

The Rise of Early Cities and States

- From kinship-based communities to stratified urban centers
- Central questions: What is a city? What is a state?
- How archaeologists and historians reconstruct evidence
- Geographic scope: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus, China, Mesoamerica, Andes
- Focus on frameworks, evidence types, key sites, causal explanations

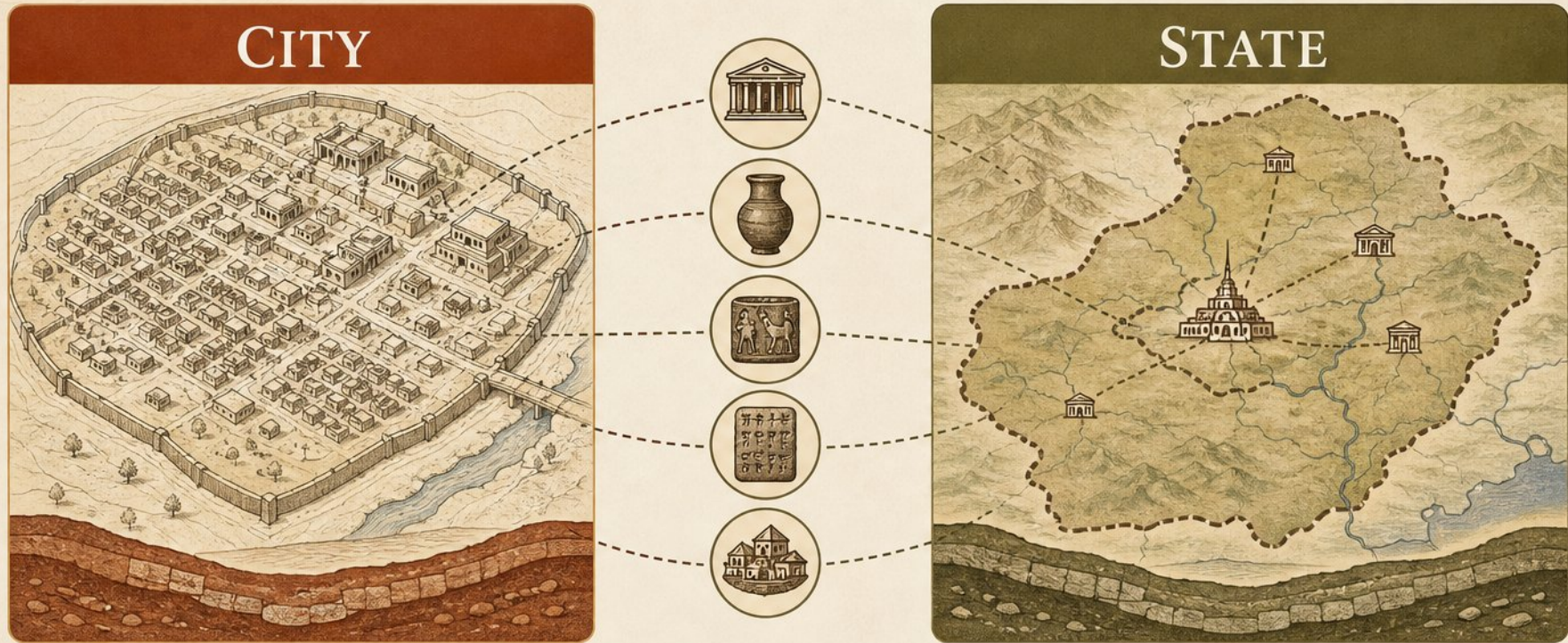


Background: Life Before Cities

- Paleolithic and Neolithic subsistence: foraging, hunting, gathering, then farming
- Neolithic Revolution: sedentism, food surplus, and population growth
- Çatalhöyük and Jericho as transitional village settlements
- Conditions for urban life preceded true cities by millennia
- Debate: was Çatalhöyük a city or a large village?



