

Kotè

"The Gods will always see you home."

The Kotè are known for their unrivaled worship of the Five Gods, and for devoting their lives and culture around their worship. They are tolerant people who hold the value of community above all, and seek to live by the values of the God who shows them preference during their coming-of-age ceremony. Although all Kotè seek to better themselves, those who wish for the truest understanding of self undergo long and arduous quests that take them far from the safety of the city.

LANDSCAPE & CLIMATE



The immediate land surrounding the city of Kotè Onè is flat, rocky, and dominated by farmland for as far as the eye can see. Only hardy crops tend to thrive in the sandy soil of the coastal landscape, and the uncultivated land is marked by low shrubs and grasses. The sea lies just to the south of the city, with the land giving way to great cliffs of sandstone. Evergreen forests then bleed away into the distance, miles past the farmlands and out to where the Kotè's claims become less cohesive.

Short, rainy springs give way to warm, long summers, with the crisp ocean air maintaining a comfortable temperature along the coastline and into the city. Autumns are crisp and breezy, and usually an indicator to the severity of the winter to follow, when storms roll in from the sea and, on very rare occasions, snow comes down from the north.

GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Kotè people are thus named for their city-state, Kotè Onè, which was constructed along the sea cliffs on the eastern coast of Éras. Unlike most of their neighbors, the Kotè are a people united under a single governing body, although it's structure is very unlike any other in the known world. Rather than a singular ruler, the city is led by a group of citizens known as the All-Chosen.

The circular, walled city of Kotè Onè serves as the hub of Kotè life. It's divided into six districts, five of which each represent a Gods of Éras: White, Black, Brown, Gold, and Silver, respectively. The sixth and central district is where the All-Chosen reside. Each of the five exterior

districts are inhabited by the people dedicated to that particular God, who are raised to embody and support the ideas and philosophies of that particular God: both their positive and negative aspects.

White: is the force of Body. It values bodily strength, the healing arts, the relationships of mortals, and the pursuit of physical excellence.

Black: is the force of Spirit. Its office is dreams and the shepherding and guiding of mortal spirits.

Brown: is the source of the Elements. It values survival and the overcoming of obstacles, and oversees the weather and non-sentient beings.

Gold: is the force of Fate. It patrons gamblers, risk-takers, pranksters, those dreaming of fame or fortune, and, finally, bards and performers

Silver: is the force of Magic. It values the varieties of magical application and theory, and a wide range of emotions.

The sixth district is dedicated to those who have been called to serve the entire Pantheon, the All-Chosen. The All-Chosen serve as the seat of the government making all the major decisions for the city. Each district is given a small amount of autonomy to develop and enforce their own policies but the majority of the major decisions regarding trade, expansion or dealings with other cultures are left to the All-Chosen. An annual election among the All-Chosen selects 10 people to serve on a council. This council develops the unified direction for the city and the remaining All-Chosen are expected to follow this direction for the year. This Election takes place the day before the Festival of New Beginning and the council takes office during the festival.

The All-Chosen also serve as the primary educators and caregivers for the children. After their first birthday all children are sent to the central district to be raised and educated by the All-Chosen. During this time the children are educated on the various philosophies and ideals of the Gods as well as preparing them for their roles in society. They are also educated on the history of the city and the various customs and beliefs that cross the Kotè society. This education is carried out until their 14th birthday at which point they are reintroduced to the rest of the Kotè at the Festival of New Beginnings.

True Names are highly valued in Kotè culture, and although the task is no easier for the Kotè than for any other mortal, those that are able to obtain that knowledge and understanding hold a higher place in their society. Traditionally those Kotè who have their True Names are treated as the defacto leaders and influencers of their districts and are often looked at for guidance by the masses.

NAMING CONVENTIONS

Kotè names are inspired by those used in the Polynesian Islands and France, with a focus on heavy vowel sounds. Depending on the person's gender, the name ends in different letters. Male names end in -i, female names in -a, and gender neutral names in -y.

The All-Chosen are given an honorific ending to their name, -lani

BELIEFS & RELIGION

Each Kotè worships their God in their own time, in their own way. Some may have shrines which they meditate or make offerings at, while others may just let their actions show their faith. Some may like to pray together, while others may want to pray alone. Every Kotè however, tries to uphold their God's values to the best of their ability.

CLOTHING

- All Kotè people wear a simple layer to protect their skin from the sun. These garments are of varying lengths and colors, based on preference, and may bear simple embroidery at the hems, depending on the skill of the wearer. Ankle high boots or sandals are common footwear for Kotè people.
- There are two main pieces of clothing that are worn by the Kotè. These are a mantle, and a sash. They tend to adorn these pieces with embroidery, bells, beads, tassels, or feathers.
 - A sash is worn, either over the shoulder or around the waist. Generally, it is a stretch of fabric that is embellished, but other things can be worn as a sash. For example, a fisherman may wear a fishing net as a sash.
 - Everyone wears a mantle or cowl in the color of their respective God. Many will wear the original mantle from their choosing rite. The All-Chosen are the only ones who do not wear a mantle.
- Each Kotè also wears a piece of jewelry made with a rock from Kotè Onè inside of it. Usually these are necklaces, but it is not uncommon for rings or other pieces to be made. Each jewelry piece has a symbol to signify their chosen God. A sun for White, a moon for Black, a tree for Brown, a timepiece for Gold, and a key for Silver.

