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GAMESPOT GAMEGUIDE:

AGE OF EMPIRES II: THE AGE OF KINGS

BY ELLIOTT CHIN

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INTRODUCTION 06

CHAPTER ONE: CIVILIZATION OVERVIEW 07

BRITONS 07
BYZANTINES 11
CELTS 14
CHINESE 17
FRANKS 21
GOTHS 24
JAPANESE 27
MONGOLS 31
PERSIANS 34
SARACENS 38
TEUTONS 40
TURKS 43
VIKINGS 47

CHAPTER TWO: UNIT OVERVIEW 50

INFANTRY 51
ARCHERS 52
CAVALRY 55
SIEGE WEAPONS 57
UNIQUE UNITS 61
MILITARY UNITS BY AGE 71

CHAPTER THREE:
GENERAL STRATEGIES

GENERAL STRATEGIES....72
THE FIRST AGE, AND HOW TO GET STARTED....73
OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES....74
HOW MANY VILLAGERS SHOULD YOU HAVE?....76
WHAT BUILDING ORDER SHOULD YOU HAVE?....77
HOW AND WHEN TO RUSH?....78
UPGRADES AND TECHNOLOGY....80
DEFENSIVE PLAY....81
BUILDING AND HOLDING A WONDER....83
DESTROYING A WONDER....85
WINNING WITH RELICS....86

CHAPTER FOUR:
COMBAT STRATEGIES

COMBAT STRATEGIES....88
RECONNAISSANCE....88
CONTROLS....88
FORMATIONS....89
COMBINED ARMS....89
COUNTERS....90
DESTROYING TOWNS....90
UPGRADES....91
TIPS AND TACTICS....91

CHAPTER FIVE:

CAMPAIGN WALK-THROUGHS.....93

JOAN OF ARC 1.....93
JOAN OF ARC 2.....94
JOAN OF ARC 3.....96
JOAN OF ARC 4.....97
JOAN OF ARC 5.....98
JOAN OF ARC 6.....102
SALADIN 1.....103
SALADIN 2.....104
SALADIN 3.....106
SALADIN 4.....109
SALADIN 5.....110
SALADIN 6.....114
GENGHIS KHAN 1.....114
GENGHIS KHAN 2.....117
GENGHIS KHAN 3.....118
GENGHIS KHAN 4.....122
GENGHIS KHAN 5.....124
BARBAROSSA 1.....125
BARBAROSSA 2.....128
BARBAROSSA 3.....129
BARBAROSSA 4.....131
BARBAROSSA 5.....133
BARBAROSSA 6.....135

FEATURES.....137

05

introduction

Age of Empires is a franchise that has already become a huge success with many gamers. Age of Empires II: Age of Kings fixes lots of problems that the first Age of Empires had and is in every way a better game. Perhaps most importantly, Age of Kings is a deeper, more challenging game. The strategic and tactical possibilities in Age II are much greater than in the original game, and the strategies and options open to you are more numerous. They can also be overwhelming.

In our Age of Empires II guide, we'll give you the strategies you need to maximize your abilities and really understand how to play and master the game. In addition, we'll provide complete walk-throughs of the campaigns, which are now more focused, more interesting, and more challenging.

in this guide, you'll find:

- Detailed campaign walk-throughs
- Comprehensive civilization overviews, discussing each civilization's bonuses, strengths, weaknesses, and special tactics
- Complete unit overviews
- Tried-and-true general strategies, including how to get your town started just right
- Complete combat strategies, such as which combined-arms strategy works best and how to best counter the nastier weapons in the game like bombard cannons and war elephants.

Chapter One: Civilization Overview

Age of Kings has 13 civilizations. Not only is that one more than the original game had, but of those 13, only three are holdovers from the first game in the series. That means ten civilizations are new. Rather than comparing them to the old civilizations, we'll discuss each on its own merits.

The civilizations tend toward offensive capabilities, with only a handful that could rightfully be categorized as defensive civilizations. Then, there are a handful of civilizations that are adept at any strategy and others whose cultural bonuses and limited tech trees steer them toward an obvious, one-dimensional strategy. There is indeed a civilization for every player. Some emphasize infantry, others emphasize naval dominance, while others are masters of gunpowder warfare.

Each civilization has unique bonuses that fit in well with its history, and each civilization has particular strengths and weaknesses you should be mindful of before deciding to play it. In addition to enumerating these bonuses, strengths, and weaknesses, we will also discuss any particular strategies a given civilization is good at as well as what type of player might find this civilization most enjoyable to play.

Britons

The Britons are a decent offensive civilization, with a modest early-game production bonus. They don't lack many crucial units, so they can employ most military tactics, but they are not the best civilization when it comes to siege warfare or naval warfare. Their strength lies in

excellent archers. The Britons are an offensive civilization and should not be played as a defensive civilization. Their bonuses let them get a modest jump in age advancement, but they don't get their attack bonuses until the third age. Beginning players might have a hard time with the Britons, mostly because they aren't as flexible as some other civilizations.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- Town centers are 50 percent off, costing 138 wood instead of 275 wood.
- Shepherds work 25 percent faster.
- Foot archers (archer, crossbowman, arbalest, longbowman, elite longbowman) have +1 range in the Castle Age and another +1 range in the Imperial Age.

TEAM BONUS

- Archery ranges work 20 percent faster.

STRENGTHS

The Briton economic advantage is that it can gather food a little faster than other civilizations. Faster food gathering means getting out a few villagers a little faster. Thus, the Britons can advance to the Dark Ages a little faster. However, because sheep get fewer and far between in the Feudal Age and beyond, you will lose that advantage in the late Feudal Age and beyond. Use this food advantage to get more villagers out and advance to the Feudal Age quickly.

The Britons military strength lies in their long-range foot archers. However, this advantage does not exist in the Dark or Feudal Ages, coming to the fore only in the final two ages. In the Castle Age, the Britons outrange all other foot archers by one. In the Imperial Age, that discrepancy increases to two. The fully upgraded longbowman, for instance, has a range of 11, which is longer than any other ground unit except for the trebuchet and bombard cannon. A fully upgraded arbalest has a range of 10, outranging scorpion and mangonel units.

In team games, their bonus makes the Britons even more powerful in the archery department, as they can produce archers 20 percent faster. In team games, British player should focus solely on cranking out foot archers and longbowmen. You can field a horde of archers

and decimate the enemy, provided your ally fields cavalry to defend against siege weapons and skirmishers and pikemen to guard against enemy cavalry.

WEAKNESSES

The Britons do not get the following units: camel, heavy camel, paladin, and all gunpowder units. The lack of paladins isn't a real blow, but it does mean the Britons lack the most powerful regular unit in the game. The lack of any gunpowder units means they have no long-range and mobile siege capability, which is what the cannon galleon and bombard cannon provide. The Britons also lack the siege onager, siege ram, and heavy scorpion, which means they themselves have precious little antipersonnel siege weapons and are average at sieges.

The lack of the bombard tower means their defenses aren't quite as strong as, say, the Byzantines or Turks. The other technologies the Britons lack are redemption, atonement, treadmill crane, stone shaft mining, and crop rotation. The lack of redemption and atonement hampers the British monk's offensive capabilities, as they can't convert buildings or enemy monks. The other missing technologies mean the Britons don't mine stone as fast and also don't build buildings quite as fast as those who do get those technologies.

The British player should be careful of the Teuton player when mounting any early attack because the British Castle Age foot archers do not outrange the Teuton town center.

MISSING UNITS

The Britons do not have the following units: hand cannoneer, camel, heavy camel, cannon galleon, elite cannon galleon, heavy scorpion, siege onager, siege ram, bombard cannon, and bombard tower.

MISSING TECHNOLOGY

The Britons do now have the following technologies: atonement, redemption, treadmill crane, stone shaft mining, and crop rotation.

STRATEGIES

The Britons should use sheep as their primary food resource in the Dark Ages because of their bonus. All players start with about four sheep near their town, but you should send your scout cavalry to find more sheep beyond your immediate starting area. You probably don't need to build a mill as early as other players, provided you do find additional sheep. However, the Britons require lots of wood because they do build lots of archers, so you want to start stockpiling lots of it. Employ the same starting strategies as any other player, but remember that you will need more wood than normal.

In the Feudal Age, if you find sheep, you should continue gathering food from them, supplementing them with farms. Gradually, you'll move away from sheep to farms. By the Castle Age, you will be gathering all your food from farms. But if you do find sheep, by all means, use them.

Build two or three archery ranges as early as possible and start building archers, so you have a horde by the Castle Age. The Castle Age is when you want to spring your attack on others.

However, don't get too caught up in your foot archers because knights, skirmishers, and siege weapons can take out your archers quickly if you don't have adequate backup. The key to a successful British attack force is having pikemen to guard your archers from quick knights and knights of your own to attack mangonels, which can decimate your foot archers in seconds.

When you do attack in the Castle Age, you should go to all the resource areas of your opponent's camp and pick off his villagers. Your nemesis is antipersonnel siege weaponry, which requires lots of wood and gold, so pick off your enemy's wood and gold production. Archers are perfect for that; you can even shoot down all his farmers because, even though the farms are usually right next to his town center, your range lets you fire at the farmers without being attacked in turn by the town center's arrows. Keep your archers close by, and you could force your enemy to keep his villagers garrisoned, making him lose precious time and resources.

However, archers by themselves will not destroy a town, so remember that at best, your archers are for killing units and villagers. In addition, using archers to the same effect as the computer player requires micromanagement. Refer to the section on foot archers for more information, but suffice to say that, unlike infantry, you can't just target something with your archers and forget about them.

The less-expensive town centers means that if you do find a resource node far from your starting town, you can build a town center rather than a camp for only a few dozen more wood. This gives you the ability to build more villagers as needed at your new node, to garrison villagers if your resource camp gets attacked, and to act as a gathering point for all resources in the area. So, consider building a town center between gold and wood, rather than a mining camp near the gold and a lumber camp near the wood if both are in relatively close proximity to each other.

BYZANTINES

The Byzantines are the most versatile of all civilizations, with access to all ground units and warships. They are capable of acquiring the most technologies of any Age II civilization. They can employ any strategy, whether it is heavy sieges, quick cavalry attacks, or archery harassment tactics. Not only that, but they also can counter other units easily and are a good defensive civilization, due to their access to all defense technologies and towers and their greater building hit points. While the Byzantines have no true weaknesses, they also don't excel at any particular units, like the Britons or Goths. The Byzantines would make a good first civilization for beginners because you could pretty much take any strategy available, although the array of choices might paralyze someone new to the genre.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- All buildings have 10 percent more hit points in the Dark Ages, 20 percent more in the Feudal Age, 30 percent more in the Castle Age, and 40 percent more in the Imperial Age.
- Camels, skirmishers, and pikemen cost 25 percent less.
- Fire ships and fast fire ships attack 20 percent faster.
- Advancement to the Imperial Age is 33 percent less, costing 667 food and 536 instead of 1,000 food and 800 gold.

TEAM BONUS

- Monks heal three times faster.

STRENGTHS

The Byzantines have the most versatile arsenal in Age II. They can create every archery range unit, including heavy cavalry archers and hand cannoneers. They can create every infantry unit, and they get every cavalry unit, including paladins and heavy camels. While they can field the most comprehensive army in the game, they also can crank out counter units cheaper than anyone else because their skirmishers, camels, and pikemen all cost less. While they can't produce them faster on an as-needed basis, this bonus does let the Byzantine player create less-expensive counter forces if he has time to prepare.

One great strength the Byzantines have is their cataphract, which is an infantry killer. This unit has a huge bonus against enemy infantry, so all but the sturdiest infantry, like Teutonic knights and samurai, go down easily against this unit. The Byzantines are the only civilization with a counter unit to infantry.

Byzantines get all warships, including cannon galleons, fast fire ships, and heavy demolition ships. They also get every naval technology, so the Byzantines are among the best civilizations when it comes to sea warfare.

The Byzantines food and resource production is good, as they get all upgrades pertaining to resource collection and all trade technologies at the marketplace. They also get all monk upgrades, making their monks powerful offensive weapons. In team games, the monks can play the role of healer, as they heal much faster than normal.

Because of their building bonuses, the Byzantines are a good defensive civilization. Their walls and buildings last longer, giving you more time to rally your forces. Their towers last longer, letting them fend off enemy attacks longer. They also get every tower, including bombard towers. Couple these defenses with counter units and effective cavalry, and you have a civilization that can fend off attacks with aplomb.

WEAKNESSES

The Byzantines are versatile, but they don't excel in any one area, such as stronger infantry or faster archers. One key ingredient missing from their military dominance is that they lack the blast furnace technology for their infantry and cavalry, so these units aren't quite as strong as those of other civilizations. Because of their existing bonuses, the Byzantines do not get masonry or architecture, which give bonus hit points to buildings. Neither do the Byzantines get heavy scorpions or siege onagers, which are great antipersonnel weapons. This leaves them more vulnerable to British archers and Chinese chukonu. Of course, this vulnerability can always be lessened by using lots of light cavalry. The other technology the Byzantines lack are sappers, heated shot, siege engineers, and treadmill cranes. The lack of sappers and siege engineers dampens the Byzantine's ability to mount sieges, while the missing treadmill cranes mean the Byzantines can't build buildings quite as quickly as those who do research this technology.

MISSING UNITS

The Byzantines are missing the following units: siege onager and heavy scorpion.

MISSING TECHNOLOGIES

The Byzantines are missing the following technologies: sappers, blast furnace, heated shot, masonry, treadmill crane, siege engineers, and architecture.

STRATEGIES

The Byzantines can do anything. In the early game, they do not have to fear the rush as much as other civilizations because of their building bonuses and less-expensive counter-unit costs. The Byzantine player can just build walls and towers, adopting a defensive stance until he decides what strategy he wants to take. When that happens, the Byzantine player can go for a full combined-arms approach, with infantry, archer support, and cavalry quick-response forces.

Something else the Byzantine player can do with great success is win with a wonder. Byzantine defenses are stronger by virtue of them having more hit points, and the Byzantine wonder also has more hit points. With less-expensive counter units and cataphracts, which

can lay waste to infantry (along with siege weapons, infantry are the units that are best suited to destroying buildings), the Byzantines player can effectively defend against all comers once he starts building a wonder.

Another strategy the Byzantines can employ is the monk strategy. While they don't have any monk bonuses, their access to all monk technologies makes their monks deadly, especially against slow units. The Byzantine monks have maximum conversion range and conversion regeneration speed. The only worry is enemy cavalry archers and light cavalry, but with their less-expensive counter units, the Byzantines have that covered.

On the high seas, the Byzantines fire ship bonus and their comprehensive ship and technology roster means they can basically dominate the oceans. Just employ lots of fire ships to destroy enemy galleons and cannon galleons to bombard enemy buildings on shore, which will be well protected by those fire ships.

Celts

The Celts make up a decent offensive civilization, with both strong siege weaponry and a good production bonus. Surprisingly, they have good cavalry, good warships, good defenses, and a nice array of technology. While not as flexible and advanced as the Byzantines, the Celts aren't as one-dimensional or rigid as the Goths. Beginners would not find the Celts as easy to play as some other civilizations because their bonuses aren't as readily accessible.

Cultural Bonuses

- Lumberjacks work 15 percent faster.
- Sheep aren't converted to the enemy side as long as one Celtic unit can see the sheep.
- All infantry move 15 percent faster.
- All siege weapons fire 20 percent faster.

Team Bonus

- Siege workshops work 20 percent faster.

STRENGTHS

The Celts get all infantry and all cavalry except for camels. Thus, they possess strong hand-to-hand troops. Their infantry can move 15 percent faster, which helps to close the distance with siege weapons, although savvy archers and quick cavalry archers can still use hit-and-run tactics against the Celts. Surprisingly, with the exception of the fire ships, the Celts have all warships and all naval technologies.

Their strength lies in their siege weaponry. Not only do the Celts get all siege weapons except for the bombard cannon, but they all attack 20 percent faster. That makes all the difference when mounting a desperate siege attempt in the very early stages of the Castle Age. You can destroy a town center or tower more quickly than other civilizations can and then rush in with your faster infantry and full complement of cavalry units.

In team games, the Celts are driven even more in the direction of using siege weapons because they can produce them 20 percent faster than other civilizations can. In team games, you want to provide the siege weaponry and infantry and let others provide archer support.

The Celts also have a nice bonus to wood production that really helps out at all stages in the game. In the Dark Ages, this wood bonus lets you devote less people to wood cutting and more to food gathering. Or, it lets you stockpile more wood and thus build more barracks or save for more buildings later. In later ages, it lets you build farms and buildings more quickly and, more importantly, lets you field more siege weapons, which require lots of wood. This bonus, plus the siege weapon bonus, drives the Celts to take the offensive with their siege technology. And they are good at it.

WEAKNESSES

The Celts are weak in ranged fire support, since they cannot build hand cannoneers or arbalests. They also do not get the final armor or attack upgrade for archers. Because their infantry is already fast, the Celts do not get squires, which makes infantry move faster.

The Celts do not get any gunpowder units except for the cannon galleon. Other troops the Celts miss are the camels and fire ships.

Celtic monks are not very strong, as they lack redemption (convert buildings and siege weapons), atonement (convert enemy monks), illumination (conversion energy regeneration), or block printing (extra conversion range).

The Celts suffer slightly in building strength by lacking the architecture technology and in farming and wood gathering by lacking crop rotation and two-man saw, respectively. But neither loss is at all crippling.

The woad raider, which is the Celts' unique unit, is not a particularly great unit. It moves quickly, but aside from that, it is simply a good basic infantry unit. Celtic players are cautioned to not make more of the Celtic infantry bonus than is there. They move quickly, but fight no better than any other infantry, so don't get carried away. Their increased speed also does not make them as quick as cavalry and does not make them too much faster than archers, so they can't run archers down with impunity. They just catch up to slower units a little better than other infantry.

Because of this and the lack of final upgrades, in open field combat, the Celts are in no better position than a standard civilization and lack any bonuses like the Japanese or Goths to decide head-to-head battles in their favor. The Celts are an average civilization with some modest bonuses.

Missing Units

The Celts are missing the following units: arbalest, hand cannoneer, camel, heavy camel, elite cannon galleon, bombard tower, and bombard cannon.

Missing Technologies

The Celts are missing the following technologies: squires, redemption, atonement, block printing, illumination, ring archer armor, bracer, plate barding armor, architecture, two-man saw, and crop rotation.

STRATEGIES

The Celts, despite their wood bonus, cannot build much more than other starting players, unless the Celtic player sacrifices farmers for wood cutters. Instead, just build yourself up normally, saving the extra wood for more barracks. You can have your scout cavalry explore the map and steal sheep from other players, since, as long as your scout can see the sheep, they are still in your control. This little tactic takes a little micromanagement, but deprives your opponents of the game's fastest food resource.

In the Feudal Age, you can employ your infantry as quick scouts or as quick attackers against enemy villagers. The increased speed lets you run down villager with ease, although it won't make you any better against the town center should you foolishly rush into the heart of the enemy camp.

In the Feudal Age, you should be stockpiling lots of wood because when you jump to the Castle Age, you should not hesitate to launch an early attack with siege weapons. You can cover the siege weapons with your infantry, which can run down enemy mangonels.

The Celtic player is not designed well to pull off a wonder victory. Instead, he should opt for all-out conquest. It is a good idea to crank out infantry from the beginning and then, as soon as you get to the Castle Age, converge on an enemy with your battering rams and mangonels to take out enemy towns. Although you lack higher-end archers, your onagers and siege onagers can provide ample anti-archer support, while your fast infantry and cavalry can likewise offer great protection.

chinese

The Chinese are like the Byzantines in that they are a versatile civilization with many choices. However, they aren't quite as good as the Byzantines because they lack key gunpowder, cavalry, and siege units. The Chinese thus are best suited to a traditional infantry with archer support attack, but they have a strong economic bonus that lets them acquire technologies quickly and less expensively than other civilizations. They can build up quickly and can threaten other civilizations earlier. However, the Chinese player should be aggressive, lest

his bonuses go to waste. Like the Byzantines, the Chinese are a good all-around civilization for beginners. The technology bonus gives the Chinese player a little more leeway in his spending. However, it probably takes a veteran player to parlay that bonus to a more substantial advantage in multiplayer games.

Cultural Bonuses

- Start with three extra villagers, but 50 food instead of 200.
- Town center supports 10 population.
- Technologies cost 10 percent less in Feudal Age, 15 percent less in Castle Age, and 20 percent less in Imperial Age.
- Demolition ships and heavy demolition ships have 50 percent more hit points.

Team Bonus

- Farms have +45 food.

Strengths

The best thing about the Chinese is that they get an immediate starting bonus, with more villagers than anyone else. That means from the get-go, you can have more people building and gathering. This bonus lessens once you're out of the Dark Ages, but you can use it to maintain your production lead. In addition, the town center bonus lets you save a little wood on a house in the early game.

The technology bonus is a huge benefit throughout the game and gets better with age. Although the discount on technologies in the Feudal Ages is just ten percent, if you start adding up the amount you save from such technologies as man-at-arms (to enable that unit), double-bit axe (for better wood chopping), horse collar (for better farming), wheelbarrow (for faster villagers), scale mail armor (for infantry armor), and forging (for infantry attack), you've saved enough food and wood for an extra man-at-arms and a house. Because technologies get more expensive in later ages, and the discount gets greater, you'll save even more in the Castle and then Imperial Age. With the Chinese, you might not even notice it, but you will be researching more technologies at a slightly faster pace. While the actual time spent researching won't decrease, the lower cost means you can research it

earlier. Keep in mind, though, that this doesn't mean you don't have to spend wisely and without any clear goals in mind. This bonus is exceptionally useful in the Imperial Age, when the money you save on high cost upgrades, like heavy horse archer, champion, and siege ram, can be converted to more units.

The Chinese get the full line of infantry as well as the full line of archers, save for the hand cannoneer. They get most cavalry, including heavy camels, but excluding paladins. And they get all siege except for the siege onager and bombard cannon. This indicates that the Chinese can field a very flexible force, with strong infantry and extremely strong archer support, especially considering their unique unit, the chukonu. The chukonu is a devastating archery unit, but it has poor range. It does more damage and fires at a faster rate than any other foot archer.

On the seas, the Chinese are also strong, although not exceptionally so, lacking the fast fire ship and elite cannon galleon, but gaining all naval technologies as well as stronger demolition ships. The Chinese can thus rely more on demolition ships than other civilizations might because Chinese demolition ships actually have a better chance of meeting their targets before being destroyed by cautious galleons.

WEAKNESSES

The Chinese are by no means a powerhouse. They don't get the hand cannoneer or bombard cannon, nor do they get the siege onager. The lack of the latter two units means the Chinese do not get the game's best long-range and mobile siege weapon or the game's best antipersonnel weapon. The Chinese also lack siege engineers, so their siege weapons aren't quite as powerful as those who do research this technology. This could mean the difference against enemy trebuchets. Neither do the Chinese get hoardings, which would make their castles sturdier, nor crop rotation (better farms) and guilds (less-expensive trade cost at market).

Whereas some civilizations lack technologies that don't matter as much, such as camel, the Chinese definitely miss out on some crucial technologies. The lack of the paladin means the Chinese don't get the most powerful shock troop, and other missing technologies mean the Chinese just aren't as great in siege warfare.

Missing Units

The Chinese are missing the following units: hand cannoneer, paladin, fast fire ship, elite cannon galleon, siege onager, and bombard cannon.

Missing Technologies

The Chinese are missing the following technologies: block printing, hoardings, treadmill crane, siege engineers, guilds, and crop rotation.

Strategies

In the beginning age, the Chinese don't need to build a house as their second action (all other civilizations should create a villager and then build a house). Instead, you have enough food to build one villager, bringing your total to seven, and room enough to support three more. Immediately build a mill near some berry bushes and start foraging. You want to keep up your advantage with villagers. Right away, you could have four villagers on food and three on wood, while other civilizations are struggling to manage four total villagers. Build two or even three more houses as you need them and rocket up to 20 to 25 villagers, which should bring in the resources. Because rushes all but fail in the Dark and even Feudal Age, you can afford to be so reckless in your resource gathering.

All players, but especially Chinese players, want to have clear goals in mind when they research technologies. The key is not to get carried away with your small discounts and research whatever you can afford, but instead to focus your research so you maximize those discounts.

Conversely, don't hold back on research just because the next age promises more discounts. It would be foolish to hold off on researching forging in the Feudal Age just because it will be less expensive in the Castle Age. You need that research immediately, so do it. But something like town watch, for example, can wait, if the alternative is not researching scale mail armor.

On the open water, Chinese should have demolition ships in reserve. Rather than try to go toe-to-toe with your enemy with an equal number of warships, you want to draw him into committing lots of forces to the water and then destroying them all with your demolition

ships. However, such a strategy won't be very effective unless you upgrade to heavy demolition ships and at least commit to a modest navy to engage your enemy's fleet.

The Chinese aren't too bad at a wonder victory, since they get the masonry and architecture technologies and can build all towers and walls. However, they lack the building bonuses of the Byzantines or the outright superiority of Turkish gunpowder defenses. Still, the Chinese can defend a wonder well with their ranged units and static defenses, using cavaliers and heavy camels when necessary to close with siege weapons.

All across the board, the Chinese are simply an average civilization, but their technology bonus can turn them into a formidable opponent if you research your technologies quickly and apply them exactly to the strategy you want. Speed makes the difference in the early game, especially when coupled with intelligent choices and preparation. You want to build up a large villager population as quickly as possible because that is your initial strength. Then, capitalize on your technology discounts to buy quick upgrades and throw troops at your opponent in calculated attacks, before he has a chance to research his own upgrades and advanced troops.

FRANKS

The Franks are a decent civilization that exhibits its greatest strength in the Castle Age. The Franks have modest production bonuses, but are not among the more peaceful and versatile civilizations, such as the Byzantines and Chinese. Instead, the Franks are bred for mounted warfare. They are somewhat of a late bloomer, with bonuses that really kick in the Castle Age. The Franks, by virtue of their later start, might not be the best civilization for newcomers, although the free farm upgrades saves a little micromanagement.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- Farm upgrades free, but you must first build a mill.
- Castles are 25 percent less, costing 487 stone instead of 650 stone.
- Knights, cavaliers, and paladins have 20 percent more hit points.

TEAM BONUS

- Cavalry (scout and light cavalry, knights, cavaliers, paladins) line of sight is +2.

STRENGTHS

The Franks form a strong cavalry civilization and a strong infantry civilization. With its throwing axemen, the Franks make up somewhat for the loss of the arbalest by having a very strong ranged unit. This unit also lets the Franks defend better against siege weapons, as the throwing axeman does regular damage, not piercing damage.

The Franks have a strong navy, with every ship except the elite cannon galleon, and so they can acquit themselves well in naval games.

