

Civilization 133

Chapter 133 Lake Capital City, Tenochtitlan! Part One

The Mexican Valley in November was tranquil and joyous, much like the clusters of Ahuehuete blossoms that exuded a piney fragrance in the gentle breeze.

The fleet, bearing the Royal Banner of Aweit and the Samurai, navigated southward along the Tampen River, with the warm sun rippling over the river surface. Though the journey through the breeze and flowing water took merely two or three days, they soon entered the prosperous and beautiful Mexican Valley, the actual territory governed by the Empire.

The Mexica villages along the way had already completed this year's harvest and tribute, and the fields were scattered with beans ready to sow. The wealthy villages had enough beans to plant to restore the fertility of the soil, in preparation for an even more prosperous following year.

Under the distant salutations of the villagers, the royal convoy continued southward, reaching Lake Haltocan a week later. Xiulote gazed far toward the East, towards Teotihuacan, his birthplace and home just a day's journey away.

This area was the heartland of the Mexica people, with numerous Mexica boats continually arriving, carrying village Elders who offered fresh vegetables, fruits, and precious light liquors to the convoy.

Melodious songs surrounded the fleet all along the journey, bold declarations of love from maidens adoring the Samurai. Like water lilies, they danced at the bow in their thin white robes, elegantly revealing their graceful figures to the Samurai. As night fell, Samurai occasionally slipped away from the rear of the fleet to rendezvous with the girls on the boats, enjoying the moonlight, the Milky Way, and joyful songs together.

In the secure heartland of the Empire, Aweit did not restrain the Samurai.

The fleet continued south, entering the fundamental land of the Mexica people—1.5 million inhabitants of the Texcoco Lake District, a direct territory of the Capital's tri-cities and the wealthiest area in Central America.

The villages along the way were densely scattered, with smoke from cooking fires rising continuously from both riverbanks and faint sounds of ancient flutes and deep drums in the autumn air, accompanying the songs of the community Samurai and Priests. Xiulote sniffed the air lightly and smelled the spicy aroma of roasted turkey and the fresh scent of roasted corn, suddenly feeling somewhat hungry.

This was a blessing banquet hosted by the village Elders in the communal hall, where villagers gathered to perform various sacrificial rites, offering food, birds, corn cobs, sage, beans, and wildflowers. Samurai and village leaders gathered joyously, relishing the abundant festivities of autumn.

Xiulote once again savored the aroma wafting nearby, detecting a special fragrance, similar to burnt sandalwood, carrying an ancient and rustic charm.

"What is this fragrance? Has the village in the lake region become so affluent that it can afford expensive spices?" Xiulote asked in surprise.

"Spices are not really expensive items. Besides the products from Chinampa, the periodic gatherings from the forest, and the Alliance continuously receiving large amounts of spice tributes from the people of Mistec, Zapotecs, and Vastec from the northeast," Elder Priest Ugus proudly answered with a smile. In the massive army, Aweit had to maintain dignity, and Gillim was always serious. So, Ugus, a noble son

from the Capital City, became Xiulote's tour guide, telling him about the beauty and wealth of the Capital Lake District.

"This must be the blessing banquet of the village community Elders. At the final stage of the banquet, the Priests and high-ranking Samurai light the fragrant Cobalt tree resin, praying to the deities and ancestors for a bountiful harvest next year."

The Lake Region was the foundational territory under the rule of the Alliance. The villages here were closely organized into clearly defined communities, Calpulli, similar to the households registered under the Qin Dynasty. Each community was managed by four Elders, typically ennobled military veterans, seasoned Samurai from the common people, and Temple Priests appointed by the Capital City.

Whenever the war horn blew, each village community was required to provide a squad of 200 Samurai and Militia, and the richness of their equipment was directly proportional to the village's wealth. Generally, the closer a village was to the Capital City, the more affluent and numerous the Samurai were.

This was already home for many Samurai in the fleet; they were born here, received military training in the Capital City, passed the selection assessment, and then joined the royal legion, becoming noble Samurai.

The fleet continued its journey south, with the air filling with various comfortable floral scents and the fresh, lemon-like aroma of ripe cocoa fruit. Xiulote looked around, witnessing everywhere in the Lake Region the thriving foundation of the Mexica people, the floating Chinampas in the lake.

These floating gardens were tightly fenced around their perimeter, with a base of mud mixed with wooden stakes. Although it was autumn, farmers were still busy planting on the Chinampas. In addition

to corn, beans, and squash, Xiulote also saw cocoa trees being harvested and avocado trees beginning to bear fruit, along with various finely cared-for Herbs, all foods supplied to the Nobility.

The Chinampas on the lake could be farmed all year round. Lake Texcoco guaranteed the water necessary for crop growth, the lake mud provided ample nutrients, and autumn and winter in Mexico never brought low temperatures or snow.

It was the dry season now, and the water channels were shallowly sliced between the neatly arranged Chinampas, with the water barely deeper than a person. Occasionally, wealthy farmers in white clothes navigated small boats, probing with fishing nets to scoop up sludge from the lake bottom and channels, which they then evenly spread over the floating fields.

Surrounding the floating fields were submerged, fermenting straw and leaves, while faintly seen fish chased scattered grains in the lake. From time to time, small boats loaded with excrement fertilizer came from the southern Capital City, adding to the Chinampas. This might be the earliest form of ecological agriculture.