

Civilization 1431

Chapter 1431: Preparations for the Eastern Campaign against Maya, Hidden Snake Shipyard

As August reached its end, the torrential rains of the rainy season gradually subsided. In the Temple of Hidden Snake City, the compilation of the epic was already underway, and the discussions among the numerous Coastal Priests were fervent and lively.

As the ruler of Hidden Snake City, Black Wolf Torc did not have the patience to sit in the Temple listening to the Priests' confusing chatter. As the rain slightly lessened, he strapped on his Longsword and, accompanied by several hundred Red-Haired trusted aides, dashed towards the East outside the city.

"By the Chief Divine Witness! This ramshackle place is the shipyard of Hidden Snake City? The great Mayan ships you built, were they really constructed in this shabby place?... "

Black Wolf and his trusted aides crossed the Great River of Hidden Snake by boat. They swiftly traveled upstream a few miles before reaching the mouth of a river bay. This section of the river had a gentle current, and many villages were visibly capable of providing labor and food.

At the bottom of a small hill in the middle of the bay lay a large area of thatched and stone houses, wood frames and poles, which constituted the shipyard of Hidden Snake City. Over a hundred wet logs were piled on the riverbank's mudflats, clearly moldy from the rainy season. As they approached, the tools and houses at the shipyard revealed marks of axe and Stone Hammer and even remnants of a great fire. The entire crude and ragged shipyard was deserted, with not even a flock of crows willing to land, resembling an abandoned ruin.

"Chuchut, I'm asking you! Why does your shipyard look like this hellhole? Can ships still be built here?..."

Confronted by the icy gaze of the Black Wolf General, Chieftain Chuchut sweated on his brow and hesitated for a long moment before whispering a response.

"Big leader Black Wolf, the shipyard outside the city... well, by the grace of the Chief Divine, when the army besieged Hidden Snake City, it was plundered and burned twice by your legion... The Samurai in charge were killed, and the civilians and ordinary craftsmen dispersed long ago... However, these framework houses still stand, and there is still wood, with some restoration, it can be restored..."

"Huh, My legion burned it?!..."

At this, Black Wolf Torc froze. He cast a harsh glance over his trusted aides behind him and harshly reprimanded them.

"Damn it! Didn't I tell you? When you encounter shipbuilding sites or craftsmen who can build ships, you must protect them for me!..."

"This is unfair! Boss, this place is so poor and broken; it wasn't us who burned it!"

Red-Haired trusted aide Wuta murmured sullenly with a bowed head.

"By the Chief Divine Witness! It was those surrendered Coastal Samurai who burned it! We Wilderness Samurai just looted things and captured prisoners; we didn't kill many people; after all, that's all money!... But those surrendered Coastal Samurai, many of them went mad. They shouted the Chief Divine's slogans, fought the Totonac Tribes furiously until no one was left, and then burned it..."

"...Enough! I understand now! So it's those little wolf cubs..."

Upon hearing this, Black Wolf raised an eyebrow and interrupted trusted aide Wuta. His Tribal Vanguard unit, driven by the kingdom's main force, served as both the vanguard in campaigns and cannon fodder in sieges. They shouldered the most casualties in siege assaults and endured harsh military laws, where beheading was commonplace, maintaining a strict high-pressure state throughout. It was only after surviving many life-or-death situations that they earned the chance to join the Kingdom Legion or transfer to a local flag team.

In other words, these Surrendered Armies, unlike the kingdom's main force, had to endure life-and-death hardships to acquire an official "designation." While day-to-day duties like transport were manageable, the ferocity and murderousness during actual combat and expeditions were unavoidable. Training the army this way, treating them as wolf cubs to cultivate into a wolf pack, could only be achieved by the fiercest Black Wolf Torc.

"Chuchut, where are the craftsmen and large timber Papu promised me?... The prince gave me strict orders to restore the shipyard of Hidden Snake City as soon as possible!"

"Big leader Black Wolf, those Maya shipwrights capable of building large ships have surrendered to Death God Temple at the foot of the Divine Mountain along with the Naval Forces..."

Chieftain Chuchut bowed, answering cautiously.

"As for the craftsmen who can build dugout War Boats, Hidden Snake City has some, and there should be some in the surrounding villages and tribes as well... As for the large timbers promised by Papu, they were previously transported from the shipyard by the Naval Forces and hidden at Sunrise Village at the Rivermouth of the Sunrise River! But for the transportation of large timbers, assistance from the Naval Forces is necessary... That village is managed by our Eastward Migration Tribes, and many villagers have participated in War Boat construction..."

"Sunrise Village? That small village at the Rivermouth seventy or eighty miles to the East?... Your Eastward Migration Tribes?..."

Black Wolf Torc stroked his chin and pondered for a while before eyeing the tense Chieftain Chuchut.

"Chuchut, your fleeing Eastward Migration Tribes can build ships?"

"Well... Everyone just contributed labor; they have always participated in the construction of paddle-sail large ships and dugout War Boats... Small boats are indeed no problem, but for building large ships, guidance from Maya Master Craftsmen is still necessary..."

"Very well! Chuchut, you are their chieftain?"

"Yes..."

"Alright! I'll leave the shipyard matter to you all!"

With that, Black Wolf Torc made a sweeping gesture, authoritatively ordering without letting Chieftain Chuchut refuse.

"Chuchut, from today onward, you are responsible for rebuilding the shipyard of Hidden Snake City, and you are now the manager of the shipyard! Hmm, your status will provisionally count as First Level military merit nobility!... This shipyard and the surrounding seven or eight villages within ten miles are all under your care!..."

"Bring back those East fleeing Tribes, handle the wood here properly. I'll organize your tribes into a shipbuilding flag team, freeing you from labor and tribute obligations, just focus on shipbuilding! As for the lacking Bronze Tools, I'll redistribute from the legion with assistance from the trusted aides! And the Kingdom Shipwrights who will guide you will arrive soon enough..."

"You have one month to prepare everything. By the end of September next month, I want to see you start building twin-hulled dugout War Boats! October is busy with autumn harvest, so that doesn't count. By early November, I want to see the first twin-hulled War Boat launched. Before the end of this year, I want to see you begin building Maya paddle-sail large ships!..."

"By the grace of the Chief Divine! The prince has decreed that we shall continue eastward conquest, and as many large and small ships as possible are needed!... I am giving you sufficient manpower and resources, and each month you must produce at least ten twin-hulled War Boats. By next year, twenty War Boats each month!..."

"Ah! Big leader Black Wolf... This... you want me to be responsible for shipbuilding?..."

On hearing this string of shipbuilding duties, Chieftain Chuchut's knees wobbled, and his voice trembled.

The kingdom's strict militaristic system centered on warfare, unlike the loose tribal systems of the city-states. The production of military equipment, including warship construction, allowed no excuses or procrastination. Cutting corners or excessive delays inevitably meant someone would lose their head! With Black Wolf, the big leader graciously promoting him, bestowing a title, providing people and resources, if he failed to meet the shipbuilding task...

"Haha! It's settled! By the Chief Divine Witness! Let it be so!..."

Black Wolf grinned broadly, giving Chieftain Chuchut a heavy pat on the shoulder, causing him to shiver all over. Subsequently, he furrowed his brows, pondering for some time before taking out a Royal Decree from his bosom and spreading it out.

"The prince instructed four things... Tribal conversion, seventy-five thousand Hidden Snake Tribes have sworn blood oaths of conversion; preparing for the alliance, I have already dispatched envoys from Coastal Priests to the tribes of the Southern Jungle and the Southeast Zoque Tribes; expedite shipbuilding, hmm, I found someone knowledgeable to do the work, fail and you'll face execution... Hmm! What was the last thing?... "

Black Wolf squinted, examining the last record carefully, and then looked at the pictogram following it before realizing.

"Ah, yes! It's cassava! The exploration fleet mentioned that more than a year ago, they had planted a field of cassava to the east of Hidden Snake City!... And now, these cassava are ripe for large-scale expansion!... As for the exact location of this cassava field... got it!..."

With this thought, Black Wolf reached out and grabbed Chieftain Chuchut by the collar. His gaze turned severe, and with a chilling presence, he sternly interrogated the shivering Chuchut.

"Chuchut! Where did you ambush the Kingdom's exploration fleet over a year ago in this vicinity?!..."

Chapter 1432: Cassava—One Sows, Ten Are Fed

The rain subsided, and the elite troops marched swiftly. Black Wolf Torc led two hundred trusted aides, galloping along the coast of White Sand for forty to fifty miles, finally reaching the riverbank where the exploration fleet had once hidden, as the sun leaned westward.

From a distance, the golden-red lake surface reflected the sunset light, with tall Luwei growing densely along the river. On the clear lake surface, flying birds occasionally descended, and even flat turtles could be seen. They floated on the water like rocks in the lake, leisurely, calmly, and peacefully.

Black Wolf Torc stood by the river, gazing at the calm lake connected to the river. The scene before him was so tranquil that it was hard for him to imagine the fierce water battles and life-and-death struggles that had once occurred. The tropical rivers and jungles were always so vibrant, swallowing all flesh and blood, leaving not even a dry Bone, erasing death with life.

"Praise to the Chief Divine! Truly a natural Naval Forces harbor!... Xiuluo, what is the name of this lake connected to the river and the sea?"

"Uh, honorable Black Wolf Leader!... This lake has no fish, but there are plenty of big turtles... The local villagers all call it, uh, Great Turtle Lake!..."

"What? Great Turtle Lake?"

Black Wolf squinted his eyes, looking at the leisurely turtles on the lake surface, and grinned, revealing sharp teeth.

"Wuta!"

"Here, Leader!"

"Go! Take some people and catch a few big turtles! Tonight, we'll encamp here and have a roasted turtle to replenish!..."

"Yes, Leader!"

Black Wolf gave a few simple instructions, arranging the encampment for the night. Then, he looked at the end of the team and asked a lean and honest Prepecha Warrior.

"Yellowfish! Where is the cassava field that the old man Qi planted back then?"

"Uh, Black Wolf Leader... It's this lake, right around here! But specifically where... It was mainly Captain Qi who planted it alone, less than two acres... I don't remember!..."

The lean Yellowfish scratched his head, staring blankly at the vast lake and the tall Luwei for a long time. He was one of the sixteen people who returned from the Cuba exploration fleet, and hence was

exceptionally honored by Xiulote with the title of Military Merit Nobility. Returning to this lakeside where bloodshed once occurred, his eyes held indescribable emotions and a touch of confusion.

"Leader, how about we look for it? This plant has very broad leaves, like a hand. It's not short in height either, growing upwards in clusters..."

"What?! Such a large area, circling thirty miles along the lakeside, and the Luwei is so tall! When will we find it?!"

Black Wolf frowned, looked at the chieftain Xiuluo, and instructed.

"Go! To the nearest village, bring out the local hunters and fishermen! First, ask them if they know..."

The summer sun sets a little later. Before the final rays of sunlight disappeared, the hunters from nearby villages finally followed orders to arrive. Upon hearing Yellowfish's description of the plant, the village hunters were surprised for a moment, then suddenly shouted.

"Ah! All Gods! I know!... It's Deathly Grass! The Deathly Grass that can kill people when eaten!... I know where it is, I'll take you there!"

