

Civilization 307

Chapter 307 - Sending Back and Discussing Battle

The rain in May was gentle, like the prelude to drumbeats, leaving long intervals in between. But when June arrived with the wind, the drumming of the raindrops became urgent. The sun loomed behind the gloomy clouds, only occasionally casting its relentless gaze down, admiring the wars of the human world, waiting for the offering of life.

Xiulote stood on the rampart of the Wooden Fort, with rain "pitter-pattering" against the flags behind him, and "whooshing" into the great river before him. Amid the swaying wind and rain, he watched the hundreds of large boats of the Naval Forces, the continuous fleet stretching for miles, with armored Samurai standing at the prow of each. Then, the Young Commander saw something and nodded slightly with a smile.

Annatri, the Legion Commander of the boatmen, stood erect on the boat, turning to look at the camp. This agile female Samurai, holding a flag-topped long spear of three meters, draped in a dark red cape, with a long dagger of one chi at her waist, was an expert in naval combat. Then she bowed her head, her short hair hanging down, as she gave her final salute to the Commander's flag.

After the salute, Annatri triggered the command flag on her long spear, and the leaders among the warriors on the fleet brandished their weapons, shouting loudly. Hearing the command, the Militia made one last check of the captives' ropes, then rowed their oars, carrying tens of thousands of terrified Tarasco men back to the powerful Mexica Alliance.

Xiulote watched as the fleet slowly made its way against the current towards the east, observing the orderly departure of large and small boats, and he nodded in affirmation again.

"Annatri is always trustworthy. Coming back from the east of the Lerma River against the wind and current, the fleet's progress is slow. It will be at least July before she returns, laden with food and

support. With the main force of the Naval Forces away, the Wooden Fort must be doubly vigilant, and the remaining boats must patrol day and night, guarding against Tarasco people crossing from the north," he said.

Hearing this, Bertade chuckled and commented,

"Legion Commander Annatri comes from a Naval Forces family of the Alliance, originating from distant tribal times. They uphold a matrilineal tradition, controlling the Mexica's Naval Forces generation after generation and maintaining neutrality within the Alliance. The name 'Annatri' itself is a legacy, meaning 'source of the river, mother of the lakes.' When it comes to naval combat, even without bow and arrow, I'm afraid I'm no match for her..."

"Your Highness has given up two remote Wooden Forts, and with the remaining three supporting each other, ten thousand loyal and elite Samurai are stationed. After sending away these captives, the stored grain is sufficient for three months. The crucial fort walls have also been reinforced. If the Tarasco people attack from the north, they will be met with bloody heads against longbows and Wooden Forts!"

At these words, Xiulote laughed heartily, filled with soaring confidence. Then, looking at the continuous rain, he laughed again.

"The rainy season has arrived, making construction and marching difficult. These apparently converted men cannot be trusted. Leaving them idle in the camp is a significant risk. As the Naval Forces are returning east, it's best to transport all of them away to Teotihuacan to serve as agricultural slaves, freeing up the Samurai and Militia of the Holy City from farm work. Our Northern Route Army needs more support!"

At this point, the Young Commander looked seriously at the Head Warrior, observing his weathered face.

"Bertade, you have always been close to the common Samurai and are aware of the situation at the lower levels. How is the morale of the army now?"

The Head Warrior bowed his head in respect, pondered for a moment, and replied candidly,

"Your Highness, with successive minor victories, a large number of captives have been taken, and our losses are negligible. The Samurai's morale is quite high. The Alliance has always placed great importance on military achievements against Tarasco and Tlaxcala. A fourth-level, experienced Samurai who captures five Tarasco warriors can be exceptionally promoted to military nobility, officially becoming a member of the minor Nobility. This campaign will certainly yield many new nobles, but it will also require vast tracts of land for enfeoffment and substantial rewards in wealth!..."

Xiulote laughed out loud. With a laugh, he said,

"Once we conquer Qinchongcan, seizing the prosperous and rich Patzcuaro Lake region, land and wealth will not be a problem. The Alliance can only firmly control newly conquered lands by depending on its enfeoffed Samurai Nobility!"

Bertade nodded, continuing with his report,

"Indeed, the priests at all levels are the link that maintains the Alliance, while the Nobility Samurai are the foundation of the Alliance's rule. Your Highness has just conducted the promotion ceremony for Samurai of various ranks, and it was effective. Of course, with sufficient rewards in wealth, the army's morale would climb even higher. Right now, the common Samurai are eager for battle and captivity.

They aspire to advance and even join the Battle Group to become part of the Alliance's military nobility!"

At the mention of military nobility, Bertade smiled faintly, his smile carrying the vicissitudes of life.

Xiulote's expression stalled momentarily. Encouraging technological development had drained his treasury. While honoring ranks was one thing, rewarding with wealth was another matter altogether—there was simply nothing to give. This hope was pinned on conquering the stronghold of Tarasco and plundering the wealth of the long-established Tarasco Great Nobility.

Then, the Young Commander nodded in agreement, lost in thought,

It had been just over fifty years since the rise of the Mexica, starting with the conquest of the capital, Topanek, and forming the Three-City Alliance. Thanks to an effective system of military merits, the Alliance was filled with a robust spirit and vitality, with the Samurai brimming with a desire for conquest and achievement, the source of the Alliance's strength.

Similarly, with the legal system of the Mexica Alliance still undeveloped, the illegitimate children of the Nobility could inherit titles through military honors, while incompetent legitimate children could fall to commoners' status. There was no insurmountable gap between common Samurai and the minor Nobility—they did not need to kneel to Nobility. The various social strata were fluid and far from rigid, with clear tribal characteristics. The Alliance favored martial supremacy, combined with religious integration, strikingly akin to the nomadic empires on the grasslands of Eurasia.