Queen of Pirates Full Game Rules

This is the official rulebook for Queen of Pirates. Refer back to this if you have questions while playing.

Background:

Queen of Pirates is an intricate riverine wargame for two players, designed to simulate the campaign that Imperial China waged against piracy in the Pearl River Delta in the early 19th century. Piracy in the Delta had always been a historical thorn in the side of the Empire. Between 1801 and 1810, these Chinese river raiders were led by the charismatic and legendary Ching Shih, historically dubbed the “Queen of Pirates.”

Take command of either the Qing Navy or Ching Shih’s pirate fleet, and try not to get outmaneuvered in the canals, hideaways, and treacherous cuts of the Pearl River.

Victory Conditions:

- Pirates:
  - Win immediately if Ching Shih is carrying at least 20 gold OR
  - Win immediately if there is at least one Pirate squadron and no Qing Navy squadrons in all three City nodes OR
  - Win immediately upon placing your eighth Ruin marker on the map.

- Qing Navy
  - Win immediately if Ching Shih is sunk OR
  - Win immediately if all other Pirate squadrons besides Ching Shih are either sunk, defected, or disabled OR
  - Prevent Pirates from achieving any Victory Conditions by the end of turn 8.

Normal Setup (If playing on VASSAL, use the “VASSAL Setup” rules at the end of this document):

- Lay out the map, place the numbered Tale Cards face down on their respective spots, place the Event Cards face down where both players can reach them, take your respective Squadron Cards and pieces.
- Take out the Garrison, Fence, and Ruin markers and set them aside for players to access.
- Starting with the Qing player, the players alternate deploying squadrons on the board, one at a time.
  - The Qing Navy (blue) must first occupy all city nodes—Macau, Hong, Kong, and Canton—with two squadrons. After that, they must place their remaining squadrons in nodes adjacent to existing Qing squadrons.
  - The Pirates (red) must deploy Ching Shih first, who must start in either Chikkai or Kongmoon. They must then deploy another squadron in either Chikkai or Kongmoon. Subsequent squadrons can then be deployed in empty nodes adjacent to existing Pirate squadrons. Finally, deploy the three Pirate scout ships
(grey) as you like, as long as they are in nodes containing another Pirate squadron. Scout ships behave by a number of special rules, discussed later in this rulebook.

- Both players place a number of Health Tokens equal to each squadron’s Health statistic next to each of their Squadron Cards.
- The Qing player allocates 30 food tokens between any of their ships as they so choose, placing them next to each Squadron Card.
- The Pirate player allocates 30 food between any of their ships as they so choose, placing them next to each Squadron Card. Place the gold bank next to the Pirate player.
- Place the attack dice (bang symbols) and defense dice (shield symbols) out where each player can reach them. Then, place the turn counter along the Turn Tracker at the bottom of the board.
- Begin the game by following the phases outlined below.

**Phases of the Turn:**

1) **Flip Tale Card**
2) **Qing Navy Moves and Combats**
3) **Pirate Moves and Combats**
4) **Simultaneous Action Phase**
5) **Flip Event Card**
6) **End turn**

**Tale Cards:**

- At the start of each turn, the Tale card is flipped. Some of these Tale cards have effects on gameplay, or will cause events to happen on certain turns. After the Tale card is flipped and resolved, the game proceeds to the Qing player’s movement phase.

**Movement Rules:**

- In their respective movement phases, a player may move any number of their squadrons they so choose, in any order they like.
- A squadron may move a number of nodes equal to the movement stat printed on its combat card.
- Moving a squadron any number of nodes costs one food from that squadron’s pool.
- City nodes may hold up to 2 friendly squadrons, every other node may only hold 1 squadron.
- Squadrons cannot move through nodes occupied by other squadrons, friendly or enemy, with the exception of City nodes occupied by one friendly squadron.
- If a squadron moves into a node occupied by an enemy squadron, a combat immediately begins. Please see the following “Combat Adjudication” section for information on how to resolve combats.
  - Movement special rules:
    - **River Boats:** Pirate squadrons must immediately end their movement upon entering an ocean node.
- **Blockade Tactics:** A Qing Navy squadron that does not move adds one to its defense stat until the end of the turn. This rule does not apply to Qing Navy squadrons in ocean or city nodes.

