AoEIII

TAD guide 2.0
RE patch version

by Goodspeed
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Introduction

I've never understood people who complained about the home city shipment mechanic. I think this is a very original and refreshing idea, one that adds a lot of strategic depth, and one of the reasons AoE3 is a very, very good RTS.

Playing this game, my quest has always been reaching a fail proof understanding of it. Figuring it out, if you will. I don't play to win, at least not primarily, I play to gather knowledge, gather evidence in order to ultimately have a perfect understanding of this beautifully complex game. While understanding this game completely is an impossible achievement, for me it has been a very rewarding way to approach it.

For a couple of months now I've been puzzling over a patch that used to be a mystery to me, and I am slowly but surely getting places. I've noticed a number of things, most importantly that trading posts are incredibly underused. Since I've come back I've come up with numerous builds that are unquestionably superior to, but outside of the current metagame. Still, my experience on this patch is quite limited and absolutely nothing compared to how much I played the fan patch but I feel that there is still some wisdom to be shared.

This document will be a collection of my findings since I've started testing on this patch. As such it will not only help any reader improve their game, it will help me in aforementioned quest as well. After all, going over the builds in detail forces me to rethink all of them and odds are it will inspire me to think of new ways to refine and/or improve them. Win-win.

Because my understanding of each civ is limited on this patch I've decided not to get into specific match ups, apart from the couple I will be mentioning as examples. I would simply be guessing about half the time because I haven't played even 10% of all the match ups on this patch and while I would be guessing right more often than not, I don't want to be teaching people things that aren't true (even so, not everything in this guide will be true!). Instead, I'll make a chapter for each civ, write a summary about what the civ is about and then a build order including most viable variations.

Maps/water
Keep in mind that I'm not counting maps without a TP, or highly unbalanced maps like New England, Deccan etc. Maps that I'm basing this on are Siberia, Plains, Saguenay, Himalayas, Yukon and Yucatan. Water builds are not included at all because it's just too much work to include them, and it's a boring way to play anyway so let's all shush about how OP schooners really is.

Wood shipments
Something you may notice in this guide is that I really like wood shipments. Why? Because wood shipments have a really high value converted to villager seconds. Wood gathers quite slowly (0.5 per sec compared to 0.84 per sec for hunts) so a 700w shipment is worth 1400 vill seconds (would take a vill 1400 seconds = ~23 minutes to gather that much wood) in stark contrast to 700f which is only worth about 830 VS (almost half!), and an 8 xbow shipment which is worth 1020. So if you weren't a fan of wood shipments yet, you should be now!

Fortress
Mostly in the builds I won't go over what to do in fortress age. The golden rule here is send resource shipments if you're not in a hurry to get units out (1000w is insane), otherwise military shipments. Don't underestimate the fort, it can secure hunts and win you games as a result! Only start on extra TCs if you're in some kind of stalemate or accidentally overchopped wood. In mid fortress map control is more important than having a vill advantage.
Balance

Because civ balance is pretty bad on this patch it's a pretty big deal to know where civs stand on the scale. Because of this I decided to include a tier list in this guide, also going into why I've ranked the civs the way that I did. A general rule (with the necessary exceptions of course) in this tier list is that every civ in a certain tier beats every civ in the tiers below it. For example Japan beats every civ in tier 3 & 4 while Russia loses to every civ in tiers 1 & 2. Within the tiers the civs are still in order of strength but the first civ in every tier doesn't necessarily beat every other civ in that tier.

Tier 1:

Iroquois

Something tells me you expected this civ to be on top... Iro combine a very fast age up and a solid economy. They don't just age fast, they age fast with a TP already up and with a free 250 wood building. Really guys, a free quickly building war hut AND a 40 second age up? This is what gives Iro their edge, it's what makes them so strong at so many different things. And then there's the 4 kanya shipment which is just amazingly disruptive. Iro can rush insanely fast, completely disrupting your early colonial while they themselves have hardly invested in the rush and are sending 600w at home. Meanwhile their map control is uncontested. Being able to do this is the opposite of balanced. Oh, did I mention the insane war chief and the infantry upgrade cards?

Ottomans

Otto revolve around abus. Often times when you're thinking about what to do in a MU, you're thinking about how to get as many abus as possible in the shortest possible timeframe. In colonial with strong abus play and a TP eco to back it up Otto are pretty much unstoppable, even Iro have trouble breaking them and are better off FFing. Other civs will try to age as well but even in fortress many civs have no luck because when Otto get 30 abus out with 3 cards on them, is there really anything that can stop them besides imperial cuirs? No, not really. Let's see what else do Otto have? Oh yeah, a really fast FF into mams, and even a spahi FI to counter strong FF civs like China. What else does a civ really need to be truly overpowered? That's right, nothing, and it shows.

India

India is, counter intuitively, even more map dependent than Brits are. On some maps India is a tier 3 civ while on others they are a top civ. Give India a map with a chokepoint and not a lot of hunts (they don't need as much food as other civs) and they become infinitely stronger. Give them herdables too (like on saguenay) and they beat pretty much everything. In that sense India is a very broken civ. Their strength is entirely dependent on the map, but on the bright side, unlike Brits, India can know beforehand if their map will be good. If the map is known and it's great plains, you shouldn't be picking India. If it's saguenay or, say, patagonia, you most certainly should. Because of this it's very hard to rank India, but I decided that they belong in tier 1 because of how strong they are in a competitive context when the maps are always known beforehand. Anyway, I should mention their insane cavalry, and urumi. Urumi. God those things are broken. India’s achilles heel? Boom civs.
Tier 2:

Aztecs

In many ways, Azzy are comparable to Iro. A quick 3 unit combo, cost effective units, an XP buff from the start and a fast rush. So why aren't they as good as Iro? Well, first of all Iro have a better war chief. 15% HP and his area damage shot are just insane. Second, 5 coyote is just a lousy shipment while 4 kanya is one of the best in the game. Third, the free war hut saves Iro about 280 wood (counting the lost vill seconds from building a WH) where Azzy has to get this wood either by chopping it or by sending it. Either way they start colonial with less resources and where Iro can easily afford a 5 vill shipment, Azzy can't really squeeze it in too early. Yes, WP are strong, but the card kicks in too late. On top of all that, Azzy have the awkward pumas (which, awkwardly, are the only unit they have in age2 that costs gold). But let's stop comparing them to the top civ and remember that Azzy actually win most match ups for the same reasons Iro do. And that war dance!

British

Dont count these guys out. With a good hunt, Brits are truly a force to be reckoned with. Solid walling combined with a good map will make them impenetrable; with the right map they can even win every match up (except Iro). However, more often than not Brits won't have enough hunts and will simply not be able to push out of their base in time to secure the food that they so desperately need. This is actually the only reason they are not a top 3 civ. Beware if you're playing against Brit and you scout that he has 2 hunts near his base because you're in for a tough one. Your best bet is probablypressuring him from the start to stop him from booming fully and hoping you'll be able to hold his push (which comes at 10-12 minutes) for map control. Aging can be an option, but I don't think any civ other than Otto or China is good enough in fortress to justify the investment.

Japan

Japan has trouble early game. Against early colonial pressure, especially with some HI running around the map killing their shrines and cav hunting their monks, they really have trouble actually jumping ahead in eco and against strong early fortress pushes (like an Otto FF or something along those lines) they have trouble coming up with enough units by the time the push hits. Their boom is very strong but takes a huge investment and finding that balance between booming and making an army is the hardest part about playing Japan. However if a Jap gets going, they're insane. If you don't pressure this civ early on, almost always you'll be on the receiving end. You're gonna be dealing with a mass of yumis (some ashi if necessary), and if you don't pressure Japan early they will actually age and their fortress, with shrines backing them up, is truly unstoppable.

France

So there we go, we've landed on the most balanced civ in the game. It's been a long time since France was OP, and it seems like ever since their 6th vill was removed they have been a beacon of light in the darkness that is aoe3 civ balance. There are no civs that beat them easily, and there are no civs that they beat easily either (depending on how you define easily). France does everything. They have a solid 2 rax pressure build, a solid semi-FF, a solid mid and late colonial (musk huss with cav upgrades), a good economy which steadily grows at a slightly faster rate than other civs', and a great selection of units. There's really nothing not to like here except the fact that most other civs are simply... better. Anyway, France's being such a standard civ with many options makes them unique in their own way, and makes them an excellent civ to start or learn the game with. And if you're looking for ways in which France is actually unique, don't look far: their
cdbs are the only vills anyone would ever consciously choose to use in a fight.

**Dutch**

Dutch were insanely strong in TWC but their banks give about half the XP they used to and as a result their semi-FF isn't as good any more. Losing a build like that really puts some pressure on Dutch to find a new way to get to fortress unharmed, and without solid building placement and a well timed age up it's just not gonna happen. If you play it right though, which is hard, Dutch are a tough civ to deal with. They don't deplete natural resources nearly as fast as other civs hence are very strong mid fortress. Where other civs vills are running around looking for gold mines, Dutch has 4 banks up.

But, most civs have some means of either preventing Dutch from aging, keeping them in their TC for the remainder of the game stacking awkward amounts of gold, or pushing hard in early fortress. Dutch can stay colonial longer and set up a solid huss skirm pike defense, but you don't want that against a straight up semi-FF. Scouting is very important and more often than not you're better off waiting for your opponent go age up and following them as fast as you can.

**Tier 3:**

**China**

China's strength is not their rush, it's not their mid colonial mass and it's not their boom. But China's fortress is not something you want to be up against. They are unique in that their fortress is simply unstoppable, if they can get there unharmed. The trick when playing against China is either getting to fortress with a better (preferably much better) economy than them, or hurting them so badly in colonial that they are unable to stabilize. The tier 1 civs all succeed at the latter, but against most other civs China has good chances to age and simply outmass in fortress. Because that's what they do, outmass. China's fortress is in a lot of ways comparable to Russia's colonial: their units are insanely cost effective and they can often overcome an eco deficit with this advantage. Also much like Russia, their anticav is mediocre. But, there's always manchu.

