

Herald 631

Chapter 631 Military Reforms (Part-1)

?

"Wha..what!"

Even before Alexander could finish saying everything, the military council members were shocked and somewhat even outraged at this absurd declaration, with some even standing up in frustration.

With Alexander so casually dismissing so many soldiers with such callousness, it was only natural that they would react so violently.

It had to be also remembered that these people that Alexander was planning to fire were fellow comrades in the arms of these council members, brothers from different mothers, people they had bled with on the battlefield.

The army was the life for many of these men and if Alexander was going to throw them away just because they complained a bit, then they were going to have some problems.

"Please calm down, Please calm down. Don't get so worked up about it without letting me finish first!"

While the recipient of this surge of hostilities, Alexander remained cool and collected, quickly flashing his palms and slowly waving them to gesture them to cool down.

Something that only worked because of his prior prestige.

But though the men obediently sat down, they almost glared at Alexander as if to say, 'You better have a good goddamn reason!'

However, Alexander, facing these hostile stares seemed unfazed, and repeated,

'As I was saying, the officer core, i.e.- the former mercenaries who are the officers will still be with us. Nothing will happen to them. They are indispensable after all.'

Alexander said the same thing thrice to first and foremost reassure all the council members of this.

And then finally proceeded with the next part.

"As for the squad leaders (in charge of 10 men) and some of the sergeants, a select of them will be hired to become trainers and instructors."

"These men have fought right at the very front lines, faced death in the eyes, and lived to tell the tale about it."

"I can think of no group better than them to teach all the fresh recruits about all the experiences of the battlefield, having seen and lived through so much of it."

"They will be like the seed from which our army will grow, and with them in charge, I believe we will soon have a world-beating army!"

Alexander very poetically exaggerated.

And then continued,

"As for the rest, the foot soldiers, the infantry, well they can have two choices."

"They can either continue serving in the standing army and keep their job and then things will be as is."

"Or they can choose to retire."

"And if they do so, then I will give all of them a plot of land. let's say....mmnnn...15 acres of farmland in Zanzan!"

"Or its equivalent price, which is I believe,um what's the price of land here, 2,000 ropals an acre?"

Alexander's stammering at the specific went to show he had just come up with the conditions just now, as along the halfway point he even had to pause to ask Menicus for some details.

"A bit less, around 1,500 - 1,600 ropals" And the old man nodded slightly while answering.

"Let's go with 2,000." But Alexander decided to go with his original value, saying with a large smile,

"The new farming methods have made the lands much more fertile, and I'm sure in the future 2,000 ropals for an acre of farmland here will be a steal. I do not want the soldiers then accusing me of swindling them."

"My lord is generous," hearing Alexander's frankness, the others could not help but chime this.

While Alexander then went on to say,

"And speaking of new farming methods, you should all know about this. That we have more than doubled, almost tripled the yield."

"So whereas a 6 to 7 acre of land could previously barely feed a family, now they can easily do it and even have surplus leftover. So with the 15 acres I will give, they will be able to easily live their life in luxury."

Alexander said this because even when going by a casual estimate of 800 kg of wheat per hectare, 15 acres would give about five tons of it per year, or 10,000 ropals according to the market value.

Even if they had to use half of that for replanting, as taxes and other miscellaneous expenditures, they still would be about twice as rich as an average peasant, being around the bracket for well-off merchants.

So Alexander's statement was fully accurate.

"Or if they want the lump sum of 30,000 ropals, they can take that too."

"Buy farmlands for cheaper elsewhere maybe."

"Or maybe start a business with it."

"Zanzan is rapidly growing and will surely continue to grow in the future. There is a lot of money to be made here."

"So perhaps the more business savvy could use that 30,000 ropals as start-up capital."

"Anyway, they are free to choose whichever option they like."

Alexander threw out arguments for both of them.

And then finished by turning to his generals and saying,

"I hope all of you can explain this to them. Of course, I will also make time to personally visit the barracks to tell this myself."

"So any questions?"

He at last turned his head inquisitively to see if there were any takers.

And for a while there were none.

Hearing all the details of Alexander's generous offer the council members finally felt soothed, as they were reassured that their men were not going to get cheated.

In fact hearing Alexander's generous offers, some even felt a tad bit jealous.

30,000 ropals was not an insignificant amount.

And it was at last Menicus who spoke up, saying approvingly, "I'm sure the soldiers will be very pleased with your offer, my lord. It is very generous!"

But the old man had not only spoken up to praise Alexander.

He also had questions, which he posed,

"But my lord, if so many soldiers were to leave the army, I'm afraid the loss...." Menicus only trailed off, shaking his head.

He did not think it was necessary to elaborate anymore as anyone with half a brain could guess what would happen if around 3,000 experienced, battle-hardened warriors suddenly left.

And given Alexander's generous offer, he was pretty sure most would.

The result of which would be devastating for the army.

But regarding Menicus's worry about this, Alexander did not seem to share it.

Or at least seem to think they were exaggerated.

He first said with a nod,

"The loss of these hardened soldiers will certainly attenuate our strength for a while. They are irreplaceable!"

And then added his trademarked 'but'.

"But that is why the army will work for the next two years training up the recruits. And with the experienced instructors, we will soon have a great army again."

"Also. remember that our officer core is still intact! They will be the ones to direct the troops. And given they will be around, the chain of command in the army will still be intact."

"That's is what matters!" Alexander insisted, and then coping Napoleon, said,

"I'm more afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion, rather than an army of lions led by a sheep!"

And Alexander truly believed in this when he said this.

He believed that it was the grassroots officers who won wars, as they would be the ones urging the men to attack and encouraging them to stay and fight.

This required a lot of skill and charisma, as sometimes entire units, usually comprised of inexperienced troops, would simply refuse to move even when the command was given.

And sometimes even if they moved, they would simply keep avoiding the enemy, circling them or advancing one step but backtracking two steps.

This would be because everyone on the battlefield was afraid and no one wanted to die.

So they would want to postpone the engagement for as long as possible.

And it took a lot of effort to remove this layer of fear.

A charismatic officer could rally the troops behind him and lead the charge, or enforce stern discipline to force these men, but no matter the tactic employed, it was a tall order for any officer to make peasants kill each other who had no grudges with one another, all for the sake of their lords.

In fact, there is even a Roman story where a unit refused to engage the enemy even after constant urging from their officers, seeing which a standard bearer suddenly threw the army's standard into the enemy formation and only after that, seeing the standard being almost lost and knowing the shame that would bring to their unit did that Romans charge the enemy.

And in addition to its organizational and logistics capabilities, it was these kinds of individual acts of bravery by low-level officers that earned the Roman army its fearsome reputation.

Hene Alexander was not wrong to place so much importance on his officers.

Hearing Alexander's boisterous line praising the officers' abilities as lions and the planned troop replenishment worked a long way in alleviating some of the worries of the council members.

They were all survivors of the battlefield and knew the importance of good leadership.

Comparing the officers to the regular infantry grunts would be like comparing flesh and bones.

It was not too detrimental to lose some flesh, as soon as the bones remained.

And since many of the veterans mercenaries seemed to be sick of fighting and wanted to rest, Alxx felt like granting it to them, and use the peace time to train new forces.

Chapter 632 Military Reforms (Part-2)

Alexander's decision to let so many of his men go could be attributed to the fact that he could afford to let them go.

And besides technically he was only relieving them, not really losing them.

And it was a point Heliptos was the first one to chime,

"The lord is right. As long as the officers and instructors are there, our army will still be strong."

"Besides, we are not really losing those men. They still exist. We can call them back anytime."

"When we organize long campaigns, our armies will certainly be bolstered by levies and they can join then, as temporary officers or regular infantry."

"I think it's not a bad idea."

Heliptos pointing this fact out made the others quickly take note of it.

He was right.

The veteran soldiers were still with them, just working as peasants or merchants or being retirees.

So Melodias then next said, "Also, they can help defend the city if something happens while we are away."

"Three thousand (3,000) veterans defending the city will put us at ease."

"Also few can join the city guards. Keep an eye on all the things we discussed," Grahtos chimed in next.

And hearing the council members all seem very enthusiastic about Alexander's proposal, Menes understood the decision had largely been approved, and so voiced his support too, saying,

"This is indeed good. Many of the men have been fighting for years and want to now settle down. Start a family."

"And this land and money will be a good gift to help them do that. They have done a lot for us, They deserve a good way of enjoying their life."

"But isn't it a bit too much money and land?"

Suddenly, just as Menes finished, this voice rang out,

It seemed that one person inside the room who was still dissatisfied- Menicus.

"I just calculated the land or money we will need to do this." The old man gruffly said, pointing out, "And it's about 200 square kilometers of farmland or about 90 million ropals. Can we afford that?"

Menicus's worry was very justified as paying the cost of 3,000 retiring soldiers was nothing to scoff at, especially when historical precedence was taken into account.

It had to be remembered that even the mighty Roman army, at the height of its power, with nearly 300,000 active duty legionaries had only 6,000 to 7,000 retirees every year.

