

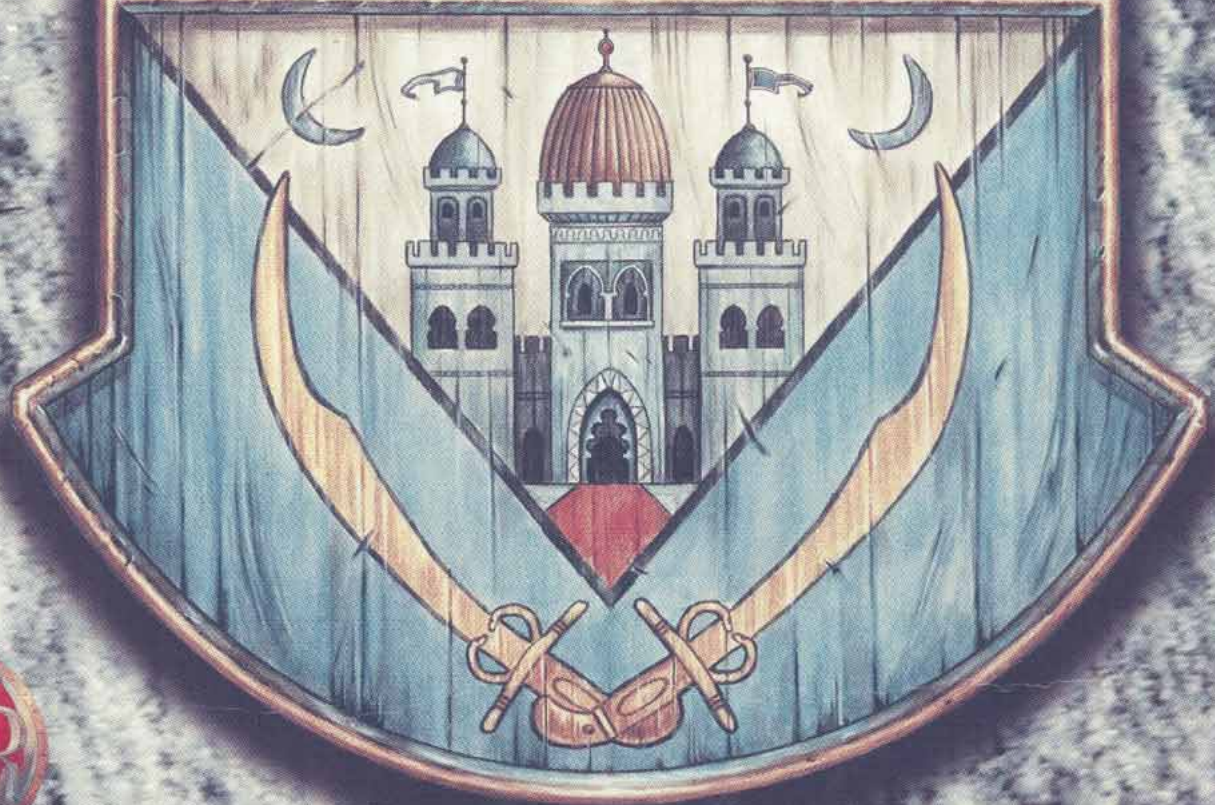
Player's Secrets of

BINSADA



BIRTHRIGHT™

DOMAIN SOURCEBOOK





binsada

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Written by Allen Varney
 Edited by Suzanne M. Kugath
 Creative Direction by Karen S. Boomgarden
 Cover Art by Tony Szczudlo
 Interior Art by Karolyn E.M. Guldah
 Cartography by Diesel
 Typesetting by Nancy J. Kerkstra
 Art Coordination by Bob Galica
 Page Backgrounds & Frames by Dee Barnett
 Production by Dee Barnett and Sue Billings

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 53147
 USA

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TSR Ltd.
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 Cherry Hinton
 Cambridge CB1 3LB
 UNITED KINGDOM

The many-headed Hydra slithers in the Harrowmarsh on your western border. The Sphinx prowls its blasted lands, breathing a venomous wind upon the lush savannah. The Harpy's birds of prey circle in coastal salt breezes, raiding laden ships. It seems as if Binsada, your land of simple, nomadic cattle herders, is hemmed in by monstrous enemies on all sides.

Although your subjects face horrors beyond imagining, their loyalty and fervor do not falter. The holy flame of Leira burns in every heart, and her High Priest's vision of conquest drives the thundering hoofbeats of your zealous cavalry. They shall slash a scimitar swathe through the lands of the infidel, and pitch your Red Tent over their so-called Iron Throne.

Soon, by divine right, all Cerilia will be yours!

what you need to play

This guide is an accessory for the BIRTHRIGHT™ campaign setting. You or your Dungeon Master need the BIRTHRIGHT boxed set to play, as well as the AD&D® *Player's Handbook* and DUNGEON MASTER® *Guide*. Your DM will find the BIRTHRIGHT supplements *Cities of the Sun* and *Blood Enemies* helpful but not essential.

how to use this book

Player's Secrets of Binsada details the people, provinces, customs, and landmarks of the domain of Binsada, a Khinasi state on the south central coast of Cerilia. You may play either Queen Banira, the ruler described in *Cities of the Sun*; Banira's younger sister, Medina el-Reshid, described in the "Notable Nomads" section of this book; or a new regent character of your own, preferably a Khinasi female fighter or thief. This pack assumes Queen Banira has appointed you her lawful successor and abdicated—though, for reasons that will become clear, few of your subjects realize this! This pack is also useful for nonregent characters who live in or come from Binsada.

Change anything about this domain that you don't like. Then, lend the book to your DM, pointing out specific details about the kingdom and the plotlines that suit your character. Remember, if anything doesn't fit the campaign, the DM is free to reject it.

Player's Secrets of Binsada is designed to show a regent's rise to power through her courage, her positive attitude, and, above all, her flair for the dramatic. Go forth and conquer!

Greetings, my lady, on this wet night. No doubt you wonder why an old priest asks to meet with you alone. I shall tell you, but you must solemnly swear by the Flame Goddess not to reveal what I say—not for many years, at least.

"My deputies, the mullahs and imams, occupy the tent next to this one. They saw me come here as they were preparing tomorrow's invocation to Leira. Perhaps they wondered if aged Haswan, for all his years and piety, hides immoral yearnings for Queen Banira's lovely sister. Hah! I only wish I were visiting for a reason so petty as illicit romance!

"Swear by Leira, and then speak no more while I explain."

his righteousness tells of a grave crisis

"Queen Banira remains lost in dementia, as she has for many weeks. You know I have called down the cleansing flame of the goddess to purge her of madness, but her former self flashes and dies as a popping spark from the evening campfire. I thank you again for your part in our charade. I must say, you have so perfected your speech and mannerisms that no one suspects you are not Banira. Thank Leira for that magical turban that you wear to look like your sister!

"We have talked with a sage from Ariya and consulted many scrolls of the great healers. Her Highness has succumbed to the mind-sickness that has blighted so many in your family. Thirty-three is rather young to fall prey, it seems, but not excessively so. She now believes she is a girl of six, learning horsemanship from your late father. Though very weak and beyond hope of a cure, Her Highness seems quite happy. It wrenches our hearts to see her fine intellect fade away, but as tragedies go, hers is more merciful than most.

"I can guess your thoughts. 'She has appointed me her lawful successor and invested me with her power. I am regent in all but name. Shall I now carry her Red Tent from province to province in my own person, as ruler of Binsada?' Would that you could! With a strong, vigorous, involved ruler like Her Highness—like you—the People of the Wind

could spread the truths of Leira across the world. And we will! My goddess-granted vision tells me this is true!

"You are well aware of the risks involved. General Vorduine has always commanded our armies. His loyalty is to Queen Banira alone, and I think he would leave in a heartbeat if our ruse were discovered. Those Anuireans are temperamental and fickle, and his departure would mean no good for Binsada. Your ambitious cousin, Prince

the high priest's exhortation

Daoud, might try to claim the Red Tent for himself. The struggle would leave our border with the Sphinx unguarded. By maintaining your disguise, we avoid these nuisances.

"Furthermore, still another problem has arisen that would make your accession to the Red Tent difficult. We have received reports that a feline monster, apparently an agent of the Sphinx, prowls the northeastern countryside. It stalks our people and demands an audience with Queen Banira. It threatens to slaughter three people daily until it meets her personally. A courier is due in an hour with details."

his righteousness speaks of opportunity

"You see, my lady, that a personal claim to regency would be inadvisable now. However, these are minor inconveniences. Leira has assured us that Binsada is destined to conquer all Cerilia.

"And why not? What other peoples can ride as we ride? What others swing a confident leg into the stirrups before they can walk, and sit proud and upright in their saddles until they die of old age? Who else crosses the open plains so swiftly and fights with such ferocity?

"Other kingdoms—they are weak. Saddled with homes, furnishings, ties of business and learning and effete luxury, they are weighed down like tortoises. We move freely and quickly, strengthened by the spirits of our ancestors. Homes? Our homes are our tents, our saddles. Homes are for the settlers who pay us tribute, as all Cerilia will pay tribute.

"When I traveled in foreign lands, I heard many dismiss our nomads as 'illiterate barbarians.' They

will speak differently with our scimitars at their throats. They thought Binsada doomed, surrounded by enemy kingdoms and, far worse, awnsheghlien. 'First the Zikalans will eat up the place, then the Sphinx and Hydra will eat the Zikalans,' they said, and they laughed. Laugh while they may, I say!

"I prefer to view all these situations as opportunities. Zikala has never been an ornament to our eastern border, but now its false and despicable Zikalan Temple of Avani encroaches upon our domain, goaded by that bloated harridan, the High Priestess Shandare. Now that it has fallen to heresy, we may occupy the land with a clear conscience.

"As for the awnsheghlien, we must regard these monsters with due caution. The Sphinx has killed thousands through the centuries, and it is rumored that it plots to invade Binsada. If so, its armies of cats and madmen are in for a rude shock. Our cavalry can outrun, surround, and fall upon them within the hour. Leira will scorch them with her holy flame!

"The Hydra merely lurks in its stagnant mire. We shall undoubtedly have problems annexing its swamp, and its many heads make it a formidable opponent. But here, I think, the magic of our true wizard will help us greatly. The Red Witch—pardon me, I meant to say 'Corazón'—has learned the Hydra's ways, and her knowledge will lead us to victory. And beyond the Harrowmarsh lie all the Anuirean lands, fat, complacent, and ripe for conquest.

"We need fear nothing from the third awnshegh just off our southern shore. The Harpy has not attacked nor infringed upon us in a century, and Her Highness sometimes made veiled references to a pact of some kind. I suggest that you discuss this with the queen during an episode of lucidity.

"We need not fear attack from the north. We maintain our centuries-long fellowship with Sendoure, which our own traders founded. Ariya, though decadent and self-satisfied, is our worthy eastern ally. Our combined forces can crush Zikala like a groundnut and depose its weak-willed Grand Vizier, Omar ibn Tuarim el-Zisef. In gratitude, perhaps you may see fit to leave Sendoure and Ariya a measure of autonomy in our empire.

"The outlanders who think Binsada doomed point most often to our flat terrain, which leaves us open, so they say, to any invader. They do not understand. The wide swathes of plains do not let others

in. They allow us to move out! We race from province to province in numbers and at speeds that foreigners must envy.

"The time approaches when you, my lady, will lead us on that path of conquest. I saw it in my dream in the Andujar salt mine, when Leira sent me visions of our ancestors. The ghostly forms led us to victory upon victory, pounding drums made of bull skulls, piping shrieking notes on bone flutes, panicking our enemies and chasing them from the field!

"At the vision's end, Leira showed me Queen Banira standing before the Iron Throne in the Imperial City, ready to mount it as ruler of Cerilia. That is why I have been so distressed by Her Highness's illness. It seemed to contravene the Goddess's vision, until I realized that I must have seen you, disguised as Banira by your magical turban."

his righteousness concludes

"I envy you, my lady! The people support you, in the guise of Queen Banira, with all their heart. They are united in the glory of Leira's prophecy. Other kingdoms treat us as impoverished barbarians, but the treasury at Ber Dairas holds enough gold to fund our outward surge. Tribute from the conquered will pay our way thereafter, for we have none of the burdensome expenses that blight other domains. There are obstacles in the immediate future, but your path and your success are ensured!

"I have taken too much of your time. As a last word of advice, my lady—or rather, Your Highness—I suggest that you remove these annoyances with dispatch, acting in unwavering confidence. True, for the moment you cannot reveal your identity, but what of that? Remember, nothing can halt our people's inevitable domination of the continent. It is the will of the Goddess! Blessings of the True Flame upon you, and good night."



history

[Note: All dates are noted first in the Khinasi system of Masetian Arrival (MA), then in the Anuirean Haelyn's Count (HC).]

The current domain of Binsada takes its name from an early Basarji kingdom called Binsada, which predates the Anuirean Empire. Old Binsada, as sages now call it, adopted the lion as its symbol, for the prides of the great cats that roamed the nation's open savannahs. Over generations, the Old Binsadans hunted the lions and other large animals within their borders to extinction. Now, most lions in the Khinasi region are found in the domain of the awnshegh known as the Sphinx.

These early Binsadans were probably ancestors of the Irboud, a people who migrated southwest from their ancient land circa 400 MA (-1088 HC). The reason for their flight remains a mystery. Though the Sphinx did not appear in Irbouda until centuries later, its conquest wiped out most historical records. The forefathers of the Irboud certainly were Basarji (the ancient name for the peoples now called Khinasi). They named the land Binsada, from *binsad* ("east wind"), the hot, gritty wind that blows from the northeast each spring.

According to oral tradition, within 10 years after their arrival in the region, the Old Binsadans exerted authority over all nearby territories, including what are now Zikala, Sendoure, the Sphinx's lands, and (briefly) the Rohrmarch. The Binsadan nomads conquered these lands with highly mobile cavalry, ferocity, and unshakable resolve. They had no interest in dominion, only tribute. The nomads followed three rules:

1. Never intermarry with settled peoples.
2. Tolerate all beliefs and practices.
3. If a village does not offer the required tribute, destroy it.

These guidelines built a prodigious empire, but it was short-lived and left no lasting mark

on its subject lands. Still, for over a century, tremendous wealth flowed to the Binsadans' main camp, Medoc. Sadly, all traces of this camp are lost to history, as are most of its treasures. Only a few fascinating trinkets—golden hair clips, gem-studded bridles—testify to the greatness of Old Binsada.

modern binsada

Anuirean Emperor Alándalae conquered Old Binsada as the first step of his assault on Basarji lands [1277 MA (-211 MR)]. He immediately founded a base camp, Lectis Magna, on the Sun Coast. Two years later, el-Arrasi, a Basarji regent, rose to prominence in Ariya. He unified the Basarji domains and united their forces in a campaign to free themselves from Anuirean influence.

Binsada remained securely in Anuirean hands almost until the end of the war, after the Emperor had succeeded in eradicating most signs of Old Binsada's empire. Meanwhile, Lectis Magna grew into a large fortified city. El-Arrasi sacked it in 1296 MA (-192 HC). In later centuries, the Harrowmarsh grew to engulf the ruins.

Following el-Arrasi's historic victory over Anuire in 1299 MA (-189 HC), Binsada and all other Basarji lands became territories of the short-lived Basarji Federation, under Ariyan guidance. Binsada represented the western reach of Ariyan influence. Here, el-Arrasi built the fortified Tower of Evening beside the Harrowmarsh. The tower, meant as a counterpart to the grand Tower of Morning in Ariya, was deserted during the Federation's decline, after el-Arrasi's death. The Tower has been a haunted ruin for centuries.

