

The Koho

The Koho, or Catfolk, are an intelligent race of cat-like humanoids. They are one of the most prominent intelligent races.

Etymology

Koho is a high tongue word which combines the root 'ho', meaning race or species, with the modifier 'ko', meaning cat. Their common tongue name 'Catfolk' is an almost direct translation from high tongue, but they are mostly referred to as Koho.

Characteristics

The most defining trait of the Koho is their relationship to household cats and wild cats, which they call 'lower cats'. Koho believe they are the same species of lower cats, just reincarnated into their current forms. Therefore 'lower' refers to other cats being lower on the reincarnation line, as opposed to lesser beings.

Koho think of house cats and wild cats as their children who, after reincarnating enough times, will become Koho themselves. This is the origin of the common fable that cats have nine lives, because the Koho themselves believe they are the ninth reincarnation cycle and only by reincarnating enough times did they earn their current forms. They also believe after death that part of their souls will be reborn into the lowest forms of cat again. So in a sense lower cats are their children, ancestors, and their future selves all in one. Koho often judge places based on how many cats are roaming around. Any Koho household is sure to have up to a half-dozen lower cats in addition to the Koho living there.

Koho are protective of lower cats. Killing or even injuring one are the two severest forms of crime in Koho society, and offenders become sworn enemies for life, including other cats and Koho. It is imperative for humans to remove all rugs or trophies of slain cats before meeting Koho. In fact Koho-human relations are responsible for a sharp drop in cat hunting for this purpose, which has caused over populations of feral cats in many places. 'Civilized' Koho tend to be more understanding of humans customs regarding hunting cats, and ask only that cat hunting is done for survival and evidence of cat hunting kept out of sight. Forest tribes of Koho however, would likely fly off the handle if they knew a human was responsible for injuring a cat at any point in the past.

Behavior

Koho organize themselves into small tribes, but are solitary in nature. While their tribes are social packs, they tend to keep to themselves in most day-to-day affairs and rarely hunt in groups. This makes them difficult to muster into armies because they are guerrilla hunters by nature, and not soldiers. They do not coordinate well in large groups.

On the other hand, no attempts at consolidating or subjugating them ever succeeded for long, either from external or internal forces. Their race is difficult to pacify because of their numerous small tribes, and their native lands have never been successfully invaded nor their culture assimilated.

Koho are stubborn and rarely change their mind. They can be quite moody if things don't go their way. However they are pragmatic. This is because they feel most things have definite answers, and more debate is pointless once they feel the right answer has been found. This is why their belief in reincarnation from other cats is so strong. Because their physiology is so close to lower cats, they feel the only explanation is that they are more developed members of the same species. No Koho of any class accepts any other explanation.

Most Koho aren't racist, but they do tend to be narcissistic and inhospitable. Most of all Koho are prone to developing deep grudges. The once wide-spread insult of Koho as clumsy drunks is no longer often uttered, because people who express those views tend to disappear in the middle of the night.

Koho are adventurous. A Koho in a new place will not waste anytime exploring and mapping the environment. Koho often patrol the surrounding area as often as they sleep. They are capable of retaining a great deal of geographic information, even for areas they haven't visited in decades. This is another reason why their lands have never been invaded: they know the land too well. A few guerrilla Koho fighters in the middle of the night can wear down and obliterate a much larger force by taking advantage of terrain multipliers.

Koho are incapable of reproducing outside their race, but interracial mating is frequent and a fetish for many humans. Koho are capable of sensual movements and releasing pheromones and low frequency noises that effect, but are undetectable to, humans.

Occasionally a Koho will mate with a lower cat, but this is illegal and seen as equivalent to human pedophilia. An offender may be cast out of a tribe, and even their entire family may be as well depending on the severity. Although Koho can't reproduce with lower cats, this is seen as disrupting the reincarnation cycle.

Most Koho are phobic of large bodies of water, but this can be overcome without much difficulty.

In contrast to popular belief, most Koho do not have any problems with dogs, although they do find them to be kind of dumb. Koho find dog tasty and plentiful when fish isn't available, which led to the stereotype that Koho are enemies to dogs.

Physiology

Koho look a lot like short furry bipedal cats but with paws, tails, and proportionate cat faces with long ears and whiskers, large eyes, and slight muzzle noses. Their spines are more curved and flexible than humans, making Koho equally capable of bipedal and four-legged movement. When standing on two legs they have a natural slouch. An average Koho stands about chest level to a human when slouching, but they are capable of standing straight which makes them eye level with humans, although this strains them.

Most Koho favor four-legs when not dealing with non-cats. They are light and agile, and can move soundlessly if needed. Any Koho is capable of eluding pursuers and avoiding being seen. Their bone structure is loose so they can contort themselves in ways impossible for humans. All Koho have an innate flexibility that adolescent human boys can only dream of.

Koho tails are long and lithe, capable of gripping and holding things. They actually make better hands than their paws which, while opposable, are puffy and padded. Along with their whiskers, Koho tails are crucial to their ability to move around an environment. Their tails are

more for balance and their whiskers are more for sensing. A lot of young Koho, especially males, worry about the length of their tails and frequently measure them, even though their tails usually stop growing by the age they begin to care about it. Female Koho tails tend to be slightly longer, but have a smaller girth.

