

Herald 491

Chapter 491 12'S Answer

Alexander himself was quite pleased with how the negotiations went.

Although none had jumped to say yes then and there, there were also no bullish nobles threatening him to fight to the death.

An event he would like to very much avoid given the recent happenings.

Although to be honest that might have been largely due to the copious amount of honey Alexander had laid out on the table in the form of economic benefit.

Hence, many nobles who had indeed come to Zanzan with the desire to flat-out reject Alexander and even die a martyr started having second thoughts right after seeing the second page.

Money truly did make the world go around.

Thus in the following three days, the group of 12 was engaged in many furious private debates, either with all of them present, or in small groups, where all kinds of colorful language and suggestions, accusations, threats, and curses were thrown out against each other as they tried to come up with a unanimous conclusion.

"Tikba! You dare betray your homeland! Your ancestors! Your oath! Have you fed your honor to the gods?" This violent roar was predictably uttered by Jamider (Earl) Yuusiq, who was the leader of the anti-Alexander faction.

And to his accusation Lord Tikba simply smiled and said eloquently, "His Majesty AM has lost the Eternal Holy City and three wars consecutively. I believe he has lost the mandate of the heavens. The gods cannot beholden me to my oaths."

To which the much more vocally limited Yuusuq could only point his point finger at the shamelessness and repeat, "Yo..you...you." in rage.

Following this, the nobles discussed every single of Alexander's demands multiple times, with many disagreeing, disapproving, and discontent with at least a few of them, or just even just with one or two clauses in one of those points.

For example, in the neutral sections of the demands, they most definitely did not like the free trade demand because most could see they would import vastly more of Alexander's new inventions than export their produce.

They were guaranteed to run a trade deficit.

The loss of coinage was another point of contention as it robbed them of their financial freedom, while the restriction on building new AM's temples snatched their religious liberty.

And lastly, the ability for Alexander to investigate them if a merchant was harmed in their territory could be easily exploited to frame and then attack them.

All these points of dubious intent were clear as day to the shrewd group.

So if this was only what Alexander had to say, then many of these nobles would have considered rebelling.

Because it would be wrong to be fooled by these apparently weak nobles, believing they would not fight or resist.

For they all belonged to at least the outer circle of Muazz's retainers and could be considered at least semi-zealots, and convincing them to submit by strong-arming them would not likely work very well.

Not when if Alexander was too heavy-handed, another crusader army might come looking for him.

Hence the second page was absolutely necessary to coax them.

Now, it had to be said, even before giving them the papers, Alexander had quite the confidence that the numbers quoted there would be quite efficacious in inducing a change of heart.

This was because when Alexander first discussed with Pasha Farzah the amount of money to give them, the old man was first a bit incredulous, finding it hard to believe that Alexander was actually being serious.

This was because even he, currently, perhaps the richest man in Adhania would not be able to stomach losing a total of thirty-three (33 million) ropes to twelve nobles every year for an indefinite amount of time.

That would be close to like 10% of his annual income.

But when Alexander said he was being totally serious, it made the old man truly open his eyes to Alexander's productive and economic potential and it both made him scared of how the balance of power would change in Adhania due to him, but also glad that the boy was on their side.

So he then joked, "Brat, increase a bit of the money, and even if would consider working under you., haha."

While Lady Inayah who was there with them too experienced a similar shock and added after Pasha Farzah with obvious admiration, "It is simply unbelievable that a single city can about produce one billion ropals worth of products annually."

"I would have never believed it if I had not seen it. Even if it came from my own father's mouth. And I fear my father will not believe it even when I tell him."

The black mature woman then let out a sigh of admiration, while Alexander actually marveled at the lady's grasp of mathematics and commerce when she was able to pretty easily estimate Alexander's total worth of output.

pandasnovel.com She did this by first remembering that Alexander had promised to sell to each of them around 300 million ropals worth of goods over the next year.

And then she simply made the reasonable assumption that Alexander would at least keep half of his total stock for domestic use and to trade with other partners other than them.

So came the number of one billion, which to her actually seemed like a conservative amount. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

And amazingly, Lady Inayah was pretty much on the dot there, as Alexander did estimate his total industrial output to be around that ballpark.

The Treasury Master of Adhania had sired a very worthy daughter.

While the man being praised put on a shy facade and lightly chuckled,

"Haha, Lady Inayah is embarrassing me. I'm not nearly as rich as you are making me out to be."

"I am without a doubt losing a lot of money to those nobles in this deal. But I chose to do it as also a kind of propaganda to other nobles. It is very hard to do business when you are hated by everyone after, hehe."

Part of this statement was completely true.

One of the other reasons why Alexander had decided to distribute his products at a discounted price besides sharing the pie so that the nobles would not rebel was indeed the simple reason for propaganda.

He hoped that other nobles would be enticed by Alexander's generosity and trading opportunity to switch sides.

But he was also lying through his teeth when he said that he was losing money on the deal.

Because while he was not making as much money as he could, he was certainly not making a loss, and actually selling the products at a much higher price than their cost price.

But Alexander naturally kept all these a tightly guarded secret.

In fact the cost of the goods that Alexander produced was kept so under wraps that even the people in charge of running them did not know the exact values.

For Alexander calculated these numbers personally and only shared them with Cambyses and to a lesser extent Ophenia.

And it was the prices of these goods that proved to be the most decisive factor in deciding the choice of the nobles when they discussed whether to stay neutral or to join neutral.

Due to that, the nobles even chose to overlook the 1% tax humiliating tax, further reasoning that there was also the exemption from all other expenses regarding entertaining their superiors, which many actually calculated as having saved money on this deal.

And so as Alexander waited patiently for the next four days, eager to hear the nobles' results, the day of reckoning finally came.

The group again met at the same place, same time, but with the exception that this time the four honored guests were missing as they simply saw no reason to be there.

So the meeting consisted of Alexander and his retainers, who had been largely overshadowed by the presence of the big four in the previous meeting and mostly stayed in the shadow then.

The meeting began shortly after exchanging some pleasantries and ended quite quickly.

Because it basically went like this.

"My lord, I Lord Tikba have decided to accept all your offers and proclaim His Majesty, King Ptolomy as the rightful king of Adhanian. I beseech thee to allow me to join thy ranks."

This was said by those choosing to submit to Alexander.

While the following was said by those choosing to stay neutral.

"My lord, I Jamider (Earl) Yuusuq have decided to stay disinterested and uninvolved in the ongoing conflict. I accept all demands on the first page and so I beseech thee that you accept."

The former oath takers far outweighed the latter, 11 to 1 to be exact, as the only one to reject Alexander was Yuusuq, who stubbornly stuck to his oath no matter what.

In fact, he had even come here with the determined mind to rather die than submit.

But after a lot of cajoling by Tikba in the following three days, and under the pressure of being outnumbered 11 to 1, who at one point even threatened to implement a total blockade of his landlocked territory, the martial man relented.

Alexander was certainly very glad to see this lopsided result.

Even though he had somewhat expected it, it did not detract him from feeling a sense of accomplishment at having expanded his dominion to 12,000 sq km.

"Hahaha, great, great. Together we will make Zanzan great again." He said as he got up to hug and shake hands with each of his new retainers.

And soon the date of the oath-taking ceremony was fixed.

Chapter 492 New Land Distribution

The noble's reason for joining in such droves was quite natural if one thought about the terms of the proposal a bit.

Alexander by design had made the proposal such that it made more sense to join him and receive the economic benefits rather than choose to stay isolated and all alone, with all the downsides to leaving Amenheraft and none of the upsides of joining Alexander.

Hence other than the most staunch supporter of Amenheraft, Lord Yuusuq, everyone flipped.

"Hahaha, it is great to see you make the right choice. You won't regret it." Alexander patted the arms of each man as he greeted them, and then decided to schedule the coronation at the Temple of Ramuh in a month.

The reason for requiring this large amount of time was because of a few reasons.

One of the reasons was that it would simply take Alexander some time to organize the large ball as it would include quite a lot of planning and making the decorations for the venue, preparing the halls, selecting a menu for the grand event, and organizing the guards and security to name a few.

But the true main reason for such a long lead time leading up to the event would definitely have to be so that the nobles could have adequate time to order and prepare the custom-made clothes for the event.

Clothes in Adhania were perhaps as much a fashion and status symbol as the jewelry worn or even the peerage itself.

And given that it was almost a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, the nobles wanted everything to be perfect.

Hence the originally picky nobles were even more so about it right now, resulting in the delay.

As a side note, Alexander had also decided to gift each of the new nobles a new, lavish suit to wear during the swearing, almost as a kind of way to make for something similar he had failed to do during his wedding.

Hence the one-month delay was a boon for also his tailors, as it gave them enough time to properly measure, design and manufacture the custom-made clothes.

But one would be mistaken if they thought the tailors were ordered to have 11 suits.

Because it would not only be the eleven new nobles who would be sworn in that day.

No.

For there would be additionally the original four lords of Lord Prantik's group.

