

Civilization 1131

Chapter 1131: Tlaxcala, Land of the Four States, A New Order

The river flows vast and strong, spring rain falls gently. The Long River of Tarsus comes from the East, witnessing the comings and goings of the Mexica fleet, and observing the spring plowing of various tribes along the way.

At the end of the Long River, in the desolate Trascal Basin, columns of smoke from slash-and-burn agriculture gradually rise. After only a few days, the wisps of smoke quickly dissipate in the spring rain. Old weeds and shrubs are burned away by the mountain fires, revealing fertile fields, nurtured by rain and dew, awaiting cultivation.

The Long River quietly flows through Trascal Land. Each day, in the mountain regions of the Four States, the elderly and weak of fleeing tribes come out and surrender to the Mexica army outside the mountains. They no longer have the food to support them until next spring. Neither can they abandon their hopeful fields to escape into the mountain forests once more. They can only obey and become tribespeople controlled by the Mexica Alliance.

At this moment, beside an humble village, the tribesmen of Tlaxcala bow their heads as they hold crude farming tools made of wood and stone. They take advantage of the softened earth after the rain, laboring to plant corn and beans with all their might. Occasionally, a team of Mexica Warriors, armed with greatbows and long spears, patrols along the mountain paths and rivers. The faces of the tribesmen then show deep fear and submission.

After the conquests and turmoil of the eastern expedition, a long-lost order is gradually being established in the western and southern parts of Trascal Land, among the remnants of the Telascallan people.

In the western Weisoqinke State, the first group of eight thousand Mexica settlers has migrated from the densely populated Texcoco Lake District and settled in more than a dozen villages outside Oak Tree City. They occupy the fertile lands once owned by the nobility of the Cloud Serpent in the East, urged by the Mexica nobility to waste no time in spring plowing. Most of this group of settlers come from the first group of small nobility who were reassigned from the Lake District and include Alliance Warriors rewarded with land after the eastern expedition. They are the first group of Mexica people settled in Trascal Land.

Once the Alliance King and the Great Nobility finish their consultations, more nobility will be reassigned here, bringing tens of thousands of people from various states. They will spread out within the Four States, completely occupying the Trascal Land, which has lost more than half of its population, and gaining control over all the local tribes!

In just one more generation, Mexica nobility and settlers will firmly take root in the Eastern Basin, bringing with them the faith in the Chief Divine. The once mighty and glorious Tlaxcala Four States Alliance will vanish completely with the disintegrated Cloud Serpent faith, fading away in the basin's gentle rain.

Sparse drizzle falls from the bright sky; it is the first rain heralding the coming rainy season. In the southern Tepeyacac State, the military farms outside Water Valley City fill again with the able-bodied Totonac people forcibly relocated there.

The Head Warrior Bertade wears leather armor as he personally leads hundreds of personal guard warriors to inspect the spring planting condition of fifty thousand acres of farmland in various camps.

"The Black Wolf's eastern advance guard has already reached the eastern coastline. In these dozens of miles of military farms, we have thirty thousand elderly Telascallan refugees, twenty thousand Mistec prisoners, and eighty thousand able-bodied Totonac people... A total of one hundred and thirty thousand prisoners are guarded by ten thousand Alliance Warriors and Militia!"

"These young men and women prisoners are urgently needed commoners and agricultural slaves for the Kingdom; a batch is transported west along the river every month. The tens of thousands of laborers responsible for farming will be relocated on a large scale only after the autumn harvest this year."

In Bertade's mind, grim thoughts swirl as he walks through a large military farm camp. In this large camp, one hundred Mexica Warriors and four hundred Militia oversee around eight thousand prisoners from various tribes, responsible for cultivating more than forty thousand acres of land.

The camp is encircled by a sturdy wooden fence, crowded with huts within, while boundless farmland stretches out beyond. A twenty-man team of Dog Descendant Warriors, leading hairless dogs, patrols between the fields and the camp. At the camp gate stands over a dozen tall wooden poles, each bearing a hanged fleeing prisoner.

The morning sun illuminates the camp under a clear sky. Low prayers arise from the camp's center. Bertade pauses, watching for a while, a slight smile appearing on his face. Thousands of prisoners are divided into small teams, praying under the guidance of the Chief God Priest, expressing gratitude for the Chief Divine's blessings before they have a simple breakfast.

"Honored Saint Eagle Head Warrior, the two thousand Tlaxcala farmers left from last year serve as the backbone in each camp. They act as team leaders, directing other prisoners in spring planting and reporting camp conditions to the warriors. The supervising Warriors and Militia live in a separate fort on the other side; every day, they oversee the prisoners farming on the outskirts of the fields."

"The Alliance's Chief God Priest visits morning and evening to lead the prayers of the prisoners and listen to their confessions, thereby stabilizing their emotions. We also ration the prisoners' food, ensuring that while they can farm, they have no extra energy to escape!"

The camp commander, an experienced Fourth Level Mexica Warrior named Huoqia, once supervised surrendered armies in the Prepetcha Lake District and is familiar with veteran Militiaman Chiwaco. Currently, with his head bowed, he reports about managing the thousands of prisoners to the highly revered Saint Eagle Head Warrior.

"... After several months of monitoring, camp order has stabilized. Tlaxcala's elders and weak are the most compliant. Their Divine Descendants have been sacrificed and killed by the Alliance, their warriors either eliminated or surrendered, and their Cloud Snake Temples burned down, leaving them no courage to resist. As for the Mistec prisoners, most are from minor tribes. Having witnessed the fall of the Rain God Temples, their faith has collapsed, and they have piously converted to the Chief Divine. Likewise, they are accustomed to obeying noble bloodlines and have diligently completed their farming tasks..."

Saying this, Huoqia paused, a hint of killing intent flashing across his face.

"As for the able-bodied Totonac people captured by the eastern advance guard, they still need much tempering to learn the Kingdom's rules! They are not yet adequately intimidated by the Alliance; the spirit of resistance in their hearts has not dissipated. Moreover, their deities, especially the Feathered Serpent, are highly at odds with the priests' teachings... The prisoners hanged on those poles are all Totonac people!"

Upon hearing this, Bertade lifts his head to glance at the praying prisoners within the camp. He ponders for a moment and then issues commands.

"We must reinforce the indoctrination of the Totonac people! Have the Chief God Priest come over and conduct another selection. Those resistant to converting, those not devout enough, draft them into the next convoy of transferred prisoners. This convoy will fill in the vacancy of laborers in two Kingdom mines, putting young prisoners to work as mine slaves..."

Hearing the term 'mine slaves', Huoqia feels a cold tremble within and nods respectfully. As the Kingdom excavates deeper into its mines, producing ever-increasing amounts of copper, iron, and coal, the demand for mine slaves rises by thousands. Huoqia is well aware that each mine slave typically survives only about four years under the harsh labor conditions in the mines.

"We need to select a group of Totonac people whom we can favorably treat as examples of aligning with the Alliance. Those prisoners who have sincerely converted should receive thirty percent more food and the authority to manage small teams!"

Bertade's gaze deepens, his expression remains calm and unperturbed. Within him is a clear, orderly path of thought.

"After half a year under the command of the military camp, those transferred back to the Kingdom should all be followers of the Chief Divine, obedient to the order. The Kingdom's grand road-construction project has already begun. Any prisoners not meeting the requirement should be screened out, prioritized as slaves for mining, quarrying, and road construction!"

"As you command, Saint Eagle Head Warrior!"

The military camp commander Huoqia bows deeply. Bertade extends his hand, pats the man's shoulder, and offers a smile of encouragement.

"The Chief Divine has bestowed glory, and the Kingdom is invincible! All tribes of the world will be conquered by us one by one. Those willing to convert to the Chief Divine's faith and follow His Highness's commands will be accepted and assimilated by the Kingdom, restoring them to the honored unity of the Jiao People's descendants! Meanwhile, all defiant tribes, irrespective of their rank or noble bloodline, will turn into firewood and fuel to ignite the Sun in the sky, becoming mine slaves, construction slaves, agricultural slaves, and even sacrifices atop the pyramid!"

Bertade's speech is somber, his face remains calm, but determination shines brightly in his eyes. He turns to the north, gazing toward the towering mountains with a hopeful smile.

"The Black Wolf's mere diversion force can defeat the Totonac people and capture eighty thousand able-bodied men. The unification picture of the world is already close at hand! Your Highness, do you think this way too? What kind of grand picture do you hold in your heart? I am willing to take up the pen for you, journey to the furthest ends of the earth, and erect your Divine likeness..."

The clouds drift freely, and a light spring rain falls again from the slightly darkened sky. New corn sprouts emerge from the vast fields, bringing joy upon sight—they are the hopeful seedlings of spring.

Chapter 1132: Siege and Collapse

The fine rains of late spring were erratic, while the lush green grass thrived abundantly. The patrolling Samurai walked through the green grass in straw sandals, and even the military camp outside Tree Snake City suddenly had a touch of spring.

"The situation in the Capital City... the authoritarian King... and my wife and son. Once the two cities fall, I shall return to the Capital City once!..."

Xiulote looked up at the sky, holding a roll of white family letter in his hand. The writing in the letter was neat and slightly slanted, with meticulous drawings interspersed. The letter had just arrived, stirring a ripple in his cold heart. He raised a gentle smile, held the letter, and stepped out of the tent. Then, the King climbed several meters up the watchtower, gazing at the western wilderness and green hills. Beyond those mountains, hundreds of miles away, lay the long-missed Lake Capital City.

"Spring has come. The barren farmlands and valleys are now covered in green grass. If there were herds of cattle and sheep, they could be grazed!"

Xiulote looked for a moment and sighed softly. The area around Four Snake City used to be the most prosperous territory of the Tlaxcala Tribes, with numerous villages and constant cooking smoke. Now, as far as the eye could see, there were only military camps stretching endlessly, patrolling Samurai militia, and vast emptiness.

The great army has besieged the city for nearly a year and a half, sweeping the Four States to the south and north. At this moment, the final two mountain fortresses of the Tlaxcala Tribes stood like withered

trees without leaves, standing silently at perilous heights, waiting for the final felling of the Mexica legion.

A moment later, the guard commander Ecatl hurriedly arrived. The King tucked the letter into his chest, and his face returned to calm.

"Family Head, the Chief Divine's blessing! The envoy has brought news that ten newly forged siege mortars by the Military Works Bureau have boarded the southern fleet, and are on the way now!"

"Good! The Chief Divine's blessing!"

Upon hearing such exciting news, Xiulote also smiled. The transport along the Tarsas River upstream would take over a month. By the end of June, the siege mortars should arrive outside Tree Snake City.

"Before the peak of the August rainy season comes, it's time to take White Snake Hill City!"

Xiulote turned around, looking northeast. White Snake Hill City stood lonely atop a small hill tens of meters high, surrounded by ditches and fortifications, filled with an air of deathly stillness. Only in the evening would faint cooking smoke rise from within the hill city, signifying that the Divine Descendant Nobility and warriors of White Snake were still barely holding on.

"White Snake Hill City is like ripe fruit, needing just a few strong attacks, and with a slight pluck, it will swiftly fall. Once the mortars arrive, the final attack should unfold!..."

Xiulote pondered, then looked to the north mountains, where Cloud Serpent Mountain City was located. He thought for a while, then looked at the guard commander Ecatl.

"Ecatl, is there any progress in the siege of Cloud Serpent Mountain City?"

"Family Head, in the past month, over a thousand women, children, and the elderly have been driven out of Cloud Serpent City, and a few hundred militia have attempted to escape into the mountain forest at night..."

Ecatl's steady face showed a smile.

