



ariya

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Your empire once stretched beyond the horizon. Now your power barely extends beyond the city walls. Rival domains and monstrous rulers gather strength on every side, and your people have grown complacent and negligent. But take heart! In its long history, Ariya has known terrible times, yet always a wise leader has appeared to guide the realm back to strength. Are you the next such ruler?

what you need to play

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

how to use this sourcebook

This book details the people, provinces, customs, and landmarks of the domain of Ariya, a Khinasi state on the southern coast of Cerilia. You may play either Prince Gerad ibn Farid el-Arrasi, the ruler described here and in *Cities of the Sun*, or a new character of your own. This book assumes Prince Gerad has abdicated and named your PC his lawful successor, but players of nonregent characters who live in or come from Ariya will also find this domain sourcebook useful.

Change anything about the following descriptions that you don't like, then pass this book along to your DM and explain what you want to keep or change about the kingdom. Point out the adventure ideas that are important to your character. Remember, if something here doesn't fit the campaign, the DM is free to reject it. The DM is also free to create a few surprises—after all, even the Prince-Paladin of Ariya doesn't know everything about his city-state.

Ariya has known far better times, but a regent with vision and leadership can restore it to glory. The key lies not in bullying or violence, but in persuasion, fairness, and hard work. Ten thousand blessings on your path!

Sample file

To the Resplendent Prince-Paladin of Ariya, who is like unto the Sun!

For the indomitable Prince-Paladin illuminates Ariya the Impregnable, City of Temples, and the light of his power shines also on the Khinasi states and all realms of Cerilia! Their rulers are like the stars, extinguished in the brilliance of the Prince-Paladin's radiance!

To the Prince-Paladin, Guardian and Preserver, who is like unto the Rain Cloud!

For the state of Ariya and the true Ariyan Temple of Avani live in the esteemed Prince-Paladin's shadow, deriving from him life and protection from the fiery hatred of our enemies! The Prince-Paladin inspires poems and artwork of transcendent beauty, as the rain cloud casts off rainbows!

To the Excellent Prince-Paladin, who is like unto the Earth and the Sea!

For immeasurable and imponderable are the limitless glory and strength of the illustrious Prince-Paladin!

Your Sublime Majesty! On the splendid occasion of your ascension to the Thousand Jewel Throne, ordinarily the noble Vizier of Ariya (praise upon him!), one of the seven deputy viziers (wise and honorable!), or any of the sixteen deputy assistant viziers (trusted colleagues all!) would describe for you the condition of our beloved state. Sadly, these worthy officials have temporarily fallen ill after your coronation feast, where all ate goat butter that, we now believe, had turned rancid. I alone—your humble servant, Fethiye Kalhat Hawwat Nishtun Benumbini al-Hufuf, junior deputy assistant vizier—am recovering from taking the butter due to a digestive ailment of a personal nature, praise Avani! So spared, I respectfully offer this concise summary, in hopes that its succinctness, meticulous accuracy, and eye for vivid detail will not go unnoticed.

your domain

You come to power as the 43rd prince-paladin of glorious Ariya, most ancient and revered of the Khinasi states. Your regency descends from el-Arrasi himself (hallowed is his name!), the Great King who freed these lands from the oppression of the Anuirean Empire. For centuries all the Khinasi lands acknowledged Ariya's

predominance. In that age of glory, three dozen provinces revered the prince-paladin in his Tower of Morning. Every harbor on the Sea of the Golden Sun welcomed ships with the Ariyan flag, and every market took our silver *shetel* over other

lands' debased currencies, which were not worth the word of a bard.

But as Lord Korkud the Magnificent (may his memory

vizier's report

survive the ages!) declared two centuries ago, "A life concerned with mere influence is a life poorly lived!" As a child grows up and puts aside the games of childhood, so we of Ariya have in maturity loosed the reins of power. No empty outlying provinces can rival our city; why should Ariya seek to control them? "Prosperous within our invincible walls, we inspire envy in other domains," said Lord Korkud.

Ariya's wise monarchs have endorsed this sentiment through the generations, down to your predecessor, Prince Gerad ibn Farid el-Arrasi (revered and beloved!). Duty compels me to report that irresponsible citizens still speculate on Prince Gerad's motive for abruptly abdicating the throne and retreating to the wilderness last month. Fortunately, even these louts still honor Prince Gerad so far as to resist questioning him directly. I will not report their scurrilous gossip, having greater respect than they for a ruler's privacy, and restricting myself solely to unadulterated facts presented for Your Superb Majesty's benefit, without concern for reward or personal advancement.

threats and weaknesses

The fanatical, expansionist Red Kings of Aftane clearly pose the greatest threat to the state. After a decade-long rise to power, the veiled rulers to the east show no sign of having sated their ruthless ambition. A century of war with Aftane has already ravaged a hundred towns and exhausted our countryside, and now war looms again. Although rumors tell of disunity among these seven mysterious monarchs, the Red Kings may trouble Ariya greatly before they destroy themselves.

