Ruling an Empire in a Changing World: The Origin, Impact, and Reception of the *Notitia Dignitatum*



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Ruling an Empire in a Changing World

The Origin, Impact, and Reception of the *Notitia Dignitatum*

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Cover: Notitia Dignitatum: *Comes Italiae* from MS W, fol. 214v

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Hannsjörg Ubl†

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The Main Manuscripts Containing the *Notitia Dignitatum*

C Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, ms. 86-1972

O Oxford, The Bodleian Library, western ms. 19854 - Canonici ms. misc. lat. 378, (fol.88v-170r)

P Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin ms. 9661, (fol.72r-146v)

V Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Barberini lat. 157, (fol.91r-172v)

M München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Clm. 10291: codex 1 = fol.1-170, (fol.88r-169v)

W München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, ms. Clm. 10291: codex 2 = fol.171-222, (fol.178v-222v)

Preface

The present volume has its origins in the international conference *Ruling an Empire in a Changing World. Studies on Origin, Impact, and Reception of the Notitia Dignitatum*, held at the University of Freiburg from 20 to 23 November 2019. The conference brought together scholars from different disciplines and academic traditions to discuss one of the most remarkable, complex, and at times elusive sources for the study of the later Roman Empire.

Few documents offer such a broad – and at the same time challenging – perspective on the structures of the late Roman state as the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Its combination of administrative and military lists, geographical information, institutional hierarchies, and an extraordinary programme of illustrations has made it an indispensable source for generations of scholars. At the same time, questions concerning its compilation, chronology, purpose, transmission, and reliability continue to invite debate. Understanding the *Notitia* therefore requires perspectives that extend well beyond the boundaries of any single discipline.

This was the starting point of the Freiburg conference and remains the guiding principle of the present volume. The contributions approach the *Notitia Dignitatum* from a wide range of perspectives, addressing its document and transmission history, its illustrations and visual language, its value for the study of the late Roman military, the organisation and defence of the Empire's frontiers, and questions of administrative structures and geography. Together, they demonstrate both the exceptional potential of the *Notitia* as a historical source and the methodological caution required when attempting to interpret it.

The years between the conference and the publication of this volume were longer and, in several respects, more eventful than we could have anticipated when we met in Freiburg in November 2019. We are therefore particularly grateful to all contributors for their patience, their continued commitment to the project, and their willingness to revise and prepare their papers for publication. The resulting volume is not intended to provide a final word on the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Rather, we hope that it reflects the productive diversity of approaches represented at the conference and provides new impulses for the continuing discussion of this unique document and the world in which it originated.

Our sincere thanks go to all those who made the conference and this publication possible: to the speakers and participants for the stimulating discussions in Freiburg; to the institutions and individuals who supported the organisation of the conference – particularly to the department for Archaeology of the Roman Provinces at the University of Freiburg; and to all those who assisted in the preparation of the manuscript, especially to Eliano Veronesi, whose help in creating the bibliography was invaluable. We are also grateful to Archaeopress for accepting the volume into the *Archaeopress Roman Archaeology* series and for guiding it through the publication process.

Finally, we would like to thank the contributors once again for bringing together the different perspectives represented in this book. We hope that the volume will not only contribute to a better understanding of the *Notitia Dignitatum* itself, but also encourage further discussion of what this extraordinary document can – and cannot – tell us about ruling, administering, and defending the Roman Empire in a changing world.

The Editors