

## Civilization 1011

Chapter 1011: Second Kingdom Exploration, Black Oil and Herbs of Crow City

Warm winds of January swept across the tropical shores of the Gulf of Mexico, bringing moisture and heat. The sea breeze blew westward, along the Cat Owl River, for seventy to eighty miles, reaching the southern ancestral land of the Vastek people, the prosperous riverside city-state, Crow City Papantla.

A few gray crows circled in the sky, overlooking familiar stockades, villages, and temples below, along with seven unfamiliar sleek large ships. Over a hundred Vastek craftsmen, bare-chested, were gathered at the edges of the longships, holding black earthen pots and busily engaged in some task.

Moments later, a curious crow lowered its height and perched atop the mast of a longship. Then, with its round eyes glancing about, it let out a satisfied caw aimed at the black Wolf Banner fluttering on the mast.

"Caw! Caw caw!"

"Huh?"

Hearing the call, the old militia Chiwaco looked up and saw the crow standing proudly on the mast. A broad smile spread across the old militia's face.

"A crow landing, crisp caws! Good! This is a rare omen indeed!"

Ah, indeed, it was a good omen! In current-day Central America, crows often appear during sacrificial ceremonies. They are like envoys descending from the sky after prayers to the gods, carrying mysterious divine attributes. Similarly, they appear when an elder is about to die, as if they are the messengers of the God of Death, guiding the soul of the deceased. Therefore, among Central American tribes who revere death, crows are truly considered auspicious birds.

"Damn! ...This hot coastal lowland is much hotter than the highland upstream of the Cat Owl River!"

Puap, wearing a wooden Eagle Helmet, looked up at the scorching sun and complained aloud. Then, he glanced at the busy Vastek craftsmen on the shore, shaking his head repeatedly.

"These Vastek, great dancers and their women are quite soft, almost taking the life out of us Samurai... But for ship repairs, I wonder if they are reliable? It's been over twenty days of repairs, and they always say it's almost done..."

It was early January, over a month since the fleet set sail at the end of November last year. The Kingdom's exploration fleet first set out from Herbal Lake, following an upstream tributary of the Cat Owl River into its main course. Then, they headed north, then turned east, bypassing dangerous waterfalls, taking gentler tributaries. When encountering unavoidable waterfalls, they had to disembark, and pull the ships downstream in reverse to avoid damage...

The Kingdom Fleet spent half a month traversing over 600 miles of waterways, finally reaching the eastern edge of Crow City. Upon reaching Crow City, lengthy repairs and waiting began.

This journey of over 600 miles involved a drop in elevation of over 2,000 meters! The surrounding temperature also increased significantly, from the warm tropical highland to the hot tropical lowland.

"Phew! Coming downstream was like urinating with the wind, fast and urgent. Without controlling the speed, one could travel a hundred miles a day! The cliffs on both sides were perilous, causing constant bumps and dents on the ship everywhere. Several times it almost broke apart!... I heard there are many fierce storms out in the Eastern Sea. If these seven longships are not properly repaired, how can they brave the sea again?"

Recalling the arduous journey, the old militia shook his head and sighed. Crossing that segment over the Eastern Madre Mountains was indeed precipitous and perilous. This was just the beginning; beyond the sea awaited a four thousand-plus mile journey!

Then, they had to return from the sea, travel another four to five thousand miles, ascend from the estuary against the current, scale those elevation differences, to return to the Tlaxcala State. From there, another trek by land for a thousand miles to return to the Kingdom of the Lake, to see the son-in-law, daughter, and grandchildren of unknown age...

Thinking of all this, the old militia was overwhelmed with sadness, eyes turning red. He turned towards the western sky, cursing angrily in his heart.

"That blind prince, deserves to be struck by lightning!..."

"Captain, the Vastek craftsmen say that the ships will be ready for sail in another day!"

Dark Snake approached cautiously, bowing his head, reporting to the old militia. The Tlaxcala Four States neighbored Vastek, and there was considerable trade exchange. Dark Snake himself knew some daily Vastek language. The old militia had arranged for him to assist in communication for the ship repairs.

The craftsmen and sailors of the exploration fleet were also arranged to partake in the ship repairs. The newly added sailor, Didi, worked more enthusiastically than anyone from morning till night, pushing everyone to accelerate the progress.

"Almost ready?"

Hearing this, the old militia felt a hint of surprise. Wearing a straw hat, he walked to the ship's edge and saw Vastek craftsmen using a black, sticky liquid mixed with soft black crushed stone, applying it all over the longships. The broken wooden planks and holes were filled with this black oil and crushed stone, which solidified into hardness.

"Such a strange black oil, smells even stranger than marsh mud!... Hmm, but once repaired, it truly doesn't leak."

The old militia sniffed, inhaling the pungent scent of the black oil. Then, he touched the patched gaps, feeling the adhesive texture, lost in thought.

The Vastek craftsmen had already informed him that this was "black oil" extracted from underground pits, the essence of the Earth Mother Goddess, capable of resisting the divine power of the Storm God over the Eastern Sea! For hundreds of years, coastal Vastek tribes have used this black oil mixed with soft crushed stone to repair damaged canoes.

And if Xiulote came here, seeing this black oil and crushed stone, he would undoubtedly be greatly astonished and shout out their two names in future times.

"Petroleum and Bitumen!"

Indeed, the Vastek's Crow City was situated atop the oil fields along the Gulf of Mexico coast. Several hundred miles north lay the massive Tampico oilfield, and several hundred miles to the east, the Cantarell oilfield, one of the world's largest oilfields!

In fact, the entire coastal region of Campeche Bay, from the Vastek lowland to the Tototanak rainforest, was rich in petroleum reserves. There was so much oil that it could seep directly from deep underground pits, practically bringing tears to the eyes of future Celestial Empires! Natural bitumen is also a common associated mineral of large oilfields.

The old militia bowed his head, carefully inspecting the blackened longships long and hard. He first tested the water resistance, then checked the patched gaps, feeling the sticky seams with his fingertips, deep in thought.

The Vastek craftsmen had long told him that this was "black oil" from underground pits, the essence of the Earth Mother Goddess, capable of warding off the divine power of the Storm God in the Eastern Sea! Throughout coastal Vastek history, they had used this black oil with soft crushed stones for ship repairs.

"Alright then, as long as they're fixed! Dark Snake, take a run and inform the Tomato Priest in Crow City and that long-headed Mayan merchant. Tell them to return early and be ready to depart!"

"Yes, captain."

Without stopping, Dark Snake showed the fleet's token and was led by a Vastek warrior to the large tent of the Silver Raven Leader. Due to frequent coastal storms, high wooden and stone buildings are not safe, whereas tents, grass shelters, and ground holes are most common here.

Inside the tent, the Silver Raven chief sat cross-legged, a gold Sun Amulet around his neck, contemplating the grass mat before him. Opposite him sat the middle-aged chief Priest Tomate with a solemn expression, explaining a drawing of the Chief Divine on the unfolded page of the Book of Ama Colley, tracing it as he spoke in a deep voice.

"...As seasons change, they bring prosperity to the faithful, but calamities to those who defy. Those who die in divine disasters will be plunged into the Abyss, never to be released!..."

"Honorable Chieftain Papata, only by fully converting to the Chief Divine and completely renouncing the faith of the Feathered Serpent can the Silver Raven Tribe receive the protection of the gods..."

"Yes, Captain."

Chapter 1012: The Second Kingdom Exploration, Silver Raven Tribe, Eastern Sea Secrets!

The grand tent was simple yet spacious, surrounded by brightly colored feathers. Everyone sat on the ground, sipping on extremely expensive herbal drinks from the Old Continent, and for a moment, no one spoke.

The young Dark Snake sat in the corner, holding a cup of vanilla cocoa, sipping it slowly. Here, naturally, he had no place to speak, and could only wait patiently. He stared blankly at the ground, where a blue Chief Divine painting lay, the Supreme Main God standing on Snake Mountain, surrounded by gods either slain or surrendering. And at the feet of the Main God, lay a gigantic Feathered Serpent, its skin flayed and tendons pulled by an obsidian dagger...

Seeing this, the young Dark Snake shivered and lowered his eyes, not daring to look any more. Over the years, the faith of the Aztecs was expanding violently across the world with the steps of the Mexica warriors! All conquered city-states had to hold grand conversion ceremonies, drink blood wine, cut hair, and offer their souls to the War God. And those unwilling to take the blood oath or convert were mercilessly sacrificed and killed...

