

# *the* ESSENCE



## Goal of the game

In *The Essence*, you will take on the role of powerful queens and kings, ruling over dominions, located on islands floating in the sky. Your primary goal is to gather magical Essence and crystallize it in order to produce enough Crystal Shards to restore the Great World Crystal. To do so, you will need to rely on your military, political, and economic genius to defeat your foes and gain knowledge surrounding an ancient prophecy. Only the one who best fulfills these objectives will become the Emperor of the New World!

## Game components

- this rulebook
- 1 game board
- 5 Faction boards
- 40 Follower cards (8 per faction)
  - 30 Advisor cards
- 55 Prophecy's fragment cards
  - 5 player aid cards
- 14 Monument cards
- 76 Location cards
- 5 Palace cards
- 100 Wealth tokens
- 100 Influence tokens
- 60 Faction tokens (12 per faction)
  - 40 Exhaustion tokens
- 40 other tokens (5 Pass tokens, 1 Sand clock token, 5 Revenge tokens, 25 double-sided Foundation tokens, 1 Trade agreement token, 1 Embassy token, 1 First Player token, 1 Defense token)





## Game board



- 1. Essence track**—shows your faction's Essence level.
- 2. Crystal Shards track**—shows your progress in crystallizing of the Essence into Crystal Shards. The game ends when one or more players reaches a specified number of shards as indicated on the board, depending on the number of players.
- 3. Treaties**—there are four different treaties that you can sign with one of powerful organizations of the New World.
- 4. Order track**—indicates player turn order.
- Prophecy cards pile (**5a**) and available prophecy cards (**5b**).
- Monuments (**6a**) and Locations (**6b**) will be put on these spaces.
- Advisor card piles will be put on these spaces
- 8. External threat**—indicates an external, enemy that threatens your dominion.

## Faction boards

- 1. Attack track**—shows your current Attack level.
- 2. Defense track**—shows your current Defense level.
- 3. Faction stats**—shows your factions initial characteristic values: Influence, Wealth, Popularity, Attack, Defense and Foundations.
- Foundation tokens are placed here.
- Each faction's story and symbol are shown on the back of their Faction Board.





## Follower cards

1. Follower's name.
2. Follower's faction symbol.
3. Card effect's cost (if any).
4. Card effect.

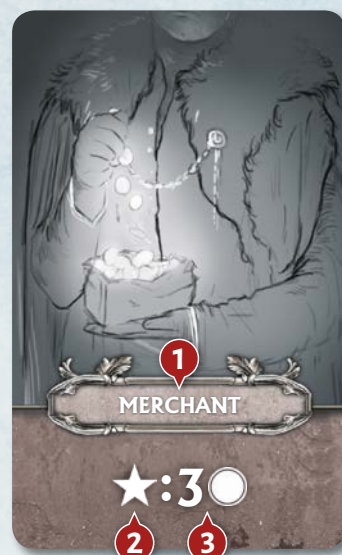
Note that card costs and effects are always divided by the ":" symbol. Sometimes there are two separate actions to choose from, each with a different cost and effect. They are distinguished by a white frame.



## Advisor cards

1. Advisor's name.
2. Card effect's cost (if any).
3. Card effect.

Note that card costs and effects are always divided by the ":" symbol. Sometimes there are two separate actions to choose from, each with a different cost and effect. They are distinguished by a white frame.



**Note:** Advisor cards and Follower cards together are sometimes referred to as "Character cards".

## Prophecy fragment cards

1. Prophecy fragment.
2. Fragment's cost.
3. Requirements players need to fulfill in order to obtain that fragment.
4. One-time effect.



The number on the back of the cards shows you the prophecy card's value which will be important at the end of the game. There are value I, II and III Prophecy's fragment cards in the game.

There are five different types of segments in The Essence: **Military**, **Magical**, **Economic**, **Cultural** and **Political**.

4. Essence value: indicates how much Essence will you gain by adding the Segment to your Island. Besides the basic value, there is also a one-time bonus depending on the adjacent Segments when the new Segment is added to your Island.
5. Card effect's cost (if any).
6. Card effect.
7. Monument's symbol. This symbol distinguishes monuments from normal locations.

## One-time effects/income

Grey symbols indicate one-time effects that trigger only when the Segment is added to your Island. Golden symbols indicate on-going effects that are referred to as income. These effects are triggered the first time the Segment is added to your Island, as well as during every subsequent Income phase of the game.

