

Seven Kingdoms II Q&A

With Trevor Chan, Enlight Software

Can you describe the overall premise of 7K2?

The premise is pretty much the same as in 7K: A game where human attributes such as leadership, skill, prejudice, tyranny, treachery and all the interactions between them are modeled; where your units are not just mass produced bunches of pixels that can be easily replaced as they are killed. We want the player to despair when an important soldier is killed and to rejoice when he comes through battle unharmed. We want them to shout, "How dare they!" when one of their towns revolts against their unjust or inept rule.

These are the kind of things that help to pull the player into the world and the kind of things that few, if any, other games have attempted to do.

What kind of requests and gamer feedback came in?

Requests for more research topics, more building types, a scenario editor, differentiation between civilian and military sprites, mounted soldiers, formations, cooperative multi-player play, higher screen resolution, etc. We have implemented all of these and many, many more while avoiding (successfully we think) making the game overwhelmingly complex.

The scenario editor will be quite different from those found in other games as you can actually play it. As the game evolves you will be able to pause it and add whatever you want before letting it run some more. In this way you can build up a complex working world just as you like it before saving it and trading it with your friends.

Will there be any changes to the basic interface?

Although the interface looks quite a bit different, it should still be familiar to players of 7K. It is more colorful and strives to present as much information as possible without becoming overwhelming. Every icon will have a pop-up help message if you choose that option. This should help new players to adjust to a game that demands a bit more from them than other real-time games.

What are some of the new units, buildings, and opponents?

Each of the 12 human races and each of the seven Fryhtan species will have a special unit, or a special building, or both. There will be, among other things, Egyptian chariots, Indian and Carthaginian elephants, Norman, Greek, Roman and Mongol cavalry, Shao Lin monks and Ninja warriors. Some Fryhtan species will have control of jaguars, gorillas, rhinos and swarms of bees and termites.

There will be Fryhtan Alchemy Tors that can do conversions between raw materials, gold and life points. There will be amazing offensive buildings, such as the one designed by Archimedes that can focus sunlight with a mirror to burn the enemy at a great distance.

What are the differences in the new civilizations?

Besides different looks, language and names they will have different fighting skills based on their historic attributes. Their towns, forts, special structures and seats of power will be based on their various architectural styles. Each race will be able to invoke its own Greater Being which will each have different powers.

How are you expanding research?

In 7K you could only research weapons. Now you will have a much wider range of projects which will enable the player to pick and choose according to his strategy. If a player plans to use only his men in battle, he can forget about weapons technology and concentrate on offensive or defensive advancements for his soldiers. If a player wants to make huge amounts of money so that he can concentrate on building a fine mercenary army, he should perhaps pay attention to mining and manufacturing technology, which will enable him to make more money from his limited resources. A player who plans to field a huge army will probably need to research better farming methods so that he will have enough food to support his troops, as troops tend to defect to the opposition when their stomachs grow empty.

How has espionage been changed?

We have added a few new missions for your spies that go along with all the great old missions from 7K. For instance, you may now cause international incidents: A well trained spy can actually start a war between two of your opponents without either of them understanding why this has occurred. Spies will also now be able to steal technological advances from other Kingdoms, saving you the trouble of doing the research yourself. But, as before, your spies will have a wide range of skill levels which help to determine whether he will succeed in his assigned mission or lose his head in the attempt!

What other specific differences will be in the game?

Seats of power will, when built, immediately confer some important advantage on your Kingdom. For example, when the Egyptians build the Temple of Isis, they will get a boost in the birth rate for all their Egyptian towns. When the Romans build the Temple of Mars, their soldiers will be trained to a higher initial level of combat than any other Kingdom. Indians will get a boost in their speed of research, etc. Every human Kingdom will get something different from their Seats of Power, even without invoking their Gods. Another major difference is that you may now play as the Fryhtans. When you do you will realize that you need to completely change your methods of play.

