

Compare egypt and mesopotamia

Countries



Jenny Di Bowler 5th Period AP World History Comparative Essay 07 September 2010 The geography of Egypt and Mesopotamia helped shaped their economies, social structures, and religions. In these two societies, the rivers they depended upon played central roles in all parts of society. The Tigris and Euphrates Rivers surrounding Mesopotamia and the Nile River, in the middle of the desert, produced two polytheistic, ancient civilizations.

Although Egypt and Mesopotamia both have similar economies which center on agriculture and include heavy trading, they differ in their religions and social structures because the geographical features in each region altered the people's beliefs and views. The two civilizations views on religion were also affected by the geography of the area, more specifically the flooding of the two rivers. The Mesopotamians believed in a dark and cruel afterlife where everyone was sentenced to after death, while Egyptians thought that they would be judged by the god of the underworld, Osiris.

He would determine if they could pass on to the good afterlife or not. The Mesopotamians view of gods as uncaring was most likely due to capricious nature of their rivers. The direct result of the gods' capriciousness was said to have lead to the unpredictable flooding. The rulers of Mesopotamia could not claim to be gods or have divine powers because they could not predict or control the floods, while the Egyptian kings were unquestionably divine.

The Egyptians had a very fond view of their gods and tried to keep their cycles of life continuing, including the continuation of divine kings, while Mesopotamians feared their gods and did everything possible to gratify them. The consistent cycle of floods in the Nile brought bountiful harvests. Rebirth occurred all around them and the Egyptians trusted in this cycle.

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They put a lot of effort in order to ensure “ rebirth” and went through many rituals, such as mummification, in order to preserve their bodies for the afterlife.

They also trusted and provided for their gods so that the floods would continue to bring them with bountiful crops and wealth. The Mesopotamians did not trust their gods, but relied on meeting all of their needs so as to not anger them and cause ruin to their landscape. Egypt’s location was quite isolated and guarded due to its surrounding deserts, while Mesopotamia was open to invaders due to its flat plains. Warriors were important and therefore high on the social ladder due to Mesopotamia’s vulnerable location. On top of the warriors in the social structure were the priest and kings, while underneath was everybody else.

The priests stayed in control of the population and on top by threatening death. The fear of death was prevalent because the religious belief of the time concerned a dark, dreary, underworld that people went for eternity once they were dead. Mesopotamia’s rulers were not gods, whereas Egypt’s society was led by pharaohs claimed to be gods on earth, in fact the sons of the sun god Re and incarnations of Horus. They were the centers of the Egyptian state and could determine whether or not the people of Egypt would go to the good afterlife or the bad.

The pharaoh also ensured the fortune and well-being of the state by predicting when the floods would come. Therefore the lower classes of peasants and artisans all looked to please and obey their rulers. Both h The economies of the two different civilizations were very similar because they both depended heavily on agriculture. Both were centered on rivers. Theses

rivers would flood and provide fertile silt for the crops to grow on, however each region did not always have all the resources necessary. Because of that, trade was also very vital and played an important role in the economy.

In Mesopotamia, the land surrounding the urban centers would all be irrigated and taken care of by farmers. They would plant crops (wheat and barley flourished here) and all the surplus would go to those inside the cities who were artisans, officials, etc. In Egypt, most people were farmers. They planted things like lettuce, wheat, barley, dates, grapes, melons and cucumbers. The two societies also relied on trade. Mesopotamia did not have many natural metals. They traded barley, vegetable oils and textiles in return for metals, timber and stone. Egypt did much trading with its southern counterparts.

Egypt traded with Nubia for gold and precious stones, but was more interested in conquering lands in order to gain access to resources. In the second millennium BCE Egyptians invaded Nubia and took control over its gold fields. If these two civilizations had been in any other region in the world, their religion, social structure and economy would differ from what they were. The behavior of the rivers and land features of Mesopotamia and Egypt caused the differences in religion and social structure, while the presence of the rivers that brought fertile silt to the croplands and lack of certain resources are what made the economies so similar.