

Civilization 1061

Chapter 1061: Second Kingdom Exploration, First Close Encounter

The tide rises and falls, flooding the coastal mudflats, washing over the calloused feet. The Putun warriors stand by the sea, raising shields and long spears, letting out beastly roars and wolf howls.

However, amidst their demonstrations and threats, seven invading longships once again approach, gradually nearing the shore. Dozens of canoes gather once more, with tribal warriors on board raising javelins, ready for combat at any moment.

By the coast, the chieftain of the Short Spear Tribe, Mochi, clad in wooden armor and wearing a vibrant feather crown, carried seven thick, short javelins. He stands among the tribe warriors, observing the sea invaders. Beside him are hundreds of tribal warriors in wooden armor, each also carrying javelins on their backs.

The Short Spear Tribe is the strongest among several Great Tribes of the Putun Tribe on the great plains. They occupy the open grasslands by the sea and the fertile downstream of the Great Grass River, named after their thrown "short spears." Most tribal warriors excel at throwing javelins and darts, especially the elite tribal warriors, who can even hit a running deer.

"Hmm? This is..."

Chieftain Mochi squints his eyes, looking at the Kingdom fleet by the shore. The fleet approaches for a while, then stops again. Next, a small canoe is lowered from the large ship. Two sailors row the small boat toward the crowd at the rivermouth. On the boat stands a foreign priest in a white robe with a feather crown, holding a book, alongside a Maya commoner with a long head but no face tattoos.

"Witness of the gods! Esteemed chieftain of the Putun Tribe! We are the envoys of the fleet, from the western Nava Tribe. We mean no harm! We come bearing gifts and wish to be your friends!"

From a distance of several hundred paces, the Maya commoner on the boat raises both hands high, shouting at the top of his voice, in the standard northern city-state accent.

"City people?... "

Hearing the accent, Chieftain Mochi furrows his brow slightly, then his attention is caught by the words that follow.

"Nava Tribe?!"

The Nava expedition five hundred years ago completely changed the landscape of the Maya world, bringing with it many eastward migrating Nava tribes. To this day, scattered Nava tribes remain in the jungles several hundred miles westward and have had previous contact with various Putun tribes. In the northern lowland city-states, there are many groups that speak Navajo, remnants of the collapsed Toltec Kingdom. Naturally, the Putun tribes, being considered barbaric Mayans, roaming the vast central grasslands and mountains, do not speak Navajo.

"Bring them over!"

More than a dozen tribal warriors surge forward, wielding shiny obsidian spears, spread out to guard the two landing individuals, leading them towards the strong chieftain. Priest Tomate, wearing a feather crown, faces them fearlessly and calmly. On the side, the Maya merchant Tikalo trembles nervously, near tears. Despite his reluctance, he steps by step, enters the "barbaric" realm of the Putun tribe.

"A brave Nava priest, a timid Maya commoner, what an interesting combination!"

Chieftain Mochi's lips curl with curiosity. But it is merely curiosity, not kindness. He grabs a sharp javelin, holding it in his hand, watching the two get closer and closer, until they are within ten paces!

"Ancestors bear witness! The invaders shall die under my short spear!"

Chieftain Mochi shouts fiercely, raising a sharp short spear, and without hesitation, suddenly throws it forward!

"Whoosh!"

Maya merchant Tikalo shudders instantly, his knees go soft, and his body lowers almost half its height. He breaks out in a cold sweat on his back, recalling being used as a target by the Lord, blurting out a phrase.

"Chief Divine bless!"

"Chief Divine bless!"

The javelin whistles as it attacks, within ten paces, there's no time to dodge. Priest Tomate closes his eyes, standing still, fiercely praying a phrase. Then, he feels a coolness on his scalp, the feather crown on his head is precisely shot off by the javelin. As he reaches to touch his head, he vaguely feels the scalp, evidently having a bald patch, truly life and death in a moment.

In full view, the feather crown symbolizing the priest's identity was shot off. Priest Tomate narrowly escapes death, has no time to fear, as the anger in his heart rises steadily. His eyes fierce, he reprimands loudly in Navajo.

"Chieftain of the Putun Tribe! I come bearing the light of the Chief Divine, with the goodwill of the Mexica Alliance! How dare you rudely act, offending the dignity of the Chief Divine?... The powerful alliance rules the highland, with tens of thousands of fierce warriors! Do not let the scripture of the Chief Divine drop from my hand!"

Hearing Priest Tomate's furious rebuke, the bright forehead of the Maya merchant breaks out in cold sweat. He can't wait to stand up straight, racking his brains, translating loudly.

"Esteemed chieftain of the Putun Tribe! This is the War God Priest from the Fierce Tiger Tribe, coming with piety and friendship! Why would you attack without cause, harming the friendship of the noble priest?... The mighty Fierce Tiger Tribe rules the western highland, with warriors twenty times your number! Please do not let the kind priest be disappointed, drawing the wrath of the spirits!"

"The mighty Fierce Tiger Tribe, with warriors twenty times our number?"

Upon hearing this, Chieftain Mochi becomes slightly serious. He does not believe there is such a powerful tribe in the world. However, since the opposing side possesses seven large ships and hundreds

of long-voyaging warriors, coming from a large Nava tribe should be beyond doubt. But why would such a tribe suddenly appear on the tribe's land?

Chieftain Mochi ponders silently, carefully assessing Priest Tomate in front of him. Priest Tomate, still simmering with anger, grits his teeth, observing the Maya chieftain before him. Moments later, both parties' expressions shift slightly.

"A slightly long head, facial tattoos, but without the eyes of a fighting chicken, nor filed teeth... The so-called divine features of the Maya nobility barely exist on this chieftain's face!..."

Priest Tomate shifted his gaze slightly and saw the opponent's strong arm, robust build, and rough large feet. Without a doubt, the leader of the Putun Tribe before him was also a formidable tribal warrior. This was starkly different from the Maya Divine Descendants he had seen along his journey.

Chieftain Moqi scrutinized the Navajo Priest in front of him, allowing his gaze to linger on the bronze axe at his waist. Then, with curiosity and a bit more seriousness, he acknowledged that such a robust priest was rare among the Mayan tribes. Pondering for a moment, he clenched his fist and thumped his chest firmly to express a warrior's respect.

"Priest of the Navarre, the gods have departed, they will not unleash their wrath, nor will they return! I threw the short spear and beseeched the ancestors with spirit. Since you are not dead, you are not an invader. Now, tell me! Why has your fleet appeared on our land?"

Upon hearing the chieftain's words, Tikalo wiped the sweat from his forehead, feeling slightly at ease. As long as the other party was willing to engage in dialogue, rather than chopping people down at first sight, he would have room to employ his wits. He quickly made some slight modifications and translated the chieftain's words, whispering a reminder.

"Throwing javelins upon meeting is both a show of intimidation and a demonstration of extraordinary combat skills, as well as a test of your courage... Priest Tomate, they have not offended the Chief Divine, so about our gift..."

Priest Tomate pretended not to hear. With a commanding gaze, he stared directly into Chieftain Moqi's eyes and spoke in a clear voice.

"The Mayan gods have long departed, but the Nava Chief Divine has just ascended to the highest! He continually performs miracles, guiding us with divine revelation, leading an immensely powerful alliance. Our fleet has traveled from three thousand miles away, neither coveting your land nor bearing any hostility towards you. We have appeared here, guided by divine revelation, bearing a sacred mission to journey to Snake Island in the Eastern Sea!"

"Miracles? Divine revelation?..."

Upon hearing this, Chieftain Moqi shook his head. Since the calamity of the gods, there had been no divine revelation in the hearts of the various Putun tribes. However, understanding the devout nature of other tribes, he curiously inquired further.

"Witness of the ancestors! Did you really come from three thousand miles away? And what is your mission?"

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! We are to journey to the Eastern Sea and prepare on Snake Island to confront the white-skinned demons!"

At this point, Priest Tomate's expression was firm as he reiterated the prophecy of the white-skinned demons. Chieftain Moqi listened in surprise, his eyes widening. After a while, he finally came back to his senses, shaking his head vigorously.

"The ancestors with spirit have never given us enlightenment. But if invaders were to come, regardless of their appearance, we would fight them!... Priest of the Fierce Tiger Tribe, I respect your mission, as well as your devotion and courage. You are a qualified warrior! But if you have nothing else to say, you may leave! Do not set foot on our land again!"

"..."

Priest Tomate bit his lip, saying nothing, feeling somewhat frustrated. He bent down, picked up the priest's feather crown from the ground, and placed it back on his head. Then, he looked at the obsidian javelin on the ground, pondered for a moment, and stood up straight again.

"Chieftain of the Putun Tribe! One of the purposes of our fleet's eastward journey is to convey the prophecy of the Chief Divine. Since you have listened to the divine revelation, you shall receive the Chief Divine's gift!"

