

## Civilization 1151

### Chapter 1151: The Story of the Great Chief

Stars like an ocean, shining in the night sky. Hence, the color of the night reveals a deep blue, the deep blue presents a dark hue, and within that solitude, a faint glow emerges. Looking at it now, the night sky, though silent, is far from flat; it's an ever-changing entity, as if reflecting the rotation of the starry river.

The King's words, calm as the night, gently float into the ears. Bertade looked up in surprise, gazing at the King's profile, he also saw the dreamy backdrop. At this moment, he felt the King's demeanor, like the starry river in the background, vast in its silence, seemingly calm, yet something was spinning deep within his eyes.

"Your Highness, His Highness Xiu Hua is still young, and the Totonac expedition does not have the King's endorsement... At this moment, to make such a request to King Aweit might... upset the King."

Bertade knelt down, softly advised.

"Both Princes of the Royal Family currently have no actual fief. The Predecessor Monarch's eldest son Montezuma II is already of age and still resides in the Capital City. The Predecessor Monarch's second son, Quetzalcoatl is the same way, not to mention the other royal nobles... To request vast Totonac lands for His Highness Xiu Hua at this time, might cause dissatisfaction among the royal factions and invoke jealousy..."

"Hmm! I understand what you mean."

Xiulote nodded slightly, reminiscing, his gaze somewhat complex.

"King Aweit once agreed with me to guard the West for him. All lands to the west of the Kingdom of the Lake were promised to me, I could conquer them all! But now, I stretched my hand to the East, creating such a huge commotion, he will surely be displeased..."

"However, the Eastern Seaside is crucial, it relates to the layout of Cuba... Now that there is an opportunity to obtain it, I cannot let it slip! ... Even if it displeases the King, the necessary lands must still be claimed! Because, time will not wait for us..."

Upon hearing this, Bertade recalled the terrifying prophecy once described by His Highness. He tightened his lips, bowed deeply, and made a low promise.

"Your Highness, crossing to Cuba, managing Snake Island, resisting the white men, I will never let you down!"

"Hmm, Bertade, I trust you! Once the rainy season is over, I will reinforce Black Wolf, I might even personally go to the Eastern Sea to take charge of the situation. And once the Kingdom has secured the Totonac coastline, the next major task will depend on you!..."

Xiulote nodded, carefully instructed. His gaze became firm, yet a smile appeared on his face.

"Of course, I will not oppose the King for excessive land. The majority of Totonac land will belong to the Alliance, controlled by the King. The so-called enfeoffment of Xiu Hua is actually just to compensate for the pretext of conquering the Seaside Lands, obtaining the King's endorsement, providing the Alliance with a justification for deploying troops. As for what the Kingdom needs, it's merely a string of coastal strongholds. As for large inland domains like Five Mountains City, who they are ultimately enfeoffed to, I will leave entirely to the King's decision!"

"Ah? This... Your Highness, if that is the case, the dissatisfaction among the royal nobles can be quelled. The Kingdom of the Lake contributes forces for conquest, King Aweit claims the majority of territories, controls key transport routes, can transfer lands to the Great Nobility,... the King over there will likely accept it!"

"Hmm. I will additionally write a long letter to King Aweit, explaining in detail. The Kingdom of the Lake claiming a few seaside strongholds is truly just for the prophecy regarding the Eastern Sea..."

At this, Xiulote gazed towards the distant East with a silent sigh. He remained silent for a long time before continuing.

"Time is running out! Whether the King believes it or not, the arrival of white-skinned demons will naturally confirm all I say... Moreover, with the current centralized reforms the King is implementing, aiming to flatten the Great Nobility of the Alliance, he will still rely on my support! At this moment, he will definitely not want to push me to the side of the Great Nobility..."

"...Yes!"

Bertade looked up again, carefully observing His Highness' serene demeanor, filled with emotion.

"His Highness can say so calmly, choosing to join forces with the Great Nobility against the King! ... The King has finally matured!"

A ruler embarking on the path of power can only be propelled by rising political groups, continuously seizing power, unable to retreat! At this point, between King Aweit and His Highness Xiulote, the previously pure and beautiful teacher-student bond no longer exists, replaced by a political alliance of mutual planning and compromise.

"Hmm... Upon careful consideration, King Aweit should agree to my request for enfeoffment for Xiu Hua. However, in words, be as respectful as possible, without offending the King's authority... Xiu Hua is very young, and the Totonac lands enfeoffed to him will nominally remain under the central management of the Royal Family. I fear the King may use this as a reason to keep Xiu Hua in the Capital City, personally guiding and cultivating him..."

Xiulote closed his eyes, softly deducing the political situation of the Alliance. As a student cultivated by Aweit, he understands Aweit very well, just as Aweit understands him.

"Bertade, if the heir of the Kingdom of the Lake grows up in Tloquiditlan, influenced by the King... will the kingdom's generals accept him?"

"Your Highness, I dare not... make an assertion. But I believe, as long as you are here, with your orders, the generals will never dare to oppose!"

Bertade lowered his head, speaking very cautiously. He believes His Highness can grasp the implications of his words. If Prince Xiu Hua sides with the King, harming the interests of the kingdom's generals, it could be troublesome...

"Hmm, I understand."

Xiulote nodded, not continuing the topic. He looked at the vast starry sea, thinking of the history three hundred years ago, softly narrating a story, his words becoming serene.

"Bertade, under the witness of the starry sky, let me tell you a true story! The protagonist of the story is an unprecedented Great Chief, who first united all the scattered peoples across ten thousand miles of prairie. He personally shaped a nation, conquered countless lands, killed innumerable enemies, and reshaped the entire direction of the world..."

"Of course, the earlier part you may consider as a distant, inspiring tale. But the story's ending leaves me indecisive. In that ending, in order to govern unprecedented vast lands, the Great Chief integrated all the tribespeople, organizing them into Thousand Houses and Wan Hu. Then, he established rules, distributing vast lands and tribes among his different sons, called the 'enfeoffment of all sons'. On this basis, he designated the most fundamental Capital City and base to his youngest son, known as 'youngest son guards the hearth'..."

"I see the vastness of the starry sky, and know the boundlessness of the world, far beyond anyone's imagination. Beyond the known world, there are still the North's endless continent, the South's endless continent, the series of islands in the East... Bertade, do you think, in striving to control such vast regions, can the approach of the Great Chief truly be successful?"

#### Chapter 1152: Enfeoffment of Princes and the Youngest Son Guarding the Hearth

The vast starry night seems boundless, hidden in the distant twilight, much like the world in people's hearts. At this moment, as one gazes up, the stars seem to align with the divine descendants on earth, like the flourishing city-states and tribes scattered across the endless world. This is exactly the astronomical concept held by Central American priests for thousands of years.

"The story of the Great Chief... the enfeoffment of sons?... The youngest guarding the hearth?"

Bertade gazed at the starry sky, and also at His Highness. He understood the boundless ambition in His Highness's story but couldn't fathom the allegorical reference to reality.

"The so-called 'enfeoffment of sons,' does it refer to the princes of the royal family, or to the princes that His Highness will have in the future? If it's the latter, then His Highness currently only has young Xiu Hua as a son, does it mean..."

"And as for the so-called 'youngest guarding the hearth,' is it hinting at how to respond if the king favors a younger heir? Or does it mean His Highness does not intend to have the eldest son, Xiu Hua, inherit the Kingdom of the Lake?..."

The complex thoughts swirled in Bertade's mind, leaving him unable to make sense of it all.

These topics involve inheritance, which is a family matter of the royal family and His Highness, and is fundamental to the alliance and the kingdom. He has always been calm and cautious, and at this moment, unable to see through His Highness's intentions, he dared not answer rashly. Soon, silence fell between the monarch and his minister, like the crescent moon facing each other in silence.

"Chief Divine as a witness! Bertade, you need not overthink. Tonight it's just you and me, speak openly!"

Xiulote waited for a moment, then turned his head. He saw the Head Warrior's concerns and smiled gently, patting him on the shoulder.

"Everything you say will disappear into the wind once I've heard them! And such questions, I can only ask you before you head east to Cuba. Because among all the generals, only you are the most loyal and selfless!"

"Phew! Loyal and selfless..."

Upon hearing this, Bertade took a deep breath. He knew he must answer now. He bowed deeply to the ground, then replied in a solemn voice.

"Your Highness, the world's terrain is fragmented, with mountains rising and falling endlessly. Each tribe is scattered and remote, with different heritages... Therefore, enfeoffment is inevitable! Leaving aside the distant Cuba and Maya, just the Sakascat Wilderness north of Otapan, the Tekos Forest west of Fire River City, and the Totonac inland east of Golden Bay City... these places, given the current situation, cannot possibly be incorporated directly! Even if there's what you say, 'the manned four-legged beast,' it cannot completely control these vast wildernesses and forests..."

"Since enfeoffment is inevitable, then enfeoffing the princes of the royal family to expand the Mexica's divine lineage is naturally the best choice! The connection of bloodlines is indelible, even if the sons fight

each other in a hundred years, it's still within the pot, and it still provides a foundation for reunification!"

