

Civilization 250

Chapter 250: The Follow-up in the North_2

Seeing this, the Elder Priest chuckled, his large hand patting his old friend's shoulder firmly.

Osellor smiled and then asked,

"Religious reform? What exactly do you have in mind? I find the priests you've brought quite useful. After one ritual, the Otomi Warriors seem more focused. How about leaving some more priests with me?"

Uguel pondered the question, which was rather difficult.

"Religious reform? That is to say that the gods are omnipotent, and so are the priests! The High Priesthood is much more stringent than before. The division of clerical duties is extremely clear, with an increase in authority at the grass-roots level. We've also expanded the Temple Guards, introduced new doctrines, and changed the sacrificial rites... From the upper nobility to the middle samurai, down to the lower commoners, the Priesthood's control is increasing, and in the future, who's to say it won't surpass that of the Royal Family.

I can leave you half of these priests; they were originally here to help stabilize the north anyway. But the other half haven't yet completed their basic literacy. They need to go back and finish learning a thousand characters... Oh, and you'd better learn to read and write too. Writing with script is much quicker than drawing pictures, although I'm still not quite used to it... And the paper for writing, that's better than wooden boards, fast and convenient to write on, and quite comfortable for certain uses."

Osellor pondered for a while and then shook his head slightly before leaning forward and lowering his voice.

"I have heard that the death of the Chief Priest Quetzal was related to the religious reform?... His Highness met with the Council of Elders, and the High Priest took over, presiding over the religious reformation..."

Uguel shivered involuntarily. He glanced around, peered behind the curtain, then turned his head to look at Osellor, his eyes wide.

"Where did you hear such nonsense? I personally presided over the funeral of the Chief Priest. He surely died of poison from the Texcoco people, something called 'death vine water.' These words should only be spoken here; utter them elsewhere is to invite death!..."

Watching the reaction of the Elder Priest, Osellor smiled knowingly and nodded slightly. He continued to probe.

"Uguel, my old friend. The Chief Priest is dead, and the High Priest comes from the Holy City, already old in years. Have you not considered taking over the position of High Priest at some point? I could support you."

The Elder Priest was taken aback for a moment, a flicker of temptation and greed shining in his eyes before he remembered the horrid death of Quetzal and felt a chill in his heart.

"No, not at all! What's so great about that position? Above me would be the immortal Elders, beside me the exceptional King, below the discontent Nobility. One would have to wield great power, preside over

the grand sacrifices, reform religion, coordinate all sides, and enforce the religious laws, offending the nobility. I'd be so busy that I wouldn't have a moment of peace, eating without taste, sleeping restlessly, and who knows when suddenly my head might just fall off...

I don't want that position. It's not so easy being the High Priest. Xutel is old, doesn't have many years left to live; now he's harsh and merciless, unafraid of making enemies. I, however, would like to live another ten or twenty years. When I could govern a region, that would truly be gratifying!"

Osellor carefully caught the details in Uguel's words and thought swiftly.

"King, Priest, Nobility, royal power, ecclesiastical authority, autonomy..."

After a while, the Commander spoke cautiously.

"So you're saying that now, the Capital City is like a boiling pot? The lid being the Elders above, the kindling below being all sorts of new policies. Religious reform, the implementation of ecclesiastical laws, reduction of noble privileges, and royal factional struggles; these are the blazing kindling woods. And in the middle, the water slowly coming to a boil includes the King, the Priesthood, the Royal Family, and the local Nobility?"

Uguel was stunned for a long moment. He chewed on the words carefully and felt he had heard some excellent content, so he took mental note.

"Osellor, you are indeed clever; the metaphor is quite apt! That is the very soup in which I find myself, looking for an opportunity to get out. Oh, you forgot one person, His Highness."

The Commander pondered momentarily, recalling the past.

"Are you referring to His Highness Xiulote, who killed a King, invented the catapult, Longbow, writing, and paper? What significant deeds has His Highness done of late?"

"It could only be him," shook Uguel head. "Recently, His Highness has invented many little gadgets. These are not important; what's most important is that he has applied to the King to train a new legion!"

Osellor was taken aback momentarily. He might not understand much about religious matters, but military affairs were his forte.

"A new legion? A Xiquipilli is a whole eight thousand men, at least half of which are elite samurai. After continuous battles, where can the Alliance muster thousands of samurai from now?"

Uguel shook his head again.

"I don't really understand this matter either. But I've heard that the majority of this new force is merely Militia, some archers, some with Long Spears. Now around the Capital City, the workers from the mines and salt fields have all been conscripted by His Highness, even causing a shortage of stone workers. So I came here with another mission, to conscript thousands of Otomi people from your territory to take back as laborers..."

Right, before the Northern army disbands, you also need to exert some pressure on the Vastec people, first to collect this year's Tribute, and second to forcibly conscript a group of Craftsmen and laborers."

Osellor first chuckled lightly, a militia legion... then the Commander nodded in agreement, his smile fierce.

"Of course! You can take as many Otomi people from inside and outside the city as you like. The Alliance always needs new fuel for various labors. Now, with food limited, we can hardly spare much beyond what is needed to support the samurai. When you go back this time, you must help me get more food over here. The Otomi people are in the midst of a great famine; having food in hand would help us soothe the civilians within our state, as well as attract Otomi Warriors and Militia from outside our borders..."