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# Cathay Hold

**Creator Name:** *Mercy Neumark; revised by Holly Hutchison, Alyssa Philips & Ron Swartzendruber.*

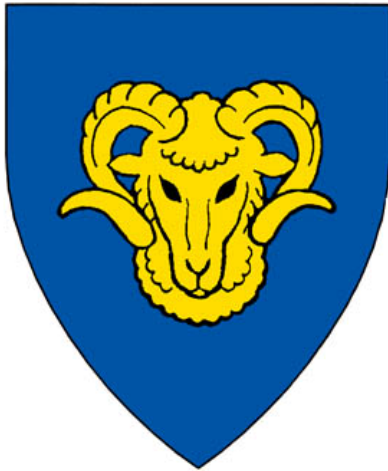
**Hold Contact:** *adoptable*

**Current Holder:** *Lord Purol Badge and colors: On a blue field, a yellow ram's head; blue and yellow*

**Minor Holds Beholden to Cathay Hold:** *Many, including High Field Cothold (cotholder Marob)*

**Last Updated:** *March 2006*

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*Heraldry by Holly Hutchison*

## GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

Cathay lies between 45 and 60+ degrees South Latitude. The bulk of the holding lies within the Western Barrier range, though it extends northward to the southern shore of Maori Lake, and in a line east of that is the terrestrial border with Maori Hold, which is negotiated. The holding extends from the Glacier River in the west (a small river that flows from the Barrier Range and empties into Maori Lake), its border with Kadanzer, to a negotiated border with Rubicon in the east.

Even at its most northerly border, at the latitude of the Lake, the holding's climate is temperate and cool, and the terrain is largely rolling foothills, with narrow valleys suitable for cultivation. To the south, especially with the increase in elevation into the mountains, the climate is correspondingly colder, with long, bitterly cold winters that feature a lot of snow.

The holding's eastern border with Rubicon extends to the shore of the Sea of Azov in the east. Everything south of that, along the shore, and south of the Western Barrier Range, technically belongs to Cathay, east of the line that extends south from its western border with Kadanzer. Except for the area of the Sea of Azov, there is land all the way to the pole, and the Antarctic circle starts at about 66 degrees of latitude. While the Barrier Range mountains extend south for some way, they are not easily passable, being glacier-locked and snow-covered all Turn long. But

along the coast of the Azov, and in a significant band inland that widens to the south, there is arctic tundra terrain. While this large area has no permanent settlements in it, being considered too inhospitable, it does see the visiting of hunting parties from the seaholds along the Azov coast further north.



## GENERAL INFORMATION

Cathay was originally founded as a minor Hold on the southern shore of Maori Lake, beholden to the Lord of Maori, within the first half-century of the Long Interval after the Ninth Pass. The area was slow to be settled, due to the difficulty of transportation and the harsh climate. It was not until midway through the second century of the Interval that the Holder of Cathay consolidated the support of his neighbors and won independence for Cathay as a Lordship of its own.

Cathay's negotiated borders with Maori and Rubicon have occasionally been subject to contention over the Turns, especially the latter. The positioning of the Rubicon border in relation to the eastern end of the Barrier Range strongly affects Cathay's ability to reach its seaholds on the shores of the Azov by overland routes during the winter. At present, a cleared, marked, and maintained road that skirts the end of the mountains is also considered to describe the border with Rubicon. Without free access to this road, overland travel to the Azov seaholds would be forced to take mountain passes that are closed by snow in winter.

There was a time in the century prior to the Tenth Pass when Rubicon annexed the road and forced a weak Lord of Cathay to pay what amounted to tolls for access to it. That Rubicon Lord's successor attempted to close off the route altogether, and use the resulting isolation of the Cathayan seaholds on the Azov as leverage to transfer them to Rubicon control – but this provoked the Cathay Lord to mount a military effort that restored Cathay ownership of the road, a situation that is the status quo to this day.

Roads are otherwise rare in Cathay holding – due to the terrain and climate, vehicle travel is difficult except in the area around Maori Lake, which is where the holding has its greatest population density. The rest of the holding is served by a network of maintained trails, and the primary method of transporting goods is by pack-train of burdened beasts. A hardy, mountainous breed of oxen are used in the lowlands, and llamas are often favored in the higher elevations.

The waterways that drain the Barrier Range provide a great deal of fresh water and sometimes water power, but most of them are too steep and rocky to be usefully navigable. The southern edges of Maori Lake freeze in the winter, but the entire Lake itself does not. The majority of Cathay's importing and exporting is done through ship travel through Maori Lake, which is connected to the oceans by

Maori River, navigable to ocean-going ships for its entire length.