And compared to that vast empire with its virtually infinite resources, Alexander was currently just a tiny ant.

So in many's eyes, retiring 3,000 men with such large benefits was not at all prudent.

"It will be a bit hard on us in the short term, sure. But nothing we cannot bear." But Alexander did not seem to think so, as he answered with a low nod, adding,

"I will admit the land and money is a bit big. But this will not be for everyone, Regular soldiers will get 8 acres or 16,000 ropals when they retire."

"This is only for our men. In recognition of their service during Zanzan's darkest hours."

As Alexander said, this voice turned softer and his eyes unfocused, seeming to enter into a pool of nostalgia, as he began,

"When I was a mercenary, my biggest dream was to have a bit of land to myself. And now I have that and a lot more."

"So I feel like giving these fellow brothers of mine something I too once wished for."

"Is it too wrong?" Alexander asked with some remnants of vicissitudes in his voice.

Now it was not true that Alexander's dream as a mercenary, or more accurately slave was to have land.

His real dream was to attack to weak city-state and take control of it.

But his feelings about giving the lands to the former mercenaries were indeed genuine.

Given they had left their homeland and fought and died for him, Alexander truly felt this was the appropriate way to repay them, by giving them an early retirement and a generous severance package.

"Hmmm," But Menicus certainly did not share that sentiment.

Which was expressed by the low hum he produced reminiscent of a growl, while looking pointedly at Alexander.

And for the first time, Alexander seemed to think the old man had found a massive flaw with his plans.

"You have said that only the infantry will retire. That the officers will remain."

"But has my lord thought what if the officers want to retire too? You are offering a lot of money and land after all." Menicus posed.

And Alexander seemed to at least have a retort ready for this.

"Of course, it is because unlike the levies and conscripts, they will get many perks. The common ones like rations and civil benefits like lower land purchasing prices aside, there will also be things like having priority in choosing booty when we conquer new lands."

"Gold, silver, jewelry and beautiful women."

"The veteran officers will be first in line to have these."

Alexander pointed out, and then continued listing,

"They will also have a career in the military. So over time, they will be promotions, benefits, and all the prestige that come with it."

"If they had enough of a long and illustrious career, or made significant contributions, they might even have get a peerage after retiring!"

"I certainly will not treat those who choose to stay and fight the same way as those who choose to quit!"

He strongly promised.

"*Shake*, *shake*," But although Alexander felt he had made a strong case for himself, Menicus did not seem to think so.

"You are misjudging them." The old man very pointedly said, "You said a mercenary's biggest dream was to obtain land. But someone like you who has been one for only a few years could never understand how much we want it."

"But I do."

"I have been a mercenary all my life and I very well know the attraction even of a scrap bit of land it holds to us."

"And let me tell you now. No matter how much gold, silver, women, or promotions you promise, most will choose to forgo them for the land."

"Because most mercenaries fight for the main reason of saving enough money to buy some land."

"And if they are being offered that, then why should they bother to fight?"

"Only the foolish would risk their life and limb to fight in the army when a perfectly safe alternative exists."

"Dying by having your heart pierced by a spear does not usually happen during plowing."

"At least that would be my choice." Menicus very determinedly said.

And as the old man slouched back on his chair, the revelation shook Alexander.

He had not thought about it like that and had assumed the perks would be enough.

But if the far more experienced Menicus was saying otherwise.

"Will increasing the money work?" Alexander asked weakly, though he was pretty sure what the reply was gonna be.

"No." And the predictable reply was there, as Menicus said,

"Most of these men have already tasted everything you can offer before."

"Perhaps a few really ambitious will stay in hopes of getting a peerage, but most won't."

"Risking their life for a possible noble title is not worth it to most."

"They would rather take the land being offered to them right now. Especially when that land is so large and good."

"....." This put Alexander into a thoughtful rumination.

He had mistakenly assumed much of the officer's core was as or nearly as ambitious as him.

Alexander personally, of course, would have taken the peerage option, because he would rather die than live a life as a commoner for all eternity.

Both for him and his children.

But not everyone was as bullheaded as him.

"Don't let them go, Alex. Listen to Menicus." And as he was considering his option, Cambyses's concerned voice rang beside him, who with a quick wit quipped,

"You said an army of sheep led by a lion is better than an army of lions led by a sheep. Well, I prefer my army to be of lions led by lions."

Hearing which Menicus could not help but break a light smile.

"Mmm, I too implore my lord to reconsider."

"Giving so much land to so many men, many of whom are in their early to mid-twenties is not a good decision."

"I absolutely will not approve of this!"

Menicus was very firm in his opinion.

And as he listened to his top advisor and wife, it became clear to Alexander that what he was about to do was wrong.

".....then what would you have me do?" Thus he asked Menicis.

And after a while of thinking, during which the man kept brushing his beard with his hand, at last answered,

"I propose we should only give the original offer for those 40 years and above."

"And the instructor position should only go to those above 35 years, with increased pay, let's say 50 ropals."

"And lastly, if anyone below that age wishes to retire, well they can too. We will give them 1,000 ropals for each year they served in their mercenary company."

"That should satisfy everyone."

Alexander was beyond amazed at the simplicity of the solution.

"Great! Great! Let's do it like that," So he cheered with a big grin.

And then turning to Menicus with a moment of ecstasy promised, "Menicus, you have saved me tens of millions of ropals and perhaps the destruction of my army."

"So once we get more land, I promise to make you a Talukder (Viscount)!"

Chapter 633 New Policies And Agreements

Alexander would later look back on this day, the day he almost dismissed 3,000 of his soldiers with morbid shame.

It seemed like this was one of those days where his head was not in the game.

And seemed to be not thinking clearly, so upon hearing Menes's report, he had jumped the gun using own assumptions.

Alexander thought he had the money, and with his spending habits, which some would describe as generous and others as loose and spendthrift, had all of a sudden decided to arbitrarily spend it to get rid of this slight headache.

Worse still, most of the council members did not seem to mind either.

Meaning if not for Menicus's stern intervention, Alexander's order might have gone out and even before he could have realized it, he would have unwittingly crippled himself.

Because by the time he would have tried to rescind, it might have been already too late.

If the land had been given or money gifted, Alexander would have been embarrassed to ask for them back.

Hence for his services to the army and helping Alexander avoid this imbroglio, it was really not excessive for Alexander to offer a peerage increase to Menicus.

"Thank you, my lord, thank you," And hearing so naturally caused Menicus to break out into a smile as soon waves of praises and congratulations started pouring in from all sides.

They contained happiness, respect, and some even a tinge of regret that they could not have been the ones to discover the flaw, with some like Heliptos even lamenting that they were so enthusiastic about such a wrong thing.

It took a while for the festive atmosphere to finally die down, at the end of which Grahtos posed the last question of the day,

"My lord, you said that we will have new recruits. But from where? We already have a shortage of men!"

And he was right, as a lot of the meeting had been about that topic.

This Alexander was prepared for.

"I have already asked the nobles to contribute. They said they will send some of their men."

And then informed,

"Also some want to also join the army, along with their sons."

"We need to be prepared for that. Soon the Zanzan army will not only be made of us."

What Alexander implicitly meant was that the nobles would soon start to compete with them over the council members over high-level positions and that the council members should not get complacent.

"Will they join as officers?" At this sudden announcement, Menes was understandably a bit concerned that the pampered men would be incompetent and so posed the question with a slight scowl.

"The details are yet to be discussed. But I will try to make them start as low as possible," While Alexander simply made this promise.

And with that, after Alexander said some pleasantries, finally the long meeting ended.

And the council members were finally relieved to be able to get out of that one.

Save for one- TH.

He was asked to stay behind.

"So how has the temple been going?" Alexander asked his head priest, feeling he had not checked up on the temple for a while.

"Our followers are increasing. Every day more and more people are joining us. Most of them poor folk we give assistance to." TH quite enthusiastically reported, adding,

"Also when my lord chose to give that 50 million ropals to the city people, many came to appreciate your generosity and our followers increased. In fact, we are thinking of building a few more temples!"

It seemed Alexander's religion was a growing one.

"Hmmm, so how many people do you think we have?" Hearing this Alexander asked for a number.

"Ummm....about ten to twenty thousand," TH guessed.

Which caused Alexander to muse, 'A bit low,' because he thought it would be much bigger.

He had been hemorrhaging money on this and had at least thought it would be closer to fifty.

But he kept it to himself and tried to think of new strategies that would attract new converts.

'Perhaps I should give some sermons to attract more people,' He thought.

After all, no matter how hard the priests worked it could never be equal to the lord of the city and the messenger of god himself showing up.

So Alexander decided to make a plan to give weekly sermons at the main temple from now on.

And when he let TH know this, the man was naturally ecstatic.

Following this, he spent the next few hours talking and getting to know how the temple operated as well as the things TH thought he needed. I think you should take a look at

And at the top of the list was the usual, more funding for more shrines and temples, as well as more acolytes.

