

SESSION 8

The Aslan Question

A Beginner-Friendly Traveller Teaching Campaign

REFEREE USE

After prizes and gunfire, the crew meets a power that is not impressed by bluster alone. An Aslan envoy raises a question of territory, honor, and claim. The Travellers must learn that the Reach is not empty space waiting for Drinax to reclaim it.

Field	Briefing Detail
Campaign	Book One: The Drinax Training Arc
Session Type	Adventure Session
Target Play Time	Three Hours
Audience	New Traveller players and a new Referee
Rules Goal	Teach faction reaction, cultural diplomacy, protocol, gifts, challenges, and long-term consequences
Campaign Goal	Prepare the crew to treat Aslan politics as dangerous, understandable, and campaign-shaping

DESIGN NOTE

This is an original teaching session document for personal table use. It is designed to be compatible with the tone and campaign frame of Traveller and The Pirates of Drinax, but it does not reproduce or replace official rulebooks or published adventures.

2. Session Snapshot

Item	Session 8 Detail
Session Number	8
Session Title	The Aslan Question
Target Play Time	Three hours
Primary Teaching Focus	Faction reaction, cultural diplomacy, protocol, formal apology, gift exchange, challenge, and long-term reputation.
Primary Story Focus	An Aslan envoy questions the crew over a prize, route, cargo, insult, or territorial claim connected to recent actions.
Main Traveller Mechanics	Diplomat, Advocate, Steward, Persuade, Investigate, cultural research, faction reputation, and consequence tracking.
Main Drinax Concept	Drinax is not the only power with old claims. The Trojan Reach is shared by proud factions with memory and leverage.
Expected Session End-State	The crew resolves, delays, or worsens an Aslan dispute and records a lasting faction reaction.
Recommended Prep Time	Sixty to ninety minutes. Prepare the Aslan claim, one protocol issue, one provocation, and at least two respectful solutions.
Difficulty for New Referee	Moderate. The session is not rules-heavy, but tone and consequences matter.

CONTINUITY FROM PRIOR SESSION

Session 7 should have left the crew with a starship combat outcome, damage state, enemy report, or witness. Before play, check ship damage, transmissions, crew reputation, enemy survival, passive observers, merchant reaction, and whether the crew used Drinax authority openly. If a long-range observer was present, it can become the Aslan contact.

3. Referee Overview

This session changes the scale of the campaign. The crew has learned checks, travel, port pressure, cargo, privateering, and combat. Now they learn that the Trojan Reach has powers that cannot be solved by a single hail or a good shot. The Aslan contact should feel proud, dangerous, and understandable, not like a random alien obstacle.

The Aslan question can be about territory, honor, compensation, a seized cargo, a passenger, a route, a damaged ship, or a perceived insult. The exact issue should connect to something the crew did in Sessions 5 to 7. The crew can solve it with respect, apology, gift, proof, shared enemy, duel, bargain, or careful withdrawal.

Avoid a lore lecture. Introduce what matters at the table: respect, claim, territory, face, clan interest, and memory. Let the players learn through the conversation, not a textbook.

REFeree NOTE

Do not present the Aslan as monsters or simple enemies. Present them as people with priorities, pride, history, and a very different sense of what ownership and insult mean.

4. Teaching Goals

Player Learning Goals

- Understand that faction play is about memory, reputation, and future options.
- Learn that cultural respect can be a practical survival tool.
- Practice diplomacy, apology, gift, challenge, and proof as alternatives to violence.
- See that victory in one session may create a problem in another.
- Recognize that Drinax cannot rebuild influence without navigating Aslan power.

Referee Learning Goals

- Run a cultural negotiation without caricature or lecture.
- Use misunderstandings to create choices, not gotchas.
- Track faction attitude in a simple way.

- Offer several respectful solutions.
- Let a third party try to twist the meeting without forcing one answer.

Campaign Learning Goals

- Introduce Aslan power as a major campaign reality.
- Foreshadow alliance-building and future territorial disputes.
- Connect recent crew behavior to long-term faction memory.
- Prepare the campaign for diplomacy and world-level consequences.

