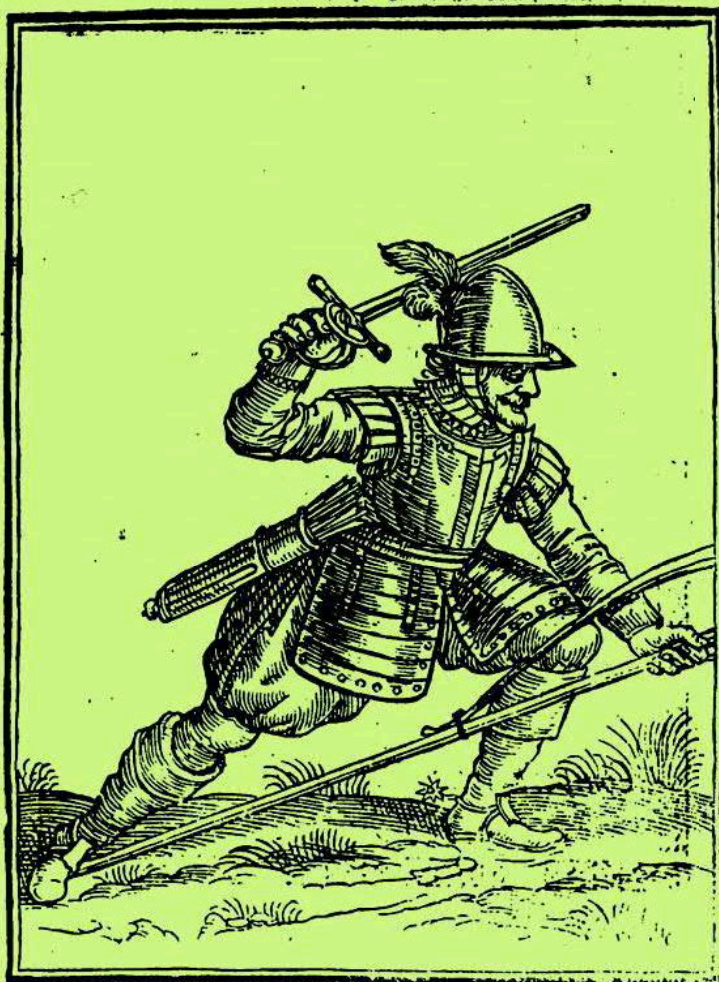


# Barons of Braunstein

Rules for Historical Games Inspired by David Wesely's Braunstein

by  
James & Robyn George





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**D**ice  
House  
Rules

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Braunstein in the Middle Ages (C) 2008 by David A. Wesely

Electronic Edition

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For my wife, Robyn, who  
knows the history of my heart and the  
future of my happiness...

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With love and many thanks  
to Robyn George for all her ideas and  
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started to begin with and was  
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along with his marvelous wife Su!

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## INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that the role-playing hobby sprang from war-games sometime in the early 1970s. Less acknowledged is the role of the transitional "Braunstein games" to this evolution, being a missing link between the different modes of play.

One night back in the day, Napoleonic war-gamer David Wesely tried something a little different. Instead of having each person command an army, he set things between battles in the town of Braunstein, with players acting the part of important townsfolk, each having an agenda and personal goals within the game setting.

Thus, a new hobby was born...

Although Wesely was initially displeased with the result, finding it chaotic, his players enjoyed it and asked for more, and for awhile, this style of gaming was referred to as a "Braunstein" in honor of the eponymous setting. There were third-world scenarios and, eventually, medieval adventures in this style.

Barons of Braunstein is a historical role-playing game, but one incorporating ideas and inspiration from the original Braunstein and designed for the medieval period (4-15th century).

## GAME CONCEPTS

Readers are likely familiar with role-playing games, but for the uninitiated, the following applies, noting that, very often, the concept of the game is the game and that rules, for all their importance, are really secondary in the scheme of things:

One person is the judge. Before any play can begin, they must first write an adventure, normally, someplace to be explored, like a castle or ancient crypt. This might also include a town or village to purchase supplies before setting out, and all of this should be organized in detail before the first session so things will go smoothly.

Sometimes, the judge will need to map out important areas, like the wilderness between towns. This can be accomplished using graph paper to the required scale (1 square equals 10' indoors).

Everyone else is a player (1-5 are best). Each creates a character, complete with their own abilities, equipment, and/or personal strategy per the rules being used. Players must coordinate with the judge, who explains their setting (and its restrictions) well in advance of the first session, although much is left to the individual to decide.

During play, the judge describes what is happening, acting out any supporting characters where necessary, and the players decide what, if anything, their own characters are going to do. The rules are then consulted and/or dice rolled to determine the outcome of certain events, like combat, where success is uncertain.

Each new session picks up where the last one left off as part of an ongoing chronicle. Assuming they survive, adventurers become increasingly more powerful, although death requires that a replacement character (or party) be generated.

## DICE

This system employs six-sided dice, referred to here as a d6, being commonly used in war-gaming. Where the rules say to roll two dice, this is written as 2d6 for quick and easy reference.

## MINIATURES

Although their use is optional, 25/28mm miniatures, painted to the participant's liking, can be used to represent characters and enemies in combat, making movement and position important. In this case, one figure on the tabletop equals but a single combatant, and 1 inch equals approximately 10', using a ruler or by sight.

## GETTING STARTED

First, the judge decides what period (4-15th century) they wish to chronicle and then chooses one or more books on the subject, the latter providing important details about the social situation and monetary system used. After that, these rules can be used to create characters and resolve unpredictable actions in play.

Barons of Braunstein is suitable to a range of historical periods, and enthusiastic judges can add (or change) anything, making their chronicles challenging and fun, which is, after all, the whole point!





## I. THE CHARACTER

Character creation is extremely simple, although players must first master a few basic concepts. This system emphasizes choices and personal interaction over detailed mechanics, even if some rules are needed to preserve the element of risk...

### TRAITS

Characters are medieval men and women who have chosen a life of adventure. Accordingly, there are no classes or skills, as adventuring is what they did instead of doing something else. That said, they can fight and attempt any action available to an able-bodied adult and might enjoy other talents as per the following:

### LITERACY

Not every character will know how to read, especially in a medieval environment, and while there are obvious advantages to literacy, unlettered commoners enjoy certain benefits as well, and the player can decide which is best for them:

ILLITERATE characters include commoners and country folk, although urban dwellers may also count, adding +2 LUCK for being streetwise and leading hardy lives of work and toil.

LITERATE adventurers come from the clergy or nobility, although wealthier commoners may also be. These can read and write in their own language (and Latin as the learned tongue), adding +1 if attempting to recall facts about history and/or the chronicle.

