CIVILIZATION IV Intermediate Tactics and Gambits

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INTRODUCTION

I thought I would take some of the lessons learned from the ALC series (and other games) thus far and turn them into a strategy article. Rather than dealing with an overall, "big picture" strategy--there are better articles here on those--I thought I'd detail a few of the smaller tactics and gambits you can fit into just about any game.

I'm referring to these as "intermediate" mainly because I've learned and tested them on an intermediate difficulty level, Prince (and I'm starting to try them out on Monarch as well, and I've had success with most of them so far). This is not to say they won't work on the beginner or advanced levels, just that they may be overkill on the former and I have not personally tested them yet on the latter.

Thanks and credit must go to the many ALC posters who alerted me to these. I am not the originator of these tactics; I'm just trying to distil what I've learned from others and pass it along, just as I did in my Beginner's Guide. I encourage, expect, and appreciate refinement and correction and will edit the article accordingly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. LEVEL JUMPING

Many Civ players become frustrated when they attempt to move up a difficulty level. They often find themselves in between the proverbial rock and a hard place: their current difficulty level has become too easy and predictable, even boring, but the next difficulty level up is too hard. How does one adjust?

Some of the tactics described later in this article may help, as will studying of the various articles in the Civilization Fanatics site War Academy to focus on specific areas of your game. At a more simple level, however, moving up a difficulty level is often a matter of adjusting your expectations.

Think about it: you probably feel you're ready to move up a level because you've *mastered* your current difficulty level. That usually means—especially on levels below Emperor—that you almost always achieve the in-game goals you set for yourself. You always build the Oracle, or the Pyramids, or both, or some other set of wonders; you always found a religion, perhaps several, including one of the early ones; you always win the circumnavigation and liberalism races; you're always the first one to each technology that grants a free Great Person; and, of course, you always win.

So you're accustomed to achieving these goals, so much so that you probably take them for granted. This probably means that when you try the next higher difficulty level, you're still pursuing these same goals. Maybe you're achieving some of them, but probably not all of them—especially the mid-game goals, which may be leading you to abandon games in frustration.

The answer should be obvious by now. Pretend you're Catholic and it's Lent. Give something up. In fact, give *several* things up. Abandon some of those goals—the religion(s) you always found, the wonder(s) you always build, and so on, and focus on building a better base-level civilization instead.

Some specific tips:

- **Religion**: Founding a religion directs research away from more worthwhile targets (especially worker and military techs). Adopting your own religion may alienate your neighbours, especially since, with an improved tech rate on the higher levels, they are more likely to found their own religions. Spreading your religion is costly, requiring you to build missionaries and to try to generate a Great Prophet to build the shrine. Instead of founding a religion, let the AI do that. Let the religions spread to you and adopt the one that will be of the greatest diplomatic benefit. For example, don't adopt the religion of the close neighbour you intend to invade; adopt the religion of their enemy whom you hope to have on your side, or at least staying out of your way (and not declaring war on *you*). You can always build Axemen instead of missionaries and capture a holy city and its shrine if you have a powerful hankering to own one.

- **Wonders**: Try setting a wonder moratorium on yourself in your first couple of games at a higher difficulty level. Wonders, like religions, can be a tremendous diversion for your research and production. You are probably better off researching military techs and building units to take the wonder from the AI that built it. Wonders do grant advantages, but you'll be a better player if you learn how to win without their benefits. Early game wonders are particularly challenging to build, so even as you get better at the higher difficulty levels, choose them carefully. Base your decisions on factors that enhance your chances of success, such as your starting technologies (starting with mining, for example puts you closer to Masonry for the Pyramids and Great Wall); map situation (if you have Shaka or Montezuma next to you, focus on military, not wonders); nearby resources (stone, marble, gold, ivory all accelerate the builds of specific wonders, giving you a better chance at building them), and leader traits (Industrious, obviously, helps a lot—but don't let that trait distract you into being a "wonderholic"!).

- **Races**: Again, choose carefully. You may be able to win some of these races, but do you need to? Will the circumnavigation bonus actually be useful to you? If you're planning an intercontinental invasion, it's handy but not essential; if you're on an isolated landmass and pursuing a cultural victory, it's next to useless—same thing if it's a Pangaea map. Liberalism is a nice bonus, but it's not the end of the world (or the game) if you're beaten to it. And you may be able to generate those Great People you want without having to race after a particular technology (the specific benefits of which may not be useful to you at that point in the game).