According to TH, there currently was a chronic shortage of them, and they even had to borrow some from Ramuh's temple.

Alexander tried to fulfill these requests to the best of his abilities and promised to do more.

He said,

'I will open more apothecaries and hospitals under the temple's name. More people are likely to come under our wing if they are healed under the goddess's grace.'

"I will also ask the Zanzan Clinic to collaborate, and have some of their doctors visit these places, while priests and priestesses of the goddess can go to them and bless the sick, staying beside their bed and saying words of comfort."

"And lastly for your problem regarding the shortage of priests, I will open a few new schools. It will be free for the students, along with food and lodgings, so make sure to choose promising boys and girls, preferably orphans when that happens."

Alexander had in one breath promised a huge load of things for TH.

And the priest appeared to be over the moon hearing this.

"Thank you! Thank you my lord," He cried, struggling to express the full extent of his gratitude.

If Alexander really did all that, it would be immensely helpful for Gaia's faith.

"Mmmm, don't worry. Continue to work hard," While Alexander in a stoic manner befitting a divine emissary coolly replied.

And with that promise and the day nearing dusk, finally, Alexander's long day came to an end, and he was just as relieved as anybody to conclude it.

But the next week proved to be just as hectic as that day.

Because this was the week he met with the nobles as promised, discussing the ongoing progress of the land,

Here the infrastructure projects were again reviewed and the deadlines revised, the last year's taxes they owed to Alexander were calculated and lastly, the deal Alexander had promised regarding cheap rates of his products was fulfilled.

And as the nobles saw the product being loaded up to their carts, ready for transport, all could not help but cheer.

There were literally millions of ropals of profit to be had.

Alexander even invited the nobles who were not under him but had promised to fight Tibias with him, similarly giving them the goods as promised, even when they did not fight.

"Your forthrightness is praiseworthy my lord," And seeing the huge amount of goods Alexander was giving to them at such a watered-down price, without even a shred of haggling, many developed favorable views of Alexander.

All these issues took a full week to complete, all along which Alexander also had to host multiple grand parties and balls to entertain the men.

Which proved to be a bit of a challenge given the lack of venue.

Previously he would have done it at his mansion, a no-brainer, but now he had to hold in one of the larger vacant noble houses.

But those were minor inconveniences, nothing Alexander could not fix.

So as Alexander mingled there, many nobles came up to offer their daughters to Alexander but was tactfully declined.

He was a pasha and these nobles' peerage were a bit too low.

Alexander might have considered if the offer was from a Matbar (Marquiss) or a powerful (Jamider), but none such came.

And so with that issue finished, he started the next phase of his negotiation- Getting more people from the nobles.

As Alexander sat behind his desk, he began, "My lords, as I have already told you, Zanzan's old enemy Tibias has reared its head again. And will again attack soon."

"So we need to grow. Especially after suffering losses from our previous encounter."

"So how many men can you contribute?"

Alexander had asked each of them this before already, and so the nobles were able to individually give their own estimate.

And predictably Alexander haggled for more, while the nobles laid out all kinds of various difficulties they were facing, like their shrunken pool of men due to the drought, the men Alexander was already using for construction, the manpower required for the brick kilns Alexander wanted, and much more.

With the two sides finally coming to an agreement that Zanzan would add another 4,500 infantry and 500 cavalry permanently to its rosters, beginning the total up to 9,000 infantry and 1,200 cavalry.

Furthermore, the number of levies was also decided, and the nobles promised that they could spare 20,000 men from winter to late spring each year, with each levy getting 120 ropals a month for their service.

And as these details were being ironed out, two predictable requests were made to Alexander.

The first one was obvious.

The nobles wanted to be allowed entry army and serve.

While the other was them asking to be allowed a few seats in Alexander's council.

Chapter 634 Military Policies And Nobles (Part-1)

According to the treaty Alexander had signed with the nobles, there was a clause in there that stated the nobles were required to send a representative to Alexander to present their viewpoints during meetings.

That had been signed almost a year ago.

However, due to various reasons and kafkaesque bureaucracies, it had yet to be implemented.

And so given that so much time had passed, it was only very reasonable that they would want this.

After all, at the moment, there was no noble in Alexander's inner circle to represent this powerful group's interest.

Alexander had no problem acceding to this, saying, "Yes, I planned it such anyway. The official council building is under construction for just that purpose and should be finished before winter."

"At that time, you can all send your representative, or even yourself might attend it."

The ease with which Alexander accepted their demand surprised the nobles because they had assumed that Alexander would try to haggle a bit.

They thought that the nobles would pick one or two of their own to be in the council seat during Alexander's meeting, who would then try and protect their interests.

So Alexander's frank admission of all of them into the group made many feel refreshed.

The reason they previously thought as such was because they were unfamiliar with the type of government structure Alexander was trying to achieve.

Higher nobles rarely sought the opinion of their subordinates on most decisions other than wars, with perhaps a rare few trusted ones kept as advisors.

And the reason for this was simple, most nobles were feudal, meaning they lived their lives as kings inside their lands, allowed to do almost whatever they liked.

So why would a pasha or matbar (marquis) implementing policies on his own land waste time listening to the opinions of other unrelated parties?

It had nothing to do with them after all.

Of course, there were exceptions to this general rule.

For instance, nobles would sign trade deals, alliances, or treaties with one another, then they would be asked to come and weigh in.

While other times, they could band together to protest on some policies their lord was or wanting to enact, such as economic ones which might drive away their influence on the market, political ones such as changing allegiances to the kings, or social ones like restricting or allowing people to move between the various noble's lands.

But those were usually done on rare occasions and with only the parties involved.

So Alexander's type of governance where everyone sat together and discussed things as a whole was a novel and unfamiliar idea to them.

Alexander of course did this so that everyone could pool their resources and work together to better everyone's circumstances, but the feudal lords who jealously guarded their lands never thought like that.

And this archaic mindset was still very much engraved into them even now, as evidenced by how many seemed to be dragging their feet when it came to the construction of projects such as cleaning the roads, broadening it, building a proper sewage system, etc, even with Alexander's urging and furthermore with his funding.

Many did not see the point in it, or at least were skeptical of the value of the investment.

Many thought Alexander was wasting 100 gold to get 90 back.

But despite the difficulties, things were still progressing, even if they were not as fast as Alexander wished they were.

The copious amounts of gold and goods Alexander had used to grease the wheel worked to convince the nobles to accept these demands, though it had to be remembered it only happened because these men, defeated in battle and then abandoned, were relatively weak and had little other choice.

So if Alexander wanted to rope more nobles in with similar deals, where a centralized form of power would be allowed to exert force on lands the nobles saw almost as sovereign, Alexander knew he would have to both use force and show the benefits it could bring to the ruling class by following this deal.

And one of the many ways of showing this was by promising each noble a seat at his table.

The efficacy and sagaciousness of this idea would have to wait until later to be evaluated.

But for now, all the nobles were quite pleased, and so the topic that many thought would be

contentious was very quickly resolved.

Though regrettably, the time they saved on that, seemed to have more than made up for discussing the next issue.

"My lord, many of us also wish to join the army. Fight Tibias ourselves! How can we join?"

The voice was young and eager, evident of the 'energetic young blood.'

"Of course, you are welcome to any time. Having trained men of your caliber is a blessing to our whole army." To this Alexander first appeared very enthusiastically.

But then added,

"But you will need to train for some time before joining the combat ranks."

"The Zanzan army does not use the usual phalanx formation, so I think you will need some months to get used to this new formation."

"Spend some time getting acquainted with the new tactics we use and the novel weapons we have invented."

After saying this, Alexander then went on to very briefly list the things they would be required to learn, by the end of which the nobles seemed a bit peeved. I think you should take a look at

Now, the fact that Zanzan used a different formation was not news to the nobles.

They knew that much.

But they were not sure just how different it was.

Many thought it was just a kind of variation of the phalanx, and so felt Alexander was being pedantic.

'We have been training our whole life. Who does this pup think he is,' Some older veterans appeared to think.

Furthermore, they were also a bit dissatisfied with Alexander wanting them to train in infantry tactics.

"My lord, we are nobles. We ride on cavalry!" Many cried as they urged Alexander to relax the requirements.

With one young noble taking a particularly aggressive stance,

"My lord, why you are asking us to train with the recruits! Those are peasant greenhorns who have never touched a sword or spear."

"Whereas we have been training since birth. My hands are all rough and full of calluses from gripping my sword for too long!"

"See! See!"

"Do you think these hands need even more training?"

The man or perhaps more accurately the boy then even spread out his palms for Alexander to see.

And as Alexander moved his gaze to the thick, rough arms bearing remains of a lot of small and shallow cuts, no doubt due to the skin breaking many times during training, he lifted his eyes to look at the adolescent boy with no facial hair and bright blue eyes as he recalled the information regarding him.

This very enthusiastic 'boy about to turn adult' was a small shordar (baron) owning a relatively useless scrap of land, about two days walk from here.

