

Perish 356

Chapter 356: Test Crossbow Arrow

"Hmm, not bad!" Maximus nodded in approval as his gaze swept towards the bow tip. "I only mentioned this briefly on the blueprint; I didn't expect you to actually build this recurve bow. It must have taken quite a bit of time, right?"

"With your guidance, leader, crafting the bow tail in this shape was actually quite straightforward. We merely needed to place the shaped bow wood tail into hot water to steam and soften it, then immediately press and mold it into shape. It didn't take much time at all; we even specially crafted curved wooden supports for this purpose."

Sistos pointed to the bow on the crossbow head and continued explaining, "The real challenge was deciding what type of wood to use for this bow. We spent considerable time on this. After repeated testing, everyone felt that yew wood offered the best elasticity.

We even conducted shooting tests comparing the recurve bow and a non-recurve bow. The recurve bow proved to have greater elasticity, shooting farther and providing much stronger force behind the crossbow arrow..."

Maximus listened intently, while reaching out to hook and pull the bowstring. "Is this bowstring made of hemp?"

"Yes, leader." Sistos quickly elaborated, "Although the tribe's flax supply has long been exhausted, we preserved the bowstrings from the previous crossbow cannons during their transformation into crossbows. We took those strings to the weaving workshop, had them shortened, refined, re-twisted, and tightly wound. Afterwards, they were soaked in oil to make what you see now. This gives the bowstring improved durability and density, enabling it to withstand the strong tension of the crossbow arm."

Maximus continued to listen while reaching out with his right hand to grab the bowstring. When he had pulled it halfway, it became noticeably difficult. Despite not being as proficient in swordsmanship as Spartacus or Cross, Maximus had a robust build honed through years of gladiatorial training, which he'd maintained even after leading his troops, granting him substantial strength. Yet, single-handedly pulling the string proved challenging.

Unwilling to lose face publicly, he mustered extra force and finally managed to pull the string back to the crossbow mechanism, where it securely latched onto the hook.

This sudden exertion without preparation resulted in minor muscle strain in his right hand, prompting him to shake out the soreness and laugh self-deprecatingly, "The tension on this crossbow is truly something!"

"Leader! Your strength is truly incredible—none of us can manage single-handed stringing." Sistos loudly applauded as he received another newly crafted crossbow from a nearby artisan. Bracing its tail-end against his abdomen and gripping the bowstring with both hands, Sistos pulled back forcefully—managing to string it far more easily.

Maximus followed suit.

The new crossbow measured 1.2 meters in bow span, with the crossbow arm at 0.75 meters—not particularly large nor heavy. Its tail-end had been specifically smoothed to avoid discomfort when using the abdomen for bracing. The abdomen served not only as a support point but also as part of the force exertion, combining the strength of both hands and the core muscles. This method was far less strenuous.

After successfully stringing the crossbow again, Maximus remained a tad uncertain, turning back to instruct one of his attendants: "Marcus, give it a try."

"Yes, leader." Marcus, one of the new Secretary Department attendant members appointed after Akegu and Casius took up their new positions, stepped forward. As the sixteen-year-old son of engineer Calpurnius Scapula, his body had yet to fully develop and his strength was insufficient. He struggled significantly before managing to string the bow.

If a kid lacking strength could do it, so could elders—or even women with long agricultural labor experience... Maximus' concerns dissipated. He picked up one of the crossbow arrows lying on the wooden table.

The crossbow arrow measured roughly 0.6 meters in length with a slender wooden shaft. Its fletching was short, consisting of only two feathers; the arrowhead was long, triangular, and finely polished to a shimmering sharpness. A gentle touch caused a pricking sensation.

Maximus inserted the arrow into the slide groove of the crossbow arm, turned toward the shooting range beyond the wooden barrier, and said, "Begin testing."

"Yes, leader!" Sistos asked eagerly, "What range do you want for the target?"

"Place it thirty meters away first."

Soon enough, an empty patch of grass was marked with a human-height, rectangular wooden target. Crafted from oak approximately an adult's thumb thickness, it was tightly wrapped in dried cowhide.

Maximus held the crossbow steady with his left hand under the arm and his right finger on the trigger, carefully leveling the bow. He closed his left eye, widened his right eye, and focused on the sight above the trigger mechanism. Adjusting the arm's angle, he aimed at the target ahead and gently pulled the trigger.

A sudden vibration from the arm followed by a sharp "whoosh" reverberated, and cheers erupted from behind.

Focusing closely, Maximus saw the arrow embedded firmly in the target's center.

His men raced to retrieve the target for him to inspect: The arrow had not just pierced the bullseye but had torn through the dried cowhide and oak, with the arrowhead protruding from the back entirely.

Maximus, who had seen the power of crossbows on television in his previous life, maintained his composure. However, his attendants accompanying him to the iron workshop couldn't help but marvel, "This crossbow is incredible! If this arrow struck a person, wouldn't it penetrate their entire chest?"

"Absolutely! Leader told us this crossbow could break armor, and we found it hard to believe back then. But repeated testing proved it could do just that. Leader, the weapon you designed is truly lethal!" Sistos exclaimed loudly.

Maximus calmly asked, "Can it break through iron armor?"

Sistos hesitated, his earlier excitement fading: "...It can break iron armor in... certain situations. We tested it against the thick ring arm armor worn by Roman Legion Soldiers—out of ten arrows fired, approximately three were able to pierce through.

Even then, these three could only create small tears, with the arrow tips penetrating the skin and damaging the muscle tissue...

