

Social Standing and Its Impact on Careers

2.1 Introduction

The most obvious divisions in senatorial society were not based on caste. Instead they reflected success in gaining magistracies, with consuls at the top, followed by praetors and the junior ranks.¹ The consulship was treated as conferring ‘nobilitas’, which extended to a man’s descendants.² But patrician status took privilege even further, as did the major priesthoods.

There were also important structural divisions, at the start of the senatorial career. These were incorporated in the initial post, the vigintivirate, held at about the age of twenty.³ The four parallel posts evidently mirrored the social spectrum within the aristocracy, and had noticeable effects on later success.⁴ First in the hierarchy were the three monetales (or ‘triumviri aere argento auro flando feriundo’). Below them were the ten iudices (or ‘decemviri stlitibus iudicandis’), followed by the four viocuri (or ‘quattuorviri viarum curandarum’) and the three capitales (‘triumviri

¹ Cicero specifies the first two groups: ‘illos ego praestantissimos viros lumina reipublicae vivere volebam, tot consulares, tot praetorios, tot honestissimos senatores’ (*Phil.* 2.37) (‘It was these most eminent men, the luminaries of the state, that I wished to preserve alive, so many consulars, so many ex-praetors, so many most honourable senators.’) Pliny’s Letters have 18 mentions of ‘consularis’ and 17 of ‘praetorius’. And when a praetor was accused of murdering his wife, Tiberius himself went to inspect the scene of the crime (*Tac. Ann.* 4.22).

² Chapter 1, n. 10. Pliny *Pan.* 70.2: ‘cur . . . deterior esset condicio eorum qui posteros habere nobiles mererentur quam eorum qui parentes habuissent’ seems to show that the Emperor could still create new ‘nobiles’ (‘why should the condition of those who deserve to have noble descendants be inferior to that of those whose parentage makes them noble?’). But the term is very rare, and it overlaps with the use of ‘nobilis’ in a more general sense. Cf. Hill 1969; Badel 2005: 65–9.

³ Recorded ages of vigintiviri are 18, 20, 20, 21 and 21 (*PIR* L 32, I 439, I 266 and S 140). Two men who died at 23 had also served as military tribune, typically a 2-year assignment (*PIR* V 297, *PIR* 2 S 700; for the duration of tribunates, see Appendix 3).

⁴ See Appendix 1.1, Tables 2.2 and 2.3 and text. There was no rigid rule, and members of the same family might belong to different vigintivir colleges. Domitius Lucanus was viocurus, but his younger brother Tullus was a iudex. Both were adlected as patricians by Vespasian (nos. 181, 182). Similarly, Minicius Natalis I was a viocurus, but his son was a monetalis (consuls in 106 and 139, nos. 253, 254). There was a visible progression in both cases.

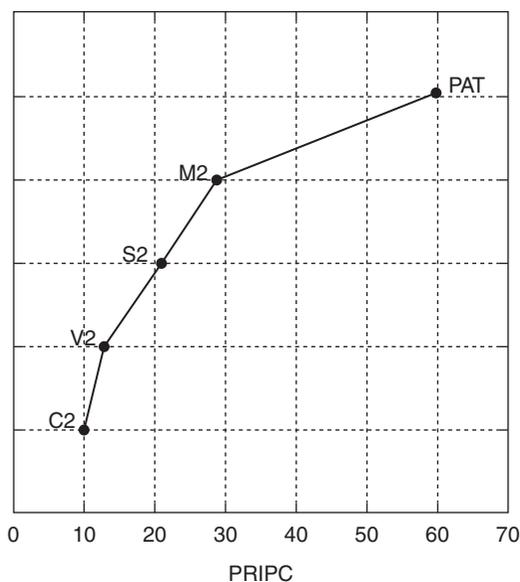


Figure 2.1 Access to major priesthoods: percentage who hold a major priesthood (for social categories, see Table 2.1)

capitales').⁵ To be a *monetalis* placed a man at the top of the tree as a *vigintivir*.

In view of the social distinctions seen in Figure 2.1, it is very unlikely that being allotted to a particular college was based on an assessment of career potential, although this has been suggested.⁶ Nevertheless, the *viocuri* stand out for their very active role (see Section 2.4), although this did not transform their social position, as seen in the priesthood hierarchy (Fig. 2.1).

