

**The Roman Empire in a time of change:
An overview of the higher officials of the fourth century**

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Introduction – An empire reinvented

With the start of the fourth century C.E. a time of internal struggle ended and a dynamic period started. These developments are generally considered to have started during the reign of Diocletian (emperor 284-305 C.E.) and Maximian (emperor 286-305 C.E.). In the time of the Roman Republic, as well as the first three centuries C.E., a system in which officials served in both civil and military offices known as the *cursus honorum* formed the core of the political organization.¹ This ended around the start of the fourth century when the old administrative structure was subjected to a series of reforms, resulting in the decrease of the size of the provinces, the creation of the dioceses as a new administrative layer and the creation of prefectures as the top layer over the course of the fourth century, as well as the development of a new military system consisting out of border and field armies.²

Just like developments on the administrative side, the Roman military was subjected to a large change in the way the military operated. In the time of the Republic and the first three centuries C.E., the Roman army consisted of units placed alongside the border of the Roman Empire, which would be drawn upon in the case of a war. Over the course of several decades around the start of the fourth century this army system was transformed into a new form, with two distinct sections. These sections are the earlier mentioned border army, the *limitanei*, and a new permanent field army, the *comitatenses*.³

The role fulfilled by the *limitanei* strongly corresponds with the old role of the Roman Army. The troops in the border armies were, as the name suggests, placed alongside the border of the Roman Empire and served as a static form of protection against their enemies and were permanently garrisoned in fortresses and fortress-cities along the borders of the empire. The *limitanei*, as the border army is often called by modern scholars, were known under a number of names which were often used as synonyms, even though their meaning might slightly deviate from the connotation attached to *limitanei*. These names, *riparientes*, *ripences*, *castellani*, and *burgarii*, are being used in several sources whereas the term *limitanei* did not appear until 363, where it was mentioned in a law in the *Codex Theodosianus*. The function of the border forces was threefold. Firstly, the border forces controlled who and what entered and left the Roman Empire. The second function was intelligence gathering about the regions beyond the borders and gathering intelligence about the possibility of attacks by enemies. The third and most obvious function was the defense of the border and the stopping of raids on the Roman Empire from outside.⁴

The counterpart of the *limitanei* is formed by the *comitatenses* who fulfilled a dynamic role, instead of static defense. The *comitatenses* are still surrounded by a lot of uncertainty and discussion by modern scholars, which will be addressed later. The main task of the field army was the support of the *limitanei* and being used on campaigns. The field armies consisted out of three types of troops, the *palatini*, the *comitatenses proper* and *pseudocomitatenses*. Originally the *comitatenses* served under the emperor and their commanders the *magister peditum* and *magister equitum*. Later the structure of the field armies changed and smaller regional armies started to appear. Around 350 there would be a smaller

¹ Horst Wolfgang Böhme, *Römische Beamtenkarrieren: Cursus honorum* (Stuttgart, 1977), 9; Louise Revell, *Ways of being Roman: discourses of identity in the Roman West* (Oxford, 2016), 70.

² Daniëlle Sloopjes, *The governor and his subjects in the later Roman Empire* (Leiden, 2006), 2-3.

³ Pat Southern, *The Roman army: a social and institutional history* (Oxford, 2006), 247-248.

⁴ Hugh Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe AD 350-425* (Oxford, 1997), 97, 204-206; Benjamin Isaac, 'The meaning of the terms *limes* and *limitanei*', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988), 125-147, esp. 146-147; Gary A. Crump, 'Ammianus and the late Roman army', *Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 22 (1973), 91-103, esp. 99-100.

regional army next to the army that was traveling with the emperor and around 370 the number of armies would be increased again to respond to threats alongside the borders.⁵

Many of the developments taking place in this time are unclear to modern historians and subjected to discussion. One of the main discussions around this era is the creation of the fourth-century governing system. This discussion is often illustrated with the introduction of the new military system and the associated new commanders, indicating the start of specialization in both branches of the government. This debate is split into three schools of thought, starting with the idea that the new field armies were first introduced under the reign of Gallienus (emperor 253-268 C.E.). This idea is supported by the existence of an army consisting out of cavalry units placed under a single commander. Furthermore, the existence of *duces* and *comes rei militaris* in the time of Gallienus support the argument, even though it is in a hybrid form in which many governors still had the military command.⁶ Pat Southern (2006) argues against this idea by stating that Gallienus was hard pressed for fast moving military troops, which resulted in the creation of the field army. This field army has been interpreted as the first mobile field army by Byzantine chronicler George Cedrenus, but should not be seen as such. Next to this argument the existence of the *duces* and *comes* is explained as fulfilling their old function, in which they served as special commanders taking command over multiple units for a limited time, instead of being permanent commanders in the structure which would later be found in the fourth century Roman Empire.⁷ The second school of thought in this debate has a broader support from modern scholars and states that the changes in the system of governance were the work of Diocletian. The new offices were implemented under Diocletian and the first form of a mobile army in the form of the *comitatus* was developed.⁸ This school is further expanded by the historians Arnold Jones (1964) and John Mann (1977), arguing in favor of the vision that the developments were started under the reign of Diocletian, but finished during the reign of Constantine (emperor 306-337 C.E.). They support this vision by pointing out that under the reign of Diocletian and Maximian several *duces* had taken over the border command, but that there were still a lot of places governed by the old system.⁹ The historians of the third school in this debate regard the newly created structure as the work of Constantine, instead of the previous emperors. This last group argues that the *comitatus* under the rule of Diocletian are merely a bodyguard, while the *comitatenses* under Constantine are a fully developed field army. They support their view with a law in the *Codex Theodosianus* from 325, which specifically mentions the field army troops alongside the border forces and the imperial guards.¹⁰ The last argument is refuted using the *Acta Maximiliani*. In the *Acta Maximiliani*, dating from 295, the suggestion is made that the *comitatus* under Diocletian formed a semi-permanent force and did not just served as bodyguards.¹¹ Stephen Williams and Gerard Friell (1994) argued against this idea by stating that prior to the time of Constantine armies that were going on campaign were drafted from

⁵ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 208-209; Martinus J. Nicasie, *Twilight of empire: the Roman army from the reign of Diocletian until the battle of Adrianople* (Amsterdam, 1998), 16-18; John B. Bury, 'The provincial list of Verona', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 13 (1923), 127-151, esp. 127.

⁶ Lukas de Blois, *The policy of the emperor Gallienus* (Leiden, 1976), 49-50; Bury, 'The provincial list of Verona', esp. 127.

⁷ Southern, *The Roman army*, 248-249; Pat Southern and Karen R. Dixon, *The late Roman army* (London, 1996), 59.

⁸ Southern, *The Roman army*, 249-250.

⁹ Arnold H.M. Jones, *The later Roman Empire 285-602: a social economic and administrative survey* (Oxford, 1964), 607; John C. Mann, 'Duces and comites in the 4th century', in: D.E. Johnston (ed.), *The Saxon Shore* (London, 1977), 11-14, esp. 11-14.

¹⁰ Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*, 6-7; *Codex Theodosianus*, 7.20.4, trans. Clyde Pharr (Princeton, 1952).

¹¹ William Seston, 'Du "comitatus" de Dioclétien aux "comitatenses" de Constantin', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 4 (1955), 284-296, esp. 294.

the border units. This was untrue for the time of Constantine after his war against Licinius (emperor 308-324 C.E.) in 324. Constantine kept the entire army used in the campaign in existence, instead of sending the units home to their original posts.¹²

A discussion closer to the topic of this thesis is centered on the hierarchical structure of the Roman army. This discussion tries to categorize different officials in the military system and place them in a hierarchical order. One of these hierarchies is provided by Stephen Williams and Gerard Friell (1994), in which they look at the respective ranking of the *magistri equitum, peditum, and militum* and the *duces and comes*. They provide a schematic overview of the system, but fail to produce sources to support their system.¹³ An earlier reconstruction has been made by Arnold Jones (1964), which is mainly based on the *Notitia Dignitatum*. The reconstruction made by Jones strongly resembles the schematic overview provided by Williams and Friell, but the heavy reliance on one source makes this reconstruction less trustworthy and in need of support of additional sources.¹⁴ The reconstruction made by Dietrich Hoffmann (1969) is again overly dependent on the *Notitia Dignitatum* and is comparable to the reconstruction made by Jones.¹⁵ The reconstruction made by Martinus Nicasie (1998) utilizes Zosimus as an additional source to research the hierarchical structure of the *magistri*. The reconstruction lacks the command structure directly under the *magistri* and the relative position of the *duces and comes rei militaris*.¹⁶

Connected to this matter is the discussion of the usage of title of *magister* and the inconsistencies revolving around it. The title of *magister* was paired with difficulty, due to apparent inconsistencies in the sources. As pointed out by Pat Southern and Karen Dixon (1996), the military officer Silvanus was addressed using two different titles in the scope of the same year. These titles, *magister equitum et peditum* and *comes et magister militum*, have different connotations. Added to this inconsistency was the interchangeability of the titles *magister utriusque militiae* and *magister militum*, which imply an all-encompassing command.¹⁷ A solution to this problem has been provided by Arthur Boak (1915), who suggested that all three titles were merely variants on the same function that appeared in different time frames.¹⁸

Strongly connected to the discussion above is the discussion around the title of the *limitanei* and the function it implies. The *limitanei* of the sixth century C.E. were known as the lowest grade soldiers available, an equivalent to militia.¹⁹ Whether or not the title applies the same type of troops in the fourth century is discussed among modern scholars. Scholars like Theodor Mommsen (1889) and Michael Rostovtzeff (1957) argued that the border forces started to be replaced by farming communities, whom were responsible for the border defense, as early as the third century.²⁰ Jones (1964) argued against the idea of the fourth century *limitanei* being equivalent to the sixth century *limitanei*, based on the treatment of the latter.²¹ This argument is supported by the historians Benjamin Isaac (1988) and John Mann (1977), who claims the usage of the term *limitanei* to indicate the so-called

¹² Stephen Williams and Gerard Friell, *Theodosius: the empire at bay* (London, 1994), 75-77.

