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IMAGE:
3D-network model of the conflict within the nobility of the Byzantine Empire in 1321 CE between followers of the Emperors Andronikos II and Andronikos III
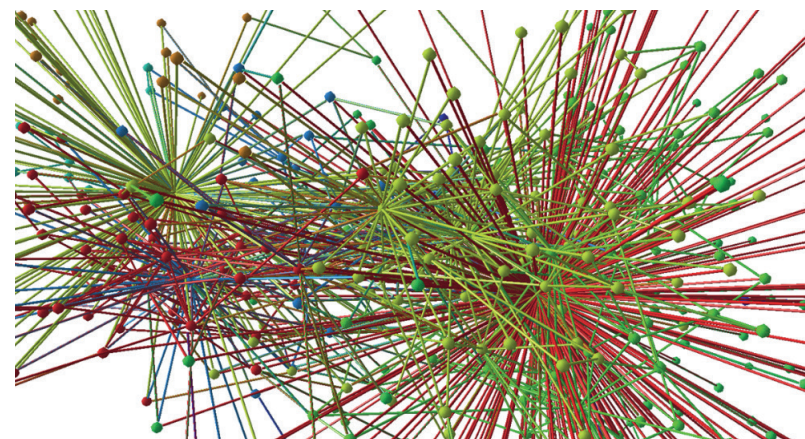(© J. Preiser-Kapeller, OEAW, 2016)

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INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

BRIDGING THE GAP

THE PROSOPOGRAPHY OF A FRAGMENTED WORLD (13TH CENT.)

ABSTRACTS

19TH TO 21ST MARCH 2020
INSTITUTE FOR MEDIEVAL RESEARCH
DIVISION OF BYZANTINE RESEARCH
AUSTRIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
HOLLANDSTRASSE 11–13, 1ST FLOOR
1020 VIENNA

PLAS
Prosopography of the Lascarid Period

Moving Byzantium

IMAFO

ABSTRACTS

SESSION 1:
Byzantium and 13th century Prosopography

EKATERINI MITSIOU
Austrian Academy of Sciences
Bridging the gap: Towards a prosopography of the Lascarid period (PLAS)

The first half of the 13th century has attracted much attention as a transformative period for the Eastern Mediterranean. The capture of Constantinople (1204) changed the dynamics of the entire region through the formation of new states and socioeconomic changes within the former Byzantine territories. Three "Byzantine" states "in exile" emerged by members of the aristocracy, the "Empire of Trebizond", the "State of Epirus" and the most successful among them, the "Empire of Nicaea" (1204–1261).

In the historical discourse, the Nicaean Empire has been analysed in various ways. The most persistent method was the collection of the information given by written and material evidence and its presentation in a narrative. Despite its positive aspects, this traditional methodology does not suffice to analyse the historical developments on a social and political level.

Recently, however, the State of Nicaea started to experience the benefits of the "digital turn" in the humanities. The Nicaean past began to be the focus of different interpretative frames based on modern tools and theories such as the Social Network Analysis (SNA) and the Historical Geographic Information System (HGIS). Another promising prospect is the creation of a Lascarid prosopographical database in the Austrian Academy of Sciences. This digital project will fill-in an enormous gap in Byzantine prosopography.

The present paper aims at presenting the PLAS Database, its structure, aims and contribution to the digital future of the Empire of Nicaea.

BRENDAN OSSWALD
University of Tübingen for the Academy of Heidelberg
For a Prosopography of the State of Epirus (1204–1261)

As for the whole Byzantine and Balkan world, the scholars currently lack a tool which would allow them to get easily the data about the characters of the State of Epirus between 1204 and 1261. Indeed, the only monography about this period of the history of the State is the 1957 book by Donald Nicol The Despotate of Epirus, which is in many ways out of date, while the Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit starts only in 1261. Certainly, it contains notices about the characters who are present after 1261 and were already active before this date, for example Michael II and his wife Theodora, but the rules of Michael I, Theodore and Manuel are totally absent. Subsequently, a new prosopographical project would be really helpful, in order not

only to cover the whole period, but also to offer an up-to-date coverage of the reign of Michael II.