"And compared to enfeoffing the royal family princes, what I hope for more, is the enfeoffment of your sons. The predecessor monarch Montezuma I had more than a dozen children, creating over a dozen branches of the royal family. If you could emulate the predecessor monarch... then no matter how vast the territory, there would be enough princes and princesses to control it!"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote raised his brow. He closed his eyes and remained silent for a long time. For a monarch with ambitions for the world, he needs more reliable blood relatives. And for a classical society based on a tribal system, divine intermarriage between tribes is the best way to form alliances, and multi-son enfeoffment is the most stable foundation for expanding rule.

"Phew! The tribespeople across the land have yet to learn to obey law and order. They are accustomed to obeying the divine-noble breeds, following the priests' guidance! And the more remote mountain tribes, forest tribes, island tribes, and wilderness tribes... the more unenlightened they are!"

Thinking of this, Xiulote rubbed his temples in distress. He could understand Bertade's words, even more thoroughly than his counterpart. This is akin to the Zhou Dynasty's enfeoffment of the world, the so-called "King Wen's hundred sons," which was the foundation that King Wu used to enfeoff the world, pulling more than 50 Ji royal family members from over 70 vassal states. At the very least, you need enough royal offspring to enfeoff territories.

"Do I really need to sow seeds across the world? Have a bunch of children, and then send them to distant lands to build nations, and intermarry with local powerful tribes. Before Europeans arrive, preemptively lay out plans in North and South America..."

Xiulote pondered for a moment, his heart complex and unclear. He pressed down all his thoughts, opened his eyes, and looked at Bertade.

"Hmm, I understand. Continue speaking!"

"Yes! Your Highness, the so-called 'youngest guarding the hearth' should be based on the 'enfeoffment of sons.' And according to the alliance's inheritance tradition, it is acceptable. Most of the alliance's predecessor monarchs lived long lives, and the eldest son might not even outlive the father. For

example, the predecessor monarch Montezuma directly passed the throne to the grandchildren. As long as power is inherited within a line, and all sons have been settled, it can be accepted by the royal family."

"However, in the current alliance, your position is the 'eldest son' that Aweit enfeoffed... This method of inheritance is not suitable now. And when you inherit the alliance, you should be in the prime of life, with numerous offspring. By then, Prince Xiu Hua will almost be of age... That might be the appropriate situation for your supreme power to be free from any offspring interference."

Saying this, Bertade lay prostrate on the ground, his war clothes completely soaked. If today's words were to spread out, once Prince Xiu Hua grows up, it would surely bring misfortune to the family. However, he still spoke honestly, leaving no way out, regarding His Highness as truly the sole sun.

"Power and offspring, inheritance and governance..."

Under the dense starry sky, Xiulote again fell into deep thought. He wasn't sure if his spirit could return again. The reason he pondered over the inheritance system now is naturally because... very soon, he would have another new child.

"The consensus of culture builds slowly, while unprecedented dramatic changes are about to occur! To quickly rule the world and establish a broader base, one must rely on religion and the extension of bloodlines!..."

"The Great Chief Genghis Khan could mold the Mongols, establishing a vast empire, completely altering the world's trajectory... Since I'm here, I must also change everything, thoroughly altering the course of history!"

The gorgeous starry night, brilliant and flowing. Xiulote remained silent for a long time, brewing the bold ambition of conquering the world in silence, his gaze growing deep. Until the night deepened, and dawn was approaching, he looked at the loyal guard Head Warrior and spoke with a smile about the final issue. It was also this issue that gave him the confidence for his ambition!

"Bertade, the kingdom's newly cast ten-ton thousand-pound mortar cannons have been transported to the Tree Snake City camp. Along with them, thousands of pounds of new granular gunpowder were also

transported. By tomorrow, we shall witness the power of these heavy cannons capable of firing 30-pound stone projectiles!..."

"Chief Divine bless! It's time to seize White Snake Hill City in the last few days before the rainy season peaks!"

#### Chapter 1153: White Snake Hill City, an Unprecedented Roar!

The overcast sky loomed over the highlands, clouds stacking in the East, heralding the change of seasons. And beneath the cloudy skies, a fortress built of White Stone stood atop a hill tens of meters high, seemingly the embodiment of the indestructible.

Ancient serpent-shaped carvings encircled the city walls up to the White Snake Hill City on top. Yet at this moment, the city walls were engulfed in a stifling silence. Over a thousand White Snake Samurai were guarding the city walls, astonishingly quiet without a sound.

The Samurai defending the city seemed to have lost their desire to talk, and even their ability to speak. Their eyes were numb and empty, faces filled with deathly intent, resembling living corpses. The Leather Armor and War Clothes they wore seemed to have gone unwashed for ages, stained with strange blood marks, and smears of unknown oil.

"It truly is an extraordinarily quiet dead city, a fortress on the brink of death."

The Royal Banner of the Black Wolf flew high, erected on a high platform outside the South City. The tall dirt platform, constructed by the effort of tens of thousands of civilian workers, was situated atop a hill, nearly level with the opposing city walls, dedicated to observing the Hill City's state.

At this moment, Bertade stood on the high platform, squinting his eyes to survey the exceptionally solid-looking Hill City before him. This was his first time observing one of the last two fortresses of the Telascallan. After a long while, he shook his head and spoke to Xiulote beside him.

"Your Highness, the terrain of this Hill City is excellent, very solid! In terms of defense, among all the City-States I've seen, it ranks second only to the Ototpan Mountain City and Tloquiditlan, the city within the lake... However, the morale of the Telascallan Samurai defending the city seems very low! Even without using the heavy gun, as long as we don't mind the casualties, we can break through them and take the city all at once!"



Xiulote remained calm, nodding in agreement. The White Snake Hill City was encircled, firmly besieged, with not a grain of food allowed inside. The siege had lasted over a year, with the city long having run out of food, turning to cannibalism for survival. With no reinforcements outside and no supplies within, under such circumstances, it was impossible for the Defending Army's morale to stay high.

In fact, if the opposing side were not the mortal enemy Mexica Alliance, who offered sacrifices to the Divine Descendants, the Telascallan Divine Descendants defending the city might have surrendered long ago.

"Bertade, you are correct! This fortress only has a single breath left. Now, let's use the God of Thunder Mortar Cannon to blast that breath away!"

Xiulote grinned and took out the attack banner, swinging it forcefully.

"Legion, attack!"

"Boom, boom, boom!"

Soon, the war drums of attack sounded in succession, and the massive Mexica legion began to move. The first ones to attack were two hundred shield vehicles, pushed by hundreds of militia, they slowly approached the city walls, shielding five hundred elite archers. Moments later, the shield vehicles advanced up the hill, struggling to close within a hundred paces from the city. Then, the archers took their stand, pulling longbows to launch Feathered Arrows toward White Snake Hill City.

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!"

Facing the Mexica legion's barrage, the deathly silent city walls finally came to life, starting to sporadically respond with arrows, though the numbers were sparse.

Cloud Serpent Warrior Olin sat on the city walls, holding a shield askew, watching the Mexica outside the city. Beside him were stacks of lime jars and rolling logs for defense, perfectly blocking the other half of his body. Arrows rained down from the sky, hitting wood and shields with "thump, thump" sounds. However, Olin's face remained lifeless, showing no emotion.

Such siege probes had occurred many times before. Olin clearly understood that the Feathered Arrows shot by the Mexica archers posed little threat to him in his Leather Armor. The advantageous terrain and walls of White Snake Hill City rendered the archers' angled shots powerless.

"If it remains like this, the Mexica cannot breach today."

Warrior Olin sat on the city walls, murmuring his weary prayers.

"Cloud Serpent Divine! Come quickly!... Destroy everything within the city! I can't bear eating anymore..."

"Boom, boom, boom!"

The fierce drumming grew intense, and more arrows were shot. Clearly, Mexica's attacking morale was far higher than previous attempts.

Next, under Olin's bewildered gaze, ten short and stout large Copper Beasts, shining golden yellow, were dragged slowly up the hill by over a hundred militia. Though deemed short, the Copper Beasts were not necessarily very short, perhaps only a bit shorter than a person's height, but indeed stout. The "mouth" of the Copper Beast was wide open, enough to swallow an entire human head and more!

"Hmm? What are these large 'Copper Beasts'? Could they perhaps, like those before, produce loud thunderous sounds, launching small stone projectiles? ..."

Olin thought dazedly. From Mexica's uplifted morale, he vaguely sensed danger. During previous sieges, he witnessed the bombardment of Sun Divine Eagle Cannon. However, against such steep slopes and high hills, the impact of those "Copper Beasts" was quite limited, with the stone projectiles posing no threat to the solid stone walls. Only the thunderous boom was truly unforgettable!

"The Cloud Serpent priests said these Mexica's Divine Power Weapons borrow power from Underground Demons!... If I die under such a weapon, will I fall into the Abyss, entering the realm of demons? ..."

Olin thought aimlessly, seemingly indifferent to the fate of the fortress or his own death. Since being besieged by Mexica, he knew that the fall of the city was inevitable and dying in battle was justified. After all, so many Divine Descendants, so many Samurai, had already perished in this brutal Divine War; why should he escape? The only concern was his destiny after death, where he would ultimately go.

"Haha! Where does one go after death? Olin, you've eaten so many people, consumed others' wives and daughters, while others ate your son... Do you still imagine entering the Divine Kingdom of Cloud Serpent's Divine Light after death?"

