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Urban systems in the Roman Near East: historical and functional dimensions of urbanism in Roman Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Arabia

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Propositions belonging to Paul Kloeg,

Urban Systems in the Roman Near East: Historical and Functional Dimensions of Urbanism in Roman Syria, Mesopotamia, Palestine and Arabia

1. Settlement dynamics are never predetermined. They result from the interplay of geography, path dependency and human agency.
2. Most settlements in the Roman Levant did not grow beyond the levels of population that could be sustained by their immediate hinterlands.
3. The spatial and quantitative properties of the settlement system of the Roman Levant cannot be seen as evidence for a high level of regional economic integration.
4. Roman Antioch would have been able to acquire the bulk of the food required to support its population from its vast administrative territory.
5. From a network perspective, when removing all links to the Rome and the wider Mediterranean, the centrality of Damascus in the Levant becomes very clear, and helps to understand its position in the Umayyad Caliphate.
6. Considering how history rhymes, both Roman and Persian empires would probably have benefited greatly from not intervening in Armenia.
7. The relative success of the reforms of Diocletian in getting a grip on the crisis of the third century shows that poor decision-making based on faulty assumptions and lack of information can nonetheless have positive, long-lasting effects.
8. Models of the Roman economy tend to overlook the fundamentally different conceptions of the value of time and labour, and fail to adequately address the thoroughly predatory nature of its basis in slavery.
9. A fundamental flaw of empire is that sooner or later repression of the few, punitive actions and the application of terror will become the most

cost-effective means of maintaining empire-wide stability. Roman reprisals against Carthage and Jerusalem, and the handling of slave revolts show the high price of Roman peace.

10. The *Discovery Tour* modes in *Assassins Creed: Origins* and *Assassins Creed: Odyssey* are perfect examples of how the study of ancient history can, and does, benefit from embracing advances in the gaming industry.

11. As is the case for any other type of heavily fortified defensive position, when all other options have been tried, a writer's block may still be conquered by a protracted siege.

12. As sieges take a heavy toll on both besieged and besieger, it follows that, from an academic perspective, it would be advisable to include such treatises as Sun Tzu's *Art of War* and Clausewitz's *On War* in the doctoral curriculum, to teach candidates to identify their own weaknesses and deal with them early on.