SHORT COMMUNICATION:
Massive Erosion in Monsoonal Central India Linked to Late Holocene Landcover Degradation

Liviu Giosan[1], Camilo Ponton[1,2†], Muhammed Usman[3], Jerzy Blusztajn[1], Dorian Fuller[4], Valier Galy[5], Negar Haghipour[3], Joel E. Johnson[6], Cameron McIntyre[3,7,$], Lukas Wacker[7], Tim Eglinton[3,5]

[1]Geology & Geophysics, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA

[2]MIT/WHOI Joint Program in Oceanography/Applied Ocean Science and Engineering, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

[3]Geological Institute, ETH Zürich, 8092 Zürich, Switzerland

[4]Institute of Archaeology, University College London, London, UK

[5]Marine Chemistry & Geochemistry, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Woods Hole, MA 02543, USA

[6]Earth Sciences, University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire, USA

[7]Laboratory of Ion Beam Physics, ETH Zürich, 8093 Zürich, Switzerland

[†]now at Division of Geological and Planetary Sciences, California Institute of Technology, 1200 E. California Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91125, USA

[$]now at Scottish Universities Environmental Research Center, E. Kilbride, G75 0QF, UK

Correspondence to: L. Giosan (lgiosan@whoi.edu)

*submitted to *Earth Surface Dynamics*

Abstract

Soil erosion plays a crucial role in transferring sediment and carbon from land to sea, yet little is known about the rhythm and rates of soil erosion prior to the most recent few centuries. Here we reconstruct a Holocene erosional history from central India, as integrated by the Godavari River in a sediment core from the Bay of Bengal. We quantify terrigenous fluxes, fingerprint sources for the lithogenic fraction and assess the age of the exported terrigenous carbon. Taken together, our data show that the monsoon decline in the late Holocene, later exacerbated by the Neolithic adoption and Iron Age extensification of agriculture on the Deccan Plateau, significantly increased soil erosion and the age of exported organic carbon. Despite a constantly elevated sea level since the middle Holocene, this erosion acceleration led to rapid continental margin growth. We conclude that in monsoon conditions, aridity boosts rather than supresses sediment and carbon export acting as a veritable monsoon erosional pump modulated by landcover conditions.

1. Soil Erosion in the Holocene

On decadal to millennial timescales, climate is the principal natural control on soil erosion within a watershed via changes in temperature and precipitation as well as their impact on vegetation type and cover (Allen and Breshears, 1998; Reichstein et al., 2013). Global sediment budgets for the Holocene indicate that humans surpassed these natural controls and became the main driver of soil erosion by at least 2000 years ago (Montgomery, 2007; Wilkinson and McElroy, 2007; Dotterweich, 2013). Transfer of sediment, carbon and solutes from land to ocean is of crucial importance for understanding continental margin architectures as well as carbon and other elemental cycles. For example, soils contain about two times more carbon than the atmosphere and, as a result, small changes in the residence time of organic carbon in soils can significantly affect the atmospheric inventory of carbon dioxide (Lal, 2004). Besides heterotrophic microbial respiration, erosion is the principal process that releases carbon from soils. Eroded carbon can subsequently be degraded/reburied along the aquatic continuum to the ocean (Stallard, 1998; Aufdenkampe et al., 2011; van Oost et al., 2012).

In the absence of historical documentation of human impacts, the complexity of soil erosion hampers the reconstruction of carbon transfer processes prior to the last few centuries (e.g., Hoffmann et al. 2013; Dotterweich, 2013; Vanwalleghem et al., 2017). Consequently, global carbon budgets implicitly assume steady state conditions for lateral transport and carbon degradation along the aquatic continuum in pre-industrial times (Battin et al., 2009; Regnier et al., 2013; Chappell et al., 2015). In contrast, abundant archaeological and geological evidence (e.g., van Andel et al., 1990; Bork and Lang, 2003; Bayon et al., 2012; Dotterweich, 2013) as well as modeling (Kaplan et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2017) suggests widespread impacts of early human landuse on continental landscapes, soil erosion and associated carbon transfer processes.

Here we present a soil erosion history from the Indian peninsula recorded in a sediment core retrieved near the mouth of Godavari River (Fig. 1) in the Bay of Bengal (NGHP-01-16A at 16°35.6'N, 82°41.0'E; 1,268 m water depth; ~35 km from the river mouth; Collett et al., 2015). The age model for the core based on 11 radiocarbon dates on mixed planktonic foraminifera was previously published by Ponton et al. (2012). The Godavari basin was not affected by tectonics at the Holocene time scale, or glacial/snow meltwater and strong orographic precipitation, which augment and complicate the water and sediment discharge of the larger Himalayan rivers like the Ganges or Brahmaputra. Instead, it integrates rainfall from the core monsoon zone (CMZ), the region of central India that is representative for both the mean monsoon regime and its fluctuations over the peninsula (see Ponton et al., 2012 and references therein). Consequently, over 90% of Godavari's water discharge into the Bay of Bengal derives from summer monsoon precipitation (Rao et al., 2005), making its sedimentary deposits a prime target for

continental climate reconstructions and a repository for sedimentary proxies of erosion prior and after the Neolithic adoption of agriculture in central India.

2. The Godavari Sediment System

Originating at an elevation of 920 m in the Sahyadri coastal range (*aka* Western Ghats) near the Arabian Sea coast, the Godavari crosses the entire Indian peninsula toward the Bay of Bengal (Fig. 1a). Because the coastal range limits penetration of the Arabian Sea moisture delivered by the monsoon (Gunnell et al. 2007), precipitation in the Godavari basin primarily originates from the Bay of Bengal. As a result, the climate is most humid at the coast (i.e., Eastern Ghats range) and becomes increasingly arid toward the interior on the Deccan Plateau (Fig. 1b). The natural vegetation reflects this gradual decrease in moisture: the headwaters on the Deccan are dominated by C_4-plant thornbush savannah adapted to dry conditions, whereas C_3-flora (deciduous forests) are dominant in the Eastern Ghats (Asouti and Fuller, 2008; Fig. 1c).

