

# **Aztec Civilization: Destiny to Conquer America!**

## **#Chapter 11 - 11 The Army - Read Aztec Civilization: Destiny to Conquer America! Chapter 11 - 11 The Army**

### **Chapter 11: Chapter 11 The Army**

The early summer sun was already quite intense, and the moist wind blowing past Lake Haltocan seemed to carry the scent of the approaching rainy season.

Xiulote followed his father, who in turn followed his grandfather. The High Priest stood at the forefront, cloaked in formal sacrificial vestments. Nobles and priests thronged around, their bright feathers merging together and their gold and silver ornaments dazzling brilliantly. Everyone was dressed in their most formal, most vibrant, and heaviest attire, waiting outside the southern gate of the City-State for the arrival of the king's grand army.

Xiulote too had been forced to wear a blue feathered High Priest's crown, its long feathers elegantly curving above his head, making him appear half a meter taller.

If it were a warrior's feather crown, the feathers could be inserted upside down and hang down the back to facilitate battle. Fortunately, the crown he had chosen was relatively simple, without any gemstones or gold and silver inlays, making it tolerably heavy. The feathers around it tickled his face, prompting him to quickly leave the crowd and sneeze on the side.

"What use are these feathers? Wearing them on the head makes one look like a bird," Xiulote complained softly under his breath. Indeed, historical texts had mentioned that the Indians never understood why the colonizers coveted merely lustrous gold and silver and not the more precious feathers.

"Feathers are gifts bestowed by the divine spirits and are also the offerings beloved by them. The more magnificent and elongated the feathers, the more they symbolize honor and sanctity," Acap chimed in with a smile as he appeared from the side.

"It is said that the twin brother of the God of Death Xiulotel, the Feathered Serpent Divine Quetzalcoatl, possesses the most beautiful feathers in the world. He uses these feathers to control hurricanes, driving his immense serpentine body into the waters of the East, where he sleeps where the sun rises. One day, He will awaken and return from the waters of the East, bringing peace and prosperity to the world."

"Is the Feathered Serpent a flying feathered snake?" Xiulote asked, his curiosity piqued.

"This is the conclusion drawn by the priests of the City-State from the ancient murals in the Holy City of Teotihuacan," Acap said after a moment of thought.

"But in the murals of the Great Temple of Tenochtitlan, the Feathered Serpent appears as a tall, white-skinned man with a large beard. He was defeated and exiled by the other divine beings and sailed to the mysterious East, to Tlapallan, promising his return."

"Damn white-skinned, big-bearded deity," Xiulote expressed strong disdain for this myth. One day in the future, the Spanish colonizer Hernan Cortes would exploit this myth to successfully rally the first group of Nava guides and establish his leadership over the Tlaxcala servant army.

Then, on the day the Feathered Serpent promised to return, pretending to be the Feathered Serpent, he was welcomed into the capital city of Tenochtitlan with divine honors by Montezuma II. He deceived and captured Montezuma II, then massacred the priests and nobility in the Great Temple, destroying the imperial power center in one fell swoop, and leaving behind countless smallpox-infected garments as he fled.

The smallpox spread rapidly through the densely populated capital, and the Mexica, unprepared and deprived of an effective organization to handle the epidemic, could no longer control it. The disease directly destroyed the core ruling group of the empire and killed eighty percent of the population.

The City-State Alliance was subsequently dissolved, headless and leaderless. Two years later, during the second siege, the chaotic capital was conquered by the conquerors and the Tlaxcala servant army, marking the fall of the Aztec civilization.

What followed was Tarasco, the Mixtec, the Zapotecs, the Maya, and all of Central America. The returned "Feathered Serpent" brought only death and destruction.

"Disease, myths, servants, cavalry, warships." Xiulote counted off on his fingers, "The five weapons of the colonizers in conquering the New World. One by one, let's eliminate potential servants first, then reform the religion."

The youth was once again caught up in dreams beyond his reach until Acap patted his shoulder. "Look to the south."

Xiulote looked southward, where a magnificent army appeared at the horizon, with throngs of people stretching across the sky, their red battle robes soaking the clouds. That was the color of cochineal, a dyestuff Tribute from the Royal City. After a full month, Xiulote finally saw the imperial army.

King Tizoc first mobilized at the capital's tri-city area, assembling ten Xiquipillies, that is, eight thousand-man legions, into a royal army group, half of which were elite units from

the City-States, including as many as two thousand Jaguar and Eagle Warriors. It was an army that no City-State could confront.

The grand army displayed the new king's awe-inspiring authority, first marching west for a week to intimidate Tarasco and the cities to the west, gathering the Allied Forces from various states.

The army from Tepanecapan was the first to join, followed by those from Tollocan and Tzalko, successively adding five eight-thousand-man legions. The grand army then turned southeast for ten days, passing through Cuauhnahuac and Xochipeople, adding two more eight-thousand-man legions.

The troops then stayed for two days, meeting with the leaders of the Qontal people and concurrently intimidating the southern border of the Tlaxcallans, causing a wave of villagers to flee inland. Finally, the grand army turned north, marching for a week, pulling another three eight-thousand-man legions from the rich Tzalko. Among these subsequently joined City-State armies, the ratio of elite units was slightly lower, about two-fifths.

At that moment, an army of twenty legions, a vast and overwhelming force that covered the sky and shadowed the sun, marched north, arriving at the ancient city of Teotihuacan, which was merely a three-day straight-line distance from the capital city. It astonishingly included over seventy thousand samurai! This was the power that intimidated all the tribes of Mexico.

"As time advances our state and the Heaven above bless its offspring, so rightly we must follow the order. Speak lightly of threats, and none shall stand unshaken." Watching the magnificent army that was gradually advancing and now filled the entire field of vision, Xiulote involuntarily recited an ancient passage.

"What are you saying?" Acap asked curiously.

