



Rivals for CATAN

Part 13 - “Age of Enlightenment” Expansion – “The Era of Explorers” Theme Set

May 31, 2012

Chapter 1

In the fictitious history of Catan, the Era of Explorers takes place shortly before the Era of Barbarians. Approximately 30 years after Catan was discovered by seafarers from continental Europe, the Catanians took the caravels of the foreign seafarers and explored regions far away from their homeland. During their expeditions, they found islands with mysterious inhabitants and encountered pirates who, of course, dampened their spirit of exploration.

“The Era of Explorers” Theme Set slightly differs from the pattern of the other Theme Sets. When exploring, the players compete for victory points and advantages. If only one player were able to explore, he would have too great an advantage, and the set would also lose some of its attractiveness. The Theme Set is thus very well suited for the Duel mode but unfortunately not for the Tournament Game. However, at the beginning of their Tournament Games, the players may agree to use the “Era of Explorers” cards.

Since there are a couple of new rules for playing “The Era of Explorers,” I’d like to give you, dear reader, an idea of how the game is played. First, my opponent and I set up our principalities.

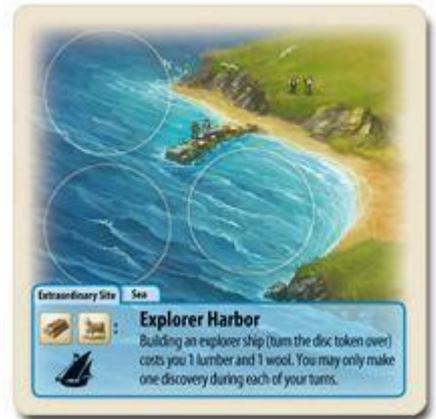
Set-up of the Principality

In “The Era of Explorers,” a new card type is being introduced: **sea cards**. Each player receives a set of 10



sea cards. Both card sets have identical fronts – only the backs differ from each other. The card backs of one set are marked with blue shields and the cards of the other set are marked with red shields.

I use the red shields, so I take the sea cards whose backs are marked with them. My opponent receives the cards with the blue shields. After we have set up our principalities in the usual fashion, I place the **Explorer Harbor** on my left building site for a road, while my opponent places it on his right building site for a road.



Then each of us shuffles the rest of their sea cards face down and places them – also face down – in a 3×3 pattern on the side where he has also placed his Explorer Harbor. In a game with “The Era of Explorers,” a principality can thus only expand in one direction.



Then each of us takes three disc tokens. The front of each disc shows a ship symbol, and the back is blank. I place one disc token on a field of the Explorer Harbor, ship side face up, and the other two discs on the other two fields, blank side face up. The preparation is now finished.



Explorer Ship Actions

My disc token whose ship symbol faces up represents an explorer ship; during the action phase of my turn, I can perform exactly one action with it. Such an action may, for example, consist in discovering (revealing) a sea card.

I could build two more explorer ships by paying 1 lumber and 1 wool for each ship – that is, turn the other two disc tokens so that their ship sides also face up. However, this doesn't make sense during this early phase of the game. Right now, it is much more important for me to place buildings with sail points in my principality, because without sail points I can't discover sea cards with my explorer ships.

Sail Points

Each sea card is between 1 and 4 steps away from my Explorer Harbor. I determine the distance by counting the number of steps to reach a sea card, starting from my Explorer Harbor. I may only count from one card to another directly adjacent card – that is, I may not count in a diagonal direction.



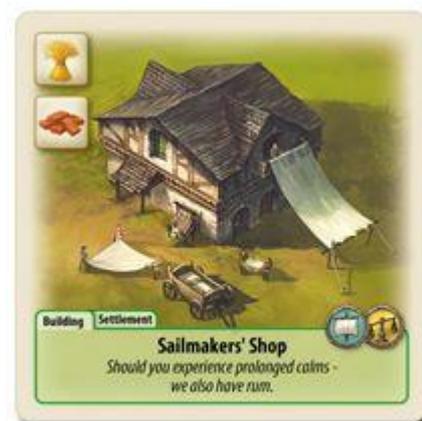
In the illustration, the number on a sea card indicates the distance to my Explorer Harbor. To reach a sea card with my explorer ships, I must have built a building that depicts at least as many sail points as the number of steps to the sea card. Therefore, I need at least one sail point to reach the sea card marked with the number 1. Fortunately, the face-up expansion card stack contains the **Shipyard**, which has a sail point. I build it immediately.

