

## Civilization 481

### Chapter 481 - Meeting and Presenting Gifts\_2

"Great Master, wait for me."

The old militiaman turned and ran halfway down the street, calling out his hidden brothers. He clapped Weizti on the shoulder forcefully and instructed carefully.

"Wood, you stay here and go find Luwei. She's in the dugout at home! Be careful!"

Puap also left a trusted aide. Ezpan sent Guzman to lead the team to protect them. Then, he hurried to the south of the city with a group of people. His Highness has entered the city and is now personally presiding over the South City gate!

The long breeze swept over the torch-filled South Gate. Xiulote stood atop the eight-meter-high city tower, gazing at the city's endless lights of the sleepless night, his heart brimming with conquering passion and excitement! He watched as the dark green torrents swept forward relentlessly, occupying various parts of the city, demolishing all resistance, then planting the Alliance's flags!

The distant sounds of battle cries and the gradually rising cheers. In the eyes of the young king, tonight's picture was so beautiful, as if he had painted the masterpiece himself. A refreshing night breeze blew by, so pleasant, prompting thoughts of distant lands.

"The wind in May is so warm! After capturing the Capital City, the samurai should take a break. We must fully protect and provide relief to the people of the Capital City, maximally preserving our manpower! Next, spring farming is the first priority!"

"Your Highness is merciful!"

Bertade praised sincerely.

Xiulote smiled. He looked around, with hundreds of trusted aides gripping bows and sticks, firmly guarding the South Gate. Messengers were running back and forth, reporting the latest battle situations.

"Your Highness, General Olosh has sent word: most of the Tekos camps have been broken through, the surrendering enemies are like turkeys all over the hills, and captives number in the thousands!"

"Your Highness, Marshal Iskali has sent word: all four gates are now completely sealed, and not a single Divine Descendant of Tarasco shall escape! General Coyote at the East Gate is valiant and keen-eyed, having captured a prince! Truly the Chief Divine's blessing!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote was stunned for a moment, the visage of the Coyote Family Head appearing before his eyes. He nodded with a smile.

"Send him to the main camp for identity verification. If confirmed, record a major merit."

"Your Highness, General Etalik reports: the craftsman's camp has been taken, with the capture of over a thousand senior craftsmen, including more than a dozen master coppersmiths! The recently occupied logistics camp has revealed large amounts of food, military supplies, and women!"

"Your Highness, General Kuluka reports: South City is under control, and the fire has been contained. The Spear Legion is heading toward the eastern and western parts of the city!"

"Your Highness, General Natali reports: the temple priests have ignited the flames, and the Temple at the top of the pyramid is burning. It is unlikely any priests have survived. Troops are currently plundering the Great Nobility in the city center, seizing many treasures, please send reinforcements!"

"Order Olosh's troops to enter the Nobility district as soon as possible, and ensure the plunder is recorded clearly!"

Then, Xiulote frowned and demanded.

"The House of Wind, a temple with a history of hundreds of years, humble yet magnificent, famous throughout the world... why not extinguish the fire quickly?!"

"This... Your Highness, the temple priests have ignited tens of thousands of jin of Stone of the Dead... the thick toxic smoke has spread, enveloping the entire pyramid... the samurai had to retreat!"

"Igniting tens of thousands of jin of sulfur!"

Xiulote was shocked, looking into the distance. Under the dark sky, thick black smoke could be faintly seen rising from the center of the city. The smoke spread across the sky, obscuring the light of stars and moon, making the sky even darker. The flames at the top of the temple were hidden in the black haze, occasionally revealing a few piercing blue glows, like the arrival of the world of the dead.

"The priesthood tradition of Tarasco will end here... Well, let the Chief Divine reshape the faith!"

Xiulote shook his head. Then, something occurred to him, and he asked with a puzzled look.

"Where is the messenger from Toltec? Has the Chief Minister of the Palace of Wind been captured? What about the other members of the Tarasco Royal Family?"

"This... General Toltec has already taken the Royal Palace. He has sent out trusted aides, reporting that the Chief Minister might possibly be dead? The Royal Family members are still being hunted..."

"Might possibly? Being hunted?"

Xiulote's gaze hardened, and the pressure of a mountain became apparent. The messenger "thud" knelt down, answering fearfully.

"General Black Wolf says he will personally ask for Your Highness's forgiveness!"

The young king's face remained calm as he nodded slowly. He looked towards the city, where a squad of spear militiamen bearing torches were approaching from the end of the street, quickly arriving before his eyes.

"General Ezpan requests an audience, with important intelligence to report!"

"Let him come up."

The group swiftly ascended the city tower. Ezpan, accompanied only by Chiwaco and Puap, came to ten paces before His Highness and knelt down respectfully to salute.

"Your Highness, a brand-new sun shines in the sky, soaring above the majestic Capital City. The Capital City of Tarasco has fallen, and you are the one true King in the hearts of all the people of Prepetcha in this vast lake region!"

At these words, Xiulote laughed heartily. He looked at Ezpan and shook his head with a smile.

"Stop there! There's still much to do afterwards. What the people of Prepetcha think of me will depend on how this year's spring farming goes! Ezpan, you didn't come to see me just to offer a few congratulatory words, did you?"

"Your Highness is wise! I encountered several insiders from the city. They are the heroes who offered up South City gate, bearing Your Highness's Jade Talisman. Now, they wish to report information about the Tarasco prince!"

"Oh?"

Xiulote looked interestedly at the two men in front of him.

The older Prepetcha man on the left was aged, with a face showing respectful smiles and yet a certain steadiness. His eyes were framed with weathered wrinkles, making him look much like an old farmer. The samurai on the right, who seemed to be in his thirties, appeared quite tense. With a fierce face and a bulky figure, he was at this moment bowing respectfully and also presenting the Jade Talisman in his hand.

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The young king took the Jade Talisman, glanced over it, and confirmed it was the Token he had issued not long before. He nodded slightly and said with a gentle smile,

&"Very well! By offering up the southern gate and sparing the army from a siege, you preserved many lives within the city. Your contribution is significant! I promised you a hereditary nobility title, and I won't go back on my word. The due rewards and riches will also be granted... Hmm, where is the Prince of Tarasco now?"

&"Thank you, Your Highness, for your generosity!"

Puap's face was bright with joy as he knelt on the ground. He kowtowed several times before speaking indignantly,

&"Your Highness, we snuck into the Palace of Wind and went through considerable trouble to take Prince Shatini of the Royal Family. But when we reached the eastern gate, a city-guarding commander intercepted us... The prince and the riches were taken, and we nearly lost our lives!"

Upon hearing this, Ezpan's face stiffened, and he translated Puap's words. Xiulote frowned slightly before he spoke, his face calm,

&"I see... The prince captured at the eastern gate is called Shatini. Hmm, I've never heard the name; it seems he is not high in the line of succession."