## Location and monument cards (segments)

1. Segment's name.
2. Cost: Monuments always cost 5 Wealth, Locations cost between 1 and 3 Wealth.
3. Segment's type symbol: shows the type of this Segment.



## Palace cards

1. The name of the faction this Palace belongs to.
2. Segment's type.
3. Card effect.
4. Special, unique effect that this Palace and its faction can use during the game.
5. Palace's symbol.





## Game setup

- Now you are ready to play! The first round of the game will begin with the Income phase.





## Playing the game

The Essence consists of several rounds. Each round consists of five phases that are resolved in the following order:

1. Preparation phase
2. Income phase
3. Advisors phase
4. Player turns phase
5. Cleaning phase

## Preparation phase

Note: skip this phase in the first round of the game!

In this phase, proceed with the following steps:

1. Return all Faction tokens to the "o" space of the Essence track.
2. Remove all Faction tokens from the Order track. The player who passed first during the previous round (has the pass token with the number "1"), places their token on the "I" space of the Order track. The player who passed second, places their Faction token on "II" space of the order track and so on. These tokens will determine the player order during this round.
3. Draw ALWAYS two Monuments and 2 Location cards PER PLAYER and put them face up below the board. For example: in 3-players game, draw 2 Monuments and 6 Location cards.

## Income phase

During this phase, all players take the following steps simultaneously:

1. Put your wooden Faction cubes on the initial values on the Attack and Defense tracks of your Faction boards. Next, adjust the Faction cubes by the Attack / Defense income values of your Segments and by any additional special Faction, Segment or other card effects that may influence Attack or Defense.

2. Return all exhausted and not-exhausted Foundation tokens from your faction board to the supply. Then, take Foundation tokens equal to the initial value shown on your faction board modified by the Foundation income values of your Segments and by any additional special Faction, Segment or other cards. Next, place those Foundation tokens readied side up on the indicated spaces on your Faction board. Note: You can have maximum of 5 Foundation tokens. You can never exceed this limit!
3. Take as many Wealth and Influence tokens equal to your initial Wealth and Influence values. Next, take additional Wealth and Influence tokens as indicated by the Wealth and Influence income values of your Segments and by any additional special Faction, Segment or other cards.
4. Draw cards from your draw pile as your initial Popularity value indicates. Next, take additional cards equal to the Popularity income values of your Segments and by any additional special Faction, Segment or other cards.
5. If you don't have enough cards on your draw pile, reshuffle your discard pile to create a new draw pile. Then continue drawing.

## Advisors phase

Take the following steps in order:

1. Reveal the top card from each advisor pile. There will always be 6 different advisors to choose from. Bidding will now take place.
2. Each player secretly chooses any number of Influence and/or Wealth tokens and puts them in their closed hand. This is your bid.
3. All players simultaneously reveal their bids.
4. The player that bid the most wins and chooses their Advisor first, adding it to their hand of cards. If there is one or more wealth tokens on this card, that player immediately takes them and adds them to their pool.
5. Then the player with the second highest bid chooses their Advisor and adds it to their hand and so on. Remember if there is one or more wealth tokens on the card, that player takes them and adds them to their pool.
6. In a case of a tie, the player that bid the most Influence tokens wins. If there is still a draw, the first player decides who wins.
7. Players may bid with 0 tokens if they choose, however, they cannot take an Advisor if they do so. Players must bid at least 1 token in order to obtain an advisor.
8. At the end of the phase, place 1 wealth token on each remaining advisor.

**Example:** Magda, Tomek and Przemko start bidding for Advisors. Magda secretly places 2 Wealth tokens and 1 Influence token in her hand. Przemko uses 2 Influence tokens and 1 Wealth token. Tomek places 4 Wealth tokens in his hand. They simultaneously reveal their hands. Tomek placed 4 tokens in total so he wins. He chooses the Admiral card and adds it to his hand. Przemko is second and he chooses the second Admiral card and adds it to his hand. Magda lost the bidding and takes the Hierophant and add it to her hand. Note that Magda and Przemko had the





same number of tokens but Przemo bid more Influence tokens, winning the tie. Finally they place 1 wealth token on each of 3 remaining cards.

