

Subsistence Economy

Palaeolithic Period

The earliest inhabitants of South Asia were the hominid species, **Homo erectus**, the ancestor of modern man, and **Homo sapiens**. Most of the Palaeolithic sites date to c. 30,000 to 10,000 years ago. During this period, they lived in caves and had temporary campsites along the banks of the Indus and Saraswati and the highlands of Baluchistan. They lived in mobile hunting-gathering bands and made stone tools, such as scrapers and blades from chert and limestone. They hunted a wide range of game, wild mountain sheep, goats and cattle.

Neolithic Period

Mehergarh

- Mainly hunting-gathering supplemented by some agriculture and animal husbandry
- Domestic cereals - wheat and barley
- Grain could either be locally cultivated or procured from the highlands.
- Growing season:
 - highlands:**
 - sowing in spring (spring crop)
 - harvesting from May-September
 - plains:**
 - sowing in November (winter crop)
 - harvesting from March-April
- Early farming undertaken in moist areas near the river.
- Evidence of irrigation and water diversion available for the later period
- Domesticated animals (cattle, sheep and goats)

After 5500 BC the percentage of wild animals decreased and domesticated species increased. By 6500 BC, these hunting-gathering bands began to settle down and cultivate barley and wheat. At first they relied heavily on hunted game (gazelle, deer, pig, sheep, goat, cattle and water buffalo but gradually domesticated sheep and goat. Later cattle and water buffalo came to be domesticated. With the decrease in mobility, population

Kili Gul Mohammed is the only highland site with evidence for the early exploitation of cereals.

The location of the Indus Valley was ideal for a broad subsistence economy due to the

presence of two river systems with rich agricultural lands, abundant fishing resources in the river and coastal areas, extensive grazing lands on the plains and highlands and wild fauna in the forests and jungles. Failure in any one area could be supplanted by procuring supplies from a different source.