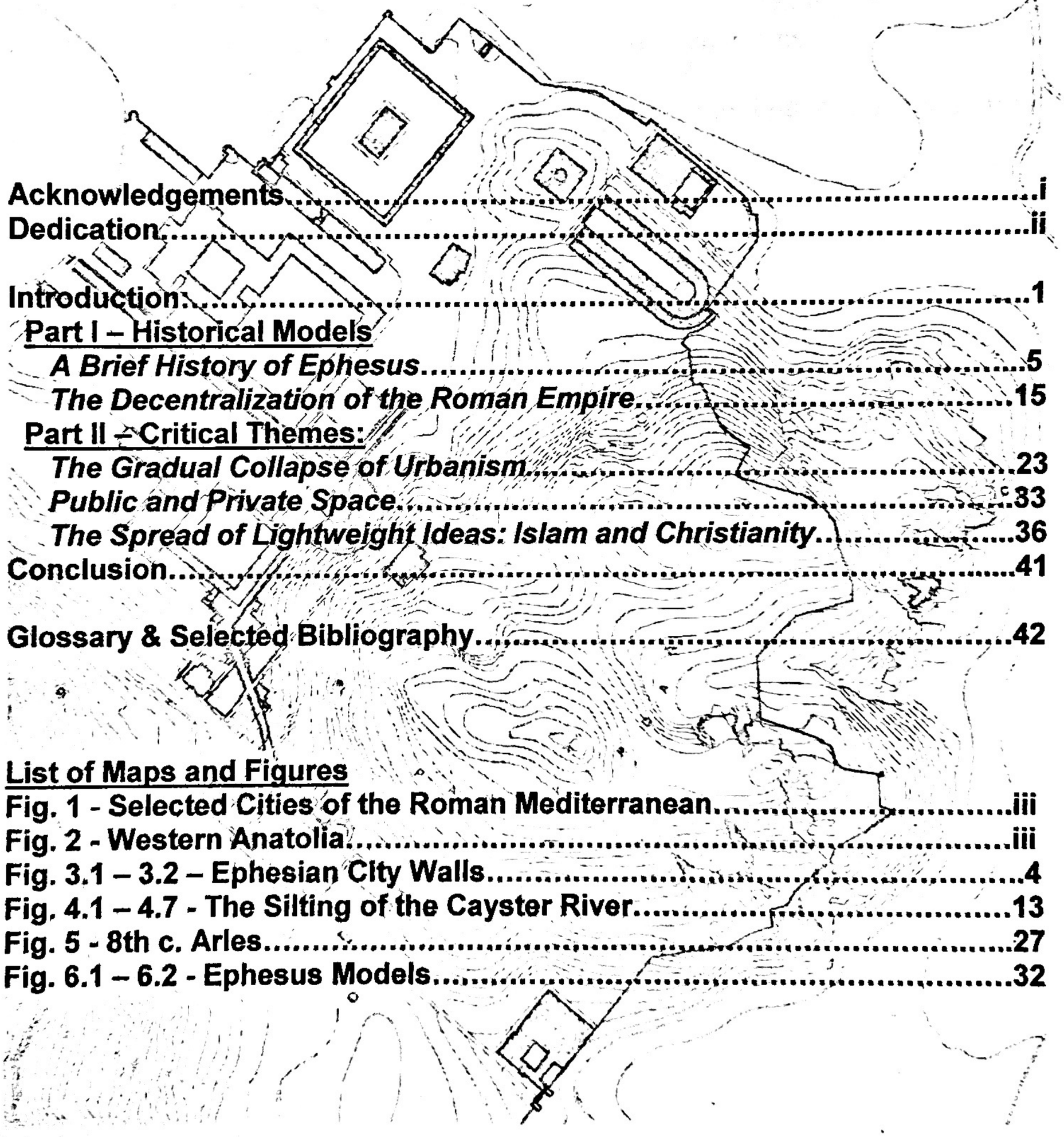
The City of Ephesus and Fall of the Roman Empire

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2003-2004 Senior Honors Thesis
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And the CUAC team was kind enough to let me practice my colloquium presentation at the California Undergraduate Anthropology Conference.

Dedication

To Tressa. You led the way for me on this, and always encourage me to reach new heights.

Ephesus in the Roman World

Fig. 1 – Selected Cities of the Roman Mediterranean

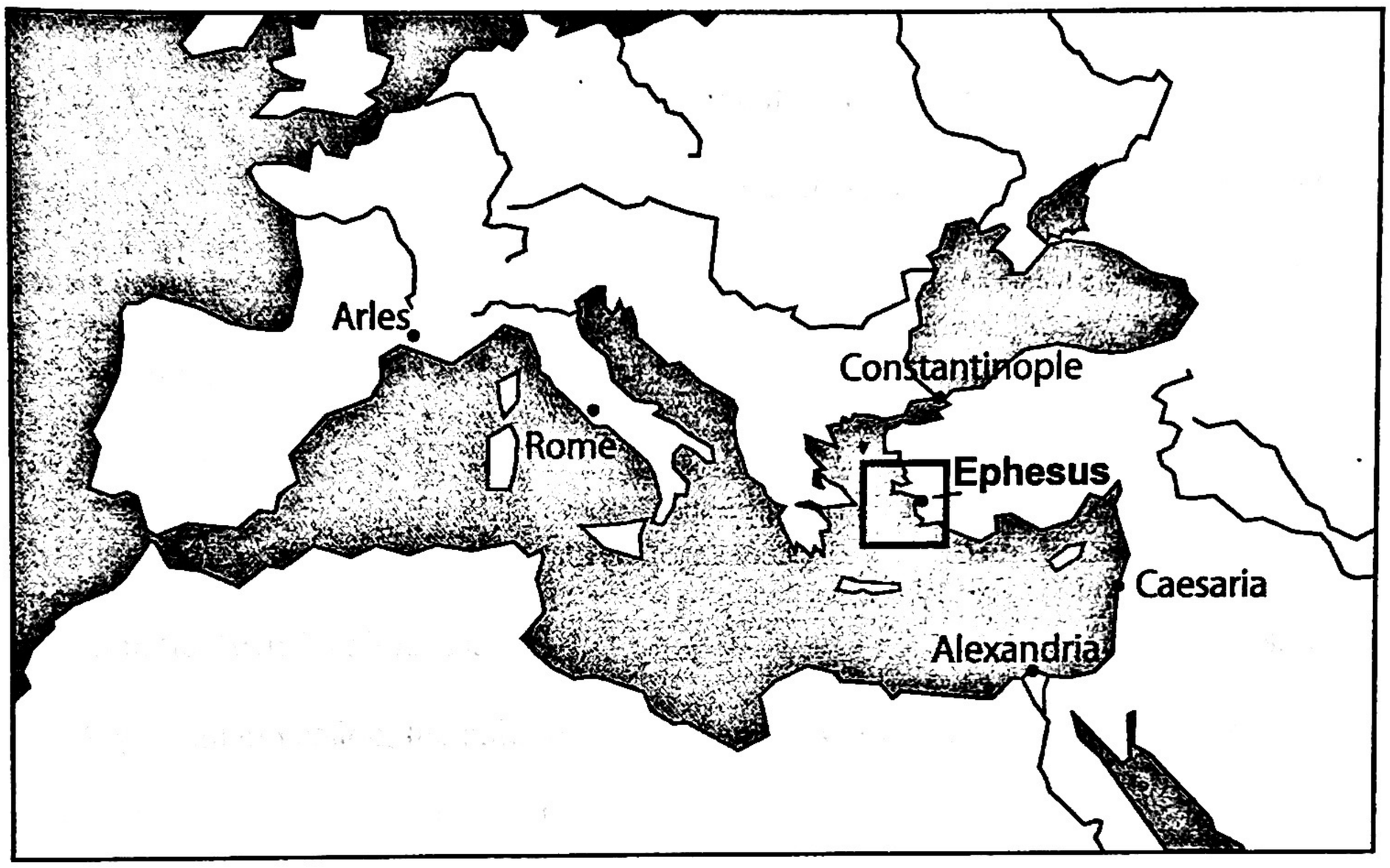
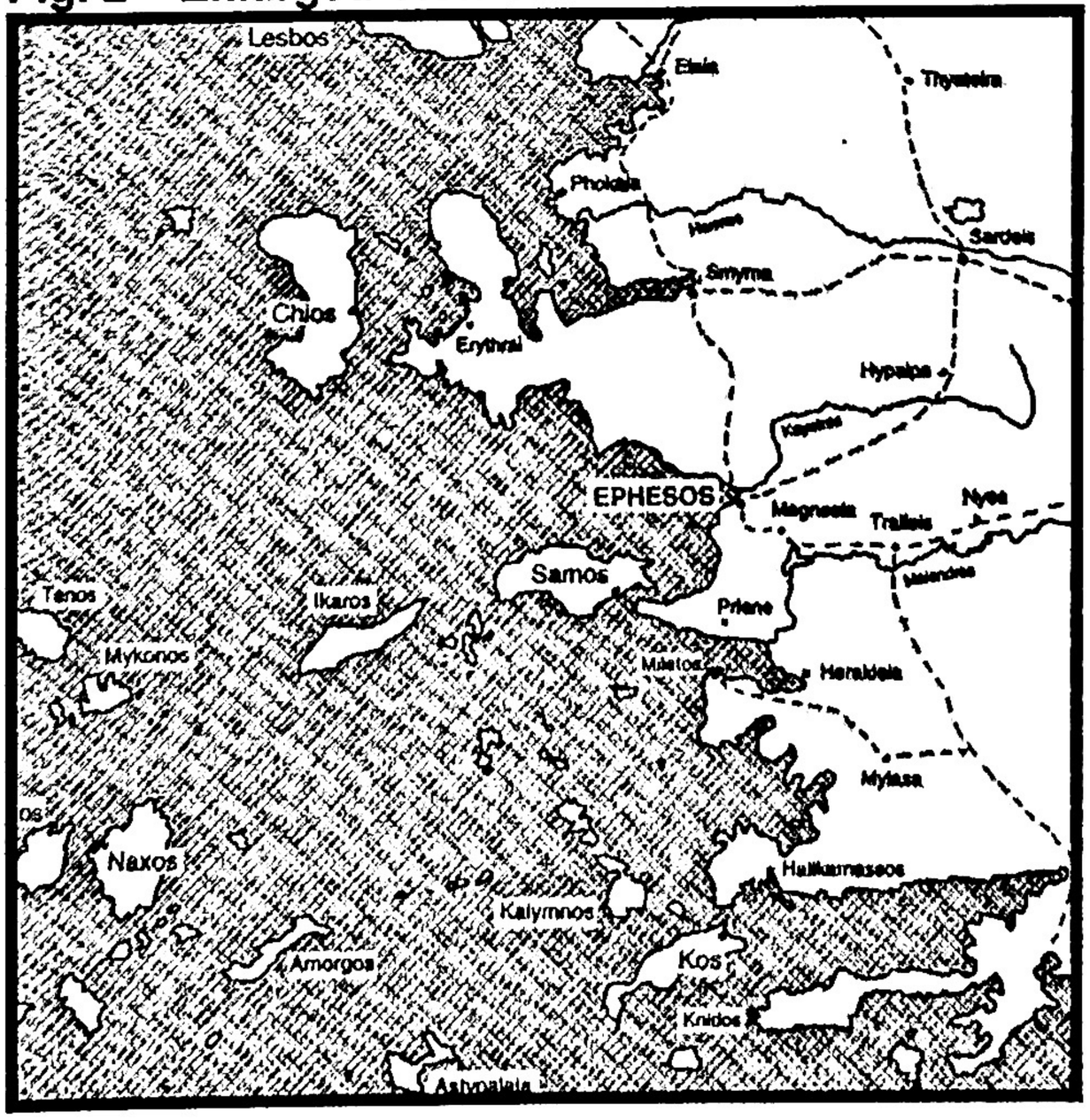


Fig. 2 – Enlarged View of Western Anatolia



Introduction

A local legend at the Anatolian city of Ephesus described seven young men who fled into a cave in the third century CE to escape the Roman Emperor Decius' persecutions of Christians. According to the story, these youths were put under a spell, to awaken two hundred years later in the reign of Theodosius II. Returning to the nearby city, the men were amazed to find a cross above the main gate, and their coins bearing the hated Decius' image unfamiliar to the Ephesians.[1] The Seven Sleepers legend bears a striking resemblance to the American folktale of Rip Van Winkle. Van Winkle falls asleep in the British colonies and wakes up in the newly-independent United States. Like the Appalachian version, the point of the Roman story is that the protagonists have arrived in a world changed for the better.

