

PLAYING A BARI

The pastoral herding people of the Bari travel following the migration paths of their herds from the highlands in the north, deep in the heart of the Kordi Nation, to the flatlands near the Abkhat in the south. The Bari are considered by many to be simple people who live their lives around their herds of goats, sheep, and other livestock, but there is more to them than meet's the eye.

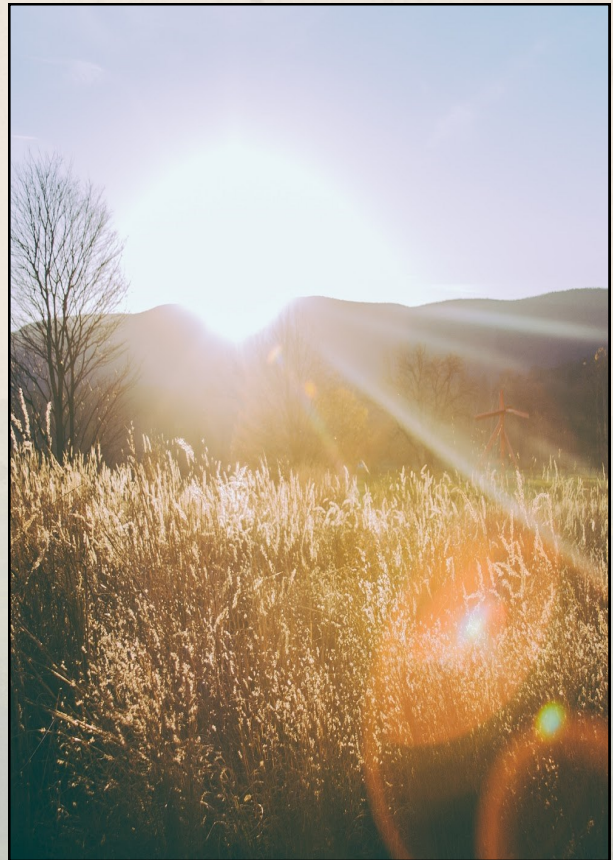
While the lands of the Bari are generally recognized by their neighbors, the people themselves do not lay claim to the territory that their herds inhabit. In turn, they form a close bond of kinship within their herding groups as well as with their animals, often viewing them as an extension of their family, and their advanced expertise in horsemanship and falconry is a testament to their dedication. The Bari take great pride in their way of life, as it is not for the fainthearted, and as such, they have developed a rich, carefree culture full of music, eccentric superstitions, and tight-knit small family communities. Their pact to join the Kordi Nation has benefited many, with increased grazing lands and protection, but the vast cultural differences often lead to confusion.

LANDSCAPE & CLIMATE

The herd-lands of the Bari have always been loosely defined, beginning somewhere between Lake Veselka and the Koptya Valley, and stretching southeast to their shared river border with the Abkhat, and onwards towards the ocean. Since their pact to join with the Kordi Nation, they have chosen to take full advantage of the borders opened up to them in the north, traveling well into the heartlands of the nation and sometimes as far as the western shore.

The vast swaths of the traditional herd-lands are thick with fields of wildflowers and tall grasses, a view broken only by low, rolling hills and the occasional cluster of oak or cottonwood trees. The southern region in particular is characterized by flower-covered hills, well-maintained fields, and fertile grasslands which support the many herds of animals that the Bari keep.

Summers are warm and rainy and the winters can be very cold in the more northern regions, leading to a mass migration of the herds to the southern regions, especially the coastline, during these times.



SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Bari people did not recognize any ruling class before their inclusion into the Kordi Nation, and their views have yet to change. The Kordi system of equating land ownership to respect means little to people who do not recognize land as property, and many older Bari still struggle with the concept. They have had no “nobility” in their society, and are often dismissive of the status afforded to those with such titles unless the individual proves themselves worthy of great respect through other actions. They are respectful to all, regardless of any status, and view an individual’s work and decision-making ability as worthy of higher praise.

