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Build Your Fantasy World in

Small Bites



The Centaur Warlord of Lockney and Other Tales of the Beast Men

aka All About Centaurs



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our latest edition of our **Small Bites**. This month our theme is centaurs and the other beast men. These folks seem to be “people” but not entirely, so how do you treat them? Are they monsters? Are they just like us?

Casser Phantillo is the centaur Warlord of Lockney we mentioned in the title, but it’s not all about him. He is however a great example of what a centaur can be, as a character that doesn’t fit the established tropes of centaurs. His nickname is “The Mule”, mainly because of his tough (stubborn) personality.

So if it’s not all about Caser, what is it all about? Well, the beast men: centaurs, minotaurs, satyrs, and many of the others. Once again, we’re working to target stuff you know about, but focus in on them in a way that you may not have done in the past. These are fascinating people! Let’s not just make them humans that take up more space!

So let’s jump in!

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FLETNERN WIKI

All of these posts are already out on the wiki where you can refer to them. We have gathered them here, because we think they are valuable in a group, and they all pertain to our theme for the month. All of them are also tagged as being in the category of “Beast Men” and in case you are more comfortable using the wiki instead of this edition.

Avarick Roanheart

Individual

Avarick Roanheart was a centaur warlord and the last leader to attack the Council of Baronies. Avarick had assembled several groups of centaur bandits into a united army. Rather than simply raid and retreat, Avarick had such an easy time taking villages in the barony of Ikkibble that he decided to try and stay. That decision drove the entire Council to mobilize their troops.

The physically superior centaurs were very difficult for the Council troops to handle. Fortunately, the Council had several accomplished tactical marshals who were able to outmaneuver the undisciplined bandit troops. Because of this campaign, most of the current barons have some military experience.

Avarick came to prominence in the early 630s as a ruthless bandit. He rose amongst the bandits until his band was the most feared raiders in the Eastern Plains. It was his reputation that banded several other bandit groups together, not his tactics or leadership. In the end, Roanheart stood and fought to the death, rather than surrender and be tried and executed.

Carvington

City

Carvington is a small village on the east coast of Drentae. Surrounded by centaur warlords, one would have thought that this small human village would have died off long ago. A four-foot tall wall protects Carvington. This minimal defense is important when one is aware that Carvington is the home of the Jambeski Crossbow Works. For six generations, the Jambeski family has built fine crossbows, ballistae and other mechanical weapons.

The people of Carvington have a reliable truce with Steelshod Stiletto, even though they limit the number of weapons he is allowed to purchase. Carvington survives through fishing and weapon sales. There is some farming, but the people do not feel safe outside the town’s walls. Everyone who lives in the town is trained in the use of crossbows. Between the town militia and the artillery weapons stored around the town, storming Carvington is far more difficult than it is worth.

Centaur

There are several centaur cultures spread across Drentae and some nomadic tribes on Koaluckssie. On the east coast of Drentae are several centaur communities, but these are overshadowed by the centaur warlords who operate out of these same areas. The warlords raid into the human and halfling communities west of them and have caused a great deal of havoc. The producing communities act like their neighbors: farming, raising livestock, and providing for their families.

Centaur of Villai live as other Velesans do, with nearly the same culture. Villai is a far more accepting community than many of the others around, and centaurs in Villai are not assumed to be bandits as they are elsewhere in the Central Plains. Current estimates have Villai at 7,000 halflings, 6,000 centaurs and 4,000 others (mostly Velesan humans) with many of the former residents having fled to the rural areas.

In the Southern Plains, there are two rival groups of centaurs, the Pinnoc and the Haesault. The Pinnoc worship the spirits of the animals, and their shamans are typically beast masters. The Haesault worship natural phenomenon, and their shamans are typically elementalists. Individual tribes typically follow either fire or air, but when they gather in permanent sites elemental masters become more common.

Detheb Slaves

On Marina 16, 653, a major earthquake hit the city of Lympeid. Thousands were killed that day and many thousands more were destined to die due to the number of deep wells that collapsed during the quake. Those with the means escaped the city as quickly as they could. Some of these managed to make it to Chuhlme before the borders were closed, but most were stopped by the Glodon military forces. Concerned about overwhelming their own resources, the Glodons were unwilling to grant aid to their longtime rivals.

Desperation sinking in, the Dethebs in the makeshift refugee camps on the borders were willing to accept any offer of help. When the centaur sailors arrived promising to smuggle refugees into Drentae, many jumped at the chance for escape, especially as they heard the stories about how Drentae was a land of countless streams and lakes. Some of the centaur captains were true to their word. If paid a proper ransom, they dropped the refugees off on Drentae to find their own way. But few of them could be trusted. Most took everything they could from the refugees and then sold them into slavery. The influx of Detheb slaves flooded the markets of Drentae, devaluing slaves across the continent.

Races

But there is a problem with Detheb slaves. The majority of them were dirt poor farmers trying to eke out a life amongst the desert conditions near Lympeid. This “training” made them useful as farm slaves, but just barely. But farm slaves are the least valuable slaves. Most of the Dethebs had no experience with animals of any kind, meaning they are worthless as shepherds or on a dairy farm. Further, their moral codes make them poor strippers or prostitutes as they show far too much shame, making the paying customers that much less fulfilled.

So the market has been flooded with the cheapest and least useful slaves. Despite their low quality, their huge supply has ruined the market and is risking the profits of all the slave merchants on the continent. There are always repercussions to economic disasters like this.

Game Designer’s Note - It may seem horrible to discuss the value of someone as a slave, but the slave trade is alive and well in the world of Fletnern. To ignore it is to throw away any hope at a realistic world that can actually function. Just because the practice of slavery is immoral does not mean it did not happen, nor that it is not happening today - both in our real world and in the fantasy world of Fletnern.

Eastern Plains

Continent: Drentae (East)

Terrain: Plains/Coastline

Major City: Villai

The Eastern Plains are a region of rolling hills, grasslands and plains. They are bordered by the Anglic Straits on the east and the Central Plains on the west.

There are no large governments in the region. Instead the area is a scattering of centaur warlords, small human kingdoms/baronies, and other odd countries. Villai is the largest city in the region and represents the strongest races: centaurs, humans and halflings.

This is a major agricultural area with some wool bearing animals as well. In many ways it is simply a continuation of its neighbors. Its agricultural industry is generally a continuation of its neighbor to the south the Green Lands. Its culture is a continuation of the Velesan culture that dominates its western neighbor the Central Plains.

Koaluckssie

Koaluckssie is the so-called “Monster Continent”. Located west of Drentae and east of the Great Archipelago, Koaluckssie is the most difficult continent to inhabit. It is a complex collection of mountain ranges separating deserts and broken lands. In the case of the Yullipi Mountains, a desert lies on one side of the range while a dense jungle lies on the other. While life does exist, survival is so difficult that culture and civilization are simply not possible.

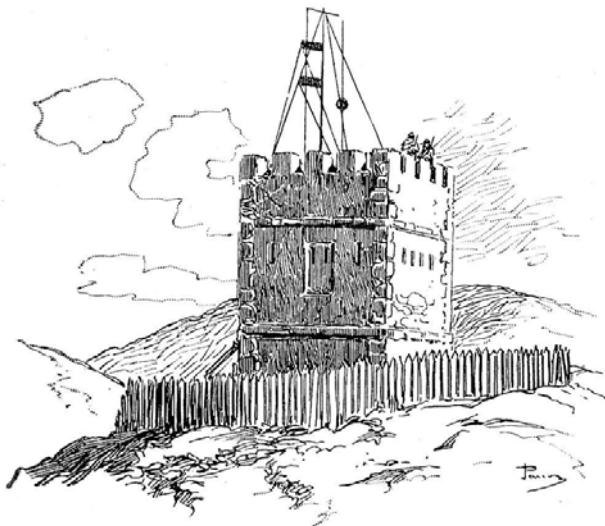
Regions

Continent

The landscape is dominated by the mountain ranges, including two running relatively parallel north and south and two more running generally parallel running west to east. This forms a central “square” as well as isolating the coastal regions from the center and each other.

There are many theories on the diverse creatures inhabiting Koaluckssie, many of them revolve around the legendary Tower of Soot. While the legends say the dragons moved the chaos causing Tower of Soot to Koaluckssie, even the legends admit that the various beast-man races (centaurs, satyrs, minotaurs, etc.) were there before the Tower of Soot. While the Tower may have had some impact on the fauna and peoples, it cannot be the entire cause of the varied creatures found there.

If any race had an accurate map of Koaluckssie it would be the Sulnuun (black) dragons. Assuming they had such a thing, it would be taboo to them. The black dragons have outlawed sea travel. This makes any maps seemingly impossible to obtain.



Locktown

City

Locktown is the village that developed around the fortress of Lockney. It has grown to about 2,200 people, mostly centaurs with some humans and halflings. Under the thumb of the previous bandit gangs, farming or ranching in this region was simply too dangerous, but with Casser proving a small sense of peace, farms have been returning to life. Reestablishing these farms has also called for forested areas to be cleared. While a small amount of this timber is being turned into lumber, most of it is being burned for charcoal or for potash. Ranching and shepherding are still considered too risky due to the amount of land they require, but poultry and hogs are being raised, as are a small number of dairy goats.

Locktown is also a port, but not a very good one. Sea crossing vessels are not able to dock here, but there is a small fleet of fishing vessels and small cargo haulers that stay in the coastal waters. Still, it is a center of trade for the region.

