

Elven Culture

Elven Superstitions

On Birth and Death

An Elf will never sleep on the ground, for to do so is to invite death. Likewise, they will never wear white unless in mourning for a loved one, because that's the color of death.

Elves bury their dead in the earth, near the deceased's home. They have an elaborate ritual of mourning in which the one nearest the deceased stands vigil over the grave for a period of time that can range from days to years. Death is considered a very private matter, and only the family and (sometimes) closest friends are allowed to participate in the mourning rituals; the rest of the community ignores the proceedings, and will never again mention the name of the deceased.

High Elven Politics

Note: This is from the Golden Age of Elves - when all the Western Shores was ruled by them

The Elven Kingdom is ruled by a Monarch, who is head of the most powerful family in the land. The Monarch's power is based on how much magic the family controls, and as I doubt the ruling family is decided on anything so trite as a magic duel, I assume ascendancy is determined in other, subtler ways (shows of power, clever lobbying, etc).

The Ruling family is customarily chosen from the seven Great Houses, the most powerful/wealthy families in the kingdom. The seven houses, and the approximately 13 lesser houses comprise the court. Or, at least, the most powerful members do. Every elf is a member of one of the 20 houses, though there is a vast gulf between Kherlian Linley-Graen, General and Warden of the Southern Reaches, and Mecklet Linley-Graen, apprentice pig-keeper.

The Linley-Graen family currently rule the Kingdom (dispute the name if you wish). The King, and the Princes are Linley-Graens, and the King is also Head of the family. I'm also assuming that, as this is a Fantasy Hero campaign, the most powerful people in the kingdom, Heads of State, etc, aren't necessarily spell casters or blessed with some super-powerful attributes. The King rules because, along with a natural inclination to the role, he is particularly well-trained in governance and the affairs of State.

L-Gs have large holdings and vast business concerns, which are over-seen by the Family Council. While the King, as Head of the Family is also Head of this Council, his sovereignty is titular, a safeguard against conflict of interest. The kingdom is governed by a council, on which members of all 20 families hold seats. Of course, the L-G family own the most seats on this Council at present. Though there is one council seat reserved for each family, the other seats are contested (probably in some arcane manner). The Monarch's sovereignty over this council is complete: the Monarch is Head of all families, with final veto over all Council decisions. Though it is uncommon for the Monarch to cast a deciding vote against the expressed wishes of his-her family, it is not unknown.

The Family council decide on the runnings of their holdings and conduct Family business. The Council votes on new petitioners: upon reaching maturity, children apply to join a family, usually either their mother's or father's (if different) or sometimes a different family. Until they reach majority, a child is the responsibility of his/her mother's family: this only becomes important in cases of custody disputes, orphans etc. Geneological records, rulings on matters of consanguinity and affinity and most other duties of Family Law Court are decided by this Council. There is no outside court of Appeals: Family business remains within the Family.

The Queen is head of the Chauda-Mehl (Showda-mel) Family. This is fairly uncommon, as usually the Heads of State are from the same Family, and has lead to a situation where the QQueen has no political power as Queen, but an immense ammount of clout as Head of a Great House. The close alluance of two Great Houses has created an extremely stable power-base, that would take an extremely concerted effort to tumble.

As demonstrated in the case of the King and Queen, marriage between two houses doesn't nesslerly mean that husband or wife joins the other's house. Leavin a House, particularly if one holds high position in a Great one, is difficult, involving drawn-oput negotiations over assets and alliances.

Positions on Councils, land and businesses are usually inherited. children of council members are, after all, usually the best trained to succeed their parents. Because of elven longevity, however, Council sears aren't usually held for life. Within the Family, sub-families, or nuclear units will usually share responsibility for particular council sears, and the highest level of administrative work that the position demands. Most of the King's administrative staff are close relatives. The heirachy spreads out, web like (though that's slightly contradictory to "hierachy") from there.

Example: a seat, or seats in any Family council is reserved for the Head of Geneological records. This council member's immediate family members might be in charge of all Family Geneologists, or Head Librarian, or secretary, etc. Second cousins might be members of the Geneological Council, or Head Researchers. More distant relatives could be employed as assistants. Of course, the lower it goes, the more unlikely it is that one family unit is associated with one particular position. The reason, of course, is that if you're assured, by birht, the promise of a prestige position in a certain field, you're more likely to show an interest in that field. If you're father's position is janitor in a small library, you may have an ambition to stydy and obtain a better job in another field. Theoretically, of course, all positions are decided on merit, and there have been circumstances when a prestige position has been awarded away from its traditional family nucleas.

As mentioned, there are seven Great Houses, and this number is set. No other house has risen to Greatness in centuries, though not through lack of effort on the part of the Lesser Houses. The formation of new Houses are subject to strict criteria, and ruled on by the King's council. Petitions to combine Houses, to dissolve Houses, are also ruled by the King's Council. Changes are fairly common amoungst the lesser Houses, as they manoever for more power, subtly encouraged by the Greater, who don't have cause to worry if the lesser lights are busy with petty squabbles.

The close allegiance between the Linley-Graen and Chauda-Mehl houses is unique in the circle of Great Houses. That two such intricate and complicated entities can work together so well is very unusual. The Great Houses, though never openly hostile (being "above" the petty machinations of the lesser lights) are wary of one another, after all, how can you fully trust such powerful equals? The inherent distrust, however, doesn't adversely affect the running of the Elven Kingdom, and when dealing with foreigners, it is quite impossible to tell exactly what differences there are between each House.

Elven Religion

Elven Religion is a very simple concept. Everything in the Universe comes from one source, and one source only, called Entropy. This source, however has many subdivisions. The Elves decided that it was easiest if divided into fives. The various races emphasize different paths of this religion - High Elf = Entropy (the total sum of everything), Justice, Magic etc. (I'll mail the religion stuff tomorrow) Wood Elf = Good, Life, growth etc. Dark Elf = Evil, Death, decay etc. Sea Elf = Chaos, War, intelligence etc. Elven Council = Order, Peace, instinct etc...

Entropy has 8 major divisions. Each major division has 5 subdivisions. The first division is the most powerful and the sum of all those below it, and so on. In order of power and importance, the major division are these :- The Forces, The Avatars, The Academics, The Physicals, The Great Powers, The Elements, The Personifications and The Manifestations.

The Forces - Entropy - Good, Evil, Order, Chaos.

The Avatars - Justice - Life, Death, Peace, War.

The Academics - Magic - Ethics, Politics, Physics, Probability.

The Physicals - Nature - Growth, Decay, Instinct, Intelligence.

The Great Powers - Fate - Love, Hate, Duty, Impulse.

The Elements - Spirit - Water, Fire, Earth, Air.

The Personifications - Imagination - Morality, Lust, Will, Emotion.

The Manifestations - The dieties of other races.

The Manifestations are what Elves class other races' gods. When another race has a religion based on usually one or more humanoid gods with personalities and faults representing one of the Elven divisions of Entropy, it is called a Manifestation. This is the major difference that causes Elven magic to be more powerful than other races. Mages also use forces rather than manifestations, so their magic is more powerful than Clerical miracles.

The Elven holy symbol is a pyramid (square based).

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