Saying this, Priest Tomate reached into his bosom, took out a pouch of gemstones, and handed it to Chieftain Moqi's trusted aide. Then, he bit his lip and took off the exquisite bronze axe at his waist, directly handing it to Chieftain Moqi.

"Hmm?"

Chieftain Moqi glanced at the gemstones in the pouch with no change in expression. The Short Spear Tribe rarely traded with the city-states and did not place much importance on the gods' favored gemstones. Then, he took Priest Tomate's bronze axe, touched the sharp blade, felt a slight pain in his finger, and his eyes immediately sharpened.

"Oh! This axe..."

Chieftain Moqi turned his palm, facing the bright sunlight, and was astonished to see his cut finger.

"What kind of axe is this? It's so sharp!"

"This is the axe granted to warriors by the Nava War God, not only sharp but also resilient."

Mayan merchant Tikalo seized the opportunity to speak with a smile.

"And each warrior of the thousands in the Fierce Tiger Tribe has one such god-given battle axe!"

Hearing this, Chieftain Moqi raised an eyebrow. Holding the obsidian short spear, he clashed it against the bronze battle axe with force.

"Screech!"

With just one powerful strike, the tip of the short spear was chipped off, while the blade of the battle axe remained unscathed. Seeing this, Tikalo's lips curled into a smile as he looked at the equally smiling Priest Tomate. Then, the two men turned to the shocked Chieftain Moqi, eyes full of expectation.

Chieftain Moqi's expression changed several times as he thought deeply for a while. Moments later, he finally raised his head again, his eyes cold, and pointed to the two of them.

"Take them! Send an envoy to tell the Fierce Tiger Tribe! Bring a hundred god-given battle axes to exchange for their War God Priest!"

Chapter 1062: Second Kingdom Exploration, Fierce Tiger Tribe's Fury

The Long River surged, flowing into the seaside. The canoe departed, carrying with it the news of Priest Tomate's captivity and the conditions from the Putun Tribe. On the longship, sailors bustled about, and warriors donned armor, not knowing what fierce arguments had transpired. Two quarters of an hour later, the canoe returned, bringing back a hundred shiny, sharp bronze axes that dazzled the eyes of the tribal warriors.

"Ha! Navajo Priest, who would've thought you were so noble and valuable!"

Chieftain Moqi looked at the shining bronze axes and laughed heartily. His small eyes glimmered with greed; he stretched out his hand and patted Priest Tomate's face as if he were touching a godly statue worth a fortune.

"Tell me, with such nobility, if we demand another fleet for a hundred bronze axes, would they give it? Haha, there's also a City-State translator here, let's price him at ten bronze axes too!"

Mayan merchant Tikalo shivered as he translated the chieftain's words. He felt both regret and resentment in his heart. Why did he get involved in this troublesome affair? He was about to leave, so why did he stir up the greed of these barbarians? Now it was too late, the other party's greed was inflamed, and they had overturned the table. Greed always escalates, impossible to satisfy, and this might be a one-way journey...

"Oh Heavenly Serpent Divine! After so many years of hard work, months of planning, with vengeance in sight, will I fall at the last stretch? Is this my destined fate?..."

"Greedy seekers of wealth, desecrators who harm priests, promise-breakers who betray! The Chief Divine shall witness all this, deliver divine punishment, and cast your soul into the cold abyss!"

Priest Tomate, bound tightly, sat beside Chieftain Moqi. He straightened his spine resolutely, his eyes seemingly aflame, unafraid as he repeatedly admonished. Keeping his head down, Mayan merchant Tikalo did not dare to translate those words.

"Haha!"

Though Chieftain Moqi couldn't understand, he could guess bits and pieces. He laughed heartily, flipping through the pictorial booklet in his hand, which had been confiscated from the Navajo Priest. The drawings depicted stories of the Chief Divine, with annotations in blocky script.

"Tsk tsk, is this your heritage tableau? So thin, what are these drawings? Double-headed pyramids, snake-entwined mountains, and gods wielding lightning?... Hmm, this paper is soft yet tough, seems coated with something, better than the City-State's from the north!..."

Chieftain Moqi tugged at the Book of Ama Colley in his hands, feeling the resilience of the stiff yellow paper. He had also snatched the City-State priest's book tablet, yet none matched the Fierce Tiger Tribe's quality.

In the Classical Period, the Mayans could make simple bark paper and even compile books for use by the divine descendants and priests. Priests would write in highly abstract scripts akin to secretive divine symbols, passing on divine knowledge through generations. Each priestly lineage had differing scripts. However, after divine calamities, much of the divine knowledge was lost, with many priestly families perishing, leading to regression in papermaking techniques. The chaotic abstract Mayan writing remained circulated only among priests.

"What a wealthy Fierce Tiger Tribe..."

Chieftain Moqi muttered, looking at the book in his hand. However, a burst of frantic shouting suddenly erupted by the shoreline.

"They're coming, they're coming! They're ramming us!"

"Boom, boom boom!"

Deafening collisions sounded continuously, like the most tumultuous tides of the rainy season. Chieftain Moqi drew his javelin, looking over with a change in expression!

Seven longships accelerated to their maximum, charging towards the shore. The rowers on board flushed red, rowing with all their might. Over a dozen intercepting canoes attempted to block, only to be overturned with resounding "bangs." Dozens of tribal warriors fell into the water, struggling in the waves to swim ashore. Before their momentum was spent, the seven longships had already reached the shore, quickly turning around. Over a hundred Prepecha Warriors standing at the aft raised their greatbows, paused briefly, then fired their arrows.

"Head high, aim high!"

"Whoosh, whoosh whoosh!"

Over a hundred feathered arrows soared into the sky, arcing over the tribal warriors along the coast, and landed obliquely on the sandy ground over two hundred paces away. The "thud" of arrows hitting the ground echoed, with one landing right in front of Chieftain Moqi. At such range, the bows' kinetic energy was depleted, causing no substantial harm. Yet, the sheer distance was an intimidation...

"Hiss! What's this? Fierce Tiger Tribe's bows that can shoot two hundred paces!..."

For the first time, Chieftain Moqi's face showed fear; this was clearly a demonstration from the Fierce Tiger Tribe. He observed the nearby longship, his expression somber and contemplative.

"Massive, ramming longships, long-range archery from the ships, and two hundred axe-wielding, armored warriors... they can run, shoot far, withstand and charge! ... Even with just a few hundred, they would indeed cause immense trouble for the tribe!"

"Whoosh, whoosh whoosh!"

From the seven longships, another intimidating volley of feathered arrows was launched. Then, the fleet quickly turned their prows, the rowers bravely paddling, once more disengaging, retreating into the near sea. By the coastline, only a dozen capsized canoes drifted, with dozens of waterlogged tribal warriors awkwardly swimming ashore.

The Moqi Chieftain watched the fleet moving away for a while, then stop near the coast. He knew they were waiting for a response. He turned his head again, glanced at the feathered arrows on the sandy ground, then the copper axe in front of him, and finally the Navaj Priest, whose expression grew fierce.

"Ha! Navaj Priest, your crew dares to intimidate me! Intimidate the brave Short Spear tribes, intimidate a powerful chieftain like me! ... You should know that no matter how fast your longships are, they cannot land! No matter how far your bows shoot, they only reach a hundred or so yards. No matter how powerful your tribes, they're three thousand li away! As long as we retreat inland or return to the fortress, your fleet poses no threat to us!"

The Moqi Chieftain squinted his eyes, sneering coldly. Then, as if mocking or venting his anger and unease, he suddenly swung the sharp axe in his hand.

"Ha! Navaj Priest, your crew doesn't care about your life or death! I'll kill you! I'll take you back to the fortress and make you into snacks for tonight!!"

"..."

The Mayan merchant Tikalo was on the verge of tears, stammering as he translated. Priest Tomate's demeanor was resolute; though trembling inside, his face showed a fearless acceptance of death.

"The Chief Divine protects me! His Highness of Divine Revelation says that weakness and ignorance aren't obstacles to survival, arrogance is! Chieftain Morton, the powerful Fierce Tiger Tribe came with goodwill, yet you repay it with malice and greed! ... You're like a prairie rat poking out of its burrow to steal food, unaware of the Jaguar's swiftness and ferocity! ... Tikalo, if you want to live, translate word for word for me, don't try anything smart!"

"Uh! ..."

Tikalo froze momentarily. Soon, he translated the Chief God Priest's stern words word for word, sweating all over.

"Hmm? Courting death!"

Upon hearing this, the Moqi Chieftain's eyes became fierce, and he raised the newly acquired copper axe. The sharp edge gleamed coldly under the midday sun.

"Ha! Navaj Priest, speak another word, and I'll sever your limbs now! Make you regret with tears!"

Priest Tomato showed no fear. He even smiled, laughing angrily and cursing.

