

Perish 211

Chapter 211: Develop the Homeland First? Or Go to War?

Others no longer showed any dissatisfaction, because they all felt that Maximus made sense.

"Leader, when will this Twenty Peerage System be implemented?" Fesaros was somewhat impatient.

"I'm afraid it will take some time," Maximus explained, "On one hand, because some reward conditions of the Twenty Peerage System still need discussion and confirmation with Chief Officers of various departments; on the other hand, we are still squeezed into this temporary stronghold, not yet moved to Validosi, so the land distribution cannot be implemented yet. Let's not let everyone have false hopes to avoid affecting their mood... Therefore, we can first discuss how to build our new home on the newly purchased land, Validosi?"

As soon as he said this, the military tent became lively again.

"Stop muttering below, stand up and say, how should we do it?" Maximus urged.

Gaius, the former Engineering Camp captain and now the new Construction Deputy Officer, was the first to stand up. Scratching his head, he said softly, "Leader, today when I was overseeing the construction of the camp, I heard that Validosi is not far from here, so once the camp was initially built, I took a few people to sneak a look at Validosi—"

"I know it wasn't just you who sneaked a peek, quite a few people here went to see it. Considering your longing for a new home, I won't criticize you here," Maximus said half-jokingly, half-seriously. "Tell us, what are your thoughts on Validosi?"

"As the Aldeans said, Validosi is a swamp, and quite a sizeable one, composed of several large pools of water, but the water in these pools doesn't seem very deep..."

Gaius carefully articulated his words and said, "I think it can be like this... hmm, you may not know that although Rome is located by the Tiber River, it's actually built on seven small hills by the river because the place often floods, forming swamps in the lowlands between these hills. That's why the Romans mastered the techniques for draining swamps and leveling wetlands very early. During those years as

slaves in Rome, we were driven many times to do such hard work... I think I can try it and turn Validosi back into land suitable for our residence and farming."

"Quick, tell us how to do it?" Maximus asked eagerly.

"Firstly, drainage," Gaius pondered and said, "These pools are densely spread on the banks of the two rivers and cover a large area, but there are still some dry lands around them. We can dispatch many people to dig large and deep pits on the dry lands, then divert the pools' water into the pits, and then channel the water in the pits into the Kupa River and Kolana River, or simply keep the pits as artificial lakes."

Once the swamp water is drained, let it sun-dry for a while. When the ground surface dries and wrinkles, spread the earth excavated from the pits over the swamp and compact it. It's best to plow the land again after some time to better remove moisture, which will be better for building houses and farming..."

"Your method is quite good!" Maximus praised, his gaze, however, turned to Flanitnus and others.

"When we were slaves, we used to transform the lowlands of the Tiber in this way, although it wasn't so complex, because Validosi is our new home; putting in more effort will make it more comfortable," Flanitnus said truthfully.

"But it seems that to accomplish this task, a lot of manpower will be needed," Maximus mused, stroking his chin.

Gaius nodded, saying, "Leader, it's best to gather all the men in our team to do this. It's best to choose summer, as this season is hot with less water, and the land dries easily. Also, we need your help, Spukala, to calculate how large and deep the pits need to be and the best locations to dig them?"

"Although I've never done this before, I will do my best to help you with the calculations!" Spukala responded earnestly, as building Validosi is everyone's task.

"If enough manpower is available and the weather is suitable, I think it may only take three months to restore Validosi to its original state. After that, we will need to build embankments to prevent river overflow," Gaius assured Maximus.

"So, it can't be done this year. We will at least have to wait until next year. By then, the Twenty Peerage System may already be in effect. If you can transform Validosi into a suitable home for us, that is a very significant achievement. I believe a peerage is definitely deserved," Maximus loudly encouraged.

Gaius, suddenly excited, said, "I will do my utmost to complete the transformation of Validosi!"

Others, upon hearing this, also felt envious.

Even Volenus, a prudent person, stood up, slightly eager, "Leader, the transformation of Validosi will have to wait until next year. We can first transform the hills east of Validosi, to be our initial settlement."

"You and I both went to see those hills today. They are covered with grass and some trees and rocks. It might also require a lot of effort to turn them into the land we want, right?" Maximus expressed some doubts.

"Leader, we can perform slash-and-burn on that piece of hills," Volenus said confidently. "We don't need to burn everything at once, which could easily set the entire forest on fire. We can first determine the location where the tribe will settle and then clear the surrounding grass and trees to prevent the fire from spreading, then conduct the slash-and-burn."