**Germans**

The thing about Germans is that their early game eco is amazing due to a 4 vill shipment in age1 and the TP during transition that they can and should always take no matter what build they do. On top of that their shipments in colonial are worth 1000 resources instead of 700 and those in fortress are worth 1450. Combined with a TP this makes for some really amazing early game presence on the map, or a very strong (semi-)FF should that be strat of choice. Not to be overlooked is a simple xbow/pike pressure in colonial which is still a pretty solid choice with the German early eco backing it up. Germans > France in fortress, but they have to live without the musks which makes them weaker than France in colonial. Since colonial is the gateway to fortress in the end, Germans are the weaker France and not the other way around.

**Russia**

Forget Russia's rush build. Just forget it forever. Russia actually has options and that build is not one of them. So what options do they have? They have options not in their unit composition and not in that they can choose to fight in fortress rather than colonial, but in their early colonial build. Russia has some strong options to choose from including a spice trade build, a 700g build and a 700w build. Which to choose depends on what they want to do early game, but either way they get a strong mid game mass and of course their late colonial is unmatched. And, often enough when their opponent says screw colonial I'm aging up, Russia can follow them up and still be in a great
spot. As for their “bad” musks, they are really not bad at all considering the cost and strelets and cossacks are among the most cost effective units in the game.

**Tier 4**

**Spain**

Spain needs better age up politicians, they really do. They also need a slightly better early game eco. As most of us know, Spain has been OP throughout the later nilla patches and TWC (basically until they finally nerfed them hard enough on TAD). Their shipments were eventually nerfed into the ground (really guys, a 3 lancer shipment in fortress? That's 600 resources) and their FF is really not much any more. Sure lancers are still pretty good, and sure Spain can still crank out some siege units in early fort (16 pike 2 cannon), but can we really say their FF is still scary? No we can't. So what does Spain do? Semi-FF? No, they don't have a fast age politician to fortress... Rush? No way, no 400w politician, their early game eco isn't nearly good enough and their unit shipments include HI, HI, and more HI, and that's not even musks! The only good shipments they still have are 700 wood, 1000 wood, 2 cannons and vill shipments. Can you win games with those? Sometimes.

**Ports**

Let us all take a moment of silence for Ports. Really, their story is a sad one. Over the years, their position within the ranks of the underpowered has been ignored by balance patches. They thrived on FP for a while and it was beautiful, but official patches have been overlooking them completely. Buffs they have received were almost negligible, and they have always remained known as a civ for players who like a challenge, or who simply don't like winning. I should note however that this doesn’t really do them justice since they’re a water civ and I’m not including water in this guide. Ports get a TC with every age up, they have good politicians, a great selection of units, and average shipments. Oh wait scratch that, they don't have vill shipments. Want to see how much of a difference this makes? Just look at the amount of units Ports can crank out in 12 minutes doing an 8 minute semi-FF, and compare that to France, Germany or even Spain. Ports are a pretty map dependent civ as well. They need a bunch of food, and on maps with good hunts they are far from the worst civ but they really need a lot, a LOT of food. Sure, they have that extra TC to secure more hunts, but can they really hold it if they put it far out on the map? More often than not they can't, and a Port still stuck in his base at 15 minutes is a sad sight to see. It doesn't matter if by then the Port is in fortress or colonial, or even industrial. He spent all that food on a bunch of vills, and now that he has to make an army he's scratching his head asking himself where all the food went. Story of a Port's life. And no, cutting vills is really not an option. Other civs have bonuses too, and you not using yours is not a means of getting ahead. But, you have mams!

**Broken tier:**

**Sioux**

No.
Just no.
Aztecs

So where does Azzy stand? They are not a popular civ at all and definitely my least played one. They're a great civ, one of the best, and it's hard to counter them directly because they really don't have many weaknesses to exploit. Their fast age up along with plenty of XP from the fire pit make them a civ that can always get economically ahead in early colonial and from there they can go into a solid mid colonial, which is where Azzy excel. They have very cost effective units and a solid economy (note that XP income also counts as economy) and they can often hold map control until their opponent is starved out. Iro can outmass them in early colonial, Otto and India (on some maps) can win in mid to late colonial but most civs will have trouble breaking them, even in fortress.

Aztec semi-FFs can work but in the end fortress age doesn't really gain Azzy that much. They don't get a new skirm, have to upgrade 2 units and nobles huts are pretty expensive. Of course it does allow them to make ERK which are very strong, and the jaguar coyote combo is not bad either. However, more often than not Azzy will be better off fighting against a fortress army in age2 because that way they keep map control and can attempt to swarm their opponent in early fortress, often with success.

But it's not all sweet and pretty in Aztec land. Pumas are a problem. It's hard to know how much you need to mine with Azzy because you can only spend your gold on pumas, which you don't always need. It's always a relief as Azzy when you reach that point where you're sending 600g over and over because then you'll always have enough gold and having too much of it is no longer necessarily a bad thing. Remember at that point when you don't really need shipments any more, put the fire pit on the WP dance to spam more. Only then is that worth it (or if you're in some kind of mid colonial stalemate).

The Aztec build

- With a 300 wood start, get that early market going.
- Fire pit on the XP dance.
- Send 3 vills.
- Fast age up (always).
- Put most of your vills on wood to get the war hut up. Mostly you'll build this forward, but it depends on your game plan and on your opponent. Against an Iro for example, you really can't afford to build it forward and in some cases you'll want to do an eco build and not open yourself up to fast rushes that you don't necessarily expect from your opponent (for example against France if you plan to ship 700w 3 WP you're probably better off building it defensively: a 2 rax will break you otherwise).

2 rax variation: If you're planning to send 700w 600w for a strong mid colonial push you will only chop wood for a market and then wait for the 700w and get 2 war huts up. The good part about this is that extra WH and a solid mass in early colonial with all your great military shipments still available.

When you get up you have 3 builds to choose from. Choose according to your game plan:

1. The 700w build
   This is almost always your best option.
   • Stop chopping wood after you start building the WH (but make sure you have enough to queue at least 1 unit).
• With the 700w you can get a market up (optional) and support a good spam for the next couple of batches. You will need to start chopping wood again obviously, but I will leave it up to you when that is. Sometimes you'll have to mine for pumas but avoid this if you can by being extra careful with the first 6 pumas that you will send later. If you really need more pumas (up against lots of cav) keep in mind that early game it's actually more cost effective to make the pumas and ship both the mace shipments before switching to a food/wood/gold eco.
• Your next shipment will mostly be a military shipment for a strong rush (short term), but 3 WP (for the long term) and 600w (mentioned above) are also good options.

2. The rush
I'm not a fan of this build, honestly. In almost all cases you can send 700w and just have a better (admittedly slightly slower) rush. So if speed is really that important to you (you want to keep him from getting military buildings up or something) then this might be an option.
• Make sure the shipment (mostly it will be 10 maces but 6 puma is viable too) arrives at your forward WH and run into their base. 10 maces in your base at 4.30 is really quite frustrating to say the least, but still this rush is rarely worth it because mm will just push you back and 300 resources is a significantly smaller investment than this rush (you could have sent 700w).
• Options after the first shipment are 3 WP for the long term, another military shipment for a continued rush (be careful: before sending another military shipment try to think about whether you're doing enough damage to warrant this big of an investment) and 700w which is simply a strong all round choice.

3. The 3 WP build
This is the most long term oriented build you have. 4 WP on the XP dance gets you shipments crazy fast and Azzy shipments are pretty great. You're gonna need lots of wood though and this will hurt your early colonial mass. Even against the weaker rushes (like the French one) you will have trouble with this build (consider 700w 3wp instead), but if your opponent is defensive and you feel like you can't break them early (a Brit behind a wall for example) then this can be a good option.
I would really only do this build if I could afford to get the market up too without risking dying to a rush.
• Send 3 WP. Fire pit stays on XP dance.
• Next shipment is either 700w (almost always) or a military shipment if you really need it to hold a rush (if it got to that point then you chose the wrong build because 3 wp military shipment is just suboptimal).
British

As a Brit player you will often know if you've won by scouting around your base and seeing how many hunts you can bring in. This can be very frustrating and is the main reason I'm not a fan of playing Brit, but also hate to play against them. There is just too much randomness involved. With a good hunt, you can wall yourself off and camp for 10 minutes and you really don't care what your opponent does, longbows will eventually deal with it. He can age and boom for free but your 40 vill eco at 8 min says you really couldn't care less. 50 lb and 20 pikes are insanely hard to break even with cannons and if you get left alone even longer you can mix in upgraded cav. In many match ups where your opponent ages to fortress you can even simply follow them there but in most cases you really don't have to.

But what if your map is bad?
If your map is bad then everything your opponent does is suddenly 10 times more scary. You now not only need enough army to hold a defensive position behind a wall, you need enough army to take map control. For Brits, this means sacrificing a lot of your boom which in turn means you will be a lot weaker in mid colonial, and in many cases you won't be able to secure enough hunts.

The British build

- Early market only with 200w 100c start. In that case gather 75 coin and trade coin for wood in the market, getting hunting dogs and a manor.
- Send 3 vills.

Prolonged discovery variation: a build that is only viable if you're sure you won't be pressured for the first 8 minutes. Basically chop a lot of wood until you have say 6-8 manors (I've actually never counted how many I build when I do this but I just keep building manors until I think it's time to age) and then age. You should be up before 6 minutes and when the 700w arrives you can start up a 3 rax lb/pike spam. This is a build not to be underestimated, but it's hard to think of a time when it's viable. Every civ will pressure a brit before 8 min, especially if they see you're still in discovery at 5:30. This could be viable if you know your opponent, for example he is playing China or Otto and is known to FF every game.

Your age up politician depends on the MU and the map. If you have decent hunts and won't need minutemen early, age with 500f for a better early game mass. Otherwise the tower+200c is necessary.