With their team bonus, the Franks can act as better scouts, but derive little other benefit.

WEAKNESSES

The Franks are slightly deficient in archery units, lacking the arbalest and the final archery upgrades for armor and attack. In addition, their infantry do not get the squires speed upgrade. Of more concern is the fact that the Franks do not get the keep or the bombard tower, seriously hampering their defensive capabilities. Nor do they get heated shot, so their shore defenses are likewise weak. Their monks cannot convert buildings, siege weapons, or enemy monks.

The Franks do not get the two-man saw (better wood cutting), guilds (lower trading fee), sappers (villagers can destroy walls easier), stone shaft mining (better stone mining), and miss out on siege onagers and siege rams.

Franks should beware of those civilizations with strong camels, such as the Saracens and Byzantines. Without strong defenses, the Franks aren't the best wonder civilization.

MISSING UNITS

The Franks are missing the following units: arbalest, camel, heavy camel, elite cannon galleon, siege onager, siege ram, keep, and bombard tower.

Missing Technologies

The Franks are missing the following technologies: squires, shipwright, redemption, atonement, sappers, ring archer armor, bracer, heated shot, stone shaft mining, two-man saw, and guilds.

Strategies

The Franks are about the one civilization with whom you can retry the Yamato cavalry rush technique. Because the Franks get a bonus to hit points for their knights, cavaliers, and paladins, you can churn out an army of them and rush. Cavalry are already a good unit type, and with more hit points, the Frankish cavalry lasts a little longer. But even the few extra hit points don't matter much to a pikemen who deals more than 20 hit point damage per hit. You want to go for villagers and archers with your cavalry, attacking buildings when you get the chance and escaping pikemen.

Because your castles are so inexpensive, Frankish players should build at least two and maybe three. You can build a castle near your enemy's home base, so you can organize your troops here before launching an attack. The castle not only gives you offensive capability to cover your gathering troops, but also lets you crank out those throwing axemen at the frontlines. This unit is a good complement to the Frankish forces because it has a limited range and can take down siege weapons easily. The axemen make good cover for the cavalry.

The Franks should use their cavalry in conjunction with gunpowder units, as the two complement each other. Frankish infantry, which is strong, can also shore up such an offensive.

Compared to other civilizations, the Franks are good, if not spectacular. Although they have stronger cavalry, they aren't overwhelming in strength and still require good strategy and combined arms, as heavy emphasis on the Franks' core competency of cavalry could be unraveled quickly by any opponent who counters with pikemen and camels.

GOTHS

Goths are about as one-dimensional a civilization as you'll ever find. This civilization is all about offense and has a potent and cheap infantry package to pull off repeated rushes. The Goths also have modest siege weapons to support their offensives. However, the Goths are absolutely terrible on the defensive, with little towers and no walls. For beginners who just want to attack, the Goths would seem a logical first choice, but their extremely limited potential will frustrate players who want more options and better defenses.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- All infantry cost 10 percent less in Feudal Age, 15 percent less in Castle Age, and 25 percent less in Imperial Age.
- All infantry get +1 attack bonus versus buildings.
- Villagers get +5 attack bonus versus boars.
- Can exceed the population cap by +10 in Imperial Age

TEAM BONUS

- Barracks work 20 percent faster.

STRENGTHS

The Goths are a powerful infantry civilization. It can crank out infantry at outrageously cheap price and have an additional bonuses versus buildings when employing infantry. This makes the Goths great for destroying buildings, walls, and towers. In addition, the inexpensive cost means you can pump these troops out quickly. Although building time is not decreased, the inexpensive price means you can build them more easily. These two bonuses to cost and building attack apply to the unique huskarl unit as well.

The Goths can also field more troops by virtue of their +10 population limit. In the Imperial Age, if your population cap is set to 75, the Goths can have 85 units. If the cap is at 150, the Goths can have 160 units. With these two abilities, the Goths can swarm the map with inexpensive infantry.

The Goths do get all gunpowder units, so they are adept at siege craft, even though they don't get the siege onager or siege ram. However, their infantry and other siege weapons means they are among the best civilizations for destroying wonders and razing towns. An army composed of huskarls and siege weapons can level castles, fortifications, and wonders with ease.

The huskarl and elite huskarls are extremely strong versus archers, as they can absorb lots of piercing damage before closing with ranged units.

The Goths are good on the open sea, with all ships except for the elite cannon galleon.

In team games, the Goths are pushed even further in the direction of using infantry with barracks that produce infantry 20 percent faster. So, the speed with which you field infantry in nonteam games will only increase. A Goth working with the Britons or Celts can demolish towns and break apart troop formations.

WEAKNESSES

The Goths have atrocious defenses and can barely protect their own towns with towers. They must resort to troops to defend their town. The only towers the Goths can build are outposts and watch towers, and they cannot build any walls. A rush against Goths can be deadly, especially if the Goths have no troops for protection. This civilization is highly vulnerable to attack and should never assume a defensive posture in a game.

Goths don't get the final armor upgrades for cavalry and infantry, so while the huskarls are strong against archers, the rest of the Gothic units aren't as impervious to ranged fire. Don't confuse the huskarl's strength with your regular units' weakness.

Gothic monks cannot convert buildings, siege weapons, or enemy monks, and lack the range upgrade.

Their siege tech is decent, although lacking siege engineer technology and the siege onager and siege ram hurts them when mounting defenses against more advanced civilizations.

The other great weakness with the Goths is that their obvious tendency toward infantry means opponents can guess their strategy. If you play as the Goths, your foes know you will go in with hordes of infantry, which can be picked apart by onagers and archers. Make sure you build lots of huskarls to counter this vulnerability. Or, trick your opponent and use a different unit type, such as cavalry archers or knights, as the bulk of your force.

Missing Units

The Goths are missing the following units: arbalest, camel, heavy camel, paladin, elite cannon galleon, siege onager, siege ram, guard tower, keep, and bombard tower.

Missing Technologies

The Goths are missing the following technologies: dry dock, gate, stone wall, fortified wall, redemption, atonement, block printing, hoardings, plate mail armor, plate barding armor, siege engineers, and gold shaft mining.

Strategies

With their cheap infantry, Goths can attempt early-game rushes in the Feudal Age. And their attack bonus versus buildings means they have a better chance of succeeding in a rush than most other civilizations. In the Dark Ages, you should use your boar bonus to hunt, which should bring you lots of food in spurts. One boar can provide you with an injection of 350 food, which you can turn around and use to create six infantry. Start mining gold early, especially if you want to rush constantly starting in the Feudal Age. It's not a bad idea to start mining gold in the end of the Dark Ages, so when the Feudal Age comes around, you have enough gold to support a dozen or more men-at-arms. Remember to build lots of houses too to accommodate your infantry.

You want to build three or four barracks and just crank out infantry units as early as possible. As a Goth player, you don't want to wait for others to come to you because you obviously have no defenses. However, don't forget that infantry are vulnerable to archers, so build two archery ranges to accompany the four barracks and create skirmishers to offer limited protection.

In the Feudal Age, target resource areas, such as lumber camps and mining camps, to cut off your enemy's resource production and keep your troops hovering around his town destroying farms. Try building multiple barracks near your enemy's town. The close proximity coupled with your infantry's cheap cost means you can keep streaming attacks into his town. When the Castle Age rolls around, you can produce a battering ram in no time and completely destroy the town.

Of course, because other players assume this is your first strategy, you can try to fool them and go with an archer rush or cavalry rush in the Castle Age instead. If the enemy thinks you are building lots of infantry, he will counter with archers in the early game and siege weapons later. In the Feudal Age, rush in with about ten infantry and make an honest attempt at an attack. Then, keep scouting intermittently with your scout cavalry and see if indeed your opponent is building lots of archers. If he is, crank out skirmishers, with maybe a few infantry in reserve. Lure the archers out with your infantry, then unload your skirmishers. Your opponent will see his archers wither away. Having spent lots of wood and gold on them, he will be much weaker and less prepared for the infantry you've held in reserve. This strategy is possible because infantry cost mostly food, while archers cost wood and gold. If you trick your opponent into going for a defensive strategy to counter your infantry, simply build another unit type that can take advantage of your opponent's commitment.

Do not attempt to win by building a wonder, as you have no static defenses whatsoever against massive assaults. However, if you are instead battling to destroy a wonder, create a large force of huskarls (15 to 20) and then a regular siege force or rams, trebuchets, infantry, and cavalry. When you attack from different sides with both forces, the enemy must decide which group to fend off. The group that gets ignored is well equipped to destroy buildings and wonders.

JAPANESE

The Japanese are a very strong civilization with excellent military and production bonuses. They have a good range of technology as well, and so are a good civilization to play for beginners and advanced players.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- Mill, lumber camp, and mining camp are 50 percent less, costing 50 wood instead of 100 wood.
- Fishing ships improvements have double hit points and +2 piercing armor; work faster with each age: 5 percent faster in Dark Ages, 10 percent faster in Feudal Age, 15 percent faster in Castle Age, and 20 percent faster in Imperial Age.
- All infantry attack 10 percent faster in Feudal Age, 15 percent faster in Castle Age, and 25 percent faster in Imperial Age.

TEAM BONUS

- Galleys, war galleys, and galleons have +50 percent sight range.

STRENGTHS

The Japanese have several strengths in infantry, archery, and monks. They are also good in naval warfare and have good production bonuses. The Japanese can build their three main resource-gathering buildings at half price, which is a huge boon in the early game. While others might spend 200 wood on a lumber camp and mining camp, you can build them both for 100 wood and have wood left over for fishing boats, which is another area where Japanese have a bonus you should take advantage of. You should use fishing ships from the outset to gather food, freeing up more villagers to cut wood and gather gold. The Japanese thus have constant food-gathering bonuses and also effectively start with a 100 extra wood by virtue of their less-expensive gathering site buildings.

In addition, the Japanese military is powerful, with a full line of archery range units and all archer upgrades. Even better, the Japanese get all infantry and infantry upgrades and have bonuses to all infantry attacks. In a pitched battle against enemy infantry of equal number and composition, the Japanese win every time, even against Vikings. Thus, the Japanese are very formidable in open battle. In addition, they get all monk upgrades, making them a potent and viable component of any Japanese strategy. A Persian player should watch out against the Japanese, both for their fast-striking pikemen and powerful monks.

Against unique units, the Japanese have an excellent defense in the samurai. While an average infantry with a fast attack, the samurai does have an attack bonus against all unique units, such as war elephants, longbowmen, and Teutonic knights. You will find that if the enemy builds a force comprising mostly unique units, you will have the advantage.

On the seas, the Japanese have strength, missing only the fast fire ship and having all naval upgrades.

WEAKNESSES

Unfortunately, whatever offensive potency the Japanese have is offset by weaker defenses and poorer siege capability. The Japanese do not get bombard cannons, siege onagers, or siege rams, having instead to rely solely on trebuchets and weaker rams for breaking defenses. Also, the Japanese do not get the bombard tower and lack the architecture technology, which improves building armor and hit points.

Japanese cavalry is decent, but missing the paladin and final cavalry armor upgrade.

Japanese mining capability is hampered somewhat by a lack of the two final mining technologies, stone shaft mining and gold shaft mining.

In team games, the Japanese navy has better scouting abilities with increased galley line of sight, but lack of more direct combat or production bonuses makes them less desirable than more endowed civilizations like the Celts or Goths.

MISSING UNITS

The Japanese are missing the following units: camel, heavy camel, paladin, heavy demolition ship, bombard tower, siege onager, siege ram, bombard cannon, and bombard tower.

MISSING TECHNOLOGIES

The Japanese are missing the following technologies: hoardings, sappers, plate barding armor, heated shot, treadmill crane, architecture, gold shaft mining, stone shaft mining, guilds, and crop rotation.

STRATEGIES

The Japanese are in a very nice position in the Dark Ages. With their less-expensive mills, lumber camps, and mining camps, a Japanese player has a little more leeway in building order in the first age. The first two buildings that should be built include the lumber camp and dock. You want wood to support fishing boats and a dock to build those boats. You should rely heavily on your first few sheep and your fishing boats for food. The benefit is that you aren't spending as much food on villagers and can thus spend wood to earn food (others that spend food to buy villagers must balance depleting their food stockpile for more workers with saving food for age advancement). However, you must devote more villagers than other civilizations to wood, since you will rely heavily on it.

Throughout all the ages, you should continue to rely heavily on fishing boats for food and build fish traps as well to replenish your fishing supply. Like farms, fish traps will run out, but the fishing square won't.

As early as the Feudal Age, you can start harassing your enemy. Although you don't have an advantage in archery, since every civilization is on equal footing in the Feudal Age in that respect, you can outgun your opponents with your infantry, which have a modest attack bonus. You can impede your enemy's resource gathering by attacking his camps and mills.

Don't neglect to build galleys in the Feudal Age to protect your fishing boats, which are a huge investment on your part. Use this to your advantage. You'll need galleys for protection anyway, so take advantage of them and build up a navy to harass your opponent's shoreline property. Scout out the map and claim gold islands. If the map is an island or coastal map, jump to dominance of the sea as quickly as possible.

Obviously, on a desert or land map, you can't employ your fishing advantage and won't need a navy. In those cases, you can employ regular strategies, but emphasizing your infantry. You want to attack early in the Castle Age, regardless, because in the Imperial Age, you don't get the better siege weapons that can more easily crack the Imperial Age defenses.

MONGOLS

The Mongol civilization emphasizes fast hit-and-run strikes with light cavalry and fast-firing cavalry archers. Although the Mongols lack gunpowder units, they have strong siege and offensive capabilities. With their cavalry archers, they can effectively harass and shut down enemy resource gathering. However, they themselves are not a great defensive civilization and are like the Goths, Franks, Persians, and Vikings in being geared toward offense more than defense. Cavalry archers are more difficult to manage than cavalry and infantry, so beginners might not have an easy time with Mongols.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- Hunters work 50 percent faster.
- Light cavalry have +30 percent hit points.
- Cavalry archers and heavy cavalry archers fire 20 percent faster.

TEAM BONUS

- Scout cavalry, light cavalry line of sight is +2.

STRENGTHS

The Mongols have a huge food-gathering bonus, as their hunters work 50 percent faster. Hunting is a good source for food, with its only penalty being that you gather food at longer intervals than all other food sources. But when your villagers do return with food, it's typically at 25 or 35 food a pop rather than the 10 or 15 you get from other sources. Mongols thus can stockpile food much faster than many other civilizations, which in turn gets parlayed into lots of light cavalry, as light cavalry only require food for production.

While others really only use light cavalry as scouts, Mongols can get a bit more use out of their light cavalry because they have 78 hit points, as opposed to the normal 60. While they do the same damage and have the same armor, Mongol light cavalry is simply better at what light cavalry do best, attacking archers and siege weapons. They still can't take on pikemen

or knights, but light cavalry make excellent hit-and-run troops to accompany the Mongol cavalry archers. The greater hit points also mean the light cavalry make much better screens for the deadly Mongol cavalry archers as well.

The other great bonus the Mongols get is faster firing cavalry archers and heavy cavalry archers. The unique unit, the mangudai, likewise has a swift ranged attack. All three can shoot arrows more quickly than other archery units and thus make devastating ranged attackers. With these cavalry archers supporting your army, you can cut down your enemy faster than he can take you down. The speed of the cavalry archers also means you are the best civilization in the game at using hit-and-run tactics. You can rush in, fire off multiple volleys at far range, then retreat when the enemy closes; then, fire again when you have a comfortable distance. Few units can withstand such a relentless firestorm.

Surprisingly, the Mongols are strong at sea, with all ships, including the elite cannon galleon. The only naval technology they don't get is dry dock.

In team games, the Mongols don't really gain any additional advantages except that their scout and light cavalry are better scouters.

WEAKNESSES

The Mongols lack ground gunpowder units, so their long-range siege ability is somewhat limited. However, they don't really miss the hand cannoneer because their cavalry archers are so good. Unfortunately, the Mongols do not get the final armor upgrades for archers or cavalry, so those units can suffer slightly in Imperial Age battles. The Mongols also do not get the paladin, limiting them slightly in their power during assaults.

Mongolian monks are also very weak, lacking four technologies that make them less than effective at conversion.

On the defensive, Mongols do not get the keep or bombard tower. Nor do they get architecture, making their buildings more vulnerable.

Technology wise, the Mongols miss out on several key economic technologies in the Imperial Age. However, these missing technologies are not too severe a restriction.

MISSING UNITS

The Mongols are missing the following units: hand cannoneer, paladin, bombard cannon, keep, and bombard tower.

MISSING TECHNOLOGIES

The Mongols are missing the following technologies: dry dock, redemption, sanctity, block printing, illumination, ring archer armor, plate barding armor, heated shot, treadmill crane, architecture, two-man saw, guilds, and crop rotation.

STRATEGIES

As a Mongolian player, you should rely heavily on hunting for your food source, even through to the Castle and Imperial Ages. Do not be afraid to drop down a mill every time you find a herd of deer or a cluster of boar. You lose 100 wood, but you gain a lot of food. You should assign a group of six villagers to always hunt, roaming near your town, looking first for boars and then deer. Because boar have high hit points and a vicious attack, select all six villagers and attack the boar. When the boar finds a target, micromanage that villager and lead him away from the boar, so that the other five can fire at the boar while it chases your decoy villager. That should ensure you do not lose a hunter to the beast.

Because there is a delay in getting food when you hunt, you should still tend sheep, then forage, and then build farms. But whereas others might assign ten farmers for food, you could get by with six farmers and six hunters.

With this constant food boost, you should build lots of scout cavalry, scout the map for resources, and harass your enemy. A gang of six to ten scout cavalry in the Feudal Age can attack enemy lumber and mining camps, then flee when archers and spearmen appear. As a Mongol, you want to build at least two stables and two archery ranges, perhaps more, in the Feudal Age.

In the Castle Age, it is time to unleash a horde of light cavalry and cavalry archers on your enemy. A good tactic for wearing down your opponent is marching into his town with a force of 12 light cavalry and 16 to 24 cavalry archers. Rush in, picking off villagers wherever you find them. You have the advantage of speed, so do what damage you can and then run

away. You will at least get your enemy to garrison his villagers in towers and town centers, so he loses valuable time that could be spent gathering resources. Do not engage buildings or towers because your troops can't possibly take down sturdy buildings effectively.

Every time your enemy comes at you with troops, bait him with your light cavalry and shoot the enemy units down with your cavalry archers. Be sure to march them away any time the enemy units get close. You can literally keep running, pausing to shoot, until you wipe out all his troops. If nothing else, you will really annoy your human opponent and cause him to devote way too much time to catching your units or building lots of cavalry in turn. Then, you respond with pikemen and more cavalry archers. Should the enemy come at your with siege weapons, just turn your light cavalry and mangudai loose on them.

If the enemy is fortified with lots of defenses, like a Teuton player for instance, you must bring in infantry and rams, but thankfully, you can build the full line of infantry. If you find a player who positions siege weapons near his town walls for additional protection, take a pack of 12 or more mangudai and roam his walls, shooting down his siege weapons. You can easily dodge fire from trebuchets, mangonels, and bombard cannons, and shoot them to pieces. Then, rush in with battering rams and a small force of protective infantry. Your cavalry archers can provide ample cover.

You should beware of highly defensive civilizations like the Teutons and be wary of the Goth huskarl. Send your light cavalry in to attack them.

As a Mongol, you'll need lots of wood and gold to support your cavalry archer force.

PERSIANS

The Persians are a strange civilization. They are weaker than most on defense and possess the game's most powerful cavalry line, due to the war elephant, which happens to be the most powerful and yet most vulnerable unit in the game. However, the Persians have a fast production bonus because they can produce villagers and fishing boats faster than anyone else and also start with a few more extra resources. The small production bonus will help beginners in the short term, but they'll be very frustrated when their core unit, the elephant, succumbs to pikemen and monks with alarming speed.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- Start with +50 food and +50 wood.
- Town center has double hit points and works 10 percent faster in the Feudal Age, 15 percent faster in the Castle Age, and 20 percent faster in the Imperial Age.
- Dock has double hit points and works 10 percent faster in the Feudal Age, 15 percent faster in the Castle Age, and 20 percent faster in the Imperial Age.

TEAM BONUS

- Knights, cavaliers, and paladins have a +2 attack versus all archery range units

STRENGTHS

The Persians have an impressive cavalry line that stacks up well against even the Byzantines. The inclusion of the elephants makes the Persians very powerful in open-field battles and lets them raze towns with great ease. Nothing can quite stand up to a rush of 20 elephants, which can take down a town center or castle in mere seconds. Elephants are so durable, in fact, that they can act as makeshift rams in a pinch.

The Persians are very good on island and coastal maps because they get all ships, and their docks produce ships faster. In a race to get warships on the open water, the Persians win in a big way and can jump out to naval dominance early. On water maps, the Persians are a good civilization to play.

The Persian siege technology is good, and with their elephants and cavalry, they make an excellent offensive civilization. They can break through even the toughest fortifications with ease. A Persian player can play well against a defensive player, especially because Persians also get all gunpowder units.

In team games, Persians have a unique bonus in that they can better handle archers. Archers are another unit that can cut down your troops from afar, especially if you are facing the British or Chinese. With your already strong cavalry line, you have even more power over archers.

WEAKNESSES

The Persians possess the weakest infantry line in the game, lacking the two Imperial Age infantry units. Of course, the elephant makes up for the loss of this brute force, but then again, the elephant is also more vulnerable to conversion. The Persians also lose the arbalest and don't get the bracer upgrade, so their archers are a little deficient in power.

The other vulnerability of Persians is that their monks are average at best, missing several technologies.

Persians are also not great on defense because they don't get keeps, bombard towers, or fortified walls. While elephants make good attackers, they are slow and thus not the best defenders. A wonder victory isn't really the forte of the Persian player.

Persians need lots of food, so you'll need more villagers than most other civilizations.

Lastly, be very careful with the war elephant. It has a massive number of hit points, a prodigious attack, and can win in a head-to-head battle with any other melee unit. But it is very susceptible to conversion due to its slow speed. And if an enemy monk converts an elite war elephant that's in the middle of a pack, all your war elephants will ignore their current target and attack the war elephant, while the converted war elephant, by virtue of its splash damage, will harm all frontal facing elephants it attacks. So, monks are a big weakness. Research faith as soon as possible and make sure you have lots of gold and food to support your elephant army.

MISSING UNITS

The Persians are missing the following units: arbalest, two-handed swordsman, champion, siege onager, keep, and bombard tower.

MISSING TECHNOLOGIES

The Persians are missing the following technologies: shipwright, fortified walls, redemption, sanctity, atonement, illumination, bracer, treadmill crane, and siege engineers.

STRATEGIES

The 50 food and wood help a little, but any good player can make up that difference in moments. So just build normally and be glad for the little boost. You can build a barracks and two houses immediately and then rush right away if you want, producing three to four militia and attacking your opponent, while he's still producing villagers. Scout first, of course, and when you find the closest opponent, rush into his town. Retreat immediately when he rings the town bell and repeat ad naseum until you really annoy your foe. Of course, what you've done is probably manage to kill very few of his villagers, but you make him stop gathering. Do not try this on large maps that accommodate more than three players. You will suffer horribly.

You can crank out villagers more quickly than anyone else, so go for a big population of 20 or so early, so you can really bring home the resources, especially if you want to harass your foe even in the Dark Ages.

One great way to fool your opponents is to lead a small attack in the Castle Age with a handful of elephants. Your foe will panic and build lots of pikemen or more probably monks. Then, in your next assault, march in with a wave of archers and cavalry archers. You will decimate his hapless monks and pikemen. This type of feint works well for those civilizations, like the Persians, who appear to have one obvious route to military success. If others buy into that, you just come on strong with a different unit type.

If you do decide to commit to a strong elephant strategy, take at least as many cavalry archers with you to shoot down monks and pikemen. If you don't, your elephants will fall very quickly and, even worse, come back to haunt you under your enemy's control.

In all respects, the Persians are an average civilization, bolstered only by their elephants. On water maps, they are good, but otherwise, they aren't among the best civilizations.

Your most important tip for the Persians is research faith as soon as possible.

SARACENS

Along with the Byzantines and Chinese, the Saracens are among the most advanced civilizations in Age II. However, they have no noticeable combat advantages for open battles, despite their cavalry archers' attack bonus versus buildings. They lack the sheer power provided by high-end knights, but the Saracens are versatile, with excellent ranged capability, a strong infantry line, good siege, and an excellent navy. This civilization requires a more advanced player to appreciate its bonuses.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- Galleys, war galleys, galleons attack 20 percent faster.
- Market trade cost is 5 percent, rather than 30 percent.
- Transport ships have double hit points and have double carry capacity.
- Cavalry and heavy cavalry archers have a +3 attack versus all buildings.

TEAM BONUS

- Foot archers have a +1 attack versus buildings.

STRENGTHS

The Saracens have a powerful archery units and powerful infantry. In addition, they get all offensive gunpowder units and have strong siege and strong defenses, minus the bombard tower.

On the seas, the Saracens are strong, with better galleys, war galleys, and galleons. In addition, they get most ships and most naval technologies. They also have much better transports, meaning they can transport larger armies for less cost.

Of great benefit is their lower marketplace fee. When they buy or sell, they only pay a 5 percent transaction fee, whereas others pay a 30 percent fee. The Saracens can thus use the marketplace as a viable short term solution to a resource shortage. In this way, the Saracens can really boost production at critical times, such as when amassing a large force and trying to make the jump to a new age.

Saracen monks are strong, with all upgrades.

WEAKNESSES

The Saracens really suffer in terms of not having the shocking power of cavalry. The Saracens get heavy camels and mamelukes, but the mazelike attacks too slowly, and the heavy camels 7 attack can't match the 12 attack of the cavalier or 14 attack of the paladin. Aside from this lack of quality cavalry though, the Saracens have few weaknesses.

They're mamelukes aren't terribly powerful, though, so they don't benefit as much from their unique unit as other civilizations might.

Although the Saracens have an attack bonus versus buildings with their cavalry archers, such a bonus still doesn't make these units as good against buildings and towers as infantry or siege weapons.

MISSING UNITS

The Saracens are missing the following units: cavalier, paladin, fast fire ship, heavy scorpion, and bombard tower.

MISSING TECHNOLOGIES

The Saracens are missing the following technologies: shipwright, sappers, heated shot, architecture, guilds, and crop rotation.

STRATEGIES

There is little the Saracen player can do to get an advantage in the early ages. It isn't until the Feudal Age and then Castle Age, really, that the Saracen player can play with more confidence. However, on island maps, it's a good idea to make galleys and start hunting enemy fishing ships. While doing this, load up some infantry into your double-capacity transports and unload your invasion force on your poor foe. Such tactics can begin as early as the Feudal Age.

