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**BULGARIA'S EARLY MEDIEVAL CAPITALS OF PLISKA AND PRES LAV:
WERE THEY REALLY BUILT TO RESEMBLE 700 YEAR OLDER ROMAN CITIES?**

“The first inhabitants of the khan’s residence who lived in lightly-built wooden buildings and yurts, did not need any water installations. With the onset of the stone construction [in the 9th c.; GH] such need became apparent. Free-flowing water was brought by the way of an water-conduit from 7 km away, from the springs at the foot of the plateau at the village of Isbul. The **water-catching there was pronounced to date to antique times** [1st-3rd. c. CE; GH] on the basis of the **antique building materials** used in its construction. Such materials had also been (re-)used in the building of Pliska itself but this **does not mean that Pliska is antique** in age [because it was unquestionably built in the Middle Ages of the 9th c. CE; GH]“ (Rashev/Dimitrov 1999, ch. 4).¹

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¹ Thanks for editorial help go to Clark Whelton (New York).

I PLISKA

European cities that were newly built during the early Middle Ages (8th-10th c. CE) are believed to have been very rare. Viking towns such as Kaupang (Norway), Birka (Sweden), Haithabu (Germany), or Truso (Poland) with 1,000 to 2,000 inhabitants present rather modest examples, though they are quite rich with Roman artifacts – millefiori glass, locks and keys, coins, square sails, ports,

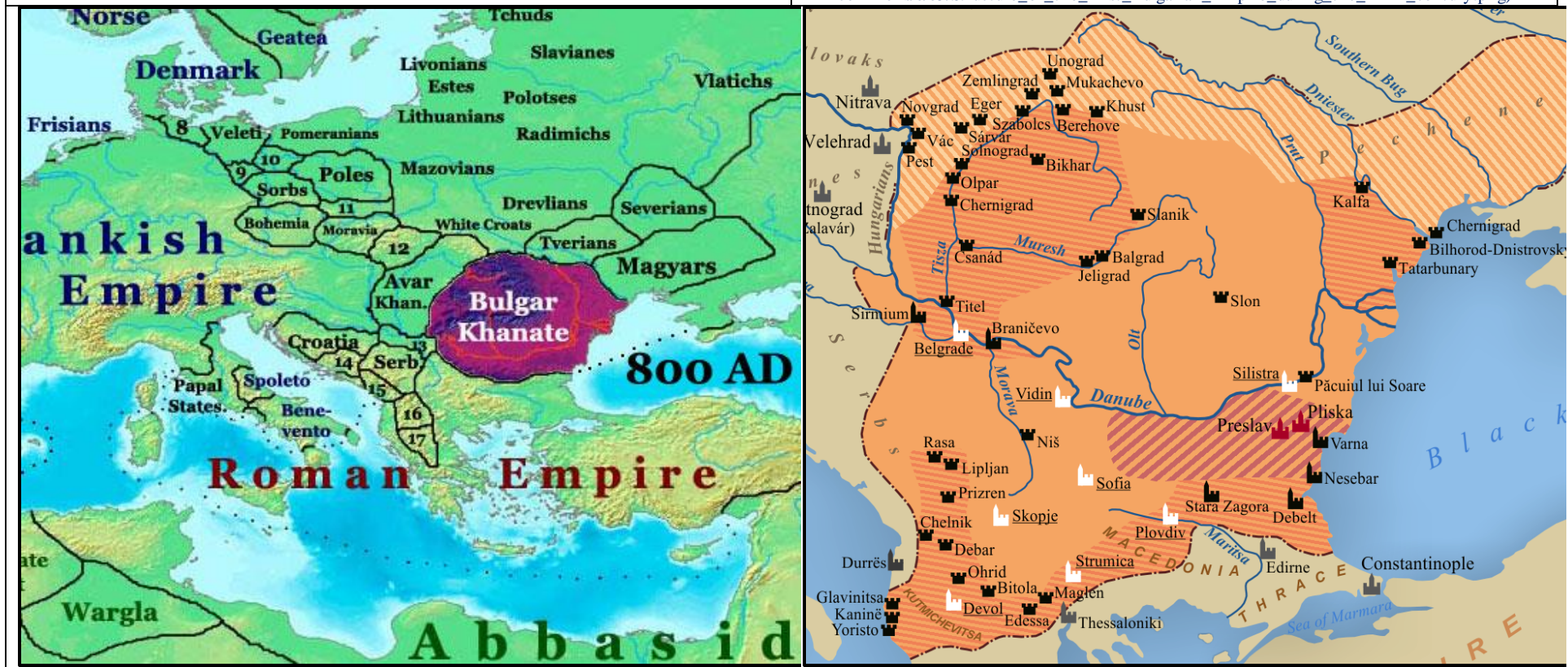
Bulgaria during its golden, which was suddenly and violently interrupted at the end of the Early Middle Ages.

Location of Early Medieval Bulgaria (ca 800 CE)



(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bulgars>)

Empire under Simeon I (893-927; Tsar since 913; Bulgaria's CHARLEMAGNE) with the early medieval metropolises, Pliska and Preslav

(http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b5/Structure_of_the_First_Bulgarian_Empire_during_the_IX-X_century.png)



breakwaters etc. – that were already known or made some 700 years earlier (Heinsohn 2014c; 2014 d). The Carolingian villa at Ingelheim (built in the 8th/9th c. CE) is not a town but a palace. Still, it is an impressive complex because it is built in Roman styles and materials that definitely look 700 years older. It is “typified by a semicircular building and a royal hall built on the model of antique basilicas. [...] A 7-kilometre-long water channel built in the Roman style served to supply the water. [...] The architecture and architectural sculpture show the influence of antique predecessors” (Early Middle Ages 2009).

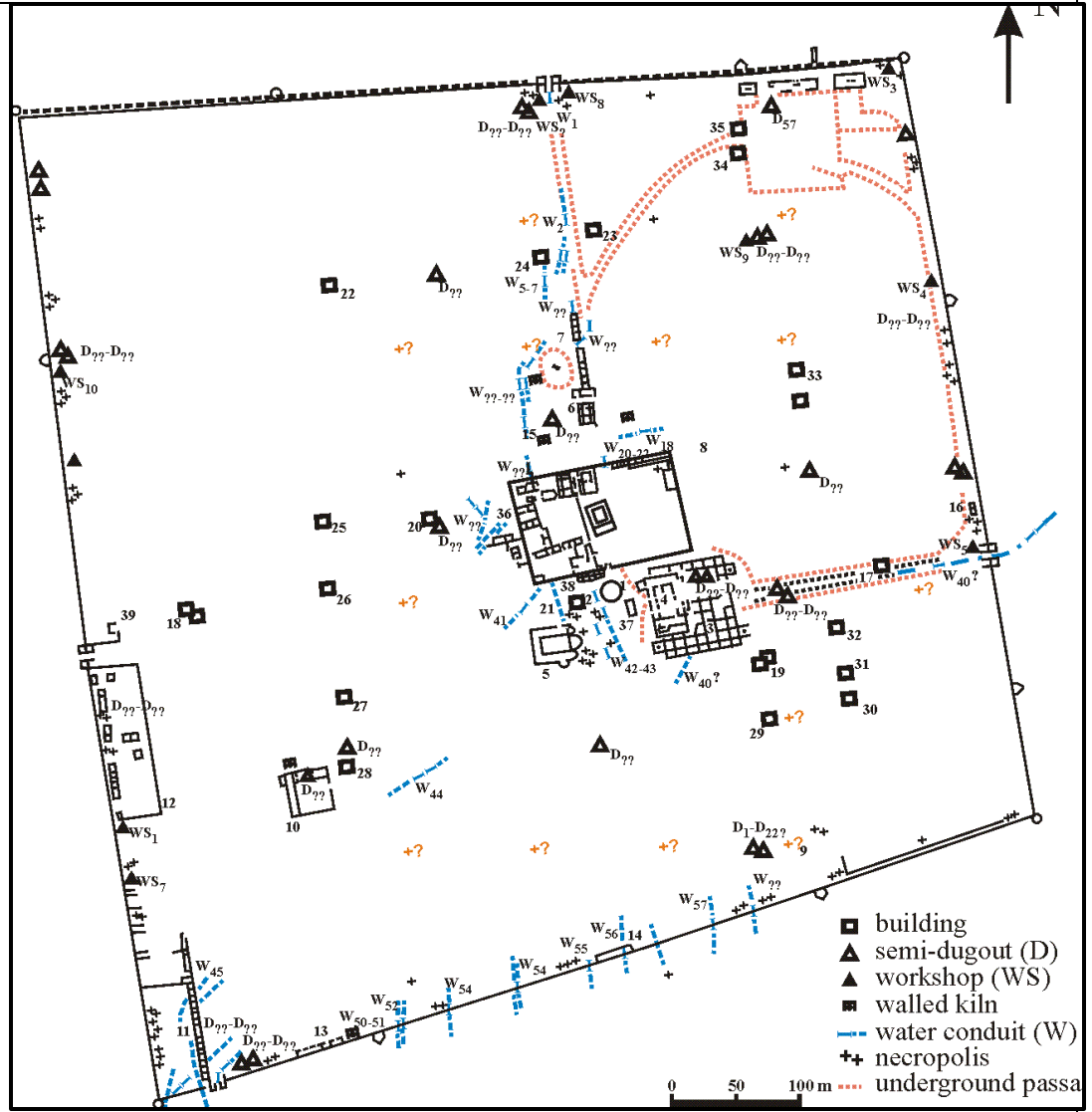
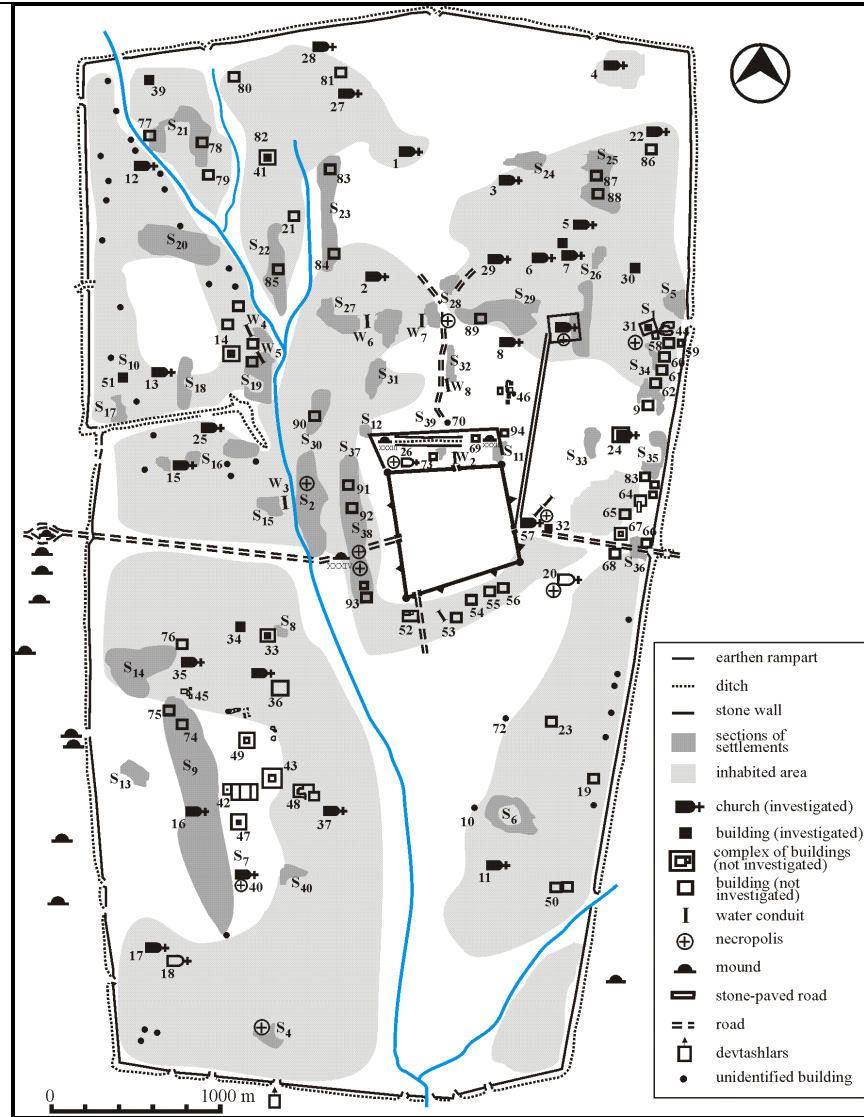
Ingelheim: Charlemagne’s imperial villa (8th/9th c. CE) in Roman 2nd c. style and materials.	
Reconstruction of the villa. The hall (bottom of the illustration) contains the <i>aula regia</i> (http://www.burgenwelt.de/ingelheim_pfalz/).	Interior of the villas’s audience hall (<i>aula regia</i>) in Roman colours (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Digitale_Rekonstruktion_-_Geometrische_Ausmalung,_Innenansicht.jpg).
 <p>BURGENWELT</p>	

