

## Civilization 277

Chapter 277: Stirrup Crossbow, The King's Directive, Manpower and Production\_2

Xiulote had searched for quite a while before he found the dignified old craftsman Kuode in the center of the crowd. He was surrounded by a dozen apprentices, earnestly discussing something with a man in a black robe. When the young man looked at the man in the black robe again, his demeanor was meticulous, and his hair and attire were impeccable—it was the Intelligence Officer Gillim.

Seeing Xiulote approaching, Gillim gave a slight smile, then greeted him with a serious bow. The young man had no choice but to solemnly return the gesture.

"Venerable Highness, I just so happened to be seeking you out for an important matter," said Gillim.

Xiulote smiled gently. His gaze lingered for a moment on the fully scarred ears of the Intelligence Officer.

"Gillim, I too have an important matter to discuss with you. However, you should have a message from Aweit, so please speak first," said Xiulote.

The Intelligence Officer nodded, made a 'wait a moment' gesture to Kuode, and then with a beckoning hand, invited the young man to a secluded corner for a private conversation.

"Your Highness, in the autumn's western campaign, you will be in charge of the Northern Route Army. According to the latest intelligence, the King has issued you directives. For the western expedition in the north, you must focus on four key points . . . first is to establish a water route advantage and secure strongholds . . ."

Xiulote nodded in agreement. This was exactly his plan. He had not yet reported to Aweit about the latest advancements in gunpowder, planning to wait until the fire arrows development was complete to demonstrate them during water combat simulations for the King, hoping to impress his teacher and friend once again.

"Second, find a way to conquer the strongholds of the Tarasco Kingdom . . . especially those controlling the rivermouth of Cuitzeo Lake . . ."

The young man furrowed his brows; this was indeed something he had not been aware of. His mind raced through various possibilities—hooked ladders, reinforced catapults, and finally settling on a huge paper gunpowder pellet.

"Third, be cautious of the northern Otomi people, try to maintain a ceasefire with them . . . carefully protect the food supply routes . . ."

Xiulote grew silent for a moment. He carefully considered and slowly nodded, an image of a groundhog popping into his mind.

"Fourth, from the western city-states of the Alliance, try to obtain some food support to reduce the consumption of provisions transported from the capital . . ."

The young man shook his head; on this point, he had no solution. He could only go back to meet his grandfather and seek help through the older generation's network.

"Additionally, the King suggests you recruit a group of Chichimeca Canine Descendants for the vanguard in the western campaign. Specific recruitment matters should be coordinated with the northern Commander-in-Chief, Osellor," continued Gillim.

Upon hearing about recruiting the Canine Descendants, Xiulote fell into thought. The fearlessness of the Canine Descendants had left a deep impression on him. Although their unordered bravery could not directly confront a tight battle formation, these Canine Descendants seemed perfectly suited as grenadiers. They could charge to extremely close distances to throw still primitive, highly dangerous and explosive Clay Tribulus.

After reflecting for a moment, Xiulote nodded seriously, showing a sincere smile.

"Thanks to the King's directives and your advice. The Chief Divine blesses us, and the western campaign will surely be victorious!" said Xiulote.

Gillim smiled in response, then bowed respectfully; the young man returned the gesture. Their mutual salutations harmonized the atmosphere exceedingly well.

Then, Gillim bowed again and inquired respectfully.

"May I know what matter Your Highness wishes to discuss?"

Xiulote pondered for a short while and then began to speak slowly.

"Originally, I primarily needed Kuode, but ultimately you would also be consulted . . . there's been a new development at the Divine Revelation Place. The production of the new Stirrup Crossbow is complete, and I'm planning to call together another group of craftsmen and laborers, and to collect more timber for large-scale manufacturing . . . Meanwhile, the production of gunpowder on Heavenly Fire Island needs to continue with an increased workforce. The subsequent gunpowder weapons also require seasoned craftsmen . . . finally, there's the matter of new troops and their provisions . . ."

In other words, the young man was seeking the Intelligence Officer and chief of the treasury, asking for craftsmen, manpower, money, and provisions.

Gillim chuckled bitterly, for the first time showing a worried expression.

"Your Highness, it's not that I intend to deceive you with my words, but where are there spare craftsmen now? And where is there enough wealth?"

Saying this, the Intelligence Officer spread out his hands, counting off on his fingers to show the price.

"First and foremost, the production of longbows. Currently, the longbow workshop astonishingly employs seven hundred craftsmen and over two thousand laborers. The daily output of longbows is one hundred and fifty, and thousands of arrows, already reaching the limit of wood supply. To continuously provide timber, there are simultaneously thousands more lumberjacks and boatmen outside. Beyond the craftsmen and laborers, there are also two hundred samurai responsible for guarding and supervision. The daily consumption of provisions by these thousands is supplied by the Alliance, and the daily wear and tear of tools is also borne by the Alliance!"

Hearing the number of longbows, Xiulote was somewhat satisfied. One hundred fifty a day meant that, in a month, there would be three to four thousand longbows, capable of arming one to two thousand warriors. By October, a full Longbow Corps could be formed.

Based on the previous experience of the Longbow Guards, it was best for each Longbow Warrior to be equipped with more than two bows because continuous use caused string follow, necessitating some idle time to relax the strings, thereby avoiding damage to the bow body.

"Next, Your Highness, you oversee the production of gunpowder. Heavenly Fire Island has completely taken control of the southern salt mines, where salt production has sharply declined, causing major and minor nobility to jump anxiously. Your Highness, members of the Royal Family have repeatedly sought an audience with the Venerable elders and the King, bitterly complaining, accusing you of brutality and greed!

If it weren't for the Venerable elders being pleased with the stitched books you presented and the King's anticipation for the power of gunpowder, as well as the High Priest's overt and covert suppression, there would already be hordes of nobility with their private soldiers trying forcefully to reclaim the salt mines . . ."