

Civilization 281

Chapter 281 Training and Suggestions

Time hurried on, and before anyone realized, another two weeks had passed. The training of the Spear Corps was intense and busy, seemingly designed to squeeze every ounce of energy from the Militia. The Militia had no choice and no time to think, fully immersing themselves in the monotonous training, striving to turn tactical movements into habitual muscle reflexes.

Each day, at first light, Guzman was awakened by the first rays of dawn. Rising from his straw mat, his first task was to wake up his squad members and urge them to quickly get dressed. After a simple breakfast, the Militia left their rudimentary camp to head to the nightmarish training field nearby.

In the morning sun, there was first a quarter-hour of standing in silence, cultivating some sort of spirit. This was Guzman's most relaxed time when he could rest for a while leaning on his spear. Then came the lengthy marches and formations, accompanied by strict supervision and harsh punishment. Guzman had to gather all his concentration, carrying a fear of severe punishment, and strive for meticulousness. He shouted himself hoarse, leading his squad, fearing a major mistake. As for minor errors, they were too numerous to count.

Next were the squad's cooperation drills. Each camp's five squads would form up and then draw closer together to form a reliable battle line. Initially, the Warrior Camp Chief scolded them, saying their movements were "as slow as turkeys", later he scolded them, saying their formation was "as scattered as monkeys", and after that, he said little, only stating, "If you were samurais, you could do better!" Guzman also held his breath, hoping to be as respected as a samurai.

After squad practice came the additional lunch. Under the gently waning sun, Guzman and his teammates happily ate cornbread and black bean paste. This midday meal was a treatment he had never experienced when he worked as a miner, many civilian samurais also only had two meals a day.

After a short rest, came the individual martial arts training, the part of the samurai life Guzman yearned for. He learned to use the Rattan Shield effectively for blocking, and mastered stabbing with the spear at limited angles. Although each time he was beaten mercilessly by the training samurai, he could distinctly feel his progress. And when several Spear Corps members teamed up, their spears converged, and even veteran samurais had to retreat, giving him a strong sense of confidence.

Finally, there were the inter-squad competitive matches. Two squads would press against each other with shields to see whose formation would disperse first. The Militia supported each other back-to-back, coordinating to exert force together. Guzman had to continually shout, "Hold steady, push!" to maintain the squad's rhythm of exertion, eventually winning after a long competition.

The competitive matches varied, including group runs to see which team's everyone would reach the finish line first. Such races required paying attention to the weakest teammate, bringing them along. Among the five squads, the salt workers showed the strongest team spirit and often had the advantage in these competitions.

There were also stabbing action contests, stabbing wooden balls on straw mannequin heads. This was pure martial arts, requiring repetitive practice with no shortcuts. The stoneworkers usually had better physical conditions, were more agile, and quicker to learn martial arts.

The most tormenting was enduring the competition with arrows, where two squads stood in the field simultaneously, taking shots from two teams of bow-wielding samurais. The arrowheads had been removed, and the wooden shafts clattered against the rattan shields and helmets, like the heaviest rains of the rainy season.

Occasionally, a shaft would penetrate the shield's gaps, striking Guzman on his body and neck. Although buffered by paper armor, it still hurt sharply. The pain was not a major issue, but this one-sided attack was unsettling and severely tested the Militia's patience and discipline. In these patience-testing challenges, the gold miners usually had the upper hand. Guzman's squad often emerged victorious.

The toughest matches were against the samurai squads. Both sides exchanged their spears for long sticks, with the Militia forming tight spear formations and samurais using loose formations. The samurais, like pack wolves, would spread out to surround the spear formation, continuously howling to intimidate, also repeatedly luring the Militia at the edges.

Once a gap showed in the formation, no longer converging the long sticks, the samurais would quickly charge, swinging their long sticks, forcefully knocking down opponents at the weak spots. Subsequently, hurried adjustments in the spear formation often resulted in more breakthroughs, the pack wolves would keep biting at the hedgehog until the gaps were large enough to break through completely and overwhelm the spear formation.

Every confrontation with the samurais ended in annihilation for the Militia, but the spear formation was holding for increasingly longer durations, and the samurais' assessed casualties also gradually increased.

Through these confrontations, Guzman's understanding became clearer.

"If we were to fight the samurais one-on-one, a few weeks of our training against a few years of theirs would leave us utterly defenseless. Only by relying on our comrades' cooperation can the spear simultaneously attack, pose a threat to the samurais, and the shields can cover each other, lasting longer."

All these competitive matches were designed by His Majesty, also involving divine envoy's rewards and punishments. The winning teams could enjoy an additional meal at dinner, usually cornbread, avocados, and a few cocoa beans. The losing teams had to clean the training field and latrines, in the mockery of others, carrying what's called 'saltpeter' materials to the lakeside to be loaded onto boats.

To earn the rewards and not be the butt of jokes from other teams, Guzman tried everything. Following the samurais' advice, he divided the two hundred miners into twenty groups, assigning an old buddy to each. Whenever there was time at night, he met with the group leaders to discuss. Although they were all inexperienced, discussing together always brought some ideas, and the relationships got even closer as a result.