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HOUSEHOLDS
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The household was the basic unit of ancient Egyptian social organization. Its composition varied, however, depending on administrative or sociological considerations: administrative records focus on nuclear families, while private sources stress the importance of the extended family. Households included not only people linked by family ties, but also serfs, clients, dependants, and "friends," sometimes encompassing hundreds of people. As for their sources of wealth, households consisted of patrimonial and institutional goods, and strategies were employed to keep and increase resources within the family. Nevertheless, menaces such as debts, shortages, or disputes over inheritances could lead to the disappearance of households—hence the importance of ideological values that tied together their members while celebrating their cohesion, autonomy, and genealogical pride.

كانت الأسرة هي المكون الأساسي للهيكل الاجتماعي في مصر القديمة، مع اختلاف تكوينها وذلك تباعاً لاعتبارات إدارية أو اجتماعية ، فركزت الوثائق الإدارية على الأسر النموذجية (أي الأسرة المكونة من الأم والأب والأطفال)، في حين ركزت المصادر الخاصة على أهمية الأسرة الكبيرة. لم تشمل الأسر فقط مجرد أشخاص تربطهم صلات عائلية، ولكن شملت أيضاً الخدم والعملاء وعائلاتهم و «الأصدقاء»، مما قد يصل أحياناً إلى مئات الأشخاص. أما بالنسبة لمصادر ثرواتهم، فتألفت من السلع المادية والمؤسسية، وتم استخدام استراتيجيات مختلفة للحفاظ على الموارد داخل العائلة مع مضاعفتها. ولكن دون شك يمكن للتهديدات مثل الديون وقلة الموارد وخلافات حول الميراث تؤدي إلى تفكك العائلات ــ ومن هنا تبرز أهمية القيم الإيديولوجية التي تربط أفراد العائلة سوياً وتحتفي بتماسك العائلة وإستقلالها وفخرها بنسبها.

T he Egyptian term *pr* ("house" or "household" being its commonest designations) appears in administrative documents as the basic unit of social organization, and the rich ideological nuances it bore are particularly evident in its inclusion in phraseology for certain territorial units (e.g., *pr Ḥww* "the domain of [the governor] Khuu") or even kingdoms (e.g., *pr Ḥty* "the House of Khety," the Herakleopolitan kingdom in the First Intermediate Period). It is not insignificant that both the pharaoh and the state were equated with the notion of the *pr-ꜥꜣ* "the big house," and Egyptologists such as Lehner have argued that the entire Egyptian state should be interpreted as a "household of households" instead of a heavily centralized state (Lehner 2000). However, administrative and sociological images of households could diverge widely. Censuses, for example, tended to focus on nuclear families, thus giving a partial and biased picture of Egyptian society because their main purpose was to record fiscal information (manpower and resources available in fixed, accessible units) rather than

(changing) social structures: *"I assessed households at the (appropriate) numbers thereof and I have separated out the gangs from their households"* (statue biography of Amenhotep, son of Hapu: Helck 1957: 1834; indeed households usually provided goods and manpower to the state: Barns 1956: pls. 24 - 25; Arnold 1990: 26). Yet occasional archaeological and textual evidence reveals the importance of extended families and kinship, an aspect hardly evoked at all in official sources (Kóthay 2001; Moreno García 2006b). This does not mean that households were highly cohesive, hyper-resilient structures either. Inner and external threats tested their endurance and opened the way for change: on the one hand, conflicts of interest between the demands of kin and the particular ambitions of individuals could lead to the disintegration of a formerly solid household, whereas heritage concerns might encourage special arrangements aimed at the preservation of family assets, as in cases where brothers held (together) fields and houses. Other risks, which weighed heavily on the cycles of family reproduction (especially of peasants), and household strategies and their viability in the long term, were debts and serfdom, whereas elite households faced specific threats such as falling from favor or factional discord—including the murder of entire families (Kanawati and McFarlane 1993). What emerges from these considerations is that the very notion of "household" encompasses a broad range of situations, subject to changes over time, and that it would be misleading to found its study only on administrative sources.