Now it's time to explore! I reveal the sea card that lies one step away from my Explorer Harbor, and I find a **Shipwreck** that earns me any 1 resource of my choice.



Chapter 2

During one of my next turns, I build the **Sailmakers' Shop**. The diligent sailmakers provide me with a second sail point, so that now I can discover each of the 3 sea cards placed two steps away from my Explorer Harbor. I reveal the sea card below the Shipwreck. I had better leave the card alone, because now the pirate **Cimmarone** stands in front of me and demands 1 gold. If I don't want to pay, my only alternative is to fight him.



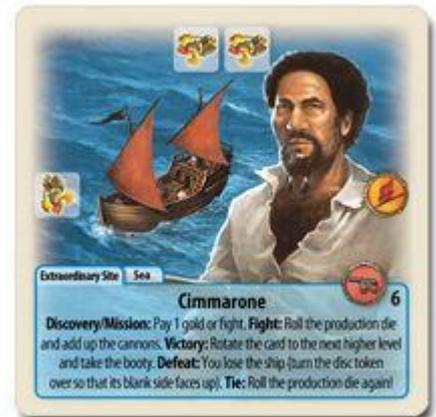
If I decide to fight him, battle ensues – that is, I have to roll one die and add the number rolled to the number of my cannon points. I can only win the battle if this sum is higher than the number of Cimmarone’s cannon points. Since Cimmarone has 6 cannon points and I have only the 1 cannon point of my Shipyard, I’d have to roll a “6” to win. Given this situation, I prefer to pay, because in case of a defeat I would lose my explorer ship, i.e., I’d have to turn the disc token’s blank side face up.

In order to be better equipped for future fights against the pirates, on my next turn I build an **Armory**, which – in addition to 1 another strength point – provides me with 1 cannon point. I also pay 1 lumber and 1 wool to launch a second explorer ship by turning a disc token’s ship side face up.

I send one of my explorer ships on a journey of exploration and reveal the card above the Shipwreck. I have discovered the **Island of the Merchants**, and one of the merchants’ representatives welcomes me. As a welcome gift, I am allowed to immediately trade any 1 resource of my choice for any 2 other resources. This gift comes in very handy.

I place my disc token with its ship side face up on the Island of the Merchants card, to indicate that I have performed an action there with this ship.

I may explore only once during my turn, and on each sea card I may only place 1 explorer ship – meaning that I’m not allowed to send a second explorer ship to the Island of the Merchants. Therefore, with my second explorer ship I carry out a mission to Cimmarone and place the disc token with its ship side face up on this card. Having only 2 cannon points, I still feel a bit too weak for a fight. However, the **Lars the Naval Hero** action card lends me support. With the aid of Lars, all problems are gone. Cimmarone immediately surrenders. To indicate his defeat, I rotate the Cimmarone card to the next higher level. Now the side of the card depicting the symbol for 1 random resource points towards me.



The symbol indicates that I may once take any 1 resource of my choice as booty.

At the end of my turn, I take all my disc tokens with ship sides face up and place them on the Explorer Harbor.

On my next turn, I discover the card to the left of the Shipwreck. It's a pirate again – this time, his name is **Haidao Chang**, and of course he also wants gold.

Since I have run out of gold, all I can do is fight. Unfortunately, I am defeated and must turn over the disc token – which I had placed ship side face up on the pirate card – so that its blank side faces up.

I send my second explorer ship on a mission to the Island of the Merchants. It's not that I want to tell those friendly people the sad story of losing my explorer ship, no – I want to give them 2 wool as a gift. Needless to say that my motives aren't entirely altruistic. After all, in return I may rotate the Island of the Merchants card to the next higher level, that is, to the side showing the trade point, and thus permanently increase my trade point total by 1.