5. Rules Introduced This Session

Rule or Concept	Why It Matters	How It Appears in Play	Teach Detail	Beginner Mistake to Avoid
Faction Reaction	Major groups remember patterns.	Aslan attitude changes based on respect, threat, proof, and payment.	Use simple status tags.	Do not track too many factions at once.
Cultural Protocol	Different customs change the meaning of actions.	Greetings, gifts, direct speech, and apology shape the meeting.	Teach only what matters now.	Do not punish innocent questions harshly.
Formal Apology	Apology can be strategic and honorable.	The crew may admit error without surrendering all leverage.	Teach as action choice.	Do not make apology feel like failure.
Gift or Tribute	Material value can carry social meaning.	Cargo, information, repair aid, or symbolic item may settle tension.	Use story value.	Do not reduce it to shopping.
Challenge or Duel	Conflict can be formalized instead of becoming chaos.	A challenge may satisfy honor without full combat.	Keep optional and contained.	Do not force one character into unwanted duel.
Third-Party Provocation	Someone may benefit from conflict.	Evidence suggests a rival, broker, or damaged captain is twisting the story.	Use clues, not certainty.	Do not make the Aslan look foolish.

6. Rules Intentionally Avoided

Rules or Subsystem	Why It Is Delayed
Full Aslan Political Structure	Introduce only the clan interests relevant to this meeting. Deeper detail can come later.
Large-Scale War Politics	The crew is dealing with an envoy and a local claim, not a sector war.
Mass Combat or Boarding	Conflict should stay diplomatic or formal unless the crew forces escalation.
Deep Xenology Lecture	Use behavior, protocol, and consequences instead of exposition.
Complex Treaty Drafting	Use simple promises, compensation, warnings, and future access.
Permanent Alliance Mechanics	Session 9 introduces alliance-building more directly.

7. What the Players Should Learn

Players should learn that factions are not quest markers. They are groups with pride, memory, territory, and limits. The crew can impress, offend, reassure, threaten, or confuse them, and those reactions will outlive the current scene.

- Respect is not weakness. It can create leverage.
- A misunderstanding can be solved before it becomes an enemy.
- The right gift or apology may cost less than a battle.
- A formal challenge can be safer than uncontrolled violence.
- The Aslan are not obstacles to Drinax. They are powers Drinax must account for.

8. What the Referee Should Practice

- Open with tension but not immediate hostility.
- Let players research or ask about protocol before meeting.
- Use cultural friction as pressure, not a trap.
- Give the Aslan envoy clear motives and reasonable demands.
- Let a third party complicate the truth.
- Record faction attitude in the campaign ledger.
- End with a consequence that makes the Reach feel larger.

REFEREE NOTE

The players should be nervous about making mistakes, but not paralyzed. Reward honest questions, respectful caution, and creative solutions.

9. Three-Hour Session Timeline

Time	Segment	Purpose	Referee Notes
0:00 to 0:15	Opening recap	Connect ship combat or prize fallout to faction attention.	Use the ledger.
0:15 to 0:45	Aslan Contact	Present the claim, warning, or invitation.	Keep motive clear but incomplete.
0:45 to 1:30	Protocol and Preparation	Let crew research customs, choose gifts, and decide tone.	Use skills to reduce risk.
1:30 to 2:15	The Meeting	Run negotiation, challenge, apology, or proof exchange.	Let players lead.
2:15 to 2:45	Provocation Revealed	Introduce evidence that someone benefits from conflict.	Do not remove Aslan agency.
2:45 to 3:00	Resolution and Hook	Record faction reaction and next opportunity.	End with wider stakes.

10. Required Materials

Checklist	Checklist
☐ Character sheets	☐ Aslan envoy card
☐ Ship record sheet	☐ Faction reaction tracker
☐ Campaign ledger	☐ Protocol reminder card
☐ Sector or subsector map	☐ Gift or compensation options
☐ World or route notes	☐ Provocation clue list
☐ Session handout	☐ Scratch paper or index cards
☐ Dice	☐ Optional duel or challenge notes
☐ Basic task check reference	☐ Optional Aslan rumor cards

For this session, prepare one Aslan claim, one acceptable respectful solution, one dangerous insult, and one third-party complication. Do not overprepare a lecture on culture.