Once you get more comfortable with your new difficulty level, you'll gradually find that you can achieve more of your old goals. You should choose them carefully, however, as part of your overall game strategy, rather than as ends in and of themselves. For example, you may be playing as a Philosophical leader and have access to stone; you decide to build the Pyramids so you can run the Representation civic early and supercharge the specialist economy you're running to generate more Great People. You decide to forgo the Oracle because you don't have marble and, if the Pyramids work out, you'll be researching techs so quickly by mid-game that one free one won't make that much difference to you.

However, be prepared to continually adjustment your expectations even as you achieve mastery of the new difficulty level. Given that it's a *higher* difficulty level, you'll probably never find yourself able to achieve *all* of the goals you used to. This is a good thing. It keeps the game challenging. Once you're attaining several of your old in-game goals, though, and winning handily, guess what? It's time to move up to the next level and for the cycle to begin anew!

2. EARLY ASTRONOMY

(Note: this section is based upon the Beyond the Sword tech tree)

On continents and archipelago maps, Astronomy is probably one of the most powerful and sought-after techs in the renaissance era of the game. It's a common choice for the free Liberalism tech. But in some games, such as if you're isolated, you'll find yourself wishing you had it much, much earlier.

Well, there is a way! With this gambit, you could potentially have access to Astronomy long before 1000 AD.

A Great Scientist, you see, will lightbulb part of Astronomy. Two Great Scientists will lightbulb it almost completely. What you need to do is research through its prerequisites. At the same time, you need to *avoid* certain technologies in order to keep your Great Scientists from lightbulbing a different technology—namely, Philosophy or Paper. (Which is ironic, since when you're going after Liberalism, those are on the list of techs you want a Great Scientist to give you.)

Obviously, you'll need to research **Optics**. If you're isolated, Optics will be a high priority on its own, as you'll need Caravels to go out and meet the other civilizations. The tech path to Optics includes these technologies:

- Fishing
- Sailing
- Mining
- Bronze Working
- Iron Working
- Metal Casting
- Compass
- Machinery

If you can generate a Great Engineer—say by building the Pyramids—so much the better, because you can use the GE to lightbulb most of Machinery, which is otherwise a very expensive technology. It's tempting to use the GE for a wonder, of course, but resist the urge! The advantage of having Astronomy ridiculously early in the game far outweighs just about any wonder you can build (with the possible exception of the Great Library, but build that "honestly" if you want it).

In addition to the above techs, you'll also need to research through the "upper" part of the tech tree to open access to Astronomy. The first thing to do is to research **Writing**; there are three paths to it, one of them from Fishing (through Pottery), which you also need above, so that has synergy with this gambit. You can also get to Writing through Agriculture or Hunting and Animal Husbandry, picking up several useful worker techs along the way; or through the religious path (Mysticism -> Meditation or Polytheism -> Priesthood). All of these could be leveraged for this tactic, since the religious path could be used to build the Oracle to get one of the Optics prerequisite technologies for free. You might also pursue a diversion, from Polytheism through Aesthetics and Literature, in order to build the Great Library to help generate the Great Scientists you need (and you help your overall level of research). This could be too much of a sidetrack, however.

Once you have Writing, you'll need the following technologies to open up access to Astronomy:

- Mathematics
- Calendar

Now that's not much, is it? However, you'll have one other technology to research: **Alphabet**. This is because a Great Scientist will lightbulb Alphabet (to which access was granted by Writing) before he'll do the same for Astronomy. But since you probably want contact with the other civs for the purposes of tech trading, Alphabet should be on your overall shopping list anyway. In fact, you could probably tech to Optics, send out Caravels, research Alphabet, and then trade some of the Optics-path techs for Mathematics and Calendar.

It should be noted that Great Scientists will lightbulb Mathematics, Alphabet, Calendar, and Optics too. If you're playing as a Philosophical leader, you might be able to generate enough Great Scientists to lightbulb all of these techs while you research towards Optics, especially if you have a top-notch Great Person farm and/or build the Great Library. However, Great Scientists can usually provide more "flasks" than these early technologies require—so it's usually preferable to save the Great Scientists you generate for the big jobs (like Astronomy itself), and/or use them for Academies to accelerate research overall.