But perhaps much more importantly it would be the official swearing of all his ever-expectant retainers and council members, who numbered officially a total of ten- Cambyses, Menes, Melodias, Menicus, Grahtos, Heliptos, Diaogosis, Uzak, Harun, and Jazum.

While unofficially it was eleven, as it also included Camius whom Alexander chose to keep hidden from his new nobles for now, instead personally apologizing to him in private and promising to make it up later with a large fiefdom and more favors.

"Hahaha, don't worry about it doc. Those kinds of parties aren't really meant for me anyway," While Camius had simply brushed off the 'un-invite'.

Hence, as everything was being prepared for the coronation event in the coming days, Alexander busied himself with meetings with the 25 people to be sworn their fealty to him,

He met with all of them both individually and in groups, their main topic always regarding one thing- The respective noble's fiefdom.

And for the ten new nobles, i.e. his council member and close retainers, this had been a long time coming.

Alexander had made many of these council members nobles within a fortnight of entering Zanzan, but they had no land of their own until now.

This had made them feel quite inferior when interacting with other nobles of even similar peerage, who had lands of their own.

Not to mention most Adhanian nobles viewed Alexander's retainers as nothing more than common rabble who were pathetically trying to disguise themselves as one of them, like a toad would try to taste swan meat.

And so they were most eager to call a piece of earth their own and show those snobs.

Alexander naturally was aware of this, and so took this task very seriously, spending a lot of time looking at maps and even going out of the city to choose suitable fiefdoms for his retainers, to make sure he gave them a mix of good fertile plains, with bad barren wastelands, and boring, unproductive hills, with exciting mines and ore deposits.

All so that nobody ended up with too much good land or too little of it and feels cheated.

But that everybody had a healthy mix of every type of land.

Now Alexander had to give this amount of land out of his own pocket of recently conquered 8,000 sq km, some of which contained lands of other nobles whom Alexander killed either in Jabel or his battle with DJose.

But those nobles could not raise any objections due to being dead and so Alxx distributed much of those already developed lands to his men without any problem.

And as for the amount he gave.

Well, as each of these new nobles was a Shordar (Baron), hence per the fiefdom limitation of Adhania set by the royal family, he gifted all his military fiefdom the maximum amount possible, which was 100 sq km.

While most of the civilian retainers got the minimum amount- 80 sq km, including Cambyses.

And the reason for this was obvious.I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

As Alexander stated. "It is certainly true that the army would certainly not be able to fight without the arms of the civilian industry."

"But it is even more true that the civilians would not exist without the army."

"It is the army who fights for us."

"It is the army who defends us."

"It is the army who dies for us."

"And no amount of civilian aid can bring a dead soldier back."

"So it is only natural they get more benefits."

pandasnovel.com Alexander throughout his life would always give the military his top priority, and all his economic output would be with the ultimate goal of strengthening it.

Hence the clear favoritism.

Besides, it was much harder for civilian nobles to rebel than military ones anyway.

After all, the pen was not literally mightier than the sword.

So it was an easy choice for Alexander on who to favor more.

While another much more sinister intention was to set the civilian nobles against the military nobles.

With the idea being that if these two groups were to be busy being at each other's throats, they would be too preoccupied to rebel against him.

It was not a nice thing to do, but a necessary one.

For this type of political machinations was something Alxx had to prepare for even as he was laying the first bricks of his empire.

Hence with Alxx giving around 900 sq km to his closest friends and retainers, Alxx then moved on to get to know the fiefdoms of all his 15 new nobles.

He first located them on maps the nobles bought and then proceeded to learn every little detail there was to them.

Their size, geography, population, tax revenue, trading partners, availability of the amount of fertile land, relation with their neighbors, and a dozen other things.

While also working out the details of their first joint infrastructure development, i.e.- the roads.

This project which seemed quite simple on the surface proved to be quite a headache for everyone involved as Alxx and his nobles were forced to spend almost a whole week just working on that.

The reason for so was because it seemed that Alxx had grossly underestimated the amount of work and planning involved in the endeavor.

First came determining the exact number of routes that would have to be built, as Alxx demanded that not only the nobles be connected to each other, but also to Zanzan.

And since each noble neighboured multiple others, so each fiefdom become sort of a central hub for the roads, spreading out from it like cobwebs.

Then came the question of where to build them.

And a straight line to the next point was not always the right answer.

Because there might be untraversable terrains like deep rivers, steep hills, fjords, marshes, bogs, bandit areas, or even hostile noble territory in the middle or even just close to the proposed routes.

So all these had to be taken into account and then the road redirected to avoid those unfriendly terrain.

While for the rivers, if possible the route would be moved to lead to the shallower parts of the river if possible, as it would make building bridges easier, and if it was not, the bridges would have to be built even atop the deep river without an option.

And speaking of building bridges, that was another part of the problem, because it was not just roads Alxx was building but bridges too.

While another problem was that if the water was so deep and fast that bridges simply could not be built, then there was the further hassle for the logistics crew to cross the river on boats and start building the road from the other side.

Then came planning where these roads would connect with each other if two roads going to the same place met or there was already a pre-existing road so that there was no foolish mistake such as two parallel redundant roads going to the same place.

This was followed by calculating the total estimated length of the proposed road, the total time likely needed to finish it, and lastly the all-important matter of budget.

Chapter 493 Taxes And Roads

The length of the road Alexander and the nobles determined was a total of around 800 km.

This number was achieved by Alexander first demanding three straight main roads built which extended 90 km in the north, east, and west directions from his city Zanzan, for a total of 270 km.

Then there were the various noble fiefdoms connecting with each other that demanded another 300 km of new roads

And lastly, the nobles were asked to repair and expand some of their existing roads for easier trading, for another 250 km of additional paved ground.

Once this was determined, and the route and specification selected, Alexander then invited an expert to help him estimate the time and cost.

And that was Diaogosis.

The man had been building roads for Alexander for three months now, and with his experience in building stone-concrete roads, Alexander could think of none better.

And once asked about the feasibility of the roads, this newly made noble addressed the crowd, "With the 60 tons of cement provided to us daily, we are able to build around 4 km of roads a day."

"That comes to each of my workers being able to build 3 meters of roads per day with the help of around hundred and fifty (150) horses and a similar number of wagons for carrying the sand, gravel, and stone aggregates."

Saying these preliminary claims, Diaogosis then paused a bit as he traced his chin and calculated his estimate based on the varying conditions.

And it was these varying conditions that were the real buggers as by using simple math, 800 km should have taken about 7 months as per Diaogosis's claim of being able to build 4 km of road per day.

But life was rarely simple.

And so the stonemason spoke out his thoughts aloud.

"So for the 800 km road, with the supply of cement being equal...and taking into account the time needed to cover the large distance from our supply point at Zanzan.....and given that we will have to build twelve bridges of different lengths....hmmm."

Diaogosis hummed for some time as the cogs spun inside his head.

Until finally a while later the man first gave his estimate of the labor force needed and the time required.

"It will take me around 2,000 men, 350 horses or mules, and 600 carts, and one and a half years to complete it." He at last said confidently.

The number of men and materials wanted was certainly a lot.

But it was only a very big project.

So Alexander only asked softly, "Could you explain?"

And the man was happy to explain his working to the Pasha,

"My lord, the main reason why I'm asking for so much time, men, and material is because since the roads will be built quite far away from Zanzan, I will need a lot of men and horse carts to supply me with the cement needed. The need is quite justified."

This was completely true and so Alexander nodded to give him the informal approval of the project.

Which meant the project was guaranteed to go ahead, and only needed to go through some formalities.

While from the side one of the nobles chimed with a light smile, "If transporting this cement is the problem, then perhaps it could be manufactured in my territory. We are situated in quite a convenient position, and it will only not save us time, but money as well."

It seemed the magic material had already aroused the curiosity of many in the group.

But Alexander did not bother responding to this.

This was because this was not a new request.

For the last weeks, as Alexander had spent some with getting to know the nobles and their fiefdoms, they had only gotten to know him, and his city Zanzan.

They inquired about all kinds of things, like his background, his military wins, his outlook in life, and one noble even prodded him about his taste in women,

While in the case of Zanzan, they asked about its people, its army, all the different kinds of things it produced, and most importantly of all, how they were produced.

And like always Alexander had answered some, evaded others, and refused to comment on a few

The last one mostly being associated with the production of many of his goods.

And as you might have guessed, the nobles were really interested in the cement-making technique.

pandasnovel.com One which Alexander even refused to put on the table, very straightforwardly saying, "That is a core technology of Zanzan and cannot be traded.

And so Alexander ignored that noble's suggestions, and simply turned to DD to ask,

"And the budget?"

Hearing this the stonemason took around round of long silence to think, as he then even took out a piece of paper from his pocket and started scribbling.

And at last presented Alexander the broken down statistics, saying,

"This is a preliminary estimate, my lord. Please have a look."

On the paper, the prices were broken down as such.

Cement cost for 1000 km of road (estimated total for road and bridge):

15,000 tons of cement for 1.2 million ropals (at 80 ropal per ton).