- You wanna be chopping a large amount of wood during transition. Put almost all of your vills on wood (maybe leave 2 or 3 on food), get a market up if you didn't have one already and get the necessary upgrades (only get placer mines if you're going musk and/or huss).
- Build a bunch of manors. How many you build depends on what you're up against and on whether you got an early market start, but mostly it will be 2 or 3.
- Against a rush, get great coat and use your vills to tank.
- When you age build your rax or stable and send 700w. Also viable is not building your military building yet and waiting for the 700w to build 2 rax or a rax and a stable (or even just 1 stable/rax and boom hard next to it). This is obviously slower so before doing it, be sure you have time to get the military buildings up before units are in your base.
- Depending on what you scouted make either a longbow or a pike batch first, or a musk or huss batch if you're going for that.
- Next shipment is preferably 600w but sometimes you need to ship 6 lb to relieve the
pressure a bit. You can get steel traps, but keep in mind you may still need 150g for minutemen.

Now you need to decide how hard you want to boom. This depends on a lot of things. What makes you want to boom more rather than less?

- You're up against an FF (consider 700g to age).
- Your opponent is being passive in colonial, likely doing an eco build himself.
- You're being rushed but are safe behind a wall.

Basically boom as hard as you can afford.

The fastest boom is sending 5 vills after the 600w and waiting to build your second military building (mostly another rax) until 600w instead of building it from the 700. From the 700w you would then be building only manors, and getting steel traps of course. You can send 4v after 5v but that may be overdoing it.

You wanna push as late as possible allowing your eco to kick in but not too late as some civs will attempt to gamble by aging up and others are simply stronger than you in late colonial (think India or Russia). In both these cases, aging can also be an option if your hunts allow it.

A general rule of thumb with Brit is that you should be booming as hard as you're allowed by your opponent and your map, but there is an exception: Japan. You have to take map control against them right away, and start killing shrines with some pikes while pressuring with mass lb. Japs are the only civ that might win in a boom war, so you wanna get in their face early on. That way you should still come out on top pretty easily due to Japan's bad early game economy.
China

China may be my favourite civ. Not because they're the best civ, or one of the best, but because they're so damn fun to play. Always a 3 unit combo means always a micro challenge, and their units are just so crazy cost effective it's hard not to love them.

With China it's all about getting to fortress in good shape, but it's not all they can do. China can rush. They are actually a very versatile civ with decent colonial potential (although their cav are nothing to write home about), and simply insane fortress potential. Their units are the most cost effective in the game and their shipments are great too. Then there's the consulate which either takes 30 off the cost of each unit batch, or gives all their units a 10% hp buff. All in all, China doesn't really need a good eco to win, which is great because they have no means of booming other than market upgrades. A vill card in age2 (like in age1 & 3) would've been nice.

So let's talk about specific builds. China has 3. FF, semi-FF and colonial play. Obviously when China goes for colonial, what they're really doing is creating an opportunity for them to age, pretty much the same as Dutch who face similar problems in colonial (awkward anticav whereas China has bad cav). But, against some civs China has trouble aging because they get rushed too fast, and against those civs China really has to stay colonial. Often enough, China has a strong push around the time when they got all 3 of their unit shipments out and many civs have trouble holding that. But if they hold it China gets increasingly awkward. Mass RI like mass lb or even mass xbow is really hard to deal with and while China's massive spam (insanely cheap units) can sometimes make up for their cav being terrible, mostly they run into trouble because their opponents are more flexible in their unit composition and have actual useful cav. Though in most MUs it's not hopeless by any stretch of the word.

China is a little slow, and they simply cannot hold the Iro rush. It's too fast and even with mm it's just absolutely hopeless. The only way you can speed up your age time is not chopping wood for the extra village but this just delaying the inevitable. Remember, Iro don't actually sacrifice eco for their rush, and sacking that extra village might help you hold the rush but even so you will be too far behind to have any hope of ever pushing out let alone aging. That's just Iro though, I'm actually not sure how China does against an Aztec rush because I haven't played that match up (both these civs aren't played much) but I would imagine they would lose for the same reasons. Rushes like the French one, the German one and the Indian 10/10 are holdable although a 10/10 hurts (you have very good chances with a semi-FF against this).

The Chinese (semi-)FF is the strongest in the game. It's not an FF that pushes out early (which is why it has trouble against an Otto spahi FI) but in the vast majority of cases it doesn't need to. Getting a solid mass of units out and getting all your shipments sent is the priority, and it's pretty much up to your opponent to try and stop you from doing just that. Many civs will try a mass cav strat (For example France will often mass cuirs while Germans will mass uhlans) in which case China sits in their base until manchu and then just pushes for the win. Getting pushed just when you're about to send manchu is quite scary though, especially since by then you will mostly be hunting outside your base.

Don't forget to keep massing disciples during fights!

The Chinese build

✓ If you're not up against a fast rush civ get a TP up from the starting wood. Usually the way I start is I gather crates with 3 vills and put the other 3 on food immediately. Then the 3 crate
gatherers go on wood while my explorer builds the TP and the next new vill goes to wood also. The next vills all go to food. You need to be precise here and not lose vill seconds if you want no idle TC time, because if you mess up you will end up with either not enough pop (village too late) or not enough food to build a vill.

**Why is this better than 2 villages for the 3 vills? Simply because a TP is much better than a vill. This gets you an entire extra shipment by 6 minutes and will continue to get you extra shipments. The math: this first extra shipment can be used for (for example) 700w/600w, 200w for the village that you're missing and the other 500/400 are extra resources that you won by going for the TP. Would that 1 extra vill be able to gather that much wood before 6 minutes? No, it would take 1 vill about 8 minutes to gather that much and the shipment comes in at 2.00 so that means the vill would have made up for it around 10 min, at which point the TP will have already got you another extra shipment (which in fortress is worth about 1000 resources). TP > vill.**

**First shipment is northern refugees either way.**

**Mind your vill micro in age1. It's important to be precise because China is slow as it is and you really want to be up around 5 minutes, not 5.20. Don't lose vill seconds!**

**Wonder to colonial is summer palace. Put 4 vills on the wonder, or 5 if you started building it after 3.40 or need to age fast (depending on what you're up against).**

This is where it deviates:

1. **The FF**
   - Put some vills on gold so you'll have at least 300 when the 700 arrives, and don't forget you may need minutemen so in most cases you should mine more.
   - You have 3 shipments in colonial. Your first shipment is 700g (age up with the confucian academy and put 4 or 5 vills on it), and for the second shipment your options are the following, keeping in mind that you really don't want your vills to be idle in your TC during the transition to fortress:
     - 8 bows against an inf semi-FF or against weak infantry pressure in colonial (against strong pressure, why are you FFing?).
     - 9 pikes against cav starts.
     - 700w if you're not being pressured at all (or can hold off any pressure indefinitely with minutemen & disciples).
   - Third shipment in colonial is 700w if you didn't send that second, and 600w if you did. From this wood build a rax, some villages, get some market upgrades going and a consulate (ally with Brits and make the 400 export musk batch whenever you can). If you only got to send 1 wood shipment you'll still have to keep chopping a lot of wood because your units are so cheap you will run into pop trouble if you don't. Get as many market upgrades as you can squeeze in, because this is quite a significant boost to your economy.

If you've made it to fortress without getting damaged, congratulations. You probably have a won game at this point, but you still need to be careful not to get beaten by mass cav. Choose your military composition wisely, and get those manchu out. In most cases you will either be massing cav (the green one) and/or RI+pikes (the purple one) and sending military shipments. You'll see that often you will win fights that you thought you would lose and this is mostly because your cav combo is insane (flails act as tanks and throw themselves at the front doing area damage while meteors (lower HP, higher attack) stand behind them and slap your opponents inf down from a distance. Pathing is not an issue when half your cav have a ranged attack. Also, your monk tanks like a boss and constant disciple production is a real pain to deal with for your opponent. Don't forget to put your summer palace on a fortress batch and use the 1000w/1000g shipments (1000g for manchu and wood for housing if you can afford it in early fortress).
2. The colonial start
   - Chop wood with all but 5 of your vills (just enough to continue vill production) and get a village up. If you don't need to build your rax immediately upon hitting colonial, get a market going too.
   - When you're up, build that rax as soon as you hit 200 wood and chop just enough to start the first batch, then put some vills back on food but keep chopping wood, you're gonna need a lot of it.
   - First card in colonial is 700w. Against fast rushes you may need to send a military shipment but don't do this too lightly because it really does hurt your eco.
   - You're going old han. From the 700w get some old han batches going, another village, a market if you didn't have one yet, and a consulate (optional; ally with Germans if you're staying colonial and Brits if you're semi-FFing).
   - Send a military shipment next. Not 600w because you want more of 1 unit (more pikes or more ckn) based on what your opponent is going for. 7 steppes is also great, obviously depending on what you're up against.
   - Either go for some soft pressure or defend, again depending on the situation.

