General Introduction

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE ARMY (*DISCIPLINA MILITARIS*) WAS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT of Roman imperial culture. Modern authors usually focus on loyalty and mutiny and on the stereotypical avarice of the Praetorian Guard, raising emperors to the throne and toppling them.[1] Other modern impressions stress the orderly tactical formations and steadfastness of the Roman army in battle and the absolute, self-sacrificing obedience of soldiers.[2] Still other modern stereotypes emphasize the severity of Roman military punishment, giving the English language the term "decimate," inaccurately equated with annihilation. Decimation was a punishment in which one in ten soldiers were executed. These impressions are exaggerated, sometimes anachronistic.

Disciplina militaris sought to control soldiers in more respects than obedience or formal discipline. Why, for instance, did the emperor Hadrian banish gardens, porticoes, and dining rooms from military camps, and why did he take care to be seen eating the soldiers' campaign fare and to walk twenty miles in armor?[3] Other aspects of Hadrian's management of the army more resembled modern institutional discipline: the repression of corruption, for instance, and the promotion of efficient administration.[4] The passage of the *Historia Augusta*'s *Vita Hadriani* is also remarkable for its omissions. Though we learn that he refused to wear ornamented armor, Hadrian did not take a particular interest in mass drill or uniform, essential elements of military training and discipline in modern times.[5] This passage suggests larger themes: the political economy of the army (soldiers' pay, work, and expenditures) and the masculinity of soldiers: Hadrian prohibited either boys or old men from serving as soldiers and purged luxurious items that might promote effeminacy.[6] He is said to have "bestowed gifts on many and honors on a few, so

[1] Gibbon [1776–88] 1932: v. 1: 9–10, 107, 119; Marx and Engels 1978: 607, 613; Rostovtzeff 1957: v. 1: 499–501; Momigliano [1954] 1966: 99; and Wes 1990.
[2] Keegan 1976: 63; Goldsworthy 1996: 247–51; Braudy 2003: 35–7, 58, 130–31.
[3] HA *Hadr.* 10.4, 10.2.
[4] HA *Hadr.* 10.3, 10.6–7, 11.1.
[5] HA *Hadr.* 10.5.
[6] HA *Hadr.* 10.7–8.

that the troops might submit more willingly to his stricter regulations."[7] Hadrian thus displayed an ability to compromise, but the imperial biographer does not explain why he wanted to treat the army strictly.

European military discipline and military culture have been influenced and shaped by the culture and politics of the day. Knightly training and chivalry were an essential part of medieval feudalism. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the development of professional armies was closely associated with the formation of nation-states and absolutist monarchies, such as those of Louis XIV and Frederick the Great.[8] The order and discipline of these armies signified the power of these states. These professional armies were created in ideological opposition to the mercenaries who had ravaged Italy, France, and central Europe in the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries.[9] The new professional armies invoked Roman traditions, but, as this book implies, the seventeenth-century military reformers' invocation of Roman military tradition had more to do with politics than with tactics.[10]

If Clausewitz said that "war is the continuation of politics by other means," military service may be the continuation of social policy by other means, given a heightened intensity because such policies are imposed to maintain or augment the fitness of the military. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century professional armies became test subjects and proving grounds for new social sciences, such as vital statistics, psychology, sanitation, and sexuality.[11] Perceived national crises in public health and morals have been and are projected onto the military; for instance, in U.S. Army training camps during World War I, the authorities prohibited or restricted dancing and access to prostitutes.[12] From the mid-twentieth century onward, the United States military achieved the inclusion of African-Americans and of women.[13] However, a conservative ideal of military service emphasizing traditional masculinity has opposed the integration of openly homosexual personnel.

[7] HA *Hadr.* 10.2.
[8] Oestreich 1982; Braudy 2003: 131, 211, 246–7 (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries); Delbrück 1990: 157, 252–3, 273–5; Ehrenreich 1997: 180–81; Myerly 1996; Theweleit 1989: 153–62; Braudy 2003: 375 on nineteenth- and twentieth-century militarism.
[9] Singer 2003: 23–31.
[10] Hahlweg [1941] 1987; Weitz 1998.
[11] Foucault 1978: 138–40 (theory), 1978: 118–19, 135 (stresses prevention of degeneration).
[12] Bristow 1996: 7, 79–88. Radine 1977; Trustram 1984; Bourke 1996 also emphasize social control.
[13] Bérubé 1990: 149–54 (homosexuality), 167 (neurosis in general); Braudy 2003: 317–19.

