

# Aurelion

A land of Plenty (of trouble)



# INFERNAL LANDS

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AQUATIC LANDS

INFUSE

# Lands of Aurelion

The continent of Aurelion is one of plenty. The land provides an abundance of materials and fertile soil for the population to thrive. The magical Solar Lens provides light and protection from the horrors that lurk in the dark. This does not mean it is in any way a utopia. Each kingdom only has a certain set of resources and is reliant on the others for the rest. While all-out war is uncommon because of this fact, tensions are quite high as the very different cultures and the exploitative nature of many of the nobles leads to a lot of friction.

The land itself is also not the friendliest. Natural disasters are not uncommon in Aurelion. Every 2-3 centuries an event known as the Scourge occurs. Its beginning is marked by the Endless Sea going from its normal dark blue to an inky black. When the Solar Lens turns an eerie red the Scourge begins in earnest. Creatures of all shapes and sizes, collectively known as Dreadbeasts rise out of the Black Sea with seemingly only one goal: to kill as many living creatures as they can.

In this section of the compendium all the general information about the geological attributes of the different lands can be found, as well as some important history and class structure of the kingdoms that reside in the different lands.



## Infernal lands

The Infernal lands is a kingdom of fire. Being in the full focus of the solar lens its lands are barren and rough. The people of the infernal lands are equally as tough. The Kingdom of Fire has been the only governing force in these lands since time immemorial and is the oldest of the kingdoms on Aurelion. With its capital in Endran, the kingdom is well respected for its military might and quality metal and metal workers.



Though the land is incapable of sustaining much in the way of agriculture, it more than makes up for it in the way of abundant mineral deposits in the mountainous earth. The Kingdom is reliant on the other lands for agricultural foods, though its rather aggressive native wildlife has been known to provide good meat for the general populace.

The population largely falls into three categories. Miners, craftsmen and soldiers.

The abundance of volcanic activity in the region has made mining the many rich mountains dangerous, but the stable income it provides makes it the preferred choice of many of the Kingdom's inhabitants.

Infernal Steel is heralded across the continent for being of top quality and is the Kingdom's chief export. Crafting steel and other metallurgical creations is reserved for a relatively small number of the population as the Kingdom strictly monitors the quality of the output of all smiths and artisans. This makes the training process for a new craftsman arduous and long, usually taking a young apprentice almost half their expected lifespan to receive a proper certification. However, when a smith is successfully able to finish their training they are assured of a good life for themselves and their family as they are put under special protection. These people are under the personal protection of the king and messing with them would incur the wrath of the entire might of the Kingdom of Fire's army.

Provided with the highest quality gear and having to survive the harsh conditions of the Infernal Lands, it is no surprise that the military of the infernal lands is held in such high regard. The life of a soldier in the service of the Fire King is not an easy one but that can be said of all life in the Infernal lands. The soldiers are trained rigorously and must always be ready to fight any foe, be it man or beast. The Fire King is directly involved in the exploits and training of the army. The King can often be seen leading the charge against the giant beasts that roam the Infernal Lands. This makes it so that the army is quite fiercely loyal to their king. The soldiers are so renowned for their prowess that it is not uncommon to have other states bolster their ranks with infernal soldiers and the soldiers themselves can often be seen doing mercenary work.

The Kingdom of Fire is one of the least tumultuous of the lands. Historically, their singular ruler has had very little interest in expanding their dominion due to their relative isolation, with the only land-based connection being directly to the Centre. Though the kingdom has seen its share of Scourgebound and bandit activity it remains peaceful through the omnipresence of the army and the general culture that permeates the land. The king of the Infernal lands follows no gods in particular but the general populace are quite zealous followers of the Twin Gods. However, both the nobility and the peasants have great faith in their fellow man. Once someone owes another a favour in the Kingdom of Fire it could almost be considered to be that person's divine duty to pay it back. This system of exchanging favours is so engrained in the culture of the Kingdom that even the law will occasionally oversee minor crimes if the people involved in the prosecution owe a debt to the suspect.

The Lost Legion is based just outside Endran in the Halls of the Lost. The ingrained nature of duty and paying back debts is likely what led to the idea of the Remnant within the Legion. The Legion is highly heretical in the eyes of the populace due to their use of Dreadsteel. This leads their members to be shunned by the peasants. Most of its members are not originally from the infernal lands themselves which, combined with their proximity to the capital, makes it so that the kingdom makes gratuitous use of the faction's services when the king's direct involvement would be less desirable.

# Earthen lands

The Earthen lands themselves are known to be quite calm. Though an earthquake will occasionally test the land's many villages, the land itself is not as tumultuous as the other lands (the Centre excluded), though this cannot be said of its inhabitants. The Earthen lands has very fertile soil and its livestock is prized for the quality of their produce. The official capital of the Earthen Coalition is Ophelia but most of the governing happens in the lands many separate provinces, each ruled over by a noble family.



The green hills and plains of the land are subdivided into small feudal provinces that are each controlled by a noble family. These lands are tended to by the peasants and, in return for a share of their produce, the peasants are granted protection by their respective noble rulers.

Though initially a monarchy ruled over by someone in the position of King or Queen it has become a Coalition ruled by a senate after a large number of rulers met their ends in quick succession. Those with power ruled the position to have been cursed and opted to abolish the position in favour of a senate. There are sources that claim that the Madmen of Corta are behind these deaths, likely sponsored by some powerful Earthen nobles. Though no conclusive evidence of this was ever found.

The lives of the people in the Earthen Coalition is usually rather simple. Those born into a peasant family will grow up to tend the farm of their parents and provide for the next generation.

Those of noble birth have a little more on their plate. They will occasionally have to quell some bandit activity or will, through diplomacy or violence, resolve a dispute with some of the neighbouring nobles. Lastly, they will convene in Ophelia every five years (or when called upon) to visit the Coalition Senate.

This convention allows for the replacement of any members of the Senate should this be necessary and any major decisions affecting the entire Earthen lands are made during this time. Those nobles that are voted into the Senate are appointed to lead the Earthen Coalition until replaced, either by death or simple dissatisfaction, and will decide upon major issues that are of importance to the entire Earthen Coalition. It is not uncommon for the Senate to simply relegate the decision making to the provincial governors as the matters "are not important enough" for them.

The Earthen Coalition does not have a single unified army. Rather, all the different provinces have their own militias consisting of minor nobles, mercenaries and some eager peasants. Should a threat arrive that threatens the entirety of the Earthen Coalition then the provinces

tend to come together to form a larger army to fend it off. Though historically the internal bickering of the nobles has made the Coalition's military responses quite weak.

The great forests of the Earthen lands are not subject to the rule of the Coalition. They are a haven for outcasts of all kinds, though a semblance of hierarchy does exist within some of the groups living there. The two major influences upon the forests are the Peasantry, who use the forests as training grounds and as sites for the creation of their Dreadhounds, and the Spirits of the Forest, a fanatical faction of Tainted that are hostile to most humans. Those that respect the forest and its inhabitants are likely to be left alone. However, any who harbour malicious intent against the forests or otherwise disrespect the rulers of the forest will meet a rapid and painful end.

Religion in the Earthen lands is as unified as its provinces, that is to say not very. Most provinces will follow the Twin Gods as mandated by their nobles, though there are others that will not enforce any particular belief and yet others that enforce not believing. The Coalition formally bans Scourge worship and other destructive cults, but apart from putting up the occasional bounty will not enforce this very strictly. This has led to the Earthen lands having to deal with a rather large amount of Scourgebound incursions.

The Peasantry has stepped up to stem these incursions, as the nobles were too caught up in their own business to do something about it. Though the biggest amount of Scourge purging is to be done within the Earthen lands itself, one can often find members of the Peasantry taking up bounties to hunt Scourgebound anywhere on Aurelion.

## **Places**

**Ophelia:** Capital of the Earthen Coalition and seat of the Senate

**Grenich:** Often referred to as the "Town of the Headless" it is said that this ghost town is inhabited solely by Royan "The Headcaster" and all of its previous residents were decapitated by them, their corpses being risen by the wisps of green mist that pass through the town every so often.

**Lunala:** Also known as the "City of the Dark Lens" Lunala is a city centrally located in the Earthen Coalition, making it a prime trading hub for all sorts of goods and services. Rumours of a dark influence within the city pop-up from time to time, as the Scourgebound target the city as a prospective base of operations.

# Aquatic lands

The Aquatic lands are, as the name would suggest, known for their water. The many waterways are filled with fresh water that sustains most of the population of Aurelion.

The landmasses of the Aquatic Lands are constantly changing shape as the water level rises and falls. Though there are a few places that have historically always been above water. It is not uncommon for an island to completely disappear into the waters.



With this tumultuous landscape two major groups have formed in the aquatic lands. Those that dwell on the land and those that call the waters home. Those that dwell on the land have accepted that their land could be flooded at any moment and adapted their buildings to such happenings. These people specialise in processing the natural resources provided by the aquatic lands, mostly fish and underwater flora, and will often make use of the water farers to gather such materials. The wild waters between the landmasses can also make certain regions of the lands unreachable from time to time. This can last anywhere from a week to as long as 10 years. As such, though the people are zealously loyal to their empress, each individual island can be entirely self-sustaining if need be.

