

BYZANTINA LODZIENSIA

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# **Strategoí: early Byzantine military commanders in the times of Zeno and Anastasius I (474–518)**

Mirosław J. Leszka  
Szymon Wierzbiński

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Niniejszy tom serii „Byzantina Lodziensia” dedykujemy  
pamięci Profesora Mirosława Jerzego Leszki, pracownika Katedry Historii  
Bizancjum Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, przewodniczącego Komitetu  
Redakcyjnego tej serii, naszego wspaniałego Mistrza, Przyjaciela, Kolegi,  
Mentora, cenionego Historyka i Współautora niniejszej pracy,  
który odszedł niespodziewanie 24 sierpnia 2024 roku.  
Możliwość współpracy z Nim i uczenia się od Niego  
była zaszczytem i przywilejem.

Współautor wraz z członkami Komitetu Redakcyjnego

We dedicate this volume of the “Byzantina Lodziensia” series  
to the memory of Professor Mirosław Jerzy Leszka of the Department of  
Byzantine History of the University of Łódź, Chair of the series’ Editorial  
Board, our wonderful Master, Friend, Colleague, and Mentor, valued Historian  
and co-author of this work, who passed away suddenly on August 24, 2024.  
It was an honor and a privilege to work with Him and to learn from Him.

Co-author and members of the Editorial Board



# Introduction



This book was created as part of research project *Byzantine military elites from the time of Theodosius II to Anastasius I (408–518). Socio-political study*<sup>1</sup> and presents the eponymous issue during the reign of emperors Anastasius and Zeno<sup>2</sup>. The period of the reign of the earlier Byzantine rulers, Theodosius II, Marcian and Leo I, was discussed in the work of Łukasz Pigoński<sup>3</sup>, a member of the research team realising the aforementioned research project.

The publication is divided into five main parts. The first part presents the Byzantine army, the command of which was the basis for the position of the commanding staff in society. Various aspects of its functioning were shown, from its organisation, numbers, to the remuneration of soldiers.

The second part was devoted to the policies of Zeno and Anastasius regarding the appointment to the highest positions in the Byzantine army, that is, the *magistri militum in praesenti, per Orientem, per Illyricum* and *per Thracias*. What

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<sup>1</sup> The project was financed with the funds from the National Research Centre, awarded on the basis of the decision no. DEC-2018/31/B/HS3/03038.

<sup>2</sup> Certain parts of the present book (chapters: I, III, 1–2, V) is a translation of somewhat modified fragments of the work: M.J. Leszka, Sz. Wierzbicki, *Wódzowie Zenona (474–491) i Anastazjusza I (491–518)*, Łódź 2023.

<sup>3</sup> *The Shields of the Empire: Eastern Roman Military Elites during the Reigns of the Emperors Theodosius II, Marcian and Leo I*, Łódź–Kraków 2023.



guided the aforementioned rulers when they were deciding to entrust these positions to specific people, what criteria did they use, and to what extent were their decisions forced by a specific military or political situation? The answers to these questions are pivotal to the considerations in this part of the work.

In the third, the main opponents of the Byzantine troops and of their commanders were characterised, in general terms. Both the common Byzantine soldiers and their leaders, the members of the military elites, fought i.a. the Ostrogoths, Persians and Bulgars; this section also examines the fate of the struggles against these peoples in the times of Zeno and Anastasius.

The fourth part traces the activity of military elites during important political events, such as usurpations and military rebellions. We attempt to indicate how each of the above-mentioned categories of events influenced the balance of power within the aforementioned elites.

The fifth and final part was devoted to ten selected as examples representatives of the military elites of the era of Zeno and Anastasius. The individual texts were constructed, as far as the source information allowed, according to the following scheme: origins, education, career (military, civilian), portrayal in the sources, family, and evaluation of achievements in the military sphere.

Information about the military elites in the times of Zeno and Anastasius is scattered across various sources. Here we would like to draw attention to only some of these, the ones which are particularly important to us for various reasons.

**Candidus the Isaurian.** Candidus wrote *History*, encompassing the years 457–491<sup>4</sup>. He came from Trachia in Isauria, was born around 430, and was an educated man – although educated only for an Isaurian, as Photius seems to suggest when assessing his way of writing<sup>5</sup>. He served as secretary for, as he himself wrote, *the most powerful men in Isauria*<sup>6</sup>. His work has survived only in a summarised form. For understandable reasons the author presented the Isaurian point of view. *History* was most likely written at the beginning of the reign of Anastasius.

**Malchus of Philadelphia** in Palestine, a sophist, the author of a work entitled *Byzantiaka*, which has not survived. According to the text known to Photius, it covered the period from 474 to 480. We have indications that it co-

<sup>4</sup> On the subject of Candidus see i.a. K. Twardowska, *Cesarzowe bizantyńskie 2 poł. V w. Kobiety a władza*, Kraków 2009, p. 17–19; W. Treadgold, *The Early Byzantine Historians*, Basingstoke 2007, p. 103, 105–106; H. Brandt, *Zur historiographischen konzeption des Izaurers Candidus*, [in:] *Griechische Profanhistoriker des fünften nachchristlichen Jahrhunderts*, ed. T. Stickle, B. Bleckmann, Stuttgart 2014, p. 162–167; M. Meier, *Candidus: Um die Geschichte der Isaurier*, [in:] *Griechische Profanhistoriker...*, p. 171–193.

<sup>5</sup> Candidus, p. 464.

<sup>6</sup> Candidus, p. 464; transl. p. 465.

vered the period stretching back to Constantine the Great and up to the times of Anastasius (491/518). It was written either during the reign of Anastasius or Justin I. The preserved fragments of this work provide important information regarding Gothic-Byzantine relations. In its tone, unlike *Candide's* work, this work is anti-Isaurian in nature<sup>7</sup>.

**Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite** is the author of the *Chronicle* covering the years 495–506 and presenting the history of Edessa, Amida and Mesopotamia. The author was contemporary with the events about which he wrote. He served as treasurer of the Church in Edessa. The *Chronicle* was attributed to Joshua the Stylite, a monk at the monastery in Zuqnin. It contains unique information regarding the usurpation of Illus and Leontius and the history of the Byzantine-Persian war of 503–506<sup>8</sup>.

