

Civilization 1171

Chapter 1171: The Second Kingdom Expedition, Daily Life in the Rainy Season, and the Taino People's Fishing Techniques

In the hot August summer days, the sea temperature rose significantly. A strong tropical depression finally formed over the Atlantic Ocean, moving from east to west. At this time, Cuba and the Caribbean Islands, located around 20 degrees north latitude, were precisely in the main area swept by tropical cyclones!

Therefore, the upcoming month would be the month of storms. The howling, galloping wind brought continuous torrential rain and terrifying thunderstorms, plunging the skies over the entire Cuban coast into a prolonged gloom. The abundant and persistent rainfall also caused the river levels to surge. The muddy floodwaters carrying slightly reddish silt rushed down, submerging the lowlands along the river, even causing the crocodiles in the river to flee to the banks for shelter.

"Hmm, the rainfall on Cuba Island is at least twice that of the Mexican Valley. The river width will drastically widen during the peak of the rainy season, and the low-lying wetlands will also become lakes. Therefore, before large-scale reservoir construction, settlements and farmland should be established on high ground near the river, considering the impact of flooding... The newly built Iron Bay Town still needs to move two or three Li south to higher ground..."

The wind and rain swayed, beating on the raincoat with a cracking sound. Priest Tomate, with eyes like torches, stood on the high ground outside Mayari Village. Observing the river's situation to the east of the village, he made slight adjustments to the upcoming city-building plans. Of course, he left two scouts in the iron ore area for more detailed hydrological information to be brought back by the scouts.

"With the Chief Divine as my witness! During the season of storms, fleets must stay ashore... If we take some risks, we might have a chance to raid an enemy that's difficult to catch at sea..."

The heavy rain poured down, seemingly forming a curtain, as Priest Tomate looked towards the sea, only to vaguely see a few longships floating in the rain.

This was the season of wind and rain, the most violent time in the Caribbean Sea. During such days, for a full one or two months, all fleets had to stay put in the harbor. Whether they were the Alliance's longships, the Taino, or the canoe of the Ciguayo people, or even more distant and powerful invaders, no one dared to venture out amidst the roaring waves. But from a military standpoint, this time could also serve as an excellent opportunity for a sudden attack, even if the cost was high.

Priest Tomate was lost in thoughts of this opportunity until the faint shouting from the village woke him from his ponderings. He listened for a while and found it was the loud voice of Puap harshly scolding the Taino militia during training.

"Hmm... this guy, if he could follow orders and not get muddled, would be an outstanding and brave officer of the kingdom."

Priest Tomate looked towards the village with a smile on his face. With nothing to do during the rainy season, the Kingdom's Warriors stayed in the village. Their daily lives consisted of training Taino men during the day and comforting Taino women at night. Presumably, in a few months, many warriors and sailors would become fathers.

"The Taino are accustomed to communal rearing, and their concept of marriage is not strong... But for the kingdom, to win the hearts of the warriors and settle them in Cuba, the best way is still to let them start families and establish careers! After some time, I should bring up with Water Chief to hold a collective wedding witnessed by the Chief Divine, letting the warriors marry the Taino women they favor!"

Priest Tomate rubbed his chin, pondering how to persuade Water Chief to agree. After the wedding, it was not about leaving the Kingdom Warriors here, but rather bringing the Taino women along to become the first group to join Iron Bay Town's local tribes.

"Hmm... Iron Bay Town isn't in sight yet, so there's no rush. All plans require first demonstrating force and fighting the Ciguayo... About conversion, Water Chief's attitude has recently loosened somewhat... I need to frequently visit him!..."

Interestingly, after a long conversation one day, Water Chief's attitude gradually changed. The chief was even willing to listen patiently to Priest Tomate expounding scripture and the mythology of the Chief Divine. However, every time Priest Tomate formally proposed conversion, Water Chief would divert the topic, never responding directly.

But in Priest Tomate's view, this was a positive trend. He prepared to push harder and develop the gentle-natured Water Chief into the first Taíno chief to convert to the Chief Divine!

"Hmm, I must find a way to make the chief convert to the Chief Divine!... How to plan this specifically, I still need to find someone to discuss it."

Priest Tomate slightly tilted his head, watching the heavy rain diminish, and the sky slowly darken. Soon he decided to return to the village. On his way back, stepping on the muddy soft ground, he thought of another issue.

"Strange! Captain Chiwaco said he would go scouting this morning and hasn't returned all day. I wonder what he's doing..."

On stormy days, it didn't always rain continuously; more often it rained heavily one day and lightly the next. And when the next day's storm slightly abated, the old militia Chiwaco, who was being missed, enthusiastically took apprentice Dark Snake, sailor Didi, and the tagalongs, with Mayari Region guide Black Stone, up to twenty Li away to fish upstream in the village.

Upstream of Maria Village, close to the mountains, not only is there the mouth of inflowing small rivers, but also a forty to fifty Li-long valley Great Lake, Mayali Lake (Rio Mayarí). By the lake, there are several fishing huts built by the Taino, with mountains to shield from the wind. During the stormy days, this slightly tranquil rivermouth was indeed a comfortable place.

"Dark Snake, Didi, I tell you, coming out with me to fish and learning some skills to support your families... It's better than staying in the village every day watching the warriors fool around! You're still young, need to grow a couple more years, don't rush into fooling around... Actually, once explained, it's just that simple! Remember, never listen to Puap's nonsense! The trivial matters of men and women are not better than coming out to fish, huh?"

The old militia Chiwaco carried a simple fishing rod on his shoulder, barefoot, steadily walking on the muddy ground. He chattered away with a smile on his weather-worn face. Dark Snake and Didi, both carrying wicker baskets for fish, followed behind their father, dejected and listless, to do a 'more interesting' thing in the mountains.

"After this heavy rain, the water level has risen, the river has become rapid, and the waters are muddied... But it's actually the best time to fish!"

The old militia smiled and pointed towards the rivermouth ahead. It was where the river met the lake, narrow in terrain but with rapid water flow. According to the old militia's experience, there was no need to look; it undoubtedly was an excellent fishing spot.

"Look, the water is carrying fish downstream. As long as there's an obstacle, there will definitely be fish! A lake this large upstream, all flowing through the mountain pass. The fish gather together, making it easy to catch them; just cast the rod and you get some! ... Also, sand mixed in the river makes the fish float upward. No need to put the line deep..."

Chiwaco gestured with his hands, cheerfully dancing around. Dark Snake and Didi, still young boys, were infected by their father's mood and quickly became happy as well. The four of them found a fishing cove near the rivermouth. But when the fishing started, the old militiaman's smile froze, and soon sweat appeared on his forehead.

"Splash!"

The Taíno guide Black Stone jumped into the cove, felt around at the rivermouth for a while, and excitedly embraced a large fish.

"Big one! Big one! Another big one!"

The old militiaman raised his eyes, twitching at the face. The large fish was as long as an arm, estimated to weigh at least over ten pounds! At that moment, the big fish was out of the water, desperately struggling in Black Stone's arms but couldn't escape. Looking closely, it seemed to be one big fish, but it was actually one big one and one small one.

The smaller one was a remora, tied with a fishing line, or rather a thin rope. One end of the rope was wrapped around Black Stone's arm, while the other end had the suction cup of the remora firmly attached to the side of the big fish, making it impossible for the capable swimmer to escape.

This fishing method is precisely the famous remora fishing of the Taíno! It doesn't even require a fishing rod, just relying on the remora's active attachment to specifically catch large fish in the lake. With this "using fish to catch fish" ultimate technique, Black Stone used only half an hour to catch eight or nine large fish at this crowded rivermouth, filling the fish basket completely.

Dark Snake blinked his eyes and looked at Captain Apu's fish basket, which contained only two small fish.

"Father, you talk much more than Black Stone, but your fish are much fewer than his..."

"Cough, cough! That's because... that's because Black Stone always gets in the water, scaring my fish away..."

Upon hearing this, the old militiaman Chiwaco blushed, finding it hard to maintain his dignity. He coughed twice, struggling to explain, only to see Black Stone back from the water holding a huge round shell.

Then, Black Stone smiled foolishly, walked over to Chiwaco, and placed the heavy round shell at the old militiaman's feet. As it turned out, this time, the remora had attached itself to a large blue turtle.

"This one, the biggest, is for you!"

Black Stone pointed at the blue turtle with innocent eyes, smiled, and then gestured at the three fish baskets behind the old militiaman.

"That one, lent me one. Mine, it's full!"

The old militiaman was dumbfounded, staring at the turtle at his feet, then looking at the empty fish basket. He couldn't help but jump and curse.

"Blind heaven!..."

As dusk fell, the day's fishing came to an end. The old militiaman released the big turtle and looked at the four filled fish baskets. Three and a half of them were caught by Black Stone alone.

Apart from the astonishing remora fishing, Black Stone also showed another ultimate technique, using mildly toxic senna leaves to numb fish. He threw a handful of chopped senna leaves into the rivermouth,

where the gathered fish ate them. Shortly after, the water surface floated with ten to twenty motionless, anesthetized fish.

Black Stone picked carefully, only taking the large mature fish and leaving the smaller juveniles untouched. After a few quarters, the anesthetic effect wore off and the remaining fish quickly returned to normal.

"Blind heaven! With such fishing skills, what Taíno, might as well call you fishermen..."

The old militiaman clicked his tongue repeatedly, yet felt some admiration in his heart. He calmed down, asked Black Stone for fishing tips, then explored and fished for a day, feeling greatly rewarded. Until the scout sent by Priest Tomate found the little fishing hut by the lake, did he reluctantly end the "scouting" and, with ample fishing harvest, return to the Mayali Region's village.

Chapter 1172: The Second Kingdom Expedition, Fishing and Preaching, Forced Aboard the Longship

"Honorable Captain Chiwaco, your 'scouting' trip this time has really yielded abundant results!"

Night fell, and the bonfire was lit. Inside the low thatched hut, Priest Tomate sat cross-legged, holding a clay pot, sipping fresh fish soup while teasing Chiwaco.

"Chief Divine is my witness! I've been in the village all day, pondering how to convert Water Chief. Puap has been busy 'converting' the women of the Taino Tribe in the thatch hut. Meanwhile, you've been 'converting' the lost fish in the Great Lake upstream... We are all recklessly striving for the glory of the Chief Divine!"

"Cough, cough!"

Upon hearing these words, the old militia man looked awkward, quickly lowering his head to sip the fragrant hot fish soup. He pondered Priest Tomate's complaints, his eyes moved, suddenly having an idea.

"With Chief Divine's blessing! Priest Tomate, I learned two new fishing methods while fishing with the Taino fishermen. One is using fish to catch fish, called garfish fishing. The other is using herbs to catch fish, making them numb..."

Old militia man Chiwaco earnestly explained the newly learned fishing techniques. Without waiting for Tomato to frown and speak, he continued with a smile.

"Actually, I feel that preaching to the various Taino divisions is much like fishing!"

"Hmm? Preaching, fishing?..."

Tomato was taken aback, asking in a deep voice.

"Captain Chiwaco, please explain in detail."

"Preaching, well, it's like fishing. You think of ways to get the fish into the basket. Water Chief is well-experienced and not easily fooled. So, might as well use herbs to make him 'numb,' cajole him into holding the conversion ceremony! With his mild temperament, even if he gets tricked, he won't complain much in the end anyway..."

