Patterns of change and disclosures of difference

Family and gender in New Kingdom Egypt: titles of non-royal women

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PhD Dissertation

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Patterns of change and disclosures of difference.
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Abstract

Skumsnes' dissertation explores the monumental remains and the non-literary ostraca and papyri as different layers of situated material-discursive practices. The records are approached both in terms of patterns of change and disclosures of difference, while trying to make sense of what often comes down as contradictory information about family and gender in New Kingdom Egypt (1539-1077 BCE). The aim has been to disclose both sameness and difference in the records.

In terms of patterns of change, women seem to gradually become more visible. More specifically, the non-royal female titular imply that there were several temporal nexuses of female visibility through the New Kingdom, suggesting that the position of women waxed and waned accordingly: the change in reference to 'his wife' from *ḥmt.f* to *snt.f* in the monumental remains imply that the wife became increasingly recognized as 'his sister', alter ego and co-occupant of his tomb; and the increasing popularity of titles such as 'woman of the city' and 'musician of Amen' (or other gods) imply a change in focus from the domestic sphere to city/village and temple.

Skumsnes' main argument is, however, that any general claim about the relative position of men and women within society will fail to describe what was reality. In general, the monumental remains give a hyper-gendered account, while the non-literary ostraca and papyri are more ephemeral and less gender focused. Class and status stand out as equally, if not more important than gender. More specifically, there are variations between, even within, single records. Definitions of gender must therefore be understood as disclosures, which depend on a number of factors, such as the material, genre, purpose and context of the specific record; the selection of records; as well as the questions and perspectives of the interpreter.

The records seem to be more coherent in terms of what constituted the family. The dissertation demonstrates that, in terms of reaching the afterlife, multiple strategies coexisted: in addition to the traditional husband-wife duality, there is also strong symbolism in father-son, father-daughter, mother-son and mother-daughter relationships. Being family, moreover, was not only about biology, or being next of kin, but was more importantly about who actually (and symbolically) acted as family. Skumsnes claims that reciprocity and mutual dependency, through the correlation of support, burial and inheritance, was the very glue that tied families together. He calls this family contracts: through these contracts, individuals negotiated their position in society through their relations/encounters with others, both living and dead, human and non-human.

Trial lecture

November 15th, 4.15 pm, Arne Næss auditorium, Georg Morgenstiernes hus (University of Oslo), "Women at work in ancient Egypt."

Evaluation committee

- Professor emerita Lana Troy, Uppsala University (1st opponent)
- Professor Anne Ingvild Gilhus, University of Bergen (2nd opponent)
- Associate Professor Ragnhild Johnsrud Zorgati, University of Oslo (administrator)

Supervisors

- Professor emerita Sahninaz Amal Naguib, Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages, University of Oslo
- Professor Jorunn Økland, Centre for Gender Research, University of Oslo

[Intro]
I can see it happening
Happen, I can see it happening
I can see it happening
Happen, I can see it

[Verse 1]
Can't go with the flow, got to make waves
Even though I look at the sand, and I'm just one grain
But my intuition says there's a bigger mission I must embrace
So I'm, I'm pushing my thoughts to a new place

[Pre-Chorus]
I'm kicking and screaming
'Cause it won't be easy
To break all the patterns
If I'm not evolving
I'm just another robot
Taking up oxygen

[Chorus]
It's something bigger than me
I can feel it beginning
Something bigger than me
Yeah, I can feel it opening
Tried to ignore it
But it keeps on growing
Out of control
It's something bigger than me
And I can feel it happening

Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation has been an incredible journey and one that has taken unexpected turns. Although it has been challenging to proceed at times, obstacles have been solved and overcome. The learning curve has been steep, but so rewarding. I am proud of the product this dissertation has become.

The initial idea behind this project stems back many years. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Lisa Sabbahy, Prof. Salima Ikram and Prof. Fayza Haikal at the American University in Cairo for their support in the early developing phases. Without the encouragement of Lisa, in particular, I think it is safe to say that this project would never have seen the light of day.

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My supervisor Prof. Saphinaz Amal-Naguib has been my rock throughout this journey. Among others, it was she who guided me to the Centre for Gender Research some five years ago. The value of Saphinaz's experience and wisdom, patience and efficiency is beyond words. She has been the best mentor and guide I could possibly dream of. For this, I am forever grateful.

My second supervisor Prof. Jorunn Økland has also been important for the development of this project, or at least for some of the unexpected turns that it has taken. She has, among others, introduced me to gender theory, and challenged me to think in new and alternative ways. She has also pushed me to reflect on how ancient Egypt is relevant in the larger scheme of things, especially when it comes to understanding the concept of family and gender today.

Symbols and Abbreviations

…	et cetera, omission from original text
[…]	lacuna, damaged text
[nbt]-pr	suggested restoration, reconstructed text
šmꜥy(t)	grammatical addition, common omission/inconsistency
⟨t⟩	error, correction
?	reading uncertain

LPH	life, prosperity and heath (*ꜥnḫ wḏꜣ snb*)

oPetrie 16	ostracon Petrie 16
pNaunakhti I	papyrus Naunakhti I
sAmara	stela Amara

CT	Coffin text
BD	Book of the Dead

BCE	Before common era
CE	Common Era

Urk.	*Urkunden des Aegyptischen Altertums*. 8 vols. K.Sethe, H.W. Helck, H. Schäfer, H. Grapow, O.Firchow (eds.). 1903-1957. Leipzig ; Berlin
LD	*Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien*. 6 vols. K. R. Lepsius (ed.). 1897-1913. Berlin
PM	*Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings*. 8 vols. B. Porter, R. L. B. Moss, J. Malek (eds.). 1927-2012. Oxford
HPKMB	*Hieratische Papyrus aus den königlichen Museen zu Berlin*. A. Erman, A. H. Gardiner (eds.). 1901- . Leipzig
LRL	*Late Ramesside Letters, Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca IX*. J. Černý. 1939. Bruxelles
HO	*Hieratic Ostraca*. A. H. Gardiner, J. Černy. 1957. Oxford

RAD   *Ramesside Administrative Documents*. A. H. Gardiner. 1968 [1948]. Oxford

HOP   *Hieratische Ostraka und Papyri aus der Ramessidenzeit*. 2 vols, *Urkunden zum Rechtsleben im alten Ägypten 1*. A. Schafik. 1973. Tübingen

HTBM   *Hieroglyphic Texts from Egyptian Stelae etc. in the British Museum*. 12 vols. 1911- . London

KRI   *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*. 9 vols. K. A. Kitchen, J. A. Roberson. 1968-2018. Oxford

RITA   *Ramesside Inscriptions: Translated and Annotated*. 7 vols. K.A. Kitchen. 1993-2014. Oxford

Kampp   *Die thebanische Nekropole: zum Wandel des Grabgedankens von der 18. bis zur 20. Dynastie*. 2 vols. F. Kampp. 1996. Mainz

Davies MSS Theban tomb tracings made by Norman and Nina De Garis Davies. Griffith Institute Archive, Oxford University ; http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/gri/4daviest.html

MoA   Ministry of Antiquities, Arab Republic of Egypt

BM   British Museum, London

MMA   Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts, New York

OI   Oriental Institute Research Archives, University of Chicago

GIA   Griffith Institute Archive, University of Oxford

UC   Petrie Museum, University College, London

PRM   Pitt Rivers Musuem, Oxford

Bibl. Nat.   Bibliotèque nationale de France, Paris

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Introduction

Ancient Egypt is often alluded to as exotic, and for being different. Yet, at the same time, it may also seem strangely familiar. It is often asked: Was the relative position between men and women in ancient Egypt as up-side-down as, for example, Greek historians have claimed? Was gender in ancient Egypt more similar to everywhere else? Was ancient Egypt a patriarchal society? Is it at all appropriate to speak of gender in ancient Egypt?

The starting point of this dissertation is the position of women in the social and administrative hierarchy, including their place in the home and role in public life through a study of the most common non-royal female titles as they appear in the records from New Kingdom Egypt (1539-1077 BCE).[1] My primary concern is, however, not men and women as such, but rather how different bodies are understood through the relationship of knowledge and power. I give attention to signifying systems – that is, the ways in which societies represent and articulate the rules of social relationships and organization in order to create meaning through hierarchies of difference based on practices of inclusion and exclusion, etc. The intention is not to study single origins, such as individual bodies or the domestic sphere alone, but rather to explore relations, and to conceive of interconnected processes that cannot be disentangled.