But that alone is impressive! Even a javelin thrown with full strength cannot completely pierce Roman Soldiers' iron armor. We can continue to improve—by enhancing the bow's elasticity, adding weight to the arrowheads, and performing more refining strikes on the arrowheads. I believe its armor-breaking capability will keep improving!"

Maximus nodded and turned back toward the shooting range. "Continue testing—this time at forty meters."

At forty meters, the crossbow's accuracy remained notably high, and the arrowhead still penetrated the wood plank, though the hits tended to shift lower on the target;

At fifty meters, accuracy stayed strong, but the hits dropped further and the arrowhead protruded only halfway through the wooden target;

At sixty meters, Maximus had to raise the crossbow arm to maintain accuracy; the arrow deeply embedded into the target but couldn't pierce it;

At seventy and eighty meters, the arrowheads still managed to impale the target...

But at one hundred meters, the accuracy significantly dropped—out of ten shots, only one managed to hit the target...

Sistos noticed Maximus holding the crossbow thoughtfully, and quickly added, "Leader, after multiple tests, we determined that this crossbow can shoot up to 150 meters, but its effective killing range stops at 80 meters. Within this range, the closer the enemy gets, the greater the lethality of the crossbow arrows.

We're planning to focus future improvements on the bow itself—to enhance its curvature, making it even more robust and elastic. That would increase its effective killing range even further."

"You can pursue those improvements, but this crossbow is already excellent as it is!" Maximus finally smiled, though still harboring a trace of regret: As expected, crossbows cannot fire projectiles effectively through arcing trajectories.

As targets got further away, the downward drop of crossbow arrows during flight became increasingly pronounced. Maintaining accuracy required continually raising the firing angle, eventually turning it into an arc shot. From this vantage, Maximus observed the destabilized arrow flight during its rise and descent—not only missing the mark but at times failing to ensure the arrowhead struck first...

In his previous life, Maximus had designed illustrations for upgrading military technology in the game "Civilization Conquest," during which he learned that crossbow arrows typically have two-feathered tails for optimal alignment with the slide groove, allowing for straight propulsion. However, this design compromised stability during ascending and descending flight compared to the three-feathered arrows...

Maximus continued, "A range of 80 meters is already very good. If enemies approach our crossbow soldiers from this distance, how many arrows can they fire in that time? Have you tested this?"

"Yes! Yes!" Sistos hurried to respond, "If Roman Legion Soldiers charge from 80 meters, with their attack speed we can fire four to five arrows; against lightly armed Pannonia warriors, we can fire two to three arrows. Those with greater strength and familiarity with crossbows might fire faster—though it would rarely be more than one arrow faster."

"Your previous tests were extremely thorough!" Maximus nodded in approval, raising the crossbow and addressing the group of artisans: "Can this new weapon be quickly mass-produced?"

Kadesos, the Public Works Department official responsible for iron production, stepped forward and reported, "Ever since you issued this directive, leader, our iron workshop has dedicated efforts toward achieving that goal. We've divided the tasks into two main groups: Iron and Wood. The Iron group is further split into subgroups for crossbow mechanisms and arrowheads.

The most intricate component, the crossbow mechanism, is led by Sistos and staffed with fifty highly skilled blacksmiths who focus solely on refining the assembly process. Each has now mastered crafting qualified crossbow mechanisms proficiently. Going forward, if each blacksmith is paired with two apprentices and provided with pig iron rough billets pre-molded, they can produce fifty complete sets of crossbow mechanisms within two days;

As for arrowhead casting, it's even more straightforward. We've prepared fifty molding templates; pig iron chunks are melted in specialized crucibles at high temperatures, poured into the molds for preliminary shaping, and then repeatedly polished—a task apprentices can handle. This subgroup is staffed by three blacksmiths and 20 apprentices, capable of casting 100 arrowheads within two days."

Chapter 357: The Manufacture of the Crossbow

Kadesos swallowed a mouthful of saliva to moisten his somewhat dry throat and continued, "Under the carpenter group, we have also divided into three sub-groups—bows, crossbow arms, and arrow shafts.

The making of bows is the most troublesome and also the most important. Previously, we allocated fifty skilled carpenters, led by Midosacus, who, after nearly two months of repeated testing, have all mastered how to make a qualified crossbow. However, the time needed to make a bow is quite long; the fastest takes at least nine days. With sufficient suitable yew wood, fifty carpenters can make fifty crossbows in ten days without issues.

Making crossbow arms is relatively simple, but since carving the grooves and planing the chamber for placing the crossbow mechanism must be very precise, we also arranged five skilled carpenters for this task. Each can make two crossbow arms in one day. Therefore, we previously entrusted the assembly of the entire crossbow to this group. If each is assigned a few carpenter apprentices, completing the manufacturing of fifty crossbows in ten days is entirely possible.

The materials used for arrow shafts, after many tests, we found that elm wood is the best. Its making is not complicated, but it requires considerable time to plane slender wood strips into qualified arrow shafts. At the same time, feathers are inserted at the tail, notches made well, and arrowheads fixed properly. Initially, the arrow shaft group had ten carpenters. After two months of practice, one person can make six arrow shafts in one day...

Moreover, I have reported to Capito about organizing a bowstring group in the Weaving Workshop, consisting of five women skilled in hemp twisting. Each can make four qualified bowstrings in a day...

If you, Leader, give the order to start mass-producing crossbows, based on our current group setup, we can manufacture fifty crossbows and five hundred arrows in ten days. If we further optimize manpower allocation and increase the carpenters making crossbows, even more crossbows can be made in ten days..."