Instead of towns or governments, the Bari have historically lived in herding groups made up primarily of close family members who tend the flocks of goats, alpaca, and sheep. These family groups fluctuate in size based on the size of the herd, but generally remain small and tightly knit. Some members of the group are responsible for initiating trade and politics with surrounding groups and nations, but each person is expected to participate equally in the management of the herds and the land.

Most agriculture takes place in the southern regions, as the migration paths of the herds there are much more condensed due to the more mild winters, and the land is generally flatter and more suited to farming. These tend to be more settled, forming small villages where crops can be grown and traded with the northern groups during their annual migrations. The southern families keep cattle and larger livestock.

Throughout the Half-Century War, the Bari evaded the invasion by constantly moving the herds to open lands. As the threat grew greater, and entire families were exterminated, the people became desperate for safety. The Kordi Nation’s ruler, Archos Sihala, offered them sanctuary in exchange for aid in the war. Fifteen years before the war’s end, The Longhill Pact was signed by representatives of both people, and the Bari took shelter within the Kordi’s capital.

The intermingling of cultures and people, while rocky at first, eventually lead to a lasting agreement to join beneath the Kordi Nation as full citizens.

Upon leaving the city at the end of the war, many Bari found much of their original grazing land to be devastated and inedible to their surviving herds, and such have taken up residence roaming about outside of the newly built cities, helping to heal and replenish the area so that their animals might feed. Those who did not wish to remain in the Kordi heartlands have returned to their original grazing routes, and to replant the croplands in the south.

Most families have at least one martially skilled member in their midst. They protect their herds as needed, but lay no claim to the land and will simply pick up and move if conflict ensues. They are known for being some of the best horsemen in Éras and traditionally use a combination of mounted archery combined with trained dogs and falcons to provide protection to the herd. It is often theorized by other cultures that if the Bari had united to form a military, their cavalry would have been the strongest mounted force in the world. Their expertise was lent as part of the Longhill Pact during the war, and led to the training and creation of the Kordi cavalry, the 6th Omada, which is still led by a Bari to this day.

NAMING CONVENTIONS

Bari names are inspired by those of Belarus and the Ukraine. Each person’s full name consists of a given name, the modified name of their father (vich or vist), indicating their parentage, and the name of their family group. Each herding group adopts its own family name. Over the course of one’s life, their family name may change from that of their natal herding group to one they forge, or one that they join to live with a partner.

Example: Vesela (*given*) Lubovich (*father’s name ‘Lubo’ + modifier -vich*) Bondar (*family*)

BELIEFS & RELIGION

The Bari tend toward the worship of the Brown, White, and Gold Gods. Their deep attachment to their animals most obviously links them to White and Brown, but their nomadic nature also leads them towards Gold. They tend to be more open to suggestions from the Gods, and therefore end up receiving fates more frequently.

Since the Bari mainly keep to their family groups, they tend to form unique fears and superstitions. Each group tends to have a unique set of beliefs and superstitions depending on their heritage. However, some superstitions have expanded to a wider cultural level. Some of the more widespread beliefs are:

- Children are at greatest risk of danger and must carry a small square of rabbit fur and paint their foreheads with charcoal or soot at night to full evil spirits into thinking the child is nothing but a rabbit, with black hair on its forehead
- During the winter months, all knitting must be done inside the tents during the day or winter weather will persist into the spring
- Always place your shoes pointing north as you sleep to assure safe travels for the herd in the morning
- Don't leave your bag or pouch on the floor or you will soon find yourself with no money.

Along with these beliefs and superstitions comes the belief that performing small actions may ward off ill fates and bad omens. These wards are typically developed in response to some sort of misfortune for a particular herding group and they are often shared with other herding groups in hopes that they may help. These wards have also been drawn from the customs of other cultures and adapted to serve the Bari. Some examples of more common wards include:

- Marching around rings of sticks or wood with weapons facing outward to ward off disease and sickness.

- Pouring salted water across paths during twilight to slow or turn away evil spirits in the night.
- Tapping trees with stones wet in lake water to ward off mange and disease in animals and prevent blight and spoiling of crops.
- Sprinkling flower petals or leaves in front of doorways every morning to protect against misfortune entering while one is away from the home.

