**Documents from Mesopotamia**

**Document A:**

**The Sumerian Goddess Inanna Looks After the City Agade (About 2000 BCE)**

So that the warehouses would be provisioned

that dwellings would be founded in the city,

that its people would eat splendid food…

that acquaintances would dine together,

that foreigners would cruise about like unusual birds in the sky…

At that time, she filled Agade…with gold,

Delivered copper, tin, and blocks of lapis lazuli to its storehouses…

Its harbor, where ships docked, was full of excitement…

Its king, the shepherd Naram-Sin, rose like the sun on the holy throne of Agade..

Its city wall touched heaven, like a mountain….

Ships brought the goods of Sumer itself upstream [to Agade],

The highland Amorites, people ignorant of agriculture,

Came before her there with spirited bulls and spirited bucks,

Meluhhans [from the Indus valley, and] people of the black mountains,

Brought exotic wares down to her…

All the governors, temple administrators, and land registrars of the Gude’ena

Regularly supplied monthly and New Year offerings there.

**Document B:**

**A Sumerian Father Gives Advice To His Son (About 2300 BCE)**

My son, let me give you instructions.

Pay attention to them !

Do not beat a farmer’s son, or he will break your irrigation canal….

When you are drunk, do not judge….

Do not break into a house…

Do not speak with a girl when you are married, the [likelihood of] slander is strong…

Do not allow your sheep to graze in untested grazing grounds…

Submit to strength. Bow down to the mighty man.

**Document C:**

**A Teacher’s Math Examination Question to Student (About 1700 BCE)**

“Do you know multiplication, reciprocals, coefficients, balancing of accounts, administrative accounting, how to apportion all kinds of pay, divide property, and delimit shares of fields?”

**Document D: Hammurabi’s Laws Seek To Uphold The Social Order In Babylon (About 1700 BCE)**

1. If a man accuses another of murder but cannot prove it, the accuser shall be put to death.

8. If a man steals, he shall repay thirty fold. If he hasn’t the money, he shall be put to death.

15. If a man helps a slave to escape from the city, he shall be put to death.

117. If a man sells his wife or child to settle a debt, they shall work in the house of the buyer for three years, and regain their freedom in the fourth.

129. If a man’s wife is caught lying with another man, they shall be bound and thrown into the water. If the woman’s husband spares her life, the king shall spare the life of the man.

132. If the finger has been pointed at a wife because of another man, though she has not been caught lying with him she shall throw herself into the sacred river for her husband’s sake.

141. If a wife goes out, plays the fool, ruins her house and belittles her husband, he may divorce her; or, if he prefers, he may marry another and keep the former wife as his maidservant.

142. If a woman hates her husband and says: “You shall not have me,” her past shall be inquired into. If she had been careful and was without past sin; and her husband had been going out and greatly belittling her, she has no blame. She shall take her dowry and go back to her father.

145. If a man’s wife does not give him children, he may take a concubine.

195. If a man strikes his father, they shall cut off his hand.

202. If a man strikes the cheek of his superior, he shall receive sixty strokes with an oxtail whip.

204. If a common man strikes a common man on the cheek, he shall pay ten shekels of silver.

205. If a man’s slave strikes the son of a gentleman on the cheek, they shall cut off his ear.

206. If a man strikes another in a quarrel and wounds him, but swears: “I did not strike him intentionally,” he shall only be responsible for paying the physician.

209. If a man strikes the daughter of another and causes a miscarriage, he shall pay ten shekels.

210. If the woman dies, they shall put his daughter to death.

The Code of Hammurabi marks the beginning of the institutionalization of the patriarchal family as an aspect of state power. It reflects a class society in which women's status depended on the male family head's social status and property. The wife of an impoverished burgher could by a change of his status, without her volition or action, be turned from a respectable woman into a debt slave or a prostitute. On the other hand, a married woman's sexual behavior, such as adultery or an unmarried woman's loss of chastity, could declass her in a way in which no man could be declassed by his sexual activity. Women's class status is always differently defined than that of men of their class from that period on to the present.

      From the Old Babylonian period to the time when the husband has power of life or death over the adulterous wife there have been great changes also in the authority of kings and ruler over the lives of men and women. The patriarchal head of the family at the time of Hammurabi was still somewhat restrained in his power over his wife by kinship obligations to the male head of the wife's family. By the time of the Middle Assyrian laws he is restrained mostly by the power of the state. Fathers, empowered to treat the virginity of their daughters as a family property asset, represent an authority as absolute as that of the king. Children reared and socialized within such authority will grow into the kinds of citizens needed in an absolute kingship. The king's power was secured by men as absolutely dependent on and subservient to him as their families were dependent on and subservient to them. The archaic state was shaped and developed in the form of patriarchy."

Women's reproductive capacity is first recognized as a tribal resource, then, as ruling elites develop, it is acquired as the property of a particular group.

This occurs with the development of agriculture. The material conditions of grain agriculture demand group cohesiveness and continuity over time, thus strengthening household structure. In order to produce a harvest, workers of one production cycle are indebted for food and seeds to workers of a previous production cycle. Since the amount of food depends on the availability of labor, production becomes the chief concern. This has two consequences: it strengthens the influence of older males and it increases the tribes' incentive for acquiring more women. In the fully developed society based on plow agriculture, women and children are indispensable to the production process, which is cyclical and labor intensive. Children have now become an economic asset. At this stage tribes seek to acquire the reproductive potential of women, rather than women themselves. Men do not produce babies directly; thus it is women, not men, who are exchanged.