His grandfather was a neta (knight) who had served as the captain of the royal guards during his time, and when Alozmer (Amenheraft's father) came to power, near the end of his rule, he elevated them to a shordar (baron).

But sadly, his father never got to fully enjoy the fruits of their accomplishments.

Because he died, slain in battle during Amenheraft's fateful attack on Adhan a half year ago, which claimed not only the boy's father but also all of his elder male relatives, his uncles, brothers, cousins, everyone, leaving him as the oldest male heir.

This way Ismale was forced to take the heavy burden of running a fief at the tender age of 13.

And as he took the reins of the family, or tried to, he was suddenly asked to swear fealty to the commander against who his father had died fighting.

And though he resisted that at first, after a bit of time, he was surprisingly pretty cool about it, saying to Alexander, "My father followed his oath, and you did yours, my lord. There can never be any question of revenge or even discontent because of this."

This was the of course typical mindset of the time period.

Something Alexander doubted he could do.

He was not sure whether he could forgive a commander who killed his father.

As Alexander reminisced this, his focus ultimately returned to the hot-blooded youth standing so eagerly in front of him, and could not help but ask,

"Ismaele, why are you so eager to army? Don't you have a fief to oversee?"

Alexander thought that given almost half his family died due to war, the boy would be averse to it.

But Ismaele clearly thought differently, saying,

"Of course it is so win battles and earn glory. I must make my father and grandfather proud!"

"Lillan can look after the lands."

Lillan was the boy's half-sister, 16 years old, and someone Alexander remembered seeing once or twice at parties.

At the boy's 'matter of fact' answer, Alexander momentarily felt unable to retort back.

It had no reason with which he could argue against.

"My lord, Ismale is right. We nobles ride on the horse, we are cavalry."

"Don't you think it is a waste of our time to be learning about the infantry?"

Compared to Ismale's very loud and aggressive tone, this one was soft.

And it came from Jamider (Earl) Tikba, perhaps the most influential noble in Alexander's retinue.

It seemed making the nobles comply with him would not be easy for Alexander.

Chapter 635 Military Policies And Nobles (Part-2)

Alexander's reason for wanting the nobles to also complete the training the infantry took as simple.

Because he believed everyone should undergo basic training, no matter if you fought on two legs, or four.

And which was something all modern armies practiced too.

No matter the service branch you wished to join, everyone was required to jump, hop, swim, and crawl through the mud all the same, even if you went on to become a fighter jet pilot who would only leave the air conditioning on the way from the briefing room to the aircraft.

And this was something that Alexander tried to explain, first saying,

"I know that's what all you want to say,"

"That you already know everything. That you have fought in battle and lived. That doing these tedious tasks would be nothing but a chore for you."

"But I also know that you do not have a standardized way of training." He paused a bit,

"I know that each of you train using your own method. Which might be fine, no problem."

Alexander said understandingly,

"But that is not what the Zanzan army needs."

"It does not need powerful warriors who fight for only his own glory. But obedient and organized soldiers who work as a team!" Alexander revealed his requirement, saying,

"That is why I intend to standardize the army, its practices, its tactics so that every soldier possesses a fixed set of skills and abilities."

"In that way, all the individual soldiers can work closer together and support each other with greater coherence!"

"And for that, I want all those who wish to join the army first to undergo the basic training program."

"It is not only there to teach the soldiers how to swing a sword or use a shield, but also to teach how the army works as a whole, how the regular soldiers operate, learn what they say, and even develop some kind of camaraderie with them."

Alexander in his long speech listed all the reasons for his demand, as then, before others could bring more objections, quickly said in a negotiating tone,

"If you have a problem even with this, then start training first. Spend one or two weeks and see the differences for yourself. Then if you really think it is everything is reduntant, we can discuss further."

And seeing Alexander's firm stance as well as hearing his promise, the nobles were finally convinced to shelve the matter for the time.

Though Alexander in reality had no intention of changing anything.

These nobles might be good warriors, but Alexander believed they lacked stamina, making them ill-suited to bear the harsh conditions of the Zanzan army.

Particularly its per-day marching target.

Alexander believed even if these nobles were to try and complete in on horseback, they would still be tired, and if repeated over and over again, the constant exertion would eventually burn them out.

So Alexander wished to use the infantry training program to remind many of them of the required fitness for the army.

But the results of these programs were to be seen in the future,

And as for now, with this penultimate issue settled, at last, arose the question Alexander was most concerned about, which was regarding the post the nobility and their scions would get when they joined the army.

Normally, even the lowest would join as officers like captains leading a whole phalanx unit.

While in reality, it was more common for them to join being in charge of three to four phalanx units.

And sometimes, they would even join directly as part of the leading noble's council, having no official title, but wielding much power due to their background.

But Alexander could never agree to this tradition.

Not only due to the weakness and fragility of incompetence, it would introduce into his army, but also due to the fact if he did do so, the problems here would be much more compounded.

This was because the size of Alexander's army units under a captain was much bigger than the equivalent phalanx unit, being composed of 600 men units called battalion

Furthermore, the legionary formation was nothing as rigid and one-minded as the phalanx formation, where you could install an idiot at the head and simply point him forward, and all he would need to do was make sure the soldiers walked straight and did not run away.

No, the legionary formation's greatest strength was its flexibility, being able to respond to a myriad of threats.

But its greatest strength could also become its biggest liability at the hands of an incompetent commander as he would have much more ways to screw up.

So Alexander knew he had to break this cursed tradition of automatically getting a post based on one's father's name.

"Every new recruit who joins the army as infantry with no prior battle experience will start as a basic legionary, fighting in the front line with seven of his brothers next to him in the row....regardless of his background." So he firmly declared.

And this got a rise of the nobles as he had expected.

"What!" I think you should take a look at

"Expose our sons to the frontlines!"

"Lord Alexander, this joke is not funny!"

"Fight alongside peasants! How!"

"Our son's safety! Who will guarantee it!"

Each of the nobles exclaimed.

And though these shouts were loud and boisterous, if not for the fact that Alexander was their boss and they were nobles required by etiquette to hold their tongues in the open, the cries would have been much more colorful.

Alexander for this part, hearing each of the noble's concerns, could not help but sneer angrily at them for disparaging the soldiers, the very people who fought and died for them.

"First of all, they will be soldiers you and your sons will be fighting next to. Professionals who are paid to do so and only so. They will not be peasants."

Alexander very coolly replied to the aggrieved group, and then his voice turned snarky, as he almost snarled,

"And what exactly are you crying about? You are going to join the army. You are going to war. You are going to kill people. And then you are going to take their lands, their women, and their possessions!"

"So if you are going to do that, why are afraid of dying!"

His octaves rose for each question until it was booming, and thundering.

And as the noble attempted to recover from his scathing attack, Alexander quickly added in a deadpan tone,

"If you do not want to join the army, no one is forcing you. You can leave and I will not judge you."

"But if you are gonna join, if you want to fight for honor, glory, riches, and lands, then you better be ready to put your life on the line."

"..." And as Alexander made his position on the matter clear, the other nobles found nothing more to say.

It was Alexander's army, and whether he would let them in was entirely up to him.

So many became stoic, some went quiet and some pursed their lips, each noble swimming in their own thoughts.

Some accepted Alexander's proposal, some rejected it, and some even vowed to make things difficult for Alexander in other ways.

"Good," But those did not seem to concern Alexander for the moment, as he uttered the word with a nod after hearing no objections, before saying,

"Now, as I was saying before you interrupted me, all new infantry recruits will join the rank and file, and fight in the frontlines."

"But if you are worried about your son's safety, you can send a team of bodyguards, to be in his squad. You could even send seven of them so that everyone in that row will be working to protect your son. (each row is made of 8 soldiers)."

"That is the best concession I'm willing to make for you. Even my son will be the same."

"Do you still disagree?"

In very much contrast with his previous booming voice, Alexander's current tone was soft and soothing, as if he was trying to lull a child.

And hearing this concession, as well as the fact Alexander would be putting his own to-be-had child in the same boat, many nobles slowly or slightly nodded.

They were not exactly happy over the deal, as in a battlefield, no amount of bodyguards could ever be enough, much less seven,

After all, even generals who were supposedly protected by the entire army could be killed.

But even still it was a reasonable arrangement.

And worked to relieve the acrimony of the nobles.

"That is acceptable to us," So Jamider (Earl) Tikba said on behalf of everybody else.

"Mmmm," Hearing which Alexander hummed, after which he continued,

"Also what I said was only for new recruits, People who have never participated in battles."

"As for those who have, who have experienced the crucible of a real battlefield, if they are nobles, after finishing their basic training, they will be allowed to join directly as a sergeant, leading 100 men."

And this clarification further helped make the noble be a lot more receptive to Alexander's policies, with some shrewd ones even thinking of sending their sons on some small skirmishing missions and presenting it as they had been to war.

But Alexander was not bothered by these curved paths, as such opportunities were far and between.