Excavators are surprised that no instructions or orders by Charlemagne were ever found or even heard of that forced his architects to employ 700- year-old designs, forms and materials. Yet, they are thrilled that down to the hydraulic cement, as well as the chemical fingerprint of the wall colours, the Frankish builders were able to retrieve all the secrets of Roman craftsmen that had been lost for so many centuries. Ingelheim, therefore, is looked on as nothing short of a miracle (Heinsohn 2014b).

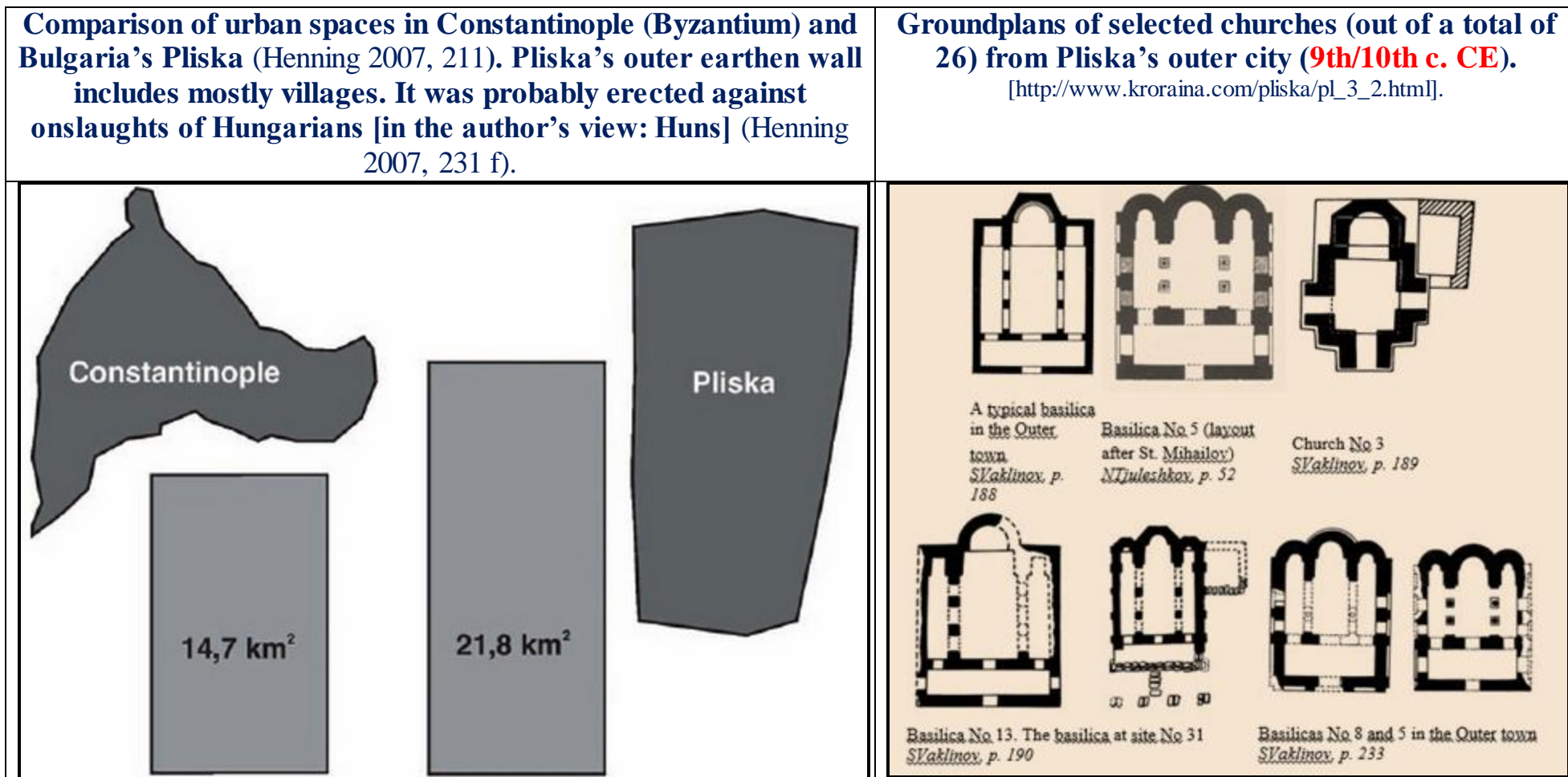
PLISKA: Europe's largest newly built city (ca 22 km²) of the Early Middle Ages [http://www.kroraia.com/pliska/pl_3_2.html]

Earthen rampart (12 m wide; 3 m high) around exterior city with villages and 26 churches (9th/10th c. CE).

Pliska's interior city (48 ha) with stone walls (2,60 m x 10 m high), four gates (13-14 m high), and citadel (128 x 84 m) [9th/10th c. CE]



Still, Ingelheim was not a town but an emperor's residence *cum* audience hall (*aula regia*). Bulgaria's huge agglomerations, Pliska and Preslav, however, were urban jewels that "could match Constantinople, the global metropolis" (Kirilov 2006, 139).



Bulgaria's urban explosion during the Early Middle Ages, which matches the scope of city building in Rome's imperial period some 700 years earlier, takes the excavators by surprise because even Constantinople cannot not show any new building between 600 and 800 CE. Actually "nothing is known about Byzantine cities from the 7th to the 9th c. CE" (Kirilov 2006, 181). Whilst the most

powerful empire of the Early Middle Ages lacks any urban ambition, the Bulgarian newcomers do not limit themselves to copies of individual Roman villas *à la* Ingelheim. Boldly, they recreate huge Roman urban ensembles whilst the rest of Europe appears to have fallen asleep in a dark age. It is this absolutely extraordinary, even ravenous, urban appetite of former steppe dwellers that makes the Bulgarians sensational and unique all over Europe. Without question, they add their own touches – like certain patterns on their ceramics. Yet, basically they return to Roman patterns whilst the new Rome, Constantinople, could not achieve anything in terms of city building during the same period.

Pliska: excavated section of the interior city with foundations of Khan Omurtag's (814-831 CE) palace (right)

(<http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=381235&page=106>).



Reconstruction of Khan Omurtag's (814-831 CE) throne palace

(http://www.kroraina.com/pliska/pl_3_2.html).



