

Egyptian & Babylonian Social Thought



Egyptian & Babylonian Social Thought

- ▶ Egyptian Social Thought
- ▶ Babylonian Social Thought
- ▶ Comparison of the two
- ▶ Contribution to modern day thinking

Egyptian Social Thought

Early Egypt

- ▶ Social order dominated by a ruler or king (divine)
- ▶ King & nobles owned the land
- ▶ Most people slaves or serfs
- ▶ Middle class, small & weak
- ▶ Even temple authorities did not improve situation
- ▶ Priests shared power with their soldiers

Some occupations:

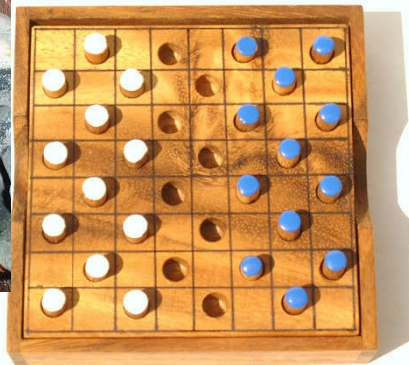
- ▶ Farmers
- ▶ Boatsmen
- ▶ Mechanics



Egyptian Social Thought

Characteristics of Society

- ▶ Occasional protest
- ▶ Prophets spoke for oppressed
- ▶ Self righteous ruler, like Henku (2850 B.C.)
 - Gave food to hungry
 - Clothed the people
 - Serfs made officials



- ▶ Some of the statements of this period are very harsh:

“There is no righteous man left, the earth is an example of those who do evil”

- ▶ Society mostly rural
- ▶ Education confined to a few
- ▶ Priests incited superstition
- ▶ Strengthened their social control
- ▶ Drinking as amusement
- ▶ Music as entertainment

Egyptian Social Thought

Marriage and status of women?

- ▶ Polygyny practiced by wealthy
- ▶ Freedom to privileged women:
Appear in public with husband