ATTIRE

Bari fashion focuses on protection from the elements and sturdiness to survive the wear and tear of a nomadic lifestyle.

- Most outfits include a loose-fitting cotton shirt or dress, practical pants, and sturdy shoes. Vests and apron dresses are common, and all pieces are often decorated with embroidery or woven trims, with each family typically creating their own unique trim that marks their best pieces.
- Layered knits such as shawls, sweaters, and scarves are common. Thick knit hats or patterned scarves protect the head from the rain and cold.
- Clothing colors tend towards darker and earthy tones, but often have splashes of color or unique patterns in the detailing.
- Jewelry and fineries are typically limited to a few smaller trinkets. Some women wear metal rings pinned into their hair or headscarves at the temple.
- The Bari are known for their skills in textiles and shoemaking, and take pride in the quality of their clothing. They pay careful attention to maintain and repair their clothing as needed to maximize the lifespan of the clothing. Pieces are repaired and passed down, with subsequent owners adding to the embroidery

COMMON CUSTOMS

- The Bari enjoy sporting and field games. Oftentimes when herding groups come into contact with each other, they challenge each other to field games, mounted archery competitions, and falconry exercises. They typically place small wagers on the outcome of the games.
- The written word is viewed as excessive, as any information truly worth remembering should be committed to memory. Oral tradition is prominent in Bari culture, but some have learned to read and write to take better advantage of the new tomes of knowledge made available to them by the libraries of Kordi and to share their own acquired learnings with their new countrymen.
- In the evenings, families will gather around campfires to sing and play music using traditional stringed instruments and drums. Traditionally there is little dancing, however foot-stomping and clapping along with the music is encouraged. They believe that evening performances ward off danger from the herd.
- Traditional birthdays are not recognized, instead, the Bari base their passage of age on the number of thawing seasons they have witnessed. During each thawing season, the families each celebrate the survival of the herd through the winter and to usher in a new year.
- Marriage in the traditional sense is rare between Bari, but has become more commonplace as cultures have mixed. Having multiple partners across different families is not an uncommon practice, though not the preference of every single Bari. If two individuals wish to live together, a Joining Ceremony is performed, formally enfolding one into the other's family and daily life.
- Children are taught to ride as soon as their legs are strong enough. Their mounts are always highly valued and given great care and attention and will grow with the child.

HOLIDAYS

Dynatin Games (1st Week of Springfall)

The northern families gather together to participate in games of sport and demonstrate feats of strength in friendly competition. Winners earn bragging rights for the year. The activities are open to all Bari and neighboring cultures, who often send representatives to participate. Over the years, the spectacle of the games has drawn the attention of a number of Waso clans, and it has become commonplace for many to join in and participate. Activities include games of dogball and tackleball as well as competitions of log throwing, knuckle hop, wrestling, weightlifting, and distance running. Games are often wagered on by individuals, with friendly bets amongst the groups as a whole that often result in humorous or embarrassing consequences for the losers.

Pakiv (2nd Weekend of Summerfall)

As the day breaks on the first morning of the week's end, Bari families come together in groups to celebrate uncontrollable forces of nature: floods, harvest, tides, and the weather. Half of the young adults and children spend the day weaving wreaths of wildflowers and ferns, which are later tossed into the nearest body of water. The other half of the young population dive into the water to retrieve the wreaths, and will spend the remainder of the weekend with the maker. The pair will complete various tasks together, such as searching for flowers going out of season, or jumping over the bonfire as night falls, to strengthen the relationships between the tribes against the trials of nature.

Ranavi (3rd Week of Reaping)

Before the Bari ready endure the winter, families gather together to aid each other with preparing their food and resource stores. This time of hunting, fishing, gathering, and crafting has turned into a week-long competition as the various members seek to bring down the largest prey, tan the finest hide, and find the most mushrooms. Evenings are spent around large bonfires, as people rest from their daily activities, drink, and tell exaggerated stories of their exploits.