Core Concepts: Defining Cities and States



- - City: size, density, labor division, public buildings, non-farming populations
- - State: centralized authority, hierarchy, taxation, law, territorial control
- - Clues include architecture, burials, seals, writing, settlement patterns
- - Not all cities were states; not all states were urban
- - Definitions are debated, especially "city-state"



Theories of Urban and State Formation



- **Environmental theories:** irrigation, floodplains, circumscription, and concentrated resources



- **Economic theories:** surplus, craft specialization, and long-distance exchange



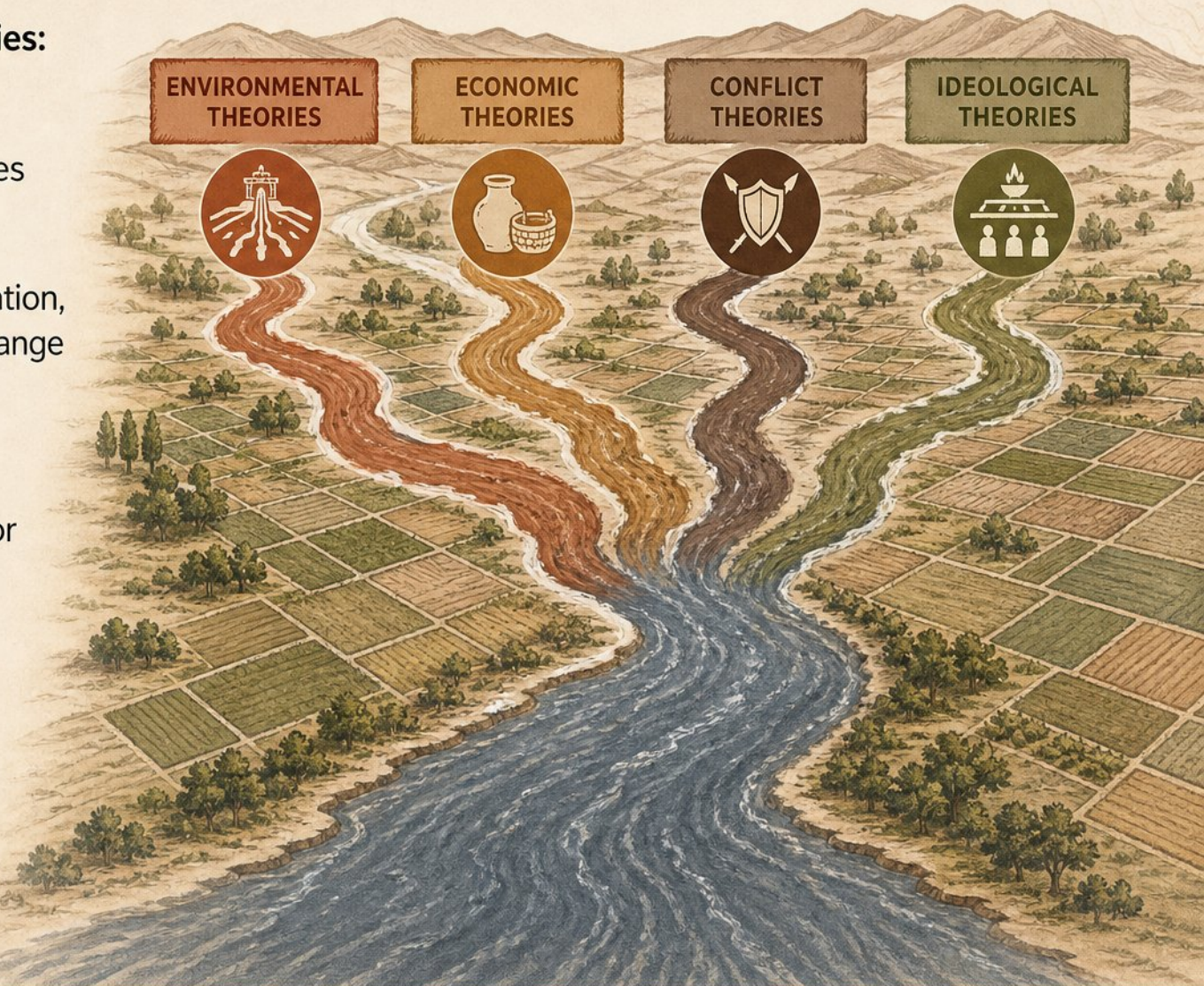
- **Conflict theories:** warfare, defense, and elite control of labor



