PLAYER MANUAL

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Crusader Kings II*! You will take control of one of the great dynasties of medieval Europe and lead them to glory. You will control counts, dukes, kings, and emperors. You will expand your lands and serve your faith. You will arrange marriages, hold tournaments, and pass laws. You may even dabble in the shadow world of spies and assassins. The mark you leave on the world may last for centuries.

What will your legacy be?

WHAT IS CRUSADER KINGS II?

Crusader Kings II is a grand strategy game in which you guide a medieval European dynasty across hundreds of years. Your objective is to obtain a high score, representing the accumulated prestige of the dynasty.

Unlike other strategy games, in *Crusader Kings II* you do not control a nation, but a character. The decisions you can make will be limited to the decisions that such an individual could have made as a member of medieval nobility. When that character dies, his or her score will be tallied up, added to your running total, and you will take control of his or her heir. The game ends when you reach the year 1453 or when the dynasty has no remaining members or holdings.

Whether you consider yourself a master strategist, a scholar of medieval history, or something in between, *Crusader Kings II* offers a rich experience that we hope will keep you entertained for many hours!

USING THIS MANUAL

Ruling a medieval kingdom can be an overwhelming task for even seasoned strategists. This manual is meant to help you with the finer points of ruling, beginning with the most fundamental skills and progressing to the most complex. This manual covers the single player portion of the game, and does not deal with the specifics of multiplayer.

If you are a new player, we recommend beginning a game and using the manual as a reference. Some aspects of the game will not become fully clear until you have an understanding of other systems, and seeing how they all fit together can help considerably.

By default, help windows will be displayed whenever you open a menu or click on a territory or army. These can help you as you play. Furthermore, almost every item on screen can be scrolled over for detailed breakdowns. This manual will provide context, while the game will provide details!

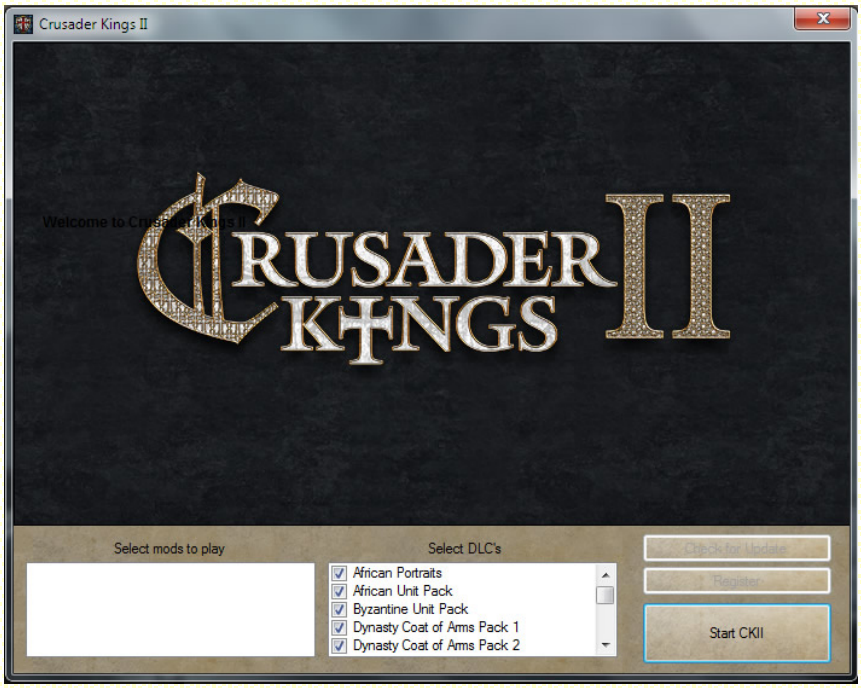
If you ever feel lost, turn to this manual for help. With a little knowledge and practice, you will find yourself commanding even empires with ease!

Keep an eye out for these boxes! They contain valuable hints to make the most of your *Crusader Kings II* experience!

BEGINNING THE GAME

LAUNCHING THE GAME

To launch *Crusader Kings II*, double-click on the game's icon. You will see this screen:



To begin the game, press the button labeled **Start CKII.**

If you have installed any mods, you can enable or disable them in the box labeled **Select mods to play.** Mods are unofficial changes to the game, and may negatively impact the game. Be careful when using them!

If you have installed any downloadable content (DLC), you can enable or disable them in the box labeled **Select DLC's.** DLC are official add-ons to the game and are completely safe to use.

If you are connected to the Internet, you may check for updates or register your game by clicking the buttons labeled **Check for Update** and **Register.**

Updates are free and can include significant improvements to the game, including new features. Be sure to keep your game up to date!

THE MAIN MENU

Once the game loads, you are taken to the **Main Menu**.

The options available to you are:

Single Player--Start a new game or load a saved one.

Multiplayer--Create or join a multiplayer game. This manual covers only the single player portions of the game.

Tutorial--Complete the in-game tutorials to learn how the game works. These are special scenarios and you cannot save the game while playing a tutorial.

Options--Adjust in-game options, including graphics and sound. This is also available from within the game.

Credits--See who made the game!

Ingame Store--If you are connected to the Internet, you can click this button to browse and purchase DLC. Some features affect the game even if you do not own a DLC. DLC you do not yet own will be displayed above the menu. DLC is **not** required to enjoy the game!

Quit--Exit to your desktop. This is also available from within the game.

STARTING A NEW GAME

To start a new *Crusader Kings II* game, select **Single Player** from the main menu. You will see the following screen:

You can scroll around the map using the keyboard keys as well as by moving your mouse to the edge of the screen.

ADJUSTING THE STARTING DATE

You can adjust the starting date of the game using the time tool in the upper middle part of the screen. The earliest you can start a game of *Crusader Kings II* is September 15, 1066. The game ends in 1453, so starting earlier allows you more time to earn a high score.

Below this tool are several map filter buttons. Clicking on them will display different types of information on the map, such as limiting your view to independent realms rather than individual counties. This can make it easier to pick out high-ranking characters like kings and emperors.

Europe in 1066 may be very different from Europe in 1100! The earlier you play, the less unified the lands will be. This may make it easier to expand, but you will start off with fewer technologies and a less advanced economy. Choose carefully!

SELECTING A CHARACTER

To select a character to play, simply click on a region of the map. The character who controls that region will appear on the right, along with his or her vassals, his or her ruler (if applicable), current wars the character is involved in (if applicable), and the relative difficulty of playing that character. You can mouse over the difficulty bar and listed wars for more information. See **Characters** for more information. If you have the **Ruler Creator** DLC, you can customize a character before you begin by clicking the small icon next to the character's portrait.

If you can't decide who to play--there are hundreds of available characters, after all!--a list of significant historical events is offered on the left. Selecting one from the list will display interesting characters from that period. A description of the event is located at the bottom of the screen.

Interesting characters are often interesting because they lived through dangerous times and overcame impossible odds.

If you have any DLC installed and activated, their icons will be displayed at the bottom of the screen, beneath the interesting characters and above the description of historical events. If you have **The Republic** DLC installed and you do not have a region selected, Republic leaders will be displayed in the right-hand panel.

By default, you can only play as a feudal Catholic or Orthodox character. If you have purchased the *Sword of Islam* DLC, you may play as a Muslim character. If you have purchased *The Republic*, you may play as a member of a merchant republic. If you have purchased *The Old Gods*, you may play as a pagan or Zoroastrian character.

You cannot play as a theocrat (priest, pope, etc.).

When you are ready to play, press **Play** to begin your journey!

LOADING A SAVED GAME

To load a previously saved game, select the **Saved Games** tab, located next to the **Historical Start** tab. A list of saved games will be displayed. Click on the desired game to select the last character you played, and press **Play** to resume from where you left off.

If you do not want to continue with that character, but wish to continue with the world in the same state as you last left it, select another character in the same way that you would when starting a new game and press **Play**. You cannot change the date or see a list of interesting people when loading a saved game.

ACCESSING THE MENU

The menu can be accessed from within the game by pressing the **esc** key on your keyboard. From here you may adjust options, save and load the game, quit directly to the desktop, or return to the main menu.