Now think about what you want to be doing. Are you staying colonial or do you want to age?
   - If you stay colonial, your next shipments should be any combination of 600w and the rest of your military shipments. Get all your market upgrades and a second rax when you have around 28-30 (earlier if you're losing a lot of units and don't need the wood for villages) vills to prepare for late colonial wars, which China is quite strong in. Don't forget your consulate!
   - If you want to age:

3. The semi-FF
   One of my favourite builds in the game. It's flexible (can always cancel it and stay colonial), gets a solid amount of units out in colonial, makes your opponent think you're doing a colonial build, and even allows you to pressure the somewhat more boommy civs while aging up. This build is especially strong against civs that want to boom against your FF (Brits, Japan, Dutch, etcetera) because it scares them out of booming too hard or damages them if they did boom too hard. It's also strong against civs that pressure you in early colonial but then transition into an eco build like India, or against opponent semi-FFs (although a straight FF works against that too). Basically it's a build that can work against almost everything.
   - Your start is the same as the colonial start.
   - Your third colonial shipment is 700 gold.
   - Try to figure out when exactly you need to stop chopping wood to get the 1200 food just in time. I pretty much improvise every game so I don't have the exact numbers but this is a good macro test: if your macro is good you should be able to improvise it as well.
   - After the 700 gold you have 2 options: a military shipment or 600w. Send a military shipment if you need it (being pressured) and 600w if not. The 600w allows you to keep most of your vills on gold and food making for a better spam from your rax in fortress. Use this wood for housing, remaining market upgrades and a consulate if you didn't have that already. When planning to semi-FF, it can be a good idea not to build the consulate from 700w but rather to wait for the 600.
   - Age with confucian academy, put 5+ vills on it. You should be up around 10 minutes.
   - For what to do in fortress, refer to the FF.
Dutch

Dutch are a very defensive civ. They're incredibly vulnerable when they move out of their base with just the 8 pike shipment as anticav. If their opponent managed to mass up 10 cav and they get caught out, the game is just over. Because of this, Dutch will often camp in their base until fortress which gives their opponent a lot of room to do whatever they want. Yes, Dutch can build some pikes as well as skirms and play colonial with a (not to be underestimated) skirm/pike combo, but most civs will be either in fortress by the time Dutch pushes out or will have enough colonial units to crush the Dutch army. Why would they have the army to do this? Because Dutch invest a lot in economy in early colonial and they simply can't mass that hard, and in the end musk huss just counters skirm pike in an open battlefield, and so does RI+cav. If Dutch mixes cav, musk huss still just wins. The only civs I would consider playing colonial against as Dutch are civs that don't have musks, but those civs can often get away with aging.

Because Dutch are confined to their base for most of the early game, they have trouble gathering resources. Without a decent in their base that they can live off of for a while they're really a hopeless civ to play, at least against an opposing civ with any agressive colonial potential. But in fortress Dutch are not that bad. A 3 or 4 bank + 20 vill economy (equals 32-35 vills) allows a pretty solid skirm ruyter spam. However, civs like France who will age to fortress with ~35 vills (counting market upgrades and the fact that they're coureurs), and who have access to a 2 cannon shipment and better cav (cuirs in this case) will just destroy Dutch in fortress. As will Germans, Brits, China, Spain, etcetera. Dutch just has too little to write home about in fortress, which sucks because they often have to try pretty hard to even get there. If you're having trouble getting there, try walling in your base to give your skirms a better position to shoot from. Good against colonial timing pushes which many civs will attempt.

Considering the rest of Dutch's weaknesses, their boom is a bit expensive. The bad thing about it is that banks can't be upgraded with a market. Other civs are happily spamming market upgrades while this is hardly worth it for Dutch. Steel traps can be worth 3+ vills for a civ like France where Dutch gets about 1.5 vills out of it, and placer mines is worth almost nothing to them while France gets another 1.5 to 2 vills from it. Also, the market makes vill shipments a lot stronger. France's 4 cdb shipment is worth almost 6 unupgraded european vills whereas Dutch's 4 vill shipment is worth... 4 vills. In other words, Dutch spend 2100 or 2800 resources on their boom (half of which is wood which is very valuable) while France ends up aging to fortress with the same economy having only invested 1000 resources and a vill shipment in their “boom”. Banks do give XP which is something, but since the nerf they don't really give enough any more to make up for their high cost. What Dutch is left with is their advantage of not having to mine as much gold, which you can try taking advantage of with a ruyter cannon combo forcing your opponent into making cannons too, or you can try outlasting them with a regular fortress 3 unit combo.

**The Dutch build**

- You want to queue up to 12 vills, which means you'll age with 15 including the 3 vill shipment. Mine enough gold for this.
- Send 3 vills.
- Age with the 400w politician.
- During transition gather enough food/wood for your first bank. Try to get it up before you hit colonial (treasures?), otherwise you won't have the XP to send your shipment right away.
- You will likely idle your TC a little bit in early age2 but this is no big deal. Try to get vill production going again asap though by putting some vills on gold. Note that to keep up vill
production with 1 bank up, you'll still need 2 vills on gold.

Here's your first choice. Do you want a quick boom or do you want units out early? Based on this, you can do one of the following builds:

1. The 700w build (the quick boom)
   - First shipment in colonial is 700w.
   - From the 400 wood you aged up with, build another bank.
   - From the 700w, build your military building and yet another bank (and a house). Which military building, you ask? Up to you.

4 bank FF variation: Instead of the military building, build another bank. Next shipment is 600w for a military building, a market and houses. Simply gather 1200-1000 and age up. This may be a viable option against an Otto player who is going jan abus and it's always good against opposing FF builds although semi-FFing is often better in that case.

Skirm semi-FF
- So you're building the rax. Your next shipment is mostly 8 pikes (against cav starts), or 600w if you don't need the pikes.
- If you did send pikes, you're gonna need 1 more house so chop for that.
- If you get to send 600w and age safely you're probably in a good spot. Remember, Dutch don't actually send a resource shipment when they want to age (some players send 700f which is a rookie mistake), all they have to do is stop making military units and wait for the 1200-1000.
- Usually stop making skirms when you have 10, sometimes 15 or even 20 it depends on what you're up against.
- Always use the fast age politician.
- If you got to send 600w and think you can afford it, get that 4th bank up. Use the rest of that wood for a stable and a market (get hunting dogs and placer mines, and steel traps if you can). Yes, you still need to chop wood for houses.

Cav semi-FF
- Still build the rax, but send 3 huss....... No, build the stable, obviously.
- You still want to send the 8 pikes if your opponent is going for lots of cav (which imo is the only time you should cav start (and maybe against very passive civs like Brits)) in which case you still need that extra house.
- Get either 4 or 5 cav out and start saving for fortress.
- The rest of this build is the same as the skirm semi-FF, but usually mix in the rax as second military building. Sometimes though (like against Otto) it's better to get another stable up and go for mass ruyter.

2. The bank wagon build
   This build gets units out quicker, but booms slower. Note that the biggest problem with this build other than the slower boom is that there is no room for 8 pikes unless you want to be stuck on 2 banks for a long long time. So what it comes down to is that this build is only viable if:
   - You're getting rushed. You'll probably still need the 8 pikes then.
   - You plan on cav starting and don't need the pikes.
- Send bank wagon.
- In case of the rush, holding that off is priority so unless they don't bring cav (who rushes a Dutch player without cav?) you're gonna have to send the 8 pikes which is just terribly
awkward in this build. Chop some wood for houses and crank out skirmis in the meantime, maybe some more pikes if you need them (have to chop chop chop then).

- In case of the cav start, you will mostly be semi-FFing. Your next shipment is 700w for 2 more banks then 600w for houses and another military building. Refer to the above cav semi-FF for what else to do. You can also go for colonial play in which case you build a rax from the 700w and 1 more bank.
France

France is a sexy civ. They have an infinite number of options with their insane early game eco and solid unit selection. Why do they have an insane early game eco? Well, let's do the math:
They age up with 14 coureurs + hunting dogs. Coureurs gather 25% faster than normal vills, so that means France actually ages up with 14*1.25*1.1 = 19.25 vills which is the best transition eco out of any civ. Then if France sends the 4v card right away they end up with 20 coureurs around 5 minues, which equals a 30 vill eco considering the market upgrades. You may never have realised this, but France has the best early game eco in the game.

But then what?

France has a bunch of options. A solid rush, a great TP build, solid semi-FF potential and a strong defensive musk huss play against civs like Iro or Azzy. But none of these options is exceptional. They do okay, but usually end up falling behind due to other civs simply having stronger bonuses than them. You can have a 19 vill eco all you want, but Iro has already aged up and is in your base with kanya before you're even up. Same story with Azzy who rush you with an amount of units that you really can't hold efficiently. Then there's Brits who just outboom you, Russia who outmasess you in late colonial etcetera. France has a great early game, but how to turn this into a win? Often this is a tough question to answer.

Their 2 rax xbow/pike build uses this advantage most efficiently. It turns their early game eco advantage into a military advantage to put some direct pressure on their opponent which is why it's a strong option in almost every situation. It can usually defend any rush, and is a very solid way of pressuring a booming Brit or Jap, for example. In the meantime France's eco is still growing steadily, and their 7-8 minute mass is simply amazing.

But they have plenty of other options, as mentioned above. Their semi-FF can be quite scary because it ages quickly with a very solid eco. Their musk huss build is a very strong choice in colonial due to its mobility and the way that it keeps your options open. It can be turned into a bow huss build, a full inf build, and you can send 700g and age whenever you get the opportunity with a food+gold eco already set up.
On maps with good hunts and a prolonged colonial game, don't underestimate spice trade. 20% on your hunts is huge when you have like 16 vills on food. Without boring you with the math again: with 16 vills on food the shipment would be worth 4 vills and of course it increases in value for every extra vill you put on food.

The French build

✓ With a 100w start, get an early market. With a 200 wood start, get a TP up. Chop for the house, obviously.
✓ Send 3 vills.
✓ Age up with the 400w.
✓ During transition chop wood for either a market (and gang saw if you're going 2rax, placer mines otherwise) or a TP, depending on which of the 2 you built from the starting wood.
✓ Mine enough for steel traps and get that immediately upon hitting age2 (except against Iro).

1. The 2 rax
   • Keep chopping wood with about 8 vills, you should have 400 when you age. Build 2 raxes immediately. Depending on the MU, build your raxes either forward or defensively.
   • Send 700w then 600w (you should still be chopping wood with a couple of vills during all this) then 8 xbows for the best possible mass. 700w 600w 4 vills is a possibility too, this will
obviously mean you have 8 less xbows but it will make a switch into cav smoother.

- If you want to switch to cav, build the stable from 600w.

2. **The semi-FF**
   - From the 400w build a stable or a rax depending on whether you're going musk semi or cav semi. Build 2 houses from the rest of the wood and send 4 vills.
   - If you want to make more units in age2 (10+ cav or 20+ musks) you'll need to chop 100 more wood for an extra house. Note that if you end up wanting more units without having counted on it and are in pop trouble, you can always just trade gold for wood at your market.
   - Send 700g after 4v and age up.
   - Sending 700w afterwards (for housing, a second military building and optionally the second gold upgrade in market) is standard, but you can also send 8 xbows if you need extra defense.

