

Civilization 1301

Chapter 1301: The Beginning of North America's Western Sea Coast—A Narrow Peninsula

The July wind blows from the sea towards the land, with the Hawaiian high pressure rotating clockwise, throwing the strong wind towards the Western Sea Coast of the continent. However, unlike the rainfall brought by the Azores high pressure, the summer on the North America Western Sea Coast is dry and has little rain.

Within the entire dry Western Sea Coast, the warm Bay Area of California is particularly special. The Alaska warm current travels north from the land of Golden Bay, heading all the way to the Northwest of the polar regions, reaching the Bering Strait, and even connecting with the tide of the Kamchatka Peninsula.

The California cold current, on the other hand, travels southward from here, heading towards the coast of Central America. Following the cold current southward are the footprints of the exploration fleet moving northward, starting from the initially explored Guano Rock Peninsula.

"In mid-March, a Kingdom exploration fleet of more than a thousand people arrived at the peninsular stretch, reaching the southernmost cape. Then, the massive fleet was split into two here! The merchant fleet, consisting of thirty catamaran canoes with three to four hundred people, stayed there to mine guano. The first newly established village, South Bird Stone Village, was also set up here, housing more than fifty people..."

"Subsequently, twelve longships carrying over seven hundred people navigated past the southern tip of the peninsula, truly heading towards the northern coast..."

Exploration Captain Zuvaro raised his head, looking at the southern waves, reminiscing about the unknown starting point of exploration. The name "South Bird Stone Village" was personally named by him, signifying "the southern village of the peninsula that produces guano." Meanwhile, the surrounding Kochimi people were all loosely organized and out of sorts. Their largest tribe barely reached a hundred people, directly submitting to the massive fleet.

"The loosely scattered and sparse Kochimi people hardly had any decent farmland, mostly surviving through hunting and fishing... Since areas capable of producing guano, such quality fertilizer, are almost perpetually arid sandy grounds!... Without sufficient water sources, no matter how much fertilizer there is, crops cannot survive, leading to a sparse population... Truly interesting!"

Thinking of this record personally written by Miki, Zuwaro nodded gently, seemingly seeing again the arid desolate peninsula and the guano piled into mountains.

The Kingdom's South Bird Stone Village occupies the precious small lake in the south of the peninsula and has planted drought-resistant sweet potatoes. Since there are limited fields available for planting, the Kingdom placed only fifty immigrants here. They need to farm, fish, and collect guano to service the in-and-out fleet, striving to survive long-term in this distant barren land.

In fact, this massive Kingdom fleet went out to sea with the dual missions of exploration and colonization! At least two-thirds of the samurai, sailors, and militia will be placed in various settlements along the way. The entire massive fleet will gradually spread out, staying at various locations on the Western Sea Coast to maintain contact with each settlement...

That means that most people participating in the voyage, including the twelve longships, will not return! They are to become the first pioneers colonizing the Western Sea Coast for Your Majesty's prophecy, rooting themselves in the vast Northern Continent from now on!

"The samurai and sailors aboard are all unmarried males... everything is prepared for colonization... May the Chief Divine bless us!"

Exploration Captain Zuwaro shuddered lightly, recalling the prophecy and plan he read. Only he and Miki in the entire fleet knew the full scale of this grand plan.

"Connecting the entire Western Sea Coast into a line, even if it's a fragile dotted line..."

"The South Bird Stone Village established in mid-March is the first settlement. And in early April, the Kingdom fleet took nearly a month to sail against the wind and water, moving northward 1600 Li, reaching the slightly northern part of the peninsula. Here, we found another freshwater lake and established the second settlement, North Bird Stone Village!"

Zuwaro touched his chin, with a tinge of pride on his face. As the Kingdom exploration captain, he had the right to name landmarks and settlements along the way. The simple name "North Bird Stone Village" is also named by him, meaning "the northern village of the peninsula that produces guano"...

This segment of the voyage was immensely difficult, with the surrounding coast being quite barren, almost showing no greenery at all, and the ship's stored food was rapidly consumed. The only comforting aspect was the continuously appearing guano hills, accumulating on the shore, indicating the real wealth here!

At North Bird Stone Village, the fleet similarly left 50 people and half a year's worth of food. These people will cultivate sweet potato fields, fish, shoot birds, and gather guano... Subsequently, as the fleet moved further north, the peaceful Kochimi gradually transformed into roaming desert raiders, the "Sri people."

At the northern end of the peninsula, a Sri hunting squad ambushed the fleet members ashore. However, when dozens of tribe assailants wielding long spears and carrying Hunting Bows charged out from the hidden dunes, they were shocked to find hundreds of elite warriors armored in Leather Armor wielding Long Spears, Bronze Axes, and Greatbows in front of them.

"Haha! Poor little Sri!"

Thinking of this, Zuwaro's lips curled up. The greatest contribution of this band of tribe raiders was providing more than a dozen crew for rowing, along with rumors from the distant North.

The fleet continued north, consuming almost two-thirds of the onboard provisions, before finally leaving the exceedingly arid coast with infrequent rain. At this point, everyone's perspective brightened, finally seeing lush green vegetation and precious rivers flowing from the mountains. It was a perfect settlement point, later famously known as San Diego. However, this rare along-river fertile land was already occupied by the powerful Kumeyaay tribe!

"From North Bird Stone Village heading north, it took nearly a month to travel over 1500 Li... By the end of April, we arrived at the Ypa Great Tribe of the Kumeyaay! It is a coastal Great Tribe with thousands of tribes and is allied with the Salt Lake Great Tribe further north, part of the Kumeyaay Tribal alliance..."

Exploration Captain Zuwaro squinted his eyes, recalling their initial encounter. Twelve longships carrying six hundred warriors and sailors arrived at the seaside of the Ypa Great Tribe. On the other side, over a thousand Kumeyaay warriors wielding Greatbows and carrying Flint Javelins shouted as they surged forth. The warriors of the Yipar Tribe gathered on the beach, confronting the strange fleet of longships, shouting and demonstrating, almost ready for a bloody encounter right there!

"Chief Divine bless us! At the critical moment of slaughter, Miki was still fearless, stepping down from the longship to meet the Red Stone Chief, Matutumbe of the Ypa Great Tribe..."

In Kumeyaay language, "Matutumbe" means red rock. And on this coastline, one can see many mountains of red rock, marked with ancient weathering traces, also hinting at the as-yet unknown mineral resources.

"Matutumbe... Red Stone Chief..."

Recalling that difficult communication, Zuvaro could not help but shake his head. Both parties had language barriers, only cautious of each other, wanting to avoid war, leading to a long session of gestures. Finally, they located a Kumeyaay hunter from the Ypa Tribe who could speak Sri, and then a Yaji person from the fleet who could speak Sri, thus facilitating successful communication.

"Ah! No one expected that after a battle almost erupted, there would be a grand feast with drinking and dancing... Praise the Chief Divine!"

Chapter 1302: First Encounter with the Kumeyaay

"In the beginning, the world was a vast sea, filled with salty water (Pa'pa), and there was nothing else..."

"The great Heavenly Divine and Sea God, were nurtured together in the sea, brothers from the same womb... They both had their eyes closed, floating above the sea. The Sea God opened his eyes, glanced once, and the saltwater blinded him, causing him to sink into the sea. The Heavenly Divine opened his eyes, glanced once, and the sky allowed him to see, so he ascended into the sky (Kukatem)..."

"Then, the Heavenly Divine created the red ants, and the ants, using their bodies, filled in the first land of red (Sújam) upon the sea. The Heavenly Divine also created flocks of black eagles (Qawi), but without light, they were lost, wandering the skies endlessly, unable to find a place to perch..."

"Pondering, the Heavenly Divine molded a disc with red, yellow, and black clay, and threw it far into the sky, becoming the moon (Kaa'ip), and thus there was light... But the moon was too dim, so he made another brighter one and threw it again, becoming the sun (Makwáy)... Before ascending to the sky, he crafted men and women from the remains of the sun and moon. These were the ancestors of the Kumeyaay (Tama'), the sun and moon in the Heavenly Divine's hands!..."

On the red coast, at dusk when the sun and moon shone together, the Kumeyaay priests of the Yipar Tribe swayed wooden rattles, singing ancient, timeworn ballads. They wore black Eagle Feather Crowns, cloaked in red, yellow, and black robes, with sandals made from agave grass on their feet. Around their necks were shell and Pearl necklaces, and through the inner sides of their noses were ornaments made from buffalo Bone, pierced and worn, looking quite painful.

Eagle Feather, cotton cloth, agave, shell pearls, buffalo Bone... these are the cherished "Currency" of the Kumeyaay, hinting at their semi-nomadic, semi-agricultural lifestyle. The attire adorned with these decorations is the grandest priestly attire in the Tribes, symbolizing age-old tribal traditions!

"The Heavenly Divine bestowed generosity, turning the departed ancestors into wind, blowing towards distant worlds... from the Northern Land's endless Mountains, to the barren deserts of the East, and to the boundless Wilderness of the South... and wherever the wind blows, there once shared ancestors!..."

Red Stone Chief Matutumbe, wearing an Eagle Feather Crown, danced the tribal War Dance. His robe flapped like wings, nimble like a mountain eagle flying over two fish. Then, he stopped, came before Scholar Mikki, tilted his head, and looked at the uninvited "shark" before him.

"Rowing a long Large Ship, tribes from the sea! The tempestuous Sea God sleeps in the depths, while the majestic Heavenly Divine watches over us. Could the winds of our ancestors have intertwined? Are you here following the wind's footsteps, bringing goodwill?"

Before the Red Stone Chief's inquiry, Scholar Mikki remained silent for a long time. He heard many vague Navajo terms within the other's words, seemingly foretelling some common origin.

But as he observed the Kumeyaay, noted their unique tattoos, attire, and weapons, and listened to the tribe's mythic songs, he clearly understood their differences. He still couldn't understand them, but he could attempt to communicate...

"May the Chief Divine watch over us! Esteemed Tribe Chief, we are descendants of the Jiao People, your brothers from far in the South!... We've come with goodwill, bringing a new breeze never before felt in the South, to sow new vitality in the distant Northern Land!"