Of course, being illiterate does not imply stupidity by any means, and such characters make excellent adventurers.

### SOCIAL CLASS

As itinerant adventurers, most characters fall outside of medieval society, although some details of their background might be useful when establishing a suitable back story:

CLERGY include Christian priests (and nuns from wealthy stock) and priests (or priestesses) from the old pagan faith, the latter being active through the 11th century. Christians are always literate and pagans sometimes are, knowing the runic script.

Note that while the Christianization of Northern Europe was complete by the 11th century, individual holdouts are always possible!

## RELIGIONS OF ASIA AND EUROPE

FAITH/CLERGY	PERIOD	REGION
Buddhism (foreign monks)	5th century onward	Asia
Christianity (priests)*	4th century onward	Asia/Europe
Islam (wandering imams)	8th century onward	Asia/Europe
Judaism (rabbis)	4th century onward	Asia/Europe
Paganism (oracles/priests)#	4-11th centuries	Asia/Europe
Protestantism (ministers)	16th century onward	Europe

\*Greek Orthodox or Catholic, brothers and sisters

#Hellenistic pagans (4th century) or northern (4th-11th)

COMMONERS include craftsmen, farmers, and social outcasts, like prostitutes and thieves. These are typically illiterate, although rich freemen could often hire tutors.

NOBILITY can be unacknowledged bastards or second/third children having no land to inherit (a perfect motive for adventuring), whether by war or circumstance. These are normally literate unless part of a tribal and/or barbarian culture, although the latter will sometimes be literate in the manner of pagan priests.

The above is just a guide for players to establish a consistent background for their characters. Being social outcasts, most will have varied histories, although the judge might impose some limitations to ensure a minimum level of accuracy.

### LADY LUCK

All characters begin the chronicle with 10 points of LUCK (+2 if they happen to be illiterate) representing the skill and strength necessary to survive in difficult situations. Players can spend 1 LUCK performing any one of the following as the judge permits:

- (1) Add +1 to any die roll, noting that the player can roll first and decide whether or not they wish to do this, the maximum bonus limited only by the total amount available.
- (2) Survive an attack made against them, noting that some, like natural hazards and/or traps, might require multiple points of LUCK to stay alive, scaling with the risk involved.

If a character lacks sufficient LUCK to survive, death is inevitable barring the use of armor and/or intervention from the judge, although just falling to zero is not otherwise fatal unless subsequent injury occurs (a present risk). Spent LUCK is recovered through rest, and this is explained more fully in the following game rules section.



With the above concepts understood, character creation becomes simple, starting with background as follows...

## BACKGROUND

Using 25 words or less, the player describes their character's name, gender, and personal history, noting that fighting ability and literacy need not be referenced. Background helps the player make their character unique and might also indicate certain skills, like being a monk or blacksmith's apprentice:

Bodvar was a Viking raider  
who abandoned his crew to seek his fortune  
abroad and learned Latin from a blind  
priest he met in England.

Notice that while literacy is not specifically addressed, it forms the basis for some of Bodvar's background, and as a Viking invader, fighting prowess is a given. The character is ready for the next step; armor, weaponry, and/or other starting equipment.

Background fleshes out a character, but might also suggest additional abilities. That said, the judge can increase the number of words allowed, taking care to be consistent.

## ARMOR AND SHIELD

Those characters wishing to wear armor begin the game having a set, although only if they intend to use it. This can be anything from hide to chain or plate mail, per the period, with no distinctions made except where noted by the judge. Again, characters cannot just take armor for personal resale, but must actually intend to use it.

Should an armored character take enough damage to actually die in combat, they revert to 10% of their total LUCK and stay alive, although the armor is damaged beyond use and must be repaired (10 SP) or replaced before receiving its benefit again.

Optionally, players can take a shield, but never both to start unless they can otherwise afford to buy each separately. These allow the character to ignore up to 3 points of damage from a single attack, after which the item is ruined and must be repaired or replaced in the same manner as armor and at the same price (10 SP).

Note that for game purposes, armor and shields captured or found on adventures have only a 1 in 1d6 chance of being useable without repairs, making regular visits to town for maintenance essential.

Armored characters cannot climb, hide, sneak, and/or swim, although exceptions to the latter can be made for those wearing hide or leather if the judge otherwise permits. Unarmored characters may, of course, attempt all of the above, making this an attractive option and a good strategy for those wishing to act stealthily.

Characters move 50' per round (10' climbing) unless armored (30'), per the game rules and the judge's discretion.

#### WEAPONRY

Each character likewise begins with a single weapon of the player's choice and, unlike armor, captured and/or found items are fully useable, subject to all of the following:

BOWS have a range of 200', although the judge can adjust this for more realism. Shields cannot be used, although a small (one-handed) weapon may also be carried for use in close combat.

ONE-HANDED MELEE WEAPONS include hand axes and swords that, being smaller, leave one hand free for a shield. Some, like the aforementioned axe, can be thrown 30', making them versatile.

TWO-HANDED WEAPONS require both hands, making shield use impossible, although their larger size grants +1 to damage scored:

WEAPON	RANGE	NOTES
Bows	200'	crossbows, long/short bows*
Melee	--	axes, maces, swords, etc.
One-handed	10'	enables shield use, no bonus
Two-handed	10'	no shield, deals +1 damage#
Thrown melee	30-50'	includes daggers, spears, etc.

\*Judges can enforce a minimum range of 30'

#Requires at least 20' free space to wield properly

#### EQUIPMENT AND LOAD

Otherwise, characters begin their adventures with a backpack large enough to hold 15 items and 1,000 SP, food and water for a full game week, and whatever armor (shield) and/or weapon they chose, noting that the maximum load for anyone is 20 items. This excludes armor and weapons carried, either on a belt or in the pack, etc.

Silver pieces (SP) are the monetary standard in this system, and all characters begin having 1d6 x 10 SP as rolled, noting that most equipment is already provided, and many things can be won on adventures.

Costs vary with availability and location, making an equipment table unnecessary. Rather, items cost 1d6 SP times a multiplier based on rarity and/or size as per the judge:

ITEM	COST (SP)	NOTES
Common/small	1d6	personal items, tools
Exotic/large	1d6 x 10	armor, weaponry
Rare/very large	1d6 x 100	luxuries, mounts, vehicles

Note that the judge has the final say here, although the above rules make it possible to further equip an aspiring party.

#### A SAMPLE CHARACTER

The following sample character is provided as an example, demonstrating what a finished hero might look like:

NAME: Mite            SEX: female

LITERACY: illiterate (+2 LUCK)

LUCK: 12    SOCIAL CLASS: commoner

BACKGROUND: Mite is a young street urchin with no knowledge of her birth name. Although willing to steal, she is protective of the weak and helpless.

