

## Civilization 491

### Chapter 491 - Submission, Army, and Farewell

June swiftly passed by a week. Two Kings sat loftily in the Capital of Qinchongcan, with thirty thousand Mexica legions intimidating every direction, and envoys of submissive regions arrived one after another.

The mountain tribes from the Weytamo copper district presented newly crafted copperware; the Great Nobility from the southwest of Apachigan submitted their declarations of submission; the Tekos Tribe from the edge of the Colima mountain region delivered the daughter of a Noble Chief; and finally, the envoys from the Chapala Lake Region arrived.

In the grand Palace of Wind, King Aweit adorned in divine attire, holding the inherited Divine Staff, received the audience of the Chapala envoy. The envoy, clad in a gem-embedded feathered long robe with a noble feather crown on his head resembling the spread wings of a mighty eagle, kneeled humbly before the two rulers of the Mexica Alliance.

"Most High Sun God King, valorous God of Death, bloodline of the Holy Eagle of Prepetcha, ruler of the Chapala Lake Region, Divine Descendant Prince Pengguari, sends greetings to the great Kings through his envoy! Admiring the greatness of the Alliance, revering the martial prowess of the Alliance, he wishes to offer his unparalleled loyalty to the Most High King!"

"Before I set out, the Prince cut his hair and dripped blood, swearing by the name of his ancestors! He vowed to spill the last drop of the Holy Eagle's blood for the Most High King, and to guard the northwestern wilderness for the great Alliance for generations. As long as the Prince lives, the fierce Chichimeca Canine Descendants shall never set foot on the soil south of the Lerma River!"

"The Prince's loyalty is visible to the divine spirits! He has already imprisoned the former queen of the Tarasco Royal Family. He presents to you gold and silver, gems, feathers, and jade artifacts, along with a

beautiful girl from the Feather Family. Among those accompanying me, there are several princes from the former royal family, all of noble blood..."

At this, Xiulote was slightly surprised. The implication of noble blood meant that they could serve as holy sacrifices for the grand celebration.

"Sun God King, as the ruler of the Chapala Lake Region, the Prince wishes to submit at your feet and battle for your glory! Please grant a noblewoman from the Mexica Royal Family to be the Prince's new wife..."

At this point, the envoy finally took out a wooden plank of submission from his chest, held it up with both hands, and presented it to the Great Tlatoani of the Mexica Alliance.

"Most High King, this is the pictorial of the Lake Region's submission, with the annual tributes listed behind it."

Aweit extended his hand, and a trusted aide took the pictorial, carefully inspected it, and then handed it to the King. After looking at it for a while, the King smiled gently and passed it to Xiulote.

"Acceptable! Let submission be converted to faith, and grant him the noble lady. Spring and Autumn tributes cannot be delayed!"

"Exalted is Your Will!"

The envoy bowed again, his face tightly pressed against the cold ground, revealing a barely noticeable slight smile.

Xiulote took the pictorial, glanced at the densely packed Feather Family banners, counted the exaggerated figures of over a dozen warriors and dozens of militia, and shook his head with a smile. He turned to the back and saw drawings of gold, silver, gemstones, jade artifacts, feathers, and robes, and figures with bound hands, yet saw no corn, beans, pumpkins, fish, wood, or stones. The young King then slowly nodded.

Although forced by circumstances, the Chapala Lake Region had shown submission, but the Alliance still had almost no influence over the area. In fact, both parties clearly understood that today's submission was merely a superficial ceremony, a bowing under military threat. Once the Alliance's main forces returned to the East, the land of Chapala would be an independent kingdom.

"The faith in the Three Gods is deeply rooted in the Lake Region, but it is not without its flaws. Hmm, the militia captured earlier, converted then released..."

Xiulote pondered for a moment, then revealed a smile as well.

The audience ceremony ended quickly, and the Chapala envoy respectfully bowed once more, then, guided by the guard, turned and departed. Yet, as he left, he inevitably raised his head and swiftly glanced at the grand murals of the Palace of Wind.

As the guard and the envoy gradually moved away, the grand hall was once again left with only the two Kings. Aweit removed his heavy crown, opened his elaborate robes, and laughed, saying.

"Pengguari is not an eagle, but rather a cunning fox. From now on, this fox is yours to deal with."

"Although the fox is cunning, it is not good at fighting. Faced with the swift Black Wolf, it is merely delicious prey cowering at home."

Xiulote, full of confidence, smiled and shook his head again.

"It's just that, this fox's den is somewhat too far."

Both laughed heartily. Their laughter echoed in the grand hall, like the loud cries of an eagle. After a long while, Aweit became serious again.

"Xiulote, after meeting the Chapala envoy, I will lead the army away tomorrow. On the way back, I will take the Northern Army's route, swiftly returning by water route.

I will meet with your father once at the Rivermouth fortress, board the Naval Forces ships of Annatri to return to the East. Then, at the southern bank of Lerma River in Akanbaro State, I will stay for two days, summon and pacify the local submissive nobility, and conduct the glorified nobility division ceremony for Tepopolo.

Eight thousand warriors, two thousand from the Noble Chief Battle Group, will head north with me. Tepopolo and the remaining fifteen hundred Royal Warriors will also travel with me to the fief. As for Marshal Iskali, he will stay here with five thousand men to guard until the end of the July spring planting when the stability of the Lake Region is confirmed, after which he will commence his journey back to the East, heading to his fief in Xitaqualo State."

Aweit's expression had become somewhat serious. A hint of worry was hidden in his eyes.

"As spring planting begins, the Militia mobilized by the Alliance are gradually dispersing, and the City-State Warriors are eager to return home. The number of troops under your command will significantly decrease, and the support capabilities of the Alliance will also diminish..."

"Xiulote, my student, the first year is the greatest challenge, you must try to establish a firm footing. From today, the four hundred Jaguar Warrior Brigade and over three thousand Royal Warriors at your command are now truly yours! You must distribute lands to them here, let the warriors take root. I will also gradually relocate their families from the Alliance."

Upon hearing Aweit's words, Xiulote was emotionally moved and nodded, then performed the gesture of a student.

"Thank you, Teacher! The legions from the western city-states have already returned East not long ago, the legions supported by the northern Otapan City-State have been dismissed, the Divine Blessing Legion from Xilotepec City will also return, and the surrendered army from Tarasco still needs time for integration... Indeed, I need a trustworthy force to suppress the various territories in the Lake Region!"

In the recent days, the counting of the legions had been completed. Now, in my hands, there are nearly a thousand trusted aides, over a thousand Temple Guards, over a thousand Longbow Militia, more than two thousand Holy City Legion, over five thousand Long Spear Militia, plus the thousands you've left to me, as well as several hundred Canine Descendant Mercenaries, adding up to fifteen thousand Mexica legions.

"This number of troops, dispersed throughout the territories, can basically maintain the stability of the Fief. As for the thirty thousand Surrendered Army from Tarasco, I have a new resettlement plan..."

"Oh? This is indeed a fresh plan, having the legion taking up the hoe... I've never thought of that... But it can only be implemented among the surrendered soldiers without political status, and it requires the Commander's sufficient prestige..."

Aweit looked curious. He listened patiently for a while, his eyes brightened, then he nodded thoughtfully.

"Not bad! Xiulote, the legions of the Alliance can conquer nations and destroy city-states, but establishing firm rule is far more difficult than conquest... This requires more nuanced and flexible governance skills, gradually controlling the hearts of the people... and food, that is the most important public sentiment, the most fundamental cornerstone of rule!"

Having said this, Aweit smiled faintly.

"Xiulote, are you sure you do not need me to leave behind the Great Nobility of the capital? They are very familiar with this land and hold considerable influence, capable of helping you quickly control everything in the Lake Region."

Xiulote shook his head firmly.

"No, Aweit, I do not need them. Take them all away!"

Aweit slowly nodded, displaying a calm smile. The fate of the captured nobility was thus decided. The Mexica King looked at his successor with solemnity.

"Good. Xiulote, since you do not need me to leave behind the Great Nobility of Tarasco, from now on, the rule over the lands within the lake will be entirely up to you! Remember, governing a nation is like taming a golden eagle, sometimes fierce, sometimes gentle, all depending on the situation, never be impatient!"