11. Opening Situation

READ OR PARAPHRASE

A message reaches the Harrier by formal channel, tight-beamed and carefully worded. It does not demand surrender. It demands answer. An Aslan envoy claims that the crew has interfered with cargo, territory, kin, honor, or passage rights that are not Drinaxs to ignore. The message offers a meeting under truce. Refusing it is a choice. Accepting it is also a risk.

12. Key NPCs

Name	Role	First Impression	Wants	Knows	Helps	Complicates	Skills
Khaor Tleakh	Aslan Envoy	Controlled, proud, physically still.	Respect, answer, and useful settlement.	The crew action touched a claim or insult.	Can open cautious relations.	May mark the crew as reckless if slighted.	Diplomat, Advocate, Persuade
Seara Hleka	Interpreter and Advisor	Quiet, precise, watching words.	Prevent avoidable insult.	Human phrasing can sound evasive.	Can clarify protocol.	May note every careless statement.	Steward, Diplomat, Investigate
Eikit Khava	Young Warrior	Tense, eager, easily insulted.	Honor and recognition.	The clan is watching how outsiders behave.	Can accept formal challenge terms.	May escalate if mocked.	Melee, Athletics, Leadership
Mara Volan	Human Provocateur	Helpful smile, too much information.	Push Drinax and Aslan into friction.	Someone profits from the dispute.	May provide useful clue by accident.	May plant false evidence.	Deception, Streetwise, Persuade
Princess Rao via Message	Drinax Patron	Measured and careful.	Avoid war, gain leverage.	Drinax cannot afford careless insult.	Can advise on political stakes.	May restrict future autonomy if mishandled.	Diplomat, Admin, Advocate
Jalen Mor	Crew Advisor	Gruff, practical, wary.	Keep crew alive and ship welcome.	Space remembers insults.	Can warn against swagger.	May offend if allowed to speak freely.	Carouse, Streetwise, Pilot

13. Key Locations

Location	Description	First Notice	Useful Details	Complications	Relevant Checks	Campaign Connection
Harrier Wardroom	Controlled meeting space aboard ship.	Too small for comfort, easy to misread.	Good for private diplomacy.	Ship ownership symbolism may matter.	Steward, Diplomat.	Makes ship a political space.
Neutral Docking Hall	Borrowed meeting chamber at a port or station.	Open floor, formal distance, visible exits.	Safer for truce talks.	Crowds or observers can spread rumors.	Recon, Steward, Diplomat.	Shows public reputation.
Aslan Courier Ship	Small vessel or shuttle carrying the envoy.	Discipline, scent of old leather and metal.	Meeting there gives Aslan home advantage.	Crew may feel off balance.	Steward, Recon, Diplomat.	Introduces alien authority.
Gift Table	Formal space for exchange of items or proof.	Objects arranged with care.	Lets players settle matter materially.	Wrong gift may confuse intent.	Broker, Steward, Advocate.	Turns cargo into diplomacy.
Side Corridor or Challenge Space	A quiet place for formal confrontation.	Few witnesses, high tension.	Allows contained challenge or apology.	Violence may still echo politically.	Melee, Leadership, Persuade.	Teaches formal conflict.

14. Scene-by-Scene Outline

Scene 1: The Formal Message

PURPOSE	Introduce faction pressure without immediate combat.
SETUP	The Aslan envoy contacts the Harrier about a claim tied to cargo, territory, insult, or a prior encounter.
WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO	Answer, delay, ask for terms, accept meeting, research claim, or contact Rao.
RELEVANT CHECKS	Diplomat 8+, Advocate 8+, Admin 8+, Recon 8+.
LIKELY OUTCOMES	The crew understands the issue enough to prepare.
FAILURE COMPLICATIONS	They sound evasive or dismissive, increasing tension.
REFEREE ADVICE	Make the claim serious but negotiable.
TRANSITION	The crew decides where and how to meet.

Scene 2: Protocol and Preparation

PURPOSE	Let the crew reduce risk before diplomacy.
SETUP	The Travellers can learn basics of greeting, gifts, direct speech, and what not to joke about.
WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO	Research, ask a contact, choose spokesperson, prepare gift, review logs, or plan security.
RELEVANT CHECKS	Steward 8+, Diplomat 8+, Investigate 8+, Broker 8+.
LIKELY OUTCOMES	The crew gains practical etiquette and one useful leverage point.
FAILURE COMPLICATIONS	They prepare the wrong tone or overlook a danger.
REFEREE ADVICE	Reward preparation. Do not make protocol a secret trap.
TRANSITION	The meeting begins.

