

Compare and
contrast the writings
of confucius, ha



Hammurabi, and the Book of the Dead. Three of the most famous writings from ancient civilizations are the writings of Confucius, Hammurabi's code of laws, and Egypt's Book of the Dead. At first, they seem very different, they're from different times, regions, and religions, but they all offer a peek into what values ancient people considered important.

One of the values that all three civilizations is justice and fairness. I feel that this is best viewed in Hammurabi's laws.

All of the penalties for the crimes are very stiff, but fair. I feel that it is fair that " If he has broken the limb of a patrician, his limb shall be broken" It's like in the Bible " An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." In Egypt, in the Book of the Dead, a man couldn't proceed into the after life unless he was found innocent of any wrong doing on Earth. In Confucius' writings, he never actually says the word " justice", but he does say " Great Man cherishes excellence; Petty Man, his own comfort. Great Man cherishes the rules and regulations; Petty Man special favors." To me, that mean " Great Man is fair, Petty man is unfair." The second of these three values is responsibility and respect to one's family and elders, and responsibility and respect to others families and elders. This is most evident in Confucius' writings. He is constantly stressing family values and responsibility. One quote that shows this is " Let the sole sorry of your parents be that you might become ill." This stresses personal responsibility and

respect to your parents. Hammurabi showed responsibility by saying " If a builder has built a house for a man, and has not made his work sound, and the house he built has fallen, and caused the death of the man's son, the builder's son shall be put to death." That quote shows a man's responsibility for himself and his family. In Egypt, during the ritual of the dead, it is said that the dead man, in order to pass into the afterlife, must profess that he has not done anything to hurt anyone.

This shows responsibility because if the man did not tell the truth, he was responsible for not entering the afterlife.

Knowing that they would be responsible for their actions, the Egyptians tried not to hurt people in their mortal lives. The final value that all three cultures had in common was being truthful. All three cultures relied heavily on the truth. In Hammurabi's laws, it says " If a man has borne false witness in a trial, or has not established the statement that he has made, if that case be a capital trial, that man shall be put to death." In other words " If you lie, you die." When Confucius examined himself every day, he asked the question " have I been false with my friends?" In Egypt, it was important that a man be truthful when brought before Osiris, because if they didn't tell the truth, they would be banished from the afterlife.

One of the lines of the Book of the Dead reads " I have not committed sin in the place of truth," which I read as " I have

not lied." Each one of these three civilizations used different methods to enforce them. In Sumer, Hammurabi's strict punishments kept people from disobeying them. On the other hand, Egypt didn't use any kind of physical punishment, but they used threats. The people thought that if they went against the values, Osiris, god of the afterlife, would punish them after their died. In China, the values weren't enforced, but they were protected by the government. In the second century B. C., Confucianism became the official philosophy of China, thus preserving it for the future. I am greatly impressed by Hammurabi's ideas.

His laws may sound harsh, but they had to be. In ancient Sumer, you had to be harsh or people wouldn't even listen. I don't agree, however, with his double standards. I feel that a life is worth just as much whether it's a patrician or a plebeian. I think that Confucius' ideas are the ones that come the closest to my own beliefs. I like the fact that Confucius' ideas are still just as relevant today as they were in ancient China.