Order of Ballantane

Group

Created in 655 in Forsbury, the Order of Ballantane was established to honor those soldiers from Forsbury who fought at the Battle of Ballantane (Laenta 19, 642P). The Battle of Ballantane was named for the town in eastern Ikkibble where one of the fiercest battles of the war against Avarick Roanheart was fought.

During the battle, Martin Highell of Triess famously killed one of the centaur champions, making a real name for himself as a warrior. This was also the battle where Edward Highell of Forsbury and his squad were pinned down by centaur archers. As they were returning fire, they were surprised by infantry. Because of their preparation (of having loaded crossbows at the ready), they managed to shoot their way out their predicament.

Upon being inducted into the Order of Ballantane, each member is given a stainless silver medal hung on navy and crimson ribbon. The medal is of a shield with a crossbow bolt in front of it pointed upwards. Each member is invited to an annual feast to commemorate the battle and its veterans. Each also receives a 200sc stipend every Polish Day so that they may be able to maintain “suitable dress military attire” for the annual feast.

Southern Plains

Region

Continent: Drentae (South)

Terrain: Plains

Major City: N/A

The Southern Plains are a region of plains and savannahs, most of which are kept alive by the River Fhearree and its tributaries. The climate is tropical and frosts are extremely rare. In summer, there can be no relief from temperatures over 100°F because there are very few trees.

The Southern Plains are home to many races including centaurs, humans, orcs, trolls and many more. While there are some larger human settlements and even a few large centaur villages, there are no major cities in this region.

The region is considered to stretch from Dismal Swamp in the west to the Fhearree Delta in the east and from the foothills of the Gold Mountains in the north to the foothills of the Broiling Mountains in the south. Most of the area is lawless and untamed. Many places are still controlled by wild animals.

THE SOUNDING BOARD

When Slavery Works

With the full expectation of pissing off just about everyone - Let's talk about slavery. Worse yet, let's talk about the morality of slavery.

Forget what you might think about the trans-Atlantic slave trade of the Age of Discovery. You have to think farther back, because slavery is not as easy as a racial issue in most fantasy worlds. Anyone can become a slave regardless of race or ethnicity.

In Fletnern, slaves typically come from war. But they can also come from other origins. The most obvious right now is the earthquakes on Hughijen. Massive earthquakes in the desert region near Lympeid have been causing the wells in the villages to collapse. This in turn forced refugees to go to other places where the resources were already spread too thin. Those with the money to escape chose to escape. The problem is that they chose the wrong folks to help them escape.

Centaurians sail the open seas in huge ships, trading whatever they can or even venturing into piracy. They were some of the first on the scene in Lympeid, and they made all sorts of offers to the refugees. New homes, new careers, in a safe and water lush new homeland. But they didn't mention the chains that went along with all of that. The centaur warlords were in need of workers for their sweat shops, and they were happy to use the Dethebs.

Now one of the accepted principles of sea travel through the Anglic Straits (where the centaurians had to sail) is that if you are transporting slaves, the Myork Navy will sail up and sink you. They might be able to save the slaves (or not), but they are not going to let the slavers through. So why did the Navy let all those centaur ships through when they knew they were hauling Detheb slaves?



Now we're into the morality of it all. The current powers in Myork had a decision to make. What to do about all the Detheb refugees? If they brought that many Dethebs into their lands, there would be major cultural issues. While they could absorb the refugees and even produce enough food to feed them, they couldn't do it without giving up some of who they are. The resulting culture would be an amalgamation of the two. They were not willing to do that.

The other option was to sink the centaur ships and stop people from carrying Detheb slaves. But that would doom the Dethebs to death, and in fact doom more than the number of slaves. It had all happened before. Problems in the desert lead to people overwhelming the resources and all the people die, not just the refugees. So if it's a numbers game, then Detheb slaves survive, the people of Lympeid survive, that's a win-win, right?

That's where the morality of slavery often comes to: death or slavery, which is worse. If the centaurians did not move large populations of people to where the resources could handle them, then a larger number of people would die. What happens to the slaves, even if they all died, would be a greater "good" than an even larger number of people dying. Granted this messed up "logic" also justifies slaughtering people during a famine, but we're really not going there right now.

Let us please be clear: Slavery is never morally right. We are not arguing that slavery would be morally right, ever! But in the minds of people pushed into really bad places, it might seem better than the alternative, especially if you expect the alternative to be death.

Let's switch examples: The elves of the Slyvanian Forest believe that death is better than slavery. They are one of the few legal systems in Fletnern that allow for abortion. The nearby Rhorics are absolutely against abortion. They are so against it that if a poor couple winds up pregnant, they will often sell the baby to the plantation slavers. Their morality tells them that selling (and really, it's far more like giving) their child to the slavers means the child will have a chance to grow up on a large farm doing hard work, but living. They see that as the far better outcome. They couldn't feed their baby, but the planation will.

Let's go back to the Dethebs escaping Lympeid. While the greater good could be served by the Anglics of Myork allowing the refugees into their lands to work as low paid agricultural workers who could earn their keep, they are not willing to do that. Their sense of patriotism (that is how they see it) tells them that doing so would weaken who they are as a people and this would endanger the world. It doesn't help that the Dethebs are stereo-typed as being lazy and willing to cheat anyone in order to make their lives easier - and there is a nugget of truth in that broad cultural stereo-type.

It would also be the greater good if the centaurians would pay the Dethebs a living wage and allow them to

leave if they so choose. But then why would they be willing to ship them across the sea? Where's the profit in that? Without question, the centaurs who are running Detheb slaves are not moral people. They are immoral people, and they like profiting by the easiest means. So they know they are the bad guys, but they are OK with it.

So let's sum up: The Dethebs want to live. Many of them, given the choice of slavery or death would choose slavery. There should be other choices open to them, but right now there are not. The Angles have chosen to allow the Dethebs to be sold into slavery in order to avoid a massive death toll in Lympeid. There are other options open to them, but they believe those options to be more dangerous. The centaurs are the bad guys, and they don't care that slavery is immoral.

But what about the rest of the world? Let's just focus on the governments of Drentae for a minute. While they don't think about it, they have been relying on cheap fabrics made in the centaur sweat shops for a generation now. Publicly they are against slavery, but they aren't willing to do anything about it. Trying to "rescue" the new slaves would put a strain on their resources and dramatically increase the cost of certain fabrics. Just to leave you with one point here - If you think these other governments are evil for allowing slavery and in a way profiting from it by getting cheaper goods, you might want to think about what's happening in the world today. There is a direct parallel!



What's a Beast-Man?

Sometimes splitting hairs on definitions is actually a little bit important. Sometimes, a rose by any other name would be a completely different thing. Sorry Willie.

So what's a "beast man" and what's a chimera? And how do you pronounce chimera? We'll leave that one to a later time. But most of all, why does it matter?

Here's how we see it, and we absolutely admit, there is some room for argument! A beast man is part

animal and part "man". A chimera is more than one animal joined together in some way. So a centaur and a minotaur are both beast-men. Part horse, part man, or part bull, part man. But a griffin is a chimera - part lion, part eagle. I wanted to use a pegasus as an example, but I'm still debating what that other part is - goose? swan? eagle? does it matter?

Let's go with that question: Does it matter? It does! Beast men are men, people. Chimeras are monsters. They may not be evil. They might even be herbivores, but they are monsters and they are not people. That matters because just as you wouldn't see a dog or a tiger as an NPC, you wouldn't see a hippogriff as a playable race. But could you play a centaur? Seemingly of course! After all, he has a fully formed human head, capable of speech and likely the casting of magic.

So that's the underlying difference - monster or man, but is that enough of an explanation? Let's focus on "man" for a moment. I was really tempted to make the centaurs of Fletnern half horse, half elf. Why? because the elves and the centaurs come from the same place. It seemed like it worked. But I went back in the world's history and the answer came to me pretty easily.

The question of human or elf came down to how were they created? Are they natural? Well, yes, they are natural, in that they, like nearly every other animal, monster or race, were created by the gods. When the gods of horses created centaurs, they were competing with the gods of men (probably titans, but at least one of the races of men). So they would have crafted their centaurs to be men instead of elves.

But what about the chimeras? Are they natural? Yes, for the same reason, at least most of them. Very few chimeras were actually created by people; most were created by the gods. Therefore, they are as natural as you can get in a fantasy game.

If this all seems unimportant then I'm not yet explaining my main point: There is a major difference between a centaur and a pegasus. Both are half horse and half something else, but one is a sentient being and the other is an animal. Beast-men can think, form civilizations, be player characters. Chimeras are very interesting and very "fantasy/myth" monsters, but as clever as they might be, they are not people. They will not form civilizations, and they do not make for very good PCs. Both groups work great as enemies for the PCs to come up against, but they are fundamentally different styles of creatures.

That means it matters when your party encounters minotaurs or one of the other seemingly "monster" beast-men. Minotaurs can think. They can use weapons. They can lay traps. Griffons don't do those things. They use what the gods gave them and that's about it.

Now, don't ask us about sphinxes, because that's one where we're still on the fence. I really think they're

chimeras, but they have human-esque faces. So I guess they're beast-men? What do you think?

Superstition vs. Religion

There are numerous religions in the world that seem to believe things that most of the rest of us don't. The one that I'm thinking about right now is that there are certain religions that feel that talking animals are a depiction of magic, and all magic is the work of the devil, and thus evil. I'm not here to disrespect the moral beliefs of anyone, but instead to consider how these things would be seen in a fantasy world.