Sediments transported by the Godavari are sourced from two major geological units (Bikshamaiah and Subramanian, 1980). The upper river basin developed on the Deccan Traps, a large igneous province consisting of relatively young flood basalts (Cretaceous to early Neogene) that largely span the Deccan Plateau. The lower river basin developed over old Proterozoic to Archaean crystalline igneous/metamorphic rocks of the Indian Craton (Fig. 1d). The relatively young Deccan basalts retain a highly radiogenic mantle-derived Nd isotope composition (εNd of +1±5) while the old continental crust of the Indian Craton has a relatively unradiogenic isotopic composition (εNd of -35±8), yielding a sharp contrast between geological end-members. Thus, the sediment provenance for the Godavari sediments can be deduced from the Nd isotopic signatures of the detrital inorganic fraction in our core because the Nd signal remains unmodified through bedrock weathering processes (McLennan and Hemming, 1992; DePaolo, 1988).

Black soils cover the Deccan Plateau whereas red soils are generally typical for the Eastern Ghats (Bhattacharyya et al., 2003; Fig. 1d). Although both types of soils have been affected by landuse since prehistorical times, the black soils of the arid to semi-arid Deccan appear to be the most degraded at present (Singh et al., 1992). Intense soil erosion within the basin is reflected by the inordinately large sediment load of the Godavari relative to its water discharge (Bikshamaiah and Subramanian, 1980). In contrast to the dynamic Himalayan rivers of the Indo-Gangetic alluvial plain, Godavari and its tributaries are incised in rock or alluvium and have relatively stable sandy channels. As for other rivers affected by storms (Edwards and Owens, 1991; Hilton et al, 2008), extreme rainfall events are disproportionately important for erosion in the Godavari watershed and in subsequent transport of sediments to the ocean (Kale, 2003).

Given their incised morphology, shifts in channel position in response to floods are however rare above the Godavari delta (Kale, 2002). Floodplains are limited in extent (2% of the basin; Bikshamaiah and Subramanian, 1980), and loss of sediments to overbank deposition is minor (Kale, 2002). Therefore storage is minimal in these intermediate alluvial reservoirs that normally would increase the residence time of sediments, including particulate organic carbon.

Once reaching the Bay of Bengal, sediment delivered by the Godavari has constructed a large Holocene delta (Rao et al. 2005; Cui et al., 2017). Offshore from the Godavari mouth, a persistent sediment plume extends over 300 km during the monsoon season when over 90% of the fluvial sediment is discharged (Sridhar et al., 2008). Because the shelf in front of the delta is unusually narrow (i.e., under 10 km at our core location) copious sediment deposition takes place directly on the continental slope, resulting in sediment accumulation rates as high as 250 cm/kyr; Ponton et al., 2012). Owing to the narrow shelf, changes in sea level would also have minimal effects on sediment deposition at our site, especially after the early Holocene when the global sea level reached within a few meters of modern values (Lambeck et al., 2014). This relatively simple sedimentary regime of the Godavari system in combination with the monsoon-dominated climatology and the simple geology of the Godavari basin allows for relatively straightforward interpretation of sediment sources and transfer processes. The monsoon washload is rapidly and directly delivered to the continental margin without significant trapping in intermediate depocenters along the river. As the suspended load makes up over 95% of the total sediment transported by the Godavari (Syvitski and Saito, 2007), the washload-derived terrestrial proxies are representative for the production of fine-grained sediment in the basin. Potential contributions from resuspension of shelf sediments cannot be excluded but are likely minor due to the narrowness of the shelf; furthermore, given the large sedimentation rates on the shelf itself (Forsberg et al., 2007), the resuspended sediment is expected to be quasi-contemporaneous with sediments arriving on the slope directly from the river plume.

3. Hydroclimate in the Core Monsoon Zone

We have previously reconstructed the Holocene paleoclimate using the same sediment core discussed herein (Ponton et al., 2012; Zorzi et al., 2015). Terrestrial reconstructions were based on the carbon isotopic compositions of higher plant leaf-wax biomarkers (i.e., long-chain *n*-alkanoic acids $C_{26\text{-}32}$) and pollen, whereas contemporaneous sea surface paleoceanographic conditions in front of the Godavari delta came from the oxygen isotopic composition of planktonic foraminifer *Globigerinoides ruber*. Sedimentary leaf waxes provide an integrated $\delta^{13}C$ record of the flora in the CMZ that document an increase in aridity-adapted vegetation (C_4 plants) after the monsoon maximum in the early Holocene (Ponton et al., 2012; Fig. 2). The overall trend of the $\delta^{13}C$ leaf wax record agrees with the view that the seasonality of Northern Hemisphere insolation (Ponton et

al., 2012) led to progressively weaker monsoons over the Holocene. However, two clear aridification steps are evident: between ~5000 and 4500 years ago, and ~1,700 years ago (Fig. 2). Pollen from the same core (Zorzi et al., 2015) reinforce these conclusions: coastal forest and mangrove pollen (Fig. 2) that are typical for the more humid coastal regions of the Eastern Ghats and Godavari delta declined over the Holocene.

Dryness-adapted thornbush pollen from the Deccan Plateau increased substantially after the second aridification step ~1700 years ago, overlapping well with the maximum contribution of C_4 plant-derived leaf waxes (see Zorzi et al., 2015). For the same time interval, the ice volume-corrected oxygen isotopic composition of planktonic foraminifer *Globigerinoides ruber* documented a series of low values interpreted as high salinity events at the Godavari mouths (see Ponton et al., 2012). Together these continental and oceanic records suggest that the CMZ aridification intensified in the latest Holocene via a series of short drier episodes (Ponton et al., 2012). This interpretation is reinforced by speleothem-derived records from central and northern India for the past thousand years (Sinha et al., 2011), and the overall evolution of the CMZ hydroclimate as seen from our core is supported by local reconstructions from the Lonar crater lake in central India (Prasad et al., 2014; Sarkar et al., 2015), Godavari delta (Cui et al., 2017) and other records from the larger Indian monsoon domain (Gupta et al., 2003; Fleitmann et al., 2003; Prasad and Enzel, 2006; Berkelhammer et al., 2012; Dixit et al., 2014b).

4. Erosion in the Godavari Basin

The Holocene sediment flux at our core location (Fig. 2) is representative for the Godavari continental slope (Mazumdar et al., 2009; Ramprasad et al. 2011; Joshi et al., 2014; Usapkar et al., 2016) and is driven by changes in the siliciclastic sedimentation rate as dilution by biogenic carbonates is less than 5% (Johnson et al., 2014). Despite a lower sea level at the time, the flux was relatively small in the early Holocene (~25 g/cm^2/kyr) but began to increase after 6000 years ago (~40 g/cm^2/kyr), as soon as the monsoon started to decline but well before the adoption of Neolithic agriculture and settlement of the savannah zone of the central peninsula (~4500 years ago; Fuller, 2011). Between 4000 and 3500 years ago permanent agricultural settlements spread throughout the Deccan Plateau. The associated small-scale metallurgy (copper-working) requiring firewood together with the agricultural intensification probably also affected erosion via widespread deployment of two cropping seasons (Kajale, 1988; Fuller and Madella, 2001). As the climate remained arid, sediment fluxes stayed high despite a phase of agricultural abandonment and depopulation between ~3,200 and 2,900 years ago (Dhavalikar, 1984; Roberts et al., 2016).

