

Welcome to Kaurath

Kaurath was an unusual area because unlike most of its home world the plague of random visits by elementals had been banished from the land by a group of Fae who left their own home world and traveled to bond a piece of it with Kaurath. The natives were basic hunter gathers and easily overawed. A group called the "Beast-Men" possessing animal characteristic such as horns migrated north into Kaurath bring civilization from southern lands and establishing their own empire. Eventually the various peoples rose up and killed or banished the "Beast-Men" from the land.

Today **High Kingdom of Kaurath** is a royal union of twelve realms including the original Kingdom of Kaurath and has spent half its millennium of existence fighting a (sort of civil) war with the undead Kingdom of the Barrowheart, which was born in curse and misunderstanding (and the hidden hand of the ancient enemy Zoradieth). That war is over, the ancient curse that caused it now abated, though the consequences and ill feelings of five centuries linger. The death of the old King sealed the peace and his bastard son Bulzaric rose from the command of the half-orc Razioch forces, traditional guardians of the Land, to assume the throne, confirmed by the Stags, the mystical symbols and guardians of Kaurath.

The adventures led by the Lord High Marshal Sir Alric Stark and great wizards and nobles from elsewhere choose to start a great war to stop Zoradieth's efforts to become one of the great guardians of the world or conquer Kaurath again, and simultaneously to stop the true mother of the Fae refugees who bonded their stolen lands with Kaurath from returning and reclaiming them. Through a series of dangerous deceptions (such as the one which led to the King's apparent death and his return as Zaric the First), questionably moral efforts such as an attempted genocide of some of Zoradieth's allies, as well as the heroic efforts of heroes such as Guild Master Aishins used of ancient ritual magics to grant true life or true death to the undead, Zoradieth's Dubhember and Beyzor allies were neutralized, he was finally defeated, but the mother of fairies was about to reclaim her homeland.

The Fae performed a great ritual which seems to have cost them greatly (as most have not been seen since) and took Kaurath, mortal and otherwise, people and the land itself, and flex across the universes to place where they would be safe. Erúmír. The flux of the magics involved change some things on arrival and it is still causing spontaneous changes here and there. Old spells and rituals no longer work and new ones are being developed to replace them. The land itself seems to be changing and expanding.

Periodically nobles and adventurers gather in one of the cities of the land to address problems not solved by lesser means.

The High Kingdom is divided into four Royal Provinces. Each Province is governed by a member of a Royal Family and administered by a noble Skald. The Skald, a knight of the realm, acts as the administrator of matters of law and justice for that part of the human kingdom as well as liaison with the other member kingdoms located in that Province.

Each Royal and Skald maintains a personal court of Knights, Squires, Lords and Ladies, and other supporters who aid them with their responsibilities. Those seeking advancement find a current noble to sponsor them on the path of nobility, learning and practicing important skills, then facing with tests, both practical and ethical. Other choose different patches of advancement such as through the Guilds, the military, any of the member kingdoms, or scholarship. In the new world even more options are likely to be needed.

Basic education of the subjects of the crown is covered by free schooling as well as reduced taxes. Teaching is provided by the Viisas Talos (Houses of the Wise) established by High Queen Faranan 500 years ago throughout the Kingdoms. More advanced training was usually handled by apprenticing to a Master of a Craft but now the Royal Academy and Guilds offer additional options.

Guilds

A variety of craft guilds exist in Kaurath. The most important ones are chartered by the High King and have duties to advise the monarchy and its magistrates as well work for the improvement of the craft and of the realm. Among those with charters of most interest to adventurers are the Magicians, the Bards (Jackalope), and the Alchemist, Tinkers and other useful arts.

Royal Academy

Another body of interest to adventurers is the Royal Academy. This is a relatively new Viisas Talo that focuses on training new adventurers in the skills they need to succeed and progress in their endeavors.

Kingdoms

Kaurath, while used as the name for the entire region, is most properly the human monarchy, which holds the High Kingship among the Twelve Kingdoms. Humans are found everywhere in the twelve kingdoms and the Barrowheart but are rare in the Plains of Morathel.

Innos Halal, an elven kingdom in central Haltia east of the Lake, is ruled by the Haran Quinar and Harni Ruthiel. It is heavily forested, ancient, and rich in lore and skill. Its people are of the main Earth Elbaels and Forestfolks.

The **Gythai** are a reptilian **Magocracy** in the south of Haltia, ruled by the Kawei and a council of clan leaders. It is mostly water and swampland with dry land reserved for purposes that require it, such as trade and libraries. They engage in aquaculture of all sorts and trade up and down the river.

Seannaught in the north (Western Kasember near the Lake) and **Briars Hollow** (Southern Kasember along the river) in the south are similar agrarian realms of Hillfolk and Riverfolk ruled by the Grand Foreman or Grand Sheriff, respectively, who are elected for a seven-year term by the constituent regions of the realms. The Major merchant houses are based o these realms, known for their beer and pies.

