

Re-Evaluating the Eleventh Century through Linked Events and Entities

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Abstract. This report presents the aims and ongoing progress of the ERC-funded project “Re-Evaluating the Eleventh Century through Linked Events and Entities” (Grant #101002357). We introduce the rationale for the project and the innovative solution for recording historical data that we have developed, known as the STAR model. We then give details of the four case studies undertaken in the project, which will shed new light on the movement of people, the understanding of place and space, and the production of texts within and among Christian societies of the eleventh century. Through the work of this project, we hope to be able to represent, examine, and illustrate the multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations that arise in the history of a century that was so pivotal to the development of the modern Near East and Europe.

Keywords: digital history, data modeling, medieval studies, eleventh century, eastern christianity

The history of the Christian world during what we might call the ‘short eleventh century,’ wedged between the ‘long tenth century’ that extends by some accounts to 1033 and the advent of the Crusading movement in 1095 that arguably kicks off the twelfth,

is extremely challenging to study for a number of reasons. These range from a lingering Western colonialist bias that results in disproportionate attention to and generalizations about the Middle Ages based on events in France and the Holy Roman Empire to the imbalance in the survival of contemporary evidence that also favors Western Europe to the sheer multiplicity of languages, cultural contexts, and types of evidence that must nevertheless be connected. Here lies the historical objective of the RELEVEN project: to seek to create a more coherent and connected picture to match the coherent and increasingly connected Christian world that Jonathan Shepard¹ and Peter Frankopan,² among others, have argued comes closer to how the different inhabitants of this world conceived it in terms of the space they inhabited, the people around them, and the written artifacts, pointing in many cases to the intellectual ideas that circulated around it. The importance of such a connected approach is clear in light of recent trends toward thinking in terms of a Global Middle Ages.³

The methodological challenge of re-thinking how digital data about the past can and should be represented arises from the observation that, although there has been a huge drive in the last twenty years to render collections into open repositories of data that can be mined by the researcher, the usefulness of these repositories is too often doubted, even dismissed with the claim that such data collection and analysis is necessarily positivistic.⁴ Scholars of the medieval world, in particular, have generally not been able to profit as much as others from the ‘big data’ trends of digital humanities—while we have much more data than one scholar can reasonably grapple with using paper notes alone, it is rarely enough to support the use of the sort of exploratory statistical and machine-learning methods that appear so promising for contemporary history and modern literature. Yet it is critical that we find some way for the medievalist to profit from breakthroughs driven by digital methods, as opposed to mere digital remediation; without this, it becomes difficult to argue that Digital Humanities is making any real difference to traditional working methods after all.

These two challenges, the historical and the methodological, come together as the objectives of the RELEVEN project. The core idea is to put scholarly interpretation and source provenance, rather than ‘simple’ but often misleading or incomplete facts, at the center of our approach to data construction. For this, we have developed the STAR model (‘STRUCTURED Assertion Record’) as the basis of our data collection practices. In order to demonstrate the potential of such a data-driven approach to such heterogeneous data, to best harness the digital work that has already been

1 Shepard, “Storm Clouds and a Thunderclap,” 127–53.

2 Frankopan, *The First Crusade*.

3 Cp. Holmes and Standen, “Towards a Global Middle Ages,” 1–44.

4 Drucker, “Humanistic Theory”; Fuchs, “Critical Digital and Social Media Research,” 37–49.

done, and to get a sense of the trends circulating broadly during the period of interest, we focus within the project on three thematic strands as they relate to the ‘short eleventh century’: People and Movement, Place and Space, and Textual Culture. Here, we will introduce the basic principle of the STAR model and describe the four case studies—movement around Central Europe, questions of identity formation in northern and eastern Italy, the construction of a communal historical narrative in Armenia, and the correspondence network around Michael Psellos as a source for understanding the educational norms and mobility of persons within Byzantium.

An innovative practice for the capture of historical data: the STAR model

The treatment of historical information as a collection of assertions rather than plain facts is the methodological basis of RELEVEN. We therefore need to address the question of how we can robustly express conflicting information in our historical sources and our present-day reconstructions and even how we can use digital methods to express the multi-perspectivity that is so sought after in today’s historical methodology. In so doing, we aim to provide a clear counter-example to the common assumption that digital history projects are positivistic by their very nature. The opportunity to do this is provided by our focus on the eleventh-century Christian world, which involves very many perspectives and very contested events, of which only one or two narratives are generally known.

