

## Civilization 571

### Chapter 571 - New Year's Grand Ceremony, King's Will\_2

Su'angua turned his head and watched the sun ascend to mid-sky, with not a cloud in the boundless expanse. Then, his gaze followed the sunlight downward to the pyramid below, illuminating a multitude of tiny figures. Tens of thousands of faces looked up in excitement and anticipation, their eyes also on him. Within the heart of Tarasco's king, a sense of fate dawned. He suddenly recalled a fleeting thought from long ago, while watching the "House of Wind" sacrificial rite.

"So this is the famous Mexica sacrifice ceremony known throughout the world! And I am witnessing the grand spectacle of the New Year's great ceremony in this manner..."

Suppressing the sorrow in his heart, Su'angua surveyed the queue of sacrifices for a long time. He saw several of his sons, a few brothers of the royal family, but not the small figure of Shatini. The Tarasco king nodded silently, finally climbed the last step, and for the first time, truly faced the Mexica king.

"King of Tarasco, blood of the Divine Eagle, Su'angua, greets you! King of Mexica."

Su'angua bowed his head, clenched his fist at his chest, and performed the protocol of kings meeting.

"The ruler of the world, blood of the Chief Divine, Ahuizotl, accepts your greeting! Former king of Tarasco."

Ahuizotl stood erect, his arm motionless, simply nodding lightly. The joy of revenge formed a smile on his lips, filling his chest!

"Remember your promise, Su'angua Cazonci!"

"Hmm... King of Mexica, please also remember the promise."

Ahuizotl nodded slightly. Then, unable to hold back any longer, he finally raised the Divine Staff high and burst into laughter, his laughter brimming with unchecked exhilaration!

"Haha, hahaha!"

In front of Ahuizotl, Su'angua slowly knelt down without any coercion from the samurais, nor had he taken any potion!

"King of Tarasco, Su'angua, offers his submission! The king of Mexica is the ruler of the world! This is the promise of the Chief Divine!"

The High Priest watched all this intently, then called out loudly. Soon, hundreds of priests repeated it, followed by five thousand samurais, and tens of thousands of citizens. Waves of sound rolled out in succession, accompanied by the shouts of the masses, from the temple at the heart of the capital to the edge of the floating islands in the lake.

"The king of Mexica is the ruler of the world!"

Hundreds of thousands of capital citizens were in complete frenzy. Deafening cheers rose from below the pyramid, making Ahuizotl's smile even more radiant. He laughed while grabbing Su'angua's hair. Then, his expression became solemn, watching the humiliated and angered eyes of the other, and quietly began to speak.

"The Sun God is austere, but also merciful. Su'angua, before you journey to the Divine Kingdom, do you have any last words?"

Upon hearing this, Su'angua closed his eyes, thought silently for a while, before sighing and tearfully reciting.

"I've always compared myself to the Divine Eagle, far from a mediocre fish or mouse, yet my kingdom perished in my hands!...

Alas, I pilot the great boat swiftly through the water! It breaches and breaks against the rocks, and the storm raises waves. The crocodile opens its mouth to bite back, red sparrows flee in panic. Only the loyal Hummingbird falls before me, its withering wings a pitiful sight...

Alas, I then knew: it was the intent of the three gods to lead me to ruin, not due to a failure in battle but a destiny that concludes my chapter!"

Listening to the king's final poem, Ahuizotl was slightly moved. He waved his hand, and a priest brought paper and pen to quickly jot down the poem.

"Su'angua, rest assured! Your poem will be immortalized within the epics, along with the Mexica's feats of war. Now, my old acquaintance, please let me personally send you to the Divine Kingdom!"

Su'angua nodded. He stripped off his regal garments, removed his traditional Feather Crown, with a calm expression, walked over to the Sacrificial Stone and laid down. Five Elder Priests adeptly held down his limbs, pinning his body. Then Ahuizotl personally lifted the Obsidian Stone Dagger, tracing a dazzling arc!

"Ah!..."

In that instant, bright sunlight swiftly dimmed, as the cloudless sky offered no glimpse of its profound depths. Su'angua trembled violently for a moment, then his eyes completely lost focus. His spirit turned into a wisp of smoke, drifting along the profound sky, flying towards the distant Divine Kingdom, toward the departed ancestors...

"Descendant of the rubber people, the revered and glorious King Su'angua, Divine Descendant of the Tarasco Cazonci lineage Qinchongcan, has gone to the Sun God's domain!"

The High Priest's passionate proclamation echoed through the temple.

"He left his final verses: 'I will follow the will of the Sun God, bravely face the defeat in godly war. The people of Prepetcha are destined to join the Alliance; this is destiny's final chapter!... Praise him, the brave king! He converted to the Chief Divine in his last moments and will forever enjoy peace in the Divine Kingdom!'"

The High Priest's chant spread far and wide, again triggering a tidal wave of cheers and almost mad praise!

Ahuizotl watched Su'angua's rolling corpse, smelled the blood at his nose, and let out a deep, quiet sigh. At that moment, as he looked at his left hand stained with the blood of an old friend, he felt an inexplicable sense of loss, his sentimental moment fleeting.

"Your Majesty, this poem?..."

The priest who penned the writing had swiftly documented the High Priest's version of Su'angua's final verses. Afterward, he looked at the two different versions, seeking the king's decision.

Hearing this, Ahuizotl's expression became solemn, immediately regaining composure. He pulled the original draft of the poem from the priest's hand, read it one last time, then gently shook his head, casting it into the roaring Sacred Fire.

"Record the epics as the High Priest has said, and let it be sung throughout the land!"

Chapter 572 - New Year's Grand Ceremony, King's Will\_3

The following sacrificial rites were just like the past: grand and magnificent, bloody and resplendent, frenetic and unforgettable. The sacrificial ceremonies included the dueling of nobles, the tearful dances of young girls, impersonations of the Chief Divine, and the lake's harvest tributes... The nobility and royal family of the Patzcuaro Lake region vanished in smoke as the old rulers went to the Divine Kingdom, also taking with them the old dreams of the Tarasco Kingdom.

The wide plaza erupted in waves of sound. There were the excited cheers of the nobility, the heroic roars of the Samurai, the sincere hymns of the commoners, and the terrified screams of foreigners. As the sun slowly dipped westward, casting a red glow in the sky, the ritual paused temporarily.

Aweit solemnly lifted the Divine Staff, and the Priests' chants rang out just in time.

"The Sun God reveals his red smile. He is pleased with the noble sacrifices!... Now, envoys of the Alliance, pay tribute to the Monarch! All regions under heaven, present gifts to the Monarch!"

Guided by the Samurai, envoys from the Alliance states stepped forward to present this year's tributes to the supreme King. As they reached the pyramid, a glance at the raised head of Quiyus invigorated their spirits, proud of the Alliance's strength; a glimpse of the hanging head of Tepeiter filled them with fear, awestruck by the Monarch's power.

Xiuxoke looked solemn, frozen like a statue. The noble envoys from various states of the Alliance walked past him with a gaze that was both reverent and distant. It was not until Balda from the Lake Fief passed by that he paused briefly to bow respectfully to the Deputy Head. Xiuxoke nodded gently in response.