As he spoke, Scholar Mikki took out a cloth bag filled with gemstones and handed it to the Red Stone Chief.

"Friend, brother!... This is our gift!"

The Red Stone Chief took the bag, opened it, and his expression changed. After pondering for a moment, he placed the bag on the ground and said solemnly.

"You have given a gift. You are friends! But brothers... require blood and vows!"

With that, the Red Stone Chief drew a Flint Dagger and handed it to Scholar Mikki. His expression was solemn, speaking simple yet clear words.

"The Heavenly Divine and Sea God... are brothers... and a vow... is a bleeding eye!"

"A brother's vow... a bleeding eye? Ah?!"

Hearing the Translator's stuttering words, Scholar Mikki shivered all over. He trembled while taking the dagger, hesitating repeatedly in his heart before resolutely muttering the Chief Divine's name, aiming the Dagger at his eye!

"Oh Chief Divine! For the glory of spreading your name in the Northern Land... to forge an alliance between the Kingdom and the Kumeyaay... I will devoutly offer you my left eye!"

Scholar Mikki trembled as he prayed, compelled by courage, finally about to act. The Red Stone Chief shouted just in time to interrupt.

"Brother's vow, the eye of blood!"

Hearing this, Scholar Mikki looked up, seeing the Red Stone Chief already carving a bleeding eye on his arm with the Dagger. Then, the strong Chief, with a serious expression, extended his arm to Mikki, patiently waiting.

"Arm, eye! Place together!"

"Ah? Carve an eye on the arm?"

Scholar Mikki was momentarily stunned but suddenly realized. Overjoyed, he gave a fierce glare at the unreliable Translator, decisively wielded the Stone Dagger, and carved a similar bloody eye. Then, the two arms came together, and the blood eyes overlapped, mingling their blood!

Upon witnessing this, the surrounding Kumeyaay warriors erupted in a thunderous cheer! They raised their Stone Spears, stomped heavily, and leapt into a War Dance like stampeding buffalo. The Tribal Priest beat hand drums, singing celebratory songs, while the crowd onshore shouted in jubilation until their voices resounded thunderously!

"Salem (Silem)! Kupula (Ku'upla)! Salem! Kupula!"

This was the first meeting between the Kingdom's exploration fleet and the Kumeyaay. From a near-miss skirmish to a meeting of two leaders, then to a blood-oath alliance, celebrated by a grand welcome feast!

Even after several months, Exploration Captain Zuvaro vividly remembered that scene, recalling the two shaking hands high on the beach! Of course, what was more unforgettable for him was the enthusiastic and passionate welcome of the Seaside Tribes after the feast...

The bonfire ignited, night songs resounded on the beach, akin to the intermittent chirping of summer insects. And there, on the nocturnal beach, he held a young Kumeyaay woman. He still remembered that heart-stirring cry, testingly saying to the woman.

"Salem (Silem)?"

"Hah?"

The young woman was momentarily stunned, then burst out laughing. She shook her head, pointed at him, then at herself, and replied.

"Salem, no. Yukur, yes."

"Salem... man to man? Brother? Yukur... man to woman? Spouse?"

Exploration Captain Zuwaro pondered for a moment, seeming to comprehend. Then, he cautiously looked into the woman's pure eyes and said.

"Kupula?"

This time, the woman understood. She smiled and leaned forward, like the tide engulfing Zuwaro. Then, Zuwaro understood too. "Kupula" meant "to meld".

Chapter 1303: The First Lifeline of the North American Continent, Miki's Decision

The Kingdom's exploration fleet took a good rest for a few days among the Kumeyaay Ipa Great Tribe. Scholar Mikki worked hard to communicate with the tribe's elders, learning more about the Northern Continent's intelligence.

The Kumeyaay Tribes are powerful tribes occupying the northern coast of the Peninsula--the Great Salt Lake--Colorado River and Gila River lower basin. Their controlled territory, which also includes Arizona's southwestern part, the southernmost tip of California, and the northern end of Baja California in Mexico in later generations.

In the water-scarce Northern Desert, this land, which has rivers and lakes suitable for farming, is a fertile ground fiercely contested by countless Northern Tribes. The tribe able to hold this land must have been left after numerous battles, a powerful tribe, or even a Tribal Alliance. The current Kumeyaay Tribes are in a distinct yet connected state, forming a vague tribal alliance prototype.

"Brothers coming from the sea, we Kumeyaay people have more than 60 tribes, large and small!... The three most powerful Great Tribes are the Salt Lake Tribe occupying the Salton Sea, our tribe occupying the west bank rivermouth, and the Long River Tribe at the confluence of the Wikiwa'a and Hanan Chuuk

rivers! Each Great Tribe, including the affiliated small tribes around, has at least four to five thousand people and can muster over a thousand warriors!..."

Red Stone Chief Matutumbe pondered, holding a stick in hand, drawing a map on the sandy ground. Scholar Mikki wrote tirelessly, sketching a simple map on resilient bark paper with a charcoal pen, marking the positions of various tribes. He would collect as much information about the vast North as possible, providing the most critical reference for the Kingdom's future Northland strategy.

"Red Stone Chief, what do the Wikiwa'a and Hanan Chuuk rivers mean?"

"Oh! 'Wikiwa'a River' is what the northern Paiute people call the 'Long River'! This Long River is very, very, very long, coming from the upstream in the north, with numerous tribes along the way... The eastern Havasupai people call this river 'Hāichidhoma,' which means 'blue-green water flow.' Meanwhile, the powerful Navajo Alliance from further east, occupying the Long River's upper reaches, calls it 'Tó Nahasdzáán,' 'the blue river.' Of course, most tribes along the river use its most common name, 'The Great Mother River!'"

"Chief Divine witness! A very long, blue-green, blue river, the Great Mother River..."

Scholar Mikki drew a long line representing the known Long River extending infinitely to the Northeast. This was his initial impression of the Colorado River, also marking the first time the entire Kingdom of the Lake learned of this river running through the Grand Canyon. This river, stretching five thousand miles, nurtured hundreds of Northern Tribes, becoming the North American continent's first lifeline!

"...The Hanan Chuuk River, also known as the 'Corn River' by various tribes, where corn can be planted. It comes from the eastern upstream, flowing through the Yavapai and Hopi territories, eventually reaching the Salt Lake. The river's upstream harbors the truly powerful, threatening Apache Alliance!..."

"Corn River? Apache Alliance?"

Scholar Mikki mused, drawing a long line flowing from the east. In later generations, this thousand-mile-long line would be the Gila River. At the source of the long line, an emphasized circle was marked, labeled "Apache Alliance"!

"Oh! So it seems the Navajo Alliance lies to the north, the Apache Alliance to the south, with these two powerful Tribal Alliances just connecting together? Just like two packs of overlapping wolf territories..."

Seeing this, Scholar Mikki pondered for a moment and then asked Red Stone Chief.

"Honorable Chief, what is the relationship between the Navajo Alliance and Apache Alliance?"

Upon hearing this, a gleam sparkled in Red Stone Chief's eyes. He smiled subtly, answering with deep meaning.

"Brother from the sea, your map drawing is excellent, your vision as keen as a mountain eagle!... These two powerful Tribal Alliances are like two tireless wild bulls, locked in continual combat and pursuit for hundreds of years!"

"Furthermore, the tribes upstream of the Long River eastward all have to choose a side and join this prolonged fight because when two wild bulls are entangled, they won't let surrounding wolf packs leisurely watch from the sidelines..."

"But fortunately, we Kumeyaay people occupy the far western end of the desert and canyon, free from the need to fight for the upstream Tribal Alliances... Of course, we are always keeping an eye on them. If one of the two wild bulls genuinely determines its leader, then the entire desert and canyon land will have a sole, powerful leader wolf!"

The conversation between Scholar Mikki and Red Stone Chief regarding the Upper Long River ended here. At the close of the talk, Scholar Mikki, with a serious demeanor, asked Red Stone Chief a critically important question.

"Red Stone Chief, the wind of the Ancestor brought me here, offering a chance for change... If a truly powerful Divine demonstrates their miracle before you, would you be willing to believe in Them and see Them as the sole Divine?"

Seeing Scholar Mikki's solemn expression, Red Stone Chief seemed to sense something. He contemplated for a long time before cautiously asking in return.

"Brother from the sea... The Sea God controls the sea, deciding the fishermen's catch. The Heavenly Divine controls the sky, determining the rainfall... So, what might the miracle of a truly powerful Divine be?"

"They command Thunderbolt and Fire, giving devout Samurai the power to destroy any resisting enemies!"

"Thunderbolt and Fire? Destroying enemies?"

Hearing this, Red Stone Chief raised his eyebrows, showing a moved expression.

"Do you truly have such power?"

"Of course! If you are ready, I can show you!"

Red Stone Chief pondered silently for a while, then slowly nodded. Scholar Mikki took him to the coastline to demonstrate the shooting of the Tiger Squat Cannon. Watching the trees shattered by the flying stones, Red Stone Chief's face drastically changed and he remained silent for a long time. That night, he couldn't sleep at all. The next morning, when Mikki came to see him, he found him looking much more haggard.

"Broader from the sea! Thunderbolt and Fire are forces of destruction... Indeed the power of a strong Divine can compel me to worship! However, such a destructive force only invites awe, making it hard for the entire tribe to genuinely acknowledge... And I alone do not represent the entire tribe."

"Destructive force only invites awe but makes it hard for the tribe to acknowledge?... And you alone don't represent the tribe?..."

Hearing this, Scholar Mikki frowned, showing an insightful expression.

"Then, what do you want?"

"A power of life. One that allows the entire tribe to recognize."

"... Chief Divine witness! I see."

Scholar Mikki fell into contemplation once again and then made a decision. The wisdom and sincerity of Red Stone Chief left a deeply profound impression on him. As the second leader among the exploration fleet, his recognition of Red Stone Chief meant tangible rewards! This was another more peaceful path of assimilation, minimizing bloodshed.

Thus, Mikki left the camp, went to the anchored longship, and directly approached Exploration Captain Zuwaro, who always remained vigilant and ready for battle.