Chiwaco looked up, carefully observing His Highness's expression. Seeing him unaffected, he understood there would be no commendation for this military achievement. The old Militia clenched his teeth, set down the bamboo basket behind him, and after rummaging through the soft, beautiful Feathers, he finally produced, under Bertade's wary gaze, an Emerald Gemstone as big as a fist!

&"For you, oh Great Master of the Heavens! This is the Emerald Gemstone inherited by the Tarasco Royal Family, as large as the moon!"

The lustrous Emerald shined under the firelight, casting a captivating light. In that instant, the surrounding Samurai all held their breaths, fixated on the enchanting, shifting radiance. In Central American culture, a gleaming and dazzling Emerald symbolizes supreme wisdom, able to see through everything and foresee the future like the Feathered Serpent Divine!

Xiulote straightened his back and reached out his hand. Chiwaco carefully handed the gemstone to the trusted aide, who briefly inspected it before giving it to His Highness. Xiulote caressed the bright, smooth, gigantic gemstone, his eyes showing delight.

&"Such a massive Emerald Gemstone! It perfectly matches my title of Divine Revelation!"

&"Your Highness, this gemstone is passed down from the Royal Family of Tarasco. It witnesses your majestic feat of destroying a kingdom and aligns with your Divine wisdom... It is a gift from the Chief Divine! Promising you the power to rule the lands around the lake,

if it were to be crafted into a Divine Staff and declared before the masses... and if the Priests were to write praises and the Poets to compose songs in its honor... not only would the army's generals be in awe, but the people of Prepetcha, upon hearing of it, would prostrate and accept your rule!"

Ezpan's eyes gleamed. His thoughts flashed rapidly, and he knelt again, congratulating. As a Prepetcha, he knew well that the lake-dwelling people shared a devout faith in the divine, a fascination with Divine Objects, and a reverence for fate and omens. If properly utilized, this gemstone could be more powerful than tens of thousands of Samurai!

Hearing Ezpan's suggestion, Xiulote pondered for a moment before bursting into hearty laughter.

&"Commanded by heaven, may the longevity and prosperity... Good, very good! Ezpan, you indeed came up with an excellent idea! After this western conquest, you too should be promoted to hereditary Nobility. And with this idea alone, your future is assured of glory!"

Upon hearing His Highness's promise, Ezpan shook with excitement, joyfully bowing deeply.

&"Thank you for this grace, Your Highness! Please take hold of my hair, for you are my only sun!"



Xiulote extended his hand with a smile, and the trusted aides' faces instantly showed envy. Chiwaco and Puap might not fully understand, but they could roughly grasp the meaning. The old Militia's eyes slightly reddened. He bit his lip and once more, from the bamboo basket, produced a bloodstained cloth bundle!

&"Generous Great Master, contained within here, is the head of Tarasco's foremost chief!"

Chapter 483 - A Conversation with Destiny

Flames flickered on the city battlements, illuminating the astonished expressions of everyone; the night wind weaved through the city towers, carrying the lingering scent of blood. Xiulote's smile paused in the wind. His expression instantly turned solemn, focusing on the cloth bag in Chiwaco's hands.

"The chief of Tarasco? Bring it here, open it!"

The trusted aide promptly stepped forward and carefully opened the cloth bag. An aged, white-haired head was presented before everyone. The head's features were old, the expression peaceful, the eyes closed, with only the white hair stained with blood. Puap couldn't bear it and turned away, slightly bowing his head and wiping the corner of his eye with his hand.

Xiulote stared at the head for a moment, then looked back at Chiwaco. The old militia's expression was equally tranquil, tinged with a hint of anticipation as he looked at him.

"The chief of Tarasco... the greatest contribution to this battle..."

The young king pondered for a while, then gazed at the Surrendered General, Ezpan.

"Ezpan, have you ever seen the Hummingbird chief?"

Ezpan shook his head with a bitter smile.

"Your Highness, I was just a miner before... later just a Militia Captain..."

"Hmm. Summon Commander-in-Chief Crocodile, Ospai!"

Xiulote nodded slightly, then fell into deep thought.

The young king had never seen the chief of Tarasco but had long heard of this opponent and greatly admired him. If the Tarasco Kingdom were likened to a chariot, the young King Su'angua was merely a general waving long spears on the chariot. Chief Jinjinni was the true charioteer controlling the kingdom. Born into distinguished nobility, he had managed the kingdom for thirty years, aiding successive monarchs. He was ruthless and flexible externally, suppressing the northern and southern Tekos; internally, he strengthened central authority, controlling both the Priest and nobility. It could be said his understanding and influence over the Tarasco Kingdom surpassed that of anyone else in the world.

In this western campaign, the fierce resistance encountered by the two Mexica legions originated from the Hummingbird chief's desperate mobilization in the Lake Region. Without the aid of new weapons, the second western campaign likely would have also returned without success... Although hope was extremely faint, Xiulote still wished to recruit the opponent... but now...

The young king once again looked towards the serene, closed-eyed head, feeling an inexplicable surge of anger and irritation in his heart.

Chiwaco carefully observed the contemplative His Highness. His face bore desire and hope, yet a hint of ill-omen surged in his heart.

The torches flickered, the wind gradually died. The city tower was quiet; even the air turned solemn. Soon, a procession of torches rushed from the camp outside the city and headed straight towards the city battlements.

Ospai, in his sleeping robe, with messy hair and dark circles under his eyes, glanced over the capital filled with fire and conflict, his heart growing sadder, even his steps staggered. The Crocodile Commander-in-Chief bowed his head, stopping several paces away, then prostrated before His Highness.

"Respected Your Highness, Ospai greets you. What may I do for you?"

"Hmm, Ospai, calling you out so late, there are mainly two matters."

A faint smile appeared on Xiulote's face. He stood atop the city wall, overlooking the magnificent capital city, then glanced lightly at Ospai.

"The lights tonight are extraordinarily brilliant! From above, the city's flames, fallen banners, burning Temple, present a sight rarely seen in a century. Ospai, you are a wise man, you must have seen clearly on the way here, what are your thoughts?"

"Ah... thoughts... I... the King has been captured, the Kingdom is lost... Your Highness, by the Chief Divine's witness! From now on, I will be loyal to you!"

Ospai's eyes flickered. As clever as he was, he instantly understood the meaning of His Highness. His heart still struggled, but his body truthfully knelt on the ground, earnestly responding with his words.

"You rise like the sun, Your Highness! I will exert all my effort, to aid Your Highness, ruling the lands of the lake!"

"Very well. Ospai, rise. Oh, there is one more thing I wanted to ask you."

Xiulote chuckled softly, lightly patting Ospai's shoulder, then pointed forward.

"You see, I have a newly acquired head, and you should be acquainted with it. Hmm, what do you think, how should it be dealt with?"

Ospai's heart shuddered; upon hearing this, he looked up to see in a trusted aide's hands, an aged head being held. The Crocodile Commander-in-Chief shivered all over, and after barely recognizing it, he fell to the ground in horror, his voice trembling.

"Ah, Your Highness... this... this!... I..."

