

Rivals for CATAN

Part 9 - Age of Darkness - “The Era of Intrigue” Theme Set

September 28, 2010

Part 9 of my series of blog posts about The Rivals for Catan had been announced for the beginning of 2011. Unfortunately, the development of the game expansion took longer than originally planned. In order to sufficiently test the cards of the expansion and harmonize them optimally with each other, the release date – and thus, this blog post – was postponed.

Now, in September of this year, the German edition of the first “The Rivals for Catan” expansion has finally been published, and the English edition is scheduled for the fourth quarter of this year. Its title is “Age of Darkness,” and it contains “The Era of Intrigue,” “The Era of Merchant Princes,” and “The Era of Barbarians” Theme Sets. I first present “The Era of Intrigue” below.

The theme of this set is the controversy between the worshippers of Odin and the Christians. The beginning of this conflict is also portrayed in Rebecca Gablé’s novel “The Settlers of Catan.”

The key events of the set are the two “**Religious Dispute**” cards. If a Religious Dispute occurs, both players lose their hand of cards. **Churches and Temples**



– the cards of the face-up draw stack – minimize losses. Furthermore, a Temple and the cards that require a Temple strengthen your access to your own draw stacks, and a Church gives you the opportunity to lure away opposing heroes and earn additional gold. And if you have built both a Church and a Temple, you may build the Great Thingstead and end the Religious Dispute.

The two heroes **Judith, Guardian of the Church** and

Bran, Defender of the Temple are also very important in this set. In the Basic Game, the Town Hall was placed on the Parish Hall, thereby enhancing its function; in a similar fashion, Judith is placed on a Church. Judith protects the Church from all actions and events, while the functions of the Church as such remain in effect. The victory point of the Church is also depicted on the “Judith” card (one victory point for Judith and one for the Church). The same applies to Bran and the Temple.

But let's give Judith and Bran a chance to chat a little with each other and, in the process, introduce us to the remaining cards of the set.

Judith: A beautiful island, this Catan. But only my Church makes the land perfect.

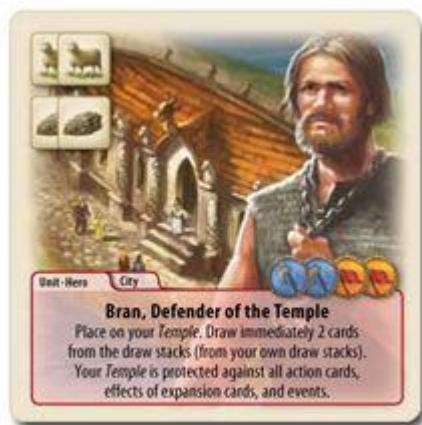
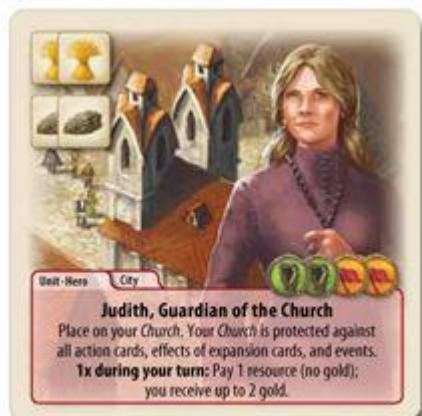
Bran: Soon, churches will spring up like mushrooms here. I should put a stop to this with Odin's Temple.

Judith: Don't you dare, you godless man!

Bran: Godless? Who? I? I do believe in gods! Odin, Loki, Freyja, Thor ...

Judith: But there is only one God: mine! And mind you, he created Heaven, Earth, and Man.

Bran: Oh, were you there? I wasn't, actually. Still, I know that it was Odin who created Ask and Embla, the first two human beings.