"Cruel Aztecs... not only do they want to conquer the body, but also the soul, to completely change the world! And all warriors who dare to resist are ruthlessly destroyed... When will this terrifying tide, this bloody world, come to an end!..."

The young Dark Snake of Cloud Serpent Divine Descendant felt melancholy and remained silent. Opposite him, Papata the Silver Raven Chieftain stroked his chin, also in thought.

As a distant vassal of the Mexica Alliance, the Vastek people, apart from paying tribute on time, could still maintain a degree of autonomy. Over the past two years, the Silver Raven Tribe had been actively aligning with the Alliance, establishing the emblem of the Mexica War God in the temple, while

worshipping the War God, Feathered Serpent Divine, and Rain Divine. Although the priests and nobility within the tribe were somewhat dissatisfied, they could only compromise and accept in the face of the Mexicas sweeping the world.

"But to exalt the War God as the main god and completely abandon the Feathered Serpent Divine? The prestige lost in such a complete conversion, the dissatisfaction aroused, how can it be compensated..."

Silver Raven Papata lowered his eyes for a long time before raising his head, smiling as he proposed conditions.

"Respectable God of War Priest, the Silver Raven Tribe has always followed the Alliance, and is the model of devotion to the War God among the Vastek tribes! Yet some small tribes in the North remain stubborn, reject the divine revelation of the Alliance, and affront the divine, they must be punished!..."

"The Silver Raven Tribe, as a loyal vassal of the Alliance, is willing to serve the Alliance, leading the northern Vastek tribes and spreading the faith of the War God in this coastal area!"

"Hmm..."

Upon hearing, Preaching Priest Tomate raised an eyebrow, pondering in silence.

The Silver Raven Chieftain was negotiating, seeking the Alliance's promise for unconditional conversion, with the assurance of extending northward, incorporating more Vastek small tribes. Such conditions, Tomate, as the Kingdom's Second-Level Preaching Priest, absolutely lacked the power to agree.

Considering this, Priest Tomate squinted his eyes, deeply gazing at the Silver Raven Chieftain. He was uncertain whether the other party was genuinely negotiating or evasively stalling. After several breaths, Priest Tomate smiled back, hiding sharpness in his response.

"The glory of the Chief Divine will surely illuminate the world! Like the roaring Cat Owl River surging forth, destined to flow into the Eastern Sea! Honorable Chieftain Papata, if you go with the flow, you'll travel hundreds of miles in a day, but to go against it, you'll struggle with each step!..."

"I will dispatch priests to convey your request to the Supreme King Aweit and inform His Highness Xiulote of the divine revelation. Besides this, do you have any other requests?"

Hearing this, Papata pondered slightly, revealing a respectful smile.

"Haha! Silver Raven Papata bows to the King, grateful for the Mexican Royal Family's marriage alliance! I have already sent warriors with my three adult daughters to the great Lake Capital City. They can all sing and dance, with waists as slender as thin snakes, footsteps as agile as flower deer, bellies as fertile as wild rabbits..."

"Ah? Three daughters? You mean..."

Upon hearing, Priest Tomate was somewhat surprised. According to Vastek tradition, adulthood begins at fifteen. After reaching adulthood, formal marriage can take place. Papata sending three young daughters to the Lake Capital City is surely to forge further royal marriages.

"Indeed! My youngest daughter Liulin is just fifteen, just in time to be engaged to His Highness Little Quetelawak. My eldest daughter Liuyu is nineteen, and my second daughter Liuyao is seventeen. Both sisters are as delicate as flowers, as white jade pairs. They can dance and sing for His Highness Xiulote, serving closely, slightly easing the fatigue of laborious days..."

Silver Raven Papata smiled knowingly. These three daughters, born of the same mother, beautiful in appearance, each with their own strengths — either delicate, elegant, or pure — he had meticulously nurtured, intending to marry into powerful tribes.

With King Aweit thriving in the Spring and Autumn of his years, he hadn't decided whether to place his bet so early. But upon seeing the Kingdom of the Lake's large ships, knowing the exploration fleet crossing the entire world, coming two thousand miles from the Western Sea to Crow City, and planning to head to the Eastern Sea!...

"If the kingdom's fleet can reach here, they can also transport warriors... With thousands of national warriors traveling downstream, the five hundred miles of mountains and jungles offer no hindrance!..."

After much deliberation, Papata finally decided to send two daughters first and secure a spot on the large ship of the Kingdom of the Lake.

"Hmm..."

Priest Tomate lowered his head, sipped his cocoa. This proposal again exceeded his jurisdiction, leaving the decision to the prince in Tree Snake City. He pursed his lips, feeling the herbal essence between his teeth, and asked again with a smile.

"Honorable Chieftain Papata, your foresight is like a divine raven on the Divine Tree, looking afar! Do you have any other suggestions?"

"Haha, God of War bless! Respectable God of War Priest, I heard once the longship is repaired, the Kingdom Fleet will set forth to the Eastern Sea to seek the Holy Land in the sea?"

"Chief Divine bless! Indeed."

Priest Tomate nodded. According to his understanding, with a serious demeanor and stiff words, he narrated the substantial task of this expedition.

"His Highness received the divine revelation, aware of the great matters in the East! The fleet will head east, passing through to find the Holy Land in the sea! Must traverse the sea, find the metals and stones, and finally suppress the divine soul of the Feathered Serpent!"

"Ssss!... To seek the Feathered Serpent God and completely subdue the divine... What ferocity and madness from the alliance!"

Hearing such a secret, Silver Raven Papata drew a cold breath and asked with concern, "Esteemed War God Priest, the Feathered Serpent is one of the four creation gods after all. Isn't the alliance afraid that suppressing its divinity might trigger some calamity?"

"Ha! The Supreme Main God is almighty and invincible! Insignificant as they are, the dead such as the Feathered Serpent, their spirits are all vanquished!"

"Once the alliance's suppression begins, it won't take long before the white-skinned demons cross the sea, intending to bring havoc, but even with their thunderous beasts and roaring thunderbolts, and vast snake ships, we will defeat them all one by one and sacrifice their hearts!"

Chapter 1013: The Second Kingdom Exploration, Songs in the Caribbean Sea

"Ah... Pala!..."

The proclamation of the Mexica Priest echoed within the tent, conveying a will of fire and blood, narrating the inevitable coming of martial prowess! Then, a filled clay pot fell from trembling hands, accompanied by a suppressed gasp, landing heavily on the soil. The rich scent of cocoa spread instantly, filling the tent with fragrance.

"Hmm?"

The Chief God Priest Tomate squinted his eyes, looking towards the corner at the bewildered and trembling Dark Snake. He carefully observed the boy's sun-tanned skin and the calloused fingers but said nothing.

"Someone, clean this up!"

Papata of the Silver Raven put down the clay pot in his hand and called out. Two Vastec maidens lowered their heads and came bustling. Then, the Silver Raven Chieftain gave a few more instructions, summoning a robust young Silver Raven warrior. The young warrior also wore a Sun Hummingbird amulet around his neck.

"Respected War God Priest, the Kingdom Fleet, blessed by Divine Revelation, is destined for the Eastern Snake Island, to subdue the Feathered Serpent Divine... Thus, as a loyal vassal of the Alliance, the Silver Raven Tribe will certainly not stand by!"

At this point, Papata smiled slightly and patted the young warrior on the shoulder.

"This is the youngest warrior of the tribe, a Fish Hawk who can fight in the water! Fish Hawk once piloted a small boat to the lands of the Totonac people, familiar with the city-states along hundreds of miles... From today, he will lead thirty Silver Raven warriors and twenty shipwrights to join the Kingdom's naval expedition!... Please, do not refuse."

"Oh? Warrior Fish Hawk, skilled in naval warfare?"

The Priest Tomate pondered briefly, glancing at the silently fierce Warrior Fish Hawk, examining his streamlined muscles and smiling.

The Silver Raven Tribe sent fifty men, a small number but one that further clarified Chieftain Papata's stance. The Kingdom of the Lake lacked secure footholds along the Eastern Sea coast. The Silver Raven Tribe, with tens of thousands of young and strong warriors, controlled Crow City along the coast, and aligning with the kingdom would bring great convenience.

Thinking of this, Priest Tomate nodded with a smile and expressed his gratitude aloud.

"Thank you, respected Chieftain Papata! I will write to His Highness, praising your support for the kingdom!"

"Haha! I have long admired His Highness Xiulote, blessed by Divine Revelation. At this moment, His Highness is leading a great army to besiege the ancestral land of the Telascalan. How I wish to lead tribal warriors to join the Alliance's army and fight for the Chief Divine!... "

Hearing Papata quietly change the term "Chief Divine," Priest Tomate nodded in satisfaction. He stood up, drew a symbol of the Sun Hummingbird before the Silver Raven Chieftain, and then, smiling, he made a bold promise.