Following the procession of envoys, Balda ascended the magnificent Great Pyramid. On the middle platform, he presented the tributes of the Lake Fief: a set of sturdy Bronze Medium Armor, a Bronze close-combat dagger, two Brass ceremonial vessels, two boxes of large gleaming pearls, and several ancient artifacts from the Royal Family of Tarasco. Then, an Eagle Warrior took out a thick scroll and handed it to the King's trusted aide, which recorded the details of the large tributes.

Soon, Aweit on the pyramid unfurled the scroll. He just glanced over it briefly, and seeing the words "six thousand catties of bronze," he nodded with satisfaction. Thereupon, Balda prostrated on the ground, paying deep homage to the towering High Monarch, before turning back and retracing his steps.

The tributes from the states of the Alliance were the same as in previous years, categorized into exquisite tributes for the royal family and large tributes paid to the Alliance. Created not long ago, the Lake Fief was very short on food, timber, and stone. Thus, the Alliance's demands centered around the widely-used copper from the Lake Region.

Then came the foreign envoys from regions under heaven. They, in various attires, arrived sequentially at the pyramid. A glance at the raised head of Quiyus stirred fear in their hearts, intimidated by the strength of the Alliance; and looking at the hanging head of Tepeiter, their fear turned to dread, horrified by the Mexica's cruelty.

According to their relationship with the Alliance, first to present tributes were the loyal vassals, the Quiyus and the Vastec. Followed by the disloyal vassal, the Mistec Alliance.

The Mistec envoy cautiously presented a large wooden plank. Aweit inspected it briefly and nodded slightly. The Mistec not only repaid the tributes overdue from the expedition but also offered additional generous amounts of rainforest feathers, dyes, spices, fruits, gold, and gemstones. With no expression on his face, the King raised the Divine Staff, and the relieved vassal prostrated and performed the ritual.

The Zapotecs and the Tlapanec did the same. For these disloyal vassals, Aweit had already taken note, although the time for reckoning had not yet come. It wasn't until the Otapan envoy, representing the Otomi, presented the tributes and humbly paid homage that a faint smile appeared on the Monarch's face, recalling his long-separated brother.

"Tizoc, my brother, the Otomi have now submitted to me..."

After the subjects, came the foreigners. First were the highly regarded people from the Cholula Holy City, followed by the seaside Totonacs.

"Descendants of the Gum people, Totonac Envoys, present themselves before the Monarch of Mexica, bearing the Gum people ancestor's inherited Jade Ring! It is a Divine Object from a past Era!"

The clear chanting sounded high and loud. The High Priest, holding an ancient yellowed Jade Ring aloft, displayed it to all. Then, the Jade Ring was carefully packed into a silver box and stored in the temple as a treasure.

The Totonac people's annual tributes were always ancient artifacts. They occupied the ruins of the Olmec civilization, where artifacts were plentiful, and occasionally sold them abroad. These kinds of tributes were beneficial and cost-effective for the Mexica Alliance to accept, compared to the tributes of vast quantities of gold, silver, cotton, spices, and food.

Moreover, even if the real ancient artifacts had run out, it would be entirely feasible to make new ones. Of course, facing the powerful Alliance, the Totonac people would not risk angering the King by offering fakes; everything they submitted was genuine.

This year's grand ceremony was exceptionally elaborate, with envoys from foreign lands numbering in the hundreds, the most in history. Those who ascended the stage to offer tributes included Noble Chiefs from the northern and southern Tekos tribes, Chieftains from the Highland Canine Descendants, Clan Leaders from the eastern Rainforest, and even Mayan merchants acting as envoys!

The last to offer tributes were envoys from the eastern Tlaxcala people. This was also the first time in decades that Tlaxcala had sent an official Envoy to the Alliance. The Envoy, dressed similarly to the people of Mexica, bowed humbly. He presented precious tributes and then, with both hands, held up a wood plank covered in patterns. Aweit took it to examine, but it was a pictorial album requesting peace.

"Praise the Mexica War God! Offering treasures and noble ladies, offering the Tarasco princess, withdrawing border legions... bowing down to the ground seeking peace."



"Haha, all directions come to court, the supreme Monarch of all under heaven!"

Aweit laughed heartily. At this moment, he was the supreme Monarch dominating all under heaven! The Mexica Alliance controlled a population of four million from various states and tributaries, in addition to nominally subjugating three million people from various tribes, all prospering under his rule! And he, Aweit, was indeed the Great Tlatoani, the lord of seven million people's realm!

In the hearty laughter, the King stood atop the Great Temple, gazing at the setting sun. The sky and the ground before him were vast expanses of bright red, much like the Divine Kingdom of the mythical stories. As the embodiment of the Sun God, he looked down upon the "ant-like" masses below, once again lifting the Divine Staff high!

"Boom, boom, boom!"

Three cannon shots roared through the heavens, sending off the sun and making countless "ants" kneel and bow down, turning into waves at the feet of the King.

"I am the embodiment of the Chief Divine, I am the only Monarch, master of the sky, the land, and the lakes!"

Aweit shouted into the sky, his hand holding the Divine Staff high, his feet over the prostrate masses. His eyes contained two flames wishing to burn across all seas, consuming the entire world!

Chapter 573 - The New Sacrifice, Wolf, Deer, and Fish!

The twilight bled like blood, engulfing the heavens and earth, reminiscent of a river of life converging or flames devouring the sky. The New Year's festival danced within this river and flames, as jubilant cheers filled the entire capital.

"Go, little Aviloztli! Take my message to him!"

Crisp voices called tenderly, and a young golden eagle suddenly soared up! In just moments, it reached an altitude over a thousand meters. It soared into the sky with full wings, bringing the rustle of wind, like a king of the skies, startling the birds over Lake Texcoco.

Little golden eagle Aviloztli was now three years old. Once a small chick that could be cradled in the palm, it was now a massive creature with a body length over half a meter and a wingspan beyond one and a half meters. Its nimble neck was yellow-brown, and its broad wings dark brown, though it still retained the juvenile white down at the tips of its wings and tail. And at this very moment, tied to its slender eagle legs was a small scroll of cotton cloth bearing a letter.

"Yo, yo!"

Aviloztli circled in the sky thousands of meters high, swaying its head proudly, issuing a juvenile joyful cry. Then, widening its pupils, it looked down at the white-robed girl gazing upward, calling out "yo yo" proudly once again.

After a while, it seemed to finally understand the young girl's expectations and flew a nostalgic circle before flapping its wings, heading straight for the mountains in the west. The golden eagle's flying speed could maintain at least 200 li per hour; from the lake capital to Qinchongcan Capital, it took less than four hours. Fearless of threats along the way and capable of long-distance navigation, it was the era's best messenger!

Of course, all this depended on whether it truly understood its master's command.

In less than a quarter of an hour, Aviloztli reached the mountainous areas in the western part of the Alliance. Looking down from the sky, the layered mountains undulated on the ground, smoke rose from settlements between the mountains, and stone fortresses looked especially tiny. From here going west, crossing the rugged forest, one would reach Xiulote's fief, the boundary of the Kingdom of the Lake.

The little golden eagle did not venture further west; the prey here was already abundant. It soared freely in the sky, first spotting a running wild wolf, it reduced its altitude and followed effortlessly, filled with a desire to pounce. The wild wolf sensed the lurking danger, stopped in its tracks and looked up. Shortly after, it howled several times, and several of its kind gathered, together vigilantly staring at the threatening spot in the sky.

