

Romance of the Nine Empires™



Rules of Play



ZOMBIE ORPHEUS
ENTERTAINMENT™



TM

Countermay: *Where several threads converge in the Tapestry of Worlds. A world of settlers, both by choice and accident; a world of conflict, between civilizations young and ancient, noble and cruel, living and... otherwise; a world unresolved, with many vying to shape its fate.*

After a thousand years of conflict, nine empires have risen to prominence in this strange world. However, after 1000 years of war, Countermay is dying. Battles, salted earth, curses, plagues, rains of blood, extraterrestrial parasites, demonic influence, and other hazards beyond count have ruined much of the planet. The food is running out. The threat of starvation looms.

No one is willing to sacrifice their freedom or power to another, so the only way to save Countermay is to seize undisputed control, defeating the other empires. Once Countermay is united under one banner, then the hunger problems can be addressed. Until then, armies march across the planet, fed with the ever-dwindling food as they churn once-fertile farmland into mud with their boots.

Can you save Countermay from its inevitable doom?

Welcome!

You hold in your hands the 15th Anniversary Retrospective Edition of *Romance of the Nine Empires*, the epic adventure game where you, the players, tell the story.

The history of R9E, as it is commonly called, is as improbable as its ongoing storyline. R9E actually started in 1982 as a homebrew role-playing campaign held at various small conventions within driving distance of the designers' home town of Toad Suck, Arkansas, in which the results of each adventure pointed the scenario designers to create a new adventure based on the old.

In 1989, when one of the designers moved to Charleston, West Virginia, and continued to use the scenarios in other conventions, they had to assimilate the results of the players' accomplishments in both states, creating what became the first Evolving Storyline Convention Adventure. These ESCAs rapidly spread among small conventions across North America and even overseas to Norway.

Things "ESCA-lated" in 1996, when a wealthy raisin farmer from Fresno became enamored of the ESCA concept, and teamed up with the original designers to create an Evolving Storyline Cardgame Adventure based on the groundwork laid over the previous fourteen years. The first R9E World Championship tournament was held in 1998 with the original tarot-sized cards. Although R9E had started as a basic medieval fantasy, tournament players had an unprecedented amount of control over the story development, which included such salient events as the arrival of the extraplanar Ord, and the temporal displacement of an entire US military division from 1945 Los Alamos.

The game also survived some questionable decisions made when the entire staff but the accountant came down with the stomach flu at the World Championships. These include the notorious "partial keyword ruling," which stated that anything that targeted an orc could also target a **sorcerer** card; and the "card ownership ruling," which ended up banning borrowed cards and decks from tournaments until it was overturned in 2009.

This is not just a game you hold in your hands. You are holding more than mere cards. You are holding the reins of an epic storyline that has been fashioned by the creative minds and competitive play of players across the globe. Where the story goes will be determined by players just like you!

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Object

Your goal is to become the undisputed leader of Countermay. There are three methods by which you can obtain your goal:

- You win a **dominance victory** if you are the only player to have castles with food at the end of a turn. In this case, the people come to you to survive, and pay homage to your banner.
- You win a **popular victory** if you have 50 Renown and have at least three quests in play at the end of a turn. In this case, the people all respect you, and swear fealty to your banner.
- You win a **conquest victory** the instant you destroy the last castle (other than your own) in the game. This is almost always done in combat, but can be accomplished by other means. In this case, the people all fear you, and grovel before your banner.

To seize control of Countermay, you'll use your properties and stronghold to bring powerful heroes, cohorts, items, and spells into play to build your army. You can send your heroes to attack enemy castles, raid your opponents and steal their food, or undertake dangerous quests. Through all this, you must mind your castles, your food, and your enemies' Renown to ensure they don't steal a victory from you.

Components

Your copy of *Romance of the Nine Empires* should have the following components. If it does not, contact customerservice@alderac.com for assistance.

- Five different playable decks of 61 or 62 cards each (for the complete deck lists, see page 16).
- One pack of 100+ extra cards (for customizing) and token cards (for game play).
- 125 punchboard tokens.
- Enough crazy imagination to transport you to Countermay.

Decks

This set holds the top-placing deck of each faction that made it into the quarterfinals at Gen Con 2012.

- Holden: Sean Cassidy (2012 World Champion)
- Ixhasa: Louis Weaver (Runner Up)
- Malchior: Mark Meacham (3rd Place, storyline co-winner)
- Ord: Sandy Moore (Quarterfinalist)
- Displaced: Jason O'Reilly (Quarterfinalist)

Since players from Arcanix, Esh, Shad-Hujem, and Tuatha did not make it into the quarterfinals, their decks do not appear here. And the one guy who played an Unaligned deck (using a promo stronghold from 2003) was mathematically eliminated halfway through Swiss.

In the following pages we'll describe each of the card types in the game. Don't worry if you don't understand everything yet; we just want you to be familiar with the components before we teach you all the rules.

Stronghold Card

This designates which of the factions you are playing in the game. There are nine factions in the land of Countermay, each with a unique style, and various strengths and weaknesses. You can learn the basics of each faction on page 18.

Your stronghold card is never in play like other cards, cannot be attacked or destroyed, and never goes into your deck.

Your stronghold's **Castle Points (1)** are how many points' worth of castles you can select to have in play at the start of the game. You do not need to use them all.

Renown (2) gives the starting level of your faction's fame, which shows how well known you are across Countermay.

Keywords (3) affect which cards you can and cannot bring into play.

Strongholds can bow to generate gold to pay for gold costs. This is given in the **Text Area (4)** immediately below the keywords. In addition, each stronghold has some sort of special ability.

Fate Value (5) has no inherent benefit or effect, but is referenced by other card effects.

Castle Card

Castles are the fortresses in which you stash your food. With the spread of war, curses, and diseases from alternate realities, food has become the most important commodity in Countermay, with the possible exception of enough weapons to protect that food.

Might (1) shows how much damage a castle can take before it is either destroyed in battle or looted during a raid. All castles in this set have a Might of 1.

Storage (2) is the castle's capacity for holding food. It shows how much food the castle holds at the start of the game. Obviously, you want this to be as high as possible, since you get that food for free. Storage is also the maximum amount of food that the castle can hold.

Point Cost (3) is how many of your stronghold's Castle Points you spend to start with this castle in play.

The **Text Area (4)** holds the keywords at the top. The keywords primarily affect which factions can use the castle card. The rest of the text area shows what abilities (if any) the castle has.



Hero Card

Hero cards (called personages and individuals in earlier versions of the game), are the main people who serve you as leaders, specialists, and advisors.

Each hero belongs to one of the factions in Countermay (or else eschews all allegiance). While each hero's faction can be seen in the keyword line of the text box, it's quicker to tell a hero's faction by the faction's unique decoration in the card border.

Strength (1) represents a hero's prowess, and is used for inflicting and absorbing damage. This mainly happens in battles. Note that in card text, Strength is abbreviated as "S", so a penalty of -1S means one less Strength.

Will (2) is a hero's cleverness, as well as his or her desire to continue to fight the good fight. If a hero's Will drops to zero, that hero quits, dies, or otherwise leaves your service; bury that hero immediately. Note that in card text, Will is abbreviated as "W", so a bonus of +1W means one extra Will.

Glory (3) is a hero's fame and charisma. It is used for launching quests, and is also referenced by a number of card effects.

Food Cost (4) is how many food tokens you must spend to bring the hero into play.

Gold Cost (5) is how much gold you must spend to play the hero.

Keywords (6) affect which factions can use the card, and may be referenced by card effects and abilities.

Abilities (7) detail what other game effects the card may have, if any.

Fate Value (8) is used by a variety of card effects.



Property Card

Properties are economic or strategic resources available to each leader: farmland, smithies, or even cantankerous advisors.

Food Cost (1) is how many food tokens you must spend to bring the property into play.

Gold Cost (2) is how much gold you must spend to bring the property into play.

Keywords (3) we have already gone over in the previous card types.

Gold Production (4) (if any) shows how much gold the card can generate for buying other cards.

Abilities (5) we have also gone over in the previous card types.

Fate Value (6) ditto.



Item Card

These are special objects that enhance the abilities of your heroes. While all heroes carry mundane weapons and armor, item cards represent special things like a flaming sword or a Sherman tank or the gizzard of a dragon.