A further step increase in the sediment flux (~90 g/cm^2/kyr on average) occurred after ~3000 years ago, this time with no apparent concomitant change in climate. The Nd isotopic signal points to an increase in the Deccan sedimentary output at the time, after a

muted variability earlier in the Holocene when the Indian Craton consistently provided ~50-60% of the sediments (Fig. 2; see Supplementary Materials). Ferrimagnetic minerals interpreted as originating from the Deccan (Sangode et al., 2001; Kulkarni et al., 2014) also increase in late Holocene sediments in the Godavari delta (Cui et al., 2017) and Bay of Bengal (Kulkarni et al., 2015) supporting our interpretation. Augmented Deccan input was suggested for the Godavari delta even earlier after ~6000 years ago (Cui et al., 2017), in step with the initial aridification. New improvements in agricultural technology became widespread in the Deccan Plateau, including use of iron agricultural tools (Mohanty and Selvakumar, 2001) that required firewood-fuelled smelting Fuller, 2008). A new phase of agricultural settlement began in the middle Godavari basin (eastern Maharashtra) between ~3000 to ~2800 years ago (Brubaker 2000). However, the largest boost in sediment flux occurred after ~2000 years ago, when the monsoon reached its driest phase and when further increases in population occurred resulting in the founding of towns and the first cities of the region at the beginning of the Historic period (Allchin 1995; Parabrahma Sastry 2003). This doubling in sediment flux relative to the early Holocene values involved a basin-wide increase in erosion. The contribution from the Deccan Plateau, although at its maximum according to the Nd isotope mixing model, only accounts for a 15% shift in sediment source (Fig. 2).

Overall, watersheds with high precipitation have higher discharge and discharge magnitude is considered a primary regulator for sediment and carbon erosional fluxes to the ocean (e.g., Summerfield and Hulton, 1994; Ludwig et al., 1996; Galy et al., 2015). However, our Godavari record shows that erosional output is maximized by aridity because significant rain and seasonal floods still occur during the summer monsoon season (Mujumdar et al., 1970; Kale, 2003). Aridification and/or agricultural expansion lead to changes in vegetation type (i.e., forest decrease in favour of savannah) and cover (i.e., shrinking of naturally vegetated lands in favour of agricultural and/or degrading arid lands) that exacerbate soil erosion (i.e., Langbein and Schum, 1958; Dunne, 1979; Walling and Webb, 1983; Istanbulluoglu and Bras, 2005; Vanacker et al., 2007; Collins and Bras, 2008).

5. Carbon Export from the Godavari Basin

The terrigenous organic carbon exported by rivers consists of a mixture of dissolved and particulate components derived from contemporary vegetation and of carbon stored in bedrock, soils and fluvial sediments that may be significantly pre-aged (Smittenberg et al., 2006; Galy and Eglinton, 2011; Feng et al., 2013). On the Godavari slope, the terrigenous fraction dominates the total organic carbon (TOC) in marine sediments (Johnson et al., 2014). In agreement with this, TOC radiocarbon ages in our core have been previously found to be remarkably similar to co-located ages of the strictly terrigenous higher plant leaf wax fraction (Ponton, 2012). This age similarity also excludes interferences from within-river biological productivity (e.g., Eglinton and

Hamilton, 1967; Eglinton and Eglinton, 2008). To assess the variability of the terrigenous carbon age exported by Godavari River based on this understanding we used high resolution TOC radiocarbon measurements to calculate radiocarbon age offsets relative to the atmosphere (Soulet et al., 2016; see Supplementary Materials). Over the Holocene, these biospheric organic carbon radiocarbon age offsets in our core mirror the history of erosion in the basin (Fig. 2).

As a first order observation, TOC ages (Fig. 2 and Supplementary Materials) are significantly older (~200 to 2000 ^{14}C years) than their depositional age in our Godavari core. Before 5000 years ago the bulk organic carbon radiocarbon age offset were ~600 ^{14}C years old on average. In contrast, the highly erosional regime under both climatic and early human pressure in the late Holocene led to the export of significantly older carbon from the terrestrial biosphere, i.e., ~1300 ^{14}C on average. This increase in radiocarbon age offset occurred largely during the two aridification steps identified by Ponton et al. (2012): more abruptly between ~5000 and 4500 years ago and more gradually after ~1700 years ago (Fig. 2).

In the absence of significant storage in alluvial sediments in the Godavari catchment, several processes can explain the doubling in age offset over the Holocene: an overall slowing of soil carbon turnover in the drying climate of central India, a decrease in TOC contribution from contemporaneous vegetation relative to older (pre-aged) soil carbon input and/or deeper exhumation of soils contributing increasingly older carbon. Given the drastic changes in vegetation cover and increase in erosion in the Godavari basin, a decrease in soil turnover is unlikely during the Holocene aridification process (Carvalhais et al. 2014). In turn, the good agreement between the pollen and leaf-wax $\delta^{13}C$ records in our core (Ponton et al., 2012; Zorzi et al., 2015) with independent monsoon reconstructions suggests sustained delivery of recently fixed biospheric organic carbon to the delta. Thus, the doubling in age offset over the Holocene is best explained by increasing contributions from an older soil component, which could only come through deeper erosion. Because the age of soil organic carbon in soil profiles increases with depth (Trumbore, 2009), older mixtures imply a deeper soil erosion, whether uniform, or through gullies, which are common especially on the Deccan Plateau (Kothyari, 1996).

6. The Monsoon Erosional Pump

Overall, these multiple lines of evidence indicate that soil erosion in the CMZ, as integrated by the Godavari River, increased throughout the basin immediately as climate began to dry at the end of mid Holocene, and was further enhanced by Deccan agricultural activities in the late Holocene. The likely mechanism for this is the extreme seasonal distribution of the rainfall that characterizes the monsoon (Wang and Ding, 2008), which promoted erosion on the more sparsely vegetated landscapes (Molnar, 2001; DiBiase and Whipple, 2011; Plink-Bjorklund, 2015). Our findings thus point to a

273 veritable “monsoon erosional pump” that accelerates during minimum landcover
274 conditions when the protective role of vegetation is reduced, whether naturally or by
275 humans. The volume of total eroded sediments since the mid Holocene must have been
276 considerable as the continental margin growth accelerated with the shelf edge aggrading
277 ~80 meters in the last ~2000 years alone (Forsberg et al., 2007).

