

## Civilization 49

### Chapter 49 Begin

Jifeng shook the tent's canvas just as the bonfire inside flickered, casting sporadic light across the faces of the generals. The sudden rain pelted the soft earth, much like the scout's rapid narrative that stirred ripples of unease in everyone's heart.

"The people of Tarasco have mobilized an army of over fifty thousand, the exact number unknown. The army includes the Royal Copper-axe Guards and a large number of Copper Spear Warriors. These legions are currently assembled in the Akanbaro area on the southern bank of the Lerma River, with more troops still on their way."

"Scouts from the enemy side have now covered both banks of the Lerma River, making it impossible to gather more accurate information about the enemy. Near our siege camp at Otapan, we have spotted enemy scouts. It is estimated that Tarasco's army is just over a week's march from our camp."

This was startling news, but it was not unexpected by the generals in the tent.

Since the spring plowing had passed, the Tarascans had no other mobilization concerns and were bound to send troops. Their targets could either be the formidable Mexica army, the dying Otomi people, or both, ready for any change.

The people in the tent began to whisper among themselves. Those attending today's council were generals directly loyal to the King, without any intentions to waver or advocate retreat like some City-State Legion Commanders. Regardless of their personal thoughts, everyone would follow the King's orders.

Xiulote stood at the edge of the tent, using his peripheral vision to observe the King seated high on the dais.

Tizoc, in the center of the tent, wore only a light ceremonial garb today and a simple Feather Crown, not making much effort to maintain the "majesty of a god". His complexion was noticeably paler than at the last council, showing signs of poor sleep due to the prolonged siege, which troubled him deeply.

At that moment, his cheeks displayed an unhealthy flush, a combined effect of emotional agitation and the irritability of insomnia.

After listening to the scout's report, Tizoc took a deep breath to calm himself before speaking gravely, "The movements of the Tarascans are unclear. We need to detach a force to guard the south at the Lerma River. First, to use the river to hold back the Tarascans, and second, to establish a supply route to the Capital through the river and open up an additional food supply channel."

"Who do you think is suitable?" After speaking, Tizoc's piercing gaze swept over each commander present, closely observing their expressions.

Casal stepped forward with his head held high, his confident demeanor underpinned by a strong desire for victory. "Please give me twenty thousand warriors, and I shall defeat the Tarascans in one fell swoop!"

Tizoc remained silent, merely nodding subtly. Then, his gaze shifted to Aweit.

Aweit gravely nodded, "The Tarascans are formidable opponents. It's enough to hold them back. This southern mission will not only need warriors, but also militia to construct and defend strongholds.

Supreme Commander Totec is adept at using troops and has an acute grasp of the situation, making him the most suitable candidate."

The King observed Aweit's expression, seeing only genuine sincerity. He slightly nodded, then turned to Totec, "Supreme Commander, what is your opinion?"

Totec thought briefly before confidently saying, "I recommend Aweit. I can handle the Tarascans, but the siege of Otapan is more crucial. Aweit has fought the Tarascans in the past two years with mixed results, understanding their tactics well. Moreover, the purpose of this detachment is confrontation and defense, not offense, and Aweit is very good at defense. Therefore, he is more suitable!"

Tizoc pondered for a moment, lightly tapping his fingers on the throne's stone surface. Then, he stared at Aweit for a few more seconds and finally nodded.

"Aweit, you will be the commander of the Southern Army detachment." Tizoc's gaze remained on his brother's face.

"We currently have nearly twenty thousand direct warriors and twenty-four thousand City-State Warriors. For this mission south, I can only provide you with fifteen thousand!"

Tizoc's gaze became sharp. "No matter how many soldiers the Tarascans have, you must hold the northern bank of the Lerma River, prevent them from crossing it until Otapan City falls! Messengers have already sent word to the Capital, and new legions are being mobilized. Just hold for a month, and you will have continuous reinforcements."

Aweit gravely bowed his head, "I will follow your will, my King."

Then, looking up at Tizoc, he sincerely said, "Fifteen thousand warriors already stretch my command capabilities and are enough to resist the Tarascans. However, this mission south might be very challenging. I need ten thousand direct legion warriors and a thousand from the Jaguar Warrior Brigade as the core. They are more loyal and can endure longer."

Tizoc hesitated a bit. If so, beside him, there would be less than ten thousand direct warriors left, a thousand direct Eagle Warriors, and five hundred Tonsured Guards. This would reduce his core forces to about ten thousand.

The King looked towards his most trusted Supreme Commander.

Totec nodded in affirmation, "This is the correct tactical decision. The front line's resistance must rely on the direct core; the City-State legions are willing to endure much less in casualties. The remaining ten thousand direct warriors in the camp will suffice to command the twenty thousand City-State Warriors in the siege."

The theologian king then nodded, "Aweit, I will give you ten thousand direct warriors. Do you have any other requests?"