As he thought on, Olin laughed wryly, tears streaming down, faintly stained with blood. Arrows fell now and then, yet they couldn't instill fear in the dead-hearted. He simply pursed his lips tightly, watching Mexica militia methodically fixing ten large Copper Beasts on the hill. The position of this deployment was behind a large area of shielded vehicles, barely a hundred paces from the White Snake city walls.

"It's close... I feel it's close..."

Olin softly murmured as the White Snake City Lord Tizat's panicked cries echoed on the walls.

"What are those golden Copper Beasts? What are they! Hurry, call for the Cloud Serpent Priests! Quickly have them perform rituals and prayers! ..."

Echoing cries of fright from the City Lord reverberated, but aside from his family of warriors, few others responded. Olin, too, remained silent, watching as dozens of Mexica artillerymen buzzed about, filling the massive "beasts' mouths" with large jars of "black powder." The artillerymen's faces showed signs of tension during loading—this was unlike any previous heavy artillery, packed with over ten pounds of new gunpowder!

Finally, enormous stone projectiles, larger than a human head, were gradually stuffed into the "beast's mouth." Then, the mouth was sealed with cotton, a long fuse connected... Every ritual composed precisely was performed in front of Olin, no farther than a hundred paces away, unfolding neatly and orderly like a ritual before death.

"... Stone projectiles larger than a human head? Could it be... Ah!"

Olin blinked in astonishment, observing the Copper Beast "swallowing" the stone projectiles, for the first time showing signs of surprise. At that moment, a foreboding sense returned, powerful enough to demand attention.

"Cloud Serpent Divine! I pray to you, do not let me die too disgracefully..."

The Cloud Serpent Warrior muttered prayers, eyes brimming with fear. He watched the Mexica artillerymen ignite torches, light the fuse, then swiftly covered their ears, squatting behind the Copper Beasts. Soon enough, following moments of utter silence came the thunderous roar—a sound more powerful than ever before!

"Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!..."

Chapter 1154: The Fall of White Snake City

"Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!..."

Ten terrifying thunderbolts formed a line, exploding on the high hills like the roaring descent of the God of Thunder! Then, amidst the mind-blowing, dizzying sound of explosions, ten heavy 30-pound stone projectiles suddenly spewed out from the huge mouth of the "Copper Beast"!

Under the terrified gaze of the defending army on the city walls, the massive barrage of stone balls traced a high arc, ascending dozens of meters before mercilessly accelerating their approach!

"No! No! Oh, Cloud Serpent Divine!"

Olin widened his eyes, emitting a piercing scream. He watched as a stone projectile swiftly descended, heading straight towards his position. He wanted to get up and flee, but it was as if he had been immobilized by witchcraft, his body trembling, his limbs paralyzed.

"Cloud Serpent Divine... ah!"

"Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!..."

A sequence of violent impacts resonated, nearly deafening the defending army. Immediately afterward, the solid walls shook heavily, like the upraised hand of an angry Earth Mother Goddess!

"Aah!"

A full seventy or eighty White Snake Samurai were directly thrown to the ground, rolling down the several-meter-high city walls, emitting a series of heartrending screams!

However, the real tragedy was at the point of impact with the stone projectiles. Fragments of stone sprayed rapidly like sharp blades, slashing the warriors' necks. Dust and sand surged upward, blinding the defending army with their piercing energy. When the dust settled, over twenty gruesomely dead bodies lay scattered around different stone impact points, some even crushed into pulp in the center! As for the injured on the outskirts, numbering in the dozens to hundreds, they screamed in madness, some even jumping off the walls.

"Ah! The Mexica have summoned the God of Thunder!"

"Oh, Cloud Serpent Divine, save us!"

"Ah! Ah! Divine punishment! This is divine punishment!... It is punishment for our sins!"

Amid the hysterical cries on the city walls, Olin struggled to open his eyes. He was already lying flat on the wall, his leather armor pitted and embedded with numerous stone fragments. Stretching out his bruised arm, he turned his heavy body, seeing just five or six steps away, a fallen stone projectile, like a deadly God of Death's glance.

The stone projectile lay quietly motionless, but below it were layered one or two shattered pieces of "pulp." Just two minutes ago, those "pulp" had been seasoned warriors Olin knew, clad in leather armor, holding shields, and impervious to arrows.

Blood as red as tomato juice flowed across the city walls, quickly soaking the arms of the Cloud Serpent Warriors, showing the fate of those struck by "divine punishment." Quickly, trembling arms rose up, drawing a gesture of prayer, accompanied by whispers of despair.

"Mighty God of Thunder! I beseech you! Do not let me die like this..."

Further away, at the top of White Snake City, Tizat knelt down, his face full of dust, his eyes empty and forlorn. His fear was uncontrollable, his body weak, hearing the cries of the warriors on the city wall, tremblingly muttering to himself.

"...Divine punishment? Could this really be divine punishment?... Our sins, my sins..."

"Praise the Chief Divine! Truly a weapon like divine punishment!"

On the high platform, Bertade widened his eyes, watching the mortar cannon's onslaught in utter shock, losing complete control of his expression. Moments later, the shock on his face gradually transformed into ecstasy, raising his voice in excitement!

"May the Chief Divine bless the Kingdom, may the Chief Divine bless His Highness! Your Highness, with such a weapon, how can any city-state, no matter how fortified, resist you?! God bless the King! You are destined to become the one who unites the world like the Sun!"

"Haha! God is with me, I shall unite the world!"

Hearing Bertade's words, Xiulote laughed heartily, his spirits soaring high.

The current mortar bombardment was powerful, yet not enough to move him. What truly delighted him was Bertade's truth. Facing such a siege weapon, no city-state in the world could resist! In future military campaigns, as long as sufficient mortars were brought in, it would inevitably lead to the city's downfall!

"Hmm, of course, rare mountaintop fortresses like Cloud Serpent Mountain City are not included..."

Xiulote's thoughts drifted as his gaze settled on White Snake City. After a round of stone blast, there were no more feathered arrows shooting down from White Snake City's walls. The shouts and chaotic

movements of warriors on the battlements clearly indicated disorder. Many knelt on the city walls in prayer, words like "divine punishment" and "sin" vaguely audible in the air.

Outside White Snake City, Mexica gunners busied themselves again. They cleaned the cannon muzzle and barrel with expensive brushes, extinguishing any lingering sparks and checking the fixations. Then, once confirming no hidden fire, they blocked the ignition hole at the cannon's breech to prevent air from fueling accidental ignition, pouring large amounts of gunpowder without excessive compression. Finally, they loaded heavy stone projectiles, sealed the cannon muzzle, and set the front lines all ready...

The loading speed of such muzzle-loading stone-throwing mortars was extremely slow, taking a full half-hour for the gunners to light their torches, readying for the next launch.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Hit the wicked!"

After a unified prayer, sparks glided along the fuses, like judgment before the end of days. Then came another ten thunderclaps!

"Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!..."

The thunder of the apocalypse descended again, delivering impartial judgment upon all atop the walls! In the face of such a fearful weapon, a mere touch meant death! And this time, among those meeting their end was an individual of true nobility.

"No! No! I am the Divine Descendant of the Cloud Serpent, the City Lord of White Snake City! I command you, stop! No! No!... Ah!..."

The ruthless stone projectile listened to no one's protest. It merely howled its descent, smashing through the city wall, scattering stone chips. Then, these shattered "blades" shot forth, piercing the City Lord of White Snake with blood-soaked holes all over his face and neck!

City Lord Tizat knelt on the spot, suddenly silent. Next, streams of blood gushed from his head, face, and neck like some sort of showerhead spray. Soon, his muscles relaxed, his body collapsing limply to the ground, much like a tomato pecked by a bird.

"The... City Lord... is dead?!"

"Ah! The city wall! The city wall is cracked!"

Two different cries resounded on the city wall, carrying the same fear, followed by a chaotic uproar. This time, almost all the defending warriors fell into terror and confusion, completely losing any organization and discipline.

"Hmm? The city wall is cracked?"

Upon hearing the shouts from the city wall, Xiulote stroked his chin, carefully scrutinizing the wall. Soon he noticed a conspicuous crack appearing on the west side at the top of South City. If they focused their bombardment on this area for a few more rounds, perhaps the entire section of the wall could be completely brought down.

"Your Highness, the defending army on the wall has lost its commander, intimidated by the stone barrage, and their morale is utterly depleted!"

Bertade, having observed the wall, prudently offered his suggestion.

"Now is the time to send troops to climb the city, and it can be easily conquered!"

"Hmm. Good!"

After a brief consideration, Xiulote raised his command flag. Subsequently, the intense sound of war drums echoed like raindrops beating down!

A thousand Mexica vanguard, already prepared, carried dozens of ladders, charging towards White Snake City. Along the way, the city wall remained in chaos, with only scattered shooting. And when the ladders were set up and the hundreds of vanguards began their ascent, launching a massacre on the wall, the defending army's morale crumbled.



Hundreds to thousands of White Snake Samurai almost offered no resistance, dropping their weapons, kneeling on the city wall, and surrendering to the Mexica vanguard climbing up. Subsequently, the flags of the Chief Divine were planted atop the walls, and the gates were flung open!

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise His Highness! Capture White Snake Hill City, seize the Cloud Serpent Divine Descendant!"

As the second thousand-warrior battalion stormed into the city from the gates, chanting the divine's mantra, stepping over the rubble and bloodred ground, the fate of White Snake Hill City was sealed! This once impregnable fortress standing atop its hill, shielding the Tlaxcala for over a hundred years, had finally fallen!