I start with the claim that «… neither equality nor inequality is given but both are culturally constructed and historically specific. … Equality is not the lack of structure, and hierarchy is not a precondition of historicity. There is not the *one* egalitarian society as opposed to different kinds of hierarchal system. Instead, notions and/or structures of both may be present. Aspirations to become or remain more equal than others are likely to be subject to continuous re-negotiations».[2]

I aim to show that women (like men) were not ascribed a specific position, i.e. women (like men) did not constitute one homogeneous group, but rather existed in a number of different social sub-strata, where different men and women, both young and old, were 'actors'. I also aim to show that family and gender are not static dimensions, but rather are constantly being

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[1] The chronology used here is largely based on Hornung, Krauss, and Warburton 2006, 492-493 ; See also for example Shaw 2002, 479-483

[2] Kienlin 2012, 19

negotiated, and that their representations and interpretations are determined by the context of the evidence, its specific genre and purpose, as well as the perspectives and questions proposed by scholars.

The way in which I will compare and explore variation in the representations of family and gender can be seen through two main genres – the monumental remains (tomb iconography, stelae and statues) and the non-literary ostraca and papyri (letters, notes, legal documents, accounts and administrative documents) – in conjunction with the use and distribution of non-royal female titles. These are the records in which men and women, both young and old, figure together most prominently during the New Kingdom. It is also of significance that these records are the ones that speak explicitly of, and actually provide, small glimpses into material-discursive practices of family and gender in ancient Egypt.

The overall aim of this thesis is thus to explore the different layers of material-discursive practices and to try and make sense of what often comes down to us as contradictory information about the structures that made up family and gender – that is, the acceptability of the system in New Kingdom Egypt. My aim is not so much to answer what family and gender really were, but rather to open up and allow the different records to speak, and through me disclose the manifold expressions of what family and gender potentially could have been. I address family and gender as a myriad of potential material-discursive practices and hypothesise that any strict divide between men and women as two homogenous categories, as well as between the private and the public based on gender alone, is not applicable to the ancient Egyptian context. I also hypothesize that there was neither equality nor an unambiguous gender hierarchy in ancient Egypt, but rather a multitude of different family and gender constellations.

Research questions and methodology

The dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter one, presented herein, introduces the reader to the thesis and its overall aims. Chapter two is a theoretical and methodological chapter. Here I position myself within a theoretical landscape and propose a three-dimensional perspective on gender as a framework for this dissertation, as follows:

- The political perspective: focuses on social belonging and group membership;
- The cultural-discursive perspective: focuses on institutionalized cultural norms/coded patterns of cultural value on the relative standing of social actors, and;
- The socio-economic perspective: focuses on social mechanisms and institutions that (re)produce individuals.

In addition to the differences and similarities between, and even within single records, these perspectives allow me to paint a complex and multi-layered picture of what family and gender potentially could have been like in New Kingdom Egypt.

Chapters three to five, follow the abovementioned perspectives chronologically. Chapter three is a macro-levelled comparative study focusing on the distribution of non-royal female titles in the monumental remains and non-literary ostraca and papyri. I have gathered all known examples (according to specific criteria) and arranged these into a custom-made database, which includes a summary of the main dataset. Chapter four and five are largely based on meso- and micro-levelled case studies focusing on specific records and individuals, material-discursive practices and processes of signification, that structured the life of men and women, both young and old. Chapter four will largely draw on the monumental remains, while chapter five is concerned with the non-literary ostraca and papyri.

Through the course of chapter three to five, I seek to answer the following research questions:

1. What is a title? What can titles tell us about the role and status of women?

2. How are titles gendered? Are they consequently gendered?

3. What titles were given to non-royal women in New Kingdom Egypt? Which titles were most common?

4. Is there a connection between female titles and those of her husband (or other family members)?

5. What is the connection (if any) between the titles and the source in which they appear?

6. What was the symbolic significance of the female element in reaching the afterlife?

7. Did women achieve the afterlife in the same manner as men? Did there exist alternative strategies for women?

8. Were women always inferior to men?

9. Did there exist particular family strategies intended to motivate mutual support? How did these strategies affect relations between family members? How did this affect the position of specific women within their family and society at large?

10. Did female networks extend beyond the family household? Who did they network with?

11. What tasks did women carry out? Could they carry out the same tasks as men?

12. Are there patterns of change?

In order to tackle these questions and to better understand the picture that the records paint, I have approached them from two different angles: one that seeks patterns of historical change, and another that seeks disclosures of difference. These two approaches are intended to balance each other. Together they highlight that although the different records that we have found and that are available at hand may suggest change, the records are only fragments, and do not necessarily give the full picture. They may not even be representative for most people, and what was common practice. The records that we have are, however, the closest we get right now, and only future finds will tell if the picture painted here will change.

The dataset

As mentioned above, the starting point of this study is non-royal female titles. I have thus gathered all known examples attested in the material records and then arranged these into a custom-made database designed by the author using FileMaker Pro 12. The database comprises of a total of 4631 entries of individual women from the New Kingdom (see database on USB). Each entry includes the woman' name(s), title(s), her (familial) relations (primarily husband, father/mother and son/daughter) and their titles, the name(s) of the record(s), date and provenance, current location and bibliography.

The lack of name(s) obviously makes identification difficult. In addition, certain names are very common, and unless additional information about (familial) relations is available, it is impossible to determine whether an individual referred to in one record is the same individual referred to in another. Records from Deir el-Medina are perhaps the exception, but even here there are difficulties. Although I have connected records that refer to the same woman, it is impossible to avoid duplicate entries altogether.

It must be noted that obtaining a complete overview of the different records of the New Kingdom is a daunting task. It has thus been absolutely necessary to narrow down my search. The criteria for inclusion in the database, includes:

1. Records which bear non-royal female title(s);
2. Records of a specific genre: the monumental remains (tomb iconography, stelae, statues) and non-literary ostraca and papyri (letters, notes, legal texts, accounts, administrative texts).

This means that I have omitted records such as literary texts, temple iconography and objects from burial assemblages (coffins, ushabtis etc.) in order to keep the database manageable. However, they certainly lend themselves to further study in an extended version of this research in the future.

The database is not exhaustive, but I have included all records that I have had access to, and gained knowledge of, by way of publications, museum collections and in situ monuments. Direct access to the research archives at the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, has been particularly rewarding in this respect. The staff at the Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, has also been extremely helpful whenever I have had an inquiry about any of their archival material. I have visited as many collections in Egypt, Europe and Northern America as possible, but unfortunately, I have not been able to visit, nor locate, the relevant objects in all of them. I have visited all in situ tombs within Egypt that are open to the public and asked, and been granted, special permission for all case studies discussed herein.

In retrospect, I am aware that there are some shortcomings to the database, especially in terms of its usability. For example, I should have had one single space in each entry, rather than multiple spaces (which is the case today), to enter all the known title-strings. It would have also been helpful to have marked each title-string with their specific context and record (when

multiple). In the current database, in cases where there are multiple records, it is not clear which record the title comes from unless you return to the record or publication as given in the bibliography.

The biggest difficulty, as I see it, is how I have presented the information about the specific forms of the different titles. I should have used one standard transliteration for all the different titles, and then made a second space for specific features such as lack of feminine *t*, genitive, article, determinative, abbreviation, etc.

Finally, kings with the same name have been numbered using Roman numerals, which has made specific searches by reign difficult. For example, if searching for entries dated to the reign of Thutmose I, entries dated to the reigns of Thutmose I-IV will appear, because all of these have the Roman numeral I in them. This is similarly the case for Amenhotep and Ramses. Moreover, it is not always possible to narrow down a date to a specific king's reign, which means I have had to prescribe a date range – for example, Horemheb-Ramses II, Dynasty 18-Dynasty 19. In consequence, the entry will appear when searching for all dates given – i.e. Horemheb, Ramses II, Dynasty 18 and Dynasty 19. Date ranges are difficult to work with when analysing the distribution of the different titles. I have thus used the highest reign/dynasty in the distributional analysis in chapter three.

The case studies

Based on the analysis of the database, and some of the more significant finds, I have made a further selection of records for study in chapter four and five. The different records are explored as case studies with particular focus on named individuals. Some of the case studies include more than one record.

In chapter four, the selection of records is based on a careful analysis of all New Kingdom tombs that to my knowledge carry reference to the wife as both *ḥmt.f* and *snt.f*[3], while searching for potential patterns in the use of these two ways of referring to 'his wife'. I have selected six case studies of purely pragmatic reasons. As I see it, these are the tombs and scenes that provide the best information, that actually allows us to explore the change in the reference to 'his wife' from *ḥmt.f* to *snt.f*, as well as the potential symbolic significance of

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[3] See illustration 4.1 in the appendix. See also the database for reference to each specific case.

the wife, in particular *ḥmt.f* or *mwt.f* as the signifier of the feminine element. The selected tombs are all from Thebes, and identified as follows.