Koho's senses of smell and hearing are more acute than humans. Low frequency noises and pheromones are part of how Koho communicate, which humans can't sense. Their eyesight is incredibly advanced when in the dark, to where they see far better at night. During the daytime they have trouble discerning colors, much like a color-blind human, and their eyes let in a lot of light which hampers their depth perception, causing them to bump into things and appear clumsy during the day. A common prejudice is that Koho are all drunks. At night however, they are precise predators capable of finessed movement.

Because of these factors, Koho tend to be more active at night. They are not strictly nocturnal, but prefer the night or twilight hours. They do not need as much sleep as humans, so most Koho schedule their lives around frequent naps sprinkled through the daylight hours which often correspond to human mealtimes. They only sleep about four hours each day on average, but another four is dedicated to prowling around their environment. However, Koho can be quite lethargic during the daytime if they have no other matters to attend to.

Blinking is a major form of Koho communication. Depending on the speed or length of a blink, a Koho can express many emotions such as affection, attraction, displeasure, fealty, respect, or insult. Their facial expressions play a part as well. Most of these signs are indecipherable to humans, especially because Koho also communicate with pheromones and low frequency noises.

Koho rub and lick for affection. Licking is an extreme contact reserved only for lovers and close family. A Koho licking for any other reason is similar to molestation.

Koho are incapable of tasting sugar except in extreme quantities, but they don't eat sweet things anyway because sugar is poisonous to them. However many Koho purposefully try to develop their sense of sweetness because sugar is a frequent assassination tool against Koho. They are also extremely sensitive to alcohol. A few sips of a mild brew can cause inebriation. Their drink of choice is milk when they can get it, preferably raw, even though many Koho are lactose intolerant. This is also a common assassination method so Koho favor plain water where they can easily taste imperfections.

Koho are true carnivores like all cats. They are voracious eaters and have a bad habit of being distracted by foods, especially fish. In the past they occasionally ate humans and other intelligent races after battles which gave them a bad reputation as beasts, even though this is a rare trait they shed long ago.

All Koho have sharp teeth and retractable claws. They prefer to fight with claws in lieu of human style weapons which their padded paws have trouble holding. Their claws are also useful tools. However they use their teeth as often as their claws for everything. The more 'civilized' Koho frown upon using their teeth, but even the most sophisticated Koho bureaucrats will use their teeth in a pinch when nobody is looking.

Koho usually do not wear clothes apart from their fur, except in certain situations such as diplomatic meets or business. Their flexible bodies are throttled when wearing typical human clothing, but its close enough to work. A Koho won't hesitate to rip off clothes in a pinch. During

battle Koho wear specialized leather or fur armor that allows for their movements and doesn't make a sound, but is unsuitable for melee combat.

Professions

The Koho's innate mapping abilities and nocturnal tendencies make them ideal for less savory professions. Assassins, spies, and thieves are common Koho jobs. However, they hold plenty of jobs with less criminal natures such as nightclub owners or dancers. Female Koho often become exotic dancers or prostitutes. Koho do not make good chefs for non-cats because they can't taste sugar, like meat too much, and tend to eat everything before they cook it. They also don't do well as clergymen for non-cat religions because their belief system is deep-rooted and only concerns cats.

Koho can make decent politicians because of their steadfastness, but this works out best when they are in charge of decision making. Their narcissism, stubbornness, unwillingness to compromise, and impatience gets in the way at lower levels of administration.

One profession that surprisingly suits Koho is being mail couriers. Because they operate at night noiselessly and don't sleep much, they make ideal mailmen. Their efficacy is such that couriers are the one position where Koho are universally accepted and respected. Koho in fact make up the bulk of the capital mail system. It's the one legal job virtually any Koho can get, no matter what their social status is. Many Koho who live in human settlements aspire to become couriers. However, there are still non-cats who mistrust Koho mailmen. Koho couriers are frequently accused of thievery, so Koho avoid working in racist neighborhoods.

To combat these prejudices, the Koho founded the Courier's Guild. The guild is self-regulating with incredible standards. A past criminal record of any kind is an impossible barrier to entry, and criminal activity is grounds for permanent expulsion. The Courier's Guild has the strictest standards of any guild except the Templar Knights. However the guild is protective of its members and combats false accusations. The guild has a clear agenda to aid the Koho but they don't exclude non-Koho due to their need to operate in racist regions. Koho remain the vast majority of its members.

Many Koho couriers see themselves as a sort of ambassadors for the entire Koho race, fighting deep seated prejudices and stereotypes. For this reason, they see Koho thieves and assassins as detriments. On the other side, Koho criminals think couriers are prissy. Luckily, the former mindset is more prevalent in all intelligent races.

Magic Use

Koho are just as capable of using Aether as any other intelligent race, but most don't practice it. Many non-cats consider their stealthiness to already be some kind of witchcraft.