**Document E: A Sumerian Father Wants His Teen-Ager To Be A Scribe (About 2000 BCE)**

…Why do you idle about? Go to school, recite your assignment, open your schoolbag, write your tablet, let your “big brother” write your new tablet for you. Be humble and show fear before your apprentice teacher. When you show terror, he will like you…. Never in my life did I make you carry reeds to the canebrake. I never said to you ”Follow my caravans.” I never sent you to work as a laborer. “Go, work and support me, ” I never in my life said that to you. Others like you support their parents by working… Compared to them you are not a man at all. Night and day you waste in pleasures…. Among all craftsmen that live in the land, no work is more difficult than that of a scribe. [But] it is in accordance with the fate decreed by [the god] Enlil that a man should follow his father’s work.

**Documents from Egypt**

**Document F: Praise for Pharaoh’s New City (About 1300 BCE)**

His majesty—life, prosperity, health !—has built himself a city, named “Great of Victories.” All men have left their towns and are settled in its territory. Temples of the gods Amon and Set, and the goddesses Astarte and Uto, mark its four quarters. Pharaoh is in it as a god. The Residence is full of supplies, its ponds with fish, its lakes with birds. Its granaries are so full of grain they come near to the sky. Onions and leeks are available for food, and lettuce, pomegranates, apples, olives. Its ships go out and come back to mooring, so it has supplies and food every day. One rejoices to live there. The small in it are like the great. The young men are dressed up every day, with sweet oil on

their heads and newly dressed hair. The ale of the city is tasty, so is beer from the harbor and wine of the vineyards. The singers of “Great of Victories” are sweet, being taught at Memphis [the old capital of Egypt]. So live there content, Pharaoh—thou god!

**Document G: Instructions Of The Vizier Ptah-hotep To His Son (About 2450 BCE)**

Let not you heart be puffed up, confident that you are a wise man. Take counsel with the ignorant as well as the wise. Good speech may be found with maidservants at the

grindstones…. Wrongdoing has never brought its undertaking into port. Fraud may gain riches, but the strength of justice is that it lasts… If you sit at the table of one greater than you, speak only when spoken to. Laugh after him. When carrying a message from one great man to another, be accurate. Beware of making words worse through vulgar speech, and so making for hostility between them. If you have a son who listens to you and takes care of your property as he should, do not cut your heart off from him. But if he does not carry out your instructions, if his manners in your household are wretched, if he rebels against all you say, cast him off. He is not your son at all.

If you want to make friendship last in a home to which you have access as a master, a brother or a friend, beware of approaching the women. Do not do it. Do not be greedy, or envious of your own kindred. Love your wife at home as is fitting. Fill her belly, clothe her back. Make her heart glad as long as you live. Do not contend with her at law, but keep her from gaining control. Bow your back to your superior, then your reward will be as it should be. Opposition to a superior is a painful thing.

**Document H: A Selection of Math Problems (About 1850 BCE)**

Problems 1-6: How do you divide N loaves between 10 men, when the value of N is 1,2,6,7,8,9?

Problem 26: A quantity added to a quarter of that quantity becomes 15. What is the quantity?

Problem 50: A round field has a diameter of 9 khet. What is its area?

Problem 64: Divide 10 hekats of barley among 10 men so that each gets 1/8 hekat more than the one before.

**Document I: An Egyptian Father Wants His Son To Be A Scribe, About 2000 BCE**

On his way to put him into the Writing School among the children of officials, he said to his son:

I have seen how the laboring man is burdened. You should set your heart on pursuing writing instead. The scribe’s place is in the Residence City, and he shall not be poor in it. Men greet him respectfully, and he is not clothed in the workman’s apron. If you leave the school after midday is announced, and go rollicking in the street, it is not for you. If three loaves should satisfy you, and two measures of beer, but there is still no limit to your belly, fight against it. I have set you on the way of god. The scribe reaches the halls of the magistrates. No scribe lacks food, being fed from the property of the King’s House—life, prosperity, health!

**Document J: Negative Confession By the Deceased In the Underworld, Afterlife Depending On Its Truth, From The Book Of The Dead (About 1500 BCE)**

Hail to you, O great god, judge of the dead! I know your name, and that of the forty-two godswith you who punish evildoers on the day of reckoning. Lord of Justice is your name. I havecome to you; I have brought you justice; I have expelled deceit for you.

I have not committed evil against men.

I have not mistreated cattle.

I have not blasphemed a god.

I have not defamed a slave to his superior.

I have not made anyone weep.

I have not killed.

I have given no order to a killer.

I have not added to the weight of the balance.

I have not built a dam against running water.

I am pure! I am pure! I am pure!

I have not stolen.

I have not been greedy or envious.

I have not told lies.

I have not practiced usury.

I have not gossiped.

I have not committed adultery.

I have not been quarrelsome.

I have not been abusive.

May you rescue me from the devourer of the condemned dead! I have come to you without sin, without guilt, without evil, without a witness against me, without one against whom I have taken action. I have come here to testify to justice, and to bring the scales in which my character is weighed against the feather of truth into perfect balance.