"What, don't you recognize him?"

"Your Highness, Chief Jinjinni managed the kingdom for thirty years, naturally, I recognize him..."

"Oh?"

The young king's voice slightly raised. He continued smiling and asked.

"Ospai, then how should it be dealt with?"

"Pounding" the Crocodile Commander-in-Chief violently knocked his head on the ground several times, then with tear-filled eyes, said,

"Your Highness, although the Hummingbird chief resisted the Alliance and committed great sins... he was distinguished, lived simply, and had a resolute character. In the hearts of the Tarasco nobility, he is a figure both revered and feared..."

I was stationed on the frontier, also suppressed by the chief for over a decade, often harboring resentment... but now seeing his head, I also cannot help but shed tears... Since the chief has been beheaded, please, Your Highness, preserve his last dignity and let him turn to ashes in the flames..."

Hearing this, Xiulote's expression shifted slightly, and he nodded slowly. He sighed softly, then patted Ospai's shoulder again.

"Alright, as you say!... Ospai, I know you value loyalty and integrity, and I admire your talents... I will grant you the highest rank among the Prepetcha people in the lands of the lake. I treat you sincerely, you must not be double-minded again! Otherwise..."

The voice suddenly grew cold. The young king's face expressionless, he looked again towards the aged head.

Chapter 484 - Destiny's Conversation\_2

"Your Highness, I...I swear on the name of my ancestors!"

Overwhelmed, Espai trembled violently, forcibly casting himself down to the ground. His emotional defenses collapsed in a moment, fear, awe, anticipation, and gratitude surged through his heart, emerging as a choked and sobbing cry.

"From this day forward, I shall serve you unto death!"

Xiulote calmly regarded Espai for a moment before smiling. He stepped forward, grasping the Crocodile Commander's hair, and said with a gentle smile.

"I am aware of your loyalty. The night is deep, go back and rest!"

Upon hearing this, Espai hurriedly rose, bowing deeply to His Highness. He glanced one more time at the Great Chief's head, then staggered and turned to depart.

Xiolote's eyes twinkled with amusement as he watched Espai disappear from the ramparts. Only then did he slowly turn, his gaze shifting towards the two surrendered men, his smile turning icy cold.

"The Chief of Tarasco...did he leave any last words before he died?"

The old Militia watched the Great Master's expression and shuddered inside. After Ezpan translated the question, Puap respectfully bowed his head and repeated the Chief's final instructions.

"The Colima Mountain Region, the Great Chief, the noble bloodline, Prince Shatini..."

After listening to Ezpan's translation, Xiolote's gaze flickered. He mused for a moment, then sighed softly.

"To make such arrangements before death, almost planting a seed of trouble for the Alliance...such dedication from a Chief..."

The young King was stirred by complex emotions. Looking at Puap, he asked without a trace of emotion.

"Your Family Head put great trust in you, entrusting the Prince to your hands. Then, you turned around and beheaded him, bringing both the Prince and the head to us. Puap, as a loyal Samurai, do you feel any guilt?"

"I..."

Upon hearing His Highness's calm question, Puap felt both ashamed and remorseful, unable to utter a word. Fear and guilt entwined in his heart, he suddenly fell to his knees and wept softly.

"I didn't want it to be this way...it was...it was always Chiwaco who did it..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's eyebrows rose slightly as he shifted his cold gaze towards the old Militia.

"Was it you who killed your own Family Head, severing his head?"

Seeing the eyes of His Highness, Chiwaco's heart beat violently, a sense of imminent danger rising within him. The old Militia immediately fell to his knees, bowing deeply three times before raising his head and shouting urgently.

"Wise Great Master, this so-called Chief was never my Family Head, nor have I ever received an ounce of kindness from him. On the contrary, he was a cruel tiger, a greedy wolf! He destroyed my village, killed my fellow villagers, and ruined my home! He was my enemy!"



"Hmm?"

Xiulote's expression changed as he spoke.

"Enemy?"

"Yes, Great Master."

The old Militia clenched his teeth, gathering the courage to look directly into Xiulote's eyes, and spoke with sincerity.

"I was once a farmer in a village of the Lake Region. I had a hardworking wife, a fifteen-year-old son, and a thirteen-year-old daughter. Although the Tribute was heavy, we farmed and fished, and life was rather good. Corn turned into cakes for Tribute, pumpkins and beans filled our stomachs. We also grew sweet potatoes, made pots and bowls, even bricked under our house..."

Chiwaco's expression became distant as scenes of the past flashed before his eyes. He thought he had become cold enough, but now a warmth flowed within him. However, soon dark memories followed.

"Last spring during the planting, I was busy in the fields, my wife cooking with the children. The Samurai came from the Capital City for conscription. I boarded a small boat, took up a Long Spear, and before I could speak to my family, I was taken hundreds of miles north. I was stationed at the Rivermouth fortress, then the Lords boarded us onto a ship to a Great Lake where I faced a massive battle. I will never forget that scene. Fire Arrows flew across the sky, becoming exploding Fire Demons, countless ships burning, flames covering even the water!"

"The Battle of Lake Yuriria."

Xiolote's eyes sharpened; this was a veteran of the battle on the lake.

"It was terrible! When ships crashed together, they burnt together. Lords fell like cornstalks, Militia like weeds. Dozens of my fellow villagers died in that battle, leaving only a handful of old brothers. We rowed a small boat, escaped back to the Rivermouth fortress. The Alliance army soon followed. Surrounded for months, Feathered Arrows flew, the roar of the God of Thunder outside and inside the walls, Fire Demons burning on the ramparts. Lords on the ground and on the wall turned to weeds, charred by flames. Then, the Force of the God of Thunder struck, the western gate where I was stationed burst open, and the Alliance's Lords flooded in like a deluge!"

"The Battle of Rivermouth Fortress. You actually escaped alive!"

Xiolote was visibly moved. He considered the old Militia before him thoughtfully.

"I led my brothers out of the city, got a small boat, and fled south to my home. I was full of hope, wanting to escape the war and live the same life as before with my wife and children. But when I returned to my hometown..."

Suddenly, Chiwaco sobbed uncontrollably. Large tears fell from his eyes, soaking his blood-stained Black Robe.

"The village was gone...my wife was gone...my son and daughter gone! This damned Chief, thrice conscripted, not even a living dog remained in the village, just one old man who should have died but didn't! His son died too, he had no more hope. When I last ventured out, he too had perished, his body sprawled like a dog!"

#### Chapter 485 - Destiny's Dialogue\_3

"Great Master, with just a few fleeting words, the Prime Minister destroyed everything we had, and we didn't even need to face him! From that moment on, I regarded him as an enemy to the death! Tell me, what's wrong with killing him?"

Chiwaco stared with tear-filled eyes, bloodshot with desperation. Xiulote slightly lowered his gaze, avoiding the old Militia's eyes, at a loss for words.

Beside him, Puap's expression changed rapidly as memories of the past flashed through his mind. After a moment, he looked at the old Militia with shock, as if seeing him for the first time.

