

Five major rivers cross the plain in Pakistan. From west to east, they are the Indus itself, the Jhelum, the Chenab, the Ravi, and the Sutlej. Of these, the Indus is by far the largest. Arising in the Himalayas, it flows for a thousand miles in a deep gorge through the mountains, draining an enormous area, before it enters the foothills and basins of the Former Northwest Frontier, and thence debouches onto the plain. The other four rivers are tributaries of the Indus; they arise in the hills of Kashmir and Jammu and are fed by the western slopes of the Himalayas. A fifth tributary, the Beas, formerly ran through what is now West Pakistan, but it has changed its course, and at present joins the Sutlej in India. The Jhelum and the Chenab converge about a hundred and eighty miles below the border; in turn they are joined by the Ravi some forty miles further downstream. The Sutlej joins the others at Panjnad - the place of the five rivers - and the combined stream flows on to meet the Indus near the northern edge of the former state of Sind.

The areas between the rivers are called Doabs. Sind Sagar, or Thal Doab, lies between the Indus and the Jhelum. Between the Jhelum and the Chenab is Chaj Doab, its name being taken from an abbreviation of the names of the two rivers. Rechna Doab, between the Chenab and the Ravi, is similarly named. Bari Doab, which in Pakistan lies between the Ravi and the Sutlej, was given its name because in its northern section, now in India, it is bounded on the east by the Beas.

These four Doabs make up the southeast part of the former state of the Punjab in West Pakistan. Beyond the Sutlej lies the former state of Bahawalpur. Its fertile cultivated portion extends in a narrow strip between the left bank of the Sutlej and the Thar Desert. Southwest of Former Bahawalpur, below the confluence of the rivers, is the region called Former Sind.

The settled part of West Pakistan is divided into twelve Divisions, and each of these in turn into three to five Districts. In the Indus Plain, these Districts vary in size from 1.3 million to more than 4 million acres.

As shown on Map 1.1, many of the Districts in the Former Punjab lie entirely within a single Doab. From northeast to southwest in Bari Doab are Lahore (1.4 million acres), Montgomery (2.7 million acres), and Multan (3.6 million acres). Similarly in Rechna Doab, Sialkot District (1.3 million acres) lies to the northeast, followed by Gujranwala (1.5 million acres), Sheikhupura (1.5 million acres), and Lyallpur (2.25 million acres). The southeastern flank of Rechna Doab makes up part of Jhang (2.2 million acres), but this District also covers the extreme southern corner of Chaj Doab