The Egyptian Household

The nuclear family has been traditionally regarded as the core of Pharaonic social structure on the basis of architecture (both civil and funerary), iconography, and administrative records. Nevertheless, architectural evidence comes mainly from a limited number of sites, such as Deir el-Medina, Lahun, and el-Amarna, often designed by the state according to an orthogonal grid and created to fulfil specific purposes. But a careful re-examination of

their remains, as in the case of Lahun, shows nevertheless that houses apparently planned for nuclear families were subsequently modified by their inhabitants and adapted to the needs of extended families (Kóthay 2001). As for private tombs and statuary, the iconography stresses the central role played by the owner, his wife, and sons; however, secondary shafts and inhumations were also arranged for other members of his kin, a characteristic mainly visible in provincial mastabas, whose multiple burials prove that they were often designed for the needs of extended families (Moreno García 2006a: 223 - 232). Finally, it cannot be excluded that dwellings housing nuclear families in villages, towns, and cities were in fact grouped by neighborhoods or residential quarters mainly inhabited by extended families: a passage in the *Instruction of Papyrus Insinger*, for instance, lists the house (ꜥt), the extended family (mhwt), the village/town (tmj), and the province, in ascending order (Franke 1983: 179 - 195). Some archaeological evidence has also been adduced (Kemp 1991: 308).

In any case, the collapse of the state at the end of the third millennium was followed by frequent mentions of the extended family (ꜣbt) both in private inscriptions and funerary texts. Taking care of one's ꜣbt figures prominently in monumental texts, while some formulae in the Coffin Texts enumerate the categories of people encompassed by this term and constituting the household of the deceased; its core was formed by the deceased's father, mother, children, siblings, and serfs (mrt) (CT II: 151, 152, 154-155, 164, 181-183; III: 52), as well as by other people related to him by social, not familial, links, such as fellow citizens (dmj), companions (jrj-rmnw), friends (ḥnmsw), loved ones (mryt), associates (smꜣw), and concubines (mt-ḥnwt) (CT II: 181-183). Broadly speaking, a distinction was made between his extended family (ꜣbt, including his serfs) and his dependants, subordinates, and acquaintances (hnw) (CT II: 174-177; Urk. IV: 1398: *"all his kindred together with the household"*), a distinction outlined by other sources where the extended family (hꜣw, also including the serfs, bꜣkw) together with the friends (ḥnmsw)

constituted *rmṯj nbt* "all my people" (Franke 1983: 219 - 220). Other late third-millennium sources, such as some execration texts, confirm this picture as they also evoke, for the first time, the members of a household instead of the traditional lists of Egyptian and foreign enemies (Koenig 1994: 135 - 137). Like the ink inscriptions found on many jars at the necropolis of Qubbet el-Hawa, they provide detailed insight into the composition and social life of the households of local high officials, their tombs being foci of rituals and the deliveries of offerings tying together their kin as well as a dense web of relations, including clients and eminent local personalities (cf., for example, Höveler-Müller 2006). The dead were also considered members of the household (a Late Period stela explicitly represents the deceased relatives among the extended family [*ꜣbt*] of a lady), and petitions were addressed to them in order to solve domestic problems (Moreno García 2010). Later on, during the Middle Kingdom, private stelae evoked complex genealogies and were often placed in family cenotaphs; in some cases, they took the form of long lists of what seems to be the heads of households linked together by unspecified ties (Kaplony-Heckel 1971). New Kingdom texts mention individuals involved in lawsuits over family property held by a group of brothers or by a group of descendants of a common ancestor (Kitchen 1969 – 1976: 803 - 806; Gaballa 1977). Finally, during the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods, censuses list only nuclear families while private archives reveal that personal affairs and sales concerned, in fact, other relatives as well as the members of extended families (Mueller 2002; Pestman 1995; cf. also Parker 1962: 50). To sum up, Egyptian households should not be considered limited to nuclear families as they were frequently multifaceted social networks embracing other relatives, serfs, clients, subordinates, and dependants, especially at the uppermost levels of Pharaonic society. Thus, the silos in the richest villas of el-Amarna could be interpreted both as indicators of status and as the foci of a redistributive system involving not only their owners but also their relatives and dependants, also considered members of the household (Kemp 1991: 309 - 310). "Middle class" papyri and houses show that the same principle was operative, although on a smaller scale, in the households of relatively modest officials and individuals (Allen 2002; Adams 2007).