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! Putun Chieftain, you are unaware of our strength's might and the preciousness of our friendship, nor can you comprehend the glory of the Chief Divine's mercy! These hundred copper axes are mere hairs on a Jaguar for the powerful alliance! And the four hundred warriors on board are only one-twentieth of an eight-thousand-man legion. The alliance has twenty such eight-thousand-man legions!"

"Come on, kill me then! The Chief Divine's protection will guide my spirit to the bright Divine Kingdom! Whereas you will regret with tears! Because you will face the Fierce Tiger Tribe's wrath, lose the hope of conversion to the Chief Divine, miss out on your tribe's rise, and utterly lose your tribe! ... You will regret with tears for all of today's actions!"

Hearing Priest Tomato's angry shout, the Moqi Chieftain lowered his gaze and remained silent.

"The Fierce Tiger Tribe's wrath... the tribe's chance to rise? ..."

A hundred copper axes were enough to prove the Fierce Tiger Tribe's wealth. The longships and greatbows further demonstrated the tribe's power. And Priest Tomato's composure in the face of death surpassed even the city-state priests in courage. His confident words surely indicated genuine backing from a powerful force, trusting in the Fierce Tiger Tribe's strength!

After a while, the Moqi Chieftain gritted his teeth, kept a cold face, and raised the copper axe in his hand, suddenly swinging downward!

"Ah! Save me, Serpent Divine! I still have unfinished matters!"

The Mayan merchant Tikalo closed his eyes and screamed in despair. However, the cold axe blade did not penetrate his body. Moments later, he opened his eyes, shivering, only to see the solemn faces of both Priest Tomate and the Moqi Chieftain.

Priest Tomate loosened the stiffened shoulders, tore off the cut ropes from himself. He stood up with difficulty, controlled his trembling legs, and looked at the Moqi Chieftain, who lowered the copper axe, asking calmly.

"So, Putun Chieftain, will you honor your promise and let me go?"

The Moqi Chieftain pursed his lips, lowered his head. After a while, he looked at Priest Tomate, and suddenly his mouth curled upwards.

"Navaj Priest, your bravery has earned my respect! The enlightened ancestors bestow upon me guidance and show me a chosen future. Through my mouth, he asks you a question..."

"Does the friendship brought by the Fierce Tiger Tribe still remain?"

Chapter 1063: The Second Kingdom Exploration, Blood Oath Alliance, Anything Can Be Traded!

"Bring the deer hunted this morning! Fetch the stolen mead! The ancestral spirits protect our tribe; today is a good day to welcome friends! I, Short Spear Moqi, will swear a blood oath here with the Tomato Priest of the Fierce Tiger Tribe!"

By the Long River, the waves crashed. It was evening, and the clouds were floating. Seven longships approached the shore, with over a hundred archers standing vigilant on the deck. Gray Soil noble Puap personally led sixty armored Prepecha Warriors onto land. He was fully armed: bronze cloth armor on his upper body, a long spear in his right hand, a shield strapped to his left, and a bronze axe at his waist.

"Ha! First they attack, then they detain, and now they want an alliance... so capricious, these damn barbarians!"

The valiant Gray Soil noble wore a grim expression, cursing inwardly. He gripped his copper spear tightly, ready to rush forward and fight the Putun Tribe to protect Priest Tomate, who was making an alliance in front.

Opposite the Kingdom's Warriors, separated by dozens of steps, were the densely packed warriors of the Putun Tribe. They held their stone spears up high, slung their darts, and howled with excitement. Soon, following the chieftain's orders, several Tribal Warriors clad in wooden armor carried a stag, dead for half a day, to the center between the two groups.

"Chieftain, a fresh stag! Perfect for the ceremony!"

"Hmm. Let me handle this. The ancestor said, to welcome friends, one must show sincerity!"

Chief Moqi personally handled the dagger, slicing open the stag's front belly and extracting the heart where blood had coagulated. With precise strokes of the dagger, he evenly cut the dark red fresh heart in half. Then, with a solemn expression, Chief Moqi handed half of the heart to Priest Tomate and declared gravely.

"With the ancestor as witness! Friend, we share the soul of the same heart, and we establish a bond of mutual trust between our hearts!"

Witnessing this, Priest Tomate raised his eyebrows, understanding in his heart. In the collective consciousness of Central American tribes, the heart is seen as the seat of the soul and possesses mysterious spirituality. Many significant ceremonies require the participation of the heart. At this moment, the stag heart acts as a magical medium, proclaiming the two's 'shared heart'.

"With the Chief Divine as witness! Friend, we share the soul of the same heart. Henceforth, our souls are interconnected; our friendship, like our souls, is indivisible!"

With a solemn demeanor, Priest Tomate declared formally. Then, the two simultaneously bowed their heads to swallow the bitter and fishy 'witness'.

Two steps away, Tikalo's eyebrows twitched, his expression complex. He knew that this was the first step in the Putun Tribe's alliance, and the next step was a blood pledge.

"The fierce Aztecs have finally arrived in the Maya world. Their first move is to ally with the equally barbaric Putun Tribe... Oh! Heavenly Serpent Divine! Was guiding them here right or wrong?..."

The tides rose, the river surged, and the momentum was unstoppable. In no time, Priest Tomate and Chief Moqi lifted their heads simultaneously. The two looked at each other's dark red lips and stained teeth, paused for a moment, and for some reason burst into laughter!

"Ha ha! Praise to the Chief Divine! Moqi, my friend!"

"Ha ha ha! The ancestor has spirits! Tomate, my brother! Roar, roar!"

Chief Moqi raised his head and howled wildly towards the sunset. Then, with a wave of his hand, he commanded.

"Bring the wine!"

Two Tribal Warriors immediately stepped forward, bringing a large pottery jar. The jar was filled with mead made from honey, a precious brew used within the tribe for curing diseases and disinfecting wounds.

"Come, brother, let's drink blood together!"

Priest Tomate nodded. Immediately, he expertly drew out an obsidian dagger, slicing open the vein on the back of his palm, then held his hand above the pottery jar. Almost simultaneously, another sliced palm came over. The two clasped hands, their blood converged, and dripped into the wine, turning the golden mead red.

"With the ancestor as witness! The Short Spear Tribe wishes to ally with the Fierce Tiger Tribe! From this day, mutual support, never betrayal. Should I betray the vow, I, Short Spear Hoji, shall perish by the blade!"

"With the Chief Divine as witness! The Kingdom of the Lake wishes to ally with the Short Spear Tribe of the Putun! The warriors of both sides shall trust each other with their backs, never striking from behind. Should I betray the vow, Chief God Priest Tomato, I shall offer myself in sacrifice to the Divine!"

High-spirited vows echoed under the sunset, ringing through the seaside sky. The fiery warmth stained the precious mead, then entered the mouths of both. After gulping down the large jar of fishy-sweet mead, their faces subtly flushed. Then they again raised their blood-dripping right hands, tightly grasping each other's in midair! A thunderous cheer erupted enthusiastically from the Putun Tribe warriors!

"Allies! Brothers! Allies! Brothers! Oh ho!..."

Just a dozen steps away, Puap was speechless. He watched the sudden shift in the situation, truly at a loss. On the flagship, veteran militia Chiwaco glanced sharply, then raised both hands, joining in the loud cheers.

"Allies! Brothers!... What are you all staring at, let your voices roar! Allies! Brothers!"

The cheers only lasted a moment before the joyful atmosphere began to spread along the coast. Warriors from both sides laid down their weapons, grinning, and the mood significantly lightened. Chieftain Hodge ordered the warriors to make a fire, roasting deer meat on the spot. Then, the two sat down by the seaside and began discussing important matters.

"Chieftain Moqi, my brother, the glory of the Chief Divine has already unified the Western Highlands! And now, His merciful gaze has come to the Yucatan Peninsula for the first time, watching over you!"

Priest Tomato solemnly removed the pure gold Sun Amulet from himself and placed it around Chieftain Moqi's neck.

"This is the Amulet of the Mexica Chief Divine! The Supreme Main God has chosen you. As long as you devoutly believe in the Chief Divine, you will receive His protection!... Also, this scripture is the book of the Chief Divine, capable of bringing you divine enlightenment!"

"..."

Chieftain Moqi's lips twitched as he looked at Tomate's solemn and fervent expression and remained silent. He put on the pure gold amulet and received the illustrated scripture. Then, he followed the fervent priest in reciting a few prayers to the Chief Divine. "Praise the Chief Divine Huitzilopochtli! He governs all things, is omnipotent, granting us victory and valor, light and harvest!..."

Until Priest Tomate was beaming with joy, Chieftain Moqi couldn't wait to speak up.

"Brother Tomate, you mentioned that accepting your friendship presents a great opportunity for a tribe to rise!... What exactly is this opportunity and benefit you speak of?"

"Moqi... brother, let me explain slowly."

