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The Roman army in Ancient period of History

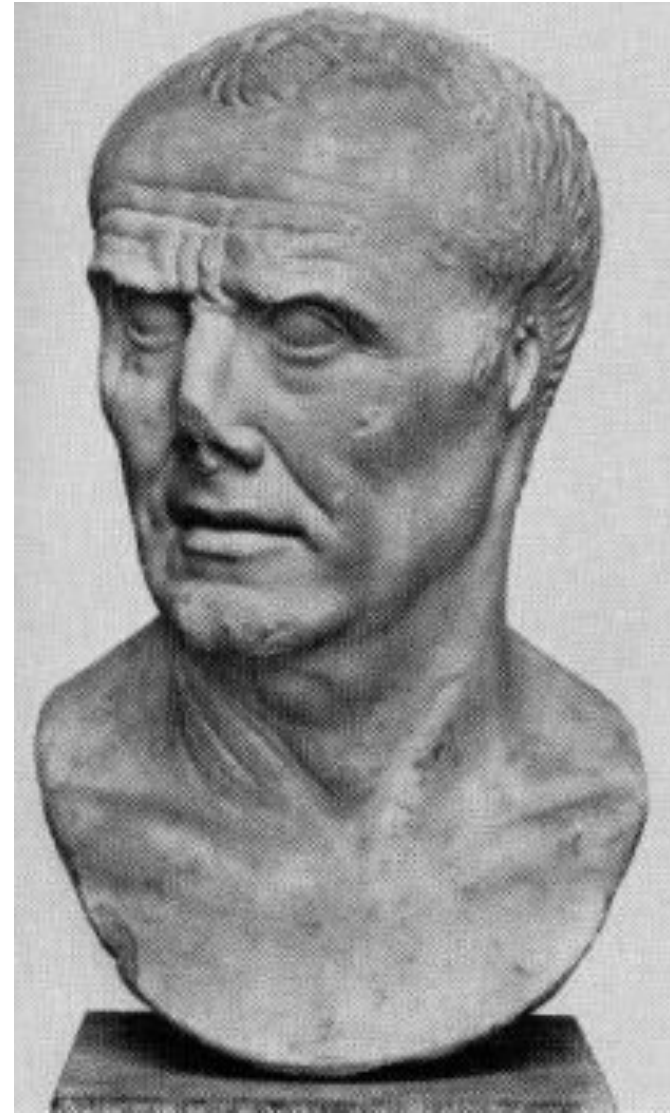
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Plan.

- **1.The history of the Roman army**
- **2.The organisation of the Roman army**
- **1.Contubernium**
- **2.Centuria**
- **3. Legioen**
- **3. The life of a Roman soldier.**
- **4. Camps, Forts and Fortresses**
- **1.Marching Camps**
- **2. Auxiliary Forts**
- **3. Legionary Fortresses**

1. The history of the Roman army

- During the first 5 centuries, the Roman Empire had no army. That is: the empire had no standing army (an army that is permanently established at a tactical place). When the authorities in Rome thought it was necessary to take military action, they called up the citizens who had subscribed to a list. When these citizens were called up, they took their own armour with them and formed a temporary army.
- When the Roman Empire became bigger and bigger, and the military actions took place further from Rome and Italy, the people weren't satisfied with the citizen-army anymore. About 100 B.C. the Roman general and consul Gaius Marius had made a regular army out of the Citizen-army. Because the army was regular now, it became much better and stronger, because the soldiers were better trained and armed. A disadvantage of such a regular army was, that it could be used as a personal political means of power



2.The organisation of the Roman army

A legion consisted of a few parts. In sequence from small to large:

- Contubernium
- Centuria
- Cohort
- Legion

Here follows an explanation of the subdivisions of a legion:

1. Contubernium

- A contubernium consisted of eight legionarii (pl. of legionarius, soldier). The eight men of a contubernium shared a tent in a camp together. Such a tent wasn't very spacious: about 4 by 3 meters, with a tiny front room. Each contubernium had a mule, to carry the heavy stuff when the army was marching.

2. Centuria

- 10 contubernia formed a centuria (80 men) together. Every centuria had his own fieldsigncarrier, a signifer. The leader of such a centuria was the centurio. When you were a good soldier, you could become, via the rank of optio (assistant of a centurio), a centurio. When you were centurio, you were the leader of a low ranked centuria. Sons of senators and other rich persons in Rome became the commander of the high ranked centuria. They became this because they needed military experience for a good political career. The centurio of the highest centuria (the first centuria of the first cohort) was the primipilus. A skilled centurio had also a good chance to become commander of a camp (prefects castrorum).



