

Identifying Political Dissent and Gender Biases through Large-Scale Digital Analysis of Texts from Premodern China

Amelia Ying Qin | Dept. of Humanities and Religious Studies & Dept. of History

Project Objectives

This project aims to identify patterns of political dissent and gender biases in premodern China through the interdisciplinary approach of digital humanities.

It aims to expand the scope of my previous pilot study (on one text) to construct and analyze data from eight additional texts selected from Tang (618-907) China to find patterns with methods of large-scale digital analysis.

The project also offers itself as a case-study for the critique of this new approach by identifying the advantages and limitations of applying digital methods to similar projects.

The project and its research results will serve as pedagogical tools for students to become familiar with DH resources in the classroom, while also conveying the potential for technology to discern patterns of dissent and gender biases in historical narratives.

Methodology and Outcome

This study takes an innovative approach to anecdotal representations of the past by applying social network analysis to collections of historical anecdotes to discern large patterns in the texts dialogue networks. Nodes in the networks represent historical figures engaged in conversations and edges indicate dialogues between two figures, weighted according to the number of countable interactions.

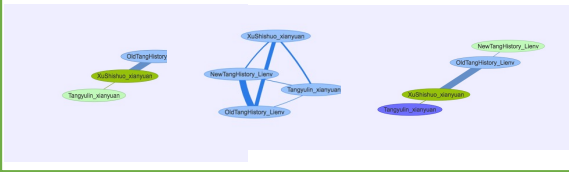
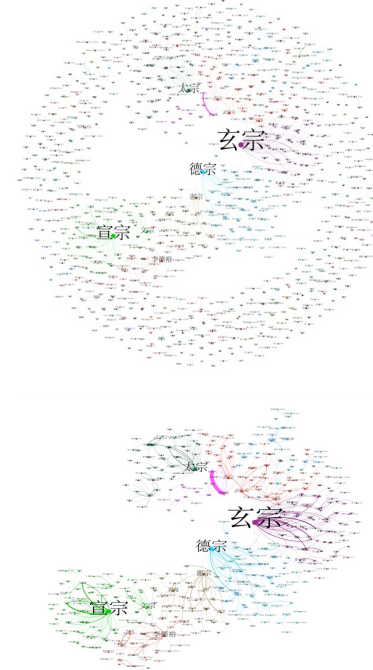
For this expanded project, I completed data construction from three additional collections and used this enlarged data set for visualizations and statistical analysis. The panel to the right shows two samples of Gephi network visualizations of the enlarged data set. The bottom graphs display three types of measurements that illustrate the relations among the texts selected for the analysis of representations of female figures.

Selected References

Newman, Mark E. J. *Networks: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

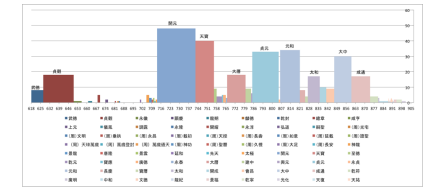
Scott, John. *Social Network Analysis*. 4th Edition. SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017.

Network Visualizations



Results and Discussion

Network analysis foregrounded the significance of Emperor Xuanzong across collections, reflecting a hidden rhetoric of political criticism. Statistical analysis reveals a lack (see gap below) of representation for the female ruler Empress Wu's reign and political power, reflecting a gender-biased construction of the anecdotal memories about the Tang.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The support from the Probationary Faculty Development Grant program, the departments of HRS and History, and the College of Arts & Letters not only made progress in this project possible but also resulted in the successful revision and publication of another article “History and Lore.”