In order to conduct such a project, the specificities of Epirus impose to examine the following problems. First, the problem of the chronology, since the date of 1261, which makes perfect sense for the history of the Empire of Nicaea, is irrelevant for the history of the western state. Second, the problem of the geography, since the borders of the State of Epirus have changed a lot, including other regions than Epirus stricto sensu. Finally, the problem of the sources, since the history of Epirus is known mostly through sources which are exterior to it, mostly from Nicaea/Constantinople and the West. This is even more true for the first decades of the State, since we have no local sources like the Chronicles of the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century.

ANNIKA ASP
University of Birmingham
Prosopography in early thirteenth century Trebizond

The early thirteenth century is a formative period in the study of late medieval Trebizond. The political entity conventionally known as the Empire of Trebizond was founded in 1204, at the same time as but not as a direct consequence of the Fourth Crusade. Its first ruler was Alexios I Komnenos (r. 1204–1222), the grandson of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–85). The first half of the thirteenth century is in the study of Byzantine history viewed as a period of successor states, of which Trebizond, along with Epiros and Nicaea have been studied as contestants for rule over Constantinople. This historical narrative has framed the scholarly perception of Trebizond and influenced the study of the two centuries that followed: a successor state that failed its aim yet somehow remained viable until 1461. Prosopography is the cornerstone of this narrative, where the argument that the rulers of Trebizond competed for Constantinopolitan rule rests on the notion that its ruling family held superior claims to the Constantinopolitan throne over the rulers of Nicaea and Epiros. This talk will begin with an overview of the challenges in studying Trebizond in this period and the significance of prosopography in creating historiographical narratives: with a scarcity of sources, each prosopographical connection risks gaining disproportionate significance in comparison to better documented periods. Thereafter, the dynastic claims of the Trapezuntine Komnenoi will be examined. Finally, some key prosopographical connections will be discussed in framing narratives of early thirteenth century Trebizond. It is hoped that the papers in this workshop can be used to complete the gaps highlighted in the study of Trebizond and vice versa, in order to complete the understanding of the relationships between Trebizond and other contemporary polities.

SESSION 2:
Vienna Digital

MAXIM ROMANOV
University of Vienna/Aga Khan University
Too Much To Fathom? Modeling the Evolution of the Islamic World (ca. 600–1600 CE) from Arabic Written Sources

How did pre-modern Islamic societies develop over time? Historians have been searching for answers to this complex question in massive Arabic chronicles and biographical collections that survive by the dozens. Advances in digital humanities offer an approach that can overcome all usual methodological limitations associated with the study of these massive historical texts and open virtually unlimited research opportunities. This paper will present the main conceptual and methodological aspects of the implementation of a specific and new DH approach. Medieval historians composed their texts by picking and choosing "passages" from their sources, rephrasing them, commenting on them, and, in the end, reassembling them into their own representations of historical reality. In a somewhat similar manner, we can computationally disassemble all surviving sources into such passages. (Due to the use of unique identifiers with all passages we will still be able to reassemble original texts as well as to keep adding other historical texts as they become available.) Using metadata from the original books and such methods as named-entity recognition, we can arrange these passages chronologically and geographically, merging them into what will virtually become the "master chronicle" of Islamic history. Using computational methods for identifying textual similarities, we can then assemble these passages into networks of related historical information. This arrangement will allow for a variety of modes of reading. For example, one will be able to read: "historically"—by moving from one event to another in chronological order; "historiographically"—by exploring how specific events were presented by different Arab historians; "thematically"—by focusing only on events that deal with specific topics. Moving between distant and close reading will be effortless as trends can be graphed and mapped, and any specific passage, which constitutes a given trend, can be read carefully in a traditional manner. By bringing together all available historical texts, the master chronicle will provide the most thorough possible coverage of historical periods and geographical regions. By marshaling all available quantitative evidence, the master chronicle will make the qualitative analysis more substantial as findings will rest on exhaustive textual evidence. The master chronicle will allow us to conduct research in a "cumulative" manner where results are attained at a large scale and with reproducible means, providing a solid foundation for asking novel research questions. Finally, the master chronicle will serve as a robust exploratory environment for studying any research question that can be possibly approached through Arabic historical texts.