"Most of these Tlaxcalan women, children, and militia have been captured by the various tribes' warriors who sealed the mountains! According to the scouts' interrogations, the food stockpile in Cloud Serpent City is confidential, but there shouldn't be much left. Before leaving the mountain city, these commoners could only eat one meal of pumpkin soup per day. Moreover, they lack salt on the mountain, first becoming as thin as skin-covered bones, then bloated, with no strength to even stand up after falling..."

"Not necessarily. The condition of ordinary commoners proves nothing. Only when the warriors lack food does it truly indicate a food shortage."

Hearing this, Xiulote lowered his eyes slightly and shook his head. He thought for a while before giving a faint order.

"Have the scouts and priests carefully identify and weed out the hidden Cloud Serpent Nobility! As for ordinary commoners, avoid unnecessary slaughter. Nurture them for a few days, then send them to the southern Water Valley City's great camp to cultivate fields. By having them recount the situation within Cloud Serpent City, the Tlaxcalan tribe in the farm camp will be thoroughly crushed of any extraneous thoughts!"

"Yes, the Family Head is merciful!"

"How many people are left in Cloud Serpent Mountain City?"

"The escaped commoners can't say clearly, only that after driving out some of the population, only strong adults remain in the city. Based on the scouts' rough estimates, judging by the smoke and scale of defense, there are about four to five thousand people."

"Hmm? At the beginning of the siege, Cloud Serpent City reportedly gathered over ten thousand people. Now, they have voluntarily discarded the old and weak, leaving less than half?"

Xiulote frowned. In the current situation, it was not that Cloud Serpent City's defenders were too many, but too few. If there were only around four thousand in the city, relying on the mountain fields and

springs between the two mountains, the persistence time of the Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants would far exceed the Alliance's expectations.

"It's the spring plowing time now. Has Cloud Serpent City planted its mountain fields?"

"...They have. The prisoners said that they planted all the places where pumpkins can grow. There is also a small patch of cornfield on the rear mountain of Cloud Serpent."

"To let women and children out instead of as food and have enough grain to plant... Cloud Serpent City's stored grain could last until next year. Hmm, the key to the siege still lies in the rear mountain!"

Xiulote pondered for a while and asked in a deep voice.

"Ecatl, can the tribal warriors have a way to climb Cloud Serpent Rear Mountain and destroy the Tlaxcalan mountain fields?"

"Family Head, Cloud Serpent Rear Mountain is hundreds of meters high, passable only by narrow paths where only a few can walk side by side. Getting down wasn't too difficult, but climbing up... with just a few dozen people guarding the high ground throwing stones downhill, even the bravest warriors have been hurled off the mountain!"

Ecatl slightly bowed his head, reporting honestly. He had attempted to send scouts for a night raid but to no avail, losing a dozen warriors in vain. It seemed to him a genuine natural defense, not conquerable by human strength.

"Hmm. I understand."

Xiulote pursed his lips, his expression unchanged. Facing such terrain, he felt somewhat helpless. After thinking for a moment, he sternly spoke again.

"Carefully interrogate the prisoners! How many Divine Descendant Nobility are now in Cloud Serpent City, and how many warriors each have? Who guards the rear mountain?"

"Respected Family Head! Besides the most revered Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants, there are about six or seven other nobility groups, including Oak Serpent Divine Descendants from Oak Tree City. The rear mountain is guarded mainly by Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants, leading several hundred Cloud Serpent Warriors...oh, and there's also a Black Serpent Divine Descendant, commanding dozens of warriors!"

"Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants, Oak Serpent Divine Descendants, Black Serpent Divine Descendants... Hmm? Black Serpent? Is it the Black Serpent Teuctli who escaped from the Water Valley City battle?"

Xiulote was somewhat surprised, looking at the guard commander Ecatl.

"How can the Black Serpent be this good at escaping?"

Hearing this, Ecatl looked embarrassed. He had previously been guarding the High Priest, so he attempted to bow his head respectfully.

"... Family Head, I will go and personally interrogate the prisoners."

"...You shall do so,"

Xiulote kept his expression unchanged. Faced with such terrain, he was at a loss for a moment. As the gentle spring rain began to fall once again, soaking the green earth, sprinkling new seedlings with moisture, a group of mud-stained Messengers arrived, led by a Red Hair wearing a Bone amulet, clearly an experienced Canine Descendants. The Envoy looked up at the figure of the King as they arrived in the camp and moved below the watchtower. Then, glancing at the King, the Red Hair Envoy knelt swiftly.

"The God of Death, great Great Chief! May the Chief Divine protect the tribes! Ten days ago, the Black Wolf Great Chief has led the great army forward!"

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Chapter 1133: The Death of the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, the Rebirth of the Jiao People Descendants!

The pattering raindrops fell from the coastal sky. Acrid black smoke rose from the broken walls and ruins. The embers of the fire that burned on the pyramid for ten days finally extinguished on the charred and broken Temple of the Feathered Serpent. The rain fell among the dilapidated thatched huts, gathering on the muddy streets, where large dark red congealed bloodstains slowly spread out, forming meandering streams.

The pale red streams flowed eastward along the streets, passing broken arrows, tattered cloth, and clumps of severed hair, trickling downward. It flowed out from the wall-less Feathered Serpent Ancient City, crossed a newly dug and filled burial pit, and finally, at the gray-white tidal flats by the shore, it merged into the boundless Eastern Sea along the trampled lowlands.

This trampled lowland was the legendary departure point where the Feathered Serpent Divine rode a serpent raft to the Eastern Sea. Here, during the annual Feathered Serpent Festival, thousands of Tototanak people prostrated in prayer, and hundreds of Feathered Serpent Priests offered sacrifices to the Divine, releasing the sacred statue of the Feathered Serpent and wooden rafts!

Now, the piety and prosperity of the Feathered Serpent Festival months ago had been mercilessly erased by the power of bronze and flame. The revered Feathered Serpent Priests, the noble Totonac nobility, and even the tribes' warriors and militia who dared to resist had all turned into layers of corpses in the burial pit. The ancient and sacred Feathered Serpent Ancient City had also been conquered by the Chief Divine's legion from this day forth!

As a marker of the army's conquest, a brand-new tall stone stele was just erected at the holy site of the Feathered Serpent Divine. Black Wolf Toltec, wearing leather armor, carrying a greatbow, holding the scepter of a Legion Commander, and having a bronze sword at his waist symbolizing his rank, stood in front of the two-meter-tall stone stele. He stood tall and proud, with a confident smile, reading the newly inscribed inscription word by word.

"Holy Calendar, Year 10 House (Calli), Moon 1 Deer (Mazatl), Day 4 Dog (Itzcuintli)..."

Year 10 House, Month 1 Deer, Day 4 Dog, when converted into the Gregorian calendar, is May 18, 1489, which was also the day ten days ago when the army captured the Feathered Serpent Ancient City.

"Chief Divine bless! Black Wolf General Toltec, capturing the holy land of the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, overcoming tens of thousands of Tototanak, records his merits at the holy site! Praise the King, praise His Highness!"

Black Wolf, brimming with pride, read it multiple times without a single mistake. Satisfied, he nodded, looking towards the boundless Eastern Sea, letting out a hearty breath.

"Ah! I've followed His Highness for just over two years, from the Western Sea, where all the Tekos tribes reside, to the Eastern Sea of the Totonac people! Haha, which of the kingdom's generals can compare their achievements to mine? ... It's not boasting, to pacify the Mistek people and Zapotecs of the South and to conquer the distant Eastern Maya tribes, they still need me, Black Wolf!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Black Wolf Great Chief, conquering East and West, is the mightiest Great General!"

Upon hearing this, all the legion generals bowed their heads in unison, praising the illustrious military achievements of the Legion Commander. Black Wolf turned around, eyes shining, surveying the group of generals who bowed in turn according to their ranks, feeling truly triumphant.

The foremost young general was Tupa, a camp commander born from Black Wolf's Personal Guard, commanding the thousand Imperial Guards artillery camp. Next were three Canine Descendant generals standing side by side: Red Frog Kaka, Red Deer Masate, and Red Monkey Ozoma, leading the main force of the 8,000-strong Guajili Legion.

These two army units were the most reliable 9,000-strong main force in the vanguard. The Guajili Legion was responsible for routine array suppression and crucial assaults, while the artillery camp was employed for bombarding fortified mountain villages.

Black Wolf's gaze paused slightly on Tupa's excited face, sighing quietly.

"The resistance from the Totonac people, from Five Mountains City to the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, was beyond my expectations!"

From Five Mountains City to the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, there lay over two hundred li of mountain roads, the altitude dropping by more than a thousand to two thousand meters, with extremely rugged and dangerous highland terrain. Throughout this journey, there were more than a dozen mountain fortresses of the Totonac people, relying on challenging terrains to vehemently resist the army's eastward advance.

Under the call of the holy land Feathered Serpent Ancient City, the various Totonac tribes in the mountains truly resisted to the death, like moths to a flame. If it weren't for the artillery camp's bombardment breaking several mountain villages along the way, perhaps until now, the legion would still be blocked at the mountain pass of the Sierra Madre Oriental foothills.

"The army could descend east from the highlands all the way to the coastal lowlands, with Tupa's artillery camp deserving the top credit!"

Looking at Tupa, Black Wolf mused inwardly, nodding slightly. His gaze swept over the obedient Canine Descendant generals, his lips curling upwards.

In hundreds of li of campaign, the 8,000-strong Guajili Legion initially absorbed warriors from the surrendered army, consistently maintaining full strength. While ordinarily campaigning, serving as the army's forerunner, storming cities and mountain villages, engaging in bloody conflicts, fighting various tribal camps, it was the Mistek Vanguard Camp and the newly formed Totonac surrendered soldiers camp doing so.

"Out of four thousand Mistek surrendered soldiers, after two months of fighting, fewer than three thousand remain. These Mistek wolf cubs seem to have been trained quite nicely!"

Mistek's brave general, Woodpecker Lichi, positioned himself respectfully alongside the surrendered Divine Descendant Priest Andiwei, both standing at the back. Woodpecker Lichi commanded three thousand battle-hardened soldiers from the Mistek Vanguard Camp, whose combat power was second only to the Guajili Legion, another force to be trusted.

At the moment, of the 8,000 Guajili Legion, 2,000 men were garrisoned around the Five Mountains City area, 2,000 were stationed throughout various fortified villages along the two hundred li, and near the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, only four thousand-man camps remained. These 4,000 legion warriors, Black Wolf would not easily employ, preserving them as a force reserved for crucial engagements.

"With a vanguard of over ten thousand soldiers, marching against various Tototanak tribes to the east, the more we fought, the more numerous we became, now nearly reaching 20,000!"

Thinking of this, Black Wolf's glance moved back, landing on the last two Totonac surrendered generals.

The robust man in front, wearing a samurai wooden helmet, turned out to be the warrior Muxi, who submitted at Five Mountains City, with more than 2,000 Tototanak warriors under his command. The last lean man, wrapped in a militia headscarf with notably red ears, served as a militia leader, Hong Er, commanding over 3,000 local militiamen forcibly conscripted along the mountain path. These two had their hands stained with Totonac blood, even being coerced into executing Feathered Serpent Priests and Divine Descendants in the Feathered Serpent Ancient City.

"Hmm. Muxi and Hong Er count as just recently trained wolf cubs! These 5,000 Tototanak surrendered soldiers being familiar with the local geography, as long as their wolfish nature is aroused and they are allowed to unleash their slaughter... they could be more effective in suppressing local tribes than the Mistek Vanguard!"

Black Wolf's gaze fell upon the respectful warrior Muxi, his head bowed in reverence, and Chief Hong Er, who knelt beside him, lips tightly sealed, fingertips trembling slightly.