Captain Chiwaco, with a smile, holding the fish soup, spoke slowly, like an old turtle squinting its eyes.

"Water Chief is no longer young, has experienced much, and is not easily guided. His peaceful nature, indifferent to worldly matters, makes it hard to make major decisions... So, don't expect him to actively convert and become a devout believer willingly..."

"However, once he's in the basket, he becomes a garfish. We can then use him to 'catch' others in the tribe, making it much easier... In comparison, ordinary tribespeople are easier to guide and become devout believers of Chief Divine..."

"Hmm? Using Water Chief's temperament to make him 'numb'?... The chief is the garfish, the tribespeople are the fish shoal..."

In the vast night, Priest Tomato stroked his chin, his face shifting under the firelight. He recalled interactions with Water Chief, making up his mind after a while.

"Captain Chiwaco, what you say makes sense! His Highness once said, if the mountain won't come to me, then I'll go to the mountain... So, when do you think is a suitable time to act?"

"Hmm... I'm thinking, when we campaign against the Siguayu, we can invite Water Chief to join the battle... After winning, we should hold a celebration ceremony on the longship according to the Kingdom's tradition! ... During the celebration, erecting Chief Divine's emblem and praying together, the chief will surely understand..."

Chiwaco chuckled, winking as he spoke.

"As the Kingdom's friends and battle allies, inviting Water Chief to participate in the prayer ceremony is just as normal as the chief inviting us to sing the tribal epics! As for cutting some hair, drawing blood for blood wine, even engraving Chief Divine's emblem on the forehead during prayer... these are traditional in our tribe, while people are still on our ship!..."

"Ah! Tribe's tradition, ceremony on our ship, conversion ceremony..."

Hearing this, Priest Tomate's eyes brightened, thoughts racing.

Cutting hair for a blood pledge, engraving emblem, these are significant parts of the conversion ceremony, promising the soul. As long as Water Chief is brought aboard and cajoled through the conversion process of Chief Divine... with the Sun Hummingbird's mark on his forehead, he can't back out, right? And with Water Chief's temperament, once done, there's no way 'Waterflower' will turn back.

After all, once Water Chief leaves his foundational tribe, aboard the Kingdom's longship, what can he do? The Kingdom's many fierce samurai are indeed 'witnesses' to the sacred ceremony!...

Once the chief 'actively converts' and returns with Chief Divine's mark, he won't be able to explain it away. The Kingdom will not allow him to deny the conversion ceremony. This silent loss, he'll have to accept. With the chief's endorsement, teaching the villagers becomes a live example, making breaking ground ten times easier...

"Haha! Wonderful, truly wonderful!"

Priest Tomato quickly sorted through his thoughts, devising an opportunity. Overjoyed, he laughed while lifting the fish soup to toast the old militia man.

"Praise Chief Divine! Honorable Captain Chiwaco, you always bring inspiration to me from unique angles. Such a good plan makes me eager to try it! And if it works this time, we can replicate this in future preaching..."

"Uh... Honorable Priest Tomato, such a method depends on the person, mainly the chief's temperament... But most Taíno chiefs can be considered honest and kind..."

"Indeed, you are correct! This method should work with the simple Taíno divisions, but not with the crafty Maya tribes... Since it's about getting the chief aboard and coercing conversion... let's call this method 'forcing aboard the longship'! Haha! Forcing aboard the longship, blessed by Chief Divine!..."

Priest Tomato's hearty laughter echoed in the thatched hut, reaching distant surroundings. At this moment, Water Chief was nearby in the chief's wooden house, patiently working the crocodile skin. Hearing this familiar voice, the chief paused slightly, a gentle smile appearing on his face.

"Praise All Gods and Ancestors! The priest of the Longboat Tribe is truly a straightforward and good person!"

Night encompassed the village, which returned to tranquility, only the crackling rain sound persisted. A succession of storms, large and small, lasted for over a month. Until mid-September, the sky finally cleared again after a long absence.

Post storm, the sky was vast and cloudless. The gentle sunlight spread freely, and the fierce Caribbean Sea temporarily returned to calm. The peaceful island tribes also finally stirred into action. Coastal canoes shuttled back and forth, bringing trade goods and the latest news.

The Kingdom Fleet was ready to set sail, prepared for battle. After waiting several days, they received the latest news from the envoy requesting aid from the Red Soil Clan in the Mayali Region!

"The Siguayu, silent for two months, are mobilizing again! At this moment, they've gathered hundreds of warriors and nearly a hundred canoes, plundering around the Red Soil Clan area!"

Upon receiving this news, Priest Tomate donned his armor, grabbed the Bronze Axe, and immediately went to see Water Chief, requesting to set out together. Facing the crisis of the brother tribe, Water Chief did not hesitate, nodding in agreement.

"Good! Thank you, Tomato Priest! The Longboat Tribe's willingness to lend a hand is wonderful! I will immediately bring sixty hunters and militia from the tribe to board the faster longship and set out with you!..."

"All Gods and Ancestors bless us! Let us fight together to repel the Siguayu invasion!"

Hearing this, Priest Tomate's face showed a confident smile. He nodded briskly, his smile as warm as sunlight.

"Excellent! Chief Divine's blessing! The Red Soil Clan is in dire crisis, please hurry aboard the longship so we can depart immediately!"

Chapter 1173: Second Kingdom Expedition, First Battle on Cuba Island!

The sea and sky are vast, the wind is calm, and the bright September sunlight is spread across the Caribbean Sea after the storm. The sea sparkles like the golden long feathers on the body of the Feathered Serpent, or like the magnificent mirror beneath the Heavenly Divine's feet.

After the rain, seven Kingdom Longships loaded with three to four hundred warriors set out together. The whole flotilla maintains a steady speed neither hurried nor slow, rowing along the green coast of Cuba all the way towards the East. The Red Soil Clan, some two hundred li away from the Mayali Region, is the destination. To ensure the sailors have the strength to engage the enemy at any moment, travel is limited to sixty to seventy li per day. After three days of this pace, as the dawn light illuminates the sky, the magnificent red hills and earth along the coast appear before everyone's eyes.

The Taino People's Red Earth Tribe is just over ten li ahead, but Priest Tomate isn't in a hurry to arrive. He has the flotilla rest nearby, allowing crew members to recover their strength. Meanwhile, he sends two hunters from the Mayali Region onto the land with the envoy who previously sought aid, to make

contact with the Red Soil Clan. A nimble canoe is lowered from the longship carrying three to four skilled Kingdom sailors to scout the coastal situation ahead.

After half a day, having eaten a simple lunch, the scouts return one after another. The Kingdom sailors have discovered the coastal situation, with over a hundred dugout canoes of the Ciguayo raiders splitting into squads of several dozen men, plundering villages and tribes along the coast!

"The Chief Divine witnesses! The Ciguayo raiders are like a...a bunch of crazed Wild People!... they brandish Stone Spears and Hunting Bows, stealing fish and turtles from the pond, dogs and tough-haired rats from the pens, dried fish and tools from the fishing huts, dried tobacco leaves from the tobacco huts, and even digging cassava from cassava fields to take away..."

The scout sailor responds as such, showing no sign of pre-battle worry, but rather an amused fascination.

"Two to three thousand tribespeople of the Red Soil Clan have mostly gathered together, cooped up in their main village, relying on a circle of wooden fences for defense. The Ciguayo raiders have sent four to fifty men to watch the main village, yet haven't exerted much force to attack. Their main force is plundering in the small villages, taking away all wealth they can and capturing able-bodied men and women scattered around..."

"There are no signs of combat along the coast, and few dead bodies. From afar, I spotted hundreds of laborers transporting goods. Judging by the different white tattoos on them, they should be captured Taino people, but it's unclear from which tribes they were taken..."

Upon such descriptions, Priest Tomate and the veteran militia Chiwaco exchange a thoughtful glance.

"With the Chief Divine's blessing, it seems the Red Soil Clan is not in immediate danger. They have hundreds of able-bodied men gathered, it shouldn't be easy for the enemy to consume them. While the Ciguayo raiders haven't massacred, only plundered food and wealth, and captured prisoners..."

"Hmm, it's as if treating the Taino people like a fishery... After all, a personal fishery must retain fish, they can't haul them all away! I guess the Ciguayo raiders truly intend to settle down. Their lair must be within two or three hundred li around..."

As they discuss, the scout from the Mayali Region also returns from the land. They report something to Water Chief, who, with a worried face, speaks to Priest Tomate.

"Respected Priest Tomate! The Red Soil Clan is surrounded by the vicious Ciguayo raiders! They number in the hundreds, more than dozens of hands can count... They've captured dozens of able-bodied men and women. According to the previous raid, Ciguayo raiders will plunder until dusk, then depart northeast to the sea..."

At this point, Water Chief pauses, then kneels on the deck with a thud, pleading to the leaders of the Longboat Tribe.

"Red Stone Chief Bociba from the Red Soil Clan wishes to make a pact with the flotilla. When the Ciguayo raiders begin to retreat at dusk, let's launch a pincer attack from sea and land! Although ruthless, the Ciguayo raiders lose their fight when laden with loot. We don't need to utterly defeat them, as long as we can drive them off, and rescue as many captured village men and women as possible!..."

Seeing Water Chief's earnest request and hearing the detailed plan, Priest Tomate raises his brows and lets out a slight chuckle. After patiently listening, he steps forward, gently lifting Water Chief, confidently smiling as he responds.

"Chief Water, rest assured! As we have come, we shall defeat the Ciguayo raiders and rescue the captured tribespeople! Because the Chief Divine blesses us, He is most exalted, and you will witness His great power..."

"As for the battle plan...it's quite simple. The Ciguayo raiders are plundering, most warriors are on land. Seize this moment where their forces are scattered, we just need to focus our full strength, and charge forward!..."

With a slight smile, Priest Tomate clenches his left fist, thrusting it forward gently pressing against Water Chief's heart. Then he turns his head, his gentle gaze suddenly sharpens, as if transformed, with undisguised killing intent accompanying his solemn words, knocking against Water Chief's heart.

"Deputy Captain Puapu, have the warriors don all armor! Archers ready the Greatbows, spearmen raise Long Spears, and rowers prepare fully!...In two quarters of an hour, we'll deploy the flotilla, assuming attack formation, and attack the Ciguayo raiders' flotilla moored by the shore!"

"In this battle, disregard capturing, unleash slaughter freely! Give it your all, win beautifully! I want to offer the Ciguayo raiders as sacrifices to the Chief Divine, let the Chief Divine's glory illuminate the East of Cuba Island!..."

"Ho Ho! Praise to the Chief Divine, this battle will surely be a grand victory!"

Under the horrified gaze of Water Chief, Huitu warrior Puapu donned his bronze cloth armor, raised a ninety-pound greatbow, and tucked two bronze axes into his waist. He grinned widely, his face radiating a bloodthirsty intent, unable to suppress his eager smile. Soon, the belligerent Huitu Puapu gathered the warriors onboard and delivered a loud speech to everyone.

"Chief Divine's blessing! This is the first battle on Cuba Snake Island; give it your all! You are all clad in leather and copper armor, wielding sharp weapons, while the foe doesn't even have cotton armor; they're just a bunch of wild people... When the time comes, don't hold back, get close and kill fiercely!"

"All the way here, having had Taíno women, it's time to show some manliness! After this battle, if anyone's hands are not stained with blood... I'll punish him to accompany Captain Chiwaco, fishing for half a month! Hey, that's much more interesting than fooling around with young women in the village..."

