

Chapter Three



The Drifting Kingdoms A Concise Guide



The Kingdoms consist of seven islands, and the adventures of **Chancers** will begin on the easternmost island, Aurichor. Long residence on an island will habituate a Chancer to the magical influence of the prevailing **Magnus**. The **Magnae** are entities of tremendous power that emerged in the Kingdoms at the same time as Chancers. The **Phantic Academy**, made up of scholars and philosophers, assumes that terrestrial genii (localized spirits belonging to the land) displaced during the settlement of Aurichor were reborn as Magnae.

At the northeast corner of Aurichor is the Misted Bridge, which links the island to other lands and other times (called collectively the **Continent**) in an unpredictable pattern. The **Wardens of the Bridge** can stabilize the connection for up to two weeks at a time, allowing for short forays into these strange lands and for the safe arrival of newcomers to the island.

The climate in Aurichor approximates our own Mediterranean climates, with mild weather in the winter and hot, dry weather in the summer. Temperatures range from 50°F (10°C) in the colder months and 86°F (30°C) in the hotter months. The climate is quite similar on the neighboring island of **Vesca**. It is considerably colder in **Fikavikt** to the north, and warmer in **Sereyin**, **Djun**, and **Quivoq**, the southern string of islands. In **Cynevox**, the westernmost island, the climate is very humid, but temperatures oddly hover near 68°F (20°C) all year.

The Kingdoms are in the late Bronze Age, developmentally speaking, although infusions of ideas and technology from the lands across the Misted Bridge make development uneven. **Metallurgy** and Alchemy are highly advanced, as are farming and irrigation. Aurichor in particular is rich in arable land, with about 40% of the island devoted to growing crops. Both Vesca and the southern islands support their people with traditional modes of fishing, hunting, and gathering; Djun and Quivoq have very rich soil and furnish the Kingdoms with a wide variety of tree fruits. Fikavikt grows grains in its flatlands, though its economy is driven by mining. The Cynevocians have elaborate fisheries and fungus farms.

History will be discussed in another chapter more extensively, but all seven islands have arrived at monarchical approximations of government. In Aurichor, the Orian line has ruled for the past eighty years; the current sovereigns, fraternal twins Halcyor and Kaledor, are very well regarded, and they often solicit the perspectives of citizen-advisors. The nominal ruler of Vesca is **Diasyn Cedarson**, though regional leaders attend to the peoples of the northern mountains and southern wetlands on the island.

The calendar and day/night cycle in the Kingdoms roughly correspond to our own annual pattern, with holidays hinging on seasonal transitions. Of special interest are **Aphiemi**, or **The Day of Release**, observance of the separation of **Seolfa** and **Ephemer**, the two aspects of Aurichor's Magnus, the **Twining Dragon**, so that Ephemer may journey to the moon. The day, which occurs on our January 1st, is celebrated among the people of the island with both conciliatory gestures and the forgiveness of all debts. The islands also celebrate **Kaleoso**, or **Newcomers' Day**, in the middle of summer, around our June 24th. Finally, the grandest fixed holiday of each year is **Skyrise** (around our October 31st), the day when the **Iridex** looses the rejuvenated souls of those that died during prior years, that they might be embodied once again.

Most citizens of the Kingdoms live in small or extended family units, though families in the Kingdom owe more to consent than to descent. The systems of Antiquity (unrecorded time) and the Sonian Age (which began with the settlement of Aurichor roughly 335 years ago) were largely patrilineal. A hint of



those old ways persists in **Annexation**, a practice by which the longstanding households of Aurichor graft promising individuals to their family trees. The attachment to a historic family group is generally signaled by a suffix. The practice of Annexation is dying, but the suffixes -or and -son link individuals to the current and the former royal lines and is still viewed as a rare honor.

Chosen or found extended families are the norm in the Kingdoms, with individuals joining existing networks of kin based on affection and shared lifeways rather than birth. Ancient principles of guest-friendship make it possible for citizens to move freely among the islands and find their people over time. In the Orian era, newcomers who cross the Misted Bridge are encouraged to spend a few weeks acclimating to the magicks of the Kingdoms before voyaging to the places they hope to call home.

Marriages between newcomers and the indigenous and previously habituated peoples of the islands are commonplace, resulting in an incredibly diverse population. Same-sex marriages are also common, and all couples can opt to bear children via the magicks of the **Mirrored Pillars** on the island of Quivoq. As with the emergence of the Magnae and the Chancers, the folk of the Kingdoms take for granted that the Kingdoms are expressing their will by inviting newcomers across the Bridge. The word Kaleoso mentioned above means “the islands called to your souls.” Terms of endearment and affiliation in the Kingdoms tend to be gender-neutral and speak to relationships among souls. **Filoso**, for instance, simply means “soul beloved of my soul,” and **Saviso** means “soul known to my soul.”

The monetary system in the islands is a work in progress. In Aurichor, pearlescent pence were introduced as a unit of currency almost 30 years ago, just before Halcyor and Kaledor took the throne. The pence are made from waste metals refined and mixed with the runoff of alchemical processes, yielding coins that have a rippling, reflective quality. Most folk call them pearlies, and citizens receive the **Citizens’ Income** of 50 pearlies a month in addition to housing and communal meals in the plazas of the city. Schooling is also freely accessible in the Capital, and the services of the **Melioric Order of Healers** and the **Ambrosial Union of Alchemists** are deeply discounted and customarily donated during times of need.

In instituting the Citizen’s Income, Celsior went against the counsel of his advisors, who argued that a housed, monied, well-fed populace would become unambitious. The contrary, however, has proven to be true. The economy thrives, as does the island, and a commitment to **meraki**, the ancient practice of finding ways to put love and heart into one’s endeavors, has arisen anew. The young take up apprenticeships in the professions that intrigue them, and wealthy elders devote their time to teaching and their resources to sponsoring public projects: renovations to the **Chordian Athenaeum**, the creation of pleasure and meditation gardens, the refurbishment of dormitories for the orphaned.

Many feel that Aurichor and its capital are on the cusp of a Golden Age, that all the changes the Orian monarchs instituted have set the stage for a future bolder and brighter than any could have imagined a few generations ago. Historians of the era have of course debated the matter, attempting to isolate the essential causes of the revival. The most venerable among them—including the great scholar **Corisande**, whose name is graven on the keystone of the citadel in the heart of **Old City**, who even the long-lived **Psithuri** call *grandmother*—contend young Jovolor set the renewal in motion with the **Restorative Order**, which invited Chancers to participate in the public life of Euphyria after long centuries of exclusion. “Good things are bound to happen,” Corisande writes in *The Definitive History of Euphyria*, “when you let the magic back in.”