After some twists and turns, they finally found the cassava field planted in the Luwei of the Lake Bay. After a year of wind and rain, the traces of the field had long disappeared. The cassava grew densely in clusters, thriving robustly even without the care of farmers.

"Chief Divine's blessing! These small tree-like plants, are they the matured cassava?"

As the sky darkened, Black Wolf held a torch, staring at the cassava clusters in front of him, estimating the height. Most of the grown cassava reached over half a person's height, with robust stalks. In the cassava's height advantage, there was hardly any weed in this patch. Compared to the alliance's most common corn, pumpkins, and beans, this "new" crop was evidently easy to grow and thrive without much trouble.

"Tsk tsk! Is this the Divine-blessed crop His Highness mentioned, yielding five to six hundred pounds per acre?... Said to carry the divinity of death and the vitality of the earth, needing to be peeled and processed before eating..."

Black Wolf stroked his chin, observing the thriving cassava clusters for a while. Then, he looked at the Military Merit Nobility Yellowfish, and asked.

"Yellowfish, I recall this thing being quite cumbersome, how to eat it?"

"Uh... Leader, Captain Qi made up a new song about cassava, it's easy to remember!"

Upon hearing this, Yellowfish cleared his throat, mimicking the old militia's accent, and sang the song mystically.

"Cassava, oh it's good, one person plants it to feed ten! It has its merits, but also demerits, born with a deathly peel, eat casually and you'll die!..."

"Chief Divine is good, granting a treasure, digging out roots long and thick! Peel it, cut into pieces, soak in water to disperse poison, wait overnight to eat at ease!..."

"After soaking, boil it, make it into porridge so fragrant. Dry it, grind it into powder, bake it into cakes for long storage, Chief Divine bless His Highness well!... Ah! Chief Divine bless His Highness well!... Cassava, oh it's good, one person plants it to feed ten..."

Listening to the ear-piercing chant of the earthy yellow fish loop like a spell, Black Wolf Torc's eyelids twitched, but the sound was so magical it was hard to forget. He remained silent for a while before shaking his head and ordering.

"Alright! Stop singing! It gives me a headache!... Mique, go, take a few people, and dig up some cassava roots for me, peel them and soak them in water... Tomorrow morning, I want to personally taste what this divinely blessed crop, valued by His Highness, actually tastes like!"

"Yes, boss!..."

"Black Wolf Leader, I'll also go help, I'm familiar with this!..."

"Earthy yellow fish, don't rush!"

Black Wolf Torc shook his head. He extended his large hand, pressing down on the thin earthy yellow fish, and seriously asked.

"Chief Divine witness! This patch of cassava doesn't look like much... how many acres can be expanded?!"

"Great Leader Black Wolf, these cassavas have all matured, and the stems can be cut off for replanting... One cassava can be cut into a dozen segments for planting without any issue. This two-acre cassava field... could probably expand to twenty acres!"

"Twenty acres? That's so little?..."

"Chief Divine protection! It's not little! Even corn doesn't thrive as well as it does!... After another year, there will be at least over two hundred acres!..."

"Oh! Really!"

Black Wolf's eyes widened, using his fingers to calculate hard, finally completing the tenfold multiplication. He pondered for a moment, staring intently into the eyes of the earthy yellow fish, making the latter shiver.

"Uh! Black Wolf Leader?..."

"Earthy yellow fish, His Highness gave me a royal decree to expand the cassava plantation, to popularize this high-yielding new crop..."

Black Wolf Torc, eyes bright, looked at the earthy yellow fish, decisively giving orders.

"Chief Divine witness! You're good! Knowledgeable and capable! This task of expanding the cassava plantations will take many years, and I'm entrusting it to you!..."

"Ah! Me... entrust it to me?! But, I'm just one person..."

"Ha! As for the lack of manpower, of the tribal warriors and militia conscripted by the legion, you can choose!..."

Black Wolf waved his large hand, heavily patting the earthy yellow fish's shoulder, generously giving promotions.

"Right here, by this Great Turtle Lake! I'll set up a small tribal flag team, assigning four hundred people for you to manage! And this entire thirty miles of Great Lake, I'll also entrust to you!... Hmm, a tribesperson can farm at least five acres, four hundred people equals two thousand acres?... That should last at least two years!..."

"Earthy yellow fish, Chief Divine witness! I'll give you two years to cultivate two thousand acres of cassava for me! If you do well, I'll promote you another level, setting up a large flag team of four thousand, dedicated to farming cassava! I've even thought of a name for the flag team, it'll be called the Cassava Banner!..."

"However! If you don't do well..."

Black Wolf Torc squinted his eyes, coldly staring at the earthy yellow fish, then grinned again, revealing sharp teeth.

"Chief Divine witness! His Highness and I will both be very angry!"

"Ah! Ah this?... Do it well, command a large flag team? Cassava Banner?... Don't do it well, uh..."

The earthy yellow fish stood dumbfounded for a moment before suddenly shivering. He knelt respectfully, loudly accepting the order.

"Yes, Chief Divine protection! Black Wolf Leader, I will definitely cultivate the cassava fields well, for the Chief Divine, for His Highness, and for your command!..."

"Very good! That's the spirit!..."

Black Wolf Torc raised the torch, nodding in satisfaction. Then, he turned around, back facing the lush cassava field, and looked towards the dark western horizon, murmuring softly.

"Actually! This task, it's most suitable to give it to the old man Qi! However, he should be in Cloud Serpent Mountain City..."

"Chief Divine protection! Counting the time, shouldn't the unsetting Cloud Serpent Mountain City have finally set by now!..."

The long wind heads west for thousands of miles, the darkness also envelopes the mountain city, with a drizzle still falling. Beneath the rainy curtain of the mountain city, a team of silent Imperial Guard Warriors climbs the steep mountain path. And not far above their heads, the back camp of the Cloud Serpent Mountain City has quietly opened its gates.

Chapter 1433: The Long Rainy Night and the Bowed Cloud Serpent

The mountain city stood high and dangerously, engulfed in a rain-soaked, lightless night. Black Serpent Teuctli watched with an impassive face, standing on the walls of the rear village, peering into the indistinct mountain path, awaiting an unclear future. Beside him, the small Dark Snake wore leather armor, hope evident in his eyes. He glanced up at his father for a moment, then silently lowered his head.

Further back, dozens of Black Serpent trusted aides and over a hundred Cloud Snake Warriors gathered by the walls, getting drenched in the rain, waiting silently. Under the sparse firelight, many appeared thin, gaunt, and starving, barely recognizable. Some were severely salt-deprived, causing their bodies to bloat and stand unsteadily; others had lifeless expressions, with blood continuously dripping from their weapons, unsure whose blood it was...

At this moment, everyone remained in collective silence, heads bowed, seemingly unwilling to face, yet having to face, everything to come, surrendering their lives to fate.

On this quiet rainy night, they took that step... From this moment, everyone betrayed the ancestral God of the Hunt, betrayed the Cloud Serpent Divine Descendant at the former village, and betrayed the resilience of the past three and a half years!... Yet, they really had no choice... Their only choice was to survive through the hopeless long night and live to see the dawn.

The night rain drizzled as a large detachment of Imperial Guard Warriors, cloaked in black, concealed a few torches, and ascended the narrow mountain path, wide enough for only one person. Moving softly through the rainy night, they resembled an actual menacing "Black Serpent," creeping up to seize their prey that had been waiting for long!

On such a night, only the most organized Imperial Guard Warriors could manage a climb and siege. In such perilous terrain, should they encounter enemy resistance, rolling stones, or falling logs... only the elite guards, with the help of insiders, held a slim chance of capturing the city!

Fortunately, the brutal siege battle they feared did not occur. The village gate swung open, and the defending Cloud Snake Warriors lowered their heads in surrender; everything proceeded so smoothly! It was as if, after a long wait, the fruit finally ripened and fell from the tree, splattering red juice and leaving a deep, dark red stain.

Soon, dozens of Kingdom Imperial Guard Warriors surged into the rear village, promptly securing the area around the gate. Black Serpent Teuctli, along with many defending troops, dropped their weapons and knelt before the Kingdom's legion!

"Praise the Chief Divine! We present the unconquerable mountain city to the Supreme Main God and His Highness..."

Moments later, more and more Imperial Guard Warriors flooded into the rear village, and the sounds of noise gradually rose, yet there were no screams of slaughter or battle. Within two to three quarters of an hour, the Cloud Snake rear village situated on the hilltop, along with over two thousand acres of the surrounding barren mountain fields, fell completely under the control of the Kingdom!

"Divine protection! Esteemed Black Serpent Divine Descendant Teuctli, you have finally made the right choice!"

Priest Mekate, with a smile on his face, and the old militia Chiwaco stepped out from among the Imperial Guard Warriors. He ascended the village wall, surveying the vast fields inside and outside the rear village, then gazing at the nearby fore village on another adjacent mountaintop, struggling to conceal his excitement and thrill.

"Haha! Without the mountain fields of this rear village, even if tonight's surprise attack fails to capture the Cloud Snake fore village, they won't be able to hold on any longer!..."

"Hahaha! This final Cloud Snake Mountain City, this unconquerable ancient fortress, has finally fallen into the hands of the Kingdom!..."

Upon hearing Priest Mekate's words, Black Serpent Teuctli bowed deeply, his waist bending without a sound. He silently tugged at Dark Snake's sleeve. The small Dark Snake pursed his lips, walked over to the Imperial Guard Warrior's ranks, and quietly called out to the old militia Chiwaco.

"Old Chiwaco!..."

"Ah! Dark Snake, you've been alone in the village for so long... it really hasn't been easy for you!..."

Seeing the frail and emaciated Dark Snake, once again malnourished, the old militia Chiwaco sighed helplessly. He kindly reached out, ruffled Dark Snake's hair, glanced at Black Serpent, and then promised reassuringly.

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! Rest assured! Now that the Kingdom's warriors have entered the village, the Divine's light has already arrived... everything will come to an end! Everything will get better! His Highness truly embodies mercy..."

"Praise the light of the Chief Divine! Praise the merciful His Highness!"

After hearing this exchange, Black Serpent Teuctli felt somewhat assured. He still kept his head down, earnestly pleading with Priest Mekate.

"Respected Kingdom Envoy! Please... do not forget the promise of the God of Death... the settlement after our surrender..."

Upon hearing this, Priest Mekate raised an eyebrow, a faint smile on his face. Observing Black Serpent's respectful demeanor, he casually replied.

"Black Serpent Divine Descendant, rest assured! Having offered the Cloud Snake rear village, His Highness's promise, ensuring the survival of eight hundred people along with the fief on the Northern Continent... will naturally be fulfilled! In reality, had His Highness not previously sent food and salt into the village... this rear village of yours might not have even gathered eight hundred people, with more deaths occurring!"

Upon hearing this, Black Serpent Teuctli lowered his eyelids, silently unable to respond. This long Divine War has been so brutal, its cruelty exceeding the imaginations of all the Tlaxcala nobility!