At the heart of our digital work is the STAR model, which stands for STructured Assertion Record. We use the STAR model to approach the problem that, on the one hand, Linked Open Data (LOD) is a very popular model for many sorts of data collections, including those within the cultural heritage domain. On the other hand, as mentioned above, LOD was designed basically without controversy in mind. One of the consequences of its design is that the collection of facts, or assertions, represented in an LOD store tends to get dissociated very quickly from the context that is very often associated with important meaning or cultural implications for the data that was collected.⁵ The other common approach, known as the ‘factoid model,’ used primarily in prosopographical databases,⁶ has the strength that its data statements are always connected to the primary source from which it was taken, but the weakness is that if a statement is not made in a primary source, it cannot be represented in the database at all.⁷

5 Kahn and Simon, “Feast and Famine,” 86–100.

6 Pasin and Bradley, “Factoid-Based Prosopography and Computer Ontologies,” 86–97.

7 Baillie, “Alternative Database Structures for Prosopographical Research,” 117–32.

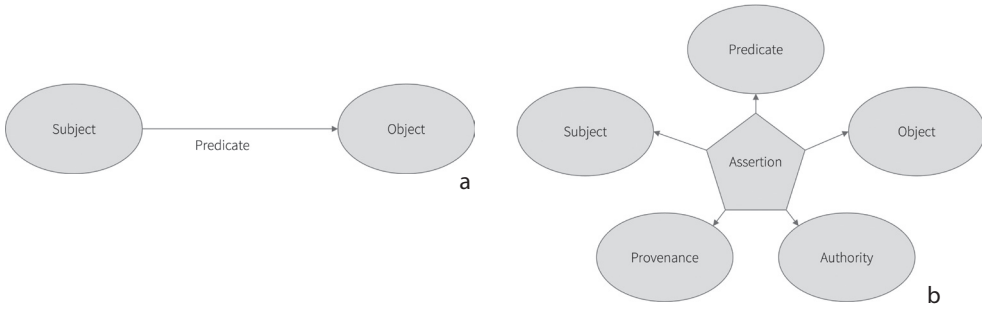


Figure 1 An information statement in regular Linked Open Data LOD (a) and in the STAR (b) model

The schematic of a typical LOD statement is given in Figure 1a: it consists of an entity that is the subject of the statement, a relationship that denotes a property of that entity—one might think of this as the verb—and an object, which is the value (or content) of that property. The same statement is represented in Figure 1b according to the STAR model. The statement is now rather more complex: the relationship (or property) that was previously only a connection between two entities is now itself an entity. This is known as ‘reification.’ All three entities—the subject, predicate, and object—are then connected to a core ‘assertion’ object, which also provides a connection to an entity representing the authority for the statement (that is, who made the claim) and one representing the source (that is, on what basis the claim was made).

One of the first crucial tasks was to find out how our approach could fit with existing models, if at all. Indeed, the problem of conflicting assertions has received an increasing amount of attention in the last several years, and a relevant revision was published in 2019 to the CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model (CIDOC-CRM), which is increasingly becoming the fundamental standard for the computational modelling and representation of cultural heritage data. We have based the specifics of our model on CIDOC-CRM version 7.1.2; the specific entities and properties we have adopted to form the assertions are shown in Figure 2. The use of our STAR model to represent the data we collect underpins each of the case studies presented below.

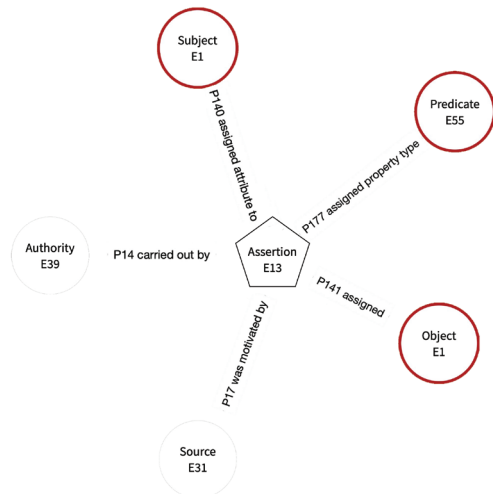


Figure 2 The STAR model according to the CIDOC-CRM standard

Movement and Power in Central Europe (Rózsa)