¹³ Williams and Friell, *Theodosius*, 182-188

¹⁴ Jones, *The later Roman Empire 285-602*, 608-610.

¹⁵ Dietrich Hoffmann, *Das spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum* (Düsseldorf, 1969), 7.

¹⁶ Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*, 76-81.

¹⁷ Southern and Dixon, *The late Roman army*, 58; *Codex Theodosianus*, 7.1.2; *Codex Theodosianus*, 8.7.3.

¹⁸ Arthur E.R. Boak, 'The Roman *magistri* in the civil and military service of the empire', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 26 (1915), 73-164, esp. 123.

¹⁹ Southern, *The Roman army*, 250-251.

²⁰ Michael Rostovtzeff, *The social and economic history of the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1957), 425-428; Theodor Mommsen, 'Das Römische Militärwesen Seit Diocletian', *Hermes* 24 (1889), 195-279, esp. 209-211.

²¹ Jones, *The later Roman Empire 285-602*, 649-654.

farmer soldiers is a form of anachronism. The sources used to support this argument are less reliable due to the strong anachronistic tendencies within.²²

The topic of this thesis has a strong connection to the developments taking place in the fourth-century Roman Empire. The changes in both the administrative system and the military system lead to a new internal hierarchy within the empire and a shift in status for the different offices at the top level. This thesis will attempt to do two things: firstly, try to unravel the hierarchy within the empire's top level and secondly, look at the status held by the various officials. To answer this problem within the scope of this thesis several offices have to be excluded and only the praetorian prefect, vicar and governors on the administrative side and the *magistri peditum, equitum, and militum* and their subordinates the *duces and comes* will be analyzed on the military side.

The hierarchy and status of the top level officials within the Roman Empire will be analyzed in the scope of two chapters. The first chapter will attempt to reconstruct a hierarchy. This will be done by first analyzing the military's hierarchy and then compare this hierarchy with their administrative counterparts. The sources that are going to be used for this analysis consist of both official documents and Roman historians, which will be combined to provide a better image of the hierarchy. These sources will be paired with the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire I: AD 260-395* (1971) by Arnold Jones, John Martindale and John Morris, which contains a collection of all known Roman officials in the fourth century.²³ The second chapter will attempt to fulfill the second part of this thesis and determine the status held by the various officials in the Roman Empire. For this purpose the same sources as for chapter one will be used, as well as the hierarchical system determined in that chapter to analyze the difference.

²² Isaac, 'the terms *limes* and *limitanei*', esp. 139-141; Mann, '*Duces and comites*', 13.

²³ Arnold H.M Jones, John R. Martindale, and John Morris, *The prosopography of the later Roman Empire I: AD 260-395* (Cambridge, 1971).

Chapter 01 – The hierarchical system of the fourth century

Around the end of the third and the start of the fourth century C.E, the Roman Empire's official order, in which administrative and military duties were combined, experienced an overhaul. This resulted in a new system in which the two orders were separated, but still interconnected. The new military hierarchy included a number of new ranks. This was accompanied by a new complex hierarchical structure within the Roman Empire, both in terms of military offices and the positions of military officials relative to the administrative bureaucrats. In this chapter an attempt will be made to clarify both the hierarchy in the Roman army and their hierarchical standing compared to the administrative side. I will limit myself to the officers and officials within the higher command structure and those operating on the provincial or supra-provincial level. The main officers will thus be the *magistri equitum, peditum, and militum* for the highest command and the *comes rei militaris* and the *duces* for the second level of command. On the administrative side the praetorian prefect, vicar, and governors operation on a provincial level or higher will be analyzed.

1.1 The sources

The extant sources on the fourth-century army structure are few in number. They include formal and literary sources. The most frequently used formal sources are the Theodosian Code and the *Notitia Dignitatum*,²⁴ while the best-know literary sources are the writings of Roman historians, who can provide a different perspective than presented by the formal sources, like Ammianus Marcellinus and Zosimus.²⁵ Each of the sources has its own limitations and challenges, which should be kept in mind while analyzing them. Sources like the writings of Roman historians like Ammianus Marcellinus can provide a different perspective on the subject than the rigid formal sources, which do not show any flexibility where it may have existed. On the other hand, the literary sources are formed by their context and are dependent on the sources of information used by the author.²⁶

The two formal sources are frequently used in the analysis of the fourth century. When utilizing the sources to do this the time frame in which they were made is important to keep in mind. The *Notitia Dignitatum* is a text consisting out of two parts, one for the East and one for the West. The eastern portion of the text got its last revision around 395, while the western portion continued to be revised until 419.²⁷ The compilation of the other formal source, the *Codex Theodosianus*, was completed in 437. The laws it contains have been issued between 313 and 437, covering the entire area of interest.²⁸ Of the two sources written by Roman historians, the *res gestae* by Ammianus Marcellinus are often cited. The work of Ammianus covers the period between Nerva's (emperor 96-98 C.E.) ascension to the throne in 96 C.E. to the battle of Adrianople in 378. Of this period the last 25 years are written based on the personal experiences of the author. A systematic description of the military system is lacking, but key features of the Roman military are often mentioned.²⁹

²⁴ Clyde Pharr e.a., *The Theodosian Code and novels and the Sirmondian constitutions: a translation with commentary, glossary, and bibliography* (New York, 1952); Seeck, Otto, *Notitia Dignitatum, accedunt notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae et latercula provinciarum* (Frankfurt am Main, 1962).

²⁵ Zosimus, *New history* 2.33.3, transl. Ronald T. Ridley (Sydney, 2006); Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, transl. John C. Rolfe (London, 1935-1940).

²⁶ Crump, 'Ammianus and the late Roman army', 92.

²⁷ Michael Kulikowski, 'The "Notitia Dignitatum" as a historical source', *Historia Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 49 (2000), 358-377, esp. 360.

²⁸ John F. Matthews, *Laying down the law: a study of the Theodosian Code* (London, 2000), 10-11.

²⁹ Gavin Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus: the allusive historian* (Cambridge, 2008), 1; Crump, 'Ammianus and the late Roman army', esp. 92-93.

1.2 A new army structure

In the introduction a brief overview was given on the account of the two new parts of the fourth-century Roman army. These two parts, the *limitanei* and the *comitatenses*, changed the way the Roman army was operated and introduced new military officials to take command. The development of this new army structure did not happen in a short period of time and continued over the course of the fourth century. The officers of interest for this thesis are the *magister equitum* and *magister peditum*, with the later addition of the *magister militum*, followed by the *comes rei militaris* and the *duces*. In order to analyze the military hierarchy of this time a brief introduction is in place, explaining the developments regarding the higher military officials.

The newly created army structure under Constantine was completed with the creation of two commanding offices: those of the *magister equitum* and the *magister peditum*. These commanders were most likely meant to be operating on an equal footing, since the offices were created in order to reduce the power held by a single individual, namely the prefect. As an added safeguard the praetorian prefects still outranked the *magistri* in charge of the armies.³⁰ The commanders took over the position previously held by the praetorian prefect. None of the commanders in charge of the field armies before 343 are known by name. The information about their existence is provided solely by Zosimus, but although he wrote long after the events, there is no reason to doubt this information.³¹

The basic structure created by Constantine changed over the years, together with the changing structure of the field armies. Around the midpoint of the fourth century, when there were several regional armies, as well as armies under the direct command of the emperor, a new type of command was introduced, the *magister militum*. These *magistri* commanded the smaller field armies in Illyricum and Gaul in the West and in Orient in the East.³² With the appearance of the *magistri militum* the command structure of the Roman army changed. During the reign of Constantine the *magistri* served on an equal footing. The system in the second half of the fourth century – depicted by the *Notitia Dignitatum* – however, suggests that the *magistri* in charge of the emperor's field army held a higher position. These *magistri* gained the suffix *praesentalis* and would be placed above the regional commanders. In the western half of the empire the organization changed only slightly, with all units in the empire officials commanded by either the *magister peditum praesentalis* or the *magister equitum praesentalis*.³³

As pointed out in the introduction the title of *magister* appears to have been applied inconsistently in the official documents. The *Codex Theodosianus* provides an example for one of these *magisters*, Silvanus, who is addressed by two different titles in laws of the same year. These titles were *magister equitum et peditum* and *comes et magister militum*. The *magistri* did not know a sharp division between the two branches of the military and both the *magister peditum* as the *magister equitum* commanded a mixture of infantry and cavalry. Combined with the possible development pointed out by Arthur Boak, the change in the title could have been a development in the naming or be regarded as a synonym.³⁴

Below the command of the *magistri* was a layer of officers who served the *magistri* directly. These officers held the rank of *comes rei militaris* and *duces*. As stated by Pat Southern and Karen Dixon

³⁰ Southern and Dixon, *The late Roman army*, 57-58; John Michael O'Flynn, *Generalissimos of the Western Roman Empire* (Alberta, 1983), 4-5.

³¹ Southern and Dixon, *The late Roman army*, 57-58; O'Flynn, *Generalissimos of the Western Roman Empire*, 4-5; David S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at bay AD 180-395* (London, 2004), 454; Zosimus, *New history* 2.33.3.

³² Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 208-209.

³³ Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*, 78-79.

