

## Civilization 308

### Chapter 308 Sending Back and Discussing Battle\_2

After a moment of reflection, the Young Commander gathered his scattered thoughts and looked again toward the southern bank of the Lerma River. The villages and farmland along the coast, stretching for miles, lay abandoned, and distant fortresses undulated among the hills, controlling all the river mouths and passages. Tarasco's legions were stationed behind stone forts and wooden fortresses, and their Naval Forces hid within Cuitzeo Lake. The main force of the enemy remained as elusive as a fog, hard to clearly discern, causing unease.

"Such is the fog of war!"

Xiulote looked on for a long time and sighed softly.

"Bertade, at this point, I do wish the Tarasco army would come out of their turtle shells. It would be best if they dared to cross the river in the rain, deploying both by land and water, besieging the camps on the North Coast. Then, everything would be clear! Currently, they can mobilize a limited army, at most ten thousand Samurai and twenty thousand Militia, unable to breach the wooden fort in the short term. As long as the vanguard holds out for a month and waits for the fleet to return with reinforcements, it will be another splendid victory!"

Bertade nodded in agreement, his gaze stern as he looked toward the southwestern river fortresses.

"Your Highness, the Southern Army should already be pressing the south, forcing the Tarasco people to defend heavily. More than the limited mobilization of warriors, I worry more about the Tarasco Naval Forces. Along the vast banks of the Lerma River, having the advantage of the Naval Forces is akin to controlling the battlefield initiative. When our Alliance's Naval Forces are present, we can maneuver advantageously, concentrate our forces, and choose our point of attack from the south. Just as you said, 'In the appropriate battlefield against the appropriate enemy.' However, now that the Naval Forces have

returned to the east, we can only station ourselves in the wooden fort, cease our strikes, and wait for reinforcements."

Xiulote looked at Bertade appreciatively. In Central America, rivers never freeze, and in the basins crisscrossed by grand rivers, Naval Forces are the Cavalry that seize tactical initiatives! The Head Warrior's understanding in employing Naval Forces to grasp the essence of maneuver warfare showed that his own influence was indeed effective.

The Young Commander then affectionately patted the Head Warrior on the shoulder, boasting playfully.

"Bertade, you have learned the essence of the tactics I have imparted! You must keep yourself healthy. In the future, I will entrust you with a force as swift as the wind!"

Hearing this, the Head Warrior looked puzzled. As swift as the wind, but how could that be achieved? Surely one couldn't grow wings and fly like a bird.

Xiulote did not explain. He merely mentioned it in passing and then continued analyzing military intelligence.

"The enemy's Naval Forces have been shrinking back, unclear in their mobilization details. They might be transporting supplies and troops, waiting for support from the Chapala Lake Region, or they might have already amassed their forces, ready to strike at any moment. The Chapala Lake Region has a high degree of independence, busy with spring plowing, support likely coming only after the October harvest... Even if we find no opportunity for battle, we cannot simply wait for the situation to unfold. Bertade, is there any news from the Messenger contacting the Northern Tekos people?"

The Head Warrior recalled the latest intelligence and shook his head slightly.

"Heading to the Northern Tekos people requires passing through the Chapala Lake Region. The Tarasco nobility there have already begun preparing for war, blocking major rivers and roads. It would be difficult for an Envoy to pass through there. According to a merchant's report intercepted last month, the Northern Tekos people being suppressed in the Northwestern highlands, have only been conducting guerrilla warfare in the mountains. With their scattered military strength and guerrilla tactics, they certainly won't attempt to snatch chestnuts from the fire for the Alliance, nor would they draw the main force of the Chapala Lake Region."

Xiulote thought for a while and agreed with a smile.

"Bertade, you are right! The Northern Tekos people are like hyenas waiting for their prey, only pouncing when it is weak. We cannot rely on them. We need to defeat the Chapala reinforcements in a frontal encounter first, reduce the strength of the Western Tarasco nobility, and then incite the Tekos to strike... So, what about the movements of the Northern Guamal Canine Descendants?"

