

Ontopiac History: A New Framework for Civilizational Analysis



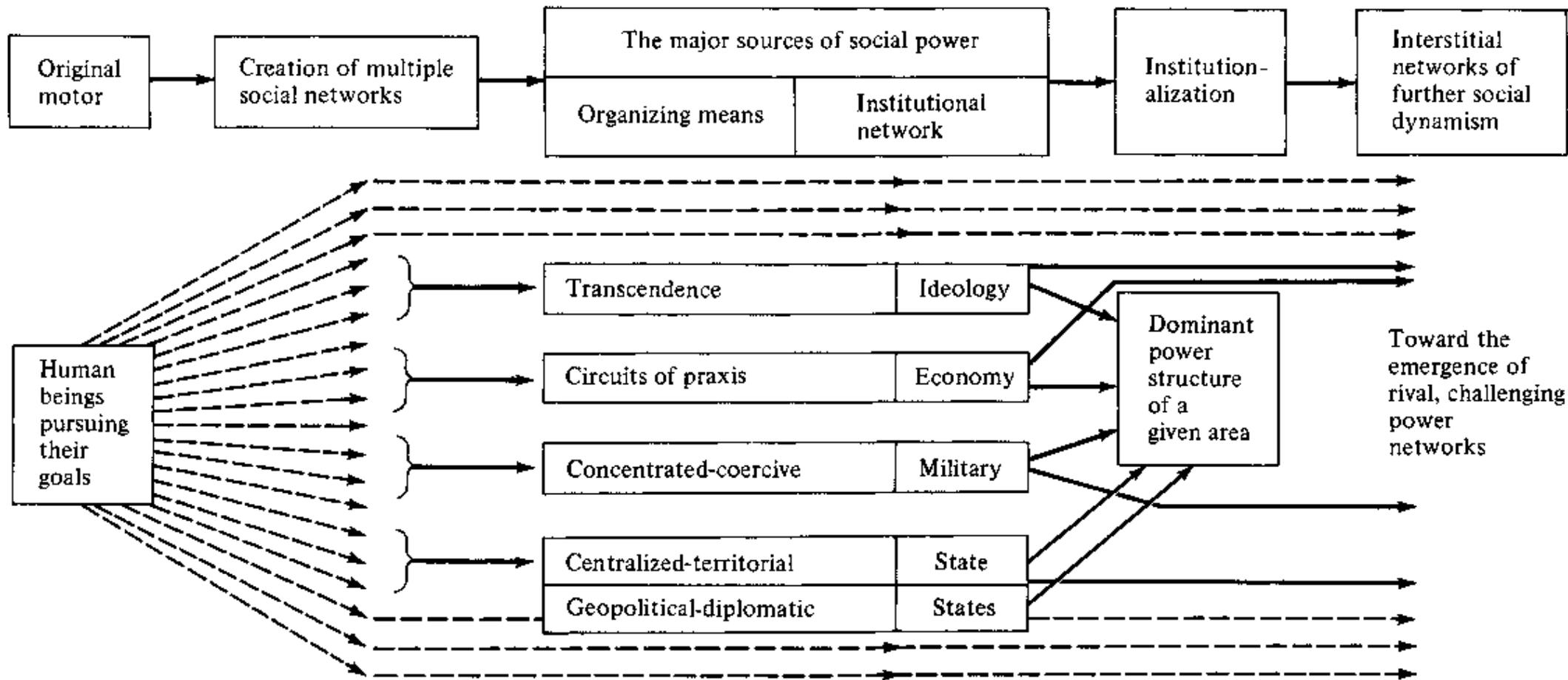
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- Why we need a new paradigm for civilizational history
- Ontopiac History: beyond organizational materialism
- Diagnostic analysis and Civilizational Stability Index (CSI)
- The Reasons of Civilization in ancient Mesopotamia

Spengler introduces his book as a "Copernican overturning" involving the rejection of the Eurocentric view of history, especially the division of history into the linear "ancient-medieval-modern" rubric. **According to Spengler, the meaningful units for history are not epochs but whole cultures which evolve as organisms.** He recognizes at least eight high cultures: Babylonian, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Mesoamerican (Mayan/Aztec), Classical (Greek/Roman), Arabian, Western or "European-American". Cultures have a lifespan of about a thousand years of flourishing, and a thousand years of decline. The final stage of each culture is, in his word use, a "civilization".