**Procopius of Caesarea** (ca. 500–ca. 560) – considered one of the greatest, if not the greatest, Byzantine historian – is the author of, among others, *The Wars*, which presents the history of the struggles of the Byzantine Empire in the era of Justinian I against the Persians, Vandals and Goths. This work is useful to us because its author preceded his story about Justinian's times with information about the state of relations between Byzantium and the aforementioned peoples during the earlier period. Hence, his account contains valuable information about Byzantine commanders taking part in the struggle against the Vandals and the war with Persians of 503–506<sup>9</sup>.

**John Malalas** is the author of *Chronography*, which begins with the creation of the world and ends in 532 (in the Antiochian version, published just after this

<sup>7</sup> On Malchus, see i.a.: B. Baldwin, *Malchus of Philadelphia*, DOP 31, 1977, p. 89–107; P. Janiszewski, *Historiografia późnego antyku (koniec III – połowa VII w.)*, [in:] *Vademecum historyka starożytnej Grecji i Rzymu*, vol. III, *Źródłoznawstwo czasów późnego antyku*, ed. E. Wipszycka, Warszawa 1999, p. 43–45; H.U. Wiemer, *Malchos von Philadelphia. Die Vandalen und das Ende des Kaisertums im Westen*, [in:] *Griechische Profanhistoriker...*, p. 121–126; K. Twardowska, *Cesarzowe...*, p. 19–21; W. Treadgold, *The Early...*, p. 103–107.

<sup>8</sup> On Pseudo-Joshua, cf. i.a.: *Die syrische Chronik des Josua Stylites*, ed., übersetzung A. Luthier, Berlin–New York 1997, p. 1–31; *The Chronicle of Pseudo-Joshua the Stylite*, transl., notes., introd. F.R. Trombley, J.W. Watt, Liverpool 2000, p. XI–LV.

<sup>9</sup> The literature devoted to Procopius and his works is enormous, therefore I allow myself to point out only a few of the most recent titles in which the reader will find further bibliographic information: A. Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*, Philadelphia 2004; C. Whately, *Battles and Generals: Combat, Culture, and Didacticism in Procopius' Wars*, Leiden 2016; *Le monde de Procope / The World of Procopius*, ed. S. Janniard, G. Greatrex, Paris 2018; *Procopius of Caesarea: Literary and Historical Interpretations*, ed. Ch. Lillington-Martin, E. Turquois, Abington 2018; *A Companion to Procopius of Caesarea*, ed. M. Meier, F. Montinaro, Leiden 2022; D. Brodka, *Prokop von Caesarea*, Hildesheim 2022.

date), and in the year 565 (maybe 573/574) in the Constantinopolitan edition, written in the sixties and seventies of the sixth century. It is not an outstanding work in terms of historical technique, but it sometimes provides information that is very interesting for our considerations and which is not available in other sources<sup>10</sup>.

**Marcellinus Comes**, who came from Illyricum and wrote in the 6th century, is the author of the *Chronicle*, which covers the period from 379 to 534 and is a continuation of Jerome's chronicle. Although the author was writing his work in Constantinople, he composed it in Latin, his native language. In the *Chronicle*, one can find a number of interesting from our perspective and absent from other sources information about the activity of Byzantine commanders, especially during the reign of emperors Zeno and Anastasius<sup>11</sup>.

**John of Antioch** is the author of a chronicle of the world, which opens with its creation and ends in the year 610. This work has survived only in fragments. It was written after 610 and probably before 631. Its author was to have been a bishop of Antioch (perhaps Monophysite, in the years 631–649). The chronicle is based on good sources, including some which are now lost (e.g. the work of Eustathius of Epiphania). Scholars consider John of Antioch's technique as a historian to be very good. For our subject, this *Chronicle* is one of the best sources, providing a lot of information that cannot be found in other authors<sup>12</sup>.

**Chronography of Theophanes the Confessor** encompasses years 284–813. It was created very soon after 813. The role played by Theophanes - a monk and defender of the cult of icons - in the creation of this work is debatable. Some scholars see him not so much as the author but as the editor of the materials he received from George Syncellus, his friend. For the period in which we are in-

<sup>10</sup> On Malalas and his work, see, i.a.: *Studies in John Malalas*, ed. E. Jeffreys, B. Croke, R. Scott, Sydney 1990; M. Kokoszko, *Descriptions of Personal Appearance in John Malalas' Chronicle*, Łódź 1998; E. Jeffreys, *The Beginning of Byzantine Chronography. John Malalas*, [in:] *Greek and Roman Historiography...*, p. 497–527; *Recherches sur la Chronique de Jean Malalas I*, ed. S. Augusta-Boularot, J. Beaucamp, A.-M. Bernardi, B. Cabouret, E. Caire, Paris 2004; *Recherches sur la Chronique de Jean Malalas II*, ed. S. Augusta-Boularot, J. Beaucamp, A.-M. Bernardi, E. Caire, Paris 2006; W. Treadgold, *The Early...*, p. 235–256; *Die Weltchronik des Johannes Malalas. Autor – Werk – Überlieferung*, hrsg. M. Meier, Ch. Radtki, E. Schultz, Stuttgart 2016.

<sup>11</sup> On Marcellinus Comes, see: M.J. Leszka, Sz. Wierzbinski, *Komes Marcellin, vir clarissimus. Historyk i jego dzieło*, Łódź 2022.

<sup>12</sup> On John of Antioch and his work, see: P. Sotiroudis, *Untersuchungen zum Geschichtswerk des Johannes von Antiocheia*, Thessaloniki 1989; P. Janiszewski, *Historiografia...*, p. 175–177; S. Marié, *Introduction*, [in:] *John of Antioch*, p. 3\*–41\*; W. Treadgold, *Early...*, p. 311–329.

terested, the *Chronography* includes a number of important information which Theophanes took, among others, from Theodore Lector's *History of the Church*, which has not been fully preserved to this day<sup>13</sup>, but he also knew the accounts of Priscus, Procopius of Caesarea, John Malalas and John of Antioch<sup>14</sup>.

The reader will find a detailed description of the source base constituting the foundation of our knowledge about the reigns of Zeno and Anastasius, and which is necessarily also useful for our research, in the works devoted to these rulers which we list below. Łukasz Pigoński made interesting comments about the source base for the considerations appearing in this book regarding the military elites in the period from Theodosius II to Leo I<sup>15</sup>.

When it comes to the academic literature, our starting point consisted of three prosopographical works covering the period in which we are interested, and authored by: John R. Martindale<sup>16</sup>, Christoph Begass<sup>17</sup> and Łukasz Jarosz<sup>18</sup>, as well as monographs presenting the rule of Emperor Zeno, by Rafał Kosiński<sup>19</sup> and by

<sup>13</sup> On the use of Theodore Lector by Theophanes, see: R. Kosiński, K. Twardowska, A. Zabrocka, A. Szopa, *The Church Histories of Theodore Lector and John Diakrino-menos*, Berlin 2021, p. 407–412.