From a modern perspective, this positive view of the Seven Sleepers' transition seems a little difficult to understand. When the seven Romans woke up in Ephesus, their empire had recently divided into Eastern and Western halves, the capital city of Rome had just been sacked by Germanic troops in 410, and the Western half of the empire was only a few decades away from completely dissolving into independent states. To denote this period's differences with Classical Greco-Roman civilization, historians usually mark the beginning of "Late Antiquity" around 200 CE. According to modern popular imagination, the Roman Empire had already fallen, and humanity was entering the Dark Ages. Why then did the tale of the Seven Sleepers make things out to be so positive?

The answer lies in two key issues: the prosperous location this legend takes place in (the city of Ephesus), and the new values and priorities of the Late Antique Ephesians.

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[1] Peter Brown, The Making of Late Antiquity (Harvard University Press, 1978), 1.

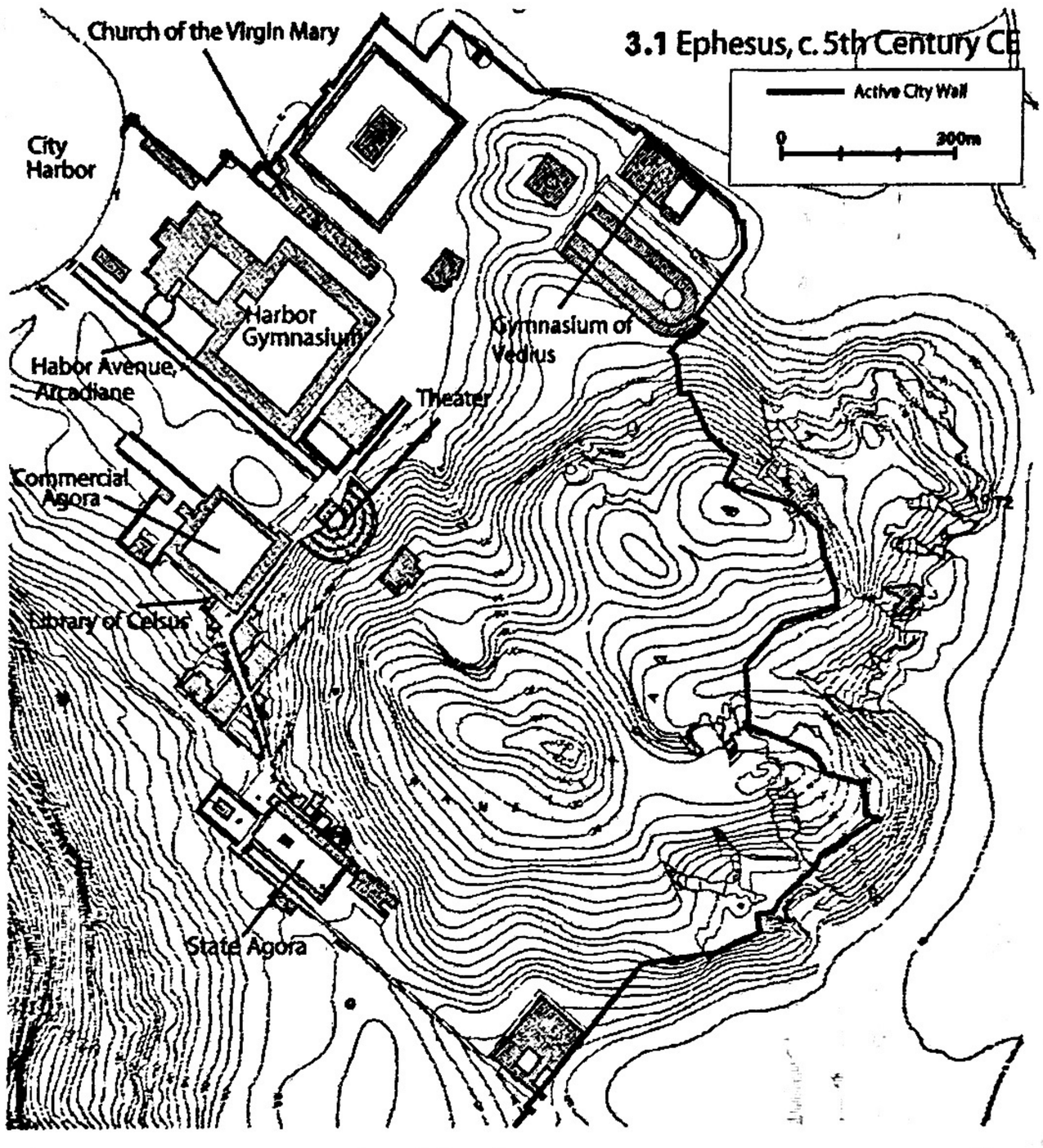
While many tumultuous and often violent changes were taking place across the Mediterranean, it was by no means a homogenous scene of chaos and destruction. The Seven Sleepers legend highlights the fact that cities like Ephesus in the Eastern Empire not only maintained their Classical heritage, but actually *flourished* in Late Antiquity. To get beyond stereotyped generalizations of the Fall of Rome, it is therefore critically important to study the individual experiences of specific Roman cities.

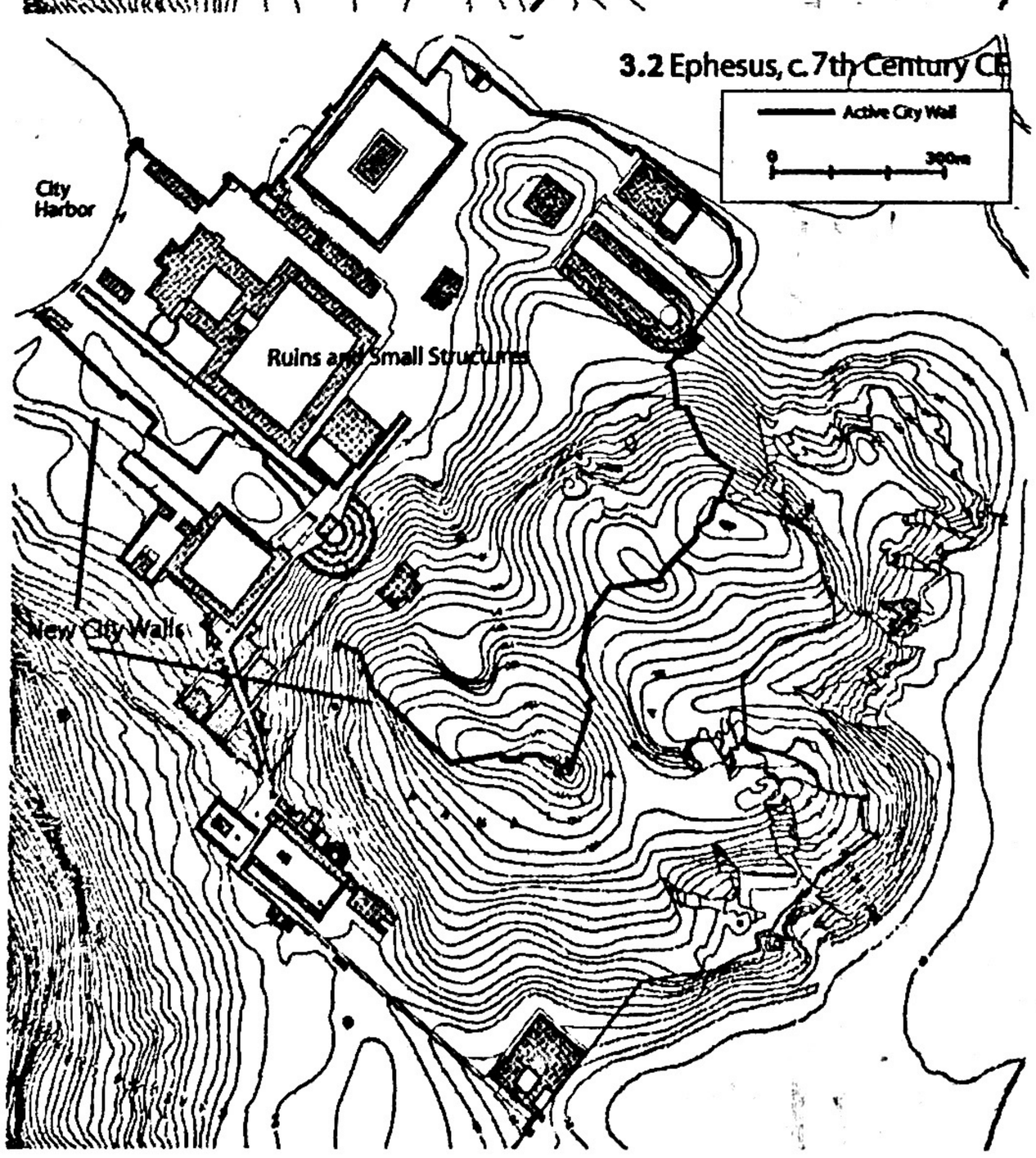
Despite the slow political disintegration of the Roman Empire, the upbeat story of the Seven Sleepers also highlights a new value system developing in Late Antiquity. The rise of Christianity would signal an important break between "church" and "state" that had previously not existed in Western Civilization, so that Christian fidelity began superceding loyalty to the Roman state. St. Augustine's *City of God*, written in the Late Antique world the Seven Sleepers had arrived in, signaled a religious shift away from earthly matters of state to intangible, spiritual ones. This critical change helps explain the positive tone of the Ephesian legend. So long as the empire was now becoming Christian, the survival of Roman hegemony was no longer a chief priority of the populace. The tale of the Seven Sleepers thus provides specific evidence to compare against the general model of Mediterranean Late Antiquity, and identifies two important themes: a shift in priorities, and the influence of regional variation.

By taking a general historical mòdel, such as the Fall of the Roman Empire, and comparing it against extensive evidence at one location, researchers are better able to understand the overall situation. This technique illustrates a hierarchy of processes at work, and allows us to separate trends that are apparently universal from others more local and exceptional. Often, comparison provides enough evidence to make tentative

arguments about *why* the general model works or doesn't work at a specific location, and lays a foundation for further study.

Ephesus, the home of the Seven Sleepers, when compared against other Mediterranean cities and placed in the larger framework of the Fall of the Roman Empire, reveals critical elements of this broad historical model. Overall, Ephesus fits into the general collapse of urbanism in the first millennium CE. The city also represents the enormous paradigm shift in Roman conceptualizations of cities, public space, and public services, as these all but disappeared from the Mediterranean. As the Seven Sleepers demonstrate, this trend was accompanied by the rise of new religious organizations that were not tied to a particular ethnicity, city or political body, but were instead politically and culturally transcendent entities. Finally, Ephesus highlights the importance of regional diversity to the Fall of Rome model, both by its exceptional prosperity, and the decidedly local and physical reason the city eventually collapsed - from the silting of its harbors. Thus, both for its supports and its contrasts, the city of Ephesus is a critical example for understanding the Fall of Rome.


