Crowns and Shadows Game Manual

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version Alpha 1.0 — Andromeda

Crowns and Shadows *is a turn-based strategy game of military and political domination. Command your armies in the field of battle, arrange a network of political alliances, offer bribes and send assassins, or build castles and cities. Choose one of multiple paths to build your empire and achieve victory for your House. Will you declare yourself King and rule your empire with military might? Or will you choose to be a shadowy advisor, the real power behind the crown?*

1 Changelog

- This is an initial release. Future releases will include a summary of changes and new features incorporated in the release build.

2 Installation

The game will come compiled into a Java JAR file. It should run out of the box on Windows, Mac, or Linux running Java 7.

Windows distributions may be launched through a batch file, which will call the java jar file, and include command line options.

If the performance of the game is slower than desired, the graphics options can be reduced by running with the command line options `-g N` where N is an integer representing the graphics level. Graphics level 1 is the lowest, while graphics level 5 is the highest.

3 Gameplay

The campaign will continue until one of two events occurs. Either your House has been completely obliterated, or it has expanded until it controls over 50% of the regions on the map and has outlasted at least one other House. The former circumstances will result in defeat, while the latter will result in victory.

3.1 Houses

The game consists of a contest between many political families in the form of Houses. You control one of these Houses, while the rest are controlled by rival players. Each House is identified on the map via a unique coat of arms, depicted on both the shields and banners of that House. If the line of succession of a House is obliterated, a different branch of the family will assume command and their coat of arms may undergo a subtle change.

Each House has a ruling family of characters. The success or failure of the House is often dependent on these characters.

Heirs within your house can serve as battle commanders, or bannermen to your cause. Armies led by an heir are more disciplined in battle. They are also more loyal to your House in the event or bribes or rebellions. The number of stars on a army's banner gives some indication of the number and skill of the generals commanding that army. Whichever army contains the head of the House will also bear a crown on its banners.

If your House does not allow female inheritance, the daughters of your House may be married into rival families. These marriages strengthen alliances and give you some claim in the event that the head of the rival House dies without an heir apparent.

In the event that all the heirs in your House die, a different branch of the family will take over command. This has the advantage that the new branch of the family will have its own ruling characters, which may act as battle commanders. The disadvantage is that without a clear line of succession, many of the regions in your control may rebel or declare for other Houses that they see as having a more legitimate claim.

3.1.1 Political Marriages

Political marriages between Houses help to cement alliances. Vassal Houses are much less likely to rebel if they are married into your ruling family.

Marriages also give you some claim to regions in the event that all characters in the rival line of succession are obliterated. This claim goes both ways, however. If your ruling family is killed, rival Houses may lay claim to regions you control.

3.1.2 Feuds

If a rival House openly kills a member of your ruling family, you may declare a blood feud on them. Brutal actions against a rival House (for example executing prisoners of war) are more honorable if you have declared a feud on them.

Similarly, if you kill a character in a rival family, they may declare a feud on you. Do not expect mercy or diplomacy from families that have declared a feud on you.

3.1.3 Titles

You may grant titles to your vassals. These titles increase the prestige of the vassal House. Once granted, the only way to revoke a title is to capture the region to which the title pertains. If the vassal House rebels, all of the titles you have issued them will be stripped.

Titles make it more likely for a House's allegiance requests or political marriage offers to be accepted. A House holding titles is less likely to rebel. Titles generally increase the power and influence wielded by a House.

3.2 Characters

Characters make up the ruling family of each House. Each has a set of five attributes that combine to form their personality: *dread*, *command*, *greed*, *honor*, and *subtlety*.

Dread is how much the character is feared. Ransoming prisoners of war decreases dread, while sacking and razing regions increases dread. Characters with high dread will not be inclined to mercy.

Command is how skilled a general the character is. Capturing regions and winning battles will increase command. Losing regions or vassals will decrease it. High command characters make the best generals in battle.

Greed is how ambitious a character is. Characters with high greed are more likely to rebel if they percieve you have slighted them.

Honor is how likely a character is to keep their promises. They are more likely to cleave to pacts and alliances, and less likely to resort to underhanded methods such as assassination.

Subtlety is how skilled a diplomat a character is. Bribery and assassination attempts increase subtlety. A character with high subtlety is better at making alliances.

Throughout the game, the attributes of various characters will change to reflect their actions. A character who starts out as a poor commander, and then goes on to win ten battles, will still be esteemed as a general. A character without subtlety who successfully bribes several enemy hosts to their cause will see a similar attribute increase.

3.3 Regions

Regions are the fundamental building block of empires in the game. Each region is depicted on the campaign map with a wax seal bearing the colors of the ruling family. Each region will provide an income to the controlling House at the beginning of each turn.

The region will also have a development level. Most regions have no developments on them, some have towers, some castles, and some citadels. Region developments serve two purposes. First, they increase the incomes on a region (a region with a citadel will bring in almost twice as much in income as if the region were completely undeveloped). Second, they allow the training and garrison of troops. The more advanced the development, the more skilled troops they are able to train, and the longer the garrison will be able to withstand a siege.

Developed regions can be sacked or razed. Both of these options will decrease their public order and destroy their income potential for the next several years. Sacking a settlement trades the long-term income potential of a citadel for immediate short term income. Sacking a settlement is a good option if you do not have the forces to hold the settlement long term. Razing a settlement costs gold and destroys the fortifications on a

region. This is a good option if you are certain to lose control of a region to a rival House and do not wish them to take the fortifications.

3.3.1 Public Order

Each region has a level of public order. This represents the crime rate and strife within the region, and the likelihood that the it will rebel. Regions that have long been under your control will have a higher public order, while wartorn regions and new acquisitions will have a lower public order.

