

# The Dawn of Everything

## Session 4

Chapter 8 – Imaginary Cities

Chapter 9 – Hiding in Plain Sight

OLLI Discussion Group  
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# Chapter 8 – Imaginary Cities

- Eurasia's first urbanites – in Mesopotamia, the Indus valley, Ukraine, and China – and how they built cities without kings.
- Mass society exists in the mind before it becomes a physical reality and exists in the mind after becomes physical reality.

# Imaginary Cities?

- Very large social units are in a sense imaginary:
  - Relations with family, friends, people, and places we actually know verses
  - Empires, nations, states, and cities, etc.
- We evolved to be members of small groups and to work in small teams.
- Civilization did not really come as a package.

# Why Did Cities Appear

- Early cities are a self-conscious statement of civic unity -- built spaces in harmonious arrangement and patterns -- reflecting some kind of planning at the municipal scale.
- They have a civic infrastructure and ritual calendar with some occasions for popular festivity.



# Why Did Cities Appear


- The appearance of cities follows the post-Ice Age development of the ecological package that started about 5,000 BCE:
  - About 7,000 BCE the rivers started to settle down and created a wide variety of highly fertile flood plains.
  - The melting of glaciers slowed down allowing sea levels to stabilize.

# Why Did Cities Appear

- The coastal delta and riverine sites supplied aquatic resources to buffer the risks of farming and a perennial source organic materials (reeds, fibers, silt) to support construction and manufacturing.
- The fertile land promoted the growth of specialized farming and animal herding.
- Urbanization led to extensive agriculture.



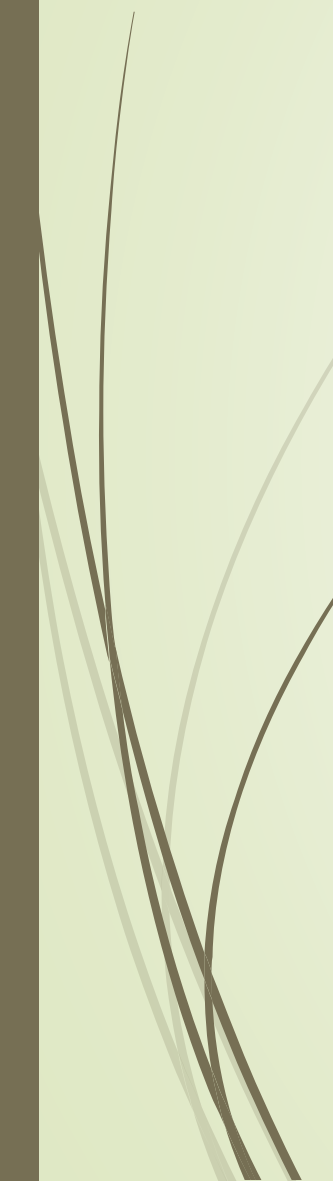
# Why Did Cities Appear

- Extensive agriculture may have been an outcome of urbanization, not the cause.
  - Choices of which crops and animals to farm often had less to do with subsistence than providing inputs for industries such as textiles.
  - Hunters and foragers, fishers, and fowlers were no less important than farmers and shepherds.
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# Talyanki (4,100 to 3,300 BCE)

- A Cucuteni-Trypillian proto-city or mega-site.
- Extended over 300 hectares (740 acres)
- Wattle and daub timber framed homes on stone foundations.
- Well over a 1,000 homes and buildings.
- No government buildings, fortifications, or monumental architecture.





# Talyanki





**Reconstruction of Talanti c 4000 B.C.  
Design Kenny Arne Lang Antonsen & Jimmy John Antonsen**



# Uruk in Mesopotamia (4,200 BCE – 2,900 BCE)

- At 3,300 BCE Uruk was a city of about 230 hectares (500 acres) with 25 – 50 thousand inhabitants.
- Cuneiform script may have been invented here, along with the world's earliest written literature and law codes.
- Only the public sector has been excavated.








# Predynastic Uruk

- Open temples accompanied by space for public meetings assuming governance by popular assembly.
- The Gilgamesh epic speaks of such assemblies.
- Around 3,200 BCE the original public buildings were razed and rebuilt as gated courts and ziggurats.






