



# Rivals for CATAN

## Part 14 - “Age of Enlightenment” Expansion – “The Era of Sages” Theme Set

*July 26, 2012*

### Chapter 1

The “**Era of Sages**” Theme Set is set in the 16th century of the fictitious history of Catan – roughly the same time the “Era of Prosperity” set takes place.

When I developed the old Card Game more than 15 years ago, I didn’t think yet of giving Catan a history. The question of how the settlement and further development of Catan might have taken place if Catan as a large island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean had really existed didn’t start to interest me until later, while I was developing “Cites & Knights.”

I drafted an outline of the history – episodically referred to in the “The Rivals for Catan” and its expansions – partly before beginning to develop “Rivals” and partly parallel to developing individual sets of the game. Last in line was the set in the tradition of “Wizards & Dragons,” a Theme Set of the old card game for 2 players. The main topic of “Wizards & Dragons” is the manipulation of events by means of witchcraft. That, of course, didn’t go well at all with a history that was supposed to develop in a possible real world.

If magic could no longer play a role on Catan, then “miracles” had to happen in the real world. Does that work? Well, let’s take the “Prophesy” card of “Wizards & Dragons,” for example. A couple of years ago, did one have to be a prophet to predict that many European countries’ burden of debt would get them into big trouble? And to foretell the 2nd World War didn’t require any supernatural powers either.

The problems of the future have their roots in the present time. With vigilance and great foresight, future events can be predicted and – through timely action – can often be averted.

This kind of foresight is a characteristic of wise people – sages. In each cultural group, wisdom has a slightly different definition. Ultimately, wisdom allows man to see and assess things with clarity – detached from his individual needs – while trying to encourage humane actions and support human dignity. Considering that wisdom and foresight will shape the future differently than stupidity and narrow-mindedness, the “Wizards & Dragons” set developed into the new Theme Set “The Era of Sages.”

But who are those sages on Catan? Let’s recall the “Secret Brotherhood” from “The Era of Barbarians”, which helped to prevail against the barbarians. Or the “Master of the Brotherhood,” who – in “The Era of Intrigue” – tried to mitigate the effects of the conflicts between Christians and Odinists.

### History of the Sages

In our fictitious history of Catan, men and women opposed to fanatic belief systems founded the “Secret Brotherhood.” The Brotherhood was secret because it had to operate in secrecy for many years. Its influence kept growing, however, and the Brotherhood eventually was able to reconcile Christians and Odinists and have them live in peaceful coexistence. Highly respected by the populace, the Brotherhood no longer had to operate in secrecy and henceforth called itself the “Alliance of Brothers and Sisters.”

From among its own ranks the Alliance elected the Council of Sages, which consisted of six sage brothers and sisters, also simply called sages. These sages did not necessarily have to be highly educated or erudite – above all, they had to have a strong sense of justice, common sense, and a strong desire to be humane.

Each of the six sages was active in a certain area, and each area bore a relation to one of the six Catanian terrain types.



During the times in which this set takes place, **Peter, Sage of the Forest** thus tried to understand the processes of nature and advocated reconciling human need with the need to maintain balance in nature.

**Walther, Sage of the Gold Field**, ensured stability and balance in the area of trade and commerce.

**Frederich, Sage of the Hills**, was the mentor for architecture and the arts.

**Piet, Sage of the Mountains**, concerned himself with the welfare of craftspeople and workers. **Barbara, Sage of the Fields**, was responsible for all issues concerning food supply, and **Michaela, Sage of the Pasture**, did all she could to protect the weak, including children, old people, and also animals.

The 7th sage was the “**Principal Sage Woman.**” Whenever there was dissention in the Council of the Sages, the Principal Sage Woman had to mediate. If conciliation could not be reached, it fell on her to decide the issue. Watching over the integrity of all council members was also part of her job.

The Principal Sage Woman was elected from the ranks of the Alliance through secret ballot. Her identity was known only to her predecessor, who led the electoral procedure. The Principal Sage Woman always appeared cloaked and remained in office for one year only.