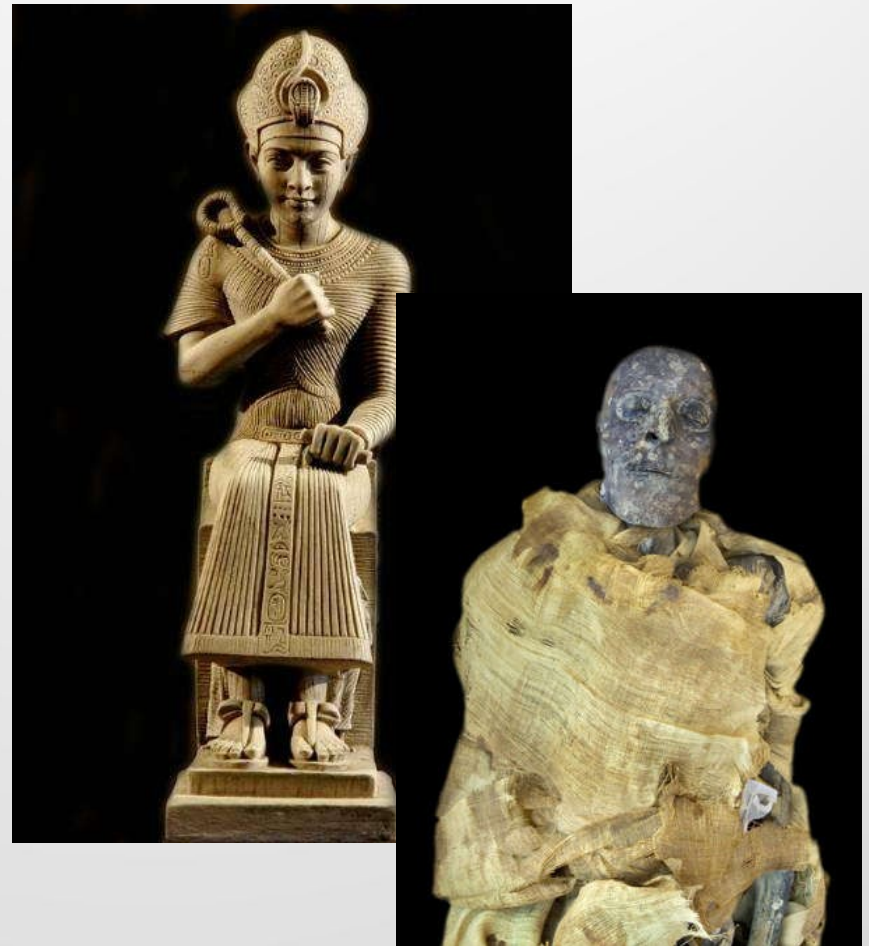


- ▶ The Property Rights of women:
 - Own property
 - Sell property
 - Loan money to husbands
- ▶ A famous statement:
“Thou shalt not forget thy mother, and what she has done for thee, that she bore thee and nurtured thee in all ways”
- ▶ **Children** taught to:
obey parents

Egyptian Social Thought

Belief in Future World

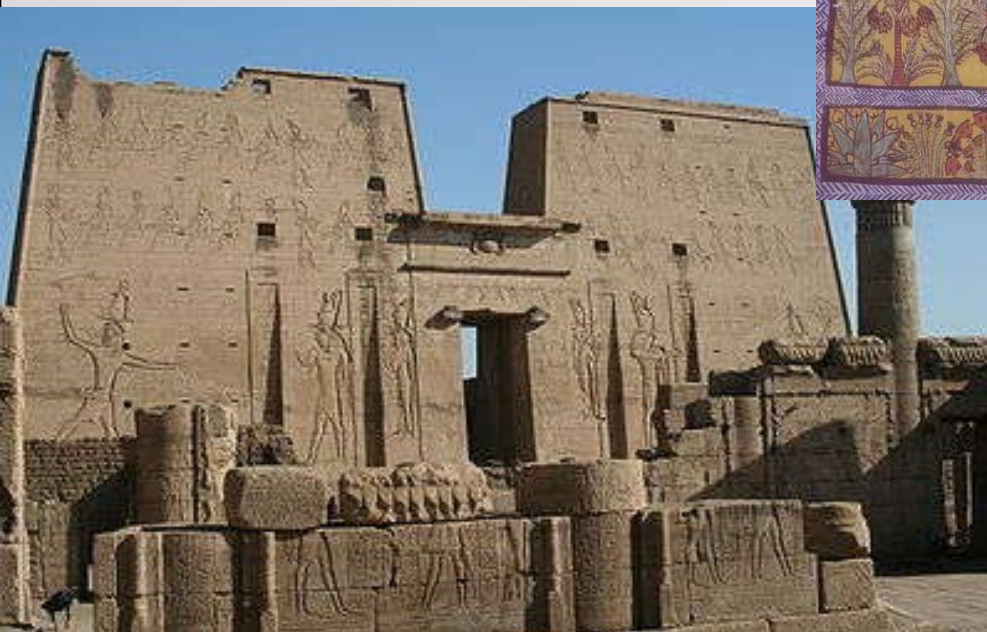
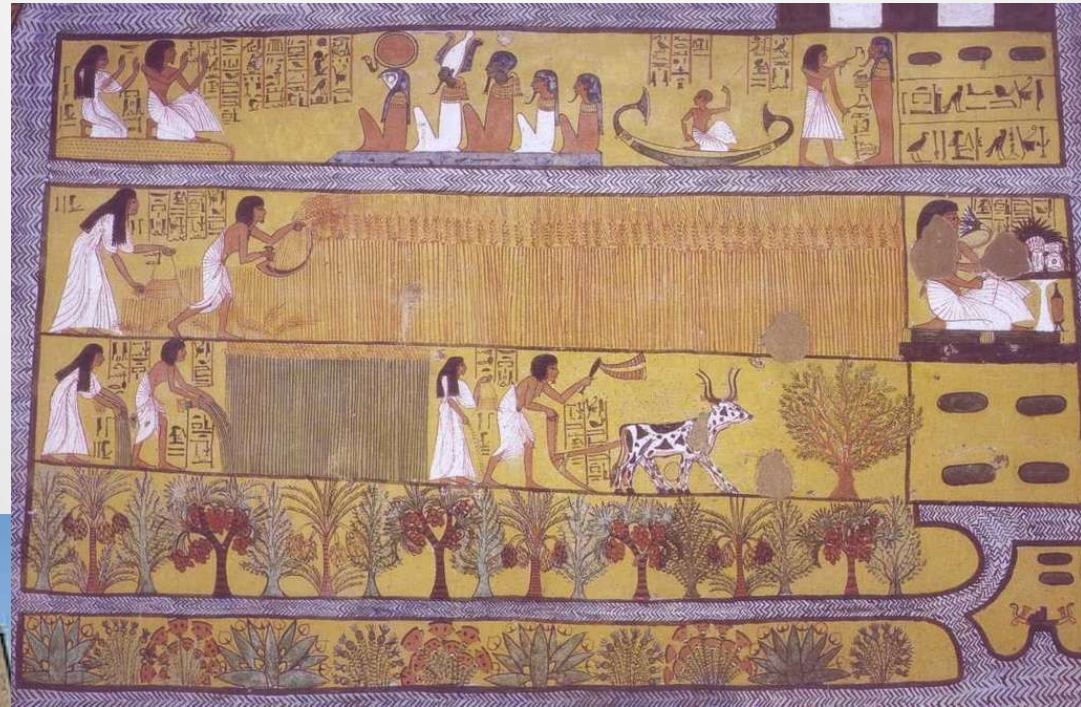
- ▶ Superstitions
- ▶ Why sculptures were made?
- ▶ Accountable for deeds in life
- ▶ Powerful social control
- ▶ Important Aspects:
 - deal honestly
 - protect rights of weak people
 - not make false charges, even for a slave
 - respect social rights



