

Civilization 201

Chapter 201: Progress of Reform, Planning for the Future_2

The future religious reformation in Europe was about dismantling the powerful theocratic organization and returning power to the secular world.

"Religion is an inverted worldview; it is not that gods created humankind, but that humans created gods according to their own needs."

Xiulote reflected on the words of a future philosopher, his emotions complex and full of sentiment.

"Now, on this land where ignorance is just beginning, we will establish a mighty Divine Kingdom in the name of God!"

Then, the High Priest pondered for a moment, his face exceedingly solemn.

"Article Eleven, the end of days cycles every fifty-two years, when all souls face judgment. Samurai who die in battle for God, and women who die in childbirth, will first ascend to Heaven and dwell at the top. They may reincarnate on earth to enjoy endless bliss. Devout believers follow closely, residing at the bottom of Heaven. They pray and accumulate merit, gradually ascending to the top.

Nonbelievers and those of different faiths fall into the Land of Death. They seek a long deliverance amidst the cutting winds and cold disasters, salvation only possible through conversion. While those with serious sins fall into the lowest Hell of Fire, suffering eternal torment, their sins gradually burning away. Only High Priests can rescue them back to the Land of Death."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote abruptly looked up, the great hall falling silent for a moment.

His face was grave; this was the true Mexica vision of religious life and death, addressing the salvation, reincarnation, and afterlife of the followers. Here, the Elder Priests left much room for their own interpretation. And to place Samurai who die in battle for God at the highest tier after death... In the foreseeable future, the Mexica monotheism would possess boundless aggression and militancy.

Sure enough, the grandfather pondered for a moment and continued to chant aloud.

"Article Twelve, during every fifty-two-year cycle, the Great Temple will listen to the will of God and ignite the Sacred Flame. Then, a group of twelve priests will announce God's revelation to all believers, and spread the Sacred Fire everywhere. The divine will shall be the utmost directive, and also the swiftest ladder to the Divine Kingdom! At the end of the 1453 cycle, God's will was that the Mexica Alliance must conquer the world!"

At this, Xiulote finally looked at his grandfather in shock, his face full of disbelief.

"The fifty-two-year cycle's divine will? Periodic holy wars?!"

The High Priest nodded with dignity. The old man's face remained unchanged, as the endless bloodshed of the future loomed before them.

"That is the Elder's intent. He praised your concept of the divine war and agreed to gradually reduce the wasteful human sacrifices. The Council of Elders decided to increase the scale of priests accompanying

the army. They will first popularize the concept of divine war among the military, to strengthen the Samurai's will to fight, increasing the war efforts after the autumn harvest."

At this point, the High Priest gently patted the youth's head again. With his palm, he felt the softness of the dark hair, just like the child's spirit.

"My child, prepare yourself. This year's Tarasco conquest war will be exceptionally cruel. The people of Tarasco are complete believers in a wicked Goddess of the Moon... In the divine war, no one will show mercy!"

Xiulote pursed his lips, his head bowed in silence. The High Priest gave a slight smile, shifting the subject.

"Once we have conquered the world, the Temple's doctrine can change to focus on recuperation and population growth. Or maybe issue decrees to weaken the Great Nobility in various places... Also, the short poem you recited last time was quite good. In the distant West, was there really an alliance of city-states between Shang and Zhou? The alliance of Shang is so similar to us Mexica! How could the powerful Shang be destroyed by the weak Zhou?..."

Based on your suggestions, the Priesthood is already revising the history of the Alliance and compiling myths. We will include the rubber-producing Olmec, the gods-worshipping Teotihuacan, and the craftsman-rich Toltec into the ancestral lineage of the Mexica! The Totonac must relinquish the relics of the Olmec and are not allowed to claim heritage from the ancestors.

We, the Mexica, will become the sole inheritors of ancient civilizations, the Alliance destined to rule the world! And you, my child, will do the same!"

With that, the High Priest Xutel laughed heartily, his aged voice carrying the vigor of youth. Then he embraced Xiulote in his arms, interrupting the young man's thoughts.

The youth felt the long-missed embrace of his grandfather, felt the lean yet steadfast body beneath the divine robe, and a warmth coursed through his heart. After a moment, his emotions settled, and he hesitated for a few breaths before asking in a low voice.

"Grandfather, who stands higher, the King or the Priesthood? How do the Nobility and the Priests coordinate?"