By extensively dealing with the problems in their respective areas, the sages gained insight and knowledge. It was their task to protect the **Manifesto of Humane Conduct**, Catan’s Constitution, and watch over the compliance of its laws. In modern terms, the sages thus were a kind of judiciary.

### Rules for Playing with the Sages

Each sage is a unit with the addition “sage” and is defined as a region expansion. Except for the Principal Sage Woman, each sage is assigned to a specific region



and may only be placed adjacent to this region. Each of the 6 regional sages has a personal name that makes him/her unique, which is why in the Tournament Game they may only be placed once, in one of the two principalities. Only the Principal Sage Woman has no personal name and may be placed adjacent to any region, once in each principality. Other than that, no further requirements apply for placing the sages.

Each time the number of the region adjacent to a sage is rolled, he or she receives one wisdom point (owl). When this occurs, the sage card is rotated 90 degrees counterclockwise. This was different in the case of the wizards of the old “Wizards & Dragons” set, where the players had to pay one resource of the adjacent region for each extra unit of magic power.



Oh dear – many of the seasoned Tournament players might say now – doesn’t that bring too many wisdom points into play that can be used to manipulate events? No, it actually doesn’t – but enough wisdom points come into play to make it fun juggling with them.

## Chapter 2

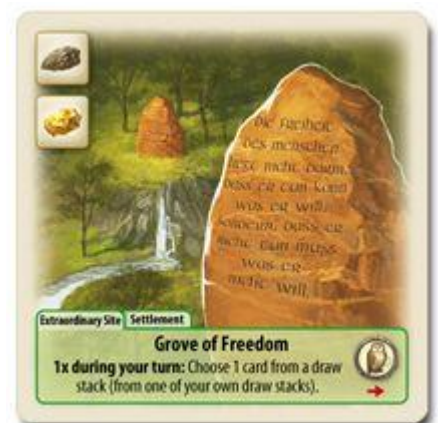
The groves replace the magic books of the predecessor set “Wizards & Dragons.” At the center of each grove there is a boulder with an engraved aphorism. Each grove has a function; a player may pay a certain number of wisdom points to use that function.

Groves are placed as extraordinary sites in settlements/cities. Let’s take a more detailed look at the groves:

### Grove of Freedom

*“Man’s freedom does not reside in the fact that he can do what he wants, but that he does not have to do what he does not want.”*

*(Jean-Jacques Rousseau)*



In our tests, this grove was the most popular of all. Having the freedom to choose a card in the middle of a turn and being allowed to use that card immediately is undoubtedly very helpful.

### Grove of Fraternity

*“Fraternity is innate to man. Not being fraternal – being separate – is tenaciously instilled into man.”*

*(Leo N. Tolstoi)*

Isn't it fraternal to also grant a small advantage to one's opponent?

### Grove of Justice

*“Temper justice with the weight of mercy, not the weight of money.”*

*(Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra)*

Since I have fought so hard for the trade advantage, isn't it only just and fair that I can enforce it?

### Grove of Peace

*“Peace and freedom have something in common: just as freedom is also the freedom of others, peace is also the peace of others.”*

*(Franz Alt)*

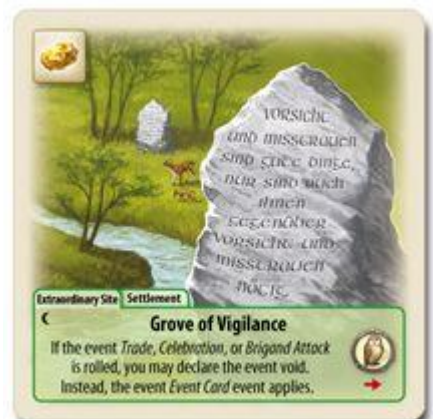
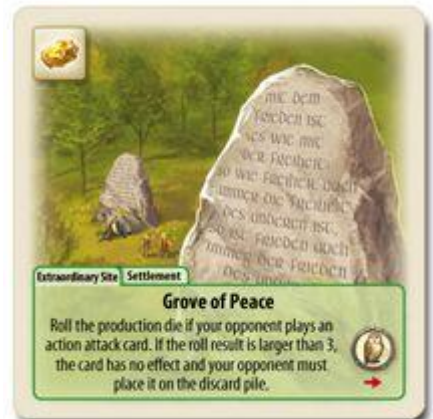
Imposed peace is also peace.