³⁴ Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*, 78; Boak, 'The Roman magistri', 123.

in their 1996 book the distinction between the ranks of both the *duces* and the *comes rei militaris* is so vague that the rankings are often discussed in conjunction, without making sharply defined divisions between the two.³⁵

The rank of the *dux* was originally given to any officer who temporarily acted above his usual rank. The function of the *dux* changed over time until at the end of the third century it became a regular office. The *duces* held authority over the troops of the *limitanei* in the border regions, which were not under direct control of the *comitatenses* or *palatini* (the emperor's personal forces). The authority wielded by the *duces* stretched either over a single province, resulting in the addition of the name of the province to the title, or sometimes over multiple provinces, in which case the *duces* would be called *dux limitis*. This expansion of the authority of the *duces* beyond the provincial structure was a response to the threat from outside of the Empire. The duties of the *duces* were mainly formed by the recruitment of new soldiers into the army and assigning them to the correct units, overseeing the collection and distribution of the resources to the different army units, and repairing the fortifications and, should the circumstances demand it, building new fortifications. They reported to their commanding officer and the praetorian prefect, who was responsible for providing provisions to the army.³⁶

The rank of the *comes rei militaris*, even though it was developed in unison with the rank of *duces*, derived from a different source. The title was originally an honorary title bestowed on the members of the emperor's entourage. This honorary title would not come with a military rank. In time, the titles *comes* came to denote a range of regular functions, both civilian and military. In case of the military command the *comes* would be styled the *comes rei militaris*. However, in the case of an official already holding another military rank, the honorary, non-military title *comes* could be carried in conjunction, resulting in titles like *comes et magister equitum* or *comes et dux* or *comes et praeses*. The scope of the authority of these *comes* could vary as much as that of the *duces*, and could range from smaller commands to frontier commands and even commanding smaller field armies in the later fourth century.³⁷

The difference between the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* cannot easily be determined based on their function. The *duces* in general are in command of the frontier regions of the empire, but there are exceptions. The *Notitia Dignitatum* described eight *comes* in command of frontier regions, instead of the *duces*, two in the East and six in the West.³⁸ To determine the difference the use of more information than their basic functionality is required.

1.3 The ranking of the higher military command

The respective ranking system of the higher military command, consisting out of the *magistri*, *comes rei militaris*, and *duces* is complex. It is important to note that changes were made to the system over time and that the structure of command in the East differed from the hierarchy in the West. The most important change to this ranking system is the implementation of differences between East and West, developed in the second half of the fourth century, adding a second layer of command under the *magistri* in the East.

Stephen Williams and Gerard Friell proposed the ranking system as seen in figure 1 and 2. They did not provide any references to source material, although it seems to be at least partly based on the *Notitia Dignitatum*.³⁹ The generalized power structure as shown in figure 1 held true for the period

³⁵ Southern and Dixon, *The late Roman army*, 59.

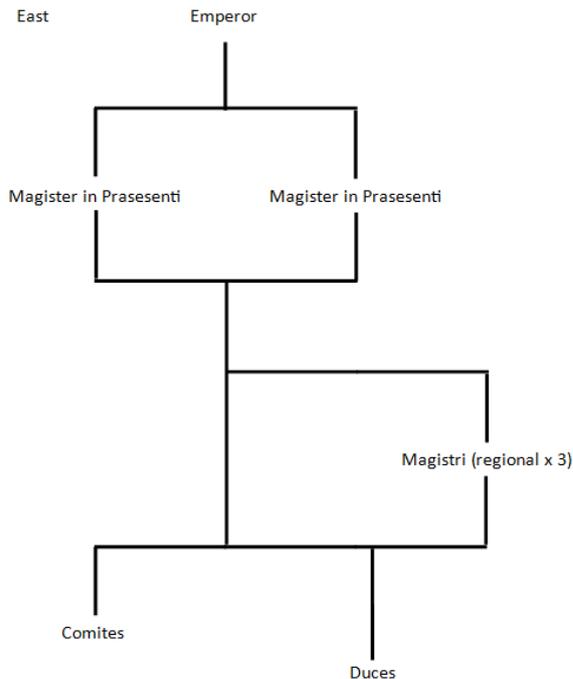
³⁶ Southern and Dixon, *The late Roman army*, 59; Southern, *The Roman army*, 254-256.

³⁷ Southern and Dixon, *The late Roman army*, 59.

³⁸ Seeck, *Notitia Dignitatum*, 2, 104.

³⁹ Williams and Friell, *Theodosius*, 188.

Figure 2 Schematic overview of the higher command in the East ⁴⁴



Other sources have been incorporated into the reconstructions made by various scholars to confirm the information provided by the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Michael Nicasie described a development that perhaps helped define the military structure in the East. In the *Notitia Dignitatum* the *magistri peditum* are placed under the command of the *magister peditum praesentalis* and *magister equitum praesentalis*. In passage 4.27 in Zosimus' *New History* it becomes evident that before this structure was developed under the start of the reign of Theodosian I (emperor 379-395 C.E.), there most likely was a system with five *magistri* in equal positions, who all gained equal payment and status. In the same passage it is mentioned that before the change made by Theodosian there was a structure of just two *magistri*, one *magister peditum* and one *magister equitum*.⁴⁵ The analysis provided by Nicasie mentions the complex position of the *duces* and *comites*, of which hardly anything is known. However, due to the close cooperation between the *comitatenses* and the *limitanei*, it seems probable that the *duces* from the *limitanei* were placed under the command of the *magistri militum* of their region. This is supported by the *Notitia Dignitatum Occidentis* (the list for the western side), which mentions the *duces* and *comites* as under *dispositio* of the *magister peditum*.⁴⁶ The analysis of the western side matches the previous reconstruction made by Jones.

The position of the higher command in the army is described in a fairly clear fashion by the *Notitia Dignitatum*, as shown by various scholars. At the end of the fourth century there were five *magistri* in charge of the army in the East and three in the West. The only question about their ranking that remains is the position held by their subordinates, the *comes rei militaris* and the *duces* and their relative position to each other is, however, less clear. Their position as the subordinates of the *magistri* has been made clear by the examples provided by Nicasie and Jones, who based their arguments on

⁴⁴ Williams and Friell, *Theodosius*, 188.

⁴⁵ Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*, 77-78; Zosimus, *New history* 4.27.

⁴⁶ Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*, 77-78.

the *Notitia Dignitatum Occidentis* and the *Codex Theodosianus*. Their relative position, however, is less clear based on those two examples alone and requires further attention.

Even though the difference in position between the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* is difficult to analyze, an analysis can be made based on the armies they serve in. In general the *duces* are regarded as the commanding officers of the *limitanei*, while the *comes rei militaris* are regarded as the commanding officers of the *comitatenses*, often commanding smaller field armies themselves. The *limitanei* and *comitatenses* were not regarded as equal in ranking and benefits. The source generally used to argue for the existence of the *comitatenses*, is law 7.20.4 from 325 in the *Codex Theodosianus*. This law distinguishes between three classes of troops, based on the treatment of their members after discharge from the army, the class of *comitatenses* ranked the highest, followed by the *ripenses*, and lastly the *cohorts* and *alae*.⁴⁷ This source clearly names the *comitatenses* as being of higher status than the *ripenses*, or river troops, who are commonly regarded as on equal position and a synonym to the later *limitanei*. Another indication of the disparity in ranking is the existence of units by the name of *pseudocomitatenses*. These *pseudocomitatenses* were units who were promoted from the *limitanei* to the field army and mentioned for the first time in law 8.1.10 from 365 in the *Codex Theodosianus*. This law distinguishes between the first grade field army forces and the second grade field army forces through a difference in pay scale. The *pseudocomitatenses* were regarded as second grade troops and thus received a lesser amount of payment compared to the first grade troops. The distinction of the *pseudocomitatenses* as second grade troops is further supported by the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which always listed the palatini (the personal forces under command of the Emperor) first and the *pseudocomitatenses* last, indicating an order of importance.⁴⁸ Based on the *pseudocomitatenses* no definitive answer can be provided to solve the lack of information about the ranking of the *duces* and *comitatenses*. However, it is likely that the ranking of the commander was tied to the ranking of the unit he was serving in. The position of the *pseudocomitatenses* could thus serve as an argument that the position held by the *duces* was lower than the position held by the *comes rei militaris*.

The difference in ranking between the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* can be further illustrated by a passage in Ammianus Marcellinus, 21.12.22 dated to 361. During the usurpation of Julian (emperor 361-363 C.E.) the *comes* Martianus opposed Julian by taking command of all the forces and garrisons in the province. These forces were presumably coming from the *limitanei*, while Martianus belonged to the *comitatenses*. He nonetheless took command over all forces, indicating a possible superiority of the *comes rei militaris* over the commanders of the *limitanei* and its garrisons, the *duces*.⁴⁹

The disparity in sources directly commenting on the position of the *duces* and the *comes* could be further analyzed by *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* – Henceforth PLRE - by Arnold Jones, John Martindale and John Morris. The prosopography provides a compilation of all information available on officials in the later Roman Empire, including military officers. For the second half of the fourth century this list contains a large number of officers, of which a small number contain information about military careers. For this period the prosopography contains information about 60 *magistri militum*, 56 *comites*, and 53 *duces*.⁵⁰ The careers of these commanders are often limited and only eight contain a development in their military career, which included at least two of the positions in question, as listed in table 1.

⁴⁷ *Codex Theodosianus*, 7.20.4.

⁴⁸ Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 95; Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*, 16-17; *Codex Theodosianus*, 8.1.10.

⁴⁹ Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*, 22. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae XXI.12.22*.

