It is inevitable that from the 6th through to the 13th centuries the army of the East Roman Empire underwent significant transformations. These were the consequence of changes in the political, economic and social structures of the empire, as well as of developments in the wider political and military context. Nonetheless, the sources indicate the existence of elements of continuity in the structure of the imperial army. Taking into account the political, military and social developments in the wider Byzantine world, this paper examines the continuities and transformations in the structure of the military forces of the East Roman Empire up to 1204.

The military organization of the Byzantine Empire has attracted insufficient attention in the modern scholarship and is in many respects still an underdeveloped field. Works devoted entirely to the army are rare. As far as the military history of the later Roman Empire up to the 6th century is concerned, most of the conclusions of the work of A.H.M Jones are still valid, although some details require revision. More recently, the monograph published by M.J. Nicasie examines the structure of the late Roman army from the reign of Diocletian until the battle of Adrianople in 378 where the eastern Roman army was crushed by the Goths. The monograph published by H. Elton in 1997 examines the fighting techniques and effectiveness of the late Roman armies in the West from 350 until 425 and includes an analysis of the military structures of the empire. The work published by A.D. Lee in 2007 focuses on the impact and effects of war on the state and society of the later Roman Empire. In addition to these, a significant number of articles published in recent years have contributed significantly to our understanding of the structure and administration of the imperial army. The works of J. Haldon shed important light on the study of the military structures from the 7th to the 12th century. Important sources include:

1 Jones, The Later Roman Empire, 2, pp. 607-686; Nicasie, Twilight of empire; Elton, Warfare in Roman Europe; Lee, War in Late Antiquity.
information concerning the evolution of the army in the 10th century can be found in the work of H.-J. Kühn, while the book published by W. Treadgold in 1995 which covers the period from the 3rd to the 11th centuries focuses more on pay and numbers.\(^3\) Important conclusions concerning the Byzantine army in the 12th century can be found in the work of A. Hohlweg, while the monograph published by J. Birkenmeier focuses on tactics and the fighting capabilities of the Comnenian armies.\(^4\)

1 From Constantine to Justinian

The army Constantine commanded when he was proclaimed emperor by the troops of his father, the Tetrarch Constantius I, in 306 was the creation of the reforms of the emperor Diocletian (284-305). Most of army was stationed along the frontiers, while each of the Tetrarchs was in command of a standing field army, the *comitatus*. The establishment of four standing armies enabled the empire to respond simultaneously to threats on four fronts. For instance, in the last years of the 3rd century, Constantius was defending the frontier along the Rhine against the Franks, Maxentius was in Africa, Galerius invaded the Persians through Syria and Diocletian was in Egypt suppressing a revolt.\(^5\)

It has been suggested that during the Tetrarchy the *comitatus* was made up of legions of 5,000 men divided into ten cohorts.\(^6\) Nonetheless, for important operations the field army needed to be reinforced either by detachments drawn from the frontier zones, or by foreign troops, usually referred to as *foederati* or *auxilia*.\(^7\) These were supplied under treaty by tribes in alliance with the empire and served under their own leaders for specific expeditions.\(^8\) In the recent past, the increasing employment of such units of barbarians in the Roman army has been seen as detrimental to the affairs of the empire. It was suggested that it weakened the Roman army to the point of its being unable to


\(^4\) Hohlweg, *Beiträge zur Verwaltungsgeschichte des Oströmischen Reiches unter den Komnenen*; Birkenmeier, *The Development of the Komnenian Army*.


\(^7\) For the *foederati* see Stickler, “The *foederati*”, pp. 532-56.