"I am saying that seeing the great army of the King, I am much amazed," Xiulote made a gesture of astonishment. "It seems the King is not in a hurry to punish the Otomi people, but primarily to inspect each city, declaring his majesty."

"You speak truly," Acap said, laughing as he clasped Xiulote's shoulder.

"Every city-state is a descendant of the Heavenly Divine, autonomously deciding matters within dozens of miles. Although the King is the leader of the alliance, he cannot directly command the military and administrative affairs of the city-states, nor can he fully control the Great Nobility of the capital. To make the city-states obey, one must rely on the military power and the monarch's prestige of the capital, as well as blood relationships like ours from this city-state."

"Thus, the first task for a new king is to establish his prestige in the hearts of the city-states. Firstly, by gathering a large army, then inspecting each state, and simultaneously meeting tributes, while also intimidating rivals. Conquering enemies and sacrificing them is the final step to declare his majesty."

"Kill a turkey to frighten a troop of monkeys," Xiulote thought of a familiar idiom.

"Turkey, monkeys?" Acap paused, then burst into loud laughter, "That analogy is so interesting."

Acap then lowered his voice, looked around, and whispered with a chuckle, "If we compare the city-states to monkeys, then the king who occupies the capital is the Monkey King. Only when the Monkey King is strong enough can he command the nearby monkeys."

"From that perspective, if a monkey strays too far, it becomes a wild monkey, or a group of wild monkeys, needing a regular beating, to ensure timely delivery of the fruits."

"Right. However, the Otomi people are neither monkeys of the same kind nor foolish turkeys. They are cunning earth dogs. As soon as things look bad, they will hide themselves in burrows."

As they were talking, the vanguard of the army had already arrived forcefully. Four elite groups of eight thousand each passed through the southern road, then set up camp by Lake Haltocan.

Over thirty thousand warriors of various ranks clustered together, forming a moving sea of red and black pointed hats and yellow beast helmets, the obsidian war clubs reflecting a sea of light. The camp was bustling with voices, faces eager and confident, infected by the group's power, at the peak of morale.

On the lake, thousands of dugout canoes carrying food sailed from the capital area of Lake Texcoco. Ten years of food reserves were utilized, ensuring the troops were well supplied.

Then, an entire legion of veteran warriors, marching in the most organized formation Xiulote had ever seen in his life, approached silently. All in leather armor, carrying javelins in their backs, one thousand Jaguar warriors, one thousand Eagle warriors, and six thousand Fourth Level warriors. No words were needed, their relaxed yet always ready-to-fight demeanor proved this was the core force of the Empire.

Xiulote and Acap fell silent. In the presence of absolute power, even the most fearless words felt weak and ineffectual. Xiuxoke strode over in two steps, pulling Xiulote back into line, clearly the King would not stray far from his trump cards. Xiulote noticed that Xiuxoke also had a solemn and somewhat tense physique.

Following the most powerful legion in Central America, the royal litter of Tratoani Tizoc, guarded by five hundred "hairshearers", processed slowly. These guards, resembling Xiongnu, had shaven most of their hair, leaving only a patch on the top and sides of their skulls. Dressed in green, thick cotton armor, draped in net-like cloaks studded with flags depicting abstract symbols of the Sun God.

Xiulote simply perceived them as Imperial Guards, appearing very strong in combat.

Regrettably, at this time in America, there were no suitable camel beasts, and there was no hope for ox carts, horse carts, or elephant carts. The divine lineage of Tizoc could only sit on a shoulder-carried litter borne by dozens of people, dressed in a white robe adorned with red patterns, wearing a white skull-shaped helmet, very conspicuous, its helmet also featuring green long feathers. This imagery, derived from ancient legends of powerful Evil Spirits.

Behind the shoulder litter, a row of feathered flags fluttered high, equally striking, with various pictographs painted on them. Xiulote was struggling to discern the sun, cactus, eagle, serpent, lake, and giants depicted, when an envoy hurriedly approached.

"The supreme Sun God, War God, Guardian God Huitzilopochtli's descendant, ruler of Tenochtitlan in the Lake Region, the great and glorious Tratoani Tizoc, wants to meet with his kindred, the ancient and holy city manager of Teotihuacan, High Priest Xutel!"

## **Chapter 12: Chapter 12 Dedication Song**

Xutel nodded, and followed the Messenger away.

The High Priest today was particularly grandiose, adorning his full set of regalia. A Ruby Divine Crown, a Sun Cape, a robe adorned with gold and silver symbols of the sun and the moon, Gold Feather Bracers, and Wolf Feather Shoes. In his hand was an additional Divine Artifact: the Feathered Divine Staff from the murals of the Sun God, with its shaft curving downward and ending in a golden serpent's head.

His pace was slow but resolute as he walked through the aisle parted by the "crop-haired samurai," approaching the dazzling and daunting "skull warriors."

Xiulote found the scene inexplicably familiar, reminiscent of certain games he used to be fervent about. He looked around, only to see that whether they were priests, nobility, or warriors, everyone held their breath and cast down their eyes, not daring to disturb nor directly witness this sacred moment.

The "skull warrior" Tizoc rose from his shoulder-litter, looking down from his elevated position and appearing unusually tall. He also unfurled his Sun Cape, then lifted the Sun God Scepter from his waist, touching it to the Divine Staff in the High Priest's hands, symbolizing the exchange between gods.

The two suns completed a set of elaborate and soundless rituals, akin to a mime show. Only then, amidst everyone's awe-stricken gaze, did they resume normal human interaction.

"The theocracy of the City-State era is somewhat like the Pharaoh regime from ancient times. Relying on the rule of mythology, once the mythology is broken, people will become directionless," pondered Xiulote.

The King and the High Priest's human interaction, however, was brief. The two exchanged a few words with stern expressions before nodding to one another.