Strength Bonus (1) is how much the item modifies the hero's Strength. If there is no icon here, the item does not boost a hero's Strength at all.

Will Bonus (2) is the same as a Strength bonus, but for the mind instead.

Glory Bonus (3) helps out, because in Countermay, fame is not fleeting.

Food Cost (4)

Gold Cost (5)

Keywords (6)

Abilities (7)

Fate Value (8)



Cohort Card

Cohorts are the soldiers that follow your heroes into battle or on raids. When brought into play, they must be attached to a hero you already have in play. They're not quite bright or organized enough to act on their own.

Strength (1)

Food Cost (2)

Gold Cost (3)

Keywords (4)

Abilities (5)

Fate Value (6)



Tactic Card

Tactic cards are surprise moves that you can use. They do not come into play in the way that (for example) heroes and properties do, thus they do not have a gold cost or food cost in the center of the card. Instead, the costs for the tactic card's effects are given in the ability description. If a tactic card has more than one ability, you can only use one of them when you play it.

Cost (1)

Keywords (2)

Abilities (3)

Fate Value (4)



Spell Card

Spell cards put the 'whiz' into wizards. They are kind of like items for bookish sorts. When brought into play, a spell can only be attached to a Wizard, who then gets to use the abilities printed on that spell card.

Food Cost (1)

Gold Cost (2)

Abilities (3)

Fate Value (4)



Quest Card

What's an epic story without an adventure? Quest cards are noble deeds that your heroes can undertake to generate Renown for your faction.

Unlike most cards, quests have a **Glory Cost (1)**, which is the total Glory of heroes that you must bow to bring the quest into play. Some also have additional conditions that have to be met.

They also have a **Renown Reward (2)**, which is added to your faction's Renown when you put the quest into play. This is a boost to your fame simply because you have sworn to undertake this quest.

Each quest has a **Completion Condition (4)**, which is what you need to do or accomplish to complete this quest. If you meet this condition, you get the rewards for doing so.

In addition, some quests have **Abilities (3)** that they confer on players just by being in play.

Fate Value (5)



Quest Reward Tokens

These are token cards that you bring into play when you complete a quest. They do not go into your deck, and can only be brought in by meeting the completion condition on the matching quest card.

The **Renown Reward (1)** is added to your faction's Renown as soon as you complete the quest and bring this card into play. This is a boost to your fame because you have succeeded in your sworn task.

Some quest rewards have **Abilities (2)** that they confer on the player.

Fate Value (3)



+2/+2

Undead

-1S

-1W

Markers are used to track a variety of ongoing effects. Markers cannot be targeted. When a card with markers on it leaves play, remove those markers from the game; their effects end.

Not Enough?

The quantity of tokens and markers is not intended to be limited. We've provided an amount of each token and marker that should be plenty for 99% of the games you'll play, but if you find that you need more, just mock something up with coins, beads, or whatever. If a token or marker gets buried just return it to the pool for reuse.

Tokens & Markers

Romance of the Nine Empires uses a variety of tokens and markers to track game needs.



Food tokens are an essential resource for any empire. If you lose all your food, you lose the game at the end of the turn.



Cohort, hero, and item tokens are game elements that act like cards, except that they are not played from your deck or hand, but are instead created by card effects. When one of these tokens leaves play for any reason, remove it from the game.

Learning the Game

When learning a game as deep and rich as *Romance of the Nine Empires*, we don't recommend learning all the rules at once. Instead, a stepwise approach can make the learning easier and more enjoyable. And while R9E can be played by any number of players, it's perhaps easiest to learn playing head to head.

As tournament decks, these are built to be played in a one-on-one format.

In your first game, play **Ord** versus **Malchior**. These two decks are fairly straightforward military decks. You won't need to read all the rules, either, you can skip the sections on Raids and Quests. The Malchior Deck is a military hammer. It is the quicker of the two, but is heavily food reliant. The Ord deck is a military toolbox, and is more subtle. Because it uses items rather than cohorts, its units are more vulnerable to certain cards.

Once you've mastered those, read the section on raiding and play the **Displaced** deck against the **Ord** deck. The Displaced deck is a combat-ready defensive deck that seeks to win through hardcore raiding. Its heroes are geared toward stealth and theft rather than direct combat and are, in general, expendable.

Next play **Ixhasa** against **Malchior**. The Ixhasa deck is a control deck that wins through a non-military starvation strategy. It seeks to steal or bleed out opponent's food. Yet it's flexible; it can attack a raid deck or raid a military deck, but in general it seeks to control the board position and food resources.

Finally, play the **Holden** deck against either the **Ord** or **Malchior** decks. The Holden deck is a combination deck that seeks to win by completing quests.

From there, you should have mastered the game, and you can use the extra cards provided (voted on by past champions) to customize the decks to better suit your individual play style. See page 16 for rules on building your own decks.

Setup

Each player selects one of the championship decks to play. This could be done by drafting, random assignment, or mutual agreement. Alternatively, each person could make a custom deck using the rules on page 16 and bring custom decks to the table. We suggest initially playing a one-on-one round robin game (where each player plays each other player once).

Preparing to Play

Simultaneously, all players reveal their stronghold and starting castles. Each player can start with castles with a total Point Cost up to (but not more than) the Castle Points listed on his or her stronghold card (the decks in this box are, of course, legal). Each castle starts with food tokens equal to its storage.

Each player also starts with one *Motte and Bailey* property card in play.

Each player shuffles his or her deck and draws 4 cards plus 1 additional card for each castle that player has in play.

All players review their hands. If desired, each player can take one mulligan: discard his or her hand, discard two food tokens, and draw a new hand.

Finally, select a player randomly to take the Ordained marker and go first. (In a two-player game, one player can hold out both fists, one of which holds the Ordained marker, and the other player chooses a hand.)

How to Play

Romance of the Nine Empires is a game for at least two players, but you can seat as many as you like. Most fans like to play head to head, but the rules are written to encompass both faceoff and multiplayer games.

Each player has his or her own deck to play. Each turn represents one year, and all players get to do whatever actions they want each turn.

Overview

Players purchase properties to increase their economy. They also recruit heroes and increase their power with items, cohorts, and spells to improve their armies. Then players attack one another's castles, raid to steal food, and send their heroes on quests.

Key Concepts

Fundamental to all aspects of *Romance of the Nine Empires* is that the game is not divided into "my turn, then your turn." Instead, each player is active at all times, and players alternate resolving actions.

The First Rule

The cards often break rules in the game. Wherever a card contradicts the rules, the card's text takes precedence, unless the person playing the card is obviously rules-lawyering.

Decks, Discard Piles, and Hands

Your hand is comprised of the cards you have drawn but not yet played or discarded.

You have two different places to put cards that leave play: Your buried pile is filled with those cards that have been destroyed during the course of the game, and your discard pile is filled with those cards that have been discarded without having been destroyed. Cards in your buried pile cannot be reclaimed without a card effect, while the discard pile is shuffled whenever your deck runs dry.

Your deck is the shuffled stack of face down cards that you draw from. If your deck runs out of cards, that's fine. The instant you need to draw or reveal cards from an empty deck, shuffle your discard pile (but not your buried pile) to create a new deck.





Bow



Straighten



Prelude to the 2012 Championship...

A generation ago, Simm Buxtehude and Tuatha Dundareel led an alliance against the God-King Shad-Hujem and his undead allies! They toppled the Dark One from the Godhead Seat and sealed his throne under a mountain of stone! But man has a short memory. A failed experiment in Arcanix shook loose New Mountain, exposing the God-King's throne! The sunken pyramid of Ixhasa rose from the deep, and from it issued forth the Dread Army, with a single goal in mind: To return Ulix, the Eternal Emperor, to the Godhead Seat and reclaim their fallen empire! Would Ixhasa succeed? Or would the mortal kingdoms stand together and put one of their own on the throne? The answers are yours to make!

Bowing and Straightening Cards

Bowing a card means to turn it 90° to the side. It does not matter which direction the card is turned. (This is a rule change pursuant to the disqualification of the reigning world champion—who was left-handed—for bowing her cards in the wrong direction at the 2010 World Championships.)