Pliska's largest basilica (99 x 29,5 m; 2920 m²) may have been built above the burial ground of Bulgaria's first and most prominent martyr, Khan Ormutag's (814-831 CE) son Enravota (killed around 830 CE). The foundations of a cross shaped chapel under the basilica's altar area may have belonged to Saint Enravota. Scholars believe that the period of Christian martyrs of the 1st/2nd c. CE

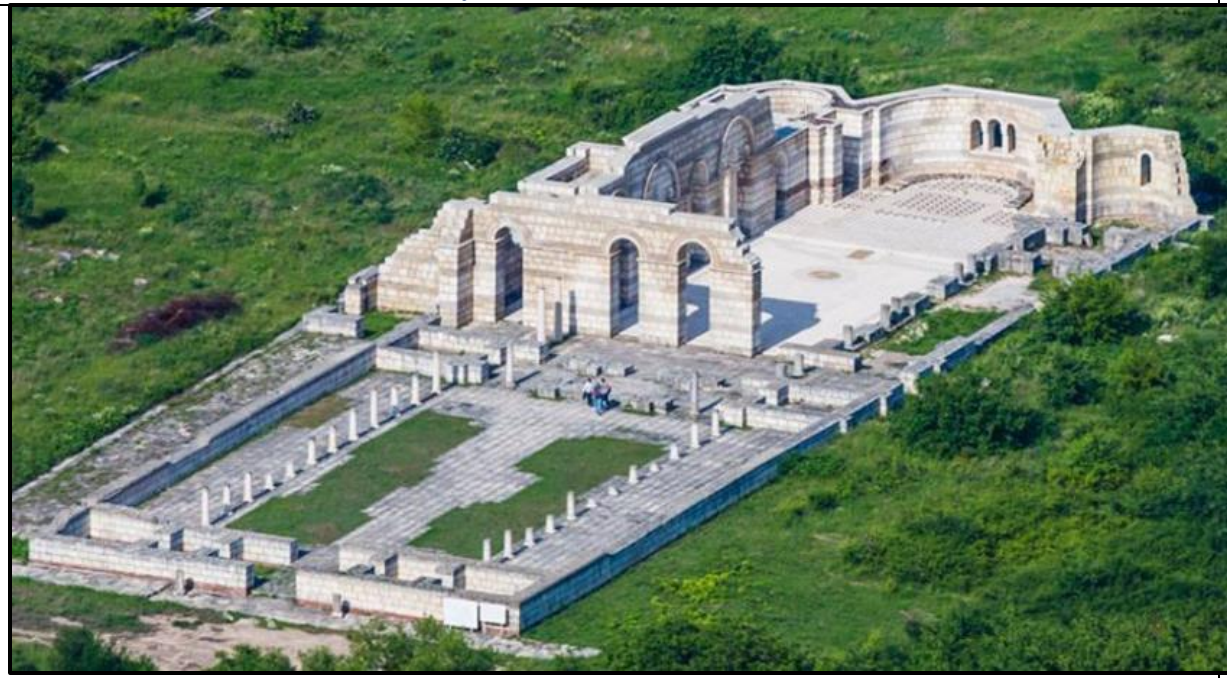
has been repeated in very similar manner 700 years later by Bulgarians in the 8th/9th c. CE (cf. Heinsohn 2014a). Yet, for stratigraphical and architectural reasons, some Bulgarian archaeologists have identified the massive basilica „as a building from antiquity“ (Kirilov 2006, 132). In that case, Pliska must have had a Roman style period some 700 years prior to its early medieval metropolitan period (8th/9th c. CE). Suddenly, one would have to deal with Bulgarians of Enravota’s entourage some 700 years prior to his suffering as a martyr. That would turn the Bulgarians into contemporaries of Romans from the time of Hadrian (117-138) or Marcus Aurelius (161-180). Such a placement would definitely explain Bulgaria’s 1st/2nd c. type of Roman architecture that is not only characteristic for the basilica but for other buildings, too. Yet, it would stand in a bewildering contradiction to the early medieval date of the Bulgarian Empire. So far there is no reasonable solution to this strange chronological confusion.

Pliska’s largest church basilica (99 x 29,5 m; 2920 m²) in the compound of the archbishop’s monastery (from 863 CE)

[<http://kodeks.uni-bamberg.de/bulgaria/PliskaBasilika.htm/> <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=381235&page=106>]

Situation after excavation

Partial rebuilding onsite in Ziegeldurchschuss technique (walls of ashlar alternating with bricks) already fashionable in the 1st c. BCE/CE.



Model of Pliska's largest basilica (99 x 29,5 m; 2920 m²; 863 CE ff.) as a small copy of Rome's Old St. Peter (4th c. CE).

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Basilica,_Pliska#/media/File:Old_Basilica_in_Pliska_Reconstruction.JPG).

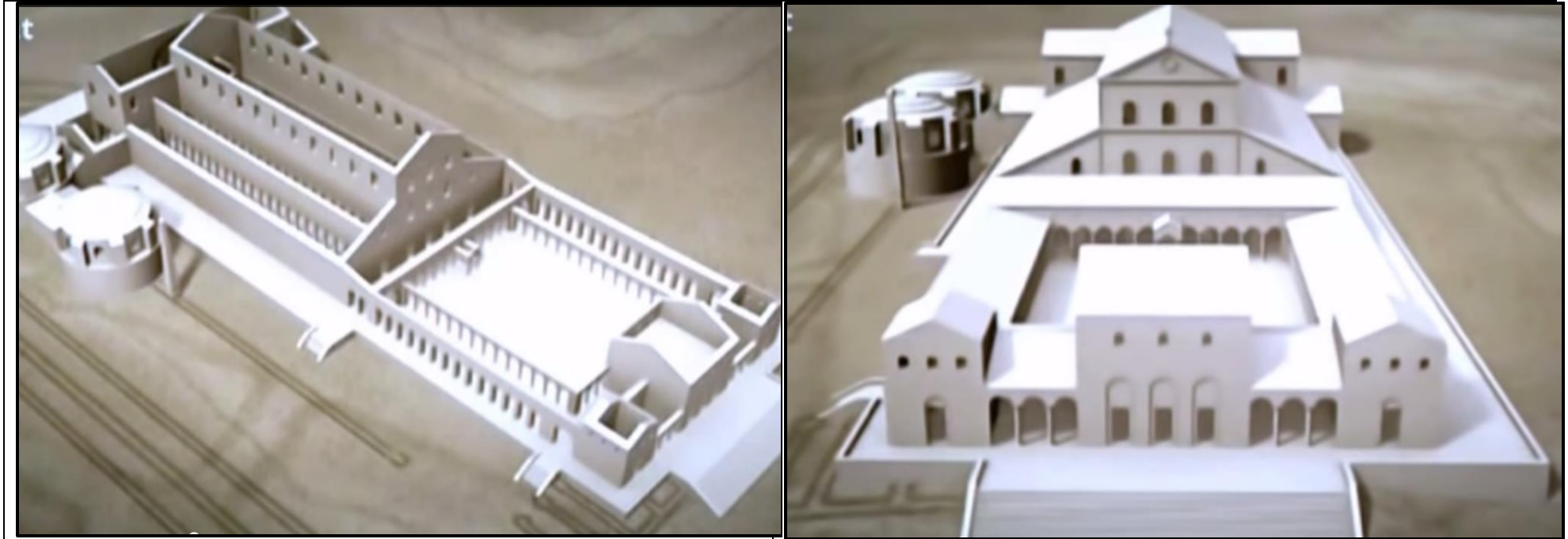
(http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schule_von_Preslaw#/media/Datei:Die_alte_basilika_modell.jpg).



Material details of the buildings at Pliska prove to be even more puzzling. The city “had served as Bulgaria’s production center up to the end of the 9th c. CE.” The iron industry alone was firing up “a total of 62 furnaces“ (Kirilov 2006, 137). One major glass company alone had been working “with 9 smelting ovens [...] dated by the excavator to the end of the 9th or the beginning of the 10th c. CE“ (Kirilov 2006, 137). Even more impressive was the manufacturing of ceramics: “There were two independent branches – the mass production of household items, and the sector for architectural ceramics“ (Kirilov 2006, 136). Yet, a closer look at pipes, bricks and roof tiles returned mind-boggling results because the early medieval builders had “used Roman period bricks and pan tiles“ (Kirilov 2006, 137). This was explained as a re-use of *spoliae* from 1st-3rd c. settlements in Bulgaria. Yet, such a way out only aggravated the problem. Who in his right mind would re-use 700 year old pan tiles that must have been crumbling in the roofers’ hands? Why not employ the solid products of Pliska’s state of the art own 9th c. CE architectural ceramics? How could the local producers of the 9th c. earn any money if 700 year old *spoliae* could be plucked from the ground everywhere for free? Who would have put up the money to start all these firms?

Reconstruction of Rome's Old St. Peter (4th c. CE) that may have served as inspiration for Pliska's 9th c. CE basilica.

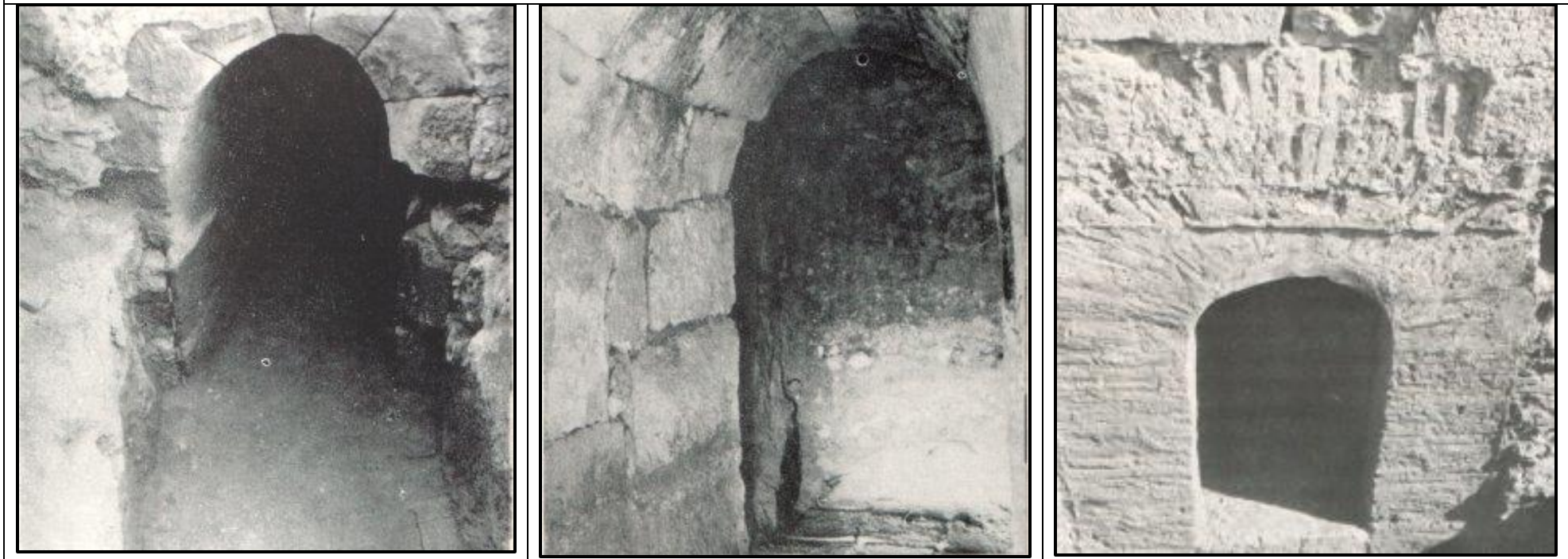
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1EsPBMVEZY>).