"Chief Divine witness! Zuwaro, I think the Red Stone Chief of the Ipa Great Tribe is truly worth winning over!... He's a wise person, having seen the power of our fleet. He personally is willing to convert to the Chief Divine, but the conversion of the entire tribe requires us to bring real, life-giving strength to his tribe!..."

"Huh?! Life-giving strength? Mikki, speak in layman terms."

"I want to leave a traveling missionary Priest in the Ipa Great Tribe, along with two young Assistant Priests and a dozen warrior guards. Additionally, we'll leave the drought-resistant sweet potato roots and cold-resistant potato tubers here and teach the Kumeyaay people!"

"What?!"

Upon hearing this, Exploration Captain Zuwaro looked utterly surprised. His thoughts raced as he swiftly weighed the pros and cons of such actions. After a while, he hesitantly asked.

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure. Before coming, I consulted His Majesty! His Majesty said these suitable crops and better farming techniques, as well as the use of manure and guano rock, should be spread to the various

Northern Continent tribes! He said, 'The Chief Divine wants to bring prosperity and abundance, not cruel destruction and plunder. The populations of tribes on the Northern Continent, the more the better!...'."

Since Mikki cited His Majesty, Zuvaro had nothing more to add, finally nodding in agreement.

"Alright! Praise the Chief Divine, and His Majesty's mercy!..."

"I agree with your decision, with only one condition..."

"Red Stone Chief must conduct a conversion ceremony, taking a Blood Oath, to convert to the Kingdom's Chief Divine in front of the whole tribe!"

Chapter 1304: Colonizing the Western Sea Coast—Yipar Tribe and Three Hills Port

In early May, after the Kingdom fleet stayed at the Ypa Great Tribe for half a month, Red Stone Chief Matutumbe finally made a blood oath and chose to convert to the Chief Divine. From then on, he became the first Tribe Chief on the North American continent to voluntarily convert to the Chief Divine faith! And the Ypa Great Tribe, with five thousand tribespeople, promptly became the Kingdom's first allied tribe on the Western Sea Coast of North America!

"Chief Divine bless! The wind of the ancestors comes from the South, and the long-separated brothers are now united! Salem! Kupula!..."

"Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!"

This thunderous cheer echoed from within the Kingdom's exploration fleet, accompanied by the cannon fire soaring skyward, deeply etched into the hearts of all the Kumeyaay. Faced with the power of thunder and fire, the previously dissatisfied tribal priests and elders also closed their mouths and bowed their heads in awe.

"From spring to summer, this journey northward has been terribly dry with little rain... Thankfully, the fleet's gunpowder grains have consistently maintained their good power!"

On the flagship longship, Exploration Captain Zuwaro watched the divine conversion scene, a smile spreading across his face. The missionary priest stationed here has been determined, and it is none other than Prepetcha's First-level Priest Kuimu.

Judging from the plant-related name "Mu" and the eagle-related surname "Kui", he likely comes from the South of the Kingdom, possibly an illegitimate child of some Old Nobility. Applying to Divine Power University to become a Kingdom Priest, and even participating in sea exploration... is a true pathway to ascension for these noble descendants who possess cultural heritage but neither rank nor land!

"Praise the Chief Divine! I, Kuimu, shall stay here to spread the faith of the Chief Divine, guiding more Kumeyaay into the embrace of the Sun!"

"Kuimu, you must teach the Kumeyaay how to plant sweet potatoes and potatoes, tell them how to compost, how to cultivate and weed, just follow the guidelines from Divine Power University... Remember! Only by ensuring a plentiful harvest can you create true miracles that render the tribespeople devout believers of the Chief Divine!"

Scholar Mikki seriously instructed, personally choosing Kuimu, and the latter, like him, is a Kingdom Priest with a gentle assimilation philosophy.

"Exactly! Kuimu, the fleet's northern exploration requires more food support! And the grain yield from your farming in the Ypa Great Tribe... all can be traded to become logistical support for the fleet... Therefore, for the faith of the Chief Divine and the Kingdom's interests, you must work diligently!"

Exploration Captain Zuwaro smiled as he gave a few reminders. He had just completed trading with Red Stone Chief, using twenty bronze axes, forty bronze spears, and a small bag of gemstones to supplement the food for over seven hundred people for a month.

The further north the fleet traveled, the more pragmatic the Northern Land tribes became. Their demand for gemstones is much less than the prosperous southern tribes. They also value the food that the tribes have worked hard to surplus very highly. If Zuwaro had not offered solid bronze weapons for exchange or been an ally of the tribe, the Ypa Great Tribe would not have given up so much surplus food. But even so, this "fair" exchange rate is absolutely skewed in favor of the Kingdom!

"Mikki, we also need to find guides and translators from the Ypa Great Tribe for heading north. From the elders here, I inquired about a large bay in the North which could very well be the Golden Bay from His Majesty's prophecy! The tribes there seem to speak a completely different language from here!"

In reality, though the Kumeyaay language differs greatly from Navajo, both belong to the Uto-Aztecan language family, sharing many cognate words. Once mastering Navajo, learning Kumeyaay isn't too difficult, much like learning a dialect.

Further north, most of the native tribes in the California Bay Area belong to different branches of the Penutian language family. This language family and Navajo share no common words at all. Studying deeply, one can glimpse the migration and heritage of tribes from the origins of these languages.

"Indeed, Chief Divine bless! I will find Red Stone Chief to have the guides and translators for heading north join the fleet!"

Two days later, the Kingdom exploration fleet set off northward with newly joined Kumeyaay guides and translators. The exchange price for these two people was an "astonishing" ten bronze axes.

In mid-May, the fleet traveled six hundred miles north to discover a coastal narrow land surrounded on three sides by mountains, with an irrigation river flowing down from the mountains. This mountain-surrounded narrow land measures only seventy miles long and over thirty miles wide, housing seven to eight Chumash tribes each with a hundred or two hundred people.

Exploration Captain Zuvaro surveyed for several days, finding these Chumash tribes in the enclosed narrow land had little interaction with external tribes and were all very gentle by nature. They even voluntarily paddled small boats to bring acorns and berries to the fleet.

Ah, not bad! The Chumash people of this coastal narrow land still maintain the ancient lifestyle of gathering and fishing, only planting some simple vegetables and beans. Scholar Mikki tasted a variety of fresh foods while dining at several tribes.

"Acorn is the staple food, can be ground into flour. There are acorn pancakes, acorn balls, acorn dry..."

Mikki, while eating the fragrant acorn cake in hand, recorded with a charcoal pencil.

"Seafood includes bass, frogfish, and shellfish... meat includes rabbits, deer, and grouse... These are scarce, however. More common are wild onions, cauliflowers, sweetgrass roots... and some sweet or sour berries."

"Overall, the agriculture of these Chumash people is still very primitive. Due to insufficient food, their tribes are very small, unable to support specialized warriors, and have no priests. Within the tribes, only a few storytellers by the campfire pass down ancient tribal stories... Chief Divine! This truly is a blank slate of faith!"

Upon this subject, Scholar Mikki's eyes sparkled with excitement. Seeing this, Exploration Captain Zuvaro also understood.

"Mikki, you wish to establish a settlement here, bringing all these Chumash people under the Kingdom's control?"

"Indeed! Although these Chumash people are not tall and slender, unsuitable as warriors... they are extremely diligent, adept at hunting and fishing, and skilled at climbing trees and rocks... Most importantly, their disposition is very gentle, a rarity in the Northern Land!"

While speaking, Scholar Mikki grasped the Sun Amulet around his neck, sincerely praising.

"Chief Divine bless! Thank you for your guidance, lead us to discover such fertile soil in a valley! Here, being difficult to traverse inland and relatively isolated, offers no worries of land attacks yet is convenient for sea passage. This one to two thousand gentle Chumash people shall surely become Your most devoted believers in the bayside area and finest farmers!"

Listening to Mikki's prayer, Exploration Captain Zuvaro nodded in agreement. He paused for a moment, then decisively made the captain's decision.

"Mikki, what you say is very true! This not very large narrow land is sufficient for us to plant potatoes and sweet potatoes, supporting thousands or even tens of thousands of population!"

"Since that is the case, we shall establish a significant settlement here!"

"Leave one hundred and twenty people, two longships, three missionary priests!"

"Cultivate the land, fish for the schools, preach to the surrounding Chumash people, assimilate them into the Kingdom's rule!"

Following this, Zuwaro's spirits also soared. It was time for his favorite part, naming the new settlement that would be passed down through generations.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Since here is surrounded by mountains on three sides, facing the sea on one..."

"Let's call it... Three Hills Port!"

Chapter 1305: Salinan People, K'elqom!

The summer sun was bright and clear, with a sky so blue without a single cloud in sight, not even the slightest hint of rain. The scenery along the California coast was truly impressive, with the majestic coastline stretching north and south, flanked by towering mountains along the seaside.

The exploration fleet stayed for half a month at the rivermouth valley of the Chumash people, choosing the location of Three Hills Port to set up makeshift shelters made of branches. The priests, with smiles on their faces, gifted the local tribes some shimmering Lake Gems and practical, warm thick cloth. The nearby two small Chumash tribes were also friendly and genuine, joining in the construction of the camp.

Kebao, the First Level Preaching Priest of the kingdom, was stationed at this valley port. His name "Kebao" represents "Wolf in the Woods" and is a commoner surname. Interestingly, the name "Kebao" also connects with the local wildlife along this portion of the Western Sea Coast, where the most common large predators are the prairie coyotes, while the shores are teeming with spotted seals and elephant seals.

To these animals lying on the shoreline, with adorable eyes and oblivious to the danger of arrows, the exploration fleet was quite fond. For these animals provided plentiful sources of precious meat, warm fur, and fatty oils for maintaining weapons and leather armor. Even their bones were fully solar-dried, roasted, dried to brittleness, then crushed and ground into bone meal, used as fertilizer on fields.

"Miki, Priest Kebao has indeed done a commendable job in uniting with the Chumash people."

Exploration Captain Zuvaro stroked his chin, observing from afar as Priest Kebao led a group of Chumash tribespeople, clearing seal bones of residue, roasting them by the bonfire. He watched the exchanges filled with gestures and laughter, listening to Priest Kebao's shouts, his eyebrows slightly raised.