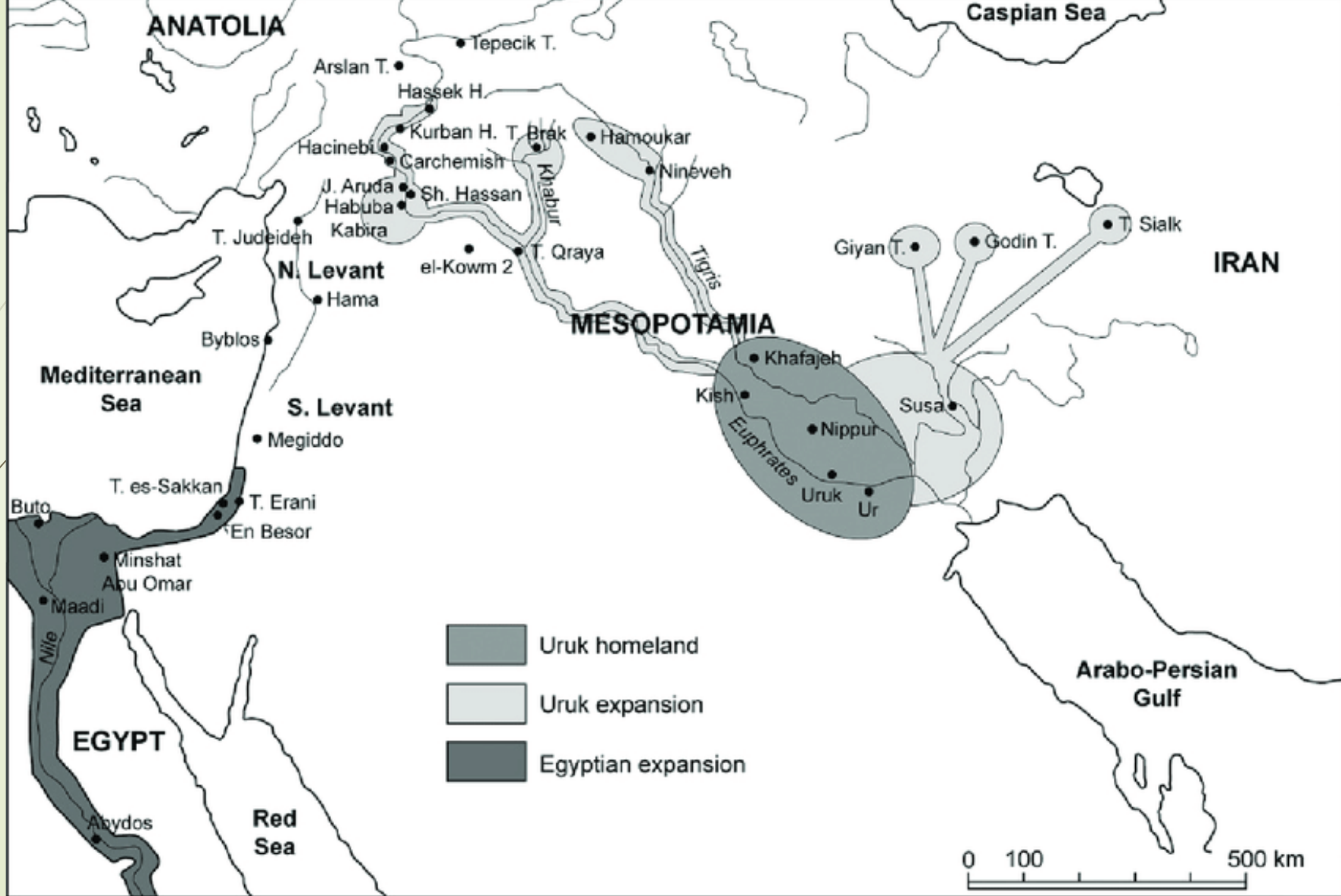
# Dynastic Uruk

- By 2,900 BCU local kings of rival city-states were vying for supremacy over Uruk and a five and a half mile city wall was constructed.
  - Within a few centuries the royal rule was well established.
  - The earliest cities of Mesopotamia were probably not monarchies.
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# Uruk Expansion