Soon, Xutel gestured for him to come forward, and then Xiuxoke advanced, kneeling on one knee with his head bowed, allowing the King to grasp his hair. Xiulote had seen this scene in the murals before and surmised that it must signify an oath to dedicate one's life. Afterwards, the young man stole a glance at the King; through the slits in the bone helmet, intertwined tattoos obscured his face, but Xiulote sensed he was around forty to fifty years of age.

When it was Xiulote's turn, the ceremony was much simpler. The King merely gave the boy a cursory glance and nodded slightly. He then bestowed upon him a finely-crafted Obsidian Dagger, its hilt inlaid with exquisite turquoise. Conveniently, the boy slipped the dagger into his bosom, his previous one having been given away during a prisoner capture.

After meeting with relatives, the King summoned some of the Great Nobility and the priests in turn, performing some procedural rituals. Afterwards, the High Priest invited the King to enter the ancient city and enjoy the banquet together.

The banquet was the most lavish meal Xiulote had ever had. It started with hearty pottery bowls of corn, pumpkin, and beans, representing the three most important staple foods bestowed by the gods to mankind. However, this was more a formality, and at such an event, no one would partake of these.

Next was a bowl of blood-red cocoa beverage, mixed with chili, honey, and an array of spices, then colored to resemble fresh blood. This was a drink for warriors and nobility; it had to be consumed with a solemn and dignified demeanor.

After drinking, Xiulote's face completely changed color – the taste was a bizarre mix of bitter, spicy, sweet, and cocoa.

The food that followed was much more normal: boiled tomatoes, turkey, deer, cacti, papaya, avocado, and tequila infused with insects or chili, available for selection as desired.

Xiulote ate a bit then stopped, as did everyone else. His utensils were an Obsidian Dagger with a shallow indentation in the middle, which could cut meat and also serve as

a spoon and fork, just careful not to cut his mouth. In such formal occasions, the wooden spoon Xiulote normally favored was not quite presentable.

After several rounds of drinks, the High Priest, Xutel, waved his hand, signaling for the dance to commence.

First, naturally, was the dance of sacrifice. Braziers were lit with smoking leaves and spices; the mystical fragrance wafted through the hall, inducing a trance-like state as if entering the Divine Kingdom. The priests, adorned with feather crowns and jeweled belts, step forward to dance and perform, singing an ancient and archaic chant:

"My heart is a flower,

It blossoms in an instant,

The king of night indeed,

Oh ya oh ya oh a ya.

"

"The Goddess returns from afar,

Our Earth Mother bestows,

All things upon me,

Oh ya oh ya oh a ya.

"

"I am the God of Maize, born in Heaven,

Amidst the blooming flowers.

That one flower unique in the world,

Yantala, yantala, a ya ya a.

"

"I am the God of Maize, born in the land of mist and rain,

The cradle of mankind.

The Mountain God's homeland,



Yantala, yantala, a ya ya a.

"

"Dawn arrives with a radiant sunrise.

With my colorful spoon,

I drink nectar from standing blooms,

Yantala, yantala, a ya ya a.

"

"Upon the Earth,

Walking through the bustling market,

I, the Feathered Serpent, Quetzalcoatl,

Am master of the world,

Yantala, yantala, a ya ya a.

"

The priests' song was deep and resonant, the rattling of their attire echoing through the air, an ancient charm fading with the wind. The King Tizoc was completely entranced, lightly nodding his head to the rhythm. After the song concluded, it took him a long while to come back to his senses. "High Priest, what is this divine chant? I've never heard it before," he said.

"Your Majesty, this is the Hymn of the Feathered Serpent," Xutel replied with a smile and a nod, "Over the years, the priests have been studying the murals of our ancestral city, finding many myths that differ from the ones passed down to us. This song speaks of the Feathered Serpent once being the ruler of the world."

Tizoc nodded, "After the banquet concludes, please, High Priest, tell me more about our ancestors' myths. We must always return to the Divine Kingdom."

Next was the Nobility Song. Some noble girls draped in lavish capes, wearing passionate tunics, and shaking gemstone bracelets, began to sing the joyous song of leisure of the nobility:

"I love the colors of the world,



the brilliant flowers and feathers.

In the season that moves your heart,

light up the intoxicating divine smoke.

"

"Dance with us,

let your bitterness flee,

adorn yourself with them,

the beautiful gold cocoa flowers.

"

"Then kiss beneath the blossoms,

share the joy of you and me,

singing beautifully here.

The cheerful songs of birds and parrots,

echoing beside the tinkling springs.

"

"You are like a cup of cocoa,

with it, my heart is filled with joy,

my heart is soaring,

my heart is soaring.

"

The girls' singing was melodious and cheerful, like larks in the sky. Their capes whirled, revealing their graceful figures, also with a hint of allure and temptation. As the passionate dance finally came to an end, sweat drenched their tunics. The girls then caught their breath, with dewy eyes, anticipating the king on stage.

Perhaps it was the fervent message hidden in the song, or perhaps it was the fragrance of the girls close at hand, Xiulote felt a rush of heat to his head and soon blushed.

The rest in front of the hall maintained their composure. Clearly, such singing and dancing were just a trivial scene for the nobles present.

Tizoc stroked his hand and lightly praised, "The song and dance are decent, not as grand as those in the capital city but has its own sense of purity."

Xutel nodded with a slight smile, "Does the king fancy the dancers in the song?"

Tizoc pondered for a moment, shook his head. His expression unchanged, "On the march, there's no hurry for the pleasures of singing."

The High Priest then waved his hand, signaling the beautiful girls to retire.

Lastly was the Warrior Dance. The city-state's most outstanding samurai entered the hall, led by Olosh, adorned with bright flowers, carrying ancient shields and wooden sticks without obsidian blades in them. When shield and stick collided, they sang the song of the warrior and the flower:

"The life of a warrior fades like a fleeting flower,

all glory shall pass away,

dazzling honors return to the earth.