JOHANNES PREISER-KAPELLER
Austrian Academy of Sciences
DöReg, LaurReg + PLAS. Imperial and patriarchal charters, prosopography and potentials for collaborative digital research platforms for Byzantine studies

Inspired by recent developments of online repositories of medieval studies (especially for the Holy Roman Empire, such as Regesta Imperii Online [http://www.regesta-imperii.de/startseite.html], Germania Sacra digital [http://germania-sacra-datenbank.uni-goettingen.de/books] or the virtual charter archive Monasterium.net [https://icar-us.eu/cooperation/online-portals/monasterium-net/]), the paper explores the potential for the establishment of similar resources for Byzantine studies, taking into consideration already ongoing projects such as PLAS (Prosopography of the Lascarid Period, initiated by Ekaterini Mitsiou). In particular, it focuses on the possibilities of the digitalization of existing survey of Byzantine documents such as the Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches (initiated by Franz Dölger almost a century ago in 1924) and Les regestes des actes du patriarcat de Constantinople (with the relevant volume for the 13th century published by Vitalien Laurent in 1971) in the form of a collaborative digital research platform, which allows for a constant update and extension of information, the integration with prosopographical data bases such as PLAS, other networks of open linked data in historical studies such as Pelagios and the application of digital tools of data exploration, visualization and analysis. Furthermore, such a platform would enable the establishment of useful digital standards for the entire field (such as unique identifiers) and its connection to the above-mentioned repositories within the wider community of medieval studies of Europe, the Mediterranean, the Islamic World and beyond.

ALEXANDER WATZINGER
Austrian Academy of Sciences
Prosopographical Data in OpenAtlas

OpenAtlas is a digital research environment for the work with historical, archaeological and geospatial data. Regarding prosopography various information on actors (human beings, groups and legal bodies) can be recorded and organised in a systematic way, following the classes and properties of the CIDOC CRM.
The presentation will give an introduction into the general use of OpenAtlas and especially into the work with prosopographical data.
Information about actors: Basic information on actors themselves like names, aliases, whereabouts and their chronological frame.
Information about actor relations: Next to this OpenAtlas can record information on relations between actors, their affiliations respectively within groups or legal bodies, their involvement in activities, as well the sources that refer to these.
Information about involvement in various events and processes: In many cases an event links actors to others or to places etc. These relations can also be treated in OpenAtlas and depending on the type of involvement various relations can be defined.
Data enrichment with types: Since the investigation of the common characteristics is essential, OpenAtlas provides a very flexible system to add types for entities like actors, events, places etc. but also for relations between them.
Data storage and extraction: Data is stored in an object oriented network and therefore can be queried with regard to prosopographical research questions. Furthermore they can be used for various specialised analyses like social network or spatial and chronological analyses etc. as well as for visualisations. With an API which is currently in development the data can also serve as endpoints for linked open data.

SESSION 3:
Byzantium, Digital Humanities and Prosopography

NIELS GAUL, FOTEINI SPINGOU, AND LUCIA MICHIELIN
University of Edinburgh
Before and After 1204: A new Database on Byzantine Literati and the case of the Choniates brothers

Our paper touches upon the blurred borders between prosopography and social network analysis, as well as issues of periodisation. Our discussion starts from the Database on Byzantine Literati (DBL), a meta-prosopography that is currently being developed at the University of Edinburgh and under the auspices of the ERC-funded project PAIXUE. DBL is a MySQL relational database that locates individuals in space and time and connects them. It is a new tool for social networks analysis (SNA) that in its final form is envisaged to cover the period between the end of the ninth century and the middle of the fourteenth, thus covering the oeuvre more than 300 Byzantine literati. Flexibility is of outmost importance for DBL : the user can not only search and browse open data, but also export ego or double ego networks in forms appropriate to be directly imported to the desired SNA software (e.g. Gephi, SocNetV). At the next stage of its development, DBL is envisaged to enable multi-author, version controlled, peer-reviewed data entry.
The first part of the paper briefly presents DBL and its methods aiming to find paths of collaboration with PLAS. The second part of the paper focuses on a particular case-study that chronologically transcends the borderline between the so-called Komnenian and the Lascarid period. The brothers Niketas and Michael Choniates are two well-known literati and statesmen, with rich social networks that extend before and after 1204. Despite their fame, the network of the two brothers has never been systematically explored. The systematic mapping of their activity, with the help of DBL, reveals not only a highly interconnected Eastern Mediterranean world, but also the individual motives and aims of the two brothers for their scholarly activity and interests.

