

## Civilization 233

### Chapter 233: Papermaking Improvements, Spending a Fortune on Bones, and the Craftsman Scholar

Having left the side hall, Xiulote called over the Head Warrior and instructed him in a low voice. Bertade then nodded gravely. He left behind two loyal Guard Warriors and carefully instructed them on the precautions to take in case of an emergency. The young boy's eyes were slightly lowered as he headed towards the papermaking area nearby.

There were several circularly arranged buildings at the papermaking area. In the middle of these buildings was a spacious square, which had once been a small garden, still bearing traces of flowers and leaves.

At that time, the flowers in the garden had been removed, and the corner pond was soaking with various papermaking materials. Workers were turning and inspecting them. The pulp, beaten to a pulp in the paper-making troughs, some workers were carefully leveling the paper. The surrounding walls were plastered with yellow-gray sheets of dried paper, and the ground was littered with sun-exposed pale yellow pulp. The doors of the larger buildings were open, while the smaller ones were closed, occasionally locked.

Xiulote stopped briefly. He looked up at the sky where the sunlight was brilliantly conducive. Then he bent down to inspect the pulp on the ground, which had turned to a pale white under the strong sun exposure.

Looking at everything before him, the boy pondered silently. Startled by the presence of the accompanying warriors, the middle-aged supervisor in charge of the papermaking hurried over. As he walked, he waved his hands to the sides, and the surrounding craftsmen obediently knelt and paid homage to His Highness.

The Alliance's real mass-scale paper workshop was located at the artisan center in the north, whereas this was just a small papermaking site. A papermaking team had been newly established in the Divine Revelation Place, following the arrangements made by His Highness. The team leader, sent from the paper workshop, was called Tezroca, apparently from a noble lineage.

Tezroca knelt on one knee, performing a noble's salute, and then carefully raised his head, only to see His Highness with a calm expression, betraying no emotion. With something troubling his mind, he bowed his head again, uneasy.

"Tezroca, how is the progress at the papermaking site recently?"

Xiulote asked with a slight smile.

"Respected Your Highness, we've made a new breakthrough recently!"

Tezroca said, his face alight with joy. He pointed to the pulp under the sunlight and spoke with a smile.

"As per your orders, Your Highness, just by exposing the pulp on the ground to the sun, it gradually becomes white. The paper produced is the same!"

Following that, Tezroca pointed to a water trough not far away.

"Your Highness, we also discovered that by adding the viscous juice of the cactus to the paper pulp liquid in the water trough, the paper produced becomes uniformly smooth and sleek. Truly a gift from the Guardian God!"

At these words, Xiulote was slightly puzzled. He wasn't quite sure about the role of cactus glue in papermaking. However, since the facts proved it effective, they proceeded according to practical experience.

In fact, this was an ancient secret of papermaking, "paper medicine". Paper medicine was derived from the leaf and rhizome juices of various plants, such as elm bark, Hibiscus manihot, cactus, wild grape, kiwi vine, and sand pine root. Different paper medicines had different effects.

But in general, paper medicine had two key effects: first, making the paper smooth and even. The paper medicine would combine with the paper and keep the plant fibers in the pulp uniformly suspended. This process improved the paper's surface absorption and in modern papermaking technology, it was replaced by better pressing and sizing techniques. Second, it prevented wet papers from sticking together, crucial in mass-scale papermaking. When stacking thousands of wet papers, only with the addition of paper medicine would they not stick to each other.

In this era, good paper necessarily required good paper medicine, and once produced, the paper would feel soft, display vivid ink colors, and not turn grey as coarse paper did.

Xiulote remembered the white paper he had seen at the engraving area. He nodded slightly, expressing his appreciation to the supervisor. Then he continued to wait, but Tezroca seemed to have nothing further to say.

The boy looked again at Tezroca, who knelt on the ground, his face also full of expectation.

"Your Highness, are you satisfied? Your previous promise..."

Xiulote frowned slightly. He asked in a deep voice.

"Tezroca, I heard that you've recently produced a batch of white paper?"

The middle-aged supervisor's face changed subtly. He quickly lowered his head and replied respectfully.

"Your Highness, indeed, the white paper is in the western building. But this batch of white paper was produced by chance; we have yet to master the trick to replicate it. In a few more days, we hope to succeed and then we will rejoice with Your Highness!"

Xiulote thought for a moment. He remembered the irritating smell on the white paper and recalled what Aquila had mentioned, his suspicion growing. When he spoke again, his tone was more severe.

"Tezroca! How was that batch of white paper produced, and you didn't record it? Which craftsmen were involved in making it? Call them here!"

Tezroca's forehead immediately broke into a sweat. He struggled to maintain his composure, named a few craftsmen, and then began to call them over.

However, Xiulote paid him no heed. He simply extended his hand, pointing to two craftsmen kneeling by the water trough.

"You, you, come here!"

The craftsmen looked at each other, quickly got up, and came over. Then, glancing at the supervisor kneeling on the ground, they too knelt down again.

"How was the recent batch of white paper produced?" Xiulote questioned sternly.

The craftsmen hesitated, their glances converging on the middle-aged supervisor on the ground. Seeing this conspicuous scene, Tezroca collapsed in despair.

Xiulote's anger rose. He looked around at the Guard Warriors, and immediately one of the warriors pinned Tezroca to the ground. Two more elite warriors took their War Clubs from their backs and approached the craftsmen.