

Pax Saxon

design by Mario Brioschi & Stefano Cieri
(standing on the giants' shoulders)

In Pax Saxon, you are an Anglo-Saxon thegn living in 10th century Britain. Since the raid of Lindisfarne, Dane incursions kept growing in frequency and scale; they seem to be peaking now, in your times.

Alfred conceded large portions of the northern and eastern territories to the Danes and they settled in the lands that you once considered yours. Now Anglo-Saxon and Dane families are creating alliances, arranging marriages, cross-pollinating faiths, shaping a new shared culture. In these uncertain times, maintaining relevance requires constant adjustment.

As events unfold, you will have to cleverly shift allegiances and determine whether faith, wealth, lineage or cultural ties will offer the most viable path to adapt and shape your standing, as well as your legacy's.

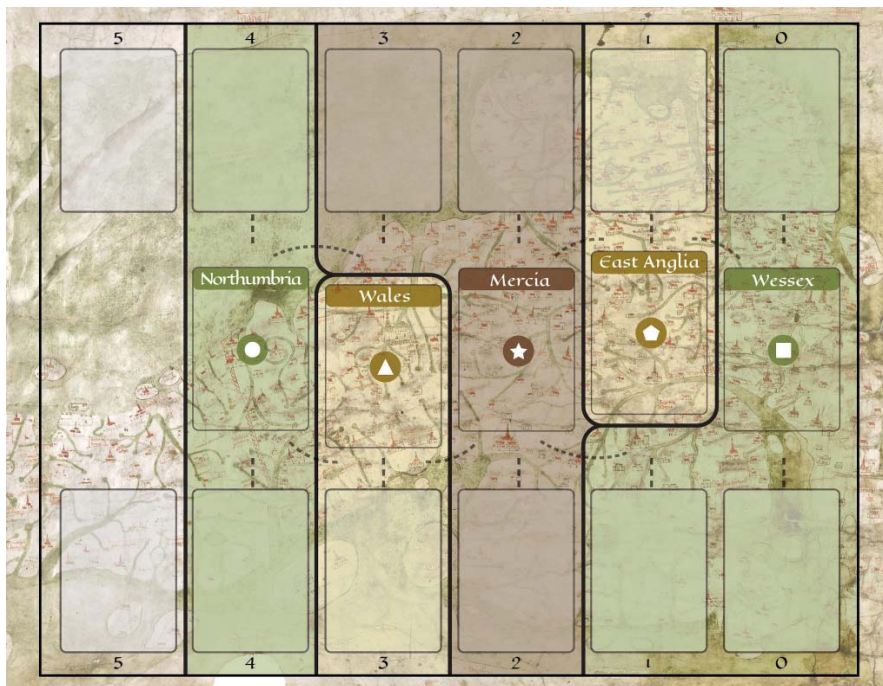
Document **1.0.0**

Deck **3.0.0**

Note: if you're reading this from a PDF, chances are there is a more up to date version [here](#). The project was originally presented in [this thread](#) of the WGG Discord.

Components

- **map** and **market** (two rows, top and bottom) share the same board: both market and map locations count for adjacency when moving; (some) cards can be played on the map, which effectively becomes a shared tableau, up for grabbing.



- **25 coins**, representing *non-perishable wealth*, the only currency to purchase from the market
- **player cubes**, coloured, 9 per player, representing the player influence
- **faction cubes**, light and dark wood, 15 per faction, representing either population or *perishable wealth* (depending whether they are on the board or on player areas, respectively)



The **cards** can be categorised as: **Denizens**, **Events**, **Omens** (an online dashboard of the current deck can be seen [here](#)); there are also **Favour** cards which can be considered player components (see below).