Once you have Optics, Calendar, and Alphabet, your next Great Scientist will lightbulb Astronomy. Provided, that is, that you've blocked off the path to other technologies that a Great Scientist will lightbulb before Astronomy. To do this, you need to *avoid* researching the following technologies:

- Meditation (grants GS access to Philosophy)

- Civil Service (grants GS access to Paper)

- Theology (grants GS access to Paper)

As a result, when you do finally meet the other civilizations, you'll probably be missing several key technologies such as Currency, Code of Laws, Monarchy, and so on; however, you should have plenty of juicy techs to trade to your new friends. As for those that aren't so friendly, well, you can invade them while your homeland remains untouchable for centuries! With this gambit, an isolated start may turn out to be the best thing that ever happened to you.

3. THE ORACLE/METAL CASTING/PYRAMIDS GAMBIT

The idea of this gambit is to generate a Great Engineer as soon as possible, then use him to build the Pyramids, which a GE can do in a single turn. You can have the Pyramids by 1000 BC and never have to lift a brick!

Essentially, you're going to build your first two cities within close proximity of one another. You'll build the Oracle in the capital and use it to obtain Metal Casting, they you'll build a forge in the second city in order to run an Engineer specialist and generate a Great Engineer before the capital generates a Great Prophet.

Because the 2nd city's GP generation has to play catch-up, the most critical part of this gambit is to build the forge in the second city within 6 turns of finishing the Oracle. This is no mean feat. This is why you will build a barracks or obelisk in the city, but stop building it when you're one turn from finishing. You want to whip this building to completion so that the overflow of hammers goes towards the build of the Forge (and in the capital, towards the Oracle).

Be sure to grow the population of the 2nd city to at least 3 and pre-chop the 3 forests required. Be prepared to use the whip to get the forge completed in time, but don't whip the population down to 1 unless it will recover on the next turn. You need at least 2 pop in the 2nd city in order to run the Engineer specialist.

This really requires a Philosophical leader because of the +100% Great Person point generation bonus. A non-Philosophical leader may be able to pull it off, but with the greater delay in generating the Great Engineer, the likelihood of the AI finishing the Pyramids before you is much greater.

In vanilla Civ IV, Frederick the Great and Saladin are probably the two best leaders for this gambit. Frederick starts with Mining and the Creative trait means his cities' borders will expand without having to build Obelisks or Stonehenge. Saladin has the advantage of both of his starting techs being on the required tech path, giving you a head start.

In Warlords and BtS, however, their traits changed, both of them losing the Philosophical trait. Gandhi is now Philosophical and Spiritual (Saladin's old traits), while Pericles is Creative and Philosophical (Frederick's former combination. The Greek starting techs (Hunting and Fishing) are not on the list of required techs for this gambit, while the Indian ones (Mysticism and Mining) both are—so Gandhi is probably the best leader for this gambit.

(Getting the Pyramids this early lends itself to a running a specialist economy, since you now have access to all the government civics. A specialist economy also leverages the advantages of the Philosophical trait, since more specialists generate more GP points and therefore more Great People. But there are other threads on this board dealing with that economic strategy in more detail and so I won't attempt to cover it here.)

TECH PATH:

1. Agriculture
2. Animal Husbandry
3. The Wheel
4. Mysticism
5. Mining
6. Bronze Working
7. Meditation
8. Priesthood
9. Pottery
10. Masonry
11. Metal Casting (from Oracle)

CITY 2 "3F" RULES:

- A 3 Food source within the city's workable area (if the leader is not creative, this may only be the initial 9 tiles!)

- 3 Forests within the city's workable area (ideally they should be between the 2nd city and the capital, but make sure that when chopped, the hammers go to the 2nd city)

- 3 tiles from capital, maximum (this is to minimize the impact of maintenance costs on research, and to maximize the efficiency of the Workers)

WORKER TASKS:

- FARM or PASTURE tiles so each city has at least one 3-food tile

- build ROADS on forest tiles (preferably between cities)

- PRE-CHOP three forests for each city, especially for City 2

- MINE a hill or production resource for each city to provide additional hammers

CITY BUILD QUEUES:

City 1 (Capital):

1. Worker
2. Settler
3. Barracks or Obelisk to within 1 turn of finishing
4. Military Units
5. Oracle when available (Priesthood); whip-finish Barracks or Obelisk so the overflow of hammers goes to the Oracle
6. Chop/Whip the Oracle

City 2:

