

Civilization 214

Chapter 214: Spear Phalanx and Preliminary Discussions on Military Reform

Light had given way, and nightfall descended silently. The flickering campfire in the great hall cast shadows on the king's face, outlining the stiff lines as if sculpting a cooling statue.

Xiulote looked at his friend with anticipation, yet he could feel the king's gaze growing deeper and the distance between them starting to stretch.

The youth felt a sense of urgency in his heart and didn't wait any longer. Subconsciously, he reached out his hand, hesitated for just a moment, and then gently pulled at Aweit's sleeve. Then, looking into his eyes, he sincerely and firmly made his promise again.

"Aweit, believe me. I will always stand with you, just like in the past," he said.

Upon hearing these words, Aweit's gaze flickered slightly. His thoughts landed back on earth as divine contemplation was interrupted by the surge of emotions. He lowered his eyes, pondered for a moment, then stood up from his seat, turned, and walked to the window, gazing into the profound night sky while the darkness enveloped his face.

Xiulote also stood up and walked behind his friend. The two stood one before the other, separated by a single step's distance, quietly and silently watching the night sky and the Milky Way.

In the corner, Gillim observed everything in silence. His expression was extremely serious, eyebrows slightly furrowed, lost in thought.

After a long while, feeling somewhat disheartened, the young man spoke again.

"Aweit, forming a militia of long spears can increase the Alliance's military power. I am just making a suggestion; the commander of the troops can be appointed to someone else..."

Only then did Aweit turn around. He looked at the youth who was now close at hand and let out a soft sigh. Unconsciously, the young man had grown a good deal taller, almost reaching his shoulder.

"How many men do you need? What exactly is your plan?" came his calm voice, as gentle as ever.

Xiulote blinked, and quickly, his face lit up with joy as he responded earnestly and in detail, his voice rising with excitement.

"I plan to form a group of eight thousand. I have just surveyed the mining camps, and we can probably draw out about three thousand gold and silver miners, whose obedience and discipline are the best; over two thousand salt workers, who are fierce and cooperative; and more than eight hundred stone workers, who are steady and immensely strong. With six thousand miners as the base and another one thousand citizen warriors as the backbone, the entire battle group can be driven forward. Finally, the ranks will be filled with a thousand selected village militia. After a few months of military training, these eight thousand will form a complete and powerful Xiquipilli battle group."

At this point, Xiulote paused to ponder.

In his mind, he first envisioned the Macedonian phalanx with small shields, extra-long spears, and tightly packed 16 by 16 formations. But given the actual circumstances, he shook his head. Without the threat of cavalry, the spears did not need to be five or six meters long. It would also be difficult for a military force trained in just a few months to maintain such tight discipline.

Then, he remembered the early formations of heavy infantry from Ancient Greece, with large shields, spears three meters long, and bronze breastplates. He recalled that bronze helmets were of little significance among heavy infantry, often purely decorative, with the main defense provided by large shields. This kind of early formation was somewhat loose, less demanding of formation integrity, and easier to train. Furthermore, breastplates could be reduced in size considering they were going to face early bronze weapons.

Xiulote considered the Alliance's military equipment and continued with his description.

"This battle group will be equipped with thickened cotton caps, half-body cotton armor, large shields bound on their arms, and three-meter-long spears. Miners and militiamen only need to learn to maintain tight formation, striking in alternate succession by squad. Warriors will stand on the outside, bearing war clubs. Should the spear formation break, close-combat warriors will be needed to hold off any breakthrough."

"The role of the long spear battle group is to uphold the battle line, to be the anvil at the front, withstanding the enemy's forces, requiring effective cooperation from other units."

Aweit pondered this. He recalled the long spear militia of the Tarasco people, their dense two-and-a-half-meter copper spears, and the tight formations that were notably enduring, different from ordinary militia. If they increased the thickness of the formation, lengthened the spears, and added armored shields, they could indeed withstand elite warriors' onslaught for a considerable time.

"If there is an anvil, there must also be a hammer. The long spear formation is not flexible, and it tends to become disjointed when moved. Therefore, it should be used mainly for defense, like a curled up porcupine, weaker in offense. Its flanks and rear are also vulnerable... How do you plan to arrange tactical cooperation?"

As a commander-in-chief seasoned in many battles and having seen similar armies, Aweit quickly pinpointed the crux of the strategy.

Xiulote nodded in agreement, softly commending. Seizing the opportunity, he elaborated on his ideas for the Mexica military reform.

"Exactly! The long spear formation will not be used on rugged terrain but rather in the vast battles of the Lake Region, serving as the center of the army formation. This position was originally held by elite warrior bands of Great Nobility or experienced warriors, who can now be used for attacks on either flank."

"The flanks of the army formation will be fast-moving warrior bands, protecting the sides of the long spear formation and acting as the hammer for the assault. Once the enemy warriors and the spear formation are entangled, warriors from the sides will charge, coordinating the anvil and hammer to scatter the enemies. All close-combat warriors should carry two obsidian javelins, to shoot at close range before the charge. The purpose of the javelins is not to inflict casualties but to disrupt the enemy's formation, rendering their shields useless."

