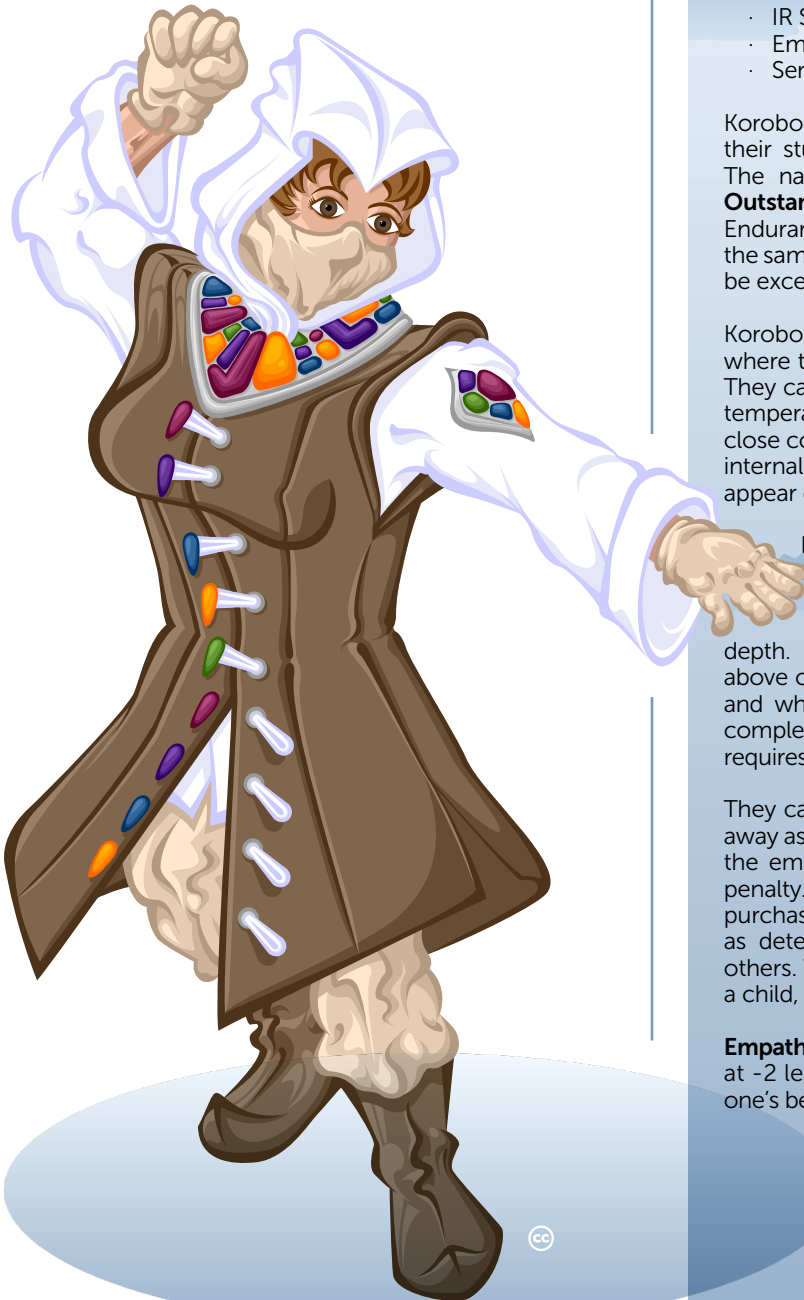


Korobokuru

The Architects

Physical Appearance

Korobokuru resemble the legendary creatures of the same name from Earth's Japan. They are about two heads smaller than a typical human, with solid, stocky, sturdy builds. All Koro have thick, wavy hair on their heads, and mature males sport luxurious beards and ample body hair. Their skin, hair, and eye colors come in various shades of earthy brown, and their hair either acquires silvery-white stripes or goes completely silver in the last decades of their lives.



