



Appearance

Orcs are identified by their green skin and tusked underbites. When it comes to garb, orcs generally prefer function over fashion. It is most common for orcs to wear piecemeal clothing, forging the other race's ideas of fashion over comfort and practicality. Animal pelts and coarse woven fabric are common garb in the wastelands, while those who travel outside the desert regularly incorporate what is practical for that region.

Behavior

Renowned for their temper, orcs burn with energy and are known for their destructive rage and a lack of subtlety. Their legends expel the virtue of orcs who give into their anger at the right moment to crush their enemies and triumph against all odds. Orcs are known for their gruff demeanor, it is said that orcs are only truly happy in the midst of bloody battle.

Hailing from the badlands, orcs are left bewildered by the more modern technology and day to day amenities that the other races enjoy. They are likely to mock the comfort of a feather bed and in the same breath praise the pleasures found in a well-stocked bar.

Valuing strength and indomitable will, orcs are drawn to those who they see as equals and hold great respect for those who possess wisdom and cunning. Meanwhile, orcs tend to be distrustful of magic, having grown up under the tyranny of powerful shamans.

History

Emerging from the wastelands, the surrounding countries learned to be wary of ferocious orc raiders. This would lead to the lucrative career of many orcs sell swords and entire tribes seeking employment as mercenaries. The early success of these groups would earn the attention of the emerging Gaesin Empire who were eager to employ the orcs in the front lines of their legions.

Many orcs would sign on and proudly serve as heavy infantry in the imperial war machine. This would open the door for a rebirth of orc culture as orcs found steady pay on and off the battlefields in the ever expanding empire. Veterans and their families

would retire to the lands they had conquered and their children found work as artisans as the orcs adjusted to a more civilized way of life.

This golden era would come to an abrupt end with the decree of Emperor Mercius. Orcs were branded traitors to the empire following a series of political assassinations supposedly orchestrated by an orc named Olfrar. Orcish settlements in the empire were put to the torch. Families were arrested and executed in the streets, those who ran were hunted down, their bodies left as a warning to those who would dare invoking the emperor's ire. Unaware of the betrayal, Orc battalions were ordered to charge headlong into certain death, the survivors cut down by their erstwhile brothers in arms.



As the flames of betrayal grew higher and pockets of resistance were stamped out, orcs died with oaths of vengeance on their lips. Legions hesitated to carry out the extinction order and outrage spread across the empire like wildfire, sparking political unrest into full blown civil war. Emboldened by acts of a few, the cities of the empire declared independence and fought against their conquerors. Divided by loyalty to their emperor and loyalty to their sword brothers, legions came to blows and mutual assured destruction ensued.

For those who had narrowly escaped the slaughter, no solace was found in the wastelands. The tribes clung fiercely to their tradition, weakness was not to be tolerated. The civilized orcs slowly starved in the badlands, all the while being raided to extinction by their ferocious cousins. The survivors, reasoned the shamans, would have earned their place among orc kind; those who couldn't survive had no right to do so.

In recent times, the countries bordering the badlands hear war drums echo over the hills and blanch at reports of increasing raids. Once more young orcs leave the wastelands with axe in hand, seeking fortune and glory amidst the struggles of the civilized world.

Society

Orc society is based around the tribe which fights every day for survival in their hostile homeland. Tribes are united by familial ties and oaths of brotherhood. Orc children are raised communally, the adolescence seeing all the tribes' women as their

mothers and the men as their fathers. It is not unheard of for orc raiders to return with children from different tribes or even different races entirely. These foundlings are raised with the rest, taught from birth the art of survival and combat. All are taught to fear the shaman, who manipulate the tribes from afar with their terrible power.

Coming of Age

By their 10th year, orcs are considered to have entered into adulthood. This time in each orc's life is marked by conflict and bloody challenges, usually culminating in raids against neighboring tribes or more ambitious skirmishes outside the boundaries of the badlands. Success in these bloody excursions are rewarded with a higher degree of respect and freedom in the tribe. Relishing in their newfound autonomy, many young orcs choose to leave the wasteland in search of adventure and more deadly foes. Many of these sell swords do not survive to return to their homeland, but those who do enjoy unparalleled fame and respect from their tribe.

Religion

The Orcs recognize no god other than Amaran, the dead god of orc kind who rules the badlands and created the orcs with his own blood. Orcs are baffled by the other races' notions of prayer and worship, for Amaran disdains such things.

According to the orcs, Amaran has already given to all the races the greatest boon of all; that being a strong back and boundless courage. The orcs tell stories of the glory of Amaran to inspire the youth and encourage all to live up to his example. Orcs will call on Amaran before a battle, not to beseech him for aid but rather to ask that he watches on as they demonstrate their strength and courage in the world of mortals. Orcs hope their deeds impress the dead god in order to earn a place by his side in the afterlife where they can sit by the fire and swap tales of glory.

Prejudices

Believing in pragmatism and strength above all, orcs scoff at what they see as pointless superstition. However, it is not uncommon for different tribes to cling to traditions of martial rituals in preparation for battle.

