

MERKITSA, ELF CLANS OF THE TAMIRE

Known for their skill with horse and lance and feared for their frenzied raids are the Elf Clans of the Tamire. The *hosk'i imou merkitsa* or the shortened *merkitsa*, which means *people of the land before the Cataclysm* lands cover about 16,000 square miles, occupy a large part of the inland side of the Tamire, and is the largest land area populated by elves within Taladas.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The merkitsa are somewhat short compared to their Silvanaes cousins with the average being well under five and half feet. They are slender and well muscled with skin tones ranging from rich brown to deep honey-tan. Their hair color ranges from honey-blonde to brown, although black hair isn't completely unheard of.

Though they live a hard life on the Tamire, like all elves they have fine and delicate features, with slightly slanted almond shaped eyes that are almost always brown or hazel. Their mouths are small with thin weathered lips and their teeth are slightly sharper and more pointed than those of humans or other elves.

Often the lobes of their ears are stretched from the common practice of piercing them with decorative metal or wooden plugs.

Many men wear their hair long and neatly braided with one braid behind each ear and another down the center of the back. Typical clothing for the men is very similar to the Uigan, loose-fitting pants, with a wool over-tunic that reaches the knees, and soft antelope skin boots. During the hot summer months of the Tamire men wear a long linen turban for protection from the sun. In winter a fur lined cap of fox or lynx with flaps to cover the ears and a long, heavy fur-lined leather coat with intricately carved wooden ties is worn.

Women's dress is similar to the men; however the wool over-tunic is longer with a slit up the front and back allowing each half of the tunic to be tied at the ankle. Often women wear loose silk trousers instead of the rugged woolen ones normally worn. Like the men, most women wear their hair long; however they pull it up in buns on the sides or fasten it with decorative combs into a cascading fan shape in the back. It is customary for

married women to dye their bangs a reddish-brown and for widows to mark their cheek with an angled scar.

Typical merkitsa clothing consists of brightly colored wool, felt, silk and linen, the latter being obtained in trading with the League merchants. Tanners normally weave or print clothing in wide stripes, flowered patterns or clan totems and leather is colorfully dyed and rarely left natural.

PSYCHOLOGY

Merkitsa have a tendency to be impulsive and quick to act on their emotions.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Merkitsa are nomads, small clans spread across the steppes tending their horses and following herds of antelope, deer and gazelle. As such there is nothing more important to them than family and ones standing within the clan.

Often clan names are totem inspired such as the Tiger clan or the Eagle clan and a single clan is usually two to four extended families made up of five to six generations of aunts, uncles, children, etc.

There is no single tribal ruler as each clan is independent of all others and the clan is the only political structure with authority.

FAMILY LIFE

The Elf clans are patriarchal with the father being the head of the family in all matters.

Because of their lust for battle sons are favored to daughters and all merkitsa men, no matter what their age are expected to be warriors.

Women have little in the way of rights and are considered of lower status than men. Women are expected to serve their husbands in all ways. However, this does not mean that women are completely subservient or without rank. Like the men, all women of the clan are expected to be warriors.

Unlike their Silvanes cousins half elves are part of elf clan society. It is normal for every clan to have a number of half-elven families whose status is nearly as equal to an elf. The only exception being that interracial marriage (between elf and half-elf) is frowned upon. Largely in part to prevent half-elves from attaining the highest positions within the clan. In all other aspects of clan society half elves are considered equals.

Because of the low birth rate and the high mortality rate since Hiteh's night children are a very important part of elf clan life. Childbirth and pregnancy have become sacred and the clan shamans have created a number of rituals to ensure the child's health. The sa'qul idri or "birth-rage" is one of these rituals (though this ritual is a common practice before all raids). The father to be and other men from the family paint their faces in colorful war paint and enter a state of berserk frenzy then raid the nearby goblin, ogre and human clans. It is believed that the success (or failure) of these raids dictates the child's future, so the men fight with ferocity, heedless to the danger.

On the occasion the infant dies in childbirth the raiders kidnap a human child to be raised in its place. If the mother dies, a human woman is kidnapped to raise the motherless child. These human children are considered *true* elves by the clan and are free from the prejudice that prevents interracial marriages between non-elves.