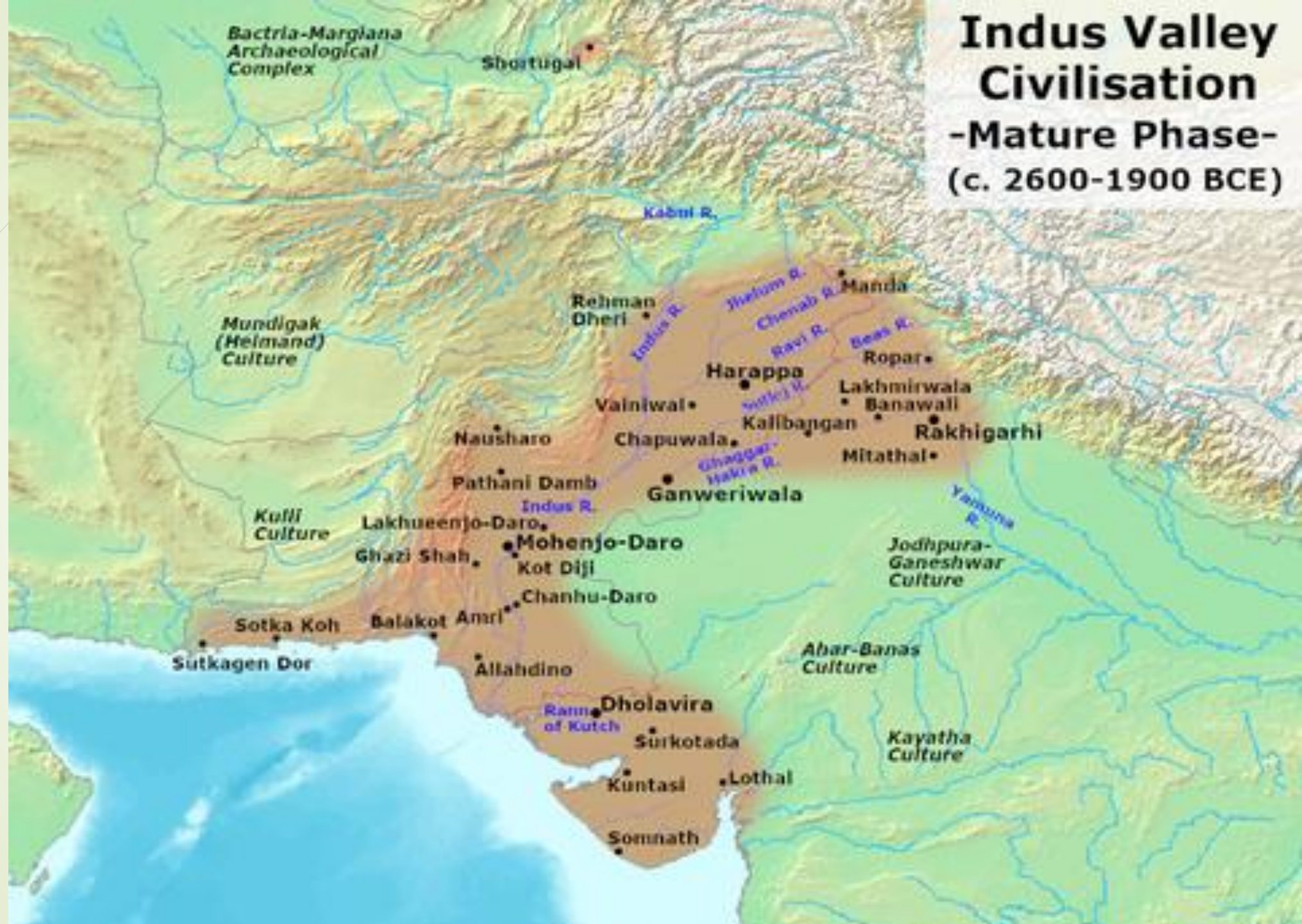
- Uruk established colonies at many strategic points along the trade routes.
  - These outposts appear to have been both commercial outposts and religious centers.
  - They expanded as far north as the Taurus Mountains and east to the Iranian Zargos.
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# The Edges of Urban Civilization

- The earliest known palace was built at Aslan Tepe around 3,100 BCE.
- These were large buildings with an audience chamber and living quarters, as well as storage areas and an armory.
- This was the rise of a warrior aristocracy in their small forts and all traces of bureaucracy disappear.