- **Denizens** (beige or brown) compose most of the deck; they can be purchased from the market to your hand and later played to tableaus. Each *denizen* has a faction (Anglo-Saxon or Dane), an associated region, some affiliation icons on the left (which count for victory conditions) and some impact icons on the right (executed when played to tableaus, as in *Pamir*). At the bottom they have icons, which determine what *operations* players can perform in their turn.
- **Events** (red) are the clock of the game: they cause shifts in populations and open winning opportunities at the same time. On each card, the left icons indicate new population (*faction cubes*, Anglo-Saxon or Dane) which is placed on the event as it lands on the market; on the right there is a slot that allows players removing *faction cubes* (while on the market) before they land on the map; when a player purchases an event, they can *announce* an *omen*, or claim victory if certain conditions are met.
- **Omens** (black/blue, 2-sided), representing the possible winning conditions; players can claim them for victory, after one or more have been *announced* (flipped) over the course of the game (provided its specific condition is met).
- **Favour** (beige/brown, with faction icon, 2-sided cards), representing the player's *favoured* faction dealt at setup, they indicate each player's favoured faction and the tableau side where the corresponding cards should be played to.



Game Overview

Note: this section is intended to provide a general sense of how the game flows. It is by no means sufficient to understand the rules (see following section) but it can help introduce the key concepts of the game to those less familiar with Pax games.

On setup, the board is placed at the center of the table, the *Omen* cards next to it, and the market is filled with *Denizen* cards.

Then, 3 cards are dealt to each player, they draft one and discard the others: the card they picked will begin their tableau and determine their *favoured* faction; the discarded ones will determine the initial *population* of Anglo-Saxons and Danes on the map.

Events are then shuffled in the deck and the *First Omen* card added on top; the game can begin.



In their first turns, players will generally work on placement, by purchasing cards, building their tableau, consolidating their presence on the map and players' tableaus.

Initially, they will check how the market and map look like, what *Omens* have announcing conditions which are likely to be met, how many *Events* are on the market (and how fast they're travelling across it).

In building their tableaus, players will determine both their available operations and their *affiliations* (counting for victory conditions).

Events are the clock of the game; while on the market, they:

- give players a sense of how the population will swing
- give players a chance to remove *population cubes* from the card (by using the *op* indicated on it, and get them as *goods*)
- are available for *purchase*, to players who want to announce an *Omen*, *claim victory* or simply prevent another player from doing so, while also deciding how that population will be distributed on the map



Eventually, **either** the *First Omen* card (see *First Omen* rule) will fall off the market **or** an *event* will be purchased: an *omen* **must** now be *announced*.

Based on how many *population cubes* there are on the map **and/or** how many *coins* there are on the market, 2 to 4 *omens* will be available for the current player to *announce*: the picked *omen* will be flipped and is now an available victory (with new conditions to claim it).

Below, the *Faith Victory* was *announced* because the *First Omen* fell off the market.

Next time a player purchases an *event*, **if** there are at least 5 *Old God* or 5 *Cross* icons (depending on the dominant faction) across all tableaux **and** **if** they have the most icon of such kind in their tableau, they can *claim victory*; **otherwise**, **if** one or more other *Omens* can be *announced*, the current player must pick one and *announce* it.



Rules

Note: in an attempt to keep this section compact and yet readable, we coloured any introduction and secondary information in **brown**; you should be able to get all fundamental rules by just reading through the **black** text.

Setup

During setup, cards are split by types, ready to prepare the deck, and the market is populated. Players draft a card which will begin their tableau; it will also determine their *favoured* faction and the initial influence on cards or map. The discarded ones will determine the initial presence of Anglo-Saxons and Danes on the map.

To setup, follow steps:

- place the board at the center of the table and the Omen cards next to it, flipped on their *unannounced* side.
- separate *Denizen*, *Event* and *Victory* cards
- populate the market with *Denizen* cards
- deal 3 coins, and 3 *Denizen* cards to each player, plus the components of their chosen colour and 1 *Favour* card
- each player drafts a card
 - first, pass 2 cards to the next player clockwise and gets 2
 - then, pick 1 *Denizen* card and places the remainder next to the board, face down
- all players reveal their drafted card at the same time and:
 - flip their *Favour* card to match the drafted card's faction
 - place the card in their tableau, on the side indicated by the *Favour* card
 - resolve the card's impact icons in full
- all unchosen cards are revealed:
 - resolve card's impact icons with *Favour* (Anglo-Saxon or Dane); ignore any other icon
 - cards are then returned to the deck
- prepare the deck
 - split the remaining *Denizen* cards in two decks, roughly the same size
 - add 3 *Events* to each subdeck and shuffle
 - stack the subdecks and put the *First Omen* card on top, next to the market
- the player whose card name is first in alphabetical order begins

Game Loop

Game End Trigger

After setup, players will take turns until the game end is triggered.

