

Civilization 273

Chapter 273 Planning the Western Expedition Part 2

The night grew deeper, and the bonfire in the main hall had diminished, letting a slight chill seep in from outside the windows, gradually cooling the hearts of those within. Sensing this, the Intelligence Officer moved forward and, in silence, added some charcoal to the fire. With that, the flames in the hall flickered, casting an intermittent glow.

The King scrutinized the enormous wooden map, his finger tracing the long river, absorbed in deep thought.

The Mexica domain is intersected by three great rivers that connect the highlands with valleys, and link the mountains with the plains, turning forests and rainforests into open paths. In fact, in an era devoid of animal-drawn vehicles and mountain pass roads, rivers served as the sole large-scale means of transportation, the lifeline of transportation for maintaining the vast City-State Alliance.

Aweit's hand first caressed the north. War is nothing more than a battle for control of mountains and rivers, where soldiers give their lives. For the Mexica, national war priorities lay first in mountains, rivers, climate, second in food transportation, and only lastly in the legion's valor and combat prowess.

The Lerma River is the greatest in the land, flowing majestically from east to west for about two or three thousand miles. At the river's easternmost part, it connects to the Lake Capital City through a man-made canal stretching for tens of miles. Every step of this canal was carved out at the cost of Tepanec lives.

From there, the Lerma River continued westward for over two hundred miles, passing through several Mexica City-States on the west. The river then pressed further west for more than three hundred miles, forming a natural boundary. To the north lay the Otomi of Otapan State, and to the south, the northernmost state of the Tarasco, the Akanbaro State. Here, a branch of the river splits off, flowing

through a narrow rivermouth, southwest for several miles, and into Lake Cuitzeo, penetrating deep into the heartland of the Tarasco.

Aweit's firm finger lingered over Lake Cuitzeo for a long while before he slowly began to speak.

"Gillim, the focus of the Northern Route Army should be right here."

Gillim, eyeing the location of Lake Cuitzeo connected to the river above and the plains below, perfectly situated at the core of Tarasco's heartland, nodded in agreement.

"Yes, Your Majesty. The Northern Route Army needs to first establish a foothold along the banks of the Lerma River, then clear the rivermouth, and make its way deep into Lake Cuitzeo. Just landing at the southernmost part of the lake puts us only two hundred miles from the Patzcuaro Lake region."

The King pondered for a moment, reflective.

"Gillim, relying on the great river, the Northern Route connects to the Capital City. With convenient food transportation, it's actually more suitable for mobilizing a large force than the Southern Route."

Gillim bowed deeply. He was well-prepared and now elaborated in detail.

"Your Majesty, the grand strategy has already been agreed upon and should not be changed lightly... There are four difficult points on the Northern Route.

First and foremost, the toughest challenge is to utterly defeat the Tarasco Naval Forces. The Tarasco people are lake dwellers, boasting a Militia skilled in naval warfare and a massive fleet that is no less formidable than the Alliance. Apart from their main naval forces within Lake Cuitzeo, they can also continue to summon fleets from the Chapala Lake Region to the west, rapidly bringing in support from Samurai."

Unless these fleets are eradicated, a stable grain route cannot be established. And the prospect of totally defeating the Tarasco Naval Forces is extremely difficult! Although His Highness claims to be inventing gunpowder and has made some progress recently, the actual effectiveness of this new weapon is still uncertain. We cannot base the progress of the war on uncertainties!"

Listening to the report of the Intelligence Officer, Aweit remained expressionless, continuing to listen attentively.

"Secondly, the next major difficulty lies in the fortresses of the Tarasco Kingdom. The Tarasco are well aware of the significance of Lake Cuitzeo and have constructed a massive stone fortress at the narrow rivermouth spanning tens of meters, controlling the passage of the rivermouth. The entire rivermouth falls within the range of the fortress's archers and catapults, requiring the conquest of the fortress before being able to proceed further.

Similarly, along the southern bank of the Lerma River, numerous stone fortresses and dozens of wooden stockades stand in defensive reliance on one another. According to the latest news, on the northern bank of the Lerma River, the Tarasco have taken over the wooden stockades you built and have begun reinforcing them with brick and stone, making full use of the construction efficiency of bronze tools."

"Lastly, even if the fortresses are captured, and a southern landing is made along the southern shore of Lake Cuitzeo, a sturdy stone fortress called Huayamo stands between us and Qinzhongcan."

Only then did the King nod slightly. He turned to the Intelligence Officer, waiting calmly.

Gillim paused briefly, organizing his thoughts, and spoke clearly.

"Thirdly, we must consider the Otomi's stance. Although the Otomi have ceased hostilities with the Alliance and are also hostile to the Tarasco, and might even be utilized by the Alliance to some extent... there is no doubt that deep down, the Otomi harbor extreme animosity and vigilance towards the Alliance!

"Once tens of thousands of the Alliance's main force deploy to both banks of the Lerma River, posing an actual substantial threat to Otapan City again, the Otomi might change their stance once more, allying with the Tarasco. And when the Alliance's main force gets mired in the southern fortresses, faced with the temptation of a battle that could obliterate the Mexica's main army, the Otomi might stab the Alliance in the back, severing the grain route and leading to the failure of the western campaign.

"Even though these threats are merely conjectures, the Alliance's main forces cannot risk such a venture. And as a Monarch who has just ascended to the throne, you absolutely cannot fail in this inaugural war! Your elder brother lost the throne because of his failure... Such a risk... can be left to the detour forces of His Highness..."

Aweit's pupils contracted slightly. He lowered his eyes and grasped the Divine Staff beside him.

Gillim respectfully bowed his head, his actions meticulous even without the King's gaze upon him.

"Your Majesty, the last point is the stance of the two western states of the Alliance. Tlalocan and Tepanecapan have both suffered losses in the last war. Thousands of Samurai fell in the Otomi forests, and food was heavily requisitioned. I fear that both states might not fully support this western campaign..."