Certain branches and zones of the military (especially training) contrast military service with civilian "decadence."[14]

In the late Republic and early Empire, *disciplina militaris* addressed a social and political crisis, though slow-moving and transmitted through literary tradition, so that responses to it spanned centuries, from Polybius in the late second century BC to Vegetius in the late fourth century AD. This ideological crisis concerned the political economy of the Roman imperial army, its material dependence upon the state, and its legitimacy. The Roman Republican citizen militia of the fourth and third centuries BC was recruited from farmer-soldiers levied for short periods of time and waging war almost every year. The consuls, the Republic's two chief executives and commanders-in-chief, were elected yearly, attaining the top of a ladder of magistracies. They traditionally waged campaigns and celebrated their victories with triumphs, festive processions in which the commander displayed the plunder won by his army and his glory as *triumphator*. *Virtus* (courage in battle) and *gloria* (fame, glory) were core aristocratic values in the traditional Republic. The Romans conquered Italy by the early third century BC, most of the Mediterranean from Spain to the Near East by the mid-first century BC, Gaul in the 50s, and part of Germany by the end of the first century BC.[15]

The soldiers, however, served longer and longer in overseas campaigns and became impoverished. By the late second and early first centuries BC, soldiers were recruited from the landless poor and depended on their generals for both pay and assignments of land or money so that they could support themselves as veterans.[16] Accordingly, the upper classes depicted these soldiers as a mercenary rabble, whose demands were exploited by increasingly ambitious generals. The generals' ambitions, in turn, depended on their soldiers' loyalty.

With the establishment of the Principate, Augustus and his successors and the Roman governing classes (who were also the literary classes) sought to routinize the professional army and to legitimate it through *disciplina militaris*. Thus, they sought to prevent the syndrome of civil war. Employing Weberian sociology, this study explores to what extent *disciplina* imposed formal or bureaucratic rationality

[14] Ricks 1997: 162–3, 274–97: Marines instructors characterize civilian society as "undisciplined" and "nasty" in order to motivate recruits; the U.S. military is increasingly separate from civilian society.

[15] Rosenstein 1999; Harris 1979; Rosenstein 1990, 2006. Fuller notes on Roman society and the army start in Chapter One.

[16] Brunt 1962; moderated, [1971] 1987; challenged, Rosenstein 2004; Phang 2006 reviews the question of Roman soldiers' impoverishment.

on the Roman army, resembling the Weberian concept of discipline, and to what extent *disciplina* remained irrational, constrained by elite preconceptions and values. In this period the army became separated from civilian society; the aristocracy had less and less military experience, drawing their knowledge of military service from the literary tradition.[17] One of the aims of *disciplina militaris* was this separation of soldiers from civilians, as well as the maintenance of Roman qualities in soldiers, as opposed to "barbarian" qualities.

Augustus rationalized the conditions of service.[18] Legions of approximately 5120 men were supplemented by the *auxilia* or "helping" troops, units of cavalry and infantry with 500 to 1000 men. First created by Julius Caesar, the auxiliaries were noncitizens, who received Roman citizenship on their discharge from service. There was also a naval fleet, and in Rome the Praetorian Guard of 10,000 men, the urban cohorts, and the night watch or *vigiles*, whose duty was to keep order. Augustus reduced the number of legions to 28, so that some 300,000 soldiers (urban troops, legionaries, auxiliaries, and sailors) were under arms at any one time. He stabilized their pay and length of service and ensured that Praetorian and legionary pensions would be paid from taxation rather than from confiscation of aristocratic estates. The number of legions fluctuated slightly and reached 33 under Septimius Severus, giving at that time a total of about 400,000 troops.[19] Other elements of bureaucratic discipline, which appeared over the next two centuries, included promotion patterns; an extensive military bureaucracy, with pay and work records; a more routine and humane approach to punishment; and various policies repressing corruption and extrainstitutional work and income.

However, *disciplina militaris* was also a highly moralistic and conservative ideology that sought to turn back the clock and reproduce an ideal social hierarchy. *Disciplina* sought not only to maintain soldiers' combat skills in peacetime, but also to repress the syndrome of civil war. According to *disciplina*, the emperors and senatorial commanders should impose austerity on soldiers, repressing their avarice, and preventing luxury and degeneration. They should impose traditional harsh punishments and uphold an authoritarian model of obedience. They should

[17] Mattern 1999.
[18] Raaflaub 1980; Gilliver 2007. On this transitional period also Cornell 1993.
[19] MacMullen 1980; Campbell 1984: 4–5; Garnsey and Saller 1987: 88; Le Bohec 1994: 34–5; Campbell 2002: 7, 84, 89; Gilliver 2007: 186–9; slightly higher figures, Mattern 1999: 82–3.

keep soldiers constantly at work, lest soldiers' idleness lead to mutiny. In this ideology, generals who behaved thus were less likely to become usurpers. However, imposing this severe, politicized discipline was more difficult than it seemed, as the emperor Galba found out to his cost in AD 69. He decimated a legion and refused to pay the Praetorian Guard a promised donative (a gift of cash), and in short order he was overthrown.