"Haha!"

Hearing this, the kingdom's warriors on the fleet burst into loud laughter, while the sailors pursed their lips, not daring to laugh out loud. Old militiaman Chiwaco's face darkened as he awkwardly glanced at the young Dark Snake and Didi, secretly harboring a grudge in his heart.

"Good for you, Puapu! I just said a few words about you in front of the kids, and you've remembered till now... Ha! After we're gone, you can accompany Priest Tomate and have fun in the village of Cuba!"

After the kingdom's warriors' hearty laughter, the entire fleet suddenly became solemn. Everyone was seasoned with blood and would not have much emotional fluctuation if a battle indeed ensued. On the

contrary, the Water Chief holding the Hunting Bow, along with the Taino Militia from the Mayali Region, were truly nervous and excited, their faces filled with unease.

"Chief Divine bless us! Water Chief, don't be nervous. Under the Chief Divine's watch, the warriors of the kingdom are blessed. This battle is promised by the Chief Divine, and we are destined to win!"

Priest Tomate stood solemnly, offered a few comforting words, and changed the Water Chief into a sturdy leather armor. He didn't want any accidents happening to this significant target in the battle.

Huitu Puapu commanded the fleet to travel over ten miles, catching sight of the low-lying villages of the Red Soil Clan and the cluttered small boats along the coast. Hundreds of Xiguayou warriors were busy along the coast, bare-chested, adorned with black tattoos, holding stone spears and short bows. They drove over a hundred Taíno captives, with many personally hauling large and small baskets of supplies, loading them onto small boats.

Their black hair was mostly dyed blue because indigo dye was most common on the coast of Central America. A few dyed it red, which was powder made from redwood seeds from the Caribbean Islands. Only a very few respected war chiefs could dye it the rare and esteemed purple.

That was bone-conch purple extracted from numerous conchs, naturally bright in color and traditionally lustrous. This expensive seaside dye was produced along the coasts of North Africa in the Mediterranean and the Caribbean Islands, once symbolizing the "purple" of the "Purple Nobility," representing the Byzantine Empire's royal family.

"Wow! These Xiguayou people have distinct hair colors, indicating a clear hierarchy, evidently more organized than the Taíno people..."

Huitu Puapu squinted his eyes, standing at the bow of the swiftly advancing ship, scanning the chaotic crowd by the sea, searching for targets to slay.

As the Kingdom Longship suddenly appeared, the Xiguayou warriors on the outer small boats were immensely surprised and were the first to shout. Quickly, a chief with purple hair turned pale, pointing sharply at the approaching longship several miles away, calling out loudly to those around him. Within mere moments, several red-haired veteran warriors pulled out their warning conches and blew them in succession!

"Toot! Toot-toot-toot! Toot-toot!..."

The warning conch sounded, and the Xiguayou warriors onshore looked drastic. They threw down the food and wealth in their hands, ignoring the nearby Taíno captives and the distantly observing villages. They merely grabbed their bow spears, hastily jumping onto small boats, preparing to meet the sudden longship appearance at sea. The Xiguayou had no allies in eastern Cuba; this must be the enemy!

"Enemy! Enemy! To the west, on the longship, the enemy is here!"

In just a moment, the Xiguayou's boat cluster, like startled fish, rapidly shifted. And just as they were barely ready to engage, seven twenty-plus-meter kingdom longships accelerated to the maximum, like aggressive and fierce sharks, pouncing fiercely!

As the sides rapidly approached, the "sharks" uttered heart-shaking, uniform slogans. It was a language the Xiguayou had never heard before, and a battle array killing never seen among the Caribbean tribes.

"Praise the Chief Divine, fight for the Divine!... Eighty paces!... Sixty paces! Fifty paces! Archers ready, shoot!"

Chapter 1174: The Second Kingdom Expedition, the Fear of the Ciguayo People

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!"

A fierce rain of arrows rose from the greatbows on both sides of the longboats, bringing a sharp death hum! The vicious bone arrows arrived in an instant, and the fifty-step distance was already accurate enough. The hunters on the small boats had just raised their short hunting bows when they let out a series of miserable cries, falling one by one to the incoming sharp arrows. These sharp bone arrows were of such forcefulness that even a slight hit would result in a penetrating severe wound!

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!"

The cries had not yet subsided when a second round of sharp arrows followed, injuring more than twenty warriors. After two rounds of arrow rain, the canoes of the Taino people gathered to face the

battle scattered quickly like an injured school of fish. The warrior leader Zi Sun gritted his teeth, lying low on a small boat in the back, cursing angrily in surprise.

"Damn! Damn! Such powerful arrows?! Which tribe with skilled archers is this? By the ancestors of the lake, this is definitely not the meek Taino people!"

"Chief Divine bless us, speed up, speed up! Shoot another round of bone arrows, then accelerate and charge, capsize them!"

Huitu Puapu shouted fiercely, personally releasing arrows from the bow of the ship. The enemies had no armor, and the cheap bone arrows were deadly enough. Amidst the calls, seven fierce longboats had already charged to within ten paces.

The kingdom's archers in armor on the longboats stood behind the shields on both sides, fully revealing their forms. Their expressions were calm; even on the rocking boats, their arms remained steady, aiming at the nearby enemies.

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!"

The third round of feathered arrows was shot almost touching the ships of both sides, once again shot close! The hunters of the Taino people shouted and desperately drew their short bows, shooting upward at the surrounding longboats.

"Quick! Use the poison arrows!"

Upon hearing the order, dozens of veteran hunters did not hesitate and switched to the rare and precious poison arrows!

However, the poison arrows for the first time were blocked by the enemy's leather armor, only grazing a few people. At the same time, a burst of miserable cries and the warriors' angry and fearful howls broke out again from the scattered boats of the Taino people!

"Oh ancestors! Leader Zi Yuan has fallen in battle!"

Dozens of steps away, the warrior leader Zi Sun lay on the boat, shocked at the news. He looked up and saw that the warrior leader Zi Yuan, who commanded at the front line, had obviously been given special attention. In the last round of arrow rain, twenty sharp arrows hit the small boat where Zi Yuan was, turning him into what looked like a spiky porcupine! The bright purple hair was also stained red with blood at this moment.

"Ah! They're crashing! Crashing over!"

"Crack! Crack!..."

It was only a moment before terrified cries and the huge snapping sounds of wood shattering suddenly erupted from the small boat!

Seven sharp-headed longboats relentlessly rushed in with terrifying speed, crashing ferociously into the fleet of small boats! It was like a shark bite, instantly smashing and capsizing over a dozen small boats. The dozens of Taino warriors on board plunged into the water in exclamations, and were crushed by the heavy longboats, bodies trembling and softening, sinking silently to the seabed. This round of impact alone had taken forty of the tribe's best men out of the fight completely.

"Surround them! Surround them! Close in and surround them, kill the archers on the longboats!"

A brave leader with purple hair, holding an obsidian long spear, shouted loudly! He led a dozen small boats, approaching the leading kingdom flagship. Then, he let out a heroic shout and, with a group of red-haired warriors clustering around, jumped onto the bow of the longship.

"Ancestor witness! No matter which tribe they belong to, I, the brave Zi Ying, must stab them to death!... Kill! Ah? You!... Uh! Hoho!..."

"Ha! Blabbering some gibberish, it sounds nothing like Taíno language, no idea what he's yelling about!"

Huitu Puapu muttered in a low voice, pulling a bloodstained bronze axe from the chest where the leader Zi Ying had his tattoo. Then, the warm gush of bright red blood splattered all over his head and face.

"Bah!... This blood is really fishy!"

Puapu spat forcefully, ejecting the blood from his mouth. Then he instinctively touched his somewhat aching chest.

In that flash of a moment, the Taino warriors jumped onto the bow of the boat and fought the kingdom's warriors at close quarters. On the narrow and crowded boat, there was no room for either side to dodge, and the outcome was decided in an instant! He faced the purple-haired leader, taking a spear to the chest but still managing to return an ax blow. That full-force ax nearly split the unarmored enemy in half, and the enemy's fierce spear...

Puapu's palm stopped, feeling the hard, slightly cold touch on his chest, a grin spread across his face.

"Ha! Quite strong, huh! Reckon it's all bruised up..."

"Hiss! All Gods and ancestors witness! This... this Longboat Tribe is amazingly mighty!"

On the longboat, the Water Chief stared wide-eyed, watching the melee battle unfold, his hunting bow trembling in hand. He drew a sharp breath, his mind filled with both surprise and awe.

The battle had lasted only two quarters, and the dozen Taino warriors who jumped onto the longboat were effortlessly killed by the warriors of the fleet. The Taino people howled viciously, with the frenzy of mad dogs biting, while the fleet's warriors remained indifferent and calm, moving unhurriedly like turtles. They pierced with copper spears with precision, fiercely slashed with bronze axes, killing the enemies one by one while suffering almost no casualties themselves!

"Facing the savage Taino people, the battle on the seven longboats was like this! It was a one-sided slaughter... Is this perhaps the power of the Chief Divine?..."

The fierce battle raged, cries shook the heavens, stone spears clashed with armor, bronze axes collided with bodies. Water Chief glanced around, his face showing more and more undisguised horror.

At first, dozens of hastily assembled Zigouyou canoes rushed forward, desperately engaging the seven longships in battle. The numbers on both sides were roughly equivalent, with Zigouyou having slightly more.

But the battle has now turned the sea red with blood, blue-haired and red-haired corpses floating everywhere. And the kingdom's warriors, clad in leather armor, had no more than a dozen wounded. To the Taino people, the ferocious Zigouyou raiders were nothing but beasts ready for slaughter in front of the silent battling Longship Tribe!

This one-sided slaughter continued for another quarter, and the Zigouyou began to show signs of collapse. Especially when another purple-haired leader commanding was killed by an Osprey's piercing javelin, the remaining Zigouyou warriors could no longer hold on.

"Ah! Ancestors! They killed the leader! They are undying Sea Demons!"

A dozen small boats hurriedly turned away, leaving behind the captives on the shore, and the fighting fleet, choosing to flee. The escaping tribal warriors showed unprecedented fear, heading for the vast northern sea, desperately rowing away without looking back.

"Leader! Purple Kite Leader is dead by arrows, Purple Eagle Leader was killed by a sword, Purple Raven Leader was shot dead by javelin... Now, of the four leaders, only you remain!"

"Damn it! What are you babbling about? Keep it down!"

Upon hearing the trusted aide's shouting, Purple Falcon Leader's face turned angry, then showed inner fear. He already noticed that the enemies on the longships intentionally sought out purple-haired leaders, killing them one by one. And the purple on his head, though just smeared with some black mud from the ship, was still hard to conceal.

"Damn it! Truly damn it! Where did these enemies come from? They can shoot arrows from afar, row boats to ram, and fight close! They are clad in tough thick leather... This is definitely not Taino people!"

Purple Falcon Leader gritted his teeth, heart bleeding. He could not understand why, when the tribe was excited and looting successfully, they suddenly faced such terrifying enemies? Whether it was the swift

arrows and greatbows, golden axe and spear, or the thick skins on the longships, it was everything that the wandering Zigouyou had never seen on the Caribbean Islands!

"If we had known there would be such formidable tribes on the Western Long Island, why did we migrate the entire tribe thousands of miles to come here? Though the Taino Tribe on Haiti Island is slightly more brave than the Taino people here, they cannot compare to the Longship Tribe we encountered today..."