Aviloztli circled cautiously for a long time, but eventually gave up the risky pounce. It continued searching and then spotted a running young elk. Such prey was not too challenging for it. The little golden eagle quickly lowered its altitude, and at 100 meters, swiftly pounced fiercely. The roaring wind from high above rapidly swept down, and its powerful wings knocked down the young elk.

The little golden eagle extended its sharp claws, forcefully tearing at the neck of its prey. Blood gushed out, accompanying the mournful cries of the elk. After moments of struggle, the elk ceased to move or make a sound. Aviloztli arrogantly raised its head, issuing a "majestic" cry once again.

"Yo, yo!"

Then, Aviloztli grasped the elk, vigorously flapping its wings! It struggled on the ground for a while, trying to take the prey with it, but found it impossible to take off. Moments later, the little golden eagle reluctantly set down the heavy elk and flew to a nearby river, pouncing once again!

This time, Aviloztli caught a fierce and beautiful purple-red fish as a gift for its mistress. Proudly flaunting its catch, it called out joyfully and soared upwards, hastily returning to the lake capital. The letter tied to its feet remained intact, and after hundreds of li back and forth across the sky, it was about to safely return!

"Yo, yo!..."

Under the sky hundreds of li away, the New Year's festival in Qinchongcan Capital also just reached its conclusion.

Xiute, dressed in black ceremonial attire, stood at the very top of the Akatla Pyramids. He raised the emerald Divine Staff in his hands, facing the setting sun, and amid the kneeling of tens of thousands of citizens in the capital, he offered the most sacred fire sacrifice to the burning sacred fire.

The first sacrifice presented was a young coyote, its blood already drained beforehand, and intentionally positioned with its head facing west. In the Mexica animal worship, the coyote was a creature of loyalty and unity with innate divinity. The animal form of God of Death Xiulotel was that of a black wolf howling to the heavens.

In front of the citizens of the lake, Xiute cast the divine body of the coyote into the fire, offering it to the departing Sun God, while chanting aloud.

"Praise the Sun God, I offer you the coyote! It is the companion of the sun, journeying toward the Abyss after sunset!... Praise the Chief Divine! May you take away death and grant us enduring life!"

After the offering, Xiulote raised the Divine Staff again, and a boiling cheer erupted instantly. Below the pyramid, both the Prepetcha and Mexica people prostrated themselves on the ground, their faces showing sincere joy as they shouted with all their might. Although the burnt smell of fur lingered at his nostrils, the young King took a deep breath and smiled slightly.

As a Priest King, this was Xiulote's first time to fully lead the New Year sacrificial rites!

Based on his family background and the legends of the Alliance, he boldly altered the sacrifices for the New Year celebration. Under his strict demands, the Kingdom of the Lake's New Year ceremony focused on the Chief Divine, incorporated different customs from both the Alliance and the Kingdom, and replaced human sacrifices with animal ones!

"Give me enough time, and I can change everything!"

Xiulote whispered silently, filled with confidence in reshaping civilization. He then took the second sacrifice, a deer shot dead, with its head pointing to the East. In the tradition of the Prepetcha people, the deer stood as a symbol of the Nobility and a pet of the Moon Goddess.

"Praise the Sun God, I present to You this deer! It is a sprite under the moon, ascending toward the path to the Divine Kingdom when the moon rises!... Praise the Chief Divine! May You bless us with peace and bestow upon us a pleasant afterlife!"

As the sun set and the moon began to rise, another burst of fervent cheers erupted. In the myths of both tribes, the Moon Goddess held different divine roles, both good and evil, which were now erased in the ceremony, leaving only the common afterlife. And after the sun and moon, came the earth, symbolizing tolerance and vitality.

Xiulote finally took a river fish, held it high with its head pointing to the ground. In the shared culture of Central America, fish represented the common peasantry, born of the earth and lakes.

"Praise the Sun God, I present to You this river fish! It is life of the earth, going to the rivers among men after the rain falls!... Praise the Chief Divine! May You grant us blessings, bestowing a bountiful harvest on our fields!"

"Praise the Chief Divine, grant us a bountiful harvest!"

As the multitude looked on, Xiulote threw the river fish into the fire. The most intense shouts erupted at this moment! The people of the Lake Region had been troubled by war and famine for nearly two years, with thousands dying from starvation. For them, only a plentiful harvest could quench their deep-seated desire.

The continuous cheers surged and created waves of sound that reached the heavens. Not until the sun dipped below the horizon did the Lake Region's New Year ceremony conclude. Next came the grand feast at night. The entirety of Qinchongcan City, and indeed all the residents of the Fief, came together to celebrate. They celebrated the end of the war, and also a hard-won peaceful New Year.

After a day of hard work, the grand ritual was finally over. Xiulote, maintaining the demeanor of the divine, entered the Temple at the top of the pyramid. He then removed his heavy Ceremonial Dress, changed into a festive robe, and proceeded to the Palace of Wind's New Year banquet accompanied by Ugus and Mawilo.

The Envoy from the southern Zicao County had been waiting outside the Palace of Wind for a long time. The banquet circle that evening was small, limited only to the upper layers of the Kingdom. He did not qualify to attend and could only wait there.

Xiulote kindly reassured the Envoy with a few words, not directly responding to the delicate inquiry about the Fief Issue, and then left under the escort of the High Priest.

Soon, the young King sat solemnly on the throne in the grand hall of the Palace of Wind. He looked up at the dark sky outside the window, seeming to hear a familiar yet distant cry. The recently sacrificed wolf, deer, and fish flashed through his mind, embedding a prolonged contemplation of the situation.

"By sacrificing the King of Tarasco, the New Year's grand ceremony in the Capital City of the Lake will shake the world! All the factions will know the power of the Mexica people, and will perceive the threat of the Alliance's conquest. ... A new year is about to begin, and a new journey is underway!"

"For the Alliance, the Tlaxcalans are like the united Coyotes. They are closely connected with the surrounding factions, moving as one. For the Fief, the Chapala Lake Region is like a robust deer. They are delicious prey, only requiring time to hunt, time to digest. And for me, what then is the river fish at arm's reach?"

The bright bonfire in the great hall glimmered, and the King's contemplation sparkled in the firelight. His brow slowly relaxed, as plans of various preparations converged in his mind, forming a continuous serpent.

Soon, the generals took their seats in order, grouped according to their affiliations. The maids also brought in exquisite dishes and drinks. The fragrant aromas filled the air, and relaxed laughter gently arose. A lavish banquet was about to commence!

Chapter 574 - Kingdom Banquet, Xiulote Sword Dance!

The Stone Hall of the Palace of Wind was rustic and solemn, its four walls adorned with ritual vessels passed down through the ages, the ceiling carved with ancient murals, and the Chief Divine's banners fluttering. The candles within the hall shone brightly, together with the central bonfire, reflecting off the joyous faces of all present, dispelling the deep darkness of the night outside.

Xiulote sat at the head of the banquet, surrounded by the bright light of the flames, just as he was by the people around him. According to the tradition of the Tribal Alliance, based on their different statuses, everyone took their seats in a roughly circular arrangement.

