

## Civilization 293

### Chapter 293 Longbow Militia\_2

Subsequently, chieftains adorned in feather crowns made their entrance. They alternated their steps, jingling the bells on their hands and feet, waving their hollow wooden sticks, creating a gust-like, deep whooshing sound. After dancing for several moments, from time to time a chieftain would respectfully step forward, kneel on both knees before His Highness, and lift up the deer meat, bird meat, rabbit meat, goose, and even the symbol of death, the black vulture, all personally roasted.

Xiulote smiled and nodded his acknowledgment one by one. He motioned for Bertade to not worry and personally took the food, sampling a small bite of each as a symbolic gesture. Every time he tasted an offering, a tribe's militia would cheer in unison, jumping into dance. By the end of all the offerings, the camp was filled with shouts of elation and joy.

"Great Chief! Great Chief! Great Chief!..."

Xiulote carefully distinguished the dialects of these tribes, then burst into laughter. With a grand wave of his hand, the Samurai attending him also rose to their feet. They sang the songs of flowers and death, beat the low-sounding war drums, blew the heavy conch shells, and offered up the Warrior's War Dance to His Highness!

The vigorous dance matched the earth-shaking music, the skies filled with cheers accompanying the high-sung songs, like heady wine, brought Xiulote an unparalleled sense of ease and exhilaration! He drank deeply from his tequila, forgetting all the troubles of the Capital City, recalling feasts long past, laughing and singing out loud.

No one could make out the song His Highness sang, not even the Head Warrior, who had accompanied him for many years, could only guess. He felt the young man's brimming valor, witnessed his spirited demeanor, yet within that reckless abandon, he tasted a deeply hidden nostalgia.

Unwittingly, the night deepened. Amidst the song, the moon rose to the zenith, then silently drifted westward. The moonlight faded, shining upon the dying campfires on the ground, taking with it distant dreams.

As the first light of dawn brightened the sky, the regular rhythm of his body woke Xiulote from his drunken stupor.

Inside the largest wooden hut, the young man suddenly opened his eyes. He looked at the faint glow of dawn, pressed hard against his forehead, and groaned softly, feeling somewhat reluctant.

"Last night in my dreams, fragrance filled my journeying robe. My homeland exists only in old dreams~~"

The following two days remained busy. After the rituals and feasts, the loyalty of the tribe hunters was at an acceptable level and slowly improved with the guidance of the accompanying priests.

Xiulote personally oversaw the following training. The training for the Longbow Hunters was straightforward. In terms of martial arts, they only needed to practice archery repeatedly, and when unstringing their bows, practice with the short dagger they carried.

Tactically, as militia, they didn't need to learn formations, just to understand the commands of drums and conch signals, and to recognize the flags indicating the direction of attack. Specifically, within their ranks, they only had to practice gathering, dispersing, advancing, retreating, extending the flanks, and targeted shooting... such simple and effective tactical maneuvers.

Xiulote stayed for two more days. Under his supervision, more than two thousand Tlaxcalan Bows were finally transported from the armory, giving the tribe hunters a preliminary re-equipment. And approximately seven to eight hundred new Longbows were given priority to the older hunters proficient in archery. The remainder of the Longbows was still being gathered. Of course, such a costly state weapon had to be reluctantly handed over by the armory only after His Highness applied repeated pressure.

In his free time from training, Xiulote would always summon the military officials of the camp and share his understanding of the Longbow Militia with them. Not until the sun of April shone upon the land, bringing more humidity to the air, did he finally call Toltec for some last instructions.

"Toltec, my Black Wolf. The battlefield role of the Longbow Militia is to provide consistent and strong support, and to make effective shots when occupying favorable positions. Their most crucial ability is mobility, they must run faster than any of the Samurai!

The Longbow Militia should avoid all forms of close combat, always maintaining a distance from the enemy. Before the battle, they should advance to harass, move quickly when the fight intensifies, looking for opportunities to shoot from the flanks. Most importantly, keep the retreat orderly when pursued! You need to practice pursuing and retreating with the Samurai and them.

Apart from the fierce battles, the mountain people could move freely in the forest, taking advantage of the bow's range to continuously attack the enemy's camps and supply lines... just like the Otomi Militia did before!"

Toltec nodded earnestly. He took out paper and pen, drawing little moving figures, then marked them one, two, three, four.