A small section of the land dwellers has chosen to become spellcasters and actively practice their craft within the settlements of the aquatic lands. Most of these spellcasters focus on restorative magics, as the aquatic lands have historically housed true mages that practice these spells. This makes it so that the people and products of the Aquatic Empire are renowned for their amazing healing properties.

The water dwellers are much less numerous than those that dwell on the land, but in no way less important to the general structure of the Aquatic lands. They exist either under the service of the Empire or as free sailors. Though being a free sailor can be more lucrative, as they can take full payment from any job, legal or not, the stability of working for the Empress is a draw for many. The water dwellers spend almost all their life out on the waters of the aquatic lands, only stepping on land occasionally to stock up or to get info on work.

The Aiyana Empire is a matriarchal society that is ruled by an empress from the ornate city of Aqua. This is a city of excess and pleasure. There is always something to see or listen to in Aqua. Though the empress of the aquatic lands is often wise and gifted with great compassion for her people, it is the Counsel of Islands located in Draug that runs the day-to-day of the empire, a task that would be impossible for one person due to the constant shifting of the lands in Aiyana.

The majority of the Aiyanan people are wholly loyal to their empress. Some even worship her as a goddess. This unified adoration of their leader makes the people relatively peaceful



among themselves and Scourge worship is very rare in these lands. However, any who do not join the people in their blind love for their leader is immediately looked at with suspicion or even scorn. Traders and emissaries of the aquatic lands are known across Aurelion for always working praise of the Empress into all of their speeches.

The abundance of spellcasters and the great academy of Draug made it the perfect place for the Choreo Arcana to be formed and based there. These unorthodox mages are a large part of the Aiyanaan military power along with a more traditional, but in no way less powerful, navy. The lack of large waterways in most of the other lands makes the Aquatic lands less of a threat to the other nations, though it also means that the aquatic lands would be immensely difficult to conquer by those not intimately familiar with its workings.

# Aerial lands

The Aerial lands are the least interesting when it comes to its geology. It consists mostly of a large expanse of barren snowy tundra occasionally interrupted by a mountain or two. This means that the natural resources of the land are few and far between and its inhabitants have been dependant on trade for all recorded history.

The main draw of the Aerial lands is their amazing technology. The large expanses of empty land between settlements have necessitated fast modes of transportation between them and allow for great freedom when conducting tests.



The Aerial lands are officially ruled by the Warp King in Deluge, however ruling the general populace was never their strong suit. The King and his Arms have formal understandings with the major factions of the Aerial lands to distribute power among them. The Arms of the King are rightfully respected and feared by the inhabitants of the land. They are powerful mages and supremely skilled soldiers, which makes them brutally efficient when disposing of the King's enemies.

The machine-worshipping Riders rule the lands in between settlements. You will often see their massive vehicles barrelling through the snowy plains of the Aerial lands. Their zealous worship of their vehicles and other machinations makes them difficult to deal with, as they can go from docile to hostile in a matter of seconds because their "god" has told them they should. The Riders are generally known as a lawless bandit faction, but they usually follow a code-of-honour and help those who help them. Though they 'own' the majority of the lands there are some train-lines under the direct protection of the Warp King and the Riders know not to touch them.

The flight-obsessed Hunters of the Sky where given free rein to roam the skies of the Aerial lands. Their focus on flight has allowed them to create machines and contraptions that the other factions of mankind could only dream of. Their greatest achievement is the flying fort Freedom. It is a complete settlement that houses its own population in the sky, held up by a marriage of magic and the latest Aerial tech. It functions as a base of operations for the Hunters. Their flight technology make them excellent bounty hunters and mercenaries, though they are known to transport people and goods from time to time as well.

Finally it was the Aural Syndicate that has power within many of the settlements on the Aerial lands. This family of conmen lead the settlements efficiently under the loose rule of the King. Through using their wide network of members they exert pressure on all who do business in their territory.

Any member of the native populace that is not a member of the above groups likely serves them in some other way. The social structure of the Aerial lands will often be ridiculed by the people of other lands. Though this will rarely show when others interact with the people of the Aerial lands as their respect and fear of Aerial technology far outweighs any prejudice.

The people of the Aerial lands are probably the least religious of any of the lands. Their general poor living conditions and thorough understanding of technology and science make them quite sceptical towards the higher powers.

## **Places**

**Deluge:** Capital of the Aerial lands and home to the Warp king and his Hands.

**Petisara:** An ancient city-fortress near the rivers that had withstood many scourge incursions before eventually being infiltrated by some especially cunning Scourgebound. This started the Scourgebound faction of the Infested and they have been based out of this city ever since. The Overboss is aware of the activities of the Infested but turns a blind eye so long as the Boss of Petisera makes their payments.

## Infused lands

Though the people of the Infused lands might be one of the more docile sects, the land itself is not to be taken lightly. As the name might suggest the land is infused with all sorts of magic. So much so in fact, that the majority of it is uninhabitable and can only be travelled through if a lot of precautionary measures are taken, due to the high number of magically induced storms and anomalies that happen there. This is, however a good environment for experimentation.



Before recorded history the Infused lands was territory similar to the Aerial lands, barren snowfields devoid of life. At some point a powerful mage attempted to grant life to the land, but their attempt failed catastrophically. The resulting magically infused land was even more hostile to life than the Aerial lands. The mage, distraught by their failure, founded the city of Corta to try and study the land and its phenomena in an attempt to fix their mistakes. Their studies of the arcane and the alchemical attracted others to the city. Since then Corta has been known for its research centres and library, where much of the knowledge of the people of Aurelion is stored. The mage's studies never resulted in them being able to reverse their mistake, though the city remained.

The flora and fauna of the Infused lands is as out of whack as the land itself is. Any effort to document all the different beasts and plants is almost futile as the landscape can change any minute. A forest of vines could be growing out of control one day and it'll be reduced to ash the next day after being hit by a firestorm. Most of the "animal" life is hostile to the people of Corta (as well as other animals) and can range from almost harmless fleas to building sized behemoths out for blood.

Though the Infused lands officially belong to the Aerial lands it has not enforced this since time immemorial. The city of Corta is the only real settlement that exists within these lands, protected by a field placed there by its founder. One might occasionally stumble across a field station where some of the Cortan people are researching something that they can't within the walls, but this is quite rare.

Roaming tribes of so called "Savages" do exist and somehow manage to survive in the land outside the city. These people do not trust anyone outside of their circles, but if someone can overcome this hurdle they will have allied themselves with some of the most unique and often powerful individuals on Aurelion.

Many of Aurelion's wise men travel to Corta in the hopes of joining the prestigious ranks of the group known as the Madmen of Corta. Though the name may put off those who take pride in their sanity, no one will deny the results that the Madmen publish. The Madmen

consist mostly of alchemists but will accept anyone with a strong enough thirst for knowledge. This means that quite a few of Aurelion's mages have some relationship with the Madmen. Their clandestine, and often morally questionable, experiments have caused plenty of trouble in Aurelion, though most of the population doesn't actually know it.

The city does not have a formal hierarchy. If any decisions have to be made on a city wide level it is usually done by vote of the entire population of the city or some recognised academics are chosen to deal with it. The Arbiter of Knowledge is the unofficial guardian deity of Corta. Their presence in the city is very rare, though they can always be seen during Mad Week.

Every two years the Madmen come together to share the knowledge they have obtained with their fellow seekers of knowledge. This event is known as the Mad Week and has become a staple festival in Corta as the Madmen show the new things they have created. It attracts craftsmen from all different lands of Aurelion to find out about the latest and greatest in their craft.

When the Scourge rears its ugly, but so very interesting head, the people of Corta can be seen everywhere where the Scourge is, be it to help out in fighting it off or to simply study the Scourge and its effects on the people of Aurelion.

# The Centre

The centre is Aurelion's most and least interesting piece of land. To most it is simply a beautiful, yet dangerous piece of land, but to those of religious persuasion it is a place of reverence.

The Centre consist of flat plains of different types of vibrant flowers interrupted by the occasional font of water. The entire landmass is suspended a great height above the ocean, only connected to each of the continents by a few land bridges. It



is unlikely that these are enough to support the mass of land and so there is likely to be some sort of magical force at play. This elevation makes it so that Luxibris Tower and its walls can be seen from any point on Aurelion. Even though the abundance of flowers and water would suggest a very fertile land and good place to live this is far from the truth. Many attempts have been made, but nothing other than the native flowers will grow on the fields. The flowers themselves have strange effects on any creature that ingests them, and the waters of the fonts are not for human consumption. Another factor is that the "Arbiter" of poison calls the area its home and any foolish enough to enter when it's around will be added to their undead legion.

This beautiful, yet hostile landscape makes it so that the Centre is left alone most of the time by the populations of the other lands. Short trips through the lands are often safe enough and traders will pass through the landscape often to get to their destinations. Because of the previously mentioned dangers it is extremely rare to spot bandits along the road here, adding to its serenity and versatility as a trade route. The sea underneath The Centre is also often used for trade, though it can be a very tumultuous sea.

The Luxibris Tower is a titanic construct that is the literal and metaphorical centre of Aurelion. The tower was supposedly built by the Twin Gods and rumour says that they still live in a section of the tower. The area within its walls is unreachable for most people as only the Arbiters and their guests, which are exceedingly rare, are able to visit it. Any who attempt to enter are faced with metal golems, courtesy of the Arbiter of Dominion, that protect its entrances, as well as a magical barrier that is impenetrable through mortal means. Even True Mages have been unable to breach it.