1. Worker
2. Barracks or Obelisk to within 1 turn of finishing
3. Military Units
4. Forge when available (Metal Casting); whip-finish Barracks or Obelisk so the overflow goes to the Forge
5. Chop/Whip forge (within 6 turns, remember!)
6. Pyramids once Great Engineer appears

WARLORDS VARIATION:

In the original Warlords expansion pack, this gambit is even easier. Research to Masonry and build the Great Wall world wonder. The Great Wall generates 2 GP points towards a Great Engineer. Use the GE from the Great Wall to build the Pyramids. The only thing to really be careful about is if you're building Stonehenge as well. Make sure the Great Wall finishes first, and in a different city from Stonehenge, so that you don't generate a Great Prophet instead of a Great Engineer.

However, the 2.08 patch for Warlords reduces the the GP points from 2 to 1--making it unlikely that you'll generate a GE in time to beat the AI to the Pyramids. Still, the original tactic described above should still work, and could even be combined with the Great Wall in some way for added effectiveness.

In **Beyond the Sword**, the Great Wall contributes GP points towards a Great *Spy*, not a Great Engineer, so this variation no longer works. However, it contributes to another gambit, covered in the next section.

4. GREAT WALL/GREAT SPY TECH STEALING (BEYOND THE SWORD)

In the Beyond the Sword expansion pack, the Great Wall contributes points towards a Great Spy rather than a Great Engineer. Many players first bemoaned this change, as it did in the ability (described above) to generate a Great Engineer early in the game who could be used to rush the completion of the Pyramids. However, gaining an early Great Spy can be almost as valuable.

The gambit is relatively straightforward:

1. Research Masonry.

2. Build the Great Wall.

3. Generate a Great Spy from the Great Wall's GP points.

4. Meanwhile, research Alphabet so you will be able to build Spies.

5. Send the Great Spy to another civilization and use him on an "infiltrate city" mission. This will give you several thousand espionage points (EPs) against that civilization.

6. Send Spies to that same civ and use them to steal technologies.

Remember that by taking the risk of leaving a spy in an enemy city for several turns, you can reduce the EP cost of a mission such as stealing a tech (by 10% per turn, up to a maximum of 50%). Thus, you may be able to steal anywhere from six to a dozen early technologies this way.

However, this gambit may not always be the best to pursue. Consider the following:

- **The Great Wall**: How successful will your attempt to build it be? If you don't start with Mining, don't have a source of stone near your start, don't have trees to chop (for which you need Bronze Working anyway), and you're not playing as an Industrious leader, your chances may be slim; the AI is fond of this wonder.

- **Tech Stealing Target**: Do you have a likely target nearby? The best targets would obviously be one of the best researchers, such as Mansa Musa, Huayna Capac, and so on. If you are isolated or surrounded by slowly-teching neighbours such as Sitting Bull and Genghis Khan, this gambit may not be worthwhile. If you're planning on targeting the likeliest tech theft target with an early axe rush, there is also no point; you can't steal techs from a dead civ.

- **Alphabet**: This is a very expensive early tech, but you'll need it for Spies to make this gambit work. Is it worth it, or are there other tech targets that will be more important?

- **Tech Lead versus Tech Parity**: Because you can't steal techs no one has, you will not immediately claim a tech lead from this gambit; you'll just be keeping up. However, this could eventually amount to a tech lead, since you're not having to research or trade for the technologies you obtain this way.

5. RIVERSIDE IRONWORKS

By the later part of the mid-game, the production offered by waterwheel and workshop tile improvements will have improved significantly. Watermills get +1 additional hammer with Replaceable Parts and +2 commerce with Electricity; Workshops get +1 hammer with Guilds and another +1 hammer with Chemistry. In addition, the State Property civic (available with the discovery of Communism) adds +1 food to watermill and workshop tiles. (In Beyond the Sword, running the Caste System civic also adds +1 hammer to workshops.)

So with Replaceable Parts, Electricity, Guilds, and Chemistry under the State Property civic, tile yields are as follows:

- Plains riverside tile with watermill: 2F 3H 3C

- Grassland riverside tile with watermill: 3F 2H 3C

- Plains tile with workshop: 1F 4H (1C beside river)

- Grassland tile with workshop: 2F 3H (1C beside river)

Financial civs will gain an additional 1C from the watermills, of course.

A workshop on grassland or plains, then, has equivalent production output to a mine on the same type of terrain on a hill, but with +1 food under State Property. The extra food ensures that the city can grow to its maximum size and not only sustain the population to work every tile, but also run several Engineer specialists for additional hammers and to potentially produce a Great Engineer.