### Grove of Vigilance

*“Caution and distrust are good things, but one must use caution and distrust with them.”*

*(Christian Morgenstern)*

He who is vigilant in the present will be able to prevent unwelcome events in the future.



## Grove of Great Foresight

*“The strangest thing about the future is that they will be referring to our time as “the good old days.”*

*(John Steinbeck)*

Even though great foresight does not always allow prevent certain things from happening, it may allow you to delay them.

## Grove of Courage

*“Only when the courageous have become wise and the wise courageous will we feel that which has often been mistakenly claimed before: mankind is making progress.”*

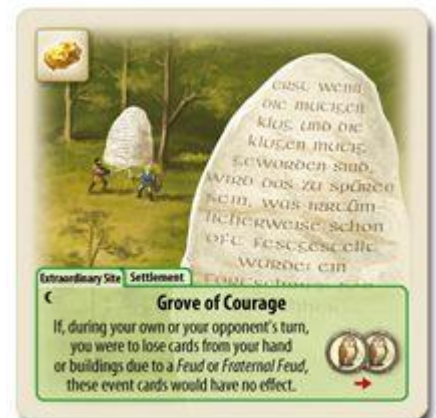
*(Erich Kästner)*

In a humane future, people should have the courage to put an end to antiquated customs and take away the breeding grounds for Feuds and Fraternal Feuds.

Those are powerful quotes. They are accompanied by female and male sages, the Manifesto of Humane Conduct, and the Justice Grove, Peace Grove, or Freedom Grove. It almost sounds like too much of a good thing. Is it possible that – long before the French Revolution – our fictitious Catan was the first nation to implement the humanistic ideas of the 15th and 16th century, where human dignity occupied center stage? Was tolerance – an indispensable requirement for a peaceful coexistence of the religions – indeed taught successfully to the people of Catan?

Isn't that a utopia, a beautiful vision, a fiction, a pipe dream? Well, sure. But a game isn't everyday life. It isn't reality.

If you submerge yourself into a game world, you are allowed to dream in it – a dream of an Age of Enlightenment, for example, where stubborn fanatics no longer bash each others' heads in because of their religious or political beliefs and where human dignity is respected.



## Chapter 3

The value of the groves is mainly based on their valuable functions, which can be used time and again. Wisdom not only flows into the groves – the groves also emit some of it when the **Power of the Groves** action card is played.

For example, if you have placed 3 groves in your principality, you receive 3 wisdom points that you may distribute among your sages. If nothing else, the chance to receive these points justifies placing groves on valuable building sites for settlements/cities.

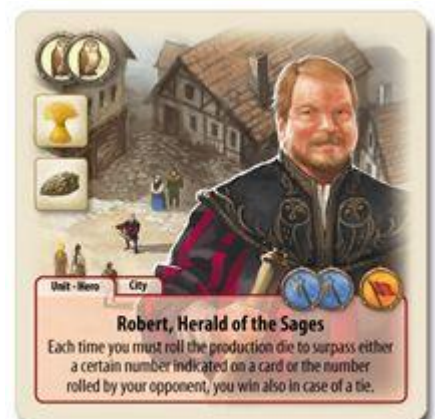
There is only one of each grove. Therefore, from time to time your beloved opponent will snatch a grove you'd have liked to place in your own principality right from under your nose.

If this happens, **Cole, Paladin of the Sages** comes in handy. He is the sages' executive entity that makes sure both principalities are in balance, so to speak. If you have placed Cole in your principality, henceforth you may also use your opponent's groves. In addition, Cole is worth 1 victory point and provides 3 strength points.

**Robert, Herald of the Sages** is the sages' spokesperson. He likes to tip the scales when the dice are rolled and a tie occurs. Like Cole, Robert is a city expansion; he is worth 1 victory point and provides 2 strength points.