The social standing of the different groups was largely reflected in their access to patrician rank (Table 2.2). Only the *monetales* have a majority of patricians, the other large patrician bloc being in the *iudices*. The figure for *capitales* is anomalous, but this group rose dramatically in status in the third century, and three of its four patricians belong to this period.⁷

⁵ The shorter forms are used here for convenience. For their contemporary use, see *ILS* 1175; 1185 (*triumvir monetalis*); *CIL* VI 41234; *AE* 1964, 178 (*viocurus*). For *viocuri* named as such, see also Christol 1986: 317.

⁶ Birley 1988: 80–1 in an otherwise important and seminal article (cf. also Alföldy 1975: 291–2). For scepticism, see Campbell 1975: 18 and Dobson 1993a: 192.

⁷ See nos. 140, 352 and 367. Chapter 7, p. 78. See also Appendix 1, p. 154. Plebeian *capitales* are well below other *vigintiviri* in their percentage of consulships (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.1 *Totals by social group*

	Total	Percent
1. All patricians (PAT)	81	15
2. Plebeian monetales (M ₂)	31	6
3. Plebeian iudices (S ₂)	174	31
4. Plebeian viocuri (V ₂)	70	13
5. Plebeian capitales (C ₂)	39	7
6. Plebeian non-vigintiviri (NOV)	134	24
7. Senators from the militiae (MIL)	28	5
TOTAL	557	

Table 2.2 *The distribution of patricians*

	Patricians	Percent
Monetales	48/79	61
Iudices	18/192	9
Viocuri	2/72	3
Capitales	4/43	9
Non-vigintiviri	9/143	6
Militiae	0/28	0

Patrician rank over-rode every other attribute, and placed the holder on a higher social level, as emerges from office-holding patterns studied in Section 2.2. And the numerous career senators with no vigintivirate formed a further social group. These in turn were separate from the few promoted from the equestrian militiae.⁸ Thus the status hierarchy contained seven categories (Table 2.1).

⁸ For the non-vigintiviri (abbreviated here as 'NOV'), see Appendix 2. For senators and the militiae, see also Section 10.1.2. Senators began to be adlected from the militiae very early (see Dio 52.25.6), and from admittedly small samples, their numbers appear stable at 5% over the three periods (see Table 7.3). For first century praetors with this background, see nos. 517, 582, 599, 605, 312 (also consul). In Epictetus's imaginary example (4.1.33–40), the manumitted slave dissatisfied with merely being free obtains the gold rings of the eques, serves the three militiae and then enters the Senate. For transitions from slavery to the senate, see Section 14.3.1.

2.2 Priesthoods, Consulships and Career Scores

The major priesthoods and the consulship also provide important indexes of social standing (Table 2.3). The priesthoods show a continuous descending hierarchy in the first five categories, with patricians far above the rest, holding more than twice as many priesthoods as anyone else. They also far outstrip other groups in the consulship. The priesthood quotients for the first five groups are continuously graded (Fig. 2.1). Although less steep, the sequence is the same in terms of career scores and consulships, except that men in the fourth category, the *viocuri*, are higher than expected. Their career score ranks second, and their consulship figure is third in the first five places (see Table 2.3).

The non-*vigintiviri* and the *militiae* men fall outside the orthodox career structure.⁹ Perhaps surprisingly, they are second only to the patricians in their career scores. Both also hold consulships in quite large numbers, falling behind when it comes to priesthoods.

The close relationship between access to priesthoods and social standing extended even further, with the importance of the individual priesthood reflected in the average social score.¹⁰ The priesthoods were, in order of precedence, *pontifex*, *augur*, *quindecimvir sacris faciundis* and *septemvir*

Table 2.3 *Priesthoods, consulships and career scores*

GROUP	Consuls	Percent	Major priesthoods	Percent	Career score (av.)
1. Patricians (PAT)	59/81	73	49	60	9.2
2. Plebeian <i>monetales</i> (M2)	15/31	48	9	29	7.5
3. Plebeian <i>iudices</i> (S2)	66/174	38	36	21	7.1
4. Plebeian <i>viocuri</i> (V2)	31/70	44	9	13	7.7
5. Plebeian <i>capitales</i> (C2)	12/39	31	4	10	6.6
6. Plebeian non- <i>vigintiviri</i> (NOV)	52/134	39	16	12	7.8
7. <i>Militiae</i> (MIL)	13/28	46	3	11	8.4

⁹ Table 2.2 lines 6–7.