- **Ideological theories:** shared ritual and ceremonial integration



- Most cases combine multiple causes, not one prime mover



Evidence and Methods

- Survey: systematic surface collection across regions
- Excavation: stratigraphy, radiocarbon dating, material analysis
- Settlement hierarchies reveal regional political complexity
- Texts reconstruct administration, law, and ideology
- Absence of writing limits inference of kinship and belief



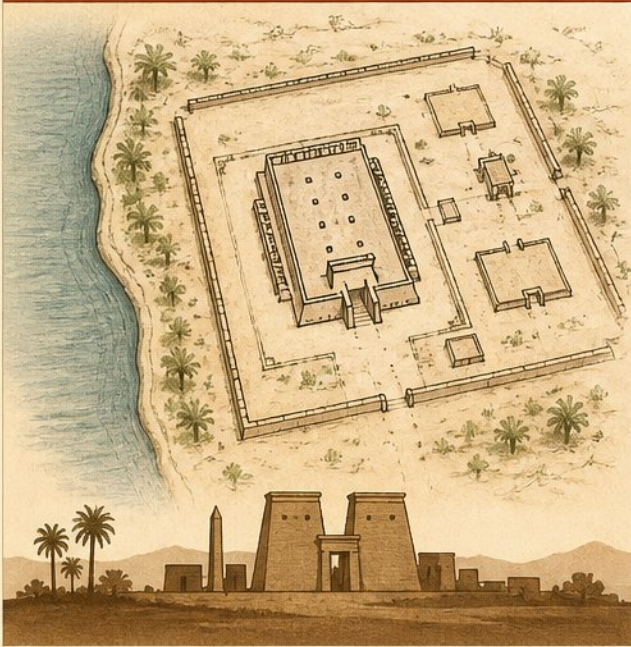
Case Study: Mesopotamia and the First Cities

- Uruk became the world's first true city by the late 4th millennium BCE
- Tigris and Euphrates floodplains enabled irrigation and agricultural surplus
- Monumental temples, writing, and cylinder seals mark incipient state authority
- Gilgamesh tradition offers insight into early urban political and religious imagination