ZACHARY CHITWOOD
University of Mainz
Mapping a Monastic Republic: The Promise of Prosopography for Medieval Mount Athos

As a site blessed with rich archival material, Mount Athos represents a unique opportunity for prosopography. Over the course of the Middle Ages the Holy Mountain not only served as a home for thousands of monks living in communal monasteries, sketes (small monasteries) and hermitages, but also extensively interacted with the outside world as the object of lay patronage. Documenting and analyzing the diverse actors associated with Mount Athos is one of the principal objectives of the project MAMEMS ("Mount Athos in Medieval Eastern Mediterranean Society: Contextualizing the History of a Monastic Republic (ca. 850–1550)"; funded by a Starting Grant of the European Research Council over the period 2020–25). The project aims to create an open-access digital database, Prosographica Athonica, which will contain entries for all monks, donors and visitors to the Holy Mountain over the period 850 to 1550. In the first part of this presentation the unique challenges and opportunities of this prosopographical undertaking will be discussed.

In the second part of the presentation the question of how Prosopographica Athonica might fit into other prosopographies, either already published or currently being undertaken, will be explored. One question is how a very focused, "local" prosopography like Prosographica Athonica can complement larger prosopographical works which cover whole periods, like the Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit. Another area to be discussed is the digital component of such an undertaking: how, for instance, might the digital infrastructure of an Athonite prosopography be made compatible with other prosopographical undertakings? What are the prospects for the long-term hosting, accessibility and updating of digital prosopographies?

TARA ANDREWS
University of Vienna
Arising from the Page: Desiderata for linking text editions and prosopographies

Prosopographical collections derive their information from many different sources, but by far the most common are textual sources of various forms, where the text has been established through a critical edition. Although both prosopographies and critical editions are increasingly being created and presented in digital form, there has as yet been very little work done on linking these together in any formal way. This talk will be a critical reflection on how such digital linkages could be established, what the challenges are, and what sorts of tools and infrastructure exist (or, indeed, ought to exist) that would allow the community to establish an online environment where records of historical people can be linked directly to the sources of evidence for their existence.

SESSION 4:
Byzantium's neighbours and 13th century Prosopography I

FRANCESCO DALL'AGLIO
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
Towards a prosopography of the second Bulgarian kingdom: the state of the field

Within the historiography of the second Bulgarian kingdom (1185/6–1396), prosopography is one of the least developed areas. This is not the consequence of a lack of interest in the topic, but of a serious limitation: the available sources, of whatever origin and type, are discouragingly meagre and, in their great majority, of foreign origin. Therefore, any attempt at reconstructing and analysing the networks of social, political, cultural and economic relations within the second Bulgarian kingdom is a daunting task, sometimes posing insurmountable difficulties.

Yet, there are some significative exceptions. Even from the few data available, it is certainly possible to reconstruct some of those eluding networks, at least in their broad lines: especially those pertaining to the highest political and religious spheres, obviously better represented in chronicles, church records, inscriptions, dedicatory notices and seals. The largest one is, understandably, the ruling dynasty of the second Bulgarian kingdom, the family of the Asenides. Its history and the relations between its members have been investigated in a series of studies of great quality, whose main concern, however, was not to lay out a prosopography of the Asenides but rather to detail the general history of medieval Bulgaria with biographical or genealogical information.

If properly analysed, those data can be of the utmost importance in reconstructing the social and political networks of the ruling elites of the second Bulgarian kingdom, both within the country and outside of it, in their relations with Byzantine or Latin Constantinople, Hungary, Serbia, Nicaea, Epiros, Rome, and contribute to a better understanding of the "fragmented world" of the 13th century. The paper will offer an introduction to the available data, to the various typologies of sources in which they are contained, and to the current research trends in the prosopography of the second Bulgarian kingdom.