Priest Tomate thought for a moment, organized his words, and then smiled as he responded.

"To resist the upcoming white-skinned demons, His Highness of the Divine Revelation is leading us to the Eastern Snake Island. Our fleet is merely an exploratory vanguard, acting as scouts for the great army! Once we confirm the Eastern route, thousands of the Kingdom's Warriors will follow! And the place of the Short Spear Tribe is a necessary stop in this route."

"Hmm? Thousands of warriors? Surely they will pass through here?"

Hearing this, Chieftain Moqi's face changed unpredictably. He cast a skeptical look at Priest Tomate and forced a smile.

"The Fierce Tiger Warriors are to pass through here, but the Short Spear Tribe must provide food and fresh water? If the terms are right, it's not impossible."

"Haha! Moqi, my brother, the Kingdom will never shortchange you, nor the allies of the East!"

Priest Tomate laughed. Seeing Chieftain Moqi's doubts, he continued to explain.

"As long as the Short Spear Tribe converts to the Chief Divine, the Kingdom's priests will come to guide you in farming and help you build a city-state! Moreover, the Kingdom's fleet will constantly bring wealth, allowing your tribe to prosper!"

"Farming? Building a city? Bringing wealth?"

Chieftain Moqi pursed his lips and shook his head in response.

"Tomate, my brother, the tribe's life is very good! Everyone is accustomed to a nomadic lifestyle, there's no need to enclose ourselves with stones like the city-states of the North. I've heard that the city-state people of the North pursue gemstones, even taking them to the grave! That's more foolish than rock rats! All that so-called wealth can't be eaten, drunk, or used in battle, so what's the point of having so much? It's of no use!"

Upon hearing this, Priest Tomate's eyes flickered. Looking at the already opinionated Chieftain Moqi, he smiled and asked.

"Oh? Brother Moqi, then what is it that you want? You can tell me directly!"

"Haha, straightforward! Seeing each other as brothers, there's no need to wriggle in the waters like the Water Serpent! I'll just say it plainly..."

Chieftain Moqi raised a clay cup, drinking another cup of Blood Wine. He licked his lips, savoring the bloody and sweet taste, feeling a wave of heat in his body. Then, he pulled open his collar, strongly patted his robust chest, and loudly declared.

"Tomate, my brother, my ally. I want your axes, I want your long spears! I want your greatbows, I want your armor! If possible, I also want your large ships!..."

"Ancestors witness! If I have these things, never mind changing beliefs or providing passage supplies, even the lives of tribal warriors, I can exchange with you!"

Chapter 1064: The Second Kingdom Exploration, A Win-Win! Kingdom Weapons Exchanged for Tribal Warriors

The seaside is warm with fragrant grass upon the shore. Longships glide through the waves, and encampments stand at the riverside. Hundreds of warriors cheer and shout, while two leaders sit facing each other, drinking together. Priest Tomato finishes a cup of blood wine and laughs heartily.

"Good, refreshing! Moqi, my brother, what you want, I can give it to you in the future! The Kingdom provides you with god-given weapons and equipment, and you provide skilled warriors to the Kingdom! Together, we can sweep through the Maya Tribes of the Northern Land!"

Hearing this, Chieftain Moqi's eyes flickered. He reached out friendly, grasping Priest Tomato's arm, looking him in the eye, and spoke earnestly.

"Xulucumul! We Putun people, 'live under trees amid ashes and poverty.' Life is always hard; we can only see what's in front, unable to think too far ahead... Brother Tomato, there are many weapons on your ships, and many warriors in our tribe. Let's trade now, before you leave!"

"Trade now, in such haste?"

Priest Tomato was taken aback by how impatient Chieftain Moqi was.

"How do you want to trade?"

"Five Bronze Axes for one tribal warrior! Two Greatbows for one warrior! As for your Leather Armor..."

Chieftain Moqi squinted his eyes, greedily eyeing the armor worn by Prepecha Warriors. He had seen similar armor among City-State folks, much better than Wooden Armor. Then, he curiously glanced at Puap wearing the unfamiliar Bronze Cloth Armor. Finally, he extended a finger, greedily saying.

"One set of Leather Armor for one warrior! They've seen blood, killed, and are skilled with Javelins. After the trade, they join the Fierce Tiger Tribe, becoming yours!"

"Oh? One set of Leather Armor, two Greatbows, or five Bronze Axes for one Putun Tribal Warrior?"

Priest Tomato looked at Chieftain Moqi with a smirk.

"Moqi, my brother, the price..."

"Ahem! Brother Tomato, to be honest, we Short Spear Tribe have twenty thousand, can mobilize five thousand warriors; the strongest tribe in the great grass river region!"

Chieftain Moqi clenched his fist and thumped his chest again, slightly boasting of his tribe's might. Then, he gazed at the vast grass river to the East, his eyes full of ambition and desire!

"In the great grass river region, there are seven or eight Great Tribes, over ten Small Tribes, tens of thousands of hunting Putun Tribes! As long as I have your weapons, I can send troops to the upper reaches of the great grass river's other Putun Tribes!..."

"This trade price does make the tribe a bit fortunate, I can compensate you more. According to Putun tradition, tribal warriors defeated and captured submit to the powerful victor, starting anew as War Slaves for the new tribe! If you can wait, loan me some weapons first, then when I return victorious, I can give you double the War Slaves!"

Speaking of this, a genuine smile appeared on Chieftain Moqi's rugged face. He tightly grabbed Priest Tomato, urgently inquiring.

"How is it? Brother Tomato, if you desire gemstones, gold, and silver, there are loot from years in the tribe, all yours!"

"Hmm..."

Hearing this, the corner of Priest Tomato's mouth lifted. Along the journey, the Kingdom sold Lake Gem and profited greatly. Unexpectedly, it was the "barbaric" Putun folks here who truly recognized value. The chieftain even considered taking a loan for the Kingdom's weapons, repaying double...

"The Kingdom Fleet indeed has two entire ships reserved with axe and spear. But with seven longships carrying four hundred warriors and sailors, allowing for only a hundred and fifty more, space for food and water storage would be too tight..."

Priest Tomato pondered for a while, then responded seriously to the chieftain.

"Brother Moqi, our fleet only needs eighty warriors now."

"Only eighty warriors?"

Upon hearing this, Chieftain Moqi furrowed his brows. Even with five Bronze Axes for one warrior, four hundred Bronze Axes would not suffice. What's more, weapons wear out when used...

"Correct! Brother Moqi, this is our first transaction, so let's go with your price. But truthfully, our Greatbow is costly, requiring highly durable arrows. Your tribe cannot manufacture them and cannot use them for long."

Upon hearing this, Chieftain Moqi rubbed his chin, bringing from the sand a Bronze Arrow. He examined the sharp arrowhead, sturdy wooden shaft, and glued tail feathers, silent in contemplation. Moments later, he snapped the wooden shaft with both hands, finally nodding silently.

"In large-scale combat, rather than using close-ranged hand axe, it's better to use long-range Bronze Spears."

Priest Tomato gestured, summoning a Prepecha Warrior wielding a spear. Then, he took hold of a Bronze Spear, demonstrating skilled thrusts, and handed the spear to Chieftain Moqi.

"One Bronze Axe can exchange for two Bronze Spears. The spearhead is durable; when dull, sharpen it. If the wooden shaft breaks, you can replace it, or use it as a Short Spear... Give me a tribal warrior, and I

will give you ten Long Spears! Eight hundred Bronze Spears can definitely enhance your tribe's strength!"

Gazing at the Long Spear before him, Chieftain Moqi pondered intensely again. To be honest, he desired the long-distance shooting Greatbow and sturdy Leather Armor the most. As for Bronze Axes and Spears, their greatest use wasn't defeating mobilized tribal warriors, but breaking through other tribes' Wooden Armor Warriors.

"Eighty warriors, eight hundred Long Spears... eighty warriors, twenty sets of Leather Armor, six hundred Long Spears..."

Chieftain Moqi murmured softly, thinking hard for a while. He then tightly grasped Priest Tomate's arm with great force, making the latter's eyelids twitch.

"Tomate, my brother! Your god-given weapons, so sharp and sturdy, how are they crafted?"

"Brother Moqi, it requires the Chief Divine's flame, his stone, crafted by his craftsmen! Once your tribe fully submits to the Chief Divine, gradually, you can learn too!"

Priest Tomate tried to withdraw his arm but couldn't. Enduring the pain, he still wore a wide smile.

"Chief Divine grants protection! He bestows strong weapons upon devoted followers, overcoming all tribal obstacles!"

"Chief Divine grants protection! He will aid me in defeating upstream enemies, annexing their tribe!"

Chieftain Moqi gritted his teeth, sincerely praying for the first time. Then, he resolutely made his decision.