At the top of the tower, visible from anywhere on Aurelion, is the Solar Lens. This artefact shines light and warmth upon the lands. It is focused upon the Infernal lands, which leads to these lands being quite hot and barren. The Aerial lands being completely out of focus leads to them being in perpetual cold. The moderate climate of the other two lands are also thanks to their location in relation to the Solar Lens.

A sphere surrounds the Solar lens that darkens and becomes clear at around 10-hour intervals. This signifies the day-night cycle of Aurelion.

The Scourge will mostly ignore the Centre. The Scourgebound creatures are hurt by the Lens' light in its pure form, only coming out in force when it is tainted red during an Incursion. The reason why the sphere turns red every two or so centuries is unknown to many, though the Faith of the Twin Gods teaches that incursions are a test for humanity and their value to the Twin Gods.

# Factions

The inhabitants of Aurelion are as diverse as its lands. The unique geological and ideological landscapes of each of the kingdoms lend themselves to fostering a wide variety of different factions and subsets of the population. Though the general populace is only loyal to their kingdom and their people, there are a few that swear allegiance to other purposes or people. These factions are usually created and based in one kingdom, but their loyalty lies with their own above all else.

This section of the compendium is dedicated to explaining the ideologies, origins and major accomplishments of the major factions in Aurelion.



# The Lost Legion

The Lost Knights

## Faction Background

The Lost Legion is one of the oldest factions on Aurelion. After the Scourge had consumed the land it would often leave many fighters without a purpose. Their lands destroyed, their lords killed, their loved ones taken, these warriors would roam the recovering world looking for a new reason to fight. These Lost knights would eventually gather in the Infernal Lands where they would find purpose anew in fighting for one another, finding comradeship in their shared loss, both as sell swords and as an army to oppose the next Scourge

After a particularly destructive Scourge, that had left the Infernal Lands in ruin, one of the Lost whose name is long forgotten happened upon an abandoned Dreadsteel blade left by the Scourge. The blade began assaulting the warrior's mind when he touched it. The Lost was able to quell the thing's manic whispers, though it was now bound to the knight. The Lost Knight gained immense strength and resilience from the blade, though it would take great effort to keep the blade under control. The Lost Legion had found a source of superhuman power in the Dreadsteel and were not afraid to use it. The next Scourge was much less destructive than the one before due to the increased power of the Legion.

It was not long after that the adverse effects of fusing Dreadsteel into the body became apparent. The mind of those that had overly indulged in its power quickly deteriorated. This often led to the Knight going on a mad rampage, attacking everyone in their sight until they were slain.

Now that the Lost Legion had become dependent on Dreadsteel as a source of power they could not simply stop its use. Instead, it became customary that the Lost Knights that felt their mind slipping would raise their sword to the sky should they not wish to take their own life so that they could be slain before harming those they had come to care about.

The general populace is not keen on interacting with members of the Lost Legion as their reputation of violence and insanity is widespread.

## **Ranks in the Lost Legion**

The Lost Legion doesn't really follow a classical hierarchical structure. Though there are more powerful Lost Knights (referred to as Generals or Leaders by the general populace) that generally make important decisions, the Lost Legion doesn't have a single leader and all tasks, be it battles or other things, are voluntary. There are however a few companies that serve different purposes within the Legion.

### **Remnant Legion:**

Those that join the Lost Legion often have something that still weighs on their mind. Be it revenge for one they cared about or wanting to save someone that was in trouble. These tasks are what becomes one's reason for living when they've lost everything else. These tasks are written down and sealed in what is known as a Scroll of Duty. This Scroll is proof that a Knight is part of the Remnant Legion. Remnant Knights tend to stay away from the larger battles that the Legion partakes in as they still have a duty to fulfil. This duty transcends all other commitments and should an opportunity to come closer to completing it present itself the Knight will take it, regardless of what they are doing.

If the Knight is slain before they can complete their task another Knight will take it upon themselves to complete it, which occasionally means some re-join the Remnant Legion, even after completing their own Duty. When the Knight completes their mission, they bring the Scroll of Duty back to the Infernal Lands where they burn the scroll in the Common Hall hearth fire in a celebratory festival.

### **Steel Brethren:**

After completing their Duty a knight will be given the option to have a piece of Dreadsteel bonded to them. Though not mandatory, it is considered customary to go through the process and most go through it. After the Knight has received, or not received, their Dreadsteel they join the Steel Brethren. This is the Legion's main force and most that hire a Lost Legion mercenary will meet with one of the Steel Brethren. When not on a mission, the Steel Brethren are usually undergoing tough training in even tougher circumstances. This leads them to strengthen their mind and body as well as the bonds between each other. All this training makes the Lost Knight less likely to succumb to the influence of the Dreadsteel.

**First Line:**

The First Line is the first “veteran” company of the Lost Legion. Those that have learned all there is to know from the Steel Brethren will move to the coasts of Aurelion. Here they are tasked with sending any Scourge that happen upon the coast back to the Sea from whence they came. Though the task is physically less draining than the things the Brethren put one up to it becomes much more mentally draining. A Lost Knight of the First Line can spend multiple months without any action on their grounds, but they must always be vigilant. If a Scourgebeast is let loose on the general populace for even a few hours it can cause casualties that count into the hundreds. When a Scourgebeast is sighted it must immediately be engaged to stop its advance, this means that some Knights will face Beasts that they could never hope to win against alone. Such moments of extreme stress compared to the normal days of staring out across the ocean can quickly wear the mind of a knight down.

When a Lost Knight of the First Line starts to hear the whispers of They Beyond again, they know it is time to lean in to the insanity and become a Hound.

**Mad Dogs:**

Though most that interact with the Lost Legion will meet one of the Steel Brethren, it is the Mad Dogs that the general populace will speak of when referring to the Legion. The Mad Dogs or Hounds of the Lost Legion are a force consisting of the Knights that have lost all semblance of self-preservation and now seek only to die in service of their brothers and sisters. Once one becomes a Mad Dog there is no turning back. Making gratuitous use of the powers that the Dreadsteel provides and relishing in the maddening whispers it utters, a Hound of the Lost Legion is a terrifying and seemingly unstoppable force of war. The greatest examples of which are those that will intentionally get hit, wounded and even run through, just to continue their rampage as if these mortal injuries are but pinpricks.

Eventually the whispers of They Beyond become too loud to drown in the cries of the enemy and a Hound truly goes mad. It is at this moment that the Mad Dog will raise their blade to the heavens and the others of the Lost Legion temporarily retreat. The Hound gives in to the whispers and goes on a rampage that is beyond words. Everything within vision that shows even the slightest hint of life becomes a target. Should the Knight still stand at the end of such a slaughter they will have become more Scourgebeast than man. They are then slain at the hands of their previous brethren and their body is ceremoniously burned, ending their tenure with honour.

# The Peasantry

## The Peasants

The Peasantry is Aurelion's newest faction to gain a decent amount of traction. The farmers of the Earthen Kingdom had gotten tired of the reluctance of the royalty in the area to protect them from the Scourge.

A number of them gathered to train with weapons, both close and long range, so that they would have a fighting chance. They also raised canines to help them fight. The Peasantry, as the nobles had named them, were initially mocked as fools and their efforts were mostly ignored by the majority of the populace.

This attitude would change during the next Scourge Incursion as the members of the Peasantry, using their knowledge of the land and the dogs they had trained, proved to be able combatants, sometimes even outlasting the professionally trained knights.

By the end of the Scourge Incursion the faction had gained a lot of respect and even the most sceptical of nobles could not deny the success of the Peasantry.

The only problem that the farmers faced was that their canine companions were more susceptible to the Scourge's corruption than they had initially thought. This meant that a lot of the beasts had to be put down. A hard thing to do for one who had spent so many years training it.

One member refused to slay his companion even going so far as to travel to and through the Infused Lands to have his loyal hound cured. Having never seen a half-corrupted beast the Madmen eagerly started their experiments. The experiments were not successful in their original goal of curing the beast, but they were able to stop the beast from going feral. The hound was never as strong as it was before the corruption but it had become extremely resilient and had gained amazing recovery abilities.

Upon his return to the Earthen Lands the man shared the knowledge he had acquired with the other Peasants and from then on, it became customary for a member of the Peasantry to create and train a Scourgebound Dreadhound. This would further increase their combat capability, though it also led them to become a more shunned and secluded group.

Their use of Scourge related power and open-minded approach to Scourgebound people/beasts have made them more popular with the Tainted and members of the Peasantry are some of the few human groups that the Spirits of the Forest are on good terms with.

# Choreo Arcana

## The Arcanists

The Choreo Arcana is the main military might of the Aquatic Lands and has existed for as long as memory serves. The group is unique in that it uses magic through the movement of the body rather than making use of infusion or invocation. This unusual way of casting allows them certain benefits over the other mages. The main one being that they are not limited by limited materials. The biggest drawback is that the casting takes a lot longer.

When talking about the Choreo Arcana and their accomplishments many would mention their immense help during incursions of the Scourge. Creating wards at the initial point of the incursion as well as being very capable healers, though the most well-known event is the destruction of old Deluge.