Disciplina became a contest for legitimacy between the emperors, the senatorial and equestrian aristocracy, and the army, as well as lower-class civilians in Rome and the provinces. The emperors needed to retain both the loyalty of the army and the good opinion of the aristocracy. Some emperors were irresponsible patrons of the soldiers, bestowing privileges freely upon them, subverting hierarchy, and thwarting the aristocratic ideal of discipline.[20] Insofar as formally rational elements of *disciplina militaris* developed, they did so not just to expedite administration but to check patronage and usurpation. Thus most emperors also sought to enforce discipline. Senators and emperors belonged to this same elite, after all; they were educated in the same rhetorical and historical tradition.[21] *Disciplina* frequently invoked this tradition.

However, both emperors and senatorial or equestrian commanders needed to make discipline legitimate to the soldiers. Many recruits were volunteers. A model of authority that relies on coercion of unwilling subjects is inefficient. *Disciplina militaris*, though authoritarian, avoided the direct coercion of soldiers in the manner of slaves. The elite ideal of discipline and presumptions of the soldiers' irrationality and lack of self-control conflicted with the soldiers' assertion of their own relatively honorable status.[22] The soldiers contested aristocratic standards of discipline by claiming that they were being treated like slaves, and emperors and commanders might compromise in order to maintain the loyalty of the army. An emperor or general might compromise by taking on the hardships of the soldiers, as Hadrian did. He also balanced stricter discipline, repressing corruption, with the bestowal of honors on deserving personnel.

The aim of this book is not a narrative political history of each episode of discipline or each military conflict, nor is it a biographical examination of each commander's or emperor's actions. It explores major themes in *disciplina* and the

[20] Campbell 1984 presents this as a model.
[21] Mattern 1999: 2–3, 15–16.
[22] Carrié 1993: 103–6.

cultural assumptions behind them, stressing Roman rather than universal concepts. Concepts of wage-earning. redistribution, and labor and concepts of the body and of masculinity were among these, as was elite class prejudice. The upper orders regarded the lower classes (especially soldiers) as irrational and potentially violent. A major conceptual problem in imperial *disciplina militaris* was the promotion of *virtus*, courage of prowess in combat, which *disciplina* redefined as also displayed by activities such as labor and effort in peacetime. *Virtus* thus was produced by disciplinary activities and thus took on new meaning, as when Hadrian was able to display his *virtus* by walking twenty miles in full armor.[23] A recent study of Greek and Roman warfare emphasizes the tension between *disciplina* and *virtus* in combat; this book stresses general service and the political aspects of such service.

In studies of the Roman army, modern scholars have written little about Roman *disciplina*, despite the ancient authors' obsession with it.[24] This study employs sociological and critical theory as an analytical model. The moral and rhetorical nature of the ancient literary sources requires explanatory models. Though this study emphasizes Weber, it also employs Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the *habitus* and of symbolic violence.

Ancient literary authors did not construct their narratives from documents and statistics, but from *exempla*: biographical episodes, often rhetorical and emphasizing morals and behaviors to imitate or avoid. Even Roman authors with military and administrative experience fashioned their histories and biographies from such *exempla*; the governing classes of the empire were also the literary classes.[25] The ancient authors did not observe modern disciplinary boundaries; legal experts, writing on military discipline, might allude to legendary history; administration was inseparable from moral concerns. Ancient authors were also influenced by Platonic and Stoic philosophy, adapted for Latin audiences by Cicero and Seneca the Younger in the mid-first century BC and mid-first century AD. Ancient technical treatises also display the literary mentality, such as Frontinus's *Stratagems*, a collection of anecdotes on strategy, tactics, and military discipline, and Vegetius's

[23] HA *Hadr.* 10.4.

[24] Older literature on *disciplina militaris* is represented by Sulser 1920; Mauch 1941; Neumann 1936, 1946, 1948, and 1965. General works of regional pertinence: Le Bohec 1989; Le Roux 1992; Isaac 1992; Mitchell 1993 (not only about the army); Alston 1995; studies focused on a shorter period, Blois 1984; Blois 2002.