Scene 3: The Meeting

PURPOSE	Make diplomacy active and tense.
SETUP	Khaor Tleakh states the claim and waits for the crew to respond with respect or defiance.
WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO	Apologize, deny, offer proof, gift, trade information, accept challenge, or propose shared investigation.
RELEVANT CHECKS	Diplomat 8+, Persuade 8+, Advocate 8+, Deception opposed.
LIKELY OUTCOMES	The crew keeps the channel open and learns what the envoy truly values.
FAILURE COMPLICATIONS	A careless phrase, bad posture, or evasive answer hardens the envoy.
REFEREE ADVICE	Use silence and reactions. Not every NPC should overexplain.
TRANSITION	A provocation or inconsistency appears.

Scene 4: The Provocation

PURPOSE	Show that someone benefits from conflict.
SETUP	Evidence suggests a human broker, rival captain, court enemy, or damaged target twisted the story.
WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO	Investigate logs, question witnesses, compare manifests, challenge Mara, or show evidence.
RELEVANT CHECKS	Investigate 8+, Recon 8+, Streetwise 8+, Admin 8+.
LIKELY OUTCOMES	The crew identifies a third-party push or at least reasonable doubt.
FAILURE COMPLICATIONS	The provocation remains unclear and both sides remain suspicious.
REFEREE ADVICE	Do not make the Aslan dupes. They can be wrong without being foolish.
TRANSITION	The crew must choose settlement terms.

Scene 5: Settlement or Scar

PURPOSE	Turn the meeting into a lasting faction result.
SETUP	The crew can offer apology, gift, information, formal challenge, joint action, compensation, or refusal.
WHAT THE PLAYERS CAN DO	Choose terms, set boundaries, request future contact, or walk away.
RELEVANT CHECKS	Diplomat 8+, Broker 8+, Advocate 8+, Leadership 8+.
LIKELY OUTCOMES	A clear faction reaction is recorded.
FAILURE COMPLICATIONS	The crew avoids immediate disaster but leaves insult, debt, or future challenge.
REFEREE ADVICE	Make the result visible in the ledger.
TRANSITION	Session 9 can begin with alliance-building as a concrete opportunity.

15. Core Checks and Suggested Difficulties

Situation	Skill	Difficulty	Success	Failure
Interpret formal message	Diplomat or Advocate	8+	Understand claim, tone, and stakes.	Misread warning as threat or invitation as weakness.
Prepare respectful greeting	Steward or Diplomat	8+	Avoid first insult and gain patience.	Begin meeting with disadvantage.
Choose suitable gift	Broker or Steward	8+	Gift signals respect or compensation.	Gift seems insulting, cheap, or confusing.
Read envoy reaction	Investigate or Recon	8+	Notice what matters most.	Push wrong issue.
Explain crew action	Persuade or Advocate	8+	Present defensible account.	Sound evasive or careless.
Spot provocation	Investigate or Streetwise	8+ or 10+	Find outside manipulation.	Suspicion remains on the crew.
Formal challenge restraint	Leadership or Melee	8+	Keep challenge contained.	Challenge escalates or humiliates someone.
Settle terms	Diplomat or Persuade	8+	Gain truce, respect, or future contact.	Leave debt, insult, or warning.

16. Player-Facing Choices

Choice	Why It Matters	Benefit	Risk	Later Effect
Meet aboard Harrier or neutral ground	Sets symbolic balance.	Home ground gives control.	May seem arrogant or fearful.	Shapes first impression.
Apologize, deny, or ask proof	Defines tone.	Can keep talks open.	Wrong tone may harden claim.	Affects Aslan attitude.
Offer gift, cargo, information, or service	Compensation can settle honor.	Creates practical bridge.	Costs resources or reveals weakness.	May create future alliance.
Expose provocation or exploit it	Changes target of anger.	Can redirect tension.	Evidence may be incomplete.	Creates third-party enemy.
Accept challenge or refuse formality	Manages honor pressure.	Can contain conflict.	May risk injury or insult.	Defines crew courage.