Deluge was the seat of power of the Mad Monarch, Desdaen, before he had set his sights on dominating the entirety of Aurelion. The Choreo Arcana would assist the Warp King in overthrowing Desdaen, by containing the immense power of the future ruler in a barrier. The people of the city found it strange to have such a large group of eccentrics dancing outside their city for the good part of a week, but could do little about it, as any that approached would be unable to breach the barrier. At the close of the week the entire city was obliterated by the Warp King. The barrier saving the surrounding land from complete destruction.

Though the true strength of the Choreo Arcana lies in numbers, it is not uncommon to see them travelling in pairs or even alone. Their magic has many uses, both in and outside of combat, which makes them valuable as mercenaries. Their loyalty lies with the Empress of the Aiyana Empire, but so long as the job doesn't involve anything negative for the Aquatic lands they'll take it on for the right price or reason.

# Madmen of Corta

## The madmen

The Madmen of Corta is one of the more mysterious factions in Aurelion. Its exact time of creation is unknown. All that is known is that at some point the people of Corta, a city always known for its expertise in alchemy and scientific endeavors, had started recruiting people interested in learning about a variety of questionable subjects. This organisation soon rose to prominence due to their amazing leaps in the alchemical sciences as well as several other subjects. The true name of this organisation is only known to those that have joined, though it is speculated that the Madmen almost take pride in being called such and have changed the organisations name to fit.

The event that led the organisation to become known as the Madmen of Corta was when a number of its highest ranked individuals were seen walking among the Scourge forces taking samples and observing the behaviours, seemingly not caring about the danger that this posed to their lives. The continued apparent lack of self-preservation when the Madmen gather knowledge further cemented the name in the eyes of the general populace.

The defining feature of a Madman is their insatiable thirst for knowledge. If something intrigues them, they want to test it to its fullest extent and will not stop until either the subject perishes, or they have exhausted all possibilities. The Madmen are quite open about their occupation, wearing extravagant garbs that contain a large variety of tools, though they rarely disclose what they are working on out of fear that someone will ruin their experiment. This means that depending on individual experiences a person has had they can receive a Madman with open arms or pure hatred.

The most common occupation for a Madman is that of an alchemist. The different effects of a myriad of chemicals providing endless new experiments. The potions created by a Madman are rightly praised and feared for being able to cure almost any illness or provide a slow agonising death at the flip of a coin.

# Hunters of the Sky

## The Hunters

The Hunters of the Sky are a technological powerhouse located in the skies of the Aerial Lands. Headquartered in their flying fortress Freedom, they work with anyone willing to fork over enough money. Their defining trait is their (over)use of cutting-edge technology, using steam and magic to power their machines and making full use of any other tech they can create.

Their airships are often deployed as transport and fire-support vehicles. Their capability of flight makes them very popular with nobles that are concerned about speedy and discreet delivery of their goods. When deployed for combat the ships are usually put into a support role where their cannons can provide a plethora of payloads to the warzone below.

Though they have an affinity for flight and will find any excuse to stay in the air, the Hunters should not be underestimated on land. The same technology that powers their ships has been used to create suits and weapons for the hunters that give them an edge over the average foe, though most Hunters have come to rely heavily on these enhancements and will make for easy prey once they are unable to use them.

The hierarchy of the Hunters is relatively simple. Their leader is appointed by lottery whenever the previous one falls, sometimes quite literally. Most leaders begrudgingly take the role as it mostly entails being stuck on Freedom, as ironic as that is, to handle the day-to-day of the organisation. The rest of their time is spent negotiating contracts from the bigwigs across Aurelion.

Each ship and squad will usually also have a captain, be it because of experience or something else. These captains speak for their squad when negotiating contracts. There are instances of lone wolf types among the ranks of the Hunters that will join others for a cut of the profits. These types aren't the most popular but are likely to deliver on what was promised or be free labour should they die during the contract.

The quite literal cutthroat competition of the Hunters attracts people from all walks of life particularly if they have a propensity for violence. The peaceful ones are few and far between, but they are coveted members of the group, as they usually provide the maintenance and research that keep the Hunters at the top of the mercenary game.

# The Aural Syndicate

## The Members

Based somewhere in the mountains of the Aerial Lands, the Aural syndicate exerts their influence in every major settlement in the kingdom. Their rule is oppressive, not allowing many individual freedoms among the population, but very efficient. They have eyes and ears everywhere and nothing goes unnoticed in their territory.

The Aural Syndicate cares about two things: loyalty and money. Morality is unlikely to be of concern to the Members and they will remove any threat to their organisation no matter how small. Anyone who isn't loyal to their cause, whether they are a member or simply live in their territory, is not likely to be around for very long. Same goes for someone that can't provide them with income. But if someone is useful to the Syndicate, even in a small way, they are guaranteed safety and stability.

Their relationship with the Warp King is tenuous at the best of times though the syndicate and the king both understand that mutual respect is best for both parties.

The Aural syndicate has a strict hierarchal order that all its members are subject to. The lowest rank is that of the Member. These people are everywhere and follow the orders of their higher ups without question. Though not a glamorous job it pays enough to be a Member and the knowledge that the Syndicate has your back is worth quite a lot too.

The Underboss is next in the line of ranks. These people are often put in charge of neighbourhoods/districts of a town where they oversee the work of the Members in that district. They are also responsible for counting and passing on the taxes and other goods collected by the Members. The last duty of the Underboss is to mete out punishment and reward where it is needed.

A city is looked over by a Boss. They have some semblance of power and have some individual freedom to rule the city their way, so long as their quotas are met.

Elite Members are technically not above Bosses in rank though they are well-respected, as they are the voice of the Overboss. They will travel the Aerial Lands to relay any orders as well as collect every city's contributions that are then redistributed to all other cities.

The Overboss is the sole leader of the Aural Syndicate and their power is only matched by their mystery. No one apart from the few Elite Members know their identity or whereabouts. Their only recognisable feature is a unique enchanted badge that proves their identity. Those that have met them will forget their face as soon as the conversation ends. Their word is absolute and to disrespect it would bring the ire of the entire Syndicate upon oneself.



# The Riders

## The Riders

The Riders are likely to be the most fanatical and religious group in all of Aurelion, beating even the Scourgebound in their dedication to their beliefs. They ride crude wheeled vehicles through the snowy plains of the Aerial Lands at breakneck speeds. Their tattered clothing often getting stuck in the inner workings of the machines they worship. This is entirely in accordance with their doctrine.

Though very tribal in their nature they are united in one thing: their worship of the Machine God, Heat-hal. This god manifests themselves in the machines that the Riders use. They look to their machines for guidance in everything. Should something break down it is punishment for something they did. Should two people meet through some sort of mechanical accident then they must be meant for each other. And should they get stuck in their machines and be mauled by the gears then it was their time to join their god within the machine.

Most Riders get the supplies needed to survive through banditry and scavenging, though there are a few bands that are known to trade with the inhabitants of the settlements. This can be both lucrative and dangerous for the settlement as the Riders will often be willing to trade away their unique technology for quite cheap, but should Heat-hal suddenly decide the settlement isn't worthy then it won't exist for much longer.

The vehicles used by the Riders are all armed to the brim with mechanical and magical weaponry that is barely understood by the crew. Anything that they find is somehow used to make a weapon or to go faster. This haphazard construction makes the machines highly unpredictable and they are equally as likely to completely obliterate their foe in a blaze of fire or utterly destroy themselves because of a catastrophic malfunction.

The different caravans will often fight each other for their resources and as a way to deepen their connection with Heat-hal. The winning side will cannibalise the vehicles of the losers to make their own a more glorious housing for their god. The survivors will become venerated members of their new caravan as they were chosen by Heat-hal to carry the knowledge of the slain caravan.

The Riders make travel across the plains very dangerous, but the wreckages of previous generations and the speed of some routes makes it worth the risk for some travellers. Should they be captured, if not simply killed on sight, then they are forced to work on maintaining the Riders' machines. Most don't survive long and those that do tend to join them in their crazed rampages throughout the Aerial Lands.

# Scourgebound

## The Worshippers

The term Scourgebound was originally used to denote any who would use the power of the Scourge and its corruption to further their own goals. This would also include factions like the Lost Legion or the Peasantry, who would use their corrupted strength for the betterment of humanity. Though initially neutral, the term has become synonymous with evil, as factions that worship the Scourge as a sort of divine force of cleansing have been associated with the name. These factions all have their own ways of spreading their influence and tipping the balance of power. Some factions will use subterfuge and diplomacy to weaken the bonds of humanity where others would brute force people into servitude and simply join a Scourge Incursion on the invading side. Very rarely will a Scourgebound faction make their presence widely known unless they have some sort of goal.

Most of the Scourgebound factions will have their own secret ways of communicating, but many also share some markings or mannerisms that would help them identify allies amongst the common folk.

## Scourgebound Infested

The Infested are some of the most nefarious and twisted individuals on Aurelion. Their leaders have such a disregard for human life that they would put the Madmen of Corta to shame.

Just after a Scourge Incursion in days long past an Aerial Lands noble found a creature that had been corrupted by the Scourge. This creature was unlike anything anyone had ever seen. The noble, who would become the founder of the Infested, was there with a few other men initially to find and eradicate any stragglers left after the Incursion, when they came across a large slug like creature that jumped out of the corpse of a Dreadbeast. The creature immediately latched on to one of the founder's men. Though it was quickly killed, the bite it left was nasty.