3. **The musk huss start**
   - A very flexible build that gets both musks and huss out on the very first batch which keeps your options open and allows for a quick musk huss combo which is very strong in age2.
   - From the 400w you aged up with build a stable and a rax. No houses yet. Send 700w.
   - Start 1 musk and 1 huss and wait for the 700w for housing. Often you will mix in a second rax when the wood arrives so you can go into a full musk spam. Going into 2 rax bow + huss is also viable, in that case definitely send 600w soon (you will want to send that anyway).
   - Next shipment is usually 4v, but sometimes you need military fast (8 xbow) or more wood crates (600w) for a better bow spam.
   - If you ever feel like aging is a good idea, and you can afford a small hiccup in your spam, send 700g and age.

4. **The TP build**
   - If you started with a TP (200w start), instead of getting a market going during transition get another TP. Then from the 400w you aged up with, build a military building and upgrade your trade route.
   - Send 700w first and use it for housing, a market and a second military building. Basically it's the Otto TP build, and a solid extra way for France to boom if they want to. This will hurt your early mass though, so don't do it if you need units early (either for pressure or to defend).
   - Usually after the 700w you will be sending 4 vills then 600w to maximize your eco. This build can turn into a semi-FF as well of course, simply send 700g after the 4 vills then. I would consider this build against civs like India who you can't really push early on which makes max booming a good idea.
Germans

Germans have a lot of things in common with France. They get a very strong early game eco (age with 18.7 vills, 17 + hunting dogs), they get the best vill cards whereas France gets the second best, and have a lot of options build-wise. In almost every way, Germans are a better France but there is 1 thing France has that Germans don't: Musks.
Not having musks is a big deal. It means that Germans are a little uncomfortable in the later stages of colonial because musk huss counters them very well. Bow dopp uhlans can be an option but musks are just better than dopps which you will learn the hard way if you try dopp uhlans against musk huss. But in small numbers it's not bad, and early on you do have that 8 xbow shipment which is an amazing addition to a dopp uhlans army. This means dopp uhlans isn't necessarily a bad choice, because its early strength does allow you to age up. But, I have trouble finding MUs where it's actually a viable choice on this patch.

Fortress is where Germans ultimately want to be. Their shipments are amazing and large masses of uhlans are very scary indeed.
In most cases Germans will attempt to reach fortress by semi-FFing. Their semi-FF is one of the strongest in the game, getting 9 uhlans out (4 free from shipments) and still aging up with a shipment ready around 7.30. 8 skirm followed by 7 skirm supported by a large mass of veteran uhlans from your stable (and some ww if you need anticav) are a tough one to hold off in early/mid fortress, and many civs will be on the receiving end against it. It's not like the German eco is bad either, they age to fortress with a very solid 30 vill eco (comparable to France), more than that if they managed to squeeze the 2nd market gold upgrade in.

Last but not least Germans have a decent xbow pike build, and no it's not 2 rax. Seriously, don't 2 rax with Germans! You really want to mix in those uhlans. If you're up against a civ where uhlans are really not going to help you (musk huss?) and still want to start xbow pike for some early pressure, then committing to a 2 rax is still no good. You will lose in mid colonial because musk huss is the better combo, and the better option is early 1 rax pressure with the 8 xbow shipment and then turning your build into a delayed semi-FF, although I question your decision to not simply go for a cav semi or straight FF.

The German build

✓ Same as France: 100w start means early market, 200w start means early TP.
✓ Send 2 SW.
✓ Age up with the 400w.
✓ During transition chop wood for either a market (and gang saw if you're starting xbow/pike, placer mines otherwise) or a TP, depending on which of the 2 you already built from the starting wood.

1. The xbow pike start
   A solid start in most MUs, but theoretically this is rarely the best way to go. Allows you to dictate what your opponent is doing with some early aggression and allows you to transition into a strong uhlans xbow/pike combo relatively quickly. You can also age after this start which is a decent option against civs like Japan, Brit or India, and will often catch your opponent off guard.
   • Keep chopping wood, build a house during transition (so you won’t get popped), and when you age up build the rax immediately.
   • First batch pike or xbow depending on the situation.
• Send 8 xbows. This is a pressure build, if you wanted to go for an eco build by sending 3 sw or 700w, you should’ve probably started cav and mixed in the rax later instead of the other way around. The only situation where it would make sense to start rax and still send 3 sw or 700w is if you 1. Don’t want cav at all and 2. The xbow shipment wouldn’t actually help you, although in that case FFing would probably be better.
• Next shipments can be 700w (for a cav transition), 3 sw (slower but stronger long term), 3 dopp (if you really need more units), or 700g (to age).

2. The semi-FF
This is a cav start which you can turn into a colonial build just as easily as you can semi-FF with it.
• In that case (colonial build), send 700w first and mix in a rax when it arrives. 2nd gold upgrade in market from the 700w is optional.
• In case of semi-FF:
  • Chop 100 extra wood during transition for a house, you’ll need it.
  • Get placer mines.
  • When you have the 100w, put all your SW on gold.
  • Build a stable and 3 houses from the age up crates.
  • Send 3 sw.
• Try to get 5 uhlans out, but 4 isn’t bad either as long as you get your shipment soon after the batch finishes.
• Send 700g. Because of your early TP, you actually get this shipment on time whereas without the TP you would have to build 10 uhlans and age up quite a bit later because your 700g shipment arrives so late.
• Age up from the 700g with the fast age politician. Make sure you switch vills off of gold in time so you don’t stack too much of that and run into food trouble.
• In fortress, get your epic shipments out and mass uhl/an/ww, or get a rax up if you feel like you need extra skirms.

2 TP variation: when semi-FFing it can be strong to get 2 TPs because XP is so good with German shipments. Like with France this only works with a 200w start. Instead of getting a market up during transition to colonial, get another TP, then get the market somewhere in early fortress, or as soon as you start stacking wood because you lost units and don’t need to house any more.

3. The FF
There are a bunch of different ways Germans can FF. Even though I prefer the semi-FF in almost all cases, an FF can sometimes be better because it doesn’t get slowed down by 6 minute pressure while the semi-FF does. Also, the FF gets fortress units out quicker for the cost of a worse eco and no 9 uhlans in colonial (2 or 4 instead). These are your choices:

Shipment FF
I’m calling this the shipment FF because your eco is relatively bad, but your TPs get you a lot of shipments. Germans have crazy good shipments so it can be a viable option. However, in most cases I would prefer the fast FF. Depends though, having units out quickly in fortress (with the fast FF) is good but not always good enough to justify the eco sacrifice.
• Age to colonial with the 400w and send 700g.
• Use the 400w for another TP and some houses.
• Age up with the 6 skirm politician, and during transition send 700w for more houses and a military building (almost always a stable because you need to upgrade your uhlans).
Eco FF
Obviously you’re aging with a better eco (6 more vills), but you will be slower (if you go market), and you'll have 1 less TP.
- Age with 500 food and send 3 sw.
- Gather all the resources to age with instead of sending 700g.
- Age with the 6 skirm politician and send 700w for buildings and houses.
- With this build it can be a good idea to get the second tier market upgrades for food and gold, but do this only if you can afford it (if you don’t need many units in early fortress). Then again if you can’t afford it, you probably shouldn’t have went with an eco FF in the first place.

Fast FF
I like this build best with a 200w start because you can build the TP then. You can do this with a 100w start as well, but then you will have to chop the entire 200 wood for the TP, and you can’t build it first then because you’ll get housed for sure. In this case you will age with 18 vills which isn’t necessarily bad in this build because you don’t have to wait for 700g to arrive, but still this is a lot better with a 200w start. You really do need the TP. Don’t build a market with this build (at least not till the 700w arrives), it will slow you down too much.
- Age with 500f and send 700w.
- Gather all the resources to age.
- Use the fast age politician. You will be up very early with a shipment ready, and the 700w means you will have a stable up with plenty of houses so you can start spamming units immediately upon hitting fortress.
India

India is a civ that loves to drag a game out. Their early colonial mass is quite small (even though their 10/10 rush can be scary) but the longer the game goes on the better they get. No matter what India does, they’re always booming due to getting a vill with every shipment, and they have some great extra means of booming as well with the vill shipment from Otto consulate and a really good wood trickle shipment.

India’s unit selection is pretty much the best in the game, although Japan's infantry is pretty insane too (actually naginata are as well). India’s cav however, are truly amazing. They get a ranged cavalry unit in colonial which is rare and very strong and sowar are age2 lancers. Sowar even get a shipment that makes them counter inf even harder than they already do. Gurkhas are an age2 skirm (what’s not to like) and sepoy are one of if not the best musks in the game. In fortress, India get urumi. Seriously, what’s with these guys? They even do okay against their theoretical counter (cav) and just demolish everything else. Howdahs are great but expensive, and mahouts are amazing tanks. Oh, and their units get even better if you age to fortress with the mansabdar wonder and build a mansabdar unit for every type you’re making.

But it’s not like India has an easy time getting to fortress. They don’t always want to because they have to upgrade their skirms and their primary cav unit (sowar), plus they don’t get shipments very quickly (squeezing in a TP is awkward with India) and an FF often relies on shipments.

India’s weakness is their early-mid colonial mass. On great plains for example, almost all civs can have more units at this point, but it’s breaking the Indian that’s the challenge. Many civs can age, in which case India usually has to follow them up but India can’t always get enough units out to hold an early fortress timing. FF or semi-FF builds are India’s achilles heel (as well as civs that outboom them hard) and on maps without sheep or cows India has serious trouble against the stronger ones. But on a sheep/cow map India is unstoppable. They 10/10 and because they can send a unit shipment first in colonial and still get their 600w relatively quickly (it takes really long for them to get the 600w on a map like GP), they can keep up a steady mass and you will have trouble getting to fortress against them while staying colonial is entirely hopeless unless you’re Otto or Iro, which I think India can still deal with quite comfortably on the right map.

