

## Civilization 92

### Chapter 92 Conclusion

The noonday sunshine was still warm, but the autumn breeze carried a slight chill.

In the light of the sun, scattered weapons gleamed coldly, leaving behind the final sparkles of the samurai. With the breeze came the gently falling yellow leaves, carrying away the silent farewells of many.

The campaign that began at the great Otapan camp, developed by the waiting at the Lerma River, and climaxed with the fierce battle in the mountain encampment, had now come to an end, just like the close of the rainy season. The king and his warriors had all returned to dust.

After a long while, Xiulote silently stepped forward. He gently closed Totec's eyes and, touching the samurai's cold, stiff face, once again smelled the familiar scent of blood and couldn't help but let out a soft sigh.

Olosh came up from behind and gently patted the young man's shoulder.

"Xiulote, even the mightiest jaguar will one day die in the forest, and even the highest eagle will fall to the mud. We all have our day. To die for one's beliefs is actually a samurai's fortune. I, too, look forward to such a day!"

Xiulote nodded, calming down from the intense emotions. The sorrow in his eyes disappeared, replaced by a determination that came from within. It was a lesson taught by example, showing the young man what a samurai's will was, and what it meant to have beliefs and to protect them!

Strength was shaping his spirit, erasing completely the fragility of his future life.

He moved over to Tizoc's body and looked at the face smeared with mud. The once-superior king now lay on the ground, looking no different from an ordinary man. The young man shook his head; he felt nothing for the king's death. If it was a fight to the death between enemies, then death it should be.

Xiulote picked up the Divine Staff from the ground. It had a slender wooden body, with ancient textures, and on top was a gold base studded with a ring of yellow gemstones the size of pearls, forming the outline of the sun. The young man thought of Aweit, and likewise flicked his finger on the Divine Staff.

A clear and melodious chime of gold and jade reverberated across the fields, also spanning through time and space.

This was the ancestral Divine Staff, passed down for hundreds of years, a symbol of divine authority.

During the times when the Priesthood dominated everything in the tribe, this staff was passed down from Priest to Priest. After the Lake Capital City was established, the staff was always kept in the hands of the Chief Priesthood of the Great Temple. When the king and the Chief Priesthood maintained an intimate relationship, the Chief Priest would confer the Divine Staff to the king in the name of the Guardian God, declaring the support of the Chief Priesthood.

The intimacy of this relationship was like that between Tizoc and Quetzal. And the price for obtaining the support of the Chief Priest was the retreat of royal power and the expansion of divine authority.

In fact, before Montezuma made another Divine Staff, this single Divine Staff also represented royal power derived from divine authority. Of the fifteen predecessor monarchs of the Aztec, half came from priestly backgrounds, or were Priests of royal descent.

Xiulote remembered, the king had once used this staff to communicate with the gods in the Holy City, in front of his grandfather. At that time, tens of thousands of samurai watched with reverence, bowing their heads and not daring to look directly. This shows how deeply divine authority had penetrated into people's hearts.

The young man frowned, feeling quite troubled whenever he thought of divine authority and the Priesthood.

The authority of the Priests didn't come from one or two individuals, but from an entire class. In this era, the Priests were the most educated class. Their power came from the possession of various kinds of knowledge, the conduct of rituals for harvest, funerals, marriages, and the interpretation of myths and celestial phenomena.

The power of the Priests came from a complete monopoly of culture!

With such power, Priests could influence the succession of the Royal Family, divert the taxes of the City-States, occupy large tracts of land and villages, and also had a large number of following samurai, continually manipulating the hearts of the common people.

As a widely renowned fifth-level Priest, the young man's own force included five hundred following samurai. To support these samurai, he too had to acquire wealth and land.

"Go back and discuss it well with Aweit. Mexica society is still before the cultural enlightenment of contending schools of thought, and Huaxia's civil official system doesn't exist, not even the foundation of a civil service examination. Compared to the hereditary world of the Great Nobility with its rigid class structure, at least the Priesthood absorbs some excellent commoners."

"In the future, the power of the Priests can only be limited and guided, not completely eradicated!"

The young man was contemplating future plans when he heard Olosh's light exclamation.

"Eh! Xiulote, come quickly, what is this?"

