



BOOK II

PLAYER'S GUIDE



- PLAYTHROUGH •
- STRATEGY •
- SOLITAIRE •

Updated Dec 1, 2020

M. BEGINNER'S PLAYTHROUGH



ou've started a 2-player game, and your opponent goes first. On your Turn the West Market contains the 5 faceup cards shown to the right. (In this playthrough, we assume the East Market is uninteresting and thus ignored). You have 4 Florins; how should you spend them? The cards are busy with icons, which ones should you pay attention to? Which cards are the insta-buys bargains, and which are the overpriced baubles? On turn 1, we offer some basic purchasing tips:

M1. PLAYTHROUGH TURN 1 - WHAT CARD SHOULD I BUY?

Your opponent went first, and now it's your turn. You have 4 Florins and 2 actions, and your first action is likely to (1) buy a card, and (2) play it. But which card?

- a. Agents, Location, & One-Shot.** These 3 card attributes are more important for grabbing early Empires than its Ops and Prestige. Act fast; Empires start vulnerable but quickly stabilize as they gain Levies during trade fairs. See also **N5b** for advice on assessing Empire Stability.
- b. Finances.** You only have 4 Florins, and it is a good idea to spend it all snapping up the good cards before worrying about getting more Florins. Of the 5 West Market cards, your 4 Florins are enough to purchase all but the most expensive, Joanna the Mad (see **E1** for details on how to purchase).
- c. Star Chamber** PREN006 is the cheapest card (1 Florin cost), with a Location in England and a Reformation One-shot. This card is uninteresting for the following reasons:
 - **Its Agent** is a Bishop, which is not a combat unit and doesn't help topple the Empire.
 - **Its One-Shot** is an unwinnable Religious War. There are no protestant (red) chess pieces in England or in any Empire adjacent to England, so the English Reformation currently has no chance to succeed.
- d. Peter's Pence** PREN007 is more expensive, costing 2 Florins. This card has a Location of "The West", meaning it can be applied to any of the 6 Western Empires, and this flexibility of Location makes it very powerful. Yet its One-shot is apostasy, which is weak in the early game.
- e. Order of Santiago** PREN049. This card costs 3 Florins, but it is worth it. Why?
 - **Agents.** It has two Agents (2 gold Rooks), which makes it quite powerful.
 - **Location.** Portugal is weakly defended by only a defensive single Ruling Class (the Toledo Knight). This makes it ripe for the toppling. See **N1a** for the relative value of Empires.
 - **One-Shot.** Considering the previous 2 bullets, the Santiago One-Shot pits 2 Agents against 1 Ruling Class, giving a certain win to the conspiracy. See **BATTLE**. (Terms in caps or all-caps are defined in the glossary).
 - **Invasion Risk.** Portugal will not be so weakened by this Civil War that an opponent will be able to instantly invade and snatch your Empire with a campaign or Religious War.
- f. First Turn Results.** You buy the Order of Santiago, leaving you with 1 Florin. For your second action, you play it, activating its conspiracy; see **J1** for details. In the conspiracy, one of the attacking Rooks dies, as does the defending Knight in Toledo. One of your Rooks survives, meaning that you now control Portugal, which is placed in your Tableau. This gives you a Concession Adjacent to Portugal. You place this into the border between Portugal and Aragon.
- g. Recap.** Your first turn was exciting: for a few Florins and whispering in the right ears, a conspiracy was launched that toppled the King of Portugal and installed Prince Henry the Navigator. The grateful King granted you a Concession in Portugal, and, as his moniker suggests, Henry's discovery prestige gives you an advantage for a eventual discovery victory. A lot happened!

TURN 1 - West Market

Facedown
Card [M2c]

You purchase this card,
leaving a gap.



TURN 1 - Your Tableau

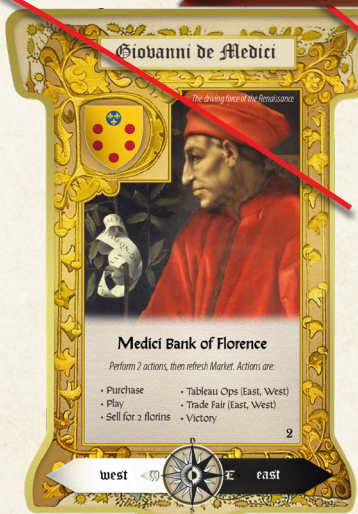
Your
Hand



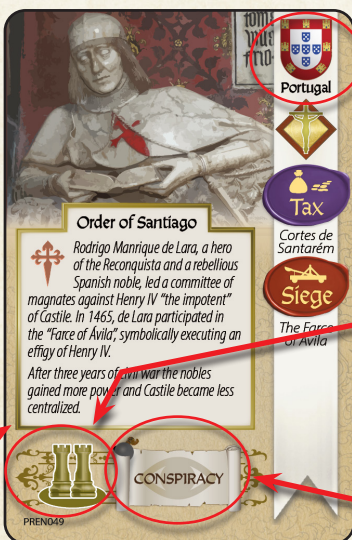
5. Regime Change
moves the King from
his Throne into your
Tableau.



2. You play your Hand card
to make your first Tableau
card.



1. From your starting finances
of 4 Florins, you spend 3
in the Market to put a card
into your Hand.



Location
[M1e]

Agents = Two Rooks.
Quite strong!
[M1e]

This Conspiracy
One-Shot will win
in Portugal!
[M1e]

3. You decide to activate the Santiago
conspiracy.



4. The 2 conspirators defeat the Ruling
Class in Toledo.



6. Regime Change
grants you a
Concession.

7. Market Refresh
fills the gap in
the Market by
sliding cards.

M2. PLAYTHROUGH TURN 2 - HOW TO PRESERVE MY INVESTMENT?

Let's play another turn, and learn a bit about Ops and Prestige.