Instead, he was more pleased at having achieved this milestone.

And so with these pivotal decisions made, Alexander's week with the nobles finally came to an end, a successful one if he said so himself.

Chapter 636 Brief Leisurely Interlude With The Girls

With the meeting with the nobles over and each leaving for their own fief, their carts filled to the brim with the things Alexander sold to them, life for the young pasha began to drift back into a calm lull.

Of course, there was a lot of work to be done in the city, but those were for the council members and the workers to accomplish.

For Alexander personally, he only needed to check up on the progress from time to time.

So his following days were spent in relative leisure, where he would attend one or two small meetings with a few of the council members in the morning and then spend the rest of the day doing whatever he felt like doing.

Because it was summer, sometimes Alexander would simply decide to stay in his house, feeling too lazy to move in this heat.

So he would simply laze around, munching on seasonal fruits such as peaches, apricots, figs, and drinking cool juices or wine to his heart's content.

A particularly favorite pastime for him was to sit on a comfortable wooden rocking chair on the second-floor balcony, holding a cool glass of wine and simply taking in the view of the surrounding hills.

Alexander's current house, similar to his previous one was also built on a hill, overlooking the Cisran hills, though the view was nowhere as good, given both the hills and the sea were visible from that manor.

But still, the bungalow had its charms and was a quiet place to relax and unwind, deserving of its name as a noble's vacation house.

And many times Alexander would not be alone, as one or more of his girls would be there to accompany him.

They would talk about their work, gossip about what types of the new style is in fashion, play games like poker, chess, dice, etc. recite poetry, re-tell stories, and sometimes even discuss philology, going over light-hearted topics such as can animals understand human speech to heavy ones like the meaning of life or why people should have morals and ethics, to lastly even abstract ones like the 'ship of Theseus

problem,' which explored the concept of identity over time by asking if one took a ship and replaced all its part with a new one would it still be the same ship?

The answer to that particular dilemma for the girls appeared to be - yes, it would be the same ship.

Of course, Alexander did not simply spend the time with the girls in idle gossip.

Sometimes, he performed various strenuous exercises with them too.

This was a noble's vacation home after all, and that man seemed to have built several beautiful bedrooms overlooking the fantastic views outside, with all of the rooms being away from all kinds of prying eyes just for this kind of event.

So unless one got really close and listened very closely, they would struggle to pick the low humming moans and shorts gasps of ecstasy that would come out from some of those rooms at different times of the day.

"Ahh, master...doing this in broad daylight...ohhh good,"

Cries like this would be common and if one were to really pry and look inside, they would often be met with a man and one or more women engaged in making love.

Sometimes Alexander would take Gelene to the open balcony, completely naked, and rail her pink flower from behind, feeling the fresh, cool mountain air hit him as he smashed his hips against the luscious, curvy black butt.

The sexy rump would be covered in mild dewes of sweet-smelling sweat due to the heat and the exercise, and many times it would gain a glowing rosy tint by the time Alexander was done spanking it.

And facing this attack, most times Gelene would only be able to hold onto the rails of the balcony for dear life, and just be capable of letting out soul-stirring moans.

"Ahhh, I'm so embarrassed...to not have even a thread on ...mmmm what if someone sees us!"

Many times Gelene would try to play coy when Alexander would take her outside showing her ebony, busty body, glistening with sweat to the world.

Though the hungry way she would swing her butt at the same time, in reciprocity to Alexander's thrusting would not make that sentence not at all convincing.

Alexander would even feel the ebony lady's passage squeeze harder during these exposure plays, clearly showing her preference. I think you should take a look at

He also came to feel that Gelene's canal had become tighter recently, something he attributed to both his enlarged organ as well the lady's use of legumnum which worked to turn her muscles more taut.

Alexander of course did not give this special treatment to only Gelene.

The same position would many times be taken by Ophelia too, whose delicious melons swinging in the air would be even for fantastic to look at than Gelene's, as the jeweled piercings would tempt Alexander to play with them, eliciting lustful songs from this sacred priestess.

"Yes, master, pull them more....harder!" Ophelia would cry unabashedly.

And many times both the women would be lined up together fully naked on the balcony, all oiled and lubed up, as they swung their glistening black and white butts shamelessly, letting the sun hit their pink holes, while Alexander took them simultaneously from behind, pinching, kneading and spanking their asses along the way much of both's delight.

Or if Alexander wanted to get serviced, he would lay down as the two voluptuous girls would smash their oiled melon together and squish his hot spear in between, which would look like a chocolate and vanilla colored sandwich to Alexander, before the two would use their fleshy pillows, warm mouths, and skilled tongues to coax his fat rod to release its treasures and dye them in his white, creamy milk.

In fact, both Opehnia and Gelene loved getting new facials and would try to make Alexander erupt right in front of their faces before they would sultrily turn to show their new make-up to Alexander, letting him see how his turbid spunk covered them from head to chin.

The many thin cloudy streams would be seen rolling down their rosy cheeks and luscious lips, painting them in his color, with some even getting stuck in their hairs from time to time.

Seeing this, Alexander would not be able to decide which view was better, this, or the sexy, cleaning-up act that would follow, where the two girls would lick and lap each other off his sperm, while also hotly french kissing each other during the process, many times with his dick between them.

The two girls' talent and experiences in pleasuring men really showcased themselves during these service plays, and Alexander certainly very much enjoyed these.

And it would not only be these two to earn Alexander's favor, as despite her busy schedule, even Mean would also sometimes try and join these acts, though she appeared to have grown a particular preference for another type of play.

She would stand nude on the balcony, with her hands behind her head and her legs spread as Alexander lightly caned the petite girl upon her request, leaving deep red slashes on her small, pillowy flanks, as she came in wave after wave while singing in joy like a lusty canary.

While at the same time, the girls would play with her pink cave or petite boobs or soft armpits as she would get spanked, fingering her, pinching her or kneading her, and in general tormenting the pain-loving girl to ever greater heights of pleasure.

Before Alexander would take her roughly in brutal, almost animal-like matings, pressing against her violently and stirring her insides to his heart's content.

And on days Cambyses would be present Mean would get a special treat, as the pregnant lady would use a small leather crop to hit her friend all over the body as Alexander smashed her from behind, the soft wooden instrument being directed at all the vulnerable places, from the nubile cherries on her chest to her creamy armpits, to her smooth crotch or even her cute, sensitive red bean down below.

Feeling these attacks, the petite girl would scream her heart out and many times even lose control of her sphincter, producing a golden shower for everyone to enjoy.

As for the orchestrator of this delightful play,- Cambyses, by now, her baby bump had become quite prominent and almost impossible to hide.

So she retrained herself to mostly the house, only occasionally going out for walks in the garden to stretch her legs a bit.

Alexander also stopped having physical relations with her for the time being, in fear of hurting the baby, especially given the size of his enlarged organ.

He even refused to do her in the back side even when Cambyses stuck her butt up and parted her cheeks, inviting him with her flowery hole, as Alexander wanted to exercise the very limits of caution.

Without being a doctor, he could not say with absolute definiteness that his large tool in the rear hole would not put pressure on the baby in front, and though it might been excessive, Alexander wanted to take every precaution available to him so as to avoid any unforeseen events.

This was because although he did not show it, deep down Alexander was deathly afraid regarding Cambyses's pregnancy and all the ways it could go wrong, both for her and the child.

So in the end, Cambyses had to sate her lust by only getting fingered by him or the girls, and squirting.

Chapter 637 Viewing The City's Progress (Part-1)

As Alexander's leisurely days turned to weeks, he began to notice the three had become much more aggressive in their desire to sleep with him.

In fact, the more the time for Cambyses's conception approached, the more the trio seemed to want to spend more time with him, with even Mean skipping overseeing the housework to get frisky with Alexander under the sheets.

Alexander had first thought this eagerness was because they had missed him very much over the last few months.

But that idea did not seem to hold water as with the passage of time, the girls did not slow down their advances as one would expect after sating their lust.

But instead, they began to get even more aggressive with each passing day, to the point they were willing to try even some extreme plays involving things like melting wax, where Alexander would pour hot, melted wax on the girls' luscious boobs, perky nipples, and even the crotch.

Or bondage plays like the wooden horse where they would be naked or with underwear on a wooden triangle and feel the wedge dig into them, or rope plays, where the girls would have their limbs bound tightly in different ways, all of which worked to present themselves as a helpless prisoner to Alexander, allowing him to do whatever he liked to them.

Alexander was at first a bit confused by this overly eager attitude, not understanding where all this love was coming from, until one day Gelene accidentally let spill the beans during a particularly steamy session.

"Ahhh, yes...make me pregnant...I too want to give master a son like sister Cambyses," Gelene in her lustful stupor had screamed out as Alexander came inside her.

Hearing which made Alexander raise a slight eyebrow.

Of course, this was nothing too unexpected, as Alexander guessed the other girls seeing Cambyses's burgeoning belly could not help but feel both happy for her and also a bit sad that it could not be them.