#### Chapter 1155: The Disappearing Militia

The clouds grew thicker, and the sky darkened. The scent of sulfur smoke drifted in the wind, as the Chief Divine's flag fluttered atop the city walls. Balda, leading over a thousand Imperial Guard Warriors, drove the third wave into the city, encountering almost no resistance.

"Huh? The militias defending the city should be several thousand strong. Where have they all gone?"

Dressed in copper armor and brandishing a copper spear, Balda surveyed the city, seeing only a deathly silence. It seemed that beyond the city walls, no trace of the defending army remained, nor the usual large militia groups seen during past sieges. Without pausing, he led the large group of Imperial Guards past low, deserted huts and desolate, quiet stone houses, finally reaching the first strategic location, the main warehouse of White Snake City.

Originally, over a hundred White Snake Warriors were stationed at the main warehouse, but they had surrendered their weapons to the vanguard who entered the city first. Now, nearly two hundred Mexica vanguard warriors, except for the few dozen watching over prisoners, were inside the warehouse searching for spoils, sneaking away some inconspicuous items like easily hidden gemstones, gold dust, silver grains, and spices.

"Hmm?...These little bastards..."

Balda furrowed his brow, seeing the tense vanguard warriors, but said nothing. The vanguard warriors, risking their lives as the first to fight, traditionally received an extra share of spoils. As long as they weren't too blatant, the military judges would not intervene.

"That's enough! Seal off the warehouse for me! All large quantities of cotton and food must be confiscated!"

The confiscation of large valuables meant small items could be privately kept. The Imperial Guards smiled, and the vanguard warriors relaxed, cheering softly.

"By the Chief Divine's witness! Commander Balda, though there are many treasures in the warehouse, there's truly not a grain of food!"

"Hmm?"

Upon hearing the warrior captain's report, Balda entered the stone warehouse and glanced around. It was indeed so clean a mouse might weep. Deep in thought, he said nothing more and simply turned away.

Soon, a hundred Imperial Guard Warriors stayed behind to guard the warehouse and prisoners, while the main force of the Guards pressed on. They quickly reached the palace district in the city, where once there had been the sounds of fierce resistance, but as soon as hundreds of Imperial Guard Warriors arrived, the last defense crumbled instantly under a rain of arrows and sharp axes.

"Over a hundred White Snake Personal Guard Warriors slaughtered. Over two hundred divine descendant nobles captured... All the divine descendant nobility in the city are here?"

"Yes, Commander! Oh, apart from here, in the central Cloud Snake Temple, there are also many priests of divine descent!"

"Hmm, I understand, we'll go to the Temple later!"

Balda nodded and marched forward, stepping over the bodies and bloodstains of the guards into the City Lord's palace. Over two hundred last of the Cloud Snake divine descendants lay in despair on the ground, sobbing and wailing. Having fallen into the Alliance's hands, the fate of these divine descendants was sealed.

Balda glanced through the captives, nodded with satisfaction, and inquired further.

"Where is the warehouse in the City Lord's palace?"

"Commander, it's in the back!"

Balda kept moving, led by a warrior, to the personal treasury of the White Snake City Lord. The treasury held even more gemstones, gold and silver ornaments, spices and herbs, and feathered Chinese clothes. Additionally, there were dozens of bronze weapons, longbows, and copper arrows in the stockpile. Balda picked up a bronze axe for a quick inspection and cursed aloud.

"Damn, by the Chief Divine's witness! The mark on this axe handle must be from the capital's craftsmen camp! Who knows which Great Nobility it trickled down from..."

However, there were only a dozen smuggled bronze weapons in total, too few to trace. Even if traced, those involved, the capital's Great Nobility, could claim they were spoils from battles with the Telascallans. In fact, given the amount of bronze weaponry leaking out, the Alliance's armament controls had been quite effective. The Great Nobility within the Alliance still held fear of the King and High Priesthood, daring not to overstep their bounds.

Besides weapons, the warehouse still stocked enough food to sustain five hundred people for half a year, likely prepared specifically for the divine descendants dwelling within. This was the first time Balda discovered food within the city.

"Chief Divine protect us! Leave two hundred men! Keep a close watch on these divine descendant captives, don't let them commit suicide! They are precious offerings for the Divine!"

A moment later, two hundred Guards were left behind, while the main force continued forward, advancing towards the city's center, the Cloud Snake Temple. From afar, a faint glow of flames flickered there.

By the time Balda arrived, the ancient Cloud Snake Temple was already in the hands of the vanguard warriors. The newly ignited flames within the temple had already been extinguished. Over a hundred Temple Guards' bodies lay scattered around the pyramid, their deaths grotesque and tragic. Bright red liquid trickled down from the pyramid's heights, covering the thick, sticky dark red clots below, as if painting a new layer of dye.

"Yikes! This stench of blood, these old clots! How many were sacrificed here?"

Balda sniffed the air, a hint of displeasure crossing his face.

On the pyramid of this Cloud Snake Temple, too many traces of blood had solidified, and during the siege, there wasn't enough clean water to wash it away. Over time, the blood clots solidified into thick chunks, emitting a nauseating stench under the scorching sun. As the Imperial Guard Warriors climbed the pyramid's stone steps, they found the accumulated, viscous clots deep enough to submerge their ankles.

"Commander! Seeing the Alliance Warriors storm into the city, all the Cloud Snake priests within the temple committed suicide!"

Soon after, a leading armored vanguard warrior, Quetz, ran down from the temple's heights, making a bow to Balda as he reported.

"Moreover, the tablets and records within the temple were mostly set on fire, only just extinguished! The city lacked enough grease to set a big fire..."

"These Cloud Snake priests died decisively!"

Balda raised his eyebrows, looking at the thick blood clots on the pyramid, choosing not to ascend. He pondered for a moment, then asked solemnly.

"Did we capture any divine descendants? Did you find any hidden warriors or militias?"

"Commander, the brothers didn't catch any divine descendants... But by the Chief Divine's mercy, we captured dozens of prisoners behind the temple pyramid, in a small lower temple. They are..."

At this point, the vanguard warrior Quetz hesitated slightly, with a hint of undisguised disgust on his face.

"Hmm, who are they?"

"They are the city's quartermasters and chef servants, responsible for preparing food for the defending army... They might know the whereabouts of the city's militias..."

"Quartermasters? Preparing food? And the militias' whereabouts?"

Upon hearing this, Eagle Warrior Balda lowered his gaze. He vaguely guessed something, but his face remained calm, his voice turning somber.

"It seems that in this dead silent fortress, we should not encounter more resistance."

"Let's go then! To the small temple, to interrogate the captured quartermasters... We must report back to His Highness definitively!"

#### Chapter 1156: Bone, Torrential Rain, and Radiance

The overcast sky looms, obscuring the sunlight. In the old, small Temple, the bricks and stones are damaged, moss erodes the eerie spots, and bloodstains are mottled in the darkness. In several sunken corners of the Temple, thick oil traces and viscous blood stains converge here, the intense odor of blood almost suffocating. Cleanly scraped human bones, severed and fallen fingers, black and red tangled hair, accumulate like hills, yet they are difficult-to-dispose "kitchen waste."

At the center of the Temple is a dimly lit shrine, the statue within long vanished, as if someone wished to ensure the Divine wouldn't witness what transpired inside. And where the statue once stood, is perhaps the only clean, blood-free spot in the entire Temple.

Obsidian Eagle Warrior Balda, with a stern expression and deep eyes, watches a middle-aged prisoner with a lifeless countenance before him, Quartermaster Ohui of White Snake City. He waits silently, until Quartermaster Ohui slowly speaks in a low voice, using the same Navajo language, revealing the city's terrifying reality.

"...The Priests, in the name of the rite, select two hundred elderly and weak each time, as human sacrifices to the Cloud Serpent Divine. The human sacrifices are decapitated, skinned, and boned, yielding thirty to forty pounds of meat per person, enough to feed a Samurai for a month. As for the kitchen waste of entrails soup, it's distributed to the Militia to sustain life..."

"Originally, the city had fifteen thousand people, food for a year. Three months ago, the commoners and Warriors were cut off from supplies, leaving nearly ten thousand. From then on, massive rituals have been held daily at the Cloud Serpent Temple, sharing the Sacrifices. The elderly and weak are eaten first, then it's women and children, meat dwindling, and soon it's young, strong Militia. Some families commit suicide together and are processed first..."

"Just to sustain two thousand Warriors in the city, over three months, more than six thousand people have been consumed... Thus, honorable Mexica General, you ask me where the thousands of Militia in the city have gone, I can tell you that they are all..."

Saying this, Quartermaster Ohui points with a dead look to the muddy land behind the small Temple, muttering softly.

"Their fresh flesh is within the Warriors' bellies, their old bones buried deep in the Abyss. Their desperate spirits, unclaimed, with dying resentments, await transformation into the Undead..."

Upon hearing this, Balda furrows his brow. He glances at the large area of freshly turned muddy soil behind the temple, ponders briefly, then orders dozens of Warriors to start digging. After a brief moment, layer upon layer of white bones, boiled to a youthful pale, an older light yellow, and some dark red, unforgivingly exposed before everyone, startling and chilling in appearance.