CUSTOMS

- After their first year of life all children are sent to the central district to be raised by the All-Chosen. One week prior to the Festival of New Beginnings, all 14 year old children undergo a ceremony deemed the Day of Choosing to determine the district they will become a part of. It is believed that during this ceremony one of the Gods, or in rare cases all of them, place their blessing on a child and welcome them into their district.
- Clothing is used as a form of personal expression and can vary greatly in adornments from person to person. Most clothing modifications are performed by the wearer themselves and, as such, most Kotè children learn basic sewing skills in order to maintain and adorn their clothing.
- Each district in Kotè Onè contains a monument in the center square dedicated to the patron God of that district. The monuments are treated as sacred areas and play a large role in many of the Kotè festivals and Holidays. Should something happen to damage the

monument, the district pulls all necessary resources to repair or replace the monument as quickly as possible as they believe the monument is their connection to their God.

- Those who have learned their true name are known for marking their faces with paints in the color of their God. The typical markings for each district are: a black stripe across the eyes, a silver arrow on the forehead, gold outlining or worn on the lips, brown claw marks or panther spots down the cheeks, or white filigree framing the eyes. When a new person discovers their true name they are taken to the monument where other true named members of the district perform a small ceremony and provide the first markings for the newly named Kotè. Afterwards the group will parade around the district bearing the news that a new true name has been discovered.
- Kotè life is not limited to one district. Each district contains the basic necessities of life, but specialized services are often only available in certain districts. The people move freely across the districts to make use of services, and to socialize with friends made both before and after their choosing.
- Despite their dedication both to the Gods and community, the Kotè do have a strong focus and sense of self. The common understanding is that one cannot help others if they do not care for themselves first.
- Worship and reverence of the Gods is one of the most important parts of Kotè life, and as such, the complete embracing of all aspects of the Gods may lead to acts that may seem extreme or immoral to other cultures. Should a question of the validity of a certain practice be brought up, the All-Chosen will make a final ruling that all districts must abide.

HOLIDAYS

The Kotè have five Holidays spread through the year, one to honor each of the Gods.

- **The Day of Choosing** (1st weekend of Thawing): During the day of choosing, all 14 year old children under the care of the All-Chosen undergo a ceremony to establish which district they will call home. The children spend the week prior preparing a blank, dull gray mantle, and will often sleep in the mantle for the nights leading up to the ceremony in order to infuse some of their own energy. During the ceremony each child wades into a pool that is to the northwest of the city, wearing their mantle. After 5 minutes with their body fully submerged the child will exit the pool and the mantle will have taken on the color of the district the child will go to live. In the rare event that the mantle does not change color after 5 minutes, that child will be welcomed into the ranks of the All-Chosen.
- **Festival of New Beginnings** (2nd weekend of Thawing): The Festival of New Beginnings is a holiday dedicated to the White God and celebrates the creation of new life. The festival takes place at the time where the ground has softened and the first seeds are planted. During the festival, most shops open their doors and set up small stands in front, creating an open air market across the entire district. Children will be seen running through the streets playing games of hide and seek and making crowns of greenery and flowers. Throughout the day it is customary for every person in a district to place a single flower at the district

monument as thanks to the Gods for the end of winter and the start of spring. Just after nightfall the new members of the district will parade from out of the central district through the streets of their new home. During this time all members of the district line the streets holding candles and cheer as the new members parade through the streets towards the monument.

- **Carnival of Fates** (2nd week of Feasting): Held in high summer in honor of the Gold God, this five day long festival migrates across the districts. A different district hosts each day with a theme chosen by the Gold district. Many games of chance are played and competitions bet upon. There is also a contest for performers, based upon the theme of the year. The performer to win gets a small pin of golden pipes.
- **Feast of Bounty** (2nd weekend of Reaping): A feast in honor of the Brown God is held after the last of the crops are harvested. A city-wide potluck is prepared by the people. After dinner, a giant game of hunters and deer is played. It starts with a single hunter and everyone else a deer. As the deer are found, they become hunters. The last person to be found becomes the first hunter for next year.
- **Gala of Passions** (1st day of Autumnfall): A day of celebrating the emotions that drive mortals, in tribute to the Silver God. All participants are encouraged to express their emotions openly and use the time to reflect on them for their own personal betterment. During the day, most citizens express feelings of love, joy and happiness towards one another, then moving to deeper emotions of disappointment, anger and sadness as the day wears on. At the end of the day, an anonymous public airing of grievances takes place. Each Kotè puts a slip of paper with a grievance on it in a cart in the middle of each district. These are then read aloud, and burned, releasing the Kotè of their bad emotions.
- **Night of Remembrance** (Last night of Winterise): A Solemn night of mourning for those who have entered the Black God's Realm for the last time. A Candle is lit in honour of those lost over the last year as a way to say goodbye to the departed with many stories being told and their favorite foods being shared among the small groups who gather together to celebrate. This is held on the last night of the year.