Dorado Hold

Owned by: *Holly Hutchison (orca@shore.net)*
Creator Name: *Mercy Neumark; expanded by Chris Nagy, and Holly Hutchison*
Current Holder: *Lord Kairo*
Badge and Colors: *Gold and white; a gold field with a horizontal white stripe.*
Minor Holds Beholden to Hold: *Dirra Hold; Flatlands Hold; Full Moon Hold; Green Horizon Hold; Haven Beach Seahold; Khagren Hold; Needlethorn Hold; Rivermouth Seahold; Saleeli Hold; Skystone Hold; Whitesands Seahold;*
Last Updated: *January 2005*

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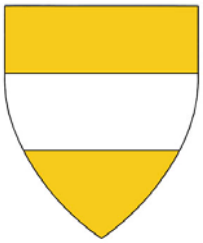


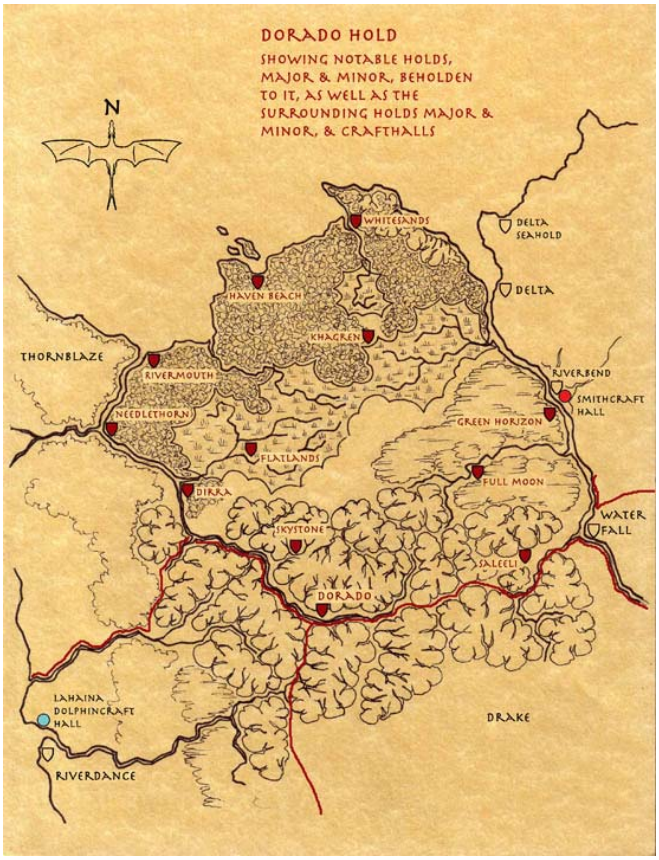
(badge art by Holly Hutchison)

GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

Dorado's territories extend from its highest point around the 15th South Latitude degree to its lowest point around the 35th South Latitude degree. The Holding is bounded on the east by the Silverfall River, which marks its borders with Delta and Waterfall; and on the west by the Dorado River, which rises in the hills, flows west-northwest, and then turns to the north, marking the border with Thornblaze and Riverdance. The line of the river and of the hills describes the surveyed southern border of the holding, shared with Drake. Over the Turns, it has been the Drake border that has been the most in dispute; indeed, it is the only border that can be disputed. This may have something to do with the main Hold's location close to that border.

The climate ranges from tropical along the coast, to temperate/sub-tropical in its southerly reaches. The climate of the interior is affected by its climbing elevations: frost and light snow may be experienced in winter in the higher elevations of the hills through which the Dorado River flows, along the southwestern edge of the holding, which tend to trap the moisture of the weather systems that move in from the Great Bay to the west.

The area is largely flat along most of its coastline, although it rises to seacliffs around the stubby peninsula of its northernmost point. The jungle of the coastline gives way to extensive marshy wetlands in the west, with the land rising to a more grassy plateau in the east around the Silverfall River area. The land also dries out as the hills to the south of the holding rise; this is the driest region of the holding, sitting in the rain-shadow of the hills.