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It is autumn now, the grass is dried up, so burning should be easy. After burning, we can dig up and remove those rocks and tree roots, and the burnt field should be usable. I carefully looked at that piece of hill; it's quite gentle and the soil is thick. Whether for building houses or farming, it would be excellent."

Capito, who had also followed Maximus to inspect, interjected, "There are some trees on that hill. It would be a pity to burn them all. Why not cut them down first and then burn? We can use those trees for building houses, making boats... Our supply camp has a dozen frame saws, so cutting trees would be faster."

"As long as there are enough people, cutting the trees first would also work," Volenus responded straightforwardly, as if he believed Maximus wouldn't object.

Maximus smiled, "Volenus, your method of using fire to clear the land is a good one. In the future, you will be in charge of developing that hill, but—"

He put away his smile and asked seriously, "Now that we plan to burn the land on that hill, do you think the Pannonians will let it go unchecked?"

Volenus was momentarily at a loss for words, then said, "Leader, can we send a legion to protect while burning the land? If the Pannonians dare to come, we can repel them..."

Before Maximus could reply, Flanitus loudly opposed, "That's impossible! You need a lot of people to burn land and build houses, and you also need a lot of people to send a legion to protect them. This means almost the entire army would be concentrated on that hill, and burning the land isn't something that can be done quickly. If all the strong men of the tribe stay there long-term, here will become very unsafe!"

"There's another point that needs our attention!" Quintus added, "When I went to look at the hill with the leader today, as soon as we got close, the warriors from the nearby Pannonian tribe came out to drive us away. It shows they've already considered that hill as their territory. If we burn and build houses there, we will undoubtedly anger the Pannonians.

Even if we repel them once or twice, as the Aldean Great Chief said, the Pannonian Tribes alone here have over ten to twenty thousand troops. When their army comes in full force, most of our soldiers are still burning the land, and by then it might be a disaster!"

"This..." Volenus had no words to respond and just looked at Maximus because he had the final decision-making power.

Maximus did not immediately make a decision but instead asked, "How long can our food supply last now?"

"We currently have 10,930 soldiers and 4,532 people in the entire supply camp, totaling more than 15,000 people. Since Padua, we haven't replenished any supplies, and after marching for two months, more than half of our supplies have been consumed. Now even with frugal eating, it can last at most a month and a half."

Volenus was previously an administrative officer and understanding the troop's population and provisions was his job. Even while helping in the supply camp during the march, he kept fulfilling his duties, so he could answer without hesitation.

He said with concern, "If we want to save some wheat as seeds, I fear it may not even be enough to last a month. So, I hope to quickly burn and cultivate land, taking advantage of it's still September to plant some beans. If it's delayed any longer, there might be no yield this year. We can't completely rely on the Aldeans for food support, right?"

Now it was Quintus and Flantillus exchanging glances, for they hadn't realized that the tribe's food storage was already tight. In fact, many people inside the tent were getting a bit anxious.

Maximus, however, remained calm. As a leader, he understood the situation of the troops very well, which was why he earlier sought food support from the Aldean Great Chief.

"Flanitnus, how many soldiers do we have capable of fighting now?" Maximus asked his military officer.

"The march in the mountains recently took a heavy toll on the troops, with more than 1,000 injured or sick. We have about 9,700 who can fight now," Flanitnus replied.

The reason Flanitnus didn't give a more precise number was not due to lack of diligence in his work, but because, after entering the mountains, someone was injured or fell ill every day, and just today they arrived here to set up camp and hold a meeting, so he hadn't had time to gather the day's sick count from the various units.

Maximus was certainly aware of the military situation as well, and his question aimed to transition to the next statement: "Do you think if we engaged the Pannonians tomorrow with our army's current condition, could we win?"

This statement shocked everyone.

The officials of the original supply camp were still indulging in the future vision painted by Maximus, thinking about how to build a homeland, only to suddenly hear the demand to "engage in battle tomorrow." They were all incredibly taken aback.

After a long march, even the most eager commanders preferred to allow the weary troops to get a good rest, fully recover combat strength, and then engage the Pannonians to the east with better odds of victory.

Seeing this, Maximus asked with a solemn voice, "Previously, the Aldean Elder Budocaribas mentioned that after his people retreated here, they often suffered harassment from the Segestica people. I observed many damaged traces north of their village, indicating that the Segestica people may have led an attack on this village, so the Aldeans likely lied!

