

Civilization 154

Chapter 154 The Coronation Ceremony: Song and Dance, Sacrifices, Light, and Blood_2

"The gaze of the divine watches over the ancestors. He said, 'Mexica people, from lake to lake, from mountain to mountain, this is your home, your land, your nation!'" This was the Priest's hymn.

Xiulote was entranced by the splendid beauty of the celebration. Yet, when he looked inward again, what he saw was a different kind of sacred bloodshed.

Inside the walled boundaries of the Temple District, there were also dense crowds. These people were invited attendees, dressed in their most formal attire, participating in the coronation ceremony at the Great Temple.

On the outer edge, there were foreign merchants adorned with various exotic ornaments. Followed by noble Poets, skilled Temple Craftsmen, Mexica military merchants, high-ranking elite Samurai, and representatives of the community. Most of them wore garlands and formal cloaks, excitedly and joyfully talking loudly, watching the intense sacrificial ball game.

At the inner edge, various Nobles sat cross-legged on beautifully woven feathered mats, clad in vibrant cloaks with blooming plumes on their heads. They conversed quietly, under the service of servants and slaves, watching the temple rituals and also observing the ball game from the corners.

In each corner of the Temple District, there were large stone ball courts, semi-constructed underground, about four to five meters deep, with exposed tops for spectators, resembling a neatly arranged stone pit. Each court had two teams of 20 Otomi captives, engaged in intense ball-hitting games, vying for a solid rubber ball infused with latex.

According to the formal game's requirements, captives wearing only shorts occupied tens of meters of half-court, striking the ball back and forth with their hips, alternating turns between sides. A score was made whenever the opponent touched the ball twice, or if the opponent's return went out of bounds. Priests were specially appointed to record the scores. Usually, the ball game lasted for two hours until both sides were exhausted, unable to provide a more vigorous match; then the Priests would declare the winner.

Unlike the Maya rituals, the winners of the Aztec ball game would receive honor and wealth, while the losers would be offered to the divine. The symbolic meaning of the sacrificial ball game was the unending struggle between the Guardian God and his wicked siblings. The sacrificial ball game also inspired the creation of the game "Quidditch" in later generations.

As Xiulote watched, suddenly, a thunderous cheer came from the northwest corner. He turned his gaze and saw a strong Otomi captive powerfully strike the five-pound rubber ball. The solid ball whistled straight, smashing into the face of a young captive opposite. Blood instantly flowed from his nose and mouth, his facial bones slightly concave, twitching as he fell. Nearby, two other teammates lay with broken ribs. Apparently, the Otomi team intended to win this way.

The Priest referee loudly announced the scores, and the strong Otomi captive scored again!

The cheers among the spectators erupted once more. An agile, older warrior captive came up on the opposing side. With a solemn gaze, he measured along the wall with his arm repeatedly and finally, with a twist of his hips, he powerfully struck the ball. The rubber ball traced an unnaturally precise arc, just brushing past the four-meter-high wall and squeezing through an exceptionally narrow ring.

The thunderous cheers were louder than ever, attracting even the attention of the warriors beneath the Great Temple. It was a game-ending move, rarely seen in months! The Priest referee declared fervently, and the winner was then adorned with a colorful cloak and escorted out of the city for release by the warriors, while the loser was tied up by ropes and taken to the small temples around for sacrifice.

The strong Otomi captive roared in resistance and despair, but was swiftly subdued with a skillful stick hit by an Eagle Warrior, clutching his abdomen as he fell. The Priest referee frowned, took out a small clay pot, and poured a few mouthfuls into the strong captive's mouth. Soon, the captive was giggling idiotically, compliantly taken to the top of the tower, and then rolled down in another form, leaving a long trail of red.

The sacrificer at the small temple died silently without the Priest announcing his name to guide his soul. Then, amid the cheers of the spectators, the next sacrificial ball game began again.

Beneath the Great Temple, noble battle groups lined up neatly, presenting formidable dances before the divine. A thousand fierce Jaguar Warriors, adorned with clinking tiger tooth and bone, performed a war dance for the War God. A thousand splendid Eagle Warriors, draped in vibrant, swinging multicolored feathers, performed a beast dance for the Rain Divine.

Next to dozens of large and small Temples, Priests lit the lingering sacred incense, chanting in a uniform, deep tone. Xiulote listened intently; this was a hymn praising the Guardian God.

"The Guardian God of the Mexica ascends to the sky, replacing the original sun. He fights the evil moon and night, drawing strength from hearts and blood..."

Then, from the top of the War God Hall of the Great Temple, a resounding and deep Priest chant came: "Noble Owatdne from Otapan City goes to the realm of the War God! Honor him!"

Xiulote turned at the sound and saw a body entirely in blue rolling down from the sixty-meter-high top of the War God Hall of the Great Temple. Divine liquid flowed robustly from the massive hole in his chest, scattering along the way until it was stopped by the reclining sculpture of the Moon Goddess Coyolxauhqui at the base of the Temple.

In mythology, the Moon Goddess led her siblings, symbols of the night, in pursuit to kill their inadvertently pregnant mother. However, at the critical moment, Guardian God Huitzilopochtli emerged from his mother's womb, wielding the Lightning Rod, defeating his siblings, and slaying his wicked sister, chopping her into pieces to prevent her resurrection. The sculpture accurately depicted the dead form of the Moon Goddess and also foreshadowed the fate of the sacrifices to follow.