After a card bows, it is termed “bowed.” A bowed card cannot be used to perform any ability printed on it (that is, anything preceded by descriptors like Summer, Autumn, Battle, and React), except for actions that specify straightening that card. Bowed cards cannot attack, defend, or raid. In addition, spells and items attached to a bowed hero cannot use their abilities. Keywords and non-ability game text (e.g., text like, “Cohorts attached to this hero gain +1S”) continue to function even if the card is bowed. Cohorts attached to a bowed hero may bow to use abilities.

When a card is straightened, turn it upright. A straight card is considered “unbowed.”

Paying Gold Costs

When playing a card with a gold cost, you must select a combination of your stronghold and/or property cards with a total gold production greater than or equal to the gold cost of your card. Each property that can produce gold specifies in its card text how much gold it produces.

Bow all the selected cards, and play the card you just purchased. Any excess gold produced (e.g., from your stronghold) is lost, spent to buy extravagant luxuries for your personal gratification.

Paying Food Costs

Many cards and abilities also have a food cost. To pay a food cost, destroy one food token from any of your castles for each point of food cost the card has. If you do not have enough food on your castles, you cannot play that card or ability. You cannot pay food costs with food on a hero.



Turn Order

Romance of the Nine Empires is played in a series of turns, each representing one year. However, there are no player turns; during each turn every player gets to do whatever actions he or she wants.

Each turn is played through the following steps, in order: Spring Phase, Summer Phase, Autumn Phase, and Winter Phase.

During each phase, each player may take one action at a time or pass, beginning with the Ordained and proceeding clockwise around the table. If a player passes, he or she can still take another action later in that phase. When all players pass consecutively, the current phase immediately ends and the next phase begins.

Spring Phase

Each player straightens all of his or her cards and applies any effects that may or must be done in the Spring Phase. In most cases, everyone can just do this at the same time.

Summer Phase

The Summer Phase is when players can bring new cards into play, as well as launch an attack on another player. During the Summer Phase, each player may take one of the following actions or pass. Actions may be taken in any order, and you can take the same action (e.g., bring a hero into play) multiple times during the Summer Phase.

Perform a Summer Ability

Many cards have ability descriptors printed on them that start with “**Summer:**”—these are special abilities that the card can use at this time. Such abilities may be on cards in play, or on tactic cards in your hand. Announce that you are using the Summer ability on the card, and perform all the text printed for that action.

Each card can only use each ability once each turn. See “More on Using Abilities” on page 10 for further details.

Bring a Hero, Property, or Quest into Play

Choose one hero, quest, or property in your hand and play it. You must pay all gold and food costs prior to bringing the card into play.

To bring a **hero** into play, that hero must have a keyword that matches a keyword on your stronghold card. Note that all heroes that share your faction’s specific keyword also share the same border design as your stronghold. “Unaligned” is itself a faction (that is, it’s not a wildcard term that matches any faction), so players can only bring in Unaligned heroes that match another keyword on their stronghold. Heroes come into play unbowed.

Unlike heroes and quests, **properties** come into play bowed. Some properties may have a faction keyword on them. To bring such a property into play, your stronghold must be of that same faction. Aside from that, there are no restrictions on bringing properties into play.

To bring a **quest** into play, you must bow your unbowed heroes with a total Glory equal to or greater than the quest’s Glory cost (exception: unbowed heroes with the Questor keyword do not have to bow to use their Glory to help pay for a quest). If you can’t or don’t, discard the quest immediately. Like heroes, quests come into play unbowed.

Each given player can only have one copy of a given card with the “Unique” keyword in play at a time (see page 10 for more details). Multiple players can each have one copy of the same Unique card, however. Counterplay is a strange place.

Attach a Cohort, Item, or Spell

Choose one cohort, item, or spell card in your hand and play it. You must pay all gold and food costs, and you must attach the card to one of your unbowed heroes. If there is no hero that a cohort, item or spell can legally attach to, you cannot buy it. If the card has a faction keyword on it, you must be of that faction to play the card.

Spells can only attach to a hero with the “Wizard” keyword.

Cohorts have their own Strength values. They do not add to the hero’s Strength (however, they can work together to engage for damage; see Battles, page 12).

Items do not have their own Strength, Will, or Glory values; they add to the hero’s values. Items also have keywords that restrict their use: each hero can only have one item card with a given non-faction keyword attached. That is, a hero can only have one card with the “Weapon” keyword, one with the “Hat” keyword, etc. Some items may have no keywords; a hero can attach as many of these as desired.

Attack Another Player

Each player can launch one attack per turn. See Battles, page 11 for details.

Autumn Phase

The Autumn Phase is when players can try to steal food from each other.

Beginning with the Ordained as usual, each player may take one of the following actions or pass.

Perform an Autumn Ability

Some cards have ability descriptors printed on them that start with “**Autumn:**”—these are special abilities that the card can take during this time. Such abilities may be on cards in play, or on tactic cards in your hand. Announce that you are using the Autumn ability on the card, and perform all the text printed for that ability.

Raid Another Player

Each player can launch one raid per turn. See Raids, page 13 for details.

Winter Phase

Finally, in the Winter Phase, players prepare for the next turn.

All players place any food from their heroes onto their castles. In addition, players can redistribute food tokens between their castles. Food tokens that can’t be stored in castles are discarded.

All ability effects end at this time, unless otherwise specified. Effects from markers continue to apply, of course.

If only one player has food on his or her castle(s), that player wins. Otherwise, beginning with the Ordained and proceeding clockwise, eliminate any players without food tokens from the game (yes, that means if you are the Ordained and all players are out of food, you lose). Your minions don’t fight on credit.

If any quests in play haven’t been completed, bury them.

Next, check for a popular victory. Starting with the Ordained and proceeding clockwise, see if any player has 50 Renown and at least three quests in play. If so, that player immediately wins (thus if two players both reach the levels needed for a popular victory, player seating is the tiebreaker).

Each player draws four cards, then discards down to his or her maximum hand size, which is four cards plus 1 extra card per castle that the player has. Strongholds do not add to hand size.

Finally, pass the Ordained marker one seat to the left.

Additional Rules

There are a few rules for events that are less common, or that don't fit neatly anywhere else in the rulebook. These are nonetheless crucial to the game.

More on Using Abilities

These are mostly common sense, but are included here for completeness.

Frequency

Unless otherwise noted, each ability can only be used once per turn, and only if the card is unbowed.

However, card text without an ability descriptor (i.e., text that does not start with **“Battle:”**, **“Summer:”**, **“Autumn:”**, **“Raid:”**, or **“React:”**) are considered to be active at all times, whether or not that card is bowed.

Targeting and Legality

To use an ability on a card, you must have legal targets for that ability. Look for the word “target” in the ability text; if you cannot define each target before using an ability, you cannot use that ability. If you lose the legal targets after starting the ability (due to React abilities from other players), the ability still continues.

Some effects allow another player to target something as well. You can still use your effect even if that player is unable to find legal targets.

Players must completely resolve an action before another can be taken (except in the case of React abilities).

Timing

Reacts are special abilities that affect other actions. Sometimes these change what the ability does, other times they respond to the ability having been used. Each React tells you in the first sentence precisely when you can play it.

Obviously, using a React ability interrupts the normal flow of play. If multiple players wish to use a React ability in response to an action, precedence is always given to the Ordained (if there is not a battle or raid happening), or the defender (if players are in the midst of a battle or raid).

You cannot use a React ability in battle or raid unless you have a hero in the battle, or the React specifically allows you to play it when you have no heroes present.

Locations

Heroes are always considered to be at a specific location. Each castle in the game is a specific location, and each player's stronghold represents the undefined location called “home.” When heroes enter play, they are always at home.

If there is no battle or raid currently taking place, all heroes are at home.

When there is a battle or raid going on, heroes can be assigned to attack, raid, or defend a specific castle. If they are not assigned to a specific castle, they are still considered at home. In addition, any unit in a battle or raid is assigned to either the attacking/raiding army, or to the defending army.

During a battle or raid, units may use various card effects to move between home and the defender's castles, leaving one place and entering another, so it's important to track where each unit is. This is most easily done by moving the units to be near the specific castles at which they are assigned.

Finally, certain card effects (e.g., *The Fallen Outcast*) create additional locations; these are covered by the ability text. If that text ends and the location ceases to exist, move all heroes at that location home.