EQUIPMENT: backpack, bedroll, knife, picks and tools, rations

EXPERIENCE: 0    TREASURE: 12 SP

As characters go on adventures, they gain valuable experience and become better at what they do per the game rules that follow...



## II. THE GAME

Throughout the game, characters will attempt many actions, and as success is by no means guaranteed, rules are required. This element of risk is essential to an exciting game.

### DOING THINGS

Some actions are easy. The player does not roll dice because their character is automatically successful. Other things are simply impossible and never succeed under any circumstances, although judges can always intervene (a matter of common sense and good judgment). Everything else requires the roll of 2d6, based on conditions:

TASK	SUCCESS	NOTES
Simple	--	ordinary walking/talking
Easy	7 or better	elementary/little interference
Moderate	9 or better	harder/distractions present
Difficult	12+	daunting/dangerous conditions

Note that simple actions can easily become difficult, like moving when bound and gagged, as per the judge.

### KNOWLEDGE

Characters may attempt to recall facts about the game world, like the location of some holy place, etc. This does not apply to solving problems and never does anyone's thinking for them.

### STRENGTH

Feats of physical strength must never exceed the limits of human ability, although this varies and can be remarkably powerful.

### ACTS OF STEALTH

Characters who forego the use of armor can attempt feats of speed or stealth, resulting in fast, mobile, and generally versatile heroes, albeit vulnerable in combat. These may climb walls at 10' per round, hide and sneak, and/or steal small, light objects.

### PUSHING LUCK

Literate characters add +1 when reciting facts. Otherwise, players can spend LUCK adding +1 to any die roll (they can roll first and decide whether or not to do this). Note that running out of LUCK in this way does not result in death unless the character later enters combat.

## THE MELEE

Combat is divided into rounds, each representing 1 minute of action moving and/or exchanging blows, where applicable, noting that time here is approximate and may vary greatly.

## ORDER OF ACTION

At the start of each round, both sides roll 1d6 for initiative (one player rolls for the party and the judge for enemies), with the higher result moving and acting or attacking first. Combat must involve risk, so in the event of a tie, initiative goes to the enemy.

## MOVEMENT

Combatants move 50' per round (30' armored) and may attack if within range at the end of that movement. Optionally, the side winning initiative adds +1 to attack dice, but only when armed and ready to fight, noting that luck may also be spent to do so.

## RESOLUTION

Once again, attacks are resolved by rolling 2d6, with damage scored per the following combat table:

2d6	DAMAGE	NOTES
2-8	0	Possibly glancing off armor
9-11	1 hit	May indicate fatigue, etc.
12	2 hits	Normally represents a physical blow

\*Two-handed weapons add +1 damage

Targets must spend 1 LUCK per point of damage to survive. Otherwise, death results, although armored combatants recover 10% of total LUCK and continue fighting as explained earlier.

## DEATH AND HEALING

Any target having insufficient LUCK to survive will die. Otherwise, characters recover through rest at a rate of 1 per day spent camping in the wilderness and 1d6 at an inn or hostel, etc.

## USING ARMOR

Characters having armor revert to 10% of total LUCK, rounding up, so illiterate types (12 LUCK) get 2 (1.2 rounding up), noting that experienced adventurers having greater LUCK should benefit even more.



Shields allow the character to ignore up to 3 points of damage (the maximum possible in most situations). Note that this might apply to traps and certain natural hazards, provided a shield would be useful, like swinging blades or machine-fired spears.

#### A SAMPLE COMBAT

Bodvar is attacked by a brigand on the road to Bristol, and the first round of combat begins. The player rolls 3 and the judge 5, so the robber acts first, attacking at a +1 bonus:

Because the Viking was ambushed in close quarters, movement is not required, and the bandit attacks with a dagger, rolling 9. Bodvar is hit and must spend 1 LUCK to stay alive. Now the Viking can act, using his enormous (two-handed) axe and rolling 4, missing.

The second round begins, and Bodvar wins initiative, swinging his gigantic axe and getting 12. The brigand has to spend 3 LUCK to survive, but only has 2, dying instantly, although things may have worked out differently with more enemies present, etc.

#### NATURAL HAZARDS

Drowning characters suffer 1d6 damage per round unless recovered, otherwise, death results. Falling deals 1d6 per 20' dropped, and the judge might break a leg unless the player spends additional LUCK to prevent this from happening (assume 1-3 points).

#### POISON

While most poison is delivered in food or drink (being the stuff of assassinations), venomous animals, like spiders and snakes, might also be encountered in exotic locales. Either way, poison inflicts damage by strength and potency, being weak (1d6) or strong (2d6).

#### MECHANICAL TRAPS

Characters might encounter the following traps:

TYPE	DAMAGE	NOTES
Bear trap	1-2d6	victim restrained 1d6 rounds
Covered pit	distance dropped	broken limbs might result
Poisoned needle	by strength	found in locks and similar things
Projectile	1-2d6	machine-launched spears, etc.
Swinging blade	1d6 per blade	possibly multiple blades present

Note: Others are possible; these just represent "real world" types.



When placing traps, the judge will need to have some idea of how it operates and what actions will trigger it, including string or pressure plates, etc. Beyond that, careless players who fail to look might accidentally activate the device, and death is always easier to defend when the judge can explain themselves:

BEAR TRAPS and COVERED PLATES must be stepped on to activate, making placement the deciding factor.

POISONED NEEDLES are often placed in locks or small crevices that characters might need to probe for whatever reason, including locks or narrow openings housing some desired object.

PROJECTILES include machine-launched spears, etc.

SWINGING BLADES are some sort of pendulum that, once activated, moves under its own power and momentum.

Note that some traps may need to be reset by human hands, either fitting poisoned needles or reloading spears, etc.

#### EXPERIENCE

At the end of every playing session, each character is awarded one or more experience points (EXP) as follows:

CHARACTER...	EXP
Goes on an adventure	1 (base)
Performs extraordinarily	+1
Completes a quest, etc.	+2

Experience is cumulative, so a character who participates in an adventure (1) and performs well (+1) would get 2. For every 10 experience points awarded, the character adds 1 LUCK, making them more powerful adventurers and allowing them to better survive in combat and improve their die rolls as well as getting more benefit from armor, etc.

