

Barbarian Culture and History

The Barbarians of Feragothe are a rough and rugged race. They bear a resemblance to Humans, although they are generally more muscular and less concerned with physical appearance. The Tribe provides the primary distinction between different groups of Barbarian peoples, and each Barbarian heeds his own tribal identity and customs. The tribe is led by a Chieftain who obtains leadership through physical strength and his ability to rally strong supporters. He may continue to lead his tribe well into old age as long as luck is on his side and he is able command the respect of the younger warriors. If a number of young barbarians rise up to take leadership, however, the older leaders and their supporters are often overpowered and the cycle begins anew. This is only considered fair in a land where the survival of the tribe is seen as dependent on the strength of each Barbarian, the Chieftain being the strongest of all. Occasionally this leader may employ elder individuals as advisors in a sort of loose council system, but the Chieftain always reserves the final word on the fate of the tribe.

Many tribal customs and stories share a common thread. Though each story is unique, the theme almost always teaches a similar lesson. For example, the Gofram, a tribe of fishers, recall a bloody war with a people who lived within the waters of the Great Deep. These sea peoples were decimating the tribe, but a small group of Gofram warriors set out on a quest to destroy their elusive enemies. After many adventures en route they eventually arrived at the great settlement of the sea people. Through strength and courage they were able to kill many of the leaders of the sea people, but were overwhelmed by the sheer number of their enemies and slain. There is another story that is handed down within the tribe of Potuk. They recall a legendary warrior, Tycol by name, who had once single handedly killed a gigantic monster that had been slaughtering the Potuk. The monster had skin and armored plates too thick to pierce, so Tycol jumped into the creature's mouth, slid into his stomach, and began to destroy him from the inside. After the monster fell, the remaining Potuk tried to cut him out, but it was too late. The tremendous force of the creature's fall had crushed much of his body. Unable to move, he drowned in the creature's own juices. Upon extracting Tycol's broken body, his brethren found the creature's pierced heart still held tightly in his hands. The Potuk now carry the preserved heart as a remembrance. These stories tell different tales, but both teach lessons of bravery, courage, and sacrifice for the good of the tribe.

Even the simplest tasks of survival can entail significant risks. Take, for example, the Barbarian way of hunting for food. A settlement will usually send out a group of hunters to obtain food by hunting game in the surrounding forests. Sustaining a sizable population of barbarians necessitates a large

amount of land to hunt, so large villages are generally far apart. If a village is successful and grows, it is likely to poach meat from land claimed by a neighboring tribe. This is a constant source of conflict, the taste of which the barbarians never seem to tire. To keep their land and their people safe, fighting is often ferocious between tribes, as the weak are in no position to survive. The strong are regarded as the only rightful leaders in this society, and shoulder the responsibility for keeping the tribe strong and thriving. A winning tribe often claims more than its share of land. The losers are usually forced to flee farther into the wilderness to attempt to rebuild, or else disperse and join other nearby tribes. Going too far into the wilderness is extremely dangerous, and most tribes forced to flee there are already weakened, and therefore rarely able to reestablish themselves.

Hunting holds a special place of importance amongst the tribes, as several consecutive unlucky or unsuccessful hunts can be disastrous. Most Barbarians skilled with a weapon are hunters during times of peace and serve in tribal militias in times of war. To blur the line of these roles even further, it is not uncommon for a hunting party to turn into a raiding party mid-way through the hunt if the opportunity presents itself. The best hunters achieve a level of skill that takes a great deal of time to hone. Some of the most proficient are said to be able to take down a stag many stone-throws away in the middle of a night-fog. However, the legendary hunter Nahlok is remembered as saying something like “Da bestest of da best hunters not need to strike from great distance. Dey can creep right up to da quarry and slit its throat wid a belt knife. It not even know it dead til we roasting it over da pit!” Since hunting can take a fair amount of a Barbarian’s time, they take great pride in their skill. They can be found wearing trinkets, made from all manner of bones, claws, and body parts, as well as clothing made from the hides of the beasts they have slain. They wear these almost as proudly as they bear the scars they have received in the hunt.

Far ranging hunting parties occasionally report sightings of ruined villages in the wild, with bones strewn about the forest floor for miles. These remains are thought to belong to those too unlucky, or too foolish, to flee into the deep wood. These sightings also give credence to tales of terrible evils contained in the unknown wilds. One such tale is the legend of the Ghosts of Ishmeer. It is said this tribe of enigmatic warriors, who called themselves the Ishmeer, set out in search of a lost city of treasures. None of the tribes ever heard from them again, however now and then slain hunting parties are found wounds resembling the supposed shape of the Ishmeer icon. The few survivors who managed to come back never knew what was killing their comrades, but some speak of being stalked by mysterious shadows.

While not naturally inclined to welcome strangers into their villages, stray Barbarians have been found in the living places of others. Several have had boisterous and sometimes dangerous stays within the new settlements. While not evil-hearted by nature, their mannerisms can seem quite aggressive and overbearing to those used to such pleasant-minded ideas as common courtesy and proper etiquette.

The Barbarians, as natives of this land, have developed relations with the Wild Elves. These mostly involve some trading agreements between individual tribes, however when pressed by wild creatures, several tribes of each race have been known to band together to repel such intrusions. It is generally accepted that warfare amongst different tribes, however, will not garnish the support of the other race.

Average natural lifespan: 40 years.