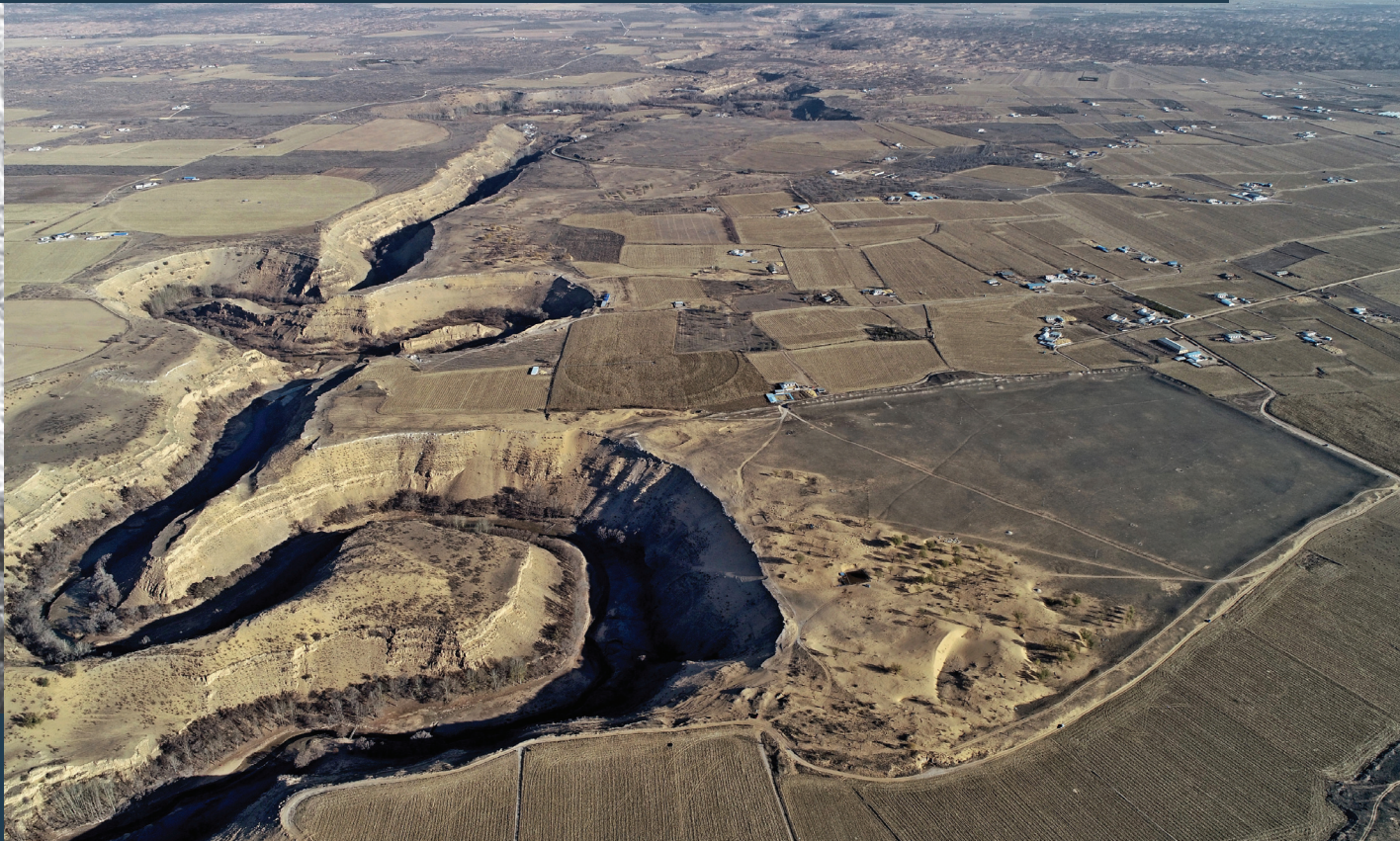


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Cover photo. The ancient city of Sanchahe is located on a terrace beside the Wuding River, in the southern Mu Us Desert, China. Owing to the incision of the Wuding River, part of the western wall of the city has collapsed. Field observations of the ancient city walls, a well, and a spring, supported by ¹⁴C dating, grain-size measurements, spatial analysis of archaeological sites, and analyses of historical seismicity, indicate that neotectonics may have contributed to crustal uplift and accelerated fluvial incision of the Wuding River. This rapid incision caused a decline in groundwater levels, an important reason for the irreversible environmental degradation around Sanchahe city over the past 800 years. Photo: Penghui Wen (see the article by P. Wen et al., pages 1-13 this issue.)