(map by Holly Hutchison)

HISTORY

Dorado Hold was founded in the middle of the Ninth Pass, under the direction of Lord Toric of Southern who was seeking to expand his control over the South, trying to claim that he held as much of it as possible. The first settlement was a Seahold at the mouth of the Dorado River (originally called Dorado Seahold; later renamed Rivermouth Seahold), and the holders first used the Dorado River to penetrate the interior. Needlethorn Hold was the second founded in the area, to harvest from the abundant natural stands of that bush. Early holders also found extensive populations of wild wherries in the marshy interior.

When Southern Hold was destroyed in 2440, Dorado's then-Seaholder, a charismatic man named Daro, was one of the first to take advantage of the situation and consolidate enough power in the area (securing the backing of several other minor Holders in the region between the two major Rivers) to make a bid to be declared Lord.

The new main Hold was constructed at its present inland location in 2590 at the order of Lord Hinaru. It was built on the site of a cothold that had been primarily a shipping depot for mining production from the surrounding hills. The previous half-century had seen extensive conflict between Dorado and Drake over the boundary between them, spurred by increased surveying of the area for mineral wealth and the beginning of exploitation of a number of productive mining sites. Drake had been under the control of an ambitious Lord who sought to test the strength of the boundary, and in response, Hinaru of Dorado moved his seat of power inland, as a signal that he intended to keep close watch on the boundary. The new Dorado Hold was finally completed by Hinaru's son and successor, Lord Roshin.

During the Long Interval, because of the lack of a plentiful supply of hardwoods in most of the region, holdings were constructed of mud, reeds and grasses, which proved problematic when it became known that Thread would return. The present Lord's grandfather, Lord Hatoan, realized the danger to his people, and began an ambitious project to address the problem. Hatoan's actions were prompted in large part by the efforts of his second wife, Karasova (a former queenrider of Kadanzer who lost her dragon, and married the Doradan Lord after returning to her family in Riverdance). Having been a dragonrider, Karasova took the return of Thread very seriously indeed, and was able to make her husband listen to her warnings and to the advice of the Weyr.

At first, the plan was to reconstruct all of the Holds and cots in Dorado out of stone, to be roofed with slate. The Lord negotiated an important agreement with Barrier Hold to secure a supply of the necessary building material (part of the agreement included marriage of one of the Lord of Barrier's daughters to Hatoan's Heir). This plan ultimately proved far too ambitious, and the focus of the project was changed to more practically address how each of the holdings could be protected from Thread, with existing structures modified to support slate roofing.

Hatoan's successor, Lord Hiro, continued his father's work; Hiro was a son of Karasova, and the Lady long survived her older husband, and therefore was around to continue to encourage the work, as well as to imprint her influence on her children and later, her grandchildren.

Because of Hatoan's devotion to her, and Karasova's force of personality and influence, Dorado under Hiro became known as particularly welcoming of dragonriders and supportive of the Weyr. The present Lord, who can still remember his imposing grandmother, shares this attitude. The Holders and cotholders under Dorado are under orders to always honor the Search requests of the Weyr.

THE HOLDS

Dorado Hold itself is located in the southwest corner of its territory, not far from the borders it shares with Riverdance and Drake. The Hold is situated on a hill overlooking a bend in the Dorado River, which is navigable up to that point mainly by barges. (The site was originally that of a cothold established as a shipping depot.)

The Hold is built on top of a slope overlooking its immediate farmlands with the complex broken into four separate compounds by interconnecting water and flower gardens. The majority of the buildings never extend further than two stories in height with the complex spread out around them. Many support buildings cluster around the bottom of the hill. The Hold is really a large complex of connected and semi-connected buildings, rather than a single structure.