Judith: *Ridiculous! For one, the first humans were called Adam and Eve, and then, how is a god of war supposed to be able to create life? Your god sends people to their deaths, mine died for mankind.*

Bran: *In Valhalla, Odin drinks with all the warriors who die in combat with his name on their lips. Can a warrior expect anything better than such a paradise? If you come a little closer, sweet Judith, I'll gladly tell you more about Odin and Valhalla.*

Judith: *Before courting me, you should get a bath or, even better, be baptized and become converted. Maybe my Bishop can see to that.*

Bran: *You call it converting if your Bishop wants to snatch my gold? I prefer to send him to the **Sacrificial Site**; there he can make himself useful on the sacrificial stone.*

Judith: *You'll definitely not send him there, you ill-bred oaf!*

Bran: *Very well then, as a confidence-building measure I'll let your Bishop go. I'll ask the **Priestess of the Norns** for help instead.*

Judith: *What kind of pagan nonsense is that again?*

Bran: *The Norns are wise women who live by the roots of the World Ash, next to a well, and determine our fate. They just gave **Odin's Priest** into my hand. I'm going to introduce him to you. But beware! You might feel a bit rattled afterwards.*

Judith: *Heavens, such ill-smelling words. I think I'm going to faint. What was it again I wanted to do?*

Bran: *Convert me?*

Judith: *Right, I wanted to sic my **Missionary** on you. But where is he? Heavens, could it be that this horrible priest put my servant of God to flight?*

Bran: *Why not? Sometimes, Odin moves in mysterious ways too.*



A little later ...

Judith: *Ah, there he is again, our good Missionary. If he succeeds in leading one of your heroes to the Lord's pasture, he can make up for his blunder.*

Bran: *Vegetarian food for Odin's warriors? What a joke! But before my heroes might actually fall for the tricks of such a pretty church guardian, I let Godfrey intrigue a little.*

Judith: *Don't push my patience to the limits!*

Bran: *I can't help it, the Missionary is now on my side.*

Judith: *Bah, without a Church he won't be useful for you.*

Bran: *Then I build one.*

Judith: *And what does your god say about competition?*

Bran: *Odin isn't vain, he is more of a pragmatist, just like me. As long as he is the stronger one, he doesn't care much about other gods. Besides, this stupid Religious Disputeloses its bite if the few Christians in my principality also have a place where they can pray.*

Judith: *You think you're pretty clever, right?*

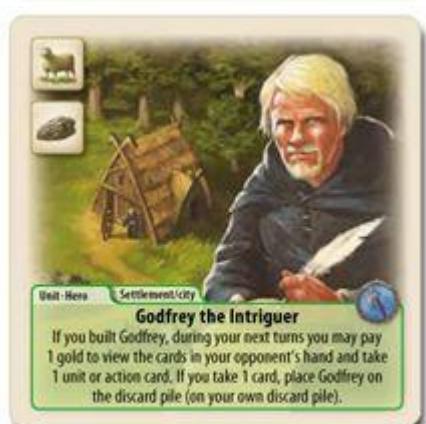
Bran: *I am clever, because your former Missionary now does his missionary work in your principality and gives me Reiner the Miller.*

Judith: *I gladly do without that disloyal soul. Fortunately, the Master of the Brotherhood is on my side and compensates me for my loss with gold.*

Bran: *Does he help you because he believes in your God?*

Judith: *No.*

Bran: *So he believes in Odin?*



Judith: No.

Bran: Does he believe in anything at all?

Judith: I have no idea. He always drivels about tolerance and Enlightenment.

Bran: Your masterly brother seems not to be of this world.

Judith: Maybe, but I don't care. I build a **Brewery** for my loyal heroes now and invite them to the Lord's Supper with bread and beer.

Bran: Shouldn't it be wine?

Judith: No, beer. Some ignorant monks mistranslated that.

Bran: I see. If you need a clear, delicious elixir for your beer, I could supply you with some barrels of water from **Odin's Fountain**.

