

Age of Ascent

Introduction

In an age long passed, the world learned to harness twin powers of science and sorcery. With their aid, the great Emperor Valnais rose to power. A warrior and philosopher, he united humankind under an Empire that never slept...a Dreamless Dynasty. But history ever slides back to darkness, and even a kingdom that straddled the world eventually fell to ruin. Now, after generations of struggle, greatness once again gestates in the powers that dot the land. Will your empire triumph over its rivals, using long-forgotten treasures and newly-risen heroes? Wield your influences of might, wealth, and culture wisely, and you will dominate this new age of ascent!

Overview

Age of Ascent is a card game with the goal of building the best civilization, measured by victory points. Your civilization competes for 3 types of resources: strength, gold, and culture. Strength tends to offer superior purchasing power while relying on aggressive play, whereas culture tends to focus on a big payoff at the end of the game...gold is the most flexible resource, while generating victory points over time. The three resources are represented by tokens and “3-sided” dice, in colors of red (strength), yellow (gold), and blue (culture). Dice are an upgrade to tokens not only in raw value, but in unlocking new ways to wield the resource and earn victory points.

You build your empire by acquiring cards. There are three card types: territories, heroes, and treasures. Each card type has an affinity to a resource type: for example, territory tends to provide, and is easiest to acquire by, combat strength. Similarly, heroes tend to provide (and be easiest to acquire through) gold, and finally treasure cards align with culture. New cards are revealed each turn, and you must allocate your resources wisely to secure ever more lands, leaders, and wonders, and finally victory!

Contents

Playing board

The Banner of Initiative!

25 territory cards (red border), consisting of: 20 land cards (no title) and 5 city cards (titled)

20 hero cards (yellow border)

12 treasure cards (blue border)

40 strength tokens (red triangle), 10 for each player color

40 gold tokens (yellow circle), 10 for each player color

40 culture tokens (blue square), 10 for each player color

8 victory tokens (metallic square), 2 for each player color

24 empire tokens (gold diamonds), 6 for each player color

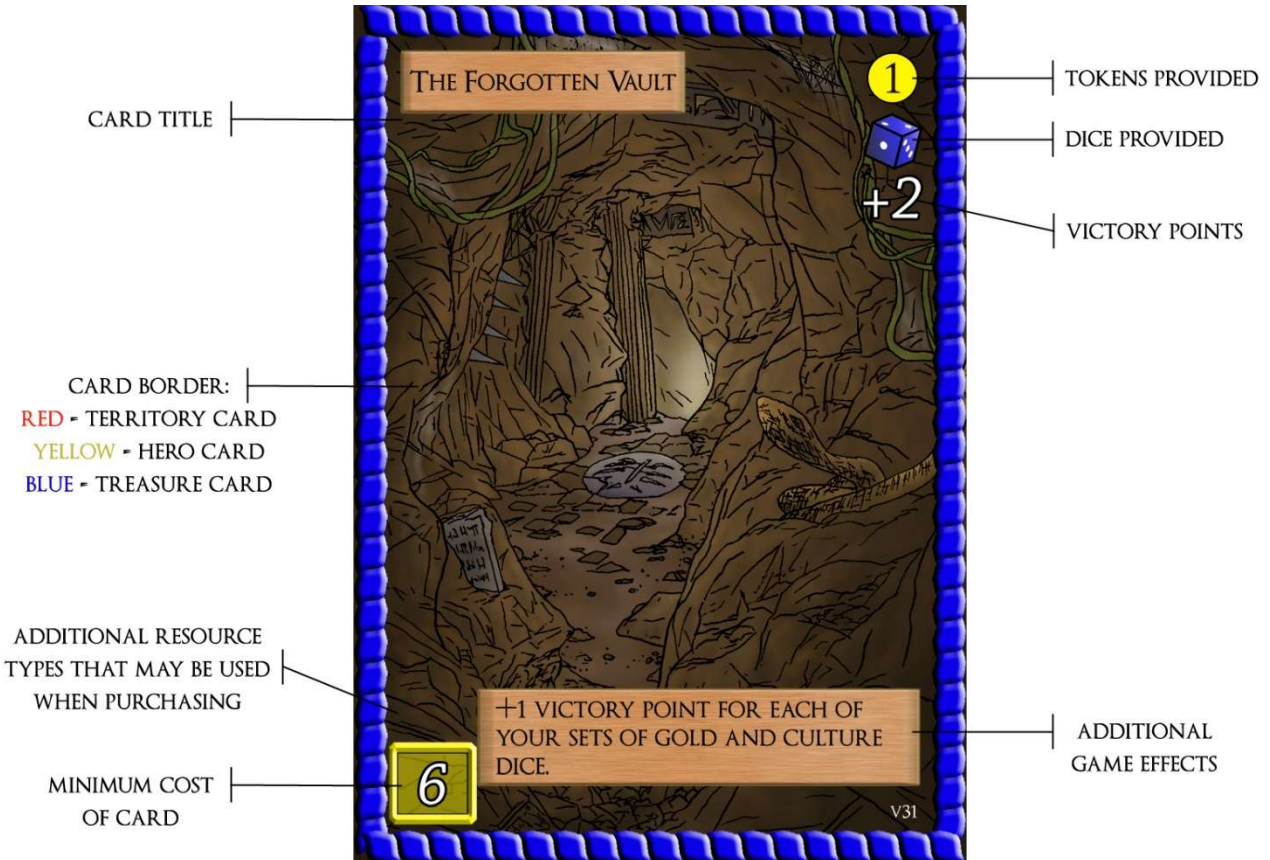
20 strength dice (red), 5 for each player color