Segestica didn't stop invading after occupying the land east of Validosi; instead, they wish to continue occupying the upper reaches of the Murenica River and the Kolana River. Since these areas along the rivers are fertile plains, not mountains, residing here would inevitably make us the Segestica people's primary target for elimination—"

"Damned Aldeans!" Torrelugo cursed.

As the people showed nervous expressions, Maximus continued, "Our food is running short now. Although I've already sought the support of the Aldean Great Chief, that's only a last resort. If we rely entirely on the Aldean's food supplies, how can we refuse if they demand us to do this and that? Eventually, we would just become their pawns, slowly perishing in battles with the Segestica or other enemy tribes of the Aldeans."

Volenus couldn't help swallowing hard as he saw Maximus' gaze turn to him, "When we inspected that hill today, we also saw the Segestica village there. Surrounding the village were large wheat fields. Now it's autumn, the wheat is harvested, and I imagine their granaries are full from the harvest. If we could seize their village, wouldn't it solve our winter food supply problem!"

Volenus swallowed hard again.

"Is seizing their village difficult?" Maximus turned his gaze to Quintus, "The Segestica people probably don't know we are here, yet we have learned quite a bit about them through the Aldeans.

For instance, many of their warriors fight without armor, lack tight formations, and like to have Scodisqi slaves charge first... As for their village, we've observed it lacks moats and probably doesn't have traps. It's surrounded by a simple wooden wall...

Since they've previously defeated the Aldeans several times, they must be quite arrogant. Could we use this mindset to lure out their warriors to defeat them, making it easier to then occupy the village?"

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Maximus moistened his somewhat dry throat with spit and continued, "If we surround the village, the neighboring Segestica Village will definitely send troops for rescue upon getting the news. Will we be able to defeat them by ambushing them on the way?"

If we continuously capture two or three Segestica people's villages, not only will we have a sufficient supply of food, but we will also weaken the strength of the larger Segestica Tribe. By the time they lead their troops to attack us, I wonder if they can still gather an army of over ten thousand people?

As long as we defeat the larger Segestica Tribe, then all the villages and farmlands east of Validosi and along the Kupa River will belong to us. Do we still need to build houses? Do slash-and-burn farming? ..."

Maximus expressed the ideas he had pondered repeatedly after inspecting Validosi as questions, stirring the emotions of everyone present.

Maximus prepared to add the final touch, "We are very close to the Segestica people's village. Perhaps tomorrow, or the day after, the warriors coming to harass might discover our presence, and by then, we would lose the element of surprise, and the Segestica people would be on alert. We will face continuous battles with them, and whether it is slash-and-burn farming or transforming Validosi, it will definitely not be easy to accomplish!"

The military tent fell silent for a moment.

"Leader, our Second Legion can absolutely go to battle tomorrow, and we are fully confident of defeating the Segestica people!" Torrelugo was the first to declare.

"Our First Legion can also go to battle tomorrow!" Fesaros was a step behind and had to shout loudly.

Immediately following, Camillus, Oluus, and Pequot also expressed their willingness to lead troops to battle.

Flanitus cautiously reminded, "Leader, it's easy to start a war with the Segestica people, but how it will end is not something we can decide! Moreover, we cannot predict how the war will progress, so we need more understanding of the Segestica people's situation to formulate a detailed battle plan."

"Karsipengpas is resting in the camp, quickly go and bring him here, so we can ask him." While speaking, Maximus looked at the only officer in the tent who hadn't responded, "Quintus, what do you think?"

Quintus did not immediately respond not because he opposed starting a war with the Segestica people tomorrow, but because he found Maximus's tactic of "ambushing the Segestica people" very clever, so he was pondering it carefully. When he heard Maximus's question, he looked up and confidently responded, "I think the leader is right; we can't miss the opportunity. We should start a war with the Segestica people tomorrow! And I believe the chances of victory are very high!"

Karsipengpas originally planned to leave after taking Maximus to see Validosi, but Maximus insisted on keeping him for a night, saying it was to thank him for his immense help to the rebel army.

Karsipengpas couldn't refuse, and he drank a lot of wine that night. When he was awakened, he was a bit drowsy, but upon hearing Maximus say "we will start a war with the Segestica people tomorrow," he was shocked and became alert.

However, he had been a pirate abroad for years and wasn't very familiar with the Segestica people's situation, so he volunteered to go to the nearby Aldean Village and bring Budocaribas for everyone to discuss together.

In the silence of the night, the rebel army leaders, who were initially excited by the new regime proposed by Maximus, now began to get busy. A war was brewing...