Tokens and Markers

Tokens are cards that are not included in decks, but are generated by card effects during the game. Once they are brought into play, treat tokens just like cards: they remain on the table, they can be targeted just like any other card of their type, they can bow, etc. However, any time that a token card would go to your deck, your hand, your discard pile, or your buried pile, remove it from the game instead. Tokens are not intended to be limited in quantity; a token that has been removed from the game can be created anew.

Markers are punchboard chits used to track semi-permanent changes to cards. When an effect places a marker on a card, that marker remains on the card until the card leaves play for any reason.

Special Keywords

Certain keywords on cards have special meaning within the game.

Brutal: When this card engages and the opposing player chooses to absorb damage by burying a hero, that player cannot discard a card to increase the amount of damage that the hero absorbs.

Carry X: Steals X additional food tokens from a successful raid. Obviously, a unit cannot steal more food tokens than there are to be stolen.

Holy: This term is not referenced by cards in this set, and in fact the term has not had special meaning since Second Edition, but is included for backward compatibility with the old tarot-sized (2.5" x 4.25") First Edition cards.

Questor: These heroes do not need to bow when applying their Glory to the Glory cost of a quest.

Raid: Adds to the Fate value of a stealth card played in a raid.

Unique: You can only have one unique card of a given title in play. If you have a unique card in play, you cannot play another copy of that card, however you are allowed to use it as a stealth card or discard it for card effects. Note that the buried pile and discard pile do not count toward uniqueness; you can have a unique hero in your buried pile and another copy of the same card in play. Also, multiple players can each have the same unique card in play.

Wizard: This is the only type of hero that can attach and use abilities on spells.

Zero

Cards cannot have any numeral on them reduced below zero. However, effects that raise and lower the same value should be combined before applying the net change. Thus if a 1 Strength hero gets a -2 Strength penalty, then gets a +3 Strength bonus afterward, his final Strength is 2 (combining the -2 penalty and +3 bonus for a net modifier of +1).

If a hero's Will is reduced to zero by some combination of card effects and/or markers, bury that hero immediately.

Burying a Hero with Attached Cards

If a hero gets buried for any reason and has cohorts, items, and/or spells attached that are not buried by the same effect, discard those attached cards. Note that when a hero is buried due to absorbing damage, and an item on that hero added to the hero's Strength and thus helped absorb damage, that item gets buried as well.

Card Memory

If a card leaves play for any reason (buried, discarded, returned to your hand), all card effects affecting that card end. If the card returns to play, it is treated as a new card; it can use all its abilities, etc.

Battles

Each Summer Phase, each player may declare one attack. This creates a separate Attack Phase that is resolved entirely before the next player takes an action in the Summer Phase.

Key Terms

Battle (conflict between armies): Battles are fought at castles. When a player attacks, there is a battle at each of the defender's castles, even at castles where neither player has units. The battle that is being resolved is termed the "current battle".

Battle (ability): The primary type of card ability that can be used during a battle. You can also use React abilities if their description allows it.

Unit: Heroes are the mainstay of your army. A single hero along with all attached cohorts, items, and spells, is termed a unit. Cohorts, items, and spells always follow their hero; if the hero to which they are attached gets buried or discarded, bury them (if they absorbed damage, see page 12) or discard them as well.

Army: An army is the collection of all units on the same side (attacking or defending) at a given battle. When a card refers to an army, it does not refer to heroes at other locations than the current battle.

Location: In an Attack Phase, each of the defender's castles is a distinct location. In addition, each player involved still has the home location available. See page 10.

Opposing: A card, unit, or army on the opposite side of the battle (attacking or defending) at a given castle. A unit in your army that is facing an opposing army with at least one unit is it is said to be opposed.

Flow of a Battle

Each battle is resolved through the following steps, in order.

1. Declare Attack

Declare your intent to send units to assault the castles of one other player. You are termed the attacker, and the other player is the defender.

Multiplayer note: If playing with more than two players, the attacker and the defender may call for allies from the other players. In clockwise order from the attacker (not the Ordained), each player chooses whether or not to ally. If a player decides to ally, that player must also declare which side he or she will join. Note that an ally gets no benefits (other than strategic and political) for allying.

2. Attacker Assigns Units

The attacker (followed by any attacking allies) assigns units to attack the castles of the defender. Each unit that is sent to attack is assigned to assault a specific defending castle.

Attacking players can send multiple units to attack one castle, while sending nothing to attack another castle. They don't even need to send any units at all.

3. Defender Assigns Units

After all attacking units are assigned, the defender (followed by any defending allies) then assigns units to defend the various castles.

Defending players do not need to commit any units to defense. The defending player is not required to send units to castles that are being attacked; in addition, the defender and defending allies may assign units to castles that have no units attacking them.

4. Select a Battle to Resolve

During an Attack Phase, a battle is fought at each castle, whether or not any units are there. This is because players may have cards or abilities that can move a unit to attack or defend a different castle.

The attacker chooses one battle to resolve. Once a battle is selected, resolve it entirely before moving on to the next battle.

5. Battle Action & Resolution

Resolve a battle using the same method as playing the Summer Phase or Autumn Phase: beginning with the defender (not the Ordained) and proceeding clockwise around the table, each player may perform one action at that battle until all players pass consecutively.

Key to knowing which actions you can use in a battle are the concepts of **presence** and **relevance**. While the terms presence and relevance are not used in any of the card text, understanding them will answer a lot of questions.

Presence means that to be able to use an ability in a battle, you must have a hero there.

1 Declare Attack



2 Attacker Assigns Units



3 Defender Assigns Units



4 Select a Battle to Resolve



Relevance means that the ability you use has to matter to that battle. That is, it must target or affect the current battle's castle, a unit or part of a unit, or a tactic played in that battle (in the case of a React ability). Players are not allowed to fiddle about with effects that have nothing to do with the current battle.

Specifically, actions that a player can use in a battle include the following (React abilities are also allowed if you have a hero present, but are not considered an action taken in battle because they occur outside of the normal order):

Use a Battle ability that comes from a hero, cohort, item, or spell **that is in the battle**.

The ability must target cards in the battle, the castle at that location, or affect the battle itself.

Use a Battle ability on a tactic card from your hand, on a completed quest, on a property, or on the castle being attacked, **if you have a unit in the battle**. The ability must target cards in the battle, or affect the battle itself.

Use a Battle ability on any card (whether in the battle or not) provided that ability moves a card into the current battle, even if you do not have a unit present.

Bow cards to engage them for damage. Obviously, these must come from a unit in the battle. If you somehow straighten cards in a unit, you can bow them again later in the same battle. The effect of engaging cards for damage is described in the next section.

Bow your target unit to return it home. It leaves this battle safely. Any player can use this ability, but of course only units in the current battle can do this. You cannot target a bowed hero with this action.

Pass if you have nothing that you can do or wish to do.

Once all players pass consecutively, the battle at that castle ends. Bow all attacking units at that battle and send them home. The defending units remain at the castle (if the castle has been destroyed, the battle has already ended and all units have already gone home).

Play then continues with the attacker choosing the next battle to resolve. Once all battles are resolved, all defending units go home and the Attack Phase ends. Continue with the next player's action in the Summer Phase.

Engaging and Damage

During a battle, you can "engage" any number of cards in a single unit to inflict damage on the opposing side. This is the main action by which you bury cards on the other side of the battle. Engaging for damage is resolved by following these steps:

- Bow your cards to engage for damage.
- The opposing player chooses a card or token (on his or her side) to absorb that damage.
- Bury the card or token that absorbed the damage.
- If there is still damage to be absorbed, the opposing player chooses another card or token and buries it, until all damage is absorbed.

To engage cards in a unit, bow any number of cards in that unit and announce the total damage of the cards you bowed. Ordinarily, the damage inflicted is equal to the total Strength of the cards you bowed, but other effects may change that. You may engage any or all cards in the unit to increase the total damage inflicted, or leave some unbowed for later use. (Exception: items that add to a hero's Strength must engage when the hero is engaging; they cannot engage at other times, nor can you decline to engage them.)

After you engage the cards as the defender, the attacking player may (but is not required to) declare specific cards in his or her army immune to that damage. A card can be declared immune if that card has a Strength greater than the total damage that you just engaged for. Items and other card effect that add to a hero's Strength also apply toward granting that hero immunity. For example, if the defender engages for 5 damage, and the attacker has a 4-Strength hero equipped with a weapon that grants a bonus of +2 Strength, that hero has 6 Strength total and can be declared immune. An immune hero or cohort is not required to absorb damage (but may do so if it is strategically beneficial).