The game ends immediately when:

- an *Omen* card is purchased
- the market is emptied of all cards

Player Turn

Each turn, a player may take up to 2 actions (or pass):

- **Purchase from the market:** buy a card to your hand, paying *coins* on the market (as in *Pamir* and *Ren*)
- **Play *Denizen* to tableau,** from hand: cards cannot be re-arranged (Pax Pamir) and must be placed on the side dictated by the *Favour* card, impact icons are resolved (as in *Pamir*).
- **Perform a *Denizen Operation*:** choose an *operation* (*op* from now on, see *Denizen Operations*) on any card in your tableau or any other you control (on the map, market or other players' cards).
Only 1 *op* can be performed per card, per turn; if the card is *controlled* by another player (see *Control Rule*), to perform the *op* you must *pay 1* (see *Pay Rule*) to them.
- **Perform a *Faction Scheme*** (once per turn): *pay 1* to perform 1 *op* from each card of your *favoured* faction, in any order.
To perform a scheme from the faction you do *not favour*, you must switch faction (the only way players can do so) and discard 1 *denizen* from the abandoned faction side of the tableau.
- **Settle *Denizen* on the map:** when a *Denizen* card is adjacent to its region on the map, **if** you have presence in that region **and if** no *Denizen* is already *settled* there, you can purchase the card at no cost and place it in its map slot; impact is resolved as if played to your tableau.

When resolving a card's *impact* icons, you will place cubes on locations (across tableaus **or** on the board) matching the region of the card:

-  a *player* (AKA *influence*) *cube* on any card matching region.
-  a *player* (AKA *influence*) *cube* on the map's matching region.
-  an Anglo-Saxon *faction cube* on the map's matching region.
-  a Dane *faction cube* on the map's matching region.

End of Turn Maintenance

Once a player has taken their 2 actions (or passed):

- **if** an *Event* reaches the end of the market, it falls off of it: the *Omen* won't be triggered but the rest of its effect is resolved, generally resulting in new population cubes landing on the map.
- **if** the current player has more than 3 Denizens on either side of their tableau, or in their hand, they must either pay 1 for each card in excess, or discard it.
- **if** the current player has more than 3 *perishable goods* cubes they discard 1.
- refresh the market, by sliding cards right to fill empty slots and replenishing the remaining ones from the deck. **If**, when refreshing the market, an *Event* lands on it, the card's *impact* is resolved (*faction cubes* -and possibly *coins*- are immediately placed on it).

Core Rules

- **Purchase rule:** when **purchasing** cards from the market, only coins can be used to pay, by placing them on the preceding slots (as in *Pamir*).
- **Pay 1 rule:** when performing an action requires a player to **pay 1**, they can choose what currency to use: *food* or *coins*. When paying maintenance (**AKA end-of-turn costs**): *food* payments are returned to the supply, while coins are paid on the market, starting from the left end (the current player chooses which row). When **paying** a player (**AKA bribe**), the currency is transferred to their reserve.
- **Control rule:** a player **controls** a region when the sum of his cubes is higher than any others'; a player **controls** a card **if** they have most cubes than any other player on that card **or if** tied for the most player but is *castled*.
- **Dominance rule:** a *faction* is **dominant** **if** they have more cubes on the map than the *opponent*. **Omen rule:** when an *Event* card is purchased or falls off the market or a *Denizen* card is played to a tableau, **if** it has the *Omen* icon, an *inactive Victory* card can be flipped to its *active* state, provided the top condition is met; **if** conditions for multiple *Omen* cards are met, the current player chooses. **If** *active Victory* cards are available and meet the top condition, the player can claim it and the game ends.
 - **First Omen rule:** when the *First Omen* card falls off the market (and only in this case), the *Omen* rule applies as if the card was purchased.
- **Castle rule:** when a *player cube* enters a card, **if** their player *controls* that card, such cube is automatically placed in the *castle* slot, the player is now **castled** on that card; **otherwise**, any previously *castled* player keeps that status.

