The Geography of Mesopotamia

E.Q. Why did people settle in Mesopotamia and what were advantages and disadvantages did its geography provide to the people that settled there?

The Tigris and Euphrates rivers start in southwest Asia. They begin in the mountains of what are now Turkey and Kurdistan. From there they flow through what is now Iraq to the Persian Gulf.

It is in this area that one of the first civilizations was formed. The region around where the rivers flow is called Mesopotamia. In fact, the name means "land between the rivers". This land is bordered by the Persian Gulf to the southeast. The Syrian and Arabian Deserts stretch west to the Red Sea. The Zagros Mountains border this area to the east and stretch northward. The Mediterranean Sea is the large body of water to the west.

The Tigris and Euphrates rivers provided water and a means of transportation for the people who settled in the area. In ancient times, it was easier to travel by boat than over land. Few roads existed during this time. Also, because of the rivers, this area had a rich supply of fish and waterfowl that could be used for food.

The land in this area was flat and fertile, rich in nutrients. This is caused by the flooding of the rivers. Almost yearly, rain and melting snow in the mountains caused the rivers to swell. As the water flowed down the mountains, it picked up soil. When the rivers reached the plains, water overflowed onto the floodplain, the flat land bordering the banks. As the water spread over the floodplain, the soil it carried settled on the land. The fine soil deposited by rivers is called silt. Silt is fertile and good for growing crops. Because of this, Mesopotamia is also known as "The Fertile Crescent".

Usually, less than 10 inches of rain fell in Mesopotamia each year. Summers were hot. This type of climate is called semiarid. Although it was hot and dry, ancient people could still grow crops because of the rivers and fertile soil.

However, the flood patterns of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers were unpredictable. No one knew when the flood would occur. It may occur in April or as late as June. Also, the flood’s size depended on how much snow melted in the mountains and how much rain fell. If there was too much, the flood might be violent and wash everything away. If there was too little, the flood would not come at all. A drought is a period of time when not enough rain and snow fall. In a semiarid region, drought is a constant danger. During a drought, the river level drops making it hard to water the crops. If crops fail, people starve.

Therefore, water was a very important resource for the people. The people of the area would fight with each other over water rights and leaders began to form armies and build walls around their cities to protect their water rights.
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Why did people settle in Mesopotamia and what were advantages and disadvantages of settling there?

The Tigris and Euphrates rivers start in Southwest Asia. They begin in the mountains of what is now Turkey and Kazakhstan. From there they flow north into the Persian Gulf. It is in the area where one finds the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The region surrounding these rivers is called Mesopotamia. In fact, the name means "Land between the Rivers". The land is described by the Persian Gulf on the southeast, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers on the east and west, and the mountains to the north and south.

Mesopotamia is the large pool of water to the west. The Tigris and Euphrates rivers provide water and a means of transportation for the people who settle in the area. In ancient times, it was easier to travel by boat than by land. Few roads existed during this time. Also, because of the rivers, there was a good supply of fish and water that could be used for food.

The land is fertile and fertile fields are remarkable. This is caused by the flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. They flood the land in the area, and fertile fields appear in sumerian. Water from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers supplies the water to the land. As the water goes down the mountains, it passes through the plains, where it is released into the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. As the water is released, it forms a pool of water called the Mesopotamia. This pool is known as the "Fertile Crescent".

Vocabulary:

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