20 gold dice (yellow), 5 for each player color

20 culture dice (blue), 5 for each player color

8 counters, one large and one small for each player color

Card Layout



Setup – 3 players

1. Turn order: each player rolls one of each of their red, yellow, and blue dice; the highest combined score goes first. If there is a tie for first, the tying players reroll, doing so repeatedly until there is a highest score.

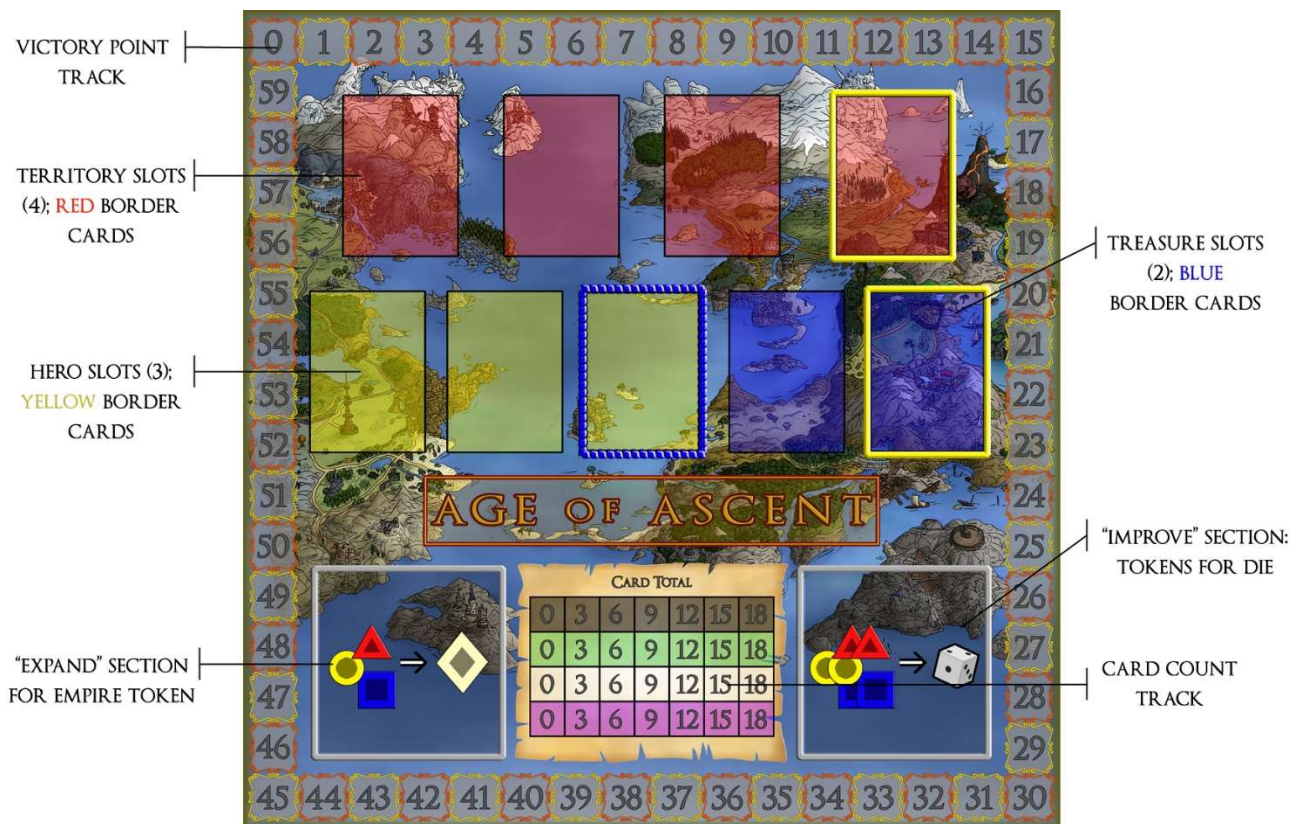
2. Card draft: shuffle the 17 land cards (red border cards without titles – the city cards are also red border, but titled, and should be temporarily set aside) and 18 hero cards. From these decks, reveal as many land cards and as many hero cards as there are players. The first player selects one of these face-up cards. The player to the left then picks a card from the remainder, and so on, in a clockwise direction. When the last player is reached, (s)he also selects a second card. The second card is selected in a counterclockwise direction, until all face-up cards have been selected. *Hint: due to their additional abilities, the hero cards tend to be favored in the first round of the draft.*