Although they had each beheaded a dozen or so heads on this skull tower themselves, now, seeing over six hundred noble dignitaries laying to rest here, their heads stacked as the Mexica's symbol of conquest and merit... the idols representing the Feathered Serpent Divine faith crumbled thunderously within their hearts!

"Ah!... The supreme Chief Divine who devours all gods, the powerful and irresistible Mexica legion, the fearsome copper beast that unleashes thunderbolts and stone projectiles... perhaps, for hundreds of years, the Feathered Serpent Divine, revered by tribes in devout faith, is truly dead!"

"Thus, as the Chief God Priest mentioned...we are not warriors betraying Divine Spirits and tribes. We are indeed surrendering to the supreme Chief Divine, embracing the glory of the true Divine, continuing the tribal lineage, reverting to the powerful Alliance as... descendants of the Jiao People!"

Chapter 1134: The Black Wolf's Disposition, Friends and Foes

The light rain drizzled down from the sky, falling into the muddy burial pits, beating against the asphalt bone piles, flowing between the tall stone monuments, and also brushing against the stern faces of the legion generals.

The land of the Totonac belongs to a tropical rainforested climate, warm and humid all year round. The coastal lowlands are particularly hot, with frequent rain and wind in summer, and can even be cultivated year-round. At this moment, the light rain falls, a breeze blows, bringing a slight coolness, making one feel instantly refreshed.

The Black Wolf Torc raised his head, gazing at the assembled generals, pondering for a long time. He had received orders from the Prince in the main camp at Tree Snake City, leading a lone army on an eastern expedition, descending more than two thousand meters from the highland, traveling over five hundred li, finally reaching the seaside lands occupied by the Totonac people.

Now, the army has completely detached from the supply range of the main camp at Tree Snake City, arriving at the coastal area where the Alliance's influence is weak, and has completely opposed the various parts of the Totonac. His task is no longer to plunder captives and leave after burning, but to truly take root on the coast and establish a stronghold from which the Kingdom's fleet can set sail. In other words, he must start managing the area, take root here, obtain local food and material supplies, and support over ten thousand troops on their own.

The Black Wolf General frowned slightly, feeling the heavy pressure. He thought for a while before he spoke solemnly to the respectfully waiting generals.

"With the blessing of the Chief Divine! We have captured the northern Holy Land of the Totonac people, the ancient Feathered Serpent Ancient City! The wolf pack has run for so long and finally reached the Prince's desired outlet. Next, this land is ours, and the legion will not leave again!"

Hearing this, the generals all cheered sincerely. The Guajili Legion has been fighting for over a year, engaging in dozens or hundreds of battles, and indeed some fatigue has set in, needing good rest. As for the surrendered generals, they had to be the spearheads of the army, undertaking the most arduous tasks of the raids, often suffering the heaviest casualties, and truly desired to settle down.

"The army has descended from the warm highlands to the hot lowlands. Although the various parts' weapons along the way were simple, without armor, the resistance was very tenacious. In the battle of the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, the Totonac Divine Descendants and priests, followers of the Fake God, in the name of the Holy Land incited warriors and militia from various tribes to fight and struggle,

relying on the towns! We fought for three to four days, with thousands of warriors fighting and dying, and finally, it was by using cannons that we scattered the Divine Descendant family's warriors, causing the terrified militia to surrender..."

The Black Wolf General paused, glanced at the militia leader Red Ear, who had been the first to surrender, and nodded with a smile. Red Ear was overwhelmed with favor, his face instantly bright with joy, and respectfully saluted back.

"...After entering the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, the Divine Descendants and priests of the Fake God led hundreds of warriors to resist relying on the Pyramid Temple. We shot fire arrows, which ignited the black oil in the temple, causing a great fire. The fire burned for ten days, and now everything has turned to ashes! The Prince asked me to preserve the Heritage Tablet and stone engravings in the temple as much as possible, but I failed to do so, which is a mistake on my part..."

Hearing this, Red Monkey Ozoma lightly coughed and replied with a smile.

"Respected Black Wolf Legion Commander, there was so much black oil stored in the Temple of the Feathered Serpent, naturally causing suspicion about its purpose. I believe that the temple's priests were originally determined to set fire to the temple. This is not your mistake, but rather the Fake God's priests being deceived by evil demons, unable to see the true glory of the Divine, hence reducing it all to wood and stone!"

Upon hearing this, the Totonac Warrior Lizard opened his mouth. He wanted to explain something, but ultimately did not dare to speak. He had served as a guard for the priests of the Feathered Serpent, knowing the use of the black oil, one for the pigments of murals, the other for the preservation of corpses. And had it not been for the legion's use of the terrifying fire arrows, this black oil would not have been so easily ignited...

"...Hmm. Regardless, burning the ancient temple without leaving Heritage Tablets is my responsibility, and I will acknowledge my fault to the Prince!"

The Black Wolf was silent for a moment, not making any excuses. Proud as he was, he disdained to put the blame on the dead. He raised his head, scanning the crowd sternly, and ordered in a solemn tone.

"With the Chief Divine as witness! After capturing the Feathered Serpent City, the three thousand Divine Descendant Nobility, priest warriors who dared to resist, were all killed and sacrificed by the army! You have plundered belongings and women, indulged yourselves for several days. Now, you must restrain the army again for me! Otherwise, if I have to personally enforce military discipline, I will not be lenient!"

Seeing the Black Wolf's cold expression, the generals felt a shiver in their hearts. They all bowed their heads in unison, responding obediently.

"Yes! With the Chief Divine as witness! We follow you, courageous Black Wolf Great Chieftain!"

"Very good! You are my wolf pack, when it is time to bite, you must do your utmost, and when it is time to feast, you should fully enjoy it. Now that you have finished eating, it is time to stop and listen to orders!"

The Black Wolf nodded in satisfaction. He collected his thoughts and spoke again.

"After more than a month of fighting, you should also have noticed that the Totonac people, like the Wilderness Tribes that moved south hundreds of years ago, are our distant brothers, speaking the same language and sharing the same origin. Although they have been at peace for a long time, if they truly fight for their lives, they can also hold their ground!"

Hearing this, all the Canine Descendant generals nodded one after another. After years of conquests, the ranking of the various forces they've fought against is roughly that the Telascallan soldiers and commoners are unified, the most numerous, and the strongest in combat. The Cloud People Misteks are separated by rank, the militia is weak, overall the weakest. The organization of the Totonac is even higher than that of the Southern Tekos tribes in the mountains, nearly ranking second!

"Therefore, we must firmly occupy this place, manage the seaside lands, and carefully distinguish the various Totonac tribes, see the different groups within each tribe, differentiate enemies, and recognize friends..."

At this, Black Wolf paused slightly, recalling the teachings of His Highness, his words becoming meaningful.

"His Highness said, who is our enemy? Who is our friend? This is the primary question in war!...Looking closely, among the Totonac, top to bottom, they can be divided into four classes!"

"The top two classes are the hereditary priest and nobility, who number the fewest but hold the most power and wealth! Next are the mid-level tribal warriors, numbering in the thousands, possessing military force but often subordinate to different priests, nobles, and chieftains. Lastly, there are the lowest class of tribespeople, numbering in the tens of thousands, responsible for farming, fishing, logging, construction, and tool-making...Overall, the priests, nobility, warriors, and commoners each require different handling!"

Upon hearing this, the generals looked at each other and pondered. Red Monkey Ozoma listened with utmost attention, awe naturally arising for the Highness who could say such things.

"...How do we differentiate enemies and friends? Simply put, enemies are the targets of the pack's bite, while friends are the cooperative wolves. To take over the Totonac pack, we must naturally kill the pack leader, eliminate the leading nobles and priests, and seize the leadership of the pack! This process of usurpation requires completely destroying the priests' divine authority and striving to gather the chieftains' control...which means executing all Feathered Serpent Priests, sacrificing all Great Nobility, and selectively retaining small tribe chieftains!"

Black Wolf's cold words fell into the ears of the generals like a thunderclap, stirring their hearts. Across Central America, only the Mexica, tasked with heavenly destiny, self-recognized as chosen by the Divine, would view the terrifying notion of annihilating the gods and sacrificing the Divine Descendants as logical.

"After eliminating the leading nobles and priests, we can acquire sufficient wealth, land, and population to reward loyal warriors who follow us! The Guajili Legion has land grants in the kingdom, thus requiring enough financial rewards. As for the following Mistec Warriors and Totonac Warriors, they need land and agricultural slaves to truly settle down...likewise, dealing with priests and nobility, the coastal warriors and militias will lose their loyal leaders, and can be subdued by us!"

Hearing this, Woodpecker Lichi and Divine Priest Andiwei exchanged a glance, knowingly nodding.

Currently, the Mistec Warriors under their command have become completely wild and are no longer the previously tamed figures subdued by priests and nobles. These Mistec Warriors obey commands and fearlessly fight, only intimidated by the Mexica legion's oppressively powerful force, and can indulge in plundering and slaughter post-war, gaining unprecedented release and wealth.

Such an army, truly like a wolf pack, ready to counter-attack at any moment. The two of them lack the savage bravery of Black Wolf General, leading the vanguard camp in constant trepidation. If they can allocate land and agricultural slaves to the warriors, it would indeed stabilize the army's morale and restrain the fierce warriors.

As for Warrior Wood Lizard and Militia Leader Red Ear, upon hearing they could be granted the land and slaves of noble chieftains, they are somewhat skeptical and temporarily dare not believe.

"Priests and nobility are the kingdom's destined enemies. Warriors and militias are friends the kingdom can win over, they are the mature wolves. We should recruit the mature wolves, kill the few rebellious ones, and assimilate the majority of obedient cooperative wolves!"

"As long as tribal warriors and militias submit to the kingdom, they can replace the position of noble chieftains and gain unimaginable wealth, land, and tribes! In traditional Totonac tribes, they have absolutely no chance of attaining all this...Once they accept the kingdom's rewards, they will become wolves under the kingdom's rule! Of course, for different tribes, awarding specifications must be differentiated. Warriors who first follow us should receive benefits first! The greatest merit should fetch a bigger share!..."

At this, the generals felt a longing, as if gaining a new target for battle. Black Wolf General's words, falling on the surrendered generals, were no longer stern and frightening, but became kind and authoritative.

"The rebellious are executed, the obedient are rewarded! Once we solve the leading wolves and mature wolves, the remaining weak old wolves and young wolves, tens of thousands of tribespeople, will only follow suit, working obediently for us. Without the guidance of priests and chieftains, they lack the ability to resist and aren't considered the kingdom's enemies. And they who believe in the Fake God, before earnestly converting to and submitting to the Chief Divine, aren't considered friends of the kingdom either. They only need to remember to turn over their original tribute to the chieftains to the kingdom, and then submit to the Chief Divine!..."

At this point, Black Wolf paused, briefly touching his head, faintly sensing something amiss. After years of conquest, he can be considered quite knowledgeable, having seen many different yet similar tribespeople.

Across the land, tens of thousands of tribespeople have only ever known to obey the honorable and sincerely believe in the divine, unaware of rebellion. They are prey to the upper echelon, fundamentally not old wolves and young wolves, merely domesticated turkeys and grass rodents!

At this moment, Black Wolf felt slightly dazed. He couldn't help but look westward, pondering deeply.

"His Highness repeatedly emphasized to me that commoners are like tides, containing truly mountain-and-sea-like powers. Yet this power, where is it hidden? I have never seen it..."

Chapter 1135: Three-Pronged Assault, the New Serpent-Slaying City

"Praise the Chief Divine, praise His Highness, praise the wise Black Wolf Legion Commander!"

