

**Some Aspects of Family
Relationships in the Documents of
the New Kingdom**

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The aim of this study is to depict a genuine picture of the relations and daily communications among the different members of the family during the New Kingdom. A picture which could be more realistic than that which could be gained from the different group statues representing husband, wife, and children, or representations representing the whole family lamenting their deceased father or mother on funerary stelae.

There are still, other aspects of daily life such as affection, disaffection, disputes, quarrels and normal daily dealings which need to be pointed out. Such different aspects could best be illustrated through texts of daily life such as letters, legal documents, oracles etc ... So, the aim here is to show these relationships from their human and materialistic point of view. In fact, the New Kingdom is very fertile with this kind of information having social connotation. This family relationship will be viewed here in many but connected directions : for example the negative or positive relationship between father or mother with other members of the family, between brothers and sisters.

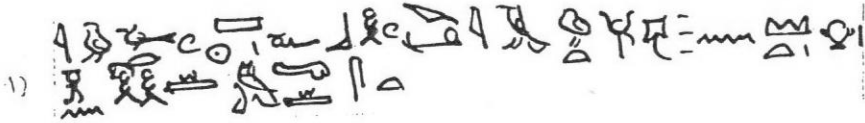
A. Between father and other members of the family :

It was an essential aim for the Egyptian to form a family and establish a house in his early age, as clearly expressed by Ptahhotep in his maxims :

ir ikr.k grg.k pr.k mr.k hmt.k m hn mh ht.s..... If you are clever, establish your house, love your wife with ardor, fill her belly ...⁽¹⁾

According to this principle the man feels himself responsible for taking care of his family and its maintenance, while the wife used to stay at home and do the household work, as it is somehow illustrated in the story of the two brothers :

(1) K. Sethe, *Agyptische Lesestücke*, Leipzig 1928/1983 die Weisheitslehren des Ptahhotep. p. 40, 3.



iw wrs.f hr hbs iəwt n həst hr in wəh m-bəh .s

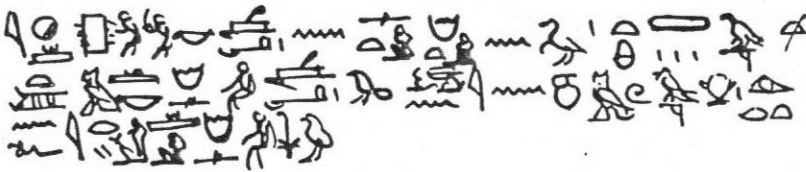
“He used to spend the day hunting animals and placing them before her”.



iw.s hms.ti m pəy.f pr.⁽³⁾

While she is staying home :

Naturally, an important reason for getting married is to have a partner, so that one may not feel lonely, as seen by the gods themselves in the story of the two brothers. So Pare said to Chnum :



ih kd,k w' n s.hmt n Bətə tm.k hms w'w wn-in-Hum hr irt n.f iry hmsw “May you form a woman for Bata, that he may not stay alone, and Chnum made him a mate”.

However, the most important intention for forming a family is to beget children, who would carry the man's name and keep his memory on earth.

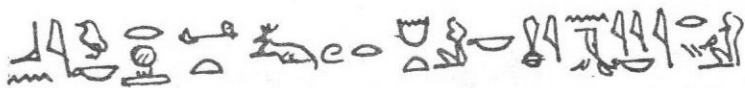
It is an urgent desire, for which both a king or a common one are equal. We do remember the childless king in the story of the “doomed Prince” who never lost hope, and prayed his gods to give him a male child.⁽⁴⁾

On the other hand, there is evidence that cases of inability to beget children is seen from the social point of view as blameworthy as we learn from a letter sent from a workman to the scribe Nekhemmut, where he blames him for being avaricious although he is a rich one and adds :

(2) A. Gardiner, Late Egyptian Stories, *Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca*, I, Brussels 1932, 19, 12-13 (9, 6-10, 1).

(3) *Ibid.*, 19, 7-8 (9, 6-9, 7); Gay Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, London 1993, p. 92.

(4) Gardiner, *op.cit.*, I, 1 (4, 1); and about it see also G. Robins, *op.cit.*, p. 77f.

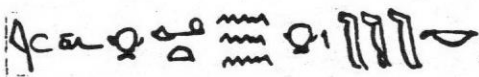


bn iw.k rh dit iwr hmt.k mi nꜥy.k iry

“you can not make your wife pregnant as your fellows”.

Then he scolds him saying *bn ntk rmt iwnꜥ* “You are not a man”.

Lastly, he advices him to adopt a son, that he may pour water on his fingers^(*) :



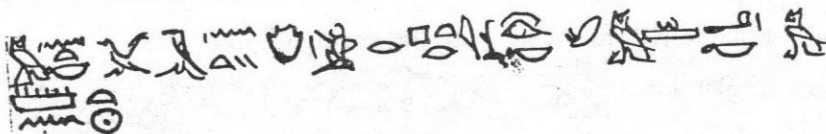
iw.f hr dit mw hr db'w.k⁽⁵⁾

The main characteristic of the relation between the father and his family was affection and attachment, but as usual, and as elsewhere some daily problems or disputes could occur from time to time. These different aspects will be shown in the following :

a- Between father and his kids :

Affection :

Sense of affection and other human feelings could be rightly sought in family correspondances. The father used, in his letters to his family, to be very concerned with different matters of kids, and very anxious about them, expressing his feelings in many expressive ways : so the known scribe Tuthmosis says to his son :



ntk pꜥ nty ib.i r ptri .k sdm 'k m-mnt

It is you whom my heart longs to hear about your state daily.⁽⁶⁾

Or to the whole family :

(5) O.P. Bln, 10672.

(*) This interesting duty is done also by the wife cf. this with the tale of two brothers in LES 13, 15, 16. (see above p. 26) .

(6) LRL, 12, 5-7.

SIC



ntr n3 nij ib.i r sdm .tn n.-mnt⁽⁷⁾

In another letter, the same scribe writes to someone asking him to take care of a woman (may be his daughter) and her children :



ih di.k hr.k n Sdy-m-dw3t n3y.s 'ddiw sryw r tm dit th3.st ky

“may you pay your attention to Shedemdwa and her young kids, so that no other one does hurt them”.⁽⁸⁾

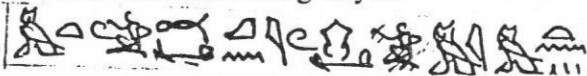
Sometimes, a father expresses his desire to see his son in a very interesting way :



mtw.i mh irt.i m ptri.k

and I'd like to fill (my) eyes with the seeing of you⁽⁹⁾

Or in a similar way :



mtw.i mh kni .i -im.tn

and I'd like embrace you (to fill my bosom with you)⁽¹⁰⁾

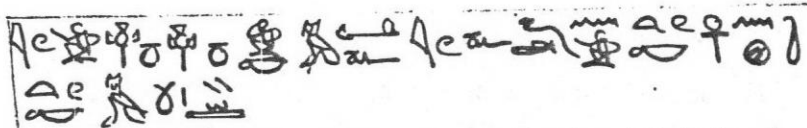
In other cases the writer (father) does not depend on the letter sent to him from his sons, but inquires about them from the messenger himself :

(7) LRL, 12, 12

(8) LRL, 13, 7-8; 14, 14-16 (the woman is a chantress of Amon).

(9) LRL 14, 7 one would compare this expression with the modern arabic *أملى عيني برؤيتك*

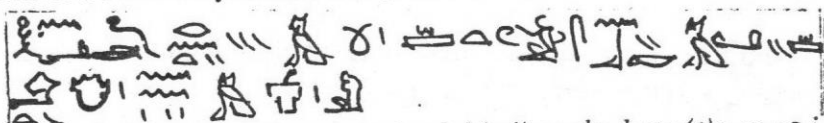
(10) LRL 17, 8-9, 71, 14.



iw.i (hr) ndnd.k m-di 'f iw.f (hr) dd n.i tw.k 'nh.ti tw.k m-ss⁽¹¹⁾

"I inquired about you, and he told me you are alive and well"

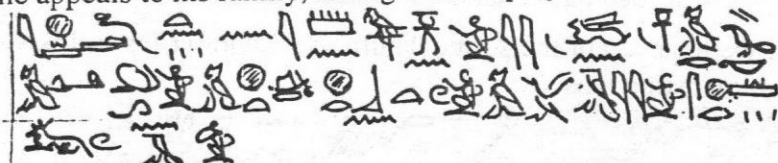
On the other hand he writes to them telling them about his good matters so that they do not worry about him :



hn'-dd r-nty tw.i m-ss tw.i snb.k(wi) m-d+ hḏty.(t)n m-sḏ.i

"And that I am well and healthy, do not worry about me"⁽¹²⁾

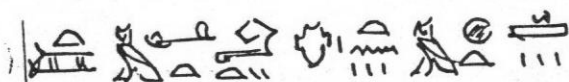
Some expressive feelings is shown, when he is ill. In his writing he appeals to his family, asking them to pray the gods for him :



ih dd.tn n Imn iny.i wn.i mr.k(wi), m-dr ph.i m-hd hr bn tw.i m pḏy.i shrw iwnḏ⁽¹³⁾

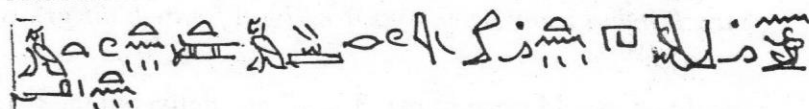
"May you pray to Amon, he should bring me back, indeed I am ill since I reached the north, and I am not in my usual manner".

