

Civilization 37

Chapter 37 Agriculture and the Empire

The sun rose from the forests of the East, dawn pushed away the night, releasing a brilliant golden hue. Dew shimmered among the grass and trees, and the birds awoke along with it, their melodious chirping filled the air.

Xiulote faced the rising sun, barechested, wearing only the most convenient white loincloth around his waist. Before him was a tub of cold water and a clay basin. Bertade stood quietly in front, looking at his face.

He scooped up a basin of cold water and poured it from above his head. The water flowed like a waterfall, running down his entire body, instantly chilling him in the morning breeze, his skin puckering up, yet his expression remained unchanged. According to the demands of a Samurai, he had to always remain resolute, showing no signs of cold aversion or hesitation.

After a little while, once the droplets had nearly dried, he poured another basin of cold water over himself, repeating the process until the tub was empty. Bertade then showed a slight smile.

"Well done, Xiulote, you are now showing some spirit of a Samurai. It is already April, and the weather is starting to warm up. The willpower training for cold resistance will soon stop. Then in the mornings we will switch to agility training, until October, when the warm rainy season is over, and we will return to the beginning."

Xiulote nodded firmly, his face had frozen, temporarily unable to speak.

At that moment, a small red bird, attracted by Xiulote, flew around the young man while chirping. The bird had a distinct crown on its head, its face was black, it flew very fast, its call was loud and joyful, and it chirped melodically, occasionally pecking at the water splashes at his feet. Xiulote found it very familiar.

"Ah, a courting songbird, it's a blessing from the Goddess of Fertility, Tonakaxiwatel. This is a good omen, it seems the season of reproduction has arrived. Xiulote, you need to suppress your own desires. Of course, trying it once, completing the transition from boy to man, is also necessary." Seeing the good omen, Bertade was in a good mood, and made a rare joke about men.

Xiulote rolled his eyes, his face finally able to move. "Bertade, you've been corrupted by Aweit. You don't need to show off your theological knowledge in front of the priests. Tonakaxiwatel is also the God of Harvest. Seeing the red songbird signals that the season for spring plowing has arrived."

This beautiful little bird is the Northern Cardinal, widely distributed in the woodlands of Central America and North America. April is their mating season, and they have an especially beautiful song. Xiulote was more familiar with its other widely known name, "Angry Bird".

While they were talking, they saw smoke slowly rising in the distant sky to the East, dispersing in the sky, not too dense. After a while, another plume of smoke slowly rose. Bertade looked in the direction of the smoke columns and then nodded in relief: "It's in the direction of the villages. It's preparation for Milpa, setting fire to the forests, spring plowing is about to begin."

Xiulote nodded. The agriculture in Mexico comprised of Chinampa and Milpa, the former being the highly productive floating gardens in river and lake terrains, and the cornerstone of the strength of Mexica city-states. One hectare of Chinampa could feed at least twenty people, equivalent to one and a half per acre. Xiulote remembered the Ming Dynasty books he had seen, "The fertile fields close to city walls yield not less than five or six stone per mu ", which made Chinampa equivalent to the top-grade rice fields of Celestial Empire's Jiangnan.

In the capital, the city of Tenochtitlan, located in the middle of a lake, boasted over 9000 hectares of Chinampa gardens, supporting a magnificent city of more than two hundred thousand inhabitants—more populous than any city of Western Europe at the time, comparable to Celestial Empire's cities like Kaifeng and Hangzhou. For this expedition, the capital along with three cities and the villages in the lake region, with a total population of 1.5 million, directly provided five Xiquipillis, 40,000 royal Samurai directly under the Royal Family.

Xiulote had once followed his father to visit the family's Chinampa gardens. This fertile floating farmland was the core of every nobility's household. However, he was not familiar with Milpa, the most widespread form of cultivation in Central America.

Agriculture was the foundation of the Empire, and population was the cornerstone of civilization; only civilizations with a substantial core population could truly grow into an empire. Xiulote thought about Celestial Empire's hundreds of millions core, Ottoman's ten millions core, France's ten millions core... of course, excluding the Indian subcontinent.

Considering this, Xiulote decided to personally witness the Milpa cultivation. A Samurai never delayed taking action. After consulting with Bertade, who nodded, he went to summon a hundred Samurai followers.

Then, Xiulote went to find Totec and told the Supreme Commander that he wanted to visit the Otomi villages occupied in the East, "to conduct a sacrificial rite for the spring plowing". Totec furrowed his stiff brows, gruffly warned, "Be careful of the Otomi coyote attacks", and gave him an escort of a hundred Samurai.

Thus, Xiulote dressed in a Coyote priest robe, accompanied by two hundred Samurai, carrying ten days' worth of provisions, set off to the mountain villages in the East.

By then, the siege warfare had been going on for half a year, and the large Mexica army had already deployed at the foot of Otapan City. Siege warfare wasn't simply tens of thousands of soldiers amassed below a city; it involved setting up well-distributed camps, deploying troops extensively, controlling critical points around, and cutting off the city's food and water supply.

By now, villages within two days' distance around the mountain city had been cleared out, the village closest to Xiulote being two and a half days' distance to the East. The squad of Samurai then followed the supply route, winding their way eastward.

During the march, Xiulote encountered a supply convoy once; hundreds of porters carrying tall packs of provisions struggled to walk along the mountain path, their heavy loads bending their backs, surrounded by hundreds of fully armed Samurai and militia. Xiulote shook his head; this supply efficiency was so low that at least half would be consumed on the road.