Afterwards, I play the **Broadside** card and demand that my opponent sink one of his explorer ships. *Misery loves company*, I think to myself.

The third level of all pirate cards and all island cards is marked with a victory point. As we remember, the same sea cards are placed in both principalities. This means that at some point, my opponent will also give a gift to the people of the Island of the Merchants or enter into a fight with Haidao Chang or Cimmarone. If he succeeds, he may rotate the respective card to the next higher level, too.

However: Only one of us may rotate a card with a victory point, such as the Island of the Merchants or Cimmarone, to its third level and thus snatch the victory point. If a player has rotated a sea card in his principality to the third level, the opponent may rotate the same card in his principality up to level two only.

This competition for the victory points on the “Era of Explorers” cards interesting and exciting.



Because of this competition, the cards work well in the Theme Game and the Duel but not so well in the Tournament Game if only one player uses the “Era of Explorers” cards.

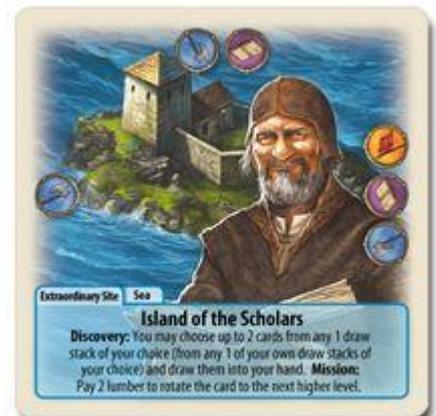
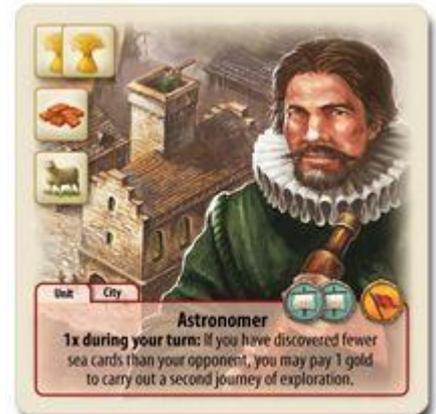
Chapter 3

A couple of turns later, I have expanded my principality further. An **Astronomer** has established himself in one of my two cities. The cards in my principality now depict a total of 4 sail points. With 4 sail points, my ships can reach any of the sea cards placed in my principality. However, before I blindly continue exploring and thus potentially encounter an even stronger pirate, I play the **Cartographer** action card. I take a look at the fronts of two of my face-down sea cards and then also swap the positions of any 2 sea cards of my choice in my principality.

Meanwhile, I have 3 explorer ships, one of which I use to discover the **Island of the Scholars**. The scholars’ welcome gift consists in allowing me to choose up to 2 cards from any 1 draw stack of my choice. During my following turns, each time I carry out a mission to the scholars and give them 2 lumber, I may rotate the Island of the Scholars to the next higher level.

Although I’m no longer allowed to explore, I may send my two unused explorer ships on missions. I use one of the ships to challenge my old friend Haidao Chang to a fight, which I win. That’s a good thing, because that way I can beat my opponent to the card’s victory point. With my last unused explorer ship I visit the Island of the Merchants. I give them 2 wool and rotate the Merchants card to level 3. That’s another victory point my opponent no longer can obtain. However, he has already rotated the Island of the Scholars to level 2 and thus is in the lead regarding that card.

My opponent’s strategy is more centered on taking advantage of fighting the pirates. Initially, when he discovered the pirate **Jean**, he got the short end of the stick. Then he built the **Cannon Foundry**, and – combined with a bit of luck – he was able to defeat



Cimmarone for the third time, thus snatching the victory point and rotating the Jean card to level 2.

Two turns later, I first build the **Landing Stage**, which should make doing business with the island peoples easier for me, and then send two of my explorer ships on missions. I place one of the ships on the **Island of the Bards**, which I discovered a couple of turns ago and whose inhabitants – as a welcome gift – gave me the possibility to draw an action card from my opponent's hand. If I give the bards grain, they help provide me with more skill points and trade points. Thanks to my Landing Stage, they also settle for 1 grain and 1 gold instead of 2 grain.

