

Mesopotamian Government

In the early day of Mesopotamia, the free citizens met, discussed, and made decisions for themselves in a democratic assembly. As the villages grew into larger cities, however, the citizens found it necessary to elect one of their most capable citizens to lead them through troubling times. At first the lugal, meaning “big man” or king in Sumerian, was appointed only for the time of crisis, but soon one war led to another and the lugal made himself permanent ruler, or king.

The king had many important jobs. He built temples, settled disputes between his people, and maintained the complicated system of canals that irrigated the farmlands. The most important job of the king was to lead his people to victory in war.

Because the Sumerians went to war often, the army had a powerful influence in the government. Generals advised the king on military decisions.

The king was also the head priest in the ziggurat, or main temple. Priests were respected because they were the servants of the gods and advisors of the king.

The king could not maintain peace and manage the trade of Sumer at the same time. He appointed bureaucrats, or workers who answered directly to him, to regulate trade and agriculture.

Name _____

Date _____

Period _____

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Answer all of the following questions in complete sentences.

1.) How did the early Mesopotamians first make decisions? _____

2.) How and why did the early form of government in Mesopotamia change?

3.) What important jobs did the king have?

a.) _____

b.) _____

c.) _____

d.) _____

4.) How did the army influence the government? _____

5.) What role did religion play in government? _____

6.) How did the kings of Mesopotamia manage all of their jobs? _____

7.) If you had been the king of Mesopotamia, what aspects or jobs would have been most important to you?