## Player turn phase

Beginning with the starting player and proceeding according to the order track, player continue taking turns until every player Passes. On your turn, you must take ONE Main action and you can take as many Side actions as you want (However, you are limited to reading prophecy fragments once per turn). Side actions can be taken before or after taking a Main action. Main actions are:

1. Build a segment
2. Sign a treaty
3. Use a [symbol akcji głównej] action
4. Pass (discarding cards)

Side actions are:

1. Read a prophecy fragment (once per turn!)
2. Use a [symbol akcji pobocznej] action

## Main actions

### Build a segment

During the game, you will develop your flying islands by adding Segments: Locations and Monuments. At the beginning of the game, your playing area consists just of one Segment: your starting Palace card. Throughout the course of the game you will add new cards to the Palace creating a unique Island every time you play.

In order to build a Segment on your Island, you must have at least one readied Foundation token on your Faction board. Remember that the Foundation value on your faction board and some other card effects will indicate your actual number of Foundation tokens. If you don't have a readied Foundation token on your Faction board, you cannot take this action. Note: you will renew your supply of Foundation tokens during the Income phase each round.

Flip readied Foundation token on your Faction board to its exhausted side to take the "Build a Segment" action. Then choose a Segment (Location or Monument) card from the available face up cards on the table. You must pay its cost as indicated by the [] symbol to the common supply.

When adding a card to your Island the new card must be orthogonally adjacent to at least one of the existing cards on your Island. This means that those two cards must share at least one full edge. If for any reason, you cannot place the new cards following the above rule, you cannot take this action.

After placing the Segment card, immediately gain as much Essence as indicated by the [] symbol on the Segment. This

number of Essence points is modified by "+1/-1" for Locations or "+2/-1" for Monuments, depending on whether the Segment matches the color of the modification and is adjacent to the newly placed Segment. Keep track of the Essence you gain by moving your Faction token the corresponding number of spaces on the Essence track.

## Foundation tokens

During the game, some card effect let you to take new Foundation tokens from the common supply. Each token you have allows you to build a new Segment. When you build a new segment, simply flip a readied foundation token to the exhausted side. Remember that unspent Foundation tokens do not carry over from round to round. They will be renewed every Income phase.

### Example

The Tavern is among segments that are available for this round. Przemo decides to take the "Build a Segment" action to build the Tavern, which one-time effect that allows him to draw 2 cards when built. First, he exhausts his last Foundation token, then he pays the Tavern's cost of 2 Wealth tokens to the common supply. Next, he takes the Tavern card and adds it to his Island, so it is adjacent to two green Segments. Because of this placement, he gains a total of 4 Essence points (2 points for building the Tavern plus 1 additional point for each green building adjacent to the Tavern). He then immediately draws two cards.





## Signing a treaty

As your Main action you can also use one of four Treaties available on the board. Signing a Treaty will let you take an action, which are different for every Treaty. Treaty actions include:

- attacking a chosen player or external threat
- raising your defense value by 3
- drawing 2 cards from your draw pile
- move one of your previously placed Segments to a different location (following normal placement restrictions) OR swap the locations of any two of your previously placed Segments (in either case, game-entering effects are not triggered)

To take a particular Treaty action, place your Faction token on the lowest numbered space below that treaty. Then spend Wealth or/ and Influence tokens equal to the value showed on that space. Note that those values differ depending on treaty but always rise after every use.

Each player can sign any number of Treaties each round and take the corresponding Treaty actions as long as they can pay the required Gold/Influence tokens. If there are no available, empty spaces below the Treaty or if you do not have enough Faction tokens or resources you can not sign that Treaty.

## Using an action marked with

### ★ symbol

Some of the Character and Segment cards have a ★ symbol as a part of their effect's cost. This symbol means that playing this card or using the card's ability counts as your main action for this turn. Remember that you may only take one Main action each turn!

When playing a Character card with a ★ symbol from your hand, take its effect and discard it to your discard pile on the right side of your Faction board. When using a Segment's special effect

with a ★ symbol, place an Exhaustion token on it. This indicates that the special effect cannot be used again this round.

All symbols and card effects are explained on page 13 of this rulebook.

## Pass

Pass is a special Main action, because after you take it, you won't be able to take any other actions in the following turns of this round.

Note: if attacked, you defend normally and your defense value rises by 1 as usual.

The first player in a round to Pass gets a Passing token with the value "1", the second player - value "2" and so on. Passing tokens will determine the turn order for the next round.