Business people in Pliska appeared to act insanely. In spite of all their sophisticated workshops, time and again local builders of the 9th/10th c. recklessly bungled their demanding jobs by resorting to 2nd-3rd c. scrap:

“Besides the already mentioned antique columns and capitals, Pliska contains other, more ancient materials. Most common amongst them are the bricks. A small part of them are Roman, from the **II-III c.**, sealed by the seals of the state or private persons. Predominate the bricks from the V-VII c. sealed by private persons, among whom the name ‘Dules’ being most frequent. These bricks were used in the earliest buildings in Pliska – the vaulted arches in the Throne Palace, the brick addition to the wall around the Small Palace, the floors of the secret underground passages“ (Rashev/Dimitrov 1999, ch. 15; bold GH).

Pliska: early medieval tunnels in ancient Roman shapes and executions. Left and center: tunnel (1.3 km) under palace. Right: passage under fortress walls [http://www.kroraina.com/pliska/pl_3_5.html].



Could it be that the Slavic master builders were not irresponsible, or even crazy? Rather, are modern historians mistaken about the chronology of the 1st millennium CE? Pliska's thermal baths may provide another hint that the Bulgarian architects were fully up to their tasks:

“The baths are one of the most characteristic elements of the Pliska Palace. They are a real wonder in the middle of this dry plain, where the subterranean water level is nowadays at 10-12 m. depth. They were fed by an 7 km long aqueduct. Their small size distinguishes them from the large Roman baths, but their principal **layout and the construction of the heating installation (hypocaust) links them with the Antique** [1st-3rd c.; GH] and then the Byzantine traditions [4th-6th c.; GH]“ (Rashev/Dimitrov 1999, ch. 2; bold, GH).

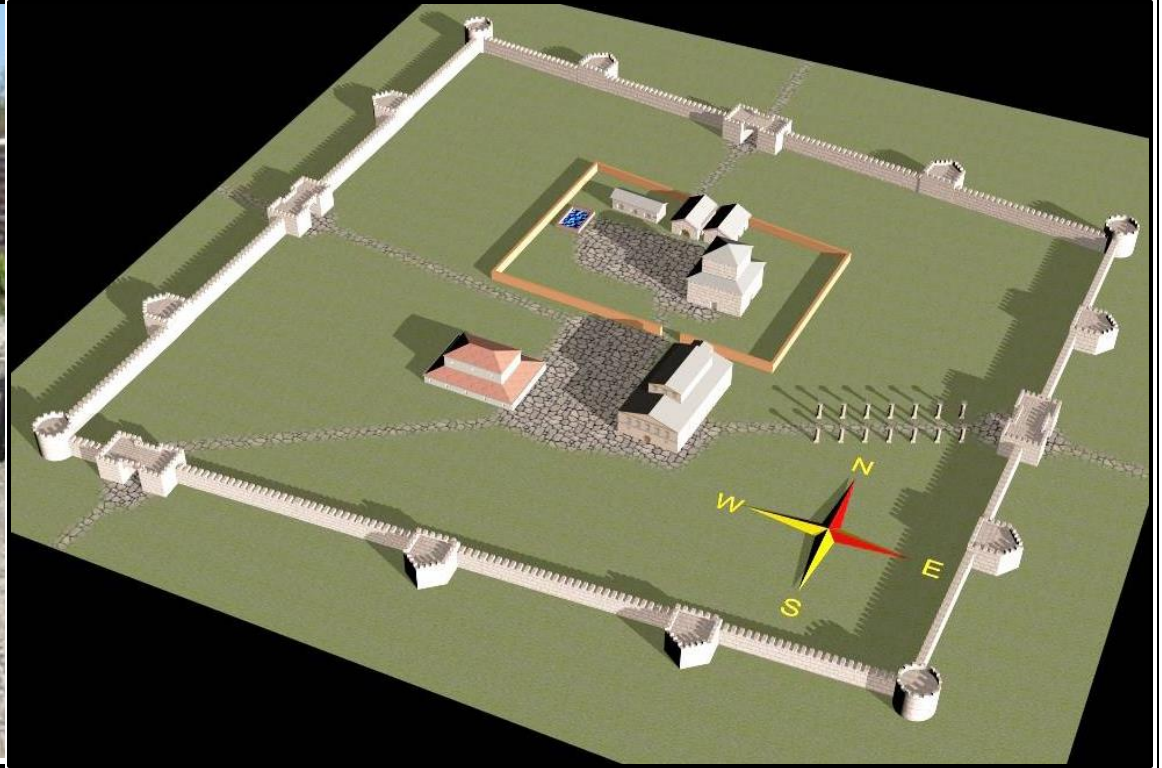
Roman style hypocaust heating in Early Medieval Pliska

(<http://www.panacomp.net/uploaded/pliska/pliska-archaeological-site.jpg>).



Partial digital model of Pliska's Early Medieval inner city in the outline of a Roman *castrum* of Antiquity

(<http://www.pmgsh.bg/bg/articles/category3/article55.html>).



The Bulgarians appear to have created a miracle no less impressive than the nearly unbelievable performance of Frankish builders who had managed to recreate 700-year-old Roman architecture at Charlemagne's Ingelheim. Bulgarian triumphal columns, as well as sculptural building decorations, also surprise by repeating Roman designs. Again, as with the pan tiles, the scholars are convinced that up to 700 year older materials had been bought from second hand dealers to be re-used:

“Its [the column’s; GH] diameter of 1 m would correspond to a height of 8-10 m. Its crudely polished surface has a shallow helical flute which makes it **resemble the similarly decorated Roman-Byzantine triumphal columns**. The poor quality of the marble used betrays a local origin, probably from the quarry in the district of Marcianopolis. / The types of decorations found in the pagan period buildings are facing plates of white marble, columns and re-used Byzantine capitals. During the Christian period the cornices under the roofs of some churches were made out of limestone segments with denticles. The altar barrier of the Palace Church was made of marble, decorated with the traditional geometrical and plant-like ornaments. A **lion statue (from Roman times?)** and a part of a relief of the Thracian heros was incorporated into the façade of the eastern gate“ (Rashev/Dimitrov 1999, ch. 10; bold GH).

There exists, however, one type of building material at Pliska that has defied all efforts to chronologically neutralize it as *spoliae*. It concerns the famous Roman invention of water-proof cement (also known as *pozzolana* after the ground volcanic slag from Pozzuoli/Naples that was mixed with powdered lime):

“The water for the baths was stored in a large reservoir with a volume of around 500 m³. Its walls were plastered with **special hydrophobic mortar**. The excess waters were diverted by pipes to a collector“ (Rashev/Dimitrov 1999, ch. 4; bold GH).

Water-proof cement cannot be picked from 700-year-old ruins to be re-liquidified and, then, employed a second time. It must be mixed on the spot. Yet, nobody claims that the Bulgarian builders re-invented that technique. Thus, Pliska’s hydraulic cement simply provides – like the supposedly 700 year older pan tiles – additional proof that Roman Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages with its material Roman culture are two aspects of the same Roman period that has been chronologically stretched over three periods – Antiquity, Late Antiquity, and Early Middle Ages.

However, contemporaneity does not mean ethnic identity. At Pliska there are undoubtedly non-Roman people (later called Bulgarians) employing Roman techniques. Their earliest buildings still show the form of the steppe yurt, indicating their realms of origin. The textile material is replaced by wood. Yet, the adoption of Roman outlines requires a further evolutionary step. It may well reflect the legal recognition of the newcomers as Roman *foederati*.

Yurt-shaped 8th c. CE palace in Pliska that had replaced the textiles used in the steppe with wooden panels.

Excavated foundations (<http://www.kroraina.com/pliska/s18.jpg>).



Attempt at reconstruction.



No less puzzling than the Roman designs and building materials are the ca. 600 coins so far discovered at Pliska. Only 12 belong to its “period as capital“ in the 8th/9th c. CE (Kirilov 2006, 137). Thirty-four belong to Antiquity and Late Antiquity “with the latest minted in the time of Justinus II (565-578)“ (Kirilov 2006, 137). These coins cannot be easily told apart from pieces struck under Justinus I (518-527). Thus, not only in terms of styles and building materials (including hydraulic cement) but also in monetary aspects **Pliska appears to belong to Antiquity and, at the same time, to the Early Middle Ages**. That certainly must sound bizarre but it is borne out by hard evidence. After all, there are no sections at Pliska that exhibit an Antiquity strata-group that is superimposed by a strata-group with Late Antiquity buildings on top of which new strata are found with early medieval buildings. There is just one strata group. The two expected additional ones are simply not there:

PLISKA BUILDINGS OF THE 8TH/9TH C. CE.**Remains of round tower**

(<http://bgglobe.net/historic-landmarks//pliska-the-first-capital-of-danubian-bulgaria-3824>).

**Partial reconstruction of an interior city gate**

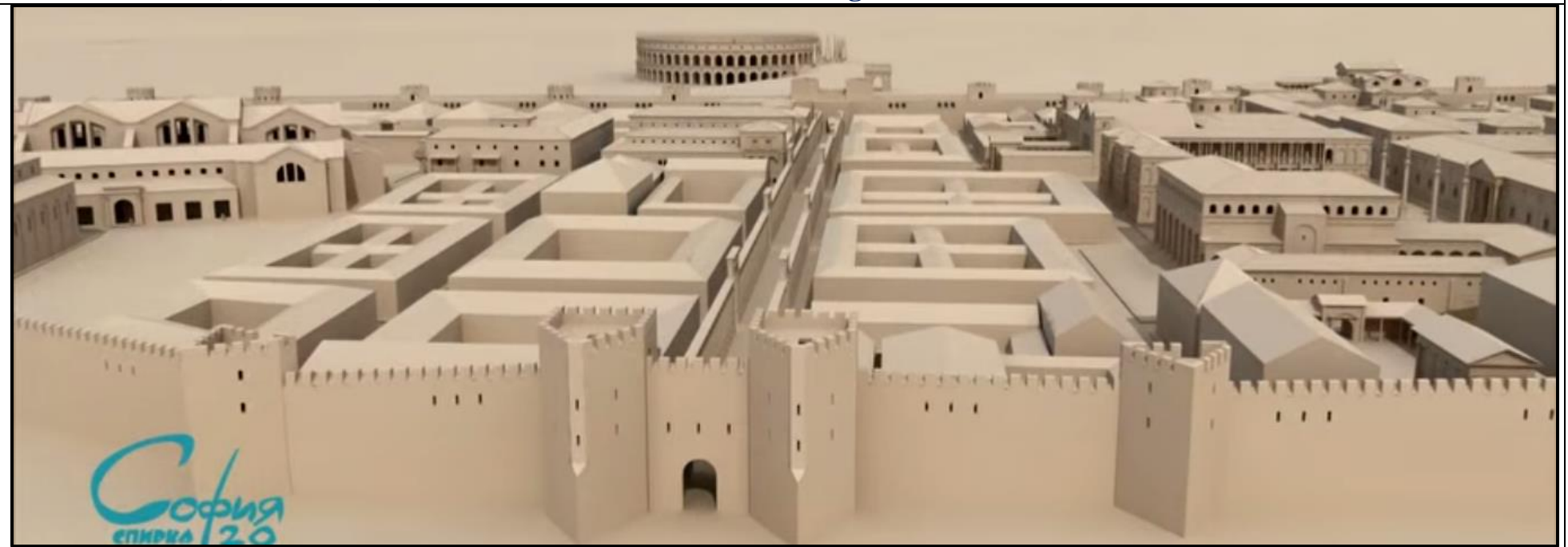
(<http://www.panacomp.net/uploaded/pliska/pliska-bugarska.jpg>).