Let's think about this for a bit. Many modern film watchers see no problem watching Disney movies whether there are talking animals in them or not. But how would people in a fantasy world see it? Well, first off, they actually see magic. That makes things a bit more real. We really don't have to worry about a rabbit and a deer carrying on a conversation.

One thought that occurred to me is that these people have to legitimately worry about lycanthropes. The use of an anthropomorphic wolf in a play would likely be terrifying to these people who would be concerned that it was a werewolf. Completely unlike Aesop's Fables and Disney movies, these would not be cute and clever animals, but instead dangerous monsters. They can still be used as villains in plays and operas, but they would be seen as evil or even demonic.

But that is the other side of it - the concept of demons. In most fantasy games, the players fight demons, so demons are real. Many demons have animal or animalistic aspects, such as humanoid swine, etc. Sometimes they are more chimeric - having aspects of multiple animals jumbled together. We all know demons are evil, so are man-beasts also? While many urban folks would likely be somewhat comfortable with the idea of centaurs, are they just as comfortable with minotaurs? satyrs? tumataurs? (Tumataurs are like centaurs, but instead of man and horse, they are man and lion.) People, at least in mobs, are uncomfortable with things that are different. These different races with different cultures would have to be scary or at least off-putting to most folks.

So, what to do? On my world of Fletnern there are very few "cursed" items, so talking objects are not as spooky to the commoners as talking animals are. So instead of a wizard in a play having a talking owl to help guide him, the wizard character might have a talking book. Or the young knight would have a singing sword instead of a steed that carried on conversations. These are often easier to depict in plays, as the voice actor can hide in the wings, while an actual object can be dangled via thin strings.

But how does this play in actual games (and combat)? While it is not going to change the amount of damage done, I think it should impact the role-playing

aspects on adventures. If one of the characters (PC or NPC) is a minotaur, the other characters might automatically view him as evil and refuse to surrender to him. How far would it go? Some religions might see many "humanoids" as evil beasts. I'm thinking about **LEGEND QUEST'S** lurians - humans with swan wings. While we might think "angel", would some sects might see "man-beast = demon" and want to kill it in some horrific fashion in order to make sure it stayed dead. I love paladins, but we do have a tendency to think in extremes, even more so when people try to tell us we're wrong. I think in a true role-playing game, such things should have a real place!



World Building through Consequences

Little bio on me: Having been a pretty bright kid, playing chess from kindergarten on, and programing computers around the age of 11, I see the world as a chess game, as a massive series of if/then/next nested loops. In other words, I believe that everything that happens, happens as a result of something else.

That's why I like this approach to world building. I've brushed on it in other posts, but I believe this one might explain it best. Assuming I am right and nothing happens in a vacuum, every settlement, every town, every country; they are where they are due to something else happening. What do I mean? I will use Fletnern for my examples. Check out the wiki if you want to learn more.

There are a number of centaur settlements on the eastern coast of Drentae. The centaurs were brought to Drentae from Koaluckssie as slaves (by the elves, but that is a whole other story!). In their homeland, there had been a legend/myth that the centaur god instructed them to "follow the setting sun" (that's east in Fletnern) when threatened. So escaped slaves and later those released during the abolitionist movement fled to the

east, as their myths told them to do. When they smelled the sea air, something primal in them was triggered and they knew this is what their god wanted for them. So they settled down. Centaurs: origin = Koaluckssie, current home = Eastern Plains - explained.

The Southern Point Citadel was an attempt by well-meaning humans to stem the tide of orcish/goblin expansion north. The orcish expansion was simply the result of a fairly consistent peace within the Wembic Empire that allowed the tribes to grow and therefore need more land. The Citadel was in some respects a civil crusade and attracted many of the lesser sons of Velesan noble families (again, thriving and expanding due to a relative peace). When various disorganized raids did not stop the citadel from being built, the Wembic Empire took coordinated actions. They restocked the Fortress Vonastog, which had lain all but dormant for decades. With a base of operations, the orcs were able to field far more efficient raids against the Southern Point Citadel, including all but destroying the citadel twice. So why is there this “cold war” between the Velesans and the orcs, with this one isolated spot of open violence? Because both sides are able to shift their hot heads into open battle here without risking all out war. Both sides hope to eventually win, but for now, there is this one “hot zone” surrounded by relative peace. There’s also the whole orc part in the taking of Parnania a Velesan city that helped to fuel the furor of the humans, but that’s mostly propaganda at this point.

This is a no brainer, right? Why are these people here? Because there was too much peace and they thrived, or a natural disaster and they fled, or a war and they got pushed out. The history of Europe is filled with these population movements (especially during the Roman vs. barbarian eras). You can easily justify why people are where they are because of their history. If you don’t do this, you get a world that feels hodge-podge. Sometimes it is better to know what really happened and then make up lies that the people think. No one wants to think that they live in a beautiful valley because they use to live on a beautiful shore, but someone beat them in a war and they were forced to move. They want to pretend that it was all their idea in the first place. Hey, some of those centaurs I mentioned earlier believe that they just followed the instructions of their god. They forget the whole - fleeing slavery thing, and the elves don’t want to remind anyone that their cities were built by slave labor, so they help the lie along.

So what do you do? Start developing your world and world history from the dawn of civilization? You don’t have to. There’s nothing wrong with looking at your world as it is and starting to ask some questions: Why are the centaurs there? Why is there a human fortress there? Why are those guys living on the edge of a swamp? Depending on how developed your world is, you may see obvious answers, or you may start creating

some really cool retcon. In either case, the farther you go the more things will just snap into place. I love it when a plan comes together!

The Lifestyle of a Minotaur

As world builders and even as game masters, we have to control and role-play some pretty kooky monsters. OK, so you are not likely to “role-play” some sentient ooze, but you might have to. When world building something that feels like it might be like us but really isn’t this can get very hard. Take for example - minotaurs.

Minotaurs are people, right? So they’re just like us, right? Yeah, probably not. Admittedly, I don’t know any minotaurs. My best friend is not a minotaur, but there are some things we should be able to figure out.

Minotaurs are big and strong. Probably not too nimble, but not klutzy either. They may not be as smart as humans are, but they aren’t complete morons either. OK, so how do they live?

Normally we wait until the end to tell you why this matters, but we’re going to stuff it in here. Why do you care how a minotaur lives? Because if minotaurs are only creatures that appear in the middle of mazes or lost in dungeons somewhere, it doesn’t matter to you. But if you are trying to build a fantasy world, then the minotaurs have to come from somewhere. Will your player characters ever encounter a minotaur village? If not, why not? Do minotaurs breed? I assume it’s possible that every minotaur is actually an alchemical creation, but that’s not how most worlds see them.

So assuming they come from somewhere, there will always be a chance that the party will go to that somewhere. And if they do, what’s it like? If it absolutely sucks, then you know why minotaurs are more likely to be wandering the world all alone and are easily hired or captured by bad guys. If it is a lush, wonderful place, then why do they always seem so mean? Is it because they want to get back there? Is there a distant island so getting back is really tough? If your evil priest enemy guy has hired a minotaur as a bodyguard, how easily can the party bribe the minotaur to go away? Knowing this other stuff helps you figure that out.

I know a few things about the minotaurs on Flettern: They originally came from Koaluckssie, a distant continent. They were captured, enslaved and brought to Drentae, but eventually they were (as a people) freed. So now what?

One of the big questions, is How cow-like are they? Are they herbivores? I can’t stomach that. (sorry) Are they carnivores? That seems close, but ... I’ve made them omnivores, BUT! They prize physical strength, that seems right, so they pursue physical strength, and that takes a lot of proteins. So while they are omnivorous, they focus on proteins.

Back to how cow-like are they? Do they feel an affinity for cows? Most humans see eating apes as creepy and disgusting. We don't really see ourselves as apes (most of us don't) but that feels way to close to cannibalism. Is it the same for minotaurs? Yes and no. Minotaurs do feel a little creepy about eating cattle, but they justify it by saying that they respect steers and horses for their strength and feel animals that are eaten should not be as noble as the steers and equines. So culturally, no cattle ranches for the minotaurs, but they will still enjoy pork, poultry and fish.

Where most of the minotaurs live in Fletnern now is a coastal region hemmed in by forests. Minotaurs don't strike me as the hunters of the woods (especially when the satyrs are right there too). But, put those massive muscles to work on a fishing net, and the minotaurs could be hauling in an ample supply of fish from the sea, small lakes and some rivers. They are bigger than humans, so they must eat more than humans, and if they are not farming, then they need to provide food somehow. This seems to work.

Alter that question a bit and How smart are they? While there must be some manner of priests or shaman or something, they aren't highly magical. Again, they respect physical strength, so smarts aren't as important. But they aren't dumb goons either, at least not in their homeland. So while I'm not putting in any universities (magical or otherwise), they do need to have some industry. Industries that rely on physical labor are things like mining. But now we have a real issue that I believe will separate the game worlds: Are minotaurs lovers of nature or just folks willing to exploit their environment?

In Fletnern, they are not nature lovers. This matters a lot, because minotaur miners seem more like the strip mining types; they just wouldn't easily fit into underground mines. But strip mining, logging, similar labor professions don't normally go hand in hand with



the nature lovers. So at least in Fletnern, they're happy to rip some minerals out of the ground.