Then he adds, in order not to let them worry about him :



tm dit hḏty.tm m hr⁽¹³⁾ "and do not worry about (any) thing"

In most cases he also asks them not to neglect writing to him about their conditions :



mtw.tn tm rwi.tn hḏb n.i '.tn⁽¹⁴⁾

(11) LRL 17, 11, 12 .

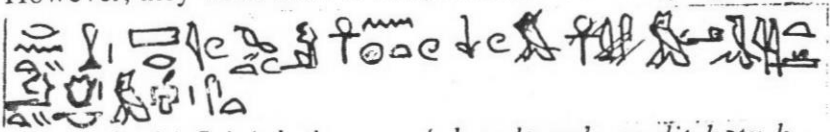
(12) LrL 12, 5, 6; 11, 12

(13) LRL 2, 7-9; and a similar sense in LRL 18, 3, 8, 10.

(14) LRL 21, 10; 22, 3 (without *tm*)

“and do not neglect writing to me about your condition”.

However, they write back to him, to reassure him saying :



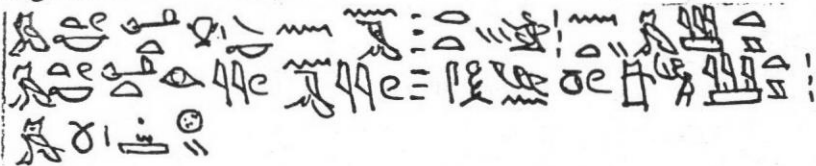
*r-nty hm(t)-Sri 'nh.ti sw m 'nh wdə snb, m-dit həty.k
m.sə.s⁽¹⁵⁾*

“And that Hemetsheri is alive, she is well, prosperous and healthy, do not worry about her”.

b) In dealings and other daily life matters :

The correspondences are also an important source for getting information about such daily matters like needs, requests or orders.

Here, we have again the scribe Thutmoses who writes to his son and gives him instructions :



*mtw.k dit hr.k n nə rmt nty m sht, mtw.k dit iry.w nəy.w
shnw <m> sht m-ss sp-sn.⁽¹⁶⁾*

“and you should pay attention to the people who are in the fields, and let them do their duties in the fields very very well.

Or in another instance :



*mtw.k həb n.i inn swəd.k nə it n Hri n.f mtw.k dit grh.tw
m t3 'rt.⁽¹⁷⁾*

“and you should write to me, if you have delivered the corn to Hori (or not) and you have to finish with this upper-chamber”

(15) LRL 40, 2, 3.

(16) LRL 10, 12-13.

(17) LRL 11, 9-10.

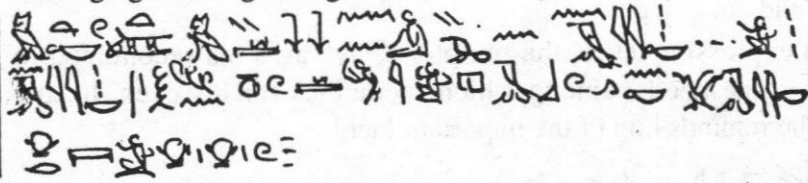
And in requests :



*mtw.k dd n hmw Imn-htp.... iry pə idd.i n.k r ir(t).s iw.i
<r> dit n.k pəy.f hd hr.k n.f⁽¹⁸⁾*

“and you have to tell the carpenter Amenhotep, he should make the door about which I told you to make it,* and I will pay you the price, so you should say to him”.

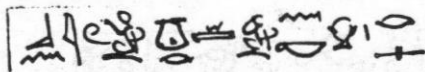
Such requests from a father to his son, is often followed with warning against neglecting them in this way :



*mtw.k tm nni n nəy.k nəy.k shnw ihəb n.k pəy.k Hry
hr.w⁽¹⁹⁾*

“and don't be careless towards your concerning the duties about which your chief had sent to you”.

Moreover, he would be upset if his son did not obey his requests, and expresses his anger in this interesting expression :



*bn iw.i (r) gr n.k hr .s⁽²⁰⁾ “I'll not forgive you (lit. keep
silent to you) because of it”*

This expression may be rightly compared with the current Egyptian one :

أنا مش حاسكت لك عليها

(18) LRL, 20, 1-3.

(*) Infin suffix pron. (with the prothetica a writing for, it can be also an imperative : *irs* = “do it”.

(19) LRL, 19, 2-3; 5, 14 : 8, 5; 11, 14; 14, 11.

(20) LRL, 73, 1; 74, 2.

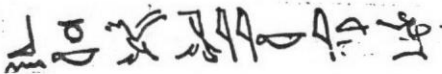
Other examples of similar family transactions may be quoted :

In O. Cerny 19, the well known sculptor "Pay" writes to his son "Paremhob" asking him to seek for him some amulets of lapis-lazuli and promises to pay their owner. He asks him further to send him some fresh incense for polishing the coffin of his mother and he would also pay for it. He does not forget to warn him from neglecting his requests.⁽²¹⁾

Human aspects between family members :

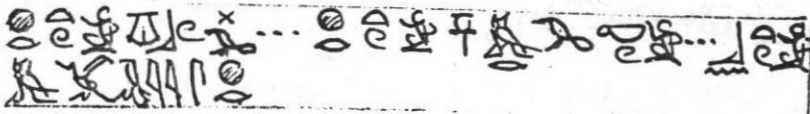
Beside the above mentioned instances of family dealings, the texts show us some interesting human aspects in the dealings among father and sons and daughters :

In an expressive letter, the sculptor "Pay" asks his second son to send him some needs, among which medicines for his eyes. In this instance, he reminds him of the important fact :



bn ink pəy.k it⁽²²⁾ "Am I not your father ?"

These words anticipate that parents have rights on their sons and point out to the moral responsibility of the sons towards their parents, specially when they are ill or in need. This was exactly the case with "Pay" who says further :



hr tw.i gb hr tw.i mr.kwi bn tw.i m pəy.i shr

"I am needy and I am ill ... I am not in my manner (state) anymore"

We have to compare this situation with that letter in which "Pay" was ready to pay the price of the things he required from his son'

In the second letter, it is clear that he was old and sick.

In another situation, a father turns, this time to his daughter asking her to continue sending him bread on the (river) bank,* so that he may

(21) Cerny-Gardiner, *Hieratic Ostraca*, vol. I, Oxfred 1957, 54.4.

(22) O. Bln. P. 11247.

(*) In reference to the market of Deirel-Medineh on the river bank.

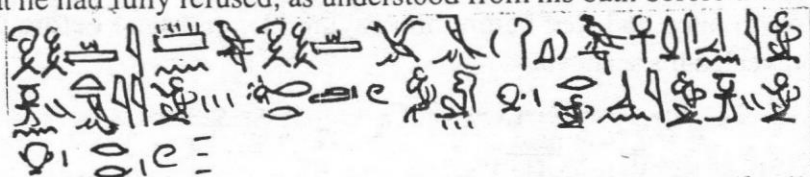
give from them to the young ones, since they were sharing with him his rations, he, moreover, asks to send him anything she can send but not to send them with a bad one.⁽²³⁾

Some interesting evidences show how strong was the responsibility of the father towards his daughter and his support to her whether married or divorced.

In O. Bln 10629⁽²⁴⁾ we learn that a father had given his daughter for her marriage a house furniture as a dot and, moreover, promises to give her a fixed ration of corn for as long as seven years.