The Mexica swept across the Four States, sacrificing tens of thousands of Divine Descendants, nobility, priests, chieftains, and warriors! Following this, the army besieged Cloud Snake Mountain City for a full three and a half years, without any hint of retreat. This lengthy siege forcefully besieged several villages within Cloud Snake City, dwindling down from ten thousand three thousand tribes to merely the front and rear villages, with barely three thousand remaining!

Facing the scarcity of resources, lack of salt, and shortage of food, nearly all the weak, elderly, women, and children among each tribe perished, while the feeble able-bodied men were forced to descend the mountain to challenge the Mexica blockade, ultimately either dying or surrendering. After such a terrifying siege that eroded all faith and hope, the population of Cloud Snake rear village indeed numbered only a little over eight hundred...

"The Chief Divine controls destiny and governs all the tribes in the world!... The old Cloud Snake Divine is dead. The Cloud Snake Divine Descendants of all tribes are destined to sacrifice and perish... Respected Kingdom Envoy, I sincerely thank the Chief Divine for His mercy, thank His Highness for His generosity, for sparing us these humble mountain survivors!"

"Hmm, Divine protection! Black Serpent Divine Descendant, being able to appreciate the Chief Divine and His Highness's mercy means you have found a path of light for your future..."

Upon hearing Black Serpent Teuctli's words, Priest Mekate nodded affirmatively. As the other party was so perceptive, and having a son like Dark Snake, he naturally wouldn't hesitate to offer further guidance.

"Teuctli, please remember! You bear the blood of the Cloud Snake Divine. Although His Highness may tolerate you, others in the Alliance, including the Alliance's Divine King, might not..." /p>

"Therefore, for you, the priority is to convert to belief in the Chief Divine! You must demonstrate sufficient piety, even surpassing that of other followers!... Likewise, you need to maintain a low profile, cautious in attire, tradition, and ceremonies, aligning with the nobles of the Mexica..."

"And aside from these, the most important current task..."

Priest Mekate, with a smile, pointed towards the nearby fore village, indicating the passage between the two villages. From this angle, the precariously suspended, tethered with ropes and wooden planks, rudimentary ropeway appeared like a drooping cloud serpent, radiating a dim, dying hue.

"Respected Black Serpent Divine Descendant Teuctli! Please send your Personal Guard Warriors over the ropeway and find a way to secure the sentry on the other end... lead the Kingdom's mighty Imperial Guard Warriors to assault the final Cloud Snake fore village!... You must know, the Supreme Main God has waited too long to savor the most sublime yet delicious Cloud Snake City Lord Tepetic, along with those last surviving Cloud Snake nobility..."

"The long night is enduring, the night rain profound, there's still plenty of time!... By the time the morning sun rises, this protracted siege should genuinely come to an end. If the Chief Divine's banner could be erected on the ancient Cloud Snake Temple, witnessing the first glimpse of dawn from the East..."

"Divine protection! Then we can dispatch an envoy to report victory to His Highness! And your future would thereby gain a sliver of hope!"

Chapter 1434: The Fall of the Mountain City, the Destruction of the Cloud Serpent

The night was deep and dark, with black clouds shrouding the sky. The drizzle came and went, and the firelight flickered intermittently. The convergence of this light and rainy night inexplicably brought to mind sacrifice and death.

Old Militia Chiwaco stood on the height of the Cloud Serpent's rear village, holding the hand of the Dark Snake with a dim complexion. The two silently watched as those familiar yet indistinct figures walked across the rope bridge connecting the two villages. They couldn't hear any sound, only seeing those familiar figures carrying weapons, disappearing for a moment before reappearing. Then, the elite Imperial Guards, like jaguars before the hunt, moved forward silently. They traveled along the narrow path, wide enough for one person, arriving at the opposite side one by one. And when a sufficient number of jaguars, the symbol of death, gathered, the true ruthless massacre began!

"Blessed by the Chief Divine! The Imperial Guard Legion has invaded the front village, and the Black Snake has done well!... This last front village of the Cloud Serpent will fall completely tonight!... Haha! After tonight, the last resistance of the Tlaxcalans will cease to exist!"

Priest Mekate, with excitement on his face, walked to the side of Old Militia Chiwaco, smilingly said.

"The two thousand Cloud Serpent Divine Descendant priests and noble warriors on the opposite side are the core remnants who fled and gathered here from 1.2 million Tlaxcalans of the Four States. They are the divine enemies resisting the Alliance to the end!..."

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! Head Warrior Bertade has already given the order... Such stubborn and persistent enemies must be completely eradicated, leaving not one behind!..."

"And the surrendered Black Snake Teuctli also needs to stain his hands with blood, sacrifice the Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants in the oldest Cloud Serpent Holy Temple, scorn the Cloud Serpent idol, betray the tribal ancestors, and finally hold a blood oath conversion... to show his true resolve to pledge allegiance to the Alliance Kingdom and convert to the Supreme Main God!"

"Oh Chief Divine! Not one left... the command of the Head Warrior... the conversion of the Black Snake..."

Hearing this, the eyes of the old militia flickered, and he nodded silently. He felt the trembling of the young Dark Snake beside him, squeezed the other's hand firmly, and gently reassured him.

"Child... don't worry! Since the Kingdom has given your father a chance to convert, no matter how harsh the conditions, even if he has to personally sacrifice his clansmen... it's truly to fulfill a promise so that you may survive..."

Upon hearing these words, the young Dark Snake trembled once more before barely calming down. He slightly raised his head, eyes filled with hope, and looked at the omnipotent Old Chi in his heart.

"Old Chi!... The Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants in the front village... do they all have to die?..."

Hearing this, old Militia Chiwaco lowered his eyes without answering. Only after a long time, did he softly hummed in acknowledgment from his nose.

"Hmm... it is the cost..."

"Ah? The cost?..."

"Yes. It's the cost for the Divine, the cost from the Cloud Serpent divine to the Chief Divine..."

The long wind blew, bringing with it the smell of rain and blood. Old Militia Chiwaco took a deep breath and spoke softly, his eyes turning vicissitude.

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! For the replacement of the Divine... these last and most direct Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants must die!... And with their death, the Tlaxcalans and the Mexica can merge into one... just like the Purpecha people and the Mexica..."

"But... but... Chief Divine... Enlightening Chief Divine..."

The young Dark Snake lowered his head, his eyes faintly shimmering. A strong sense of guilt surged in his heart, as in his understanding, his father, the Black Snake, opened the gate and led the Mexica legion into the city because of him... At this moment, he didn't know what to say, only knowing what Old Chi said might be right. Only after a long time, did he raise his head again, praying and asking.

"Oh Supreme Main God, descend your merciful light! Old Chi, if all the tribes under heaven believed in the Supreme Main God!... Would this slaughter then stop?"

"If the faith of the world united..."

Old Militia Chiwaco's gaze was deep, contemplating for a long time, yet he still gently shook his head.

"No! Dark Snake, slaughter and war are the reality of this world, they are the eternally unceasing tides... Even if all tribes' faiths converged, such wars would still continue... surging from the center of this world to the edges of the Northern Continent, Southern Continent, and the sea islands!"

"Of course, by that time, the Telascallans and the Mexica will become one, and there will be no more slaughter..."

"Ah!... Old Chi... the world is so vast, surely... surely... there's a place without slaughter, only peace and beauty, somewhere?"

Upon hearing Dark Snake's trembling question, the old militia Chiwaco fell silent for a long time, his eyes becoming hollow. He gazed into the dark east, thinking of those distant islands over the sea, and recalling the food-laden, simple and kind-hearted, singing and joyful, unaware of slaughter, Taino people.

"Chief Divine bless! Such a place naturally exists, right on Snake Island in the Eastern Sea, those simple Taino villages... Dark Snake, I have been there, you have been there, we all remember it! Remember the goodness there..."

"It's just, according to the prophecy of Divine Revelation, it's uncertain how long such peace can last... After all, peaceful tribes are always so fragile in front of warring tribes, confronted by the more terrifying prophecy of the white-skinned..."

"Chief Divine bless! The Taino people of Cuba... beautiful yet fragile peace..."

The young Dark Snake stood in a daze for a moment, reminiscing about the tropical islands in his memory, those peaceful Taino villages and tribes, unable to hide the yearning on his face. Would the Northern Continent, where his father is about to head, also be as peaceful and beautiful?...

However, when he snapped back to reality, looking at the deep night in front of him, it was as if he saw again, the blood color spreading under the night. In the blood color of the night, many scattered flames flickered, echoing with the fervent shouts of the Imperial Guard Warriors and the dying wails of the Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants!

"Chief Divine bless! He watches over us! This is the final Divine War, to extinguish the faith of the Cloud Serpent! ...Kill! Kill these wicked Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants! Not one of them shall remain!..."

"Oh supreme Cloud Serpent! We beseech You! Grant the Divine Power among the clouds, bring down thunderbolts and flames, destroy these fierce Mexica, destroy these shameless traitors! ...Ah! Ah! Groan!"

Slaughter and screams, in the night wind, urgent yet intermittent, like a song rising and falling, singing the elegy of destruction and death. The youth, Dark Snake, listened in a daze, indeed hearing the final elegy of the Cloud Serpent Priests, which was in Tlaxcallan Nava, a language almost identical to the Mexica Language. Only at this moment, the priests' singing was more desolate and ancient, also with a taste of death and decay during the Wilderness's Divine Disaster.

"Oh-hahahaho! ...Oh supreme Cloud Serpent, flying over the high mountains! Oh spirits of the ancestors, dwelling on the high clouds! ...The dark shadow throws its veil over Cloud Mountain, the heritage tribe will be destroyed this night. All that is most ancient and sacred, destined to perish within destiny. This is the end of the Era, the final moment, an irreversible occurrence!"

"Oh-hahahaho! ...Oh heartless Divine Disaster, incarnate in the volcanic Mexica! Oh brave God of the Hunt, devoured by the volcanic demon!"

"Unyielding Cloud Serpent Fortress, it has reached the end of the road of death. And the towering, continuous mountains, they too shall fall into the vile jaws of Mother Earth..."

"Oh-hahahaho! ...The tribe's death follows like a shadow, the tribe's soul falls into the Black Abyss. All Gods are already dead! All Gods have already departed! ...This is the despairing end of days! It's the time of ancient hearts breaking..."

"Oh-hahahaho! ...Let us light the fire, follow the fading All Gods! Let our souls become firelight, soaring to the sky of the Divine Kingdom! ...Fly now, carry on, journey to the Divine Kingdom! Oh-hahahaho! ...Ah!!!..."

The drifting elegy gradually grew in intensity, transitioning from desolation to frenzy! Then, a vast blaze abruptly ignited from the highest point of the front camp, the Cloud Serpent Temple, and in the drizzling rain, stained with the blue flame of the dead!

"Stone of the Dead, the blue fire of death, the pathway to the Divine Kingdom! Ah!..."

The piercing wails and shouts, burning together with the blue flame. However, this abruptly rising flame evidently lacked fuel, becoming weak. It burst and blazed for a moment, but was unable to ignite the rain-soaked temple during the rainy season, instead, slowly and gradually diminishing...

"Been besieged for too long... there's no fuel left in the Holy Temple..."

