

Kids' KOrner

Look Mom! Early Pakistanis had Great Cavity Reports

WASHINGTON — "It's as though these individuals were using fluoridated toothpaste."

John R. Lukacs, an associate professor of anthropology at the University of Oregon, was explaining why about 45 people whose teeth he had studied in January and February of this year had an abnormally low rate of cavities.

But the low rate of caries - the scientific term for cavities - was not the result of a high-powered television advertising campaign. These 45 inhabitants of the Pakistani village of Mehrgarh lived there as long as 8,000 years ago.

A Prehistoric First

Instead, their low caries rate is due to a heavy dose of natural fluoride in the river that ran past their village. The discovery by Lukacs of what is known as dental fluorosis, a consistently high level of fluoride intake, marks the first documented case ever found in prehistoric skeletons.

Lukacs had no idea that he would find dental fluorosis in the teeth of the skeletons, uncovered at Mehrgarh by members of the French Archeological Mission in Pakistan.

A preliminary study he con-

ducted of a handful of specimens in 1981 also had indicated a surprisingly low caries rate. But Lukacs, following the lead of other scientists who had studied the teeth of prehistoric skeletons, thought there were other reasons for this.

Evidence found by archeologists since 1973 suggested that the Mehrgarh site was occupied at a crucial time in South Asian prehistory: when New Stone Age man began to change from a society dependent on hunting and gathering to one sustained by cultivation of plants, mainly cereal grains, and animal domestication.

"Scientists have found that in stages where agriculture was first developing, there's quite a bit of poor health because of increases in population size and the changes in food sources," Lukacs says. "I was interested in testing this hypothesis in Mehrgarh."

"Now, after this last field season where we found the fluorosis, it became obvious that my initial thesis could not be applied to the Mehrgarh skeletons."

River Water Did It

The reason, Lukacs explains, is that the inhabitants of Mehrgarh, from 6000 B.C. to the present, have

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Which Witch is This?



FUN BUG

by RANDS

CONNECT THE DOTS FROM 1 - 84.



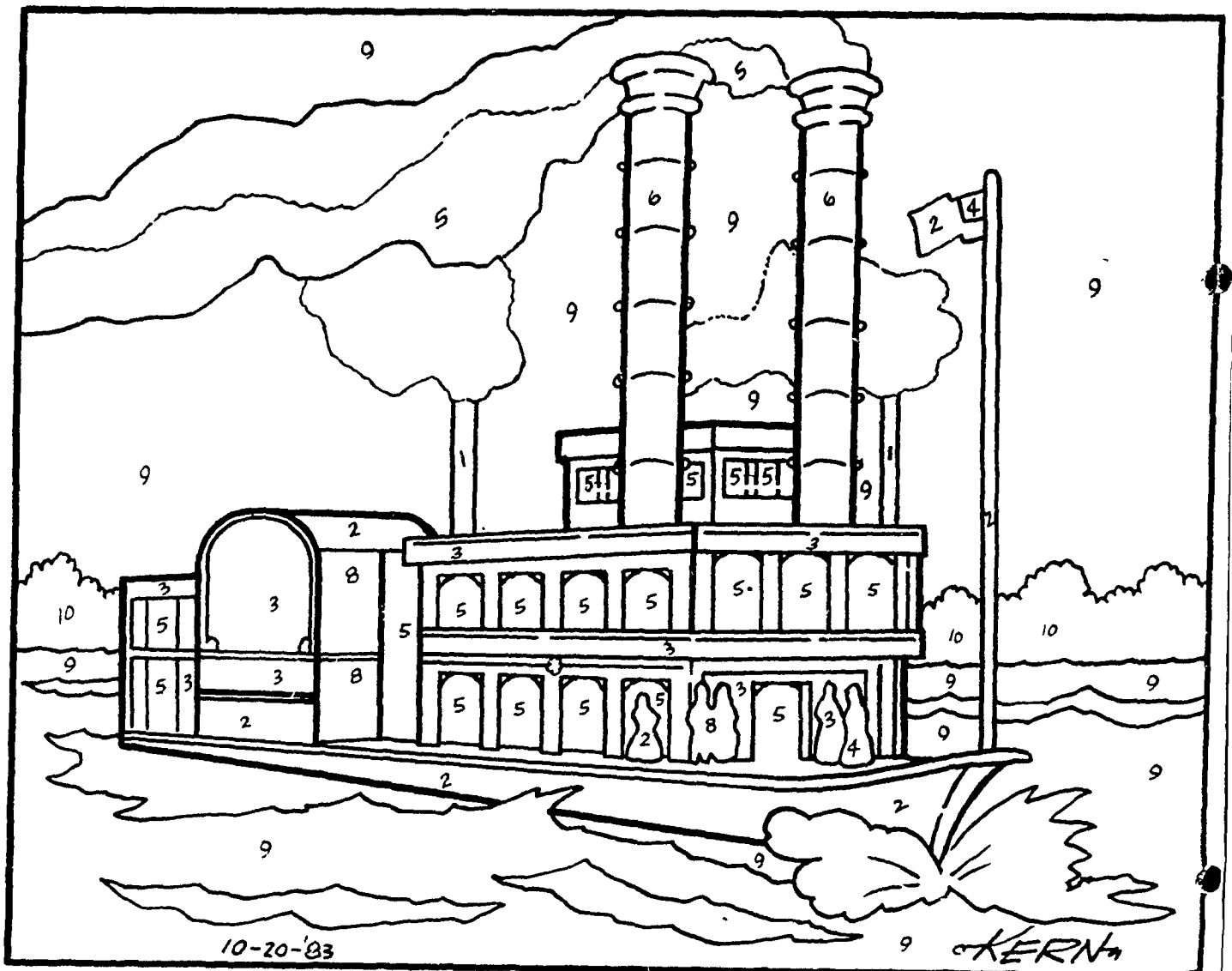
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COLOR THIS!

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1. BLACK | 6. LT. GREY |
| 2. RED | 7. GREEN |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. BROWN |
| 4. BLUE | 9. LT. BLUE |
| 5. BROWN | 10. LT. GREEN |

RIVERBOAT. AS LANDS ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER WERE SETTLED, THE RIVER BECAME AN IMPORTANT HIGHWAY FOR THE HAULING OF PEOPLE AND CARGOES OF COTTON AND SUGAR. THESE FLOATING PALACES REACHED THEIR PEAK IN LUXURY A NUMBER OF YEARS BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR.



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