The focus of the RELEVEN project on the Eastern borders of Christendom is also evident in its interest in Central Europe. The eleventh-century history of this region provides a challenge for modern scholars due to its turbulent politics, cultural and religious transformation, as well as the quantitative and textual issues of our source material. However, Central Europe is a problematic geographical and geopolitical concept as its meaning, terminology, and definition have been changed many times in accordance with different political and intellectual intentions.⁸ The project employs the latter term to refer to a region that encompasses Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland, as well as some smaller Wendish and Baltic polities. As a successor of the Frankish Empire, the Holy Roman Empire was subject to conditions significantly different from those affecting other regional polities. Even so, the empire is frequently considered to be part of Central Europe and so has not been entirely excluded from the analysis as it had numerous connections with its eastern neighbours.

What is the significance of Central Europe to the Christian world in the eleventh century? This century marked a transition period in the spheres of religion and politics. The Christianization of Bohemia started in the ninth century, while the conversion of Poland and Hungary began in the tenth, but the process lasted until the thirteenth century.⁹ Nevertheless, Christianization forged special bonds between Central Europe and the rest of Christendom, which are of interest to our research on the movement of individuals and the perception of space.

The primary focus of this case study on Central Europe is the problem of how local rulers utilized itinerant individuals for their policies. One can identify specific factors—namely, Christianization, political and administrative development, and conflicts—that prompted people to move. The importance of this issue can be illustrated through the career of Saint Gerard of Csanád. Gerard was born in Venice and moved to Hungary in the 1020s. He spent some years in Bakonybél as a hermit, then was appointed the first bishop of Csanád by Stephen I. As a prelate, he played an important role in the politics of Hungary even after the death of Stephen I.¹⁰ Through these events, it is evident that a foreigner visited Hungary, engaged with several notable figures of that polity in various locations, maintained a presence as a religious man, and traveled to specific places on official assignments. Gerard's movements were significant, and various meanings can be attributed to them. This raises the question of how the king of Hungary addressed this situation. Nevertheless, this is just one example

8 Berend, Urbańczyk, and Wiszewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages*, 1–39.

9 Berend, Urbańczyk, and Wiszewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages*, 315–28.

10 Most of these events are mentioned in the two lives of Gerard: Szentpétery and Madzsar, “Legenda Sancti Gerhardi Episcopi,” 471–506.

that highlights the value of spatial movement in politics, as evidenced by a variety of cases. In truth, the scope of this research is not on the careers of individuals or those whose different journeys are documented in primary sources but rather on the possible underlying patterns in the individuals' movements. It is also worth stressing that the research is more focused on the rulers' responses to the movements of others than the sovereigns' itineraries. Nonetheless, the presence of the ruler can occasionally be an important factor in the case of the movement of another individual.

Historians have already observed numerous movements in medieval Central Europe, yet a thorough analysis within the regional context remains necessary. One can approach the historiography of this topic from different angles, and the political aspects of journeys have especially attracted the interest of modern historians. Central Europe has received increased attention in recent decades, yet the focus of observation was seldom on movement. Nora Berend contributed to several volumes that revolved around this region.¹¹ Dániel Bagi analysed the division of political power in eleventh- and twelfth-century Central Europe.¹² Péter Báling observed the diplomacy and foreign affairs of Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland as the manifestations of dynastic and personal ties.¹³ While some analyses focus on movement, their main concern is usually specific types of motion, such as migration, colonization, pilgrimage, and exile.¹⁴ It is clear that historians recognized the significance of movement in the politics of eleventh-century Central Europe. However, itinerant individuals, their journeys, and their role in politics were overshadowed by other topics or scholars focused on specific kinds of agents (e.g., pilgrims) and activities (e.g., colonization). Therefore, there is room for a comprehensive analysis of the political use of 'individuals on the move'.

