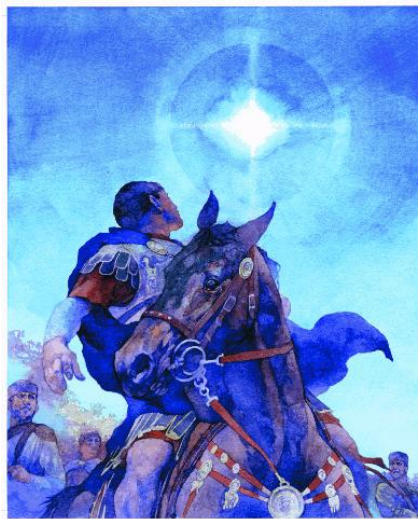




Good day Worthy Knights

In this part 10, you will see an overview of the Roman Legion during the Imperial era. (Wikipedia).



The Roman Legion, backbone of the Empire, was commanded by a Legatus, often around 30 years old on a 3 years assignment with Officers for medical staff, engineers, record keepers and commander of camp.

For most of the Roman Imperial period, the legions formed the Roman army's elite heavy infantry, recruited exclusively from Roman citizens, while the remainder of the army consisted of auxiliaries, who provided additional infantry and the vast majority of the Roman army's cavalry.

The Legion evolved from 3,000 men in the Roman Republic to over 5,200 men in the Roman Empire, consisting of Centuries as the basic units. Until the middle of the first century, ten Cohorts (about 500 men) made up a Roman legion. This was later changed to nine Cohorts of standard size (with six Centuries at 80 men each) with the first Cohort being of double strength (five double-strength Centuries with 160 men each).

In the Later Roman Empire, the number of Legions was increased and the Roman Army expanded. There is no evidence to suggest that Legions changed in form before the Tetrarchy, although there is evidence that they were smaller than the paper strengths usually quoted. The final form of the Legion originated with the elite *Legiones palatinae* created by Diocletian and the Tetrarchs. These were infantry units of around 1,000 men rather than the 5,000, including cavalry, of the old Legions. The earliest *Legiones palatinae* were the *Lanciarii*, *Joviani*, *Herculiani* and *Divitenses*.

The 4th century saw a very large number of new, small Legions created, a process which began under Constantine II.

In addition to the elite palatini, other Legions called comitatenses (field army) and pseudocomitatenses, along with the auxilia palatina, provided the infantry of late Roman armies.

The Scholae Palatinae were an elite military guard unit ascribed to Constantine the Great as a replacement for the equites singulares Augusti, the cavalry arm of the Praetorian Guard.

The Notitia Dignitatum lists 25 Legiones palatinae, 70 Legiones comitatenses, 47 Legiones pseudocomitatenses and 111 Auxilia palatina in the field armies, and a further 47 Legiones in the frontier armies. Legion names such as Honoriani and Gratianenses found in the Notitia suggest that the process of creating new legions continued through the 4th century rather than being a single event. The names also suggest that many new legions were formed from Vexillationes (picked up from other detachments) or from old legions. In addition, there were 24 Vexillationes palatini, 73 Vexillationes comitatenses; 305 other units in the Eastern limitanei (the Empire frontiers) and 181 in the Western limitanei.

According to the late Roman writer Vegetius' De Re Militari, each Century had a ballista and each Cohort had an Onager, giving the legion a formidable siege train of 59 Ballistae (catapult with bow for e.g. javelin) and 10 Onagers (catapult for e.g. heavy stones), each manned by 10 Librators (artillerymen) and mounted on wagons drawn by oxen or mules. In addition to attacking cities and fortifications, these would be used to help defend Roman forts and fortified camps (castra) as well. They would even be employed on occasion, especially in the later Empire, as field artillery during battles or in support of river crossings.

Despite a number of reforms, the Legion system survived the fall of the Western Roman Empire, and was continued in the Eastern Roman Empire until around 7th century, when reforms begun by Emperor Heraclius to counter the increasing need for soldiers around the Empire resulted in the Theme system. Despite this, the Eastern Roman/Byzantine armies continued to be influenced by the earlier Roman legions, and were maintained with similar level of discipline, strategic prowess, and organization.

The Legionarius was a Roman citizen under 45 years, enlisted for 20 years.

There is some discrepancy over what was actually carried and the possible total weight. At times, it has been estimated that a legionary could carry anywhere from 30 kg to over 45 kg of gear and weapons, with Roman armour and shields being particularly heavy.

On the march, the Legionary could carry:

- Between three and fourteen day's worth of rations, although a Roman army on the move would typically have a baggage train of mules or similar to carry supplies, such as the legionaries' tents and millstones for grinding the corn rations.
- Entrenching tools to construct fortifications and dig latrines etc. Each legionary would typically carry either a shovel (batillum) or dolabra (mattock) for digging, a turf cutting tool or a wicker basket for hauling earth.
- A waterskin, Roman camps would typically be built near water sources, but each soldier would have to carry his water for the day's march.
- Cooking equipment: including a patera, cooking pot and skewer. A patera was a broad, shallow dish used for drinking, primarily in ritual contexts such as a libation.

Each of these items, aside from the pickaxe which was worn on the belt, was carried on a forked pole introduced by Gaius Marius called the pila muralia, which earned his men the nickname Marius' Mules.

In addition, on unfriendly terrain, the legionary would carry, shield, helmet, two javelins, dagger and gladius.