"What's Kebao saying?... Saka'apa (saak'apa)? Tek'uut (tek'uut)? Nataan, Na'a'it (nataan na'a'it)?"

Upon hearing this, Miki pondered for a moment, then retrieved a roll of skin paper he carried at all times, which recorded some Chumash vocabulary. He examined it carefully for a while before replying.

"Saka'apa, 'brother.' Tek'uut, 'fire, use fire to roast'... he must be saying, 'brother, roast these bones with fire.' As for 'Nataan-Na'a'it'..."

Miki paused briefly, his face also showing confusion.

"Sky? Grandfather?... Heavenly Grandfather?"

Exploration Captain Zuvaro squinted, watching Priest Kebao sincerely and gesturing a Sun Hummingbird, suddenly understanding.

"Oh! He's praying! So, 'Heavenly Grandfather'... is the Chief Divine?... Brother, roast these bones with fire, Heavenly Grandfather (Chief Divine) bless us!"

After interpreting this phrase, the two exploration captains exchanged glances. Moments later, Exploration Captain Zuvaro burst into laughter, his face showing satisfaction.

"Excellent! Priest Kebao is very adaptable and excels in interacting with the tribespeople! I feel confident leaving here to him!"

"Indeed, you're right! Zuwaro, we must continue north! According to intelligence, the Great Bay is not far to the north..."

In early June, the exploration fleet departed from Three Hills Port, continuing northward exploration. North Bird Stone Village stationed 50 men, Ipa Tribe stationed 15, Three Hills Port stationed 120, along with two longships... Out of the over 700 explorers, only about 500 remained, with ten longships.

The ten longships continued northward, with tall redwoods appearing on the eastern shores. As some of the tallest trees in the world, these could grow over 100 meters tall! And when these towering trees grew on the sheer cliffs of the coastline, they silently watched the unprecedented longships like ancient natural guardians.

Black eagles and white seagulls rested atop the high redwoods, curiously gazing at the rowing longships below. The cliffs along the shore showed no signs of human life, filled with chattering squirrels, occasionally sighting beautiful white-tailed deer, and sometimes encountering fearsome brown bears.

Brown bears are the mightiest predators on the entire Western Sea Coast, perhaps even the whole North American continent. They can reach a height of over two meters and weigh up to half a ton. Most native tribes hold them in awe, keep their distance, and some even engrave them on their totem poles.

"Chief Divine! Such a large bear! It's enough to feed the entire fleet for a day!"

Exploration Captain Zuwaro stood at the ship's prow, wide-eyed, locking eyes with a brown bear on the cliff. He quickly estimated that this brown bear was at least four to five times his size.

The brown bear looked down at the small dots on the sea, showing some curiosity towards the "long fishes they've never seen before. Its eyesight is slightly better than a human's, particularly good at long distances and night vision. Its sense of smell and hearing far surpass those of humans.

Soon, it heard the voices from the longship and sniffed the familiar scent of two-legged beasts. Just north of the redwood forest, there's an oak forest it likes very much. But the oak trees that could bear fruits were occupied by these flocks of two-legged beasts. Having encountered these two-legged beast groups before, it knew that their sharp teeth were long and sharp, not easily provoked.

"Roar!..."

The brown bear opened its massive mouth, issuing a deep roar from the depths of its throat. It was a warning to the two-legged beasts, declaring its territory. It watched as the "long fishes" slowly departed, their presence gradually dissipating, before retreating into the woods, vanishing from sight.

Encountering a brown bear seemed to be some sort of divine omen. Half a day later, a vast expanse of continuous oak forest appeared along the coastline, with a river flowing from the deep forest, and a Salinan village established by the riverbank. Surrounding the village stood a totem pole of over ten meters tall, carved from sturdy oak wood. The totem pole was etched with a massive oak tree and a brown bear beneath it, signifying the tribe's name, the Oak Bear Tribe.

The arrival of the exploration fleet made this village of five to six hundred tribespeople extremely tense. All the men in the tribe stood armed with stone spears, carrying spears and hunting bows, ready for combat. The women and children had already retreated into the deep forest to the east.

"It seems that the tribes in this area are not peaceful! They are very vigilant and quick to react, with strong fighting instincts... likely, there are many skirmishes between the tribes!"

Exploration Captain Zuvaro stood at the ship's prow, observing the sights within the village. The warriors on the ship did not disembark, and the tribal hunters onshore did not initiate an attack either.

After a brief standoff, a Salinan tribal elder stepped forward. He wore a wolf fur hat, with a shirt made of long grass, adorned with vines and animal bones. He was clad in seaskin shorts, with two strings of animal teeth and colorful stone beads. Judging by his clothing, much more elaborate than ordinary tribespeople, he must hold a high position within the tribe. As he approached the coast, he raised a bone staff, loudly questioning the people on the longships.

"Huchum!... Himi!... Naxasla?"

"Uh..."

Hearing this, Zuvaro looked at Miki, who helplessly shook his head, indicating he didn't understand at all. At this time, the translator recruited from the Ypa Great Tribe finally came into play.

"Huchum...is a greeting, it means hello, showing friendliness. Himi... is water, lying in the water. Presumably, it refers to our ship being in the water. As for 'Naxasla'..."

Miki thought for a while, and his face also showed confusion.

"Sky? Grandfather?... Sky Grandfather?"

The exploration captain Zuvaro squinted, watching Priest Kebao, sincerely and animatedly depicting the Sun Hummingbird, and that's when he realized.

"Ah! He's praying! So, 'Heavenly Grandfather'... is the Chief Divine?... Brother, roast these bones with fire, Sky Grandfather (Chief Divine) bless us!"

After translating this sentence, the two exploration captains exchanged glances. A moment later, Exploration Captain Zuvaro laughed heartily, looking greatly satisfied.

"Very good! Priest Kebao is very flexible and skilled at dealing with the tribespeople! I'm very confident leaving this place to him!"

"Indeed, you're right! Zuvaro, we should continue north! According to intelligence, the great bay is not far north..."

In early June, the exploration fleet left Three Hills Port, continuing northwards. The North Bird Stone Village stationed 50 people, the Ypa Tribe stationed 15, and Three Hills Port stationed 120, leaving just over 500 people and ten longships from the original exploration fleet of over 700.

The ten longships continued north, as tall redwoods appeared on the eastern coast. These are some of the tallest trees in the world, growing over a hundred meters tall! Seeing these towering trees growing on the steep cliffs along the coastline, silently watching the unprecedented longships, was like being guarded by ancient natural sentinels.

Black eagles and white seagulls perched on the tall redwoods, peering curiously at the moving longships below. The cliffs on the shore looked devoid of human life, only squirrels chirped, beautiful white-tailed deer occasionally appeared, and fearsome brown bears were sometimes spotted.

The brown bear is the most formidable predator throughout the Western Sea Coast, perhaps even the entire North American continent. They can grow over two meters tall and weigh up to half a ton. Most native tribes hold them in awe, keep their distance, and even carve them on their totem poles.

"Chief Divine! Such a big bear! It could feed the entire fleet for a day!"

Exploration Captain Zuvaro stood at the ship's prow, wide-eyed, staring at a brown bear on the cliff. He quickly estimated that this brown bear was at least four to five times his size.

The brown bear looked down at the small points on the sea with curiosity at the sight of the never-before-seen "long fish." Its vision was slightly better than humans, especially adept at long-distance and night vision. Its sense of smell and hearing far exceeded humans'.

It soon heard voices from the longship and smelled the familiar scent of two-legged beasts. Just north of the redwood forest, there was an oak grove it really liked. But those oak trees yielding acorns were occupied by these groups of two-legged beasts and knowing the trouble their sharp long teeth could cause.

"Wow!"

The brown bear opened its mouth wide, letting out a low growl from deep within its throat. It was a warning to the two-legged creatures, declaring its territory. It watched as the "long fishes" left, their presence gradually dissipating before it turned into the forest, disappearing from view.

After the brown bear encounter, it appeared as if a divine omen. Half a day later, a vast stretch of continuous oak forests appeared along the coastline, a river flowing down from the deep woods, and a Salinan settlement established by the riverside. Inscribed on their totem pole, a giant oak tree and a brown bear beneath it signified the tribe's name as the Oak Bear Tribe.

The arrival of the exploration fleet caused great tension in the village. Every able-bodied man of the tribe held stone spears, carrying spears and hunting bow, ready to fight. The women and children had already retreated to the deep woods to the east.

"It seems that the tribes here are not at peace! They are very vigilant, react quickly, and have a strong fighting spirit... Conflicts must be common between the different tribes!"

Exploration Captain Zuvaro stood at the prow, observing the scene within the village. The warriors on the ship did not disembark, and the tribal hunters onshore did not initiate an attack.

The two sides stared at each other for a while, and the Salinan Elder onshore raised a bone staff, loudly shouted towards those on the longship. The Salinan hunters onshore also became slightly restless.

Until the Elder shouted again, the translator from the Ypa Great Tribe finally demonstrated his worth.

"Huchum... it's a greeting, hello, showing friendliness. Himi... is water, in the water. I guess it refers to our ship in the water. And for 'Naxasla'..."

Miki took a while to think, and the elder on shore raised the bone staff again and shouted loudly. The Salinan hunters on the shore, too, were slightly restless. Until the elder shouted again, did the translator finally remember.

"Naxasla... 'peace', a greeting of peace."

"Peace? Are you sure?"

"I am..."

Just as Deer Worm was about to confirm, the two leaders looked at each other, and he wasn't a hundred percent certain. But soon, he came up with a solution.

"There's another word! We can reply with another word!"

"Quick, say it! What is it?"

"K'elqom means 'respect'!"

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure!"

The Exploration Captain then leapt onto the longship. He met the eyes of the Salinan elder holding the bone staff, and saw that his attire was much more elaborate than that of the tribespeople, indicating his high status in the tribe.

Standing there on the wild and ancient California Western Sea Coast, he greeted loudly with respect.