"We will follow you, brave Great Chieftain of the Black Wolf!"

"With your words, we know what to do! Roar!"

The drizzle paused, and the sun emerged from the clouds, illuminating the boundless Caribbean Sea. The generals by the sea raised their hands to swear allegiance in the sunlight. They shouted loudly, their voices shaking the skies, expressing submission to the wise Black Wolf Torc.

The words of the Great General Black Wolf, "distinguishing friend from foe," were, in fact, a clearly defined action plan. After hearing it, the generals also roughly understood how to deal with the conquered Totonac Tribe and what to do with the different strata within the tribe.

"Very well! Kill our enemies and treat our friends well. This is the foundation of our standing! Praise the Chief Divine! Awoo!"

Black Wolf looked around at everyone, contentedly throwing back his head and howling long. His eyes were resolute and cold, like those of a merciless wolf in the snow. Then, with a fierce expression, the lead wolf grinned, revealing sharp teeth.

"Next, we will divide into three routes! One will clear the surroundings of the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, within a radius of sixty Li, taking all the Totonac camps and villages into direct control. One will go

north, advancing along the coast, subduing the tribes along the way, allowing them to farm peacefully... Continue northward for two hundred and fifty Li, opening up land and sea routes to Vastec Crow City, establishing contact with the Silver Raven Tribe!"

"The final route, the main force of the army, will march south to attack the Totonac allied forces, striking at weak, scattered tribes, burning distant villages and forcibly relocating commoners... Until they reach Golden Bay City, one hundred and fifty Li away!"

Hearing such an ambitious plan, all the generals displayed eager expressions, like a pack of wolves eager to hunt. They lowered their heads, straightened their ears, and listened attentively to the specific arrangements of the lead wolf.

"Red Monkey Ozoma, I'm giving you one thousand from the Guajili Legion to oversee the clearing around Feathered Serpent Ancient City! Woodpecker Lichi, select one thousand Mistec Warriors. Wood Lizard, also select five hundred Totonac Warriors... Red Monkey, these fifteen hundred warriors are placed under your command to clean within a sixty Li radius! And when the clearing is completed, they will be the first to receive land grants and slaves around Feathered Serpent City!"

Upon hearing this, Militia Leader Red Ear's expression changed drastically. He couldn't help stepping forward, humbly kneeling on the ground, praying to the mighty Great Chieftain of the Black Wolf.

"Honorable Great Chieftain of the Black Wolf, within this sixty Li radius, there are actually many villages loyal to the Alliance, with faith in the Chief Divine!..."

Black Wolf raised his eyebrows, looking at Red Ear faintly for a moment, then he understood.

The three thousand militia who surrendered under Red Ear roughly came from the nearby sixty Li villages, which was about a day's swift march at most. Clearing the villages around Feathered Serpent City would affect the vital interests of the militias. Therefore, the always submissive Red Ear had to come forward and plead.

Black Wolf's thoughts turned, not in a hurry to reply to Red Ear. Instead, his gaze shifted to Red Monkey, asking in a deep voice.

"Red Monkey, how many were captured after capturing Feathered Serpent City?"

"Reporting to the Commander, besides the three thousand surrendered militiamen, we captured about seven thousand able-bodied men and women! They were all controlled by the Feathered Serpent nobles and priests."

"Seven thousand people... Hmm, about right. These people dared to resist the Kingdom, so they will all be demoted to agricultural slaves, distributed to the warriors of the various tribes to be awarded soon!"

With a wave of his huge hand, Black Wolf decided the fate of thousands of people and determined the promotion of various tribal warriors.

"All three thousand Mistec Warriors and two thousand Totonac Warriors will be promoted to the Kingdom's Second Level Warriors, receiving land and slaves just outside Feathered Serpent Ancient City nearby. Each person will be granted 20 acres of land and 1 slave... Hmm, that's five thousand agricultural slaves."

"Then, from the Mistec Warriors, select six hundred Third Level Warriors based on merit, and from the Totonac Warriors, select two hundred Third Level Warriors. These eight hundred Third Level Warriors will each be granted 100 acres of land and 5 slaves! It turns out the number of slaves is still short... short by..."

At this point, Black Wolf's speech paused, unable to calculate immediately. Red Monkey, assessing the situation, respectfully lowered his head and answered.

"Reporting to the Commander, approximately one to two thousand agricultural slaves are still needed! The army, after capturing Feathered Serpent City, saw many enemies scatter. We just need to capture some from the surrounding tribes, and we'll quickly make up the numbers!"

"Very good! Red Ear, your three thousand militia will also follow Red Monkey to participate in the clearing of various camps and villages. They are all local militias, with a clear understanding of the villages. Within the sixty Li radius, execute and sacrifice all tribal leaders, elders, and priests! Any resisting tribesmen, execute the men, and demote their wives and children to agricultural slaves!"

"Remember, let the local militia do the work themselves! Next, the management of each village will be handed over to them, allowing them to rise and take control. Each village will accommodate dozens or hundreds of surrendered militiamen, selecting several leaders who believe in the Chief Divine to form the Kingdom's direct agricultural village society! Their most important task will then be to supervise the villagers' conversion and organize this year's spring planting!"

At this point, Black Wolf raised his head, looking at the blazing sun. The lowland by the seaside did have an advantage, which was year-round farming. So even if clearing the tribes delayed for a month, planting in June would still be possible.

"No matter what, the surroundings of Feathered Serpent Ancient City must be cleared, turning into villages loyal to the Kingdom! And as long as the surrendered militias' hands are bloodied, gaining unimaginable power and wealth, there will be no turning back!"

"Praise the Great Chief Black Wolf! You are the generous and strong jungle Jaguar!"

Upon hearing the Great Chief Black Wolf's arrangements, Red Ear lifted his head and praised loudly. The unease on his face disappeared, replaced by a genuine smile. If the Great Chief Black Wolf delivers, then the surrender of the militias would not be a disaster but rather a colossal opportunity!

"The opportunity for the militias is the disaster for the tribal leaders! Haha, praise the Chief Divine, it's time to rise up and be the master!"

Red Ear prayed devoutly, then stood up. He instinctively reached out his hand to touch the sharp obsidian dagger at his waist, recalling the scene of being forced to kill the Feathered Serpent Priest. An unprecedented red color flickered in the depths of his eyes.

"Praise Chief Divine! For the second northern route, progress by water and land, recruit tribes along the way, and requisition canoes from each group until two or three hundred miles away to Crow City! The goal of this route is to open the road, requiring not too many troops..."

Black Wolf pondered briefly before choosing the leading general.

"Red Frog! I give you a thousand Guajili warriors, and five hundred Totonac militia as local guides. Remember, as you travel north, scout the situation along the way, send envoys to the northern tribes, demanding their tribute and submission! If the Totonac do not openly provoke, execute the Kingdom's envoys, or block the marching route, do not actively attack them..."

"Your primary task is to establish contact with the Silver Raven Tribe, request food supplies from Chief Papata! If Chief Papata is willing to take the initiative to send troops south to attack the Totonac's tribes, then a vast northern territory can be handed over to him!"

Black Wolf raised his head in generous promise. After departing from Five Mountains City and capturing the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, the coastal Totonac tribes were like a long snake struck at its seven-inch weak point, split directly in half!

From the Feathered Serpent Ancient City eastward and southward, the Eastern Totonac people occupy more than six hundred miles of coastline until the Eastern Holy Land Hidden Serpent City. While northward and westward from the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, within two hundred miles, the seaside tribes completely lost the Divine Descendant leader from the Feathered Serpent City, becoming scattered like loose sand.

"When all tribes within a radius of sixty miles are cleared out, the next step is to act against the north, to take care of all the scattered seaside tribes! The control range northward must extend until it borders the Silver Raven Tribe."

Black Wolf pondered for a moment, then raised his head again, looking at the generals who respectfully accepted their orders. He clearly understood that to completely assimilate the two surrendered armies, continuous warfare and constant victories were essential!

"For the last route, the main force heading south will be led by me personally! Red Deer, you bring two thousand Guajili legions as the central force. Woodpecker Lichi, you bring two thousand Mistec warriors, responsible for the inland west side. Wooden Lizard, you lead the remaining fifteen hundred Totonac warriors, responsible for the coastal east side. Tupa, bring ten Sun Divine Eagle Cannons as the reserve siege force!"

"Arrange the troops and prepare for departure! In three days, we will march heavily southward, to test the strength of the Totonac eastern allied forces until we reach Golden Bay City!"

At this point, Black Wolf raised his head and laughed heartily. His face was full of fearless determination, and his eyes burned with a cold fire.

"If the eastern Totonac people are not prepared to defend their city... we light a fire to burn down their central temple and destroy the prosperous Golden Bay City! Roar!"

Upon hearing such words, and thinking of the prosperity of Golden Bay City, the eastern expedition generals' eyes flickered with a wolf-like desire. Red Deer Masate, with eyes red, ripped open his chest's war clothes and was the first to shout out loud.

"Roar! Capture Golden Bay City, kill the Divine Descendants and the priests, then burn their temple! The women, population, wealth, they're all ours! And this coastal land belongs to the Kingdom!"

"Roar, roar! Siege, killing! Burn the temple, plunder! Offer the land to the Great Chief, offer sacrifices to the Chief Divine!"

The deafening roar echoed on the seaside mudflats. Generals widened their eyes, shouting fiercely to the sky, demonstrating their loyalty. Soon, the hundreds of trusted aides behind them started shouting fanatically. The longing for battle echoed through the vast seaside, foretelling a future of bloodshed.

Black Wolf, satisfied and triumphant, looked around at his wolf pack. The wolf pack, regardless of their origin, as long as their blood courage was aroused, could be used, far surpassing domestic dogs!

All the generals were shouting and cheering, only Red Monkey Ozoma remained calm. When the crowd's shouting subsided, he stepped forward respectfully.

"Honorable Black Wolf Legion Commander! Since we have captured the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, this Holy Land of the fake god should have its name changed... please grant a new name, so that this ancient seaside land may bask in the glory of the Chief Divine!"

"A new name?... Hmm..."

Black Wolf stroked his chin, pondered for a while, then waved his hand decisively, announcing in a loud voice.

"The great fire of the Temple of the Feathered Serpent has died down. Today, upon returning, let the captured able-bodied men start demolishing the burned ancient temple completely! We will rebuild a magnificent Main God Temple on the pyramid! We must bask in the Chief Divine's glory and bring His radiance to the lost Totonac tribes!"

"Praise the Supreme Main God! The priests have said, the Chief Divine killed the Feathered Serpent God, devouring His divinity and divine job... So, from now on, the new name of this ancient city will be 'The Land where the Chief Divine Slays the Feathered Serpent,' the Kingdom's Serpent Slaying City!"

Chapter 1136: The Clans of Golden Bay, Veracruz, and News from the Feathered Serpent Ancient City

June arrived in the warm drizzle, soaking the coasts of the Totonac tribes. The rudimentary farmland was lush and green; the beans had just sprouted new buds, and the maize grew strong alongside the weeds—it was indeed the busy farming season. Yet, at this moment around Golden Bay City, the tribespeople couldn't spare the effort to clear the weeds. With fear on their faces, they gathered before the altar of the Feathered Serpent Divine, anxiously discussing, even in panic.

Travelers fled along the coastal roads, the escaping militia bringing terrifying news. More than half a month ago, the ancient Feathered Serpent Holy City to the north had already fallen under the Aztec invasion!

