

## Civilization 213

### Chapter 213 - One Hundred Twenty-One: Waiting and Proposal

The setting sun, like blood, bathed the palace district in the colors of blood and fire, just like the royal power of the Mexica.

In the sunset, under the royal power, two Great Nobles walked in silence, step by step treading on their own shadows.

"Butcher, what do you think?" After a long silence, the royal noble Iskali finally spoke slowly. His expression was cold and meaningful.

"The end of the month is still early, no need to rush."

The noble Tepopolo smiled kindly, as light as a breeze. The two were already familiar with each other, addressing each other by nicknames.

"The line of Itzcoatl has long been assigned outside the city-states, yet there comes a day for a rise again!"

Iskali furrowed his brows. His emotions fluctuated, his voice filled with dissatisfaction.

"So what? After all, it's the bloodline close to the royal family. Today, it indeed appears mysteriously formidable."

Tepopolo smiled gently and patted his old friend on the shoulder.

"Moreover, King Aweit is a combination of both royal lines. By favoring his paternal relatives, he probably aims to balance your power."

Iskali paused for a moment, then responded gravely.

"But his kingship is, after all, inherited from the maternal line! You can stand outside and observe, but I stand inside!"

"You are mistaken, my old friend," Tepopolo said with a sober expression, setting aside his smile.

"The Mexica's kingship is never inherited from anyone! It is only inherited through mighty force and exceptional talent!"

"That is also why I told you not to rush. The coronation war of autumn hasn't started yet. The king needs to prove himself, as do the heirs! If he is truly a great commander, why not follow him?"

"What you should be more concerned with now are these new laws and reforms concocted by the priests! Our power is also inherited from wealth and force. However, now, the priests want to snatch it from us!"

Iskali was startled and alarmed. He looked solemnly at Tepopolo.

"I've heard a bit about the new laws; they seem to just constrain ordinary nobility and are not targeting us. Besides, some nobles indeed go too far."

Tepopolo smiled gently and shook his head.

"That's now. But what about later? The priests are getting stricter. Once they develop, they will inevitably devour us!"

Iskali frowned deeply. He pondered for a while but his thoughts were unclear, shrouded in fog.

"What should we do?"

"Wait, still wait, silently wait," Tepopolo said with a gentle smile again.

"Behind the new law reforms are the elders. Right now, we can do nothing."

Speaking of elders, both looked toward the magnificent Great Temple not far away. As the sun set, visions of blood-red sacrifices seemed to emerge before their eyes again. They both shuddered simultaneously, falling silent.

A long time passed, and only after they walked past the Great Temple, moving away from the nightmarish shadow, did Iskali speak again.

"Butcher, what are we waiting for?"

"The end of the month, of course, is waiting for an opportunity," Tepopolo bent his eyebrows, appearing even more amiable.

"Opportunity? Are you saying..." Iskali's eyes flashed fiercely, his face murderous.

Tepopolo paused. He stopped walking, looked at Iskali, and sighed with a smile.

"My foolish moon friend, you're nearly forty, nearly in the grave, yet still so full of killing intent? I really should give my name to you."

Iskali smirked.

"Enough, my clever butcher friend! When you followed the conqueror Montezuma I on the southern campaign, you had thousands of Zapotecs executed all at once. How about we share the same name, I as the elder of one generation, and you as the younger of the second?"

With that, Iskali laughed heartily, quite pleased with himself.

Tepopolo sighed helplessly again. Then, something occurred to him, and his expression turned serious.

"Iskali, let me ask you, would you bring the Zapotecs' captives back to the Lake Capital City?"

Iskali pondered for a moment, then shook his head decisively.

"Too far. From the Zapotecs' city-state to the Lake Capital City takes two months. The roads are full of dense forests, with no convenient rivers, and too much food would be consumed on the way. It would be better to sacrifice them on the spot, to please the gods and the legion."

Tepopolo nodded, smiling, a gleam in his eye.

"Exactly, Iskali. This is about distance and time. Look, even the great Montezuma couldn't completely conquer the far southern states. The local vassals would bow when the army arrived but often refused tribute as soon as the legion left, autonomously deciding everything on their lands."

"Next, if the King's conquest fails, the awaited opportunity will arise! The nobility will reconsider the future, and the priests' reforms will equally be hard to continue. If the heir is not competent enough, it will be time for your Huitzilíhuítl lineage to exert its power!"

Itzcoatl pondered deeply. His thoughts churned as he tested his old friend's intentions.

"So, are you saying that in this Western expedition, we do not truly exert ourselves?"

"No, we must put forth all effort in the Western expedition! As the Cabinet Minister, you must fully support the King until he fails, earning the King's trust. King Aweit monitors everyone closely, and Gillim is his eyes. If the King can indeed lead us to conquer Tarasco, opportunities will still present themselves!"

Tepopolo smiled enigmatically. Amidst Itzcoatl's puzzled gaze, he spoke slowly and profoundly.

"At that time, we will voluntarily ask for an external appointment. With our vassal samurais, we will go to the distant Patzcuaro Lake region to guard the frontier for the Alliance. That is true autonomy, just like the military city-states in the northeastern front of Tlaxcala, yet without facing formidable enemies!"

Upon hearing this, Itzcoatl finally showed signs of shock.

"Tepopolo, you are leaving the hereditary Tlatelolco?!"

Tepopolo nodded solemnly in confirmation.