Chapter 1306: First Encounter with the Land of Golden Bay

The western coast of California stretches to the north, while the austere mountains extend endlessly in the East. Most of the time, the coast is lined with steep cliffs, jagged rocks, and towering forests.

For the indigenous people settled here, this was fertile land difficult to cultivate. With no suitable crops, the yield from the fields was very low; without metal tools, the forests were hard to fell. California's Mediterranean climate meant that the long, warm summers were dry, and the cold winters were filled with storms. Whether it was summer farming or winter hunting, all became extremely challenging. Under such harsh conditions, the average life expectancy of most tribes hovered around twenty years, and knowledge was often lost.

Thus, even with towering mountains blocking the deadly cold currents from the north, the number of California's indigenous people could not compare to the tropical tribes of the South. In this era, this land, which would later support a population of forty million, only had tens of thousands of Indian tribes at most. Across the entire North American continent, the density of tribes like this far exceeded those in the central and eastern parts, who were forced to face the deadly cold currents!

In simple terms, the cold but bountiful North America was indeed an industrial era Heaven, but an agrarian era Hell.

The exploration fleet stayed only a day at the Oak Tribe of the Salinan people. Zuwaro, accompanied by a translator, "fairly" exchanged a few bronze axes for many acorn cakes, sea fish, and berries. He then led the fleet north, leaving the cautious Salinans behind, and leaving only a group of tribal hunters amazed by the sharpness and resilience of the bronze axes.

Beyond the Salinan coast lay regions above the latitude of 35 degrees north. This was the place where, according to Your Majesty's prophecy, the land of the Golden Bay might appear at any moment. As the fleet sailed further north, the drop in temperature became more palpable. Fortunately, after passing a certain part of the coast, the previous south-flowing ocean current suddenly disappeared. Abruptly, a north-flowing ocean current emerged, rapidly carrying the entire fleet north. With this day-and-night persistent current, the speed of the fleet more than doubled!

Two days later, the cliffs along the coast suddenly lowered, transforming into rolling hills, then into flat woodlands. A wide bay suddenly appeared before everyone.

"Ah! A giant bay, flat lands, and many rivers flowing into the sea..."

Exploration Captain Zuwaro gazed towards the eastern shore, seeing several rivers flowing into the coast, flat fields beside the rivers, and blooming torch flowers. The tall flowers, erect with long flower spikes, swayed like torches, resembling colorful corn. The flowers' colors were bright red, yellow, and orange, mirroring Zuwaro's current excitement. He danced with enthusiasm, took a few pieces of flower sage acquired from the Oak Tribe, and chewed on them for the first time.

"Mmm, delicious! So beautiful!... Flowers flourishing by the river bay... I must give this place a resounding name!"

Beside him, Miki the Sage, suppressing his inner excitement, remained calm. He pointed towards the rivermouth farmlands and the faintly visible large, round thatched huts, and said gravely.

"Zuwaro, this bay is already occupied by a tribe! Judging by the scale of these huts and fields, it might be a large tribe. The larger the northern tribes, the more knowledge they retain, and the more they understand distant matters... Let's first land and inquire about them!"

The tribe on the shore was the Costanoan people, a name coined in later times. In this era, they called themselves "Residents of the Seaside", the Beach Tribes. The tribe occupying this bountiful bay was a powerful seaside tribe, the Great Kano Tribe.

The population of the Great Kano Tribe was about two to three thousand, with five to six hundred tribal warriors and tribal priests preserving their faith and myths. With such a tribe size, they could definitely be considered powerful in the entire Bay Area!

The totem pole of the Kano tribe was planted in the bay, carved with images of the sky and sea, Heavenly Divine, and Sea God. Seeing these familiar carvings, Kumeyaay translator Deerbug became excited. During his conversation with the local tribal elder, he was surprised and delighted to find that their languages shared quite a few similarities, making communication not too difficult.

Perhaps it was the ability to communicate, or perhaps the Kano tribe was strong enough, but the Seal Lion Chieftain of the Great Kano Tribe was relatively hospitable towards the arrival of the fleet. He hosted a small banquet for several leaders of the fleet and was pleased to accept a small pouch of "gemstones" gifted by Zuwaro.

Seeing the joyful expression on the other's face, Exploration Captain Zuwaro also breathed a sigh of relief. Previously, when he presented Lake Gems to the tribal elder of the Salinan people, the other showed little interest, merely staring at his axe. He feared that more northern tribes might lose interest in the bright Lake Gems, which would mean the Kingdom would lose an important trading commodity.

But now it seemed that it was probably just the Salinan's Oak Tribe being too small, focusing more on practical survival tools, and setting aside the pursuit of "luxuries." As long as the northern tribes were larger and no longer worried about survival, the bright and pure gemstones could still serve as trade goods, exchanged for an abundant supply of food and resources.

"Praise the Chief Divine! The Seaside Tribes' food is delicious indeed!"

Scholar Mikki sat cross-legged in the Chieftain's round longhouse, eating the food before the bonfire and exclaiming in admiration.

The evening's banquet was indeed sumptuous, with dried seal meat, roasted rabbit, stewed salmon, juicy grilled lobster, and various strange roasted insects. These meats were specialties of the California coast, especially the seal and salmon, which were plentiful and easy to catch. As for the vegetables and grains, there were pumpkin mash, beans, acorn cakes, and a limited amount of corn tortillas.

"If they have enough fish catches, their boatbuilding and fishing skills should be decent. Judging by the hunting situation, their Hunting Bow is also adequate... Hmm, there's not much pumpkin and beans, even fewer corn tortillas. So their agricultural techniques, like other northern tribes, are still quite primitive..."

Miki the Sage pondered as he ate. Observing the items in the chieftain's longhouse, he noted the large Hunting Bow, flint Long Spears, digging sticks for farming, Stone Axes for felling wood, woven vine fish traps... and most notably, wooden panels carved with Heavenly Divine and Sea God.

"Hmm... polytheistic belief, quite developed for a large tribe. I wonder if there's a chance to persuade the Seal Lion Chieftain to convert to the Chief Divine..."

Miki was deep in thought when Zuvaro suddenly became excited. He widened his eyes, grabbed the Seal Lion Chieftain's arm, and, through Deerbug's translation, incredulously asked.

"Did you say, according to the tribe's records, there are many shimmering golden rocks in the mountains a few hundred miles to the east?"

The Seal Lion Chieftain, wearing warm clothing made of seal skin, a necklace of seal teeth around his neck, and a seal skin cap on his head, blinked and looked at the tribal leader from the sea with a puzzled expression before speaking again in a deep voice.

"...What? You said there are even more golden rocks in the northern mountains? Even forming into shining hills?"

Hearing the translation, the Seal Lion Chieftain nodded with a smile. He spoke a few more sentences, and Zuvaro couldn't sit still.

"What?! Five or six days' journey north, there's a place the Mivok people mentioned, a massive, deep Great Lake, vast and connected to the sea?"

Upon hearing this, Scholar Miki was also stunned, his eyes suddenly brightening.

"A massive, deep Great Lake, vast and connected to the sea... Doesn't that sound like a Great Bay?"

"The golden rocks, forming hills... Could it be Gold Mountain?"

"Great Bay and Gold Mountain... Ah! That's the Golden Bay of destiny foretold by Your Majesty, right to the north!"

Chapter 1307: Golden Bay, West Mountain Port!

The summer sunlight penetrated the pure sea, reaching down to the shallow coastal seabed tens of meters deep. The red coral off the coast of California, resembling a spectacular little forest, twisted and expanded in all directions, showing a vivid and deep crimson. Thousands of coastal fish swam swiftly northward, in the same direction as the fleet.

"Hmm? Strange..."

Miki the Sage stood at the side of the rowing longship, gazing at the mysterious coral gardens deep in the sea, his eyes full of curious exploration.

"Oh, Chief Divine... why do so many fish gather together and swim northward at the same time? Why do these fish move at almost the same speed, even maintaining the same intervals? Could it be that the ocean current driving our fleet also exists deep beneath the sea, like an unseen Divine Serpent that keeps moving forward? Does it possess a special Divine Power that can stick all the fish schools together and lead them north?"

Miki the Sage pondered, imagining the unknown underwater world. He thought about the formation of ocean currents, the nutrients they carry, and their impact on fish schools. Even though he didn't realize that it was simply the ocean's natural currents and not the power of some sea deity...

"Faster! Row faster!"

Exploration Captain Zuvaro did not think as deeply. Impatiently, he stood at the bow, gazing toward the distant coast. After hearing the news of the Golden Bay, the group stayed at the Kono tribe for only two days, without even swaying the Seadog Chieftain to change faith. The entire fleet swiftly headed north again after trading some food with gemstones to replenish the freshwater onboard.

With the help of the Alaskan warm current, in just over two days, the whole fleet had traveled over three hundred miles. Everyone exerted full force, maintaining steady rowing to keep accelerating the longships. As the fleet passed a bay, the eastern coast began to curve inward. A few quarters later, a vast bay suddenly appeared before everyone's eyes!

"Chief Divine! It seems like a large bay!"

Miki the Sage widened his eyes, watching as the extending coastline indented to the extreme before suddenly interrupting. The entrance of a bay, ten or even twenty miles wide, appeared before everyone!

"Turn eastward! Enter the bay!"

Exploration Captain Zuvaro commanded excitedly. The ten longships immediately turned direction, rowing rapidly into the bay along the entrance that spanned dozens of miles. The dormant Mount Tamalpais quietly lay dormant, standing on the north side of the bay. While passing the bay's exit, Zuvaro witnessed the majestic mountain and its tall sequoia and cypress forests.

"Divine protection! Hmm... this peak does not seem to be the Gold Mountain."

Miki the Sage gazed up, searching meticulously. His eyes were filled with green and he saw no golden rocks.

"Yes! This is not Gold Mountain. According to the Seadog Chieftain, Gold Mountain lies deeper within the bay, extending further into the eastern mountains. It's a vast mountain range of golden rocks, not a solitary peak like this..."

Exploration Captain Zuwaro nodded with a smile, his face reflecting certainty.

"However, this bay must be the Great Bay that Your Majesty spoke of!"

"Ah? Why?"

