

SOCIETY AND JUSTICE

READING

COMPREHENSION

Read the article. Match the words in BLUE with the definitions below.

- 1 a person who says that somebody has committed a crime
- 2 the smallest amount of money that somebody can be paid for doing a job
- 3 involving private arguments between people or organisations rather than criminal matters
- 4 dishonest actions
- 5 a process in a court of law to decide whether someone is guilty of a crime
- 6 information that shows if something is true or not

Read again. Are these sentences TRUE or FALSE?

- 1 The Code of Hammurabi is an ancient punishment.
- 2 King Hammurabi ruled in France in the 1700s BC.
- 3 The code only covers disagreements between individuals.
- 4 The punishment for theft was death.
- 5 The code only protected powerful people in society.
- 6 Some of King Hammurabi's ideas about fair trials are still true today.

THE CODE OF HAMMURABI

The Code of Hammurabi is an ancient collection of laws that was created by King Hammurabi of Babylon, in the Middle East. King Hammurabi ruled between 1792 and 1750 BC. He believed that his code of laws was given to him by the gods, and he said that he wanted justice for everyone. The laws are written on a tall block of stone that is now in the Louvre Museum in Paris, but many smaller copies have been found in different parts of the Middle East.

The 282 laws in the Code of Hammurabi give examples of criminal and civil cases and punishments. Many of the laws seem cruel to us today. For example, 'if anybody commits a robbery and is caught, he shall be put to death.' However, other laws protect the weak. For example, the code includes minimum wages for some workers, and gives some rights to women. Not everybody was equal though. The punishment for violence depended on who the victim was. If a man broke the bone of somebody who was his equal, then his own bone would be broken; but if he broke the bone of a slave, then he only had to pay a fine.

Although the Code of Hammurabi is no longer relevant to us today, some of the ideas are still important in a modern court of law:

- Innocent until proven guilty: In Hammurabi's code, the accuser must prove that the person is guilty. If not, the accuser might suffer the punishment himself.
- Evidence: Hammurabi's code says that evidence must be provided in a trial.
- Lack of corruption: Hammurabi describes the punishment for corrupt judges. Judges who made mistakes could lose their jobs.

The principle of a fair trial is still with us today.