Is there a most brilliant moment?

"

"Let flowers die in their bloom,

leaving behind unforgettable songs!

Let my heart be an offering to the land,

this mortal world is but fleeting~

"

The samurai's dance started with soothing calm, then resonated with metallic clangs, and finally, all returned to a solemn calm. Afterwards, the leader Olosh stepped forward, knelt on one knee before Tizoc, offering him a bouquet of flowers.

Tizoc merely nodded slightly, maintaining a godly aloofness, without saying a word.

Xutel gestured for the samurai to retreat as well. He then inquired, "What does the king think?"

"It's adequate," Tizoc simply stated, obviously not much interested in the samurai's performance.

"High Priest, since the entertainment has concluded," Tizoc leaned slightly, his tone bearing some anticipation, "let's discuss the myths of the ancestors in detail. Once this campaign is over, I can carve a new ritual plate beside the sun stone sacrificial plate in the temple, combining the myths with war."

"It would be my pleasure to serve you."

The lengthy banquet finally ended, bidding farewell to the spirited king. Everyone dispersed, and the family of three could finally gather together.

Looking around, Xiuxoke asked softly, "Father, did you specifically arrange the entertainment to see what the new king is like?"

"An exceptional Divine Descendant, a competent noble, a lacking commander-in-chief," Xutel pondered for a moment, the old wrinkles not overshadowing the sharpness in his eyes, "This campaign is likely to end in difficulty achieving victory, but it would only be a minor defeat!"

Xiulote seemed to understand something—it was a trial. In this era of frequent wars, with city-states standing side by side, everyone held their own opinions and judgments.

"In today's world, not only does a king choose his followers, but the followers also choose their king!" The youth couldn't help but softly exclaim in admiration. Looking at his grandfather's weathered face, he was wholeheartedly convinced!

### **Chapter 13: Chapter 13 Prophecies and Astrology**

The King stayed in the ancient city for two days, listening to the High Priest interpret the murals of the ancient Holy City, with Xiulote also listening to the mythological stories for two days.

"...And so, the world emerged from nothingness, when there was neither Heaven nor the underworld, no Father Divine nor Mother Goddess. At the beginning of all things, there existed only the first divinity Ometeotl, the object of veneration and the source of the Otomi's name."

"He possessed two opposing natures, being both heaven and earth, both fire and water, light as well as darkness, order and chaos. These opposing natures gave birth to two divine beings, one male, one female. Their union bore the War God Huitzilopochtli, the

original Sun God Tezcatlipoca, Xiulotel—god of death and rebirth, and Quetzalcoatl—the Feathered Serpent Divine."

Xutel gently caressed the ancient mural carvings, slowly interpreting them for King Tizoc.

"I see. Since the War God Huitzilopochtli inherited the esteemed position of the Sun God and promised us, the Mexica people, a fertile valley, he shall be the sole Chief Divine," Tizoc nodded, "The Otomi people claim to be descendants of the primeval ancestors. In this campaign, we must compel them to hand over the temple carvings, destroy the old gods' statues, and convert to the great Sun God."

"Very well. The Sun God will bless the King," Xutel assured with a gentle tone.

Tizoc smiled in satisfaction. Then, as though asking casually, "By the way, isn't your grandson named Xiulote? And he's twelve this year?"

"This," Xutel faltered slightly, recalling the other's theological expertise and his own impulsive excitement from years ago, and he couldn't help but clench his hand.

Trying to be as truthful as possible, the High Priest replied, "Return to the King. Xiulote was born soon after the great Montezuma I passed away. On that night, the Night Star shone brightly in the sky. I named him after Xiulotel, the Night Star Divine, hoping to capture the essence of Venus, the Morning Star."

"Indeed. I too noticed the sky on that night of my grandfather's passing. The Morning Star was shining brightly," Tizoc stared intently at Xutel's face, watching the old man's expression, "Xiulotel, the Morning Star, also symbolizes death and rebirth. I have heard these two days that the child has always been bright, seemingly born with knowledge."

"Xiulote is indeed precocious, but he only knows numbers well, and is naive about worldly affairs," Xutel quickly bowed his head, and his tattooed cheeks seemed to be dissolving in sweat.

"Great Montezuma I, a descendant of the Sun God, had the merit of sacrifices and glorious conquests, and on the day of his death, he was surely personally received by the Sun God and led into the Divine Kingdom; he could not possibly return to the world of the living. The bright Night Star was indeed a sign of the Sun God's descent!"

"As for Xiulotel, merely an escort for the sun during its nightly travels, how could it influence the sun's death and rebirth?" Xutel raised his head once more, his face now sincerely earnest.

Tizoc remained silent. His eyes held a hint of murderous intent and suspicion, fixed intensely on Xutel. Xutel maintained an expression of genuine openness. The great hall suddenly quieted down.

Xiulote was gazing at the simple and abstract murals, pondering how these ancient myths, so long-standing and abstruse, were ultimately subject to the priests' interpretation. Suddenly, did he hear his own name?

As the young man turned around, he saw the scene frozen like sculpted stone carvings. The King and his grandfather stood facing each other, engaged in a "deeply affectionate" exchange.

Curious, he moved closer, and a sudden insight came to him; he looked at the King innocently, then at his grandfather, and blinked his eyes.

"Haha." Tizoc suddenly burst into hearty laughter upon seeing Xiulote's oblivious and ingenuous face.

"The High Priest speaks wisely. I too have received divine messages in dreams that my grandfather has already been led by the Sun God back to the Divine Kingdom, assisting the Guardian God in governing the mortal realm. These years of prosperity and wealth in Mexico are the blessings of the Heavenly Divine and our ancestors."

