

Roman Army under Augustus

Explanation

At the time of Augustus Caesar, the Roman military was comprised of regular soldiers of Roman or Italian origin organized into legions and stationed through the provinces of the empire as single legions or combined with other legions into an army (*exercitus*).

Other troops were raised in the provinces and organized utilizing a different structure. They were called “auxiliaries” and served largely to keep order in the provinces by filling police functions or manning guard posts. The legionary units conducted required military operations, although on occasion they were assisted by auxiliary troops, particularly by cavalry units that performed reconnaissance and guarded the flanks of the battle line.

Chart 5-1 shows the organization of both classes of troops, their provenance, function, and command structure around the time when Jesus was born.

Reference

G. Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the First and Second Century A.D.* (London: Block, 1979).

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REGULAR ROMAN UNITS

Unit	Number of Troops	Commander	Unit Type	Origin of Troops
Exercitus (army)	Two or more legions with <i>auxilia</i>	Legatus Augusti (Legate of Augustus)	varied	Italy and provinces
Legion	6000 divided into 10 cohorts	Legatus Legionis (Legionary Legate)	infantry	Italy
Cohort	600 divided into 6 centuries	Tribunus Militaris (Military Tribune)	infantry	Italy
Century	up to 100	Centurion	infantry	Italy

PROVINCIAL AUXILIARIES

Auxiliary Cohort	480	Praefectus Militaris (Military Prefect)	light infantry or archers	provinces
Alae	480	Praefectus Militaris	cavalry	provinces
Vexillatio	240	Senior Decurion	cavalry	provinces
Turma	120	Decurion	cavalry	provinces