# Indus Valley Civilisation -Mature Phase- (c. 2600-1900 BCE)




# The Indus Civilization (2,500 – 1,700 BCE)

- Mohenjo-Daro was founded about 2,600 BCE on the Indus River in what is now Pakistan.
- It was south Asia's first urban culture with an estimated population of 40,000.
- The most completely preserved city of the Bronze Age world.
- Comprised of a Lower Town and a Citadel.



# Lower Town

- The city was raised to protect it from flooding.
  - Most of the city consists of brick-built houses of the Lower Town.
  - It has a grid-like arrangement of streets, long boulevards, and sophisticated drainage and sanitation systems
  - There are remains of private and public toilets and bathrooms.
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Source: National Geographic





# Upper Citadel

- It was a raised civic center encased in a wall of baked bricks which extended all the way around it.
- The Citadel is known to have supported public baths, a large residential structure designed to house about 5,000 citizens, and two large assembly halls.
- A watertight pool called the Great Bath, perched on top of a mound of dirt and held in place with walls of baked brick, is the closest structure Mohenjo-Daro has to a temple.

# The Great Bath





# Indus Civilization

- The Indus civilization spread over most of the area of modern-day Pakistan and beyond the floodplain of the Indus River into India and Afghanistan.
- The civilization had its own script which has not been deciphered.
- The caste system may have been here.

# Taosi in China

- Evidence of the world's first documented social revolution?
- 2000 BCE:
  - City wall razed and flattened.
  - Lack of special regulation.
  - City grew to 3,000 hectares.
  - Ritual area abandoned and former palace area included trash pits.

# Chapter 9 – Hiding in Plain Site

- This chapter focuses on the indigenous origins of social housing and democracy in the Americas.
- The authors find evidence that indicate egalitarian forms of government existed in early Mesoamerica just as they did in Ukraine, Mesopotamia, and the Indus valley.

# Teotihuacan – A Different City

- Evidence indicates that Teotihuacan was a large city of at least 100,000 which managed to govern itself via assemblies/or other democratic arrangements.
- The typical trapping of other early Mesoamerican urban centers were strikingly absent.
- No artwork displays of dominance, etc., were found, unlike other cities.