In O. Petrie 61, a father tries to assure the life of his daughter after his death, so he states in his will : "you are my good daughter, if the workman Bakey divorced you (lit. dismissed you, from the house), you can stay in the hall (room), which I built myself in my house, and no one in the whole land can get you out of it".⁽²⁵⁾

In Pap. Turin, we meet with a very tragic and impressive situation, where a man named "Weserhat" should give a part of his property, according to a judicial sentence, to a physician, probably as fees for treating his wife, and then another part to his wife herself (may be after her divorce). Moreover he should give up his three daughters, a fact that he had fully refused, as understood from his oath before the court :



wəh Imn wəh pə hkə 'w.s. bn iin təy.j hrdw ə hrr.i bn iin.i
hr.w⁽²⁶⁾

"As Amon endures, as the ruler endures, my three daughters will not be separated from me and I'll not be separated from them".

In this, somehow unclear but lugubrious situation, this man seems to have lost his property. Part of it had gone to the physician, and the other and great part had gone to his wife whom he may divorced after a

(23) O. DeM 324, (DFIFAO VII, p1. 27).

(24) J. Cerny, in BIFAO 27, 177 f (= O. Bln 10629, T. 37).

(25) HO 23, 4; Allam, Zur Stellung der Frau in Alten Agypten in Bi. Or. 26 (1969), 156 f.

(26) A. Gardiner, Ramesside administrative documents, 48, 10-13.

family dispute. The wife may have assumed her right to have the children.⁽²⁷⁾ Anyhow, this father who had lost everything, keeps attached to his daughters and would not give them up anyway.

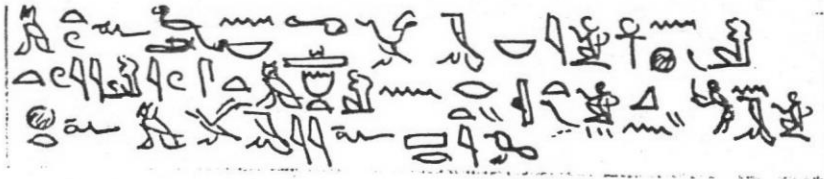
An instance from Pap. Anast V illustrates for us, how hard and painful could be the life for a peasant and his family in case he is unable to pay his taxes. He has to see them tormented before him and used as constraints mean on him :



təy.f hmt snh.tw m-bəh.f nəy.f hrđw m-mhə ⁽²⁸⁾

“His wife shackled before him and his children are in fetter”

On the other hand there must have been negative aspects of father and son relation, specially as regards a father having a bad character. Such is the case of the famous evil chief workman Paneb (known from P. Salt 124) of the 19th dynasty. Besides the numerous scandals he committed in Deir-el-Medineh we know of the bad relations between him and one of his sons. Some of his scandals were reported by that son, who once had fled before him saying “I can't stand before him” and revealed his scandals :



mtw.f dd nk Pə-nb 'nh̄t Twy iw.s m h̄mt n rmt̄ ist Knnə
hr.f m pəy.f šri

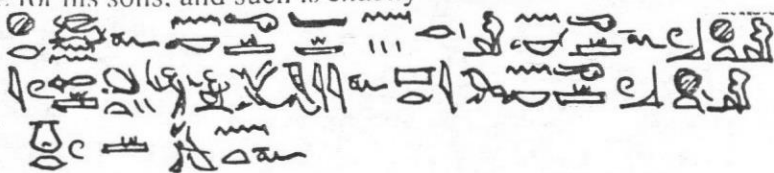
and he (the son) said “Paneb debauched the citizeness Tuy when she was wife to the workman Kenna, so says his son ...⁽²⁹⁾”

(27) Allam, Hieratische Ostraka and Papyri, Tübingen 1973, p. 314.

(28) A. Gardiner, Late Egyptian Miscellanies, Bibl. Aegypt. II, Bruxelles 1937) 65, 3; 893, 14, 15, (the father here is a prisoner).

(29) J. Cerny, Pap. Salt 124, JEA 15 (P. BM 10055), Pl. 43, p. 243; G. Robins, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

And as one would expect, such an evil father must have been a direct example for his sons, and such is exactly what is noticed with his other son “*ḏp*”



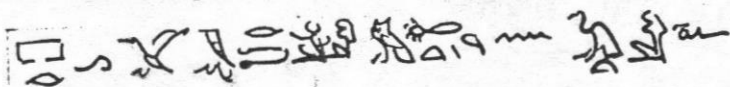
*hr wnn.f nk Hnr nk.f Wbht iw 'ḏ phty pḏy.f sri nk
Wbht gr ntf*⁽³⁰⁾

“And after he (Paneb) had debauched Hunro, he debauched Webkhet her daughter, and Aaphty his son, also debauched Webkhet”*

2. Aspects of relationship between the mother and her children :

Many interesting aspects of this important kind of family relationship can be followed and shown up in the documents of the New Kingdom.

First we should refer to an expressive instance which denotes the physical relationship of the man with his mother :



Pr pḏ rmt m ht n mwt.f⁽³¹⁾ “The human (man) comes out of the womb of his mother”.

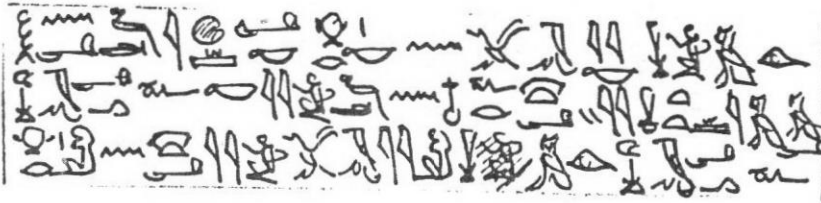
It is interesting to note here the double sense of the word *ht*, the one here and that in the known expression “*sḏ.f m ht.f*”, “his son of his body” both referring to the physical relation, father/son. So the concern of the mother towards her children and her worry about them might be clear and natural, as will be shown in the following :

O. De M. 560 is a letter sent from a very kind mother to her son *Hwy*. Worried about another of her sons, she begs *Hwy* to take care of his brother, she also repeats the same plea to her daughter :

(30) *Ibid.*, p. 245.

(*) We have to compare this bad character of Paneb with that of a father of a young man who had affair with a married woman in Pap. DeM 26 (see above p. 31). The father here had condemned his act and brought him. Personally to the court., see also, C. Robins, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

(31) LEM 16, 12; 84, 8 (withouth *ht*)



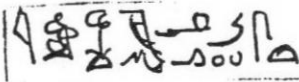
*hn' dd ih di.kk hr.k n pəy. k sn m ir hə'. f ky-dd n
Nfr(t)h'y mitt imi hr.t n H'y pəy tsb mir həc.*

“To the following effect, may you pay attention / take care of your brother, don't leave him (alone), and further, to *Nfrth'y* also, pay your attention to *H'y* your brother, don't leave him.”⁽³²⁾

This sense may be similar to the modern Egyptian :

خللى بالك من أخوك وما تسيبوش أو عى تسييه (تتخلى عنه)

An important and distinguished role of the mother as to her daughter is well illustrated in the words of the loving daughter, given in the famous love songs. She is here very concerned with her daughter, taking good care of her, she even does not allow the lover to look at her daughter :

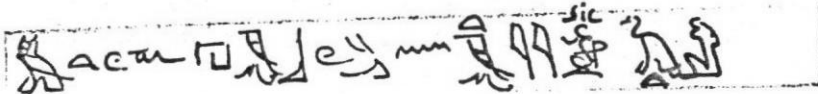


i.hə' məəs ⁽³³⁾ “stop seeing her”

The mother is considered in this text as the main character and as the lady of the house, as the text refers to her, and not to the father, as the house owner :

“He is a neighbor to the house of my mother, but I can't go to him”.

It is also from the mother that the lover should betroth his beloved girl :



mtw.f həb n təy.i mwt

(The girl's words) : “and he will send to my mother”⁽³⁴⁾

(32) Sanneron, *OHNL. T. VII*, pl. 7, rt 6-8, vs. 1-3.

(33) A. Gardiner, *Pap. Chester Beatty, I*, pl. XXII A, (C2).

(34) *Ibid.*, pl. XXIII A, 3, 4.