Household Composition

The composition of households varied greatly depending on their social status, as the Egyptian vocabulary displays a wide range of terms, from those referring strictly to blood relations to those including individuals linked to the household as co-residents, serfs, clients, "friends," or dependants—their nuances being quite often difficult to specify (cf. *ꜣbt, wḥyt, mhwt, hꜣw, hnw, ẖnw, ḫrw,* etc.; Franke 1983: 178 - 301). Heqanakht, a moderately well-off official of the Middle Kingdom, mentions eighteen people belonging to his household, including his mother, his second wife, his son, two daughters, his older aunt or daughter, his youngest brother, his foreman (and his dependants), three cultivators, and three female servants (Allen 2002: 116 - 117). The contemporary general Sebeki represents in his stela his wife, two sons, two daughters, his brother, his sister, his mother, her (second?) husband with his five sons, his mother, the daughter of his mother, seven cultivators, ten female servants, and three other men (Schoske 1995: 97 and fig. 108). As for the households of the highest members of the elite, they could integrate hundreds of people (including dozens of servants; according to Middle and New Kingdom sources, from 60 to as many as 150 serfs were transferred to dignitaries: Moreno García 2008: 115 - 116), many of whom are depicted in their tombs (e.g., the Old Kingdom Saqqara tombs of Ti or Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep). But archaeological evidence suggests that the average number of people living in a small to medium house would have been six, and an average of two or three children living with their parents seems logical. One or two more people—either dependant relatives or servants—were

possibly also resident. Therefore it can be estimated that the number of people living in such a house was five to eight, with an average of six (Koltsida 2007). Hellenistic censuses show that an Egyptian household included two adults and two children on average (Thompson 2002; Clarysse and Thompson 2006: 226 - 317). In the case of high officials a formal distinction was made between their family household and the domains allowed by the state. Thus, Hapidjefa of Siut, in the early Middle Kingdom, distinguished carefully between his own family household (*pr jt*, "the house of the father") and the domain granted to him as a reward for his position as governor (*pr ḥꜣtj-ꜥ*, "the house of the governor"); domains of this kind usually included not only provisions but also serfs, fields, specialized workers, and a suitable residence (Lacau 1933: 11). Leaving aside these rather specific cases, the autonomous household is thought to have been an ensemble formed by an extended family (*ꜣbt*) and their fields (*ꜣḥwt*) put under the authority of the residence (*pr/ḥwt*) of the household head, an ideal echoed by the ritual texts (CT II: 159).

Nevertheless, such an ideal of self-sufficiency was hardly achievable for many Egyptians, who were thus obliged to depend on powerful or influential fellow citizens and to join their patronage networks to the point of being considered part of their households. In other cases, such networks provided a kind of "vertical integration" in addition to the "horizontal" one constituted by family and neighbors, thus linking high officials to minor ones, local potentates to courtiers, and officials to ordinary workers and citizens. A New Kingdom ostracon, for instance, reports that fugitive oarsmen were found in the company of prominent officials at different locations in the Delta (Gabolde 2008: 187 - 190, 196, fig. 2). Interestingly, Old Kingdom lists of personnel frequently state that workers were actually replaced by their wives, fathers, brothers, sons, or daughters, or by other persons (referred to by such terms as *sn-ḏt* or *ḏt*) (Moreno García 2007: 126 - 129). Middle Kingdom papyri from Lahun confirm this

practice: in one case the names of several workers were accompanied by annotations specifying that they should be brought in person or replaced by their wives, mothers, or Asiatics (serfs?) (Luft 2006: 92 - 93); in another case, a governor requested two workers or, in their place, men or women from among their own dependants (*ḥr*) (Luft 2002); finally, another papyrus not only listed a labor force but also identified the persons (usually priests and officials) for whom the worker answered the call (in one case the substitute was a *ḥr*: Collier and Quirke 2006: 44 - 45). Sometimes, workers recruited on a local basis came from the households (*pr*) and districts (*rmny*) of provincial potentates (Arnold 1990: 26). New Kingdom sources also mention tenants acting as agents of scribes (Wilbour Papyrus A 90,8). At a higher social level, clients or colleagues were expected to replace their "patrons" when performing ritual services in the temples (Moreno García 2007: 128). In exchange for their services, the superior was expected to take care of his subjects (for example, in case of illness, lawsuits, etc.: Chauveau 2000; Müller, M. 2009: 264). Such bonds linking clients and subordinates to their patron's household were significantly marked by the use of kinship terms. Thus, compulsory workers were sometimes described as the "sons" of prominent citizens: "N*, he is called the son of Senbebu, a priest of Thinis," "*N*, he is called the son of Hepu, a commander of soldiers [of This]*" (Hayes 1955: 25 - 26), while palatial officials were explicitly labeled as "friends" (*ḥnms.f*) or "(pseudo-)children" (*ḥrd.f*) of their superior (Franke 2003: 74). More clearly, the patron-client relationship was sometimes formalized by means of legal contracts (Pestman 1994: 37), even by fictitious adoptions that masked what constituted, in fact, the voluntary servitude of the person called *šrj* "son" (Malinine and Pirenne 1950: 76 - 77). Lastly, vertical integration often implied that someone was the client or subordinate of another person who, in turn, proved to be the client of a third individual (Moreno García 2007: 136; 2009).