Maximus listened attentively and made no comment but instead asked, "I remember I also insisted earlier that the crossbows you make must have interchangeable parts for easier maintenance."

"We have kept your orders in mind and execute them accordingly," Kadesos answered seriously. "After repeated tests, we have defined a fixed size for each component of the crossbow. Each group's leader is the quality gatekeeper for every part made by his group. He must measure the finished parts with a ruler. Any that are of poor quality or not the right size will be sent back for remanufacturing..."

As Kadesos spoke, he gestured towards Sistos.

Sistos immediately summoned a few craftsmen to pick up the two crossbows on the wooden table and quickly dismantle one of the crossbow mechanisms. Then, they mixed the parts of both mechanisms, reassembled them on the crossbow arms, and, after loading the strings and setting the triggers, everything worked smoothly.

Seeing this, Maximus finally cast a smiling gaze around at each craftsman and loudly praised, "You have done very well! Your diligent research not only lets you produce powerful crossbows in such a short time but also perfects your manufacturing process, making this new weapon more efficient for mass production and delivery to our soldiers!

I hope you continue this vigorous research spirit to keep improving your Iron Workshop's management system and casting process, applying it to all future weapon manufacturing! Let our Nix Tribe's Iron Workshop surpass all of Rome's armories and become the best in the entire Mediterranean! What do you say?!"

"Yes!!" the craftsmen shouted excitedly in unison.

"In light of your outstanding performance at the Iron Workshop this time, I decided to reward you all!" Maximus pointed forcefully at the crowd and loudly said, "Kadesos, later, bring me the list of personnel who performed excellently in this crossbow-making process. I will propose it at tomorrow's Political Affairs Hall meeting. I believe that during the tribe's autumn harvest festival, some among you will be able to go on stage to receive the tribesmen's cheers!"

The craftsmen became even more joyful, and suddenly someone shouted, "Thank you, Leader!"

Instantly, the chorus of gratitude erupted, interrupting what Maximus was about to say. He had no choice but to face everyone with a smile until silence returned.

He then looked at Sistos again, asked, "To mass-produce these crossbows, are there any difficulties needing my intervention?"

"Leader, yes!" Sistos responded without hesitation, "The yew, oak, and elm wood for making crossbows and arrows is abundant in the surrounding mountains, but our workshop cannot afford to waste manpower cutting them. I hope the tribe can regularly send Reserve Tribe Members to do this task."

"This should not be a problem. I will mention this to Volenus," Maximus readily agreed.

"What we lack most is the hemp for making bowstrings. I have inquired with the Reserve Tribe Members, the Segestica people have flax fields along the Sava River, and the Aldeans cultivate some flax near their Main Camp. We have no dealings with the Segestica people now, but the Aldeans are our allies. We can purchase flax from them just like buying iron ore."

"Hmm, I'll have Pigeris negotiate with the Aldeans."

"The iron required for crossbows is not much. If it's just for making crossbows, the iron ore our tribe purchases periodically from the Alde Tribe is already enough. But, if we are going to make other weapons, we may need to buy more iron ore.

Also, the Iron Workshop needs to build two more blast furnaces to meet pig iron smelting needs. At least two more hydrological hammers should be built to help our Iron Workshop better forge ironware, thereby saving manpower and allowing everyone more focus on the casting of daily ironware and weapons..."

"Hmm, I will discuss this matter with Capito. After the autumn harvest, the construction team should be relatively free and can build more blast furnaces and hydrological hammers for you. As for constructing them, it will require Spukala's planning."

"Thank you, Leader!"

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The Nix Tribe's tribesmen, working together, finished harvesting all the wheat fields in four days. Simultaneously, sun-drying, grinding, sorting, winnowing, and storing the wheat into personal granaries took a total of 6 days.

However, they cannot rest just yet. They still need to collect the straw from the threshing field, make it into stacks, and according to the new suggestions from the Agricultural Department, transport most of it to personal fields for burning, mixing the ash into the soil as fertilizer, leaving a small portion for other uses such as roofing, cement wall covering materials, making chicken coops... etc.

Just after they finished, the Agricultural Department pushed again, urging them to re-plow the land quickly and divide it into three parts: one part for planting alfalfa and other fodder to feed livestock, fallow for two years to preserve fertility; another part for legumes to enrich the soil, to be left for cultivation next year; and the last part for tilling, loosening soil, harrowing, and fertilizing, preparing for winter wheat planting after October...

Furthermore, the Agricultural Department also suggested leaving a few mu of land for planting flax, so at harvest time, they could not only weave clothes but sell to the Weaving Workshop for extra income.

Thanks to previous assistance from the Agricultural Department, the tribesmen's wheat grew well and they had a bountiful harvest, so most are willing to continue listening to the department's suggestions.

Meanwhile, Maximus issued a decree via the Political Affairs Hall: other tribesmen may take a short rest, as long as they complete the tri-field transformation on their property by early October. However, those belonging to the First Legion must finish these labors by September 15.

Due to Maximus's prestige and already receiving news that "they will soon head out to battle," the members of the First Legion are willing to obey orders.

Additionally, the Agricultural Department dispatched many Reserve Tribe Members, providing significant support, so the members of the First Legion felt no resentment.

Throughout the entire autumn harvest, the sky remained clear. It was only after the tribesmen began re-plowing that there were a few brief showers, cooling the weather, softening the earth, and benefiting farming activities.