Starting Korobokuro Characters

(1,624 Character Points)

B A S E W I P R Rep HP SP
Pr Pr Cm Gd Pr Cm Cm Dr Dr 24 17

Skills

- Languages: Koro-go, Traveler's Creole

Powers

- IR Sight: **Gd**
- Empathy: **Gd**
- Sense Magnetic Fields: **Gd**

Korobokuro are not quite as agile as Humans, but their sturdier bodies can take more punishment. The natural upper limit on Koro Agility is only **Outstanding**, but the upper limit on their Endurance is **Extraordinary**. All other trait limits are the same as those of Humans, but all trait limits may be exceeded through magic.

Korobokuro vision extends into the deep infra-red, where they perceive *naibu no kara* ("inner colors"). They can distinguish between subtle differences in temperature as well as most humans can tell apart close colors. Otherwise bland-looking objects with internal or external temperature variations can appear colorful to them.

Koro can sense magnetic fields through their mineral-rich bones, in particular the planetary magnetic field. They have an innate sense of direction and altitude / depth. Any Korobokuro simply knows how far above or below ground she is, which way is North, and which way is home. Doing something more complex, such as backtracking out of a maze, requires a power check.

They can sense each other's emotions from as far away as 200 meters (600 ft), and can even decipher the emotional states of other species with a **(-1)** penalty. A rare few further develop this power, purchasing feats that allow them to do things such as detect lies or project their own emotions to others. When a Koro falls deeply in love or has a child, he buys a special feat:

Empathic Bond (*Name the Person*):

at -2 levels, Sense the emotions of one's beloved from anywhere on Haven.

Life Cycle

Mating, pregnancy, and birth for the Korobokuru are similar to that of humans, except that mated pairs form deep empathic bonds, Koro pregnancies last a full year, and mothers are constantly aware of the emotional states of their unborn children after they develop consciousness. Korobokuru children mature at about the same rate as human children, but Koro life-spans are about double that of Humans. When a Korobokuru dies and exits the story, her body undergoes a process of rapid petrification, turning into a pillar of stone.

Language

It is within the ability of most educated people on Haven to learn the structure of Koro-go, the Korobokuru language, but about half their vocabulary is incomprehensible to non-Koro. Koro-go has words for colors beyond red, for combinations of magnetic field characteristics beyond just polarity and strength, and for complex emotional interactions. Conversely, the language has few ways to describe deliberate deception, such as lying, because it's very difficult to do in Koro society.

Habitat & Range

Koro live at high altitude, on mountain tops, in complexes that are often built into or inside the mountains themselves. A typical Korobokuru settlement might only appear to consist of a high mountain valley terraced into paddies and fields, with a cluster of stone service buildings forming an outdoor market space at the valley's entrance. That, and perhaps some elaborate carvings on the walls at the opposite end of the valley, is about all an outsider might see. But such carvings are only the signs of the gateway to a greater dwelling within the mountain. More than one raiding party in the distant past learned the hard way that less than 10% of a typical Koro settlement and its population are visible to the open sky.

Diet

While Korobokuru have access to many of the same foods and medicines as other peoples of Haven, they've also bred subterranean plants and animals for centuries. Some settlements eat domesticated bats, blind cave catfish, or albino crustaceans, while others harvest giant fungi. At least one settlement is famous for their extensive pharmacopoeia based on exotic mushrooms.


 The image shows a stylized Koro character for "Female". It consists of a vertical line on the left, a horizontal line across the middle, and a curved line on the right that loops back to the middle horizontal line.

"Female"


 The image shows a stylized Koro character for "Male". It consists of a square frame with a horizontal line across the top and a vertical line down the right side, with a crossbar connecting them. Below the square is a horizontal line that curves upwards at the right end.

"Male"

Arts & Sciences

By and large, the Koro are a non-iconic culture. Their decorative arts tend to explore abstract geometric patterns and complex calligraphy instead of representations of actual people, animals, and objects. They never make statues of people, possibly because that comes too close to imitating their own corpses. Their one exception is the *senzo kao* ("ancestor face"), a warmask incorporated into heavy Koro armor. The *senzo kao* is carved as an abstraction of a face, but with enough Korobokuru graphic symbolism to identify a specific ancestor. When a Koro warrior dons such a face-plate, everyone knows who he is—it isn't meant as a disguise—but everyone calls him by the name of the ancestor he is trying to channel through the mask. The *senzo kao* is believed to be a tool of transformation.