At the very center of the head was the supreme young king, to his left was his trusted teacher Olosh, to his right stood the loyal Guard Commander Bertade. Below the king to the left, were the esteemed spiritual priests. Ugus and Mawilo, the two High Priests, in front, followed by Bravo and other mid-level priests. To the right below the king, were the valiant Legion Commanders of the various armies. In keeping with the established customs of the Alliance, they were led by the veteran Etalik, Naval Commander Annatri, the monkey Kuluka, Black Wolf Torc, quartermaster Begire, miner Ezpan... Crocodile Ospai, sky dynasty Family Head Oorta, and at the end, Huitu Puapu. And opposite the king, were the locally born civil officials, headed by Chief Minister Jatili, with Chalape from the Bronze Workshop among them.

"This is the team I've assembled to manage my fief!"

Xiulote smiled, lifting the Divine Staff in his hand. Soon, bamboo flutes in the band played high, prayerful songs began to resonate, and the hall fell into a respectful silence.

"Praise the Chief Divine! He is omnipotent, bestowing upon us food, victory, and light!"

The king was the first to speak.



"Praise the Chief Divine!"

The people bowed their heads in prayer, chanting in unison. The deep echo resonated within the great hall, symbolizing the will of the entire fief.

Then, a group of maids came forward, bringing freshly prepared cocoa. Xiulote once again raised his cup.

"Let's drink this cup to the highest Chief Divine, to celebrate, to the king of the Alliance, to celebrate!"

"To the Chief Divine, to the king, cheers!"

"Another cup, to celebrate the new year!"

"To the new year, to His Majesty, cheers!"

After drinking the holy cocoa, the banquet officially began. The main dishes included fragrant roasted corn cakes, sweetened boiled black bean paste, soft roasted pumpkin, and mildly sweet sweet potatoes. The vegetables were refreshing cold zucchini salad, tender boiled cactus, spicy stewed green beans, and crispy roasted sweet potato.

Tired from a day's work, Xiulote was genuinely hungry. He took a piece of the well-roasted cornbread, smeared it with sweet black bean paste, sandwiched a few slices of sweet potato and zucchini, and added some chili sauce, relishing the hearty bites. Only after devouring two soft cakes did the king begin to leisurely savor the variety of fresh fruits.

Because the climate was tropical, the fruit selection at the banquet was extremely rich, a feast for the palate. There were tangy pineapples, soft and fragrant guavas, sweet and sticky rambutans, ice cream-like mammees, slightly intoxicating cactus fruits, soft and sticky purple figs, Jamaica roses resembling hawthorn in texture, and delicious juicy tomatoes.

Of course, the king's favorite was the rare black-fleshed persimmon, locally known as chocolate persimmon, which was rarely seen in later times and only grown in Mexico. This black persimmon had a very thin skin, which made it difficult to transport long distances, and the inside was soft like jelly. Once you took a bite, you would be instantly conquered by its stunning taste!

"The flesh is soft and sweet, like a blend of cream and chocolate, meticulously crafted into a premium soft pudding!"

Xiulote savored the delicious black persimmon, a sincere look of appreciation on his face. To enjoy such exquisite flavors in the wilderness of the Middle Ancient Times was indeed a rare privilege for an American transmigrator.

The most popular among the guests was the variety of tasty roasted meats. Large chunks of herb-roasted venison, skewered pineapple-roasted turkey meat, complete barbecued sapote fish... The various meats, aromatic, were accompanied by a selection of seasonings such as chili powder, annatto powder, garlic vine, American parsley, and Mexican caraway. These spices, so prized by Europeans as gold, were common in the lush Central America and widely used in the diet of the nobility.

Xiulote simply ate two pieces of roasted venison. The meat was tender; one piece glazed with fresh honey, another with chili salt. The sweetness, the spicy salt, two distinct flavors in turn mixed together, making for an endless aftertaste.

Feeling a bit thirsty by now, the king picked up a cup of tequila from the table and drank freely.

The banquet offered three types of alcoholic beverages. Tequila was light and formal. Mead was rich, sweet, and the most expensive. Fruit wine varied in flavor depending on the fruit but was less formal and not suitable for toasting others.

Xiulote raised his cup, and several trustful individuals came forward to toast the king. The young king laughed heartily, not turning anyone down. He sipped gently while merrily watching everyone.

After a few cups of rice wine, the atmosphere of the banquet began to liven up. People started clinking cups, making loud noises, and toasting each other. The priests, military leaders, and civil officials started by drinking among themselves, followed by individually crossing toasts. Townsfolk, relatives, friends, comrades-in-arms—they drank in a jumbled group according to all kinds of connections, subtly reducing many barriers among them.

Xiulote smiled contentedly. For the sake of long-term rule, he encouraged extensive intermarriage between the Mexica and the Prepetcha tribes. He had personally arranged some weddings over the past few months. Bonds of matrimony were gradually established between Mexica warriors and Prepetcha civil officials. The integration of the ethnicities was progressing, the consolidation of the kingdom's upper layer was underway; it just needed time to complete.

Chapter 575 - Kingdom Banquet, Xiulote Sword Dance!\_2

The night was mellow, and the music joyful. The bonfire radiated warmth, and the wine made everyone merry! Unknowingly, the generals had their fill of food and drink. The maids stepped forward again, removing the meal and presenting the sacred cocoa.

"Your Highness, you are our Marshal, you are our Sun! Please allow your loyal Samurai to perform a dance for you!"

Black Wolf Torc rose with dignity, speaking on behalf of all the generals. He was the first to reach the center of the banquet, lifting a cup of cocoa, and toasted to His Highness.

"Very well, my beloved general!"

Xiulote smiled and nodded, lifting the Divine Staff.

Soon, the stirring sound of war drums began to resound vigorously. Black Wolf removed his war robe, baring his muscular torso, and with his powerful arms crossed, he began a wild War Dance! His steps matched the rhythm of the drums, and he chanted a heroic poem.

"Samurai should fight to their hearts' content! Samurai should sing with abandon!"

We chase the glory of battle, we embrace each other's shoulders.

We live with laughter, seeing flowers bloom all over the battlefield!

Then, we die with laughter, when the flowers and songs cease...

"

Xiulote's expression moved, smiling and nodding. It was a widely known Samurai poem, often sung by many. Yet, only truly bold warriors could capture its essence!

After the dance had ended, Black Wolf was drenched in sweat. He then strode forward, his muscular lines quivering like a cheetah's, and suddenly knelt before the King, lifting high a Samurai's garland.

"Your Highness, please accept the flowers presented by your generals! Our lives are like fresh flowers, blooming loyally at this moment. We dedicate our lives to you, the supreme Sun!"

Xiulote laughed heartily, stood up, and took the garland with both hands. He affectionately patted Black Wolf on the shoulder and then looked around at the eagerly watching generals, nodding and smiling at each one.

"My Samurai, my generals, I will be with you all!"

At this, the usually stern Marshal Mawilo briefly pondered, then tugged at Ugus's sleeve.

Ugus understood, and he too came to the center of the banquet. The intense drumming then turned into the venerable tone of a bone flute. The young High Priest of the Capital City, grave in demeanor, stepped in a mysterious pattern and began a magnificent recitation.

