

## Civilization 135

### Chapter 135 Lake Capital City, Tenochtitlan! Up\_3

Where the Royal Banner passed, there lay only the citizens who knelt to the Empire.

"The sun had just risen, its glorious rays ablaze, and thousands upon thousands of hills seemed to catch fire. In an instant, it ascended into the sky's boulevard, chasing away the stars and the waning moon."

Xiulote's heart was a torrent of emotions. He was surrounded by tens of thousands of soldiers and knelt by tens of thousands of people; this was the rigidly hierarchical Mexica society, this was the taste of supreme power!

Under the Royal Banner, the young man was slightly intoxicated but soon became alert, regaining the clarity in his eyes. He then leaned forward slightly to look at the majestic Aweit. The latter's expression was as calm as usual, his eyes sparkling, and so he nodded inwardly.

Along their path, as the great army traversed the Long Bridge amidst the reverence of countless people, the North City of the Lake Capital City lay before them, the once City-State of Tlatelolco. This City-State was one of the twin cities first established by the Mexica people on the Lake Island, about a quarter the size of the main city in the south, Tenochtitlan.

With the expansion of the Mexica, the Lake Capital City developed rapidly; the two cities eventually merged into one, leaving only an arched water channel at their boundary, providing the two sides of the city with the most important fresh water.

Xiuolote proceeded, with intersecting bridges and waterways in front of him. In the North City of Tlatelolco, most houses were built on small patches of land in the water, many of which were newly filled islands. These houses were the dwellings for the commoners or ordinary Samurai, neatly arranged according to the plan.

The intersecting waterways resembled a chessboard with straight sides, the houses clustering in blocks like pieces dropped by the Heavenly Divine. The foundation of each house was a stone platform to prevent flood inundation. The foundations of the houses were white granite or red volcanic rock, the roofs were wooden beams and rods, and the exterior was plastered with clay. The layout of the houses were straight, typically divided into a bedroom, kitchen, storeroom, and slave quarters.

Whenever a certain number of houses congregated into blocks, a small community market and a fully stone-constructed community temple would emerge at the center. The communities within the city resembled the wards in Chang'an during the Tang Dynasty, housing approximately three thousand people, possessing not only economic functions but also military functions.

This kind of temple represented the deepest roots of the reigning Divine Tree of the Empire, tendrils reaching into the grassroots, forming the foundation of the Mexica's strong mobilization capacity. Likewise, four elders were in charge of each community, usually collecting tributes, overseeing the enlistment of suitable youths into military schools, and during wartime, assembling battle groups of one hundred to two hundred Samurai.

As Xiuolote calculated, the North City of Tlatelolco housed around ten communities, far fewer than the eighty communities in the four major districts of the main city. Therefore, it was eventually absorbed by the main city and came under the direct administration of the Royal Family, establishing the position of City Lord of Tlatelolco. In this era, everything was ultimately determined by population and martial strength.

After nearly an hour's march, the great army finally arrived at the center of the North City. The centers of the cities in Central America were similar to those of the city-states of Rome, always dominated by

towering temples and a vast central plaza. Xiulote gazed at the near forty-meter-high twin pyramids, the Tlatelolco Temple, before shifting his focus to the central plaza that served as a grand marketplace.

For in the main city to the south, which he could see, stood the truly magnificent Great Temple of the Mexica.

North City was far from the religious and political center of the main city, away from the sprawling villas of the Great Nobility, so there was ample space, allowing for the formation of a huge marketplace. This marketplace was twice the size of the main city market, with about sixty thousand people trading here daily!

The marketplace was a flat open space, surrounded by connecting water channels, with rows of arches on the edges. Traders from across two oceans arrived by boat, transporting goods directly to the arches. Thrifty traders slept under the arches with their goods.

Based on the type of goods, the market was divided into different zones. On the edges were the most common items: fruits, vegetables, staple food, various stone tools and pottery containers, wooden furniture, firewood and pine strips, plain cotton, and hemp clothes and blankets, as well as ordinary obsidian knives, bone knives, bone needles, and spinning awls. These were the daily necessities of the commoners and also covered the largest area.

Moving further in, there were bright woven feather cloaks, ornate patterned rugs, exquisite samurai battle garments, obsidian clubs, and wooden shields, witch doctor priests' herb potions, various dried meats and fish, and the hides of tigers, deer, coyotes, and otters, completed concoctions of cold cocoa and tequila, honey and maple sugar candies. Xiulote noted down the location, planning to return when he had some free time.

Between the center and the edge was a huge slave market with diverse origins. Most of the slaves had their hands bound with ropes, their necks encircled by a loop of rope attached to a long pole to prevent escape. A few were slaves selling themselves; these were likely destined for the human sacrifice games. Of course, there were exceptions. Great slave traders had enough samurai guards that they allowed their young female slaves free use of their hands to display themselves freely.

The young man glanced a few times, estimated their ages, and then silently turned back.

Moving further in, there was the high-end market guarded by samurai. As expected, Xiulote once again saw the Maya people's self-proclaimed divinely elongated skulls; their shops always had enchanting sacred smoke. Then, he immediately spotted the bronze axes and needles from the west; these small bronze items were priced very high, nearly equivalent to gold and silver ornaments. He also noted down the location of the shops.

Not far from there was the gold and silver gemstone stalls, especially known for the craftsmanship of the Mistec people who resided in the clouds. All kinds of finely carved gold and silver jewelry, bracelets, and rings with embedded gemstones, and the most precious jade necklaces. There were also some traders from the coastal Vastec and Totonac, selling shimmering seashell decorations; high-grade rose-colored and light red seashells could even equate to the value of gold and silver while pearls were often just an add-on with the seashells.

In another part of the high-end market, which the nobility favored, were luxury shops selling dyes, spices, and vibrant plants. Tropical flowers competed in beauty, and the air was filled with the Totonac people's favorite scent of herbs, the beautiful rouge red showcased in exquisite silver bowls, and the pungent smell of horseweed, Mexican oregano, and taco seasoning.

Xiulote reached the edge of the marching warriors, walking beside the marketplace, marveling at everything in the grand marketplace. In front of him were traders from across two oceans, his ears filled with the eager dialects of various regions, his nostrils with unidentified floral scents and rouge, his hands with the cool touch of gold and silver gemstones; he was momentarily dazzled and overwhelmed.

It was only when it became quiet by his side, upon seeing traders and commoners respectfully kneeling under the royal banner, that he managed a faint smile, walking back to the mighty marching troops, walking back to the formidable royal banner.

"Wheels clashing, shoulders brushing, clothes forming tents, sleeves creating canopies, sweat turning into rain," the young man smiled wistfully, praising what a thriving, bustling, prosperous, bountiful, and peaceful place the world was!

The army did not linger. The elite nobility battle groups merely glanced lightly over the affluent marketplace, their eyes filled with the self-assuredness of deciding the traders' fates. They followed the royal banner, full of honor and reverence, and boldly headed south, where the majestic main city and towering Great Temple laid.