

Decline of the Indus Civilization and the Role of Agriculture

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Abstract

The Indus civilization fragmented into decentralized regional cultures at the end of the 3rd millennium BCE. Shifts in the material record and settlement data are clearly identifiable at this time. While the reasons for decentralization and localization are still debated, ecological and climatic factors were likely involved. Agriculture was critical to the Indus civilization and it constantly evolved through adapting to shifts in the climate and the developing needs of Harappan society. Since agricultural practices are a consequence of both human needs and opportunities, the decline in the Indus civilization is closely aligned with shifts in cropping practices. With a focus on the ecological diversity of the Indus civilization, this paper explores the relationship between agriculture, climate and culture change during the transition to the Late Harappan Period.

Keywords: Indus civilization, crops, agriculture, decentralization, deurbanization, Late Harappan