⁵⁰ Arnold, Martindale, and Morris, *The prosopography*; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 146-148, 272-273.

Table 1 Military careers in the fourth century ⁵¹

Name	Rank and years of service
Flavius Arbitio	<i>Dux</i> (under either Constantine or Constantius), <i>magister equitum</i> (351?-361)
Flavius Arinthaëus:	<i>Tribunus</i> (355), <i>comes rei militaris</i> (363-4), <i>magister peditum</i> (366-378)
Flavius Equitius	<i>Tribunus scholae primae scutariorum</i> (364), <i>comes rei militaris per Illyricum</i> (364-365), <i>comes et magister militum per Illyricum</i> (365-375)
Iulius	<i>Comes rei militaris</i> (365), <i>comes et magister equitum et peditum per Orientem</i> (371-378)
Lucillianus	<i>Dux</i> or <i>comes rei militaris</i> (350), <i>comes et magister equitum (in Illyricum)</i> (361), <i>magister equitum et peditum</i>
Sebastianus	<i>Dux Aegypti</i> (356-358), <i>comes rei militaris</i> (363-378), <i>magister peditum</i> (378)
Flavius Theodosius	<i>Comes rei militaris</i> (368-369), <i>magister equitum</i> (369-375)
Traianus	<i>Dux Aegypti</i> (367-368), <i>comes rei militaris</i> (371-374), <i>magister peditum (in Thrace)</i> (377-378)

The information in table 1 demonstrates, in a limited way, the developments that took place in the military careers in the second half of the fourth century. Of the eight careers listed in table 1, two officials, Sebastianus and Traianus, both served in the rank of *dux*, followed by *comes rei militaris*. None of the examples in the prosopography reveals a different development, where officers first served as *comes rei militaris* and later as *duces*. These two examples, though limited in their scope, could perhaps be seen as an example of a military career, where the officer moved up in rank – from the position of *dux* to *comes rei militaris* or *magister*.

The information on Sebastianus in the PLRE provides two passages in Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* as basis for the rankings. Passage XXIII.3.4-5 describes Sebastianus as a *comes rei militaris*, who previously held the military command in Egypt as *duce Aegypti*.⁵² This passage does, however, not tell us of any relation between the two positions held by Sebastianus.

A different perspective on the relation between the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* is provided by the *Codex Theodosianus*, in which law 6.14.3 of 413 suggests a difference in status of the two commanders. The law of 413 placed the *comes* on equal rank with the *duces* who hold control over one or more provinces except Egypt or Pontus (which were proconsular provinces). This suggests that the *comes rei militaris* who did not hold such a command were of inferior rank to *duces* who did. This, however, also works the other way around and places the *comes rei militaris* who held control over a province above *duces* who did not. The rank given to both commanders in this position would be count of the first order.⁵³ The information provided in this passage is applicable to the information available on Sebastianus. The *duces* who commanded one of the frontier provinces were of equal rank to *comes rei militaris* who held such a command, except for Egypt. Egypt was regarded as a special province, not to be compared to a normal border command due to its special status as a proconsular province, who were the highest ranking governors. Holding a command in such a province was most likely of a higher rank than commanding a normal province. This leads to the conclusion that Sebastianus did not advanced in rank and perhaps even got a demotion.

Further analysis of the position held by the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* can be done by the *Notitia Dignitatum*, on the basis of which a suggestion can be made for their relative position. The

⁵¹ Arnold, Martindale, and Morris, *The prosopography*.

⁵² Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXIII.3.4-5.

⁵³ *Codex Theodosianus*, 6.14.3.

Notitia Dignitatum appears to list the officials in the list in order of precedence. The highest position is held by the prefects, directly followed by the *magistri* in command of the armies. As discussed in an earlier passage the order in which the military units are listed reflect the importance held by these units. This principle can be used to analyze the relative position of the *comes rei militaris* and the *duces* on the *Notitia Dignitatum*. The list places the *comes rei militaris* above the *duces*, both on the eastern and the western list. This order thus suggests the position held by the *comes rei militaris* as being above the *duces*.⁵⁴

The ranking of the *magistri*, both those *in praesenti* and regional is straight-forward at first sight, but it proves more complex when we look closer. The system as described above makes a distinct differentiation between East and West, with a set system. This reconstruction might have been more dynamic than sources like the *Codex Theodosianus* and the *Notitia Dignitatum* make it to be. The example of Ursicinus, who served as a *magister equitum* in the East from 349, *magister equitum* in Gaul from 355 to 356, and then moved back to the East again to serve as *magister equitum* from 357 to 359. In 359 he was appointed as *magister peditum praesentalis* in Italy, but was called back to help his successor against the Persians as *magister equitum* and ended his career in 360 as *magister peditum*.⁵⁵ At the end of the fourth century, the sources show two distinct military systems, one for the East and West. However, during the career of Ursicinus he was assigned positions both in the East and the West. This could be seen as an indication that the split between the eastern and western system was not permanent and the possibility of moving between them was there. His mobility could be explained by the reign of Constantius II as the sole ruler, but examples of *magistri* serving in both the eastern and western half are known under the reign of two emperor's. The reason for the relocation of Ursicinus to Gaul in 355 and 356 was in order to deal with the usurpation by Silvanus in September 355,⁵⁶ something which could not have been done in a separated empire. However, Ursicinus was not the only *magister* to move between the eastern and western half of the empire. Flavius Lupicinus was *magister equitum* in Gaul under Julian in 359-360 and was later assigned *magister equitum* in the East in 364 to 367.⁵⁷ The second term as *magister* served by Lupicinus was under Valens (emperor 364-378 C.E.)

The command structure as discussed above changed over time. The high command held by the *magistri* developed in a different fashion in the eastern and western side of the Empire. In the West the armies highest positions were held by two *magistri in praesentalis*, assisted by a *magister equitum*, positioned in Gaul. In the East the highest position was held by two *magistri in praesentalis* based near Constantinople, being supported by their three subordinate *magistri militum* in Illyricum, Thrace and Oriens. The position held by the level below this layer of commanders, formed by the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* has a less clear definition. The position of the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* can be defined in several ways. The suggestion made by the *Codex Theodosianus*, even though the law dates to 413, is that the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* who held a similar command (the command over one or more provinces) were equal in rank, namely count of the first order. Disparity between the two officers can be argued based on several other sources. The most plausible of these arguments is the order in which the officers are listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which suggests the higher position of the *comes*. This is further supported by the commands that were generally held by the two commanders. The position of the *limitanei* was regarded as lower compared to the *comitatenses*. Lastly, based on the few military careers known to us, in which the rank of *dux* was followed by a command as *comes rei militaris*,

⁵⁴ Seeck, *Notitia Dignitatum*, 2, 104.

⁵⁵ Nicasic, *Twilight of empire*, 78-79.

⁵⁶ Kelly, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, 40-41.

⁵⁷ Jones, Martindale, and Morris, *The prosopography*; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 520-521.

without examples of the opposite is known, one might carefully argue that the position held by the *comes rei militaris* was indeed higher than the position held by the *duces*, even though it may have been only slightly.

1.4 The relation between administrative and military officials

The fourth century is characterized by the developments in the administrative and military system. The military system as set forth above was strongly connected to the administrative officials of the empire. An analysis of the changes to the fourth-century administrative system has to be made in order to research the relations between the civil and military officials. The officials of interest for the analysis are the governors, the vicars and the praetorian prefects, which will be connected to their military counterparts.

During the first three centuries C.E., the Roman Empire was mainly governed by governors, taking control over the provinces and the military forces connected to these provinces. Around the start of the fourth century, the basic system of province was changed, creating a larger amount of provinces of a smaller size numbering about 100. This system of provinces was combined with a new administrative layer formed by the dioceses, under the control of the vicars. It is unknown as for when the system of dioceses was implemented. Information provided by the Verona List, which can most likely be dated to 314, provides the names of the twelve dioceses as well as a date for which this system was in place. At the end of the fourth century the system of dioceses was assembled under a system of four prefectures under the prefects. The number of prefectures increased over the course of the fourth century.⁵⁸

The ranking of the administrative class can be distinguished using the hierarchical system laid down by Valentinian I (emperor 364-371 C.E.). The class of the governors was subdivided into four different titles, the *praeses*, *corrector*, *consularis*, and *proconsul*. At the bottom of this hierarchical system was formed by the *praeses*, *corrector*, and *consularis*, who were members of the *clarissimi*. This rank was followed by the *spectabilis*, a rank granted to the vicars and the last of the governors, the *proconsul*. The rank of *spectabilis* was also held by the military commanders of the second grade, the *comes rei militaris* and the *duces*. The highest rank in this system was formed by the *illustris*, which was given to the praetorian prefects and to the military commanders of the first grade, the *magistri*.⁵⁹ Based on this hierarchical system the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* were on equal footing with the vicars and the *proconsuls*, while the *magistri* were equally ranked with the praetorian prefects.

The hierarchical system by Valentinian I suggests that the military commanders and administrative officials had the same ranking as their counterparts. The ranking system does, however, prove to be more complicated than it seems. Several laws in the *Codex Theodosianus* suggest a more complex relation between both parties. Law 6.14.1 of 372 suggests that the position of the *comes rei militaris* was higher than the position of the *proconsul*. The law states that the men who hold the position of count of the first order shall be paid such respect that the holders of the *proconsulate* shall yield precedence to them. Law 6.14.3, which has already been analyzed above, places the *comes rei militaris* on the same level as the *duces* and vicars. These two laws suggest that the position held by the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* was equal to the position of the vicar, and higher than the position of *proconsul*, even though their official rank was the same. This places the two officers above all the administrative officials who govern provinces and on an equal level to that of the dioceses, while

⁵⁸ Sloomjes, *The governor and his subjects*, 16-17; Karl L. Noethlich, 'Zur Entstehung der Diözesen als Mittelinstanz des spätrömischen Verwaltungssystems', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 31 (1982), 70-81, esp. 70-72.

