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**WRECKED METROPOLES OF
THE 1st MILLENNIUM CE:
A COMPARISON**

GDANSK/DANZIG, May 1, 2016

Stratigraphic evidence for seven of the most thoroughly discussed cities in *FRÜHMITTELALTER*== *SPÄTANTIKE*==*ANTIKE* (forthcoming) – Aachen, Kalisz, Rome, Athens, Byzantium, Jerusalem, and Samarra – is hereby presented in schematic overviews to facilitate objections. They underline the claim that each site experiences just one devastating destruction during the 1st millennium CE that, in each case, is the same that brings about, at the beginning of the 10th c. CE, the dramatic shift from the Early Middle Ages to the High Middle Ages. The collapses of the 3rd and 6th century were summarized by Liebeschütz a quarter of a century ago :

“The climax of the physical development of the classical city was reached in some areas at the end of the second century, more generally in the first two decades of the third century. After that the great flood of private munificence displayed in public buildings, banquets, distribution of money for food, games statues and inscribed monuments subsided everywhere, and never recovered to anything remotely approaching its former level. The Empire was passing through the crisis of the third century.”

“During the sixth century the cities of the Greek East were hit by a series of severe blows; earthquakes (Brandes, 1989, 176-181), Persian invasions (Foss 1990), and, perhaps most serious of all successive waves of bubonic plague (Conrad 1987; Durliat 1989), the first in 541. [...]. The effect was like the crisis of the third century.“

(Wolfgang Liebeschütz, “The End of the Ancient City“, in J. Rich, ed., *The City in Late Antiquity*, London & New York: Routledge, 1992, 1-48 [3f. / 34]; bold GH).

-Brandes, W. (1989), *Die Städte Kleinasiens im 7. und 8. Jahrhundert*, Amsterdam: Brill Academic Publishers

-Conrad, L. (1987), „The plague in Bilad al-Sham in pre-Islamic times“, in M. A. Bakhil, M. Asfour, ed., *Proceedings of the Symposium on Bilad al-Sham*, Amman: University of Jordan

-Durliat, J. (1989), „La peste du 6e siècle“, in C. Lepelley et al., *Hommes et richesses dans l'empire byzantin I: IVe-VIIIe siècles*, Paris: P. Lethielleux, 107-125

-Foss, C. (1990), *History and Archaeology of Byzantine Asia Minor*, Aldershot: Variorum

There is less familiarity with the Tenth Century Collapse. It is, therefore, referenced for a few regions from Norway to Bulgaria:

TENTH CENTURY COLLAPSE

Massive destructions from Scandinavia via Eastern Europe to the Black Sea, and Mesopotamia happened at the end of the Early Middle Ages (920s/930s CE). The disaster struck where no devastations appear to have occurred during the crises of the third and the sixth century

“In the Scandinavian lands [...] the old rural places of power, commonly called central places, all met their end. [...] A general conversion to Christianity took place at this time” (Skre 2012).

In Poland “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).

In Bulgaria’s metropolis Pliska “the whole production area was covered by considerable amounts of erosion material” (Henning 2007). / In the 11th c. the “Pliska basin was turned into a desert landscape” (Kirilov 2006).

-Buko, A. (2011), *Archeologia Polski. Wczesnosredniowiecznej: Odkrycia – hipotezy – interpretacje*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo TRIO