The favorable weather conditions led to more acceptance of the rumor that "Maximus is a progeny of the Danu Goddess."

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In the early hours of September 16, Casaridaoa awakened early, lighting the firewood in the hearth skillfully in the darkness. When the fire started burning steadily, he hung a large pottery jar full of water from the chain and sprinkled two handfuls of oats inside, starting to simmer porridge slowly. Then he covered it and took two large loaves of bread baked a few days ago from the food cupboard, placing them atop the pottery jar to warm slowly from the rising heat.

Next, Casaridaoa picked up the nearly empty water bucket from inside the house, went out of his door, and washed his face with the remaining water, rejuvenating himself instantly.

He then carried the empty wooden bucket, opened the wooden gate to his yard, and walked directly towards the riverbank.

At that time, dawn was breaking, and the light in the village was still dim. Insects were still singing from the night, but many were already walking on the roads, mostly having the same destination as Casaridaoa—the Water Channel in front of the Water Wheel.

The giant water wheel creaked as it slowly turned, pouring buckets of river water from mid-air, which splashed into the Water Channel and flowed forward joyfully...

Chapter 358: The Life of Casaridaoa

There were already some people gathered on both sides of the water channel, some filling their containers and leaving, some taking a sip of the cool river water, and others directly scooping water to refresh themselves...

"Casaridaoa!" A shout came from the crowd.

Casaridaoa took a good look and hurried over, respectfully saluting, "Captain, good morning!"

Centurion Stags looked at him and asked with a slightly serious expression, "You got up quite early; have you prepared everything?"

"Report to the captain! Helmet, breastplate, shin guards, square shield, short sword, along with a wooden pot, pottery jar, iron plate, crane head shovel... and five days' rations, I've packed them all." Casaridaoa answered fluently.

"You are now a centurion, so you cannot only take care of yourself; you must also supervise the soldiers under you!" Stags reminded.

"Yes, I know."

"How many reserve tribe members do you have in your squad?" Stags asked again.

"Two."

"Not many. Have you learned the Illyrian language during this time?"

"Captain, don't forget my wife is a Skodisqi, and I learn Illyrian from her every day. I speak it fluently now! Would you like me to say a few words?" Casaridaoa boasted.

"You lucky boy, you've hit the jackpot this time!"

The reason Stags said this is because the Military Department had once issued a notice: Future tribe members who want to be promoted to centurion, great captain, or even legion commander, must be able to speak Illyrian and communicate with the Skodisqi people and Pannonians, or else they cannot become a team officer.

"Uh..." Stags thought for a moment, then said, "When we gather, I plan to transfer two reserve tribe members from other squads to replace some of the soldiers in your squad. What do you think?"

"No problem!" Casaridaoa agreed readily.

"Good! Very good!" This was the main reason Stags liked this young man, who never procrastinated or negotiated terms when accepting orders.

After bidding farewell to Stags, Casaridaoa carried the bucket filled with water back to his own home, pushed open the half-closed door, and saw his wife, Enneaga, who was already awake, sorting out the bedding with her big belly.

Casaridaoa quickly put down the bucket and hurriedly said, "Why did you get up so early? Lie down and get some more sleep; the doctor said pregnant women need more rest, which is good for both your health and the baby!"

"I couldn't sleep thinking that you were leaving soon."

Enneaga's words were filled with reluctance, and Casaridaoa was momentarily stunned, then said, "If you can't sleep, you can rest while sitting; let me do these chores, don't tire yourself out!"

Saying this, he moved forward to help, but Enneaga gently pushed him away, "Such little things won't tire me! The doctor also told me that I need to do some moderate exercise every day so that it will be easier when the baby comes!"

Knowing his wife's stubbornness, Casaridaoa did not insist further and joined her in doing chores.

The two busied themselves for a while, finishing up their tasks, and the wheat porridge was almost ready. Casaridaoa brought the pottery jar and bread to the wooden table, and they started having breakfast, sitting on wooden stools.

Enneaga scooped an egg from the pottery jar with a wooden spoon and placed it in her husband's wooden bowl, excitedly saying, "After I got up in the morning, I walked around the yard and found that the hen we bought at the market the day before yesterday had laid an egg, try it—it might be tasty!"

"You should eat this egg! You're carrying a child and should eat well!" Casaridaoa decisively scooped the egg back into his wife's bowl.

The two of them kept pushing it back and forth, ultimately, Enneaga ate most of it, and Casaridaoa ate a small portion.

"Is it delicious?" Enneaga asked eagerly.

"It's delicious." Casaridaoa used his finger to brush the bits of egg yolk from the corner of his mouth back onto his tongue.

"The speckled hen has started laying eggs, seems like it has settled in here. I'll feed it extra wheat bran and bugs every day, and it will lay eggs for us daily. I want to go to the market and exchange for a few more hens, so we will consistently have enough eggs to eat!"

Enneaga enthusiastically said, "I also want to go to the market and exchange with the Aldeans for a ewe. Once we raise it well, we can regularly milk it and make cheese. Moreover, the doctor said that once the child is born, drinking sheep milk would help them grow quickly... What do you think?"

"Of course, go ahead and take care of the house affairs." Casaridaoa paused and said kindly, "But now that you're pregnant and it's inconvenient for you to move around, you should first go to the Military Department's residence, ask them to send someone to accompany you to the market, to help you bring the chickens and sheep you fancy back home..."