"Look to the east, to the distance!"

Upon hearing this, Miki the Sage stood on tiptoe, gazing at the eastern horizon. Then, he slowly widened his mouth, eyes filled with astonishment.

"Such... such... a huge bay!"

As the fleet sailed into the bay entrance, moving deeper inside the coast, an endless and vast bay unfolded before everyone! It stretched three hundred miles north to south and over two hundred miles east to west!

The ten longships navigated the Great Bay, and all they could see was boundless blue water, as if they were still at the sea's center. Looking in all directions, distant mountains and coasts cast grand reflections on the water's surface, resembling a mythical celestial lake!

"Divine protection! After traveling more than five thousand miles north, I have never seen such a large bay! I finally understand why Your Majesty said that once we arrive here, it would be evident at a glance..."

Miki the Sage murmured, dazed for a moment, before his eyes shone brightly, like a candle lit suddenly!

"Your Majesty's prophecy has been fulfilled! Truly fulfilled!"

Upon hearing this, Exploration Captain Zuwaro also nodded vigorously. He clenched his fist against his chest, praying piously and fervently towards the far south, making a fearless vow!

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise Your Highness! After navigating for over half a year, we have finally arrived! ... The land of the Golden Bay, the first location from the prophecy!"

"Ah! Your Majesty's Divine Revelation fulfilled a thousand miles away! This is a miracle of the Chief Divine! ..."

Miki the Sage grasped the amulet on his neck, eyes filled with eager longing. He took a deep breath and spoke impatiently.

"Since that's the case, let's follow Your Majesty's instructions and establish a grand settlement here! Then, plant all the potatoes and sweet potatoes on board right here!"

"Alright!"

Exploration Captain Zuvaro nodded emphatically. After a brief pause, he instructed.

"This bay is too large, extending far into the interior on the east side, beyond sight. Its upper reaches must be several Great Rivers, connecting countless tribes! These tribes occupy the inland lands, and whether they are enemies or allies is still unclear..."

"For now, meticulously survey this outer area and find a piece of arable land with rivers or lakes providing freshwater nearby. The initial settlement need not be large, but it must ensure safety and convenient communication, preferably near the bay's entrance!"

"Alright! Let's do as you say!"

The ten longships resumed rowing, searching along the boundless bay for two full days. Ultimately, it was the sharp-sighted Kumeyaay Deer Bug who found the inland land of the bay and discovered a river. The eastern upstream of the river was a steep mountain range partitioning a roughly sixty-mile plain along the bay. Along the river's upstream was a small lake, and a sip confirmed it to be freshwater.

"North to south sixty miles, east to west twenty to thirty miles... along the bay plain, the outer soil is slightly salty, but the inner side near the small lake is covered with low shrubs and fertile soil suitable for cultivation! More importantly, no tribes are visible in this bay plain, suggesting an uncontested area..."

Miki the Sage roughly estimated the area, his face radiating excitement. This small bay plain was enough for early cultivation. The eastern and southern mountains and the western and northern bays were natural barriers, ensuring the settlement's safety!

"Divine protection! Here it shall be!"

Exploration Captain Zuvaro stood by the shore, inhaling the slightly salty sea breeze, his face brimming with excitement. The spot under his feet would become future Oakland, the "Land of the Oaks," on the eastern side of San Francisco. At this moment, he watched the setting sun fall behind Mount Tamalpais, casting a golden halo, unable to restrain his desire to name it, and chanted aloud.

"Fearless fleet, following the Divine Revelation, sailed into the long Golden Bay..."

"The sun sets behind the western peaks, sinking into the endless Western Sea..."

"The ancient mountains guard the newborn harbor..."

"That mountain is where the Sun God descended, the West Mountain..."

"And this harbor, it's the one I personally established, West Mountain Port!"

Chapter 1308: The Hunter in the Cloak

The rivers of the East converge in the Gold Mountain Bay, and the plains along the river are suitable for settlement. Therefore, in this vast Bay Area, there are naturally many indigenous tribes.

After the fleet anchored at West Mountain Port, within two or three days, Indian Hunters paddling canoes were already spying from afar on the Great Lake to the East. Zuvaro personally led a longship, attempting to contact the scouts of the Tribal Huntsmen, but they fled swiftly.

"The Tribal Huntsmen here are so vigilant..."

Watching this scene, Zuvaro frowned, pondering in his heart.

"It seems the tribes in the land of Golden Bay probably engage in mutual slaughter and are not so peaceful."

In the following days, Hunters in various attire cautiously appeared from the North and South of the Great Lake, spying on the fleet from afar, clearly belonging to different tribes.

With time pressing, the fleet temporarily set aside the surrounding tribes. It was already mid-June, and the planting of corn and beans was somewhat late. Everyone was busy building thatched huts and grass shelters, cultivating the land along the river, and quickly planting the crops from the ship. Fortunately, potatoes are hardy crops that can be planted later, and as long as sweet potatoes could grow, they would yield something.

Thus, after ten busy days, rough camp structures began to take shape along the shore. Perhaps realizing the fleet intended to settle, finally, came a canoe with five Tribal Huntsmen from the Northern Bay to meet the fleet onshore.

"Ah-hi! Which tribe are you from? What are you doing here?"

A strong Miwoc Hunter stepped off the canoe, arriving before Exploration Captain Zuvaro. He wore short sleeves and trousers made of sea lion skin, and on his head was a hat woven from grass stems, decorated with gray bird feathers, indicating his identity as a Hunter. Among the accompanying Hunters, only he had an orange fur cape draped over his back, vaguely painted with what seemed like an animal. The bright color, dyed with flower sap, symbolized his courage and status within the tribe.

"Ah-hi!"

With a stammered explanation from the translator, Deerbug, Zuvaro began his cautious first contact with the Miwok. "Ah-hi" was a peaceful greeting in the Miwok language, akin to saying "hello."

"We come from the water, from the South, we are the Lake Central Tribe! We intend to settle here. And you? Who are you? Which tribe are you from?"

"From the water? Southern Tribes? Hmm..."

Upon hearing this, the cloaked Miwock Hunter squinted, examining the leather armor on everyone's bodies and the Greatbows they carried on their backs. He pursed his lips slightly, listened further to the translator Deerbug's words, and a look of realization dawned upon his face, seemingly linking everyone to other Southern Tribes.

"Ancestors, the warlike Kumeyaay migrated here from the sea... this is somewhat troublesome..."

The Miwock Hunter murmured a few words in the tribal language, which no one understood. Then he straightened himself, indicating his intention.

"Me? I am the Cloaked Hunter of the North Bay Tribe! My name is 'Toho,' coming from the North as the 'Wind.' You can call me..."

The Miwock Hunter proudly uttered a series of long words. The translator Deerbug listened intently and then cautiously explained.

"He was explaining his name... This is a very formidable Tribal Hunter! He has hunted mountain beasts and earned the qualification of using the tribe as his 'surname.' And what is painted on his cloak represents his courage, the bear..."

"Eh? Is this a bear? I thought it was a wild boar..."

Exploration Captain Zuvaro widened his eyes, glanced at the Miwock Hunter who deliberately turned to reveal the fur cloak, examined the abstract engravings, and then looked at the material of the fur itself to confirm that it was indeed bear skin.

"Then, what is his name?"

"He is called Le Feng. 'Wind' is his name, representing his agility. And 'Le' refers to their tribe's Heavenly Divine, who plays the flute, sings songs, and created the world and life. Only the mightiest Miwock Tribe can claim the title 'Le,' a Great Tribe blessed by the Heavenly Divine..."

"Le Feng?... A Great Tribe blessed by the Heavenly Divine?"

Upon hearing such a name, Scholar Mikki pondered in silence. From the narrative, it appears that this North Bay Tribe is quite powerful among the surrounding tribes. Their tribal mythology and the honor of the cloaked Hunter prove that this Miwock Tribe's capacity is enough to support the ranks of Priests and warriors...

With this in mind, Scholar Mikki stepped forward, glanced at the translator Deerbug, and solemnly asked.

"Carefully inquire how many cloaked Hunters like him are among their tribe? And how many ordinary Hunters?"

Deerbug nodded, engaged in conversation with Cloaked Hunter Le Feng, and the group watched as Le Feng gestured with his fingers, proudly speaking plenty. Once that was translated, there were only a few concise sentences.

"Uh... I don't understand too well... Their tribe occupies a large hunting ground on the north side of the Great Bay. This place is also one of their hunting grounds, but game is scarce... And their cloaked Hunters, counting fingers and toes, are about 20... As for ordinary Hunters, there are 20-20-20-20-20-20-20 small boats..."

Deerbug rattled off six or seven twenties, uncertain if he was mistaken. Upon hearing this, Scholar Mikki's expression abruptly became serious.

"If it's six twenties... that means 120 boats, with five people per boat... this North Bay Tribe actually has six hundred young adult Tribal Huntsmen?"

Calculating this, Exploration Captain Zuvaro and Scholar Mikki exchanged glances. Such estimation suggests this is likely a four or five thousand-person Great Tribe of the Northern Land, reaching almost the maximum capacity of semi-fishing and semi-farming tribes in the frigid North. Indeed, this might be the largest tribe they encountered since heading north!

"Ask why he came here,"

The translator Deerbug conversed with Cloaked Hunter Le Feng for a while, until Le Feng gestured to the canoe behind him.

"Uh... he said... this piece of land is one of their Northern Bay Tribe's hunting grounds..."

The translator Deerbug cautiously observed the expressions of the two leaders and replied.

"If we settle here, their hunting ground must be handed over to us..."

On hearing this, Warrior Leader Chakapu Stonefirm's eyes turned cold, and he drew his bronze axe from his waist with a "clang," shouting sternly.

"This is the place predicted by Your Majesty, also the will of the Chief Divine! If they want to drive us away, let them come and fight us!"

"Uh..."

Deerbug swallowed, glanced at the enraged Warrior Leader, and then at the other side, where the Miwock Hunters were also noticeably wary although unaware of what had happened. He cautiously explained.