SRĐAN PIRIVATRIC
Serbian Academy of Sciences
Serbia and prosopography in the first half of the 13th century. Some initial remarks on the source material and a draft of a case study

The prosopography data base of the Eastern Mediterranean and South-East European world of the first half of the 13th century is very important as the necessary instrumentum studiorum for historical studies of the region and period in general, but also for the study of the concrete role the certain individuals and groups had in the crucial processes of fragmentation and renewal of the Byzantine world, who after

the outcome of the IV crusade underwent major changes. Naturally, this role may be attributed only to a part of the higher stratum of different social groups of the region, while beyond and bellow of it there were also individuals and groups who were not directly related to this processes. The same values for the case of Serbia in the first half of 13th century, where the prosopography studies should take into account several different criteria based at the first place on the nature of the source material, starting by the natural categorization regarding the place and time of their composition into the foreign and domestic sources, as well as the contemporary and near contemporary sources, including the cases of much later sources which, however, represent authentic tradition based sometimes even on the first hand sources. The source material of Serbian provenience is, of course, especially important for the prosopography studies of the individuals of Serbian origin, but it is also very important for the prosopography of those who may be categorized as foreigners and who for some specific reason were introduced into a certain narrative created in Serbia. There is also a special group of historical persons who in some texts appears as important thopoi. Since the focal point of this research is on a part of the higher social stratum, it may be observed that the contemporary inscriptions, marginal notes, representative hagiographical texts, later genealogies and chronicles form certainly the most important group of the narrative sources, while the contemporary diplomatic material and letters appears as still important but less abundant documentary sources. Further, our analysis is focused on the personality of Byzantine emperor Alexios III as an unusual but important case study of the Serbian prosopography of the first half of the 13th century.

SESSION 5:
Byzantium's neighbours and 13th century Prosopography II

RUSTAM SHUKUROV
Moscow State University/Austrian Academy of Sciences
Between two worlds: Anatolian Seljuk sources as a source for Byzantine prosopography

The author examines the role and significance of Anatolian Seljuk narrative texts, documents and epigraphy as a source for the prosopography of the Byzantine world in the thirteenth century. The paper focuses on Byzantine figures whose biographies were in this or another way linked with Muslim Anatolia. There could be drawn up a typology of such persons: 1) Byzantine political refugees seeking for asylum in the Seljuk Sultanate; 2) Christian Greeks who were former subjects of the Seljuk sultans and "repatriated" to Byzantium at a moment; 3) non-Greek émigrés from Seljuk Anatolia to Byzantium who formerly confessed Islam and adopted Christianity in the course of their naturalization on the Byzantine soil; 4) wandering groups and individuals who traveled to and fro the Byzantine-Muslim border such as teams of artisans, companies of mercenaries, merchants and the like. The question of the presence in the Byzantine territories of Muslim individuals who could have become subjects of the Byzantine emperor will be posed and discussed. The reconstruction of the biography of the aforementioned categories of persons is impossible without an in-depth study of Persian and Arabic sources originating from Muslim Anatolia. In particular, methodologically paradigmatic cases exemplified by the biographies of Michael Palaiologos, the brothers Basilikoi, the brothers Kīr Khāya and Kīr Kadīd and the like will be discussed in more details.

MICHAL BIRAN
Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Mongol Eurasia and Prosopography

The presentation will introduce the database JPP-Spring of the Jerusalem project Mobility Empire and Cross Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia. The fully-relational internet-based database records multi-lingual information about people who were active in Mongol Eurasia (13th-14th centuries). Culled mainly from Chinese, Arabic and Persian sources, and translated into English (either by scholarly translations or by the project's members), the database currently indexes more than 13,600 persons. Originally built over the infrastructure of the Jerusalem Prosopographical Project (JPP) initiated by Prof. Michael Lecker of the Hebrew University for studying early Islamic history, the database has been updated, modified, and considerably extended according to the project's needs, although the patchy structure has its limitations. The database's main advantage is its ability to create a highly-nuanced classification of people and reports, notably by assigning keywords of various levels to each report and person. It enables the researchers to index the connections among various people, places, tribes, periods and activities; to make complicated searches, and to reconstruct the networks that were active across the empire and beyond its frontiers. There is a certain possibility to visualize the search results on maps and SNA graphs, as well as to export the data to specific softwares (e.g. Gephi) that specialize in producing more sophisticated visualizations.
The presentation will demonstrate the database's pros and cons by giving the example of its use for studying the issue of slavery in Mongol Eurasia and for the more limited subject of Baghdadi libraries.