### III. THE CHRONICLE

Barons of Braunstein uses a medieval setting, although the judge has considerable freedom when choosing a period to chronicle in, noting that most should derive from the following:

PERIOD	DATES	EVENTS
Dark Ages	4-10th century	fall of the Roman Empire*
Middle Ages	11-15th century	Crusades and Christianization

\*Includes the Viking era (793-1066 AD) in Britain/France

Note that while some disagree with the designation "Dark Ages" as a period, it remains useful, including, among other things, the Viking Age, when Christianity and northern paganism coexisted.

Rather than reconstruct history here, judges are directed to the many excellent books on the subject. These rules, coupled with the right references, provide everything needed to get started, as history is the best, and most richly detailed, setting of all!

#### WHEN AND WHERE

Having selected "when" the chronicle takes place, "where" becomes a simple matter of preference, noting that certain periods lend themselves to specific places, like Britain during the Norman Invasion, although such events may only serve as a backdrop.

#### LANGUAGE

The setting chosen determines what languages are spoken; noting that educated types will know Latin, at least in Western Europe, making this a serviceable "common tongue" among literate folk.

Optionally, the judge can allow characters to spend experience points learning another language, provided they have a teacher (perhaps another character in the party), spending experience as shown:

EXP SPENT	FLUENCY
1	Basic, some words known
2	Discussion possible
3	Excellent, fully fluent, etc.

Good communication is important, and the judge must ensure that the characters can at least speak with one another while otherwise enforcing language restrictions when meeting foreigners and/or travelling in exotic lands, like Egypt or Mesopotamia during the Crusades.



## LANGUAGES SPOKEN

TONGUE	REGION	NOTES
English	England	Old Saxon through 12th century
French	France/Germany	assume Old French through period
German	Germany	regionalized until 12th century
Greek	Greece/Turkey	treat as Latin in Roman chronicles
Italian	Italian Peninsula	Vulgar Latin until 12th century
Latin	Europe	native Roman, scholarly language
Norse	Norway/Sweden	Old Norwegian through 14th century
Portuguese	Portugal	from Galician and Vulgar Latin
Spanish	Spain/France	Moorish influence through period

New adventures will begin in civilization, whether a town or nearby village, etc. Here the characters gather to equip and find work, perhaps from the mayor or local guild master:

DUNGEONS might include natural caves, castle cellars, or crypts, the latter being trapped against grave robbers, especially Egyptian burials and the like (all believed to contain great wealth).

TOWN adventures often involve talking to people and finding clues, although major confrontations (requiring miniatures, of course) with the city guard or robbers can sometimes happen.

WILDERNESS forays might be incidental to the main event, such as travelling to some shrine or nearby town, although they can also involve bounties on wanted criminals, etc.

## MAPPING THE GAME

Underground (and indoor) areas should be mapped on graph paper or similar material, with 1 square equaling 10'. Above ground or wilderness locations can be mapped if the judge finds it necessary, again, using graph paper at a scale suitable to the adventure.

Assume that characters move 1 mile per hour above ground, allowing sufficient time to rest. Otherwise, they can travel at double speed for a maximum of 20 miles per day, although doing so is exhausting such that players roll all dice at -1 (barring LUCK).

## NON-PLAYERS

During the game, characters will encounter many people, referred to variably as non-player or supporting characters, all of them created and run by the judge as the scenario requires. Some are friendly, like clergy or townsfolk, while others, including robbers and rival parties, must be overcome, sometimes over the course of a chronicle.

Non-players use the same rules as players, but LUCK may vary as befits their ability and purpose in the game:

TYPE	LUCK	NOTES*
Brigand	1-5	robbers or common thugs
Commoner	6-10	farmers and tradesmen
Non-player	10 or more	important friends or villains

\*Action/movement based on armor worn (if any)

Note that brigands are stock enemies, not always the strongest, but dangerous in numbers. This results in dramatic battles with many foes that are deadly, but not overly drawn out.

Commoners are hardy folk, having greater skill and fortitude in general, not to mention being more likely to use LUCK to improve rolls, making them dangerous if crossed.

Other non-players, like knights or enemy lords, are comparable to characters and harder to overcome. Indeed, the chronicle may benefit from recurring villains who return to fight again!

#### TOOTH AND CLAW

Sometimes, characters will encounter animals still numerous through large parts of Europe at the time, noting that most attack with tooth and claw for additional (bonus) damage as follows:

TYPE	LUCK	MOVE	DAMAGE*
Bear	9	40'	bite, 2 claws (+2)
Bull	10	50'	gore, trample (+3)
Lion	8	40'	bite, 2 claws (+2)
Pig	7	30'	charge, gore (+1)
Wolf	6	50'	bite, 2 claws (+2)

\*Can be split between multiple targets

Of course, the judge can add others, like crocodiles, when travelling in exotic or foreign lands, comparing to the above.

#### BEASTS OF BURDEN

Horses have 5-10 LUCK, although being more passive, use it only for purposes of personal survival. Some can be outfitted with armor (called barding) that functions as the usual sort. Horses allow the rider to travel at high speed (3 miles/hour) or 30 miles per day without tiring the character and may bear up to 3,000 SP and/or 20 regular items.

Of course, the judge can add additional creatures, often on the fly, although human encounters are always more challenging, and the greatest enemy is often one's fellow man!

#### ANTIQUITY

Barons of Braunstein is set in the medieval period, starting in late antiquity (the 4th century onward), although an enterprising judge could easily push this back to even earlier times, being technologically identical where it counts. This is left to the judge, who can tailor these rules to the desired context with some research.

Alternately, the judge can (with a little effort) introduce firearms, taking their chronicles into the 16-17th centuries, as the old world still survived enough to make these rules work.

Note that the earliest firearms had limited accuracy and took time to reload, as per the following:

TYPE	ATTACK*	RANGE	RELOAD TIME
Arquebus	-1	200'	1 round
Matchlock	-2	100'	2 rounds

\*Assume all firearms deal 1d6 damage

The greater damage afforded by such weaponry brought an end to the old ways and signaled the dawning of a new age...

#### WEALTH AND RICHES

Adventurers seek riches, either by taking work and/or capturing treasure. For game purposes, wealthy persons or rival adventurers may carry the maximum allowed, not including jewelry or material wealth, which might take the form of exotic goods. Note that characters must earn every scrap, this being the ultimate reason for adventuring!



## ADVANCED RULES

The judge might wish to introduce a more detailed system of armor, representing the common historical types and the relative advantages of each within whatever period is being played:

LIGHT ARMOR includes padded or quilted vests, like the gambesons worn under chainmail to minimize chafing, although these (or variants) can be worn alone and offer lightweight cover.