The new domain of Binsada was founded by a nomad whose name is variously given as Chenghas Zaran and Tengis Rhan. In 1348 MA (-140 HC) Chenghas marshalled an army of 12 nomad clans to aid the Ariyan regent Jamal I, grandson of el-Arrasi, in a battle with would-be usurpers in present-day Aftane. In return for his help, Chenghas expected a land grant on the western plains where he had grown up. Though Chenghas's aid was essential to Jamal's victory, Jamal spurned the nomad's claim, dismissing him from the throne room in the Tower of Morning. "I shall give you no more Khinasi land than you may cover with that hat," Jamal sneered, pointing to the leather calpac (nomad's cap) that Chenghas wore. Furious, Chenghas stormed into the adjacent war room. There, he flung his cap upon the enormous relief map of the Khinasi lands. He rode forth at the head of his army, and conquered the province his hat fell upon in a year-long lightning campaign. This marked the birth of modern Binsada.

Chenghas died decades later without heir, and his regency passed peacefully to the senior family of his clan, the el-Sharaf. They first fostered trade with other domains, then frowned upon it generations later. Because of this reversal, trading families along the Asarwe River moved north. With the refugee traders from Irboud, they founded the domain of Sendoure. The domain prospered by levying tariffs on well-traveled trade routes and has enjoyed peaceful relations with Binsada throughout its history.

the tyrant

For 500 years, Binsada's nomads, though no longer expansionist, followed their ancient traditions, roving the plains with their cattle herds. Though the monarch was often male, descent passed through the mother, and women controlled property. This changed disastrously in 1820 MA (332 HC).

The Binsadan scion Dantaverah el-Sharaf, later called "the Tyrant," returned from travels in the Anuirean lands to assume the regency after the death of his mother, the queen. Dantaverah promptly imposed a patriarchal system like those he had observed in the west. He revoked women's inheritance rights, exiled female clan elders, and installed male elders to positions of power. Later in his reign, over the protests of most clans, the Tyrant began construction of the only city in modern Binsada: oppressive, unsightly Ber Dairas.

Dantaverah's imperious policies finally drove even his most loyal supporters to desert him. He was assassinated by a cabal of conspirators in 1846 MA (358 HC). Though historical evidence indicates the involvement of only seven people, all 11 of Binsada's surviving clans claim a vital role in the Tyrant's murder.

All 11 clans also deny responsibility for the purge that followed within hours of Dantaverah's death. In what Binsadans now regard as a shameful episode, every member of the el-Sharaf clan was killed or exiled. In the ensuing interregnum, clan fought with clan for power, until the elders parleyed and worked out a shaky compromise. For the next eight decades, the regency rotated among the scions of five different clans. Each clan elder reigned until death, and then the elder of the next clan in the pentad assumed control.

This unwieldy scheme did not last. In 1929 MA (441 HC), the Sphinx made a tentative foray into Ghouref, Binsada's northeastern province. The reigning queen, Larefa bint Marlassah el-Reshid, declared an emergency to stave off the invasion. Following her victory, Larefa found evidence of treason by certain army scouts, who conveniently belonged to the next clan in rotation. Larefa rejected the rotation arrangement on security grounds and invested her daughter with her regency. Larefa's prestige, greatly enhanced by the triumph over the Sphinx, let this edict go unchallenged.

Secure in power, Larefa restored the ancient matriarchal traditions. The el-Reshid clan has reigned ever since. Queen Banira bint Hamilah el-Reshid was the eighth, possibly the most capable, and certainly the best loved in the line.

problems and prophecy

Relations with Zikala have deteriorated in the last three years, because Grand Vizier Omar (no doubt at the prodding of his advisers) has raised tolls on caravans and other trade along the important Moura river route. Trade has fallen sharply across the Moura, and the smaller el-Tasri cannot make up for all the losses.

The expansion of the Zikalan Temple of Avani across the Moura at the behest of Zikalan High Priestess Shandare has only increased tension. Doctrines of the Zikalan Temple differ from the Binsadan Temple of Leira, but worship of Leira (goddess of flame and beauty) and Avani (goddess of light and reason) presents no inherent conflicts. Zikala's expansion is clearly motivated by Shandare's personal ambition, not by piety. However, the Temple is spreading rapidly.

Trade also suffered in the north when the Sphinx stepped up its raids across Sendoupe's trade routes. Binsada's nomads suffered a steep drop in morale, and some spoke openly of fleeing from the domain before an

enemy conquered it. The idea provoked venomous arguments in every clan's sun camp, and nothing Queen Banira

did could assuage their fears. During these trying times, the High Priest Haswan Mandil experienced his vision.

The old priest was visiting the trading village of Andujar when he learned of a calamity in the nearby Sarra-Binssa salt mine. Two miners had been attacked and trapped by a burrowing monster. His Righteousness hurried there and entered the shaft alone, for the other miners (convicts and low characters) refused to accompany him.

For a day and a half those outside stood watch. At the second sunrise after he had entered, His Righteousness emerged with one of the injured miners, who was now completely healed. The two men dragged the carcass of a young carrion crawler. That night, as the miners cooked the crawler (a rare delicacy in Binsada), His Righteousness recounted his battle. Deep underground, he had found both miners paralyzed by the crawler, which had devoured most of one man. The priest slew the crawler, but he took a wound from its crippling tentacles. He fell frozen and thought he would die. Then, as he told it, "Leira visited me as a pillar of flame. She burned away the poison, then traced a blazing circle in the air. Through that ring, as through a portal, I saw things. Wondrous things. Visions of the future!"

The High Priest's vivid account of Binsadan dominion held all the miners mesmerized. His Righteousness claims that they all instantly converted and begged to join Queen Banira's army. The story spread like a summer grass fire, and the people's morale soared. Queen Banira took this to heart and quickly endorsed the High Priest's prophecy. In the month before her illness struck, she had been preparing to attack the Hydra. Not all clan elders supported this idea—Banira's own cousin, Prince Daoud, criticized it openly—but the people zealously prepared for war. As the new regent takes on Queen Banira's rule and her very identity, the path to conquest seems inevitable.

geography

Like the other western Khinasi domains, Binsada is a flat, grassy savannah. Only a small region of rolling hills in the east, topped by small groves of trees, interrupts the expanse. The grass is esparto, or needlegrass, a tough, fibrous green-brown grass that resists drought and is good for cordage and baskets.

Binsada is bordered by water and dust. The eastern border with Zikala is marked by the wide brown Moura, a river that flows calmly for

the land and its nomads

most of its length, save for a young rapids in the hills of Andujar. The northern river of Asarwe, by contrast, rushes blue and turbulent until it settles into the dank Harrowmarsh on Binsada's western border.

To the south, the Sea of the Golden Sun is placid, the sky usually clear, the wind typically gentle. However, the rocky coast has no safe harbor; a boat can barely steer to the mouth of the el-Tasri without dashing itself on jagged fangs of stone. On the eastern border, the Moura's mouth offers a fair port, but Zikala guards it with the fortified city of Turin. It is unlikely that Binsadans would willingly maintain a port. Though the Basarji (Khinasi) peoples are descended from seafarers, some Khinasi have descended further than others. Binsadans have discarded the nautical lore of their ancestors. They view sailing as a disreputable and desperate trade. They venture onto water only on the el-Tasri and Moura rivers.

Water or swamp marks every border save for the northeast, where grassland quickly gives way to the hostile desert of the Sphinx.

Climate: The climate is warm year-round, and arid except near the Harrowmarsh, where it rains every three or four days during the winter.

The *binsad*, a hot dry wind from the northeast, blows each spring and autumn, carrying thousands of tons of sand toward the ocean. Much falls on Binsada, and although the nomads enjoy spectacular red sunsets at this time, the gusts bring death and disease to their cattle.

The people say the *binsad* is the breath of the Sphinx.

Minerals: The Old Binsadans mined gold and silver from the hills around Andujar, but the veins were exhausted centuries ago. The abandoned shafts have become lairs for underground monsters. Prospectors have found copper and marble in the western provinces near the Harrowmarsh border, but the Hydra's presence renders it too risky to mine them.

The only significant mineral resource in Binsada is salt. Adventurers from cooler, well-watered lands seldom appreciate the importance of this vital nutrient in dry climates. Perspiration in the desiccating heat of Khinasi lands rapidly leaches it from wanderers on the open plains and deserts. Ancient stone tablets from Irboud and the Tarvan Wastes show that in those times, traders exchanged gold for salt, pound for pound!

In Old Binsada's inland provinces, salt was worth its weight in, if not gold, at least copper. The Old Binsadans had not discovered the salt mines near Andujar, which were found only under the el-Sharafs in the late 1700's

MR. Salt mining has become a minor industry near Andujar, but no one likes the work. Clan elders in Andujar sentence criminals to the mines, as a "humane" alternative to exile, mutilation, or death.

In the largest salt mine, Sarra-Binnsa, High Priest Haswan Mandil experienced his vision of Binsadan conquest (see page 6).

plants and animals

The edge of the Harrowmarsh is a gravid wetland, thick with marsh glasswort, damselflies and sand spiders, flamingoes and grebes, nuthatches, treecreepers, and brilliant green butterflies. Papyrus reeds and cork trees are harvested amid great danger by brave traders. The papyrus reeds are soaked and pounded into paper. The paper is used not for writing, but for kites (see page 15).

A few wild olive trees grow in the arid eastern hills. By custom, these trees are considered the regent's property. Commoners greatly envy the ruler's meals, prepared with olive oil instead of beef fat.

Along the rocky coast grow some of the oldest trees in all Cerilia: small, twisted bristlecone pines that divination magic has dated at four thousand years old. Pine needles and sap from

these trees are reputed to be efficacious in *incense of meditation*.

The Petrified Forest: Most unusual of Binsada's trees, or perhaps of its mineral resources, is the forest of stone trees at the northern border, near the Serir Regal forest in Sendoure. The trees in the Petrified Forest are not fragmentary fossils like those sometimes found in the Tarvan Wastes and the Icemarch. Instead, this two-square-mile wood consists of intact trees that have been magically transmuted to rock. Stone leaves still hang from their branches, and stone birds perch on their upper limbs. Over the years, souvenir hunters have depleted the stone-bird population on lower branches.

Though no one has confirmed the identities of the two stone figures at the center of the forest, local folklore claims that the shorter one is the human true wizard Ventinah Falas of Old Binsada, and the taller one is an elf wizard of Coulabhie, known today only as the Woodworker. Falas and the Woodworker, says the legend, fought many centuries ago for control of Serir Rigal, which was then a much larger forest extending across northern Binsada. No account of their duel has survived. No one can positively identify either decapitated figure. Perhaps if one or the other's stone head is found and replaced on its body, a careful use of *stone to flesh* might restore the victim and grant a fascinating glimpse of Binsada's lost history.

Animals: Herds of cattle have supplanted almost all native animals larger than red foxes, weasels, and fringe-toed lizards. Though antelope and gazelles once roamed these plains, Old Binsadans hunted them to extinction. Birds remain prolific in the region, though, for the Old Binsadans regarded them as sacred. Cream-colored coursers, grouse, quail, lanner falcons, and wheatears are all main characters in Binsadan fables. None are so prominent as the ruffed bustard, a plump, lazy bird legendary for its stupidity. Nomads joke that if a line of bustards perches on a fence and an archer shoots one, the others won't move. Its flesh is unappetizing, its feathers mangy, and only its mediocrity has spared the ruffed bustard from extinction. Calling a Binsadan "bustard" is a terrible insult.

Agriculture: Though the nomads are cattle herders, the subject "settler" tribes who

pay them tribute farm. Along the flat banks of the el-Tasri, they grow wheat and sorghum in rotation. The settlers raise some fruit and vegetables, which make up the bulk of the tribute they pay the nomads. For more about the settlers, see page 11.

the awnsheghlien

Nearly all the Khinasi lands are troubled by the evil monsters of Azrai's bloodline, and Binsada is in greater danger than most. Though none of the three awnsheghlien at Binsada's borders are ancient heirs of Mount Deismaar like the Gorgon, Manticore, or Chimaera, they are all superhumanly powerful.

Binsada's most benign awnshegh is also its most recent arrival. The Harpy was created over a century ago by unknown means (rumor speaks of a magical sword) from the unwitting union of a spell-singing wizard, Khabarah Habban, with the queen of the harpies on an island off Binsada's coast. The Harpy has organized her avian followers into a devastating force, but Habban's virtuous nature still dominates her, for the moment. Her only hostile moves have been raids on ships that pass too near her island domain.

Next oldest of the awnsheghlien is the Hydra, which has ruled the region west of Binsada for centuries. Mapmakers once called this marsh Sodden Falls. The name it bears today, Harrowmarsh, comes from Anuirean heroes who sought the Hydra but found only its harrowing, inhuman habitat. They were the lucky ones; the ferocious reptilian monster has slain and eaten seven scions over the ages, whose heads now sprout from its gargantuan body. The Hydra's dangerous offspring, called hydrakin, infest the Harrowmarsh, as do criminal exiles and refugees from surrounding domains. Fortunately, the monster seems content to remain in its bug-infested swamp.

Oldest and worst of the three awnsheghlien is the Sphinx, a human-lion fusion ages old. The Sphinx conquered Irboud centuries ago and has reduced it to a desert waste populated by brigands, goblins, gnolls, and the great cats that carry out its orders. A longtime menace to trade, the Sphinx craves territory and power above all else.

Heretofore Binsadan traders, and occasionally even armies, have placated the Sphinx with bribes, but in recent years its desires have grown too expensive. Rumor has it that the Sphinx is preparing an assault on the fortress of Ber Dairas.



The Binman: This is a lesser awnshegh, a freakish creature assembled over a century ago from body parts of various human and demihuman races. Its creator, the mad Sendouorean wizard Danita Kusor, is now an awnshegh called the Chimaera. The Binman, animated by the Chimaera's bloodline magic, roams Binsada, Zikala, and Sendoure, seeking purpose and power. It has the skills of a warrior, but its nature is unpredictable and often amoral. *[For more about the Binman and the other awnsheghlien, see Blood Enemies.]*

the ghostlion

The Sphinx recruited this spectral lioness from the Shadow World to wreak havoc in Binsada and, if possible, destroy Queen Banira. Larger and fiercer than Cerilia's lions, this ghostly assassin also has keen intelligence. She carefully surveys a clan encampment for many nights, determines who has the magical weapons that could harm her, decoys them away from camp, then attacks the helpless camp members. The lioness bursts into the center of the camp, her pale hide glowing with a pearly light, her eyes lava-red, her breath sulfurous. After killing all who attack her, the ghostlion speaks in a hollow, rumbling voice: "I shall kill and kill until you bring your queen." Then, she bounds and vanishes into the night.

Some clan elders recall tales from their grandparents of a similar visit by a spectral cat, perhaps the ghostlion herself, over a century ago. The regent of the time, Queen Cassimalah, defeated the creature by journeying to a ruin within the Sphinx's domain, where the beast had first appeared and attacked a passing caravan. The queen found an item there, remembered today only as "a bone," that she and her High Priest used to banish the beast to the Shadow World. No one knows where the present ghostlion first appeared, but its first attack occurred two weeks ago, just northwest of Andujar.