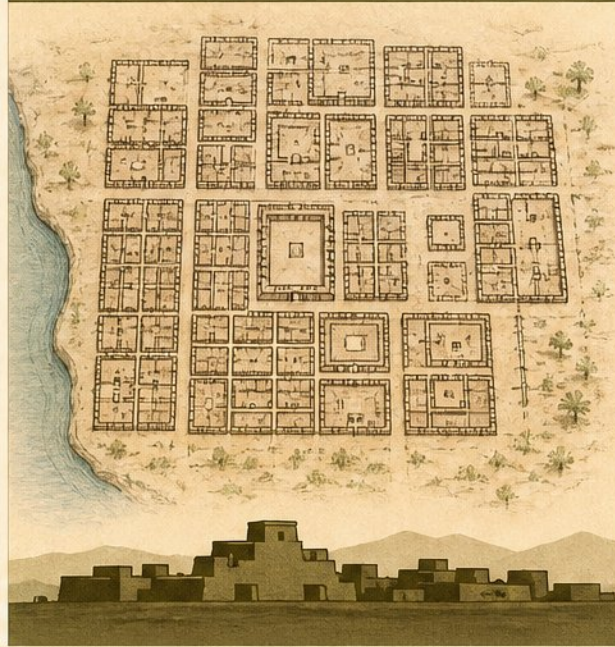


Case Study: Egypt, the Indus, and China

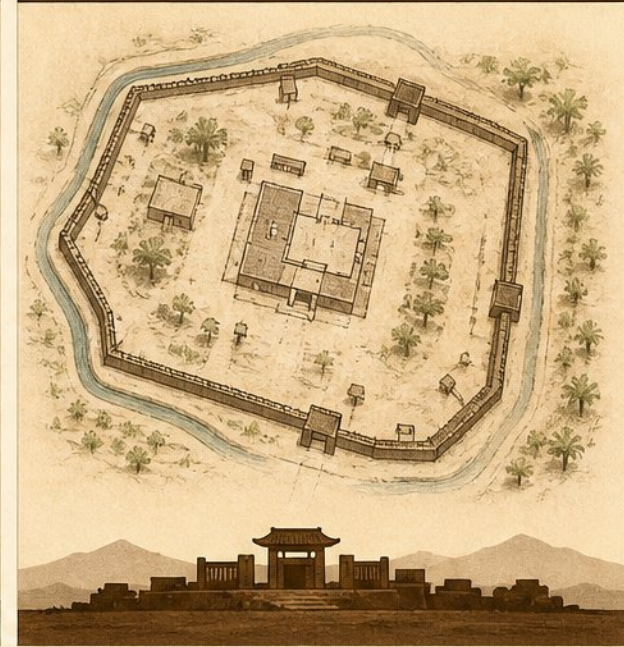
EGYPT: NILE CEREMONIAL CENTER



INDUS: PLANNED GRID CITY



CHINA: EARLY WALLED SETTLEMENT



- ◆ Egypt: Nile Valley territorial kingship vs. Mesopotamian city-states
- ◆ Indus: planned cities, standardization, debated political organization
- ◆ China: Erlitou ritual authority preceded Shang kingship
- ◆ Common features and distinct regional pathways



Case Study: Mesoamerica and the Andes

- Early Mesoamerican centers: San Lorenzo, La Venta, Monte Albán, Teotihuacan
- Ritual complexes and plazas supported urban growth and elite authority
- Andean sites: Caral, Chavín de Huántar, early Wari and Tiwanaku
- States emerged without major riverine irrigation, challenging older theories
- Shows multiple pathways to social complexity



Consequences of Cities and States



- Inequality grew with intensive agriculture and land control



- Taxation, labor drafts, debt, and property emerged



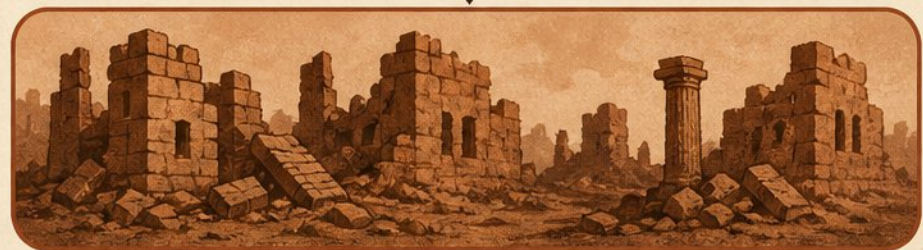
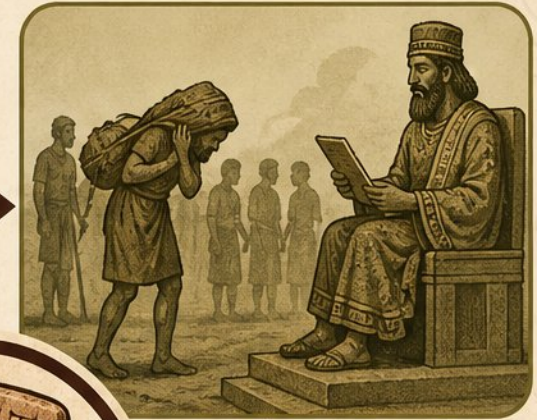
- Writing, calendars, and monumental architecture advanced