<sup>14</sup> The literature devoted to Theophanes and his work is enormous. Here I allow myself to cite several representative works in which the reader will find references to further reading: C. Mango, R. Scott, *Introduction*, [in:] *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern history A.D. 284–813*, transl. and ed. i.i.d.e.m. with the assistance of G. Greatrex, Oxford 1997, p. XLIII–C; A. Koma, *Gnesioi filoi. The Search for George Syncellus and Theophanes the Confessor's Own Words and the Authorship of Their Oeuvre*, SCer 5, 2015, p. 155–230; W. Treadgold, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, New York 2013, p. 38–77; *Studies in Theophanes*, ed. M. Jankowiak, F. Montinaro, Paris 2015; B. Cécota, *Islam, Arabowie i wizerunek kalifów w przekazach Chronografii Teofanesa Wyznawcy*, Łódź 2022; J.W. Torgerson, *The Chronographia of George the Synkellos and Theophanes. The Ends of Time in Ninth-Century Constantinople*, Leiden–Boston 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Ł. Pigoński, *The Shields of the Empire: Eastern Military Elites during the reigns of Theodosius II, Marcian, and Leo I*, Łódź–Kraków 2023, p. 15–20. Here, the reader will also find valuable comments on problems encountered in the sources by researchers studying military elites.

<sup>16</sup> J.R. Martindale, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. II, A.D. 395–527, Cambridge 1980 and complementary works: B. Baldwin, *Some Addenda to the Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, *Hi* 31.1, 1982, p. 97–111; R. Scharf, *Spätrömische Studien. Prosopographische Studien und quellenkundliche Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des 5. Jahrhunderts nach Christus*, Mannheim 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Ch. Begass, *Die Senatsaristokratie des oströmischen Reiches, ca. 457–518. Prosopographische sozialgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, München 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Ł. Jarosz, *Wschodniorzymscy magistrowie militum w latach 395–527 studium prosopograficzne*, Kraków 2017 (unpublished doctoral dissertation).

<sup>19</sup> R. Kosiński, *The Emperor Zeno. Religion and Politics*, Cracow 2010.

Peter Crawford<sup>20</sup>, and the rule of Anastasius, by Carmelo Capizzi<sup>21</sup>, Fiona K. Haarer<sup>22</sup> and Mischa Meier<sup>23</sup>. Particularly significant for us, for its descriptions of the leadership of the Byzantine army, was the work of Evgenij Glušanin<sup>24</sup>. Texts devoted to individual representatives of military circles who were active in the period in question were also useful. It should be noted, however, that only some of them had separate works devoted to them. These were i.a. Illus<sup>25</sup>, Trocundes<sup>26</sup> and Hypatius<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> P. Crawford, *Roman Emperor Zeno: The Perils of Power Politics in Fifth-century Constantinople*, Yorkshire–Philadelphia 2019.

<sup>21</sup> C. Capizzi, *L'Imperatore Anastasio I (491–518). Studio sulla sua vita, la sua opera e la sua personalita*, Roma 1969.

<sup>22</sup> F.K. Haarer, *Anastasius I. Politics and Empire in the Late Roman World*, Cambridge 2006.

<sup>23</sup> M. Meier, *Anastasios I. Die Entstehung des Byzantinischen Reiches*, Stuttgart 2009.

<sup>24</sup> E.P. Glušanin, *Voennaja znat' rannej Vizantii*, Barnaul 1991.

<sup>25</sup> H. Elton, *Illus and the Imperial Aristocracy under Zeno*, B 70, 2000, p. 393–407; M.J. Leszka, *Illus Izauryjczyk wobec uzurpacji Bazyliskosa*, AUL.FH 80, 2005, p. 45–53; i d e m, *Kilka uwag na temat losów Illusa Izauryjczyka w latach 479–484*, M 40.1/2, 2007, p. 99–107.

<sup>26</sup> P. Lemerle, *Fl. Appalius Illus Trocundes*, Syr 40, 1963, p. 315–322; M.J. Leszka, *The Career of Flavius Appalius Illus Trocundes*, Bsl 71, 2013, p. 47–58.

<sup>27</sup> G. Greatrex, *Flavius Hypatius, quem vidit validum Parthus sensitque timendum. An investigation of his Career*, B 66, 1996, p. 120–142; M. Meier, *Flavius Hypatios: der Mann, der Kaiser sein wollte*, [in:] *Verwandtschaft, Name und soziale Ordnung (300–1000). Kinship, Name, and the Social Order (300–1000)*, ed. St. Patzold, K. Ubl, Berlin–Boston 2014, p. 73–96.

C H A P T E R

I

**SZYMON WIERZBIŃSKI**

# Army







In order to present the structure and workings of the Byzantine army during the reign of Zeno and Anastasius, it is necessary to at least briefly discuss the changes it was subjected to in the earlier period<sup>1</sup>. Although attempts to carry out military reforms were made throughout the history of the Roman Empire, it seems reasonable to assume that the first vital changes to come after those from the 2nd century AD were undertaken by Diocletian<sup>2</sup>. Under Diocletian's reforms, the majority of legions were stationed along the borders of the empire while relatively small forces (*comitatus*), which over time evolved into field armies, were left by the side and under the direct control of Diocletian and his successors<sup>3</sup>. Diocletian also established the military office of *dux*, integrating it