Wages of 2,000 men for 18 months:

9 million ropals (at 250 ropals per worker per month)I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

Feed for 350 horses or mules for 18 months:

3 million ropals (at 500 ropals per animal per month)

Cost of 600 carts, 2000 buckets, and other miscellaneous pieces of equipment:

1 million ropals.

Slack: 1 million ropals.

Total- 15.2 million or about 15 million ropals.

Alexander found these numbers to be quite reasonable and hence gave DD a nod of approval.

But that did not stop his heart from skipping a beat after looking at the numbers.

And this was even when he knew the values would be like this.

The road's cost was around a Jamider's (Earl) annual income and this was considering Alexander was using the much cheap cement road.

If he had made the roads using traditional techniques, this would have easily cost tripled or even quadrupled the amount.

No wonder nobles did not like building roads if it was not absolutely necessary.

It was bloody expensive.

And as Alexander passed the paper around, the nobles sitting there all too drew cold breaths.

They had certainly suspected such a value, but still seeing the amount scared them.

While those with a good head on them even posed with a slight shake of the head, "My lord, I don't think our yearly tax will be able to cover even one-tenth of this."

This Alexander knew.

Over the past few days, he had gotten to know the financial capabilities of each of the individual nobles and it went like roughly this like.

Each Shordar (Baron) controlled around 100 sq km of land, which had 10 to 13% of arable land in them.

And since in this agricultural society, almost everything worth of value was produced in the fields, those good lands were really their only money makers, and they produced around 250,000 ropals worth of goods per sq km as per Alexander's calculations.

And since the nobles got a cut of 20% as taxes, and after deducting all the extra expenses such as paying the tax collectors and the bookkeepers, a shordar (Baron) earned around 500,000 to 600,000 ropals annually.

Using this similar math, a talukdar (Viscount) who controlled around 500 sq km earned 2.5 million.

While a Jamider (Earl), who controlled 2,000 sq km, and had actual cities under their control earned 15 million.

From this, Alexander calculated his total 1% tax revenue would be only around 1 million ropals, which was more symbolic than an actual amount.

But it was a start.

While in the meantime Alexander knew he would have to foot the bill.

So he answered, "I'm aware of the monetary difficulties the city is facing."

"So I propose that the Zanzan council borrows the money from me for now. And they can then pay me back the amount once the trade and commerce here develop."

Alexander afterward even put on a magnanimous face, as he declared, "I will be generous and not charge the city any interest. Just the principal amount."

Which drew relieved faces from the nobles.

Because they knew Alexander was unlikely to ever get his money back on this.

As did too Alexander.

In this project or any number of the additional infrastructure developments he had in his mind, Alexander was destined to lose money.

But it was an investment for developing trade and even security in his fiefdom.

So Alexander was more than willing to splurge.

As the issue of the road came to an end and the issue of tax was raised, Alexander remembered he had one last thing to discuss with them.

Coincidentally, it concerned increasing his tax revenue.

So he turned to address the nobles.

"Gentlemen, many of you may not know this, but Zanzan has had a small agricultural revolution."

"We have implemented several new farming techniques in our crop cultivation, and we expect our crop yields to double this year, from 400 kg of wheat per hectare to 800 or even 900 kg."

At the mention of these numbers, the nobles were naturally astounded, and if not for Alexander's previous acumen would have likely mocked him on the spot.

But given all they knew about Alexander, now they were very curious.

While Alexander finished his speech by saying,

"I hope that you will pay attention to our practice and emulate them."

Chapter 494 Swearing Ceremony (Part-1)

The revelation of Alexander's ability to grow more crops was something the nobles were eager to learn about no matter what.

"My lord, is that true? Can it really be done?" Lord Tikba represented the entire ecstatic noble group as he hopefully asked.

Because doubling their food production would double their income.

And so in the days leading up to the swearing ceremony, Alexander gave them a tour of his farms and showed them the various new inventions such as horse collars, and the heavy plow, and the new three-crop rotation method.

And while most nobles were impressed, or at least outwardly pretended to be, some of the bit more stubborn nobles tried to argue with him as they did not think a military man would know anything about farming.

This caused Alexander to simply propose, "Then send some of your men during the autumn harvest. And find out the yield for yourself. Seeing is believing after all."

In this way, Alexander's month flew with him entertaining the nobles, while in the background, the preparation for the swearing ceremony was coming along nicely.

Alexander himself did not really have an official swearing ceremony in Adhan, as it was instead combined with Ptolomu's coronation ceremony.

Though this was done mainly due to Alexander's urging, for he wanted to leave for Zanzan as soon as possible and not waste time on such fruitless frivolities.

pandasnovel.com But for this event, since he was the host, he wanted it to be very grand, as grand as possible in fact.

Because he wanted this party to be a way to show off his wealth and taste, and thus boost his prestige among his retainers.

And to help achieve that, he had requested the help of another Pasha, Farzah, who had decades of experience doing these things, while also employing his daughter for many of the artistic decorations.

And with these lengthy preparations finished, finally, the day came.

The swearing ceremony was scheduled to be organized at night, as per traditions, and as dusk fell, carriage after carriage made their way to the Temple of Ramuh situated at the center of the city.

This temple, which was now overseen by Azura and Azira was without a doubt a sight to behold, The domed structure had a beautiful golden domed crown, while its outer walls were made of the best marble and granite, giving it a checkered black and white pattern and decorated with various colorful mosaics and paintings.

The huge courtyard leading to the main temple had many beautiful gardens graced with resplendent flowers that were immaculately cared for, while at each of the corners, there stood a tall obelisk, where frescos were decorated using gold leaves, colorful pigments, and precious stones, detailing legendary battles between the gods.

The temple was only slightly less opulent than the Grand Temple at Adhan.

Alexander observed these outer decorations as he arrived at the venue gates just as the sun was setting, accompanied by Cambyses and his entourage of bodyguards in his large, lavish carriage.

The group was immaculately dressed.

The guards wore shining ceremonial brass body armor without a single scratch, dent, or blemish on them.

Painted bright golden, these brass cuirasses had ornate engravings, etchings, and embossed patterns of Alexander's heraldry and Temple of Gaia's symbols, both enhancing their visual appeal and showing their statuses.

Their gauntlets, boots, and greaves too were similarly decorated, while their Corinthian helmets were even decorated with precious gemstones and metal engraving, accompanied by the usual red plum,

And to finish the decorations, a long heavy cape was draped over their shoulders, blood red, and embroiled using real golden threads of the symbols of House Alexander.

The men naturally looked magnificent in their armor, though if one noticed, they would have found all of them sweating profusely, as underneath all this fancy junk, the men also wore real chainmail with linen thorax and the whole other nine yards of protection.

Meaning on this particularly hot summer day, they wore multiple layers of clothing, making them quite uncomfortable.

But they had no choice and wore them viewing it simply as also one of the occupational challenges of being Alexander's bodyguard.

While their escorts, the lord and lady of the house wore much more formal civilian clothes.

Alexander wore a high-quality, navy blue, double-breasted coat featuring a fitted silhouette and a structured shoulder line, that conveyed an air of authority and strength.

The jacket's lapels were adorned with golden braids, meticulously woven into intricate patterns, while the buttons were made of solid gold.

While underneath Alexander wore a fine shirt, followed by chainmail.

But the most prominent feature of his dress had to be the three rows of golden ribbons running side to side from his suit, accentuating his midriff, while the breast pocket on his left was embroidered with the symbol of his house crest.

And next to him, his wife was dressed exactly the same, except that her hair was done in a much fancier way, being clipped and brushed back to give a sporty feeling.

Now in Adhania, males and females dressed very differently. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

And dressing similarly was very frowned upon.

But Alexander insisted that everyone to be sworn in was to wear the same clothes, regardless of gender.

And when looking at his wife, Alexander would say he made the right choice, as she looked very catching in her new garment, emitting a much different aura from her usual feminine charms.

The heavy suit stuck snugly to her body, making her appear bigger and more intimidating, while her brushed-back hairstyle gave the impression that she was a general returning from a victorious battle, thus tickling Alexander's sense to dominate and conquer this formidable flower.

"Ahhh, so hot. Why do I have to wear this? I'm dying in it! " Or he had that amorous feeling until Cambyses crassly spoke out aloud while tugging at the collar of her buttoned-up blue shirt as she tried to get some air in.

She was forced by Alexander to also wear the full suit of armor beneath, and like the guards with them, it was killing her.

"....." Alexander did not reply to this complaint he had heard a million times, and instead simply said, "Let's go. Many are waiting."

And so soon the group crossed the stone-paved courtyard path leading into the temple and entered its lavish premises.

For this event, the interior of the temple had been heavily renovated, with huge, beautiful chandeliers hanging from the domed roof brightly lighting up the interior, many of which were ordered for this event, colorful paper streamers outlining many of the granite surfaces, and colorful flowers jeweled with gemstones and emitting a sweet smell gracing many of the sacred artifacts inside the temple.

While at the center of the Ramuh, was its centerpiece, the statues of the god Ramuh, and goddess Gaia, were also heavily decorated with golden clothes and jewels, embellishing them even further.

While right below their feet was a luxurious throne chair.

Naturally, that was meant for Alexander to sit as the nobles bowed and swore fealty to him.