"However, being born on the day of the Sun God's descent is an auspicious sign," Tizoc again chuckled, "The Tengu Xiulotel who escorts the sun at night surely also escorted my grandfather back to the Divine Kingdom. Xiulote's birth is a manifestation of this event in the mortal world. This child is the blessing of the Tengu."

"Come, bestow the garment," Tizoc beckoned to someone behind him, and a Tonsured Guard stepped forward, unfolding a meticulously crafted black feathered garment. The garment was quite ornate, its back adorned with a depiction of Xiulotel, the beast that shields the sun, in a Tengu Costume—clearly prepared in advance.

As for whether there were any other preparations, Xiulote glanced at the group of silent, Tonsured Samurai behind, but he couldn't tell.

Upon donning the Tengu Costume, Xiulote felt that it fit him perfectly, much to his surprise. He thanked the King profusely, blissfully unaware that he had narrowly missed a potentially fatal disaster.

The King smiled and patted his head, then said to Xutel, "I see this child is quite sharp and has taken my fancy. Let him accompany me during this campaign for his safety, and that he may learn something about conducting war. Once the campaign is over, I shall return him to the High Priest."

Xutel looked at the young man, then at the King, and could only nod in agreement, "Your Majesty's favor is this child's honor. Xiulote's learning in numeracy is already not far behind mine. However, in conduct and understanding the world, he is still naive and ignorant. If he unwittingly gives offense, I pray that Your Majesty will forgive him."

Tizoc gave a noncommittal "oh." He then laughed and said, "High Priest, do not worry. Since we share the same bloodline, I will treat him as my junior."

The two then exchanged formal goodbyes. Xiulote didn't understand what had transpired in between but saw his grandfather entrusting him to the King. The young man suddenly felt as if he had been sold. With a face full of question marks, he bid farewell to his father and followed the King out of the city.

"What was all that secretive talk about just now?" Xiulote recalled the conversation and remembered something about stars and Heavenly Divine, "Astronomy, divinations, truly hard to understand." he muttered.

By this time, the King's palanquin had arrived at the lakeside camp. The large army filled the entire lakeshore, with more than ten militia legions having already arrived. Along with a mixed legion from Teotihuacan, a grand total of twenty legions, a force of one hundred sixty thousand soldiers.

Even as the officers tried their best to maintain order within the camp, it was still a scene of utter chaos. The Samurai, having rested for a day, still presented a decent military appearance. The newly arrived Militia, however, were already in disarray, taking water to cook and causing a ruckus by the lake.

It was upon Tizoc's return that he witnessed this scene. The King's countenance showed no change as he whispered a few words to a tall man standing by his side.

The youth saw the tall man nod. He had a stern face with Tonsured stripes, wearing a special double-sided cloak that somewhat resembled a person in a poncho. The front of the cloak depicted the iconic Aztec Sun Stone, while the back featured a feminized giant Serpent.

The tall man then walked over to a group of officers behind the palanquin. Xiulote noticed several men in double-sided cloaks. On the front of each cloak were sun stones of varying sizes, and on the backs were different weapons drawn: Javelins, War Clubs, Shields, Stone Spears, Obsidian Daggers, and even slings and bows and arrows.

After a brief conversation, a man with an Obsidian Dagger depicted on his cloak hurried off. It wasn't long before the camp erupted in commotion, and then quickly fell silent.

A Tonsured Guard was seen holding a Long Spear high, its tip adorned with a dozen freshly blood-dripping heads. Witnessing this, a chill ran through Xiulote's spine. He began to form some conjecture about the significance of the Obsidian Dagger.

The man led the Imperial Guards along the lakeshore to make an example, while the village Bailiffs were also loud in their efforts to organize the ranks. Soon, the previously disorderly Militia regained proper discipline.

Upon returning, the man with the cloak painted with a Dagger respectfully reported back to the King on the palanquin. Xiulote then saw the King nod slightly, as though giving him another instruction.

The man nodded in acknowledgment. He then stood up and strode towards Xiulote.

Only then could Xiulote see clearly. The man appeared to be about the same age as his father, muscular, and quite handsome, but his face always carried a hint of an elusive smile. Perhaps it was psychological, but the young man felt as though he could smell fresh blood.

After sizing up the young man for a while, the man revealed a sincere grin, showing his teeth, "Hello, Xiulote. I am Ahuizotl."

## **Chapter 14: Chapter 14 Conversation, Memory, and the Beginning**

At first, Xiulote was somewhat hesitant about the arrival of Ahuizotl.

But soon, Ahuizotl produced the Jade Token of the High Priest. This token had always been closely guarded by his grandfather, representing significant trust.

"Your grandfather entrusted me to take care of you. From now on, I am your teacher!" Ahuizotl said with a smile. His smile was like the refreshing fragrance of pines and cypresses, making one feel a sense of kinship unconsciously.

"Now, I'll help you adapt here. In the future, we share the same goals," Ahuizotl said with a smile that suggested deeper meaning. His smile was like a warm spring breeze but also carried a chilling seriousness.

Within a few days, under Ahuizotl's gentle instruction and considerate care, Xiulote accepted this wise teacher and also considered him a close friend. Ahuizotl cared deeply for the boy's well-being, attending to his every need with meticulous care. He always smiled sincerely and chatted with him, resonating with the boy's thoughts and dispelling his loneliness.

One day, Ahuizotl called the young man to watch the sunset together. They watched as the brilliant red hues filled the sky, even the treetops flickered with colorful, shimmering light.

Ahuizotl took out a small flask, took a hearty swig, and then passed it to Xiulote. The boy also drank heartily; the flask contained tequila flavored with honey and spices. The alcohol was delicious, seemingly purified, but its proof was masked by the sweetness of the honey and the strong fragrance of the spices, making it very pleasant to drink.

Xiulote, while enjoying the magnificent scenery, chatted with his teacher, and, without realizing it, drank more than intended.