17. Consequences and Branching Outcomes

Clean Success

The crew shows respect, addresses the claim, exposes or undercuts the provocation, and gains a cautious Aslan contact. Aslan Attention becomes Interested or Wary, not Hostile. Rao approves the crew's discipline.

Mixed Success

The immediate dispute is cooled, but the crew owes a gift, favor, apology, proof, or future meeting. Aslan Attention becomes Wary. A third party remains active.

Complicated Failure

The crew insults the envoy, refuses terms without respect, mishandles a challenge, or leaves the claim unresolved. The campaign continues with a warning, restricted route, future duel, hostile rumor, or demand for compensation.

CONSEQUENCE

The most important result is not whether the crew wins the argument. It is whether the Aslan record them as respectful, useful, foolish, dangerous, or beneath notice.

18. Combat, Conflict, or Crisis Guidance

Combat is not the focus of this session. Use conflict as diplomatic, cultural, symbolic, and reputational pressure. A formal challenge may occur, but it should be contained and meaningful rather than a random fight.

- Enemy purpose: no default enemy. The envoy wants answer, respect, and settlement.
- Morale: Aslan participants withdraw if the meeting loses honor or purpose.
- When conflict escalates: mockery, bad faith, visible deceit, or attack during truce.
- Terrain or cover: formal distance, witnesses, ritual space, and exits matter more than cover.
- Nonviolent exits: apology, gift, proof, shared investigation, formal challenge, or delayed answer.
- Consequences of injury: even minor injury can become honor debt or insult.

19. Ship, Trade, Law, or Faction Notes

Category	Session 8 Use
Ship Operations	Minimal. Ship damage or prior battle logs may provide evidence.
Trade	Cargo ownership, prize cargo, or compensation may be part of the claim.
Cargo	Possible focus if an item taken or carried touches Aslan interest.
Passengers	Possible complication if a passenger has Aslan ties or debt.
Fuel	Not emphasized unless route access is threatened.
Starport Procedures	Meeting location and truce rules may involve port authority.
Law Level	Less important than honor, claim, and faction memory.
Local Authority	May provide neutral space or witnesses, but should not dominate.
Drinax Reputation	Strongly affected by whether the crew appears diplomatic or reckless.
Imperial Attention	Not central unless a human official exploits the dispute.
Aslan Attention	Primary focus. Adjust attitude based on respect, proof, compensation, and restraint.
Pirate Reputation	Affected if the crew seems predatory, respectful, or useful.
Merchant Reaction	Brokers watch whether the crew can handle serious faction pressure.

20. Campaign Ledger Updates

Checklist	Checklist
☐ Aslan claim recorded	☐ Aslan Attention adjusted
☐ Meeting tone summarized	☐ Gift, apology, proof, or challenge recorded
☐ Khaor Tleakh reaction recorded	☐ Eikit Khava reaction recorded if used
☐ Provocation source noted	☐ Third-party enemy or suspect recorded
☐ Drinax Trust adjusted	☐ Rao reaction recorded
☐ Cargo, territory, or honor debt noted	☐ Route access or warning recorded
☐ Merchant Reaction adjusted	☐ Pirate Reputation adjusted if relevant
☐ Session 9 alliance hook recorded	☐ Open questions preserved

21. End-State of the Session

- The Travellers have met an Aslan representative under tension.
- The players understand that cultural respect and faction reaction matter.
- The crew has either settled, delayed, worsened, or redirected the claim.
- The campaign ledger now includes an Aslan Attention status.
- A third-party provocation, honor debt, contact, or warning may now exist.
- Session 9 can move into alliance-building with stronger context.

22. Hooks into the Next Session

Hook Type	Hook
Direct Hook	Rao identifies a nearby world where the crew can turn diplomacy into practical alliance work.
Optional Player-Driven Hook	The crew follows the provocation trail, makes a gift delivery, seeks Aslan contact, or asks for a world to influence.
Consequence-Based Hook	Respectful settlement opens doors. A messy meeting creates debt, warning, or Aslan pressure during the next patron mission.

