

## I. Dynasty 223

### Chapter 223: All for Resources

“Sails?”

When Zhang Liang raised this issue to Xiao Ming, the problem became clear.

The ship itself was nearly built, but Zhang Liang had no means to produce the sails. Moreover, the galleon’s tall masts required equally large sails.

“How did you make sails for ships before?” Xiao Ming frowned.

Zhang Liang gave a bitter smile. “Your Highness, back when the Wei family was still around, they operated a textile workshop that produced sailcloth. We used to purchase it from them. But after Your Highness eliminated the Wei and Qin families, I later found out that the workshop had been taken over by the government and was still being reorganized—production hadn’t even started yet.”

“That was my oversight,” Xiao Ming admitted. “The Wei family’s assets were all seized by the government. I had planned to reorganize the textile workshop earlier, but the war in Cangzhou delayed everything. Then my trip to Chang’an pushed it further back. Alright, for now, focus on completing the ship’s hull. As for the sails, give me the measurements and designs, and I’ll arrange for their production.”

“Yes, Your Highness. I’ve already prepared the specifications.” Zhang Liang pulled out a blueprint from his robe and handed it to Xiao Ming.

After reviewing the plans, Xiao Ming and Pang Yukun inspected the other two galleons. At this pace, they should be completed by the end of the year.

Now that the ships were nearly ready, the next step was recruiting sailors. A standard galleon required a crew of about 150.

This matter also needed attention, so Xiao Ming asked Zhang Liang, "Since the galleons will soon be ready to sail, you must know more about recruiting experienced sailors than I do. Where can we find skilled seafarers?"

Zhang Liang looked confident. Having worked in shipbuilding for years, he knew exactly where to find the right people.

"Your Highness, when you assigned me to oversee the Dengzhou shipyard, I spent some time there and got familiar with the area. Dengzhou is a coastal region where most fishermen make their living from the sea. In the past, many fishermen from Dengzhou came here to buy boats. But in recent years, with pirates and Japanese raiders infesting the waters, many fishermen have been killed and their boats stolen. Fear has driven most of them to avoid the sea altogether. I think now is the perfect time to recruit them—they'd make excellent crew members for the galleons."

Pang Yukun nodded in agreement. "Your Highness, Zhang Liang is right. Since ancient times, people have relied on the mountains or the sea for survival. The people of Dengzhou have always depended on fishing. Now that their livelihood has been cut off, they must harbor deep hatred for the pirates and raiders. If we recruit them, they'll surely respond enthusiastically."

He paused before adding, "Moreover, many in Dengzhou have turned to smuggling salt out of desperation. The local governor, Yang Chengye, has repeatedly asked me how to deal with these salt smugglers."

“Very well. In a few days, we’ll go to Dengzhou together to assess the situation firsthand,” Xiao Ming said. “My concern is that these people are accustomed to living off the sea and have no interest in farming. The land distribution policy offers them little benefit, and the crackdown on salt smuggling has likely bred resentment. If they join forces with Korean or Japanese pirates, the situation could turn dangerous.”

Zhang Liang agreed. “Your Highness is absolutely right. Fishermen with no means to survive may turn to piracy, raiding and plundering along the coast. Desperate men are capable of anything.”

After settling the matter and instructing Zhang Liang to speed up construction, Xiao Ming and Pang Yukun returned to Qingzhou.

Currently, the barbarians still posed a threat north of Cangzhou, while pirates and raiders blocked maritime trade routes. This meant that Qingzhou’s goods couldn’t easily be transported by sea to other regions or foreign markets.

The domestic market was important, but overseas trade was equally crucial.

Another issue was that some resources needed for industry were either scarce or nonexistent within the Great Yu Empire.

For example, rubber trees and ironwood. The former was essential for future steam engine components like pistons and belts, while the latter—native only to Annam (Vietnam)—was prized for its hardness and resistance to decay, making it the best material for shipbuilding.

Currently, Zhang Liang was using locally sourced pine and fir wood for the galleons, but these couldn't match the durability of ironwood ships. During the Age of Sail, many vessels disintegrated and sank due to inferior materials corroding in seawater or breaking apart in storms.

Thus, securing resources like ironwood was critical—not just for shipbuilding, but also for military equipment, specialized machinery parts, and construction.

Moreover, historical records from the Technology Crystal showed that the rapid advancement of Western nations during the colonial era was largely due to their ability to extract resources from across the globe, which in turn fueled industrial growth.

In essence, materials were the foundation of civilization's progress. Coal, oil, nuclear energy—some scientists even predicted that without discovering new energy sources, humanity would forever be confined to the solar system. This was why major powers invested in lunar and Martian exploration—everything was for resources.

This was precisely why Xiao Ming placed such importance on galleons. He didn't lack technological knowledge—he lacked resources. And some of these resources either hadn't been discovered within the Great Yu Empire or simply didn't exist there.

The next day, Xiao Ming summoned Qingzhou's key officials to a meeting at the royal residence.

Having just returned from Chang'an, he needed updates on the territory's recent developments and to discuss the threat posed by the Blood Wolf Tribe near Cangzhou.

“Your Highness, the military restructuring into divisions, brigades, battalions, companies, platoons, and squads is now complete across all six prefectures,” Niu Ben reported first.

“Good. The soldiers’ new salute and slogan at the city gates show the reforms are progressing quickly,” Xiao Ming said with a smile. “Any difficulties adapting to the changes?”

Niu Ben looked uneasy. “Being called ‘Division Commander’ instead of ‘General’ feels... strange.”

“Exactly! Now they call me ‘Brigade Commander,’ and it just doesn’t sit right,” Lu Fei grumbled.

Xiao Ming nodded. He had indeed rushed the military reforms, and the officers were struggling to adjust.

“Very well. Keep the new salutes, slogans, and regulations, but for now, revert to the old titles. Consider this an educational phase—we’ll reintroduce the new ranks when necessary.”

“Yes, Your Highness!” Niu Ben and the other officers replied in unison.