

Egyptian Marriage



Peasant girls usually married around the age 12, the boys were a few years older than the girls. Girls of more affluent families married a few years older. The marriages were arranged by parents of the children although some young people chose their own spouse. While the ordinary man

normally had one wife, the kings always had several. Before the marriage ceremony, an agreement was signed by the couple. The pre-nuptial agreement stated that the wife was to receive an allowance from her husband. The contract also stated that any material good the wife brought into the marriage was hers to keep if the marriage ended for any reason. Both could own land separate from each other but the wife usually let her husband administer her land along with his.

Divorce was an option, although it was not common. If a husband treated his wife badly, she would go to her family for help. The wife's family would try to persuade her spouse to change his behaviour. If his behaviour did not improve the divorce took place. The divorce was a simple procedure consisting of making a simple statement to annul the marriage in front of witnesses. The wife was given custody of the children and was free to remarry.

Marriage and close family relationship played an important role in the life of ancient Egyptians who portrayed this by paintings found on temple walls and letters written by grieved widowers to their deceased mates.

One of the most affectionate titles you could be called was "brother" or "sister". This has nothing to do with sibling relations, but led many archaeologists and scholars to wrongly assume that most ancient Egyptians married their siblings. Actually this usually occurred only among royalty and was not a common occurrence. Also, Museums are filled with statues and paintings of husbands and wives showing love and affection.

A standard marriage contract contained:

- The date (the year of the reign of the ruling monarch)
- The contractors (future husband and wife)
- The names of parents
- Husband's profession
- The scribe who drew up the contract
- The names of the witnesses
- The details of the settlement.



The document was given to a third party for safekeeping or kept among the records of the local temple.

The wedding day was really simple. The bride merely moved her belongings into the home of her husband whether living alone or with his parents. The bride wore a long dress of tunic made of linen, which may have been covered from head to toe with bead-net. If she owned any gold, silver or lapis she probably adorned herself with those, too.

There were family celebrations in honour of the uniting couple with music, dance and food served.