At the far eastern end of the holding, the shore of the Azov is dotted with seaholds, and the Azov is connected to the oceans by the Rubicon River, which is actually a deep, wide strait. The Azov, therefore, is salt-water. Its edges also freeze in the winter, below about 55 degrees latitude, but north of that, the seaholds remain reachable by water Turn-round. These seaholds tend to have close relationships with those beholden to Rubicon, further north along that coast; and also with the holdings of Eastern Weyr territory, on the opposite shore of the Azov. Historically, Cathay has had (and continues to have) many trade agreements with the closest Eastern holdings, such as SeaDancer Hold (an archipelago in the Azov), Cremott, and Araby, as well as numerous marriage alliances with them over the Turns.

Holds and cotholds in Cathay are built from local stone and slate-roofed, even though they were built during a time when it was thought that Thread would not return. These are simply the most common local building materials, much more plentiful and therefore less expensive than wood. Likewise, many smaller settlements are partially or fully delved into cliffs – originally, not for protection against Threadfall, but for the insulative properties of building underground. Cathay holding was therefore well-equipped for the start of the Tenth Pass and the return of Threadfall.

The population of Cathay Hold territory is not large, as the environment is unforgiving, lending little to the weak bodied or thin-blooded. The valleys tend to be a bit more hospitable than the mountains, in that they are sheltered by the bitter winds that sweep across the mountain ranges, but they are not as nice living as the foothills near Maori. The foothills are the most hospitable of all the Cathay land, having a warmer climate and without the gusts of wind common in the mountains. Those who do live in the mountains have adapted into sturdy people, well adjusted to the cold. The population is extremely good-natured and friendly, perhaps due to the harshness of the highlands environment. They have a strong code of hospitality.

Spring, summer, and autumn are relatively short clement periods. Harsh, long winters reduce the viable growing season to about 2/3rds that of more temperate Holds, even in the northern lowlands.



## ECONOMICS

Despite its harsh climate and terrain, Cathay exploits many advantages of its situation.

First, it exploits a number of mines and quarries. It is the single largest producer of firestone in Kadanzer Weyr territory (though it competes with Barrier Mountain Hold and Kadanzer Hold in that area). It produces some metal ore, primarily silver, and some gemstones. It also has quarries for building-rock. But, apart from its firestone

production, it focuses on mining to a lesser degree than Barrier Mountain Hold.

Second, it raises a variety of hardy animals that do well in mountainous terrain, such as sheep, goats, and llamas, as well as a heavy-pelted variety of herdbeast. It is also known for its hardy breed of mountain pony. It exploits its herds primarily for wool and hair to turn into textiles, and for pelts with fleeces still attached. Cathay is better known for these herds, and its wool and pelts, than it is for mining.

While it does not primarily exploit these herds for meat, it utilizes milk from the sheep and goats to make a wide variety of cheeses. These are of high quality, and the hard varieties are exportable, well-known outside of the holding.

Third, it takes advantage of the natural abundance of native Pernese wildlife found in the mountains and the arctic regions to the south. Although the long, harsh winters suspend other outdoor activities and drive the holders to indoor pursuits and industries, the winter in Cathay is the time when holders turn to trapping, for the hides and thick fur of cold-adapted wherries, tunnelsnakes, and whers (the ecological equivalents of Earth arctic megafauna: bears, beavers, foxes; local wherries equivalent to gulls, puffins, and penguins, or land-dwelling ptarmigan; and migrating wherries that come to the Antarctic regions seasonally to breed, similar to geese).

In addition, the Azov is rich in sea-life, like all arctic seas. Fishing is rich Turn-round, although dangerous to boats during winter storms. Because it is connected with the oceans by the strait, it is a breeding-ground for the native Pernese equivalent of large Earth sea-mammals, like whales and seals. These sea animals are hunted by the Cathay seaholds, and during the winter, when the Azov partially freezes and land-animals venture out on the ice to hunt as well, seaholders hunt those hunters for their pelts. Exploiting these resources is not easy, and it is not a way of life that is undertaken by a large number of people. But it is very profitable for those who do risk the dangers of the environment.

To a lesser extent, Cathay also depends on fishing in Maori Lake. The eastern ends of the lake have seen the successful cultivation of beds of a tasty freshwater shellfish.

Cathay has a few other natural resources that contribute to its economic stability. The alpine regions furnish a variety of medicinal herbs that are of interest to the Healercraft, although these do not grow in large quantities. But their rarity gives the medicine derived from them great value. In addition, there are several varieties of high-altitude and arctic plants that yield the ingredients for dyestuffs. Cathay's exported textiles are known for distinctive shades of blue, yellow, and a dark red.