Use the marketplace whenever necessary to buy extra materials, as you can trade on a nearly one-to-one basis. If you are facing a heavy cavalry civilization, like the Franks or Persians, be sure to stock up on camels. Your mamelukes actually do well against siege weapons as well, so use them for that purpose in addition to providing general cavalry support.

The Saracens really don't have any specific strategies that they can employ because they are a generic and flexible race with options but few obvious strengths, aside from their naval bonuses.

TEUTONS

The Teutons are a fantastic defensive civilization, with incredible towers and a strong town center. Beginners will like this civilization because you can play defensively, walling yourself off to concentrate on building and production. In battle, the Teutons are very strong, with strong cavalry and exceptionally strong infantry. Their weakness at ranged attacks, though, leaves them a little vulnerable to such civilizations as the Mongols and Britons.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- Town center has +2 range and +5 attack.
- Farms cost 33 percent less.
- Murder holes research is free.
- Towers garrison twice as many people, and fire twice as many arrows.
- Monks have double healing range.

TEAM BONUS

- Teuton units are more resistant to conversion.

STRENGTHS

The Teutons are unquestionably the strongest defenders in the game, with all towers and walls and bonuses for their tower and town center. No one can truly rush a Teuton town center in the Dark or Feudal Age, and no one in the Castle Age will attempt such a feat without

several rams. The power of the town center and the range therein makes the Teutons especially strong against any archer rush that might possibly be performed in the Feudal Age.

Another strength is getting murder holes for free. This is a must-have upgrade for all civilizations in the Castle Age, yet the Teutons don't even have to bother thinking about this. As soon as the jump is made, Teuton towers lose their minimum range.

Another nice bonus is the less-expensive farm bonus. Teutons can build farms more readily than other civilizations, getting off to faster starts and never really running into the problems that other civilizations have when they are laying down military buildings and upgrading, only to find themselves short on wood for farms.

Teutonic monks are strong, with all technologies and a much greater healing range. Although building enough monks to really provide efficient in-battle healing is prohibitively expensive, the Teutonic monks are a strength that is costly to employ but very beneficial.

One nice strength of the Teutons is that they get a surprisingly robust range of technologies, missing only six technologies or upgrades. Those who pick this civilization will find an advanced civilization with strong infantry and excellent defenses.

In team games, one weakness of the Teutons - vulnerability to conversions - is practically eliminated, making them stronger.

WEAKNESSES

The Teutons are a slow civilization with poor ranged-fire support. While their Teutonic knight is unparalleled in hit points, damage, and armor among infantry, it can be cut down quickly by ranged fire. The Teutons do not get arbalests or heavy cavalry archers, and the hand cannoneer simply cannot replace those two units. Nor do the Teutons get the bracer technology.

Teutonic knights, like elephants, are slow and susceptible to conversion. In addition, their cavalry are slower than everyone else's because they do not get the husbandry upgrade and do not get light cavalry. The Teutonic cavalry is quite ponderous, and rather than complement the weakness of Teutonic infantry, it simply reinforces it.

The Teutons seem well equipped for sieges, with the bombard cannon, siege upgrades, and strong infantry, but their speed and superior ranged cover makes them vulnerable to civilizations with strong antipersonnel siege weapons and ranged units.

On sea maps, the Teutons get a wide range of ships, but aren't quite as powerful as others because they miss key naval technologies.

Missing Units

The Teutons are missing the following units: arbalest, heavy cavalry archer, camel, heavy camel, light cavalry, elite cannon galleon, and siege ram.

Missing Technologies

The Teutons are missing the following technologies: husbandry, dry docks, shipwright, bracer, architecture, and gold shaft mine.

Strategies

The Teuton player should actively use his town center to guard his town, building structures close to town. Of course, other players should do this as well, but Teutons are so good at it, careful town planning can offer incredible protection for the Teuton player. Judicious use of walls and towers serves this civilization well, and whenever possible, you should garrison archers at all times in your towers.

The Teuton has no real starting bonuses, but when you hit the Feudal Age or are upgrading to the Feudal Age, you can start farming as early as possible and get a big jump on food. It's a good idea to start early in the Feudal Age to claim resource spots like gold and stone deposits, walling them off and building towers near them. Every spot you claim is one less resource source for your enemy.

The only worry for you is fast-moving ranged units, especially cavalry archers. You should build lots of antipersonnel siege weapons, like scorpions and onagers, for use as defenders. In battle, a savvy opponent can neutralize you easily with archers and cavalry archers, so you need your own ranged units, which means siege and skirmishers. Build elite skirmishers in large quantities, as they will offer the best protection for your Teutonic knights.

The Teutons aren't particularly suited to feints, like the Vikings or Persians, who can trick opponents into thinking they are building longboats or elephants, respectively, and then unload transported infantry or cavalry archers on an unprepared opponent. Instead, the Teutons should really play to their strengths and slowly expand across the map, methodically attacking when possible with bombard cannons and siege weapons, forcing the enemy to sally forth and meet Teutonic knight defenders.

An Ensemble Studios strategy is to use your town centers offensively by building them close to enemy camps or enemy resource gathering points and then garrisoning them. The town centers can then attack from far range, killing all villagers and incoming troops within range. However, such a strategy could be extremely wasteful (think of the wood spent on the town center and then the wasted villagers inside). But then again, an enemy player caught unawares by such a strategy could be burned badly by it.

TURKS

The Turks are the latest bloomer in the game, not coming into their own until the Imperial Age. Until then, they are vulnerable to such civilizations as the Goths, Japanese, and Franks, who all have potent bonuses that apply from the Feudal Age and Castle Age. Beginners would be hard pressed to play them, but advanced players can really take advantage of the potent gunpowder units and demolish enemy towns and defenses.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- Light cavalry upgrade is free.
- Chemistry upgrade is free.
- Gold miners work 15 percent faster.
- Research for all gunpowder units is 50 percent cheaper.
- Gunpowder units have +50 percent hit points.

TEAM BONUS

- Gunpowder units are created 20 percent faster.

STRENGTHS

The Turks excel in the Imperial Age, getting the Imperial Age infantry and cavalry units and having superior gunpowder units that are more durable and less expensive to research. Because of the free chemistry upgrade and discounted gunpowder research, a good Turk player can field a force of gunpowder units before anyone else and literally raze a town with a boxed formation of bombard towers, janissaries, and infantry before the other player has time to react.

The weakness of hand cannoneers, which is minimum range, is not present in the janissary, which is a powerful ranged unit that can keep many troops at bay while your bombard cannons wreak havoc on enemy walls and towers.

On island maps, the Turks have an easy time with a strong navy. Not only are cannon galleons stronger for them, they get all naval technologies and all ships but the fast fire ship.

Turks have very good range of technology, and although they might miss a few key units, they have just as flexible and robust a technology tree as the Byzantines.

WEAKNESSES

Turks are vulnerable on water maps to galleons, so the Saracens are particularly well suited to take Turks on a water map. In addition, Mongols can decimate Turk bombard cannons and also take on janissaries and hand cannoneers, while British bowmen outrange the Turk ranged units.

The Turks do not have good antipersonnel siege weapons because they lack the onager and siege onager. In addition, the lack of two key counter units - pikemen and elite skirmishers - makes them more vulnerable to cavalry, although the camels and archers mitigate this weakness. Their monks suffer slightly without a few key upgrades.

The key weakness of Turks is that they are vulnerable in the early game, especially to cavalry rushes, so beware of the Franks and Persians. Without elite skirmishers and pikemen, and lacking any early production or military bonuses, the Turks are in a poor position. It is

not so much that the Turks have grievous penalties in the early ages, it is more that other players know the Turks will rush for the Imperial Age. Thus, they will target you early, and you don't have any bonuses or particular strengths that will protect you from such determined preemptive strikes.

Turks are vulnerable to elephants because they lack pikemen and have weaker monks. Likewise, they don't have elite skirmishers and so cannot repel cavalry archers and later-age bowmen as well.

Missing Units

The Turks are missing the following units: elite skirmisher, arbalest, pikemen, paladin, fast fire ship, onager, and siege onager.

Missing Technologies

The Turks are missing the following technologies: block printing, illumination, siege engineers, stone shaft mining, and crop rotation.

Strategies

Turks should wall themselves in, protecting their resources and making sure they claim lots of gold resources. Take advantage of that 15 percent gold bonus and start gathering early in the Feudal and Castle Ages. In the early game, because you don't have the best counter units, you must rely on static defenses to defend your town unless you believe you can pull off a traditional combined arms attack of archers, infantry, cavalry, and siege weapons.

Still, other players are not likely to prepare for a Turk early attack, so you can use that complacency to your advantage. Harass your opponents with archer attacks in the Feudal Age and even go after the enemy with a light cavalry rush in the beginning of the Castle Age, since you get that upgrade for free. The upgrade from scout to light cavalry is significant, and you can put a serious damper on the enemy's resource production with these speedy attackers. Build up about eight to twelve scout cavalry during the time when you are

advancing from the Feudal to Castle Age and then walk over to his town. When the age advancement is complete, and your scouts turn into light cavalry units, march in and cut down his villagers. Be careful not to go after his buildings, but damage his resource-gathering operation, preferably attacking the villagers around his lumber and mining camps.

Keep your opponent on his toes and don't just stay in your starting town. Although a defensive strategy is good, that doesn't mean you shouldn't explore the map and claim additional stone and gold patches.

If you aren't as capable of pulling off a combined-arms masterpiece, or you are playing against a civilization that could punish you severely for angering it, like the Goths or Japanese, then hole up and race for the Imperial Age, when you can unleash your gunpowder fury on your foes. To that end, the priority for you as a Turk player is stone for fortifications and gold, in anticipation of gunpowder units.

Build two or three siege workshops, two barracks, and preferably two castles. Then, crank out bombard cannons, infantry, and janissaries. Your weakness with this force are cavalry archers and siege weapons, so create light cavalry that can run down onagers, scorpions, and archers. Keep your force of cannons, janissaries, and infantry in box formation and have your cavalry in a flanking formation, ready to descend on enemy ranged units. Camels and heavy camels would a good substitute if you think you are facing strong cavalry resistance, as camels are as effective against archers and siege weapons as light cavalry and much better against armored cavalry. With a gunpowder formation like this, you can blast through enemy fortifications.

Alternatively, you could be better off trying for a wonder victory. Your bombard cannons can destroy rams and siege weapons before they get within range, offering great protection, and your janissaries would likewise provide great defense against incoming units. Your bombard towers are another excellent defensive measure, and with your masonry and architecture upgrades, your towers and fortified walls would be very tough to break down.

VIKINGS

The Vikings are a great water map civilization, can build less-expensive boats, and field the only unique warship, the fearsome longboat. Indeed, the Vikings are unique in that they have two unique units, the berserker infantry and the longboat. The Vikings are an infantry civilization when fighting on land, so lack some archery and cavalry strength. On water maps, they are excellent, and beginners would do well to choose the Vikings in these circumstances.

CULTURAL BONUSES

- Wheelbarrow and hand-cart upgrades are free.
- Infantry have +10 percent hit points at Feudal Age, +15 percent hit points at Castle Age, and +20 percent hit points at Imperial Age.
- Warships (galleys, war galleys, galleons, cannon galleons, elite cannon galleons, fire ships, fast fire ships, demolition ships, and heavy demolition ships) cost 20 percent less.

TEAM BONUSES

- Docks cost 33 percent less.

STRENGTHS

The Vikings have extremely durable infantry that come out on top of all infantry battles except those involving the Japanese.

Of course, the seas are where the Vikings really excel, with very inexpensive warships, the deadly quick longboat, and all available ships. You have the tools to rule the seas like no other civilization. And in team games, the Vikings are undisputed masters of the water, as not only do they get less-expensive warships, all their ships are faster, too.

One great benefit that the Vikings get is free wheelbarrow and hand cart units. This means the Vikings get two very essential and beneficial villager upgrades that boost production. When the Vikings hit the Feudal Age, their villagers automatically work faster. When they hit

the Castle Age, their villagers get yet another boost. These two upgrades are justifiably expensive because they have such an impact on production, so the Vikings get nice gathering bonuses in the Feudal and Castle Age. This bonus doesn't make the Vikings better than other civilizations at the actual work of gathering resources, but it does give the civilization a boost as the Vikings get it before anyone else.

WEAKNESSES

The Vikings suffer a little in the archery department, missing the speedy and potent heavy cavalry archer and also missing the hand cannoneer. In fact, the Vikings get no ground gunpowder units. In other military areas, the Vikings don't get husbandry, the paladin, or plate barding armor, so their cavalry are a little slower and less potent. The siege capability of the Vikings is good, although the lack of the siege onager means they aren't as potent in the antipersonnel department.

The Viking monks aren't that good, with fewer hit points, slower conversion regeneration speed, and the inability to convert enemy monks.

On defense, the Vikings lack the keep and bombard tower, so their static defenses aren't as strong as say the Teutons or Byzantines.

One weakness of the Vikings is their unique unit, the berserker. This unit has the unique ability to regenerate hit points, but in pitched battles, the berserker is a weak unit, with the lowest hit points of any infantry unique unit. Although it has a good attack strength, it simply isn't durable. To keep them alive requires micromanaging the battle and pulling them out when they hit half hit points. Against Teutonic knights, paladins, or samurai, that means after two hits, you must pull out your berserkers.

MISSING UNITS

The Vikings are missing the following units: heavy cavalry archer, arbalest, camel, heavy camel, paladin, siege onager, bombard cannon, keep, and bombard tower.

Missing Technologies

The Vikings are missing the following technologies: husbandry, shipwright, redemption, sanctity, illumination, plate barding armor, treadmill crane, stone shaft mining, and guilds.

Strategies

As a Viking, you can dominate the seas with your longboat and less-expensive warships. Get out to an early jump in coastal and island maps and rule the seas, attacking enemy fishing ships and harassing docks. You can even do this as early as the Feudal Age.

Of course, because others expect you to dominate the ocean with fleets of warships, use that to your advantage and do the unexpected. In the Feudal Age, build up a fleet of transports and create a large group of infantry and archers. However, such a huge investment won't pay off unless you can cripple or destroy the enemy's base. Therefore, if you do rush in the Feudal Age, you better have two dozen men-at-arms at least. You need that many to take down his town. Unload those troops onto his island and have your archers pick off villagers while the infantry take on the town center.

In the Castle Age, you can go in with a few siege rams and berserks, whom you can pull out of danger when they are at low hit points. When they regenerate to full, send them in again. The enemy will be surprised by your land invasion and will undoubtedly switch gears to making lots of land-based troops to protect against another invasion, should the first one have failed. Well, then, you switch gears again and go for longboats and warships and cut him off from the rest of the map, destroying his docks, patrolling his waters for transports, and shooting at any buildings he happens to have close to shore. This constant harassment will eventually tire him out, and you'll starve him to death if you deprive him of the ability to take new islands with resources.

Vikings aren't too bad at winning with a wonder, as they get the masonry and architecture upgrade. However, your defenses won't be as heavy on towers as other civilizations. However, a large group of infantry can substitute.

However, the Vikings are best suited to a constantly attacking strategy, especially on the water.

Chapter Two: Unit Overview

Age of Kings is first and foremost a strategy game about conflict. You are there to defeat your rivals, whether its by building a wonder, collecting all the world's holy relics, or pounding your opponents to dust with your massive army. The military units you can build are the keys to your success. Know yourself, and you need not fear the outcome of a hundred battles. Sun Tzu's dictum could very well be made to encompass Age of Kings' military units as well, for those who don't know their units are doomed to fail in every battle.

The military units in Age II are broken into several categories: infantry, archers, cavalry, siege weapons, warships, and counter units, which themselves belong to the three major unit classifications of infantry, archers, and cavalry. In addition, each civilization has a unique unit that falls into one of those three major classifications. Then there are miscellaneous units, which consists of nonmilitary units, such as fishing ships and trade carts, and two units that can serve peaceful and destructive means: the villager and monk. Included in this chapter are towers, which technically are technically buildings, but do serve their military purpose.

The most effective tactical strategy in Age of Kings is one that uses combined arms. This is much more the case in this game than in the original. You could very well win in Age of Empires by playing Yamato and rushing with light cavalry in the Bronze Age. Four out of five times, you'd be declared a victor. But that's no longer the case in Age of Kings. There are counters to every unit, and even all-around good units are sometimes ineffective unless teamed up with another than enhances its strengths or covers up its weaknesses. Thus, no one unit type in Age II will win the day for you. It takes combined arms to win in this game. So let's take a look at those arms.

INFANTRY

Infantry are the mainstay of any force. They form a good all-around unit with good hit points, attack, and armor. Their weakness is a lack of speed. Cavalry can flee them easily, and cavalry archers can whittle away infantry with hit-and-run tactics. In addition, foot archers can harry infantry by firing and fleeing. There are two lines of infantry - swordsmen and spearmen. The militia doesn't belong in either group and is simply a villager with beefier hit points.

SWORDSMEN

Man-at-arms, long swordsman, two-handed swordsman, champion, Celt woad raider, Franks throwing axeman, Goth huskarl, Japanese samurai, Teutonic knight, and Viking berserker.

The swordsmen are strong units that do extra damage to buildings; the more advanced the infantry unit, the bigger the damage bonus. Infantry start poorly armored, starting with 0 regular and piercing armor. In close quarters, they can take down archers, skirmishers, camels, pikemen, and siege weapons. With archers, the swordsmen must first catch them, and until they do, the archers can hurt all but the huskarl greatly. They suffer against cavalry, however, which are stronger and have more hit points. They also lose out to cavalry archers; in the hands of a good micromanager, cavalry archers can kill hordes of infantry without ever getting hit.

SPEARMEN

Spearman and pikeman.

The spearmen are counter units designed to kill cavalry, including camels and elephants easily. They are absolutely atrocious against anything else, doing a paltry amount of damage. Their saving grace is they do 18 damage to cavalry (pikemen do 26) and up to 30 damage to war elephants (pikemen do 50). That's without upgrades! Plus, they cost only food and wood, meaning you have more gold to spend on other units. Like swordsmen, spearmen suffer greatly against cavalry archers, although the spearmen bonus versus cavalry also extends to cavalry archers.

Both swordsmen and spearmen benefit from the armor and weapon upgrades at the blacksmith. They get a sight upgrade in the Feudal Age called tracking. They get a speed upgrade in the Castle Age called squires.

ARCHERS

Archers are a vital support unit that can vex an opponent that relies heavily on infantry. These units can do damage from a longer range, and a horde of archers can shred apart infantry before the infantry can close in on archers. Archers and infantry move at the same speed, so if the archers begin far away and shoot and then flee, moving to keep the distance great between the two units, they can do serious damage to the infantry before they catch up. Archers deal piercing damage, which is repelled by piercing armor. This damage is designed mostly to disable units, while buildings and siege weapons are particularly durable against this type of attack. Siege weapons have high piercing armor. Buildings are even better defended against piercing damage, for archers do only one point of damage against buildings, regardless of how much base damage the archery unit does. All archery range units are poorly armored and do not begin play with regular or piercing armor.

There are three lines of archer units: foot archers, skirmishers, and cavalry archers. Then, there is the hand cannoneer, which doesn't fall neatly into any category.

IMPORTANT UPGRADES:

When using all archers, it is important to research ballistics as soon as possible in the Castle Age. It is researched in the university and makes your archers (except for the hand cannoneer) more accurate.

FOOT ARCHERS

Archer, crossbowman, arbalest, British longbowman, and Chinese chukonu.

Foot archers are the perfect support unit that can mean the difference between victory and defeat when melee units go at it. The best thing about foot archers is that they do a good amount of damage from a distance and can shoot off a few arrows before the enemy can close with them. The bad side of foot archers is that they have low hit points and a slow rate of fire when compared to the attack speed of infantry and cavalry. Once the enemy melee units close with the archer, the archer is pretty much dead. However, if used to back up infantry or cavalry, foot archers can brutalize the enemy units.

Foot archers are great against infantry and monks and can fire off lots of shots against the slow elephants. Conversely, foot archers are terrible against siege weapons, skirmishers, and buildings. Because mangonels do area of effect damage, and because archers stay still to fire, foot archers get slaughtered by them. Foot archers are also especially vulnerable to skirmishers, who do bonus damage to foot archers, including hand cannoneers.

SKIRMISHERS

Skirmisher and elite skirmisher.

Skirmishers are counter units to foot archers and cavalry archers, doing bonus damage to those units. Skirmishers also have high starting piercing armor, so can shrug off lots of damage from archers. Indeed, when pitted against the same number of archers, skirmishers will demolish their nemesis. Even when outnumbered two to one, they can still take down foot archers. The good thing is that skirmishers cost wood and food, and even then, the food consumption is low. So, they don't detract much from infantry and cavalry consumption. Unfortunately, the skirmishers are very poor against all other types of units and have low hit points. Aside from decimating archers, the skirmisher can also kill monks and is just as effective as other archers at destroying buildings (all archery range units but the hand cannoneer do 1 damage to buildings). It's a good idea to build elite skirmishers if you are facing such civilizations as the Britons and Mongols, who you know will be building lots of archery units. And if you scout extensively and see your opponent building archers, you should commit to elite skirmishers. Otherwise, this unit isn't good unless you are low on gold and desperate for ranged support.

CAVALRY ARCHERS

Cavalry archer, heavy cavalry archer, Mongol mangudai

Cavalry archers are powerful units, perhaps the most powerful of all ranged units. They combine the mobility of cavalry with the long-range firepower of foot archers. In fact, they are slightly more powerful than foot archers and have more hit points, so cavalry archers can be a devastating addition to your army. Because they can move as fast as cavalry, cavalry archers can destroy infantry, monks, and slow moving units with ease, moving up to range to fire, then scooting away to fire again, shooting and running to escape danger, while quickly

bringing down their victims. Cavalry archers are excellent against infantry, monks, and war elephants, but less effective against cavalry (although they are still as effective as foot archers are to infantry, which is to say they can shoot and flee to damaging effect before the cavalry finally closes).

Like foot archers, though, cavalry archers are poor against siege weapons and buildings and aren't as good against foot archers, who have better range. Cavalry archers are unfortunate in being vulnerable to all three counter units: skirmishers, spearmen, and camels. All three have bonuses to attack the cavalry archer, with the camel being the most deadly against the cavalry archer, followed by the spearmen and finally the skirmisher. In addition, players who don't micromanage their cavalry archers and scatter from mangonel fire are as vulnerable to mangonels as foot archers are. Cavalry archers are very expensive to field, costing about as much as knights, with wood replacing food. Cavalry archers benefit from the archer blacksmith upgrades, not the cavalry upgrades. However, cavalry archers do benefit from the husbandry speed upgrade.

Hand Cannoneers

Including the Turkish janissary.

These take some practice before they can be used effectively. Poor in some respects, they are also excellent in specialized circumstances.

They have a long starting range, longer than any other archery range unit, but unfortunately don't benefit from any archer unit range upgrades. So, fully upgraded arbalests have better ultimate range. And although hand cannoneers do a lot of damage per hit (17 piercing damage), they don't benefit from attack upgrades either. Worse, the hand cannoneer has a slow rate of fire, almost half that of the arbalest, and sometimes misses at maximum range, missing about once in five shots. So, the hand cannoneer can't get off as many shots as the foot archer before the enemy closes. The hand cannoneer is not too terribly expensive, although it costs food and not wood, so it can detract from building infantry and cavalry. For that reason, and its slow rate of fire, inaccuracy at range, low hit points, and lack of upgrades, it isn't a good choice for creation unless you know how to use it.

What the hand cannoneer is very good for is killing infantry, elephants, and buildings. It actually does more than the listed damage against infantry (+8 to attack). It's also very good against elephants and buildings, doing great damage while staying out of range against the former and doing a full 10 damage per hit to the latter. The hand cannoneer is better than the regular foot archer against infantry, but when comparing fully upgraded arbalests to hand cannoneers, you must make a choice. Fully upgraded arbalests do 10 damage, as opposed to the hand cannoneer's 17, but the arbalest can fire roughly twice for every shot the hand cannoneer gets off. In addition, the arbalest has one more range and always hits, whereas the hand cannoneer misses one in five times at far range. If you need accurate shots at long range, use foot archers. If you can only get off a few shots before heavy infantry or cavalry get to you, use hand cannoneers. However, in no circumstances should you rely solely on hand cannoneers because foot archers are simply more reliable.

CAVALRY

Cavalry are the most powerful troops in the game: fast, durable, and strong. They have the most hit points, do the most damage, and are the fastest moving units. Even the power of the archers is mitigated by the cavalry's swift hooves, which can deliver it to an archer in quick time, thus minimizing the damage such units can do. Cavalry are best used to destroy siege weapons and archery units. Cavalry are also good for those times when you need a quick defensive force that needs to shuttle between bases, or for those times when you need to keep the pressure up on an opponent. Walking infantry to a far off base won't cut it; instead you need to be relentless in your attacks, and that's where the cavalry comes in. About the only unit that the cavalry can't beat hands-down is the spearman and pikemen, both of which own cavalry units. There are two lines of cavalry, the regular horse cavalry and camels. The horse cavalry (referred to simply as cavalry) fulfill the description of cavalry made above. The camels are simply weak counter units with incredible bonuses against horse cavalry.

LIGHT CAVALRY

Scout cavalry and light cavalry.

The first line of cavalry is the scout cavalry, which is a weak unit that falls easily to infantry, due to its lack of armor and its paltry attack. The light cavalry fares much better because it actually has decent attack and piercing armor to go along with its good hit points. Light cavalry are especially good against monks, as they have a slightly better resistance to conversion than other units. Because of their decent combination of speed, attack, and hit points, light cavalry are ideal for destroying siege weapons and archers. However, they aren't very strong and lose quite easily to infantry and other cavalry as well as being particularly vulnerable to camels and spearmen. The best thing about light cavalry is that they only cost food, so they will always be easy and cheap to build. Remember this when you are fighting a war of attrition and are on your last leg of resources.

Knights

Knight, cavalier, paladin, and Byzantine cataphract.

Knights are excellent shock troops and can be the most effective troops for attacking far off bases. They get there quick and can cause a lot of havoc. Cavalry have the most hit points in the game and also do the most damage. Knights are where the real power is concentrated. These units have good starting armor to go along with their hit points and attack. They are perfect for destroying siege weapons and archers and are also good at taking down infantry and monks. They must fear camels and pikemen however, for both units have outrageous bonuses against them and can slaughter them quickly when the numbers are even, faster if the cavalry are outnumbered.

Camels

Camel, heavy camel, and Saracen mameluke.

Camels are highly specialized, with a great bonus against cavalry and war elephants. Camels also have high hit points and can double as light cavalry when need be, meaning they can kill monks and siege weapons with ease. However, lacking pierce armor, the camels are woefully inadequate against archers and are much too weak to attack infantry. All they are good for is fighting cavalry. Thankfully, they are less expensive than horse cavalry, but not by too much. Only build camels when you are facing cavalry and if you have gold to spare. Otherwise, stick to pikemen.