"Your devotion is truly astounding! The light of the Chief Divine must be protecting you from the lower reaches of Cat Owl River to the Eastern Sea! And if His Highness knows, he will be extremely gratified and surely supportive..."

"Oh? From the lower reaches of Cat Owl River to the Eastern Sea?! This territory..."

Upon hearing this, Papata's face showed joy. This was akin to a secret agreement between the kingdom and the Silver Raven Tribe, to achieve a certain potential cooperation. Both parties understood without involving the Alliance... The Silver Raven Chieftain's mind whirled as he reached out to stroke the Book of Ama Colley on the ground, showing sincerity.

"Respected Chief God Priest, please bestow this sacred scripture upon the Silver Raven Tribe! I want to invite the priests and elders of the tribe to contemplate day and night, comprehending the teachings of the Chief Divine!"

"Good! Very good!"

The Priest Tomate, invigorated, said with a smile.

"However, one copy isn't enough? Another purpose of this naval expedition is to spread the Chief God's glory and to educate the Taino people on Snake Island... Our Kingdom Fleet has dozens of chests of scriptures! Each priest and elder in the Silver Raven Tribe may have a copy!"

"Haha, that is excellent! May the Chief Divine bless!"

"May the Chief Divine bless us!"

Both parties reached an understanding, and everyone was delighted. However, to further confirm the cooperative relationship or even establish a secret alliance, it still awaited His Highness's consent. Next would be a sumptuous and exquisite banquet and a night of joyful singing and revelry.

The next day, the weather was clear and cloudless, perfect for a long journey. As the sun rose to the zenith, seven newly repaired and strengthened Kingdom longships raised their sails together, prepared for the voyage.

The silent Warrior Fish Hawk, with the Vastec warriors, joined under the command of Puap. The Mayan merchant Tikalo returned from the nearby market, bringing with him a few elder Mayan guides. Meanwhile, the Silver Raven Chieftain Papata led hundreds of tribal warriors and personally bid farewell outside the city.

The Long River stretched on, flowing into the Eastern Sea. The longships set sail, embarking on their journey. Two days later, the vast Caribbean Sea unfolded before everyone's eyes!

"Such a vast Great Lake! Where on earth does it lead? From east to west, as far as the eye can see, it's all water!"

"Ah! A Great Lake larger than the Rain Divine! This must be the creation of the Chief Divine!... Praise be to you, almighty!"

At the bow of the flagship, the young Dark Snake was dumbstruck, while the sailor Didi prayed devoutly. At this moment, two crew members from different backgrounds and classes stood side by side, their spirits stirred. It was their first time seeing the boundless sea!

"Praise the Chief Divine, for safe voyages!"

Hundreds of sailors and warriors stood at the bow, praying to the sun in the sky. This was also the first time the Kingdom of the Lake and even the Mexica Alliance's fleet reached the vast Caribbean Sea! And a brand new five-thousand-mile route was unfolding, leading to a never-before-reached distant place!

"Aiyo hey, setting out to sea!... "

The endless sea and sky, departure with no known return. The old militiaman turned the ship's rudder, watching the swift-flying swallows, looking towards the endless sea and sky in the east. He tilted his head, his mouth wide in song, singing a hometown tune from Patzcuaro. Singing with joy, in the unique dialect of the Lake Region, he didn't worry that the Mexica would understand. Soon, he sang faster and happier, even laughing to tears!

"The sea, it's all water! Journeying, no end in sight!... Your Majesty, with one word! Poor old farmer me, gonna break my legs running!... "

"Break my legs, travel the world! Travel the world, sun burns! ...The great sea surges like boiling soup, His Majesty waves a fan in the tent! ...Wave the fan, set sail!"

"Set sail eastwards, five thousand miles to go! Five thousand miles away, looking home! Vision blurred and vast!... Home is far, I can't see! Your Majesty, you're a real rascal!... Aiyo, a real rascal!"

"..."

Listening to the familiar hometown tune, hearing the lyrics made up by the old militiaman, Puap was drenched in sweat, momentarily speechless.

Beside him, the Chief God Priest Tomate showed curiosity. He listened intently for a while, hearing only a genuine sense of freedom and fearless determination. The devoted Chief God Priest nodded, softly inquiring.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Truly a hearty sea shanty!... Hmm, what's the song about?"

"Uh, it's about... setting sail today, determined to spread glory! If I don't reach Snake Island, I'll never return home in this life!... Ah, praise the Chief Divine, praise His Majesty! His Majesty is truly great!... Aiyo truly great!"

Puap stammered, struggling to respond. Then he forced a smile, changed the subject, patted the shoulder of Priest Tomate, and pointed southeast.

"Aha! With the Chief Divine's blessing, the fleet sails eastward! Calm seas, perfect for a long journey... Our next target is three hundred miles southeast, Feathered Serpent City of the Totonac people!"

Chapter 1014: The 2nd Kingdom Exploration, the Return of the Feathered Serpent Divine!

The sea and sky are vast, with endless waves in the East, and land appearing faintly in the southeast. The Kingdom's exploration fleet set out from the mouth of the Cat Owl River, along the extended land, heading east. Traveling one hundred and twenty miles, they reached the mouth of the Sharp Corner River (Rio Filobobos); another sixty miles, and they arrived at the mouth of the Flat Sand River (Rio Colipa).

The Cat Owl River, Sharp Corner River, and Flat Sand River lined up like the roots of a tree, extending inland and branching out into more than ten tributaries. These tributaries connect to the Four States of Tlaxcala, the Vastec coast, and the Totonac coast. They even stretch southeast, reaching the border

where Totonac, Mistec, and Zapotecs converge at the expansive Great Lake (Lake Miguel Alemán), seven hundred miles away. In other words...

"Oh Supreme Main God! This eastern seaside is truly a wild place, with trees everywhere, relying solely on these rivers to connect!"

Puap took off the Eagle Helmet, wiping the sweat from his forehead and neck. Then, he took a piece of dried, shriveled tomato, tossed it into his mouth, and chewed absentmindedly. The sour and slightly sweet taste spread in the Graysoil Samurai's mouth, reviving his spirits.

"Descending from the highland, the coastal lowlands are nothing but continuous rainforest and one river after another!... If it weren't for these rivers of various sizes streaming through the forest stretching for hundreds of miles, it would be life-threatening!"

Hearing this, the Mayan merchant Tikalo shook his head with a smile. Is this even a challenge? Next, when we reach the various Maya territories in Yucatan, with two thousand miles of rainforest from north to south and sixteen hundred miles from east to west, everywhere is a green ocean, and the inland lacks long rivers to connect through—that's truly life-threatening!

If there weren't local guides leading the way and local City-States' support, any legion venturing into the rainforest was doomed, no matter how strong the legion!

Thinking of this, Tikalo lowered his eyes, pondering without speaking. Some ancient family records flashed in his mind, leaving a lingering unease. After a moment, he smiled and said.

"After crossing the three Great Rivers, we leave the reach of the Vastec Tribe, arriving at the territory of the Totonac people. Heading southeast for another hundred and twenty miles, we reach the esteemed Feathered Serpent City among the various Totonac tribes! According to ancient legends, this was the very starting point where the Feathered Serpent Divine left the continent, riding a serpent raft to the Eastern Sea!..."

"Hence, hundreds of years ago, the coastal tribes that worshipped the Feathered Serpent established an ancient City-State here and built the revered ancient Temple of the Feathered Serpent! Then, the Totonac people, coming from the northern Wilderness and settling by the Sea, gradually converted to the Feathered Serpent Divine..."

"It is now mid-January, coinciding with the first Feathered Serpent Day of the new year! The various Totonac tribes along the coast will hold grand festival rites lasting several days. If the fleet hastens their pace, they should just arrive in time!..."

The rowers paddled in shifts, the fleet moving forward continuously. Two days later, the Kingdom's exploration fleet finally arrived at Feathered Serpent City. By this time, Feathered Serpent City was celebrating a ritual devoted to the gods. Tens of thousands of Totonac tribes were dancing and celebrating inside and outside the City-State!

"...Merciful Feathered Serpent Divine, You possess the world's most beautiful feathers! You dance through storms at the sea's edge, driven by the wind through your feathers! With your beard flowing, face smiling, You sing with us!..."