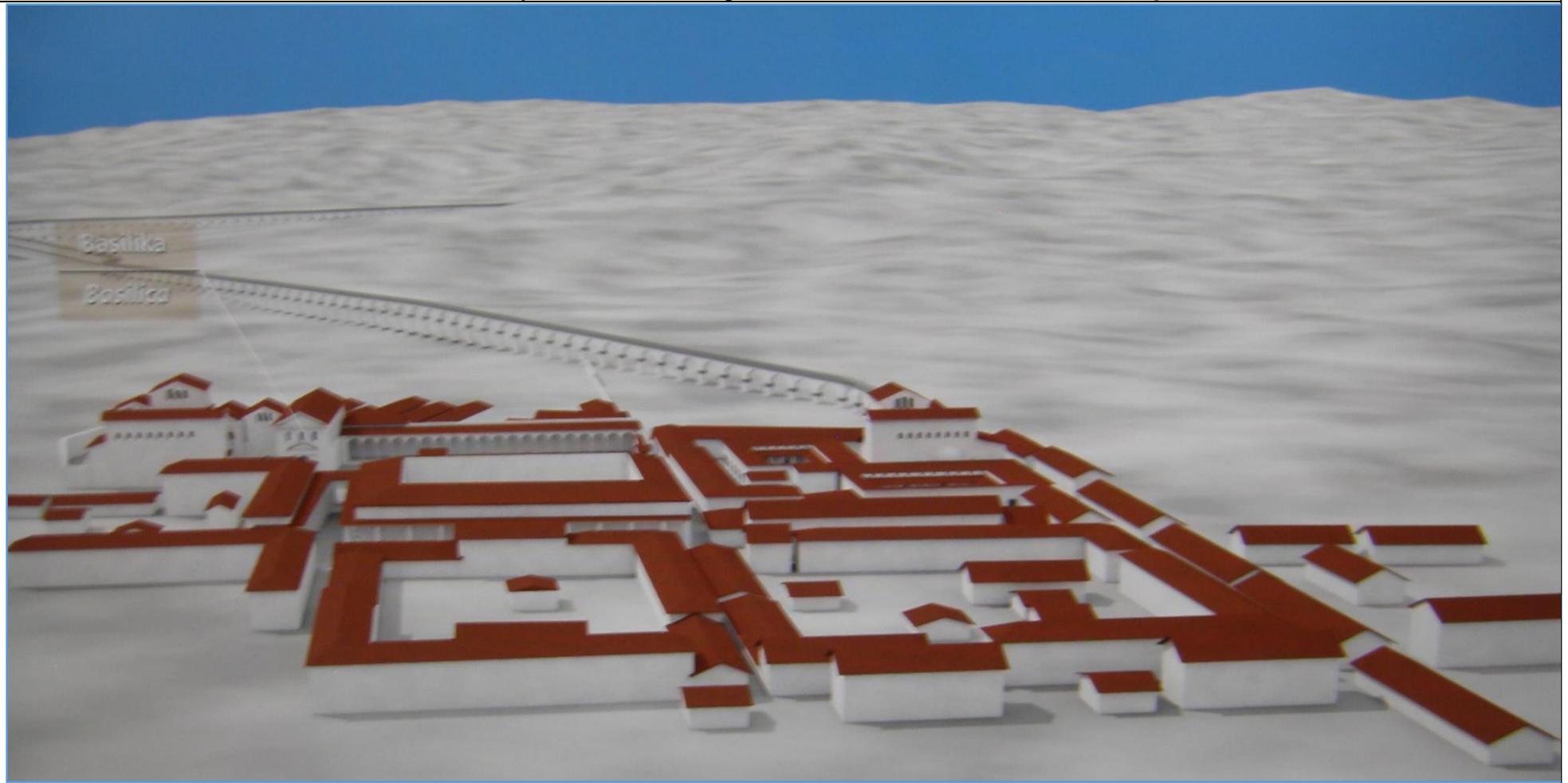
-Henning, J. (2007), „The Metropolis of Pliska or, how large does an early medieval settlement have to be in order to be called a city?“, in J. Henning, Hg., *Post-Roman Towns, Trade and Settlement in Europe and Byzantium*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, vol. 2, 209-40

-Kirilov, T. (2006), *Die Stadt des Frühmittelalters in Ost und West: Archäologische Befunde Mitteleuropas im Vergleich zur östlichen Balkanhalbinsel*, Bonn: Habelt Verlag.

-Skre, D. (2012), „The Development of Urbanism in Scandinavia“, in Brink, S., Price, N., eds., *The Viking World* (2008), London & New York: Routledge, 83-93

Attempt at reconstructing the aqueduct as well as sections of AACHEN (Aix La Chapelle) in **Antiquity (2nd/3rd c. CE). These quarters of Roman Aachen would well fit into Early Medieval Aachen (8th-10th c.) whose living quarters are mysteriously missing.**

[Foto (from video) by G. Heinsohn with permission of Aachen's *Centre Charlemagne*.]



EARLY MEDIEVAL AACHEN (8th-10th c.)

The city appears to consist of the 8-10th c. palace complex only. Its architectural designs and building materials are entirely antique (2nd/3rd c. style). There are no living quarters, no streets, no aqueducts, no baths, not even latrines in the capital of Charlemagne's empire. The complex appears to have existed in death zone. However, all features of a genuine city are massively present in the 2nd/3rd c. strata of Aachen.