3. Legioen

- 10 cohorts were a legion together (4800 men). The leader of a legion was the legatus. Very often, he was helped by 5 or 6 tribuni, lads who needed military experience for their career. A legion had more than 4800 infantry: it had the disposal of about 60 catapultae en ballistae. A catapulta shot arrows, and a ballista shot rocks. A legion had also the disposal of a lot of doctors, trumpeters, bakers, executioners, veterinary surgeons, novelist, writers, carpenters and blacksmiths. The legion could provide for itself like this. Altogether a legion counts about 5500 to 6000 men.



3. The life of a Roman soldier

- A lad who wanted to serve in the Roman army as a legionarius, became a tiro, soldier in training, when he was about 17-18 years old. After he was trained for legionarius he was put in a centuria. When the legionarius was trying to do the best he could do, and he had talent, he could become an optio. When the optio was good and had succes, and a centurio died or resigned, the optio could be promoted to the rank of centurio. When the centurio was very good, and was respectedhe could even be promoted to primipilus. A normal soldier couldn't reach any higher rank then that. It wasn't easy to make such a career, and it almost never succeeded. So the most soldiers became after their 22 years of serving a veteranus, veteran. He was about 45 years old then.



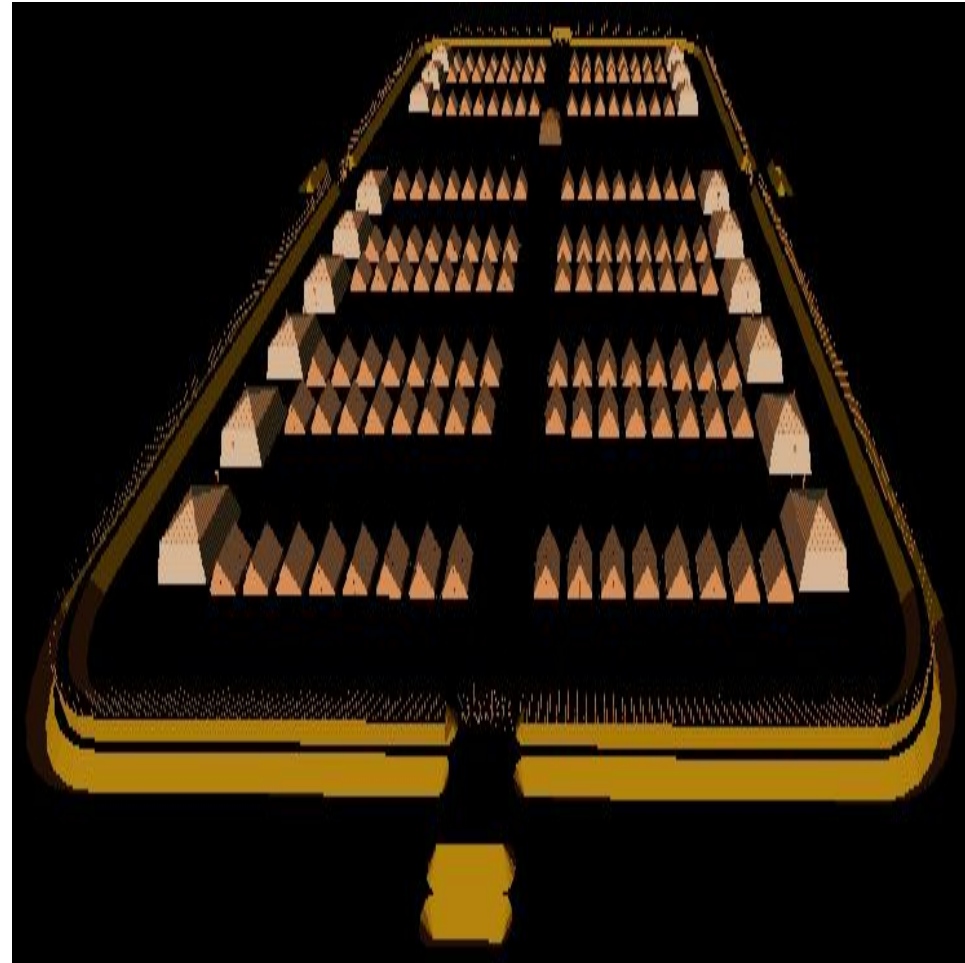
4. Camps, Forts and Fortresses

- There are traditionally three main types of Roman fortification; the Marching Camp, the Auxiliary Fort and the Legionary fortress. To these three basic types there has been recently added a fourth classification, that of *Vexillation* Fortress.
- There are also smaller fortifications such as Fortlets, Signal Stations, Light Houses and Watch Towers. Of these types, the Fortlets may be viewed simply as small forts possessed of an unorthodox interior layout and with no administrative buildings, but these latter classes which, in general, are localised in thei



