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In the House of the Rising Sun

Paul Mason affords us a glimpse at the times and the morals

The following is a transcript of a speech given by Horun hiPalumitlo, an elder of the Rising Sun clan at the clanhouse in Jaikalor, to mark the anniversary of the clan's foundation. Only the gist of the speech has been transcribed, to spare the non-Tsolyáni reader the necessity of wading through the formulaic recitation of the clan's entire history and notable successes, as well as the various honorifics and elaborations required by Tsolyáni speech-making etiquette. Interested parties are directed to the ground-breaking translation work of Lechuk hiKemu'ul and his small Jakálla-based publishing concern.

"In this glorious year of the enthronement of the most excellent and exalted Emperor, whose ascension seems to me somewhat akin to the arrival of a sudden downpour upon parched earth, it is incumbent upon us to focus all the more assiduously upon the qualities which have enabled our clan to climb through the firmament of the Empire, blazing a trail of nobility and shining with incomparable brightness amid the sky of deepest azure. Foremost among those qualities must, of course, be our devotion to correct behaviour in word and deed. If we are to maintain the eminence of the clan, it is essential that we preserve these qualities while ruthlessly rooting out those ignoble and unwelcome practices which appear from time to time when success leads us to complacency."

"First, then, let me address myself to the question of correct language. The words of a man are the representation of his spirit. If a man is sloppy and chooses his words inappropriately, then all will see that his spirit is poor, and his honour suffers accordingly. For example, there are those who feel that it is acceptable to address close friends with the word *tsam* [second person pronoun, lowest class]. They feel that this expresses their intimacy. But when I hear this word as I go about my business in the clanhouse, I feel a sharp pain as if a candle had been pressed close to my body. The way you address another implies far more than simply your feelings for them. Whenever you speak, you speak as one of the Rising Sun clan. If you address a clan-cousin as *tsam* then you demean the clan! There are more elegant and appropriate ways of demonstrating intimacy that do not require such a lamentable lowering of standards."

Know your place

"Were a poorly educated listener to be present here, he might presume from all this that I oppose the use of humble forms. This would be incorrect, and simply display such a person's superficial acquaintance with the forms and usages of etiquette. The truly noble recognise that displaying humility does not demean the speaker. Rather, addressing a noble guest using *lukan* [first person upper-class pronoun, ordinarily appropriate to a Rising Sun clan member] displays nothing more than arrogance. Nobility arises from a fine sensitivity to correct place. It is not noble to dicker about relative status. This is arrogance masquerading as concern for the clan's reputation. If you meet a noble person and you are unsure of your relative position then you should be forthright in your words: you should choose a humble form to show your respect. In this way you display the nobility of the clan. In thus showing respect to others you display the nobility of the clan."

The price of honour

"Now I turn to the question of *shamtla*. There is no nobility to be found in causing others to lose face, even if other people behave ignobly. In the presence of inferiority, the Rising Sun clan member safeguards his clan's reputation and his own face by remaining aloof and uninvolved. For this reason I would advise clan members to minimise their contact with those of other clans. Where such contact is unavoidable, maintain a distance. If offence is given, *shamtla* should be paid promptly and without any argument. However, *shamtla* is a last resort. It is an apology for an improper action that has brought shame on the speaker and, more importantly, on the speaker's clan. Do not expect any support from the clan if your arrogance brings about legal consequences. Our policy is simple: we will safeguard the reputation of the clan by taking speedy action to extract a clan cousin from litigation, after which we will ensure that the clan cousin makes full reparation to the clan for the inconvenience caused."

The measure of a man

"In these times of relative peace, it is all too easy for people to forget that, above all things in life, they owe everything to their clan. A clan cousin who devotes himself to his clan, promptly obeying his clan elders, and following their words even when this goes against his own judgement, is a true model of nobility. This is the kind of nobility which has maintained the fortunes of the Rising Sun throughout the long ages."

"The individual who exploits his clan to obtain power or wealth, while forgetting the enormous debt he already owes, may achieve temporary success, but ultimately he will be betrayed by his own selfishness. For in this mighty empire of Tsolyánu, a man has no greater possession than his reputation. If his reputation shows a lack of respect for his clan, then who will trust him, other than a few similar-minded mavericks? Everything is founded on respect for the clan. If a man wishes for advancement in the bureaucracy, his superiors will first look at his history: how has he repaid the debt he owes his clan? If he is true to his clan then we can feel secure that he will repay his trust in the bureaucracy. If a soldier is to be promoted in the army, his clan again is crucial: if he is loyal to his clan, then he will be loyal and steadfast to his legion. If a priest wishes to advance in circle, then his devotion to the clan is of primary importance: the man who is devoted to his clan can be trusted to show devotion to duty and to his god. And for the merchant who wishes to do business, what can be more important than his clan? In business, trust is everything. If I see a man who is true to his clan, then I know that he will be true to me. I also know that I can rely not only on the man himself, but on the whole of his clan to speed the business and bring it to a mutually profitable conclusion."

"In the years ahead there may be some confusion in the Empire caused by those whose minds are muddled as to the correctness of certain policies. In these times, facing adversity and confusion, the correct course of action is to remain, above all, true to one's clan. We of the Rising Sun clan believe in the sanctity of tradition and established practice. We are loyal to the Petal Throne and to the unity that it represents. We are but vessels by which the glorious history of the clan may be propagated. We now turn our heads towards the future with strength and determination guided, as ever, by correct word and deed."