OK, so they eat a lot, mostly fish, but also other proteins like nuts, pork and some other meats. Those not providing food can be miners, stone workers, lumberjacks, lots of stuff that could give them exports to trade for some things they don't produce. But what about them, their families, their homes?

Well, if they are logging and cutting stone, then they should be living in some solidly built homes; homes as tough as they are. No tepees or thatched huts here. Admittedly, not all of this has been figured out for Fletnern, so I'm just going to leave you with some questions you can determine for your own minotaurs: Are they monogamous or do they live in harems? This could be why many male minotaurs go off to other cultures, but not so many of the females. Do the fathers stay with their baby-mamas or do they leave the women folk to raise the kids on their own? This again goes towards how cow-like are they.

Do they wear clothing? If so what? I mean, trying to put a shirt on a minotaur would be expensive, because that's a lot of real-estate. We've seen a lot of movie minotaurs that decorate themselves. Do minotaurs go in for tattoos? ritual brandings? scrimshawing their horns while they are still attached? Are there certain things they won't do because they resemble cattle? Like would they refuse to pull a plow or a wagon? Do they grow beards? Can they or do they shave? I mean goats grow beards, but cattle don't (said by a kid who grew up in Chicago and has no idea how to raise an animal!).

Summing up again: This stuff does matter. If minotaur culture is such that the mother raises the kids alone, that changes who the minotaurs met in the outside world are going to be like and may justify certain personalities. Assuming there are no minotaur military academies, then again, we've justified why they are axe users and not more disciplined soldiers.

If someone (good guy or bad guy) goes to a minotaur village looking to recruit some mercenaries, we now know that there are going to be sturdy stone and wood homes. The females will probably be acting as most females (in a fantasy era) do: raising children, tending to the home, preparing meals, etc. (That is NOT sexism, it is a historic fact used to justify a fantasy world.) There are fewer young men around because the older adult men have chased off some of the younger guys to avoid having to compete for their harems.

You could just as easily have had your minotaurs living on the plains in tepees where their main resource is the buffalo they hunt. There's nothing wrong with that, but clearly knowing whether the minotaurs live in stone houses or in tepees is going to matter if you plan to have the party attack them in your campaign. This is why, even when your game is focused on combat, you still need to do some world building.

LIFESTYLES OF THE MAGICAL AND MUNDANE

This is the spot where we normally put a deep narrative about the life and times of a character archetype. But this edition is about centaurs. And there isn't just one centaur culture; in fact, there's at least five. Because of that, and that we want to tell you about all of them, we've decided to do more of a summary of the various centaur cultures instead of the deep dive. Variety is the spice of life, even in Small Bites.

Game Designer's Note

In this edition we will refer to the elves having originated on Koaluckssie. The elves dispute this claim. They have written histories showing their origins in the Slyvanian Forest. Where they originated may not be as important as the elves do admit they took beast men as slaves from Koaluckssie and brought them to Drentae. We'll tackle the origin issue later on.

All centaurs originated on Koaluckssie, "The Monster Continent". Many tribes of centaurs still live there. But there are many centaurs living on Drentae. Many are the stories of how the centaurs came to get across the ocean, but the generally accepted fact is that they were transported by the elves. Most people believe that the beast men were brought over as slaves, but again, there are historical arguments here. No centaur cultures seem to exist on Hughijen, though there are individual centaurs who live there, especially in the welcoming culture of the Tands. This is despite the fact that all of the equine animals seem to have originated on Hughijen.

The Drentae centaurs are split into two main groups. The first and better known (due to local population densities) are the "Northern Centaurs" of the Eastern Plains. The other groups live far to the south in the perhaps aptly named Southern Plains. Here several different centaur cultures exist across the savannahs, often working with each other, but sometimes in conflict with each other.

The Wild Centaurs of Koaluckssie

Though the centaurs began on Koaluckssie, they are by no means a dominant force there. They remain hunters and gatherers and have not formed what would be recognized as a civilization. They live a nomadic life, moving from place to place hoping to avoid serious

predators. They fight mainly with their hooves, and all members of the herd/tribe are expected to be able to fight and to run.

The Koaluckssie centaurs may seem ignorant, but they are quite advanced when compared to the others of their region. Some bands use spears and clubs and have been known to trap both predators and prey. They have mastered the braiding of cordage and have been known to use nets. Some tribes have mastered herbalism to the point of knowing how to craft poisons for their weapons or even support medicine men (and women) capable of healing the wounded quickly enough for them to remain with the herd. They are a dangerous people, and no attempts at educating them by outsiders, including other centaurs, have been successful.

Rare tribes have found natural fortifications, often either a valley or a mesa, and started the first glimpses of settling down, but with the amount of food they need to survive, they cannot afford to stay in one place for any length of time. Even if they were to develop herding (and none seem to have progressed to this point) they would need to lead their domesticated animals around in order to feed them, opening themselves up to attacks and other dangers.

An interesting point that has not completely been proven: Centaurs are omnivorous. While the centaurs on Drentae are "white skinned" (similar to Earth's Caucasians), the centaurs of Koaluckssie are "red-skinned" (similar to Earth's American Indians). It is believed that the fact that the Koaluckssie centaurs are primarily carnivorous is what leads to this reddish pigmentation in their skin. Should a Koaluckssie centaur start to eat plants his skin would eventually (over the course of several years) begin to become paler. The reverse is true and there seems to be some evidence in the centaur warlords' region that centaurs who feast primarily on meat begin to have their complexions turn ruddier (some might say "more bronze"). No Drentae centaur has ever achieved the true red tone of their cousins, but this might be due to issues of nourishment passed on by their mothers during pregnancy and later nursing.

The Northern Centaurs of the Eastern Plains

In an overly general explanation, the centaurs of the Eastern Plains are descended from the centaurs who were released when slavery was outlawed in the Slyvanian Forest. Wishing to stay as far from the elves as possible (in case they changed their minds about abolition), they moved eastward to the opposite coast. There they mixed in with the halflings and some of the human colonies, and in some cases built their own villages and towns.

The Agri Centaurs

Feeding a centaur family is no small feat. These folks eat large amounts of food, and the centaur villages around Villai supply this food through some of the more advanced farming techniques in use. Villai seems the center of this centaur culture, but while it is the main trading hub, few of these centaurs actually live within the confines of the city (probably less than 5,000 individuals).

Using their own strength, these so called “agri centaurs” plow their own fields and perhaps most importantly have built extensive irrigation systems. What would seem a daunting amount of work for people with human levels of strength, the centaurs have successfully maintained these irrigation channels for generations. Not only have they maintained them, but they have avoided all but the most minor disputes about water rights. Though they lack a true centralized government, they have managed “justice” through roaming arbiters of established water rights who have handed down common sense rulings throughout the region.

Though exact comparisons are typically difficult to calculate, it appears that these agri centaurs are able to produce about one and a half the crop yields reached by humans on comparable land. Their methods do not appear to be magical, though they certainly have a number of herbalists within their communities. The lands also do not appear to be materially better than others, in fact seeming to be less fertile than the Green Lands to the south. Apparently it is a combination of science and hard work that grants them the higher yields, though it should be stated that their choice of crops tends to lend some advantage with a high concentration on corn (maize) and high yield tubers.

The Eastern Plains Centaurs have formed a culture influenced to a small degree by the elves and to a larger degree by the halflings they encountered in the Eastern Plains. They are typically farmers and/or ranchers. They typically have villages or even towns. They organize themselves by these more “civilized” methods rather than refer to themselves as tribes or herds. With their physical prowess, both in speed and strength, they are not typically drawn to the mystic arts, they do engage in most other forms of learning and technology.

One distinction between the typical halflings and the centaurs is that the centaurs more commonly speak Velesan, while the halflings favor Rhoric. Many assume that this originated with the centaurs more commonly finding buyers for their wares among the Velesan humans, while the halflings were already established in supplying the more northern Rhorics. It is also related in some way to the centaurs seeing the city of Villai as a major centaur community, even if they are still not in the majority.

The Centaur Warlords

While the farming communities and Villai may stand as examples of what the majority of the centaurs will do, the Eastern Plains has another culture of centaurs, the centaur warlords. Formerly bandits, these men have established themselves in the towns and regions they once raided as the central authority, typically after killing the previous leaders. They rule their regions by force, though borders are almost impossible to draw. Raiding each other and the halfling and human settlements nearby, they struggle to survive without providing for themselves. Typically, they are left alone until they anger one of the major governments on their borders. The Triad, Parnania, and the Council of Baronies have all at one time or another gone to war with one or more of these warlords.

Again, generalities are common, and most humans and halflings who do not live near these raiders will assume they are all alike, but that simply isn't fair. Each warlord is as bad and as fair as he is, with no regard to what the neighboring warlord is capable of. Here are some examples of the more successful warlords currently in operation.

Currently there are two “main” centaur warlords. There are other centaurs who claim to be warlords, but these are no better than bandit leaders, and they do not actually rule a domain.

Casser “The Mule” Phantillo is the most powerful centaur warlord along the east coast. He controls a region of roughly 45 miles of coastline from a stronghold known as Lockney. Casser is an ambitious man who has been expanding his holdings since he became the leader of this band. His expansion has begun to infringe on the Triad's territory, which has brought him into conflict with a very powerful military foe.