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The next morning, the Segestica Tribe leader Wallis woke from his sleep and saw a young woman asleep on a wooden chair beside the bed and a bowl of goat milk on a wooden table.

He instantly became furious, got up, and kicked hard with his right foot.

The woman cried out in pain, fell off the chair, and also knocked over the nearby table, spilling the goat milk all over the floor.

"You worthless thing, how dare you fall asleep here? Do you want to die?" Wallis kicked again while shouting harshly.

The woman gritted her teeth, enduring the severe pain, trembling but not daring to make a sound, continuously kowtowing.

Only when her forehead was completely bruised did Wallis shout again, "What are you still dazing around for? Hurry up and bring me another bowl of goat milk!"

Wallis's shouting was like a pardon to the woman, and she hurriedly ran out of the bedroom.

Wallis put on a simple robe and went into the hall, where the tribe elder, also Wallis's brother, Clarys, was waiting.

"Clarys, is there anything unusual in the village?" Wallis asked habitually.

"Nothing unusual, the slaves are all well-behaved."

"The wheat harvest is over, but don't let them be idle, idleness leads to trouble. Assign them more tasks, like repairing the roads... The other day Cabdes complained that our roads are all muddy pits, and it's easier to take a boat to reach us than walking."

"Okay, I'll arrange for those slaves to fix the roads properly in a bit." Clarys agreed readily, then added flatteringly, "Brother, today's weather is perfect for hunting. I saw dozens of deer drinking water across the river this morning."

Wallis was greatly tempted upon hearing this, but he suddenly remembered something and instructed, "Yesterday, the Aldeans actually crossed the river and stood on the hill spying on us, and they were on horseback... Send a team of warriors across the river to carefully check if the Aldeans have any new movements?"

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"Big brother, the Aldeans are completely terrified of us now. They're like turtles hiding in their shells, afraid we'll smash them to pieces. Where would they dare provoke us now?" Clarys sneered.

Wallis's face darkened immediately, and he barked, "Are my words just air to you?!"

Clarys's heart skipped a beat, and he quickly said, "I'll send someone to investigate right away!"

Just as he stood up, a young woman entered the hall carrying a wooden tray. On it were a wooden bowl filled with goat's milk and a piece of flatbread.

Wallis, having just lost his temper several times, felt a dry throat. He grabbed the wooden cup holding the goat's milk and tipped it back to drink.

"Blegh! Why is this so sour?!" Wallis spat out the milk after one sip and roared fiercely, "Why didn't you add some honey?!"

Enraged, he hurled the wooden cup at the woman, and a shriek followed. The woman staggered and fell to the ground, clutching her forehead. Red blood mixed with white goat's milk poured through her fingers like a stream...

"Brother!" Clarys, witnessing the scene, couldn't help but exclaim, "Isn't that too harsh? She's the female slave Chief Andres rewarded you with—the most beautiful among all the tribal slaves!"

"So what? She's still just Skodisqi scum!" Wallis sneered with contempt, then shouted at the woman, "What are you staring for? Do you want another beating? Hurry up and bring me another cup of goat's milk with honey! If you mess up again, I'll take your life!"

Tears welled in her eyes as the woman clutched her forehead and fled from the hall like her life depended on it.

Glaring at his brother, Wallis said in a deep voice, "Chief Andres rewarded us this land to establish our own tribe and conquer more of the Aldean lands! If you can capture that Aldean outpost across the river, I'll give this woman to you."

"Really?!" Clarys was ecstatic.

"Really." Wallis nodded, watching Clarys leave the hall in high spirits. Yet, inwardly, Wallis had already made his plan: once the outpost of the Alde Tribe across the river was captured, he would kill the woman in front of Clarys, teaching his foolish, lust-driven brother the brutal reality of war and transforming him into a hardened warrior.

Wallis grabbed the flatbread from the tray. Just as he took a bite, Clarys came rushing back into the hall in a fluster.

"Why are you back so quickly? Did you take care of what I asked?!" Wallis scowled.

"Big brother, something's happened!" Lalala said anxiously, "Our patrol discovered many Aldeans on the southern bank of the Kupa River, below the western hills!"

"What?!" Wallis, hearing this news, was not alarmed; instead, he appeared excited. He promptly asked, "What are they doing across the river? Are they planning to attack our outpost?!"

"Munsendes, you explain." Clarys, unsure of the full details and worried about making Wallis angrier, quickly pushed the patrolling captain forward.

