

Civilization 210

Chapter 210: New Trends in the Capital City and the Alliance Government

As everyone followed the Long Bridge made of White Stone, they entered the majestic Lake Capital City.

On Xiulote's advice, the banks of the Long Bridge, both sides covered with mud dikes, now bore neatly planted aquatic pines and cypresses for aesthetic pleasure and reinforcement. Along the way, passers-by would step back to the banks, kneel under the trees, and offer their respects. The lake breeze brought with it the gentle sway of the young Ahuehuate trees and the fresh scent of pine and cypress.

Xiulote looked far ahead, where the line of aqua pines and cypresses stretched for miles along both sides. With slender trunks and drooping green branches, their budding tips were bursting with vitality. They stood between the lake and the white bridge, the temples and the palaces, accompanied by sunlight and breeze, swaying with the flow of life, pure and ethereal, captivating to any beholder.

The young man dreamed of the time when these trees would mature into a majestic sight and remembered the small bridges over the waterways of his homeland. In the turn of thought, he also recalled the name of the Ahuehuate tree, and his mind wandered far away.

"A new ruler for the Divine Capital, inheriting the great throne, a king with elegant governance."

At this thought, he smiled faintly and continued on.

The streets of Tenochtitlan were broad, lined with canals, the houses neatly arranged, and order prevailed throughout. The Lake Capital City was strictly managed, with a high regard for hygiene; those who polluted the lake water would be severely punished, even put to death. Despite being home to

hundreds of thousands, the Lake Island was not as dirty and disordered as other cities in Europe of the same period—it somewhat resembled Ancient Rome, with a logical layout and cleanliness.

The capital had specially constructed water channels and drainage channels, as well as public toilets.

The two special aqueducts, extending over a hundred miles, brought water directly from the western highlands, passing through the city center, dividing the North City from the main city, and then dispersing into different urban areas. This was the path for drinking water. Next to the houses and streets, there were separate drainage ditches that guided the city's wastewater to the nearby floating farms, the chinampas. Meanwhile, public toilets were located near communities and main roads, collecting manure to replenish the nutrients consumed by the chinampas.

The purifying of lake water relied on soil filtration and the floating farms. Surrounding the capital in Lake Texcoco, there were nine thousand hectares of chinampas, where the year-round crops absorbed nutrients from the water and decomposed the accumulated manure, constantly purifying the water. Between the chinampas swam schools of fish of various sizes, devouring organic particles from the farms and the water. The continuous farms and the massive city depended on each other, forming a clean and efficient giant ecological agricultural system.

Xiulote paused in his steps. His gaze rested on the shady spot outside the public toilet thatched hut, where the soil was a slightly damp purplish-red.

The young man pondered briefly; he had reflected on much yesterday. This must be another important source of saltpeter, fecal and urine nitrates. In his memory, the extraction of fecal and urine nitrates was challenging, the product impure, requiring further intricate processing. Clearly, he had not memorized the specific steps, so he would have to explore slowly.

Xiulote made a mental note and then assigned tasks to his people: guard Elvi, with the Temple Guards, went to the Priestly Temple to report to his grandfather. The old craftsman Kuode returned to the workshop center to step up the making of longbows. Additionally, an escort guided the chief salinist, Moreno, to the High Priest's Mansion to store the saltpeter and continue studying saltpeter making.

The young man thought for a moment and let Bertade take the dried saltpeter and then headed directly towards the administration center in the southern part of the palace district.

The administration center was located on the south side of the central square in the capital, occupying a substantial area. It comprised over a hundred rooms with white-stone walls and red roofs, surrounded by blooming gardens and babbling water.

To the east of the administration center was the sacred and noble Ancestor Memorial Square, with many time-worn stone pillars and simple statues adorned with carvings and images.

Xiulote paused briefly to inspect the site. Rebuilding efforts were underway, seemingly to erect more ancestor stone pillars and statues. After a moment of thought, he remembered this was also part of the reform plan. The genealogy of the Mexica ancestors, spanning over a hundred years, was being extended further back to flawlessly connect with the mythology of the Olmec civilization from three thousand years prior.

"Generational inheritance, an unbroken lineage across millennia, is established this way,"

Xiulote chuckled at himself and moved on.

The west side of the administrative palace was the capital's court, with white walls and black detailing, and its base stood several meters high. It was responsible for adjudicating civil disputes within the Texcoco Lake District. From afar, the young man could see a High Priest in a deep robe and feather crown, standing on an elevated platform, proclaiming something in a clear voice. Below the platform were many opulently dressed merchants, each with attendants and samurai, bowing or kneeling.

The merchants were buzzing with conversation, and the din carried faintly from a distance. The High Priest, with a look of indifference, waved a hand, and hundreds of Temple Guards took several steps forward, striking their shields with war clubs to produce an intimidating howl of a tyrannical wolf. The noise from afar ceased instantly. After a moment, a large wooden board was erected in front of the court, and the merchants left dispiritedly, carrying urgent bad news as they hastily departed.

Xiulote nodded, merchant laws were being promulgated and enforced. The government would control prices, strictly manage strategic materials, limit the use of luxury goods, impose heavy taxes, and massively prohibit divine smoke, all the while hastening the unification of measures and weights. Even though merchants could use flexible methods to circumvent many restrictions, their profits would still significantly decrease, especially for foreign merchants.