Behind the military formations were the Longbow Warrior platoons for long-range attacks. They were best suited to occupy high ground and form up. With dense volleys of arrows, they should focus on striking the enemy's warrior platoons, effectively inflicting damage.

In front of the military formations, on the outer periphery of the formed-up battalions, swift light javelin militiamen needed to be deployed. Armed with over a dozen javelins each, they were used to harass the enemy's elite warrior platoons and to pursue scattered foes.

If there were surplus longbows, I would also like to form a light bow and arrow militia primarily composed of tribal and village hunters. Similarly positioned on the outskirts of the military formations, they would move rapidly across the battlefield, seeking appropriate shooting positions.

The longbow militia would further enhance the ability for long-range harassment, continuously sniping at the enemy's commanders and warriors, striking at their morale. If positioned well, the damage could be very astonishing...

Xiulote described his vision of the future Mexica military reforms with serious contemplation, a plan that had long been forming in his mind.

Forming spear phalanxes as the mainstay of the battle line, deploying more warriors for battlefield assaults. Creating elite light infantry to replace the tactical role of cavalry, swiftly chasing down fleeing enemies, and expanding the advantage on the battlefield. Additionally, maximizing long-range striking power and leveraging the capabilities of the militia.

The longbow militia would not need close-combat abilities, nor a need to capture prisoners. These skilled village and tribal hunters could kill to the utmost. This was the second new army upon which the young man pinned his hopes.

The military reforms would focus on enhancing the role of civilian warriors, liberating them from being considered mere battlefield expendables. On one hand, establishing civilian formations and on the other, exploiting their speed and long-distance advantages. Once the power of the civilians was proven

in war, their political status would swiftly rise to gain rightful influence. And thus, a rising civilian class could then provide a foundation for the next set of reforms.

Xiulote's thoughts soared far away, into the vast heavens and earth beneath the stars, envisioning the grand future of warfare.

Aweit, meanwhile, pondered deeply, constructing in his mind the battlefields as described by the young man. After a while, he exhaled a long breath and nodded appreciatively.

"Xiulote, your ideas are good. Spear phalanxes to hold the line, longbowmen to deal damage, warriors for flanking assaults, light infantry responsible for harassing pursuits. Militarily speaking, such a new formation would further expand the Alliance's armed forces."

At this point, Aweit paused and placed a hand on Xiulote's shoulder, looking seriously into the young man's eyes.

"However, the foundation of the Mexica Alliance is the warriors. Not only are they critical military forces, but they are also the political core of the nation's society, especially the Nobility warriors. For millennia, militiamen have been insignificant auxiliaries. The era of copper spears and longbows will gradually change all this, but it will take time.

Therefore, Xiulote, my student, keep your grand designs to yourself for now, and don't mention them to others. I will give you six thousand miners; first, form the Spear Militia and see what their combat effectiveness is truly like.

Meanwhile, I permit you to recruit two thousand tribal hunters, assigning you all the Tlaxcalan Bows seized over the years by the Alliance, to explore the tactics of harassment. Both these forces will be under your command."

Aweit paused again for a moment, searching for something on the young man's innocent and joyful face. After a while, he nodded gently and smiled warmly.

"To the south of the Tarasco people lies the Balsas River, and to the north, the Lerma River. If water supply lines could be established, they would be able to maintain large campaigning armies. I intend to divide our forces into two routes for the autumn campaign. The main force will still attack from the closer south, while a detached force will make a longer flank from the north.

These days, the Cabinet Ministers and Great Nobility incessantly argue, each hoping to lead the detached force. But I don't trust them!

My student, if you can train eight thousand strong Spear Militiamen, two to three thousand Longbow Warriors and Militia, plus the four thousand City-State Warriors of the Holy City, you'll have enough strength to take command of the Northern Route Army. Combined with your experience fighting the Lerma River and the Tarasco people, the Great Nobility will not be able to object.

So, come autumn, I will let you lead the Northern Army alone, striding along the Lerma River to strike deeply into the heart of Tarasco territory, delivering a fatal blow. Xiulote, remember, I believe in you! Don't let me down!"

Hearing Aweit's authoritative charge and feeling the warmth of the King's difficult trust, the young man's heart surged with emotion. He stepped forward impulsively, embracing Aweit tightly.

"Aweit, I won't let you down! I will stand with you always, I swear it on the names of our ancestors!"

The young man's face was filled with emotion as he expressed his feelings, sincerely showing his sentiment.

Aweit nodded with a smile, returning the youngster's embrace with equal fervor. Then, he slowly closed his eyes. The swirling emotions and deep, inscrutable gaze were simultaneously concealed, disappearing beneath the visage of the King.

Great leaders, thunder in their hearts, calm as serene lakes. The path of a Monarch, destined to be unpredictable and lonely.