NAMES

Merkitsa names usually consist of three parts: first the clan name, then the family name, and finally the personal name.

EVERYDAY ACTIVITY

Whether hunting in the scrub grassed Tamire, tending their herds of horses, or serving as a guide for League merchants, life for the Elf clans on the steppes is difficult.

ARTS AND INDUSTRY

The merkitsa have no true industry. They rely almost completely on their herds of horses and trade with the Uigan and League merchants for such things as silk and linen. All merkitsa children are taught the basic skills of steppe survival and hunting.

MAGICAL PRACTICES

Arcane magic is almost exclusively practiced by merkitsa women.

Few if any men practice arcane magic and those that do are often cast out from the tribe or at best treated as a woman.

Wizards draw their power from the moons of Krynn and therefore every wizard chooses one the moons to be her guide. Like her wizard counterparts on Ansalon she is subject to the waxing and waning powers of that moon, however she is not restricted in spell selection.

RELIGION

In general, Merkitsa worship the gods of good, with Qu'uan the Warrior (Kiri-Jolith) and Mislaxa (Mishakal) being the most frequent.

Clans are identified by a totem, called a quoyai (spirit protector). The quoyai is an animal spirit that can be called upon in times of need and each clan has a shaman that communicates directly with the quoyai. Originally, before the Cataclysm, each clan was led by the shaman, now however, that is not always the case.

LANGUAGE

Merkitsa speak their native language and Uigan.

RACIAL RELATIONS

The merkitsa tend to be suspicious of strangers and like most elves are arrogant, proud and believe they are superior to all others.

MERKITSA RACIAL TRAITS

Merkitsa have all the elven racial traits listed in Chapter 2 of the *Player's Handbook* except as follows:

- +2 Dexterity, -2 Intelligence. Merkitsa are shorter but more muscular than other elves, with a tendency to focus upon the physical over the cerebral.
- **Elvensight:** Krynnish elves have low-light vision and can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, and similar conditions of poor illumination. They retain the ability to distinguish color and detail under these circumstances. Elvensight also includes darkvision up to 30 feet. Darkvision is black and white only, but it is otherwise like normal sight.
- **Ferocity (sa'quil idre):** Merkitsa can attempt to enter a heightened state of physical prowess, a berserk frenzy known as the sa'quil idre. This is done by spending an hour in focused preparation. The frenzy lasts for 1 hour. During this time the elf gains a +2 bonus to their strength, their Dexterity or their Constitution score. At the end of the frenzy, they suffer from exhaustion and lose 2 points from their ability score for one hour until fully rested.
- **Weapon Proficiency:** Merkitsa elves receive free a Simple Weapon Proficiency feat with the spear, short spear, long spear and Martial Weapon Proficiency feats with the short sword, shortbow (including composite shortbow), and longbow (including composite longbow). Merkitsa are hunters and warriors, so all Merkitsa are familiar with these weapons.

- +1 racial bonus on Handle Animal, Knowledge (nature) and Survival checks. At home on the Tamire, the Merkitsa possess an intimate understanding of the ways of nature.
- +2 racial bonus on Ride checks.
- **Automatic Languages:** Elven, Uigan. **Bonus Languages:** Common, Goblin, Kazar, Pureshk, Ogre.
- **Favored Class:** Fighter or Ranger

ELF CLAN WARRIOR ALTERNATIVE CLASS FEATURES

Warriors of the Elf Clans are a wild and dangerous group. They are expert horsemen, even more than the Uigan. Like their neighbors, they are skilled with the bow and lance.

ELF CLAN RANGER

The majority of elf clan warriors that are rangers use their wilderness skills and exceptional tracking ability to hunt down and confront creatures of the Tamire or other threats to Northern Hosk and the elf lands. Elf clan rangers typically take the Two-Weapon Fighting combat style at 2nd level and many choose goblin as a favored enemy. Other favored enemies include Kazar, magical beasts, and evil outsiders.

STEPPE HUNTER

Nothing is more dangerous on the steppes than an Elf clan ranger. Silent and deadly hunters, Elf clan rangers often patrol the Tamire alone, camouflaging themselves and virtually becoming one with their surroundings.

