

Physical aspect of the environment as it affects human culture essay sample



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Pakistan, or the “land of pure” among the Persians, is best described geographically by Ramos (1980) to be ‘located in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent, extending from the northern Himalayan mountain ranges one thousand miles down to the Arabian Sea. It is bounded, on the southwest by Iran; on the northwest by Afghanistan and the Himalayan mountain ranges; on the north by the Kashmir Valley with ceasefire line dividing the two countries; and in the east by the Sutlej River, the Rajasthan deserts and the Rann of Kutch. Topographically, it is mountains in north and northwest, plateau in west, flat Indus plain on central and in the east.

Geographically, Pakistan covers total area of 796, 095 square kilometers.

Located in the northern Great Highlands of the Himalayan is the world’s second highest peak Karakoram also known as Mount Godwin-Austen, Chogori or Dapsan. In the southwest, are the Baluchistan Plateau composed of mountain ranges, desert and dry lakes. In the southeast, large barren desert forms the terrain. And from the Himalayas to Karachi on the Arabian Sea, Indus River flows south forming a vast, fertile and flood plain.’ (Ramos, 1980)

Pakistan’s government proudly describes its land features as: - ‘the scenery changes northward from coastal beaches, lagoons and mangrove swamps in the south to sandy deserts, desolate plateaus, fertile plains dissected upland in the middle and high mountains with beautiful valleys, snow-covered peaks and eternal glaciers in the north.’ (“Info. pak. gov. pk”, 2006) As shown on Attachment #1, Pakistan’s variety of landscape divides the nation into six major regions: firstly, the Low Mountainous Region of the west; secondly, The High Mountainous Region of the North; thirdly, the Balochistan Plateau

southwest; fourthly, the central Potohar Uplands and salt range; fifth and last, the Punjab and the Sindh Plains of the east. (" Info. pak. gov. pk", 2006)

The North High Mountainous Region stretching from west to east are series of high mountain ranges which form its boundaries with Afghanistan on the northwest, Russia on the north, and China on the northeast. The High Mountain Region includes the Himalayan Ranges, the Karakoram Ranges and the Hindukush Ranges.

The Himalayan Ranges stretch on the northeast; the Karakoram Ranges start from to rise from the Himalayas stretching eastward up to Gilgit; the Hindukush Ranges lie to the northwest of the Karakoram extending eastward to Afghanistan. These three mountain ranges are composed of thirty five no less than 24, 000 ft high giant peaks. As shown in Attachment #3, the highest peak is the 26, 000 ft. high K-2 or Mt. Godwin Austin, being second to Mt. Everest. But K-2 is far more formidable to climb than Mt Everest. The Himalayas second highest peak, the Nanga Parbat which literally means the " Naked Mountain", is also known as the " Killer Mountain" due to many climbers' lives it claimed so far. Several passes are over 18, 000 ft making the Karakoram Highway, which passes through these mountains, the highest trade rout in the world. (" Info. pak. gov. pk", 2006)

Further boasting of the scenic beauty and economic prospects the ranges bring and as shown in Attachment#6, the current regime broadly describes: ' the region abounds in vast glaciers, large lakes and green valleys which have combined at places to produce holiday resorts such as Gilgit, Hunza and Yasin in the west and the valleys of Chitral, Dir, Kaghan and Swat drained by rivers Chitral, Pankkora, Kunhar and Swat respectively in the east.... dotted <https://assignbuster.com/physical-aspect-of-the-environment-as-it-affects-human-culture-essay-sample/>

profusely with scenic spots having numerous streams and rivulets, thick forests of pine and junipers and a vast variety of fauna and flora, the Chitral, Kaghan and Swat valleys have particularly earned the reputation of being the most enchanting tourist resorts of Pakistan.' (" Info. pak. gov. pk", 2006)

Moving south, the High Mountain Ranges elevation gradually descended until finally settling down on the 2, 000 to 3, 000 ft. highs Swat, Chitral and Margalla hills located within the vicinity of the nation's capital, Islamabad. Unlike the barren northern ranges which receive no rains, the southern slopes are forest-covered as latter receives heavy rainfall.

Pakistan contains more glaciers than any other land outside of North and South poles and claim to possess the greatest mass and collection of glaciated space on earth: the Karakoram lap alone has total length of glaciers more than 6, 000 sq, km, when add up or 37 percent of its area while the southern flank has glacier concentration of 59 percent of its area as compared to European alps of 22 percent only. (" Info. pak. gov. pk", 2006) The glaciers in the Nanga Parbat region include the following: the 75 kilometers Siachin glacier, The Hispar and Biafo forming a 116 kilometers ice corridor, the 58 km long The Batura glacier and the 63 km long Baltoro River of ice, which all constitute an area of more than 1, 200 sq. km of mighty glacier.

As lengthily described by local historian: ' These western low mountains spread from the Swat and Chitral hills in a north-south direction (along which Alexander the Great led his army in 327 B. C) and cover a large portion of the North-West Frontier Province. North of the river Kabul their altitude

ranges from 5, 000 to 6, 000 ft. in Mohamand and Malakand hills. The aspect of these hills is exceedingly dreary and the eye is everywhere met by the dry rivers between long rows of rocky hills and crags, scantily covered with coarse grass, scrub wood and dwarf palm. South of the river Kabul spreads the Koh-e-Sofed Range with a general height of 10, 000 ft. Its highest peak, Skaram, being 15, 620 ft. South of Koh-e-Sofed are the Kohat and Waziristan hills (5, 000 ft) which are traversed by the Kurram and Tochi rivers, and are bounded on south by Gomal River.