HEAVY ARMOR is chain and/or plate, subject to restrictions already described per the basic rules. Here the character sacrifices speed and maneuverability for greater physical protection:

ARMOR	COVER*	MOVE	RESTRICTIONS
Light	10%	40'	penalties (-1) to all stealth
Heavy	20%	30'	no climbing, stealth, or swimming

\*Denotes LUCK recovered as per the basic rules

Once again, good judges will study the historical period they wish to chronicle and research the armor typically worn, noting here that this will vary by culture and/or region...

SHIELDS may now, at the judge's discretion, resist 3 hits of damage incrementally instead of all at once. Players can decide how to do this, resulting in a more tactical combat experience.

### SHIELD WALLS

Any character can raise their shield against incoming missile fire, deftly avoiding frontal attacks, although movement is reduced to 10' per round with counterstrikes made impossible.

Effective SHIELD WALLS may be employed by having multiple warriors interlock their shields to strike with axes, spears, or swords from within, such that all attacks against them are rendered more difficult to execute based on the number used:

SHIELDS	COVERAGE	REQUIRED TO HIT
3-6	Front only; flank exposed	10 or better
7-9	Front and sides only	11 or better
10+	Front, sides, and top covered	12 or better

Once again, movement is reduced to 10', and any successful (melee) hit against the wall has a chance (1-3 in 1d6) of reducing the shields by one, noting here that these are not necessarily lost in the process...



## HISTORICAL BATTLES

While this is not a war-game, historical battles nonetheless figure prominently within its framework, and characters might find themselves involved in hostilities, whether real events or those imagined by the judge as part of some alternate history.

Historical or otherwise, the judge should know well in advance the outcome of any given conflict, and rather than recreate the engagement wholesale, individual parties might participate in smaller encounters superimposed over this in some way:

RAIDS on an enemy position can produce some challenging adventures despite the actual outcome on the battlefield.

RECONNAISSANCE missions to collect vital information can result in success for the players even when the ultimate cause is doomed to fail, like the Battle of Hastings, etc.

SKIRMISHES might sometimes represent the party's small portion of the larger battle raging on around them. For example, fleeing the defeated army of Harold Godwinson, last Saxon King.

Alternately, the judge can allow these otherwise minor exchanges to decide the final ending, where applicable, resulting in the characters literally rewriting history within the judge's game!

## WAR HORSES

Only war horses can stand battle. These get 7 LUCK (50' move) and can be fitted with leather or metal barding as desired.

## SIEGE WEAPONS

Most characters will eventually encounter siege weaponry, being extensively used. This includes the use of boiling oil and pitch against those trying to scale castle walls:

TYPE	DAMAGE	RANGE	NOTES
Ballista	2d6	400'	giant-sized crossbow
Boiling oil	1d6	--	poured from walls
Catapult	3d6	800'	throws large rocks, etc.

Siege weapons require a crew of 2-5 and take 1d6+1 combat rounds to reload on the battlefield. When used against buildings, these always hit in a straight line, although catapults/trebuchets can sometimes injure characters within 20' of impact unless special steps are taken...

## MEDIEVAL SIEGE

Occasionally, characters may find themselves participating in sieges under conditions similar to the above. These might be actual historical engagements or part of an alternate timeline...

### STORMING THE WALLS

The following is true of sieges:

Direct assault using ladders was always a dangerous affair, as it subjected attackers to enemy arrows and, of course, ladders could always be pushed away. For game purposes, characters suffer 1d6 hits from missile fire per round (no dice) unless shields are held aloft, which is not always possible when scaling ladders, etc.

As previously stated, ladders are fraught with risk, for not only is movement reduced to 10', but there is a flat 1 in 1d6 chance per round of these being successfully repelled. Smart defenders will no doubt take advantage of this and might employ boiling oil or burning sand instead, both dealing damage per the above table.

CATAPULTS (OR TREBUCHETS) inflict damage as shown, noting that enemy walls can sustain anywhere from 50-75 damage per the judge, this representing structural integrity (a sort of LUCK for buildings and/or vessels, including the various siege engines)...

RAMS deal 1d6 battering hits per round, noting that these are often protected by a portable and tent-like covering, taking 10-15 hits as per conditions and the judge. These will require a proper crew, with most doors easily withstanding 25-30 hits.

SIEGE TOWERS (or belfrys) are built for the siege and carry several hundred fully equipped soldiers. These must be pulled to the castle walls at 10' per round, normally by a team of 10-20 oxen led by 5-10 exposed handlers, and can take up to 50 hits per the judge.

TUNNELING can access an enemy castle, but is often done purposely to destabilize the wall above it (a 1-2 in 1d6 chance). Characters may find themselves tasked with entering these and exploring the castle's many counter-tunnels stocked with enemy soldiers hoping to repel the invader, making for difficult fighting underground!

Note here that archers on the walls are a hazard, being difficult to counter from the outside. For simplicity, assume that these are limitless and impossible to defeat unless the wall they stand upon is eventually destroyed or the party scales defenses to engage hand-to-hand...

Except for missile fire from the walls, all actions against enemy fortifications require attack dice. Note that characters firing siege weaponry can spend LUCK to modify results.

#### CASTLE DEFENSES

DRAWBRIDGES can be raised and/or lowered across a moat or similar barrier to admit (or deny) passage. Assume this takes 2-3 rounds, with any unfortunate soldiers actually on the bridge falling within the gatehouse to be isolated or outside, noting that both deal damage as per conditions, normally 1-2 per 10' fallen.

GATEHOUSES guard access to the inner castle, typically featuring a portcullis (iron gate) on the outside and a reinforced door to the castle itself, always under constant watch. Men could be isolated here and exposed to arrows or burning oil from murder-holes built into the walls for that purpose, being fortified as per the period.

MOATS are either dry ditches or (3-30' deep) bodies of water meant to impede access to the wall. These might be filled over time, but subjects workers to a barrage of deadly missile fire...

#### ENGINEERING TABLES

Once again, physical structures get hits (LUCK) as follows:

STRUCTURE	HITS	NOTES
Ballista	10	ineffective against castle walls
Battering ram*	5-10	crew moves 10' per combat round
Catapult/trebuchet	15-20	takes 1d6+1 rounds to reload/refit
Door, reinforced	25-30	barred (wood) or iron reinforced
Door, wooden	10-15	resistance varies by thickness
Siege tower, wood	25-50	occupants may suffer fire damage
Wall, timber or wood#	25	fire deals 1 hit/round once set
Wall, worked stone	50-75	often built into natural hillsides

\*Assume here that portable covers add +5 structural hits

#Normally, antiquity and/or pagan (primitive) fortresses, etc.

Obviously, arrows are of no use against larger structures, like castle walls and/or siege weaponry (but deadly to any crews).