The jubilant songs echoed throughout the entire City-State. The nobility and chieftains dressed in bright costumes, adorned with tall bird feathers, and surrounded by gold and silver and gemstones, raised their hands in singing. Meanwhile, the young maidens wore scanty tops, their wrists and ankles bare, strung with multicolored shells, dancing lively and youthful dances with jingling sounds.

The entire city was immersed in a sea of festivity and joy. The arrival of the Kingdom's fleet did not garner much attention. Although the Kingdom's longship was large, it was not much different from the large oared sailing ships commonly seen by the Mayans. In fact, a few Mayan merchant ships were also docked at the seashore of the City-State. On such festive days, the nobility and chieftains never scrimp on wealth; it is a prime time to do business!

Under the vigilant eyes of their Mayan companions, a group disembarked from the longship, entering the ancient city before them. This Feathered Serpent City of the Totonac people, although sharing its name with the Feathered Serpent City of Tlaxcala, had a much more ancient architectural style, greatly different.

The Feathered Serpent City of the Tlaxcalans was a small but sturdy fortress with complete green stone outer walls and tall twin temples. In contrast, the Totonac's Feathered Serpent City was a sprawling marketplace City-State, expansive, with only simple wooden fences, and most houses were low straw huts and wooden shacks. In the City-State, the only stone building over two stories high was a single pyramid ten-plus meters tall, with the most revered Temple of the Feathered Serpent built on its summit!

"Huh? Is this the statue of the Feathered Serpent Divine? It looks really strange."

Old militia member Chiwaco stood near the temple, looking up curiously at the carvings of the Pyramid Temple. The Prepetcha people believe in the Sun, Earth, and Moon, and the Mexica Alliance had already abandoned the Feathered Serpent belief, completely destroying the Feathered Serpent sculptures. So indeed, this was his first time seeing the Feathered Serpent Divine.

The reliefs were vividly dynamic, carved hundreds of years ago. In the spiraling Feathered Serpent, the Feathered Serpent Divine stood with distinct features. The Feathered Serpent Divine's eyes were two huge blue jewels, with an extremely broad forehead and a high nose, a visage so profound that it was entirely different from the other gods of the Nava. More importantly...

"Really strange! Why would the Feathered Serpent Divine have such a long beard?... Eww! It's uglier than His Majesty!..."

Seeing this, Chiwaco shook his head and sighed. In this era, no part of the world had the habit of growing a beard. Genetically, American Natives also had the least body hair, with skin follicles least sensitive to male hormones, almost never growing lush beards. This statue in Chiwaco's eyes was just like how ancient Celestial Empire's people first felt seeing "foreigners."

A couple of steps away, Puap widened his eyes. The Feathered Serpent Divine's beard was dyed with gray-red pigment, with rubies embedded in it. The Feathered Serpent Divine's face was inlaid with some silver pieces, shimmering in the sunlight.

"A broad forehead, a high nose, blue eyes, white skin, and a gray-red big beard?... Hmm? I think I heard someone say that this is..."

"This is the Evil Demon of foreign lands! Damn! These degenerate Totonac people not only believe in the Feathered Serpent Divine but also depicted it in the appearance of the white-skinned Evil Demons!..."

Seeing the temple's carvings, Chief God Priest Tomate glared, anger shaking his hands. Although the Feathered Serpent Divine of the Alliance also had a big beard, it wasn't carved into this image of the evil demon from the Divine Revelation!

"Oh! Supreme Main God! May you unleash thunder to punish these lost tribes! The Alliance's legions must come here, destroy the statue, and burn the demons to ashes!..."

"Tsk tsk!... The Totonac's Feathered Serpent Divine truly is peculiar. I wonder where they learned to make it look completely different from our Mayan Feathered Serpent Divine!"

Not far away, the Mayan merchant Tikalo touched his clever bald head, looking at the temple's sculpture with confusion and puzzlement.

However, just at this moment, several elderly Feathered Serpent priests suddenly emerged from the high temple. Holding corn and feathers, they sang and danced as they descended the pyramid. Behind them, a dozen priest apprentices carried a magnificent bamboo raft, carefully following.

The young Dark Snake stood on tiptoe to look. On the raft, there was a two-person tall wooden statue of the Feathered Serpent, adorned with gold and silver. At the base of the statue were rows of long wooden snakes. This was precisely the sculpture of the Feathered Serpent Divine riding the serpent raft.

"...Merciful Feathered Serpent Divine, He bears a somber heartache.

He was harmed by dark spirits, witnessing the decay of the end!

He took an Obsidian Stone Mirror, observing his pale face.

He extended an aged hand, leaving the last handprint on the stone...

"

The Feathered Serpent Priests sang and danced, carrying rafts towards the seaside miles away. The people of the city-state sang loudly, following the priests' footsteps. The nobility took out thin Obsidian mirrors, reflecting the sunlight onto the rolling sea, like sparkling stars.

Everyone in the fleet glanced at each other and followed the city-state residents to the seaside.

"Merciful Feathered Serpent God, He chooses self-exile!

He leaves the people He loves, to head towards the endless Eastern Great Lake.

There lies His homeland, with countless birds and beautiful flowers.

The citizens who love Him cry, pleading. They say:

O merciful and radiant God, when shall You return?...

"

By this point, the Feathered Serpent Priests had reached the seaside. They set down the ornate rafts and placed them into the vast sea. Nobility and chieftains immediately stepped forward, eagerly placing their gold and silver and jewels onto the god-honoring rafts. Meanwhile, the young, pure maidens of the city-state carried tropical flowers, adorning the surroundings of the rafts.

Soon, as the sea currents and tides carried the tall Feathered Serpent statue, loaded with gold, silver, jewels, and flowers, it slowly sailed into the depths of the sea. Tens of thousands of Totonac people stood on the shore, staring blankly at the departing raft. Gradually, sadness appeared on their faces, some even shedding tears.

Only after a big wave came, making the statue on the raft disappear, did the Feathered Serpent Priests sing again in a sorrowful tone.

"Merciful Feathered Serpent God, He left the crying people!

He travels on the green serpent's raft, heading to the distant East.

He promises a divine vow to those who love and are loved by Him!

Beautiful Feathered Serpent will return one spring,

bringing prosperous flowers, ending the brief withering...

"

"He says: I will return from the surface of the Eastern lake,

sailing a ship the likes of which has never been seen!

Bringing peace and prosperity, bringing light and wisdom,

to save you all once more!...

"

The song of the Feathered Serpent Priests halted abruptly in the wind. Priest apprentices blew a melancholic conch, like crying sinking at the lake bottom. The mythology of the Feathered Serpent God spreads in ballads, telling this tale, leaving only endless regret and a final, wispy hope.

A sorrowful atmosphere engulfed the crowd. Tens of thousands of Totonac people could no longer endure it. They knelt in groups on the seaside, eyes filled with tears. Trembling, they stretched out their hands towards the boundless sea in the East. Led by the priests, they issued hysterical cries:

"... Return! Merciful Feathered Serpent God! ..."

"... Return! Glorious Quetzalcoat! ..."

"... Please, sail a great ship back from the Eastern sea! Save your people with light and prosperity!"

"... Please, we beg you, come back! ..."

Cry after cry, heart-wrenching. The calls and wails of tens of thousands sounded on the shore outside Feathered Serpent City, echoing far away. Yet on the distant horizon of the East, there was only an empty sea and lonely flying seabirds.

Chiwaco stood amongst the crowd, gazing towards the East in a daze. He had never participated in such a celebration, but he could genuinely feel the people's yearning for the Feathered Serpent God, their longing for peace, light, and prosperity!

However, in the past hundreds of years, throughout thousands of divine ritual events, the merciful and radiant Feathered Serpent God had never returned. Central America was maintained in a precarious balance through endless division and slaughter, trudging toward the Bronze Age, awaiting a breakthrough millennia in the making.

And in the original history, such Feathered Serpent God rituals would continue to be held. Such calls and waits would persist!

Until exactly thirty years later, a towering three-masted ship indeed returned from the Eastern coast on the day of the festival, sailing towards the ecstatic welcoming crowd. Then, it brought the "envoys and incarnations of the Feathered Serpent God," filled with brutal greed and desire, bringing endless darkness and death!

Chapter 1015: The Second Kingdom Exploration, The Kingdom Gem Flowing to the Distance

The tides rise and fall, and the singing continues throughout the night. The following day in Feathered Serpent City, the sacred celebrations are still ongoing. Totonac nobility erect small altars in front of their manors, offering large bowls of gold grains, heaps of silver ingots, shining pearls, colorful shells, stacked flowers...and the gemstones most favored by the divine, especially turquoise, symbolizing wisdom and immortality.