Church of the Virgin Mary
City Harbor
Harbor Gymnasium
Habor Avenue, Arcadiane
Theater
Commercial Agora
Library of Celsus
State Agora
Gymnasium of Vedius
3.1 Ephesus, c. 5th Century CE
Active City Wall
0
300m


City Harbor
Ruins and Small Structures
New City Walls
3.2 Ephesus, c. 7th Century CE
Active City Wall
0
300m

A Brief History of Ephesus

The Anatolian metropolis of Ephesus was, for much of its history, an elite among the community of Roman cities. Wealthy and prosperous, Ephesus was ideally located for trade, and consequently held a favorable place in the imperial infrastructure. Ephesus was also significant for its resiliency. It suffered through many of the disasters associated with the Fall of the Roman Empire, and yet continued to survive long into the Middle Ages. When the city finally did collapse, it was for specific, local reasons rather than general ones. The history of Mediterranean urbanism, both in its general trends and local variation, is represented in Ephesus.

Ephesus is valuable not only because of its longevity and importance, but also simply because we know so much about it. Clive Foss, whose *Ephesus After Antiquity* is still the cornerstone of the city's English-language scholarship, notes that Ephesus is "the most excavated of the major cities of the East."[2] What's more, Foss' study and others like it attempt to *complete* Ephesus' history by including the Late Antique and post-Roman periods, which Classicists have been notorious for ignoring.[3] A final advantage of Ephesus is that it is not currently occupied; the Hellenistic and Roman city was abandoned after the eighth century CE. To archaeologists, many of the most famous sites in ancient history: Thessalonica, Constantinople, Alexandria, Athens and Rome itself all

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[2] Clive Foss, Ephesus After Antiquity: A Late Antique, Byzantine and Turkish City (Cambridge University Press, 1979), 7.

[3] Liebeschuetz notes a specific example of Austrian archaeologists at Ephesus so focused on the city's Classical period that they disassembled a late antique building made out of reused materials, and returned them to their original positions during the Early Empire. J.H.W.G. Liebeschetz, "The uses and abuses of the concept of 'decline' in later Roman history" in Luke Lavan, ed. Recent Research into Late-Antique Urbanism JRA Supp. Series 42 (Portsmouth, RI, 2001), 236.

suffer from modern cities existing over them, and much of their ancient versions have been lost forever.[4]

The local geography of the site made it a valuable location for settlement. Human presence Cayster River Valley dates back to the Neolithic.[5] Ionian Greeks arrived sometime around the tenth century BCE, and settled along the southern bank of the Cayster River close to the Aegean Sea. [see pg. 13, fig. 4.1] Hellenistic Greeks refounded the city at its better-known Classical location, expanding westward in the vicinity of three important landmarks. The largest of these was Mt. Bulbul, at 355 m., which served as the Greco-Roman city's southern wall. Mt. Panayir, at 155 m., was part of the eastern defenses, while the third and smallest hill, Ayasuluk, was the most militarily defendable. Ironically the local geography would also play the crucial role in the site's abandonment, through the continuous silting of the city's harbors.

Ephesus fell under the control of the expanding Roman Republic in 133 BCE, and became an interesting blend of Greek and Roman city planning.[6] [see pg. 4, fig. 3.1] Its main avenue curves around Mt. Panayir and runs north through the center of the city. The second axis is the Harbor Avenue, running at a right angle east to west. The city's public buildings were along one of these two roads, and clustered heavily at their intersection. The Odeion in the State Agora was the seat of Roman city government, the Library of Celsus held around 12,000 scrolls, and the city's great Theater could hold around 24,000 spectators.[7] The Temple of Artemis right outside Ephesus, known as the Artemision, was the most famous public monument of the city, and one of the Seven

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[4] C. Mango, Byzantium, The Empire of New Rome (New York, 1980), 69.
[5] Thomas, Christine, personal correspondence, May 29, 2004.
[6] Although Ephesus also took part in a regional rebellion against Roman rule in 88 BCE, put down by Sulla; Selahattin Erdemgil, Ephesus: Ruins and Museum Net Turistic Yayinlar (1995), 13.
[7] Lionel Swain, Ephesians (Wilmington, Deleware: Michale Glazier Inc., 1980), 41, 86, 98.

Wonders of the Ancient World. It was the biggest building in the Greek world, and at the time the largest marble structure on Earth.[8] The city also contained gymnasia, temples, aqueducts, fountains, and baths. One famous building missing from Ephesus was an amphitheater, whose popularity in Italy never spread to the Greek east.[9] Ephesus' infrastructure represented both Greco-Roman influences and the prominent position the city held in the Mediterranean.

The city was located at the intersection of several regional trade routes, and had a commanding role in the Aegean. Because of its importance as a commercial and political hub, the Roman Senate made Ephesus a provincial capital in 29 BCE.[10] Protected by the *Pax Romana*, there was little need for the city's Hellenistic walls. From Ephesus, Central Eurasia could be accessed inland, and in Roman times three important highways converged upon it. [see pg. iii, fig. 2] Ephesus' role in western Anatolia was apparently so important that all milestones in the region were gauged by their distance from the city.[11]

In addition to being at the center of the road network, Ephesus was also the largest seaport in the Aegean.[12] Ideally located, its harbors connected sea routes from Syria and Egypt in the south to the Bosporus and Black Sea in the north, and to Greece, Italy and the western Mediterranean.[13] However, the Cayster River suffered from a continuous, sporadically prograding delta, whose upstream deposits of sediment would choke off the city's access to the Aegean. [see pg. 13, fig. 4] As a result, Ephesian harbors were

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[8] Giancarlo Biguzzi, "Ephesus, Its Artemision, Its Temple, to the Flavian Emperors, and Idolatry in Revelations," Novum Testamentum 40 (1998), 279.
[9] Mango, 61.
[10] Thomas, Christine. personal correspondence, May 29, 2004.
[11] Clinton E. Arnold Ephesians: Power and Magic (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 13.
[12] Foss, 3.
[13] Foss, 3.

afflicted with silting problems throughout the metropolis' long life. Around 300 BCE the original Sacred Harbor near the great Temple of Artemis became unusable to the Greeks, and required moving the city to its better-known Classical location.[14] Since that time, the citizens of Ephesus built numerous harbors as the delta slowly inched westward toward the Aegean, each eventually consumed by silting.

Despite the silting problems steadily becoming a major nuisance, the city developed workaround solutions. Harbor dredging and anti-silting projects were a key theme in Ephesian history. The Emperor Hadrian actually tried to divert the course of the river in 129 CE, in order to keep the harbor viable.[15] Second-century records describe a system of artificial islands and ferries used to unload large cargoes, presumably because the city harbor was no longer deep enough to receive them directly.[16] Continual adjustment to the narrowing of the harbor channel with such innovations allowed Ephesus to remain a major trading hub.

Like much of the Empire, Ephesus would suffer through the fifty years of military anarchy during the third century. Little is known about the city during this tumultuous period; there are few inscriptions and no known building activity between the years 235 and 284.[17] One clear piece of information was that a Gothic fleet of five hundred ships sacked and burned the city around 262. The harbor district was almost completely destroyed and the Temple of Artemis was pillaged. When Ephesus emerged from the chaotic third century, its walls had been rebuilt and reinforced.[18]

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[14] John C. Kraft et al. "A Geologic Analysis of Ancient Landscapes and the Harbors of Ephesus and the Artemision in Anatolia." Jahreshefte Des Osterreichischen Archaologischen Institutes in Wien 69 (2000), 175.
[15] Kraft, 190.
[16] Kraft, 199.
[17] Foss, 4.
[18] Foss, 4.

Despite the city's, and empire's, crises in the third century, Ephesus would become prosperous once more. The enormous archaeological record from the fourth and fifth centuries attests to a flourishing commercial and urban center at Ephesus.[19] Foss calls the city the "most striking example of the rich late antique urban culture in the Mediterranean."[20] With a rebuilt harbor district, Late Antique Ephesian goods traveled all over the region.[21] When the Emperor Theodosius II settled on Ephesus for an important Church council in 431, he proclaimed, "We have chosen Ephesus as a city easily accessible to those who come by land and sea, bounteously providing all useful local and imported products to its inhabitants."[22]

Ephesus also revived Classical artistic and architectural traditions after the third century, becoming a center for portrait sculpting, poetry, and art. The presence of artisans such as wood-cutters, pipe-makers, and clayworkers, as well as professional academics, lawyers, philosophers and doctors attests to the continuity of urban society in Late Antiquity.[23] Where building activity in the anarchic third century was extremely limited, the fourth century saw an explosion of growth at Ephesus. Bath-houses were restored, the Gymnasium of Vedius was remodeled and continued to be used. The Stadium received major rebuilding, and a new public fountain was added nearby.[24] In the late fourth century Emperor Arcadius provided for the construction of one of the finest Late Antique shopping avenues in the Mediterranean, the Arcadiane. A marble-paved boulevard connecting the Harbor to the city center, the Arcadiane maintained the Classical ideal of broad, paved streets with colonnaded sidewalks. The shopping avenue

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[19] Foss, 8.
[20] Foss, vii.
[21] Foss, 8.
[22] Foss, 7.
[23] Foss, 9.
[24] Foss, 48.

also employed a rare technological innovation: street lamps. This luxury was reserved for only a few very prosperous cities, such as Constantinople, Antioch and Alexandria, so much so that their citizens disdainfully referred to less-refined cities as "lampless".[25] Having escaped the persecutions and chaos of the 250s, it is this prosperous city the Seven Sleepers would have awoken to.

The city would remain relatively prosperous until the turn of the seventh century, when larger regional forces almost swallowed the city up. Unlike the crises of the third century, which had little long-term impact on the Anatolian city, Ephesus was forever changed by the catastrophic events of the seventh century. The physical evidence in this period must compensate for the almost complete lack of written documents and inscriptions. Although an exact chronology is still out of reach, Ephesus clearly contracted during the seventh century.[26] The most prosperous sections of the city were utterly destroyed around 616, either from an ongoing war with Persia or a natural disaster, and were never rebuilt.[27] In fact, except for the construction of the new city walls and new churches, there is *no* evidence of *any* significant building activity after the sixth century at Ephesus.[28] Coin finds, usually a reliable barometer of an urban economy, continue until the reign of Heraclius (610-641), and then effectively stop. According to Foss only two coins after that, one in the eighth century and another in the eleventh, represent the entire numismatic record for this period in the city's history.[29] Ephesus had slid into obscurity, and became something entirely different from what the Seven Sleepers ever knew.

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[25] Foss, 57.
[26] Foss, 111.
[27] Foss, 103.
[28] Foss, 111.
[29] Foss, 113.

Like almost all other cities in the Mediterranean, Ephesus contracted to a small defensible core. The city nucleated into two fortified areas; one around the life-sustaining harbor, and another a mile east on the easily-defendable hilltop of Ayasuluk. [see pg. 13, fig. 4.6] Originally the burial place of St. John, Ayasuluk received a massive cathedral under Emperor Justinian and gradually drew the population out of the dying Classical city. Ephesian citizens constructed a fortress around the Church of St. John during this period, and during the Arab sieges of the seventh and eighth centuries the walls were enlarged and strengthened.[30]

Meanwhile, in the old city a new course of walls consolidated the population within the Harbor District. The new walls excluded the State Agora, once the seat of city government, and Ephesus' luxurious hillside villas. [see pg. 4, fig. 3.2] The Commercial Agora, previously the center of city life, was also left outside the walls. The Theater and Arcadiane fell into disuse, were invaded by small houses, and eventually were incorporated into the new circuit of defenses.[31] The majority of the Classical city was abandoned and left in ruins, while the remaining population fortified itself around the city's harbor, or moved to the fortress on Ayasuluk.

Despite the wars, disease, depopulation and disasters from the seventh century onward, the citizens of Ephesus endured. When most of the cities in the Mediterranean were disappearing and contracting to small fortresses, Ephesus still held on to an urban area of a square kilometer. Relative to everywhere else in the Roman world, the trickle of written records that came out of this period mentions Ephesus in relatively positive terms. Michael McCormick's monumental *The Rise of the European Economy* notes that

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[30] Foss, 107.
[31] Foss, 106.