Key

- > denotes causal sequences too complex to be theorized
- > denotes causal sequences organized by the power sources and capable of being theorized

Many works that do not concentrate explicitly on the fate of empires are nevertheless crucial to this theme. Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, Cambridge University Press, 1986 (especially the first volume) probably heads this category of books: he divides power into four categories – military, economic, ideological and economic – and discusses the balance between these four types of power both in general and in a range of specific ancient and medieval polities, including the key empires of the pre-modern world. This is an exceptionally thoughtful book though anyone comparing Mann's work to my own will note a number of important differences: for instance, I count geography and demography as crucial independent factors of power.

THE PATHS OF HISTORY



IGOR M. DIAKONOFF

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Diakonoff 1999

Heterotopia

A concept proposed by Michel Foucault, referring to real-world spaces that exist in contradiction or opposition to their surrounding environments ("heterogeneous spaces").

Retrotopia

Coined by Zygmunt Bauman to describe societal phenomena where disillusionment with the future drives an idealized turn to the past.

Ontopia

Eutopia

Retrotopia

Hylotopia

Apotopia

Heterotopia

Hylotopia (Geotechnological materiality)

- Spatial-material foundation shaped by geography, technology, ecology.
- Non-linear environmental shifts, technological infrastructure.
- "Substrate" for human activities, non-deterministic.

Eutopia (Ethical constraint systems)

- Frameworks regulating actions, balancing cohesion with freedom.
- Ethical inertia delaying crisis responses. Legal syncretism.
- Mediates conflicts but struggles with norm synchronization.

Retrotopia (Sedimented historical norms)

- Institutional and cultural memory in social practices.
- Path dependence, strategic reinterpretation of historical precedents.
- Stabilizes systems, risks fossilization.

Apotopia (Future-oriented praxis)

- Projecting futures via innovation or mobilization.
- Self-accelerating trajectories. Mechanization, transhumanism.
- Disrupts but adapts to challenges.

Civilization Stability Index (CSI)

The robustness of a civilizational system quantified by interactions among the four domains (Hylotopia, Retrotopia, Apotopia, and Eutopia).

Key Parameters

1. Hylotopia (H): Material-technological capacity.
2. Retrotopia (R): Institutional effectiveness.
3. Apotopia (A): Technological/social innovation.
4. Eutopia (E): Ethical adaptability to shocks.

