

## Civilization 174

### Chapter 174 Continued News: Commoners, Nobility, and Priests\_2

Of course, faced with the large tracts of land and estates left by the Prince and the various nobles, the thousands of vassal samurai, the nobles of the capital city were likewise green with envy. Nobles of all ranks held secret meetings to discuss whether there was a chance to obtain the fertile fiefs on the eastern shore of the lake and to succeed as the lord of the city of Texcoco, thus passing on a legacy that would last for generations.

The desires of the ordinary samurai were much smaller. They hoped to pledge loyalty to the royal family, dedicate their martial prowess, and be granted a productive chinampa. From then on, they would be able to support many children and establish their own families.

Only those with a keen eye paid attention to the discreet actions of Prince Totoquihuatzin of Tlacopan. Totoquihuatzin handed over the jurisdiction of his six thousand direct subordinate samurai and gave up a large expanse of chinampa on the western shore of the lake. Then he divorced his original wife and married the fourteen-year-old great-grandniece of the Chief Priest. The next day, he crossed the bridge and went west.

When he arrived, he was surrounded by a host of followers, his aura mighty; upon his departure, he was as light as the drifting breeze, slipping away without a sound.

Kapana stood on the long white bridge, bidding farewell to her cousin. The two embraced, crowned each other with fresh flowers, wept together, and reminisced about their kind and amiable grandfather, hating the prince of Texcoco with the heart of a beast but the face of a man. Acap stood by, gently watching his new bride. Xiulote, having just regained his freedom, also joined in the excitement.

Prince Totoquihuatzin appeared to be in his thirties, with a round face, always smiling and plump, exuding an aura of kindness. He did not conform to the aesthetic ideals of the samurai of his era; rather than resembling the widely revered king, he looked more like a prosperous merchant.

Upon seeing Xiulote, he enthusiastically took the young man's arm, greeted him loudly, and had people bring over a long feather crown, gemstone-studded outfits, and crocodile leather shoes. Then he animatedly commented on the exquisite delicacies, the ornaments of gold, silver, and gemstones, and the songstresses from various parts of Mexico.

Xiulote quietly observed Prince Totoquihuatzin for a long time. He pondered that he would likely see this face for many more years to come.

After parting with her cousin, Kapana nostalgically touched the dagger hidden inside her blouse. It was a gift from her grandfather before her marriage, along with a vial of pale yellow potion. Remembering her grandfather's final instructions, she sighed softly.

"My beloved grandfather, Acap has been kind to me, and the king whom you were worried about has not harmed our family. I will probably never need to use your potion," she said.

If she had married the king in the beginning, would her grandfather have also given her a dagger and potion? There was no answer to this question, and Kapana did not want to know; things were good as they were. With a relieved smile, she contentedly held onto Acap's arm.

Acap, dressed in the black attire of a high priest, also smiled and held his wife close.

He had changed his outfit and become the youngest Elder Priest among the group of twelve. Despite opposition from many in the Chief Priest's line, with the identity of Kapana and the support of King Aweit, he was still able to persuade everyone and successfully inherited part of Quetzal's authority.

For the priests of the Lake Capital City, the news of greatest interest was the merging of the High Priesthood and the Priesthood. The Council of Elder Priests, consisting of twelve members, became the sole and supreme ecclesiastical center of the Alliance, with High Priest Xutel assuming the leadership of the priesthood. At the call of the leader, the upper echelons of the Priesthood hurriedly came from the Holy City.

The first matter that the Elder Priests addressed upon meeting was to clarify the Fifth Level sacred offices.

The consensus was quickly reached; the Elder Priests of both Priesthoods were equivalent to the Supreme High Priest, while the Elder Priests of other city-states were categorized as High Priests, under the direct management of the Supreme High Priests. The Fifth Level coyote priests served as High Priests, the Fourth and Third Level as City Priests, and the Second and First Level as village and community priests. The five-tier structure was clear-cut with a strict promotion system.

Obviously, with the territory of the eleven Mexica states, the classification of the priests' sacred offices was exceedingly elevated. But during the early stages of reform, it was time to appease the priests across the region. Once the overall situation was stabilized, there would be plenty of opportunities to gradually streamline.

Next were fundamental scriptures and religious regulations, of utmost concern to the Elders.

Xiulote, having been entrusted by the Elders with the important task of compiling the scriptures, was able to further advance, and was honored with the title of High Priest. Now, his most important daily

work was to go to the Priestly Temple, teach the textual characters to the Elder Priests, and participate in the discussion of new doctrines.

Chinese characters were the main carriers of the new Mexica writing system. During the integration with the Nahuatl language, the first issue was pronunciation. The majority of Chinese characters adopted the 'on'yomi'—the form and meaning of the Chinese character, with the sound from Nahuatl. For some special Chinese characters, where no equivalent concept could be found in the existing languages, the 'kun'yomi' was adopted, taking the sound, form, and meaning of the Chinese character.

Beyond 'on'yomi', was the newly developing Kana system. This system borrowed the form of Chinese characters, assigning localized meanings, and even localized pronunciations. Combining the features of the Mexica pictographic script, it was possible to develop an extremely simplified hiragana-like system that would allow the culturally uninitiated samurai and commoners to quickly master the simple written form. The phonetic hiragana-like script would be akin to a Nahuatl phonetic system.

Of course, for the high priests, mastering the full range of Chinese characters was a symbol of status and position. They were also intelligent enough to learn and master Chinese characters and even to draw inferences by analogy.

At that moment, Xiulote, dressed in black priestly attire, sat slightly below the center of the great hall of the Priestly Temple, next to a pile of wooden boards inscribed with characters. Opposite him sat his grandfather, with a majestic expression and wearing a Divine Crown, surrounded by a circle of Elder Priests of similar age. Feather crowns adorned their long hair, the air was heavy with the scent of sandalwood, turquoise wound around the four walls like vines, and the surrounding tiers were filled with priests of all levels, listening attentively.