"The brutal Aztec legion summoned demons from the earth's volcano! They shattered the Feathered Serpent Divine Priest's protection with roaring thunderbolts! The sacred High Priests and noble Divine Descendant Nobility perished in the invasion. Their blood and bodies were sacrificed to the War God! Their heads and feather crowns were even piled into small mountains!"

The fleeing Feathered Serpent Priest, Papu, told the leader of the Snake Lake Tribe, the village chief Chuchut. In the Totonac language, Papu means "moon," while Chuchut means "water." Both bore names of divinity, passed down from their divine ancestor, naturally placing them within the Aztec's purging scope.

"Chuchut, I escaped from the fallen Feathered Serpent Ancient City and stayed in a nearby village for over ten days. The Aztecs' treatment of the nobility is more brutal than any mythological epic, even surpassing the Evil God!"

Papu appeared disheveled, sitting in Chuchut's longhouse. He grasped his Divine Staff, recalling the past more than half a month, still unsettled.

Months ago, in the name of the Chief Divine, the Aztecs demanded the Defectors from Tlaxcala and seized the fortified Five Mountains City. The priests of the Feathered Serpent Ancient City were furious, enmity against the Chief Divine's faith, raised the banner of the Feathered Serpent Divine, and rallied warriors and militia of each tribe to rely on mountain camps for a desperate fight against the invading enemy! However, to everyone's surprise, the fierce resistance of each mountain tribe lasted merely over a month before the ferocious Mexica legion reached the outskirts of Feathered Serpent Ancient City, even before reinforcements from the Totonac City-States could arrive!

The Feathered Serpent Ancient City was open on all sides, lacking walls, with only the solid, expansive central Holy Temple as the final fortress. During the Aztec legion's attack, as an inconspicuous middle-ranking Feathered Serpent Priest, he chose the courageous escape rather than return to the Holy Temple for a desperate resistance!

The surroundings outside the city were filled with chaotic battles among warriors. He took no risks traveling but quietly hid in a nearby Totonac fishing village, waiting for the situation to calm.

"The brutal Aztecs show no reverence for any Divine. They even set fire to the ancient pyramid! The black smoke from the burning Feathered Serpent Holy Temple—I could see it clearly from the village more than ten miles away!"

Speaking of this, Papu's face was filled with uncontrollable fear, tears unwittingly falling from his eyes. Had he made a wrong choice back then, he, too, would have turned to ashes along with the Elder Priests.

But now, the Western ancient holy land has been occupied, the Feathered Serpent Holy Temple burned to ash. The Feathered Serpent Priests of the Western tribes have lost their foundation, akin to stray dogs. From now on, these remaining Ancient City Priests might have no choice but to bow under the Eastern Holy Land of Hidden Snake City!

"The village leader, with deep reverence for the Feathered Serpent Divine, carefully protected me. The Aztec barbarian patrol came once, extorted a batch of food from the village, and returned to Feathered

Serpent Ancient City. At that time, though the Feathered Serpent Ancient City had fallen, the villages outside still had allegiance toward the Feathered Serpent Divine! But afterward, afterward... alas!"

"Honored Papu Priest, what happened next?"

Under Chuchut's concerned gaze, Papu paused and let out a deep sigh. He gritted his teeth, speaking each word with deep-seated hatred and contempt for the overthrow of nobility.

"Afterward, the Aztec army dispersed from Feathered Serpent City and began cleansing the countryside! Led by local militia who betrayed the Divine and tribal leaders, they reached the fishing village where I was hiding... They, they actually gathered the villagers, ordered them to destroy the Feathered Serpent Divine's altar! They openly executed the village leader and even granted the village's population, land, and administration to surrendered vile militia!"

"Hiss!... Feathered Serpent Divine! The Aztecs are indeed so brutal!"

Hearing this, the leader, Chuchut, drew a breath, his face turning pale. He initially thought the Aztecs' arrival meant merely a new entity to pay tribute to, akin to tribal skirmishes. However, listening to Papu Priest's description, Aztecs not only sought to overturn each tribal faith but aimed to completely overthrow the hierarchy of tribes!

"This is... this leaves no room for us to survive! Every tribal leader, every City-State shall resist to the end!"

"Feathered Serpent Divine's protection! We have no choice but to resist to the last! Those traitors betraying the Divine, daring to collude with the Aztecs, shall face Divine Punishment and fall into the deep dark sea forever!"

Papu gritted his teeth, cursing harshly.

At this very moment, the Totonac militia converted to the Mexica Chief Divine, were leading Aztec warriors, one after another, brutally and cruelly clearing the villages outside Feathered Serpent City. If an escaping Feathered Serpent Priest were captured, they faced only immediate execution! Had it not

been for the prematurely executed village leader who prepared two canoes and appointed a few tribal youths as escorts, he could not have escaped to this place, merely thirty miles from Golden Bay City.

"Feathered Serpent Divine, just as the Tlaxcala nobility warned! The Aztec invasion is fundamentally different from previous tribal skirmishes! They do not accept surrender from Divine Descendant Nobility, they do not honor the sacredness of the Feathered Serpent Priest, they want to offer the noble leaders to the Divine and demons as sacrifices! They unleash demons from human hearts, seducing warriors and militia to grant tribes and villages to commoners without Divine Blood. They would even distribute the leader's lands to the most lowly ant-like commoners!"

Papu Priest shut his eyes, painfully recalling before opening them again. He clamped his teeth shut, squeezing icy words through his teeth, chilling to the core.

"Therefore, Chuchut, village chief, do not harbor any illusions, do not hope for surrender! Even if the tribespeople under you survive, you will lose everything, your life and soul! This Aztec war is completely different from the past... It is the War God against the Feathered Serpent Divine, an invasion of volcanic demons, aimed at completely overthrowing the ancient order!..."

Hearing this, Chuchut's face turned ashen. His eyes were filled with unhideable fear as he tremulously asked.

"Respected Papu Priest, in the face of the Aztec legion's invasion, Five Mountains City, Feathered Serpent Ancient City... all the powerful Totonac Tribes have been destroyed one by one. What can small, weak tribes like ours do?"

"..."

Upon hearing this, the Papu Priest pressed his lips tightly together and remained silent for a long time. It was not until Chuchut, the village chief, asked again that he responded in a low voice.

"The Feathered Serpent Divine observes everything! Even though darkness assaults from the horizon, light will eventually arrive after the storm... Facing the Aztec invasion, the priests and Divine Descendants of all Totonac city-states actually have no retreat. They will certainly unite, gather the strength of all the tribes, and resist to the end! However, the chieftains need time to see their situation clearly. Gathering the warriors and militia of each tribe also requires more time..."

"And at this moment, the Aztec army is sweeping south, advancing to attack. When I was in the canoe, I saw a force of over a thousand Totonac defectors marching south along the coast... It is estimated they will arrive here in two or three days."

"Two or three days? Only two or three days!"

Chuchut was like thunderstruck, rooted to the spot. His mind was blank, and his eyes were filled with fear and helpless confusion.

"In two or three days, the Aztec army will arrive here?!"

"Yes. That is the most optimistic estimate. When I headed south, each tribe along the way was in disarray, totally unable to withstand for long!"

"Ah! What should I do? Papu Priest, what should we do?"

The Papu Priest squinted his eyes, deeply observing the panicked and bewildered Chuchut, the village chief. Only then, under the guise of trying to save him, did he state the purpose of this trip.

"Chuchut, village chief, now, there are only two or three days left. Our families have been connected for generations, and we have always been close... I will not harm you. In the current situation, if the tribe resists, it is a dead end. If the tribe surrenders, it is also a dead end... The only way to survive is to take your valuables, gather the tribe's warriors and able-bodied men, and migrate the entire tribe!"

"Migrate the entire tribe? Escape to the nearest Golden Bay City? There is a circle of walls there, it should be defensible, right?"

"...Although Golden Bay City is strong, it may not be defensible. Even if it is, it will inevitably be the frontline against the Aztecs..."

The Papu Priest paused for a moment, walked out of the longhouse, and looked to the distant East. His gaze was far-reaching, his thoughts thorough. However, at this moment, he was just an ordinary priest

who had lost his belonging and was fleeing alone. He must gain the tribe's support to go where he wished, maintaining his revered status.

"Therefore, Golden Bay City is just the beginning of the migration, the further East the better! I know the road to the East, even to the Hidden Serpent City Holy Land, and only there is truly safe... But for now, let's quickly mobilize the tribe and hide behind Golden Bay City for now! May the Feathered Serpent Divine protect us!"

"May the Feathered Serpent Divine protect us!"

Chieftain Chuchut prayed, standing up. He stood shoulder to shoulder with the Papu Priest, looking towards the East.

In their view, the East was an expanse of jungle and flowing marshland. The low-lying villages of the Totonac people were scattered on the high grounds of the jungle and marshland, along the river. In the unseen distance, an ancient flourishing city-state stood reliant on the Long River that extended into the southern jungle, beside the winding Golden Bay.

At this time, the name of this city-state was aptly attributed to the seaside scenery, called Golden Bay City. In the eyes of the Totonac people, this riverside city-state had continued for hundreds of years and would always worship the Feathered Serpent Divine until the end of the era arrived.

And in later history, it had a more prominent name: the arrival point of the Conquistador Cortes, the first settlement of Spaniards in Central America, "the True Cross," Veracruz!

Chapter 1137: The Snake Lake Tribe's Migration

"Oh people of the hot land, wandering on the earth like leaves in the wind, falling into unknown destinations. Oh Feathered Serpent, illuminate the bright path, on the long road of migration, filled with stones and thorns..."

The Papu Priest spoke of the horror in the north, Chieftain Chuchut made a decision, and the Snake Lake Tribe promptly began their migration. It was so hurried, without much hesitation, just like their ancestors. In the epic of tradition, the ancestors of the tribe came from the far distant north, traveling all the way from the desolate desert. And now, it was once again a migration towards the hot land in the south.

In fact, "Totonac" means "hot land." So "Tototanak people" are "the people of the hot land."

Time is pressing, calls and haste are everywhere. The young and strong men wore loincloths, bare-chested, carrying baskets of food on their backs. The women wore concealing robes, heads down, carrying cloth and pottery. Chieftain Chuchut personally directed a few robust men to carry the wooden carvings that symbolized the tribe's heritage.

As for the elderly left by the tribe, they remained in the soon-to-be-empty village, looking at the lush farmlands, awaiting a brief and unknown fate. They sat cross-legged on the earthen altar outside the village, beating ancient-leather drums, singing songs to send off those who would never return.

"Oh high Sun God, guide the way southward, towards His blazing light, seeking fertile land to plant corn. Old God of Thunder, ruler of the endless Eastern Sea, remember to walk along the coast, there is food and water. New Rain God, who whirls up terrible hurricanes, do not travel in His season of great rage, and avoid the sweeping floods..."

The old song echoed across the fields, reaching the ears of the Papu Priest, stopping him to look back.

In the traditional polytheistic beliefs of the Totonac, apart from the prosperous Feathered Serpent, there was also the Sun God who ruled the sun-grown crops, the old God of Thunder who commanded the endless waters, and the New Rain God who governed hurricanes and storms. Their Nava Faith, like the Mexica people of the highlands, shared many similarities but also had more unique deities.

"Chieftain Chuchut, bringing so many things, migrating so slowly..."

The Papu Priest frowned, looking past low huts made of palm leaves and branches towards the silent green jungle in the north, full of worry.

"How can we possibly outrun the Aztec army advancing south?"

"Without food, we won't last until the autumn harvest. Without cotton and pottery, we cannot gain assistance from other tribes. And without the wooden carvings of heritage, how can I, in the name of our ancestors, lead the tribe?"