The sound of battle gradually grew faint, panic-stricken cries rang out among the boats. More Zigouyou warriors turned to flee, the attacking canoes scattered in all directions. And the longships, paused for several quarters, finally painted with the scarlet of death, began to move again.

"Leader, Leader! The longship is moving again! It's coming towards us!"

"Damn it! Stop shouting! Inform the nearby boats to spread out and flee! Escaping to the lake island in the northern sea!"

"Ah? What about the looted goods on the shore, the captured captives, and the warriors who didn't make it to the ships... What should we do?"

"What to do? Damn it! Leave it all! Turn the bow, row with all our might, we're leaving now!"

After speaking, Purple Falcon Leader forcefully pushed overboard a large basket of looted tobacco and fragrant leaves. Then he crouched his form, took a paddle, and personally started rowing, murmuring prayers.

"Ancestors, I beseech you protect me! Let those damned Longship Tribes not pursue us!"

With the retreat of the last leader, the Zigouyou's complete rout thus ensued. The Zigouyou warriors, who two quarters ago charged like fearless hunting dogs, now turned into timid, fearful grass mice, abandoning their courage. They exposed their unguarded backs, scrambling to escape by rowing, mercilessly pursued and slaughtered by the warriors on the longships!

Perhaps hearing Purple Falcon Leader's plea, Huitu Puapu's eyes sparked sharply, keenly spotting that fleeting glimpse of purple among the dozens of scattered fleeing boats.

"Haha! Here's another one, a big fish that slipped through the net!"

Puapu grinned, showing the excitement of pursuit and hunting. One hand held a purple blood-dripping head, the other pointing forward, ready to fiercely command an all-out chase in that direction.

The longships have many rowers, who can take turns in an orderly manner, stabilizing the speed of advance, actually faster than the canoes. Don't be fooled by the current rapid escape of Zigouyou's canoes; it is merely a temporary burst. Just patiently pursue for a few quarters, when the rowers' stamina is exhausted, they will be fat fish waiting to be slaughtered!

"Chief Divine bless! Give me..."

"Chief Divine bless! We've won!"

Just as Puapu was about to issue an order, Priest Tomato smiled serenely, extended a hand to hold back Puapu's arm, suppressing his command.

"Esteemed Deputy Captain Puapu, Chief Divine bless the fleet, this is undoubtedly a great victory!"

"Ah? Priest Tomato, I was about to chase that..."

"Praise the Supreme Main God, praise the Warriors of the Kingdom! I think the battle with Zigouyou should just end here! As for the fleeing enemy, it is better to leave it to fate..."

Saying this, Tomato smiled subtly, while communicating in the Mexica Language, he glanced around at the blood-stained coast. He looked at Water Chief, who was in shock and excitement, and then at the large group of militia rushing out from the Red Soil Clan village, his mouth gradually curling up, his words carrying deep meaning.

"And now, another, more important 'battle' is soon to begin... Chief Divine bless!"

Chapter 1175: Second Kingdom Expedition, The God Has Arrived!

The sun rose to the zenith, blood-red floating on the sea. Longships drifted near the shore, clearing the battlefield after the battle. The sailors fished out the goods from the sea, captured the overboard prisoners, and handled the dead bodies. The Kingdom's warriors laughed and chatted loudly, cutting off the heads as trophies, perceiving the fierce battle just now as mere routine.

In fact, in such a one-sided battle, there was indeed no pressure. Only about a dozen were lightly injured, three or four seriously injured, while two died from poison arrows. Meanwhile, the dead or overboard Xiguayou people covered the coast, numbering probably a full two hundred!

"Praise the Chief Divine! He guides us to reunite once again!"

Priest Tomato stood smiling at the flagship's bow. His eyes shone, watching the Red Stone Chief Bociba of the Red Soil Tribe approach in a small canoe and then board the longship of the flagship. Priest Tomato's smile remained as gentle as two months ago, only more confident and composed.

"Red Stone Chief, the Chief Divine's great power has shielded us! The siege of the Red Soil Tribe is lifted! The Xiguayou people have been completely defeated, abandoning all captives in their escape. They suffer devastating losses and will not return anytime soon!"

"Oh! Praise the Divine... Esteemed Priest Tomato, you are a friend to the Red Soil Tribe, truly grateful for your rescue! And you, honorable Water Chief!..."

The Red Stone Chief, slightly short in stature and with a plain face still marked by red patterns, jumped onto the longship, and knelt on the deck, deeply grateful for everyone's rescue.

"Blessed by All Gods and Ancestors! We thought we would suffer misfortune, yet unexpectedly, you defeated the ferocious Xiguayou people! The villagers they captured remained on the shore, rescued by the village militia. Many looted items left on the shore. And dozens of fleeing enemies escaped into the surrounding jungles... This is truly a victory beyond my wildest dreams!"

"Haha! This is all thanks to the Chief Divine's blessing!"

Priest Tomate laughed heartily, full of enthusiasm, lifting the Red Stone Chief. Then, he tightly grasped the other's arm and, smiling, began another topic.

"Esteemed Red Stone Chief, since we last parted, have you thoroughly read the Chief Divine's scripture I left? Is there anything unclear that you need to ask me?"

"Uh!... The Chief Divine's scripture... I read it... Good! The drawings are good! Hmm, this material called 'paper' is truly magical..."

Hearing this, the Red Stone Chief stammered and responded with a forced smile. He had indeed thumbed through the scripture Priest Tomate left, but he didn't recognize a single "rune," merely skimmed through the picture stories. He even learned about the depicted eagle, snake, hummingbird, preparing to draw them on the Zemi God Card he worshipped.

As for the Chief Divine or the Supreme One, he comprehended none of it from start to finish. In truth, he had no intention of converting to the Chief Divine, only planned to worship one divine. After all, all things have spirits, and relying solely on one god, how could it possibly suffice? However, with the Longboat Tribe coming to the rescue and defeating the marauding Xiguayou people, he couldn't say much given such a great kindness.

Thinking of this, the Red Stone Chief tugged at his hair and sincerely invited.

"Priest Tomate, my good friend! You came such a long way and fought such a big battle! The tribe is grateful from top to bottom and wants to prepare a grand celebratory feast for you... Why not let the warriors and hunters of the longship rest in the village, with all the food and drink guaranteed aplenty!..."

Upon hearing this, the Water Chief nodded repeatedly, also issuing an invitation with a face full of joy.

"Indeed! Priest Tomate, this successful defeat of the enemy rests upon your valiant Longboat Tribe! Upon returning to the Mayali Region, I will also hold a grand celebratory feast for you!"

"Haha! Red Stone Chief, Water Chief, thank you for your invitation! However, the celebration is not urgent at the moment."

Saying this, Priest Tomate's smile receded, his expression solemn. He glanced calmly at the Water Chief, speaking one word at a time in simple Taíno language, said with a deep voice.

"The Chief Divine is the War God, sheltering the tribe's warriors to achieve victory in battle! According to our tribe's tradition, after every great victory, a sacred prayer ritual must be held, offering sacrifices to console the Chief Divine!..."

"Esteemed Chiefs, since we participated in the battle together, we are comrades in life and death, and should share the Chief Divine's glory! In the upcoming prayer ritual, both of you must attend together under any circumstances!"

"The Longboat Tribe's tradition, the victory prayer ritual? Fine, I'll participate!"

Upon hearing this, the Water Chief readily agreed. The Red Stone Chief hesitated at first but, seeing Priest Tomate's solemn face, nodded as well.

"Good! Good! People! Prepare the captive sacrifices, erect the Chief Divine Emblems, ignite the Sacred Fire basin, burn the Cuba Divine Smoke, ready the Tequila!"

Priest Tomate beamed a smile and issued orders in a clear voice. He looked at the longboat, praising the several dozen blood-stained warriors of the Kingdom with Mexica Language, loudly announcing.

"The Chief Divine has bestowed boundless power, showing His majesty! Warriors and sailors, your brave fighting spreads the glory of the Chief Divine, also earning reverence from the Taíno Chiefs! They have decided, just at this moment, to formally convert to the Chief Divine on this longship!..."

"Quick, quick, get ready! Cut off the heads of the Taino people and pile them below the Chief Divine's emblem. Then prepare two captured sacrifices! Right here, we will offer the enemy's heads, present the enemy's hearts, and hold a solemn prayer ceremony for the conversion of two Taino allies!"

"Roar, roar! Praise the Chief Divine! We fight for the Divine, spreading His glory!"

Upon hearing these words, the Kingdom's Warriors and the sailors on the longship cheered excitedly. Immediately, the cheers, along with orders, were transmitted to all the longships, causing the whole coastline of the Red Soil Tribe to erupt in frenzied cries!

"Fight for the Divine, spread the glory! Sacrifice! Sacrifice! Conversion! Conversion!"

The cries roared like thunder, reaching everyone's ears. The Water Chief and the Red Soil Chief exchanged glances, both with inexplicable dread on their faces. And as a two-meter tall wooden stone emblem was erected, a scene that awed them and even instilled fear unfolded!

One by one, freshly severed, blood-dripping heads were boldly brought by the Kingdom's Warriors and piled beneath the emblem of the Sun Hummingbird. In mere moments, a pile of one or two hundred was formed! Blood-stained heads tangled together, stacked layer upon layer into a small pyramid over a meter high. The base was composed of blue-haired tribespeople, the middle of red-haired tribal warriors, and at the very top, three purple-haired warrior leaders!

At this moment, these "fierce and evil" Taino marauders, in the hearts of the Taino people, had their heads neatly stacked together, like stones. Their necks dripped with blood, their faces frozen in expressions of terror, anger, unwillingness, or despair. Their eyes widened, staring at the leaders before the emblem, especially the two Taino chiefs.

"Ah! Ah this! Ancestors!..."

Faced with such a horrific sacrificial scene, the two simple-hearted Taino chiefs turned pale, shocked beyond words. However, once the sacred chieftain rites began, they could never be interrupted midway! Several accompanying Preaching Priests skillfully lit the Sacred Fire, burning Divine Smoke, devoutly chanting the sacred scripture.

"Praise the Supreme Main God! We offer the enemy's heads to You, praying for Your gaze, praying for Your arrival!..."

"The Divine has arrived! Offer the sacrifices!"

With a declaration from Priest Tomate, two red-haired Taino captives were brought to the bow. Seeing the pyramid of heads, they turned ashen and began struggling fiercely. Yet, several strong Kingdom's Warriors held them down firmly, revealing their violently heaving chests.

Priest Tomate's face was solemn, without any expression. He deeply glanced at the two Taino chiefs, watched their faces full of shock and reverence, and nodded slightly. Then Priest Tomate raised the sacrificial Obsidian Dagger, glanced at the sacrifices before him, and suddenly leaned forward!

"Splurt!"

"Splash!"

"Sizzle..."

"Ah this! Ancestors!"

The dagger fell amidst the astonished cries of the two Taino chiefs. Warm blood splattered, and when it fell into the fire basin, it erupted into faint charred smoke. The acrid smoke permeated, carrying a strong fishy smell that assaulted the nostrils. The prayers from the priests aboard surged loudly, and the Kingdom's Warriors fervently began their hymns.

This was a conversation between Divine and human, a bloodthirsty tradition on the Mexica Highland that persisted for two thousand years, and was a devout blood sacrifice never seen by the various Taino divisions!