Her father, however, was still living; since she says in another passage :

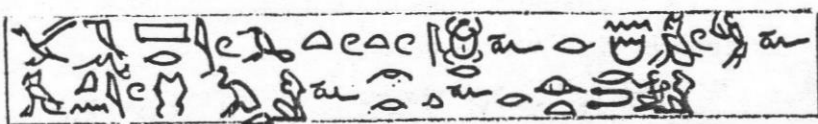
“Father, mother, will rejoice, my people will hail you all together”⁽³⁵⁾

Mother's attachment to her baby is considered even if she was a woman-slave, as we may conclude from this passage :



“You will cause that he may give you a woman-slave in satisfaction, with her child in her bosom”⁽³⁶⁾

But, yet, it seems that the child, in given situations, may be taken away from his mother and be brought up away from her :

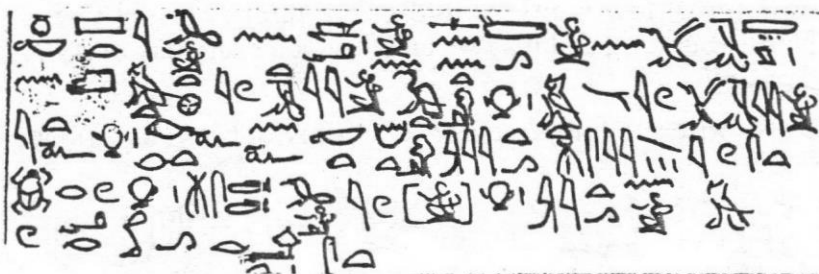


“The child, one brings him up (since) he is taken from the bosom of his mather till he reaches to be a man”⁽³⁷⁾

Lastly, a reference should be given to a special case, namely, the step mother :

It seems all over this time, that the notion about her relations to her man's children is still the same as the tale of the Doomed Prince informs us :

The Doomed Prince explaining to the Syrian prince of Naharin, in his invented story, the reason why he escaped from Egypt says :



(35) M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, Vol. 2, p. 183.

(36) Edwards, *Pap. Bankes*, JEA 68, 1982, Fig. 2 vs. 4, Fig. 1, rt. 5.

(37) LEM 61, 4 (P. An. V, 10, 6); 79, 14-15 (P. Sall. 3, 8-9).

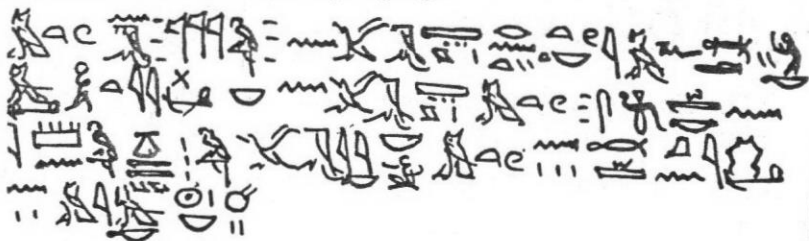
“I was a child of an officer of the land of Egypt. After my mother had died, my father took for himself another wife, it happened that she hated me, I have come fleeing from before her”.⁽³⁸⁾

III- The relationship of sons and daughters to their parents and to each others :

a) Relations to father and mother :

The relation between the children and their parents are in general very kind, and full of affection. Such an impression can clearly be picked out from their correspondences :

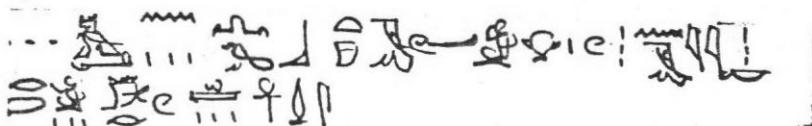
The scribe Buthiamon writes to his father Thutmose answering back his letters in a kind way saying :



*mtw n3 ntrw n p3 t3 nty twk im.f šd.k m ḥty nb n p3 t3
mtw.w sw3d.k n Inm (nb) nswt t3wy p3y-k nb mtw.n mḥ
kni.n im.k r'-nb sp-sn*

“And may the gods of the land, in which you are, rescue you from any danger of the land, and may they hand you over (give) to Amon, the lord of the thrones of the two lands, your lord, and may we embrace you every day every day”.⁽³⁹⁾

He also writes to him to relieve him of his worries concerning his people :



(38) LES. 3, 16-4, 3 (5, 11-5, 12).

(39) LRL. 31, 14-16.

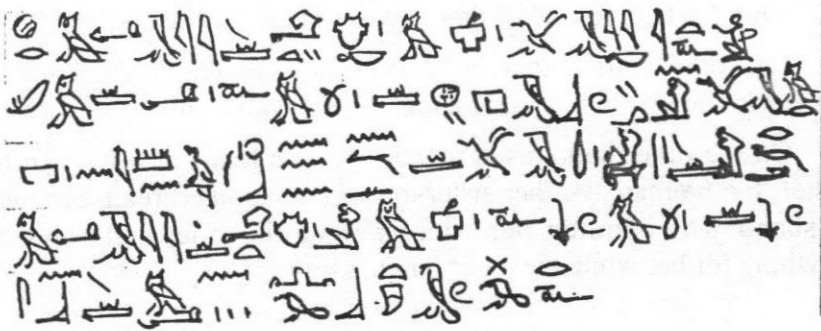
*nə 'dw sriw m ss Hmt sri təj.s 'dt m ss mn btəw hr.w nəj.k
rmt dr.w 'nh wdə snb*

(your young boys are well, the woman sheri and her young daughter are well) (and) there is no mistatement concerning them, all your people are L.P.H.”⁽⁴⁰⁾

He ends his letter with the usual expression :

mtw.n mh kni.n im.k “and we may embrace you”.

In a letter (Pap. Geneva D 191) the chantress of Amon “Henwtawy” tries to calm down the worried scribe of the necropolis “Nyswamonemopet” about his father in these kind words :



*hr m.dit həty.k m sə pəy.k it sdm.i c.f m šs sp.sn həb n.i
imyr.pr r-dd m-dit həty.t m sə-f sw m šs sw snb mn btə
r.f.*

“and don't worry about your father, I heard his state is very well. The overseer of the house of Amon the purifier Nyswamdwshespsy said to me : don't worry about him, he is well, he is healthy, there is no harm (done) to him”⁽⁴¹⁾

In a model letter in Pap. An. V, the scribe Amonmose is also very worried about his father the troops' commander Bakenptah, so he urges him to write to him about his state in an impressive way :

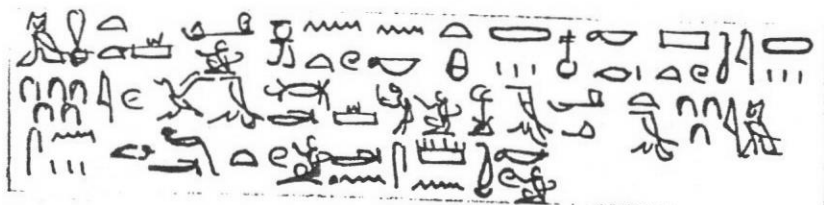
“May you write to me about your condition with anyone who would come here from you because my heart is eager to hear (about) your condition daily, (since) you don't write to me whether good or bad”⁽⁴²⁾

(40) Ibid., 33, 1-3.

(42) LEM 67, 13-16 (= An. V, 21, 1ff).

(41) Ibid., 59, 1-4.

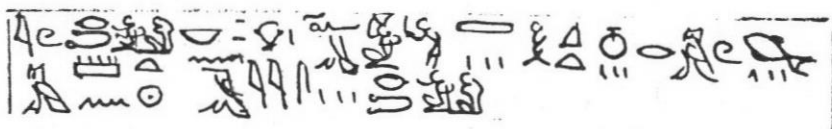
Exchanging gifts in form of provisions as bread, fish, fat etc was a typical and kind gesture of affection and attachment as the last scribe had done to his father :



“also I let 50 loaves of good kyllestes-bread be sent to you, but Pashed, left 30 of them saying : I am too loaded”⁽⁴³⁾.

He regrets also, that he didn't know Pashed's departure day, otherwise he would have sent anointing-fat with him.

On the other hand, as is mentioned in a letter of a woman to her sister, the woman asks her sister to make her some bread, because her husband was blaming her, since her family does not send or do anything for her while the other families do :



“And all the people are carrying bread, beer and fish for their relatives everyday”⁽⁴⁴⁾.

Other kinds of daily life dealings is also very current between sons and parents :

ODeM 322, gives us an example of such dealings, where a son writes to his father asking him to send him a “hnw” of water every day, in addition to a (piece of) leather and some bread. And in return, he sends him one “hnw” of spicing oil (nhh).⁽⁴⁵⁾

(43) Ibid, 68, 2-3 .

(44) HO LXX, 2, 19-10.