Upon hearing the words of the Papu Priest, Chieftain Chuchut shook his head, not fully convinced. While he had heeded the advice of the Papu Priest and decided on a mass migration, he remained somewhat optimistic, not believing that the Aztec army would arrive so soon.

"What's more, there is the powerful Cempoalla, with more than 20,000 people in the Nianshui City division, blocking our northern path!"

"The powerful Cempoalla, with its Nianshui City division having two to three thousand warriors..."

Upon hearing this, the Papu Priest's face froze, and he began to feel a bit of doubt. In the Navajo language, "Cempoal" means "twenty." "Cempoalli" is the "land of twenty waters," a prosperous city-state with many canals and lakes, Nianshui City.

Nianshui City was located sixty or seventy miles south of the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, a truly ancient city-state. It was established at the end of the Olmec Era and the early Teotihuacan Period, inheriting over 1,500 years of history. It is said that during the Teotihuacan kings' eastern campaigns against the Maya, they left recorded tablets in Nianshui City, blood-sacrificed six hundred captives to the old Gods.

This ancient city was located inland on a coastal plain, closely adjacent to the Actopan River, with the coastline a dozen miles away. The Papu Priest, when fleeing south, rowed a small boat in haste and did not see the state of Nianshui City.

"When guarding the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, the Nianshui City division sent out over seven hundred samurai, who were later completely defeated by the Aztecs, suffering significant casualties. Like many coastal city-states, Nianshui City has no walls..."

The Papu Priest was worried, looking at Chieftain Chuchut.

"Chuchut, you have not seen the might of the Aztec legion... Before the copper beasts of thunder and the burning fire arrows, I'm afraid the Nianshui City division won't hold out for several days!"

"Papu Priest, the Nianshui City division is a great tribe of 20,000 people! Even if hundreds of warriors have fallen, they can still muster three or four thousand militia. Though this city-state lacks walls, it has many small fortress-like temples. All those temples are situated atop pyramids over ten meters high, built with bricks and stones, using lime made from snail and shell, extremely strong! Even if fully exerted, a stone spear cannot damage the stone temples in the slightest. The stone temples are also fireproof, and besides, it's still raining..."

Chuchut's lips curled up, recalling the sights he personally witnessed, deeply believing in the solidity of Nianshui City. Such a powerful city-state, at worse, could hold out for several days.

"We follow the river, through the jungle, towards Golden Bay City, which takes only two or three days. Counting the days you've traveled south, the Nianshui City division surely must be able to hold out for three or four more days?"

"Hmm... indeed! If it's three or four days, Nianshui City division ought to be able to hold on."

The Papu Priest thought for a moment, reluctantly nodded. He no longer urged, just quietly watched the migration of the Snake Lake Tribe. An indistinct worry tangled in his heart but was unclear.

"Cempoalla... Nianshui City division... one of the earliest Totonac tribes to submit to the Mexica Alliance and pay tribute. It is the 'accounting land' of the Mexica Alliance, stationed with the Alliance's envoys, collecting taxes and tributes from the Totonac vassals... there are Mexica envoys there... surely no strange events will occur?"

The Papu Priest pressed his lips tight, contemplating for a long time, then anger surged within his chest.

"The western Totonac tribes have been paying tribute to the Mexica Alliance for over a decade! As a result, perhaps due to some alleged crime, the legion in the lake was ordered to subjugate and massacre the Divine Descendants and priests! From now on, the tiger and wolf ambitions of the Aztecs will be known to all tribes under the heavens! The noble ones of the Totonac, only by uniting, can resist to the death... The Mistec, Zapotecs, and others further south must also form alliances..."

The Feathered Serpent Priest's thoughts were scattered in the incessant drizzle, yet they fell upon the moist soil, unable to see the clear stream. He sighed, extending his hand to assist Chieftain Chuchut in directing the tribe's migration.

Night enveloped the land, torches lit up outside the village. After a long day's toil, the tribe finally settled their affairs. The tribespeople rested in the village for one last day, their cries and whispers never ceasing. In the early morning of the following day, the tribe, numbering over two thousand, embarked on the forest dirt road for migration. From dawn till dusk, they managed only a dozen miles. By evening, the tribe found a flat area by the river and lit a bonfire.

Soon, the desolate Totonac songs resonated by the river. This unique language, while beginning to merge with Navajo, still retained the undulations and pauses of the distant highlands.

"...The Sun God sits atop the tall trees, watching the people of the hot land wander the barren earth... He gazes at the Totonac for a long time before generously commanding, 'You, people of the hot land, may rest under the shade of the trees to evade my most majestic light. But you must close your eyes and dance a prayer ritual around the tree for me...'"

"'Oh, mighty Sun God! Thank you!' The ancestors bowed, saluting the Sun God. They dared not step forward, not knowing how to close their eyes and dance around the tree. They dared not retreat either, fearing to defy the Divine's command. They pondered, how could they meet both ends?..."

"'I will!' The wise heroic chieftain stepped forward. With his head lowered, he tied a long rope around his waist, leaped, and attached it to the tree. The Sun God's scorching gaze fell upon him, but the chieftain closed his eyes, descending inverted from the tree. With eyes shut, he danced in the air, circling the tree with the rope, like a brave and nimble eagle!..."

In the melancholy yet generous song, imbued with inevitable sorrow, it sang beneath the moonlight and outside the woods. The tribespeople listened to the song, ate softened dried pumpkin, their expressions dull and subdued.

The Papu Priest gnawed on a precious cornbread, his brow jumping. This ancient song, too, narrates the story of the Totonac ancestors' migration. Alongside the spreading of the story, a Totonac sacrificial custom ensued, passed down through generations. It was akin to an eagle hunting, the "Flying Man Dance."

"Chuchut! This song chills me to the bone! The epic chieftain's migration was beset by trials from various deities, dying along the way... Quickly, have the singers stop, it's too demoralizing!"

Chieftain Chuchut raised his brow, pondered for a moment, and softly instructed his trusted aide. The aide hurriedly left, and soon, the singing ceased, leaving the camp in dead silence.

The Papu Priest furrowed his brows, surveying the resting Snake Lake Tribe, and sighed. Sitting before the bonfire, his mouth full of ulcers from anxiety, he spoke softly.

"Chuchut Clan Leader, our pace is too slow! With all these baskets and bags, can't we leave some behind?"

"Papu Priest, the tribe hasn't migrated in many years... Despite today's rush, the pace isn't slow."

Chieftain Chuchut shook his head, helplessly refusing.

"The items taken are essential for the tribe's reconstruction. The Aztecs haven't appeared yet, but I've forced the tribe to abandon farms and villages to migrate, exhausting my prestige. If I further demand leaving behind their possessions, the warriors will stand against it!"

"If we wait until the Aztecs show up, it'll be too late!"

At these words, the Papu Priest ground his teeth, anger rising on his face.

"Chuchut! By then, both you as chieftain and I as priest will be doomed!"

"...Papup, I believe you. I, too, wish to speed up the pace to escape the brutal Aztecs..."

Chuchut remained silent for a moment before replying softly.

"But the warriors don't think the same. They feel...compared to the terrifying long migration, facing the Aztecs might not be so awful... If pressured further..."

"Hiss!"

Papu inhaled sharply, his expression changing unpredictably. After a while, he slowly lowered his head.

"Hmm. What you say makes sense. Tomorrow I'll hold a brief prayer ceremony to reveal the Feathered Serpent's oracle... I'll speak on the Aztecs' collusion with the demon..."

As night deepened, the fire flickered, casting shifting shadows until dawn approached. A short prayer ceremony was held on the riverbank mudflat.

The Papu Priest donned a Feather Crown and danced to communicate with the Divine under the reverent gaze of all. Yet, before announcing the new oracle, a few scouts, drenched in sweat, arrived hurriedly. They brought a bedraggled Divine Descendant Nobility and two alarming pieces of news.

"Yesterday, the Nianshui City tribe of over twenty thousand has surrendered to the terrifying Aztecs... No, the formidable Mexica legion!"

"This morning, the Red-Haired Barbarian scout squad appeared in the northern woods a few miles away. They stared across the river at the rear scout hunters for a long time! Our tribe's migration route has surely been discovered by them!"

Chapter 1138: Ancient Nianshui City and Cempoala of Three Eras

The red-haired hunter Chabo, in straw sandals, set out from Snake Lake Village, occupied by scouts, and ran all the way north. He passed through the lush lowland jungles, crossed the deep and shallow river streams, and tread along the soft edges of cornfields. He passed by various waterside villages, encountered militia squads collecting food supplies, and saw waves of warriors heading southward. Finally, he reached the edges of Nianshui City, Cempoala, and saw the ancient, low-lying stone buildings, along with the numerous pyramid temples.

"Wide noses, thick lips, deformed eyes, and helmet-like clay pots... such strange sculptures, strange Divine!"

Chabo's gaze lingered slightly on the ancient stone carvings on the outskirts of the ancient city, and he casually smirked. Ever since the corps moved south to the seaside lands, such worthless stone sculptures have been frequently seen, like relics of ancient civilizations.

He heard from the accompanying priest that these carved statue relics all originated from the ancestors of the various tribal alliances, the Olmec Jiao people. And what was carved on these stones were Divine from the Second Epoch, whose worship was continued by the Third Epoch's Teotihuacan people, referred to as the "Olden All Gods."

Over a thousand years ago, the ancient Cempoala inherited the remnants of Olmec civilization, forming large settlements for the first time. Over eight hundred years ago, the Teotihuacan people once ruled here, establishing the most prosperous city-state of the entire seaside lowlands. Subsequently, the Teotihuacan civilization collapsed, and ancient Cempoala fell into a prolonged decline.

"Undefeatable Divines, if they're dead, let them be dead!... Now in this world, only the Supreme Main God is the most invincible! Praise be to the Chief Divine!"

Chabo thought nonsensically as he presented the scouts' patterned wooden badge to the patrolling Mistek warrior squad. Then, he surveyed the city's myriad of stone and thatched huts, gazed at the dozen towering pyramid temples, scratched his head, and loudly inquired of the familiar Mistek captain.

"May the Chief Divine protect us! Tortillas, I have the latest military intelligence to report to the Great Chief Black Wolf! Where is the Great Chief?"

"Oh, praise the Chief Divine! The Great Chief is at the Chief Divine Temple, meeting with the Envoy of the Supreme Chief and some local tribal leaders."

The tall "Tortillas" turned around, propped his copper spear on the ground, and answered with a goofy smile. In Mistek Language, his name was "Jita" (Ji), which means "Tortillas."

At the sound of this name, it is clear he comes from ordinary Mistek commoners, destined to be a low-level warrior in the tribe for life. However, after surrendering to the Kingdom of the Lake, he was promoted to third-level warrior because of his fierce fighting and even served as a squad leader of a hundred men. Now, his smile was indeed genuine. Because, only within the corps of the Great Chief Black Wolf, did he have the opportunity to ascend.

"What? The Supreme Chief's envoy?"

On hearing this, Chabo paused, counted on his fingers, and tried hard to figure it out.

"The Black Wolf leader is the Great Chief, the God of Death is the Supreme Chief, then who is the Supreme Supreme Chief?... Uh, forget it, can't figure it out... the Chiefs never mentioned it, never mind!"

After a while, Chabo vigorously shook his head, not bothering to think anymore.

In the Black Wolf Army, Red Monkey, Red Deer, Red Frog, several chieftains leading the troops, have only mentioned the name of the God of Death and never talked about the alliance's Supreme Supreme Chief. Therefore, for the canine descendant warriors in the corps, their loyalty is not to the King of the Mexica Alliance but to the sole Supreme Lord!

"Tortillas, where is the Chief Divine Temple? Is it the largest pyramid temple at the center?"