Culture & Customs

Gender Roles

Korobokuru culture is matrilineal, and some say, matriarchal, but this is an over-simplification. For thousands of years, the Koro have treated everything from inanimate objects to abstract concepts as having a gender. A piece of equipment has a gender, an occupation has a gender, even wealth has a gender—and wealth's gender is female.

A family's property is owned and controlled by its women. Accounting, finance, banking, business administration, and property management are all as feminine a set of occupations to the Korobokuru as midwifery and wet-nursing are to humans. It is unmanly for a Koro male to concern himself with more property than the clothes on his back, the tools of his trade, his weapons, armor, and the contents of one knapsack. On the other hand, it is unladylike for a mature Koro woman to stray too far from the property she governs, sending instead her daughters or nieces to handle her affairs on other mountains.

In the last five-hundred years or so, Koro culture found ways to live with women that are terrible at numbers but great with a battle axe, and men that are just too good with money to keep out of the family business. Such individuals often incorporate symbolic elements of the other gender's clothes into their own work clothes, and are treated as the opposite gender during that time. Sometimes, just writing the Koro sign for "male" or "female" on one's forehead will do in a pinch. A man who manages his grandmother's accounting books might trade in his traditional male work-vest for an open "vest" that trails down to his calves during the day, and be called "ma'am" while working. A woman guarding a market might modify her female traveling veil into her armor's beard-guard, and be addressed as "sir". A settlement's only healer, while cleansing and purifying himself between patients, will take the time to put on a fresh apron, gloves, and veil/beard-guard, plus a headband marked with the appropriate gender sign for his upcoming procedure.

Clans, Mountains, and Guilds

Korobokuru society is arranged into three overlapping structures: The ruling *kaigi oba-sani* (council of grandmothers) for an entire mountain, the individual matrilineal clans that can span multiple mountains, and the various craft guilds that represent every type of work performed on a mountain. An individual's competing obligations to each of these three structures form the basis of many Koro dramas and operas. While a Korobokuru is born into a clan and always has a home mountain through her mother, she can apply to any guild if she shows the potential to excel at their craft. In a carry-over from the bad old days, an applicant of the "wrong" gender for her craft must demonstrate exceptional talent to be even considered for guild membership.

Final Service & Clan Survival

In times of great danger to a clan, elder Korobokuru males may insist on preforming a "final service" for their family. This practice was first seen during the desperate days of the Second War of the Falling Stars, when Devourers broke into the more shallow Koro settlements. Dozens of old men threw themselves into un-winnable fights with those monsters in order to buy time for evacuees.

