

# GENIUS LOCI

a two player game by **Stephen Tavener**

art by **Viole Rodrigo**

## INTRODUCTION

**Genius Loci** is a two-player combinatorial game played on a hexagonal board. According to the Romans, a *genius loci* is the spirit of a place; in this game, the spirits allow movement between places.

Playing pieces consist of humans, belonging to the players; and spirits - neutral pieces which can neither capture nor be captured, but enable the movement of the other pieces. Each turn, the players must make at least one sacrifice to the spirits, or lose. Humans cannot move unless they are making a sacrifice.

## COMPONENTS

- hexagonal board, 37 spaces.
- 32 humans, 16 each of 2 colours
- 5 spirit tokens, all different



- carrying case

## SETUP

The recommended board setup is below; the spirits should be shuffled at the start of the game, and placed on the red spaces in a random order. For a faster start, place all the pieces randomly, but the game plays better if the spirits aren't in the same line as each other.



Standard setup

## PLAY

At the start of each turn, the active player selects one of their humans to be high priest. This is the only human that will move this turn. The high priest then makes at least one sacrifice, as follows:

1. Select a spirit which has not received a sacrifice this turn
2. (optional) move that spirit; spirits move in straight lines, over any number of empty or occupied spaces, but must end in an empty space.
3. (required) make a sacrifice to the spirit; move the high priest onto an occupied space, according to the movement rules of the spirit.

A player may continue to make sacrifices as long as each sacrifice is to a different spirit, i.e. a maximum of five sacrifices per turn. Each sacrifice must be made with the same high priest.

**IMPORTANT!** You may sacrifice friendly pieces as well as enemy pieces. The spirits don't care, so long as they get their tribute.

## THE SPIRITS

Each spirit has its own rules regarding how a sacrifice must be made, described in the chart below, but in all cases a sacrifice is made by moving the high priest onto the same space as another human, and removing that piece from the board. The rules are as follows:

**Tractor:** Sacrifice by moving one step towards Tractor from any distance.



**Pulsor:** Sacrifice by moving one step away from Pulsor from any distance.



**Saltator:** Sacrifice by Jumping over Saltator, landing the same distance on the other side.



**Scylla:** Sacrifice by moving one step clockwise around Scylla.



**Charybdis:** Sacrifice by moving one step anticlockwise around Charybdis



## END OF THE GAME

The game ends when a player may not make a sacrifice on their turn. They lose.

## NOTES

I suggest putting sacrificed humans onto the spirit to whom they were sacrificed until the end of the turn; this makes it clear which spirits may still be used this turn.

This game is inspired by the "Activator Piece" discussions in the BGG abstract games forums. This is the purest game I could devise – the humans do not move at all, unless an activator allows them to do so; the theme of spirits demanding sacrifices came naturally from the mechanics.

Activator games seem to be inherently lacking in clarity. I actually started with around ten powers, but quickly discarded half of them as being too confusing. Even then, the first incarnations of the clockwise/anticlockwise spirits acted at any distance; and had to be severely restricted to improve game play.

Feel free to invent your own spirits.

## CREDITS

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Produced by Néstor Romeral Andrés.