"The Chief Divine casts His gaze upon devout us!... He will personally witness, witness His faith spreading for the first time on Cuba Snake Island!..."

Priest Tomate declared passionately, his demeanor both devout and fervent. Then he lowered the blood-dripping Obsidian Dagger and slowly turned around, revealing a High Priest robe already completely stained red. His face and hands were smeared with blood, yet his smile was radiant and sincere.

"Water Chief, Red Stone Chief..."

Seeing the familiar yet unfamiliar Priest Tomate, the Water Chief felt a surge of uneasy fear in his heart, his face turning pale. Beside him, the Red Stone Chief silently stepped back, only to be firmly blocked by surrounding Warriors. The two looked around, seeing dozens of Kingdom Priests and Warriors encircled around them, eagerly watching. The flagship of the fleet had long been packed, and six surrounding longships offered no route for escape.

"Come forth! You, esteemed chiefs!"

Priest Tomate looked at the two with sincerity, gentle like a kindly elder, patiently guiding wayward children, with no room for refusal.

"The sun is at its zenith, the Supreme Main God is watching us! Come, let me convert you, let you become the first batch of glorious believers in the Chief Divine on Cuba Snake Island!... Come, offer your hair, offer your blood, offer your spirit... Give everything to the Chief Divine, and He shall bestow light, protecting you henceforth!"

"The Divine has arrived, on this vast and pure sea! He is true, and the only faith! And I will let you know..."

Chapter 1176: Second Kingdom Expedition, Conversion Ceremony, First Batch of Converted Cuban Chieftains

"The god has arrived! He incarnates as the hummingbird of the South, riding the howling hurricane, descending upon the distant seas! He takes the form of the divine being, casting the divine spear from His hand, shooting out a bolt of lightning! He nails the divine body of the Feathered Serpent Divine above the Eastern Sea, transforming it into the long Snake Island... and the lightning brings light that will illuminate you!"

Divine smoke billows, sacred fire burns intensely. Blood fills the air, and the sacrificial altar stands flowing. Before the emblem of the Chief Divine, Priest Tomate raises his head, embracing the sun with both hands. He fervently chants aloud, his face flushed, his entire body stained with fresh blood, so exhilarated he is nearly delirious!

What he is chanting are scriptures from the "Book of Ama Colley," derived from ancient alliance myths, recounting the death of the Feathered Serpent. This scripture, first written only five or six years ago, has, with the extensive printing of the "Book of Ama Colley," along with the newly formed characters, already deeply penetrated the hearts of the young priests! Priest Tomate, having graduated from Divine Might University, recites the entire scripture backwards fluently, viewing it as heavenly reason.

"Now, I have finally reached the Eastern Sea, the site of miracles, and the Snake Island, the place of prophecy! I will establish the first temple of the Chief Divine at the head of the serpent where the Feathered Serpent died, before the iron ore formed by His fangs! I will also touch the light of the lightning, and bring this divine light to the people on the island!..."

Priest Tomate chants devoutly, a radiant smile on his face. He extends his hand, as if truly touching the divine light. Then, he lowers his head, gazing at the two kneeling chieftains in front of him, gently touching their hair with the hand that conveys the brilliance.

"Come! Bow your heads, you two chieftains! I will cut your hair and toss it into the fire. Raise your hands, I will cut your palms and let the blood drip into the fire. Then raise your foreheads, I will carve the emblem of the Chief Divine, leaving the mark of His gaze..."

"From this day forth, your souls and blood will go to the Divine Kingdom, under the Chief Divine's control! Your bodies will remain in the mortal world, to spread the glory of the Chief Divine among the tribes!..."

"Ah! Ah, this? Ancestors! My hair, my palms, and my forehead... my soul and blood... all must be offered to the Chief Divine?..."

In the ensuing ritual, Water Chief is shocked and confused, his mind a blank. Dazed and muddleheaded, like a puppet coming to life, he allows the longship priests to manipulate him, together with the silent and tight-lipped Red Stone Chief. They have their hair cut off, thrown into the fire, their palms pricked, dripping blood into the fire. Even in the eyes of the simple Taino People, this is a ritual concerning the soul, determining one's fate after death, not to be performed lightly!

However, on this kingdom's longship, surrounded by dozens of samurai, they have no room to resist, and are intimidated by the brutal sacrifices. Both are almost half-coerced, step by step, completing the conversion ceremony.

"Praise Chief Divine Vizilopochtli! He occupies the highest, governing all, omnipotent! He takes away the hair and blood of the converts, also controlling the souls of believers..."

Priest Tomato's chanting continues, the voice lofty and resonant, like the proclamation of a divine. Wisps of blue smoke rise from the sacred fire, wafting forth, bringing a different kind of protein-scorched smell. At this moment, Water Chief's heart seems to be taken away by this smoke, flying to the ethereal sky, becoming empty.

"Come! Drink this cup of blood wine!"

The two Taino Chiefs are still bewildered, but the surrounding priests have already handed them two cups of blood-hued tequila. Red Stone Chief silently extends his hand, drains it in one gulp, a faint taste of blood permeates his mouth, it is the heart's blood of the Si Gua Yu sacrifices. Then, in just a few breaths, his eyes start to blur, his senses grow distant, his figure begins to sway.

"This! Priest Tomato! You all..."

"Water Chief, don't worry, drink up, I won't harm you! This cup of wine has some harmless herbs, will let you sleep a while, making the upcoming divine inscription less painful... Alright! Support them properly!..."

Priest Tomato softly orders, and four samurai approach, each supporting the two drowsy chieftains. Then, Priest Tomato's mouth curls, pulling out the obsidian dagger from his waist, placing it on the forehead of Red Stone Chief.

Red Stone Chief's eyes seem to be covered with a layer of mist. However, after a few breaths, the mist suddenly disperses, and the pain cry follows.

"Ah!..."

Priest Tomato's expression does not change, his arm remains steady, and his wrist is flexible up and down. In a matter of moments, he has engraved a complete emblem of the Chief Divine on Red Stone Chief's forehead. Crimson droplets seep from the engraving, dyeing the flying Sun Hummingbird red.

"Very good! Red Stone Chief, in the days to come, the Chief Divine will always watch over you, granting you the power to be invincible in battle..."

Priest Tomato murmurs softly, his eyes bright, piercing the heart. Then, his bright gaze turns towards Water Chief beside him, a brilliant smile blooms.

"Water Chief, it's your turn!..."

"Ah!..."

Moments later, accompanied by a mark engraved into his bones, another suppressible cry of pain. Priest Tomato smiles, watching the two red Sun Hummingbirds fly side by side before him. At this moment, in the intoxicating divine smoke, he seems to see countless hummingbirds rising before him, flying toward wide coasts and various parts of Cuba!

"Good! Very good! There will be more, more... very good!"

Blood drips, divine smoke wafts, prayers echo, praises drone. The chanting of the priests gradually deepens, drifting towards the blue sea and sky, also flying to the green coast. And when the final prayer arrives, all the kingdom people on the ship bow down on the deck, offering fervent praise.

"Praise the Chief Divine!... The god has departed!"

Priest Tomato raises his head to the sky once more, embracing the sun with both hands. He chants lowly for a while, then reveals an extraordinarily passionate smile, looking at the two dully waking chieftains. The surrounding kingdom priests and samurai also cast the same eager gaze, as if looking at two brothers returning home after a long absence.

"Ah!... Me?... My forehead?..."

Water Chief groans in pain, opening his eyes. His forehead burns with a fiery pain. And when he glances at the Red Stone Chief beside him, he instantly understands everything.

"This is? This is!"

"This is the Chief Divine's emblem, also the Chief Divine's blessing! You swore a blood oath, carved a mark of flesh, and completed the holy conversion ceremony... Welcome, into the embrace of the Chief Divine!"

Priest Tomate smiles gracefully, his demeanor turning again to familiar warmth. The two Taino Chiefs remain dazed in place, as if congealed. For the tribespeople of this era, such a conversion ceremony is tantamount to giving up everything of the soul. Their faith, too, will henceforth, transform completely!

"Praise the Chief Divine! He who is generous and merciful, bestowing us with blessings!"

Looking at the speechless and numb two chieftains, Priest Tomate's smile remains. He has them fully in hand now, since they didn't resist before the ceremony, nor struggled during it, even if they regret afterward, they can only accept reality. After all, at this moment, the divine still lives vividly in people's hearts.

"Come, cheer! Welcome our newly joined brothers!"

Boarding the longship, the scheme is completed! Amidst the cheers of the samurai, Priest Tomate's eyes are radiant, glancing at the slightly bowing old militia Chiwaco, nodding in greeting with a smile. The old militia inclines slightly, returning a modest salute.

In the end, Priest Tomate extends both hands, lifting the non-resisting arms of the two chieftains, declaring generously to the jubilant samurai aboard the ship.

"Praise the Chief Divine! To celebrate the victory in battle, to celebrate the conversion of the Mayali Region and Red Soil Clan, the chieftain brothers... let us head to the village on the shore, to hold a grand feast of celebration! The generous Red Stone Chief has already promised us plenty to eat and drink!"

"Hooray! Praise the Chief Divine! Praise the chieftain brothers!..."

"The Chief Divine protects us! The glory of the divine shall be immortal, overshadowing Cuba's fertile land!"

"Hooray! The Chief Divine protects! Glory immortal!..."

Amid the deafening cheers, Priest Tomate smiles again, casting his gaze once more at the two wooden chieftains, his words deeply meaningful.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Water Chief, Red Stone Chief, the fleet is landing, do you... agree?"

They remain silent for a long time, until the burning sacred fire finally goes out, revealing burnt remnants. Only then does Red Soil Chief lower his head, pulling Water Chief along, both responding softly in unison.

"Priest Tomate, the feast in the village has been in preparation for a long time!... Praise... the Chief Divine..."

Hearing this, Priest Tomate's bright eyes smile, radiant as the stars.

Chapter 1177: The Second Kingdom Expedition, Devotees and Dialecticians

The sun tilted westward, and the battlefield had been cleared. The sky reflected a gorgeous red glow, and the coast floated with pale red waves of blood. The Kingdom Fleet docked along the shore, and a large group of the Kingdom's Warriors, clad in armor, disembarked and surged into the village of the Red Soil Clan. The tribespeople in the village cheered to welcome them, joy evident on everyone's faces. Meanwhile, the two Taíno Chiefs, bearing the evident Emblem of the Chief Divine on their foreheads, returned. Their expressions were somewhat melancholic, but they forced smiles and said nothing more.

The banquet of the Red Soil Clan that night was grand and enthusiastic, without any incident. The Kingdom's Warriors and the Taíno villagers sang and danced, and after eating and drinking their fill, many women, enamored by the warriors, willingly offered themselves.

Priest Tomate, with a broad smile, pulled the two dazed chiefs and solemnly declared to the tribespeople!

"The Chief Divine bestowed Divine Power upon us, granting victory in the battle against the Zigualyuan! Both revered chiefs have now converted to the Chief Divine and embraced His embrace!...From now on, the mighty Chief Divine shall be their supreme and sole belief, protecting the entire tribe from the Zigualyuan marauders!"

Upon hearing this, the warriors and sailors of the Kingdom cheered in celebration. Some of the ordinary tribespeople were surprised, but soon they too celebrated. Only the elders and chieftains of the tribe appeared bewildered and came forward to inquire.