⁵⁹ Sloomjes, *The governor and his subjects*, 19, 22-23; Jones, *The later Roman Empire 285-602*, 528-529.

operating on a provincial level themselves.⁶⁰ While this suggests that the *comes rei militaris* and *duces* held precedence over all governors, this might not have necessarily been true. In law 1.7.2 of 393 the condemnation of a governor by one of the *magistri* is condemned. The *magistri* did not have the right to judge a civil administrator, even when the crime he committed was connected to a military commander. This task ultimately fell to the praetorian prefect. This analysis is supported by law 1.15.7 of 377, which states that when judging civil cases the vicar takes precedence over the *comes rei militaris*, when judging military cases the *comes rei militaris* takes precedence over the vicar, and when it is both a civil and a military case the vicar takes precedence. This law shows a sharp distinction between the administrative and civil side and when possible both sides would deal with their own. However, when both sides are involved with each other it is the civil official, in this case the vicar, who takes precedence over the military side.⁶¹ Both laws suggest that in cases in which the administrative and military duties are combined, the administrative side takes precedence, placing them above their military counterpart, even though they hold the same rank. The dominance of the administrative officials when colliding with the military system is further supported by law 7.4.3 of 357 in the *Codex Theodosianus*. The law provides an insight to the hierarchical relation between the vicar and the *comes rei militaris* and the role the vicar as a civil administrator compared to the military commanders. The law states that the *comes rei militaris* appropriated supplies on his own accord, something which has to be approved by the vicar.⁶² This law reinforces the idea that the administrative side has a controlling function over the military commanders. The law was aimed at the praetorian prefect instead of the *magister* in charge of the count at fault, consolidating the idea that the administrative officials take precedence in cases of mixed interest. Furthermore it becomes clear that the vicar was responsible for monitoring the supplies provided to the army. The vicar takes the role of the paymaster instead of the *comes rei militaris*, fortifying the administrative position and placing the vicar slightly higher in ranking than the military commander. The role of the administrative side as paymaster is furthermore shown by passage XIV.10.4 in the *Res Gestae*. In this passage there is unrest among the soldiers because the lack of supplies, something which has to be solved by the presence of the praetorian prefect, who had to explain why the supplies were late. The involvement of the praetorian prefect in this case shows that this official was responsible for the supplies.⁶³ In practice the praetorian prefect might delegate the administrative aspect to the vicar, as shown by law 7.4.3. However, the praetorian prefect seemed to be responsible for the supplies provided to the armies, shown by the passage in the *Res Gestae* and further supported by various laws directed to the praetorian prefect regarding several regulations of the supplies.⁶⁴

Another possible way to determine the hierarchical relationship between the administrative and military side is the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which was used above to help determine the military system. On both the eastern and western list the prefect comes first, directly followed by the *magistri*. This order corresponds with the order taken while judging court cases, as explained above. The order of the *spectabilis* on the list deviates from what we have seen above. On both the eastern and the western list both the vicars and the *proconsuls* are listed above the *duces* and *comes rei militaris*. The position of the vicar above the two military commands should not be regarded as strange, when comparing the data from the *Notitia Dignitatum* to the information above, in which the vicar also takes precedence over the military commanders. However, as shown in law 6.14.1, the *comes rei militaris* was of a higher position than the *proconsul*. The governors finishing the rest of the list retain the order

⁶⁰ *Codex Theodosianus*, 6.14.1; *Codex Theodosianus*, 6.14.3.

⁶¹ *Codex Theodosianus*, 1.15.7.

⁶² *Codex Theodosianus*, 7.4.3.

⁶³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XIV.10.4.

⁶⁴ *Codex Theodosianus*, 7.4.

as given above in the East, with the *consularis* listed first, below the *duces*, the *correctors* second, and the *praeses* last. In the west a minor change is recorded, with the position of the *correctors* listed last.⁶⁵

The precedence that the administrative officials take over the military commanders might be further explained by a passage from Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* 21.16.1-2. In this passage about the time of Constantius II (emperor 337-361 C.E.), Ammianus speaks about the ranks held by the military leaders, compared to the administrative leaders. He remarks that no commander of the army ever advanced to the rank of *clarrisimus* and that all of them were *perfectissimi*. This ranking differs from the earlier mentioned ranking created under Valentinian I. The rank of *perfectissimus* was given to governors with the title *praeses*, while the rank of *clarrisimus* was given to the *corrector*, *consularis*, and *proconsul*. This meant that in the first half of the fourth century, the military commanders were lower in hierarchical standing than the civil administrators governing the empire. In this system Ammianus further remarks that the military commanders never took part in any civil affairs and regarded the praetorian prefect as the highest official in the empire.⁶⁶

The hierarchical ranking of military commanders compared to the civil administrators is complex. The basis of the later fourth-century hierarchical system is formed by a ranking system, which places regular governors at the bottom as *clarissimi*, proconsuls, vicars, *duces*, and *comes rei militaris* in the middle as *spectabilis*, and ranks the *magistri* of the army and the praetorian prefects the highest as *illustris*. This ranking system proved to have disparities in several rankings, creating complex relations between the several offices. In general the administrative higher officials seemed to be of a higher ranking than the military counterparts due to their privileges. In cases of intertwined interests the administrative administrators took precedence over the military commanders, ranging from court cases to supervision of military supplies. This system might be a continuity from the earlier fourth century, in which the military commanders had a significantly lower hierarchical ranking than their administrative counterparts, as illustrated by Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae*. At the end of the fourth century the gap between the two sides is closed and the complex system illustrated above is the result.

⁶⁵ Seeck, *Notitia Dignitatum*, 1-5, 102-106.

⁶⁶ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXI.16.1-2.

Chapter 02 – The status of the higher officials of the fourth century

In the first part of this thesis the hierarchical status of the officials was analyzed. This chapter will attempt to expand upon that analysis and furthermore research the status held by the different officials, in comparison to the ranking they held within the hierarchical system. The analysis will be based on the same sources as were used in the first chapter, but the emphasis will be placed on the literary sources, instead of formal sources in the first chapter. The chapter will be divided in two parts, firstly the concept of status will be analyzed. In the second part this concept will be utilized to analyze the sources source material from Ammianus Marcellinus and Zosimus, paired with the formal sources and the hierarchical analysis of the first chapter. Thirdly, forms of social mobility will be analyzed, in the form of strife at the court and the rise through the rankings.

2.1 The concept of status

The social status held by a person is strongly connected to their relative social or professional position and thus in this case strongly connected to their hierarchical position. The social status of an official in the Roman Empire is determined by the prestige and the social rank held by the official, which is connected to the position he is fulfilling or has fulfilled in the past. Secondly, the social status of someone is determined by its relative position to someone else, or in this case to a different function.⁶⁷ The concept of status is difficult to analyze because of the psychological element. A system has positions of superiority and inferiority, but does not have to be egalitarian internally.⁶⁸

Status as it will be perceived in this thesis is the relative position of an official compared to the position held in the hierarchical system. Social mobility over the course of the fourth century will be an important element in the analysis made, since it provides an insight in the changes that occurred in the social status of an office or group of importance to the Roman Empire. Another important element in the analysis is the difference in the social position of the various officials in regards of their military and administrative counterparts, which can be perceived when comparing the regarded social position to the hierarchical system.

2.2 The higher officials and status

At the top of the hierarchical system a complicated relation existed between the praetorian prefects and the *magistri* in charge of the army. In the hierarchical system, as discussed in chapter one, the *magistri* and the prefects held the same rank at the end of the fourth century, namely the rank of *illustris*. In practice the ranking of the prefect was placed above the rank of the *magistri* in some situations, for instance when the interests of the civil bureaucracy and the military were intertwined.

In the later years of the reign of Constantine the separation of the civil and military system was completed by the, as discussed earlier, introduction of the *magister peditum* and *magister equitum*. This division was made to reduce the concentration of power held by an individual and thus reducing the threat of usurpation of the emperor's position.⁶⁹ In the newly developed hierarchical system the praetorian prefect, who previously had the highest rank below the *augusti* and *caesari*, had to share his power with the *magistri*. The praetorian prefects and the *magistri* both held the rank of *illustris* near the end of the fourth century, making them socially equal. The status held by both officials was thus, in theory, equal. In practice a disparity between the social and hierarchical ranking was developed

⁶⁷ Inge Mennen, *Power and status: administration, appointment policies and social hierarchies in the Roman Empire, AD 193-284* (Enschede, 2010), 3-5.

⁶⁸ Moses I. Finley, *The ancient economy* (Los Angeles, 1973), 51.