Oh, I forgot to mention, yesterday afternoon when we were gathering the First Legion on the training ground, Leader Maximus made a special trip to emphasize to us that if any soldier's family is in difficulty, they can always seek help from the Military Department, which will do its best to solve the problem for us...

Also, the hospital will regularly send nurses to check on you women who are pregnant, and if the birth is imminent, they'll arrange for you to be hospitalized promptly... so don't worry, the leader has everything well planned."

Enneaga nodded, then couldn't help but ask, "When will you be back?"

"The legion commander told us it wouldn't be more than a month!" Casaridaoa said lightly, "The place we're going is not far from here. We just follow the river south, and we'll get there soon to help the Aldeans fight a battle and then quickly return..."

"Then... you must take care of yourself!" Enneaga said, full of concern.

"You saw the armor next to the bed, right? It's made of iron, so thick—" Casaridaoa gestured confidently, "A long spear or a short sword won't leave a scratch on it! Moreover, the First Legion is very powerful. The Otarlat people won't be able to fight us for long before being defeated... Rest assured, I'll return safely!"

Enneaga's worry eased slightly but she continued talking to her husband because it was the only way to relieve her sense of loss.

After breakfast, Casaridaoa sat by the bed and began donning his breastplate, while Enneaga sat beside him, silently assisting him.

Once Casaridaoa wore the breastplate and shin guards and hung the helmet in front of his chest, he strapped a short dagger and a short sword to his waist, slung a square shield over his back, and packed all his everyday items into a bag, slinging it over his shoulder with a Futuca wooden stick.

Enneaga silently handed him a cloth bag filled with large pieces of bread.

Casaridaoa took it with his left hand and, looking at his wife, smiled brightly, "I'm off now. The road is filled with First Legion soldiers rushing to the training ground. It's inconvenient for you to see me off. Rest assured, I'll be back soon!"

Enneaga bit her lip and nodded firmly.

As Casaridaoa reached the door, he couldn't help but turn back, unwillingly looking at the room full of various items:

A bit over half a year ago, because he and Enneaga got married, the tribe granted them this house. At that time, the house was dilapidated, with nothing inside but a broken bed. During the winter nights, he and Enneaga had to keep the fire burning and cover themselves with an army-issued linen blanket, hugging each other tightly for warmth to be able to sleep comfortably.

In the past few months, thanks to their joint effort, they repaired the house and the property, and through several credits, they bought various pieces of furniture and everyday items from the market, and only a few days ago, they paid off their debts with the harvested wheat, turning this place into a real home, a warm home, completely replacing his memories of that small house he shared with an old friend, transforming him from an idle loafer into a genuinely responsible man...

Casaridaoa dared not look any longer, quickly stepping out of the house, casting his reluctance to the back of his mind.

Enneaga leaned against the courtyard gate, watching her husband's departing figure with her eyes quickly reddening: Initially, she chose Casaridaoa just to gain freedom and live a better life. At that time, Casaridaoa was a complete stranger to her, and they couldn't even communicate in the same language. From the initial struggles to having heart-to-heart conversations now, the two of them overcame many difficulties together in these tough times and became a genuine family. Therefore, as Casaridaoa went away for a period, she felt an emptiness in her heart, the pain of which made her cry...

Leaving his house, Casaridaoa did not head directly to the training ground of the Military Department. Instead, he visited some neighboring homes, which were inhabited by soldiers under his squad.

The Nix Tribe was founded less than a year ago, yet the tribe had nearly 40,000 people, occupying the two fortresses of Snowdonia and Westeni, with extensive land on both sides of this section of the Kupa River.

In such a large tribe, each subtribe had a similar management method: The leader controlled a larger population and land, and the nobles in the tribe managed some population and land. Except for important matters, which the leader and nobles discussed and ultimately executed by the leader, daily affairs were not interfered with, allowing the tribe to run in order.

However, the case of the Nix Tribe was different: Power was highly concentrated in the hands of Leader Maximus and his Political Affairs Hall. Nine departments under it were responsible for various affairs of the tribe.

But there weren't many officials in the nine departments who, within their jurisdictions, could only play a role in conveying, guiding, and supervising, unable to govern each tribesman effectively. The team officers of each legion truly played the basic administrative role.

According to Maximus's instructions, when the tribe assigned houses and lands to the tribesmen, they tried to arrange tribesmen from the same Centurion and Ten-man Team in the same area. Hence, these centurions and centurions could easily gather their soldiers for military training during fallows. Additionally, during busy farming periods, the team officers had to help urge the soldiers to farm, assist the Agricultural Department in promoting new farming techniques, and coordinate and help soldiers solve daily difficulties and conflicts...

Chapter 359: Legion Assemble

In fact, in the daily life of the tribe, team officers are equivalent to the roles of the head of a district and village chief.

Since the soldiers in the army are accustomed to obeying the orders of the team officers, they are also willing to accept their governance in daily life, which allows the Political Affairs Hall's decrees to be smoothly implemented at the grassroots level, making the entire tribe orderly.

However, officers govern the military on horseback and the civilians off horseback, and even though only centurions and decurions have this right, this system has significant drawbacks, which Maximus, well-versed in historical knowledge, is acutely aware of.

It's just that with the tribe newly established, political structures fledgling, manpower lacking, and resources insufficient, temporarily delegating grassroots power to team officers can better ensure the efficient operation of tribal governance and the unity of the tribesmen, so he does not intend to make any changes in the short term.

