

# Literature of Antiquity

## SYSTEMS OF RECORD KEEPING



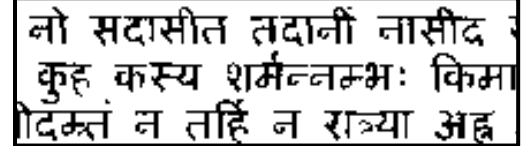
**Cuneiform**  
(Sumer 3000 BCE)



**Hieroglyphics**  
(Egypt 3300 BCE)



**Quipu**  
(Incan Empire 3000 BCE)



### Hammurabi's Code

(Cuneiform 1700 BCE)

- If anyone brings an accusation of any crime before the elders, and does not prove what he has charged, he shall, if a capital offense is charged, be put to death.
- If a son strikes his father, his hands shall be hewn off.
- If a man puts out the eye of a patrician, his eye shall be put out.
- If a man knocks the teeth out of another man, his own teeth will be knocked out.
- If anyone strikes the body of a man higher in rank than he, he shall receive sixty blows with an ox-whip in public.
- If the slave of a freed man strikes the body of a freed man, his ear shall be cut off.
- If anyone commits a robbery and is caught, he shall be put to death
- If anyone finds runaway male or female slaves in the open country and brings them to their masters, the master of the slaves shall pay him two shekels of silver.

What does the code say about the egalitarian nature of the Paleolithic age?

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Summarize the code in one sentence:

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Why is this significant?

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### Epic of Gilgamesh

(Cuneiform 1700 BCE)

I will proclaim to the world the deeds of Gilgamesh. This was the man to whom all things were known; this was the king who knew the countries of the world. He was wise, he saw mysteries and knew secret things, he brought us a tale of the days before the flood. He went on a long journey, was weary, worn-out with labour, returning he rested; he engraved on a stone the whole story.

When the gods created Gilgamesh they gave him a perfect body. Shamash the glorious sun endowed him with beauty, Adad the god of the storm endowed him with courage, the great gods made his beauty perfect, surpassing all others, terrifying like a great wild bull. Two thirds they made him god and one third man.

Gilgamesh went abroad in the world, but he met with none who could withstand his arms till he came to Uruk. But the men of Uruk muttered in their houses, 'Gilgamesh sounds the tocsin for his amusement, his arrogance has no bounds by day or night. No son is left with his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all, even the children; yet the king would be a shepherd to his people. His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble; yet this is the shepherd of the city, wise, comely, and resolute.'

What does this story say about the gods and their effects on men?

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Does Gilgamesh remind you of any other literary figure?

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Why is this story so significant?

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### Rig Veda

(Sanskrit 1700 BCE)

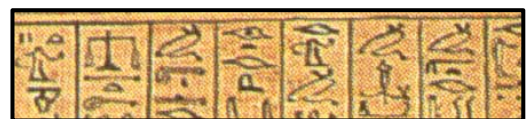
A time is envisioned when the world was not, only a watery chaos (the dark, "indistinguishable sea") and a warm cosmic breath, which could give an impetus of life. Notice how thought gives rise to desire (when something is thought of it can then be desired) and desire links non-being to being (we desire what is not but then try to bring it about that it is). Yet the whole process is shrouded in mystery.

Where do the gods fit in this creation scheme? The non-existent was not; the existent was not at that time. The atmosphere was not nor the heavens which are beyond.

How is this story similar to other creation stories?

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### Book of the Dead

(Hieroglyphics 1550 BCE)

That which was shut fast hath been opened, that is to say, he that lay down in death--hath been opened—

I have made for myself a way, my members are mighty and are strong. I am Horus the avenger of his divine father. I am he who bringeth along his divine father, and who bringeth along his mother by means of his sceptre

According to the Egyptians, what happens after your death?

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