THE MAP

The Flow of Time

Crusader Kings II happens in real-time, meaning that the game does not typically stop to allow you to make decisions. The current in-game date is displayed in the upper right-hand corner of the screen.

You can **pause** the game yourself by pressing the space bar or clicking on the date window. You can also increase and decrease the flow of time using the **+** and - buttons located here or on your keyboard. A single upward arrow indicates the default speed, while five upward arrows indicates the fastest speed.

All references to time refer to in-game time, *not* real-time. It does not take decades to play *Crusader Kings II*!

NAVIGATING THE INTERFACE

Much of your time in *Crusader Kings II* will be spent on the **map**. Here, you can see all the territories in the game as well as the main interface.

> **You cannot see what is going on in territories that are not adjacent to your own realm or adjacent to territories where you've dispatched troops or councilors. Territories you cannot see will be covered in an obscuring fog.**

To scroll around the map, use the arrow keys or move the mouse to the edge of the screen. You can also scroll by clicking and holding the mousewheel and dragging. You can zoom in and out by scrolling the mousewheel.

In the upper left corner, you will always see your **character portrait**. This is the current character you are controlling. This will be examined in more detail in the **Characters** chapter of this manual.

Next to your portrait are buttons related to your **realm**. These are explained in **Managing your Realm.**

In the upper middle of the screen are any notifications you currently have. Scrolling over a notification provides you with information. Left-click on notifications to be taken to the relevant screen and address the issue. Right-click on notifications to accept or dismiss them.

In the upper right of the screen are running tallies of your **income, prestige, piety, demesne, realm,** and **score**.

These are explained in detail in **Characters** and **Managing your Realm**.

Below the tallies is the current **date**. Next to the date are the **time controls**.

Below the date are your **important messages** and **other messages**. Important messages will always expand and chime when they occur, while other messages will simply sit in the inbox for a time. Click on the tabs to view messages you have.

You can adjust message priority from the Options menu within the game.

Directly beneath your inboxes is the **ledger**. Mouse over it to expand it. The ledger is a very brief summary of your income and expenses. Any character you have marked as a **character of interest** will also be listed here.

In the lower right corner is the **minimap**.

This shows the entirety of the map. The white box indicates your current viewing area. Clicking within the minimap will move the viewing area to the selected destination. If you click the small **+** sign in the upper right corner of the minimap, you can view the available filters.

Pressing the - sign hides the filters again. These filters allow you to change how you view the map. You can make independent realms stand out, track the spread of religions, see if any of your holdings are likely to revolt, and more. Mouse over the icons to see what they offer. You can drag up to five icons to the open slots next to the minimap for quick access. By default, the map is set to show terrain.

Below the filter icons, you can lock the minimap in place or minimize it.

Below the minimap is a quick access bar for the **message log, detailed ledger**, the **home button**, **go to next county button, people menu, zoom in,** and **zoom out.**

The message log shows all of the messages that have occurred so far in the game.

The detailed ledger has extensive information regarding all of the events currently going on in the world.

The home button will center the map on your current capital.

The next county button will take you to the next county in your demesne if you have currently selected a county.

The people menu shows you a searchable, sortable list of all characters in the gameworld.

EVENTS

As you play the game, **events** will occur. Some events can be triggered by you. Some events represent major historical occurrences. Some events simply happen. Whatever the case, you will need to deal with them.

When an event occurs, you will be presented with a window on the map. It will describe the event and present you with a list of options as to how to react. You will not always have a choice of what to do. Regardless, you can mouse over your options to gain more information about your response. Icons representing possible outcomes will be displayed on the button. Click a button to make your choice.

CHARACTERS

People are the heart of *Crusader Kings II*. From cruel kings to pious Popes, cowardly knights and devious stewards, the assortment of characters populating the gameworld will shape the flow of your game.

THE CHARACTER SCREEN

All characters have a **character screen**. With a few exceptions relating to your current character, these screens are identical. To access a character screen, click on that character's **portrait**. Your character's portrait is located in the upper left-hand corner of the **map**.

As you can see, there's a great deal of information on the character screen. Let's start at the top half of this screen.

At the top, the character's name and age is displayed. Next to his or her age is a small "i" button. If you are connected to the Internet and the option is enabled in the **Options** menu, you can click this button to go to the Wikipedia page for this character. Not every character in the game has a Wikipedia page.

Below this, the screen is divided into two halves. On the left, you can see the character's portrait. If this is your current character, a small star will be superimposed over his or her portrait. If the character is dead, a small skull will be located on the character portrait. To the left of the character's portrait is the character's kingdom coat of arms. Clicking on this will take

you to the **Kingdom Screen** for that territory. To the right of the character's portrait is his or her spouse. Below the character's portrait is his or her heir, if one currently exists. If the character you are examining is not the one you are currently controlling, you will see a star icon. Clicking this will mark the character as a **character of interest**, and you will be able to quickly find this character again from the ledger on the map screen.

Below these portraits are the character's current **titles** and **claims**. Titles are indicators of power in medieval society, and let the world know the territories a character controls. Claims indicate titles which a character does not control but which he or she has a legal right to. More information about titles and claims can be found in **Managing your Realm**.

On the right of the screen, you will see a more detailed breakdown of the character's skills and background. At the top you will see the character's **dynasty** and the dynasty's **coat of arms**. A dynasty is an extended family, and a coat of arms is a visual symbol of a dynasty.

Below the dynasty name are three useful buttons. First is the **realm tree**. This allows you to easily see all of the characters in this character's **realm**. Realms are described in detail in Managing your Realm. Next is the **family tree**. This allows you to see several generations of the character's immediate blood relatives. The final button is the **dynasty tree**. This tree allows you to track every member of the character's dynasty in the gameworld.

Below the dynasty information is the character's background, including **culture, religion,** where the character is currently located, and what the character is currently doing. Next to the character's current location is a small icon indicating his or her current **ambition** (see below). If it is your character, you can cancel this ambition by clicking the red "x."

Below the character's background are the character's **attributes, character ledger,** and **traits**.

ATTRIBUTES

Some of the most important information regarding a character is found in his or her **attributes.**

There are five attributes:

Diplomacy: This represents a character's interpersonal skills as well as knowledge of legal matters. A character with high diplomacy is a charmer who will more easily make friends and allies. A character with low diplomacy is awkward at best, and repulsive at worst.

Martial: This represents a character's military prowess. A character with high martial ability performs better in battle. A character with low martial ability is going to fare poorly in matters of war.

Stewardship: This represents a character's skill with economic matters. High stewardship improves the character's ability to earn money as well as his or her ability to manage large realms. Low stewardship is a quick path to poverty.

Intrigue: This represents a character's skill with secretive matters. High intrigue helps a character defend against and arrange **plots**. Low intrigue makes the character more susceptible to and less skilled at plots.

Learning: This represents a character's knowledge of religious, cultural, and, to a lesser extent, general scientific matters. High learning can help prevent the spread of **heresy**, speed the advancement of **technology**, and improve **piety**.

More information about how attributes affect the game can be found in Managing your Realm.

Character Ledger

The character ledger shows the character's current amounts of money, **prestige, piety,** and **score**. These are explained in more detail in **Winning the Game.**

Traits

Traits represent the unique characteristics--both mental and physical--of the character. These can affect them in a wide variety of ways. To see the effects of a trait, simply mouse over it. Some traits are positive, some traits are negative, and some are neutral. Some traits are earned, while some are present from birth. Some traits are hereditary. There are many traits to discover!

If you aren't sure what to do, just ask:
What would my character do?

OPINION

Opinion represents how characters view one another. Every character has an opinion of every other character, but you will only be able to see three: the character's opinion of you, your character's opinion of another character, and another character's opinion of his or her ruler.

A single box always represents a character's opinion of your character.

Two boxes always indicate the character's opinion of you (top) and either the character's opinion of you or the character's opinion of his or her ruler, depending on the context.

Opinion affects an enormous number of things in *Crusader Kings II*: whether an ally will answer a call for aid, whether a vassal will pay the full amount of taxes, and much more. Opinion can even be a matter of life and death!

Good opinions are represented as positive values and are colored green. Bad opinions are represented as negative values and are colored red. The highest possible opinion is 100, while the lowest possible is -100. An opinion of 0 is considered perfectly neutral.