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<sup>1</sup> B. Campbell rightly points out that in dealing with this topic, scholars face two problems: the scarcity of sources, which makes it difficult to resolve such issues as, for example, the formal and actual number of units, and disinformation contained in some of the surviving accounts: B. Campbell, *The Roman Army, 31 BC–AD 337. A Sourcebook*, London–New York 1994, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> The assessment of these changes by contemporary scholars differs from that by the authors of primary sources. The latter were affected in their judgement by Diocletian's religious views. This explains why Lactantius and Zosimus took a negative view of the emperor's reforms: Lactantius, 7 (criticism of the tax burden); Zosimus, II, 34, 2–4. The dominant view held by modern scholars is that the emperor had two basic goals in mind. First, he aimed to create a military system capable of resisting external threats that arose from time to time at different sections of the empire's long border: A. Kaldellis, M. Kruse, *The Field Armies of the East Roman Empire, 361–630*, Cambridge 2023, p. 1. Secondly, the emperor was well aware that the army was a potential threat to the ruler, as the fate of many of his predecessors proved only too well (A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602. A Social, Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. II, Oxford 1964, p. 608). Thus, it seems that Diocletian made efforts to create an army that would be able to effectively deal with external threats, while at the same time remaining unable to start a rebellion that might depose him or his successors from the throne: W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum i jego armia 284–1081*, transl. M. Grab ska - Ryńska, Włodzisław Ślaski 2011, p. 25. This reform turned out to be effective because, as C. Zuckerman points out, in the period from 324 to the rebellion of Phocas, none of the Eastern emperors was thrown from the throne by an army: C. Zuckerman, *Armia*, [in:] *Świat Bizancjum*, ed. C. Morrison, transl. A. Graboń, Kraków 2007, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> B. Campbell (*The Roman...*, p. 82) indicates that until the beginning of the 3rd century most of the forces were concentrated on the Rhine and Danube. However, significant forces were also stationed in Africa and the East: N.D. Kontogiannis, *Byzantine Fortifications. Protecting the Roman Empire in the East*, Yorkshire–Philadelphia 2022, p. 11–12. In Diocletian's view, a large field army was not needed because most of the army was stationed on the border of

into the system of the organization of the army. *Duces* were placed in charge of the units deployed in strategically crucial border regions, exercising almost exclusively military powers<sup>4</sup>. This solution was often relied on in the history of Byzantium, especially in areas that demanded leaders capable of responding to arising threats in a quick and flexible manner<sup>5</sup>. This pertained to the areas which were in constant danger of invasion or which the empire had recently regained or conquered<sup>6</sup>.

It is also believed that Diocletian brought significant modifications both to the size and to the organization of the Roman army<sup>7</sup>. The emperor is credited with the creation of many new legions, which was intended to reinforce the field troops remaining at his disposal and to add strength to the troops stationed on the borders<sup>8</sup>. Unfortunately, the source analysis still leaves us with questions about how

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the empire, and each tetrarch had only one of the key sections of the front to hold. From a military point of view, the ruler's task was only to support the border legions with the units of the *comitatus*: A.K. Goldsworthy, *Roman Warfare*, London 2000, p. 166. However, it quickly turned out that the *comitatus* became a tool in the struggle for power between the tetrarchs soon after Diocletian's resignation. For this reason, they began to be strengthened at the expense of the border armies, and the period of civil wars ended only when Constantine the Great took power. More on this topic, see: S. Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, New York–London 1985.

<sup>4</sup> *Duces* were therefore in charge of the troops in particular provinces regardless of who their civil governors were. It seems likely that, at least in exceptional cases, the *dux's* prerogatives could be extended to include administrative functions: B. Campbell, *The Roman...*, p. 239. It is possible that the system remained flexible for a long time and was adapted to the local conditions and challenges that the provincial governors and local *dux* had to deal with. In some cases, the *dux* ruled over an area covering more than one province (e.g. *Dux Pannoniae Primae et Norici Ripensis*): *Notitia.Occ.*, XXXIV, 13.

<sup>5</sup> This solution reappeared, for example, in the form of *duces* and *katepans* in the 9th century in Byzantium: J. Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565–1204*, London 1999, p. 84–85.

<sup>6</sup> C. Holmes, *Basil II and the Governance of Empire (976–1025)*, Oxford 2005, p. 301–302. The concentration of troops on the border certainly had various consequences. It is worth remembering that one of the tasks of the Roman army was also to maintain public order in the country: B. Campbell, *The Roman...*, p. 110.

<sup>7</sup> The changes concerned the organization both of the army and of its personnel. Researchers encounter significant difficulties not only in reproducing the structure of the new legions, but also in determining the direction in which the reform of the old ones went: A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. I, p. 17. Overall, researchers agree that the army grew by about one-third. For more on the organization of the army during Diocletian's rule, see: P. Heather, *Fall of the Roman Empire*, Oxford 2005, p. 63–64.

<sup>8</sup> B. Campbell calculates that in 305 the Roman army had a total of 67 legions, twice as many as in 235: B. Campbell, *The Roman...*, p. 232. The nature of the mentioned reform remains controversial. On the one hand, Diocletian created new legions, but due to their smaller size, it is believed that the army's numerical growth was quite limited: W. Treadgold, *A His-*

many units were newly created and what the emperor did to those already existing upon his accession to power. Some scholars (for example, A.H.M. Jones) have argued that the size of the old legions remained unchanged (approximately 5,500 soldiers) while that of the new ones was fixed at 1,000 soldiers<sup>9</sup>. This view remains a matter of debate. A different opinion is held by W. Treadgold, who claims that Diocletian reformed all the forces, thus also reducing the number of soldiers who made up the old legions<sup>10</sup>. None of the scholars resolves the issue of the legions' size clearly. However, following their arguments, it can be safely said that an important motivation behind the reform was to make the army more flexible, and to achieve this goal, it was necessary, among other things, to change the structure of its units. Regardless of whether the legion consisted of 1,000 soldiers or more, it is clear that the emperor aimed to reorganize the army in such a way as to ensure the possibility of directing detached units to where their support was needed most<sup>11</sup>.

Since it has been hard to establish whether the reforms embraced only the newly created units, or whether they also applied to the old ones, scholars still find it difficult to determine the total number of the imperial army. Currently, however, two views dominate the critical literature. According to the first, based

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*tory of the Byzantine State and Society*, Stanford 1997, p. 19; P. Southern, *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine*, New York 2001, p. 157.

<sup>9</sup> Before the reforms of Diocletian and his successors, the legion traditionally consisted of nine cohorts of 480 soldiers each, a tenth cohort of twice the strength and a cavalry unit estimated at 120, which gave a total of 5,400 men: B. Campbell, *The Roman...*, p. 28; A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 681; C. Zuckerman, *Armia...*, p. 177. This would mean that the imperial army was strengthened by nearly 15-20%, which is still a huge number of soldiers: R.S.O. Tomlin, *The Army of the Late Empire*, [in:] *The Roman World*, ed. J. Wachter, Oxford 1988, p. 111.

<sup>10</sup> Even if the old legions were not disbanded, in practice they were nominal in nature and the commanders were in charge of 1,000-person, independent units operating under a unified chain of command: W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 104-105. It is worth noting, however, that if Diocletian reformed all the legions, even by appointing twice as many units, as Jones would have liked, the size of the imperial army would not only not have increased, but would have decreased. A.K. Goldsworthy (*The Complete Roman Army*, London 2003, p. 206) has a different opinion, arguing that the reform covered all the formations and, consequently, meant dividing the existing legions into smaller units.