**Combat Adjudication:**
- When a squadron enters a node occupied by any enemy squadrons, immediately start combat.
- Combat takes place in rounds, where both sides will get to make attacks with their ships.
- The squadron who moves into an enemy-occupied node is the “attacker” and rolls first, and the defending squadron or squadrons are the “defender.”
- The attacking squadron picks an opposing squadron in the same node and rolls a number of attack dice equal to its Attack statistic. The selected defending squadron rolls a number of defense dice equal to its defense statistic. For every number of hits rolled in excess of shields rolled, the selected squadron suffers one damage.
- The defending squadron (or squadrons) then roll their attack dice against the attacker’s defense in the same manner as above, and the attacking squadron rolls its defense dice. If the attacking squadron is fighting two ships, it rolls double the number of defense dice it normally would. Any excess damage is allocated to the attacking squadron.
- After both sides have resolved their rolls, the combat round is over.
- Squadrons are allowed to choose if they want to retreat to an adjacent node containing no enemy squadrons. Priority is given to the defender, then the attacker.
  - The defender cannot retreat into the node the attacking squadron came from.
  - If the defender has two squadrons in a node, they may elect to retreat one or both of them. If both retreat, each must retreat to a different node than the other.
  - The attacking squadron can only retreat into the node that it came from.
- If neither side elects to retreat, resolve another round of combat, then repeat the retreat step. Do this until combat is resolved.
- Combat special rules:
  - **Ramshackle:** After combat is resolved, if a Pirate squadron has taken one damage it immediately loses half its gold, rounded up. If a Pirate squadron has taken more than one damage, it loses all its gold.

**Simultaneous Action Phase:**
- Starting with the Qing player, each player alternates picking squadrons and performing actions with them, until one player does not wish to perform any further actions.
- When a player does not wish to perform any more actions, they Pass the phase and are ineligible to perform further actions during the phase.
- Each squadron may only perform one action per action phase.
- Not every squadron has to perform an action during the phase.
- Qing Navy and Pirate squadrons have unique actions available to them, listed here:
  - Qing Navy Actions:
- **Train Militia:** Costs 1 food. Select a squadron on a village node that does not have a Ruin marker on it. Roll a number of defense dice equal to the Squadron’s Defence statistic. If three or more shields are rolled, place a Garrison marker on the village node.
  - Villages with a Garrison marker on them cannot be targeted by the **Raid** or **Annihilate** actions.

- **Crackdown:** Costs 1 food. Select a Qing squadron currently in a city or village node containing a Fence marker. Roll a number of attack dice equal to the Squadron’s Attack statistic. If three or more hits are rolled, remove the Fence Marker from the node.

- **Requisition Supplies:** No cost. Select a Qing squadron currently in a city or village node that does not have a Ruin marker on it. Roll a number of defense dice equal to the Squadron’s Defence statistic. If two or more shields are rolled:
  - gain 3 food if on a village node.
  - gain a number of food equal to the city’s Food value if on a city node.

- **Transfer Food:** No cost. Select a friendly squadron in an adjacent node, or in the same City node. Transfer any amount of food between the active squadron and the selected squadron.