„With the transfer and the re-use of such antique building materials must be linked the antique coins from the II to the VI c. found in Pliska, as well as other easily moved antique materials which cannot not contribute to the dating of any of Pliska's buildings. The thesis about the antique age of some buildings, on the basis of such mobile materials alone, is undefendable. It can be discussed only if there existed the corresponding cultural layer, formed in the same way as in all other Roman-Byzantine towns. Such a layer is absent in Pliska. Its absence can only mean that **no antique town existed there in the first place**“ (Rashev/Dimitrov 1999, ch. 15; bold GH).

Whilst Pliska has no building strata for Antiquity and Late Antiquity but only massively built up early medieval strata in the style of Antiquity, one of the city's rulers, Khan Krum (803-814 CE), has succeeded (in 809 CE) in occupying Bulgaria's [i.e., *Moesia*'s] Roman period capital, *Ulpia Serdica* (excavated beneath modern Sofia). Since *Ulpia Serdica* has rich building strata during Antiqui-

***Ulpia Serdica* (Roman period Sofia) in the 1st-3rd c. CE (attempt at reconstruction). The city is conquered by Bulgaria's Khan Krum (803-814 CE) at a time when there are no building strata at Sofia** [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5B-Qu9PqLM>].



ty (1st-3rd c. CE) but none for early medieval 8th-10th c. CE, Krum appears to have combined a conquest with time travel 700 years back into the past.

BULGARIA'S STRATIGRAPHY DURING THE FIRST MILLENIUM CE		
PERIODS	ROMAN CITIES: <i>ULPIA SERDICA</i> [SOFIA], <i>DUROSTORUM</i> [SILISTRA]	SLAVIC CITIES: PLISKA, PRES LAV
Early Middle Ages (EMA)	NO NEW BUILDING STRATA but visited by Krum (<i>Ulpia</i>) and Simeon (<i>Durostorum</i>).	RICH BUILDING STRATA WITH INTERNAL EVOLUTION DURING 8TH-10TH C. WITH DESIGNS AND MATERIALS LIKE IN ANTIQUITY. Coins are dated by catalogue to A, LA, and EMA but not stratigraphically according to EMA stratum in which they are found.
Late Antiquity (LA)	NO NEW BUILDING STRATA after 3rd c. crisis. Coins are dated by catalogue but not according to ANTIQUITY stratum in which they are found.	NO BUILDING STRATA (but supposedly a <i>FIRST BULGARIAN EMPIRE</i>).
Antiquity (A)	RICH BUILDING STRATA WITH INTERNAL EVOLUTION DURING 1ST-3RD. C. WITH DESIGNS AND MATERIALS LIKE IN EARLY MIDDLE AGES.	NO BUILDING STRATA

Notwithstanding all its stone and brick massiveness in the 9th/10th c. CE, Pliska comes to a violent and sudden end. After that devastation only small and primitive peasant huts are carved into the debris: "A situation of fully developed and highly specialized artisan production was followed later by a process of broad ruralization" (Henning 2007, 216). „Between the 11th and 15th c. CE the Pliska basin was turned into a desert landscape" (Kirilov 2006, 134). "**A dark grey (most probably erosion) layer**" (Henning 2007, 219; bold GH) had strangled that urban jewel for good:

“After the production activities had stopped, for whatever reason, the whole production area was covered by considerable amounts of erosion material (colluvium). Coming from higher parts of the area near to the Inner Town’s fortification it traveled

downhill and spread over the former craft-working zone (Pl. 24-b). The question as to **why these erosion processes took place and exactly how long they lasted is difficult to answer**. / Approximately at the end of these soil creep events cottage dwellings of the grubenhause type were constructed in great numbers by digging them either into the erosion layer directly or into the older garbage layers of the abandoned craft-working quarter“ (Henning 2007, 218; bold GH).

The “why“ behind the dark grey layer clearly leads to something gigantic. At the same time Pliska is reduced to ruins, around the 930s CE, cities from Birka in Sweden to Samarra in Iraq disappear under mud, dark earth or sand. Strangely, like Pliska, many of these 700-930s sites contain 1-230s Roman artifacts (see the author’s articles in q-mag, 2013 ff.). The 930s-cataclysm is archaeologically well attested to in Eastern Europe. Slovakia suffered major “destructions” at the “beginning of the 10th century” (Chorvatova 2012, 249). No military opponents or other causes are known that may have been the culprit. Yet, simultaneously, in the Czech Republic, “castles of regional chieftains were destroyed. [...] That phenomenon is not at all mentioned in the written sources” (Sommer 2012, 266/273). Poland was hit no less severely in the early 10th century: “There was a rapid, sometimes catastrophic, collapse of many of the pre-existing tribal centers. These events were accompanied by the permanent or temporary depopulation of former areas of settlement” (Buko 2011, 464). Parallel to these disastrous events the Baltic ports of the Slavs’ North-European trading partners mysteriously but lethally “experienced discontinuity” (Kleingärtner 2014, 249).

What toppled their habitats also closed the minds of the survivors:

“The tenth century was the ‘age of Iron‘ (*saeculum ferreum*), the Dark Age (*saeculum obscurum*) – dark not merely in the sense of the cognitive possibilities available to historians, but also in the sense of more primitive relationships and the ‘lack of enlightenment‘ of our tenth century ancestors. When the Carolingian unity began to **crumble** and then **collapse**, when a period of renewed and universal anarchy in social relationships came [...], when the light of the splendid but chronologically and geographically limited Carolingian Renaissance was **extinguished**, it would seem that the development of Latin Europe became **retarded**. A symptom of this regression maybe the situation that in the period from about **920-960** as far as we know,

nothing of any great interest in the fields of intellectual development or literature appeared in Latin Europe” (Strzelczyk 2001, 42 f.; bold GH).

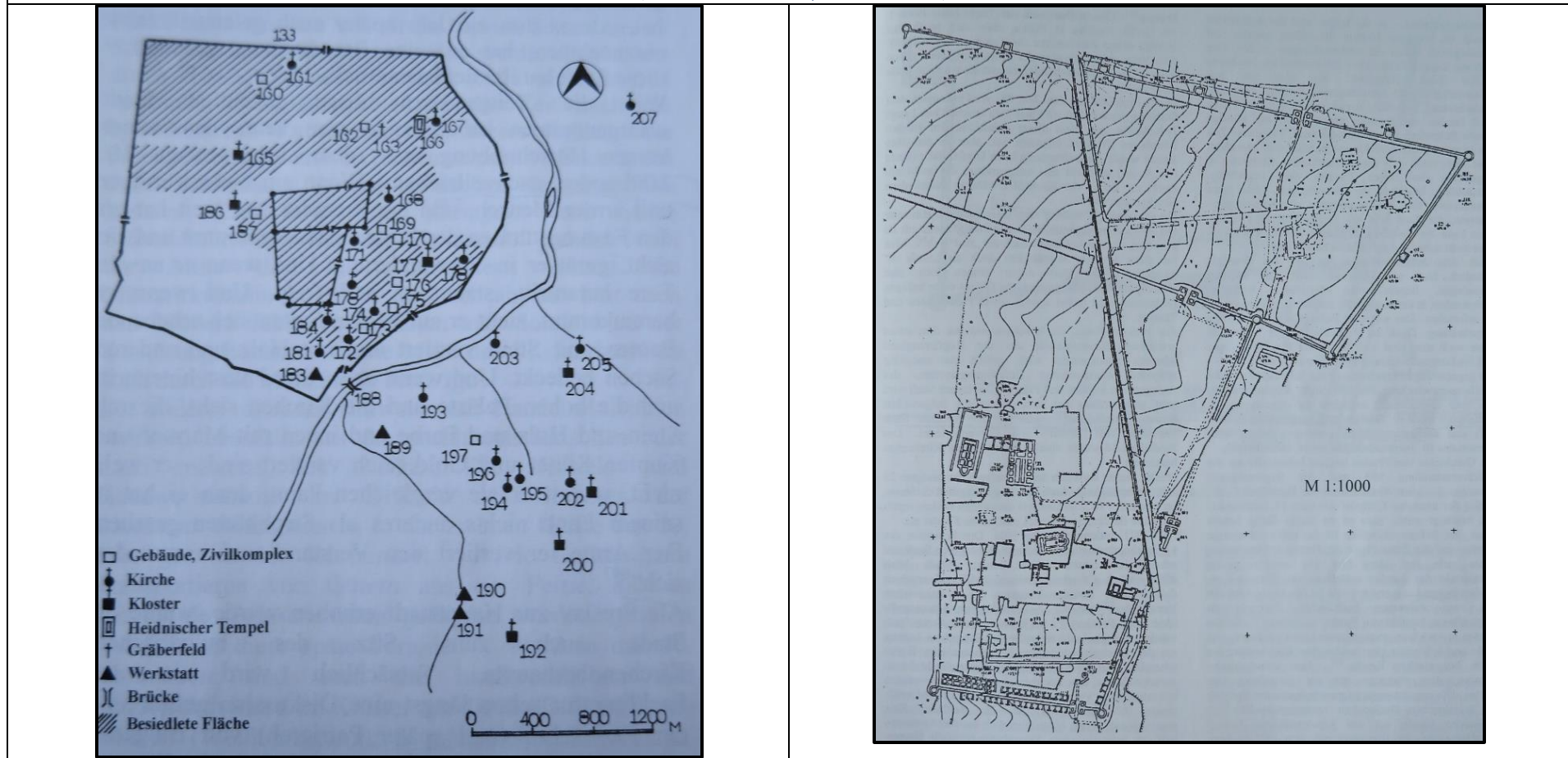
Thus, Pliska’s fate was shared all the way between the Black Sea and the Baltic Sea. It wasn’t until the 19th century that the rediscovery of Pliska began to gain traction:

“Pliska (under the form of *Plyuska*) is mentioned for the last time in the Bulgarian Apocriphal Chronicle of the **XI c.** /The German traveller Karsten Nibur passed through these places in 1767 AD and heard that near the town of Novi Pazar there were ruins of a large town, but he could not visit the site and did not know its name. In 1878 AD the Hungarian Felix Kanic inspected the ruins, managed to read the name 'Burdizo' on a half-buried stone column and assumed that this was the name of the town. This uncertainty was due to the fact that Aboba — the name of the small Turko-Tatar village that was established at the site in the XVII c. had no connection with the name of the long abandoned and forgotten town. Only in **1884 AD**, during his big tour of Bulgaria, the Czech historian Constantine Irechek realised that the ruins next to the village of Aboba were remains of the town of *Pliskova*, mentioned by Byzantine chroniclers of the X-XI c. AD“ (Rashev/Dimitrov 1999, ch. I; bold GH).

