breed horses, and boat yards to build fishing boats and warships. From this humble beginning you can buy better, more efficient units, you may be able to open mines which will give you metal to work. You will have the loyalty of your army and people, at the moment. It is then your task to survive and prosper in a very hostile land using all the means at your disposal. Does this sound like your kind of game? If yes, read on. This is your key to the kingdom.

3. MOVEMENT  
Movement in Ancient Empires is very simple. You can move 200 miles in any direction. However, you must start and end your movement in a village. The scale of the map is 1" = 100 miles. All Military units move under their own power, but heavy weapons and commodities (such as craft) need to be carried in transport units such as carts . Each transport unit carries a set amount of weight and each unit that needs transporting has been given a weight for load purposes. ie. 1 cart unit will carry 400 Load Points. All land units can move 200 miles per turn. All ships can move 600 miles per turn.

4. ECONOMY  
The economy is very important. It is important to get it right, so that you can prosper. The economy is based upon available manpower. Each village has an assigned size. From this size, a level of manpower is allocated. The other parts of the village being the young, sick and the old. Smaller newer villages tend to have a higher proportion of available manpower than larger villages. Manpower is allocated to the production facilities, but no facility can operate without an allocation of manpower. Food production is the highest priority. Many things will make the growth of your kingdom more difficult. The first being weather, which varies from month to month. Another factor is unrest. If you do not feed you people they will quickly become unhappy and reduce their work. Keeping the men and women healthy and educated is also important. Food can be given in varying levels from starvation to double rations. It is not a good idea to starve the population, as they will leave for a better way of life. Low rations may be necessary, till better weather comes and the available food increases, but double rations will attract people faster. Available manpower can be drafted in to the army to provide Infantry and cavalry. With a happy population, your village will soon fill with people. You do not need much management to keep a village on the right track, but there are several settings to each village that control how the village reacts. These are:

- Ration level (set by you)
- Tax rate (set by you)
- Unrest level (automatically set)
- Manpower pool (automatically set)
- Weather (automatically set)

The presence of other facilities like wells, temples, infirmaries and store houses also help to keep the village operating.

5. PRODUCTION  
Every unit has to be produced. The building blocks for units are Craft and Metal. You start with a few workshops which build craft and a large stockpile. Mines are found in certain parts of the map, and produce metal. Each unit has a fixed production cost. ie, 1 hunting lodge costs 10 craft points. . 1 Light Infantry unit costs 10 craft points and 2 metal points. New units are bought by filling out the production sheet. On this form are spaces to specify the new units, as well as the cost to buy them. There are 14 lines of production.

6. UNIT CONVERSION  
As time goes by and your Kingdom advances you will need more and more powerful units. As you get these you will be able to upgrade units built at lower level of technology. There is a small cost and the table below outlines this. Ships cannot be converted.

| Old Unit           | New Unit       | Craft | Metal |
|--------------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| Irregular Infantry | Light Infantry | 3     | 2     |
| Skirmish           | Light Missile  | 3     | 2     |
| Irregular Cavalry  | Light Cavalry  | 2     | 2     |

7. THE MAP  
The map shows a large area of land, and some sea areas. The scale of the map is 1" = 100 miles. There are a number of terrain types as shown below. Rivers are crossable but mountains are not.

8. TERRAIN EFFECTS  
Village  
A Village is a location that can be developed in the game. At the start they have NO defensive value, but fortifications can be added as the game progresses. The population level of a village is vital, as this dictates the quantity of artisan units that can be located at the village. Each village has an unrest level and potentials for the resources available in the area.

Mountains/Hills/Woods

This represents very rough terrain which will prevent movement of all types of unit.

Rivers

Cargo and Light war galleys may use rivers. Rivers present no obstacle to ground movement. They also generate a small fishing potential.

Swamp

Swamp effects the potentials in an area. In a swamp area they are likely to be low. Units stationed in swamp areas may well have a steady decline in morale. Combat in a swamp is also very difficult. Mounted, armoured units and transport will have great difficulty in getting through a swamp area.

Forest

Forest has no effect on movement, but cavalry operations in wooded areas are extremely difficult. Infantry units such as spear men might find that they are less effective in forest terrain due to their armament.