278 This “landcover-mode” of the monsoon erosional pump must have been active before the
279 Holocene as well, affecting the transfer of terrigenous sediment, solutes and carbon from
280 land to the ocean. The beat of monsoon precipitation on orbital timescales is not well
281 constrained but considered to be modulated by at a combination of precession and
282 obliquity frequencies based on monsoon wind reconstructions (e.g., Clemens and Prell,
283 2003). Such complex variability did not inevitably follow the sea level cyclicity (e.g.,
284 Goodbred and Kuehl, 2000), which is usually assumed to control most of the sediment
285 transfer from land to the deep ocean (see Blum and Hattier-Womack, 2009 and references
286 therein for an analysis underlining the increased recognition for a climate role). Thus
287 untangling the effects of the monsoon is difficult especially during the Quaternary (e.g.,
288 Phillips et al., 2014), but may be easier to discern earlier when the sea level change
289 magnitude was reduced. Landcover effects are less likely to occur in the upper basins of
290 Himalayan monsoonal rivers where there are other sources of water such as snow or
291 glaciers and where elevation (i.e., temperature) and orographic precipitation promote
292 ecological stability (Galy et al., 2008a;). The erosional pump in these high, steep regions
293 is still active due to monsoonal seasonality but in a “topographic-mode” dominated
294 primarily by landslides (Montgomery and Brandon, 2002; but see Olen et al., 2016 for an
295 alternative viewpoint). However, the landcover-mode for the erosional pump should still
296 be active in their lower basins where aridity controls vegetation type and cover (e.g.,
297 Galy et al. 2008b).

298 Recent coupled erosion-carbon cycling modeling suggests that long-term anthropogenic
299 acceleration of erosion has had a significant impact on the global carbon cycle by
300 intensifying the burial of terrigenous carbon (Wang et al., 2017). Whereas the monsoon
301 domain only covers ~15% of the Earth’s surface (Hsu et al., 2011), it used to export to
302 the ocean ~70% of the sediment load from the Earth’s largest rivers (see Syvitski and
303 Saito, 2007 for a compilation for pre-damming conditions). Therefore, we suspect that
304 the cumulative effect of the monsoon erosional pump on the carbon budget was
305 substantial in augmenting the burial of terrigenous carbon during the Holocene and needs
306 to be estimated for inclusion in assessments of the net soil–atmosphere carbon exchange.

307

308 References

309 Allchin, F. R. (1995) Early cities and states beyond the Ganges Valley. In Allchin, F. R.
310 (ed.) The Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia. The Emergence of Cities and
311 States. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 123-151

312 Allen, C.D. and Breshears, D.D., 1998. Drought-induced shift of a forest–woodland
313 ecotone: rapid landscape response to climate variation. Proceedings of the National
314 Academy of Sciences, 95(25), pp.14839-14842.

315 Asouti, E. and D.Q. Fuller, (2008) Trees and Woodlands in South India. Archaeological
316 Perspectives, Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, Calif.

317 Aufdenkampe, A. K., E. Mayorga, P. A. Raymond, J. M. Melack, S. C. Doney, and S. R.
318 Alin (2011), Riverine coupling of biogeochemical cycles between land, oceans, and
319 atmosphere. Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment 9(1): 53-60,
320 doi:10.1890/100014.

321 Battin, T.J., Luyssaert, S., Kaplan, L.A., Aufdenkampe, A.K., Richter, A. and Tranvik,
322 L.J., 2009. The boundless carbon cycle. Nature Geoscience, 2(9), pp.598-600.

323 Bayon, G., Dennielou, B., Etoubleau, J., Ponzevera, E., Toucanne, S. and Bermell, S.,
324 2012. Intensifying weathering and land use in Iron Age Central Africa. Science,
325 335(6073), pp.1219-1222.

326 Berkelhammer, M., Sinha, A., Stott, L., Cheng, H., Pausata, F.S.R., and Yoshimura, K.,
327 2012, An abrupt shift in the Indian monsoon 4000 years ago, in Giosan, L., et al., eds.,
328 Climates, landscapes, and civilizations: American Geophysical Union Geophysical
329 Monograph 198, p. 75–87, doi:10.1029/2012GM001207

330 Bhattacharyya, T. et al., 2003 Soils of India: historical perspective, classification and
331 recent advances, Current Science, VOL. 104, NO. 10, 1308-1323

332 Bikshamaiah, G. and Subramanian, V., 1988. Sediment transport of the Godavari River
333 basin and its controlling factors. Journal of Hydrology 101, 275-290.

334 Blum, M.D. and Hattier-Womack, J.I.L.L., 2009. Climate change, sea-level change, and
335 fluvial sediment supply to deepwater depositional systems. External Controls on
336 Modern Clastic Turbidite Systems: SEPM, Special Publication, 92, pp.15-39.

337 Bork, H.R. and Lang, A., 2003. Quantification of past soil erosion and land use/land
338 cover changes in Germany. In Long term hillslope and fluvial system modelling (pp.
339 231-239). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

Brubaker, R. (2000). Aspects of mortuary variability in the South Indian Iron Age. Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute, 60, 253-302.

Carvalhais, N. et al. Global covariation of carbon turnover times with climate in terrestrial ecosystems. Nature 514, 213-217 (2014).

Chappell, A., Baldock, J. and Sanderman, J., 2015. The global significance of omitting soil erosion from soil organic carbon cycling schemes. Nature Climate Change.

Clemens, S. C., and W. L. Prell (2003), A 350,000 year summer-monsoon multi-proxy stack from the Owen Ridge, Northern Arabian Sea, Mar. Geol., 201(1–3), 35–51.

Collett, T., Riedel, M., Cochran, J., Boswell, R., Presley, J., Kumar, P., Sathe, A., Sethi, A., Lall, M., and the NGHP Expedition Scientists, 2015, Indian National Gas Hydrate Program Expedition 01 report: U.S. Geological Survey Scientific Investigations Report 2012–5054, 1442 p..

Collins, D.B.G. and Bras, R.L., 2008. Climatic control of sediment yield in dry lands following climate and land cover change. Water Resources Research, 44(10).