Case # 1	TT100 = tomb of Rekhmire
Case # 2	TT96 = tomb of Sennefer and Senetnay/Meryt
Case # 3	TT80 = tomb of Djehutynefer
Case # 4	TT55 = tomb of Ramose
Case # 5	TT50 = tomb of Neferhotep
Case # 6	TT255 = tomb of Roy and Nebettawy

I have selected two more case studies, among the very few tombs that potentially belong to women. The aim here is to further explore the assumed maleness of the creative force of regeneration and transformation. The selected tombs are from Sakkara and Thebes:

Case # 7	Bub. I.20 = tomb of Maia
Case # 8	TT250 = tomb of Ramose and Mutemwia

In chapter five, the selection is based on records, primarily non-literary ostraca and papyri, which mention specific women and thus provides an alternative account of reality. These records indicate variation, which suggest that men could also be inferior to women, and above all, that care and support was a more general concern. I have selected 13 case studies, among others, based on variations of the recurring formulae *ỉrt n.ỉ nfr* (who was good to me) and *krs sw ỉwꜥ sw* (bury him and inherit him). Some of the case studies will include more than one record. The records are largely (but not only) from Deir el-Medina, as follows:

Case # 9	oNáprstek Museum P 2027 = oPrague 1826
Case # 10	pBM EA 10055 = pSalt 124
	sManchester 4588 = stela of Hesysunebef
	oUC 19614
	sBankes No. 9 = stela of Nakhuemmut
	oAshmolean Museum 272 = oGardiner 272
Case # 11	oBerlin P 10629
Case # 12	oBM EA 65936 = oNash 6

Case # 13	TR 17/5/25/8 = tomb of Mose
Case # 14	Oxford Bowl = PRM, No. 1887.27.1
Case # 15	pCairo 58092 = pBulaq 10
	oUC 39617 = oPetrie 16
Case # 16	sBrooklyn Museum 38.544 = sAmara = stela of Hori
Case # 17	pAshmolean Museum 1945.97 = pGardiner I = pNaunakhte I
	pAshmolean Museum 1945.95 = pGardiner III = pNaunakhte IV
	pStato Civile 7
	sBM EA 278 = stela of Kenherkhepeshef
Case # 18	pAshmolean Museum 1945.96 = pAdoption
Case # 19	pTurin 2021 + pGeneva D 409
Case # 20	oUC 39619 = oPetrie 18
Case # 21	pLeiden I 371

I have selected six more case studies, which allow us to take the question about female inferiority a step further. Through these records, I aim to explore how some women were able to operate on the edge of the family household, take part in administration, and more importantly, how they were able to network and possibly contribute to their own, as well as the family economy. Again, some of the case studies will include more than one record. The records are largely (but not only) from Medinet Habu.

Case # 22	pUC 32784 = pGurob III.1
Case # 23	oAshmolean Museum 1945.37 + oAshmolean Museum 1945.33 + oMichaelides 90
Case # 24	pGeneva D 191 = LRL No. 37
	pBM EA 10430 = LRL No. 42
	pBibl. Nat. 198, ii = LRL No. 46
	pTurin 1895 + 2006 = pTurin Taxation
Case # 25	pBM EA 10412 = LRL No. 36
Case # 26	pTurin CGT 54101 = LRL No. 38
	pTurin Cat. 2069 = LRL No. 39
	pTurin Cat. 1973 = LRL No. 2
	pBM EA 10100 = LRL No. 30

Case # 27	pBerlin P 10489 = LRL No. 35
	pBerlin P 10487 = LRL No. 21
	pBerlin P 10488 = LRL No. 34

I have, of course, made my own transliterations, translations and analysis, but have no doubt benefited from the ability to consult earlier work. The fact is that most of the records studied here are well known to Egyptologists, and have already been transliterated, translated and analysed, some even numerous times. I thus give reference to a selected bibliography for each case study.

The different case studies are explored individually, in constant dialogue with the secondary literature. In accordance with the material differences between tombs, on the one hand, and non-literary ostraca and papyri, on the other, the approach to the case studies is somewhat different for the two chapters. The case studies in chapter four focus exclusively on specific scenes and texts within the monuments. These are described and analysed. The case studies in chapter five usually give the transliteration and translation of the text in question, followed by their description and analysis. The focus in the discussion is obviously concerned with the larger aims and research questions of this study. Key finds are extracted and included in the conclusions that follow each chapter.

For the most part, each chapter sets out on the macro level, be it political, cultural-discursive and socio-economic, focusing on the larger structures and patterns. Chapter four and five, however, zoom in on the meso and micro levels, i.e. the individual in relation to others and daily life. The overall approach is dialectic and comparative. I attempt to move between levels in order to try and make the different levels speak to one another.

While the main focus is New Kingdom material, parallels in earlier and later periods of ancient Egyptian history are also consulted whenever relevant. When making reference to other textual records, I have largely followed existing translations with only minor variations. This is pointed out in each case.

As tables and figures are intended to support the text, they are all found embedded in the chapters presented here. However, because of the limited size of the tables and figures within

the text, some of the details are difficult to see. These can be studied in more detail from the USB that accompanies this dissertation.

The USB also contains the database. The database can be accessed in PDF, Excel and Filemaker Pro 12 format.

The appendix includes all the illustrations.

The limitations of the records

Despite an exceptionally dense archaeological record, our knowledge about people living in New Kingdom Egypt is scattered. Historically, most of our knowledge comes from temples and tombs, and textual records have often been privileged.

The textual records are few and ambiguous, and often relate to state/temple affairs – and although disputed, for the most they only reflect the lives of the male elite and upper middle class at single locations. They are set in specific contexts, in material-discursive practices that might differ from what was common elsewhere.[4] They are also subject to various degrees of decorum. For example, the binary real/ideal is constantly at play. There is simply no way around the fact that any analysis of the textual records alone will be skewed.

It is an open question whether texts may reflect the larger population. It is estimated that 80-90 % of the population, which most likely comprised peasants, workers, craftsmen, servants etc., is only vaguely known to us in terms of the available evidence.[5] The most important reason for this is estimated literacy rates of 1-5 % among the total male population.[6] Local variations, such as estimated literacy rates up to 40 % at Deir el-Medina,[7] and an arguably larger number of semiliterate people might somewhat improve this representation.[8] It is, however, a problem that most of the available records are made for, and by, men. They concern male activity, and only a limited number include women: the latter are usually mentioned briefly in 3rd person, or seldom as one of the main actors.

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[4] See for example McDowell 1994
[5] Neunert 2018, 228 ; See also Frood 2014, 476 ; Moreno Garcia 2014, 234
[6] Baines 2007, 49 ; Fischer-Elfert 2001, 439
[7] McDowell 1999, 4
[8] Fischer-Elfert 2001, 442 ; Sweeney 1993 ; Bryan 1985

No doubt *the* most important site of investigation into matters of daily life during the New Kingdom is the village of Deir el-Medina. This site has left more records than any other, in particular non-literary ostraca and papyri. The non-literary ostraca and papyri can, however, be quite challenging to come to grips with. Although there are surely recognizable patterns, particularly in the papyri,[9] this genre of record is not as coherent and standardized as, for example, the monumental remains. While the latter were intended for eternity, non-literary ostraca and papyri are claimed to have been written largely as aide-mémoire in face-to-face dealings.[10] Černý has, for instance, argued that legal texts consist «of an oral deposition made by the party before the court or witnesses and written down by a professional scribe». It was not «the written word alone, but the spoken word subsequently recorded as an actual event on a papyrus or ostracon that conferred upon the document its legal validity».[11] More specifically, some scholars' claim that the actual need for written documents, as opposed to the more commonly assumed oral tradition, proves that they are anomalies to what was regular practice.[12] In these cases the documents are what Muhs terms *non-normative alternative depositions,* arguably understood as negotiated alternatives to what was common normative practice.[13] Other scholars have pointed out that it is the survival of papyri that is the exception, and not necessarily the written documents as such. In fact, Hagen asserts that if «the surviving fragments … are indicative of the general level of scribal activity then they represent only a tiny fraction», i.e. they need not be exceptional nor unrepresentative to their original context.[14] The key question here is – how do we define regular practice in the first place? As I see it, there is no reason to believe that all texts at all times were written down with the same purpose in mind, always bound to one single normative practice, nor that textual records were only of value to literate people. Practice should rather be understood as individually and contextually determined.