Upon hearing this, the young man looked over and saw Olosh, who had no taboos, rummaging through Tizoc's body.

To his surprise, he pulled out a large piece of neatly folded exquisite cotton cloth from the king's embrace, full of drawn pictures and symbols, with the distinctive fragrance of rouge dye.

This large piece of exquisite cotton cloth was equivalent to three hundred cacao beans, or one hundred corn cakes, only to be used as paper for recordkeeping by the King and the Great Nobility. The price of vermilion dye was even more expensive, comparable to the gold of the Old World.

"After returning this time, I'll develop paper-making technology to provide a medium for cultural dissemination," the youth pondered.

He then took the exquisite piece of cotton cloth and unfolded it. It was a huge design plan, depicting a three-dimensional ritual stone disk.

From the distance markings, the disk had a diameter of about three meters and a height of about one meter. The top of the disk was engraved with ritual images of five suns from the calendar. Above the top, there was space for the intended placement of a Guardian God sculpture or ritual offering stone table. The sides of the ritual plate featured sixteen images of battling Monarchs, engraved with the imposing figure of the King and his diminutive defeated enemies.

Each Monarch bore the markings of divinities, like the War God's splendid headdress, the Primordial Sun's shifting smoke, the Feathered Serpent's tri-colored long feathers, and the God of Death's red tongue. The first fifteen images naturally represented the fifteen preceding Monarchs of Aztec history, and the sixteenth was Tizoc himself.

Under the feet of the Monarchs, there were enemies either kneeling in submission or lying dead. These enemies had various name tags, symbolizing the City-States and lands conquered by each Monarch. The enemies lying dead under Montezuma's feet were especially numerous, with dense markings filling the scene.

Beneath Tizoc's feet, there were, for now, only two names: Xilotepec and Otapan. However, he left himself a great deal of space, clearly harboring grand ambitions.

"This must be one of the reasons why Tizoc insisted on maintaining the siege!" Xiulote looked at the image of the Otapan Warriors and their markings on the plan and felt a tinge of emotion.

Even after discarding the Royal Banner, abandoning the army, and fleeing south in a panic, Tizoc did not give up this design. The dense design markings revealed the devotion he poured into it, his faith in theology. Unfortunately, this historically famous "Tizoc Stone" would never appear again.

"History has been forever changed!" On second thought, the youth felt a sense of excitement. "Now it's our era!"

The battle was over, and it was time to reorganize the troops.

Xiulote ordered Stanley to accept the surrender of the remaining Royal Family Imperial Guards; their loyalty and combat prowess were unmatched. Perhaps Aweit would use them as a seed to rebuild the Tonsured Guard Camp.

He also tasked Olosh with organizing the three thousand warriors directly under the Royal Family, preparing to take them northward on their return.

Finally, he praised Bertade for his remarkable archery and ordered his Head Warrior to dig pits to bury Totec's remains. He himself sat cross-legged on the ground, carving a wooden grave marker and began to etch cubic Chinese characters with his knife.

Another hour passed. The troops were ready, and Xiulote prepared to start the journey back.

He made his last stop at Totec's grave, looking at the nameless headstone.

"Here lies a true Samurai. He possessed peerless martial arts, the purest soul, and a beautiful acceptance of death. Now, he has died for his beliefs, please do not disturb his peace."

Who here could truly understand the Chinese characters on this? It was impossible to learn Chinese quickly, and even Bertade had not learned much. Xiulote smiled self-deprecatingly; this was but a memorial he wrote for himself.

In the end, the youth touched his chest with his hand and silently asked himself:

"What are my beliefs?"

"My beliefs are also to protect. Now, I must protect my ancestors, friends, lover, followers... everyone I care about. In the future, when I ascend to the throne, it will be the people of this land, this nation, and civilization!"

He gazed at the shallow grave, remembering the Samurai's serene smile, and once again questioned himself.

"When the choice arises, can I die for my own beliefs?"

Xiulote reflected for a moment, contemplating the road ahead filled with hardships, as well as future diseases and colonizers. The youth nodded silently and firmly.

"I can," he said as he turned and walked away with the bearing of both a Samurai and a Commander-in-Chief.

The army of four thousand set off towards the encampment to the north, three days' journey away. The old days had ended, and a new era was dawning!