Alexander would always make them apply the legummum, which acted as a spermicide, both before and immediately after each session, so getting accidentally pregnant was not really possible.

And even if they could manage to fool Alexander during this process and get pregnant, still the legummum was capable of inducing even late-stage abortion once processed in a certain way.

So the only way for them to realistically get pregnant would be only through Alexander's permission.

But Alexander was very strict here.

He wanted his main wife Cambyses to give birth first, preferably to a son, thus solidifying her and her child's position in the family, before he would think of having children with others.

Now, there was no rule stating the main wife had to give birth first.

In fact, it did not matter when she did, just that she did.

But Alexander preferred his firstborn to be Cambyses's and hence he kept all the relations with his other women sterile for the time.

"If you want to be pregnant wait till Cambyses gives birth twice. Then I will let all three of you conceive."

And as he came to know about their desires, Alexander was very clear in his deal to them.

Alexander wanted to give Cambyses two chances to produce a son before others had their own kids.

And if Cambyses had two consecutive daughters, well then Alexander would have to accept that his successor would have elder siblings.

There was nothing he could do what that.

While for the trio, upon knowing Alexander's deadline, they seemed to calm down and get off their heat.

They at least now had a time frame and given that Cambyses was already close to delivering once, it meant they would be able to conceive in another year or two.

So at last the intensity of those night attacks decreased and Alexander finally had some time to give his little brother some rest.

Now, Alexander of course did not spend all his time engaged in debauchery.

He also did some work.

Not much, but he did, holding meetings and going over policies. I think you should take a look at

But primarily over the following weeks and months, he went on various tours across the city, in order to see how everything was going.

He first visited the construction site of the apartment complexes and was pleased to see quite a few of them were already complete, standing tall and magnificent, with their shiny white painted walls glistening under the golden sun, the rows of four-story buildings seemed to exude a profound sense of strength and safety.

The very first of these were even starting to be furnished with doors and windows and it appeared the building would soon be ready to accept its first inhabitants.

Alexander first viewed these complexes from the already completed new, wide, roads, and then decided to go over to meet and talk with those in charge.

Here he made conversation with the foreman, asking him about the project's progress and what kind of problems he was facing.

Then he toured the insides to inspect the build quality, and found they were built mostly to his specifications.

"Small merchants, artisans, and city guards should get first priority in obtaining these flats." And as he toured, he made a note to himself on how to distribute these flats, choosing the groups possessing rare skills and those economically more significant to be favored more.

And after coming out of the flat, lastly, with kind of half an agenda at propaganda, he exchanged some pleasant words with laborers there such as the bricklayers and cement mixers working there, asking them about their working conditions and life in general, which made these poor folks be over the moon.

"The lord is so nice. Never thought a noble would actually talk to me." The minimum wage men would say to themselves, recounting the experience several dozen times to anyone who would hear, from his family members to friends to even acquaintances.

While the man who was being praised, Alexander, after inspecting the apartments, moved to see the aqueducts, several of which were under construction.

And much to his delight found many seemed close to being complete.

The huge overhead structures ran 10 meters high and were several meters wide, with some running for several kilometers all the way from deep inside the Cisan hills, where they would collect water from the large and fast-flowing spring waters, which would sometimes be as much as hundreds of gallons of water per second for each aqueduct, and then transport them all the way to the city.

To do this the aqueducts would be built with a slight reclining slope so that the water would flow gently from the hills to the city under the effects of gravity.

A key point here had to be the word 'gently' as a very fast-flowing rate of water would erode the structure quickly.

Furthermore, these aqueducts would have many stone bars pointing out of them along many points, its job to catch large-sized garbage like the carcasses of dead animals like goats, sheep, and even cows or large boulders that could fall into the water.

After all, given the water would travel for several kilometers under the open sky, it would be very common for it to be contaminated by all kinds of rubbish, dirt, leaves, to even dead birds and animals.

Anyway, after the water finally arrived at the city, it would be collected in humongous overground tanks or reservoirs, with there sometimes being multiple of them.

And down below, many huge pipes would be connected to them, all working to distribute this collected water across the city to many designated outlets.

These outlets would be in the form of giant wells or fountains, from which people would be able to collect the water at their convenience.

This was of course quite a primitive way of distributing water to the city, and Alexander already had future plans to divert a part of the water to bathhouses and public latrines, to industries such as dying, and lastly to private houses, such as his own and other nobles, thus finally giving him some kind of running water,

But developing such complex underground delivery networks and mechanisms to control and direct the flow of water would take some time, as pipes needed to be made and the ground underneath dug to lay them in.

And so for now, Alexander settled for the current arrangement, with tens of large wells spread throughout the city, with their greatest concentration being around the western district which was designated to be a residential area, they being fed by multiple aqueducts, many of which provided water to multiple such collection points simultaneously.

Well the aqueducts were supposed to work as per the above description.

As up until now, these magnificent structures were yet to be completely made operational.

So as Alexander looked up, he saw many of them ending abruptly in the middle of the sky, while many workers and beasts of burden worked around it, the latter mainly working the huge cranes that lifted the huge stones and many bricks that were needed to build the thing, while much of the former was on perilous scaffolding, laying bricks and stone layer by layer, applying the cement as mortar between them and extending the structure towards its eventual goal bit by bit, brick by brick.

And seeing such a huge structure get built piece by piece right in front of him, Alexander could not help but feel a surge of achievement and a sense of accomplishment.

'Once it's finished I will be grand!' He said to himself.

Chapter 638 Viewing The Aqueducts (Part-1)

"My lord, welcome! What do you think? It's quite the size if I say so myself!"

Alexander had of course let the council member in charge of this project know of his intended visit and Uzak was there to greet him soon after he arrived, pointing to the aqueducts and marveling at it for a while.

Following this the stonemason then took Alexander around the construction site of one of the aqueducts, showing him the progress they made.

Though even though he said one, Alexander had actually designed all of them to be interconnected, so that if one of them broke down or required maintenance, the water flowing through it could be redirected.

But each aqueduct was made to serve the areas around it, making them fairly localized, so it was not wrong per se.

Anyway, after exchanging the usual pleasantries, Uzak then took Alexander to the construction site, showing him around.

As he was doing so, at one point he suddenly stopped, before looking up at the huge, thick pillars of the aqueduct, and letting out a sigh of admiration.

"Ah! I never thought such huge structures were possible."

"It's all due to these arches! So magnificent!"

"They are so strong and robust compared to just a line. We could have never imagined such a simple solution existed!"

"My lord is truly omniscient!"

What the man here was so enthusiastically referring to was how the arched shape between the pillars helped the aqueducts reach the size and shape they were seeing.

When Alexander had initially proposed the dimensions of the structure, not just Uzak, other stonemasons had also expressed their doubts regarding the possible structural integrity of it, saying if they were to build the aqueducts to Alexander's specifications, the whole structure might very well tumble under its own weight.

"All these...ummm bridges between the two pillars might break my lord," Uzak had said pointing to the individual straight lines between the pillars.

And then advised him to tone down the size and scale of the structure to reduce the load on it, moreover arguing, "It will also cost less and be quicker to build!"

But Alexander did not view that as an option.

Because one needed them to be high up, much above the city so that gravity could work effectively to pump the water all around.

Water always tried to reach the height it was dropped from, as it exerted pressure on itself evenly and it was this phenomenon that enabled aqueducts to deliver water throughout the city.

Without this, and with the absence of modern electric pumps, there could be no way of delivering running water.

And so, if one were to decrease the height of the aqueducts, it would also reduce the height difference between the water and the city, which would in turn decrease the pressure of the flow and hence the speed, giving rise to concerns such as some parts of the city not getting any water as it would not be able to flow out of the pipes and become stagnant.

There was also another reason behind Alexander's wish to make them really tall.

And that was that by making them so large, they would be able to get access to cleaner spring waters from higher up the hills.

It had to be remembered that not all sources of water were created equal, with the higher one went, the purer the water became, and vice versa.

This was because as the water flowed downhill, it inevitably picked up sand, silt, and earth, making it dirtier.

This was also why lakes and rivers were usually not used as sources of water for aqueducts, the former being stagnant and considered unclear, while the latter had too much silt and many times even waste from people using it upstream.

All this made Alexander unable to compromise on his designs.

And so facing the problem, Alexander turned to the Romans and looked at how they solved it.

And the answer was by using the arch shape to connect the pillars instead of a straight line.

This was because when this particular shape was used to connect two load-bearing points, due to the geometry of the shape, the forces exerted on it were distributed evenly throughout the whole structure and then redirected towards the strong, load-bearing pillars.

So when tons of water would flow over the arch shapes, its weight would actually be borne by the pillars.

Whereas if a simple straight line was used to connect the two, that thin, weak section would have to bear the entire brunt, making it much more likely to snap along a weak point over time, thus turning the entire aqueduct inoperational.

When Alexander had made the suggestion, the artisans were understandably a bit skeptical of the efficacy of the idea.