3. Take tokens: the players then retrieve the tokens matching the upper-right icons on their card, placing them in front of him or her. (Note: tokens and dice are colored so that the “external” color matches the

resource...the “internal” color matches the player’s color.) Each player then takes as many empire tokens as required so that they have 4 tokens in total. All remaining tokens should be set aside.

4. Board setup: add the 4 city cards to the remaining land cards, and shuffle this pile (this is the *territory* deck). Once shuffled, flip the first 4 cards and place them in the top 4 slots of the playing board, starting from the right and proceeding to the left. From the remaining *hero* (yellow border) cards, flip the first 3 cards and place them in the left slots of the playing board, from right to left. Then shuffle the 11 *treasure* (blue border) cards, flip the top 2 cards, and place them in the lower right slot of the playing board, from right to left. Place the 3 decks face down next to their respective slots. Finally, place the victory and card counters at zero.

Board Layout



Gameplay

Gameplay begins with the player that selected first from the initial cards, receiving the Banner of Initiative. While a player has the Banner, (s)he takes first action in each phase of a turn, with play proceeding clockwise. There are five phases in each turn – the **allocation** phase, the **resolution** phase, the **loss** phase, the **gold** phase, and finally the **count** phase.

1. Allocation phase : each player takes turns placing any number of his or her tokens and/or dice on a single card or section on the playing field. When the option becomes available, the player may also attack an opposing player by placing any number of strength dice on an enemy territory card (for more information see the Battle section, below). You may only place resources on one card/section at a time, and once placed, they cannot be increased later in the turn. The allocation phase proceeds from player to player, until all resources are allocated or all players decline to place any more tokens/dice.

By default, strength resources may be played on territory cards, gold resources may be played on hero cards, and culture resources may be played on treasure cards (note the border colors on the cards as a reminder). In addition, gold resources may be played on the final territory and treasure slots, and culture may be played on the final hero slot. Certain cards may also indicate other allowable resources, denoted by “S,” “G,” or “C” symbols in their lower left corner. Empire tokens may be played on any card, however are single-use only. Empire tokens are consumed (returned to the unowned token pool) upon a successful claim on a particular card; if they are bid but the card is not won, the token instead returns to its owner.

In addition to the face-up cards, there are 2 additional sections of the board. They operate as follows:

Expand: players may play any resource type (except empire tokens) here. The player with the most resources *resolves* (see resolution phase) this section by withdrawing his/her resources and claiming an empire token; remaining tokens are returned to their owners.