As noted above, once a player has Passed, they may not take any more normal actions. However, each time that player would start a turn, they gain Essence instead: 1 Essence on the first turn after passing, 2 Essence on the second and 3 Essence on all following turns. Immediately move your Faction token up by the indicated number of spaces on the Essence track.

**Note:** When Passing, a player can additionally discard any number of cards from their hand and place them on their discard pile. That player gains 1 Wealth token for every card discarded this way. Cards not discarded remain in their hand and will be available to be used later.

## Side actions

### Read a prophecy fragment

The Great Book of Entirety consists of countless hints on how to rebuild the World Crystal and restore the natural order. During the game, you will attempt to uncover those hints by reading the Prophecy fragments. If you succeed, you will be rewarded with bonus resources and additional Crystal shards at the end of the game.

At the beginning of the game, Prophecy fragment cards are placed in face down pile on the indicated space of the game board. (See: Prepare Prophecy fragment card pile of the Game Setup section on page 5).

Available Prophecy fragment cards are placed face-up on the indicated spaces on the game board, next to the face down pile. When a player – after fulfilling all requirements – reads (claims) a Prophecy fragment card and removes it from the board, all other cards must be moved one space to the right to fill the empty space. Then, reveal a new card from the deck and place it on the first empty space. Note that the first card on the left is always unavailable and can not be claimed until it moves to the next space.





Each Prophecy fragment card consists of 3 elements:

1. Cost
2. Requirements that must be met in order to claim the card
3. ONE-TIME bonus, which the player receives immediately after taking the Prophecy fragment card. On the back of the card, there is a number that shows the value of the Prophecy fragment card.

Basic Prophecy fragment card requirements involve achieving a certain arrangement of Segment cards on your Island (including the Palace). Note that only the colors and relative positioning of Segments on the card is important. This means that the configuration of Segments is valid when read from any position (e.g. upside down or sideways).

Requirements for other Prophecy fragments can be, among other things, making a certain number of successful Attacks in one round or gathering and spending a specified number of Influence or Wealth tokens.

Prophecy fragments requiring players to defeat Old World monsters are special cases. They require a player to make a successful Attack directed 'against' that Prophecy fragment instead of against another player. Each card has a certain Defense value, depending on the monster.

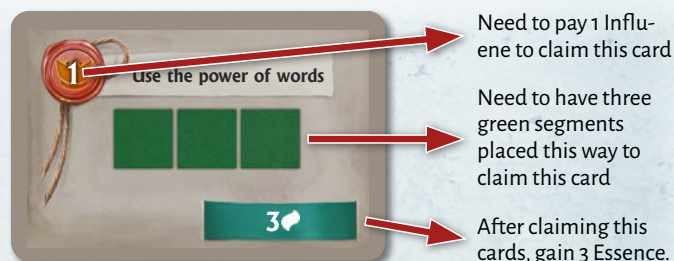
Players may only take the "Reading a Prophecy fragment" side action if they fulfill ALL of the requirements shown on their chosen Prophecy fragment card. The cost shown on each card indicates the number of Influence tokens that must be paid to the supply. Note: cards with a cost of 0 do not require players to spend any influence tokens in order to claim them.

After paying any necessary costs and fulfilling any necessary requirements, the player takes their chosen Prophecy fragment card and places it face down in front of themselves, forming a pile next to their Faction board. They also receive the one-time bonus indicated on the card that was just claimed.

At the end of the game, the player who owns Prophecy fragment cards with the highest total value (indicated on the back of the cards) gets additional 4 crystal shards, the player with the second highest value gets 2, and the player with the third highest value gets 1.

**Note:** Reading a prophecy fragment is a special side action and a player can perform it just once per turn (not round)!

**Example:** Tomek managed to create an arrangement of Segments needed to read one of the Prophecy fragments. As a side action he decides to take the "Reading a Prophecy fragment" action. He pays 1 Influence token (it is a fragment with a cost of 1) and places this card face down in front of him. As a bonus indicated on the card, he immediately gains 3 Essence points and move his Faction token on the Essence track up 3 spaces.



## Using an action marked with ☆ symbol

Some of the Character and Segment cards have a ☆ symbol as a part of their effect's cost. This symbol means that playing this card or using the card's ability counts as a Side action. Remember that you may take as many Side actions as you want each turn!