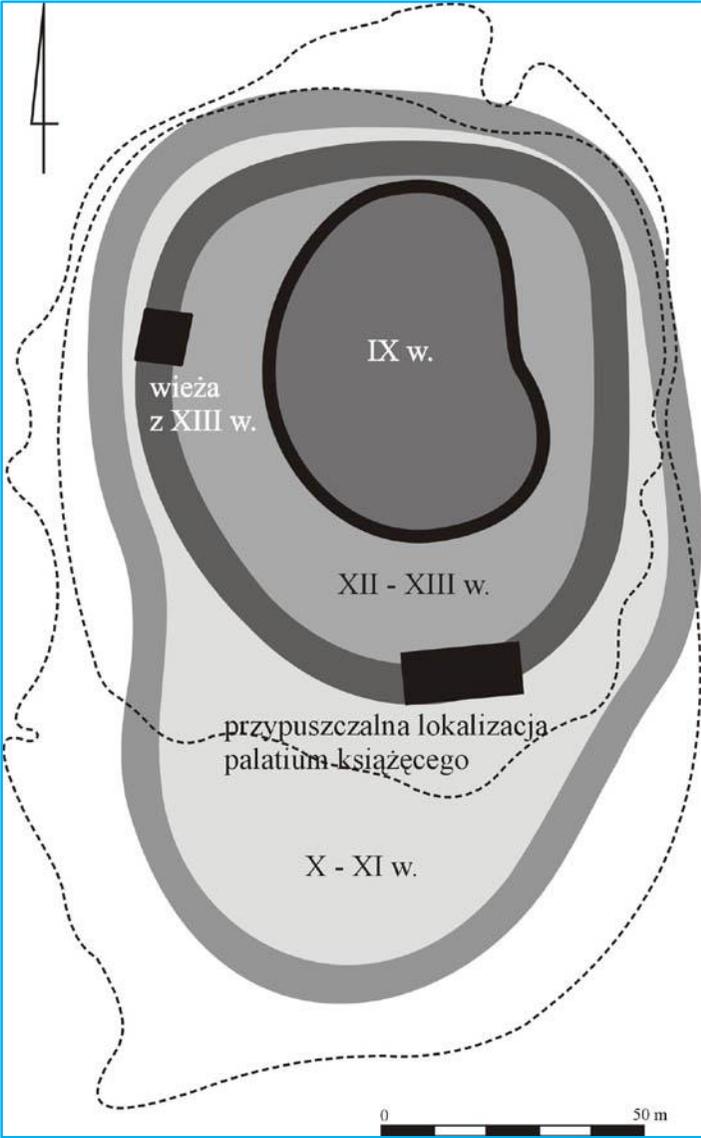
[Foto by G. Heinsohn with permission by Aachen's *Centre Charlemagne*. On of the video's producers, Sebastian Ristow, is developing the model further.]



A A C H E N (Aix La Chapelle)				
CHRONOLOGY	MATERIAL EVIDENCE			
HIGH MIDDLE AGES (HMA) 10 th -11 th c.				Cultural evolution begins again with primitive 10 th c. huts sunk into the dark mud that covers 3rd c. ruins (700 empty years).
Collapse of the 930s				Dark mud of the 230s immediately precedes HMA, i.e. it must be 700 years younger.
EARLY MIDDLE AGES (EMA) 8 th -10 th c.			Palatial complex isolated in a wasteland built in the style and materials of Antiquity (2 nd renaissance); writing in Latin of Antiquity; no living quarters. They would be available only 700 years earlier in Antiquity. Standstill of cultural evolution!	
Catastrophe of the 6th, and crisis period of the 7th c.		No traces of Eastern Empire's fall caused by plague and comet.		
LATE ANTIQUITY (LA) 4 th -6 th c.		Military camp in irregular Augustan outline (renaissance of 1 st c.). It is not super-imposed on 1st-3rd c. strata. No new living quarters, small finds also of 1st-3rd c. Standstill of cultural evolution!		
Crisis of the 3rd c. (230s)	Dark mud covering ruins of 1st-3rd c.			
ANTIQUITY (A) 1st-3 rd c.	Rich Roman strata; internal evolution; large living quarters but no military camp.			

