

Civilization 309

Chapter 309 Investigation (Added for alliance leader Xian Qilin)

The incessant drizzle fell from the sky, dampening the flags that stood tall, and landing on the fortresses of polished blue stone. The raindrops meandered down the smooth stone, hardened by many washings, difficult to ascend. They then merged into the rushing Lerma River, gliding past the small boats on the water.

At the mouth of the river near the Tarasco's fortress, a hundred meters away, several small Mexica boats were swaying and probing. This was the daily reconnaissance of the northern enemy, a routine the defending army had grown accustomed to.

Xiulote stood alone at the prow, attentively observing the layout of the rivermouth fortress.

Since it was a personal reconnaissance, he certainly couldn't carry the commander's banner, nor could he ride in a large boat. Dressed in the simple garb of a civilian samurai, the young commander wore his habitual Mexica longbow and carried the obsidian short dagger that was never far from his side. He appeared as an ordinary young warrior, spirited and attentive as he surveyed from the boat. Behind him, a towering Head Warrior with a longbow stood firmly at the center of the small craft.

Xiulote watched for a long time, his expression growing increasingly serious. He straightened his arm, crossed his thumb with his fingers, took references and made comparisons for some time, then deeply furrowed his brow.

The height of the fortress walls at the rivermouth was a staggering six meters. From this height, the defending army's rolling stones and arrows had immense destructive power. And judging by the number of soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder, the width of the wall top was also five to six meters, with the base being at least eight to nine meters wide. The exterior of the fortress was brick-clad, with the

underlying blue stone exposed at the top. The thick walls were engraved with dense, intricate yellow patterns, revealing ancient and profound traces of age.

Xiulote needed only a brief look to recognize it as the mysterious symbols carved by the Tarasco priests, representing the blessing of the Earth Mother Goddess Velavaperi, signifying that the fortress was reinforced with the power of the earth. It seemed that the Tarasco Kingdom had managed the rivermouth fortress for a long time and placed great emphasis on its defense.

The young commander pondered for a moment and then gave a quiet order to the Head Warrior behind him.

"Circle half way around the fortress along the Lerma River. I want to see the specific topography and terrain!"

Bertade nodded slightly without saluting to avoid blowing Xiulote's cover. Quickly, the several small boats picked up their oars and circled around the fortress like swimming fish.

After viewing it a couple of times, Xiulote sharply inhaled a breath of cool air. Although he had already heard from the scouts, seeing the terrain with his own eyes still chilled his heart. The rivermouth fortress was surrounded by the river on three sides and faced land on one side, a truly defensible and difficult to attack position.

To the north of the fortress was the expansive Lerma River, and to the west was Cuitzeo Lake. The channel between the river and the lake that led to the mouth was only thirty to forty meters wide, spanning hundreds of meters in length, all within the striking range of the fortress's towers. The fortress had no northern gate, but there was a water gate on the west side, connected to Cuitzeo Lake, from where the defending army could strike at any time, cutting off the river-lake passage.

To the east of the fortress was the land bank of the river, but there was also a natural moat, about five to six meters wide. Likewise, to facilitate defense, the fortress had no eastern gate, only a barely visible southern gate for the passage of large groups of warriors. Outside the southern gate, there were two circles of wooden fences meant to obstruct, both within long-range striking distance from the city head.

The young commander mentally calculated. Two to three li east to west of the rivermouth fortress, and two to three li north to south, meant the area was around two square kilometers, essentially a small city. Such a military city could garrison ten to twenty thousand people. Relying on natural terrain and man-made fortifications, it was truly a hard place to conquer. If one were to mount an assault on the city, the casualties were unknowable.

Xiulote looked up again, carefully observing the city head. The city walls were piled with logs and stones, with tall watchtowers erected on top. Shielding archers, there were also thick shields on top of the walls. The remaining militia wielded copper spears and huddled in groups, now looking down at the Mexica boats on the river.

"Although the Tarasco people only have ordinary single bows, they possess a large number of armor-piercing copper arrows, which can kill a leather-armored warrior at twenty meters,"

Xiulote pondered secretly, feeling heavy-hearted. He looked at the flags fluttering on the city head, one was the grand banner of the gods—the sun, moon, and stars—and another symbolized the Royal Family, the "Ukucuscha" flag, which is the Eagle Banner. The last was the emblematic banner of the local Nobility, whose family crest was "Ospai," the green Crocodile.

The meanings of these flags were that the fortress was under the dual jurisdiction of the gods and the King, and was actually controlled by the local "Crocodile" Nobility.

"If the King's banner can fly on the fiefs of the bordering Nobility, it seems the centralization of the Tarasco Kingdom is indeed higher than that of the Mexica Alliance. Using the formidable Crocodile as a family crest, the Nobility here must surely be a member of the Great Nobility,"

Xiulote looked at the flags and analyzed for a while before returning his gaze to the sturdy fortress. He thought for a moment, his mind cycling through many classic battles. Finally, the young commander turned his head and spoke to the Head Warrior.

"Bertade, let's get closer and take a good look at the water gate!..."

The young man's voice dissipated in the wind, gradually becoming inaudible, until it reached the top of the rivermouth fortress. Beneath the fluttering three banners, amidst the surrounding warriors, two Nobles of Tarasco adorned in war clothes sat cross-legged on cotton mats, engaged in discussion.

"General Kukuna, the main Naval Forces of the Mexica have departed, and the Kingdom's Navy has also assembled completely. It is time to dispatch the army and teach the enemy on the north coast a lesson!"

A robust, round-faced Noble spoke loudly, his demeanor authoritative and commanding. He wore an exquisite Bronze Necklace and a dark grey Crocodile leather hat, inlaid with purple copper, immediately signaling his high status.