When viewing opinion, mouse over the value to see a complete breakdown of how the value is calculated.

It's not always possible to maintain a positive relationship with another character. If someone is a perpetual problem, it might be time to consider more...permanent...solutions than trying to get on their good side.

AMBITIONS AND ASSASSINATIONS

Below a character's portrait is a button. If it is your character, it represents **ambitions**.

Ambitions are goals that your character can work toward. These may be short-term goals, such as getting married, or long-term goals, such as amassing wealth. The available ambitions depend on your character's current circumstances; a married king, for example, cannot have the ambition to get married. All ambitions are positive and are worthwhile endeavors in their own right. However, completing an ambition also earns you bonus prestige. A character's current ambition is located in the background section of the character screen. You can cancel your current ambition by clicking the red "x" on the icon.

Realizing that a goal just isn't going to work out can be very dispiriting. Don't expect a character to be able to muster the energy to choose a new ambition immediately after abandoning an old one.

If you are viewing another character's screen, the ambition icon is replaced with the **assassinate** icon.

Clicking this button will begin a plot to have this character assassinated, if you are not currently leading another plot. See **Intrigue** for more information regarding plots.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

The bottom half of the character screen is devoted to characters who are important to the currently selected character. These are **family, vassals, court, allies,** and characters living **abroad**.

Family indicates living and deceased relatives. Small blood drops in the upper right of a portrait indicate that the character is a child of the currently selected character. Wards are children your character is currently caring for and educating. Wards may or may not be related to a character.

Vassals indicate land-holding nobles, clergy, and mayors (or equivalent) who owe the character allegiance. For more information on vassals, see Managing your Kingdom.

Court indicates courtiers, characters who are part of the nobility but who do not possess the titles that would give them real power in medieval society. This also includes characters who are currently held as prisoners.

Allies are leaders who have sworn to aid a character in battle. Characters can call in allies to help during times of war. For more information on allies, see **Warfare**.

Abroad indicates characters who would normally fit into one of the other categories but who are not currently located in the character's realm. This is most often the result of a treacherous character fleeing the realm, so this can be a good way to track characters who may hold grudges.

Finding Characters

When you want to quickly find where a character currently is, simply right-click on his or her portrait. Two buttons will be displayed. The scroll indicates diplomacy, while the head will zoom the map to the character's current physical location.

DIPLOMACY

Below ambitions/assassination, you will see the diplomacy button.

This button opens the diplomacy screen.

Diplomacy is an extremely important part of *Crusader Kings II*. Here you can declare war, arrange marriages, and much more. The exact options available depend on a number of factors. If you click on the option you are interested in, a description of the effect (and cost, if applicable) will be displayed on the right.

If the decision requires a response--for example, an offer of peace--you can see whether the recipient will accept or refuse. Mouse over the "yes,""no," or "maybe" to see a breakdown of the decision.

Options that you cannot select will be grayed out. Mouse over them to see why they cannot be performed.

Good luck trying to strike a deal if the other character hates you! Maybe sending a few gifts will help you make friends?

MANAGING YOUR REALM

If you know how characters work, you know enough to get around in *Crusader Kings II*. To fully succeed, however, you need to know more about life in medieval Europe. This chapter will help you understand how things work in this time period and how to make the most of your situation. If you want to jump straight into the game, proceed to **The Realm Screen** below.

THE FEUDAL SYSTEM

Medieval Europe used a system of government known as *feudalism*. In a feudal society, everyone occupies a position in a hierarchy. People are born into these positions, and it is extremely rare for someone to move to a higher position. These hierarchies could be very complex and could differ from one culture to the next, so *Crusader Kings II* is unable to perfectly model this system, but we feel we have included enough to create a reasonable facsimile.

At the bottom of the feudal system are the commoners or **lowborn** (called peasants or serfs, depending on the part of the world). These include farmers, craftsmen, most soldiers, and similar occupations. Most people in feudal societies were commoners. They had few rights, and in some cases were little more than property for the nobility. Their lives were difficult and often short. The only commoners you will interact with in the game are mayors (or equivalent), elected officials who oversee the day-to-day workings of towns and villages.

Above commoners are the nobility. Only established noble families are considered nobility. The nobility is itself highly structured. At the bottom are **landless lords**. These men are part of a noble family but do not possess any **titles**. Titles indicate ownership of land. Landless lords may rely on wealthier members of their families for support, or may marry into wealthier families. They may also seek help from more powerful nobles in order to seize titles to which they have a claim. Land is the source of all wealth in a feudal system, so in *Crusader Kings II*, landless lords will always be very eager for opportunities to gain titles. If your current character has no lands, the game will end.

Above landless lords are **barons,** lords who control only a castle and its surrounding area (called a **barony**). Castles are discussed in more detail later in this chapter, but they are the only type of **holding** (town, religious center, or castle) which a noble can control without penalty. Barons earn money by collecting taxes--often in the form of crops, weapons, and goods--from the commoners within their baronies.

Above barons are **counts**. Counts are men who control the titles to **counties**. Counties are large geographic areas containing several holdings. Counts earn money by collecting taxes from these holdings. Like barons, counts typically directly oversee the primary castle within their home county. Counties are the basic division of land in *Crusader Kings II*.

Above counts are **dukes**. Dukes control the titles to **duchies**. A duchy is composed of several counties. A duke may or may not also be a count. Many dukes had direct control over one or more of the counties within their duchies. However, many dukes did not oversee *any* of the

counties within their duchies. In *Crusader Kings II* there are several important factors here that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Above dukes are **kings.** Kings control the titles to **kingdoms**. Kingdoms are composed of many duchies. Kings may also be counts and dukes.

Above kings are **emperors**. Emperors control the titles to **empires**. Empires are composed of more than one kingdom. Emperors may also be counts, dukes, and kings. Emperors were extremely uncommon in medieval Europe, and becoming an emperor in *Crusader Kings II* is perhaps the most difficult objective in the game.

CLAIMS

As described earlier, titles are indicators of power and authority; they show that a noble has authority over a territory. However, **claims** indicate that a noble has a legal right to a title. Because titles are hereditary, children are born with claims to their parents' titles. Claims are not guarantees that a person will ever receive a title (see **Laws** for more about inheritance), but it does mean that he can legally try to acquire one through force. It also provides incentive for him to try to assassinate those with stronger claims.

WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

You may have noticed that in the above descriptions we spoke almost exclusively about men. An unfortunate truth is that women did not have much power in feudal Europe. Most of a woman's property went to her husband if she was married--assuming she somehow obtained property to begin with. Additionally, children were considered a part of their father's dynasty, not their mother's, except when a special **matrilineal marriage** was arranged.

Still, women could find themselves fortunate enough to hold titles. Titles for women are baroness, countess, duchess, queen, and empress.

DE JURE BOUNDARIES

You may be wondering how these titles were determined. Medieval titles were determined by the *de jure* system, which boils down to historical precedence. In *Crusader Kings II*, this simply refers to pre-set boundaries that determine what county is part of what duchy, what duchy is part of what kingdom, and what kingdom is part of what empire. We have tried to be as accurate as possible, though some historical inaccuracies are inevitable. Additionally, most of the empires included in the game never truly existed, but are included to provide high-level goals for experienced players.

Counties are displayed on the map at all times, and are the most basic geographical division. You can view de jure duchies, kingdoms, and empires by using the available **map filters**. See **The Map** for more information.

If counties, duchies, and kingdoms are held outside of their de jure boundaries for a great deal of time, the de jure boundaries will be updated. For example, if you are controlling an English king and have captured a French duchy, that duchy is a de jure part of the Kingdom of France. If that duchy is held by English kings for 100 years, however, it will become a de jure part of the Kingdom of England.

VASSALS

A noble who serves another noble of a higher rank is called a **vassal**. Vassals pay taxes and provide troops to their lords. They must also follow the laws imposed upon them. In *Crusader Kings II*, vassals usually have some say when laws are changed.

Additionally, vassals will not pay a ruler the full value of taxes if they do not like the ruler. While not strictly legal, the nature of medieval record-keeping means that there's little a ruler can do except improve the vassals' opinions.