"Old Chi...you...you!..."

"Haha, that's right. The Hummingbird Samurai, still wouldn't let us go. A few old brothers and I were dragged into the city like stray dogs, following Great Master Huitu, tasked with guarding the city walls. Then, night and day, I searched until I found my own daughter. She... had been sent to the logistics camp... Oh... I failed her. I swore an oath to find every opportunity to avenge my wife and children!"

"The Alliance's army soon marched south, facing off against that damned King. We emerged from the city to aid them, and watched as the King's banners fell. The Kingdom's cocoa fell, and the monkeys scattered from the trees! I finally found my chance and made contact with the Alliance nobility."

"So that's how it was! On the plains of the Lake Region, the Royal Army decided to fight. Not only did you flee, but you also passed on a message."

Xiulote let out a deep sigh. Here was a tenacious old Militia, impossible to crush down.

"Great Master, we guided the Alliance into the city. Not only for your reward but also for the civilians of the Capital City! What does the outcome of the nobles' wars have to do with us humble weeds? The longer the city is besieged, the more people inside die; the fiercer the attack, the more people die on its walls. Aren't those who die in front of us just common folk to be trampled upon?"

"Great Master, the Prime Minister of the Royal Palace is the enemy of the people! He conscripts us, takes our food, sends our women to barbarians like beasts, forcing so many to their deaths! I stood tall and killed him with a clear conscience, with no guilt in my heart, only full of satisfaction and joy! And for the Alliance, with so many merits to our name, have we done anything wrong?"

Chiwaco finally knelt up straight, candidly meeting Xiulote's gaze. His face was so plain, his wrinkles so aged, with old tears twinkling in his eyes. Yet upon closer look, Xiulote found the old Militia's gaze exceptionally bright, like a profound morning star.

"Alas...the living barely scrape by...for miles no chickens crow...when the Kingdom falls, it's the common folk who suffer the most, yet no one hears their voice!"

Xiulote turned his back, his hands clasped behind him, gazing up at the night sky of the grand Capital City, watching the subsiding glow of fires, muttering to himself. The King's turbulent emotions gradually calmed. Then, he looked at Chiwaco again, his eyes mild with appreciation, his tone becoming gentle.

"Well said! Neither you nor Puap are wrong, you are both heroes of the Alliance! He led the opening of the south gate, and I promised him a hereditary noble title. You offered the gemstone and the head, what else do you want?... Speak boldly, I will try to grant it!"

Chiwaco's expression froze. He thought of his daughter, of the future life, and his straight back slowly curved again. The old Militia thought carefully for a long time before responding with sincere and cautious words.

"Great Master, I was born a farmer, at most a Militia, not cut out to be a master. I don't fancy ordering others around or being waited upon. If you ask me what I want, I only wish for a promise from you for a peaceful life! I just want to live quietly with my daughter and son-in-law, my whole family safe and secure, no longer conscripted by the Alliance or oppressed by the Samurai."

"Oh? A modest life, free from taxes and labor, peaceful for a lifetime?"

Xiulote paused, pondering for a moment, his smile growing even warmer as he continued to ask.

"Just that simple, anything else?"

"There is more, I wish for a few brothers who followed me to have a chance at life. So they won't be like wild turkeys, running wild with no peaceful home to return to. Lastly, I'd like to ask you to help look for my son. Although he's likely dead, my heart can't stop worrying..."

"Hmm, I will grant your brothers the title of nobility for their military merits. I will also dispatch people to search for your son. But..."

The young King showed a kindly smile, touching Chiwaco's hair with his hand. A long-held plan resurfaced in his mind, and this time, he had finally met the perfect candidate.

"Chiwaco, how is your swimming?"

"Swimming? You mean swimming? I grew up by the lake; my swimming is just a notch below the fish."

The old Militia felt the palm on his head, confusion on his face, but a new sense of crisis began to grow.

"Good, very good! Chiwaco, you managed to escape all the way from the northern borders and survived the great war. It seems the God of Destiny favors you! No matter the adversity, you always have a chance to survive!"

"Ah? This!... Great Master, I'm just a common Militia, and I don't fight battles..."

The old Militia hurriedly explained, only to be interrupted by the Prince's ruthless words.

"Don't worry! I'm not sending you to battle, nor right away."

Xiulote withdrew his hand, stroking the smooth Emerald. His face lit up with the smile of destiny, as if glimpsing a distant country.

"I'm just asking you, to take a long journey in the near future!"

The vast winds swept through the gradually calming Capital City, billowing black smoke into the wide sky. Carried by the wind, the smoke, like spirits riding the clouds, flew towards the distant horizon. And the King's gaze settled on the boundless south!

Chapter 486 - The Conversion Ceremony, the Enfeoffment Grand Ceremony, The End of the Western Expedition!

The sleepless night waned as the morning star appeared in the distant sky, the sky brightened, and the morning sun emerged at the end of the East. Soon, a splendid red sun rose slowly through the clouds, illuminating the boundless fields, shining upon the majestic Capital City, and bringing new light.

Xiulote smiled, admiring the beauty of sunrise, as well as the Capital City beneath his feet.

The flames in the four cities gradually subsided, only the Great Temple in the center still emitted thick smoke. The palace and Temple area were firmly under control, with thousands of Samurai gripping their weapons tightly, carrying out a meticulous search. At the top of the imposing Palace of Wind, two flags of the Mexica Royal Family fluttered high, a blood-colored Sun beside the upturned head of a Black Wolf. Not far off, the flag of the Chief Divine of the Sun Hummingbird flew.

The majority of resistance in the Capital City had been quelled. The civilian and Craftsman districts had entirely returned to order. Along the narrow streets, there were streams of marching Samurai, patrolling Spear Militia, and squads escorting spoils and captives. Only in the Nobility district, there remained the last few sturdy mansions. Dozens, even hundreds of the Nobility's private armies, leveraged the terrain, making a desperate and futile struggle.

The young King whispered a few commands, and a trusted aide left with the Jade Talisman in hand.

Soon, a group of tall Samurai hurried off, carefully cradling a sealed wooden box. Then, a series of "boom, boom" explosions rang out among the Nobility mansions, followed by piercing screams, and the last resistance finally crumbled.

Xiulote laughed loudly, lifting his head. The Sun God had ascended to the central throne, and Tarasco's Capital City, Qinchongcan City, had finally been completely pacified in his hands!

"Your Highness, congratulations on your glorious victory! You are the invincible Wolf King!"

Toltec had been there for a while now. He frowned and hid behind Bertade until he saw the Highness in good spirits, only then daring to come forward and kneel on the ground.

"Black Wolf begs for your forgiveness!"

Xiulote watched his beloved general with a smile tinged with amusement.

"Ah, beg for forgiveness? Toltec, did you capture the Head Warrior and the Prince?"

"I... did not."



The Black Wolf warrior looked ashamed and glared bitterly at Chiwaco.