A further characteristic of the composition of a household is that it changed according to the life cycle and attendant circumstances of its members. Middle Kingdom papyri from Lahun show, for example, that the (nuclear) family of soldier Hori included his wife and his young son. Later on, after the death of his father, he appears as the head of a household also encompassing his mother and five aunts, thus suggesting that, in fact, his family and that of his father shared residence, that multiple family households were acknowledged by the administration if only one male family head was present in the household and, consequently, that two adult males in one household represented two unconnected units from an administrative point of view. At an even later period, Hori seems to have died and his son Sneferu became the head of the household, which now consisted of six people (Kóthay 2001: 354 - 355). Another example, from late New Kingdom Deir el-Medina, describes a lady living in her husband's house while, later on, she and her daughter lived in the house of a married son without children (Demarée and Valbelle 2011: 6 and 35). Outside these institutional settlements, where only one man could be (administratively) the head of a household, women are occasionally attested as heads-of-household in rural environments, as in the case of the 4th Dynasty household (*pr.s* "her house") of the lady Tepi, made up of a scribe, a letter carrier (*jrj mḏꜣt*), and a "property manager" (*jrj jḥt*) (Posener-Kriéger 2004: pl. 16H).

Forming and Dissolving Households

Founding a household was a highly praised act in Pharaonic times, celebrated both in teachings and literature. The troubled times at the end of the third millennium introduced many ideological innovations in private beliefs and self-presentation, with emphasis now put on one's own initiative, autonomy, and achievements. The concept of restoring the family household (*grg pr jt* "to restore the house of the father") became quite popular, and the protagonists usually stated that they had found their family households ruined, but had successfully rebuilt and enriched them, and subsequently transferred them to their heirs, thus ensuring the continuity of their lineage. What is more, the same ideology outlined the piety of the protagonists by asserting that they had given houses to disadvantaged people such as orphans, young women, or, simply, persons deprived of a household. Finally, their own merit was further highlighted because of their condition as the youngest child risen from a family with many heirs (Moreno García 1997: 39 - 45). Such an ideal was, nevertheless, confronted with much harsher realities, when debts contracted in hard times, hazardous economic decisions, contested or problematic inheritances, or basic penury could result in the loss of family property or in the destruction of a household (Bakir 1952: 85 - 86; Parker 1962: 49 - 52; Willems 1991).

Economic and Social Strategies of Households

The economic strategies followed by Egyptian households naturally depended on their status and wealth. Nevertheless, certain points deserve attention. As stated previously, self-sufficiency was an ideal hardly attainable for many Egyptians, who were thus forced to borrow from richer neighbors, to work (at least part-time or seasonally) for institutions and wealthier neighbors, or to enter into patronage networks that perpetuated social inequalities between households. Late third-millennium sources evoke these problems, probably current in a rural environment: on the one hand, wealthy individuals boasted about their autonomy and acquisitions when lending staple cereals, yokes, and livestock, and acquiring fields, serfs, and flocks, especially in periods of crisis; on the other hand, indebted people lost their goods and became the serfs of other people (Willems 1991; Moreno García 1997: 32 - 44; 2000). Young women seem to have been particularly vulnerable and the first members of indebted households to be enslaved (Moreno García 2000: 136 - 137). It is also quite possible that debts and loans reinforced the influence of local potentates and lubricated social ties between peers, as is exemplified in the archive