Xiulote took the young warrior's notebook, flipped through the records of the drawings, and nodded with a mix of satisfaction and helplessness. He laid his hands on Toltec's shoulders again.

"Toltec, when I lead all the Longbow Warriors away at the end of the month, I will leave you a contingent of Samurai guards as the core force to command the Longbow Militia... I've never worried about your exceptional bravery, and I believe in your agile intelligence. But, I have higher expectations of you. You must become an excellent Commander-in-Chief, you have much more to learn! There are no others here, so I'm giving you a new military order.

Now, 180 days remain until October, and every day you must remember three characters. When you lead the Longbow Militia to me again, you must have mastered at least five hundred characters! If you cannot complete this task, you will hand over the militia to the adjutant during the western campaign, and come to my tent to practice writing every day!"

Toltec's face, once brimming with confidence, suddenly soured. He thought for a moment, then tried to defend himself.

"Your Highness, you can't count it like that! Every day I remember three characters, the next day I'll forget two, so actually, I only keep one..."

Xiulote had already stridden out of the tent, leaving a commanding order in the wind.

"Then remember five characters a day!"

Bertade smiled slightly, patted Toltec's shoulder, and then left with a laugh.

Xiulote bid farewell to his reverent followers and departed from the mountain camp. He had no time to enjoy the scenery of the Holy Mountain but rushed to the bustling Lake Texcoco instead.

Though a month had passed since he was last there, he always maintained a close connection with the Capital City. The High Priesthood sent priests to accompany the army, envoys from the Divine Revelation Place periodically reported on the latest developments, and Aweit also sent people to inquire about the new army and new weapons. The Mexica war machine kept turning, and preparations for the important spring plowing were also underway.

Lightly dressed and accompanied by his escort of Samurai, Xiulote moved swiftly. He had just received the latest briefing—the work on gunpowder weapons on Heavenly Fire Island had made new progress. In no time, the young man was boating on Lake Texcoco, bypassing the majestic Lake Capital City without entering, heading toward the southern side of the lake to Heavenly Fire Island.

Seeing His Highness's flag from afar, Esko had been waiting at the dock for a long time. He bowed respectfully and then, upon His Highness's inquiry, reported the latest saltpeter stockpile. Xiulote calculated in his mind the amount of gunpowder that could be produced and nodded with mild satisfaction.

Next, Esko proudly and respectfully announced to His Highness,

"Respected Your Highness, the saltpeter production on Heavenly Fire Island has now reached two hundred jin per day! As the collection of saltpeter decreases due to the abundance of saltworkers' hands, the output of saltpeter will further increase!"

Xiulote looked toward the fence where two or three dozen new heads were displayed and nodded slowly and calmly. April had arrived, the weather was warming, and the rainy season was approaching. Collecting saltpeter from the alkali lands was becoming difficult, and would soon cease altogether.

"Esko, well done! As always, the saltpeter that is processed must be sealed in jars and stored in scattered locations. Be extremely careful when transporting it...How long can the remaining saltpeter sustain our consumption? Has there been any progress in the development of urine saltpeter?"

Esko replied with a smile,

"Your Highness, rest assured, there are mountains of stored saltpeter! Based on the current rate of consumption, it can last until the cold season at year's end. At that time, we can collect saltpeter once again."

Following that, Esko paused slightly, then spoke in a lower voice,

"As for the development of urine saltpeter... I will double my supervision over Moreno, the saltworks leader, and also assign this task to other saltworking teams!"

Xiulote glanced at Esko's fierce expression and commanded in a deep voice,

"Good. Esko, you handle the nuances yourself, I want results!"

Having said that, Xiulote affectionately patted Esko on the shoulder. He pondered for a moment, then took out the Sun Necklace hanging with a pure gold amulet and personally placed it around the excited saltpeter overseer's neck, before advising in a low voice,

"The saltworkers need devout faith to maintain their enthusiasm for work. I will send a few priests to reside here permanently, who will also exercise further control over the saltworkers."

With his instructions complete, Xiulote maintained the seriousness on his face. He turned and looked toward Talaya, whose eyes were filled with spring and who waited quietly. He approached her with dignity, and then, after watching the potter girl's expectant expression, hesitated for a moment before finally cracking a slight smile.