Looking at the boy's flushed face and feeling his slightly swaying body, Ahuizotl smiled faintly. He skillfully deepened the conversation. Under the influence of the delightful intoxication, the alcohol's effect, and an unknown potion's encouragement, Xiulote no longer held back. He finally spoke his heart.

"Are you saying that the sun is a big fireball, and the ground beneath our feet is a big ball of earth, and this big earth ball is constantly rotating around the big fireball day and night?!" Ahuizotl looked at Xiulote in shock.

"Yes, yes. Ahuizotl, you're so clever; you understood it as soon as I explained," Xiulote said with excitement, patting Ahuizotl's shoulder. "The earth beneath our feet is also constantly spinning on its own. It's because of the rotation around the sun that we have the change of seasons. It's precisely because of the earth's own rotation that we have day and night!"

Ahuizotl looked seriously at Xiulote's face, only to see sincerity, drunken redness, and the excitement of finding a kindred spirit. Thus, he fell silent. Even with his ability, he could not tell if Xiulote was truly foolish with drink, or feigning foolishness.

"You truly are different from ordinary people," was all Ahuizotl could say in the end.

"My grandfather said the same," Xiulote replied. The young man laughed heartily. No one had ever listened so patiently to his scientific knowledge from a previous life or to his explanations of natural phenomena. He had discussed a different understanding of the world with his grandfather and father. His father had scoffed at these ideas, while his grandfather was delighted that he was different from ordinary people. Neither cared about the content of his words.

Drunk words are sober thoughts, and the barely detectable potion also brought a strong sense of trust. Xiulote's emotions were highly agitated. He couldn't help but express some of the thoughts hidden in his heart, releasing some of the continuous pressure from living in an era with vastly different values from his own.

"When I was very young, there were different memories in my mind, or rather some visions," Xiulote gesticulated as he described. Alcohol affected his movements, and it also influenced his thinking.

"What memories?" Ahuizotl asked with a renewed, sincere smile.

"In that memory, I lived in an era fundamentally at peace, having never ended another person's life... There wasn't this much bloodshed and murder in the world," Xiulote said somewhat nostalgically, with a touch of lament.

Even though equality wasn't truly realized in his past life, the idea of it still existed. Unlike now, the concept of hierarchy was deeply ingrained, like a divine will, and killing among different levels was common.

"In my past understanding, life was precious. One's life should not be taken at will; the taking comes abruptly, as though it's justified and completely irresistible!"

Since arriving in this era and witnessing more bloodshed than he ever would have in his previous life, Xiulote constantly felt a strong sense of insecurity. Even though born into a privileged family, he still couldn't ensure the longevity of his own safety.

In this era, the end of life was all too arbitrary, with the lives of commoners falling like weeds. Nobles and priests still died on the cruel battlefields and in secretive assassinations. In truth, he had narrowly escaped death on several occasions. The fear of when the Western colonizers would arrive, unknown to him, was deeply buried in his heart, unspeakable.

"Ahuizotl, tell me, by what right does the King stand highest, directing my life and the lives of others? Nobles inherit their status generation after generation, higher than others, controlling almost all wealth, and my family is the same. Commoners toil hard all year, yet struggle to feed themselves, unable to sustain their children and the elderly. Slaves have no future at all. They either die in the mines or in the fields, or become sacrifices..."

If given the same education, how much of a gap would there be between their wisdom and abilities and those of the respected ones? How can the respected ones have the right to crush others? Should we perhaps try to change something, pursue some degree of tolerance and equality?"

Xiulote shook his head, his past memories swirling in his mind, longing for "home." There lay the values of his youth, the progressive ideas passed down over the years, and the way he was before the era changed him.

In this era, what also disturbed him was the strict social hierarchy. Divine authority was supreme, ruling over society. Royal authority suppressed the nobility, the nobility controlled the warriors, and the warriors decided the life and death of commoners. The life of a king was spent preemptively eliminating threatening factions, nobles harshly executed disobedient commoners, and warriors indifferently slew uncivilized tribes; life was as transient as duckweed.

In the "past" twenty years, he had grown accustomed to the company of friends, maintaining an independent self. He wasn't ready yet to determine everything for others, nor did he want himself to be easily decided by others. Even if that person was the supreme King!

The contradictory thoughts clashed violently in his mind. Everyone around him was instilling in him another kind of pure jungle law, a cognitive system that better "adapted" to this era.

He was merging with the cruel times. It signified mutual compromise, the world, or himself, which couldn't be accomplished in a single day.

So he would occasionally go off the rails, making impulsive actions. Like showing pity to a girl when capturing prisoners, like recklessly dismantling his grandfather's divine armor, and like this "dangerous" conversation.

Aweit remained silent. He no longer needed to struggle with whether Xiulote was truly naive or just pretending. However, Xiulote's words still caused some ripples to surface in his cold and cruel heart. Facing such a simple youth, he finally revealed some of his ruthless inner thoughts.

"This world is inherently cold and cruel. Lions eat deer, deer eat grass, not eating means death, and death means being eaten. Priests, nobility, samurai, commoners, slaves. City-States people, foreigners, savages. What difference is there between a city-state and the jungle?"

"Sunlight is finite, if you don't pull out the weeds, corn can't grow. Look at the rainforest, the higher you stand, the more sunlight you get, the longer you live. Pines live for a hundred years, reeds live for ten years, mushrooms live for a season. Where is the sameness? Even in death, there is no sameness."

As he spoke, Aweit's words fluctuated, "So-called life, so-called the equality you talk about, are all just accessories to power. As long as you are strong enough, you can be free. Until you reach the highest point, that is absolute freedom."

As he spoke, he subconsciously glanced at the distant palanquin, and at the majestic King on it, and murmured to himself, "And I, am of divine lineage!" Suddenly becoming alert, he stopped speaking and turned his gaze to Xiulote.