"Eh? These gemstones...these green gemstones..."

The old militia widened his aged eyes, carefully observing the bustling market. Every New Year's celebration is also an auspicious day for markets in villages within dozens of miles, making it the busiest trading day in the city-state.

The vast majority of the city's wealth is concentrated in the hands of the Totonac nobility and priests. Their spending habits are the most extravagant. The nobility and priests direct their servants to lay down small bags of herbs, large bags of food, strips of salted fish, jars of sea salt, and seashells and pearls abundant by the seaside.

Then, they purchase exquisite Obsidian utensils from the Western alliance trading caravan, alongside inexplicable bronze tools and highly expensive yet rare bronze tools; from the Eastern Mayan merchants, they buy divine smoke from the rainforest and islands, alongside cotton fabrics from the northern Mayan states of Yucatan; from the southern Mixtec merchants, they acquire exquisite and luxurious gold and silver ornaments, and the costly feathers of the Chager Bird; and further south, from the Zapotecs, they purchase carmine dyes and yellow copper utensils produced in the Oaxaca Valley.

Of course, the most essential is still the purchase of a large number of precious gemstones from the kingdom fleet that comes from the far west!

"...various kinds of gemstones, huge gemstones, round gemstones, and everyone's beloved turquoise!...The gemstones of the Kingdom of the Lake will certainly not disappoint you!"

The Kingdom of the Lake fleet, having traveled two thousand miles, is selling in the coastal city-state. Their wooden shelters and stalls are crowded with the city-state's dignitaries, including Mixtec merchants adorned with silver ornaments, and Mayan merchants with elongated foreheads.

At this moment, the transactions at the kingdom's stalls are continuous, with immense activity. The coastal Totonac states seem like a large jewel funnel, no matter how many gemstones are shipped in, they are seized by the merchants of various states!

Seeing this scene, Tikalo shook his head. He meaningfully smiled at the old militia Chiwako.

"The great His Highness Xiulote is truly blessed by the divine! The Kingdom of the Lake can produce such a tremendous amount of gemstones, weighing hundreds of thousands of pounds!...These Mayan merchants coming from the north of Yucatan, originally would bring Emeralds from Cuauhtēmallān, to

sell to various tribes on the Mexican Plateau. However, under the impact of the massive amount of gemstones from the Kingdom of the Lake, not only do they no longer transport gemstones here, they even acquire gemstones in large quantities from here!..."

"Mm. The kingdom's gemstones, excellent!"

Chiwako scratched his head, nodding. During the last sea voyage, he vaguely guessed that the source of the kingdom's gemstones was probably not from mining but from some method, uh...divine revelation in manufacturing them.

Of the seven fully-loaded ships in the kingdom, besides essential food and liquor, one ship carries the scriptures and emblems of the Chief Divine, two ships are for spare planks and sails, two ships carry bronze tools, weapons, and armor, and two ships are entirely filled with various bags of "gemstones." This was precisely the amount given as travel expenses by Your Majesty before his departure, tons of it.

"Merchants from the two southern Cloud Tribes say that Lake gemstones are not mined. They are the result of a wicked transaction between the Kingdom of the Lake and a volcano demon! The kingdom offers human sacrifices, and the volcano demon generously reciprocates with gemstones. Behind every Lake gemstone lies a spirit devoured by a demon!"

The Mayan merchant Tikalo shook his bald head, laughing as he recounted the southern rumors, all the while scrutinizing the old militia's expression. The production volume of Lake gemstones is unrivaled, its quality stable, and its price affordable, dominating the entire gemstone market in Central America. However, the secret of Lake gemstones is a mystery that every merchant in the world longs to uncover. Even if such gemstones do indeed come from demonic sacrifices, they are undeniably real wealth!

"Mm...The kingdom's gemstones, bestowed by the Chief Divine, excellent!"

The old militia smiled but did not respond to the bald Maya. In front of the bald Mayan, he boldly scratched his head, tugged at his hair, and then asked with a smile.

"These merchants, buying so many gemstones, who are they selling them to?"

"Haha!"

Seeing the old militia's watertight response, Tikalo shook his head secretly and laughed aloud.

"Now, five thousand miles east to west, four thousand miles north to south, from the tribes of the Sakatekas Desert in the north to the rainforest tribes of Yucatan in the south, and the gemstone-producing forest tribes of Cuauhtēmallān, to the even more southeastern forest tribes of Solan...All the tribes in the world have become buyers of the Kingdom's gemstones!"

In the Mayan language, Cuauhtēmallān means "the place of many trees," which is known as Guatemala in later generations. Solan means the "place where quail abound," now known as Honduras.

"Five thousand miles east to west, four thousand miles north to south? All buying kingdom gemstones..."

Upon hearing this, the old militia widened his eyes. Imagining such a grand scene, where bags of gemstones are produced somewhere in the Kingdom of the Lake, then transported by countless kingdom and city-state trading fleets to the hands of nobles in various parts of the world. Meanwhile, global wealth flows the other way, into the bottomless Kingdom of the Lake, supporting innumerable armored warriors preparing for battle!

"Hahaha! On this voyage, His Highness wants us to head east five thousand miles, to Snake Island in the Eastern Sea. But in reality..."

At this, the Mayan merchant Tikalo's expression turned complex, and he sighed.

"In reality, the gemstones of the Kingdom of the Lake had already circulated on the island before the fleet and army's arrival!..."

The tides of people brought wealth through trade. The Kingdom Fleet stayed in Feathered Serpent City for another day, selling a small number of gemstones to fill the fleet's food storage.

Only then did the Totonac nobility in the city dispatch envoys to interact with the two expedition leaders, obtaining some gemstones as gifts. The old militia observed closely, sensing a subtle, faint

hostility from the local nobility. After pondering over it, he inquired of Dark Snake, learning about the connections between the Tlaxcala nobility and the Totonac nobility, finally coming to a revelation.

"...Jaguar pounced towards the East, hunting Cloud Serpent in the mountains. The monkeys by the sea are clever, restlessly aware that the Jaguar will soon devour them. Yet, they stay high in the trees, some distance away, harboring a false sense of security, waiting to see others be eaten. Even if the monkeys bare their teeth and howl in discontent, they don't have the courage to bite the Jaguar directly, like the Cloud Tribe in the rainforest..."

"But in any case, the coastal Totonac people, devoutly believing in the Feathered Serpent Divine, are already at odds with the Mexica Alliance...We are also carrying so many gemstones; if we encounter bandits posing as City-State Warriors, as we did in Northern Tectos Tri-River City..."

The old militia keenly sensed potential danger. In this Feathered Serpent believing Totonac coastline, the Kingdom Fleet must avoid lingering too long in any one city-state. Without further delay, he made a decision!

When the new dawn arrived with the new day, the Kingdom Fleet set sail again. Their next target was Golden Bay City, one hundred sixty miles away. After a brief stop at Golden Bay City, they would travel for over ten days towards Hidden Serpent City, six hundred miles away! And from there, heading further East, lies the Maya!

Chapter 1016: Eastern Expedition Grand Sacrifice! The Divine King sits high, the blood-colored poetry!

The sea breeze blows across a thousand miles, transforming from the heat of the seaside back into the slight chill of the highland, reaching the Lake Capital City in the Mexica Valley. Lake Texcoco glistens with brilliant waves, reflecting the white stone dyke of Tenochtitlan, like the projection of the Divine Kingdom on earth!

Divine Smoke swirls, bringing the fresh scent of pine resin. In the Divine Kingdom, there are envoys of the gods, communicating between heaven and humanity. Soon, the cries of hundreds of city priests soar into the sky, echoing praise across the lake and sky.

"...Praise the Chief Divine! He is supreme and almighty! He bestows sunlight and rain, grants harvest and food, gives victory and glory, provides land and future! Praise him! The Chief Divine loves us, protects the mighty alliance, and we repay with devotion, with sacrifices and blood!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Repay with devotion, repay with sacrifices and blood!"

Tens of thousands of city citizens prostrate themselves on the ground, fervently praying to the sun, celebrating an unprecedented great sacrificial feast! The boiling wave of sound shakes the four directions, vibrates the lake surface, and even disperses the clouds in the sky, causing ripples on the water!

"The sun rises high, and the Chief Divine Huitzilopochtli ascends to supremacy! The supreme Chief Divine protects the alliance, the eastward Divine War has once again achieved perfect victory! The Chief Divine has devoured the Cloud Serpent of the mountain and devoured the God of the Hunt! He holds the javelin, carries the bow and arrow, holds the authority of war, conquering all directions, invincible!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Conquering all directions, invincible!"