II Preslav

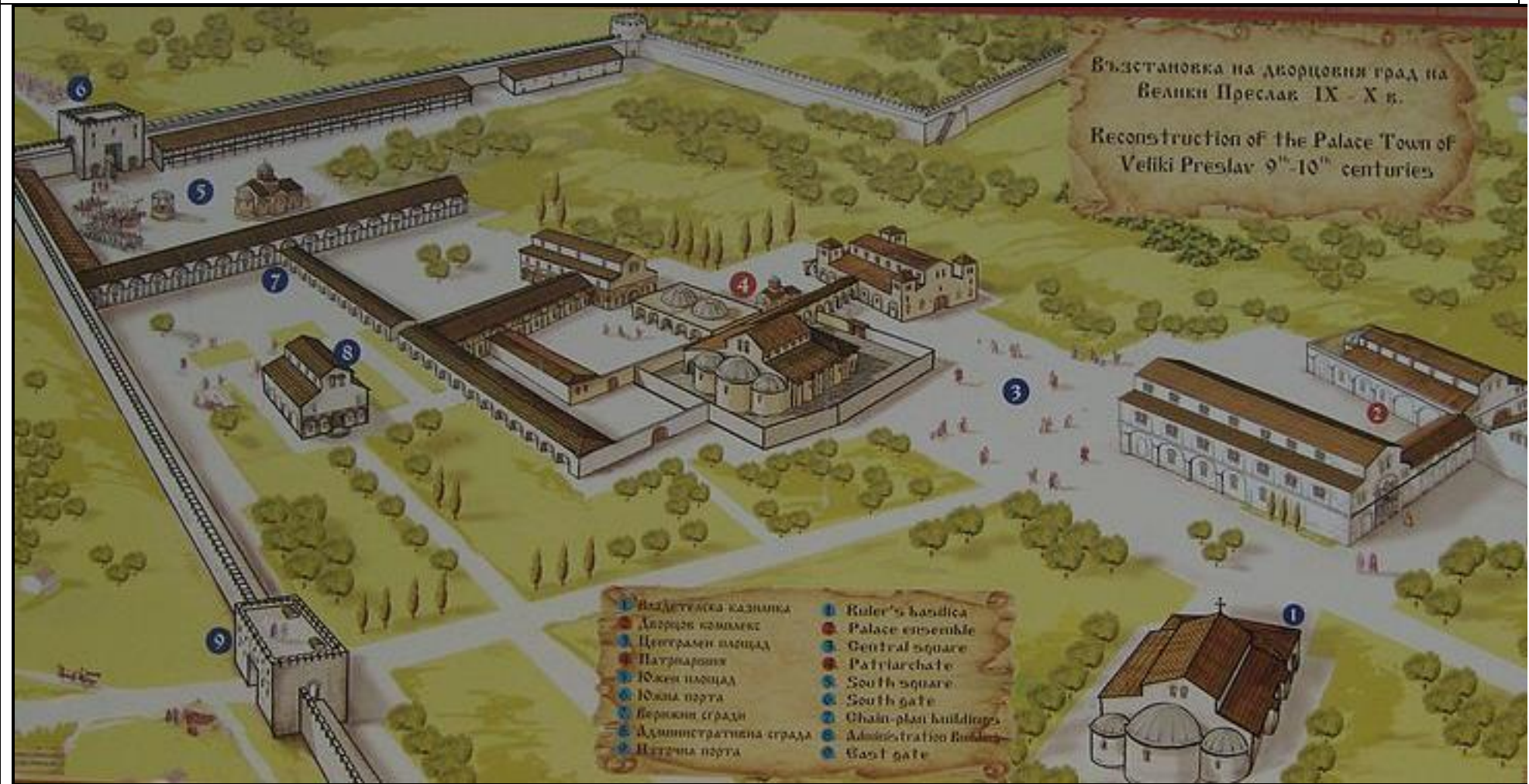
Over a period of 27 years, Tsar Simeon (893-927 CE) expanded Preslav — already growing in the early 9th c. CE — into his splendid capital city. “After Constantinople Preslav was, in the 10th c. CE, the most important cultural center in all of Eastern Europe“ (Kirilov 2006, 150). Simeon decided to abandon Pliska, where his brother and predecessor, Vladimir (889-893), had tried

Outlines of Preslav. Left: exterior and interior city (some 500 ha). Right: interior city with citadel.
(Kirilov 2006, 140/141.)



to force the Bulgarians back to paganism. By settling for a new metropolis, Simeon was in a better position to continue the heritage of his father, Boris I Michael (852-899; died 902), who had Christianized the Bulgarians in the 860s CE.

Partially reconstructed palace compound in Preslavs interior city (9th/10th c. CE) with buildings imitating the style and technology of the 2nd/3rd c. Roman period (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Preslav_fortress_30.jpg).



Simeon is often called Bulgaria's Charlemagne. And, indeed, like the Frankish ruler who had his Ingelheim villa built in a 700-year-old Roman style, Simeon, too, ordered his architects to please his eyes with basilicas built in a style typical of ancient Rome. Already his father, Boris I Michael (852-899), had insisted on "Latin inscriptions" (Kirilov 2006, 142) in the period of Preslav's Christianization – a strange attitude in a Greek environment. It would have made more sense to follow such a cultural course during the 2nd c. CE when *Ulpia Serdica* (Sofia) was the definitely Latinized capital of *Moesia*.

Simeon's seal signified the victory of his efforts at Re-Christianization by a *Christos Pantokrator* with a *Theotokos* (Saint Mary God-bearer) on the reverse. Mary could advance into the adoration of former pagans so easily because it was very common for their own deities to procreate with human females.

Lead seal (25mm, 17.89 g) of Tsar Simeon (893-927 CE)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon_I_of_Bulgaria#/media/File:Seal_of_Simeon_I_of_Bulgaria.jpg]

Obverse: *Christos Pantokrator*

Reverse: *Theotokos* (Saint Mary God-bearer)



Preslav: reconstruction of palace and main basilica of Bulgaria's Christian Patriarch (late 9th c. CE).

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Preslav_fortress_28.jpg)



Partial onsite reconstruction of a Preslav gate in typical Roman design (<http://www.panoramio.com/photo/37170084>).



Detail of Preslav building colonnade (reconstruction) (http://www.euroholidaysbg.com/en/view.php?view=old_bulgarian_capitals).



Just as Khan Krum (803-814) appears to have traveled through time when, in the 9th c. CE, he conquered *Ulpia Serdica*/Sofia whose urban building strata end in the 3rd c. CE, Tsar Simeon undertakes a similar endeavour. When, in 895 CE, he was chased by Hungarians, he took refuge in a fortress at *Durostorum* (Silistra), whose building strata end in the 3rd c., too. A famous fortress was indeed built in *Durostorum* in **29 CE**. Under Marcus Aurelius (161-180) *Durostorum* is already known as a major city in what would become Bulgaria. Already in the 6th c., Bulgars of a so-called **First Bulgarian Empire** are believed to have invaded *Durostorum*. Yet, there are no building strata for such a Late Antiquity city. In 865 CE, however, soon after their Christianization, the Bulgarians turned *Durostorum* – supposedly already in their hands for 300 years – into a Slavic diocese. Yet, the archaeologists find – as in the the city's extensive baths – remains of antiquity only – plus, dated by coin catalogue, Diocletian period “4th“ c. items:

“The remains of Roman *Durostorum* lie beneath the center of modern-day Silistra, making it difficult to carry out archaeological excavations at the site. Investigations led by P. Donevski from 1972 to 1981 succeeded in locating and partially

revealing the layout of the ancient legionary camp, or castra. Six periods of construction are indicated between the 2nd and 4th centuries“ (Athena 2003).

Bulgarian narratives are employed in modern textbooks at least two times to help fill a pre-conceived chronology of 1,000 years for the 1st millennium CE (whose urban stratigraphies show a maximum of only 300 years). So, too, have Pannonian narratives been used several times. This recycling of history has, to this very day, made it impossible to understand the origin of the Hungarians, the Bulgarians‘ most feared enemies. The following overview will help to solve the Hungarian enigma by showing that “four“ different masters of Pannonia are actually just one: the Hungarians.

WHO ARE THE HUNGARIANS?

Iazyges **(I)**, Huns **(II)**, Chunni-Avars **(III)**, and the rulers of the early Hungarians **(IV)** refer to the same group. The Iazyges, Huns, and Chunni-Avars did not disappear without any traces of their future whereabouts outside Pannonia because they never left Pannonia. The Hungarian items of Pannonia in the high High Middle Ages are the missing traces for the continuation of Iazyges=Huns=Chunni-Avars from the period prior to the High Middle Ages. There are still today Iazyges living in Hungary under the name of Jász (courtesy Zsolt Németh). Just one historical narrative of Pannonians invading Italy has substance in fact. That’s why remains of the 10th/11th c. Árpád dynasty immediately follow the Roman period which, therefore, must have accommodated, simultaneously, the Iazygian, Hunnic and Chunni-Avar “periods“: “The most recent excavations on the Várhegy [castle Hill] in Esztergom have not revealed any settlement traces for the centuries between the Roman period and the early phase of the Árpád dynasty” (Nagy 1986, 199; cf. Németh 2014, 571).