Multiplayer note: In a similar manner, allies (both attacking and defending) can choose whether or not to declare their own cards immune to an engagement by cards on the opposing side.

The defender is not allowed to declare his or her cards immune.

A player must absorb all of the damage inflicted on his or her army. To absorb damage, a player may bury any combination of heroes and cohorts (bowed or unbowed). In addition, the defending player can bury food tokens, and (if there is no food left on the castle) the castle card in the battle. Although a player is not required to use immune cards to absorb damage, any non-immune cards at the battle must be used to absorb damage so long as there is damage left to absorb.

Multiplayer note: The attacker and defender make all choices about which cards in their armies get buried to absorb damage, and may select cards belonging to allies rather than choosing their own.

Each destroyed food token absorbs one damage.

Each hero and cohort buried absorbs its Strength in damage. Any modifications to Strength apply (from items, card effects, etc.). Items that add to a hero's Strength are buried when the hero using those items gets buried due to absorbing damage.

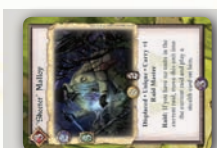
In addition, whenever a player absorbs damage with a hero (not a cohort), that player may discard one card from his or her hand to add its Fate value to the damage absorbed by that hero. (Exception: Cards cannot be discarded to absorb damage from Brutal attacks.)

When you bury a castle card to absorb damage, it absorbs all remaining damage. When a castle is buried in this manner, the location ceases to exist. The battle ends immediately and all units go home. Attacking units return home bowed; defending units return home unbowed.

The bottom line is this: The attacker gets to declare some units immune to smaller parcels of damage, but the defender can sacrifice food tokens and the castle to keep units alive (or vice versa).

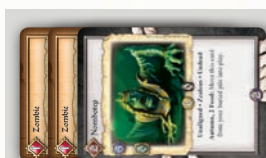
At the end of an Attack Phase, if a player has no castles remaining, that player is eliminated.

"Skeeter" Malloy engages for 3.



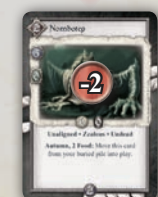
3 Zombie tokens absorb the damage and are buried.

Nomhotep's unit engages for 4.



1 food token and the castle absorb damage. The battle ends, saving "Skeeter" from being buried.

Colonel Baker engages for 5.



Nomhotep absorbs 2 and is buried. Since he's a hero, the player discards a card to absorb the other 3.

Raids

Each turn, each player may declare one raid during the Autumn Phase. When a player declares a raid, this creates a separate Raiding Phase that is resolved entirely before the next player takes an action during the Autumn Phase.

A raid is an attempt to steal food from another player. After all, as Napoleon said, “An army marches on its stomach.” Unlike battles, which involve multiple units on each side at a given castle, raids are stealthy affairs and involve no more than one hero per side at each castle.

Key Terms

Raid (conflict between players): Raids take place at castles. When a player launches a raid, a raid occurs at each of the defender’s castles, even at castles where neither player has a unit assigned. The raid being resolved is considered the “current raid”.

Raid (ability): The primary type of card ability that can be used during a raid. You can also use React abilities if their description allows it.

Unit: Heroes are the mainstay of your army. A single hero along with all attached cohorts, items, and spells, is termed a unit. Cohorts, items, and spells always follow their hero; if the hero to which they are attached gets buried or discarded, bury them (if they absorbed damage, see page 12) or discard them as well (see page 10).

Army: An army is the collection of all units on the same side (raiding or defending) at a given castle. When a card refers to an army, it does not refer to heroes at other locations than the current raid.

Location: In a Raiding Phase, each of the defender’s castles is a location. In addition, each player still has the home location available. See page 10 for more details.

Opposing: A card, unit, or army on the opposite side of the raid (raiding or defending) at a given castle. A unit in your army that is facing an opposing army with at least one unit is it is said to be opposed.

flow of a Raid

Each raid is resolved through the following steps, in order.

1. Declare Raid

Declare your intent to send one or more units to steal food from another player’s castles. You are termed the raider, and the other player is the defender.

Multiplayer note: You cannot raid multiple players simultaneously, and allies are never involved in a raid.

2. Raider Assigns Units

The raider assigns a maximum of one unbowed unit (an unbowed hero and all attached cards, whether or not those attached cards are bowed) to each castle that the raider wishes to steal from. The raider cannot assign more than one unit to raid a single castle.

In addition, the raider must place one card from his or her hand face down on top of each unit. This is called a stealth card. A stealth card on a raiding unit is not being played, and no costs must be paid for the card. You do not normally use any text on the stealth card; it is only used for its Fate value. Stealth cards are required; if the raiding player has zero cards in hand, no raiders can be assigned.

3. Defender Assigns Units

The defender may assign a maximum of one unbowed unit to defend each castle.

In addition, the defender must place one stealth card from his or her hand face down on top of each unit; better cards increase its chance of successfully defending against the raid. The defender cannot play a stealth card on an undefended castle.

Stealth cards are required; if the defending player has zero cards in hand, no defending units can be assigned.

4. Select a Raid to Resolve

During a Raiding Phase, a raid takes place at each castle, whether or not any units are there. This is because players may have cards or abilities that can move a unit to raid or defend a different castle.

The attacker chooses one raid to resolve. Once a raid is selected, resolve it entirely before moving on to the next raid. Resolve a raid using the same method as playing the Summer Phase or Autumn Phase: beginning with the defender (not the Ordained), players alternate using Raid abilities or passing.

As with a battle, presence and relevance (see page 11–12) are required to use any of the following Raid actions (React abilities are also allowed if you have a hero present, but are not considered an action taken in raid because they occur outside of the normal order):

Use a Raid ability that comes from a hero or cohort **that is in the raid**. The ability must target cards in the raid, or affect the raid itself.

Use a Raid ability on a tactic card from your hand, on a completed quest, or on the castle being raided, **if you have a unit in the raid**. The ability must target cards in the raid, or affect the raid itself.

Use a Raid ability on any card (whether in the raid or not) provided that ability moves a card into the current raid, even if you do not have a unit present.

Players continue until both players pass consecutively. You cannot use the stealth card for anything other than its Fate value.

If a hero in a raid goes home, discard that hero’s stealth card.

Once players are done using Raid abilities, reveal the Fate values of the stealth cards, and add any Raid bonuses (not Strength, but Raid bonuses given by keywords) given by cards in that player’s unit. If the raider has the higher value, the raid is successful. If the defender’s total is equal or greater, the raid fails.



If there is no defender at the castle once all raid actions have been used, the raiding unit’s total Raid value (Fate value of the stealth card plus total Raid value of cards in the unit) must exceed the castle’s Might for the raid to be successful.

It does not matter whether either hero is bowed. A bowed hero can win a raid. Likewise, it does not matter what either hero’s Strength or Will are.

If the raid is successful, place one food token from the raided castle onto the raiding hero. Cards with Carry +X take an additional X food tokens (up to the amount present) when part of a successful raid. If the raid was not successful, no food is stolen.

Discard the stealth cards used at that castle, bow the raiding unit, and send it home. Send the defending unit home without bowing.

The raider chooses another raid to complete and repeats the process. Once all raids are resolved, the Raiding Phase ends, and the Autumn Phase continues with the next player.

Quests

Quests are special events that your heroes can undertake to bring your faction fame and honor. Quests add to your faction Renown total. If you end a turn with 50 Renown and have three completed quests, you win a popular victory.

To bring a quest into play, a player must target and bow heroes with a total Glory at least equal to the Glory cost of the quest, which is given in the center of the card. Unbowed heroes with the Questor trait contribute their Glory toward this cost without bowing (bowed Questors cannot pay for a quest).

A quest cannot be brought into play if you have a copy of that quest (completed or uncompleted) already in play or in your buried pile. Additionally, you cannot bring a quest into play if you already have an incomplete quest in play (one thing at a time). However, you can play a quest if another player has a copy in play or buried.

There may be other conditions to play a quest card; these must also be fulfilled before you gain Renown from playing the quest.



Once a quest is played, the player immediately gains Renown equal to the Renown reward on the quest. Also, the player can begin to work toward completing the quest. Actions and events that took place before the quest was played do not count toward completion of that quest; after all, quests are public affairs.