With Aftane to the north and east, Ariya needs no other enemies. To the west, however, religious extremists have subverted neighboring Zikala. The fanatical priestess Shandare, leader

of the misguided Zikalan Temple of Avani, incessantly preaches conquest and subjugation of our true and righteous Ariyan Temple.

Unfortunately, the weakling Grand Vizier of Zikala, Omar ibn Tuarim el-Zisef, begins to heed her sermons.

Even the south—the Sea of the Golden Sun (Baïr el-Mehare)—holds peril for Ariya. In recent years our fleets of dhows and dhouras have suffered a resurgence of piracy, by both the notorious *Black Arrow* and the enigmatic, sinister Brotherhood of Khet. These scoundrels operate from secret bases along our coast, but their locations remain a mystery. Rumors credit the pirates with unusual powers—survivors of plundered ships say that the *Black Arrow*, to all appearances a normal ship, attacked from underwater.

Dangers on all sides; dangers, too, within. Passionate intrigues, and sometimes assassinations, historically have accompanied succession to the Thousand Jewel Throne. Conspiracy runs rampant inside the palace, the sanctum of the current and previous royal families. I warn Your Majesty that some in Prince Gerad's royal family may not greet your ascension with unalloyed joy. I cannot give names, for my informants refused to speak them. I will not speculate and thereby compromise my yearning for spotless truth.

I hesitate to mention what I perceive as a deeper trouble. Ariyan citizens have grown complacent, absorbed in our magnificent city while neglecting important matters beyond our walls. Many officials have developed a rarefied taste for soft, idle living—always excepting my superiors and colleagues, honor upon them!

This complacency also extends to the Swords of Avani, the elite troops who protect your palace. Over the generations they have assumed ever greater duties, so that now they exercise power that perhaps rivals your own. Yet they do not act to expand Ariya's dominion, but exert their energies in training our youth, maintaining civil order, and even supervising street cleaners! Worthy causes, to be sure, but what of our stagnant domain? The Swords have stubbornly resisted reforms, aided by an entrenched nobility and—forgive my candor, Your Majesty—even some priests in our venerated Ariyan Temple.

The treasury represents another source of alarm. The worthy viziers senior to me argue persuasively that lavish spending on Your Sublime Majesty's court keeps the city strong and stifles dissent among Your Majesty's envious relatives. Never

one to question those of superior wisdom and station, I agree! Yet palace luxury represents the greatest strain on our state's resources. If the esteemed prince-paladin can find a new, less expensive, more financially responsible way to assert power and quell unrest, all

Ariya may benefit.

To my mind the gravest danger facing Your Majesty is our calcified, stagnant civil service, which discourages promotion of its most gifted, clear-sighted, energetic, and loyal workers. Some high officials object to bringing certain kinds of problems to Your Majesty's attention, such as the problems I have mentioned here. To gain Your Majesty's ear, concerned individuals (naming no names) sometimes attempt desperate measures.

strengths and opportunities

Ariya remains the jewel, the great power of our Binasi states. Our economy is strong, our armies adequate for defending the impenetrable city walls, if not the sparsely populated provinces beyond. The state collects an excellent income, and Your Majesty's many palaces and temples contain colossal wealth.

Ariya gains security from its long alliance with the western domain of Binsada, and we maintain cordial relations with Mesire, beyond Aftane to the east. We have powerful secret allies even in Aftane, in the provinces that once belonged to Ariya.

Your Majesty's greatest strength lies in the voice of regency: the authority and ability to speak to all the people. No one else commands this power. With advice from your predecessor, the wise Prince Gerad, Your Majesty can guide us to still greater glory. Praise on your path!

Your loyal servant,
Fethiye Kalhat Hawwat
Nishtun Burumbini al-Hufuf



The Khinasi use the Masetian Arrival (MA) calendar, which takes as its starting point the first appearance of the Masetian people on the continent of Cerilia. Dates in Haelyn's Count (HC), which begins with the cataclysm at Mount Deismaar, follow in parentheses.

ancient days

The City of Temples entered history as a simple Masetian port town, Saria. Saria stood as the first town founded in the region, and possibly the first in Cerilia. Although tradition says that the Masetian calendar dates from Saria's founding, the town was probably built in 12 MA (-503 HC), a decade after humanity's Flight from the Shadow across the primordial land bridge from

Aduria into Cerilia.