Casser is a dangerous and intense man. He takes himself and his state extremely seriously. As Casser has ruled for over a dozen years, he is getting on in years and might soon be losing his edge in battle. He is a good, if somewhat fascist, administrator and is much better for the region than most of his predecessors have been. He conducts himself as a seasoned military man with the look and bearing of a soldier.

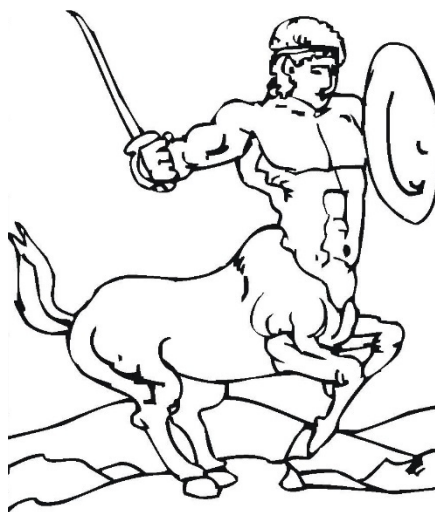
Locktown, the village around the fortress Lockney, has grown to about 2,200 people, mostly centaurs with some humans and halflings. The region is slowly developing, but the Warlord Casser Phantillo has been taxing the area extensively to support his military expansions. Most of his subjects fear him, but paying taxes has prevented them from being raided. Many feel that the taxes are easier to bear than having warriors charging through the villages burning buildings and stealing livestock. While loyalty would not be the appropriate description, these peasants do show some manner of fealty to Casser.

Steelshod Stiletto is the lesser of the two centaur warlords. He controls some of the southern territories. He inherited the territory from Digger Leatherback. Digger was a ruthless bandit, and Stiletto had been his war chief. Stiletto is an extremely dangerous warrior who rules through fear. Assassination attempts are common among the warlords. Stiletto has a knack for sniffing out attempts before they occurred, and killing the assassins in relatively fair fights.

Stiletto's territory is maintained by his core of henchmen traveling with him randomly throughout the area. No one is sure where they will show up, nor what they will expect when they arrive. It is dangerous to be a rebel when a deadly force could show up on your doorstep at any time. Since the territory is less than 30 miles by 30 miles, this cadre can easily cover the entire domain.

Stiletto himself carries himself as a laid back crime boss. He and his "gang" will settle into a tavern or inn and hold court from the beer hall. He is a carouser and a womanizer, but it seems to work in this region. He has ruled for a short time (less than five years), but he does not have any serious rivals at the moment. With Casser busy with the Triad, Stiletto should be able to rule for as long as he can avoid making mistakes.

Stiletto has been busy confiscating large weapons. One of the things he and his gang do whenever they come into a village is look around for anything they consider a battle weapon. This would include most swords, great bows, heavy crossbows, lances, etc. They do not consider the smaller bows and the smaller blades to be worth their efforts, so they will allow the people to retain them. This confiscation is done for two purposes. First, it arms Stiletto and his men. Second, it makes it more difficult for the peasantry to rise up against him. This policy has caused many of the locals to hide any weapon they fear might be taken, but they are not currently armed well enough to even consider a rebellion.



The Mule and Stiletto currently have a truce in place. They will not invade each other's turf. They have exchanged some female hostages (concubines). These hostages should now be considered traitors to their lords, and the lords would never have cared about their loss in any event, reducing their true value as hostages.

The Centaurs of the Southern Plains

Whereas the Northern Centaurs were released from slavery by the elves about 900-1,000 years ago, the Southern Centaurs are assumed to be descended from the centaurs that escaped from slavery prior to that. Several groups of centaurs made their way to the Southern Plains where they found plentiful game and relatively free access to the area. All they needed to do was clear out some of the predatory animals who were living there.

The Pinnoc

The Pinnoc people are most commonly known south of the Fhearree River. They are tribes of hunters who believe that as hunters, they have a spiritual relationship with their prey. Pinnoc hunters are easily identified because they will wear lion and jaguar pelts for clothing. They believe that by dressing as predators, eating predators and worshipping the gods of these predators, that they will gain further power over both the predators themselves and their prey animals.

Their shamans are beast masters who channel the powers of the various animals to make themselves or the tribe's hunters supernaturally powerful. Though the Pinnoc do eat predators, this occurs during ritual ceremonies that invoke the various animals' spirits and make offerings of the predators to those same spirits. To many other religions, the spirit of the lion would be unwilling to accept a sacrifice of his own creature, but somehow the Pinnoc have managed to forge these relationships.

The Pinnoc are expert hunters in numerous ways. They have the strength to use the most powerful bows, and they train with them relentlessly. They have a speed that can match many prey animals and will combine their speed and their bows. They are also trackers and skilled in the actual hunting of their prey, not just in the killing of it.

The Pinnoc provide for themselves through hunting, but they are also skilled foragers, gathering what they need that their prey animals do not. They have been known to trade, even going so far as to capture certain animals for sale. For themselves, they see no reason to keep animals around and even consider it to be disrespectful to imprison a predatory animal, even if that "prison" is domestication. While they keep all predatory furs for themselves, they are willing to sell most of their prey furs and hides.

The Pinnoc are nomadic, though they will establish camps for short periods of time, typically about a month.

They live in animal skin huts. While these might be seen as tepees, they are generally more in line with rectangular buildings instead of the traditional cone shaped tepee. This is simply because their shape and size are not conducive to cones.

Every Pinnoc is trained in survival, and they are among the best prepared and best trained wilderness survivalists anywhere. Whether it is gathering water or avoiding the ambushes of big predators, the Pinnoc have a connection with their environment and are ready for the dangers there.

The Haesault

The Haesault people are typically known to live north of the Fhearree River. Unlike their animal worshipping rivals, the Haesault worship natural phenomenon. Their shamans are typically elementalists. Individual tribes typically follow either fire or air, but when they gather in permanent sites elemental masters become more common.

The Haesault tribes practice a large number of disciplines including farming, ranching and hunting. This is the reason they more commonly settle a region, while the Pinnoc are far more nomadic. Still, other cultures might not see a Haesault community as a “permanent” settlement. Because of the lack of building materials and typically fine weather, they most commonly live in thatched huts or lean-tos.

The Haesault see the divine in seemingly natural occurrences, such as dust devils, rainbows, and storm clouds. This makes others believe that they are very superstitious. While the Haesault may be easily spooked by odd weather, they are reacting to the very real elementals and other divine creatures inhabiting the mortal world. They know to offer a prayer to the spirit of a newly found pond before drinking from it, to avoid having the nereid of the pond reach out and drag them under.

The Haesault actually worship a trio of gods/spirits, though typically fire and air get the majority of the attention. There is also a god of lightning who also covers rain and water in their pantheon.

Though the Haesault live north of the river and the Pinnoc live south of it, this is not a hard and fast rule. There are Haesault tribes south of the river, and Pinnoc hunting parties have no problem hunting the regions to the north. It is not uncommon for these two groups to battle each other if they run into each other. This open warfare comes from a difference in ideologies and a practical sense of eliminating the folks who might be taking their food. So it is more about eliminating the competition, rather than a true hatred, though the two tribes are so different from each other, they simply cannot stand to communicate with each other.

While these two tribes form the majority of the centaur bands in the Southern Plains, they are not the only ones. There are independent centaur bands, most often referred to as tribes even if they are only a smaller family group. It is best for these smaller groups to simply avoid the large tribes, and staying clear is often a safe enough way to survive.



The Samedoun

The Samedoun tribe of centaurs is much smaller than the Pinnoc or Haesault tribes. There are only five Samedoun “clusters” of about 30-50 individuals each. Samedoun clusters are nomadic gatherers and follow the ripening seasons of various wild crops they gather. Their shamans are herbalists, though they have also produced a few druids within their tribes. They worship Sweet Mother and can be quite philosophical. They are typically not violent and trade frequently with the Borten settlements along the river. Their martial skills will be only the bare minimum necessary to defend themselves against the wild animals of the region. They avoid the other centaur tribes, though since they are not at war, the other tribes typically leave them alone. Both the Pinnoc and the Haesault consider them to be pathetic and beneath notice or concern.

The Samedoun follow the same “tracks” that their bands have followed for generations. They move from place to place, but before moving on, they will have enhanced the spot for the next arrival. This typically means ridding the area of any weeds or plants that do not help them, planting fruit bearing trees, and even redirecting (modestly) a waterway so it will better maintain one of their more important forage crops.

The Samedoun do not really have an industry, but they are willing to trade. Most commonly they trade medicinal herbs, but this includes various products that we modern folks would see as drugs. This affects their philosophy as well, and they can be seen as stereotypical nature lovers, though hopefully not too comically.

NEWS OF FLETNERN

Racial Changes in Villai

In 610, most people would have said that there were two major Velesan cities, Parnania and Villai. While Villai was a halfling city, it followed the Velesan culture similarly to the way the Triad follows the Rhoric culture. In 616, Villai was attacked by troops from Garnock and much of the city was burned. The enormous number of refugees (who fled the city) and the slain turned a city of some 27,000 to a city of 17,000. While halflings still represent the largest group within the city, their percentage of the population has declined to give them only a slight advantage over the centaurs and a less than double the number of humans.