Fortification of KALISZ in the Early Middle Ages (9th c. ["IX w."])

[<http://www.pma.pl/kalisz/kalisz.htm>].



K A L I S Z (<i>Calisia</i>) [Poland]				
CHRONOLOGY	MATERIAL EVIDENCE			
HIGH MIDDLE AGES (HMA) 10 th -11 th c.				Cultural evolution continues, with new fortifications.
Collapse of the 930s				Destructions as massive (from Norway to Iraq) as the ones reported for 3rd or 6th c.; yet not mentioned in sources.
EARLY MIDDLE AGES (EMA) 8 th -10 th c.			Massive building strata; citadel of 850 CE either makes Ptolemy 700 years younger or proves him wrong. Cultural evolution sets in after a 700 year break since end of Late Latène!	
Catastrophe of the 6 th , and crisis period of the 7 th c.		No traces of Eastern Empire's fall through plague and comet.		
LATE-ANTIQUITY (LA) 4 th -6 th c.		No building strata though located on amber road, and coins since Late Latène (1 st c. BCE). Standstill of cultural evolution!		
Crisis of the 3 rd c. (230s)	No traces of this catastrophe.			
ANTIQUITY (A) 1 st -3 rd c.	Active since Late Bronze Age; known as <i>Calisia</i> by Ptolemy in 150 CE; Roman coins of 2nd/3rd c.; no building strata although on amber road to Rome. Standstill of cultural evolution!			

Attempt at reconstruction of circus and palace area at ROME in Antiquity (2nd/3rd c. CE)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjO__PpLwzU].



ROME'S CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

ANTIQUITY: No tangible churches but texts mention *TITULUS-CHURCHES*.

LATE ANTIQUITY: *TITULUS-CHURCHES* look like **300 year older basilicas of Antiquity**

EARLY MIDDLE AGES: More *TITULUS-CHURCHES* look like **700 year older basilicas of Antiquity**.

ANTIQUITY

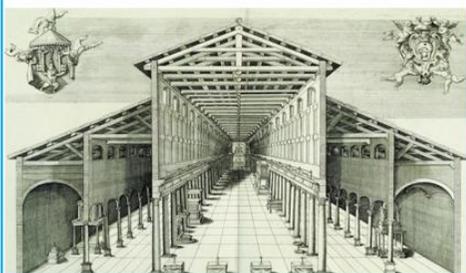
1st c. Imperial [much richer]
Pagan Basilica Ulpia

versus

4th c. Christian Basilica of St. Peter

Churches of LATE ANTIQUITY are **never super-imposed** on basilicas of Antiquity.

EARLY MEDIEVAL churches are **never super-imposed** on basilicas of Antiquity or Late Antiquity.



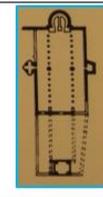
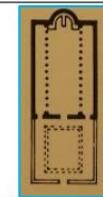
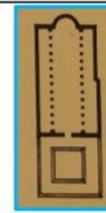
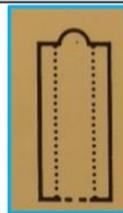
**Santa Maria
Maggiore**

**Santa
Sabina**

**San
Martino ai
Monti**

**Santa
Cecilia**

**Quatro
Coronati**



R O M E				
CHRONOLOGY	MATERIAL EVIDENCE			
HIGH MIDDLE AGES (HMA) 10 th -11 th c.				Cultural evolution sets in again with simple construction right above 3 rd c. or "6 th " c. (Latium) remains.
Collapse of the 930s.				Ruins of 3 rd c. immediately beneath construction of 10 th /11 th c. (700 year gap).
EARLY MIDDLE AGES (EMA) 8 th -10 th c.			Churches in basilica-style of 1 st -3 rd c. (2 nd renaissance). They are not super-imposed on 3 rd c. ruins but are parallel with them. No new living quarters. Latin still written as 700 years before. Standstill of cultural evolution!	
Catastrophe of the 6 th , and crisis period of the 7 th c.		No traces of Eastern Empire's fall; depopulation of Latium but hilltop villages not before the 10 th c.		
LATE-ANTIQUITY (LA) 4 th -6 th c.		Churches in basilica-style of 1 st -3 rd c. (1 st renaissance). They are not super-imposed on 3 rd c. ruins but parallel with them. No new living quarters; Latin as 300 years before. Standstill of cultural evolution!		
Crisis of the 3 rd c. (230s)	Massive urban destruction.			
ANTIQUITY (A) 1 st -3 rd c.	Massive building strata with internal evolution; no churches for 230 years of Christianity.			