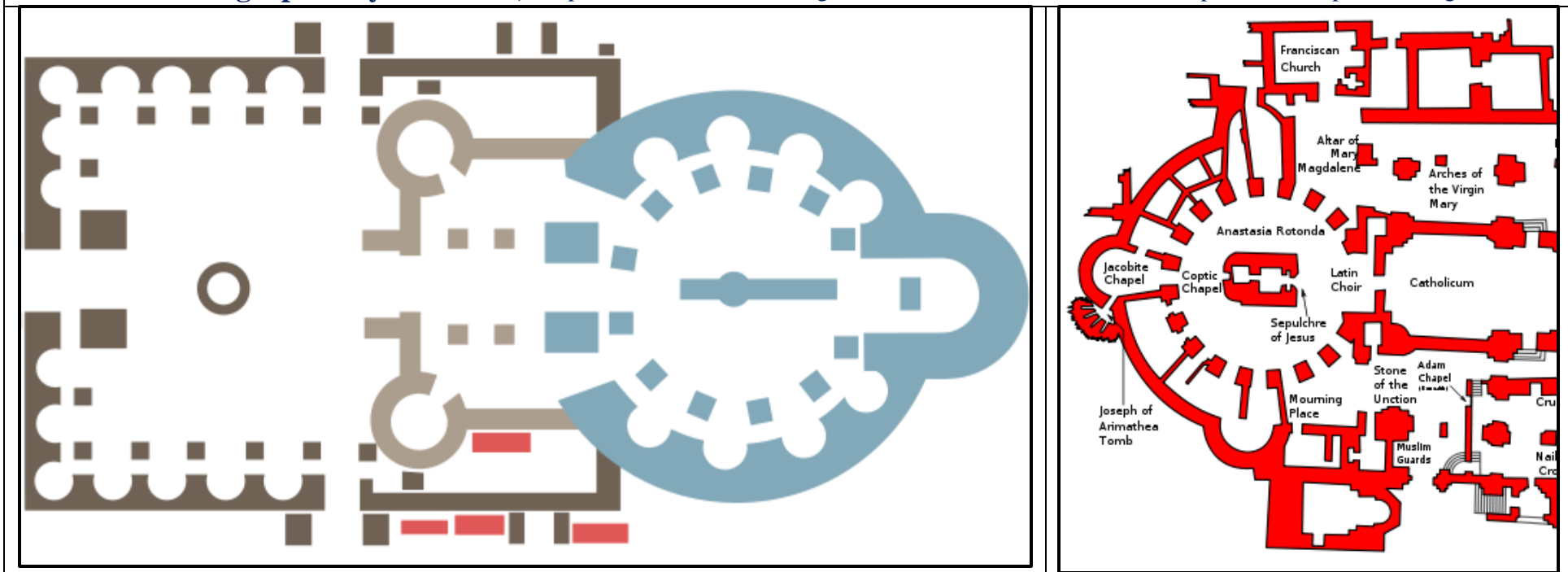
The only narrative with hard substance has been employed four times to fill our textbook chronology that has a thousand years for a 1st millennium stratigraphy of only some 300 years. All four “periods“ are actually just one that belongs to Roman Antiquity, whose stratigraphical date, however, is not 1st-3rd but 8th-10th c. CE (**cf. already Heinsohn 2015**).

(I) Sarmatian Iazyges (also called Huns-Sarmatians) from Pannonia attack Northern Italy and threaten Rome (160s CE).	(II) Huns from Pannonia attack Northern Italy and threaten Rome (450s CE).	(III) Chunni-Avars (also called Hungarians) from Pannonia attack Northern Italy (610s CE).	(IV) Hungarians from Pannonia attack Northern Italy (899-904 CE).	Hungarians of the High Middle Ages (11th c. CE) consider themselves as successors of Huns (no knowledge of Chunni-Avars).
Iazyges disappear from Pannonia without any traces.	Huns disappear from Pannonia without any traces.	Chunni-Avars disappear from Pannonia without any traces.	Hungarians live in Pannonia , attack Bulgaria in 895 CE.	High Medieval Hungarians are the direct successors of earlier Hungarians known as Iazyges=Huns= Chunni-Avars.

Of all the sacral buildings of Preslav, the *Round Church* (also called the *Golden Church*; part of a monastery complex) is not the largest but by far the most extraordinary building. It is dated to the beginning of the 10th c. CE, and was most probably meant as a copy of Jerusalem's *Church of the Holy Sepulchre*.

LEFT: Groundplan of Preslav's *Golden Church* (early 10th c. CE) built during the reign of Tsar Simeon (893–927 CE) seen as a copy of Jerusalem's *Church of the Holy Sepulchre* (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Anastasia_Rotonda_sketch_1.svg).

RIGHT: Groundplan of Jerusalem's *Church of the Holy Sepulchre* (4th c. CE; to the author late 1st c. CE=stratigraphically 8th c. CE) [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Round_Church,_Preslav_simplified_floor_plan_TB.svg].



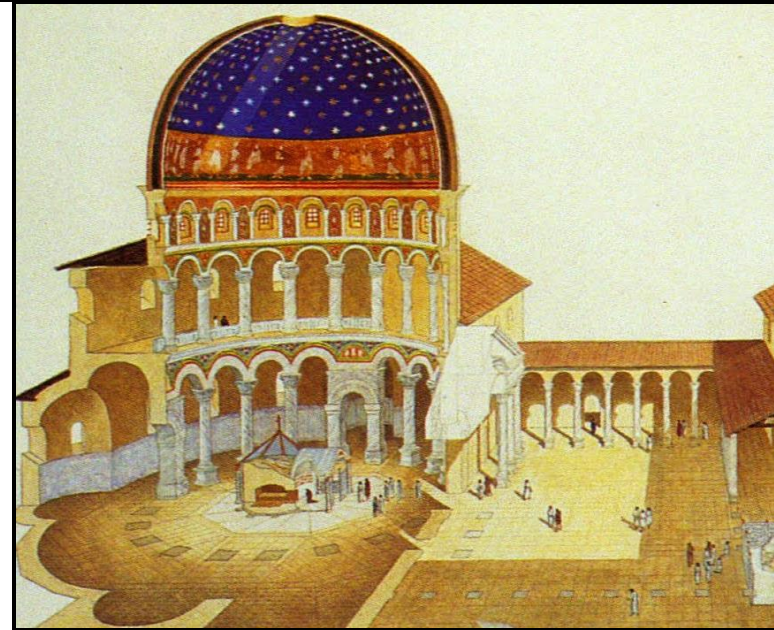
Model of Preslav's *Golden Church* (early 10th c. CE)

(<http://www.panacomp.net/bulgaria?s=bugarska-preslav>).



Reconstruction of Jesus-Mausoleum in Jerusalem's *Church of the Holy Sepulchre* (4th=1st=8th c.)

(<http://ritterakademie.blogspot.co.at/2010/05/basilica-und-heiliges-grab-zur-zeit.html>).



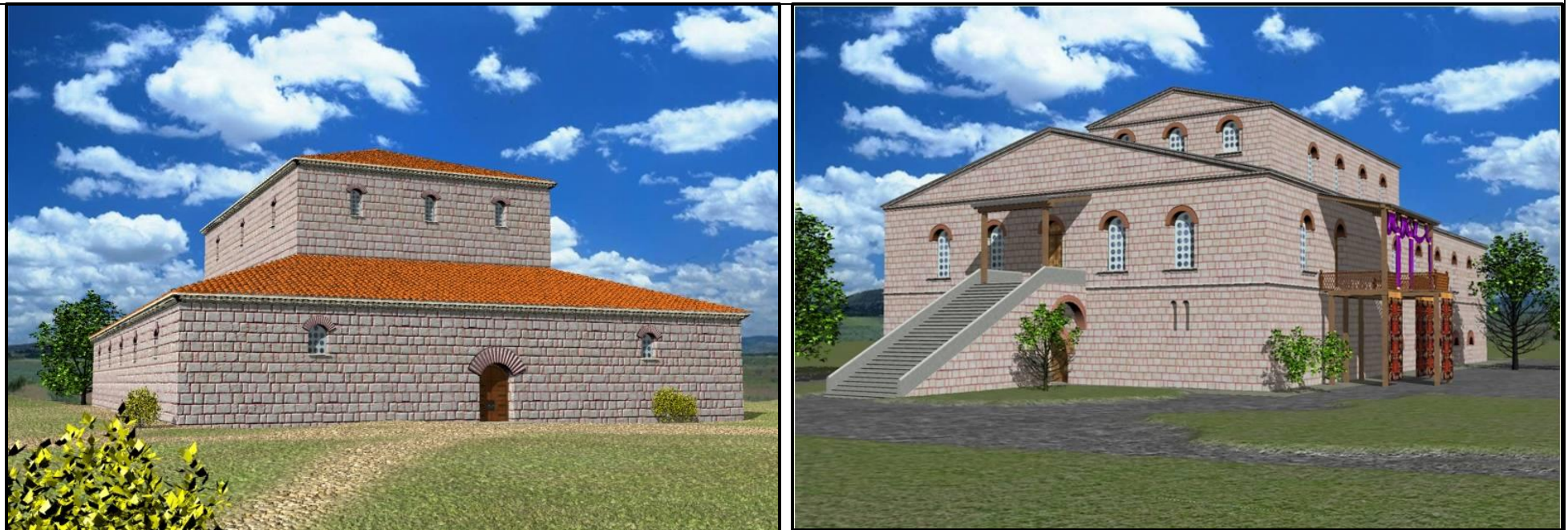
Notwithstanding Preslav's triumphant eclipse of Pliska, it is condemned to share the latter's terrible fate. Its annihilation follows the same pattern: "After the 11th c. all that remained was a memory of a 'once great' city. Hardly anything of its magnificent urban substance was left by the end of the 12th c." (Kirilov 2006, 140/143). Although Pliska is given a few more decades in our textbook history, the expected accompanying "strata for the 11th c. are hardly recognizable in the area of the interior city" (Kirilov 2006, 142). On the contrary, burial grounds are all that was found dug into the soil layer burying the city: "At the end of the 11th c., at the latest, individual cemeteries began to develop. Yet, slowly the excavators began to understand that they all belonged to one huge burial ground, to a genuine city of the dead that, between the 11th and the 13th c., had covered the lion's share of the ancient interior city" (Kirilov 2006, 143). Eastern Europe's cultural center, that was second only to Constantinople, had turned into a dumping site for the deceased.