Around this time, Steel is discovered, making the Ironworks national wonder available. The late-game production city where Ironworks (and a Forge and Factory) should be located is not a city surrounded by hills, but one with a significant number of river tiles and mostly grassland tiles in its fat cross. The idea is to exploit the food and hammer yields from Watermills and Workshops.

The first priority is to increase this city's population, so you should leave farms and food resources in place for a time. Place as many waterwheels as you can on the river tiles. Do not be afraid to replace cottages. On any flat land tile where a waterwheel cannot be built, build a workshop. Eventually, you should consider replacing the food resources' farms or pastures with Watermills or Workshops—if they will provide more hammers than supporting an Engineer specialist would.

To maximize this city's production, you want its citizens to work every tile, so you may end up "stealing" some tiles from nearby cities if their fat crosses overlap.

A tip for maximizing the number of watermills: build the watermills on the tiles with the fewest sides next to a river first. This is because if you build a watermill on a tile with 3 river exposures, the watermill may get placed on the same side as an opposing tile with just that one river exposure, and now a watermill cannot be built there.

One obvious advantage to using a riverside city this way is that it can then be used to build the Three Gorges Dam world wonder, which can only be built in a city next to a river. In addition, a riverside city with a large number of grassland tiles is usually near the equator (the grassland was probably jungle at the start of the game). This puts the city in the required location (within 30 degrees latitude of the equator) to build the Space Elevator if you are pursuing a Space Race victory. In fact, you should choose the riverside Ironworks city with these end goals in mind.

FLOOD PLAINS CAVEAT:

You can also build watermills on flood plains, of course. However, remember that flood plains are detrimental to a city's health (-0.4 health per flood plains tile in the fat cross). You can mitigate the effects of flood plains with forests (each 2 forest tiles add +1 health). And a lumbermill with a railroad on a forested tile provides the same yield as a workshop would on the same tile type. So if there are several flood plains in the city's fat cross, try to preserve some forests (always an even number, remember) and optimize their yields with lumbermills instead.

6. TRADE WITHDRAWAL

I regard this as an exploit now and have stopped using it, but I'm leaving it here for the sake of thoroughness and in recognition that "Civ Ethics" can be a very relative thing.

Your target: an AI civ which has at least 1 gold per turn (gpt) available for trading. You have a gpt surplus and at least one resource that your target lacks. Ideally, you should not be expecting or planning to go to war with this civ for a very long time, if ever.

In the diplomacy screen, check how much gpt the AI leader has available for trading. Gift them 2 gpt. Now check their gpt for trading again. If it went up by 2 as well, gift them another 2 gpt. Keep doing this until their gpt for trading does not increase, or only increases by 1. You have now found the limit that this civ is willing to give you in trade for a resource.

Now offer them one of your resources in return for all their gpt, which now includes all (or nearly all) of the gold you gave them as a gift. If you have another resource they want, repeat the process.

You will pretty much break even for the next 10 turns. Once the 10 turn minimum before trade agreement cancellation is up, go in to the diplomacy advisor and cancel all the 2 gpt gifts you gave them. Do NOT cancel the gold-for-your-resource trade. You now get all that gold back, and just as important, you have taken all that gold from the AI's gpt total, dealing a blow--potentially a significant one--to their economy; the AI civ will likely have to ratchet down the research slider to compensate for the loss. You will NOT get a diplomatic demerit, because you did not cancel all trade with that civ.

Note: Do NOT attempt this with a civ that has 0 gpt to trade. They may be running a deficit and there is no way to tell how much gold you will have to give them to bring them out of it.

As a further refinement, if you expect that other civ to be around for awhile and you have several resources to offer them, do NOT trade a resource to them that expires (e.g. whales, ivory, furs) if another is available. Otherwise you will lose the gpt and they get it back when this happens.

7. TRADE RENEGOTIATION

In a way, this is a simpler variation of Trade Withdrawal (above), but is much less of an exploit.

Over time, the amount of gold per turn (GPT) that an AI civilization is willing to give you for a resource will tend to increase. You could sell them another spare resource to get that gold, of course. Every resource you sell to an opposing AI civ, however, allows them to grow their cities larger and to thereby better compete with you. You therefore want to trade as few resources to the AI as possible. But how do you do that and still get your hands on all that lovely gold that's just burning a hole in the AI's virtual pocket?

