

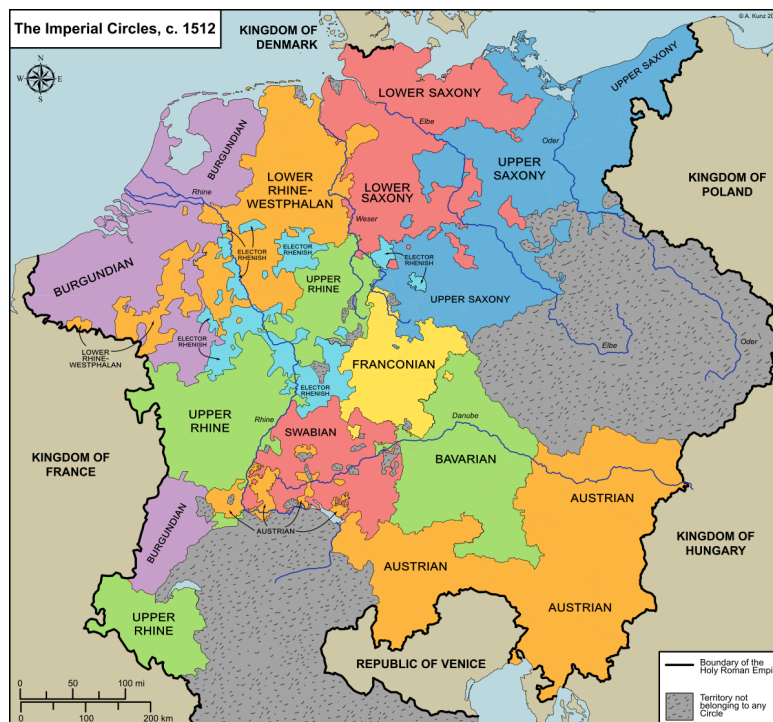
Imperial Circles (c. 1512)

Abstract

At the start of the early modern era, efforts were made to strengthen the government of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. Under Emperor Maximilian I (1493-1519), large areas of the Empire were organized into ten Imperial Circles [*Reichskreise*], each of which was headed by two princes, normally the highest-ranking secular and ecclesiastical members of the Circle. The tasks of the Imperial Circles included safeguarding the “Perpetual Public Peace” proclaimed in 1495, enforcing verdicts passed by the Imperial Chamber Court [*Reichskammergericht*] established in 1495, supervising minting, collecting Imperial taxes, and raising troops for the Empire. As the map shows, some territories within the Empire belonged to no Imperial Circle: Switzerland, Imperial Italy, Bohemia and its crown lands (Moravia, Silesia, and Lusatia), and the lands of the Imperial Knights.

The Imperial Circles did not encroach upon the territorial integrity of the existing duchies, counties, etc. The need for an administrative and executive organization, much discussed during the fifteenth century, did not gain any concrete form until the Imperial Diets held between 1495 and 1512. The Circles strengthened the princes’ predominant role in the Imperial Diet [*Reichstag*], an enduring characteristic of the Imperial constitution, which did not develop further in the direction of a centralized or federal nation-state.

Source



Source: Original cartography by IEG-MAPS, Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz, A. Kunz/ Joachim Robert Moeschl, 2007. Revised cartography (WCAG-compliant) by Gabriel Moss, 2022.

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