

Michael Zerjadtke: *Das Amt ›Dux‹ in Spätantike und frühem Mittelalter. Der ›ducatus‹ im Spannungsfeld zwischen römischem Einfluss und eigener Entwicklung.* Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2019 (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 110). IX, 421 p., 17 maps. € 119.95/\$ 137.99/£ 109.00. ISBN 978-3-11-062267-6.

Michael Zerjadtke's book on the late antique 'dux' is a study on a topic that has been long overdue. While the administrative and military structures as well as the officials of the late antique period have been part of many modern studies (for instance in studies on the *Notitia Dignitatum*), so far we lack an in-depth analysis of the position of 'duces', who emerged both as officials in the late Roman military and administration as well as an important leading position within the various emerging kingdoms in the West. While the late Roman 'duces' in the service of the Roman imperial government play a role throughout this study, they merely loom large in the background as a given. At the core of Zerjadtke's analysis are the 'duces' who by the author are called 'gentile duces' (5) in German. In other words, Zerjadtke focuses on the 'duces' who emerged among the Alemanni, the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, the Vandals, the Burgundians, the Franks and the Langobards once they established their rule.¹ While modern scholars have certainly published on internal political structures of these various peoples and their kingdoms, so far a comparative study on 'duces' as an office that emerged within all the kingdoms has been lacking.

At the outset of his analysis, Zerjadtke emphasizes that he will deliberately step away from our traditional and artificial chronological boundaries between the ancient and medieval worlds. While chronologically ending around A.D. 600, Zerjadtke aims to analyze the primary evidence regarding 'duces', without being influenced by our modern and traditional notions of late antique changes and continuity. That is not to say that change and continuity do not play a role within his study. On the contrary, these opposing processes are omnipresent.

1 For the remainder of this review I will distinguish between the two different types of 'duces' by adding the adjective 'Roman' when referring to the Roman duces who functioned within the late Roman administrative structures.

Two questions are woven into all the chapters of the book. First, there is the issue of the meaning of the role and position of 'duces'. Was 'dux' considered to be an office within an official administrative hierarchy or a function that could be employed depending on the particular needs of a people or a kingdom? Is it possible to draw general conclusions that are applicable to all kingdoms, or did each kingdom have its own development of a 'dux'? Second, to what extent can we discern a continuity between the Roman 'duces' and the 'duces' of the newly established kingdoms? As becomes clear from Zerjadtke's detailed overview of previous scholarship on 'duces' in his introduction, modern scholars of the past decades have been proposing different views on both these questions. Some have a strong preference for the assumption that the newly established kingdoms in the West took over the office of 'duces' from the Romans, even though they might have transformed the office. Others have adopted the view that the new kingdoms set up the position *ex novo*. Overall, there is agreement in past scholarship that there were clear differences in the way 'duces' functioned in the various kingdoms.

The core of the book is taken up by the chapters three, four, five and six. In these, Zerjadtke first zooms in on the appearance of 'duces' among the various peoples while they were wandering into the western territories of the Roman Empire. Notably no 'duces' are mentioned in the sources on the Alemanni and Burgundians, but 'reges' seems to have been a more common term used for their leaders. In regards to the Goths, Langobards and Franks, Zerjadtke points to a clear break in their usage of the term 'duces'. As long as these groups were on the move 'dux' appears as a term for their leader. However, once they became settled and created kingdoms, 'dux' was used mostly for the leader of the military who was subordinate to the king.

Second, Zerjadtke examines in great detail each kingdom, or 'Territorialreich' as he calls them, in order to map out the evidence for all the 'duces' that have appeared in the sources. The analyses demonstrate clearly that each kingdom had its own specific circumstances which led to slightly different positions for 'duces'. Nevertheless, an overall lack of sources often impedes a conclusive understanding on many of the 'duces' as well. Zerjadtke is able to demonstrate that in the case of the settlement of the Visigoths, the Ostrogoths, the Langobards and the Franks their kings decided to separate their military duties from their other duties. Even though each kingdom might develop its own particularities for their military leader, they all called the

military leader a 'dux'. One might thus argue that in the case of these four kingdoms we can discern a transition of the 'dux' into an official top military office directly subordinate to the king.

As for the issue of continuity between the Roman period and that of the kingdoms in the West, it is difficult, if not impossible, to establish a continuity between the Roman 'duces' and the 'duces' of the newly created kingdoms of the west. It often remains unclear to what extent new peoples moving into Roman territory and settling there would take over Roman structures of administering and existing types of officials.

The author should be complemented for his in-depth presentation of the many different types of sources on 'duces', accompanied by a series of rich footnotes which is valuable for other scholars who would like to dig deeper into this topic. Overall, 'duces' as the prime focus of analysis in this book has demonstrated that it is important to analyze each kingdom in its own right. As Zerjadtke rightfully states himself at the end of his study, a possible next step for future scholarship would be a comparative study between possible influence of the kingdoms on each other. In our studies on the Late antique world of the fifth century in the West we tend to draw comparisons between the old Roman structures and those in the individual kingdoms, but it could indeed be very fruitful to examine among the new kingdoms. In conclusion, Zerjadtke's work on the 'dux' is a welcome and much needed addition to the existing scholarship on late antique and early medieval officials and administrative structures.

Daniëlle Sloomjes, Radboud University Nijmegen
Radboud Institute for Culture and History
Department of History, Art History and Classics
d.sloomjes@let.ru.nl

www.plekos.de

Empfohlene Zitierweise

Daniëlle Sloomjes: Rezension zu: Michael Zerjadtke: Das Amt ›Dux‹ in Spätantike und frühem Mittelalter. Der ›ducatus‹ im Spannungsfeld zwischen römischem Einfluss und eigener Entwicklung. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2019 (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 110). In: Plekos 22, 2020, 297–299 (URL: <http://www.plekos.uni-muenchen.de/2020/r-zerjadtke.pdf>).