Texts can be small personal notes, indeed scribbles that make little or no sense at all for anyone other than the author, or they can be carefully written documents with detailed accounts of specific events. Either way, the records often allow for more than one possible

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[9] Legal and administrative documents can be argued to be formal documents. They convey a simple descriptive, and indeed sometimes highly formulaic account, but allude to a socio-economic reality, and crucially, they are not ideologically loaded compared to for example the monumental records.
[10] See for example Eyre 2013
[11] Černý 1945, 42
[12] David 2010, 5-9 ; Eyre 2007, 233-234 ; Jasnow 2003, 292-293
[13] Muhs 2017
[14] Hagen and Soliman 2018, 75 ; See also David 2010, 160 ; Haring 2003 ; Janssen 1982, 256-257; 1997

interpretation. Translation is interpretation, and inevitably involves flattening out a conceptual system, as well as cultural variables that can be different from our own.[15] The often-lacking contexts of the records create further uncertainties connected to the transmission of content from past to present.[16] It is not just a matter of genre, material and context, the different records can also be quite challenging from the point of palaeography. The late Egyptian hieratic script might be difficult to identify and transcribe. Coherent spelling and correct grammar are often lacking, as many of these texts are full of inaccuracies, additions and omissions. The material might be broken with fragments missing and/or ink faded and unclear.[17] Frandsen has rightly pointed out that «anyone who has ever spent time turning the pages of publications of papyri and ostraca from Deir el-Medina will be familiar with the feelings of frustration that many of these documents give rise to, either because of their bad state of preservation or because they presuppose a knowledge of things, persons and actions that are in fact unknown to us».[18]

Since the records have only survived as bits and pieces of a larger picture, there are multiple possible interpretations. Although surely not without problems, employing theory is our best shot at critically filling in the blanks and making any sense of past realities. Without theory it may be argued that «we are left trying to assemble the ancient data in a 'common sense' way, ultimately creating a past which is a shadow of our own preconceptions, without the benefit of reflexivity as promoted by modern theories».[19]

I will return to the discussion about the records and the use of modern theory in chapter two.

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[15] See for example Meskell 2002, 8-9

[16] Quirke 2004, 3, 15 ; Franke 1984; Ward has argued that interpretive translations of the ancient Egyptian language would require extensive discussions, often subjective and therefore inconclusive (Ward 1986, 1-2).

[17] For a discussion on the significance of the material, see for example Mandeville 2014, 7-11; Eyre 2013, 22-30 ; McDowell 1990, 3-9

[18] Frandsen 1992, 31

[19] Warden 2014, 3

Motivation: the gender paradox in Egyptology

> Different sources treat the role of women in different ways; all must be taken into account.[20]

There is an inevitable overlap between the political, cultural-discursive and socio-economic perspectives applied here, and their relative importance might vary according to each specific context. However, it is crucial for anyone addressing gender issues, that they do not reduce one perspective to another, but rather assume a holistic analysis incorporating all three perspectives. Moreover, any analysis of gender has to take all the available records into consideration, or at the very least, they have to take a qualified representative sample.

Earlier scholars were surely aware of this, but still arrived at very different interpretations of gender, often contradicting one another. In addition to a potential lack of balance in choice of records and perspectives, there may be temporal and spatial variations. Some scholars (particularly in the past) may have been coloured by, for example, the Greek historians Herodot and Diodorus Siculus descriptions of gender in ancient Egypt, as opposite everywhere else.[21] More importantly, there also seems to be some confusion in the use and understanding of concepts, such as body, sex, gender and sexuality, possibly caused by a lack of attention to the theoretical background of these concepts. One may of course argue that what seems to be conceptual and theoretical confusion is, in fact, an accurate representation of the lack of sharp distinction between the different concepts.

The aim here is not to give an extensive review of the state of current research, but rather to give a brief overview of existing 'definitions' of gender in ancient Egypt by those whom I consider to be among the most important contributors. The presentation of these definitions may be argued artificial (there is surely an overlap between them), superficial and taken out of context. By way of the definitions below, however, I attempt to set the stage for the larger discussion of this dissertation: what was family, and above all, gender in New Kingdom Egypt? In addition to this brief overview, chapters three to five have their own state of current research based on the perspective under study. The point here is that the different quotes, understood as definitions of gender, reveal what I describe as four main positions – what I have called *the gender paradox in Egyptology*.

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[20] Baines and Eyre 2007 [1983], 88
[21] Herodot II:35 ; Diodorus Siculus I, 27:1-2

The first position includes those who downplay the significance of gender, and perhaps argue for a more gender fluid/neutral/equal society. It is curious to notice that three out the five contributions here are from the Nordic region. Among these scholars include Finnestad, Parkinson, Toivari-Viitala, Troy, Langráfová and Navrátilová:

> … behind the Egyptians' lack of interest in absolute ontological separations there lies a total conception of being as life – life generating and manifesting itself in a diversity of forms.[22]

> It is now widely accepted that sexuality as a dominant characteristic force was not recognised in the ancient world: sexual preferences were acknowledged, but only as one would recognise someone's taste in food without characterising him or her on that basis as a member of a sub-species of mankind. In Europe and the Mediterranean, personal identity seems not to have been defined in terms of sexual preferences before at least the seventeenth century AD…[23]

> As it is quite hard to identify strict divides based on gender, it seems feasible that such polarization was not the main principle which structured life at Deir el-Medina. … Despite the fact that the non-literary texts present only a fragmentary picture of life at Deir el-Medina, one strongly gets the impression that pragmatic considerations usually took precedence over "ideological" ones (such as ideal sex/gender roles). However, this is not to say that such roles did not exist, but that these could be defined and redefined when the need for it arose.[24]

> Gender was not biologically delimited in the symbolism of ancient Egypt. It was projected as a mode to which both biological sexes could, and did, have access. … The inclusion of women in the presentation of the power of the kingship was not an anomaly, but rather a regularly reoccurring feature that explicated the view that power was an androgynous realm.[25]

> It seems that in ancient Egypt we can find more similarities between the sexes.[26] … One might enquire why so much attention is paid to sexuality, especially if we end up claiming that the concept as such did not exist in ancient Egypt and that even the delimitations of gender roles (though perhaps not genders) in Egyptian society are expected to be rather fluid and not too restrictive. It is because modern understanding – indeed even modern concept understanding – of the role of sexuality in Egyptian

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[22] Finnestad 1989, 33 ; Although Finnestad's concern is not gender as such, her claim about absolute ontological separation has significance for the understanding of gender as well.

[23] Parkinson 1995, 59 ; Parkinson's main concern here is sexuality, and not gender as such. I have, however, chosen to include Parkinson here because sexuality may be argued to impede on gender. See for example the definition by Robins below.

[24] Toivari-Viitala 2001, 237-238

[25] Troy 2003, 93

[26] Landgráfová and Navrátilová 2009, 61

society has influenced Egyptological readings of these texts, the manner we translate and interpret their imagery, and what we expect to have happened in the past.[27]

The second position includes those who stress the significance of gender and argue that society was patriarchal/hierarchal. Among these scholars include Lichtheim, Meskell and Joyce, Roth, Eyre and Graves-Brown:

It is mere hyperbole to claim, as is now sometimes done, that the women of ancient Egypt enjoyed full equality with men. True is that their social and legal rights was much above that of women elsewhere in the ancient world. Inter alia it included their ability to consecrate the funerary monuments of deceased male relatives.[28]

… Ancient Egypt was essentially patriarchal and succumbed to aspirations for male dominance in the representational and social sphere, to circumscribe female sexuality. Nonetheless, our sources reflect a certain ambivalence toward male sexuality. There are worrying ambivalences, such as the celebration of the male genitalia as signifiers of power, phallic intimidation, sexuality and fertility, juxtaposed with the trend against male nudity in the representational arts, in strict opposition to the portrayal of women. This gendered difference reveals a concern for the elite status of clothed men, in contrast to women's inherent sexualized representations. Despite what many scholars have argued for decades, Egyptian eroticism is not exclusively tied to fertility, fertility symbolism or even mutuality, since these characteristics are often at odds with creation myths that describe how mankind arose from an act of masturbation, spittle or tears of the eye – all fluid emanating from the autonomous, deified, male body.[29]

… the separation of their (the gods) sexes was essential to the definition of existence itself. Existence was defined by such contrast rather than by mere physical presence; nothing could exist unless it could be contrasted with something else. For men to have existed, women must have been in existence from the very same moment; the two sexes were therefore regarded as of equal antiquity and equally essential to the existence and functioning of the created universe. The maintenance of the boundaries between the two sexes and their contrasting expression in the gender roles of the population were thus essential to the existence of any people at all.[30]

The Egyptian social context is one of clear sexual division of roles in the functioning of the household as an economic unit: a woman must carry out the work of the house; a house without a woman is inconceivable; and for a man to take on that social role of a woman – to act socially as a woman – is at a higher level of social disruption than mere sexual aberrance. That is to say, a male household within