The two Taíno Chiefs, although crestfallen, nodded in affirmation.

"To repay the debt of rescue, we have sworn with our souls to worship the Chief Divine of the Longboat Tribe... The Longboat Tribe has promised to protect us and will also train our militia to guard against the Zigualyuan marauders!..."

Hearing this promise, the leaders of the Red Soil Clan exchanged glances, speechless. Throughout the day, the ferocity and combat prowess of the Longboat Warriors had been witnessed by all, leaving an indelible impression. In the presence of these armored and axe-wielding warriors, the "fierce" Zigualyuan warriors seemed like children before adults, truly no match. And the Taíno Militia, who feared the Zigualyuan, in front of the Longboat warriors, might as well be infants.

That night, the Kingdom's Warriors reveled in conversion with the young women, while the Kingdom Priests, though solemn in demeanor, were inwardly elated!

For with the esteemed chiefs leading the way and the powerful demonstration of force, just in one night, they had converted five or six high-ranking tribal leaders and over a dozen skilled hunters!

"Phew! This is top-down mission work... Once the upper leaders convert, the ensuing progress indeed flows as a rapid mountain flood, unstoppable!"

Priest Tomate rotated his sore wrist, his face unchanged but feeling immensely satisfied inside. Looking at the twenty or so respectful Taíno believers before him, and the Sun Hummingbird on their foreheads, he envisioned the endless Divine Light of the Chief Divine enveloping the entire Cuba Main Island's future!

Of course, Priest Tomate was well aware that most of this newly converted tribal upper class were shallow believers, moved either by gratitude for the fleet's rescue or by the awe of force, perhaps even opportunistic pseudo-believers. They only knew the name of the Chief Divine and revered His power, still harboring various divine beliefs within and lacking firm conviction.

Next, only if they truly revered the Chief Divine from the heart could they further become True Believers. True Believers are the main body of followers, the most numerous. In the Kingdom, most of the nobility and merchants, with their complex thoughts and deep desires, can perhaps only remain at the stage of True Believers, if even that.

Above True Believers are the Sincere Believers, who harbor no doubts about the Chief Divine and believe with genuine sincerity. In the Mexica Alliance and the Kingdom of the Lake, Sincere Believers are already the highest requirement for most people. The warriors of the Kingdom, carefully selected for thousand-mile voyages, mostly belong to this level.

And going further, only a few pure unwavering believers or those who have experienced the collapse of old beliefs and comprehensively reshaped cognition can become Zealots. Zealots already view the divine as the only one and can truly sacrifice their lives for the divine!

In the Mexica Warriors of the Kingdom, the proportion of Zealots is actually small. Instead, among the Prepecha Warriors who experienced the collapse of the Tarasco Kingdom and abandoned the belief in the Three Gods, there are quite a few Zealots. The Divine Blessing Legion, formed by Otomi Warriors stained with the blood of their clan, and the Vanguard Throwing Camp composed of the Tecos Tribe warriors who surrendered after their tribe's extinction, also have a high proportion of Zealots.

"His Highness Xiulote has demonstrated the Divine Power of the God of Death, subduing many Telascallan tribes driven to extinction and should also gain a large number of Zealots. Hmm... If 'the Heart of the Divine' hot air balloon ascends a few more times to display divinity, the piety level of believers would also greatly enhance!"

In the vast night, amidst the joyful singing and dancing, Priest Tomate smiled, contemplating long and hard over the simple, celebratory Taíno villagers. These simple ordinary tribespeople, pure in thought and sincere by nature, just need patient instruction to produce a much higher proportion of Sincere and Zealous Believers, far surpassing the tribes on the Mexican Plateau!

"Pseudo believers, Superficial Believers, True Believers, Sincere Believers, Zealots... Beyond that are the Saints officially canonized by the High Priesthood of the Alliance! The level of Saints is not just about faith but requires demonstrating sufficient ability, making astounding contributions to the Chief Divine..."

With this thought, a surge of excitement coursed through Priest Tomato's heart, unable to contain his longing.

"Currently, the only two canonized Saints are the immortal elders who founded the Divine Church with unfathomable prestige and High Priest Xutel, who personally established church law and led religious reforms. His Highness Xiulote, blessed with Divine Revelation and able to prophesy, will certainly hold a reserved spot as a Saint in advance..."

"And if I can spread the faith of the Chief Divine across Cuba and withstand the invasion of the foretold evil with white skin... then, the revered position of Saint... Ah! May the Chief Divine bless!"

Priest Tomato murmured prayerfully, the fervent gleam in his eyes seemingly able to scorch anyone who met his gaze.

Old militia Chiwaco shrank his neck and lowered his head, avoiding such daunting eyes. He paused silently, exhaled softly, ceased paying attention to the fervent state of Priest Tomato, and instead looked at the Huitu Puapu who was embracing a Taíno woman and drinking merrily.

"Come, come, come! Finish this cup! After you're done, all four of you, accompany me to the hut next door!... Haha! I, Puap, am the strongest warrior on the longship! Yes! All four of you, I want tonight!..."

"Whew! After this battle, I'm going to head back. Before I leave, I have to thoroughly enjoy myself! It's a pity that on a long voyage, we can't bring women. Fine beauties like you, once I return to the Kingdom, I'm afraid I won't encounter again!"

"Tsk ts! So vibrant, so enthusiastic! Come all of you, let's go inside! I can't be like some old men, having only a teapot without a mouth, and there's no water inside the pot..."

"Cough cough! Damn! That scoundrel Huitu!"

Upon hearing this, Chiwaco's face darkened, cursing angrily in his heart.

"You're about the same height as me! If these Taino women stood up, even if you stood on tiptoe, you couldn't reach them!..."

Strangely enough, although the Taino are gentle by nature, they are exceptionally tall, generally a head taller than the Highland Tribes. According to the Mayan merchant Tikalo, on the Southern Continent, there are giant tribes who are as tall as the long spears of the Kingdom's warriors, and mind you, under the new Kingdom standards, a long spear is over two meters.

"The Northern wilderness people, the Highland people of the Alliance, the lowland Mayans, the Taino of the islands, and the rumored Southern giants... So many differently built, diverse in character, and entirely different in language and belief tribes... Are they really, as the scripture says, all descended from the same ancestors of the Jiao People?"

Reflecting on the experiences of two maritime explorations, old militia Chiwaco had flashes of deep skepticism in his mind. Though uneducated and illiterate, he has witnessed numerous things and nurtures a spontaneous, simple dialectic thought, pondering everything in the world. However...

Old militia Chiwaco turned his head, glancing at the fervent and focused preaching of Priest Tomate, then pursed his lips. He knew that most people in the fleet were different from him. It was faith that brought them thousands of miles here. He can think certain thoughts but must never express them.

"Praise the Chief Divine! He blesses you, blesses us, and blesses the converted tribes and villages!"

The stars shone, and the bonfire roared. Priest Tomate lowered his dagger and carved another hummingbird. Then, solemnly and devoutly, he comforted the converted hunter.

"Hunter Chiwo, as long as you sincerely believe in the Chief Divine, your combat skills will improve daily! Your courage, your strength, your wisdom will all be blessed by the Divine, gradually increasing... In the end, you will be as valiant and strong as the Kingdom's warriors!"

"Praise... the Chief Divine!... Praise... Huitzilopochtli!"

The newly converted Taino hunter Chiwo stammered out the Divine's name and prayed a couple of lines, then excitedly left.

Priest Tomate smiled and stroked his chin, brooding silently. He hadn't deceived the other; all hunters and militia who underwent ceremonies and converted to the Chief Divine would receive systematic training from the Kingdom's warriors before engaging in small-scale battles. Completing this comprehensive process inherently leads to enhancement.

"Hmm, seizing the current wave of the Kingdom's might, I still need to recruit some clever Taino youths! Teach them the Kingdom's language, explain the Chief Divine's scriptures, teach them the prayer rituals, and train them as local priest apprentices. Once these apprentices become priests, the Kingdom's foundation on Cuba Island will be firmly established!..."

Thinking of this, Priest Tomate felt invigorated and thrilled. The situation on Cuba Island was unfolding, offering the Kingdom fleet great opportunities! And among the greatest contributors, besides himself, was old militia Chiwaco...

Priest Tomate raised his head, placing a fist to his chest. He nodded and smiled at Chiwaco, who was lost in thought, stargazing nearby.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise you, Captain Chiwaco, you are an outstanding believer of the Chief Divine!..."

Amid the celebratory crowd, old militia Chiwaco paused. He stood motionless for a few moments, then respectfully bowed in return.

"Praise... the Chief Divine! Priest Tomate, you are the fearless whale in the sea, leading the fleet forward!..."

"Hahaha!..."

"Haha!..."

The hearty laughter echoed in the village of the Red Soil Clan, reflecting the night sky of stars and moons. This was the greeting between the pious believer and the dialectician, before bidding farewell and leaving.

Chapter 1178: The Second Kingdom Expedition, The Beginning of Establishment

The red sun rises, casting great light, and the river flows underwater, pouring into a vast ocean. The torrential Moa River, from the upper reaches of the Red Soil Clan, flows down through the Moa nickel belt with faintly reddish nickel sand, converging with the Caribbean Sea. After a night of celebration, the faint red bloodstains by the sea also dissipated almost completely.

Over two hundred headless bodies of the Siguayu, drifted away with the tide, disappearing into the vast sea. Only the sharks, drawn by the scent, were still searching for traces of the fierce battle.

The Kingdom Fleet stayed with the Red Soil Clan for four or five more days. The Kingdom's Warriors, along with the local Taino Militia, searched the surrounding mountain forests, capturing dozens of Siguayu stragglers who had escaped into the woods. Including those captured in naval battles, there were as many as eighty Siguayu captives.

The trial of the Siguayu captives by the Kingdom Fleet was straightforward. The tribal warriors with red hair, skilled in battle and posing potential resistance, were all executed. The tribespeople with blue hair were individually tested by the Priests to swear a blood oath of conversion to the Almighty. Those who resisted were also executed.

After two rounds of processing, the fleet gained fifty "voluntarily" converted Siguayu able-bodied men. Added to this were the fifty or so Taino laborers who were rescued and "willingly" joined, amounting to over a hundred capable laborers.

Most of these Taino laborers had been held captive by the Siguayu for several months and were quite docile to survive. The majority hailed from small tribes within two to three hundred miles, already homeless after being raided by the Siguayu. Faced with the invitation of the formidable Longboat Tribe, they were genuinely willing to join. A few remaining individuals came from the more eastern Marine Tribe and still had family and relatives. However, they dared not request to return out of fear of the fleet's power.

"Yes, the Great Marine Tribe two hundred miles to the east also has two or three thousand tribespeople... it would be wise to plan ahead and include them in the mission plans..."

Priest Tomate quietly took note and comforted all the newly joined Taino able-bodied men. Then, the priests, half coaxing and half threatening, had all able-bodied men swear a blood oath and engrave emblems, performing a sacred conversion ceremony. Thus, this expedition resulted in converting a hundred individuals from the Red Soil Clan and another hundred among the newly joined tribespeople. Overall, the mission gained two hundred new "followers" of the Chief Divine, marking significant progress in the spreading of beliefs!

