

To the Assembly of Nine of the Imperial Synod,

I regret that I could not meet you in person, though I believe I did meet one or two of your number at the Printer's Guild Ball last year – in particular I remember meeting the Cardinal of Ambition who struck me as a very interesting individual. In general I was struck by the openness of many of the Synod priests I spoke to during my visit to considering viewpoints I would have thought were considered at best heterodox positions. It seems the composition of your Synod at this time is open to new ideas and ways of thinking, and I think this is to your credit. I have been thinking much about the strengths of your Synod and the ways in which it might provide a pathway toward the unification of my own people through their spiritual beliefs.

I have been asked by Illarch Deianeira to compose the oath we require of you. The text I have come to is as follows:

*"I swear to bear this hallowed item in such a manner as to give full effect to the aura that lies upon it. I will not use spiritual strength that comes from within or without to resist it, but will truly respect its effects and experience the world through the lens it offers, and hence come to a more whole understanding of the spiritual power it represents. I will not share it with others, passing it around like some curio, but treat it as a precious thing. This I will do until the power of the hallowing ceases and fades away, in one year's time."*

Illarch Deianeira sees this as an essential commitment by you to treating Axou beliefs and practices seriously. I know there are people like the New Scions of Atun in your Empire who are extremely concerned with what I might call an experimental approach to theology. While I respect this, our concern is that it would be easy enough to "sample" an aura and then cast it aside.

As a theologian I am a phenomenologist: I believe that our understanding of the world – including the Virtues and other spiritual powers of the world – comes primarily from our experiences of them, but I believe they must be experienced wholly and with an open heart to the experience, rather than with the experimentalist's sceptical distance. I am hopeful you will commit yourself to this.

I have prepared a pamphlet on the spiritual power of Understanding, a lightly edited version of an earlier work of mine. I have sent copies of this with my disciple Sophia Anacharsis who will be delivering this letter, along with nine of the doses of liao you kindly provided. She will hallow one item for each member of the Assembly (including the Throne) as long as they are prepared to swear the above oath – it is your choice what hallowing she performs, and the pamphlet ought to help you make that decision.

I will not be offended at all if none of you decide to take up the offer. I have asked Sophia to be careful in discussing any details of religion with anyone other than yourselves while she is here – she does like to engage in theological discourse, but I want to respect your laws and traditions as I know you will respect ours. Please also pass along my regards to Ambassador Nighthaven who was of great help to me during my recent visit.

May you have the vigilance and wisdom to avoid the Creator's evil, in all your days, and I wish the eyes of your ancestors upon you,

Yours Faithfully,

Theodosia of Ipatava