The ghostlion has the statistics of a female spotted lion (see "Cat, Great" in the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*), except for higher Intelligence, better morale, and immunity to nonmagical weapons.

Ghostlion (Cat, Great): AC 6; MV 12; HD 6+2; hp 50; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d4/1d4/1d12; SA rear claws; SD magical weapon to hit; SZ M (6' long); ML champion (16); Int 16; AL NE; XP 2,000.

Notes: Surprised only on a 1; leaps 30 feet; if both forepaws hit, rear claws rake for 2d4 each. Sunlight drives it back to the Shadow World in 1d4+1 rounds.

provinces and people

Except for the fortress capital of Ber Dairas and the small village of Andujar, Binsada has no permanent settlements worth the name. The "settlers" who pay tribute to the nomads live in small groups near Ber Dairas or along the rivers. Each of twelve nomad clans occupies its provincial territory, most clan members moving with the cattle herds. However, most clans live for the spring and summer months in semi-permanent "sun camps," which double as Law and Guild holdings (see page 24). The clan elders own circular courts within Ber Dairas, which they occupy when the clans gather there at festivals four times each year.

roads and routes

Binsada has no roads. Caravan trails of hard-packed dirt parallel the rivers, and another trail connects Ber Dairas and Andujar. Smaller trails branch off from these like the veins of a leaf, leading to the "sun camps" of the nomads or the huts of settlers. The nomads need no roads, for their cattle herds keep the grass close-cropped, and the land is so flat that a rider can race across the open plain almost as fast as on a paved road.

The barge village: The wide and placid Moura River between Andujar and Turin hosts one of Cerilia's most unusual forms of transport: a floating village. It is composed of over a hundred barges, lashed together with needlegrass ropes, guided and propelled by hundreds of sweating oarsmen. The oarsmen are Zikalan convicts or Binsadan employees of the barge captain, the "sheriff" of the unnamed village.

More than a thousand people live here, either permanently or for the duration of their trip downriver. The village makes frequent stops at settler huts or to meet passing caravans. Some barges are markets, merchant booths, or even restaurants. The people are boisterous, and one barge or another is always hosting a party at any hour of day or night. The festivities often develop into brawls, but the people simply heave the offenders overboard. The sheriff fishes out the combatants when they've cooled off.

In times past, even the regents of Binsada and Zikala occasionally rode on the barge village in disguise, picking up the gossip and thoughts of their people.

the people

The name "Khinasi" is a shortened form of *kbir-asten el-Arrasi*, "lands under the protection of el-Arrasi," the Ariyan mage-king who led the heroic war to free these lands from Anuirean dominion. The People of the East Wind prize el-Arrasi's legacy as much as all other Khinasi.

The nomads belong to the familiar Khinasi stock, identifiable by their tawny or dusky skin, black hair and eyes, broad features, high cheekbones, and wide noses. Men are taller on average than Anuireans and tend toward rangy or wiry builds. Women are of average height, often stocky, and usually wide-hipped. Almost all are slightly bowlegged from a lifetime of riding.

Other Khinasi who have visited Binsada, even those who remain convinced the nomads are barbarians, always remark on how attractive the young men and women are, and how wrinkled are the elders. Life on the open savannah weathers handsome faces like the twisted bristlecone pines on Binsada's shore. However, no one complains about the wrinkles (at least not too loudly), for lines are a mark of age, and in Binsada, age equals status.

government

Insofar as it has a government, Binsada may loosely be called an oligarchy. Its people belong to 11 clans, and the clan elders make laws, mete out justice, and raise armies. The queen rules as an elder among elders, by virtue of the strength and status of her clan, and of her personal honor and leadership within it.

In another sense, Binsada is a theocracy. The word of a priest of Leira, especially that of His Righteousness Haswan Mandil, is beyond reproach or appeal, even by the queen.

However, in reality, Binsada is an anarchy. Nomads wandering the grassy plains may safely ignore any authority save the weather and the herd. The amalgam of different and fragmentary governmental systems perplexes other Khinasi, but for the Binsadans, their way is the most natural in the world.

clans and livelihoods

The clans proper are made up almost entirely of humans. A few elves and halflings are adopted as honorary members of each clan in recognition of their heroic service, excellent ability, or personal connections. Most demihumans in Binsada live outside the clans as "settlers" (see below).

Each clan occupies one province. The clan elders handle routine duties of governing their province—administering laws, resolving disputes, and collecting taxes.

Each clan also has one larger duty to the domain, such as regulating caravans or serving as sentries against troops of an awnsheghlien. For the six most powerful clans, including the el-Reshid ruling clan, the duty is providing one cavalry unit (200 riders). Each unit roams on what is supposed to be a regular route around the borders, so that any stretch of the border is patrolled every few days. In practice, a given boundary may see three cavalry companies pass in as many hours, in three different directions, then no one passes by for a week.

The provinces (with levels in parentheses), their clans, and their duties:

High Asarwe (3/2): el-Harfeh, customs.

Low Asarwe (3/2): el-Agadir, army.

Deishel (1/4): el-Layune, transport.

Mermoune (2/3): el-Mermoune, watching Sphinx.

Ber Dairas (4/1): el-Reshid, army (the elite Lions of Dusk unit); ruling clan.

Ghouref (1/4): el-Ghouref, army.

el-Tasri (2/3): el-Tasri, army.

Andujar (3/2): el-Djebel, army.

Khesselim (1/4): el-Khesselim, watching Hydra.

Harpy's Watch (1/4): el-Saldiah, watching Harpy.

Moura (3/2): el-Zagora, army.

The size of a clan mirrors the level of the province. A clan in a Level 1 province numbers about 1,000 to 1,500 members; Level 2 and

3 provinces have clans with 2,000 to 4,000 members. In Binsada's sole Level 4 province, the el-Reshid clan is about 4,000 strong, and an additional 6,000 settlers.

Settlers: These farmers, craftspeople, and fisherfolk are subservient to the nomad clans. Though tiny hamlets of under a hundred people are scattered across the plains, most settlers live near Ber Dairas or along the rivers.

The settlers pay tribute to the governing clan, usually in kind: If a settler harvests flax plants from the river bank and turns them into linen cloth, he pays a bolt of cloth each quarter; those who raise grain pay a few bushels from each harvest. The nomads treat settlers humanely, but look upon their fixed way of life with contempt.

Few settlers risk trouble with the nomads, but occasionally a farmer tries to fence his fields, or a weaver claims she has too little cloth to afford her taxes. News of conflicts is forwarded to the clan elders, who haphazardly resolve them based on their personal liking for the settler in question.

crime and justice

The Old Binsadans followed the law of *talion*. A criminal paid for the crime he committed with a like restitution. If a criminal killed a clan elder's

a wandering people

son, the clan elder would kill the criminal's son in return. This policy promulgated endless feuds within and between clans.

Modern Binsada has tempered this unforgiving code by permitting an offender to pay restitution, or *redemption*, to his victim's clan. Acceptance of payment removes all stain of guilt from the criminal; refusal to remit causes punishment by other means, such as mutilation, exile, or death. If the criminal flees before sentencing, the victim's entire clan is honor-bound to find and return him to justice.

Clan elders set redemptions according to the Pendicle, a loose oral code passed down through the centuries. "Pendicle" literally means "hanging ornament," referring to the orange, flame-shaped, silken pennant the elders suspend from the peak of the tent to indicate when a hearing is in session. It is said that beauty is truth, and Leira, goddess of beauty, does not look kindly upon those who sully fact with lies. According to folklore, perjurers provoke the wrath of Leira herself, setting the pendicle ablaze with her holy flame (or at least a *detect lie* spell).

Here are some of the Pendicle's guidelines:

500 gp redemption: Property theft, unlawful entry, vandalism, cruelty to one's horse or other animals. A criminal who fails to pay is branded on the cheek or forehead with a symbol representing his offense.

1,000 gp: Bribery, disobeying a decision of the elders, forgery, fraud, impersonating a regent, resisting arrest, pandering, slander, usury. A criminal who can't remit has a hand or foot cut off, or may serve the injured party for a year without pay.

2,000 gp: Arson, assault, battery, escaping justice, theft of horses or cattle, theft or vandalism of a priest's goods. A criminal who can't pay is exiled from Binsada for at least 10 years.

3,000 gp and up: Espionage, insurrection, manslaughter, murder, rape, sabotage, sedition, slavery, treason. These are capital crimes, although in some cases the criminal may instead be exiled for life.

All property crimes (such as theft or vandalism) also require the criminal to make restitution of the item's value.

In disputes between clans, when the clans cannot agree on which elders will hear the case, the regent resolves the dispute.

Every clan elder memorizes the Pendicle litany. In reality, though, Binsada suffers little from crime. Few people own anything worth stealing, and a nomad inspired to commit a crime of passion can find an outlet in a harmless, referreed duel against the person who angered him (see *Competitions*, page 15).

armies

As mentioned above, each of the half-dozen strongest clans provides one 200-rider cavalry unit. Half the clans provide medium cavalry, and the other half gives light cavalry. Units, which include both men and women, are named for the clan that provides them—thus, "Djebel light cavalry," "Ghouref medium," and so on.

Garrison duty at Ber Dairas, which is considered undesirable, is assigned on a rotating basis; one unit guards the capital at all times. This presents dangers when an ambitious clan, a rival to the ruling el-Reshids, controls the citadel. Near the end of her reign, Queen Banira was considering elevating the status of Ber Dairas duty, then assigning it only to loyal clans.

The Lions of Dusk: These elite troops, the queen's personal guards, are the ruling el-Reshid clan's medium cavalry unit. They regard their unshakable loyalty to the queen as synonymous with loyalty to Binsada. The Lions travel with the queen (or, more accurately, vice versa), exempt from the established patrol routes of the other clan units. When the el-Reshids return to Ber Dairas each quarter for festivals (see below), the Lions take over garrison duty from the previously assigned unit.

communications

Every quarter, each clan leaves word of its likely route and schedule with the garrison guards at Ber Dairas. Dispatching an emergency message from anywhere in Binsada to a particular clan often calls for two different couriers. One rides directly to the clan's likeliest location, usually its sun camp in its home province. The other rides to Ber Dairas, receives the latest information on the clan's location, and rides on from there. One or both usually find their destination.

To send simple messages over short distances, a clan member may fly a kite of symbolic shape (see page 15).



The regent uses a troupe of elite couriers who ride the domain's fastest steeds. These messengers, the Flame Arrows, are the only riders in the realm who may embroider their saddles and tack with gold thread. Interference with a Flame Arrow's delivery is a capital crime.

The watcher stones: Binsada's unique form of magical communication dates from the earliest years of Old Binsada. Ancient wizards erected these angular stone monoliths at points that are believed by sages to represent the exact centers of Old Binsadan provinces. The boundaries are now forgotten, as are the wizards, but their stones remain.

The watcher stones are black granite monads engraved with magical symbols. They show no signs of weathering, and conventional attacks cannot damage them. The stones embody passive spirits that hear and see everything that occurs as far as the horizon—and in Binsada, that encompasses an enormous area. A scion of any line except Azrai's can touch the stone, mentally contact the spirit, and ask about any occurrence the stone has observed. Most supplicants ask about recent events, but the watcher spirits' memories extend back over a century before they grow hazy.

If the scion behaves politely towards the stone, listening to its complaints about ailments or birds, or if he fulfills some simple request ("Clean all that moss off my top"), the spirit may telepathically transmit the answer to the scion's

question. A watcher may also pass along a message intended for a specific person, although it can't distinguish individuals well.

Bad weather or magical disturbances may make a watcher cranky enough to refuse to speak at all.

politics

Queen Banira was popular among the clans, but not all regents earn the same love. Though they respect familial claims to the regency, Binsadans rank competence and courage more highly. In their pragmatic, rough-and-ready political thinking, if one is strong enough to claim the Red Tent and do a better job, one should take it!

For many centuries, regents have forestalled such challenges to their authority through a system of hostage-taking. From time to time, the regent "entertains" the eldest daughter or son of a clan elder for a month or more, quartering the offspring in comfort at the capital. This arrangement is known informally as

"honorable captivity." The daughter of a particularly ambitious elder may remain confined for months or years, and is regarded as a threat to the throne if she escapes.

The el-Reshid regents have made adroit use of honorable captivity. The queen makes a point of inviting the oldest daughter of each clan elder to Ber Dairas for at least one month per year. No one can politely refuse a regent's request, particularly not one that grants the honor of Her Highness' hospitality. This allows the queen to hold a hostage and defuse a pending crisis without openly offending a rival clan. In these rare cases, the queen's "invitation" serves as pointed warning against vaulting ambition.

currency and trade

The minting of money is the regent's exclusive prerogative. Binsada's *shetel* is a crude silver disk with an embossed profile of the young Queen Banira on both sides. Banira ordered the production of 1,000,000 coins at the beginning of her reign and has seen no need to mint more. The nomads and settlers do not value their native currency. They use coins from almost any domain, and other Khinasi peoples hold their Binsadan *shetel* in little esteem.

The People of the East Wind deal in kind, not currency. They barter their cattle, beef, leather, horn, and goat cheese for manufactured goods from Ariya or Mesire, wood from Coullabhie, Anuirean and Ariyan textiles, and weapons and tools from any source. Binsadans understand little of finance, but show a remarkable talent for bargaining.

culture

Khinasi in distant domains regard Binsadans as barbarians, illiterate cowherds without mathematics, medicine, philosophy, or decent food. However, the People of the East Wind cherish the same virtues as other Khinasi: fidelity to one's family, piety (though this is less important than in Ariya), courtesy, storytelling ability, and *sayim*, a Basarji term meaning status or "face." Unlike other Khinasi, Binsadans

also place great emphasis on good horsemanship, a sensible value for a nomadic culture.

the nomadic lifestyle

The Binsadan nomads live in a matriarchal society. Women head families, inherit and control most property, and arrange marriages. Ancestral descent is traced matrilineally. Most clan elders are women, although men of sufficient wisdom and years are welcome. Although the law does not specify the regent's gender, all el-Reshid rulers have been female. In the Binsadan Temple, however, most priests are male, as are most army troops.

Horsemanship: It is said that Binsadans are born in the saddle. This is not quite correct, but nomads do spend long stretches of each day riding, starting as soon as they can walk. The quarterly festivals in Ber Dairas feature riding contests and exhibitions that leave foreign visitors slack-jawed with wonder. [*The DM may require that a Binsadan character have the Riding proficiency, and (optionally) may award the character a free +1 bonus to reflect superior Binsadan horsemanship.*]

Clothing: Settlers weave and dye the rough linen fabric, called *kente*, that clothes Binsadans. Prosperous nomads also buy rich Ariyan or Anuirean cloth from caravans.

Traditionally, only the queen and her immediate family (husband, siblings, aunts, and uncles) may wear red. High officials and more distant relatives of the regent may wear red-striped gray cloth. Priests wear brown. Everyone else wears a motley wardrobe of whatever they can afford.

Diet: As roving cattleherders, Binsadans need not look farther than their pastured steer for most of their meals. Tributes of grain, fruit, and vegetables from settlers balance the nomads' diets.

To retard spoilage and maximize portability, most food is dried and salted. Butchery, cooking, and other everyday household chores are shared by entire families, men and women alike.

Marriage: Many marriages are arranged between families when the children are 10 to 12 years old. Betrothals form useful social or economic ties between families of differing wealth or clans. Families of low status may see their children go unmarried until 18 or even 23, practically ancient by Binsadan standards.

