



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

It is a terrible thing, a titan's grudge.
For the sin of defiance I stand alone.
Once more the jealous have come to judge.
They tell me to be silent and atone.

And yet "For Keitan!" I cry aloud -
Let all creation hear my song.
For I am honourable, true and proud
I have done nothing wrong.

Your majesty.

I am once more gladdened by your frankness, and by your adroit description of your nations past and present situation. I will endeavour to reply in kind. It is a mystery to me that, despite counting literal jellyfish people amongst our tribes, Keitan seem to be one of the few nations with actual backbone.

Your concern for the people does you credit, but your willingness to do what is necessary does you more. It is the duty of kings and chiefs to make the hard choices. To burn the grain so that rot may not spread.

But you mistake me if you think I am threatening the refugees. You and I are no strangers to warfare, I speak only of the misery to the people that is caused when two armies clash on their land, not a misery I intend to deliberately inflict. This is a price we would each pay, for we know the burden of rule, but it is not one I welcome and I would avoid it if I could.



I myself am no stranger to hard choices. It is not ten years since I used fireships to break the fleet of the southern salt-tyrants whilst they were engaged with my vanguard, condemning both foes and friends alike to the fire. And before that, like all our kings, I have earned my place. I have done my time as a humble servant, a latrine-digger of no renown. I have earned valour in my days as a warrior for my tribe. It was my voice that shouted insults clever enough to goad the southern salt-kings to war, and my blade that severed the head of the last of those tyrants, truly unifying the Keitan tribes at last. It is said among my people that "to find who rules you, find who you are not allowed to insult." As ruler, I cannot be ruled, and thus I bear the scars earned defending my right to insult everyone. Should you desire our friendship, I will be happy to compose the traditional 47-stanzas of insult to test your mettle.

Your view of this age as the true age of chaos is an interesting one. We in Keitan have been both awed by the new lands we have encountered and saddened by the ignorance, cowardice and disrespect of many of the peoples that live in it. We have found good trade in the ports of Tauhan, Al'Daric, Rahastan and Grovel, though each nation has its flaws. What are your views on the nations surrounding you?

As you know, we have recently come into conflict with the perfidious people that reside in the Quorum Quotidien. I do not know what face they showed to you, but we have found they employ dark magics and impersonate the faces of better men. They paid our merchants with ensorcelled coins, designed to spy on the purchaser when carried back to their homeland, then insulted us when we asked for honourable redress. After they refused our envoys and attempted to assassinate government figures in Grovel whilst wearing my peoples face as a mask, we had no choice but to retaliate. After our fleets crushed their own, we found that their land was deadly but concealed vast stores of gold.

Recently, we were persuaded to cease hostilities by the honourable intercession of Vulkarath Sootscale. In deference to our friendship with the Rahastan, we have forgiven the Quorum their transgressions and are prepared to give them a second chance. It seems, however, that they have squandered that second chance. I have just learned that assassins recently attempted to take the life of several of my captains and employed dishonourable disguises and dark magics to do so.

Your terms are heavy, but it is possible that we might agree to them - with one condition. Once we help you stabilise the land of Tauhan, join us in waging war upon the Quorum. As military allies, we could muster a crusade the likes the world has never seen. Keitan ships could deliver your knights across Bellor. Wedded together by bonds of blood and honour, our tribes will both benefit as trade flows between our shores. Moreover, my people know much of beast mastery, and perhaps we can assist you in taming these gryphons and pegasi you speak of. Where your ancestors were held aloft by a single noble beast, in friendship with Keitan you would be able to field a regiment.

If you agree to join us in this, we can work out the precise details of a treaty (precisely what "half the resources" entails and so forth).

From his majesty Mansa Sino'otollo, the Shark-Binder, Voice of the Navigators, High King of the Three Fleets, Ruler of the Six Seas, Lord of the Nine Islands, Warden of Northern Tauhan, the Starblessed, Councillor of the Cnidarians, Good Buddy, Binder of Men, Cleaner of Latrines, First Sword of the Surf, Brine-bound and Iron Willed.

Mansa Sino'otollo