The case study poses specific questions regarding the political implications of individuals in motion. Despite the focused nature of the topic, it is necessary to take into account numerous factors in order to come to a comprehensive understanding. What was the function of the movements that seemed to be influenced or managed by the central government? Who were the agents of these directed actions? In what ways did the court intervene in movements that were not directly induced by the central government? Who benefited from the rulers' oversight of these movements? What role did the church play in this process and policy? Many of these questions are inherently part of the broader topic. They mainly explore the relationship between

11 Berend, *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy*; Berend, *Expansion*; Berend, Urbańczyk, and Wiszewski, *Central Europe in the High Middle Ages*.

12 Bagi, *Divisio Regni*.

13 Báling, *Az Árpád-ház hatalmi kapcsolattrendszerei*.

14 Piskorski, "The Medieval Colonization of Central Europe," 215–35; Csukovits, *Magyar zarándokok*; Kersken, "Hungary as a Place of Exile in the Middle Ages," 300–20.

agency, competence, and various personal aims. The role of the church appears to be an exception, an additional topic of interest. However, given the realities of eleventh-century politics and the significant role of the church in various domains, the inquiry into the church's involvement in this process remains a compelling question to explore. These questions establish the groundwork for what can be investigated while also pointing out the challenge of figuring out how much and what kind of information can be acquired from the source material.

The political changes in Central Europe shaped the region's written culture and, thus, the available source material. Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland had to re-establish their foundations for their literary production in the late tenth and eleventh centuries. Historiography emerged as the last among the various literary genres in Central Europe. The earliest known preserved or theorized examples were compiled at the end of the eleventh century or the beginning of the twelfth century: the *Chronicle of the Bohemians* by Cosmas of Prague, the *Gesta principum Polonorum* by Gallus Anonymus, and the hypothetical old gesta of the Hungarians.¹⁵ Political treatises and hagiography appeared in the region's literature in the early eleventh century. Yet, the official documents and written laws marked the beginning of a new cultural era, illustrating the preferences and needs of the emerging polities of Central Europe. This slow development means that the internal sources of local history were very scarce in the first half of the eleventh century. Modern historians often rely on external sources, especially those written in the Holy Roman Empire, although these source materials tend to address the matters of Central Europe peripherally. A wide variety of sources is necessary for this observation, as different genres have various interests and provide unique contexts for understanding movements.

The case study employs a methodology aligned with its specific questions and the general goals of the RELEVEN project. The key connection between the two perspectives is the interest in prosopographical data. The basis of this case study is the study of individual journeys. This aligns with the structure of the RELEVEN database, which organizes the majority of historical data according to events. The analysis of movement comprises two phases: first, recording evidence about individual movements, and second, conducting a study to explore tendencies based on the factors identified in the first phase. The first part includes collecting data based on six factors associated with an individual journey: 1) the agent of the movement, 2) the geographical dimensions of the event (i.e., places involved in it), 3) the aim(s) of the activity, 4) the proponent(s) of the movement, 5) the beneficiary or beneficiaries of the event, and 6) the benefit(s) of the activity. The second part is a comprehensive study that explores tendencies according to the factors defined in the first stage. By structuring both the individual and the comprehensive phase around the six

15 Veszprémy, *Történetírás és történetírók*, 59.

factors, the case study avoids relying on less relevant typologies or classifications. This approach effectively focuses the observation on aspects that are closely linked to the political utilization of geographical movement.

Research on the movement of individuals and its political significance is currently underway. The division of the research into two phases pertains more to methodology than to the timeline. As such, the research repeatedly alternates between the two steps throughout the project in order to derive insights from the investigation. Certain publications further refine the scope of observation by showing the practicality of the topic and the methodology of this case study. The initial publication of this case study is about a bishop's journeys from the Holy Roman Empire to Hungary.¹⁶ Further publications on specific topics related to this case study, such as Stephen I's policies on moving individuals and the role of itinerant people in the *imitatio imperii*, are also in progress. An analysis focusing on personal movements contributes to our understanding of eleventh-century Central European politics. However, there is the need for the careful evaluation of eleventh-century details, given the prevalence of modern theories and interpretations of the fragmentary evidence in primary sources. The issue of primary sources and modern interpretations represents another juncture at which the research on Central Europe aligns with the interests of the project.

