

# IMBULU

## Honoring the Animal Orisha

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Many African legends speak of humans that can take the shape of animals, or animals that can take the shape of humans. Some legends speak of beast men; creatures with the heads of animals but the bodies of men.

The lands of Nyambe-Tanda have shapechangers, werecreatures and even the mchawi can reincarnate into animal form. Noticeably absent is the mythology of beast men.

Below is a new player character race called the Imbulu (im-BOO-lu) that you can add to your African adventures game with little disruption to your campaign.

The name Imbulu refers to a lizard headed human of South African legend, but is used here to describe a beast-human of any animal type.

**Compatibility Notice:** Nyambe: African Adventures was originally published under D20 v3.0 rules. This document was created to accommodate players of both D20 v3.0 and D20 v3.5. Where differences occur between versions, rules will be marked as (3.0) and (3.5).

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*"The monkey does not leap for the branch he cannot reach."*

Long forgotten, hidden away in the many secret valleys of the Kuba-Taaba Mountains live a people unlike any other in Nyambe. Shunned and misunderstood for what they are, the Imbulu have seldom been found outside their small, hidden villages. Their isolation has not helped to shed the mystery of these strange looking, yet very normal people.

Most Imbulu have little use for the outside world. Long ago they were the hope of the well intentioned wakyambi bangu (druids). Infusing tembu humans with the spirits of animals, and supplicating the animal orisha, they hoped to create a weapon to fight the kosans. And while the Imbulu did indeed exhibit some of the qualities of animals, they were no match for kosan magic and were hunted nearly to extinction. Mistaken for shapechangers, Imbulu found little refuge in human communities so they fled to hidden places where they have survived to this day.

Some say that certain Tembu families still contain that special quality, the possibility that one of their children will be infused with an animal spirit while in the womb. Such children are often left out in the wilds to die. Most are never seen again as Imbulu dembe stay on the lookout for such outcasts and bring them to their village to be raised and cared for as one of their own.

Imbulu make extensive use of bows, the Nyamban scimitar, the throwing spear and the versatile knobkerrie. Imbulu use shields of all types when not using two-handed weapons.

**Personality:** Imbulu are cautious around strangers, expecting to be mistaken for werecreatures or animal orisha. When calm they tend toward contemplation before action. When aroused they turn loose their animal spirits and are frightening to behold. They are a quietly passionate people.

Imbulu understand prejudice all too well and are very accepting of the differences of others.

Imbulu avoid killing other Imbulu if at all possible, and practice ritualistic combat in their inter-village disputes.

**Physical Description:** Imbulu resemble Tembu humans. What sets them apart, however, is their animal-like head sized to match

their human bodies. There is no rhyme or reason as to what animal head an Imbulu child will have, other than that they will never have an animal head like either of their parents. Imbulu live 150–200 years and are considered adults by the age of 25.

**Relations:** Imbulu are ancient enemies of the kosan's and their progeny (getiet and ingogo). They understand the plight of ngoloko and go out of their way to make them feel welcome. They distrust most humans due to past persecutions. They have good relations with wakyambi, without whom they never would have come to be.

**Alignment:** Most Imbulu are good, but they can have any alignment.

**Imbulu Lands:** Imbulu live in small valleys hidden in the Kuba-Taaba mountains. Their villages are often connected by small foot trails and their dembe keep their lands safe from predators.

**Religion:** Animal Orisha. With few exceptions, Imbulu honor animal orisha exclusively. Imbulu n'anga clerics are the only n'anga clerics in Nyambe-Tanda able to use the *summon nature's ally* spells. They may not however take the *summon dragon* or *summon elemental* spells, even if they use the bangu spell lists.

**Arts:** Imbulu are noted for their beautiful kente cloth clothes. The

spiritual images on such clothing honor animal orisha. Imbulu are also known for their descriptive prose in story telling and poetry.

**Food:** Imbulu food consists of stewed fruits and vegetables with fried meats in spicy sauces. The food is served in bowls with sides of nuts and injira.

**Language:** Kordo. Imbulu have had little outside contact, so do not share words with Daka-Kara as other Tembu peoples do. Imbulu suffer no speech impediments because of their animal mouth.

**Names:** Imbulu names consist of the name of an animal (not necessarily matching the animal head of the Imbulu) with a descriptive prose phrase that tries to capture the personality or inner essence of the Imbulu. The name of the animal can be at the beginning or end of a name and is not changed. Imbulu start with just the name of an animal until they come of age (age 25) at which time they add their descriptive name. This coming of age ceremony involves a day of fasting, a long solo walk and meditation, followed by an oral recitation of the Imbulu's deeds in front of the village elders and the rest of the village. After this recitation, the now adult Imbulu announces his new name and is given a gift of kente cloth clothes. The clothes are symbolized with images from the

Imbulu's past and include images honoring his animal orisha.

**Imbulu Names:** Oryx Smiles at Danger, Slyly Looks Behind Lion, Placid River Holawaka, Elephant Stands Ever Ready.

**Adventurers:** Imbulu adventurers tend to be cautious, yet curious explorers. They see the world as one full of the animal orisha and their place is to honor them.

**Appropriate Classes:** N'anga or bangu of the animal orisha, dembe rangers.

**Appropriate Feats:** Chosen Animal, Expert Tracker, Orc-Slayer, Poetic Speech, Ritualistic Combat, Scent.

## Imbulu Racial Traits

- -2 Charisma, +2 Wisdom: Imbulu are hardy and tough, but are often socially reserved.
- +2 racial bonus on Spot and Hide checks, +4 racial bonus on Wilderness Lore (3.0) or Survival checks (3.5): Imbulu live in the deepest wilderness and learn to know it well by the time they reach adulthood.
- +2 bonus to Diplomacy checks with wakyambi.
- Bestial Toughness: Imbulu are built tougher than men and a touch of their animal heritage shines through. They receive a +2 toughness bonus to their Armor Class.

- Automatic Languages: Kordo and Sylvan. Bonus languages: Elven, Celestial, Gnome, Gnoll, Orc.
- Skill Proficiency: Wilderness Lore and Knowledge (nature) are always class skills for Imbulu.
- Bestial Heritage: An Imbulu may choose one of the following abilities to reflect his animal nature. The ability chosen should fit with the Imbulu's animal heritage. All of these are extraordinary abilities.
  - Bite: The Imbulu has learned to use his jaws as a weapon and can do 1d3 points of normal (not subdual) damage with a bite (lion, hyena, leopard).
  - Inhuman Grace: The Imbulu has some of the speed of his aspect and receives a +2 racial bonus to Reflex saves (gazelle, impala, oryx, merekat).
  - Steadfastness: Something of the fundamental strength and resolve of the Imbulu's aspect remains, and he receives a +2 racial bonus on Fortitude saves (lion, elephant).
  - Orneriness: The Imbulu is stubborn and determined, receiving a +2 racial bonus on Will saves (water buffalo, cat).
  - Blood of the Hunter: The Imbulu gains the Track feat (leopard, lion).
  - Animal Acuity: One of the Imbulu's senses is heightened. He receives a +2 racial bonus on Spot or Listen checks when using that sense (hawk, cat, rat, jackal).
  - Waterborn: The Imbulu's aspect is a creature adapted to water, and he receives a +2 racial bonus on Swim checks (water buffalo, hippopotamus).
  - Bounder: The Imbulu's aspect is a creature renowned for leaping, and he gains a +2 racial bonus on Jump checks.
  - Fleet: The Imbulu has some of the swiftness of his aspect and increases his base movement by 10 feet (gazelle, impala).
- Favored Class: Ranger (dembe)
- Level Equivalent: Class levels +1.

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