"Tomate, my brother. I give you eighty skilled tribe members! You give me twenty sets of Leather Armor, six hundred Long Spears! I will also give you a close tribal warrior; he can throw a dart and hit a running deer!"

After saying this, Chieftain Moqi turned around, looked around, and called out to a young trusted aide.

"Dart Mokai! Ancestors bear witness, from today, you will follow the Fierce Tiger Tribe! You should step out from the grasslands and hills, go venture out. This is a Great Tribe, only true warriors can find a place here!"

"...Understood, Chieftain."

Dart Mokai pursed his lips and strode confidently to stand before Priest Tomate. He assessed the other's physical stamina, secretly pursing his lips. Then, he pounded his own chest and shouted loudly.

"Leaders of the Fierce Tiger Tribe! Ancestors bear witness, I am a true warrior; you will see my Javelin, witness my valor!"

Chapter 1065: Second Kingdom Exploration, Night Talk by the Sea, Closer Lowland Maya

The red sun headed to the west, casting a kaleidoscope of azure light across the sky. The seaside evenings were always extraordinarily magnificent. The Caribbean Sea, with its mighty splendor, swallowed the waters of the Great Grass River, its feet touching the shores of the Yucatan Peninsula. Dozens of Maya clans flourished and fell on this northern peninsula, thriving and perishing through the ages.

"The Aztecs and Putun reached an agreement so quickly, it's like a predatory alliance of wolves and tigers!... The barbaric aura is overwhelming, surging northward like a tide..."

Observing these "barbaric" tribespeople trading, Tikalo, the Mayan merchant, covertly smirked and inexplicably sighed. He dutifully translated every word of the transaction between the parties, his eyes slightly drooping, plotting something unknown.

"Good, very good! Dart Mokai, the Chief Divine will watch over you! Here, put on this Sun Amu... uh!"

Looking at the young, strong tribal warrior, Priest Tomate was very pleased. He reached into his robe, searching briefly before remembering that he had already given the Sun Amulet to someone else. But it didn't matter; there were plenty more on the ship. Tomate glanced towards the ship, pondered briefly, and then called over Huitu Puapu.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Captain Pu, I have sworn a blood oath with Chieftain Short Spear Moqi and reached an agreement to exchange surplus weapons from the ship for eighty tribal warriors from the Putun. When we reach Snake Island of the Eastern Sea, the fleet must establish a foothold and leave enough manpower, so we must prepare in advance..."

"This rivermouth is a necessary passage for the subsequent fleets of the kingdom. I intend to establish a solid base here on the Yucatan Peninsula. Chieftain Moqi can supply the kingdom's sailing fleets with food and water and fighting personnel! He is very important to us! And as long as the expansion of the Short Spear tribe reaches a certain size, it will inevitably impact the northern Maya city-states, causing disruption on the Yucatan Peninsula, which could be advantageous to us!"

"Uh?... Yeah. Priest Tomate, you are right."

Priest Tomate explained patiently for quite some time, making the Gray Soil noble dizzy. Then, lowering his voice, he instructed.

"Captain Pu, go get a set of the kingdom's bronze cloth armor. I want to gift it to the chieftain!"

"What? Give him precious bronze armor?!"

"Yes! Chieftain Moqi has pledged to the Chief Divine and is very important to us!"

Tomate nodded affirmatively.

"The kingdom must ensure he doesn't inexplicably die in the upcoming battles. If that happens, finding another Putun chieftain willing to trade won't necessarily be easy! ... Oh, and arrange for two kingdom's warriors to stay here, get familiar with the local situation, and also learn some Maya language."

"... Alright! You make sense, we'll do as you say!"

Puapu pursed his lips, grumbling internally. The Tomato Priest loved to wave the scriptures and create all these issues. Returning to the ship, he quietly communicated with the old militia.

"... What to do?"

"What else can we do? He's already set his presence there, and isn't wrong, so we just follow his lead!"

"OK. Then I'll pick two people! Peika, Peiqiu, you brothers pack up and follow me. Stay with the Putun tribe for a while, and quickly learn their language... What, you're asking when you'll be picked up? Wait 'til the fleet returns from Snake Island and then we'll see!"

Shortly afterward, Puapu returned with a set of bronze medium armor and two kingdom's warriors with bitter expressions, handing them to Tomato Priest.

"Haha! Brother Moqi. You gifted me with a trusted aide, and I also present you with a deity-given war armor, so you stand invincible and unshakable on the battlefield!"

Priest Tomato acted swiftly, grabbing Chieftain Moqi's arm tightly, making the latter flinch. Then, he solemnly handed the bronze cloth armor to Chieftain Moqi.

"Praise the Chief Divine! He bestows the invincible armor upon the devout warriors!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise His armor!"

Chieftain Moqi touched the copper armor, his expression changing. He eagerly donned the heavy armor, pounding it with his fist, feeling the clangorous impact, his face filled with surprise and delight.

"Brother Tomato! You are truly my great brother! With such armor, I can charge freely!... Good, good!"

Chieftain Moqi praised repeatedly, testing with a short dagger for a while before satisfactorily removing the armor, sweat already appearing on his back. The March weather wasn't yet too hot; come the fiery August, under the blazing sun, even the strongest tribal warrior could only wear armor for a few quarters before needing to quickly take it off!

"Haha, the Chief Divine protects the kingdom! Brother Moqi, the kingdom has thousands of such deity-given armors! The Short Spear tribe has pledged loyalty to the Chief Divine. When the kingdom's priests and craftsmen arrive, they will guide you in weapon making and equipment maintenance. One day, the Short Spear tribe could also produce deity-given weapons and armors!"

Priest Tomate, smiling, painted a picture of a future filled with bountiful maize cakes.

Chieftain Moqi nodded excitedly, imagining a brighter future for the tribe. After pondering for a moment, he grinned and said.

"Priest Tomate, when you came last time, you gifted a hundred bronze axes... I'll give you twenty more tribal warriors, both as compensation and an apology! You look at the distant eagle, while I focus on the wolf at hand. The eagle flies high, the wolf runs alongside, together attacking prey, sharing the enemy's heart!..."

At this, the strong Chieftain Moqi extended his wounded right hand, grasping Priest Tomate's hand tightly once more. This time, sincerity sparkled in his eyes.

Chapter 1066: Second Kingdom Exploration, Night Talk by the Sea, Closer Lowland Maya_2

"Priest Tomate, ancestors bear witness! We can become true brothers! For our paths lie far ahead!"

Upon hearing this, Priest Tomate's expression became solemn. He looked into the sincere eyes of Chief Moqi, and after a moment, slowly nodded his head.

"Chief Moqi, the Chief Divine bears witness! Our paths lie far ahead. As long as you devoutly believe in the Chief Divine, I will be a brother to you like a sibling!"

"Good! Praise the Chief Divine!"

"Praise the Chief Divine!"

The two of them clasped hands tightly, their eyes meeting with a burning resolve. Translation was unnecessary at this moment, they both could feel the other's intentions and the resolve to forge ahead!

As night slowly descended, the bonfire flickered on the shore. The Kingdom's warriors returned to the ships to rest, and most of the ordinary warriors from the tribe also went back to the prairie fort to retire.

Both parties extended invitations simultaneously, but Priest Tomate did not go to the Putun Tribe's fort, nor did Chief Moqi board the Kingdom's large ship. They, along with dozens of others, lit a bonfire on the shore and set up camp. Their low conversations floated in the pitch-black night and were carried away by the waves into the sea. They shared many stories that the other did not understand. The only one who could understand at once was Tikalo, the Mayan merchant struggling to stay awake.

"Lake Great Chiefdom? Mexica Great Chief Alliance? Divine Revelation's God of Death Great Chief?... So, you are merely the largest of the dozens of tribes in the Fierce Tiger Tribe Alliance?"

Curiosity shimmered in Chief Moqi's eyes. After a night of conversations, neither side felt the slightest hint of sleepiness. He never imagined that the Highland in the West was so vast, and that the tribes on the Highland were so powerful... and complex.

"No. The largest tribe is the king of the Alliance, and we are the second largest. However, our exalted leader is the king's son-in-law and cousin, and also the kingdom's primary successor. If the king were to die, the largest two tribes would merge into one. Unless the weaker tribes could unite completely, they would be insignificant!"

Priest Tomate succinctly and simply described the situation. Moqi stroked his chin, pondered for a while, then asked in confusion.

"With two Jaguars in the jungle so close, wouldn't they fight?"

"Hmm... No. The king and the exalted both worship the Supreme Main God, incarnations of the Divine on earth! They are at war year after year, responsible for different directions, working in close cooperation to quell all tribes under heaven!"

"Oh, I see! The wolves in the jungle haven't been finished yet; it's not time for them to fight each other." Chief Moqi clapped his hands in realization, laughing.

"When all the other prey in the jungle is gone, then the two strong Jaguars will finally battle it out to decide the sole king!"

"No, it is not like this!"