"Your Highness, I fought desperately at the front, personally killing more than a dozen Samurai! Yet, to think, a despicable rat stole the fruit of victory!"

"Oh? Chiwaco, do you have anything to say?"

Facing the fierce gaze of the Black Wolf warrior, the old Militia shivered. His mind racing, he squeezed out a smile on his face.

"Mighty Black Wolf warrior, you are the jungle's leopard, wounding the running rabbit. The rabbit hid in a hole, only to be eaten by a rat, it doesn't really mean anything. Indeed, we did pick up the leftovers, we are willing to cede the credit to you, please do not take it to heart."

After hearing Chiwaco's words, Toltec's expression softened slightly. He calmed his anger, considering the old Militia's suggestion, but then deflated. He answered proudly.

"Forget it, how could I, Black Wolf, take credit from others! What is yours is yours, I, Toltec, must capture the prey with my own hands! With His Highness here, I am destined to dominate the world!"

Xiulote watched Chiwaco's response, listened to Black Wolf's reply, and smiled as he nodded. Then, setting his face sternly, he instructed Toltec.

"Toltec, you are a fierce warrior unmatched by hundreds, with thousands of elite under your command. Chiwaco is but an ordinary Militia, with barely a dozen men. Yet, he managed to take away the most important spoil before you, even without your notice!... Toltec, my Black Wolf, you need to reflect on the lessons here!"

"War is like hunting! In this battle, you had at least three issues. First, you did not lower your head to consult your guide, to understand the situation of the Palace of Wind; second, you did not pay attention to your surroundings, to keep an eye on your guide; lastly, you did not completely surround the prey, finding another passage."

"My Black Wolf, your bravery is exceptional, that is your strength! But those skilled in bravery often rely on it exclusively, thus neglecting the wisdom of the mind, and flexible tactics. People good at swimming can drown in water, those good at fighting must not rely solely on fighting!"

"My Black Wolf, last time, you went alone to hunt the hounds, and if it weren't for the Head Warrior's rescue, you would have been dead in the wild. This failure is a good lesson. I have high expectations for you... Toltec, when you can set aside your one-sided bravery, consider the whole situation before you, and make rational use of everything at your disposal, you'll become a true Commander-in-Chief! Then, I will entrust an army to you without any worries!"

"Yes, Your Highness, I was wrong."

After hearing the Highness's admonishment, Toltec hung his head dejectedly, kneeling as he acknowledged his fault. Not far away, Ezpan watched all this with eyes full of envy.

"Hmm, Black Wolf, I'm giving you another task! Take your thousand elites and continue the search for the whereabouts of the Tarasco Prince! Chiwaco and Puap are locals, they will be your deputies. Remember, consult with them often!"

Upon hearing His Highness's command, the old Militia and the Huitu warrior grimaced, bowed their heads in acknowledgment, and the group quickly departed. Xiulote turned his head to look at Bertade, his most trusted Head Warrior.

"Bertade, you take charge of pacifying the city and handling the aftermath, tally the population and the spoils. Ezpan will be your deputy and Translator. The Samurai should sheath their weapons now. Organize people to extinguish the burning Temples with sand and soil. Five days later, hold a conversion ceremony and a feudal grant ceremony in front of the Temple Square in the city center!"

Chapter 487 - Conversion Ceremony, Enfeoffment Ceremony, The End of the Western Expedition!\_2

The Head Warrior bowed and complied. The young King then turned and descended from the castle tower. He was to meet Aweit in person, report the latest situation, and discuss subsequent arrangements.

Five days hurried by, and the winds of May blew from the East. In front of the remnants of the House of Wind Temple, under the majestic reflection of the pyramid, nearly seventy thousand city residents were driven to the surroundings of the square. Twenty thousand Mexica legionnaires held shields and staves, three thousand archers occupied strategic positions, and the Temple District was tightly controlled. The atmosphere was filled with solemnity.

High atop the Akatla, a great altar was set up, and a roaring Sacred Fire was lit beneath the pyramid. Xiulote, adorned in a Feather Crown Ceremonial Dress, stood at the peak over forty meters high, overlooking the sprawling masses below like a swarm of ants. A surge of heroic spirit echoed in the King's heart, as if he held the world in his palm. Behind him, Aweit, dressed in the King's Divine Garb, sat solemnly on a golden Throne of the Gods, his face breaking into a smile as he watched the young High Priest.

Incense was thrown into the Sacred Fire, and the divine smoke that spiraled upward spread a pleasant aroma. Hundreds of War Priests began to sing sacred hymns, and their solemn praises resonated throughout the Capital City, drowning out faint cries. Subsequently, Xiulote raised both hands, and twenty thousand samurai simultaneously knelt on one knee, shouting prayers toward the pyramid.

"Praise the highest Chief Divine! Praise the majestic King! Praise the brave Highness!"

In the midst of thunderous cheers, Aweit stood up, solemnly raising the Yellow Gemstone Scepter in his hand and bellowed loudly.

"The Chief Divine has decreed His will! He has conquered the three gods, His Throne of the Gods raised high once again! The Chief Divine says, the light of the Sun encompasses the lands amid the lake, the Tarasco Kingdom perishes today! Henceforth, the people of Prepetcha are now Citizens of the Alliance, devotees of the Chief Divine, partners of the Mexica! The glorious conquest to the west has been victorious, the warriors of the divine battle, shall be blessed by the Chief Divine!... God bless the Alliance, ruling over the whole world!"

"God bless the Alliance, ruling over the whole world!"

The boiling shouts shook heaven and earth, also shaking the people of Prepetcha in the square. Twenty thousand Mexica warriors banged their shields, chanting in unison with the Priests to pray to the Chief Divine, praising His divine light.

"Praise the Sun God Huitzilopochtli! His light falls upon the earth, and also upon the hearts of the believers! He is the deity that commands all, also determining the fate of the non-believers! Offer the Sacrifices, pray for the coming of the Chief Divine!"

"Bang! Boom! Boom!" The priests poured carbon powder into the Sacred Fire, causing the flames to suddenly flare up. Then, two wooden cannons fired simultaneously into the sky, the thunderous sounds echoing throughout the Capital City. The city's residents trembled in terror, cowering on the ground in reverence of the divine power, finally praying to the Mexica's Chief Divine.

The Sacred Fire burned fiercely, the sounds of the cannons roared, and five hundred eighty-four Temple Guards dragged an equal number of captives from the Royal Family and the Nobility in front of the priests. It was the cycle of Venus, heralding destruction and rebirth. The Divine Descendant captives were dressed splendidly, bound hand and foot, with cotton stuffed in their mouths. They were the ceremonial Sacrifices, large ceramic pots were ready with tequila already poured in them.

Moments later, the priests' chanting suddenly intensified, and the warriors' cheers erupted fiercely; the residents of the Capital City widened their eyes. The sharp Obsidian Dagger traced the ritualistic arc with exceptional precision. Following that, the sublime essence rose upwards and the vibrant life descended. The great pot of Blood Wine was mixed, provided for the devoted warriors and Militia.