The soil dug away, the bone hill exposed. A scene of deathly silence fills the small Temple, mute and motionless. Balda gazes wordlessly for a long time, sighs, and turns away.

"Chief Divine protects! It's all here?"

"Seven or eight thousand ant-like people, all here. No need to search elsewhere in the city. The White Snake Warriors have long since cleaned out the people."

Quartermaster Ohui's face is dead silent, with no emotion or light in his eyes. He simply answers, truthfully responding to all of Balda's inquiries.

"Was there no resistance among the commoners in the entire city?"

"Apart from the beginning, some people jumped the city to flee. Afterwards, they were all starving and deformed, unable to yield much flesh, and what could they use to resist? Besides, this is a sacrifice held in the name of the Divine, with over two thousand Warriors suppressing. And for the starving commoners, as long as they weren't chosen, obtaining a mouthful of meat broth could barely sustain them for two days..."

"But I went to the palace district, there's still food there."

"That's prepared for the Divine Descendants, enough for only two hundred to eat. Even family Warriors don't get a taste, let alone the lowly ant-like people."

"So lacking food, didn't the Warriors in the city think of rebellion and surrender?"

"Certainly some thought about it, it's just..."

Quartermaster Ohui paused and for the first time, a complex emotion flickered in his eyes.

"But the ones besieging the city are you Mexica, age-old enemies. The Priests say you collude with demons of the Abyss, obtaining terrible weapons through sacrificing souls... If they fall into your hands, not only will they die, even their souls won't reach the Divine Kingdom, eternally cast into the Abyss!"

"...With it like this, do you still wish for the Divine Kingdom?"

"...Besieged for over a year, there must be hope. Those without hope have long since committed suicide, and been eaten."

Upon hearing this, Balda shook his head, and Quartermaster Ohui remained silent. The small Temple falls into silence once more, the quiet before death.

"Chief Divine witness, I've asked you so many questions. Before you die, you're allowed to ask me one question."

In Balda's eyes, complex emotions flickered about. This was a traditional Eagle Warrior, offering a moment of respect before killing the enemy.

"No matter what question, I'll do my best to answer, not concealing anything."

"The last question before dying huh?..."

Quartermaster Ohui thought for a moment, scratching his head. As a family Warrior close to the City Lord, he initially wanted to ask about the fate of City Lord Tizat, the disposition of the Cloud Serpent Divine Descendant, the survival of surrendering Warriors... But after thinking for a while, these realistic questions drifted from his mind, leaving only one ethereal question, like clouds drifting from the sky.

"Mexica General, the Tlaxcala Alliance perished in the Divine War, but Telascallan people are still alive. Many years later, will our descendants continue to be mutual enemies, fighting so brutally as we do today?"

Upon hearing this question, Balda paused, a mysterious emotion flashing in his eyes. Moments later, he shook his head affirmatively.

"No more. After a few decades, the concept of Telascallan will vanish. They will assimilate into the Mexica people's group, speaking the same language, believing in the only Supreme Main God, and then belonging to one new and glorious name, the descendants of Jiao People!"



"Oh, I see!"

Quartermaster Ohui hesitated for a moment, a flicker in his eyes before they returned to a lifeless black. He was silent for a while, then murmured.

"So what about the hatred from this slaughter now?"

"Time will erase everything. And today's war will also be wiped from history, not allowing future generations to see... at least, not in such cruel reality."

Balda pressed his lips together, thinking of the new epic revised by the High Priesthood and the assimilation education promoted by His Highness, and answered so. Then he lowered his eyes, drew out the obsidian dagger from his waist, and gently reminded.

"By the way, this is the second question, a gift for you."

"Oh, I see... also, well then!"

Quartermaster Ohui nodded slightly, a glimmer of expectation in his eyes. He felt his chest, unbuttoned the war clothes, exposing his lightly beating heart.

"Then, go on!"

"I still have time, I can wait for you to leave a farewell poem."

"A farewell poem?"

Quartermaster Ohui was stunned for a moment, then asked softly.

"No need to trouble yourself..."

"This is a tradition of the Flower Battle, it's up to you whether to leave one. After all, no one will record it."

"Oh, right! It's the ancient tradition of the Flower Battle..."

Quartermaster Ohui thought for a while, raised his head, looked at the dim clouds, thinking of the brightness at sunrise, and recited softly.

"I died before the heavy rain comes, washing away a lifetime of filth, simply to catch a glimpse of the impossible brightness. It will come long, long after, like the best radiance of spring..."

"Not bad, any more?"

"No more. Go on!"

"Hmm."

Eagle Warrior Balda nodded solemnly. He watched Quartermaster Ohui's eyes, raised his right hand, and slowly aimed the sharp point of the dagger at the opponent's heart. Then, he let out a low shout, suddenly thrusting with force, the dagger hilt-deep.

"Go on!"

Quartermaster Ohui's eyes suddenly shrank and brightened, as if death squeezed out the last bit of brightness. Then, his whole body convulsed violently, pupils dilated rapidly, and his body collapsed to the ground. In just a moment, he lost all movement, quietly and silently slipping into death.

"He didn't cry out in the end; he's a warrior after all!"

Eagle Warrior Balda was silent for a while, nodded at Quartermaster Otto. Then he took out a piece of straw paper and carefully wrote down the other party's farewell poem, placing it on his chest.

"Quetz, bury him!"

"Commander, where to bury?"

"Not here, anywhere else... give him a separate grave."

"Yes! At your command!"

Vanguard Warrior Quetz stood up straight, respectfully agreeing. Balda took one last look at the eerie little temple, and the piles of white bones behind it, murmured something to himself, and then shook his head and left.

"When I see His Highness, I must suggest tearing down this temple and having the Chief God Priests hold a reception ceremony... to prevent any mythical undead from really appearing..."

The long wind blew, lifting the straw paper, unfurling it in the air, drifting over the pit full of white bones, floating towards the distance. Scattered raindrops gradually fell from the clouds, moistening the words on the straw paper again. The heavy rain washes away the filth, and the bright radiance will eventually arrive quietly in the post-rain waiting, bringing rebirth.

#### Chapter 1157: Mathematics Beginner's Handbook

The night is silent, the rain leaves no trace, and the dark clouds remain on the horizon. This rain is merely a prelude to the overture; the real downpour is already on its way from the west.

On the third day after the fall of White Snake City, Xiulote received more detailed reports. He sat cross-legged in the large tent, carefully reading the numbers in the reports, and his expression changed.

"White Snake City originally had fifteen thousand people. The siege lasted more than a year, and by the time the city-state fell, two thousand two hundred people were captured. Among them, two hundred were captured Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants, and two thousand were surrendering White Snake Samurai, with no commoners surviving. The remaining thirteen thousand either died from disease,

slaughter, or cannibalism... A mass grave was discovered at a small temple in the city, estimated to hold the bones of eight thousand people..."

Xiulote lowered his gaze, gently tapping his fingers on the table as if playing a melody. After a moment, he sighed and wrote down a Royal Decree.

"Royal Decree: Demolish the large and small temples in White Snake City and build the temple for the Chief Divine. Dispatch accompanying priests to perform soul-guiding funerals and divine blessing rituals."

"Royal Decree: Send envoys to report the victory to the Alliance; White Snake Hill City has fallen in early July, while Cloud Serpent Mountain City needs to wait a bit longer... Dispatch two hundred Samurai to escort the captured two hundred Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants to the Lake Capital City, for the King and High Priesthood to deal with!"

Then, Xiulote paused a moment, contemplating the arrangement of the two thousand Defectors. This group of Telascallan Defectors had resorted to cannibalism for three months, likely having become fearless and fallen into the ranks of the "Beast Army." His initial desire was to "kill them all."

However, from a political and military perspective, the effects of killing captives are not good. Similarly, these two thousand battle-hardened, boundary-breaking surrendering warriors still possess enough combat ability to fight for the Kingdom.

"Royal Decree: Dispatch accompanying War Priests to convert the surrendering White Snake Samurai, giving them an opportunity for soul redemption."

Xiulote wrote coldly.

"During the two-month rain season, they must be made to follow the Chief Divine. After the peak of the rain season, they will be dispatched..."

Writing this, Xiulote paused again for a moment. Such ruthless Defectors, he neither wanted them assigned to the Telascallan Long Snake Legion nor integrated into various armies within the Kingdom. The only suitable destination for them is...

"Dispatch them to the Seaside Lands, under the Black Wolf Toltec's command, as vanguard for the charge!"

With the issuance of two Royal Decrees, Guard Commander Ecatl tidied them slightly, and then trusted aides swiftly departed as envoys. Bertade had already set out southward at dawn, returning to Water Valley City to continue managing the farming affairs of one hundred fifty thousand people.

Xiulote set down the feather pen and looked towards the northern sky. With White Snake Hill City taken, only the most perilous Cloud Serpent Mountain City remains. Such mountainous terrain makes transporting the siege Mortar Cannon challenging; it will have to wait until after the rain season to attempt. As for the battle situation on the Eastern Seaside, no new information has arrived.

"Once the rain season is over, and the autumn harvest is plentiful... If conditions permit, I shall lead the Imperial Guard Legion to personally campaign on the Seaside, directing the attack on Golden Bay City!"

Xiulote stroked his chin, his gaze becoming resolute.