Trade one resource to an AI civ for the maximum amount of gold they'll offer you for it. Check the diplomacy screen frequently to see if the amount of GPT that AI civ will offer you has increased. Provided that ten turns have passed since you initiated the trade, you can cancel the deal and then immediately renegotiate its terms. Again, sell just the one resource to the AI for all the GPT they offer. Repeat this throughout the game.

I should mention that when you broker deals in the diplomacy screen, arrange for only one deal at a time. That is, finalize an Open Borders agreement, for example, *then* negotiate a resource trade. Otherwise you end up having to cancel several or even all your deals just to renegotiate one of them.

8. TRADE DENIAL

There are certain resources that you should almost never, if you can avoid it, trade to an AI civilization, because they could be used against you.

First and perhaps most obviously, never trade a military resource--that is, one that can be used to build and/or fuel military units--to the AI. You don't want the AI to use your resource to build units with which it can turn around and attack you.

The following items should be considered military resources and should not be traded to the AI:

- Copper
- Iron
- Ivory
- Horses
- Uranium
- Oil
- Aluminum

Trading Aluminum is a double no-no since it speeds the AI's ability to build space ship parts for a space race win. Remember that a space race win is the AI's favoured victory condition, the one it will pursue above all others. Don't make it easier for them!

You should also not trade coal, marble, or stone to the AI. Denying them coal will keep them from building railroads, while denying them marble and stone will make it harder for them to complete wonders.

In terms of what you should or can trade, health resources such as wheat, rice, fish, and cows are better trade offerings than happiness resources such as fur, silk, and gold. The reason for this is that cities' happiness caps are lower than their health caps, so a health-boosting resource is usually less helpful than one that boosts happiness. Of course, you could also trade a happiness resource to the AI, let them grow their cities larger with its help, and then cancel the deal and plunge them into unhappiness. But that would be *wrong*. 😊

Probably the best resources to trade to the AI are livestock (cows, pigs, sheep, deer). This is not only because they aid health rather than happiness, but also because the building that doubles their effectiveness, the supermarket, comes very late in the game. After that, the next best are seafood (fish, crabs, clams), since doubling their health boost is only possible in coastal cities with a harbour.

NON-ABSOLUTIST CAVEAT:

"Never" is a little too absolute a term to use in a game as complex as Civilization IV; there may be times when you want or need to trade these resources to the AI. The AI may demand the resource as tribute when you're not yet ready to resist them militarily, leaving you with no choice (the game's equivalent of "Go fetch me a stick so I can beat you with it"). Or you may be allied with an AI civ and want them to build better units to attack your mutual enemy. Or you may trade aluminum to the AI to keep it preoccupied with building space ship parts while you build military units and prepare to conquer them. As the saying goes, these are not rules, merely guidelines.

For example, if both you and an AI civ have iron, but only you have copper, it may be worthwhile to trade the letter to the AI. Having copper on top of iron gives them no additional benefit (aside from speeding a couple of wonders such as the Colossus and the Statue of Liberty). Speaking of wonders, you may want to trade a wonder-accelerating resource to the AI in the hope that they will build the wonder, so you can attack them and capture it.

9. TRADING FOR OBSOLETES

This is a situation that arises very rarely, but when it does, be prepared to take advantage of it.

Certain luxury resources expire when you research certain technologies. To wit:

- **Whales** are made obsolete by **Combustion**

- **Ivory** is made obsolete by **Industrialism**

- **Fur** is made obsolete by **Plastics**

When you finish researching the technology that makes the resource obsolete, you are denied the benefits of the resource if it's within your borders. Citizens of a city with the resource in the fat cross may still work the tile, but the happiness benefit from the luxury resource is gone. Or is it?

Keep an eye open for a less-developed civilization that has access to one of those resources with a best-before date. Until that civilization also obtains the obsoleting technology, they have access to the resource. If they have a surplus, they can trade the resource to you and you can regain the happiness benefit. Be warned, however, that once that civ obtains the obsoleting tech, the trade deal will be cancelled and the happiness benefit lost. This tactic may, however, buy you some time if you need to build happiness boosters like temples and theatres in cities that need them.

WARLORDS/BtS VARIATION

In Warlords and BtS, if you are lucky enough to have a vassal (or in BtS, a colony) with access to an expiring resource, not only can you demand the resource from them gratis, you can also direct their research to keep them from obtaining the tech that obsoletes the resource.