- Deforestation, salinization, disease, and sanitation challenges appeared

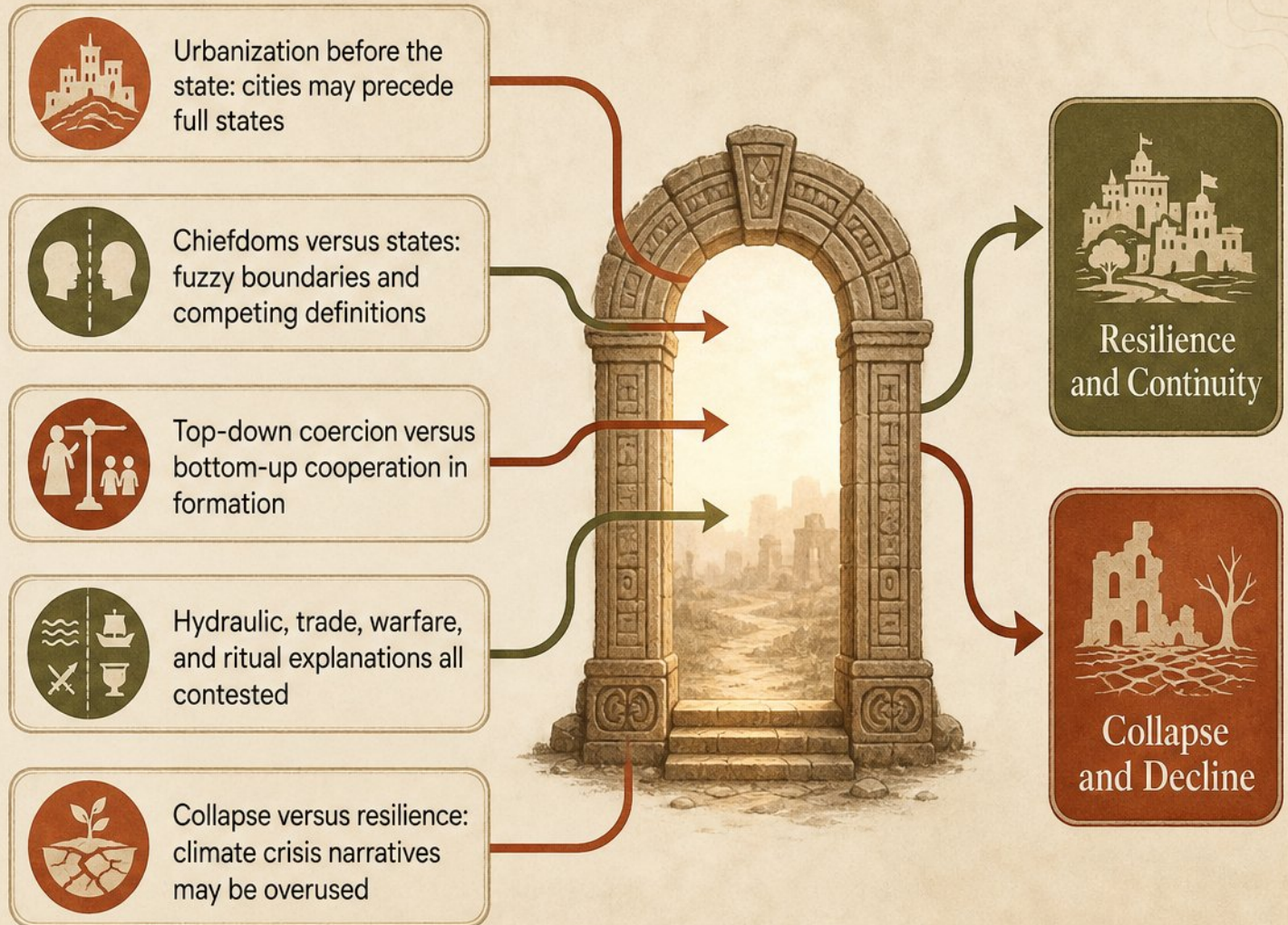


- Extensive farming locked in inequality and collapse risks



Debates: Cities, States, and Collapse

- Urbanization before the state: cities may precede full states
- Chiefdoms versus states: fuzzy boundaries and competing definitions
- Top-down coercion versus bottom-up cooperation in formation
- Hydraulic, trade, warfare, and ritual explanations all contested
- Collapse versus resilience: climate crisis narratives may be overused



Common Misconceptions



- Cities did not evolve automatically from villages along one path



- States were not universal, inevitable, or always desirable



- Cities and states are distinct; primary vs. secondary formation differs



- Writing was not required: Inca quipu recorded state data



- Early cities were not modern bureaucracies or rigid class systems



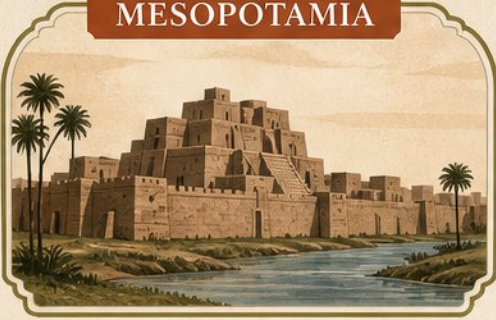
Teaching Strategies for the Classroom

- Sequence: define terms, examine evidence, compare case studies, revisit theory
- Use site plans, artifacts, maps, texts, timelines, and structured debates
- Add simulations: miniature digs, artifact reading, Rosetta Stone-style projects
- Include virtual tours, 3D reconstructions, and museum collections
- Build evidence-based arguments over memorizing a single origin story

