Preface

This bibliography presents a comprehensive survey of studies published from 1885-2001 concerning women, gender, and related subjects in the ancient cultures of Anatolia, Syria, Mesopotamia and Iran. From the beginning of Assyriology, women have been a topic of study. The first Assyrian woman who was transformed from a mythological into a historical person was Semiramis, identified in 1854 by Henry C. Rawlinson with the Assyrian queen Sammuramat, the wife of king Šamši-Adad V and mother of king Adadnirari III. Queens and princesses have since remained an important subject in ancient Near Eastern studies.

The status of non-royal women is a subject in the law texts excavated since the second half of the nineteenth century. With the discovery of the stele of Hammurabi in Susa and the publication of the Codex Hammurabi by Vincent Scheil in 1902, the most complete law text of the second millennium B.C.E. became a focus of scholars’ attention. But women were studied primarily in the context of marriage and family. The first marriage contract was published by Johann N. Strassmaier in 1885, followed in 1888 with articles by Felix E. Peiser and by Jules Oppert, both published in Zeitschrift für Assyriologie 3. Two major works appeared in the 1890s: from 1890 to 1898, the four volumes Aus dem babylonischen Rechtsleben by Josef Kohler and Felix E. Peiser, and in 1893, Bruno Meissner’s still cited Beiträge zum altbabylonischen Privatrecht. The first study of the status of women in society was published in 1902 by Viktor Marx, which, for sixty years, represented, according to Aaron Skaist (1963: 11) “all that had been accomplished in the area of Neo-Babylonian marriage law.”

For most of the twentieth century, royal women and women in legal texts represented the core of research on women in ancient Near Eastern
history, and thus the majority of entries in this bibliography. Until the 1970s, studies on women, sexuality, and family remained relatively rare. When academic interest in the structures of societies and economies grew, scholars eventually began to pay more attention to women and related issues. Thus, the vast majority of literature on these subjects dates to the past thirty years. Since the 1980s, women have become more visible in studies, sometimes in separate chapters, more often listed in indexes, especially in studies of economy, family archives, and increasingly, in text editions. Today an author may even be criticized for neglecting to include women, as in I.M. Diakonoff’s 1995 review article of Marc Van De Mieroop’s Society and Enterprise in Old Babylonian Ur.

In 1989, in the Festschrift for Åke W. Sjöberg, Tikva Frymer-Kensky published the first Assyriological “gender study”. Because gender studies demand a new theoretical and methodological approach, such publications still remain rather rare and appear predominantly in interdisciplinary journals and editions of collected thematic papers (see, e.g., sub J.M. Asher-Greve, A.K. Guinan, T. Frymer-Kensky, R. Harris, M. Marcus, S. Pollock, M. Roth, R. Wright). To facilitate access to gender-relevant material, studies on family, children, love, sexuality, and eunuchs are included in this bibliography.

Considering the above mentioned limitations, the bibliography nevertheless presents a breadth and depth of material that should motivate more scholars to engage in gender studies.

The main source material for gender, women and related issues are legal and economic texts, law collections and legal documents, family archives, letters, incantations, and omens. Because so many of the relevant publications are written for the specialist, this bibliography includes primarily works that include transliterations and translations and interpretative studies.

Including or excluding a publication from this bibliography has been a difficult decision. To list all relevant primary material (e.g., excavation reports, text editions, catalogues of art objects and artefacts, inscribed objects, lexical studies, etc.) did not seem feasible. Most listed works contain notes and/or bibliographies with references to primary sources and further specialized studies. Thus, with exceptions, omitted are: excavation reports, editions of cuneiform texts, series such as Archives Royales de Mari (ARM), Cuneiform Texts in the British Museum (CT), Textes Cunéiformes du Musée du Louvre (TCL), Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon (MSL), Uruk Endberichte, Mission Archéologique de Mari (MAM), Oriental Institute Publications (OIP), and most editions of economic and administrative texts, cata-