**● TEOTIHUACAN**

**TENOCHTITLAN ●**

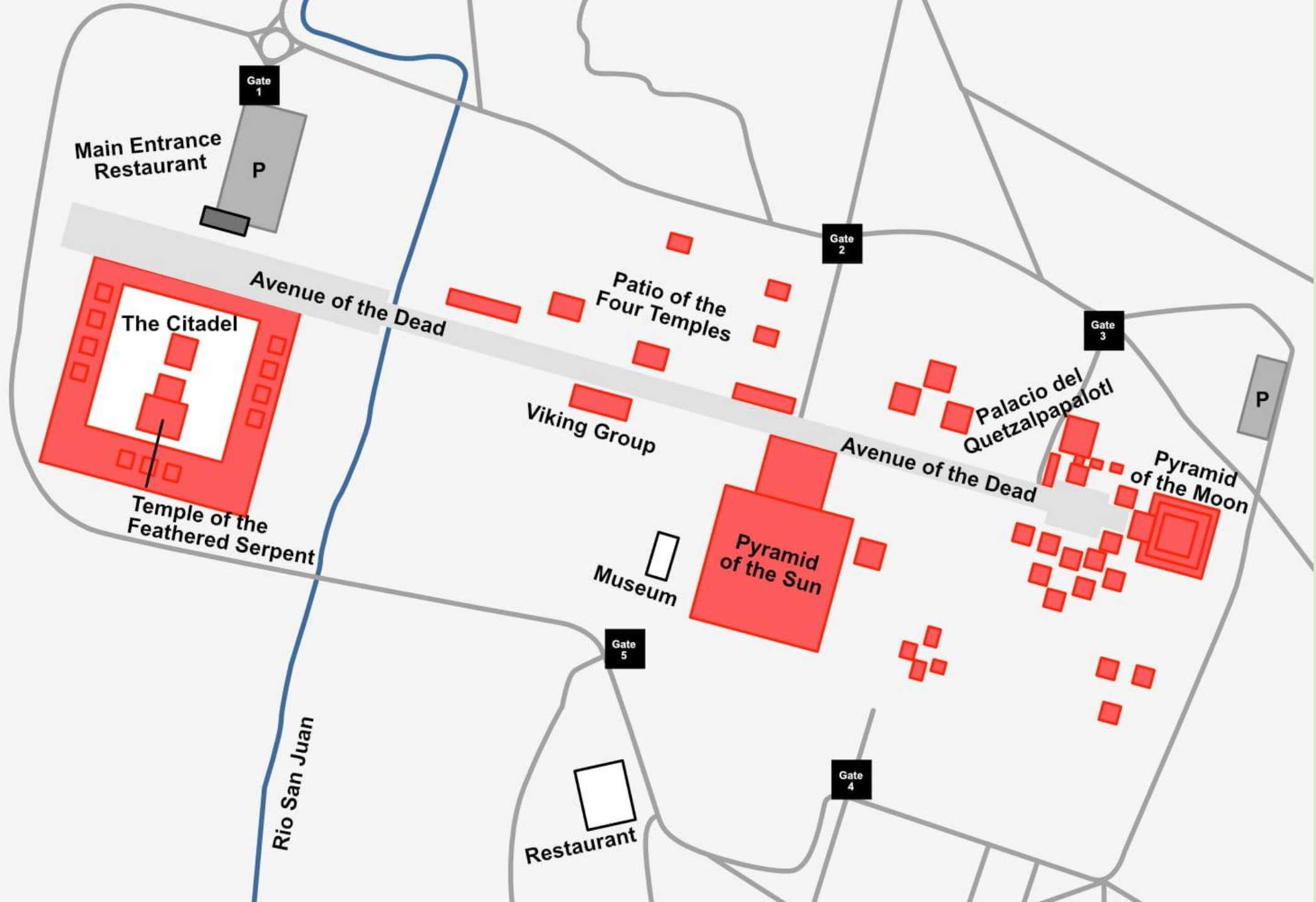
**LAKE TEXCOCO**

**CENTRAL MEXICO**



**TEOTIHUACAN**

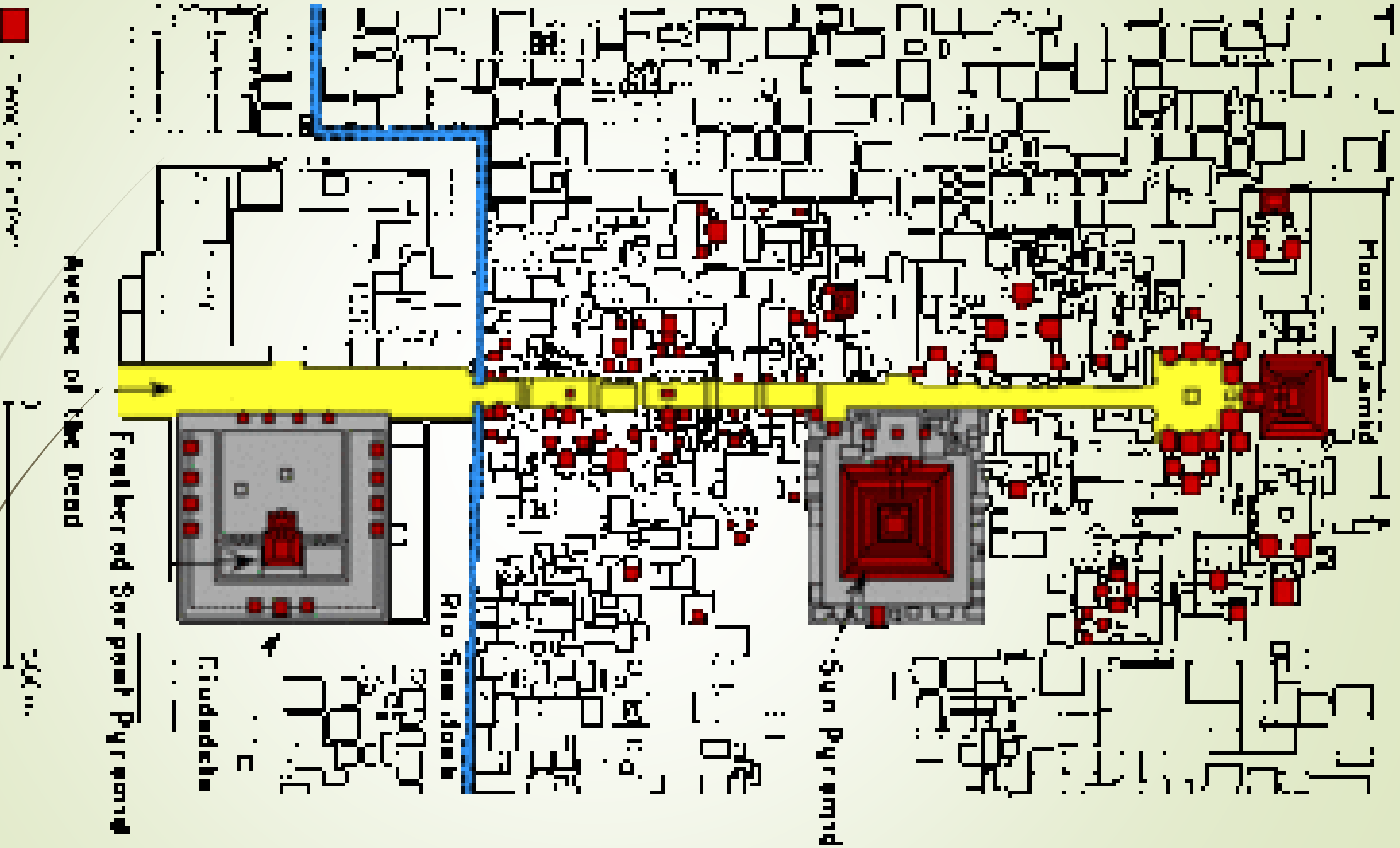
**100 BCE - 300 CE**





An aerial photograph of the Teotihuacan archaeological site in Mexico. The central feature is the Avenue of the Dead, a long, straight, wide stone-paved road that runs diagonally from the bottom right towards the top center. At the top of the image, the Pyramid of the Moon is visible, a large, stepped pyramid with a complex structure. The surrounding landscape is a mix of dry, yellowish-brown earth and patches of green vegetation. In the background, a modern city with numerous buildings and houses is visible, showing the proximity of the ancient site to contemporary urban development.

Avenue  
of the  
Dead  
and  
Pyramid  
of the  
Moon



## Reconstruction of Central Zone

Scale: 1:10000  
 Date: 1987  
 Author: J. P. ...

# Teotihuacan – 100 BCE to 300 CE

- Built largely before 250 CE, it was the first American city on a grid and the first large metropolis in America.
- The city was firmly on the path to be the same as other urban centers in Mesoamerica until about 300 CE.
- At this time the citizens changed course, developing over 2,000 high-quality apartments for most of the people.

# Teotihuacan – 300 CE to 550 CE

- The urban upgrades provided a form of social housing for a city with large in migration from the region around it.
- Each family had their own set of rooms within a larger apartment block.
- Single story buildings with a courtyard for activities and porticos for light and air.
- These blocks housed 60-100 people.

