

The Empire

The Empire in Cyrodiil

In the provinces, the Empire is a grand, idealistic project to unite all peoples under the Divinely mandated rule of the Septims. While it imposes itself through military conquest and permanent occupation, the most influential aspect of the Empire is arguably its extensive system of civil governance, which has created a more-or-less unified administrative structure across Tamriel.

The provincial rule is almost universally approved of in Cyrodiil. Most Imperials genuinely believe in the moral supremacy of their civilization. Almost every Imperial family has a son or a daughter working in one of the Empire's provincial branches, which they see as a moral duty as well as a point of great familial pride. For many, taking part in the Empire's propagation is a religious mandate as well as a civil one.¹

On a more pragmatic note, it is generally understood that the Imperial control over the provinces greatly benefits Cyrodiil on a political and economical level.² Continent-wide taxation and beneficial trade arrangements have made the Imperial City into the wealthiest and most prosperous city in the history of the world.

The Cyrodiils have quite a different attitude to the Empire when it functions as their own government. Unlike the provincials, the inhabitants of Cyrodiil have some degree of influence over the Empire through local nobility, socio-political parties, mercantile organizations, and the age-old tradition of bribing and buying Councilmen and administrators. The Imperials are fiercely protective of the civil privileges and assurances of local governance that they have under Imperial Law. To be a Cyrodiilic Citizen³ is quite different from being a Provincial subject of the Empire – one can speak of two different classes of citizenship here.

The inner working of the Empire are dictated by money, influence, and the cut-throat political games of the Heartlands. Inside the walls of the Imperial City, the hierarchical nature of the Empire dissolves into a lethal morass of alliances, administrative departments, bizarre rituals, social obligations, thefts and assassinations. Governmental supplicants vie with each other for cushy appointments in the provinces, resorting to blackmail, sabotage, and outright murder as a matter of

1 Some Imperials consider the Empire a reflection of Divine Will, instated by Tiber Imperator.

2 There is dissent on this point, as visible in the call to exclude Morrowind and Argonia from the Empire based on economical arguments.

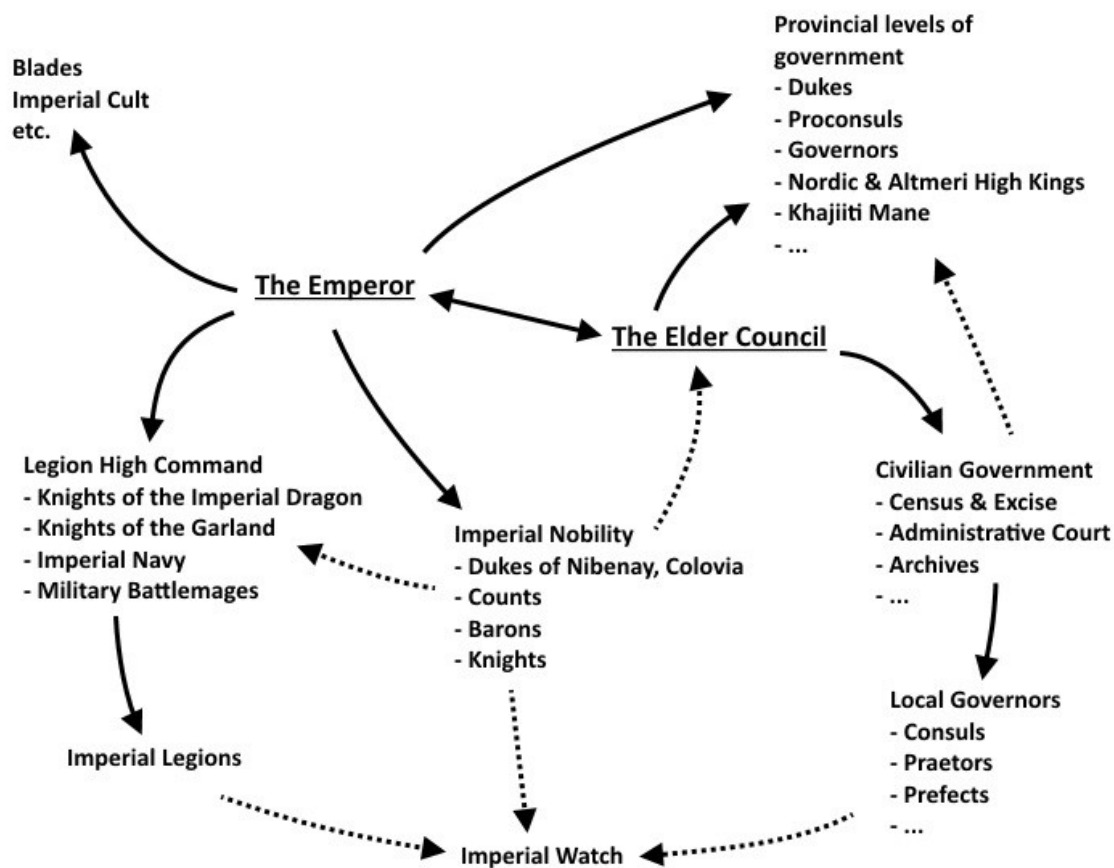
3 A quest to apply for Cyrodiilic Citizenship might be worth considering.