The young Dark Snake murmured to himself, large tears rolling down his eyes. He didn't know why he cried, clearly, he stood on the side of the victors, having obtained the kingdom's title and rewards. He simply cried silently, watching the large force of Imperial Guard Warriors extinguish the flames, surging into the last Cloud Serpent Temple. Then, but a few breaths later, a victorious shout, carrying uncontrollable elation, pierced through the clouds and came forth!

"Haha! Chief Divine bless! Chief Divine bless!!..."

"I, the kingdom's Imperial Guard, Vanguard Warrior Quetz, offered the most sacred sacrifice, severed the head of the Cloud Snake City Lord Tepectl! Tepectl's head!!..."

"Hahaha! The Chief Divine bears witness! The Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants of Tlaxcala, are extinguished at this moment!!..."

Chapter 1435: The Layout of the Cloud Serpent Fortress, the Weight on the Scales

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! According to the decree of Your Majesty, Vanguard Warrior Quetz killed the Cloud Snake City Lord Tepetic, rising two levels in rank and promoted to Second Level Hereditary Noble, Camp Commander of a Thousand Warriors! Additionally, he is granted eight hundred acres of land, forty agricultural slaves, twenty chests of gold and silver, gemstones, feathered garments, cotton cloth, ironware, and farming tools!..."

The blazing sun rose to the zenith, illuminating the peak of the Cloud Serpent Mountain City. The dark red bloodstains had already coagulated, and the dead bodies were thrown into the valley. Three days had passed since that blood-soaked night of slaughter. In the highest Mountain City Temple, the stone statue of the God of the Hunt was smashed by the warriors, its visage unrecognizable. The gold statue of the Cloud Serpent was also toppled and broken into pieces, awaiting recasting as the statue of the Chief Divine. A brand-new emblem of the Chief Divine had already been erected in the center of the temple, symbolizing the Mexica's conquest, the conquest of the Chief Divine's faith!

"Blessings of the Chief Divine! The undefeated Cloud Serpent Mountain City is finally in the hands of the kingdom!"

At this moment, Head Warrior Bertade stood solemnly under the emblem of the Chief Divine. Before him was a row of kneeling kingdom warriors, receiving their rewards for the night assault and vanquishing their old enemies. Under the witness of the Chief Divine, Bertade raised the Marshal's Scepter in his hands, and solemnly declared with pious conviction.

"All five hundred Imperial Guards involved in the night raid are promoted one warrior level! Five Warrior Captains are promoted to First Level Military Merit Nobility, granted lands and slaves according to merit! Praise the Chief Divine! Praise Your Majesty!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise Your Majesty!"

The warriors on the ground showed excitement, shouting fervently. With this announcement, hundreds of Imperial Guards outside the temple also raised their weapons and shouted in unison.

"Praise the Chief Divine! Praise Your Majesty! Praise the Marshal!"

Hearing the cheers outside the temple, Head Warrior Bertade smiled calmly, nodding slightly.

This exhilarating night raid saw the warriors conquer the impregnable fortress without suffering serious casualties. With the help of insiders, the enemy lost their advantageous terrain and fell victim to a surprise attack by the kingdom's warriors. These Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants and nobles, besieged for three and a half years, were like weak coyotes after a long starvation, easily torn apart by the fierce Jaguars!

With the fall of the Mountain City's ancestral land, the remaining Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants were annihilated. The Four States of the Tlaxcalans also lost their final resistance! The spiritual sanctuary of the Tlaxcalan tribes was completely destroyed, leaving them no choice but to submit to the alliance, to submit to the kingdom's rule.

"Blessings of the Chief Divine! The fall of Cloud Serpent Mountain City and the extinction of the Cloud Serpent Divine Descendants! Such a triumphant report, I have already dispatched envoys to spread the news to the Lake Capital City, King Qinchongcan's Royal City, and the seaside Golden Bay City! Once this news spreads, the more than two hundred thousand Tlaxcalan tribes migrating westward to the Kingdom of the Lake will have no hope but to fully integrate into the kingdom!"

"And this long Tlaxcalan Eastern Campaign hereby concludes! The kingdom has successively relocated over two hundred thousand Tlaxcalan tribes, fifty to sixty thousand Mistec tribes, and more than one hundred thousand Totonac tribes... The population of the Kingdom of the Lake has rapidly increased by more than four hundred thousand, primarily consisting of young and strong men and women. The two southern counties, the main settlement areas for immigrants, have more than doubled in population, far exceeding the peak period of the Tarasco Kingdom..."

Head Warrior Bertade pondered calmly. He had long been overseeing the garrison and population transfer in Water Valley City, fully aware of the benefits this long plundering war brought to the kingdom!

"The Southern Army, without experiencing particularly difficult battles, plundered a large population and wealth! The shortage of agricultural slaves needed for the kingdom's military merit ennoblement has not only been entirely filled but more than thirty tribal flag teams were organized. These tribal flag teams effectively developed the Apa Plain, the Talas River banks, and the Talas estuary!"

"With such ample manpower, His Highness's large-scale infrastructure plan could unfold! With the support of these tens of thousands of resettled tribes, the kingdom also formed a Long Snake Warrior Corps, drafting thousands of tribal archers..."

Contemplating all this, witnessing firsthand the rapid development of the kingdom, Head Warrior Bertade was filled with boiling excitement. He looked up at the sun in the sky, praying wholeheartedly to become one with the sun for His Highness, before turning his gaze back to the cheering Warrior Captains before him.

"Praise the Supreme Chief Divine! Praise the Supreme Sun! Praise the Supreme Highness! ... After a siege of three and a half years, what do you think of the terrain of this Cloud Serpent Mountain City?"

"Blessings of the Chief Divine! This terrain is rarely seen in the world, absolutely perilous as if forged by a god!"

"Indeed! The two forts in front and behind control the two mountain peaks, located at an altitude of several hundred to over a thousand meters. When attacking from below, the mountain path can only accommodate one person! No matter how many brave warriors we have, it's impossible to conquer from below!"

"Yes! There are even mountain fields up there that can yield crops! Without the insiders' surrender... they could have probably held out for another year, or even longer!"

Mentioning the terrain of Cloud Serpent Mountain City, the generals spoke up, all showing some apprehension and dread on their faces. Despite the long siege, they had never considered storming the city. Because such a natural fortress, in this era, could not be taken by force. Hearing the generals' evaluations, Head Warrior Bertade nodded in affirmation, then said to them.

"Exactly! Such an impregnable fortress is impossible to breach by force... The Cloud Snake Fortress must be in the hands of the kingdom! The kingdom will rebuild a new Main God Temple here, station the Chief God Priests, Temple Guards, and Kingdom Warriors!"

"Ah? Building a temple and garrisoning troops in such a critical place? What about the alliance's attitude..."

Upon hearing the words, the expressions of the generals changed, each showing a hint of contemplation. Seeing the changing expressions, Head Warrior Bertade scrutinized for a moment before pointing to the fearless and eager Vanguard Warrior Quetz.

"By the witness of the Chief Divine! Quetz! You climbed the perilous heights and were the first to break into the forward camp, slaying the Cloud Snake City Lord... In courage, will, and fortune, you are excellent! The Kingdom intends to station a thousand warriors and two thousand militia here... Are you willing to serve as the military officer of Cloud Serpent Fortress, guarding this place for the Kingdom?"

"May the Chief Divine protect! I, Quetz, am willing! I will definitely hold this place for the Kingdom!"

Vanguard Warrior Quetz rose to his full height, patting his chest generously. As an Imperial Guard Warrior of Prepetchan descent, he had eyes only for the Majesty of his Kingdom, not for any alliance's king. Thus, he raised his head, looked at Head Warrior Bertade, and asked solemnly.

"Respected Holy Eagle Head Warrior! If the alliance members attempt to come up and take control of this fortress... may I lead the Kingdom's warriors to drive them away, or even shoot them?"

"By the witness of the Chief Divine!"

Hearing this loyal inquiry, Head Warrior Bertade showed satisfaction and smiled calmly.

"Of course! This is an impregnable fortress and also a temple of the Kingdom! Quetz, I chose you to ensure this place is in your grasp! Regardless of who from the Alliance comes, unless they shed their last drop of blood, they should not dream of taking it!..."

"Good! Praise the Chief Divine! Just give me three thousand warriors to guard this mountain city... even if the Alliance launches an army of a hundred thousand in siege, after three and a half years of attacks, they still won't take it!..."

"Good! Good! Quetz, the role of Warrior Camp Chief of this Cloud Serpent Fortress, is entrusted to you! I will fill the mountain city with enough provisions, bags of salt, and deliver sufficient arrows, javelins, and rolling stones to you!..."

Head Warrior Bertade stroked his chin, nodded approvingly, then pondered for a moment, summoning Firebird Flower, a Second Level Kingdom Priest of Prepetchan descent, handsome and dignified.

"Firebird Flower Priest!"

"Respected Holy Eagle Head Warrior, Marshal Bertade!..."

"By the witness of the Chief Divine! Named after the vivid Firebird Flower, your demeanor is like a soaring firebird, vivid as splendid fireworks! You excel at dealing with priests and nobles... This strategically crucial Cloud Snake Temple, I entrust to you to master! And you will also be the Third Level Main Priest stationed in the Kingdom's fortress!"

"Ah! Praise the Chief Divine! Praise His Highness! And praise you, Holy Eagle Marshal!"

Upon hearing this, Firebird Flower, the Second Level Priest, showed excitement. He knelt to the ground, respectfully saluted, and responded in a loud voice.

"By the witness of the Chief Divine! I am a Kingdom Priest, a follower of the Majesty! Here will be a fortress of the Kingdom, and a temple of the Kingdom also!"

"Good! By the witness of the Chief Divine! Firebird Flower, guard this place for the Kingdom!... I will leave enough gemstones, gold, and silver, and feathered garb for you to deal with the nobles of the Alliance!... Remember, money is not an issue, better not to move armies if possible!"

"Following your command, Holy Eagle Marshal!..."

"Very good! May the Chief Divine protect! Everything is arranged... Cloud Serpent Fortress, this impregnable mountain city fortress, is a pin left by the Kingdom in the heart of the Alliance!... "

Head Warrior Bertade gazed distantly, standing in the highest point of Cloud Snake Temple, looking at the clouds in the sky as if amidst the cloud layers. Then he gazed westward over the plains, his sight extending over the far mountain ranges. And the Alliance's Lake Capital City, the core Texcoco Lake District, was beyond the mountains, not actually far.

"The long Eastern Expedition is over!... Soon, His Majesty will lead the army back to the Lake Capital City, to participate in the grand sacrificial rite!... Although His Majesty is confident and decisive, there are risks in all this, the attitude of King Aweit!..."

"May the Chief Divine protect! May this impregnable Cloud Serpent Fortress in the Kingdom's hands... weigh slightly on the scales between the Alliance and the Kingdom in the heart of God King Aweit!..."

"May the Divine bless the Kingdom! May the Divine bless my King!..."

Chapter 1436: New Routes for North American Expansion: Exile and Relocation!

As summer drew to a close, the Cloud Serpent Mountain City was warm and sweltering, and the highlands were verdant and lush. Inside the temple, the water cypress stood tall and strong, its trunk bearing black and red marks as if scorched by fire and stained with blood. Outside the temple, the white oaks were bare, their bark and leaves long since consumed.

