

Biata

One of the more enigmatic races of Terna, the Biata are fiercely proud of their race and history while simultaneously accepting the yoke of slavery. Residing almost exclusively in the Northlunds and the far eastern Ternian Empire, the Biata live in pockets and clumps. They are one of the least numerous of Terna's people, matched in scarcity only by the High Ogres. Bound up in the winds of tragedy, and property negotiations, the Biata exist at the whim of their masters and, for the most part, accept this as their place in life.

The caprice of fate which brought the Biata, once the overlords of the Northlunds, to their knees is lost to all but the eldest. This twist is but two generations removed as it happened around a thousand years ago, yet it is a guarded secret. Common tradition says the Biata themselves chose to don the mantle of serfdom. As such, it is highly dishonourable for a Biata slave to disobey their master's orders. Biata have acted in earnest regard to this tenet and it is commonly said, "Distrust your own eyes before you distrust your Biata." However, there are still Biata who have freed themselves from slavery. While some slavers might disagree, it is customary that any Biata born to free parents is free, and any Biata whose master dies without making arrangements for his or her slaves is also free. One would think this would lead to many Biata scheming to overthrow or kill their masters, but such machinations are looked at with contempt by the majority of Biata.

Because of their dedication to tradition and their willingness to embrace their serfdom, many Biata are placed in positions of honour and respect throughout Terna. The Emperor of Ternia keeps a Biata in his highest council, and the post has been filled by the same family for generations. It is not entirely uncommon for a Northlunds Barbarian tribe to have a Biata as both war-counsel and teacher, training the youngest members of the tribe in culture, hunting, and even the shamanic arts. This is in part due to the fact they typically have a good understanding of the dwarves and stone elves of the Northlunds, thus helping to fortify the tribes against their neighbors.

Ternian Biata share the same allergy to Celestial magics as that of their cousins through the Mists. The great sundering of the Biata culture has lessened the cultural distaste for such magics, but the physical symptoms still remain. Biata who are exposed to star magics, by sleeping in a Ward or using Celestially attuned charms, experience symptoms as mild as headaches and joint pain to more severe reactions such as hives, vomiting, and, in some case, coma and death.

One Biata custom that is not shared by Ternian Biata is the keeping of a Biata Lodestone. Though elder Biata speak of the Homestone and the memories it shared, no Biata has carried such a stone since the sundering of their people. Biata mourn the loss of their racial memories and whisper of the day when they will regain this birthright and "remember" their past so they might forge a new future.

Ternian Biata, as a whole, tend toward a stoic and stolid view on life. Having lived as slaves for

many generations, most Biata speak plainly and without the colourful flourishes common among Biata born beyond the Mists. This being said, there is no genetic propensity toward a cold and stern nature, and Biata personalities vary as much as their plumage. It is commonly known that the colour of a Biata's feathers can give insight into their personality and character. While most Ternian Biata are coloured in blacks and purples, showcasing their equanimity and serious tones, red white, and yellow Biata are not uncommon, and their corresponding ferocity, mischief, and ardor are well known. Since much of Biata culture and history has been lost to the ages, it's hard to say which colours signify what these days, but a Biata is always true to her colours.

Rebellion

The last several years have seen an upsurge in Biata dissidents, becoming increasingly vocal in attempts to regain their rights and freedom. The handful of free Biata have begun to work against the main slaveholders - especially the Stone Elves of the Northlunds, who form the largest network of owners, breeders, and merchants for Biata. In fact, the actions of some adventurers have led to the destruction of one of the great Mage towers of the Stone Elves, and to the freedom for nearly 300 Biata.

Many slaves are running away in hopes to join up with the adventurers or with the great hope of the Biata: Pasha Poot, a lowly escaped slave who now controls the power of the entire underworld, or so the legend says. Most view him as a hero of the ages. However, a few Biata see him as a major problem, as its ones like him that make it worse on all the rest as the yoke is tightened.

Still others work from inside the system. The Chief Advisor to the King of the Northlunds is a Biata named Marton Marvov, and he works tirelessly to improve the station of all Biata when he can. The reality is that there is little he can do in many cases. But one great example of his hand was when he doubled the rations at dinner for all slaves in the kingdom.

Marton actually follows in the footsteps of another freed Biata who once served at the ear of the King. Aeren Sarak in fact founded a city in Tympany for all legally freed Biata to gather: Freehold. This was an act of careful diplomacy between his King and the neighboring Duke of Tympany long before the Kingdom of Wayside formally existed. He met a cruel end at the hands of those who would see freedom squelched and the Biata remain slaves.

Of Gryphons

Every Biata child is told to be good or the Gryphons will come and snatch them away, and feast on their liver. Children are taught to fear them and that they are the servants of the StoneElves. Since there has not been a Gryphon seen on Terna in at least a thousand years, Biata children must be very well behaved.

Author: Rob D