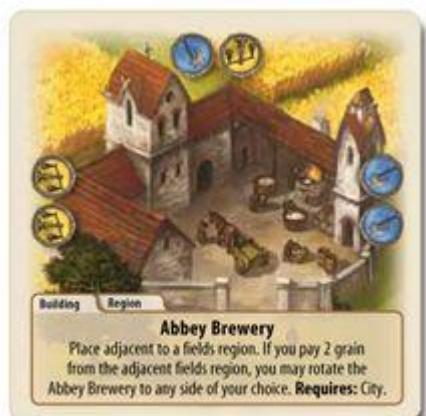
Judith: For all I care, you can give your pagan water to your hogs. I'll definitely not add it to my beer.

Bran: Too bad, I thought that in return you'd tell me who was the exceptionally gifted stone sculptor who carved the cross in the rock of your **Pilgrimage Site**. I could almost get jealous when I see you selling trinkets for gold in your stands. Was it perhaps **Michael the Master Builder**?

Judith: No, there is no stone sculptor, and the Master Builder only helped me build my magnificent Church. It was my God himself who burnt the cross into the rock, by means of a huge thunderbolt. It's a miracle your Odin would hardly be capable of.

Bran: Only your stupid subjects believe that. You know what? I'll give you the **Red Light Tavern**! And I throw in some nice ladies, for free. It won't take them much time to tease your stone sculptor's name out of your heroes.

Judith: If one of my heroes shows up in that disastrous place, he'll get only stale bread in the Lord's Supper.



Speaking of bread, it is running short due to this disloyal Miller. And it seems that you can make extensive use of him. I think I have to build a see for my Bishop.

Bran: *What does your Bishop's See have to do with the Miller?*

Judith: *Well, in return for his see the Bishop promised me to threaten the Miller with excommunication if he doesn't retreat to the desert as a hermit. There he can grind rock into sand, as a penance for his disloyalty. If I can't have the Miller, you shall not have him either. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth ...*

Bran: *By the way, Odin also lost an eye. I guess he still has his teeth though. They actually have something in common, our gods. And therefore we also have something in common, right?*

Judith: *Nonsense, my God hasn't lost an eye. That stupid saying just slipped out. My God wants reconciliation. If our enemy smites us on our right cheek, we are supposed to turn him the left cheek also.*

Bran: *Interesting. So let's do something for our reconciliation. First, we drink to Good Neighbors, or at least to better ones!*

Judith: *If you like. After all, the Bible says that I shall also love my enemies.*

Bran: *And then I build the Great Thingstead for us.*

Judith: *And what's that supposed to be good for?*

Bran: *For resolving disputes amicably. For talking to each other. Besides, behind those rocks are some very romantic spots for people who just fell in love ...*

Judith: *What's that supposed to mean?*

Bran: *That we shouldn't always quarrel. As a good Christian, what would you do if I kiss your right cheek now?*



Judith: *I'd probably have to turn you the left cheek also*

...

A little later...

Judith: *But the Bible doesn't say anything about the mouth!*

Bran: *How do you know? Maybe you remember now ...*

Up to now, it was only possible to expand settlements, cities, and regions. For the first time now, the game expansion includes cards that can also be placed on free roads.



In the “Era of Intrigue” Theme Set, the “Red Lantern Tavern” belongs to this type of cards. Since the card is placed on a road and not on a free building site, we refer to it as a road complement. The function of a “complemented” road remains in effect; it only receives additional functions or properties. Therefore, the illustration of each road complement still depicts a road.

The “Age of Darkness” expansion not only offers new and exciting Theme Games but also adds to the Duel. Together with the new sets of the expansion, we now have a total of six different sets. The many possibilities of combining three sets make for an even more varied Duel that always presents new challenges.

The new cards enable the players, for the first time, to use the Tournament mode in a meaningful way. Therefore, we will also program the Tournament mode for the Catan Online World.

Probably in a few weeks, I will introduce “The Era of Merchant Princes,” the second set of the expansion.

Klaus Teuber

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