The Indian build

With India you immediately need to make an important decision. Are you going 10/10 (note that 10/10 is awkward with a gold start) or are you going for the standard, slower age up? On maps with herdables (sheep, cows, etc) usually go 10/10 even when going defensive. You're gonna have a lot more XP and you wanna get those colonial shipments out as fast as possible. Believe it or not, on the right map a 10/10 actually gets a better eco going than standard play because you can send 600w 300 export right away and will get the 4 vills from the Otto consulate faster, as well as the 2 vills that came with the shipments. On other maps, only go 10/10 if you want to rush. Usually you would want this against civs who want to (semi-)FF against you. A quick sepoy rush will damage them and you can then transition into an eco build with 600w 300 export. However it takes really long to get your eco going after you 10/10’d on a non-herdable map, and in some cases it may be better to just let them FF, do a standard age up and try to mass as much as possible before their first push comes.
1. The 10/10
   - With a 300 wood start, chop 100 wood. Otherwise chop no wood. Don't build a house. This build is called 10/10 because you're staying on 10 max pop.
   - Send the wood trickle.
   - Age up with the agra fort, build it defensively or aggressively based on the match up. Note that if you're rushing that doesn't always mean you should build it aggressively. The timing push against you in mid colonial or your opponent's early fortress is less scary with a defensive agra.
   - Your first batch will usually be sepoy for some early pressure.
   - Send 5 sepoy or 4 sowar if you're rushing (600w after), but mostly you will just be sending 600w.
   - Either way your shipment after 600w is 300 export. You can send 2 military shipments in a row, but almost always this is overdoing it. Be sure that you can do some massive damage with the sowar before you send them (like pushing your opponent off hunts or something).
   - From the 600w, build a consulate and usually a stable as well. If you don't need cav, leave the stable for now but if there is any hint of ranged infantry in your opponent's army, mixing the stable early is a good idea. Also, get a market going from this wood.
   - Wait for the 300 export before you ally with anything (saves you 75 export). Ally with Otto and send the 4 vills. You can also go for the 3 huss first, but do this only if you really need cav. Even if you need extra defense, going with the vills and then the minutemen from the 200 export is usually a better idea than going for the 3 cav, but does cost 100 export more so if you're dealing with an RI-heavy timing, going for the cav may be viable.
   - After 600w 300 export, send either 4 sowar or the big wood trickle depending on whether or not you are in need of more military. Mostly at this point you shouldn't be aggressive yet, so if you don't need the cav for defense go with the wood trickle. 600g to age is also viable.

2. The eco build
   - Chop lots of wood. You obviously don't want to overchop wood because this slows your age up time, but you also don't want to chop too little because this will idle your TC. A general point of reference: before the wood trickle you need 7 vills on wood to gather 100 in the time it takes to create a vill, and after the wood trickle you need 5. This means that you will be chopping wood with the vast majority of your vills in early colonial.
   - Do build a house in discovery age.
   - Send wood trickle.
   - Age with agra fort, mostly you'll wanna build it defensively. Only rarely you can afford to take map control with it, I actually can't seem to think of a situation right now where you would even want to try this. Though obviously if your hunt is terrible you will have to use it to secure hunts.
   - Decide whether you can afford to skip the first military batch. If you can, get a market going during transition, skip the first batch and get all the market upgrades (except the 150-150-150 one).
   - Shipments in early age2 are always 600w 300 export, exceptions are so rare that they are not worth mentioning. You really don't want to be aggressive with this build.
   - After 600w 300 export, send either 4 sowar or the big wood trickle or 600g. Same as 10/10.

If you've made it to late colonial and your opponent hasn't aged, you've won the game unless you're up against Japan in which case you'll likely still win but it becomes dangerous as your resources start to run out. If your opponent does age, try to identify it early and follow them up with 600g. If you're surprised by it I guess you need to stay colonial which is often enough still playable.
Iroquois

So Iro have a ridiculous number of strengths, and no weaknesses. They get a free TP, a fast age up, a free WH with that age up (which in combination is insane), a great cav shipment, an even better war chief, and really good infantry cards in colonial. Not only their early colonial is insane, they only get better and better due to their inf gaining insane amounts of stats with the right cards.

What about their FF? Well they age at 6.30 with 5 vills sent (if you so choose), 2 military buildings for free and really great fortress units and shipments. Seriously, what's with Iro and their insane cav shipments? They even get 5 cuirs for 500 gold on top of the 6 kanya...
And they can semi-FF too, which is great against civs who want to keep them from aging by rushing them. Due to Iro's great early game eco and crazy amount of good shipments, they can actually rush and age at the same time. OP much?

So what is Iro's weakness? Do they even have any?
No. They just don't. There is nothing, not a single weakness that you can exploit playing against them. Semi-FF against them, you'll die to early pressure. Straight FF against them, you'll die to early pressure (or to an FF build of their own). Try to boom against them, you'll die to early pressure. Do pretty much anything else? You will get outmassed in mid colonial.

The only way to beat Iro is outlaming them. This means either playing India on a map with herdables, or Brits with 2 or more big hunts at your disposal. I believe those are the only 2 civs that beat Iro, but only with the right map. There are a bunch of civs that can hold the rush (almost all of them can), and they will have a shot if you outplay the Iro or if he is mapscrewed, but theoretically Iro will come out on top in mid colonial.

The Iroquois build

- Get that early TP up from the starting wood and build a house from the travois. If you started with 300 wood, get an early market going.
- Send 3 vills.
- In case you're going for colonial play age with the fast politician.
- In case you're going for a fortress build (FF or semi-FF) age with the wise woman (crates).

If you did the fast age up you have a bunch of choices how to play early colonial based on the match up. Another great part about Iro is that you can basically do your own thing and still dictate the game because your opponent has to adapt to what you do, not the other way around. Of course, there are ways you can play into their hand but honestly it's pretty hard to do this as Iro, the exception being when your opponent is FFing in which case you need to either rush him and go for the contain, or FF yourself (which isn't really an option any more if you went for the fast age up). Anyway the choices in colonial are:

1. The rush
   A build that is almost always viable because it lets you control the game from very early on, and there are no civs who can counter it effectively. Almost every time you do this build, it will hurt your opponent's eco more than it hurts yours. It doesn't actually hurt yours that much at all because your next shipment is already available, in stark contrast with the Indian 10/10 (on a non-herdable map, that is). There is no civ except Ottos who can FF against this build, but even though I think you still win (Otto gets to fortress but then what?) you
shouldn’t be rushing Otto anyway: just (semi-)FF and win by outmassing.

- During transition, leave most of your vills on food. You want enough food to make 2 vills in early colonial, and then big button after (the TC one, obviously). But, you also want to get the 125 wood in time to be able to send a second military shipment after 4 kanya (if you so choose) and/or to continue vill production after the BB.
- BB unless you don’t need any toma (then just make aenna).
- Send 4 kanya.
- Next shipment is either another military shipment for a very strong continued rush, or 600w. Sending another military shipment is almost always viable because it guarantees that you’ll still have means of pressuring your opponent for the next [insert a very long time here], but the 600w is better in the long run (obviously). Note that 4 kanya 600w allows you to keep most of your vills on food after building the 2nd house which greatly increases your eco efficiency.
- Whenever you start to feel like eco is a bigger priority than military, send 600w 5v. You really want 5 vills after the wood so you can actually support that stable but you can switch back into military shipments if you think that's necessary (if he actually somehow got a big mass out and you're scared of a push, or if he's doing some kind of semi-FF and you want to keep him from aging). Good shipments to send (in order) are 5v, 7 aenna, 6 toma and if you've sent all of those go for the inf upgrade cards.
- Mix in a stable (and a market if you didn't have one already) with 600w.

2. The 600w build
Good against civs that are hard to rush. This gets ahead in a different way. It’s just a solid all round build which you should probably consider against civs that don't (semi-)FF that well, since you don’t need to rush them.
- Send 600w. From this wood, build a stable and another TP, and a market if you didn't have one already. Upgrading the trade route is an option, but getting your shipments out first is also great. Honestly, I haven't played this enough to know which is better. If it were me I would only upgrade the route if my opponent is unlikely to take his own TP (although he always should if you upgrade it).
- Send 5 vills unless he is actually pushing you.
- Spam shipments (don't send 4v before the infantry upgrades).
- Keep map control and push him where he's hunting.

Now, if you did the slow age up:

3. The FF
A very basic FF. the build order is as straightforward as can be.
- Make sure you mine enough to age. Note that you will get 100g from the age up as well.
- Market is optional, but I always build it. Chop 50 wood during age up so you can get hunting dogs right away with the 100w from age up crates.
- When you age up, build a WH from travois and send 600g.
- Age to fortress with the fast politician.
- Next shipment (still in colonial) is usually 5v. 600W is also viable for a second TP (optional), military unit upgrades and houses. 600w is stronger early fortress but obviously worse long term.

4. The semi-FF
People who play Iro must know how awkward it is to age to fortress with a slow politician. Basically what happens is you stop investing in your colonial army very long before actually reaching fortress. In some situations it still isn't bad by any means, but in hindsight if you
end up aging, it wasn't the optimal way to do it. That's why if you plan to age to fortress, go with the wise woman to colonial. Against some civs you don’t need or don’t want to rush, and this build gets the same if not a bigger mass by 7 minutes than the fast age build with the obvious advantage of having the option to age.