Sailors of bold and impetuous character, Masetians explored the land and founded small city-states as far west as

modern-day Binsada and as far east as the islands of the Ajari Deep. History records few prior inhabitants in this land; elves kept to the forests, dwarves and goblins to the mountains. On the wide, grassy savannah and rocky coasts the Masetians found few rivals.

Across the gulf of millennia, only a few Masetian names survive. Maltos Saria, founder of a long-lived dynasty based in Saria, reigned over an empire of city-states in southern Cerilia and the islands of the southern sea. His people worshiped the ancient goddess of the sea, Masela. Maselan doctrine encouraged followers to teach the lore of the sea to whomever sought it, and so the Masetians, finest sailors of the ancient world, taught their

lore to a tribe of nomadic seafarers and mages from lands across the Sea of Dragons—the Basarji.

The two peoples shared the land and sea peacefully for centuries. Intermarriage

was not uncommon, though Basarji culture dictated that interracial couples must adopt the Basarji ways of life.

And so it came to pass that while many Basarji children had Masetian blood coursing through their veins, the number of true Masetians declined.

The War of Shadow and its climactic battle on Mount Deismaar in 515 (0 HC) proved disastrous for the Masetians. Never numerous, the Masetian people were all but annihilated by the cataclysm; the few survivors could not prolong their race beyond several ever-windling generations. Many left their cities along the coast of the Ba'ir el-Mehare to consolidate in the southeastern islands.

As Masetian influence in Saria declined, Basarji influence increased. The wanderers began to trade their nomadic lifestyles for more permanent settlements.

Taking advantage of this transitional period, pirates and bandits descended upon Saria. After a few years of their sacking, pillaging and plundering, Saria lay in ruins. In 523 (8 HC), the Basarji rallied to drive the bandits out of the region. The victorious Basarji rebuilt the city, naming it Ariya.

Though the Masetians wrote an ancient chapter in Ariya's history, symbols of their rule survive in many forms—notably in the Seal of Ariya and the prince-paladin's Scepter of Office. Their role in history also is evident in the faces of Ariya's people, many of whom favor their Masetian ancestors.

the temple of avani

As the Basarji took over the Masetians' cities, they also adjusted to the new gods who emerged from Mount Deismaar. In their new homeland the Basarji gradually moved away from sea worship, but the transition did not happen smoothly.

In 524 (9 HC), Nurida el-Deyir, a charismatic priestess of the old faith, fell afoul of bandits while traveling with a caravan between Zikala and Ariya. The bandits slew the caravan's guards, then moved to attack the unarmed travelers. Nurida, like all priests still serving "dead" gods after Deismaar, had no major spells to protect herself. Nonetheless, she stood against the bandits and tried to persuade them from murder. In the extreme circumstances she appealed to "the light of reason," and so drew the first manifestation in Basarji lands of the goddess Avani.

After incinerating the bandits, Avani enlisted Nurida to teach the virtues of reason

history

throughout the land. Nurida spent the next 40 years preaching first in Ariya, then throughout the region. Late in life she journeyed east to Djafra. Her activities there are unknown to Ariyans, but two Djafran provinces are named for Nurida el-Deyir.

Nurida's message found a cold reception in Ariya. Worshipers of the old gods remained stalwart, convinced that their deities' apparent death was only a test of faith; meanwhile, priests of the new gods competed for followers on the newly leveled field. Persecution of Avani's earliest disciples forced them to retreat to the unoccupied provinces, where they created huge underground cities in which to practice their faith.

Eventually, Avani's children could once again feel the warmth of her sunlight: In 760 (245 HC), the Ariyan ruler Lord Orhan converted to Avani's faith, thereby making the Temple of Avani the official creed of the city-state. Today, the abandoned underground cities remain potent sources of magic.

el-arrasi and the empire

The leading figure of Khinasi history was born in and ruled the city of Ariya, a fact which has remained a source of endless pride for Ariya's citizens. Though legends shroud

his childhood, all know that Rashid doune Arrasi was born in 1249 (734 HC), battled with his brother Eirat for the throne in 1270, and emerged as ruler of Ariya in 1271. Custom discourages the use of this heroic leader's birth name: Ariyans call him simply "el-Arrasi."

El-Arrasi's rise to fame began in 1279 (764 HC), when the Anuirean Empire ruled all the Basarji states from Ber Dairas to Djafra—all the lands, that is, save the city of Ariya, where el-Arrasi reigned as mage-king. Anuire had a tyrannical (and mad) new emperor, Alándalae, who conquered western Khourane. In response, the mage-king began uniting the Basarji to oppose Anuire. Displaying his superb grasp of diplomacy, intimidation, local custom, and logistics, el-Arrasi led a series of lightning strikes against the Empire's land and sea forces. In the two decades of war that followed, the mage-king distinguished himself as a master of guerrilla tactics, naval strategy, espionage, and realm magic.