"Mighty Leader... it's not like this. The Northern Land's hunting grounds may have belonging, but aren't fundamental to tribes... Tribe migrations are common, and hunting grounds can transfer between tribes. Apart from sacred ancestral lands and cultivated fields, no land truly belongs to any particular tribe or individual... The vast land is a gift from the Great Spirit to all tribes."

Seeing such perception of land, the fleet leaders exchanged glances, slightly surprised. This idea of shared land produce and common gifts from the Great Spirit is like the oldest tribal tales in legend. On the Mexican Plateau, this ancient concept had long vanished...

In fact, in later years, Yankee colonists sometimes used a small amount of gifts to sign contracts with local tribes, "buying" vast lands. This wasn't because native tribes were foolish nor was it their true intention. Their intention was simply to follow ancient traditions, sharing the land's produce with white-skinned tribes because land was a gift from the Great Spirit, belonging neither to tribes nor individuals.

A moment later, Exploration Captain Zuvaro lightly coughed and commanded.

"Chief Divine, witness! You continue speaking. Why has he come."

"Oh! Oh... he said, the aged, wise, healing Miwock Shaman, North Bay Tribe Chief, Cedar Puiatti, heard of the Longboat Tribe's arrival. He wishes to invite our tribe's leaders to be guests with the North Bay Tribe..."

Chapter 1309: Napa Valley Without Grapes, the North Bay Tribe of the Mivok People

"Chief Divine witness! I've decided. Don't stop me!..."

The expansive bay was calm and unrippled, with the occasional plump fish leaping up, creating ripples of shimmering water. Along the plains by the shore, the leaders of the fleet were whispering among themselves, seemingly faced with a difficult choice. Meanwhile, five Miwock Hunters stood on the other side, near their canoe, patiently waiting while vigilantly watching the debating crowd.

"Since the Chieftain of the North Bay Tribe has extended an invitation, it probably isn't with ill intentions. On the contrary, if we decline it, they might misjudge us and it could lead to conflict and fighting... We have just arrived here, the fields have just been planted, and the houses aren't built yet. We will need a period of stability to establish our roots!"

Scholar Mikki, with determination in his eyes, looked at the other leaders and firmly grasped the Sun Amulet around his neck.

"May the Chief Divine protect me! I must go to the North Bay Tribe! If we are to settle here long-term, we must connect with the surrounding tribes! Moreover, our fleet is running low on food. We must trade with the Miwock people!..."

"Mikki, I didn't say you couldn't go..."

Exploration Captain Zuwaro frowned, clearly worried.

"It's just that if you encounter any danger... Let's have Stonefirm accompany you with a team of armored Samurai to the North Bay Tribe. Meanwhile, I'll be on standby with ten longships ashore..."

"Zuwaro, I'm not going alone; I have Translator Luchong with me."

Scholar Mikki smiled confidently as he replied.

"As long as we can communicate, the power of language will outweigh a hundred Samurai! Furthermore, going with the Samurai might provoke hostility from the North Bay Tribe. If that tribe really has many hunters, should anything go wrong, a few Samurai would be futile, merely sacrificing themselves in vain..."

"So, let me go by myself! I believe the Chief Divine will protect me!"

Seeing Mikki's determination, the Exploration Captain sighed. He shook his head, giving a quiet order, and two Samurai followed behind Mikki.

"Don't refuse... just these two. When you visit that important Shaman Chieftain of the North Bay Tribe, it wouldn't make sense to go empty-handed! Bring some gemstones, cotton cloth, bronze axes, and copper spears as gifts... Should any trouble arise, these gifts might give us a chance to ransom you back..."

"Alright... fine!"

This time, Mikki didn't refuse. He just looked up at the midday Sun and once again prayed devoutly.

"Supreme Main God! May you protect me, protect our fleet, and also protect the Miwock people here!"

With the need for gifts, the Miwock canoe clearly wasn't sufficient. A Kingdom longship, accompanied by the Miwock hunters' canoe, rowed northward together.

Scholar Mikki invited the Cloaked Hunter Le Feng to join him on the longship and gifted him a silver Sun Amulet.

"Ah? Such a large ship!"

The Cloaked Hunter Le Feng looked on in astonishment, unable to hold back his amazement.

"How large must the wood be to carve a boat of this size? Do you have trees in the South so big that it takes a dozen people to encircle one?"

"Such longships are a blessing from the Chief Divine!"

Scholar Mikki smiled warmly, pointing to the Sun Amulet in Le Feng's hand, and spoke gently and fondly.

"With the protection of the Chief Divine, all kinds of miraculous powers will appear before you! And as long as you believe in Him, revere Him... such power will be granted to you, and even your tribe!..."

"Huh? The Southern Heavenly Divine Ancestor Spirit? Can He build ships?... Ah?! He transforms from a sacred Tree Spirit, able to grow trees into the shape of ships? Wow! Truly a mighty and extraordinary Heavenly Divine Ancestor Spirit!"

The Cloaked Hunter Le Feng expressed his amazement. Their exchange clearly had some misunderstandings, as Translator Luchong shivered slightly to show it wasn't his fault.

They continued their enthusiastic but somewhat lost-in-translation conversation all afternoon. The longship had rowed fifty to sixty miles, not even reaching the northern coast. This vast sea bay was overly wide, stretching over a hundred miles from West Mountain Port to the North Coast. A single day's effort would not be enough to reach their destination.

As night fell, they steered towards the eastern shore and spent a hasty night on the beach. In Golden Bay during June and July, daytime temperatures hover around 20 degrees, while nighttime temperatures fluctuate around 10 degrees. Overall, the climate is mild, but sometimes fierce winds necessitate sleeping wrapped in thick blankets.

"Ah? Is this a fabric blanket? Not a fur one?"

The Cloaked Hunter Le Feng came forward, touching Mikki's blanket with a face full of surprise and admiration.

"Your Southern Tribes have so much fabric! In our tribes, only the Chieftains and Priests have clothes made from fabric!..."

These everyday conversations, Translator Luchong managed reasonably well. Scholar Mikki's eyes twinkled as he smiled and asked,

"You lack cloth? Then what are your clothes made of?"

"Leather, or grass. It gets cold in the winter, so we have to wrap ourselves up thicker. The tribe tried to grow cloth, but it didn't work, so we have to trade from the South..."

Cloaked Hunter Le Feng gestured with his hands, explaining many things about tribal trade.

"We travel south to trade with the Yokuts. Sometimes we use fur to exchange for the cloth in their hands. And they too can't grow cloth, having to trade it from tribes even further south..."

Scholar Mikki stroked his chin, speculating that the cloth mentioned by the other party probably meant both "cloth and cotton". However, what the other party just mentioned...

"The southern Yokuts? What tribe is that? We came all the way from the south but never encountered them?"

"Oh! They don't live on the coast but in the inland valleys and riversides of the south... Their tribes are many, like the scattered feathers of a grouse... They are better at farming than us, able to grow a lot of squash, corn, beans... They also grow purple coneflower and frankincense trees..."

"Purple coneflower and frankincense trees? What are those?"

Hearing about new plants, Scholar Mikki perked up, his sleepiness instantly dissipating.

"Are they tasty?"

"Uh... The purple coneflower is a flower, an important herb for the tribe. Especially if one catches a cold, coughs, or sneezes, it is relied upon for treatment. Well, if injured, consuming it alleviates pain and prevents wounds from festering... As for the leaves of the frankincense tree, they also relieve pain... When hunters travel far, they carry some dried purple coneflowers..."

Cloaked Hunter Le Feng rummaged around and took out a small bunch of gray-blue purple coneflower from his chest, handing it to Mikki.

"Try it! The tribe's priest says these purple coneflowers can ward off disease, bringing the vitality of the earth to hunters! Yes, you can eat them directly or brew them as tea..."

Curious, Scholar Mikki took the purple coneflower, examined it, sniffed it, and then popped it into his mouth. He chewed on it; it was initially bitter but gradually became somewhat sweet. After a while, he indeed felt a bit sedated.

"Local herbs, treating diseases... Purple coneflower, frankincense tree..."

Mikki thought for a moment, then immediately took out a roll of paper, and moved to the campfire. He drew the shape of the purple coneflower, recording the effects of this herb, occasionally asking Hunter Le Feng a few questions. Since the fleet intended to settle down here permanently, the local diseases that might emerge would certainly appear. The tribe's herbs would be very useful to everyone and could even benefit the kingdoms and alliances in the South.

"Le Feng, you know so much, truly a learned, wise, brave cloaked hunter! Uh... Are there other herbs?"

"Hahaha! You speak so nicely!... Yes! There's also corn silk for treating blockages in men... and yarrow for blockages in women..." "This!... Go on... Are there more broadly used herbs?..."

"Oh! Eucalyptus leaves for treating various wounds and body aches... Sage, used by many southern tribes, helps to sleep well when brewed as tea... Since you come from the south, you should be familiar. Uh... Purslane tea, it's sour and tasty, but I'm not sure what it's used for. But the priests say there are benefits..."

The moon rose, and the bay was tranquil in the night. The two, meeting from the southern and northern lands, continued gesturing and talking around the campfire well into midnight.

The next day, Scholar Mikki, drowsy, sat on the rocking longship, continuing to sail north. The longship rowed over forty miles, finally reaching the north bank. Then, under Hunter Le Feng's guidance, everyone continued rowing upstream along a broad great river toward the northern inland.

"So wide, the water is very clear... Le Feng, what river is this?"

"Ah? Oh, this water is drinkable, you can drink it straight. It's a bit sweet, Sweetwater River!"

"Uh..."

Scholar Mikki glared at the translator Gleeback and asked again.

"I meant, what river is this? Its name, name!"

"Name? Hmm... around this river, many flying birds land, and there are big cats coming to catch the birds. We usually call it Birdcat River!"

"Birdcat River?..."

Scholar Mikki blinked and recorded the river's name on paper. Unbeknownst to him, this river would later be known as the "Napa River" in Spanish, meaning "the river where leopards lurk." Nor would he have known that in later generations, the fertile land irrigated by this Sweetwater River would be the globally famous wine-producing region, California's "Napa Valley"!