Improve: Empire tokens or dice may not be played here, and each player must commit at least two tokens when playing in this space. Further, any tokens played by a player here must all be of the same color (however, different players may choose to play different colors). The player with the most tokens *resolves* (see resolution phase) this section by placing his/her tokens back in the unowned pool, and taking a die of the same color/resource. Any remaining tokens are returned to their owners.

2. Resolution phase : this *resolves* all resources placed on the table. The player resolves any card that (s)he has placed resources on, in any order (s)he chooses, until all options are exhausted; play then proceeds to the next player.

When a given card is resolved, players roll their associated dice to determine their value; tokens have a value of 1. The total of a player's tokens and dice is the player's *bid* for the card. To win a card, the player's bid must be the highest among competing players, AND equal or exceed the *cost* of the card, found in the lower left corner.

The winning player takes the card and places it in front of him/her, along with any dice/tokens indicated in the upper right corner; remaining resources are returned to their owners. If there is a tie bid, priority is given to the player that is *lowest* on the card count track (see the count phase for additional details). If players with tied bids are also tied on the card track, resources are returned to the player(s) and the card remains on the table. Note that any game text on a card that has been won may not be used until after the turn ends.

Example: both orange and black are competing for a land card. As it is in the final territory slot, gold may be used to purchase it. Orange allocates a gold die and an empire token. As the card has the blue “C” above its cost, culture may also be used to purchase it. Black allocates a red die, a gold token, and a culture token (red is always usable for territories). Orange rolls a 2, for a total bid of 3; black rolls a 3, for a total bid of 5. Black wins the card. All players take back their tokens. As orange did not win the card, the empire token is not consumed, and will be available for orange’s use next turn.



Battles: when a player has collected one or more red dice, they can attempt to conquer lands and/or defend their own. Only strength dice (NO strength tokens, or gold/culture dice) can be used to attack or defend a card, and these dice are placed during the allocation phase. During the resolution phase, the battle is treated similarly to cards on the board; to win, the attacking player must equal or exceed the *cost* value on the card. However, the defending player may also allocate dice on that card, their value adding to the card cost. If other players are also attacking the card, the highest value wins; ties among attackers give priority to the player that is lowest on the card count track. If there is still a tie, the defender retains the card.

Example: Alexander places two of his red dice on Beyonce’s territory card, thereby setting the stage for a battle. Moreover, Christopher places three of his red dice on the same card! In defense, Beyonce places one strength die on her card. Alexander’s roll is a total of 3. Meanwhile, the card cost is 3, and Beyonce rolls an additional 1. The defensive value of the card is thus 3 (normal cost) + 1 (strength roll) = 4. With her total exceeding Alexander’s, she successfully defends against his attack. However, Christopher rolls a total of 4. By tying the card’s defensive value, Christopher wins the card.

If an attacker wins a battle, a victory token of the victor’s color is placed on the card. The victory token is simply a reminder of the outcome until the next phase of the turn (see: loss phase). The loser will need to lose, if possible, one resource of his/her choice displayed on the card. Further, the winner will take the new card. It is now his/hers for purposes of any victory points (or victory point modifiers) at the end of the game.

3. Loss phase: this phase only takes place if one or more players have lost a battle during the resolution phase. For every battle lost, a player must lose one of the printed (upper right) resources for that card back to the unowned pool; if this is not possible, an empire token must be lost, and if this is also not possible, no loss is required. The card is then transferred to the winner’s territories.

4. Gold phase: this phase only takes place if one or more players have a gold (yellow) die by the end of the resolution phase. All players roll their gold dice, regardless of whether or how they were used in the previous phases. The highest total receives victory points equal to the number of gold dice (s)he owns; the victory counter is immediately increased. Note that any game text (i.e. Fadefoot’s) that uses the word “resolves” must apply during the resolution phase, and may not be applied during the gold phase. Ties in the gold phase give

priority to the player that is lowest in the card count track; if there is still a tie, no one scores any victory points that turn.