There is a wall that surrounds the entire complex, one of the few extensive uses of stone in the holding. It has two gates with gate towers, located on the road that runs through the Hold, along the river, and it is punctuated by several low towers around its circumference.

Nearly all cots and holds in Dorado are likely to contain at least one flower garden, if not two, in addition to the usual herbal and foodstuff gardens. In addition to being valued for their beauty, many of the flowers grown in Dorado are processed for their oils, and some are popular as foodstuffs in their own right (fried snowvine blossom, for example, is a seasonal delicacy popular at the Lord's table and at gathers).

Dorado's land varies in character, from the thick and extensive jungles found along the coast to the widespread wetlands/marshes in the western interior, along the Dorado River; to drier grasslands on the plateaus of the east, and finally, softwood (pine-like) forests in its more southerly, hilly regions.

The northern jungle has only been sparsely settled, and that mainly along the coast. While Dorado has several important and vital seaholds, they are vulnerable to fierce seasonal sea-storms. Many of the holdings in the tropical region harvest goods from the wild jungle, rather than engaging in extensive cultivation. Because so much of it has been left in a wild state, it is well-populated with native species like wherries, whersports, and wild whers; it also unfortunately provides sometimes-convenient shelter for bandits, despite the efforts to patrol the coast.

(This list of holds names and briefly describes the most prominent in Dorado, but is by no means an exhaustive list.)

Rivermouth Seahold remains the primary trading port of the holding, and is the largest hold on the coast. It has the oldest and some of the most productive citrus orchards in the area, as well as some of the few grapevines of any note in Dorado. It produces a relatively small amount of drinkable but not particularly notable white wines.

Needlethorn Hold is located on the Dorado River upstream of Rivermouth, as its name suggests in an area abundant in the shrub for which it is named. It also has citrus orchards, and extensive plantings of firethorn as well, which is cultivated for its berries.

Haven Beach Seahold is located along the coast east of Rivermouth, on a spectacular, large, semi-circular natural cove, sheltered from the sea by a trio of offshore islands and the reefs around them. While its harbor is tricky to navigate into and favors shallow-draught ships rather than deep ocean-going vessels, it provides a sheltered anchorage that is blunted from the force of many sea-storms.

Whitesands Seahold on the westward side of the short peninsula that marks the holding's northernmost point, where a small river from the interior meets the sea. Known as one of the most extensive deliberate plantings of shellnut trees, it is also a producer of basketry made with the sturdy dried fibers of those trees' cast-off, palmate leaves. It has several cotholds in the interior, up the river, that are the sites of plantations of fingerfruit "trees" (which, in reality, are a gigantic Southern variety of grass).

Dirra Hold, located on the Dorado River upstream of Needlethorn, is the last Hold on the river that can be reached by middle-sized keeled ships; upriver travel from Dirra is by barge or other flat-bottomed, shallow-draught boat. Dirra is consequently a busy and prosperous clearing-ground for a great deal of trade from within the holding.

Flatlands Hold is one of the earliest established in Dorado, and the first and largest center of herding/tending of marsh and weaver wherry flocks. It also farms watergrains and legumes.

Khagren Hold, in addition to herding weaver wherries, is a primary center of reed and rattan harvesting, and the manufacture of those items into finished goods like furniture. It is not the only such center of harvest or manufacture, but it is the oldest, and its wares are considered some of the finest.

Green Horizon Hold is the largest of the herding holds located on the grassy plateaus in the east. It is located on the Silverfall River, across from the Smithcrafthall in Delta. For this reason, Green Horizon is Dorado's main trading center in the east, the focus of trade between Dorado and both Delta and Waterfall Holds.

Full Moon Hold is a small herding and farming hold located in the grasslands, situated on a small tributary of the Silverfall River.

Saleeli Hold is located on the more arid side of the range of hills east of Dorado Hold, along the main road that runs between Dorado and Green Horizon. In addition to some mining in the hills, it is the most successful cultivator of red grapevines in Dorado. Although the wine it produces is mediocre, it uses some of it to make a well-regarded fortified wine. Located only a day's ride from Waterfall Hold, Saleeli also derives some prestige from the advantages of that location.