Dynamics

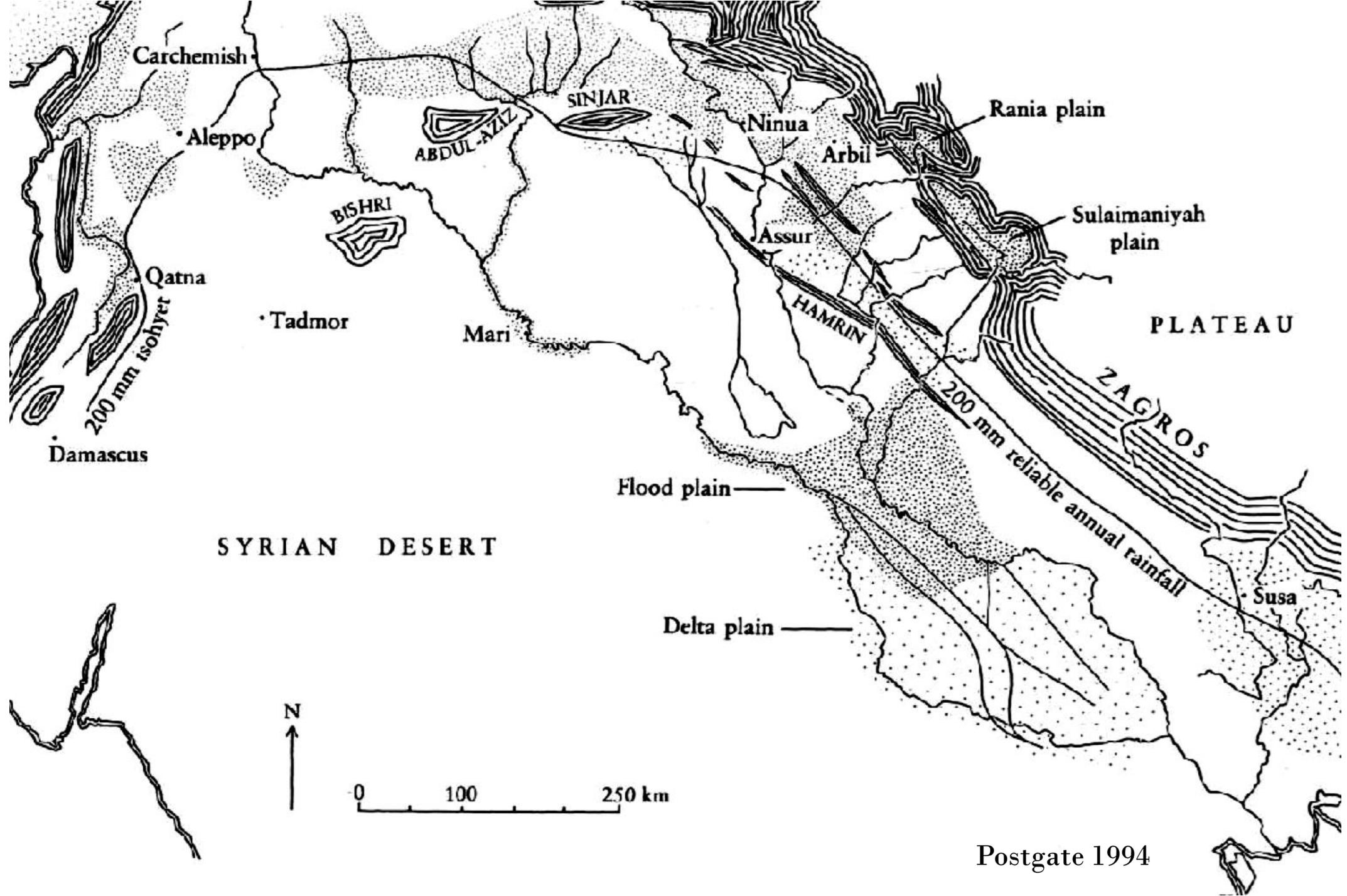
- H-R Synergy: High material-institutional alignment boosts CSI.
- A-E Lag: Technological surges outpacing ethics erode CSI.