5. Count phase: finally, after the gold roll, all players check their total card count. If any player reaches the next threshold specified on the card count track, their counter is moved up. Once a player has reached a certain card total, they cannot move back down even if cards are later lost. Each move up the track is worth an extra victory point at the end of the game; however, it also gives tie priority to players lower on the track. For example, a player that ends the game on the “12” square receives 4 bonus victory points.

The turn is then concluded.

Final Culture Roll and Winning the Game

As a turn starts, if there are not enough cards to fully populate the slots on the board, the game immediately ends. All players then roll their culture dice, using any text applicable to the “final culture roll.” The final culture roll is not considered a “turn,” and therefore does not allow any text applicable to a single “turn.” The total value of this final culture roll is added to their victory points.

All players add their victory points, including what was accrued during the game, the printed values on owned cards, and any game text bonuses. Each square moved along the card total counter is also worth 1 victory point. The winner is the player with the most victory points! A tie score is decided by the player with the most culture dice. A tie in both victory points and culture dice is decided by the number of gold dice, and if the game is still a tie, the game is decided by the number of strength dice.

Two-Player Rules

With two players, remove the following cards (indicated with a “3P” icon in the top left):

Territories: land 6 (1 strength for 1 cost, G modifier), land 12 (1 strength and 1 victory), land 13 (1 gold and 1 victory), and land 14 (1 culture and 1 victory)

Heroes: Dormon Helver, Broadpalm, Jenn Ochari, Anathen Triforge

Treasures: Glove of Forged Force, The Last Temple

Four-Player Rules

With four players, add the following cards (indicated with a “4P” icon in the top left):

Territories: land 18 (1 strength), land 19 (1 gold), land 20 (1 culture), Skyclad

Heroes: Brighton Farcrest, General Kelburn

Treasures: Valnais Ascends

Resource Comparison

Specialization in a certain resource type tends to reinforce further specialization. While all resource types are designed to be viable paths to victory, they play differently.

Strength is resource-oriented. It provides the most resources at the cheapest costs. It can accumulate cards the fastest. However, on its own it provides the fewest combo strategies or utility, and victory points are dependent on monopolizing as many territory cards as possible (by force, if needed!)

Culture is victory-oriented. It provides the fewest resources at the most expensive costs. However, every die contributes to total victory points (in the final culture roll). It also provides the most unique powers and utility. It can be disrupted if opponents build their resources quicker.

Gold functions as the most flexible resource type. It's able to purchase the oldest territory and treasure on the board. But its flexibility comes at a cost of mediocre resources, and competition over the gold roll. A gold-centric strategy needs to build victory points over time while strategically investing in other areas.

Additional Card Lore

Anathen Triforge: perhaps the world's greatest interdisciplinary mind, her research blends cutting-edge chemistry and physics with the mysterious forces of magic.

Bloodrush: to the few experts on such things, this ronin is considered one of the most accomplished assassins of all time. His covert strikes have affected the flow of history on more than one occasion.

Brighton Farcrest: the quintessential restless soul, happy only on a frontier. He is best identified by his signature Dusk Tiger cloak...that is, if you happen to see him at all.

Broadpalm: cultivating an outwardly boorish image, this "Lender to the Gods" wields the organs of finance as deftly as a fencer handles a rapier. The world's grandest designs inevitably filter through him.

Chi-stone: believed to once be a king's retreat, this emerald city seemingly sprouts out of the ocean, a feat achieved by the lost techniques of Earthwrights.

Cleartop Run: also called the Crown of the East, the spired bridge and walls of this bustling city form the shape of a tiara to approaching ships.

Cosquette: one of the first artists to capture moments of magical energy in paint, she is a beloved gem in the circles of explorers and scholars.

Crester Halfshot: a former spy that found his talents were also suited to uncovering ancient artifacts. He is said to have evaded death on multiple occasions by leveraging his rich knowledge of the world's secrets.

Crown of Ferocity: with a design evoking running blood and molten silver, this Alpha-class artifact inspires a cunning mania in all who wear it.

Domus Valnais: the crumbling palace of Emperor Valnais still exerts a power and sense of awe in the world. Recently rediscovered, the history contained within has yet to be fully understood.