¹⁰ For social scoring, see Appendix 1, Table A1. The coding is as follows: patricians 7; plebeian *monetales* (M2) 6; plebeian *iudices* (S2) 5; plebeian *viocuri* (V2) 4; plebeian *capitales* (C2) 3; plebeian non-*vigintiviri* (NOV) 2; *militiae* (MIL) 1. The last two categories lie outside the conventional groupings, and are given lower social scores.

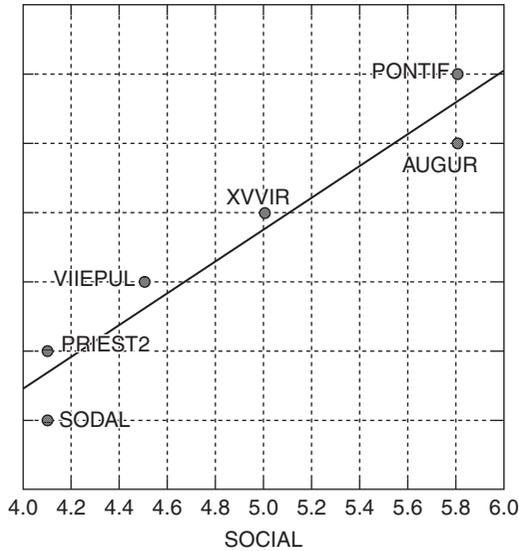


Figure 2.2 Priesthood and average social score
(for social scores see Appendix 1; 'Priest2' comprises fetial, curio, Arval, lupercus and sodalis Titius)

epulonum, followed by sodales of the Imperial cult and secondary priest-hoods such as fetiales.¹¹ For the results, see Fig. 2.2.¹²

2.3 The Patricians

As the pre-eminent social group, the patricians require separate treatment. Not all belonged to the same vigintivir college (see Section 2.3.2).¹³ But college affiliations mattered less at this level (Table 2.2, with 2.5).¹⁴

¹¹ *Tac.Ann.* 3.64. The Emperors belonged ex-officio to all four major priestly colleges, shown in order of precedence in Julio-Claudian inscriptions (*ILS* 107, 160, 222(4)). Dio refers to them as 'the four priesthoods' (53.1.5 and 58.12.5). Fetials, Arvals, curiones, luperci and sodales Titii are classified here as 'secondary priesthoods'. See also Appendix 6.

¹² There was some overlap, because it was possible to hold a mixture of priesthoods, even combining them with being sodalis in some cases. The figures shown include all major priests, together with the non-overlapping secondary priests and sodales.

¹³ Pistor 1965; Barbieri 1952: 479–93; Jacques 1986: 121–5 and 660–1.

¹⁴ It has been suggested that 'there were almost no practical differences between (patricians and plebeians) by the imperial period, but for reasons of religion and tradition emperors did seek to maintain and exalt a tiny group of patricians' (Talbert 1984: 526). But this is not borne out by the evidence, which shows distinct patrician career patterns. Fifteen percent of the career sample is patrician. Emperors drawn from the Senate were often patricians (Galba, Otho, Nerva, Trajan). See

The patricians of the Principate were mainly the creation of the Emperors, the old families having rapidly disappeared.¹⁵ But their privileges continued.

2.3.1 *Locating Patricians*

Although patricians formed an undoubted elite, inscriptions do not usually give their rank explicitly.¹⁶ The term 'patricius', which remains extremely rare in our period, evidently meant 'adlectus inter patricios', and thus only identified first-generation patricians.¹⁷ Half the patricians here were located through their tenure of the patrician priesthoods, whether salius or flamen.¹⁸ Fifteen others were adlected 'inter patricios'. The rest were identified through their lack of tribunate or aedileship (n=25).¹⁹ Patricians were of course never seen in these junior posts, and, at a more senior level, they did not hold the prefectures open to other ex-praetors (the two types of praefecti aerarii and the praefectus frumenti dandi).²⁰

2.3.2 *Patricians as Vigintiviri*

It is often maintained that patricians by birth normally became tresviri monetales, and that this was the rule from Vespasian to Severus Alexander.²¹ But three iudices who were certainly patrician, because salius or flamen, seem to be second century.²² The most privileged senators certainly gravitated to the upper echelons of the vigintivirate, but there were many exceptions. Among patricians by birth, monetales

also Christol 1986: 15, and Morris 1964: 336: 'the sessions of the senate . . . were overweighted by patricians'.

¹⁵ See n. 31.