Villai is the center of the Agri Centaur culture today. Back at the turn of the century, this culture was broadly spread across the entire Eastern Plains region, but mainly due to banditry and the warlords, the safer agricultural area is now closer to Villai. With more of a say in the city-state of Villai and a more concentrated population, some would say that Villai has become a centaur city, but this isn't a fair statement. Estimates have about 6,000 of the 17,000 people being centaurs, with roughly 7,000 being halflings. Though the centaurs have increased their influence, they are still just one faction within the city.

Currently, in the Eastern Plains ...

There has been a change in the way banditry and warlords act in the Eastern Plains. Both the Mule and Stiletto are dealing in Detheb slaves. This lucrative income has made them both wealthier without them risking their men in raids on small towns. This is part of the reason that they have both managed to maintain peace in their holdings.

But with this change of direction, they have both needed to look defensively. Bandit groups operating near them were attacking some of the slave caravans and taking the slaves. So the two warlords have been looking to defeat their centaur bandit rivals. Not only does this lower the chances of bandits attacking slave caravans, but it gains the warlords captured loot and it decreases bandit attacks throughout the region. Many see this is as the bad guys wiping each other out, and it is.

Eventually this will need to be addressed. The concentration of power amongst the two warlords will at some point allow them too much power, unless they turn on each other. At this point, one of the major governments of the region, or perhaps an alliance of them, will need to remove the threat of a powerful centaur warlord. It is uncertain if this will increase

banditry in the region or decrease it. We will have to wait to find out.

But the oversupply of slaves on Drentae has lowered the prices on slaves across the spectrum. This means that no slavers are making the same profits they once were, including the two warlords. The typical slaver's reaction to this oversupply is to attack and wipe out their competition. Many of them believe that this will lower the supply and therefore raise demand. The fact that this is poor economics doesn't register on your typical slaver. While no major "slaver wars" have yet broken out, minor raids have been noticed throughout the continent.

The lack of a response from the Anglic Navy needs to be mentioned as well. It seems that rather than force slavers to avoid their ships, the navy out of Myork has been letting ships known to be carrying Detheb slaves through to Drentae. The explanation for this is that these people are better off as slaves in Drentae than dead in Lympeid, but this is an unusual stance for the Angles to be taking.

Some have suggested that one of the reasons that the Angles are not interfering with this slave trade is not that they are "saving" the lives of the Dethebs, but instead that they do not see the Dethebs as being fully human. While with some of the Angles, this is part of the reasoning, but this racist view is not held by the majority of the people of Myork. (Rumors and legends within Myork are that the Dethebs are part goblin.)



Glynnglen's Trial

Early in the Spring of 653, Baron Glynnglen of the Council of Baronies offered a 25,000sc bounty for the capture of any of four bandits that had been active in his lands. He did this for many reasons, not the least of which was an attempt to look strong on crime and more powerful to his peers on the Council. A far more secret reason was that he had worked out a new "entertainment tax" with many of the innkeepers in his barony. In exchange for driving far more visitors and travelers to

their inns, he imposed a higher tax. He planned to recoup the massive bounty because of all the travelers who would come to his barony for the spectacle of the trial and summary execution.

The first of the bandit leaders captured was Seyic the Crazy. Seyic was a centaur who led a band of about twenty bandits, a mixed troop of centaurs, humans and orcs. His nickname came from his seeming lack of control over his emotions. He would rant and rave about the most minor things, but ignore issues that would infuriate more "sane" people.

Once Seyic was imprisoned, people started to flock to Glynnglen, just as expected. The prisoner was basically on display, though few humiliations were heaped on him. The Baron invited all who had ever been victims of Seyic and his band to come to testify against him, after all, dragging out the trial would increase the revenues at the inns. Everything seemed to be going perfectly.

As you probably guessed from that last sentence, then things turned sour. After the grand trial but just before the long awaited hanging, a mercenary known only as "Mother's Milk" snuck into the prison and escaped with Seyic. Milk's plan was so well planned that they were across the river and fleeing in a carriage with fresh horses before the sun rose. Needless to say, Glynnglen was thoroughly embarrassed and furious.

So at the beginning of 654, Seyic, now crazier from his months of incarceration and his very near execution, is hiding with the centaur warlords. He is desperate to put his gang back together and start raiding, both because he wants people to fear him again and because he owes Milk far more money than he has. He agreed to match the bounty that had been placed on him if Milk would spring him, and now he needs to put together 25,000sc. No one is really sure what Milk might do to him if he doesn't, but Seyic seems convinced that as Milk got him out of that prison cell, he could put him back into it. Of course, the Baron would be willing to match the bounty to have him back, and Milk is a mercenary.

Mother's Milk refers to himself as a "reverse bounty hunter", meaning that he offers to spring criminals from prison after they have been captured. He has tried to sell this service as an insurance policy - Should you ever get captured, I will come and free you. But few criminals believe that he would live up to his word and so they are not willing to pay him up front. His freeing of Seyic was of course for the money, but also for the fame, something his fledgling business needed. While he taunts Seyic with the thought of his execution, Milk won't go anywhere near Glynnglen. His reward for returning the centaur bandit leader would certainly be the neighboring noose.

Unbeknownst to nearly all, Mother's Milk is actually a satyr. He uncharacteristically wears boots to hide this fact, expecting that should he ever need to flee a

determined tracker, he should be able to shed his boots and escape. He is a planner of the highest order, and though a trained soldier, his greatest weapon is his brain and his organizational skills.

It may seem odd that they fled using a carriage, but this shows Milk's way of thinking. The trackers coming out of Glynnglen were looking for a human and a centaur. At first when they came across the carriage tracks, they assumed it was something unrelated. They did eventually get on those tracks and begin to follow them, but by then they had given Milk a full day's head start.

Earlier Agri Centaurs

The time period now referred to as the Dark Ages was a time of great change for the world and its civilizations. It was around 200D (approximately 900 years ago) that the elves released all slaves, and the centaurs moved east to the Eastern Plains. Not long before this, perhaps 50-75 years before, the Velesans, the Rhorics and the Yugsalantis all arrived in the Eastern Plains themselves. While none of these groups actively went to war against each other, there was a considerable competition for the better farmland.

In the end, it was the centaurs who primarily stayed in the region. Having been slaves of the elves, the centaurs were not expert farmers, certainly not in a plains environment. They had to learn how to farm in this region, and over the generations they did. While they may not have had the education, they had the strength and the will to succeed.

Throughout these earlier centuries in the Eastern Plains, the centaurs worked together as families and prepared the land. They cut down forests and pulled the stumps. They moved boulders and other obstructions to farming that previous cultures lacked the ability to remove. Further, they built irrigation canals. Their elders understood that the centaur population would be extremely limited if they did not do something to increase the crop yields of this region, and primarily they used irrigation.

As most know, now the Eastern Plains are awash in centaur bandits and warlords. The southern portion of the Eastern Plains has many races, but the northern Eastern Plains, those areas east of Villai and to the north along the coast, are primarily centaurs. This many centaurs would have great difficulty surviving in this region if it had not been properly prepared. Further, the centaurs have secret ways of fertilizing their fields and rotating their crops that give them higher yields than most races would be able to achieve, especially out of lands like these.

In the areas closer to Villai, the irrigation systems and other advanced farming techniques are easily seen. They are well maintained and though the centaurs there take them for granted, they do understand them. Further,

they don't typically hide these techniques. They are willing to share them with other races. But few other races are capable of doing the work of a centaur, so few races would be able to accomplish what they have.



Along the coastal areas where the warlords hold sway, these masterful farming secrets are all but gone. With the worry of bandit raids, the canals are not properly maintained, and they do not work as cleanly as they once did. The composting and fertilizing techniques are likewise difficult to maintain when foolish raiders see fertilizer sheds as a place where someone might hide valuables and then get angry when they find out how wrong they are and torch the farmsteads. In some ways, the more powerful warlords have slowed the decay of these centaur farms, but they have not stopped it. This is why the populations density near Villai is at least four times that of similar lands just a short distance away.

Though the centaurs never built large cities, there are many ruins in this territory. These are the larger plantations of some of the more established centaur families. They held out for generations against all manner of bandits, but eventually could not hold onto their farms. These farms could be revived if knowledgeable centaurs were able to return to them in peace, but that won't happen soon.

Anyone travelling through the area will come across low stone walls, "creeks" that travel in extremely straight lines, isolated homes - many quite large, and if they are sharp, secrets of centaur farming techniques. But too many of these overgrown plantations have been completely reclaimed by nature. Just as the canals now appear to be creeks and culverts, so too do the walls appear to be nothing more than now hills, and the wells seem to be sink holes.

Few in the region understand today how many more centaurs there were say 300-400 years ago. The bandits did not need to kill them off. Simply making it unsafe to farm here drove them away or into starvation. The repercussions of a violent society were too much. The centaurs still existing run this risk as well, so it may turn out to be best for all if the warlords take control of the territory and wipe out the bandits. As has been implied elsewhere, high warlord taxes are still far better than the losses due to banditry.

Southern Centaurs in the North

About ten years ago, a tribe of Haesault centaurs moved north. Their area was in the midst of a minor drought and the shamans were told by their gods to move north to find more abundant water. All along the way they were harassed by orcs, humans and especially goblins. They settled in the southern Eastern Plains, but they established their colony too close to one of the vampire lords in that region. Two centaurs were turned to vampires. Fortunately, these two centaurs were so devoted to their gods, that they managed to commit suicide by venturing out into the sun in the morning. After this, the tribe moved farther north, closer to Villai.