The war reached its climax in 1299 (784 HC) when Alándalae personally led a land assault on Ariya, while his nephew Caercuillen commanded a supporting navy. Aboard the Basarji flagship *Sebare el-Dair*, el-Arrasi defeated the navy in the Battle of Kfeira. He captured Caercuillen, then landed and attacked the imperial army in what is now called the Battle of Kings. After intense fighting, el-Arrasi marshaled the magic of his land and burned the enemy legions with explosive flames, roasting the emperor alive.



Rather than ensure the war's continuation by killing Caercuillen, el-Arrasi offered peace. The new emperor, impressed with el-Arrasi's courage and wisdom, agreed and withdrew his troops from the region. The following years of friendship between the two rulers helped heal the rift between their people.

El-Arrasi ruled the Basarji until only 1311 (796 HC), when an assassin struck. Sent by the Serpent, who feared el-Arrasi's growing influence along the Sun Coast, the assassin bypassed the Great King's formidable protections by infecting him with a magical wasting disease similar to a potent *curse*. The mage-king's magic could not stop the disease, but before it killed him, he placed himself in a *temporal stasis*. El-Arrasi's viziers laid their lord's body in a secret chamber beneath the Tower of Morning and searched for a cure. After weeks of effort, they found one—but the body had vanished. No one ever discovered who took the Great King's body, nor why, nor what became of it. If the *stasis* has not been dispelled, el-Arrasi may still live, transfixed, perpetually on the brink of death.

In reverence for their lost ruler, the Basarji renamed their region the *khir-astan el-Arrasi*, "lands under the protection of el-Arrasi." In time this phrase became elided into *Khinasi*.

the golden age

The century that began with el-Arrasi's victory in the Battle of Kings is now retrospectively called the Golden Age by Ariyan scholars, seemed no more golden at the time than any age does. Without the leadership of the Great King, the Basarji Federation survived only a few years beyond him. Yet Ariya emerged from the breakup with 11 provinces and a commanding prestige everywhere on the Sun Coast. For five generations it led the other Khinasi states through influence, if not authority.

Despite Ariya's influence abroad, however, the state faced ugly problems within. The contest for the throne between el-Arrasi and his brother had created resentful feelings among Eirat's heirs and set an unfortunate precedent: The death of each ruler sparked a fierce internal succession war, not only with Eirat's descendants but also among

the rightful heir's siblings. To remove some of the competition, one winner marked his victory by sitting on the Thousand Jewel Throne and watching as his brothers and sisters were publicly strangled. To Ariya's shame, this barbaric act became tradition.

Outside the palace, the city-state found itself beset by feuds between *geirhou*, clan-like extended families who each pursue a single craft or trade. The *geirhou* jealously guarded their occupational secrets and believed they had a traditional right to monopolize their chosen occupation. Midnight turf wars between rival bands of cobblers or glassblowers destroyed whole neighborhoods.

These uncivilized practices came to an end in 1495 (980 HC) with the ascension of Fatima bint el-Arrasi. Before taking up the scepter of rule, Fatima served with Ariya's paladins, the Swords of Avani. Rather than destroy her many siblings, she confined them to house arrest in the royal palace, beginning a tradition that survives to this day.

Even as ruler, the Lady Fatima maintained her service to the Temple of Avani. However, when she rose to become its lady high matriarch (supreme authority), she claimed the office not as a paladin but as regent of Ariya, calling herself "lady-princess." This marked the beginning of theocracy in Ariya. Subsequent rulers also were priests or paladins of Avani, at least in name, and maintained authority over both temporal and spiritual domains.

Fatima ended the *geirhou* battles by granting monopolies to one family in each trade. Rival families left the city and moved to new settlements in the countryside. There they founded villages and maintained their crafts. This isolationism explains why the rare traveler in Ariya's remote provinces may find that all residents in one village are toothless but wear boots of stunning craftsmanship, whereas residents of a neighboring village may sport perfect teeth but go barefoot.

The Lady Fatima faced her first crisis in 1497 (982 HC), when adjacent Aftane invaded and seized Ariya's four northern provinces. Her counterstrike ended in disaster, for in the century since el-Arrasi's death Ariya's army had grown incompetent. Fatima responded by exiling all commissioned officers and founding a new army, led by her fellow paladins in the Swords of Avani. After two years of preparation, the Swords tried again to reconquer the northern provinces. Though Aftane's court mage threw them back with overwhelming power, the Swords made a much better showing than they had before. Earning the respect of the citizens, and drawing on a strong power base in the Temple of Avani, the Swords became the chief military and police force on land and sea throughout the domain.