The **Vaeltaa** are a people who are often found traveling along the roads and rivers throughout Kaurath. Many are more stable than elsewhere because a single voice was required to speak with the High King in council during the Barrowheart War and because they were honored in Kaurath not vilified.

The **Vorlonal** are a union of tribes who have established a kingdom with a fixed capital and a unified rule. They live, herd, and farm in Harcos to the east of the Dragonspine Mountains but as part of the High Kingdom they provided a strong backbone of the army fighting the Barrowheart during much of the 500-year long war. They are known to clash with the Vanastagg, the totemic and nomadic tribes, who view settlements as a betrayal of their way of life and tribal totems.

The **Razioch** are the Orcs native to Kaurath. They have a martial culture after 500 years of war with the Barrowheart and its minions and continually fighting with the monsters that used to spawn in the Plains of Morathel. They are deeply tied to the land of Kaurath and take pride in being its defenders both in the past and recently (since Bulzaric won their allegiance for the kingdom while he was a Prince.)

The **Ograth** are the Ogres native to Kaurath and occupy the forests in the south and south west of Kaurath. They have somewhat mystical culture, which might have been peaceful save for constant conflicts with the Troll Masters of the Dubhember Peaks and the Razioch.

The newly peaceful **Barrowheart** occupies a large area to the west of **Haltia** through and past the mountains as was recently "conquered" despite being an ally to become the 10th kingdom.

The new realms, **Malmiheim** (beneath **Kasember**) and **Āmurs Akmens** (beneath **Haltia**) were formed by those (mostly Clan Iron and Clan Copper respectively) fleeing unrest in Kulta Kerros actively digging

tunnels and asserting sovereignty by ancient Mountainfolk law over those digging. They swore fealty to the High King and joined the High Kingdom as the 11th and 12th kingdoms. Many are now Gnomes.

Provinces

The province of **Haltia** lies in the west of the High Kingdom between the two great rivers flowing from the Lake of Ice and from the Dragonspine Mountains. It is heavily forested and produces a wide range of timber, wood products, fruits and vegetables. The current capital, **Kaurath City**, lies within its borders just down the Royal Road from the Gatetown of **Celtios** where many Gathers have taken place. It is the province with the longest border with the Barrowheart. Much of the Royal Road, and the Gatetowns spaced all along it, which saw combat in the war, lie in Haltia on the border or separated from it by Lake Haltia and its associated river.

The province of **Kasember** lies north and west of the Dragonspine Mountains and the river connecting them to Haltia. It is primarily plains and a source of much of the grain that can be forced from the rock soil of Kaurath. Its large size permits it to support the same population as the denser but richer lands of Haltia. The plains (and forests) of **Rensvarvas** lies to the north and west and the 'Eastern' mountains mark the north east edge of Kasember. Passes have been discovered leading to new lands north.

The province of **Harcos** lies east of the Dragonspine Mountains. It is primarily plains and a major source of meat as much of the land is occupied by herding barbarian tribes. The rich grasslands supports numerous clans of Barbarian's, many of which are part of the Vorlonal Kingdom, as well as towns and trading posts. The only city Vahnakard is the capitol of Vorlonal. The **Keskaur forest** is home to a closed foreign kingdom of elves. It lies against the Kalivan Mountains and marks the eastern border of the 12 Kingdoms.

The province of The **Plains of Morathel** lies south of the Dragonspine Mountains. It was infested with monsters and echoes of the past and dangers. Repeated attempts to colonize or improve it failed. It was a source of rare herbs, exotic plants, strange beasts, and all sorts of dark and dangerous things. Anything that died there rose again as undead for a time. This is where one can find most of the Razioch and the Ograth. Since the great ritual the lands there have been returning to their ancient verdant profusions.

Royal Road

The Royal Road runs through western Kaurath from the Siltamuri in the north, the great gate between the Barrowheart and the rest of Kaurath where many battles were fought and most soldiers put in their years of service on the Wall holding back the undead hordes, to the Eltamuri in the south, another great gate blocking access to the road from the bandits and other things that live in the Southern Wastes. The road facilitates trade in peaceful moments and supports rapid redeployment of troops along the border. Along the road a day's travel apart were the "Gate Towns", standardized royal rallying points and garrisons, though with the expansion of the lands they are now several days apart.

Kaurath City

The Gate Town of **Kaurath City** is the "new" capital of Kaurath and of the High Kingdom. Kaurath City is a standard Gate Town expanded by the Royal Castle and extensive manors and holdings for the notables of the twelve realms. There are still large fields and room for vital agriculture within the outer walls, sufficient to sustain a large population through an extended siege, especially by enemies not at full strength in the daylight. It is common to see royals and notables slip away from the castle and into the older part of town with their friends from their years of military service on the Wall.