Bishops are a special kind of vassal, and are discussed in more detail in **Religion**.

REALMS AND DEMESNES

In addition to the above divisions, there are two which largely contextualize nobles' positions. **Realm** indicates the number of counties controlled by a noble, including vassal territory. **Demesne** indicates the territory that a noble directly oversees. For example, the Duchy of Normandy is composed of three counties. If a character controls the Duchy but only one of the counties within it, his realm would be considered three counties and his demesne one county.

Note that a character cannot efficiently manage an unlimited number of counties. The maximum size of a demesne is determined by the realm stewardship (see Realm Attributes, below).

THE REALM SCREEN

The feudal system is a lot to take in, but it is organized in the game on the **Realm Screen**. To access a Realm Screen, click on a realm coat of arms located on any character screen. Your character's realm coat of arms is also located in the upper left corner of the screen, next to his or her character portrait.

The top half of the screen allows you to see the currently selected title and current vassals. In this case, the title is the Kingdom of Denmark. If you control multiple titles, you can destroy the title (which is usually unwise) or make one your primary title. Your primary title should always be the highest available title. If you have access to two or more titles of the same rank, your choice will determine who you are a vassal to. For example, if you control three counties but no duchies, your primary title will determine the duke to whom you are a vassal.

You can see de jure vassals, including those not controlled by the character, by clicking the box labeled "de jure."

CREATING TITLES

If a title is available to you, you must create it by spending money. Simply click "Create Title" to do so. You cannot create titles if you do not possess enough money. Titles are only available to characters if they control at least half (50%) of the de jure territories of that title. Titles are held until another character achieves this condition *and* spends money to acquire the title. This is known as **usurping** a title. If two characters each control 50% or more of a title, they can usurp the title infinitely between them.

HOLDER DEMESNE

The bottom half of the screen is dedicated to the economy of the title holder's demesne. Remember, demesne indicates the titles that the character directly oversees and not vassal holdings. The row of coats of arms will let you jump to the realm screens for those titles quickly.

REALM ATTRIBUTES

In the **Characters** chapter, we discussed **attributes**. In addition to character attributes, there are realm attributes. Realm attributes are the same as character attributes, but are determined in a more complex manner. The formula for a realm attribute is:

Ruler's Attribute + 1/2 Ruler's Spouse's Attribute + Councilor's Attribute

For example, let's say that we have a ruler with an Intrigue score of 10. His wife also has an Intrigue of 10, and his **spymaster** has an intrigue of 15. The realm Intrigue value would be:

10 + 5 + 15 = 30

Realm attributes are displayed in parenthesis next to the ruler's attributes on his character screen. Realm attributes determine the efficiency of the entire realm.

MANAGING HOLDINGS

If you click on a county, you will see the holdings within that county. A holding is either a town, castle, or church. As a feudal lord or lady, your character will have been trained to manage castles and will not be very skilled at managing towns or churches. If you find yourself in possession of a town or church, you should pass the holding on to someone more well-suited for the task: a mayor for towns and a bishop for churches.

You will also notice that each county also displays the amount of gold that can be looted from it. Typically this is only accessible to pagan raiders, and building fortifications will protect more

and more of the value of a county. Sieges destroy fortifications, and a successful conquest will yield large amounts of gold to the victor.

When you click on the image for a holding, you will open the construction menu. You can spend gold to construct new buildings or upgrade existing ones. Mouse over the build/upgrade button to see the effect. Castles are heavily fortified and provide the most troops, towns have the strongest economies, and churches can provide benefits related to technology and religion.

Only one construction project can be active in a holding at one time, and projects cannot be cancelled once started. Given the expense of construction projects, you should always carefully consider your options before beginning construction.

Directly controlling a county allows you to build within all the holdings, regardless of whether you directly control all of them. The mayor of a town within a county you control, for instance, can also spend money on construction projects, saving you money. You have no control over this, however.

THE COUNCIL

Managing your realm can be a daunting task. Fortunately, you have help in the form of the **Council**. The Council is made up of individuals selected by a ruler to help conduct the day-to-day business of running a realm. To view the Council, press the Council Button.

To appoint a character to a council position, click the appoint button for the position. You can always appoint a new councilor if you aren't happy with someone's performance, but remember that this won't endear you to them. Each position is described below in the order that they are displayed on the Council Screen.

While being a councilor can be stressful, it is also very prestigious. Even the most unpleasant character will be pleased with an appointment.

Each councilor can perform three actions. To perform an action, click on the button and then click on the map (available regions will be highlighted) to send the councilor on his or her way.

CHANCELLOR

The Chancellor is your chief diplomat and legal advisor. A chancellor therefore needs a good Diplomacy score to be effective. A chancellor's diplomacy value contributes to the realm's diplomacy value, helping your ruler to maintain good relations. A chancellor's actions are:

Improve Relations: The chancellor travels to a county to improve how characters within that county view your character.

Fabricate Claims: One way to gain claims is to have them forged. With sufficient knowledge of succession laws and family trees (and often a few bribes) a chancellor can forge legal documents to secure a claim to a county. This is not a fast or cheap process, however.

Sow Dissent: Turning his charm to nefarious ends, the chancellor works to worsen the relationship between vassals and their rulers.

MARSHAL

The Marshal oversees all matters of military in your realm. As such, he needs a good martial value. His martial value contributes to the realm's martial value, improving the troops under your command. A marshal's actions are:

Suppress Revolts: The marshal travels to a county and organizes local military forces to prevent the peasants from rising up in rebellion.

Train Troops: The marshal travels to a county to personally oversee troop recruitment. Levies in the county will be filled faster.

Research Military Technology: The marshal devotes his time to studying military science in a county. This speeds the spread of military technology, which has various positive effects on military effectiveness.

STEWARD

The Steward manages financial and infrastructure matters in your realm, and is very reliant on a high stewardship value. The Steward's stewardship value contributes to your realm's stewardship value, increasing the amount of money you make as well as the maximum size of your demesne. The steward's actions are:

Collect Taxes: The Steward personally oversees the collection of taxes in a county. A skilled steward will use a combination of tact and hired muscle to keep himself safe from angry taxpayers, while an unskilled steward may severely raise unrest in a county.

Oversee Construction: The Steward oversees construction projects in the county. This greatly increases the efficiency of the projects, reducing construction times.

Research Economic Technology: The Steward dedicates himself to studying the latest advances in economics. This speeds the spread of economic technology, which has various positive effects on economic prosperity.

SPYMASTER

The Spymaster is not an "official" councilor, but serves the realm by managing spy networks in service of a ruler. This unofficial status means that the Spymaster is the only council position that may be filled by a woman. An effective Spymaster needs a high intrigue value, and contributes to your realm's intrigue value. See the **Intrigue** chapter for full details. The Spymaster's actions are:

Scheme: The Spymaster works to foil the plans of enemies in a county, reducing the chances of successful plots against his or her ruler and reducing the likelihood that characters in that county will join plots. The Spymaster may be put in great danger when scheming.

Establish Spy Networks: The Spymaster establishes his or her own network of informants and lackeys in a county. This increases the likelihood that characters will join your plots, and may yield other benefits over time. The Spymaster may be put in great danger when scheming.

Steal Technology: The Spymaster gathers information on advanced technologies in a foreign county. This may yield advances in any of the technology categories. The Spymaster is in less danger when stealing technology, but may well be imprisoned in a distant locale.

Your Spymaster controls all of your spy networks and is in charge of carrying out and preventing assassinations. What happens if your Spymaster dislikes you?

COURT CHAPLAIN

The Court Chaplain oversees spiritual matters in the realm. The Court Chaplain does not have to be a member of the clergy to fill this position. A good Court Chaplain has a high learning attribute, and contributes to your realm's learning value, improving the spread of cultural technology and the success of religious actions. For more information, see the **Religion** chapter. The Court Chaplain's actions are:

Convert Populace: If a foreign religion or heresy spreads into a county, or is already present after a county is conquered, the Court Chaplain oversees the efforts to spread your realm's faith to the people of that region. This is time-consuming, but will yield greater stability in the county. A poor Chaplain may prompt a peasant rebellion. A chaplain may also be sent to convert pagan leaders, who may or may not receive them with open arms.