Aweit thought seriously for a moment, "I need fifteen thousand direct militia, who will be used to construct and garrison the camps. Finally, I also want command authority over the Capital's boat corps, to establish a water-based grain transport route."

The king looked deeply at Aweit, then majestically agreed, "All these are granted to you! Remember, hold the Lerma River fast, do not allow the Tarasco people to cross. If the Tarasco people do not attack,

you are not allowed to cross the river to strike them! Lastly, without my orders, you are not allowed to retreat!"

Aweit then bowed deeply, hiding his expression, revealing only his absolute obedience to the king.

After discussing the critical issue of the Southern Army, the meeting proceeded relaxedly and swiftly.

During this period, the army's logistics lines were occasionally attacked by Otomi Warrior squads and Toltec rebels. The Otomi people had city-states for support, whereas the Toltec rebels did not.

Totec then dispatched large numbers of scouts into the deep mountains and found more than a dozen villages where Toltec people gathered. Following this, he sent two hundred Tonsured Guards and eight hundred veteran warriors, slinking deep into the mountains. These elite battle warriors cold-bloodedly wiped out all the Toltec people they encountered. Not even the rebels could escape the single combat prowess of the Tonsured Guards, which was even above that of the Jaguar Warriors.

Now the logistics line was restored to normal again. The sole enemy of the grain supply was the perpetual, humid rainy season, known as "Treading the Wind and Dancing with Thunder."

The meeting soon concluded. During this time, King Tizoc did not spare any extra energy on Xiulote, not even inquiring about the youth's prior ambush. He merely advised, "You must continue to study the trebuchet!" before discussing other matters with Totec again.

The army was quickly reorganized. In less than two days, the troops were divided.

Thus, on a gloomy rainy morning, Aweit, dressed in the bright Sun Stone cloak with a nearly three-meter high heavy back-flag tied behind him, resolutely led the thirty thousand strong army out.

There were no horses, no carriages. The commanders at all levels could only walk, using tall back-flags to signify their identities. Aweit's back-flag was a giant yellow canopy supported by a long wooden frame, with equally dazzling green feathers. It was the symbol of the army's supreme commander, ensuring its visibility to all soldiers at a glance.

In this era, one could not be a commander if they were not physically robust.

At this moment, Aweit appeared somewhat spirited. After leaving the besieged camp, he faced the light drizzle, listened to the joyous cries of the swifts, and smiling, said to Xiulote, "The corn has already sprouted; the rainy season has finally begun!"

Behind the supreme commander, a thousand elite Jaguar Warrior Brigade surrounded him, still the core of the large army.

The Jaguar and the Eagle Warrior Battalions were both elite shield-bearing groups, with the Jaguar favoring flexible offensive assault and the Eagle leaning towards heavy shield defense strategies. The Tonsured Guard was scarce in number but boasted outstanding single-combat martial skills and absolute loyalty to the king.

The ten thousand direct warriors boasted high morale, as they were the backbone of the army. Ten direct warrior camps were arrayed front and back, leading the five thousand City-State Warriors with ordinary morale, as well as the fifteen thousand militia bearing provisions.

Thus, thirty thousand people trudged through the constant drizzle, walking on the soft mud in the woods, following the gradually easing mountain terrain, and after a week of marching, finally arrived at the banks of the Lerma River.

Xiulote climbed a high hill, looking toward both banks of the great river. Beneath his feet were undulating hills and trees, while the far shore was a mix of gentle slopes and fields, with the scouts of the Tarasco people faintly visible. Both riverbanks featured relatively flat mudflats, extending endlessly to the east and west.

First, he looked westward, where the hundreds of meters wide Long River roared westward, passing through the western boundary of Tarasco people at Chapala Lake, and then wound its way into the distant Pacific Ocean. Then, he looked eastward. Here, paddling upstream alone in a canoe would take just ten days to reach the western City-States of Mexico, then the bustling Mexican Valley, and finally the great Lake Capital City.

"Canoes and small boats are still too slow, averaging only about twenty kilometers per day against the current. If there were vehicles from the Celestial Empire, it would only take a few days to communicate from east to west," Xiulote thought absent-mindedly. But shipbuilding technology was difficult, not something one could imagine out of thin air.

The Lerma River, this seven hundred fifty-kilometer Long River, originating from the center of the Mexican Plateau, connected the three cities of the capital, western Mexica cities, the Otomi City-State group, the Tarasco City-State group, and went straight into the Pacific Ocean on the far west.

"This truly is the core waterway of the Central American Empire!" Xiulote exclaimed. Canals were the lifeblood of classical empires, and their surrounding areas were the core of effective governance.

The youth's thoughts seemed to travel through time and space, reaching that far-off flourishing future:  
"The north's Tampen River, the central Lerma River, and the south's Balsas River, these will be the  
future's Yellow River, Yangtze River, and Pearl River of the Empire!"