Once again, this is not a true war-game, so the above rules focus on individual characters attacking (or defending) castles and the variables affecting them. As always, the judge is expected to research the above concepts and incorporate period-specific (and correct) details for better realism, noting here that miniatures add both spectacle and fun!

## APPENDIX I: HISTORICAL TIMELINE

The following timeline may be useful to the judge:

313	Edict of Milan; Roman toleration of Christianity
395	Roman Empire split in two parts (east and west)
476	Western Roman Empire falls to Germanic Barbarians
718	Moorish conquest of Iberia and push into Europe
732	Battle of Tours; Muslim expansion effectively halted
793	Sack of Lindisfarne, England; Viking Age begins
800	Europe (France/Germany) united under Charlemagne
1066	Battle of Hastings; Norman conquest of England
1096	First Crusade called by Pope Urban II; forces move
1099	Siege of Jerusalem; crusader states established
1144	Crusader State of Edessa falls; begins Second Crusade
1187	Muslims retake Jerusalem; Third Crusade initiated
1347	Black Death (bubonic plague) spreads into Europe*
1381	Plague in England effectively ends manorial system
1478	Spanish Inquisition begins; witch hunts common#
1492	Islamic expulsion from Spain completed (Reconquista)
1500	Renaissance spreads; the medieval period ends here

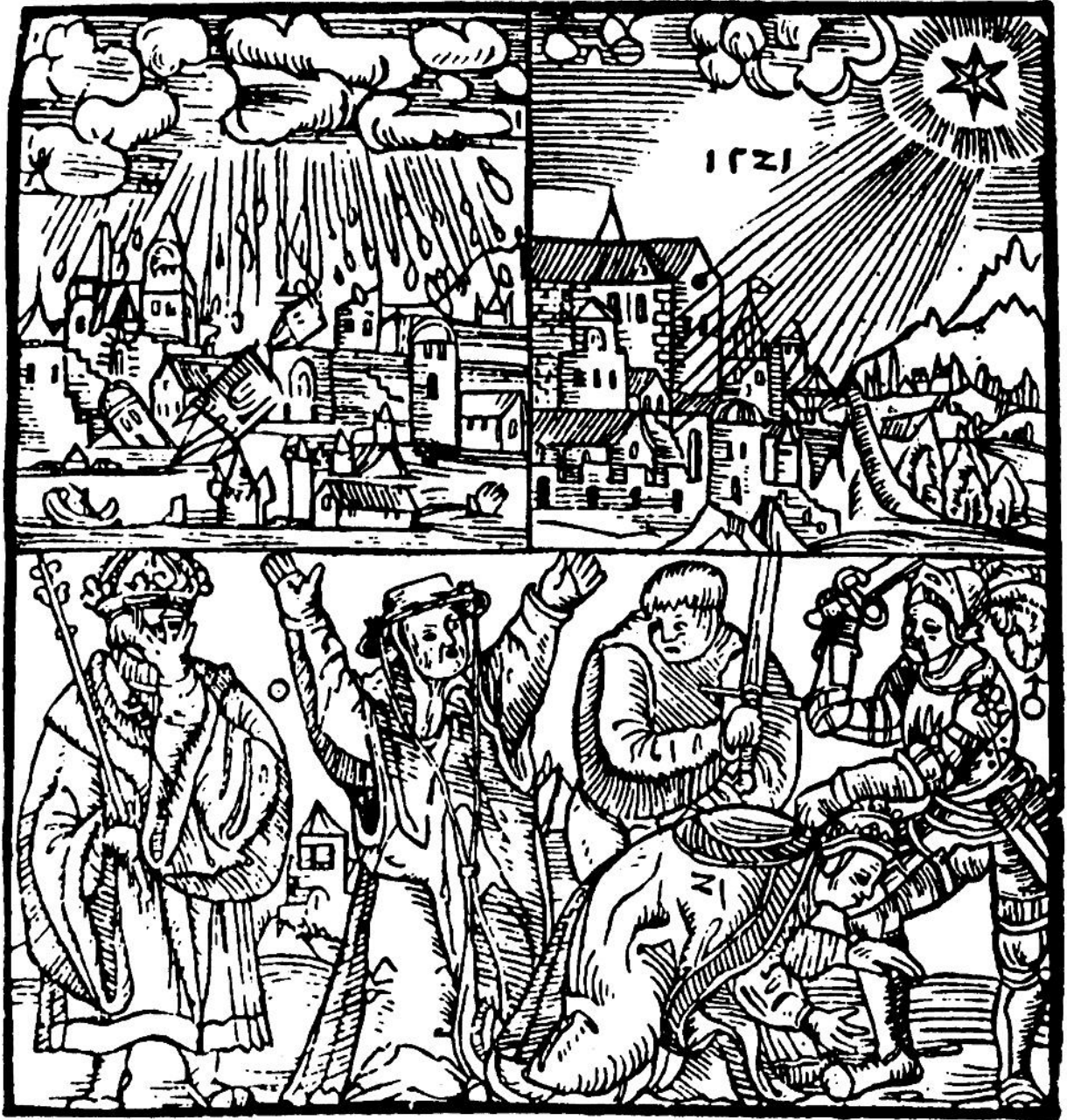
\*Should characters come in contact with a plague carrier and do not otherwise protect themselves, there is a 1-2 in 1d6 chance of contracting the disease and succumbing in 2d6 game days, although any who survive beyond the first week will recover fully.

#The judge can introduce real magic and witchcraft to their game, although doing so will dramatically alter the nature and feeling of an otherwise historical setting. Traditionally, this involved conjuring spirits, whether those of the dead and demonic or pagan ones as befits the chronicle and/or period employed:

Commanding spirits uses 1d6 LUCK, which also indicates the number of rounds the summoned power lingers before returning from whence it came, whether Hell or the spirit world, etc. These are always non-corporeal and cannot be engaged or otherwise slain, passing through walls and/or moving 50' per round as the summoner demands.

Spirits will automatically (no dice required) execute any actions available to a normal character, attacking for 1 hit per round against a single target within 10' and consistently performing at double human intellect and/or physical strength, etc.

Characters desiring to use magic must declare this ability in their backgrounds, noting that they cannot wear armor or shield and may only perform 3 magical acts per day, this being difficult to master.



## APPENDIX II: FAITH AND APPEALS

Religion was undoubtedly important to ancient and medieval man, and even if the judge prefers a strictly historical chronicle devoid of working magic, a belief that the gods were "on their side" no doubt added immeasurably to their morale. Judges are encouraged to research their desired period and utilize the following...

