

Partly solitaire

A monument should be erected for the inventor of the zip lock plastic bag as this practical aid makes the storage and sorting of our game utensils so much easier. Thank goodness, these bags are nowadays supplied by many publishers, if not always in a suitable way. Finding in the box, however, the entire gaming material (including the board) stored outright in zip locks, we consider slightly exaggerated, from a storage point of view. Supposedly the idea was to prevent losing punched parts when they fall from their stamp sheets during packing.

CONSTANTINOPOLIS will take us into the city of the same name as it allegedly appeared during the 6th century. Each of us is an ambitious merchant who wants to become immortal in this metropolis. And how do we manage that? By increasing our wealth and collecting fame points through our activities. Sounds somehow familiar ...

There is a lot to do. At the beginning of each round – a maximum of nine lie ahead of us – we all compete for one of the public offices, which will gain us special privileges as well as a place in the player order. And of course, there can only ever be one for each office; whoever pays more gets the post.

I Plenty of buildings

The fact that in the next phase our ships are going to move is yet of no interest in the first round, as we have not sent any on a voyage so far. Similarly with the production phase: We have all started the game with a single building, which is now going to produce two little green cubes. This aspect only gets interesting later when we are able to erect further buildings.

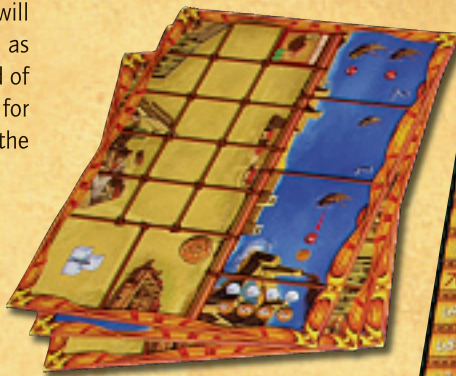
There are plenty of them: production, commercial and utility buildings, public buildings and city walls. The latter however may only mason who is currently holding the office of Praefectus Urbi. Every section of the wall gains you privileges during the game and fame points in the end, the more the more.

The other buildings are readily available. Production buildings produce

resources – that much is clear. The resources they produce are printed on the tiles, and they come in five different kinds. Some form of building phase schedule ensures that certain things may only be build when others are already in place. With commercial buildings we can sell produced cubes for gold; utility buildings win us privileges, public buildings fame. Of each type, players may build one in the building phase. Now this may sound generous, but of course money is always too tight, because the process of building is nothing less than gratis. To

make the best out of the situation, we are allowed to trade at the market in this phase and use our commercial buildings, even though we may have just completed them. The latter brings better profit for our produced cubes than they would otherwise achieve on the market.

After the building phase is over, we take a closer look at the contracts waiting



for our ships. The contract cards are drawn from a deck, their number depending on how many production buildings we own. We cannot stockpile our contracts, so we either accept them at once or we discard them again. (There are exceptions to this rule, by the way.)

I Limited activities

Fulfilling a contract implies: We send a ship with the respective cargo – colored cubes – on a voyage. A small ship we have received free of charge at the start of the game; additional ships, also bigger ones, we need to buy, for which we again require gold. Therefore, we can also use our commercial buildings in this phase and trade with the market.

Wouldn't it be nice if our actions were unlimited? Of course they are



not. So I am allowed to use each commercial building only once per round. If I already had my turn in the building phase, it will now, in the contract phase, be taboo to do it again. And the market exactly prescribes the maximum trade limit for each color. To ensure the limits are kept, there is a somewhat

awkward procedure in place for the trade activities.

The ships are on the move for one or two rounds, depending on their respective contract. When they reach their destination – and this is always the case as there are no adverse events happening at sea – they fetch gold into the cash box and some of them also fame points onto the account.

Before the round is over, we get the opportunity to give cubes to charity, as this will also get us a little fame, but more importantly we save them from destruction, because when you have not provided for the relevant buildings, you can only keep one (!) cube for the next round. This in turn will start with new market conditions and another run for the offices.

I To each his own board

The gaming material is sumptuous. The big board depicts Constantinople from bird's-eye view and reminds me of Michael Menzel's style. However, he would surely not have made the lapse of putting two identical market places into a picture. Copy and paste were only too obviously at work here. There is actually not much happening on the board anyway, it serves merely as a storage area, holds the various buildings and ships in readiness, provides an overview of the rounds and shows how many points can be gained for the city wall. Only the allocation of offices takes place on the big board, if in one corner only.

For the actual events, every player has his or her own approximately letter sized board (28×21 centimeters). It is here that you build your buildings, hoard your gold,

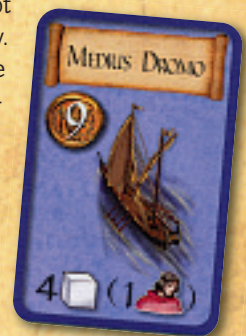


send ships across the sea and store your goods.

Does this mean we all play by ourselves then? Well, we can answer that question pragmatically with "yes and no". No, because at the beginning of each round the roles will be freshly allocated. This is not only about the order in which the players act, which is not even all that important for all phases of a round anyway. There are also individual privileges on disposition: One player gets four gold coins as a gift, another gets a cube. Somebody takes three additional contract cards from the deck; somebody else may build the city wall or occupy the right of first refusal. If you play for the first time, it is hard to judge the importance of these privileges right from the start, but after the first round, this is no longer a problem.

The "no" also applies to the building phase, if not quite so emphatically. Even though there are plenty of buildings available, there will of course not be enough for each player in the reserve. Particularly in a game of five a fierce scuffle for the production buildings will commence, as their number – in contrast to the commercial and utility buildings – is not topped up to match the increased player numbers. In a small round, the competition strain is less noticeable.

In the contract phase, it is really every player playing for himself; therefore this phase may be dealt with by all players simultaneously – assuming of course that nobody is cheating. Everybody is





now optimizing their possessions, gold, cubes, privileges from the buildings and ships waiting for cargo. No player can however put

a spoke in the wheel of another player at this point, which is a pity (and that from someone who is married to a woman who freaks out if someone plays only against her).

Initially it seems as if you are totally free to determine your turn. For example, the market can be used in phase 4 and 6, so can the commercial buildings. Very soon you will discover that this is only theoretically the case. Not before the current contracts are known does it make sense to trade at the market or farm the cubes.

Finally, a word about the rule-book. With 32 pages, it is quite lavish, and illustrated in an exemplary fashion. It does leave no questions open, even though actually looking something up can be quite tricky. Here and there, I would have wished for a little more structure in the prose text, for example to stress that the commercial buildings can only be used for goods produced in your own production buildings, not for purchased ones.

KMW/cs



Title: **Constantinopolis**
 Publisher: **Stratelibri**
 Designer: **Giancarlo Fioretti and Alberto Celletti**
 Artist: **Antonio Dessì**
 Players: **2-5**
 Age: **about 12 and up**
 Duration: **about 90 Minuten**
 Price: **about 50 €**

Reviewer	Playing appeal
KMW	8
Christwart Conrad*	5
Matthias Hardel**	6
Alan How	7

** Too long, too luck-dependent.
 ** Functioning mixture of well-known elements. One can play it, but there is no need to, really.*