The towering Great Temple reflects in the water, so clear and magnificent. The twelve Elder Priests stand atop the pyramid, holding the black obsidian stone long dagger for sacrifice. In front of the Main God Temple, behind the elders, a more than one meter high Divine Platform has been newly erected, holding a golden Throne of the Gods.

At this moment, in the shining golden light, King Aweit sits high upon the throne, dressed in splendid royal attire, holding the divine staff with yellow gemstones. He sits above everyone, overlooking the tens of thousands of ant-like city citizens, overlooking the tens of thousands of Royal Warriors, overlooking the hundreds of lake region nobility, and also the twelve Elder Priests!

"The great King Aweit is the incarnation of the Sun God, leading the divine citizens! He has conquered our enemies, conquered the Telascallan of the East! He has captured the divine descendants of the Cloud Serpent and delivered them to the altar of the temple!"

High Priest Uguel wears the Divine Crown, dons ceremonial dress, raises both arms high, shouting under the pyramid of the Great Temple. The twelve Elder Priests, four hundred various priests, also shout together, guiding twenty thousand citizens of the lake!

"The great king is brave and adept at war, having twice achieved victory in the Divine War, extinguishing two factions of the world, and is undoubtedly the Divine King! Let us pray for the Divine King of the alliance, praying for him to lead us forever!"

Then, High Priest Uguel turns around, under the eyes of tens of thousands, suddenly kneeling towards the king on the throne.

"Praise the Chief Divine, praise the Divine King! Praise you, my supreme king, may you sit high on the throne, unifying the world!"

"Praise the Chief Divine, praise the Divine King! Sit high on the throne, unify the world!"

In an instant, the frenzy of cheers rises from beneath the pyramid, all converging into the sky! Even the flying birds are dizzy from the shouting, shaking as they escape into the distant sky. The cheers are so boiling, yet so deeply imprinted upon the hearts, like tens of thousands of worker bees vibrantly buzzing under the command of the queen bee!

"Ha ha! Sacred as I am, sitting above all living beings, I shall certainly unify the world!"

Seeing the kneeling High Priest Uguel, seeing the subjugated twelve Elder Priests, Aweit is extremely pleased, laughing aloud. He leads tens of thousands of the Royal Army, carrying the momentum of great victory, hurriedly returning to the capital city, primarily to fully suppress the High Priesthood, becoming the sole supreme of the alliance!

The immortal elder has fallen, Morning Star's High Priest Xutel has gone to the Divine Kingdom. Now, within the High Priesthood, only the weak and mediocre High Priest Uguel remains. Under the king's overwhelming pressure, the draw and divide, plus the guarantee and promise of status, finally leads to today's ceremony! From this day forward, both divine authority and royal authority are under the Divine King alone!

Thinking of this, Aweit trembles all over, like being electrified, feeling the pleasure brought by power. He abruptly stands up, raises the divine staff in his hand high, and proudly declares to tens of thousands.

"The Sun God incarnates within me, I am the entire alliance! The Chief Divine's will is my will, and also your will!...At this moment, the sun arrives at the zenith, the Chief Divine is watching us! He has long impatiently awaited for the soul to ascend into the sky, for the freshness to burn in fire, for vitality to flow into the earth, and more awaits to personally bless us!...Come! Sing joyful celebrations, pray to the sun, the sacred great sacrifice, begins now!"

Upon hearing the king's declaration, High Priest Uguel freezes for a moment. He quickly reacts, raises the divine staff high, and announces as well.

"...Praise the Chief Divine, praise the Divine King! The great sacrifice, begins!"

Behind High Priest Uguel, the expressions of the Elder Priests change. Elder Priest Tonaltiliu of the Sun God, Elder Priest Azar of the War God, Elder Priest Acap of the Chief Divine, the three Deputy High Priests exchange glances, eyes flashing. Moments later, Elder Priest Acap of the Chief Divine is the first to raise his divine staff, followed by Elder Priest Tonaltiliu of the Sun God, lastly Elder Priest Azar of the War God. Then, the entire High Priesthood kneels to the king on the highest throne.

"Praise the Chief Divine, praise the Divine King! Victory in the Divine War, sacrifice the divine descendants of Tlaxcala!"

Chapter 1017: Eastern Expedition Grand Ceremony! The Divine King Enthroned, Crimson Poems!\_2

The priests' shouts floated all the way to the center of the Temple District, the temple of the God of Sin. Chief Priest Yaoke, clad in Leather Armor and draped in a long robe, held a Bronze Axe in his hand. Accompanied by hundreds of Temple Warriors, he personally escorted the precious Divine Descendants as sacrifices. The long line of Maya Blue sacrifices stretched all the way to the front of the Great Temple.

Hundreds of captives cried, wept, hesitated, even resisted, as they were marched to the end of their fates! That was the top of the Great Temple, the gray-black sacrificial stone already stained dark red with blood.

"Ah! Praise the mighty Chief Divine! Sacrifice, sacrifice!"

"Sacrifice the Tlaxcalans! Kill the arch-enemies of the Eastern Valley!"

"The King is invincible! The Alliance is blessed by the gods!"

"Haha! Exterminate the Tlaxcalan Divine Descendants, avenge the fallen ancestors!"

"Avenge! Sacrifice! Avenge, sacrifice! Roar! Roar!"

As the procession of sacrifices advanced, the shouts of hundreds of thousands of Mexica people almost reached a frenzy. The nobility and warriors howled with excitement, like mad Jaguars and eagles.

The Tlaxcalans were the Eastern arch-enemies of the Alliance! Both sides have been slaughtering each other, engaging in brutal warfare for half a century! Tens of thousands of Mexica Warriors died in the prolonged battles, and thousands of Mexica nobility were sacrificed in the Tlaxcalan temples! Between them, an undying blood feud had long since formed. Now, the rivals in slaughter had finally settled the score; years of blood feuds were about to be avenged, and in such a sacred sacrificial ceremony, as victors, they would witness the demise of the enemy's Divine Descendants!... How could everyone not go mad over this!

The long procession of Maya Blue was escorted up the towering pyramid. The blazing Sacred Fire had long been lit in front of the Great Temple, emitting the unique aroma of Divine Smoke. Aweit sat high above, his lips curling in a sneer, looking down on all directions. The Twelve Elder Priests were divided into two groups, presiding over two sets of sacrifices.

"Whew! Being the High Priest is truly exhausting! Not only do I have to proclaim loudly, but I also have to conduct the main sacrifice with a blade, announce names, and perform burning rituals to honor the gods... Pity these old bones of mine!... "

However, the slightly plump figure of High Priest Uguel didn't show much bone, but rather a lot of flesh. He took a deep breath, slightly moved his wrist, and began to wait for the first sacrifice.

In front of the Great Temple, the number of Tlaxcalan Divine Descendants to be sacrificed today was 625. Such a grand sacrifice would last for ten whole days, sacrificing 6250 Divine Descendants! And the number 625 came from the addition of the 365 days of the Sun Calendar and the 260 days of the Holy Calendar, a number symbolic of the Sun and the holy.

According to King Aweit's original plan, this grand celebration of the Great Temple's expansion, honoring the elders and the High Priest, celebrating victories and the autumn harvest... had never been held before, and should indeed have involved 36,500 sacrifices!

But after rare persuasion from both his son-in-law Xiulote and Chief Intelligence Officer Gillim, Aweit eventually changed his mind. He placed the 30,000 able-bodied Tlaxcalans in the military camp, entrusted them to the priests and warriors for training. After training, these 30,000 able-bodied men would become his son Chimalpahin's followers.

As for the four to five thousand who showed some resistance during training, they were singled out and put into the capital city's human sacrifice ball court. During the ten-day celebration, they would entertain the citizens of the capital city with their ball skills or their blood!

"Descendant of the Jiao People, Tlaxcala clan, Serpent Divine descendant, Prince Omomochi, journey to the realm of the Sun God! His spirit, according to his wishes, will meet with his brothers journeying to the Divine Kingdom, obtaining eternal peace!"

High Priest Uguel chanted loudly, casting the living soul in his hand into the Sacred Fire. Black smoke rose, carrying the soul of the departed, drifting high into the sky. Then, Uguel lowered his head, gazing upon the sacrificial stone where the young Divine Descendant had ceased to struggle.

"What a young and strong body... so young indeed!..."

High Priest Uguel paused, waving his hand slightly. Two Temple Guards immediately stepped forward, pushing the warm body off the edge of the Great Pyramid, leaving a trail of blood. Not far behind, Chief God Priest Acap followed with a nearly identical chant.

