

Civilization 195

Chapter 195 Mexica "Jiang Zuo Shao Fu": Longbow and Paper Making

The next morning, Xiulote was awakened by his body's natural rhythm. He looked out the window—the light of dawn was faint, and the sounds of the city faintly reached his ears. In this era, common people always rose with the sunrise to make the most of every minute of sunlight. Last night he had dreamt of the glorious Maya, and today before him lay the thriving capital, where the fire of civilization was rising.

The young man then got up and went to a courtyard filled with Huashu trees. On this chilly morning, Bertade had already prepared a tub of cold water. First, there was a half-hour cold bath, followed by an hour of physical training, and then an hour of combat practice.

The arduous training was lengthy and busy. Not until sweat ran from his forehead to his feet and his muscles' explosive strength was completely exhausted did Xiulote collapse onto a bench. Guards then handed him nuts and boiled eggs to replenish his proteins and brought him cocoa drinks to maintain his stamina. The maids approached to massage him all over. As the young man relaxed his body, he pondered the day's schedule.

The samurai's martial arts needed to be accumulated day by day, and his iron will continuously honed. As long as the conditions allowed, the young man's training never paused. In his view, human strength lay in self-discipline, and the most important thing was to control one's own life. The Mexica samurai tradition also placed restraint and self-control in second place, second only to the devotion to the gods.

After Xiulote had breakfast, the old craftsman Kuode, along with a few other craftsmen, was already waiting in the front courtyard. The young man changed into a high priest's robe and nodded to the newly appointed chief craftsman. Protected by the chief of personal guards and elite warriors, they headed straight to the craftsman district of the capital.

Today's plan was to inspect the capital's craftsman production and the mining industry, briefly called "industry."

Dressed in priest robes, Xiulote walked through the bustling streets, where samurai bowed their heads in greeting and commoners knelt to pay their respects.

Scholars, farmers, artisans, merchants. In Mexica society, the highest status belonged to the priests and samurai, followed by the farmers, craftsmen, and merchants of comparable status, all of whom were the ruled. The farmers had no freedom at all, being subjects of the local nobility. The senior craftsmen had some freedom, under the control of the royal family and the priesthood. The merchants had the highest degree of freedom, but also the least security.

The first stop was the workshop center responsible for military production, the Mexica "Directorate of Works." The workshop center was located in the northeast of the capital, between the Fire God Temple's armory and the War Javelin Temple, near the shore of Lake Texcoco. This location could take advantage of the waterway, making it easy to transport raw materials.

The morning sun made the lake and embankment glow golden. Xiulote looked toward the lake, where, under the surveillance of hundreds of warriors, dozens of large boats loaded with thousands of serfs were heading north to the Tampen River. Most of them held stone axes, and only a few held the precious bronze axes. They were headed to the northern logging camps to cut high-quality wood for the production of longbows for the alliance, not allowed to return even during the New Year.

Also departing were fleets of boats loaded with food heading to the large military camps in northern Xilotepec. Despite the ever-changing situation in the capital, the brutal siege warfare continued in the northern city-states. Xilotepec City, abandoned by the Otomi Alliance, would not last much longer. And further out on the lake, continuous large boats were dragging long logs, returning upstream from the north.

Xiulote's heart stirred. He carefully observed the expressions of the serfs and warriors, yet he saw only simplicity and obedience. In the wind, there were faint sounds of commotion.

The young man then stepped forward to listen to the serfs' conversations. Even though several weeks had passed, the serfs were still praising the grandeur of the coronation ceremony, regretting missing the New Year sacrificial rites, and subconsciously singing praises to the gods. Despite the conscription, taxes, and death brought by war, Mexica society still danced and sang in the celebratory sacrificial festivals.

Comforted by the gods, the Mexica people had long become accustomed to war. They yearned for victory and bloodshed, despised defeat, but never tired of war.

Xiulote quietly listened for a while, finally understanding the elder's words about spiritual motivation.

"We are a true military society. The Mexica are either preparing for war or on their way to war. The bloodthirsty gods are so powerful, they hold together the hearts of the people, making war a part of life."

In the distance, the fleet of boats gradually approached, finally reaching the lakeshore. Then, the timber was transferred to smaller boats that navigated through the interlocking waterways. The two followed the boats, stepping into the vast workshop center.

The workshop center was filled with fully armed warriors. Under the warrior captain's command, the boats docked in designated spots, and dozens of serfs rushed to drag the timber ashore for drying. Xiulote waved his hand to stop the warrior captain's formal salute and continued silently observing.

The wood drying area consisted of simple earthen kilns that were manually accelerated to save time. Xiulote observed the design of the kilns, recalling some episodes mentioned in certain books. He knew there was a trick to it, but didn't know exactly how to do it. In the end, he could only vaguely say, "Hot air drying, the temperature can't be too high...".

The old craftsman, who had decades of experience, respectfully agreed, with a smile that was not quite a smile. The young man blushed slightly and said no more.

Afterward, the serfs took the dried timber from the earthen kilns to the processing points. Xiulote recognized them after a moment and let out a slight gasp.

"Kuode, is this a fir tree?"

"Yes, Your Highness. The processing of sandalwood and ironwood consumes too much manpower and tools, and only bronze axes can barely handle them. To fulfill the quantity of longbows required by the king and you, we primarily process fir and oak."