The three-day marriage ceremony takes place when the betrothed daughter turns 16. On the first evening, the groom's family pitches temporary tents behind the bride's tent. The next day, the bride's father delivers a calf to the groom's father, representing the future gift of a large dowry of cattle. All day, the families compete in

intense but friendly contests: riding, running, wrestling, archery, and storytelling (the more outrageous the tale, the better). In the evening, the party gathers around the cooking fires to sing. Each song gives advice to the new couple, with varying degrees of seriousness. The groom's father makes a speech praising the groom's fine qualities, and he tells the bride, "If you don't like him, send him back with all his teeth"—in other words, don't abuse him. The bride's father makes a similar speech about the bride, concluding with the same request.

The third day begins with the official wedding ceremony, called "Holy Fire." Building a large bonfire, the groom's family chants an invocation to their clan's legendary ancestral matriarch, notifying her of the marriage of "your great-grandson" and naming the bride. The bride's family chants a ceremonial answer representing the matriarch's approval. Then, in front of the fire, a priest of Leira marries the couple.

The newlyweds then retire to the nearest corral to ritually slaughter a sheep to symbolize a lifetime of cooperation. By tradition, they are required to eat all of the mutton on that same day; by the same tradition, both families help. The couple burns the bones and scatters the ashes in a ring around their nuptial tent.

diversions

Among the nomads, the key to all artistic pursuits is portability. Binsadans do not sculpt in stone, paint canvasses, or build theaters. They have no specialized artists or musicians. Their folk art includes scrimshaw-style engravings on horn (often pictures of cattle), leatherwork, and things knotted in attractive, intricate patterns.

Competitions: Every three months, all the clans converge on Ber Dairas for a three-day festival. This includes a bazaar, a feast (bring your own beef), and competitions of every kind: running, riding, singing, wrestling, swordfighting with blunted blades, and much more. The winner of a contest may catch the queen's eye as a candidate for a mission.

Kites: Binsadans fly kites of all kinds for purposes far more serious than recreation. Diamond, hexagonal, box, and circular kites, serpentine dragon kites with huge papery heads and bodies of many small disks trailing behind—the nomads are master kitemakers. They relay messages by flying kites of particular shapes and colors. A red lion head signals the queen's approach. A white hawk shape indicates danger. A long

brown rectangle marks a priest's coming, and the length of its tail represents his rank.

Kites have military functions as well. Legend says that el-Arrasi, laying siege to an Anuirean fort on the Old Binsadan border, used a kite to take the fort. One night, he flew a kite over the enemy battlements with a lantern bound to its tail. The Anuireans shot it down with arrows. It crashed into the courtyard, shattering the lantern, and a swarm of fire elementals erupted from it. They devastated the garrisoned forces, and the commander surrendered. Modern Binsadan commanders now fly kites over enemy objectives to inspire their troops, then again to celebrate victory once they have taken the target.

Birds: More than kites, the nomads love to watch birds. Many children can identify all of Binsada's birds before they learn all the clans' names. Elders adjourn important meetings to watch a rare bird fly by, and references to the avian habits serve as idioms and metaphors in everyday speech. However, the Binsadans do not adorn themselves with feathers, thinking this a degenerate and tasteless fashion.

Austromancy: The love of birds and kites has inspired a voluminous lore of austromancy, or divination by study of the winds. By examining the pattern of a kite's fluttering or a gull's circling, it seems that any elderly woman in Binsada, can tell one whether one will marry well and the hair color of one's unborn children.

Many of these part-time prophets have made auguries of Binsada's prospects for conquest, and the priesthood relays them to the regent. Every sign and portent bears her destiny: dominion of the continent. Each city and village of Cerilia will soon pay her tribute. Binsada will reign supreme!

the fortress of the east wind

In 1835 MA (347 HC), the king of Binsada, Dantaverah el-Sharaf, "the Tyrant," grew fearful when he learned that the Gorgon had conquered Kiergard. At that time, Binsada had no fortifications, let alone cities. Dantaverah spent two years overtaxing his resentful people and then sought dwarves of Baruk-Azhik to "build for me in a defensible place a mighty fort." He chose three experienced planners, the Brothers Grozhok, known today in Binsadan folklore as "the Three Drunken Dwarves."

A huge company of dwarves broke ground for the capital, Ber Dairas, in 1837 MA (349 HC). Although construction proceeded smoothly, friction erupted between the rambunctious Grozhoks and puritanical, intolerant Dantaverah. Contrary to popular belief in Baruk-Azhik, the king did pay several installments of the fee. However, when the city was completed ahead of schedule in 1842 MA (354 HC), Dantaverah withheld the Grozhoks' final payment and rejected their budget. According to local legend (grossly exaggerated over centuries of campfire talespinning), the dwarves charged the Tyrant for 21,186 tuns of barley beer as "necessary expenses." In the ensuing squabble, Dantaverah banished all dwarves from Binsada. Baruk-Azhik has nurtured a grudge ever since. Persistent rumors whisper that the Grozhoks dug a secret tunnel that would let an enemy army invade Ber Dairas. No one has ever found it.

Ber Dairas is a megalithic eyesore. Its 24-foot walls, gangrenous green basalt over a core of earth, are 20 feet thick at the base and taper to 10 at the top. The city-fortress has no streets, no parks, and few buildings. The royal palace, Reshidia, is an oppressive basalt edifice that looms atop the only hill in the province (altitude: 87 feet).

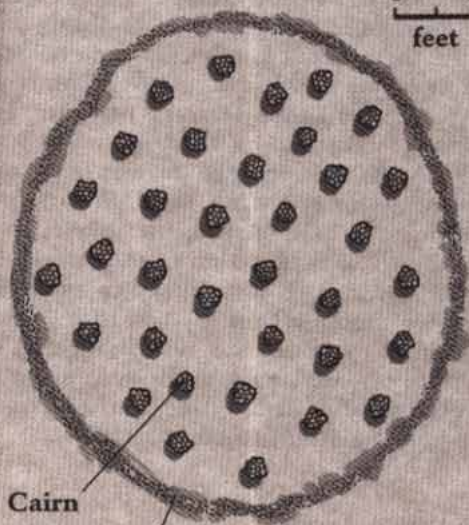
Other buildings, such as barracks and embassies, are shoddy sod constructions. The many empty courts are

meant to accommodate thousands of people and their livestock during an attack. Each clan has its own court, theoretically the clan's sovereign domain. However, sovereignty is a sketchy concept in Binsada, considered to derive from strength rather than titles to land. No clan shows much interest in its court, and none of them care at all for Ber Dairas.

ancestral cairns

(Temple holding)

0 50
feet



Cairn

Salt boundary

Cutaway of Cairn

10 foot diameter base with a height of 10 feet

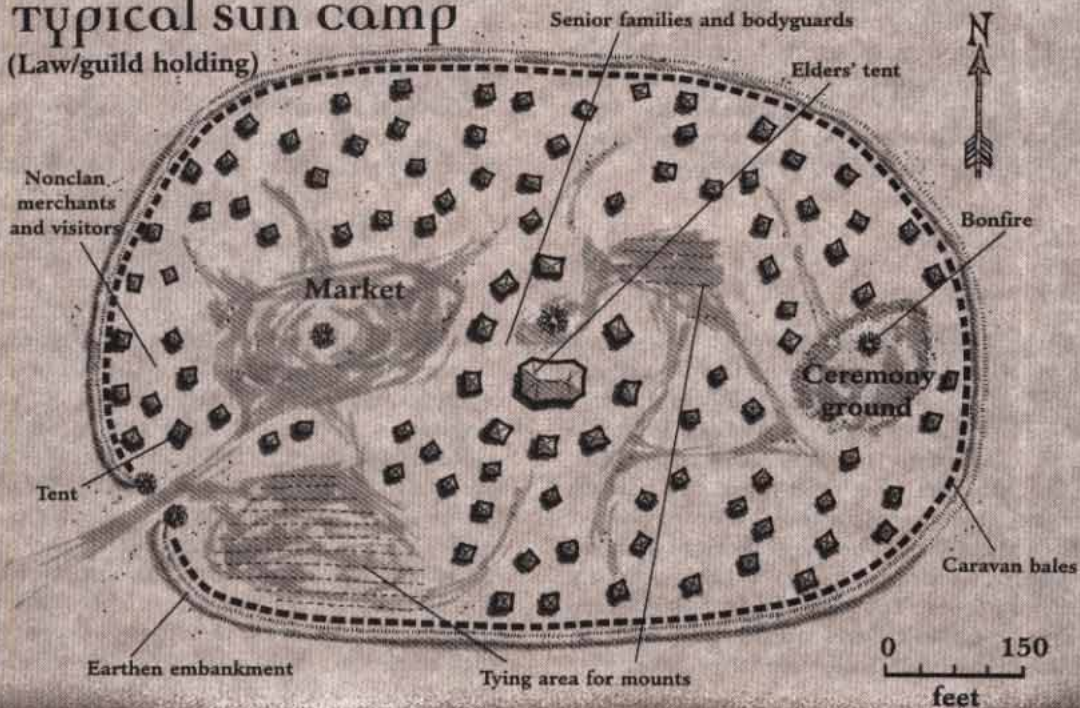


Piled rock covering

Earth and ash mixture

Typical sun camp

(Law/guild holding)



Side view

0 10 20
feet



Depression



Top view

Depression

spirit cave

(Source holding)



The People of the East Wind number in the tens of thousands, but a precise census of Binsada's population is impossible. More than 20,000 nomads and settlers converge on Ber Dairas for the quarterly festivals. Approximately 20,000 additional nomads roam with their herds across the rolling grasslands, never bothering to visit the capital. For every person, there are at least 10 cattle and 10 sheep!

notable nomads

The wanderers of Binsada are all unique and interesting individuals. This section describes a few, but you should feel free to populate your character's domain with many more of your own creation. How many servants carry the regent's tent, and who are they? Who are the Khinasi ambassadors who sulk in the sod embassy huts of Ber Dairas? Give your descriptions of these nonplayer characters to your DM, who can approve or revise the description as desired. Together, you will bestow on the People of the Wind the depth and exotic color they deserve.

demographics

Of an estimated 40,000 Binsadans, only 5,000 are settled anywhere in the province. Most of these farmers, fisherfolk, and craftspeople live within a day's ride of the bazaars in Ber Dairas and Andujar, or the floating markets on the rivers Moura and el-Tasri. The nomads, who roam from north to south with the seasons, outnumber them six or eight to one.

Of the entire population, less than 2,000 have a character class and level. Most are fighters or rangers who command raiding parties, proficient in riding, archery, and mounted combat. Only two or three hundred Binsadans are adventurers above 3rd level. Of these, half are mages, for magicians are greatly respected in the Khinasi domains. However, true blooded wizards, who

tap the magic of the land, are rare. The Hydra and the Sphinx have lured many to horrible fates.

Many mullahs and imams of the Binsadan Temple of Leira carry the title of "priest," but only a few dozen command priestly

magic. Thieves and bards are almost unknown in Binsada. There is little to steal but cattle, and bards are considered scoundrels everywhere along the Sun Coast. Thieves and bards usually find it more profitable to present themselves as respectable merchants.

Classes: Binsada does not recognize the intricate (if unofficial) class structures familiar in other Khinasi lands. Commoners, professionals, named families, aristocracy—these caste-titles are useless baggage to the nomads. One's battle prowess, horsemanship, bravery, eloquence, age, lineage, clan, and herd size determine *sayim*, the Khinasi concept of status.

Two broad classes can be distinguished. Those of great and worthy *sayim* include clan elders, magicians, owners of large herds, and polite, well-married youths. The leaders of this class are the el-Reshids, the royal family. The lower, larger class includes disreputable clans, unremarkable riders, untalented artisans and merchants, and settled farmers and fisherfolk. Though settlers spring from the same family stock as themselves, the nomads regard them with derision. In Binsada, to homestead is to lose status. A settler obviously has no stomach for hardship, no courage to conquer! To the nomads, settlers exist merely sources of tribute. Most settlers are too intimidated by the nomads to venture a contrary opinion.

Races: Nearly all Binsadans are human. There are no dwarves in the land for historical reasons (see page 16). Elves are rare enough to excite comment, for they dislike the open plains. Halflings, pleasant and amicable, but prone to keep to themselves, live in tiny enclaves among the settled farmers and fisherfolk.

the queen's family

The el-Reshids are not a royal family in the usual sense. Queen Banira's clan is considered greatest in *sayim* of all Binsadans, but it is not inherently above the other clans. The el-Reshid's sovereignty is a pragmatic matter of power and leadership, and intermarriage with most of the other clans has been common for eight generations. Their proud vision and able authority have kept the el-Reshids securely in the Red Tent, and Queen Banira has not faced any major threats to her position. However, as the People of the Wind ready themselves to conquer Cerilia, a single, unwise ruler could bring about the clan's downfall.

Your character:

This book assumes that you are playing Lady Medina el-Reshid, younger sister of Queen Banira. See page 20 for her statistics and consult the family tree on the front gatefold of this book. If you wish, you may play a new regent, whom Queen Banira is assumed to have adopted and invested shortly before her dementia.

In either case, you begin your reign in a difficult situation. Few of your subjects realize that Queen Banira is ill, and you dare not reveal your true identity until you have firmly established your own power and authority. Until then, you have a *turban of disguise* that lets you assume Banira's likeness. Thus far, you have played your role convincingly, but Banira must certainly have kept secrets that may still surprise you.

The royal bloodline: Basaia, the old goddess of the sun, light, fire, reason, and logic, has left her mark on many regents in the Khinasi domains. Her energies bestow a wide range of abilities: lie detection, hawk vision, cleverness, resistance to fire or evil, or a sharpened awareness of illusion. Great rulers in other realms have even stepped into bonfires and emerged from

another flame on the other side of the continent, but the regents of Binsada have never possessed this power. Their powers work best when used in service to the domain.

The bloodmark of the clan is the so-called royal eye. Blooded members often have eyes that, in proper lighting, gleam a deep, rich sapphire blue. Among Binsadans, who have black irises, this bloodmark arouses respect verging on awe. At the DM's discretion, your character may automatically have this mark as one of her blood abilities.

people of importance

Below are a few of the many people who serve or oppose the regent of Binsada. Unless otherwise noted, all NPCs are humans of Khinasi descent. These are exceptional figures, leaders of the People of the Wind, and not typical Binsadans.

Note: The lieutenants described in this book have statistics that reflect the regent they served according to *Cities of the Sun*. Adjust their levels to suit your regent PC's level, following the lieutenant guidelines in the rulebook.



banira bint hamilah el-reshid

Former queen, 4th-level fighter

S: 13
D: 12
C: 15
I: 15
W: 10
Ch: 16
AC: 4
hp: 33
MV: 12
THAC0: 17
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d8



Bloodline: Basaia, major, 22

Blood abilities: alertness, bloodmark (distinctive features), unreadable thoughts

(Note: If the campaign assumes that Queen Banira has invested the player character with her bloodline strength, the only blood ability she retains is her bloodmark.)

Equipment: Amulet of proof against location, heirloom dagger, herbal medicines, prayer candles. Before her illness, Queen Banira wore scale armor +2 and carried a scimitar +1 flame tongue.

Typical dialogue: (when coherent) "It is good to talk of caution, yes, but what of the people's spirit? If they want to conquer, will you try to stop them? Think as they do, live as they do, for you are one of them!"