SIEGE WEAPONS

Siege weapons are a vital part of the game, for without them, it takes overwhelmingly great odds to destroy a town. Defenses are much easier to come by in Age II, and they are very effective. It is almost impossible to pull off a rush in the Dark and Feudal Age, precisely because there are no siege weapons to neutralize the town center. However, once you acquire siege weapons, you can pretty much demolish towns in a matter of seconds. These engines of destruction are slow, cumbersome, and easy to pick off, so they require a large and dedicated escort, but if they can reach their targets, they can pull off some spectacular results.

There are two different kinds of siege weapon. One kind is designed to destroy buildings, while the other kind is designed as an anti-personnel weapon to destroy groups of slow-moving infantry and archers. In the first group belong the rams, trebuchet, and bombard cannon. In the second group belong the mangonel and scorpion lines. However, the mangonel can also double as a building smasher, though it is more effective as an anti-personnel weapon.

RAMS

Battering ram, capped ram, and siege ram.

Beginning in the Castle Age, you can build a siege workshop. In this age, the very best siege weapon for taking down buildings is the battering ram. It is virtually impervious to ranged fire and does great damage to buildings. Just one can destroy a garrisoned town center and still have plenty of hit points left. Bringing just two into a town, backed up by a dozen infantry and a dozen archers and cavalry, is often enough. However, rams are very slow moving and are highly vulnerable to hand-to-hand attacks, meaning infantry and especially cavalry can destroy them rapidly. The Saracen mameluke and Frank throwing axemen are also great against rams because they have ranged attacks but do regular damage. Mangonels can also do good damage to rams. When using rams, it is imperative that you guard them with infantry, preferably traveling in a box formation to defend them against onrushing infantry and cavalry. If a mangonel shows up, detach a few infantry to destroy it. Upgrade rams at your first opportunity to give them even more hit points.

MANGONELS

Mangonel, onager, siege onager

The mangonel is the perfect archer and infantry killer, as it hurls a cluster of rocks that damage all opponents in an area of effect. It also does good damage to buildings. However, it is slow and weak, with few hit points. Just a few of these can demolish an army of two to three dozen infantry and archers. However, they are highly vulnerable to cavalry. Upgrade mangonels as early as possible so they can kill archers and infantry in one shot. The damage jumps up noticeably upon upgrade. Mangonels are quite good for defensive purposes and can be stationed behind walls to kill enemy troops trying to break down your defenses. They can also destroy enemy rams. However, in the open field, you should take care to control these war machines, for they do damage to all targets in their area of effect, including your own troops. My recommendation is that when you build your mangonels, immediately put them on the no attack stance (O) and then manually switch them to attack mode (A) when you see the enemy. That way, your mangonels won't go hurling rocks in every direction, killing your own troops as well. Mangonels are poor against ships; ships have better range and can dodge the mangonel attack.

SCORPIONS

Scorpion, heavy scorpion

The scorpion is also an anti-personnel weapon and very poor against buildings. This siege weapon is highly specialized and, in some respects, worse at its purported specialty than the mangonel. However, it has superior range because it benefits from archery upgrades at the blacksmith as well as the siege engineer upgrade. In addition, it fires in a straight line, meaning other units, especially ships, can't dodge the attack. The scorpion is good against monks, archers, infantry, and ships. However, its damage is much less than the mangonel, so it sometimes can't kill enemy units before it is taken down by onrushing infantry and especially cavalry, which have an easy time against scorpions.

BOMBARD CANNON

The bombard cannon is a great building demolisher, combining fantastic range with mobility. It can move quickly and fire from almost as far away as the trebuchet. In some respects, it is better than the trebuchet because it can fire and then run, dodging attacks from mangonels

and trebuchets. Its firing rate is a little slower than the mangonel, and its piercing armor is lower as well. Bombard cannons shouldn't be used against units because they are very expensive and not as good at that use as mangonels. Use bombard cannons to destroy towers and buildings. Bombard cannons are particularly vulnerable to cavalry and cavalry archers.

TREBUCHET

The trebuchet is the mightiest siege weapon in the game. In fact, it is so powerful, it needs to be assembled on the field of battle and anchored to the ground to be used. It has the longest range of any weapon in the game and can do 200 damage to buildings and units alike. However, because its arc is so high, enemy units can easily dodge its attacks. Instead, the trebuchet is best for taking out defenses from a distance. Guard the trebuchet with infantry, preferably in a box formation, so onrushing units can't get at the trebuchet. If melee units do get to the trebuchet, the trebuchet is doomed. The trebuchet does have excellent pierce armor, so archer units are poor against it. In packed mode, the trebuchet piercing armor is much less.

Trebuchets are expensive, so if you use them, make sure you protect them. These units are great for destroying castles and gates. Position a line of cavalry and archers in front of the trebuchet and keep infantry close by. The enemy will be faced with a lose-lose proposition: either stay inside and let you destroy his fortifications or file forth in a column through the gate and get cut down by your cavalry and archers. You can use trebuchets defensively by positioning them just behind your walls or by towers. Because the enemy trebuchets must be unpacked to attack, your trebuchets can get off some free shots on them before these enemy siege weapons are fully assembled.

WARSHIPS

It can be easy to neglect warships in an Age of Empires II game because with so many units and options, your mind just automatically eliminates the choices that simply aren't necessary. You don't need to use ships on a nonisland map to win, but if you do make smart use of them, you could tip the balance in your favor. Obviously, ships are a huge component of your strategy on an island or water map. You must transport troops and units to new resource islands or enemy islands, and you must protect those ships with warships. Undoubtedly, your enemy will also create warships to thwart your own navy.

Fishing is a very quick way to gain food, as it is among the fastest of food sources next to sheep. If you are on any type of water map, including coastal and Mediterranean, you might want to build a few galleys early on and scout the waters to both find potential resource spots and destroy any enemy fishing boats to halt an enemy's food production. Just this foray could make your opponent concentrate on building lots of shoreline towers and warships. If so, then move in with lots of land troops later on. In general, warships are an excellent way to keep your enemy off balance; attack from land and attack from sea, using your ships to pepper his shoreline buildings and fishing boats.

You can take one of two tacks with your naval effort: either use transports to dump off troops on his backdoor, hoping to catch him off guard by attacking with ground units from his seaside flank, or by attacking with shore bombardments by warships. In the former case, you'll want fireships and galleys to protect your transports. They are sufficient. In the latter case, though, you'll need better ships. Fireships don't have the range to hit buildings on the shore, and galleys do too little damage to buildings. If you commit to shore bombardments, you need the cannon galleon, which outranges all towers and does massive damage to buildings.

Galleys

Galley, war galley, galleon, and Viking longboat.

The mainstay of the Age II navy is the galley line, which has good range and does a modest amount of damage. It is ideal against cannon galleons and noncombat ships. Galleys are also good for clearing out beachheads for your transports, as they shoot straight and can clear away units on the shore. However, the galley is highly vulnerable to the fire ship. When you go to the sea, create lots of galleys, because you need numbers to stop the demolition ships, which are easy to kill if you can concentrate fire on them, but deadly if they slip by your fire.

Fire Ships

Fire ship and fast fire ship.

Fire ships are an excellent complement to your navy, for they have a lethal attack against galleys and cannon galleons. They aren't good against demolition ships though, which can wipe them out quickly. The fire ships shoot a continuous stream of liquid fire, but it effectively

only has melee range, so it must close with enemy ships. Fire ships are more effective in larger numbers, so enemy galleons can't concentrate fire on you and survive.

Demolition Ships

Demolition ship and heavy demolition ship.

Demolition ships are a strange unit, for in theory, they are a great equalizer on the waters. But in practice, they aren't that great a unit. For one, even the heavy demolition ship doesn't do enough damage to sink a ship. You need two. And all the enemy player must do is click on your target and retreat with his ship, drawing your demolition ship away. If you pause to redirect the demolition ship, odds are, you just gave your enemy the time he needed to sink the demolition ship. In practice, it is difficult to use the demolition ship because it is only marginally faster than the galley. You are better off anticipating your enemy's moves and scouting ahead, so you can build a large fleet. That way, you won't need to build demolition ships to save yourself. About the only time you can use these ships effectively is when you distract your enemy with your other ships and sneak demolition ships into his midst.

Cannon Galleons

Cannon galleon and elite cannon galleon.

Cannon galleons are the perfect building destroyer, having great range and doing exceptional damage to buildings. They are poor in naval combat because other ships can sail under their arcing cannon shot to get close, and galleys have a special bonus against them. However, if you want to destroy an enemy island, you can't do better than sending in half dozen elite cannon galleons guarded by a dozen fast fire ships and galleons. The cannon galleons will demolish all towers and buildings, while your fire ships and galleons intercept any intercepting enemy ships.

Unique Units

Unique units are a vital part of Age II, for they often represent the ultimate power of their respective civilizations, either further adding to their strengths or compensating for their weaknesses. Here is a run down of the unique units and what they bring to the game. Each

unique unit also lists its unit type, which helps determine what special strengths or vulnerabilities it has (for instance, the longbowman is a foot archer, so it is vulnerable to skirmishers).

British Longbowman

Foot archer.

The longbowman is an excellent ranged unit that has the longest range of any unit. It starts with a good range, but then gets the British range bonus in the Castle and Imperial Age. In the Imperial Age, a fully upgraded longbowman has a range of 11 and does 11 damage. Because of this range, the longbowman can really decimate infantry, getting off many shots before having to run away and reposition itself for yet another volley of withering fire. In numbers, the longbowman can be especially deadly, knocking down all but the sturdiest of units or largest of forces. If you add a line of infantry in front to tangle up enemy units and a few light cavalry to swiftly destroy mangonels, the longbowman can remain virtually untouched, while taking down scads of enemy troops. As a British player, you want to build at least two castles, maybe even three, and crank out longbowmen. After all, longbowmen are very inexpensive. You want to upgrade these units as soon as possible because elite longbowmen get more hit points, do more damage, and have better range. To defeat these units, you must resort to heavy cavalry, since mangonels don't have the range to catch the longbowmen.

Byzantine Cataphract

Cavalry.

The cataphract is a weaker version of the knight, but it has one great strength: it does double damage to all infantry. Thus, while it is slightly inferior to the knight and cavalier in the traditional cavalry roles (that is, taking on archers, siege weapons, and acting as quick shock troops), it is the best unit in the game for taking down infantry. Cataphracts still suffer against pikemen, but against all other infantry, cataphracts are impossible to kill, as they swiftly strike down all swordsmen they face. They lose in virtually all battles against other cavalry, but these cataphracts have their purpose. If your enemy is coming at you with lots of infantry

and siege weapons, cataphracts are a perfect defense. Infantry heavy civilizations like the Goths, Celts, Vikings, and Japanese are ideal victims for the Byzantine cataphract. Upgrading cataphracts is vital because they improve significantly in hit points and attack. To kill these units, employ cavalry and camels.

CELTIC WOAD RAIDER

Infantry.

Unfortunately, this unit is a bit of a puzzle. As unique units go, it's not very special. The regular woad raider is a weak unit with a weak attack. It's ability is to move fast, but even then, it can't simply rush up and kill archers and still can't catch cavalry archers or cavalry. If you don't upgrade this unit, don't build it because the long swordsman is just as good, and the two-handed swordsman is better. However, if you do want to use it, you must upgrade to the elite woad raider. At least that unit has more hit points than the champion and does the same damage. It still doesn't have any starting armor, but it is now better than the champion, as it has a few more hit points and is faster. The elite woad raider performs all the traditional roles of the infantry and is better than average against foot archers and mangonels because of its speed. However, for all intents and purposes, it's just a champion that moves a little faster.

CHINESE CHUKONU

Foot archer

The chukonu is a strong unit that gives the Chinese great ranged firepower. While the Chinese don't get hand cannoneers, the chukonu is an able substitute. It has poor range (worse than the arbalest and the same as a cavalry archer), but it does a lot more damage, for it fires multiple times and does more damage per hit. It actually costs only slightly more than an arbalest because it costs more wood but less gold. It is not necessary to upgrade the chukonu to elite status because the only difference is five more hit points. The elite chukonu does the same damage and has the same range. Chukonu are in every way an acceptable substitute for your regular foot archers because they make up for their one less

range with greater firepower. In addition, they aren't that much more expensive. A Chinese player should build several castles, just as the British player would, so you can crank out chukonu. They complement your strong infantry well. While they don't provide the extremely long range of the longbowmen, they provide just as effective support.

FRANKS THROWING AXEMAN

Infantry.

The throwing axemen is a nice unit, for although it is much less potent than other infantry in hand-to-hand attack, it has a ranged attack and deals regular damage, not piercing damage. Units that traditionally are impervious to ranged fire, such as siege weapons and hurskarls, are vulnerable to throwing axemen. Unlike other unique units, the axeman is not a replacement for anything. It should not be built in lieu of other infantry or even as a complete substitute to archery units. Instead, it supplements a Frankish force by providing a ranged fire change-up. It has much poorer range than other ranged units, but, as stated previously, its regular damage lets it bypass piercing armor, although regular armor still applies. So, the axeman is great against the huskarl, but ineffectual against the Teutonic knight. In addition, axemen have a slower rate of attack than other infantry.

Frankish players should build a healthy number of axemen to support their armies. In addition, you should upgrade your axemen to elite status because they get more hit points and slightly better range and damage. Because the axemen are being used as supplemental archers, you need the upgrade. One nice bonus of the axemen is that they still get their bonus to buildings, so you can have your axemen behind your rams while the rams attack. Whereas other troops would have to wait, the axemen can attack and lend their anti-building bonus to the effort. Although axemen have a ranged attack, they benefit from infantry upgrades at the blacksmith.

GOTHIC HUSKARL

Infantry.

This is a specialized unit that the Goths need to counter their traditional vulnerability to archery range units. The huskarl is quite a bit more expensive than regular infantry, although the Goth's cheap infantry bonus diminishes the hit somewhat. The huskarls are somewhat

weaker than two-handed swordsmen and champions, but they have great piercing armor, so they can withstand archer. They also get a large attack bonus versus archers (+3 for huskarls, +4 for elites), so when they do hit, they can cut down an archer in two or three hits. Their piercing armor also makes them ideal for taking down town centers and castles. Do not build huskarls in lieu of all other infantry, but if you are facing lots of archers and busting down towers, make the huskarls the majority of your force, keeping some strong infantry around in case you are fighting other infantry. If you are using huskarls, it is imperative that you upgrade them to elite status, for their piercing armor improves, thus further entrenching their strength, and their hit points and attack increase. Huskarls are the perfect unit for shrugging off archery and tower fire and continuing their relentless building attacks. As Ensemble once pointed out, 20 elite huskarls can destroy one fully garrisoned castle without one huskarl ever dying.

JAPANESE SAMURAI

Infantry.

The samurai is a curious unit. You won't need to build it if you opponent never builds unique units. But if he does pull out unique units, you can churn out samurai and beat him soundly. The samurai is like the woad raider in that it is slightly inferior to two-handed swordsmen and champions. However, the samurai at least attacks more quickly and has a bonus against unique units (+5 attack for samurai and +6 attack for elite samurai). If you are using samurai, you must upgrade them, because they get a big attack boost and more hit points. Do not build samurai as substitutes for your regular infantry, but if your enemy does build lots of unique units, say if you are facing the Goth huskarls and Viking berserkers, make a large force of samurai to utterly crush your opponent. The only unique units it can't defeat one on one are the cataphract, Teutonic knight, and the war elephant.

MONGOL MANGUDAI

Cavalry archer

The mangudai is a cavalry archer, and so is perfect at the traditional role of cavalry archers. Upgrade your mangudai as early as possible because they then have more hit points and do more damage than heavy cavalry archers. The mangudai excel at hit and run, just as do all other cavalry archers, but the mangudai has another strength: it gets an attack bonus versus

siege weapons. This bonus bypasses piercing armor, so it adds to the normal one damage that a cavalry archer would normally do to say a trebuchet or ram. Although the mangudai still doesn't do as much damage as a heavy cavalry, it's bonus and rapid rate of fire can make short work of siege weapons. The mangudai is better in every way than the heavy cavalry archer, so build multiple castles and churn out these units.

PERSIAN WAR ELEPHANT

Cavalry.

The war elephant is a massive and intimidating unit. It has 450 hit points and does 15 damage. And it has good piercing armor. Even unupgraded it is a juggernaut of destruction. However, upgrade the war elephant as soon as you can, and you will gain a powerhouse. The elite war elephant has 600 hit points, does 20 damage, has better piercing armor, and does splash damage to all units it touches except for those directly behind it. Both elephants also have bonuses to attack against buildings, so they are absolute monsters when it comes to razing towns. They beat down cavalry and infantry easily. The only thing they fear are hordes of pikemen and monks. The pikemen do great damage to elephants; three pikemen can take down an elephant, with only one pikeman going down.

In addition, you should fear monks because they can easily convert your elephants, and you'll not only lose an expensive and powerful unit, but have it turned against you. If you use elephants, make sure you research faith first and support your elephants with light cavalry or cavalry archers, both of which should kill all monks on sight. If you can neutralize enemy monks and pikemen, nothing can stand against your elephants.

SARACEN MAMELUKE

Camel.

Mamelukes fulfill the same role as camels, but they do slightly more damage and have a ranged attack. Because they have a ranged attack that does regular and not piercing damage, the mameluke is like the throwing axeman in that it is good against units with high piercing armor. Indeed, the mameluke and elite mameluke are as good as the throwing axeman at their duties. However, as an added bonus, it does double damage to all cavalry and elephants. However, the mameluke has many less hit points than the camel and heavy

camel, so it can't completely replace those two units for the Saracens, but then the mameluke does greater damage than those units and has a ranged attack. If the mameluke had more hit points, it could absolutely replace the heavy camel, but alas, it does not. When creating a cavalry force, the Saracens should make the majority of their force mamelukes, but keep a sizeable group of heavy camels for traditional cavalry roles such as destroying siege weapons and archers. Although mamelukes have a ranged attack, they benefit from cavalry blacksmith upgrades.

Teutonic Knight

Infantry.

The Teutonic knight is the most powerful infantry unit in the game and can kill the samurai despite the samurai's bonus against unique units. It has the most hit points, does the most damage, and has a staggering armor rating. The regular Teutonic knight is the equal of nearly all infantry, elite or otherwise. The elite Teutonic knight is even more powerful, with a whopping 100 hit points, 17 attack, and 10 armor. It defeats all units in one-on-one battles except for the cataphract and war elephant. The Teutonic knight's only weakness is its slow movement, which makes it vulnerable to far ranged archery units and monks. Longbowmen and mangudai can shred Teutonic knights apart without being touched, and monks can convert them with almost as much ease as they convert elephants. Mangonels can likewise greatly harm these units. Teutonic knights are very vulnerable to archers because of their slow speed and their relatively weak piercing armor, so when employing knights, you must accompany them with skirmishers or cavalry. Another unit that can utterly demolish the Teutonic knight is the hand cannoneer, which is not affected by the Teutonic knight's armor and does more than 20 damage per hit. However, in all other respects, Teutonic knights are super infantry.

Turkish Janissary

Foot archer/hand cannoneer.

The janissary is a special hand cannoneer, but it is better than the common or garden variety cannoneer by virtue of its greater range. It performs the functions of the hand cannoneer admirably, meaning it is the perfect infantry killer, has excellent range, can kill Teutonic knights and elephants easily, and does great damage to buildings. However, it also has the

fallacies of the hand cannoneer; it doesn't benefit from range or attack upgrades, it sometimes misses at maximum range, and it has a slow rate of fire. Still, it is an excellent unit to accompany your siege weapons, for in great numbers, it can lay waste to crowds of units coming in. You can build janissaries instead of hand cannoneers. While the janissary is a little more expensive, it is simply better. Upgrade the janissaries if you use them because the elite ones do more damage, have more hit points, and have more armor. The janissary, just like the hand cannoneer, has a substantial bonus against infantry, so it should be used in lieu of archers for taking down infantry. Because Turks do not get arbalests, you should use janissaries in numbers as much as possible to provide ranged support for your troops.

VIKING BERSERKER

Infantry.

The berserker is a curious unit. It has very poor hit points, low attack, and no armor. Once you upgrade it, it gets a modest hit point boost, gets a little armor, and gets a significant attack upgrade. However, it still doesn't match up well against other unique infantry or the champion. Its one special ability is the ability to regenerate lost hit points. This regeneration is slow and won't keep you alive any longer than normal in a fight, but it does let you flee and recuperate for another attack. However, this ability requires micromanagement and the ability to pull your berserkers out at the right time. You can regenerate full hit points in under a minute, so you can keep resume attacking shortly, but if you must flee to regenerate, odds are the enemy will be pursuing you with cavalry or archers, in which case you'll be hunted down before you can regenerate. The ability is thus pretty much useless unless you are already winning, and if you are winning, then you don't really need to rest and regenerate. Your berserkers will not make up for your other infantry, so while they should be a part of your force, they shouldn't be the only infantry you use. Use a mix of champions and berserkers and always upgrade your berserkers because they are too weak otherwise.

VIKING LONGBOAT

Galley.

The Vikings' other unique unit is the longboat, which is essentially a floating chukonu. It is a war galley that fires a rapid succession of arrows. While the individual attack is modest, the aggregate effect is impressive. In addition, the longboat has better range the galley or

galleon and so is better in all respects than the other galley line ships. It has around the same hit points, but it is much more expensive. Viking players should always build longboats and can build them instead of galleons even. They offer excellent shore bombardment, although they still aren't that great against towers. However, they cut down galleons, cannon galleons, transports, and other ships. Because of their rapid fire, they can even take down fire ships and demolition ships before either can close. You must build multiple docks to pump out lots of longboats. To enable longboats, all you must do is build a castle, and they'll be available at the docks. Upgrade your longboats as soon as you can at the docks, for they get more hit points and better attack, armor, and range.

TOWERS

Towers are a vital component of any civilization's defense. In the Dark Age, you can only build an outpost, which has no attack, but does act as a reconnaissance post. When you enter the Feudal Age, you can begin to build watch towers, which have lots of hit points and a modest attack. In the next ages, you can research and then upgrade your watch tower to a guard tower and then a keep. Each incarnation does more damage and has more hit points. In addition, each tower can be garrisoned with archers or villagers, who add their strength or multiple arrows to the tower attack. In the Imperial Age, you can research and build a bombard tower, which has the same range but does much more damage. The bombard cannon is ideal for attacking troops that are traditionally impervious to tower fire, such as huskarls and siege weapons. As buildings, towers take very little damage from archers, but do take considerable damage from infantry and fall easily to rams, bombard cannons, trebuchets, and cannon galleons.

Every player should wall off his towns and build towers at key resource points for defense. It's a good idea to erect towers near resource spots even if you don't have a camp there yet. One key weakness of towers, though, is that they have a minimum range and so cannot hit units at their feet. That's why one of your first upgrades should be murder holes at the university in the Castle Age. It rids your towers and your castle of minimum range. The only tower exempt from this upgrade is the bombard tower.

One strategy you can use against your opponent is to build towers near his town. Then, you can leapfrog into his town with more and more towers. If you are staging an attack on a town, build a few towers by your troops so you can fall back and regroup after each skirmish. You can thus draw your enemy's units to your tower camp, do some damage, and

then attack again, pulling back for rest each time you start losing units. When building military buildings near enemy camps, it is a good idea to also build two or three towers for defense. When you clear out the area close to the enemy town with your troops, build another tower or two at maximum range from your current tower. This strategy can frustrate your opponent to no end, as he must choose to attack the sturdy towers and ignore your troops or concentrate on your army and let the towers attack with impunity. If your opponent is on the ropes, building several bombard towers in his town just hastens his demise. For these strategies, you can substitute a castle for even greater effect; not only does the castle do more damage, but you can also release your unique units near or in your enemy's town.

Unfortunately, towers require stone, and stone is at a premium on all maps. Whereas a map might have tens of thousands of gold, more wood, and unlimited food, there is usually barely more than ten thousand stone. So you need to claim and protect all stone deposits as early as possible.

MONK

The monk is a unique combat unit. It can heal your troops or assist in the battle by converting enemy units. However, it has no attack, is slow, and easily destroyed. To be truly effective, it needs lots of upgrades, to give it more hit points, increase its conversion range, quicken its conversion energy regeneration, and speed up its movement. Because the monk costs purely gold and because its upgrades are expensive, employing a monk strategy is incredibly expensive. About the only time you really want to use monks is when you are facing a Teuton or Persian player. In those cases, the monks can easily convert enemy elephants and Teutonic knights, both of which are powerful but slow units, easily susceptible to conversion because of their slow gait. When facing a large force of Teutonic knights or elephants, make sure you target units in the middle of the horde. Also, use a screen of units to distract the Teutonic knights or elephants and block their path so they can't close with the monks.

Monks are good against slow units because they have time to perform their conversion magic. Unfortunately, about the only units that fit into that category are the Teutonic knight and elephant. Monks are useless against archers, cavalry archers, and cavalry because these units can all kill the monks quickly before the monk can convert. In addition, monks

are useless against siege weapons until they research the redemption technology, and not every civilization gets that upgrade. Even then, mangonels will slay monks immediately because conversion takes awhile.

If you use monks, it is imperative you research illumination, fervor, sanctity, and block printing. Otherwise, it is best to simply have your monks pick up relics and heal your troops. Even then, healing doesn't so much have a battle field application. It's more useful to heal your troops after battle.

MILITARY UNITS BY AGE

Dark Age	Militia
Feudal Age	Man-at-arms, spearman, archer, skirmisher, scout cavalry, galley
Castle Age	Basic unique units, long swordsman, pikeman, crossbowman, elite skirmisher, cavalry archer, light cavalry, knight, camel, battering ram, mangonel, scorpion, monk, war galley, fire ship, demolition ship
Imperial Age	Elite unique units, two-handed swordsman, champion, pikeman, arbalest, elite skirmisher, heavy cavalry archer, cavalier, paladin, heavy camel, siege ram, siege onager, heavy scorpion, trebuchet, bombard cannon, hand cannoneer, galleon, cannon galleon, elite cannon galleon, fast fire ship, heavy demolition ship

Chapter Three: General Strategies

In this chapter, we'll take a look at some general strategies to get you going. These strategies can apply to both single- and multiplayer games. A very important determinant of your success is how you start a game. Do you have enough villagers to support a large economy and army? Do you try to rush the enemy and hope to wipe him out before he can reach the Castle Age? These are questions you must ask of yourself from the minute your start the game.

We'll tell you how to get started, including how many villagers you want and what building order to commit to. In addition, we'll give you an overview of the resources, detailing how important they are as the ages progress and which resources are the most rare, and thus the ones you must guard closely.