By the time Alexander had arrived, the temple was already filled with guests.

The men were wearing suits like him, while the women wore lavish gowns, and were seen chatting, laughing, and gossiping with a drink in their hands.

As Alexander gazed at this lavish function, one which had burnt a hole in his pocket, he could not help but reminisce the reason for this.

And the reason for hosting this gaudy, extravagant party was to show off.

In Adhania, excess, extravagance, and flaunting were celebrated and even venerated.

Which was very much different from modern times where self-restraint and simplicity were valued.

Where billionaires going to shops wearing a sweatshirt and short pants was seen as something positive.

Instead in this time period, those same words and practices would be synonymous with the word poverty.

And since Alexander came to know that face in the nobility circle was won by faulting one's wealth and status and that was it the quickest way to obtain his retainers' confidence, he decided to do just that.

For it seemed face and prestige were really important in the Adhanian nobility circle.

And people judged and acted based on what kind of reputation one had.

For Alexander this was critical.

Because a lord with good prestige made one's retainers look up to and follow their lord, and more importantly not underestimate him as being a lowly uncouth slave barbarian with no manners.

The latter which would if not instigate a rebellion directly, at least would make the nobles less complainant to one's directives, thus hindering their ability to govern their province effectively.

Hence Alexander saw the lavish party, the intricate dresses, and the opulent foods as a necessary expense to gain the loyalty of his subjects.

As Alexander and Cambyses slowly entered the sacred halls, their arrival naturally caused quite a stir, as the nobles could not help but set their eyes on first their lord, before their eyes were quickly attracted to the heroic women beside him.

Dressed in a suit and pants Cambyses stood out from the other women dressed in gowns like a proud peacock, and as her shiny, polished leather shoes struck the carpeted floor with strength and authority, all the nobles marveled at the way the lady of House Alexander carried herself.

They gazed at her powered face, her cheery lips, her strong, straight posture, and her powerful gait,

Cambyses might not be the most beautiful woman in that room, but she was certainly the most unique.

Chapter 495 Swearing Ceremony (Part-2)

With Cambyses turning many heads and even drawing some muttered jealous curses, Alexander went ahead to first greet the highest nobles there, PF, the Queen Mother, and Lady Inayah.

And then all the twenty-four nobles there.

Here, he also met many of the families of the nobles, many of whom were specially called to attend this ceremony from their fiefdoms.

In fact, this was another reason that some of the nobles requested the ceremony be delayed to this degree.

Because they wanted their family members- sons, wives, and daughters to attend the meeting and get to know Alexander.

And while for some this was purely intended as a social courtesy, for a few others, they were clearly fishing.

Fishing for benefits by betting on the fact that Alexander might take a fancy to one of their daughters.

Or sons.

The nobles would not judges

Or even their wives and concubines for that matter if it fits Alexander's taste.

Most Adhanian nobles were not picky about either of the three options, as long as Alexander would give them more benefits.

Or at least that was the vibe he got when interacting with some of them, who usually wore low-cut dresses showing ample cleavage, or made suggestive comments, such as wanting Alexander to give them a tour of the city or offering him to show their embroidery skills in his leisure time.

pandasnovel.com While one particular wife of a nobleman was far more direct, very openly saying, "My lord, I keep having this chest pain here."

"And I heard from my husband that you are a great doctor with unparalleled skills with his hands. May I ask to see you tonight?"

Alexander could barely stop his lips from twitching at this, and after a few similar interactions, he frankly began to be surprised that some of these women had even come to this party wearing any clothes, given how eager they appeared to just strip and jump on him.

Alexander even believed that if he opened his fly and took it out, some people would likely fight over who got to him first just to get more favor.

It appeared the things Alexander showed had truly made some very greedy.

But it was also because such promiscuity was somewhat the norm between a few of the nobles.

Though fortunately such dangerous, almost ruinously ambitious nobles numbered on the low side.

After spending some time with small talk and pleasantries, finally, once the night deepened a bit, Alexander decided to begin the main ceremony.

He sat on the luxurious throne at the foot of the statue, flanked on either side by Pasha Farzah and the Queen Mother, who stood next to him as per tradition, while one by one each of the chosen twenty-five walked up to him, kneeled and answered as Alexander read off a special script:

"Cambyses of the House of Alexander, and lord of Jabel, do you stand before us to join our cause against the false King Amenheraft?"

"Yes!" The woman naturally gave the affirmative answer.

"Do you recognize me, Alexander as the rightful ruler of the province of Zanzna and your lord?"

"Yes!"

"Are you prepared to embrace the responsibilities and privileges that come with such an action?"

"Yes!"

"Will you uphold the value of virtue, integrity, and selflessness as befit a noble?"

"Yes!"

"Will you administer the laws and rules of the land impartially and unhesitantly, ensuring that all are treated equitably under your stewardship?"

"Yes!"

"Will you protect and defend our Your Lord Alexander and His Majesty Ptolomy to your death?"

"Yes!"

"And lastly, will you show unwavering loyalty to the people, the crown, and its allies?"

"Yes."

At this point, Alexander nodded, and said,

"Good, then I hereby welcome you to your ranks and proclaim you as one of us."

As the Queen Mother then stepped forward and tapped her left shoulder with a ceremonial sword, saying, "The crown accepts your pledge."

Followed by Pasha Farzah doing the same on her right shoulder, and saying, "We nobles accept your pledge."

This was the custom of Adhania, where to be made a noble, one needed someone from the royal family or their representative and one extra noble to act as witness.

This was likely done to show that both the royal family and the noble community as a whole accepted the man into their ranks.

With this done, Cambyses then took the following oath of the noble.

Where she said,

"I, Cambyses of Jabel, hear by swear upon my honor to faithfully serve my lord, Pasha of Zanzan, Alexander."

"I swear to uphold my lord's commands and carry out his will with unflinching loyalty." I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

"I pledge to defend my I honor, to protect thy from harm, and to act with unwavering devotion."

"I shall not betray their trust nor falter in my duty."

"This oath I take willingly, knowing the responsibilities it entails and the consequences of breaking it."

"May the gods bear witness to my pledge, and may they grant me strength and wisdom in fulfilling this oath to my lord."

With came the end of the long and mundane ceremony for Cambyses, leaving Alexander with only twenty-four others.

Who all took their turns slowly, and by the end of which Alexander did not even need to read the script.

Among these swearing, there was one particular swearing Alexander was a bit uncomfortable with.

And that was Jazum.

He had deliberated on whether to present the peerage to the stonemason as he did not seem to get along with the man over the issue of his son.

But in the end, he decided to keep his end of the bargain.

Alexander had originally promised the stonemason that if he could get 10 cement kilns up and running within six months, and produce 250 tons of cement for him per day, he would get a hereditary peerage.

And Jazum had indeed done that.

In addition, his handling of the day-to-day operations of the kilns was unrepachable, with the supply of everyday cement up until now being always smooth, consistent, and on time as far as Alexander knew.

So up until this point Alexander really had no reason to block the man's rise.

But the only snag in this perfect report would be his blind love for his son- Jafor, who was the complete opposite of his father, lazy, incompetent, and a bully, a natural walking disaster.

And Alexander did fear giving such an imbecile the power of the nobles.

But he gave it anyway.

He had promised the father the rewards and Alexander here decided to keep his word.

Because him breaking his word to his enemies was one thing.

It would simply make him more trustworthy during negotiations.

But a lord breaking his words to his retainers was something entirely different.

That would plant the seeds of a rebellion.

Alexander would rather avoid that than give a cruel brat the power to harass the innocent.

And it was rather hoped that this favor would make Jazum recognize Alexander's favors, and thus wake up the man to the reality of what his son really was.

Alexander really hoped for that outcome.

Because if nothing of that really worked,...well Alexander always had the power to terminate Jazum and take back the peerage.

This was after all one of the powers he had gotten the permission from Ptolomy- To have the ability to punish any noble as he saw fit.

With that comforting thought, Alexander swore the man in and then proceeded to do the same for the others.

Until all twenty-five people were sworn in, and it was finally over.

'Finally! Time for the feast.' While the end of the ceremony made the whole crowd who were standing in rows the entire time have the exact same thought.

It was already getting quite late and everyone was famished, a situation exaggerated by the absolutely fabulous flavors coming from the open kitchen situated at the back garden of the temple.

Alexander too was quite hungry, and so led the group to the open garden dining arrangement, which was brightly lit with huge flaming braziers, and where they were served the best delicacies Zanzan had to offer.

Meat, fish, wine, and sweet pastry flowed without care and the men and women there feasted to their hearts' content, laughing, joking, and enjoying themselves to the utmost.

While Alexander himself sat with his twenty-five retainers and broke bread with them personally.

With these merriments, the day at last came to a close, and each of the nobles slowly exited in their carriages.

As for Alexander, on the way back, Cambyses regaled her experience of the party, retelling how the ladies commented on her dress, the new foods, and lastly prodding Cambyses about whether Alexander was looking for any new concubines or even maids.

