

abutu). In addition to this "genuine" adoption, Old Babylonian law provides for a variety of forms of adoption, which involve a mere guardianship relation between the parties rather than inclusion in the family. This was especially true of minors and women. Besides the adoption will there are evidences of parental distribution in all periods, particularly developed as šintu (provision) in Subaræan law. This distribution of the estate among the family (wife and children) according to the rules of legal inheritance is related to the making of gifts in case of death, which is found in Sumerian and Old Babylonian law as referring to individual gifts and which might involve the entire estate according to neo-Babylonian law, taking the place of the adoption will. Here again, however, distribution usually did not extend beyond the immediate family, and freedom of testamentary disposition did not exist.

Characteristic of Babylonian civilization were the hieroduloi, who formed a special caste of temple slaves (širkū) in the great temples of the neo-Babylonian period; there were also free hieroduloi, including even the king's daughter. More is known concerning the female hieroduloi of the Old Babylonian period; these were forbidden to have legitimate children, whether pledged to prostitution or to chastity. The female votary could therefore have no heirs, and the wealth given her by her father at the time of her dedication passed to her brother after her death, unless her father named another as heir or allowed her free disposition of her property. Certain hieroduloi were even allowed to marry but were replaced by concubines for the bearing of children. According to Sumerian law, when the wife was sterile, even the children borne the husband by a prostitute were legitimate.

There are various forms of land tenure in cuneiform law. The need for regulating the periodic floods in Babylonia favored the aggregation of men into large units from earliest times. In northern Babylonia clans were the units of political organization and owners of the land in the Old Akkadian period. In the south the very oldest legal finds indicate the existence of private property, landownership being concentrated in the