Attempt at reconstruction of circus and palace area at CONSTANTINOPLE in Late Antiquity (4th c. CE)

[[<http://dev.nationalgeographic.de/aktuelles/ng-aktuell/byzanz-pracht-und-alltag>].



BYZANTIUM / CONSTANTINOPLÉ				
CHRONOLOGY	MATERIAL EVIDENCE			
HIGH MIDDLE AGES (HMA) 10 th -11 th c.				Cultural evolution sets in again with construction right above 6 th c. remains resembling 3 rd c. Roman ruins.
Collapse of the 930s.				Fall of 6 th c. must belong here because new works only begin after 930s.
EARLY MIDDLE AGES (EMA) 8 th -10 th c.			Building strata mysteriously missing Buildings de-scribed in texts are indistinguishable from Late Antique structures that are seen as renaissance of Antiquity 700 years realier. Standstill of cultural evolution!	
Catastrophe of the 6 th , and crisis period of the 7 th c.		Fall of the Eastern Empire leaves massive traces (Tsunami-line, port silting).		
LATE-ANTIQUITY (LA) 4 th -6 th c.		Massive city of 4th c. arises out of nowhere with palaces, baths, and circus like Rome's 1 st c. (re-naissance); internal evolution, yet standstill of evolution in relation to Antiquity.		
Crisis of the 3 rd c. (230s)	No traces since there is no antique urbanism to ruin.			
ANTIQUITY (A) 1 st -3 rd c.	Building strata mysteriously missing though it's the 2 nd city of entire Empire (Cassius Dio).			

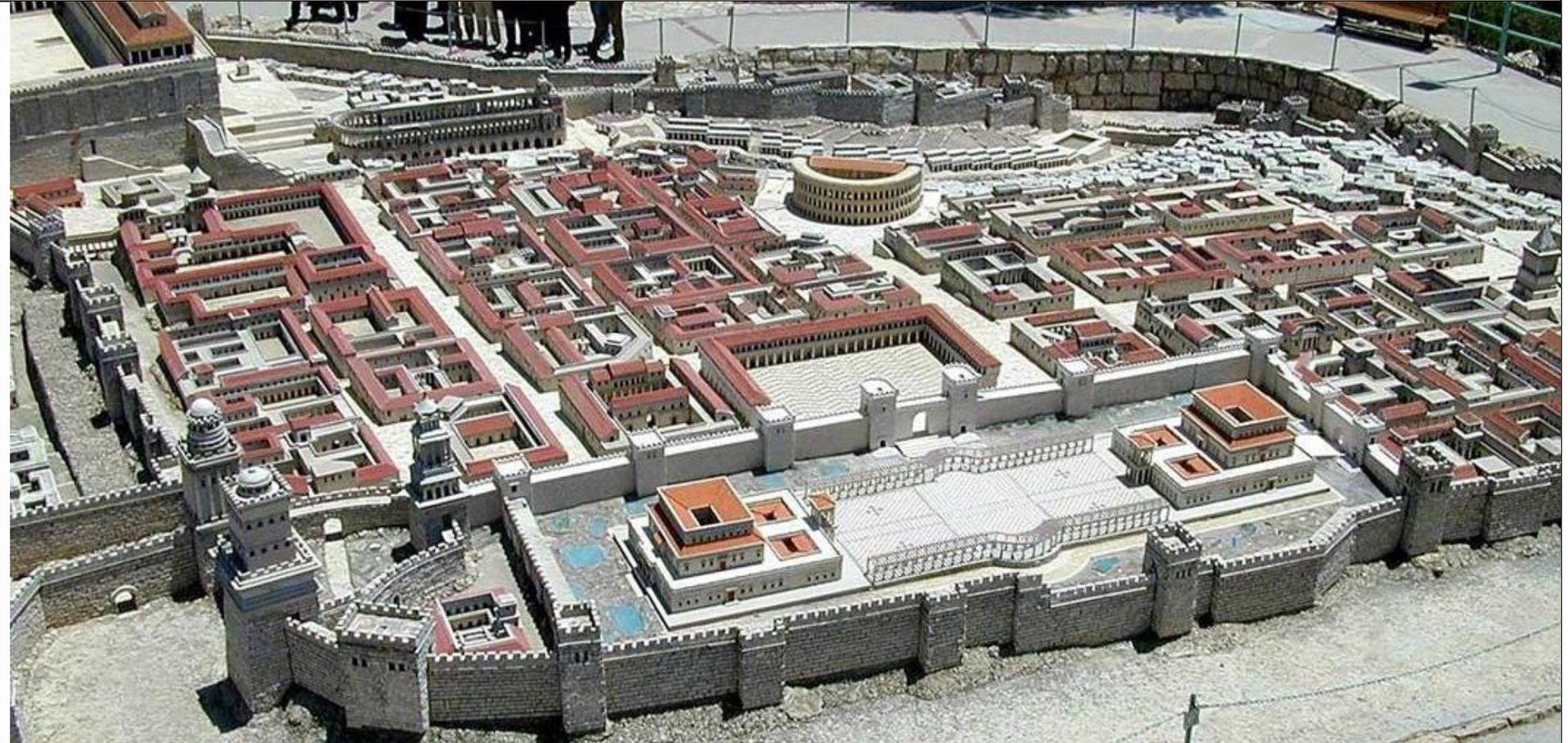
Attempt at reconstruction of ATHENS in **Antiquity** (2nd/3rd c.)