Xiulote pondered for a moment, then responded seriously with a nod.

"Yes... to conquer territory with a War Club and Bronze Axe, and then to rule with divinity and food... Aweit, I do not need the Tarasco nobility from the capital, nor do I intend to rely on the old governing system..."

"The power of a King comes from the hearts of the people, and from the people he stands upon! The Patzcuaro Lake Region has been swept clear, it is a brand new blank slate, I want to build a more centralized kingdom here, and with it, create a completely new, strong masterwork!"

Hearing this, Aweit slightly lowered his eyes and slowly nodded his head. He stepped forward and gave Xiulote a solemn hug, also leaving a parting word.

"Soar high, my mighty eagle. I will watch you fly from the nest at the peak, and wait for the day you return!"

The breeze blew, all whispers merged into the wind. The hall then fell silent, only the sound of wind chimes ringing clearly.

The next morning. The splendid morning sun rose from the eastern horizon, illuminating the majestic bluestone capital and also shining on the splendid Mexica legions outside the eastern gate. Under the reverent gaze of tens of thousands of Alliance warriors, two kings clad in sacred and solemn royal attire, held up the Divine Staff to each other, conducting a silent communion between deities.

Their silent gaze lasted a long time, until the sky was completely bright and the Sun God ascended the sky. Aweit finally gave Xiulote one last deep look, turned majestically, and departed. The Royal Banner was raised high to the north, followed closely by tens of thousands of warriors. The somber atmosphere spread across the field and gradually disappeared into the horizon's end.

Only then did Xiulote let out a gentle sigh. He raised his slightly lowered head, looking invigorated towards the sky. The golden light bathed the land, with an eagle soaring at the zenith!

"Bertade, fully supervise the spring planting affairs! Send out trusted aide messengers, see how the Surrendered Army is doing! After a while, I shall personally inspect the fields. Spring planting is currently the top priority!... Starting today, whether warriors or Militia, everyone must give their all to the spring planting!"

"Kuluka, gather the Scouts and long-distance merchants, and report back to me in detail about the situation in the Fief!"

The young King commanded sharply, the generals and trusted aides saluted in turn. Centered on the capital, countless Messengers scrambled in all directions, heading to every corner of the Patzcuaro Lake Region. As they raced along, they implemented the King's will across this reborn land!

Chapter 492 - Spring Plowing, Military Farming, and Fields

The wind of June was relentless, driving layers of cloud and mist as it rose from the Great Lake in the Gulf of Mexico. After half a month's journey, it finally arrived above the fields of the Patzcuaro Lake region, bringing with it the first rain of the rain season.

The sound of rain dropped steadily, a light drizzle fell from the sky, scattering onto the half-barren land of the Patzcuaro Lake region, softening the soil, making it more suitable for the farming tools. The fine rain danced in the air, moistening the endlessly cultivated fields, and dampening the heads of the busy young men.

The weather in June had already become hot, and thousands of young men worked collectively in the fields, like a bustling colony of ants, creating a rather spectacular scene from a distance. Most of the young men were bare-chested, wearing just a loincloth around their waists, carrying a bamboo basket on their back, and wielding a digger in their hands, maintaining their vigorous work. The fields under their feet were simply marked with sticks, divided into clear strips, each man having a set length to complete.

Old Militiaman Chiwaco used both hands to forcefully jab the digger into the field, then twisted it to create a hole finger-deep. Next, he took a few corn seeds from the bamboo basket on his back, carefully placing them into the dug hole, and then used his foot to gather the ash from burnt weeds around, roughly filling the hole—a planting spot was thus completed.

Then, the old militiaman stepped forward about half a meter and dug another hole. He had been doing this kind of farming work for over a decade and was extremely familiar with it. Picking it up again now, he felt a heartfelt fondness and tranquility.

The gentle rain caressed, and a light breeze lingered, and half a day passed swiftly. The old militiaman had continuously worked over a hundred steps before finally straightening his back, leisurely sighing. He looked up at the cloudy sky, wiped the rain and sweat off his face with his hand, and shook his hands vigorously. Then, he turned his head to look back at Weizti, who was lagging behind.

"Dumb log, pick up the pace! It's getting darker over the horizon, and the rain is likely to get heavier. Let's finish up today's work and rest under the shed together."

"Um, okay."

Weizti, wrapped in a headscarf, glanced at his uncle. Despite his small frame, he worked much faster than his younger counterpart in the fields. He responded dully and continued to dig with the stone knife tip of his digger.

"This scene, it's so bustling! Just like a huge swarm of bees."

The old militiaman, resting his feet, surveyed the surroundings. He first saw the crowd of busy young men and clicked his tongue in admiration. Then, tilting his head, he looked at the long strip of land he had cultivated.

This type of narrow strip had recently been designated by the Great Master, called "mou;" it was further dictated that a step to the left and right counts as one "step." Each mou is 240 steps long and one step wide, marked beforehand by the Great Master's men with wooden sticks, and each mou spaced half a step apart. The young men just need to keep their heads down and work in a straight line. The planting of each mou remained the same as before: first corn, then beans, and finally squash.

Chiwaco was an old farmer. He stretched out both hands, carefully calculated for quite a while, and roughly figured it out. In a normal year, on regular land, the yield of one mou would be around eighty or so pounds, mainly of corn, with beans as a secondary crop, and squash as an addition, with squash

leaves also being edible as vegetables. The spacing for planting corn had to be large enough to ensure each plant had space; otherwise, they wouldn't develop ears.

Overall, the yield of a field fluctuated with the soil and was also related to precipitation, fertilizer, light, and heat. On the fertile lands near the lake, the yield would notably increase by twenty percent, whereas on the poor soils of the mountain areas, it would decrease by twenty percent. The tropical region didn't lack sunlight or heat, so generally, the biggest limitation was precipitation.

In terms of precipitation, the Patzcuaro Lake region was a highland valley, similar to the Sichuan Basin, and had an annual rainfall similar to the Lake Texcoco region, ranging from 1000-1500 millimeters. The mountain ranges on both sides contributed to streams that converged here, so agricultural production was not lacking in water, but the distribution of rainfall was uneven, posing the danger of seasonal flooding.

The climate here was of the tropical grassland type, with an average annual temperature in the twenties, distinctly divided into dry and wet seasons. During the peak of the rainy season in August and September, the area of Lake Patzcuaro would visibly expand, so planting near the lake required extra caution, either by constructing slightly elevated fields or, like the Mexica, building floating gardens on the water.

As for the fertility of the fields, in this era lacking iron farming tools and large domestic animals, and thus unable to plow deeply, it was only possible through natural fertilizers and the practices of fallowing and slash-and-burn. The large spacing required for planting corn, along with the use of beans for nitrogen-fixation, was to maintain an adequate supply of nutrients.

"Hmm, the yield from four mou of land, over three hundred pounds of grain along with field vegetables, just enough to sustain a young man for a year. Is this what the Great Master was talking about, 'one stone'?"

At this thought, Chiwaco lifted his head and counted the long strips he needed to complete, which just happened to number ten. The old militiaman let out a deep breath. He murmured a complaint, but his face showed a smile.

"That's tough, one young man farming ten mou! When it comes to harvest time, he's likely to be as exhausted as a fish out of water, collapsed on the shore. But oh, I really look forward to seeing that harvest scene!"

"Uncle, I'm done. This work is more exhausting than what we used to do in the village, let's take a break!"

Chapter 493 - Spring Plowing, Military Farming, and Fields\_2

Weizti finally caught up with the progress. Panting, he dragged Chiwaco to the pavilion between the fields. The neatly organized fields were clearly demarcated, with a large thatched pavilion every some distance. Inside the pavilion, there were several large barrels and a corner piled with farming tools and seeds, with a simple altar for the Chief Divine in the center. It was raining today, and the sun wasn't too fierce. Once the rain stopped, it would be impossible to work under the midday sun; they would have to rest in the shade.