Denizen Operations

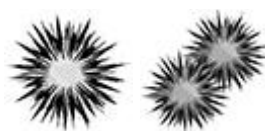
As mentioned, *Denizen* cards (in your tableau and on locations you *control*) will determine what *ops* you can use, based on their icons.

Op icons can be single or double, the latter indicating you can perform the *op* twice **or** (in some cases) use a *special op*. Below are listed all operations available in the game:



Move

- **single**: move 1 of your cubes from any location (board or tableaux) to an *adjacent* one.
- **double**: perform 2 single *Move* actions **or** pay 1 to move one of your cubes from any location to any other on sharing the same region.



Oust

- **single**: remove an *opponent* from any location where a cube of yours or of your faction is present.
- **double**: perform 2 single *Oust* actions **or** pay 1 to remove a *non-castled* (see *Castle Rule*) card where a cube of yours is present.



Trade (AKA *Speculate*, naming still in flux)

- **single**: sell a card or any cube from your tableau for 1 coin on the market; **if** selling a faction cube, return it to the supply; **otherwise, if** selling a player cube of yours, return it to the box.
- **double**: perform 2 single *Trade* actions **or** sell a card or a cube of yours for 1 coin from the bank.



Demand (AKA *Commend* or *Grant Land*, naming still in flux)

- **single**: take a *faction cube* to your reserve, from a map location you rule.
- **double**: perform 2 single *Demand* actions.



Convert

- **single**: replace a *faction cube* with an opponent, in a map location you rule; you can only target *non-favoured* cubes.
- **double**: perform 2 single *Convert* actions.

Victory

There are 4 distinct paths to victory, each reflecting different historical forces at play around 900 AD, a moment when the fate of England was still very much undecided and constantly shifting. These paths are meant to reflect the open-ended nature of the time, where no outcome was preordained and the future could have taken many different directions.



< card icon

Royal Victory: if there are at least 5 such icons across players' tableaux, the player with the **most royalty** (AKA *crown*) icons on the *dominant* faction's side of their tableau wins.
Supporting the highest-ranking noble of the currently dominant faction.



< card icon

Faith Victory: if there are at least 5 such icons across players' tableaux, the player with the **most faith** icons of the *dominant* religion of their tableau wins.
Aligning with Alfred's vision to forge a united Christian kingdom or, alternatively, secretly backing the old gods.



< card icon

Cultural Victory: if no faction is dominant, the player with the **most culture** icons of the *dominant* religion of their tableau wins.
Pursuing peace and balance even amidst conflict, in order to preserve memory, oral traditions, and precious manuscripts, essentially playing the long game for legacy and identity.



< coins

goods in reserve >



Economic Victory: if there are at least 5 coins on the market (after *purchase*), the player with the **most wealth** (combined *goods* and *coins*) wins.
Fostering trade, commerce, prosperity and stability, while profiting from it.

Glossary

Note: this section is still being built; terms and explanations will be added as the terminology of the game settles.