<sup>11</sup> Disbanding the old legions and establishing new ones in their place must have been a very serious challenge and, as such, would not have gone unnoticed by the authors of the sources. However, changing the command structure and unifying it throughout the entire army would have been much less spectacular and could have gone unnoticed. There is no doubt, however, that Diocletian was aware of how important the strengthening of the army was for the empire to survive: E.N. Luttwak, *Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, Baltimore-London 1976, p. 177. A different view is held by C. Zuckerman, who claims that the legions differed in size and the new formations were significantly smaller than the old formations: C. Zuckerman, *Armia...*, p. 177.

directly on some sources, Diocletian raised the number of troops to between 580,000 and even 645,000 soldiers<sup>12</sup>. The order of this magnitude was considered likely by Jones<sup>13</sup>. Today, a similar view is held by W. Treadgold<sup>14</sup>. The problem is that these estimations are based on the sources that are now regarded as unreliable. Moreover, the method of determining the size of individual units used by Jones is also being questioned today<sup>15</sup>. Advocates of the second view emphasize that apart from the testimonies of Zosimus and Agathias, there also survives an account by John the Lydian, who puts the number of the empire's troops at almost 390,000 soldiers<sup>16</sup>. According to the second interpretation, it is this number that is considered to reflect reality. What speaks in its favour is also its precise character (389,704 soldiers). Additionally, some researchers point out, not without grounds, that the source information regarding the personnel of the imperial army pertains only to the desired or maximum number of soldiers to which particular units were supposed to be comprised. In reality, soldiers made up no more than two-thirds of the units' nominal number<sup>17</sup>. There is no doubt that the issue of the size of the Roman army still requires further research, and the basic problem seems to be that of determining whether Diocletian's reform applied only to the new units or whether it also covered the old ones<sup>18</sup>.

The issue of the organizational structure of the legion is much less controversial. It can be assumed that the basic unit, perhaps at first functional in nature and only later popularized as a legion, consisted of 1,000 soldiers, divided into two cohorts of roughly 500 men each<sup>19</sup>. It seems reasonable to assume that un-

<sup>12</sup> These numbers are given by Agathias (V, 13) and Zosimus (II, 15, 22) respectively.

<sup>13</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 680–683.

<sup>14</sup> For more information on the size of the Imperial Army, see: W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 44–59.

<sup>15</sup> E.A. Thompson, *Zosimus 6. 10. 2 and the Letters of Honorius*, *ClAq* 32.2, 1982, p. 446; R. Duncan-Jones, *Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy*, Cambridge 1990, p. 105–117. The biggest differences concerned the units stationed in the east, where, apart from two short-term conflicts against Persia, relatively little happened. For this reason, it is difficult to determine the nominal and actual number of the imperial troops in this region.

<sup>16</sup> John Lydus, *De Mensibus*, I, 27.

<sup>17</sup> H. Elton, *Warfare in Roman Europe, AD 350–425*, Oxford 1996, p. 89.

<sup>18</sup> It is worth noting, however, that according to some researchers, the reforms deprived the legions of their artillery component. It is believed that the so-called *ballistarii* arose in response to the fact that the new, smaller legions were losing their own war machines: L.I. Ree-Petersen, *Siege warfare and Military Organization in the Successor States (400–800)*, Leiden–Boston 2013, p. 36. The author refers to Ammianus Marcellinus, who regretted that the attacking legions were unable to operate the siege engines: Ammianus Marcellinus, XIX, 5, 2. Therefore, the army was subject to increasing specialization.

<sup>19</sup> W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 104–105.

til the reign of Constantine the Great, the legion was led by a prefect who had under his command 2 tribunes, 2 vicars, 12 centurions, 120 decurions, 840 privates and a number of specialized soldiers, such as adjutants, trumpeters, medics, etc.<sup>20</sup>. The cavalry, in turn, was organized into 500-person *alae*, each of which consisted of 30-person units headed by a decurion<sup>21</sup>. As a result, its structure was even more flattened. As W. Treadgold points out, the rank of cavalry centurion most likely first arrived during the reign of Diocletian. Commanding the fourth part of the *alae*, in the 6th century he began to be referred to as hecatontarch<sup>22</sup>.

Treadgold also notes that the legions varied in number, as some of them simply were not fully manned. There is no doubt, however, that over time a group of 1,000 soldiers began to be identified with a legion. The problem of a legion's strength is further complicated by the fact that the pace of the changes mentioned above were different in the west from those in the East. Therefore, one may get the impression that in both parts of the empire the organization of the legion remained fluid for some time, and the two armies differed from each other in terms of their respective structures. However, we know that this was not the case<sup>23</sup>. The problem is not hard to explain. As A.H.M. Jones was right to note, it was customary for commanders stationed on the Rhine and Danube rivers to detach particular units from their legions and deploy them to the most vulnerable sections of the front. Such a practice was not common in the East. This held true especially for those areas where threats were less serious<sup>24</sup>. To sum up, it can be argued that the establishment of new, smaller legion formations,

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<sup>20</sup> It is worth noting that the above-mentioned structure of the new legion, consisting of two 'old cohorts', was first applied to *comitatus* armies. The legions stationed on the border, often numbering 500 men, were commanded by a prefect, although his rank was lower, and the units composed of federates were led into battle by an officer with the rank of *praepositus*: H. E l t o n, *Warfare...*, p. 101; A.H.M. J o n e s, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 640.

<sup>21</sup> Researchers as a whole exercise more caution in determining both the number of particular units and the structure of their command. Thus, the size of the *alae* is estimated from 120 to 500 soldiers: H. E l t o n, *Warfare...*, p. 89; A.K. G o l d s w o r t h y, *The Complete...*, p. 202–206; D. M a t t i n g l y, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire*, London 2006, p. 239. As far as infantry units are concerned, their size range is assumed to have been quite significant, with 500 soldiers constituting the minimum number of a legion (this holds true especially for units that will later be included under the *limitanei* category).

<sup>22</sup> W. T r e a d g o l d, *Bizancjum...*, p. 106. This may indicate the increasing importance of cavalry: C. Z u c k e r m a n, *Armia...*, p. 178–179.

<sup>23</sup> At first glance, one might think that the old, large legions continued to exist in the east, while the new, smaller ones were found mainly in the west.