Skystone Hold, located on the arid side of the hills northeast of Dorado Hold, is the largest remaining mining hold in the territory. It still produces copper, and is particularly known for its turquoise.

ECONOMICS

The only long-term trade agreement Dorado presently adheres to is with Barrier Hold, importing slate in exchange for a large quantities of foodstuffs every Turn. Many more trade agreements are made on Turn by Turn basis.

The majority of what Dorado exports are crops, primarily watergrains and legumes that are cultivated in the marshy region, though some root crops and feedgrains are grown in the southern and eastern reaches of its territory. It grows enough of the former to tithe and export, but not enough of the latter, which are generally kept for distribution within the holding.

Other crops include some orchards of citron fruits, as well as a wider variety of native fruits, many of which are turned into preserves. Although cultivation in the jungles of the tropical region is rare, many holdings have encouraged the spreading of stands of native fruit-bearing trees, bushes, and giant-sized Southern grasses, including breadfruit, fingerfruit, and shellnut (the latter of which, when carefully harvested, provides both nutmeat and a hard shell that can be worked for a variety of uses). The jungles also produce a variety of medicinal herbs, and several of the tropical Holds are well-known for producing fragrant items, like soaps, perfumes, oils, etc.

Cultivated areas in Dorado tend to use hedges or stands of tall plants to mark property lines, as well as poles of flowering vines (which themselves are often harvested for their flowers or fruit). Dorado is well known for producing numerous varieties of flowers, as well as plants for both medicinal purposes and fragrance. This includes the product of specialty soaps, perfumes, powders and oils. Jams and candies are another specialty extremely popular in the contests at Dorado's gathers.

The grassy plateaus and low hills in the eastern part of the holding, meanwhile, proved hospitable to the cultivation of cotton, which Dorado supplies raw to the Weavercraft.

Because of the scarcity of hardwoods in the region (the forests found in the hills to the south of the territory are primarily softwood; hardwood is mainly found in the jungles, but those species are relatively rare and difficult to harvest, and they are mainly used for shipbuilding), Dorado holders long ago began using local materials for building. Its wetland/marshy region has many stands of reeds, bamboo-like grasses, and trees that produce something like rattan, all of which are cultivated and used to construct buildings and furnishings. In raw form, some of the largest varieties are a popular export, as they make sturdy but light material for scaffolding in building projects. These crops all

have the advantage that they grow to harvestable maturity far faster than comparable softwoods or hardwoods.

There are a number of holdings that specialize in creating finished products from these materials, as well as producing a variety of items using mat- and basket-weaving techniques. Finished furniture, screens for dividing cot interiors, and storage basketry are major finished items of export and are used extensively by preference throughout the holding.

Dorado has some herds of herdbeasts and a few runner-breeding cotholds, but its main herd animals are large wherries, which were found by the first settlers already extensively occupying the interior. These proved amenable to attempts to semi-domesticate them and control their breeding.

There are three main species of wherry herded in Dorado.

Marsh wherries, as the name implies, are a wading species that grow to about half the size of a man, and which feed primarily on several varieties of crustaceans, waterbugs, and small fish that inhabit the shallow waterways of the marshes. Their eggs are harvested to manage the populations, and they provide meat, which has a distinctly fishy taste and oily texture that nonetheless is palatable when properly cured.

Weaver wherries are a taller species, but actually yield about the same amount of meat as the marsh wherries, with most of their height coming from longer legs and longer necks. Their primary foodsource is plant-based, the seeds and fruits of reeds and grasses found around the fringes of the marshlands, which results in a mildly-flavored meat. Their eggs are difficult to find and even harder to get to, as they tend to build their nests in thick stands of reeds, and to protect them by weaving barriers of grasses (hence their name). Therefore, their eggs are seldom harvested.