Description: 5 ft. 11 in., 150 lbs., age 33. Long, flowing black hair, tawny skin, strong chin, heavy eyebrows, deep blue eyes. Athletic build. Wears a shroudlike white burnoose, which attendants change frequently.

Background: Queen Banira inherited the Red Tent while still in her teens, but her poise and authority let her carry the weight of regency easily. Through shrewd maneuvering, she held back the Sphinx's armies of gnolls and brigands and maintained trade routes through difficult times. Zikala's increased tariffs provoked her anger, and

toward the end of her reign she had intended to forcefully protest them.

Banira was a strong-willed, mercurial, impetuous monarch who gained her people's love by embodying her people's nomadic lifestyle. She often said that a good ruler shares the life of her people.

She was glad to leave oppressive Ber Dairas, which she despised.

Banira's family is prone to a disease that wastes the mind. Healing magic dispels its effects for only a few minutes at a time. Rather than retain a battery of priests when their magic could help her people, Banira secretly appointed you as her successor and invested you with her power. In her rare moments of lucidity, she hopes the sages and priests of Binsada can discover a cure and restore her mind.

lady medina el-reshid

Regent, 3rd-level thief

S: 12
D: 16
C: 14
I: 13
W: 14
Ch: 16

AC: 4
hp: 18
MV: 12
THAC0: 19
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d8



Bloodline: Basaia, major, 15

Blood abilities: Bloodmark (distinctive features), enhanced sense (hawk vision)

Equipment: Banira's scale mail +2, Banira's scimitar +1 flame tongue, heirloom dagger, bat (turban) of disguise

Typical dialogue: "Your Righteousness, my sister would have faced this danger laughing. I cannot say I feel like laughing, but I shall do my best to confront it as she would."

Description: Medina usually poses as Banira by means of her turban of disguise. In reality, she is 5 ft. 9 in., 140 lbs., age 29, with thick black hair cut short, tawny skin, heavy eyebrows, deep blue eyes. Slender, agile build. Wears a red burnoose (the color of royalty), with the small turban hidden under its hood.

Background: Lady Medina, Queen Banira's younger sister and successor, is assumed to be the player character regent. Never as athletic as her sister, Medina spent Banira's reign carrying out mercantile and diplomatic errands that, after repeated struggles, she persuaded Banira to delegate to her. These missions often required the aid of adventurers, from whom Medina learned her thieving skills almost as a hobby. On one of her excursions, she found the *turban of disguise* that she now uses three or four times each day to impersonate Banira.

Medina developed a taste for the adventuring life and had no ambition to rule, but now that her beloved sister has invested her as regent, Medina has resolved to do the best job she can. She views this act as preservation of the queen's formidable honor and reputation. Only the High Priest and the three healers attending the queen are aware of Medina's double identity.

his righteousness haswan mandil

High Priest, 4th-level priest

S: 9
D: 9
C: 12
I: 16
W: 17
Ch: 18

AC: 6
hp: 20
MV: 12
THAC0: 18
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d6



Bloodline: Vorynn, minor, 9
Blood ability: unreadable thoughts
Equipment: Scale armor, quarterstaff, holy symbol (brass-bound wax candle), flint and steel

Typical dialogue: See "The High Priest's Exhortation," page 2.

Description: 6 ft., 150 lbs., age 59. Curly salt-and-pepper hair, black eyebrows, long white-streaked black beard. Wide, powerful face, hawk nose, sturdy build. Headlong, presumptuous manner. Wears red-striped gray robes.

Background: The High Priest of the Binsadan Temple of Leira for nearly 25 years, Haswan Mandil is a fiery old priest, like most of his predecessors in the Temple's 500-year history. Unlike most Binsadan priests, he is literate and highly educated, having studied as a boy in the ancient city of Ariya. His Righteousness downplays this learning, preferring to be a man of his people. His education shows only in his matchless oratorical

skill. He preaches that the Temple must rescue erring spirits by bringing them to Leira's holy flame, whether voluntarily or by conquest. Leira, he says, is poised to become the leader and all-encompassing embodiment of all the gods of Deismaar. His sermons are so earnest that his listeners can hardly get a word in edgewise.

Haswan's vision of conquest came at a time when the Binsadan nomads had almost given up hope. He still travels the domain tirelessly, preaching that domination of all Cerilia is Leira's will. Now, zealous Binsadans crowd outside his tent, chanting, praying, awaiting the latest divine revelation to the Goddess' chosen priest.

gaered vorduine

General, 5th-level Anuirean fighter

S: 17
D: 12
C: 15
I: 17
W: 8
Ch: 13

AC: 4
hp: 35
MV: 12
THAC0: 16
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d8



Bloodline: Reynir, tainted, 8
Blood ability: unreadable thoughts
Equipment: Anuirean banded mail, long sword, ring of feather falling, brooch of shielding, potion of extra-healing

Typical dialogue: "You are from the el-Agadir cavalry? A fine unit, no matter what the el-Zagorans say. —What? Oh, let it pass, they're just envious. As I was saying— *You!* Get back from those weapons! By Sera, touch them again and I'll slice your eyes!"

Description: 6 ft. 3 in., 220 lbs., age 38. Thick blonde hair and beard, green eyes, stub nose, wide face. Wears bright Anuirean open-throated shirt, black breeches, knee boots, many good luck charms and nonmagical talismans. Moody, fickle manner, first bluff and friendly, then violent and unpredictable.

Background: Gaered Vorduine has always served Queen Banira loyally. No one knows why. The queen met him at the edge of the Harrowmarsh, when she and a patrol found him battling a hydrakin. Only she and

Gaered returned from the battle alive, and neither has ever explained what happened. She had already formed a mysterious bond with him, and she soon made him leader of Binsada's armies.

Gaered reached Binsada after a checkered life as a soldier in Roesone (discharged for seducing his commander's wife), mercenary scout in Elinie (sole survivor of an ambush by Markazor goblins), poacher in the Sielwode, honored lieutenant in Kiergard's cavalry (led a disastrous attack on the Vampire's Hold), and mercenary captain in Rohrmarch (where he provoked a small war with Kiergard).

Gaered shows great skill and intelligence, but he is convinced that he was cursed at birth. He has received countless blessings from priests of all faiths, and has paid for a hundred hex-breakings, but he still believes that he remains a doomed wanderer. In reality, Gaered's only curse is his troublemaking, politicking nature.

If Gaered learns he no longer serves Banira, he may defect. If he behaves true to his history, he won't leave without creating problems for Binsada.

prince daoud ibn mustaf el-reshid

6th-level ranger

S:	13
D:	14
C:	14
I:	12
W:	14
Ch:	11
AC:	6
hp:	40
MV:	12
THAC0:	15
#AT:	1
Dmg:	1d8



Bloodline: Basaia, minor, 19

Blood abilities: Bloodmark (distinctive features), unreadable thoughts

Equipment: Studded leather armor, scimitar, *amulet of proof against location and detection*

Typical dialogue: "Your Highness, if you had seen those Zikalan legions marching by, rank upon rank upon rank, you wouldn't be so bold in your plans to— You can't silence me! I, too, am of regal blood! Let me finish!"

Description: 6 ft. 1 in., 190 lbs., age 33. Short, black wavy hair and beard, deep blue eyes,

thin scar along nose. Slim build, graceful and precise movements. Wears brown and green on the plains, a red-striped burnoose in camp.

Background: Queen Banira assigned her close cousin to scout the eastern border, where he led a small scout patrol under the Sphinx's constant threat of attack. Some cynical observers said Her Highness was removing the ambitious Daoud's threat to her regency. Others felt that Daoud, who was familiar with the land by his constant wandering, was truly the best person for the job. Both opinions were correct.

Daoud likes Banira personally, but he strongly disapproved of her sanction of the High Priest's call to conquest. Daoud believes Binsada is over-matched by Zikala and the power of the Sphinx. He has vocally criticized her policy, and has discretely investigated the extent of the el-Reshid clan's support for his contemplated bid for the Red Tent. Though headstrong and sensitive to criticism, Daoud holds Binsada's welfare above all, and he performs his duties well.

corazon bint rilni, the red witch

9th-level wizard

S:	9
D:	13
C:	13
I:	18
W:	14
Ch:	12
AC:	6
hp:	35
MV:	12
THAC0:	18
#AT:	1
Dmg:	1d6 or by spell



Bloodline: Vorynn, major, 27

Blood abilities: animal affinity (minor, owl), blood history, resistance (major, invocation/evocation wizard spells)

Typical spells memorized: *Armor* and *stoneskin* spells in effect. 1st level: *burning hands*, *detect magic*, *protection from evil*, *sleep*; 2nd: *bind*, *scare*, *stinking cloud*; 3rd: *dispel magic*, *fireball*, *fly*; 4th: *fear*, *phantasmal killer*; 5th: *hold monster*. Realm spells: *Dispel realm magic*, *mass destruction*, *summoning*

Equipment: Ironwood staff, leather pouch of material components, *wand of magic missiles*, *amulet of proof against detection and location*, *ring of fire resistance*, many other minor magical items

Typical dialogue: "Yes, yes, hold that thought, wait a bit, I've made a major breakthrough in the war against that blasted lizard—at least I think

so—but hold! Where am I? Corazón! Corazón, where are you?"

Description: 6 ft., 140 lbs., apparent age 58. White hair, light tan skin, glittering black eyes. Gaunt build; wears a thin red shift wrapped and patched with many colored swatches of cloth. Piercing gaze; waddles like a wading bird.

Background: Like many wizards, Binsada's court wizard tells little of her background. Corazón comes from a minor family in Sendoure, but she won't say which one. A spooky old woman who makes nearly everyone uneasy, the Red Witch earned her name by wearing red in defiance of custom. Scarlet raiments are the exclusive privilege of the regent and her immediate family. No one could persuade the Red Witch to change, and they didn't want to push the issue.

Corazón appears in the regent's camp at random intervals, but she spends most of her time in an obsessive struggle against the Hydra. She has revealed that the awnshegh killed her mother, also a wizard, when Corazón was an apprentice. She vowed revenge, and she has pursued it for decades. Now, more than a little crazed, the Red Witch espouses mercurial and addle-headed theories about the Hydra's weaknesses. She sometimes believes herself to be her own mother, for she inherited her mother's memories at birth. In a crisis, Corazón will sometimes weave a spell that she didn't realize she knew. She didn't—her mother did.

kort bregeden

8th-level Brecht thief

S: 11
D: 18
C: 15
I: 14
W: 10
Ch: 12

AC: 6
hp: 45
MV: 12
THACO: 17
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d6

Bloodline: Unblooded

Equipment: *Leather armor +2, short sword, dagger, ring of invisibility*

Typical dialogue: "Naaaowww, dear sir, you must understand that the cost of my operations rises *dramatically* with each passing day. If you withhold your payments, my people can't guarantee your safety against the terrible brigands of the Harrowmarsh. Did you hear what they did to that darling little girl in High Asarwe? Drowned. Tch, tch."



Description: 6 ft. 1 in., 210 lbs., age 39. Thin red-blond hair (balding), pudgy round face, deep-set brown eyes, pushed-in nose, thick lips, no chin. Heavy, but nimble. Wears a dirty gray burnoose and many rings (only one is magical). Unctious, simpering manner, purring voice.

Background: This malevolent rogue came to the Khinasi lands from the Rohrmarch. He'd heard there were few thieves in this region, and thought fat-pursed cattleherders would make easy marks. He soon learned that Binsadans were not as gullible as he had hoped. Fleeing from Sendoure into the swamps of the Harrowmarsh, Bregeden fell in with many other fugitives there. Through cunning and threats, he gradually rose to command a band of brigands. In the guise of "merchant guildmasters of Harrowmarsh," they have monopolized western Binsada's trade through extortion and protection rackets.

Bregeden originally planned to make a fortune and escape to the Free City of Anuire. In recent months, observing the nomads' rising fervor over the High Priest's prophecy of conquest, Bregeden has tried to capitalize on the excitement. In the Ber Dairas market, merchants have begun to hear rumors (started by Bregeden himself) that the High Priest has told all market people to move to the west, where the campaign will begin. This brings the merchants under Bregeden's influence. After extorting their service, Bregeden may send these fools back to Ber Dairas to do his dirty work.

delia of coeranys

4th-level Anuirean fighter/thief

S: 14
D: 16
C: 14
I: 13
W: 10
Ch: 15

AC: 8
hp: 30
MV: 12
THACO: 17
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d8



Bloodline: Anduiras, minor, 12

Blood abilities: Courage, iron will

Equipment: Leather armor, scimitar, *periapt of proof against poison*

Typical dialogue: "Your Highness! May I present to you a sample of these fine dates, just in from a caravan from Turin? Trade has grown so dangerous of late, and those bloodsuckers in Zikala make it no easier. May I describe to you the methods I have implemented to blunt the bastard-beaks of the enemies of the realm and the Goddess?"

Description: 5 ft. 5 in., 110 lbs., age 31. Brown hair clipped short, thin face, narrow nose, piercing gray eyes, thin lips. Slender build, consciously disarming manner (but tense with flirtatious men). Wears a red-striped gray burnoose, with an earring and rings of Anuirean manufacture.

Background: Although she is undeniably of Anuirean descent, no one can verify that Delia Sharay was born in Coeranys. However, she got her start in business there in the province of Bogsend, running errands for Ghorien Hiriele and the Overland Traders. Delia left Coeranys heartbroken after falling in unrequited love with Hiriele. In Binsada, people wonder why the man didn't take Delia as his second wife, but who can understand foreigners?

Delia has (so far) shown no love for anyone or anything in Binsada except wealth. When she found the Saere Consortium, a sleepy association of cattle barons and merchants in six central Binsadan provinces, Delia joined and learned all its operations. When its aging guildmaster retired three years later, Delia used political skills honed in cutthroat Coeranys to slide past many senior members and take over.

In the six turbulent years since then, Delia has achieved success that has stifled any resentment the members may have felt about her rapid rise to power. With her Anuirean connections, she has opened profitable trade routes to Coeranys and to Osoerde. She coolly opposes her guild's chief rival, the Extraordinary Trade Company of

Turin, and leads occasional espionage actions against the Company's holdings in Andujar and Moura. She holds Kort Bregeden's protection operation in open contempt, dismissing it as a minor threat. Few

realize that Delia hopes to extend the Saere Consortium's reach into Coeranys and eventually drive her old love, Hiriele, out of business.

hekti one-arm

0-level street urchin

S: 9
D: 18
C: 13
I: 15
W: 11
Ch: 10

AC: 6
hp: 4
MV: 12
THAC0: 20
#AT: 1
Dmg: 1d2



Bloodline: Unblooded

Equipment: Pocketknife, leather pouch of clay marbles.

Typical dialogue: "Haswan was really preaching up a frenzy today, Auntie Ban . . . uh, I mean, Your Highness. The will of the Goddess, her unquenchable blaze, your divine right to conquest, purifying the infidels with Leira's holy flame, torching the abominations to cinders in the wake of her chosen people, all the usual stuff. At this rate, the High Priest is gonna have hydraskin boots by breakfast."

Description: 5 ft., 90 lbs., age 12. Wavy, cowlicky shocks of black hair, gray-green eyes, mischievous grin. Lanky, limber, agile. Wears grass-stained, tattered rags while spying in bazaars.