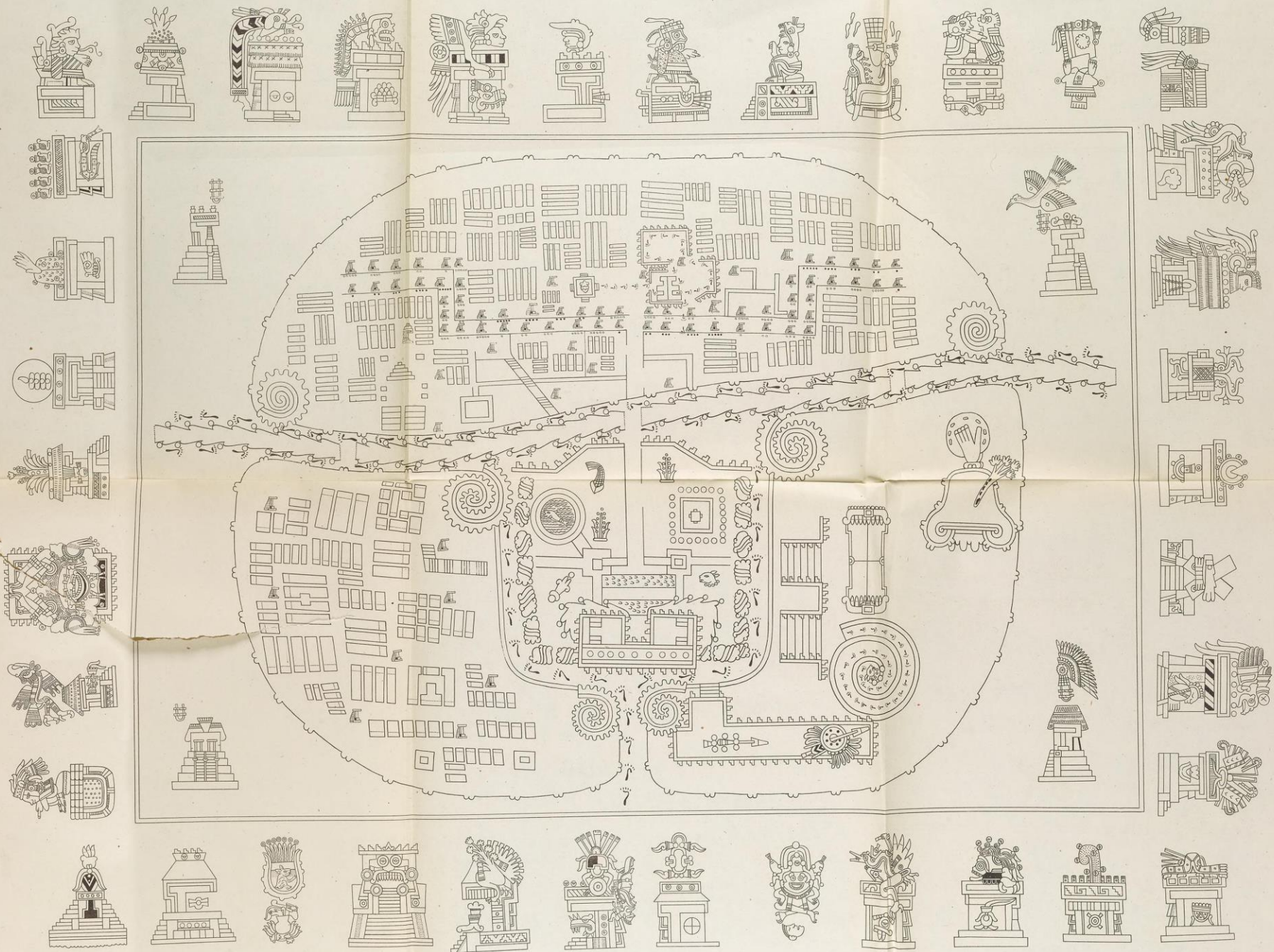


# Teotihuacan – 300 CE to 550 CE

- By 550 CE, the social fabric of the city was failing.
- There was no evidence of invasion.
- The city failed from within and people abandoned it to return to disperse to their homelands.
- This is not a unique pattern in early times.


# Tlaxcala – 1,348 CE -- Present

- ➔ Ancient Tlaxcala was a republic ruled by a council of between 50 and 200 chief political officials.
- ➔ These officials gained their positions through service to the state, usually in warfare, and as a result came from both the noble (pilli) and commoner (macehualli) classes.
- ➔ Population about 300,000.





# Tlaxcala – 1,348 CE -- Present

- Resisted the Aztecs for more than a century.
  - Used democratic deliberations to consider whether to join Cortez in attacking the Aztecs.
  - Ended up joining with Cortez.
  - Became the center of Spanish influence.
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# Tlaxcala – 1,348 CE -- Present

- After the Spanish conquered Tenochtitlan and the rest of Mexico, Tlaxcala was allowed to survive and preserve its pre-Columbian culture.
- As a reward to the Tlaxcalans unyielding loyalty to the Spanish, the city and its inhabitants largely escaped the pillaging and destruction following the Spanish conquest.
- It is now a the capitol of Tlaxcala state.

# Next Week

- No class on the Monday the 27<sup>th</sup>.
- Read Chapters:
  - 10 Why the State Has No Origin (Humble beginnings of sovereignty, bureaucracy, and politics)
  - 11 Full Circle (Historical foundations of the indigenous critique)