Another important issue is rushing - when to do it, how to do it, and how to stop it. In Age II, rushing is tough and means something different than what you are normally used to. Among the other factors of victory we will go over are wonders and relics.

Whereas the other sections of this article deal with campaign, civilization, or unit specific strategies, this chapter gives you tools to win, regardless of which civilization you play and which units you use. In essence, it is a general strategy section.

The First Age, and How to Get Started

The start of a multiplayer random map game in Age of Empires II is a critical time, for it sets the tone for the rest of the game. However, don't worry too much. If you make mistakes or go a little slowly, you won't be penalized too much, because the game automatically lets you defend yourself with your town center, should you find yourself on the receiving end of an early rush. With that in mind, it is perfectly reasonable to simply adopt a purely economic strategy in the early game.

After all, in the Dark Age, the only military unit you can build is the militia, and the one scout cavalry you start with is meant only for reconnaissance. It would be foolish to rush and attack your enemy with five militia, which is the maximum number of militia you can build in the Dark Ages without diverting precious wood and manpower to gathering gold in the Dark Ages. Such a strategy is suicidal, as the enemy will simply defeat your militia with his town center, jump to the Feudal Age before you, and attack you with more advanced troops.

It is far better to stick to building and gathering in the Dark Ages. You'll begin with three villagers, a scout, and a town center. In the random map game, you begin with 200 wood, 200 food, 100 gold, and 100 stone.

The first thing to do is build a fourth villager. That's all you have room for until you build a house. Have two villagers build a house and then have your third villager build a mill

In regicide games, you begin with ten villagers, a scout, a king, a town center, and a castle. Your starting resources are 500 wood, 500 food, 0 gold, and 150 stone. In a deathmatch game, you start with three villagers, a scout, and a town center, and have starting resources of 20,000 wood, 20,000 food, 10,000 gold, and 5,000 stone.

near the bushes. Then, set your scout cavalry to scout out the map by giving it waypoints. Create a concentric circle of waypoints and then click on the final destination to send the scout on its way. You want to identify sheep, stone, and gold early, and find where your opponents are. There should be sheep nearby your town. Have your scout find them first and bring them into your town center. Then, send the scout on its scouting mission.

As soon as the house is built, start creating more villagers. Rally them on the sheep or berry bushes, so they immediately gather food. Two of your original three villagers should be on the bushes, while the third should be on the trees nearest your town center. You will have spent 130 wood, so you have 70 left. Before you can advance to the Feudal Age, you must build a second building, but that can wait until you build more houses. When you build your eighth villager, have it build two houses, so you will have enough room for up to 10 more villagers. When he is done, if you have enough wood, build a lumber camp near the trees so you can gather wood faster. Soon, you will need wood for farms and more buildings. Continue cranking out villagers until you have 15 to 19 villagers. By this time, 12 to 15 should be on food and up to five should be on wood. Your berry bushes should be running out soon, but you should have barely enough to advance to the Feudal Age. When the sheep run out, have three to five of them build a mining camp near a gold patch so you can gather gold, which will be needed in the Feudal Age.

OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES

Age II has four resources, and these four resources are more or less important as the ages progress. In the Dark Age, food is your most important resource because you need it to create food and advance to the Feudal Age. Wood is necessary because you need some to build two buildings for age advancement and several houses to support more villagers. In the Dark Age, you should have 75 percent of your villagers on food and 25 percent on wood. If you want to get a jump on gold to field a Feudal Age army, you might want to start changing that to 60 percent food, 30 percent wood, and 10 percent gold once you start advancement.

In the very early game, in the Dark Age, you must get most of your food from sheep, game, fish, and other sources. When first searching for food, sheep provide the fastest food, followed by fish and berry bushes. Boar and deer provide lots of food but in intermittent bursts, as villagers gather 35 food before returning to a mill or town center. Farming is good because it is absolutely reliable and also produces vast quantities of food. When first gathering food, setting five villagers apiece to hunting, sheep, and berry bushes is a good bet. When sheep and bushes run out, having a team of five hunters amidst your farming force is still a good idea, especially if you are the Mongols or Goths.

In the Feudal Age, you need lots of wood to build farms and more buildings and because some technologies require it. Gold and stone also become important because troops require gold and defenses require stone. In addition, gold is needed for some technologies. Advancement to the Castle Age requires much more food and two hundred gold. Food still remains your primary resource, followed by wood, then gold, and then stone. If you want defenses, stone will become a higher priority. If you want to support troops and lots of research, gold becomes a higher priority. At this stage, you want to split your villagers so 50 percent are on food, 30 percent on wood, 10 on gold, and 10 on stone. One thing to note is that if you want to build a castle immediately upon hitting Castle Age, you must devote more villagers to stone mining, thus changing it so that 20 percent of your villagers are on stone. That way, when you get to Castle Age, you can have a castle right away. As always, consider what you are playing toward. If you want to go heavy on siege weapons to knock out your opponent early, you must stockpile lots of wood in anticipation of when you arrive in the Castle Age, so you might have 40 percent of your villagers on wood. If you want to go heavy on knights, you'll need as much gold as food. The key is to plan ahead and start gathering so you have a stockpile ready, rather than advancing first and then collecting the necessary resources.

In the Castle Age, your gold requirements are much higher, so you'll now need about as much gold as you do wood. In addition, if you are going to build more castles, stone will be a big priority. Now is the time when your war machine will be cranking on all cylinders, so you need lots of food, wood, and gold. In this age, you probably need more food then gold, wood, and stone. You also must dynamically adjust your villager allocation as you see your stockpiles growing or shrinking in a particular area. When you have a large surplus of wood and want to crank out more troops, turn some lumberjacks to farmers. If you have lots of food but need gold, make some farmers turn to mining.

In the Imperial Age, gold moves even higher up on your must-have list. Food remains a premium because many upgrades for super units, like paladins and heavy horse archers, require lots of food and gold. The resource priority remains the same as in the Castle Age: food, gold, wood, and stone.

Of course, circumstances can change this priority. On water maps, wood is more important than food because you must field a large navy. If you are going for a wonder, stone is more important than gold, because you must build lots of walls, towers, and of course, the wonder.

Remember that as far as the availability of resources, food is unlimited, while wood and gold are abundant. Stone, though, is in very short supply.

how many villagers should you have?

Your army starts with your villagers. It is therefore important that you create a large work force and research the necessary upgrades to help them at their jobs. If you aren't going for a purely military strategy, you should research the wheelbarrow and hand cart because they make your villagers much more efficient. Fishing boats do not benefit from these upgrades.

Fishing boats count as villagers, and in fact, are a good food gatherer in the first two ages because they don't cost food, which is at a premium, and fishing is a quick source of food. Indeed, you can set more villagers to other resources if you have fishing boats to take the place of farmers or gatherers.

You should have a robust workforce of 20 to 25 villagers in the Dark and Feudal Age and up that to 30 to 35 in the later ages. As you build a larger army, you can delete villagers to make room for your troops. However, if you increase the cap higher than the standard 75, you can increase your villager count to 40, bringing home the resources and letting you support a much larger army.

What Building Order Should You Have?

As important as gathering resources in the early game is when and where to build your buildings. The first things to build are houses to support a greater population. Next, you should place a mill, so you can gather food from berry bushes faster. Your next building should be either a dock for fishing or a lumber camp, so you can get wood faster. Do not build your houses near your mill because you want to have room to lay down farms around the mill.

When placing your first few buildings, you should place your mill about one farm length's away from your town center. The reason being that if you get rushed, you can garrison your town center, and your mill will be within the sphere of attack of your town center. You should likewise build your first barracks and military buildings within this sphere. Later, you will obviously build farther away, but if you fear an early rush and don't want to see your far-off buildings get attacked while you watch helplessly, build your first buildings within six tiles of your town center, so they fall under the protective umbrella of the town center. Obviously, your lumber and mining camps can't be built in this range. When building farms, ring them around your town center without any spaces between farms.

While you are waiting to get to the Feudal Age, you should lay down a barracks, so you can build the next line of military buildings. Your first two Feudal Age buildings should be a blacksmith shop, so you can upgrade your troops. Then, build an archery range for ranged support for your troops, since the only unit you can build at the stables, the scout cavalry, isn't a very good unit. The market should be built if you have the wood to spare. While the market isn't vital, it is very useful if you have a huge surplus of one resource and want to buy resources to advance quickly in age or build troops right away instead of waiting for more resources to trickle in. It is during the Feudal Age that you should start walling in your town, so you can't be attacked by Feudal Age rushers. As you claim resource spots, you should also wall them in as well.

If you choose to rush in the Castle Age, you should set up a watch tower and several military buildings near your enemy's base. Build outside his line of sight and lay down a tower and then two barracks, followed by one or two archery ranges. In the Castle Age, you can actually build a castle there as well. Stables can be built in your home town because cavalry can move quickly. In the Castle Age, you should build a university right away for some vital upgrades. If you want to jump to the Imperial Age, your most obvious choice is to build a castle, so you can get a good defensive structure and immediately advance, provided you have the resources. However, if you want to attack a town, build a siege workshop near the enemy town.

how and when to rush?

Rushing is an essential part of any real-time strategy game. However, it is a little more complicated in Age II. You can't pull off a traditional rush in the Dark or Feudal Ages because your opponent can just garrison his villagers in his town center, which has a good range and does lots of damage, wiping out a dozen militia or men-at-arms quickly. Militia are too weak to mount much of a rush, so you really can't attack in the Dark Ages. You can however, have your scout harass a few villagers and then run away. Even distracting your enemy's villagers for a few seconds gives you a slight and momentary advantage.

It is in the Feudal Age that you can start harassing your opponent. By that age, he has built lumber and mining camps and has them well outside the protective range of his town center. A viable rush is to create a dozen archers and rush to his town, scouting with your scout cavalry for his gold miners and wood cutters. Then, systematically and quickly shoot down all his workers. Bring along men-at-arms and demolish his camps. Then, go for his houses. If he rings the town bell, he is losing valuable time that he could have used gathering resources. Position your archers just outside his town to shoot at villagers, but keep them just out of the town center range. Go for any buildings that aren't within the six-tile range of the town center and destroy them. If your enemy attacks with troops, take care of them and find that barracks or archery range.

Rushing in Age II means pretty much taking out all villagers and buildings just beyond the town center and leaving the town center to your rams in the Castle Age. Because gold, wood, and stone are usually more than a few tiles from your town, you usually must build these camps far from your base and risk having your villagers work outside the protective influence of your town center. Your enemy must do the same. Use this to your advantage and attack him at these defenseless spots. Chase his villagers back to the town center, but don't get too close. Wait with your archers and attack his villagers anytime they ungarrison. This way, you keep him locked up inside the town center and can eventually starve him to death. As you stunt his growth, you can advance much more quickly, crank out a few rams, and finally demolish his town.

To defend against this, you should position your buildings so they do fall within the six-tile range of the town center and then upgrade your archery attacks at the blacksmith as soon as possible, so you can increase that range. Abut your buildings to your farms, so they all can be covered by the town center. And as soon as you enter the Feudal Age, erect walls around your base. The sooner you can wall off your base and any resource nodes, the less likely you are to be rushed. If you can completely wall off your base, you are safe until the Castle Age.

Obviously, a rusher must therefore try to rush with his archers and men-at-arms as soon as possible, before the enemy walls go up.

UPGRADES AND TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a vital part of the game. There are many economic upgrades that increase the efficiency and speed of your workers and better your resource gathering. There are also military upgrades that boost your troops' effectiveness. What are the must-have upgrades, and which can you wait on? We'll tell you, but the answers depend on what strategy you want to employ. Obviously, if you want to jump through the ages, economic advances are a priority. If you plan to attack or be attacked, military advances are a must-have.

As always, don't just research everything because you can. Pick a strategy you want to execute and research the technologies you need to carry out that strategy. Use your idle time, such as when waiting for houses, to research town center advances like town watch and loom. When you are waiting to get enough gold to produce cavalry, but have a surplus of food, research some food-intensive upgrades at the blacksmith.

Here are a few technologies you just can't do without.

MUST-HAVE ADVANCES

ALL UNIT UPGRADES TO BETTER FORMS (ALL AGES): You must upgrade as soon as possible, for example from militia to men-at-arms, or else your obsolete soldiers will lose every battle they encounter.

BLACKSMITH UPGRADES (ALL AGES): All these are important depending on which units you use for attack and defense. If you are rushing in the Feudal Age, research better arrows, so you do more damage per hit and increase range. If you aren't attacking with knights, don't bother with cavalry armor. See which units you will use and only upgrade those, but upgrade both their attack and armor.

MURDER HOLES (CASTLE): This is absolutely essential, because it means your towers can now attack units at close range.

BALLISTICS (CASTLE): To make your archers more effective, you must research this. Otherwise, your archers will miss when they attack from far range.

CONSCRIPTION (IMPERIAL): Absolutely do not ignore this advance because it quickens your troop training town, so you can make troops faster. It is a great ability and should be researched immediately, so you can crank out larger armies in shorter time.
FAITH (IMPERIAL): This advance is absolutely necessary if you spot enemy monks in number because without it, your units are much more susceptible to conversion. Teutons and Persians should definitely research this as soon as possible.

STRATEGY-DEPENDENT ADVANCES

SHIPWRIGHT (IMPERIAL): If you are on an island map, this advance is a must-have because it makes ships less expensive by 20 percent.
MASONRY (CASTLE) AND ARCHITECTURE (IMPERIAL): If you are going purely defensive in your strategy, you need these two upgrades because they increase the hit points and armor of your buildings.
SIEGE ENGINEERS (IMPERIAL): Conversely, if you are trying to attack a heavily fortified town, you want the siege engineers advance to field stronger siege weapons with better range.

ECONOMIC ADVANCES

Farm upgrades are more important than mining or wood cutting upgrades because farms begin with so little food. You need those upgrades to make your farms better. The hand cart and wheelbarrow are important advances and should be researched during those times when you are waiting for houses to be built so you can generate more units. If you are creating a large army, the gold mining upgrades are very important.

DEFENSIVE PLAY

Not all Age II players want to race to the best units and start hurling themselves at all enemies with massive armies. Some are better skilled at playing a defensive game. Indeed, some civilizations are designed to be played in a defensive manner. The Turks and Teutons, for example, are excellent defensive civilizations, and the Byzantines and Chinese are also good at playing defensively. On the other hand, some civilizations, like the Goths, are terrible at it.

What is playing defensively? Basically, it means erecting walls as soon as possible to prevent rushes and building towers to protect your interests. The goal is to give yourself breathing room to decide on a more active strategy later. If you are well protected and have claimed lots of resource nodes, you have the luxury of deciding exactly how and when to attack. You also want to adopt a defensive strategy if you plan on eventually building a wonder.

To start with, you should build outposts around your town, preferably near resource spots. This gives you advanced warning of danger and those who might want to pilfer from your resource areas. Playing defensively requires that you have lots of stone and that you start building defenses in the Feudal Age, so you want to start mining stone toward the end of the Dark Age. Just as offensive players would want to mine gold in the Dark Ages in anticipation of creating lots of troops in the Feudal Age, you will be mining stone in anticipation of building walls and towers. Of your initial workforce of 20 villagers, have 10 on food, four on wood, and four on stone, and two on gold. You want lots of stone, and as soon as you reach the Feudal Age, you want to wall off your town. Use natural obstacles, like forests and water for protection. So, you could anchor a wall between two forests for example. Take care not to accidentally cut through your natural defenses though. In addition, look ahead to the future and wall off potential resources. If you see a gold deposit a little way from your town, consider moving your planned wall out to include the gold.

Then, start building towers and gates around your wall. Stack your towers together, so they can each defend each other, since towers in the Feudal Age can't attack close targets.

As soon as you get to the Castle Age, you want to build a university right away and research murder holes and better towers.

The key to being successful on defense, though, is not just having good static defenses. You need a mobile force that can sally forth and attack siege weapons, which can turn your well-crafted defenses to rubble. Have a dozen or so cavalry inside your walls, ready to go forth and smite your enemy siege weapons. And station your own siege weapons within your walls to fire first at siege weapons that are coming for you.

In the Imperial Age, bombard cannons and trebuchets can also be set up in the same way to offer protection.

Eventually, of course, you must go out and attack to win...unless you go for a wonder victory.

Building and holding a wonder

One way to win a game of Age II is obviously to destroy all your enemies. To win, you must destroy all his war-making units, which include villagers and all military buildings. However, another way to achieve victory is to build and maintain a wonder.

If you adopt this strategy, you must mine lots of stone. Stone is already scarce, but you must explore the map and claim more stone deposits than you might normally have to. That's because you not only need the 1,000 stone to build the wonder, you also need more stone for plenty of towers, a castle or three, and all the building and defensive upgrades.

Do not build your wonder until you are ready to defend it. If you do build the wonder, they will come. That means your enemies will start planning their assaults immediately, and if you don't have any defenses in place already, they can come immediately and just wipe out your villagers and half-built wonder. So, it is important to lay down your defenses and have a standing army before you begin wonder construction. When you do build your wonder, apply at least a dozen or more villagers to the task so you can complete the wonder quickly. Otherwise, it normally takes a good 15 minutes to complete. Depending on the map size, you must hold the wonder for another 10 to 20 minutes (the larger the map, the more years you must hold the wonder). You can't control the latter amount of time that must elapse, but you can control the time you spend building it.

You want to pick a location that is easily defensible. First, build it within the walls of your city and behind several buildings. That ensures there is one first line of defense and cluttered buildings your enemy must navigate to get to the wonder. Next, if you rule the seas, you can build the wonder with one or two sides facing the ocean. However, if you don't rule the seas,

your wonder will be destroyed within a minute by cannon galleons. If possible, build your wonder with one side backed up against the edge of the map. That way, you know you can't be attacked from that side. If neither that nor the ocean (provided you control it) are available, pick a large forest.

Next, build several layers of walls around the wonder site. Each wall ring should be spaced about 3 or so tiles apart, with towers ringing the inside of each wall. The walls and towers will provide protection from cavalry and infantry, but what you really need to watch out for are trebuchets and bombard cannons. These can rain death on you from a great range, so you want to build your walls far enough apart so that enemy trebuchets can't unpack just outside your outermost wall and still hit your wonder. With three walls lined with towers, you force your enemy to pack and unpack three times and waste his time busting through three sets of defenses.

Just inside the outermost wall, you want to unpack your own trebuchets to the tune of two trebuchets per side. These trebuchets can attack any enemy trebuchets that start to unpack to attack your defenses. In addition, have two to three mangonels inside each wall to attack incoming rams. As added insurance against these siege weapons, you want to have a team of a dozen or so cavalry waiting outside the walls and ready to take on siege weapons. Because your enemy will probably come with much infantry protection for his siege weapons, it is important not to sally forth from within your walls because the enemy can see where you are coming from and can move his troops accordingly. Have your cavalry take a position outside and away from your walls, whether north or south, or whatever. Then, when the enemy force comes in, attack from the flank to destroy his siege weapons. It is important to set up a succession of static defenses, backed up by your own siege weapons, to provide layered defenses and then also maintain a free-form cavalry force to pick off enemy siege engines.

The most important piece of this puzzle is having a dozen or so villagers inside the final ring of walls, poised to repair the wonder if necessary. Remember, you will need stone to repair it, so make sure you have some left or sell off food and wood to get more stone if need be.

DESTROYING A WONDER

If you are the one attempting to destroy a wonder, you are in a bad position because you have a deadline to meet. If you don't mount an effective offensive in a given amount of time, you've lost.

The best thing to do is make sure your enemy doesn't have the resources to build a wonder in the first place. As with all games, success starts with scouting. Make sure you continually scout the map and claim stone deposits, laying down outposts or towers near each one if you have to. If you watch the stone deposits, you will see if your opponent is devoting a lot of time and energy to mining stone. That should tip you off. Keep harassing his miners, so you don't give him the room or time to collect stone. Your attacks will force him to spend time creating a mobile defense force, which in turns detracts from his wonder strategy. The key is to keep attacking and not let your opponent have the luxury of building a wonder.

However, if your opponent does happen to build a wonder, you must mount an offensive to take it down. If he builds the wonder within 13 tiles of the ocean, destroy it with cannon galleons. This is the easiest way to take down a wonder, as the cannon galleons need only be guarded by a dozen fire ships or so. Their range will keep them away from any towers the enemy might have. If the enemy has built his wonder completely inland, you must go in with siege weapons, preferably trebuchets and siege rams. All your other troops are there to protect your siege weapons or distract the enemy.

When a wonder is built, the location is revealed on the map. If you can, build a military outpost near that location, with a castle, two siege workshops, and several other military buildings. The castle will help protect you if the enemy sallies forth with cavalry. Next, you want to have your trebuchets unpack and attack the towers of the enemy fortifications. If he has trebuchets of his own planted down for defense, you must go up to the enemy walls with your bombard cannons and shoot the entrenched trebuchets apart. Bombard cannons have the mobility to dodge trebuchet fire and can easily destroy trebuchets. They also have enough range that they won't be hit by towers and mangonels. If you don't have bombard cannons,

then mangudai and mamelukes have the best chance to take down fortified siege weapons easily. Otherwise, you must resort to cavalry archers while also unpacking your trebuchets to engage in a shooting match with the enemy ones. Always make sure you have greater numbers than the enemy, so if you lose one or two while unpacking, you can still wipe out his trebuchets.

All the while, you must keep a box formation of pikemen around your siege weapons and a group of cavalry waiting to engage any troops that might ambush you. As long as you can wipe out enemy trebuchets and towers, you can methodically push into his defenses to wipe out his wonder. The only problem is time, so as soon as your enemy builds his wonder, use that marketplace to buy the resources you need and start building your army. Scout the area around the enemy's wonder to see what defenses, if any are already up. It's now a race to see if you can deploy a larger army before he completes his defenses.

Winning with Relics

Another victory condition is taking and holding all the game's relics. Winning this way is difficult because the relics are always scattered about the map. If you don't move fast enough, at least one or two of these will already be taken by enemy monks before you can collect them all. It is important to scout the map early and uncover every inch of the map. Relics will appear as white dots on the minimap. The sooner you locate the relics, the better positioned you will be to seize them. If you plan on winning this way, try to collect all the relics in the Castle Age. You want to be the first to jump to the Castle Age, so you can send out your monks before the enemy can. By being the first to reach the Castle Age, you ensure that no one else can yet move the relics. Create as many monks as there are relics and have the monks go forth to collect them. Escort each monk with a few cavalry. If you manage to collect all the relics in the Castle Age, you'll have a much easier time than if you built a wonder in the Imperial Age. That's because the only siege weapons in the Castle Age are the battering ram, mangonel, and scorpion. You can wall off your monastery, erect several towers and

a castle for protection, and keep some troops around to insurance. Unfortunately, it is not wise to commit to building a defense around your monastery if you don't already have all the relics because if you end up ditching this strategy, you'll have a bunch of defenses around one monastery.

However, if even one relic is taken by an opponent, you should abort this strategy because you must forcibly take that relic from your opponent's base. All players should actively search out and take relics, both so you ensure that no one wins with relics, and so you can collect relic gold.

Chapter Four: Combat Strategies

Whereas the previous chapter dealt with general strategic information, such as how to start, where and when to build, and how to play defensively, this chapter deals with more immediate tactical concerns like how to control your troops and how to counter enemy units. We'll cover the always-important role of reconnaissance and also delve into unit controls, formations, combined arms, and other information you have to know.

Reconnaissance

It is important to always scout the map, not once or twice, but constantly. You want to use your starting scout cavalry to locate all the resources, relics, and enemy towns. Then, you want to continue to explore to see when your enemy erects walls and see if he is building new bases on the map. It is important to watch resource nodes, so you know when someone else tries to claim them. It's not a bad idea to build outposts, which are cheap, around gold and stone deposits. Anytime you are idle, waiting for something to be done or built, take an active role in scouting.

Controls

Make use of numbered groupings, so you can more easily select and command troops in the heat of battle. Assign your various types of units to numbers, so that way if you need to single out one unit type for a certain action, like taking your light cavalry to attack an incoming

mangonel, you can do so without band boxing the whole army and diverting all your units' attentions. You could have your infantry as 1, foot archers as 2, cavalry as 3, cavalry archers as 4, rams as 6, and so on. Use hot keys as often as possible. Memorize the hotkeys for building (structures B) and for all military and nonmilitary buildings. For instance, to build a barracks, just hit B twice. To build a house, you hit B, then E. To crank out villagers, just click on the town center and hit C. To create unique units at your castle, just press T. If you need lots of skirmishers in a pinch, you can just press R multiple times. Memorize the list of military building and unit creation hotkeys. Assign rally points for all your military buildings so your troops all gather in one spot. It is easier to coordinate that way. When you finally arrive in combat, let your infantry and cavalry attack on their own, but specify targets for your archers and siege weapons.

FORMATIONS

You don't have to use formations, but they can come in handy. When moving slow units like monks and siege weapons around, it is a good idea to travel in box formation. The computer is smart enough to put the infantry on the outside box, the archers inside of that in another box, and the siege weapons in the very center. When you greet the enemy, you can switch to flank formation, which divides your army into two sides, which converge on the enemy, swinging around the enemy's flank to meet in the middle. This is a good formation for your swift cavalry. Scattered formation is a great one for your foot archers, for it spreads them out and thus minimizes their damage from mangonels. Generally, your units will move at the speed of the slowest unit in the group. For that reason, do not place cavalry and cavalry archers in the same formation as your other units. These two types must be free to respond quickly to unforeseen situations or forces, and having other units attached to them will weigh them down.

COMBINED ARMS

You won't win in Age II unless you can use multiple unit types together. Infantry are the mainstay of your army, but they are easy prey for mangonels and archers. Thus, bring support for them. The most common combined arms formation is to bring infantry and archers

along in a force, as the archers will provide ranged fire to support the infantry against other infantry and cavalry. Next, increase the complexity of your force by adding light cavalry, which can pursue siege weapons that get close and harass enemy skirmishers that might zero in on your archers. The light cavalry can also attack enemy archers that crop up. Siege weapons should be added to your entourage to attack buildings, as archers are terrible against buildings and cavalry merely average. However, if you do this, you must keep your infantry close to your siege weapons to protect them. For a fast strike force, consider using knights and cavalry archers. These units can run down any other unit, chop them down, and then flee. They are ideal for taking down enemy archers, monks, and siege weapons, and can really hurt infantry. On the water, consider using a combined formation of a dozen galleons, half a dozen fire ships, and a handful of cannon galleons. This force is thus equipped to handle enemy galleons, enemy cannon galleons, and bombard shoreline defenses.

COUNTERS

If you are facing lots of archers, build skirmishers and mangonels. If you are faced with cavalry, build pikemen. If faced with infantry, build lots of archers. If monks are attacking, build light cavalry and cavalry archers. When facing siege weapons, build light cavalry. If war elephants are attacking, use monks and pikemen. If you are facing Teutonic knights, go with cavalry archers and monks. In the face of cavalry archers, deploy camels and cavalry.