of Heqanakht: up to twelve persons owed Heqanakht cereals, while he himself leased land from well-off neighbors (Allen 2002). In some cases, the sources offer a glimpse of individual strategies: thus one Ikeni bought land from several persons (mostly priests) during a troubled year (lit. "the bad time"; in one case the field of a lady was actually sold by a male kinsman of her household). Most of the fields were located "by the well of Ikeni," therefore suggesting that he pursued the control of land around a water source of his own (Parker 1962: 49 - 52). As for the lady Tsenhor, she built up a modest (but not unsubstantial) asset: she acquired a slave, obtained a building area, inherited part of a building, a cow, and a field of 11 arouras from her father, and, finally, she acquired some income as a *choachyte*, or mortuary priest (Pestman 1994). The detailed archive of Heqanakht also provides a good picture of the composition of the household of a well-off Egyptian: it included about eighteen persons, a sizeable amount of land (between 55 and 110 arouras) and 35 head of cattle, and its owner was also involved in other lucrative activities such as renting out and leasing land, and lending cereals to neighbors (Allen 2002). Other well-documented socio-economic activities in modest households include the domestic production of women (especially clothes), small credit, exchanges of gifts and agricultural products, and transactions between villagers (Koltsida 2007: 142). Wealthier households participated in more profitable activities like leasing land from temples, buying and selling real estate (especially urban houses), or lending money, as late legal manuals and contracts show (Donker van Heel 1990; Martin 1995; Agut-Labordère 2011).

If bad years tested the resilience of households, inheritances and the subsequent fragmentation of property holdings (including family land and houses) were another threat, which could be avoided through the collective possession of land and buildings, such as by creating (transmissible) shares giving rights to a part of a house or of the incomes from a field (cf. Kitchen 1969 – 1976: 803 - 806;

Gaballa 1977; Muhs 2008). Conflicts of interest between an official and his kin about the institutional goods granted to him were not unknown, for example, in situations where the (extended) family claimed the right to dispose of property while the individual tried to keep these goods for himself or for his immediate offspring; in some cases, officials actually forbade their siblings and family from using the funds allocated for their own funerary service (Moreno García 2010).

Finally, sources are most explicit when dealing with strategies undertaken by powerful households to preserve their power bases. 6th Dynasty inscriptions from Akhmim show, for instance, that a high official called Tjeti-Kaihep abandoned a very promising career at the court, in Memphis, and returned to Akhmim in order to replace his (prematurely deceased?) elder brother as chief of the local temple and "great overlord of the nome," two positions traditionally held by his family and which ensured them a leading role in the province. Apparently, Tjeti-Kaihep preferred to control the traditional, local power-base of his family instead of developing a high-ranking career in the capital (Moreno García 2005). In the case of the Middle Kingdom governor Khnumhotep II of Beni Hassan, his claim to his position was hereditary right and royal favor, and his autobiography illustrates the degree to which power-blocks cemented by marriage alliances could arise, based on the control of some provinces, on positions held at court, and on connections with other powerful families (Lloyd 1992). Other inscriptions show that the position of governor of a city, held for generations within a family, could be sold to a member of the kin-group (*ḥꜣw*) and thus preserved within the extended family (Lacau 1933). Even at a modest level, buying and selling official positions (such as priestly office) prevented a household from losing control over institutional income and sources of power (Collier and Quirke 2004: 100 - 105).

In fact, the transmission of the household to the next generation was always a delicate affair. The elder son usually inherited a larger

share of the family possessions, with the obligation to bury his parents and perform rituals in their honor (Pestman 1987). However, the family ideology was strong enough to mask other forms of transmission within a set of fictitious kin expressions (e.g., the simultaneous existence of several "elder sons," pseudo-adoptions, etc.: Moreno García 2003: 346; 2007: 136). Significantly, the transfer of permanent legal rights to own and bequeath property was established by means of a document called *jmjt-pr* (lit. "what is in the house": Logan 2000). In the end, family ideology was a powerful tool that not only ensured the cohesion of the household and preserved its identity, but also provided alternative values to the official ones. Multiple burials, the cult of dead relatives, the display of genealogies and pride of lineage, and economic self-sufficiency figure prominently as its most conspicuous elements (Moreno García 1997: 32 - 44; 2006a: 223 - 232; 2010).

Bibliographic Notes

The fundamental study of household terminology and organization remains Franke (1983), although more recent works reveal that the role of the extended family in Pharaonic society is becoming widely accepted (Kóthay 2001; Müller, I. 2002; Moreno García 2006b, 2010). Some private archives show the composition and management of the assets of individual households (Allen 2002; Pestman 1994), while other sources evoke the risks threatening them (Willems 1991; Moreno García 2000), or the conflicts (both internal and external) over the collective possession of goods such as land (Gaballa 1977). Finally, ideology cemented the cohesion of households while providing alternative values to those of the palatial culture (Moreno García 2006a, 2010).

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