Background: Hekti still has two arms, thanks to Leira's grace and her High Priest's presence when the crushing wheels of a runaway cart severed the small boy's limb. Queen Banira, who also witnessed the accident, took the orphan into her care during his recuperation. Years later, Banira's grateful ward became her eager spy and informant. Hekti, now a jovial and curious 12-year-old, can wriggle into the oddest places and overhear the most secret conversations. He informs the queen of the peoples' morale. Hekti is unaware of Banira's illness, and would be crushed by the loss of his beloved "Auntie Ban" if he knew.

Though you reign in Queen Banira's stead, you gain the Regency Points from her Law holdings in Binsada. Others control holdings within your borders: Haswan Mandil leads the Binsadan Temple of Leira, Delia of Coerany's administers the guilds of the Saere Consortium, and the Red Witch draws magical power from the land's sources. Three foreign regents, including the Hydra, also stake claims to holdings in Binsada.

To bring the light of Leira to Cerilia, your character must ally with or defeat these other regents. This section details their holdings.

law and guilds

The 11 Binsadan clans occupy "sun camps" in their native provinces for over half the year. Though the campers can easily pick up and move, these camps occupy the same sites, summer after summer. Some clans have used the same worn swatch of savannah for their clans' entire existence, although there is little to distinguish one patch of ground from another in most of Binsada.

In the summer months, while keeping one eye on the cattle herds that graze on the rich grass, clan elders hear complaints, resolve disputes, and maintain order in the regent's name. Meanwhile, guild agents trade and conduct business everywhere in camp. The sun camps become de facto Law and Guild holdings.

A typical sun camp includes about six dozen canvas tents. Each tent, about the size of a large one-story house, is partitioned into smaller enclosures by decorated canvas curtains. The elders and infants of several families live comfortably in a tent, while the rest of the family sleeps in blankets outside under the stars. The clan leaders' tents are in the camp's center, and other families pitch their tents in concentric circles around the middle. The closer a tent stands to the center, the higher the status of its occupants.

For protection, most camps dig a circular earth embankment about six feet high. The campers pound the steep, curved wall flat by running their cattle herds over it. Two to four sentries walk the crest of this embankment, and torches light its length. As a second line of defense, bales of trade goods are stacked in a high ring within the embankment. Archers fire from behind these bales, which are identified by the owners' family glyphs or brands.

Trading: As guild holdings, sun camps are busy marketplaces. Every five to seven days, people from all over the province gather to sell goods, buy provisions, bargain hard, and gossip endlessly. In the evening after a market day,

buyers and sellers tarry to build bonfires and amuse themselves. Since bards are not usually welcome in Binsada, nor in any Khinasi land, people entertain themselves with homespun tales, songs, and dancing.

holdings

Each seller pays a percentage of his receipts to the local guildmaster or market manager. These commissions flow to one of the three guilds that fight, in desultory fashion, for control of Binsadan trade. The Saere Consortium, led by Delia of Coerany's (see page 23), controls trade in the six central provinces, where her holdings total 8 RP per Domain Turn. Delia's control of the el-Tasri has also let her establish a sea route to Coerany's, though the river's mouth is hardly a desirable port.

Delia's main competition comes from the Hydra's agents, who control trade in the western provinces of High Asarwe [guild (2)], Low Asarwe [guild (3)], and Mermoune [guild (1)]. They have even established covert inroads into Ber Dairas itself [guild (1)]. These agents are unwillingly anonymous because ambitious underlings overthrow them as soon as they gain formidable reputations. As long as tribute flows without interruption, the Hydra does not care.

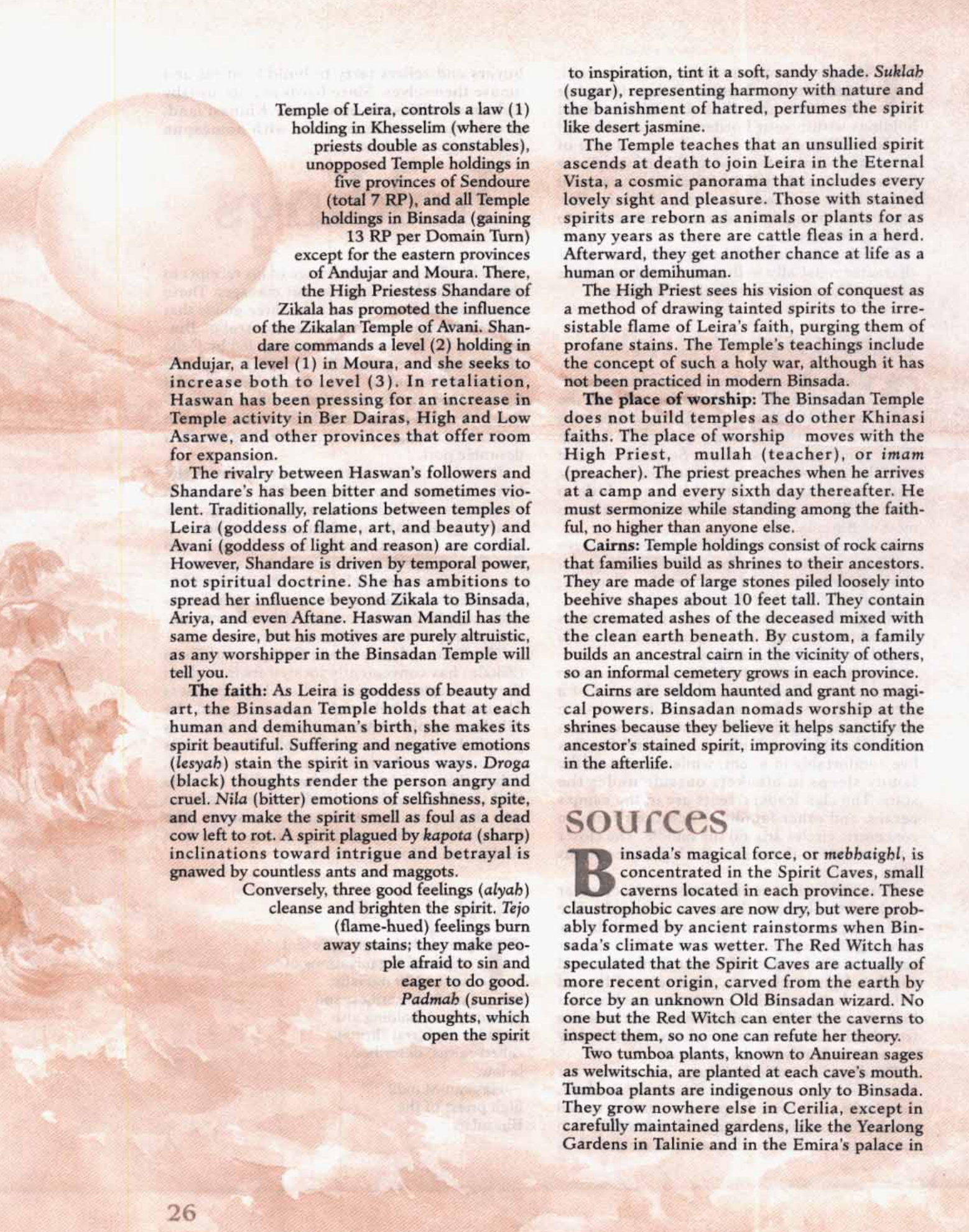
The Extraordinary Trade Company of Turin (Zikala) has conveniently located its inroads in the same eastern provinces where High Priestess Shandare (see below) has promulgated the Zikalan Temple of Avani. Zikalan missionaries preach that transactions with "infidel" merchants are unclean in Avani's sight. Fearing eternal, unbearable punishment in the afterlife, converts find the Extraordinary Traders standing by to save their spirits by handling their business. The Company has a level (2) holding in each of Andujar and Moura provinces.

temples

Temple holdings represent regional organizations of up to 100 mullahs, imams, novices, scribes, and attendants. A holding also includes ancestral shrines, called cairns, described below.

Haswan Mandil, high priest of the Binsadan





Temple of Leira, controls a law (1) holding in Khesselim (where the priests double as constables), unopposed Temple holdings in five provinces of Sendoure (total 7 RP), and all Temple holdings in Binsada (gaining 13 RP per Domain Turn) except for the eastern provinces of Andujar and Moura. There, the High Priestess Shandare of Zikala has promoted the influence of the Zikalan Temple of Avani. Shandare commands a level (2) holding in Andujar, a level (1) in Moura, and she seeks to increase both to level (3). In retaliation, Haswan has been pressing for an increase in Temple activity in Ber Dairas, High and Low Asarwe, and other provinces that offer room for expansion.

The rivalry between Haswan's followers and Shandare's has been bitter and sometimes violent. Traditionally, relations between temples of Leira (goddess of flame, art, and beauty) and Avani (goddess of light and reason) are cordial. However, Shandare is driven by temporal power, not spiritual doctrine. She has ambitions to spread her influence beyond Zikala to Binsada, Ariya, and even Aftane. Haswan Mandil has the same desire, but his motives are purely altruistic, as any worshipper in the Binsadan Temple will tell you.

The faith: As Leira is goddess of beauty and art, the Binsadan Temple holds that at each human and demihuman's birth, she makes its spirit beautiful. Suffering and negative emotions (*lesyah*) stain the spirit in various ways. *Droga* (black) thoughts render the person angry and cruel. *Nila* (bitter) emotions of selfishness, spite, and envy make the spirit smell as foul as a dead cow left to rot. A spirit plagued by *kapota* (sharp) inclinations toward intrigue and betrayal is gnawed by countless ants and maggots.

Conversely, three good feelings (*alyah*) cleanse and brighten the spirit. *Tejo* (flame-hued) feelings burn away stains; they make people afraid to sin and eager to do good. *Padmah* (sunrise) thoughts, which open the spirit

to inspiration, tint it a soft, sandy shade. *Suklah* (sugar), representing harmony with nature and the banishment of hatred, perfumes the spirit like desert jasmine.

The Temple teaches that an unsullied spirit ascends at death to join Leira in the Eternal Vista, a cosmic panorama that includes every lovely sight and pleasure. Those with stained spirits are reborn as animals or plants for as many years as there are cattle fleas in a herd. Afterward, they get another chance at life as a human or demihuman.

The High Priest sees his vision of conquest as a method of drawing tainted spirits to the irresistible flame of Leira's faith, purging them of profane stains. The Temple's teachings include the concept of such a holy war, although it has not been practiced in modern Binsada.

The place of worship: The Binsadan Temple does not build temples as do other Khinasi faiths. The place of worship moves with the High Priest, mullah (teacher), or *imam* (preacher). The priest preaches when he arrives at a camp and every sixth day thereafter. He must sermonize while standing among the faithful, no higher than anyone else.

Cairns: Temple holdings consist of rock cairns that families build as shrines to their ancestors. They are made of large stones piled loosely into beehive shapes about 10 feet tall. They contain the cremated ashes of the deceased mixed with the clean earth beneath. By custom, a family builds an ancestral cairn in the vicinity of others, so an informal cemetery grows in each province.

Cairns are seldom haunted and grant no magical powers. Binsadan nomads worship at the shrines because they believe it helps sanctify the ancestor's stained spirit, improving its condition in the afterlife.

sources

Binsada's magical force, or *mebhaighl*, is concentrated in the Spirit Caves, small caverns located in each province. These claustrophobic caves are now dry, but were probably formed by ancient rainstorms when Binsada's climate was wetter. The Red Witch has speculated that the Spirit Caves are actually of more recent origin, carved from the earth by force by an unknown Old Binsadan wizard. No one but the Red Witch can enter the caverns to inspect them, so no one can refute her theory.

Two tumboa plants, known to Anuirean sages as *welwitschia*, are planted at each cave's mouth. Tumboa plants are indigenous only to Binsada. They grow nowhere else in Cerilia, except in carefully maintained gardens, like the Yearlong Gardens in Talinie and in the Emira's palace in

Khourane. These strange plants look like giant radishes a yard in girth, with two broad, leathery leaves. The leaves grow to over 10 feet in length, but tatter to ribbons at their tips. The tumboas at the mouth of the Spirit Caves have lived for over 17 centuries. The Red Witch believes that the plants embody the spirits of long-dead wizards and help concentrate magical energy, but again, this is only her hypothesis.

The Red Witch has established a single spiralling, segmented ley line that permits her to cast realm spells in any province of Binsada. She controls all of Binsada's sources, garnering 24 RP per Domain Turn. Corazón's ley line ends close to the border provinces of the Sphinx's domain, and she wishes to extend it. However, her feud with the Hydra diverts her, and this is best for Binsada. No one will say so to her face, but if the sorceress came into direct conflict with the Sphinx, she could not win.

income and expenses

Binsada has little gold in its treasury, but has little need for it. Its budget is balanced enough to satisfy its people. This section describes the domain's financial state.

Taxes and collections: Assuming moderate taxation, Binsada's 11 provinces produce an average of 19 GB per Domain Turn.

Tribute: The queen receives tribute from the Saere Consortium's trade routes of 2 GB per turn, and from the Binsadan Temple of Leira of 2 GB per turn. In return, she guarantees protection of their holdings in the dangerous provinces where they struggle against Zikala. The Red Witch pays no tribute and would be insulted at the suggestion. The queen's total average income per turn is about 23 GB.

Domain maintenance: The 11 provinces and seven Law holdings together cost 3 GB per turn. Maintaining the immense fortification at Ber Dairas requires an additional 1 GB per turn. Support for the six cavalry units amounts to 12 GB per turn—2 per unit. Total: 16 GB.

Two of the remaining 7 GB support the queen's court, such as it is. Foreign regents who wish to punish a diplomat send him to Binsada, where he lives in a drafty sod embassy and dines on barley bread and warm beer, or he travels with the queen as a nomad, hauling a tent and eating all the beef he can slaughter. Queen Banira's stingy court made diplomacy impossible and contributed to the universal impression that Binsadans are barbarians. Banira never found diplomacy half as useful as a well-trained unit of medium cavalry. "Let other domains send us their mewling diplomats when we occupy their lands," she once said.

Banira spent the remaining 5 GB per Domain Turn on travel (1 GB), Agitate actions to maintain loyalty in the eastern provinces (2 or 3 GB), decrees against the Hydra (1 GB), and an occasional, secret 1 GB payment to the Harpy (see "Rumors, Secrets, and Plots"). Sometimes, she decided to lighten the tax rate, which contributed to her popularity. Seldom did she see a purpose in storing excess GB in her Ber Dairas treasury.

Some rulers might regard a treasury of 11 GB as a crippling constraint on their ambitions, but as Binsadan horsemen say, "The cavalry of Binsada ride quickly where others are weighed down with gold." Move forth, spread the word of Leira, and pay the way with tribute from conquered provinces.

During her reign, Queen Banira calmly faced problems that would make lesser rulers shake on their thrones. In the queen's place, your character can do no less. The intelligence reports that follow may appear daunting, but any crisis presents opportunity! Look them over and show them to the DM, indicating the plotlines you want to pursue in the campaign. The DM can then customize adventures and a Domain Turn's Random Events to address your character's ambitions.

rumors and plots

Has Gaered Bolted for the West?

Yesterday, the army's commander, Gaered Vorduine, reported trouble with brigands near the Harrowmarsh. With your PC's permission, he took a scouting party and rode west. This evening, after a long meeting with several clan elders, you returned to the Red Tent to find two surprises. First, the scouting party had returned without Vorduine. The commander had sent them back and ridden on alone to the Harrowmarsh. Second, your secret informant, Hekti One-Arm, was in your tent, pacing nervously.