DESTROYING TOWNS

It is difficult to destroy a town in the early game, as discussed in the rushing section. You should wait until the Castle Age because the best way to destroy a town is with several rams. Your troops are simply there to guard those rams and chase down enemy units. If you want to chance a full attack in the Feudal Age, make sure you take a dozen or so archers to kill villagers (the more villagers you kill, the less that can garrison the town center) and at least two dozen men-at-arms. In the Imperial Age, your options are more open, as you can still go in with rams or try to take down a town with trebuchets or bombard cannons. You can bring in cavalry archers to provide mobile ranged support and heavy knights to tackle incoming infantry.

UPGRADES

Upgrade your units as soon and often as possible. Attack and armor upgrades can seriously turn the tide of battle. While the individual units get a little stronger, it's when you add the collective power of these many slightly improved units that you get phenomenal results. Archers should definitely research arrow attack first, so they increase their range and attack strength. Likewise, infantry should upgrade their attack quickly. If you are facing archers, armor upgrades are very important minimize damage while closing. These unit upgrades make all the difference in combat. So, you should research them immediately when you arrive in a new age.

TIPS AND TACTICS

Here are a few key tips and tactics to keep in mind. Some are explained elsewhere in this guide in more detail, under each unit heading, but here is a quick reference to some helpful hints.

- Keep cavalry archers out of range and swoop in after your infantry tangle up the enemy troops.
- Lure the enemy out with a handful of foot archers, but keep your cavalry archers hidden and ready to spring out.
- Likewise, use your scorpions to lure out enemy units and then rush in with cavalry.
- Build towers at enemy borders and keep leapfrogging in with more towers.
- Build military buildings near your enemy's town and crank out troops with rally points in his town.
- If you are in a rush, such as when building towers or a castle near enemy lines, assign multiple villagers to a single building. A dozen villagers on a tower can build the tower very quickly.
- Locate and take all the relics you can find because they provide you with a steady stream of gold as soon as you garrison them in your monastery.
- Garrison wounded troops in your castle so they can heal inside. All units except for siege weapons can be garrisoned in a castle.

- Always have a plan when you are advancing through the ages. Don't just research everything haphazardly. Determine whether you are going for a defensive strategy, a wonder strategy, a Castle Age cavalry rush, or a comprehensive town-busting strategy in the Castle Age with siege weapons. Then, research just those technologies you need and start producing the units or defenses you need to carry out your strategy. It is difficult to maintain multiple strategies at once or try to spread your resources too thin trying to get every unit and upgrade. Decide what strategy you want and act accordingly. Frivolous spending and indecisive thinking will ruin you.

Chapter Five: Campaign Walk-Throughs

Age of Kings has five campaigns, although the first one, the William Wallace campaign, is really a tutorial, with instructions for how to play the game. Because of that, we won't be providing a walk-through for that campaign; it practically is a walk-through itself.

The four campaigns are, in order of difficulty: the Joan of Arc campaign, the Saladin campaign, the Genghis Khan campaign, and the Frederick Barbarossa campaign. Only in the Joan of Arc campaign will you actually control the namesake of the respective campaign. In every other campaign, you are under orders by your leader and have mundane forces under your command to fulfill those tasks.

The campaigns have scenarios that usually require you to quickly build up your forces to accomplish a goal, while also defending yourself from repeated attacks. After playing the campaigns, you can build a base in a hurry, defend yourself against massive invasion while still churning out resources and troops, and build and defend a wonder. Each campaign is progressively more challenging, and the odds are stacked ever higher against you as the game progresses. Here then, are our walk-throughs for the four true campaigns of Age of Kings.

Joan of Arc 1

STARTING OBJECTIVE

Escort Joan from the camp at Vaucouleurs to the Chateau of Chinon. Joan must survive.

This scenario is easy enough. As soon as you leave the town, several troops will join Joan and your two knights. You should travel west. You'll see a pitched battle between French and English forces, but can't help at all. As you continue west, you will come to a broken bridge. Your knights will then tell you to travel north. Along the way, you'll meet some resistance from Burgundian forces, but your knights and troops can deal with them. Keep Joan in the back of your forces, so she is not the first unit targeted when you meet enemy forces.

Continue up the coast north from the broken bridge, and at the edge of the map, you will find your allied army and several transport ships. You must take these transports across the river. Chinon, as revealed on the map, is in the west corner. Take your ships and sail south down the coast of the Chinon island, hugging the shore. When you find a clear area, you can drop your troops off and make the methodical trek north to Chinon. There are men-at-arms and towers guarding the way, but the rams and troops you pick up on your journey should serve you well enough to get to Chinon.

JOAN OF ARC 2

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Joan must survive.
- The cathedral in Orleans must remain standing.
- Escort Joan to Blois, so she may command the French army.

LATER OBJECTIVES

- Get Joan to the Orleans town center.
- Deliver six trade carts of supplies to the Orleans town center.
- Convince the British troops to withdraw by destroying at least one of their castles.

You start in the south corner and must first travel northwest to Blois, which is revealed in the west of the map. As you travel northwest, you will pass a monk near a monastery. Anytime Joan is injured, come back here for healing.

Once you arrive in Blois, you will be given the new objectives and control of a force of knights and crossbowmen in addition to the six trade carts. Orleans is to the northeast of Blois. A road leads that way and crosses a bridge to get to Orleans, but south of the road is a British tow. Don't veer south off the road. Just before the bridge is a Burgundian tower and several knights, men-at-arms, and crossbowmen. Take all your troops and the trade carts and move to Orleans. It is just north of the bridge. When you get to the bridge, have your carts hang back while you engage the enemy. Then, move north up the bridge into Orleans.

If Joan gets injured, bring her to this allied monk for healing.
You lose the scenario if she dies, so be careful.

Once you arrive in Orleans, you will be given another objective: to destroy a castle. The easiest one to get to is the castle directly south of the bridge. Although you will now have control of Orleans, you must build siege workshops and more military buildings. In addition, you must go back to Blois to cut wood and mine gold. Build a town center there and erect a few towers for additional protection. Use the marketplace in Orleans to buy resources as you need them to get off your feet. All the while, the English will attack you with infantry and bowmen, so be prepared. The English castle in the south is not as well defended as the ones to the north. Bring several rams protected by your crossbowmen, knights, and infantry to destroy it. The castles themselves are all walled off and protected by one or more towers. The one in the south is guarded by three towers, dispersed among three walls.

JOAN OF ARC 3

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Destroy at least three castles.
- Joan must survive.

You start with a modest military force and several villagers. You are on an island, so walk a little north, where you will find two transport ships. Take your transport ships directly across the river and walk a little way north, where you will find a large gold deposit and forests. Build your town here. Take your troops and explore the immediate area. North of where you start is a Burgundian lumber camp, and further north is a Burgundian town. Destroy all of it except the town center, which you should leave until you can build a few rams to take it down.

This scenario is like a random map scenario; you must start a base, amass an army, and destroy the British castles. There are four castles, and each is completely walled off and guarded by several towers. While you are building though, you should create some defenses, for the British will attack you intermittently, sending longbowmen and a few other troops after you. If you don't have cavalry to chase down the longbowmen, you will suffer greatly.

JOAN OF ARC 4

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Travel west to help reinforce the French town.
- Be wary of opposition along the way.
- Joan must survive.

LATER OBJECTIVES

- Destroy the town center of Rheims.
- Destroy the town center of Chalons.
- Destroy the town center of Troyes.

You start with a large army in the east and must make your way west to a French town. Along the way are some British guards, consisting of a dozen men-at-arms and crossbowmen. Your troops should have no problem defeating them enroute to the town. When you arrive, you will be given control of the small town, which consists of a town center and a few villagers. Start cranking out villagers, while keeping your forces together and ready to respond.

A force of scorpions and troops will descend from the town of Chalons in the north. Build a castle for defense and a siege workshop as soon as possible. You can take Chalons in the north with a few rams and your starting force. Rheims and Troyes will be more difficult to overcome.

The map is split into two halves, separated by a river. You are in the southern half, and the other cities are in the north. Chalons is in the western edge of this land mass, while Troyes is in the eastern half. Rheims is at the very north of the map. After taking down Chalons, you can advance on Troyes by going east from Chalons, rather than attacking south of Troyes by crossing the land bridge from your land mass to the British one.

Troyes has no walls, just some cavalry, other troops, and a castle. However, the castle is behind the town center if you are coming from the west, so you can ignore it. Just attack the town center with your rams, making sure you have cavalry and crossbowmen around to

defend them, and you will defeat Troyes as well. Along the way to Troyes from the west are crossbowmen and a few cavalry. If you wait too long though, the computer will build many more troops for its defense.

The hard part comes in attacking Rheims, which is completely walled off. Not only that, it is also well guarded by towers, mangonels, and longbowmen. You will need trebuchets to destroy this town center. Don't even try to tackle the whole town. It is only necessary to push in far enough to unpack your trebuchets and unload them on the town center. You can go north up from Troyes to attack the east gate of Rheims, but a castle is near that gate and will pose a problem. Instead, go back west and attack from the south gate into Rheims. You can unpack your trebuchets just south of the gate and knock out the towers and town center.

The British longbowmen will try to draw you into the city, where the towers and mangonels will decimate you. Instead, when you set your trebuchets down to attack the Rheim towers, have a force of infantry in front to meet the longbowmen that come out. Keep retreating away from Rheims. Have a second group of cavalry come around behind the longbowmen and sandwich the longbowmen between your infantry and cavalry. Also, beware of British knights, which will also come out to attack you. Once you destroy the few towers there, attack the town center. There is a castle to the east of the town center, but you shouldn't have to bother with it.

JOAN OF ARC 5

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Refugee villagers in Paris are attempting to escape English tyranny.
- Locate at least six of the refugees.

LATER OBJECTIVES

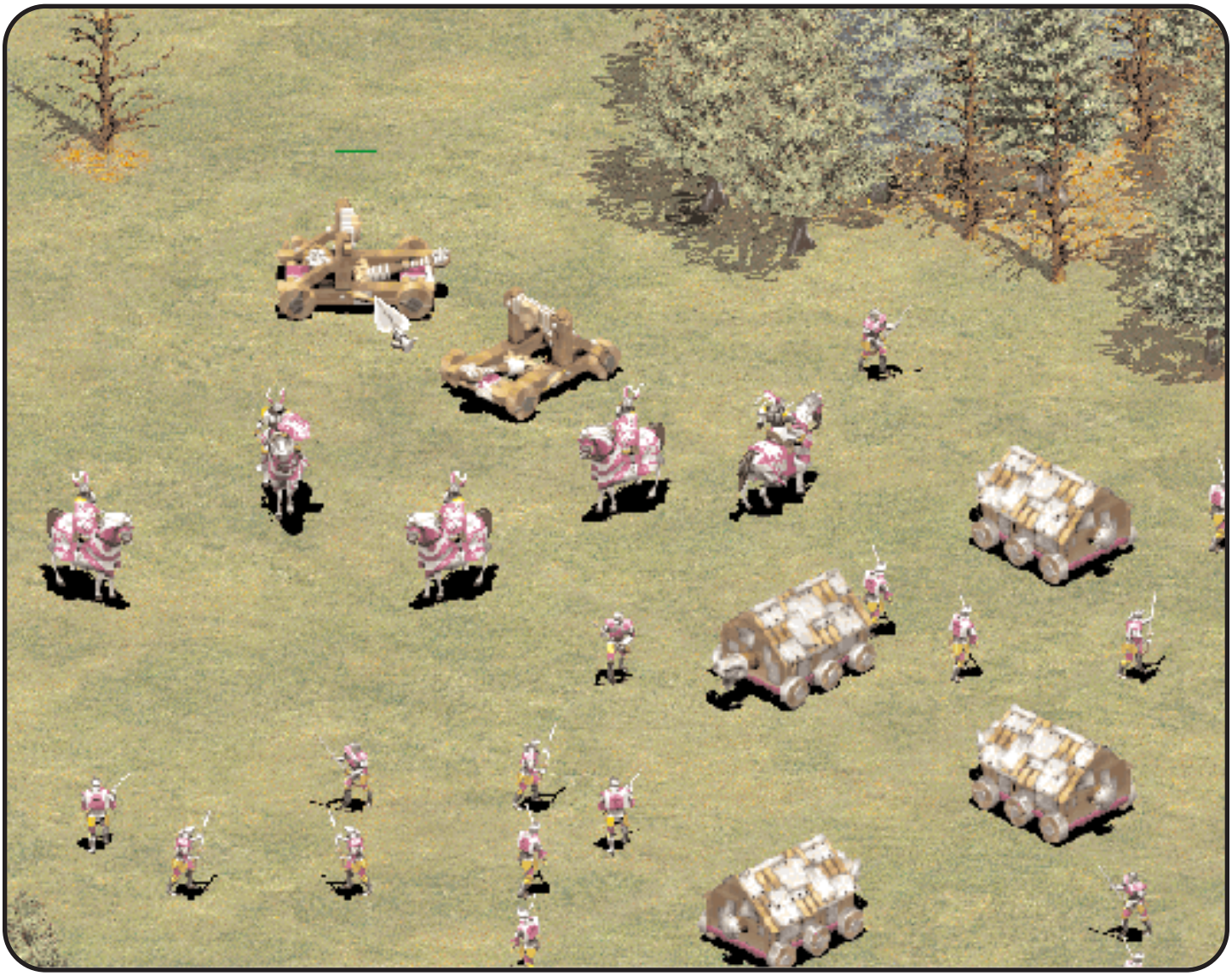
- Escort Joan and six refugees to the Chateau of Compiegne (the square between the flags).
- Rendezvous with the king's reinforcements in Paris, just south of the river bridge.
- Joan must survive.

You start in the bottom corner of the map with your force and must go west through Paris (red) and then north into a fortress at the northeast of the map (white).

Rush up to free these villagers, but make sure you clear away all defenses on the riverbanks of the city, or the towers and ships will kill them when you send them to wait by the river.

When first moving west, beware of a monastery and two monks. Kill them before they can take down your paladins and knights. Preferably, move in with two pikemen, which the monks will try to convert, and then run in with your horsemen. The way into Paris is blocked by a double gate, two towers, and a large force of longbowmen, plus several onagers and knights. They have full upgrades. Lure them out a few at a time before you assault the gate. Run up a few knights and then back away. You'll draw out the longbowmen and onagers.

Then, have your crossbowmen, knights, and bombard cannons ready to attack them when they are drawn out from the safety of their walls and towers. You can then start attacking the gate. Any remaining longbowmen and onagers will come out and attack you. Soon after, the enemy knights will come. Protect your siege weapons from the longbowmen and knights. Attack the gates with your trebuchets. Have a box formation of pikemen guarding the bombard cannon and keep your horsemen hotkeyed and ready to move in to attack incoming longbowmen and onagers. Have your bombard cannons attacking incoming onagers and longbowmen as soon as they appear.



This is the army waiting for you before Compiegne, so be careful. They won't attack your villagers, but they will go for Joan.

Inside the city and a few steps down the main road is another tower, which you can destroy with your cannons. You'll draw out some longbowmen with this attack, so have knights and crossbowmen ready to take them on. Additional defenses inside the city include a completely walled-off castle and trebuchet in the west of the city as well as additional longbowmen, champions, pikemen, onagers, and even a monk or two. Don't engage them head on; that's not your objective.

The key isn't defeating all the English troops. It's finding the villagers near the flag and then taking them to the bridge. There are ten villagers there, and you must keep six alive. Send your knights up to the flag and reveal the villagers. Before you get there, though, destroy the onager along the road because if you don't, it will attack the villagers and kill a cluster of them. After you get the villagers, keep them together and travel back down the main road and then up to the bridge. Don't just hug the coast and walk directly to the bridge because British cannon galleons could attack you. You should have secured the main road already with your troops. You should also destroy the two towers at the base of the bridge, or else they will kill your refugees. Send your knights and any remaining troops against the direction the refugees are traveling to stop the pursuing enemy troops.

Past river and to the right down the road from the cathedral are some Frankish units ready to serve Joan. They include two scorpions, two knights, two throwing axemen, and more than a dozen militia.

Instead of fighting your way through the gate, break a hole through the wall of the southeast side of the city, south of where you picked up the new troops. There is a tower there, so destroy it first. Then, go east until you are directly south of the gate and go up into Compiegne.

Cautiously approach the scout cavalry on the road to Compiegne. When you do, the Burgundians will attack the chateau, changing their status toward you to neutral. This is important because it means the two massive flanks of troops on either side of the road will ignore your villagers and attack your allied fortress. Send your refugees into the square first and then send in Joan. If you send Joan first, she could get attacked and killed before your refugees get to the square because she travels so much faster than them. Have her wait beyond the fighting, out of enemy sight. Then, rush her up to the square as the refugees arrive there.

JOAN OF ARC 6

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- The trade cart carrying the French flag must survive.
- Plant the French flag (loaded in a trade cart) on the hill in Castillon (covered with flags).
- Rendezvous with the French artillery, commanded by Jean Bureau.
- Rendezvous with the French army, commanded by Constable Richemont.

Go east with Guy, and you'll meet Constable Richemont (cavalry), La Hire (infantry), and the army (eight light cavalry, eight champions, 16 arbalests, six paladins, two trebuchets, and six villagers). Then, go south across the marshes, and you'll find Jean Bureau, six cannons, and eight cannoneers.

Then, attack the Burgundian town just west of where Jean Bureau is. You just need to take down the three towers behind the walls with your trebuchets and cannons. Keep your troops close by, and your hand cannoneers, crossbowmen, and knights will make short work of all incoming Burgundian defenses. Have your light cavalry close by to take on a few monks. Inside the Burgundian town, the only other defenses are a castle and another tower. Once you destroy the town center, you'll capture its stockpile of 1,665 wood, 400 food, 50 gold, and 150 stone.

Start building up your town and defenses. Destroy the gates so the enemy can't come into your town, but keep the rest of the walls. Replace the destroyed gates with your own gates. On the west side of town, there is a gap between the trees. Use your captured stone to build a wall quickly to keep out invading cavalry. Soon, the enemy will attack with rams, infantry, cavalry, and a few monks. To get to the victory area to plant your flag, you must follow the dirt road west. However, along the way are various stops guarded by towers, cannon towers, and troops. At each tower spot, there are knights and longbowmen. Some of the towers are bombard towers, so beware. Go in with a large force of siege weapons with cavalry and archers for support, and you can methodically make your way to the flag area.

SALADIN 1

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Defeat the Franks west of Cairo.

LATER OBJECTIVES

- Get your soldiers to the mosque in Cairo.
- Defeat the Franks east of Cairo by destroying their town center.

You start with a large army of camels, light cavalry, men-at-arms, and a few scorpions and mamelukes. Go south, and you'll encounter a few French crossbowmen.

Use this bombard cannon to destroy the towers on the west banks of Cairo before moving your troops in.

There is a French tent town in the south of the map guarded by more crossbowmen and a few knights as well as throwing axemen. This is about all the resistance you initially encounter on this side of the map (the map is split vertically into west and east halves). However, soon the Egyptians will turn on you, and you must destroy a few Egyptian forces.

To the east of the southern French town is a bridge. Go across the bridge, and you will find a cannon galleon that joins you. There is a small island in the middle of the bridge, where there are more knights and a blacksmith. Destroy the blacksmith to get chain barding for your camels and light cavalry.

You must now take your army into Cairo and take the mosque to bring the Egyptians back into line. However, there are towers on the western edge of the town that must be taken out first. Use your newly acquired galleon to destroy the gate and the west edge towers. Inside the city, there is little resistance, except for a castle that is east of the gate in the middle of the city. Steer clear of it and take the roads on the west edge of town up to the mosque. A monk or two will try to convert some of your units. When you arrive, you are given a siege ram, more camels, and some cavalry archers. The Egyptians are once again your friends.

Now, you must destroy the French occupation town center. To the southeast of the mosque, outside the city walls, are a few guard towers and pikemen, knights, mangonels, and crossbowmen. Your forces should be adequate for taking them down.

SALADIN 2

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Defeat Reynald's pirates.
- Defeat Reynald's raiders.
- Do not let your Aqaba and Medina allies be defeated.

Reynald's raiders are in the northeast of the map, close to the starting town. Reynald's pirates are in the far west corner on an island. Medina is in the far east. Aqaba is in the north. You must protect the trade routes between these towns, which means making sure no enemy units appear to disrupt the trade carts. These carts travel in a straight line from the east corner to the north corner.

Position a contingent of defenders here, because Reynald's pirates will unload cavalry and mangonels here to attack your town.

You start out with a small town, containing three villagers, four camels, and three scouts, but you have no military buildings.

If the allied cities survive, they will tribute 300 and then 400 gold to you at long intervals.

Occasionally, archers and skirmishers from Reynald's raiders will attack, but they are of no real concern. A few light cavalry or archers of your own will counter them.

You can move up and attack Reynald's raiders quickly, for this establishment is only guarded by a few skirmishers, archers, and scouts. There are a few towers at the gates of raider town, but two battering rams should be fine. Adding camels and light cavalry support should do it.

After a while, Reynald's pirates will attack your starting town with cavaliers, so have defenses and camels nearby. Have the camels and pikemen patrolling the coast. They'll rush to meet any attackers as they disembark from the ship.

Shortly after that, you will be attacked by onagers. An investment in ten pikemen, five camels, and five light cavalry is actually very inexpensive and should be adequate to protect you from both waves. The pirates will attack from the west, disembarking on the shores west of your town center. Keep your troops there for defense.

You must soon build docks and warships to take on Reynald's war galleons. Sail to the pirate island with three ships of knights, camels, and siege weapons, and you should take apart the island. There are several towers on the island coast, but none is clustered together, so you only need to take on one at a time. Your warships should patrol the coast to take on pirate war galleons and towers. You can land your troops on the thin southernmost edge of the island, which abuts the southwest edge of the map.

Behind the town center (northwest of the center) is a castle, so proceed with caution there. Then, you can rush in recklessly. Rams will take care of the castle quickly.

SALADIN 3

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Capture the Piece of the True Cross (a relic) and return it to the Horns of Hattin (marked by flags).

You will be attacked very shortly in both your south and north camps by knights, cavaliers, and spearmen from the Byzantines and Teutons.

After this initial assault, bowmen from Britons and more spearmen will start attacking your towns. Rebuild your palisade walls at the first opportunity and start building skirmishers and cavalry while upgrading your troops. You must build lots of troops to establish some good defenses to ward off attacks because there is no stone for static defenses. You must protect your villagers, so you can amass enough wealth to make your army. If you don't have cavalry early, you could be in trouble against the British bowmen.

The relic lies here. You must kill the monks, break through the walls, and send in a monk to grab the relic. Rush back, and you win.

If you can't stave off the first attack, you will forever be caught on the defensive against ever-increasing forces. Give them enough time, and the Byzantines will even come in with scorpions and battering rams.

To get to the relic, don't take the obvious route through the towns of the Knights Hospitaller and Templar. There is a secret way, along the very northwest edge of the map, here, where you should bring your force of infantry, archers, siege weapons, and monks.

Go down and take on the British first, which are south of your north camp. Receive the first attack, then rush forth, taking two rams to take down the town center. Then, your units can destroy the town easily. Make additional skirmishers. Rush to the Castle Age to get those rams. Shore up your south camp, so you can continue to produce gold. If you don't have adequate defenses, you will lose that town quickly.

If you lose that camp, there is a large deposit of gold near the British town.

The Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller are in the west. If you want to plow through the enemy forces to get the relic, you must go through the Templars first, then the Hospitallers. However, a better route would be to hug the northwest wall of the map and travel west. Get rid of the wall to the northwest, then sneak down to the relic. Take lots of archers to kill the monks, break your way through the palisade walls, and take that relic. Rush back to the flag area. You don't want to make multiple trips and give the computer time to bring defenses over there if you fail in your first bid, so make sure you have a large force before you go.

Three monks guard the relic.

SALADIN 4

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Do not any Jerusalem monastery or the Dome of the Rock be destroyed.
- Destroy the five towers defending Jerusalem, so that Saladin's army can occupy the city.

The Knights Hospitaller are in north. The Templar are in south. Byzantine farms, lumber, and gold mines are in the west and southwest.

Your first goal should be taking out the Knights Hospitaller and Templar because if you don't, they will build up and attack you repeatedly.

Have your starting villagers build a town right where you started, close to the gold and trees. Build a siege factory right away so you can crank out two rams. Then, build a castle for defense. Ideally, as you are building the castle, you can take your starting force (which includes some camels, mamelukes, and special arbalest units called the Archers of the Eyes) and your two rams to the northwest, where the defenseless Hospitaller town is. You'll raze it with few casualties as long as you let the rams take down the town center and keep your troops on the outskirts of the town. When the center goes down, send in your troops to mop up. There is a relic near the Hospitallers, but don't break down the walls to get it until you have a monk yourself, or Jerusalem will just send a monk to get it before you can.

Half an hour or more into the game, you'll find yourself attacked by enemy knights, crossbowmen, rams, mangonels, and a few Teutonic knights. You want to have ready a force of camels, knights, and pikemen around to handle them. Also, hopefully, you have built your castle and two towers close together, covering most of your town to offer defense in case of such an invasion.

The goal is to destroy the towers, so you want to build up to the Imperial Age and get trebuchets. You can harass the southwestern farms of the Byzantines to cut down on their food production, but keep your troops close by most of the time to fend off attacks from the Hospitaller and Templar knights. (Destroying those two early means you won't have to contend with their attacks later in the game.)

Four of the towers are on the edge of the city walls, while the fifth is in the middle of the city beside a mosque.

When you attack with your trebuchets, Jerusalem will come out with its cataphracts and arbalests as well as a few pikemen. Make sure you have camels, mamelukes, and skirmishers on hand. Just take a methodical approach, guarding your half dozen or so trebuchets with a box of camels and skirmishers, and you should be in good shape. Remember, your goal is the towers, not to destroy all the buildings and troops.

When you break through the city walls and attack the final tower, do not let your troops out of sight. They will attack all buildings within reach, so do not release control of them. Set any siege weapons to no-attack stance and have your trebuchets target only the tower. Your troops should stand behind the trebuchets, ready to defend them, but doing nothing else.