<sup>24</sup> For more on changes in the size of a legion in the eastern part of the empire, see: M.P.S. G o m e z, *Constantine, Constans and the Comes Rei Militaris (306–350)*, [in:] *Proceedings of the XIII Symposium of Nis and Byzantium, Nis (Serbia)*, ed. M. R a k o c i j a, Nis 2015, p. 478.



coupled with new ways of command, resulted in changes to the sizes of all the Roman legions, while at the same time entailing no change in the chain of command in the legion's particular units such as cohorts<sup>25</sup>.

Although a mobile military reserve already existed during Diocletian's reign, the actual creator of large field armies was Emperor Constantine the Great<sup>26</sup>. Constantine's reform involved detaching many troops from the frontier regions<sup>27</sup> and transferring them to the field armies of a new type (*comitatenses*)<sup>28</sup>. These armies were reinforced with the new category of infantry (*auxilia*)<sup>29</sup>, as well as the cavalry (*vexillationes*)<sup>30</sup> which was already well known at that time.

<sup>25</sup> It can therefore be argued that Diocletian's reforms were of a transitional character, since the new command structure appeared only as part of the reforms introduced by Constantine the Great.

<sup>26</sup> B. Campbell indicates that the emperor made use of some of Diocletian's solutions, such as the military reserve, which was formed by the *comitatus*. However, he gave it a permanent and formalized form: B. C a m p b e l l, *The Roman...*, p. 233. Nevertheless, it is believed that the army capable of manoeuvre and remaining at the emperor's direct disposal was created by Constantine: C. Z u c k e r m a n, *Armia...*, p. 175.

<sup>27</sup> This is, in fact, one of the charges Zosimus made against Constantine. The emperor was accused of weakening the defence of the empire's borders: Z o s i m u s, II, 34, 2–4.

<sup>28</sup> The core of these forces were probably *comitatus* troops at the disposal of Constantine the Great: A.H.M. J o n e s, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 608. For more on the formation of *comitatenses* and their role in the army of the late empire, see: G. E s p o s i t o, *Armies of the Late Roman Empire AD 284 to 476: History, Organization & Equipment*, Tintern 2018, p. 61–66. The name is first mentioned in 324: A.D. L e e, *War in Late Antiquity, A Social History*, Oxford 2007, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> According to C. Zuckerman, these were infantry units that were not included in the legions, although they formed part of mobile armies: C. Z u c k e r m a n, *Armia...*, p. 177–178. As the scholar proves, these were almost certainly smaller and less armed units. It is difficult to clearly determine the origin of this formation. However, it is known that it was established by Constantine the Great, and the names of the oldest units of this type refer to Germanic tribes. Perhaps, their core was made up of the old cohorts of auxiliary troops, composed largely of barbarians: A.K. G o l d s w o r t h y, *Roman...*, p. 174. It is worth noting that Constantine's contemporaries made complaints about the barbarization of the Roman army: A.H.M. J o n e s, *The Later Roman...*, vol. I, p. 98. The discussion regarding the extent to which Constantine's troops were „barbarized” has continued for a long time: A. A l f ö l d i, *Cornuti. A Teutonic Contingent in the Service of Constantine the Great and its Decisive Role in the Battle at the Milvian Bridge*, DOP 13, 1959, p. 171–179. It is worth noting, however, that the units we have been dealing with here had their own tradition in the Roman army, and their soldiers underwent the same training as the rest of the legionaries, and at least some of them regarded themselves as citizens of the empire. For more on the origin of the *auxilia* formation, see: M.P. S p e i d e l, *Raising New Units for the late Roman army: auxilia palatina*, DOP 50, 1996, p. 163–170; i d e m, *The Four Earliest Auxilia Palatina*, REMA 1, 2004, p. 132–146; M. C o l o m b o, *Constantinus rerum nouator: dal comitatus diocleziano ai palatini di Valentiniano I*, K 90, 2008, p. 124–161.

<sup>30</sup> Originally, this unit was detached from the rest of the legion and entrusted with a specific task. It was active only for a specific amount of time. After fulfilling the order it had been

The forces that remained on the border were referred to as *limitanei* or *ripenses*<sup>31</sup>. The policy lowering both the prestige and the combat capabilities of *limitanei* units was continued by Constantine's successors<sup>32</sup>. A slightly different approach was adopted for the troops guarding the border on the Danube river – the emperor's reform provided for the river to be guarded by new *auxilia*, which were supported by cavalry units (*cunei*)<sup>33</sup>.

The new units operated under a completely revamped command structure. In terms of the ladder of their command, the only thing that the reign of Constantine shared with Diocletian's rule was that the cohort was headed by a tribune. The cohort's remaining ranks, counting from those directly subordinate to the tribune, included: primicerius, senator, ducenarius, centenarius, biarch, circitor, semissalis, eques/miles and tiro, i.e. recruit<sup>34</sup>. The most significant change Constantine is credited with concerned the radical separation of the powers held by military commanders from those held by civilian officials<sup>35</sup>. This change was accompanied by the rearrangement of the command structure. Beginning in the reign of Diocletian, the legion (as W. Treadgold points out), was headed by a prefect<sup>36</sup>. Under Constantine's reforms, the prefect was deprived of his military powers while sometimes retaining responsibility for the recruitment, supply and

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given, its soldiers rejoined their parent units. Over time, these cavalry units were maintained on a regular basis as rapid reaction forces: R.E. Dupuy, T.N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History: from 3500 B.C. to the Present*, New York 1986, p. 147–148; C. Zuckerman, *Armia...*, p. 175–176.

<sup>31</sup> Their status was lower than that of the soldiers belonging both to the *palatina* and to *comitatenses*: W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 149–157.

<sup>32</sup> However, it is worth noting that at least in the course of the 4th century, the *limitanei* were as professional as field army units (this applies to both the infantry and the cavalry) and were made up of full-time soldiers: K. Strobel, *Strategy and Army Structure between Septimius Severus and Constantine the Great*, [in:] *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. P. Erdkamp, Oxford 2007, p. 268; A.D. Lee, *The Army*, [in:] *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. XIII, *The Later Empire 337–425*, ed. A. Cameron, P. Garnsey, Cambridge 1998, p. 234. Some researchers point out that it was only in the 6th century that *limitanei* units lost most of their combat strength and transformed into local militias that were unable to repel any serious attack: P. Southern, K.R. Dixon, *The Late Roman Army*, New Haven–London 1996, p. 36; C. Zuckerman, *Armia...*, p. 170, 183.

<sup>33</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. I, p. 98–99; W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 106.