Kirthar Range South of the Sulaiman Mountains is the Kirthar Range which forms a boundary between the Sindh plain and the Balochistan plateau. It consists of a series of ascending ridges running generally north to south with broad flat valleys in-between. The highest peak named Kutte ji Kabar (dog's grace) is 6, 878 ft. above sea level. Bleak, rugged and barren as these hills are, they afford some pasturage for flocks of sheep and goats. The valleys are green with grass and admit cultivation up to a highest of 4, 000 ft.

Historical Passes The western mountains have a number of passes, which are of special geographical and historical interest. For centuries, they have been watching numerous kings, generals and preachers passing through them and the events that followed brought about momentous changes in the annals of mankind.' (" Info. pak. gov. pk", 2006)

Less than 20 percent of Pakistan's total land area is potential for intensive agriculture. Cultivation is low the northern mountains, the southern deserts and the western plateaus. The deserts are located in Sindh and Punjab regions namely Cholistan and Thal in Punjab, while Thar in Sindh. Manchar and Keenhar Lakes can be found in Sindh, Hanna Lake in Balochstan. Saif-ul
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Malik in NWFP, while Satpara and Katchura Lakes are in the Northern Areas. (Pakistan Topography) Pakistan has two river dams: the Tarbela Dam in the Indus and the Mangla Dam on the Jhelum. (“ Pakistan Topography and Drainage”, 2005)

The Indus plain is the most densely populated area of the country but it is the most fertile as it gets year round water sustenance from the Indus River and its tributaries The Indus River basin in northern Sindh and Punjab has fertile soil suitable for agriculture under usual climatic conditions. As edited by Schwartzberg (1992) ‘ The Indus, one of the great rivers of the world, rises in southwestern Tibet only about 160 kilometers west of the source of the Sutlej River, which joins the Indus in Punjab, and the Brahmaputra, which runs eastward before turning southwest and flowing through Bangladesh. The catchments area of the Indus is estimated at almost 1 million square kilometers, and all of Pakistan’s major rivers–the Kabul, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, and Sutlej–flow into it. The Indus River basin is a large, fertile alluvial plain formed by silt from the Indus. This area has been inhabited by agricultural civilizations for at least 5, 000 years.’ (Schwartzberg, 1992)

The important role Indus River plays for Pakistan was broadly discussed by Howard (1999) when she expounds: “ The Indus provides the key water resources for the economy of Pakistan – especially the *breadbasket* of Punjab province, which accounts for most of the nation’s agricultural production, and Sindh. It also supports many heavy industries and provides the main supply of potable water in Pakistan. The inhabitants of the regions through whom the Indus River passes and forms a major natural feature and resource are diverse in ethnicity, religion, national and linguistic backgrounds. On the <https://assignbuster.com/physical-aspect-of-the-environment-as-it-affects-human-culture-essay-sample/>

northern course of the river in Kashmir live the Buddhist people of Ladakh, of Tibetan stock, with Kashmiris who practice both Islam and Hinduism. As it descends into Northern Areas of Pakistan, the Indus River forms a distinctive boundary of ethnicity and cultures '(Howard, 1999)

Regarding its climate, Asian studies extensively discuss that ' while Pakistan lies in the temperate zone, its climate varies greatly according to altitude. The mountain areas are cold year round with over 300 glaciers which never melt. The lowlands are characterized by hot dry summers, and cool or cold dry winters. There is little rainfall and little snow outside of the mountain areas. The lower elevations of Pakistan have four seasons: a cold season from December to March, a hot season from April to June, a monsoon season from July to September, and a post monsoon season in October and November. Most of the rain falls during the monsoon season which can also be a time of floods and high humidity. The post monsoon season is dry and pleasant with warm days and cool nights. The desert province of Balochistan is often missed by much of the monsoon rain.' (" Asian Studies: Windows on Asia", 2006)

As shown on Attachment #4 and #5, photos vividly show geography of the Southern Baluchistan - Makran Regions. Baluchistan, being the largest province of Pakistan, covers 44 percent of the nations' land area. Thousands of kilometers of barren deserts and stark mountains form the borders with Iran and Afghanistan to its north and west. More than 500 kilometers of deserted sandy beaches of the Makran Coast stretched towards the south along the Arabian Sea. With the region sparsely populated and resembles the moon surface, Baluchistan physical geography of arid waste-lands, great <https://assignbuster.com/physical-aspect-of-the-environment-as-it-affects-human-culture-essay-sample/>

deserts and formidable ranges of amazing rock formations. Makran, on the other hand, form the most southern most strip of Baluchistan having more than 500 kilometers of virgin golden coastline. The Egyptian Sphinx look-like is one of the natural rock formations and shapes created by Mother Nature along the Makran coast. (" TransPakistan", 2006)

In closure, the physical aspects of environment have great and direct influence on the culture of its people. Indirectly, climatic condition has some effects too, more particularly on land cultivation and food production. In the case of Pakistan, it is the Indus River, which originated from the melting glaciers of the Northern mountain ranges, that is responsible for the vital supply of water both for personal and irrigation use, for the natives of different cultures living along the length of its riverbanks. On the other hand, the still unexplored natural sceneries of the coastline are of great help to its residents of the barren Baluchistan-Makran region when fully exploited for tourism industry. Further, its high mountain ranges are formidable barrier of defense against any foreign would be aggressors not to mention the tourism potential for mountain climbers and expeditions as well.

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