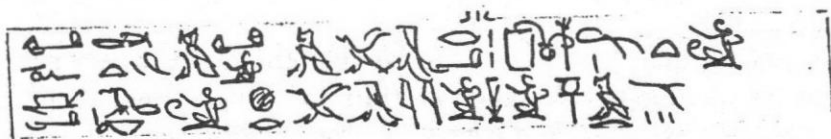
(45) Cerny, OHNL T. Pl. ODeM 322

Some aspects of family relationships in the documents

In another letter, the god's father "Sheri" asks his father to send him a wooden door,⁽⁴⁶⁾ or, as in a letter of a workman (Paendwa), he writes to his father asking for some requirements.⁽⁴⁷⁾

In another case someone named "Baki" complains in a letter to his father from the carelessness of a workman, whom his father, the sculptor "Nakhtwf" had sent to help Baki.⁽⁴⁸⁾

On the opposite, the known Harmin writes to his father to send him a workman to help him on his work :



"That he may give a hand with me at the drawings, since I am alone and my brother is ill".⁽⁴⁹⁾

Some other documents show that sons were, in their daily requirements, somewhat dependent on their parents. For example, a son writes to his mother begging her to send him some bread and anything else in her hand, very urgently, and he prays Amon for her for doing so :



"May Amon give you, may you be (in his ?) favour ..".⁽⁵⁰⁾

In other case, a sandal - maker writes to his mother concerning some inquiries of hers. At the end, he asks her to send him some provisions, about which he would be happy.⁽⁵¹⁾

In the above mentioned letter of the woman Tahntyt to her sister, where she asks her to make her bread, under the constant demand of her man; she had only to turn to her family for help, since her husband usually blames her saying :

(46) ODeM 129.

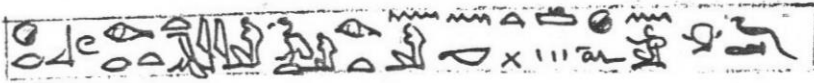
(48) ODeM 328 rt.

(49) C. EYRE, A Dronghtsman's Letter from thebes (P. Gardiner. T. in sak 11 (1984), Vs. 1, P. 198.)

(50) ODeM 119 rt. 5; vs. 1

(51) ODeM 446 10, 2.

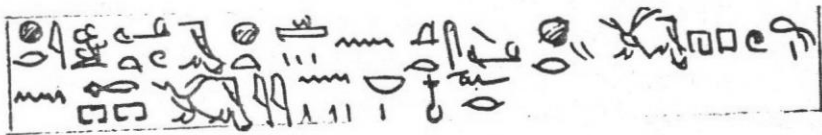
(47) ODeM 120.



“and your mother doesn't do anything for you so keeps he saying”.⁽⁵²⁾

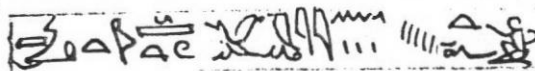
Through this daily dealings, some interesting human aspects could be picked out :

In a charge before the court, a good son had fulfilled many good things for his mother “Tagmyt”, among which are a wooden sarcophagus, in addition to a burial (*st-krst*) for his father. Now, after her death, his brothers came claiming rights at her inheritance, but he refused, so they had to go to court. His argument was that they didn't participate with him at the burial of his father and mother, and that this is against the pharaoh's rules which runs as follows :



“The property should be given to him who fulfills the burial, so says the law of the Pharaoh our good lord”.⁽⁵³⁾

Other instances show that children were raised up to respect the will of their father, even if it is not in their favor. This may be deduced from a case in Pap. Turin 2021, where a father had given the greater part of his wealth in his will to his second wife. His sons accepted his decision saying :



“Right is our father”.⁽⁵⁴⁾



(52) HO LXX, 2, 6 (O Prag. 1826); Allam, op.cit., (Bi. Or. 26), 156.

(53) Allam, UHOP, 289 ff, pl. 89, 9-11 (P. Cairo 85092).

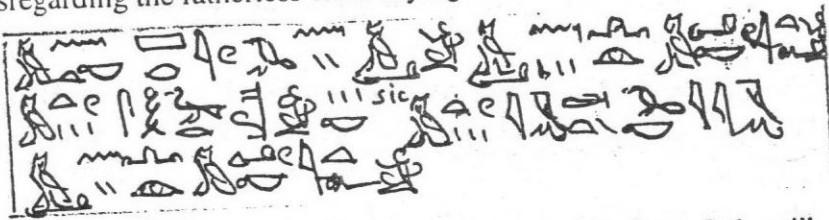
(54) Ibid., pl. 17, 8, 10, p. 320ff.

Some aspects of family relationships in the documents

“As for what he has done, who can oppose him (speak with him), his property belongs to him.

Lastly, a reference should be given to another negative aspect from the society's point of view. In regards to the fatherless child :

In the story of the “blinding of truth” we find the other children disregarding the fatherless child saying :

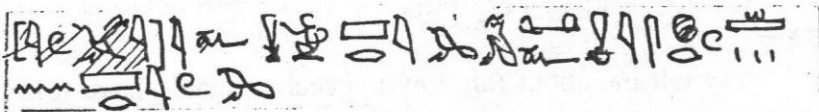


“You are the son of whom ? You don't have a father !”
And they reviled him and mocked him : Indeed, you don't have a father !”⁽⁵⁵⁾

b) Relations between brothers and sisters :

The documents are very rich with different aspects which illustrate the relation between brothers or between brothers and their sisters. These relations vary between affection and disputes, as well as daily dealings.

First of all, the relations between brothers are characterized by affection and respect. This feeling is clearly expressed in the tale of the Two Brothers :



“and his younger brother was for him as a child”⁽⁵⁶⁾

In the words of the younger brother to the wife of his elder brother he says :

(55) LES 32, 14-15; This example may convey the social position of fatherless children, cf. G. Robins, op.cit.

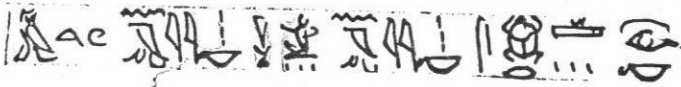
(56) LES 9, 12,13 .



“And your husband (his elder brother) is for me as a father, and he is the elder one than me, he is the one who raised me”.⁽⁵⁷⁾

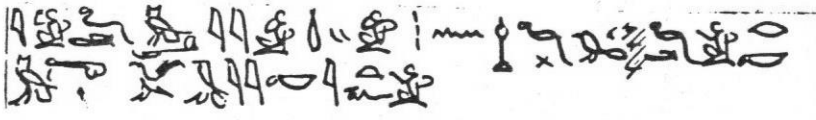
This interesting expression “*nif shpr.i*” which is quite parallel to the arabic : “ هو اللي ربانى ” suits rightly the role of the father assigned to the elder brother.

The same sense is stated in another passage in a letter of the scribe “Thutmoses” to his son “Buthiamon” where he reminds him :



“and your brothers are they who brought you up”.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Examples for the affection among brothers can be quoted also from their correspondences, as in a letter from the scribe Hay to his brother Weserhat, where he inquires about his health and prays the gods for him.⁽⁵⁹⁾ The kindness of the elder brother towards the younger is shown once in a simple and expressive way, where the elder brother is trying to defend himself against some reproaches of the younger one :



“Pray tell me about (any) evil speech, I would have told about you before your father”.⁽⁶⁰⁾

In this same context, we do remember the kind words of the lady “Werel” to her son and her daughter to take care of their brother “*m-ir h3'f*” “do not leave him”. Such kindness is shown also in the above mentioned letter of Harmin to his father, where he speaks about his ill brother who shares with him his bread :

(57) Ibid., 12, 16; 13, 1.

(58) LRL 14, 9.

(59) ODeM. 128

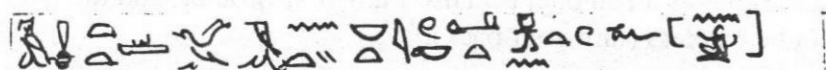
(60) LRL 68, 7, 8.



“and my brother is ill, moreover he eats my flour (for bread) with me”.⁽⁶¹⁾

We have many evidences of daily-dealings and transactions among brothers and sisters :

The wcb-priest Nekhmwt in his letter to his brother “Kenherkhepeshef” asks him to send some requirements, as papyrus-rolls, sandal soles and anything he can send :



“Also all what you can send to me”.⁽⁶²⁾

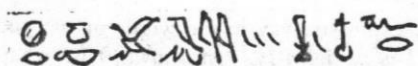
In a short letter the sculptor “Khay” asks his brother “Pareemheb” to send him a bird and figs of a sycomore.⁽⁶³⁾

The same is noticed in a letter of the scribe Khay to his brother “Pahey” where he asks him to send him a *ksb*-vessel, and to give some other things to other people.⁽⁶⁴⁾

In the scribe Kensti's letter, he asks his brother the scribe Amonemope to send him some pigments and other writing materials (brush etc ...).⁽⁶⁵⁾

And as usual it may end, in some of such dealings, with disputes as shown in some of the evidences :

In a very interesting letter, a man tries to convince his sister to conclude a deal with him about a goat he wants to buy from her, against one large *thbs*-vessel; but she refuses,⁽⁶⁵⁾ and demandes another little *thbs*-vessel, vegetables and some other things more. In doing so, he reminds her, on one hand, of the many things which he had given her during the life and after the death of her mother; and, on the other hand, he reminds her of their good relationship⁽⁶⁶⁾ :



hr ink pəy.k sn nfr

(61) P. C. Erre, Op. Cit., VS. 1-3, p. 197,198.

