

Civilization 64

Chapter 64 Development

Xiulote lay on the soft grass bed, tossing and turning restlessly throughout the night.

Listening to the rain outside his window, the endless tapping of the raindrops seemed to knock directly on his heart. His thoughts, like a long wind, flitted away in the blink of an eye, soared to the distant Lake Capital City, and settled on an unfamiliar svelte figure, struggling to discern the smile of the shadow.

Night always quickens one's thoughts. Xiulote clearly understood that this political marriage, as the most crucial guarantee for an alliance between two powers, could not possibly be canceled or altered.

As for Xiulote himself, he felt a bit of awkwardness, yet he was also filled with many longings—imagining, anticipating, the complexity indescribable. In matters of the heart, he was always a youth, whether in his past life or this one.

Early the next morning, as dawn just began to break, Xiulote suddenly rose. He casually draped on a robe and went to find Acap, his old friend who lived nearby.

Acap was also up early. Dressed in neat High Priest robes, his hair combed and wearing a formal feather crown, he sat upright in the tent, reading a wooden tablet in his hands. Upon closer inspection, it was the initial version of the script that he and Aweit had revised.

"Acap, what do you think of this script?" the youth pondered, deciding to talk around the subject at first.

"It's quite good! This script you've invented is precise in meaning, standardized in writing, neat, and aesthetically pleasing. It facilitates communication between all levels and makes it easier to teach knowledge, contributing to the inheritance of culture," Acap said, nodding and smiling in approval.

"Do you think Grandfather would be willing to use these scripts? Can they be promoted on a large scale?" the youth asked with some concern.

"The High Priest probably won't object, especially since you invented it," Acap considered for a moment before smiling slightly. "He has always been keen on reforming religion, and over the years, he has guided the priests of the city-states in excavating and organizing the stories and records of the Feathered Serpent Divine."

"However, other priests probably won't be pleased to see the standardization of script. The greatest resistance will definitely come from the Chief Priesthood in the Capital."

"Chief Priest Quetzal has always been conservative and stubborn. They have historically held the authority to interpret mythological records, often using omens and legends to intervene in the internal affairs of the Alliance. The Chief Priesthood themselves possess many fertile lands and numerous warrior followers. This kind of change in script will touch on their fundamental interests, and there will certainly be a severe backlash."

Acap analyzed seriously, and he looked at the youth with some worry.

Xiulote nodded, understanding that the Priesthood had deep roots within the Alliance, holding the hearts of the warriors and the common people. Trying to forcefully overthrow the Priest class would mean opposing the majority in the Alliance, which would lead to self-destruction.

Regarding the Priest class, only a religious reform was possible. Standardizing and popularizing the script was essentially part of the reform. Next, he needed to align himself with the reformist faction within the Priesthood, continuously strike against and eliminate the traditional conservatives, while also increasing the literacy rate among the warriors and commoners.

Then came the reduction of Priest privileges, the modification of human sacrifice rituals, the improvement of theological theories, the reorganization of the ecclesiastical system, and deciding whether there should be unity or separation between church and state, and so on. These reforms could only advance step by step, requiring time for the people's views to settle and waiting for further developments in the situation, creating the groundwork for the next reform.

The religious reform he hoped for was destined to be a long and difficult process, unless some uncontrollable force suddenly swept away all obstacles.

After some idle chat, the youth looked around again. Hmm, no one was around, and Bertade was not there.

Only then did he sit down next to Acap, grabbed his old friend's arm, and asked in a low voice, "Acap, about... Alisa, the princess... um, the one you proposed on my behalf yesterday, well, is she pretty? What's her personality like?"

Acap was taken aback for a moment, then couldn't help but twitch the corner of his mouth.

He fought to hold back a laugh and teased in return, "The princess is only eleven years old and is still in the stage of home education. It's not yet time for her to go to school at Calmecac. How could I have possibly seen her? You should ask His Royal Highness, the King's brother."

The youth thought about it; indeed, maybe he should ask Aweit? Then he touched his still aching cheek and remembered Aweit's fierce glare, suddenly shivering. "Maybe not."

"Actually, you shouldn't worry about the princess's appearance," Acap laughed heartily. "How do you think His Royal Highness, the King's brother looks?"

"Quite good," Xiulote pondered on Aweit's handsome face and his distinct facial features, and replied factually.

"Given that, the wife of the King's brother is also a renowned beauty of the Capital City, there's no way their daughter would be anything less than desirable. As for her personality, the Royal Family has always been strict in their household education. Moreover, the princess is still young and nothing is set in stone. If you're truly concerned, why not take the initiative to connect more?"