Sea

Sea areas are important for transport and fishing. Each Sea Area has a relatively high fishing potential that can be exploited by fishing boats. Movement along the coast can also be fast and efficient using ships, and control of coastal waters may be vital in any campaign.

9. ROYAL PROCLAMATIONS

Royal Proclamations are a very important part of the game. They are used to do anything that is not directly covered by the rules. For example, to make your people think you are a good and caring leader you may order a clean up of the streets or attempt to improve the health of the people, or train your cavalry in open warfare. You can also use a Royal Proclamation in a more sinister way as well. You may want to have a well trained assassin to hand to poison the food supplies of another country, or a spy in military headquarters. Many thing are possible and you may try anything that comes to mind, evil or otherwise. However not everything will work. Actions might have repercussions later on in the game, or effect other aspects of your empire. In order to carry out actions you must allocate manpower in the form most suitable for the job (e.g.. miners to improve mines) and points. (e.g. If you wanted to invent a code you should allocate Knowledge.) The more resources you put into the action the greater the chance of a positive result.

10. CIVIL UNREST

The Civil Unrest Level is the measure of discontent in your country. Unrest is shown in each location, and ranges between fanatical loyalty and Rebellion. The further from Loyalty the population go, the less work they do in the production facilities. If you do something that is really unpopular or fail to feed the population, this level will rise. Other things will also make unrest rise.

Several things have an influence upon Unrest

- Food shortages
- Actions that the population disapprove of.
- Being under siege
- Poor weather
- Army units taking food

There are also some things which will make unrest fall.

- The presence of a leader
- The presence of an Infirmary
- Actions that benefit the well being of the people

Civil unrest is important at the monthly adjustment, and has an effect on production. It is very important to keep this level as low as possible. Royal Proclamations are a very good tool for this.

11. POTENTIALS

Each location has a level of Potentials. This is the MOST that a location can produce on the monthly adjustment, assuming a zero unrest level and all necessary units are in place. i.e.. a metal potential of 10 means that the most that can be produced in that location would be 10 metal, regardless of how many mines were present. This is to reflect the natural resources available in that area. The only limit to craft production is how many workshops your economy can sustain.

12. MANPOWER

Although you might have a population level, not everyone in the village can work. For this reason, there is a manpower pool. This represents the able bodied men (and women) who are available to work in the facilities of a location. In small villages, the proportion of able bodied is high, but as the village grows, this proportion falls to a lower level, reflecting the arrival of families and the growing infrastructure. Each level of manpower is allocated to a production facility. If there is not enough manpower, some facilities will not function. Priority of manpower is given to provisions, so hunting lodges always get their allocation of manpower before others.

13. COMBAT

When two forces meet, unless they are allied they will fight. In Ancient empires combat is very bloody. Many units will be destroyed and 1 side will lose. Unless there are fortifications the battle will be classed as an open field battle. With fortifications it will be a siege/assault. For this type of fighting you need special weapons, such as ladders or rams. Without these and a high morale level your troops will not attack. You may of course mix a special action with your combat order. A planning guide is provided called the combat sheet, which helps you to adhere to all the limits and answer all the questions that the GM might need to ask.

14. ALLIANCES

You are allowed 5 allies. These will appear on your print out. Of course you are allowed to write to anyone and an informal alliance can be set up. It takes one month notice to break an official alliance. You do not need to be allied to trade.

15. MESSAGES

Initial messages are sent through the GM. You are allowed to send your address, phone number or email. Usually after first messages, contact is outside of the game unless you want to remain anonymous, in which case I will pass messages through the game system, although this is much slower.

16. PROVISIONS

The following units require 1 provision at the Monthly Adjustment:

All Infantry units. All local units. (Such as Chiefs, Machinates, Sheriffs)

If they are not fed, the civil unrest will rise alarmingly, and the morale of local army units may fall sharply. Please note that provisions are allocated before any food production is carried out. This means that you will need sufficient stocks of provisions already in place at the end of the month.

Cavalry and more advanced units require more food than other types of units.

17. RATION LEVELS

Each Location has a ration Level. This is set by you. The levels vary between Starvation and double rations.

The ration level is the amount of food that each unit type is given. Normal rations means that each unit (including Population level) is given 3 provisions. Double rations will give them 4 provisions each. Villages with poor ration levels will become unhappy, and unrest will rise. Villages with good ration levels attract population and allow growth. You must judge the population against the food stocks and make decisions about provision allocation.