As the two approached, they could see two Mexica samurai sitting cross-legged on the ground chatting idly in the pavilion. The weather was indeed hot, so they were not wearing armor, just holding war clubs, with sharp bone whistles hanging around their necks. These two samurai were supervisors of this area of fields. They were responsible for overseeing the work of the men, guarding the Chief Divine altar, and also looking after the farming tools, water buckets, and seeds in the pavilion.

"You..."

Seeing someone approaching to rest, one of the young samurai looked up and was about to scold them. However, the older samurai quickly stopped him, pulling his arm.

"Let them rest... They've made great achievements, seen His Highness... Supposedly, they're to be ennobled as nobility!"

The young samurai swallowed the rest of his words. He gave a couple of looks and then turned his head away, muttering resentfully under his breath.

"Just some Prepetcha militia who betrayed their old master, with no exceptional martial arts, and yet they're to be ennobled as nobility of the Alliance, standing above us!... Ah, His Highness said he would distribute lands as rewards to us, so why is there still no movement? Instead, we samurais are tasked with watching over these mundane field chores."

"When has His Highness ever made a mistake? No matter the background, whether one is a traitor or not, rewarding contributions is His Highness's constant practice... Recently, hasn't His Highness already handed down rewards of gold and silver cloth, promoted our samurai ranks? Now with a shortage of laborers, if we were indeed given fields, would you farm them yourself?... We just need to follow His Highness's orders!"

"His Highness is, of course, never wrong. It's just that gambling is forbidden in the military, there's not much fun in the city, and even women are drafted to work... These gold and silver coins are of little use in our hands!... As samurais of the Alliance, we must seek our prospects on the battlefield. As long as we collect enough captives and severed heads, make enough merits, we can eventually become nobility by military service!... What kind of future can one have by sticking around in the fields."

Upon hearing this, the older samurai also sighed. His eyes showed a longing for battle, like a wolf with hidden fangs, enduring in silence, yet he continued to pacify his companion.

"Keeping gold and silver in hand, even if it can't be spent here, can be used in the markets of the Alliance's hinterland. When our families relocate from the hinterland of the Alliance, we all need to establish our foundations here. Building residences, acquiring herbs, purchasing slaves; each requires a significant amount of wealth..."

"As for making merits, following His Highness, do you fear not having opportunities to earn them? After fighting this campaign in the west, everyone is quite exhausted, deserving some rest. Once the autumn harvest is complete, we can go out to conquer again and capture more laborers and food!"

The young samurai nodded, his face showing an expectant smile. By this time, Chiwaco and Weizti had already entered the pavilion. The Mexica samurai greeted them briefly, then fell silent, stopping their conversation.

Chiwaco's old face smiled in return. Then, he went to the barrel, scooped out some water with a wooden ladle, and drank directly from it. The ice-cold water flowed down his throat, dispelling the heat from his body and even carried a bit of sweetness and saltiness.

This water was fetched by laborers from a nearby deep well, stored in wooden barrels, and transported here in the morning by a new type of wheeled cart. The Great Master had ordered that no one should drink lake water during the rainy season at will; everyone must drink well water or clean stream water. The Alliance never lacked salt, with large salt fields near the Capital City, so the Great Master had ordered laborers to add salt to the water to better sustain the workers' strength.

As for that type of wheeled cart, an old militiaman had also curiously inspected it closely. This type of single-wheel cart could move freely on the muddy plains of the Lake Region, but it was uncertain in the forest with intertwined tree roots. The cart had two wooden handles, a flat box for carrying loads, and a large wheel below. The center of the large wheel was hollow, supported by evenly cut wooden rods and secured by two rings of shiny bronze nails... Anyway, it looked time-consuming and labour-intensive, definitely requiring bronze tools to make; it was also expensive, seemingly something used by the Lords.

Beside the old militiaman, Weizti took a few quick sips of water and then went to the center of the pavilion to the altar. The altar was piled up with wooden and stone blocks, displaying the Mexica Chief Divine's sun emblem, surrounded by rings of dried grains, mainly corn kernels, bean pods, and pumpkin seeds.

Weizti bowed his head, silently praying in his heart, reciting the name of the Chief Divine, praying for this year's harvest.

Normally during spring plowing, the village priests would lead everyone in praying to the God of Harvest. Now that the Alliance managed everything, Mexica priests also toured to perform ceremonies. It was said that the Chief Divine was very powerful, capable of taking care of everything, including the harvest... it was somewhat doubtful, but praying seemed better than not, so let's see what this autumn's yield would be like.

The two rested for a quarter hour, then continued back to their work in the fields, busy until dinner time. By then, the rain had slightly eased, and the clouds had thinned somewhat. The sun hid behind the clouds, staining the dark edges of the clouds with a stunning red glow, emanating an inexplicable charm.

Chapter 494 - Spring Plowing, Military Farming, and Fields\_3

This day was a non-stop grind, and they only managed to cultivate just over an acre. Ten acres would require five or six more days of toil.

Chiwaco wiped his sweat and picked up the tip of the digging stick. In less than two days, the stone blade had worn down significantly, needing a replacement midway. Fortunately, it was said that the Great Master had made arrangements early, and the craftsmen in the city were forging spare farming tools using bronze, continually supplying them to the able-bodied men cultivating outside the city.

The old Militia had used bronze Long Spears and knew that this metal was quite durable. However, production was scarce and the cost was high, so they were always prioritized for tools and weapons. As for bronze farming tools, they couldn't count on them just yet.

In reality, digging holes for planting was not too bad. There was no need to plow, and stone digging sticks worked just as well. The real exertion came during harvest with the sickles; having sharp sickles could save a lot of effort. And when it came to sharpness, the Alliance's Obsidian blades were the sharpest, even faster than ordinary bronze blades. However, the sources of Obsidian Stone were limited, it wore out quickly, and the cost was also very high.

The old Militia walked leisurely along the ridges, mind wandering aimlessly as he looked towards the horizon. The able-bodied men around him finished their work one by one, forming groups on the way back. They chatted about the day's meals, causing a commotion over the fields. Now and then, someone greeted Chiwaco with a bow, and the old Militia smiled back.

The Mexica Samurai maintained the order of the ranks as they returned together, leaving only a duty-bound worker in the pavilion. This worker had to sleep in the fields overnight to guard them. If any agricultural tools were lost or the altars damaged, it would result in severe punishments including hair cutting, whipping, or even beheading.

Such tedious tasks of course wouldn't fall to Chiwaco. He was now a Camp Commander in the fortification army, commanding a Militia brigade of two hundred men. Yes, the able-bodied men were all part of the Tarasco Surrendered Army, now arranged by the Great Master to engage in collective farming. They were organized in the form of an army, lived in communal camps, had to get up on time every day for prayer, breakfast, farm work until evening, followed by another prayer, dinner, and then rest back in their tents.

This life was essentially farming in military style and feeding themselves, with surplus food serving as military provisions for campaigns. The number of Surrendered Army personnel was calculated in the tens of thousands, now scattered in units of a thousand men each, divided into thirty fortified camps.

Each camp's officers were composed of Mexica Samurai, Mexica Militia, honored Tarasco Surrendered Generals, or earlier Tarasco Surrendered Soldiers.

Puap now led one of these thousand-man camps, and most of his old comrades were also leaders of two-hundred-man squads, except for Weizti who had given up his squad leader position to quietly follow the old Militia.

The crowds gathered at the end of the fields and then roughly split according to different battalions, noisily heading back to the camp. The squad leaders shouted loudly, the able-bodied men marched amidst the shouting and chaos, maintaining basic order with difficulty.

The old Militia led his own battalion, cajoling like he was leading a flock of turkeys. After several days of collective labor, these able-bodied men had started to follow basic rules. At least they wouldn't stop halfway, urinate on the spot, or chase wild rabbits in the bushes. This might also be due to the effect of the Mexica Samurai's whips.

At the very front of the column, Puap marched with a stern face, leading the fortified camp. Finally having become a hereditary Great Nobility, he still had to lead his subordinates in this strenuous fieldwork. Huitu Puap was now full of complaints, but didn't dare show it, as this task was a strict mandate from the Prince and highly valued.