"Oh, no, it is not. The largest one is the Temple of the Feathered Serpent."

"Is it the second largest one on the left?"

"Oh, no. That one is the Temple of the Sun."

"Is it the third largest one on the right?"

"Uh... Chabo, you see that mural of rainfall looks much like my hometown Divine Stone City, clearly it's the Rain God Temple..."

"Damn it! Where is it exactly?"

The Red-haired Hunter Chabo finally got angry. He widened his eyes and glared fiercely at the "corn cake".

"I have the latest military intelligence! You take me over there!"

"Oh, okay!... Actually, it's this one at the end, the smallest, newly built temple. It's the main temple..."

The Mistec Warrior Jita, carrying a long spear, led the Red-haired Hunter Chabo towards the depths of the ancient city. Majestic, cyan-grey pyramid temples with carved murals stood silently beside the two, quietly narrating the vicissitudes of history.

More than five hundred years ago, dozens of wilderness tribes from the North, in order to escape the flourishing Toltec Empire, migrated southeast to the coastal lowlands. These martial tribes from the highlands immediately favored the low plains where Cempoala was located. They defeated and integrated the local Teotihuacan remnants, occupied the fertile Cempoala, and gradually took root. Subsequently, these martial southern tribes continued along the coast, intermarrying with seaside tribes along the way, extending eastward to hundreds of miles away to the Hidden Serpent City.

Then, more than three hundred years ago, the martial Toltec civilization from the highlands once again collapsed amid the southward turmoil of the Canine Descendants. The Mexican Plateau, with its numerous city-states and dense population, fell back into a long and cruel civil war.

During the enduring plateau civil wars, some Toltec remnants migrated east to the Seaside Lands. They brought with them advanced stone construction techniques, the organizational form of city-state alliances, and built many large temples. It was they who brought the multi-god belief centered around the Feathered Serpent Divine, merging with the local "Old Gods." The eastern-migrating Toltec remnants gradually fused with the southern-migrating wilderness tribes, forming the concept of the "Totonac people," people of the hot lands!

Of course, the centrally prosperous Mexican Plateau had always been the political center of Central America, and the fate of all surrounding tribes was always influenced by the hegemony on the plateau. After the rise of the Tepanec people more than a hundred years ago, they once again demanded tribute from the coastal Totonac city-states.

More than thirty years ago, after the establishment of the new Aztec Triple Alliance in the Mexican Valley, the conqueror Montezuma I was dedicated to expanding hegemony, gathering a large warrior corps from the affiliated city-states, and initiated subjugation wars against various eastern tribes. First, he invaded the Northeast, subduing the Vastec people along the way, then marched south along the coast, forcing various Totonac city-states west to pay tribute.

It is said that in the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, Montezuma I stayed for a month, listened to the Feathered Serpent priests of the time elaborate myths, and accepted the tributes of the Totonac tribal leaders. Then, he led the Alliance's army to the vassal Nianshui City Cempoala, left an envoy of the Mexican Royal Family, and designated this place as the Alliance's "registry place," or the gathering site for coastal city-states' tributes. The temple's main sanctuary was only begun after the Nianshui City tribes became a vassal of the Alliance, less than thirty years ago.

"Oh mighty Main God! So many strange divine murals, I don't recognize any of them..."

Hunter Chabo glanced around, looking at the engravings on the temple, blinking. He didn't know those ancient stories, nor did he really care. Soon, his sharp eyes lingered on the divine glowing engravings, a strong desire emerging.

"Hiss! These divine statues' red eyes are all inlaid with rubies! Ah, the helmets are glowing gold items, and the straps are countless silver grains... Oh main god, truly prosperous seaside tribes!"

"Aren't they! These local Totonac tribes are indeed rich! Heard from the surrendering militiamen that the nobles in Nianshui City feast on meat each meal, along with inexhaustible salt and spices. Even ordinary city-state warriors have several feathered garments, all of different kinds!"

Warrior Jita licked the corner of his mouth, tightened the copper spear in his hand, a pure yet cold bloodlust flickering in his eyes, like a brown bear yearning for honey.

"What a pity, there are envoys from the Great Great Chieftain stopping us, forbidding us to plunder! Even though the local tribes were defeated and surrendered, those wealthy leaders remain unaffected! Damn it, truly infuriating!"

"Hmm? Envoys stopping... no plundering?"

Hunter Chabo rubbed his chin, deep in thought. He withheld his temper, looking around at the golden sparkling temples and palaces, speaking no further. Light rain gently fell again, hitting his red hair, not cold, rather warm.

Centered around ancient Nianshui City, along the coast for hundreds of miles, including Feathered Serpent Ancient City, Golden Bay City, Conical House City, Coyote City, Hidden Serpent City... all gathered Totonac tribes' "hot lands." This stretch along the seaside, abundant rainfall, hot and humid climate, suitable for crop growth. Rivers flowing from the Western highlands irrigate the coastal lowland plains, forming thriving villages. Along the coast, a chain of developing Totonac city-states gradually formed prosperous coastal trade routes, linking trade between the Nava Plateau and the Maya lowlands.

Due to its vast region and prosperous trade routes, Totonac city-states were rich. But, also because along the long coastline, scattered for hundreds of miles, the Totonac city-state alliance was extremely loose. Customs amongst the tribals were different, mostly unaffiliated, even antagonistic to each other. In reality, only the Priesthoods of Holy Lands on Totonac's east and west had the influence to rally the tribes to unite.

The fine rain fell on the mixed green stone dirt roads, making walking a bit slippery. Compared to the great cities on the Mexican Plateau, the jungle city of Nianshui City Cempoala was not particularly large. Hunter Chabo walked quickly, arriving at the newly bricked main sanctuary in a mere quarter of an hour. As he ascended the more than ten meters high temple pyramid, the spacious hall came into full view, vast and unobstructed.

The Great Chief Black Wolf donned armor, a bronze sword at his waist, his head held high, gazing at the Main God statue holding a javelin. Over ten Totonac divine descendants, crowned with a feather crown, were bowing, kneeling at the back of the temple. An alliance's great nobility, clad in a feathered garment and holding a scepter, stood with furrowed brows facing Black Wolf, standing in front of the local nobility.

Chapter 1139: The King's Envoy's Inquiry

The hunter Chabo raised his head and walked into the oppressive and serious great hall, summoned by the Black Wolf Legion Commander. He whispered a few words, and a fierce glint flashed in the Black Wolf Legion Commander's eyes.

"Very well! I understand. You may leave now!"

"Yes! At your command, Great Black Wolf Chief!"

The hunter Chabo bowed down respectfully and turned to leave without even glancing at the Alliance's great nobility beside him during the brief report.

"Honorable royal noble Yao Lin, the scouts of the army's vanguard have already arrived in the vicinity of Golden Bay City. According to the latest news, various Totonac tribes, large and small, are migrating towards Golden Bay City."

The Black Wolf pondered for a moment, expression neutral, as he looked at the king's envoy beside him, the middle-aged royal noble Yao Lin.

"The strength of the rebellious Totonac tribes is gathering, increasing! I need to gather the commanders, head to the frontlines, and launch an expedition and cleansing of the Golden Bay City area as soon as possible... Excuse me for not staying longer. Praise the Chief Divine!" After saying this, the Black Wolf General, with a cold gaze, glanced at the Cempoala Divine Descendants prostrating on the ground before leaving.

"Wait a moment! Honorable Black Wolf Legion Commander, please hold on!"

The royal envoy Yao Lin furrowed his brows and stepped forward urgently to block the Black Wolf Torc.

"Witness of the Chief Divine! The Totonac tribes of Cempoala have always been loyal vassals of the Mexica Alliance. They have paid tribute on time twice a year for twenty to thirty years! Over the past decades, the Divine Descendant leaders of Cempoala have been a firm pillar of the Mexica Alliance's rule over the Totonac lands. Even when the Lake Army launched an unprovoked southward expedition, under my persuasion, the tribal leaders of this city did not occupy the forts to resist but surrendered to the Alliance's army instead..."

"An unprovoked southward expedition? Ha!"

Upon hearing this, a dangerous wolf-like glint appeared in the Black Wolf Torc's eyes. He interrupted Envoy Yao Lin coldly.

"Yao Lin, what exactly do you want to say?"

"General Torc, please return the forcibly detained Divine Descendant nobility and hand over the local tribal management authority back to the leaders in the great hall! You must know, they are the most loyal supporters among the Alliance's vassal tribes!"

"Praise the Chief Divine, praise the King, we are loyal to the Alliance!"

Upon hearing this, the local nobles in the hall shouted loudly. Flying Bird Shah, the Great Chief of the Nianshui City Tribe, lifted his head in excited proclamation.

"I am King Aweit's most loyal vassal, leading the surrender to the southward Alliance army! Black Wolf General, how can you unreasonably detain my four sons, occupy my palace, seize the food in the warehouses, and forcefully conscript the tribe's warriors? I will personally go to Tloquiditlan to appeal to the great King Aweit!..."

Hearing this, Torc's gaze turned cold. With a "clang," he drew his bronze sword from his waist, pointing it directly at Chief Shah's position. Without hiding his murderous intent, he angrily shouted.

"Flying Bird Shah, shut your mouth! When I led the army through the Madre Pass, sending envoys to have you respond from the interior, how did you refuse? Who sent the warriors to support when I attacked the Feathered Serpent Ancient City and crushed hundreds of Cempoalan warriors? When the army reached Nianshui City, prepared to besiege, you only thought of surrendering—what kind of loyal Alliance vassal are you?..."

"...Witness of the Chief Divine! Shah, when I entered the city and saw the smallest Chief Temple among your many temples, I knew what kind of person you are!... Guards, take him away and interrogate him strictly! Let him confess his collusion with the Totonac rebels and opposition to the Alliance!"

With Black Wolf's command, two armored and axe-bearing Guajili warriors strode forward. They drew their bronze axes, turning the blunt edge, and mercilessly struck several blows, knocking the Great Chief Shah to the ground. Shah let out a few screams before being dragged away by the two strong warriors.

"Hiss!"

Seeing such a fierce scene, the many tribal nobles gasped, daring not make a sound. Yao Lin opened his mouth several times to try to intervene, but ultimately did not speak.

Among the accusations by Black Wolf, two were most deadly. One was sending warriors to support the Feathered Serpent Holy Land and battle the Lake Army. The other was disrespecting the Chief Divine, treating the Chief Divine as a subordinate deity. Currently, as the Alliance's religious reforms grow stricter, King Aweit ascends as Divine King, consolidating the High Priesthood and increasingly emphasizing faith in the Chief Divine. At this crucial moment, even Yao Lin, being a royal noble, could not speak lightly, lest he be suspected of disrespecting the Chief Divine.

"...Alas! Honorable Black Wolf Legion Commander!"

It was not until Shah's screams faded outside the Chief Temple that royal noble Yao Lin sighed. He lowered his voice, speaking cautiously.

"May the Chief Divine watch over us! Great Chief Shah indeed committed some errors in disrespecting the Chief Divine. But he has always been compliant towards the Alliance, without resisting to the end. The Nianshui City Tribe has always been a pivot for maintaining the Totonac lands' vassal states in the Alliance... Please, Black Wolf Commander, spare him a way to survive. The handling of such vassal city-state chiefs is best sent to the Capital City for the King and the High Priesthood to decide!"

"...Hmm. May the Chief Divine watch over us!"

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf Torc remained silent for a while before subtly nodding. He looked deeply at the king's envoy, the royal noble Yao Lin, sensing some constraints from the Alliance.