When playing a Character card with a ☆ symbol from your hand, take its effect and discard it to your discard pile on the right side of your Faction board. When using your Segment's special effect with a ☆ symbol, place an Exhaustion token on it. This indicates that the special effect cannot be used again this round.

All symbols and card effects are explained on page ## of this rulebook.

## Cleaning phase

Take the following steps in this order:

1. Remove all Exhaustion tokens from all Segment cards and return them to the common supply.
2. Remove all face-up Locations and Monuments that were not purchased this round and place them on the Segment discard pile.
3. Remove all Foundation tokens from your Faction boards and return them to the common supply.





4. The player with most Essence points get 3 Crystal Shards, the player with second most Essence points get 2 Crystal Shards and the player with third most Essence points get 1 Crystal Shard. Immediately move the corresponding Faction tokens the respective number of spaces up on the Crystal Shards track. In case of a draw, players get Crystal Shards according to their place, but the next player is treated as being one place lower. For example: In a four player game Magda and Przemio scored 31 Essence points, Tomek scored 29 and Bartek scored 22. Magda and Przemio gain 3 Crystal Shards, Tomek gains 1 Crystal Shard and Bartek does not receive any.

### Important

In 4-5 player games: each player who did not obtain any Crystal Shards this round, gets 1 Revenge token. This rule does not apply in 2-3 player games.

### Revenge token

If, at the end of the round, you have the most Essence points and you also have at least 1 Revenge token - you gain 1 additional Crystal Shard. You must then discard 1 Revenge token. You can have more than 1 Revenge token in your supply, but you cannot use more than 1 each round.

5. Starting with the First player and proceeding clockwise, each player may place one of their Faction tokens on one available Prophec fragment card on the game board. After all players have had an opportunity to do so, any Prophecy fragment cards with no Faction tokens on them are discarded.
6. Move all "reserved" Prophecy fragment cards to the right and fill any empty spaces with new cards from the pile. Players then take back their Faction tokens.
7. Players MAY now reshuffle their discard piles and draw piles together to form a new draw pile for the next round.

8. The External Threat counter-attacks! The External Threat attacks each player with an attack value equal to its defense value. This attack works like all other normal attacks as described on page XX. If the Threats attack value exceeds a player's defense, that player must discard a number of wealth and/or influence tokens equal to the difference between the two values. If they do not have enough tokens, they simply discard as many as they can.
9. Check if any player has gained enough Crystal Shards to trigger the end of the game. This number depends on the number of players and is indicated on the Crystal shards track. If the end of the game is triggered, proceed with final scoring. If not, the round ends and next round begins with the Preparation phase.

## End of the game and final scoring


The game ends when any player reaches the required number of Crystal Shard points: 12 points in a 2-player game, 11 points in a 3 and 5-player game, 12 points in 4-player game. The player with the highest total value of Prophecy fragment cards claimed throughout the game gets an additional 4 Crystal Shards, the second highest total value gets 2 Crystal Shards and the third highest total - gets 1 Crystal Shard. In the case of a draw, all players sharing a position gain the full number of Shards. You must have at least 1 claimed Prophecy fragment card to qualify for this additional scoring. The player with the most Crystal Shards restores the World Crystal and wins the game!

## Attack and defense

There are two tracks on each Faction board -Attack and Defense- which are used to track your actual Attack and Defense values which will change throughout each round.

## Attack

Some card effects, Segments or Treaties will let you perform Attacks on a player of your choice. To Attack, take the following steps in order:

1. Play a card, exhaust a Segment, or use a Treaty with a  symbol and choose an opponent.
2. Check your current Attack value.
3. Compare your Attack value with the Defense value of the Defending player possibly modified as above.
4. If the Attacking player's Attack value is HIGHER than Defending player's Defense value, the Attack is considered successful.
5. In case of a successful Attack, the Attacking player gains Essence points equal to the difference between his Attack value and the Defense value of the Defender. The victor immediately moves his or her Faction token the respective number of spaces up on the Essence track.





6. After a successful Attack, if possible, the Attacking player may take one Wealth OR Influence token from the Defending player and add it to their supply. If you cannot or do not want to take a token, you may exhaust one of the Defending player's Segments with ability cost of [tutaj znak akcji głównej - main action - czyli pełna gwiazdka] or a [znak akcji pobocznej - side action - pusta gwiazdka] actions. Place an exhaustion token on the chosen Segment.
7. After EACH successful Attack, the Defending player always increases their Defense value by 1.