As she said, Cambyses produced a teasing look, and turned to Alexander to chuckle,

"Haha, so Alex, how about it? If you want you could sleep with any woman, girl, or lass you want".

" I especially liked some of those wives in there. They had big butts, hehe."

Alexander only gave a gentle chortle to the joke.

But with the end of the ceremony, the nobles started to finally leave, taking a large load off Alexander, And within the next week, Zanzan was back to his usual peaceful tranquility.

But it was also on one such peaceful afternoon after the nobles had left, that Alexander unveiled to Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah a revolutionary naval ship concept in a secluded spot outside of Zanzan, the display of which almost made the two have a small heart attack.

Because it was that out of this world.

Chapter 496 800 Million Ropals Sale

It was on a bright late June afternoon, just after lunch did Alexander suddenly invited Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah to come with him to an unknown place a bit outside the city saying he had a new ship concept he had been working on and wanted their opinion.

"Brat! What do you know about shipbuilding?" On their way, inside the carriage, the aged pasha asked this with a curious look and a raised eyebrow.

'How could he also build a new ship when he had taken over Zanzan for just eight months?' He asked himself, believing that even for Alexander, there had to be a limit to his talent.

"Hahaha, nothing really. That's why I'm inviting esteemed guests like you." To this, Alexander only chuckled, deciding to keep the whole thing mysterious.

While Lady Inayah who was sitting beside Pasha Farzah, too smiled and soothed, "Then Lord Farzah, let us be patient. Lord Alexander has surprised us so many times already, I'm sure he will not disappoint us this time."

"Yes, yes, it will be easier to see the ship than hear about it anyway." Alexander too reassured the grouchy noble.

For some reason, the old man seemed to have woken up on the wrong side of the bed today, as evidenced by the "Hmmmph," Pasha Farzah let out and then slapped his back against the soft leather cushion.

The man himself very well knew the reason for his bad mood.

It was because he was letting his irritation get the better of him as he tried to deal with his mixed feelings about Alexander.

These feelings arose from recently seeing with his very own eyes how the impoverished city of Zanzan in less than a blink of an eye become as rich as half his entire province. all within just six months, and under the command of a slave boy from the gutters.

Someone he would normally be unwilling to even hit with his boots for fear of soiling them, not to even mention talking to.

But here was now, forced to even somewhat look up to the boy.

It rubbed the man the wrong way.

For he was that prideful.

It might not be readily apparent given his loud cheerful everyday demeanor and the casual manner in which he spoke with Alexander and his family, but it would be a grave mistake to be fooled into thinking this was his default.

In fact, most of the time, the man was a taciturn individual, being usually very aggressive to everyone who was outside his very close inner circle.

And because of this, for some time, the Pasha did hold Alexander in varying degrees of contempt even if he hid it well.

Sure he respected many aspects of the boy, his military prowess, eloquence with speech, and medical skills, but he had also bet that he would miserably fail in the administrative category, especially administrating a failed city like Zanzan.

But he could not have been more wrong even if he said the sky was red or the world was flat.

In fact he figured that Alexander might be the one soon holding him in contempt given his speed of progress.

And for the hyper-competitive man, this was a nasty blow.

Hence, the bad mood.

But the old man did not let that bad cloud of feeling affect him for too long.

pandasnovel.com "Since we have the time, then let us discuss the prices," He suddenly decided to reengage with the conversation, alluding to re-negotiating the prices of the goods he wanted to buy from Alexander.

And he was joined by Lady Inayah, who too chimed in, "Yes, let's. It will be a good use of our time."

Now, Alexander and the other duo did have several discussions before regarding this issue but were unable to settle on an exact value.

Mainly due to Alexander refusing to budge a single ropal, giving this hackneyed reply with an almost pleading face, "My lord, my lady, I have already told you."

"We are already giving a huge discount here. And we are just making enough profit to keep us going with these prices."

"Besides, as an ally, please consider that we are really strapped for coins right now."

"I have already spent most of the money I had, first with you and His Majesty back in Adhan. That was already 600 million then and there."

"Then after I came to Zanzan, I found the city folk here had no almost no coin to speak of and so then I had to give everyone a large amount of money to get the markets going."

"Then there was using a lot more money upfront to set up the workshops to create jobs and build all these new things."

"Then came paying for all the construction like the buildings, the roads, the aqueducts, and the sewage works as you all saw going was on."

"Followed by the war and various bereavement payments, and lastly all the gifts for the nobles to name."

"All in all I have less than 50 million ropals by now."

"So at this point, Zanzan simply needs the cash."

Here Alexander had grossly exaggerated his financial ruin, as in reality, he had around 200 million of the original 300 he had come with. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

And it was unknown how much of Alexander's lie the two experienced nobles bought.

But neither tried to disprove Alexander outright, as Lady Inayah replied to this with,

"We understand your troubles, Lord Alexander. But we also understand that you don't need 800 million ropals from us to solve them, now do you?"

The way this 800 million ropal was reached was because the bill Alexander gave them for the list of products they wanted to buy amounted to 400 million ropals each.

And given such an amount was around half of Adhan's annual income at its peak, and Lady Inayah only had a budget of 300 million, she was eager to try and push the price down.

But Alexander responded as such to the allegation of him being greedy, as he replied gently and with a light smile,

"My lady, please not be unreasonable. You know better than me that Zanzan needs a lot of capital to expand."

"It needs a lot of money to build a strong army, and then a strong navy, it needs to pay its nobles to keep them happy, and then it needs to capitals to launch wars of conquest."

"So that 800 million will soon disappear like the morning dew under sunlight."

Alexander afterward quickly reminded her,

"And please remember that I have already given you the secret for the brown sugar. You can start earning a lot of money from that soon."

The brown sugar Alexander referred to was sugar obtained from the beetroot juices that had been only treated with limestone and not also with bone char or charcoal, thus giving them a brown color and a slightly bitter taste.

They were neither as good to look at as the pearly white powder, nor nearly as tasty.

Hence Alexander sold them at wholesale for 10,000 ropals per ton or a tenth of the white stuff.

And the reason for selling the inferior goods was given after Pasha Farzah's little aggrieved spat, "Bah! What use it that useless thing?"

"Tell me how to make the white stuff. And I will you 800 million ropals upfront!"

The old man might be a misery penny pincher, but that did not mean he was not loaded.

And it was because of such greed that Alexander decided to keep the supply low and the demand high, thus maximizing profit.

To accomplish this he lied to Pasha Farzah through the teeth, replying, "My lord, the process of turning the beetroots into white is extremely complicated and labor intensive. Meaning a lot of time and hard work has to go goes into it."

"Not to mention even then the chances of turning the brown crystal into the refined pearly whites is just 1 out of 100."

"Meaning to get 1 ton of the beautiful white, we need to use 100 tons of the brown sugar, which itself has to be processed first."

"And sometimes, depending on the quality of the beetroots we need to use even more."

"And then there is the fact that in the process, a lot of the brown sugar becomes inedible when it fails to turn into white sugar."

"So the price we are charging is very reasonable."

"And thus we also cannot so easily hand over this secret process. Not right now. Please understand."

As Alexander finished his long speech, it was unknown how much the two nobles believed him.

But at least his 'not right now' phrase indicated that he might be amicable to a deal in the future which placated the lord somewhat.

While Lady Inayah raised another potential thing she had wanted to buy.

"My lord, this like thing that becomes like marble when it hardens...you call it cement I believe. We would like to buy it."

This demand somewhat surprised Alexander because Lady Inayah had not expressed a desire when he showed her the apartment blocks, for they already had a similar mortal.

So what changed?

Well, it was simply Lady Inayah thinking whatever Alexander made was worth taking a second look at.

And Alexander knew this thought would become a thousand times stronger when he unveiled to them the ship he wanted to showcase, and so attempted to give an appropriate reply.

But his reply was suddenly put on hold for now.

Because they had arrived.

Chapter 497 Naval Dreams (Part-1)

Once the carriage arrived at its destination, and Alexander felt the movement of the vehicle slow down and then fully stop, a guard from the outside placed his armored fist against the wooden carriage door and gave it a solid knock, before proclaiming, "My lord, we have arrived."

And so soon the three people got down and found themselves looking at the wooden walls and raised palisade of what likely appeared to be a small hamlet that had been renovated into a military fort.

Pasha Farzah and Lady Inayah were certainly intrigued to know what mad thing Alexander had cooked up for them this time.

"My lord, my lady," And they did not need to wait for long, as once their escort was ready, Alexander addressed the two nobles with a gesture of his hand and invited them inside.

And as the group traversed this short distance, eager to see what lay beyond, Alexander himself recalled the naval tactics of this time.

Naval fights were eerily like land battles, with the ships acting very much like phalanx units. While the ships themselves typically hugged the shores, one reason being so that the ships could be quickly resupplied as the battleships really could carry only a few days worth of food and water.

And so if they ran out of this, they would either starve or have to make landfall and forage.

The other reason for always being close to the shore was because the shipbuilding of this time could not build crafts that would guarantee adequate safety in rough seas.

So no naval power was willing to put tens if not hundreds of thousands of men together and then sail them out into the middle of the sea where rough storms could instantly make them disappear.

