



Witan

2+ Player variant



A more deterministic, strategic and non-deck building way to play.

Witan is the Anglo-Saxon word for “wise man” and was also a term used to describe the council of notables who helped to lead early Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the ancient Germanic tribal tradition. In Witan you will find a more cerebral version of Ortus Regni, one that asks you to be that wise man (or woman!) who can out maneuver your opponent, without much aid from the Wheel of Fate.

Key Differences from normal Ortus Regni

- ◆ You will **not** make Earl decks and will instead draw a card, from your oak tray, to end your turn.
- ◆ **Politics** operate very differently. Witan’s new way to employ politics maintains its core functionality, found in normal Ortus Regni, while allowing it to operate in this format. There are also no Political Struggles with Vassals in Witan.
- ◆ You start the game with **2 Witan advisors** (2 cubes) that can each be used, once, for any Political card function you require.
- ◆ **Mercenary** cards now enter play with a free Army card in their Garrison slot.
- ◆ **Vassal Lords** operate more like Prince Lords; if a Vassal Lord is Treachery assassinated that Lord’s Fief remains on the table.

- ◆ You will **select** your own 5 card starting Hand.
- ◆ **Tournament Rules** are used at the start of the game and **Medieval Tactics** rules are used for the Battle deck.

Introduction

Witan is a dramatic departure from normal Ortus Regni. The wood card trays are a core feature of this variant. You will select your cards directly from your tray and you will also select your opening Hand. This game plays much more like a linear and deterministic game, such as Chess. All the cards in your Hand, at any time, have been specifically selected by you. Not only are there no random card draws, from a shuffled Earl deck, but all other aspects of randomness in this game can be manipulated and modified. The Vikings via Emissaries, of course, and through the use of Medieval Tactics - and the normal Church Decides control - the Battle deck itself can be strongly manipulated.

Victory Conditions

The same victory conditions apply as in normal Ortus Regni. To be victorious and the undisputed King, be the last Earl on the table.

There is a special multiplayer condition that can also be used, included here after the main Witan rules.

Variant Rules used in Witan

Tournament Rules

http://ortusregni.com/variant_rules/variant-tournamentrules.html

Medieval Tactics

http://ortusregni.com/variant_rules/variant-medievaltacticslogistics.html

Set-up

Keep your oak Earl card tray next to your Earldom. This is now a key playing piece. Your tray should include all your 90 Earl cards in whatever slot order you desire. Note that periodically changing this order helps to obscure your selections at the table. Discarded cards will be placed in a discard pile next to your tray.

Place your Palace card in your Earldom, as normal.

Place 2 cubes, of your Earl color, in front of your Earldom. These are your Witan. Pick a standard side for them; left is our preferred placement, in front of our oak trays.

Select your 5 card starting Hand from your tray. Any 5 cards that you wish.

Set out 2 free Towers (per Tournament Rules) from your tray.

Select the starting player, as normal, with a Viking bag cube draw. Ensure that all players start with 1 cube in the Viking bag. And begin play.

Witan cubes

In addition to the 90 Earl cards in your tray you have **2 special and powerful advisors** at the start of the contest. Each one of these Witan can be used once, as if they were a Political card:

Treachery card

Intrigue card

- ◆ Allies card
- ◆ Banquet card
- ◆ Banner card (yes, for the King card too, or used in
- ◆ Medieval Tactics)

◆
Once used, a Witan cube is discarded and is out of the game, with one exception.

When a Witan cube is used as a Banner card to try and seize the King card, it is important to place it carefully to avoid confusion. We keep Witan cubes to the left above our Earldoms, and traditionally, place Banners for King to the right of our Earldoms. This distinguishes their uses. Those cubes remain until someone has earned the King card, and are then discarded.

Politics in Witan

There are no Political Struggles. Vassals have no part in politics

- 1) You attack with **multiple** Treachery cards, or **multiple** Intrigue cards.
- 2) The defender must play an **equal** number of Allies to block that attempt.
- 3) **Witan** cubes can be fielded and spent by either the attacker or defender.

Politics works differently in Witan. Treachery and Intrigue **do the same things** as in normal Ortus Regni, when they succeed, but they are employed and blocked differently.

To attempt to Treachery or Intrigue a target there is a new order of action. There are no Political Struggles. Instead you can play out multiple Treachery cards, or multiple Intrigue cards, when declaring the political attack! To block that attempt the targeted Earl must play out an equal number of Allies cards. Witan cubes can be used here.

Note that the effect of a Treachery or Intrigue attack is still “singular” regardless of how many such cards you spent to achieve that attack. In other words, spending 3 Intrigues to steal Properties from a Fief might succeed, but you still only get to steal 2 Properties (i.e. not 6).