However, despite their dissatisfaction, the influence of the great merchants was irrelevant to the bigger picture. In the young man's view, neither the merchant laws nor the commoner laws would create much disruption. The most crucial aspect of the new laws was the implementation of Noble Law, battling for the right to govern villages!

Xiulote entered the administrative palace, at its center stood the Alliance's King's Palace, an impressive and rare two-story building.

The upper level of the King's Palace was the throne room for the rulers of Tenochtitlan, Texcoco, and Tlacopan, and it was also the most exalted main hall for holding large meetings. Initially, the three kings occupied the prime seats together, then it changed to Texcoco and Tlacopan sitting in secondary seats. But now, the young man peering through the open window could only see a single supreme throne.

The lower level of the King's Palace was divided into different side halls, with the most important being the halls for governmental and military affairs. As the young man walked into the King's Palace, he saw dozens, if not hundreds of nobles waiting in the vast outer hall. They were grouped by region and rank, with subtle and shifting allegiances among them. Or, more precisely, there were inner Tribal Alliances.

Xiulote observed carefully. All these nobles came from samurai backgrounds, sturdy in physique, dressed in brightly colored war clothes. They gestured with bare hands, often raising their voices in heated arguments, engaging in martial arts contests with fists and feet where they settled disputes by might makes right. The outer hall buzzed with discussion, chaotic yet with a clear and fierce order.

Seeing Xiulote enter with dignity, the nobles paused briefly and then swarmed towards him. Some greeted him with hearty embraces, some bowed in respect, while others watched silently with cold eyes, each posture different, their true intentions veiled and unpredictable.

In general, the Mexica Alliance was still in the later stage of a loosely governed Tribal era, with an administration that was both simple and independent, reminiscent of the Tribal Alliances on the Eurasian steppes or the Shang Dynasty's multi-zhou groups.

The King was at the highest level of the Alliance. Next came the "Serpent Woman" Supreme Commander and the four Cabinet Ministers, usually from the Royal Family and closely related Great Nobility. Important military and governmental matters of the Alliance were decided by the King and the Council of Five, representing the absolute political core.

Further down were various influential nobles constituting the Alliance Council, which had both military and administrative roles. Each Third Level honored noble acted as the nucleus, with other nobles coming together in a cohesive yet fragmented array, based on rank, region, and closeness.

The Great Nobility controlled varying numbers of private troops, held the right to collect taxes from their fiefs, and also filled different official roles, responsible for specific affairs of the Alliance. These positions could be subdivided into Central Officials, Local Officials, and Clan Officials.

Central Official positions were appointed by the King, with common duties including taxation, building, land development, mining, salt harvesting, training, military preparation, patrolling, diplomacy, and deterrence... However, the most important duty was campaigning with the army to ensure logistical support. The Alliance had been at war for over thirty years, with warfare becoming an everyday instinct of the kingdom, where only powerful warriors received widespread acknowledgment.

Local Officials managed their respective regions, typically being hereditary positions. Military-nobility not by descent were controlled by the central government, unable to fully pass on their titles and lands. The allegiance of mines varied between the central and local levels depending on the distance and the preciousness of the minerals. Important obsidian mines were managed solely by Central Officials, while ubiquitous gold and silver mines were largely left to the discretion of Local Officials.

Clan Officials were essentially grassroots functionaries of the dynasty. Settlements in each region were formed by clan members, who then elected local village leaders. With the participation of priests and samurai, they formed the grassroots management structure. Within the Lake Capital City's one hundred districts, Clan and Central Officials mixed, with important artisan and warrior districts directly controlled by Central Officials, while ordinary civilian districts still elected Clan Officials.

The Alliance's administrative officers overlapped with the three kinds of offices, including the capital's courts, local tax officers, agricultural officers, storage officers, and military academy instructors. The ratio of Central Officials depended on the level of control exerted by the central government over the area, outside the Texcoco Lake Region, where it was entirely autonomous Local and Clan Officials.

At this thought, Xiulote slightly shook his head, recognizing that the road to centralization was long. The first step was to control more troops, strengthen the military might of the core, and carry out effective military reforms!

Under the escort of Bertade, the young man struggled through the enthusiastic crowd of nobles. He straightened his black priestly attire and put on his solemn feather crown, then solemnly pushed open the door to the governmental hall.

In the deep hall, Ahuehuete looked majestic, seated high upon the throne. The King was dressed in dark red tinged with black, his gaze as profound as the one he cast. Gillim sat sternly at a lower seat, smiling silently at the young man. Stanley, with his burly frame, sat rigidly like a wild bear at bay, nodding friendlily to the young man. To the left and right, two equally robust middle-aged nobles turned at the sound, one smiling, the other with an indifferent gaze.

On the table before everyone, sacred cocoa drinks in clay cups shimmered with a fresh red hue, like silent Holy Blood, eerily reflecting a cold light.

Under the King's deep and serene gaze, Xiulote reverently knelt down. With a determined expression, he touched his forehead to the ground in a solemn bow. Behind him, Bertade bowed and retreated, closing the door of the hall. A silence descended, so profound one could hear a pin drop. On the cold floor, only a plain unadorned clay jar remained, holding the sparkling, translucent saltpeter.