¹⁶ Authors can be reticent here. Pliny mentions the patrician rank of (Pedanius) Fuscus Salinator, a young man he is promoting (*Ep.* 6.26). But this is his only explicit mention of patricians. The patrician rank of Domitius Tullus never emerges, despite Pliny's long letter devoted to his life and testamentary arrangements (no. 182; *Ep.* 8.18).

¹⁷ Barbieri 1952: 490–1; Christol 1986: 20 n. 37; Davenport 2015: 271–4.

¹⁸ The database contains 37 salii, including 1 rex sacrorum and 7 flamines, together with 4 flamines who were not salii. Five salii were adlected patricians.

¹⁹ See Mommsen *DP* II: 214 n. 4. This negative criterion is only effective in certain cases, and judgements by predecessors (n. 13) have been important here.

²⁰ The corn-prefects were appointed by lot (Dio 54.17.1), patricians apparently being excluded. See also Christol 1986: 18 and n. 30.

²¹ Groag 1896; Chastagnol 1992: 158; Alföldy 1975: 277 n. 41; Talbert 1984: 13; cf. Syme *RP* IV: 31 and 403. Christol 1986: 19–20 n. 37.

²² Nos. 66, 196 and 387, Appendix 7. See also Pistor 1965: 80–2 and Dessau 1913: 303 n. 2. For patrician decemviri in the Republic, see Mommsen *DP* IV: 317 n. 1.

emerge with 70% of the total, iudices with 20% and other colleges with 10%.²³ Iudices went on being adlected into the patriciate in all three periods, again showing that membership of the monetales was not essential.²⁴ In Period 1 the adlecti also included a capitalis and a viocurus.²⁵

It may seem surprising that about one-third of patricians failed to become monetalis when many others were able to do so. But even these patricians possessed considerable advantages: 47% of non-monetalis patricians held major priesthoods, against 29% of monetales who were not patrician (16/34 and 9/31). More than one-third of monetales were apparently non-patrician (31/79 or 39%).²⁶ Thus, there were probably enough places among the monetales for the patricians who actually went elsewhere.²⁷ Restriction by quota looks unlikely. Patricians by birth account for roughly half of the three annual places for monetales calculated here.²⁸ Evidently, the appointment of vigintiviri remained flexible, with some places in the highest college going to patricians, and others to well-connected plebeians. Patronage, usually invisible to us, was of course crucial here.²⁹ Imperial biographies readily explain early advancement as the work of particular patrons.³⁰ But no such traditions survive for most senators.

2.3.3 *Adlection to the Patriciate*

The men adlected 'inter patricios' were an integral part of the patrician body. There was a recurrent need to replace extinct patrician families, and the adlecti were simply first-generation patricians.³¹ The replacement

²³ The present figures are: 38 monetales; 11 iudices. 3 capitales (all third century, nos. 140, 352, 367); and a viocurus (no. 359). Of the 20 adlecti, 1 is not seen as a vigintivir, 10 are monetales, 7 iudices, 1 a viocurus and 1 a capitalis. A further nine patricians seem to lack any vigintivir post (nos. 457, 484, 490, 503, 561, 594, 595, 608 and 611).

²⁴ This has not been generally recognised (see e.g. Jacques 1983: 126). Nos. 182, 278 (period 1); 62, 164, 183, 277 (period 2); 138 (period 3). No. 111 (a 'patricius' in period 2) is probably an adlected patrician (see n. 17).

²⁵ Capitalis, no. 192; viocurus, no. 181.

²⁶ The only plebeian monetalis (M2) who is clearly later than the 160s is a proconsul of Macedonia under Severus Alexander (no. 134). The consular monetales between 168 and 270 are all patrician (nos. 356, 292, 295, 202, 243, 353, 270, 201, 142, 150, 350, 257). A further 4 from period 3 who are not closely dated bring the total to 16 (nos. 33, 118, 119, 161). But diversity continued, and 7 of the 16 vigintivir patricians by birth seen in period 3 were non-monetales (3 capitales, 3 iudices, 1 viocurus).

²⁷ Thirty-four, including 4 monetales not present in the database (see Appendix 4).

²⁸ Patricians by birth contribute 38 of the monetales (n. 23), who total 79 (38/39 = 48%). Adlection as a patrician normally came later than the vigintivirate.

²⁹ Saller 1982.

³⁰ HA *Did. Jul.* 1.4; *Had.* 2.2; *Sev.* 4.4; *Suet. Vitell.* 7.1; *Vesp.* 4.1. See also Section 5.1 with n. 7.