"You need to cultivate a relationship between you, experiencing beautiful things together. At the same time, gently guide the girl's naive thoughts. By the time the princess grows up, you will be as intertwined as beans winding around corn, growing closely together. You two are certain to be a perfect match!" Acap said, smiling gently.

In the eyes of the youth, the face of the old friend, gentle and refined as jade, suddenly sparkled with a light of "wisdom".

"Acap, you're really too smart!" The young man suddenly stood up, hugged Acap with joy, and babbled excitedly, "Let me take a moment to reflect and seriously draft a plan!"

Acap just smiled lightly, and patted the forehead of the young man, ah, that's good.

The easy times passed quickly. That evening, Acap changed into casual clothes, bade farewell to the Commander and the young man, and, accompanied by a few intelligence officers, braved the rain to head towards the siege camp at Otapan.

Then, Acap needed to make contact with Xiuxoke, the group leader there, to inform the High Priest and the King's brother of the decision to form an alliance, integrating the Teotihuacan City-State army into the Alliance.

Aweit also dispatched envoys separately. He kept in contact with the military officers at all levels of the siege camp, keeping the upcoming plans strictly confidential, only cautiously testing the officers' attitudes. This was to identify those who remained loyal to him, judge the wavering neutral party, and clarify the King's staunch supporters. His identity as the Chief Intelligence Officer gave him great freedom and cover for his actions.

On the other hand, envoys going to and from catered to the supporters in the three cities of the Capital. He showed goodwill towards the Great Nobility and the Priesthood, ensuring they would at least remain neutral in subsequent actions. To the lesser nobility and the rank-and-file Samurai, he made ample promises, and from the army units he had once led, he formed a steadfast group of supporters.

Last, the Commander began to reform more than ten thousand Samurai under his command: first by marginalizing those loyal to the King. Then, based on recent military achievements, he promoted officers loyal to himself. Next, in the name of victory in battle, he lavished rewards on the common Samurai and Militia, thus consolidating their loyalty.

Xiulote spent his days with his followers, practicing Martial Arts and literacy. Lately, he had been somewhat ill at ease in Aweit's presence and decided to hide away for a few days to recuperate.

He now had five hundred followers and had formed a Personal Guard Warrior group, with Bertade serving as the Head Warrior of the guard. Relying on the core support sent by his father, his personal guard was already developing into a formidable force. The youth valued the literacy education of his followers greatly; he was preparing to train the Personal Guard into a future officer corps while also experimenting with new tactics and combat methods.

The Longbow Guards within the military were also under his command. There were now one hundred and fifty longbows, and a full two hundred men in the guard, all more experienced Samurai. They had been exposed to javelins and possessed a foundational sense of distance for long-range shooting, as well as skills in aiming and firing.

Xiulote had secretly established a training base in the nearby forest, where come rain or shine, the Longbow Guards trained day after day. By now, their training regimen had shifted from general flat shooting and lobbing to focused fire on fixed targets within two hundred meters.

Time slipped by in the wind and rain, waves surged under the rivers. An invisible net was slowly and steadily unfurling.

Two weeks hurried past, and both banks of the Long River remained calm. Until one drizzly afternoon, a canoe suddenly arrived.

The mud-soaked Scout leapt and sprinted, tumbling into the great tent. He had just rushed from Xilotepec City, traveling day and night for six straight days, without rest for man or oar, almost completely worn out.

"Xilotepec City has rebelled seven days ago! The Otomi people simultaneously ambushed the supply camp on the banks of the Tampen River, as well as the food storage sites in the mountains. The exact casualty reports are still unknown, but the supply line to the siege camp at Otapan has been temporarily cut off!"

The Supreme Commander and the young man looked at each other. Both faces remained calm as they nodded lightly, "It's finally here!"

The next morning, the Tarasco camp across the river was also stirring. Just after midday, Tarasco's naval forces repeatedly mobilized upstream and downstream on the Long River, transporting numerous Militia squads across, making gestures of launching a major attack.

"The beginning of the rainy season has passed, and everything among humankind is unfolding—truly perfect Unity of Heaven and Man." The youth stood atop a hill, looked up slightly at the rainy sky, and beheld the vast expanse of earth and rivers.

In his heart was a peace, and even a trace of serenity. With matters coming to a head, it was time to be bold! He watched the world with amusement, stepped forward with conviction, as if the world itself was moving towards him.