Contreras-Rosales, L.A., Jennerjahn, T., Tharammal, T., Meyer, V., Lückge, A., Paul, A. and Schefuß, E., 2014. Evolution of the Indian Summer Monsoon and terrestrial vegetation in the Bengal region during the past 18 ka. Quaternary Science Reviews, 102, pp.133-148.

Cui, M, Wang, Zhanghua, Nageshwar Rao, Kakani, Sangode, S J, Saito, Yoshiki, Ting, Chen, Kulkarni Y.R., Gnaga Kumar, K Ch V, Demudu. 2017. A mid-to-late Holocene record of vegetation decline and erosion triggered by monsoon weakening and human adaptations in the south–east Indian Peninsula; The Holocene, 0959683617715694.

DePaolo, D.J., 1988. Neodymium Isotope Geochemistry, An Introduction. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, 187 p.

Dhavalikar, M.K 1984. Towards an Ecological Model for Chalcolithic Cultures of Central and Western India, Journal of Anthropological Archaeology, 3. 133-158.

DiBiase, R.A., and Whipple, K.X., 2011, The influence of erosion thresholds and runoff variability on the relationships among topography, climate, and erosion rate: Journal of Geophysical Research–Earth Surface, v. 116, no. F4, F04036.

Dixit, Y.; Hodell, D. A.; Petrie, C. A. (2014), Abrupt weakening of the summer monsoon in northwest India similar to 4100 yr ago. Geology, 42 (4), 339-342.

371 Dotterweich, M., 2013. The history of human-induced soil erosion: Geomorphic legacies,
372 early descriptions and research, and the development of soil conservation—A global
373 synopsis. Geomorphology 201, 1–34. doi:10.1016/j.geomorph.2013.07.021

374 Dunne, T., 1979, Sediment yield and land use in tropical catchments: Journal of
375 Hydrology, v. 42, p. 281–300, doi:10.1016/0022-1694(79)90052-0.

376 Edwards, W. M., and Owens, L. B., 1991, Large storm effects on total soil erosion, J.
377 Soil Water Conserv., 46(1), 75–78.

378 Eglinton, G.; Hamilton, R. J., Leaf epicuticular waxes, Science 1967, 156 (3780), 1322

379 Eglinton, T. I.; Eglinton, G. (2008), Molecular proxies for paleoclimatology. Earth and
380 Planetary Science Letters, 275 (1-2), 1-16.

381 Feng, X. J.; Vonk, J. E.; van Dongen, B. E.; Gustafsson, O.; Semiletov, I. P.; Dudarev, O.
382 V.; Wang, Z. H.; Montlucon, D. B.; Wacker, L.; Eglinton, T. I. (2013), Differential
383 mobilization of terrestrial carbon pools in Eurasian Arctic river basins. Proceedings of
384 the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 110 (35), 14168-
385 14173.

386 Fleitmann, D., S. J. Burns, M. Mudelsee, U. Neff, J. Kramers, A. Mangini, and A. Matter
387 (2003), Holocene forcing of the Indian monsoon recorded in a stalagmite from
388 Southern Oman, Science, 300(5626), 1737-1739.

389 Forsberg, C. F., A. Solheim, T.J., Kvalstad, R. Vaidya, and S. Mohanty (2007), Slope
390 instability and mass transport deposits on the Godavari river delta, east Indian margin
391 from a regional geological perspective, Submarine Mass Movements and Their
392 Consequences 27, 19-27.

393 Fuller, DQ; (2008) Asia, South: Neolithic cultures. In: Encyclopedia of Archaeology. (pp.
394 756-768)

395 Fuller, D. Q. (2011). Finding plant domestication in the Indian subcontinent. Current
396 Anthropology 52(SUPPL. 4)

397 Fuller, D. Q. and Madella, M. (2001). Issues in Harappan Archaeobotany: Retrospect and
398 Prospect. In Settar, S., Korisettar, R. (Eds.). Indian Archaeology in Retrospect, Volume
399 II. Protohistory ( ). New Delhi: Indian Council for Historical Research.

400 Galy, V., Eglinton, T.I. (2011), Protracted storage of biospheric carbon in the Ganges-
401 Brahmaputra basin. Nature Geoscience, 4, 843-847.

Galy, V., François, L., France-Lanord, C., Faure, P., Kudrass, H., Palhol, F. and Singh, S.K., 2008a. C4 plants decline in the Himalayan basin since the Last Glacial Maximum. Quaternary Science Reviews, 27(13), pp.1396-1409.

Galy, V., France-Lanord, C., Lartiges, B., 2008b. Loading and fate of particulate organic carbon from the Himalaya to the Ganga–Brahmaputra delta. Geochim. Cosmochim. Acta72, 1767–1787.

Goodbred, S.L. and Kuehl, S.A., 2000. Enormous Ganges-Brahmaputra sediment discharge during strengthened early Holocene monsoon. Geology, 28(12), pp.1083-1086.

Gunnell, Y., K. Anupama, and B. Sultan (2007), Response of the South Indian runoff harvesting civilization to northeast monsoon rainfall variability during the last 2000 years: instrumental records and indirect evidence, Holocene, 17(2), 207-215.

Gupta, A. K., D. M. Anderson, and J. T. Overpeck (2003), Abrupt changes in the Asian southwest monsoon during the Holocene and their links to the North Atlantic Ocean, Nature, 421(6921), 354-357.

Hilton, R. G.; Galy, A.; Hovius, N.; Chen, M.-C.; Horng, M.-J.; Chen, H. (2008), Tropical-cyclone-driven erosion of the terrestrial biosphere from mountains. Nature Geoscience, 1 (11), 759-762.

Hoffmann, T., et al. (2013), Humans and the missing C-sink: Erosion and burial of soil carbon through time, Earth Surf. Dynam., 1, 45-52, 2013.

Hsu, P.C., Li, T. and Wang, B., 2011. Trends in global monsoon area and precipitation over the past 30 years. Geophysical Research Letters, 38(8).

Istanbulluoglu, E., and Bras, R.L., 2005, Vegetation-modulated landscape evolution: Effects of vegetation on landscape processes, drainage density, and topography: Journal of Geophysical Research–Earth Surface, v. 110, F02012, doi:10.1029/2004jf000249.

Johnson, J.E., Phillips, S.C., Torres, M.E., Piñero, E., Rose, K.K. and Giosan, L., 2014. Influence of total organic carbon deposition on the inventory of gas hydrate in the Indian continental margins. Marine and Petroleum Geology, 58, pp.406-424.

