

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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CLIMATIC CHANGES

Meteorologists of a generation ago were generally inclined to be skeptical about the occurrence within historic times, in any part of the world, of definite variations in climate, though of course it was recognized that one year's weather usually differed from another's. A somewhat different attitude now prevails on this subject. The following statement occurs in a recent publication of the British Meteorological Office:

"It is now generally admitted that there have been variations of temperature and rainfall in northwestern Europe since the close of the Ice Age, and that about 3,000 to 1,500 B.C. the temperature was higher than at present, forming the 'Climatic Optimum,' while a period of cold rainy weather began about 850 B.C. There are indications of a dry period in the north temperate belt in the sixth to eighth centuries, and of a period of great storminess and heavy rainfall in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, but the changes during the Christian era are not universally accepted. The principal evidence for them is, in Europe, fluctuations in Alpine glaciers and in the traffic across Alpine passes; in Asia, variations in the level of the Caspian Sea and other salt lakes; in North America, variations in the rate of growth of the Sequoias of California, some of which are more than 3,000 years old. As a rule instrumental meteorological observations do not reveal any indications of climatic changes, but the series of rainfall measurements in England, which have been standardized over a period of 200 years, point to a pronounced dry period in the first half of the eighteenth century."

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