

Environment

Along the Southern Indus River (Sindh) there is often little or no rain, but water is provided by the melting of the snow in the north.

Rains occur in two seasons-monsoon and winter. Usually one system or the other will provide enough water to sustain agriculture and herding from one year to the next.

Around 3000 BC, a similar climatic pattern would have been prevalent. Further evidence suggests a stronger summer monsoon and warmer summers and cooler winters than at present

Geography

The Indus Valley region includes highlands and plateaus to the west of the river (i.e. parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, collectively known as Baluchistan); mountain ranges of the Himalayas (extending over northern Pakistan, Afghanistan, Soviet Central Asia and China) in the north and northwest.

To the east the ancient river Saraswati, is bounded by the Thar Desert and the Aravalli ranges.

To the west of the Indus delta is the arid and rugged coastal region of Pakistan known as the Makran. To the east is the region of the Kutch and the Saurashtra peninsula.

Around 3000 BC, two rivers bound the Indus Valley, namely the Indus on its western margins and the Ghaggar-Hakra river system with its tributary, the Saraswati on the eastern margins. Numerous surveys have shown that a large numbers of settlements (4th-1st millennium BC) were situated on the banks of the Ghaggar-Hakra river system.

Both river systems provided communication links with the hinterlands rich in natural resources such as metals, semiprecious stones, minerals and timber.

Presence of the river Saraswati

The gradual drying of the river Saraswati is documented geologically as well as in the Vedic texts and Brahmanical literature. Hymns in the Rigveda describe various episodes taking place along the sacred river, which eventually disappeared beneath the sands. There is also mention of the shifting course of the river and its tributary, the Sutlej, and the splitting of the rivers into numerous streams.

Geologically, Oldham (1887) mapped the ancient riverbeds and was able to reconstruct how the drying up of the Saraswati led to the creation of numerous stream channels. The streams of the Sutlej were eventually captured by the Indus system. Moreover, failure in one area could be supplanted by procuring food from another source.

The geological and archaeological evidence confirm the continued presence of many archaeological sites along their banks even as the river shifted its course.

Evidence

Some seals depict animals which can only be sustained in certain environments. Animal remains will also provide information on environment.

The environment provided a wide range of resources to support the population in times of scarcity.

The juxtaposition of mountains, river plains and coasts provides a unique pattern of seasonally available resources and abundant raw materials for exploitation.