18. FORTIFICATIONS

Fortifications represent defences at a village, such as ramparts and walls. Each fortification level is capable of defending 1 village level effectively. Therefore a village level of 3 would need three fortifications to be fully defended. Partial fortification will provide limited protection to the defenders in combat, but full fortification will make the attackers task much more difficult. Attackers can besiege a village and wait for them to run out of provisions, or rebel. This is a costly and time consuming task that has its own problems.

19. ORDER OF PROCESSING

Ancient Empires is processed in the following order:

All Market Trading.

All movement.

All production.

All unit upgrades.

Transfers to other players

Any special actions outstanding from previous parts of the turn.

For reasons of fairness there will be no variance from this order

20. COMBAT BONUSES

As your army gets better and your dirty tricks department gets dirtier you will receive combat bonuses. These are the level to which your forces have special abilities over and above normal. They range from Navigation to Siege and are very useful to have in a war or if anything happens to you by someone else's special action.

21. EFFECTS OF WEATHER

The weather in Ancient Empires varies from month to month. On good weather months, extra production is available, but as weather gets worse, the amount of production falls.  
On good weather adjustment turns ALL production will be raised by 20%  
On poor weather adjustment turns, ALL production will be reduced by 25%  
On BAD weather adjustment turns, all units effected by weather will only produce 20% of their normal output. (Taking unrest into account).  
It would be wise to plan for at least a few months of the year when food production will be less than expected due to weather conditions.

22 CAPTURED LOCATIONS

If a location is captured, and it has no potentials, then it is an un-surveyed location. In order to carry out a survey to find out the potential level for the location. A survey costs 30 Knowledge, which will reveal the potential production levels of Natural resources and food production. This is done on the "Potential Survey " part of the turnsheet. Usually if you capture a village in battle, the unrest level will be very high.

23. THE MARKET PLACE

The Market Place is a location within the game. It is off map, and cannot be entered or attacked by players. It contains stockpiles of game commodities. The GM will assess and price of these commodities and then they will be put on sale to all players. Prices are non negotiable and taking them up is optional. If one type of commodity at the Market Place becomes scarce then the price will rise, until such times as plentiful supplies are available at the Market Place, when prices will fall. The Market Place trading scroll will be sent out with the monthly adjustment. Prices and the amounts for sale will be notified on this form. You simply fill in the amounts that you want to buy or sell and where they are to be delivered or collected from. The trade will then be carried out on the turn that you send it to the GM.

24. SHIPS

Ships are built at a boat yard. Boat Yards require manpower from the manpower pool to operate. When you have built a Boat Yard, you will start to receive "Boat Craft". This is what Boats are made from. Boats & Ships move 600 miles per turn. All ships and boats come with crew, and a cargo capacity that may be used for combat units or supplies. Only Light Galleys and Cargo Galleys may use rivers. Ships cannot be upgraded. Each ship consumes Provisions for the crew.  
Fishing Boats are able to fish the seas, and provide valuable extra food to your population. Fishing has a potential, usually much lower in coastal and river locations, so getting onto the high seas may well give you a good catch. Weather effects fishing. Good weather brings good fishing, but poor weather restricts the activity of your fishing fleet.  
A Cargo Galley can carry 4000 cargo points. (Cargo Point values are notified in the TAL 1 & TAL 2 Unit Reports.)

25. TECHNOLOGY ADVANCEMENT LEVELS

As the game progresses you will be able to carry out research (Spending Knowledge Points) to gain the knowledge for more diverse and more capable units.  
These units are grouped into Technology Advancement Levels You start the game at TAL 1.  
Once you have gained ALL the technology at the current TAL, you can spend the required Knowledge to move to the next TAL. You will then be informed of the units available, the Knowledge point cost and the cost of moving to the next TAL.  
Once purchased units will appear listed in the Current Technical Training section on the printout.