⁶⁹ Jill Harries, *Imperial Rome AD 284 to 363: the new empire* (Edinburgh, 2012), 141 .

over the course of the fourth century. The praetorian prefect's position was strengthened by the control he had over the military, in case of conflicting interests like the court case described in the earlier mentioned law of 1.7.2 of 393.⁷⁰ Under the newly formed system the position of the praetorian prefect changed and instead of being directly connected to the emperors and traveling with them, they now were tied to certain areas, of which Africa was the first in 333. The disparities between the status of the praetorian prefect and the *magistri* do not end here, as is pointed out in passage 2.33 of Zosimus' New History. The praetorian prefect fulfilled the role of paymaster for the army, something which would turn out to be a grave mistake according to Zosimus. In the system before the introduction of the *magistri*, as the chief commanders of the army, the praetorian prefect fulfilled both the role of commander and paymaster. In the new system a disparity was created, which served as an extra control on the *magistri*, since they were now dependent on their administrative counterpart for the supplies needed to feed and pay their forces. This dependence on their counterpart reduced the power they held over the soldiers according to Zosimus, since their commanders were not the one to pay them. This disparity increased the status held by the praetorian prefect, since he was their paymaster, while their commander only had the right to punish them and could not deduct their payment.⁷¹ The credibility of this passage in Zosimus is supported by the *Codex Theodosianus*, which holds a number of laws related to the praetorian prefect in the role of paymaster. Chapter 7.4 of the *Codex Theodosianus* is filled with laws aimed at the praetorian prefects of the fourth century and is filled with regulations regarding the resupplying and payment of the military.⁷²

In passage XXI.16.1-2 in Ammianus' Marcellinus *Res Gestae*, which has been analyzed in the first chapter, discusses the position of the praetorian prefect in the earlier years. Marcellinus mentions the ranking system of the earlier years of the fourth century, in which the military commanders took a lower position than they would in the second half of the century. The passage mentions a peculiar event, namely that the status held by the praetorian prefect had not declined compared to the old form in which the official held both the administrative and military power. Ammianus states that all officials of the Roman Empire looked up to the praetorian prefect with old-time respect, as the peak of all authority.⁷³ The passage corresponds with the information provided by Zosimus and it can be assumed that in the first half of the fourth century the praetorian prefect was regarded as the highest official in the Roman Empire, without a diminishing of its status since the introduction of the *magister peditum* and *magister equitum* in the later years of Constantine's reign.

Even though the status of the praetorian prefect seems absolute in the earlier years of the Roman Empire, alternatives to his power are known. Passage 2.40 in Zosimus' New History mentions the so-called patriciate, which supposedly was introduced in the later years of Constantine's reign. The title originally was given to older noble families in the time of the principate. This social group would hold a number of special privileges and would distinguish themselves from the regular senators by the means of a distinctive shoe. Under the reign of Constantine the title would be given to close friends of Constantine and the highest officials under his command. Officials with the title of patriciate, which would later evolve into the medieval patrician, held precedence over all other officials, including the

⁷⁰ *Codex Theodosianus*, 1.7.2.

⁷¹ Zosimus, *New history* 2.33; Ronald T. Ridley, *Zosimus new history: a translation with commentary* (Sydney, 2006), 158-159; Alexander Sarantis, 'Waging war in late Antiquity', in: Alexander Sarantis and Neil Christie (ed.), *War and warfare in late Antiquity: current perspectives* (Leiden, 2013), 1-98, esp. 37.

⁷² *Codex Theodosianus*, 7.4.

⁷³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae XXI.16.1-2*.

praetorian prefect. In the early fifth century this function would appear permanently in the western half of the Roman Empire, as attested in law 15.14.14 of 416.⁷⁴

The rank and status of the higher officials mentioned thus far is not absolute. On top of the currently analyzed system, there was an extra layer formed by those who served as consul. In law 6.6.1 from 382 in the *Codex Theodosianus* it is stated that the status of the consul's still took precedence over the highest officials. The law describes a complex system in which it is described in which order officials should be regarded. Under normal circumstances the consul would take precedence over any higher official, like the praetorian prefect, *magister equitum*, *magister peditum*, and patrician. In the case in which one of these official would have served as a consul the ranking system would be regarded as it is described above. The patrician would be regarded of the highest status, above the praetorian prefect or military commanders. Added to this was a system of seniority, in which the consuls ranked according to the date at which they held their office. This system becomes complicated when an ex-consul who did not hold any higher office, and thus ranked below someone who did, gets elected to do so. In this case the seniority of the consulship takes precedence over the date at which the higher office was held. Holding the consulship for a second time does not change the status held by that person and was merely counted as the reaffirmation of his status.⁷⁵

Table 2 Higher officials and the consulship ⁷⁶

Name	Rank and years of service
Flavius Arbundantius	Comes et magister utriusque militiae (392-393), consul (393)
Septimius Acindynus	Vicar of Spain (317-326), praefectus praetorium (338-340), consul (340)
Petronius Annianus	Consul (314), praefectus praetorium (315-317)
Fl. Claudius Antonius	Praefectus praetorium Galliarum (376-377), praefectus praetorium 377-378), consul (382)
Flavius Arbitio	Dux (?), magister equitum (351?-361), and consul (355)
Flavius Arinthaheus	Comes rei militaris, dux, magister peditum (366-378), consul (372)
Decimius Magnus Ausonius	Praefectus praetorium Galliarum (377-378), praefectus praetorium galliarum italiae et africae (378-379), consul (379)
Iunius Bassus	Praefectus praetorium (318-331), consul (331)
Flavius Bauto	Magister militum (380-385), consul (385)
Flavius Bonosus	Magister (militum) (?), consul (344), magister equitum (347)
Fl. Caesarius	Praefectus Praetorium Orientis (395-397), consul (397), patricius (?)
Aco Catullinus, signo Philomathius	Vir consularis (?), praeses provinciae gallaeciae (before 338), vicarius africae (338-339), praefectus praetorium (341), consul (349)
Fl. Constantius	Praefectus praetorium (324-327), consul (327)
Iulius Consantius	Patricius (335), consul (335)
Maternus Cynegius	Vicarius (381), praefectus praetorium (384-388), consul (388)
Dagalaifus	Magister equitum (363-364), magister peditum (364-366), consul (366)
Datianus	Consul (358), patricius (before 360),

⁷⁴ Southern and Dixon, *The late Roman army*, 58; *Codex Theodosianus*, 15.14.14.; Jones, *The later Roman Empire 285-602*, 106; Ridley, *Zosimus new history*, 162; E. Stuart Staveley, 'The nature and aims of the patriciate', *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 32 (1983), 24-57, esp. 24.

⁷⁵ *Codex Theodosianus*, 6.6.1; Jones, *The later Roman Empire 285-602*, 534.

⁷⁶ Jones, Martindale, and Morris, *The prosopography*.

Flavius Equitus	Comes rei militaris per Illyricum (364-365), comes et magister militum per Illyricum (365-375), consul (374)
Flavius Euodius	praefectus praetorium Galliarum (385-386), consul (386)
Eutropius	Proconsul asiae (371-372), praefectus praetorium per Illyricum (380-381), consul (387)
Flavius Eutyhianus	praefectus praetorium (396-397), consul (398), praefectus praetorium per Orientis (399-400), praefectus praetorium Orientis (404-405)
Virius Nicomachus Flavianus	Vicarius Africae (377), praefectus praetorium (390-2) and (393-394), consul (394)
Flavius Florentius	praefectus praetorium Galliarum (357-360), praefectus praetorium per Illyricum (360-361), consul (361)
Flavius Fravitta	Magister militum per Orientem (395-400), magister militum (400), consul (401)
Falvius Hypatius	Consul (359), praefectus praetorium Italiae et Illyrici (382-383)
Flavius Iovinus	Magister equitum (361-369), consul (367)
FL. Domitius Leontius	praefectus praetorium per Orientis (340-344), consul (344)
Vipius Limentius	Proconsul of Constantinople (342), praefectus praetorium Italiae (347-349), consul (349)
Flavius Lupicinus	Magister equitum (359-360), magister equitum (364-367), consul (367)
Claudius Mamertinus	praefectus praetorium per Illyricum (361), consul (362), praefectus praetorium Italiae, Africae et Illyrici (361-364) and (364-365)
Antonius Marcellinus	praefectus praetorium per Italiae, Illyrici et Africae (340-341), consul (341)
Nonius Atticus Maximus	praefectus praetorium Italiae (384), consul (397)
Valrius Maximus	Vicarius Orientis (325), praefectus praetorium (327-328), consul (327), praefectus praetorium(332-33)
Flavius Merobaudes	Magister peditum (west) (375-388), consul (377), consul (383)
Flavius Neoterius	praefectus praetorium Orientis (380-381), praefectus praetorium Italiae (385), praefectus praetorium Galliarum (390), consul (390)
Flavius Nevitta	Magister equitum (361-363/4), consul (362)
Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius	Proconsul africae (361), praefectus praetorium Illyrici (378), praefectus praetorium Orientis (378), consul (379)
L. Papius Pacatianus	Vicarius britanniarum (319), consul (332), praefectus praetorium (332-337)
Flavius Philippus	praefectus praetorium Orientis (344-351), consul (348),
M. Maecius Memmius Furius Baburius Caecilianus Placidus	praefectus praetorium per Italiae (342-344), consul (343)
Sex. Claudius Petronius Probus	Proconsul Africae (358), praefectus praetorium per Illyrici (364), praefectus praetorium per Galliarum (366), praefectus praetorium Illyrici, Italiae et Africae (368-375), consul (371), praefectus praetorium Illyrici, Italiae et Africae (383)
Pompeius Probus	praefectus praetorium (east) (310-314), consul (310)
Flavius Promotus	Comes Africae (before 386), magister peditum (386), magister equitum (388-391), consul (389)
Flavius Richomerus	Magister militum per orientem (383), consul (384), comes et magister utriusque militiae (east) (388-393)
Flavius Rufinus	Consul (392), praefectus praetorium Orientis (392-395)

Vulcacius Rufinus	Consul (347), praefectus praetorium per Illyricum (347-352), praefectus praetorium per Galliarum (354), praefectus praetorium Italiae, Illyrici et Africae (3650368)
Flavius Salia	Magister equitum (344-348), consul (348)
Flavius Sallustius	praefectus praetorium per Galliarum (361-363), consul (363)
Flavius Afranius Syagrius	Proconsul Africae (379), praefectus praetorium (382), consul (382)
Flavius Syargrius	praefectus praetorium Italiae (380-382), consul (381)
Fl. Eutolmius Tatianus	praefectus praetorium Orientis (388-392), consul (391)
Fabius Titianus	Consul (337), praefectus praetorium per Galliarum (341-349)
Flavius Timasius	Comes et magister equitum (386), magister equitum et peditum (388-395), consul (389)
Victor	Comes rei militaris (362-363), magister equitum (east) (363-c.379) consul (369)

Table 2 contains a comprehensive list of fourth-century officials, both military and administrative, who have fulfilled the post of consul sometime in their career. When analyzing the table a few general tendencies become apparent. The vast majority of the officials who served one or multiple terms as consul did this during or after they held a prestigious position like praetorian prefect or *magister* in the army. The second noteworthy element in this list is the lack of officials who held the office of consul twice, with only one example available in the form of Flavius Merobaudes. A third element of interest is formed by the examples of consulship at the start of a career before the officials held one of the highest ranks. These examples are mainly contained to the period before the reforms in the hierarchical system by Valentinian I. Furthermore, these examples, in which the consulship is held before any other high office, are limited to the administrative side of government, with no examples available of military commanders who held a consulship before their military command.