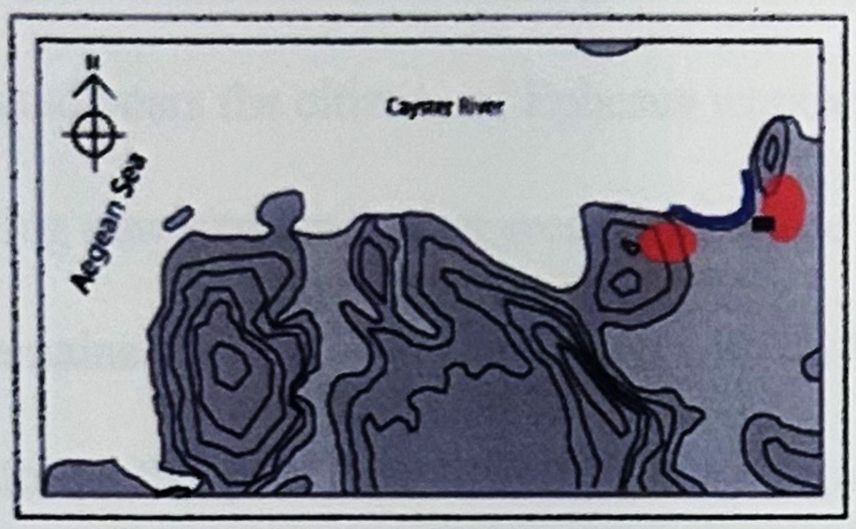
pilgrims still frequently visited Ephesus during this period, both because of the religious significance of the city and because it still lay on several important trade routes.[32] An account by Gregory the Dekapolite in 830 describes an annual fair, and ships laden with goods in the harbor.[33] Another account notes a fair that produced one hundred pounds of gold in tax revenue, a considerable sum implying Ephesus' continued economic importance to the region.[34] When Constantine V hired outside help to rebuild the ruined capital of Constantinople in the mid-eighth century, Ephesus could still provide skilled craftsmen to rebuild the aqueduct.[35] Although the city contracted and relocated, and the entire empire had fallen on hard times, Ephesus still maintained a prominent position in the Mediterranean approaching the first millennium CE.

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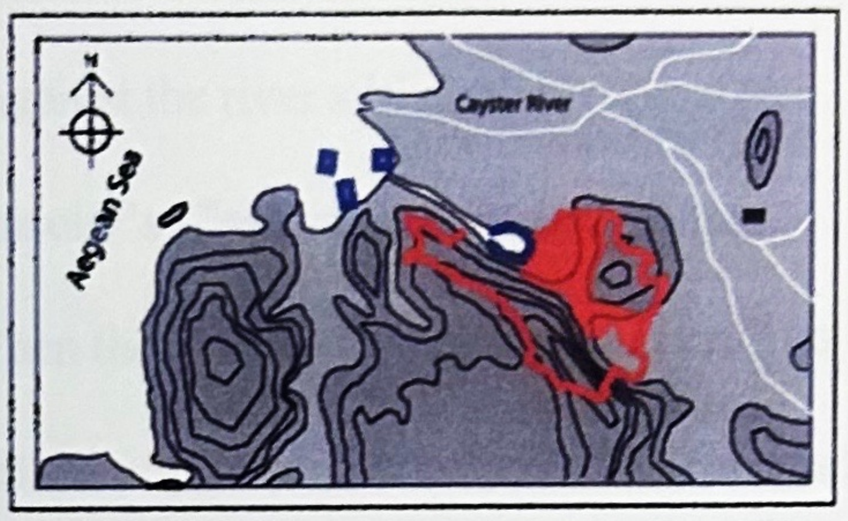
[32] Pilgrims were attracted to Ephesus because of the burial place of St. John and Mary Magdalene, the cave of the Seven Sleepers, and its prominence in the New Testament; see Michael McCormick, Origins of the European Economy (Cambridge University Press, 2001)
[33] McCormick, 199.
[34] Foss, 110.
[35] Foss, 110.

Fig 4

The Silting of the Cayster River



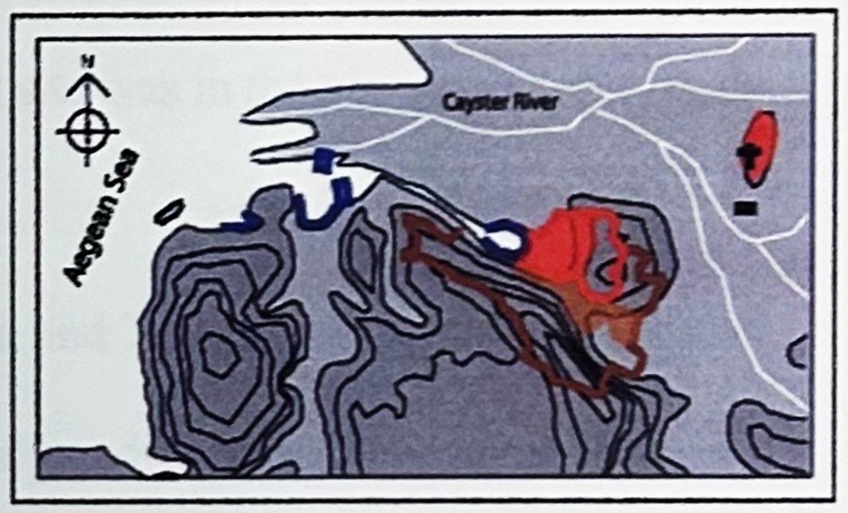
4.1 Original settlement. ~1000 BCE



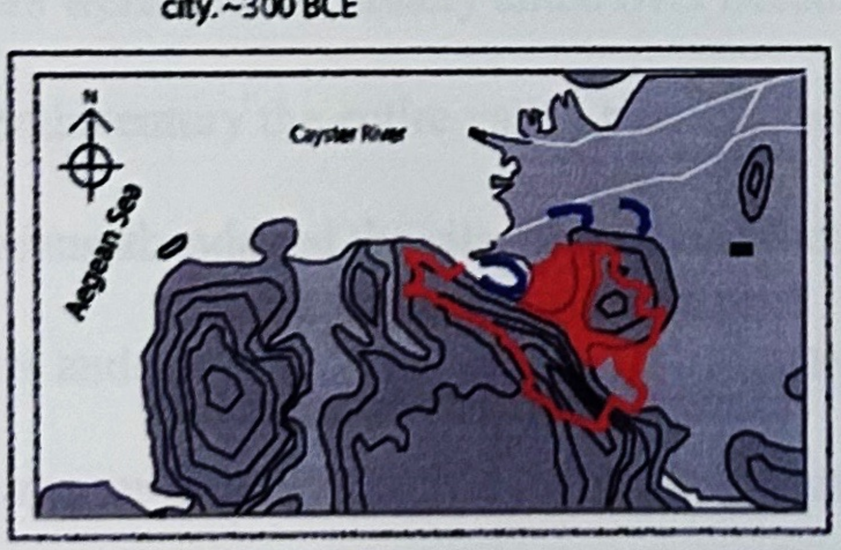
4.4 Harbor channel kept open, artificial island system in use. ~200 CE



4.2 River silting prompts refounding of city. ~300 BCE



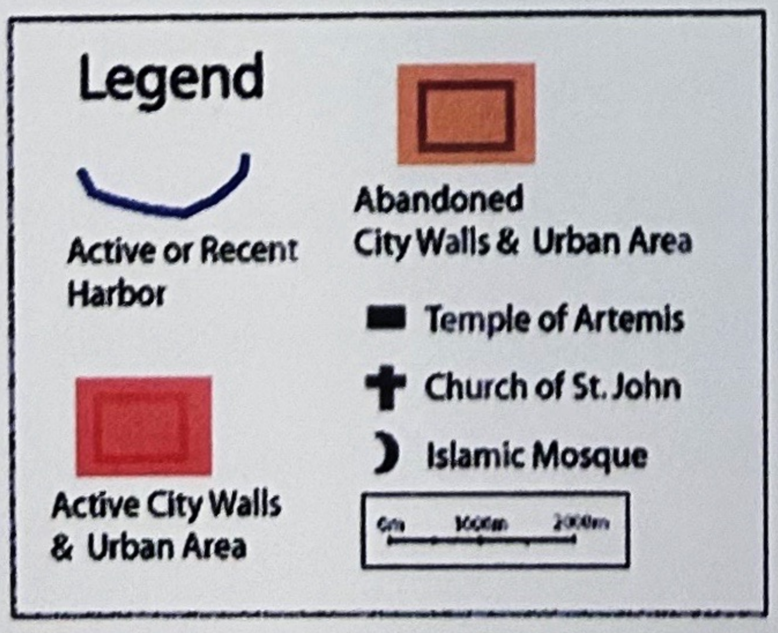
4.5 Disasters of seventh century, urban contraction around harbor, church of St. John

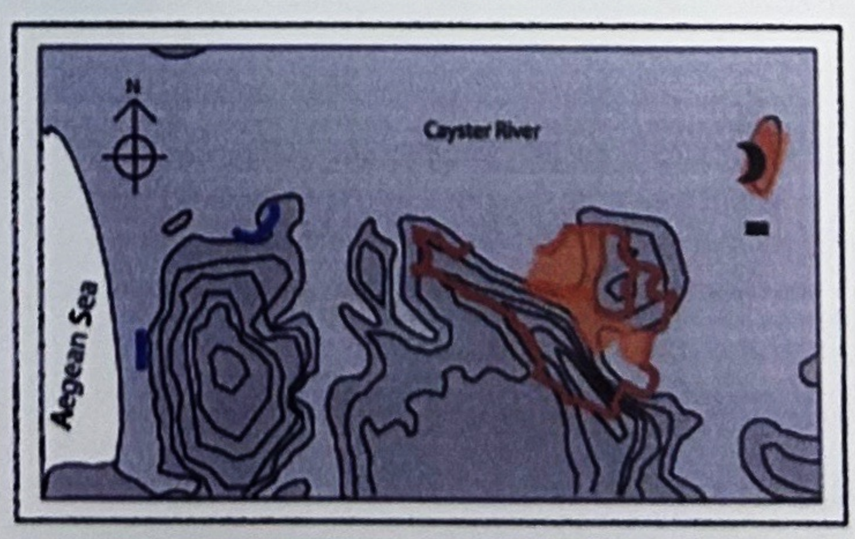


4.3 Silting prbolems intensify. ~1 CE



4.6 Turks capture city, find primary harbor ruined, population concetrated around Church of St. John. ~1304 CE





4.7 Last usable harbor silts over, site abandoned. ~1550

The city of Ephesus did eventually fall, but not because of grand trends or forces affecting the entire Mediterranean. Rather, it fell for a very specific reason, one central to the city's entire history: the silting of its vital artery, the Cayster River. For over a thousand years the citizens of Ephesus worked against the river silting by continually building new harbors further westward. Once the city's Classical harbor died, though, the remains of the Classical city died with it. When the Turks captured Ephesus in 1304, they found the great Roman harbor unusable, and the population entirely resettled around the fortress of Ayasuluk. The ruins of Greco-Roman Ephesus, once one of the greatest cities in the world, were uninhabited and the old site was in the possession of a single individual.[36]

New harbors were built farther westward, and Turkish Ayasuluk regained and held prominence in the Mediterranean for several hundred years. However, the new harbors were also eventually silted over because of the prograding river delta. By the sixteenth century the entire valley became useless as a seaport, and the remaining Ephesians abandoned the site. Ephesus, which had survived the Fall of the Roman Empire and prospered well into Late Antiquity, collapsed because of a geological phenomenon entirely specific to the city's location.

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[36] Foss, 147.