[25] Millar [1977] 1992: 96–108; Mattern 1999: 2–8, 15–18; A. R. Birley 2003; on Vegetius, Lendon 2005: 283–5. On approaches to literary anecdotes, Saller 1980; Plass 1988; Woodman 1988: x and *passim*; Habinek 1998.

Epitoma rei militaris, a handbook on the Roman army.[26] For the Romans, commanding an army was not a technical task; it was conceived of in moral and social terms, as will become apparent.

In this book, when late Republican or imperial authors cite as *exempla*, precedents, or justifications episodes from the older Republic before the late second century BC or from classical or Hellenistic Greece, these anecdotes represent this exemplary mentality, intended to instruct the authors' contemporaries. Later Roman sources (fourth and fifth centuries AD), such as Vegetius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and the *Historia Augusta*, are also cited as evidence of traditional attitudes. Roman *disciplina militaris* reflects these habits of thought, frequently invoking tradition.[27] Despite the exemplary mentality, individual leaders and soldiers can be glimpsed exaggerating, resisting, or subverting *disciplina militaris*.

Due to the limitations of space, certain topics and source materials will be treated briefly or not at all. These include the marriage ban and the privileges of veterans; coin issues as imperial ideology; military career inscriptions; detailed narratives of individual battles; Christian sources on the Roman army; and the source problems of Vegetius and the *Historia Augusta*.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Theorizing *Disciplina*: Social Conflict, Legitimation, and Power

Besides reviewing the hierarchies of Roman society and the army, this chapter applies Weberian concepts of legitimate authority and of rationalization to Roman society and the Roman army. Pure Weberian ideal types, including Weberian discipline, are not applicable. The Roman army displayed patrimonial, formally rational, and value-rational policies. The concept of *habitus* in Pierre Bourdieu's sociology is also relevant, as many aspects of *disciplina militaris* represent not rational administration but habitual dispositions of the body and mind. The inculcation of *habitus* promoted the social and cultural reproduction of the Roman military hierarchy. Commanders and emperors' restrained benefactions to soldiers and adoption of austerity and hardship inflicted symbolic violence (the acknowledgement of hierarchy).

As later chapters show, *virtus* and *disciplina* were associated with a masculine *habitus*; indiscipline represented the catastrophic collapse of this *habitus*. *Disciplina*

[26] Campbell 1987; on Vegetius, Zuckerman 1994; Lenoir 1996; Richardot 1998.
[27] Lendon 2005: 5–12 (general antiquarianism), 280–85 (Roman).

also maintained the distinct identity of soldiers, separating them from persons and activities defined as shameful in the military context, such as camp followers, trade, and revelry.

Combat Training and Discipline

Vegetius depicts the Roman empire as maintained by the combat training of soldiers. Representations of Roman combat training emphasized individual fitness, combat skills, and aggression more than mass drill and coordination. This combat training made weapon use second nature and reduced soldiers' fear of wounds. In the field, the general and his officers imposed mass discipline, making soldiers keep order and follow the standards or keep up with the line of march. However, relatively little is known about Roman mass formation and drill.

Mass formation did not give Roman *disciplina militaris* its paradigm, as in early modern and modern militaries, in which social control was achieved by parade-ground drill. In the Roman army, social control was achieved not by drill, but by the imposition of work or *labor*, the subject of a later chapter, and by castrametation, the building of temporary and permanent camps. Roman tactics required individual fighting skills and aggression. Because these could not be reduced without compromising combat performance, *disciplina* sought to control other aspects of military service.

Viri Militares: Habitus and Discipline

This chapter focuses on *disciplina*'s prescription of relatively static aspects of military service, such as soldiers' attitudes to their superiors, the social origins of soldiers, etiquette and religion, and the wearing of armor, replaced by uniform in modern armies. All of these contributed to the military identity of soldiers. Soldiers displayed discipline not simply through their outward appearance and attitude. *Disciplina* inculcated a masculine *habitus* into soldiers, both through sexual propriety and the avoidance of effeminacy, and, to a greater degree, through a general disposition of the body and mind. Discipline promoted a state of *intentio* or "readiness" that powered soldiers as fighters or as workers.