[27] Landgráfová and Navrátilová 2009, 219
[28] Lichtheim 1988, 37
[29] Meskell and Joyce 2003, 101
[30] Roth 2005, 212

which one partner took on an entire female social role – the permanent female gender role – and not merely a female sexual position for individual sexual acts, is probably outside the social experience.[31]

Women generally did not have the same rights or wealth as men. Ancient Egypt was a patriarchal society. … Not only do women … seem to be the chattel of men. … Men then, as now, dominated the administrative hierarchy. … While women worked just as hard as men, work in the home, or women's work then, as now, does not appear to have been so highly regarded as men's work.[32]

The third position includes those who point out the complex, and often contradictory nature of the records. Among these scholars include Johnson, Bryan, Wilfong, Szpakowska and Sabbahy:

From our earliest preserved records (Old Kingdom), the formal status of Egyptian women (unmarried, married, divorced, or widowed) was identical with that of men. Differences in social status between individuals are evident in almost all products of this ancient culture; its art, its texts, its archaeological record. … This distinction between women's legal status in ancient Egypt and their public or social status is of major importance in understanding how the Egyptian system worked.[33]

Our evidence derives from sources that must be evaluated in various ways. … All of these types of sources must be combined to form something resembling a full picture. Crucial to an understanding is the fact that ancient Egypt was not a monolithic society in which all women were viewed in the same way and received the same respect or lack of it. … Within this overarching structure, however, individual male attitudes towards women were disparate; sometimes we are able to glimpse true marital partnerships and, at other times, unmistakable gender bias.[34]

Gender can be defined, in its most basic sense, as the sets of social constructions relating to, arising from and imposed on biological sex. … Ancient Egypt was a highly gendered society: the Egyptians presented themselves in text and image in very specifically gendered ways, and the material culture of ancient Egypt reveals a complex system of gendered divisions. … This wide array of evidence for gender in ancient Egypt, though, is frequently ambiguous and often hard to interpret as a whole; it has been more common to focus on a single area of investigation: women in ancient Egypt. … A detailed examination of the Egyptian evidence, though, reveals a decidedly mixed picture of women's status and roles, which varied widely by status and individual circumstance, and changed over time.[35]

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[31] Eyre 2007, 224-225
[32] Graves-Brown 2010, 4-5
[33] Johnson 1996, 175
[34] Bryan 1996, 25
[35] Wilfong 2007, 205-206

In all societies we can consider models of gender roles and of sexuality as projected in layers that vary by social context, as well as by media and purpose.[36] … skeletal malformations associated with repeated heavy lifting and physical labor were found in male and female skeletons of all social ranks. This suggests that gender differentiation in terms of work was perhaps not as strict as is suggested by visual representations.[37]

Ancient Egyptian society was highly gendered. Participation in most aspects of ancient Egyptian life depended on whether one was male or female. Positions, jobs, and almost all types of labour were divided by sex. … It does not appear that ancient Egyptian culture was sexist in the sense that women were demeaned and seen as the inferior gender. … Based on the written evidence preserved from ancient Egypt, women had the same legal rights as men.[38]

The fourth position includes those who focus on the dynamic/discursive nature of gender. Among these scholars include Sweeney, Robins and Williamson:

An individual's "sex" may be defined as whether the body of that individual is identified as male or female, or as one of various possible manifestations of intersexuality … Gender, on the other hand, may be defined as the sum of constantly changing associations, attitudes, and practices prescribed by human social groups for their members according to their sexed bodies. Individuals may engage in socially prescribed practices and assume socially prescribed attitudes in different degrees; one would thus speak of masculinity or masculinities (different ways of "being a man" in different settings), femininity and femininities, and other genders. Although sex is based on an individual's physical body, and is normally assigned by primary sexual characteristics at birth, it is nonetheless a cultural concept …[39]

Although based on assigned sex, gender goes far beyond any biological differences that may be thought to dictate the way individuals of different sexes are supposed to behave, thus expanding the differences into areas where they become completely artificial. Gender is not, therefore, a biological outcome, but a social construct that must be learned from birth. It is created through performance by and between individuals, and is only meaningful when enacted in relation to other individuals within a social context in which all the actors are participants. Socially acceptable presentations of gender construct, maintain, and reinforce a culture's gender system … Like gender, ideas of sexuality are based on, but go beyond, biological sex. Although sexuality is to some extent biologically driven, the result of this drive can be constructed into a system of socially acceptable sexual behaviour … sexuality is enacted differently in different contexts and across different cultures … Sexuality and gender are closely intertwined, and the norms of the former may be dictated by the constructions of the latter. Therefore, such questions as what it means to be male or female can be answered in terms of both gender and sexuality.[40] … To

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[36] Szpakowska 2007, 394
[37] Szpakowska 2012, 33
[38] Sabbahy 2013, 2876-2878
[39] Sweeney 2011, 1
[40] Robins 2015, 121

examine sexuality in art, we must go beyond the current western fixation on sexual orientation to look at all aspects of sexual experience: attractiveness, desire, arousal, physical sex, conception, pregnancy, and childbirth. We also need to understand the role of sex in ideas about the creation and maintenance of the cosmos.[41]

Gender and status are not universal and ahistorical givens, but rather ways to account for social relations that are different in every society. By trying to look not for power or agency, but for what a special culture valued as important, we can start to reveal women in more roles of significance, instead of consigning them to the single heading of "disempowered".[42]

The key to understand what I have called the gender paradox in Egyptology is the history of the discipline itself. Although argued to be a prolific branch of anthropology, that would illuminate the general history of mankind more than any other discipline,[43] interaction with other disciplines is not the true story of Egyptology in the 20th century. Egyptology has clearly privileged narrow cultural-historical approaches, focusing on textual and archaeological details instead of taking part in broader theoretical discussions.[44]

Despite its cross-disciplinary potential, Egyptology has only had limited connection to other academic disciplines,[45] and the vast dataset has even, by some, been described as *closed territory*.[46] The interdisciplinary potential between art historians, philologists and archaeologists has also not been recognized.[47] Even today, it is argued that the discipline occupies «a curious position within this academic landscape, somewhere between archaeology and history»,[48] and that «the development of theory continues to be a relatively niche approach within Egyptology».[49]

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[41] Robins 2015, 129
[42] Williamson 2015, 192
[43] Griffith 1901, 9 ; This claim is a mystery to me. I recognize, of course, that the American and UK educational model usually classify Egyptology together with archaeology as sub- and sister-disciplines of social and cultural anthropology. This, however, is not the tradition in the European and Scandinavian educational system, where Egyptology is usually classified under history and language. Although clearly a study of culture, different from our own both temporally and spatially, with great potential outside Egyptology, the discipline must not be mistaken to be anything but a historical study.
[44] See for example Howley and Nyord 2018, vi ; Nyord 2018, 73
[45] Carruthers 2015, particularily part I, 17-77
[46] Riggs 2014, 2
[47] Weeks 1979; «History may tend to privilege written above material context, without discussion, while archaeology may eject all written sources as elite, without defining elite (Scott 2008, 27).
[48] Quirke 2015, 4
[49] Olabarria 2018, 89

I am not saying that Egyptology has been completely siloed,[50] but research has often been purely based on Egyptian art, text or archaeology, not a combination. It is also of significance that although the overarching thematic focus of Egyptology has shifted over the years, the lack of attention to other disciplines, has caused Egyptology to lag behind the general research front.[51] As in historical and archaeological research more generally, one can chronologically distinguish between the focus on the long lines of political history, studies of previously inaccessible topics, studies that challenge established knowledge of traditional topics, and studies that problematize social organization and power dimensions in a new way.[52]

Although the remnants of the past are still very much present within Egyptology, over the last decade increased attention has been given to the history of the discipline itself, leading scholars and institutions (museums and universities) to become more self-aware and reflective on their role, both politically and ethically, and consequently interpretations and biases are being questioned to a larger degree than ever before.[53]

There is a strong tradition of women studies within Egyptology, but true gender research has only recently gained momentum. This new wave, or moment of scholarly interest,[54] is radically different from the earlier tradition. In today's demanding scholarly climate where there is much emphasis placed on the impact of research, closed disciplines are no longer viable. Instead, cross- and interdisciplinary research is hailed as the future and potential key to the subject's survival. Theoretical input from other disciplines and methodological awareness, together with the rich archaeological record, appear as the driving force.[55] Old paradigms are being questioned, and the records are being viewed from new perspectives. It is my claim that this approach is far-reaching, particularly when it comes to learning more about the manifold expressions of what family and gender potentially could have been in New Kingdom Egypt. Moreover, only by taking seriously the differences and similarities in the records, in different

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[50] It has for example been argued that the work of some of the more important scholars do «reflect knowledge of, but rarely establish explicit links to, relevant anthropological literature» (O'Connor 1997, 2).
[51] Carruthers 2015
[52] See for example Scott 1999 [1983]
[53] Meskell 2007, 28; 2012
[54] For the argument about moments rather than the more well-known wave metaphor, see for example Masterson, Rabinowitz, and Robson 2015, 3 ; Griselda Pollock also mentioned this in the lecture "Is Feminism a Bad Memory? Or Have we Created a Bad Memory of Feminism?" that she gave at the University of Oslo, 3. November 2017. See Pollock 2019
[55] See for example Wendrich 2018 ; Bussmann 2015

spatial and temporal contexts, can we hope to find new and potentially better ways to grapple with the complications inherent in our own assumptions and categorizations.

