

which was a code of laws regarding women, has been best preserved; it contains provisions regarding marriage law and offenses by and against women. There is some doubt as to the nature of a collection of laws, principally criminal, found in the state archives of Hattusa and written in the Hittite language. Although this collection, which survives in several editions, consists largely of laws it can scarcely have been published as a code in the form in which it has come down to us. It is rather an official collection of individual laws and decisions for the use of officials of the royal courts. Fragments of legal prescriptions, chiefly regarding marriage and inheritance law, which date from the neo-Babylonian period are of indeterminate nature. To these sources may be added private and official letters, documents connected with the management of private households, temple administrations and to a lesser extent the administration of the government.

These sources deal primarily with civil law or with economic management, such as that of the temples. Only the state archives of Hattusa and of neo-Assyrian Nineveh furnish any considerable number of documents on governmental law and public administration, so that our knowledge of the state is meager. There is enough information, however, to dispel the widely held belief that the ancient East possessed only the despotic monarch. This may be true of the Old-Babylonian, neo-Babylonian and neo-Assyrian kings, although a remarkable text makes it the duty of the latter to avoid arbitrariness and to respect the law; it may be true also of the state at the close of the Sumerian period, which had degraded the former city princes (isag) to mere officials. Its character is clearly expressed in the deification (which disappeared later) of the king. But even the Old Assyrian rulers seem to have been confronted with a considerable degree of urban autonomy, while the Old Assyrian trading colonies in Asia Minor had a republican form of government. As the state treaties found in Hattusa show, the Hittite Empire was a federative alliance under the leadership of Hatti, and its rulers were probably linked to the dependent princes through feudal