- In transition to colonial, gather wood for a second TP and a market. Get hunting dogs but leave placer mines for now (get that when you start mining for fortress).
- Use the TC’s big button for 5 toma whenever you need them. Make sure you have 500f saved up for that throughout the game.
- Depending on the match up build the WH forward or defensively.
- Send 4 kanya and 5 vills in the order you deem most appropriate for the situation. Usually 5 vills first, then your kanya come out around the same time as your first unit batch and you can push. Send the kanya first if you think you can do some damage with raids or if you want to start pressuring early with 4 kanya 5 toma.
- Get some inf out of that WH: toma if he’s going cav otherwise aenna.
- After 5 vills, your choice is to either age now with 600g (do this only if you really need to be fast), or 7 aenna first and then 600g (the most solid option), or even staying colonial. Make it depend on the amount of units they have and how much potential they have to actually push you.
- You don’t definitely have to age yet. You should never blindly stick to a build but in this case it’s especially unnecessary. Pick your moment to age wisely!
Japan

Your early game is trash-tier. You age with around 12 vills (considering orchards gather rate) and pretty late too, and your age up wonder is more for the long term than the short term. Actually, everything Japan does in the early game is setting them up for the long game. Apart from the wonder they get a port consulate up to make shrines cheaper and they ship heavenly kami which doesn't help their eco directly but helps their boom. You could say “no wonder that they have trouble against early pressure”, and you'd be right. You could also say why not play them differently, why not send 2 vills or 3 fishing boats and age with the military rickshaw and go for some kind of colonial play? Well, because Japs suck at that. The age up wonder sucks, it's a lot worse than 400w. Besides, you're still aging with a bad eco (orchards don't gather as fast as hunts) and your units are rather expensive. You also don't get good military shipments. The list goes on and what it comes down to is that you want to be going full shrine boom for which you need all the aforementioned ingredients: heavenly kami, port consulate and toshugu shrine.

Forget about holding rushes with good yumi micro or a quick ashi+naginata combo. Good players won't lose to that. Your way to hold a rush is to send CM and wall your town while you're booming hard all over the map, and somehow getting those raxes up. If he's really not leaving your town, hide some vills and build 2 raxes. Mass a bunch of stuff and wait before attacking him until the fight favours you. If it never ends up favouring you and you lost your tc, you're in a tough spot. Japan is a very adaptive civ. There's really only one build but it can turn out in a lot of different ways based on what your opponent is doing. The golden rule is if you can afford it, age. Remember, water maps get you an extra 3 vills in early colonial. Huge, huge deal! This moves Japan from a possible tier 3 civ to a tier 1 civ.

The Japanese build

So I recommend always shrine booming on this patch. Not booming is not viable in my opinion because you simply fall too far behind early game.

Strong about this build is that it's very adaptive. It's the same every game the first 6 minutes (a rush you can usually scout, for the CM), and then you get the choice to age or to stay colonial. Against civs like Otto which you really can't scout in transition to colonial, this is a strong way to play.

- Get that port consulate going no matter what: build consulate (start it quickly or you'll get housed but build it with 1 vill), ally with ports and chop up to 106 wood for the shrine.
- Send heavenly kami.
- During age up keep up vill production by putting 6 vills on food. Rest goes on wood (shrines too).
- Mass shrines. Just keep booming, don't use the wood for anything else for now.
- If he's rushing with xbows or with anything else that makes CM useful (as in, it makes your tc take 1 less shot to kill their inf), send CM (enlist irregulars).
- Walls help to decrease idle vill time against rushes.
- First shipment in colonial is 600w. From this wood, get raxes up or 1 rax and a stable (rarely). Hide these buildings if you have to. Also get that market going.
- As soon as you have 400 export get the xbow batch from consulate (on water maps get the 3 fishing boats right away obviously) and cancel the port alliance. Go for Jap isolation instead.
- Send 600g. If he's going for a colonial play but not being aggressive or you want to go full yumi, go 4v or 600w. This is where your build starts to deviate but which card to send is too situation-dependent to go into in this guide. Shrines go on either food or wood.
- Now you will either start massing units or age. The rest is up to you.
Ottomans

Whoever designed this civ should jump off a cliff... Imagine what I want the designer of Sioux to do to himself... No, I kid, I kid. Otto are a really fun civ, but damn are they easy. I've seen absolutely horrible players reach all kinds of inflated ELOs/PRs with this civ, and they always seem to have an ego too.

Anyway, abus guns are truly a pleasure to micro. It's not hard by any means but still I see people fail at this far too often. What you wanna be doing is kiting. Constantly. When you reach 15 abus they should never go idle for another second until you've won the game. If he storms at you with 10 cav, no problem, you don't even care. Abus kill 2 of them before they even reach your army and when they do there will be 10 melee jans waiting for them. But keep kiting even during fights! There is no reason to stay put unless you're up against RI that outrange you.

So yeah, jan abus is pretty scary but Otto also have good FF builds because of their speed and strong mercenary shipments. Compare 5 mams for 1000 gold to 3 mahouts for 1000 food (which admittedly is a terrible shipment) and realise how OP it really is. There's also spahi, but to be honest mams are pretty much the sole reason you would even age to fortress with this civ.

Many civs (actually all except Iro I would argue) have a lot of trouble dealing with Otto in colonial and will have to try and age in order to get goons out. Goons are Otto's achilles' heel, they simply have no counter. As a bonus, it's convenient that goons counter Otto's merc shipments so well too. So Otto will have to hit hard before their opponent gets to a position where they can mass ranged cavalry comfortably. Usually they can jan rush, contain while massing abus (which do ok against goons if you outmass them hard enough) or FF themselves and push with jan falc or with early mams but for example against an Iro FF they simply lose because jan rushing that is pointless. Otto get the wh up and have the big button which allows them to adapt quickly; they can turn their FF into a semi-FF if you rush them and FF wars are even more hopeless. An abus contain also doesn't work due to the speed of the Iro FF and FP kanya doing pretty well against jan abus. But that's just Iro, and they're quite the rebels when it comes to being balanced.

The Ottoman build

- Get a TP and a house up from the starting wood and just gather food. Get some popcorn or something while you watch your vills build automatically.
- Send 3 vills. Don't fall asleep.
- Age with 400w.

Now more often than not you will set up for a colonial play then adapt. Adapting into an FF can be strong after 700w 700g, I especially like starting huss abus then transitioning into abus CA in fortress, waiting for the mams then pushing out. Jans are better tanks, but abus CA can kite so nicely and with mams as tanks it's a strong combo. Jans are better though, because surviving to the point where you get mams out is more important. Anyway, you can also choose to FF right now.

1. The colonial build
   This build plays for the critical abus mass, which you can reach relatively quickly because 15 abus can already be called critical mass. Abus are ridiculous, and this build plays into that. Viable in almost every situation especially since it can adapt into a strong semi-FF, but the FF is slightly faster and can be strong for an early fortress jan falc push or a mid fortress jan falc mam push.
   - Chop wood for another TP. As soon as you start building it, take all vills off wood and gather for either a cav start or a jan start (usually jans).
- From the 400w, build a rax or a stable and upgrade the trade route. If you decided to adapt into an FF then upgrading it is optional. In that case send 700g and age.
- For a colonial play, send 700w. If you have more TPs available, take another one from this wood. Also, get the art foundry up. Yes, always the art foundry, don't go jan huss!
- Put the TPs on wood or gold depending on how many houses you need.
- Next shipments are 700g 600g (you can age for mams somewhere in between these shipments or after 600g) military 600w.
- Mixing a third military building for 3 unit combo is viable but don't do it all too early because it will hurt your mass.

2. The FF
   Why are you doing this build? If this is not a tournament or a test game you have no excuse.
   - Gather 1200-300.
   - From the 400w, build another TP and a military building (almost always a rax).
   - Send 700g. Age with the 4 huss or 4 abus depending on the situation.
   - Send 700w for houses. You can upgrade the route at this point and mix in an art foundry, but I feel like if you were going to do that you're probably better off starting 700w 700g and aging fast.
   - Make some units.
   - Send 1000g then mams.
   - Right click their base.
   - Consider switching civs or quitting aoe3.
Portuguese

Ports don’t have vill shipments which hurts them a lot. They don’t have obvious early game advantages like Russia (extremely cost effective units and good unit shipments) to make up for it, all they really have is that extra TC and that takes kind of a long time to pay off. At least Ports start with 7 vills so their age up eco isn’t all that pathetic, but it’s not great either. Something you’ll really find yourself needing as Ports is the early TP (300w first) and spice trade in early colonial to get more mileage out of that extra TC. Spice trade is the only viable eco card you have and since your eco is the only thing that can win you games, investing a card in it early is a great idea. However, on a map with little hunts this will often not be worth it, and some kind of early fortress mam play may be your best bet in that case but this is bound to lose against someone who knows what he’s doing. This strat will not be included here because I assume enough hunts. Maps with little hunts are quite unplayable with ports anyway (water builds are not included here either).

Early game you are weak, but hard to break due to the 2 TCs. This gives you time to quickly invest in eco and harass a bit, then decide what to do based on your opponent’s build. That’s why a cav start with spice trade 700w is almost always recommended, there are very few rushes that will break you unless you build your TC forward (in most match ups you can and should do this). You become stronger as you get your 3 military buildings up and your eco starts to come out ahead due to the 2 TC boom. More often than not, your opponent will either be fortress by now or will have map control in colonial. Your next goal is to take map ctrl, because you need more hunts. In some cases you will end up fighting age2 vs fortress with musk huss. Your eco is the light at the end of the tunnel here but if you lose the map you lose the game. In other cases you will find yourself following them up into fortress and fighting a fortress war. In yet other cases you will find yourself in a colonial war, in which case (similarly to fortress wars) the game becomes entirely about whether or not you can secure enough hunts, the difficulty of which depends on your opponent’s civ and the map. If you manage to secure hunts, your eco will eventually win you the game. Don’t forget to send the best shipment in the game (mams), but make sure you have an army to back them up. Mams are tanks, they’re bad on their own.

With Ports, mid to late game is your time to shine, but don’t give your opponent unnecessary chances to trick you by aging to industrial early or something like that. Keep scouting them (spyglass!) and pressuring them whenever your army is bigger. As Ports you’re often in a defensive mindset, but sometimes this is misguided. Even in early fortress Ports manage to get a pretty solid mass out and sitting in your base gives your opponents chances to do cheesy stuff like age to industrial.

