The Nok

In 1928, archaeologists unearthed artifacts from an amazing culture that flourished from about 500 BCE to 200 CE. The archaeologists referred to the ancient culture as Nok, the name of a modern Nigerian village where they made their discovery.

Nok artifacts included sculptures of animals and people made of terra cotta. Terra cotta is clay that has been baked in an oven. The complex Nok sculptures were probably based on woodcarvings, but any wooden artifacts would have disintegrated long ago in the humid climate of West Africa. The sophistication of the artifacts leads archaeologists to believe that the Nok civilization may have been much older than even the oldest artifact.

The Nok discovered that they were able to “smelt” iron by heating certain rocks to a high temperature. Iron is very malleable. A malleable material can be reshaped, and the Nok used iron to make weapons and plows. Most ancient cultures discovered other metals such as copper and bronze before iron, but the Nok apparently moved directly from the Stone Age to the Iron Age without having a Copper or Bronze Age.

Fill in the Blanks

In 1928, a_ _o_ _o_ _i_ _ts uncovered an ancient *unn_ _d civilization in the present day village of N____, Nigeria. The ancient Nok c_ _e apparently flourished for at least *___ years. The artifacts of the region included figurines made of t_ _e, or clay that has baked in an oven. The s_ _ of the figurines lead archaeologists to believe the N___ culture was even o_ _ than the oldest *s_ _re.

The a_ _ Nok culture s_ _ iron by h_ _ rocks to a high t_ _e. Iron can be r_ _ed to make w_ _ and p_ _. Iron can also be used for cooking and heating because it conducts heat well. The Nok apparently moved from the S____ to the I____ Age. Most cultures discovered c_ _ and b_ _ before iron. We don’t know if the Nok discovered the secrets of i_ _ on their own, or if they learned about it from another c_ _.

Answer in Complete Sentences

1. The test states that the ancient Nok culture existed at the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers. Use a dictionary to find the meaning of confluence.

2. Why do we refer to an ancient African civilization as the Nok?

3. Why do archaeologists believe that the Nok civilization may have been much older than its oldest artifact?

4. List five tools or weapons made from iron that would advance an ancient civilization.

*This is a higher order learning question. Any reasonable answer will be graded as correct.
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