"Descendant of the Jiao People, Tlaxcala clan, Serpent Divine descendant, Prince Tohenyo, journey to the realm of the Sun God! His spirit, according to his wishes, will meet with his brothers journeying to the Divine Kingdom, obtaining eternal peace!"

Within just a few breaths, another similar but younger body rolled down from the high pyramid. The two bodies overlapped in front of the Moon Goddess statue, brothers reuniting in this manner, their blood mingling together. The bloodthirsty War God in the sky then, for the first time, extended a blood-red tongue to savor the flavor of the Divine Descendants.

"Sacrifice! Sacrifice! Sacrifice the princes of the Tlaxcalans! Praise the Chief Divine!"

Blue fell, red flowed. The hysterical cries echoed at the base of the Pyramid Temple, the exuberant shouts of the nobility and warriors. As the opening of the grand sacrifice, it always required two Divine Descendants of sufficient weight to delight the gods and the people!

"Descendant of the Jiao People, Weisoqinke clan, Rubber Serpent Divine descendant, City Lord Weiso, journey to the realm of the Sun God! His spirit will soar in the sky of the Divine Kingdom, meeting with his son journeying to the Divine Kingdom, transforming into a white serpent!"

High Priest Uguel chanted again, decades of sacrificial experience forming skilled muscle memory in his arms. Without needing to think, he cut and sliced seamlessly, with the precision of a master surgeon.

Chapter 1018: Eastern Expedition Grand Sacrifice! The Divine King Sits High, A Blood-colored Poem!\_3

The Chief God Elder Priest Acap, being younger, was always a bit behind. Originally, the designated lead was the Sun Elder Priest Tonaltiliu. But King Aweit intended to elevate Acap, and Elder Tonaltiliu was happy to have less work, without any dispute... So, after a few moments, Acap's clear and resounding chant finally echoed atop the pyramid.

"Descendants of the Jiao People, Weisoqinke Clan, offspring of the Serpent Divine, Prince Weiko, go to the realm of the Sun God! His soul will soar in the sky's Divine Kingdom, meet with his father who journeyed to the Divine Kingdom, and transform into a green serpent!"

"Boom, boom!"

Two corpses of different ages but similar appearances rolled down successively, falling not far ahead of the Eagle Warrior Battalion. Deputy Head Xiuxoke held the King's Royal Banner and stood at the front of the samurai. At this moment, Battalion Leader Stanley was stationed in Oak Tree City, and nominally, the Alliance's Eagle Warrior Battalion recognized Xiuxoke as its leader.

The High Priest journeyed to the Divine Kingdom, and Xiuxoke seemed to have aged overnight. His figure again became gaunt, gradually revealing the sharpness of a samurai. Yet, the chest where a rib had once broken still throbbed intermittently.

The eagle enjoyed riches, squandered in a cage; is that truly its nature? Even his grandson, Xiu Hua, was tightly protected by the King, and it was difficult to see him at all!

"Huff... Blood-red gleams over the capital city, hundreds of corpses serve as spring tillage."

Corpses rolled down, blood intertwined. Xiuxoke looked at the sacrificed divine descendant before him and softly chanted.

These sacrificed remains had already lost the spirit from their hearts and were no longer imbued with the divinity of the divine descendant. Their next destination, after a slight disposition, was burial into the thousands of acres of chinampas in the lake region to serve as fertilizer for spring cultivation. This was the Alliance's tradition upheld for decades, affirmed by the priests as divine will, using life's essence in the corpses to compensate for the earth's depletion.

Soon after, Xiuxoke's gaze slightly sharpened. He recognized the two corpses' identities as the City Lord and Prince of Weisoqinke Clan's Oak Tree City! These highly respected individuals were captured right before him by Eagle Battalion Leader Stanley!

All captured divine descendants of Tlaxcala, regardless of how illustrious their status had been, no matter how many lives and deaths they once controlled, faced the fate of sacrifice in the Alliance's Grand Festival!

"Incense burns until green smoke rises, bodies of divine descendants roll down the temple."

Amid the fervent cheers of hundreds of thousands, Xiuxoke held the Royal Banner, observing the growing number of corpses. The vast redness extended from the Great Pyramid below, boundless and seemingly endless, as if reaching to the horizon's end.

"Two hundred thousand voices shouting together, proclaiming the Chief Divine's slaughter far and wide!"

Subsequently, Xiuxoke slightly turned his gaze, looking at the silent Otomi envoy, the exceedingly deferential Vastec envoy, the shocked and astonished Tekos envoy, the pallid-faced Mistec envoy, the deeply furrowed brows of the Zapotec envoy, and the fear-tinged whispered Totonac envoy...

Seeing this, a smile gradually appeared on Xiuxoke's face. The eagle in the cage also felt joy. After the New Year, there would be one less envoy from these numerous realms! And this unified world would ultimately be passed down through his descendants...

"The divine descendants are slaughtered, the world unites, cosmic order returns to the Divine King... Haha! My sons and grandsons, they will be the future Divine King!"

Blood spread, cheers unending. Xiuxoke's chanting slowly lowered, gradually becoming inaudible. In a trance, he saw the silhouette of his father, walking toward him from the blood, merging with him. But moments later, Xiuxoke shook his head, burying his father deep within his heart. He raised his head, gazing at King Aweit atop the Great Temple Pyramid, on the golden throne, smiling in admiration.

"What a poem, a splendid poem! The Divine King's conquest of the world, I write poems trailing behind the gallant horse. Let's see where this grand poem leads, into whose hands it will fall!"

Chapter 1019: Eastern Expedition Grand Sacrifice! Slaying Evil, The Immortal Sun!

The vast Lake Texcoco, shimmering with ripples, reflects the blazing sun in the sky, as well as the towering Great Temple. The temple of white stone and red roof casts its reflection in the tranquil lake, appearing entirely crimson. The stairs of the temple, stained by the thousands of sacrifices when red was painted on, were engraved with the last traces of the Divine Descendants. The nearby water of Lake Texcoco was also infused with bright red, transforming into a faint Blood Lake. The Red Temple of the Blood Lake, that is the realm of redness!

On the temple, priests prayed and chanted, wielding sacrificial stone blades. In the ball court, the prisoners of war played desperately, exchanging it for rounds of cheers. In the plaza, poets recited loudly, reciting their composed verses. In the communities, musicians played bamboo flutes and beat lively drum rhythms. Beside the roads, maidens danced and sang joyously, attracting admiring youths...

At this moment, the voices, music, songs, roars, chants, prayers... all echoed together in the magnificent Lake Capital City, pleasing the hundreds of thousands of citizens with a festival of life, composing a symphony of celebration! This is the annual New Year Great Festival, as well as the rare Victory Festival!

The people of the Lake Capital City, indulging in an unprecedented great festival, were savoring the rare joy and mourning the departed elders. Such devotion and sacrifice, the color red and death, are a shared aesthetic of the Mexica, that has continued for over a hundred years, and no one knows when it might change.

The victory festivities have lasted for a full nine days! And today, is the final day. King Aweit, dressed in royal attire, still sat high on the Throne of the Gods. His gaze sharp, he scanned the Twelve Elder Priests presiding over the sacrifice in front of the temple, and swept over the nobles drinking and spectating in the plaza, along with the armored warriors keeping watch. His eyes were keen, observing the celebrating crowd, gazing upon the sprawling communities, feeling the inclination of the hearts of the city's people.

After a while, Aweit lowered his eyes, feeling both satisfied and somewhat inadequate. Gripping the Divine Staff in his hand, he murmured to himself at the highest point of the city.

"In their hearts, I am a battle-savvy king, a devoted Divine King, but not yet... not yet the immortal Sun! Reputation and legend need the sediment of time, and more so... need remarkable feats engraved in memory!"

After a moment of contemplation, Aweit's eyes sharpened, a fire igniting in his chest. He waved his hand, summoning a trusted aide, and whispered a few words.

In no time, a few trusted aides brought the king's splendid bronze cloth armor, bronze helmet, feather shield, and battle axe, below the Throne of the Gods. Following them, another trusted aide approached High Priest Uguel, who was presiding over the ceremony, and whispered a couple of sentences.

A look of surprise flashed in Uguel's eyes. After hesitating for a moment, he glanced at the king on the Throne of the Gods. Aweit nodded affirmatively, his expression one of irrefutable command. Soon, the Twelve Elder Priests ceased the sacrifices, standing around in front of the Great Temple, forming a large circle. Chief Priest Yaoke personally escorted the two most important sacrifices, ascending the sixty to seventy meters high pyramid to the forefront of the Great Temple.