Egyptian Social Thought

Architecture

- ▶ Tombs, monuments, pyramids
- ▶ Mural Works



Egyptian Social Thought

The main sources of Egyptian Social Thought:

As given by J.O. Hertzler

- ▶ Precepts or admonitions affect the upper classes denote social obligation
- ▶ Expressions of social discontent and unrest reveal the degree of social injustice and misery
- ▶ Ideals for observance by officials disclose the formal standards
- ▶ Prophetic utterances indicate coming of an ideal ruler that suggest criticism of the current rule

Egyptian Social Thought: Conclusion

Recap

- ▶ Supreme nature of Kings
 - ▶ Most people were slaves
 - ▶ Henku, a good ruler (2850 B.C.)
 - ▶ Women's rights
 - ▶ Children taught to respect parents
 - ▶ Moral thoughts
 - ▶ Religion
 - ▶ Sculpture & Architecture
- ▶ *“I have not committed theft; not slain man or woman; I have not uttered falsehood; I have not acted deceitfully; I have not sought for distinctions”*

Babylonian Social Thought

Introduction

- ▶ Similar in many way to ancient Egypt
- ▶ 23rd century BC
- ▶ Great flood, referred in Old Testament
- ▶ Religion played an important role in society
- ▶ Merodach was the Supreme God
 - he fought for the nation
 - partial God, working only for benefit of Babylon and against all other people



BEL-MERODACH, ARMED WITH THE THUNDERBOLT, DOES BATTLE WITH THE TUMULTUOUS TIĀMAT.¹

Babylonian Social Thought

Slavery

- ▶ Existed but entirely different approach than Rome
- ▶ Similar to Egyptian practices
- ▶ Slave considered member of the family
- ▶ Could become free
- ▶ No social stigma



Babylonian Social Thought

Women's rights

- ▶ Similar to Egypt
- ▶ Married woman of ruling class possessed property rights
- ▶ Use property in any way
- ▶ Bequeath property
- ▶ Dowry was her absolute property, gave economic independence