Over the next few weeks the founder would watch as his friend slowly went insane and started transforming into a corrupted monstrosity. Unable to kill his friend, they would both slowly descend into madness as the transformation took hold. Though horribly disfigured and utterly unrecognisable the friend was still conscious and retained some form of sentience. His corruption had granted him visions of the cleansing that would eventually happen and told the founder that only those marked by the Scourge would be saved.

To this end he told the founder to spread the infestation using slugs that he would produce. Over the following years the founder would spread his influence through cunning subterfuge and diplomacy, until they eventually came to rule one of the fortress cities of the lands. It wasn't long after his rise to power that this city would completely shut itself off from the outside, only rarely having some people leave to do something or other.

The general populace is aware of the existence of the Infested, as some have occasionally transformed in normal populated areas, but the location of the cult is only known to the Overboss of the Aural Syndicate and they are content looking the other way so long as the taxes keep rolling in.

# Beings & Creatures

The lands of Aurelion host many different creatures and entities that may be an ally to or pose a threat to the different inhabitants of the land. Some have clear backgrounds and don't warrant much interest from the average traveller, whereas some are steeped in myth and folklore. Some of these beings exist only in rumour and hearsay whereas others have very real physical manifestations that have been seen by many.

This section of the compendium functions as a bestiary and library of information on various races and unique or rare creatures that exist on Aurelion.

# Humanity

*“Resilient and stubborn, those that fight the scourge are as much of a blight upon the land as their enemies are supposed to be”*

*-Scourgebound Preacher*

The vast majority of Aurelion is inhabited by humans and very few areas still go without their touch. The humans of the different lands will have vastly different cultures and proficiencies, but they all share a hardiness and adaptability that has allowed them to thrive after being released from the dominion of the ancient Scourgebeasts.

The average lifespan of a human comes out at around 100 years. Though this can be much shorter, due to unkind circumstances, or much longer if one is magically inclined.

Being the dominant species on Aurelion means that any human can travel anywhere and easily find accommodation and other basic necessities. Though the occasional faction or people can be hostile to their fellow humans, this is the exception rather than the rule and most people will be hospitable to others, within reason.

Most humans are followers of the Faith of the Twin Gods. Their exact teachings and how strictly they are followed are very different based on what exact part of Aurelion one finds themselves in. Though a general hospitality for other followers can be found across the lands, as can a hatred for most things Scourge.

The general populace will therefore have an open distaste for the Tainted and members of said species unlucky enough to be unable to hide their nature will be shunned and mistreated for their association with the Scourge.

# The Tainted

*“Abominations scorned by the majority of the populace, this makes them excellent and loyal friends should you not.”*

*-Member of the Peasantry*

Abominations, Beastfolk, Unshorn. The Tainted go by many names, most of which are meant to harm. The names refer to a great number of species of humanoids that walk the lands of Aurelion, with their common link being that all descend from the mingling of Scourgebeast and human. This link to the Scourge makes them the target of the vitriol of many human communities, though most will tolerate their existence as the Tainted will often have traits that make them very useful in specific cases.

The exact time at which the Tainted started walking Aurelion isn't known. The process by which they were created has been the subject of discussion for many cycles. The general consensus is that some particularly cunning strains of Scourgebeast found a way to procreate with humans, likely in an effort to reduce the effects of the Solar Lens, but the exact process is unknown.

Though most Tainted are born within their own communities it is possible for human families to have a Tainted child or for a human born child to develop Tainted traits if they come into contact with Scourge-related things at a very young age.

Over the course of the cycles following the first sightings, the Tainted have become part of society in Aurelion. Though they have a relatively small population when compared to humans they are not entirely uncommon and most any normal citizen will have interacted with them at some point in their life. It is estimated that for every 10-20 children one of the Tainted will be among them.

Their rarity and special traits makes it so that they are in high demand from those that want to use them. Most of the Tainted will live the life of a mercenary or other hired muscle, their unique traits allowing them to be especially good at a specific job. Those that do not possess physical prowess may find other professions where their “condition” does not halt them. Some may have a good affinity for magic and find purpose following its path.

Those unlucky enough to be born within the reach of nobility are usually sold into slavery. This practice has only been formerly outlawed in the Kingdom of Fire, and even there the occasional Tainted slave can be found working in the mines.

Depending on how far removed from the original Scourgebeast ancestor one of the Tainted is, the traits that set them apart from normal humans are stronger or weaker. Though the variety of traits is vast they are usually subdivided into two main categories.

**Utilitarian:** Useful traits that make a job or other task easier are categorised as Utilitarian. Examples are superhuman strength or to be better in tune with magic. These traits are usually not outwardly visible and are unlikely to negatively affect the Tainted socially.

**Aesthetic:** Though not always purely visual in nature, for example a tail could be used functionally but would be seen as an aesthetic trait, these traits are very much outwardly visible and will likely affect the Tainted socially.

Though these labels mean little to the Tainted themselves, those interested in them usually use these terms to narrow down what kind of Tainted they are specifically talking about. This of course being of particular interest to those in the business of “handling” Tainted.

Such individuals also use a few terms to denote the balance between Utilitarian and Aesthetic traits.

**The Afflicted:** This title refers to the Tainted that have mostly utilitarian traits. They are particularly valuable as mercenaries or slaves as their traits give them an edge on the job, while their minimal aesthetic differences don't give them too much difficulty fitting in. The Afflicted are also the most common Tainted to live in human settlements as they can relatively easily hide their true nature.

**The Blighted:** These Tainted have mostly aesthetic traits and very few utilitarian ones. This often leads to them being quite weak and/or small. On the markets they usually aren't considered very valuable as they don't make a very good workforce, though there are some clients that will pay handsomely for the weaker specimens as they are more easily 'persuaded' into fulfilling, let's say, niche roles. The Blighted are not often seen living among human communities, but it does happen, as their often non-threatening appearance makes the general populace less weary of them as a group.

**The Cursed:** This group is the rarest to encounter for humans and as such their true numbers are unknown. The Cursed are those with an abundance of both aesthetic and utilitarian traits, making them more beast than man. Due to their bestial form they can only very rarely integrate into human society and are only seen as novelties on the markets. Most of the Cursed live in secluded regions or otherwise away from humans.

The Tainted have a few villages to call their own in the Earthen Coalition, within the lands of benevolent lords. These villages will function like any other with the exception of its inhabitants. The Aerial lands and Infused lands also have a few Tainted only settlements, though their location is unknown and trade with them near non-existent. Those that know where these villages are will closely guard this secret as the unique goods and technologies that come from them are very valuable.

A group of fanatical Tainted that harbour an extreme hatred of humanity, whether this is a trait of them descending from the Scourge or if this simply stems from the treatment of their race is up for debate, exists within the forests of Earthen lands. Most of the time these “Spirits of the Forests” are left well enough alone and they will also rarely venture out of their territory. Both sides are keenly aware that an outright conflict between humanity and the Spirits would lead to massive casualties on both sides, regardless of the victor. Though the occasional scuffle is unavoidable when either side trespasses on the land of the other, the relationship between the humans of the Coalition and the Tainted of the forests is mostly silent.

# Arbiters of The Centre

*"Man or gods? Depends on who you ask. All I know is that their strength is real and I am NOT messing with them."*

*-Warwick, "The Hunted"*

The Arbiters of The Centre is a group of god-like individuals that act as guardians of the Centre as well as an incarnation of their respective aspects. They are like mages in their fascination with an aspect, though their dedication to it is on a different level. They are practically immortal as they cannot be killed by any normal means. Mortal wounds heal rapidly, even completely obliterating their physical bodies would have them regenerate in the magical fonts of the Centre.

They are not everlasting though as, when an arbiter is created, they pledge themselves to live only as the incarnation of their aspect. Should they waver in their determination or otherwise be surpassed in their devotion to said aspect, then they will lose their regenerative abilities and be mortal again.

The creation of an arbiter can happen in two ways, the first is the most well-known among the populace. An arbiter can be 'usurped' if beaten in what is known as an Arbitration. Whoever instigates the Arbitration must prove themselves to be a better incarnation of that arbiter's aspect.

The second is less known and arguably more difficult than the first. An individual (usually a True Mage) presents themselves to the fonts of the centre, submerging themselves in the water. They are then tested by the waters of the Centre. This test can come in many forms, depending on what the mage is trying to become the arbiter of. Should they succeed they will emerge in the central font at the base of Luxibris tower, should they fail they will be drowned by the waters.

## The Arbiter of Knowledge

The Arbiter of Knowledge is the oldest and least likely to change out of all the Arbiters. His aspect of knowledge encompasses everything there is, was and will be to know. The creation of the Arbiter of Knowledge is the event that started the calendar that Aurelion uses. To the Arbiter's annoyance he only has vague information about the time before his creation. To fulfil his aspect, he finds and records any and all information about as much as physically possible for him and his followers. This includes anything from reporting on major battles to tracking day-to-day weather information of a village. This makes it so that you could ask him about quite literally anything and he would know the answer. This makes him quite the sought-after character and is also the reason that he spends most of his time within the confines of Luxibris tower, as interacting with others takes away from his time spent gathering knowledge.

