

# PLAYING A KOTÈ

The people of the city-state of Kotè Onè are known for their inherent connection to the Five Gods: Black, White, Silver, Brown, and Gold. Each Kotè undergoes a selection rite in which they are believed to be marked by a God to serve, thus determining their role in the community and into which of the city's districts they will move. They are tolerant people who hold the value of community above all and seek to live by God's values that selected them. Although all of the 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.

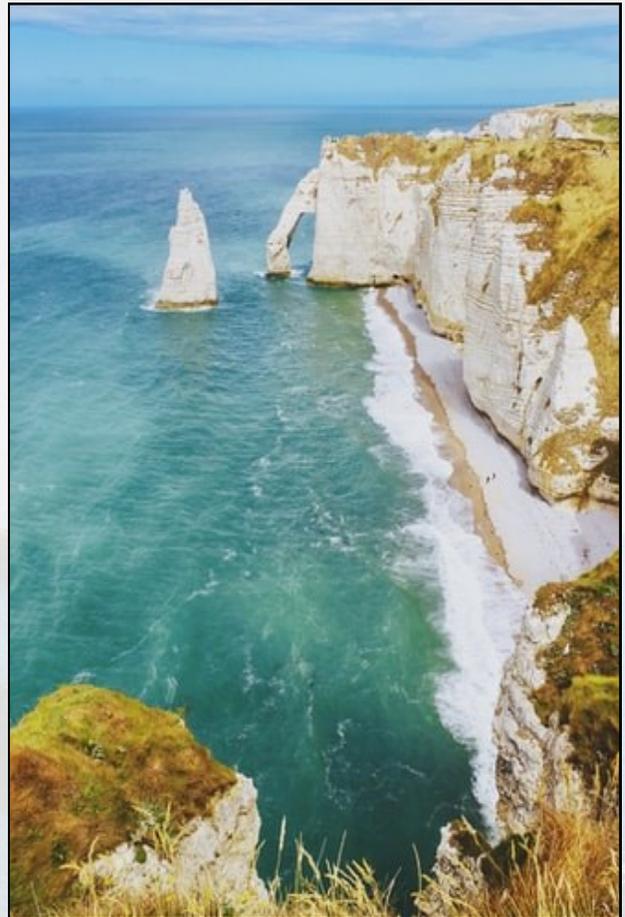
## LANDSCAPE & CLIMATE

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 city itself is encased in great, white stone walls that glisten in bright sunlight, and many of the buildings contained therein have been crafted from a locally quarried stone of similar paleness.

The sea lies just to the south of the city, with the land giving way to steep white cliffs. Evergreen forests blend away into the distance on all sides, 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 of 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.



## 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 its 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 is inhabited by the people dedicated to that particular God, who are raised to embody and support the ideas and philosophies of that particular God.

- **White:** is the force of the 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 government, making all the major decisions for the city. Each district is given a small amount of autonomy to develop and enforce their 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. (Please note: All-Chosen are not playable)

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 can obtain that knowledge and understanding hold a higher place in their society. Traditionally those Kotè who have their True Names are treated as the de facto 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, borrowing the heavy vowel sounds. Depending on the person's preferred pronouns, the name ends in different letters. Masculine names end in -i, feminine names in -a, and gender-neutral names in -y.

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

## COMMON CUSTOMS

- After their first year of life, all children are sent to the central district to be raised by the All-Chosen. Children undergo a ceremony at fourteen to determine the district they will become a part of for the rest of their life. It is believed that during this ceremony one of the Gods, or in rare cases all of them, places their blessing on a child and welcomes them into their district.
- 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 person discovers their true name they are taken to the monument where other true named members of the district perform a ceremony and provide the first markings for the newly named Kotè. Afterward, they will parade around the district bearing the news that a true name has been discovered.
- Kotè life is not limited to one district. Each district contains the 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 one does not care for themselves first.

- Kotè hospitality is revered by all who come to the city to trade with them. The city has spared no expense in building some of the finest, and cleanest, inns and taverns for the vast numbers of guests who come by boat or road every year. The Kotè tend to be fascinated by people of other cultures, and are typically eager to sit them down for a drink or meal and to hear news of the world beyond their walls. Stories and tales from visitors have led to many a young Kotè's adventure into the lands beyond.
- Worship and reverence of the Gods are some 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 by.

## RELIGION & BELIEF

Each Kotè worships their God in their own time, in their preferred way. Other cultures are often surprised to learn that such a God-focused culture has incredibly private worship, but the Kotè find massive, public temples to be less personal than their own methods.

Some Kotè may visit small district shrines—little alcoves shielded from the weather—at 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 and show their devotion by living their life to demonstrate those values.

## ATTIRE

- Kotè people wear a simple underlayer 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.
- 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. They tend to adorn these pieces with embroidery, bells, beads, tassels, or even feathers.
- 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 stone from the city walls of 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.
- 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 to maintain and adorn their clothing.
- Carefully applied makeup and body designs in paint are a common part of daily life. While facial symbols are reserved for those who have attained their true name, small ornamental designs on the face, neck, and hands are common forms of expression.

## HOLIDAYS

### Day of Choosing

Exactly two weeks before the Festival of New Beginnings, all 14-year-olds undergo a ceremony to establish which district they will call home. They spend the week prior preparing a blank, gray mantle, and will sleep in it for the nights leading up to the ceremony to infuse it with their energy. Each child wades into the Pool of Dawning in their mantle. After 5 minutes with their body submerged they will exit and the mantle will have taken on the color of the district the child will go to. In the rare occasion that the mantle does not change color after five minutes, that child will be welcomed into the ranks of the All-Chosen.

### Festival of New Beginnings (2<sup>nd</sup> 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.

## HOLIDAYS (CONTINUED)

### **Carnival of Fates** (2<sup>nd</sup> 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** (2<sup>nd</sup> 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** (1<sup>st</sup> 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 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** (31<sup>st</sup> of Winterise)

A solemn night of mourning for those who have entered the Black God's Realm for the last time throughout the year. A candle is lit in honor 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.