

The epic of gilgamesh and hammurabi's code

[History](#)



The Epic of Gilgamesh and Hammurabi's are some of the most ancient texts from ancient Mesopotamia that have been found by historians and archaeologists to date. Both of these texts are rich in information concerning Mesopotamia at this time regarding its political systems, religion, social relationships and their cities. They show how religion was a very important part of the everyday lives of the ancient Mesopotamians and this is exemplified when Hammurabi declares that the set of laws which he has codified have been given to him directly by the god Shamash, and uses this to justify his codification of the law. Gilgamesh was going to the temple of Shamash to consult with the god before undertaking a major mission also shows the great influence religion had in Mesopotamia. In both of these texts, it can be noted that the sun - god Shamash, who was also the Mesopotamian god of justice, plays a major role in some of the major events which take place considering that he granted Hammurabi the laws and always gave guidance to Gilgamesh so that he would succeed in his missions (Hawkins, 277 - 278).

The values of the ancient Sumerians seem to have been guided by their religion and many believed that they needed the authority of a god while doing anything important to ensure that their actions were a success. One would notice in these texts that the relationships between the people of this society in the ancient times were very close and that friendships had a higher value than they have today. Friends tended to treat each other more like siblings than as people from different backgrounds and a good example of this is the relationship between Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Although Gilgamesh was the king of Uruk and Enkidu was wild man from the fields, these two strike a friendship that would be very unlikely in the current times.

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It can further be noted that the rulers of ancient Mesopotamia tended to place a very high value to their connection with the gods most likely in an attempt to justify their authority over their people. We note that Hammurabi claims to have been in direct communication with a god when he was given the laws, which would be imposed, on his people (Beaulieu, 11). Gilgamesh on the other hand is said to have been two-thirds god and one-third man and that his mother was the goddess Ninsun who is repeatedly seen to intercede on his behalf to the other gods. It is most likely a fact that Gilgamesh's attempt to attain immortality was in a bid to destroy his human side and retain his divine part.

The influences of religion are still very prominent today as they were in ancient Mesopotamia. In fact, religious influences today are so strong that in some instances, they border on fanaticism. Those who have retained their religious beliefs in a world that is headed to secularization believe that what they are doing is the will of God and that anyone not doing the same is a sinner and will die in hell. Furthermore, some of the most powerful states in the world today are monarchies and the monarchs sit on their thrones not because of any great ability but because a legendary ancestor once ruled before them and this is used to justify their social position. The similarities between the code of Hammurabi and the Ten Commandments can clearly be seen especially when one considers that they both are said to have been handed by a god and that they are both based on the eye for an eye doctrine. The Gilgamesh epic and the Flood story also have many similarities especially when one considers that a version of the latter story is told in the former in detail than is told in the Bible.

Works Cited

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