Dormon Helder: with the powers and larger-than-life presence of the berserker kings of old, this hero dominates a battlefield like few can.

Drakeforge: the last functional city-forge of the North, recently restored to operational capacity. The tamed lava flows underneath the city are considered one of the wonders of the world.

Fadefoot: what others create or find, she appropriates. Many a priceless bauble has vanished in her silent wake.

Geistblade: a relic from a different time, the Geistblade seems to do little more than inspire a vague dread in those that behold it. But it is said that irresistible powers slumber within, waiting to be tapped by a worthy heir.

General Kelburn: also known as the Bird of Prey, this gifted strategist is responsible for much of the recent expansion of the Long Plains dynasty.

Glove of Forged Force: Aura, Beam, Gleam, Glow, Lightning, and Mist...the six Gems of Light hold mysterious sway over the universe's primordial energies.

Goldrune Knight: a famed mercenary that now plies his trade in drilling, organization, and tactics. Despite his immense fortune, he also isn't above picking up a sword now and then...

The Hanging Baths: while few dispute the glory of the ancient wonders, this more recent marvel is testament to the new wealth and power of the Harbor Princes.

Invertus Incendior: while the potential of magic is only beginning to be understood, a few have already found a gift for using it in combat. The first archwizard of modern times is also the pioneer of Bionsu, the fusion of magic with the martial arts.

Jenn Ochari: the so-called Harbor Princess, she has become the most influential patron of the arts in the world. She is said to frequently travel in disguise to tease out greatness in all levels of society.

Lee O'Nar Dodavinsky: inventor, artist, scientist...perhaps the keenest mind of this, or any other, era, there are few fields untouched by his genius.

Nerick Nimblenose: this craftsman has dedicated his life to making armor as awe-inspiring as it is effective. The armies he outfits are the envy of the world.

Pace Skrimpscrew: a former drifter turned inventor, this "Wizard of Widgets" brings a practical, can-do spirit to his world-famous workshop.

Reidle Grayfold: while believed to be a cutthroat in business circles, this bold tycoon publicly projects an image of optimism and philanthropy. His professed goal is to unite the world through a vast network of transportation.

Ring of Tongues: a curious artifact with the power of translating languages and even cultural ideologies to the wearer. It is rumored to bestow even deeper levels of understanding and insight to the right bearer.

Shimmer Basin: the sister town to Cleartop Run is situated on the Grand Crystal Canal. Tributaries from a thousand rivers are said to pass through its docks.

Sigil Crest: the oldest city in the world is home to a wealth of Long Plains architecture and culture. Built directly into a deep canyon, dozens of bridges span the famously breathtaking view.

Silvershade: founder of the Greencloaks, he has a mystical ability to communicate with animals and plants. He claims no understanding of how his powers came to be; it seems the world's awakening magical energies have activated powers in individuals, as well...

Skyclad: high in the Aurora Peaks is this famously self-sufficient and beautiful city. According to legend, the city came before the mountains; a desperate last stand by Earthwrights shaped the very land in defiance of the mages and creatures of Underfire.

Tannin Windfield: the youngest Grandmaster Architect in history has beautified many of the world's major cities, and is a world-renowned authority on Valnaian architecture.

Teves Talanwright: as ready with a rapier as a smile, he is said to have a soul equal parts warrior and poet. Perhaps surprisingly, the reality of the man is every bit equal to his reputation.

The Forgotten Vault: while it might take great expense to uncover, this ancient trove of treasure and knowledge could prove well worth the effort...

The Great Tower: erected to command the A'Tan Foothills with unparalleled line of sight and incredibly powerful catapults and ballistae. Among its features is a world class war room near the highest floor, complete with a dedicated carrier hawk roost.

The Last Temple: what started as a remote school for monks has blossomed into an enduring center of power and culture.

Valnais Ascends: the legendary ruler's most famous likeness, this pure gold sculpture also possesses a touch of magic from a bygone age.

Wands of Polarity: these ancient artifacts are inextricably connected, and seemingly channel dueling powers of nature and technology.

Wilford Longlock: the rare ruler that combines compassion with force of will, he has been the de facto leader of the Harbor Princes for over a decade.