23. Referee Quick Reference

Item	Reference
Session Goal	Teach cultural diplomacy and faction reaction through an Aslan dispute.
New Rules	Faction reaction, protocol, apology, gift, challenge, provocation, long-term consequences.
Important NPCs	Khaor Tleakh, Seara Hleka, Eikit Khava, Mara Volan, Princess Rao, Jalen Mor.
Important Locations	Harrier Wardroom, Neutral Docking Hall, Aslan Courier Ship, Gift Table, Challenge Space.
Likely Checks	Diplomat, Advocate, Steward, Persuade, Investigate, Recon, Broker, Leadership.
Main Complications	Misunderstanding, insult, bad gift, challenge, provocation, incomplete proof.
End-State	Aslan reaction recorded and alliance, debt, warning, or rivalry established.
Ledger Updates	Aslan Attention, claim, settlement terms, NPC reactions, provocation, next hook.

REFeree NOTE

Let the players make mistakes, but give them chances to recover with honesty, respect, and effort. That makes culture playable rather than punitive.

24. Player Handout Page

PLAYER HANDOUT: THE ASLAN QUESTION

An Aslan envoy has contacted the crew about a claim or insult connected to recent events. The issue may involve cargo, territory, passage, kin, or reputation. This is not a normal port dispute. What you say, offer, refuse, or mock may echo beyond this meeting.

Known Situation

- An Aslan representative wants an answer under formal conditions.
- The claim is connected to something the crew recently did or carried.
- The meeting can be handled with respect, proof, apology, gift, challenge, or refusal.
- A third party may benefit if talks fail.
- Drinax needs the crew to survive diplomacy as well as combat.

Diplomacy Questions

Question	Why It Matters
What exactly is the claim?	Do not answer the wrong accusation.
Who speaks for the crew?	Mixed messages can sound evasive.
What can we offer without looking weak?	Gift and compensation can create respect.
Who benefits if we offend them?	A provocation may be hidden.
What will Rao think of our method?	Drinax reputation is tied to crew conduct.

Crew Task List

Role	Focus
Captain or Mission Lead	Sets tone and accepts or rejects terms.
Face or Diplomat	Handles greeting, apology, and negotiation.
Investigator	Looks for provocation or inconsistent claims.
Broker	Values gifts, cargo, or compensation.
Security	Keeps the meeting safe without threatening.
Scholar or Scout	Researches Aslan protocol and route context.

25. Appendix: Notes, Tables, and Optional Adjustments

Shorter-Session Adjustment

Begin with the meeting already accepted. Use one protocol check, one claim exchange, one provocation clue, and one settlement choice.

Longer-Session Expansion

Add preparation scenes with multiple advice sources: Rao, a broker, an old spacer, a passenger, and an unreliable rumor.

If the Players Choose Violence

Make violence a serious breach of truce unless a formal challenge was accepted. This should create faction pressure, not a simple fight reward.

If the Players Avoid Violence

Reward restraint. Let respect, gifts, or proof create a useful Aslan contact or at least a non-hostile warning.

If the Players Ignore the Hook

The envoy records refusal. The next time the crew enters disputed space, reaction begins colder and more formal.

If the Crew Lacks a Key Skill

Use preparation, sincere questions, and NPC advice. A respectful plan can offset low Diplomat or Steward skill.

If the Referee Wants More Roleplay

Give Seara Hleka several quiet corrections that reveal what the Aslan value without lecturing.

If the Referee Wants More Action

Use a formal challenge, a security scare, or a provocation attempt. Keep it contained and meaningful.

Optional Rumors

Rumor	Use
The Aslan do not forget who claims territory carelessly.	Sets faction tone.
A gift given well can end a fight before it starts.	Encourages noncombat solution.
Someone wants Drinax and the Aslan angry at each other.	Foreshadows provocation.
The crew is being measured, not merely accused.	Frames the meeting as test.
Rao fears insults more than laser fire.	Connects Drinax to diplomacy.

Optional Complication

OPTIONAL COMPLICATION

The claim is true in part and false in part. The crew did touch Aslan interests, but a human rival exaggerated the insult to provoke a harsher reaction.

Optional NPC Reaction

Khaor respects clear speech and controlled strength. Seara respects careful listening. Eikit respects courage with restraint. Rao respects any result that keeps Drinax alive long enough to matter.