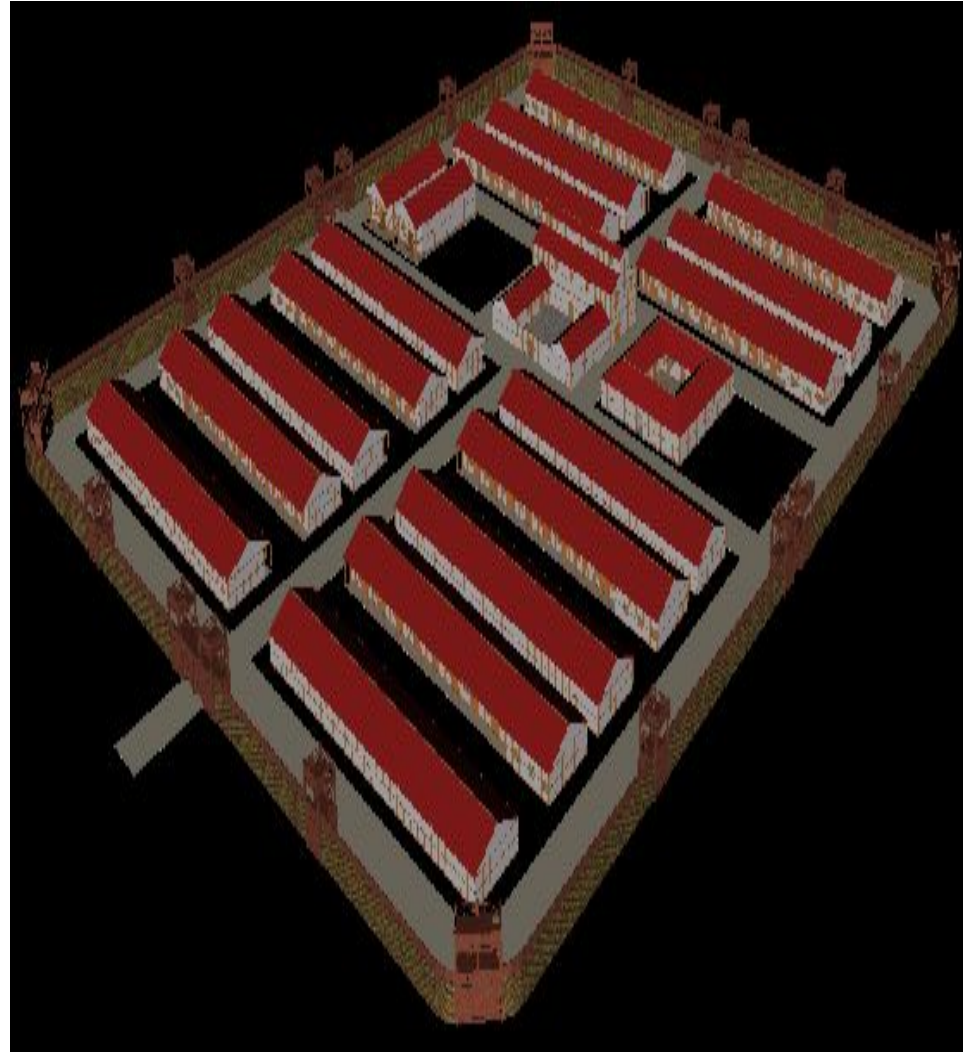
1. Marching Camps

- These are characterized by a single narrow ditch and interior rampart, are generally rectangular in outline, but can vary widely in size. These camps generally represent the entrenchments made by a single Roman army unit for an overnight stop in field conditions, when the enemy is close at hand and there is chance of an attack. The size of the army unit on the march would obviously dictate the actual dimensions of the camp.



2. Auxiliary Forts

- These were generally rectangular or square in outline, possessed of a substantial rampart and may have several ditch systems. They were constructed at first mainly of timber but later in stone, and housed troops from allied and Romanized nations, who would become full Roman citizens on discharge, the *Auxilia*. These troops were not as highly trained (or as well paid) as were the citizen troops of the Roman Legions, and although they made their own Marching Camps, their Garrison Forts were actually built by the legionaries.



3. Legionary Fortresses

- These were, as the name implies, the permanent strategic military encampments of the Roman legions, which were occupied for any period between tens of years like Viroconium (Wroxeter) or even centuries like Eburacum (York). As they were built to house an entire legion, where the number of soldiers did not vary (*i.e.* c.5,200 legionaries), their size is fairly uniform at around fifty acres. Their defences are massive, generally of stone, although the Fortress at Isca Dumnoniorum (Exeter) was occupied for only a short period

Roman Legionary Fortresses 27 BC–AD 378

