

Ancient egypt vs mesopotamia



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Egypt and Mesopotamia, although similar, are different as a result of one major natural resource: a river. Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia were an agricultural based society that believed in the existence of many deities; however, they differed in the aspect of how they evolved as an agricultural society and whether they feared or praised their gods. Mesopotamia, also known as the Fertile Crescent, was located inside the Euphrates and Tigris River. The fertile land was a home to the many city-states. Although the city-states are not unified, they share the same curse/ blessing. All city states are located near the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

The rivers provide rich soil that is favorable for farming. The continuous supplies of minerals, silt, left over from the flooding replenish the soil. Also, many archeologists found ditches that indicate that the Mesopotamians had an irrigation system. The placement of dikes suggests that the Mesopotamians used them in order to get rid of excess water from the flooding. Also, by using this system, the Mesopotamians will have a supply of water throughout the city and excess silt won't layer the ground. However, it is through flooding that many Mesopotamians have suffered as well. The Mesopotamians often experienced flash flooding.

The flooding would destroy crops, homes, and even deliver death. Because of inconsistent flooding, the Mesopotamians built a monumental structure in order to provide shelter to the people and serve as a granary for food. In order to make the Ziggurat, the structure, water proof, the locals would apply bitumen (a substance that is of the same viscosity and color of tar) to the exterior. After applying this substance to the Ziggurat, the people would be safe from the aggressive waters. The Mesopotamians feared the flash

flooding; therefore they feared the gods that they believe possess the power to control the rivers.

The Mesopotamian religion was mainly polytheistic. They believed that the gods were angry beings that avenged humans if they are unsatisfied. Their religion also included an afterlife in which all people, good or bad, go to. The underworld is a very gloomy place and all are to suffer in their afterlife. This belief caused the Mesopotamians to adopt a more optimistic view in their current life. They treasured the life they have until the unavoidable end. This belief is supported in the ancient text, "Epic of Gilgamesh." In the story, a king (who is the son of a god) was unjust and was very unpopular.

One day the gods delivered him a friend, and through their friendship, Gilgamesh believed that he was unstoppable. However, one day the gods decided to kill his friend and this caused Gilgamesh to fear death. He searched for a flower that will grant him eternal life. Although Gilgamesh found the flower, he lost it. Therefore he accepted his fate as a mortal. He became a better ruler and was subdued to the gods. This epic highlights the capricious nature of the gods and the vulnerability of the humans. The ancient Egyptians, however, did not share the same fate as the Mesopotamians.

They prospered a great life in the ancient world and were in favor with the Nile. The Nile is a single river that splits into several rivers. That particular part of the Nile is referred to as the Nile delta. The Nile is the core to understanding the Egyptian civilization. Unlike the Mesopotamians, the Nile is a tamed river that flooded in a controlled fashion. Therefore, the Egyptians were able to create calendars that would coincide with the flooding and would create the

most favorable time for farming. The flooding, like in Mesopotamia, would leave silt behind.

Although the flooding is not as frequent as in Mesopotamia, Egypt had more rainfall. Likewise, like the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians stored their food surpluses. Although they don't build a ziggurat, the Egyptians did have a granary. Also, similar to the Mesopotamians, the Egyptians had an irrigation system. Through this system, the Egyptians were able to deliver water to the crops. However, they did not use it to trap excess silt or to save water. Because of the favorable actions of the Nile, the Egyptians believed that they had a good relationship with their gods.

The Egyptian religion, like the Mesopotamian's, was polytheistic. They believed that many deities controlled the natural balance of the world. They also believed that the chosen emperor was a son of the god and he is able to communicate with the spiritual world. They believed that the relationship between the pharaoh and the spiritual world is so strong that the Egyptians build pyramids as a burial chamber. It is filled with various items (including a boat) that the emperor would need in order to travel to the afterlife.

This concept is the same as the Mesopotamian belief in their ruler being a demigod. The concept of a demigod as a ruler was very important to the Egyptians because they want to continue having a favorable relationship with the gods. As a result of their belief in having a good relationship with the gods, the Egyptians believed that they would have a great afterlife. The concept of death wasn't terrifying to the Egyptians because they believe it is just another part of life. Therefore, the Egyptians build mastabas- filled with essential items- that will be the burial chamber for a peasant.

This is completely the opposite of the Mesopotamian belief because the Egyptians believed that they would be rewarded in their afterlife if they are good. The expectancy of a good afterlife expresses the Egyptians' belief that the gods are accepting and benevolent beings. The Egyptians and Mesopotamians constructed an advanced civilization with the help of their greatest resource: the river(s). Although one provided a curse, the other brought prosperity. The Egyptian and Mesopotamian society was agriculturally oriented and they both believed that the characteristic of the river is parallel to the attitude of their gods.