His quarters at the tower contain an immense amount of magical and physical means of storing information. Maintaining and adding to this library is the what he spends most of his time doing. This makes it so that he has less time to go out into Aurelion to actually gather information. To this end he has a network of people and constructs known as Gatherers. The magical constructs come in many shapes and sizes, from small floating orbs to beast-like

creatures. These constructs have a magical connection to the Arbiter so that he can record all that they witness.

The human Gatherers tend to be cold and distant to any who they meet as they intend to gather information as objectively as possible. They share a similar link to the Arbiter like the constructs do but it is less powerful. These Gatherers will usually only send information during specific parts of the day. They are useful in two ways. The first is entering areas where the magical constructs cannot go. The biggest example of this would be the Infused Lands, where the rampant magical interference makes it impossible for the constructs to go there. The second use is that these humans can serve as “access points” to the Arbiters base of knowledge. This makes them valuable to researchers and many others. There is one catch though, the human Gatherers are usually quite preoccupied with their own duties and will directly answer any questions asked as briefly as possible, this can make it incredibly difficult to get any useful info out of a Gatherer.

The Arbiter of knowledge himself is not a very interesting character. Being constantly bombarded by information leaves him with little mental space to think about what he does. This makes him extremely curt and dismissive in conversation and he will not add any real insight into what he knows. This does, however, contribute to the reason that many believe him to be the least likely to ever be usurped or lose his dedication to his aspect. As there is almost nothing to him other than that he gathers knowledge. The only time that he seems remotely human is when asked about the time before his creation as it is the only time where he would ever respond with “I don’t know” which makes him pause in disappointment, as well as during Mad week, where he is reported to personally interact with the presenters and visitors to gather information about the newest developing theories and technologies.

## **The Arbiter of Dominion**

The Arbiter of Dominion is the most famous and most contended of the Arbiter titles. Their aspect revolves around dominating an opponent entirely. This definition is rather wide though and many of these Arbiters have had their own flavour of destruction. An Arbiter of Dominion could be an expert on military tactics or simply a very powerful swordsman, if they can beat the current Arbiter, they will be next in line.

The longest lasting Arbiter of Dominion is known as the Constructor. As his name would suggest he creates magical constructs to do the fighting for him. This is likely the reason that he has been the Arbiter for so long, as you’d need to defeat almost all of his giant machinations before truly having defeated him.

The Arbiter of Dominion has been known to start an Arbitration themselves instead of waiting for someone to challenge them. Though rare, it is possible that a warrior or army of enough strength draws the attention of the Arbiter. One is unlikely to survive such an encounter and the very few that have usually swear off of their life of violence as to not draw the Arbiters attention again. The crushing defeat at the hands of the Arbiter of Dominion is too much of a burden for them.

The quarters of the Arbiter of Dominion change with each incarnation. They can be mechanical workshops, alchemical laboratories, training halls or even torture chambers. Luxibris tower will provide any locale that the Arbiter needs to continue honing their skills.



## **The Arbiter of Diplomacy**

Particularly famous in the Earthen Coalition, this Arbiter's aspect encompasses almost any spoken word. Though prose and normal conversation falls under his aspect it is not their main focus. The real interest lies in what he refers to as 'competitive conversation'. From political debates to criminal trials, it deeply intrigues them.

The Earthen Coalition has its fair share of territorial disputes between the nobles, as well as the occasional murder plot. The Arbiter of Diplomacy will often meddle in the rather heated discussions that precede or follow such conflicts. He presents himself as the neutral party there to make sure all arguments made are sound. This usually means that at the end of the debate he walks out having made two more enemies, as both parties would have their arguments invalidated through obscure technicality.

The only reason he still lives is through the generous powers of the Fonts, as the amount of (successful) assassination attempts must number in the hundreds.

Despite this he generally has a rather positive disposition and is a very patient and pleasant man to be around outside of any 'competitive conversation'. The social nature of his aspect makes him the Arbiter that interacts the most with the normal people of Aurelion. Though the Arbiter of Dominion may be more famous in the sense that anyone will know of the title, it is the Arbiter of Diplomacy that has the best reputation among the populace, excluding some of the nobles he's crossed.

## **The Arbiter of Subterfuge**

The existence of the Arbiter of Subterfuge is known to very few, and even those that know would only whisper the name. If one needs something done discreetly there is no one better than this Arbiter, whose aspect revolves around everything involving stealth, deception and assassination.

The identity of the Arbiter is not known, though this isn't because of no one having seen them. The Arbiter of Subterfuge is a master of illusory magic and can change their appearance at will. It is not known whether the Arbiter of Subterfuge has remained the same over the years or if they have been usurped, though it would be of little consequence anyway.

The Arbiter is considered to be a spirit of vengeance to some and an insane murderer to others. The truth lies somewhere in the middle. To contact the Arbiter, one must perform a profane and often grotesque ritual. This ritual is to take place in a darkened room where the individual must sacrifice something that is equal to that which they wish to disappear. A coin for a coin, a life for a life. Should the individual hear a whispered confirmation they will know their wishes shall be met.

The eventual outcome of the ritual is also always unknown. That which was targeted will be dealt with, but in what way can differ greatly. A targeted victim can disappear without a trace or be found mutilated and strung up in the city square.

There is not much else to speak of, likely by their design, only a warning. Those that learn of the Arbiter of Subterfuge should use this knowledge with great caution, lest they themselves fall victim to their handiwork.

## “Arbiter” of Poison

*“Travellers of the Centre beware, should the horizon tinge green. Turn around and run, for the mists of the dead take no prisoners.”*

*-Notice in Taverns*

The age of the being is not entirely known as it stems from a time before the Arbiter of Knowledge. Though it is not a true Arbiter it is often called such because of its purported immortality. The being takes the form of a fine green mist that is poisonous to almost all life. Should a lifeform succumb to the toxic cloud its corpse will be reanimated by the cloud and join the other walking dead in the fog.

The size of the cloud can vary depending on the amount of walking dead found within. If nothing exists within the cloud it could cover entire cities, but it shrinks with every victim it reanimates. The poison does have a personality of sorts, though it does not often show itself. A single corpse must be infused with an incredibly large amount of the poison before the personality can manifest. Though the personality is described as rather joyous, by those few that have survived an encounter with it, it has also been said that it laments having lived this long and wishes it ‘could live amongst men again’. This has led many to believe that the entire cloud hosts the ‘soul’ of the person that became poison.

The “Arbiter” of Poison was a prolific researcher in Corta at some point in ancient history. Their name was Oleander Durvish and their research into ways of altering life is still revered to this day amongst the scholars of Corta. As with many prolific researchers, Oleander eventually walked the path of the true mage. They were able to heal wounds and other afflictions through magic, yet their fascination with the alchemical never faltered either.

Their forte lay in two opposites. Shortening life through toxins and extending life through magic. It was this research into these opposites that would eventually lead them to the creation of their masterpiece. A poison infused with life-strengthening magic that would kill the very ‘soul’ of living creatures, yet their corpse would continue to walk. Initially this proved to be rather useless, as, though the corpses walked, they would not be able to do much of anything beside that.

Their work continued nonetheless. The frustration of continued stagnation got to Oleander and they created a batch of this poison with much more hostile intent. This led to the creation of a group of undead that became extremely hostile to anything nearby. This anomaly led Oleander down a rabbit hole of trying to discover how they could infuse ‘intent’ into the poison.

Eventually they unknowingly became able to infuse a part of their ‘soul’ into a batch of poison and became able to, for the first time, command a risen creature. This was such an exciting discovery that they quickly repeated the process many times. They found out too late that they were not just transferring their intent, but a part of their very being into the poison.

The last volume of their writings includes a passage on how they didn’t feel right unless they were near their poisons. The volume ends with them determined to “become whole again” and to imbibe all of it themselves.

# They Beyond

*“Wielders of knowledge beyond comprehension, to seek them out is to challenge madness itself, I am content simply collecting that which is here.”*

*-The Arbiter of Knowledge*

They Beyond exist beyond the Endless Sea. What they do is not known though it is rumoured that their vast knowledge of everything is what keeps them busy. The effects of their exploits can be felt on Aurelion, though only indirectly.

Their form is unknown and unknowable, for to see their true form would break the mind of any mortal. Those that were ‘blessed’ with their knowledge have usually heard their incomprehensible murmurs but will never have actually seen one of them. This knowledge, although very valuable, is extremely dangerous and delving too deep into it has driven many a person insane.

The existence of the Scourge is also attributed to They Beyond. The corrupting power of the Scourge would be explained should They Beyond and their maddening arcane knowledge be behind it. The actual purpose of their invasions is still unknown, though a select few among the Scourgebound have been said to be aware of the nature of the Scourge. These individuals claim that the invasion is a cleansing ritual of sorts, removing the ‘repugnant’ influences of those that oppose They Beyond from the lands of Aurelion.

It is commonly believed that Luxibris tower, and the Solar Lens at its peak, protects Aurelion from the evils of the Scourge, as an incursion only ever happens when the Solar Lens is darkened. This may hint at a desire to destroy the Lens, though if the power of They Beyond is so vast this should not pose that much of a problem.

It is believed that They Beyond aren’t entirely evil, it is simply that they do not care what consequences their actions may have on those around them.

Another fact that points to They Beyond not being entirely malicious is that the restorative magic also stems from their power. Those that dedicate themselves to healing have said that their encounter with They Beyond is much more of a dream rather than the nightmare often described by other mages.

