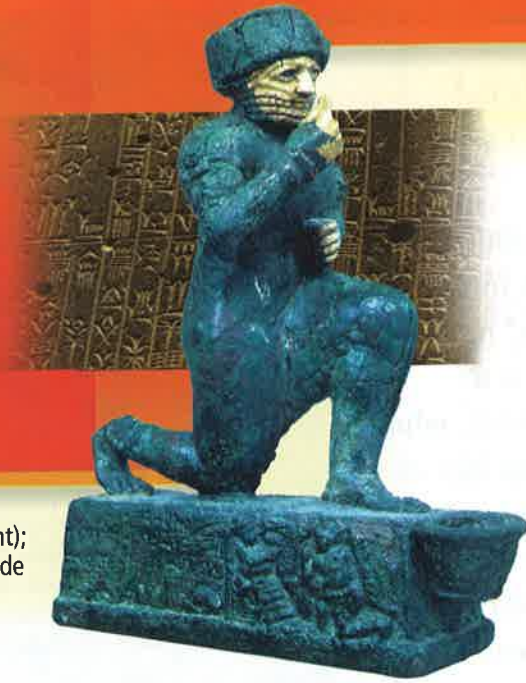


SECTION
2



Hammurabi (front);
Hammurabi's Code
(back)

WITNESS HISTORY AUDIO

Establishing the Law

To establish the law of the land, Babylonian king Hammurabi set the law in stone and placed it in public view. He began the law code with a statement of his authority:

“Then [the gods] Anu and Bel called by name me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, who feared God, to bring about the rule of righteousness in the land . . . so that the strong should not harm the weak; so that I should rule over the [people] and enlighten the land, to further the well-being of mankind.”

Focus Question How did various strong rulers unite the lands of the Fertile Crescent into well-organized empires?

Invaders, Traders, and Empire Builders

Objectives

- Outline the achievements of the first empires that arose in Mesopotamia.
- Understand how conquests brought new empires and ideas into the Middle East.
- Describe how the Persians established a huge empire.
- Summarize the contributions the Phoenicians made to the ancient Middle East.

Terms, People, and Places

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Sargon | barter economy |
| Hammurabi | money economy |
| codify | Zoroaster |
| civil law | colony |
| criminal law | alphabet |
| Nebuchadnezzar | |

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas Use a table like this one to record the main idea of each section of text that follows a red heading.

Red Heading	Main Idea
First Empires Arise in Mesopotamia	
Conquests Bring New Empires and Ideas	

Through thousands of years of war and peace, the peoples of the Middle East built great empires and made long-lasting innovations. The region became a vital crossroads where warriors and traders met, clashed, and mingled. Many of the beliefs and ideas of the ancient Middle East survived to shape our modern world.

First Empires Arise in Mesopotamia

Again and again through time, nomadic peoples or ambitious warriors descended on the rich cities of the Fertile Crescent. While many invaders simply looted and burned, some stayed to rule. Powerful leaders created large, well-organized empires, bringing peace and prosperity to the region.

Sargon Builds the First Empire About 2300 B.C., **Sargon**, the ruler of Akkad, invaded and conquered the neighboring city-states of Sumer. He continued to expand his territory, building the first empire known to history. He appointed local rulers, each of whom served as king of the land he oversaw. However, the world's first empire did not last long. After Sargon's death, other invaders swept into the wide valley between the rivers, tumbling his empire into ruin.

Hammurabi Brings Babylon to Power In time, the Sumerian city-states revived, and they resumed their power struggle. Eventually, however, new conquerors followed in Sargon's footsteps and imposed unity over the Fertile Crescent. About

1790 B.C., **Hammurabi** (hah muh RAH bee), king of Babylon, brought much of Mesopotamia under the control of his empire.

Hammurabi's most ambitious and lasting contribution was his publication of a set of laws known as Hammurabi's Code. Most of the laws had been around since Sumerian times, but Hammurabi wanted to ensure that everyone in his empire knew the legal principles his government would follow. He had artisans carve nearly 300 laws on a stone pillar for all to see. Hammurabi's Code was the first important attempt by a ruler to **codify**, or arrange and set down in writing, all the laws that would govern a state.

Establishing Civil Law One section of Hammurabi's Code codified **civil law**. This branch of law deals with private rights and matters, such as business contracts, property inheritance, taxes, marriage, and divorce. Much of Hammurabi's civil code was designed to protect the powerless, such as slaves or women. Some laws, for example, allowed a woman to own property and pass it on to her children. Another law spelled out the rights of a married woman, saying that if she was found to be blameless for the problems between herself and her husband, she could leave the marriage. If she were found to be at fault, however, the law instructed that she be thrown in the river.

In general, Babylonian civil law gave a husband both legal authority over his wife and a legal duty to support her. The code also gave a father nearly unlimited authority over his children. The Babylonians believed that an orderly household was necessary for a stable empire.

Defining Crime and Punishment Hammurabi's Code also addressed **criminal law**. This branch of law deals with offenses against others, such as robbery, assault, or murder. Earlier traditions often permitted victims of crimes or their families to take the law into their own hands. By setting out specific punishments for specific offenses, Hammurabi's Code limited personal vengeance and encouraged social order.

By today's standards, the punishments in Hammurabi's Code often seem cruel, following the principle of "an eye for an eye and a life for a life." For example, if a house collapsed because of poor construction and the owner died as a result, the house's builder could be put to death. Still, such a legal code imposed more social order than existed when individuals sought their own justice.

Other Accomplishments Made by Hammurabi Although most famous for his code of laws, Hammurabi took other steps to successfully unite his empire. He improved the system of irrigation, organized a well-trained army, and ordered many temples to be repaired. To encourage religious unity across his empire, he promoted Marduk, the patron god of Babylon, over older Sumerian gods. In time, Marduk became the chief god of Babylonian worship.

 **Checkpoint** How do civil law and criminal law differ?



Civilizations Expand

As new civilizations took control of Fertile Crescent lands, their empires expanded but stayed near the two large rivers. Many elements of shared culture existed among these civilizations, including worship of Marduk (above), who became the region's chief god.