Yao Lin, journeying thousands of miles from the Capital City, directly secured the surrender of the over twenty thousand people of the Nianshui City Tribe, truly unexpected for him. According to his original plan, he intended to forcefully attack Nianshui City and sweep through the Cempoalan tribes. Even if it meant two thousand Totonac defectors fell in battle, he was determined to thoroughly eliminate the noble leaders, controlling each tribe within his grasp!

But now, with the Nianshui City Tribe surrendering, they contributed as many as three thousand defectors and retained numerous Divine Descendant nobility. Though this saved the army southward time and reduced casualties, the subsequent handling became tricky.

After all, he did not intend to maintain the traditional vassal system and return this strategically crucial ancient city to the tribal leaders, but planned to integrate it into the expeditionary army's direct control. As for the thousands of able-bodied men of the Nianshui City Tribe and years of stored food, he did not plan to overlook them.

Because, according to His Highness's directive, he was not waging a vassal war of subjugation, only to make the tribes submit; instead, he aimed to completely destroy the upper echelons of the tribes, conduct a brutal clearing, and initiate a unified war to rebuild the faith order!

The Black Wolf pondered for a long time, his expression growing colder. Yao Lin observed this, his expression subtly shifting, his voice also turning deep.

"Honorable Black Wolf Legion Commander, I come from the Capital City, under the king's decree, responsible for mediating the conflict between the Kingdom of the Lake and the Totonac vassal tribes!"

The king's envoy Yao Lin straightened his expression and raised the scepter, personally bestowed upon him by King Aweit. He gazed into Black Wolf Torc's eyes, asking every word before the Chief Divine's statue.

"The Chief Divine witnesses all! The Kingdom of the Lake advanced east, first capturing Five Mountains City, then occupying the Feathered Serpent Holy Land, and controlling Nianshui City. Now, the Lake Army plans to move further southeast to attack Golden Bay City..."

"Black Wolf Legion Commander, on behalf of the King, I must ask you: How long does the Lake Army intend to continue battling the Totonac tribes, and to where, before it plans to stop?"

Chapter 1140: The Interrupted Promise and the Black Wolf's Question

"...When will the fighting stop, and where will it end?"

Hearing the King's inquiry, Black Wolf Torc was startled and pondered for a long time.

If he followed His Highness's orders, he would have accomplished his goal by capturing the Feathered Serpent Ancient City and securing a coastal outlet for the kingdom along the Eastern Sea. But in his heart, he naturally wanted to continue attacking the Totonac tribes until he could fight no more!

This campaign eastward, although unexpected at the start, progressed smoothly, with impressive achievements. The morale, weaponry, organization, training, and familiarity with large-scale warfare of the Kingdom Legion far surpassed the Totonac tribes, who had enjoyed years of peace. The Totonac tribes were completely unprepared and were taken by surprise by an attack from the Lake Central Army, which was also a vassal state under the same suzerain alliance. The coastal states reacted very slowly, and their forces, unable to mobilize and unite, were defeated one by one, with a third succumbing and surrendering.

In this situation, from a strategic external perspective, as the highest commander of the legion, he must capitalize on the surprise attack on the seaside tribes and continue advancing swiftly eastward! This is like a wolf pack chasing a herd of deer, giving the opponent no respite, thus capturing the most prey.

Similarly, from an internal strategic perspective, the eastward push of the Black Wolf Army had only the Guajili Legion, comprising eight thousand core troops, with an additional few thousand surrendered Mistec soldiers. At this moment, with the army expanding rapidly, and considering the newly surrendered three thousand warriors of the Nianshui tribe, there were more than eight thousand surrendered troops from the Totonac tribes!

So many battle-hardened defectors could not be supported with the territories currently controlled by the Black Wolf Army. The defectors only feared the Kingdom's military might and had no loyalty until land and agricultural slaves were distributed. Currently, under the supervision of the Kingdom's warriors and promised rewards from looting, they could be controlled as warriors, inspired to fierce bravery, their hands stained with blood, attacking the other unrelated seaside tribes.

If the ruthless war of conquest continued, the number of defectors would gradually dwindle, and the legion could obtain enough land, population, and wealth to settle the surrendered warriors. But if there was a sudden cessation of hostilities, without continued plunder, and if external enemies gathered again, it wouldn't be long before the legion would implode!

"If Yao Lin hadn't persuaded the Nianshui City tribe to surrender, if the whole area had been conquered, and the surrendered army had lost one or two thousand men, thoroughly looting Cempoala might have

sufficed to satisfy the warriors. But now, with thousands of additional defectors and limited spoils, the war must continue!... "

"The number of wolves is increasing, their ferocity growing, and their hunger for prey intensifying! If there isn't enough flesh and blood to satiate them, they might turn against the Wolf King..."

Realizing this, Black Wolf Torc frowned, feeling the pressure. He silently gripped the bronze sword at his waist, contemplating the specific circumstances of the battle. The military momentum was like a sea, waves pushing waves, surging eastward, with no room for retreat. Tactically speaking, at least the attack on Golden Bay City, sweeping through the Golden Bay tribes, and looting extensively were necessary to barely satisfy the warriors and defectors under his command!

"Honored King's envoy, judging by the current situation, the Totonac rebels are quickly gathering around Golden Bay City to the southeast!....We must at least approach the city's gates, completely sweep the Jamapa river, known as the Adobe River's west side, to break the Totonac people's backbone, severing east and west, so they completely lose the western tribes!"

"What? Attack Golden Bay City, sweep the Jamapa river?"

Upon hearing this, King's envoy Yao Lin pursed his lips, swallowing hard. The Jamapa River, 20 li east of Golden Bay City, could be considered the dividing line between the east and west Totonac regions. Completely sweeping the area west of the Jamapa River was equivalent to taking the entire western Totonac region! And the seaside tribes subjugated by conqueror Montezuma I were limited only to the western Totonac region...

In other words, this was about completely overturning the thirty-year-old vassal system established by the alliance on the Totonac coast! This was dismantling the stable old order, comparable to Tlaxcala's eastward national divine war!

"Oh Chief Divine! How can such actions be justified to the vassals under heaven? How do I report back to the King in the Capital City, account to the Great Nobility of the Alliance?"

Thinking of this, Yao Lin's expression changed repeatedly, anxiety flashing in his eyes. Although he was the King's envoy, a scion of the royal subordinate nobles, his stance was aligned with the most

traditional great nobility of the alliance, inclining toward the conservative old order, naturally opposing such a fundamental change in the order!

Yao Lin's cousin, Vite Yao Ke, a branch of the War God lineage, managed the royal prison in the capital city, embodying the most conservative royal power. Over the past thirty years, his grandfather, his father, and he had successively served as the royal envoys of the alliance in the Totonac region, dealing extensively with Nianshui City, responsible for collecting and transporting local tribute. This generational familiarity with the vassals was precisely why King Aweit sent him eastward to mediate seaside conflicts, forming the trust foundation to persuade local noble chiefs to surrender to the alliance.

Since coming to power, King Aweit has been ambitiously pursuing religious reform, consolidating power through westward and eastward campaigns, with the goal of unification! However, across the entire alliance, there are very few Great Nobility who can have a global vision and keep pace with the King, moving forward. Even among the royal noble families, the conservative forces, like Yao Lin, who maintain the traditional order and follow alliance customs, still constitute the majority!

In this world, there has never been an example of complete unification, nor has there existed a system of central authority. As part of the Royal Family, they bow their heads and support the King's conquests. But from their inner views and personal interests, they don't necessarily agree with these drastic changes and expansions.

"The western expedition against Tarasco is the elders' directive, and a measure to eliminate hidden dangers for the eastern expedition. The eastern campaign against Tlaxcala aims to thoroughly defeat the enemies of the Alliance and eliminate the imminent threat. Now the threats in both east and west of the Mexican Valley have been removed! Whether Mistec, Zapotecs, or the current Totonac people, all are willing to submit and pay tribute, daring not to provoke the Alliance. Meanwhile, the King's extensive centralization contradicts tradition, causing unrest among the Great Nobility of various states, even unsettling the Alliance..."

"Chief Divine's protection! The Alliance's hegemony has been established in the world; no external worries remain. Since that's the case, why must the army continue to wage campaigns all around? By maintaining a tradition-bound stable order, why fear it cannot last hundreds of years?... Nianshui City is over seven hundred miles from the Capital City, yet even Predecessor Monarch Montezuma I, with all his military brilliance, never directly incorporated it, only established a vassal here to collect tribute! Just like now, although the Lake Army could destroy the Totonac lands, it's so distant that direct governance is impossible. In the end, new nobles have to be enfeoffed, vassals established, and in a few decades, it repeats..."

A whirlwind of thoughts surfaced in Yao Lin's mind, only to disappear one by one in reality. After a while, he took a deep breath and asked with a serious face.

"Chief Divine witnessed! Esteemed Black Wolf Legion Commander, I represent the King to ask you: Are you certain that after attacking Golden Bay City and sweeping Jamapa River, the Lake Army's expeditions will end here? After that, the tributary obligations of the Cempoala vassal status must be fully maintained and timely met!... I need a clear assurance to account to the Supreme King!"

"Chief Divine witnessed! I, the Black Wolf Army's campaign... will come to..."

Black Wolf Torc appeared solemn, hesitating as he opened his mouth, his voice struggling. He realized that his reply, should it reach King Aweit's ears, would be a serious political promise. Such a promise would indeed bind the Lake Army hand and foot. Once bound, to untangle would mean considering the King's majesty and paying a considerable price...

"Ahem! Praise the Chief Divine! The Guajili Legion is loyal to His Highness's revelation, fighting for the Supreme King! The Legion's campaign against the rebellious Totonac, ultimately, must be decided by the wisdom of His Highness in the Tree Snake City camp!"

At this critical moment, the Artillery Camp Commander Tupa gritted his teeth, decisively stepping forward to interrupt. He deeply glanced at the Black Wolf Commander, shaking his head imperceptibly.

Black Wolf was momentarily stunned but soon realized. His expression quickly shifted before fixing on self-reflective shame. His arrogance had him serving as commander of the Black Wolf Army for too long, accustomed to having ultimate authority. Subconsciously, he saw the Black Wolf Army as his own, poised to make commitments on behalf of His Highness.

Tupa's youthful face wore a respectful smile as he humbly bowed, and solemnly queried the King's envoy.

"Commander witnessed! Esteemed Envoy Yao Lin, did you meet His Highness on your journey east? What were His Highness's directives?"

"Uh... indeed, I did meet His Highness Xiulote on my way here."

At these words, Yao Lin pursed his lips, furrowing his brow deeply. Just as the Black Wolf Legion Commander was about to be trapped, giving himself a clear answer, another problem emerged.

Regarding His Highness's directives, it couldn't be countered with empty words. Yao Lin remained silent for a moment before honestly responding.

"His Highness Xiulote warmly hosted me for several days before informing me: 'A general out in the field might disobey commands, responding to changing situations with specific judgments. Like setting out to hunt, nobody can guarantee what prey will be caught in advance'... And he trusts the Black Wolf Legion Commander; the campaigns in Totonac land should be decided by Black Wolf General!"

Hearing His Highness's trusting words, Black Wolf lowered his eyes, feeling deeply moved. He closed his eyes, sorting through his jumbled thoughts, considering the flow in Yao Lin's words to find the critical pulse. After several moments, he suddenly opened his eyes, gazing sharply, like a wolf, into Envoy Yao Lin's eyes.

"Envoy Yao Lin, I have a question I want to sincerely ask you. Given that you represent the Supreme King, handling affairs in Totonac lands, issuing these inquiries toward me, what exactly were the King's instructions?"

Upon hearing this, the King's envoy, royal noble Yao Lin, suddenly changed his countenance.