- **Pirate Actions:**
  - **Raid:** Costs 1 food. Select a Pirate squadron on a village node that does not have a Ruin marker on it. Roll a number of attack dice equal to the Squadron’s Attack statistic. If two or more hits are rolled, the pirate squadron receives 2 Gold or 4 Food.
  - **Establish Fence:** Costs 1 food and 1 gold. Select a Pirate squadron on a village or city node that does not have a Ruin marker on it. Roll a number of defense dice equal to the Squadron’s Defence statistic. If three or more shields are rolled, place a Fence marker on that village or city node. A city or village node cannot have more than one Fence marker on it.
    - For every Fence marker on the map, a Pirate squadron receives +2 gold whenever it would receive gold through resolving the **Raid** action.
  - **Annihilate:** Costs 1 food. Select a Pirate squadron on a village or city node that does not have a Ruin marker on it.
    - **If on a village node:** roll a number of attack dice equal to the Squadron’s Attack statistic. If three or more hits are rolled, place a ruin marker on that village node.
    - **If on a city node:** Begin a combat against that city, with the squadron performing the action as the attacker and using the city’s statistics. If the city’s health is reduced to 0, place a Ruin marker on that node and end the combat.
- Cities cannot retreat from combat, though their attackers can elect to.
- Unless it has a Ruin marker placed on it, a city’s health is restored to full at the beginning of each turn.
- After combat ends and Pirate gold loss from damage is resolved— if a Ruin marker was placed on the city, the selected pirate squadron gains food and gold equal to the city’s printed Food and Gold statistics.
- Any Fence markers on a node are removed when a Ruin marker is placed on that node.
- City nodes with Ruin markers on them can still house up to 2 friendly squadrons.

- **Transfer Food/Gold:** No Cost. Select a friendly squadron in an adjacent node to the squadron performing this action, or in the same City node. Transfer any amount of food and/or gold between the active squadron and the selected squadron.

**Event Cards:**
- After both players have passed the action phase concludes, and the players flip an Event Card, resolving its effects.
- Some Event Card effects take place throughout the following turn, rather than immediately.

**End Turn**
- After all of the above phases have been completed, advance the turn marker along the turn track, then, proceed to the next turn.

**Special Rules and Conditions:**
- Squadrons may not initiate combat on the first turn of the game.

- From turn 5 onward, Pirate squadrons face the possibility of defection. If Pirate squadrons choose to flee from combat, the fleeing Pirate squadron must roll two defense dice. If no shields are rolled, the squadron defects.
  - Upon defection, the card for the fleeing Pirate squadron will be given to the Qing Navy, who will also gain command of this unit and keep track of its food reserves.

- At the start of turn 6, place two Portuguese squadrons (yellow) in Macau, or place each of the ships in nodes adjacent to Macau if it is occupied by the Qing Navy player. The Qing Navy will gain full control of these forces. These squadrons start with 3 food each. They utilize the same stat values as Major Pang Noo (2):
  - Attack: 4, Defense: 5, Health: 4, Movement: 2
  - The Portuguese ships do not arrive if, at the start of turn 6, any of the following conditions are met:
    - If Macau is full, and there are no empty nodes adjacent to Macau where these ships can be placed.
- If the Macau city node is occupied by one or more Pirate squadrons.
- If the Macau city node has a Ruin marker on it.

- If a squadron has no food at the start of its movement phase, that squadron is Disabled.
  - Disabled squadrons’ base attack and defense stats are set at 2. In addition, they cannot move or perform actions while they have the Disabled condition. Turn a squadron marker on its side to indicate that it is Disabled.
  - A squadron is no longer Disabled when it receives food through a Transfer action.

- The Pirate player is in possession of 3 scout ships (grey). In combat, after rolling attack or defense dice in a node containing a Scout ship, a Pirate player may declare that they are using their Scout ship. If so, remove the Scout ship from the board. The Pirate squadron may then reroll any number of dice, abiding by the new result.
  - Scout ships do not count against the maximum number of friendly squadrons that can occupy a node, but a node may only contain one Scout ship at a time.
  - Scout ships may move with their accompanying Pirate squadron when that squadron moves, and retreat with them from combat.
  - Scout ships have no statistics, cannot move independently of other Pirate ships, and cannot take actions.
  - Scout ships cannot carry food, or gold.
  - If a Qing squadron ever enters a node containing a Scout ship with no accompanying Pirate squadron, the scout ship is immediately destroyed.