- a. Opponent's Turn.** He spends 1 Florin and buys the Star Chamber. This means that Peter's Pence (i.e. the papal tax collectors) slides into the cheapest slot, becoming the only one you can now buy with your 1 remaining Florin.
- b. Your Turn, Buy the Inquisition?** At first glance, the Pence looks like a great buy:
- **Bishop Agent.** This brings Catholicism close to Supremacy (**L3**).
 - **Catholic Prestige.** If you have more of these, the Pope will give you the nod for the holy victory.
 - **Taxation Op.** As you would expect from the papal IRS, you can make your opponents suffer anywhere in the West (**F4**).
 - **Inquisitor.** Its Bishop Token can start on any of your opponent's Tableau cards in the West, *silencing* them (**F1f,g**). This Bishop can be moved to bring the Inquisition to other cards using the *inquisitor op* (**F1**). Nobody expects that.
- c. Portugal at Risk to Madness & Greed.** And yet, if you buy the Pence, you will likely lose Portugal. Why? This purchase will make not just one, but two market cards cheap enough for your rival to buy: the Conquistadors and Joanna the Mad. Both have "Portugal" mentioned on their card, and either can ruin Portugal:
- **Joanna** is a Queen with a *coronation* (**I**) One-shot. If your rival buys her, he will undoubtedly marry into a neighbor of Portugal and threaten it with a campaign. Moreover, Joanna has Catholic Prestige (madness and piety go hand in hand). This means you no longer will be in the lead in your devotion for Catholicism, should it become the supreme religion.
 - **Conquistadors** have a Portuguese Location. If your opponent has them in his Tableau, he can use the *siege op* (**F8**) to remove Portuguese rooks or knights, making it weak against crusades or campaigns. Its *tax op* (**F4**) would also be irritating; although it strengthens Portugal, it depletes your purse. (If you buy the Pence, you may be able to use its Bishop to silence the conquistadors).
 - **If Portugal Falls**, your opponent will be ahead for a discovery, imperial, and perhaps holy victory.
- d. Your Turn, West Trade Fair.** You are going to need funds for the fight for Portugal, and suddenly spending your last Florin on the Pence seems foolish. Instead you gain a couple of Florins by running a West *trade fair* (**M**). Starting in Tana and running past your starting Concession, this gives you enough Florins to buy the conquistadors for your 2nd action, both in order to keep the card's discovery prestige from falling into the wrong hands, and to defend Portugal.
- **Stability.** Running the West trade fair places *Levies* (**G4**), stabilizing all the Empires along the Trade Route. But Portugal is particularly strong, as its Levy allows you to put a 2nd Knight there. This makes it much stronger offensively as well as defensively!
 - **Burying Peter.** A second trade fair bonus is that it flips the pence *facedown* during refresh, see **D2a**). It's a great card, so if you don't get it, you don't want your opponent to have it either.
 - **No Minions.** Buying the Pence would have deployed a Catholic Bishop. But don't forget that you are just a banker, and not a Napoleon who can expect blind obedience from minions. This Bishop is not in your employ, has no particular fealty to you, and could be used by your opponent for a holy victory. This goes for all the chess pieces, no player "owns" them!
- e. Spice Island Trade Shift.** If you had played the conquistadors, because you have a Discovery Prestige in your Tableau (on Henry the Navigator, see **H1a**), you could have enacted their Spice Island One-Shot, indicating that they had discovered the Cape route to India.² But this would have dried up trade fair profits in the future for both your Concessions in the Mediterranean.

² THE PORTUGUESE DISCOVERY OF THE SEA ROUTE TO INDIA had the greatest economic impact in the entire Renaissance and its Age of Discovery, because it realigned trade routes as it secured a Portuguese monopoly of the spice trade around the Cape of Good Hope. The entire Mediterranean and Black Seas became backwaters, and the Ottoman Empire, Crimea, Italy, North Africa, and Aragon fell into decline.

TURN 2

Your Tableau



Discovery Prestige
[M2e]



Catholic Prestige.
[M2b]

Papal IRS
[M2b]

Nobody expects this.
[M2b]



1. You gain 2 Florins from running a West trade fair.

Market Cards

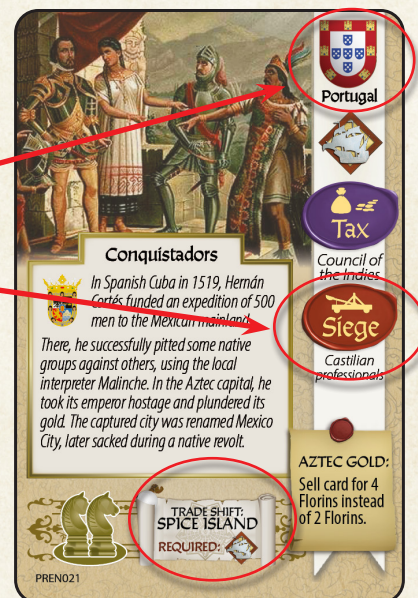


Agent = Catholic Bishop
[M2b]

Coronation One-Shot
[M2c]




Siege Op
can devastate
Portugal. [M2c]



2. For the price of a Florin, you purchase the conquistadors into your Hand.

3. Market Refresh fills the gaps left by the facedown card and the conquistadors. Peter's Pence is flipped to become the new facedown card.



M3. PLAYTHROUGH TURN 3 - FINANCES

Keep track of each player's available money. Make a point to know what your opponents can afford.

a. Opponent's Turn. Your rival purchases Joanna the Mad and activates her coronation One-shot. Soon she is married to John the Faithless, King of Aragon, and the royal couple move to your opponent's Tableau.

- **Joanna's Piety.** Because of the Queen's Catholic Prestige, you are now tied for the holy victory, should that be the victory that ends the game. (I wonder if "The Faithless" ever had religious discussions with his wife?)

- **Repression.** These nuptials give your opponent a Concession, and he has a choice of Borders to place it in. He decides to place it in the Portuguese/Aragonese Border, where you already have a Concession. Since there can't be 2 Concessions in the same Border, he pays a Florin to **repress (F5)** your Concession. Your Pawn is moved to the King of Aragon's card, to indicate it is now a humble Aragonese serf.

b. Your Turn, Should You Play or Buy? Should you play the conquistadors you have in your Hand? No need, it is better to use your precious actions for something more urgent. Keeping the conquistadors in your Hand for a rainy day has several advantages:

- **Opportunists.** If played, its 2 knights will come in handy in case Portugal is threatened with invasion (e.g. a campaign from Aragon), or you need to launch your own campaign or crusade.

- **Aztec Gold.** You can sell the card from your Hand (2 Florins), or from your Tableau (4 Florins, **E3**).

- **Surprise Globalization Victory.** If played into your Tableau, its discovery prestige may maintain your lead for the **globalization victory (L5, N7)**. Its trade shift may also prove advantageous.

c. What's Next? You need to build up a financial engine, so look for cards with commerce ops, so that you gain funds each time you run ops. Even better, much better, is buying and staging a winnable **peasant revolt (J2)**. This is worth selling Cortez for. See **N4** for more funding strategies.

d. Road To Victory. Eventually you will need to focus on one of the 4 paths to Victory. Currently you and your rival are tied for both the imperial and the holy victories. It could go either way. But notice that only you have a discovery icon, and so only you can win the globalization victory. For this you will need Concessions (which is why we emphasized peasant revolts in the previous bullet).

e. A Callow Renaissance Man No More. You are now ready for advanced stratagems (next section).

TURN 3 - Opponent's Coronation

1. A wedding and serfdom in Aragon. [M3a]

2. Regime Change in which your opponent seizes Aragon. [M3a]

FUTURE TURN - Your Tableau

1. You sell Aztec Gold to buy this card. [M3b]



2. This peasant revolt is winnable in Aragon, using the Agent, your Concession, and the serf there. [M3c]

4. This Prestige plus enough Concessions is good for a globalization victory. [M3b]



3. If activating western ops, you can both tax the blue Concession and gain a commerce income. [M3c]



“From Venice to Cathay, from Seville to the Gold Coast of Africa, men anchored their ships and opened their ledgers and weighed one thing against another as if nothing would ever change.”

--Dorothy Dunnett, *Niccolò Rising*, 1986 (a series of novels about a banker in full Pax Renaissance mode).

O. SOLITAIRE RULES

(BY JOSÉ CUNHA & KEVIN THATCHER)



his solo game uses an automated opponent (“the **opponent**”) allowing all actions of the multiplayer game. No extra components are needed for this game.

- a. Golden Rule.** All rules of 2-player Pax Renaissance apply, unless superseded by these rules. You (“the player”) perform your turn in the same way as in the multiplayer game.
- b. Setup.** You assume the identity of Fugger. The opponent can represent any of the other bankers, but it owns all 3 remaining starting Concessions. In each Market the two Comet cards are shuffled among 8 other cards instead of 12. The setup is in all other aspects the same as in a 2-player game (**Part C**).
- c. Victory.** Win by any of the four conditions that can be activated by the Comet cards. However, you cannot win through the *Patron victory* (**L2a**). The automated opponent will try to disrupt your plans.