And even if they wanted to, the men would likely mutiny before that.

Because the realization that there was no way to retreat in their rickety wooden boat and the fear of drowning, coupled with the superstitions regarding the seas played such havoc on the morale of soldiers that neither the attacker nor defended would dare launch full-scale attacks against one another in the open sea.

Hence all naval engagements actually occurred close to the shores, either to one's own coast, or their opponents.

And the reason for such an evolution of naval warfare lay in the design of the main 'battleship' of this time- Trireme.

This ship's average length was about 40 meters and weighed 50 tons, which was big enough to cause significant damage to enemy ships through ramming, but also light enough to be transported by the crew on land, if necessary.

But its most important feature was that it was made out of pine and cypress wood, built such so that it could be fast and agile, with a top speed of around 8 to 10 knots, which allowed the commander to ram enemy vessels with significant force and momentum.

The ship had three rows of oarsmen, hence the name tri-reme, who, contrary to popular belief were not tied to their seats but well armed, so that they were able to board an enemy ship or defend their own.

These men would be seated on wooden planks extending from the ship's hull on top of one another, forming a sort of three-layered rowing team, with the top position being the most prestigious, as the men there would be most exposed to the elements and enemy fire.

But perhaps the most prominent feature of a trireme would be its bronze ram, which would be two to three meters long and be attached to the ship's keel, often shaped like an animal like a ram's head.

Using these metal extends, triremes would most regularly try to ram each other enemy ship and follow it up by infantry boarding and clashes.

Hence naval warfare at the time really looked much like a land battle on the sea.

Inside the average trireme, it would have a crew of 200 men, with 7 officers, 170 oarsmen, 14 marines, 10 phalangites, and 4 archers, along with 9 sailors who were responsible for the ship's sails and general maintenance.

From this it could be seen that usually a navy had to rely on the naval maneuvers of their captains and depend on skilled oarsmen to correctly steer the ships according to their superior's command, in order to be able to flank and ram the opposing ships from the sides, dealing maximum damage.

Or at least that was the preferred tactic of Cantagena and Sybarris, whose ships usually had a much lower number of marines so that they were able to have more oars for more speed and maneuverability,

Now, this particular set of strategies was unique to Cantagena, who Alexander knew so much about not because he was a Thesina, but because there were extensive records about them in Adhan's royal library, as the two had fought uncountable times over the past few centuries.

Hence it would be wrong to extrapolate the same strategies to other navies.

For instance, Exolas had a completely opposite strategy to Cantagena, as they would rely more on the infantry's capabilities and would prefer to quickly ram the Cantagenans vessels head-on and board ships since it was almost impossible to compete with the superior Cantagenan maneuverability and their highly-skilled oarsmen.

While Cantagena would attempt to flank the enemy fleet while infantry and ranged troops harassed the enemy.

Now, the reason why the trireme was the king of the navy at this time, and not some of the better ships of later times was simply because the people of this time were unable to build better ships, as they were still quite primitive in their ship-making technology. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

Now did have good techniques to be sure.

For instance, they were able to build ships with multiple internal frames and crossbeams that provided structural strength, thus letting them transition from small boats to large ships capable of even transporting 1,000 tons of cargo.

The hulls of those ships would be constructed using overlapping planks which were individually cut, shaped, and fitted together, and then fastened to the frames using nails or iron clamps.

And then to make these watertight, they filled the gaps between the planks with materials such as wool, moss, animal hair, or tar-soaked ropes, which prevented water from seeping into the ship's hull.

All these were great achievements in naval technology.

But their biggest flaw was with how they built the body of the ship.

They still used mortise and tenon joints extensively in ship construction, which was a technique where mortise holes were cut into one timber, and tenons were formed on the end of another timber, which was then fit into the mortise holes and after the joints were secured with wooden pegs or iron fastenings, creating a somewhat strong and rigid connection.

But as it could be seen, this meant that the ship's strength was not equal to the multiple layers of thick planks with which it was used to make it.

But the strength just came from the relatively thin peg that was used to hold the planks together, which any decent amount of force could simply snap in two.

A decent enough force such as a bronze ram crashing against it, or even just large, rough waves repeatedly battering it.

This was the reason for the navy operating close to the shore and just ramming each other in wars.

A very similar thing had happened in Alexander's previous life too, and it was not until the advent of better ship construction techniques, such as the "shell-first" method, where the hull framework was built first, followed by planking and additional features, thus allowing shipbuilders to use sturdy hardwoods like oak for the frames and planks, that ships could get much bigger and stronger.

And this was one of the reasons the Europeans discovered America, while the Romans never left the Mediterranean.

Now, for Alexander copying the Europeans was not an option.

At least not right now.

He neither had the known now nor did he shipwrights of this time.

So after the naval block, he had racked his brains over how to build a navy.

His very first thought was to copy the Romans and build the Corvus.

But those ships were notoriously unbalanced and though the Romans destroyed Carthage using them, there were two nasty incidents of the Romans losing their entire fleets during storms in 255 and 249 BC due to how unstable the ships were, which contributed to them abandoning ship design over time.

So Alexander wanted something better if possible.

Hence he came up with the idea to improve the mortise and tenon joints technique.

He thought of using his high-quality weapons-grade steel for his pegs, which would be tens of times stronger than the wooden ones.

And then to stave off corrosion, he even thought of using zinc or even tin as a galvanizing metal.

This was one option.

But the other, much more radical option was for Alexander to use cement as the binding building for the planks, just like building a house.

Ships made entirely of concrete ships were built in the 1900s, so it was certainly possible.

And so, even if Alexander could not build a ship made of only concrete, almost like a 'cementclad' (as in ironclad), even if could just build a ship with a mixture of wood and concrete. he was pretty sure his ships would be invincible not just now, but even in the age of sail, being immune to burning and almost impervious to ramming and cannon fire.

It would almost be a floating castle!

Chapter 498 Naval Dreams (Part-2)

The group crossed the heavy wooden door restricting access to the naval fort and were soon escorted inside.

The inside was quite spare, with only a few large wooden houses distributed across the entire space acting as lodging for the five hundred or so workers plus soldiers there, a few large wooden sheds that were used as carpentry workshops, and a small dock leading out to the sea that was used to build the vessels.

And as the two nobles looked around curiosity at these, Alexander gave some background of this place.

"After suffering the recent blockade, I felt an urgent need to build a navy as soon as possible. Or risk having all my trade plundered."

"And so I had this abandoned hamlet be turned into a sort of shipbuilding yard."

"It's not a real shipyard yet as it's very rudimentary. But for now, it is only being used built to new ship concepts."

"And we have built three such boats to showcase our new designs."

"And I hope to get the two esteemed lords' opinion on them."

Finished saying this with humility, Alexander turned to look expectantly at the two.

And Lady Inayah replied with a gentle smile, "Hehe, Lord Alexander is being too humble. I'm sure whatever you have come up with will impress us no doubt."

"And although Adhania has never been a great naval power, we will try our best to give our thoughts."

The mature lady was suddenly looking forward to seeing three new types of ships.

While Pasha Farzah was far more pessimistic, saying, "Brat, even if you can build a better trireme, do you think you will have the men with the expertise to use them?"

"Do you think expert oarsmen come floating out of the ocean?"

"And let me tell you beforehand, you won't find any slaves with such skills either."

"Because in battles these expert sailors will either drown or their host countries will buy them back even for large ransoms. "

The experienced man did have a point there.

There was a reason why there were 'countries with a strong navy culture', who would be quite protective of their expert sailors.

Because it took generations of such people, each handing their life experiences to their successor to create a strong navy.

The reason for taking so long was they had to master a variety of techniques all of which were needed to effectively steer and command.

These included reading the wind patterns to adjust the sails and riggings optimally, navigating through the stars, predictably the weather based on the color of the sky or the type of clouds, able to feel the roughness of the waves to properly guide the ships, and even just understanding how much a ship would turn when the steering wheel was turned.

All things that took decades to master.

This was one of the reasons England was able to dominate the seas even against other coalitions of European powers- because being an island nation they had generations of expert sailors who were able to better command the ships.

So in this respect, a good navy could be compared to a good cavalry, both taking many years to master and very much influenced by geography.

And since Adhania was a huge country, enabling it to be self-sufficient, it did not really trade with the outside world too much, with Lady Inayah's family and Kuleef being the only two major powers engaged in international trade in the whole of Adhania before Alexander came.

Even Matrak mainly traded by land to Thesos or depended on Thesian ships for naval trade.

Hence, Adhania never bothered to develop a navy to speak of, as it did not need it to protect any maritime routes.

Which was as different as night and day for naval powers such as Cantagena and Sybarsis.

In the case of Cantagena for instance, they had built their whole society around the navy, with the strata of society one coming from dictating the position one could take when joining the armed forces.

pandasnovel.com The highest role- the captain was naturally always held by a noble, with him being responsible for the ship's maintenance and operation, as well as conscription and recruitment, not only from Cantagena but other friendly Thesian city-states too.

