

*IB SL Latin*

*Internal Assessment: Research Dossier*

## **To What Extent Was The Superior Discipline of the Roman Army a Factor of Success on Campaign?**

Word Count: 800 words ✓

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**Abstract**

One of the best known characteristics of the Roman army is their discipline. This dossier will examine to what extent this discipline was present among Roman soldiers. Two successful periods in Roman military history – the Punic Wars against Carthage and the Golden Age between the reigns of Emperor Augustus and Domitian – are focused on. A range of literary sources chronicling Roman military activity are examined.

✓ [redacted]

**Source I: Discipline through the Senate (The Second Punic War)**



"Legionibus, quae Punico bello militiam detractaverant, in **Siciliam** velut relegatis per septem annos **hordeum** ex senatus consulto datum est<sup>1</sup>."

*The legions which had refused to serve in the Punic War were sent into a kind of banishment in Sicily, and by vote of the Senate were put on **barley rations** for seven years<sup>2</sup>.*



*The Strategemata, Frontinus  
Book IV, Ch. 1*

During the Punic Wars, the Senate used a 'carrot and stick' approach. Victorious commanders were rewarded, but an extremely rigid code of punishment was enforced on betrayers and deserters. These legions are exiled symbolically 'in Siciliam' (in Sicily), land captured from Carthage during the First Punic War. The 'hordeum' (barley rations) would reinforce Roman ideals of frugality onto the soldiers. It was the ultimate hope of the Senate that these legions would return as a determined and effective fighting force.



<sup>1</sup> Latin text from [www.thelatinlibrary.com](http://www.thelatinlibrary.com)

<sup>2</sup> English translation from  
<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Frontinus/Strategemata/home.html>





## Source II: Discipline at Cannae (The Second Punic War)



Varro, collega eius, vel maiore constantia post eandem cladem vixit gratiaque ei a senatu et populo actae sunt, quod **non desperasset rem publicam**. Non autem vitae cupiditate, sed rei publicae amore se superfuisse reliquo aetatis suae tempore approbavit: et barbam capillumque summisit et postea numquam recubans cibum cepit; honoribus quoque, cum ei deferrentur a populo, renuntiavit, dicens felicioribus magistratibus rei publicae opus esse<sup>3</sup>."

*Paulus's colleague, Varro, showed even greater resolution in continuing alive after the same disaster, and the Senate and the people thanked him "because," they said, "he did not despair of the commonwealth." But throughout the rest of his life he gave proof that he had remained alive not from desire of life, but because of his love of country. He suffered his beard and hair to remain untrimmed and never afterwards reclined when he took food at table. Even when honours were decreed him by the people he declined them, saying that State needed more fortunate magistrates than himself<sup>4</sup>.*

*The Strategemata, Frontinus  
Book IV, Ch. 5*



Romans living at the peak of the Empire, such as Frontinus, took great pride from their predecessors' willingness to continue the Second Punic War after the disaster at Cannae. This was embodied by Varro, who organized the retreating troops and refused to negotiate with the enemy. Even in defeat, this source shows the esteem with which Romans held the discipline and stubbornness of their commander at the battle, as 'non desperasset rem publicam' (he did not despair of the Commonwealth'), as well as his humility afterwards. Both were highly valued characteristics of the Roman commander.



<sup>3</sup> Latin text from [www.thelatinlibrary.com](http://www.thelatinlibrary.com)

<sup>4</sup> English translation from

<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Frontinus/Strategemata/home.html>



### Source III: The Pannonian Revolt: A Disciplined Mutiny (6 AD)

"non tribunus ultra, non castrorum praefectus ius obtinuit: vigilias, stationes, et si qua alia praesens usus indixerat, ipsi partiebantur. id militaris animos altius coniectantibus praecipuum indicium magni atque inplacabilis motus, quod neque disiecti nec paucorum instinctu, **set pariter ardescerent, pariter silerent, tanta aequalitate et constantia ut regi crederes**<sup>5</sup>."

*Neither tribune nor camp-prefect maintained authority any longer. Patrols, sentries, and whatever else the needs of the time required, were distributed by the men themselves. To those who could guess the temper of soldiers with some penetration, the strongest symptom of a wide-spread and intractable commotion, was the fact that, instead of being divided or instigated by a few persons, they were unanimous in their fury and equally unanimous in their composure, with so uniform a consistency that one would have thought them to be under command*<sup>6</sup>.

*The Annals, Tacitus  
Book I, Ch. 32*

The Pannonian mutiny of 6 AD was one of the most effective in Roman history, occupying the attentions of over half the Roman army at its height. The organization with which the regiments acted, unusual for a revolt, was a major reason for its sustained success. So much so that Tacitus claims 'regi crederes' (one would have believed them under command). The efficiency of the Romans at drilling their military values into all their troops, including foreign mercenaries is shown here. This source also brings out the success a disciplined army can attain in the ancient world.