O1. OPPONENT’S TURN

The opponent’s turn consists of:

- a. Check for opponent Victory.** See **O6b**
- b. Determine opponent’s Course of Action and Objective.** See **O2, O3** and **Table O7**.
- c. Determine 2 actions to be performed.** See **Table O8**. During most turns the opponent will buy a card and place it into its Tableau.
- d. Action Phase.** Perform the opponent’s 2 actions. See **O4** and **Table O9**.
- e. Refresh Market Phase (D2).**

O2. DETERMINE COURSE OF ACTION AND OBJECTIVE CELL (TABLE O7)

The **course of action** is a row in **Table O8** that is determined either by cometary override or by the trigger, and which contains *objective cells* (**O3**) for determining the opponent’s actions and Ops (**O4**).

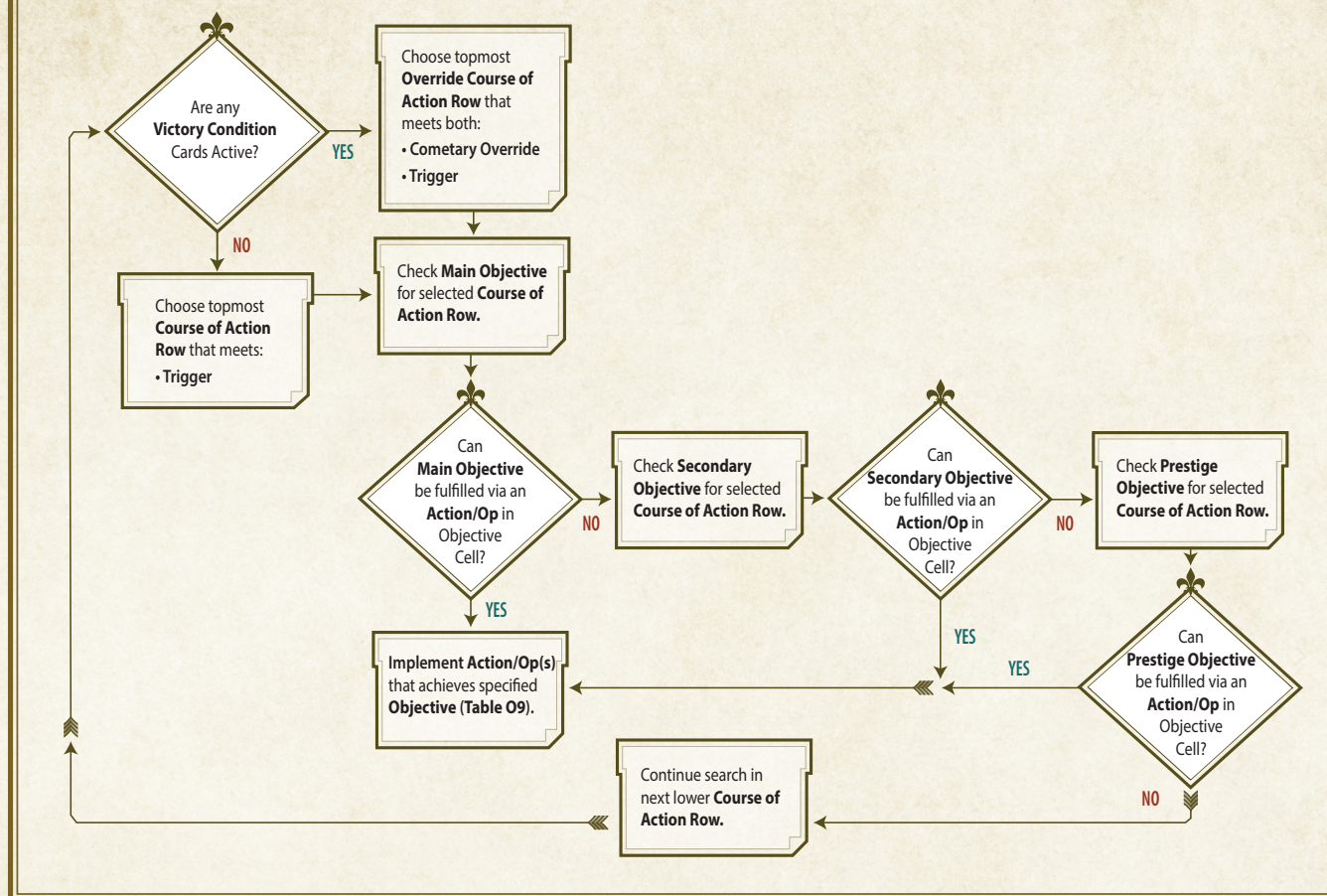
- a. Cometary Override.** If one or more Victory Squares are active, start in the topmost row and stop at the first row that meets both the cometary override and trigger. This row is the **override course of action**.
- b. Trigger.** Assuming no override, start in the topmost row and stop at the first row that meets the trigger. This row is the **course of action**.
- c. Objective Cell.** In this row, check the **main objective** and proceed according to **O3**. If that objective cannot be fulfilled, or it was fulfilled and the opponent still has an action remaining, move right to the **secondary objective**. If that objective cannot be fulfilled or it was fulfilled and the opponent still has actions remaining, move to the **Prestige objective**.
- d. New Course of Action.** If there are no remaining objectives in the course of action, continue the search in the next lower course of action row.
- e. Table O7** illustrates this decision process in flowchart format.

O3. OBJECTIVE CELL PRIORITY (TABLE O8)

Given a specific course of action, determine which of the three **objective cells** has priority. An objective cell lists either, (1) a single or multiple bullet points which are performed (in order), if possible, or (2) an objective followed by multiple bullet points. In this latter case, all bullet points serve as a reminder of what actions can be useful to accomplish the specified objective.

- a. Objective Priority.** First check the main objective, then the secondary objective, and finally the Prestige objective. The Prestige objective can only be performed if it:
 - (1) has a net cost of 1 or less Florins, or
 - (2) is part of an *override course of action* (**O2a**).

TABLE 07. SOLO DECISION FLOWCHART



Easily Missed: You start with 3 Florins, and the opponent starts with 4 Florins. [Ob]

Note: The number of cards added to the top of the initial cards in each market (8) may be adjusted up or down for an easier or harder solo experience. [Ob]

Objective Priority Example: Islam has more Bishops than all others combined and is therefore the dominant Religion. There is no override. If attempting the main objective, “Kill dominant Bishop/Acquire non-dominant Bishop”, the target will be chosen from among all Locations with Islamic Bishops. If none of these Bishops can be Killed nor any non-dominant Bishops acquired, pursue the secondary objective: “Remove Dominant Religion Theocracy”. The targets will be all Islamic Theocracies. [O3a]

- b. Target Locations.** The objective cell indicates the opponent's objective, and the target locations must be Locations that achieve this objective when the objective cell is executed, either by harming the player or helping the opponent in 1 turn or less. Search the Market from left to right until you find a card with a matching Location (including The West or The East) that fulfills the criteria defined in **O3c** and **O3d**. For Bishops, search the opponent's Tableau first, left to right, then yours.
- c. Criterion to Buy.** Playing the card and using a combination of its One-shots and Agent placements, the opponent can achieve the objective outlined at the top of the objective cell.
- d. Criterion for Other Actions/Ops.** If no card can be purchased that matches the criterion, check the opponent's Tableau to determine if any East or West Ops can fulfill the objective. If so, perform the Op(s) (**O4c**) thereby spending one of the opponent's actions. Card **sales (O4b)** or **trade fairs (O4d)** may also be used to meet objectives, especially if the opponent only has one action left after performing West/East Ops.
- e. Next Objective.** If no purchase or other action can assist the opponent in achieving its objective, proceed to the next objective.