Casaridaoa certainly wouldn't know Maximus' painstaking efforts. After the establishment of the Nix Tribe, Nick meticulously executed the new appointments given to them by the Political Affairs Hall. Although this is much more tiring than being an officer in the army, his youthful strength and positive attitude made him relish it.

After ensuring that nearby subordinates have all their equipment, he sent them to gather at the training ground first, then proceeded to the outskirts of the settlement himself.

Initially, when the Nix Tribe was established, the First Legion Soldiers were settled in Westeni. Because it was adjacent to the Segestica Territory, they didn't expand outwardly like in Snowdonia at first but instead added some defensive facilities. Due to insufficient housing within the settlement, many single Official Tribe Members were crowded into various homesteads.

It wasn't until Nix and Segestica signed a ceasefire agreement that Westeni began to expand outward, with the Westeni Town Hall allocating homesteads to each single, homeless Official Tribe Member.

Although the tribe had explicit regulations that the construction teams must build houses for these contributing single Official Tribe Members for free, most single Official Tribe Members did not actively apply for house construction from the town hall. Instead, they merely marked their residential plots with wooden poles because, with the cold winter, hastily building a house to live alone was both lonely and freezing.

When spring arrived and the weather warmed, both Westeni and Snowdonia immediately experienced a housing construction boom because each Official Tribe Member had their own land, and by summer, after harvesting wheat, without their own house and courtyard, there was nowhere to store the grain.

Not until late August did the two settlements basically resolve the housing issues for all Official Tribe Members. For this reason, Westeni had not yet had time to build new settlement walls.

After calling upon these few single subordinates, Casaridaoa did not plan to inform the only two remaining Reserve Tribe Members in the squad, because the department responsible for governing Reserve Tribe Members would collectively take them to the training ground.

On the way to the Military Department training ground, a soldier couldn't help but ask, "Captain, why can't we set off a few days later? I heard that the tribe is planning a harvest celebration the day after tomorrow. Maximus Leader is going to award the tribesmen who did the best in farming and paid the most taxes, and there will be a rugby competition for the whole tribe. Each legion, including the Reserve Tribe Members, can organize teams to participate. The top three teams will receive rewards from the tribe—"

"The Harvest Celebration is much more than that!" Another soldier interjected: "I have a good friend in the Commerce Department. He told me that Leader Maximus had already sent Business Officer Pigeris with some food to gift to the nearby friendly Alde Tribes and also negotiated with them, reaching an agreement for free intermarriage between the peoples—"

"Is that true?!" The other soldiers asked eagerly in surprise.

"I asked my good friend the same thing. He solemnly swore to the Divine in front of me that 'everything he said is true, and the tribal notice will be out in a few days.'"

That soldier first responded proudly, then mysteriously lowered his voice and said: "And he also told me that Leader Maximus plans to hold a series of bonfire parties for several nights after the Harvest Celebration and ordered Pigeris to invite tribesmen from the Alde Tribes, men and women alike, to come and participate—"

"Men and women alike..." Another soldier was the first to react: "We just reached a mutual marriage agreement with the Alde Tribes, and then we invite the women from these tribes to our bonfire parties, isn't this a matchmaking event!"

"Yes, that's what my good friend told me." The soldier sighed with regret: "My luck is terrible; last year, I was injured, and at the matchmaking event, no woman took a liking to me. Now, just as another matchmaking event is about to occur, I have to go to war, sigh..."

A soldier immediately shouted: "It's not fair! Why can't we take part in such a good opportunity to find wives! Brothers, we need to protest to the Political Affairs Hall and ask the leader to let us attend the bonfire parties before leaving!"

Before the others could join the commotion, Casaridaoa quickly shouted: "What nonsense are you spouting! How is it unfair! Do you not know that the Military Department and several Legion Commanders debated for a long time about which legion to send to aid the Aldeans in battle? Sending us out means that other legion brothers might consider it unfair!"

Want to find women and also earn military merits, how can there be such good things! If you really want to find women, I can suggest to the Great Captain to have you transferred to another legion, how about it?!"

"No, Captain!" The soldier quickly shook his head: "I was just talking nonsense, I really don't want to find a woman, I would rather win victories and gain more land, and become a Noble of the tribe!"

"Alas, I felt the same way when I first heard this news, but I came to understand later." The soldier who revealed the news seriously said: "Perhaps the tribe is holding the bonfire parties after we leave to make other legion brothers feel better and not envy us.

After all, our tribe and the Alde Tribes have already signed the intermarriage agreement, and we can gain more military merits and land. In the future, we will have more chances to attract even better Alde women to marry us."

"Aristis, you're right!" The other soldiers became excited again.

"Stop the nonsense; we need to pick up our pace, or we'll be late and have to face the military stick!" Casaridaoa solemnly reminded them.

The soldiers felt a sense of urgency and hurriedly followed Casaridaoa.

When they merged with other tribesmen and rushed into the Military Department training ground, the first round of copper horn sounded just in time, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

Though the training ground was crowded and noisy, the number flags of the six Great Captains of the First Legion stood tall in a row, and Casaridaoa quickly found the Centurion Unit he belonged to.

The rest of the squad, including the two Reserve Tribe Members, had already arrived. Casaridaoa carefully checked the weapons, armor, and marching supplies of the two Reserve Tribe Members and found them no different from the others (these legion supplies for Reserve Tribe Members were provided by the tribe, all from previously fallen rebel soldiers), then he relaxed and began to organize the ranks.

At this point, Centurion Stags approached with two others: "Casaridaoa, do you remember what I told you this morning?"

