

Civilization 239

Chapter 239 - One Hundred Thirty-Five: The Blue Bricks and Glass

Hearing the "croak, croak" of calls, Xiulote lifted his head and saw the black silhouettes circling in the sky.

The young man watched for a while, his feet never stopping.

By the lake were many Chinampas, floating farms that grew staple fruits and vegetables all year round. These crows, attracted by the food, were extremely clever. They would steal bites from the corn sprouts and eat the seeds underneath; come harvest, they'd tear open the protective husks and gorge themselves on the ears of corn. The scarecrow deities erected in the fields could frighten away other birds but not the crows, leaving the farmers at a loss for solutions.

"We still need to promote the use of bows and arrows, letting the Militia practice their archery... The technological developments nurtured by the Divine Revelation Place must not be interrupted by the Empire's crows..."

Thinking this, Xiulote couldn't help but smile wryly. Over these two months, his mind had been filled with religious reform, power struggles, technology in farming... It had been a long time since he had purely enjoyed something, and it was hard to regain the clarity of heart he once had.

"A Saint is originally the beauty of heaven and earth, achieving the logic of all things... When will I reach the realm of a Saint? Observing the world with a translucent heart, spiritually whole, like the crystalline clarity of glass..."

As he walked, Xiulote approached the brick-making Workshop. Here a small kiln had been built, with some bricks being fired, some kilns freshly extinguished, and others already cooled down.

He took a closer look; the kilns were about three meters high, resembling a barrel, with a base diameter of about two meters. The top of each kiln was slightly curved, with thick earthen walls forming a hollow, round platform. There were two small opposite doors on the walls for loading raw bricks and extracting finished ones, while the base contained the fire ducts for burning wood.

The youth mentally calculated the height and the base diameter... Hmm, the volume of a cylinder is just over ten cubic meters, with a brick density of 2.5-3.0 tons per cubic meter, so one kiln is about three tons of bricks. Indeed, bricks are the most cost-efficient and high-yield building material!

In fact, as early as 1000 B.C., the Olmec civilization had been making a large number of bricks for building houses. By the time of the Teotihuacan civilization, brick-making had reached its zenith in scale and skill.

In the place where Xiulote had come to this world, within the majestic, ancient Holy City, stood the 63-meter-tall spectacle of the Sun Pyramid, topped with a platform tens of meters wide, founded on a base over 200 meters in length and width, the volume estimated at over 1 million cubic meters. Converted into weight, that's a total of 3 million tons of building material, with a small portion being stone and the majority being fired bricks! Between the stacked bricks, they filled crushed stones and binder, fitting tightly together, enduring for a millennium.

The youth had climbed the 248 stone steps of the Sun Pyramid countless times. This marvel, built in the 2nd century A.D., used no metal, animals, or wheeled tools. All the bricks were fired locally. Upon close examination of the bricks' colors, he was astonished to discover that many were the hardy and durable grey Manganese bricks. Compared to red bricks, these were stronger, more durable, and the best material for such a marvel.

Having withstood more than 1300 years, the Sun Pyramid still stood as solid as the Divine Mountain by the Avenue of the Dead, and so did the Moon Pyramid.

Day and night, the two grey-bricked pyramid marvels stood firm into future generations, astonishing every visitor who came. In silence, they upheld the imagined community of the nation, keeping the ancient civilization of Central America alive in people's hearts, rather than being erased from history as the North American Indians were.

"To unite the hearts of people, that is the significance of a marvel!"

Xiulote reminisced about his Holy City home he hadn't returned to in two years and also about the distant future he dreamt of.

In this era, the Great Wall had largely been completed, with important passes reinforced with grey bricks. At this time, the renaissance Mongol ruler Dayan Khan had just taken the throne and was subsequently halted by the Great Wall, sighing in its shadow, compelled to focus his conquests on the Mongolian regions west of the desert.

Like their advanced ceramics, the Mexica's brick-making techniques were already very mature. Brick-making within the Alliance was overseen by potters, and the manager here was Tanali, a female potter leader.

Seeing the prince, Tanali quickly approached. She was about forty years old, robust and with a face that bore the marks of time, hints of her bygone loveliness still in her eyes. A striking and vivid cloak covered the female leader.

Xiulote took a closer look, and on that cloak were depicted eight abstract babies with five Samurai beneath holding War Clubs. The youth inhaled sharply, bowed his head to Tanali. The surrounding Samurai also bowed respectfully to honor the hero mother. With such merits, the potter leader's prestige even exceeded that of the local Priests. She was indeed worthy of managing the potters.

Tanali saluted the prince vigorously and then spoke in a deep, hearty voice.

"Respected prince, the War God watches over us! Although this Workshop is new and its scale can't compare to the large kilns of the Capital, with me in charge, the red bricks produced will not be inferior!"

Xiulote quickly stepped forward, lifting the potter leader to her feet. Then, the youth walked through the Workshop, listening to Tanali explain the brick-making process.

"Prince, this clay for making bricks must be dug from a meter below the ground surface, for that's where it's soft and sticks together, fine and useful! The best way is to pile up this clay for several months, letting the wind and rain break it down, making it finer and finer," Tanali explained, taking a stride forward and grasping a handful of the fine soil from the clay pile to place in the prince's hand. Xiulote squeezed the soil to feel its texture and nodded in approval.