The holding is fortunate in being able to exploit these local resources, since there are many items that have to be imported: produce, grains, and spices, for example. Beef is also something that needs to be imported, since the holding's terrain won't support large cattle herds. The holding also needs to import blackrock (coal) for all-important heating. Early settlers in the area denuded the hills around their

holdings of trees, and wood is now a carefully maintained resource managed by the holding for some furniture and cooking uses.

The majority of the outdoor work takes place in spring, summer and autumn. Due to the harsh, long winters, this narrows the growing season to only two thirds of the growing season of other, more temperate Holds. The coldest months are a time for the people to stay in home or hall, producing what products they can from excess fibers from shearing and smaller chips from the stones that aren't exportable (too small and not worth the time to ship out). Jewelry, carvings, and knife hilts are made with these bits of stone and are sold briskly at most Gathers at reasonable prices.

Due to its location, Cathay trades as much or more with its neighbors to the east, the holds in Eastern Weyr territory, as it does with Kadanzer territory Holds. In particular, it has a close trading relationship with those Eastern Holds located on the eastern shore of the Azov and Rubicon strait – Seadancer Hold (which occupies the islands in the Sea of Azov), Cremott Hold, and Araby Hold.



### SPECIAL EVENTS

Cathay celebrates the usual round of celebrations, which revolve around the seasons. Their largest, and most attended by outsiders, is the Spring Livestock Gather, traditionally held at the end of the first sevenday in month 12. It focuses on their local livestock, as well as the display of all the crafts that have been produced over the long winter.



### IMPORTANT PEOPLE

**Lord Purol** -- M, A=68, H=Grey, E=Hazel, HT=5'8". Lord Purol is an elderly man who believes his position entitles him to a life of luxury and ostentatious display. He is an adequate Lord Holder and a smart man about industry, but not very responsible with money. Father of Dolan, Larold, Puson, and O'len. (Adoptable NPC)

**Lady Landa** -- F, A=42, H=auburn, E=brown, HT=5'6". Highly formal in public. Has a very high respect for the Weyr, and has tried to instill this in her children. Wife of Lord Purol of Cathay. Mother of Dolan, Larold, Puson, and O'len. (Adoptable NPC)

**Larold** – M, A=24, H=brown, E=brown, HT=5'11". Second son of Lord Purol and Lady Landa, now the Hold Heir, thanks to Purol's disowning of his oldest son Dolan. Not so much a partisan of his father against his older

brother; but determined to avoid Dolan's mistakes. More capable than Puson, has a better head for business even than his father; but is aware that Puson is still a rival in the succession. Was glad when his youngest brother went to the Weyr and Impressed, as that removed him from competition. Brother of Dolan, Puson, and O'len. (Adoptable NPC.)

**Puson** – M, A=22, H=auburn, E=gray, HT=5'10". Third son of Lord Purol and Lady Landa. Not as capable a student of Hold management as his brother Larold, but more a favorite of their father's. Like Larold, he keeps his head down and tries to keep on their father's good side, after the exile of their oldest brother. Brother of Dolan, Larold, and O'len. (Adoptable NPC)

**Ezzell** – M, A=60, H=white, E=green, HT=5'10". A capable Steward, he is possibly the only person who is truly Lord Purol's friend. (Adoptable NPC)

**J'lyn** -- M, A=27, H=brown, E=blue, HT=5'5". J'lyn transferred to Kadanzer from Telgar Weyr after the Poisoning. He enjoys making people smile and he's a good listener. He's easygoing and very hard to anger. Cheerful and enjoys his creature comforts. When Pliath was injured in Threadfall and could not continue in the fighting Wings, the pair were transferred to Cathay to become watchriders. J'lyn is mature and diplomatic enough to thrive in the post, and having come from Telgar, he actually prefers the climate and scenery of Cathay to that of Kadanzer's current tropical location. Rider of blue Pliath.



### IMPORTANT FORMER CATHAYANS

**Dolan** -- M, A=25, H=brown, E=blue, HT=6'0". Dolan is the disinherited heir to Cathay Hold. He is rather stiff and formal, and a stickler for honor. Son of Lord Purol of Cathay Hold, steward of Thornblaze Hold. Blue firelizard named Wave. (Adoptable NPC)

**O'len** -- M, A=18, H=Black, E=Brown, HT=6'0". Brash and reckless, enjoys anything that will give him an adrenaline rush. Over-inflated ego in general, particularly when it comes to sex. Loud and proud about his high breeding. Fourth son of Lord Purol of Cathay Hold. Rider of blue Gresuth. (Persona of [Alyssa Phillips](#))