

Civilization 304

Chapter 304: The Foothold_3

A thousand Longbow Warriors once again executed precision shooting at close range, and the Tarascans who poked their heads out fell like leaves, quickly silenced altogether. The temporary commander was in a great panic. He personally leaned out to shoot, loudly calling out, and got his wish, shot into a porcupine, and thus went to the Land of the Dead, to Goddess Haratana, the moon.

Seeing the palisade breached, Xiulote once again waved the flag. The sound of the war drums suddenly quickened, resonating through heaven and earth.

Balda personally led five hundred Samurai in the vanguard. Clad in double armor, wearing a beast helmet, and gripping the Bronze Battle Axe awarded by Your Highness, he charged at the forefront of the siege team. A quarter hour later, the first ladder was set against the stockade, and Balda was the first to climb up. Within a few breaths, he reached the top of the wall, then with a ferocious roar, he swung his axe mightily, cutting down the nearby Tarascans. Behind him, more and more Mexica warriors advanced.

With the support of the Longbowmen, a dozen more ladders successively reached the stockade walls, and Mexica warriors climbed up. When more than two hundred warriors had surged over, the stronghold was declared captured. The Tarascans made a final feeble resistance, and seeing the situation was hopeless, they threw down their weapons and prostrated themselves in surrender.

Seeing the Wooden Fort fall, Xiulote remained composed. In just one day's time, the strategic foothold was easily taken. This victory was but the first inconsequential step of the campaign to the West. The young commander waited quietly till the gates were opened and Balda returned to report. Only then did he show a smile, lavishing praise on the valiant Eagle Warriors.

Xiulote moved the central army, having the commander's flags enter the Wooden Fort. The warriors took complete control inside and outside the fort, and the captives were led out in lines. The young commander briefly surveyed the captives, totaling about one thousand five hundred. Two hundred Tarascan warriors had mostly fallen, most killed by precise close-range shots. The militiamen on the walls had also suffered several hundred casualties, while those hiding below the walls incurred fewer losses.

The young commander issued orders in a grave voice.

"Check the captives; perform sacrificial rites on those who are too severely wounded to move. Leave those with lighter injuries who can work to repair and fortify the stronghold. Interrogate the warriors for intelligence about the surrounding area; those willing to surrender and convert will be spared, the rest executed!"

The Priests followed orders, erecting a sacred platform. The blazing Sacred Fire burned, and sacrificial rites and conversions proceeded simultaneously. Mystic and solemn chants echoed within the Wooden Fort, accompanied by the reverent blue flames of the Tarascans. The Priests, in their feather-crowned robes, ruthlessly wielded the Obsidian Daggers for sacrifice, fervently extolling the name of Huitzilopochtli, introducing the faith of the Chief Divine into the Tarasco Kingdom for the first time.

Xiulote did not preside over such a small sacrificial rite. He sat high in the largest wooden house, analyzing the intelligence gathered from the captives and listening to the reports of the Scouts as they returned from their recon, deciding the next moves for the vanguard forces.

The next day, the Mexica army split into two groups, besieging two nearby Wooden Forts. Marching one day and besieging the next, they broke into the stockades in two days, slaying three hundred Tarascan warriors and capturing close to three thousand militiamen and laborers.

The Lerma River surged westward, naturally dividing North and South. Facing the sudden onslaught of the Mexica forces, the Tarascans finally began mobilizing their troops. The two remaining Wooden Forts on the North Coast were abandoned, with the Tarascan warriors the first to withdraw, losing hundreds in the pursuit by the Mexica vanguard. The remaining militiamen and laborers scattered in all directions, with at least two thousand surrendering.

The conflict on the North Coast temporarily paused. The Tarasco Kingdom had lost five Wooden Forts established by the Mexica, seven hundred of their noble warriors, and nearly ten thousand common militiamen and laborers. In contrast, the Mexica vanguard solidified their footing on the North Coast. The Alliance's forces suffered only a hundred casualties, expended tens of thousands of arrows, but gained eight thousand new converts from their former captives.

As the situation became clear, the Tarascans began mobilizing on the South Coast. They drafted warriors and militiamen, filled their fortresses and strongholds, assembled Naval Forces vessels, and dispatched Scout boats northward, clashing sporadically with the patrolling Mexica boats on the Lerma River. Further north, the Otomi Scouts flickered in and out of the forests, covertly monitoring the battle situation along the riverbanks.

The intense fighting took a hiatus, and the dark clouds from the East had arrived. The true war was brewing, like the first rain about to fall in the coming rainy season.