"A great fire scorches the tall trees, and the people consume the bark. Sacrifices are offered by the Divine Descendants, the idol rots and collapses... Light descends, bloodstains vanish, and all glory returns to the Chief Divine!..."

The Head Warrior, Bertade, maintained a calm demeanor as he looked at the scene inside and outside the temple. He knew all that had transpired here, and he knew about the sacrificial rite held yesterday, though he had not participated personally. He then instructed his trusted aide to summon the important participants from the sacrificial rite for final arrangements.

"Go! Summon Black Serpent Teuctli!"

"Yes, Holy Eagle Marshal!"

Moments later, Black Serpent Teuctli arrived, bowing respectfully. By now, he was clad in a dark green Mexica war garment, with the Sun Amulet of the Chief Divine hanging around his neck. Most striking of all was the red divine emblem engraved on his forehead. One look at the width and depth of the stone dagger carvings would make anyone's forehead ache.

"Divine protection! Greetings from Black Serpent to you, esteemed Holy Eagle Marshal!..."

"Hmm. Black Serpent Teuctli, as promised by His Highness, you will be granted the status of Second Level Hereditary Noble of the Kingdom. Your fief lies far in the North American continent, in a warm bay valley region (now Morro Bay, between Los Angeles and San Francisco). Near that bay, there is a northern Salinan tribe called the Oak Tribe!"

"Praise the Supreme Main God! Praise the merciful His Highness! And praise you, the valiant Holy Eagle Marshal!..."

Though being reduced from the esteemed Cloud Serpent Divine Descendant to a Hereditary Noble of the Kingdom, Black Serpent nevertheless showed joy and respectfully knelt. After all, becoming a Hereditary Noble of the Kingdom meant gaining a foothold in the sweeping Alliance and Kingdom. However, the location of this fief...

"North America, bay valley, where is it?... Salinan people, Oak Tribe, what are they?..."

Black Serpent Teuctli thought hard but was certain he had never heard of such a place, nor of any Salinan tribe.

The Head Warrior Bertade gave a faint smile, not telling Black Serpent that the fief's location was "just" seven thousand miles away in the northwest. A month ago, the northern exploration fleet had sent a report suggesting the establishment of a supply port between West Mountain Port and Three Hills Port, which led to the arrangement of Black Serpent's fief... Bertade remained composed, only calmly outlining the next plans.

"Black Serpent, His Highness has granted you a quota of eight hundred tribe members. However, together, the two Cloud Serpent sites have more than a thousand survivors. I will entrust those surviving tribe members to you, as your tribal residents!"

"The Kingdom's Naval Forces will first transport you along the Talas River to Zicao County. There, there will be a miraculous rite called the 'Chief Divine's Eye.' You must participate in the rite and then listen to the Chief Divine's Priest preach the scripture... At the end of the year, the religious Inquisition in Zicao County will check your tribe's beliefs. You must at least memorize the important scriptures and prayers..."

"By early next year, the third fleet heading north will take you and a thousand others to that valley, your Black Serpent fief. The area of that valley is vast, and no one will restrict your exploration... The Kingdom fleet will provide you with food and tools for exploration, and dispatch the priests of the Chief Divine. As for the development of the fief, it will depend on you all!"

At this point, the Head Warrior Bertade paused for a moment, recalling the sight of the Black Serpent warriors and the surrendering Cloud Serpent warriors.

These Tlaxcala noble warriors, although yellowed and emaciated, appeared weak, that was merely due to hunger. In reality, with their stricter organization and the battle prowess honed from a sea of corpses, they held absolute advantage over the small and medium-sized tribes of North America.

However, the Kingdom did not trust these Divine Descendant Nobility warriors. In the Kingdom's conquest, they lost power, status, wealth, and tribes. They lost so much, yet had too much traditional influence over the ordinary tribal warriors. Thus, it was impossible for them to be integrated into the new legion, and they would often be sacrificed and executed!

But now, the exploration and settlement in North America have presented a new option: after conversion, these untrustworthy Divine Descendants, nobles, and warriors could be exiled and relocated to the remote North America!

In North America, each Divine Descendant and noble would be just isolated outposts. They, having lost contact with their original tribe, were like fish out of water, unable to struggle. And when they fought for and developed their fief, loyalty became a non-issue.

Once the settlements and small fiefs were established, the colonies in North America and the northern trade route outposts would connect in a line. These isolated small fiefs became diligent pioneers in the north and providers for the fleet's supply. They could not resist the Kingdom, nor could they confront it even if they developed. After all, besides food, their essential supplies, including metal tools, weapons, sacred gemstones, feathered cotton garments, were all supplied by the Kingdom's fleet!

"This new route for northern exploration, the exile and relocation of each Divine Descendant and noble... His Highness is both benevolent and wise!..."

The Head Warrior Bertade's thoughts raced, recalling the recent letter from His Highness, which emphasized the relocation strategy, evoking feelings of admiration. He reached out and patted Black Serpent Teuctli's shoulder, patiently advising him.

"Black Serpent, when the Kingdom's northern fleet transports you to the fief, they will also provide you with an additional batch of leather armor, axes, spears, and bow and arrows! Your tribe mostly consists of warrior-worthy men, lacking women to continue the tribe... As for the Salinan Oak Tribe, only five to six hundred people are there, and other tribes are not large... It is a great opportunity for fusion!"

"Ah! Develop the fief, merging with local tribes?..."

Upon hearing this, Black Serpent Teuctli's eyes gleamed, contemplative. The Chief Divine had cast him down from the lofty heights, yet seemingly gave him a barren wilderness, leaving a new hope in some distant North...

"May the Chief Divine protect!..."

Seeing Black Serpent's sincere prayer, the Head Warrior Bertade nodded with satisfaction. He turned to look at old militia Chiwaco in the corner, speaking solemnly.

"Chief Divine protect! His Highness already has plans for exploring the Southern Continent. Captain Chiwaco, you need to prepare early!... Now that Cloud Serpent City has fallen, you can return to the Kingdom of the Lake, rest a while, and stay at home for some time... After all, once the voyage to the Southern Continent begins, the unpredictable fate will once again hover over the sea of death..."

Hearing "go home," the old militia Chiwaco's face showed a hint of brightness. But soon, he remembered the endless surging sea, and his expression turned a tad somber.

"Chief Divine protect! Thank you! Holy Eagle Marshal! I heard you're going to Cuba... If you have time, I can tell you all about the Taino people in Cuba..."

"Good! I'd love to hear about it!"

The Head Warrior Bertade nodded calmly, giving a positive response. Finally, he looked at the young Dark Snake, inquiring.

"Chief Divine witness! Military Merit Noble Dark Snake, what are your plans? Do you wish to follow your father to the northern fief... or do you want to continue staying with the exploration fleet, serving the Kingdom?"

"I?... I would like to..."

Young Dark Snake's eyes widened, eager to voice his choice. However, as the words reached his lips, he saw his father Black Serpent's signaling gaze and remembered his father's previous stern instructions... Moments later, he lowered his head dejectedly and answered softly.

"Chief Divine protect! I am willing to remain with the fleet, continuing to serve the Kingdom!"

"Oh?"

Upon hearing this, the Head Warrior Bertade was slightly taken aback. He looked deeply at young Dark Snake, then at the respectful Black Serpent Teuctli, calmly concluding the conversation.

"Very well! Not bad! Dark Snake, if you can survive and return from the voyage to the Southern Continent... there will undoubtedly be a place for you in the future of the Kingdom's expansion!..."

"Alright, you may go now... May the Chief Divine protect you!"

Chapter 1437: The Doctrine of Heavenly Destiny: Five Gods, Five Elements, Five Missions, and the Origins of the Clans

The long wind of September stretches a thousand miles eastward, accompanied by the running Messenger, until the end of the seaside. The golden one ascends to the sky, illuminating the ancient seaside city. And the black God of Death's Wolf Banner flies over the head of Hidden Serpent City, symbolizing the king's presence!

At this moment, thousands of Imperial Guard Warriors are tightly patrolling inside and outside the city. In the most securely guarded Hidden Serpent Temple, Xiulote looks on with satisfaction, watching the two Third-Level Main Priests before him, and gives a pleased nod.

"May the Chief Divine protect us! Very good! Very good!... Papu, Iwood, the epic outline of the ancestors you reported, I am very satisfied!..."

"Papu, the five symbolic Divine Objects you proposed for the Five Eras: Flame, Divine Tree, Blue Serpent, Golden Eagle, and Black Wolf, can be further expanded!... That is, the Five Elements of the Five Eras: Fire, Wood, Water, Gold, Earth!... These Five Elements of the Five Eras are exactly about reverse-generating and accepting the predecessors, Wood generates Fire, Water generates Wood, Gold generates Water, Earth generates Gold... As for the detailed explanation, hmm..."

Upon saying this, Xiulote paused for a moment and decided to stand on the shoulders of the Celestial Empire, transforming the Han Dynasty's "Five Virtues and Five Elements Theory" into the "Five Gods, Five Elements, Five Missions"! This is the American characteristic of "Heaven and Human Resonance," the Central American version of "Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals," to form a complete doctrine of Heavenly Mandate rule.

"The Chief Divine has sent down Divine Revelation! This is precisely Five Gods, Five Elements, Five Missions!... The reverse generation of Five Elements is just like the shape of a pyramid. The topmost layer is Fire, which receives the divinity of the Sun God! Next is Wood, nurturing the verdant fields. Then comes Water, connecting the East and West Great Lakes. Below that is Gold, conquering the various places of the North and South. The final layer is Earth, connected to the land, extending to the land of the Jiao People, linking the North-South Continent and all tribes under heaven!..."

"Therefore, these Five Gods, Five Elements, Five Missions, layer by layer, reverse-accept and expand, the divinity spreads from heaven to earth, becoming ever grander and broader... It is not only the epic outline of the Five Eras, but the prophecy that the Chief Divine granted to the ancestors has long revealed the five fates and missions of the Jiao People's descendants!..."

"Those are 'Inherit Divine Fire, Worship the Chief Divine', 'Cultivate the fields, nurture millions', 'Connect the Great Lakes, control the two oceans', 'Conquer the four directions, prosper in martial virtue', finally 'Unify the North and South, boundless across a myriad miles!'... In summary, it's 'Faith', 'Farming', 'Controlling the Sea', 'Conquest', 'Unification'!"

Xiulote, with a smile of satisfaction, concluded somewhat proudly.

"Five Gods: Flame, Divine Tree, Blue Serpent, Golden Eagle, Black Wolf! Five Elements: Fire, Wood, Water, Gold, Earth! Five Missions: Faith, Farming, Controlling the Sea, Conquest, Unification! So, the legacy of the Five Eras, Five Gods, Five Elements, Five Missions, is the Heavenly Mandate of us Jiao People's descendants to rule the world!... Haha!..."

"Ah! Oh this! Let me record your holy words, Your Highness, and carefully study them to refine them into our ancestors' divine text!..."