[<https://aristotleguide.wordpress.com/2014/01/31/this-is-not-athens/>].



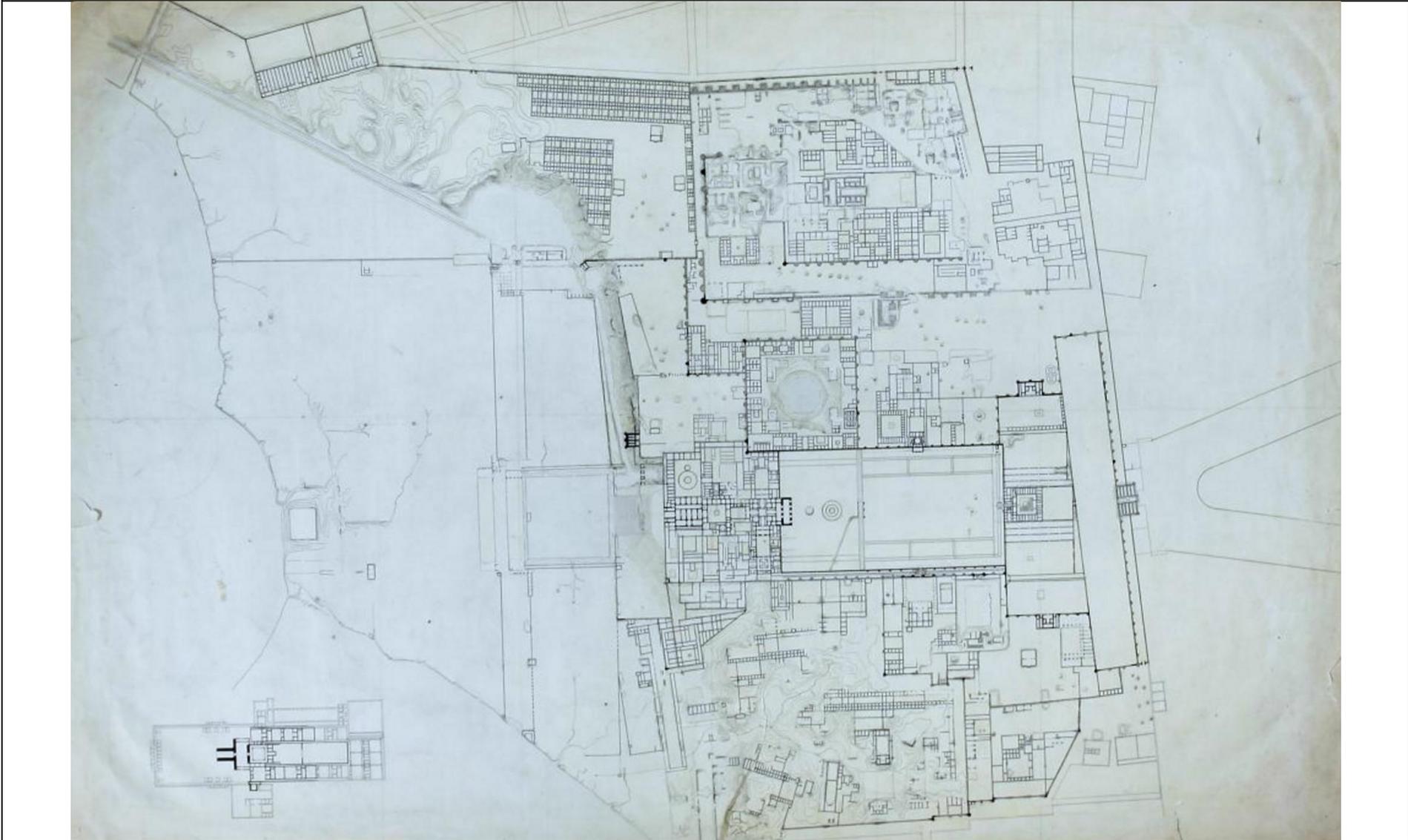
A T H E N S				
CHRONOLOGY	MATERIAL EVIDENCE			
HIGH MIDDLE AGES (HMA) 10 th -11 th c.				Cultural evolution sets in again with countless small churches built directly upon 700 older ruins of Antiquity. Greek changes, too.
Collapse of the 930s.				Destructions of 3 rd c. must belong here because new building only begins after 930s.
EARLY MIDDLE AGES (EMA) 8 th -10 th c.			Building strata mysteriously missing. Standstill of cultural evolution!	
Catastrophe of the 6 th , and crisis period of the 7 th c.		No fallout from the massive devastation of Constantinople located quite close by.		
LATE-ANTIQUITY (LA) 4 th -6 th c.		Philosopher villas and other buildings in style of 1 st -3 rd c. with sculptures of 1 st -3 rd c. are seen as a renaissance of Antiquity . Yet, they are not super-imposed but stand parallel with 1 st -3 rd c. buildings. Largest university of the Imperium does not create a single new work but only uses texts as well as the Greek idiom already in existence before 230s. Standstill of cultural evolution!		
Crisis of the 3 rd c. (230s)	Walls of Acropolis hit, most urban space never used again.			
ANTIQUITY (A) 1 st -3 rd c.	Massive building strata; internal evolution. No churches.			