³¹ Badel 2007. For successive losses of patrician families, Chastagnol 1992: 157; Talbert 1984: 30–1. For their decline in the Julio-Claudian period, Lewis 1955: 162–3, 171–4.

process seems to have been intermittent, with new adlections only attested under certain Emperors. *Monetales* predominated here also (10/20), with the rest mainly *iudices* (7/20).

2.3.4 *Patrician Success Rates*

Most patricians seen here reached the consulship (Table 2.3), and in the highest posts they are far above their target of 15% (Tables 2.1 and 2.4, col. 1).³² By contrast, plebeian *iudices* (S2), the single biggest bloc of *vigintiviri*, are strongest at praetorian and junior levels (col. 2). Patricians are under-represented in the careers ending before the consulship, and their careers rarely end with a praetorian military post (Table 2.4, lines A–C). Thus, patrician praetors, unlike many of their plebeian colleagues, could usually count on receiving the consulship as well. The social scores for plebeian senators increase in the upper stages of the career, suggesting that aristocratic standing helped career performance even here (Table 2.4, lines D–E).³³

Table 2.4 *Patrician success rates*

Career–score	Patrician percent (n)	S2 percent(n)	Total	Social score (non-patricians)
A 1–4	10% (11)	44% (48)	109	4.4
B 5–6	10% (9)	27% (25)	92	3.2
C 7–8	2% (2)	33% (35)	107	3.3
D 9–1	23% (26)	28% (31)	112	3.6
E 11+	24% (33)	26% (35)	137	3.8

Note: The target percentages are 15% for patricians and 31% for plebeian *iudices* or S2 (81/557 and 174/557; Table 2.1). Scores 1–4: tribunate/aedileship and below. Scores 5–6: praetorship, curator viarum, praefectus frumenti, iuridicus. Scores 7–8: legionary legate, junior proconsul, praetorian legate-governor and praefectus aerarii. Scores 9–10: *suffect* and *ordinarius* consulships. Scores of 11 and above: consular legateships, senior proconsulship, *consul bis* and praefectus urbi. (For full details, see Appendix 1, Table A2.)

³² Patricians are 15% of the total sample (81/557).

³³ The high social score for careers ending at the tribunate or below suggests that with careers that ended early, the more aristocratic senators had a better chance of being commemorated.

2.3.5 The Patrician as Consul Ordinarius

Patricians had much better prospects of becoming consul ordinarius than other senators. Over half the patrician consuls in the career evidence achieved this distinction (32/60).³⁴ Plebeian consuls were mainly suffecti, with only 12% becoming ordinarius (22/188).³⁵

2.3.6 Patrician Priests

Patricians were required for priestly duties that only a patrician might perform.³⁶ Thus, under the lex Ogulnia of 300 BC, 5 pontifices were patrician, and 4 plebeian, with the same totals for augurs.³⁷ The patrician figure of 55% is close to the 51% for patrician pontifices and augurs seen here.³⁸

Patrician grip on the remaining major priesthoods was weaker (33% of quindecemviri and 17% of epulones).³⁹ About 16% of plebeians held a major priesthood.⁴⁰ Patricians held fewer of the secondary priesthoods such as fetial or Arval (in 4% of cases, against 8% for plebeian vigintiviri).⁴¹ But the salii and flamines were exclusively patrician. Almost half of their members also held major priesthoods.⁴² The sodales of the Emperor were appointed by lot, unlike other priests.⁴³ As a result, patrician and plebeian vigintiviri appear on equal terms here.⁴⁴

2.3.7 Patricians in Active Roles

It has been suggested that ‘the patrician senator never sees an army; he accedes to the fasces at 32 . . . and may not bother to leave Italy until the

³⁴ Chronology: Period 1: 41% (7/17); Period 2: 59% (13/22); and Period 3: 57% (12/21).

³⁵ From the career sample. Career inscriptions do not usually specify the type of consulship. The term ‘ordinarius’, although current centuries earlier in authors such as Livy, only emerges in inscriptions under the Severi (Davenport 2015: 270).

³⁶ Agricola’s career may illustrate the process. Adlected patrician in mid-career by Vespasian, Agricola was created pontifex a few years later when designated governor of Britain (*Tac.Agric.* 9).

³⁷ Scheid 2003: 134; Livy 10.6.6–8 with Oakley 1999: 88–92. Cf. *Tac.Ann.* 4.16.3.

