

times, became common in the Ptolemaic period. This is often explained as a response to the increase of population and the need to keep landed property together in the family. More decisive, no doubt, was the example set by the Ptolemaic royal house; Romans living in Egypt were not allowed to marry their full siblings.

A young man of the upper class was supposed to marry when he was able to support a family. Since he finished his education around the age of twenty, this was probably about the age for him to find a wife. As in the early Judaic and the much later Islamic cultures, a woman married soon after reaching maturity, between twelve and fourteen. Thus, she was prevented from having illicit intercourse and could maximize her period of fertility. Although the marriage of an immature girl is recorded in the twenty-sixth dynasty, a man was not supposed to have intercourse with a girl before she had reached puberty. During the pharaonic period a suitor approached the father of the desired bride, or if he were dead, her mother or uncle. They signed a marriage contract, which they might keep, give to a third person, or deposit in a temple. From 536 BCE on the surviving contracts are signed by the couple themselves. Often drawn up after the couple already had children, these contracts regulate the rights of the wife and her children during the marriage and in case of divorce. Either partner could ask for a divorce and marry again. Some contracts name a sum a man had to pay (*šp n šhm.t*) if he divorced his wife, assuming she was innocent. Others name the dowry or a sum the bride gave to her husband, which obliged him to maintain her or which he had to return in case of divorce (*hd n jr hm.t*). If the wife was blameless, she had a right to one-third of the husband's belongings; the other two-thirds went to her children (*sh n snh*). All that a woman inherited or acquired was at her own disposal, and she could leave it to whichever of her children she preferred. Thus, it was difficult for a man to remarry. If a wife had committed "the great sin," she lost her dowry and all her rights from her husband. During the pharaonic period a man usually could afford to maintain only one wife. If he could afford it, however, he was free to have more than one official wife and to have sexual contact with dependent women of his household. The marriage contracts transmitted to us from the lower classes during the Late and Greco-Roman periods, seem to exclude second marriages without divorce or the death of one partner. The children of the first wife were the main heirs; the children of a slave woman had the same rights only if their father had adopted them.

Adultery with a married woman was forbidden in order to keep inheritance lines clear. Death penalties for both sexes or castration of the man are punishments mentioned in literary texts but not in the nonliterary records. A hundred strokes, cutting off the nose, or hard labor are

**FAMILY.** Ancient Egyptian has a large repertory of terms that denote various types of familial relationships. These include *h3w*, close relatives, or kindred; *hrw*, the people a person has to care for, family members, relatives; or the extended family household; *3bwt*, extended family household, or clan; *mhw*, extended family, or clan; *whjtt*, clan; *hnw*, co-residents; and *dnjt/dnwt*, a term for family used during the eighteenth dynasty. The terms for members of the nuclear family include *mwt*, mother; *jt*, father; *z3t*, son/daughter; and *sn/t*, brother/sister. Grandparents were specified as maternal or paternal: *mwt mwt.f/jt.f*, mother of one's mother/father; *jt mwt.f/jt.f*, father of one's mother/father. Grandchildren were specified by the sex of their parent: *z3t z3t.f* son/daughter of one's son/daughter. Nieces and nephews were also called *z3t*, and cousins *sn/t*. But since *sn* can also mean "brother-in-law," and sometimes merely a member of the same generation, it often is difficult to determine the relationship between two family members.

The Egyptians usually married within the same social class. Late period archives indicate that marriage between cousins or uncle and niece was allowed, as well as between half-brothers and half-sisters with the same father but different mothers. Marriage between full brothers and sisters, rare among nonroyal Egyptians in pharaonic



*FAMILY. Statue of Uni and Renwet, nineteenth dynasty.* This limestone statue of Uni, the chief royal scribe of Ramesses II, and his wife Renwet, a priestess of Hathor, was found in the tomb of Uni's father at Asyut. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1915. [15.2.1])

threatened, though not inflicted on, an adulterer in the village of Deir el-Medina. During the Late period, a priest who committed adultery had to pay a fine and leave his community. A woman who could not state her innocence on oath could be repudiated by her husband and lose all her rights to him.

Among poorer people, a wife might come to live with her husband's parents (patrilocal marriage); less often the husband came to live with his wife's family or was received by her on periodic visits (matrilocal marriage). Because sharing a house with one's relatives resulted in all kinds of difficulties, a man was advised to found his own house (neolocal marriage). Literary texts, household lists, the title "mistress of the house" for a married woman, and the size of houses indicate that the nuclear family was the usual situation.

Unmarried children or mostly female relatives who could not care for themselves could be included in the household of a male relative. Census lists of the Kahun papyri show that in the household of a man named Snefra were included his grandmother, mother (both probably widowed), three aunts, and his own wife and children. Houses of 70 square meters (230 square feet) in Deir el-Medina and 20 to 100 square meters (66 to 328 square feet) in Tell el-Amarna were the norm for the working class. Well-off families lived in bigger houses. In Deir el-Medina the houses of related families were situated in the same square of the town. A complex of eleven living quarters, twenty-five courtyards, and a few ovens in Tell el-Amarna has been interpreted as the compound of an extended family; this seems very doubtful, however, because the site was inhabited for less than fifteen years.