Research Cultural Technology: The Chaplain devotes himself to theological study, improving the speed with which cultural technology spreads through your realm. This has many effects on your relationships with nobles and clergy as well as religious actions.

Improve Religious Relations: The Chaplain works to improve your standing with members of the clergy in a county. This is useful for convincing bishops to give their taxes to you instead of the Pope. Additionally, this option can be used to improve your standing with the Pope, allowing you to more easily obtain special favors from him. Finally, this may worsen the relationship between a religious head and his clergy.

LAWS

As we've already seen, medieval Europe was a complicated place! In addition to the general outlines of the feudal system, each realm also had its own sets of laws. To view your realm's laws, simply click on the gavel button in the upper left.

SUCCESSION

The most important law for you to understand is the law of **succession**, and the top half of the **law screen** is dedicated to it. We discussed the various titles in the game and how they are determined in **Managing your Realm.** Here we deal with what happens to a title when the owner dies. When your character dies in *Crusader Kings II*, you will continue playing as his or her heir. The law of succession determines who that heir will be.

There are two parts to succession: gender and succession laws.

Gender determines under what conditions a woman may inherit.

Agnatic--Also known as Absolute Agnatic, this option forbids women from inheriting under any circumstance.

Agnatic-Cognatic-- Women may inherit, but only if no eligible men are available.

Absolute Cognatic--Women have full inheritance rights. This option is only available to characters who are culturally Basque.

Succession laws determine the manner in which an heir is determined.

Elective--Successors are nominated and voted on by vassals. A character can only be nominated if he or she has a **claim** on a title.

Gavelkind--A character's holdings are split among his or her children evenly. If an even split is not possible, excess titles are distributed by seniority.

Seniority--The oldest *dynasty* member receives the titles. Dynasties can be quite large, so this may be a character you didn't even know existed. Always check the **Dynasty Tree**!

Primogeniture--The oldest child receives the entirety of the inheritance.

Remember that claims are established by heredity. Even if a younger brother didn't receive anything from the succession laws, he still has a claim to his family titles.

The current heir is displayed in the upper left of the screen. Your heir will always be indicated by a crown on his or her portrait. The second and third inheritors are known as **pretenders.** If something happens to an heir, the pretenders move up the list. As you can imagine, pretenders can be very dangerous.

REALM LAWS

The bottom half of the law screen determines a variety of laws for your realm. There are many options here; mouse over them to see what effects they will have. Generally speaking, higher values will give you more power and/or money at the cost of your vassals' power and/or incomes. Higher values will lower your vassals' opinion of you.

CHANGING LAWS

Succession laws can only be changed once during the reign of a character, so be very careful about this. To change these laws, click on the gavel next to the available options. This will change the opinions of characters who are affected by your decision. A character who can no longer inherit because of a law change will be very upset.

Realm laws can be changed an indefinite number of times, but have two limitations. First, laws cannot be changed in quick succession. The implementation is simply too complex. Second, at least 50% of your vassals must approve the change. If they dislike you, they will not agree.

If you are someone's vassal, you will get to vote on their laws. Think about where you sit in the line of inheritance before you say yes or no!

TECHNOLOGY

Medieval Europe was not a very well-educated place. Many devices and ideas that we take for granted today simply did not yet exist. Furthermore, the Catholic church controlled most areas of cultural life and had a great deal of control over the spread of new ideas. Add the numerous wars and devastating plagues of the period, and you can begin to see why science advanced so slowly compared to modern times.

However, there were improvements made, and the **Technology Screen** is how you can see the spread of ideas. To access the Technology Screen, click on the gear button at the top of the screen.

Technology is divided into three categories: military, economic, and cultural advances. You can see each technology and its current development on the screen. Mouse over the name of the technology to see its effects. To increase a technology level, you must invest **research points** into the category.

Each technological category earns research points separately, based on your realm values for martial, stewardship, and learning. Certain buildings and events can modify the rate at which you earn points.

If you are significantly far ahead of other kingdoms, you will find the research point cost is higher than normal. In contrast, technology spreads very slowly from areas with greater advancements to areas with lower advancements, and this natural spread lowers the total cost of upgrading a technology.

To see where the highest levels of technology are to be found in the world, click on the small, square map button for one of the categories. The counties with the highest value for that category will be highlighted in white, the counties with the lowest value in dark blue, and every other county a shade in between.

Note that only Dukes, Kings, Emperors, and their equivalents generate research points. Lower-ranking nobles simply do not have access to enough centers of learning to see and direct of the advances of science.

INTRIGUE

Court life in the medieval period was a rich blend of social events, personal grandstanding, and nefarious schemes. In *Crusader Kings II*, these facets of life are collectively known as **intrigue**. To gain an overview of intrigue options available to you, click the letter and dagger to go to the **Intrigue Screen.**

PLOTS

At the top of the Intrigue Screen is the **Plot Window**. Plots are illegal conspiracies meant to achieve a number of possible outcomes. The plots available to a character vary depending on many factors. You may begin a plot to assassinate any character by clicking the assassinate button on their screen.

Plots are illegal, but if you are not a vassal, there is nothing anyone can do if you are caught. It won't help your relationship with other characters, however.

If you begin a plot, you must recruit co-conspirators known as **backers**. Backers always have some connection to the target, but not every potential backer will be willing to join a plot. To increase the chances of a backer joining a plot, he or she will typically need a poor relationship with the target.

Additionally, each backer contributes a different amount of support to the plot, represented as a percentage of the target's security force. Not every backer is capable of contributing significantly to the plot. Once a sufficient amount of support is gathered, the plot can be put into motion in the **Decisions Window**. Higher amounts of support yield higher chances of success, but there is always a chance of failure.

Having many backers increases the odds that one of them will be discovered.

DECISIONS

Below the Plot Window is the Decision Window. This section allows you to put plots into motion, but also offers many less-nefarious choices for characters, such as throwing feasts or going on hunts. The options vary based on the character's culture and rank. Decisions typically have additional requirements, such as gold costs, which must be met. Mouse over the button for a decision to view requirements as well as effects.

THREATS, PRISONERS, AND KNOWN PLOTS

At the bottom of the Intrigue Screen are tabs to track known issues relating to intrigue. Threats are characters who pose a danger to you, prisoners are characters in your dungeon, and known plots are plots that you have discovered, either because of a slip-up by a plotter or uncovered by your Spymaster.

If one of your vassals is plotting, you may demand that they stop or even imprison them. Of course, sometimes it can be useful to let them have their fun. You might even consider joining their plot.

FACTIONS

Factions are a special branch of intrigue. Like plots, they serve a variety of purposes and require backers to succeed. Unlike plots, they are technically legal and are not secret. To view, create, and/or join a faction, click on the fist and paper to go to the **faction screen**.

The faction screen only shows factions within your current realm. When a faction gains enough strength, the leader will issue an ultimatum to the realm ruler. Unlike plots, this is not a pass/fail scenario; the ruler may comply with the demand or refuse, which results in a civil war between the ruler and the faction members.

Characters who join factions against you clearly have problems with you. It may be worth keeping an eye on them.

Because plots are about internal efforts to undermine a ruler, you cannot create or join a faction unless you are a vassal to another character.

RELIGION

Religion played a very important role in the political structures of Europe during the medieval period. Unlike today, most nations had an official religion which determined many of their laws and traditions. In *Crusader Kings II*, most of your interactions will be related to the Catholic church. The Catholic faith was the faith of most of Europe during the medieval period. Characters of different faiths will not get along very well, if at all.

THE POPE

The head of the Catholic church is the Pope. The Pope is selected by members of the church and can never be controlled by a player. The Pope can offer many boons to faithful Catholics. For example, the Pope is the only individual who has the power to grant divorces to characters. If the Pope does not wish to allow a divorce, it cannot be done.

If the Pope is exceptionally displeased with a character, he may **excommunicate** that character. An excommunicated character is considered to be outside the church and receives a significant penalty to relationships with non-excommunicated characters. Additionally, any non-excommunicated character can declare war against an excommunicated character (assuming they aren't vassals who are forbidden from independently waging war by their realm laws).