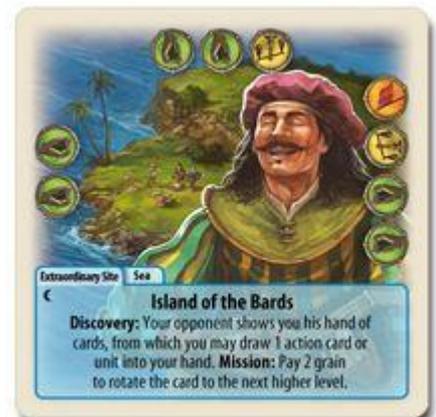
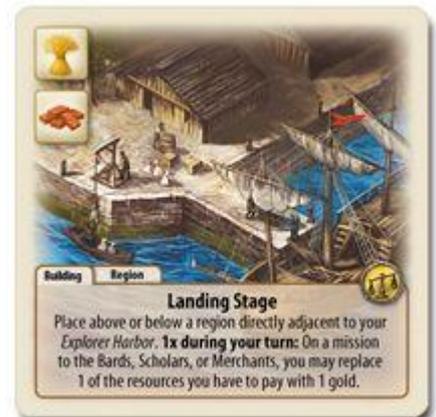
I send the other ship to the Island of the Scholars, pay 2 lumber, and rotate the card to level 2. Who knows, maybe on my next turn I'll be able to grab the Scholars' victory point before my opponent does.

Chapter 4

We're approaching the end of the game. It is my turn; I roll the die and must reveal an event card. It is the **Most Successful Explorer** card. Unfortunately, this title corresponds to my opponent, since he has discovered all cards and so far, I have left Jean undiscovered. I did the latter for a reason, because with only 2 cannon points I don't stand a chance against Jean's 8 cannon points. So, my opponent may add 2 cards to his hand.

Four turns ago, I had discovered the **Island of the Forgotten Tribe**. It's a nefarious island. After I had rolled a "1" on each of my three previous turns – leaving my explorer ships shattered on a reef – I seriously considered removing this card from the Theme Game. But then again, nothing had forced me to run the risk, and luck plays no small role when discovering – that's just the way it is.

Anyway, now I have only 1 explorer ship left and, unfortunately, no resources to build another one. I place the ship on the Island of the Scholars, pay 1 lumber and



1 gold, and rotate the card to the next higher level, snatching the victory point from under my opponent's nose.

Then I play the **Navigator**. This card allows me to use my explorer ship a second time. I can't help testing my luck, so I place my explorer ship on the Island of the Forgotten Tribe. This time, I roll a "5." That's nice for a change! I may rotate the card to the next higher level and receive the treasure depicted on the side that points toward me, which is any 2 resources of my choice.

I immediately use these resources to build a ship and finish my turn with 11 victory points.

It's my opponent's turn. He rolls the die and must reveal an event card. He reveals the **Friendship Between Peoples** card. As a result of this event, I get 3 resources and my opponent gets 2. Now my opponent is unstoppable. He plays the **Ambassador** card and claims the merchants' welcome gift a second time. He trades 1 gold for 2 brick and thus has all the resources needed to upgrade his cities adjacent to the Explorer Harbor to an **Explorer Metropolis**. He wins the game by a nose. Well, if the reef of the Island of the Forgotten Tribe hadn't cost me so many of my ships, the game would have taken a different course, wouldn't it?

In the Duel, the "Era of Explorers" Theme Set combines very well with other Theme Sets. Here, both players add a set of sea cards (reduced by 3 cards) to their respective principality.

Our tests revealed, however, that one should start going on journeys of exploration as early as possible. If the opponent is too far ahead at sea, it becomes difficult to take the victory from him with the aid of the cards of the other two sets.



End of blog post 13 about the “Era of Explorers” Theme Set. Next week I’ll begin blog post 14, dedicated to the “Era of Sages” Theme Game.

“The Era of Explorers” is the second of three new Theme Sets of the “Age of Enlightenment” expansion of “The Rivals for Catan.”

Klaus Teuber

