

# The Lawless Lands Gazetteer

## History

After the war, the lands around the former capital were ravaged by man-hunting creatures from the Shadow Plane. The first 12 years were a time of slaughter and constant fear but over the time, the foul creatures returned to their home planes as the dark influence waned. Over the centuries, the locals managed to rebuild their villages but not their cities, which are to this day infested with various aberrations and shadow folk.

## Customs & Religion

The core lands were the most civilised of the whole Golden Empire but now they are mostly a wasteland of ruins and buried treasures. No warlord has managed to get a foothold here, so the various villages have become quite self-sufficient.

Indeed self-reliance is one of the primary virtues for people in the lawless lands. Also, they are uncultivated - the highest bureaucrats to survive are the village overseers and most of their descendants have lost even that knowledge. The ability to fight has grown more important than the ability to read or write, let alone to calculate taxes. Thus most villages are now ruled by elders or the descendants of military officers who protected the peasants.

As the name implies, these lands are without law - except for the wandering followers of Fu. These holy warrior-philosophers roam the lands, fighting against unnatural creatures, and lending their wisdom to villagers should they require it. They have profound

knowledge of the old laws and are willing to act as judges when asked.

Anybody who is not a wandering judge or a villager is considered dangerous - either a supernatural threat or a bandit. Witch hunts and lynching are not unheard of in these lands.

While most of the customs are quite like those of the old days, there are a few changes due to the influence of foul magic. First of all, there are no burials. All corpses have to be burned to avoid their rising as undead due to the residue magic.

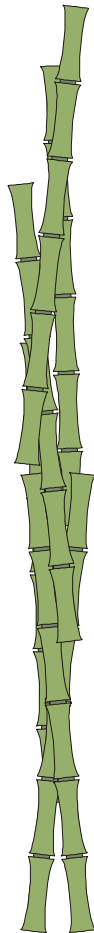
Another custom is to wear wards of all kinds and use prayer wheels to scare off evil spirits. While not always effective, their primary function is to ensure that a villager has not be replaced by a shape changer (no evil spirit is able to *wear* wards, even if able to bypass them, the reasoning of the peasants goes).

Another effect of the great mistrust these people display has led to a variety of sign languages, one for each village. The most sophisticated of these are not even recognisable as communication, appearing to be random movements instead.

Common proverbs from the lawless lands are:

- *Enemies come in many guises* (strangers are seldom welcome here)
- *Anything can still be useful* (the idea of throwing away something is very uncomfortable to these people)
- *Betrayal wears a silken robe* (the corelanders are not very fond of nobles who they hold responsible for their current misery).

As one might have guessed already, this is not the happiest corner of the world. There is only one major holiday - the day of the dead. On this occasion, large parades with black paper lamps and bone-white masks are held to scare of the restless dead. The rituals are actually magical and cause all undead to suffer a



-1 morale bonus to attack rolls when entering the village for the next year.

## Dress

Peasant outfits dominate the scene in the lawless lands. Most wear pullover shirts in subdued colours and huge straw hats. Shoes are rare, at best people own wooden or straw sandals. Most men go bald and beards are reserved for the old and wise. Bandits often wear moustaches to prove their manhood and defiance of local order. Colourful pieces of cloth (bandanas, sashes etc.) are often worn to indicate gang affiliation. Old armour or peasants' outfits complete their appearance.

Followers of Fu wear bright yellow robes and a pagoda-shaped head. They also take pride in their long plaits.

Women generally have the same outfit as men, often, however, they hide their hair under a bright piece of cloth (even when wearing a hat). The colour of this cloth usually indicates such things as marital status, social standing, and age (usually with a high level of ambiguity).

## Food

The dishes of the core lands used to be the best in the Empire - the Imperial court was renown for its exotic tastes. Nowadays, however, the core is the poorest province and this is reflected in the food. A staple of any meal is a lot of rice, often with a highly nutritious yet disappointingly bland sauce. Vegetables and meat are added by availability rather than taste.