Celtios, a typical Gate Town

The Gate Town of **Celtios** is one of the Royal cities set a day's travel apart along on the **Royal Road** from the southern border to the pass into the lands of the Barrowheart. Built on a standard pattern as part of the Kingdom's defense against the Barrowheart each town is marked by a large central Inn usually operated by some member of the Barnstead family, four walls with the large gates which give the town its

name, a Garrison for the guards and military stationed there, Storehouse and Armory to hold supplies, residences, temporary housing for visitors and visiting officers, merchants, farms, and craftsmen and their families in residence, the local primary school, and areas of protected agriculture within the outer walls. It is common to see royals, notables, and adventurers gather in each Gatetown for major festivals seeking interesting rumors and offers of employment. Since the Barrowheart War ended the mood in the gate towns has lightened. Although the walls do not keep out all hazards, they do make it hard for a large force to enter unchallenged and the local adventuring community uses the gatetowns as hubs to address issues in the area.

Militia

A strong local militia supplements the Royal Army in the Gate towns and supports the constables and sheriffs elsewhere. Composed of veterans mustered out after the end of the war the militias gave a venue for those veterans who were not happy with civilian life. The knight's fief is the basic unit of administration in the less built up areas and knights have taken to recruiting the best of the militia to expand their personal spear of troops.

Nearby Realms

South of the Plains one finds the Southern Waste. Most of Kaurath's external trade used to flow south down the Royal Road to the South end, the great fortified gate called the Etelamuuri, and across the Southern Wastes to the kingdoms there. Now what lies beyond the wastes is unknown.

Other realms are known to lie beyond the mighty mountains to the north east and west but there were few passes and little trade there. We now know of two, the **Beyzor Imperium** and the mysterious **Ascendancy**, but have seen hints there may be more beyond.

There are many unincorporated barbarian tribes throughout **Kaurath**, especially in the north and east. Most are reasonable if fierce. Some are ferocious beyond measure.

The elven kingdom of the **Keskaurani** lies in the Keskaur Forest against the **Kalivan Mountains** in the east. Those who enter their lands uninvited are not normally seen again.

The mysterious **Dubhember** reside under the **Dubhember Peaks** and had been rarely seen or at least noticed even before the effort to exterminate them and to rescue them from extermination. They appeared to be Shadow Elves.

Two independent Mountainfolk kingdoms are found to the north and south of the Barrowheart, **Kulta Kerros** and **Eltor Szakal** respectively. There are also a fair number of the unaffiliated **Ahkerá** Mountainfolks working individually throughout the High Kingdom. Many of the Mountainfolk became Gnomes during the move to Erúmír.

North of Kasember are Pacted and the nomadic Ferrishyn of the land of **Rensvarvas**. They have been wracked by war for several years.

The mountain borders and the central Dragonspine Mountains are lightly populated, and the locals do not necessarily give allegiance to the High Kingdom in any useful sense.

Small groups of other people have migrated to Kaurath (such as the underground town of Webspire) but the details of how they survived the transitions are now well known.

Seasonal Meets

Once each quarter representatives of the Twelve Kingdoms meet to discuss matters of mutual interest. From time to time, for example just after the peace with the Barrowheart was declared, they meet in a more formal Grand Council to give full depth to a debate and, in turn, full assent to the final resolution. The meetings are chaired by the Kaurathel, or his representative, but each of the Twelve has equal say in the Council. On such occasions, representatives from the neighboring realms also attend

Elementals and The Fae

While the old world was overrun with Elementals in ways that Kaurath was not they are now beginning to appear through with the sorts of power hierarchies and battles which were their hallmark elsewhere. Instead the Fair Folk had a presence here that they did not have elsewhere. The wise were caution around all of the Fae folk no matter which court they hail from or what their type or politics. Travelers often carry milk or beer, bread or honey as homage for the fae, or sometime suitable trinkets. Many homes keep a special stock of guest goods to offer any visitor or to put outside in case of the risk of a faery visit. Others carry faery stones or talisman of proof against fae magics. The complex political alignments of the immortal beings have been set askew or destroyed and their presence has not been felt for good or ill since the change last year.

Trollball

Those traveling in or near the Ograth lands may encounter them playing some version of their game of Troll ball. The Razioch took it up as well although their version is more martial. Gambling on the outcome of a game is common and depending on the season there is often some mystical benefit that is attributed to winning a game. It is worth noting that a game depends on having a dead troll to extract a skull and any benefit seems tied to the nature of the skull used. An exception to the troll skull rules is that the penalties for deliberate cheating or for trying to fix a game is to be used as the ball in the replay.