Seeing Xiulote still drunkenly zoning out, Aweit let out a slight sigh of relief and changed to a smiling expression.

He patted Xiulote on the shoulder, steadied the unsteady youth, and said with a gentle smile, "Although I don't know what memories you are talking about, I can hear the contradiction and confusion in your heart. As a samurai or a noble, overthinking is meaningless."

As he spoke, he glanced again at Xiulote's Tengu Costume. "As a Priest, you should also devote more thought to divinity, for royalty, divinity is humanity. Understanding divinity is to avoid dying in vain."

Then, Aweit flashed another quick smile, "No, I'm wrong. You are just fine, very good! I will relay your understanding of the sun and earth to the King."

"That way, you can preserve your precious life and the equality you cherish..." Aweit thought with a faint smile. Of course, this unspoken sentiment was unknowable to Xiulote, who just leaned on Aweit's shoulder, drowsily falling asleep.

The gentle May, with its breezy drizzles, softened the summer. The warm wind carried the freshness of moisture, stealthily ushering in the rainy season.

After the Teotihuacan legions joined the coalition forces, the grand army went northwards, first veering northeast, intimidating the northern frontier bordering Tlaxcala and the Empire. King Tizoc and representatives from the city-state of Atotztlitl met, continuing to flaunt their military strength while arranging defense against Tlaxcala.

Upon the suggestion of the "Female Snakes" officer corps, the King left two legions directly under his command here to strengthen the defense and to surveil the Tlaxcalans and various city-states.

Then, the grand army continued north for several days, reaching Mestitlan City which Xiulote once passed through. King Tizoc met with representatives of the Vastec people here, accepting another tribute. Then turning southwest, he received a city-state legion from Weyophethlan, reinstating twenty legions in size.

Finally, the forces went straight west, aiming for the latest large city-state of the Otomi, Xilotepec City, a mere two weeks' direct march from the capital.

Swiftly, the twenty legions encircled Xilotepec City, severing the city-state's supply of food, salt, and some of the water. The city stretched only four or five square kilometers. Eight core legions encamped on the east side, about ten thousand veteran warriors, twenty thousand capital warriors, and more than thirty thousand village warriors, stationed alongside the most convenient grain pathway, a tributary of the Tampen River, these were forces directly loyal to the King.

The remaining twelve city-state legions were evenly stationed on the west, south, and north sides, with more than thirty thousand on each flank, approximately forty percent city-state warriors and sixty percent village warriors. Xiuxoke then led the Teotihuacan city-state legion stationed on the west, where Otomi reinforcements were most likely to appear.

Father and son were distanced east to west, gazing at each other from afar. Since they parted at the Holy City, they hadn't seen each other again. Xiulote often looked westward, but it was only on one evening that he saw over eight thousand direct city-state warriors quietly disappearing into the forest outside the encampment.

The capital's provisions could be sent up north along Lake Texcoco, crossing Lake Haltocan, entering the main stream of the Tampen River, then twisting westward, all the way directly to the encampment by the riverbank. A canoe full of grain, completing the journey, took just over half a month.

King Tizoc's army morale was soaring, with no concern for the dearth of food. Aweit told Xiulote that, according to the latest scout reports, inside Xilotepec City there were only eight thousand city-state warriors, over ten thousand conscripted village soldiers, and tens of thousands of civilians. Morale was low, and anxiety pervaded.

If the two sides engaged in direct combat, the eight thousand veteran warriors could easily drive them into the Tampen River like scattering a troop of monkeys with just one charge.

Now, Xiulote stood outside the eastern gate. What appeared in his line of sight was a four or five meter high wall, a mix of earth and stone, manned by the defending army. The narrow top of the wall was filled with warriors' stone-throwing slings, throwing spears, simple bows and arrows, and piles of stones and wood were clearly visible.

## **Chapter 15: Chapter 15 Siege**

"This city is not easy to besiege." Outside the eastern gate of Xilotepec City, after carefully observing the width, thickness, and material of the city walls, Xiulote spoke earnestly. Since his last heartfelt talk, Xiulote felt much lighter in his heart and seemed to have grown closer to Ahuizotl.

"Of course, if Xilotepec were easy to conquer and were so close to us, it would have been subjugated and eradicated decades ago; it wouldn't have lasted till today," Ahuizotl said with a smile.

He liked spending time with Xiulote who had no sense of danger. It allowed him to feel an unusual sense of relaxation. "After years of campaigning, all that's left in the north are stubborn rocks."

"Aweit, have you noticed the cross-section of the city walls?" Xiulote continued to study seriously, "Inside it's an amalgam of stone and clay. It doesn't crumble at all despite being eroded by rainwater."

"It should be a binder made of corn ash mortar mixed with lime," Ahuizotl got serious, "I remember seeing the craftsmen use it when I was supervising repairs on the pyramid; it's very expensive."

"If that's the case, then it's almost like glutinous rice mortar; it's much stronger than cob. It's impossible to undermine the foundations of the walls."

"What is glutinous rice? Undermining the foundation?" Ahuizotl asked with a laugh, "Xiulote, why do you have such interesting ideas? Are you planning to hew a city wall nearly ten steps wide with a stone axe?"

Xiulote was at a loss for words, realizing that the Aztecs neither had iron nor copper pickaxes at the moment and were only equipped with easily worn stone and wooden tools.

"So how do we usually besiege a city?" Xiulote asked the high-ranking officer beside him.

"If the city walls are not tall, warriors command conscripts to pile up earth below them and then directly charge over it. The small cities of the Mixtecs to the south are very easy to conquer," Ahuizotl recalled.

"But like now, with the walls being too high and thick, we usually don't attack directly. It's better to lay siege - cutting off water, food, and salt. After a few months, the city will surrender."

"Our army is ten times the size of those inside the city; we could directly scale the walls with ladders, swarming over them like ants."