The *nationes*: Formation of an Identity (Prajda)

According to the historiography, a civic identity began to crystallize in Italy in the twelfth century. The birth of the term and the phenomenon of the *nationes* themselves, translated into English as trading nations, is seen by historians as the culmination of this civic identity. At this early stage, scholars traditionally identify four leading *nationes* in the form of the medieval maritime republics: the Amalfitans, the Pisans, the Genoese, and the Venetians.¹⁷ The origins of the Republic of Lucca also date back to the same period, but it was not until the thirteenth century that its merchants, alongside the Sieneese and Florentines, became significant players in long-distance trade and banking.¹⁸ However, by the second half of the fourteenth century, the importance of the Pisans and Sieneese in these two areas had diminished considerably. At that time, the Venetians were joined in the Adriatic by the two other leading nations that were almost completely new to this geographical area: the Genoese and, above all, the Florentines.¹⁹

16 Rózsa, "Augsburgi Brúnó és Szent István," 615–37.

17 Tangheroni, "Trade and Navigation," 127–46.

18 Goldthwaite, *The Economy of Renaissance Florence*, 42–3.

19 On the Genoese in fourteenth-century Dalmatia, see: Prajda, *Italy and Hungary in the Early Renaissance*, 87, 95, 114. On the Florentines in the same period, especially: 47–54, 86–90.

Despite the chronology generally accepted by the scholarship, in a recent monograph, *The Donkey and the Boat: Reinterpreting the Mediterranean economy, 950–1180*, published in 2023, Chris Wickham maintains that the commercial revolution began in the period between 950/1000 and 1180, which he calls the “long eleventh century.”²⁰ In this metanarrative of the historiography, the evolution of the *nationes* plays a crucial role. Contrary to previous scholarship, Wickham argues that the Commercial Revolution was more about the intensification of connectedness between regional economies than about Italian long-distance merchants, especially the Genoese and Venetians, venturing to distant destinations in the Mediterranean.²¹

The scholarship has provided a definition of the *natio* and linked the development of the term to the so-called ‘barbarian invasions’ (that is, the great migrations of the High Middle Ages).²² The term was used to describe the ethnicity and the language of individuals.²³ Indeed, in documents from Venetian territory, the term *natio* was already in use in the eleventh century. In a source datable to 1022, a woman was mentioned as “qui professa sum ex natione mea lege vivere Alemannorum.”²⁴ In 1028, the two *comites* of the comitatus of Treviso, father and son, are cited by the local notary as “qui professi sumus ex natione nostra lege vivere Salica.”²⁵ In a similar fashion, in a document drawn up a year later on the Rialto by a Venetian notary, another woman is mentioned as “ex natione mea lege vivere Longobardorum.”²⁶ These expressions, *Longobardorum*, *Salicorum*, and *Alemannorum*, all refer to the very same *natio*, which starting from the sixth century, lived in the Peninsula.²⁷

In these two successive periods and historical contexts, how should we understand the term *natio*? How, if at all, did the German *natio* of the eleventh century differ from that of the Venetians and the Genoese, for example, in the twelfth century? Starting from this period onwards, the term *natio* was applied to communities of the same origins settled abroad that had institutionalized representation in a given place.²⁸ Thus,

20 Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 1; Abulafia, “A Radical Rethink of Mediterranean History,” 12–3.

21 Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 625–26, 62.

22 Teillet, *Des Goths à la nation gothique*, 3–9. For a historiographic overview, see: Quartier, *Guerres et richesses d’une nation*, Introduction, 2.1.

23 Gasparri talks about a collective identity of the Longobards. Gasparri, “Rapport introductif,” 17–31.

24 *Corpus delle fonti di Venezia*, n. 26. (27/08/1022). I wish to thank Stefano Gasparri for the collection. Published in: Lanfranchi, S. *Giorgio Maggiore*.

25 n. 43. (06/10/1028). Published in: Lanfranchi and Strina, *Ss. Ilario e Benedetto e S. Gregorio*.

26 n. 44. (07/05/1029). Published in: Lanfranchi, S. *Giorgio Maggiore*.