After all, how could just simply changing the shape of something make all their problems go away?

A problem as big as this?

But once they did do so under Alexander's insistence, they were amazed to see it actually worked!

The structure held and showed no signs of breaking.

And that was why Uzak had addressed Alexander as being omniscient or all-knowing

As Alexander went over the site, suddenly one particular sight caught his eye.

It was not anything out of the ordinary at first glance, in fact Alexander seemed to have even missed it till now. I think you should take a look at

But it did finally register with him, the sight of many men, tirelessly at work laying the brick and cement mortar while hanging from the scaffolding at precarious angles.

Alexander was at first amazed at these men's courage and skill to be able to work with such concentration and even nonchalance at such heights, without a drop of fear in them.

Alexander doubted these men were compensated even a tenth of their deserved pay for the dangerous situation they put themselves in.

But these men nevertheless put themselves in these positions just so they were able to put food on the table for their families.

And seeing this, Alexander even felt a bit shamed at his own lack of diligence for not having arranged any safety mechanisms.

Hence turning to Uzak, he pointed to the workers on the scaffolding and said,

"Uzak I noticed that the men on the scaffolding were working with no type of protection, no rope tying them or any type of net to catch them if they fell down,"

"They just have their legs expertly hooked between the pieces of scaffolding as some sort of precarious handle."

"That is a bit too dangerous, don't you think?"

"Try to make here a bit safer."

"If they fall and die, it will not only be a tragic loss of life but much more a waste of a good worker."

"It will even cost me money."

Alexander knew workers dying due to work-related accidents were nothing to even bat an eye about for most.

Falling from heights, death from falling debris, and other accidents were treated as just occupational hazards.

It was no more noteworthy than a leaf falling off trees, not even worth a second look.

So Uzak was here not being callous or negligent, but that this was simply the norm, something people simply came to expect and bear.

Hence Alexander framed it like it was about the money and the labor shortage.

"Haha, my lord truly is truly of gentle heart. I'm sure the workers will be overjoyed once they know of your concerns."

Uzak appeared to be genuinely impressed at Alexander's thoughtfulness, as he slightly bowed, before adding,

"But my lord, construction projects are inherently dangerous. And death and injury are a part and parcel there."

But adding in a reassuring tone,

"But since my lord has spoken, I will try to endeavor to make the site as safe as possible."

"Rest assured!"

Alexander was pleased to hear this commitment and so hugged and nodded.

Though he was not expecting anything major to come out of this, as even the awareness of deaths during these projects was not in many's consciousness, but at least these were baby steps.

Uzak might not know exactly how to proceed in making the site safer, but Alexander was confident the man would learn and figure it out on his own over time, especially if Alexander were to nudge him from time to time.

Finishing this, Alexander then at last asked the most important question, which was,

"So how long till can we expect the aqueducts to be operational,"

To which the council member put on a long face before saying,

"I've previously told you of the difficulties my lord. We need more of everything. More men, and more material, particularly more cement and much more stone."

"If I could have that, I could finish all the ones by this year. Or I will need one more." Uzak answered in detail.

And then after a pause added,

"The most time-consuming is actually digging. Digging through the hills to channel the water through, digging underground to place the pipes, and digging to build wells and cisterns."

"We need to dig so much!"

"And many times we even get lost during so. It's all dark after."

"Or sometimes we find the tunnel is not straight and have to dig again."

"All of this wastes a lot of time."

"That's why I asked for more men. Not just workers but also skilled supervisors to prevent these mistakes!"

The man even sounded a bit exasperated. as he tried to show Alexander all the difficulties and challenges he had to face to try and get the aqueducts going.

Chapter 639 Viewing The Aqueducts (Part-2)

Alexander did not disagree over the extent of the challenges Uzak faced.

He would admit that he had set quite a high bar for the man, commissioning quite a few very large and long aqueducts simultaneously, and ordered the construction of a fair few number of large wells and fountains.

Alexander eventually wished to set a well for every hundred men in the city, and even though the current plans were much more modest, it seemed with the limited resources provided, Uzak was having a difficult time managing it.

And this was not his only sticking point, as aside from the lack of men to do the tedious digging, which the stonemason had frankly grown sick of, there was another point he kept Alexander hankering about.

"My lord, about the thing we discussed earlier, couldn't we use lead to make the water transporting pipes under any circumstances?" Uzak again made the request.

The reason why he wanted to make the connecting out of this metal was because it was soft, malleable, had quite a low melting point so was easy to work with, and most critically, unlike iron, it did not rust.

Not to mention was cheap.

To Uzak this did not even seem like a choice.

But when that topic had come up, Alexander had of course brutally shot this material down saying, "No water pipes can be made from lead. It is highly poisonous and if we make the pipes out of it, we would be poisoning our own people."

One only had to take a look at the later Roman emperors and the mad antics they got up to to see what the effects of lead poisoning could have.

Only one such example would be how Emperor Nero had castrated a young slave and then married him in order to play the role of his deceased wife.

But given that Alexander did not know of any such examples that he could relate to Uzak, the stonemason seemed reluctant to follow this.

"My lord we have used lead pipes, back in Adhan for generations. There was no poisoning!" He cried though Alexander would have liked to very much disagree after hearing stories of the previous king.

But that did not deter Uzak from trying to further present his case, additionally saying, "Also, if we do not use lead, making the pipes out of iron will take too long, because iron is really not easy to work with, This will set us back even further, meaning even more delays."

"Never mind the issue of rust we will have to deal with."

"You should know all this my lord," He at last pleaded.

Now what Uzak said was all very true, and Alexander of course knew it.

Metal pipes in this time period were made by first hammering the metal into a sheet and then shaping it into a cylinder with even more hammering.

And as this process was a hot working process, i.e.- the metal was heated and then shaped, through manual labor, it was convenient to have a soft metal like lead.

Forming metals with high melting temperatures like lead, especially into large structures such as a water-carrying pipe was really too hard and time-consuming.

And it was also because of this the Romans too used lead pipes to construct their water supply system.

But the people escaped lead poisoning there due to how quickly the water through them, thus not giving the metal enough time to dissolve into the liquid.

And also because the water they carried had a high concentration of calcium deposits, which worked to form a protective coating inside the pipes.

This formed a barrier between the water and the lead, not permitting them to come into contact with each other.

While the reason the Roman emperors went mad was thought to be more due to their use of lead in eating utensils, such as goblets, cups, and cooking pots, and the use of lead acetate which was used as an artificial sweetener.

But though things worked out fine for the Roman people when using lead pipes, that did not mean Alexander's own pipes would be safe.

After all, the water composition between the two places was bound to be different, so who knew if the water here had enough dissolved calcium to form that protective layer?

Thus he categorically rejected the request to make the pipes out of lead.

But though it was certainly the most sensible thing to do, then the question arose what to make it out of?

If Alexander could he would have certainly preferred to make it out of iron as it was cheap and very plentiful to him.

But making pipes out of iron required industrial equipment as simply casting them was not an option.

And to prevent the vast network of pipes from rusting, called for complex cathodic protection which would be impossible.

So that option was out of the running.

He hence had to look for another one.

And it took a fair bit of thinking.

But eventually, he found it.

The building material was quite low-tech but certainly feasible.

And having come up with the answer, Alexander first shut down Uzak's search for that elusive, saying in a strict voice, "The goddess has decreed that the pipes be not of lead. Or the people of the city will suffer."

"So if you want to make it out of lead, ask Her!" I think you should take a look at

Given his persistence, Alexander decided to use the 'nuke card' as he liked to say, and it worked just as intended, as the talk of the divine instantly shut down the stonemason.

Though that did not smother his frustration.

To Uzak it made no sense to create so much controversy over such a simple deal.

'So what will I make it out of? If you ask me to make it out of iron, I will ask for a thousand blacksmiths or quit!'

Hearing Alexander's decision, Uzak then internally fumed, while looking at Alexander with a placid face, wanting to hear his solution.

And this was what he got.

"So for now, make the pipes out of terracotta. They will be extremely durable, resistant to wear and tear, noncorrosive, and securely sealed, meaning there won't be a problem with leaking like the metal pipes."

Alexander said this in a very grand voice.

There was also the added benefit of having no risk of chemical reaction with their surrounding environment, but he skipped that part for obvious reasons.

"..." Uzak stayed quiet for a bit at the answer.

This was of course not some kind of revolutionary idea.

Pipes made of clays were pretty common and had been around for generations.

And though Alexander worked hard to display its virtue, the problems associated with them were also numerous and very commonly known.

The biggest and easiest one to guess was that they were fragile, and prone to breaking, especially during transport and installation.

Another was the hassle of manufacturing which needed skilled potters.

And lastly, there was the need for specialized kilns to burn the soft clay in and turn it into terracotta.

Uzak believed none of these considerations could have escaped Alexander when he made the proposal.

So after hearing the answer, he patiently waited for Alexander to provide him with all the extra facilities that would be required to manufacture these.