The Decentralization of the Roman Empire

Focusing on the history of Ephesus allows one to understand the processes at work in the city, but a wider perspective is required to see how specific those trends were to Ephesus alone. Ever since the publication of Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* two centuries ago, debates have raged over the ultimate causes for the collapse of the Roman state. Despite constant debate over the ultimate causes for the fall and whether there really was a "fall" in the first place, it is clear that from the early Roman Empire onward a decentralization of power took place in Mediterranean society. The momentum of Roman expansion was lost in the first few centuries CE, and Roman emperors found it increasingly difficult to govern the vast areas of conquest. The revolts and invasions of the third century, as well as the reforms that resulted from them, only set the stage for further decentralization of power. Western Europe broke away and Roman power consolidated in the eastern Mediterranean. By the seventh century many of the old Roman Empire's frontier territories had become politically independent, though they remained part of the cultural continuity of Classical civilization.

The collapse of this political entity is directly related to the nature of its creation. When the Roman Republic was expanding its authority over the Mediterranean at the beginning of the Common Era, regional power became increasingly centralized at the city of Rome itself. Many ancient writers saw Rome, the imperial center of the universe, as destined to rule the entire world.[37] At the beginning of the third century, though, the empire was reaching the limits of its expansion. The Emperor Caracalla had recently granted universal citizenship to all of its inhabitants, 'Romanization' was proceeding in

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[37] For example, Ovid's Fasti II 683-684 "...but for the Romans the limit of their city is the limit of the world."

Gaul and the Near East, and Gallic and Syrian frontiers were relatively stable. The Parthian Empire, which controlled much of modern-day Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, were the major rival to Roman power. Since the beginning of the second century Rome had been intermittently expanding into Mesopotamia, but the frontier was perceived as generally stable border neither the Romans nor the Parthians were particularly interested in changing.[38]

The cusp of the crises of the third century that would soon engulf the Empire hangs on two leaders. The Roman Emperor Alexander Severus took power in 222, and two years later his counterpart Ardashir would gain control of the Persian Empire. Ardashir would be the founder of the Sasanian dynasty, while Alexander would be the last of the Severi. When Ardashir took power in Persia, he advocated a hard-line military assault against Roman territories to the west. In his mind, the Romans occupied Persian territory that had been lost hundreds of years earlier to Alexander the Great, including the city of Ephesus. Another Alexander, the Roman emperor, was a stark contrast to his Macedonian namesake. Raised in an era of peace, Herodian describes Alexander Severus as weak-willed and inexperienced in matters of war.[39] After his idealistic attempts to negotiate were rebuffed by Ardashir, Alexander assembled an army in Italy, and set out for Central Eurasia. Alexander rallied his troops in Rome with a speech assuring them that the Sasanian army would collapse in the face of Roman might, as "we have always learnt to conquer the barbarian."[40]

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[38] Dodgeon and Lieu, eds. The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (226-363) (Routeledge: London, 1994), 1.
[39] Dodgeon and Lieu, 17.
[40] Dodgeon and Lieu, 19.

Imperial bureaucracy and the technological limitations on communication and travel proved disadvantageous to the vast Roman Empire. The way their system was set up, the emperor was constantly undercutting the independence of his field commanders for fear they would overthrow him. John P. Adams writes that Roman emperors "preferred risky mediocrity to dangerous competence" in their subordinates, and once a real threat materialized emperors would have to deal with it personally.[41] As a result, Alexander had to fight the Sasanian Persians himself, despite the theater of war laying hundreds of miles away. Alexander's communications with the Sasanians would have taken weeks to travel both ways, and once it was clear that Ardashir would not back down, Alexander was forced to personally raise an army and sail all the way from Italy to check his advances.

Although sources conflict on the results of the campaign, it is clear that no lasting peace was bought. In fact, Alexander's campaign highlighted the strategic weaknesses of the Roman Empire at its height. While the emperor fought against the Sasanian Persians in the east, Germanic invaders began advancing into Roman Gaul and Italy from the north, and Alexander Severus was forced to turn his army around and sail back to Italy. While campaigning against the northern invaders, he was murdered at the hands of his own disgruntled troops. The two-front war that had flared up and the emperor's murder signaled the beginning of fifty years of complete anarchy in the Roman Empire. The Romans were fighting against invaders on multiple fronts as well as among themselves as numerous challengers vied for control of the empire.

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[41] John P. Adams, "The Roman Imperial Army in the East: Social and Governmental Problems," Ancient World 2 (1979), 133.

Diocletian, a soldier selected emperor by the army in 284, helped stabilize the chaos of the third century and implemented many telling reforms in the Roman system. To prevent the leadership from being overwhelmed, he divided the Roman Empire among four rulers, the *tetrarchs*, each charged with protecting a specific territory. Diocletian bolstered the Roman army and set up layered networks of defenses, the *limes* system. While this did not guarantee Roman military superiority, it did prevent enemy invasions from gaining ground. In 296, the Persian Emperor Narses defeated Diocletian, but the auxiliary defensive network he set up prevented Narses from capitalizing on this victory. Two years later the Romans decisively defeated Narses and forced important territorial concessions.[42] Diocletian's *tetrarchy* and *limes* fortification network would hold the eastern frontier and foil Persian invasions, but it also promoted a decentralization of military and political power.[43]

The crises of the third century passed, and Ephesus and the Eastern Empire enjoyed several hundred years of relative stability during Late Antiquity. However, the crises had taxed the obese, militarily-undermanned, and awkwardly centralized empire to its limits. The ascendancy of neighboring states was temporarily checked, but it required a decentralization of Roman power, and an increased emphasis on defense. Rome's central location in Italy facilitated its rise to power, but as recent events had shown, administering and defending Rome's empire required something more. Leonardo Benevolo notes that "Rome was not the chosen capital; that role was forced upon it by the fact that its Empire was the product of a city-state which had spread and spread."[44]

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[42] Nicasie, M.J. The Twighlight of Empire: The Roman Army from the Reign of Diocletian until the Battle of Adrianople (Amsterdam: J.C. Giebiem, 1998), 133.
[43] Dodgeon and Lieu, 4.
[44] Benevolo, 140.

During much of Rome's long history of expansion and rule, wars usually came one at a time along single fronts. By the time of Alexander Severus, though, pressure was mounting both from the north and from the east.[45] Co-emperors, and a consolidation of imperial power at Constantinople, were two techniques employed to counter this pressure.

The location of Constantinople no doubt factored into the Emperor Constantine's decision to build his capital there around 324 CE. Because of its valuable access to the Balkan, eastern European, Mesopotamian and Anatolian frontiers, Constantinople was the logical headquarters for dealing with the many foreign pressures on the Empire. Housing around half a million people in 476, Constantine built his city in grand Classical tradition, and it quickly surpassed Rome as an imperial capital. Two major roads defined the layout of the city, which included a hippodrome, public baths, theater, amphitheater, Senate house, and two fortified harbors. Egyptian grain shipments, historically used to support Rome's massive urban population, were tellingly diverted by Constantine for his new capital city.[46] The Emperor Theodosius II added massive new fortifications to the city: an elaborate three-wall system at the forefront of Roman defensive technology.[47] Constantinople had become, and would remain for over a thousand years, the preeminent city in the Roman East. The consolidation of power at Constantinople allowed the Roman Empire to survive and prosper in Greece, Turkey, Syria and Egypt. It is to this world the Seven Sleepers awakened, and its prosperity helps us understand why their story was a positive one.

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[45] Mason Hammond, The City in the Ancient World (Harvard University Press, 1972), 307.
[46] Mango, 77.
[47] J. Crow, "Fortifications and urbanism in Late Antiquity: Thessaloniki and other eastern cities," in Luke Lavan, ed. Recent Research in Late-Antique Urbanism JRS Supplemental 42 (Portsmouth, RI, 2001), 92.

Meanwhile, Roman power in the West had become increasingly dependent on 'barbarian' military support, and as the Empire consolidated at its new eastern capital, the peoples of western Europe were quickly carving out their own independent kingdoms. The different frontier peoples identified by Roman historians: Franks, Visigoths, Ostragoths, Burgundians, Britons, Vandals and Huns, would all gain power as Rome was losing it. *Federates*, barbarian allies to Rome, began dominating regional politics. The Visigoths, for example, were so unhappy with the terms of their alliance that they sacked Rome in 410 to force a renegotiation. That same year the Western Emperor Honorius withdrew Roman troops from Britain, handing sovereignty over to the local population.[48] By the fifth century, Franks and Germans had ascended to power in Gaul. The last Roman emperor in the West, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by the German king Odoacer in 476, and although the states of western Europe held nominal allegiance to Constantinople, in practice they were now completely autonomous organizations.

Despite the growing dominance of previously fringe societies, many Classical traditions were preserved. The Germanic kings in large part simply co-opted the laws and administrative organization of the Late Roman Empire. Roman historians such as Alfons Dopsch believed the Germans were, as Hammond writes, "won over by the superior Roman culture and sought to perpetuate it and its institutions."[49] Despite this judgmental point of view, it does seem logical Germans and Franks would see value in well-tested Roman mechanisms of empire and include them in their own kingdoms. Germanic politicians would even hold imperial titles like *proconsul*, and dress in Roman

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[48] Hammond, 332.
[49] Hammond, 334.

fashion to bolster their authority.[50] The emerging European civilization altered Imperial legal and political systems to meet its own needs, but the quality of *Romanitas*, Roman character, became part of Western Europe's cultural heritage.[51]

The Eastern Empire would eventually be itself threatened by powerful neighbors. In 602 a great war with Sasanid Persia began that lasted for nearly thirty years, and destroyed much of the eastern Mediterranean in the process. The Sasanian advance conquered Syria, Palestine and Egypt, and cut off the urban food supply to Constantinople. Sasanian troops burned Anatolia; Ephesus and its neighbors Smyrna and Halicarnassus were razed.[52] Under the leadership of the Emperor Heraclius, a tremendous reversal in the last years of the war saved the Byzantine Empire from collapse and brought the total defeat of the Sasanians. However, the Persians' defeat was not the end of the Eastern Roman Empire's troubles.

At this point in history the Arabs arrive on the world stage. Until 634 the Arabs were a small nomadic group on the southern fringes of the Persian Empire, in present-day Saudi Arabia. As disorganized Bedouin tribes, the Arabs united under Mohammed and his new Islamic system while the two great superpowers of the time, Persia and the Eastern Roman Empire, were at war. Despite the fact the Romans had defeated the Sasanians, Constantinople was not strong enough to prevent the Arabs from filling the power vacuum after the great war. Arab conquests continued for a century, expanding their empire into Egypt, North Africa, Syria, Persia, east into modern Iran, and west to

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[50] Noble et at., Western Civilization: The Continuing Experiment Vol. 1, Brief Edition (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), 131.
[51] Hammond, 334.
[52] Foss, 105.

fight the Byzantine Romans.[53] The many Arab expeditions into Anatolia no doubt came near Ephesus.

Trends at Ephesus, which at this point was contracting to its Harbor District and Ayasuluk, make sense in the larger regional picture. Over a century of intermittent warfare culminated in the last Arab siege of Constantinople in 716. Led by the general Maslama, the expedition had its winter quarters in Ephesus' province. Whether or not the city was attacked is unknown, but the Arab force captured neighboring Sardis and Pergamum, and the Ephesian economy was no doubt in shambles. Although the year-long siege of Constantinople was eventually broken, it had cut off the capital city of the East from its empire.[54] The rest of the eighth century in Asia Minor saw Arab raids almost annually, compounded by a devastating civil war in 743 and a three-year outbreak of the Bubonic plague in 744.[55] The Ephesian population must have suffered tremendous decline from the prosperous times of Late Antiquity.

The Fall of the Roman Empire was not so much a single, sudden event as a general trend. Rome was unable to prevent its subject peoples and weaker neighbors from taking control of their own destinies and creating empires of their own. From the 200s onward it became increasingly more difficult to manage and control the vast territory of the Empire, as the 'barbarians' in Persia, Gaul, Arabia, and Britain began asserting local sovereignty, either militarily or economically. Dividing the empire into more-manageable sections, and relocating the capital were two methods of maintaining control, but Rome's real power was quickly eroding. Throughout Late Antiquity, military pressures across the Mediterranean prompted the Empire to rely on local

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[53] Noble et at., 145.
[54] Foss, 105.
[55] Foss, 105.

surrogates, and to place the burden of defense on cities and communities. Within this larger decentralization of power Ephesus represents many of the important trends in Mediterranean society, with some notable exceptions. Using Ephesus as a touchstone, Part II will analyze the coinciding decline of urbanism, changing values and changing priorities in Late Antiquity.