Public order can be quickly ascertained on regions you control by looking at the wax seal. A colored pip on the ribbon below the seal indicates the level of public order on the region (using a stoplight theme). Green pips mean very orderly regions, yellow mean somewhat orderly, and red pips mean disorderly.

Establishing colonies will increase the public order, making regions less likely to rebel. Appointing governors (discussed below) will also decrease the chances of rebellion.

3.3.2 Governors

Members of your household can be appointed as governors. Any member of your ruling family on a region will automatically act as governor of that region. If more than one family member is present on a region, the general commanding the garrison will act as governor.

Regions which have governors are less likely to rebel so long as the governor remains in that region. Skilled governors will also increase the public order in a region over time, making the region less likely to rebel, even if they vacate the region. Unskilled governors have the opposite effect: making regions more likely to rebel once they vacate the region.

3.3.3 Rebellion

Regions with very low public order may rebel. This creates a new rebellious faction, and transfers control of the region to the faction. The rebel army will be placed on the region. Since rebel armies are poorly trained and equipped, a small force of soldiers may often retake a region and restore the peace. Unless your strength is spread dangerously thin, rebellions will not constitute a serious threat. The danger they pose is in the way they divert needed resources and create disorder in neighboring regions.

3.4 Armies

Fortifications allow you to train troops of soldiers. The more advanced the fortification, the better trained and equipped the soldiers can be. Troops can be gathered together into armies.

Each troop has an initial training cost, plus a per-turn levy cost on whichever region they are stationed on. Troops laying siege to an enemy fortification will levy the per-turn cost against the besieged region. This decreases the incomes from a besieged region, with the added benefit of allowing you keep a standing army without having to pay to support it. Troops garrisoned in a fortification do not have a levy cost.

Battles are fought when any region contains armies of multiple Houses. The victor will remain occupying the region, the loser will be forced to retreat. Armies which lose battles on fortified regions they control will retreat into the fortifications on that region. Otherwise they will be forced to retreat into a neighboring region.

3.4.1 Unit Weights

Each unit has a weight level. Light or militia units are cheap to train, and move more quickly, but do little damage. Heavy units are better equipped and armored. They do more damage in battle, but sacrifice speed of movement.

3.4.2 Spear Militia

All light infantry are classed as spear militia; these troops are best used with care.ll light infantry are classed as spear militia; these troops are best used with care. They can do extra damage when fighting in a group against cavalry, but take extra damage when engaged in hand-to-hand combat with more elite infantry troops.

3.4.3 Climate

The climate on a region will alter the effectiveness of units on a region. Heavilly armored units take more damage when battling in hot desert climates.

3.5 Alliances

Alliances are formed between Houses for mutual benefit.

Once per turn you can make an alliance overture. This will be either an allegiance request, or an allegiance offer.

Offers of allegiance are more likely to be accepted, but they have some drawbacks. In any conflict between a lord and a vassal on a third party region, the vassal will retreat in favor of the lord. Lords may choose to levy tribute on their vassals, and take a fraction of their incomes each turn.

Political marriage offers can be included in alliance overtures, or offered separately to other Houses. A well placed political marriage can increase the probability that an allegiance request will be accepted.

3.6 Assassins

There are many circumstances when it can be helpful to eliminate a character from the game. Perhaps a rival House has a particularly skilled general or governor, perhaps they have a particularly diplomatic king. Perhaps a member of your own family is not cut out to rule. Perhaps you wish to remove the heir to a rival House to clear the line of succession. In any of these cases, assassins can help.

Assassins are never a sure bet, but they allow you to intervene without taking direct responsibility. In some cases the deaths will even appear to be accidental.

The more prominent a character is, the more expensive it will be to send an assassin after them, and the less likely the assassin is to succeed.

3.7 Bribes

Surpassing even assassins in usefulness, bribes allow you to take command of an enemy force — for a price. Armies that are under the command of a member of the ruling family cannot be bribed. All other forces are vulnerable to bribery. The cost of the bribe will depend on the number of troops bribed, and whether you are bribing a military commander or the castellan of a region. Battle commanders can be bribed more cheaply and are more likely to take bribes.

A bribe will take effect immediately, allowing you to command the bribed army in the same turn. But beware, bribes are considered an act of war. Trying to bribe a vassal's army and failing will result in a broken alliance.

4 Controls

Regions, armies, and fortifications can be selected by clicking on them. If an army or a fortification with a garrison is selected, the sidebar will display a list of units in the army.

Units can be dragged from this sidebar into other armies or garrisons. If a unit is dragged to an empty space on the map, it will establish a new army there. You are unable to drag unit directly to a neighboring region. They must first be assigned to an army.

Armies can be moved by dragging them around the map. If you move an army into a neighboring region, and then change your mind, you must move it back to the original region, before moving it to a different neighboring region.

New units can be trained by clicking the unit creation buttons in the sidebar. Units in training will be displayed in a queue along the far right side of the bottom of the sidebar, next to the unit training buttons. Clicking on a unit in training gives you the option to cancel a currently training unit.

Right clicking on a region, fortification, or army will bring up an actions menu. The actions available on this menu will depend on the item clicked and the current game state. Clicking an action from this menu will often result in a confirmation window, explaining the effects of an action, and verifying your choice.

5 Computer Opponents

The game comes with a default computer AI, the *Alphabot*. Upon initialization, each computer opponent will be given an attribute goal, and a conservative strategy level.

The computer player will act to maximize their goal trait throughout the game, giving a consistent style of play to each enemy House. Players who strive for *honor* are much less likely to rebel, while players who strive for *subtlety* are much more likely to use bribes and assassins.

The conservative strategy level of the player ranges from defensive to agressive. Agressive opponents will concentrate their forces to lauch all-out attacks, while defensive opponents will tend to build up their garrisons, and choose their battles more carefully.

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