

THE ROMANS

Roman law, dating from approximately 1753 B.C. was similar to the Hammurabi Code in its treatment of parent-child relationships. The doctrine of **patria potestas** established the unilateral and almost unlimited right of the father. The "father" in this society was the oldest male family member. He was the head of the family and the undisputed leader, and he retained this role and status until he died.

Despite legal prohibitions, the practice of infanticide, the sale, mutilation, or killing of children, and the view of children as property persisted in Roman culture. The power of **paterfamilias**, or male head of the family, was not controllable by law. This is an early expression of a pervasive cultural value of parents' rights superseding the rights of children.