Part II: Critical Themes
The Gradual Collapse of Urbanism

By combining the detailed histories of specific Mediterranean regions within this larger framework of decentralization and turmoil, several nearly-universal trends emerge. One is the decreasing usefulness of Classical Mediterranean cities. The need to defend a city against attack, and the costs of supporting its public services, both increased dramatically. While regional differences varied significantly, throughout the Classical world there is a general pattern of urban fortification, contraction, and abandonment.

To the Seven Sleepers arriving in Ephesus in the early fifth century, though, this argument would be a hard sell. Ephesus itself was flourishing in the fourth and fifth centuries. Diocletian's repair and maintenance of the Anatolian highway system, so critical to urban trade and communication, kept Ephesus an important nexus of the Aegean.[56] Connecting Egypt, Constantinople, inland Anatolia, Syria, and the western Mediterranean, Ephesus remained an important city in Late Antiquity. Thus, while an overall trend of deurbanization exists, it was punctuated by large regional variation.

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[56] Foss, 6.

In addition to Ephesus, other portions of the Eastern Empire show signs of urban growth and prosperity. While urban areas were disappearing from the West, Byzantine cities like Ephesus maintained many of their Classical aspects. Cyril Mango writes that in the sixth century, the Eastern Empire still saw itself as "an aggregate of cities."[57] Mango estimates that under Justinian the Eastern Empire had over 1,500 self-administering units, each "a real town provided with a rural territory."[58] City life in the East remained very public; baths, hippodromes and theaters still attracted crowds, as did debates, lectures, and other public events.[59]

At the city of Caesarea Maritima in Palestine, the Late Antique population tripled, and new fortifications increased the size of the city's urban area.[60] A prosperous Mediterranean city, Caesarea was a center for international commerce, home to many ethnicities, and the seat of leading Jewish and Christian academics. During Late Antiquity the city received a hippodrome, amphitheater and a second aqueduct.[61] Similarly, at Jerusalem, Gerasa, Scythopolis, and Neapolis evidence indicates the urban area expanding out beyond the cities' walls, eventually prompting the construction of new fortifications.[62]

Egypt continued to function as the bread basket of the Roman Empire, becoming wealthy from its critical exports of grain and trading in luxury goods like wine and oil. Sustaining the urban populations of Rome and later Constantinople required massive supply lines with food-producers like Egypt. The city of Alexandria on the

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[57] Mango, 60.
[58] Mango, 60.
[59] Mango, 63.
[60] Joseph Patrich, "Urban Space in Caesarea Maritima, Israel," in Thomas Burns & John W. Eadie, Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity (Michigan State University Press, 2001): 77
[61] Patrich, 92.
[62] Patrich, 84.

Mediterranean coast, as well as its surrounding Mareotis countryside, was commercially prosperous during Late Antiquity.[63]

In western Greece and the Balkans, though, urban civilization was on its way to total collapse. By the fifth and sixth centuries, the population was shifting into the countryside, into small defendable settlements on high ground. In 582 Sirmium was sacked by the Huns, then the Avars, and completely disappeared afterwards.[64] Signs of considerable building activity at Stobi lead up to an Ostrogothic attack in 479, after which construction and coin finds cease.[65] The city of Bargala relocated to a more defendable position in the fifth century, and was abandoned after 585.[66] Serdica greatly expanded in the early fourth century, but shrank back to its old center by the sixth, and then disappeared altogether.[67] At Philippopolis, the urban area of the city was halved in the sixth century, followed by the eventual abandonment of the city.[68]

The Balkans were only part of the larger collapse of Classical urbanism in the West. In 535 the Ostrogoths sieged Rome. Central authority having been moved to Constantinople in the East, the defense of the Eternal City was no longer the chief priority of the Roman military. With its supplies and aqueducts cut, the city whose population had peaked near a million in the Early Empire had been reduced, according to Hammond, to a mere five thousand inhabitants.[69] Rome and other Italian cities suffered further when the Eastern Emperor Justinian campaigned to reclaim the Western Empire,

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[63] see Haas, Christopher. "Alexandria and the Mareotis Region." In Burns and Eadie, eds.
[64] Mango, 69.
[65] Mango, 69.
[66] Mango, 69.
[67] Mango, 69.
[68] Mango, 69.
[69] Hammond, 324.

in a twenty-year war that destroyed much of the disputed territory.[70] Once the greatest city in the world, by the ninth century Rome would be reduced to an impoverished village situated in ancient ruins.

Urbanism in Southern Gaul was little better off. Where Ausonius describes Bordeaux as a peaceful university town in the 300s, Sidonius Apollinaris describes the city a century later as beleaguered by Visigoths and Burgundians, and saddled with a worthless imperial administration.[71] The Vandals seriously disrupted urban life in Nimes, known as Nemausus to the Romans, in 407. After this point Nimes' amphitheater was adapted into some kind of fortress, which then met a Saracen invasion.[72]

Thirty kilometers away, Roman Arles was another important Western city. Arles, or Arelate, was intimately connected with the Roman Empire throughout its history, so much so that Ausonius labeled it the "little Rome of Gaul".[73] Julius Caesar settled veterans from his legions in the city in 46 BCE, beginning a golden age of prosperity at Arles. Like most cities it was equipped with extensive public buildings, including a forum and the largest amphitheater outside of Italy (at 149x117m).[74] The prosperity of the Early Empire ended when Arles was plundered in 270 CE, beginning a period of intermittent devastation.[75]

Arles recovered under Diocletian, and regained some of its Classical importance. Diocletian's new administrative system made Arles, like Ephesus, into a regional capital,

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[70] Hollister et al., The West Transformed (Harcourt College Publishers, 2000), 194.
[71] Hammond, 322.
[72] George E. Fay, The Roman Remains of Nemausus Museum of Anthropology Misc. Series, 1984.
[73] S.T. Loseby, "Arles in Late Antiquity," N. Christie & S.T. Loseby, eds. Towns in Transition (Scholar Press, 1996), 49.
[74] By comparison, the Coliseum of Rome is 195x156m.
[75] Loseby, 47.

and by the beginning of the fourth century it was the seat of the Praetorian Prefecture of the Gauls.[76]

As the Western Empire began dissolving, however, so did Arles. The prominence the Empire gave the city was the real source of its power, and once the Imperial system broke down, the city lost its protection and much of its importance. While Ephesus was prospering in the fifth century, the Visigoths were devastating Arles. Like most cities in western Europe it was entering a long period of urban contraction and decline. The city was later plundered by the Saracens, after which it contracted even further to within the limits of the dead city's amphitheater. [see fig. 5] When the Seven Sleepers would have been enjoying the prosperity of Ephesus, cities like Arles in the West were contracting drastically.

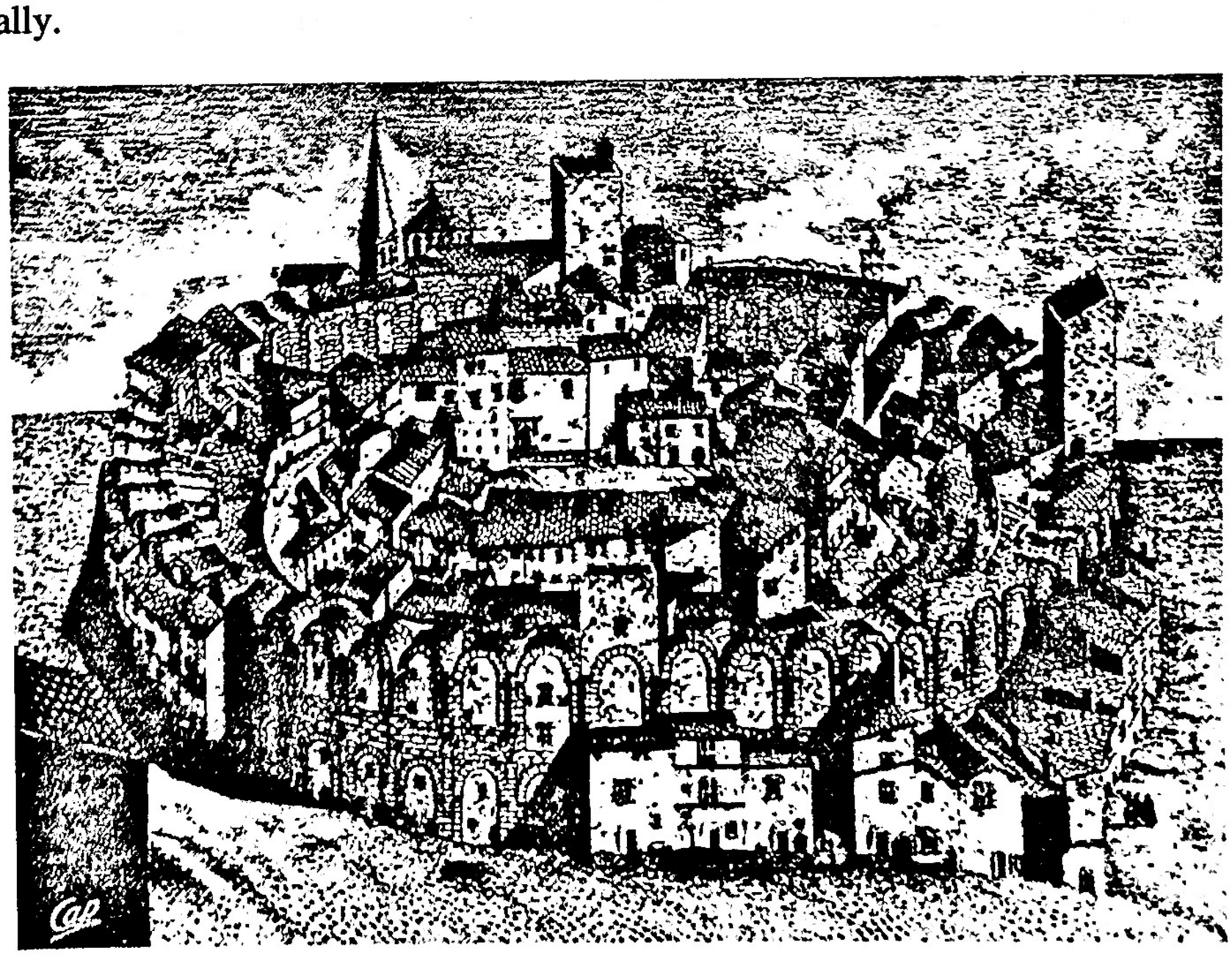


Figure 5 – Eighth-Century Arles, inside the old city's amphitheater.

[76] Loseby, 46.