Bertade thought for a moment and reported back.

"Your Highness, we have sent three batches of envoys, all of whom were attacked and killed by the savage Guamal Canine Descendants, who stole the gifts they carried. They are dispersed into many tribes with no clear leader, making negotiations difficult."

Xiulote paused to think, recalling the methods of interaction between the Celestial Empire and the Highland Tribe, and then asked,

"Do they have any special needs for goods? Such as tea... no, it should be spices, cocoa, or salt? Of course, not food. The perpetual shortage of food is their biggest driving force to move southward!"

The Head Warrior thought about the envoys' reports and analyzed the intelligence from captured merchants before speaking.

"Some of the Great Tribes occupy the rare salt fields in the desert, many smaller tribes lack salt, so they are more friendly towards caravans carrying salt. The Great Tribes don't have the custom of drinking sacred cocoa; they likely have never had the chance to taste it. The Canine Descendants lack medical supplies and cotton, they only have simple agave plants for treatment... Oh, they have a custom of cremating the dead and scattering their ashes to the wind, calling themselves 'Children of the Wind.' They also dye their hair with various colors and paint tattoos on their faces in homage to different Heavenly Divines!"

"Cremation and scattering ashes, Children of the Wind, hair dyeing and face tattoos?"

Xiulote was momentarily stunned, his thoughts drifting to long distant memories. After a while, he smiled faintly and nodded, giving orders in a deep voice.

"Then send out a trade delegation with a hundred escort samurai. Let the traders carry a sufficient amount of salt to buy off the smaller tribes, and gift the chieftains with small amounts of cocoa and cotton. Have the traders describe to these tribes the prosperity and vulnerability of the Chapala Lake Region, encouraging them to move south quickly!... Also, select two brave priests, raise them to a higher ecclesiastical rank. Let them bring Maya blue dye to baptize and face paint the Canine Descendants, learn the local language, understand the customs, and then find an opportunity to spread the Chief Divine's faith!"

"In conquering the Tarasco Kingdom, these Canine Descendants are our potential allies. After conquering the Tarasco Kingdom, they will be the next conquest target!"

In the howling wind and rain, Xiulote ordered loudly. The Young Commander's vision was not limited to the present; he had long been looking at the world.

Bertade bowed to receive the command. What he admired the most was the Young Commander's foresight, soaring like a bird, never confined to the traditional ideas of the era. Consequently, the Head Warrior returned to reality, again mentioning the move southward.

"Your Highness, once the subsequent forces arrive, as the large army continues south, we will encounter the long-operated Tarasco Fortress. Our military strength is limited, the supply lines are lengthy, and it is unwise to hard-attack the southern line of fortresses. Meanwhile, the Rivermouth Fortress controls the river entrance, blocking the entry to Cuitzeo Lake. The Tarasco Naval Forces are always deep inside Cuitzeo Lake, like a snake that could emerge at any moment. Once the large army gets stuck inside the southern line of fortresses, it will definitely be ambushed by the enemy's fleet, taking a severe bite."

Xiulote again looked toward the west, gazing in the direction of the rivermouth. After a long time, he slowly nodded.

"The Rivermouth Fortress must be taken! Only by clearing this node can we move directly south from Cuitzeo Lake, bypassing most of the fortresses on the south coast, and drive straight into the heartland of the Tarasco Kingdom!"

Afterward, Xiulote paced two steps, his expression changing unpredictably. He watched the relentless rainwater, the perpetually dim sky, and finally made a decision.

"The army can rest, but the commander must plan. Bertade, be prepared. Tomorrow I want to go to the rivermouth to personally scout the area, to truly observe the geographical advantage!"

The long wind surged westward, the Young Commander's orders dispersed in the wind, with the tall and vibrant battle flag fluttering.