Diagnostic historiography

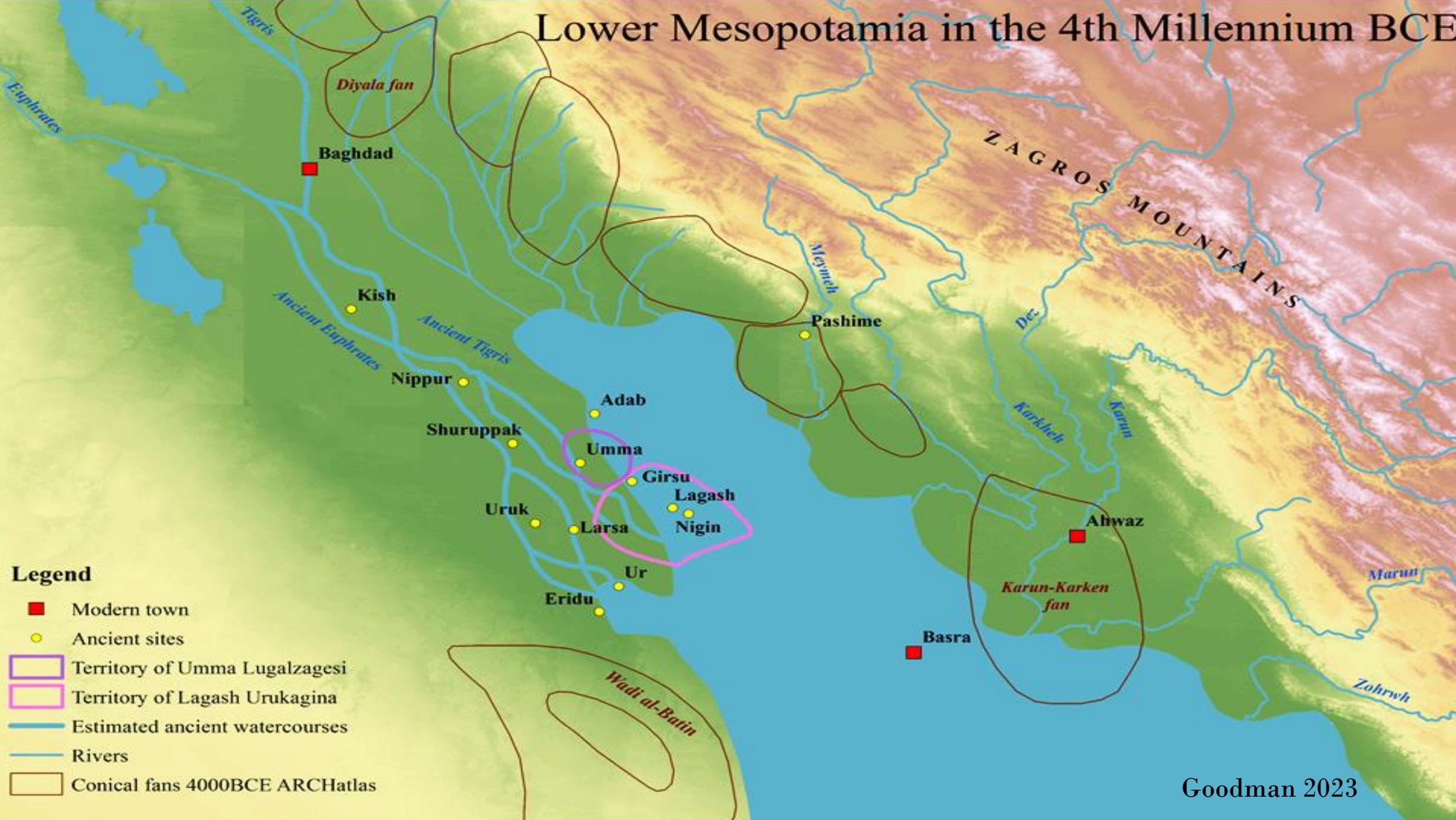
It locates historical moments where imbalances or conflicts arise between domains—for example, when a technological innovation (Apotopia) destabilizes traditional institutions (Retrotopia), or when environmental shifts (Hylotopia) strain ethical frameworks (Eutopia). These thresholds reveal systemic vulnerabilities or transitions.

Adaptive pathway tracing

It then maps how civilizations reorganize themselves to restore equilibrium. This involves analyzing how new norms, laws, or ethical codes (Eutopia) emerge to mediate conflicts, or how material infrastructures (Hylotopia) adapt to absorb shocks from future-oriented practices (Apotopia).