27 Gasparri, “Le molteplici identità etniche,” 493–504. Pohl, “Ethnicity, Theory, and Tradition,” 221–39.

28 Quartier, *Guerres et richesses d’une nation*, Introduction, 2.1. Petti Balbi, *Mercanti e nationes*

in the application of the term ‘nation’ to the Germans, Venetians, and Genoese, for example, the common element was their status: they were all strangers (*forestieri*) in that given place, born elsewhere. However, the emphasis in the two cases seems to be different. Meanwhile, in the case of the Barbarians (i.e., Longobards), the scholarship (for example, Stefano Gasparri) emphasizes their origins and language as a reason for developing an identification of the term *natio*.²⁹ At the same time, in the case of the trading nations, scholars stress the institutionalization of a foreign community abroad.³⁰

The institutionalization of territorial control by the trading nations in the form of commercial consulates and warehouses (*fondachi*) established by the Genoese and Venetians started following the First Crusade in 1096. As with their participation in the crusade, the foundation of these institutions also had a dual nature.³¹ On the one hand, to develop territorial control and diplomatic representation; on the other, commercial purposes. According to scholars (for example, Enrico Basso), the First Crusade, a milestone in this development, requires further analysis.³² The event may also be seen in the context of the evolution of a collective or civic identity, and as the decisive moment ending the short eleventh century. This, indeed, contrasts with the theory advanced by Wickham about the ‘long eleventh century’ in which the *nationes* play a limited role.

In the case of Genoa, as with Amalfi, there are virtually no sources that could give us any indication of the development of a civic identity as early as the eleventh century.³³ Although the written sources on Venice, and especially Florence, are far more abundant, they must be treated with extreme caution when drawing conclusions about issues of identity. The sources become more consistent only in the twelfth century, which is one of the main reasons why much of the scholarly discourse on civic identity in Italy begins with this date.³⁴ The same is true when we try to study questions of an economic nature. According to Wickham, commercial contracts, for example, have survived only from Genoa and Venice, but they are exclusively bound to church collections. Thus, they do not concern private individuals or secular powers.³⁵ In his estimation, there are altogether thirty-five such documents from Venice and a further seventy-one of an economic nature. However,

nelle Fiandre. I Genovesi in età bassomedievale, 55–60.

29 Gasparri, “Le molteplici identità etniche,” 493–504.

30 Petti Balbi, “Introduzione,” XI–XXIII.

31 Petti Balbi, *Negoziare fuori patria*, 1–14; Balard, “Consoli d’Oltremare (Secc. XII–XV),” 83–94.

32 Basso, *Strutture insediative ed espansione commerciale*, 16.

33 For a discussion of the relationship between Genoese citizens and the Church until the mid-twelfth century, see: Petti Balbi, *Governare la città*, 61–67.

34 Cammarosano, *Italia medievale*, 39.

35 Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 471.

they predominantly deal with immobile properties and provide little to no information on commerce.³⁶ Thus, it is reasonable to assume that before the twelfth century, references to merchants involved in trade were also scarce.

In the Florentines' case, Enrico Faini claims that before the end of the twelfth century, the sources infer the complete absence of a civic identity.³⁷ In the development of a civic identity, he attributes a leading role to the secular memory of the collective actions of the citizenry.³⁸ Only in that period, he claims, did the first signs of collective memory start to appear, embodied by the *annales*.³⁹ However, even at the end of the eleventh century, the Lucchese merchants were preoccupied with the Florentines. In 1081, the bull issued by Henry IV in favor of the former specified that such privileges applied only to the "cives Lucenses."⁴⁰

At the same time, some historians collocate the beginnings of the path that led various trading nations like the Pisans and the Genoese to their eventual hegemony in the Mediterranean with the eleventh century. Enrico Basso has articulated that, in the case of the Genoans, this path was marked by two significant conflicts with Maghribi merchants in Mehedra in 1087 and in Valencia and Tortosa in 1092 and 1093.⁴¹ Even though these attempts failed, a detailed analysis of the involvement of these trading nations in the First Crusade, according to Basso, might show the changes which became evident in the century that followed. In fact, in the twelfth century, Genoa drew up significant commercial treaties which helped expand its merchant network abroad. From the Venetians' point of view, as Basso has pointed out, the commercial treaty with Byzantium in the eleventh century was of utmost importance. It was a determining factor in the spread of their commercial networks as well as in the birth of a Venetian *natio*.⁴² The exact date on which this agreement happened is still fertile ground for debate among historians. Scholars have typically accepted that the Golden Bull of the Byzantine emperor, Alexios I, which conferred upon merchants of Venice greater autonomy in trading with the Eastern Mediterranean, is datable to 1082.⁴³ More recently, a new date, 1092, was proposed.⁴⁴