Both of these wetland-dwelling species have developed quite thick hides as protection against insects, which makes them valuable sources of wherhide as well as meat. Tanned wherhide is a major additional production of the holds that herd these wherries, and it is supplied in tithe to the Weyr, as well as in trade agreements with the Tannercraft. There is a minor Tannerhall in the territory, subservient to the main Hall in Sunstone.

The third species found in the region are loper wherries, a large and robust animal found on the grassy plains of the eastern plateaus. Long-legged, flightless, and fast-moving (and actually trainable for riding in some cases), they are larger than a man and have as much meat on them (especially in their well-developed legs) as a herdbeast. They are mainly grass-eaters but are opportunistic omnivores that won't pass up insects, the occasional 'snake, or basically anything small that will fit in their mouth. Largely docile and extremely herd-oriented (they don't like to be separated off on their own and regard numbers as safety), the force of the kick that they can deliver with those hind legs is lethal on its own, nevermind their claws.

Loper hide is not as thick as that of the other two species, but is equally valuable. In addition, the upper legs of the lopers are covered with a fine, thick down, and this is generally preserved in the tanning process and used as a lining material (similar to shearling).

While not a particularly mineral-rich area, some copper is found in the hills of the southwest. Related mining produces a small trickle of turquoise, malachite, and azurite as well, which are mined for trade. After several centuries of working, copper is no longer a major export; most of the local production is used within the holding first.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The height of Dorado's gathers is the Flower Festival, held early summer every Turn (month 10). People from all over Dorado bring their specialty products and flowers for display and trade. It is also the only time when the private gardens of Dorado Hold are opened for viewing to all people.

Rivermouth Seahold holds a large gather at Midsummer, which the Lord and Lady traditionally attend.

Green Horizon Hold hosts a gather in late autumn, at a time when the lopers herds are brought in and culled, and that year's maturing hatchlings are caught and marked. This is held right before the loper mating season. Because of the Hold's location, this turns into a major regional trading opportunity, drawing attendees from Delta and Waterfall as well as from Dorado.

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Lord Kairo; Lady Narna, wife of Lord Kairo; Lady Kameko, mother of Lord Kairo; Head Steward Dalpha, brother of Lord Kairo; and Mostal, eldest son of Lord Kairo and Heir of Dorado. Remaining children are R'ka, Iro, Fintal, Nali, Jette, and Veletta.

Lord Kairo - (43) H-inky black, E-brown, HT=6'2" Lord Kairo is a hard-working man, who puts the welfare of his family and people before his own. He is a loyal husband, loved by those beholden to him and an ally of the Weyr. He and Narna were a love-match; he insisted on marrying her, even though she is only a cousin of old Lord Kabur of Maori, and there were better matches to be made at the time. Kairo is devoted to her, and treats her as a confidant.

Lady Narna – (39) H-red, E-blue-grey, HT=5'5" Narna is the daughter of one of Lord Kabur's sisters who married a minor Holder close to Maori. Although Lord Hiro was considering making a marriage offer to Maori anyway for

his son and Heir, it was Kairo, who met Narna at a Maori festival, who chose her and insisted on the marriage. An intelligent and practical woman, she and Kairo have a good working partnership as well as a happy marriage. Narna has become as loyal and devoted to the people of Dorado as her husband is, and she is just as well-loved by them. After bearing Kairo seven children, she recently had a problem pregnancy. Since her miscarriage over a Turn ago, her health has not fully recovered, but the healers have much hope with her continuing improvement.

Lady Kameko – (62) H-white, E-dark brown, HT=4"7' Kameko is a younger sister of the previous Lord of Barrier, Caley's father. She had a good marriage to Lord Hiro (who was strongly influenced by his own mother to value strong women), and had some very fruitful childbearing Turns to show for it. She has aged quickly and dramatically since her husband's death in the Thornblaze earthquake. She is still active in matters of running the Hold, having an unusually good relationship with her son's Lady, Narna. But she is not strong in health, and never leaves Dorado Hold.

