

Hengeyokai

Our natural form is the body of a man with the head of an animal, but we can change this appearance at will. The ability to change the face, to take on different forms, forms of man and beast, is what humans would say most defines us. Perhaps it is our ability to change our face which so causes men to fear us, dependent as they are on their eyes. Yet, in this we know that men are mistaken. More than any other race, we know that it is not the outward face which matters, it is the heart within. No matter our form, no matter which face we wear, we remain the same.

If we take on the form of the beast we become no more bestial. If we take on the form of a man, we become no more "civilized." We do not see the ability to change our shape to be our defining characteristic. It is simply a part of us, like our feet or our tongues. Rather, what defines us is how we act in the world. Our reverence for the sacred kami, our loyalty to family, our personal honor, our sense of humor; these are the things that make us who we are.

Physical Description: Hengeyokai are shapeshifting humanoids able to take one of three forms. Their true form is that of a humanoid with the face of an animal. There are many clans of hengeyokai, each associated with a different animal.

When two hengeyokai from the same clan marry, their children are always of the same clan. When two from different clans marry, their offspring can belong to either clan. If one learns how to take a form other than the one to which they are born, they are still considered to belong to the clan to which they were born.

Ecology & Society: For the most part, hengeyokai are a simple people, a people of wood and stone. Their desires are for the necessities of life and the companionship of others. Hengeyokai typically do not enjoy living alone, and generally feel safer when with a group. Superficially, hengeyokai social structure is similar to that of men, though lacking a caste system or a feudal nobility. Instead, the basic social unit is the family and a hengeyokai is loyal first to their family and then to their clan. A typical family has three to five children. Twins and triplets are not uncommon. Most marriages take place within a clan, but there is no taboo against marriage between the clans. For that matter there is no taboo against marrying humans, though this practice is deemed foolish, doomed to end in tragedy.

There are three kinds of henge communities. The most common sort of community is familial in nature. That is, some families maintain their own homesteads, with children building new homes near their parents. These communities can grow quickly from one generation to the next, especially in families with many sons. When such an endeavor experiences true success, it frequently forms the basis for the second sort of community, the clan.

Clan communities are generally comprised of four or five families, with the head of each family, whether a patriarch or a matriarch, serving as one of the village elders. The third sort of community, one in which the clans mix, is the rarest sort, though the oldest and largest hengeyokai villages are mostly of this nature. These villages are also led by village elders, though the elders are selected by reason of age or ability, rather than their position within a given family.

Hengeyokai Clans: Hengeyokai clans are divided as follows based on the clan into which the hengeyokai is born and the animal shape they can take:

Panda Zoku (Panda Clan): Known for their calm demeanor and wisdom, the Panda Clan members are peaceful and thoughtful, often serving as mediators and healers.

Usagi Zoku (Hare Clan): Agile and quick-witted, the Hare Clan members are known for their speed and cleverness, often excelling as scouts and messengers.

Ryū Zoku (Dragon Clan): The Dragon Clan members are powerful and majestic, known for their strength and leadership, often taking on roles as warriors and leaders.

Ushi Zoku (Ox Clan): Strong and dependable, the Ox Clan members are hardworking and resilient, often serving as laborers and protectors.

Tora Zoku (Tiger Clan): Fierce and courageous, the Tiger Clan members are known for their bravery and combat skills, often excelling as warriors and hunters.

Buta Zoku (Pig Clan): Friendly and sociable, the Pig Clan members are known for their generosity and hospitality, often serving as hosts and caretakers.

Kitsune Zoku (Fox Clan): Cunning and resourceful, the Fox Clan members are known for their intelligence and trickery, often excelling as spies and strategists.



Relations: Amongst themselves, the hengeyokai have few conflicts, often resolving disputes over property and territory without bloodshed. Their shared faith and values help maintain harmony, recognizing the greater threat from humans. Hengeyokai have a strained relationship with humans, who often fear and misunderstand them, but they are open to cultivating positive relationships. Some hengeyokai live among humans, using their shapechanging abilities to blend in, while others act as spies or merchants. The hengeyokai count the tengu as allies and share resources with them, while the kappa are frequent visitors to their villages.

Alignment & Religion: Hengeyokai alignments vary by clan, with each clan having stereotypical attitudes towards life. The Panda Zoku are Neutral Good, the Usagi Zoku are Neutral, the Ryū Zoku are Lawful, the Ushi Zoku are Lawful Good, the Tora Zoku are Chaotic Good, the Buta Zoku are Good, and the Kitsune Zoku are Chaotic Neutral. Hengeyokai worship the kami, building shrines and leaving gifts for the spirits, focusing on their duties in this life rather than the hereafter.

Adventurers: Hengeyokai can become adventurers for various reasons, such as personal quests, community errands, seeking enlightenment, or simply having fun. Their shapechanging ability allows them to adapt to both urban and wilderness challenges, making them well-suited for martial and spellcasting classes. Multiclass hengeyokai are common.

Hengeyokai Racial Traits



When creating a hengeyokai, first determine the animal associated with the hengeyokai. Each hengeyokai clan has a different set of ability score adjustments and different racial bonuses.

Panda (Panda Zoku): +2 Constitution, +2 Wisdom, -2 Charisma; +2 racial bonus to Heal and Knowledge (religion)

Hare (Usagi Zoku): +2 Dexterity, +2 Intelligence, -2 Constitution; base speed 40 feet

Dragon (Ryū Zoku): +2 Strength, +2 Wisdom, -2 Dexterity; +2 racial bonus to Sense Motive and Survival

Ox (Ushi Zoku): +2 Constitution, +2 Strength, -2 Dexterity; +2 racial bonus to Endurance and Intimidate

Tiger (Tora Zoku): +2 Strength, +2 Dexterity, -2 Wisdom; +2 racial bonus to Acrobatics and Stealth

Pig (Buta Zoku): +2 Constitution, +2 Charisma, -2 Wisdom; +2 racial bonus to Diplomacy and Handle Animal

Fox (Kitsune Zoku): +2 Dexterity, +2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom; +2 racial bonus to Bluff and Stealth

Medium: Hengeyokai are Medium creatures with no bonuses or penalties due to size.

Low-light Vision: Hengeyokai can see twice as far as humans in dim light.

Normal Speed: Hengeyokai (except for the Hare Clan) have a base speed of 30 feet.

Keen Senses: Hengeyokai receive a +2 racial bonus to Perception checks.

Shapechanger: A hengeyokai's true form is that of a humanoid with the face of an animal. They can change shape to appear as a human or in the natural form of their clan animal (*alter self, beastshape I*) a number of times per day equal to 1/2 their character level (minimum 1).

Yokai Traits: Hengeyokai always count Stealth and Survival as class skills.

Weapon Familiarity: Hengeyokai are proficient with the great club, long bow, and spear.

Hengeyokai Weakness: Hengeyokai are susceptible to cold iron, which always does +1 damage against them and causes them to revert to their true shape when struck.

Common Names:

Male: Akemi, Akeno, Botan, Juro, Keiji, Kukemi, Teijo, Wakaki.

Female: Asa, Fuyu, Hanako, Haruko, Kukiko, Matsu, Sukura, Umeko.

Languages: Hengeyokai begin play speaking Common and Sylvan. Hengeyokai with high Intelligence scores can choose from the following: Celestial, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome, and Goblin.