For example:

The Blue Earl declares as their Action a Treachery attack on the Red Earl's Prince Lord. The Blue Earl then places down 4 Treachery cards. A strong attack. The Blue Earl only used cards, and did not spend any Witan cubes. The Blue Earl is then done. It is now up to the Red Earl to react.

To counter this attempted Treachery on their Prince Lord, the Red Earl must be able to play 4 Allies. This can be a combination of Allies cards and Witan cubes. In this example, the Red Earl really does not want to lose their Prince Lord but lacks 4 Allies cards in their Hand. Instead they block this attempt by playing 2 Allies cards and spending both of their Witan cubes. A total of 4 Allies, and enough to block the attempt, at the cost of losing their Witan.

Earl card changes in Witan

Banquet card - The Banquet card operates normally, but instead of drawing 2 cards from your Earl deck you are selecting any 2 cards you wish from your tray. As you can imagine, the Banquet card becomes a “bread and butter” card in the world of Witan. This card will allow you to pivot, or build up, your strategies.

Vassal card - When a Vassal Lord is eliminated by a Treachery that Vassal Lord's Fief now **remains** in your Earldom. This is identical to the power that Prince Lords always enjoyed in regards to Treachery assassination.

Mercenary card - When a Mercenary card is placed in your Earldom it **immediately** gets a free single card draw from the Army card deck. This free card - Infantry or Knight - is placed in its Garrison slot.

Bequeathing in Witan

When you Bequeath in Witan you slot all your discards **back** into your card tray.

Yes, you can still Bequeath, using the normal Ortus Regni rules to do so. Instead of placing your Prince and Banner into your discards and reshuffling that into a new Earl deck, you slot all of those cards back into your tray for future selection and use.

Remember that you only have 6 of each available card type until you Bequeath and bring some of those cards back into your tray!

Card drawing etiquette tip

In Witan you will find yourself thinking carefully about which card to draw from your tray, whether that is your end of turn draw, or the two draws that you've earned by playing a Banquet card. This feels a tiny bit like deciding which chess piece to reach for in a formal chess match. And you will often be uncertain of the direction of the match.

We have found that it is helpful to employ a means to avoid potential game sequence pitfalls that can occur when people second guess their choices. In normal Ortus Regni it is quite clear when you have drawn a card from your Earl deck. You cannot put it back, that is an irreversible moment. In Witan an Earl might easily begin to slot a card back into their tray right when another Earl has announced an action on the table.

To avoid any potential confusion, and to ease gameplay, it is recommended that a simple etiquette rule be put into place; once a card has fully emerged from its slot it cannot be placed back down. That is to say, be careful about which card you draw out :)

Gameplay notes:

It will take you some time to get your head around the timing effects at work in this style of Ortus Regni. Several interesting dynamics are at play here. Turns are linked sequentially, in a novel way that will be surprising to players familiar with the normal rules.

Tournament Rules - two turns, two towers - limits an Earl's ability to strongly rush. Even though you can indeed start with 5 Champions in your Hand, if you wish.

You also know that without Bequeathing your opponent(s) have access to only 6 of any card type.

Time is an essential feature here. It can take several turns to build-up the Hand that you want, to accomplish some goal. And Banquets are often a key feature of that process. Keep in mind, when you end your turn, you can and should set yourself up for your next turn's Action. But you want to think several turns ahead, to understand both your strategy and what your opponent is doing.

Using politics wisely is not easy in Witan, as you will usually have to plan such a move several turns in advance. Furthermore, since each Earl has access to whatever resources they want, your target can usually be replaced in short order. You have access to 6 Treacheries and 6 Intrigues, and your 2 Witan cubes as backup, yes, but you have to be wise... to know how many to spend at any one moment to achieve your end. Are 2 Treachery cards enough? Or do you need to spend 4? Also note that because you are often spending more than 1 Treachery card, an attempt to Treachery someone's Hand does not pay off in the same manner as it does in normal Ortus Regni.

Bequeathing can be a wonderful thing especially if you have spent most of your Banquets or Champions or Allies or, etc.

Witan cubes play an interesting role. They are useful in many ways. They are also a balance or pivot point between players. If you have fallen behind your opponent in Witan cubes there are some interesting knock-on effects that they can take advantage of. But spending your Witan might also be exactly what the situation requires and help you on your way to victory.

Medieval Tactics dovetails somewhat nicely with Witan. You have control of what cards are in your Hand, and can plan to have more Banners (including any Witan cubes you still have) than your opponent. So that you can force either a normal Battle or, alternatively, ensure that a good Battle result remains in play.

The Cathedral and King cards are both still quite useful in this deterministic style of play. And you have the ability to try for either resource whenever you wish. The Cathedral mainly for its unchallengeable effect on the Church Decides battle result (which Medieval Tactics cannot alter). And the King card for its permanence.