Attempt at reconstruction of a quarter of JERUSALEM in **Antiquity** (1st c. CE; upper left: Temple area)
[<http://www.ebibleteacher.com/node/187>].



J E R U S A L E M (KISHLE), and I S R A E L (SYNAGOGUES)				
CHRONOLOGY	MATERIAL EVIDENCE			
HIGH MIDDLE AGES (HMA) 10 th -11 th c.				Cultural evolution sets in again with Crusader tannery immediately above 700 year older palace of Antiquity.
Collapse of the 930s.				Break after Herodian palace must be here because HMA tannery right on top of it.
EARLY MIDDLE AGES (EMA) 8 th -10 th c.			No building strata. Silent period continues. Hebrew dated to 900 CE is same as Hebrew of 200 CE. No Jews in EMA though Crusaders murder them in HMA. Analogy to Europe where HMA-Ashkenazim are enigma because they have no Early Medieval predecessors. Standstill of cultural evolution!	
Catastrophe of the 6 th , and crisis period of the 7 th c.		No traces of Eastern Empire's fall through plague and comet.		
LATE-ANTIQUITY (LA) 4 th -6 th c.		Synagogues of 4th-6th c. as renaissance of 1st-3 rd c. style although sources on Jewish life extremely scarce. Silent Period begins. Standstill of cultural evolution!		
Crisis of the 3 rd c. (230s)	Destruction of palace.			
ANTIQUITY (A) 1 st -3 rd c.	Herodian palace at Kishle. No synagogues though rich religious and historical sources on Jewish life.			

Water colour (1911/13) of **Early Medieval** palace complex in **SAMARRA** (9th c.) by excavator Ernst Herzfeld (1879-1948) [<http://www.asia.si.edu/explore/asia/travelerseye/gallery4a.asp>]



9th/10th c. Samarra drowned under sand (modern Iraq) covers 58 km². 6,314 buildings had been registered as of 1991 with only 9 having components of significant height: “The **ruins are well preserved**” (Northedge 2007, 240).