"Praise the War God Huitzilopochtli! He uses the blood and souls of the Sacrificers to grant courage to those in battle, promises victory to warriors, also controlling their body and mind!... Drink the Blood Wine, shine the glory of the Chief Divine!"

Guided by the Mexica warriors, over ten thousand captive Tarasco warriors, Militia, and members of the Tekos Tribe were the first to convert. Soon, the first batch of a thousand warriors knelt before the Sacred Fire, had their hair cut off by a thousand War Priests, thrown into the fire, then drank the crimson Blood Wine, reiterating their oaths of loyalty to the Chief Divine. Then, they were led dazedly to kneel aside.

Ezpan, accompanied by the Militia of royal descent, guarded the perimeter. They shouted loudly in the Prepetcha language, recounting the might of the Chief Divine, praising the future of the believers, then

threatening with the fate of the unfortunate. Hundreds of elite warriors looked somber, lowered their Bronze Axes, fresh red dripping down the blades, the consequences of non-conversion apparent.

Blue smoke rose, carrying the scent of burning hair. The Nobility and senior officers among the captives had already been led away; the remaining Soldiers could only go with the flow. Large groups of warriors poured in like a stream. They knelt, cut hair, saluted, drank, prayed, and finally withdrew. Occasional resistance and uproar were like insignificant waves, instantly turning red.

Xiulote looked solemnly from high atop the pyramid. Tens of thousands of Tarasco soldiers gathered like tiny specks of dust. Swept by an irresistible Force, they were transformed, their spirits impacted, silently scattering to the sides. In this moment, the King, high above, effortlessly controlled the life and death of everyone. This peculiar sensation was intoxicating, making one feel light and somewhat dazed.

Xiulote turned back to look at the seated Aweit. The true King appeared calm, overlooking the world, his gaze treating all people as insignificant. Only when his eyes met the young one did he nod slightly, smiling gently.

"Praise the Chief Divine Huitzilopochtli! He brings light to all who are lost, allows them to feel the warmth of the gods, and saves the souls of all!... Convert to the Chief Divine, remember His divine name!"

Chapter 488 - Conversion Ceremony, Enfeoffment Ceremony, The End of the Western Expedition!\_3

Amidst the chanting of the priests, more than ten thousand warriors had converted, prostrating themselves on the blue stone ground. Next, it was the turn of nearly sixty thousand civilians. The priests removed the Blood Wine, replacing it with lukewarm corn cakes, the fragrance of the food instantly diffusing. Another wave of restlessness emerged in the crowd. The Temple Warriors strode forward. They swung their War Clubs through the air, blew the chilling Death Whistle, and easily suppressed the commotion.

The conversion ceremony for the civilians was even simpler. A single priest could handle seven or eight people at a time. The civilians trembled as they knelt before the Sacred Fire. They cut off a lock of hair and cast it into the flames, listening to the priest's prayers. They needed to remember the name of the Chief Divine, repeat it three times, and then they could carry the corn cakes to either side.

The Sacred Fire was fed twice more, as the sun slowly set. In the glow of the sunset, the pyramid cast a slanting ephemeral shadow, covering the crowd on the ground. Countless 'ant-like' figures moved slowly, pausing before the Sacred Fire, then gathering like dust to all points of the compass. They were like the sand in the hourglass toys of the deities, silently running out.

The setting sun's blood-like hue imbued the youthful king's eyes. Xiulote slightly lowered his head, looking at his own hands, which seemed to grasp the fates of countless people.

Aweit slowly rose from his golden throne. He looked around, guards stood at a distance, kings sat high above. At this height shared by only two, he took out a newly-crafted Emerald Divine Staff and asked with a smile.

"Xiulote, my child, are you ready?"

"Aweit, I am ready."

Xiulote turned around, facing his mentor, and slowly knelt to the ground. His gaze was calm and joyful, yet his shoulders seemed ever heavier.

"The sun opens its red eyes, the Chief Divine witnesses the blood-colored future!"

Aweit raised both hands high, the priests cried out in unison, and a hundred thousand people simultaneously fell silent. At this moment, at the foot of the grand pyramid, no matter whether nobility, samurais, or civilians, all were prostrated on the blue stone ground. A hundred thousand people looked up to see the red sun sinking on the pyramid's pinnacle, the blood-colored brilliance emerging on the kings' bodies, stirring the heart. The sacred heaven and earth tightly connected at this moment, and the incarnation of the deities descended upon humanity!

"The Chief Divine witnesses! He departs with the crimson sky, leaving the earth to mankind!"

"He says, the Alliance is destined to conquer the world, kings are born to reign over all directions! The leader of the Mexica is the ruler of the world, the king of Mexica is the king of the world!"

"In the name of the Divine Descendant king, in the king's name!"

King Aweit, with a face like a deity, clasped his fists, looking down at all directions like a mighty eagle. Where the king's gaze roamed, tens of thousands in the crowd bowed their heads to the ground. They offered up heartfelt reverence and obedience to the incarnation of the deities. A smile emerged on Aweit's face, which he then reined in, once more solemn and sacred.

"In the king's name! I, Aweit, king of all, assign the land in the heart of Lake Michi to my heir, the 'Divine Revelator' Xiulote! From the Rivermouth fortress to the north, to the Tarsas River to the south, from the Xitaqualo Mountains to the east, to the endless Great Lake to the west, all shall become his fief! He shall wield the authority of both deity and king to rule over the rivers, mountains, flora, and fauna of the Lake Region, govern the cities and villages upon this land, and all its citizens, exercising a power second only to mine!"



With these words, Aweit finally approached Xiulote. A smile played on his face. He raised his right hand and passed the Emerald Divine Staff in his hand to Xiulote, letting the youth feel its cool touch. The bright Emerald Gemstone emitted a radiance of boundless wisdom, also foretelling a future without limits!

"Xiulote, I entrust to you the Divine Object of Tarasco! From this day forth, you are the king of the land within the lake!"

Xiulote nodded in salute, suppressing the excitement in his heart, and tightly gripped the Divine Staff. Then, he slowly rose, facing the hundred thousand people below the pyramid, and slowly spread his arms!

The Divine Staff raised high, the gemstone glittering, the cheers of the Mexica legion erupted in a moment! Shouts filled the Capital City, shaking the souls of everyone, until they converged into an overwhelming cry:

"Divine Revelation Priest, king of the Lake Region! Priest King!"

Chapter 489 - The Four Directions, Population, and Able-bodied Men

The June wind came from the Great Lake in the East. It traveled over the undulating highlands and journeyed two thousand miles to the basin of Patzcuaro. The air began to fill with moist vapor, signaling the imminent arrival of the rainy season to the lands by the lake.

Xiulote stood atop the Palace of Wind, gazing at the surrounding mountains, rivers, and fields. Plumes of conspicuous black smoke rose from the nearby plains, spreading like ink across the sky, leaving lingering traces. The young king watched intently for a moment before slowly turning around.