III Summary

„The thesis about the **antique** [1st-3rd c. CE; GH] **origin** of the monumental buildings in Pliska is not based on the **antique materials found there** alone. Its most impressive **monuments are “antique” in appearance**. / It seems indeed unbelievable that at the beginning of the IX c. the culture of one recently founded pagan state could produce such constructions, served by running water which had to be brought from several kilometres away. It seems more natural to assume that they belong to an earlier epoch. But **the archaeological evidence does not allow this** [because it belongs to the Early Middle Ages, GH] and it is exactly what makes Pliska a real **puzzle**“ (Rashev/Dimitrov 1999, ch. IV; bold GH).

Digital reconstructions of two Early Medieval Pliska buildings in outline of Roman Antiquity

(<http://www.pmgsh.bg/bg/articles/category3/article55.html>).



Sequence of Bulgarian rulers since the victory over Constantinople/Byzantium in 811 CE.	
893-927	Simeon; <i>Tsar of "Bulgaren and Romans, studied in Byzantium"</i> ; turns Preslav into imperial capital; orders translation of major texts of Antiquity into Bulgarian employing Cyrillic; secures, after 893 CE, the blossoming of Bulgarian literature (Schools of Ohrid and Preslav) as well as Bulgarian theology with its own church fathers; therefore also called Bulgaria's Charlemagne; escapes, in 895, from Hungarian attack to <i>Durostorum</i> (Silistra) where excavations have revealed building strata for Antiquity only (no Early Medieval strata, and no 6th/7th c. strata for a "First Bulgarian Empire"). Preslav ends under soil in which cemeteries are dug; Pliska is strangled by a <i>dark grey layer</i> . There are no urban strata for a continuation of Pliska or Preslav into the 11th century (as assumed by textbook chronology).
889-893	Vladimir; pagan regression (blinded by his father, Boris I Michael); in 892 alliance with Arnulf of Carinthia (896-899).
852-889	Boris I. Michael (883 abdicated; died 902); orders Christianization of the Bulgarians .
836-852	Presian I.; conquers Macedonia.
831-836	Malamir; executed his elder brother, Enravota (Bulgaria's first martyr), for his conversion to Christianity.
814-831	Omurtag; major buildings in Pliska; Chatalar- and Tarnovo inscriptions (Greek); martyrs his Christian son Enravota but has Arian church of Goths [annihilated in Late Antiquity] in his fortress <i>Aul na Omurtag</i> .
803-814	Krum; defeats, 811 CE, Nikephoros I Genik in the Battle of Pliska; creates law code; conquers <i>Ulpia Serdica</i> (Sofia) whose urban stratigraphy is rich for 2nd/3rd. c. Antiquity but zero for 9th c. Early Middle Ages.
681-803	Asparukh; Tervel; Kormesyi; Seva; Kormisosh; Vinekh; Telets; Sabin; Ulmor; Toktu; Pagan; Telerig; Kardam.

The eternal controversies between different Bulgarian schools of archaeology about whether Pliska and Preslav belong to Antiquity, Late Antiquity or the Early Middle Ages could never come to a conclusion because all of them are right. The two metropolises are indeed part of Roman Antiquity that, however, in terms of stratigraphy, belongs to the Early Medieval Period of the 8th to 10th century and not to the 1st-3rd century of our textbooks. Therefore, a "First Bulgarian Empire" beginning in Late Antiquity is without material basis, too.

Antiquity, Late Antiquity, and the Early Middle Ages are stratigraphically contemporary. They are simply different aspects of the same quarter millennium of Rome's imperial period (now dated from 31 BCE to the 230s CE). Because Antiquity, Late Antiquity, and the Early Middle Ages run parallel, they all enter – where settlements continue at all – the High Middle Ages at the same time – the early 10th c. CE.

The High Middle Ages, in turn, experience such a dramatic collapse into primitivism because a global catastrophe caused the fall of Roman Civilization (archaeologically 8th-10th c. but textbook dated 1st-3rd c. CE). “Dark earth“ blanketing, e.g., Roman *Londinium* (London; 2300 km to Pliska as the crow flies) in the 3rd c. CE (Schofield 1999), and the dark grey layer burying Early Medieval Pliska in the early 10th c. are, therefore, caused by the same natural catastrophe.

Reconstruction of London’s largest Roman basilica (153,9 x 45,7 m; situation of the 2nd c. CE) that was covered by dark earth in the 3rd c. CE to be rediscovered only in 1881

(<http://www.historic-uk.com/assets/Images/reconstruction.jpg%3F1348569804?1350905614>).



“Parts [of London] had been cleared of buildings and were already covered by a horizon of dark silts (often described as ‘dark earth’) suggesting that land was converted to arable and pastoral use or abandoned entirely. The **dark earth** may have started forming in the **3rd century**” (Schofield 1999; bold GH).

Whilst many historical narratives of Antiquity (1-230s) and Late Antiquity (290-520s) can be read as concurrent comments for the same events (see already Beaufort 2013), the stories attributed to the 700-930s block cannot be transplanted 1:1 upon the narratives of the 1-230s=290-520s-block. What we find in our textbooks for the 520-930s period does include repetitions of narratives from the 1-230s=290-520s-block, too. Yet, they are usually out of sync because the Early Medieval time block contains not 300 but 400 years.

For Bulgaria, however, the 700-930s-period does fit – *cum grano salis* – the 1-230s=290-520s-block quite neatly. Bulgaria's Christianization since the 860s CE runs parallel with the great plague *cum* war period with invading tribes under Marcus Aurelius (161-180 CE). Its Late antiquity match is the migration period of the 450s. The demographically pummeled Roman Empire (160s=450s=860s) must defend itself against ruthless invaders but also has to invite foreign tribes as *foederati* to resettle depopulated territories laid waste by the plague that may have killed more than five million inhabitants. The **migration period** (160s=450s=860s), thus, does not take place **after** the fall of Rome but between its major crisis (known as the plague of Marcus Aurelius) and its true demise in the 230s (=520s=930s).

The transformation of the Bulgarian Slavs (with Asians in their leadership) into Christians appears to have led to an acceptable co-existence between indigenous (Latinized) survivors and the newcomers. As Theoderic (493-526; stratigraphically 9/10th c.) ruled over Goths and Romans, so did Tsar Simeon (893-927) become ruler of “Bulgarians and Romans“. As the Huns – occasional partners of Goths – were rejected as *foederati* (exactly like the Sarmato-Hunnic Iazyges under Marcus Aurelius), so were the Hungarians -- deadly enemies of the Simeon-Bulgarians – denied a chance to become legal citizens of the Empire. As the city of Rome continued to exist side by side with Goth-dominated Ravenna (exactly like Quadi-dominated Ravenna blossomed under Marcus Aurelius and Commodus), so Slav-dominated Preslav – still producing Latin inscriptions – co-existed with the Latin dominated *Ulpia Serdica* (Sofia; Rome's capital of *Moesia*). Whilst Rome was afraid of Huns (or of Hunno-Sarmatian Iazyges under Marcus Aurelius), the Bulgarians – as well the Byzantines of their time – were afraid of Hungarians with the latter being none other than Hunno-Sarmatian Iazyges (2nd c.), Huns (5th c.), or Chunni-Vars (7th c.).

Though it is true that the urban designs, building materials and technologies, as well as aqueducts and hypocaust-heated baths of Pliska and Preslav are through and through Roman-inspired, the Bulgarians add their own cultural touches. This is not only visible in their ceramic decors but even more so in their secular as well as theological literature that, for the first time in the history of the Slavs, is written down (after an intermediate stage with Latin or Greek letters) in their own Cyrillic alphabet.

The plague-ridden Marcus Aurelius crisis (160s=450s=860s) not only triggers hostile invasions, as well as invited resettlements, it also stimulates the growth of Christianity. Ever more survivors convert to the young creed because its apocalyptic texts (that had “foreseen“ the disaster) provided the appropriate ‘medicine‘ to come to terms with tormenting fears and terror-stricken people. The vast wave of new churches attributed to the late “5th c.“ is corroborated by Bulgaria’s churches of the late 9th century. Both groups of churches stratigraphically belong to the same Early Medieval period. After all, there are no urban building strata with 5th century churches that are superimposed by new building strata with 9th century churches. All Christian church periods – Antiquity, Late Antiquity, and the Early Middle Ages – build basilicas in the style of the 1st-3rd c. CE that stratigraphically all belong to the 8th-10th c. period.

EUROPE’S STRATIGRAPHY EXEMPLIFIED BY BULGARIA’S ARCHAEOLOGY			
Same stratigraphical level beginning after 930 CE	<i>HIGH MIDDLE AGES</i>		
G L O B A L C A T A C L Y S M [<i>Destruction; Dark Earth; Discontinuity; Dark Grey Layer etc.</i>]			
Same stratigraphical level ending around 930 CE	<i>ANTIQUITY</i> (230s=930s)	<i>LATE ANTIQUITY</i> (520s=930s)	<i>EARLY MIDDLE AGES</i> (930s=930s)

It may well be that ethnically diverse populations may have found it easier to live together within the same empire by resorting to a common denomination. This experience of social peace may have been the motivation to quickly doom forced regressions to paganism, as tried, e.g., by Khan Vladimir (889-893).

All the new churches, however, could not fend off the final catastrophe of the 930s (=230s=520s) that terminated the Roman universe. The cities listed under “Antiquity“ (ending in the “230s“ of the Third Century Crisis) or “Late Antiquity“ (ending under Justinian’s Comet and Allah’s Elephant Rocks of the “520s“), as well as the cities from the Black Sea to the Baltic Sea, including Pliska und Preslav, are all hit by the same cataclysm whose destructions the archaeologists of the Slavic and Scandinavian realm have tied to the 930s CE. Whatever we find in our textbooks as post-930s history for Pliska and Preslav is due to chronological misreadings of ruler’s names and/or coins. Strata tied to their dates were not found either in Preslav or in Pliska, above whose *dark grey layer* no urbanism ever materialized again.

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