

## GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY ACTIVITY II

### The Bedouins' Migratory Lifestyle

*Bedouin* is the name given to wandering tribes of people in the deserts of southwest Asia and northern Africa. Loosely translated from Arabic, it means "desert dweller."

#### A Nomadic Lifestyle

The harsh conditions of the desert did not allow Bedouin tribes to stay in one place very long. People who travel from place to place like this are called *nomads*. The intense desert heat and lack of running water prevented the Bedouins from planting crops. In the desert, temperatures in the direct sun can rise as high as 165 degrees Fahrenheit (74° C).

Instead of farming, the Bedouin people raised animals which they moved from one water source to another. A water source in the desert is called an *oasis*. Grass and other plants edible by the animals grow around these oases. The Bedouins' herds of camels, goats, and sheep would feed on these grasses. The herds would graze on the plant life until it was almost gone. Then the Bedouins would pack up their tents, gather up their animals, and move on to the next oasis. Sometimes the Bedouins would go to the mountains where there was running water.

#### Raiding and Trading

Around 2500 B.C., the Bedouins learned how to tame and ride camels. Because these sturdy animals could go for long periods of time without water, they became the chief means of transportation for the Bedouin people.

In the early years of the Christian era, the largest number of Bedouins lived in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. They were warlike tribes who fought each other and often raided towns for animals, goods, and supplies. Other Bedouins were skilled craftspeople and traders. They made fine rugs and other handicrafts. These they would trade for food products they could not grow, like wheat for baking bread.

The Bedouins' diet consisted mostly of dairy products made from the milk of their animals, dried fruit, and nuts. On special occasions or when their herds were large, the Bedouins might slaughter one or more animal for the meat. When a camel was killed nothing was wasted. The hair was used to make tents, ropes, and cloth. The skin was used to make water bags. Even animal waste was put to use. Camel dung was used to fuel fires.

#### Bedouins Today

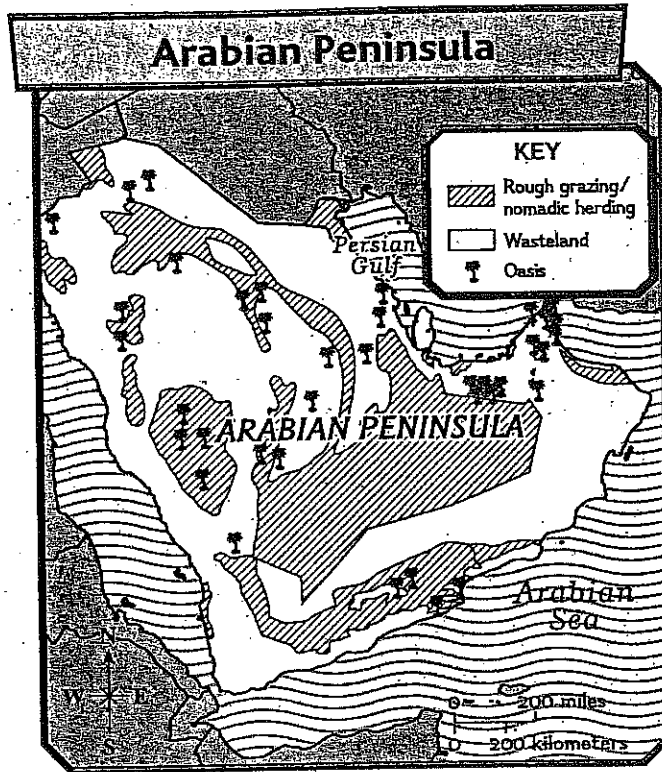
Today many Bedouins have given up their migratory lifestyles. Some countries have encouraged Bedouins to settle down. Those

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**The Bedouins' Migratory Lifestyle**

countries believe that the Bedouins are too independent and should follow government rules more closely. A number of Bedouins now live in cities and towns. Some of the wealthier ones even drive cars instead of riding camels. Many Bedouins, however, still carry on the nomadic lifestyle of their ancestors.

**Directions:** Answer the questions below in the spaces provided.



1. What does the word *Bedouin* mean in Arabic?  
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2. How did the Bedouins make a living?  
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\_\_\_\_\_
3. What connections can you make between areas of grazing/herding and the location of oases?  
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4. Name three types of animals the Bedouin kept in herds.  
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5. **Drawing Conclusions** Why do you think the Bedouin referred to the camel as *Ata Alla*, which means "Gift of God"?  
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