Casaridaoa looked at the two young men behind him: "Captain, are these the Reserve Tribe Members you're assigning to my squad?"

"That's right. Look, they're pretty strong, and they were among the first batch to join our tribe as Reserve Tribe Members. They've participated in the battle with the Segestica people and the defense of the temporary camp, so they have considerable combat experience."

Stags explained seriously: "Originally, they were in Proconsus' squad; if it weren't because that squad had too many Reserve Tribe Members and Proconsus himself isn't fluent in the Illyrian Language, making command a bit challenging, he wouldn't have been willing to separate these two."

After listening, Casaridaoa didn't immediately agree but directly asked the two Reserve Tribe Members in Illyrian Language: "Have you two attended legion training?"

"Of course!" One of them responded quickly: "During the agricultural off-season in March and April this year, we were brought here every one or two days for training led by Pro... Proconsus Captain or other soldiers in the squad."

"What kind of training did you do?" Casaridaoa continued to ask.

"Shield holding practice, wood stump cutting, battle practice, also formation marching, charging..." Another Reserve Tribe Member eagerly added: "During the agricultural off-season in July, we also participated in a three-day training with the entire legion to familiarize ourselves with the flags, orders, and various formations..."

After listening, Casaridaoa finally relaxed and said: "Captain, I'll take your word for it, and assign these two to my squad."

"You little rascal, claiming to take my word for it, I see you almost had 'doubt' engraved on your forehead! I promoted you with my own hands; why would I harm you!" Stags scolded a few times but did not show clear anger on his face.

Casaridaoa didn't reply, just touched his head and smiled foolishly.

"Alright, which two of your capable subordinates do you plan to transfer to Proconsus' squad?" Stags asked.

Casaridaoa still didn't speak, just pointed twice within the squad.

Stags saw clearly that the two individuals Casaridaoa indicated both had more seniority in the First Legion than Casaridaoa. Back when Casaridaoa was exceptionally promoted due to his Battle Merit and abilities, these two were the fiercest opponents. Although after multiple scoldings from him, these two had cooperated relatively well in training and operations, clearly, discord still remained.

Chapter 360: Re-entering the Aldean Territory

This young man, though young, is no pushover... Stags thought to himself, personally walking over and bringing the two men to another squad.

After the third sound of the bugle, First Legion Commander Fesaros appeared at the front of the training grounds of the Military Department, announcing: Each unit is to count their personnel. Any soldier not yet present will face military punishment.

The results delighted him: everyone was accounted for!

Evidently, yesterday's assembly drill had an effect, and each level of team officer fulfilled their responsibilities. Therefore, he did not make a pre-march speech and directly declared: The entire army, move out!

The First Legion departed in four orderly columns, filing out of the grounds, along the main road of the town, and heading toward the west gate.

The roadsides were already packed with tribal clansmen. Some were soldiers from the Third Legion, their eyes filled with envy. Others were the heavily pregnant wives of First Legion soldiers, their faces full of reluctance as they loudly called out their husbands' names...

With sharp eyes, Casaridaoa spotted his wife Enneaga among the crowd. Suppressing the urge to wave back, he instead sternly reminded his subordinates, "Stick close to the group ahead. Don't fall behind!"

The First Legion left the village, treading the road south of the Kupa River. At the tail end of the formation were over a dozen transport carriages from the tribal logistics team, carrying only one type of military supply—army tents.

By noon, the First Legion arrived at Snowdonia, where Fesaros issued an order for temporary rest. The somewhat tired soldiers sat themselves along the roadside surrounding Snowdonia Village.

Maximus and his officials personally served the soldiers with water and provisions that had been prepared earlier.

After half an hour, the rested soldiers reassembled and continued their march.

This time, however, the troops gained several new members: the leader of the Budocaribas, sent by the Alde Tribe both to urge the Nix Tribe to dispatch troops and to serve as a liaison and guide throughout the campaign;

members from the Nix Legal Department assigned as the Military Judges for the First Legion;

the Military Affairs Department of the Military Department, which dispatched personnel to act as record-keepers for battle merits of the First Legion;

the Civil Affairs Department, which sent members to oversee and verify the heroic deeds and penalties among First Legion soldiers;

the Finance Department, which assigned personnel to regulate the spoils of war and also manage the soldiers' personal belongings;

a small engineering team from the Public Works Department, tasked with supervising camp construction;

and a few workers from the Iron Workshop under the Public Works Department, responsible for weapon and armor repairs. Due to the absence of siege operations in this campaign, no siege equipment specialists were dispatched...

Additionally, Lebilus, the Arms Officer of the Military Department, joined with several of his staff to manage logistics and supplies. He also enlisted the help of Acronis, the Chief of Internal Affairs, who invited several tribesmen with extensive cooking experience within the rebel army to join and specialize in preparing hot meals for the soldiers.

In fact, both Military Officer Frantinus and Chief of Staff Quintus wanted to join the march. After all, this was the first major battle since the Twenty Peerage System had officially been implemented and the Nix Tribe had formally settled. However, they were persuaded by Maximus to stay, citing the many military affairs of the tribe that required their attention and that senior officials could not leave lightly. (Lebilus was allowed to join because the Arms Department was newly established under the Military Department, with relatively few matters to handle. Moreover, Lebilus needed this opportunity to gain experience with military engagements in his new position.) As a result, the Military Affairs Department and Staff Department each sent personnel to assist the First Legion with daily affairs and military consultations.