Easily Missed: *The opponent will only perform the Op or set of Ops needed to achieve the objective as well as any commerce actions that are available. [O3e]*

Example: *You have more Kingdoms (including Mamluk) than the opponent and the main objective is therefore "Remove/Acquire Kingdom". Although there are no cards in the Market that will achieve the opponent's main objective, you notice a card with "Mamluk" and "Crusade" that will achieve its secondary objective ("Weaken Player Kingdom"). The opponent buys and plays the card to its East Tableau and performs the crusade immediately in Mamluk. The crusade does not create a Regime Change and the opponent's action phase is now over, but the reduction of Agents in Mamluk has achieved the secondary objective. If there were no Heretics in Mamluk, the crusade could not be performed and the card would not have been bought. [O3]*

O4. OPPONENT'S ACTIONS & OPS (TABLE O9)

- a. Purchase & Play Market Card** (spends 2 actions). Per **E1** and **E2** except the opponent can purchase only when it has 2 actions and uses them to purchase a card, immediately place Agents and then play the card to its Tableau. The opponent never keeps cards in a Hand. Moreover, the opponent does not place a Florin on any faceup Market Card with any Florins already on it.
- b. Sell Card.** This is per **E3**. It must be done either to remove a Bishop in the opponent's Tableau from the game, or as an objective in row 7 of **Table O8**. In this latter case, the card sold must either have no Prestige or Patron Prestige (only).
- c. Perform Eastern/Western Ops.** Only commerce Ops or Ops aimed at the current target locations (**O3b**) are performed.
- d. Convene a Eastern/Western Trade Fair.** Choose East/West according to what yields the most opponent income, and in case of a tie choose the action that provides the player with the least income. If still a tie, the opponent chooses East.

Golden Rule: *The opponent's second action may never undermine or reverse the result of its first action. For example, the opponent may never implement a Trade Fair that will re-populate an Agent it removed with its first action. [O4a]*

Note: *If a purchase is triggered by an Op/One-shot, it must be possible to perform the Op/One Shot, or else the card is not purchased. [O4a]*

O8. DIRECTING THE BRAIN OF THE SOLO OPPONENT!

	COMETARY OVERRIDE	TRIGGER	MAIN OBJECTIVE	SECONDARY OBJECTIVE	PRESTIGE OBJECTIVE*
1	Imperial Victory is active.	Player has 2 or more Kingdoms than opponent.	Remove/Acquire Kingdom. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy & play coronation, Civil Wars, Religious Wars. • West/East Ops vote, behead. • West/East Ops campaign. • Buy & play apostasy. 	Weaken player Kingdom. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy & play Civil Wars, Religious Wars. • West/East Ops repress, siege. 	• Buy & play red text Ability (imperial victory).
2	Renaissance Victory is active, <u>and</u> opponent has same/less Law Prestige than player.	Opponent has fewer Republics than player.	Remove/Acquire Republic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy & play Civil Wars, Religious Wars. • West/East Ops vote, behead. • West/East Ops campaign. • Buy & play apostasy. 	Weaken player Republic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy & play Law Prestige. • Buy & play Civil Wars, Religious Wars. • West/East Ops repress, siege. 	• Buy & play card with Law Prestige.
3	Holy Victory is active, <u>and</u> opponent has same/less Supreme Religion Prestige than player.	A dominant Religion has more Believers in its Theocracies than all other Religions combined.	Remove dominant Religion Agents in Theocracy/ Add non-dominant Religion Agents to Theocracy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy & play Civil Wars, Religious Wars. • West/East Ops repress, siege, tax. • Buy & play card with non-dominant Religion Agents. • Trade Fair. 	Remove dominant Religion Theocracy/ Create non-dominant Religion Theocracy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy & play Religious War, vote. • Buy & play card if it gives same/more dominant Religion Prestige than player. 	• Buy & play red text Ability (holy victory). • Buy & play card with dominant Religion Prestige.
4	Holy Victory is active, <u>and</u> opponent has same/less Supreme Religion Prestige than player.	A dominant Religion has more Bishops than all other Religions combined.	Kill dominant Bishop/Acquire non-dominant Bishop. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West/East Ops behead, inquisitor. • Buy & play card with Bishop Agent. • Buy & play apostasy. • Sell a card. 	Remove dominant Religion Theocracy/ Create non-dominant Religion Theocracy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy & play Religious War, vote. • Buy & play card with dominant Religion Prestige. 	• Buy & play red text Ability (holy victory). • Buy & play card with dominant Religion Prestige.
5	Globalization Victory is active, <u>and</u> opponent has same/less Discovery Prestige than player.	Player has 2 or more Concessions than opponent.	Remove/Acquire Concessions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buy & play coronation, Civil Wars, Religious Wars. • Buy & play card with Concession or Pirate Agents. • West/East Ops corsair, siege, repress, vote, tax. 		• Buy & play red text Ability (globalization victory). • Buy & play card with Discovery Prestige.
6		Opponent has 2 actions left this turn.	• Buy & play leftmost card with Prestige (East Market if tied).		
7		Opponent has 1 action left, <u>or</u> less than 3 Florins .	• Trade Fair. • West/East Ops commerce. • Sell a card with either no Prestige or Patron Prestige.		

*The Prestige objective can only be implemented if it: (1) has a net cost of 1 Florin or less, or (2) is part of an override course of action.

Dominant Religion is defined in rows 3 and 4 of **Table O8** in the trigger column. It is not the same as Supremacy, as defined in the glossary. [O8]

Note: The campaign op is only performed in the objectives that list it. [O4c]

Your opponent is going to make stupid moves.

We cannot fill the holes in the AI without a 30 page algorithm and giving the opponent a working memory.

—José Cunha

O5. OPPONENT DECISIONS

While performing the prescribed opponent actions, follow these decision-making rules:

- a. Paying for Actions.** The opponent will always pay to repress your Concessions or avoid having its own Concessions repressed, but it will not spend its last Florin to do so (unless it achieves its main objective or if it is the only way the opponent can place a Concession). For card purchases and the campaign Op, the opponent will spend all its money if necessary.
- b. Placing Concession & Pirate Agents.** The opponent always chooses to place these except it will never Kill its own Concessions. The priority is to replace the player's Concessions and then choose Borders 'upstream' in the Trade Routes.
- c. Placing Knight or Rook Agents.** The opponent only chooses to place these Agents if the target is an Empire it owns or if it helps the opponent to achieve its main objective.
- d. Placing Bishop Agents.** The opponent always chooses to place these on the card that the opponent plays.
- e. Commerce Op.** The opponent takes one Florin from one of the facedown Market Cards. If there is none the opponent takes a Florin from the leftmost faceup card with any Florins.
- f. Levies.** When choosing which Levies to raise, the opponent will never choose a Believer in a Theocracy. When possible it raises Levies that create the most religious diversity, giving priority to Rooks over Knights.
- g. Coronations.** The opponent will always choose the available Kingdom with the most Knights on the map. If tied, choose the first listed available Kingdom. The opponent may purchase *old maids* (I2).
- h. One-Shots.** The opponent may purchase a card with a One-shot as a result of the main objective in row 6 of **Table O8**. In this case, the opponent will activate the One-shot if it will either:
 - (1) successfully acquire a Kingdom (coronation, Civil War, Religious War), or
 - (2) hurt the player as much or more than the opponent (trade shift, apostasy).

