**The Third Servile Revolt**

***-Crixus the Gaul***

*Presented by William Wang*

Crixus was born in Gaul and he was enslaved by the Romans under unknown circumstances. His village was most likely raided and he was kept as a slave. He was transported back to Italy where he resided and he eventually became trained as a gladiator in Capua (a city north of Naples).

Around 73 B.C, Crixus joined Spartacus and started a small slave revolt against their masters. This started in their training school, Lentulus Batiatus in Capua. They were successful and about 70 gladiators escaped. These slaves defeated a smaller Roman force sent to capture them and they eventually found refuge on Mount Vesuvius. Their famous escape spread across the country and soon, more and more slaves escaped and joined the revolt. Around this time, the fellow slaves elected Crixus, the thracian Spartacus and fellow Gaul Oenomaus to become leaders of the slave army. Afterwards, Gannicus and Castus would serve under Spartacus as generals.

This slave movement is known as the Third Servile War and gained great success. The Romans sent military forces to attack their camp on Vesuvius (led by Gaius Claudius Glaber, legate and praetor) but the gladiators devised a plan that used rope fashioned from vines to scale and flank the army, thus gaining another victory. These great victories against the Roman empire caused thousands and thousands of slaves to join the movement and at the war’s peak, the slave army had as many as 150 000 in their ranks. Another praetor, Publius Varinius, was sent to stop Spartacus’ army. For some reason however, his forces were split under the command of his subordinates Furius and Cossinius. These forces were easily defeated by the slave army and the Roman’s equipment were seized. During this time period, the slave army was having trouble with housing all their members so they captured entire towns such as Nola, Nuceria, Thurii, and Metapontum. They spent the winter of 73-72 BC training for war.

Crixus decided to split shortly afterwards with a small part of the army. As the revolt was eventually unsuccessful, historian do not know why they split but many theorie have been made. A popular theory is that Crixus wanted to stay in Italy and plunder the countryside and then eventually Rome while Spartacus wanted to escape Italy over the Alps and to freedom. The reason why this is a popular theory is because the raiding of the towns Metapontum and Thurii are distant from the raiding of the Nola and Nuceria, thus hinting that there were in fact two separate groups of the rebellion. While this theory is not contradicted, there is no direct evidence supporting it. Everything is surrounded in mystery. Historians are even unsure whether the army acted under Spartacus or if they were a band of several groups, each following a leader (Crixus, Gannicus, Oenomaus, Castus, to name a few).

Around this time, the Senate finally starts to think of the slaves as a major threat and they dispatch consular legions under the command of Lucius Gellius Publicola and Gnaeus Cornelius Lentulus Clodianus. These legions were successful and managed to surround the 30 000 men following under Crixus and killed two thirds of them, including Crixus himself. After this period, there are two separate documentations of history by the two historians at the time, Appian and Plutarch. These histories don’t contradict each other but simply report of different events that happened in different places.

Because of Crixus’ death, Spartacus captured Roman soldiers and uses them as gladiators in their own “Gladiatorial Games” in honour of Crixus. He executed about 300 Roman soldiers in this way.

Around this time, Marcus Crassus, perhaps the richest man in history took over the Roman army. He was given praetorship and he assembled six new legions as well as the two under Gellius and Lentulus. He was a cruel commander and he enacted the punishment of unit decimation. It is reported that he either destroyed his whole army for a defeat (4000 soldiers) or destroyed the two consular legions (under Gellius and Lentulus) for cowardice. This proved to his soldiers that he was more dangerous than their enemies and motivated the Roman soldiers to fight.

This led to to another series of wars with Spartacus, eventually driving the slave army to seek retreat to Sicily. They made a bargain with some pirates for passage to Sicily but the pirates seemed to have betrayed them and left them stranded. Spartacus then tried build ships or rafts to traverse the river but this failed. They retreated to Rhegium, but Crassus followed and built fortifications to surround the army. The rebels were cut from supplies.

Around this time, Pompey, another military commander was returning with his legions from a war in Hispania and he was ordered to bypass Rome and go directly to Crassus and help him take down the slaves. Crassus, fearing that the credit for the victory would go to Pompey, decided to act quickly. He orders his whole army to attack. A group of Spartacus’ army led by Gannicus and Castus breaks off and flees to the mountain but the legion manages to kill about 12,000 of them. Spartacus realises that his army is losing discipline and thus, decides to charge head on and meet the Romans in a final last stand now called the Battle of Siler River. The vast majority of Spartacus’ army were killed on the battlefield and historians report that Spartacus was killed as well, although his body was not recovered.

**Crixus’ main goals were speculated to be:**

Escape from Roman rule

Kill Romans

Plunder cities and villages

Destroy the Roman government

Take over Rome

**Possible Changes:**

Crixus should have stayed with the main army instead of branching off to plunder other villages. A feasible option would have been to escape over the Alps quickly, travel to Sicily to incite a slave revolt (which was Spartacus’ plan) and gather another hundred thousands slaves and recruit into the army. This would make their army almost 250 000 men strong, more than enough to cause a serious threat to the Roman empire. From there, they could take over Sicily or simply disperse the army and let the slaves go back to their homelands (Gaul, Thrace, Sicily, African countries, etc). If they did decide to capture Rome, they would have been a lot stronger and gained valuable time in Sicily to train and gather equipment.