A few days ago, when spring plowing began, the Prince even went down to the fields himself, leading a group of high-ranking Commanders and generals, each planting just over an acre. A Legion Commander, who was particularly good at farming, even managed to plant two acres in the same amount of time. Since the Prince and the Commanders had personally set an example, the officers at all levels naturally did not dare to slack off, at least until this wave of enthusiasm passed.

Huitu Puap thought about the good days after this wave would pass, and a smile slowly spread across his face, but he was met by a group of neatly arranged fortified army troops coming his way.

Seeing the march of the opposite army, Puap's countenance became serious. After a brief assessment, he identified that this was a purely Samurai-involved thousand-man camp. Among the thirty fortification camps, about five such Samurai camps existed, all consisting of surrendering Tarasco Samurai from previous battles. The troops in front of him were particularly disciplined, led by the young Family Head of the "Sky," Oorta.

Oorta's face was also grim, like a creditor coming to collect debts. His followers were his own family's Samurai, who arrogantly claimed unity and cohesiveness. The Prince hadn't split and reassembled them.

In the last two days, terrifying news had come from the northwest: the two-hundred-year-old Sky family had been completely eradicated by the Feathers Prince, vanishing into thin air in the Chapala Lake Region. The Prince had personally summoned the Sky Family Head, kindly soothing him and even promised a Mexica noblewoman in marriage, allowing the Sky family to establish its roots in the Alliance.

In the face of the Prince's consolation, Oorta responded gratefully, yet his face could not show a smile. A deep hatred accumulated in his heart, constantly craving for revenge and battle, looking forward to the day when he could campaign against Chapala.

Under their Commanders' lead, the two fortified camps gradually approached each other. Puap measured for a moment, then stopped his steps, signaling for the Sky Samurai to pass first. Oorta proudly nodded and moved on, only to recall something after a few steps and turned back to face the Huitu warriors.

"Huitu Puap?"

"Respected Sky Family Head." Puap's expression changed, but he first bowed his head in greeting.

As an aristocratic-born, Oorta then bowed in return. He forced a stiff smile, looking at the newly established nobleman before him.

"Huitu Noble, there's a favor I must ask of you, please do not refuse."

"Speak."

"The Prince has ordered us to fortify our lands, and each man in the camp must complete ten acres, a total of ten thousand acres for a thousand-man camp."

"Indeed,"

"My camp is composed of Samurai, not skilled in farming chores. Could you possibly send some seasoned farmers among your able-bodied men to assist us somewhat?"

Puap paused for a moment before nodding with a smile in agreement.

"No problem, it's only natural."

"Good!"

#### Chapter 495 - The Roots of Dominion, Directly Governed Villages

The July rains fell softly, so warm and unhurried. A fine mist moistened everything: lush plants flourished in the mountains, birds chirped joyfully in the forests, and new sprouts dotted the fields with green—all bustled with the vitality of early summer.

Xiulote, draped in his thatched raincoat, stood quietly in the rain by the shore of Lake Patzcuaro.

He looked up at the overcast sky. The pitter-patter of raindrops formed intermittent lines, drifting onto the cloud-enshrouded mountains and then flowing down to form streams in the valleys. He turned his gaze toward the stream at the base of the mountain. The clear brook flowed gently, nourishing the burgeoning shrubs along its path and the freshly tilled farmland.

The young King's eyes moved across the orderly fields before finally settling on the village by the lakeshore.

"Let's go, let's take a look over there."

Xiulote commanded in a deep tone. Bertade nodded and hurried off with a few dozen trusted aides to inspect the village first. Meanwhile, over a hundred Samurai, cloaked in capes and wielding shields and axes, stood guard beside His Highness.

"Be careful not to step on the new sprouts!"

Xiulote ordered loudly before slowly crossing the ridges between fields. He bowed his head to observe the cultivated acres on both sides, carefully inspecting the new sprouts and estimating the timing of the planting.

Once corn seeds are sown, they absorb water and germinate within a week, given appropriate soil temperature and moisture conditions. The germinating sprouts first send out roots, spreading three or four primary roots deep into the surrounding soil, and then reach upwards with their shoots.

Thinking this, Xiulote squatted down, carefully measuring with his fingers. He then grabbed some sandy loam from the field, feeling its texture and viscosity, and nodded in approval.

At this stage, the corn sprouts had just begun to emerge, about the length of a little finger, with the first pair of cotyledons yet to unfold, still encased in a tubular shape. The gathering rainwater flowed through the fields, past the young corn sprouts, causing them to lean slightly.

"The seeds have only germinated for a week... which means planting was completed two weeks ago... just before the heavy rains. Good enough!"

Xiulote gazed at the tender sprouts, lost in thought. If they were to grow for another week, the roots would firmly anchor into the soil, and the cotyledons would open into a heart-shaped leaf form. Only then would the corn sprouts be fully developed and less likely to be damaged by heavy rains... But when too much water penetrated the soil, it would decrease the oxygen, damaging the crops' roots. This also required deeper and longer roots to overcome...

All in all, farming activities needed to align with rain and temperature. This year's spring farming was indeed a bit late... Fortunately, on his way here, it seemed that the settlements around the Capital City, both military and civilian, had roughly completed their cultivation tasks, which should not affect the autumn harvest.

As Xiulote pondered, Bertade quickly returned from the village and stood by silently. Looking up, the Head Warrior gave a serious nod. The young King then rose, brushed the sandy loam from his hands, and strode toward the village.

The village chief, Priest, and villagers were already waiting at the entrance to the village, forming a dense crowd, surrounded by dozens of supervising trusted aides and accompanied by a Translator. The Tarasco language and Mexica language are not much different, with many similar words and pronunciations. Even without a Translator, Xiulote could roughly communicate with the people of Prepetcha.

Seeing the distinguished His Highness approach, everyone simultaneously bowed down in salute. Xiulote, with a calm expression, nodded and gestured with his hand, signaling the Priest, village chief, and Militia Captain to rise and speak.

This was one of over eighty villages in the Patzcuaro Lake region, located on the North Coast of the Great Lake. The village was large and used to be populous and prosperous. However, last year, the village suffered multiple levies by the Tarasco Kingdom and was later harassed by a defeated army, leaving it severely damaged.

After the capture of the Qinchongcan Capital, Xiulote accounted for 60,000 civilians in the city, nearly half of whom were refugees from the countryside. The young King organized these 30,000 people, together with the over 100,000 vulnerable populations around the Capital, into villages around the Lake Region. He then directly appointed Priests to manage them, establishing them as communities directly under his jurisdiction. Each community village had a sizeable population of around 2,000 inhabitants, totaling approximately 80 communities with about 160,000 people.

Community management was a Mexica tradition, which was the backbone of the Alliance's strong ability to mobilize. The essence of community cultivation was structured household registration, rigorous oversight of farming, and command of agricultural activities. However, Xiulote lacked reliable grassroots administration and low-level Priests proficient in accounting. Therefore, the organization of the communities had just begun and remained at a very rudimentary stage.

The young King had simply dispatched newly trained, low-level Priests to various community villages, selected local chiefs, and supported them with stationed Militias, barely managing to control the 150,000 to 160,000 rural people surrounding the lake.

Therefore, in the community village before him, the highest authority was the village Priest directly under His Highness, who could communicate with superior Priests, oversee religious activities, tax collection, and the proclamation of edicts; next was the locally selected village chief, usually from a family with many mouths to feed, who practically managed agricultural production, coordinated village affairs, and inspected communal storage; lastly, the appointed or selected Militia Captain, holding the village's military power, maintained the safety of the village, guarding the warehouse, and dispatched tribute teams on schedule. Of course, in an Alliance that revered military strength, the political status of the village chief and Militia Captain was actually roughly equal.

#### Chapter 496 - The Roots of Rule, Directly Governed Village\_2

Under such grassroots construction, the old nobility's influence, along with their bodies, were completely erased by the devastating national war. New civilian administrators were able to emerge and become the managers of the village, striving to implement the will from the power center... meaning, the degree of centralization had further increased.

