

The Grand Duchy of Irolo

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Irolo is a large confederation consisting of over a hundred semi-independent fiefs and baronies (Herrschaftsgebiete). Its eastern border is the Greenwater and Rauko rivers, its western and southern border is the Allsea and its northern border is an indefinite line running somewhere south of Thimblebark Forest from the Grand Range to Stormshaven Bay. In fact, Irolo and Ambria could be more accurately described as blending into each other than bordering each other.

The lands which are now Irolo were part of Ambria in the days of Rauko. After the fall of the Empire, minor nobles all grabbed what they could. The result was the fragmenting of the region into scores of tiny, independent kingdoms. For the next four centuries the lords and their heirs fought among themselves, each trying to add his neighbour's lands to his own. Although the demon invasion did not reach Irolo, the constant infighting among the regional nobles did nearly as good a job of plunging the land into chaos.

The state of affairs may have continued to the present, if two of the larger fiefdoms and the city-state of Alasrenoa had not signed a treaty of unification. The new kingdom had enough power to force the other fiefdoms to declare fealty to its ruler, who held the title of "Duke of Irolo". Some nobles, of course, rejected the new authority and the armies of the Duke were able to eliminate all military opposition in three years. Only one noble, Lord Megiers, resisted unification successfully, supposedly with the help of the Zylistani. The Free City of Megiers is fully independent to this day.

Over the years, however, increasing eccentricity in the members of the Royal Family (said to be the results of an ancient, lingering curse) has caused the various fiefdoms to begin recovering some of their autonomy. The current ruler, Duchess Lorelia, spends most of her time commissioning new dresses (and then throwing them away when she decides she doesn't like them). She also takes long walks through the countryside, continuing her life-long search for "the one perfect buttercup, in which true beauty is contained". She leaves most of the tedious administrative tasks to her aide-do-camp, Count Flavio. Many lords consider her completely incompetent. Unless something causes the current situation to change, it is only a matter of time before Irolo fragments once again, making it an easy target for sea raiders, bandits from the Horse Wilds and the things in the Drakor Mountains.

Irolo is currently friendly towards Ambria, and trades with Zylistan through the Free City of Megiers.

The Duchess has stated her desire to “see those nasty, brutish Dornican pirates sunk”, but for reasons of her own, Count Flavio usually dissuades her.

Roleplaying Synopsis

Irolo is a land with a weak, unstable government and many power blocks. It resembles renaissance Italy in terms of government and lifestyle, although its roots are germanic. The irolans are less enlightened than the Italians were, however, and tend to be a little more bizarre. The power politics and minor conflicts amongst Irolo's component states make the land prone to court intrigue and mercenary activity - the lords are always looking for hired swords to perform some sort of mission against their neighbours

The Lay of the Land

Irolo's terrain is much like Ambria's, but somewhat more hilly. It is also somewhat drier, except along the coast. Rain and stormy weather are common in the vicinity of the Grey Bogs. Irolo, being further south than Ambria, is warmer, and snow is rarely seen except near the Grand Range. The men of Irolo are somewhat shorter than their Ambrian neighbours and darker in complexion. Hobbits are fairly common in the north and Centaurs from the Horse Wilds occasionally settle in eastern Irolo. Wild creatures are fairly common, and cattle raids by gryphons of the southern Grand Range are not unheard of.

Life in Irolo

Irolon society most closely resembles renaissance Italy; the land is divided into dozens of city-states, with little or no central government. As such, local laws and customs, the economy and state of the military can vary greatly from province to province.

A few general rules hold true throughout all of Irolo, however. The peasants are loyal to their lord first, and to the Duchess second. Life amongst the common folk is generally good, although recent political unrest is beginning to change this. The Irolons are fond of festivals, and seem to find excuses to make new holidays every year. Harvest Festival is usually the largest of these.

Life is not as pleasant among the upper class, however. Certainly they enjoy a finer lifestyle, but there is a great deal of political and economic rivalry. Both diplomacy and trade in Irolo are complex duels of wit and skill, and only an Irolon can hope to grasp all the subtleties of an encounter.

Religion in Irolo is very intricate. The Irolons maintain variations on the rituals, one for each month. Many of the Irolons, particularly those of the upper class, place a great deal of belief in the idea that the month of one's birth influences one's fortunes throughout life (much like Astrology)

Magic is more accepted in Irolo than many of the more orthodox nations. The only “wizard” of note residing in the land is Markoth the Undying, a reclusive lich which has driven all living inhabitants from the Grey Bogs. Magic items are fairly common, but are rarely very powerful



Places of Interest

Alasrenoa:(pop 450,000) the capital of Irolo. Alasrenoa is a large, well-defended trading centre. The royal palace, a fairy-tale castle of high towers and steeped turrets, is on a low hill at the north of the city. By order of the Duchess Lorelia, every building is required to fly the Irolon flag, making for a festive (or ridiculous, depending on your point of view) sight. Count Flavio, a thin, rat-faces man has been empowered by the Duchess to make nearly all of the decisions necessary to keep the government working.

Torleo:(pop 150,000) A metting of many roads. Torleo is set in the middle of a great plain. It is partially surrounded by a wall which was begun in the days of Rauko, but was never completed after the Empire's fall.

Lantern-Town (Laternestadt): (Pop. 80,000) This town is located at the end of the Great North-South Road. It gains its name from the many lanterns which hang outside every night, intended to scare away beasts and monsters from the Horse Wilds and Drakor Mountains. It is the home of many barge captains who carry goods up and down the Rauko River.

Being so near the monster-ridden Drakor Mountains, and so far from Alasrenoa, the inhabitants of Lantern-Town are very capable, rough-and-ready sorts who consider themselves somewhat independent of Irolo.

Scrubbrush Downs (Gestrüpp Hügel): These low hills are barren of trees, being covered only by scrub and grasses. They are frequented by shepherds and not a few bandits.

Greenwater (Grünwasser): A slow, smallish river which winds down from the Halfling lands of the Thimblebark forest. It is remarkable in the fact that its banks are the only place in the Western Shores on which Tobacco can be grown.

Breezewood (Brisewälder): This forest of ocean pine is cool and pleasant yearround.

Grey Bogs (Grausümpfe): This fetid, fog-shrouded swamp is home to Markoth the Undying, a lich and necromancer of great ability. Markoth moved into the bogs over two hundred years ago, and proceeded to drive out all living creatures within. Since then, anyone wandering too close to the bogs has disappeared. Rumor has it that Markoth is using the bodies to create an undead army. Most Irolons pray to their gods that these rumors are not true.

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