"The slash-and-burn fires this year seem more intense than in previous years."

"Fields laid fallow are severe, and there's more vegetation than in the past, so naturally, the smoke from burning them is thicker. But if you look closely at the amount of smoke, you'll realize that the lands around the lake have become desolate like saline lakes, in need of patient rehabilitation before they can once again teem with prosperous schools of fish."

Aweit responded with a smile. Dressed in a breathable plain robe, he was inspecting a wooden board in his hands. Soon, he passed the board to Xiulote with a light chuckle.

"I heard that the Capital City has fallen and Akanbaro State, to the northeast of Qinchongcan along the southern bank of the Lerma River, has sent people to surrender. This is their submission document and pictographic record."

Xiulote took the board and examined it closely. He saw six banners, each bearing sixteen feathers. In the center, there were three Samurai figures and eight Militia figures. Below these illustrations, there was a figure kneeling, head bowed, genuflecting before a larger figure. The larger figure wore a blue-green Hummingbird helmet, radiated with sunbeams, and held the characteristic Javelin of the Chief Divine. Clearly, this was a symbol of the Mexica Alliance.

"At this point, Akanbaro State still has three thousand Samurai and eight thousand Militia?"

Xiulote was somewhat surprised.

"Haha, that's just the last gobble of a turkey before it's caught."

Aweit laughed.

"The Intelligence Officer has already conducted a thorough investigation. Many of the minor Nobility from Prepetcha have also pledged their allegiance to me. After being pursued by you all along the way, Akanbaro State now has about one thousand five hundred Samurai and five or six thousand Militia. Most of the Militia were reinforcements sent from the Lake Region to the northern fortresses, but your march southward was too swift, so they stayed where they were."

"The fortresses of Akanbaro are still relatively strong, but lacking in provisions and supplies, they've never had the capability to launch an attack. Now that the Capital City has fallen and the Kingdom has perished, and with the crucial time for spring cultivation upon us, surrender has become inevitable... The difference lies only in the terms of surrender."

As he spoke, Aweit pondered for a while. He kept the number of banners unchanged, crossed out half of the feathers, and then looked up with a smile.

"All six hereditary families will be retained, but the number of Great Nobility must be halved, and they will decide among themselves who stays. Let these families fight amongst themselves for a while, and then let Tepopolo take fief over them, which is the best way to keep Akanbaro State firmly in hand."

Xiulote nodded. Then, he looked at the figure of the Militia on the board, a glint forming in his eyes.

"Aweit, since these Militia are all sturdy men sent out by the Patzcuaro Lake Region, as a condition of their surrender, they should be returned from Akanbaro State!"

"Ah, returned? Amidst ongoing conflicts, few Nobility would be willing to give up their sturdy men. However, Akanbaro State is severely short of grain now. If you provide a batch of grain, I can use it to intimidate them during the surrender, which could make them hand over half. As for the remaining half... that will be Tepopolo's future fief, and you need to leave him something."

"Good! Three thousand Militia are not an insignificant enhancement. The small city of Patzcuaro to the southeast has already surrendered to the Legion, and there's a Tarasco Kingdom military granary there. The stored grain can feed more than one hundred thousand people for a year. I don't lack grain at the moment, just sturdy men."

A smile formed on Xiulote's face.

"Oh? The small city of Patzcuaro... that must be the Tarascan supply depot for the southeastern front, for Xitaqualo State... If it's sturdy men you lack... the southeastern Legion of Tarasco has already surrendered to me in Xitaqualo. Apart from the few thousand sacrificed wounded, there are about twenty thousand Militia left, and five thousand Tekos Samurai. These people consume a lot of grain, and guarding them requires thousands of Samurai. If you can afford to feed them and keep them under control, they can all be handed over to you!"

Aweit stretched out his hand and patted Xiulote's shoulder. Then, a hint of indifference surfaced on the king's face.

"If you don't want them, I can hand them over to the elders, to be used as supplies for building the Temple and as Sacrifices for the Capital City festivities."

"Twenty-five thousand Surrendered Army!"

Upon hearing this number, Xiulote's throat twitched, and he swallowed. He carefully calculated his military forces at hand and then struggled to say.

"Give me the twenty thousand Militia for collective conversion and reorganization, and I should be able to keep them under control. As for the Tekos Samurai... these tribal forces can only be subdued with overwhelming power. The language barrier makes them difficult to govern, and they are fiercely independent... I only need a few dozen guides from the Colima Mountain Region, that's all!"

"Then it's settled. I'll send out an Envoy today; you prepare the grain supply for the journey."

In a light-hearted conversation, the two of them decided the fate of tens of thousands. Aweit smiled faintly, once again looking at his student, with a touch of examination on his face.

"Xiulote, you've been tallying the population these days. Now how many troops, sturdy men, and people do you control?"

The young king thought for a while, took out a scroll he always carried with him from his garment, and opened it to look through in detail.

"I've been moving southward from the north of the Lerma River. In the battles on the Lake and the siege on the fortresses, I've taken about five thousand surrendered Tarasco; then I captured the Huayamo Fortress and fought a major battle with the Chapala Legion, taking another seven or eight thousand, of which more than two thousand Tekos were handed over to Xilotepec City as part of the exchange for the Canine Descendants. Of the remaining more than five thousand, there are over two thousand

warriors from the Sky families and more than two thousand archers. That makes a total of ten thousand combat-ready surrendered troops."

#### Chapter 490 - The Four Directions, Population, and Able-bodied Men\_2

"Following the fierce battle with the Tarasco Royal Army, it was quite gruesome. Most of the over 3,000 captives were injured. After sacrificing the more severely wounded, only 2,000 were incorporated. After conquering the Capital City, nearly 15,000 surrendered troops were assimilated, half of whom were common folks from the Tekos Tribe. Adding the surrendered towns in the Lake Region, that totaled 30,000 surrendered troops."

At this point, Xiulote sighed.

"These 30,000 surrendered troops can also be considered as the able-bodied men of the Prepetcha people. In the fiefdom areas I control, Qinchongcan City has 60,000 civilians, of which 20,000 are able-bodied. Along the lake, there are only over a hundred thousand elderly and frail. The northern part of Lake Patzcuaro is in ruins, only the western part of the lake area is slightly better, and by my estimate, there are about a hundred thousand people, around ten thousand able-bodied. Whereas the southern part of Lake Patzcuaro is a bit better, mainly the intact state of Apachigan, but I estimate it's also no more than two hundred thousand people, forty thousand able-bodied."

"Aweit, I haven't had the chance to sort out the south. Although the state of Apachigan has already surrendered, it still largely maintains autonomy... Roughly speaking, you have given me such a large fiefdom, yet there are fewer than five hundred thousand people, a hundred thousand able-bodied. And truly under my control, there are only about three hundred thousand people, sixty thousand able-bodied."