It would be unwise to dig any deeper than this surface level analysis as the only thing that awaits one who attempts to understand these beings is madness, corruption and death.

# Warp King

*"To some, a mysterious powerful oppressor. To others, a divine liberator. To all, a terrifying ruler"*

*-Hand of the King*

The Warp King is an anomaly among the rulers of Aurelion. Their power lies in their perfect mastery of the art of teleportation. Anything that is within their view or near themselves could be relocated to anywhere in an instant. They have gone so far as only move themselves using magic. This makes their movements jerky and inhuman, which, along with their armour-clad appearance, makes them an unsettling presence. Their identity is shrouded in mystery, to the point where it is not even certain if they're human. Their rise to power was swift and unexpected.

The Mad Monarch, Desdaen, had done the impossible, he had unified all of the fortress cities and settlements of the Aerial Lands under one banner. This should have been a joyous occasion, as such unity should have solved many of the supply issues that the separated colonies had faced for centuries. However, Desdaen would soon show that nothing but despair awaited his new subordinates. He would levy insane taxes and grab almost any capable person to grow his army. Now that the Aerial Lands were his, he wanted all of Aurelion.

Under the rule of this new oppressor there would be no respite. If you weren't training to be in his army you were being worked to near death to gather resources for his forces. These conditions would lead to rebellions and riots left and right, but Desdaen would swiftly and violently end these. His army had become so strong that he no longer feared anyone.

It was during this time that the first sightings of the Warp King and his Hands were reported. When particularly violent minions of Desdaen would rampage through the towns, they would suddenly fall, a shadowy figure apparently having struck them from behind. These figures would vanish within seconds, leaving zero trace of their presence. Desdaen paid no mind to these reports, for no one would dare to stand against him and his army.

As these mysterious attacks continued Desdaen would keep planning his grand war, amidst the lavish lifestyle he had grown accustomed to. Even if there was something to these rumours, no one would enter his pride and joy, the fortress of Deluge.

During a particularly grand feast, Desdaen would receive an odd report. A group of eccentric dancers had started gathering outside Deluge and any soldiers that approached would see something shimmer and find themselves back at the gates of the city after trying to get close. These reports would continue to come in over the following days and Desdaen could see the mass of dancers growing by the day, any order to have them removed were met with the same confusing tales of not being able to get close.

On the final day of the week it would come to a head when a new figure appeared in front of Deluge. Clad in a strange segmented white armour, a human form showed itself. Everyone in and around Deluge received a psychic message, they weren't spoken to, but everyone felt the message of dread. "I AM THE NEW KING. I HAVE COME TO TAKE THE THRONE. ALL IN DELUGE WILL DIE. NONE WILL ESCAPE. TO RESIST IS FUTILE."

The panic that followed in the city was profound but short-lived. All that tried to run would find themselves in the square. Desdaen eventually resigned himself to his fate, realising that he could not stand against such power. As the dancers, members of the Choreo Arcana, sustained multiple barriers around the fortress, it would be removed from existence by the unimaginable power of the Warp King. Though the barriers may have saved the surrounding area it did not save the dancers from seeing the utter devastation. Many would be driven into deep depression after witnessing the futility of their existence in the face of such power. Those that would still speak of the event gave such wildly different accounts that it is unlikely anyone truly knows what happened, though one thing was undeniable. Whether by massive explosion or some giant summoning of beasts, Deluge had been reduced to nothingness.

The Warp King would rebuild part of the fortress to serve as their seat of power. The throne room and housing for the Hands of the King being the only buildings to rise out of the land in this eerily empty place. The crumbling walls surround a pristine plane of white stone, on which only these few buildings appear. Their rule has been benevolent and, though far from perfect, very beneficial to the people of the Aerial Lands. The factions that they gave the authority to rule the lands to, have been doing quite a decent job at raising living standards and cooperation between all the fortress cities.

The Warp King has been known to make appearances at events of great importance to their people, as well as an annual 'celebration' of the start of their rule. This celebration has them visit every major settlement and faction to grant a boon to the people there. Though an overall positive event it is a rather sombre happening, as any in the presence of the Warp King can never feel at ease.

It would also be during such celebrations that the Warp King would choose a new Hand of the King if one had left their ranks for any reason. The Hands of the King are a group of five individuals that have been granted immense power and knowledge by the Warp King so that they could accompany them in Deluge and occasionally interact with the people of Aurelion on their behalf. The main distinctive trait of the Hands is their strange armour and their mastery of teleportation. They will arrive without any prior indication, do what they need to, and vanish just as quickly. The selection process or requirements for becoming a Hand of the King are unknown and appear to be quite random. Even so, should a family become aware that they are related to a Hand it brings a lot of respect with it.

The personalities of the Hands are diverse though they are usually all stoic and matter-of-fact to a degree. The personality of the Warp King themselves is difficult to describe. They are often described as making one feel out-of-place and wrong in his presence. When one looks upon them it's as if they intrinsically know what the Warp King wants from them or would want to say. They does not speak and the pulsing void that fills their helmet conveys no emotion, yet they transmit meaning with perfect clarity. Overall, they are described as being a good 'person' with the right intentions, though it occasionally feels like they don't quite understand the other humans around them.

## Royan “The Headcaster”

*“Those that meet their blade are doomed to a fate worse than death, to walk the plains endlessly alongside the Envoy of Poison”*

*-Villager of the Earthen Coalition*

Royan was born to an executioner's family. The family of outcasts consisted of the father, the mother, a son by the name of Roy and a daughter by the name of Annabelle. The family would travel around Aurelion to lend their services to the people of the land. This lifestyle meant that the two children never really had any friends and, though the family was respected for their work, the family lived separated from most of common society. Travelling together and the stigma that came with their parents' work led to the isolation that made the family so close.

Roy and Annabelle were taught in the art of the blade by their father, while their mother would often take them along to the markets, where they would learn to haggle and trade. The two siblings complemented each other well. Where one had a weakness the other would likely find strength. This made them quite the duo and they would rarely be found apart from one another.

The only friend they ever had was the son of one of the people that were executed. Though odd, it seemed that the orphan, named Ahnur, was rather mature for their age and understood that when his father stole from the local lord it likely would not end well. The child had grown attached to the two siblings during the surprisingly lengthy trial of his father, and the two siblings were there to comfort him when his father's sentence was eventually carried out. This friendship lasted even when the siblings had to travel and they would often write each other.

The family lived a fairly peaceful life, the families of those they executed most often pointed their anger at those who ordered their execution and bandits would usually leave the family alone after the executioner's axe saw the light of day. Over the years Roy and Annabelle would start to assist their father in his job and as young adults had become quite capable. The father and mother of the pair would start saving up, so that the siblings could start off on their own, and they would take on more jobs. This, however, led to a chance encounter that would put a stop to those plans.

On a particularly busy day the family was travelling through the Centre and they saw the distinct green mist of the 'Arbiter' of Poison on the horizon. The father quickly turned his cart around to try and get to safety. Having misjudged the dates would be a costly mistake. Though the cart was fast they were simply too far from safety. The Poison and the accompanying horde were upon the cart before long. All members of the family fought valiantly and would have likely defeated the mindless reanimated dead were it not for the poison slowly invading their system. When only a few dead were left the mother fell to the blade of one of the remaining dead, with the father hitting the ground not long after. Their efforts were not entirely in vain though as the 'Arbiter' showed himself to the father. He offered to fulfil a wish for his valiant display. The 'Arbiter' agreed when the father wished for his children to be saved.

Sadly, Annabelle was already beyond saving. A wound inflicted by the undead left her bleeding out within the cloud. Roy, though weak, was still alive. The 'Arbiter' would see the

wish through however, if only so he had something to do. Through his mastery of restorative magic, he was able to save both siblings 'soul', though only one body. This was the true start of 'Royan'.

Royan would suffer for quite a while after awakening sometime later. The amnesia brought on by the procedure along with the confusion of having two minds in one body made life difficult for them. The body would be controlled by one of the siblings at a time, though the other was still conscious most of the time.

Though difficult at first it would become second nature to them and they'd usually switch control when a task required the specific skills either were good at. The 'Arbiter' would be their mentor for a while, taking joy in living as Oleander again for a short time. Royan would learn to cast magic from Oleander, making a contract with him to do so, Annabelle being much better at it than Roy.

When Oleander eventually had to leave, Royan still had very little memory of their previous life. The few memories that had returned did remind them of their previous profession and a single face, that of Ahnur. With these fragmented memories they started their tortured search for answers. It would be some time before they'd end up in the Earthen Lands. This time had not been kind to them. Living as an executioner again meant that their days were filled with death. When night fell, death would be replaced by further torment as they would experience nightmares of a battlefield tainted green, where they would always lose those they love to the figures within the mists.

As they travelled throughout the Coalition, they would come across a town that somehow seemed familiar to them. The local lord would request their services, as a criminal had attempted to kill him and needed to be put down. The day of the execution arrived and when Royan ascended the execution platform it was none other than Ahnur looking up at them from the pillory. Ahnur recognised Roy relatively quickly and all he said was: "I failed to get revenge, but I'm glad you are the one to send me to my father." These words echoed in Royan's mind for a while. The lord had ordered his execution and Ahnur himself had no objections. Right? As the axe swung down Royan felt empty, hopeless. The one thing that tied them to their previous life was now gone. As Ahnur's head lay upon the stand, smiling contently, something within Royan broke. They wanted all this pain, all this meaningless suffering to go. They picked up Ahnur's head and whispered, "would you help us remove this pain?" At that moment, the head burst into green flame and as it disappeared Royan felt calm, at ease, healed. Unknowingly having offered their head to the 'Arbiter' to cast a healing spell. This would be the start of their rampage as "The Headcaster". The moment of respite from the suffering would be short and as soon as it was over Royan wanted that feeling to return. The massacre that followed went down in history and the town received the nickname "The Town of the Headless".