Despite its fifth century prosperity, the eastern Mediterranean eventually felt the effects of urban decline as well. The natural disasters of the sixth century, followed by a terrible war with Persia and unceasing Arab invasions, nearly extinguished urbanism in the Roman Empire. By the eighth century, it was no longer an aggregate of cities, but of *kastra* fortresses.[77] The term *polis*, in common usage in the Mediterranean for centuries, became almost exclusively associated with Constantinople.[78] The Arab geographer Ibn-Khordadhbeh stated in the ninth century that there were only five true cities left in Anatolia; Ephesus, Nicaea, Amorium, Ancyra and Samala, while the rest were reduced to fortresses.[79] Abundant archaeological evidence indicates that with the sole exception of Nicaea, cities on vulnerable flat ground moved or were abandoned.[80] The great capital of Nicomedia lay in ruins.[81] The capital of Hellespontus, Cyzicus, was half-destroyed in the sixth century and ceased to exist soon after that. The Medieval version of Miletus was less than a quarter of its size in Roman times. The same story is told at Pergamum, Magnesia, Nysa, Laodicea, and Colossae. Ancyra, one of Ibn-Khordadhbeh's five cities of Asia Minor, was in reality little more than a tiny hilltop fortress.[82]

Greek urbanism collapsed along with Anatolian cities. Athens suffered widespread devastation in the 580s, after which the settlement retreated to the Acropolis and a small fortress to the north.[83] Around 580 the population of Corinth fled to the fortress island of Aegina.[84] No evidence of urban life exists in Thebes between the sixth

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[77] Mango, 73.
[78] Mango, 73.
[79] Mango, 71.
[80] Mango, 73.
[81] Mango, 71.
[82] Although an imperial description over the 500 x 300 m. fortress' main gate labels it a city. Mango, 72.
[83] Mango, 71.
[84] Mango, 71.

century and late ninth.[85] Cities were literally wiped out in the Peloponnesus, and one of the few remaining outposts of Byzantine rule in Greece was Thessalonica.[86] Fifth century walls enclosed an area of roughly three kilometers around the city's harbor, which received refugees from Greece and the Balkans. Despite its exceptional survival, Thessalonica had little power in the region; overland communication was cut off and the rural population was hostile to both the city and the emperor. In 689 Justinian II had to literally fight his way through the province to reach the city, a tiny island of central rule in a sea of local autonomy.[87]

The fortunes of the Eastern Empire's capital city, Constantinople, were not much better during this period. The city reached its zenith of growth around 500 CE, beginning a long process of decline.[88] The population plummeted in 542 from plague, and when the Persians cut off Egyptian foodstuffs the city undoubtedly could not sustain the population it had previously. Surviving the great Persian war, a siege by the Avars, a four-year Arab blockade and siege, and a 698 plague Constantinople's population contracted dramatically. In preparation for the last Arab siege by Maslama, the Emperor Anastasius II expelled everyone from the city who did not have three years of personal provisions.[89] Another plague in 747 made the city almost uninhabitable, and evidence exists of the mass exportation of corpses for lack of space to bury them.[90] The year 747 was possibly the lowest point in the city's history, when an earthquake partially destroyed Constantinople's walls and the population did not have the ability to rebuild them.

Constantinople had been living without a working aqueduct for over 140 years, and could

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[85] Mango, 71.
[86] Mango, 71.
[87] Theophanes, Chronographia, ed. C. de Boor, (A.M. 6270), 452.
[88] Mango, 77.
[89] Mango, 78.
[90] Mango, 77.

not have effectively sustained over fifty thousand people. A rare document from the period describes an impoverished and fatalistic population living in a ruined city, in the shadow of great monuments whose significance had been forgotten. The anonymous author writes that "it would be a good thing if we do not live to see what is destined to happen."[91]

Constantinople did partially recover from this low point, but only by the forced repopulation of the city under Constantine V and the hiring of outside labor. Ephesus was able to contribute skilled laborers for the task of rebuilding the walls and aqueducts needed to sustain the large urban population.[92] Although the city lacked public services and any significant building activity beyond fortification and earthquake repair, Cyril Mango describes a spirit of renovation that kept Constantinople going for several hundred years.

While cities in the Greek and Anatolian east were collapsing rapidly during this period, they were only joining the West in this process. Western Europe has undergone a complete break in the continuity of urban development, and medieval European towns would emerge as parochial creations very different from Classical Roman cities.

One of the few bastions of Mediterranean urbanism during this period was the growing and prosperous cities under Muslim rule. The structural differences between the Muslim conquests and the former Roman Empire are significant. Unlike the top-down central government at Constantinople, the Caliphs did not subvert the rule of local government. The central Muslim authority provided city walls, mosques and a water supply to their cities, but little else. Tax revenue remained in the hands of local

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[91] Th. Preger, ed., *Scriptores originum Constantinopolitanarum*, I (Leipzig, 1901), 19ff.
[92] Foss, 110.

government, and city development was directly in the hands of its citizens.[93] Market forces, largely suppressed in Roman society, played a much more important role in shaping Muslim city plans.[94] This new urban administrative system in Syria and Egypt resulted in the emergence of a new type of city, the *madina.*

Comparing the darkest years of the eighth century with Classical Greek and Roman cities, a clear pattern of deurbanization emerges from literary and archaeological records. Nevertheless, this process varies dramatically region to region: Arles and Rome were decaying in the fifth century, while Ephesus and the East would not feel this deurbanization until two centuries later. Moreover Arab cities in Syria and the Fertile Crescent underwent important transformations, but did not contract.

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[93] Kennedy, 20.

[94] Late Roman construction, such as the elaborate but ungainly Ephesian shopping avenue, the Arcadiane, seemed to respond very weakly to public pressures or market forces, in favor of imperial self-promotion and bureaucracy. Kennedy, 25.

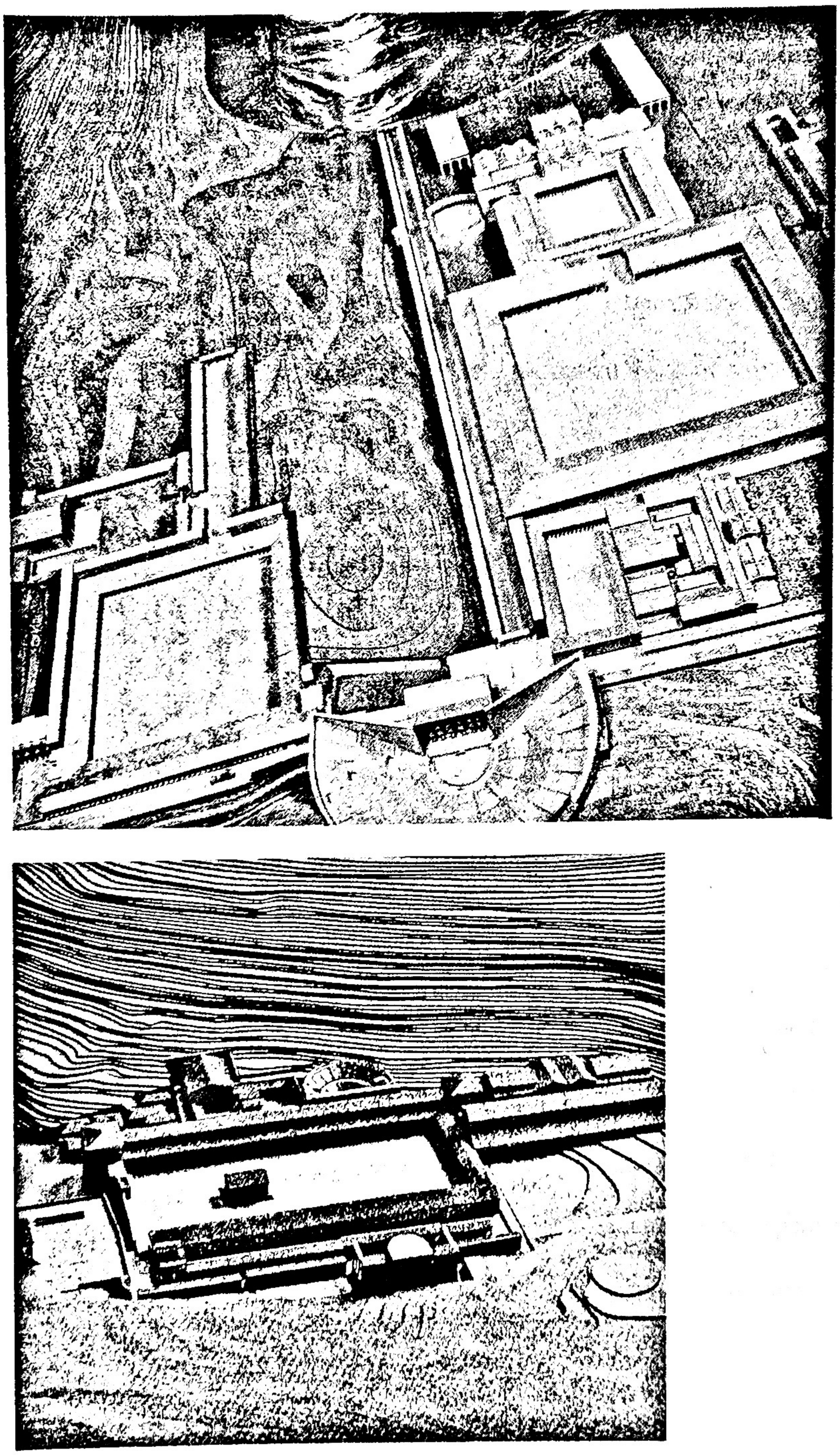


Fig. 6, 7: Scale Models of the Commercial Agora, Theater and Harbor District (top), and the State Agora (bottom) at Ephesus.

Public and Private Space

In the ideal Greco-Roman city, it might be said an invisible barrier protected markets, agoras, basilicas, assembly halls, theaters, and stadiums from being swallowed up by private buildings. During Late Antiquity, this barrier collapsed, and municipal facilities were neglected and consumed by privately-owned houses, businesses, and religious facilities. The ultimate result was the virtual death of public space in the Mediterranean.

Classical Roman cities were defined by the predominance of urban public space. [see figs. 6 and 7] Town plans were very open, directing visitors along clear, broad roads to central activity centers such as forums and marketplaces.[95] Open spaces, theaters, latrines, well-maintained public buildings and supplies of fresh water were all core to the Roman definition of 'civilization.'

The city of Rome, for example, was serviced by thirteen aqueducts, bringing around a thousand million cubic meters of water to the population every day.[96] Rome had an extensive sewer system, public restrooms, fountains and baths in the absence of the economically-impractical private bathroom.[97] Up until the crisis of the third century, the capital city housed between 700,000 and a million inhabitants, the greatest concentration of humanity western Eurasia had ever known.[98] The state's resources were dedicated to the citizens of the city; around 150,000 people were fed at public expense, and on the many public holidays free entertainment was provided by the government.[99]

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[95] Perring, 276.
[96] Benevolo, 192.
[97] Benevolo, 194.
[98] Benevolo, 176.
[99] Benevolo, 194.

The Roman public sphere extended much farther than it does in post-industrial societies. As A. Wallace-Hadrill points out, the modern Western concept of the 'private' home was nonexistent in the Early Empire.[100] Romans of all economic and social groups lived in houses that blended both private living and public workplace. The Roman house was an invaluable staging ground for doing business; it was a place for nobles to meet with their clients, and artisans and merchants to make a living.[101] Either in the household or in municipal buildings of the first and second centuries, urban life was very public.

After the third century, public buildings gradually fell into disuse, and the private sphere expanded dramatically into the public realm. Decaying Syrian theaters were invaded by small-scale houses and shops or incorporated into the city walls, as at Caesarea and Ephesus.[102] At Arles, the ten thousand-person theater was overrun by private houses and religious facilities in the 400s. In addition to high costs of urban defense, pressure against theaters was also applied by the Christian Church. The burgeoning religion saw theaters as both dens of hedonistic paganism, and prime competition.[103] The last vestiges of Mediterranean theatrical use, once a staple of Greco-Roman culture, came to an end with the Persian and Arab wars of the seventh century.[104]

Another symbol of private encroachment on Classical civilization was the public bath. Procopius mentions the importance of bathouses in defining civilization from barbarism.[105] From a functional perspective, the Roman bath was a social powerhouse, a community gathering place to "conduct the business of the day".[106] They were often

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[100] A. Wallace-Hadrill, "The Social Structure of the Roman House," BSR 56 (1988), 56.
[101] Wallace-Hadrill, 56.
[102] Kennedy, 6.
[103] Mango, 64.
[104] Kennedy, 7.
[105] Kennedy, 8.
[106] Kennedy, 10.

large, and included gymnasia and libraries. During Late Antiquity, this multi-purpose building became more of a utility, functioning only as a place to get clean. New bathhouses had smaller rooms, and gymnasia disappeared altogether.