Then there were the free, affluent men, usually land owners, who would be picked to be the phalangites, armed in the usual phalanx style, but given a smaller shield for better maneuverability on the close spaces, and a linen thorax instead of bronze cuirasses so that if one ever fell aboard, he would not instantly drown.

Further, these men, who mainly acted as the ship's secondary weapon after the ramming, were equipped additionally armed along with grappling hooks for boarding enemy ships.

But usually, the primary task of these forces was defensive, as they were tasked with the protection of the oarsmen, arguably the most critical group of the crew.

And lastly, there were the oarsmen, who would be usually taken from the lowest strata of Cantagenan society, being peasants and fishermen.

Which was interesting given it was their skills which usually decided battles. I think you should take a look at pandasnovel.com

But whatever the reason for Cantagena's choice was, no one would doubt their lethality in naval combat.

For example, in the hundreds of small and large skirmishes Adhania had fought against Cantagena, they were yet to win a single major engagement and had their navy mostly relegated to harassing actions in the rear to try and disrupt the enemy's supply lines.

These historical precedents made Pasha Farzah quite skeptical of Alexander's desire to field a strong navy.

But he also wished deep down to be proven wrong.

As he was having these thoughts, he noticed small a trireme dock near the shore and Alexander invited the two nobles to come to take a closer look.

"My lords, please let us look at this," He said as he went forward, followed by the other two as he then introduced the ship,

"This trireme might look like any ordinary trireme out there, but it is in fact quite special. More specifically its joints are very special."

"Because instead of using wooden pegs to lock in the mortise and tenon joints we here used thick high-quality steel!" Alexander revealed the secret, and claimed,

"So this trireme's hull is now a few times stronger than anything out there."

Alexander made this huge claim in a sort of flat, neutral tone, something that would sometimes irk Cambyses, but this time there was no shock from the two nobles who could hardly believe their ears.

The shock to the two nobles was certainly quite a lot.

"What! Are you saying the truth, Alexander!" Lady Inayah in her extreme surprise even forgot about the honorifics as she almost squealed in surprise and amazement, and even somewhat doubted Alexander.

Because if it really worked as he said, then she had no doubt that Adhania would be able to dominate both the land and sea of this world.

While Pasha Farzah was seen visibly shaking.

He knew switching from wood to iron had never been done before because mainly of cost, but that was not an issue with Alexander.

And so he found the technique completely viable.

"Are you sure? Does it work?" He hence hoarsely asked to confirm

To which Alexander only chuckled and said, "Haha, well seeing is believing. I have arranged for a combat demonstration. Let us wait and see."

With this said, under Alexander's directions, the small trireme was slowly towed a bit out to the sea by two other small boats, while the group moved to a raised platform along the shore to get a better view of the combat demonstrations.

And soon this demonstration commenced, as another trireme appeared a few distances away from the new ship and then sped towards the sides of the steel pegged ship at full speed, shortly before ramming it with maximum force.

The solid bronze ram crashed into the flank of the new ship mercilessly, causing large bits of pine and many splinters to fly out and making the small trireme groan and creak with pain as it swayed dangerously under the large impact.

But even under such huge forces, the ship still stood and sluggishly returned to an upright position after its oscillating sways slowly subsided.

And as the crowd waited with baited anticipation at this demonstration, they saw that there showed no signs of any water entering the ship, meaning only the outer part of the hull had been chipped, but the hull had not been penetrated.

Meaning this ship had accomplished the unimaginable task of surviving a type of attack no other vessel would be expected to live through.

Not at that speed and such a clean shot.

This was like being shot in the head by a desert eagle and surviving.

Maybe possible once in a million times, but the chances would certainly not be in one's favor.

And hence the result astounded those present.

"Haha, brat you really are something to come with such an idea. Hahaha, great, great," Pasha Farzah gave out a massive roar and laughed boisterously seeing this, even letting his head hang out into the air.

Alexander had rarely seen the old man so happy.

While Lady Inayah could only nod her head silently as she seemed to have lost her voice, only managing to form a huge smile that showed all her flawless pearly whites.

To say both of them were impressed would be a gross understatement.

And then remembering there were two other additional demonstrations, the duo could hardly keep still.

Chapter 499 Naval Dreams (Part-3)

Contrary to the much more visibly impressed two nobles, Alexander was much calmer as he had already expected the results.

So he addressed the two, "Thank you for your praises, my lord, my lady. But to make sure it was not a fluke, let's try that again a few times."

"I'm interested to see just how powerful this ship really is."

It seemed Alexander wanted to find the limit of his ships and hence asked the men to continue until the trireme failed.

"That...." Which on the other hand made Pasha Farzah feel it was a great waste to destroy such a ship.

'If you don't want it, sell it to me,' He wanted to ask Alexander.

But it was ultimately Alexander's ship and he could do what he wanted to it.

It was not really Pasha Farzah's place to object now was it?

And so the attacking trireme took position again and rammed the new ship again, which again creaked and groaned in pain.

But still refused to budge.

So it was rammed again and again several more times, with each hit causing the dent on the ship to become that bit bigger.

Until finally, after nine whole rounds of ramming attacks to the flanks at full speed, even the steel pegs could no longer hold their ground and at last gave away, snapping like hard candy and letting the huge, heavy bronze ram punch a sizable hole around the waterline side of the prototype ship.

And soon afterward, the water began to flood the compartments and the ship began to list noticeably.

Which made the crowd both impressed at the ship's performance but also a bit sad at seeing it go down.

Now, to be specific, the ship did not literally go down, meaning it did not really sink, but was simply turned inoperational.

Wooden ships generally did not sink like steel ships unless it was laden with heavy cargo but would list to one side and become immobile.

Which would work just as well as sinking them as they would be unable to participate anymore in the ongoing battle.

Or it might even be argued that not sinking was actually better, as those sailors could be captured and traded for ransom.

Anyway, after the new, steel-jointed trireme was destroyed, it was towed back to the shore so that the group could get a better look.

And as Alexander and the two approached the punched hole situated around the waterline, they found traces of the repeated attacks along the outer perimeter of the holes, where a significant amount of the paint and even wood had been chipped away to reveal the inner structure of the hull.

The group could even see some of the steel pegs in the hull.

"It seems my lord will soon be able to rule both the land and sea of Souther Adhania, haha," Seeing the amount of damage it took to bring the trireme down, Lady Inayah had a big smile on her face, as she was quite confident in Alexander's chance of achieving exactly what she had said.

While Pasha Farzah additionally joked, "Yes, perhaps the next time we visit he will show us a way to fight in the skies, hahaha."

Which got a chuckle even from Alexander along with Lady Inayah.

But for very different reasons.

While Lady Inayah laughed at the impossibility of it, for Alexander, it was not because the joke was funny or anything but because he knew Pasha Farzah had framed the joke as an impossible endeavor, while he very well knew otherwise.

But he also knew that building an airplane even in his lifetime might be too tall an order, no matter how much he wished otherwise.

And so only smiled and nodded at the man's joke, unable to give the perfect reply of, 'Perhaps there will be a flying machine by the next time you come by.'

Though Alexander was confident about making something workable as a hot air balloon sometime in the future.

As Alexander planned his inventions way, way into the future, Lady Inayah, who was staring at the exposed nail-like steel pegs that were sticking out suddenly asked, or rather shrilled in concern, "But Lord Alexander, won't these iron pegs rust?"

The lady had quite a bit of panic in her voice as she believed she had detected a grave hidden threat.

But Alexander only gave a light smile and a reassuring look.

Being a metallurgist specialized in steel, he in general knew almost everything there was to corrosion.

And so afterward in a cool voice said, "These steel pegs will not rust for around a decade. We have made them as such."

Which made Lady Inayah speechless. I think you should take a look at

'How can steel not rust? Is he a magician?' She thought incredulously.

But given everything Alexander had shown them in this short period of time, she felt she should no longer be surprised by anything Alexander could claim, and so decided to take Alexander's word for it, and simply weakly nodded her and smiled, "It seems that I was so hasty. Of course, I should have expected my lord to have already thought about that already."

To which Alexander gave a thin smile and humbly said, "No, my lady's concern is most appreciated. This lord is most grateful"

Now Alexander had not certainly used magic to make the steel rust-proof.

So how did he do it?

Well, the reason he could make this claim was because he had dipped all the steel pegs in molten tin, giving them a coating that would 'rust' instead of the steel.

This was quite easy to do as tin was widely available due to it being used to make bronze, which was an alloy of copper and tin,

While the reason why he did not use zinc was because it had not been discovered yet.

Though Alexander knew how to get it.

In fact, it would be quite easy to get, given copper ores were widely available and they usually had zinc metal mixed in with them as a chemical compound.

Which could be then separated by simply heating the ore to sufficient a temperature that the zinc would melt and drip out, while the copper with a much greater melting temperature would remain solid.

And at a later period, Alexander would use both zinc and tin to galvanize his steel and protect it from corrosion.

And if all these sounded too complicated, well one could just paint the steel such that water and air simply could not come into contact with them.

So all this went on to show that steel rusting at sea was not really a problem.

While Pasha Farzah had a much simpler idea, "Even if the pegs rust it is no problem. They can be taken to a dock and simply replaced."

