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Landscapes of Urbanisation and De-urbanisation: Integrating Site Location Datasets from Northwest India to Investigate Changes in the Indus Civilisation's Settlement Distribution



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Abstract

Archaeological survey data plays a fundamental role in studies of long-term socio-cultural change, particularly those that examine the emergence of social complexity and urbanism. Re-evaluating survey datasets reveals lacunae in survey coverage, encourages the reconsideration of existing interpretations, and makes it possible to integrate the results of multiple projects into large scale analyses that address a broad range of research questions. This paper re-evaluates settlement site location reports that relate to the major phases of the Indus civilisation, whose Mature Harappan period (c. 2600-1900 B.C.) is characterised by numerous village settlements and a small number of larger urban centres. By the end of the Mature Harappan period, people appear to have left these cities, and a de-nucleated pattern of settlement is evident in the subsequent Late Harappan period. Survey data from the plains of northwest India are key to understanding this process of de-urbanisation, as it has been argued that there was an increase in the region's settlement density as the cities declined. Assembling site locations from multiple surveys into an integrated relational database makes it possible to conduct geographical information systems (GIS)-based analyses at larger scales. This paper finds that the number of settlements on the plains of northwest India increased between c.1900 and 700 B.C., and that some settings within this region were favoured for settlement, resulting in new landscapes of de-urbanisation. These results lay the foundation for future research that will ask whether this shift in settlement location occurred at the expense of alternative social processes, such as movement to highland areas, fortification of nodes of long

distance exchange, and political consolidation. More broadly, investigating the Indus civilisation's landscapes has the potential to reshape models of social complexity by revealing how it emerged and transformed across extensive and varied environmental settings.

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Landscapes of urbanisation and de-urbanization: integrating site location datasets from northwest India to investigate changes in the Indus Civilization's settlement distribution, *Journal of Field Archaeology* [DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00934690.2018.1464332>]. [32]. Dixit, Y., Hodell, D.A., Giesche, A., Tandon, S.K., Gázquez, F., Saini, H.S., Skinner, L., Mujtaba, S.A.I., Pawar, V., Singh, R.N. and Petrie, C.A. 2018. Intensified Indian summer monsoon and the urbanization of the Indus Civilization in northwest India, *Scientific Reports* 8:4225 [online first 09 March 2018; doi: <https://doi.org/> View Indus Civilization Research Papers on Academia.edu for free. This approach is essential to understanding changes in the Indus Civilization's settlement distributions (ca. 2600–1600 B.C.), which shift from numerous small-scale settlements and a small number of larger urban centers to a de-nucleated pattern of settlement. This paper examines the interpretation that northwest India's settlement density increased as Indus cities declined by developing an integrated site location database and using this pilot database to conduct large-scale geographical information systems (GIS) analyses. It finds that settlement density in northwestern India may h Much of the Indus civilization developed around an extinct river, challenging ideas about how urbanization in ancient cultures developed, scientists have discovered. Share: FULL STORY. The Indus or Harappan Civilisation was a Bronze Age society that developed mainly in the northwestern regions of South Asia from 5300 to 3300 years ago, at about the same time as urban civilisations developed in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Archaeological evidence shows that many of the settlements in the Indus Civilisation developed along the banks of a river called the Ghaggar-Hakra in northwest India and Pakistan.