And Alexander did promise him these, saying, "Kriskhok can help you build the kilns. They should be similar to the ones we already use for brick making, so it should be quick to make"

"As for the potters, well there are many people who sell their wares in the market. Recrute from them. I will give you the funds."

And finished by giving Uzak a glimpse of better things to come, promising,

"And once we increase cement production, we will give priority allocation to you so that you can simply make cement pipes. That will be much less hassle."

"Thank you, my lord. I will try to keep everything as close to the schedule," And hearing so, Uzak could only promise this.

Though internally he was not very hopeful of being able to make cement pipes anytime soon.

He thought this because if cement production could have been ramped up, Alexander would have done so long ago.

So Uzak understood that he would probably be stuck with the earthen pipes for the time being, first building kilns outside the city, making his pipes there, and transporting these fragile pieces across the city to their destination.

A lot of hassle and a lot of potentiality for things to go wrong.

"Yes, do your best,"

Alexander too understood the workload Uzak was under to know this, and so with a slap on the man's shoulder, he encouraged him to continue endeavoring and try and overcome the hurdles.

And With this Alexander's aqueduct visit came to an end.

But that did not he and Uzak were destined to be separated yet.

For Uzak was one in charge of not one but two projects, both somewhat interconnected.

If the aqueducts brought clean water into the city, the other project worked to get rid of the dirty, used one.

Yes, Alexander's next destination was the sewers.

Of course, it was not literally visiting the bowels of the city.

Alexander did not want to wade through the flowing sludge or take in the nauseating pungent smell of rotten eggs and ammonia.

So instead they stood by one of the many entrances through which the workers entered and exited the maze-like tunnels, as Uzak gave an overall report about the ongoing down below.

Chapter 640 The Sewage System

Standing around one of the sewage work sites, Alexander easily noticed the hustle and bustle of the work, as workers moved with speed and urgency to and fro through the many small doors which were the entrances of the city's bowels.

The ones going carried a variety of materials inside, ranging from building materials such as stone, bricks, cement, and even wood, to food and drinks for the workers inside, to lastly firewood for the brazier that worked to illuminate the place.

All these were usually carried in large wooden buckets they carried on both hands or sometimes more curiously in cast iron metal pans that the workers placed on their heads

Alexander had noticed it before too, but it seemed that due to the abundance of iron, many construction sites were starting to substitute bronze tools for iron.

Anyway, this traffic was not only one way.

Because there were workers coming out of the tunnels too, though their accompanying material was much more simple.

Aside from the sludge and bad smell they brought with them on their body, they mostly carried out dirt-lots and lots of dirt

It seemed Uzak was justified in his growing distaste for the substance.

"The underground digging is still in its ongoing proceedings my lord."

"Because of the nature of the work, the workers we use here are mostly slaves, criminals, or war prisoners."

"That's also why we have a lot more guards here than the previous site."

Uzak said pointing to the twenty to thirty burly men dressed in bright red bronze armor scattered through the site.

They had a shield on their back, used to suppress any attacks from rioters, and a thick club graced their hands, no doubt there to dish out the pain, with lastly a short sword equipped on the hips, likely for situations if things got really ugly.

"Having killed and fought, these men are not the meek sort like the peasants."

"So many don't want honesty and try to slack off whenever possible."

"And many are hot-tempered too. So a few small fisty cups and brawls are not uncommon here. Happens almost every week or two."

"That's why a few of our supervisions have to use these to get the lazy bums moving."

Uzak first explained the makeup of the site, going over the workers, the guards, and lastly the supervisor, who could be seen wielding leathery whips and shouting in foul language,

"You lazy fu*ks, it will tears your ass....."

"Move! Move, you worms! You won't get a rest until you finish..."

All such colorful languages hit Alexander's eardrum, while his eyes were entertained with the sight of the supervisors and small managers occasionally using their whips to encourage greater productivity from their subordinates, leaving sharp, red lashes on their backs in the process.

Though in fairness the practice was not ubiquitous, and the manager did seem content to just use very foul language and loud curses to get the workers moving most of the time.

Though it was also very much possible that they did not want to seem too cruel in front of Alexander.

And so tried to show off how competent they were by these tactics and by making the workers strive extra hard.

Or perhaps this was normal procedure.

After all, getting a slave sick or worse killed would get the officer in charge into trouble.

A whole lot of trouble if it was bad enough, as the incident might even reach as high as Alexander's ears.

This was because almost all the slaves in Zanzan belonged to Alexander, numbering anywhere between 30,000 to 35,000, which would easily put him as the biggest slave owner in Adhania if not the whole world.

Even Amenheraft's father, Alozmer had only around 25,000 to 30,000 slaves, and he was a ruler of a superpower at the peak of his authority, and not the overseer of one puny city and a few surrounding farmlands.

Now, Alexander also knew this and he did have plans to remedy it.

He planned to set most of his captured slaves free soon, especially the original 20,000 prisoners of war, i.e.- the ones he caught against Amenheraft, the native inhabitants of Zanzan.

He had intended to offer them freedom after 5 years or release them right now for a 15-year-long lease payment of 30 ropals a month.

But he could not implement the latter part due to the huge number of skilled accountants that would be needed to keep track of who paid their dues, who did not, and who was late in their deposits.

And then have the administrative infrastructure to trace them down and make them cough up.

This would require an enormous leap in Alexander's administrative capabilities and he simply did not have so many learned men yet to implement this.

So he only promised them release after five years, one and a half of which was already finished.

And it was because of this, in addition to the humanity of it, that he would not tolerate them being mistreated or killed. I think you should take a look at

And even if one were to remove the human element completely, still they were his property, so why would he tolerate others ruining it?

A slave dying, besides being tragic, also meant losing a few thousand ropals and a strong worker.

So it was because of all that Alexander strictly asked his council members to make appropriate arrangements for the slaves, saying,

"I'm only lending them to you. You must take proper care of them. Do not maltreat them even if they were criminals or war booty. They do not belong to you!"

And because Uzak knew this why he had provided such a long and detailed explanation as to why the supervisors were using whips.

Now, even before Uzak's detailed description, Alexander had already guessed that the workers here were hardened criminals given they had a certain lifeless aura to them,

Furthermore their feet also seemed to be adorned with manacles, iron cuffs with a protruding hole through which usually a chain would go through, connecting both feet.

That chain did not seem to exist, though Alexander guessed it might be because it would hamper their productivity.

But such chains would come once the day was over when these slaves would have their legs connected and their walking and running speed restricted.

Alexander did not disapprove of this, as slaves running away was always a major headache for any slave owner.

And just having a linked chain connecting your leg still gave one a decent amount of freedom to move around.

So it was as humane a condition he could provide these men until someone invented GPS trackers.

And in that same compromising vein, he also did not outright ban the whipping, only disapproved of it.

So turning to Uzak he said,

"It's okay if they are really slacking, but make sure the officers exercise moderation. No slave is not killed or permanently injured."

"The whips should be the last resort, not the first response."

Being a slave himself, Alexander had seen some instances where a stubborn slave really deserved what was coming.

"Yes, yes, I have told so to all my men. To use the whips sparingly! I will be sure to tell them again," Hearing Alexander's positive answer, Uzak flashed a bright smile of relief as he forcefully nodded his head a couple of times in order to show his enthusiasm for the promise.

After this exchange was over, Uzak then finally started to show how much work they had actually done, reporting,

"As you have instructed, the workers are currently working to expand the existing sewer network, digging new tunnels, widening existing ones, and attaching the sewerage system to more parts of the city."

"Once they are completed we will be able to accommodate much greater volumes of waste."

"The thing we are about to start now is attaching the sewer pipes to all the public restrooms, the markets and dye houses, and lastly all the many rainwater drainage ditches located around the city. That fast-flowing rainwater should be enough to wash away all the filth into the sea."

The sewers project seemed to be going far better than the aqueduct projects going by Uzak's confident reporting and was much closer than the aqueduct to being operational.

"Good, good, that is good to hear," Thus Alexander praised, before adding a bit of addendum,

"Remember the sewers are to end about 200 meters into the Mad Sea. I do not want my beaches to smell with refuse."

"Yes, of course, my lord" Uzak was instant in his reply, and then declared, "We will start making the swage pipes as soon as the new kilns are built."

'New kiln! What's he talking about?' And hearing so, Alexander was visibly flued for a second.

He did not quite get the reference instantly.

But a while later it at last dawned on him.

Uzak was referring to how he would use the terracotta pipes here.

And understanding this Alexander had an urge to slap his own forehead.

Uzak seemed to think Alexander had banned all pipes made out of lead.

Whereas he only banned making pipes that would carry useful water, not waste ones.

And so Alexander explained this to Uzak, saying, "You can make these pipes of lead. People will not use this water. And I really do not care if fishes get lead poisoning."

'First, do not use lead. Now use lead. Which one is it?' While Uzak internally rolled his eyes at the confusion but accepted it nevertheless.

And with this, having seen everything there was to see, Alexander finally ended this tour.