"Ah, the Sun God descends brilliance, the Chief Divine grants Divine Revelation, spreading his renown across the world.

That is you, King created by divine spirits!

You sing in the Valley, in Tenochtitlan, where the eagles soar.

You fly in the sky, over the Lake Region of Miken, where the eagle transforms into the Sun!

Ah, I gaze up at the abode of our Father God, I pray for the Divine Kingdom on earth, and there you are above Snake Mountain...

"

Listening to this, Xiulote became solemn. This traditional sacrificial poem, glorifying a divinized subject, was usually dedicated to divinely endowed kings of old. The grand hall fell suddenly quiet, save for the unbroken high recitation echoing, reaching into everyone's heart. After a moment, Ugus ceased his chanting. He smiled as he approached, offering a piece of Green Jade symbolizing wisdom and eternal life.

"Praise to the Chief Divine! Esteemed Supreme High Priest, you are an incarnation of divine spirits among us. And we bow to serve you, as though we serve the divine spirits themselves!"

"Praise to the Chief Divine! High Priest Ugus, thank you for your poem! The future of the Fief cannot be divorced from the Priest of the Alliance. The glory of the Chief Divine will surely spread across the world!"

The two exchanged glances briefly, smiling and acknowledging each other. Xiulote then turned towards Mawilo, who bowed respectfully in return.

Jatili had been silently observing the whole time. He pondered for a while before slowly taking an item from Chalape, and walked to the center of the hall.

"Your Majesty, this old servant is not adept at singing and dancing."

The learned elder smiled and bowed. Xiulote stood up and solemnly returned the gesture.

"Respected Sage, you are an elder of the Prepetcha people, please, no need for such formality."

"Your Majesty, you possess the far-sight of an eagle, the will of a lion-tiger, the patience of a Coyote, and the kindness of a turtle. You treat the citizens of the Lake Region well, and you are our King, bestowed upon us by the Sun God... This old servant, representing millions of Prepetcha people, wishes to bow at your feet, offering you our loyalty!"

Jatili's demeanor turned solemn. Before everyone, he prostrated deeply, paying his respects to the King at the head of the hall.

"Ah! Sage..."

Xiulote hurried forward two steps, bending down to help the learned elder up. He earnestly advised.

"Sage, I treat you with the respect due to a teacher, please do not do this!"

At this, Jatili gave a small smile. He held up a long wooden case, presenting it to the young monarch in front of him.

"Your Majesty, the people of Prepetcha wish to be your wings, to soar into the sky! This is the Bronze Weapon commissioned by Chalape to be forged!"

"Inspired by the obsidian sharp fragments and the handle of the war club, he mixed the sturdy tin of the sword spine with the sharp tin of the sword blade, combining the strengths of both, and adding fragments of the Divine Kingdom that fell from the sky, forging a sharp and durable Divine Weapon..."

"Offered to you, my Majesty! Both tolerant and strict, kind and resolute, this is truly a weapon for a King!"



Xiulote paused at this. He received the wooden case and opened it himself. An eight-sided Qin Sword, three feet long, immediately appeared before him. The sharp blade glinted coldly while the polished durable spine shone brightly, and the gold-plated handle glittered, with two pictographs engraved on it.

The King examined it closely, the pictograph on the front like a bolt of lightning, symbolizing the inscrutable power of the divine spirit; the one on the back was a figure of a person, arms spread in a powerful pose. Clearly, these represented the divine spirit and the king. And the meaning of these two characters, found in similar Oracle Bone Script, was...

Chapter 576 - Kingdom Banquet, Xiulote Sword Dance!\_3

"Divine... Summer..."

Xiulotte murmured to himself, chanting these two words softly. An odd sense of destiny surged through his heart in an instant, as if carrying a power that could shake the soul. Moments later, facing the crowd, he lifted the three-foot Qin Sword and solemnly announced in a loud voice.

"By the Chief Divine's witness! This is the Divine Summer Sword! My King's sword!"

"Generals, play music for me!"

At the King's command, everyone obediently followed. Olosh blew the bamboo flute, Ugus sounded the Bone ocarina, and Toltec beat the war drum. The fluttering flute, the desolate ocarina, and the rousing drumbeat resounded together in the Stone Hall, accompanied by the chorus of the generals.

Xiulotte stood in the center of the great hall, slowly drawing the sharp treasure sword. He gently traced the Sword Spine with the pad of his finger, turbulent emotions swirling in his chest, countless memories flooding his mind, all finally turning into the verses he recited.

"The treasure sword is born with a pure intent, a single purpose through ten springs."

The King gazed upward slightly. He remembered the pure feelings when he first came to this world, and the child with clear eyes in the Butterfly Palace.

"I fall from the pyramid, I come from the Butterfly Palace. I bring a pure heart, like the spring water of spring."

At these words, Olosh's expression changed. Having watched the boy grow up, many memories were naturally indelible.

"Once I mistakenly drank the blood of the mortal world, henceforth murderous intent accompanies me,"

Xiulotte lowered his eyes, his left hand making a blocking gesture while his right arm thrust forward the long sword. This was the motion of his first kill, something he couldn't forget for a long time.

"I swung my weapon, I became a Samurai stained with blood. I silently prayed to the War God, knowing that from then on, death would ensue!"

"Dragon chants stir the shallow depths as the sword in the sheath longs to sweep across."

Xiulotte circled the sword around his chest, making a gesture of sheathing the sword. He recalled the time trapped in Tizoc's army, and his first meeting with Aweit, their shared discussions and aspirations. In those days, it was dragon met sword, and King met King.

"I've experienced the first battle, I've held a funeral for the divine. I am the fledgling eagle just out of the nest, in pursuit of sacred glory!"

Bertade's eyes deepened. After a while, he clenched his fist to his chest and bowed his head in salute.

"Soaring to the zenith of the blue mist, standing tall above all with the strength of heaven and earth!"

Xiulotte stepped forward and swung his sword forcefully. The three years of carnage flashed across his mind.

The first ambush he encountered, the first time he led an army to chase a King; the dialogue in the stone chamber with the elder and the life-and-death pledge with Chief Priest Quetzal; the first time he led a legion on a western conquest, from the North Coast Wooden Fort to Lake Yuriria, from the Rivermouth fortress to the Takuro Plains, from the battle of Kings to Qinchongcan's downfall...

"I've met many opponents, I've withstood the trials of the divine. I've cut through brambles and thorns, emerging from life and death unto a grand avenue!"

The generals fell silent for a moment, then erupted in unanimous cheers. Having followed their invincible prince through several brutal battles, they naturally shared the same sentiment.

"Riding the sword to ascend to true enlightenment, alone atop the eastern peak unlocking heaven's gate."

Xiulotte stood erect like a pine, lifting the long sword above his head before lowering it again into his hand. He remembered the grand investiture ceremony, the excitement of ruling a territory, and his heart full of bold aspirations.

"I captured the old King, I ascended the throne of the Lake Region. Amidst the ruins of the Kingdom, I built a brand new nation!"

At these words, Jatili was the first to bow, and everyone else paid deep homage, submitting to the King.

Seeing his subjects submit, Xiulotte laughed heartily. Years of training as a Samurai had made his body flexible and robust. His sword dance became more intense, whistling through the air, and then suddenly retracted!