Joshi, R.K., Mazumdar, A., Peketi, A., Ramamurty, P.B., Naik, B.G., Kocherla, M., Carvalho, M.A., Mahalakshmi, P., Dewangan, P. and Ramana, M.V., 2014. Gas hydrate destabilization and methane release events in the Krishna–Godavari Basin, Bay of Bengal. Marine and Petroleum Geology, 58, pp.476-489.

Kajale MD (1988) Plant Economy. In: Dhavalikar MK, Sankalia HD, Ansari ZD (eds) Excavations at Inamgaon, Vol. 1, Part 2. Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Pune, pp 727–821

Kale, V. S. (2003). Geomorphic Effects of Monsoon Floods on Indian Rivers. Natural Hazards, Springer, 28, 64-84

Kale, V.S., 2002. Fluvial geomorphology of Indian rivers: an overview. Progress in Physical Geography 26, 400–433.

Kaplan, J. O., Krumhardt, K. M., Ellis, E. C., Ruddiman, W. F., Lemmen, C., and Klein Goldewijk, K.: Holocene carbon emissions as a result of anthropogenic land cover change, The Holocene, doi:10.1177/0959683610386983, 2010

Kothyari, U.C., 1996, Erosion and sedimentation problems in India, in Erosion and Sediment Yield: Global and Regional Perspectives (Proceedings of the Exeter Symposium, July 1996). IAHSPubl.no. 236.

Kulkarni, Y.R., Sangode, S.J., Meshram, D.C., Patil, S.K. and Dutt, Yatindra (2014) Mineral magnetic characterization of the Godavari River sediments; Journal of Geological Society of India, v. 81, pp. 376-384

Kulkarni, Y.R., Sangode, S.J., Bloemandal, J., Meshram, D.C., Suresh, N. (2015) Mineral Magnetic Characterization of the Godavari River and Western Bay of Bengal Sediments: Implications to Source to Sink Relations; Journal of Geological Society of India, v. 85, pp. 71-78

Lal, R. 2004 Soil carbon sequestration impacts on global climate change and food security, Science, 304, 1623–1627 3.

Lambeck, K., Rouby, H., Purcell, A., Sun, Y., and Sambradge, M., 2014, Sea level and global ice volumes from the Last Glacial Maximum to the Holocene, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 111, 15296–15303.

Langbein, W.B. and Schumm, S.A., 1958. Yield of sediment in relation to mean annual precipitation. Eos, Transactions American Geophysical Union, 39(6), pp.1076-1084.

Ludwig, W.; Probst, J. L.; Kempe, S. (1996), Predicting the oceanic input of organic carbon by continental erosion. Global Biogeochemical Cycles, 10 (1), 23-41.

Mazumdar, A.; Dewangan, P.; Joao, H. M.; Peketi, A.; Khosla, V. R.; Kocherla, M.; Badesab, F. K.; Joshi, R. K.; Roxanne, P.; Ramamurty, P. B.; Karisiddaiah, S. M.; Patil, D. J.; Dayal, A. M.; Ramprasad, T.; Hawkesworth, C. J.; Avanzinelli, R. (2009),

466 Evidence of paleo-cold seep activity from the Bay of Bengal, offshore India.
467 Geochemistry Geophysics Geosystems, 10.

468 McLennan, S.M., Hemming, S., 1992. Samarium/neodymium elemental and isotopic
469 systematics in sedimentary rocks. Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta 56, 887–898.

470 Mohanty, R. K. and Selvakumar, V. (2001) The archaeology of the Megaliths in India:
471 1947-1997. In Settar, S and Korisettar, R. (eds.) Indian Archaeology in Retrospect,
472 Vol. 1. Prehistory. New Delhi: Manohar. Pp. 313-352

473 Molnar, P. (2001), Climate change, flooding in arid environments, and erosion rates.
474 Geology, 29 (12), 1071-1074.

475 Montgomery, D.R., 2007. Soil erosion and agricultural sustainability. Proceedings of the
476 National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America 104(33), 13268-13272.

477 Montgomery, D. R. & Brandon, M. T. Topographic controls on erosion rates in
478 tectonically active mountain ranges. Earth Planet. Sc. Lett. 201, 481-489 (2002).

479 Mujumdar, G. G., Rajaguru, S. N., and Papu, R. S.: 1970, The recent Godavari Flood
480 (September 1969) and its relevance to prehistoric archeology, Bull. Deccan College
481 Res. Inst. 24, 1–17.

482 NBSS&LUP (National Bureau of Soil Survey & Land Use Planning of India), 1983,
483 Soils of India. (Suborder Associations), Map scale 1: 6,300,000, NBSS&LUP, Nagpur.

484 Olen, S.M., Bookhagen, B. and Strecker, M.R., 2016. Role of climate and vegetation
485 density in modulating denudation rates in the Himalaya. Earth and Planetary Science
486 Letters, 445, pp.57-67.

487 Parabrahma Sastry, P. V. (2003) The Early Historic Transition. In Murty, M. L. K. (ed.)
488 Pre- and Protohistoric Andhra Pradesh up to 500 BC. New Delhi: Orient Longman. pp.
489 139-147

490 Phillips, S.C., Johnson, J.E., Giosan, L. and Rose, K., 2014. Monsoon-influenced
491 variation in productivity and lithogenic sediment flux since 110 ka in the offshore
492 Mahanadi Basin, northern Bay of Bengal. Marine and Petroleum Geology, 58, pp.502-
493 525.

494 Plink-Björklund, P., 2015. Morphodynamics of rivers strongly affected by monsoon
495 precipitation: Review of depositional style and forcing factors. Sedimentary Geology,
496 323, pp.110-147.

Ponton, C., 2012. Aridification of the Indian subcontinent during the Holocene: implications for landscape evolution, sedimentation, carbon cycle, and human civilizations (Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

Ponton C, Giosan L, Eglinton TE et al. (2012) Aridification of India during Holocene. Geophysical Research Letters 39: L03704.

Prasad, S., Anoop, A., Riedel, N., Sarkar, S., Menzel, P., Basavaiah, N., Krishnan, R., Fuller, D., Plessen, B., Gaye, B. and Röhl, U., 2014. Prolonged monsoon droughts and links to Indo-Pacific warm pool: A Holocene record from Lonar Lake, central India. Earth and Planetary Science Letters, 391, pp.171-182.