Seeing the sign from His Highness, the three power-holders in the village once again bowed respectfully, and then carefully stood up. The village Priest softly called out, and two young girls came forward, heads lowered, to offer fresh wreaths to His Highness.

Xiulote smiled slightly and tilted his head. The Head Warrior then took the wreath and handed it to the Escort beside him. Next, the young King gazed solemnly at the middle-aged Priest.

"Take me to see the village's altar. How is the spring cultivation sacrificial rite? Are the dawn and dusk prayers completed on time? Have the Alliance's religious laws been recited?"

The middle-aged Priest, half-bowing yet displaying a hint of a Warrior's demeanor, came from the Alliance. He had undergone five years of military training in his youth and was also skilled in combat. Fluent in both Tarasco and Mexica, he was at the far end of the great tree of the Alliance's rule.

"Respected Priest-King, the spring cultivation rites were grand. According to the latest directives of the High Priesthood, the Chief Divine has replaced the God of Harvest, without erecting statues, only leaving an Emblem... Prayers are held communal in the morning and evening, and although the villagers were somewhat confused, they are now gradually getting on the right track... The busy farming season just ended, and I've just finished reciting the merits of military promotion by the Alliance, encouraging cultivation and fertility... Your Majesty, the altar is here."

As they spoke, they arrived at the center of the village. There stood a stone and wood altar, two meters in height, with a large wooden Emblem of the Sun Hummingbird atop, nearly four meters in total height. Around the altar lay various grains, as well as some sacrificial feathers, birds, and small beasts.

Xiulote watched for a moment, his face revealing a slight smile. With religion at the core of the Alliance's rule, the altar was crucial to both divine right and public opinion.

"The Chief Divine is bright and merciful... preservation of manpower should be maximized; sacrifice birds and beasts... even in major festivals, do not sacrifice humans."

The young King commanded solemnly, the middle-aged Priest blinked and nodded seriously. Then, Xiulote turned to the village chief who followed him.

"How well was the village's spring plowing done? Was the required acreage achieved? How was the collection of manure? How is the village's granary construction?... Everyone in the village must participate in labor, and you are no exception!"

The elderly village chief nodded repeatedly, his face's wrinkles blooming like a flower. He replied lowly and respectfully.

"Yes, yes! Your Highness, I have personally led everyone in cultivation, not resting for a moment. The village's spring plowing was completed three weeks ago, without delaying the farming time!"

Hearing this, Xiulote frowned slightly, but said nothing. He simply glanced lightly at the old village chief. The latter shuddered slightly and continued.

"As per your instructions, the able-bodied men in the village need to cultivate eight acres, adult women six acres, and the elderly and frail four acres. Additionally, a few craftsmen were specially arranged to repair damaged farming tools... Outside the village, a pit was dug to collect manure, which is also used as a communal toilet. Everything is guided by the Priest, and we are also making compost... The village's granary is somewhat damaged, being filled with earth and stone, and will soon be repaired."

The old village chief led Xiulote to the front of the granary. This was a robust brick and stone building, usually the most important building in a village. Due to the lack of metal farming tools and plowing animals, villages in Central America mostly still maintained a collective village system, somewhat similar to the well-field system of the West Zhou dynasty. The villagers needed to work collectively, then centralize most of the harvest into a public granary for storage during barren years, and subsequently,

the village administrator was responsible for the allocation of granary food, paying the Lord's tribute, and arranging villagers' labor.

Under Bertade's escort, Xiulote entered the granary. He looked at the corners of the room smeared with mud and the rainwater seeping into the warehouse, then touched the slightly damp clay floor, and slowly shook his head.

"This won't do! The granary must be waterproof, and the foundation needs to be paved with brick and stone!"

Xiulote pondered for a while. He looked at the frightened old village chief and reassured him.

"This is not your fault. I will soon build a large kiln around the Capital City for firing building bricks. When that happens, you can send someone directly there to get bricks for repairing the granary... But, these bricks must be used on the granary, and the granary must be completely waterproof! Otherwise..."

Hearing this, the old village chief immediately prostrated himself, repeatedly assenting. Xiulote nodded, then strode out of the granary. Next, he beckoned and walked away with a hint of a smile on his face.

"Come here. Are you a militia under Ezpan's command? How are things going here?"

The Militia Captain set down his spear, approached Xiulote empty-handed, and then dropped to his knees with a thud to pay his respects.

"Your Highness, I pay my respects to you! Yes, I am a militia under Captain Ezpan's command. The captain often says that you are our only sun!"

"I am doing well here! I married a local wife, raised a flock of turkeys, and even got a large house... Oh, about the village... Now I have five militiamen who followed me here, and another twenty local able-bodied men recruited to protect the whole village... When harvest time comes this year, I will lead them to deliver the tribute to the capital city!..."

Xiulote listened patiently and nodded slightly. A village of two thousand people, with five seasoned militiamen and twenty ordinary militiamen, along with the authority of the priesthood and the village leader, could almost maintain basic order and catch sporadic bandits. After all, this was the heart of the Lake Region, not the borderland ravaged by the Canine Descendants. The village's militiamen could take an extra ration from the storage to sustain several training sessions a month.

"Very good!"

After hearing the Militia Captain's story, Xiulote smiled and nodded. He raised his hand to take a red cloak from a trusted aide, and personally handed it to the Militia Captain. The captain, somewhat excited, draped the cloak over himself and then knelt to pay his respects.

"Your Highness... Marshal! When will the legion march again? I want to fight valiantly for you and also to rise as a respected senior samurai!"

At these words, Xiulote's eyes twinkled with amusement and admiration. He stepped forward, kindly patted the Militia Captain's shoulder, and spoke with a smile.

"There's no need to rush, just patiently root down in the village and maintain good order in the community. You are the cornerstone of the Alliance... There will be many opportunities to go on expeditions later..."

Afterward, Xiulote continued his tour around the village. He stood outside, looking at the villagers' humble and cramped thatched houses and peered inside through the doorways. The expression of the young king grew serious; the limitations of the era restricted the development of productivity, leaving the lives of ordinary people merely to struggle for existence.

The young king issued no further orders but only stood in front of the altar for a while, then gazed at the wooden emblem of the Sun Hummingbird. The towering hummingbird spread its wings, flying toward the hopeful sun. Then, under the escort of his aides, Xiulote turned and left, not stopping until he disappeared at the end of the fields. Only then did the prostrate villagers rise, their faces showing divine-like reverence.

Rumors had already begun to spread unconsciously around the royal city that the king, embodied as a high priest with the Emerald Divine Staff, foresaw all futures...

Xiulote returned through the drizzle. He passed through the sturdy city gates, traversed the empty streets of the capital city, and returned to the magnificent Palace of Wind, all the way to the grand hall. Two painters, who had been working, immediately set down their brushes, paid their respects to his Highness, and bowed out.

The young king briefly surveyed the wall murals, which were being altered. The Prepetcha people, led by the Sun Hummingbird, had come to the fertile lakeside. Then, they joined the powerful and tolerant Mexica Alliance, with their Mexica kin, they built the magnificent Qinchongcan City. The existence of the "House of Wind" pyramid stood as a testament to the Chief Divine descending to the mortal realm, issuing decrees, and completely merging the two clans!

Then, Xiulote took off his raincoat, wiped off the rainwater, and sat down at a wooden table to examine the latest album.

Kuluka the Monkey busily helped hang his Highness's clothes and brought over a cup of honeyed hot cocoa, then sat cross-legged beside him.

"Monkey, have all the latest scout reports been delivered?"

"Yes, Your Majesty, they're all here... Your fief is truly vast!"

At this, Kuluka took out a large wooden board, carefully handed it to Xiulote. The young king looked at the densely marked board, studied it for a moment, and a satisfied smile finally appeared on his face!

#### Chapter 497 - Fief, Farmland and County System

"From the Rivermouth fortress in the north to the Tarsas River in the south, from the mountains of Xitaqualo in the east to the mountains of Saka in the west... This vast land is my fief!"

Xiulote laughed heartily, revealing his pearly white teeth. The smile of the young king was handsome, and within that handsomeness lay a touch of solemn majesty. He stretched out his finger, tracing the edges of the atlas, etching the hills and rivers, villages and towns into his mind, as well as comparing them with the memories of his journey to the west.