Head Steward Dalpha – (41) H-inky black, E-brown, HT=6'0 Dalpha is a patient man who doesn't tolerate deceit in his workers. He is candid and honest with Lord Kairo and is a good diplomat, often presenting a more mild, friendly, and seemingly approachable face than his brother the Lord. (He and Kairo often play this up on purpose.) He is proud of his older brother's management and will uphold any decision made by Kairo with fierce loyalty.

Mostal, Heir of Dorado – (20) H-red brown, E-dark brown, HT=5'11" Mostal is a helpless romantic who is easily distracted by a pretty female. He has learned the skills needed to manage a hold, but struggles with any long-term commitments.

NOTABLE FORMER DORADANS

Gian -- M, A=39, H=brown, E=blue, HT=5'9". Grew up in Dorado Hold as the son of a journeyman Harper. Gian is Craftmaster for Calandryl Hall Harper Crafthall and is wildly in love with music. He's very much the curious sort, would get his finger in every pie if he could. Likes to help people, teach new students and will talk your ear off if you let him. (Persona of Heidi Henderson)

J'tael -- M, A=15, H=Blond, E=Blue, HT=5'6". J'tael is a former migrant field worker whose family travelled between eastern Dorado and Waterfall Holds. He is one of a family of 10 children who has just Impressed his brown Hazeroth. Curious in a sometimes obtrusive way, hard working and hard playing, J'tael will usually get along with most people. (Persona of Sandy Hinkley)

Netheril -- M, A=18, H=brown, E=blue-green, HT=5'11". From a large farming family in a cothold very near Dorado Hold itself. Netheril is an apprentice farmercrafter and candidate. He is an intelligent, competitive, self-confident and gregarious young man with ambitions of earning rank in the farmcraft should he fail to Impress. (Persona of Samantha Shmuir)

Nilsi -- F, A=36, H=blond, E=blue, HT=5'5". Nilsi was shipped to the Weyr as part of a "tithe" after becoming pregnant by an unknown dragonrider at a Dorado Hold Gather. Nilsi is cheerful and outgoing and dotes on her children. Mother of Kalsi and J'loo. (Adoptable NPC)

Rilam -- M, A=20, H=brown, E=blue, HT=5'9". Came from a large family in a small farming cothold in Dorado. Rilam is a serious young senior apprentice who is working diligently to earn his journeyman knots as a dragonhealer. Owner of the precocious wherry named Roo. (Persona of Heidi Henderson)

R'ka -- M, A=19, H=black, E=black, HT=5'11". Second eldest son of Lord Kairo of Dorado. R'ka is a light conversationalist who's often intimidated by the more muscular of his sex. General friendly, but with a slightly naive outlook on love and life. Well-suited to being a greenrider. Rider of green Jainth. (Adoptable NPC)

R'yo -- M, A=22, H=black, E=brown, HT=5'10". **(Deceased NPC)** Came from Full Moon Hold. R'yo was a hardworking young man, who cared deeply about those around him, particularly his brother T'oma. He could be impulsive and didn't always think things through. He was quite athletic. Bronze firelizard Breaker, rider of bronze Kentoth. **Died in Threadfall on 2858.07.04.**

T'oma -- M, A=20, H=auburn, E=aqua, HT=5'9". Came from Full Moon Hold. T'oma is a shy young man who can moody at times. He strives to be the best he can at all times. He loves to participate in sports, especially archery. Brother of deceased bronzerider R'yo; brown firelizard Muddy, rider of brown Sageth. (Adoptable NPC)

Z'min -- M, A=17, H=brown, E=brown, HT=5'8". Came from a small seahold on Dorado's coast. Z'min is a cheerful and very gullible youth who is forever flitting about looking for excitement. He is almost touchingly naive and sheltered. Rider of green Sluarth. (Adoptable NPC)