The conquest concluded with plentiful gains. Before leaving the Red Soil Clan, Priest Tomate harbored some worries. He felt that the Red Soil Clan's faith was not yet solid and wanted to leave behind some personnel. But the number of people the fleet could leave in Cuba was too few. For this, he approached the seasoned Militia man Chiwaco, discussing whether some loyal Prepetcha Warriors could be left from the two hundred people meant to return.

"Huh? Leave a few dozen people in the Red Soil Clan? ... Hmm..."

The old Militia man showed signs of difficulty. But after hearing Priest Tomate's reasoning, a glint appeared in his eyes, revealing a thought.

"Honorable Priest Tomate, farmers build fences and keep turkeys inside, even raising dogs, to guard against thieving foxes and wolves."

"Hmm?"

Hearing the familiar analogy, Priest Tomate blinked. Knowing this was the old Militia man's speaking habit, he listened patiently.

"Actually, if foxes and wolves are constantly howling outside, the timid turkeys won't dare fly over the fence. The worry is that if the foxes and wolves keep quiet, the turkeys, being forgetful and bold, might forget in a few days..."

"Hmm? Captain Chiwaco, you mean..."

"Ahem! Perhaps you could... pile the Siguayu heads into a Jingguan, erecting it outside the villages of the Red Soil Clan. Then plant the Emblem of the Chief Divine, forbidding them to clean it..."

Chiwaco lowered his eyes and lightly spoke two sentences. Priest Tomate's eyes lit up, suddenly enlightened.

"Good! Great idea! Truly hitting two rabbits with one stick! It displays the Chief Divine's majesty while cutting off any retreat for the Taino, preventing hesitation..."

Action followed thought, and the Kingdom Warriors, with practiced ease, took half a day to build a sturdy Jingguan of stones and skulls outside the Red Soil Clan's village. Over two hundred blue-haired, red-haired, and purple-haired heads were arranged in turn, glaring fiercely with menacing faces, stacking up to the height of a person, leaving a daunting impression!

"Ah? Priest Tomate, this! ... What does this mean?"

With great enthusiasm, Priest Tomate, along with a few warriors, personally erected a two-meter-tall Emblem of the Chief Divine in front of the Jingguan. He then solemnly instructed, speaking gravely.

"This is the Chief Divine's protection and a memorial of battle honors! The Chief Divine's glory envelops the villages of the Red Soil Clan, and any Siguayu raider daring to encroach will face beheading! Red Stone Chief, you must safeguard the Emblem of the Chief Divine; it is the Chief Divine who grants Divine Power, sheltering the faithful of the Red Soil Clan. Any slight damage will surely invite Divine Punishment!"

Hearing Priest Tomate's words, most of the newly converted Taino believers showed joy on their faces. Ordinary Taino villagers felt both surprise and fear, yet pride and happiness. Meanwhile, the Red Soil Chief and several Tribe Chiefs appeared somewhat uneasy. Unlike the ordinary villagers, they understood the situation's gravity.

The Siguayu raiders had visited twice before, seeing the village's determined resistance, and they did not exert much effort to attack to minimize casualties. At most, they plundered some goods and food, capturing a few scattered villagers who fled. But with this Jingguan erected, it was set on a course of non-stop hostility between the Red Soil Clan and the Siguayu!

"Uh... Priest Tomate... this Jingguan..."

"This is the Chief Divine's majesty! With Divine Might present, you cannot doubt it! Remember, you too are now a believer of the Chief Divine, among the first Tribe Chiefs to convert. Warriors of the Kingdom will continue to come from the Highland, bringing more and stronger Forces. Know that Divine grace and punishment are never empty words!"

"Red Soil Chief, as the foremost example of conversion, your faith must be steadfast!"

Priest Tomate's expression turned stern, preaching a few serious words. The Red Soil Chief silently pondered for a long time, reluctantly sighing and reluctantly nodding. He knew that henceforth, the Red Earth Tribe had no choice but to move closer to the Longboat Tribe and the Supreme Main God...

Upon completion, seven Kingdom Longships set sail, filled with food, taking along over twenty seized Siguayu canoes, along with over a hundred newly joined able-bodied men, embarking on the return journey. Three days later, they arrived at the village of the Mayari Great Tribe, returning the weary Water Chief, and participated in a grand victory celebration banquet!

In the Mayali Region, the Kingdom Fleet stayed another eight or nine days. The Kingdom Priests were busy spreading their teachings and converting followers. The warriors and sailors were occupied in recruiting the village's able-bodied men and women. Meanwhile, the newly joined able-bodied men were engaged in preparing food, harvesting a batch of cassava, soaking it in water to detoxify, and also securing some plantable cassava stalks.

Back in the village, the Water Chief secluded himself in the chieftain's wooden house, using the excuse of processing crocodile skins, and remained dispirited for several days. It was only after multiple visits from Priest Tomate that he finally came to terms, or rather, accepted his fate, officially wearing the Sun Amulet symbolizing the Chief Divine.

"Alas! Praise the Chief Divine!," May the Mayali Region truly receive the Chief Divine's protection, the safeguarding of our Tribe lengthen..."

Subsequently, the good-natured Water Chief regained some of his spirits, leading the village hunters in becoming busy here and there, in preparation for the upcoming establishment of Iron Bay Town!

"Alright! Praise the Chief Divine! May the strength and blessings be with us..."

The next day, the seven Kingdom Longships, filled with supplies, along with a great fleet of small canoes, set sail forty miles eastward, reaching the lower course of the Mayari Iron Mine at the confluence of the bay and river. With four hundred crew members, over a hundred new laborers, the desolate bay thrummed with activity, brought to life.

Priest Tomate then unfolded a small hand-drawn map, and the groups busily set out to establish the Kingdom's first settlement in Cuba, "Bay of Iron"—Iron Bay Town!

Chapter 1179: Second Kingdom Expedition, Preparations Before the Return, Cuba's Outstanding Crops

The weather was clear, with a pleasant breeze. The gentle September, accompanied by raindrops, gracefully neared its end, while the busy October arrived under bright sunshine.

At the lagoon bay where the Kingdom Longship docked, a clearing had been made between the large palm and tung oil trees. Two simple wooden warehouses were erected, along with a row of huts where the Samurai resided, and an open-air grass bed area for able-bodied men. Of the two warehouses, one stored copper stone tools for logging and mining, while the other held food and freshwater, both guarded by the Kingdom's Warriors in leather armor.

On a slightly elevated area near the riverbank, the Water Chief and the militia skillfully cleared a new field, planting cassava seedlings they had brought. The new field was only roughly cultivated, with taller shrubs removed and many low weeds remaining. The land was uneven, with even some stones present.

However, it did not matter; unlike most delicate crops, cassava was an exceptionally resilient and superb crop. It didn't require meticulous care and had no special water or fertilizer needs; just plant it, and it would thrive. Even when facing weeds in the field, it held a strong competitive advantage. As long as the climate was warm, it would quickly grow tall, reaching up to 3 meters, usually around 2 meters. With such a height advantage, the weeds in the field would be deprived of sunlight and nutrients, leading to their wilting and death.

Even more astonishing, this hardy and resilient crop yielded a surprisingly high output, earning it the title of the "King of Starches." In this era, even without fertilizers, cassava could yield hundreds to a

thousand jin per mu. Later, with the addition of fertilizers, it could easily reach an average yield of 2 tons per mu. Yes, you read that right, an astounding 2 tons per mu!

Moreover, the starch content of fresh cassava was around 30%, much higher than that of potatoes and sweet potatoes. Two jin of cassava provided as much energy as one jin of white rice. Of course, their taste was incomparable. However, it was still food, sustenance that could save lives during times of disaster. In the later Qing Dynasty, it was also once a common staple in the southern Celestial Empire.

As for the only limitation of cassava, it was a tropical crop preferring a rather warm climate. It could grow in temperate environments, but yields would significantly decrease. The most suitable continent for this crop was Sub-Saharan Africa, primarily with a tropical climate.

In the 16th century, when this exceptionally high-yield tropical crop spread to the sub-Saharan area, the Black African population increased steadily with the rapid expansion of cassava cultivation areas! Even after five hundred years, cassava remained the lifeline for African people, the crucial staple for impoverished farmers, and once supported over a billion Africans!

At this moment, under the scorching sun, the old militia member Chiwaco squatted in the field with the Water Chief, busy planting the last batch of cassava. Having practiced planting for several days, he genuinely loved this easily sustainable, high-yield crop.

By noon, everyone had finished their work. The old militia member Chiwaco wiped his sweat, dragging the smiling Water Chief and the simple-minded translator Kuba to the newly built thatched shed. He summoned the Priest Apprentice Dark Snake, who could write and draw, to carefully document everything.

"Dark Snake, where are your pen and booklet? Take them out and write down what I say!..."

"Huh? Captain Dad, I haven't fully learned the alliance's writing..."

"It's okay. If you can't write it, just draw! Can't you write some graphic text? Just record it all; as long as it can be recognized, that's fine!"

"Uh... I'm ready, Captain Dad."

"Ahem! Hmm, remember now, to plant cassava, you don't use seeds but select seedlings. These seedlings are..."

Saying this, Chiwaco paused, somewhat uncertain. He looked at the Water Chief and Kuba, gestured while chatting for a while, then continued to speak.

"Select seedlings from the main tuber that have budding points and milky incisions, free from diseases and pests... Cut the later half, two to three palms long, as seedlings. The planting is simple, dig a hole one palm deep, put the seedling straight in, and just stick it in..."

"The planted cassava seedlings take ten to twelve months to mature and can then be harvested. When harvesting, follow the roots excavating the soil, taking only some tubers while leaving some to continue growing. Be careful not to damage them; this thing spoils easily..."

"Yes, cassava spoils easily! After harvesting, peel it, then cut it into pieces. Soak them in water, soak hard... Remember, this thing is poisonous; soaking removes the poison! When eating, be sure to boil it again in boiling water to eliminate any remaining poison, then it will be fine..."

The old militia member Chiwaco rambled on, covering all the details of cassava planting and consumption. If there was any uncertainty, he asked the Water Chief, exhibiting unprecedented seriousness and thoroughness. The young Dark Snake filled several pages with notes and drawings.

"Whew! How about it, did you record everything?"

"Recorded everything, Dad. It's all in this booklet!"

"Hmm, writing in the booklet is not very reliable. Dark Snake, you have a good memory; memorize it all for me. In case we encounter big waves on the way back, if the booklet gets wet, you can still recall it..."

"Got it, Dad. I'll memorize it tonight."

"Good! Very good! Praise the Chief Divine for the good!..."

After finishing everything, the old militia finally let out a long sigh and offered a rare sincere prayer. Then, he received a whole large basket of prepared cassava seedlings from the Water Chief, holding them tightly in his arms.

"Tsk tsk! That blind Highness finally opened his eyes for once... As long as I bring this basket of cassava seedlings back to the lake, even if I die on this trip, it would be worth it! If we can plant these high-yield treasures at home, imagine how many more people could survive... "

"...No, this won't do. One basket is still not enough. When I reach the west of Cuba, before crossing to the Maya, I need to find local tribes and get another basket of fresh, good-germinating ones..."

While the old militia busily prepared for cassava planting, Priest Tomato also had new progress on his side. He, along with several preaching priests and Divine Revelation Priest Mekate, busied themselves for ten days and built a clay charcoal kiln, producing the first batch of charcoal.