The historical context: New Kingdom Egypt

New Kingdom Egypt is a period of about 500 years, stretching from ca. 1539 to 1077 BCE. The period is divided into three dynasties: the 18th Dynasty from ca. 1539 to 1292 BCE; the 19th Dynasty from 1292 to 1191 BCE; and the 20th Dynasty from 1190 to 1077 BCE. The latter two dynasties are also known as the Ramesside Period (1292-1077 BCE). For more details about dynasties and reigns, see illustration 1 in the appendix.

The New Kingdom was established after years of civil war between the 17th Dynasty Theban rulers in the south, and the 15th Dynasty Hyksos, who ruled from the northern capital Avaris. The victorious Thebans continued the wars after having united the country and expanded Egyptian influence to the areas of Euphrates/Tigris in the northeast, and far into Nubia in the south. During the 18th Dynasty, Egypt was *the power* in the Near Middle East controlling resources from a vast empire. For more details about the geography, see illustration 2 in the appendix.

It is of particular interest to this study that a potentially large number of men were away from their homes, conscripted to royal expeditions of war, building projects and mining activities. In fact, David has suggested that as many as 1/10 of all men could be enrolled during the reign of Ramses II.[56] Conclusively, civil war and later *imperialism*[57] may have had similar effects on men and women in New Kingdom Egypt, as both the First and Second World Wars had in more recent history. It is also of significance that the Theban royal women seem to have «played key roles in the fight to regain independence from the Hyksos, which extended for several generations. Their participation was encouraged by the men of the family and they were honoured for their contributions».[58] It is hypothesized that these royal women set the standard, and stand to represent what is to come, the golden era of the New Kingdom, a period that indeed has been dubbed by scholars as 'formidably feminine'.[59]

As a consequence of the empire, there was significant contact across borders, no doubt making an impact on men and women, both young and old. It seems likely, however, that Lower Egypt (the Delta) had more contact with the Mediterranean world, while Upper Egypt

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[56] David 1998, 171, 272 ; There is to date little knowledge about conscription of women in ancient Egypt. Recent studies of the human remains at the North Tomb Cemetery at Tell el-Amarna suggest that young girls were also part of the conscripted (or forced) workforce. See for example Stevens and Dabbs 2018, 12-13
[57] See for example Morris 2005
[58] Ziegler 2008, 193
[59] See for example Lesko 1996, 13-26 ; Onstine 2005, 29 ; Whale 1989, 241

(the Nile valley) had more contact with Nubia. Urban settlements, moreover, are likely to have been more exposed to influence than sparsely populated areas.

During the 18th Dynasty, the royal administration was moved from Thebes, and remained for most of the New Kingdom in Memphis, strategically located between Upper and Lower Egypt, just south of modern day Cairo. During the reign of Ramses II (1279-1213 BCE), Pi-Ramesses, which was located within the Delta to the northeast of modern day Cairo, became the capital. The religious stronghold was Thebes, by modern day Luxor. The provincial administration, consisted of 22 nomes (districts) in Upper and 21 nomes in Lower Egypt that took care of business at the local level.[60]

The significance of the river Nile cannot be exaggerated. The Nile was not only the place of travel, but also the life force of the country. People lived along the river, and the size of settlement populations «depended on the area of land cultivated and its carrying capacity».[61] In line with the political situation during the New Kingdom, moreover, the demographic centre of gravity is argued to have moved from Upper to Lower Egypt. This was not just caused by movement within the country, but also because of immigration from the Levant and later also Libya.[62] The estimated population of Egypt during the New Kingdom varies between three and five million.[63] It is assumed that 2/3 of the population lived in Lower Egypt, while 1/3 lived in Upper Egypt.[64] With the exception of the oases, the deserts were largely barren.

As an empire, Egypt prospered, arguably with «wealth in plenty stored and in circulation, offering to all the prospect or the dream of a life far above subsistence level».[65] The temples of Egypt, those of Amen, in particular, were awarded in plenty for the success of the empire, and as a consequence they and their priesthood grew large and powerful. During the Ramesside Period, however, what is known as the *Dark Ages* saw gradual, but dramatic changes in the larger Mediterranean world.[66] Although this period was not as disastrous for

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[60] Snape 2014, 60-63 ; «Focal points conceived to organize and collect agricultural revenue from the fields under their control dotted the Egyptian countryside (Moreno Garcia 2014, 246).
[61] Eyre 2014, 303
[62] Meskell 2002, 52
[63] See for example Kemp 2006, 49-51 ; Trigger et al. 1983, 190; Butzer 1976, 80-87
[64] Hagen and Soliman 2018, 74
[65] Kemp 2006, 333
[66] See for example Cline 2014

Egypt as it was for some of its neighbours, Egypt was no longer the unchallenged power, and together with other social, economic and political factors, including the powerful priesthood, royal power gradually declined,[67] and in the end dissolved into the Third Intermediate Period (ca.1076-723 BCE).

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[67] See for example Cline and O'Connor 2012

Conclusion

It may seem strange, and out of place, to include the lyrics of Katy Perry in a dissertation such as this. Not only have I listened to this song more times than I can count while writing this dissertation, there is also something about the lyric that resonates with what I am trying to say. Although I can only see the world from my own point of view (the ego), my view is only one out of many. Although I may feel like I am in charge of my own life, making major decisions, I am continuously affected by forces that are outside my reach. I am only a small piece in the bigger picture.

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The scholarly focus has up until quite recently been on the macro level of society only. The social structures of ancient Egypt have been described as strongly hierarchal, often referring to a social pyramid that comprises of king, elite and rest. There has also been a tendency of prioritising the national level, rather than the provincial and local levels.[1041] During the last decades, the exclusive focus on the macro level and the larger structures of society have, among others, been challenged by studies of daily life, studies that focus on the meso and micro levels of society. Meskell has, for example, advocated strongly for a larger focus on the individual experience.

It has no doubt been necessary to adjust the focus. It is my claim, however, that an exclusive focus on the micro level is equally problematic to that of the macro level. Although it is true that the micro world is the social reality for most individuals,[1042] the micro level is not detached from the macro level.[1043] It cannot be a question of the one or the other. Rather, it is my claim that the different levels form a symbiotic system, and the extended household was the beating heart of this system. Urban settlements are also good examples of how individuals, families, extended households and state co-existed and to some extent merged, each being heavily dependent on the other. This system not only affected the individual, but also attached the settlement to its periphery through large networks of patronage, way beyond the household unit. In order to grasp the ramifications of this system, it is of the utmost

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[1041] See for example Trigger 2004, 51-54
[1042] Neunert 2018, 228
[1043] Frood 2014

importance to strive for an account that does not miss the overarching look into the detailed. The specific can only be understood through the system that it belongs to.

I have thus proposed a three-dimensional perspective on family and gender as a framework for this dissertation, as follows:

- The political perspective: focuses on social belonging and group membership;
- The cultural-discursive perspective: focuses on institutionalized cultural norms/coded patterns of cultural value on the relative standing of social actors;
- The socio-economic perspective: focuses on social mechanisms and institutions that (re)produce individuals.

I have claimed that anyone addressing gender issues, must not reduce one perspective to another, but rather assume a holistic analysis incorporating all three perspectives. I have also claimed that a representative sample of all available records has to be taken into consideration.

In order to better understand the picture that the records paint, I have approached them from two different angles: one that seeks patterns of historical change, and another that seeks disclosures of difference.

Patterns of historical change

In terms of historical change, I have found that women become more visible in the records over the course of the New Kingdom, in particular from the 18th to the 19th Dynasty, and interpret this as a sign of increased recognition of women within the Egyptian society. For example, the change in reference to 'his wife' from *ḥmt.f* to *snt.f* in the monumental remains suggest that relations between husband and wife shifted. I have traced this shift as a gradual historical change that may have started in the Middle Kingdom, motivated both from above and below in the social hierarchy. This change is most visible in the New Kingdom tomb iconography from the reign of Hatshepsut/Thutmose III onwards.