The young King turned, facing the setting sun in the West. The bygone era lay five hundred years in the past, his distant homeland twenty thousand miles away. Everything was far away, all once an illusion. To him, all that was real, all that existed, was only this realm, only this home.

Xiulotte exhaled deeply. In an indecipherable language, he chanted a trance-like prayer.

"Sudden clear skies, sudden rains, sudden winds arise,

At times bright, at times dim, through several autumns pass.

The roc flies twenty thousand miles, the sword is lost in the furnace, descending to the Nine Netherworlds.

The floating bridge forgets worldly matters, adrift in the vast forgotten river.

The endless evening swept by wind from heaven and earth, gazing at the dawn's light, a speck in the void."

The King gently wiped the long sword, intoning four lines of deep poetry in a sonorous voice. Soon, Alisa's beautiful smile appeared in his mind, followed by the vast, fluctuating terrain of the world map etched in his heart!

"...Seeing the flowers bloom without seeing the leaves, a sword's cold light crosses fifty states!"

Xiulotte murmured for a moment before suddenly looking up at the sky. The history of future generations appeared before his eyes, only to be reduced to ashes by the fiery rage in his gaze. Under the euphoria of wine, he suddenly thrust his sword into the Eastern sky! This thrust, with a resolute will, regardless of the passage of time; this thrust, with a final determination, no matter what life held!

"I came to this realm, bearing the divine promise. I am destined to rule over all, to reign over the continent at my feet!"

## Chapter 577 - Long-standing Hope, Divine Might University and Divine Revelation Place

Time flowed like a river, sometimes with turbulent waves, sometimes calm and unruffled, yet only memories settled in the passage of time, glittering as we look back.

The festival day's banquet eventually concluded with a delightful intoxication. The King brandished his sword and recited poetry, expressing his contentment and leaving an unforgettable impression upon all who watched.

Soon, ten days had passed in a flash. Under the tireless efforts of the Prepetcha painters, the grandeur of the New Year's grand ceremony and the night banquet was carved into the stone walls of the Palace of Wind, with the King's poems also inscribed alongside for the Capital City's poets to recount. The murals also depicted scenes of people offering dances, Sages prostrating in respect, and the presentation of the "divine summer" sword to the King.

Two copies of these murals would be made, one to be placed in the College of Divine Might Priests and the other in the Divine Revelation Place for future generations to admire. They served as a testament to the King's rule over the Lake Region and a symbolic representation of the elite of Prepetcha's loyalty and official integration into the Alliance.

After the New Year, the College of Divine Might Priests officially commenced operation. Xiulote personally presided over the opening ceremony of the Divine Might College and left behind his own handwritten original religious scriptures, the Book of Ama Colley. Regardless of how broad the college's future was in Xiulote's long-term plans, the initial steps were but small budding sprouts.

The first class of students, barely a hundred people, consisted mainly of the Prepetcha Priests who had pledged allegiance to the Alliance and a few local youngsters who were recommended. Their training focused on the role of frontline administrators, the Preaching Priests.

The curriculum for the Preaching Priests included Mexica language as the official language, foundational modern scripts; then revised histories of the Alliance, mythic promises of the Chief Divine; followed by the fundamental scriptures, the Book of Ama Colley, common sacrificial rites; and finally, the religious laws of the Alliance, as well as new political reforms in the Lake Region such as registered households, military and civilian settlements, military promotion by merit, and land and title grants.

After a year of short-term study, they would officially become low-level officials of the Alliance. The majority would govern fiefdom villages as First Level Priests; a very few old Priests from the Lake Region would attain the status of Second Level Priest and involve themselves in the administration of larger towns. Overall, being admitted to the Priest College meant entering the fast track, securing a significant opportunity for social mobility and advancement.

While the school's first batch of students had just started their courses, the selection for the second batch was already underway within the army. The second batch would consist of about two hundred students, primarily training to become War Priests.

Seventy percent of these students would hail from the temporary War Priests elevated during the western campaign, including outstanding commoner samurai youths, while thirty percent would come from the exceptional ranks of the surrendered Prepetcha army. The training would last one to two years; besides literacy, theology, and ecclesiastical law, they would learn martial arts from seasoned samurai and master small unit tactics. In Xiulote's plan, they would provide the foundation for a base of officers throughout the ongoing military reforms.

In general, the Priest College's current curriculum focused on literature, theology, ecclesiastical law, politics, and the military, and would later include herbs, another area of expertise for the Priests. During his spare time, Xiulote began to write a book, recalling the textbooks he had once studied, in an endeavor to compile an introductory text on natural sciences, to sow the seeds of rational thinking. Of course, everything was done in the name of the divine, explained through the language of divinity.

The Divine Revelation Place in Qinchongcan City was also formally established after the new year. Under direct jurisdiction of the King, the new Divine Revelation Place's headquarters was set up near the Royal Mansion in the palace district of the Capital City, strictly guarded and of high standard. Free from the confines of the old Alliance system in the Lake Capital City, the new Divine Revelation Place grew like a vigorous American bison, bounding freely throughout the Kingdom, its corpulent form expanding ever larger.

As the most important research and production center, the Kingdom's Divine Revelation Place trained Divine Revelation Priests and integrated the newly arrived Mexica craftsmen with the old craft guilds of the Kingdom, effectively controlling multiple significant bureaus and residences.

First was the Mining and Metallurgy Bureau, led by Necali, with advisors from the Metal Family assisting, responsible for managing the Qinganbate mining region southwest of the Capital City, including the area's coke and copper smelting workshops. The mining area was tasked with regular deliveries of coke and copper materials to the Capital City and reporting on recent production matters.

Then came the Gunpowder Bureau. Esko, who remained at the Lake Capital City, and was highly valued by Aweit, left only Talaya to come to the Lake Region, becoming the Director of the Gunpowder Bureau. The bureau included the saltpeter production pools in the eastern part of the fief and a gunpowder workshop and testing ground on a small island in Lake Patzcuaro.

It was currently the season for saltpeter collection, and large-scale saltpeter production and evaporation were underway. Xiulote summoned the chief salt worker, Moreno, and held a personal audience. Moreno was respectfully submissive, with clear speech and an excellent grasp of the saltpeter-making process. Having toiled away on Heavenly Fire Island for three arduous years, even the fierceness in his bones was diminished significantly, making him now eminently capable. The King appointed him as the head official responsible for saltpeter production, overseeing thousands of related laborers.

Within the Capital City, there were the Manufacturing Department and the Military Manufacturing Department, both divisions of the grand craft guild of the Kingdom.



The Manufacturing Department was in charge of producing cotton fabric, clothing, pottery, woodwork, stone artifacts, jade artifacts, gold and silverware, and common copper items; it had the authority to manage various types of civilian manufacturing and could, when necessary, conscript craftsmen from all regions to serve the Royal Family. It was imperative that the manager of the Manufacturing Department was well-acquainted with the situation of the Kingdom and maintained connections with leaders from each industry, with a preference for employing local experienced officials.

#### Chapter 578 - Long-standing Hope, Divine Might University and Divine Revelation Place\_2

After some deliberation, Xiulote chose a local noble recommended by the Chief Jatili as the Director, Sulata. The King had met with him once, asked some practical questions about production and management, and nodded in satisfaction.