<sup>34</sup> A.K. Goldsworthy, *The Complete...*, p. 202.

<sup>35</sup> The first reforms in this direction were already undertaken by Diocletian, but the separation of the civil and military powers was limited to units organized at the provincial level: A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 608.

<sup>36</sup> W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 105. Interestingly, this applied both to the new legions (created by Diocletian) and to the older formations stationed on the border and consisting sometimes of only 500 people: H. Elton, *Warfare...*, p. 101.

other aspects of the legions' logistical support<sup>37</sup>. It is believed that the reform was launched as early as 312 and arose as one of the consequence of the dissolution of the Praetorian Guard<sup>38</sup>. Jones points out that those who were placed in charge of the army and held the ranks of *dux* and *magister* were recruited from among the tribunes, (i.e. soldiers who had previously commanded cohorts) while *praesides*, prefects and vicars were selected from the group of educated civilians<sup>39</sup>.

Officers with the rank of *magister* first took command of the imperial troops during the reign of Constantine. The emperor established separate positions for foot troops (*magister peditum*) and for cavalry (*magister equitum*)<sup>40</sup>. As Jones

<sup>37</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. I, p. 100; I. Łuś, *Żołnierze scholae palatinae – „nowi pretorianie” późnego cesarstwa*, VP 66 (36), 2016, p. 259–260. The separation of the military and civil powers that were held by the *praefectus praetorium* was probably not associated with the creation of new positions. It seems that in order to limit the power of the prefect, the tribunes, who had already been in charge of the cohorts and performed purely military functions, were elevated to a higher rank, while matters of administration were entrusted to the *magister officiorum*: A.E.R. Bock, *The Master of the Offices in the Later Roman and Byzantine Empires*, New York 1919, p. 60. This view dates long back in time. Jones was convinced that Constantine left some powers to the prefect, and the *magister officiorum* was elevated later. However, the office itself was created earlier, and the establishment of it aimed to limit the influence of the praetorium prefect: [A. Kądziało], *Magister officiorum*, [in:] ODB, p. 1267. It is also worth noting that the process of weakening the role of the praetorium prefect did not proceed without obstacles. For example, in the East the office regained some of its jurisdiction and in 395 Arcadius (or rather Rufinus) again took away some of its prerogatives, including those regarding authority over the *scholae palatinae*: Ch. Kelly, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire*, Cambridge 2004, p. 208. The process of forming the scope of authority of the office of *magister officiorum* ended in the East only in 443. For more on the evolution of the competences of the praetorium prefect, see: S. Olszaniec, *Comites consistoriani w wieku IV. Studium prozopograficzne elity dworskiej cesarstwa rzymskiego 320–395 n.e.*, Toruń 2007, p. 31.

<sup>38</sup> S. Bingham, *The Praetorian Guard: A History of Rome's Elite Special Forces*, New York 2013, p. 37–39; M. Grant, *The Army of the Caesars*, New York 1974, p. 217–220; I. Łuś, *Żołnierze...*, p. 253, 259. Members of the Praetorian Guard are considered to have been treated with clemency, since they were allowed to continue serving in order to achieve veteran status, although they were to serve outside Italy: R.H. Cowan, *Roman Guardsman 62 BC–AD 324*, Oxford 2014, p. 60.

<sup>39</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. I, p. 101. Although in exceptional cases a *dux* commanded soldiers from several provinces, Constantine decided that the commanders would have only military prerogatives. The emperor stated that the civil and military power required different talents and education. See also: B. Campbell, *The Roman...*, p. 233.

<sup>40</sup> More about the mentioned positions in the army and the changes they were subjected to can be found in: M. Whitby, *Army and Society in the Late Roman World: A Context for Decline?*, [in:] *A Companion to the Roman Army...*, p. 515–531. See also: Y. Böhre, *L'Armée Romaine sous le Bas-Empire*, Paris 2006, p. 256; C. Zuckerman, *Armia...*, p. 180; A. Kaldellis, M. Kruse, *The Field Armies...*, p. 3.

points out, none of the surviving sources contain direct references confirming that either *comitatenses* or the above-mentioned positions existed already during Constantine's reign. However, such references are found with regard to the reigns of his successors<sup>41</sup>. It can be safely assumed that both Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans I were all in possession of their own *comitatenses* armies and that they preserved the structure given to this type of unit by their father<sup>42</sup>. It was also while Constantine's sons were in power that the position of *comites rei militaris* first arrived<sup>43</sup>. A commander with this rank was sometimes appointed to the area that had already been attached to the dux, which could indicate that he was superior in authority to the latter and that he coordinated the actions of several commanders operating in their respective provinces<sup>44</sup>.

However, this was not an end to the changes in question, as over time, the *comitatenses* armies underwent further divisions. As scholars point out, following the reunification of the empire by Constantius, the troops that constantly accompanied the emperor began to be distinguished from the rest of the field units<sup>45</sup>. This

<sup>41</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. I, p. 97.

<sup>42</sup> The size of the army of the imperial successors of Constantine the Great remains a controversial issue. Taking into account various estimates, it numbered from approximately 410,000 to 581,000 soldiers: H. Elton, *Warfare...*, p. 120; W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 60–62; L.I. Ree-Petersen, *Siege...*, p. 49. Taking into account Zosimus' account, the *comitatenses* mobilized for the war against Maxentius numbered 98,000 people: Zosimus, II, 15. The previously mentioned Elton convincingly proves that field formations in the times of Constantine the Great could not have amounted to more than 1/4 of all the empire's troops. These estimates seem to be based on reliable grounds, although over time the proportion shifted in favour of the *comitatenses*. This can be seen, for example, in *Notitia dignitatum*. This source shows that the strength of the field armies in the East was approximately 100,000 people: W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 65; A. Kaldellis, M. Kruse, *The Field Armies...*, p. 4–5.

<sup>43</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 1090. Originally, they were to command the armies of *comitatenses*. Due to the specific challenges faced by emperors in the West, it was in this part of the empire that there were a greater number of commanders of the above-mentioned rank. They seem to have been the military equivalent of the civil official overseeing a single diocese: H. Elton, *Warfare...*, p. 201.

<sup>44</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 610. In the light of more recent literature, there is no doubt that *comes rei militaris*'s position was superior to that held by the dux, although he was also subject to magisters (both those in the rank of *equitum* and *peditum*): M.P.S. Gomez, *Constantine...*, p. 483. Interestingly, although commanders with the rank of *comes rei militaris* commanded forces ranging from the size of a new legion to the size of a field army, they usually commanded forces consisting of *comitatenses*, because the *limitanei* troops remained under the authority of the dux: A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 1090; A. Kaldellis, M. Kruse, *The Field Armies...*, p. 6–7.