Another reason for Maximus's decision not to let them join was this: Fesaros, despite his cheerful and lively personality, was equally ambitious. Previously, his good friend Pequot had distinguished himself in

glorious battle and earned commendations from the tribe. Now, if commanding troops to aid the Alde Tribe required the assistance of Quintus and Frantinus, it would be a source of embarrassment for him.

Maximus understood this well and thus sought to give Fesaros the opportunity to take independent command in this campaign.

However, assisting an ally on their territory involved not merely military concerns but political ones as well. To navigate relationships with the various tribes of the Alde, Commerce Officer Pigeris accompanied the army to handle diplomatic matters. He was also tasked with negotiating post-victory shares in the salt mine and other business dealings with the Aldeans.

Furthermore, Maximus dispatched three attendants from the Secretariat. Their roles included handling the army's correspondence, documenting the customs and cultures within Aldean territory, and managing communications between Maximus and Fesaros...

Of course, there was one more unspoken reason from Maximus. Namely, the surveillance of any abnormalities within the First Legion, with these findings to be covertly reported to the Intelligence Division of the Secretariat afterward. This was because one of these attendants was under the command of Casius.

As the First Legion continued its march, the fleet at Snowdonia Pier also set sail southward.

This Nix fleet consisted of ten ships—four captured during the war with Segestica and six newly constructed over the past several months by the tribe's shipbuilding workshop. The fleet had previously demonstrated its effectiveness in waterway transportation between the two towns.

Admittedly, the timber used for shipbuilding had not been properly dried and was prone to damage, but it would suffice for short-term use.

Other than the sailors, the ships were empty. They would only be loaded at the Aldean Tribe's Main Camp with the promised grain supplies for further transport to the First Legion.

The First Legion stretched out in a long column, advancing along the north bank of the Kupa River, while the fleet aligned in a straight row, sailing on the river.

The two groups moved in parallel, until the army turned southward upon reaching Validosi, and the fleet diverged into the Kolana River.

By autumn, the Kolana River's water levels had receded, allowing the First Legion to pass through the fordable section with ease.

By dusk, they arrived at the outskirts of the Budocaribas Tribe.

When the Nix Tribe migrated last year, they had completely dismantled their temporary encampments, leaving no timber behind. Interestingly, the Aldeans had left the land of the former camp untouched, with even the trench lines preserved, now overgrown with grass.

Thus, the First Legion set up their camp on the site of this former encampment. Since they were in allied territory, they didn't need to dig trenches or build earthworks—only clearing the grasses, leveling the ground, and setting up tents was required.

After Fesaros issued the order to encamp, the engineering crew assigned temporary housing areas for each unit. Subsequently, team officers worked alongside their soldiers to complete the tasks together. In the lively and casual atmosphere of camp-building, the new Reserve Tribe Members gradually began integrating into the collective of the First Legion.

While the soldiers were setting up camp, the leader of the Budocaribas Tribe, upon returning to his tribe, brought along a group of individuals. These were all tribal leaders from the Aldean tribes that had agreements with the Nix Tribe, unexpectedly congregating at the Budocaribas settlement.

They warmly invited Fesaros to a tribal feast, but Fesaros declined politely, citing, "As the commanding officer, I cannot leave the army during a campaign, lest I violate military law."

However, the Aldean leaders were not disappointed, for Commerce Officer Pigeris eagerly accepted the invitation. For him, a banquet was one of his most proficient battlegrounds.

Early the next day, after breakfast, the soldiers dismantled their tents. Fesaros instructed team officers to relay the following to the troops: "Some Aldean forces from tribes friendly to ours will march alongside us. Everyone, stay vigilant and ensure you do not bring disgrace to our tribe!"

Soldiers raised a practical question: "Should we march fully armed?"

The team officers gave a unanimous response: "Not necessary, but ensure the formation remains tidy, march with pride, and hold the banners high."

The First Legion departed the temporary encampment and entered the Budocaribas settlement.

This was Fesaros's second time leading troops into this settlement. He vividly remembered that during his first visit, the villagers were wary, with some even showing hostility.

Now, both sides of the road were packed with Aldean villagers, their eyes filled with curiosity, respect, and anticipation. After all, they had personally witnessed this army defeat the fearsome Pannonians twice at their doorstep. Unconsciously, they had come to view these outsiders as heroes and hoped they would give the detestable Otarlat people who had bullied them a thorough lesson in the upcoming battles.

Fesaros also noticed several villagers excitedly waving their hands, some even shouting out the names of specific soldiers. At first, he was puzzled, but he quickly realized that these Aldeans must have previously been employed by the Nix tribespeople and treated well. Recognizing their former employers among the ranks, they were now brimming with enthusiasm.

"In less than a year, these villagers regard us as family. What a dramatic change!" Pigeris exclaimed beside him, expressing his true feelings. "This is all thanks to the leader's wisdom! Of course, I've played a small role as well."

"You've played a role?" Fesaros asked, his tone carrying a hint of dissatisfaction. While he could admit that their leader's directives and battles commanding respect from the Aldeans were unquestionable, he found it difficult to credit Pigeris, who had never even been on a battlefield, with such accomplishments.

Pigeris seemed oblivious to the implicit meaning of Fesaros's words. Pointing to the roadside, he said, "Look at that tall man. I remember him; he sold sheep at our market. And that slightly plump woman? She once bought chickens and eggs from us at the market and intended to rent a stall from us long-term. That dark-skinned young man sold dried fish at the market. And that old man? Hearing we were short on flax, he's been selling it to us daily at the market and also wanted to rent a stall long-term..."