

HELMAND-ARGHANDAB VALLEY

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

by

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دفتر رئيس

FOREWORD

This pamphlet entitled The Helmand-Arghandab Valley YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW fills a long-existing need for a brief history of the Valley and prospects for future development. It is not a technical book, nor is it an exhaustive treatment of all that has transpired in the Valley over the last thousand years, or even over the last ten years. It is rather an historical sketch of the past, of the present situation, and of the future potential of the Valley.

It was Dr. Raymond T. Moyer, Assistant Director of the Helmand-Arghandab Valley Region, USAID/A, from March 1967 to March 1968, who first conceived the idea of producing this historical sketch. Dr. Moyer then persuaded Mrs. Mildred Caudill, wife of Mr. Sanford Caudill of the Bureau of Reclamation group working in the Valley, to do the research and writing that produced this volume. The text has been reviewed by His Excellency Governor Mohammed Hashim Safi, General President of the Helmand-Arghandab Valley Authority, Royal Government of Afghanistan, and his principal officers in the HAVA, by Mr. Elonzo B. Grantham, Jr., Assistant Director, Helmand-Arghandab Valley Region, USAID/A, by Dr. William A. Wolffer, Deputy Director, USAID/A, and by myself.

The research, writing, reviewing, and revision have taken over a year, and I believe the result is well worth the considerable efforts of all who have contributed.

By far the greatest credit goes to Mrs. Caudill who did most of the research, all of the writing, and many of the revisions which resulted in the present text. I especially appreciate the fact that she did all of her work without any compensation other than the personal satisfaction of doing well something that needed to be done. Mrs. Caudill deserves the highest commendation for her perceptivity, her diligence, and her writing skill.



Russell S. McClure
Director

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I. An Introduction to Regional Development in the Helmand-Arghandab Valley

Continuing efforts by the Helmand-Arghandab Valley Authority of the Royal Government of Afghanistan to rehabilitate ancient irrigated areas and modernize the Valley's agriculture hold encouraging promise.

The long range program will ultimately develop a gross irrigated area estimated at 363,000 acres. This includes land of varying classification and quality in most regions now receiving a full or partial water supply.

Approximately 300,000 of these acres lie within the Upper Helmand and Arghandab regions. Attention will center here during the years immediately ahead.

In general nature and potential the Helmand-Arghandab Project corresponds to the Salt River Project in Arizona.

Plans for constructing drainage facilities, leveling land and restoring soil fertility are being formulated and are projects of high priority. The goal is full utilization of available water and land resources.

Such a monumental task, requiring continuing work over a period of years, will involve extensive effort, patience and large additional financing before completion and attainment of goals.

Land development in the Helmand Valley, which has been proceeding at a slower rate than originally contemplated, is now gaining momentum. Feasibility studies have been completed in some areas and are continuing in others. The problems of salinization of soil, waterlogging and low crop yields are being studied. Agricultural development is being accelerated and work is under way to improve and expand the supply of electric power.



II. Afghanistan ... A Part of its Past

The nation of Afghanistan as it is known today was founded in the eighteenth century, less than 30 years before the United States of America were declared independent. However, history was being recorded in this Asian country long before the discovery of America and the new world.

Ancient documents narrating events of 5,000 years ago mention Afghanistan, which was then known as Aryana, a name taken from migrating Aryan tribes of central Asia. In writings of the seventh century A.D., when the teachings of Islam were becoming known, the country was called Khorasan. This is translated "land from which the sun rises."

Because of its geographical position between Iran and India on the overland trade routes, Afghanistan inevitably became the pathway and objective for military attacks by world conquerors. History tells of centuries when a pattern of invasion and conquest, destruction and restoration was repeated again and again.

Only when archaeologists have classified and evaluated the remains of long buried cities and cultures will the full story of this south Asian area be assembled and the continuity of civilization be established. Many unexcavated sites tempt the scholar and stir the imagination of the curious. Their contents perhaps will shed light on the dim, unknown past and answer many questions of the present.

In the Helmand-Arghandab Valley artifacts have been discovered from a highly developed civilization existing thousands of years ago. Mounds at Mundigak, a prehistoric city in Kandahar province, were found to contain 13 layers rising to a height of 97 feet.

A missing link in early history was supplied when a stone slab of the third century B.C. was found in the Arghandab basin in 1958. It bears an edict of the Indian Emperor Ashoka relating to Buddhist practice during his reign. Modern historians accept this as evidence supporting their belief that the Indian kingdom of that date included portions of Aryana and that Buddhism was once the religion of the Arghandab Valley.

MASSIVE CRUMBLING WALLS which line many miles of the river south of Lashkar Gah are today mute reminders of the glories of the winter capital of the Ghaznavids.