"I waited for you a long time!" cried the boy. "I listened outside the yellow-hair commander's tent all morning, and he was really angry. He said the same things over and over, like that boring storyteller everybody threw rotten fruit at on the last festival night. I think he was making up a speech or something. He says, 'Your Highness, you have lost faith in me.' Then he says, 'No. Banira, you are acting coldly. No. Banira, I must go to the Harrowmarsh, for reasons you may guess.' Then, I heard him tear a kite, and then do that writing that the yellow-hair can do. Then he crumpled it up and threw it away. He left and rode away with the patrol. I went into his tent and got the paper." Hekti held out a crinkled sheet torn from a signaling kite. On it, among scratched-out sentences,

Vorduine had scrawled in Khinasi:

Banira, there is no brigand problem in the marsh. I left because you have been acting strangely.

You must think I have betrayed you. I tell you I have not. I ride to the place we know to bring back what we left. If I return safely, you will know I remain loyal.

Only an Anuirean would have a pen and ink! Fortunately, Hekti can't read. The note may mean that the PC's impersonation of Banira has not been good enough to convince Vorduine.

If Vorduine is entering the Harrowmarsh alone, he is danger. If this known troublemaker died, it could make the PC's ruse easier to maintain, but it would be a waste of a talented soldier, someone who was devoted to Banira.

Will your character ride after Vorduine? If he is found, the PC may have to reveal her true identity. Perhaps the PC can learn the mysterious hold Banira has over Gaered Vorduine.

Will Prince Daoud Try for the Regency?

As one of her last acts as regent, Queen Banira had "invited" Julnar bint Sariyah el-Zagora, only daughter of the chief elder of the powerful el-Zagora clan, to live at the palace of Reshidia. Banira did this to discourage ambitious el-Zagoran elders from agitating against the el-Reshid dynasty. The el-Zagoran elders are among the least supportive of the High Priest Haswan Mandil's call for jihad. Prince Daoud shares their skepticism.

Four days ago, while the PC was away from Ber Dairas, Prince Daoud, or someone who looked like him, arrived at the palace and spirited Julnar away. The two rode east. The High Priest guesses that Daoud plans to deliver Julnar to her family to gain Zagoran support. If it was revealed that the PC is impersonating Banira, Daoud could make a plausible claim to the Red Tent. He is a blood relative of Banira, more experienced than the PC, and his bloodline is stronger than the PC's. However, Daoud lacks the cool temper and tact that a good Khinasi ruler needs.

The prince cannot be tracked magically because of his amulet of proof against location and detection, but Julnar has no such protection.

Scrying reveals that she is riding on the barge village as it drifts lazily



down the Moura from Andujar. Daoud is probably with her, traveling in disguise to avoid discovery.

The barge village takes about 15 days to reach Turin. On a fast horse, the PC could reach the floating town before it arrives in Moura, el-Zagora territory.

The Sphinx? Or an Impostor?

Due to the Sphinx's depredations to the east, the trade has fallen sharply. Half a dozen laden caravans per year once crossed eastern Binsada between Ariya and Sendoure. Now, only two or three risk the journey. Lacking profitable targets, the Sphinx has begun to harass the salt mines outside Andujar.

Or is it the Sphinx?

Since High Priest Haswan Mandil's epiphany in the Sarra-Binssa mine, the curious and the fanatical have congregated outside the mine, declaring it hallowed ground. A few evenings ago, the spectral emissary of the Sphinx, the ghostlion (see page 9) leaped out of the darkness into the people's camp. Roaring and racing about, but not attacking anyone, it snarled, "The mines are mine! None may work the salt veins any longer! Begone!" Needless to say, everyone fled.

However, there have been reports of unknown people entering and working the salt mines. The salt is loaded onto wagons at night and driven away into darkness.


The ghostlion's warning did not sound like its earlier attacks. It made no demand to meet the queen. It had been seen in the area of the mines several times in the previous month, but Andujar is near the mines; if the lion wants to frighten people, it has to go where the people are. It had never shown interest in salt before this latest incident.

Could this be the work of clever illusionists who steal salt? Perhaps a journey to Andujar is in order. If the ghostlion turns out to be real, the PC would have to face the beast eventually, anyway.

What is in the Tower of Evening?

Saere Consortium guildmaster Delia of Coer-anys has proposed the most preposterous mission you've ever heard. She has learned that her rival, Kort Bregeden, who has taken over her Guild holdings in western Binsada, chews a mild stimulant called qetal root. Qetal is unpopular in the Khinasi lands; the only socially acceptable stimulant is betel nut. Qetal is said to be highly addictive, and Bregeden has been chewing it for years.

According to a tip Delia received from a guild spy in



Mermoune province, qetal root grows in this region only in a small patch in the Harrowmarsh. She offers to fund a mission to find the qetal and either destroy it or secure the supply. Then, she says, Bregeden must either cooperate with her or vacate Binsada in search of the drug elsewhere.

Of all the nonsensical goose chases—Then Delia mentions the location of the qetal root: *inside* the Tower of Evening. How could ordinary nonmagical plants like qetal grow within the toppling ruins? Old folktales say that the Tower is haunted by many ghosts and undead, including a legendary spectre called Gillwort. In life, this spirit was supposedly a queen under the old Basarji Federation. She went mad, spent all day gardening, and lost her domain to an ambitious daughter. Now, the legend says, Gillwort cultivates all kinds of plants deep underground, with leaves of gold and blossoms of precious gemstones.

Whether or not Delia's information is right, you can justify a mission to the Tower of Evening. If she funds the venture, you could easily humor her silly qetal-root idea. She would be useful company, too, as would other blooded adventurers. If Gillwort really exists, she might command realm spells, and only scions could hope to face her.

What Lies Beneath Reshidia?

The queen's palace at Ber Dairas, christened Reshidia by the founder of the el-Reshid dynasty, is the largest (and almost the only) stone structure in Binsada. A bleak square of greasy, green basalt, nearly windowless, badly ventilated, and cold, it has driven more than one regent into the countryside to renew the nomadic lifestyle.

A messenger from Ber Dairas reports that workers have heard strange noises from beneath the palace. The treasury is there, as are several storage chambers reserved for the regent. There, Queen Banira kept a curious rock that plummeted from the sky in the first year of her reign, during an eclipse of the moon. Sages who studied it discovered that the meteor turns from black to glowing white during solar eclipses. During the first eclipse, it glowed like a firefly; in the second, like a bright torch; in the third, it grew too dazzling to look upon. No magical divination could determine anything about the rock.

Banira, apprehensive,
locked it away.

The last eclipse was over a year ago, and the meteor had slipped the PC's mind until an elder reminded her today that there will be another eclipse tomorrow night.

According to witnesses, the noises beneath Reshidia sound like something thumping around forcefully for ten minutes, starting at sunrise. The pounding stops, only to resume for another ten minutes at sunset. This has occurred for two days now, and the thudding grows stronger each day.

secrets

A regent must keep secrets to protect herself and her domain. Here are a few of your PC's secrets. The DM may approve others as well, so try inventing a few of your own. Be careful not to create any that would unbalance the campaign by solving your PC's problems instantly. It would be unworthy of her heritage.

A Weapon Against the Sphinx

In her ongoing struggle with the Hydra, Corazón bint Rilni has discovered surprising information about another awnshegh altogether: the Sphinx. The Red Witch was researching abominations in a fragmentary text called *Theocrats of Mystical Forces*, attributed to the wizard Khufu the Mad. This book also discusses the Sphinx in detail, and Corazón found a telling reference. "No one else would have recognized it," she said. The Red Witch's background and the blood memories she received from her late mother alerted her to the clue.

Khufu mentions that the Sphinx, always prone to fits of rage, experienced an extraordinary episode in Akhada province centuries ago. Before the eyes of astonished witnesses, it transformed into a great cat, thrashed around madly, and attacked those around it in a berserk fury. The awnshegh did not recover for a full day. Khufu's account gives no explanation.

The Red Witch read this and instantly recalled a patch of strange weeds that had grown in Akhada during her mother's lifetime. The plants were said to have sprouted where an Irboudan scion had fallen in battle with the Sphinx. Traveling at great risk to Akhada, just across the border from Ghouref, Corazón found these weeds, analyzed them, and blended them into a potion.

The potion's other materials cost 3 GB per vial, and the liquid spoils a few days after brewing. If one could get the Sphinx to ingest it, or could pierce its hide with an arrow coated with the fluid, the effects would be dramatic. The awnshegh would become deliriously angry, incapable of spellcasting, and unable to distinguish friend from foe. At least, so claims the Red Witch.

The limiting factor is the supply of weeds. Perhaps they could be cultivated in Binsada, or they might grow elsewhere in the Sphinx's domain. Corazón knows of a druid in that wasted place, a bitter foe of the Sphinx named Iuri Ilyich. Perhaps the druid (said to have been a great Vos warrior earlier in life) knows where to find more of the plants.

An Unlikely Ally

The Harpy has dwelled in relative peace on her island off Binsad's coast for a century. Her harpies make occasional raids on passing ships, but they are usually smuggling vessels. The Harpy is no threat to Binsada, and, unknown to most people, is actually a potential ally.

Before her lapse into incoherence, Queen Banira told you of a long-ago pact between the Harpy and the el-Reshid family. The awnshegh's forces inspect all ships, including cargo and passengers, that sail within 30 miles of her island. She trades this information for news from the mainland about the Sphinx, the Hydra, and Zikala. The current go-between is Fatima bint Nuria el-Djebel, a sober halfling merchant who trades with the Harpy for a rare herb called asafetida, which grows only on the Harpy's Isle. Asafetida secretes a foul-smelling, yellow-brown resin that has medicinal uses.

In her latest report, Fatima recently passed along news of a different nature. She told you of the Harpy's genesis. A century ago, the mortal harpy queen of the isle attacked the spellsinger Khabarah Habban with the *Heartsword*, a short sword which let its wielder adopt the form of anything or anyone it slew. A magical accident caused the harpy queen and Khabarah to merge into the Harpy. In its confusion, the newborn awnshegh forgot the sword. One of Khabarah's fellow adventurers, the priest Iman Tenek, took the *Heartsword* back to Andujar. His son, Nurin Tenek, inherited it, but someone stole the sword from Nurin days ago, and no one knows its current location.

No one, that is, except Fatima. "I saw the theft," she told you. "A few nights ago, in Andujar, I was preparing asafetida extract, which you have to do outside or your house reeks of dungheaps. I did it in the cool of the evening, for the sun is too hot now. I saw a big human sneak away from Tenek's home, carrying something wrapped in cloth." The halfling followed and saw the thief enter one of Andujar's abandoned salt mines. The shadowy figure emerged empty-handed half an hour later.

Nurin Tenek never reported a robbery, and Fatima did not tell him what she had seen. ("I never liked Nurin," she says. "Too sharp a dealer, and surly, too.") She isn't certain that the thief took the *Heartsword*, but halflings (who live half-swallowed in Shadow, it's said) have a sense of these things. Fatima wants 2 GB for the buried parcel's location, which seems reasonable—if it is the *Heartsword*.

The magical sword that created an awnshegh must be a weapon of great evil. To wield it would be foolish. Your PC has never met the Harpy, but she is supposed to be honorable. She would be extremely interested in the sword, and your character suspects that she could arrange a deal, such as exchanging the sword for support from her disciplined flying units. Why not? Any sensible awnshegh must see the advantage in helping a domain that will soon conquer all Cerilia!

To achieve Binsada's destiny, act as a Binsadan regent would, with unshakeable self-assurance in the face of apparent disaster. Your confidence will inspire your people to battle against all odds. However insurmountable the obstacles, matters have proceeded too far to dovetail. Your people wish to conquer Cerilia, so you must lead them. Here is some advice:

strategy and advice

remain nomadic

The ancient rules of Old Binsada's empire still serve you well: Exact tribute from conquered provinces, and punish those that withhold payment. Tolerate all beliefs and practices. Never intermarry nor adopt the ways of the defeated. If you risk assimilation, your people lose their greatest advantage: mobility.

gaered vorduine and prince daoud

By accident or intent, Gaered is a troublemaker. He served Queen Banira loyally, but he seems drawn to her rather than to Binsada. As commander of your armies, can he be trusted? Try to transfer his loyalty to you, or better, to your people.

Prince Daoud presents the opposite problem, a skilled warrior loyal to Binsada, but resentful of authority. It would be easy, and wrong, to alienate him by asserting your power over him. Instead, placate him. Listen to his ideas respectfully. Better yet, place him in a position of authority—if you dare.

Both men could be valuable allies, so don't dismiss them. Demonstrate your skill and integrity to them gradually, then reveal your true identity. Trust them with trial missions and hope for the best. If they betray you, replace them with trusted fellow adventurers.

cavalry

The nomads' phenomenal skill on horseback is their greatest strength. Use it to the fullest. Levy infantry units from conquered settlers, if necessary, but your strategies should rely on cavalry mobility.

the hydra

The Hydra will test the strength and resolve of all your armies. The Harrowmarsh harbors diseases and hideous mutations that can lay the most stalwart platoon to waste. The awnshegh may not even have to raise a talon to decimate your troops. Only capable leadership, in person, by you and a band of trusted companions can hope to defeat the monster, its foreboding homeland, and its innumerable hydrakin.

You must bring along the Red Witch as well, not only because her realm magic can defeat the Hydra's enchantments, but because she would never forgive you if you killed the beast without her aid. Once the Hydra is slain, clearing a path through the Harrowmarsh is the next task. At the DM's discretion, a *mass destruction* realm spell might cut a trail between any two provinces for one season, and 1 GB per Domain Turn could hire workers to maintain the road.

the sphinx

This abomination is a challenge that befits a powerful empire, not a rag-tag band of nomads, but you do have advantages. The potion that Corazón bint Rilni has devised (see page 31) could turn the awnshegh into a berserker. This doesn't sound promising, but it would render the creature incapable of using its powerful spells and blood abilities.

Find a steady supply of ingredients to produce this potion, and get the Red Witch to teach its formulation to other capable wizards in the region.