The valley's terrain is very narrow, stretching over a hundred miles north to south, surrounded by mountains on three sides and having a warm and pleasant climate. The Napa River flows through the valley, nourishing the fertile lands along its banks and eventually feeding into the southern Great Bay. As they rowed along the river for half a day northward, patches of lush green farmland began appearing on both riverbanks. Then, a series of tribal camps stretched for miles, with continuous thatched huts and straw houses, and thousands of Mivok tribespeople emerged in the fertile valley!

"Oh, Chief Divine! A valley suitable for farming between mountains, the powerful and prosperous North Bay Tribe, I have finally arrived!"

Chapter 1310: Miki's Gift, Shaman Chieftain's Dialogue

No vineyards in the Napa Valley, nor the lavish wineries and large cellars filled with barrels of the later generations. Five hundred years ago, this was the land of Indian tribes, just like it had been for a thousand, ten thousand years in the past.

Walking from the ancient wilderness to today, countless Miwok people have lived and thrived in this narrow valley. They cleared the lands along the river, built tribal longhouses, passing them down generation after generation. The only constant was the clear summer sun and the Napa River with its sweet taste, irrigating the fertile soil along the banks.

"Such fertile land, so many fields! ... It must have been cultivated for a long time, but the crops are growing mediocre. Perhaps it's the lack of fertilizer, or maybe the weeds haven't been carefully removed... Of course, the biggest issue might be that it's not warm enough..."

Scholar Mikki stood on the longship, traveling along the river, heading towards the heart of the North Bay Tribe. He observed carefully, and as he moved further in, the farmland along the river became increasingly dense. Corn, pumpkins, and beans grew leisurely alongside the weeds. Around him, thatched huts and grass houses gradually increased in number, and then after a stretch of riverbank, there suddenly appeared rows of wooden houses and stacks of firewood!

"Tribal longhouses... Wooden houses... Stored firewood... So many?"

Scholar Mikki widened his eyes, raising his estimation of the North Bay Tribe. In the more primitive Northern Land, cutting and chopping trees in the woods is not an easy task. Wooden longhouses could resist the cold but required many laborers. And this also necessitated a sufficient supply of food and enough tools, which means more people farming, hunting, and making tools.

Thus, as the fleet headed north, encountering many tribes, they gradually formed a consensus. That is, for a tribe, the more wooden houses there are, the bigger it would be, and its strength usually stronger! And with the number of wooden houses in this valley...

"Chief Divine bears witness! The great tribe of the North Bay might really have six to seven hundred tribal hunters, four to five thousand tribespeople..."

Based on the observations along the way, Scholar Mikki roughly judged, and became increasingly cautious.

Here was already the core camp of the North Bay Tribe, as the longboat approached the shore, attracting many tribespeople's attention. And among the gazes of several hundred curious people, Scholar Mikki quickly jumped off the longship. He then followed the cloak-clad Huntsman Le Feng, who was carrying gifts and accompanied by the Kingdom's warriors, heading to the largest chieftain's longhouse.

And close to dusk, the chieftain's longhouse was lit with bonfire, the inside was warm and filled with the scent of herbs. An elderly tribal shaman was hunched over, sitting cross-legged in front of the warm bonfire, taking advantage of the bright firelight to process some herbs. His face was engraved with yellow and red patterns, at first glance, resembling a red fox on the prairie. And those old wrinkles, like the bark of a pine tree, etched with time and frost.

"Honorable, wise Cedar Shaman!"

Upon seeing the Shaman Chieftain, Cloak Huntsman Le Tian lowered his head, showing respect on his face. Among the northern tribes, Shaman was an esteemed title, being known as "doctors, healers, prophets and diviners." In a more common kingdom manner, it's a High Priest or even an Elder Priest.

In the hearts of many Miwok tribespeople, the Shaman's status is actually ahead of both chieftain and priest, second only to All Gods and Ancestor Spirit. Because, chieftains and priests usually belong to one tribe, while a shaman can belong to many tribes. And to become a shaman in the Northern Land, one must have aided many tribal huntsmen, healed many tribespeople, allowing a reputation to transcend tribal boundaries and resonate in people's hearts.

"Shaman, I have invited the leader of the Longboat Tribe! ... They have large ships, much larger than the tribe's. They have many huntsmen, almost all those I have seen are hunters. I've carefully looked at their attire and weapons; this might be a powerful Kumeyaay Tribe, who fled south by ship after losing a battle..."

"But their leader seems divided into different factions. This visiting leader is the most gentle one, with no hostility! He seems to know nothing about the conditions of the Bay Tribe, and does not even know about you, the esteemed healer of all!"

Cloak Huntsman Le Tian lowered his voice, quickly reporting in the tribal Miwok tongue. Along the way, Scholar Mikki observed all around, while he silently observed Mikki.

"Hmm."

Shaman Chieftain Cedar raised his head, looking sharply at Mikki in the doorway of the longhouse, and the two Kingdom's warriors clad in leather armor. His calm gaze stayed on Mikki's amulet on the neck for a moment, gradually becoming keen.

"They're not Kumeyaay."

"Ah?"

"Sun and bird... Kumeyaay do not have such Divine. His attire also does not match that of Kumeyaay."

"Uh..."

"Go! Invite the guests in!"

Shaman Chieftain Cedar chuckled, pointed to a spot by the bonfire, and began singing gently.

"Heavenly Divine blows the bamboo flute, standing on tall trees, welcoming winds from the sea!
Whether it's the breeze bringing rain, or the cold wind bringing storm... since they chose to come, they are guests!... Come, sit by the bonfire, warm yourselves. Drink a cup of sour hot pursuit tea, share stories from afar!"

"Ah-ha! Greetings to you, honorable Cedar Chieftain, thank you for your invitation!"

Scholar Mikki bowed his head, gave a kingdom greeting to the Cedar Chieftain by the bonfire. He stepped forward and sat cross-legged by the bonfire's spot. Then, with a gentle demeanor, he spoke with a smile before the elder Shaman Chieftain could open his mouth.

"Chief Divine bless us! Honorable chieftain, we come from the distant sea, following the prophecy of Chief Divine, with kingdom goodwill, arriving at this golden bay!... You are the landowner, we as guests, have some meeting gifts to present to the esteemed you!"

After finishing, Scholar Mikki gestured, two Kingdom's warriors came forward with gifts. They placed a bag of Lake Gem, a piece of cloth, a bronze axe, a copper spear, a longbow, a copper arrow, and a fine leather armor.

"Praise Chief Divine!"

The two warriors solemnly muttered a prayer in unison and backed to the doorway, their disciplined stance like moving wooden sculptures.

"Hmm... Gifts... Warrior..."

Cedar Chieftain's eyebrows twitched, his face expressionless. He first picked up the bag of gemstones, glanced briefly and closed the bag. But then paused noticing the cloth bag in hand, and looked at the nearby fabric.

"Cloth bags...a piece of cloth...tribes from the South, far to the South..."

The Cedar Chieftain pondered for a moment, then reached out and picked up the bronze axe on the ground. Although he looked old, he still handled the heavy bronze axe with ease.

"Clang!"

The Cedar Chieftain gently tapped the axe's surface and touched the sharp edge of the axe head. He raised his eyebrows again, calmly placing the axe back down. As for the copper spear, he didn't pick it up, merely extended his hand to feel the smooth spear shaft and gauge the quality of the wood.

"A metal axe, resembling the red copper of the Mountain Tribes in the East, but more resilient and sharper...the fir wood spear shaft is polished very smoothly; it's an excellent long spear."

Then, the Cedar Chieftain glanced at the greatbow and copper arrows, calmly giving orders.

"Le Tian, pull this bow."

The cloaked Hunter Le Tian nodded, raised the greatbow, and slowly drew the bowstring. His face unmistakably showed a look of surprise, but he still pulled the bow to its fullest extent. After a few breaths, he pursed his lips and gently released the bowstring without letting it snap.

"How is it?"

"...It's stronger than the tribe's bow."

"How much stronger?"

The cloaked Hunter Le Tian was silent for a while before answering.

"...Twice as strong."

"Hmm."

The Cedar Chieftain nodded again, touching the material of the copper arrow's wooden shaft, his eyes finally changing.

"Fir wood shafts? Managing to use sturdy fir wood for arrow shafts?..."

Finally, the Cedar Chieftain felt the durable surface of the leather armor and quickly asked in the tribe's language.

"Le Tian, how many people are there with such weapons and leather armor?"

"..."

Another moment of silent contemplation. The cloaked Hunter Le Tian furrowed his brows, struggling to recall for a long time before he answered.

"Quite a lot, most have them...the number...is at least half that of the Tribal Huntsmen!"

This time, it was the Cedar Chieftain who fell into silence. Scholar Mikki smiled faintly, patiently waiting for the two to converse. Although he didn't understand the other's conversation, he could roughly guess some content. This beginning was just as he had anticipated.

"Tribes from across the sea. I am already aware of your intentions and the desire to avoid war."

After a long time, the Cedar Chieftain spoke calmly. With aged yet sharp eyes, he watched the slightly bewildered Scholar Mikki and calmly inquired.

"Speak! From the distant South, you have come to this cold land and even established a camp in the bay; for what purpose? And you, risking your life to come to my tribe, what is it that you seek?"

"I..."

"Please tell me the truth, distant guest, the more direct, the better!... Because our translator seems not very reliable."

This time, the Cedar Chieftain straightened his posture, as if transforming from an old fox into a brown bear. His gaze was sharp, and he spoke in a deep voice in the Kumeyaay language.

"In my youth, I traveled to the South, seeking herbal knowledge from various tribes and also learned their language..."

Watching Scholar Mikki's changing expression, the Cedar Chieftain adjusted his language. He switched within the Uto-Aztecan language family, from Kumeyaay in the South to Ute in the Southeast, and finally to a not very standard but understandable Yaqui. At this moment, Scholar Mikki could finally stammer through a direct conversation with him.

"Speak! What did you come here for? And what are you here to seek?"

With that, a wise smile appeared on the Cedar Chieftain's aged face. He spoke gently, yet his words hit directly at the heart of the matter.

"I suppose, having traveled such a long way from the sea. Upon arriving here, you immediately started cultivating farmland...perhaps it's that you're running short on food?"