

## Civilization 183

### Chapter 183 Commercial Law\_2

Having listened, the Great Nobility nodded in satisfaction and once again waved his hand nonchalantly. His servant then took the honey and gave a small tube of gold dust worth ten pieces of cloth.

The grand merchant once again bowed respectfully. Then, with his head bowed, he received the gold dust with both hands and, smiling, backed away to leave.

Xiulote stood to the side at a nearby stall with his head lowered, avoiding being recognized by the Great Nobility.

Soon, the grand merchant hurried past, bringing a light breeze with him. Xiulote caught a glimpse of a face that retracted its smile and was filled with anger.

"Cunning old fellow, miser!" the grand merchant muttered under his breath with barely audible venom.

Xiulote pondered for a moment. He continued to wander the inner market, reaching the shops of foreign merchants. Moments later, he learned just how insignificant the grand merchant's trade was.

As the New Year festival approached, foreign merchants also brought out their best goods. These transnational traders were the real grand merchants.

Tarasco merchants wore moon ornaments, deemed evil by Mexica, and sold expensive western copperware. A copper pot the size of an arm demanded at least twenty pieces of cloth.

Vastec merchants wore only seashells and cloaks made of feathers, selling the vibrant feathers from the north. A feathered garment worn around the body was valued at a full fifty pieces of cloth.

Mistec merchants adorned with delicate gold and silver jewelry sold beautiful gemstones from the south. They accepted only gold and silver, a piece of turquoise costing half a small bag of gold dust. This gold dust would be reprocessed into costly gold ornaments by them.

Mayan merchants were distinct in appearance. Their elongated skulls and sincere cockfighting eyes were a symbol of their divinity. Sacred smoke rose sparingly from their stalls, a bag of their rolled smokes equaled a bag of gold dust, and the price of exquisite aromatic divine incense was double that.

These foreign merchants grouped by region, forming autonomous organizations within the trade area, similar to trade guilds. In the inner market, there were three duty judges and an inspector judge, along with a dozen or so accompanying samurai. The judges were responsible for maintaining market order and cracking down on theft and the sale of inferior products disguised as quality goods.

Xiulote stepped forward and revealed his identity. In the foreign merchants' anxiousness to please, he inquired about the situation of their caravans.

"What do these foreign merchants primarily bring to the great marketplace to sell?"

"Mainly all kinds of luxury goods. Sacred smoke, spices, embroidery, feathered garments, gemstones, gold and silver ornaments, copperware... oh, and carmine dye," a duty judge reported in detail.

"Good. And what do they take away?" Xiulote asked earnestly.

"The Tarasco take away a large amount of cloth, as well as the well salt from within the dominions. The Vastec purchase some fine musical instruments and flowers, along with a few pieces of weaponry and armor. The Mistec carry away a lot of gold and silver, and sometimes also buy cotton armor. As for the Maya, they want everything," another judge interjected with a smile.

Hearing the names of the products, Xiulote's eyebrows knitted slightly. He continued to inquire, "What is the daily quantity of transactions?"

The judges were at a loss for words. They were only four people with a dozen assistants, charged with the management of a marketplace catering to thirty thousand people. Obviously, tallying the numbers was well beyond their capabilities.

Xiulote thought for a moment before asking another question.

"How do you collect taxes?"

"The outer market doesn't pay taxes. Each merchant in the inner market pays a market fee. Local merchants usually pay in goods, and foreign merchants prefer to pay with the universally accepted cloth. Their trade guilds coordinate with us to agree on the amount to be paid, settling it over a period of time," an older duty judge reported.

"So, we neither restrict the types of commodities traded nor have any control over the quantity of trade. The commerce tax is very meager and unrelated to the amount of goods. And within the marketplace, foreign merchants govern themselves?"

Xiulote looked sternly at the senior duty judge.

The old judge bowed his head in a salute. Hearing the reproach, he quickly explained.

"All the city-states do this. Those figures are simply impossible to tally, even the Maya couldn't do it. If a merchant brings goods in large enough quantities, we do collect an extra share of goods."

Xiulote reflected for a moment. Given the insufficient enforcement power and inability to grasp the numbers, it was no wonder that merchants had many ways to evade taxes, so he couldn't be too harsh on the judges. He continued to inquire.

"How do you assess the value of goods between trading parties? And how do you manage disputes?"

"Value? Disputes?" The sole inspector judge was momentarily baffled. He thought for a moment.

"We have a rough idea of how much the local goods are worth in terms of cloth, and we need to negotiate with foreign merchants about theirs. As long as the trading parties are willing, the trade is finalized without intervention."

If there's a dispute, we inspect the quality and quantity of goods. Those who peddle inferior goods as quality and stealers die. To terminate a trade, both parties must return what they've received. If the dispute truly cannot be resolved, we let the parties engage in a duel with the loser dying and the winner deciding the outcome."

Hearing this method of resolution, Xiulote was expressionless and speechless within. After pondering for a moment, he continued to ask.

"How are disputes like vendettas and robberies against foreign merchants handled here?"

Being the highest-ranking, the inspector judge answered.

"Capital City forbids vendettas. Those who kill anyone below Great Nobility die. Duels witnessed by the War God may proceed. But once outside Seven Bridges, the Alliance no longer concerns itself. Against small bands of bandits, large trading caravans can usually hold their own."

At this point, the inspector judge glanced around. Then, with a deferential smile, he lowered his voice.