

ANCIENT EGYPT & SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

INVESTIGATING THE FEMININE IN BRONZE AGE DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENCE

The Amarna Letters

A corpus of 382+ administrative and diplomatic letters (c. 1360-1332 BCE) which show Egypt interacting with rulers from Hatti, Mitanni, Babylonia, Assyria and vassal states. The patriarchal power within these texts dominates our understanding of this archive and the presence of female entities is easily overlooked. Female representation is often limited to themes of diplomatic marriages, though there are rare instances when a woman is addressed directly. This research aims to define female entities within the texts and establish representative visuals through social networks.

Interdisciplinary Egyptology

A mixed methods approach is used to analyse the Amarna texts in terms of content and context. Content analysis is based on defined gender entities: female, male and undefined. Textual analysis permits the qualitative examination of the context surrounding these entities and leads to the understanding of themes, concepts, roles and identities. The defined categories are used to formulate categories for social network analysis (SNA). SNA is a quantitative sociological method that can visually demonstrate complex social relationships and which relies on data from content analysis to produce a visual output. It enables complex data to be visually interpreted in the form of a sociogram or graph. A social network consists of 'nodes' (agents: individuals or groups) and 'edges' (connections: one or more texts).

Address to a Queen

"Say to Tiye, the mistress of Egypt:
Thus Tushratta, the king of Mitanni.
For me all goes well. For you may all go well. For your household, for your son, may all go well. For Tadu-Heba, my daughter, your daughter-in-law, may all go well."
-EA 26, lines 1-6.

Social Network Analysis Graph

Content analysis was conducted on 382 texts from the Amarna corpus. 26% of the corpus had identifiable female entities. Test data sets were drawn from Amarna Letters EA 1-6, 8-9 representing 10% of the valid texts that record female entities. The resulting circular graph (centre image) displays the social network inclusive of female, male and undefined gendered individuals and groups who are of royal and nonroyal status.

Basic SNA Metric Data:

81 nodes
221 edges
31 female entities
29 male entities
21 undefined entities

KEY

- Female Entities
- Male Entities
- Undefined Entities

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Credits

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