As soon as the player meets the completion condition, the quest is completed. Find the matching completed quest token card and place it over the incomplete quest card that you have in play. The player also adds the Renown reward on the completed quest card to his or her Renown total. The completed quest token (and the original quest card beneath it) stays in play permanently, and the player may use the reward ability on the quest.

Bury a quest at the end of the turn if its completion condition has not been met.



Example of Play

Mark and Shawn sit down to play a two-player game. Mark is playing Malchior, and Shawn is playing Holden. Mark takes the Ordained marker because he can belch the loudest (he and Shawn are a little odd that way).

Spring Phase

Since no cards are bowed, nothing happens.

Summer Phase

As the Ordained, Mark goes first. He bows his *Motte and Bailey* and his stronghold to generate 6 gold, using it and a food from his *Hammerdoom's Roost* to pay for *Hektor*. He places *Hektor* in front of him, unbowed (all heroes come into play unbowed and ready for action). *Hektor* is considered at home, since there are no battles or raids going on.

Shawn gets the next action. He bows his stronghold and *Motte and Bailey* to play *Jack Newcomer*, taking one food token off his *Sanctuary*.

For Mark's next action, he plays *Zahir* and pays a food from his *Border Keep*.

Shawn gets the next action, and he chooses to play *Training Grounds*. It costs nothing, so Shawn puts it into play, bowed (all property cards come into play bowed).

For Mark's next action he chooses to attack. This immediately creates an Attack Phase.

Attack Phase

Mark assigns *Hektor* and *Zahir* to attack Shawn's *Border Keep*, hoping to destroy it. *Hektor*'s Strength is 4, because he is attacking. *Zahir* is Strength 0, because he's a weenie.

Shawn chooses to assign *Jack Newcomer* as a defender because it gives him more options in the battle.

There is a battle at each of Shawn's castles. Mark chooses to resolve the battle at the *Border Keep* first.

As the defender, Shawn has the first action. He could choose to engage *Jack Newcomer* for 1 damage, but *Hektor* can be declared immune and he needs *Jack Newcomer* unbowed later in the turn for something else. Forcing Mark to bury the 0-Strength *Zahir* seems a poor payoff for bowing his only hero in the battle. However, he needs a unit present in order to take any actions at the battle. So Shawn passes.

Mark plays the tactic *Touch of Shad-Hujem* on *Hektor* and engages him. He would liked to have played it on *Zahir*, but the -1W marker that comes from the ability would immediately kill *Zahir* (because he only has 1 Will and heroes are buried immediately if they ever have 0 Will).

Shawn would like to use the *Training Grounds* to lower the damage, but since *Training Grounds* is bowed, he cannot use its ability. Shawn now reveals why he needed someone at the battle. He plays *Blight*, using the React ability on the card, and discarding *Undermarket Dealings* (a Fate value of 2) to reduce the damage from the engagement by 2. This situation is worse than Shawn had hoped for, however, and he considers assigning the damage to *Jack Newcomer* and discarding a card to absorb it all. In the end, he decides to absorb the damage with the food tokens on the *Border Keep*, because *Zahir* is not much of a threat, and because he has plans for *Jack Newcomer*. His castle, while empty, is still intact.

Shawn passes his battle action again.

Mark plays the tactic *At Your Command* on *Zahir*, who now has 2 Strength.

Shawn is now in trouble. *Zahir* can be declared immune to any engagement from *Jack Newcomer* (*Zahir*'s 2 Strength is larger than *Jack Newcomer*'s 1 Strength), so he passes.

Mark engages *Zahir* for two damage. Shawn chooses to take the damage on the castle, burying it. The castle absorbs all damage remaining and the battle immediately ends.

Because of the text on *Hammerdoom's Roost*, Mark adds one food to it. *Hektor* and *Zahir* go home. They remain bowed. *Jack Newcomer* remains unbowed, as the defender.

Mark then chooses to resolve the battles at each of the other castles. Since there are no heroes available, neither player has anything to do, the battles end immediately.

Summer Phase (Continued)

Since Mark started the Attack Phase, Shawn gets the next action.

Shawn plays *The Biggest Turnip*. It has a Glory cost of 1, which Shawn pays by using *Jack Newcomer*. *Jack Newcomer* is an unbowed Questor, and so does not need to bow to contribute his Glory to the quest's cost. Shawn makes a note that his faction Renown has risen from 5 to 7.

Mark passes.

Shawn considers attacking, but decides against it. He passes.

Mark passes.

Autumn Phase

As the Ordained, Mark goes first. He has no unbowed heroes, so he passes.

Shawn decides to raid. This immediately creates a Raid Phase.

Raid Phase

Shawn assigns *Jack Newcomer* to raid *Hammerdoom's Roost*. He places a stealth card on *Jack Newcomer*.

Because Mark has no unbowed heroes, he cannot defend against the raid and cannot play a stealth card.

As the defender, Mark gets the first raid action. He passes. He has the card *Caught!* in his hand, but this requires that he have a defending hero in the raid, so he cannot play it.

Shawn reveals another *Blight* as his stealth card with a Fate value of 1. This would not normally be enough to beat the 1 Might value of *Hammerdoom's Roost*, but *Jack Newcomer* has the keyword *Raid +1*, which means he adds one to the value of his stealth card.

The raid succeeds. Shawn moves one food token from *Hammerdoom's Roost* and places it on *Jack Newcomer*. *Jack Newcomer* goes home bowed.

Autumn Phase (Continued)

Mark passes, as he has no unbowed heroes with which to create his own Raid Phase.

Shawn also passes.

Winter Phase

Shawn moves the food token from *Jack Newcomer* to his *Border Keep*.

Both players draw four cards, and discard down to their hand size. Mark passes the Ordained marker to Shawn.

The game continues...

Who Are These Guys?

Many of the cards in this set have the names of players and tournaments typeset at the very bottom. As we have said, *Romance of the Nine Empires* is a game where the players decide the story.

Often these players are allowed to create a card to commemorate their victory; they get their name and the tournament permanently added to the card they created. Other players often seek these champions out to get them to sign their cards.

Not only does this give them a permanent place in the champions of R9E, but it also absolves the design team of the blame for any wacky card effects that prove to be unpopular...



Appendices

Customizing Your Decks

If you think you can compete in the R9E World Championships, you can customize your own decks using the cards in this set!

Each deck must consist of 55 cards, with no more than 3 copies of an individual card. Epic cards can appear only once per deck. Your stronghold, castles, and the *Motte and Bailey* starting property do not count toward your 55-card minimum.

Select a group of starting castles whose total point cost (page 3) is less than or equal to your stronghold's castle point value (page 3).

You cannot include cards that have faction keywords unless those cards share a faction keyword with your stronghold. Faction keywords include the nine factions (page 18) as well as Mercenary, Renowned, and Zealous.

Deck Lists



Ixhasa

Castles (4)

Caldera Fort.....	1
Labyrinth of Bone.....	1
Protected Farmland.....	1
The Sunken Pyramid.....	1

Heroes (13)

The Emissary.....	2
Fortunata.....	2
Nomhopet.....	3
Pharaoh Rasha.....	2
Scourge.....	3
Skafla.....	1

Properties (13)

Burning Marketplace.....	3
Extraplanar Obelisk.....	1
Library.....	1
Motte and Bailey.....	1
Quezca'at.....	1
Sarcophagus.....	3
Training Grounds.....	3

Tactics (30)

Aura of Fear.....	2
Brutal Screams in the Night.....	2
Burn the Crops.....	2
Consistent Tactics.....	1
Feast of the Damned.....	2
The Oracle's Answer.....	3
Plague of Locusts.....	1
Snow in Summer.....	3
Soul of a Dragon.....	2
Testing Torfald's Cards.....	3
That Which Does Not Kill Us.....	2
Thwart.....	3
The Tree of Life Blooms.....	2
Undermarket Dealings.....	2



Louis Weaver



Holden

Castles (5)

Border Keep.....	1
Castle Holden.....	1
Outpost.....	1
Protected Farmland.....	1
Temple of the Snail Spirit.....	1

Cohorts (2)

Peasant Archers.....	1
Veteran Men-at-Arms.....	1

Heroes (12)