Disciplina and Punishment

In imposing punishment on soldiers, Roman commanders negotiated tradition and their present. *Disciplina*'s traditions stressed absolute obedience and extreme severity. The imperial elite was nostalgic for this severity. Soldiers, however, might

perceive excessive severity as *saevitia* (cruelty). Otho persuaded the urban troops to revolt from the emperor Galba in AD 69 in part because Galba decimated a legion. The harshest corporal and capital punishments, such as flogging as execution or decimation, became obsolete. Nevertheless, corporal and capital punishment of individual soldiers persisted during the empire. Alternative punishments included public humiliation, demotion, and dishonorable discharge or disbandment, given greater force by the rationalization of conditions of service. A bureaucratic approach to punishment developed. Leaders also compromised with severity in interpreting the law concerning desertion. However, the archaic prestige of severity and the commander's freedom to punish never disappeared; no permanent evolution toward greater leniency is apparent, as the jurists of the late second and early third centuries AD prescribed capital punishment for many offenses, invoking archaic *exempla*. A *habitus* of obedience was thus inculcated in soldiers.

Disciplining Wealth: The Ideologies of *Stipendia* and *Donativa*

Soldiers profited from military service, obtaining plunder and receiving pay and their leaders' gifts, including pensions in the form of land grants or money. The civil wars and proscriptions of the late Republic rendered questionable the legitimacy of soldiers' access to wealth. Though Augustus rationalized the pensions of soldiers, their pay (*stipendia*) and donatives were still a matter of contention. *Stipendia* were rarely raised, and soldiers' control over their income was restricted, especially in the early Empire, when soldiers' pay was reduced by extensive deductions. Discipline attempted to repress soldiers' illegitimate acquisition of income, services, and material goods through extortion or corruption.

Imperial donatives or gifts of cash to the army, a matter of controversy, had to be reconciled with disciplinary ideology. *Disciplina* required that *stipendia* and *donativa* be routinized in the Weberian sense and given in a way that would not corrupt discipline. On the one hand, donatives were given at predictable events such as imperial accessions, the distribution of predecessors' legacies, and the adoption of heirs. On the other hand, donatives (especially given at whim or under extraordinary circumstances) were personal gifts from the emperor, intended to subordinate soldiers and invoke their loyalty. Such gifts established a personal relationship that emperors violated at their peril: refusing to give was an insult. Furthermore, the *donativa* as gifts might not elicit loyalty; emperors' and usurpers' too obvious bids for material support elicited the soldiers' contempt.

These relations of exchange conflicted with a more rational and impersonal standard of discipline. A form of benefaction preferable to handouts of money was the grant of legal privileges to soldiers, protecting their rights to property they already possessed. Imperial coin issues and military decorations, usually construed as representing imperial patronage, also underwent a routinization.

Labor Militaris: Work as Discipline

According to the ideology of discipline, soldiers should be kept always at work, performing *labor* (toil). This military *labor* resembled in some respects modern work-discipline, formally documented and administered by the military bureaucracy. But *labor* was also value-rational, conditioning soldiers to obedience. *Otium* (idleness) was regarded as a source of insubordination.

Not all forms of *labor* were acceptable to the soldiers. Menial labor, tedious, repetitive, and degrading, risked the assimilation of soldiers to slaves. Soldiers resented such labor, resisting it with direct mutiny or through their acquisition of slaves to do their chores; from time to time commanders expelled such slaves from military camps. The commander's symbolic labors, sharing to some degree the toil of his men, may have reconciled soldiers to their tasks.

During much of the Principate, the soldiers were not involved in active campaigns. *Disciplina militaris* imposed *labor* and thus maintained soldiers' *virtus. Virtus* could be displayed under peacetime conditions as the might and energy expended by soldiers in permanent building, a demonstration of imperial power, as well as in other forms of labor.

Feasts of Mass Destruction: *Disciplina* and Austerity

The political economy of *disciplina militaris* also sought to control soldiers' consumption, especially eating and drinking. Dining and feasting were a major mode of social power in the Roman world, but *militia* was ideally a zone of austerity. Austerity was both formally rational, due to the vast scale of the army's needs and the limitations of ancient production and transportation, and embedded in elite values.

A double standard applied: officers might dine graciously, but soldiers were regarded as incapable of controlling their intake, so that drunken and gorged armies were easily ambushed and overcome. Luxury caused the collapse of military *habitus*. Soldiers' aggressiveness manifested as beastlike or cannibalistic savagery. Excessive consumption of meat was associated with "barbarian" status. *Disciplina*

militaris imposed an archaically simple diet on soldiers, emphasizing grain rather than meat, and imposing simple methods of preparation. This austerity was made palatable by the commander's or emperor's symbolic adoption of a similar lifestyle on campaign. In practice, soldiers sought a greater variety of foodstuffs than their limited rations.