It must be said, the Cuba Main Island is rich in various minerals, with abundant coastal oil and gas, but it severely lacks coal. The Kingdom Fleet circled half the island, never hearing of any "black stone" that could burn. Priest Tomato sent people to search, but unfortunately without much success. Therefore, Iron Bay Town had to rely on the standard method taught at Divine Power University, making charcoal, to produce bricks for building temples and smelting iron ore.

"Huh! Chief Divine's blessing! This type of Marabu tree barely smoked while burning for charcoal. I thought this kiln failed, but unexpectedly..."

Priest Mekate widened his eyes, looking at the charcoal test-burned beside the clay kiln. The charcoal, black tinged with white, burned fiercely yet produced almost no smoke. Clearly, by Divine Revelation standards, this was top-notch, smoke-free white charcoal!

"Such fierce heat, with no smoke, it's indeed the best quality charcoal!"

Priest Tomato stroked his chin, watching the blazing charcoal before him, suddenly filling with excitement.

"This must be a blessing from the Chief Divine! The Chief Divine specially prepared this for us to smelt iron ore! ...By the way, what's the name of the small tree we burn for charcoal?"

"Uh, the Taino people call it 'Marabu.' Though it's called a small tree, by thickness and height, it should really be considered a shrub. According to the guide Black Stone, this kind of small tree grows all over Cuba Island, even more than palm trees, and grows wildly."

Priest Mekate scratched his head, chatted a bit with the newly converted hunter from the Mariah tribe, guide Black Stone. Then he showed understanding, patted the guide's shoulder, praised with a smile, and looked at Priest Tomate.

"Black Stone just said that hunters who go out prefer to chop down this kind of small tree for firewood in the wild. Because when this tree is cut open, it's oily inside, and burns fiercely. So, knowing we needed firewood, he specially recommended this wood!"...

The "Marabu" tree mentioned by the Taino people is actually a native tree species on Cuba Island, known later as the "Jatropha" or tung oil tree. This tree is rich in oil, and its branches and trunk can produce the finest quality charcoal. Its seeds have an oil content as high as 40%, nearly the best type of oil crop. In the future energy field, the Jatropha seed kernel would become a main raw material for producing biodiesel, widely introduced in Tropical Africa and India.

"Good! Very good! Guide Black Stone, you've made a great contribution!"

Priest Tomate nodded, fumbled in his arms, and took out a silver Sun Hummingbird Talisman. Then, solemnly, he placed the Chief Divine's talisman on guide Black Stone's neck, proclaiming in Taino language.

"The Chief Divine blesses you! This is a divine blessing, guiding your soul to a beautiful Divine Kingdom after death!"...

Guide Black Stone bowed his head respectfully to receive the blessing from the mighty longship priest. He touched the shining, cool silver badge, exactly the same as the emblem engraved on his forehead. Black Stone closed his eyes, murmured a couple of pious prayers, feeling warmth flow in his heart. Then, opening his eyes, he remembered something and excitedly responded.

"Praise... the mighty Chief Divine! Praise... the mighty longship priest! By the way, the Marabu tree, its trunk is very good, burns very well! And, its seeds are even better! Lots of oil, so much oil!"

"Hmm? Seeds with a lot of oil?"

Hearing this, Priest Tomato was stunned for a moment, then his eyes suddenly lit up. He grabbed guide Black Stone, exclaiming excitedly.

"Quick, quick! Bring me the kernel of the Marabu tree!"

"Throughout the Kingdom, conquest is the foremost task. Crossbows need oil for maintenance, bronze weapons need to be oiled, leather armor and shields also require oiling... Currently, the most lacking military supplies are oils! The Kingdom most lacks oil crops..."

"If there really is such an oil-producing small tree, I must hand enough seeds to Captain Chiwaco before his return!"

Chapter 1180: The Second Kingdom Expedition and Puap's Outburst

The longships rocked with the waves, the lagoon rises and falls, and the bay area was bustling. Hundreds of people had been busy for half a month, and the Kingdom Camp in Iron Bay Town was beginning to take shape.

The Kingdom Priests hurried to examine the seeds of the Malab trees, and were overjoyed. The seeds of this tree indeed had an astonishing oil content! Even with a crude extraction, more than twenty percent of the oil could be pressed out, indeed a desperately needed oil crop for the Kingdom.

Soon, on the returning fleet of old militia Chiwaco, several more bags of seeds from the Malab tung oil tree were added. The guide Black Stone specifically reminded that the seeds of this tung oil tree are poisonous, the extracted oil can only be used, not consumed.

The day was drawing to a close, and the setting sun cast hues of twilight. Old militia Chiwaco stood on a small hill near the Iron Mine Mountain, gazing at the sunset over the sea.

Near the iron mine, the trees were sparse, but long grass was abundant. Not far from the old militia's feet was a large patch of unique independent flame grass found on Cuba Island. These grass were in bloom, with flowers shaped like flames, in bright red and purple, looking very festive.

"Dear Captain Chiwaco, what are you looking at?"

"Honorable Priest Tomate, I am looking at the red sunset and the purple-red flowers."

Upon hearing this, Priest Tomate's mouth curved in a smile, and he asked,

"Oh? Which do you think is more beautiful, the sunset or the flowers?"

"I have seen many sunsets by the sea. But here, with the iron mine, it feels different. The flowers and grass on Cuba Island are unseen on the highlands, they too leave a lasting impression."

At this point, old militia Chiwaco sighed deeply, a few traces of nostalgia appeared on his face, and he spoke of an answer not among the choices.

"Of course, the most beautiful are the simple folk of Cuba Island. Such peaceful and quiet villages are not found on the highlands..."

"Yes, Priest Tomate, when I left, I had a sincere request..."

"Oh? Please speak."

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! Please, you and the warriors of the kingdom, be a little more lenient with the sincere Taino people... especially the Huitu Puapu, he is too aggressive, please restrain him somewhat..."

"Hmm..."

Hearing this unexpected request, Priest Tomate raised his eyebrows. He was silent for a while before nodding in response.

"Dear Captain Chiwaco, I promise you. Witnessed by the Chief Divine, as long as it doesn't affect the Kingdom's mission, I will always remain friendly to the Taino people... As for Puapu, I will also keep an eye on him."

"...Praise the Chief Divine! Thank you!"

The old militia bowed his head and gave a bow to Priest Tomate. Priest Tomate, with a solemn expression, returned the gesture. The two were silent again, watching the sunset over the sea, which gradually sank into the mountains and sea of the west.

"Captain Chiwaco, have you informed Huitu Puapu of the matter of staying behind?"

"...Not yet. I didn't find a chance in the village before. And here, there's been plenty to do."

"Then it must be done quickly. It would be better if you talked to him yourself; it would be more easily accepted!"

Upon hearing this, old militia Chiwaco sighed and agreed.

"What must come will come... once the sun sets, I will go find him!"

The sun soon set, and the earth was enveloped in the night. When old militia Chiwaco found Huitu Puapu, Puapu was sitting by the bonfire, eating fish stew with large mouthfuls. Seeing the readily available food, Chiwaco didn't stand on ceremony and directly sat down to drink a large bowl. Only after the two had finished eating did Chiwaco calmly meet Puapu's eyes to speak of his purpose.

"What? Old Chiwaco, what did you say?"

Huitu Puapu dropped the wooden bowl in his hand with a "clang" and leapt up in surprise, pointing at his chest in disbelief as he asked.

"You said you want me to lead the warriors of the kingdom and stay on Cuba?!"

"Yes. This is a decision reached after discussions with several priests of the fleet."

Chiwaco announced dispassionately and calmly.

"Puapu, I will take half of the fleet back. You must stay behind and assist Priest Tomate."

"What? What! Why me?!"

Huitu Puapu anxiously jumped, raising his voice.

"Among the Kingdom's Warriors, there are quite a few squad leaders! I've already chosen those who will stay!"

"Yes. Because you... are the most capable fighter."

"Why?! If you talk about capable fighters, the warriors of the Silver Raven Tribe, Eagle, and the warrior Mokai of the Putun Tribe, both can fight too!"

"Eagle and the warriors of the Silver Ravens will stay here with you. Most of the warriors of the Motun Tribe will remain, Mokai will return with me. During the return journey, they need to recruit some sailors from the Putun Tribe, Mokai can help in communication."

"Damn it! Damn it! Why? Why me?!"

Huitu Puapu's eyes widened in both urgency and anger, and his face reddened. He drew the bronze axe from his waist and hacked fiercely at a nearby palm tree with such force that it was embedded by two inches.

"I am the Deputy Captain of the exploration team! I have the right to choose! I will never stay! Old Chiwaco, you and that tomato scoundrel have no right to make me stay on this broken island with nothing!"

"Sigh!..."

Upon hearing this, old militia Chiwaco sighed softly and shook his head. He assumed a solemn demeanor and gazed sharply at the fuming Puapu, like an old eagle observing an angry grizzly bear.

"Huitu, you do indeed have the right to choose to leave."

Chiwaco replied calmly, his words peaceful but filled with strength.

"However, my decision for you to stay isn't to harm you; it's to protect you! If you choose to return now, the consequences will certainly be a severe punishment from His Highness! You could be stripped of your title, exiled, or even executed!... But staying here for a few years is your only chance of survival."

"What?! His Highness's punishment? Why would he punish me? I have fought for the kingdom along the way, fearless of life and death, even slaying the Maya prince in battle..."

At this point, Huitu Puapu stopped, his expression changed somewhat, and struggle emerged in his eyes.

"I also participated in many battles, defeating numerous enemies!..."

"Ha! Slaying the Maya prince, what a great merit!... Huitu, let me ask you, has the most powerful Xiu Clan of the Lowland Maya gone to war with the kingdom?"

"This! They... attacked us first! I merely led the warriors in a counterattack!"

"Bull! Who attacked whom first? Was I blind and unable to see at that time? Puapu, you fool! Even if you're confused for a moment, by now you should have realized!"

Old militia Chiwaco's anger surged. He raised his hand and gave Puapu's head a hard knock.

"Stop being a stubborn duck, deceiving yourself! You should have realized by now, this time you were tricked by Tikalo, becoming the tool of his revenge! Without you, his scheme could not have succeeded, and the Kingdom and the powerful Xiu Clan wouldn't have become complete enemies, leaving no room for reconciliation!"

"Huitu, say with absolute certainty that slaying the Maya prince was truly a merit!"

"This! Are you saying... Tikalo!..."

Upon hearing the old militia's words, Huitu Puapu's expression changed drastically. He stammered, tongue-tied, the struggle in his eyes becoming increasingly apparent.

Along the way, now half a year had passed, and the attitudes of the priests on the ship towards this issue were evident. He wasn't really foolish, how could he not figure out the right and wrong of the matter? It was just that he had always been boasting of his merits, anesthetizing himself, unwilling to face reality. In fact, upon reaching Cuba Island, he had already become more cautious and hadn't repeated the same mistakes.

Following a brief inner struggle, Huitu Puapu finally couldn't withstand the pressure, and exclaimed vehemently. His expression alternated between anger and fear, pacing back and forth, shouting continuously.

"No! That's incorrect! I've rendered great service for the kingdom! I survived deadly perils, arrived in Cuba with the fleet, and even defeated the Cigua people... Surely I am meritorious!"

"Even if I made mistakes, His Highness, His Highness Kuanren, wouldn't severely punish me, would he? I have always been loyal, consistently fighting for the kingdom..."

"Chiwaco, speak! Am I not right? Damn it! Don't close your eyes, don't shake your head, look at me and answer!..."