Easily Missed: *The only time the opponent purchases a card without it being driven by a One-shot is row 6 of Table O8: "Buy & play leftmost card in Market with Prestige". Use O5h to determine if this One-shot should be activated. [O5h]*

O6. SOLITAIRE GAME END & VICTORY

The game ends if either you or your opponent wins.

- a. Player Victory** if you declare victory per **Part L**.
- b. Opponent Victory** if at the beginning of the opponent's turn, one of these happens:
 - (1) the opponent is able to spend an action to declare victory.
 - (2) the opponent is able to spend 2 actions to buy a Comet and declare victory that fulfills an active or inactive victory condition, respectively.
 - (3) the Market cannot be refreshed from either deck during the *refresh market phase* (D2).

Op. SOLO OPPONENT ACTIONS/OPS SUMMARY

OPPONENT ACTION/OPS	COSTS	PROCESS
Purchase & play Market Cards	2 Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May only take course of action when opponent has 2 actions available. • Will spend <u>all</u> Florins necessary to purchase card. EXC: opponent NEVER places Florins on any faceup card that already has Florins. • Search Market from left to right until opponent finds a card with matching Location that fulfills objective using combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One-shots. - Agent placements. • Opponent will always place Concessions in following priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repress player's Concession. EXC: Opponent will NOT spend last Florin to do so <u>unless</u> it helps to achieve main objective. - Choose "upstream" Borders in Trade Routes • Opponent will only place Knights or Rooks in Empires the opponent owns <u>unless</u> it helps to achieve main objective. • Opponent will <u>always</u> place Bishops on the card that it plays. • Opponent will <u>always</u> place Pirates in following priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kill player's Concession. - Choose "upstream" Borders in Trade Routes. EXC: Opponent will never Kill its own Concessions. • If purchase is not triggered by Op/One-shot (i.e., course of action Row 6 or Prestige objective), opponent implements One-shot if it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can successfully acquire an Empire (coronation, Civil Wars, Religious Wars). - Hurts player as much or more than the opponent (trade shift, apostasy). • Coronation: Opponent will <u>always</u> choose the available Kingdom with most Knights on map. • Civil War/Religious War: If multiple options for successful One-shot, opponent will target the available Empire with the fewest Knights + Rooks on map. • Opponent may purchase old maids.
East/West Ops	1 Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opponent will only perform the Op or set of Ops in Tableau necessary to achieve the objective at current target Location <u>plus</u> any commerce ops. • Will always pay to Repress player Concession and will pay to avoid having opponent's Concessions repressed. EXC: Opponent will NOT spend last Florin unless it helps to achieve main objective.
Campaign Ops	1 Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will spend <u>all</u> Florins necessary to pay for campaign.
Commerce Ops	1 Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will perform in combination with any other East/West Ops actions required to achieve objective. • Priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facedown Market card. - Leftmost faceup card with Florins.
Trade Fair	1 Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose East/West according to what yields the most Florins to the opponent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If tied, choose trade fair Location which provides the player with least Florins. - Still tied: East trade fair. • Opponent's Levy placement priority: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If possible, <u>never</u> place a Believer in a Theocracy. - Create the most Religious diversity. - Rooks over Knights.
Sell Card	1 Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be used to remove Bishop from Tableau to achieve main objective. • Card priority if sale due to course of action row 7: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No Prestige, or - Patron Prestige (<u>only</u>).

N. STRATEGY GUIDE

(by ALEX SERBAN & DOM ROUGIER)

his guide is for the more experienced player.



N1. WHAT ADVANTAGES DOES EACH EMPIRE HAVE?

- a. Portugal** has a Discovery Prestige, so it is useful for triggering the Spice Islands (western) trade shift and building towards a globalization victory. It has an Islamic Levy, so it is susceptible to crusades.
- b. France, Holy Roman Empire (Reformist), Ottoman, & Byzantium** have 2 Knight and at least 1 Rook Levies. So long as these Levies can be raised, they offer the strongest attack and defense for empire-making for the imperial victory.
- c. England, Aragon, Papal States, Holy Roman Empire, & Hungary** all have Law Prestige and vote ops on their Republic sides, making them the best Empires to build towards the Renaissance victory.
- d. Papal States, Hungary, & Mamluk** each have Patron Prestige, which are very useful if the game goes to tiebreaker.
- e. Conquering the Ottoman Empire** is easiest through jihad and coronation. Ottoman is the strongest Empire in the game when it is Islamic because it is possible to have 3 Knights in Constantinople after a Jihad (flip Map Card and move the 2 Knights onto the 2 Rook icons in Constantinople, leaving the third Knight icon open to raise as a Levy).
- f. Mamluk's Campaign Op** is difficult to use because it contains only Rook Levies. It is possible for Mamluk to receive Knights only through Agent placement or special Abilities.

N2. IS IT BETTER TO INVEST IN THE WEST OR THE EAST?

- a. Eastern Investments** are at an early advantage due to their position at the front of the trade fair line, not to mention the explosive power that exists in the East with religion.
- b. Western Investments**, with careful play, build a stronger long-term Ops engine. Taking advantage of the fact that the West rarely sees Levies from trade fairs, the West is easier to manipulate using e.g. a 2-agent one-shot, or a peasant revolt in an Empire you are adjacent to. The West has an abundance of commerce and vote allowing you to recover your money after you expend it. Sometimes, even just running a West trade fair for 1 Florin is a good way to increase the amount of money in circulation and in your hands.

N3. WHY WOULD I DO THAT / WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- a. Strawman** your own Empires to form Republics? Useful if you are building towards a Renaissance victory, gaining a new Concession from the Regime Change, or want the Republic's commerce op.
- b. Token Placement Matters!** You can prevent or enable Religious Wars, block Knights from being raised from Levies, or set up a pawn majority for vote or peasant revolts.
- c. Repressing Opponent's Concessions** can help you make more money on the trade fair, but makes it less likely that they will run the fair on their turn. However, keeping their concession count low is important to fight against their globalization victory, vote ops, etc.
- d. Sieging Tokens** in an Empire you already control can be very helpful. You can:
 - **Prevent Religious Wars** by preemptively removing Heretics.
 - **Make Campaigning Cheaper** if you have too many Knights and don't need them all.
 - **Weaken the Empire** in advance of your Strawman Attack (to gain a Republic).
 - **Remove Unwanted Tokens** that are blocking the space for the Levies you want.
- e. Repressing** can make Civil Wars easier to trigger since they add attackers. But it also makes it more expensive to vote in that Empire. It depends on what you want to do there and what you are threatened with.

N4. HOW TO GAIN FLORINS?

Funding in *Pax Renaissance* is a mini-game in itself:

- a. Trade Fair (G).** With a lot of Concessions this gains a burst of cash, but make sure your opponents do not gain too much with their Concessions.
- b. Commerce Op (F2).** Build your Tableau with plenty of these Ops. This allows you to buy a card and then with the second action regain all your money by making East or West Ops action.
- c. Gain More Concessions.** Either cause a Regime Change or play a card with a Pawn Agent.
- d. Surprise Sell-Out.** It can be quite a Machiavellian shock to your opponents if you sell a royal couple or an old maid for 4 Florins and snap up the card in the 5-cost spot they were planning their strategy around.

N5. HOW TO WIN AN IMPERIAL VICTORY?