Papu Priest was stunned for several moments upon hearing this comprehensive system of teachings, showing sincere admiration. He respectfully bowed, then quickly began writing, recording His Highness' enlightenment. Behind him, two steps away, the old Witch Doctor Kani shrank his neck, instantly realizing he had encountered a truly formidable peer. He immediately bowed his head, deciding to remain silent and not vie for any credit in composing history.

"Oh Heavenly Divine! This Highness, said to be divinely inspired, though young in age, is so adept at 'prophecy, divination, and divinity'!... Hmm, no, it is taboo among peers, saying too much would lead to mistakes!... In his presence, it is better to say less, yes, less!..."

"Very well! What I just said is the main idea and outline. As for specific elucidations, epic correspondences, interpretations of relics and Divine Objects... these will depend on your excavation and research! As long as your compilation yields results, the printing houses of the Alliance and Kingdom will print thousands of copies of these ancestors' epics with illustrated texts, distributing them to every village and banner team, letting all tribes under heaven inherit and chant them!... And all of you who compose history will also become immortal with the spread of these epics!..."

Xiulote, with a smile and poems, affirmed the contributions and merits of these Coastal Priests on the cultural unification front and promised rewards in the future. Then, looking towards the other Third-Level Main Priest, Iwood, he praised with a smile.

"Iwood, you are also doing well! You managed to see the lineage of six Olmec ancestors from the kingdom's epics, excavating the bloodline of the Jiao People from the distant East Sea Islands and various tribes on the North-South Continent... I am very satisfied, very satisfied!"

"The Chief Divine bears witness! You must continue the research and excavation in this area, you can even create another book, titled... 'Jiao People's Ancestral History, Study of the World's Clan Origins'.

Now, with the Alliance unifying the Highland and Seaside, the highland system and cloud system are almost completely under control, you can start proving from the Olmec ancestors onwards, generation by generation!"

"Remember! For all tribes, the source is the same for ten thousand generations, you must 'pursue truth and reality', thoroughly 'excavate' every tribe's Jiao People's ancestral lineage! And those outstanding ancestors from each tribe, the epic heroes sung, must also be 'organized' and recorded within, leaving behind the names of the Jiao People's bloodline..."

"The God's Temples and Priests in various places will cooperate with your historical verification! Once the compilation is complete, the necessary ancestral steles to be erected, and the inheritance carvings, craftsmen will naturally engrave them, offering them at the Main God Temples of each place, receiving the worship of the tribespeople!..."

Xiulote earnestly instructed, guiding with patience. For the unification of all tribes under heaven, for the cohesion of various tribes into one nation. He did not mind starting a 'discovery of ancestors' throughout the world, compiling an unprecedented 'vast lineage'. Even, if necessary, large-scale 'archaeological excavations' and 'reproductions of panels' are entirely possible, and they will definitely occur!

"As for the 'Maya lineage', the 'Island lineage', the 'Northern lineage'... Since the Alliance and the Kingdom have already made contact, preparations can be made in advance... But the 'Southern lineage' is somewhat too distant and is not urgent at the moment..."

"Yes! Yes! Praise the Chief Divine! Praise Your Highness!... I will definitely compile the Jiao People ancestors' history, authenticate the ancestors of various tribes of the Jiao People!..."

The Third-level Main Priest Iwood was full of excitement, prostrating. From the instructions of His Highness, he could imagine how grand a project it would be to compile the history of the Jiao People and organize the ancestral origins of all tribes under heaven. And what immense power and honor it would carry! With such responsibility bestowed upon him by His Highness, his future would certainly not be just that of a third-level main priest!

"May the Chief Divine protect! Perhaps ten or twenty years later, I might even touch the revered Divine Staff of a Fifth-level Supreme High Priest!..."

"Very good! All you Coastal Priests, I am very satisfied with your ancestral authentication and excavations! From today onward, the staff compiling the ancestral epics shall continue to expand, double in size!... Hmm, right here, establish the Olmec Academy of the Divine Might University of the Kingdom, responsible for compiling the epics! And subsequent Priest Apprentices will also join in batches, allowing your authentications to systematically continue!"

"As for the direction of your authentication, it should be divided into two main categories: one is the Heavenly Destiny of the Five Eras, Five Gods, Five Elements, Five Missions. The other is the history of the Jiao People ancestors, the heritage of six branches!"

After arranging the matters related to the centuries-long 'historical construction project', Xiulote felt elated and the smile on his face became much brighter. He looked at the many respectful Coastal Priests, at those graying heads, generously granting promises.

"May the Chief Divine witness! Learned and devout Coastal Priests, accomplish all this, and your names shall be eternally engraved in the epics! And whether you or your descendants, you will be richly rewarded by the Kingdom!"

"Praise the Supreme Chief Divine! Praise the Olmec Ancestors! Praise the Divine Revelation of His Highness!!..."

Many history-compiling priests saluted in unison, their voices filled with excitement. Meanwhile, the old Witch Doctor Kani lowered his head, eyes flickering, feeling that the position he had mingled into this time seemed like one he could truly hold for a lifetime...

"Your Highness! An urgent message from the Head Warrior!..."

Everyone was gathered together, singing praises and imagining a bright future. A red-haired, swift-running Messenger, however, raised a roll of parchment high, rushing in from outside the Temple. Moments later, Xiulote took the parchment, unfolded it for a glance, and burst into hearty laughter.

"Haha! Good! Very good!... More than half a month ago, the Kingdom's legion had already captured Cloud Serpent Mountain City! The last City-State of Tlaxcala on the Highland has thus fallen!"

"This is the protection of the Chief Divine, and even more so a revelation of destiny! The unification of the world, the fusion of all tribes, has taken yet another great step forward!"

At this point, Xiulote felt exuberant and very satisfied. After nearly four years of conquest, the most stubborn archenemy of the Mexica Alliance, the Tlaxcala tribes, known posthumously for their strongest fighting force, had finally been completely annihilated! And at this moment, the unification of Central America, apart from the loosely divided Maya tribes, had only two remaining major forces: the Mistec tribes, and the Zapotec tribes!

"Praise the Chief Divine! Go, record this major event as a symbol of the fusion of the Tlaxcala tribes into the epics, to be sung to future generations!"

"Praise the Chief Divine! Divine protection for the Alliance!"

The many Coastal Priests saluted again, faces full of smiles. The stronger the Alliance became, the more important their work. And when the Alliance unified all tribes under heaven, everything they unearthed would be history that is immutable for millennia, passed down through generations!~

Chapter 1438: Merriment Here, the Strategist Walks into the Trap

"Praise the Chief Divine! The Kingdom has vanquished Cloud Serpent Mountain City, and with it, the Alliance's sworn enemy is exterminated! Come, join me for a drink, in celebration of the Divine King!"...

"Yes!... Praise the Chief Divine! Celebrate the Divine King! Celebrate His Highness!"...

The night was vast, and the bonfire blazed. In the Divine Descendant's Palace within Hidden Serpent City, a new master had arrived, heralding a grand feast not seen in ages. Xiulote, with a gentle smile, held a cup of copal resin wine, seated high upon the grand Holy Tree Throne. Below him, numerous military generals, temple priests, and tribe chiefs sat on small bamboo mats, their status easily distinguished at a glance.

The so-called "Copal" is a sacred resin used for sacrificial rites in the Highland, Seaside, and even among the various Maya tribes, known as the holy "Blood of the Tree"! This resin is secreted by various fragrant trees of the tropical olive family, forming clusters that lie between amber and agarwood, with scents varying according to the heritage and blending of each region. In the Seaside's epic traditions, as far back as the ancient Olmec Era, there was a practice of burning copal resin during sacrificial ceremonies.

Copal resin can emit a strong fragrance when burned, also serving in rituals to guide the priest's soul to communicate with the ancient ancestors of all gods. Therefore, throughout all tribes in Central America, copal is expensive and highly sought after.

The Seaside tribes, located in the tropical jungle, are one of the primary original production areas of this "Blood of the Tree". And the resin chalice in Xiulote's hand is a divine object from Hidden Serpent Holy City, unearthed from a large, ancient resin fossil excavated centuries ago. With this chalice, one naturally bears a subtle fragrance while drinking, as if communing with the ancient tree spirits!

As for the Holy Tree Throne upon which Xiulote sat, it is also considered one of the legacy divine objects of Hidden Serpent Holy City. Originating from a "Holy Wood" tree over a thousand years old (similar to South American Palo Santo), it was crafted from its heart and naturally carries a relaxing fragrance.

In Seaside legend, it is said to be a divine gift from the Feathered Serpent to the first followers, possessing magical cleansing and healing effects. Now, these precious divine objects, symbolizing heritage and divinity, have fallen into the hands of the Kingdom of the Lake with the fall of Hidden Serpent Holy City!

"Praise the prince of Divine Revelation! You have unified the Seaside lands, becoming the first common king of the Seaside tribes!... Let our Seaside priests offer dance and song to you!"

As everyone indulged in the revelry, the High Priest of Golden Bay, Iwood, stood with flushed face, eager to present a dance to the king. Hearing this, the Papu Priest quickly rose to agree and voiced his colored praise.

"Indeed! Indeed! Honorable Highness, you are the divine sun of the Seaside, shining with golden brilliance! Let us pray and sing of your generosity and compassion, just like praising the divine mountain at dawn!"...

"Haha! Good!... Respected Seaside priests, you are all learned sages. Sing for me a hymn of the Olmec ancestors!"...

Listening to the rainbow-like praises, Xiulote's lips curled into a smile, feeling a great satisfaction in his heart. These Seaside priests, with some Olmec heritage, are much more eloquent than the

straightforward Highland priests. Now was a time to relax, and he was delighted to hear the songs of praise, enjoying this harmony between sovereign and subjects.

"Uh... good! Let me begin!"

The Papu Priest, undaunted, danced with his hands and feet, using a melodious priestly tone to first chant the opening.

"In the era of the five suns, the ancestors of the Olmec rose in sacred radiance! That was the first flame, igniting the towering Divine Tree. Then, the blue snake wandered the deep sea, the Golden Eagle soared over the towering highlands, and the Black Wolf ran across the vast land!"...

"And I, in the heavenly destiny of the Five Gods and Five Elements, saw the immortal black light... It traverses several cycles from the ancient era to this very moment, shining upon my most loyal heart, dedicated to my supreme king!"...

Hearing the Papu Priest's colorful and magnificent compliment, High Priest Iwood's eyelid twitched, feeling a shiver down his back. Compared to Papu, born of a High Priest, his literary talent was notably inferior. He pondered for a while before speaking with difficulty, constantly shifting the direction of his hands, striving to exalt.

"The six ancestral rivers originate from the original Ancient Saint City, flowing to the endless four directions of the world! Countless Jiao People tribes, one near the West, one near the South, one near the East, and one far in the East... and two dispersed great rivers, one far, far North, and one far, far South!"...

"And wherever they may be, they are the bloodline of our Jiao People ancestors, our long-lost brothers. Though they have forgotten, they are destined to return, and rekindle faith in the singular Chief Divine, ruled by the sole king of Divine Revelation!"...

"Haha! Good! Very good! Continue!"...

After the two high priests finished, the gazes of the many priests collectively turned towards the downcast Old Witch Doctor, Kani. Xiulote raised an eyebrow, curious, and focused his attention on this uniquely featured, yet always low-key old priest.