In the Prepetcha language, "Sulata" means cotton. As the name suggests, the title Sulata represents an ancient family that has been involved in cotton weaving for generations. Sulata was around forty years old, always cautious and meticulous. When the city fell, he hid among the group of craftsmen he usually managed to evade the search of the Mexica legion. He had been kind and well-regarded by his family, so none of the craftsmen betrayed him, and he luckily escaped the wrath of the war club.

The Military Production Bureau was responsible for the manufacture of military equipment, including traditional war clubs, shields, bronze axes, copper spears, leather armor, as well as the newer longbows, heavy crossbows, bronze cloth armor, and the bronze cannons being manufactured.

The Director of the Military Production Bureau was Kushinji, a bowyer from the Mexica, while the Deputy Director was the local technician bureaucrat, Chalape. The old carpenter Kuode was highly valued within the Alliance, in charge of the center of craftsmen, and naturally would not come to serve in the fief in the Lake Region. On the other hand, Kushinji refused to be subordinate to his old rival and came to the Lake Region to set up his own establishment. The King thus gladly accepted him and entrusted him with a significant role.

Under the Military Production Bureau, there were two other heavily invested manufacturing bureaus. One was the Bow and Crossbow Bureau, headed by the Prepetcha bowyer Kundili, and the other was the Bronze Bureau, led by the Master Caster Tilipi.

Tilipi was now busy day and night, living in the Bronze Workshop. As the deadline for the bronze cannons approached, his pressure increased, and he often erupted in rage at the craftsmen. When Xiulote summoned the spies placed in the workshop and learned of the difficult progress of the cannon casting, he prepared to discreetly grant them some more time. In the coming February, the King would go north to ally with the Otomi people, jointly confronting the southward raids of the Chichimeca Canine Descendants. It would be at least two or three months before he returned to the Capital City to oversee spring plowing.

Outside the Capital City, there were also the Construction Bureau, the Printing Bureau, and the Special Trade Goods Bureau.

The Construction Bureau had workshops for charcoal burning and brickmaking and supervised over a thousand laborers. The Director of the Construction Bureau was Koskachi, the head of the charcoal workers from the Alliance. This gravel-voiced foreman, actually sharp and astute, had not hesitated to follow the Priesthood here to join the independent prince. Xiulote admired him and needed trustworthy personnel, so he entrusted the construction responsibilities to him.

The Printing Bureau was in charge of both papermaking and printing workshops. The Director of the Printing Bureau was the young priest Xipak, who oversaw papermaking, and the Deputy Director was the Mexica jade craftsman Aquila, in charge of printing. Hmm, they were all old acquaintances of Xiulote. As long as they continued to follow the prince, no matter what their origins were, they would find a shortcut to career development!

At this moment, hundreds and thousands of religious texts and legal documents were continually produced by the Printing Bureau, spreading the faith and will of the Alliance at a rate beyond the imagination of the rest of the world. Therefore, this department had actual propaganda capabilities.

Considering long-term planning, the King decided to list the Printing Bureau separately under his direct control. In the future, the Printing Bureau would keep rising in significance and expand its outreach to truly take on the responsibilities of propaganda and education.

The Special Trade Goods Bureau, or simply the Trade Bureau, was tasked with the manufacture of special trade goods. The Trade Bureau only had a rough framework for now, managed by the head stonemason Losano, who owned a highly secretive glass workshop.

Losano had been making glass for three full years and, after obtaining the newly made charcoal, finally made an initial breakthrough: following the prince's hint, he added lead ore and barite to the quartz sand and successfully produced slightly transparent lead glass!

Upon receiving the good news, Xiulote joyfully put aside his administrative work and hurried to the workshop at sunset. In the glow of the setting sun, glass beads of various sizes, in a shallow green hue, sparkled with a splendid glow, colorful and magnificent, clear and dazzling.

The King was taken aback for a moment, picking up the glass bead to examine it closely. This glass was completely different from what he had expected, with low transparency, light and brittle texture, and insufficient durability... but the color was very attractive, more akin to the ancient glassware from the early periods of the Celestial Empire.

"Losano, this glass... still falls short of my requirements," said the prince, frowning as he looked toward the stonemason leader, who was beaming with happiness.

Confronted with his prince's gaze, Losano's knees went weak, and he trembled all over.

He had spent these three years studying colorless glass, burning innumerable stones, sands, and ores, making little progress and nearly burning out his hair. Meanwhile, the prince had been accumulating countless military achievements outside, with a divine might that seemed almost mythological. Now, the prince before him exuded a majestic air without anger, no longer the young noble he had first met, but a sovereign ruler whose mere gaze could make one tremble.

In a flurry of thoughts, the head stonemason clenched his teeth hard. He cautiously approached the King and whispered.

"Your Highness, I, Losano, think... these shallow green glass beads... resemble the precious emeralds of the world..."

"Hmm?!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's expression changed, his eyes flickered. After pondering a while, he thought of the Kingdom's efforts to maintain a vast legion, the ever-great military expenses, and the rapidly depleting savings of the treasury... After a while, the King lowered his gaze and asked in a deep voice.

Chapter 579 - Long-standing Hope, Divine Might University and Divine Revelation Place\_3

"Losano, can you burn other colors of...gemstones?"

"Your Highness, if I mix in different crystal stones and metals, I, Losano, should be able to do it!"

Xiulote didn't speak; he simply nodded slightly. Patting Losano on the shoulder, he turned and left.

The next day, hundreds of loyal Samurai arrived at the glass workshop, controlling every apprentice and guarding the place so tightly that not even air could escape. Accompanying the Samurai was a Royal Decree elevating Losano to hereditary nobility.

Soon after, the special trade department under Divine Revelation was quietly established, directly under the King himself. Then, the news that "divine blessings upon the Kingdom of the Lake, a massive gemstone mine discovered in the Patzcuaro Lake region" began to spread among the people. Days later, the first batch of Emeralds from the Lake Region, exclusively sold by the Royal merchants, entered the market in limited quantities, continuously traded to foreign merchants in exchange for a large amount of food and supplies.

These Emeralds were not large in size but shone brilliantly, with a hint of crystal clear flow, resembling water ripples, hence they were also called "Lake Green Jade."

Many foreign merchants, based on this name, concluded that the gems must originate from within Lake Patzcuaro. Some merchants, risking discovery by the Kingdom's navy, searched the vast Great Lake for the source, hoping to engage in private trade directly with the miners. They all returned empty-handed, merely leaving several lives behind in the process.

Summing up, the Mining and Metallurgy Bureau, Gunpowder Bureau, Manufacturing Department, Military Construction Department, Construction Department, Printing Bureau, and the special trade department – these five bureaus and two departments now oversaw the majority of the Fief's production sectors, controlling tens of thousands of craftsmen and laborers, and making Divine Revelation increasingly powerful.

As the Chief Priest of the Lake District, Xiulote naturally took on the role of head of Divine Revelation. In his plan, Divine Revelation, an institution similar to the Ministry of Works, focusing on production and

research and development, would gradually grow into a true behemoth, becoming the driving force for the development of the entire Kingdom and also an important source of power in the hands of the King.