SALADIN 5

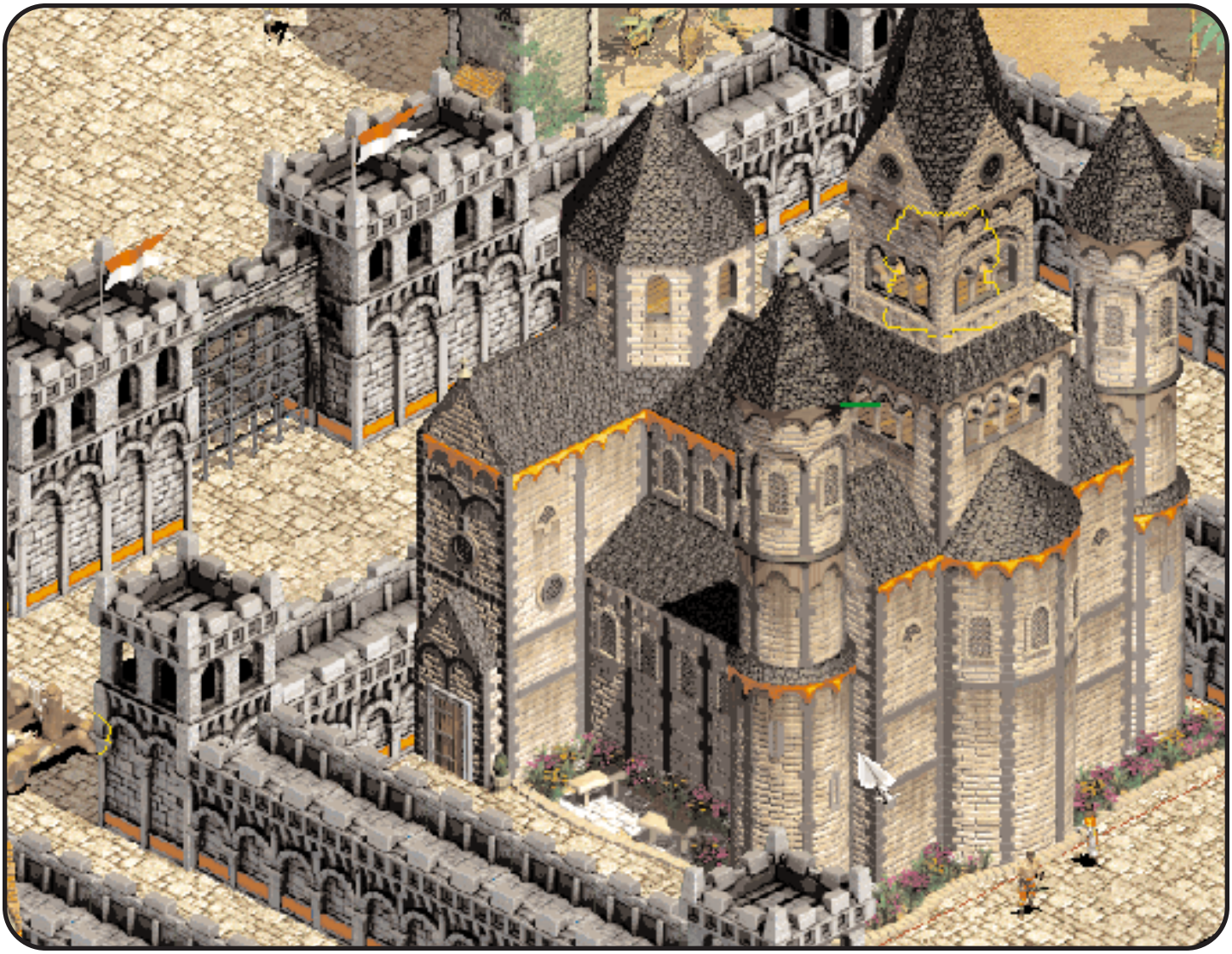
STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Defeat any two of the three Crusader cities: Tiberias, Tyre, or Ascalon.

One other city exists in this scenario, your ally Hebron, which lies northeast of you and is already revealed when the scenario begins.

There is a gold mine in your town, but you must venture outside to mine stone and chop wood.

After building a lumber and mining camp just outside your town and assigning ten villagers to collect wood and stone, you must start creating an army. The Frankish Tripoli guard will soon attack, and it consists of a battering ram, two mangonels, four knights, and several crossbowmen. Create a handful of skirmishers, light cavalry, and pikemen.



Here is Ascalon's wonder. To destroy it, you must unpack trebuchets just outside the city walls and shell the wonder. Remember to bring enough guards for the trebuchets, though. Cannon galleons can't reach the wonder from offshore.

Shortly after the scenario starts, Ascalon will build a wonder (if this doesn't happen when you play, count yourself lucky). Build two siege factories and additional military buildings outside your town so you can crank out an army. However, at the same time, the Frankish Tripoli guard will attack from the northeast of the city.

When you defeat the modest Tripoli guard attack, devote your time to building up your army. Ascalon (orange, Teutons) is in the south of the map, along the shores. It will be difficult to get there by sea, though, because Ascalon is guarded by a dozen ships, including fast fire ships, cannon galleons, and heavy demolition ships.

By land, Ascalon is guarded by numerous keeps and completely walled off. The wonder itself lies in a double walled area within the city itself. Crossbowmen, onagers, and cavaliers provide additional defense.

While building up your force, Tiberias (blue, Persian) and Tyre (yellow, Byzantine) might take advantage of your weakness and attack you shortly after the Tripoli guards do. Tyre is especially deadly because its forces will come with bombard cannons. Tiberias and Tyre won't let up either. You'll be repeatedly attacked by battering rams and cataphracts from land and by cannon galleons and demolition ships from the sea. Half an hour into the game, you want to make sure you have a force of ten galleons, with several demolition ships for support, because the first wave of Tyre ships will sport a dozen ships, consisting of cannon galleons, fire ships, and a few demo ships. Every 15 minutes or so, you'll get a similar attack, so make sure you have a navy of at least a dozen fully upgraded galleons at all times. Support ships, such as fire, demo, and cannon galleons would also help.

With regards to the Tyre troops that come to attack you, though, they are transported to your continent, since Tyre is on an island in the north. Thus, if you create a sizeable navy of eight to ten warships, you can have them patrol the waters near your town and destroy any incoming transports. It's an easy way to get rid of devastating troops that Tyre drops off; sink them while at sea.

This scenario demands that you create lots of ground and sea troops to defend against attack, and at the same time, keep your resource gathering at top speed while you create an army capable of siege.

An hour into the game, Tiberias could ask for 1,000 gold as tribute for a truce. Don't listen.

I recommend going for Tyre, since you will already have a large fleet to ward off the Tyre navy. Once the attacks stop, build up a force of cannon galleons, about six to eight should suffice, and protect them with an escort of galleons and fire ships. Then, sail for Tyre in the north. Your cannon galleons can destroy the Tyre city from afar (they have 15 range) without getting hit by the Tyre towers. If Tyre has any more ships to send at your cannon galleons, have your escort protect the bombard cannons. After the towers are destroyed, fire at will on the military buildings, castle, and town center in Tyre. When everything has been leveled, you can ferry one ship's worth of pikemen and champions to the island to mop up any units the cannon galleons couldn't get, like cataphracts. There shouldn't be too many troops.

With your large navy still intact, you can turn to Ascalon after you wipe out Tyre. Remember that Ascalon is protected by lots of warships, so beef up your navy with a half dozen more galleons and then sail south.

If at any time you need more money, there is an island in the northwest with lots of gold. You must come here anyway, since Tyre has a dock here.

Regardless, take your navy down to Ascalon and have your cannon galleons well in the rear, with your galleons and fire ships up front. Send these ships to attack the Ascalon navy on the shores of Ascalon's dockside. With the ships out of the way, bring in the cannon galleons to destroy all the towers on the shores. This attack should divert Ascalon's mangonels, which will try to come to attack your ships. Finish them off with your galleons. At this point, bring in your ground forces and march into Ascalon. Ascalon should have already been weakened by your first assault on the city (when you destroyed its wonder). Alternatively, you can continue attacking after you destroy the wonder and bring your navy down to support you at the same time. Then, when Ascalon is defeated, you can sail north to Tyre and destroy it last.

Of course, sadists can try to take on Tiberias, but it is better defended than either of the two other cities.

SALADIN 6

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Construct a wonder and defend it.

You start this scenario with enough resources to start building your wonder right away. Don't. If you do that, you won't have enough resources to start building defenses, and your enemies will attack as soon as you begin construction of your wonder. Within five minutes, you'll be dead. Instead, hold off on building your wonder until you have built up adequate defenses and gathered more resources. Not until you have established your well-fortified defenses should you start building your wonder.

The wonder must stand for 300 years for you to win. Your four enemies will attack immediately. They are the French, the British, the Byzantines, and the Teutons. The British have two amazing trebuchets with greater than normal hit points and 21 range. Refer to the section on building and holding a wonder for tips on how to win this one.

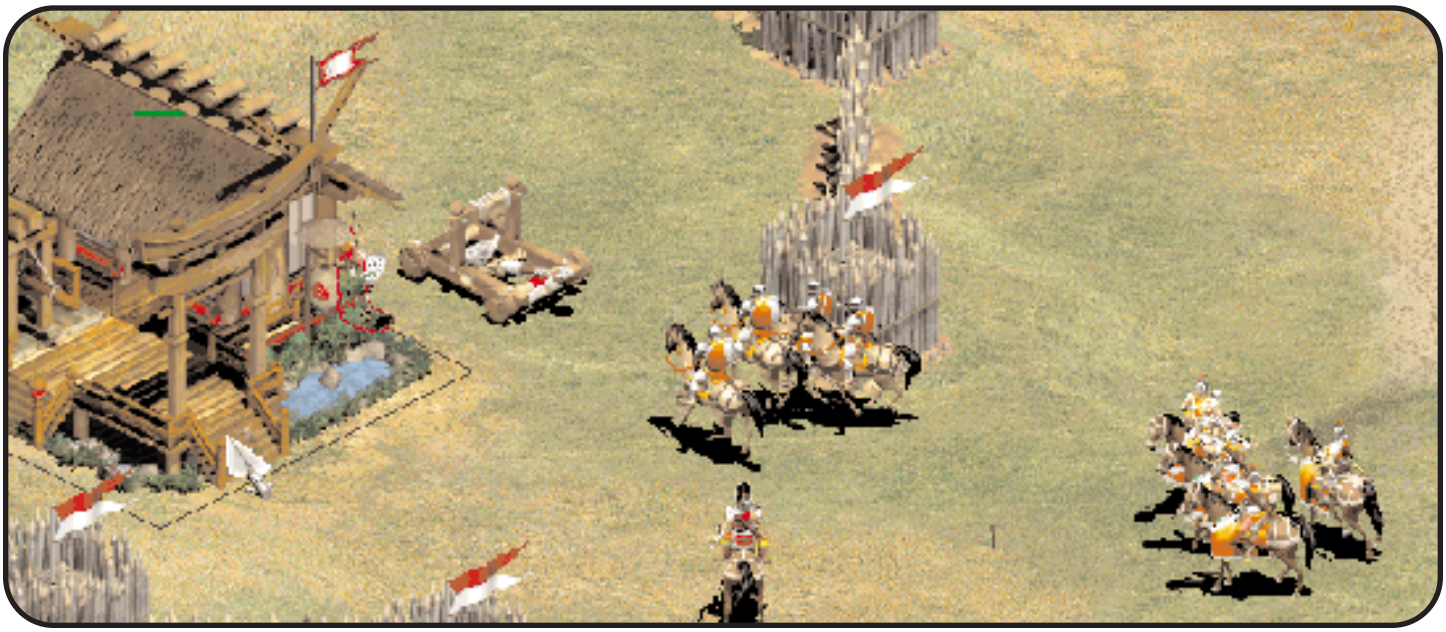
GENGHIS KHAN 1

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Wait for instructions from Genghis Khan.

LATER OBJECTIVES

- Ride forth to each Mongol tribe and convince it to join the Khan's army. Make an example of any tribes that openly war against you.
- The Ungirrads will join you if you bring a relic to their monastery.
- The Kereyid will join if you bring them 20 sheep.
- The Tayichi'uds will join if you defeat the Naiman and return to tell the tale.
- The Naiman will join if you defeat the Tayichi'uds and return to tell the tale.
- The Uighurs will join if you kill Ornlu the wolf and return to tell the tale.



The monastery where you can find the relic for the Ungirrads is here. It is lightly guarded.

The great wolf Ornlu is located here. He is a great beast with 400 hit points and 20 attack, but you can take him with your starting troops.

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There are five possible tribes to recruit: the Ungirrads, the Tayichi'uds, the Kereyids, the Naiman, and the Uighurs. All five are automatically revealed when you start the game. Only four will join you. There is also the Kara-Khitai, who are an enemy tribe roaming the map.

UNGIRRADS: This tribe will join if you bring it a relic. The relic is inside a Kara Khitai monastery in the far west corner of the map. It is guarded by a monk, a mangonel, and several cavalry archers. You must fight them and destroy the monastery to get at the relic. However, you can't pick up the relic until you recruit the Kereyid to your side because only their monks can bring the relic to the Ungirrads.

TAYICHI'UDS: This tribe will join if you defeat the Naiman. You must set Naiman to enemies, simply attack them, and return. The Tayichi'uds will then join you. The tribe only contains light cavalry. There are two sheep near the village.

KEREYIDS: The tribe will join if you bring it 20 sheep. Anytime you get injured, you can return to the Kereyid monks and get healed. There are three sheep north of Kereyids, two north and a little east of Kereyids, three east of Kereyid, and two south of Kereyids. Further northeast of Kereyids is a cluster of eight sheep behind a pen made of palisade walls, but they are watched by three cavalry archers. There are four in the far west by the Kara Khitai monastery and two by the Tayichi'uds village. There are six north of the Ungirrads. That's 29. You don't have to bring them all at once. You can bring them in one at a time. Upon completion, you get control of six cavalry archers and two monks.

In the far west corner is the Kara Khitai monastery and four nearby sheep.

Northeast of the Kereyids is a pen of eight sheep guarded by three enemy cavalry archers.

NAIMAN: The Naiman ask the same thing as the Tayichi'uds, to kill its rivals. You have a choice of attacking either the Tayichi'uds or the Naiman. I recommend attacking the Tayichi'uds because they only have light cavalry, whereas the Naiman have a tower and camels, which will be harder to defeat. The victory should be easy.

UIGHURS: When going to meet the Uighurs, be careful. If you travel along the middle of the map heading east, you'll run into a cluster of three Kara-Khitai towers. You can skip the towers by going north and then coming down south from the Naiman area. But a better way

would be to simply travel east from your starting location (where Genghis gave you your orders). You'll bypass any enemies and get to the town safely. The Uighurs ask you to kill a great wolf named Ornlu. Travel a little east after speaking to the Uighur, and you will see a trail of skeletons going up a winding path to a plateau. At first, you'll spot three regular wolves (easy kills). But behind them will be three dire wolves (100 hit points) and Ornlu, a great wolf with 400 hit points. Ornlu does 20 damage per bite. Lure him away from his lair, so the dire wolves won't follow to give you more trouble. When you kill it, return to the Uighurs, and the tribe will join you.

My recommendation for completing this mission is, in order, Kereyids, Uighur, Ungirrads, and Naiman.

Genghis Khan 2

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Prevent the tent of Genghis Khan (a wonder) from being destroyed.
- Kill the traitor, Kushluk.

When you first start the scenario, take your cavalry and go north, where the Tayichi'uds village is. Once you kill the five cavalry archers there, the town will submit to your control. Start by hunting all the deer in the area. Build a mining camp near the gold to the north of the town and a lumber camp to the east. Start gathering wood and gold in anticipation of building horse archers. The deer should give you enough food to advance to the Feudal Age, since you won't need to build any troops just yet.

Early on, a few skirmishers and archers will attack your wonder, but your cavalry can take them.

There are two stone patches, one west and one east of town, but don't move villagers to gather stone 'til you have a large force of troops. You don't need to build towers or defenses. The stone is only needed for a castle.

You want to rush to the Castle Age so you can build cavalry archers and upgrade your scout cavalry. However, to be safe, build a dozen or so pikemen at your barracks to defend against incoming enemy cavalry.

Kushluk is in the middle of the map, guarded by six cavalry archers. Kushluk himself is a beefed-up knight, but you can take him with a handful of troops. The problem is, you must go through the Kara-Khitai village to get to him. Once you enter the village, Kushluk will flee to the far west of the map to another village. This one is considerably better defended, with a castle. Thankfully, Kushluk doesn't garrison himself in the castle, but you must fight him amidst the withering attack of the castle.

You can storm through Kara-Khitai (you don't want or need to raze the city to get to him; just fly through, smash down the palisade walls, and go west). Once you get to Kushluk's town, target him with your cavalry archers and mangudai. The goal is to kill him only, so don't get distracted by other units. Just let your force loose in the town and right click on Kushluk. If you find the defenses a little to tough in this town, just ride in and ride back out, drawing some troops away from the protection of the castle and town center. Do this two or three times, and you can take on the scorpions and cavalry archers a few at a time. The scorpions are your only real worry here.

Genghis Khan 3

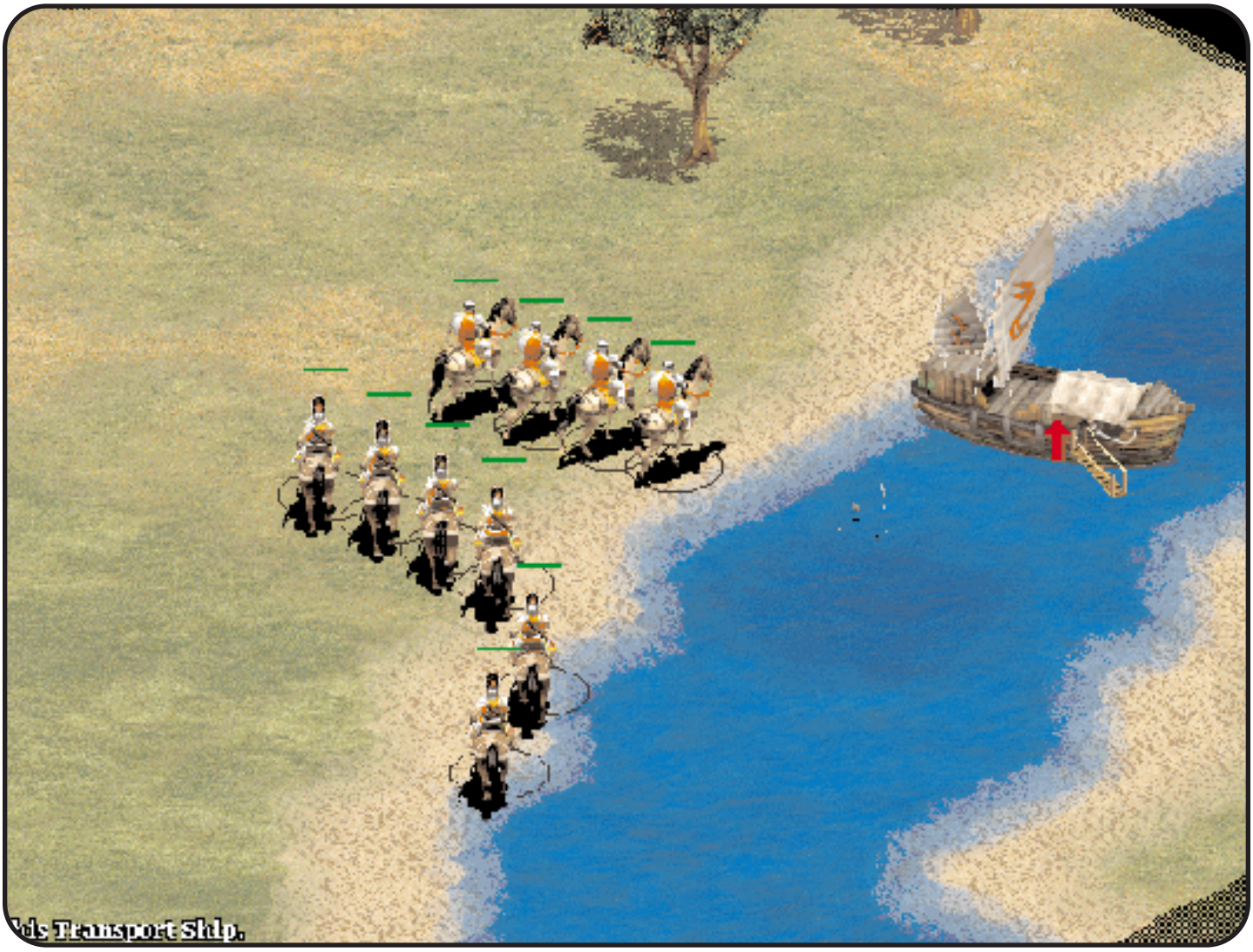
STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Conquer the Tanguts, His Hisa, Jin, and Sung.

You do not start with any villagers and must find a town to take over first. The only one available is a camp of Chinese engineers, east of your starting location. As you travel east, you'll come to a river and a transport ship. The transport ship will convert to your control as soon as you come near it. Use it to cross the river and continue east.

You'll run into the Chinese engineer town, which is guarded by several militia, crossbowmen, and scouts. You can kill them quickly. Don't attack the town center but go a little further east, and you will capture a ram and a mangonel as well as free six Mongolian villagers. Use the siege weapons to destroy the Chinese town and build your own.

Take those two siege weapons and destroy the tower south of this town (across the marsh bridge). You must do that so you can travel back and forth between your town and the northeast (where you started), which is where the map's gold deposits are.



Cross this river with this transport. Just across the river is a Chinese engineer town. Start there.

Lay down two Feudal Age buildings (you'll probably need to build a barracks first) and jump to Castle Age. Once you do that, you have enough starting food (800) to make the jump. Hunt the boar nearby the town.

Soon, you will be attacked by crossbowmen and scorpions. A short while after that, the Chinese will come at you with siege rams, chukonu, and more scorpions. Beware the siege rams because even a handful of two or three can destroy a castle or town center despite absorbing lots of damage from melee units.

If you do build a town on top of the engineers' ruins, you will soon find yourself without gold. Build a second town center or a mining camp near one of the large gold mines to the northwest (where you started).

Once you have a strong enough foothold, you want to jump to the Imperial Age, so you can get trebuchets. Just make sure you have enough light cavalry to take down siege weapons.

Later in the game, the Jin will begin construction of a wonder. If it is completed and stands for 200 years, you lose. Luckily, the AI only puts one builder on it, so you have 30 minutes to get to Jin and take the wonder down. Unfortunately, the Jin are on an island, and the city itself is walled off and protected by towers. The easiest route there is to build several transport ships, then ship a mix of trebuchets and siege rams and an escort of two dozen mangudai and melee troops to the Jin island. Proceed down the east wall of the city, which is much less fortified than the west shores of the Jin island. In the scenarios I played, the wonder was built on the east wall with little protection. Destroy that, then work your way through the city. Getting across the river should not be a problem, since only a galleon guards the waterway.

You can bust through the great wall on the main continent fairly easily, using trebuchets. However, once you crack the wall, you'll find that the Hsi Hsia are well defended, with its castle built on a plateau and guarded by numerous deployed trebuchets. You must counter with trebuchets of your own as well as rush in with infantry and rams to take down the castle and its various cavalry archers.

Once that is taken care of, you can start conquering the Chinese. If you still have units left over from your wonder assault to take on the Jin, do so. But odds are, you won't. You can leave the Jin for last. Instead, the easiest of the Chinese factions to kill is the Tanguts, followed by the Sung. Create a few rams, escort them with infantry (preferably two-handed swordsmen or champions) and cavalry archer support. Bring along some light cavalry as well because you will probably need to chase down annoying villagers who have hopes of rebuilding the Tangut town.

Next, you can take on the Sung. Bring down a few villagers and build a new town center and military buildings in the west of the map. It's much easier than creating troops at your home town and walking them all the way from the other side of the map. Make two or three barracks, two siege factories, an archery range and stable, and a castle. You want to be cranking out the whole gamut of troops: infantry, archers, cavalry, and siege weapons. You can take down the Sung pretty easily, as long as you employ infantry with ranged support. The Sung have a lot of arbalests, so skirmishers might be handy.

The towns of the Tanguts, Sung, and His Hsia have a few rivers cutting through their terrain. These rivers are patrolled by Jin galleons. There are only three or four, but they can cause a major headache by bombarding the shores where you are attacking.

Next, you want to take down the His Hsia. They are east of the Sung and Tanguts, and the most well fortified of the three. The His Hsia town is on a plateau, and the only ways up are from a north or south entrance. The north entrance curves around, meaning the His Hsia can take pot shots at you while you make your way up. However, the south entrance is a direct route and lets you storm straight up into the town. Take this way in. To do that, just go southeast from the Sung village with your force and then, at the eastern most edge of the continent, go straight up.

You'll cross a marsh bridge and up ahead will be the His Hsia village. Go in cautiously, with trebuchets and rams for taking down structures, lots of light cavalry for destroying the His Hsia's entrenched trebuchets (if he still has some on defense, you might have to rush in with cavalry units first), and skirmishers for the chukonu. The His Hsia will be well guarded by light cavalry, chukonu, and mangonels. The mangonels especially can decimate your slow-moving infantry and skirmishers, so have your light cavalry units take them on as soon as you see them.

Last is the Jin empire. It is tough because it's on an island and totally walled in as well. Rather than transport an army over to the Jin island, transport some villagers and a few cavalry archers and pikemen to the island and start a new base on the north of the island. Build a town center and two each of every military building. Approach from the north of the island (the same spot you dropped off your wonder-blasting crew), but instead of skirting around the city and going east, you can simply start a methodical movement from north to south,

destroying everything with a wave of trebuchets, rams, and units. You'll need lots of pikemen, since the Jin have cavaliers, and you'll also need skirmishers for the chukonu and light cavalry for the enemy monks. The Jin have lots of towers on their west walls, so beware of those, and there are also two castles that will provide a thorny defense.

This mission is a huge war of attrition and will take a long time, but if you are patient, you'll succeed. You'll need lots of resources, so make sure you keep exploring the map looking for gold and stone deposits. The Chinese will occasionally attack defenseless outposts, so make sure you have at least a tower and several troops at each resource outpost or at least a group of light cavalry to act as a fast-response force.

There are six bombard cannons for capture in the northwest of the map, near a Chinese engineers siege workshop (blue). They will be useful.

Genghis Khan 4

STARTING OBJECTIVE

- Subotai must survive.
- In the north, deploy Subotai's horde to conquer Russia.
- In the south, the Khwarazm shah is expecting a gift. But it is assassins he will find in our trade carts. We must deliver the carts to the shah quickly before he breaks his alliance with us.

The first thing to do is move your trade carts (you have two) to the shah in the southwest (the area is revealed when you start the game). As soon as the cart gets there, two champions will jump out on horseback. Use them to kill the shah. You can take all the time you want because the Persian troops in attendance won't lift a finger to help the shah. You can even attack these troops, and they won't fight back. But just kill the shah. Then, the Persian troops will come to life and kill your assassins.

Russia (red, Goths) is in the northwest, while Khwarazm (yellow, Persians) is in the southwest. Khwarazm is considerably better defended than the Russians.