| Knowledge Cost for TAL 1 Units |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Unit                           | Knowledge Cost |
| Chieftain                      | 50             |
| Wooden Gate                    | 10             |
| Rampart & Ditch                | 20             |
| Well                           | 30             |
| Academy                        | 10             |
| Light Marines                  | 25             |
| Light Infantry                 | 20             |
| Light Missile                  | 30             |
| Light Cavalry                  | 50             |
| Fishing Boat                   | 20             |
| Monoreme                       | 70             |
| Merchant Galley                | 50             |
| Boat Yard                      | 30             |
| Small Siege Shield             | 15             |
| Small Siege Ram                | 15             |
| Siege Hook                     | 10             |
| Machinate                      | 50             |
| Sheriff                        | 20             |
| Replacements                   | 2              |
| Healers                        | 50             |
| TAL 1 to TAL 2                 | 1500           |

26. UNIT ORGANISATION

In the Ancient world Armies were organised into larger formations than the 100 man units you will be equipped with. They each had a name. This table will outline those used in the game.

| Formation | Fighting Units | Command | Machinates | Healers |
|-----------|----------------|---------|------------|---------|
| Cohort    | 10             | 1       | 1          | 1       |
| Guard     | 20             | 3       | 3          | 3       |
| Legion    | 50             | 9       | 6          | 6       |
| Wing      | 100            | 22      | 14         | 14      |

| Additional Formations |           |              |                |            |         |
|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|------------|---------|
| Name                  | Men       | Combat Units | Leaders Needed | Machinates | Healers |
| Century               | 100       | 1            | 0              | 0          | 0       |
| Alae                  | 500       | 5            | 1              | 1          | 1       |
| Numeri                | 200 -3000 | 2-30         | ?              | ?          | ?       |
| Cohort                | 1000      | 10           | 2              | 2          | 2       |
| Comitatus             | 1500      | 15           | 3              | 3          | 3       |
| Guard                 | 2000      | 20           | 4              | 4          | 4       |
| Band                  | 3000      | 30           | 5              | 5          | 5       |
| Legion                | 5000      | 50           | 10             | 6          | 6       |
| Wing                  | 10000     | 100          | 22             | 14         | 14      |
| Horde                 | 3100+     | 31+          | ?              | ?          | ?       |
| Grand Legion          | 10100     | 101+         | 44+            | 28+        | 28+     |

27. GAME CHARGES

|                             |               |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| START UP                    | Free Download |
| TURN CHARGE                 | £3.50         |
| MONTHLY ADJUSTMENT FEE      | £3.00         |
| THERE ARE NO HIDDEN CHARGES |               |

| 28. Load Points                                                                                                       |                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Each commodity has a load point weight, to be used to calculate the amount to be transported and the capacity needed. |                     |
| Cargo                                                                                                                 | Capacity Per Point  |
| Provisions                                                                                                            | 10 load points each |
| Knowledge                                                                                                             | 0 load points each  |
| Craft                                                                                                                 | 20 load points each |
| Metal                                                                                                                 | 40 load points each |

Ancient Empires Development notes

Ancient Empires is a game of some age. It hasn’t been run from the UK for a few years now but hopefully I have added a few things from the lessons I have learned about running these games over the last 30+ years. That said, this new version is in it’s infancy, and as the players of Company Commander over the last 4 years or so will know, games of this nature grow and evolve as both the players and the GM get to know what works and what does not.

This process is interactive. Both GM and players have some input into how the game mechanics and features grow so if you have anything you want incorporated into the game let me know.

Start ups with revised/new software are notoriously difficult to get right first time so I will be relying on you to tell me when things have not gone expected.

One thing that might be unfamiliar with players is how villages work. You can build the houses but you cannot build population. This has to be attracted by setting good conditions for people to live, like plentiful food for instance. Keeping them there will need you to keep them happy.

Another challenge is weather. With different weather your output of commodities (Including food) will vary considerably. A bit of forward planning will help here and some luck.

Manpower is taken from a village every time you recruit a military unit. The choice between butter and bombs is yours to make. The opposite is true also, in that you could disband military units to make sure that the harvest comes in.

I hope that Ancient Empires captures your imagination as it did for me many years ago.

As a player I vividly remember completing my turn in a trench I had dug, under a poncho with a red torch while MLRS rockets fired into Iraq from a few hundred feet away. (The post was due out that night)

Such is the nature of games.

I hope you enjoy the challenge and have a lot of fun.

Regards Jason Oates  
October 2025 Dorchester England UK