I have suggested that, among others, this change may have to do with a shift in the focus of the Solar-Osirian cycle, from a stronger emphasis on the Osirian part in the early 18th Dynasty, to the Solar part gradually becoming more important, in particular in the Ramesside Period. It has been suggested here that for the Osirian cult, women were primarily needed as a medium, i.e. the feminine element, to stimulate and facilitate transformation. In the Solar cult,

it is suggested that the wife became less important as a medium, but more important in her own right. In the Solar cult it was rather the gods, and Hathor in particular, who stimulated and facilitated the transformation of the deceased.

More specifically, it is a common feature that certain reigns have an overall higher frequency of non-royal female titleholders than others. There are three main clusters of higher frequency: 1) from the reign of Hatshepsut to Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten, with peaks in the reigns of Thutmose III and Amenhotep III; 2) from Horemheb to Merenptah, with a peak in the reign of Ramses II; and 3) around the reign of Ramses III. We may assume that the clusters, and particularly the peaks, illustrate temporal nexuses of female visibility. The 19th Dynasty, and the reign of Sety I in particular, has the highest annual number of titleholders.

From the reign of Thutmose IV, there is a clear decrease in the use of *ḥmt* (wife), and this occurs proportionally with an increase in the use of *snt* (sister). This change is primarily caused by a radical change in the reference to 'his wife' in the monumental remains. It is curious that there is no trace of this change in the non-literary ostraca and papyri. This suggests that there may be a symbolic significance to the change in reference to 'his wife' in the monumental remains.

I have suggested that *ḥmt.f* and *mwt.f/.s* signified the feminine element in the tomb, and that *snt.f* had less to do with the symbolic feminine element, and more to do with an increasing recognition of the wife as 'his sister', as his alter ego and co-occupant of the tomb. I have also suggested that *ḥmt.f* may imply a pre-transformation state, while *snt.f* may imply a post-transformation state. This later suggestion is, however, inconclusive.

In the non-literary ostraca and papyri, phrases such as *iw.st m-di* (she is with) and *iw.st m ḥmt n* (she is the wife of), and the title *ḥbsyt* (wife), are rare, but seemingly used interchangeably with the more common *ḥmt* (wife). It is thus unclear from the records whether or not they indicate altogether different kinds of relationships or, simply, are different ways of communicating the same thing.

In addition to what I have called relational titles, women are also often referred to by institutional titles. The title *nbt-pr* (lady of the house) is the most common title in the corpus. Different from the Middle Kingdom, where this title is found in various genre of records, it is

particular to the New Kingdom that this title is, with few exceptions, is only found in the title-strings of women in the monumental remains. Different from the Middle Kingdom, where it is suggested that the titleholder held some kind of socio-economic independence,[1044] it is for the New Kingdom difficult to see any particular significance to this title.[1045] The variations *nbt-pr.f* and *nbt-pr nb.s* are interesting, and may imply that the traditional form signifies more independence in relation to the household. This is inconclusive, however, and may have more to do with the records in question rather than then position of the titleholder as such.

Another important change is the increasing popularity of titles such as *ꜥnḫt nt niwt* (woman of the city) and *šmꜥyt nt imn* (musician of Amen). I have suggested that these titles imply a change in focus from the domestic sphere of the household, to the public, in particular city/village and temple.

More specifically, the title *ꜥnḫt nt niwt* becomes common in the Ramesside Period, and particularly in the late 20th Dynasty. It is with few exceptions only found in the non-literary ostraca and papyri. It seems to belong to the daily life sphere and is often found in (semi-) formal and socio-economic contexts. It is also suggested that the titleholder may have been connected to the state and/or a state initiated urban settlement in some way.

The title *šmꜥyt* (musician) becomes common from Hatshepsut/Thutmose III onwards. This title is often found in the title-strings of women in the monumental remains, and it is thus difficult to see its particular significance. I have suggested that the purpose of the *šmꜥyt* (together with other musicians and dancers) was to invoke and attract the divine – in particular, the presence of Hathor, who was *the* feminine element in the Ramesside Period. The *šmꜥyt* is, however, also found in other contexts, such as in the Late Ramesside Letters and administrative documents. Based on the latter context, I have suggested that, in addition to their ritual and performative function in temple and tomb, the title holder could also be responsible for the daily offerings and the magazines of Amen-Re, as well as management of people, land, animals and the produce made by, and of, the former.

The title *wrt ḫnrwt nt imn-rꜥ* (chief of the female clergy of Amen-Re) is most common in the Ramesside Period and is primarily (but not only) found in the monumental remains.

[1044] See for example Stefanović and Satzinger 2015, 337
[1045] See for example Schreiber 2015, 18 ; Toivari-Viitala 2001, 18

Interestingly, this is the only title that may be argued directly related to the titles of other family members, in particular husband, father and/or son. Although over 80 per cent of all women referred to as *wrt ḫnrwt nt ỉmn-rˁ* had other family members who were affiliated to Amen-Re, or other related gods, only about 30 per cent had a husband or father who were *ḥm-nṯr tpy n ỉmn-rˁ* (high priest of Amen-Re).

The title *wsỉr* (Osiris) is commonly found in the monumental remains and is also used to refer to deceased women (not only men) from the reign of Tutankhamen onwards. The use of this title is a clear example that women also aspired to be transformed into a new state of being and to remain with their family, in much the same way as men did. It is curious to note that women are never referred to as *wsỉr* and *ḥmt.f* or *snt.f* in the same title-string. They may, however, be referred to as *nbt-pr* and/or *šmˁyt* in the same title-string.

In some few cases, specific women are represented in more than one record, referred to by altogether different titles. The change in titles obviously reflects the context and relation to the primary individual in the record. It may also indicate a time difference, and that his/her rank and position had changed. Specific titles are also tied to different contexts, in particular the genre of the different records. For example, the titles *sȝt* (daughter), *snt* (wife) and *nbt-pr* (lady of the house) are typically found on the monumental remains, while *šrỉt* (daughter), *ḥmt* (wife) and *ˁnḫt nt nỉwt* are typically found in the non-literary ostracon and papyri. The title *šmˁyt nt ỉmn* (musician of Amen) overlaps and is common in both genre of records, but never occur together with *ˁnḫt nt nỉwt* in the same record. A woman can, however, be referred to as *šmˁyt nt ỉmn* in one record and *ˁnḫt nt nỉwt* in another.

Disclosures of difference

The main find of this dissertation is that gender in ancient Egypt cannot be described unilaterally. Instead, gender must be defined according to situated material-discursive practices – that is, as these practices appear in each specific relation, at each specific encounter. It must be acknowledged that there are variations between, and even within, single records.

Definitions are disclosures – that is, they are one out of many interpretations, that are dependent on a number of factors, such as the genre and purpose of specific records. In general, the monumental remains give a hyper-gendered account, where individual actors are

explicitly marked as either male or female, both textually and visually. However, although still suggesting that society was strongly hierarchal, women and others (children, larger family members, colleagues etc.) seem to become more visible in the records. The non-literary ostraca and papyri are more ephemeral and less gender focused. They do, however, suggest that society was becoming more egalitarian, and that class and status stand out as equal, if not more important than, gender.

Non-royal female titles are case in point. Titles were used as identification – as a basic, indeed explicit expression of sex, group membership and/or social belonging. Their primary function was to indicate where the titleholder's place in society were. In theory, titles differentiate between men and women by the so-called feminine t ending, determinative, as well as more or less gender specific titles. In practice, titles often come in title-strings, followed by a name and determinative, and although the individual title may not reveal the sex of its owner, the full title-string, name and determinative most likely do. In this regard, it seems that the monumental records were more standardized than the non-literary ostraca and papyri. In the latter, we often find abbreviations, the genitive and feminine t is often lacking, making both name and determinative the prime markers of sex. In Late Egyptian, articles are usually the safest marker, but there are also spelling mistakes that sometimes make the sex of individuals difficult to determine, if at all possible.

It is my claim that family contracts based on reciprocal bonds of mutual support had significant ramifications for the relationship between generations, but also for the relationship between men and women: the status, position, authority and well-being of the individual, women and men alike, depended on his/her possessions, social belonging, and his/her networks of reciprocity and patronage.

Some women clearly inherited, owned and disposed of their own, as well as others, property. There is no doubt about it. It remains an open question, however, if this ability to administer and dispose of their own property was caused by the fact that the woman in question was widowed, because her children were still young, because her husband allowed her to, or simply because she had the means to do so.

It is also curious that, in the case of Mose's family, both his grandmother and mother, lost their rights to the guardianship, and only regained this right when they joined forces with their sons. Although gender may be the main reason for this, there may be other reasons as well.