"Heading east to the Seaside, the first task is to ascertain the layout and control of several coastal city-states, properly dealing with the status of each Vastec and Totonac faction. Then, establish the Eastern Shipyard and form a coastal fleet. Finally, arrange for the opening of Eastern trade routes and the management of Cuba... Only when all of these are settled can I return to the Western Kingdom."

Of course, aside from these obvious reasons, there is an unspeakable reason: the feat of conquering the Totonac Allied Forces should best be led by the King personally. This isn't about guarding against Black Wolf, but rather about valuing and protecting him. After all, having achieved great merit, further rewards may be impossible, and if Black Wolf wishes to continue leading troops in the future, a slight suppression now will benefit him greatly.

"Totonac Coast... Maya Lands... Cuba Snake Island..."

Xiulote's thoughts drifted once more, concerning the fleet drifting in the Caribbean Sea.

"Who knows where the exploration fleet led by the old militia and Tomate has reached? When they return, they must not linger too long in East Totonac territory..."

Two days later, heavy rain arrived as scheduled, bringing the Highland operations to a complete halt. With ample time, Xiulote took out a thick book, patiently completing a task long begun.

"To open new fields, stretching widely from east to west for fifteen steps, and longitudinally from south to north for sixteen steps, how many acres are the new fields? The answer is, 15 multiplied by 16 to give 240 square steps, divided by 240 equals 1, thus one acre..."

Xiulote flipped the book's front page, the first topic of the first Chapter he wrote. Referencing his memory of "Nine Chapters on the Mathematical Art," this Chapter discusses "Rectangular Fields," introducing Arabic numerals and the four operations, calculating the area of plane geometric figures, facilitating the measurement of acres in village fields.

He sequentially transcribed area calculation formulas for rectangles, triangles, trapezoids, circles, sectors, arc shapes, ring shapes... and detailed derivation processes, along with fraction calculation methods, as an introductory Chapter for Chief God Priests to learn mathematics.

The second Chapter is "Grains," proposing grain calculations, introducing proportional algorithms, and proportional distribution. The third Chapter is "Construction," addressing priests' architectural measurement challenges, focusing on volume calculations, including formulas for rectangular prisms, trapezoid shapes, cylindrical shapes, conical shapes, frustum shapes, spherical shapes, extensions of basic geometric formulas, and project task distribution methods.

The fourth Chapter covers "Pythagorean," introducing the Pythagorean theorem, focusing on solving various practical problems in life. For instance, the famous "Draw Reed to Shore" from the "Nine Chapters."

"If a square pond with a side one zhang exists, where a newly grown reed rises one chi above the water surface, pulls it to shore, aligning with the shore, ask how deep the water is, how long the reed is?..."

Starting from the fifth Chapter, a new name is adopted: "Algebra One." Xiulote begins teaching "single variable linear equations," using examples such as "gain and loss problems," as recalled from primary school math. Chapter six elevates to "Algebra Two," transforming into "systems of two linear

equations," with examples like "Chicken and Rabbit in the Same Cage." The seventh Chapter, "Algebra Three," introduces "single variable quadratic equations," emphasizing sketching "quadratic function graphs." The eighth algebra Chapter proposes "systems of two quadratic equations..."

"Stop! No need for an eighth Chapter, seven Chapters are enough!"

At this point, Xiulote felt satisfied. Four Chapters covering basic geometry and three on elementary algebra roughly encompass primary plus first-year content. As long as the Kingdom's lower-tier priests learn the content of these seven Chapters, most daily life production calculation problems will find solutions.

"Indeed, the content of these seven Chapters is almost compiled, serving as a systematic mathematics beginner's guide for Alliance priest apprentices, combined with numerous practical problems, laying a solid mathematical foundation. The book's question bank can be further expanded, ensuring apprentices won't worry about lacking practice questions. Given this, I must choose a striking name..."

Xiulote pondered repeatedly, flipping the book back to a blank cover. Then, he thought hard and wrote down ten striking characters.

"Village Priest's Mathematics Introductory Guide... First Edition, by Xiulote..."

Chapter 1158: Second Kingdom Expedition, Prayers Under the Moonlit Night

"Aia, bombaia, bombe. (Aia, Bombaia, Pombe.)

Lamma samana quana! (Lamma Samana Quana!)

Aia, bombaia, bombe. (Aia, Bombaia, Pombe.)

Lamma samana quana! (Lamma Samana Quana!)"

The cheerful chorus echoed under the night sky along the Caribbean coast, spreading into distant waves! The moon was a crescent, stars were shining, clouds drifted across the sky, highlighting the

depth of night. And the bright bonfire was lit right in the plaza of the riverside village, making the sea and sky lively!

"Bang bang bang!... The Storm Goddess Guabancex (Guabancex) controls the sea and waves. She brings friends long separated from afar; let us gather joyfully with music and song!"

Hundreds of simple and joyous faces were filled with anticipation in the firelight. Young girls jumped, young men danced, and elders sang ancient ballads. All kinds of Taino musical instruments also took their turns. Drums were exhilarating and urgent, bells were cheerful and sandy sounding, wood flutes were deep and distant, conch horns were long and soaring.

Young children would even beat interesting forked wooden drums, sounding like tapping on pottery pieces, producing a crisp "ding dong" like flowing water. At this moment, the welcoming feast for the arrival of the long ships became a sea of music and song!

"Bang bang bang!... Moon Mother Goddess Atabeyra (Atabeyra) governs moonlight, fresh water, and procreation. She bestows gentle moonlight and grants life-giving spring water. Friends from afar, let us drink this cup under the moonlight, chasing and rolling like wild rabbits, thriving and flourishing!"

The cheerful music played for two quarters, and then the style suddenly changed, full of the rhythm of joyous songs. Then, amidst the high praises of the tribal priests, hundreds of dancing people suddenly became jubilant. The young girls in the village, with their upper bodies bare, stretched out their arms and grabbed the robust visitors from afar indiscriminately. Eager, they wanted to leave with the bloodline from afar, giving birth to healthier children to sustain the tribe's vitality and life.

"Ah? Ah this!... Chief Divine! No, I'd rather not! You guys go find Puap, yes, the one shouting the loudest, he's got strength!"

Old militia Chiwaco smiled bitterly, struggling hard to escape from the embraces of several young and enthusiastic arms. He hurriedly made his way, clothes disheveled, even himself unaware of who had torn away his short upper garment, likely unable to retrieve it tomorrow.

"According to the Taino traditions, the clothes taken by women belong to the women. Over the past two months, I've lost seven or eight short garments... the local villages are frighteningly enthusiastic! Even a breeding rabbit has to rest for a few days, right?..."



Chiwaco shook his head and sighed, while walking towards the long ships by the sea. In the distance, he heard Puap's bold shouting, as if stepping onto the battlefield, confidently challenging as a warrior.

"Haha! Everyone come over, let me do it! hahaha! I want to take on ten! Don't rush, come one after another..."

Faintly, it seemed there was also Priest Tomate lecturing passionately, full of emotion.

"Come! Citizens of the Chief Divine! Let me teach you the doctrine of the Chief Divine's light! The Divine says, those who follow the divinity ascend to Heaven, those who defy the divinity sink into the Abyss..."

"Wow! Priest Tomate, with thick eyebrows and sincere faith in the Chief Divine, is also like this..."

Chiwaco blinked his eyes and pursed his lips disdainfully. He shook his head, climbed up the rope ladder of the flagship, stumbling towards the cabin, and grabbed a large sealed jar of cassava juice. This white beverage was a specialty of the various Taino divisions, slightly fermented with a hint of mild wine flavor, and had a unique sweetness. Hmm, ideal for storing as fresh water for navigation.

"Gulp...ah! After being here at Cuba Snake Island for two months, what pleases me most is this fermented cassava juice! Gulp...sweet, delicious!... Hmm, cassava is also nice, high yield and filling, just hard to preserve...gulp..."

Chiwaco leisurely drank for quite a while before coming out of the cabin to the moonlit deck. As soon as he appeared, he saw a peculiar silhouette, head down, doing something unknown. The old militia's eyes suddenly sharpened, and he cautiously drew the dagger from his waist, questioning softly.

"Who? Who's there?"

"Oh! It's me, honorable Chiwaco captain!"

The figure turned around and showed a slender head, with a polite and gentle smile, revealing the Mayan merchant Tikalo.

"Oh! Tikalo, aren't you attending the feast? Why are you back so early?"

"Haha! I can't handle the activities later... I'm already in my forties, I need to preserve my usefulness and serve the Kingdom..."

"Ah?... The Chief Divine bears witness! That's true. Haha!"

The two old men exchanged a glance and simultaneously shared a wry smile, showing a kind of tacit understanding.

Chiwaco's heart slightly relaxed, his eyes sharp as he glanced at the Mayan merchant's hand. He saw no weapons, only a small wooden carving painted with the white symbol "大" (great).

"Hmm? Tikalo, what is that club you're holding?"

"Uh... Captain Chiwaco, this is a wooden Zemi given to me by the chieftain of the Golden Lake Tribe. This wooden Zemi bears the crest of the Kokom Family, having been enshrined by the Golden Lake Tribe for sixty years... Counting back, it should have been left by the last batch of the Mayapan royal fleet after trading with the Golden Lake Tribe. The chieftain said giving it to me was like returning it to its original owner..."

