



To Empress Adélaïde de Val-d'Oise de Lesdiguières, first of her name, ruler of the honourable empire of Dun Sancerre

Bellor now writhes with vapours that arise
From foul sweat and cruel humours
"Bring out your dead" the corpse-man cries
as men choke on pus-filled tumours.

Empress, you bitch. I greet you with all the honour due to your station - please disregard the former insult, for tis merely the traditional greeting of one good friend to another. Indeed, I am told our customs differ somewhat in this regard: my agents report that a lowly tribesman insulted you, and you beat him into a cripple. You are within your rights, of course, though to explain in Keitan to insult is to test the strength of another, and to show that you are not ruled by them. I will ensure my people pay more heed to the ways of others in future, however.

The letters I have received from Tauhan are encouraging in many ways, concerning in others. My chiefs speak of your own soldiers as honourable and valorous, they say your steel is of great quality, and they are particularly impressed by Giacomo, of whom you have spoken so fondly. Would that I should have such a captain at my side, I would conquer the whole world. With our cooperation, both our domains have expanded greatly, and this is a cause of celebration. I hope this cooperation can continue, and indeed I am soon to embark and travel to the central island where I believe we shall be able to meet in person to discuss terms.



The best news I have to share is that my navigators have made a breakthrough in unearthing the origin and nature of the monsters that have decimated Tauhan. I share this freely with you, in the hope that it can strengthen our cooperation. It seems the monsters are not a magical aberration, but instead a natural part of the Shellfolk lifecycle - their elders, if you will.

We believe the storms that destroyed Tauhan may have in fact accelerated aging or growth, pushing the Tauhan into an end stage they would have reached naturally - and which the remaining population will reach in time. Be warned thus: It is likely the remaining Tauhan will continue to give rise to these Elders at a steady rate, and those populations within Dun Sancerre and Rahastas will produce violent monsters without our aid to pacify them. The Elders are still sentient, but addled, violent and confused by their condition. They cannot speak, but my Navigators do not need speech to communicate, and thus they have discovered they can use certain arts and rituals to render the Elders docile and care for them in their addled state.

This discovery has shifted the attitude of the local Tauhan tribes, and that of my captains and navigators, dramatically. The local Tauhan have demanded we cease to kill their Elders, and instead commit my navigators to protecting and caring for them. Indeed, adopting this approach has seen my forces pacify large swathes of land and tribes without a single casualty.

If anything, this conquest has become too amicable - my captains and navigators are now demanding I aid the Tauhan in protecting their Elders. Indeed, a confederation of Tauhan tribes have joined with several Keitan captains and formed a new great tribe - the Ayambe, taking their name from another local name for the island you have termed Graulden-Hall. This... was unexpected. A new tribe has not formed in this manner in centuries, let alone a great tribe, and many of the captains sworn to me are insisting their new loyalties lie with the Ayambe. Both a boon for us, but also a possible complexity to our agreements. To explain: such a tribe has its own rights and privileges in our society, including a vote in our councils and in the election of my successor - a great tribe is, I think, comparable in influence to one of your Kingdoms, and I would be a foolish king to ignore their requests.

And thus, I will endeavour to relay to you their request: On behalf of the Ayambe, I formally request that

your forces cease attacking the Elders, and instead allow the Tauhan tribesmen to placate them with the aid of my Navigators. My own forces will be issued with similar orders. I believe other tribes of Tauhan may wish similarly, but I will trust you to judge their desires. I appreciate that this is a weighty request, but I believe this will allow us to pacify the whole of Tauhan with minimal further military force.

I wish the rest of my letter could address happier topics, but Salt-Chief Bri'otollo tells me more of the Shaking Plague that ravages the world, and indicates that it affects your people too. We had hoped this epidemic was confined to our trade partners in Al Daric and Grovel. I grieve for the losses that your people have incurred, and I wish that our own methods of controlling it were easier to share.

I do not know if the plague has affected the QQ. Al Daric writes of this plague frequently - they are actively searching for its origin, and threatening dreadful war on whoever unleashed it. For my part, we believe that an entity named FRIEND either produced this plague or knows who or what produced it, for this being hinted at a plague in its writings several weeks before my people first encountered it. Do you know of this being, or where it resides?

I have ceased to doubt that someone directs this plague. My Navigators have developed a method of protecting those of Keitan nationality from the plague. However, my agents now report the plague has changed to a variant they term 'The Blue Blight', which leaves the dead with blue eyes and now attacks our livestock to bypass this defence. With regret, I recently had to order the Ancient Varatho to be hunted to prevent further spread, and the tribes still clamour in anger at my choice and the involvement of the cursed Narosh in the quarantine. This suggests to me that something or someone is adapting the plague to deal with our defences (or perhaps the medicines of Rahastas, who I am told also suffer little from the plague).

I hope that you are still well, and I look forward to our meeting.



From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Four Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Mansa of the Six Peoples, Lord of the Nine Islands, Viceroy of the Wreckage, Friend of the Cnidarians, the Starblessed, Binder of Men, Sitter of the Coral Throne, Warden of Northern Tauhan, Plaguecleanser, Walker of the Elder Path, Cleaner of Latrines, Good Buddy, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.