The High Priest's smile faded as he pondered seriously.

Behind this question lay the relationship between religion and the secular, the struggle between divine authority and royal power, and also the primary internal conflict of the countries across Eurasia, excluding the unique Celestial Empire with its civil officials.

"This is also my concern. According to the custom of the Alliance, the Guardian God bestows the divine scepter to the Priesthood, which then presents the Divine Staff to the King. The great Montezuma I once cast a new Divine Staff, taking power into his own hands.

Now, with the Elders holding sway over our time and standing at the apex of divine power, the power of Mexica is granted by the Chief Divine to the twelve-member Priesthood, from the Priesthood to the King, from the King to the local Nobility. The Great Nobility govern their fiefs independently, and only the Priests may intervene in the name of the divinity.

Once the Elder journeys to the Divine Kingdom, the Great Nobility will surely counterattack for their own gain. And then, the King's attitude will be difficult to gauge! The Priests need a supreme Pope, and the people of Mexica need a true King, to reign over both Priests and Nobility alike, maintaining the balance between the two classes!"

Having said this, the elderly Xutel lowered his head to look at the youth in his arms. His eyes shone with bright expectation, stinging Xiulote with their intensity. A boundless pressure emanated from the grandfather's gaze. The youth remained silent for a long while, then slowly nodded, his shoulders feeling instantly heavy.

The High Priest smiled with satisfaction, then lowered his voice, speaking with deep meaning.

"For now, the twelve-member Priesthood will fully support King Aweit, following the King's orders to expand the power of the central authority. The core needs to seize control over the Great Nobility, which is in the shared interest of both the King and the Priests.

Xiulote, the work of religious education is already on track. Next, you must participate more in the King's military and political conferences, and grasp a reliable army loyal only to yourself! I will give you my utmost support, as will the Teotihuacan City-State. The Mexica Alliance has always valued the military prowess and martial strength of its heirs; this is the highest source of legal authority!

As for the remainder of your time, you can become closer to the daughter of the King, your betrothed. She is the King's only weakness! Child, do not resent your grandfather's arrangements. Power always comes first; your marriage was never yours to choose. When you ascend to the high seat, you will understand the good intentions of your grandfather!"

Last, the High Priest's smile remained, but his undertone became chilling as he murmured to himself.

"As for those other voices from the Royal Family... my child, I will pave the way for you..."

Xiulote pondered in silence. He felt his grandfather's warm embrace but did not see the cold gaze in his eyes. The Alliance's succession rules were similar to the Ottoman inheritance laws; one had to demonstrate sufficient martial force to firmly occupy the throne. Thus, Aweit too must undertake a successful coronation war to earn the complete loyalty of the Nobility and Samurai.

The youth treasured his friendship with Aweit and loved the innocent girl. He didn't want to bring political calculations into these relationships, but the harsh world compelled him to do so. In the brutal struggles for power, only the truly strong could laboriously preserve a hint of warmth.

"The forces that truly belong to me now consist only of five hundred Longbow Guards, mostly followers from the commonfolk. Then there are four thousand Teotihuacan Samurai under the firm control of my father and teacher Olosh. Finally, there are over ten thousand Samurai who have served under me, who would show me a degree of obedience. But this obedience only takes effect when I am in a dominant position.

I need a truly loyal core force. The Samurai have long been affiliated with different nobility groups, and even the King has difficulty commanding the powerful Nobility's Battle Groups. The Royal Family's power will have other voices ... That force can only come from the commoner class, from overlooked groups. They will use new types of weapons and organizational forms to contend with the powerful traditional Samurai!"

Xiulote stood up, his expression grave. He envisioned warriors in formations with longbows, and loose Militia carrying longbows. Then he remembered the Lerma River bank, where Mexica's elite warriors with war clubs and shields battled against Militia with Copper Spears; the fight was initially at a standoff, until Feathered Arrows filled the sky... With these thoughts, he nodded silently, taking his plans for the next day even more seriously.

The High Priest also sat upright, his hair graying. In his eyes were warmth and cruelty, light and shadow. He contemplated future bloodshed and holy wars, schemed with ruthless daggers and poison, and looked forward to the ascent of the youth to the highest position... with a faint smile.

By the flickering campfire, grandfather and grandson each wore a smile, facing each other with solemn respect, then nodded lightly. Their thoughts soared like mighty eagles, flying toward a future both shared and distinct!