As Tikalo spoke, his expression turned somewhat gloomy, and his voice gradually became inaudible. He held the Zemi in his hand, feeling the mysterious faith of the Taino culture, and reminiscing about the past glories of the Mayapan royalty.

In the Caribbean Islands, among the various Taino divisions, the so-called Zemi is an abstract, mysterious symbol, possessing divine power to change the environment and society. This divine symbol is always connected with deities, ancestors, and rituals, and can be either very abstract patterns or very concrete objects. The physical manifestation of Zemi most commonly takes the form of the "Tri-spint," but it can also be an explicit family emblem or very delicate representations of humans and animals.

In other words, this is the "sacred card" or "rune totem" of the Caribbean Tribes.

"Sixty years ago, a Zemi enshrined by the Kokom Family..."

Upon hearing this, Chiwaco raised his eyebrows and remained silent.

In the past two months, the fleet has been on Cuba Island, repairing ships, replenishing food and water, and searching for three lost longships... They have received a lot of help from the Cuba Tribes. The local tribes, at first meeting, were so warm and enthusiastic partly due to the simple and kind nature of the islanders, but also because of the foundation of exchanges left by the Mayapan royal fleet. Especially the Western Mountain Tribe on the strong western side of Cuba, which is where the translator Kuba's ancestors hailed from, with a long-standing connection to the Mayan royalty, providing substantial initial assistance to the exploration fleet.

"The Chief Divine's blessing! This entire journey, the banner of Mayapan, has still not been forgotten by the Cuba Tribes!"

Chiwaco extended his hand and patted Tikalo on the shoulder. He smiled and handed the bald Mayan merchant a ceramic jug of cassava juice, gesturing for him to drink. Then, he leaned against the ship's edge, watching the celebratory bonfire on the shore, a look of serenity, peace, and hope on his face.

"The Taino people lack neither food nor fighting. Their eyes are clean, and so are their hands... Cleaner than ours. Ah! Truly wonderful! These simple, kind-hearted, and hospitable people are like the flamingos flying over Lake Patzcuaro, never having to fall into the prison of earthly battles, able to sing until they die of old age... Truly wonderful!"

Upon hearing this, Tikalo raised his head, looking into the eyes of the old militia Chiwaco. At this moment, the "old turtle," cunning and wise in his heart, showed the pure spirit akin to the Taino. Yet, that gaze had weathered more time, becoming older.

"Yes, truly wonderful!... Isolated, without hatred and ambition..."

Tikalo murmured for a moment, responding in a low voice. Chiwaco heard him and lifted an aged smile on his face.

"Isn't it! Sometimes, I sincerely want to stay here and never return to the kingdom. It's just that I still worry about my daughter... Sometimes, I'm afraid, afraid that the arrival of the fleet will change all this beauty... Bringing the slaughter and blood of the highlands and the divine authority and fire to this great island..."

"Huh!... Respected Captain Chiwaco, since childhood, I've heard the teachings of my family's ancestors."

After a moment of silence, Tikalo shook his head with his eyes closed. He deeply buried his momentary weakness in his heart, and when he opened his eyes again, he was smiling and determined.

"There is no flower in the world that blooms perpetually without wilting. The more beautiful the flowers, the more fragile they become when storms arrive! What truly withstands adversity and remains unyielding are the cold, hardy cacti of the Mexican Plateau. The Mexica people grew in the land of cacti, enduring blood and fire, while the tenderness of all tribes under the sky will be ended by the doom of blood and fire..."

"Hmm? Fragile flowers, the doom of blood and fire..."

Hearing this, the old militia Chiwaco lowered his eyes. The blind kingdom had spoken of divine prophecy, which was also the doom of blood and fire, only brought by the white-skinned demons foretold. And this peaceful land of Snake Island would be the first to fall perilously close to destruction in just a few years...

After a good while, Chiwaco raised his head, looking at the sea illuminated by starlight beneath the moonlit night. The sea reflected starlight, mirrored firelight, and cast reflections of the longships and a crescent moon. The two men on the ship silently watched for a long time before softly speaking, uttering a sincere prayer.

"May the Chief Divine protect us!..."

"May the Chief Divine protect us!..."

Chapter 1159: The Second Kingdom Expedition, the Distant Lament of Water, Moon, Mirror, and Flower

The vast expanse of stars reflected on the sea, transforming into a floating band of magnificent light. The crescent moon and stars shone together, and the shimmering waves undulated like a dreamlike scene. The people on the longship gazed at the serene beauty of the sea, listening to a distant song. No one spoke, unwilling to break this moment of Peach Blossom Land tranquility.

Such a peaceful and harmonious life had continued among the various Taíno tribes of the Caribbean Islands for thousands of years. Yet, as the two on the ship foresaw, the beautiful blossoms were about to meet their end, withering in the storm.

Three years later, Columbus's exploration fleet would arrive here, initiating a massacre of the American natives. The peace, innocence, and abundance of the Taíno people would incite the most brutal cruelty among the white men. Pillage, murder, enslavement, bestial desires... all the most horrifying crimes would appear on these wealthy islands. By then, regardless of age or gender, even newborn infants would become the torn meat in the jaws of hunting dogs. These were not isolated crimes but a systematic, large-scale extermination, without any doubt!

When the second expedition brought enough soldiers, Columbus would begin his mad pursuit of wealth, wantonly unleashing slaughter. He proclaimed that all the land he saw belonged to the Kingdom of Spain, and he was the governor of the kingdom in the New World. He ordered all subjugated Taíno islanders to hand over a pound of gold dust or a large bolt of cotton every three months. Villagers unable to meet this demand would have both hands cut off and hung around their necks as a warning, bleeding to death. Islanders dying because of this numbered in the tens of thousands.

Soon after, when impoverished Spanish marauders arrived, they would also join the savage revelry. Barbaric and wicked, they plundered the land, gold and silver, slaves, female slaves desired by them from the native villages... Also, they indulged their brutal nature by killing defenseless elders for amusement.

According to history, when the white fleet arrived, doomsday began counting down. Facing the defenseless Taíno islanders, the greedy Spanish marauders would show no mercy! Their brutality was such that even the priests accompanying the ships could not bear it and believed Hell had descended on Earth.

After the whites appeared, within ten years, from Cuba to Haiti, and then to the Lesser Antilles, all native villages along the Caribbean coast would be plundered, enslaved, massacred, or destroyed by the Spaniards. The surviving islanders could only hide in the inland forests, hoping to avoid the whites' frantic plunder.

Within thirty years, more than eight million natives would die under the whites' brutality, wiping out 80% of the population throughout the Caribbean Islands. Smallpox began to spread across the islands for the first time, annihilating tribes that fled into the forests. Endless enslavement and abuses would make Taíno women under Spanish rule prefer to kill their newborns rather than let them live and suffer.

Within half a century, over 90% of the various Taíno tribes and Caribbean tribes on the Caribbean Islands would be extinct! And the Spaniards would continue to spread death, insanely plundering the wealth of Central America. Following smallpox came the dreaded typhus; these two plagues, in three major outbreaks in Central America, would kill millions of natives, reducing New Spain's so-called population by more than 85%!

Half a century later, across America were desolate ghostly cities, while Spanish rulers still cruelly extracted wealth. They proclaimed the divine resistance of white bodies to disease, entirely disregarding the extinction of the governed tribes and not taking systematic measures against the plague. They even artificially spread diseases to crush the remaining tribes' resistance.

Because they came here, not to build anything, not to bring light or enlightenment. Whatever guise they wore, their purpose remained unchanged, which was merely to plunder wealth and destruction!

Of course, at this moment, the brutal future occurring in another space-time is unknown and unimaginable to the two on the ship. At this time in the world of Central America, only Xiulote could foresee everything and predict the future. As the advance party of the expedition, the primary goal of the exploration was to find the open-air iron ore mine in Cuba and establish the first kingdom outpost.

"Tikalo, we set out from the West Mountain Tribe at the tail of the snake, heading east along Cuba Snake Island, taking two months to reach the Golden Lake Tribe at the snake's head... this journey must be two thousand miles, right?"

"Respected Captain Chiwaco, it must be two thousand miles! I even feel it's two thousand four hundred miles... over these two months, we haven't stopped much, constantly rowing east, riding a current and taking advantage of some east wind..."

Tikalo reached out, touching his wise bald head. Then, he pinched his fingers, calculating silently.

"Starting from the familiar West Mountain Tribe, heading east for about a hundred miles are the Lake Bird Tribe beside the Great Lake. Three hundred miles more is the Forest Tribe on the coastal plain, another hundred miles plus to the lowland seaside is the Bata Tribe. During this leg, we found two lost longships... Then, traveling southeast four to five hundred miles, bypassing desolate southern mudflats and marshes, we reached the jungle bay's Palm Bay Tribe, discovering the last lost longship. Going another nearly two hundred miles east, there's the wealthy Jaguar Tribe inside the lagoon. Another two hundred miles past the numerous waterfalls and undulating hills is the Waterfall Hill Tribe... from the East Mountain Tribe at the snake's tail to the mid-point long snake's Waterfall Hill Tribe, that's already twelve hundred miles!"