One speciality that is reserved for the day of the dead (see customs) is a soup made of blood and hot spices. The *ancestor blood* is ritually eaten with a special rice bread made for exactly that occasion.

## Fauna and Flora

The lawless lands have a subtropical climate with many small forests where the original cities or fields were abandoned. However, there are few large animals left, due to the many supernatural predators. The exception of anarchic animals<sup>1</sup>. These creatures have been touched by the taint of chaos and now look twisted and unfinished. Few people are willing to eat their meat.

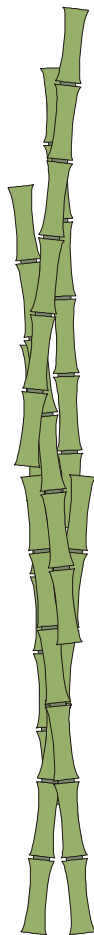
Many nature spirits of these lands were slain by shadow creatures and therefore some areas are devoid of any spirit presence. This causes an uneasiness in both man and beasts and these spots are avoided by both. The surviving spirits are usually withdrawn and prefer not to interact, their shrines long destroyed. Some, however, became protectors of the locals in return for worship.

Evil spirits on the other hand, abound here. Many were pawns of the unspeakable entities and still control the lands close to the capital.

Other creatures that are common to this area are all kinds of aberrations, stranded after the defeat of their evil master. One pretty common example are the Gricks (called *mo fu* by the natives), formerly servants of the *Barbed Tentacle*, one of the foul entities involved in the rebellion. These tentacled snakes were unleashed on the capital and never returned to their dimension, now haunting the province.

Due to the high levels of negative energy, fallen creatures have a great chance of attaining undeath of various sorts - therefore the lawless lands are known for their frequent encounters with undeads, especially in the twisted magic zones.

Most civilised denizens of the lawless lands are human, indeed everybody else is seen as a threat, with the possible exception of spirit folk and Nezumis who belong to the network.



<sup>1</sup> This is a template from the *Manual of the Planes*.

### The Ten Most Frequent Creatures in the Province (d20)

1-5	Lesser Undead (CR 3 or less)
6-7	Guixian Spirits
8-9	Grick
10-11	Gibbering Mouter
12-13	Lesser Shadow Creature (CR 5 or less)
14-15	Kappas
16-17	Gaki
18	Dixian Spirits
19	Elementals
20	Anarchic Animals

Less civilised but still above the ranks of mindless horrors are the Kappa. These small humanoids come from the East but have migrated into the lawless lands, setting up small camps near lakes and terrorising the peasants.

### Important Sites

The land is covered with the abandoned ruins of three major cities and plains of grass and bush land where rice fields used to be. Only around the many small villages the land is cultivated and used to grow rice or the odd vegetable.

### Sites of Twisted Magic

There are still many places, where the natural order has been changed. Often the effects are subtle, such as maximisation of certain spell schools (automatically affected by the *Maximise Spell* feat) or tougher save DCs against magic.

Yet, there are also more drastic effects, such as zones where it rains blood, the dead rise spontaneously, or rifts to the Shadow Plane. It will take eons, before this land becomes normal again.

### The Old Capital

The old capital: this site is already described in *Places of Interest*.

### The Valley of Mist

This 'valley' is more of a depression in the otherwise flat land of the core. It is home to the Followers of Fu, who train their pupils here before they wander out into the world. The depression is always shrouded in mist, making it hard to see farther than 30 feet.

### Outposts of the Jade Emperor

The Jade Lich has built several small but heavily fortified outposts in the lawless lands, both to protect vital trade routes and to spy on potential enemies. In order to avoid conflict, these bases are discreet and often manned with mercenaries rather than household troops.

### The Nezumi Network

The network has its own Gazetteer. The rattlings have little contact to the outside whenever they can avoid it.