"Using ladders for a direct assault causes too many casualties. Village militia are almost useless in a direct assault; their morale is too low to make it to the top. Using warriors would mean far too many dead and injured. In the face of stones or javelins thrown from the ramparts, even an Eagle Warrior is as vulnerable as a village soldier. Plus, the enemy's civilians can also help defend, serving almost as half a conscript."

"Don't we have an experienced group of fighters? Two thousand Jaguar warriors and six thousand veteran fighters swarm up the walls like ants; surely the militia on the ramparts won't be able to hold them off. At most, a thousand or so warriors might die before we break through the city."

Ahuizotl turned his head and looked at Xiulote with an incredulous expression, "Have you lost your mind? Using Jaguar and Eagle Warriors to siege the city? They are all military nobility, the core force in the suppression of states by the Alliance. This is not a nation war with Tlaxcala or Tarasco, it's a City-State subjugation. If hundreds of military nobility die in such a City-State war, the King would have to stop waging wars and prepare to return home to deal with rebellions instead."

Xiulote paused to think, weighing the analogy. If the Polish king lost five hundred Noble Knights in a battle against the Crimean Tatars... well, forget that thought.

Xiulote continued to observe the city walls. The warriors around him started to howl loudly, intimidating the enemies within the city. They beat their shields with their war clubs, producing a fierce pounding sound. The conscripted soldiers behind them also began to roar. The city walls, close by, went into a brief panic and then settled down under the firm control of the nobility and the priests.



In this Medieval battlefield devoid of cannons, counterweight trebuchets, stone-throwing machines, and even lacking skilled archers for long-range pressure, the attackers had to endure the unrestrained firepower from the city walls. Attacking a strong city became an extremely difficult task.

Relying on village warriors with low morale and insufficient training was impossible for a forceful attack on a large City-State defended by tens of thousands. And the elite City-State Warriors, the core strength of a City-State, could not be rashly wasted.

So, the most common strategy was still to lay siege.

"Do you have any other ideas?" Ahuizotl asked curiously.

"The soil here doesn't have much rock content, perhaps we can dig a tunnel and then directly breach the city from underneath."

"Digging tunnels? You mean to say to cut a path underground, passing beneath the city walls? It sounds feasible." Aweit played the scenario out in his mind. "How deep would we need to dig? How wide should the tunnel be? How do we determine our direction underground? How long could we dig with a stone shovel in one day? And how can we avoid being detected by the enemy?"

"Well..." Xiulote thought for a moment, certain he had never read a book with specific instructions on how to dig tunnels. "We can experiment with the details. We could also ask a miner for advice."

So, Aweit filed the suggestion away in his mind for later. He began to take things more seriously, "Is there any other way?"

"Perhaps we could design a simple catapult. As long as its range exceeds that of the archers on the city walls, and it can hurl stones weighing several pounds against the walls." Xiulote remembered the classic designs from countless games.

"I know about hurling stones, but what's a 'car'?"

"..." Xiulote found it somewhat hard to describe, "It's something with two or four wheels that can be pushed or pulled along."

"What are wheels?"

"..." Frustrated, Xiulote explained the shape and purpose of wheels with gestures and words.

Quickly, Aweit got it, "So, it's like the toys made by the Maya. I've seen them in the market at the capital city. They can be played with on the plaza under the Great Temple



but once you leave the city, with all the mountains and trees, where can wheels be faster than people?"

"If we had enough metal tools, we could cut down the trees, then build stone paths between the mountains and forests. With the use of wheeled carts, the city-states could communicate quickly, and the effective governance of the Alliance could extend to Vastec, Mixtec, and even farther to the Zapotecs."

"That's a good idea. Roads do expand a nation's governing territory. But pushing carts on wheels, aside from being able to carry more things, surely wouldn't be faster than running."

Indeed, there were no beasts of burden in Central America at the moment. Perhaps we could go to North America and domesticate some bison, or bring llamas from South America to pull the carts? Xiulote's thoughts drifted wildly.

"So how should the catapult be designed?" Aweit, ever practical, steered the conversation back to siege warfare.

"Let me try to draw it." Xiulote picked up a stick and squatted on the damp earth to draw, with Aweit looking on. One draped in a Priest's robe of the Tengu and the other cloaked in a Commander's cloak of the Sun Stone, the two high nobility were engrossed in their research, undisturbed by the warriors who came and went.

"Complex trebuchets are definitely out of the question. The Romans seem to have had torsion catapults? Torsion, torsion... that sounds like it requires sinew or some sort of elastic rope, which we don't have and can't make."

"We need to think more primitively. Let's consider the primitive catapults Cao Cao had in the era of the Three Kingdoms—I remember seeing it in the old 'Romance of the Three Kingdoms'. It should have a central support, with a swiveling lever on top, the short end pulled with a rope by men, and the long end hurling stones."

After striving to remember for a while, Xiulote eventually sketched the simplest form of a manual catapult, unfortunately not having studied the construction of catapults in depth despite reading so many time-travel novels.

Aweit, observing the abstract drawings on the ground, pondered carefully, imagining it in his mind. "The short end drives the long end, which hurls the stones—it seems indeed feasible. This process is somewhat like a sling, which also spins to throw stones."

"Xiulote, using a sling takes years of training to ensure accuracy—how will this catapult ensure precision?"

"We should probably standardize the design, then use a fixed configuration"—Xiulote recollected the simplistic descriptions from novels. "But to know the exact details of how to do it, we'd still have to try. Maybe we should ask a carpenter?"

While the two were enthusiastically discussing, suddenly they saw the city gates in front of them open. A Priest, adorned with a feather crown and wearing a rare black-and-white cape, walked slowly towards the camp, commanding the attention of tens of thousands of City-State Warriors, holding high a scepter as he emerged from Xilotepec City.