

The fall of the mayan civilization

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The Fall of the Mayan Civilization Elizabeth Putman Professor Jennifer Adrienne Humanities 111 January 26, 2012 Mashkan-shapir was a typical Mesopotamian city, located about 20 miles from the Tigris River, and connected to the river by a network of canals. Despite a flourishing civilization, Mashkan-shapir was abandoned within only 20 years of its settlement. What could have caused this rapid demise? For decades, archaeologists have been searching for an explanation of the Maya collapse. Many theories have been put forward, ranging from conflict and invasion to migration, disease and over-farming.

According to a study published in an issue of Science (March, 2003), a long period of dry climate, punctuated by three severe droughts, led to the end of the Maya society. Along with factors such as war and changes in the environment, irrigation techniques played an important role in Mashkan-shapir's collapse. Yes, the same process that allowed farming in this region eventually made it impossible to farm leading to their devastation by starvation. Prolonged droughts also contributed to the lack of food and drinking water. The Mayan's used irrigation for their crop production.

Unfortunately, the rivers were higher than the surrounding plain, so water for irrigation flowed into the field by gravity. The fields were lower than the rivers, subsequently; the water sat in the field and was allowed to evaporate naturally. This led to erosion and the buildup of mineral salts. When mineral salts concentrate in the upper levels of the soil, it becomes toxic for plants. By 2300 B. C. , agricultural production in Mesopotamia was impossible. Many fields were abandoned as essentially useless. Mesopotamian cuneiform tablets tell of crop damage due to salts.

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The majority of Mayan's either migrated due to lack of food and water, or stayed and perished by dehydration and starvation. Only a fraction of the Maya people survived to resist the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century. Yes, conflict was significant, as was disease, but I adamantly believe that the core problems was a prolonged drought along with inadequate irrigation techniques. Whatever the cause, the Maya did not die out entirely. Some two million are alive today, principally in the northern part of Yucatan and in Guatemala.

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