Delegate: Liam Meisner

Committee: Third Servile Revolt—Rebels

Character: Oenamus

For the Roman Republic, slavery was an important part of the economy. They were acquired either through purchase from merchants or from overseas conquests, and served a variety of roles, from personal assistants and servants to miners and farmworkers. The latter slaves were the lowest “grade”, preforming hard labor in terrible conditions. These conditions gave rise to the First and Seconds Servile revolts. The first took place from 135-132 BCE in Sicily, where an estimated 200,000 slaves revolted. However, it never posed any threat to the Republic, and was crushed. The Second Servile War lasted from 104-100 BCE. Also in Sicily, it too was easily crushed. (Heritage History, 2015)

The Third Servile Revolt began in a gladiator school. Gladiators were men (often slaves or criminals) who fought to the death in arenas against each other or animals for entertainment. In 73 BCE, a group of about 200 gladiators in a school owned by Lentulus Batiatus escaped, seizing kitchen tools and fighting their way out. They then seized Gladiatorial armaments. Upon escape, three leaders were chosen—Crixis and Oenomaus, two Gallic slaves, and Spartacus, a man of mysterious origin, who is speculated to be either a Thracian military man, or a captured prisoner of war. The slaves eventually began a campaign around Capua, defeating a small force of Roman troops sent after them, and freeing slaves in the are, recruiting more to their cause. They eventually set up base at Mount Vesuvius. (Appian, 2015)

The Roman army was a very formidable fighting force. Men of the ages of 16-60 fought in the army. The Roman military structure was very organized. The largest unit was a legion, which had about 5,000 men. This was divided into 10 cohorts, which typically contained about 480-500 men. A cohort was made up of 80-man centuries. (Cartwright, 2013) Roman equipment was all uniform. Soldiers carried a gladius, a short sword used for stabbing. They also used javelins known as pilum. The pila was a long and heavy wooden shaft connected to a 2-foot iron neck with a barbed tip at the point. With the tip and the iron neck, it could pierce through armor or a shield and into the man behind. Even if it didn’t kill the target, their shield was now rendered useless by a hard-to-dislodge heavy pike sticking through it. After being thrown, the pila would become damaged, preventing the Romans’ enemies from throwing it back. Soldiers typically carried two pilum. (Ancientmilitary, 2010)

Oenamus is a Gallic gladiator, of relatively unknown origins. He is one of the leaders of the revolt, along with Crixus and Spartacus. He was one of the original slaves who escaped from the academy run by Lentulus Batiatus. (Appian, 2015) As a Gaul, he has the power to communicate with slaves across the land, and has a large network of contacts.

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