

# Social structure of mesopotamians and egyptians history essay



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The social structure from one empire to another can vary a lot. It depended mostly on the wealth of the empire, the way the empire came to be, and other factors. In the case of the Mesopotamians and Egyptians, there were some similarities, but also some differences. Those differences included the social roles that women played in their respective empires, among other things.

The Mesopotamian Empire had many opportunities to accumulate wealth. Thus, their social structure became much more clearly defined than other Neolithic communities. In early Mesopotamia, the ruling class consisted of kings and nobles who previously were great warriors. Later on, however, royal status became hereditary. The royal class was looked upon highly, and people often thought of them as part divine. Next in the social chain were the priests and priestesses, many of whom were related to the rulers in some way. Their main responsibility was to intervene with the gods and ensure good fortune for their communities. In exchange for this service, priests and priestesses led a luxurious life. Also in the social structure were free commoners. They mostly worked as farmers in the countryside or in other manufacturing jobs. Dependent clients were another class in the social structure. They possessed no property and usually worked as agricultural laborers. The last rung on the social ladder were slaves. Slaves came from three main sources: prisoners of war, convicted criminals, and people who sold themselves into slavery in order to satisfy their obligations. Most slaves were domestic servants in wealthy households, but some worked as agricultural laborers as well.

The Egyptian social structure had some similarities and differences. Like the Mesopotamians, Egyptians had a well-defined social class system. Also, the Egyptian peasants and slaves played a similar role in society as the Mesopotamian peasants and slaves. However, the organization of the ruling classes differed significantly. While Mesopotamians had a series of urban kings, Egyptians had one supreme, central ruler called the pharaoh. The Egyptians had no need for nobles since the pharaoh was the absolute ruler. Instead, Egyptians relied on professional military forces and government officials. This allowed for individuals of common birth to have a higher likelihood of attaining high positions compared to Mesopotamians. The differences between the social classes of the Egyptians and Mesopotamians allowed each of them to have their own unique empires.

The conditions of women were also very different between the Mesopotamians and the Egyptians. In Mesopotamia, women had subordinate legal status. However, they did have a certain amount of influence politically, economically, and socially. At ruling courts in Mesopotamia, women sometimes advised the government. Other held great power as high-ranking priestesses. Other Mesopotamian women were able to receive a formal education and pursue a career. Unfortunately, Mesopotamian men began to progressively tighten their control over the social and sexual behavior of women in the second millennium B. C. E. Egyptian women were able to have an even bigger impact on society. There was a time when a woman pharaoh took power (Queen Hatshepsut). Other women also had substantial amounts of power as priestesses. Some got formal educations as well.

The Mesopotamian and Egyptian social structures had both differences and similarities. Both empires' social systems were well-defined, and included similar roles for peasants and slaves. However, the rest of their system was somewhat different, especially their ruling classes. Though both gave women some social influence, Egyptians provided more powerful opportunities for women. Both empires had a successful and well-enforced social class system.