JO VAN STEENBERGEN/ MAYA TERMONIA
Ghent University
From MP3 to MPP. 'Mamluks', Syro-Egyptian prosopography, and Arabic historiography

In the period 2009–14 a prosopographical database MP3 was constructed at Ghent University for the study of late medieval Syro-Egyptian political elites, institutions and practices, in the context of a specific collaborative research project. In the period 2015–16 new funding was obtained to create from MP3 a more widely accessible, connected and useable research infrastructure and to expand its textual component. This project is currently known as the Islamic History Open Data Platform.

IHODP is meant to become an Open Source & Open Access Data Platform for 'Medieval' Arabic Humanities Research. It is being constructed from, and integrates, the MP3 Filemaker 12 database, referred to now as MPP, as well as other relevant open datasets.

MPP on IHODP will be geared towards the integrated computational analysis of social groups and networks and of socio-cultural practices and discourses, especially for the history of the late medieval Sultanate of Egypt and Syria (13th-16th centuries). Work on MPP and IHODP consists of the following components:

− Development of a new Open Source application.
− Migration of MP3-datasets, Integration of relevant Linked Open Data, Creation of new datasets for and an annotated corpus of relevant Arabic historiographical texts.
− Creation of a user-interface, enabling multiple user-roles and multiple projects.
− Creation of user-friendly analytical functionalities and tools. Integration of and communication with data-mining and visualisation tools.

After a public tender procedure the responsibility for these components was awarded to open source developers INUITS, who started working on MPP in the spring of 2017, and will continue to do so until late 2020. In this presentation, we will give an overview of this development project, its origins in MP3, its current status, and our experiences along the way.

SESSION 6:
Byzantium's neighbours and 13th century Prosopography III

CHARALAMBOS GASPARIS
National Hellenic Research Foundation
"Prosopography of the Greco-Venetian World – The thirteenth century": From the primary source to the database.

The database "Prosopography of the Greek-Venetian world - The thirteenth century" concerns the persons who lived or acted in the first three Venetian colonies, namely Crete, Methoni-Koroni and Kythira, during the 13th century. The recording of all the persons of that century in the above possessions, and not just certain groups of people, was considered necessary, not only because of the rather manageable sources for that period, but also because this century represents the transition to a new era for these areas. In this way the characteristics of a new society, which encompasses the local Greek element and the newcomers Venetians, other Italians and Latins in general from Western Europe, are highlighted. The information will not be limited to simply listing the names and the identity of the individuals, but also the factoids that defined the life of each one, that is, his role as it is revealed in every source where the person is identified, as well as all other persons (relatives or not) and places with which these persons were related or come into contact during their lifetime. My intervention in the workshop aims at exposing and discussing not only the structure and the content of the database, but mainly the methodology used and all important problems

encountered during the process of the archival material in order the database to be fed by all necessary information.

JAMES BAILLIE
University of Vienna
Georgian Prosopography: Problems, Approaches, and Solutions

The prosopography of twelfth century Georgia has only very recently become the subject of consistent attempts at cataloguing and disambiguating, with discussions in many cases previously relying on unclear assertions from earlier scholars and with a severe disconnect between Georgian and non-Georgian scholarship which is only slowly moving towards being bridged. In this paper, I discuss the particular challenges of twelfth-century Georgian prosopography, and my development of approaches to reduce or circumvent them. In addition, I look at ways of ensuring a consistent approach to this material that maintains the argumentative clarity of the historical logic behind the data for future users, as well as ensuring its accessibility.

Notable issues divide into two main areas: firstly, there are many problems regarding material and its specific issues and availability. The varying structures of personal names in Georgia in this period makes the disambiguation of persons an art more than a science, among other issues with the texts. Beyond our written sources, epigraphy is a badly needed supplementary area of material and is still poorly accessible, and there is a wealth of information across sources in other languages that needs better connections to Georgian resources.

The second area this talk will focus on relates to methodology. Too often, person data are created and stored without a sufficiently clear outlook on the form or construction of the data, and what that may or may not allow when it comes to the use of secondary tools and analyses. Making explicit these issues both in the design process, and to future users through the UI, is a key desideratum for future prosopographical works, and greatly affects our ability to link and connect between projects, which must be one of the most vital goals for the future of this field.

NOTES: