

## The High Kingdom of Kaurath

Many centuries ago the would-be Sorcerer-King Zoradieth betrayed his sword lord and claimed rightful rule over Kaurath. He and his feared generals, the Beyzor Lords and their armies exterminated many citizens over the centuries. Eventually driven from the land Kaurath into the mountains, Kaurath still fought for centuries with the remnant of his forces on the border, the Barrowheart, a kingdom of undead Kaurathia twisted by a dark curse and others attracted or subverted to their ill end.

Kaurath then spent half its millennium of existence fighting a (sort of civil) war with the undead Kingdom of the Barrowheart.. 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 to assume the throne, confirmed by the Stags, the mystical symbols and guardians of Kaurath.

Today **High Kingdom of Kaurath** is a royal union of twelve realms including the original Kingdom of Kaurath. 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 administer 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.

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 often comes by apprenticing to a Master of a Craft but Guilds and the Royal Academy (which teaches arts the Guilds do not) offer additional options. It is said that there are more advanced Talos for those who seek to master the greater arts.

### Guilds

A variety of craft guilds exist in Kaurath. The largest of the legal 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 Celestial Guild, the Earth Guild (or Healer's Guild), the Bardic Guild, and the Alchemist's Guild. Associations of merchants, thieves, and assassins are rumored to exist as well but without Royal sponsorship.

### Circles

Healing circles, either Guild or private can be found in large towns. Similarly, Celestial Circles which can identify magical items can be found in similar places.

## 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 elvenfolk.

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 ruled by the Hobling Grand Foreman or Grand Sheriff, respectively, who are elected for a seven year term by the constituent regions of the realms.

The **Vaeltaa** are a normally migratory people similar to those known as Gadabari elsewhere in Avalon who can be found throughout Kaurath. Many are more settled and have a stronger hierarchy than elsewhere, perhaps because a single voice was required to speak with the High King in council during the Barrowheart War.

The **Vorlonal** are a union of Barbarian 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 barbarian tribes, who view settlements as a betrayal of their way of life and tribal totems.

The **Razioch** are the Half-Orcs native to Kaurath. They have a martial culture are 500 years of war with the Barrowheart and its minions and continually fighting with the monsters spawned from 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 Half-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 Dwarven realms, **Malmiheim** (formerly **Alta Kasember**) and **Āmurs Akmens** (formerly **Alta 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 Dwarven law over those digging. They swore fealty to the High King and joined the High Kingdom as the 11th and 12th kingdoms.

## 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.

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 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 is infested with monsters and echoes of the past and is a dangerous land. Repeated attempts to colonize or improve it have failed. It is a source of rare herbs, exotic plants, strange beasts, and all sorts of dark and dangerous things. Anything that dies there rises again as undead for a time. This is where one can find most of the Razioch and the Ograth (the half-orcs and half-ogres of Kaurath.)

## 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 where 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 re-deployment of troops along the border. Along the road about one day apart are the "Gate Towns", standardize royal rallying points and garrisons

## 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.

## 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 flows south down the Royal Road to the South end, the great fortified gate called the Etelamuuri, and across the Southern Wastes (what most of Avalon calls the Northern Wastes) which lie below the Plains and thence to the Kingdom of **Avendale** and through it to the great realm of **Evendarr** and central and western **Avalon**.

Other realms are known to lie beyond the mighty mountains to the north east and west but there are few passes and little trade there.

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 are also rarely seen. They resemble Dark Elves but without the white hair.

Two independent Dwarven 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 **Ahkeri** dwarves working individually throughout the High Kingdom.

North of Kasember are 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.

A group of **Dark Elves** came to found the town of Webspire. Similarly, a small group of **Biata** have migrated to Kaurath and founded a community. Sightings of isolated **Mystic Wood Elves** have been reported.

## Elementals and The Fae

Most of Tyrra is overrun with Elementals in ways that Kaurath is not. Something seems to prevent the sort of random elemental intrusions that are so common elsewhere on Tyrra. Similarly summoning Elemental beings into the lands of Kaurath is hard or impossible so those seeking elemental servants must bring them in overland like any other foreign trade good.

Instead the Fair Folk have a presence here that they do not have elsewhere. The wise are caution around all of the Fae folk no matter which court they hail from or what their type or politics. Travellers 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 political alignments of the immortal beings are too complex to summarize here but those more experienced in dealing with them are aware and can sometimes gain great advantage through that awareness.

Despite the risks many of the fae are relatively friendly or are committed to guarding the natural world. But still be cautious about mushrooms rings, mounds of earth, and unexpected guests at the door or gates in the sides of hills. Likewise be conscious to be cautious of carelessly phrased wishes or desires, or giving explicit thanks, or of failures of courtesy.