"Papu, who is he?"...

"Your Highness, he is Kani, the most extraordinary sage among many priests! He possesses a legacy divine object, able to predict fortunes, never failing!"...

"Oh?! Possesses a divine object, skilled in prophecy?"

Upon hearing this, Xiulote's face froze, and he surprisedly sized up the old Witch Doctor, Kani. Then, he stroked his chin and smiled meaningfully.

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! Wise Kani, please continue to complete this song of praise... I must implore you to foretell and divine for me the not-so-distant future!..."

"Uh... this! I..."

Hearing the King's command and feeling the gaze of everyone, old Witch Doctor Kani's heart trembled, his back instantly drenched in sweat. He had never intended to speak of any future 'divination' before someone like Xiulote, who excelled in 'prophecy'! But seeing the King's half-smile, he knew he had no retreat...

After a moment of hesitation, old Witch Doctor Kani, holding the ceramic plate he always carried, gritted his teeth hard. Recalling fragmented words from memory, he once again took a great risk to perform a major divine dance.

"The end of the Era's cycle begins anew, the noonday sun reflects the newborn dawn, forging the Divine Artifacts of the world in fire! The Golden Eagle and the Black Wolf, one before the other, sweep across the various tribes under the sky, also ruling the sky, the earth, and the sea!... The twin suns in the sky burn the world, until the Golden Eagle descends into the high mountains and the Black Wolf stands alone at the peak, where only a truly unique black glow will appear!..."

"And the end of an Era is always accompanied by disaster, the newer and broader the Era, the deeper and more terrifying the destruction! The beginning of this Fifth Epoch will bring black shadows and white calamities, coming from the distant Eastern Sea, bringing unprecedented roars and deaths!..."

"However, the black light is immortal and undying, the grasses and trees of the world will eventually continue to grow. In the trial of the divine disaster in the final days, the roots of the Divine Tree will eventually spread, uniting the withered vegetation into one... Until the divine disaster passes, when the plants blossom again, they will meld into one, thriving like never before!..."

"Hmm?! The Golden Eagle descends into the mountains, the Black Wolf stands alone at the peak? Unprecedented roars and deaths? After the divine disaster, all tribes unite as one?!"

On the Holy Tree's Throne, Xiulote's expression fluctuated, instantly becoming solemn. His gaze was deep, staring intently at the wise Kani, not speaking for a long time.

There could only be two possibilities for the other to sing such a prophetic ballad! One is truly having the ability of prophecy, or possessing a mysterious Divine Object. The other possibility is being exceedingly intelligent, having deduced his intentions from the prophecies spread by the exploration fleet. And regardless of which one it is...

Xiulote pondered for a long time, watching the cold sweat break out on old Witch Doctor Kani's forehead, his limbs trembling slightly, before suddenly bursting into laughter.

"Good! Very good! What a wise Kani, indeed extraordinary!... Ecatl!"

"Family Head?"

"Witnessed by the Chief Divine! To encounter such a wise person, I am very pleased! Come! Bestow upon him the Divine Object goblet in my hand!..."

"Yes, Family Head!"

"Ah! Thank you, Your Highness of Divine Revelation! Such a Divine Object can only be owned by someone truly noble! And an old man like me dare not..."

"Haha! Witnessed by the Chief Divine! In my life, I most admire wise people and most enjoy listening to the teachings of the wise..."

Xiulote smiled slightly, interrupting the old Witch Doctor. Then, he squinted his eyes, looking at the reverent and bowed old Witch Doctor, speaking softly yet deciding his fate.

"Respected Wise Kani! From today on, please stay by my side, to converse and teach at any time!..."

Upon hearing this, many Priests' eyes were filled with envy. However, old Witch Doctor Kani's knees went soft, and his once calm voice began to tremble.

"Ah?! Ah this!... Your Highness... I still have the duty of compiling history..."

"No matter! By my side, you can still compile epic sagas, and can even compile them better!..."

Xiulote, with a playful demeanor, sized up the nervous old Witch Doctor. His face was adorned with a smile, but his voice carried an undeniable authority.

"Just as well, you can accompany me back to the magnificent Lake Capital City... to behold the Alliance's Heritage Tablet, the epic collection... and to truly witness the noonday sun and the figure of the Golden Eagle!..."

Chapter 1439: Supreme Joy! Warriors Dance and Revel

"May the Chief Divine bless the Kingdom! Your Highness, the coastal priests have offered their sacrificial songs in your honor. Next, it's time for the Coastal Samurai to perform a dance of loyalty!"

"Good! Haha! Come, let me witness the might of the Coastal Samurai!"

As the night breeze warmed up, the generals drank heartily, and the banquet grew increasingly lively. Following Black Wolf Torc's suggestion, the Coastal Warrior Camp Chiefs removed their sweat-soaked robes, wearing only a loincloth, and strode in with blunt war clubs in hand.

At the banquets of the various tribes in Central America, it's common to see priests and warriors presenting songs and dances during tribal alliances. Typically, these performances take two forms. One is between tribes of equal strength, showcasing each other's epic tales and highlighting the valor of the warriors. If there are conflicts between tribes, they might even duel at the feast, with warriors wielding sharp blades in a life-and-death fight to decide the ownership of a lake or a mountain, or the outcome of a conflict.

The other kind of performance occurs between higher-ranking leaders and their followers of lower status. The lower-ranking priests and warriors express their loyalty or respect to the leaders and nobility through sacrificial songs and war dances, as seen at this moment.

"Boom boom boom!"

The urgent beat of leather drums sounded in the corner of the banquet. Eight Totonac Warrior Camp Chiefs lined up, bowing to the King. Xiulote's expression grew solemn as he gazed at the coastal heroes who had recently surrendered, recalling the names and origins of each camp chief.

"Camp Commander Muxi, originally a surrendered general from Five Mountains City, was the first to join the Alliance and has experienced almost all the coastal battles..."

Camp Commander Red Ear, a commoner warrior from the Feathered Serpent Ancient City, the most obedient, and most efficient at clearing the nobility of various tribes...

Camp Commander Water Falcon, a tribal warrior conscripted from Nianshui City, is a valiant vanguard camp commander...

Camp Commander Kuikama, hailing from the Tohua tribe, was captured and surrendered in the first Battle of Golden Bay, specializing in jungle skirmishes...

Camp Commander Tiger Feather, originally a surrendered warrior from Conical House City, personally sacrificed the former Chieftain Yoltzin of Conical House, also an assault commander on the front lines...

Camp Commander Forest Wolf Mayakun, from Coyote City, is the most devout, fierce, and battle-loving, earning Black Wolf's favor...

Camp Commander Black Spear Stone, a commoner warrior from Stone Engraving City's surrender, adept at javelin throwing and jungle combat...

Camp Commander Divine Rabbit Toqina, former chieftain of Rabbit Hill City in the south, captured and surrendered in Golden Bay City, subsequently lost his tribe's chieftain position, specializes in dealing with the southern Mountain Tribes..."

Xiulote glanced around; these Totonac camp chiefs were all surrendered generals from various tribes, mostly fought their way out from among the warriors, and are nearly all skilled in jungle warfare. Moving forward, if the Kingdom were to campaign against the Maya Tribes and venture deep into the jungles of the Yucatan Peninsula, these coastal leaders adept at jungle terrain would be indispensable!

Thinking of this, Xiulote smiled widely, raised his cup, and laughed aloud in praise.

"May the Chief Divine bless! You are all camp chiefs of the Coastal Legion, the kingdom's loyal and valiant generals, and the most reliable backbone of the Coastal tribes! Haha! I adore warriors! Come! Ecatl, pour tequila for these brave souls!"

"May the Chief Divine bless! Praise be to Your Highness!"

The eight warrior camp chiefs, visibly excited, drained their cups in unison. Then, they tossed aside their cups and, right in front of Xiulote, danced vigorously with their heavy, blunt war clubs, performing a gallant and intense war dance!

"Ah haha! The Sun looks upon the battlefield, the Divine Serpent sways its tail!...

Ah haha! Blood dyes the earth, warriors dash, charge, and slay!...

Ah haha! Warriors live like leaping leopards, die like falling eagles!...

Ah haha! The Earth blazes with fire, the sea storms and clashes!...

Ah haha! The warrior's soul is undying, even amidst fire and rain!...

Ah haha! Great Chief God of Death, for you, fight to the death!...

Ah haha! Great Chief God of Death, the supreme only King, greater than heaven and earth!...

Ah haha! The one supreme King, greater than heaven and earth! Tremendously great!...

"

Listening to this "simple" war song, Xiulote's eyes widened instantly, and his mouth twitched slightly. He observed the warrior camp chiefs who sang and danced fervently, then turned to see the Black Wolf Torc, head held high in smug satisfaction, instantly realizing the source of the battle hymn.

"Oh! You sly Black Wolf... your cultural level has improved indeed!"

Xiulote's mouth curved into a smile as he attentively listened for a moment, becoming infected by the uplifting emotion in the song. For some reason, listening to these warriors sing with all their might and looking at their honest yet fierce faces was far more relaxing and exhilarating to him than hearing the priests' melodious and ornate praises!

"Haha! Good! Very well done! My loyal warriors, you sang splendidly! Come! Bring wine, I want to personally pour for my warriors!"

"Praise you, Great Chief God of Death! Willing to die for you!"

"Haha! Excellent! Splendid!"

This offering of song and drink by the coastal warriors pushed the atmosphere of the banquet to a climax! Soon, the kingdom's generals were mingled together, arms wrapped around shoulders, shouting and toasting in raucous unison!

On this night, all the Mexica generals, Prepetcha generals, Canine Descendant generals, Tekos generals, and Totonac generals drank with exuberance, howling like wolves and roaring like tigers, one drink after another until they fell "clunk" drunk. Even the coastal priests beside them were dumbfounded, caught and successively drunk to the ground by the boisterous warriors. Even the aloof and distinguished Old Witch Doctor Kani was seized by two canine trusted aides of Black Wolf, doused in rice wine, then started to predict fortunes wildly.

"Haha! The Divine Object has a spirit, it brightens my eyes! I can see at a glance that you two are destined for great prosperity! What are your names? Fruit Tree Chabo? Mud Tree Miqui? ... Haha! You two are destined with the Divine Tree! You will climb the Divine Tree and see the true light! ... What? You don't want light, but something real? Fine! You will climb the Divine Tree and catch the true big fish! A big fish! A white big fish! ... Hahaha! ..."

The fragrance of alcohol filled the air, lingering in the palace. Pots of tequila, fruit wine, pineapple wine, and honey wine were being served as if for free, only to turn into empty clay pots one after another. The elderly Coastal Priests were the first to get drunk, followed by the Coastal Camp Commanders, and finally a few Great Generals... In the end, only Xiulote was left standing. He surveyed the fallen priests and generals, laughing drunkenly and triumphantly.

"Hahaha! The Divine is watching over us! I am the radiant sun, I am the ultimate victor! I am... the only king!..."

"Family Head, you are drunk!..."

"Haha! I'm not drunk! I can still... Hm? Ecatl, why haven't you fallen yet?..."

