

Compare and contrast of egyptian and mesopotamian religions essay sample

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Perceptions of Gods

Deep in the region in the Arabian Desert is where two of the earliest civilizations resided. Their names are Egypt and Mesopotamia. These two societies resided near major rivers as their source of water for agriculture. Egypt developed into a self sufficient empire that entailed agriculture, social hierarchy, and religion. Mesopotamia used irrigation and developed cities with governments and formed new religious thoughts based off of the unknown. Their polytheistic religious beliefs became established around the period 3, 000 B. C. E. Both Egypt and Mesopotamia believed in polytheism and ruled with theocracy; however their behavior towards the gods varied.

Mesopotamian and Egyptian were polytheistic. Polytheism means they believed in more than one god. For example, Babylonians of Mesopotamia believed in the gods Tiamat and Marduk. We know not just Babylon's religious beliefs, but many Mesopotamian cultures gods because of historical writings such as the Epic of Gilgamesh. The Epic of Gilgamesh talks about Gilgamesh's conquest for eternal life in which he encounters different gods. Egyptians had more than one god too. Some examples are the sun god, Re, the god of the afterworld, Osiris. Proof of their belief has been obtained from artifacts discovered in tombs and through hieroglyphs. Historians have obtained this information from artifacts discovered from tombs and through writings like the Book of the Dead.

Mesopotamian gods were responsible for common elements such as, sky, wisdom and death. They were determined from not being able to reason why natural phenomena's occurred so they figured gods were responsible. As well as being anthropomorphic they were invisible, which explained why <https://assignbuster.com/compare-and-contrast-of-egyptian-and-mesopotamian-religions-essay-sample/>

people could not see them. Egyptians derived their gods from the environment and human ecology. Unlike Mesopotamia, Egypt's gods were not all anthropomorphic. For example, Horus was the falcon god whose body was in human form with the head of a falcon. This is based off the tablet from the Egyptian Museum in Cairo that depicts Horus judging the dead woman. Egypt did not stay polytheistic through their whole ruling. In 1367, Pharaoh Akhenaten promoted monotheism later in 1367. People had a hard time adjusting and disregarded his religious views after he died. Both societies benefited from their established religious beliefs because it helped them set up theocratic governments.

Theocracy is the ruling of people in the name of a god. Different Mesopotamian societies had their own forms of theocracy. One example, is King Hammurabi Babylon (r. 1792-1750 B. C. E.) claimed to be chosen by Marduk to rule. He used this power to create the "law code", one of the first forms of written law in a society. Egypt was ruled the same way. The Pharaoh was indeed a god in human form. Specifically he was the god Horus that waited the rejoining of his father Osiris in the afterlife. Pharaoh had power over the wealth and resources of people. Unlike Mesopotamia, they would tax people's crops. This is proven by an excerpt from Ramesside Texts Relating to the Taxation and Transport of Corn, "And now the scribe lands on the river-bank and is about to register the harvest-tax."

Mesopotamians act differently towards their gods than Egyptians. This is due to their difference in lifestyles. Mesopotamians feared them. Supporting evidence includes the fact that they made shrines in the middle of their

village to honor the gods, as well as making sacrifices to give the gods no reason to harm them with a flood. Egypt on the other hand loved and honored their gods more or less due to the Nile River. This is determined by ancient an ancient writing, " Hail to thee, O Nile that issues from the earth and comes to keep Egypt alive!" (J. B. 372) It flooded annually readying the crops to be planted. Mesopotamians did not know their gods motives. This caused unrest with the people according to this writing " The man of deceit has conspired against me, And you, my god, do not thwart him, You carry off my understanding" (J. B.). Egyptians understood their gods based off of their characteristics they represent. For example, Re was the king of the sky " who served as the symbol of divine kingship" (Book 17).

The biggest question that can be drawn from this is why they are so similar in most aspects analyzed and yet they treat their gods in a different way. Egypt and Mesopotamia are both polytheistic, they live by rivers, they have theocratic governments, both societies established the earliest forms of writing, etc. Egyptians loved and praised their gods while Mesopotamians feared and appeased theirs. This can be drawn back to the origins of their gods. Each society based them off of their surroundings whether it is from the environment or ecology.

Mesopotamia was on arid soil in between two violent rivers. They had to work hard to irrigate and survive. Egypt on the other hand had the plentiful Nile that ran on a schedule for harvesting. Both societies' gods reflected their environment. Egyptians had gods that were fair and merciful just as the Nile River flew. In contrast, Mesopotamia's gods were cruel and evil. Their

people could not understand the gods; they were afraid and appeased the gods. Therefore, I conclude that Egypt and Mesopotamia's difference in the way they treated their gods is because of their different landscapes and status of comfortable living.