Since then Royan has been roaming the land looking for powerful opponents, or rather their heads, to offer them to the green mist for the moments of respite it brings. Using his executioners' axe with ruthless efficiency they have racked up a considerable kill count. Though their interactions with the general populace are rare, and mostly unremarkable should they be lucid, it is the unmistakable trail of toxic and/or headless corpses that marks the visit of the Envoy of the Toxic Mist, The Headcaster. It is said that those slain by them join the undead amid the green clouds roaming the village of the Headless.

# Concepts

This section of the Compendium is dedicated to the broader concepts that do not fit in any of the other sections. This will pertain to things like magic or religion.



# Magic

Aurelion's magic works in mysterious ways. As far as is currently known, anything should theoretically be possible through magic. From the destruction of cities to the raising of the dead, the only limit is the mages' imagination and mental fortitude. True mages are exceptionally rare in Aurelion. A true mage can supposedly invoke the energies of They Beyond.

A true mage usually does not seek to become one. They learn to cast spells after having dedicated themselves to a specific aspect of the world. For example, a fire mage would study fire almost all their life out of pure fascination. They learn how it is created, sustained, how it goes out, what it symbolises, what its many uses are, etc. When a person single-mindedly focuses on one aspect for enough time, they will eventually find there is nothing more to learn. Their search will take them across Aurelion and when even the libraries of Corta have nothing left to teach they seek beyond the land and look out at the sea. "What if more knowledge lies beyond there?" they wonder.

Those that set out rarely return, but if they do, they will indeed have a deeper understanding of their aspect. They will have attained an intrinsic understanding of their aspect and they can control it at will, with no apparent cost. Those that are asked if they truly know how their magic works will always respond with "No, and I don't want to. For those that seek such answers are driven to madness."

True mages are revered scholars and wise men and tend to gain a lot of fame across the kingdoms for their feats. The names of the first mages are lost to time but the developments that allowed magic to become as prevalent as it is now are relatively recent and well documented.

The biggest was the art of invocation. Developed by a mage wanting to discover new forms of manipulating minds, he figured out that by allowing someone who was not a mage to glimpse the knowledge that he possessed, that these individuals could temporarily cast magic similar to his. He would develop this practise further into what would become known as Invocation. After training with a true mage and providing some sort of catalyst for the spell it would be possible for non-mages to produce magic. This practice would give rise to a new class of individuals who could cast spells without the need for the insanity-inducing voyage into the endless sea.

To gain the ability to cast magic, a spellcaster first seeks out a True Mage and enters into a contract with them. Most Mages will also have the spellcaster undergo some sort of mental training before teaching them their first spell. The True Mage would then grant the spellcaster a conduit through which the magic would be manifested. The contract is then expanded to contain information about the mage's aspect, the cost of casting a spell and guidelines on predetermined spells the spellcaster wishes to be able to cast. The casting of a spell will require the spellcaster to offer a sacrifice, in essence offloading the mental stress of using Arcane Knowledge onto a physical object, destroying it in the process. It is possible for spellcasters to cast magic without the proper sacrifice, though such actions greatly strain the spellcaster's mind. Spellcasters that go through this process are known as True spellcasters. It is possible to gain magical abilities through Scourge-corrupted objects, though without proper training this is highly dangerous and few can wield these powers without bringing harm to themselves.

# Faith of the Twin Gods

Aurelion was once covered in darkness. Its barren lands inhabited by the beasts created by They Beyond. Humanity was subjugated and slaved away for their Scourge ridden lords. It was a world of pain and suffering for humanity and yet they remained. Though futile, the humans would occasionally rise up against the beasts. Sometimes small settlements would rise and humans would make a stand against the horrors, though these efforts were quickly thwarted by the forces of the Scourge. It would be by pure chance that two of They Beyond would stumble across a particularly successful (in context) uprising that was taking place.

The struggle of humanity stirred something within Them. They wished to know more, find what it was that made humanity so resilient. They wished to see humanity flourish and continue to struggle against other forces. To do this they created an object of arcane power that would expel those severely affected by the Scourge from the land of Aurelion. This object would be known as The Solar Lens. Its light drove away the scourge ridden beasts and allowed for less corrupted life to flourish.

It would be some time before They would act again. The Solar Lens was doing what it was supposed to do and humanity had flourished to create a new civilisation. However, the Lens had been gradually losing power as it used up its arcane energies. This is where They would descend upon the land, to be closer to the ones they wished to know and so that they could keep a closer eye on the Lens. To house themselves they created the Luxibris tower. To be able to interact with humanity they would assume their form. This led to a loss of some of their power, though they would remain immortal and keep their understanding of what humanity would call "magic".

Tamasis and Lanexti came to be on that day and they would be responsible for the day/night cycle. As the lens needed maintenance it would be darkened after every ten hours for ten hours to maintain proper function. After some time Tamasis and Lanexti grew tired of their isolation. Though they intended not to interfere with the affairs of man much, it grew tiresome to be alone. This is when the concept of Arbiters was created. Humans chosen by the Twin Gods would be blessed with eternal life and great power so long as they lived to fulfil the role of Arbiter properly.

Unbeknownst to many it is the Twin Gods that initiate a Scourge Incursion. For when they feel that they must once again witness humanity's struggle for existence and see proof that humanity was still worthy of their power, then they will minimise the power of the Solar Lens, turning it an eerie red, to allow the chaos of the Scourge to rise out of the sea as it once did. As Tamasis and Lanexti travel the land during such a time they are reminded of why they descended and, once they feel they've gained some more insight into the existence of humanity, they return to the tower to resume their duties.

The Faith of the Twin Gods itself revolves around the worship of the Gods and their dwelling as well as an adherence to their creed; "To struggle is to live, for humanity is unworthy of a paradise gifted unto them. The Twin Gods freed us from the tyranny of They Beyond and granted us freedom, land and light, but not out of compassion or altruism. We were given these things so that we may grow and flourish and continue to prove the value of our existence by progressing our species and fighting the forces that would oppose our progress."

Though the general following of the Twin Gods looks down upon the reverence for They Beyond and as such most forms of magic, they will not often outright refuse to interact with someone of such a persuasion. The Faithful will openly announce their distaste for those that use magic or any corrupted artefacts/tools but will not cast such individuals out. The use of the tools of a force that traditionally opposes humanity is not appreciated, though when proven to be used for the progress of humanity it is tolerated.

Those that belong to the clergy can often be seen preaching their beliefs and are likely to attempt to convert non-believers to their faith, but they will work with anyone to continue the advancement of human civilisation, even if they do not fully share the same faith.

But, more zealous followers of the Twin Gods do exist and they will preach the annihilation of magic and Scourge related tools. These followers consider anything to do with They Beyond, including magic, heretical. The reality of the Twin Gods' origin is either ignored or explained away. This group of individuals is often and openly denounced by the general followers of the faith, but their influence has led some to speak ill of the faithful as a whole.

# The Calendar

The calendar of Aurelion revolves around two main points. The cycle of the brightening and darkening of the Solar Lens as well as the periodic invasion of the Scourge.

At some point in history the wise men of Corta decided that a system needed to be created to keep track of time in more manageable chunks. It was then that time would be recorded as follows.

A day is divided into ten hours of light followed by ten hours of darkness. The actual switching between the two states only takes a few minutes, so there is no real dusk or dawn to speak of.

A week contains 10 full cycles of the Lens. I.e. a week contains 10 days. A month will contain 5 weeks and a year 5 months. This system would slowly become accepted across Aurelion until almost every settlement contained a Solar Clock.

The Solar Clock could be as simple as a board with holes that an assigned time keeper would place pegs into or it could be a complex mechanical construct that keeps time automatically. Regardless of the complexity of the clock it always served the same purpose, to provide the local population with a way to tell what the current time and date is.

Notation of the date is done using a system of numbers and letters. It starts with an H followed by a number to denote the hour of the day (anything more precise than the hour would be noted as fractions of the our or a proprietary solution created by the locals). This is followed by a D and a number, then an M with a number and it closes with a Y and a number. An example of the full notation could be H3 D7 M2 Y124.

For most applications people will stick to using only a few of the letters and really only those pursuing scholarly or archival interests will use the full notation.

A Scourge Incursion coincides with the Solar Lens staying red for a random amount of time. It was therefore decided that the calendar would begin anew after every Incursion. The Arbiter of Knowledge in particular wished to keep track of time before the most recent Incursion and he also includes an I and a number in their notation. I standing for "Incursion" and the number corresponding to the most recent Scourge Incursion, starting at I0 when the Arbiter of Knowledge was created.

In total this means that a full date and time looks like this H6 D9 M1 Y65 I3. Though this is used in many archives it is somewhat long and difficult to read for the average person. As such, most will split up the notation to look something more like this: On hour 6 of Day 9 Month 1 in Y65 I3, "this" happened.