However, your vassal/colony may tech trade to obtain the tech, and you may not want them to remain backwards, especially if there's a significant risk of war breaking out.

10. SPECIALIST-POWERED CULTURAL VICTORY

The prevailing wisdom regarding cultural victories is to research up to and including the late cultural technologies (Radio, Mass Media, Electricity), then turn research "off" in favour of increasing the percentage of commerce going to culture.

However, this approach sacrifices science and commerce from all of your cities, and therefore of your entire civ, for the sake of three cities. Other civs may outpace you technologically, threatening to attack you with a superior military or win the space race.

The solution: never touch the culture slider. Instead, use artist specialists just in the three cultural cities to generate the required culture.

Required elements of this strategy:

- The **Caste System** civic for unlimited Artist specialists

- Convert all tile improvements around the three cultural cities to those that produce the most **food**, allowing you to run more specialists

Optional but helpful elements:

- The **Mercantilism** civic for a free specialist

- The **Statue of Liberty** world wonder for another free specialist

- The **Sistine Chapel** world wonder for an extra +2 culture per specialist

- **Biology** for +1 food from each farm

One advantage of this gambit, as illustrated in the Victoria ALC game, is that you can leave your final push for (and commitment to) a cultural victory until quite late. So rather than playing as a peaceful wimp all game and worrying about getting invaded, you can warmonger happily until quite late in the game and pursue a cultural win from a position of power and, therefore, safety. The only early game goals to pursue would be getting to Music first for the free Great Artist and building (or capturing) the Sistine Chapel.

One caution: you may be running Caste System at the same time that other civs are switching to Emancipation. This will result in a happiness penalty for your cities which will grow over time. To deal with it, you first of all don't want to exacerbate the problem with war weariness, so try to stay peaceful if you can. Also don't trade or gift Democracy to any civs; the same thing goes for Mass Media (you want to avoid having the United Nations built and being forced to adopt the Emancipation civic). If any of the other civs *do* switch to Emancipation, try to bribe them to Caste System. If worse comes to worst, raise the culture slider.

11. GREAT PROPHET-POWERED CS SLINGSHOT

On Noble difficulty and below, it is relatively easy to achieve a Civil Service (CS) slingshot: research techs up to and including Priesthood and Code of Laws, build the Oracle, and choose Civil Service as the free technology.

On Prince level and especially higher, it is difficult if not impossible to achieve this. The AI will usually beat you to completion of the Oracle if you delay finishing it until you have researched Code of Laws. An alternative and more reliable means to obtain Civil Service early is to rely on the technology-granting capabilities of Great Prophets.

In this gambit, you research (if required) Mysticism and build Stonehenge. Then you research Priesthood and build the Oracle in the same city, as both wonders produce Great Person points towards a Great Prophet. Also research Meditation, Polytheism, Pottery, and Writing (or trade for them) but not Masonry. For your free technology, you can choose Code of Laws, or even Metal Casting. In some ways it doesn't matter; you can research Code of Laws on your own if it won't take too long.

By having Meditation, Polytheism, and Code of Laws researched by the time the Great Prophet from Stonehenge and the Oracle appears, and not researching Masonry, you can use the Great Prophet towards research points for most of Civil Service. (If you have Masonry, the GP will pop techs along the Monotheism – Feudalism tech path.)

Warlords 2.08 and later Addendum: The Warlords patch makes this tactic difficult if not impossible to pull off. First, Great Prophets will now "pop" the Masonry tech before they'll do the same for Code of Laws or Civil Service; in addition, Civil Service now has Mathematics as a prerequisite, so you'd have to finish researching that tech before you could pop the GP for CS anyway. Furthermore, the Great Wall wonder has made Masonry a more attractive early tech, and the change of Civil Service's civic cost to high has made it less attractive to run early. All this means you'll probably end up researching Civil Service honestly, and be better off for it in some ways.

12. MULTI-TURN TECHNOLOGY TRADING

Many players, if they have researched a technology which most other civs lack, will shop that technology around to other civs for tech trades on the same turn. However, it can be advantageous to only tech trade with one civilization per turn. The reason for this is that once you obtain a technology's prerequisite tech, you cannot trade for the more advanced tech to which it provides access until the following turn.