Moreover, the existence of the guardianship suggests that one often strove to keep landed property intact, to prevent them from becoming too small to be run efficiently. It seems clear from the documents that have survived that family property was divided among heirs, but that strategies, such as adoption, could be employed to keep property in the hands of certain chosen individuals. Although it is reasonable to assume that endogamy was common practice, I have suggested that the division of family property may not only have been a matter of keeping property within the family, but also about sharing the right amount of property, in order to attract new and favourable family members – family members who came from wealthy backgrounds and were already property owners. As such, the ultimate aim of sharing property, could actually be to expand on existing family property. In this system of keeping and sharing property, it seems that women had a significant role to play.

I have speculated whether the legal practice (laws/sayings of Pharaoh, precedent and oracular consultations) could be understood as measures that at some point had been taken to secure the rights of the individual, indeed women's legal rights. For example, during the New Kingdom it is a recurring theme that 1/3 of the joint property belonged to the wife, husband and children respectively,[1046] but also that s/he who supported in old age and/or buried should inherit. Although inheritance may have been a normative given, it clearly functioned as a security mechanism that could be altered – that is, you had to earn your share.

The genre of record seems to matter less when it comes to family. Instead, both the monumental remains and the non-literary ostraca and papyri seem largely to agree that reciprocal bonds existed between husband and wife, between siblings, and above all, between generations. For example, it seems quite clear that the potential life-giving force was not thought possible or sustainable without the manifestation and indeed participation of both the masculine and feminine elements. In general, it is claimed that the masculine and feminine

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[1046] There is only one record (oDM 764) that specifies that 1/3 of the joint property belonged to the wife, husband and children respectively. It is more common that the division between husband and wife is said to be 2/3 and 1/3 respectively. However, it is assumed that if the couple had children, the husband only safeguarded the children's share until they came of age. See Toivari-Viitala 2003 ; See also Muhs 2016, 101 ; Jasnow 2003, 322-336

elements together enacted a continuous flow of becoming in the eternal cycle of life. More specifically, it seems that there was not one single strategy for reaching the afterlife, but instead, multiple strategies coexisted. In addition to the traditional form based on complementarity between the male and female elements, as seen by the husband-wife relationship, we also see that the son-mother relationship, as well as the daughter-mother relationship holds a strong symbolism. Finally, in order for the cyclic existence to continue, the deceased was also dependent on offerings and ritual activity from the living, as seen by the father-son relationship.

I have also found that family was not only about biology, or being next of kin, but was more importantly about who actually acted as family. It was about reciprocity and patronage. I have thus claimed that mutual support, in fact dependency, through the correlation of care, burial and inheritance, was the very glue that tied families together, both in life and death. I have called this family contracts, and through these contracts individuals negotiated their position in society through their relations/encounters with others, the living and the dead.

Finally, although it is true that women are not commonly found in the position of bureaucracy and administration, there is no immediate logic to explain the few examples of the opposite as anomalies, and that these few women only filled in for their indisposed husbands of a temporary basis. The absence of evidence is not the evidence of absence! In the few examples that exist, women are represented while interacting together with, and alongside men and women. It was not an either-or situation. Rather, these examples indicate a dynamic system that was constantly negotiated and where gender alone did not exclude women from certain tasks in society. The Late Ramesside Letters are case in point. Although women, such as Henuttauy, Mutenipet, Hereret and Nodjemet, may not be representative for most women, they are likely to represent women of their social standing. It follows from this that women at large cannot have been secluded to the household unit, but were rather, as their menfolk, actors in networks of reciprocity and patronage, arguably the very fabric that made up society in New Kingdom Egypt.

My hypotheses are thus confirmed. Strict divides between men and women as two homogenous categories, and between the private and the public based on gender alone, is not applicable to the ancient Egyptian context. There was neither equality nor an unambiguous

gender hierarchy in ancient Egypt, but rather a multitude of different family and gender constellations.

Moving further

This dissertation has had non-royal female titles as its starting point. It has favoured the textual and visual remains, not only because titles are text, but also because it is the textual and visual remains that give an explicit account of family and gender. The archaeological, material and human remains, on the other hand, do not.

My attempt to see the full picture, to take a 'qualified' sample of all the available records into consideration, and give a holistic account of family and gender, is obviously skewed towards the textual and visual remains. In the future, I hope to mend this imbalance. By letting go of titles as my starting point and main focus, and move on to the question of space, in particular the private/public divide, I hope to cover a fuller spectrum of available records. The main tenets of this dissertation will, however, remain, and I will ask the following questions: Was space gendered in ancient Egypt? Was there a private/public divide? Is it at all possible to gender space based on archaeology and architecture alone, or are we dependent on textual, visual and/or human remains in order to qualify our interpretations? What are facts, and what are assumptions? What accounts for reality, and what is representational? What are the differences and similarities in the records?

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Appendix

Illustration 1. Chronology of Egyptian history.

Period / Ruler	Date
PREDYNASTIC PERIOD	ca.5300 – 2900 BCE
EARLY DYNASTIC PERIOD	ca.2900 – 2545 BCE
1st Dynasty	ca.2900 – 2730 BCE
2nd Dynasty	ca.2730 – 2590 BCE
3rd Dynasty	ca.2592 – 2544 BCE
OLD KINGDOM	ca.2543 – 2120 BCE
4th Dynasty	ca.2543 – 2436 BCE
5th Dynasty	ca.2435 – 2306 BCE
6th Dynasty	ca.2305 – 2118 BCE
7th and 8th Dynasty	ca.2150 – 2218 BCE
FIRST INTERMEDIATE PERIOD	ca.2118 – 1980 BCE
9th – 10th Dynasty (Herakleopolitan)	ca.2118 – 1980 BCE
MIDDLE KINGDOM	ca.1980 – 1760 BCE
11th Dynasty (Theban)	ca.2080 – 1940 BCE
12th Dynasty	1939 – 1760 BCE
SECOND INTERMEDIATE PERIOD	1759 – ca.1539 BCE
13th Dynasty	1759 – ca.1630 BCE
14th Dynasty	?
15th Dynasty (Hyksos)	? – ca.1530 BCE
16th and 17th Dynasty (Theban)	? – 1540 BCE
NEW KINGDOM	ca.1539 – 1077 BCE
18th Dynasty	ca.1539 – 1292 BCE
Ahmose	ca.1539 – 1515 BCE
Amenhotep I	1514 – 1494 BCE
Thutmose I	1493 – 1483 BCE
Thutmose II	1482 – 1480 BCE
Thutmose III	1479 – 1425 BCE
Hatshepsut	1479 – 1458 BCE
Amenhotep II	1425 – 1400 BCE
Thutmose IV	1400 – 1390 BCE
Amenhotep III	1390 – 1353 BCE
Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten	1353 – 1336 BCE
Smenkhare/Nefernefruaten	1336 – ? BCE
Tutankhamen	? – 1324 BCE
Ay	1323 – 1320 BCE
Horemheb	1319 – 1292 BCE
19th Dynasty	1292 – 1191 BCE
Ramses I	1292 – 1291 BCE
Sety I	1292 – 1279 BCE
Ramses II	1279 – 1213 BCE
Merenptah	1213 – 1203 BCE
Sety II	1202 – 1198 BCE
Amenmesses	1202 – 1200 BCE
Siptah	1197 – 1193 BCE
Tausret	1192 – 1191 BCE
20th Dynasty	1190 – 1077 BCE
Sethnakhte	1190 – 1188 BCE
Ramses III	1187 – 1157 BCE
Ramses IV	1156 – 1150 BCE
Ramses V	1149 – 1146 BCE
Ramses VI	1145 – 1139 BCE
Ramses VII	1138 – 1131 BCE
Ramses VIII	1130 BCE
Ramses IX	ca.1129 – 1111 BCE
Ramses X	ca.1110 – 1107 BCE
Ramses XI	ca.1106 – 1077 BCE
THIRD INTERMEDIATE PERIOD	ca.1076 – 723 BCE
21st Dynasty	ca.1076 – 1052 BCE
22nd Dynasty	943 – ca.746 BCE
23rd Dynasty (UE)	ca.845 – ca.812 BCE
23rd Dynasty (LE)	ca.730 BCE
24th Dynasty	ca.736 – 723 BCE
LATE PERIOD	ca.722 – 332 BCE
25th Dynasty	ca.722 – ca.655 BCE
26th Dynasty	664 – 525 BCE
27th Dynasty (Persian)	525 – 404 BCE
28th Dynasty	404 – 399 BCE
29th Dynasty	399 – 380 BCE
30 Dynasty	380 – 343 BCE
2nd Persian Period	343 – 332 BCE
PTOLEMAIC PERIOD	332 – 30 BCE
ROMAN PERIOD	30 BCE – 394 CE

Illustration 2. Map of Egypt and its areas of influence.