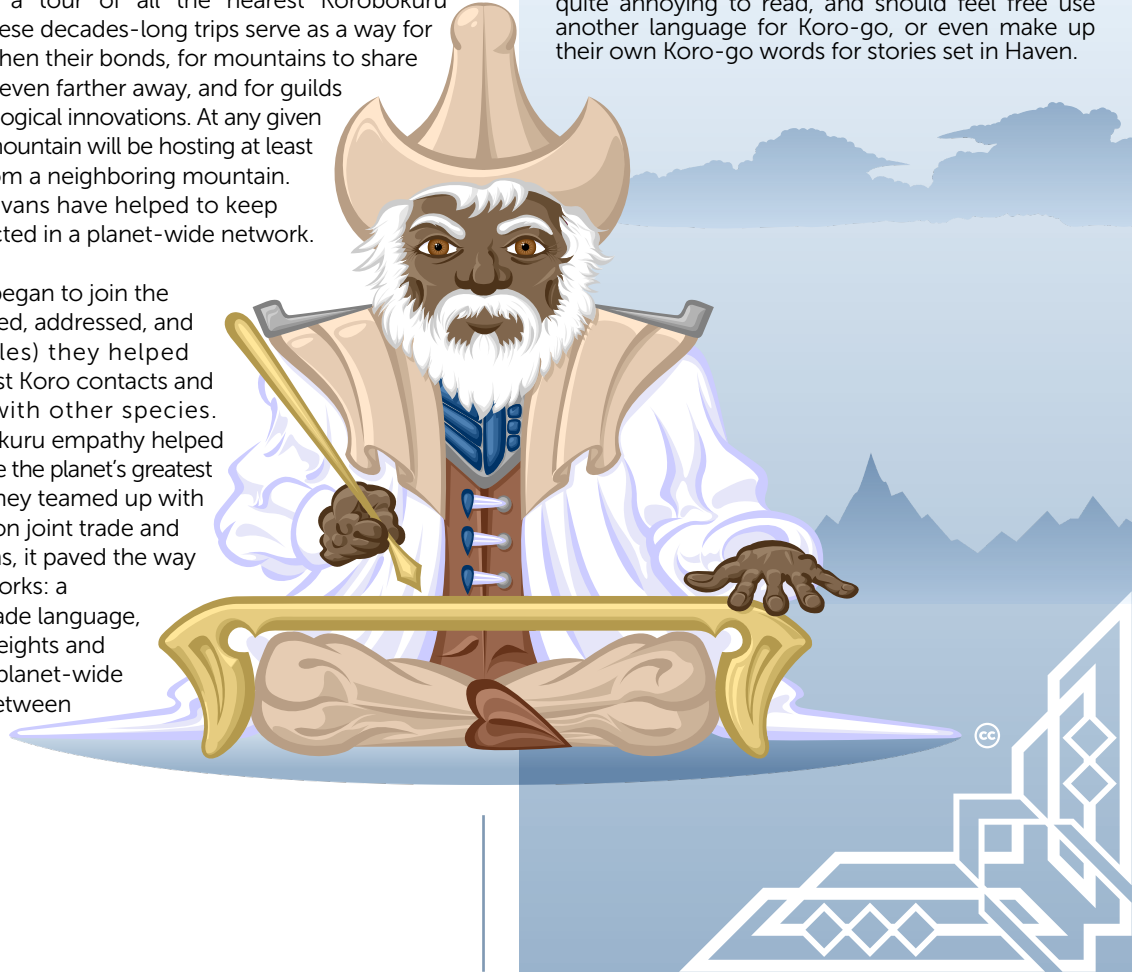
This idea, of making the ultimate sacrifice for the clan, has worked its way into all levels of society, and manifests in different ways: a Korobokuru grandmother loves all her offspring, but is still capable of making a grim calculation as to which of them she's willing to put in danger in order to save all the rest.



The Great Caravans & The Great Works

For nearly seven-hundred years, the Great Caravans have been an important part of Koro culture. Once in every generation, a mountain's *kaigi oba-sani* will send out representatives of their best and brightest of the new generation on a tour of all the nearest Korobokuru settlements. These decades-long trips serve as a way for clans to strengthen their bonds, for mountains to share news of places even farther away, and for guilds to trade technological innovations. At any given time, a typical mountain will be hosting at least one caravan from a neighboring mountain. The Great Caravans have helped to keep all Koro connected in a planet-wide network.

Once women began to join the caravans (dressed, addressed, and treated as males) they helped establish the first Koro contacts and trade routes with other species. Natural Korobokuru empathy helped them to become the planet's greatest traders. Once they teamed up with the Wakyambi on joint trade and cultural missions, it paved the way for the Great Works: a standardized trade language, standardized weights and measures, and planet-wide compatibility between currencies.



Bluffing Your Way Through Koro-go

The Koro-go language of Haven is simulated by stringing together the Latin spellings of real Japanese words, and making occasional twists. Players who speak Japanese will probably find this quite annoying to read, and should feel free use another language for Koro-go, or even make up their own Koro-go words for stories set in Haven.



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This should go without saying, but this work is a supplement to a *game*, **Ten Thousand Worlds**, and is meant to make a rainy afternoon more enjoyable for you and a few friends. This game requires you to use your imagination. If you have trouble telling the difference between fantasy and reality, then this game is probably not for you.