³⁸ The present 58 individual pontifices and augurs include 30 patricians.

³⁹ 14/42 and 4/23 (omitting mixed cases). Three epulones were also salii, making their patrician rank certain, notwithstanding modern doubts about patrician eligibility for this priesthood (nos. 264, 353, 387; cf. Lewis 1955: 9).

⁴⁰ 77 out of 476.

⁴¹ Patricians: 3/81; other vigintiviri: 25/314 (excluding major priests and sodales).

⁴² 18 out of 37 men who were salii also held a major priesthood (one was also flamen; see Table 2.5 note). These 18 individuals have a mean career score of 10.2, against 7.3 for the remaining 19 salii.

⁴³ *Tac.Ann.* 1.54.2, cf. 3.64.

⁴⁴ Patricians 15% (12/81, almost all monetales (Table 2.5)); plebeian vigintiviri 16% (50/314). The non-vigintiviri appear to have 6% (8/134).

sortition . . . awards Asia or Africa 14 or 15 years later.⁴⁵ The patrician has also been depicted as a courtier of the Emperor, expected to stay in Rome for that reason.⁴⁶ Sometimes the patrician might accompany the Emperor on campaign, with the exalted title of ‘comes’. About one-third of *comites* here were patrician.⁴⁷ But the pull of the capital was certainly great, and patricians wishing to stay at home were clearly able to do so.

Nevertheless, about two-fifths of future consuls from the patriciate did hold posts outside Rome after the praetorship, much to their advantage (‘Group A’). Thus, 43% of patrician consuls (26/60) had already commanded a legion, governed an Imperial province, managed a trunk road in Italy, or served as proconsul’s legate (normally in Asia or Africa).⁴⁸ Members of this group achieved the highest posts considerably more often than their colleagues, whether by commanding an army as consular legate, governing Asia or Africa as proconsul, or giving their name to the year as consul ordinarius.⁴⁹ That brought members of the more active group a higher average career score than other patrician consulars: 12.0 compared with 10.7.⁵⁰

Patricians were also prominent as praefecti urbi. This was the highest post open to senators.⁵¹ The prefect of the city exercised criminal jurisdiction in Rome itself and within a 100-mile radius, and had extensive powers of banishment (Chapter 9: see 9.3, n. 43). He also supervised banking and the livestock markets.⁵²

⁴⁵ Syme *RP* III: 1316. See also Birley 1981: 16 and n. 1. Nevertheless, there were patrician military tribunes (see n. 49).

⁴⁶ Cf. Talbert 1984: 148; Chastagnol 1992: 158.

⁴⁷ 9/25 or 36% of the sample, against an expected 15% (nos. 140, 202, 286, 287, 295, 325, 357, 362, 426). Birley 1981: 32. Checklist in Halfmann 1986: 245–53. Epictetus makes the *comes* harassed and anxious, awaiting the Emperor’s awakening and dreading loss of favour (4.1.46–50; cf. 4.1.95–6). At the Mughal court in the seventeenth century, the lords (*omrah*) had to attend the king twice a day, on pain of reduced pay, and followed him on campaign (Bernier in Tinguely 2008: 209–10).

⁴⁸ Group A contains 7 legionary legates, 6 legate-governors, 14 proconsul’s legates and 5 *curatores viarum*. Some of these overlap, with, for example, 1 man commanding a legion and governing a praetorian province, and 2 with a province as well as an Italian road-post. One legionary legate also served as *iuridicus* in Asturia (no. 201); 12 of the 15 proconsul’s legates served in Asia or Africa. See nos. 15, 33, 119, 138, 140, 142, 143, 181, 182, 183, 192, 201, 202, 257, 264, 270, 287, 292, 352, 356, 357, 359, 367, 412, 457, 611.

⁴⁹ Consular legates (Group A) 31% (8/26) against 15% (5/34); proconsuls of Asia and Africa 50% (13/26), against 26% (9/34); ordinarius consulships 65% (17/26), against 44% (15/34). Members of Group A were also more willing to leave Rome as young men, with 38% serving as military tribune (10/26), against 21% (7/34).

⁵⁰ For career scoring, see Appendix 1. The score depends on the final office.