Prasad, S., and Y. Enzel (2006), Holocene paleoclimates of India, Quaternary Research., 66(3), 442-453.

Ramprasad, T., Dewangan, P., Ramana, M.V., Mazumdar, A., Karisiddaiah, S.M., Ramya, E.R. and Sriram, G., 2011. Evidence of slumping/sliding in Krishna–Godavari offshore basin due to gas/fluid movements. Marine and Petroleum Geology, 28(10), pp.1806-1816.

Rao, K.N., Sadakata, N., Malini, B.H. and Takayasu, K., 2005. Sedimentation processes and asymmetric development of the Godavari delta, India. In Giosan and Bhattacharya, River Dealtas, SEPM.

Regnier, P . et al. (2013), Anthropogenic perturbation of the carbon fluxes from land to ocean. Nature Geoscience, 6 (8), 597-607.

Reichstein M. et al. 2013. Climate extremes and the carbon cycle. Nature 500: 287–295.

Roberts, P., Boivin, N., Petraglia, M., Masser, P., Meece, S., Weisskopf, A., ... & Fuller, D. Q. (2016). Local diversity in settlement, demography and subsistence across the southern Indian Neolithic-Iron Age transition: site growth and abandonment at Sanganakallu-Kupgal. Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences, 8(3), 575-599

Sangode, S J, Suresh, N and Bagati, T N (2001) Godavari source in the Bengal fan sediments: results from magnetic susceptibility dispersal pattern. Current Science, 660-664.

Sarkar, S., Prasad, S., Wilkes, H., Riedel, N., Stebich, M., Basavaiah, N. and Sachse, D., 2015. Monsoon source shifts during the drying mid-Holocene: Biomarker isotope based evidence from the core ‘monsoon zone’(CMZ) of India. Quaternary Science Reviews, 123, pp.144-157.

529 Singh, G., R. Babu, P. Narain, L. S. Bhushan, and I. P. Abrol. 1992. Soil erosion rates in
530 India. Journal of Soil and Water Conservation 47 (1): 97-99.

531 Sinha, A., L. Stott, M. Berkelhammer, H. Cheng, R. L. Edwards, B. Buckley, M.
532 Aldenderfer, and M. Mudelsee. 2011. A global context for megadroughts in monsoon
533 Asia during the past millennium. Quaternary Science Reviews 30 (1-2):47-62.

534 Soulet, G., Skinner, L.C., Beaupré, S.R. and Galy, V., 2016. A note on reporting of
535 reservoir 14C disequilibria and age offsets.

536 Smittenberg, R. H.; Eglinton, T. I.; Schouten, S.; Damste, J. S. S. (2006), Ongoing
537 buildup of refractory organic carbon in boreal soils during the Holocene. Science, 314
538 (5803), 1283-1286.

539 Sridhar, P. N., M. M. Ali, P. Vethamony, M. T. Babu, I. V. Ramana, and S. Jayakumar
540 (2008), Seasonal Occurrence of Unique Sediment Plume in the Bay of Bengal, EOS
541 Trans. AGU 89, 22-23.

542 Stallard, R. F. (1998), Terrestrial sedimentation and the carbon cycle: Coupling
543 weathering and erosion to carbon burial. Global Biogeochemical Cycles, 12 (2), 231-
544 257

545 Summerfield, M.A., and Hulton, N.J., 1994, Natural controls of fluvial denudation rates
546 in major world drainage basins: Journal of Geophysical Research, v. 99, p. 13,871–
547 13,883, doi:10.1029/94JB00715.

548 Syvitski, J.P.M., Saito, Y., 2007. Morphodynamics of deltas under the influence of
549 humans. Glob. Planet. Chang. 57, 261–282.

550 Trumbore, S. (2009), Radiocarbon and Soil Carbon Dynamics. Annual Review of Earth
551 and Planetary Sciences, 37, 47-66.

552 Vanacker, V., von Blanckenburg, F., Govers, G., Molina, A., Poesen, J., Deckers, J., and
553 Kubik, P., 2007, Restoring dense vegetation can slow mountain erosion to near natural
554 benchmark levels: Geology, v. 35, no. 4, p. 303–306, doi:10.1130/G23109A.1.

555 van Andel, T.H., Zangger, E., and Demitrack, A., 1990, Land use and soil erosion in
556 prehistoric and historical Greece: Journal of Field Archaeology, v. 17, p. 379– 396, doi:
557 10.2307/530002.

558 van Oost, K.; Verstraeten, G.; Doetterl, S.; Notebaert, B.; Wiaux, F.; Broothaerts, N.; Six,
559 J. (2012), Legacy of human-induced C erosion and burial on soil-atmosphere C

exchange. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 109 (47), 19492-19497.

Vanwalleghem, T., Gómez, J.A., Infante Amate, J., González de Molina, M., Vanderlinden, K., Guzmán, G., Laguna, A., Giráldez, J.V., 2017. Impact of historical land use and soil management change on soil erosion and agricultural sustainability during the Anthropocene, Anthropocene 17: 13–29.

Walling DE, Webb BW. 1983. Patterns of sediment yields. In Background to Paleohydrology, ed. Gregory KJ, pp. 69–100. London, John Wiley & Sons

Wang, B. and Ding, Q., 2008. Global monsoon: Dominant mode of annual variation in the tropics. Dynamics of Atmospheres and Oceans, 44(3), pp.165-183.

Wang, Z. et al., 2017. Human-induced erosion has offset one-third of carbon emissions from land cover change, Nature Climate Change 7, 345–349.

Wilkinson, B. H. and McElroy, B. J.: The impacts of humans on continental erosion and sedimentation, Geol. Soc. Am. Bull., 119, 140–156, 2007.

Zorzi, C., Goñi, M.F.S., Anupama, K., Prasad, S., Hanquiez, V., Johnson, J. and Giosan, L., 2015. Indian monsoon variations during three contrasting climatic periods: The Holocene, Heinrich Stadial 2 and the last interglacial–glacial transition. Quaternary Science Reviews, 125, pp. 50-60.