Babylonian Social Thought

Hammurabbi

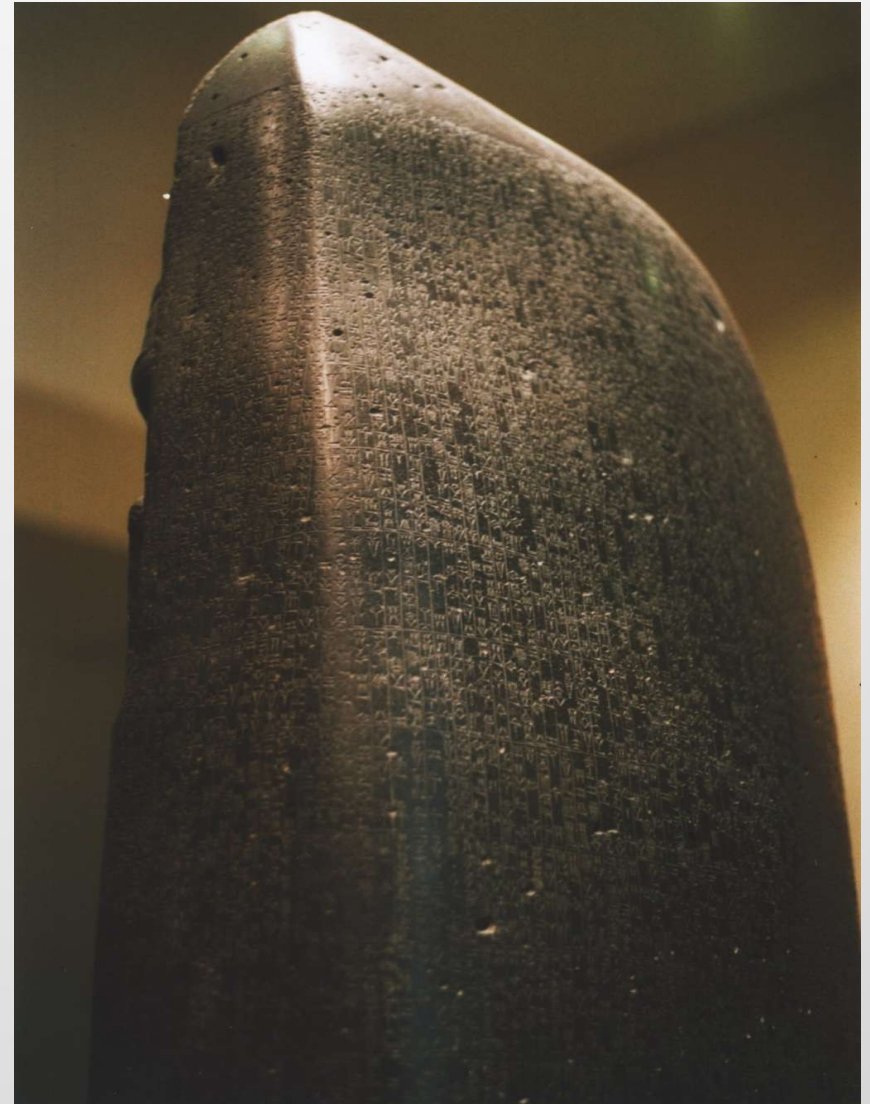
- ▶ Best known Babylonian ruler
- ▶ 2124 – 2083 B.C.
- ▶ In Old Testament, he is probably called Amraphel
- ▶ Most famous as administrator, not for scientific or literary work
- ▶ Code of Hammurabbi shows his desire for justice



Babylonian Social Thought

Hammurabbi's code

- ▶ Found at Susa, Persia 1902
- ▶ Inscribed on black diorite
- ▶ Eight feet high
- ▶ 3600 lines
- ▶ Kept in Paris
- ▶ Eulogy of Hammurabbi:
 - stood for justice
 - destroyed the unjust
 - tribute to his achievement as promoter of peace
 - his thought was remarkable considering the time and place



Babylonian Social Thought

Characteristics of the code:

- ▶ One of the earliest and most detailed set of laws
- ▶ 282 laws with sub-sections and various offenses and penalties described in great detail
- ▶ Strong humanitarian emphasis, determined to defend the helpless
- ▶ Strong aim of justice led Hammurabi to become

Social Grading in Justice

- ▶ Offense against a lower grade person can be atone by money
“If a man has caused a poor man to loose his eye, he shall pay one mina of silver”.
- ▶ *“If a builder makes a house that is not strong, and it falls, causing death of owner, the builder will be put to death. If a slave is killed, the owner must be presented with a slave. If his*

Babylonian Social Thought

- ▶ Labor & Business Laws
 - ▶ Minute regulations
 - ▶ Characteristics of 18th century mercantilistic thought
 - ▶ Earliest forms of labor legislation known
- ▶ Runaway Slaves
 - ▶ Severe punishment for sheltering
 - ▶ Property rights gain importance over human consideration



