



The Ways of Kuzu

ASLAN PHILOSOPHIES

I am Aslan, a warrior of Hoaw-li'ukhtai, of the clan Afaikhiyoi. I was born on Kuzu (as humans say it), the place of coming, in the city of U'khai-of-the-Red-Dawn. As the third eldest of my family's sons, the shape of my way was directed from my earliest days; I took the Ah'ukhtai, the "Vow of Heroes," and rose through the ranks to become Leader of Clansmen of a mercenary battle group, Kaha a'huye, the brotherhood of the Rose-Tinged Waters. I have spent many years in the company of humans, and have a better understanding of their

ways than most of my people.

There is an old and venerable saying that the true differences between peoples lie within. I am not human, but Aslan. The difference lies not in my form, but within my *eaia*, my inner self, my heart (as some humans might translate it). It long puzzled me, when I first met those of humaniti, that some should expect me to act and react as they; that they should think me, in some twisted-fang way, as a human in mask and furred costume.

It is certain that humans and Aslan will

fare together in their quests across the galaxy, and understanding—and *taro* in full on both hands—is necessary if that faring is to be for good, and not ill. It was for this reason that a human friend, a *huweihwoweiy*, bade me write this, that understanding between our peoples be increased. My friend promised to give what I had written to a friend of his, who would make it known to large numbers of humaniti by means of this Journal.

Perhaps humans must always label what they do not understand with concepts familiar to them (I am told this is called by your scholars "anthropomorphization," a word which I have never been able to pronounce). Upon hearing that Aslan "meditate," they assume the custom has some religious significance, and assume the devotees to be somehow other-worldly, removed from the thoughts and strivings of existence.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

THOUGHTS SHAPE THE WAY

Ai yourhai is the first precept, the guiding philosophy of all of my people. Its name might be translated roughly as "thoughts shape the way," a concept that surrounds and nurtures all Aslan grounded in their mother culture.

The symbol of *ai yourhai* is the Aslan hand with fighting claw extended. The Aslan's slashing fighting claw extends when it is needed without conscious thought, seemingly of its own volition, because he is what he is. The concept of *ai yourhai* states that the Aslan mind can be so ordered, so strengthened, that proper actions always spring from trained and proper thinking. This, in fact, is the purpose of meditation among Aslan, to discipline and harden the mind, that actions—the strike of arm and extended claw—be automatic and unerring. This meditation—concentration in private for a time each day on deeds,

and litany chains of abstract thoughts—serves to sharpen concentration and senses, eliminate the tendency to distraction, and prepare the body to respond to whatever demands may be made upon it.

"Right thinking leads to right action" one human writer described it, and it would be hard to improve upon those words. It must be remembered, however, that the Aslan warrior does not dwell on the concept, but simply pursues it, for he does so knowing that thinking is not doing, as doing is not achieving.

THE COMPANY OF HEROES

Ukhtai eaiawehi—"company of heroes"—is a difficult concept for humans, a belief that we are surrounded by a vast and unseen throng of those who have gone before. It is not, as so many human xenosophontologists insist, ancestor or spirit worship, or even a belief in ghosts (if I use that word properly), though it is likely that the notion had its origin in such beliefs thousands of years ago. Aslan today do not believe in literal ghosts, but rather in the *eaiia*, which might be translated as "genius" or perhaps "embodied ideal." While the *eaiia* cannot be said to have any actual being outside of its psychological reality within the Aslan mind, it is usually referred to as an external presence.

Ukhtai eaiawehi teaches us not to abandon our comrades under any circumstances, for we would be abandoned by the Unseen Company, an inner banishment more lonely, more rending than any mere physical exile. If one's *eaiia* cannot take its place with the Great Company, then there is no place for it in the cosmos, and no place for that Aslan with his people.

THE SHRINE OF HEROES

The "Shrine of Heroes" is the closest thing to a place of worship for Aslan.

One can be found on nearly every ship, each military encampment, every place where Aslan are gathered; even each household has a family shrine for meditation and remembrance. The Shrine of Heroes is a quiet and private place for personal meditation on the deeds, words, and persons of Aslan heroes. Relics or images called *ahfa* are kept there; frequently 3-D sight and sound recordings of special individuals can be projected there for inspiration and instruction.

The Shrine of Heroes is a beautiful place, close, silent, hung with tapestries or velvet curtains to exclude sound, and decorated with scenes of battle or triumph. It is never large, for meditations are expected to be private. Before battle, a military shrine will have a line of personnel waiting to use it for a precious few minutes, for it is thought that one's skill and battle prowess is increased a thousand-fold if he enters battle with his mind cleared and sharpened by the discipline of meditation, his arm guided by the purpose of right thinking. Most Aslan carry their own *ahfa* in a small pouch or chest, to be used especially when a shrine of heroes is not available. *Ahfa* may be medallions, statuettes, scrolls (detailing heroic deeds), a tuft of plant material or lump of soil from a battlefield, anything which may serve as a focus of meditation by reminding the warrior of his own deeds and those of his family and clan. A warrior's *ahfa* are considered to be—if not secret, at least best kept private, things to be shared only with the closest of comrades.