<sup>5</sup> Latin text from [www.thelatinlibrary.com](http://www.thelatinlibrary.com)

<sup>6</sup> English translation from <http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/annals.html>

#### Source IV: The Revolt of Boudicca: A Contrast (60 AD)

"igitur legionarius frequens ordinibus, levis circum armatura, conglobatus pro cornibus eques astitit. at Britannorum copiae passim per catervas et turmas exultabant, **quanta non alias multitudo, et animo adeo fero[ci]**, ut **coniuges** quoque testes victoriae secum traherent plastrisque imponerent, quae super extremum ambitum campi posuerant<sup>7</sup>."

*His legions were in close array; round them, the light-armed troops, and the cavalry in dense array on the wings. On the other side, the army of the Britons, with its masses of infantry and cavalry, was confidently exulting, **a vaster host than ever had assembled, and so fierce in spirit** that they actually brought with them, to witness the victory, **their wives riding in wagons, which they had placed on the extreme border of the plain**<sup>8</sup>.*

*The Annals, Tacitus  
Book XIV, Ch. 34*

Unlike the Pannonian legions of Source III, the mutinous Britons represented a typical rebel force: 'animo fero[ci]' (fierce in spirit) and large in number but lacking discipline and organization. They even bring their 'coniuges' (wives) onto the battlefield. Whilst the Britons lacked a cohesive formation, the Roman held a tightly organized defensive line with distinct roles for the different troop types. This led to a clear Roman victory, and is very much microcosmic of all Roman military action against uprisings in the provinces.

↓ I very much like this point.

<sup>7</sup> Latin text from [www.thelatinlibrary.com](http://www.thelatinlibrary.com)

<sup>8</sup> English translation from <http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/annals.html>

### Source V: Discipline under Corbulo (58-63 AD)

"ipse cultu [l]evi, capite intecto, in agmine, in laboribus frequens adesse, laudem strenuis, solacium invalidis, exemplum omnibus ostendere. dehinc, quia durtia caeli militiaeque multi abnuebant deserebantque, remedium severitate quaesitum est. nec enim, ut in aliis exercitibus, primum alterumque delictum venia prosequeretur, se qui signa reliquerat, statim capite poenas luebat. idque usu salubre et misericordia melius apparuit: quippe pauciores illa castra deseruere quam ea, in quibus ignoscebatur<sup>9</sup>."

*The general, lightly clad, with head uncovered, was continually with his men on the march, amid their labours; he had praise for the brave, comfort for the feeble, and was a good example to all. And then as many shrank from the rigour of the climate and of the service, and deserted, he sought a remedy in strictness of discipline. Not, as in other armies, was a first or second offence condoned, but the soldier, who had quitted his colours, instantly paid the penalty with his life. This was shown by experience to be a wholesome measure, better than mercy; for there were fewer desertions in that camp than in those in which leniency was habitual<sup>10</sup>.*

*The Annals, Tacitus  
Book XIII, Ch. 35*

Rome had suffered major defeats in the Syria-Armenia region in 53 BC and 36 BC. The prevailing reason in Rome was that their soldiers, stationed in towns and cities, were being corrupted by the loose morals of the East. In between major campaigns, the army spent years idle or policing in small detachments, giving little opportunity for co-ordinated drills and training. Corbulo, the archetypal Roman commander, 'remedium severitate quaesitum est' (sought a remedy in strictness of discipline). The creation of a tough fighting force allowed Corbulo to undertake a rapid and brilliant campaign in 58 AD, and bring Armenia under direct Roman administration.

<sup>9</sup> Latin text from [www.thelatinlibrary.com](http://www.thelatinlibrary.com)

<sup>10</sup> English translation from <http://classics.mit.edu/Tacitus/annals.html>

Source VI: Strict Discipline & Hierarchy at Camp (66-70 AD)

*Each company hath also their wood, and their corn, and their water brought them, when they stand in need of them; for they neither sup nor dine as they please themselves singly, but all together. Their times also for sleeping, and watching, and rising are notified beforehand by the sound of trumpets, nor is anything done without such a signal; and in the morning the soldiery go everyone to their centurions, and these centurions to their tribunes, to salute them; with whom all the superior officers go to the general of the whole army, who then gives them of course the watchword and other orders, to be by them cared to all that are under their command<sup>11</sup>.*

*The Wars of the Jews, Josephus<sup>12</sup>  
Book III, Ch. 5*

✓ Their life at camp reflected Roman discipline on the battlefield. Signals dictate the activities of the soldier ('nor is anything done without a signal'), enforcing ideas of obedience and authority. That, every morning, the soldiers salute the centurion and the centurions the tribune show the appreciation for hierarchy which was one of the hallmarks of the Roman army on the battlefield. Once again, the frugality of the soldiers, as in Source I & II, is emphasised. This shared discipline would create a sense of unity among the soldiers.

