

## Civilization 269

### Chapter 269 Foreshadowing\_3

"Haven't you always been fixated on Colima? Set out from Qinchongcan, and after traveling seven hundred miles west, you'll reach the state of Colima. If we conquer the Chapala Lake Region at the far southwest of the Lerma River, and then head south from there for just over two hundred miles, we can penetrate deep into the heartland of Colima State. If there really is some 'world-changing iron ore' there, this is the only way to launch an invasion!"

Having said this, the High Priest once again stroked Xiulote's head, his tone heavy and full of profound meaning.

"My child, distance implies autonomy, the lake region represents population, copper mines can be turned into military might, and expansion means having a future! Enfeoffed in the desolate lands of Michoacan, you will have a foundation to build upon. If the king is still alive in decades and you can't advance further to command the Alliance... then, you just control this place and sit tight, so that even if you step back, you can still carve out a territory for yourself and wait for the right moment!"

Hearing about Colima State, and thinking about the grand iron mines there, Xiulote was invigorated. He suppressed all his fluctuating emotions and focused on deep contemplation. After a while, the young man asked in a grave voice.

"Being enfeoffed here... Does Gillim not worry that our family might grow too strong in the west and become estranged from the Alliance?"

The High Priest gave a light, mocking laugh, shaking his head with a complex expression.

"We are a branch of the Royal Family to begin with, so how could we possibly become estranged from the Alliance? At most, we'd be a separate entity from the main Royal branch in the east. Once Tarasco is conquered, Lake Patzcuaro is seven hundred miles from the Capital City, and even if messengers run back and forth in shifts, the fastest communication would still take twenty to thirty days. The Alliance must enfeoff Vassal Kings to stabilize the region.

By enfeoffing you in this distant place, they avoid power struggles within the Capital City and leave the succession issue for the future. For the main branch of the Royal Family, it's like killing two birds with one stone, so naturally they'd be willing.

Moreover, the Tarasco Alliance is now more prosperous than ever, boasting fifty-thousand Samurai, able to mobilize a hundred-thousand Militia, and even call upon the tributary tribes of Texcoco. To completely conquer here, the entire Alliance needs to be mobilized, to march west with the nation's full force. Both branches of the Royal Family, the great and small Nobility, the inner and outer priesthood, the Temple Warriors directly affiliated and from the City-States... all forces must be mobilized.

We need to be responsible for the Northern Route Army. This time, we also have to convene all the noble branches, bring out everything the Holy City has, mobilize the Temple Warriors of the Priesthood, and go to war with all our might. This promised fief is to be won with the blood of our Samurai!"

At the end, the High Priest's words were filled with impassioned and heroic sentiment. His eyes shone with confidence, as if he were back in his spirited younger years. However, his aged body could no longer support the ambitions in his heart. Moments later, he bent over coughing forcefully.

Xiulote quickly stood up, helped the High Priest rub his chest and back, soothing his breaths. Then the young man brought a cup of water and let his grandfather moisten his throat.

It was quite some time before the High Priest spoke again, his voice hoarse.

"Today's New Year Sacrificial Rite went smoothly, massive in scale, and intimidated the other states. It looks like this year's tributes from all the states shouldn't be an issue. After two such rites, the morale of the tens of thousands of warriors in the Alliance is high. They will continue to wait for two more months. Once the tributes from the states are fully delivered, they will decide on the targets for the campaign.

This time, as long as the southern states don't cause major trouble, the Alliance will temporarily hold off. The real campaign west will start after the autumn harvest. But come April, the direct Samurai will start to mass, pressuring the border of the Tarasco people, forcing them to be on alert. This will exhaust their food supplies and disrupt their spring farming!

We have tens of thousands of chinampas, which will allow us to deploy part of the large army during the farming season, wreaking havoc on the agricultural production of the city-states, which is also the reason they fear us."

My child, when the time comes, you will need to lead thousands of elite soldiers, most of the naval forces, to find a foothold along the Lerma River in the north in advance, and repeatedly harass the people of Tarasco in the north. If the naval forces can penetrate into Cuitzeo Lake, they would be able to completely destroy the farming of several City-States in the northern part of Tarasco, creating hundreds of thousands of refugees, consuming massive amounts of their food and population, and reducing their potential for war!

This will make the conquest by the Northern Route Army easier in the fall, but you must measure your capabilities, especially relying on the naval forces."

Hearing the plan to disrupt the spring planting, Xiulote nodded silently. The tragic plight of the Otomi once again emerged in his mind, the young man closed his eyes briefly, and when he opened them again, his heart was as firm as iron.

The High Priest continued to drink some water, rested for a moment, and then commanded another important matter.

"This time Uguel returned from Xilotepec and talked about the situation in the northern stronghold. If what he said is true, your suggestion of handling different social strata separately should be very effective and could be promoted in the conquered regions. The Otomi Warriors, once shattered in spirit and converted, become quite devout and constitute a force that the Priesthood can effectively control.

In two days, the Council of Elders will redistribute the two thousand minor nobility and Samurai from Texcoco to be exiled to the northern stronghold, and I will have Uguel lead another expedition northward, also taking along generous gifts to present to the noble family Osellor of the Royal Family. Osellor is about to assume the post of the new City Lord of Xilotepec, and he has always been on good terms with Uguel.

When you lead troops to the north in April, first meet with Osellor and try to establish a connection, or make others believe that you have established one. At the same time, check the condition of the four thousand Otomi Warriors; if this legion can be of use, drill them a bit and admit them into the Northern Route Army after the autumn harvest.

The northern stronghold is strategically located; this will be another gambit! Although the chances of utilizing it are slim..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote prostrated in salute, bowing in compliance. He pondered the western campaign plan, slowly igniting a fighting spirit in his heart.

Not until the night deepened did the High Priest finally finish instructing on all the important matters. His face could no longer hide the signs of fatigue. The young man stepped forward to help his grandfather to the bedroom to rest. Soon after, the grandfather fell into a deep sleep. In his sleep, he still occasionally furrowed his brows.

Xiulote watched his sleep-disturbed grandfather and heaved a gentle sigh. The usually strong High Priest was nothing more than a frail mortal at that time, bearing the burdens of the Alliance and the Royal Family, his life like a candle in the wind.

After a moment of silence, the young man quietly left. He walked to the courtyard, standing under the cold moonlight, gazing at the distant stars. Over the course of the night, he was overwhelmed with emotions. At first tender as water, then protective as a mountain, at times worrying like the wind, and at other times burning like fire. A hundred flavors surged in his heart, yet were difficult to express. Many expressions played across his face, finally settling into calmness.

After a long while, the night breeze blew, giving Xiulote a slight chill. He tightened the black robe around him and smiled faintly.

"The air has grown cool, signaling a fine autumn indeed. As the wind rises, the clouds should dance."

The young man then nodded towards the stars and turned to retire for the night. He slept peacefully, dreamless.