"From the mid-point Waterfall Hill Tribe eastward, the coast is full of beaches and small fishing villages. The thriving Sacrificial Plain Tribe, Original Bird Tribe, and Camagüey Tribe are inland. After seven hundred miles, the fleet reaches the relatively large Sand Village Tribe along the coast. From the Sand Village Tribe further east, following the coast for five hundred miles, we reach the Sharp Bay Tribe at the southern corner of the snake's head. Actually, from the Sand Village Tribe, directly crossing the sea southeast two to three hundred miles would take us directly to Sharp Bay Tribe... From mid-snake's Waterfall Hill Tribe to the snake's head Sharp Bay Tribe, that's another twelve hundred miles!"

"Rounding the cape from Sharp Bay Tribe, another four to five hundred miles east, we arrive at our current location, the Golden Lake Tribe. This tribe is also inside a lagoon with calm seas in the bay. And just thirty miles west of here is a mountain of red and yellow colors, the most famous sight locally... Whew! Count it up, over these two months, we've sailed two thousand eight hundred miles!"

Hearing such detailed calculations, old militia Chiwaco widened his eyes, tugging his hair with force, and gasped.

"Whoa! Blinded! This Cuba Snake Island is so vast, it's two to three thousand miles east to west! ...Hiss! Without Tikalo's Mayapan records, not knowing the iron ore's precise location, blindly searching the island, how many years would that take to find? ...Hah! Blinded! Sending us out here, it's rotten to the core!..."

The starry river was splendid, the moonlight boundless, invoking nostalgia and gradually growing melancholy. Chiwaco muttered a few curses softly, feeling a bit sorrowful. This time leaving his homeland in the Lake Region, he was now probably seven to eight thousand miles away! Whether he could return alive was unknown...

The old militia, lost in thought for a while, finally composed his expression. Remembering Tikalo's earlier words, he blinked sharply, his expression shifted.

"Wait! Tikalo, you just said thirty miles west of the Golden Lake Tribe is a mountain with red and yellow colors flowing? What exactly does that mountain look like?"

"Uh? Yes, that mountain is in this area. Our ancestors' fleet recorded it, marked on the navigational heritage tablet. But I've never been there... Why, is there something special about this mountain?"

Tikalo paused, touching his head, with a hint of speculation in his eyes. The old militia exchanged glances with him, then mused with a smile.

"Chief Divine's witness! What's on the mountain, I don't know either. But this red and yellow color is indeed peculiar, giving me some uncertain premonition. While exploring in the Northern Continent, I also heard local tribes mention similar mountains, yet... no matter what, tomorrow gather the priests in the fleet, and we'll take a look!"

#### Chapter 1160: The Second Kingdom Expedition, Great Cobar Copper Mine, Haiti Island

The black-gray palm crows flew across the deep blue sky, while the gold-red, blue, and purple stone mountain shimmered on the emerald green plain. Against the backdrop of distant verdant forest, this brilliantly colored exposed hill seemed to harbor the divinity of the earth, and was so captivating.

"Is this the stone mountain said to possess divinity in local legends?"

Priest Tomate walked to the edge of the colorful stone mountain, his expression becoming serious. He squatted down, picked up a hefty rock, and carefully examined it in his hands. After a moment, he solemnly reached a conclusion.

"Chief Divine bear witness! These brightly colored stones must be some kind of mineral ore..."

Hearing this apparent conclusion, the old militia Chiwaco laughed and shook his head. He first looked towards Tikalo with an inquisitive expression.

"Tikalo, in your fleet's records?..."



"There's no mention of what kind of mountain this is in the Royal Family's fleet records..."

"Old Pu, what do you think?"

"Huh? Hmm...my back aches, I can't see clearly."

"Bah!"

The old militia spat, turning to look at the only person among them who could identify mineral ore, the Divine Revelation Priest.

"Priest Mekate, would you kindly take a look..."

"Alright!"

Mekate nodded and stepped forward. After searching for a moment, he too picked up a gilt ore, weighed its heft, then tested its hardness. He then gazed at the slightly visible green surface of the ore, pondering in silence. After a while, he took out his small bronze hammer, chipped some blue-green powder from the ore's surface, and tasted it.

"...Bitter, with a noticeable pungent smell... This is malachite! This vast mountain is definitely a large copper mine, and of no low quality!"

"Hmm? A copper mine? This dark red with yellow, along with blue, purple, black, and gray colors, doesn't quite resemble the copper mines in the Alliance's South..."

Hearing it was a large open copper mine, Priest Tomate's brows twitched. He exchanged glances with the old militia, both showing some disappointment. Large copper mines were present in the southern counties of the Kingdom of the Lake. Moreover, high-quality red copper could easily be obtained on the commercial routes of the Northern Continent.

"These red and blue-purple patterns are very unique. I always feel there's more than just copper in this copper mine!"

The old militia pondered for a while, scratched his head, and made a decision.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Since we're already here, let's carefully investigate for a day and take some ore back!"

Soon, a large cohort of samurais with the group scattered and began to work busily. As dusk approached, the sunset cast its glow, bringing an end to the day's exploration.

Just as Priest Mekate had assessed, the entire mountain and the surface area extending for miles was a large copper deposit. A rough estimate placed the copper deposit's reserves at least in the millions of tons!

Slight despondency showed on everyone's faces. Compared to the Kingdom's urgent desire for open-pit iron ore, a distant high-quality copper mine didn't count for much. After all, in the vast and bountiful American Continent, "copper" was never lacking.

They were unaware that the copper mountain they had discovered was the largest copper mine on Cuba Island, the Great Cobar Copper Mining! This astonishingly large copper mountain was once one of the world's largest mining operations by the late 19th century, containing high-grade, tens of millions of tons-level rich copper ore!

In later times, this large copper mine was excavated to over four hundred meters underground, and still produced ore. In this era, if the Ming Empire could exploit this large copper mine, the currency revenue brought only from this one mine could solve the financial issues that began to manifest during the Chenghua period!

"Chief Divine bear witness! It truly is a large copper mine, larger than any of the Kingdom's! Ah, what a pity!"

Priest Tomate looked around, observing the signs of the mineral belt extending for miles, and sighed. Puap rubbed his waist, stared down at the ground for a long time, then picked up a piece of dense and heavy black-striped hard stone to carry with him.

At this time in the world, no one recognized the true nature of this hard stone, nor did anyone realize that another rare mineral lay next to this copper belt, a gift from the Paleogene Period – high-quality nickel-manganese ore.

Indeed, the Cobar copper belt and the Bayamo manganese belt are geographically tightly connected and even partially intertwined. In later mapping data, the Bayamo manganese belt's manganese reserves were seven million tons.

"Chief Divine bless! Record the position of this large copper mine in the navigation logs. The Kingdom is rapidly expanding, and even Cuba Island's copper mine will soon have an opportunity for exploitation. Discovering this unclaimed large copper mine is indeed a great accomplishment!"

Priest Tomate lowered his eyelids, and when he opened them again, there was a look of invigorated joy. He inspired the fleet members, gazing towards the East.

"Praise the Chief Divine! The fleet's next target is two hundred miles to the East at the Guata division. We will stay there for two days, proclaim the glory of the Chief Divine, and leave the Chief Divine's illustrated scriptures! Then, traveling another three hundred miles onwards, we will arrive at the easternmost point of the long snake head on Cuba Snake Island!..."

"From there on, the fleet will turn to the Northwest, taking the route back home from the other side of Cuba Snake Island! According to the records of the Mayapan Royalty, open copper mines are located at Mayali Region north of the Cuban Snake Head! May the Chief Divine guide us to discover the iron mines and journey home!"

"May the Chief Divine guide us to discover the iron mines and journey home!"

On hearing this, everyone's spirits were lifted, and they all began to pray devoutly. Old militia Chiwaco exchanged a glance with Mayan merchant Tikalo, and a thoughtful glimmer flashed in their eyes. A moment later, Chiwaco looked again at the jubilant Puap, who clamored for homecoming, and his eyes lowered with a hint of reluctance.

"Old Pu, my friend of many years, I wouldn't harm you... It's just that the mistakes you've made need to be atoned for, to clear up matters before His Lordship..."

As dusk settled, bonfires were lit on the plain, bringing a rare burst of vitality to the mineral mountains dormant for millions of years. This trace of human vitality receded with the rise of the morning sun, finally boarding seven timeworn repaired longships set for the far eastern fertile lands of Cuba.

The vast sea and sky stretched out, solitary sails heading eastward. Several days later, the Kingdom's exploratory fleet passed through the thriving Guata region, staying for two days to teach the Chief Divine's doctrine, preach the prophecy of the white men, gathering enough food and water. Guata region was situated near the inner side of a bay in a coastal lagoon, boasting abundant water sources, flat terrain, and rivers converging, making it a natural deep-water harbor.

In future times, the location of the Guata region would have another "imposing and intimidating" name, known as "Guantanamo."

Half a month later, continuous rain came at the end of July, and the first hurricanes of August began brewing. Finally, the Kingdom's exploration fleet reached the easternmost point of Cuba Snake Island. From here, looking out at the eastern sea, one could occasionally see sturdy dugout long canoes carrying brave Taino fishermen, taking days' worth of cassava towards the opposite coastline.

Just across the coastline, within less than two hundred miles by sea passage, lay a large island bustling with human activity and thriving tribes. This great island was home to tens of thousands of Taino people, who held it as the shared ancestral land of the various Taino divisions, a water-rich nation. The name of this great island was referred to by local Taino people as the "land of tall mountains," also known as "Haiti."