Pagans and Christians alike can make offerings to their god(s), the former using animal sacrifice and the latter with monetary tithes and confession to a priest. For game purposes, each requires payment in silver, either to procure a suitable animal and/or as a sign of goodwill towards the god and their priesthood:

GIFT	RESULT*
100 SP	Add +1 to all non-combat actions
250 SP	Per the above, includes combat
500 SP	Special dispensation plus the above#

\*Blessings never last more than one day

#Interventions possible as per the following

The supplicant is rewarded with a special blessing in the form of appropriate bonuses, noting here that these begin immediately and last one game day at the most and may end sooner. For game purposes, all sacrifices require 1d6 hours of meditation and prayer, with Hellenistic rituals being especially elaborate and lengthy...

Those who pay for special dispensations are entitled to the indicated bonuses and may, at their option, request a spiritual intervention, like striking a critical blow for maximum damage or performing some other non-combat action. This requires a roll on the following table and, when successful, the desired outcome happens:

1d6	RESULT
1-2	No effect, prior bonuses remain
3-4	Partial success per the judge*
5-6	Success with "divine" manifestation#

\*Other bonuses lost when answered

#Prayer answered beyond expectations!

Once again, should the special dispensation actually be granted, all related sacrificial bonuses immediately cease, perhaps because the gods feel they have done enough. Given its considerable power, sacrifice should be limited to once per game month, perhaps full moons or holy days, and this includes characters designated as priests and the like...

### APPENDIX III: GAME PLAY THE ORIGINAL WAY

In a traditional Braunstein per Wesely, the judge develops both the setting and the various characters, each one having some specific goal to accomplish within the story. For instance, a French castle under siege by the English would have numerous personalities, like a poor clergyman trying to preserve some holy relic, etc.

Players are assigned a character and, when miniatures are used, each begins on a certain part of the tabletop, being subsequently free to move as they wish and interact with others as necessary to achieve the goals given them. Often, role-playing is the key to success and, indeed, many characters are simple commoners...

Given this lack of special powers and abilities, decision-making, exploration, and role-playing is emphasized, although combat and other hazards remain a possibility. Game play here requires but a single session, with victory achieved by those who successfully accomplish their assigned mission(s). It is much like writing a novel.

Barons of Braunstein is inspired by this war-gaming experiment and expands upon its premise. First, while the players make their own characters, they are still required to write a full background, including added skills and/or personal history, sometimes with individual goals consistent with the period being chronicled.

Furthermore, while play occurs over multiple sessions as part of an ongoing chronicle (or campaign), characters are rewarded for achieving group or personal goals with faster advancement...

That said, these rules can be used to play a traditional game, with specific provisions for character creation and the resolution of various important events, including combat. And while such a game might be played with any system, these rules have the greater simplicity required to emphasize true role-playing over complex mechanics.

First, the judge creates a setting, and this book defers to Wesely's original work on the subject. Otherwise, characters are created by the previous rules, with each having a specific goal either separate and apart from their backgrounds or having an expanded background, taking care to be consistent when doing so throughout.

Finally, each character is armored and equipped as their background requires and given 15-25 LUCK to facilitate strategic use of the same in play, although the judge can decide otherwise. Ultimately, these games enable a sort of imaginative play, and there is literally no limit to what is possible using Wesely's splendid idea and a little imagination!

## BRAUNSTEIN IN THE MIDDLE AGES

BY DAVID A. WESELY

An Extract From A History of Braunstein (C) 2008

Braunstein is located in Western Germany on the Braunwasser River, a minor tributary of the Rhine. The river flows down through large iron ore deposits, and the high iron content in the water gives it a brown color similar to tea, thus its name. Several miles above the point at which the Braunwasser enters the Rhine, it crosses a fissured granite shelf, causing the Braunstein falls, for which the town is named. During most of the year, the waters of the river do not completely cover the shelf, but rush through the fissures, leaving a chain of huge rocks that stretch across the river at the top of the falls. At the height of the spring floods, however, the rocks are sometimes covered by the raging waters. After thousands of years of exposure to the iron-rich water, the rocks in the river have been stained rusty brown, which contrasts strongly with the gray cliffs north of the river and gives the falls their name (Brown Stone).

Since prehistoric times, the Braunwasser has been an important west-east route linking the Rhine Valley with central Germany, but its frequent floods have made it a barrier to north-south overland travel. Braunstein first comes to notice in history in 9 AD, when the Romans built a bridge at the "Place of Brown Rocks" (*praecipitium saxa bruneos*) during their invasion that led to the Battle of Teutoburger Wald. After the Romans were defeated, they retreated west of the Rhine, and their wooden bridge presumably washed away in the next spring flood (some scholars have argued that the Roman bridge was built elsewhere, but the people of Braunstein are sure it was built there).

Sometime before 400 AD, a village had sprung up on the site of modern Braunstein to cater to the traders traveling up and down the Braunwasser, who would need to unload their boats when they reached the falls, then carry their goods and boats to a safe launching site on the river beyond the falls. The village soon developed inns where the traders could rest, warehouses to store their goods, porters to help them carry, a marketplace where they could trade for goods coming from the other direction, and a palisade to protect the growing village from bandits. Other traders began coming to Braunstein to cross the river at a place where they could wait safely (and do some trading) if the water was too high to cross.

In the fifth century, in approximately 412 AD, the Germanic chieftain Maeker settled his band of warriors in Braunstein and placed it under his protection. Strengthened by the added warriors, Braunstein repelled many other attempts to conquer it, and strengthened by the tolls they could levy on passing traders, the "Lords Maeker" extended their control to the farms and smaller villages south of the river. A key decision was to build a fort at the base of the cliffs at the north end of the falls to prevent any traders from making the more difficult portage there to avoid paying the tolls at Braunstein. In 800, when Karl der Grosser (Charlemagne) became the first Holy Roman Emperor, he rewarded Lord Otto Maeker by making him the first Baron of Braunstein. The Maekers remained the Barons of Braunstein for over a thousand years. This established them as Hochadel, who were direct subjects of the Holy Roman Emperor and answerable to no one else until taken under the control of the Kings of Prussia in the 18th Century.



Otto I then built the castle that still stands atop the cliff above the old fort at the north end of the falls and moved his court across the river from Braunstein. Many battles were fought between the Barons of Braunstein and their neighbors, who often tried to break their hold on trade through Braunstein.