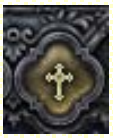
By default, the Pope operates out of Rome, which is treated as a kingdom unto itself. If Rome is captured, the Pope will flee to a friendly court. Great rewards are given to any character who returns Rome to its rightful ruler!

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

Some playable cultures in *Crusader Kings II* follow the Orthodox faith, which is a different form of Christianity. Instead of a Pope, each nation has a Patriarch who fills a similar position. The patriarch has fewer powers than the Pope, but has less control over Orthodox characters, allowing more freedom.

THE RELIGION SCREEN

To view your current religion, click the **religion button** to go to the **religion screen**.



At the top of the religion screen is the religion's current head along with his opinion of your character. Next to this is the religion's **moral authority.** Moral authority indicates the relative power of that religion in the game. The higher the moral authority of a religion, the more powers a religious head may use and the more benefits followers can enjoy. Located next to the name of the religion is a small icon. Mouse over it to see the military bonuses applied to troops following the religion.

Moral authority is raised whenever the religion gains more influence. This can be a successful crusade, the conversion of a county, and more.

At the bottom of the screen are shown **vassal clergy**. These are high-ranking officials (bishops in the Catholic church) within the religion who are vassals of your character. These characters may someday become the head of the religion, so it is a good idea to improve your relationship with them. Additionally, clergy members who like their religious head more than you will give **all** of their tax money to the religious head and not your character! Their current opinion of both you and their religious head is shown on this screen.

Investiture and the Anti-Pope

If you are playing as a Catholic nation, your laws determine whether or not you choose who your bishops are. If your realm has papal investiture, the Pope chooses your bishops. If your realm has free investiture, you choose your bishops. Needless to say, the Pope prefers to choose bishops, while having the option to appoint bishops makes it an easy way to improve relations and provides the chance for a loyal ally to someday become Pope himself.

If you have free investiture, you may name your own Pope by clicking the button in the vassal clergy section of the religion screen. This character will be known as an **anti-Pope**. Naming an anti-Pope causes you to wage war against the current Pope, and can cause a massive civil war between you and your supporters and the Pope and his supporters. If you win, the anti-Pope will become the new Pope and will, as you might expect, net you a hefty bonus towards your relationship. Failure is likely to end in execution.

Crusades

The Pope may call a **crusade**, a special type of holy war, against another religion. If a crusade is called, the icon will be displayed in the upper left of the screen. You may click on the banner to view the current status of the crusade and join in. Crusades are massive undertakings open to all Catholics and which function much like standard wars, but they are not well organized. It is difficult to win a crusade, but there are many rewards, including huge bonuses to piety and even the chance to win territory.

WARFARE

When all else fails, you will have no choice but to wage war.

CASUS BELLI

To wage war, you must have a **casus belli**, which translates roughly to "cause for war." You cannot merely declare war because you want to, as any attempt to do so would be disputed--forcefully--by other nations.

There are many casus belli. The simplest is when your character has a claim on a holding currently under another character's control. You may have several options in this case, from a single county all the way up to an entire kingdom or even an empire!

You may declare war on a character who belongs to a different religion or is excommunicated. This may net you bonuses from your religious head and may inspire fellow members of your faith to join your cause.

Finally, you may declare war on behalf of another character within your realm. This has the benefit of providing a huge relationship bonus with that character if you succeed, though you will not gain any territory yourself. Of course, if the character is your vassal you will have increased the amount of taxable income you have access to.

Regardless of the casus belli, you can declare war against a character on the diplomacy screen. When you do so, you must choose what the casus belli will be. If you win the war, you will only keep territory if you specified that territory in the casus belli. Any other counties you conquered will be returned to the character you fought against.

RAISING ARMIES

To view information about your military forces, click the **military button** to go to the **military screen.**

The **Retinues** tab is available only if you have purchased the *Legacy of Rome* DLC. See the *Legacy of Rome* chapter for details.

The **Army Levies** tab allows you to raise **levies**--military forces--from your counties. Most of your troops will come from your vassals' holdings, and vassals will not provide the maximum number of troops if they dislike you or if your crown authority (under the Laws screen) is too low. To raise levies, click on the raise levies button next to a vassal or raise all levies at the top of the screen. You may disband levies by clicking on the disband levies button. If your vassal levies are raised for a long period of time, the cost of paying for them will begin to make your vassals angry.

The **Fleet Levies** tab shows naval levies available to you. These are similar to army levies, but ships cannot wage war in *Crusader Kings II*. Instead, they are used to transport armies. Like armies, navies cost upkeep for you and your vassals, and can be a drain on your income.

Raising forces from within your realm is free, but you will incur an income penalty in the form of **upkeep**. Having many levies raised can cripple your economy.

At the bottom of the screen you can see all of your vassals as well as **mercenaries** and **holy orders.**

Mercenaries work much the same way as vassals, except that they cost money to recruit and impose much heavier upkeep costs. Typically, the largest and/or best equipped mercenary bands cost a great deal of money. If you run out of money and cannot continue to pay the mercenaries, they will either disband or turn against you.

Holy orders are dedicated groups that fight on behalf of your faith. They are not available to characters outside of their religion, and they will not fight against members of their faith. Ordinarily they cost money to recruit and maintain, but if you are at war with a member of another religion, you may spend piety instead and will not have to pay upkeep costs. Holy orders can turn the tide of a religious war without using any of your hard-earned gold, assuming you have the piety to raise them.

MANAGING ARMIES AND FLEETS

When you raise a levy or fleet (including mercenaries and holy orders) the levy will appear in the county from which the levy comes, or in your capital county if a mercenary band or holy order. They will appear on the map as a soldier or ship. To manage them, click on the soldier or fleet.

If Armies are divided into three flanks, the left, right, and center. Depending on your laws, you may be able to appoint characters to lead armies. If not, vassals will automatically take control

and you will have no ability to change their organization. More information about how this functions will be provided below, but for now just remember that characters with high martial scores will be better at leading troops. Within an army, the character leading the center flank is considered the leader of the entire army and provides some benefits to the other two flanks.

If multiple armies are present in a province, you may combine them by clicking the **combine army** button at the top of the army information window. You may also separate large armies into smaller armies.

The small skull represents **attrition**. Attrition represents loss of soldiers from desertion, disease, or starvation, and occurs when an army is outside of friendly territory (and thus has no access to new recruits or steady supplies). This is displayed as a percentage of your total force.

Each flank is broken down by the type of troop within the flank. More information about each type of troop is described below.

Fleets are similar, but simply list the number of ships and the number of troops the fleet may carry. Fleets cannot engage in combat.

MOVING ARMIES AND FLEETS

To move an army or fleet, simply left-click on the army or fleet and right-click on the desired destination. They will begin moving, though armies will be stopped if they encounter an enemy army.

To move an army to a fleet, click on the army and click on the **embark** button at the top of army information window. Alternately, you may right click on a fleet instead of a county. In either case, the fleet must have enough capacity to transport the army.

To move an army from a fleet to land, click on the fleet. The army will appear as a tab off the fleet window. Click on the tab to select the army, then right click on a county adjacent to the fleet's current location.

If you have allies in a war and you would like to keep your forces together, you may link them by moving your army into the same county as an ally's army and clicking the **link** button, represented by a small chain at the top of the army window. Your army will automatically move, attack, and defend with the allied army, making the total military force stronger.

BATTLE

If your army encounters an enemy army, battle occurs. Each flank faces off against the same flank in the opposing army (left flank vs. left flank, center vs. center, and right flank vs. right flank).

There are three phases to a battle: skirmish, assault, and chase. **Skirmish** occurs as light troops begin feeling at the opposing army's defenses. Light infantry and archers dominate this phase. **Assault** occurs when the two armies meet in full, and this is when heavy infantry, spearmen, and heavy cavalry become important. **Chase** occurs when a flank retreats and light cavalry inflict what casualties they can.

When battling, the objective is not really to kill every soldier. Instead, the purpose is to reduce a flank's **morale.** Morale is represented as the green bar above the leader of the flank's portrait. The overall morale of the entire army can be seen on the map. When morale is depleted, the flank retreats. Many things can affect morale, from terrain to a leader to casualties.

To get the most out of your troops, keep an eye on your military technology levels, troop numbers, and the traits of the characters leading the army. A skilled general leading above-average troops in favorable conditions can trump a numerical advantage!