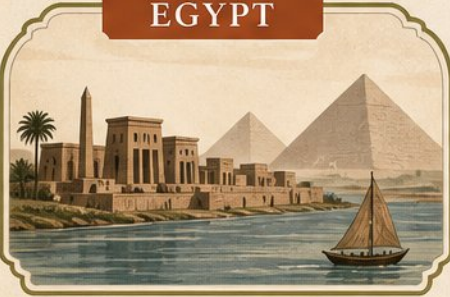


Synthesis and Key Takeaways

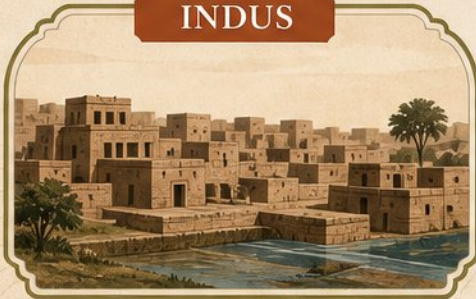
MESOPOTAMIA



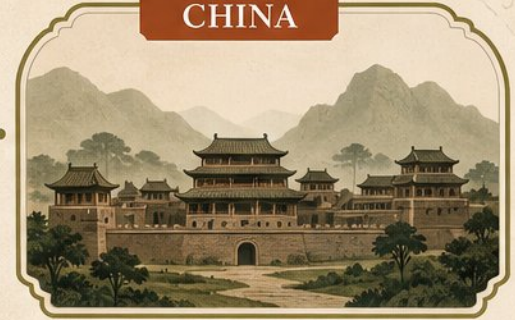
EGYPT



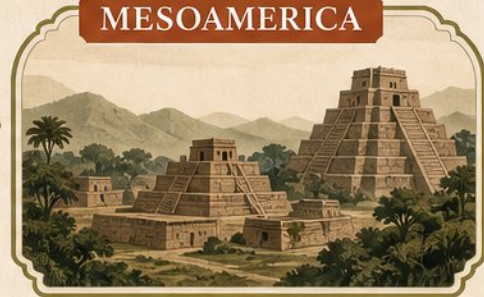
INDUS



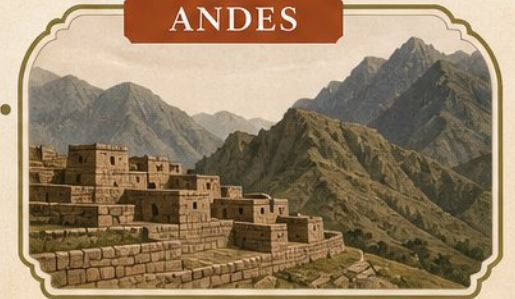
CHINA



MESOAMERICA



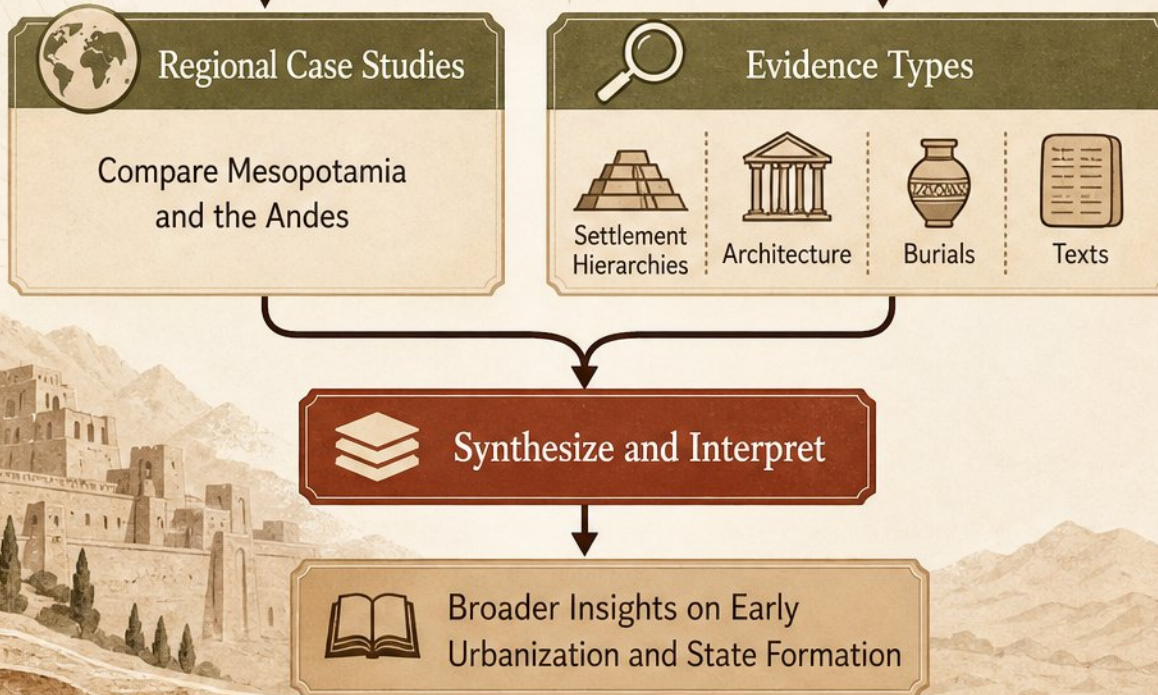
ANDES



- Cities: dense, functionally differentiated settlements
- States: centralized political formations with territorial control
- Multiple causes combined differently in each world region
- Regional paths: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus, China, Mesoamerica, Andes
- Archaeological and comparative methods expand evidence beyond writing
- Apply frameworks to new sites and debates

Discussion Prompts and Next Steps

Why here?



Next Steps

- Why did early states emerge in some regions but not others?
- Compare Mesopotamia and the Andes to test single-cause theories.
- Assess evidence: settlement hierarchies, architecture, burials, and texts.
- How would you teach definitions of city and state?
- Explore further within early urbanization and state formation.

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