The general tendencies make it possible to draw a few careful conclusions, even though these conclusions cannot be seen as comprehensive and should be looked at with some caution. The consulship seemed to be a way to distinguish higher officials, at peak of their careers. The position was generally acquired while holding an influential office, something which seems especially true for the *magistri*. This rule does not seem to be true for the administrative side, something which might be explained by the specialization at the start of the fourth century, making it easier for the civil administration to acquire this office before they distinguished themselves. A temporary conclusion that might be drawn based on this table is that the consulship served as a reward to distinguish them from their colleagues and to raise their status.

The analysis made above can be supported with passages from Ammianus Marcellinus' *Res Gestae* and Zosimus' *New History*. These works show that the addition of the title of consul meant an increase of status and could serve as a reward for their achievements. In passage XIV.11.27 Ammianus notes that Constantius Gallus, is the son of Gallus, who was the sister of Rufinus and Cerealis, and Constantius, the brother of Emperor Constantine. Rufinus and Cerealis were distinguished by the vesture of consul and prefect. Next to the office of praetorian prefect, it is specifically mentioned that they had distinguished themselves as consul. This addition could be seen as something that added to their status as praetorian prefect and could at least be seen on the same level or perhaps even higher as the earlier mentioned law in the *Codex Theodosianus* suggests. Furthermore, this passage hints at status obtained through family members. In this passage the prestige of Gallus was determined by the status held by her brothers. The status of his parents is then associated with the status held by Constantius Gallus himself.⁷⁷ The status of the consulship is confirmed in passage XV.5.27, in which Silvanus complains that unworthy men were raised to the consulship, while he and his colleague

⁷⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XIV.11.27.

Ursicinus were only raised after having completed heavy and repeated tasks for the government. Silvanus clearly distinguished the office of the consul as a special reward, which had to be earned.⁷⁸ This is reinforced by passage XVIII.1.1, which mentions the brothers Eusebius and Hypatius, who had been honored with the high title of consul.⁷⁹ In passage XXI.12.25 Mamertinus, the praetorian prefect of Illyricum, gets a promotion to consul. This promotion is awarded because he administered his prefect well, with an abundance of supplies, no complaints from the populace, and a feeling of security in time of crisis. This was combined with an encouragement for officials who were submissive, strongly suggests that the consulship was an extremely high reward, even for the highest ranking administrative official in the Roman Empire.⁸⁰ This view gets further reinforced with the raising of Jovinus to consul, after his victory on the Alamanni, as shown in passage XXVII.2.10.⁸¹ An example which strongly supports passage XV.5.27 is given in Zosimus' 4.52, in which it is described that Rufinus was promoted to consul. This passage stands out due to its criticism, which specifically ridicules that he had done nothing noble to earn this position. This ridicule of Zosimus further supports the honor and status of the consulship and that receiving this position would require exceptional actions.⁸² The last example available in the work of Ammianus is passage XXI.6.5, where two praetorian prefects received "*the insignia of the highest magistracy*", clearly placing it above the other high positions that they held previously.⁸³

The passages mentioned above provide an insight in the importance of the consulship and position this held for the fourth-century Roman officials. The passages above directly explain the status the consulship held in the eyes of Ammianus Marcellinus and Zosimus. Their histories do, however, also provide an indirect hint towards the status held by certain officials, mentioned in the previous and additional passages, in the form of recognition the title held. Important officials in the Roman Empire were identified and introduced by their rank. This is the case for the title of consul, which seems to be always mentioned when a person has held the position, but also goes for the position of praetorian prefect. The works of Ammianus and Zosimus contain a large number of references to officials, who are identified by the highest office they hold or held. The positions used to identify a person seem to be limited to the highest of the offices, namely the praetorian prefect, commander of the army or patrician, with practically no references to administrative officials below prefect.⁸⁴ The lack of these references as a way to identify the position held by an official can be explained in a number of ways. The history written about the fourth century by Ammianus is limited by personal experiences. He travelled the empire as an aide to Ursicinus, which limits the scope of officials he met, but did allow him to get some insights about the higher levels of the empire. The interactions between the lower level administrators and the military commanders were kept to a minimum.⁸⁵

To further analyze the social relations between the lower level military commanders and second grade civil officials the *Codex Theodosianus* will be utilized. The earlier mentioned law 6.14.1 provided an insight on a number of things. The *comes rei militaris* who controlled any province received higher

⁷⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XV.5.27.

⁷⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XVIII.1.1.

⁸⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXI.12.25.

⁸¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXVII.2.10.

⁸² Zosimus, *New history* 4.52.

⁸³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXI.6.5.

⁸⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XVI.6; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XVII.6.3; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XVIII.1.1; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XIX.12.9; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXI.6.4; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXI.9; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXII.3.6; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXVI.5.14; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXVIII.2.5; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXIX.2.9.

⁸⁵ Crump, 'Ammianus and the late Roman army', 92-94.

respect than the proconsuls. This rule implies that the proconsuls were in a complex position, in which they would hold a higher status than *comes rei militaris* who did not hold a province and hold a higher status than any of the other governors, which was already proven by their different title. Despite their equality in ranking when regarding their ranking, where they held the same hierarchical title as the *duces*, *comes rei militaris*, and vicars, they were regarded as having lower social status.

The position held by the military commanders of the proconsular provinces was different from the status of the commanders of the regular provinces. This difference in status is illustrated by law 6.14.3, which states that the *comes rei militaris* were placed on the same level as *duces* who controlled a province. This law specifically excludes Egypt and Pontus, indicating a higher status held by these two provinces. The difference in status between a *dux* commanding Egypt compared to a *comes rei militaris* is illustrated by passage XXIII.3.4-5 of Ammianus Marcellinus' work, previously mentioned in chapter 01. The significance of the *dux* of Egypt is illustrated by this passage due to the explicit way of mentioning the previous command of Sebastianus, adding to his prestige and status. This form of mentioning the previous commands of an official falls in the same category as the way of mentioning the rank of praetorian prefect and consul as a way to point out distinctive achievements of an official. This distinction in the passage most likely places the command of the *dux Aegypti* over the command of a regular count. A result of this distinction is that military commanders who held this position at any point were regarded as higher as commanders who only commanded regular border provinces.⁸⁶ The elevated status held by the commander of Egypt is reinforced by passage XXI.11.2 in the *Res Gestae*, in which Artemius is identified as an ex-commanders of Egypt, styled *duce* in the source. The title is again used to point out the status held by that official.⁸⁷

This did not mean that the rank of a *comes rei militaris* was not used to distinguish the status of an official. The status of the *comes rei militaris* is established by passage XXVI.5.1-3 of the *Res Gestae*, in which the emperors divide the commanders of the army between them. In this passage the commander Aequitius is introduced as only a *comes rei militaris* and not a *magister*, like the other commanders mentioned. This indicates that the status of the commander is clearly lower than the *magistri* who are in charge of the other elements of the army.⁸⁸ The status of the *comes rei militaris* is also used to establish the status of an official, after he held the command. In passage XX.4.18, which describes the declaration to emperor of Julian a man called Maurus is mentioned, with the specification that he would later be a *comes rei militaris*, something which was obviously meant to indicate the rank and status he would hold at his highest command. Passage XXVI.5.14 mentions Cretio, who is named a former *comes*, which was formerly mentioned in passage XXI.7.4, when he held the command. In the former passage the rank is used to indicate the status of Cretio, while in the latter it is used to indicate the command he held in a certain situation, not necessarily indicating the status attached to the command.⁸⁹ In the work by Zosimus there is no indication of the usage of the title of *comes rei militaris* that clearly points towards the status of an official, making a comparison of the two authors impossible.

The status was elevated above the rank of normal governors by title. In the cases in which Ammianus and Zosimus mention the governors of a province, it is always to point out that an official is the current governor of the province in question, while it is never used as a status symbol to refer back to. In passage 4.41 of Zosimus' *New History* Hilarius was made governor of Palestine, but no further indication of the status held by this title was made.⁹⁰ In passage XV.3.7 of Ammianus' work Africanus is merely mentioned as the governor of Pannonia Secunda, not indicating any status held by

⁸⁶ *Codex Theodosianus*, 6.14.3; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXIII.3.4-5.

⁸⁷ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXI.11.2.

⁸⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXVI.5.1-3.

⁸⁹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXVI.5.14; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXI.7.4.