In an Age of Enlightenment, a **Courthouse** is a must. Before this card was introduced, the defeated trading partner was at his opponent's mercy when the "Trade" event occurred, because he had to pay 1 resource of the opponent's choice. Now things can be put right: if the defeated player has built the Courthouse he can decide which resource to pay.

Sometimes even sages have to attend an advanced training course. The **Academy of Sages** is the most suitable place for this. If you have built the Academy,



you may increase one of your sages' level of wisdom by one point.

You could immediately use this wisdom point to play the “**Great Foresight**” action card. It is a powerful card, because it allows you to completely remove an unwelcome event from the event card stack for the rest of the game.

## Chapter 4

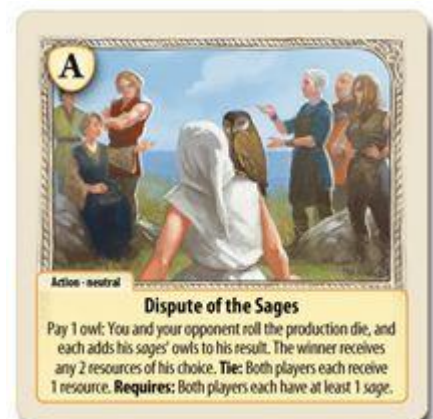
So far, the wisdom points were used to manipulate events or obtain better access to the draw stacks. I'm sure some of my readers will ask themselves whether wisdom points can be used directly for obtaining resources.

This is not really the intention behind the wisdom points, but there are actually some ways to stimulate resource production with the aid of wisdom.

When the event “**Council of the Sages**” occurs, so much wisdom comes together that either additional wisdom arises or some resources are generated in the process.

Being a sage doesn't mean that you avoid dissension. Even in an Age of Enlightenment problems that require a solution will surely exist. And when contrasting opinions clash and they are discussed matter-of-factly, a solution won't be long in coming. This is also the case with the **Dispute of the Sages**. Either the sage who has more solid arguments is awarded 2 resources to support his interests or each party receives any 1 resource of their choice.

If you have worked on your Manifesto of Humane Conduct, that is, if you have rotated the Manifesto to the next higher position(s), the **Age of Enlightenment** action card allows you to benefit from the population's contentment: for each victory point on the Manifesto, you receive any 1 resource of your choice.





For 3 wisdom points the **Prudent Compensation** action card allows you to immediately upgrade a settlement to a city – as if by magic.

The entire set contains only one single action attack card. Its name is **Wise Safeguard**, and its purpose is to make it more difficult for the opponent to play action attack cards. Since there is no other action attack card in the Theme Game, it makes more sense to use the card for upgrading the Manifesto. Of course, in the Duel this is different. When playing with 3 sets, there are enough action attack cards that would justify using the Wise Safeguard card.

Although Catan experienced an Age of Enlightenment, a couple of catastrophes still occurred. For example, the beginning of the Little Ice Age towards the end of the Middle Ages caused crop failures also on Catan, due to which a **Famine** arose. If you don't have grain to fight the Famine, you lose 2 resources because of reduced productivity. It is certainly better to take precautions by building a **Granary**. It not only ensures the end of

Famines, it also allows you to force the trade of 1 grain per turn on your opponent, demanding any 1 resource of your choice from him in exchange.

The set “The Era of Sages” is suitable for the Duel as well as for the Tournament Game.

The reform of the old Catan Card Game is thus completed. From the phoenix's ashes – the Catan Card Game – a new phoenix has risen – The Rivals for Catan. We, the members of the editorial team, believe that the new phoenix is more beautiful and colorful than the old one, especially with regard to the Theme Game and the Duel, and that – with The Rivals for Catan – the goals for the reform as set by me in part 3 were reached. However, you, dear players, will ultimately be the ones to decide that.



*End of blog post 14 about the reform of the Card Game. In four weeks (presumably calendar week 37), we'll publish a blog post about the making of the "Rivals for Catan" Card Game.*

*Klaus Teuber*