This tribe is not welcomed by the Agri Centaurs; they are simply too strange. They have foreign ways and worship foreign gods in what seems to be a primitive and possibly "evil" fashion. But the tribe, now known as the "Sun Givers" has altered their religion. Believing (they would say understanding) that their gods led them here, they see their lives as now having a new mission: to bring the sun to all vampires.

While the majority of the tribe lives by farming and ranching, they also train vampire hunters. They are perfecting their ways of doing this, but so far it has been their military skills that have allowed them to kill several vampires. They utilize astrologers to predict their futures, and then set out to do whatever they can to reduce the number of vampires in the world. They do not believe they can wipe out all the vampires, as they know many of these undead live in the Tunnel World underground. This is just not a battlefield where the centaurs can be at their best. But they would be content to drive every vampire underground for good.

The Sun Givers are seeking allies in their crusade. They will reach out to various human and halfling religions. They are willing to share their methods and hope to learn from others opposed to the undead. They are less likely to simply hire adventurers. The Sun Givers now have four small villages in the area, avoiding giving the vampires an easy target. For anyone hunting vampires, the Sun Givers are probably some of the best at making anti-vampire weapons, and they are absolutely willing to sell them to any aspiring vamp killers.

THE GOOD LIFE

Centaurs

Despite their location being closer to the Velesans of the Central Plains, the centaurs are culturally more similar to the Rhorics of Rhum and Snobist, and the halflings of the Triad. If anything, the centaurs of Villai are probably the most “Velesan-like” while all others, especially the more rural ones are more similar to the northern Rhorics.

Some of the cultural issues here include:

- The centaurs believe there is a moral duty for parents to get their children to adulthood. If this means selling the children to slavers or leaving them at a workhouse, then this is what they will do. Velesans believe the parents morally must raise their own children, even to the point of a family starving to death in an attempt to feed everyone.
- Both Velesans and Rhorics like their sweet foods, as do most centaurs. Where Velesans also like sour tastes, neither the centaurs nor the Rhorics will look for these styles of tastes in their cuisine. Similarly, the Rhorics and centaurs both seem to enjoy vinegary foods, while the Velesans are against this style. One notable difference is that neither the Velesans nor the Rhorics seem to produce salty foods, but the centaurs are keen for extra salt.
- Velesans like pears, while Rhorics like apples. That is a stereo-type that transcends all “known facts”. Centaurs tend towards apples.
- Centaur’s teeth are not as sharp as a human’s. Their incisors are thicker and though they do work for tearing, they are not as good as a human’s. They have no canine teeth, instead having an additional pre-molar. Therefore, they are just not as good at tearing into meat. For this reason, they seem to favor fish. When they do eat beef or pork (or other tougher meats) they tend to marinade it, often in vinegar, to tenderize it and help break down some of that toughness. But they are omnivorous.

Centaurs typically wear clothing. Most centaur cultures believe as humans do that sexual organs should be covered. Centaur males will often wear shirts, but if the weather is warm and they are working, they may decide not to. Centaur women will almost always wear some manner of shirt to cover their chest.

While a female centaur may wear a dress that covers both her chest and drapes over her horse body, males will typically wear two separate garments. But

centaurs do not wear “pants”. Instead, a male centaur is most likely to wear a kilt that starts about half-way down his horse back and drapes over his genitals, most commonly down to the knee. No, they do not wear undergarments beneath their kilts.

Women may wear kilts, skirts, or simply blankets to drape over their lower halves. Covering the genitals from easy sight is all that is required of these garments, and if someone attempts to see beneath the skirts, centaur etiquette blames the looker. But few centaurs are insulted by someone making this attempt. A young boy attempting to see beneath a female centaur’s skirt would be comical to them and not a reason to start a fight or find insult.

It is not entirely odd to have young children turned out of their homes in Green Lands. Typically, this happens when the parents are drunkards who cannot or will not care for their children. Children of all ages can be turned out. Often they seek help from relatives or friends, and often join those families as if they were always a part of them. This has been so common, that it is not condemned as much as one would expect. Furthermore, families with large farms or ranches may appear to have families including as many as 18 children who are too close in age to actually be brothers and sisters. Those children not lucky enough to find a home with friends can fall into any number of difficult situations, including slavery (most frequently in a centaur factory/sweat shop or on a ship), membership in a criminal organization (typically banditry), or dead from the elements as they attempted to live off the land.

Like horses, centaurs can nap standing up, but must lie down to sleep (enter REM). Though they can survive by dozing (standing) and only entering full sleep (lying) for an hour or two a day, most centaurs in civilization will sleep more similarly to what that culture does, most likely sleeping for 6-8 hours while lying down at night.

Centaurs typically avoid having stairs in their homes, but when on the road cannot always avoid the issue. Due to their weight, most of their beds are directly on the floor, rather than try and hold up the centaur and the bed on four legs. The most common centaur “bed” is a large circular or oval pillow/mattress that rests on the floor. Like other people, these mattresses could be stuffed with straw (cheap end) or anything else up to down (high end).

Like the human cultures they parallel, the Agri Centaurs are monogamous. They marry a single partner and live with that single partner for the rest of their lives (typically). The Centaur Warlords however seem to live in harems. There are numerous reasons for this, not the least of which is that many young men who grow up under the warlords wind up involved in their battles and dying because of them. There truly is a decreased percentage of male centaurs in the warlords’ territories.

But more than this, the warlords (and their chief officers) are incredibly egotistical people. They enjoy both the control and the scandal of maintaining harems.

The warlords claim that harems are the natural order of centaurs. They claim (in an unproven fashion) that all the Koaluckssie centaurs live in harems. This is not truthful. There are some Koaluckssie centaurs that live in harems, some who live in mixed “marital” groups, and some who live monogamously. Each centaur tribe lives as they can. Those with too few males may live as harems or as mixed groups. Those who have not lost large numbers or have lost even amounts of males and females, are more likely to live monogamously. For them, it is simply a matter of survival of the tribe.

Minotaurs

Like the centaurs, there are two separate and distinct groups of minotaurs. Again, there are those who still live on Koaluckssie and those who live elsewhere. The Koaluckssie minotaurs live a savage existence where their brute strength enables them to survive. Not gathering in groups as the centaurs do, lone minotaurs are often the victims of packs of smaller creatures.

Those minotaurs that live elsewhere are descended from elven slaves. Unlike their centaur counter-parts, these minotaurs have not formed into a society. There are no minotaur cities, nor a minotaur region. Some small minotaur villages exist, but even these are few and far between. It is most common for minotaurs to wander the world reveling in their freedoms.

The minotaurs hate anything that attempts to reign in their freedoms. They have been known to kill slavers out of spite and cannot be expected to honor any laws they may encounter. Each lives a moral and ethical code of his or her own choosing, and woe to the fool who tries to challenge what a minotaur thinks. Many work as mercenaries, sailors or caravaners, because it allows them to travel as they wish. Some have also been known to work as gladiators, typically for short periods of time to earn extra money.

This nomadic, unattached lifestyle does have its drawbacks. There are few minotaurs in the world, and they seldom meet to bear more offspring. Single mothers are common, and they think nothing of a female with calves by several different fathers. In fact, such a female would be respected for going her own way. The only time minotaurs can be expected to gather and work together is if news spreads of someone enslaving minotaurs. In such a case, gossip spreads quickly, and an army will assemble to destroy the villainous slavers.

The two different types of minotaurs have evolved into different ethnicities. The remaining Koaluckssie minotaurs tend to more closely resemble bison, while those on Drentae are more steer-like. This is likely because the elves brought one “breed” of minotaur with them due to the geography of the two groups, but as time



has moved on, the physical differences have become more pronounced.

Minotaurs are omnivorous, but they prefer a very high protein diet. This is one of the reasons that they often lean towards fishing instead of farming. With their great strength, they can haul in heavy nets laden with fish, and even from smaller boats, they are often able to spear (harpoon) some of the biggest fish near shore. They will often eat fish bones to provide for their calcium, and they seem to instinctively know which fish will provide them with some of the vitamins other races normally receive through plants. They are not proud about the types of fish they eat and will eat nearly every type of shellfish, though feeding a minotaur strictly on shellfish takes a very long time.

When they do farm, they are still leaning towards the higher protein foods, such as nuts. This can often help them survive in elven and human civilizations. Many elven cities expect to feed minotaurs oat breads and muffins with nuts and raisins. While not a minotaur’s first choice, consuming only meat when in a city can often be beyond a minotaur’s pay. Again, pride in food is not something most minotaurs would see as important. They eat nearly as much as centaurs and need to fill those bellies.

For this reason, minotaurs are often found eating offal meats, such as the livers and other organs. These are rich protein sources to the minotaur and often cheap as they are less appealing to the more fragile humans. In other cultures, they will continue to eat bones and skin, though typically of smaller animals such as rabbits or poultry.

Though they certainly have the strength for it, minotaurs rarely go in for smithing. There are likely to be various cultural issues about this, but the idea of “sticking their hands into fire” seems silly to them. While they enjoy the use of the best forged weapons, they seldom go for metal armors. Each minotaur will have his own reasons for this, but few of them can be made comfortable. This could be because so few of them are armorers. It is likely that human and dwarven smiths simply don’t know how to properly fit a minotaur for armor.

