

I. Dynasty 316

Chapter 316: Battlefield Simulation

“Dum-dum-dum... dum-dum-dum...”

In the Qingzhou military training ground, 500 soldiers from the Vanguard Battalion marched forward in column formation. Each carried a flintlock rifle on their shoulder, stepping in sync to the steady rhythm of a drum.

Zhu Siwu marched alongside the formation, also keeping time with the drumbeat.

Since the Vanguard Battalion was equipped with flintlocks three days ago, they had been undergoing formation training.

At first, officers shouted commands during marching drills. But after two days, two small drums were delivered to the camp.

Niu Ben randomly selected two soldiers from the battalion to serve as drummers.

“Because we fight in line formations, we need a unified rhythm.

In future battles, without a consistent sound, it’s hard for the army to march in step.

That’s why we use drums,” Niu Ben had explained when Zhu Wuliu asked about it.

He also mentioned this came directly from His Highness's lectures at Bowen Academy.

As he recalled that, Zhu suddenly noticed a section of the line drifting out of place.

He picked up his staff and marched over, smacking the three misaligned soldiers once each.

Yelping in pain, they quickly corrected their steps and rejoined the formation.

Zhu returned to his position and kept a close eye on the lines.

He didn't fully understand why such slow, rhythmic marching was important—but he trusted His Highness's decisions without question.

All he hoped for was the day when he too could go study at Bowen Academy.

Meanwhile, Niu Ben, Luo Xin, Lu Fei, Qi Guangyi, Di Ying, Bai Mu, and Zhao Gong were attending a brand-new military lecture at Bowen Academy.

After taking command of the Qingzhou Army, Niu Ben had promoted several outstanding junior officers, drawing from both the bold captains and the best centurions.

The army had grown to 20,000 soldiers, far more than when Lu Fei had commanded just a few thousand.

Without enough officers, it would be impossible to lead in wartime.

All of Niu Ben's choices were reviewed by Xiao Ming—and he was pleased.

Their selections perfectly matched what he had in mind.

Niu Ben had no selfish bias.

"Your Highness, what is this?"

At the front of the classroom stood a giant sandbox model, six meters wide.

It displayed the terrain from Bingzhou, Jizhou, and Cangzhou, stretching into territory held by the barbarian tribes.

Markers on the map showed known enemy troop positions.

In the previous two days, Xiao Ming had been teaching basic flintlock tactics and had asked the officers to start implementing those ideas.

On the battlefield, flintlock formations were key—not accuracy, but mass volleys and continuous fire were what mattered.

“This is a battlefield simulation sandbox,” Xiao Ming explained.

“On the side, you’ll find wooden pieces representing Qingzhou troops and barbarian units.”

Niu Ben picked up a wooden figure of a flintlock rifleman, about the size of a finger.

“This one’s artillery,” Luo Xin said, examining a cannon piece.

Lu Fei wasn’t idle either—he took two cavalry pieces, one Qingzhou, one barbarian, and made them collide like toy soldiers.

Niu Ben looked over the map and the figures.

He quickly grasped how to use them.

He placed an artillery unit at Cangzhou, and a barbarian cavalry marker at the Blood Wolf Tribe's Chagatai encampment.

The other officers suddenly understood, their faces lighting up with excitement.

Niu Ben truly had a general's instinct.

He quickly understood the reforms, and Xiao Ming praised him.

"As you can see," Xiao Ming said,

"this sandbox is just a detailed battlefield map. Today, we'll simulate how to drive the barbarians out of Youzhou.

"Also, I'll demonstrate a flintlock formation designed specifically to counter cavalry.

You must memorize it and train your troops to form this hollow square formation quickly."

The officers nodded.

Niu Ben spoke first:

“Your Highness, defeating the barbarians in Youzhou will require cavalry.

Leiming’s recent performance has been outstanding—his Guanning Iron Cavalry now numbers 6,000.

Although our flintlocks have the range and firepower to fight the barbarians in open field, without cavalry, we’ll have a hard time chasing down retreating enemies.

I recommend we combine Guanning Iron Cavalry with Qingzhou’s own cavalry for joint training.”

“Agreed,” Xiao Ming nodded.

“We can’t only train the rifle units—cavalry must also undergo strict training. On the battlefield, success depends on combined arms.”

“Then... should cavalry be equipped with flintlocks too?” asked Qi Guangyi, a cavalry commander.

“Yes—but not long-barreled rifles,” Xiao Ming replied.

“You’ll get short-barreled carbines. You can’t use long rifles on horseback.

Also—your plate armor will be phased out.”

“No armor?!”

Qi Guangyi was shocked.

“Without it, how do we stop barbarian arrows?”

Xiao Ming thought for a moment.

“Plate armor restricts mobility.

But you won’t go into battle unprotected—you’ll be equipped with breastplates, sabers, and become cuirassiers.”

Xiao Ming had his reasons for this.

In the 18th century, cuirassiers were widely used in European battlefields.

Napoleon revived them to great success—their protection and survival rate were much higher than light cavalry.

Against barbarian archery, a helmet and breastplate offered good defense while still allowing speed and maneuverability—ideal for chasing enemies or clearing the battlefield.

The only downside: short-barreled muskets were like triple-barrel hand cannons—good for two shots at most, then useless.

But in formal battle, even one volley could break enemy morale—or frighten their horses.

Silent, stealthy attacks, however, still required crossbows like the Guanning Cavalry's old compound bows, since flintlocks were too loud.

Xiao Ming explained this clearly to Qi Guangyi, who eventually nodded in agreement.

Niu Ben laughed.

“No matter the cavalry type, training and discipline are our true weapons.

Commander Qi, don't rely too much on gear."