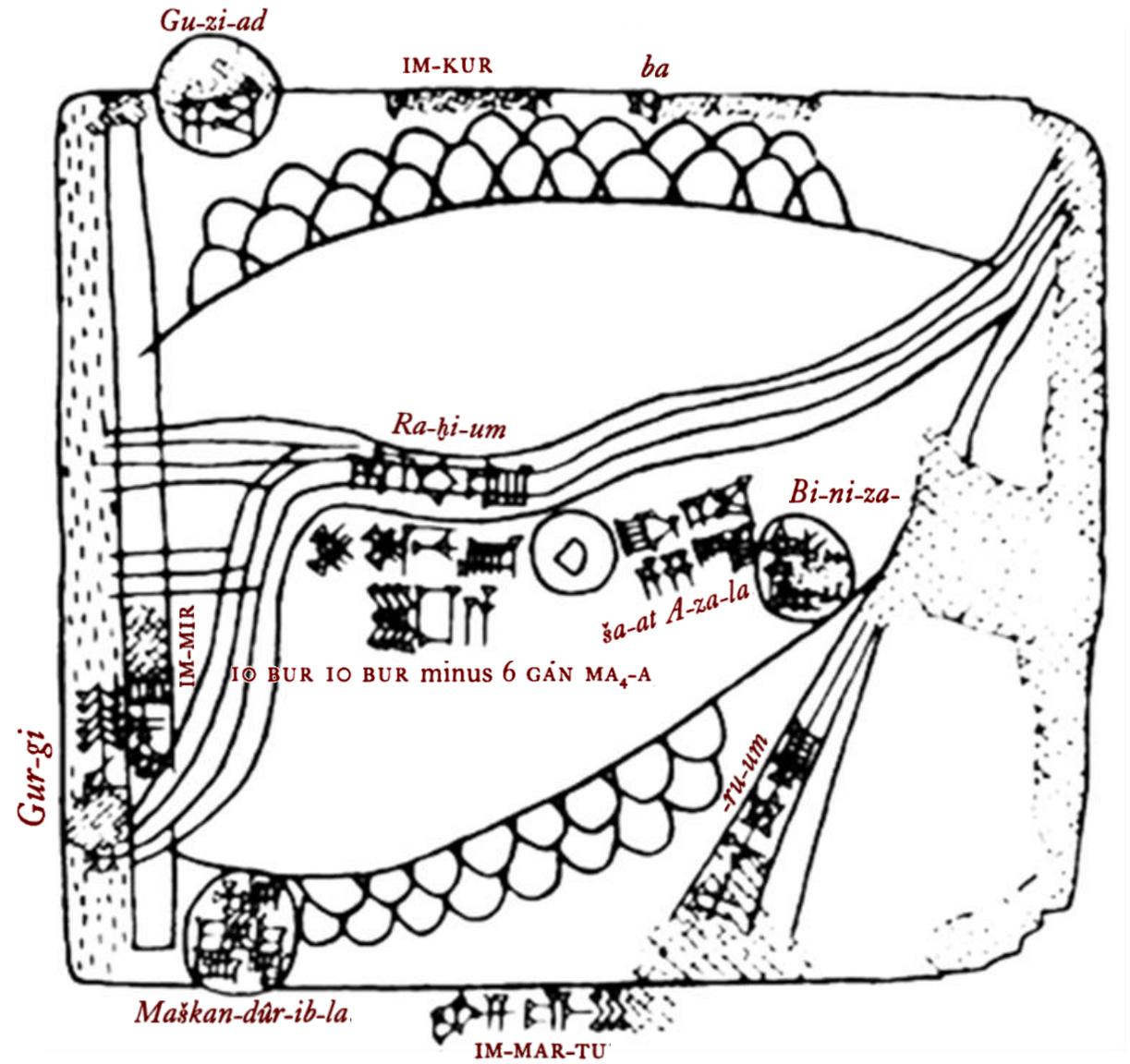
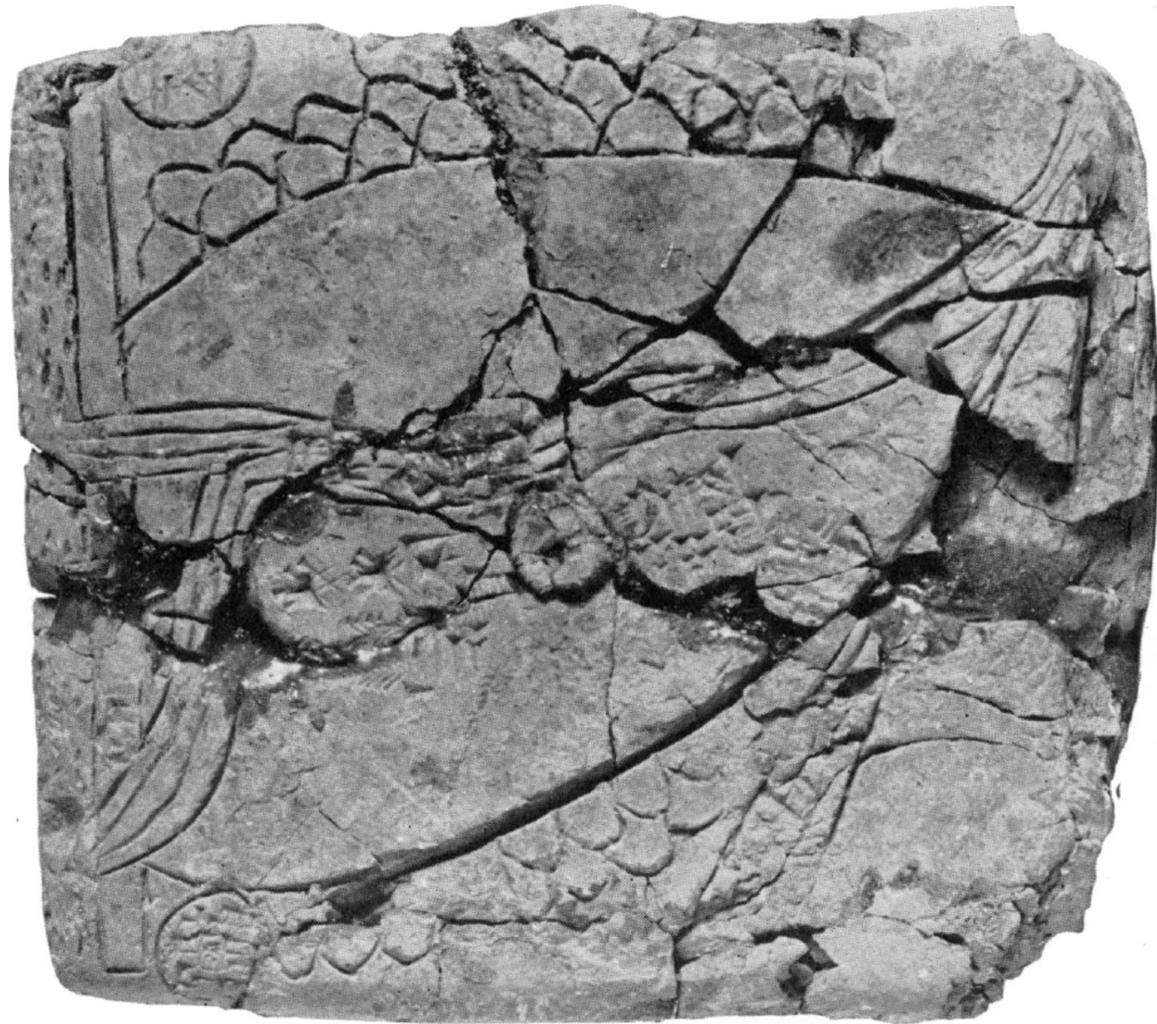


Lower Mesopotamia in the 4th Millennium BCE



Legend

- Modern town
- Ancient sites
- ▭ Territory of Umma Lugalzagesi
- ▭ Territory of Lagash Urukagina
- Estimated ancient watercourses
- Rivers
- ▭ Conical fans 4000BCE ARCHAtlas



SMN 4172 = HSS 10, 001 (Clay Tablet, 6.8 cm × 7.6 cm, Gasur Palace Area L4)

Thank you for your attention !



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