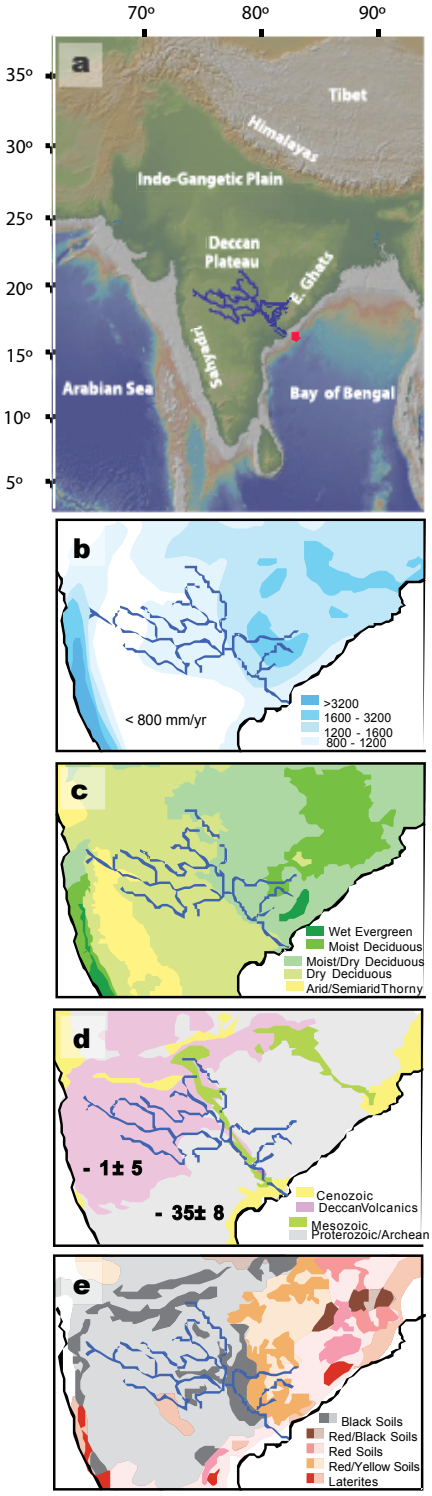

Figure 1. Godavari River drainage basin in its (a) physiographical, (b) hydroclimatic (Asouti and Fuller, 2008), (c) ecological (Asouti and Fuller, 2008), (d) geological (Bikshamaiah and Subramanian, 1980) and (e) soil cover context (NBSS&LUP, 1983). Core NGHP-01-16A location is indicated in (a) by the red dot. Average bedrock εNd values are shown in (d).
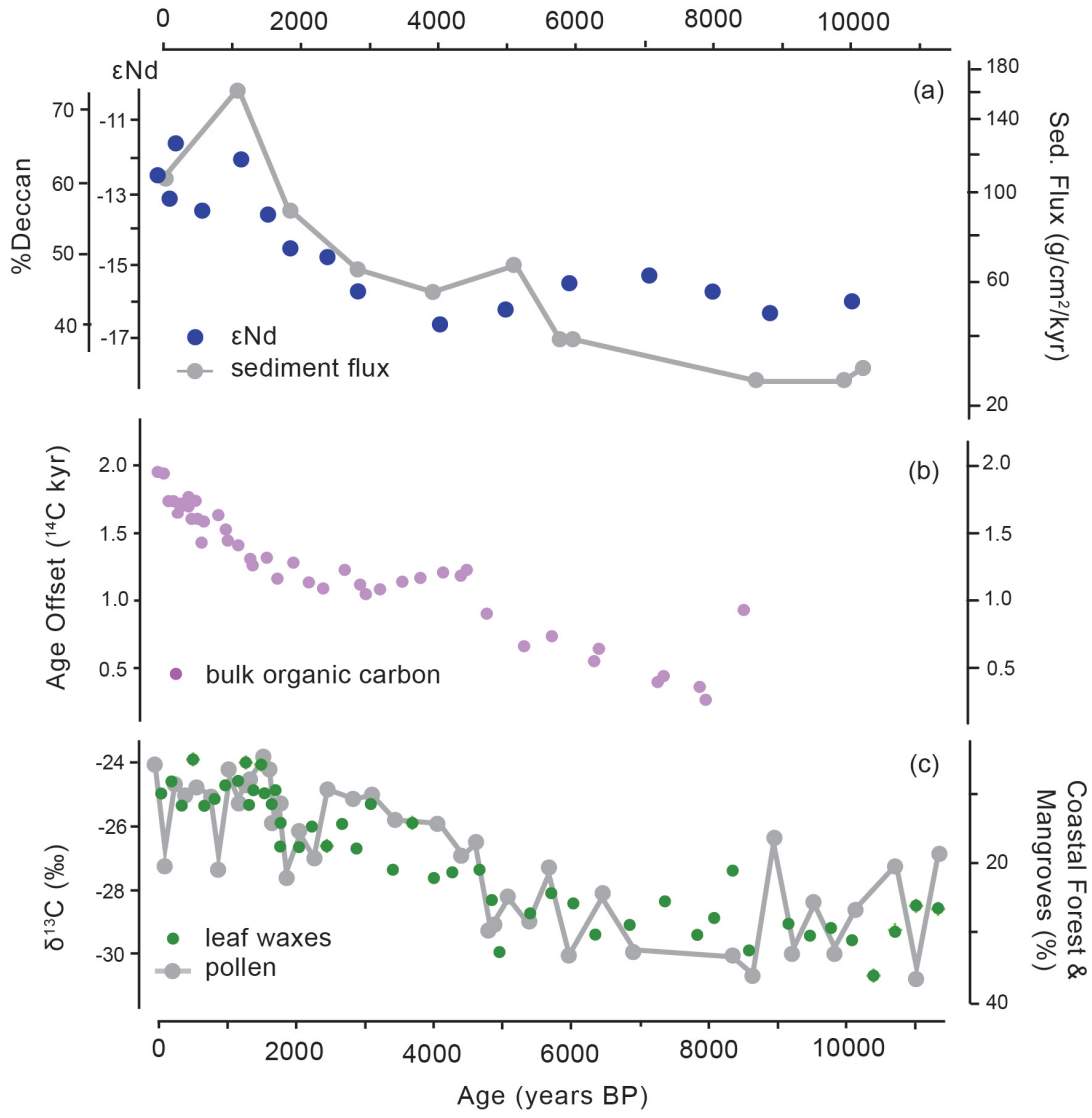
Figure 2. Paleoenvironmental reconstructions from core NGHP-01-16A for the CMZ as integrated by the Godavari River: (a) Sediment fluxes as mass accumulation rates and sediment sources from Nd isotope fingerprinting (Deccan Trap sediment contribution is estimated from a two-end member model; see text and Supplementary Materials); (b) TOC radiocarbon age offset relative to depositional age; (c) Hydroclimate and ecology from pollen (Zorzi et al., 2015) and leaf wax carbon isotopes (Ponton et al., 2012).