Location of ruins north of modern Samarra



Foundations of 9th c. arena in 2nd c. Roman technique



S A M A R R A (Souma/Sumere; Iraq), and A R A B S				
How could 1 st -7 th c. Arabs fail to write texts or issue coins when there were countless experts all over the Ancient World who could teach them such basics? How, after 700 CE, could the Arabs become uncontested masters of Graeco-Roman architecture, arts, crafts, and philosophy when there was nobody left to teach them because Rome was crushed, and Byzantium petrified?				
CHRONOLOGY	MATERIAL EVIDENCE			
HIGH MIDDLE AGES (HMA) 10 th -11 th c.				Samarra abandoned, yet Arab cultural evolution continues in Baghdad and other cities.
Collapse of the 930s				Sudden destruction, fall of Abbasids not recorded in sources.
EARLY MIDDLE AGES (EMA) 8 th -10 th c.			Massive building strata, writing, coins as copy of 1 st /2 nd c. Classical culture in 8 th /9 th c. CE makes Ptolemy 700 years younger or proves him wrong. Evolution sets 700 years after Nabataeans!	
Catastrophe of the 6th, and crisis period of the 7th c.		No traces of Eastern Empire's fall..		
LATE-ANTIQUITY (LA) 4 th -6 th c.		No building strata; no coinage or literature. Stand-still of cultural evolution!		
Crisis of the 3rd c. (230s)	No traces of this catastrophe.			
ANTIQUITY (A) 1 st -3 rd c.	Active since Bronze Age; known as <i>Souma</i> by Ptolemy in 150 CE (<i>Sumere</i> in Latin); no building strata; Arabs do not write or issue coins after Nabataeans. Standstill of cultural evolution!			

Of course, the period Antiquity=Late Antiquity=Early Middle Ages that was terminated in the 230s (=930s) has seen many more catastrophes -- like earthquakes, tsunamis, deadly volcanoes, fires etc. -- with a more restricted fallout. Yet, the episode of the time of Marcus Aurelius (161-180) appears to have been as widespread as the final crash. The following table tries to track the impact of this episode by re-combining sources that have been separated and spread over 700 years:

TWO CATASTROPHES OF DIFFERENT DESTRUCTIVE FORCE THAT HIT THE ROMAN EMPIRE SOME 70 YEARS APART		
Antiquity	Late Antiquity	Early Middle Ages
160s ff. Crisis of Marcus Aurelius (161-180)	450s ff. Western Empire declining	860s ff. Even Latium reports to Byzantium
Invasions of Hsiongnu/azyges from Pannonia , and Quadi right into Italy-Friulia . Attacks of Moors .	Invasions of Huns from Pannonia , and Gothi right into Italy-Friulia ("Migration period").	Invasions of Hungarians from Pannonia , and Vikings right into Italy-Friulia . Attacks of Moors .
During Antonine Plague (3-5 mill. killed), Rome's "sacrificial altars burnt [...] for an entire week" (Fündling 2008, 97).	Depopulation of Gallia (Gaul); foreign tribes allowed in for repopulation.	Varangian Vikings attack Constantinople.
Persecutions of Christians . "Antonine fires" (160s) require repairs of cities from Africa to England. Many sites hardly recover. Wooden Limes castles are replaced by stone structures in the 180s.	Massive wave of new Christian churches . Leo I (457-474) orders repairs of Limes fortifications .	Conversion of Bulgarians to Christianity . Rome's Nerva-Forum rebuilt with much simpler structures .
230s	520s	930s
Destructions and depopulation are much more massive. Dark earth, sand, and soil cover many sites.	Destructions and depopulation are much more massive. Dark earth, sand, and soil cover many sites.	Destructions and depopulation are much more massive. Dark earth, sand, and soil cover many sites.
Countless sites are abandoned for ever.	Countless sites are abandoned for ever.	Countless sites are abandoned for ever.
If reconstruction takes place at all it has to wait up to the 10th c. of the HIGH MIDDLE AGES that also see mass conversions to Christianity.	If reconstruction takes place at all it has to wait up to the 10th c. of the HIGH MIDDLE AGES that also see mass conversions to Christianity.	If reconstruction takes place at all it begins after the 930s of the HIGH MIDDLE AGES that also bring mass conversions to Christianity.

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