When a battle is finished, the results are displayed, including casualties. You earn prestige, military research points, and piety (when battling armies of another religion) from winning battles.

SIEGES

If there is no other army in a county, your army will lay siege to one of the holdings in that county. A siege will slowly starve out defenders, though you can speed it up by assaulting the holding by pressing the assault button. This is very risky, especially if the holding has many defensive upgrades. Successful sieges yield the same results as battles, but also gold from pillaging. The amount of gold available can be viewed on the holdings screen.

TERRAIN

Each county has its own terrain. To view terrain, use the terrain map filter and mouse over a county. Terrain typically confers bonuses to armies currently within the county--since they have time to set up defenses and favorable positions--and penalties to attacking armies entering the county. Plains are considered neutral, but swamps, mountains, rivers, and other geographical features confer various bonuses and penalties to either side.

WAR SCORE

As battles and sieges are won and lost, the war score for each side goes up and down (up for victories and down for losses). War score represents the overall progress of the war. If a war

you are participating in has a positive (1 to 100) war score, it means your side is winning. If the war score is negative (-100 to -1), it means your side is losing.

Higher war scores mean it is more likely the enemy will concede defeat. If the score reaches 100, the enemy *must* concede defeat. Similarly, lower war scores mean you are doing badly and, if you are not in control of the war (for instance, when you are a vassal), it is more likely your side will surrender. If the score reaches -100, you *must* concede defeat.

In addition to winning and losing battles, war score is raised and lowered when disputed holdings are held by one side. For example, let's say that war is declared in order to gain control of the Duchy of Norfolk. If one side captures and maintains control of more counties within the Duchy, the war score for that side will gradually increase as the war score for the opposition decreases. This gives the defender an advantage, and if he or she is able to hold off the attacker long enough, he or she is guaranteed a victory. Similarly, if the attacker seizes control of those counties and prevents the defender from achieving other victories, he or she will earn a victory without having to spread his or her forces out over a large area.

VICTORY AND DEFEAT

If you win a war, you gain a significant boost to prestige (and piety if involved in a holy war) as well as any holdings you were fighting over (see Casus Belli). If you lose a war, you lose prestige (and piety if involved in a holy war) as well as any holdings you were fighting over.

If a war drags on for a great period of time without a conclusive winner, it may be wise to consider a **white peace**. This is essentially a draw, and the defender loses nothing while the attacker loses far less than if he or she had been defeated. No holdings are exchanged.

WINNING THE GAME

SCORE

Crusader Kings II is a grand strategy game that is modeled on history. As such, there is not really a way to "win." Instead, the goal is to amass the highest **score** possible. Each character in a dynasty accrues points, and these points are tallied and added to a "bank" when the character dies. When the game ends--the year 1453, when there are no eligible successors left for you to play, or when your dynasty no longer has any lands--your final score is compared to a list of real-life dynasties which have been given scores representing their historical impact. To surpass the Capet dynasty, perhaps the greatest dynasty to arise from medieval Europe, you must have a final score higher than 100,000 points.

PRESTIGE AND PIETY

Score is the sum of a character's **prestige** and **piety**.

Prestige represents personal honor and power. Prestigious individuals are respected for their personal qualities, great achievements, and rank. A king who makes a name for himself as a great conqueror will have greater prestige than a duke well-known for assassinating his rivals and losing wars.

Piety represents spiritual devotion. Pious individuals fight for their faith and behave in a manner fitting members of their religion. A count who is known for his honesty and kindness and fights bravely in a crusade will have more piety than a lustful emperor who ignores the church at every opportunity.

As you play, you will find times when prestige or piety can be spent to receive something in return. For example, piety must be spent to hire holy orders during a holy war. Sometimes the rewards for spending prestige and piety are greater than saving them.

THE SWORD OF ISLAM

If you have purchased the *Sword of Islam* DLC, you will be able to play as Muslim characters. Playing as a Muslim is a very different experience from playing as a Catholic.

Note that, from a gameplay perspective, most features are the same, though titles and council positions are different.

Religion

Like Christians, Muslims fall into one of two categories: Sunni and Shi'ite. These are treated as two separate religions for gameplay purposes. Where the Pope is a separate entity who cannot be controlled by the player, Islamic religious heads are playable characters who function like any other. If the moral authority of their religion is sufficiently high, a player controlling an Islamic religious leader may call for a Great Jihad, which functions similarly to a Crusade.

Marriage

Unlike Catholics, Muslims may take more than one wife. In fact, they take a penalty to prestige if they do not have a sufficient number of wives! The number of wives a Muslim is expected to have is determined by his rank, with the maximum number being four.

Decadence

Located in the interface for a Muslim character is a new value: **decadence**.

Decadence represents the degree, expressed as a percent, to which a Muslim dynasty has strayed from the path of Islam. Many things contribute to decadence: landless sons, extended periods of peace, and more. Decadence trickles up the dynasty, and rises fastest for a high-ranking character (such as a Caliph, the Muslim equivalent of Emperor) with many decadent family members.

As decadence increases, Muslim characters take more and more penalties in virtually every area of the game. If decadence is sufficiently high, pious Muslims in the realm will rise up and overthrow their wayward leaders.

To reduce decadence, you will need to prove your devotion to the tenets of Islam. This may be done by going on Hadj (religious pilgrimage to Mecca), demonstrating your humility (by having a smaller demesne than other dynasty members), ensuring that your family members are all usefully occupied (by having their own lands to oversee), and more.

LEGACY OF ROME

The *Legacy of Rome* DLC adds many new features for characters within the Byzantine Empire. You will find that life in the Empire is different in many ways from life in other parts of Europe. It also adds **retinues** for all characters within the game.

RETINUES

Retinues are standing, professional armies. Unlike most medieval forces, they are not drawn as needed from the general population, but are on hand at all times.

Retinues are formed in units of 500 soldiers, and use up your **retinue limit**. Generally speaking, better retinues use a higher amount of your limit. The retinue limit is determined by the size of the realm as well as the military organization technology. Larger realms--especially empires--will be able to field more retinues.

Unlike normal armies, retinues do not incur ongoing maintenance costs. They cost gold to create and drain a small amount whenever they are reinforcing up to their full size. You can adjust the rate at which retinues reinforce--and thus how much they drain your economy--in the retinue menu. Retinues automatically reinforce whenever they are below their maximum size and are not engaged in combat. You will be alerted when you attempt to disband a retinue.

You can manage your retinues from the military screen.

SUNSET INVASION

What if Europe had been discovered by America?

In a game running *Sunset Invasion*, there is a chance that, at some point, emissaries of the Aztec Empire will encounter the continent of Europe. In this scenario, history is reversed. The Aztecs of *Sunset Invasion* are far more advanced than they were in reality, and they seek to colonize Europe in the same way that Europeans would actually do to the Americas. They bring a strange new religion, terrible new diseases, and an insatiable desire for land and riches.

The Aztecs are not guaranteed to appear in any given game, so the scenario will not always impact your experience. You can enjoy *Crusader Kings II* as both a simulator of actual European history (albeit a history which you can rewrite) as well as an entirely fanciful alternate timeline!

Furthermore, if you own *The Old Gods* DLC, you may play as the Aztecs! Simply load a game in which the Aztecs have already invaded--you cannot select them from a start date, as they will never appear in a game until some point after the game has started--and select an Aztec character to play.

THE REPUBLIC

The Republic DLC allows you to play as one of the merchant republics of medieval Europe. Where traditional nobility draws its wealth and power from land and the associated titles, merchant republics are founded entirely on trade. Merchant republics are not, strictly speaking, part of the nobility, and they follow very different rules of succession.

THE FAMILY ESTATE

Merchant republics are made up of several different families. Each family controls an estate, called the **palace,** which is *not* located on the map. These families can therefore continue playing the game even if all of their territory is lost.

TRADING POSTS

The foundation of a merchant republic's power is wealth, and this wealth comes from trading goods. Due to the limited infrastructure of medieval Europe, trading posts can only be constructed in coastal territories, but they are nevertheless very lucrative.