The Portuguese build

- With a 200w start, get that early market going.
- First card is 300w. Build a TP from this and a market if you didn’t have that yet.
- Age with 400w. Get placer mines then chop 25 more wood.
- Place your new TC in such a way that it secures resources, preferably hunts, but not too far forward against fast civs like Otto/Iro/etc.
- Send spice trade as soon as you hit age2.
- Get steel traps and a house from 400w, and a stable. Rax is also viable but to be honest it’s hard to think of a situation where this is actually better. You could argue you sometimes need inf for defense, but you have 14 mm so you should be ok.
- Send 700w and from it build 2 raxes and houses, or 1 rax if you want to stick with cav
(consider getting the 2nd gold upgrade in market in this case). Consider building a second TP, especially if you’re planning to age.

Now you’ll have to choose whether to age or stay in colonial. Note that if you can’t decide yet, it’s good to send 700g either way and then either spend it on units or on the age up. Aging is usually best if your opponent also decided to age, and maybe you can also get away with it against slower civs like Japan or Brits (or an opposing Port).

1. **The semi-FF**
   - Send 700g.
   - Age up fast. Sending 600w for extra housing/market upgrades is good but only do this if you have 2 TPs already.
   - You may need to send 8 xbows to hold some kind of a timing push.
   - In fortress, boom and mass cass+goon. Send 1000g at some point and go for mams. Fort is also viable if you find that you have room to place it in a strong spot without it being killed.
   - Secure hunts!

2. **The colonial play**
   - Next shipments are any combination of 8 xbows, 6 musk, 600w, 700g. Keep massing, usually musk huss (makes the most use of your economic upgrades), and again, make sure you secure hunts.
   - You can still age by sending 700g if you feel that you can’t win in colonial, but that’s risky business.
   - Note: If you planned to go for colonial, your TC placement is extra important. If you can afford it, you have to put this on as many hunts as possible or, by placing it strategically, get LOS so that you will be able to see any raid coming. That way you can actually hunt far away from your TCs in later stages of the game.
Russia

Russia is in a lot of ways a weaker Azzy. They have similar early colonial choices and have cost effective units, as well as not gaining that much by aging. They have limited options and a unique strength, being their cost effective mass. You really don’t want to be up against mass strelet musk coss in later stages of colonial, when Russia’s eco has caught up with yours and their units are so insanely cost effective that you would theoretically need to have 10 more vills than them to actually break them. Unless you’re India (sowars) of course. Strelets cost 37.5 food and 10 wood. Much like abus but to a lesser extent, they are too strong for their cost. And let’s all stop with the “Russian musks suck” bandwagon. Cossacks are very cost effective as well, and boyars (upgrade card) makes Russia’s army even scarier.

So what reason does Russia have to age, really? You could say none, except sometimes they need to age to deal with their opponent’s fortress potential. Often enough though, when Russia ages they will end up using the same units as they did in colonial, which is awkward because they have to upgrade all of them.

Russia is similar to Ports in that they use a lot of food, have no age2 vill shipments and will thus benefit greatly from an early spice trade. Their eco also grows slightly faster than other civs’, and combined with their cost effective army this means that they will beat all the non-OP civs in colonial.

Russia does have some trouble against strong semi-FF builds. France can usually afford to age up, Germans too, in which case Russia has trouble dealing with masses of cuirs or uhlans. But, with Russia it’s actually an option to fight most civs’ fortress in colonial. They take map control with multiple BHs, set up a strong food eco with spice trade, and mass an army that is extremely hard to deal with even in fortress. Against most FF builds they win because their eco jumps too far ahead, but against semi-FFs it’s often a close call because in early fortress their eco is mostly not that far ahead yet.

**The Russian build**

- 200w? early market.
- First card is wood trickle.
- Age with 400w. Chop for a market if necessary.

BH placement is mostly forward even with the spice trade build (secure hunts) but you can put it in base too if you’re scared of early pressure.

1. **The 700w build**
   A strong longer term build that’s not too eco heavy (spice trade) but better long term than the 700g option. It’s sort of the middle ground between the 2 builds.
   - Stop chopping after hunting dogs and placer mines.
   - Build the WH + housing from age up wood. TP is optional but often a good idea, especially if your opponent is likely to upgrade the route.
   - Send 700w. Build some houses from it, get steel traps if you can afford to, and use the rest for strelet batches. Second BH is optional.
   - Next cards are typically your 3 unit shipments, 600w somewhere in there, and boyars. Spice trade is also good, but if you plan on sending this it’s usually best to send it first.
   - You can age with 700g, but first consider whether it will actually help you at all.
2. **The 700g build**
   For a strong musk coss timing around 7/8 mins, which is good as Russia in niche situations. Many civs will attempt to age against you and that’s the time when they’re most vulnerable. Also, if your opponent isn’t likely to have cav don’t do this build.
   - Keep chopping, don’t get placer mines yet.
   - Build 2 BHs from age up wood + chopped wood. Keep some vills on wood for houses. Rest all on food.
   - Get steel traps and send 700g as soon as you hit colonial.
   - Mass musks and send 5-4 cossacks.
   - Push if they’re aging, otherwise put on some soft pressure.
   - Send 700w spice trade to set up for a longer term colonial play.

3. **The spice trade build**
   As mentioned, spice trade is a strong option with Russia. But beware, this build gives your opponent a lot of chances to push you early on or age, so it’s rarely the best way to go but it can be strong if you know your opponent is also going for a long term colonial play, like against Brit or Japan.
   - Keep chopping wood and get the BH up.
   - Get steel traps. If you can’t afford this due to early pressure, remind me of why you are doing this build.
   - Send spice trade.
   - Next shipment is always 700w. Again, if you can’t afford this, then why did you send spice trade? The spice trade/700w mechanic is comparable to azzy’s 3 WP/700w build. It makes no sense to send 3 WP and then not send 700w, although 5v is an (arguably bad) option there.
   - Next shipments are any combination of unit shipments, 600w and boyars.
Spain

Spain is a civ you won't see a lot of on this patch. They have many problems, and one of them is that they aren't very unique. Their early fortress pressure build is the only thing they really have that makes them an attractive civ to play, but that build is really not scary any more, at least not to most civs. Spain has to lower itself to playing like a weak France. They have some early colonial options like musk huss, xbow/pike (with rod shipments in Spain's case) and a selection of decent semi-FFs. However, whatever Spain does France can do it faster and yet have a better eco behind it. You're reminded of this fact every time you play Spain which is what takes the magic out.

Sure, Spain has lancers. Lancers are a great unit against infantry, admittedly, but as soon as there's cav involved they just don't do enough damage. They completely demolish the unit that they're supposed to demolish but are useless against anything else. Ranged infantry gets absolutely destroyed by lancers, especially with the card on them and that's nice, but against what civ are you gonna have a large enough mass to actually make this count? Tough question, really.

Spain's military shipments are pathetic. 3 lancers in fortress, 5 rods in colonial, 7 rods in fortress, etcetera. Those 2 fortress cards are actually worth less than or exactly 700 resources, and mostly food at that. Go figure. Another problem they face is that the TP buff (200w) doesn't benefit them as much. They still want a TP from a 200w start, but other civs having better shipments means they will always benefit more. It's the other way around with Germans, who were very happy with the TP buff.

However, Spain gets a decent eco out (always being able to send 5v, sometimes 4v right after) and they almost always get the possibility to send 1000w in fortress (not like they have better options anyway) which makes their massing power relatively scary. Still, their unit selection leaves a lot to be desired and since their FF is a lot weaker now most civs can simply semi-FF against it and as a result Spain also has to semi-FF. And Spain hates to semi-FF. Their lack of a fast age up (by the way did I mention they don't even get 400w to colonial? Ouch) makes them age quite slowly and the worst part about that is that you can't make fortress units during your transition and are more often than not stuck massing musks.

But, you have dogs! They are the light at the end of the tunnel.

**The Spanish build**

- From a 200w start, get a TP up. From 100w, get an early market going.
- Send 3 vills.
- Age with the 500f or tower 200c. Tower if you need defense, obviously.

1. **The (musk) huss start**

A very versatile build. It's playable in every situation because you have a choice to start cav or musk and will always mix the second building pretty quickly. In most cases it's best to turn it into a semi-FF because there really isn't much for you in colonial, but longer term colonial plays can be viable against some civs. Sometimes the map even forces you into it.

- Chop lots of wood. You're Spain, you don't have 400w, you always need to chop lots of wood during transition. It sucks, but that's life.
- Get a market going if you didn't have one yet. HD and placer mines.
- In colonial get a rax or a stable up. Get steel traps.
- Send 700w. From it, build the second military building and a bunch of houses. If you plan to
do a semi-FF (700w 5v 700g) consider building a second TP instead of the military building.

- Next card is always 5v. You really want to invest in your eco, and if you're being pressured too hard to send 5v you're in a pretty bad spot. Usually it's best to send the vills anyway and rely on your building wall + minutenmen and potentially your tower to protect you for a while. Not sending 5 vills here is quite painful for your eco.
- Next card is either 600w or 700g. 8 pikes for a timing push is also viable. Gold if you want to age (age with 4 huss), wood if you want to stick to colonial (for a second rax and houses).
- If you're sticking to age2 and you've been losing units and don't need the 2nd rax yet, send rods or 4v instead of the wood.
- If you aged up (usually with 4 huss), during transition you have 2 more shipments. Send 4v 600w.

2. **The xbow/pike start**
   Viable as a rush or rush defense, it gets significantly more units out than the musk huss start. However you have little to play for in mid to late colonial so you're gonna have to either defend very well and age up, switch into musk huss or do significant damage early on.
   - Chop lots of wood. Chop lots and lots of wood. Get a market if you didn't have one yet, get gang saw as soon as possible and then HD. Also, get 400 extra wood for your 2 raxes.
   - Get 2 raxes up as soon as you age. Most vills back to food.
   - Send 700w. Build xbow/pike.
   - Send 600w.
   - Next shipments can be military, 700g if you're mixing in cav or aging (or even switching to musk huss), or vills. Which one depends on what your priority is (pressure, switching unit composition or longer term colonial).