<sup>11</sup> English translation from <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/war-3.htm>

<sup>12</sup> The Wars of the Jews was originally written in Aramaic, and then translated to Greek (probably under the supervision of Josephus). However, Josephus became a Roman citizen after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. His peculiar situation as both a leader of the rebel forces in Jerusalem and then a collaborator with the Romans, allows him to give the reader both perspectives of the conflict.



### Source VII: Monthly Marches

"Praeterea et uetus consuetudo permansit et diui Augusti atque Hadriani constitutionibus praecauetur, ut ter in mense tam equites quam pedites educantur ambulatum; hoc enim uerbo hoc exercitii genus nominant. Decem milia passuum armati instructique omnibus telis pedites militari gradu ire ac redire iubebantur in castra, ita ut aliquam itineris partem cursu alacriore conficerent. Equites quoque diuisi per turmas armatique similiter tantum itineris peragebant, ita ut ad equestrem meditationem interdum sequantur interdum cedant et recursu quodam impetus reparent. Non solunt autem in campis, sed etiam in cliuosis et arduis locis et descendere et ascendere utraque acies cogebatur, ut nulla res, uel casu prorsus, **pugnantibus posset accidere, quam non ante boni milites assidua exercitatione didicissent**<sup>13</sup>."

*It was a constant custom among the old Romans, confirmed by the Ordinances of Augustus and Hadrian, to exercise both cavalry and infantry three times in a month by marches of a certain length. The foot were obliged to march completely armed the distance of ten miles from the camp and return, in the most exact order and with the military step which they changed and quickened on some part of the march. Their cavalry likewise, in troops and properly armed, performed the same marches and were exercised at the same time in their peculiar movement and evolutions; sometimes, as if pursuing the enemy, sometimes retreating and returning again with greater impetuosity to the charge. They made these marches not in plain and even ground only, but both cavalry and infantry were ordered into difficult and uneven places and to ascend or descend mountains, **to prepare them for all kinds of accidents and familiarize them with the different manoeuvres that the various situations of a country may require**<sup>14</sup>.*

*Epitoma Rei Militaris, Vegetius  
Book I, Ch. 27*

It is significant that these marches were upon the ordinances of Augustus and Hadrian. Only generals who could inspire great devotion amongst their men could impose such stern military drills (this is also apparent with Corbulo in Source V). These drills prepared the soldiers for 'pugnantibus posset accidere' (for all kinds of accidents) and ensured that real battle was replicated to as high a degree as possible. Through the toughness and regimentation of these marches, Roman troops gained an intrinsic discipline which would be their greatest advantage against opposing armies.

<sup>13</sup> Latin text from [www.thelatinlibrary.com](http://www.thelatinlibrary.com)

<sup>14</sup> English translation from <http://www.pvv.ntnu.no/~madsb/home/war/vegetius/>

### Conclusion

[REDACTED] ✓ Discipline was a key and constant feature of the success of the Roman army. These sources maintain  
 [REDACTED] ✓ its presence through all aspects of the Roman soldier's service. It is present in his life at camp ✓ [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED] ✓ through the enforcement of a strict hierarchy. Training drills are vigorously and continuously ✓ [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED] ✓ undertaken. Heavy punishment is also used effectively. The most renowned Roman commanders ✓ [REDACTED]  
 [REDACTED] ✓ (such as Corbulo, Augustus, and Hadrian) all enforce this discipline strongly. Discipline was the  
 [REDACTED] ✓ greatest factor of superiority of the Roman army against her enemies, and played a large role in the  
 establishment and sustenance of the Roman empire. ✓ [REDACTED]

## Bibliography ✓ [REDACTED]

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English translation of the *Strategemata* by Frontinus

<http://www.wou.edu/las/socsci/history/thesis07/Doyle.htm>

Information on the Pannonian Revolt ✓ [REDACTED]

Quality of Ideas (Q.I.)

The quality of ideas in this assignment is very good. The sources have been very well selected and are wide ranging as demonstrated by the very varied sub-headings. The scope of the assignment covering both republic and empire is also good, and I like the way that the material has been arranged by content rather than chronology. Well done!

Knowledge and Understanding (KU)

The annotations demonstrate a wide knowledge of the topic and a good understanding of the relevance and importance of the sources. You clearly show how your annotations relate to the sources, and your explanations display a very thorough knowledge and understanding of the P.T.O.



### Coherence and clarity of argument.

The coherence and clarity of your argument is very good, Asad. You use subheadings effectively to organise your work, and your introduction, conclusion, footnotes and bibliography show how well organised your dossier is. Your arguments flow very logically and you link your sources together well where relevant to show the flow of ideas. Your arguments are well focused and you develop your points well in the amount of "word-space" allowed. Your work falls within the word limit. Well done.

I have thoroughly enjoyed reading your research dossier. Well done for all the hard work.