Coeli Quando.....	2
Genevieve.....	1
Jack Newcomer.....	2
Myriad Buxtehude.....	2
The Vanguard of Guild 10-42.....	3
Tuatha Dundareel.....	2

Properties (13)

Exotic Mounts.....	1
Extraplanar Obelisk.....	1
Library.....	2
Motte and Bailey.....	1
The Queen's Chamber.....	1
Simm's Tomb.....	1
Training Grounds.....	3
Valiant Squire.....	3

Quests (10)

The Apple of Life?.....	1
The Biggest Turnip.....	2
A Desperate Offer?.....	2
Journey?.....	2
A Most Peculiar Lamp?.....	1
Rescuing the Hostage?.....	2

Tactics (19)

Blight.....	2
Death from Above.....	2
Lost to the Nexus.....	2
Negotiation.....	2
Soul of a Dragon.....	2
Tactical Acumen.....	2
Torrential Rain.....	2
The Tree of Life Blooms.....	2
Snow in Summer.....	2
Undermarket Dealings.....	1



Sean Cassidy



Natalie Warner



Malchior

Castles (5)

Border Keep	1
Fortified Market Town	1
Hammerdoom's Roost	1
Outpost	1
Sanctuary	1

Cohorts (7)

Malchian Guard	3
Malchian Phalanx	3
Veteran Men-at-Arms	1

Heroes (16)

Beknine	3
General Hain	2
Hektor	3
Nicoletta	3
Prince Ranon	2
Zahir	3

Properties (13)

Cache of Secrets	2
Corrupted Mine	3
Exotic Mounts	1
Motte and Bailey	1
Salt Mine	3
Training Grounds	3

Tactics (20)

At Your Command	3
Blight	2
Blitzkrieg	3
Caught!	2
Leadership	2
Tactical Acumen	2
Touch of Shad-Hujem	3
The Tree of Life Blooms	2
Undermarket Dealings	1



Mark Meacham



Displaced

Castles (5)

Border Keep	1
Camp Defiance	1
Fortified Market Town	1
Protected Farmland	1
Sanctuary	1

Cohorts (2)

Glyde, the Dreadowl	2
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Heroes (15)

"The Chaplain"	2
Colonel Baker	3
Jerrin Strongblade	3
Siter'Ath Jones	3
"Skeeter" Malloy	2
Young Mike	2

Properties (14)

Displaced Bunker	3
Extraplanar Obelisk	1
Library	1
Motte and Bailey	1
Quantum Reactor	2
Spice Mine	3
Training Grounds	3

Tactics (25)

Blight	2
Blitzkrieg	3
Death from Above	3
Lost to the Nexus	3
Mano a Mano	2
Safeguard	2
Slip Behind the Veil	2
Thwart	3
Touch of Shad-Hujem	3
Undermarket Dealings	2



Jason O'Reilly



Ord

Castles (5)

Border Keep	1
Fortified Market Town	1
Kaskad Slip	1
Sanctuary	1
Wizard's Tower	1

Cohorts (1)

Peasant Archers	1
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Heroes (13)

Actuacte Ixit	3
Cao Covah	1
Ecehatl	3
Keshie	3
Torin Quickhand	3

Items (7)

Excel R-8	2
Major Moffett's Airlift	1
Steph's Revenge	2
Three Coins of the Prince	1
Xalfian Amulet	1

Properties (14)

Bazaar	3
Cache of Secrets	2
Exotic Mounts	2
Motte and Bailey	1
Mysterious Workshop	3
Training Grounds	3

Spells (7)

Divination	3
Flaming Hand of Fiery Doom ..	1
Torfald's Cards	3

Tactics (14)

At Your Command	3
Blitzkrieg	3
Brutal Screams in the Night	1
Burn the Crops	1
Captain Greya's Maneuver	3
Caught!	1
Undermarket Dealings	2

No Photo
Available

Sandy Moore

The factions of Countermay

For those new to Countermay, here are the factions, presented from oldest to youngest.

The Dread Army of Ixhasa: The oldest of the empires is also the greatest threat to the other eight. When the world was new, Ixhasa rose, a solitary jewel of civilization in an untamed wilderness. It was the first and only of the empires, human or otherwise, to span the face of the continent. Unmatched was Ixhasa in all endeavors and fields of study: art, medicine, magic. There was but one frontier they had not conquered: death. In his hubris, Ulix, the so called Eternal Emperor, built his pyramid atop a Nexus—a place where three ley lines intersect—and tapped the power therein to bring eternal life to Ixhasa. But no entity was meant to channel such power. The Nexus festered and erupted, geysering negative energy up through the great pyramid and liquefying the land about it. The great pyramid—and the heart of Ixhasa—sank beneath the waves of a new ocean. In their absence, the rest of the Empire languished and died, falling to barbarism and internecine conflicts. Ixhasa—or at least that incarnation of it—was no more. But Ulix had, in a way, succeeded in his quest to conquer death. The negative energy hemorrhaging from the wounded Nexus permeated the population that had sunk with the pyramid. Thousands of years later, the Ixhasans awoke anew as the Dread Army, the Empire of the Dead. When they took their first steps ashore, they found their empire gone, overtaken by squatters and invaders, pretenders all. Enraged and possessed of the unending endurance and might of the dead, Ulix commanded his army to retake their conquered lands. Ixhasa had succeeded in beating death. What are a handful of mortal empires by comparison?

The Tuatha: Ixhasa may be the oldest civilization, but the oldest people—if you can call them that—are undoubtedly the Tuatha. Hailing from beyond the Veil in the Mirror World that lies parallel to Countermay, the Tuatha are not a homogenous group but a collection of the ageless fae—fairies in the vulgar tongue—noble and cruel, beautiful and monstrous. Powered by their glammers and ability to slip beyond the Veil at will, the curious and mischievous Tuatha visited Countermay for their own purposes and found a life in local legend. It wasn't until the Collapse of the Veil, with their ability to vanish lost, that the Tuatha found themselves forced to interact with the other empires and form a state. Though the Veil has since been restored, the trade and diplomatic bonds the Tuatha formed in the interim have had an indelible impact on their culture, one that escalated a longstanding internal schism into a full-blown civil war. The Seelie—the noble Sidhe and nymphs, helpful brownies and the like—found the mortal empires and their frailties and potential fascinating, and advocated for ongoing interaction with them. But their opponents, the Unseelie—the dark elves, the ravenous goblins, treacherous changelings and hags—saw weak peoples fit only for exploitation and enslavement. The resulting war was fought on both sides of the Veil. In the end, the Unseelie triumphed. They exiled the princes of the Sidhe to Countermay. The Tuatha today are an unstable and unpredictable foe, chaotic and mercurial and honestly best avoided.

The Magocracy of Arcanix: One of two city-states to rise after the fall of Old Ixhasa, Arcanix was founded precisely to prevent the sort of disaster that destroyed the first empire. To that end, the city's founders, wizards and magicians from fallen Ixhasa, built their city over the only other Nexus in the world to protect it. Their citadel fortress quickly became a center of stability in the newly fractured world, and grew from a stronghold into a flourishing bastion of civilization and center of learning. The university is the finest in the world, and while it covers all subjects, its main focus—and the reason most anyone comes to Arcanix—is magic. The Arcanese have learned to harness the awesome power of the Nexus to power their spells and research, and have raised magical barriers to protect their city from all manner of threats and invasion. Governed by a ruling council of powerful wizards, Arcanix is the oldest continuous state in the world, and considers itself the torch carrier for civilization... and therefore sees the other empires as a threat to it. Though Arcanix itself is officially neutral, it spends a great deal of time playing the other empires off one another for purposes of maintaining balance. Their meddling has never gone unnoticed, or un-resented.

The Merchants of Esh: The other city-state to emerge from the aftermath of Ixhasa's fall, Esh was founded for purposes far less noble than Arcanix. It began as a trade hub due to its strategic location, a minor city of no special distinction. It wouldn't become a power until a residual aftershock from the corrupted Nexus that sank Ixhasa tore open more than the ground beneath the fledgling city. The arcanoquake tore open the tissue between worlds, exposing what the Eshene have come to call the Undermarket: an otherworldly bazaar offering all manner of goods and services, all temptations a man could imagine—and several he couldn't. Anything can be purchased there if one is willing to meet the price, which is rarely monetary; blood, firstborns, and souls (yours or someone else's) are all accepted forms of currency. Since the discovery of the Undermarket, Esh has ballooned into a sprawling mercantile metropolis ruled by an oligarchy of trade princes—men most able or willing to barter with the entities in the Undermarket. Esh has no standing army, but has never needed one; mercenaries, from this world and others, are far more cost effective. The other empires consider Esh an immoral den of obscene wealth, ruled by barely human individuals only interested in increasing their own fortunes. Which is true. But Esh is also the only place certain materials can be found, so when push comes to shove, their grit their teeth and pay the price.