(63) Gerdseloff in ASAE 40 (1940/41), p. 534

(65) ODeM 603.

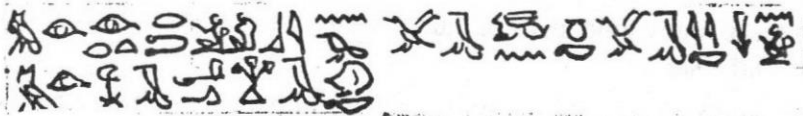
(62) ODeM, 115.

(64) ODeM 681.

(66) ODeM 587.

And I am your good brother.⁽⁶⁷⁾

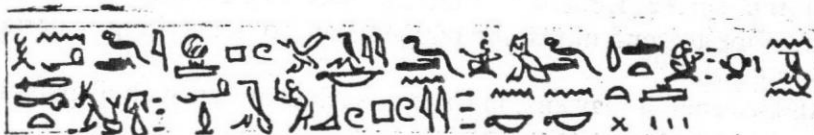
In another letter, the writer was very upset because his brother (the addressee), did not send him what he had demanded; he says in sorrow: "if I had taken anything from you, tell me about it and I will send it back to you". Nevertheless, the strong family ties were a good reason to end such problems, so he adds at the end of the letter :



m-ir irt rmt bin pə wn ink pəy.k sn m-ir hə' hək

"Don't act as a bad one, because I am your brother, and do not be careless (turn your back)."⁽⁶⁸⁾

In his letter to his brother, the deputy Annakht, Khanekhen (the writer) was exceedingly angry because of his lies concerning a she-donkey, which Khanekhen had rent him; and after a while it became ill. He declares here, that the reason for its illness was misuse and hard work, and not, as his brother said, because of its beating with a stick :



ih pw pəy.k dd m dd mdt hr nən cət <m> 'də bw-pwi n.k nkt

"What does it mean your spealling : don't speak about the donkey in lie, you have no right ملكش حاجة"⁽⁶⁹⁾

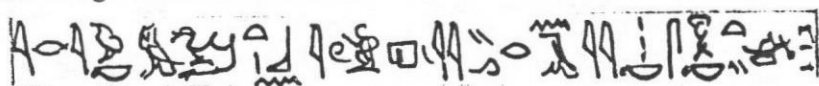
On the other hand, there were other reasons for disputes other than daily dealings. As, in one of the letters above mentioned, where an

(67) Ibid., vs. 17-19. Compare this with some expressive way in the words of the god Seth to his sister Isis : ' Iry 'ih r.t sn.t. (i) Isis 'ink Pəy. t sn n mwt., Isis "what I have done to you my Sister Isis ? ... H'm your brother of (your) mother, Isis !" (LES 49, 6-7) .

(68) HO 19, 3 vs.

(69) O. Bln. P. 12398 = S. Allam, in MDAIK 37 (1981), 10, 4-6.

elder brother, is trying to appease his younger brother who was angry because of some jokes which he had said about him. The younger brother, who is now a high official, is not ready to accept this even from his elder brother. His elder brother felt offended from the words of his younger brother, so he said to him after mentioning many of the good things which he did to him before :



ir iw.k m tṣty bn iw.i <r> hṣy r nṣy.k skty

“if you are a vizier, I will not go down to your boat”.⁽⁷⁰⁾

Dealings among sisters were not rare, as it is deduced from their correspondences :

We do remember the letter of the woman Takhentyt mentioned above, where she sends to her sister asking her to make her bread in order to calm down her husband.

Another woman, named Nebwhermaat, writes to her sister Nebiwnet to send her a chemise and asks her to fulfill some tasks which rests on her.⁽⁷¹⁾

IV. Relation between man and wife :

As it was mentioned before, the Egyptian's desire to get married and establish a house, was very essential and was always stressed out in the maxims, as mentioned above (*ir ikr.k grg.k pr-k*).

Beside the ancient expression “*grg-pr*” for getting married (establishing a house), the texts render another term for this meaning, namely *ir hmt* “to take a wife” as for example :



iry.<i>t m hmt “I took you as a wife”.⁽⁷²⁾

Or as in the words of Ahmes son of Ibana :

(70) LRL 68, 9-10.

(71) ODeM 117.

(72) J. Janssen, Egyptian letter to the dead, P. Leiden 371, p. 8, 43.

iw.i sri n irt.i hmt "I was a child, before I had a wife".⁽⁷³⁾

iw(.i) irt tɔy.f sri m hmt "I made his daughter as a wife".⁽⁷⁴⁾

Documents inform us about the various reasons for which the Egyptian seeks to get married :

First of all, it is the natural and typical desire to have descendants. Even in cases, where the man was physically unable to beget children, he had to adopt a boy, as in an above mentioned letter, where a workman advised a childless scribe to do so :

iry.k w' dd shpr.f iw.f hr dit mw hr db'w.k

"you have to adopt a child, and raise him up, that he may pour water on your fingers".⁽⁷⁵⁾

Another reason for marriage is to have a partner to be beside him, that he may not live alone, as quoted before from the tale of the two brothers.

The last reason is to undertake the daily household tasks. Some of the wives' duties at home is shown in some passages such as, for example, pouring water on her husband's hands, making light in the evening as mentioned negatively in the tale of the two brothers :

Iw.s hr tm dit mw hr drt.f m pɔy.f shrw iw bwpwy.s stɔ r hɔt.f⁽⁷⁶⁾

(73) URK, IV, 2.

(74) Posener, *Pap. DeM* 127; Pl. 16 rt. 3 = Allam *UHOP*, 299, pl. 6.

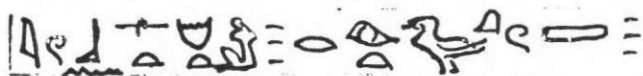
(75) O BIn 10627; (Hierat Pap. Berlin III, Pl. 33a); One would expect here the conjunctive *mtwk* before *shpr.f*.

(76) *LES*, 13, 15, 16.

Some aspects of family relationships in the documents

“She did not put water on his hand, according to his custom and she did not make light before him”.

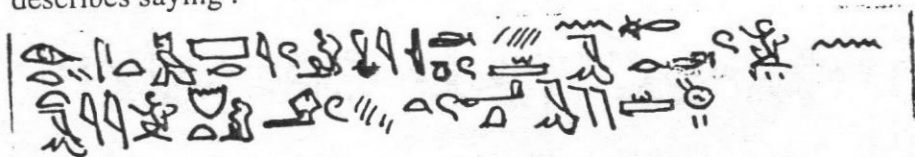
as well as making bread :



iw bn s.hmt r irt 'kw

“and no woman to make bread (for him)”⁽⁷⁷⁾

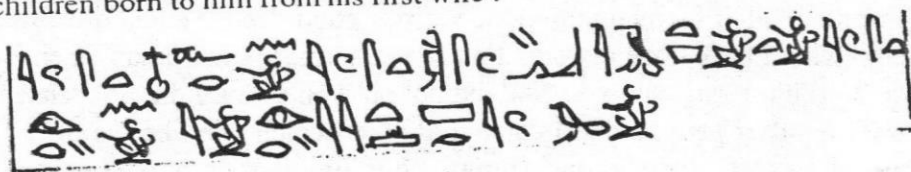
Some other interesting aspects in the character of a woman, well loved by her husband, and who is usually attentive to him, is illustrated in the words of a man who wrote his will to his second wife whom he describes saying :



“iw.s nfr n.i iw.s šms bišt.i iw.s iry n.i iiryt šry”

“She was kind (good) to me, she follows my character (obeys me), and she (used) to do for me what a daughter does”⁽⁷⁸⁾

So he announces in his will that she is quite equal to his other children born to him from his first wife :



iry.s m šri mi-kd nš hrdw n tšw.i hmt ḥ'w.t 'kš

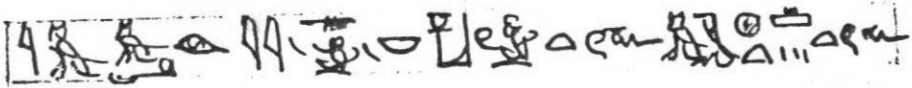
“making her as a daughter quite equal to the children of my first wife”⁽⁷⁹⁾

Even if, in his will, he gave his second wife more favor than his children; he does act according to the law which says :

(77) LEM 82, 10, 11.

