

Environmental Factors and Human Settlement in Egypt and Kush. Excerpt from the textbook *History Alive! The Ancient World*. (page 75)



Environmental Factors and Human Settlement in Egypt and Kush Environmental factors in ancient Egypt and Kush greatly favored settlement near the Nile River. Most important, the Nile was a source of fresh water in an area that was mostly desert.

The lack of water in the deserts made them unfit for farming. But in the Nile River valley, the river provided natural irrigation and fertilization. Every summer, the river overflowed its banks. The floodwaters soaked the dry ground for several weeks. As the water level decreased, a thin layer of silt (very fine particles of rock) was left behind. This soil was perfect for farming.

Also, where there was fresh water, people were more likely to find fish to catch and animals to hunt. The abundant wildlife in the Nile region included fish, ducks, geese, hippos, crocodiles, giraffes, and ostriches.

The topography of the river valley also encouraged human settlement. In the south, parts of the Nile ran through narrow valleys between steep hills. But there were also wide, flat areas of land around deep bends in the river. These flat areas were good for farming. In the north, wide plains were watered by the Nile's annual flooding.

Vegetation was rare in the dry deserts, but it was plentiful in the Nile River valley. Useful plants included reeds and a tough water plant called papyrus. People wove reeds into baskets, and roofs for their huts. Papyrus was used to make rope and paper. And the rich farmland was good for growing crops like wheat and barley.

Africa's Nile River is the longest river in the world. It is more than 4,100 miles long and flows from south to north, emptying into the Mediterranean Sea.

Deserts are natural barriers against invaders. Would you spend days crossing this hot, dry desert to fight those who live on the other side?