course. In the center of it all is the age-old conflict between the Emperor and the Elder Council, each attempting to undermine the other's power and privileges through any means possible.

As elsewhere, there is a growing sense of unease among the Empire's citizens and notables. Emperor Uriel VII is in ill health, and his heirs are considered incompetent at best, illegitimate at worst.⁴ Imperial magistrates are cashing in on their positions, shoring up their power base for a potential coup, or simply whiling away their time in decadence. It is the calm before the storm.

Structure

The most important factor in the Empire's hierarchy is the division between Emperor and Elder Council. The Emperor is nominally the supreme ruler of the Empire, assisted in governance and decision-making by the Elder Council, who are made up of representatives of the different powers and peoples in the Empire. In practice, the Elder Council is in control over vast parts of the Empire's civil system.



⁴ Many believe that the heirs of Uriel VII are magical duplicates installed by Jagar Tharn during the Simulacra.

The Emperor is in direct control over the nobility, who swear fealty to him alone, and over the Imperial Legions, who are also bound to him personally (and whose upper ranks are made up exclusively out of nobility). The Emperor also controls other factions and parties personally, like the Imperial Cult, the Blades, and some knightly orders. Since the Cyrodiilic nobility controls key positions in the Elder Council, the Emperor can use them to influence decision-making.

The Elder Council has direct control over most of the civil apparatus that keeps the Empire running, like the Census & Excise, Administrative Court, and various departments in the Imperial City itself. The various Prefects, Praetors and Consuls that deal with day-to-day life in the settlements of Cyrodiil also answer to them. The Elder Council does not have any military power⁵, but they tend to have the support of the guilds, merchant circles, and minor cults.

When it comes to the wide variety of provincial governmental systems, the Emperor and the Elder Council are by necessity united in common cause. These governments, for their part, tend to have little influence over affairs in the capital, save through their representatives in the Council.

History & Current Situation

The current Empire is the Third Cyrodiilic Empire, by far the strongest and most advanced of them all. Tiber Septim's brutal conquest allowed him to depose the Colovian kings and Nibenese priest-rulers, instating a hierarchical, centralized system of government in their place. In Cyrodiil, all is focused on the Heartlands. It is where decisions are made, conflicts resolved, and new rulers come to power.

In recent times, though, this position has diminished. The Empire's gears are grinding to a halt as magistrates neglect their duties in favor of decadent entertainment, private wars and self-enrichment. The plutocrats of the Heartlands have become blind to everything outside the sphere of their political conflicts and preoccupations. This has resulted in a number of outsider factions seeking to break away: the Free Estate Movement in Colovia, provincial insurgents like the Kali Mes and the Renrijra Krin, death-cults and Ayleid revivalists in the Nibenay, etc. Simultaneously, many are preparing for a time when the Empire's decay will allow them to usurp power over part of or even the entirety of Cyrodiil.

⁵ An exception is the office of the Imperial Watch. Besides their allegiance to the letter of the Law, the local Watch answers to anyone who has the Privilege of the Watch in their local district, which can be a nobleman, a Prefect, an officer of the Legion, or even a private Citizen.