By waiting a turn to trade your new technology with another civ, you may gain access to other technologies. For example, you may obtain Guilds on one turn, and then be able to obtain its successor, Banking, on the following turn by trading the same technology to a different civ.

The risk you run is that the first civ to whom you traded your new tech will, in turn, trade it to other civs before you can do so on the following turn. But this is often a risk well worth taking, especially since the AI seems programmed to prefer to hang on to a tech advantage rather than trade it away.

13. FAT CROSS OVERLAP

Overlapping tiles in neighbouring cities' fat crosses are not always a bad thing. One of the best types of tiles to have in more than one city's fat cross is a commerce resource such as gems, gold, or silver. This is because these tiles yield high amounts of commerce. However, these tiles usually produce relatively low amounts of food and production.

In the early game in particular, a single high commerce tile contributes heavily towards research, so it is highly desirable to obtain and work a high commerce tile early on. However, high commerce tiles contribute little towards the building of a Worker or Settler. In those cases, food and hammers matter more.

By having a high commerce tile shared between two cities, you can have one city not work the tile while building a Worker or Settler; meanwhile, its neighbouring city, without either of those items in its build queue, works the tile instead to obtain the financial and research benefits for your civ.

This can also be advantageous with cottages, which must be worked in order to grow. One city can work the cottage while the other works production-rich tiles for a more expensive build such as a wonder. Or you can simply work the cottages to maturity before one of the cities has the population necessary to work those tiles.

Frankly, any shared tile can be flip-flopped this way to match each city's build queue and other needs (growth, for example). A high-food tile, for example, can be worked by one city with room to grow instead of its neighbour which has reached its health or happiness limit.

Overlapping fat crosses have other advantages, such as allowing Workers and Settlers to travel between your cities without running the risk of encountering any barbarian animals. Shared forest tiles provide their health benefit to *all* cities that have them within their fat cross; this can allow you to chop more forests while retaining that health bonus.

14. QUEUE LOADING

Just because you have items in a city's build queue doesn't mean you have to let them finish in the order listed. You can add and remove items from the queue, and they will retain the hammers they've accumulated for several turns (usually 10 at normal speed) before they start to degrade (i.e. lose hammers). You can ctrl+click a different item to add it to the beginning of the queue, delaying the completion of the initial build.

Why would you want to do this? One reason is to better leverage overflow from whipping (i.e. slavery), but that's not my focus here, as it's covered in detail in other strategy articles (in **Zombie69's "Micromanagement is Alive and Well in Civilization IV"** in particular).

What I want to discuss is how you can use queue loading in combination with Vassalage and Theocracy. These are commonly called the "war civics" because they each contribute additional experience points (XPs) to military units. The problem is that switching to these civics may require you to switch away from civics that are more beneficial to your economy and research, such as Bureaucracy, Free Speech, Organized Religion, Pacifism, or Free Religion. The thing to remember, however, is this: military units gain the war civic XP bonuses simply by *coming to completion while the war civics are in effect*. It *doesn't matter* if most of the units' hammers were contributed under other civics.

So what you can do is run other, more beneficial civics while building military units in your city's queues. Then, when the unit is *one turn from completion*, ctrl-click to insert a *different type* of military unit into the queue, ahead of the one that requires only one turn to complete. It must be a different type of unit; inserting the same type of unit into the top of the queue doesn't work, it will just complete on the next turn. Build up several units in this way, and then change to the war civics. Now let the units complete with their additional XPs.

Be careful not to build units in the queues for too long, as their accumulated hammers start to deteriorate after 10 turns. On the turn that you change civics, it's a good idea to change the queues so the "oldest" units are at the top of the queue rather than the bottom so they will complete first, ensuring that they retain all the hammers previously contributed to their builds. In addition, if your switch away from a civic that provides a production bonus (such as Bureaucracy, with its +50% hammer bonus in the capital), you may find that the some units in the queues now require more than 1 turn for completion. They will, however, retain their accumulated hammers, provided you complete them before the hammers start to degrade.

Once you have enough units built, you can change back to other civics, having spent the minimum number of turns required running Vassalage and Theocracy.

BEYOND THE SWORD VARIATION:

The latest expansion pack has improved Golden Ages considerably; one of the biggest new benefits is that civics changes are possible without going through anarchy during a Golden Age. You can thus time the queue build and GA so that you switch to the "war civics" on the first turn of the GA and produce all the units; then you switch back to the more lucrative economic civics at the end of the GA once all the units have been produced.