Coffin Texts expressing the wish of the deceased to meet family members and others in the hereafter are often cited as proof for extended families. The fact that the deceased mentions not only his parents, brothers, children, and women, but also servants, friends, and colleagues, shows that this does not mean that they all lived under one roof. The same applies to the people for whom Hekanakht provides in his letters. Except for his mother, to whom he writes that the whole house is like (his) children, there is no proof that the others he mentions belonged to his family. The name of the father of one of the elder men mentioned differs from his, and three men receive provision for themselves, their wives, and their children, which proves how close the unity of the nuclear family was considered.

If a man failed, his wife and children could be prosecuted. They could be punished with him or, if he fled from his work, they were taken into custody until he returned or had to do the work for him. Persistent fleeing might lead to the entire family becoming "serfs."

The husband (*hy* or *ḏj*) was advised to respect his wife (*ḥm.t*) in her household and to love her, but to keep her from power. Infertility was not accepted as a reason to repudiate her. Cases of adoption have been transmitted to us. On monuments from the Middle Kingdom on, a wife is usually called "mistress of the house" (*nb.t pr*); from the New Kingdom on she is "his beloved sister" (*sn.t.f mr.t.f*); on documents, married women, like their husbands, are usually titled "citizen" (*nh.t n njw.t*). A term for a second wife seems to have been *ḥbsw.t*. Although the house was the main realm of a married woman, she could be well informed about her husband's external business. Reliefs of the Old Kingdom show wife and children in the company of the husband inspecting work on their estate. Documents from the workmen's village at Deir el-Medina, dating to the New Kingdom, inform us that a wife could take care of her husband's affairs during his absence. A peasant's wife helped her husband in the fields and with their cattle when needed. In the event of the early death of her husband, a mother was responsible for her children and looked after their inheritance. A queen or a nomarch's wife could rule for her son until he came of age. An eldest son or daughter, too, could look after the interests of his or her siblings in legal affairs.

As during life, a man was to care for his wife in death and in the hereafter. They were frequently buried together and depicted side by side in the tomb decoration, though the man is usually shown in the more prominent position. Sometimes they are accompanied by one or more of their children. A considerable number of tombs from the Old Kingdom, however, show the tomb owner with his children, while his wife is not mentioned. If this indicates divorce and there was no one else to see to their funerary

needs, these women must have been badly off. Otherwise, a woman might have her own false door in her husband's tomb, or she might erect her own tomb where her children, but not her husband, are depicted or mentioned. During the Middle and New Kingdoms, a wife is nearly always shown at the side of her husband. Except in banquet scenes, they can be accompanied by their children at festive events. Parents can be mentioned or depicted in their son's tomb at all periods. During the Middle and New Kingdoms, they and other relatives are often included in banquet scenes. The wife, children, brothers, sisters, other relatives, friends, and colleagues follow the funerary cortège at the tomb owner's burial, as is depicted in New Kingdom tombs. Some tombs show the mummies of the couple standing upright in front of the tomb during the Opening of the Mouth ceremony. According to Theban tomb paintings, spouses went to banquets together. While men and women enjoyed themselves separately during the earlier eighteenth dynasty, they are always depicted sitting side by side from the Amarna period on.

A son to whom a father wished to hand down his office had to qualify before he was nominated by the king. With the consent of the king, the father could take his son to help him with his work as a "staff of old age," so that he could take over when his father retired or died. While the consent of the king was often only a formality, the king could deny it to break the power of mighty families (e.g., at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom and during the New Kingdom, especially during the time of Amenhotep II and in the Amarna period), and assign qualified newcomers. Even a man coming from an unknown family could reach a high position. But, since a good education was needed to qualify, only a few men of lowly origin reached this goal, and political or priestly offices might stay in one family for many generations.

The royal family was a rather more complex matter, since the kings practiced polygamy to a far greater extent than was customary among ordinary Egyptians. This was especially true during the New Kingdom, when diplomatic marriages increased the number of denizens of the royal women's quarters. Some of this number were likely concubines rather than wives. It is not known what legal arrangements, if any, were made with the royal wives, but some appear to have had estates, along with their administrators, assigned directly to them for their support. Of the nature of the dynamics within the royal family, little is known. Royal family members were largely excluded from the bureaucracy after the fourth dynasty; in the New Kingdom, royal sons seem to have served in the military frequently, while some sons and daughters held priest-hoods.

In the world of the gods, families were common. Most famous is the Ennead of Heliopolis. After Atum had cre-

ated himself, he spat our Shu (air) and Tefnut (humidity). This couple begot Geb (earth) and Nut (sky), who bore four children: Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys. Isis conceived her son Horus, who became king of Egypt, by Osiris, posthumously. Common were triads: a divine couple and their child. The son of Amun and Mut in Karnak was Khonsu, the moon god. During the New Kingdom, the creator god Ptah of Memphis was associated with the lioness goddess Sakhmet, their son being Nefertem, the sun as a child rising from the lotus flower.

The ritual visit of Hathor of Dendera to Horus of Edfu—in a sacred marriage ceremony—took place in a great procession each year during the Ptolemaic era. The conception and birth of their son, the musician Ihi, is depicted in the two so-called *mammisis*, or birth-houses, built by the last Egyptian pharaoh Nectanebo and by the Roman emperor Nero at Dendera. The child-god is identified with the king being enthroned as ruler over Egypt and the desert. This goes back to the legend of the birth of three kings of the fifth dynasty and to the depictions of the birth cycle, well preserved in the temples of Hatshepsut in Deir el-Bahri and of Amenophis III in Luxor, respectively.

[See also Children; Kinship; Marriage and Divorce; Royal Family; and Women.]

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