"The fief stretches from north to south between two rivers, sandwiching two lakes; from east to west, from mountain range to mountain range. The climate here is of a tropical savanna with clear distinctions between dry and wet seasons, and the terrain is largely flat highland. Between the crisscrossing mountains and rivers, the highland dips to form a natural chain of lakes. Around these lakes rivers

converge, forming the Lake Region. The land around the lake is fertile, much like the Bashu Basin; the rivers have well-defined courses, similar to the plains of Guanzhong."

The young king perused the map, extracting information, while using the memories of his later years to understand and integrate it.

Administration of the fief required specific data for support; governance must never be based on whimsical guesses. Though the figures estimated from sampling surveys in various places were imprecise, they played an essential role in guidance.

Xiulote looked over his fief, first estimating its specific area.

"At this time, the fief around the lake in my hands is approximately the size of three states. Roughly one hundred kilometers from east to west, and more than one hundred and fifty kilometers from north to south, covering an area of about 15,000 square kilometers, which is almost one-tenth the size of Henan."

Xiulote's fingers moved across the map. He touched the blue markers for the lakes, also gauging the green-marked plains around them. These areas were fertile and flat, mostly already cleared for farmland.

"This land is the essence of the Tarasco Kingdom, with the most prosperous Patzcuaro Lake region at the center, the once densely populated Cuitzeo Lake region to the north, and the trade-rich North Coast of the Tarsas River to the south. In this era, populations always cluster near water sources, relying on rivers and lakes. On this 15,000-square-kilometer land, there once resided a million people, making up sixty percent of the Tarasco Kingdom's population."

Thinking of this, the young king scrutinized the map again. Drawing on all the information that had converged, he roughly estimated the agricultural land area of the fief.

"In this fully cultivated prime area, the arable land area, which has been cleared by slashing and burning is roughly one-quarter to one-third of the fief's total area, that is, 4,000 to 5,000 square kilometers."

"Currently, the adult men are not tall, with slightly smaller strides. One step to the left and right makes one stride, with a stride length of about 1.3 meters. One acre is 240 stride-lengths by 1 stride-width, that is,  $1.3 \times 1.3 \times 240$ ... Hmm, 405 square meters. Therefore, ten thousand square kilometers is about twenty-five million acres, just under. The number of acres of cultivated land in my fief is between ten to twelve million acres!"

Xiulote paused for a moment, rapidly calculating with a charcoal pencil in his hand. Kuluka watched from the side, covertly learning the weird numbers often used by His Highness. Moments later, the young king calculated the acres of the fief's land. He looked at the numbers at the pencil tip, his spirit invigorated, and he continued to estimate further.

"Most of the fief practices Milpa agriculture, uses slash-and-burn methods, sows with wide spacing, and crops are intermixed. There is no deep plowing or substantial fertilization. Apart from the fertile land a few miles around the lakes, most agricultural land requires burning and fallowing... Thus, in each farming season, the actual cultivable land is roughly... slightly over five million acres!"

After calculation, Xiulote pondered for a while. He was always diligent in matters of field cultivation, accustomed to personally inspecting the fields and often gathering old farmers to inquire.

The current density of farming is low, corn breeding has not reached the peaks of later generations, and with beans and squash, the yield per acre of Milpa is about eighty pounds or more. Because corn's

nutritional value is somewhat low, the yield from four acres is needed to sustain an adult male for a year. For this unit, Xiulote referred to the data from the Neon Warring States period, and defined it as one "shi," which is about 320-350 pounds of grain.

"My fief has over five million acres of farmland. If there is sufficient labor to cultivate it, at the current level of technology, the annual yield is roughly 1.3 million shi. In other words, hmm, I am also a lord of a million shi!"

The idea unexpectedly popped into the young king's mind. He couldn't help smiling. This time he had put great effort into planning, redrawing the agricultural system, dividing steps, acres, shi. Then, relying on these data, he organized military and civilian settlements, naturally with grand ambitions, thinking of establishing foundational laws for the fief!

Without iron farming tools or large draft animals, a farmer's ability to cultivate is greatly limited. In the Celestial Empire, where cultivation is meticulous with only human labor, a strong farmer could at most manage five acres. Iron implements can reduce physical exertion and allow for deeper plowing. Oxen and horses can at least double or triple this figure.

Thus, in early Tang, twenty acres per adult male were considered the limit for effective cultivation. With iron implements and oxen, twenty acres in the northern plains with one harvest per year; and for southern rice paddies with two harvests per year, ten acres per person.

In Xiulote's fief, the size of an acre is roughly the same as those in the Celestial Empire, just slightly smaller. The planting density of the crops, however, is only one-third to one-half that of the Celestial Empire farmers. Due to the diversity of crops, the busy farming time is extended by about twice.

Accordingly, the maximum farming area for a strong adult is around eight to ten acres. The normal annual harvest is between two to two and a half shi, enough to support two adult males, or to support one while the rest acts as tribute and reserves for lean years.

#### Chapter 498 - Fief, Farmland and County System\_2

It was precisely by relying on these data that Xiulote was able to outline the details of military and civilian settlements and roughly plan future tax levels, envisioning the direction of further reforms.

Military settlements would farm 10 acres per able-bodied man and contribute 2.5 dan of grain, with the surplus provided to the troops. Civilian settlements would farm 8 acres per able-bodied man and contribute 2 dan, half for self-sustenance, and the remaining three-fifths as tribute, two-fifths as village savings—taxes were around 30 percent. Adult women were to till 6 acres and contribute 1.5 dan; the elderly and infirm would farm 4 acres and contribute 1 dan, calculated in the same manner. Including corvée labor during agricultural downtime, the future level of taxation in the fief would be equivalent to that of the Qin Dynasty after its centralizing reforms.

"Encourage farming, construct water conservancy projects; register households uniformly, reward childbirth; develop metal farming tools, and assign land according to military merit... The fief's land would support ten people with every twenty dan of grain, and three able-bodied men were required from every ten people. In times of war, one of these three would be conscripted, so six thousand soldiers would be mobilized for every one million two hundred thousand dan of grain..."

A multitude of thoughts flashed through the young king's mind, eventually settling into a smile on his lips. Learning from Shang Yang's reforms, imitating the Qin Dynasty's agricultural and military system, was the direction he intended for his future governance. However, details still needed to be clarified. He continued to ponder over the map, considering the current population of his fief.

"The northernmost part of the fief is bordered by the Lerma River, with the Rivermouth Fortress at its center, and a few dozen miles to the southwest is Lake Cuitzeo. This is also where the Alliance's naval forces are moored. Kuluka, have you been to the Rivermouth Fortress to see my father?"

Upon hearing this, Kuluka nodded and proceeded to give a detailed report.

"Your Majesty, I have visited the Deputy Marshal. He oversees the Rivermouth, having refurbished the fortress anew, and has arranged the logistics very adequately. The wounded have also been treated, and the recovered samurai are beginning to rejoin the legion. The collapsing forces in the vicinity have been reorganized or eradicated, and the towns and villages maintain order and compliance. The farmers have completed the spring plowing on schedule. However, there is a severe shortage of priests there; after the nobility were purged, most villages are managed by the elders themselves."

"The land around Lake Cuitzeo is replete with water and fertile. Within a few dozen miles of the lake, numerous villages are densely spread, once aggregating a population of two to three hundred thousand. There are millions of acres of cultivated farmland, all free of tree roots and stones."

Hearing this, Xiulote nodded. He stood up, paced back and forth in the hall with his hands behind his back, lost in thought.

The area around Lake Cuitzeo in the north of the fief originally had over forty large villages and market towns, teeming with people and rich in products. However, the north had been ravaged by war, with the kingdom frequently conscripting troops, and the towns had suffered the most destruction. Now, with the northeastern area of Akanbaro State having been partitioned away to become Tepopolo's fief, the entire north needed to be reorganized. Determining the fief's administration was the first step in the new policy.

After much deliberation, the young king made a decision.

"Monkey, take a pen and record this."

