

Ancient egypt vs mesopotamia assignment

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Ancient Mesopotamia and Ancient Egypt the kings ruled in very different ways. Although the kings of both lands were closely tied to religious institutions they had very different responsibilities to their subjects because of the culture of these areas. In Egypt, a cultural belief in Ma'at, a religious concept of universal harmony and repetition cause the kings to act very differently than the kings of Mesopotamia who have to satisfy the feelings of expansionism caused by their geographic location.

These differences are best seen in the way these kings handled cultural development, keeping the support of the people, and even the life expectancy of the kings themselves. Because Mesopotamia is so centrally located it is constantly surrounded by other cultural change. Different languages, ethnicities, and material culture floated around the Near East and were constantly influencing and changing the people of Mesopotamia. This means that kings had to develop attitudes of expansionism and cultural adaptability if they wanted to have an empire.

Sumerian and Akadian kings regularly controlling or were controlled by groups of non-Semitic people. This means that these kings had to act in ways that inflicted their own culture on others or adapt to the culture of other groups constantly. This would eventually make it harder for empires to meet the needs of the various peoples in it and thus made empire itself harder to maintain. The Expansionist nature of these kings is very different from the Egyptian ideas of Ma'at.

The Egyptians had no need to expand outside of the Nile Valley which was the most productive area in the Ancient Near East, and instead developed a

more uniform culture of cycles that were naturally harmonious within their own kingdom. They called this balance Ma'at. They were much more interested in the balance of their own realm than gaining new territories. This means that the kings tended away from expansionist ideals and instead concentrated on internal policy. These leads to periods where hundreds of years would pass with genuine progress and constant levels of prosperity, but at the same time would erode the central power of the Pharaohs.

Another example of the difference between kings was the way they kept the support of the people. In Mesopotamia, at first, support for a king came from military victories and an ability to unite warring states. As time progressed they also gain legitimacy from internal policies that they endorsed such as building temples and erecting laws. Egyptians, on the other hand, rulers were expected to enforce Ma'at if they wanted a sense of legitimacy from their people. This caused the rulers of Egypt to again be primarily concerned with the internal workings of their Kingdom.

When things went well in Egypt, support was very easy to get from the people, but when the Nile had bad years or later when many Egyptians felt the balance wasn't working, this idea turned against the Pharaohs and many kings lost support because of forces beyond their control. Even the life expectancy of the kings, and thus the effectiveness of their rule, was controlled by these different ideas of expansionism and Ma'at. Under the Egyptian ideas kings seemed to live and enjoy long reigns during at first when the Ma'at was good.

In the later Dynasties when people began to shift the power of Ma'at for this world's leaders to the next world's judges the kings tended to have shorter reigns and could no longer rely on natural harmony to keep them in power. Mesopotamian kings also did not fare as well in times of depression or drought, but it was just as likely that they would die in a battle against the Elamites or any other invading force. We see a much higher rate of kings dying in battles in the Near East than in Egypt. This means that kings were on the frontline or at least in the wars with their armies.

This is strikingly different than our image of the God-like Egyptian ruler removed from the scene of battles. Even though both kings, Egyptian and Mesopotamian, had to gain legitimacy from their people and control their empire, the actions they had to perform to do these things is strikingly different. Even as culture and people of Egypt and Mesopotamia changed their views on Ma'at and expansion the rulers had to adjust, they adjusted in different ways. The actions of Kings will always be bound by their culture whether it is a culture of expansion or a culture of consistency.