

HAMMURABI

Team: Babylonia Gardeners

Position: Third man

Status: Immortalized, but still quite dead

Hammurabi (long, long ago) lived from the late nineteenth century BC to roughly the middle of the eighteenth century BC, and he may have been the first person who was so cool that he needed only one name. He is also the Babylonian king credited as the first to establish a code of laws. It's pretty clear that Hammurabi didn't create most of the laws in his famous codex. Instead, his codex is clarifying and organizing a very large body of existent law and tradition, but that is, in and of itself, a remarkable milestone in the history of law and society.

By organizing and publishing a code of laws, Hammurabi created a system in which all men could know exactly what was required of them and all men knew the punishment they would face if they failed to meet those standards of behavior or social responsibility. Babylon was the first real metropolis, and this organizational step was probably a necessary part of the city's development. As the city's population grew into the tens of thousands, the king could not take the time to personally deal with every petty criminal and every grievance, but the law still needed to be the king's law. With the codex, judgment of crimes and other transgressions became a matter of interpreting facts or events in terms of the prescriptions of the written law. That made it possible for the king to delegate a great deal of judicial authority to others. It also laid out a standard for judges to be held accountable for their professional performance and prescribed severe punishment for judicial corruption or other misbehavior.

Thus, written law allowed delegation of adjudication of the law, and that was the first step in creating a separate judicial branch of the government. This codification of law became essential to all kingdoms as they grew beyond the bounds of what an individual king could personally adjudicate.



**THINKER
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