The part of the Braunwasser at and below the falls is also called the Schweinhexe (Pig Witch). In 1080, a witch was burned in Braunstein. Before the flames consumed her, she is said to have cast a curse upon the city that would make it stink until all the people who had called her a witch recanted their stories. Soon thereafter, Baron Herman VII (the Angry) had a huge herd of pigs which he wanted to move across the river to be slaughtered for food at his daughter's wedding. But the river had risen and the boatmen who would have taken them across feared to try it and took their boats far upstream before the Baron could find them. Hearing that there were no boats the Baron shouted "Well pigs can swim, can't they? Then drive them in and let them swim across!" None of his men argued with the order. But the water was too fast and the pigs all were drowned. The carcasses were swept down into the falls, where they hung up on the rocks or were caught in the fissures, and no one could get them out. The city was filled with the stench of the rotting pigs for weeks until the people who had testified against the witch were forced to recant by their neighbors. Then a great rain fell on the city and washed the pigs away. It was clearly proof of the power of the curse and of the innocence of the accused. The Baron declared that there would be a special tax imposed upon the city as a further penance for the unjust burning of the girl and that the money raised would be used to build a solid stone arched bridge above the falls, named the Hildabrucke (Hilda's bridge) in her honor.

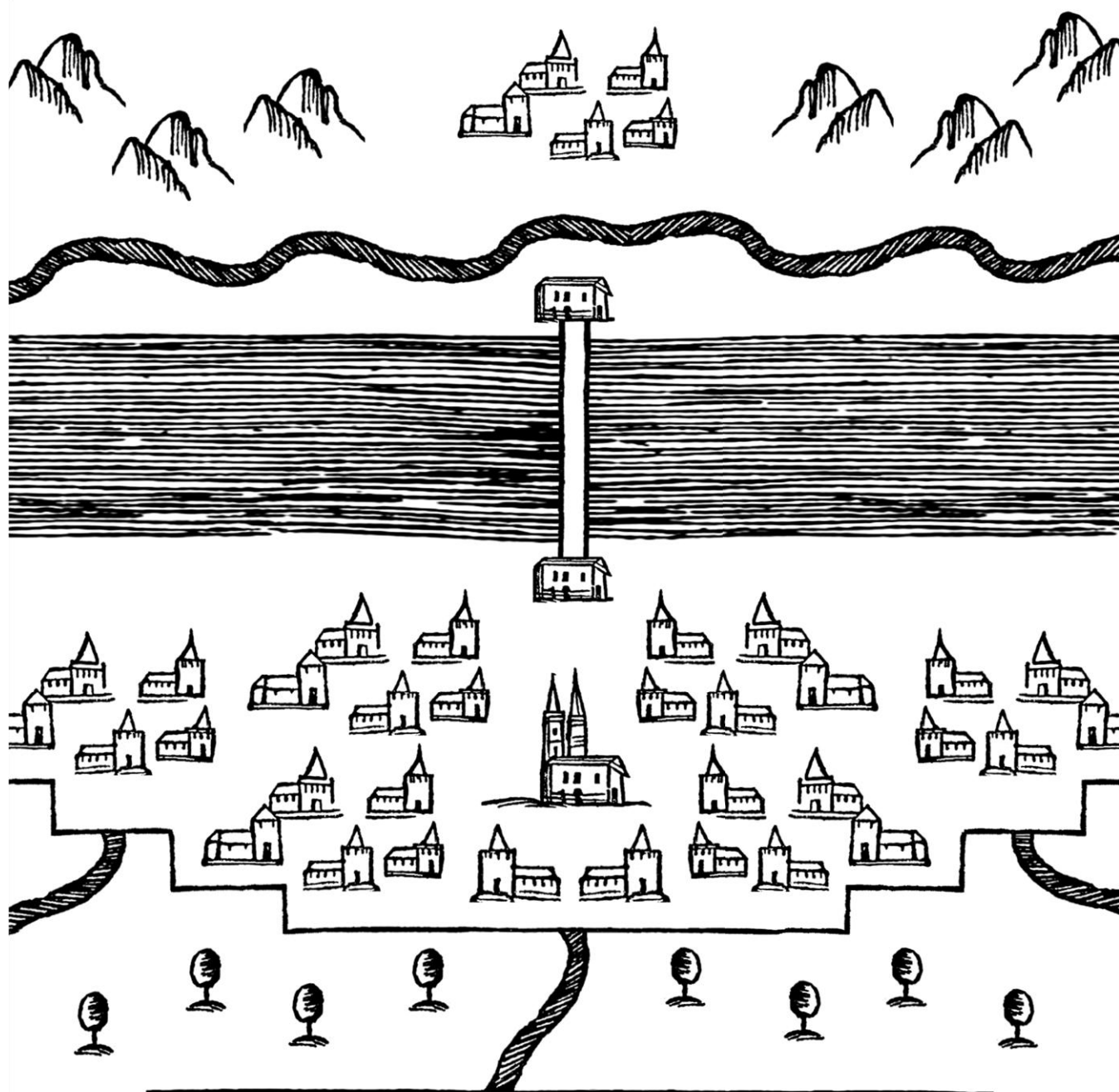
In the long run, the Hildabrucke was very good for the city, as it caused all trade to abandon the ferryboats that had crossed the river further up or downstream and pass through Braunstein to use the spectacular, new, all-weather bridge. Braunstein merchants soon realized this, and managed to block the construction of other bridges across the Braunwasser for the next 750 years. But in the short run, the cost of building the bridge was to greatly weaken the Barons of Braunstein.

In 1095, Karl (the Pious) Maeker, Baron of Braunstein, answered the Pope's call and joined the First Crusade. To raise the money for this, with the approval of the Holy Roman Emperor, he granted a charter to the City of Braunstein, making it an Imperial Free City. When he died in the Holy Land, his son Karl II (the Cruel) attempted to revoke the charter and conquer Braunstein, but failed to do so before his death.

The loss of the revenue from Braunstein hurt the Barons, and their decline was to continue in the 16th Century when another Baron, deeply in debt to Italian bankers, followed in the steps of Karl the Pious and tried to solve his problems by granting a charter to a group of scholars who wished to set up Braunstein University in his old castle. But that is another story...

Braunstein, in the turbulent region along the border between France and Germany, was to be surrounded by conflict and crises throughout its history. The Reformation, the Thirty Years War, the annexation by Prussia, the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, the Revolutions of 1848, and the First and Second World Wars would all disturb the lives of its people. And refugees from these trials would emigrate

to found new "Braunsteins" in the Americas, Africa, and Asia, only to find that danger and disorder could reach them there as well...



## The Town of Braunstein

Based on an Original Map by David Wesely

The above map is figurative. According to Wesely, the original game was played on a tabletop, with the town set up using model railroad buildings, meaning it was not so tidy as this depiction implies! There was also an orchard nearby and some other props, like wagons and old barrels, scattered around town for added realism...

## JUDGE'S NOTES

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