⁵¹ Almost half the 15 praefecti here are patrician (nos. 138, 140, 234, 287, 350, 426, 457). The post is salaried in Maecenas’ speech (Dio 52.21.7). The prefect could co-opt leading advocates such as Pliny as advisors (*Ep.* 6.11 with Sherwin-White 1985). For some prefects, see Appendix 5 (Caesonius Bassus, Caesonius Lucillus, Cornelius Anullinus, Julius Asper). In general, see Wojciech 2010.

⁵² Ulpian on Severan arrangements (*Dig.* 1.12 pr, 4, 9, 11).

2.3.8 Career Differences between Patricians

The patrician vigintiviri (n=72) can be divided into monetales and the rest (Table 2.5). The monetales have a higher career score, and they are well ahead as major priests (71% as against 42%). More held consulships (77% against 63%). Among quaestors of the Emperor, variation is insignificant (Table 2.5), but the monetales heavily predominate in the prized junior post of praefectus urbi feriarum Latinarum⁵³ and they contribute almost all the patrician sodales.⁵⁴

Table 2.5 *Career differences between patrician vigintiviri*

Category	Career score	Consul (N)	Quaestor Augusti	Adlected patrician
Monetales	9.8(48)	37	27	10
Other vigintiviri	8.1(24)	15	14	9
<i>Percentages</i>				
Monetales	–	77	56	21
Other vigintiviri	–	63	58	38
	Major priest	Flamen	Sodalis	Salius
Monetales	34	6	11	24
Other vigintiviri	10	3	0	12
<i>Percentages</i>				
Monetales	71	13	23	50
Other vigintiviri	42	13	0	50

Note: The senatorial flaminates of the Imperial cult were reserved for patricians, whereas the four ‘amplissima sacerdotia’ were also open to plebeians (pontifex, augur, quindecemvir sacris faciundis, septemvir epulonum). Overlap with the patrician priesthoods is seen in the case of P. Manilius Vopiscus, the patrician monetalis who was consul ordinarius in 114. He was also flamen, pontifex and salius Collinus (no. 239). For overlap with the salii, see also n. 42.

⁵³ 19% (9/48) hold this post, against 4% for other patrician vigintivirs (1/24). ⁵⁴ 11/12 or 92%.

2.4 Army Service and the Social Hierarchy

Military service was demanding, time-consuming and took the senator to distant frontier zones, usually in the north. Nevertheless, garrison needs dictated that about half of all budding senators perform a two-year stint as military tribune, while more than one-third of praetorian senators would hold a three-year legionary command.⁵⁵

Although military service was never limited to one part of the Senate, there were groups where it received greater emphasis. The prime case was the *viocuri*, the junior magistrates responsible for Rome's streets, the 'quattuorviri viarum curandarum'. Their tasks were to keep the streets of Rome clean, free from potholes and always open to traffic, and to ensure that the nearby buildings were kept in good repair.⁵⁶ They went on to hold more army posts at all levels than any other group, apart from senators who had held *militiae* (Table 2.6 percentages). Seventy percent were tribune, above the other plebeian *vigintiviri* with 64%. Forty-six percent were legionary legate, well above the other plebeian *vigintiviri* with 30%. And 24% were consular legate, again well above other *vigintiviri*. Their main rivals here (apart from the 'specialist' *militiae* senators in line 5) were the non-*vigintiviri*. These produced almost as many legionary legates (40%), though many fewer had served as tribune. The non-*vigintiviri*, however, had only half as many consular legates: 12% as against 24%.

The *viocuri* thus seem to have functioned as a kind of military cadre. Their road involvement returned at the praetorian level, where they held twice as many road-curatorships as their colleagues (36% of praetorian senators who were *viocuri*, compared with 18% of praetorians who were non-*vigintiviri* or other *vigintiviri*).⁵⁷ To crown their military efforts, a majority of consular *viocuri* were promoted to govern a frontier province as *legatus Augusti*. As many as 55% received this distinction, about one-quarter more than any other major group.⁵⁸

But the *viocuri* remained a limited case, and they are not enough to prove a general commitment to specialisation and professionalisation.

⁵⁵ For the length of postings, see Appendix 3. For military employments, see Chapter 5.

⁵⁶ Papinian, *Dig.* 43.10, which Mommsen identified as referring to the *quattuorviri* (*DP* IV: 312–3 n. 5). Apparently they did not deal with paving repair, for which there were special procurators (314 n. 1).

⁵⁷ Excluding patricians, *viocuri*, 18 out of 50 praetorian senators; other *vigintiviri*, 30/170; non-*vigintiviri*, 23/126. The post generally preceded any legionary legateship, except with the grandest roads (Flaminia, Aemilia, Appia; cf. Eck 1979: 49–50; Palma 1980: 192). The road-curatorship came first in 37 out of 49 cases.