Close to your north town is a village of rival Mongols, called the Merkid. Rush over there with Subotai and your four cavalry archers and attack the two cavalry archers there (there are no other defenses). When you defeat them, the Merkid town will surrender to you. You'll gain two archery ranges, a market, and several houses. Inside the town is a deposit of gold, so set up here and build more military buildings. From this new town, you can stage raids into Russia.

This scenario is tough because the Persians will bring out their elephants fairly quickly. They'll attack your south town, and if they destroy that, they will move north to help defend the Russians. It is important to build barracks as soon as possible and create pikemen.

Your north and south town are separated, so you can't use one force to defend both. Rocky cliffs and Persian walls divide the two halves of the map. However, you can attack the Persians from two sides, and you probably should, since you'll have your north army left over from defeating the Russians.

All that is required to defeat the Russians is to have lots of cavalry archers and rams. You can use a hit-and-run tactic to decimate the Russian troops or wade in with your own infantry, then pepper the Russians from afar with arrows while your own infantry attack them. Against huskarls, use infantry.

When attacking Khwarazm, be mindful of the two castles: one in the north of the city and one in the east. When you attack from two directions, you need really only worry about the two castles. Bring several trebuchets and a dozen pikemen with each attack force as well as the support of several cavalry archers. You should also bring rams to have as additional siege weaponry to take down towers.

Your first strike might not be successful, so build a military base just north of the Persian north gate. That way, if you get repulsed, you can build another army quickly and have it ready to attack the Persian gates immediately. Build two barracks for pikemen and a siege workshop. You can rush your cavalry archers and mangudai from the Merkid base.

You should build one castle in each hemisphere. One in the south and one in the north.

Castles have maximum hit points, so you must take it out in one foray. The Persians will repair them.

GENGHIS KHAN 5

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Capture the Bohemian flag.
- Capture the Polish flag.
- Capture the German flag.

LATER OBJECTIVE

- Construct three castles within the flagged area and withstand the assault of the Bohemian army.

The Bohemians are in the north (Teutons), the Germans are in the west (Teutons), and the Polish are in the east.

This is where you are supposed to make your stand.

This scenario is tough because the Bohemians have a massive siege army, with a huge number of siege rams and trebuchets. When you go to construct your castles, be aware that there is a German castle next to the flags.

A few minutes after you get this message, the Polish will start attacking with two mangonels and a few knights. Later still, the Polish will attack with men-at-arms, knights, and mangonels. These waves are quite large, so make sure you have a force of cavalry archers and infantry. In addition, the Germans will attack in a short while with an army of crossbowmen. Skirmishers would be a good bet as well as mangonels of your own.

To get to the plateau where the flags are, you must walk up a snaking ramp. Just head south from your base and then west. Along the way is a walled-in keep that will shoot at your passing troops. Get through the wall and destroy it with battering rams.

While you are building up a force, you'll be attacked often by German crossbowmen and infantry as well as Polish knights. Build mangonels to counter the German infantry, which are slow, and create some pikemen to stop the Polish knights.

BARBAROSSA 1

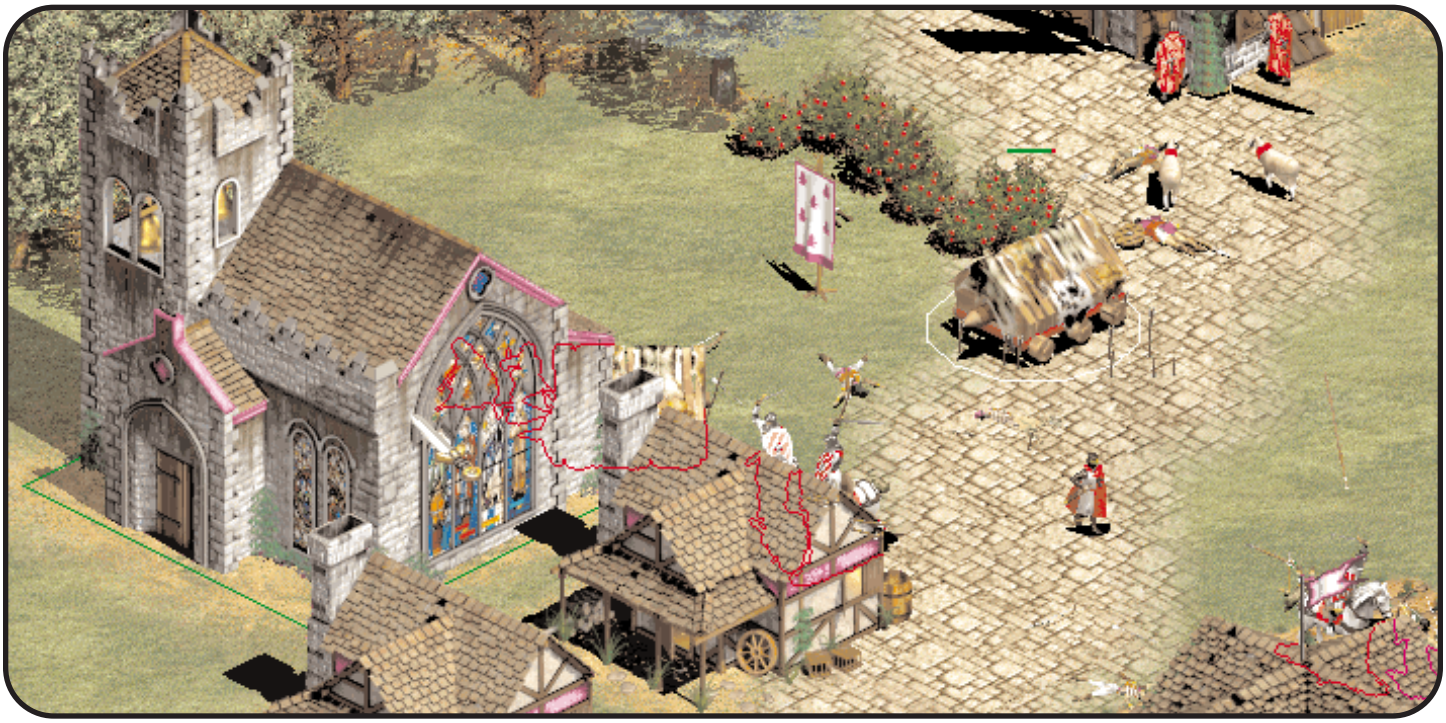
STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Capture four of the six relics from the surrounding German duchies.

Five of the six relics are garrisoned inside monasteries, while one is free, but inside the territory of a town.

You start on an island in the middle of the map. There are four ways into and out of the island: a bridge in the west, a bridge in the north, a marsh bridge in the south, and a marsh bridge in the east.

The two easiest relics to capture are to the north in this monastery of Swabia...



...and to the east in this Burgundian monastery.

The easiest towns to take are Swabia (orange, Teutons) in the north and Burgundy (purple, Franks) in the west. In Swabia, the only thing you must worry about are a few scout cavalry and spearmen. Just let your mangonel and battering ram attack the Swabian monastery, which is thankfully at the south edge of the town. Have your knights and infantry close by to guard your siege engines and have your monk close by as well. The relics will come free when the monastery is in flames, at which time, your monk can go get it. There is no need to destroy the town after that, but if you can spare the troops and siege engines, you can clean out the town and save yourself occasional spearmen attacks from the north.

Then, turn your attention to Burgundy. Burgundy has few troops, just a few skirmishers and archers, so you should be safe with two rams, a modest escort of knights and one or two archers and Teutonic knights. Take out Burgundy while it is still weak at this point, so you won't be attacked by Burgundy's troops later in the scenario.

Bavaria to the south is well defended and walled in with towers for protection. In the east is Austria (blue, Goths), and it is without protective walls. However, its monastery is just under the shadow of a castle, so you must bring additional siege weapons and more troops. In the far east is Bohemia, and it likewise is without walls and is lightly defended.

You have enough stone on your island to build up some towers near each bridge into your island. This should help you stave off attacks from what remains of Swabia and Burgundy. If you took out Swabia, you'll have an easy route to Bohemia. Even if you took out Swabia, you'll have an easy route to Saxony (yellow, Teutons) in the north, even though it is protected by walls. Bring in three rams, two or three mangonels, and a handful of Teutonic knights and archers. Plow through the walls from the west, watching out for the mangonels behind the wall.

While you are on the offensive, be wary of attacks from the south by Bavaria (green, Teutons) and Austria (blue, Goths).

Because Bavaria is so close to you, you should attack it instead of the other two towns, despite its lack of walls. Take your army of rams, knights, Teutonic knights, and archers south. Bavaria is protected by two guard towers, a wall, and a castle. Bavaria will repair its castle and monastery, so keep up the pressure.

BARBAROSSA 2

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Defeat Poland.

LATER OBJECTIVES

- Defeat Henry the Lion.

The two towns of Saxony and Bavaria will tribute food and resources to you, so you better make sure they survive. Still, they don't tribute enough to really sustain a big war effort. You have no town or villagers of your own. However, you do have a marketplace, so you can trade for resources you need and build trade carts to trade with Saxony and Bavaria for gold.

Bavaria is in the south, while Saxony is in the northwest. Your ally, Henry the Lion, is in the far west corner. The Polish are spread across the map and don't have a central town. But they do have two castles on the map and a smattering of troops. The Polish are Goths.

Send your initial force north to destroy the first Polish castle and bring along two rams as well (you must build those). Use the rest of your money to create some troops and leave them at your base. You'll need them.

Of course Henry the Lion will betray you. As soon as you destroy the first Polish castle, Henry the Lion will attack you. That's what you needed your troops for. Henry the Lion is a Teuton, so he'll send Teutonic knights at you. Henry's base is protected by a tower and a castle. He has knights, men-at-arms, and rams in addition to his Teutonic knights, and he will send them to you in waves. If you can beat a wave, rush forth and attack because Henry the Lion only has a few military buildings, so it will take him a while to build another army.

The Polish will continue to attack you though, especially with their warships and a wave of huskarls. But if you can defeat Poland's attack of huskarls, rams, and war ships, Poland will resign.

Once you defeat Henry the Lion, you'll see that he has a handful of villagers held prisoner in the northwest of his base. Free them, and you can start building your own base. However, if Poland has already resigned, you win the scenario when you defeat Henry and destroy his military buildings and troops. Otherwise, it's a simple matter to build a few rams and infantry to march across the map and destroy the few Polish towers and castle on the map.

BARBAROSSA 3

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Convert the cathedral in Milan.

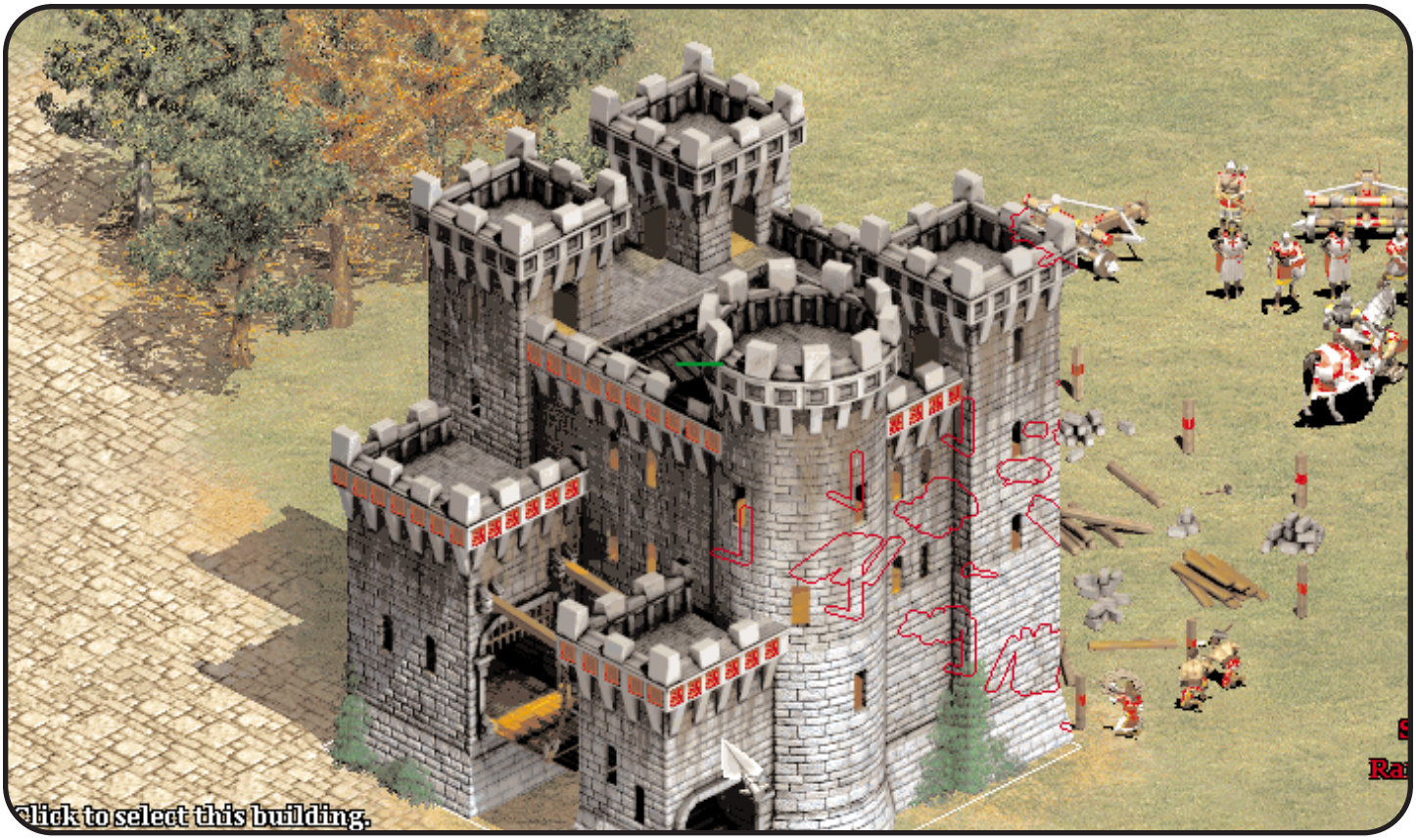
The cathedral of Milan is in the southwest of the map. However, the way there is well defended.

You start with a few troops, but no houses and no villagers. You will be attacked promptly by sea, so be warned. Milan lies across the water to the west. Frankish guards are also on the island, flanking your passage to Milan. However, of more immediate concern is Crema (green, Britons), which is to the south of your starting town.

The first thing to do is attack Crema and try to convert some villagers to your cause. Crema is lightly defended by archers and pikemen. Avoid the town center, since you can't take it on with your troops. Instead, attack the west side of the town, where the archers and pikemen are. You should take them. When they are eliminated, use your monks to convert some villagers, which should be foraging close by. After you kill the troops, Crema will resign, and you can build a town here. Make sure you watch the monks and do not convert any villagers close to the Crema town center. Stay near the mill and mining camp and convert those villagers.

After successfully converting villagers and forcing Crema's resignation, build a town center, some houses, a barracks, and an archery range. Then, start a fast town buildup. In the north of the Crema town is a gold patch with a few Creman villagers, so convert them as well and start gold mining there.

The goal right now is to build up a large force to defend yourself. Instead of going directly west from your starting base and thus meeting the Frankish guards, hug the southeast edge of the map, going under the Franks. Build two docks and create a small navy to protect yourself from Frankish ships. A navy of a dozen warships will also take care of all transport ships that come to drop off bombard cannons and axemen. In addition, the Frankish guard will usually throw waves of six to eight galleons at you.



Set up your base here in the south, then skirt around the enemy defenses by crossing the river and then walking southwest along the bottom of the map. Then, when you are south of the cathedral, set up some military buildings to field a large army.

Be careful, though, the Franks river guards will attack you with a fleet of galleons and land bombard cannons and champions on your continent to attack you. Make sure you have fast cavalry to attack the bombard cannons.

With your army, you should walk along the southeast edge and then move up, along the west side of the map up to the Milan cathedral. You must break through the southern walls of Milan and contend with a few towers and monks. In the very south edge of the map, you can build a castle and a few military buildings, especially siege factories, so you have a nearby military base with which to crank out units and continuously pound at the south side of Milan.

When you attack Milan, Milan and the Franks will send troops at you. Build another castle at the very wall of Milan and crank out Teutonic knights. Use bombard cannons to shell the few towers and military buildings in southwest Milan and walk in two monks. Have your troops simply go in and attack freely. They serve as a distraction. Have a few cavaliers escort your two monks and then just set your monk to convert the cathedral. There actually aren't any towers near the cathedral, so you should be safe. The cavaliers are to protect against any light cavalry or other troops that might attack the monks.

BARBAROSSA 4

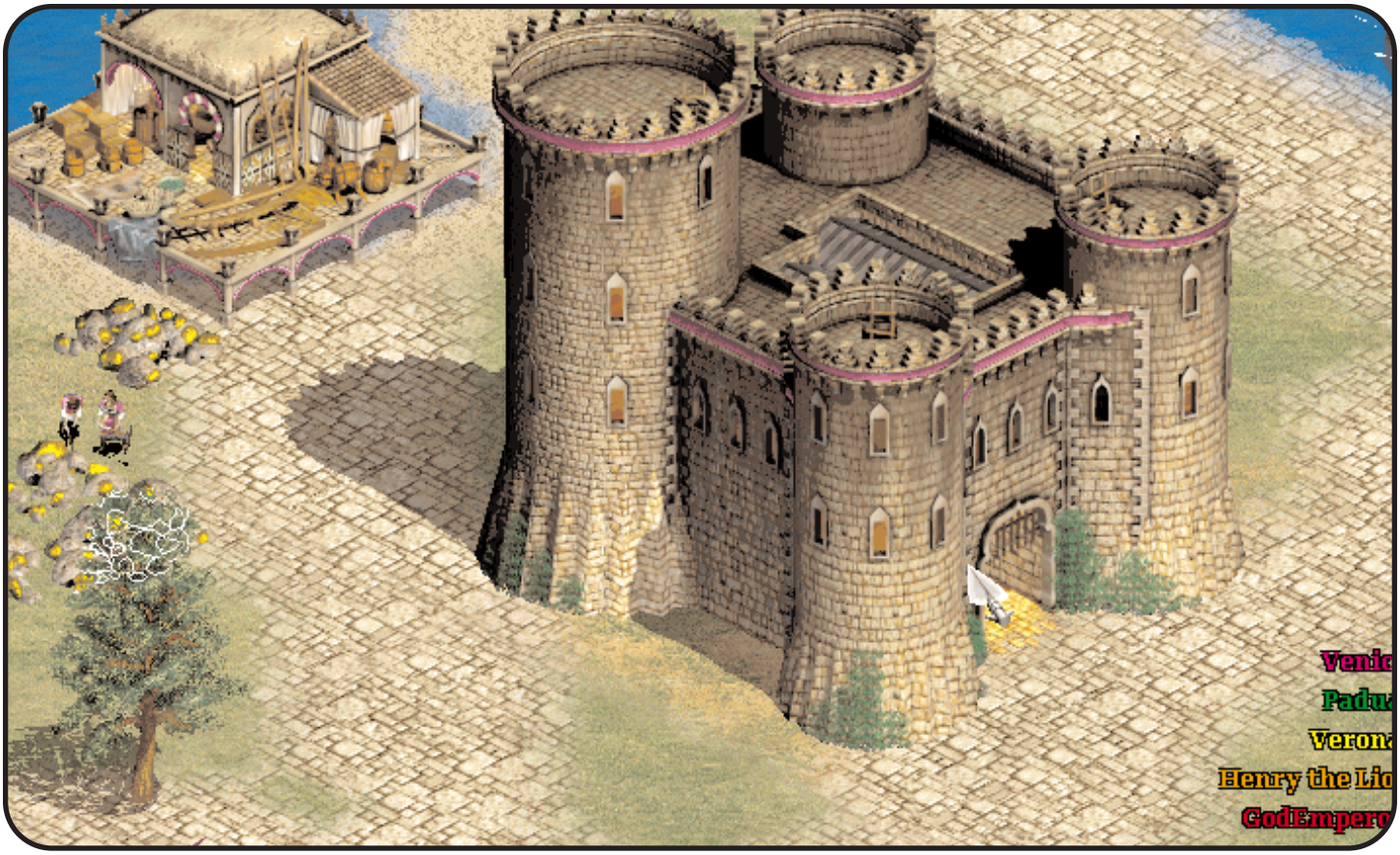
STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Construct a wonder within the city walls of Venice, Padua, or Verona.

You start under attack by a large enemy force of mangonels, Teutonic knights, and cavaliers. Load up your five villagers and paltry number of troops (two Teutonic knights, two knights) onto your transport ships and travel south to the flagged area near the gold deposits. You must rebuild your base of operations.

As you leave your original base, you will be given control of a large navy in the middle of the map. It consists of fishing boats, fire ships, galleons, and four transports of troops and villagers. The island where you can rebuild your town is rich with resources. There are large gold and stone deposits, lots of wood, and lots of boar. Unfortunately, there isn't enough gold to both field an army and navy and have gold left over for a wonder, so you must go east to an island that has a gold deposit on it. However, it is guarded by a castle, two bombard towers, and four bombard cannons. You'll need cannon galleons to wipe these defenses out before you land some villagers there.

A close place to build your wonder would be in the peninsula in Venice (purple, Byzantines). You can build bombard towers around the area and also float a large fleet to protect the wonder from offshore bombardment. You must destroy the castle there first though, with your bombard galleons. When you destroy Venice, there will be no one else capable of building ships, so your wonder is essentially protected from the city.



Build your wonder here. You don't need to hold it. You just need to build it.

The other locations are Padua (green, Teutons) and Verona (yellow, Franks).

Later on in the scenario, Henry the Lion will betray you again, turning his knights against you.

You might have to relocate your entire base. If you must, go to the far east, where there is yet more gold, stone, and wood. When you are ready, have your fleet of bombard galleons, galleons, and fire ships demolish the Venetian city. Then, bring in a transport of ten villagers

and ten knights. Have the villagers erect another set of walls either outside or within the existing Venetian walls. Then, build a few bombard cannons. When you are done, build the wonder. If you get trouble, especially with siege engines, send out your knights. Keep them garrisoned inside your castle until they are needed. Once the wonder is finished, the scenario is won.

BARBAROSSA 5

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- At least ten troops must survive to reach the Hospitaller camp.

LATER OBJECTIVES

- To force the Byzantines to surrender, threaten the Hagia Sofia wonder by stationing troops next to it.

Start by traveling west. Along this way is Constantinople and Gallipoli. There will be a Saracen ship shooting at you as you travel west. Then, you will see a house where four elite mamelukes will jump out in an ambush. These are easy to deal with.

When you pass by Constantinople and approach the gate, the Byzantines will turn on you, sending out cataphracts, pikemen, and onagers at you.

If you pass by Constantinople, you will come across a Saracen outpost, with a castle, a keep, half a dozen elite mamelukes, and a few siege onagers. Gallipoli lies on the other side of these Saracen troops. However, once you get past them, Gallipoli won't be that much help. It only has four transports and no warships, while the Saracens have several warships patrolling the seas.

Once you take to the seas, you can go to an island in the far west, where a trebuchet and six elite throwing axemen are ready to serve you if you find them.

You do not need to destroy Constantinople. All you must is move a few troops next to the wonder, and Constantinople will give you the use of its navy. After the initial wave of attackers Constantinople will not send more troops out to attack you. However, at once, the Saracen navy will converge on the ships that Constantinople gives you. They are moored in the waters to the northeast of the city.

When you do put your troops on transports, be very careful. The Saracens have heavy demolition ships that patrol the waters. Send your ships in a line, with two empty ships in front as decoys and the two ships with troops in back. It is important that your siege weapons survive to the shore. If one ship carrying troops must go down, make it the ship that is not carrying your trebuchets and siege onagers because there will be castles you must fight along the way.

There are two routes to take to get to the Hospitallers. The beachhead is simple enough, just south of Constantinople, but you can go either west or east once you land. If you go west, you must be methodical, using your trebuchets to destroy the keeps, gates, and castles along the way, while keeping your pikemen and knights close by to defend the trebuchets when the Turkish cavalry archers, cavaliers, and bombard cannons come after you. This approach is a more direct way to get to the Hospitaller fortress, but it is defended by two castles and lots of troops, not to mentioned walled off and protected with towers.

Alternatively, you can go east, where the fortifications aren't as tough. However, there are a lot of cavalry archer this way as well and a castle. But once you clear out the castle, you can continue east, and you'll come to a castle and wall surrounding four captured siege onagers. If you destroy the castle and get inside the walls, you can rescue the onagers. You'll need them because if you go the east route, you must punch through some trees and clear a path through the woods to cut back west and take a winding route up the plateau to the Hospitallers.

The only other danger on this route is a huge pack of wolves that will attack you. But if you can rush past them, you will not face any more Turks.

BARBAROSSA 6

STARTING OBJECTIVES

- Don't destroy the Dome of the Rock.
- Deliver the body of Barbarossa (in the pickle barrel) to the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

You have ten free minutes to position your troops before the Persians and Saracens turn on you.

Richard the Lionheart is in the far west, and if you send a unit to his camp, he will assist you. Richard will attack the Saracens in the west. This is the best place for you to punch through the Saracen and Persian defenses to get to Jerusalem. You should build your siege factory here, where the British are.

You want to build two stables, two archery ranges, a monastery, two siege workshops, and a castle here. You should hold off and not attack for awhile. Instead, create about five or six monks and a dozen cavalry and cavalry archers. The Persians will repeatedly send waves of four or five elephants and three or four trebuchets at you. You want to attack the trebuchets as fast as you can, while having your monks convert the elephants. After about five or six waves, you'll have an army of 15 to 20 elite war elephants. Make sure you keep cranking out those cavalry units and cavalry archers, though, because the Persians will be sending lots of trebuchets, while the Saracens will harass you with cavalry archers of their own, and arbalests.

When you go straight south from the British camp to Jerusalem, you will encounter a castle and some trebuchets. When you have that army of 20 elephants, just rush in and strike. The elephants will soak up damage and rip through the castle and trebuchets.

You can then set up a new town over the ruins of the destroyed castle, moving your forces to this new staging area. If you must build up another army, you have the breathing room to do so. Make sure you have a force of cavalry archers and cavalry. With your elephants, bust

through the northeast side of Jerusalem. The elephants and rams will take care of the towers. The cavalry units and cavalry archers should take out any monks in the area. There will be about a half dozen, and they'll give you a taste of your own medicine by converting some of your elephants.

Your cavalry archers and cavalry units should be used as a quick response to defend Barbarossa's wagon. When your rampaging army has cleared the way, escort the wagon with your cavalry units and cavalry archers and go down to the Dome of the Rock.

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