A typical conversation during *Pax Renaissance*: “What happens if I do this?”, “Well, this, then that. Optionally this.”, “Is that good?”, “I have no idea.” This obtuseness is one of the game’s charming features. How does one indirectly manipulate a shared-gamespace, while remaining aware of 2nd and 3rd order consequences? Here, we start with the most straightforward Victory type - *Imperial (L4)*. The idea is to stabilize your Empires while destabilizing the Empires of your opponent:

- a. How to Grab your First Card** (and therefore your first Empire):
 - **Civil Wars (J1, J2).** Because the Empires begin with only 1 Token each (except for Ottomans), they are vulnerable to One-Shots such as double-agent conspiracies and peasant revolts, which give you not only the Empire but also a Concession.
 - **Queens (I)** are the bloodless way to gain Empires, as long as the King is not married and in his Throne or in your Tableau.
 - **Siege (F8)** is a useful op for reducing defenses in preparation for an attack such as a *campaign (F9)* or *Religious War (K)*.
 - **Jihad (K)** is the easiest way to gain an empire in the East because it is so multicultural (presence of Heretics) and Islam has a strong presence there. Religious Wars are strong because you can pull in Adjacent Believer Knights as attackers.
- b. How to Determine Empire Stability.** Your empire-building goal is to topple (or defend) Empires that are unstable:
 - **Ruling Class.** Empires with more Tokens on the map are more stable, while Empires with more repressed Tokens in their Kingdom are less stable. Multicultural Empires (those with Tokens of various colors) are vulnerable to *Religious Wars (K)*.
 - **Trade Fairs (G).** Empires nearest to Emporia tend to be more stable because they use wealth from tolls to build up Levies during trade fairs. It follows that these Empires are sensitive to *trade shifts (H)*.
 - **Ottoman Threat.** Any Empire Adjacent to the powerful Ottoman Empire is vulnerable to *campaigns (F9)* and *jihads (K)*.
- c. How To Gain Empires into your Tableau.** If you cause a Regime Change in the location, you gain not only the Empire but also a Concession. You can also Emancipate repressed Tokens. Regime Changes happen by:
 - **Coronation One-Shot (I), Vote (F6), Civil War (J1, J2), Religious War (K)** (from the Throne or opponent’s Tableau to your Tableau).
 - **Campaign (F9).** (from the Throne or opponent’s Tableau to below the campaigning Empire as a Vassal).
- d. How To Add Ruling Class.** Add Tokens to an Empire by:
 - **Agents (E2).** Playing a card with Agents in the Empire,
 - **Tax Op (F4)** in the Empire (Tokens must match color & type on Map),
 - **Levies (G4)** placed during a trade fair (must match color & type on Map),
 - **Surviving Attackers** placed after a conspiracy or Religious War (see BATTLE),

- **Repressed Tokens** that are Emancipated in a Regime Change (see BATTLE).

e. How To Remove Ruling Class. Destabilize an Empire by:

- **Agents (E2).** Playing a card with Agents in the Empire to repress the old Token,
- **Repress Op (F5)** (also gives you 1 Florin per Token removed).
- **Siege Op (F8).**
- **Campaign (F9), Civil War (J1, J2), Religious War (K).**

N6. HOW TO WIN A RENAISSANCE VICTORY?

The *Renaissance Victory* (L6) is perhaps the most subtle. You have to have the most Law Prestige (at least 2 more than your best opponent) and the most Republics.² To get a Republic, you first need a Kingdom (N5).

- a. How To Change a Kingdom into a Republic.** Cause a Regime Change using **vote (F6)**, *Civil War (J1, J2)*, or *Religious War (K)* in an Empire that is in your own Tableau (This gains a new Concession & optional Emancipation of repressed tokens). Of these the vote is the easiest to use, to alternate either between a Republic and a Kingdom, or between a Medieval state and a Theocracy.

N7. HOW TO WIN A GLOBALIZATION VICTORY?

Globalization is the sneakiest way to win. It is easy to miss and expensive to counter since it often requires aggressive moves and Pawn repression. However, in addition to simply having the most Discovery Prestige, you also need to lead in Concessions by a margin of 2.

- a. Discovery Prestige** is the rarest Prestige in the game.
- b. Best Cards To Use.** Henry the Navigator (Portugal), Academia PREN103X.
- c. Vote.** Use **vote (F6)** to flip your Empires back and forth to saturate their Borders with Concessions. Remember that you cannot vote with Vassals, making campaigning a less effective way to gain Concessions.
- d. Repress Opponents' Concessions** at every opportunity (N3c).
- e. Avoid Pirates & Pawn-Repress Ops.** Placing Concessions in land borders is safer than in sea borders.

N8. HOW TO WIN A HOLY VICTORY?

To be **Supreme**, a religion needs more Bishops than the other two religions combined, plus the most Tokens of its religious color sitting in Theocracies than the other two combined. You yourself don't need to be the player who is converting Europe by the sword – you can let someone else do the dirty work of placing Bishops and making Theocracies and follow in their coattails by buying up the available Prestige until you have the most.

- a. Islam** is the strongest religion due to Ottoman knights and many Eastern heretics.
- b. Golden Liberty** during a vote can change supremacy by disestablishing a Theocracy. Block or enable this by maintaining a majority of Concessions there.
- c. Bishops.** Bring out these when there are no other Bishops in the Market or players' Hands. Keep them safe on a card that you control. Scan your opponents' ops for an Inquisitor of the same color, and note if they would be able to move your bishop onto a card that they can behead or sell.

²THE RENAISSANCE was named for the revival of the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, in particular Plato and his student Aristotle. Plato was the first thinker to systematize other-worldliness, rather in line with the inward "mind over matter" subjective philosophy associated with eastern mysticism (see footnote 6). Aristotle was the first thinker to systematize worldliness, the objective "matter over mind" philosophy identifying the importance of understanding this world with objective reason and logic. Aristotelian ideas were introduced to the Islamic East by Al-Farabi and later Ibn Rushd (Averroes), but tragically lost through the influential preachings of the Muslim mystic Al-Ghazali. Although dead in the East, the ideas of Averroes reintroduced Aristotelian philosophy to the West, especially with the support of the great philosopher and theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. This led to the rise of the universities and ultimately the Renaissance. In Italy, logicians at the secular University of Padua developed an Aristotelian method of proof and discovery, inspiring treatises on bookkeeping and arithmetics. This culminated in the integration of mathematics and experimentation into the formulation of the logic of scientific discovery, the work of Padua's famous professor of mathematics Galileo. Long before Galileo however, the rival Florentine Platonic School came to dominate European intellectual thought - except for logicians and scientists. The humanist approach to political and economic problems were lacking both in basic principles and logic and shunned science with its instruments and measurements. The humanist approach to political and economic problems lacked the instruments and measurements of science, and very little of note was accomplished. Sadly, Platonism remains the dominant philosophy of intellectuals today, and is even infiltrating the halls of science.

- d. Apostasies** for any religious combination are almost assured to enter the Market, so be wary of mixing religions.
- e. Heretics** can be removed by siege, repress, or campaign. No Heretics = no Religious War = no Theocracy = no holy victory.
- f. Reformation** is by far the weakest religion. Reformation cards often feature Bishops rather than the combat Agents needed to win a Religious War. It may have a chance if a trade shift brings the west emporium closer to the Holy Roman Empire, where red Knights there or in Hungary can spread the Reformation across Europe.