In Aftane, on the far side of the Sphinx's domain, lives Adara Shoufal, an Ariyan mage who has fanatically opposed both the Red Kings of Aftane and the Sphinx. She would pay much for the potion's recipe.

zikala

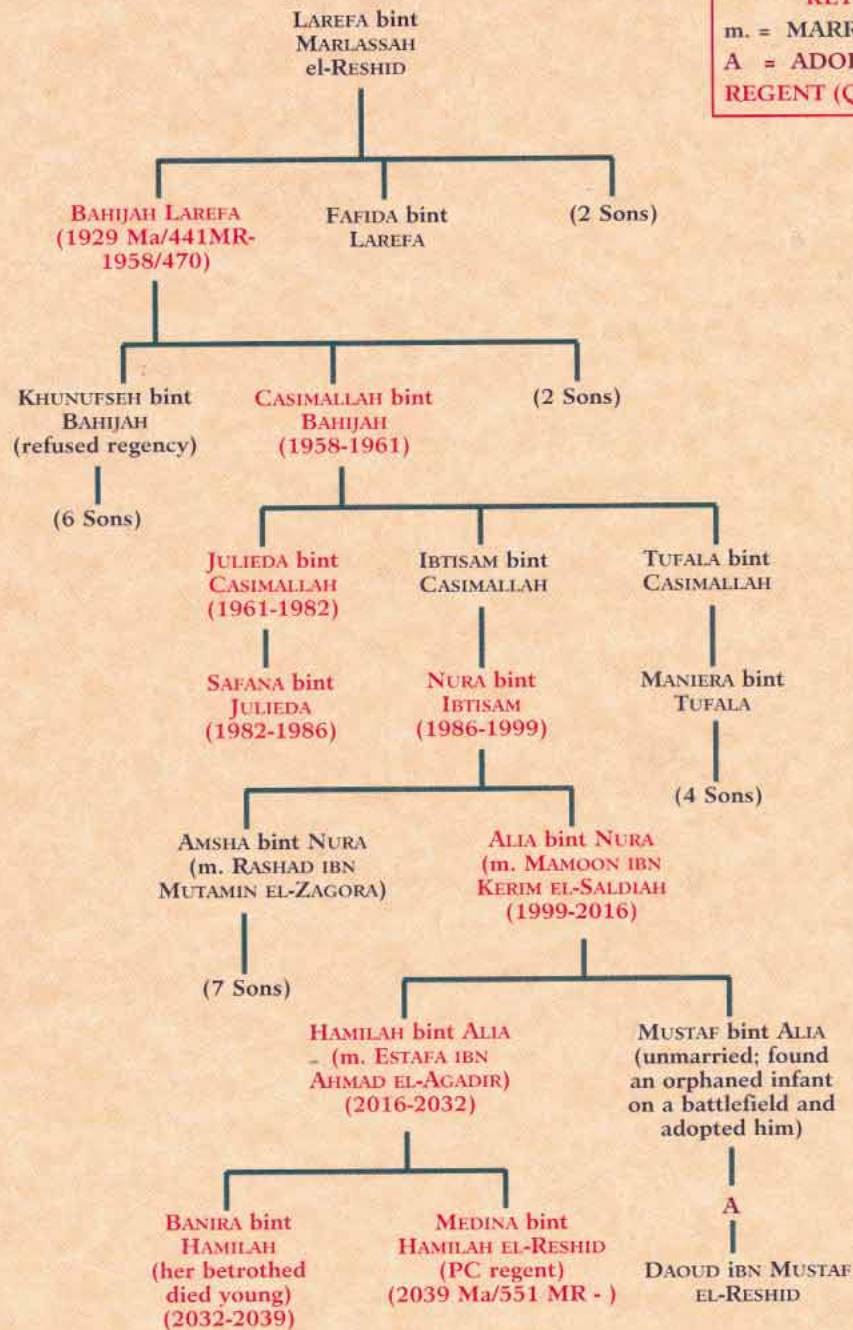
Zikala abuts Aftane, ruled by the powerful and dangerous Red Kings. Leave Zikala's eastern provinces under Ariyan control rather than risk alienating your ancient ally's Prince-Paladin and drawing fire from Aftane's seven veiled kings.

As you expand and conquer, muster new cavalry units and levy tribute to maintain them. As long as you keep expanding, you can pay your own way, especially once you've reached the rich Anuirean lands to the west.

THE DESCENT OF THE EL-RESHID LINE

Dates are of regency. Dates are given in Masetian Reckoning (Ma) except where noted. (MR = Michaeline Reckoning)

KEY
 m. = MARRIED
 A = ADOPTED
 REGENT (QUEEN)





SENDOURE

the HARROWMARSH

BINSADA

Ber Dairas

Andujar

the SPHINX

ZIKALA

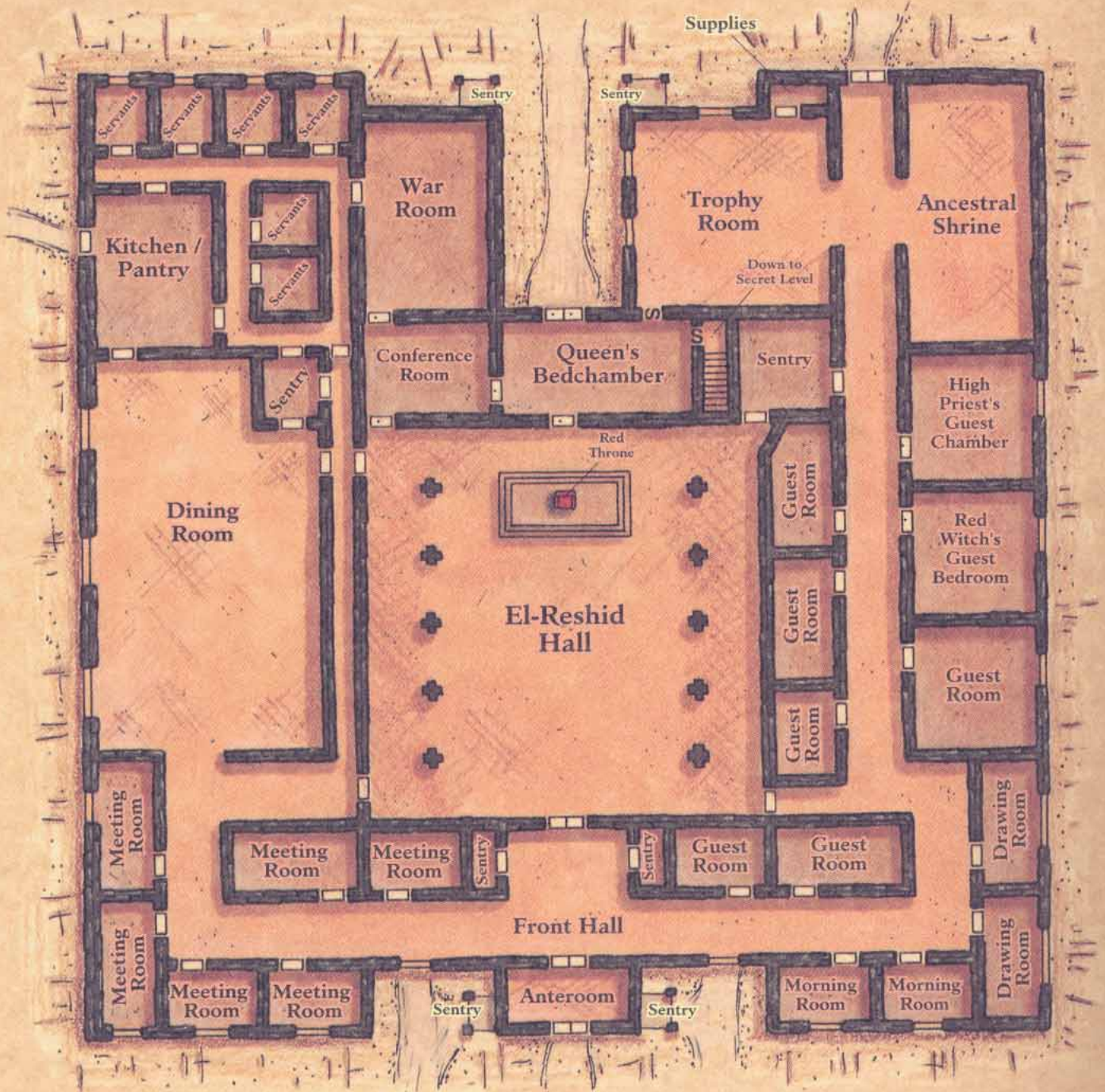
Turin

Isle of the Harpy

Zikala

SUIDEMIERE





Reshidia



KEY

- Door
- Locked Door
- Secret Door
- Window

0 10 20
Feet



Secret Level



Sea of
the
Golden Sun

Binsada



HOLDINGS

Law Holdings are in blue. They belong to the regent except as noted.

Guild Holdings are in red.

ETT: Extraordinary Traders of Turin

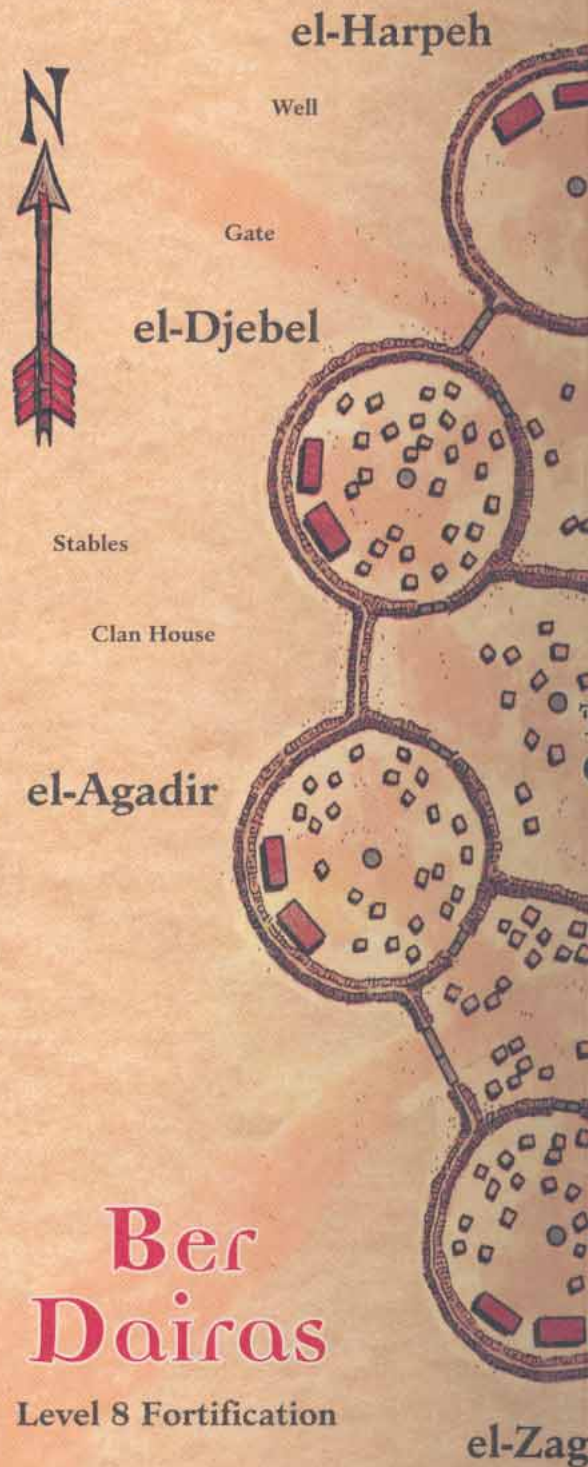
Hyd: the Hydra

SC: Saera Consortium

Temple Holdings are in green.

Bin: Binsadan Temple of Leira

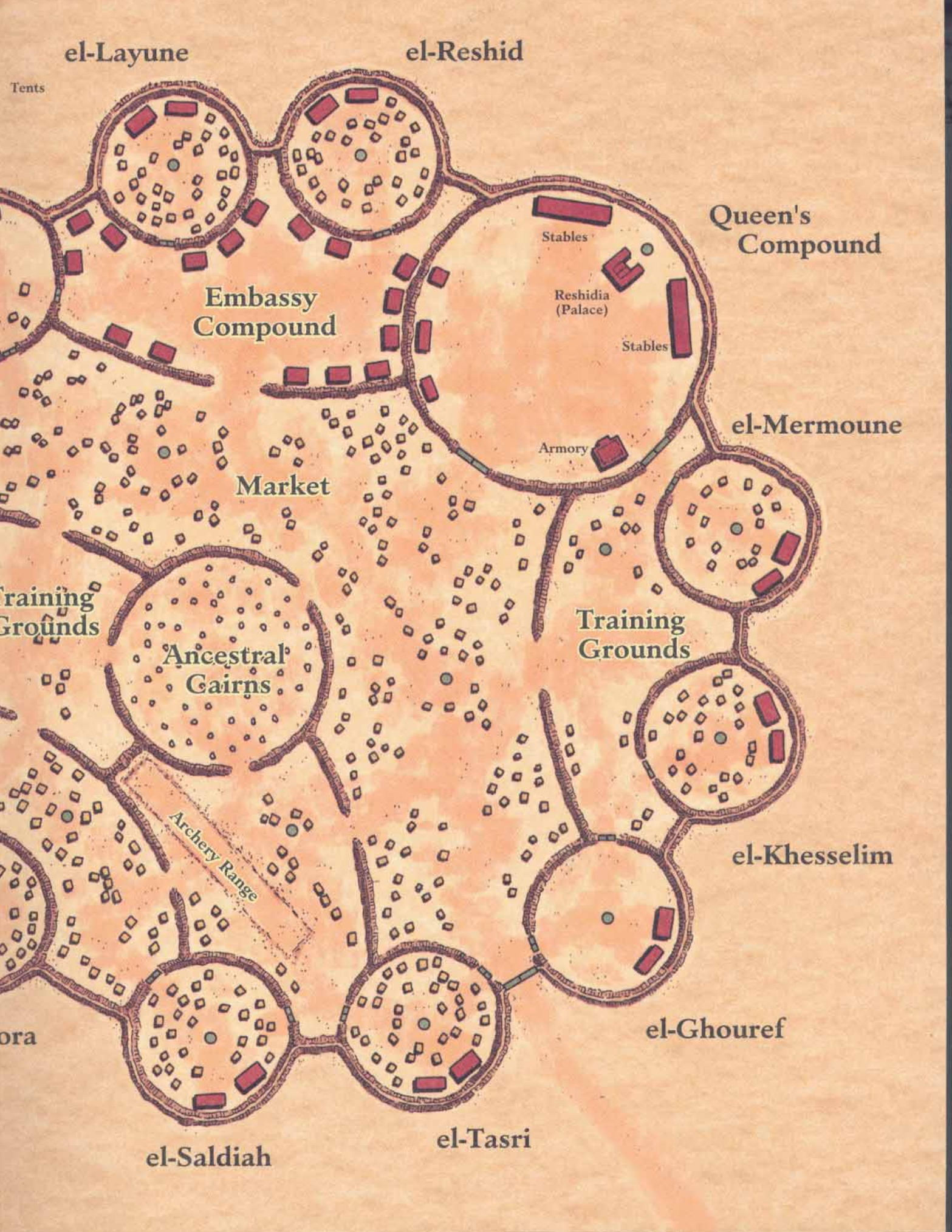
ZTA: Zikalan Temple of Avani



Ber Dairas

Level 8 Fortification

0 500
Feet



el-Layune

el-Reshid

Tents

Queen's Compound

Embassy Compound

Stables

Reshidia (Palace)

Stables

el-Mermoune

Armory

Market

Training Grounds

Ancestral Cairns

Training Grounds

Archery Range

el-Khesselim

ora

el-Ghouref

el-Saldiah

el-Tasri

Player's Secrets of

BINSADA



by Allen Varney

The many-headed Hydra slithers in the Harrowmarsh on your western border. The Sphinx prowls its blasted lands, breathing a venomous wind upon the lush savannah. The Harpy's birds of prey circle in coastal salt breezes, raiding laden ships. It seems as if Binsada, your land of simple, nomadic cattle herders, is hemmed in by monstrous enemies on all sides.

Binsada is a realm where honor means more than wealth. The ruler of this domain must maintain the status of the royal family while not offending those from other highly placed lineages. Foremost in the regent's thoughts must be retaining the loyalty of her first lieutenant, Vorduine, and controlling the ambitions of her cousin, Prince Daoud—without his knowledge, of course. This regent must have a cunning mind, a flair for the dramatic, and an honorable heart.

This BIRTHRIGHT™ domain sourcebook is designed for players who wish to take the role of queen of Binsada. It may also be used by players portraying nobles, vassals of the regent, or adventurers from this domain.

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201 Sheridan Springs Rd
Lake Geneva
WI 53147
U.S.A.



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