At these words, Priest Tomate's expression changed. He immediately refuted, even as an inexplicable anger welled up within.

"The Chief Divine bears witness! The king and exalted are the true Divine Eagles, leading the Alliance and the Kingdom! The Divine shelters them; they are intimate Dual Kings! Moreover, with the Princess among them..."

Chief Moqi chuckled and watched the somewhat irate Priest Tomate, shifting the topic.

"Alright! Tomate, my brother! I do not know the rules of succession among your Highland tribes. In our Putun Tribe, during the Great Tribe's succession, the successors always fight each other to determine a leader..."

"As for the City-Staters in the North, they are much weaker. They compare 'divinity', letting the elders with real power in the clans vote to choose a clan leader. Even in the Canul Lineage directly to our north, they don't have a leader, only a group of old folks forming a Council of Elders..."

"The Canul Lineage, Council of Elders?"

Upon hearing this, Priest Tomate raised his eyebrows, glanced at the translator Tikalo, and inquired.

"Moqi, my brother, I've heard that the four largest forces in the North are the Canul Lineage in the far West, the Xi Wu Clan in the middle, the Kapoor Clan, and the Ekab Chieftom in the far East... How much do you know about their strength?"

"Hmm. Our Putun Tribe has clashed with the Canul Lineage and the Xi Wu Clan! As for the two further East, I am not clear about them."

Chief Moqi thought for a moment before replying earnestly.

"The Canul Lineage in the west seems to be allies with that Kokom Family or something. Decades ago, the Xi Wu Clan wanted to be the head, ambushed the Kokom Family, and reportedly killed a lot of people, slaughtering the entire Royal City! To restrain the Canul Lineage in the west, they gave us the Putun Tribe a batch of weapons, women, salt, and wealth, encouraging us to raid the Canul Lineage's border..."

At this point, Tikalo's body trembled slightly. He lowered his head and translated softly, without altering a single word.

"Oh? So did you go and raid? What was that battle like?"

"We did! Why not take what's freely given? The south of the Canul Lineage was very empty; I heard we seized many women and much food... However, that was two generations of chiefs ago, before I was born. But my mother was taken from a northern City-State by the former Great Chief; she seemed to be a Divine Descendant."

Chief Moqi's expression glimmered as he recounted ancient tales, as though reminiscing about something.

"I remember my mother saying that the Canul Family (Ah Canul) were 'canan', protectors and supporters. Their ancestors also came from the Western Highland. He once held a white gourd, carrying a long obsidian spear, following an elder Nava king. Then, he was enfeoffed by the Nava king in the southwest, guarding nine hills, nine rivers, and also protecting the borders of the Royal City of Chichen Itza..."

"Then, there was a Maya named Kekum, who, with the help of his companions, climbed out of a sacrificial well. He held a coconut, proclaimed his sacred lineage and experiences, gaining support from many Maya tribes. These Maya tribes attacked the Nava king, continually growing until they invaded Chichen Itza. The Canul Family held out to the last, but still surrendered. They made a pact with a new Maya king and retreated to the far west of the Peninsula, still under the name of 'guardianship', albeit with a different king. But, this new king wasn't eventually defended either; he was killed by the Xi Wu Clan!... Haha! Hahaha!"

On recounting these bedtime stories told by his mother, Chief Moqi laughed heartily, narrating another version of the Maya epic. Tikalo beside him suppressed the excitement in his heart, asking softly.

"Honorable... Chief Moqi, is your mother still around?"

"Oh, she passed to the Divine Kingdom long ago. Tribespeople never live too long. Hey, why are you asking this?"

Chief Moqi pressed his lips, responding calmly. Then, he looked at the Maya commoner with some puzzlement, unsure why the other had suddenly become excited.

"Brother Moqi, in that case, is there a blood feud between the Canul Lineage and the Xi Wu Clan?"

Priest Tomate deeply looked at Tikalo, then turned to ask.

"Will these two powerful Maya Clans fight each other?"

"They will! Not only do they fight each other, but they also make sacrifices to each other. And we often raid the border while they are fighting!"

Chief Moqi nodded heavily. These two clans are the strongest forces north of the Putun Tribe. They too have been raided by the Putun Tribe.

"The Canul Lineage and the Xi Wu Clan each have over ten thousand City-State Warriors. The warriors on both sides are quite ordinary, not as strong as us. They have stone spears and short bows, many wooden and leather armor, adept at jungle warfare. Similarly, given time to the City-Staters, they will mobilize a vast militia. Very annoying! We usually grab and run, retreating into the jungle and the mountains."

"So, between these two forces, who is stronger?"

"Haha! Of course, it is the Xi Wu Clan! They occupy a very prosperous Capital City, with more warriors. Their leader is also very cunning, even ambushing our tribe. However, they are in the East and still have the opposing Kapoor Family to restrain them, besieged on both sides. No matter how many troops they have, there's always an opening to sneak in and rob!... And without the Kapoor Clan in the East, the 'guarding' Canul Lineage could hardly protect themselves!"

Chapter 1067: The Second Kingdom Exploration, A New Journey

The moon rises in the east and sets in the west, the night is at its deepest, and dawn is about to come. Priest Tomate and Chieftain Moqi continue their unfinished conversation, speaking bits about the northern lowland Maya, unconsciously realizing it's already dawn.

"The Canul guardian clans, their territory is at the westernmost part of the peninsula, more than a hundred miles from east to west and more than two hundred miles from north to south. The north is arid, while the south is hilly, with the population mainly in the central part. From north to south, along a line, there are more than a dozen small Canul city-states. These city-states are each ruled by different chieftains of the clans, all belonging to the Council of Elders in Kapok City. Such a loose political system makes it very difficult for them to unite all their efforts, and there is no Great Chief or King who decides everything..."

Priest Tomate took out paper and pen, recording important evaluations by the coastal campfire.

"This clan is not a whole. Perhaps, their internally scattered city-states can be treated separately. They all originate from the Mexican Plateau, bearing the bloodline of the Navarre. They also occupy the coastal area of the western peninsula, with the necessity and possibility of fostering good relations!"

Chieftain Moqi curiously looked at those square or simple characters, as if looking at mysterious priest symbols, feeling a sense of reverence. The divine descendant heritage within the Putun Tribe has faded away, and abstract writing is completely unrecognizable. They are an isolated tribe among the Mayans, also revered for force, the easiest to assimilate among the barbarians.

"Combined, the Canul family possesses more than a dozen small towns, ten thousand Maya warriors. By estimation, there should be a population of 300,000. The exact number is still unclear and further intelligence needs to be gathered."

Priest Tomate pondered for a while and then noted down the last section.

"Interestingly, the Canul clan also has a code of law, established in Kapok City, known as the Calkini Code, which is the Kapok Code. In their view, kapok (yaax che) is the center of the world, the birthplace, the origin of life, the unification of the universe, and the mode of communication between gods and humans. The kapok tree grants the divine descendants the power to govern the people, and the ruler maintains the stability of towns and villages. Witnessed by the sacred kapok tree, they established the Council of Elders' covenant, deciding clan affairs through negotiation. Such a loose yet peculiar system has been running for three to four hundred years, as it was during the Mayapan Era."

Priest Tomate scratched his head and added a remark.

"Council of Elders, Kapok Code, negotiated decisions. Such a system seems to originate from the internal Council of Elders of the city-states but has elevated to the union of multiple city-states. I believe this system is extremely stable, with the key being the code of law."

The Mayan merchant Tikalo, sitting beside him, covertly glanced at Priest Tomate's writing in the glow of the campfire. Seeing the final assessment, he smiled inwardly.

"What stable system, what critical code. It's just that the Canul clan hasn't produced a divine descendant leader like the ancestor Kekum who could unify everyone!"

Priest Tomate thought for a moment, then looked at Chieftain Moqi again, inquiring further details about the Xiu Family, and once more began to write.

"The Xiu Family leads the Tutulxiu group, originating from the desolate central Maya. Their name means 'those filled with virtue'. So, they could be called the Xiu Virtue Clan."

At this point, Tikalo's face showed a mocking smile. Rebelling against the king, slaughtering the royal family, plundering the capital, and inviting barbarian tribes' invasion, truly a 'virtuous' clan!

"Their history can be traced back seven hundred years, with the first capital established as Uxmal, the current capital being Mani, while also occupying the capital city Mayapan. They have a supreme clan chief (Halach Uinik) who oversees the clan's city-states and armed forces. This long-inherited clan is clearly more centralized, cohesive from top to bottom, and is the most powerful force in the northern Yucatan Peninsula!"

"The Xiu Virtue Family is located inland, stretches two hundred miles east to west, and also two hundred miles north to south. This two hundred-mile area is the most affluent in the lowland Maya. Leveraging the wealth of the territory, they established two legions, one in the east guarding the Kapoor Clan, and one in the west suppressing the Canul guardian clans. By estimation, they should have about fifteen thousand warriors, directly or indirectly controlling a population of 400,000 to 500,000..."