VICTORY STATISTICS

	Philipp Pfeiffer (44 games)	Alex Serban (134 games)
IMPERIAL VICTORY	16% WIN	32% WIN
HOLY VICTORY	18% WIN	ISLAMIC 10% CATHOLIC 6% REFORMATION 0,7%
GLOBALIZATION VICTORY	20% WIN	18% WIN
RENAISSANCE VICTORY	36% WIN	18% WIN
PATRON VICTORY	4% WIN	8% WIN

Percentage of victory types won in the experience of 2 playtesters (1st edition).
Doesn't account for games that ended early due to a player conceding.

WHY NOT THE EAST?

(BY MATT EKLUND)



There have been other occasions in human history where technology, trade, and cultural priority combined to create an opportunity where a renaissance, a radical shift away from top-down rule and towards individualism, could have sparked.

The aptly-named 'Golden Age of Islam' contained many of the ingredients needed to turn the tide against monarchy and feudalism. Caliphs subsidized great scientists and thinkers, and were viewed favorably for doing so. Some of the earliest universities and observatories were founded. Islamic thinkers sought out and translated Greek, Persian, Egyptian and other ancient works, and used them as stepping stones to their own scientific achievements. Philosophy, science, medicine, optics and every other endeavor to determine the 'whys' of the universe were united under a single rationally-derived discipline named falsafa. That respect for logic and natural law found its way into the Islamic legal system, providing at least the building blocks with which concepts of individual rights and free thought could have emerged. Unfortunately falsafa fell victim to the rise of the Ash'ari, a religious movement predicated on the belief that human knowledge could only be attained by direct revelation from god or his prophets. Their charismatic eventual leader, an ex-scientist-turned-mystic named Muhammad al-Ghazali, argued that the orderly patterns of nature (e.g. the rising and setting of the sun, the changing of the seasons, things falling when you dropped them) were an illusion, therefore rendering the study of science and logic pointless. Al-Ghazali's philosophy also had grave legal consequences as he championed the unification of Sharia Law, until then predicated on principles of rationalism, with Sufism, a then somewhat obscure mystical self-purifying sect of Islam. Instead of a spark of progress, Ash'arite doctrine triggered a collapse of the political, religious and scientific progress in the Islamic world. While the battle for science, free thought, and the hearts and minds of the Islamic world didn't end with al-Ghazali, the Mongol destruction of Baghdad in 1258 (then the world capital of science and learning), did. The Middle East has never recovered.

Another potential cradle for political and economic freedom could be found further East. The Chinese Song Dynasty featured the trade-fueled political transformation of warlords into civil servants, religious evolution away from mysticism and towards a rational ethos (neo-confucianism), as well as advanced banking, movable type printing, poetry and literature, math and architecture, wild gadgetry that would make da Vinci jealous... oh and gunpowder too. The dream died in the 1270s when they were conquered by Kublai Khan and the Mongols. China had another shot when they kicked out the Mongols and started the Early Ming Dynasty in 1368. Still the heart of global trade, and with the world's largest navy, the Ming abandoned the (Song invented) paper currency, and spread and established trade hubs across the Indian Ocean. The hope for a Ming renaissance was undone by political isolationism due to the threat of invasion by, who else, those damned Mongols. This threat was born out by the embarrassing capture of the Ming emperor in battle in 1449. The Chinese trade fleets were ordered home, leaving a naval and economic vacuum that would be filled by the Portuguese once they found their way around the Cabo das Tormentas. The Chinese tradition of isolation and xenophobia was born.

Western Europe dodged the two bullets that killed the hopes of an Eastern Renaissance... they had surviving religious conventions founded in Natural Law (thanks to Thomas Aquinas), and they were far away from the Mongols.

BANKING THEN & NOW

(BY PHIL EKLUND)



yrannical legislation in the wake of a pandemic, such as the many coronavirus restrictions of freedom, have parallels in Europe just after the 14th century plague. Restrictions on labor mobility increased in the East, while the competition for labor put serfdom into decline in the West, and this division is still visible today. *“After the Black Death, serfdom disappeared in Western Europe while making a resurgence in Eastern Europe. What makes the difference? I argue that serfdom was against the interests of the sovereign and was only opposed when the nobility, most of whom needed serfdom to maintain their economic and social standing, had leverage to impose their will. ...one way the nobility gained this power was through financing the military. Serfdom was imposed in areas where sovereigns had few other resources to pay for war or defense.”* —Margaret Peters, *Government Finance and Imposition of Serfdom After the Black Death*, 2018.

It was in the course of their entrepreneurial adventures that Florentines gradually eroded these traditional religious and social prejudices against their activities, while at the same time laying the foundation of a different, capitalist culture. Those in the vanguard built up an international commerce, banking, and finance network that extended throughout much of Europe. They drove the economy. —Richard Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, 2009.

The golden age of banking in the 15th century produced the Renaissance and ultimately the Western World. In America, a similar era of free banking under a republic and the gold standard brought a similar golden age of prosperity and growth during the 18th and 19th centuries. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the Postbellum period of 1865-97 saw a steady real GNP growth of 4% per year and a price level decline of 2% per year. Financial intermediation trended up during this time, as measured by the deposit-to-currency ratio and the loans-to-GNP ratio. This increase of profits demonstrates that the falling prices are caused by increases in production and do not represent deflation. —David Beckworth, *Boom And Bust Banking*, 2012.

The free banking era ended with the Federal Reserve's seizure of the money supply, which forcibly seized all private gold, issued fiat “paper” money instead, and turned banks into heavily regulated government bureaucracies. Under the fiat money system, at the touch of a few computer keys, a central bank such as the U.S. Federal Reserve System regularly credits the checking account of the Treasury. Money is created without limit and without cost, allowing a politician to print his way out of debt. The falling prices and prosperity were replaced by constant inflation, punctuated by episodes such as the Great Depression of 1929. —George Reisman, *Capitalism*, 1998.

The U.S. Housing boom of 2001-06 and the subsequent bust were not the results of laissez-faire or deregulation in the monetary system (which remains firmly under governmental control). The boom and bust were the results of the interaction of an unanchored government fiat monetary system with a perversely regulated financial system. Overly expansionist monetary policy fueled imprudent lending (e.g. HUD affordable-housing mandates to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac) that was incentivized by “too big to fail” and other regulatory distortions. —Lawrence White, *Monetary Policy and the Financial Crisis*, 2012.

GAMING THE LONGUE DURÉE

(AN ESSAY BY COLE WEHRLE, DESIGNER OF PAX PAMIR & ROOT)

A review like this demands a disclaimer. Many years ago, shortly after the release of Pax Porfiriana, I submitted a design for Pax-style Renaissance game to Phil Eklund. The design did not prove worthwhile, but it did pull me into the conversation around the game that would eventually become Pax Renaissance. I have watched the game with great interest almost from its inception. I recused myself from the playtest mostly because by that point I was up to my ears in my own projects and because I didn't feel like I had the necessary distance from the design to be useful as a playtester. I first played the finished game in November at BGG CON and have played it fifteen times since. It is a remarkable game.

Next to generic fantasy and the Second World War, no topic in gaming has proven quite as magnetic as the Italian Renaissance. From Princes of the Renaissance to Princes of Florence, the Renaissance is well-trodden ground. Yet, these games have always been too domestic and too local to truly capture their period. Even Avalon Hill's bombastic Machiavelli fails to capture the scope of the time properly. The basic problem is always the same. The Renaissance was all about contact and trade. It was a period about a world beginning to come to terms with itself and its dramatic size and variety. To look at just what was happening in Italy is to miss the point entirely. If the Italian peninsula formed the center of a great revolution in ideas, it was a nexus fed by tremendous forces swirling around it.