⁵⁸ *Viocuri*, 55% of consuls (17/31); patricians, 24% (14/59); other *vigintiviri*, 43% (40/93); non-*vigintiviri*, 31% (16/52). For global comparisons, see Table 2.6. The few *militiae* senators in line 5 ranked even higher, with 77% of ex-consuls employed as consular legate (10/13).

Table 2.6 *Army posts by social category*

Category	Tribunus militum	Legatus legionis	Legatus and tribunus	Consular legate
1. Plebeian viocuri	49/70	32/70	24/32	17/70
2. Patricians	21/81	7/81	3/7	14/81
3. Other vigintiviri	156/244	74/244	61/74	40/244
4. Non-vigintiviri	49/134	54/134	28/54	16/134
5. Militiae senators	3/28	12/28	3/28	10/28

<i>Percentages</i>				
Category	Tribunus militum	Legatus legionis	Legatus and tribunus	Consular legate
Viocuri	70	46	75	24
Patricians	26	9	43	17
Other vigintiviri	64	30	82	16
Non-vigintiviri	37	40	52	12
Militiae senators	11	43	11	36

Note: The patricians include 9 non-vigintiviri not shown in line 4 (see n. 23 above).

They account for less than one-fifth of senators in the army.⁵⁹ The non-vigintiviri have almost as high a proportion who became legionary legates (41% against 46%), and there are more of them (54 instead of 32). Viocuri provided the highest proportion of consular legates who had commanded legions, but they remained a limited part of the command structure as a whole.⁶⁰

While the emphasis on viocuri and a handful of 'militiae' senators in military posts can be taken as a form of optimisation, it would still be reasonable to expect that every general with a large army would have had military command experience.⁶¹ But that reckons without the power of

⁵⁹ In a show of consistency, viocuri are about 18% of tribunes in the present sample, 18% of legionary legates and 18% of consular legates (49/278, 32/179 and 17/97). They make up 13% of the total sample (72/557); this includes 2 patricians who do not appear in the plebeian total of 70 viocuri shown in Tables 2.1–2.3.

⁶⁰ Plebeian viocuri 88% (15/17); other plebeian vigintiviri 78% (31/40); plebeian non-vigintiviri 63% (10/16); patricians 36% (5/14).

⁶¹ Instead, almost a third of consular legateships went to men without this experience (28/97 or 29%). See also Chapter 5.

aristocracy and the forces of patronage that governed most Roman appointments.⁶² Rome's military history is too fragmentary to reveal how well the system withstood amateurism on the scale seen here. The big standing army and the powerful tax-machine that supported it were probably enough to weight the odds in Rome's favour most of the time. But military disasters are certainly seen in our limited narrative.⁶³ And further well-documented legions, part of the army's vital core, disappeared without explicit record.⁶⁴ Military command and aristocratic rank are discussed further in Chapter 5.

2.5 Conclusion

The primary status hierarchy consisted of patricians and the four grades of plebeian *vigintiviri*. Differences in career outcome and in access to priest-hoods closely reflected this hierarchy. The system can be seen as heavily aristocratic, conspicuously favouring patricians and the higher social ranks, and drastically limiting the scope for appointments primarily based on merit. Nevertheless, a number of careers, including some of the most successful, were not constrained by the *vigintivirate*, and these show that there was some flexibility in supplementing the *vigintiviri* from other sources, including the *militiae*. Among *vigintiviri* the *viocuri*, although neither aristocratic nor very numerous, received military posts more often than most others.

⁶² Cf. Saller 1982.

⁶³ Classic cases are the multiple losses of legions under Varus in CE 9 and in Armenia in 161 (*PIR* Q 30, S 306). Fronto, a rare contemporary source, recapitulates disasters of his time, the losses of consular senators in successive wars under Trajan, and the loss of many soldiers in Jewish and British conflicts at the start of Hadrian's reign (*Parth*, 2; van den Hout 1999: 206). The passage is incomplete and clearly continued further. For apocalyptic defeat in the East under Valerian, mainly documented from outside the Empire, see Section 7.3.

⁶⁴ For example, IX Hispana and XXI Deioteriana may have perished in the Jewish war of 132–5 (Keppie 1984: 214–5 and Keppie 2000: 228–30).