How will playing as the Fryhtans differ from playing the other races?

They will be as different as night and day. When playing as a human you will be penalized greatly for taking innocent civilian life. When playing as the Fryhtans, however, this can be seen as one of the most desired strategies.

Dead life forms - civilian, military, human or other Fryhtans equals life points for your Fryhtan empire. With these life points you will be able to breed new Fryhtans. There are no Fryhtan towns to draw soldiers from; they must be bred in lairs using these life points as well as gold. The gold comes from the monthly tribute collected from the human towns that have been enslaved.

Talk about the types of activities Fryhtans engage in to achieve their final objective (i.e., research, etc.). How do Fryhtans expand their kingdom?

Fryhtans expand their kingdoms by several essential methods. They must enslave human towns in order to have a steady supply of gold and they must kill living beings in order to build up their life points, with which they may breed more Fryhtans. They may also use their gold to induce independent Fryhtans to join them. Fryhtans may also “purchase” special technologies. Each species will have a specific type of technology that it can use.

What are the differences among the new Fryhtans?

Each Fryhtan race will have a special skill that differs from the others: One will be able to catch and control wild animals, another will have the ability to breed swarms of bees, another will be able to transform raw materials into life points, something that other Fryhtans will have to kill living beings for. Some Fryhtans will move slowly but be able to absorb a lot of pain, while others will move more swiftly, making them ideal for surprise attacks on unguarded enemy units or for quick strikes and retreats.

The ability to play as the Fryhtans is a massive change to the structure of the game. Why did you decide to put this in and how will the experience of playing as a Fryhtan differ from being a human?

We put it in because it is such a blast playing them! They are so completely different from the humans that it is almost like playing another game. You no longer have to worry about your reputation or your treatment of your people. Killing civilians is now good. Very good. It gives you the “Life Points” that you will need to breed new Fryhtans. Maintaining treaties is also less important. If you see your allies sending a lot of weak troops in your direction you may wish to consider breaking your alliance, slaughtering these troops and reaping the benefits! Each Fryhtan species will also have a special structure that they can build or even certain sub species that they can breed. This will make playing each Fryhtan species a different experience as well as being completely different from playing as a human.

If Fryhtans have no gods what kind of special characteristics do they have? Will they develop networks of towns and traders and whatnot the same way a human player does?

Fryhtans will be able to develop a network of towns, but these towns, although human, will be what we call “Slave Towns.” These Slave Towns will pay yearly tribute to their Fryhtan overlords, but the Fryhtans will not be able to conscript workers from them. Fryhtans may also, if they have acquired some human renegades, build normal human towns which they can use as a human king would, including building up a trading system. The problem is that these types of towns will be extremely difficult to control as a Fryhtan and almost not worth the effort unless you have a human soldier with very high leadership skills in your service.

Describe the role that heroes will play in the game and give us some examples of different heroes and how their powers differ from culture to culture. Do Fryhtans have heroes as well?

Heroes will be men who can have outstanding leadership or fighting abilities. With extremely high leadership skills they will be able to train your troops at a tremendous rate and then give them a sometimes huge advantage in battle. Their powers shall differ from culture to culture in the same general way that those of the more

common soldiers do, but many of these heroes shall possess artifacts that enhance their innate power or give them extraordinary skills. These artifacts can be dropped and picked up by others in your army if you so wish. Heroes may be hired in inns, but they may be extremely expensive.

How about the overall difficulty of the game?

The overall difficulty will depend on the options that the player sets before the game even starts. A player may set up a game that he will be sure to win or a game he that will almost be sure to lose.

How do you think the overall experience of SK2 will differ from the original?

The experience should be more satisfying because the player will have so many more paths to take to ultimate victory. Should you take the path of science, trade and wealth or naked brute force? Should you be a tyrant or a sage? Or should you flood the world with you spies and bring down the enemy by stealth? Or a combination of all of these things? The possibilities are endless.