Pax Renaissance takes this broad scope as its starting point. The first thing players do when setting up the game is to arrange ten map cards in a two by five grid representing Europe. Well, not Europe exactly. Rather, the map represents the Europe of those in control. The chess pieces on the map form the ruling class of the game's ten kingdoms. They are a motley crew of ensconced nobility (rooks) and warrior classes (knights). These figures, though differing in their religion, are alike in their interest in the status quo.

Between these map cards are the favored serfs (pawns) who through hard work and political connections have secured trade concessions and begun to amass fortunes. At the start of the game there will only be between two and four cubes on the board. That's you: a small cube in a very unfriendly world, literally living on the edge.

At first, you will probably want to put more cubes into play. The best way to do this is to play matchmaker, snagging up queens from the market and finding suitable beaux. Coronations will put kingdoms to play which allow players to place new concessions on the borders of that kingdom. These little concessions are critical money-makers. Every once in a while, players will resolve a trade route. When this happens a big pile of money will wind through Europe, paying out coins to the favored serfs and bolstering the ruling class with levies in each kingdom it enters. The ruling class likes this because it secures its position with new knights and rooks. And, of course, the serfs don't mind the inflow of cash. It's good to be friends with the ruling class.

But there's another Europe, a shadow Europe. As the various kingdoms become active, pieces may find themselves repressed. These pieces are pushed out of the ruling class and are instead stored on the corresponding king cards. Here they will fume until some conspiracy gives them a chance to reemerge. Serfs can end up on these cards too. When a new player takes over a kingdom a previously privileged serf may find themselves consigned to bondage. When the kingdom changes hands again they may have a chance at emancipation, or, perhaps a peasant revolt will set things right.

In any case, timing is everything. A map card with lots of pieces is considerably more stable than one without any pieces. So, it's usually best to wait until some foolish war destabilizes the Holy Roman

Empire before triggering a massive peasant revolt. You also won't be the only one looking to upset things. Another player may hope that the destabilized Holy Roman Empire may serve as the center for a Reformation of the Catholic church. Perhaps if a holy war could be declared another foothold may be established in northern Europe...

That kind of scheming forms the heart of Pax Renaissance. This is a game about the fate of Europe where players attach themselves to differing visions of what Europe can and should be. Can the Ottoman empire unite Europe under a single caliphate? Can the merchant adventures of a remote and backwards island like England upset the eastern trade monopoly? Can the exiled scions of the Byzantine Empire capture their ancestral home and remake Justinian's empire? Will another Crusade restore Christian supremacy in the East or might the warring Italian states form an enlightened republic?

Collectively the players will answer these questions through their attempts to activate and then secure one of the game's four victory conditions. That's right, this is a Pax game without the standard "Topple System." Instead governments are going to be toppling with alarming regularity over the course of the game. Then, towards the end of the game four "Comet Cards" are going to come out in the market. When players buy these cards, they get to activate one of the conditions. Each condition presents a new path to victory from owning a bunch of kings and vassals (Imperial Victory) to securing influence in the supreme religion (Holy Victory).


These conditions are not balanced nor do they try to be. The Imperial victory is certainly the easiest to achieve but for this reason it's often the last activated as cash-rich players without kings will be sure to activate the early comets for their own purposes.

All of this produces an outrageous push and pull between the players as they step over each other and their favored regimes in order to snatch the brass ring. But this jockeying has consequences. More than any of the other Pax games, Pax Renaissance is deeply hydraulic. A new government in England tends to have repercussions elsewhere and what goes around tends to come around with alarming regularity.

Such butterflying can also be seen in the game's economy which builds on the semi-closed economy of Pax Pamir. Here, however, there are far more ways to pull money in and take money out of the game. The repression of pieces can quickly syphon cash back to the bank (colorfully called "China"). Trade, on the other hand, can bring new money in circulation. This means that cash tends to "pool" less than in Pamir with just about every player having some opportunity gain some revenue source. This is important, because players will have plenty of things to spend money on. More than either Pamir or Porfiriana, it's common for cards to be bought from the rightmost market column. And the Imperial Victory often requires an ample treasury to fund campaign actions.

On top of it all there are a new set of special actions to master. Believe it or not, just about everything I've described to this point can be done independent of the special actions on the cards. As with Pamir, when players buy and play cards they are also setting up a menu of possible special actions which they can activate with either an Eastern or Western Op. These Ops allow a player to take actions on all of the cards on either side of his or her tableau. The actions give players a huge range of options, from conspiratorial "sieges" which can gradually erode power (setting the stage for conquest or revolution), to beheading those same troublesome conspirators. Unlike Pamir, these actions are largely "free" in that they only require activation to use. But, players will be flooded with demands on their actions and so taking the time to purge the Hungarian court just may not be worth the effort.





Nor will you always have the opportunity to use your actions. The spies which threatened tableaux in Pamir have in Renaissance been replaced by Bishops. These Bishops likewise travel on tableau cards, but here they are less agents of destruction. Instead, they silence the cards on which they stand, disallowing non-religious actions. Collectively, they add an important strategic axis. One of the best ways to deal with a warmongering empire is to send in Bishop to calm things down.

Of course, Bishops have their own vulnerabilities. The card that hosts them can be sold or beheaded, and another bishop of a rival faith might come stop by for a little religious debate that end in mutual destruction. Having witnessed my share of religious debates I can attest to the accuracy of Phil's simulation in this regard.

It would require another essay of considerable length for me to sort through the many claims Phil is making with his treatment of the Renaissance. I find many of his arguments compelling and some spurious. For example, his general theory of state stability and regime change rings true, as does the link between trade concession and political connection. However, the core argument that the bankers of Europe were the great drivers of all that the game represents seems impossible. And I know many Lutherans who would have some serious problems with the framing of the Reformation as pawns in a battle of bankers. There is something conspiratorial about the whole thing. Then again, games cannot help be conspiratorial. The "player" in any historical simulation—let alone one as broad as Pax Renaissance—is always a thin conceit. The shallowness of representation tells us more about the limitations of our art-form than our history. We know that a moment is made by many people and many histories all pushing on each other. Only so many players can sit at the table and play a game.

The best and most revealing games find ways to transcend this limitation. As players push towards victory, the friction between their positions can generate a remarkable energy. Suddenly, the world of the game might seem to be filled with many voices. By this metric Pax Renaissance is a breathtaking accomplishment. The Europe captured by the game seems positively teeming with possibility and, for a moment, players can seem to exist in a world that is so much wider than the ten map cards arrayed on their kitchen table.

Cole Wehrle



Alex's Anecdote: *I had a funny game recently where Cromwell reformed England, which spread into France! But the Reformists could not outnumber the other two religions, alas. [N8f]*

“At first sight, the economy consists of two enormous areas: production and consumption. One completes and destroys; the other renews and starts fresh... But between these two worlds slides another, as narrow but as turbulent as a river, and like the others instantly recognizable: exchange, trade, in other words the market economy--imperfect, discontinuous, but already commanding the centuries.”

--Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th - 18th Centuries*, 1979.

The 1st Edition of Pax Renaissance has been honored:



2017 Goblin Magnífico Nominee



2016 The Golden Elephant Award Finalist

PAX RENAISSANCE 2ND EDITION

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