Upon hearing Xiulote's grievances, Aweit could not help but chuckle. He reached out to the young monarch's head, and Xiulote instinctively tried to dodge but then stopped himself. Aweit gripped the youth's hair then again smiled.

"Xiulote, three hundred thousand people, sixty thousand able-bodied, what else could you possibly be unsatisfied with? When the twenty thousand surrendered militia arrive, you will have eighty thousand able-bodied, most of whom are warriors experienced in combat! In the west of this realm, you will not encounter any rival!"

At this, Aweit's gaze grew profound. He continued to smile as he spoke.

"My intelligence officer has already given me a report. The fief of Tepopolo in Apachigan has a sparse population, dense forests, merely seventy to eighty thousand people. And Iskali's Xitaqualo, with its rugged terrain and rolling hills, has also only sixty to seventy thousand people. As for the southern copper mountain region of the Alsace River, Weytamo... although the area is vast and has over a hundred thousand inhabitants, the mountain people have always been fierce and difficult to manage, and the terrain fragmented and broken, nowhere near as good as yours!"

Listening to Aweit's description, Xiulote quickly updated the map in his mind with the demographic situations of the surrounding areas. These figures, although roughly estimated and even reliant on the number of Samurai and salt consumption, were rare secrets of the age. In the entire realm, only the Mexica King, who valued intelligence and had many scouts, could understand the conditions of each state in detail.

It was a good while before Xiulote finally let out a sigh.

"Your Majesty, I am already very satisfied with my current fiefdom... It's just that I feel somewhat emotional. You gave me the essence of the Tarasco Kingdom, the entire Patzcuaro Lake region. Just a few years ago, even last year, this place had a population of a million, two to three hundred thousand able-bodied. Yet within just a year of great war, the population has halved, and six out of ten able-bodied men have perished. If it continues for another two years... the brutality of the western conquest, the difficulty of the Alliance's victory, it's clear from here!"

At these words, Aweit paused. He turned his back, walking to the balcony, gazing out over the vast lands to the east. The smoking peaks of the Divine Mountain seemed within reach, and the mountain fortresses of Xitaqualo resurfaced in his mind.

"Indeed, crossing hundreds of mountains, flying over hundreds of miles of forests, the golden eagles and red hawks battle to the death, such is the hardship of the western conquest!"

"This past year of warfare, the Southern Army lost nearly 15,000 Samurai, over 20,000 militia. Nearly forty thousand warriors perished in the lands around the lake, needing years, perhaps a decade, to recuperate fully. And the consumption of hundreds of thousands of catties of provisions has completely emptied the capital's storehouses, pushing the tribute demands to their limits. It will take years to accumulate sufficient food and supplies again!"

"A monarch's ambition flies high like an eagle, yet his gaze fixed upon the entire realm. However, neither people nor food can grow overnight, leaving only the passage of time, as the mighty eagle ages in vain!"

Aweit looked at the soaring eagles in the distant sky, exhaled deeply, and slowly shook his head.

At these words, Xiulote fell silent. He resumed scrutinizing the fresh red markings in his carry-on booklet, and after a while, he too sighed.

"The casualties of the Northern Legion were also severe. Over the year, despite my advantage in weapons and my efforts to catch the enemy off guard in field battles, we still lost ten thousand Samurai, seven thousand Militia, and had many wounded. I called up many Otomi Warriors and Canine Descendants as Mercenaries, and I used them on the frontline of the siege, thus minimizing the casualties of the Mexica warriors..."



"After this Western Campaign, the military strength of the Alliance was reduced by a full quarter, and the direct forces of the Royal Family suffered even greater losses. Indeed, we cannot launch a major military campaign again for several years. The Tarasco Kingdom has already been annihilated by the Alliance, and my next focus is to integrate and assimilate the Prepetcha people."

Hearing this, Aweit nodded. He turned his body to look at the hall of the Palace of Wind, where a mural was yet to be covered. The Divine Eagle soared in the sky, accompanied by Hummingbirds on both sides. On the ground, a group of people came from the northwest along the river, settled by the lake, built houses and towns, and their tribes flourished and expanded. And on the eastern side of the mural, the sun was slowly rising.

"The painting is quite good! The painter's skill is exquisite, no less than that of the Lake Capital City."

King Aweit laughed in admiration and then spoke somberly.

"Xiulote, my student, you have done well! The Chichimeca Canine Descendants of the north have already moved south on a large scale, and the northern Tekos Tribe is also causing trouble. The Chapala Lake Region has already suffered heavy losses, and with the casualties of the Western Campaign, the population will probably be halved. I have already received their Messenger. The new Feather Prince intends to submit to the Alliance and will soon send delegates to present gifts."

"Feather Prince Pengguari? The one I dealt with? He's sending people to present gifts?"

Xiulote remembered encountering the swift-as-wind Feather Marshal and was slightly surprised.

"Yes, he is quite a character! After the defeat in the battle with the Northern Army, he successfully led the main force of his family back and still holds the Silver Family Head. In less than half a year, he purified the Sky Family, married the legitimate daughter of the Silver Family, and then unified the entire Chapala Lake Region, proclaiming himself as a Prince and claiming to be a descendant of the Divine Eagle."

At the mention of the Divine Eagle's descendant, Aweit laughed once more.

"Now, Pengguari essentially inherits the legacy of the Tarasco Kingdom in the northwest. He controls three hundred thousand people, sixty to seventy thousand able-bodied, with the administrative center in Tzitzapan, still five hundred miles away from Qinchongcan Capital and even further from the Lake Capital City. In the short term, the Alliance has neither the desire nor the resources to launch another large-scale, long-distance campaign, so we naturally accepted his submission."

Aweit's eyes shone like burning flames. He looked at Xiulote, his expression now serious.

"Xiulote, my student! The Tlaxcala Wolfhounds are barking in the east, and I will not linger here long. I will return to the East in the coming days, but let me speak a few last words to you."

"This Western Campaign resulted in the population of the Tarasco Kingdom, originally over 1.6 million, being reduced to about one million. These six hundred thousand skeletons are the price paid for the rise of the Sun God! Groups not under the control of the Alliance, no matter how many die or are injured, need not concern us. The common people will always grow back like weeds. It is only the lands and lakes that are the foundation of everything!"

"You should patiently recuperate for a few years, win over the hearts of the Lake Region people, and train the able-bodied Prepetcha. Then take control of the south's Apachigan, and campaign against the

west's Saka and the further west Chapala Lake Region. To the southwest, there are still many Tekos Tribes and the Colima Mountain Region you constantly think of."

"Xiulote, after I return to the East, the issues in the west are yours to handle. Whether to subdue or conciliate the various factions is up to your decision. I just want peace in the west, so it doesn't affect the Texcoco Lake District. After a few more years of accumulating provisions and training a new batch of warriors, the time will come for a thorough resolution with the people of Tlaxcala!"

The long wind blew, lifting the black hair of the Kings and revealing their ambitious, dark eyes. The wind chimes at the top of the Palace of Wind swayed in the wind, ringing with a clear sound, bearing witness.