The Protectorate of Malchior: Founded by settlers who cared neither for the interference of Arcanix nor the depravity of Esh, Malchior is a mountainous coastline nation of dour warriors and seafarers. It is a harsh and unforgiving land, and the Malchians are a harsh and unforgiving people. They originally chose the area because it was uninhabited—or at least had been for eons. The early Malchians discovered the remains of a long-dead dwarven empire in the mountains, ruins that allowed them to survive their first winter. Always a practical people, they took that as a sign and modeled their society off of what they found. The result was a rigidly structured militocracy and the most formidable army on the continent. Even so, Malchior is defined less by what they found in the mountains and more by what found them. The reason the dwarves abandoned their range is because it lay off of the coast where Old Ixhasa sank; Malchior to its horror watched a trickle of awakening undead grow into a tide... a tide they've so far been able to keep from drowning them. So far; it is not in the character of Malchior to rely on anyone but itself. And this fierce pride may lead it to its doom.

The Ord: No people in Countermay are more alien than the Ord, not even the Tuatha, not even the Displaced. Blue-skinned and pale-haired, with tapered ears and gem-like eyes, they arrived through a rift in the sky on great airships. Their first act was to uproot an island and raise it into the clouds, where they settled. Why they came, no one knows, but it is clear that this is not the first world they've visited, and likely will not be the last. Their technology, powered by a strange combination of steam and crystal, is unlike anything seen in Arcanix or from Esh, a magic all their own. Extremely xenophobic and jealous of their technologies, the Ord keep to themselves. They generally avoid getting involved with the other empires, but are swift to attack when conflict is inevitable. Though it's unknown why they first came to Countermay, it is generally agreed upon—by the empires below, at least—that they decided to stay once the God-King appeared to the Shad-Hujem. Why? Only the Ord know, and they're not talking.

The Cult of Shad-Hujem: Before the God-King appeared, the Hujem were but a loose nation of uncivilized raiders making war on one another. Then He came, and brought truth. Then He came, and brought purpose. The dark God-King Shad-Hujem burst into the world in fire and pain, searing the eyes from the heads of those who witnessed His arrival. He came to conquer, and found the Hujem only too willing to bend the knee. Almost overnight, the Hujem were transformed into what they are today: A religious empire of warrior-priests and anti-paladins bent on converting the world, by the Word or by the Sword. Fueled by an unmatched religious fervor, their empire grew faster than any before it, and a generation ago stood poised to fulfill Shad-Hujem's commandment to convert all of CounterMay. It was only the unlikely arrival of the Displaced—who have since become their bitterest of rivals—that blunted their advance. In the worldwide war that followed, the Hujem and their allies in Esh and the Unseelie seemed destined for victory before the Displaced vaporized the God-King with their final city-killing bomb. Today, the Cult of Shad-Hujem is much weakened, both militarily and spiritually, and is more on par in the balance of power with the other eight empires. However, the truly devout know that the God-King will return, and when He does, He will resume his conquest of conversion and baptize the world in fire.

The Kingdom of Holden: The smallest of the empires is also one of the youngest. Throughout the wars and tribulations of the past century, the Valley of Holden has become a refuge of sorts for the free people of CounterMay. Home to free thinkers and individuals from all regions, this refugee camp grew into a city that grew into a ragtag nation of adventurers, militarily weak but cunning and resourceful, an X factor the rest of the world could not ignore. In the War Against the God-King, Holden's greatest hero, Simm Buxtehude, played a critical role. He forged an unstable alliance between Malchior, Arcanix, the Seelie of the Tuatha, the Ord and the newly arrived Displaced against the might of the God-King's forces. With the help of the Seelie prince Dundareel, Buxtehude tricked the God-King into committing his forces, allowing their alliance to sneak the Displaced's city-killing bomb into His presence. The resulting explosion vaporized Shad-Hujem and buried the Godhead Seat—his source of power—under a mountain of stone. Simm's final action before he died of a strange wasting illness—"radiation poisoning," the Displaced called it—was to crown a queen and force the other empires to recognize Holden as their equal. Holden now has a permanent place in the Circle of Nine, though many are there who would see this upstart pretender nation of smashed and scattered.

The Displaced: July 16, 1945. Los Alamos, New Mexico. No one knew what would happen when the US Army tested with world's first atomic bomb. Many feared the explosion would trigger a chain reaction and ignite the atmosphere... which is exactly what happened. Fire consumed the sky, and when it burned away, it was night and the stars were wrong. There was no communication from outside the base, no communication from Washington. Disoriented, the army sent out scouts to investigate, scouts who blundered into the advancing army of the Hujem, led by the God-King astride an ancient dragon. Panicking, the GIs fired upon this bizarre enemy, killing the dragon, decimating the Hujem, and unwittingly upsetting the balance of power in CounterMay. They've inadvertently found themselves enmeshed in world affairs ever since. Possessed of the most advanced technology in the world, but unable to replace spent ordnance or fuel for their weapons and machine, these "displaced" Americans established relations with the other powers of this strange world while they searched for a way home. Today, some thirty years later, the Displaced have adapted, marrying local girls and dabbling in magic. The old guard is still searching for that way home. But their offspring, products of intermarriage with the locals (human and non-human), accept their fate as one of the Nine Empires of CounterMay. They've known no other home.

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Turn Reference

Spring Phase

1. Straighten all cards.
2. Apply any Spring Phase effects.

Summer Phase

Player can perform the following in any order:

- Perform a Summer ability (once per card).
- Bring a hero, quest, or property into play (no limit).
- Attach a cohort, item, or spell (no limit).
- Attack another player (once per turn).

Autumn Phase

Player can perform the following in any order:

- Perform an Autumn ability (once per card).
- Raid another player (once per turn).

Winter Phase

1. Place food from heroes onto castles. Redistribute food tokens.
2. Eliminate players without food tokens.
3. Bury incomplete quests.
4. Check for a popular victory.
5. Draw four cards. Discard down to your hand size.
6. Pass the Ordained marker one seat to the left.

Raid Reference

1. Declare the raid.
2. The raider assigns one unbowed unit to each castle desired.
3. The raider place one stealth card on each raiding hero.
4. The defender may assign one unbowed unit to defend each castle.
5. The defender places one stealth card on each defending hero.
6. The raider chooses one castle and resolves the raid there.
 - a. Players alternate using Raid abilities until both players pass.
 - b. Reveal the Fate values of the stealth cards, and add any Raid bonuses on the hero.
 - c. If the raider has the higher value, place one food token onto the raiding hero.
7. Discard the stealth cards used at that castle, bow the raiding unit, and send it home.
8. Choose another raid to resolve; once all raids are resolved, the Raiding Phase ends.

Battle Reference

1. Declare an attack against another player.
2. Both sides may call for allies.
3. Each player chooses whether or not to ally.
4. Attacker assigns units.
5. Defender assigns units.
6. The attacker chooses one battle to resolve.
7. Battle Action & Resolution
 - Use a Battle ability in a unit at the battle.
 - Use a Battle ability on a tactic, quest, or castle if you have a unit at the battle.
 - Use a Battle ability to move a card into the battle.
 - Bow your unit to return it home.
 - Engage for damage.
 - a) Bow one or more cards in one unit to engage them. Announce the damage.
 - b) The attacker may declare units immune.
 - c) The opposing player must absorb all of the inflicted damage possible (except for immune units).
 - d) Food absorbs one damage each.
 - e) Heroes and cohorts absorb their Strength (including modifications). After burying a hero, you can discard a card to absorb its Fate value in damage (except against Brutal attacks).
 - f) The castle absorbs all remaining damage. If the castle is buried, send attacking units home bowed and defending home unbowed.
 - Pass. Once all players pass, choose another battle to resolve; once all battles are resolved, the Attack Phase ends.

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