(78) Pap. Turin 2021, P. 2, 3-4; (Allam, UHOP, pl. 115).

(79) Ibid., 7.

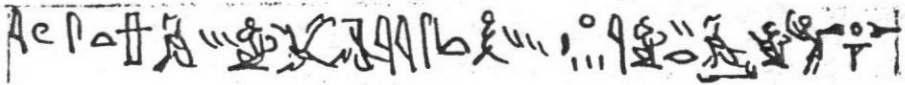


imy iry s nb əbwt.f m əht.f

“Let a man give his property to whom he loves”⁽⁸⁰⁾

It is interesting to note that this law gives the wife the right to inherit the property which her man had gained during his life with her.⁽⁸¹⁾

Another reason for dividing the property in this way for the favour of the second wife may be quoted from P. Turin 2070,⁽⁸²⁾ where a man (*Nakhtmin*) had divided his property among his two sons and his second wife “Merut”,⁽⁸³⁾ saying that this wife has right of her share since :



iw.s wnm pəy.s h....irm Nht-Mni

“She ate her B[read] with Nakhtmin”⁽⁸⁴⁾

On the other hand, features of the good husband and his kind treatment to his wife should also be mentioned :

In the above mentioned a letter to the dead, the husband speaks to the soul of his deceased woman trying to make her feel guilty (propitiate?) her by mentioning the various good deeds he had done to her : “what I have done to you ? I made you a (married) woman when I was a youth. I was with you, and did not put you away. I did not cause [you to] suffer pain and I came to do that which one like me does, when he is at home <concerning> your unguent, provisions and likewise your clothes, and I did not disregard you”⁽⁸⁵⁾

(80) *Ibid.*, 11.

(81) *Ibid.*, P. Turin 2021, P. 3, 4, 5; Allam, *zur Stellung der Frau*, 155f.

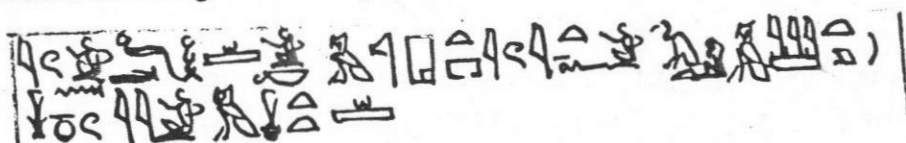
(82) Allam, *UHOP*, pl. 121.

(83) Janssen, An allusion to an Egyptian wedding ceremony ? In *GM* 10 (1947), p. 25.

(84) The suggestion *h(bnt)* bread for this gap (s. Allam, An allusion to an Egyptian wedding ceremony in *GM*, 13, 10) seems more likely than that of Janssen, *op.cit.*, p. 26, 27 i.e. Salt, compare the expression “*wnm 'kw'*” (eating bread) in Pap. DeM VI, as an expression of friendship, which seems quite parallel to the modern Egyptian expression i.e. “ate bread and salt with him” *أكل عيش وملح معاه*

(85) Janssen, Egyptian letter to the dead, Pap. Leiden 371, 2 p. 8, 9.

The role of the wife was not only confined to household tasks and duties. Some evidences show her as partner in some dealings and sharing with her husband in his work as in the words of a scribe who tries to encourage a careless pupil to learn :

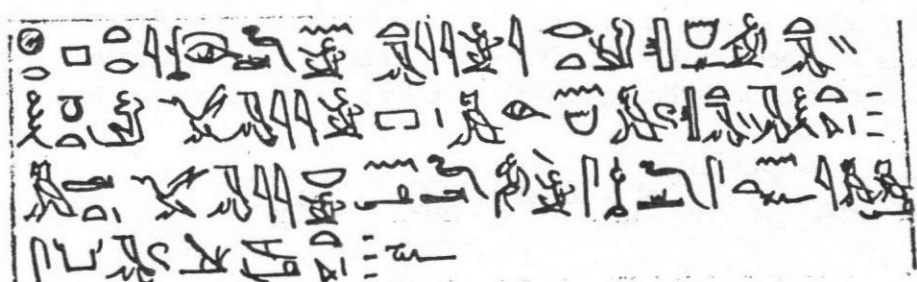


iw.i ddh.k(wi) m hwt-ntr iw it.i mwt.i m sht snw.i m-mitt

"I was held in the temple, while my father and my mother were in the field, and my brother also".⁽⁸⁶⁾

The wife can carry the responsibility in her husband's transactions, as may be deduced in O. Bln 12630, where a man (a carpenter ?) writes to someone's wife, to whom he had given a sarcophagus and then a bed, in exchange for an ox. But he got neither the ox nor his other belongings. He thus, asks the wife to fulfill the promise of her husband.⁽⁸⁷⁾

P. Bln 8523⁽⁸⁸⁾ gives us a very interesting example of a very strong and active wife, who managed to change her husband's decision, after he had taken his land back from a land laborer who used to plough it. Now, he writes to him saying :



*hr ptr dd n.i tɔy.i irt n hms tɔy hwt n pɔy.i pr m-ir nhm
tɔy ɔht m-drt Pɔy-nb-n'dd shd.s n.f imy skɛt.f*

(86) LEM 84, 11, 12; G. Robins, *op.cit.*, 122, besides other activities in Market.. such selling Bread, fish and vegetables in exchange for corn, see *Ibid.*, p. 104.

(87) Allam, *UHOP*, 35, pl. 11; Allam, *Zur Stellung der Frau*, p. 155f.

(88) Spiegelberg, "Eine zuruckgezogene Pachtkündigung" *ZAS* 53, 107ff.

“Now see, my house-partner, the mistress of my house had told me : do not take the field from: “*P’y-nb-n-‘d’* (سيد / زين الشباب) give it to him, let him plough it again”.⁽⁸⁹⁾

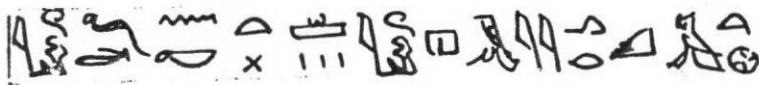
We have to notice the two nice expressions : *iry t n hms* and *hnwt-pr* in reference to the wife.

In Pap. Genf. D. 191, we meet with another instance of another active wife. In this case, she carries the husband's responsibilities (a high revenue officer) and represents him during his absence. So, she replaces him in receiving and delivering quantities of corn, she even protests against some fraud during the measuring of the corn.⁽⁹⁰⁾

On the opposite, there are also negative aspects in the relation between man and wife, such as the usual daily life family problems, whether simple or complicated which could end up with divorce. Some of such aspects will be discussed in the following :

First, we do remember the case in Pap. Turin 1880 where the man lost his property, and was about to lose his three daughters. It seems that he had reached this state on account of a dispute between him and his wife, after he had divorced her or with other people after her death.⁽⁹¹⁾

The above mentioned letter of Takhtyt to her sister, in which she asks her to make bread, informs us of a strange but interesting reason for such problems : The husband is very angry with his wife's family and reproaches her and her mother because her family does not give her presents as other families do. This was, in his opinion, an enough reason to divorce her although he was not really a needy one.



"*iw.t <r> dd nkt iw.t <r> h3y r Kmt*"

"you have to say something or else you should go down to Egypt (i.e. home = divorce).⁽⁹²⁾

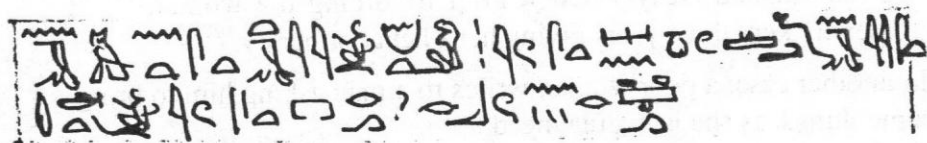
(89) *Ibid.*, 108, 7-11; Allam, *UHOP*, pl. 76; Allam, *zur Stellung der Frau*, p. 159.

(90) *LRL*, p. 57 ff; Allam, *op.cit.*

(91) Allam, *UHOP*, 312.

(92) *HO* 70, 2, 10-11.