An Attack is considered unsuccessful when the Attack value of the Attacking player is equal to or less than the Defense value of the Defending player. In this case, nothing happens. Note: even if an Attack is going to be unsuccessful you may still take the Attack action (which may, for example, trigger abilities that happen "during an Attack").

**Example Part 1:** Magda needs 1 Wealth token, to build a Location. She chooses to attack Tomek, to get it. For her Main Action, she spends 2 Influence tokens to sign an attack treaty.



**Example Part 2:** Her Three Islands Kingdom has an attack value 6 while Tomek's University of the Sun has a defense value of 3. The difference is 3 (6-3) in Magda's favor, so the Attack is successful.



**Example Part 3:** She gains 3 Essence points and takes one Wealth token from Tomek. Tomek then increases his Defense value by 1 and now has a Defense value of 4.



## Attacking an external threat

Besides attacking other players, you may choose to Attack the external threat space on the game board. It works similarly to attacking other players with one exception: after a successful Attack, you gain ONLY Essence points equal to the difference between your current Attack value and the current Defense value of the external threat. You DO NOT gain any Influence or Wealth tokens and can not exhaust any Segment as this space does not have any.

After a successful Attack on the external threat, increase its Defense value by moving the Defense cube one space up on the External Threat track. Note that this value never resets so it will continue to rise throughout the course of the game, up to its maximum value.

**Note:** An external threat is always treated as one of your opponents. You can attack it to claim some Prophecy Fragment cards.





## Moving segments

Some Segment, Card or Treaty effects let you move or swap the positions of Segment cards on your Island. When moving Segments, follow all the standard rules for building Segments with some exceptions:



1. Moving a Segment to a different place or swapping the positions of two segments DOES NOT trigger any abilities, including one-time effects. It DOES however provide you with the Essence points but only from “+” or “-” modifiers. You do not gain the basic Essence income again.

You may move your Palace as it is also a Segment.

## Income / one-time / passive effects

Gold colored segment or card effect symbols indicate Income effects which will add to your initial values during the Income phase each round. Grey-colored effects indicate one-time effects that may be used just once per game. White symbols are passive abilities that work throughout the game if certain requirements are met. If there is ★ or ☆ symbol as a part of ability's cost - you need to exhaust that card when using this ability.

## Drawing/discarding cards

1. Each card played during your turn is placed on your discard pile (right side of your action board).
2. There are Income or one-time effects that will allow you to draw new cards from your draw pile (left side of your Faction board).
3. When you are told to draw new cards from your draw pile DURING THE INCOME PHASE and there are not enough cards, immediately reshuffle your discard pile and create a new draw pile. Then continue drawing.
4. When the above happens DURING THE PLAYER TURNS PHASE, you DO NOT reshuffle your discard pile. You simply cannot draw new cards.
5. Remember that you can choose to reshuffle your draw and discard pile in order to create a new draw pile during the CLEANING PHASE each round.





## Game symbols

	The essence		Your opponent gives you influence
	Crystal shards		Your opponent gives you gold and/or influence (in any combination)
	Influence		Your opponent chooses your action
	Wealth		Successful prophecy fragment read
	Attack value		Bidding won
	Defense value		You
	Draw a card		Opponent
	Foundation		All opponents
	Main action		Monster
	Side action		Exchange your attack and defense values
	Attack action		Cost:effect
	Successful attack		Then
	Ignore an attack		Discard
	Build a segment action		Maximum
	Successful building action		Minimum
	Pass		
	Signing a treaty action		
	Building		Spy: you can take an action (main or side) available on any opponent's building (not monument and palace)
	Monument		Rector: take and add to your hand one of the advisors left unchosen after advisors phase (including any gold on it)
	Palace		
	Move a segment		Slaver: after a successful attack, instead of taking your opponent's gold, influence or exhausting his or her building, you can use a spy, priest, engineer or mayor one action if the chosen character is on that opponent's discard pile.
	Swap places of two segments		
	Add 1 building to the pool		
	Exhaust a building		Pirate's raid - for your next attack decrease your defense value completely up to 0, and increase your attack value as many points. After the attack your attack value resets to its previous state but a defense value stays at 0.
	Decrease the cost		
	Your opponent gives you wealth		