⁹⁰ Zosimus, *New history* 4.41.

this.⁹¹ Other passages are limited to the same designation of officials, without the indication of a past governor post held by any of the officials, what would indicate the prestige of this post. This is different for the proconsuls. In passage XXXVIII.4.3, Ampelius is introduced as an official who has been raised twice to the position of proconsul, clearly indicating the status of Ampelius through this achievement. Another use of the title of proconsul to indicate the status held by an official is the indication of a former proconsul, clearly meant as a distinguishing factor when indicating the official.

When looking at the status held by several officials it is important to analyze the difference between the hierarchical position held and the status as indicated in the sources. While in the hierarchy the patricians, praetorian prefects and *magistri* form the highest officials, the status of these officials is regarded as lower than the status held by a consul. The consulship is clearly used as a method to distinguish officials from their lesser achieving colleagues. The consulship served as a reward to raise the status held by an official and when the consulship was held at a certain point in their career this would be used to indicate their status. The inclusion of the consulship changes the relationship between the highest officials when comparing someone who held to consulship to someone who had not hold the consulship. The status held by the second level of officials is harder to determine due to the lack of references in the sources. The position held by the proconsul is lower than the position held by the other officials, proven by law 6.14.1 in the *Codex Theodosianus*. The status of the position of proconsul was, however, still a way to indicate the status of an official. In the sources available the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* did not receive a large amount of attention. The status of the *comes rei militaris* is indicated as being lower than that of the *magistri*, in line with the position they held in the military hierarchy. Exceptions are the sources which distinguished the status of the commanders of normal provinces and the commanders of Egypt and Pontus, indicated with the help of the *Codex Theodosianus*. The *duces* of the special provinces held a higher status than the commanders of normal border regions and would serve as a way to distinguish their status.

2.3 Social mobility in the higher rankings

In the fourth-century hierarchical system social mobility played an important role. The senatorial class acquired the rank of *clarissimus* by default. This was also the case when your father was of a higher rank. The higher rankings were only obtainable by tenure of the adhering office.⁹² The result of this rule was the need for social mobility, in order to increase in ranking. This increase in ranking came in the form of several developments, including the introduction of barbarian commanders to the highest positions in the army and plotting against fellow administrators to curry favor with the emperor.

An example of the plotting of the administrators at the court of the emperor is given in the form of Silvanus, a Frank who was *magister peditum* in Gaul and declared Augustus by his troops at Cologne, illustrated by passage XV.5.4 in the *Res Gestae*. In order to frame Silvanus and arouse suspicion with the emperor several officials at the emperor's court, including the praetorian prefect, Lampadius, forged a letter which states Silvanus' intention to ascending to the throne of the emperor. Additionally the praetorian prefect arranged that his conspirators gained the position of consul, while he hoped for a reward from the emperor. The scheme set up by the praetorian prefect was aimed to increase the status off all of the conspirators by various means, while decreasing the status held by their target, which would lead to his declaration to Augustus and his death 28 days later.⁹³ These manipulations at the court of the emperor were not scarce. The position of Ursicinus, whose career

⁹¹ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XV.3.7.

⁹² Jones, *The later Roman Empire 285-602*, 528.

⁹³ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XV.5.4.

was discussed in chapter 01, at the court of Constantius was compromised by rumors. The rumors, discussed in passage XX.2.1-3 in the *Res Gestae* eventually lead to his early retirement. The passage does not mention whether or not Ammianus knew who plotted against Ursicinus to possibly increase his status at the court.⁹⁴ The decrease in status and fall from favor with the emperor was not limited to these two cases. In passage XVI.6.1-3 of Ammianus' work Arbetio, a man of consular rank, was accused of wanting to obtain the position of emperor, even though he had already risen from a common soldier to the position of highest military commander. This example shows the possibility of growth of rank and status in the fourth-century Roman Empire, where a common soldier was promoted to the highest obtainable military rank as well as the consulship, adding to his status and prestige.

The normal soldier was not the only group that would rise in the ranks of the fourth-century elite. Over the course of the fourth-century the barbarian tribes would increase their status and be admitted into the higher ranks of the military and even obtain the position of consul. In the second half of the fourth empire a large number of the military officers were of barbarian descent and fulfilled the position of *Magister, comes rei militaris*, or *duces*. Of the 60 known *magistri* in the second half of the fourth-century, 18 were of barbarian origin, of the 43 *comes rei militaris* 12 were barbarian and of the 41 *duces* 10 were barbarian. This meant that 27.78% of the officers was of barbarian descent. Of these officers, Nevitta, as mentioned in passage XXI.10.7, was the first to be raised to the position of consul in 362, opening the highest civil position up to the outsiders.⁹⁵ While not much was known about the position and status of these barbarian commanders, their existence becomes increasingly more important to the Roman Army, proven by the large number of high commanders that were of barbarian origin and even the chance to raise to the position of consul, which was highly prestigious as shown above.

In the fourth century plotting against other administrators happened on a regular basis. This appears to have been done in order to increase the status of the conspirators, while ruining the career of the official who is plotted against. Next to these plots which are aimed at a decrease in status, there was barbarization of the army, resulting in the increase in status for this group of officials. In the second half of the fourth century 27.78% of the military commanders would be of barbarian origin, opening the way to an increase in status and even the consulship.

⁹⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XX.2.1-3.

⁹⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* XXI.10.7; Jones, Martindale, and Morris, *The prosopography*, 626-627; Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe*, 148; Nicasie, *Twilight of empire*, 115.

Conclusion

Over the course of this thesis and attempt has been made to solve the issues around the hierarchy and status of the higher officials in the Roman Empire. To solve this question a range of sources has been used as well as modern insights about the hierarchy. In the first chapter the Hierarchical system of the Roman Empire has been analyzed in two parts. First the military hierarchy was analyzed and the relative positions of the *magistri*, *comes rei militaris* and *duces* was determined. The second part of this chapter was aimed at the incorporation of the administrative officials in the form of the praetorian prefect, vicar and governors. The result of this incorporation was a complex system in which the hierarchical position was strongly connected between the two sides of the government. In the second chapter the addition of the status of the Roman Officials was made. The majority of this chapter was spent on the analysis of the status compared to the hierarchical position as explained in chapter 01.

The fourth-century military system was filled with complex connections and uncertainties, as well as differences between the East and West. The hierarchical system's development appears to have been completed in the first half of the fourth century, creating a system of *magistri*, *duces* and *comes rei militaris*. In the analysis made in this thesis it is suggested that the *magistri peditum* and *equitum* originally and later the *magistri in praesentalis*, formed the highest commanders in the army, in both the East and the West. In the western part of the Empire the two *magistri in praesentalis* were supported by a subordinate *magister equitum* in Gaul. In the eastern part of the Empire the two *magistri in praesentalis* were supported by three *magistri militum*, who commanded small regional armies of their own. In both parts of the empire the connection between the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* is complex. However, arguments can be made that the position of the *comes rei militaris* is elevated above the *duces*, supported by the *Notitia Dignitatum* that places the commanders higher, as well as the higher position of the *comitatenses* in which the *comes rei militaris* served.

The hierarchical ranking of the military commanders to the civil officials makes the already explained system even more complex. The hierarchical position of the administrators compared to the commanders is determined by their ranking. The ranking of the two sides seems to have changed over the course of the fourth century, increasing the hierarchical position of the military side. Under the reign of Valentinian I a new system was introduced, which formed the main subject of analysis in this thesis. This system divided the offices in *clarissimi*, *spectabilis* and *illustri*. The normal governors were *clarissimi*, the *duces*, *comes rei militaris*, *proconsuls* and vicars were *spectabilis* and the *magistri* and praetorian prefects were *illustri*. The first group, formed by the *praeses*, *correctores*, and *consularis* has been determined as having the lowest hierarchical ranking and status. The *spectabilis* was less uniform as the title suggests. The position of the *proconsul* appears to have been regarded as the lowest. Laws in the *Codex Theodosianus* dictated that the relative position held by the *duces* and *comes rei militaris* compared to the vicars was equal. In practice the administrative side took precedence over the military commanders. In the third group the relative position of the praetorian prefect and the *magistri* appears to have the same distinction as found in the second group. Even though both officials has the same title, the administrative side took precedence over the military commanders when it came to cases in court and controlling the supplies needed by the army.

The last subject of research was the added element of status to the already complex hierarchical system. The largest addition to this system was the title of consul, which appeared to have had a great deal of prestige and status. Several examples in the sources showed the importance in this office and the way of using the consulship as a way to distinguish officials from their colleagues. Someone who held the consulship was regarded as off a higher status than the other officers. When comparing two officials who both had the consulship seniority and the additional offices appeared to have been of great importance. The status of the second grade military commanders, the vicar and the *proconsul* are less well known. The sources did not illustrate a different image than the hierarchical

ranking already suggested. An addition to the status of the *comes rei militaris* and *duces* can, however, be made. The hierarchical ranking of the *duces* was regarded as lower than the ranking of the *comes rei militaris*. The status of the *dux Aegypti* differentiated from this model, as illustrated by the sources. This special position was used as a distinction for a commander, while he held the position of *comes rei militaris*, which should have been regarded as equal and most likely higher. This indicates that the special proconsular provinces served as an extra addition to the status held by an official, the same way as it increased the status held by the proconsul compared to the other governors.

In this thesis an attempt has been made to clarify the complex hierarchical system and the status connected to these positions. Finding a definitive answer proved impossible, but a suggestion to how this system functioned could be made. In order to create a more comprehensive hierarchical system research has to be done towards all higher Roman officials and not only the higher military commanders and administrators who control an area. Additionally the range of sources has to be extended to be able make a better reconstruction of the hierarchical system and the status connected to different offices.

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