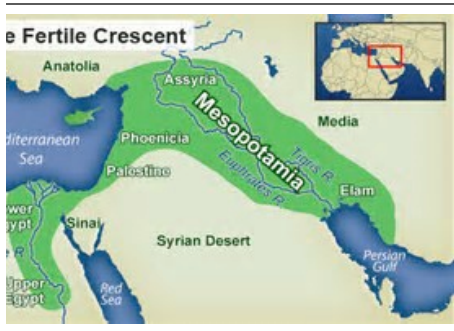


Water Resources of the Middle East



Egypt is probably the best known of all the ancient River Valley civilizations. Egypt is a large country but most of it is a sandy desert. But in this vast country, crops can be grown only in one long, narrow strip of land; the valley of the Nile river. The Nile Valley has other natural resources besides the amazingly fertile soil. For example, it has a sunny climate that is free of frost all year and well suited to farming. The Nile Valley also has deposits of clay, granite, sandstone, and limestone. These minerals are used for building. The ancient Egyptians needed these materials, for there were few forests to furnish lumber. The Egyptians were able to build a great civilization along the Nile River because of the valley's location. Deserts and seas surround the Nile valley provided a natural barrier that defended Egypt from invasion for thousands of years.



Mesopotamia, or “The Land Between Two Rivers”, was part of a larger region called the Fertile Crescent. The Sumerians, the world's first civilization, settled and farmed the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers. Although Mesopotamia had fertile soil, farming was not easy. The flooding of the rivers destroyed crops annually, and in the dry season plants wasted away due to long droughts. The farmers eventually developed methods that helped them store or reroute water to increase the amount of food they could grow all year long. In time, other societies and civilizations developed along the Tigris and Euphrates, becoming the first areas with permanent civilizations lasting to present day. The Fertile Crescent holds importance for here were the first permanent civilizations and cultures created. Also, throughout much of the Middle East, dry hot climates are found, but the Fertile Crescent provides an oasis for farming and agriculture that is still important today for the people of this region.



The Suez Canal is northern Egypt and connects the Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. The canal was constructed as a shorter route between Europe and Asia. Today the Suez's Canal importance has increased due to the rise of the oil trade in the region. It now serves as a major passage for ships carrying oil and petroleum product from North Africa and Southwest Asia to Europe, North America and the rest of the world. The Canal is a major source of revenue for Egypt. Ships pay a toll for passing through the strategic waterway. Each year the Suez Canal generates about \$5 billion in foreign currency for Egypt. Egypt controls the Suez Canal. Thus, the internal political stability of Egypt affects the world's energy security.

Water Resources of the Middle East



Egypt's Aswan High Dam, located near the Egypt- Sudan border, bring both benefits and drawbacks for the human geography of the area. The dam helps provided irrigation to thousands of new acres of farmland. The dam provided hydroelectric power to Egypt, about 10 billion kilowatt-hours. This is enough to power nearly 870,000 average U.S. homes. In addition, the dam controls flooding along the Nile River. Before the construction of the dam, flooding could be unpredictable and dangerous. On the other hand, about 90,000 Egyptians and Sudanese had to be relocated because of the dam. Lastly, the flooding caused by building the dam would have dismantled by hand and moved to higher ground.