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martial cultures

the
daikort
pack

for love or money



Martial Cultures: The Daikort Pack

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Martial Cultures: The Daikort Pack

Introduction

Mercenaries are a common fantasy staple, whether they're rough and tumble sellswords who measure their morals in silver, honorable outlaws with high standards and hearts of gold, or highly trained military units who've gone rogue. The Daikort Pack are a little alike and a little different from all of these.

They aren't just a bland band of soldiers for hire. They have a little extra edge that sets them apart. Some say it's magic, some say it's extra training, and others are too busy bleeding to say anything at all.

The Daikort have their own strict system of honor within the pack, but how that applies to outsiders is up to you. They can be a bloodthirsty cohort of merciless killers, a wary group of disciplined warriors that only takes on the most righteous of jobs, or anything in between. Either way, they are ruthlessly good at what they do.

They take jobs in parts of the world where other groups can't go, and have a very high success rate. The pack is renowned for their ability to fight in difficult terrain. They have allies in every kingdom, but more than their fair share of powerful enemies, too.

Whether you're playing as a former pack member, have an entire party that's joined up with the pack, or just need a mercenary group to drop into your game, the Daikort Pack can lend its special extra edge to your campaign.

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I've heard people say there's things as they wouldn't do for love nor money. Well, son, if ya join up with us, yer not gonna be able to say that no more. We takes the jobs we gets, and say thank you, sir. It takes a certain kinda person, and I'm not sure ya have it in ya. Yer a scrawny-lookin' thing.

Now don't ya go an' flinch like that. I might no be so purty as them teachers at those fancy schools, but I can teach ya plenty. Things them high-an'-mighty folk in their walled yards wouldn't dream ya can do with a blade. I know youse heard the stories; why else would ya come a-lookin' fer us?

We's a hard bunch to find, so I give ya credit fer that much. But it'll take more'n that afore I'm convinced yer fit to join us. I sees ya's got a spear with ya. I usedta think they's nothing' but fancy pig-stickers, but one o' our girls done proved me wrong. Ya should 'ave seen the look – but that's a story fer later.

So, ya mind showin' me what ya can do with that pig-sticker o' yers?

The Daikort Pack is a lethal cabal of skilled warriors, trained to live, track, and fight in any climate. Their base never stays in the same place for long, nor does their allegiance. They will use any skill to get the job done, and are rumored to teach their recruits a few tricks that go beyond mere martial training.

Ruthless mercenaries, the Daikort take either the best of the best, or the worst of the worst, depending on who you believe. They recruit warriors just starting out, teaching them their specialized methods, and requiring from them a certain amount of service before they are free to leave.

Daikort members are not free to choose their own missions. They go where they are assigned, do the job, and are paid their wage. However, each member accrues some amount of Favor for every mission. Favor is how the Daikort measure non-monetary debt, and they take it even more seriously than gold. Considering how deadly serious the Daikort are about payment, few members ever leave carrying a significant balance of Favor debt.

An initial debt of Favor is incurred upon joining the pack and receiving their training. After that, members can take on further debt if they ask the pack to carry out missions. The pack is bound to undertake any mission a member requests, and rarely asks questions as to why.

Pack members often barter lesser favors among themselves, meaning that most members leave the group with at least some

Tallying Favor

Favor is presented as a very abstract concept, but if the specific amounts owed become important, it can be quantified in a number of ways.

One way is to divide Favors into Small and Large. The initial training debt would incur a Large Favor for each skill taught, and Small Favors for being fed and housed during that time. An assassination would be a Large Favor, while a recon mission would likely be a Small one.

Favor can also be entirely numeric. A difficult infiltration might be worth 7 Favor, while a quick errand or loan of a weapon would be worth 1 Favor. How much Favor the initial training costs depends on how mercantile you envision the pack to be.

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debts still outstanding. Because of this, even Daikort members who appear to be long-retired can still make an appearance on missions from time to time. This practice is kept closely guarded among the Daikort, who feel that general knowledge of the fact would make it more difficult for former members to find other employment.

Employment is not lacking for Daikort retirees, many of whom join militaries or private guard services. A vast number of them take up the adventuring lifestyle, while a rare few will settle down into some less dangerous profession.

Daikort background benefits: You gain resist 2 against poison, acid and necrotic damage, or increase your existing resistance by that amount. This resistance increases to 3 at paragon tier and 5 at heroic tier. Add either Nature or Intimidate to your class skill list.

Appearance

The Daikort Pack's official uniform is leather armor dyed green, black, and dark brown. They wear it for any mission that requires neither heavier armor nor stealth. Members keep a wide variety of costumes for the latter occasion, ranging from black cloaks to brilliantly dyed court finery. Daikort's specialty lies more in out-and-out fighting than in subtlety, so it's more typical to see a pack member wearing scale mail over black and green padding than it is to spot one in a disguise.

Many members cut their hair short to keep it out of their way when fighting, while those who wear it long often braid in unpleasant surprises for anyone foolish enough to grab onto it. It is the rare pack member who wears jewelry while on a mission, though most quickly become wealthy enough to afford whatever finery they wish.

It is not unusual for Daikort members to wear enchanted gear, and the pack cultivates good relationships with many magical organizations for just that reason. While the official armor issued to each member on joining is strictly mundane, there is no rule against replacing it with better gear, so long as a uniform appearance is maintained.

Members wield a staggering variety of weapons, many of them magical. It is a rare Daikort warrior who will be caught without a backup weapon, or even three, and it is a running joke that it's impossible to know you've found all of a Daikort's knives until you've searched his corpse.

Hierarchy

The Daikort are led by a small council of the most experienced members, each of whom must be free of Favor debt at all times. Only very rarely does a council member request a personal mission. The council approves or denies missions requested by outsiders, and sets the price for both official and personal missions.

Shares of the price are then distributed by captains, also known as Alphas, who also assign members to each mission and do the high-level strategic planning. Alphas rarely lead missions themselves, and will never lead a mission they themselves have planned. This ensures the distribution of duties and pay are kept as equitable as possible.

Most missions are lead by sergeants, or Betas, tactical specialists who are usually highly experienced veterans. Most other Daikort members have no official rank, except for specialists, or Omegas. As their designation would imply, Omegas all have some highly specialized skill: poisons, reconnaissance, or even unarmed fighting.