Therefore, the deputy director of Divine Revelation, who compiled various matters, must be selected primarily for loyalty. Xiulote hesitated for a long time, finally choosing Talaya, who had always followed him faithfully and was deeply in love with him. The King knew that once she took on such an important position...she would be bound to serve the crown in solitude for her entire life.

"Talaya, are you willing to dedicate your life to the Chief Divine?"

In the dim Stone Hall, Xiulote's demeanor was calm, but his gaze deeply set on Talaya. After being separated for a long time, time passed like a clear stream, washing away the flames in the girl's eyes, yet leaving behind a more enduring perseverance.

Talaya smiled. Looking at the divine-like Highness before her, she nodded vigorously without hesitation.

"I am willing, my Sun God! I am willing to offer everything for you!"

Xiulote's expression was complex, and he nodded slightly. Then, he turned and strode towards the exit of the Stone Hall. The sound of running footsteps followed him immediately. He paused slightly and then felt a tight hug from behind. The King shook his head, about to free himself, but then he heard a soft whisper.

"Your Highness, it's been three years...just a moment...a moment...that's all..."

Upon hearing this, Xiulote stiffened, standing still. After a long moment, he left the Stone Hall calmly, leaving behind a lone silhouette gazing after him.

"A true King aspires to the whole world, with a heart like solid iron, never to be softened by private feelings...and I am only just starting out!"

#### Chapter 580 - The First Kingdom Army Reform

Busy days always fly by, and in the blink of an eye, the start of February arrived. Fresh sprouts emerged on ancient trees outside the Palace of Wind, greeting the increasingly warm and splendid sunshine. A gentle north wind blew, and throughout Qinchongcan City, prayers of devotion filled the air. The citizens of the Capital City sang the glory of the Chief Divine, as if still in the midst of New Year's festivities.

The New Year's grand ceremony brought together numerous generals, and many army officers were also in the Capital City. Seizing this opportunity, Xiulote summoned all his trusted leaders in turn, sought the advice of many Great Generals, and took lessons from certain historical experiences. Finally, he compiled a reform plan for the legion and called the assembly of generals to officially announce it in the Kingdom!

The new legion reform proposal included two parts, the first being the standardization of the military system: establishing accurately graded military ranks and clarifying the composition of each level of troops. The second part, which drew more attention, was the reorganization of the troops: the reorganization of the Kingdom Legion and the determination of the positions of the generals.

Xiulote had engaged in military affairs for many years and had long contemplated the Alliance's military system. This plan had actually been brewing in his heart for a long time. However, legion reform was a matter of great importance and could not be undertaken lightly. He had waited until now, when the Kingdom's political situation was largely stable, to find a suitable opportunity to implement it.

The first part of the legion reform was to standardize the military system, generally following the 'five-two' method of military organization.

First, 'ten' is a number that can be counted on two hands, and thus, 10 men made one group, which was the smallest unit of troops, led by a group leader. Each group of ten shared a single-wheeled cart for their baggage. Two groups of 20 men formed a small team with a team leader. This was the customary number for Alliance Scout small teams, often represented by four hands. Group leaders and team leaders were undertaken by Samurai of the second to fourth level, serving as the most basic non-commissioned officers.

Next, five teams made up a company of 100 men, led by a Centurion. Two companies formed a battalion of 200 men, led by a bi-centurion. A battalion of 200 men was typically used as a standard tactical unit, capable of effectively executing basic tactical tasks such as assaults, raids, encirclements, and occupations. Centurions and bi-centurions were usually fourth-level experienced Samurai and Nobility with military achievements, forming the backbone of the Kingdom's legions and mid-level officers of the troops.

From the company of one hundred men upwards, each level of organization added a War Priest and a Military Doctor, comparable to an adjutant at the same level. The War Priest was responsible for daily prayers, pre-war mobilization, and post-war funerals. The role of the Military Doctor was to prevent epidemics in the army, distribute medicinal herbs for treating diseases, and provide treatment for the wounded after battles. Military Doctors were held by experienced Samurai or Priests knowledgeable about herbs.

Further up, five battalions made up a battalion of 1000 men, and the battalion commander was the Chiliarch. A battalion of 1000 men was the standard unit of regional garrison. According to Alliance tradition, the commander of a Chiliarch battalion corresponded to Nobility with significant military achievements or lesser experienced hereditary Nobility.

Each battalion of 1000 men, depending on its equipment and personnel, had different tendencies, generally divided into Close Combat Camps and long-range camps. The Close Combat Camps typically



employed formations with Spears or War Clubs, generally requiring shields, and were equipped with a certain proportion of Battle Axes. Long-range camps were equipped with Longbows, powerful crossbows, or more commonly, Throwing Spears. Also within the same battalion-level organization was the yet-to-be-formed Artillery Camp.

Lastly, 4-8 battalions of 1000 men each formed a Kingdom Legion. A legion was the Kingdom's strategic unit, and the Legion Commander was truly a role of great responsibility. A legion of 4000 men was known as a small legion, while an 8000-man Xiquipilli was a fully-formed large legion. A Legion Commander required at least the title of hereditary Nobility and was one of the most important figures in the Kingdom's military and political hierarchy.

From the 10-man group, 20-man team, 100-man company, 200-man battalion, 1000-man battalion, to the 4000-8000 man legion, from the newly added Priests and Military Doctors, to the differentiation of the 1000-man battalions, the new military system clarified the traditional tribal composition, unified the numbers of troops at each level, and helped increase the control of the generals over the armies.

In fact, the new military reform did not cause any controversy, and with just a decree from the King, all generals bowed in obedience.

After standardizing the military system, the second part of the reform was the reorganization of the Kingdom Legion. The Mexica legion, Tarasco Surrendered Army, and the soldiers from the various Tribes all had to undergo dispersal and integration, unified under the same banner of the Black Wolf.

The organization and size of a legion directly affected the power and position of the generals. Only with the supreme authority of the King and under the condition of most Samurai's obedience, was it possible to effectively reorganize the armies. The news of the legion's reorganization caused quite a bit of politicking among the generals.

Xiulote met continuously with Great Generals, summoned his confidants, and soothed the officers at all levels. It was not until late February that the King solidified the specific legion organization.

Before the reorganization, the Kingdom's military force numbered up to sixty-seven thousand. Among those, the direct Mexica legion comprised of over fourteen thousand men, the farmland garrisoning Tarasco Surrendered Army was about fifty thousand strong, and there were an additional two to three thousand scattered Tecos Tribe and Chichimec Tribe soldiers.

More than half of the Tarasco Kingdom's maximum mobilized legions were successively inherited by the Fief within the lake. However, for the combined population of over six hundred thousand in the three counties of the Fief, this ratio of soldiers to citizens was certainly unsustainable in the long run. Thus, this reorganization of the legions naturally also involved a reduction of the military force.

A gentle wind swayed the torches, and the grand hall was solemn and silent, with only the faint rustling of Armor friction. Xiulote sat high upon the throne, before him a dense crowd of commanding officers, all standing in silent reverence.

"The Royal Decree: establish the Royal Guard Legion, totaling 6000 men. Under its command are the Copper Armor Personal Army of 2500 men, the Powerful Crossbow Guard of 1500 men, and the Vanguard Throwing Spear of 2000 men. The Legion Commander is a distinguished Noble, the sacred Eagle Warrior, the Head Warrior, Bertade!"