A very negative aspect of the relation between a man and wife is offered in ODeM 439, where a very bad-tempered wife used to mistreat her husband, insulting him. She had even betrayed him, as it came in a message from a woman (may be a relative) to the husband, urging him to get rid of his bad wife :



in nts tɔy.i hmt iw.s kn r dd nɔy.s mdt iw.s pr r-bl

“Can (is) she be my wife, while she speaks so roughly and goes out (leaving the door opened), (I will let you know cases of adultery which she had done against you).⁽⁹³⁾

A very hard and complicated problem because of a foolish young man who had a relation with the wife of a water-carrier. The husband, after having found him with her, reports it to the magistrate of the village. It seems that they did not believe him and unexpectedly, he was beaten. Consequently, the real criminal repeated his act many times, till the woman became pregnant. Only then, did the magistrates force the husband to take an oath by putting on the pflock, if he came back.⁽⁹⁴⁾ Nevertheless, the conduct of both the husband and the magistrates (after all what happened) is still unexplainable. The conduct of the youth's father, on the opposite should be regarded.

In another similar case, a whole village stood against a married woman who received a married man in her house during the absence of her husband, and were about to beat her. They clearly declared that they will never allow such a relation, except if it was legal.⁽⁹⁵⁾

A last example in O. Varille 30 shows an interesting case in which a father had chosen, to guarantee the marriage of his daughter with someone, where he bounds him with the following oath :

(93) Cerny, OHNLV, ODeM, 439, rt. 2-7.

(94) Posener, *Cat. Des Pap. Hierat. De Deir el-Medineh* T.I.P. DeM, 27, pl. 16; Allam, *UHOP*, p. 299, pl. 96.

(95) Janssen, *J. Marriage problems and public relations* (P. BM 10416), In *Festschrift Edwards*, 1988, p. 198 ff.

“if I had divorced the daughter of NN ... I'll deserve 100 stroke with a stick, and all my properties will go to her”.⁽⁸⁶⁾

In spite of such negative situations, there is other instances which may show that kindness and good relations still exist even after divorce :

A man named Hesyswnebef, after divorcing the woman “Hener” kept three years giving her I hekat of barley.⁽⁹⁷⁾

In another case, a poor woman writes to a man asking him to bring her some things, as she is in great need :



m-ir hə' drt.k -im.i iw.i <m> pəy gb mr nty tw.i -im.f

“Do not neglect me (do not take your hand away from me), while I am in this state of need” and illness.⁽⁹⁸⁾

Since there is no evidence that the relation between the man and this woman is that of a mother or daughter, it seems probable that she is his divorced woman.

Lastly, a final remark should be given about the figurative use of some terms of relationship.

Some instances denote that terms such as father, son and brother were not always used in their real place, but they are sometimes used to express affection or respect, as in the following :

(96) HO, 49, 4; Allam, UHOP, 254; G. Robins, *op.cit.*, p. 73; The meaning divorce or abandon for *həc* is more appropriate than “ill-treat” (*ibid.*, since forfeiting of the property and handing it over to the wife was almost connected with the divorce.

(97) O. Uni. College London 19614, p. 75 = Allam, UHOP, 253 : Allam assumes that it is a usual dealing between a man and a woman and not between man and his divorced woman, which seems more likely. But this woman Hunro seems very likely the same one as Hunro whom Paneb the chief-workman had devaunched, (see p.13), and that she was divorced from Hesyswnebef because of that affair with Paneb, G. Robins, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

(98) ODeM, 562, vs. 3, 6.

In a letter sent from the scribe of the necropolis Buthiamon to the troop-commander "Shedsohor" the writer addressed him saying :

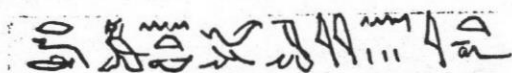


Yə ntk nfr hr ntk pəy.i it

"Indeed you are good, for you are (as) my father".⁽⁹⁹⁾

The real father of Buthiamon was the well known scribe of the necropolis Thutmose.

A similar sense came in a letter from Amenhotep son of Amennakhte (a prophet of Amenophis) to the previous scribe Thutmose, and he addressed him saying :

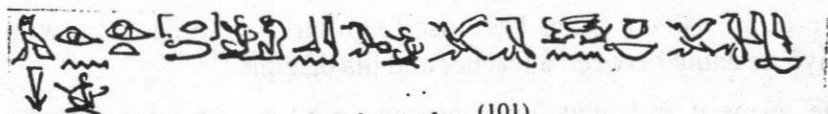


rdd ntk pəy.n it⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

"You are our father"

On the other hand, the term "sn" (brother) has also been used in the same way even among relatives :

In O. Starring the sculptor "Ipw" addresses his uncle the sculptor Khay (H'y) saying :



m-ir irt rmt bin pə wn ink pəy.k sn⁽¹⁰¹⁾

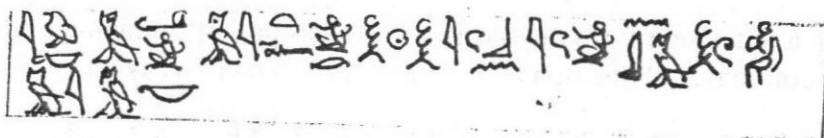
"Do not behave as a bad one, because I am your brother"

Also the term "it" (father) in its figurative sense is clearly illustrated in a passage in O. Bln P. 10630, where a young man speaks to the well known scribe Neferhotep saying :

(99) LRL, 29, 15; Wentz, Late Ramesside Letters, 15, p. 147 (translation).

(100) LRL 48, 15, 16; Wentz LRL 29, P. 56b. The suggested meaning here seems more appropriate than that suggested by Wentz : "to you belongs my father" The writer could have rather said "I belong to you".

(101) Grdesloff, op.cit., p. 536, note 6.



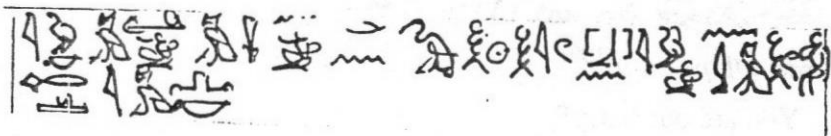
iw.k m-di.i m it r nhh iw bn iw.i nmh im.k⁽¹⁰²⁾

“you are for me as (in the place of) a father for ever and I'll not be orphan (as long as I'm) with you.

The last rather unfamiliar expression (*nmh im.k*) which would mean “I may not be separated secluded from you” can be very likely compared with the current modern Egyptian expression :

ما أنحرش منك

Another quite parallel expression occurred in another instance but in connection with “sn” :



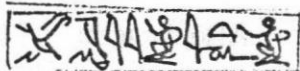
iw.k m-di.i m sn r nhh iw bn iw.i <r> nmh 'ə im.k

“you are for me as a brother for ever, and I'll not be orphan as long as I'm with you⁽¹⁰³⁾

The term “sə” (son) has been used similarly in some cases with figurative meaning between a teacher and his disciple.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾

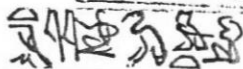
The terms it and mwt for father and mother may also refer to grandfather and grandmother as in the case of the workman

Amememope (under Ra-III), who refers to Hay as'



and

Hel as (both lived und Haremhaab), as he was



(102) Hieratische Pap. Berlin, O.BTn. P. 10630, Pl. 39 .

(103) O DeM 563.

(104) Bierbrier, the late new kingdom in Egypt, warminster 1975, PR 7f Cerny in community of workmen (p. 137-140) refers to Həy as his adopted son.

claiming, in an oracle, the possession of the tomb of Amonmose the father of He!, which is given to Hay (his son in low) since he (i.e. Amonmose) had no male son.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾

The term *it* is also attested in connection to father in law,⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ for which the current terms were *sm*, for father in law (arabic حموه) and *smt*, mother in law (arabic حماه) beside the compound expression *it n hmt.f* i.e. father of his wife.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

The terms *s'* and *s't* had been also used in reference to son and daughter in low subsequently.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

Lastly the term *sn*, beside its kind and well-known *we* in reference to the beloved man (and *snt* beloved woman),⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ is also attested in reference to Husband of the sister.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

(105) Blackman, Oracle in JEA XII, OBM 5624, vs. 2-7, p. 177.

(106) Bierbrier, Terms of Relationships of Deir el-Medina, in IEA 66 (1930) p. 101.

(107) Fisher, Egyptian Studies I, vava (New York 1976), 19-21.

(108) Bierbrier, op.cit.

(109) Gardiner, Pap. Chester Beatty I, Pl. 22, l. 8.

(110) Bierbrier, Op.Cit., 105.