They do seem to prefer various types of hide crafted armor, including leather, boiled leather, furs, and other hybrids of these styles. This goes opposite to their typical reluctance to eat beef or horse meats. The cultural rationale for not eating these animals is that they deserve more respect than to wind up on a table. For this reason, they prefer pork, poultry and fish. But when it comes to wearing leather armor, the fact that they are relying on the horsehide or steer leather to protect them is far more respectful to the animal (in their opinion). They will still eat horse or beef, if that’s what they can get their hands on; they just prefer not to.

Being more free spirits, they rarely wind up with careers that require extensive training. Especially when living in a different race’s culture, they will take laborer jobs, especially things like porters or stevedores, jobs where brute strength is the required skill. Porterage for a caravan is yet another way for them to see the world. It is not a way for them to make money, as they typically make very little due to the amount of food they need to eat.

Satyrs

Like the centaurs and minotaurs, the satyrs were brought to Drentae as slaves of the elves. Unlike the others, once released, the satyrs remained in the Slyvanian Forest. They dwell mainly along the western coast in small villages. They mix with rural elves, but urban elves do not seem to appreciate the satyrs. Whether this is because they are a reminder of past “crimes” or simply because of their gregarious lifestyle is not fully understood.

The satyrs use their superior strength (superior to elves) and speed to accomplish tasks elves simply cannot. They make excellent hunters and prefer this quick return on their work to farming. Some do become soldiers either for the elves or as mercenaries, but their unreliable personalities are a serious concern to most commanders. Their aversion to commitment typically prevents them from studying magic, since they simply will not concentrate on one subject for that long.

Satyrs are rare on either continent. Those found of Koaluckssie are typically scavengers living off what they steal from others. They live between other races, using their speed and cunning to avoid conflicts. As long as

they manage to stay one step ahead of the predators, they manage to survive one day at a time.

On Drentae, they could have nearly any profession. Some of the most common (especially when they live in other race’s cultures) are working as messengers, laborers, and glassblowers. Living basically between the elven and Maril cultures, the satyrs often find themselves working at the big vineyards supporting various winemaking support roles, except of course for stomping grapes.

The satyrs will often take jobs that the elves nearby simply won’t do. Many religious elves have strong feelings about the trees of their homeland. For this reason, it is more common to find a satyr lumberjack in these regions, as they are simply not as devoted to the elven gods (or any gods for that matter).

When working as soldiers or mercenaries, they favor missile weapons, including spears and other throwing weapons. Staying out of the fight is preferred, relying on their speed and agility to avoid getting hit. They typically shun armor as they don’t want anything that will slow them down.

Rumors

Not surprisingly, beast men are just different enough from humans that a large number of rumors exist about their origins and their physiology. Here are just a few of the rumors around beast men, and these are typically the less racy ones.

- Centaurs are the product of human and horse “relationships”. or Centaurs can be produced by human and horse “relationships”. {False}
- Centaurs are not half horse and half man but instead half horse and half elf. They even have pointy ears. {False}
- If the horse parts of a centaur are black, then the centaur is evil, violent and more prone to rage. {False - Based on Stiletto’s band being mostly black.}
- The more often elves breed with the centaurs, the lighter skinned the centaur is. That is why the Drentae centaurs are white and the Koaluckssie centaurs are red/bronze. {False - we think}
- A male centaur cannot impregnate a female human (or elf, etc.). A human male can impregnate a female centaur, and produce a centaur child. {True}
- On Koaluckssie, an offshoot race of centaurs has been found with wings. It is believed that these creatures have the ability to fly and are therefore effectively centaur pegasi. {Believed to be True}

WHAT'S MISSING

This is the “World Walker” version of this edition. Therefore, it is not the complete version, but instead the slimmed down version. So the question is - What's missing? Here is a summary of what you'd see if you got the Game Masters' version of the book:

How to Play a ... Centaur: Tips and tricks on how to make a centaur's extra power work to your benefit as a PC, as well as how to try to avoid the pitfalls (literally) of playing an extra heavy character

How to GM a ... Centaur Army: Using centaurs as enemy NPCs can give the GM a great advantage, but you don't want to simply make them a different shaped goon character. Here's how to use them against the PCs.

Optional Rules: What's the right “cost” of using centaurs in your campaigns? Here's how to try and level the playing field if you plan to give a player the boost of being a centaur (or other beast man race).

Silver Sense: The centaur warlords are running sweat shops, but at what point does this factory style make sense economically?

Gold, Silver and WHAT!?!: Centaur beer as well as sweat shop yarns and fabrics, and a Detheb slave thrown in for good measure.

Monsters & Other Menaces: All sorts of notes about other beats man races, the prey animals they rely on, “wolf-centaurs” and notes on the centaurs' physiology. Also a new centaur bandit/sheriff - yeah, you have to read it to understand it.

Church Bells: There a quite a few religions amongst the centaurs. Here are the details you'll want to have in order to run them.

By the Numbers: How exactly do you feed a centaur? A creature that needs as many calories as a horse, but only has a human sized mouth.

Huge Adventures: You have probably sensed how the various Small Bites are coming together for a massive “world war”. What role will the centaur warlords play? A far more important one than you might think!

Small Towns and City Neighborhoods: The beast men do not have any massive cities, but that doesn't mean they don't have towns. Here we go through six cities in four locations showcasing the centaurs and satyrs.

Tavern Talk: Guido gives us some lessons on where the centaur drinks come from and which ones you need to be wary of.

A Funny Thing Happened ... Rather than give you encounters, we decided to detail two beast man mercenary units - one minotaur and one centaur. These are NOT your everyday merc squads.

Pull Back the Curtain: Role-playing games are not short stories and do not follow the rules of novels. These

are joint story telling endeavors. Here is advice on how to help the story along when too many cooks are spoiling your soup.

Y? Y? Y!: How exactly did a group of released slaves develop into a full blown “country”? We try to walk through the logic of how it worked for them so you can see that there are things they purposefully leave out of their history stories.

Centaur Summary: Just to make things easier, we have an easy chart to detail the different ethnicities of the various centaur groups.

The full Game Master version of this edition is 41 pages of content. That is considerably more than what you're seeing here.

Do you know how to get the Game Masters' version instead of this World Walker edition? Well, use the links below to head out to our Patreon site and become a patron. Check it out because there's a ton of stuff that we're doing, and we want you to be involved.

IN CONCLUSION

We think centaurs and minotaurs are really cool, and we want them to be more than just miscellaneous monsters in your game world. They really can be living, breathing NPCs or even PCs. They can have their own culture and their own ways, and it doesn't take a huge amount of thought to make that work.

We hope you have caught the “bug” of beast men and how much fun they can be. Not only are they powerful, but they can lend themselves to as much or as little tie in to their bestial side. We've presented minotaurs who don't really like to be considered like cattle, but who knows, you might want them (or maybe just a few tribes of them) to be the guardians of the plains bison. They really can go either way.

We hope you've spotted something else that we've done here - based a culture on something that is not from Earth's European or Asian continents. Some of John Josten's first “lead” figures were a pair of centaurs decked out in American Indian shields, spear and war paint. It's amazing how things like that stick with you, and ever since, many of the centaur cultures have leaned closer to American Indians than to Celtic barbarians or however they often seem to develop in other worlds.

Sometimes we as GMs forget, but there are other places than Merry Ole' England. The varied American Indian tribes often serve well as a cultural reference, especially if you can then decide how far they have advanced into metal working. There are also the equally varied African tribes - cultures that may or may not have been given a chance to develop into “fantasy tech” on

their own. Don't forget the pyramid builders from both of those places!

But this is what fantasy worlds are all about! Different races, different peoples, different cultures, all tied up with magic and a sense of the spectacular. If you can't make your centaurs and minotaurs seem different from the halflings and the elves, then you have to wonder what the point of playing in a fantasy world is. There needs to be something different about them, even if it is an undescribed farming technique. Specifics don't matter as long as you're making sure that minotaurs are not simply bigger tougher orcs that needed to be fought. Give them some character! They are a lot more fun to play when you do!

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PATREON

We are incredibly proud of the community we are building within Patreon. The community was why we started this Small Bites project and it is really beginning to bloom. We knew it wouldn't happen overnight, and it didn't, but we are getting feedback, participation, opinions, constructive criticism, the whole works!!

We would love for you to join that community (if you haven't already). Just click the link:

<https://www.patreon.com/boardent>

Why? Well, first, you'll get the full edition of this book; that's the GM's Edition, and not just the World Walker edition. But if you want to help us along and sponsor us at \$1, then you'll get the World Walker edition emailed to you at the end of every month, instead of having to go out and find it several weeks later when it becomes available to the general public. The GM's edition is usually double or triple the length of the World Walker edition, but that might not be what you're looking for.

Far more important to us, you'll become part of this community we're so interested in: a community of role-players, game masters and world builders, sharing ideas, and sharing our hobby - for many of us, our passion.

You'll be able to participate in polls and other ways to let us know what you're thinking. Several times, we thought we had the best plans laid out, only to hear from our patrons that they had a different idea of what the priorities should be. So we changed the priorities and changed the order in which these editions have come out. Does it make sense? Of course it does, but without that communication, there is little we can do to properly address your priorities.

As a side note, the start of a new year always requires a review of the previous year (for taxes if for nothing else). In taking a look at the past year, we just cannot understand or even justify why things went really well when they did or just mediocre when they did. Fortunately, those are the only two "levels" we experienced, but it has been very frustrating to not know what we might have been doing right and what we were only barely making it with. We'd love to have your input as well to help guide us through the next year, and the one after that!