"Chief, those Aldeans have stayed there. Some seem to be digging with hand tools, while others hold shields and long spears, forming ranks, likely to watch for us. Their total number is about four to five thousand, with over two thousand being soldiers—"

Patrol Captain Munsendes said with some concern, "I think they're trying to build an outpost there! The spot is flanked by the Kupa River on the right and high hills on the left. The flatland in the middle is narrow. If they build an outpost there, raiding the Aldeans across the Kolana River like before will become significantly harder, just like with the one they built by the Murenica River."

Clarys burst into laughter. "The Aldeans think building an outpost can stop us? How stupid! We can always go around it through the low hills—"

"Shut up!" Wallis scolded his brother sharply and immediately asked, "Are you sure there are only four to five thousand people there?"

Munsendes, understanding what the chief wanted to know, replied confidently, "I sent several men to bypass them and scout the surrounding hills. There are indeed only four to five thousand of them, and among those digging, there are even some old men."

Munsendes was among Wallis's most trusted subordinates. Wallis believed his report and, tossing aside the half-bitten flatbread, exclaimed excitedly, "The Aldeans, hiding in their turtle shells, have finally come out. We cannot let them retreat again! Clarys, go assemble the warriors of the tribe immediately. We're preparing for battle!"

"Chief, though there are only 2,000 Aldean warriors there, those who are digging can still fight with their tools," Munsendes cautioned.

Wallis glared at him. "No need for you to state the obvious; I know."

Yet he followed up by issuing new orders to his brother. "Assemble all the warriors in the tribe at once! Bring along the slaves who can fight too!"

"Yes!" Clarys responded enthusiastically and loudly.

Half an hour later, a Segestic force of 4,520 had gathered outside the outpost gates. This included 593 Skodisqi male slaves armed with wooden clubs. The rest were able-bodied tribesmen. Most were light infantry armed with round shields and long spears but without armor, while a small portion were heavy infantry equipped with bowl-shaped helmets, chain armor, large shields, and longswords. There were no cavalry among them.

Wallis stood at the front of the formation, wearing a conical helmet adorned with feathers, a polished iron breastplate, and wielding a sharp greatsword in both hands.

With nearly 4,000 robust warriors and a tribe population exceeding 10,000, this group was the most powerful among all the tribes under Segestica's command. Positioned at the warfront, it bore the heavy responsibility of expanding their territory. As a result, the Segestica Great Leader had heavily supported this newly formed branch of the tribe.

Surveying his ferocious warriors, Wallis, brimming with confidence, shouted loudly, "Move out!"

The morning weather was decent, with a light breeze and cool air. The land on the southern bank of the Kupa River was soft and flat. The force marched along a broad dirt road flanked by freshly harvested farmland. In such favorable conditions, the warriors seemed relaxed, though Wallis was slightly concerned: if the Aldeans saw their arrival, would they flee?

Thus, before long, he ordered the troops to quicken their pace.

Their outpost was less than ten miles from where the Aldeans had been spotted.

In under an hour, Wallis could see numerous dark figures flitting in the distance.

The Aldeans were still there! Wallis was overjoyed.

He immediately commanded, "Halt the army! Form the battle formation!"

The Segestica army's formation speed was relatively quick, thanks to years of combat experience and the simplicity of their tactics.

Nearly 600 Skodisqi men, with their loose ranks, were positioned at the front. The Segestica warriors were divided into five units, each consisting of approximately 600 men, with the central unit having 1,000, personally led by Wallis. The five units formed a loose battle line, with the heavily armored soldiers equipped with large shields and longswords, including Wallis, positioned in the frontmost line.

He raised his greatsword high, marching at the very front of the central unit, leading his warriors forward with bold strides.

Wallis, known for his ferocity and skill, was a renowned warrior among the nobles of Segestica. His high reputation within the tribe was the reason why Chief Andres had assigned him to the frontline, placing great hopes upon him.

Chapter 215: The First Battle with the Segestica People

When Wallis spotted these "Aldeans," the "Aldeans" similarly noticed the imposing Segestica people rushing towards them. Instead of panicking, each of them showed expressions of delight.

"Captain, waiting here wasn't in vain, the Segestica people have finally arrived!"

"Captain, can we get rid of these crappy weapons and switch to our own now?"

"Captain, should we form ranks and charge at them now?"

...

All of these "Aldeans" were rebels in disguise, each full of fighting spirit as they eagerly requested to engage from their team officers. The officers almost uniformly replied with the same lines: "Stop shouting nonsense! Wait patiently for the Legion Commander's orders!"