Tikalo watched for a while, silently. Priest Tomate kept his head down writing, not paying attention to the translator's mood. He pondered a bit, writing down a summary once more.

"However, they also have troubles. In the process of overthrowing Mayapan, several battles erupted around the capital, damaging the canals around Mayapan, leading to reduced food production. Subsequently, they antagonized the Canul clan to the west and the Kapoor clan to the east, with food consumption remaining high. In the plundering by the Putun Tribe, the food obtained by the Xiu territory is far less than that of the Canul territory. Moreover, the generals of the Xiu Clan are more cunning, far more responsive and flexible than the Canul Council of Elders. Hence, the Putun Tribe prefers to plunder the Canul clan's territory."

"Overall, the Xiu Family, located inland, does not control the coastline, and has no direct conflict with the Kingdom Fleet. They are powerful, yet besieged on two fronts, with food shortages, so the situation is not very favorable. Coupled with their consistently flexible approach, they are unlikely to proactively confront the Kingdom Fleet. And for the fleet, there's no necessity to proactively provoke the powerful Xiu Family..."

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Upon seeing this, Tikalo turned his head and clenched his teeth.

Indeed, as he had anticipated, the Kingdom Fleet's stance towards the Xiu Family was destined to remain neutral. Whether it was the politically savvy Chief God Priest Tomate or the cautious and careful Captain Chiwaco, none would make the first move against the Xiu Family. And the cunning and patient Xiu Family surely would not rashly antagonize...

"Hehehe! Fate, after all, is determined by human action!..."

The dawn cast its gentle light, and the sky gradually brightened. Priest Tomate closed the book and gazed towards the East, praying silently.

"Praise the Supreme Main God! Please bless us! The Kingdom Fleet will journey East, without entangling much with the Maya city-states. We will surely reach Snake Island in the Eastern Sea, and establish the kingdom's outpost!"

The sunlight rose, immediately bringing radiance. The golden light reflected in the priest's eyes, resembling the grandeur and promise of the Chief Divine.

Moments later, Priest Tomate stood up to formally bid farewell to Chieftain Moqi. Although he hadn't slept all night, he remained energetic, his eyes sparkling with spirit.

"Farewell, Brother Moqi! Witnessed by the Chief Divine, we shall meet again! Please believe that the kingdom's friendship will inevitably, like the dawn in the East, continually bring you genuine brightness!"

"Good! Praise the Chief Divine, praise the Ancestors! Brother Moqi, take a hundred tribal warriors and set off early!"

Chieftain Moqi nodded solemnly. He glanced at the twenty sets of Leather Armor by the coast, a hundred Copper Axes, and six hundred Copper Spears, his satisfied lips curling up. And the hundred tribal warriors had long been selected and handed over to the Kingdom Fleet. All of them were without family burdens; henceforth, they belonged to the Fierce Tiger Tribe.

"We Putun people have a saying, climb to the top of the high hill, and naturally you can see the way!"

Chieftain Moqi extended his fist to collide once again with Priest Tomate's palm. At this moment, his eyes were brimming with intense battle intent.

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine, the Short Spear tribe will soon set out. Brother Moqi, may your journey to Snake Island be smooth and swift! Upon meeting again, I look forward to more weapons and War Armor!"

"Good! Blessed by the Chief Divine, you will inevitably be invincible in battle!"

As the red sun rose, its path filled with great light. The morning farewell was without any sorrow, instead full of hope. The Kingdom Fleet unloaded a shipload of weapons, loaded up with a hundred Putun warriors, and replenished with ample food and water. Then, the fleet set sail once more, towards Brocade Snake City, 160 miles North.

Marching North for three months against the wind, there were no currents to aid. The fleet maintained its strength, neither too fast nor too slow, taking three days to reach the area of Brocade Snake City, known as "the place of snakes and ticks" (Kaan Peech).

This city-state was located approximately near what would later be Campeche City in Mexico. Upon reaching here, the surrounding woods thickened again, turning into hilly Rainforest. The area close to the coast had many small lakes and lagoons.

"Crabs, oysters, sea turtles, shrimps, and storks... can all be stewed, also roasted!"

Didi drooled, counting the wild game near the lagoons. He couldn't recognize all, but the Silver Raven Warrior fisherman who grew up by the sea was eager to try.

"The seaside warriors must enjoy delicious bass, must hunt fierce small sharks! Although the sea is a barren, the near-coast area here is indeed bountiful!"

The rainfall in the Rainforest formed surging rivers and also brought nutrients from the soil. This coastal area had abundant seaweed, naturally attracting numerous fish and shrimp. Yaolem's mountain bird might not know the reason, but he could plainly see that the coast here was more fertile compared to the Northern Tribe's shore.

"City! A small city!"

The mountain bird squinted his eyes, being the first to spot Brocade Snake City. He waved a flag and shouted, prompting everyone to look in that direction.

"Hmm? This city seems larger than the grassland city, with quite a bit of stone used."

Old militia Chiwaco watched for a while and pondered. The Brocade Snake City here was controlled by the Brocade Snake Clan, familiar with Tikalo's trading group.

"Old Chiwaco? Should we stop here for supplies?"

Puap donned Copper Armor, gripped Copper Spears, cautiously watching the coastal city-state. Two small rivers surrounded it, and canoes traded back and forth. However, in comparison to the trade hub Red Lake Town, it was far inferior.

"Hmm, let me think..."

The old militia scratched his chin, looking at the Maya merchant Tikalo. Tikalo wore a smile, with a hint of anticipation. Seeing this, the old militia made a decision.

"We still have enough food and water on the ship, we won't disembark for supplies! Hmm, let Priest Tomate row a small boat to meet the local Divine Descendant Nobility, send a couple of bags of gemstones, and discuss that prophecy. Tonight or at the latest tomorrow morning, we'll leave!"

Then, the old militia patted Tikalo's shoulder, kindly concerned.

"Tikalo, you've been a bit scared in the Short Spear tribe, and also somewhat weary, take a good rest these few days... Let your translator, along with Priest Tomate, go together!"

"...At your command, Captain Chiwaco."

Tikalo pursed his lips, silent for a few moments, responding with a smile. Heading north, he was getting closer to his homeland, and old militia Chiwaco grew increasingly vigilant. Wherever he went, he was accompanied by two Prepetcha Warriors, offering "protection."

"A truly cautious old turtle... What to do next?"

The Maya merchant gazed at the coastal city-state, his face unchanging, without a trace of anxiety. He watched Priest Tomate carrying a stack of Scriptures, donning several Sun Amulets, and setting out enthusiastically with a group of escort guards onto the small boat.

Chapter 1069: The Second Kingdom Exploration, A New Journey_3

The small boat rowed ashore, and the group disembarked and entered the city. Then, Priest Tomate spoke to the Maya Warriors guarding the city, and someone hurriedly left. After another two quarters, several members of the Divine Descendant Nobility with divine-like faces arrived quickly, leading Priest Tomate into the palace, where he completely disappeared from everyone's sight.

Seven longships docked by the sea, attracting much attention beyond this remote little town. Soon, a few canoes cautiously approached under the watchful eyes of the Kingdom's Warriors. Upon getting closer and hearing the shouts from the Mayans on board, Tikalo smiled.

"Honorable Captain Chiwaco, those rowing are Maya villagers from along the coast. They wish to sell some local produce to the ships."

"What, local produce?"

"Yes! Mostly fruits, dried fruits, vegetables, and fish and shrimp. Sometimes, there are also shells, dried fish, cinnabar, and pretty stones of unknown origin."

Chiwaco frowned slightly, looking at the innocent and hopeful villagers on the small boat and then at the gentle-smiling Mayan merchant Tikalo, questioning suspiciously.

"Why would they take the initiative to approach and sell to us?"

"Because our fleet looks very wealthy. And they are pressured by the annual tribute to earn some wealth eagerly."

Tikalo caressed his divinely bald head, speaking with sentiment.

"Captain Chi, the northern Maya tribes are extremely saturated in population. All the land belongs to the Divine Descendants, the nobility and priests, and each village must pay highly exorbitant tribute. The rural people's land is limited, and there has always been a tradition of valuing commerce. For these coastal villagers, many do not own land and simply farm for the nobility, exchanging labor for enough food to get by. Selling local produce that cannot fetch a price domestically to foreign fleets might be their only way to sustain themselves."

Seeing the skepticism persist in Chiwaco's eyes, Tikalo smiled lightly and pointed toward the villagers' necks.

"Look, what is carved on the amulets they wear around their necks?"

"Hmm?"

Chiwaco squinted his eyes, observing for a while from afar, surprise appearing on his face. He reached out to grab the mountain bird nearby, letting it take a closer look.