**General Gameplay Tips**

- For Qing Navy:
  - Time is on your side, but your deployment is restrictive and the Pirates can really use their movement to threaten you.
  - Your ships have better stats than the pirates but worse special abilities. That being said, Admiral Tsuen Mow Sun is quite powerful and a contender for the strongest ship in the game. Make sure he is deployed in a place where he can bring the fight to the pirates quickly.
  - The faster you can create garrisons, the more difficult it will be for the Pirates to gain resources.
  - If you can trade one of your ships for one pirate ship, that is a good trade for you. Particularly if that pirate ship was carrying a lot of food or gold.
  - Moving first is a double-edged sword—it means the Pirates can respond to your actions, but it also allows you to create chokepoints on the map that can really hinder their movement. Your special Blockade Tactics rule is helpful for this.
  - Try to keep the Pirates confined to the western rivers as much as possible—this lets you free up ships that would normally have to defend Hong Kong.
  - Do not fall for feints, as repositioning your ships takes a lot of time.
- Compared to the Pirates, you acquire food much more easily, especially from cities. Use this, and your numerical advantage, to try and put pressure on them.
- Do not leave your cities undefended and open for Pirates to occupy, especially Macau.
- Use the ocean as a shortcut to offset your low movement, but be aware that ocean travel is not without dangers.

- For the Pirates
  - Your deployment is startlingly flexible and you can do some really crazy tricks with it. However, keep in mind that if you overextend it can be easy for the Qing player to cut your fleet in two along the Canton-Macau line.
  - Use your high movement to your advantage, and steer clear of ocean nodes if you can help it. They offer very little advantages for you.
  - Your squadrons have different special abilities, many of which are quite powerful. Make good use of these to offset your numerical disadvantage.
  - Protect Ching Shih! If she dies, you lose the game. At the same time, try to make sure there are ships near her that can funnel gold to her. She is very good at establishing Fences due to her high Defense stat, but bear her slow movement in mind.
  - Your food economy is inefficient, especially since you have to choose between food and gold when you raid. Be wise with your initial food allocation.
  - Annihilating a city is risky but can be a huge swing in your favor. Make sure to check cities’ stats to see which ones would be good targets.
  - Captains like O Po Tai and Meih Yew Kin are very powerful in combat when they have scout ships to provide rerolls. Don’t be afraid to use up your scout ships!
  - It is to your advantage to at least threaten Macau so that the Portuguese might not show up there. Your chances of ever attaining numerical superiority are small, but if you take Macau before turn 6, it is a massive blow to the Qing player.
  - You are very reliant on your Transfer action. Try to smartly position your ships so that, if you get gold, you can easily transfer it out of the Qing threat range.

**SPECIAL—VASSAL Setup Rules:**

- When playing on VASSAL, you will notice that all squadrons on both sides already begin in standard starting positions.
  - The Qing Navy (blue) squadrons are deployed as follows:
    - Admiral Tsuen Mow Sun (1) and Major Pang Noo of Heang Shan (2) in Macao
    - Admiral Ting Kwei (3) and Lieutenant Tao Tse Lin (4) in Hong Kong
    - Lieutenant Tseo Tang Hoo (5) and Lieutenant Ying Tang Hwang (6) in Canton
    - Kwo Lang Lin (7) in the river node directly south of Canton
    - General Lin Fa (8) in Zhuhai, northeast of Macau
- The Pirate (red) squadrons are deployed as follows:
  - Ching Shih (1) in Kongmoon
  - Cheung Po Tsai (2) in the river node between Kongmoon and Kumchu
  - Lee Shang Tsing (3) in the river node east of Kongmoon
  - Woo Che Tsing (4) and 1 pirate scout ship in the river node between Kongmoon and Sunwui
  - Meih Yew Kin (5) and 1 pirate scout ship in the river node northeast of Kongmoon
  - O Po Tai (6) and 1 pirate scout ship in Chikkai
  - Leang Pao (7) in Sunwui

- The Qing player allocates 30 food tokens between any of their ships as they so choose, placing them next to each Squadron Card.
- The Pirate player allocates 30 food between any of their ships as they so choose, placing them next to each Squadron Card. Place the gold bank next to the Pirate player.
- Place the attack dice (bang symbols) and defense dice (shield symbols) out where each player can reach them. Then, place the turn counter along the Turn Tracker at the bottom of the board.
- Begin the game by following the phases as normal