**CHW3M Decline of the Indus Valley Civilization – Theories**

**How do we know that the civilization declined?**

Article 2 states that the Indus Valley communities went from large, organized cities with developed industries to de-urbanized areas with a smaller population. Now the cities seemed abandoned and showed evidence of violence. Also, their script fell out of use.

So, there’s evidence of some change.

**What was the old theory of decline?**

Article 3 states that the old theory was that Aryan people invaded and attacked the cities around 2000 BCE.

**What was the evidence for this old theory?**

Article 3 states that in the 1920s archaeologists found 30 human skeletons that were unburied. In the 1960s they found 5 more bodies in an area of “collapsed brick, broken pottery and ash.” There were no burials. Does this evidence support an invasion?

**What are the new theories of decline?**

**Theory 1**

First, there is the newest monsoon theory. In article 2, there is a report that the monsoon (seasonal rains) declined for a period. But people stayed and adapted. They went from growing wheat and barley, very water-intensive crops, to rice, which requires less rain. With fewer crops their large storage system fell out of use and individual homes began to store their own food. This theory focuses on de-urbanization caused by the decline of the monsoon, not “abrupt collapse.“

Article 1 states that evidence for the monsoon theory comes from sediments in Kotla Dahar lake that were radio-carbon dated. Scientists collected shells of very small lake snails. The shells were made of aragonite. The scientists counted the oxygen molecules contained in the shells. Knowing that oxygen-16 evaporates faster than oxygen-18, and finding more oxygen-18, they deduced that more oxygen-18 was left during the drought caused by decline in the monsoons. Their dates for this decline are 4200 to 4000 years ago, though they say their dates could be wrong by plus or minus 100 years.

**What questions do you have about this theory?**

**What are the new theories of decline?**

**Theory 2**

Second, there is the flooding theory. In article 3, it states that a lot of evidence for flooding has been found. Some damage was ordinary, some was extraordinary. Some floods seem to have lasted for over two decades, such that the water was dammed up into lakes. This flooding might have been caused by tectonic shifts. For example, at Mohenjo Daro there are huge silt piles 70 feet deep. The city’s people may have tried to protect the city by creating platforms out of baked brick. Archaeological evidence shows the platforms to be 70 feet by 25 feet in size. There is also evidence of re-building on top of the original buildings. They sank eventually. There is evidence that this happened 5 times, probably lasting no more than 100 years each time.

Article 4 states that the rivers seem to have changed courses. As they did this, they built up sediment. Tectonic action caused this to happen. These changes in course in the river destroyed some settlements. Some cities survived due to the platforms and protective features they built. Some towns had to move.

**What questions do you have about this theory?**

**What are the new theories of decline?**

**Theory 3**

Third, there’s the theory of what happened to Harappa, a city that didn’t experience flooding. Article 3 states that the city looked like it was abandoned in a hurry, which could support the invasion theory. Or, it could mean that the people who invaded Harappa weren’t Aryans, just local raiders.

There is definitely evidence of change in Harappa’s later history; its pottery and seals were different at the end: less intricate, more plain than earlier. Seals were no longer made of soapstone and weren’t engraved in a fancy way. They city’s late architecture is made of broken bricks or re-used bricks. Did it decline gradually as its government became less organized, its script disappeared and its trade with Mesopotamia dropped? Historians can’t be sure.

**What questions do you have about this theory?**

**What are the new theories of decline?**

**Theory 4**

Fourth, there is the continuity of culture theory that counters the invasion theory. Article 4 states that certain cultural conditions were present both before and after the date of the supposed invasion. These continuations included agriculture, herding, pottery-making techniques, objects – both luxury and everyday – style and technology for making those objects, some religion-oriented rituals, and social hierarchy. If it truly were an invasion, would these cultural aspects have continued?

**What questions do you have about this theory?**