"Ah! Family Head, I'm not... I'm also drunk! ... It's just that I remembered my duty tonight is not yet completed, and I needed to stay awake a little while longer..."

"Hm... stay awake a little while longer? That works!..."

Xiulote shook his head, bleary-eyed, looking at Guard Commander Ecatl, who seemed to be swaying, and shouted loudly.

"Ecatl! Stop swaying back and forth!... Tonight? What duty do you still have?"

"Ah! Family Head... The Silver Raven tribe also sent an envoy to join tonight's feast!..."

"Hm? The Silver Raven tribe of the Vastec people? Their envoy also came? Where is he? Is he drunk?!"

"Uh... Family Head, the envoy is also drunk. But before he fell, he first congratulated His Highness on the victory of the eastward campaign, then conveyed the alliance friendship from the Great Chief of the Silver Raven... Finally, he inquired about the two Silver Raven princesses, hoping to deepen the connection between the kingdom and the Silver Raven tribe... After all, even Ilian, the daughter of the Chief of Colima, is already pregnant..."

Guard Commander Ecatl cautiously chose his words. However, the dizzy Xiulote completely misunderstood.

"Ecatl, you're rambling on about nonsense? Where's the wine? Hurry up and bring it to me!... I'm happy tonight! While you're still awake, drink a few more glasses with me!..."

"Uh..."

Guard Commander Ecatl blinked, pondered for a moment, and replied with a smile.

"Family Head, I can't, my moment of sobriety is almost over, and I'll soon be drunk... However, there are two who aren't drunk and would like to share a drink with you, just in the nearby side hall..."

"Hm? There are still people not drunk? No way! Chief Divine as my witness! I must be the last victor! The only one! ... Who are they?! Where?..."

Xiulote raised his head, though bleary-eyed, he exuded a vibrant fighting spirit, like a Wolf King ready to fight to the end. He murmured softly, speaking continuously, with what seemed like a flame burning in his chest.

"No way! I must, must be the final victor! I am the only one! The highest! The greatest!..."

"Yes! Family Head, you are the only Sun, and the only King!... Please follow me, they have been waiting in the side hall for a long time..."

"Oh? Side hall? Great! Lead the way!..."

Xiulote strode forward, staggering, and arrived at the quiet side hall. It was a hot night, and he had drunk too much, so he casually threw off his robes, leaving only his shorts. As he saw the sister flowers in the side hall whose appearances were similar, he paused evidently, his gaze becoming hazy.

"Is it you? Liuyu, Liuyao? ... Uh, are you one person or two?..."

"Powerful and brave Highness! ... Um, we... we are... yours!..."

Sister Bai Lan Liuyu and sister Daisy Liuyao exchanged smiles and spoke simultaneously. Sister Liuyu's appearance was pure and elegant, her voice crisp like the singing of skylarks. Sister Liuyao's face was young and tender, her voice soft like a fawn's gentle call. However, the twin voices in Xiulote's ears confused him even more, heating him up all over.

"Mine... you are mine? ... Who is the elder sister? ... Who is the younger sister?..."

"Hehe! ... Your Highness, let's do a flower dance for you first, and then you feel the flowers yourself... you'll understand!..."

With that, the sisters raised their arms, lifted their toes, and started a twirling flower dance in front of Xiulote. They intertwined at times, spun around at times, with postures like orchids or daisies, the alluring scent of flowers occasionally wafting over... making the drunken Xiulote unable to distinguish

even more. He watched for a while in confusion, really unable to tell, he decided to stretch out his hand to catch one.

"You two little butterflies, always swaying back and forth! Hm?... Are you Liuyu?"

"Hehe! Your Highness, you caught the wrong one!..."

"Indeed! Your Highness, I'm over here!..."

"Oh, Your Highness, you hurt me!..."

"Hmm! Your Highness, I want to be caught too!..."

Out on an outing, the tropical seaside is always hot, with enchanting flowers, fluttering butterflies, and intoxicating fragrances. Travelers who view the sight are dazzled, their hearts shaken.

At the end of summer, flowers bloom brilliantly, revealing an indescribable intoxication. The flowers bloom like dreams, the scents soak in, visitors are drunk among the flowers, as if floating on clouds, and the clouds unknown to have a deadline.

The bonfire sways, the night is vast and misty. The journey finds no finish line; floral scents engrave memories never forgotten. The bright moon rises over the sea, then falls into the traveler's newly awakened eyes, finally halting him for a long while, until dawn breaks~

Chapter 1440: A Thousand Miles of Land, a Million People, the Alliance by the Seaside Under Kingdom Rule!

"Hmm? So that's it! A book with twin flowers... Hmm?! What?!..."

As dawn broke, the side hall was illuminated by clear light. Xiulote suddenly got up, waking from a deep sleep. He widened his eyes, gazing at the rising sun with a vacant stare, while his mind buzzed with noise. He rubbed his temples, his head aching, as that unforgettable, silver-bell-like voice seemed to still

echo in his ears. It took a while before he looked around, seeing the entwined sleeping sisters, a dramatic look crossing his face.

"This is... the older sister? This is... the younger sister?..."

This time, even with their eyes closed and no expression visible, Xiulote could clearly distinguish them, as if it was an instinct deeply engraved in his bones. He was stunned for a moment before understanding an ancient saying from the Celestial Empire.

"What is learned from books always feels shallow, true understanding requires personal practice..."

"No!... All conditioned phenomena are like dream bubbles, like dew and lightning, they should be observed thusly..."

Xiulote stood up, squinting at the glaring morning sun. The dizziness after the drunkenness and indulgence still left him a bit dazed, even the sun seemed to sway and shimmer. He tried to adapt for a while and spoke to himself, distorting a Buddhist scripture in the process.

"Chief Divine witness! This unforgettable pleasure, these dreamlike flower shadows, this marvelous flower dew, and trembling lightning... let me experience them several more times, trying to comprehend the escape from the most difficult entanglement!..."

Sunrise and sunset, flowers bloom without a trace. Such absurdly indulgent days lasted for several more days. Xiulote barely gained insight into Buddhist principles, extricating himself from impermanence and change, and continued to deal with the affairs of the Seaside Alliance.

"Chief Divine protect! The populations of various departments in the Seaside Alliance were roughly estimated once by their respective priests. In the vast Seaside Lands, the departments are too scattered, unlike the alliance and kingdoms on the Highland... In these thousand leagues of Seaside, there's no division of states, only centers one after another! Specifically speaking, the Seaside Alliance controls two large cities and eight small cities, accounting for a total of ten city-states!..."

The rosewood table was long, with documents and illustrations from each city laid out across it. Xiulote sat cross-legged in front of the table, carefully examining the reports of each city and department. Behind him, two similarly-looking clerks smiled sweetly, their expressions bright, like fragrant flower buds after the rain. One was mixing dark blue ink, and the other was burning pleasant-smelling balm, perfectly in sync, creating a unique scene.

"The ten cities of the Seaside actually belong directly to the Kingdom! Eight small cities: Five Mountains City, Snake-Cutting City, Nianshui City, Conical House City, Coyote City, Ke Shi City, Lake Sacrifice City, Grass Altar City. Each small city is the center, encompassing a radius of 60 li, each with 30,000 to 50,000 tribes... The estimated total is over 300,000 troops and inhabitants!..."

Xiulote looked at the Seaside map, marking smaller blue circles. In the vast Seaside Lands, the jungle swamp was dense, rivers flooded during the rainy season... Before large-scale water control projects were completed, suitable sites for opening up settlements were very limited.

Therefore, the Kingdom's rule over the Seaside Lands wasn't a single entity but a series of circular areas centered around city-states. In fact, the rule area of the various Maya Chieftain Kingdoms was the same, determined by the natural conditions of the jungle and mountains!

"Two large cities, Golden Bay City in the Seaside center, with 160,000 mouths in a radius of 120 li. And Hidden Snake City in the farthest east, with 150,000 mouths in a radius of 160 li. Together, the two large

cities have another 300,000 villagers and troops! The ten cities add up to a total of over 600,000 mouths!..."

Xiulote's eyes shifted slightly, drawing two large circles, then he pondered silently. These over 600,000 Totonac Tribes mostly settled on the Seaside, being the most traditional Seaside departments, also known as the location of the East and West Totonac Alliance in the Alliance's perception.

"Chief Divine witness! These over 600,000 mouths are organized into troops, establishing civilian settlements, directly under the Kingdom's control! All these direct subjects have converted to the Chief Divine, sent Chief God Priests, and appointed Kingdom troop captains and civilian settlement leaders. They can provide a substantial amount of taxes and food, and can also provide the largest number of warriors and able-bodied men..."

"And from the ten cities by the Seaside going inland, there are three Totonac City-State Tribes that have submitted to the Seaside Alliance. They are located in the jungle deep in the inland, and can also be regarded as Totonac Tribes in the Jungle. These three cities are Feather Bird City, Earth River City, Rabbit Hill City... With each City-State as the center, in a radius of 100 li, each has about 60,000 to 70,000 tribes. Together, they are over 200,000 semi-directly ruled tribes, or vassal tribes..."

The so-called semi-direct rule means, simply put, they've not undergone large-scale cleansing of the nobility and chieftains, nor changed the original tribal system, but only made them swear a blood oath to convert to the Chief Divine. Therefore, these semi-directly ruled tribes still maintain a considerable degree of autonomy. The reason for autonomy is mainly because of the geographical separation of the jungle, the high cost of establishing direct rule makes it difficult for the Kingdom to control deeply.

"Hmm, for vassal tribes, they can provide more conscripted warriors, but the taxes and food supply are far insufficient... And the subsequent direct rule also requires the construction of jungle roads, and the development of inland river transport..."

Xiulote continued to move his finger, heading inland deep in the Eastern Coast, where the Kingdom's rule was weaker, establishing nominal subordination and tribute in the Southeast Jungle.

"These deep jungles, scattered with small and large Totonac tribes, also estimate to over 200,000. But these over 200,000 tribes are of limited value to the Kingdom, being almost entirely autonomous... They have almost no large city-states, nor any decent city fortresses, the tribes are both poor and resilient. Apart from gathering them to go on raids, they can't provide much taxes or labor..."

"The lack of large settlements also means they can easily migrate, flee or go into guerrilla warfare. For these impoverished jungle tribes, the cost of military expeditions is even higher, with very low potential rewards, completely disproportionate..."

"Therefore, the Kingdom's control over the Seaside Alliance can temporarily only establish political tribute and religious governance in this Southeast inland jungle! For them, the Kingdom must send missionary priests to spread the faith of the Chief Divine, and guide their agricultural production, build cities and villages... Until gradually, they transform into semi-direct tribes..."

After reading the reports from each department by the Seaside and marking the entire Seaside map, Xiulote had a clearer and more definite understanding of the Seaside Alliance under the Kingdom's control.

"Over 600,000 Seaside direct tribes, over 200,000 semi-direct jungle tribes, and over 200,000 autonomous jungle tribes... These thousand leagues of Seaside and jungle, the millions of Totonac tribes, are the foundation of the Seaside Alliance! And the entire Seaside Alliance's area is roughly equivalent to the Kingdom of the Lake. Its population and potential are at least half of the Lake Kingdom!..."