

I. Dynasty 75

Chapter 75: Neighboring Nations

The assembly line production in the steel workshop was officially implemented, and naturally, the production models of other workshops also needed to change.

To this end, Xiao Ming specifically wrote a production organization plan. The knowledge in his mind could not only be transmitted but also presented on paper. This way, others could learn through written materials rather than relying solely on his personal instruction.

During this period, Xiao Ming had written several technical books using the vast knowledge from the technology library, combined with his own understanding. These books were strictly safeguarded for reference and study.

In addition to the steel workshop, Xiao Ming also visited other workshops to correct mistakes in the production process.

This industrial district was Xiao Ming's pilot project. If the industrial district model proved successful, it would be expanded further. After all, despite all his efforts, he only had a handful of workshops, which were far from sufficient to fully tap into the consumption potential of the Great Yu Empire.

Therefore, Xiao Ming's next plan was to expand and replicate more steel workshops, more wineries, and so on, until the market was saturated.

However, expansion required silver and an adequate labor force, which was why Xiao Ming and Chen Wenlong lamented the shortage of skilled craftsmen.

Chen Wenlong's remark that war was the fastest way to acquire craftsmen was something Xiao Ming understood well. However, given his current capabilities, launching a war would be akin to an old lady eating arsenic—suicidal.

Nevertheless, this reminded Xiao Ming that he might not need to personally engage in war but could instead buy what he needed.

At present, the barbarians were the ones reaping the most benefits from war. Whether through plundering the Great Yu, oppressing Goryeo, or fighting the Ottoman Empire in Central Asia, the barbarians captured a large number of slaves every year.

In Xiao Ming's view, the barbarians' war tactics were highly sophisticated. After analyzing several of their war campaigns, he noticed that the barbarians often resorted to massacres during sieges, a form of war intimidation similar to the tactics used by the Mongols in contemporary history.

After conquering a tribe or nation, the barbarians would organize slave armies—modern-day puppet forces—using them to wear down the enemy's strength before striking the final blow themselves.

So far, the barbarians had destroyed fifteen tribes and nations across the grasslands and the Western Regions, until they encountered their formidable foe, the Ottoman Empire.

Because the historical divergence in this timeline occurred after the Han dynasty, Europe was not spared from the devastation caused by the westward migration of the Xiongnu. During the Liang dynasty, which preceded the Dai dynasty, a rising nomadic tribe from the grasslands migrated westward after their wars with the Liang dynasty.

Persian merchants from the West described the terrifying second invasion of Central Asia and Europe by nomadic tribes.

From Xiao Ming's perspective, this invasion occurred fifty years earlier than the Mongol invasion of Europe in contemporary history. It was precisely because of the butterfly effect caused by the Liang dynasty's nomadic tribe replacing the Mongols that Xiao Ming worried Europe's historical trajectory might not change significantly.

However, this was merely his speculation. The emergence of the Ottoman Empire was already enough to indicate certain trends.

As for the current barbarians, Xiao Ming believed they were essentially the Jurchen tribe. The wars between the Liang dynasty and the nomadic tribes of the grasslands had caused the original rulers of the grasslands to migrate westward, allowing this tribe to seize control of the northern grasslands.

Now, with their semi-agricultural, semi-nomadic lifestyle, this tribe had truly grown powerful.

"Troubled times indeed," Xiao Ming murmured. Although the barbarians' development trajectory had changed, their inherent nature as invaders remained the same.

Perhaps he was facing an enemy even more ruthless and powerful than the Ming dynasty of contemporary history.

This was why he had no interest in playing the game of imperial power struggles with his brothers. Instead, he focused on building up his strength to prepare for the coming storm.

After leaving the industrial district, Xiao Ming did not return to the prince's residence but went to the Xiaoqing River, where his farmland was located.

At this moment, Lu Fei was rolling up his sleeves and working alongside the soldiers to reclaim wasteland, showing no signs of tension after killing two scions of powerful families.

"Ah, this single-minded fool," Xiao Ming sighed.

If Lu Fei had acted like this under another prince, his head would have been chopped off countless times by now.

"Let's go take a look," Xiao Ming said to Zhao Long and Zhao Hu.

Spring was approaching, and the land would soon be ready for planting. Xiao Ming was considering what crops to grow. Grain was, of course, the priority, but crops like cotton could also be planted.

In early spring, people, like snakes, seemed to awaken from hibernation. Throughout the winter, Xiao Ming had no desire to go anywhere.

The roads were blocked by snow, and the cold was bone-chilling.

Now, he could finally gallop on horseback, letting the cold wind whip against his face.

By the Xiaoqing River, remnants of snow could still be seen along the banks, but the ice on the river had melted. Occasionally, a few wild ducks could be seen swimming in the water.

Before him were three thousand new soldiers and hundreds of oxen working in the fields.

The smell of freshly turned soil carried the scent of nature. The vast expanse of reclaimed farmland was a testament to the efforts of the construction corps.

"Your Highness," Lu Fei called out as he saw Xiao Ming approaching. Barefoot, he ran from the muddy field to the ridge. "What do you think, Your Highness? Not bad, right?"

"Quite impressive. Has all of my farmland been reclaimed?"

"Not yet, but we're close. We'll finish before the spring planting," Lu Fei assured.

Xiao Ming patted Lu Fei on the shoulder. Seeing a soldier nearby driving an ox to plow the field, he suddenly felt inspired and said, "Let me give it a try."

The soldier was startled and stood frozen, unsure of what to do, looking to Lu Fei for guidance.

Lu Fei was equally stunned. “Your Highness wants to drive an ox? This is the work of country folk. Your Highness is the Prince of Qi. This is beneath your status.”

Xiao Ming didn’t care about status. Besides, what leader in modern times didn’t engage in a bit of showmanship? Although he wasn’t putting on a show—he was genuinely curious—this was also an opportunity to bond with the soldiers.

Perhaps future history books would even record this as a tale of him sharing hardships with his soldiers.

Therefore, in Xiao Ming’s view, such activities should be participated in more often. They were also opportunities to build his image within the army.

“It’s fine,” Xiao Ming said as he took the rope from the soldier and skillfully began driving the ox.

In his previous life, Xiao Ming had been a child from the southern mountains, where he had often worked with water buffalo. Handling the rope felt familiar, and he quickly got the hang of driving the ox.

Lu Fei and the soldiers were even more astonished, their jaws dropping as the Prince of Qi once again reshaped their perception of him.

Lu Fei then shouted to the soldiers working in the fields, “Everyone, put in more effort! His Highness the Prince of Qi has personally come to the fields to work with us. We must finish reclaiming this land before the spring planting!”

The soldiers farther away didn't know what was happening, but the news quickly spread. They began whispering among themselves, but soon, they seemed to find renewed energy, working with even greater vigor.

Xiao Ming's once distant and unapproachable image became much more relatable in their eye