Which actually impressed Alexander as he had not thought of that.

Guess simpler times produced simpler solutions.

"Yes, yes, that is also certainly possible," Alexander nodded affirmatively at the proposal, as right then he noticed the soldiers had already finished bringing out the next concept ship.

It was another trireme.

Noticing Alexander's gaze, the two nobles also turned their heads to observe, eager to see how it was so different but after looking at it for a while, Lady Inayah made the comment, "It looks pretty ordinary to me. So what is it that makes it special my lord?"

Just from the outside, they could find no discernible outstanding features, and it simply looked just like any other ship out there.

Alexander did not answer the query right away.

Instead, to better show the specialty, or more specifically specialties of this ship, first Alexander invited the two back to the raised platform saying, "It will be much easier to show you, my lady."

And what he meant by that was made instantly apparent when they got back, as in the raised wooden platform now was a small table, with a replica trireme placed on it.

But it was unlike any other trireme they had ever seen before.

Namely because its hull was too big and long, extending quite a bit downward, presumably much below the waterline of any ordinary trireme.!

This replica ship, unlike a normal trireme whose hull would be just a smooth curved surface that would sink into some depth under the water, had an additional hull attached to its regular hull, one which descended much further down and was tapered in its shape.

The exact shape of the ship was kind of like if a boat also had another much larger hull attached to it at the bottom, one which had that distinct shape of a modern ship's hull, tapered and sharp, meaning it could cut through the water like a knife.

The shape of this 'double hulled' replica trireme was so bizarre that Lady Inayah and Pasha Farzah could not help but approach the table with morbid curiosity and then start to carefully scrutinize it.

They did not need to be told that the special ship was based on this very design.

And so, in the meantime that they waited patiently for Alexander's explanation, they could not help but marvel at his new type of ship, and comment on the exquisite artwork.

Which was superb to say the least.

They would easily be able to showcase it in their homes as the centerpiece of their decoration to their guests.

But that was not what this ship was here for.

And so as soon as Alexander got close enough to the small wooden ship, the ingenious explanation behind the shape came forward.

Chapter 500 Naval Dreams (Part-4)

Standing in front of the miniature prototype, Alexander began his explanation, pointing to the small ship on the table with his hands, and saying,

"As you have already guessed, the ship on the water is this very toy ship just bigger."

"And I'm sure you have questions regarding the shape, particularly about the hull."

"So let me explain."

Alexander finally began, stating,

"One the of problems that I see with wooden ships is they are unstable."

"They are constantly swaying which causes many on them to be seasick, and just a slight gust of wind or a bit of light rain makes you feel like the entire thing is going to topple over."

"There is a reason why the saying goes, 'If you want to learn how to pray sincerely, go out to the sea.'"

"Because it feels the ship is constantly in danger of toppling over any moment and drowning its crew."

"And the reason for this has always troubled me."

"Why do ships tend to flip so easily? And how to stop them if possible?"

Alexander posed these questions in a very philosophical tone, before answering his own question in a triumphant tone,

"And I believe I have found the answer.."

"I believe one of the reasons is because wooden ships have most of their weight above the waterline."

"And so when the winds hit, they are easily toppled over."

Here Alexander then chose to give an explanation of how he came to that conclusion, saying,

"And the reason I think so is because I believe ships are like houses."

"Just like then building a tall house, we need to build a deep foundation, so too when building a ship, we should have a part of it underwater."

"I got this idea from Diaogosis who was one day explaining to me that the apartment blocks would need a deep foundation to keep from being toppled in strong storms."

"Just like the ships would!"

By the end of his explanation, Alexander had a very confident, jovial tone, as if he had made a great discovery.

But truthfully, Alexander knew this ages ago from his previous life.

Even in middle school, he was taught Archemdie's principal which taught buoyancy, while during his engineering major, he had a full mechanics course that dealt with just this kind of problem, the problem of stability of solids in fluids and how to solve them using quite extensive mathematical equations.

In particular, it involved calculating the center of mass, and then finding the range of angles up to which that particular shape had stability- i.e., it won't fall over.

Which in the case a ship was angled perpendicularly as much below the waterline as possible without hampering its operations.

As a side note, those equations could also be used to prove why some shapes like a sphere were always stable and some shapes were not.

And in his recent construction endeavor, Alexander had indeed used those equations to calculate the size, and weight of the additional hull, only keeping just enough of the ship above water to be able to ram other ships and then board them without difficulty, while also making sure the oarsmen did not drown.

As Alexander declared his hypothesis, the two nobles found it quite convincing, as Lady Inayah nodded her head and said, "I see. What you say does make sense lord Alexander. A ship is kind of like a house in this sense."

"I presume that's why you decided to add this second hull? To be the ship's foundation?" Lady Inayah cleverly made the connection.

"Yes," Alexander replied quickly and enthusiastically, elaborating, "With this, the ships sink much deeper into the water, and so if a strong wind wants to topple them over, they will not only have to flip just the wooden structure but will also have to contend with the huge amount of water the lower hull will push against as it is forced up to the surface"

"Now water is quite heavy to push through, anyone who has done any kind of swimming will certainly know how tiring that activity that.

"And so this ordinary-looking trireme will likely be able to transverse through most rough seas except perhaps the harshest one, and through most storms expect being impeded only through really bad weather, like a hurricane or typhoon."

Although untested, Alexander felt confident to make that claim.

And it seemed to have a particularly strong effect on Lady Inayah, who cried out in ecstasy,

"Great! Great! With this I can then have my ships run through much more dangerous naval routes and have them operate all seasons."

"Haha, my trade will soon triple!"

"Hehehe, today is possibly one of the best days of my life," I think you should take a look at

She had a rapturous face that Alexander had only seen on that memorable day back in Adhan, and he could easily tell just how drunk with pleasure the woman was.

But if one thought about it, this was actually a normal reaction.

Rough seas were the bane of every naval merchant, and so if Alexander could build a ship that was much safer with the same amount of cargo capacity, which likely was given the size of the ship Alx was showing, then any merchant would be willing to pay through the nose to obtain it.

So it was little wonder that Lady Inayah was so happy.

While Pasha Farzah was a little more composed and skeptical, as he traced his index on the second hull and asked, "What is this hull made of? It cannot be made of wood because it is not easy to shape wood like this."

"And more importantly such a wooden structure cannot hold itself together as the ship sways and the large amount of seawater hits it. It will break too easily."

It appeared the experienced man had a lot of experience with a lot of things.

Alexander was certainly impressed by this display of deep knowledge and observation here.

This was not an easy thing to notice and it again reminded him that these people might be backward, but not stupid.

"Yes, you are right. Wood can't do it. So it's made from a mixture of cement, stone, and wood. Just like a house." Alexander frankly replied.

Yes, the second hull was made of solid concrete.

The way it was constructed was that at first a few holes were cut into the first hull of the trireme, through which massive wooden beams were inserted and then those beams were used as the skeletal backbone to attach and expand the framework, firmly securing and reinforcing the first hull with the to be built second hull, before finally pouring in concrete and letting it solidify to form the secondary hull.

This means the second hull was as much as part of the first hull, as the first hull was the second hull's.

As Alexander said this he also thought back on the challenges faced during the construction of this revolutionary ship as it had been a laborious one, and one that needed many tries.

With Alexander even asking Diaogosis to stop his harbor construction for some days to come and see oversee its production.

And even then it took quite a few tries and many good triremes ruined just to get a presentable prototype.

And after all that, still, though the ship that Alexander was showing could certainly float, but it also had massive teething issues, mostly with its riggings and crew quarters.

But they were nothing unsolvable and could be fixed slowly over time.

But although those problems might be small, Alexander's immediate problem was not, as with the revelation of the use of cement as an important ingredient in the ship making, Lady Inayah turned to make the same request she had made earlier, saying,

"My lord, I have already asked for it, but I will say it again."

"When will you sell us the cement-making technique."

"And if you are unwilling to do that, then at least sell us the product. "

"Don't deny us both of it!"

She sounded even a bit irritated at this point.

Which was understandable given how much she wanted those ships.

And this put Alexander in a dilemma.

There was no way he would reveal this concrete recipe to anyone as the ability to rapidly build houses and more importantly, forts using it was too great.

He also could not sell any excess even to his closest allies because he was already using every single ounce of the 250 tons of cement produced daily.

He had no spare capacity and he was also not able to scale up production due to various factors such as waterwheel limitations.

But downright rejecting Lady Inayah was also not an option.

She was a valuable ally and a rich client.

And so Alexander stalled, saying, "Okay, okay, we will give the technique. But please wait till the end of this year. We currently have some issues but will give it to you by then."

Now, it was not like Alexander did not have sort of a backup plan for this kind of eventuality.

As a matter of fact, he did, and it involved selling fake recipes for the cement, or more accurately the Roman concrete recipe instead of the Portland cement one.

And since the Roman concrete needed volcanic ash, which was hard to get, Alexander was sure it would not cause too much problem.

While with Alexander's promise, Lady Inayah seemed to calm down, because the new year was less than six months away and she could at least wait that long.