Orcs are naturally uneasy around magic users, associating them with the duplicity of the Shamans of the wastelands. Orcs will view even respected healers with suspicion and struggle to trust mages in their own adventuring parties.

Inversely, many orcs admire and respect the cunning of the rogue. Often aligning with those who they feel possess a greater tactical acumen and willingly playing their assigned role in underhanded dealings. Orcs believe that the strong should take as they please and may deal with theft with a rare burst of good humor.

First among rivals, orcs treasure competition with fellow warriors above most things. Veteran orcs tell stories around the campfire of the strength of Ogres, the prowess of Asaltante, and the lockstep discipline of the Obern. Orcs form lifelong bonds of brotherhood with proven warriors and think nothing of laying down their own life to protect their friends.

There was once a time when numerous Orcs saw the Gaesin as their destined battle brothers and truest ally. This belief died in what the Orcs remember as ‘the great betrayal.’

Courtship

While most orc relationships are nothing more than a culmination of hormones and mutual interest, some choose to form more symbolic relationships. These unions are crisscrossed through feats of bravery and the giving of gifts.

These gifts regularly take the form of something the pragmatic orcs see as useful as opposed to jewelry or trinkets. Weapons, armor, and even tools are seen as good gifts. Equipment from different culture and far-away lands are especially treasured.

Prestigious bonds are formed between powerful warlords and at the inception of new tribes. In these times, orcs seek to form fruitful pairs for the strengthening of the tribes.

Marriage

Traditionally, orcs do not believe in what other races would recognize as matrimonial bonds. However, as orcs have left the wasteland and put down roots in neighboring regions they have adapted to the cultures around them. This includes the adoption of the local traditions of marriage.

Funerary Tradition

Orcs will collect their honored dead and lay them to rest deep below the surface in a cave or ravine. In this way the body is returned to the wasteland. Tribes claim a cave to harbor generations of their dead, with especially honored individuals placed in locations deemed sacred. It is customary to place the dead of both sides in the same cave following a great battle. In this way the spirits of the dead may rest together and vouch for the bravery of their foes when they stand before Amaran as one.

Festivals

The daily struggle to survive in the wasteland leaves little time or resources for elaborate celebrations and festivals. However, civilized orcs struggle with the sense of losing their culture. Over time, the civilized life strips away the cultural identity of the children of Amaran.

For this reason, orcs outside the wasteland have developed festivals and tournaments to keep their way of life alive. At such events, orcs hone their skills as warriors through combat. Youths are put through trials of strength and bravery. All gather around crackling bonfires to retell the myths of Amaran and celebrate the deeds of storied orc heroes.

Games

In the wasteland, orcs are taught from infancy to fight and survive. Their games seek to improve upon the same lessons. Juvenile orcs wrestle and fight with stones and sticks. Adults encourage competition in the gathering of resources and memorization of local ecology.

Gender and Family Roles

In the tribes, little distinction is made between the genders. Each orc is expected to give their all to their tribe, which serves the purpose of one large family unit. This all changes as the tribe prepares for the birth of a new orc.

The size of orc newborns combined with the brutal nature of the badlands means that childbirth is difficult for both the child and mother. Seeking to protect their families, the orcs will beseech the shamans for their assistance. In exchange for the guarantee of safety during childbirth, orcs agree to dark parts and dark deeds. These often take the form of instructions to make war on neighboring tribes or even to attack and kill members of their own tribe for reasons only known to the enigmatic shamans.

Outside of their homeland, many orcs struggle to conform to the gendered expectations of other cultures. “To force an orc into a dress” has become a common phrase to describe a difficult and potentially dangerous task.

Traditional Occupations

Many civilized orcs struggle to find their place in the modern world. Lacking any racial history of farming, orcs often prove inept at working the land. Instead, orcs gravitate towards cities and find work that compliments their natural abilities. Orcs are often seen doing manual labor or otherwise working with their hands. Likewise orcs may be hired to add muscle to an organization. Orcs are regularly employed as sentries, bouncers, and bodyguards.

In recent times, it is not unheard of for an orc sell-sword to settle down and choose to put down roots in the civilized world. These scarred veterans are happy to instruct potential students for the right price.

Economics

The main export of the badlands is orcs, both in the form of sell swords and marauding bands of raiders. While it has been speculated that their homeland possesses extensive mineral wealth, the orcs lack infrastructure and any desire to exploit the land. Living in a largely cashless society, orcs tend to value goods and services over gold.

Aging and Life Expectancy

Orcs mature and age more quickly than other races. Young orcs reach adulthood by their 10th year and join their tribes in raids and hunts alike. After earning their place amongst their kin, orcs may busy themselves finding mates or otherwise leave the wasteland in search of fortune and glory.

Orcs rarely live past the age of 30. And consider it shameful to live to see their 50th year and will often seek out a fitting death so as not to burden the tribe with their infirmity.