Keep in mind, in the case of the King card, that since players can draw whatever card they want at the end of their turns... once a contest for King has begun both players can willingly spend nearly all their Banners (and Witan cubes) in a futile effort to achieve that status. Technically, not all their Banners, of course, since the rule states that you need 2 more Banners out than any other Earl. So the very last Banners available to players are superfluous. For example, your 6 Banner cards and 1 Witan cube out for King means that no one can be King; leaving you with 1 Witan cube.

We have not fully explored the game space of this variant, and hope that you have some fun exploring it with us :)



Witan Multiplayer optional victory condition

The abilities that an Earl has in Witan, to control their fate, can lead to stable game states in a multiplayer game if all players are really “on their toes” and don’t make many errors of judgment or take many risks. This does not often occur in two player Witan, because once an Earl develops a lead, and an appropriate strategy, they can often close the deal.

If players are acting wisely, and also perhaps cautiously, it can also take longer for a multiplayer game to resolve in Witan. Meaning that any eliminated players may wait longer for another game to start. This does not always happen, of course, but we have found that putting in place another, and more linear, victory condition allows the game to resolve more surely. But we also wanted this new victory condition to feel right thematically and during gameplay.

Introduction

Winchester was the capital of the great Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Wessex. The kingdom that Alfred the Great hailed from, and from which he took the first generally recognized steps toward the unification of England into a Kingdom.

We have a Variant Mat called Winchester, and also a free PnP PDF online for it, both available from: <http://ortusregni.com/mats/>

In this Winchester option of Witan, controlling the High Council of Wessex seated in Winchester will win you the Kingdom; following the ancient traditions of Anglo-Saxon tribal governance. But, this is not easy to accomplish; you will have to carefully acquire High Council support and it will take time and also ask a good deal of your Earldom’s resources.

Extra Victory Condition, for 3+ player games of Witan

Place 3 High Councilors in Winchester and you have secured the nation’s tribal power center, won the Kingdom of Wessex, and well founded your Royal dynasty.

Rules for High Councilors

- ♦ **High Councilors** will be represented by **cubes**, of your color, in the card slots along the sides of the Winchester mat (or free PDF).
- ♦ **To place** a High Councilor in Winchester you must, as an **Action** on your turn, **discard a Lord and his Fief** (i.e. also his Castle or Palace and any attached Properties) from your Earldom.
- ♦ You **cannot** place High Councilors in Winchester until after the safe “two turns” of Tournament Rules are complete, at the start of the contest. That is, you can only do so starting on turn 3.
- ♦ You **must** still have a Fief of your own to win. You cannot make the very last Lord & Fief in your Earldom your third High Councilor to win the game.
- ♦ High Councilors in Winchester **cannot** be removed. *They look out for themselves, as any important lesser Earl would.*
- ♦ Use the **Winchester** Mat or the free PnP PDF as a nice representation of this scenario.

You have ennobled a great lord and released him from his direct bond to you, setting him up to as an independent and powerful ally lobbying for your interests at the heart of Wessex.

You can make a High Councilor out of **any** Lord and his Fief in your Earldom. This could be a Vassal Lord and Castle, a Prince Lord and Palace, a Monk Lord or a Champion Lord and their Castle. Etc.

Usually you do not want to “send off” a Lord and Fief that has any Properties attached. Discarding your Market Town and Land combination, for your High Councilor, is usually not ideal. But if this

is your third and last High Councilor then that is irrelevant, you have won the Kingdom. Also, keep in mind that the cards of a new High Councilor go into your discards, and you may get them back into play. Finally, sending off a High Councilor with a larger Fief may also deny another powerful Earl the chance to acquire those Properties from you in combat or politics.

Gameplay notes:

Making a High Councilor is not an easy task. Each one involves 3 turns of investment. Two to place a Castle and a Lord, for example, and a third to release him and set him up in Winchester. This is not a quick path to victory.

However, in the hurly burly of a multiplayer game of Witan there are opportunities to release the occasional Fief.

Having one High Councilor is not terribly threatening to other Earls, and may not draw much interest. But once you cross the next threshold and place a second High Councilor the landscape changes. So do not take that step lightly, and be prepared for the result. Because suddenly you are a single Action away from winning the Kingdom. If at that stage you have extra Fiefs and Lords in your Earldom... it may not be possible for the other Earls to remove them all in a single round, meaning that you may have secured a certain victory. And also importantly, High Councilors are permanent, so that you will always be one Action away from victory, after you have placed a second one in Winchester. The other Earls must confront that reality. Your strength in the heart of Wessex means that they must deal with you one way or the other... and soon.