The Arcadiane at Ephesus was one of the last manifestations of Classical urban planning in the Mediterranean, and there is evidence that the shopping avenue was not popular. There are no statues or honorary inscriptions along the Arcadiane, nor is there graffiti. While a sign of Ephesus' relative prosperity in Late Antiquity, the cold, sterile environment of the avenue suggests that it never became the center of urban life.[107] After the disasters of the seventh century, the shopping avenue fell out of use entirely, and was filled in with wretched huts.[108]

After the destruction of the 610s, Ephesus lost most of the public space that once dominated it. The new walls excluded the old forum, council house, prytaneion and basilica that had once been the heart of the city. [109] One of the Classical city's central roads, the Embolos, and its suburbs were deserted or replaced with poor huts. The Commercial Agora was abandoned and used as an approach to the new city gate. Like other cities in the East, the market courtyards at Ephesus were replaced by poorly-constructed houses, and narrow, winding roads.

The virtual death of public space is also represented in literary sources, as well as physical remains. Texts from this period reflect a private, cloistered attitude. The *Life of St. Basil the Younger* is remarkable in that everything happens indoors.[110] The only two places for large social events were at church, or at an occasional fair, and apparently

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[107] Foss, 58.
[108] Foss, 113.
[109] Foss, 113.
[110] Mango, 82.

church attendance was so poor that Emperor Leo VI endorsed private chapels and the use of household priests. Baptisms, which before were only allowed in large public churches, were now permitted to be conducted in these smaller, private chapels.[111] The *Strategicon*, written by a Byzantine Roman general, tellingly demonstrates the private mentality of this era. It recommends, among other things, to avoid parties altogether, stockpile food, not trust anyone outside your household, not let friends stay in your house for fear they will seduce your wife, and if not on official business stay at home.[112]

The death of public space followed wherever cities themselves were contracting. After the Persian and Arab invasions, the processes of private encroachment in the public sphere had been completed. If Classical Roman cities had been characterized by public services and facilities, those few cities left after the seventh century were characterized by their *absence* of public buildings or public space.

The Spread of Lightweight Ideas: Islam and Christianity

Another important characteristic of Classical Mediterranean society was unification of what we distinguish as social, religious and economic systems. Political rulers were almost always the official head of the state religion, and were often themselves deified. In addition, local religious traditions were intimately connected with the area's culture and economy. The Romans developed a successful policy of toleration for groups they subjugated, recognizing their gods so long as the subject people recognized the Roman pantheon and the emperor's divinity. As the monotheistic, exclusive faiths of Christianity and Islam spread across the Mediterranean, this ancient

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[111] Mango, 82.
[112] Mango, 82.

conceptual model would vanish. These lightweight, highly-portable faiths carried few parochial limitations to expansion, and quickly reshaped Mediterranean civilization in the first millennium CE.

At Ephesus, the city's relationship to the cult of Artemis Ephesia was at the core of its identity: the city's very name derives from the goddess'. In *Acts*, St. Paul was unable to convince Ephesian silversmiths to give up their devotion to Artemis, inciting a city-wide riot against the apostle.[113] Although Christian theologians have emphasized this story as evidence for the greed and bankruptcy of pagan religion, it more accurately highlights the complete integration of economy, religion and politics that existed in the Early Empire. In addition to being a famous temple and one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the Artemision was also the largest bank in the Mediterranean.[114] The Cult of Artemis and its temple were a source of civic pride, and Giancarlo Biguzzi calls the Artemision a "pillar of economic solidity of Ephesus and the whole of Asia."[115]

In contrast, Christianity and Islam were radical religions for two reasons: they were intolerant, and yet universally appealing. Unlike pagan and Imperial cults, Christianity was necessarily not attached to a particular city or nationality, and could be adopted by anyone. Islam, also a faith originally limited to a small ethnicity, eventually spread as far west as Spain, and as far east as the coast of China.

The "weightless" nature of this new kind of religion is best demonstrated by St. Augustine's *City of God*. Written after the sack of Rome in 410, St. Augustine's treatise on religion and state attempts to address the shock and horror felt throughout the Roman

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[113] Acts 19:21-41.
[114] Usami, Koshi. Somatic Comprehension of Unity: The Church in Ephesus. (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1983), 13.
[115] Biguzzi, 279.

Empire once their capital city, and supposed sign of invincibility, was pillaged. Rome, Augustine said, was only a city built by men. The source of human validation, he argued, must come from the abstract and ethereal 'City of God', which holds no nationality, and can never be destroyed.[116]

His idea would become a cornerstone of Western thought, and helps explain the new Mediterranean indifference towards the decline of Classical urbanism. Public buildings were neglected, demolished and replaced by the growing power of the Church. At Ephesus the massive temple of Zeus Olypios was reoccupied in the fourth century by the Church of the Virgin Mary.[117] The great Church councils of 431 and 449 would be held in this important building. In addition to the cathedral, the ruined temple also hosted a notoriously lavish palace for the local bishop.[118] Over the course of the fifth century, these Christian monuments would form the new city center for Ephesus, overpowering and eventually excluding the State Agora and hall of the City Council altogether.

Church control over city resources only grew through Late Antiquity. In the sixth century the only major building project at Ephesus was the massive Church of St. John on the hill of Ayasuluk, east of the city.[119] With the exception of the palace of the Imperial governor, churches were generally the most well-built structures in Late Antique cities. In Syria, ruined buildings and accumulated rubble surrounded newly-built churches, which were now central in city layouts.[120] At Palaiopolis, the church was built over the

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[116] St. Augustine, "City of God" excerpts in Drake, H.A. & Leedom, J.W. Laws, Gods & Heroes. 2nd Edition (Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1999), 233-235.
[117] Thomas, Christine. personal correspondence, May 29, 2004.
[118] Foss, 52.
[119] Kennedy, 18.
[120] Zbigniew T. Fiema, "Byzantine Petria: A Reassesment," in Burns & Eadie, eds.: 117.

agora, using materials from pagan temples demolished expressly for that purpose.[121] Written records, decreasing to a mere trickle after the reign of Justinian in the early sixth century, usually only mention Ephesus in a religious context.[122]

As W. Bowden points out, the rise of churches and church-building, even in the relatively prosperous East, was not a sign of economic vitality. Rather, it only demonstrates the powerful position Christianity held in Mediterranean society.[123] Even in areas of severe depopulation and economic decline, church-building was allocated a significant amount of public resources.

In the Arab Caliphate the mosque played a role similar to the church, becoming the social center for Muslim cities. Its courtyards replaced the agora as an outdoor meeting-place and it was used for public events in the way theaters and hippodromes once had been.[124] The mosque also functioned as a courtroom, seminary, and school of law. In Damascus, the mosque had the only open area of any size in the city. Similarly in the West, some open areas still survived within cities, but always positioned next to the church or cathedral.[125] Public technologies of space had become the property of Islam and Christianity.

In addition to reshaping and dominating urban space, Christianity would also adopt a political role by replacing the weakened imperial government. The city of Rome itself became increasingly administered by the Church. When Attila the Hun was on his way to Italy in 452, it was the pope, not the Western Emperor Valentinian III, who

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[121] W. Bowden, "A New Urban Elite? Church Builders and Church Building in Late-Antique Epirus" in Lavan, ed., 66.
[122] Foss, 4.
[123] Bowden, 67.
[124] Kennedy, 15.
[125] Kennedy, 15.

negotiated a peace.[126] While Rome would decay into an impoverished village during the Middle Ages, it would become the undisputed center of western Christendom, and retain in religious power what it had lost in administrative authority.

As cities of the Western Empire could no longer afford public amenities and the central government at Constantinople began draining local tax revenues for imperial projects, a close association between Christianity and medicine developed. During the Early Empire, doctors who were trained at Ephesus' well-known medical school were public servants, given a high salary and considerable privileges by taxpayers.[127] While doctors accepted donations, they were expected to work for free as a public service. Through the course of Late Antiquity, doctors became a branch of the Church. The famous bishop Caesarius of Arles, in addition to frequently playing the role of hostage negotiator between warring factions, was widely praised for his medical good works, such as building the first hospital in Gaul.[128] Similarly at Ephesus, a man named Anatolius was both a city doctor and a deacon.[129] Funding for the medical profession is representative of a general shift in Late Antiquity across the Mediterranean. The Classical concept of locally funded public services was replaced by private contributions from powerful lords and organizations like the Church, operating outside and in many ways replacing municipal government.

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[126] Hammond, 324.
[127] Foss, 21.
[128] William Daly, "Caesarius of Arles, A Precursor of Medieval Christendom" Traditio 26 (1970), 6.
[129] Foss, 21.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the relationship between the city of Ephesus and the general historical model of Mediterranean civilization in the first millennium CE. In the process, it has identified several key themes taking place throughout the region. A clear relationship exists between the death of urban public space, the rise of exclusive but universal religious faiths like Christianity and Islam, and the eventual collapse of cities in Late Antiquity. Though the exact nuances of that relationship remain ambiguous, it seems likely that the ascendancy of Roman subject peoples and Roman neighbors directly led to much of the military and political turmoil of the fifth and sixth centuries. Furthermore, it is probable this chaotic decentralization of power in the Mediterranean created favorable conditions for both the spread of new religious ideas that did not hold allegiance to any single political or ethnic organization, and an overall decline of the usefulness of cities.

The function of this paper is not to provide answers for exactly why these processes took place, but rather demonstrate the worthiness of studying specific cities like Ephesus in pursuit of those answers. The specific and extensive study of a single city has helped us illustrate the 'big picture', both with in the evidence fits nicely into larger regional trends, and the evidence that forces us to reconsider our preconceived notions about the past.

Glossary -

Alexander Severus - Roman Emperor from 222-235. Last of the Severii, murder opened 50 years of political anarchy, the "crisis of the third century".

Amphitheater - large stadium used for public events and games. The Coliseum of Rome is one famous example.

Anatolia - another name for Asia Minor, modern Turkey.

Anastasius II - Eastern Roman Emperor from 713-715. Met the last Arab siege of Constantinople.

Artemision – the great Temple of Artemis at Ephesus.

Agora – open square at the heart of many Classical Mediterranean cities, used for religious, political and economic gatherings.

Constantine I - Roman Emperor from 324-337. Built Constantinople on the Bospourous, first Christian emperor.

Decius - Roman Emperor from 249-251. Persecutor of Christians, emperor the Seven Sleepers were fleeing.

Diocletian - Roman Emperor from 284-305. Military emperor who brought end to the anarchy of the third century, divided empire among the *tetrarchs*.

Heraclius - Eastern Roman Emperor from 610-641. Leader during great Byzantine-Persian war of the 7th century, saw defeat of the Persians and rise of the Arabs

Late Antiquity – roughly dated between 200 and 800 CE.

***Limes* system** - fortification system set up on Roman frontiers by Diocletian.

Tetrarchy - 'four ruler' system designed to divide the burden of defending the Roman Empire. Set up by Diocletian.

Theodosius I - Roman Emperor from 379-395. Last ruler of an undivided empire, lost religious authority to Church.

Theodosius II - Eastern emperor from 408-450. A pious Christian, Theodosius II called two important church councils at Ephesus, and was Emperor when the Seven Sleepers supposedly woke up.

Prytaneion – seat of Ephesian urban government, located in the State Agora.

Maps and Images:

Fig 2 – adapted from Halfmann, Helmut. Stadtebau Und Bauherren Im Romischen Kleinasien. Vol. 43: Ernst Vasmuth Verlag Tubingen, 2001. 5

Fig 3 & Cover – adapted from Lessing, Erich and Wolfgang Oberleitner. Ephesos: Weltstadt Der Antike. Wien: Ueberreuter, 1978., 74-75

Fig 4 – adapted from Kraft, John C., et al. "A Geologic Analysis of Ancient Landscapes and the Harbors of Ephesus and the Artemision in Anatolia." Jahreshefte Des Osterreichischen Archaologischen Institutes in Wien 69 (2000).

Fig 5 – Benevolo, Leonardo. The History of the City: MIT Press, 1980.

Fig 6 – Lessing & Oberleitner, 180, 181.

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