Kuluka nodded in acknowledgment. He took out a fine brush, dipped it in ink, and began to scribble and sketch haphazardly.

"Redesign the state and county system, demarcate boundaries and population. South of the Lerma River and north of Huayamo Fortress, the northern part of the fief extends 150 miles east-west and over fifty miles north-south, encompassing the entire Lake Cuitzeo area and half of the Saka State—to be set as a 'county.' The Rivermouth Fortress will serve as the county government, hence called Rivermouth County. It will govern over forty large villages, a population of one hundred thousand, and ten thousand able-bodied men. Quickly register households uniformly and establish civilian settlements!"

"County?"

As Kuluka wrote, he drew figures and simplified radical characters. His face then showed confusion.

"Your Majesty, what is a county? How is it different from a state?"

Xiulote pondered for a moment, then smiled slightly.

"Autonomous states and directly subordinate counties!"

Next, the young king's gaze moved from the north to the south, settling on the heart of the fiefdom—the Patzcuaro Lake region and the basin. This was where the most prosperous Capital City lay; it was also the cosmic center in the mythology of the Prepetcha people.

"The area of a hundred li north to south and two hundred li east to west, with the Huayamo Fortress to the south, the state of Apachigan to the north, the mountain regions and river sources as the Western Domain, and Xitaqualo as the Eastern Domain, is designated as the Capital Region, centered on Qinchongcan Capital. It governs one hundred villages and towns, with over two hundred thousand people including about seventy thousand able-bodied men and surrendered army. Among them, fifty thousand are allocated for military settlements and one hundred fifty thousand for civilian settlements, with about thirty thousand residents in the Capital City itself."

By July, the two thousand of the surrendered army promised by Aweit had already arrived in the heartland of the Lake Region not long before. They had endured the rainy season on their journey, suffering from food shortages for months since their surrender, looking gaunt and haggard. Now, these militia turned surrendered army had missed this year's spring plowing, and their bodies needed recuperation.

Xiulote just dispatched officers and Priests to organize the newly arrived surrendered army on the one hand, and on the other hand, to have the Priests convert and teach them faith. These able-bodied men would be able to participate in the autumn harvest. The young king had another plan in his mind, one that awaited inspection.

"Designate the area from the copper mines a few dozen li south of Ihuatzio City as the Northern Domain, the Tarsas River as the Southern Domain, east to the mountains of Xitaqualo, west to the first north-to-south river, with a hundred li from north to south and over a hundred li from east to west, with Kulamo City at the center of the entire Apachigan state, as Kulamo County, same as Zicao County. It governs nearly a hundred villages and towns, with two hundred thousand people, including forty thousand able-bodied men. Hmm, quickly investigate the local Nobility's fiefs to implement the next step in the plan!"

The area of the Apachigan state was vast and could roughly be divided into three parts according to its features. To the slightly northern part, there were several shallow copper mines; the southern part boasted a lot of exposed Gold and Silver mines. In fact, deep within these veins were branches of copper mines where Gold, Silver, and copper coexisted. Towards the extreme south near the Tarsas River,

which runs through half the world, there were many towns thriving on riverside trade—a land rich in mining resources and commercial prosperity!

Kulamo City is located in the very south of the Apachigan state, slightly to the west, a large city by the river. The first great river of the southern central part of the world, the Tarsus River, expands here, forming a broad lake basin and connecting to the edges of the Colima Mountain Region. This large city is a famous trading hub; merchants from Mistec, Zapotecs, Tepanec, Tekos, and other groups all gather here, together making it one of the most developed cities in the southern region.

The advance force of Iskali had landed in the southeast of Apachigan and had not passed through Kulamo City. Thus, the city was spared during the war but also retained its traditional Nobility rule.

In the Prepetcha language, the meaning of Kulamo refers to the broken cloth tree of the indigo family, a type of beautiful, tall tree which can grow up to 8 meters and has bright corymb-shaped flowers. In full bloom during summer, the broken cloth tree is extremely appealing and greatly beloved by the people of Prepetcha. It is worth mentioning that the seeds of the broken cloth tree have a high oil content, making it one of the rare sources of oil in Central America.

With thoughts flickering rapidly, Xiulote once again approached the large wooden board. His hand traced over the meticulously marked map; this north, central, and south tri-county area was the core of the lake-centered fiefdom.

During the western campaign, the northern Rivermouth County and the central Capital Region had seen the fires of war, with the Tarasco Nobility nearly completely purged, losing their local influence. The population of the Capital Region had already been divided into military settlements, civilian settlements, and were under the direct jurisdiction of the central government; whereas the population of Rivermouth County was in a semi-autonomous state, only waiting for the new batch of Priests to arrive to be wholly brought under control. Only the southern Apachigan state, planned to become Zicao County, had not experienced much war and, while retaining the majority of its population, also retained too many remnants of the old Nobility.

At this thought, the young king's expression grew cold. He firmly pressed his palm onto the position of Kulamo City on the map, his gaze turning profound.

"Your Majesty, what is the next step in the plan?"

Seeing the prince's actions, Kuluka looked up. His eyes sparkled with intelligence as he cautiously inquired.

Xiulote smiled. He reached into his chest and pulled out a scroll, slapping it onto the wooden table before him. And on the top of the scroll were neatly written four large characters.

"Granting land for military merits!"

Chapter 499 - The Land Grant for Military Achievements (Vote Request)

"Military... Force... Grant land?"

Kuluka the Monkey widened his eyes, stared for a long while, and finally made out the words on the book. He thought carefully for a moment before speaking, half in surprise and half in joy.

"Your Highness, are you truly going to distribute land to the Samurai?"

"Of course! Before the decisive battle with the Royal Army, I personally promised the Northern Army: if we win this battle, we shall grant rewards and bestow titles. Distribute fertile lands! Today, I have established a Kingdom in the lake region, and it's time to fulfill those promises. The Head Warrior has mentioned it to me, even the Samurai of the trusted aide are growing impatient!"

As he spoke, Xiulote glanced at the Head Warrior beside him. Bertade had been quiet until now, but he smiled and spoke then.

"These lads dare not speak directly to Your Highness, always pestering me with questions, so much so that my ears are calloused. And it's the same with other divisions. These legion warriors have followed Your Highness in battle, bravely and loyally to the death; they are indeed Your Highness's greatest foundation!"

"Distributing land is what the military heart desires, and we must not fail to do so. Only by settling the Samurai down, getting them rooted in farmland, and having them own land, houses, and families within the Fief can I truly establish a firm foundation in the lake region!"

The young King nodded, then pondered aloud.

"For the ranks of the Samurai and the Nobility, I have a detailed plan. Warriors shall advance based on military merit, and the amount of land they own will be tied to their rank and title. This will create a clear path of advancement, giving hope of ascension to all the Samurai, Militia, and even Slaves of the Fief!"

Speaking of which, Xiulote smiled slightly. Undoubtedly, this system was inspired by the Warring States and Han military meritocracy. Land belonged to the Monarch, who would then grant it based on military merit, bestow it according to titles, and also reclaim the old lands of the Nobility.

The young King had contemplated this system for several years. However, within the Mexica Alliance, the Great Nobility were deeply entrenched, affecting all aspects of the Alliance, thus such radical reforms had to be handled with extreme caution, or they might end up like Shang Yang.

Only now, with the lake region as his Fief, controlling a loyal and powerful legion, had he taken out the plan again. Most of the old Nobility of Tarasco had been destroyed in the war, and the rest were too weak to resist. As the old order of the Kingdom crumbled like clay, it was like a blank canvas, and he truly had the opportunity to comfortably design a new system!

While pondering, Xiulote opened the book. The first few pages covered records and planning on land output. Only by clarifying the agricultural system and understanding the output and labor cost could he define the rights and obligations of Samurai and Nobility of different ranks. In essence, what rank should hold how much land, how many Agricultural Slaves should work the fields, and how many warriors should go on campaigns.

"Today, one man with a family of five manages a hundred mu and annually harvests one and a half dan."