Fesaros and Torrelugo stood on a high vantage point not far from the troops, gazing at the Segestica Army forming ranks in the distance.

"The Segestica people's formation is almost the same as what Budocaribas described. They seem to have quite a number of men. Hmm, how many are there?" Torrelugo's last question was not directed at Fesaros but at the young Casius behind him. The boy was skilled at math and had been sent by Maximus to assist the pair.

"Approximately 4,500 men," Casius confidently replied.

"4,500 men... that matches Budocaribas's previous estimate of the number of warriors in this Segestica Village," Fesaros said excitedly, "Looks like the entire Segestica warriors of this village have mobilized."

"An all-out mobilization is good, but can your First Legion hold them off?" Torrelugo asked with skepticism.

"My brothers can certainly hold them off. I'm just worried your Second Legion might let them slip away," Fesaros retorted without backing down.

"Relax, my Second Legion brothers are hungry. With this huge pot of fat laid out in front of them, they'll at least devour half of it!" Torrelugo replied with confidence.

"Just half? I thought they'd take it all," Fesaros mocked.

"Do you not know from experience that it's impossible to completely annihilate an enemy when they're retreating?"

...

"The enemy is beginning their attack!" Casius's shout cut short their argument, prompting both men to turn and look east.

As they watched the Segestica people's loose and expansive horizontal formation slowly approaching, Fesaros did not immediately give orders. He waited until the enemy was within 200 meters before finally instructing the messenger, "Have the soldiers switch weapons and form defensive positions!"

The order was swiftly conveyed. The eager First Legion Soldiers threw their Wooden Shield and Spear to the ground behind them. Reaching into the loose dirt at their feet, they pulled out their square shields, short swords, and helmets. They weren't wearing armor, as there simply hadn't been enough time to do it.

Under the shouts of their team officers, two battalions of 2,000 soldiers from the Second Legion formed into a compact formation, 400 men wide and 5 men deep, facing the approaching Segestica Army.

As the formation solidified, the distance between the two sides had already shrunk to less than 50 meters. The Skodisqi people, serving as the vanguard, had already initiated their charge.

The rebel army had deliberately delayed switching weapons and forming ranks until the Segestica Army was right in front of them, not out of recklessness, but due to the trust Quintus and other military leaders had in this army, which had endured grueling training over the past four months.

"Raise shields!" Under the shouts of their team officers, the soldiers calmly watched the ferocious Skodisqi people charge at them, unhurriedly lifting their square shields to cover their chests, leaving only their helmeted heads exposed.

Even though the Segestica people had subjugated the Skodisqi people, they still remained wary of their former masters. They supervised them strictly and often kept them underfed to reduce their capacity for rebellion. However, today, knowing a battle was imminent, Wallis allowed them a hearty breakfast, along with a promise: upon victory, they'd enjoy a fine meal of lamb and a full day of rest.

Such meager rewards were still highly enticing to the always-hungry Skodisqi people. Moreover, their combat instincts were activated as blood rushed through their bodies during the charge.

The enemy in front of them, who had previously wielded crude Wooden Shields, now suddenly wielded neat rows of red square shields. The Skodisqi people gave it no further thought; they had only one idea in their minds: knock down the enemy with sticks!

Wooden clubs sliced through the air with sharp gusts, coming down forcefully upon the enemies before them.

The First Legion Soldiers skillfully angled their square shields to protect their heads. Clubs struck the curved shield surfaces and bounced away, leaving the kneeling First Legion Soldiers almost unmoved, successfully absorbing the blows.

Next, due to the momentum from their previous sprint, the Skodisqi people crashed their bodies into the shield walls. However, with the support of their comrades behind them, the rebels in the front ranks did not succumb to the impact. On the contrary, they quickly thrust their short swords between the gaps in the shields.

Exposed and in direct contact with the square shields, the enemies had little chance to defend themselves—bloodied gashes opened on thighs, sides, and even chests, leaving them screaming and collapsing...

In no time, a significant number of Skodisqi people lay fallen. This devastating sight was like a cold shower over the remaining Skodisqi fighters, who tossed aside their wooden clubs and turned to flee.

Trailing behind the Skodisqi people, the Segestica Heavy Infantry had originally hoped these male slaves would disrupt the enemy's formation, allowing them to seize the opportunity to break through and widen the enemy's gaps. Following them, the Light Infantry could flood in and completely crush the opposing forces... This was the Segestica people's tried-and-true tactic.