To build a trading post, click on a coastal territory and click on the trading tab on the right side of the window. Trading posts will slightly increase the tax income of the county, but most of the generated money will flow directly to the owner of the trade post. The further away a trading post is from your family's capital, the more expensive it is to construct. Once constructed, trading posts can be upgraded just like standard holdings.

The number of trading posts you can construct is limited by three factors: the size of the palace, the number of male characters in the court, and the level of the trade practices technology. After all, trading posts require knowledge, infrastructure, and management in order to succeed!

Though it is in the best interest of a county's owner to have a trade post in the county, it doesn't matter which family runs it. A character can embargo a family, allowing rival merchant families to seize control of prime trading posts. Furthermore, rival merchant families can wage war against one another for control of trading posts.

THE REPUBLIC SCREEN

When playing as a merchant republic, you will notice a new menu available to you: the Republic Screen.

Here you can view the status of each family's estate.

Each family within a merchant republic follows the Agnatic Seniority form of succession, though leaders may use the special **Designate Heir** command in the diplomacy screen to select a specific heir. The overall republic, however, possesses a very special means of succession. The leader of the republic--usually referred to as a doge--is elected by the other families based on their respect for the character. This **Respect** is a combination of age, prestige, and the amount of money spent on the election campaign.

Campaign funds are secret--they include bribes, after all--so it is possible for a character to win an election despite a low Respect score by spending a significant amount of gold. Use the **Campaign Fund** box in this screen to add or remove money from the fund. Elections are not held until the current leader dies, so campaign funds can be added or subtracted until that point, at which they are automatically spent. There are no refunds if you lose the election.

THE OLD GODS

The *Old Gods* DLC allows you to play as pagan characters. The term "pagan" has had many meanings over the course of history. In the medieval period, it was a condescending term for any individual outside of one's own faith. In *Crusader Kings II,* "pagan" refers to the disorganized faiths which failed to unite their peoples to the same degree as Christianity and Islam. These faiths were disorganized and scattered, rarely managed to eke out significant kingdoms, and their followers were frequently converted or massacred by more dominant religions.

Pagans play extremely differently from non-pagans, and there are even some significant differences between the pagan factions. Included in this DLC is a special new start date that adds several hundred years to the game. You cannot start a game between this new start date and the original start date of 1066, however.

Additionally, you may now play as a Zoroastrian character. Zoroastrianism is not a pagan religion under the definition used by *Crusader Kings II*, but is very different from Christianity and Islam. Note that Zoroastrianism had been largely extinguished as a regional power by 1066.

OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE PAGANS

Pagan nations were generally less well-organized and less civilized than their Christian and Muslim neighbors. Some cultures were very aggressive and warlike, pillaging the lands and wreaking havoc. Others fought simply to maintain their own ways of life. To reflect this, pagans in *Crusader Kings II* are either offensive or defensive in nature.

Offensive pagans pillage and conquer. They gain bonuses related to waging war, including special casus belli. Offensive pagans incur penalties when at peace for too long, but can go raiding or use one of their special casus belli. The offensive pagans are the Norse and Tengri.

The defensive pagans gain significant bonuses when fighting in their own territory. Their troops are generally more powerful, and they have larger garrisons to make invasions more difficult. The defensive pagans are the Suomenusko, West African, Slavic, and Romuva.

DEFENSIVE BONUSES

Unless they invest sufficiently in technology, non-pagan nations will incur significant penalties when fighting in pagan territory. This is intended to reflect the hostile and alien nature of pagans, at least as perceived by non-pagans of the time. This bonus is lost if a pagan faith is reformed, and the Tengri--who were historically nomadic--do not have it at all.

SUCCESSION AND LAWS

Prior to reforming their faith, pagans are too disorganized and fractured to maintain elaborate succession laws. Until a reformation takes place, pagans must follow the gavelkind succession law.

For the same reason, pagans do not easily form long-term, stable nations. Pagan chieftains typically want to follow only strong individuals, and are deeply skeptical of new, unproven leaders. Furthermore, they are eager to prove themselves as strong and capable leaders; they are more likely to found independence factions, and they have an easier time meeting the requirements to launch an uprising.

PETTY KINGDOMS

If playing with the special starting date, you will find Europe to be far less well-developed. Many of the kings of this period rule over what are known as **Petty Kingdoms**. While these kings benefit from all the typical benefits of their titles, their demesnes are little more than glorified duchies. It is in the best interest of these kings to found the larger de jure kingdoms, lest they get crushed by more ambitious and powerful neighbors.

CONCUBINES

Male pagans can take up to three concubines at a time. Concubines are women who are, essentially, slaves to their lords. They function much like wives, and their children are equally valid for succession (though they incur a slight penalty based on the stigma of being born to a concubine). Unlike wives, they do not contribute stats or earn alliances. Concubines never have any choice in the matter and can be chosen and discarded when it suits the man. Concubines contribute to their man's prestige.

RAIDING

Unlike more developed cultures, the offensive pagans frequently relied upon raiding and pillaging for economic growth. To raid, you must first convert a standard army into an army of raiders. Simply click the new "raid" button on the army info box when in friendly territory. You may convert your raiders back into a standard force in any location if you need to rapidly change the force into a standard army.

Once you have a group of raiders, simply move them to a county of another religion (the ruler of the kingdom or empire must also be of a different religion) adjacent to your territory or adjacent to a water tile with a friendly fleet in it. The raiders will automatically begin raiding the county and transferring the loot back to your territory or fleet, as applicable. A small icon

will be displayed next to the unit as it loots. When the icon turns red, the county has no more loot available.

More raiders means faster raiding!

The amount of loot a county holds is determined by its economic output and is displayed on the holding window. Mouse over the loot bar to see how much money is available for looting. Much of a county's loot is protected behind fortifications. Raiders must travel light and swift, and so cannot lay siege to a hold unless converted back into a standard army.

If using fleets, the amount of loot you can carry is equal to the number of ships times ten, and the loot they are carrying can be seen on the fleet info box. When full, or when you simply don't want to raid anymore, move the fleet into a friendly port to receive the money and an equal amount of prestige.

The Norse were famous for specially designed boats--longboats--capable of sailing upriver. Norse fleets can travel up rivers and raid otherwise inaccessible counties.

When raiding, armies belonging to the ruler of the raided county will turn hostile to the raiders. However, this does *not* count as a declaration of war, and you need not fear invasion.

Raiding is not available to the defensive pagans.

PAGAN REFORMATION

If a pagan leader controls at least three holy sites for his religion, he may spend piety to reform the religion, making it more similar to the organized faiths of Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism. As noted above, this will cause you to lose several benefits, but will open up several significant advantages. Among these advantages is the fact that the reforming leader will become the head of the religion, with all the benefits that come with that, including the ability to declare holy wars.

Reformation cannot be reversed, so use caution when undertaking it. Detailed information regarding reformation and its requirements can be found on the Religion screen.

AFTERWORD

Many years ago, I was stunned to discover the *Master of Orion 2* manual, a piece of documentation unlike anything I had ever encountered before. It described not only how to play a game that did not immediately open itself to me, but an entire setting of quirky aliens and detailed technologies. If it hadn't been for that manual, I wouldn't have been able to understand what has since become one of my all-time favorite games

This manual began as a project for graduate school. We were told that we had to create a piece of instructional documentation, including all of the stages in between. I knew immediately that I wanted to write a manual for a video game.

It is unlikely that I will ever have the opportunity to do this in a professional setting, as a variety of factors have caused manuals to fall out of fashion, replaced by hunts through wikis and online videos. While these are certainly useful, I personally have never been terribly fond of them. Videos, in particular, are a time-consuming way to learn the intricacies of a game, and I myself would rather have a decent manual at hand.

I chose *Crusader Kings II* because it is an interesting game, both mechanically and thematically, and it was one which, over a year after release, still seems to baffle many people. There is an official manual available, but I wasn't aware of it when I began working on this project, and it doesn't seem to have gotten as much attention as it deserves. I'm certainly not trying to replace it, and I would be very flattered if there were any positive comparisons between what I've put together here and what the professionals at Paradox made. If nothing else, I hope that someone finds this manual useful.

For anyone reading this: thanks for making my little dream a reality. And watch out for those pagans!

Darren West

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