Prerequisites: Elf or half-elf, member of one of the elf clans of the Tamire.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: Elf clan rangers do not gain wild empathy class feature or any later improvements in that class feature.

Benefit: At 1st level, while alone an elf clan ranger gains a bonus equal to his Ranger class level to spot, listen, jump, hide and move silently checks. He loses these bonuses in anything heavier than light armor and the bonus is halved if he is not alone.

ELF CLAN FIGHTER

The elf clan fighter uses his skill with the lance and bow to combat their enemies from their lightly armored horses.

VALIANT CHARGE

There is nothing more stunning on the Tamire than the charge of the Elf clan cavalry.

Prerequisites: Elf or half-elf, member of one of the Elf Clans of the Tamire.

Level: 2nd, 6th, 12th.

Replaces: Elf clan fighters do not gain a bonus feat at 2nd level, 6th level and 12th level.

Benefit: Beginning at 2nd level once a day you learn to urge your mount to move at 2x its normal movement without losing your ability to make a full attack. This increases to twice a day at 6th level and three times a day at 12th level.

MOUNTED COMBAT MASTERY

Elf clan cavalry is among the best on Taladas. They are expert horsemen and have perfected many battlefield maneuvers.

Prerequisites: Elf or half-elf, member of one of the Elf Clans of the Tamire.

Level: 4th, 8th.

Replaces: Elf clan fighters do not gain a bonus feat at 4th level and 8th level.

Benefit: (At 4th level select one of the 2 abilities)

Ability 1

This ability allows you to use the Dodge Feat and Mobility Feats while mounted. You must have selected the Dodge and Mobility feats to gain the benefit of this ability.

Ability 2

Mounted Uncanny Dodge: ride checks made to negate a hit (via mounted Combat) are made at +2

(At 8th level select one of the 2 abilities)

Ability 1

Mounted Spring Attack: Functions as the Spring Attack Feat of the same name. You must have selected Ability 1 from the Mounted Combat Mastery to take this ability.

Ability 2

Improved Mounted Uncanny Dodge: While mounted you cannot be flanked by enemies on foot. You must have Selected Ability 2 from Mounted Combat Mastery to take this ability

SPIRITUAL TOTEM

An Elf clan fighter can forge a bond with their quoyai or spirit protector. This bond grants him special abilities based on his clan's totem.

Prerequisites: Elf or half-elf, member of one of the Elf Clans of the Tamire.

Level: 1st.

Replaces: Elf clan fighters do not gain a bonus feat at 4th level and 8th level.

Benefit: At 1st level select one of the following totems.

Bear Totem: Improved Grab ability

Eagle Totem: +4 bonus to search and spot

Fox Totem: +4 bonus to Hide and Move Silently

Horse Totem: +4 bonus to handle animal and ride

Snake Totem: Gain Poison Immunity

Tiger Totem: Gain Pounce ability

Wolf Totem: +2 to attack rolls while flanking

TOTEM MANIFESTATION

As the bond between the Elf clan warrior and his totem grows stronger, the quoyai's spirit reveals itself more strongly.

Level: 6th, 10th, 14th and 18th.

Replaces: Elf clan fighters do not gain a bonus feat at 6th, 10th, 14th and 18th level.

Benefit: At 6th level select one of the following totems. (If you selected one at 1st level it must correspond to that totem)

Bear Totem: 1 hp/level

Eagle Totem: +1 to spot and search increases by 1 at 10th, 14th, and 18th level.

Fox Totem: +1 to hide and move silently increases by 1 at 10th, 14th, and 18th level.

Horse Totem: +1 to handle animal and ride increases by 1 at 10th, 14th, and 18th level

Snake Totem: Gain Sneak Attack ability 1d6 at 10th level this increases to 2d6, at 14th level this increases to 3d6, and at 18th level this increases to 4d6

Tiger Totem: Roar, every creature within 30' must save or be shaken. Once per day, gain an additional use per day at 10th, 14th, and 18th level.

Wolf Totem: Gain track, and +2 to survival