The Human Trafficking Operations of the Viking and Cilician Pirates

**I. Introduction.**

Thesis: This paper draws on literary, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence as well as the insights of modern scholarship to demonstrate that

it was the lack of "state sponsorship" that caused the Vikings to decline

Delos and Ephesus are comparable in the geopolitical dynamics of their rise and fall as preeminence centers of human trafficking, the general obscurity of those conducting transactions, and the origins and fates of slaves passing through their markets.

**II. Definitions and Scope.**

Define slave/trafficking victim.

Cambridge World History of Slavery definition.

Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 definition.

**III. Magnitude.**

I.e. Supply and demand in the regions supplied by Delos and Ephesus.

Delos

Magnitude and demand are difficult to ascertain.

Finley:

Most Greek families depended on selves and own families for labor.

Wealthy minority used slaves to work land.

Enormous prosperity of the Delian slave trade indicates high demand.

Rome

A greater abundance of demographic evidence contemporaneous to the peak prominence of the Ephesian slave market has enabled more detailed estimations.

Rise of empire ->

increased extent of slave labor in agriculture

social ostentation -> large slave retinues in urban households

(slaves were also used in other occupations, i.e. *servi publici* (slaves employed in bureaucratic services)

Vast slave workforce:

End of 1st century BCE, 2-3 million slaves in Italy out of a total population of 6-7.5 million people (Bradley, depending on the model)

Constant demand for new slaves:

The Roman empire in its entirety between the 50s BCE and 150 CE required at least 500,000 new slaves per year (Bradley)

**IV. Delos and Ephesus in Comparison: Premier Centers of Human Trafficking.**

Economically dependent on servile labor to this degree, both Roman Greece and early imperial Rome undoubtedly required well-positioned slave sourcing and trading centers; to meet this need, Delos and Ephesus rose to and eventually fell from similar heights of preeminence.

Their geographic similarities are perhaps self-evident; the prime Aegean locations of the Delian and Aegean markets placed each at a nexus of Mediterranean trade.

In tracking their growth and decline, it is more important to maintain the awareness that both Greek cities were products of Roman geopolitics.

Delos

Geographically ideal

Cultural center

Rise to prominence:

In 166 BC, the Roman Senate converted Delos to a free port as an act of economic warfare against Rhodes.

With the Roman destruction of Corinth in 146 BC, Delos stepped into Corinth's role as Greece's premier center of trade.

Merchants and artisans from throughout the Mediterranean flocked to the rapidly-developing city, as did slave traders in droves.

In the years following the Battle of Pydna in 168 BC, the Rome-executed disintegration of the Seleucid empire and the ensuing civil disorder in Syria and Cilicia generated a flood of slaves captured as prisoners of war and by Cilician pirates.

Delos became the capital of the slave trade, where lives were purchased by the tens of thousands. See Strabo 14.5.2.

Decline:

A massacre in 87 BC as well as a second sack by pirates – that very demographic which had nourished the city's slave trade – in 69 BC precipitated the decline of Delian trade

Further exacerbated by rising competition from Italian ports.

By 48 BC, Delos had faded into commercial mediocrity.

Ephesus

Geographically ideal

Interface between west and east

Ephesian trade connected Rome with commerce deep into Asia Minor.

In its heyday from the twilight of the republic to the height of the imperial period, Ephesus was the new capital of human trafficking.

The evidence for this Greek trade center's preeminence is bountiful in the written record:[[1]](#footnote-1)

Varro customarily filled his large servile workforce with slaves acquired at Ephesus and in fact uses it as his go-to example of a slave market

Ephesus features prominently as the quintessential slave market in the *Life of Aesop*.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**V. Delos and Ephesus in Comparison: Traders and Customers.**

Brief statement on the approach taken in this section, given such data scarcity.

Delos

Few indications.

Quiet written record.

Wealthy buyers in Italy would have had enough purchasing

parity by the Late Republic, as would buyers in Greece.

Ephesus

A little more evidence.

Greek names of slaves.

Inscriptions in Greek and latin.

Some evidence in the literature (e.g. Toranius Flaccus).

Commonality of slave traders at both sites: reputation for dishonesty.

Did not stop wealthy Romans from involving themselves practically with slavery.

**VI. Delos and Ephesus in Comparison: Origins and Destinations of Slaves**

Perhaps one other common, incontestable characteristic of slave traders at both Delos and Ephesus was their willingness to go great lengths – sometimes literally – to source slaves in such a way that maximized opportunistic advantages.

Enough evidence and contextual information exist to construct a general conceptualization for the sprawling origins of slaves trafficked through Delos and Ephesus.

Maritime crime was undoubtedly an important pipeline by which trafficking victims found themselves in one of these slave markets.

The fates of slaves sold at Delos and Ephesus are poorly-recorded but clear possibilities exist.

Ephesus

Sources

Piracy

Destinations

Delos

Sources

Piracy

Destinations

**VII. Concluding Remarks.**

Delos, Ephesus, and all those dealers and customers now anonymous to the retrospective historian prospered at the expense of human lives and human rights. Such concepts would have been mostly alien to the residents of the world surrounding these Greek cities – a world in which prisoners were legitimately enslaved so long they were, in Wiedemann's words, "captured in a just war which had been formally proclaimed by due ceremony" (Wiedemann 114) and those feeding this branch of the human trafficking pipeline "had no doubts that any war they engaged in was just, and the captives their property." Brief moments in which a conscience regarding slavery uncomfortably surfaced were sometimes managed as loosely interpretable law (*Digest* 48.18: "Torturing Slaves") but it would be another two millennia would pass before a belief in human rights was proclaimed on a global scale of policy with Article 4 of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the distressingly recent year of 1948. Meanwhile, trafficking victims would wait at the market. Their future owners might soon learn their bitter desire for freedom, but for the time being, they passed along the network as part of a system designed, as Finley said, to strip a human’s person and personality such that a profitable new slave might be created (Finley 1968).

1. And, according to Harris, in the legal record; Harris cites new customs laws set in place in response to Ephesus's increased prominence. (H. Engelmann and D. Knibbe, 'Das Zollgesetz der Provinz Asia', Epigraphica Anatolica I4 (I 989), 11.II-I2, 98-9, II7-22. via Harris.) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Koester 778. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)