The priests' chanting ceased, and the sacrifices of the Divine Descendants no longer rolled down. The change before the Great Temple quickly attracted everyone's attention. Thousands of Alliance nobles

and warriors gathered below the Temple Pyramid, gazing up at the sacred elevation, as if anticipating something.

High Priest Uguel cleared his throat, raising the Divine Staff in his hand high. In a hoarse voice, he announced to everyone.

"The Chief Divine watches over us! He yearns for valor and battle!... To please the Chief Divine, the devoted King Aweit will personally enter the arena to engage in a not to die sacrificial duel with two of the most revered Tlaxcala Divine Descendants! Our great Divine King will personally showcase valor, sacrificing our most dangerous and powerful foes!"

"What? The king himself is entering the arena to participate in a dangerous sacrificial duel, and it is one against two?!"

Upon hearing this shocking news, the city's nobles were collectively speechless for a moment. Then, an unparalleled tide of sound, filled with unprecedented anticipation, surged towards the high places of the Great Temple.

"Ah! Sacrifice, duel! Sacrifice, duel!... War God bless the king, bless the valiant Divine King! Roar!"

The excited shouts, like thunder, quickly spread throughout the city. Soon, the entire Lake Capital City echoed with a heartfelt call.

"Sacrifice, duel! Divine bless the Divine King!..."

In the hearts of the Mexica, valor and battle prowess are the greatest virtues! The tribes have not been distant from antiquity, warlike spirits are intense, and the people take honor in dying in battle... Aweit's deeds, if placed in the Celestial Empire of this time, would immediately prompt the ministers to earnestly dissuade and stop it at all costs. But in the Mexica Capital City at this moment, in the hearts of tens of thousands of people, there is only one expectant call.

"Quick! Hurry up!"

Aweit glanced around the Capital City, watching the masses gathering and surging, and nodded in satisfaction. Then, he slowly rose, raising the Divine Staff adorned with a Yellow Gemstone high, walking down the Divine Platform like a War God amid cheers. The guards promptly assisted the king in changing attire, putting on sturdy bronze cloth armor, donning an eagle feather bronze helm that concealed the face, followed by a solid tricolor feather shield and a sharp bronze short axe. Quickly, Aweit transformed into an elite Eagle Warrior, standing at the center of the twelve-member priesthood.

Then, two "most dangerous and formidable" Tlaxcala Divine Descendants, also stepped into the duel's small circle. City Lord Okote of Tree Snake City, with red eyes, clad in a robe painted with Cloud Serpents, wielded a war club with its sharp pieces removed. Meanwhile, City Lord Quiahuitz of Feathered Serpent City pressed his lips firmly, wearing a Feathered Serpent robe, handed a magnificent short baton adorned with feathers.

Chapter 1020: Eastern Expedition Grand Sacrifice! Slaying Evil, The Immortal Sun!\_2

Hmm, no need to doubt. The two sides in the duel are the Mexica King clad in Copper Armor with a Bronze Axe, against the Tlaxcala City Lords in robes with wooden clubs. Under the witness of the Chief Divine, this is fair and very Mexica. What? You say wooden clubs cannot break Copper Armor, and robes cannot withstand Bronze Axes? No, that just means you are not strong enough, nor brave enough.

"The Chief Divine bears witness! The King, incarnation of the Sun God, is about to battle against the God of the Hunt, and the incarnation of the Feathered Serpent Evil God! The bright sun will surely vanquish the darkness, slaying the Cloud Serpent and the Feathered Serpent!"

The High Priest Uguel proclaimed loudly, followed by the twelve Priesthood and hundreds of priests. Soon, the rumbling waves of sound came from the Great Temple, echoing through the Lake Capital City.

"Light against darkness, Chief Divine against Evil God. The sacred duel begins now!"

"Haha!"

Aweit, draped in Copper Armor, laughed heartily. He glanced at the two most noble individuals among the Tlaxcala Divine Descendants, bowing slightly, and said with a smile according to the ancient ritual.

"Okote, Quiahuitz, you are my beloved sons!"

"..."

The City Lord of Tree Snake, Okote, said nothing. He merely glared at the Mexica King with reddened eyes. Ten days ago, his two sons were the first Divine Descendants sacrificed. Over these ten days, the hatred of a broken nation and lost home had been etched deeply in his heart, unforgettable even unto death.

The City Lord of Feathered Serpent, Quiahuitz, after a moment of silence, replied in a low voice according to the ancient tradition.

"Aweit, you are my beloved father!... Even with a wooden club, I'll still kill you!"

"Good! Then come on!"

Aweit laughed aloud, raising the Great Shield on his left hand. Without hesitation, the City Lord of Tree Snake Okote charged forward, swinging forcefully at Aweit's neck.

"Bang!"

Aweit's left hand lifted, the Great Shield rose, deflecting the wooden club. Meanwhile, the City Lord of Feathered Serpent Quiahuitz also charged, swiftly striking Aweit's armored abdomen with a club.

"Bang!"

Aweit, burdened by Heavy Armor, could not move easily, taking a solid hit. The guards nearby widened their eyes in tension, gripping their Battle Axes, ready to intervene at any moment. The King curled his lips into a smile, shaking his head. Then, he turned towards below the Great Temple, making a pained expression as if injured.

"Ah?! The brave King, wounded by evil!"

Below the Great Temple, hundreds of thousands of eyes were watching intently. Soon, the battle between the King and evil grew even more intense. He occasionally used the Great Shield to block, with his Bronze Axe to parry, shifting his position under the torrential assault, his face showing both the pain and determination of fighting while wounded.

"Ah! Wah!... Ah!"

"Ah, this, this!"

"Chief Divine, please protect the Divine King!"

The situation gradually tilted, the King barely holding on, with no ability to counterattack under the assault of the two evil Divine Descendants. The spectators, shaken and terrified, shouted incoherently. But soon, under deliberate guidance, the chaotic shouts turned into prayers and calls of blessing!

"Chief Divine, protect us! Divine Bless our King!..."

As if hearing the prayers of the crowd, Aweit's expression became even more resolute.

The City Lord of Tree Snake, Okote, charged like a mad dog, battering the King's armor until it echoed. Yet, having faced days of hunger, his strength was waning. After barely fighting for a quarter, he staggered, struggling to stand firm.

Seeing the enemy's faltering strength, Aweit's brow lifted. The time had come for this spectacular duel to reach its climax. He suddenly stepped forward, raising a foot for a hefty kick to Okote's midsection.

"Ugh!"

Receiving the heavy blow, Okote's knees buckled, collapsing weakly. Witnessing the reversal of fortunes, thunderous cheers erupted instantly from below the Temple, accompanied by fervent prayers.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise the King!..."

Aweit smiled slightly, turning around. He ignored the kneeling Okote, facing down the Great Pyramid, flamboyantly waving his tricolored Feather Shield. The continuous cheers rang in his ears. Meanwhile, the City Lord of Feathered Serpent, Quiahuitz, showed a look of grief and indignation, likewise wielding a gorgeous feathered short club, engaging in a fierce fight with the King.

Brilliant feathers fluttered, like the incarnation of Divinity. After tangling closely for a moment, Aweit suddenly retreated a step. Then, he let out a fierce shout, finally raising the Bronze Axe in his right hand, with a broad and powerful motion, he slashed forward swiftly.

"Chief Divine, protect us! Slay the evil!"

"Screech! Crack!"

The sharp Bronze Axe easily tore through the robe of the Feathered Serpent. Subsequently, the razor-sharp blade unhesitatingly slashed open Quiahuitz's torso, carving out a half-meter long wound, spilling a fountain of blood!

"Ah! God of the Hunt, I hate..."

The City Lord of Feathered Serpent paused abruptly, managing to shout a low cry. Then, under the gaze of hundreds of thousands, he collapsed weakly.

"Roar! Roar! Slay the evil, courageous Divine King!"

"Haha!"

Aweit, soaked in sweat with blood on his face, laughed heartily. He stepped forward, grabbing Quiahuitz by the hair, dragging him towards the Sacrificial Stone. Next, he put away the Bronze Axe, drawing out the Obsidian Short Dagger from his waist, thrusting it into Quiahuitz's chest and abdomen!

"Sacrifice! Sacrifice!"

The fervent shouts came from all directions. Under countless gazes, Aweit lifted his blood-stained left hand, tossing a throbbing heart into the burning Sacred Fire! Soon, the shouts below turned into frenzied cheers and screams.

"Roar! Roar! Divine Bless our King!"

"Haha!"