"Captain, the amulets on their necks depict a strange woman! That woman has a long rope looped around her neck, with her eyes tightly shut, and her exposed upper body is all dark..."

The mountain bird scratched its head, its eyelids twitching, feeling extremely ominous.

"It's really eerie! It's like a hanging woman has been drawn!"

"Indeed! This is the hanging goddess, the Goddess of Suicide Ixtab! She has a rope around her neck, indeed hung by herself. Her dark color symbolizes a rotting corpse. This goddess is one of the few Divine belonging to commoners, providing them with a direct path to the Divine Realm."

Mayan merchant Tikalo spoke in a haunting tone, revealing a harsh truth.

"In the Maya tribes, there's only a few ways to reach the beautiful Divine Realm after death. Among them, as with the Mexica tribes, warriors who died in battle, women who died in childbirth, and sacrifices can all enter the Divine Realm directly. But aside from these, there is a primary way that is

simpler and encouraged by the Divine Descendants. This method, often used by the elderly and struggling commoners, is prioritized!"

"What? You...you mean?... "

"Indeed, it is suicide!"

Tikalo smiled faintly, nodding affirmatively.

"These commoners believe in the Goddess of Suicide Ixtab and wear the goddess's amulets. When they pass thirty, gradually losing the ability to work, they become even more impoverished. On a chosen auspicious day, they select a sacred ceiba tree. Then, they would go to the Priest of the Goddess of Suicide to borrow a divine rope, tie it to the tree branch...and end themselves, journeying to the Divine Kingdom! "

"However, sometimes on auspicious days, there are so many elderly going to the Divine Kingdom, they must share a single rope. Once the person in front just hanged, those behind must impatiently pull him down, swapping places. If unlucky and not dead enough, they would have to ask others for help to hang again..."

"Hiss!"

Hearing this, old Militia Chiwaco took several deep breaths. He turned again, looking at the suicide goddess's amulets on those commoners' necks, slowly revealing a look of compassion in his eyes.

"This!... Haven't these commoners ever thought about resisting the tribute imposed on them?"

"Haha! The revered Divine Descendants rule all land, for they carry the blood of all gods and bear divine faces! These obedient commoners follow the traditional order, dwelling in the lower echelon for generations. For thousands of years, it has always been so! They have long been accustomed to considering themselves butterflies that die in spring and fall, while the Divine Descendants and the nobility are perennial ceiba trees. Butterflies only revolve around ceiba trees, dying even upon them, how could they possibly rebel?"

Tikalo shook his head with a smile. In fact, before leaving the Maya tribes for the Mexican Plateau, he also believed this reverence for the Divine Descendants and the lowly commoners, this stable hierarchy of the ruling, to be the will of the gods, and indeed the order of the world.

"Especially facing each branch of the nobility's direct management, and the powerful family warriors, these commoners lack the ability to rebel!"

"...Ai!"

Old Militia Chiwaco remained silent for a long time, finally heaving a long sigh. He lowered his eyes, turned around, and gently waved his hand, leaving Tikalo with a piece of advice.

"Tikalo, then make the exchange! The local produce from these villagers, the fleet...also happens to need it, offer them a bit more wealth."

"At your service, Captain!"

Tikalo bowed his head respectfully, the corners of his mouth curling up once again. Then, he calmly initiated transactions with the villagers using the local Mayan language.

As the day drew to a close, the world grew dim, eventually deep into the night. Priest Tomate sent back an envoy, saying he received a warm welcome from the Divine Descendants and would spend the night in the palace, expounding on the teachings of the Chief Divine.

The seven longships remained anchored by the sea, with villagers coming and going, leaving and returning, even bringing more small boats.

Until the morning of the next day, Priest Tomate returned satisfied. Only then did the Kingdom Fleet set sail once more. The next target lay nearly three hundred li away, at Salt Village.

Chapter 1070: The Second Kingdom Exploration, the Art of Maya Rule, Everything Under Control!

Starting from the long Western coast, moving inland two to three hundred miles, passing through the jungle of the Lowland Maya, one arrives at a stretch of populous farms and villages. At the center of

numerous Mayan villages, between Uxmal and Mayapan, lies the capital city of the Xiu Family, Mani City.

Golden sunlight descends from the sky, illuminating this ancient religious center. The pyramid temples of the Heavenly Serpent Divine and the Feathered Serpent Divine, situated right at the center, radiate a dazzling golden light. Below the thirty-meter-high pyramid is a broad market plaza. To the east of this bustling plaza are the temples of other divinities. On the open southern side of the plaza sits a semi-open ball court for human sacrifice, although it's not yet time for festive games. On the solemn western side of the plaza stands a two-tiered, square palace, the Xi Wu Maid Palace, the city-state's most important site.

At this moment, an Eagle-Eye Feather-Crowned Leader with graying hair stands on the second floor of the palace, proudly surveying his realm. The eastern temple district hosts many old temples, some tracing back to the Mayan Golden Age a thousand years ago. Meanwhile, the plaza before him is a busy and flourishing market. Godly descendants and the nobility of the city-state wander here leisurely, sharing in the marvel of the divine smoke.

"The Heavenly Serpent God Festival is approaching, and the nobility are busy purchasing goods. We'll need to gather another batch of corn flour from the villages to make small cakes for distribution to the city populace during the festival..."

Clan Leader Xiupan of the Xiu Clan silently contemplated the bustling plaza. He often inspected the city-state this way, observing the details in the marketplace, pondering his family's reign.

January is the Feathered Serpent God's festival, and April is the Heavenly Serpent God's festival. During the biannual festival days, the Xiu Family uniformly distributes small cakes to the capital's citizens. These two months also coincide with the harsh spring scarcity, a time when the value of providing relief is most evident.

"Distributing two batches of food each year, though costly, wins the hearts of the capital's populace, spreading the family's virtues. Forty-eight years ago, the followers of Tutulxiu pledged their lives to follow the family and rebel against Mayapan's rule because of the family's years of benevolence and its legacy of good reputation!"

Clan Leader Xiupan squinted, recalling distant past events. Yes, forty-eight years have passed; he remembers the number clearly because he was born that year.

Forty-eight years ago, his grandfather Xiu Ashupan boldly raised an army, launching a surprise attack to capture Mayapan, annihilating the cruel Kekum royal family. Two hundred years of the family's patience at last came to fruition! After returning to Mani, his grandfather named the newborn Xiupan, where "Pan" stands for Mayapan, the model of Mayan standards and the capital city conquered by the Xiu Family!

Twenty years later, he followed his grandfather's example, naming his eldest son Xiutur. Here, "Tur" symbolizes the complete mastery and governance over the prosperous Tutulxiu region by the Xiu Clan after twenty years of consolidation and assimilation!

Divine smoke rises, and Clan Leader Xiupan's thoughts drift afar, until a young man with a divine visage, robust and strong, strides into the palace, bowing respectfully to the elderly clan leader.

"Heavenly Serpent's blessing! Father, you hastily summoned me back from the frontline against the Canul Lineage..."

Though the young man's demeanor is respectful, a trace of dissatisfaction lingers in his words.

"Is there a major event occurring?"

"Heavenly Serpent's blessing! Xiutur, sit down. Do not be anxious."

Clan Leader Xiupan turned around, pressing his palm. He then gazed at his obediently seated but still imposing as a jaguar eldest son, who was brimming with courage and wisdom. His only flaw was his excessive fondness for the Samurai, being impatient and combative by nature.

"My son, I called you for a pressing matter. On the Western front, you might have heard of a gemstone fleet from the Western highland, under the guidance of the God of Wealth, sailing along the coast eastward..."

"Hmm? The Navarre gemstone fleet? I have indeed heard about it. But..."

Xiutur recalled before heavily nodding. Then, looking somewhat puzzled towards his elderly father.

"Father, this gemstone fleet only sails along the coast, unable to land. What does it have to do with our clan, since they can't reach our territory?"

"...Xiutur, although they can't land, we can go meet them at the shore."

Clan Leader Xiupan spoke indifferently, looking towards the north. From here, traveling two hundred seventy miles leads to the Northern Coast of the Yucatan Peninsula. Along the coast, the Tail Feather Clan and Luchong Clan are vassals of the Xiu Family.

"Hmm? You want me to head north to intercept this wealth-laden fleet?"

After a brief thought, a fierce battle spirit flashed in Xiutur's eyes. He promptly stood up, extending his hand in a sacrificial gesture.

"Good! I will take a thousand Samurai to ambush the shore! Once the fleet docks for supplies, I'll launch a surprise attack, sacrifice them all to the gods, and bring back all the gemstones!"

"..."

Clan Leader Xiupan remained silent. He looked at his battle-spirited eldest son, sighed internally, and shook his head.

"No! My son. Witness of the Heavenly Serpent! I don't want you to attack the fleet to seize gemstones. I want you to meet them and trade!"