Horde Masterclass
A guide on pre-1600 WC

$\lambda x.x$

August 14, 2020

I generally go by $\lambda x.x$, pronounced lambda x dot x though often shortened to lambda, and poxks on reddit. If you only have the slides, please find the accompanying lecture videos on my channel since the slides by themselves probably are not descriptive enough. I consider myself a top-tier horde player, along the likes of accordion, marco, and gnostek; my most recent horde achievement at the time of writing this is a 1531 WC as Oirat in 1.29.6, which is to my knowledge the fastest recorded WC during the territorial corruption patches. Given the other horde players' inactivities, I think I make a good case for my playstyle to be the template to follow when optimizing for rapid expansion.

Assumptions

- Optimizing rapid expansion is the objective.
- You should have general game sense and basic knowledge – having done a WC at least once would be helpful.
- You should have all DLCs; I make no guarantees whether what I say makes sense without certain DLCs.
- You should have basic familiarity with hordes.

Promises

In these lectures, I will provide

- The knowledge required to pre-1600 WC – whether you do it or not depends on your willpower, but you will at least be convinced that it is possible, and in fact, approachable at least in theory.

- General guidelines to optimize expansion

- Occasional cat pics

Common Misconceptions

- "You should only raze when..."
    - You should ALWAYS raze.
- "You should use X cav."
    - You should never use cav beyond the starting ones[1]
- "You can't WC before 1600 without cheats."
    - Unless you define razing or culture flipping as cheating, I hope you stay tuned. Hordes are OP.

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[1]Do note that gnostek uses cav a lot. I personally disagree, and I'm under the impression that marco/accordion don't use cav either. Gnostek's playstyle gives him way more ducats to work with than usual, and I think just outright banning cav is the most beginner friendly way.

Theory

The secret behind pre-1600 WCs is to shift a typical conquest
mindset 100 years back.

Similar to the common advice that "most of your conquests
happen post-absolutism," most horde conquest happens after
roughly 1500 – this is when you have your core idea groups and
Age of Reformation (AoR) warscore (ws) cost reduction age ability.
Therefore, the primary objective of a horde player until then is to
snake around to open up expansion paths, secure a semblance of
an economy (mainly trade), fill up the core idea groups, and
convert to a religion that provides core cost reduction (CCR).

Preliminary   Introduction
Opening Phase   Quick Statements
   Theory

Idea Groups (in order)

1. **diplo**[2]
   - WS cost, diplomats, and cheaper truce breaking
   - Diplo points tend to be the most available points in the early game; filling out an admin idea group will be too slow at this point.

2. **humanist**
   - Aside from the obvious unrest decreasing buffs, RU gives stab cost, and accepted culture slots help a lot.

3. **admin**
   - CCR and governing capacity (GC)... enough said

4. **explo**
   - Required for certain discoveries but mainly for new world
   - When unlocking new idea group slots, you can temporarily go **explo1** to hire explorers and conquistadors.

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[2]There is no consensus on the exact order of the first three idea groups.
Take what I say here as my opinion fitting the playstyle I am presenting.

First. . .

Most of the strategies here are presented through Oirat. Thus, this doubles as an optimized Oirat guide. Nevertheless, I try to explain the high level explanations behind any Oirat-specific concepts and provide alternate solutions for other hordes. That being said, if anyone wants to attempt a pre 1600 WC, I would highly recommend either Oirat or Kazan.