

Roman Provincial Government

The Roman Empire was made up of several geographic territories called provinces. Each province fell under the control of a provincial governor. There were 3 types of provinces and several classifications of governor. In 180 AD Provincial governors were still mainly drawn from the Senate. The provincial types were broken down as follows:

Imperial Provinces Governed by Senators

The emperor was the Proconsul of all provinces with any significant military force, with the exceptions of Africa and Aegyptus. In 180 AD there appears to have been 28 Imperial provinces. Those provinces with at least one legion stationed in them had a senatorial governor called a *Legatus Propraetore Augusti* (imperial legate of praetorian rank). The imperial governors were technically below the level of a senatorial proconsul and had five lictors instead of six.

This formal distinction had no real significance since the legate was the representative of the governor, but officially they were lower in rank because they were subordinates of the Emperor, who was theoretically the actual governor. In provinces with one legion, the legate in charge of the province (normally of praetorian rank) also controlled the legion himself. In provinces with more than one legion, like the Germanies, Syria and Cappadocia, each legion was commanded by its own legate of praetorian rank, while the province as a whole was commanded by a legate of consular rank who could dictate general control over the entire army stationed there. These governorships were completely at the whim of the Emperor and could serve anywhere from 1 to 5 years.

Imperial Provinces Governed by Equestrians

The Emperor also had under his control a number of smaller, but potentially difficult provinces that did not need an entire legion. These provinces were put under the control of governors of equestrian status. Under the early Empire their title was *Praefectus* like that of the governor of Egypt, but later the title became procurator. New conquests generally fell into this equestrian category but most were later changed in status to reflect varying conditions in Roman control. Like the other Imperial provinces, the governors could serve any length of time up to 5 years or longer.

Much like the Senatorial province of Africa, the equestrian province of Aegyptus was an exception to the rule of Legions stationed only in Imperial provinces. Egypt was not a normal province like any other. It was considered the personal possession of the Emperor and the governor, the *Praefectus Aegypti* was considered the highest ranking equestrian post during the early empire. Later, the post would fall second to that of the *Praetorian* command, but its position was still very prestigious.

Duties of the Governor

The governor of any Roman province had four major tasks.

Taxes and financial concerns: As the emperor's personal, or the Senate's financial agent, he had to supervise the local authorities and the private tax collectors. A governor could mint coins and negotiate with wealthy institutions like temples and money-lenders that could advance the money.

Chief accountant: He inspected the books of major cities and various operations and supervised large scale building projects.

The province's supreme judge: The governor had the sole right to inflict the death penalty and capital cases were normally tried before him. Appeal was not impossible, but getting to Rome and an audience with the Emperor was expensive. Appeal was unlikely to change matters anyway, as a Governor wouldn't generally take the chance of convicting someone who the Emperor would not like to be convicted. The governor was also supposed to travel through the main districts of his province to administer justice in the major towns.

Commanded an army: In the more important provinces, this could consist of legions; but elsewhere, there were only auxiliaries. As a part of his standing orders, the governor had the authority to use his legion to stamp out organized brigands in the area without need for Imperial approval.

Every governor had at his disposal a various number of advisers and staff, who were known as his *comites* ('companions'), the number depending on his social standing and rank. Military Legates relied heavily upon their *Tribunus Augusticlavii* and others could have Senatorial Quaestors or non magistrate Procurators.