"Tlatelolco has already been merged into the Lake Capital City. Princes are either dead or in hiding, so I have become the highest-ranking noble of honor. It's the general trend— the entire Texcoco Lake District will become territories directly under the King, and the priests will expand their powers in the reforms. If I stay here, my end will eventually be dire. It's better to request an external vassalage, to step out of this cage, and observe the King and priests at the center."

Having said this, Tepopolo's words carried significant implications.

"What the future holds is still uncertain. For now, we just need to wait."

Itzcoatl furrowed his brows deeply. His visions seemed clearer, yet the future remained murky, like the shifting tequila. Despite being an outstanding samurai, his wisdom and vision still severely limited him. After a long moment, he hesitantly spoke.

"Will the elders and the King allow the voluntary request for an external assignment?"

Tepopolo smiled confidently, warm yet forceful.

"Of course. Changing our fief is definitely a plan of the elders and the King. The elders have always detained thousands of lower nobility and samurais from Texcoco, honing their temperament and sending priests to teach them day and night, surely waiting for the fall of Xilotepec City.

At that time, they will wash away the Otomi upper class and transfer everyone to the new fief. The Alliance will then firmly secure this northern riverside stronghold and eliminate any hidden threats to the capital. In Otomi territory, these relocated nobles will have no choice but to gravitate towards the Alliance.

And the core of Western Tarasco is the Patzcuaro Lake region, which is at a month or two's journey just like the capital, impossible to be directly managed by the Royal Family. Since it is a divine war for conquest, a high-ranking vassal king must guard and govern the newly conquered lands! Who else but us is more suitable for this position?"

Thinking thus, Tepopolo was once again vibrant with spirit. His thoughts drifted far, as his concealed ambition flared up from within. The Patzcuaro Lake region is also a foundation of the king, how could the Mexica have only one king?

Itzcoatl bowed his head in silence. As an elder of the Royal Family, not having endured pressure that the Royal Family inflicted on the Great Nobility, he was not really interested in a distant external assignment. However, his old friend's words made sense, and he began to grasp the elders' and King's intentions.

Thus, Iskali's expression turned cold and stern again, and a fierce light flickered in his eyes.

"Butcher, you are right. In this battle of the gods, the great nobility and priests of Tarasco can leave none behind. Tarasco's weeds must be cleared, to plant the corn of the Mexica!"

"The great nobility must be rooted out! And the priests of Tarasco... ah, them as well."

Tepopolo gave an approving response, pausing briefly in his words before casually continuing with a nod.



The conversation continued, the mood shifting. The two, with their backs against the blood-red sunset, walked steadily in the shadows, silently waiting. Around them were the elite private samurais, loyal guards.

Inside the great hall, Xiulote sat quietly for a long while after the outsiders had left. He then sat cross-legged next to Aweit, closely watching his friend the king work, recording words and dealing with wooden panels of drawings. From time to time, the young man asked about governmental affairs and offered innovative suggestions.

During the idle chatter of work, Aweit also carried a bit of a smile. He returned from his divinity, his expression relaxing, occasionally patting the young man's head, mentioning his beloved daughter a few times. Gillim sat quietly in the shadow of the throne, silently observing, occasionally adding some details.

Busy times always passed quickly. When Aweit finally looked up, the sun had sunk into the earth, and it was pitch black outside the window. Distant moonlight spilled in from the window, illuminating the bonfire in the great hall, bringing a peaceful warmth. Thus, he smiled gently at the young man.

"Xiulote, let's stop here for today. Come early for the New Year's sacrificial rites next week. Alisa misses you a bit, and I don't have time to be with her on ordinary days.

After the elders and I have finished patrolling the city, take Alisa boating on the lake, then head to the royal gardens at noon to relax, and see the flowers and butterflies. When it's less crowded in the evening, go to the zoo and the water lake, play with the deer and patterned fish, and at night go to the priest's high platform to watch the moon and the stars... I'll have snacks, light food, and drinks prepared, but no alcohol..."

Listening to Aweit's detailed arrangements and concrete plans, Xiulote wiped the beads of sweat that slightly formed on his forehead. He felt a great deal of pressure. Feeling Aweit's genuine emotions, the young man felt warmth in his heart, quietly listening with a slight joy.

Soon, after Aweit had given his instructions, the two men silently looked at each other, an atmosphere they hadn't experienced in a long while.

"Okay. Aweit, I'll take Aviloztli with me to find Alisa. The little golden eagle has grown quite a bit and has changed into new gray feathers, yet they are still very soft to the touch. It's always been timid, it can accompany Alisa for a long time."

Xiulote responded with a sincere smile. Aweit was slightly stunned for a moment, remembering the trained little golden eagle, and couldn't help but smile softly.

The two smiled again for a while. Then the young man seriously looked at his friend and made a long-delayed suggestion.

"Aweit, during the battle at the Lerma River, I was thinking of forming a well-trained spear militia as a supplement to the samurais, to hold the front line,"

"Now, we have enough copper mines to make copper spears. I visited the surrounding mines recently and found many excellent miners... Can you allocate thousands of miners to me, so that I can form a new army? They should be useful during the western campaign against Tarasco."

Xiulote spoke frankly about his proposal to form a new army, looking at Aweit with anticipation and sincerity.

Upon hearing this, King Aweit looked at the young man beside him. His smile gradually solidified, and another kind of thought gradually arose, the merciless divinity surging once again.