- **Adjacent:** the term *adjacent* refers to proximity on either map regions and market (adjacent with each other, as indicated by dashed lines on the map) **or** tableau cards (with the leftmost card on a player's tableau being adjacent to the rightmost on the next tableau clock-wise, and the rightmost being adjacent to the leftmost counter-clock-wise).
- **Affiliation:** ...
- **Castle** card: see **Castle rule**, in *Core Rules*.
- **Denizen** card: A Denizen card represents a local presence or institution within a specific region — such as a character, market, church, noble house, guild, or cultural tradition. Denizens shape the population, economy, and influence of factions in that region.
- **Dominance:** see **Dominance rule**, in *Core Rules*.
- **Enter** a card: a *player* cube **enters** a card the moment it is placed onto it (as an effect of the *move op* or when resolving *impact icons*).
- **Faction Scheme** action: ... (see *Game Loop*)
- **Favour** faction: a player **favours** a faction **when** their favour card has that faction's side up. Players can *switch* factions by taking the *Faction Scheme* action.
- **First Omen** card: a special *Event* card placed on top of the deck during setup, which will trigger a first *Omen announcement* (see *Setup* and **First Omen rule**, in *Core Rules*)
- **Impact** icons: ... (see *Game Loop*); on *Denizen* cards **impact** icons are on the top right of the card, on *Event* cards they are top left.
- **Operation (Op)** icon: ... (see *Game Loop*)
- **Opponent** cube: refers to a population to a faction other than your face up one (Dane or Saxon) **or** a presence cube belonging

- **Pay** amount: see **Pay rule**, in *Core Rules*.
- **Player** cube: a coloured cube representing a player's influence on a card or on the map.
- **Population** cube: a *faction cube* that is placed on an *event* card or the map.
- **Goods** cube: a *faction cube* that is placed in a player's *reserve*..
- **Purchase** card: see **Purchase rule**, in *Core Rules*.
- **Reserve**: ...
- **Settle**: ...
This term might eventually be merged with *Castle*, to represent both cubes on card slots and *Denizens* on map slots.
- **Supply**: same as **Reserve**
- **Switch** faction: the act of flipping a player's *favour* card, as a result of taking the *Faction Scheme* action, to perform *ops* of previously *non-favoured denizens* in their *tableau*.

Design Notes

The idea of making a Pax game began with a simple question: how far can a Pax game be distilled and made more accessible, without losing its richness and edge?

That idea sparked an ongoing experiment in simplification, while trying not to flatten the core identity of the series (often looking at *Porfiriana*, *Pamir* and *Renaissance* 1st editions, through the lens of *Pamir 2nd Edition*).

Rivers of words could be spent about the several iterations we went through already, the thought process behind those, the many shapes which the “what is pax?” dilemma took in our brainstorming sessions.

Beyond the classic Pax mechanics, the game explores some new ideas:

- more connected play areas, where the map is directly tied to the market and the trade routes retain geographical relevance
- a shared tableau “à la *Oath*”, where denizen cards can be played, competed upon and controlled on the map, as well as while they’re on the market
- an economic system with perishable and non-perishable currencies, where population and military pieces can transition into the economy, like Viking raiders settling as farmers or Saxon huscarls being bribed into service
- a blend of the original Pax games (*Porfiriana*, *Pamir* and *Renaissance*), where elements of those games are recognisable and yet re-interpreted, to offer new opportunities of gaming and story-telling

Mechanically, the game has reached a decent level of stability.

Some edge cases still break the game, occasionally, but we’re actively working on those cases and they’re getting less and less frequent.

The game is designed for 2-5 players but so far we have only tested games at 2-3 players. We’re now expanding the deck to support higher player counts and look forward to seeing how the dynamics shift.

A recent addition is a combined market and map, which players seem intrigued by; it’s still evolving, but feels promising already. The idea came out of a designer to bring the market back at the center of the players’ attention, like in *Porfiriana*.

All graphics and art are placeholder only, far from final. We use in-house techniques to prototype and iterate quickly, so visuals, icons and layout evolve naturally with the rest of the game. We like early addition of visuals as part of the design process, as it helps foresee where the game mechanics and theme pair well and start becoming evocative.

At this stage, the connection between theme and mechanics is still loose, but we're planning to strengthen it in future versions: improving historical flavor through card art and abilities, making victory conditions more expressive, and eventually introducing asymmetry between Saxons and Danes.

Bibliography

The bibliography is clearly a big absence in this document; we're working on it...

Acknowledgments

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