



GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY ACTIVITY 2

The Earliest Egyptians

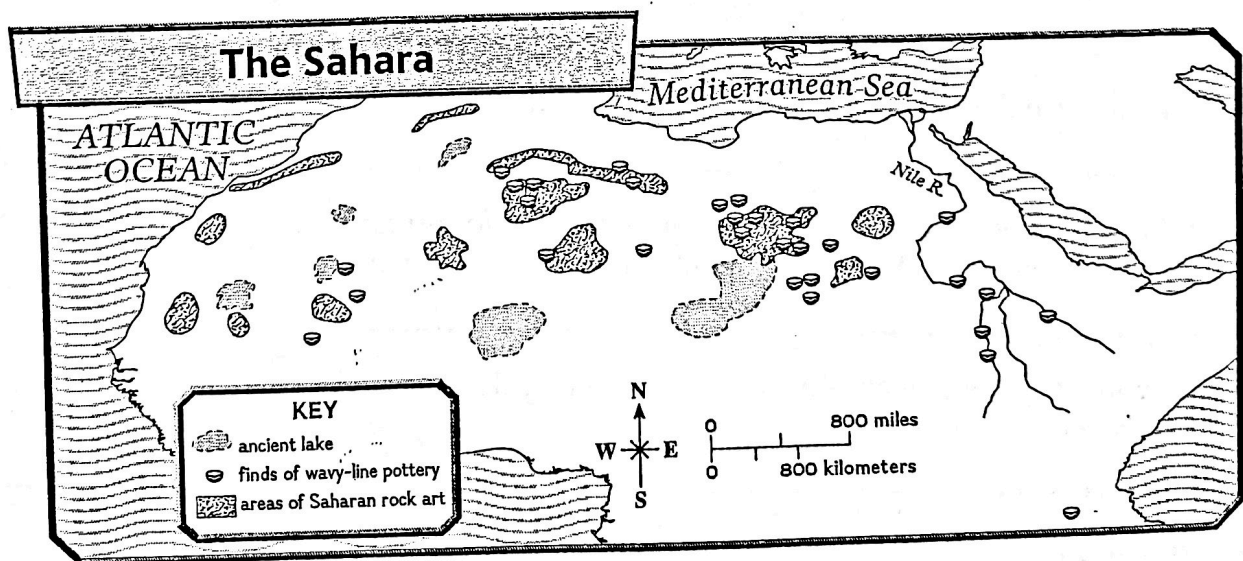
The ancient civilization of Egypt developed along the Nile River. The geography and location of the Nile River valley made it an ideal place for a civilization to grow. Seasonal flooding created rich soil for farming. To the west and the east lay hot, dry deserts that were difficult for invaders to cross.

The lands around Egypt, however, had changed. In pre-dynastic Egypt the deserts were different. In the years before 6000 to 5000 B.C., the Western Desert (or Sahara) was a savanna, or grassland. The people living there grazed their cattle and lived primarily off the meat and dairy products from their animals. They also hunted animals that roamed throughout the region. Seasonal rains allowed vegetation to grow. The nameless tribes who lived in this region stayed until their herds had eaten all the area's grass. Then they moved on to where the grass was fresh.

Wadis and Playas

The climate in pre-dynastic Egypt was much different than it is now. Portions of the Sahara received seasonal rainfall, usually in the summer. This rainfall would create temporary lakes known as *playas*. Rainfall would also run down gullies and valleys known as *wadis*. The wandering tribes of pre-dynastic Egypt would settle along these playas and wadis while the water supply was abundant. Some crops, mostly cereal grains, were grown.

Modern-day archaeologists have uncovered remains of some of these pre-dynastic cultures. They have found tools and weapons for hunting, pieces of pottery, rock art, and evidence of the trees that once grew there. The tree remains suggest that water once flowed through the region. It is believed that people lived in the



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GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY ACTIVITY 2 (continued)

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region for thousands of years before the birth of the great Egyptian civilizations.

Climatic Changes Force Migration

Between 6000 and 5000 B.C., it is believed that the climate of northern Africa began to change. It got hotter and drier. Rain did not fall as frequently as before. The playas and wadis dried up permanently and the entire area began turning into desert. The grasslands died off for lack of water. This process continues today in the lower regions of the Sahara.

The tribes that lived in the northern African grasslands migrated toward the only major supply of fresh water left—the Nile. As they moved into the Nile Valley, they had to clear land for settlement. The riverbanks were thick with vegetation. The lifestyles of these early settlers changed. They were no longer simply hunters and herders. They became farmers—a lifestyle that continues along the Nile even today.

Directions: Answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1. What is a *playa*? What is a *wadi*? Why were they important to the nomadic peoples of the Sahara?

2. What happened when the climate changed in 6000–5000 B.C.?

3. What have archaeologists found from these early cultures?

4. Is there a connection between where rock art was found and where pottery was found? If so, what is it?

5. How many finds of wavy-line pottery are along the Nile River?

6. **Drawing Conclusions** Why are trees evidence that there was once water in the Sahara?
