

Banbutsunoreichou

Polite society owns the historical existence of five sub-races of Banbutsunoreichou. The verbal history, which is decidedly not polite, maintains there are ten sub-races. The census is administered by those of polite society, or at least those not wanting to bring dishonour upon their family. As such, the census does not include the 'other' races and thusly numbers the existing sub-races of the Banbutsunoreichou¹⁾ as four.

They are the Torareichou or tigers, the nobility of Kartar, the Shishireichou, the lions, the death dealers, the Subayaireichou or cheetahs, the scouts and messengers and the lowest ranked of the species and the jaguars, the hotlanders. Once there were five, but the leopard race was destroyed centuries ago.

Fertility

The drop in population, especially the lowered fertility amongst the Torareichou is never spoken of within society, and the Empress has specifically, although very circumspectly banned discussion of the matter entirely. The current generation of the feline nobility of the has an estimated 37% sterility amongst both male and female. The other felines sub-races are suffering similarly, although the rates are currently much lower. The Subayaireichou may be immune to this curse.

Tigers - The Nobility of Kartar

Height- M: 190 cm F: 195 cm Weight- M: 110 kg F: 115kg

The Torareichou are generally acknowledged to be the nobility of the Banbutsunoreichou. They tend to be more intelligent, more wise and longer-lived than any of the other five. Add to this their greater size and strength and the slightly higher probability of magical capability and even if history and mythology had not anointed them, it seems likely they would rule Kartar regardless.

The greatest flaw amongst this species however is their low fertility. It has always been rare for a pregnancy to produce more than two healthy cubs, and nowadays fertility amongst the greatest of the felines is dropping still further.

Historically, a cub that was not healthy would die young, in hours in fact. Nowadays, with the known, but unspoken decline in the species, an unhealthy cub is far more likely to receive the additional care it requires to grow healthy and strong. For this reason, midwives among the Torareichou are exclusively elderly females of the species. The official story will always be of good health unless the mother actually dies during the birth.

Color Variations

Gold

A gold tiger displays a slightly lighter colour, the fur appearing much closer to gold. One family to the North is known for this colouring and it is noted little more than a red-headed human would be. A little unusual, a little different, the occasional bit of teasing, but nothing to note the individual as alien.

White

A white tiger is not an albino. It is merely a combination of the correct parents. It still has the normal stripe pattern although there are usually substantially less stripes in the pattern. A birth of such cubs is rare but hardly unheard of, and is as much an accepted variation as golden or blue tigers. A white tiger is mythologically considered more likely to be capable of channelling magic, but this is not borne out by the evidence.

Albino

True albinos rarely survive childhood. The mutation tends to be accompanied by a poor immune system, slower growth and a generally less impressive physique.

Melanistic Tigers

Melanistic, or all black, Torareichou, with the stripes usually a strange ghosting above the black base colour, are considered demonic and evil. Any cub born exhibiting this colouration will be killed after a week if the colouring does not change. Mythology speaks of the evil that such creatures will wreak.

A cub born with melanistic colouring that does change will be a great mage. Or insane.

A cub born with melanistic colouring that does not change and somehow survives will be both.

There are perhaps five a century born black. In theory none have survived. In practice, the exceptionally long-lived black tigers, with easily five times the lifespan of even normal tigers, tend to feel the coming birth of a new cub and attend, rescuing the cub. The stories of cubs whose colouring changes are entirely the result of this changeling activity.

Lion - The Death-dealers

Height- M: 180 cm F: 185 cm Weight- M: 95 kg F: 100kg

Lions are known as the death dealers. Individually they are no match for a tiger, or even many leopard or jaguars, and of course a cheetah could easily outpace a lion over the short of long distance. However, lions tend to band automatically from a very young age into small groups that are known, both in childhood and within the military world as ambushes. Ambushes are the focal point of lion society, more important in many ways than families.

"Ambushes"

Lions tend to be born in litters of 4-6. This is often the core of the cubhood ambush. It may be joined by others from smaller litters, the occasional orphan²⁾, and very, very occasionally by a cub of one of the other Banbutsunoreichou. A non-Feline can not fit into an ambush. These cubs will play together, eat together and sleep in a sandy pile of bodies. Experience has taught that an ambush can not be split up without a great disruption to the lives and health of all the cubs involved, so the young of servants, lessers and even slaves can gain honour and position by becoming part of an ambush with the young of high-ranked lions.

One of the primary activities of cubs of all species is to practice hunting and fighting, but lion cubs approach it in a unique fashion which has long been allowed for in common law. A lion cub acting in a foolish, or even dangerous fashion will be excused, as will the family that might otherwise suffer a loss of honour, if the actions are part of ambush play. An ambush starts very young, working together as a unit to learn to hunt and kill. The parents of lion cubs become accustomed to seeing their young treating them and the servants and slaves as prey. It is not uncommon for the individuals that comprise an ambush using a range of stalking and disinformation tactics to drive their prey, including parents and other relatives, into an ambush. A wise parent will excuse these activities, but will not make life too easy for the would-be hunters.

The great Lion families have large estates in which the Ambushes can hunt, travel and in general practice techniques as they get older. Of course, as the cubs get a little older, they may find themselves the target of older groups practicing on them. Actual bullying is frowned upon, and the disappearance of a cub is grounds for a very serious investigation and great loss of honour to the individual who caused it. Lions are very socially oriented and the loss of a single individual can have great effects.