The young King turned the first page, recalling the memories he had fought to remember. This was Li Kui's estimation of agriculture during the Warring States period. A dan here equals about 20 liters, holding 24 jin of grain. The mu during the Warring States era were small, three and a half equaled one standard mu. So, in the era of land grants in the Qin State, the fertile lands of the Yellow River basin typically harvested once a year, and one able-bodied individual would cultivate about 5-6 mu, with an average yield of around 120 jin per standard mu.

The next sentence under Xiulote's finger read, "Ten hu per mu, this is called good land, a common term throughout the land." This record was from the Wei-Jin period, with one and a half mu equaling a standard mu, and one hu roughly equivalent to half a dan during the Warring States, i.e., 12 jin. Meaning, a standard mu of high-quality land at the time would produce about 180 jin.

Thus, during the entire Qin and Han period of land grants, the Yellow River region's land yield peaked at between 120-180 jin. However, Qin had little water and the land was mostly mediocre, producing much less, around 100 jin. The agricultural technology of the Qin and Han periods was not yet developed, and the south had not been cultivated, in fact, the per unit yield was much less than that of the Lake Region's Milpa. The number of land grants in military honors should thus be adjusted accordingly to the current situation.

Xiulote continued to ponder, his gaze drifting toward the distant homeland. During the mid-Ming dynasty in this era, because American crops had not been introduced, the north usually had one harvest per year, while the south had two.

In the north during the Jiajing era, due to the constraints of soil and water, especially rainfall, there were many thin and dry fields. "The land in the north is poor, each mu yielding but a few dou."; "Getting five or six dou per mu is a cause for celebration." Each dou being 18 jin, this meant, the water-scarce northern ordinary land yielded about 90-120 jin per mu.

For northern fields along lakes, where water is plentiful, like Huaqing Prefecture, Zhangde Prefecture, and Minzhou Wei, along rivers, "the land yields ten hu or eight hu per mu", "a large mu yields three or four dan." According to "Chinese Historical Grain Output per Mu Research," one dan in the Ming dynasty was slightly more than 180 jin, with one large mu about three standard mu. Thus, the yield of good northern fields in the Ming dynasty was slightly more than one dan per mu, about 200 jin.

Therefore, in this era, the Celestial Empire's northern dry lands yielded 90-200 jin of original rice, and it took about 3-4 mu to fully support one able-bodied individual. This was similar to the high-yielding Milpa of the Lake Region, which was located in a tropical area with plenty of rainfall. Each mu of Milpa produced about 80 jin of corn and beans, and approximately 200 jin of pumpkin.

In reality, ancient civilizations in America, with corn, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, and potatoes, were never outshone by any country from the old world in terms of food production during this era. This is

also why the Stone-Bronze Age civilizations of America could sustain populations ranging from millions to tens of millions with relatively small land areas.

#### Chapter 500 - The Land Grant for Military Achievements (Vote Request)\_2

In this era, in the south, intensive farming of rice fields that could be harvested twice a year presented a completely different scene. The best fields in the south yielded an astonishing amount, four to five times that of the good fields in the north, and were very similar to the floating gardens of Tenochtitlan. However, such outputs equally demanded large amounts of manure and river silt to maintain nutrient input.

In the region of Liang Lakes, where rice was planted in two seasons, "the fields near the city were so fertile, harvesting no less than five or six stones per acre". In the Pearl River Delta, "the best fields harvested eleven or ten baskets, the next best eight or nine baskets, and the least five or six baskets." Usually, two baskets are equivalent to one stone, so in the Guangzhou region, the best fields yielded about five to six stones of rice per acre in two seasons, nearly 1000 jin; the average fields produced about four stones, roughly over 600 jin; and the poorest fields two to three stones, around 400 jin.

Therefore, it calculates that the yield of rice fields in the Ming Dynasty's southern regions was about 400 to 1000 jin per acre per season. Of course, the poorest fields were the most numerous, with an average yield of about 500 to 600-plus jin per acre, enough to sustain one able-bodied man per acre of wet rice field.

Seeing this, Xiulote paused for a moment and sighed softly.

At the end of the 15th century, when the Old and New World had not yet communicated, Europe's yield per acre was actually far inferior to those of the Near East, India, the Celestial Empire, and even ancient American civilizations, due to temperature, precipitation, crop variety, and agricultural levels.

In the records of a manor in Norfolk, England, in the 15th century, the yield per acre of wheat was about eight to nine bushels, while that of barley was six to seven bushels. Each bushel of wheat was about 54 jin, and barley about 42 jin, making one acre about slightly more than six city acres. After conversion, it was only about 40-80 jin of grain per city acre. In the cold, mountainous regions of Northern Europe, these grain yields were even less.

Generally, in medieval Europe, ten acres of land could only sustain one adult male, and each man, using horses and iron tools, could farm 20-40 acres where he would cultivate thinly over large areas and also grow pasture grass.

In this era of emerging maritime exploration, the whole of Europe had low yields and suffered from plagues. The total population was only about 80-90 million people. Among them, France had the most, under 15 million, and all of Italy and Shenluo each had about 10 million. The colonial empires of Spain and Portugal combined had only about 7-8 million. Before the cold-resistant potato was introduced, the population in Northern Europe was extremely limited. The narrow British Isles had a total regional population of only about 3-4 million. During the same period, Denmark and Sweden each had about 6 million people, and Norway only 3 million.

It was only after the discovery of America that navigators obtained the high-yield crops of America and ecstatically brought them back to the Old World, bringing Europe into the demographic explosion of the 16th century and a new era of rapid civilizational development.

In places where corn, sweet potatoes, potatoes, and pumpkins spread, barren mountains could be cultivated, field yields multiplied, and the burgeoning population increased explosively. The rapidly increasing population also provided the foundation for the Age of Great Colonization.

It is no exaggeration to say that the discovery of America ignited the first flame of Europe's emergence. The crops of America were the most important cornerstone in Europe's hundreds of years of great development and truly changed the entire world!

Xiulote stared silently for a moment, as countless images of the future flickered through his mind. He took a deep breath and buried everything in his heart. The monkey named Kuluka carefully glanced at His Highness, feeling that there was a fire burning in His Highness's eyes.

Then, the young King continued to flip through the pages until he came to the land grant document he had written himself. Bertade and Kuluka leaned in, carefully examining the diagrams and text on it.

"Military Merit Land Grant Document," the first line had five characters, depicting a figure holding a weapon, next to symbols of status like war clothes, and farmlands where crops grew.

"All the youths from community military schools, the militia who have passed real battle tests, and a portion of strong and capable slaves, can join the Fief legions, becoming the most basic young warriors," Bertade read the next line. His demeanor, no longer calm, rapidly changed as he seemed deep in thought. After a while, the Head Warrior asked in a low voice,

"Your Highness, do you really intend to open the distinguished warrior rank to ordinary militia and lowly slaves?"

Xiulote nodded calmly, affirming,

"Of course! I will open this grand avenue to all suitable warriors, and I will even allow certain devout foreign mercenaries to join. In my Fief, I make the rules! I want to strengthen the legion's power as much as possible and integrate the ruled populations!"

Kuluka's eyes flickered. He quietly and quickly read on, soon coming to different ranks of warriors.

"Young warriors, issued sleeveless cotton armor, war clubs, and shields. Capturing or decapitating one enemy, promoted to First Level Captor, becoming a First Level Warrior,"

"First Level Warrior, granted war clothes, leather hat, and Obsidian Dagger. Capturing or decapitating two people, promoted to Second Level Vastec Hunter, that is, Second Level Warrior,"

"Second Level Warrior, granted an honorary cloak. Given 20 acres of land, one agricultural slave/servant. Capturing or decapitating five militia/one warrior, then promoted to Third Level Elite Fire Warrior... Spear Legion of 5500 militia, all promoted to Second Level Warriors, tentatively granted 11,000 acres, given agricultural slaves/servants 5500 people?!"

Upon reading this, Kuluka exclaimed in surprise. His own Spear Legion being promoted to warriors meant that he himself would naturally become the leader of the warrior group.

"Your Highness, do you really want to promote all the Spear militia to warriors? While we indeed have enough land now, where will we find so many slaves to work it?"