- ▶ So far.....
 - ▶ Harsh punishments
 - ▶ Protection of weak people
 - ▶ Hierarchical punishment
 - ▶ Civil duty comes before human consideration

Babylonian Social Thought

Family Institution

- ▶ Legal marriage is required
- ▶ Divorce was recognized
- ▶ Alimony
 - woman divorced with child can claim return of dowry, portion of family property for child support
- ▶ If wife neglects her home and is in debt, her husband may take legal action

If she 'gad about' and 'belittle' her husband, she

- ▶ If her husband has been 'tramping about' or has belittled her, she is blameless, can take back dowry and return to her father's home.
- ▶ Adoption of children



Babylonian Social Thought

Progress & Inventions

- ▶ Babylonian's inventions reflect their social status, such as development of artistic lines in architecture & sculpture
- ▶ Literature similar to 'old testament' called 'wisdom literature'



Babylonian Social Thought

Medical Contribution

- ▶ Advances were made in surgery
- ▶ However demonic theory of causes of diseases enslaved the people



Babylonian Social Thought

Sum Up:

- ▶ Babylonian similar to Egyptian
- ▶ Slavery, rights of slaves
- ▶ Social rights of women
- ▶ Hammurabbi, desire for justice
- ▶ Retributive attitude “eye for an eye”
- ▶ Justice based on social gradation
- ▶ Mercantilistic thought
- ▶ Marriage & Divorce
- ▶ Family social institution
- ▶ Medicine & Surgery

Hittite Code

The Hittite Code

- ▶ 2000 BC to 700 BC
- ▶ Boghazkeui capital
- ▶ Compilation of laws is called Hittite Code

Characteristics:

- ▶ Deals with slaves
- ▶ Taking of life
- ▶ Marriage
- ▶ Private property
- ▶ Stealing

Assyrian Code

The Assyrian Code

- ▶ Capital: Assur
located in upper Tigris Valley
- ▶ Dates back to 1400B.C.

Characteristics:

- ▶ Private property
- ▶ Sex relations
- ▶ Marriage
- ▶ Widowhood
- ▶ Assault

A brief comparison.....

EGYPTIAN SOCIAL	BABYLONIAN SOCIAL THOUGHT
Religion: Many Gods, Kings also divine Afterlife	Religion: Many Gods, Kings considered separate
Little Commerce; Rural Style of life	Code of laws in business
	Communities
Women's status & rights Property Rights Mother's position	Women's status & rights Property rights, marriage, divorce, dowry
Polygyny	Punishment for Adultery
Laws (books of laws) Courts	Code of Laws, humanitarian emphasis, retribution, social gradation
Labor Conditions: Slaves & Serfs	Labor regulations
Slaves: Despite their condition, a man could not falsely accuse a slave	Slaves were 'property' first humans second. But they had a position in society

A brief comparison.....

EGYPTIAN SOCIAL	BABYLONIAN SOCIAL THOUGHT
Social unrest due to injustice	Justice of Hammurabbi
Criticism of current rulers due to prophetic utterances	Name 'Hammurabbi' indicates popularity with the King
Pyramids, geometry	Architecture: Wheel, stone works, inscription
Contribution to Education (childhood education)	Contribution to literature, writing, medicine
Labor Conditions: Slaves & Serfs	Labor regulations
Little commerce, largely rural	Mercantilistic though, private business
Contribution to Education (childhood education)	Contribution to literature, writing, medicine
Pyramids, geometry	Architecture: Wheel, stone works, inscription

What they taught us.....

EGYPTIAN SOCIAL

BABYLONIAN SOCIAL

Religion

Moral nature of thought

Agriculture

Agriculture + business

Books of Laws

One of the earliest written laws

Courts: Justice

Hammurabbi's Code:Justice

Writing Systems

Status of women

Economic Independence, property rights, dowry, alimony

Contribution to Education
(childhood education)

Education system

Architecture, Mural Works

Architecture, Sculptures, etc

Civil duty before humanitarian

Proverbs & Literature

(books)

(wisdom literature)

Social control through superstition

The End