<sup>45</sup> According to the content of the *Notitia Dignitatum*, most of the forces of *comitatenses* in *praesenti* had the status of *palatini*, and only a small part of them were regional *comitatenses*, with

process can be seen through the prism of the new positions established for significantly the *comitatenses* that remained at the ruler's direct and constant disposal, as they were supposed to be commanded by *magister militum peditum* and *magister equitum in praesenti*<sup>46</sup>. Depending on whether the soldiers belonged to the troops at the emperor's disposal or to the field army units stationed in the vulnerable parts of the empire, they were called *palatina* or *comitatenses*, respectively<sup>47</sup>. The first category included the soldiers of the former legions and *vexillationes*, as well as the *auxilia* units established by Constantine the Great. The rest made up the provincial field armies, constituting a reserve to be used in support of the *limitanei*<sup>48</sup>. There was clearly a difference in prestige between these two categories of troops. However, their distinction was based not on the quality of training or combat effectiveness, but on the fact that *comitatenses* were usually stationed far from the capital while *palatina* remained closer to the emperor<sup>49</sup>.

As W. Treadgold rightly notes, 50 years after Constantine's reforms, there was a strong tendency to strengthen field armies, at the expense of weakening the *limes* troops. Although some sources view Constantine the Great as basically responsible for this process, the blame actually lies to a much greater extent with his successors<sup>50</sup>. After Constantine's sons shared the field armies among them-

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lower prestige. It is also worth noting that eventually both *palatini* and *comitatenses* in the East became, over time, the nucleus of the thematic armies in later Byzantium: W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 37–41. For more on the organization of field armies, especially in the eastern part of the empire, see: I. Ben jamin, *The Limits of Empire: the Roman Army in the East*, Oxford 1992, p. 161–171, 213–218. In turn, L.I. Ree-Petersen points out that in the East, an important component in the creation of these were the remnants of private armies of bookkeepers who were looking for a source of income after their employers lost the ability to support them: L.I. Ree-Petersen, *Siege...*, p. 62.

<sup>46</sup> H. Elton, *Warfare...*, p. 94; A. Kaldellis, M. Kruse, *The Field Armies...*, p. 3–4. The remaining armies of the *comitatenses* were to be commanded by commanders with the rank of *comes*.

<sup>47</sup> For example, in the East, within the field army, 13 units were classified as *palatini* and 57 as regular *comitatenses* or *pseudocomitatenses*: C. Zuckerman, *Armia...*, p. 176.

<sup>48</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 608–610. It is worth noting here that the above-mentioned system remained flexible and *de facto* strengthened, not weakened, the border troops, contrary to the allegations of some chroniclers unfavourable to Constantine, such as Zosimus.

<sup>49</sup> C. Zuckerman emphasizes that the *palatini* should not be identified with the palace guard, because this role was first performed by *scholae* and later by *excubites*: C. Zuckerman, *Armia...*, p. 176. A trace of the above-mentioned process may be the organization of field armies in the East, two of which had the character of a permanent reserve placed at the emperor's disposal, and the others were of a regional nature and were stationed in critical points of the empire, such as Illyria, Thrace or the broadly understood east of the country.

<sup>50</sup> See: Zosimus, II, 34, 2–4.



selves, the desire to strengthen each one of them separately was only natural<sup>51</sup>. The hybrid system which eventually arose divided the imperial army into two categories of troops: those who were stationed on the border and those who served as a mobile reserve to be used in response to sudden threats<sup>52</sup>. It is worth noting that over time, field troops were also distributed in such a way as to be able, on the one hand, to quickly react to a possible (but still local) threat and, on the other, to preserve the combat readiness and the ability to quickly concentrate in the event of a large-scale invasion<sup>53</sup>.

Interestingly, the process of the stratification of the army affected not only the field units, but also the *limitanei*. Pertaining to the second half of the 4th century are also the first references regarding *pseudocomitatenses* units, (i.e. limes soldiers who were supposed to form units fighting side by side with the regular field army in the event of an emergency)<sup>54</sup>. As can be inferred from their pay, which was lower than that of *comitatenses* and *palatina*<sup>55</sup>, their status was also lower. The creation of these units can be interpreted to indicate difficulties in replenishing the losses suffered by the regular army in the course of the 4th century<sup>56</sup>. It also remains related to the problem of recruiting soldiers into federated units (*foederati*), especially with regard to the Western Roman Empire.

<sup>51</sup> W. Treadgold, *Bizancjum...*, p. 26–27. As C. Zuckerman points out, the final division of the army into two parts took place in 364 after the conclusion of the lost war with Persia: C. Zuckerman, *Armia...*, p. 169.

<sup>52</sup> The total forces of the *comitatenses* were divided into the units of *palatini* and those of ordinary *comitatenses*. The strategy mentioned above envisaged that in the event of a serious external threat, the first line of defense would be *limitanei* formations, and if they were defeated, the weakened enemy would have to fight another battle against field armies: R. Collins, *Hadrian's Wall and the End of Empire: The Roman Frontier in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, New York 2012, p. 36–37; C. Zuckerman, *Armia...*, p. 173. Some researchers also point out that while the *limitanei* forces were supposed to guard the borders, the *comitatenses* already existed deep inside the empire and their task was also to defend the most important cities, in the event of the limes being broken: N.D. Kontogiannis, *Byzantine...*, p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> A side effect of this solution was a relatively long time of army concentration when it was necessary to gather large forces. This was the case, for example, during the war against Persia in 502.

<sup>54</sup> E. Nisicher, *The Army Reforms of Diocletian and Constantine and Their Modifications up to the Time of the Notitia Dignitatum*, JRS 13, 1923, p. 5.

<sup>55</sup> A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman...*, vol. II, p. 626. It is worth noting that the nominal remuneration of *palatini* and *comitatenses* was the same.

<sup>56</sup> For example, in the Battle of Mursa in 351, between the usurper and murderer of Constantine, Magnentius, and Constantius, nearly 50,000 soldiers were killed on both sides. The authors of the sources note that it was one of the bloodiest fratricidal confrontations between the Romans, and the lost troops could have been successfully used to defend the borders or conduct an offensive campaign against the enemies of the empire: Eutropius, X, 12. Constantius needed another ten months to recover from the costly victory: P. Crawford, *Constantius II:*