Military Service

Every Lion will serve in the military for at least half a year. Ambushes tend to join on the same day, although military service starts from eighteen years, and individuals are starting to create their adult groups and connections around this time. There are pros and cons to a cubhood Ambush that joins the military and stays together to become a combat unit. On the upside, such units have the capability to act like a single mind, with nearly, and occasionally literally, telephatic levels of intra-group communication. On the other hand, they can be very resistant to orders from outside the group that run counter to the Ambush's opinion. Assuming sufficient military prowess such units will often become independent special forces and can easily destroy forces five times their size.

Crossbreeds

Lions have been known to breed with their close counterparts, tigers, to create interesting mixes. It is however exceptionally rare, and constitutes a great dishonour to both individuals involved, more if one is unknown and their families. In recent years, these cubs have occasionally been allowed to survive. These two breeds are called ligers and tigons.

Liger

The liger originates from mating a male lion and a tigress. Because the lion passes on a growth-promoting gene, but the corresponding growth-inhibiting gene from the female lion is not present,

ligers are larger than either parent. It is said that ligers do not stop growing and will grow constantly through their lifespan, until their bodies cannot sustain their huge size any longer, reaching up to half a tonne. Ligers share some qualities of both their parents (spots and stripes) however they enjoy swimming, a purely tiger activity, and they are always a sandy colour like the lion. Male ligers are sterile, but female ligers are often fertile.

Female ligers are fertile and can produce offspring if mated to either a pure-bred lion or a pure-bred tiger.

Tigon

The tigon is a cross between the lioness and the male tiger. Because the male tiger does not pass on a growth-promoting gene and the lioness passes on a growth inhibiting gene, tigons are often relatively small, only weighing up to 60 kilograms which is about 20% smaller than lions. Like male ligers, male tigons are sterile, and they all have both spots and stripes, with yellow eyes.

Female ligers and female tigons are fertile and can produce offspring if mated to either a pure-bred lion or a pure-bred tiger.

Leopard

Jaguar

Height- M: 175 cm F: 185 cm Weight- M: 100 kg F: 100kg

Cheetah

Height- M: 170 cm F: 170 cm Weight- M: 60 kg F: 60kg

King Cheetah

Melanistic Cheetah

Other Felines Species of Kartar

There are a number of sub-races not acknowledged as Banbutsunoreichou. Some of the border provinces use groups of them as slaves or troops, and it isn't entirely unknown for a rare individual to appear even in [Pei-lei-gang](#). They are rarely accorded any status other than that of slave, or even pet.

Smilodon

Height- M: 255 cm F: 260 cm Weight- M: 260 kg F: 250kg

The most well-known variation is that of the smilodontic barbarians in the Hu-Sien mountains. They are larger than any of the Banbutsunoreichou with, obviously, highly pronounced upper canines. They average more than two and a half metres in height and routinely weigh more than 200 kilograms. They appear to have the capacity to climb to the highest of mountains regardless of lowered oxygen, quickly develop very thick fur during winter and cold weather, and have upper limbs sufficiently long that it isn't too difficult for individuals to drop into a quadrupedal stance.

They have particular coarse pads on their paws and this, along with the only partially retractable claws and very heavy facial bones, mean they at least look like a more primitive species.

A number of families have used, and do use, these barbarians as shock troops. Their extraordinary reach and strength, speed across the ground, which over long distances puts even cheetah scouts to shame, and their ability to shrug off, partly due to the armour qualities of the thick fur, immense damage makes them immensely effective warriors when neither subtlety nor finesse are required. They are not markedly less intelligent than most of the other races of felines, but their culture values the physical and spiritual over learning, material and so-called cultural refinement. Further, an unaccompanied smilodon is prey for both slavers and bounty hunters if they stray into more civilised areas of the Empire as there is a small market for them as gladiators and warriors as well as a bounty on any not belonging to a house.

Lynx

A small tree-dwelling distant relative, this species tends to live in far more tropical climes, especially just off the south coast. This species is barely sentient, although they do build rudimentary shelters and occasionally use tools. There are rumours of Lynx Spirits that can go anywhere and see anything if they should so wish without anyone being able to see them. This seems unlikely, but some rare members of this species do have a chameleonic ability which increases their already phenomenal stealth in their home environment.

The Lynx are bipedal and have most of the standard features of the larger felines. However, they have very distinctive ears, with long slender tufts of fur growing from the tip. As this unexpectedly solid beast seldom grows taller than 80 cm, the ear tip, which can grow as long as 20 cm, is quite a feature. About two centuries ago, this tip was a prized fashion accessory, but the animals are now protected due to a proclamation from Empress <nowiki>[InsertEmpressName].</nowiki>

Ocelot

The Ocelot is distributed through the drier regions of forest along the edges of the Choupatl Depression. It also occurs on the island of Malini. It is up to 100 cm (3'2") tall, plus 45 cm (1'6") tail length.

The Ocelot is nocturnal and very territorial.

While Ocelots are well equipped to an arboreal lifestyle, and will sometimes take to the trees, they are mostly terrestrial. Prey includes monkeys, snakes, rodents and birds. Almost all of the prey that the Ocelot hunts is far smaller than it is. Studies suggest that they follow and find prey via odor trails, but Ocelots also have very keen vision.

Rakshasa

Some scholars have posited that rakshasa are a very unusual and distant relative of the Banbutsunnoreichou. This is anathema to the court and any scholar who wrote such words would live for a very long and interesting time.

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¹⁾

Panthera is the genus for all big cats that can roar. Cheetahs cannot roar, being instead capable of purring, and this further contributes to their lower status.

²⁾

Orphan:

1. Individual with no blood relatives
2. Cub born alone or single survivor of a litter.

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