WITH US IN SPIRIT

Aslan stress the purity of culture and philosophy which makes Aslan what they are. It is for this reason that Aslan culture has remained remarkably stable and unchanging across thousands of worlds where we have settled, even

where we have been thrown into close contact with alien ideas and concepts.

Huweihwoweiy might be translated as "with us in spirit," and means that a person or a people act according to the highest ideals of our philosophy. It is not a title lightly bestowed, for it brings with it responsibility for a serious trust. The only higher honor is formal adoption into an Aslan clan group—a ceremony which occurs rarely, in extraordinary circumstances.

The term *huweihwoweiy* can be applied to any (Aslan or non-Aslan) who strive or suffer or share with Aslan as brothers, who help them in need, who do not desert them in danger or trouble, who stand by them and willingly identify with them as of the People. *Huweihwoweiy* can join any groups—families or clan prides, towns or cities, even worlds with common goals and a shared direction.

ANATHEMA

There are some things which no Aslan in his right mind would do. This is, perhaps, an oversimplification; Aslan are as diverse in their individual ways of thinking and behavior as are humans. But these particular acts are rare among the Aslan because the way they think shapes the way they act—*Ai yourhai*.

Murder—that is, assassination without a formal challenge; abandoning a comrade in danger or in need; exchanging the life of others for one's own safety; blackening a good name; running from a challenge; these are the deeds called *rukhta*, a word perhaps best translated as "anathema" or "cursed," although I have seen it rendered as "crimes of honor" by some human writers.

There are several *hoawli*, or "schools" of behavior, which demand greater attention to duty, which place greater demands on the individual. Usually these are associated with war-

rior groups, and center about a secret creed or oath known only to initiates. Most of these add additional rukhta to the common list; these may include such deeds as unneedful cruelty in a kill, unneedful challenge for personal satisfaction or lust for triumph, profaning one's own ai with unworthy thoughts, and a difficult word for humans, *rukhtiywe*.

When humans say that cowardice is unknown among the Aslan, they speak the truth. There literally is no word in any of our languages for this concept "cowardice," which few of us understand perfectly, even those of us who have long associated with humans. The closest word in Aslan might be *rukhtiywe*; there is no easy counterpart in any human tongue with which I or my friend am familiar, but the word embodies the concept of denying one's own Aslan-ness—one's heritage, family, and self, and as such is certainly rukhta.

The bond of huweihwoweiy is shattered by rukhta, and many hrurastea (blood quests) are launched by individual Aslan seeking to clear their names of the taint of rukht by finding and challenging the actual doer of some dark deed. Modern customs do not admit to trial by death-challenge and combat, but the practice is a common one nonetheless. The idea of formal challenge, followed by potentially mortal combat is deeply rooted in our society.

IT COMES

Tarohaka literally means "the water that flows without being forced," and the philosophy of *taro* ("it comes") is considered a virtue among Aslan, for patience can be the greatest weapon a hunter possesses. Humans have a proverb, "all things come to him who waits," and this is one of the few human sayings fully understood by those of our people who hear it. Taro is sharpened by meditation, and is thought of as a con-

stant struggle against the dark nature of Aslan prehistory and id. The ancient call within us calls for us to strike now, and kill—but taro counsels patience, for the perfect time will reveal itself, and the strike will be sure, and the kill clean.

This is a particularly powerful image for Aslan warriors; the imagery evoked for us is the patient flowing of a trickle of water, which in the course of years smooths jagged rocks to pebbles, and over eons carved out vast canyons. Many Aslan keep as ahfa a small stereograph of Ka'htesu or of some other spectacular canyon or water carved rock formation in the badlands of Kuzu, a reminder of the power of taro. Others find the same understanding in a water-worn pebble from the bank of a stream.

The concept of adventuring—going forth as travellers in search of riches, recognition, victory—is well known to Aslan. Senior sons take upon themselves the title and land of family; it is left to younger sons to venture forth and carve new holdfasts from new worlds, and that carving is the stuff of adventure, the ai of new generations of heroes.

CONCLUSION

Many humans see in Aslan a likeness of a beast credited in your mythology with great strength, wisdom, and courage. Aslan see in humans a resemblance to a beast, common in our legends as a shrewd, clever trickster. Neither of us should be guided by myths.

You who would be huweihwoweiy to your Aslan comrades, understand what drives them, understand their eais, their personal heart of hearts, that they seem not strange, but huweihwoweiy-in-human-terms; not human, but brothers.

— *Leader-of-clansmen Raaaru'he KhaheakUkhtaikeHooawilikhe Ukhtai* as told to
William H. Keith, Jr.,
of Scotia