36 Wickham, *The Donkey and the Boat*, 509–10.

37 De Angelis, "Cittadini prima della Cittadinanza," 169–90.

38 Faini, *Firenze nell'età romanica*, 26.

39 Faini, *Firenze nell'età romanica*, 24.

40 Faini, *Firenze nell'età romanica*, 23.

41 Basso, *Strutture insediative ed espansione commerciale*, 16.

42 Basso, *Strutture insediative ed espansione commerciale*, 17–22.

43 Nicovich, "The Poverty of the Patriarchate of Grado," 1–16.

44 Frankopan, "Byzantine Trade Privileges to Venice," 135–60.

Even before this date, during the awakening of this civic identity, the initial diplomatic alliance between Hungary and the Venetian ruling elite took an unexpected turn. In 1000, Doge Pietro II Orseolo conducted an expedition to Dalmatia. Following this, thanks to the Venetian elite's interest in the territory, he was the first Venetian doge to take the title *dux Dalmaticorum*.⁴⁵ Shortly after that date, in 1011, the marriage between his son, Ottone, already doge of Venice, and Stephen I's sister created a diplomatic alliance with the newly formed Christian kingdom on one side and the Adriatic city already in expansion on the other. Following Stephen's death in 1038, the Hungarian crown went to his nephew, Pietro di Ottone Orseolo, who, after a short reign, was sent into exile by local lords in 1041. In 1044, he made his return and, for a short period of time, once again was able to hold the Hungarian throne. In 1046, he was definitively driven away by a pagan rebellion.⁴⁶ Until that point, Dalmatia was in the sphere of interest of both Venice and Byzantium. During the century, the Normans made attempts to occupy the port cities on the southeastern shore of the Adriatic against Byzantium. In these conflicts, Venice was on the latter side.

As far as the primary sources attest, at the beginning of the eleventh century, Hungary had no interest in the Adriatic. In 1091, Ladislaus I conducted the first campaign to occupy the Croatian throne and thus also the Dalmatian towns.⁴⁷ Within a century, the personal union between the crowns of Hungary and Croatia through Coloman led the Kingdom on the Adriatic to become the chief adversary of the Venetian *nation*. However, in 1098, the Hungarian king and the Venetian doge made an agreement that the former would retain Croatia and the latter Dalmatia. This changed shortly afterward when Coloman was crowned king of Croatia and of Dalmatia in 1102.⁴⁸

As we have seen, the eleventh century also represented a watershed in the evolution of the trading nations. In his analysis of identity in the post-Roman Adriatic, Francesco Borri argues for the pivotal role of the sea and its trade networks.⁴⁹ Following this line of thought, the dominion of the Adriatic and its shores were presumably of strong significance in the development of the Venetian *natio*, too. The question of the identity of the population living on Venetian territory in the short eleventh century will be the subject of further research that compares the available written evidence, especially with mainland Lucca and Florence at the time.

45 Ortalli, "Pietro II Orseolo," 13–27.

46 Báling, "The Orseolos," 13–26.

47 Körmendi, "Szent László és Horvátország," 443–77.

48 Gál, *Dalmatia and the Exercise of Royal Authority*, 11–3.

49 Borri, "The Waterfront of Istria," 51–67.

The Armenians between Byzantium and the Seljuq Turks (Read)

“The life of the house of the Armenians came to an end. For in one year, the two brothers, Ašot and Yovhannes, who held the kingship of our land, were raised from this earthly life. Their throne of constancy was moved and was never again stable. The princes departed from their patrimonial inheritances and became wanderers in a foreign land; thereafter districts were ruined and looted by the house of the Greeks.”⁵⁰

“In the same year, the gate of Heaven’s wrath opened upon our land. Many forces moved from T’urk’astan, their horses as swift as eagles, with hooves like solid rock. Their bows taut, their arrows sharp, well girded, and the laces of their shoes were never untied. Having arrived in the district of Vaspurakan, they attacked the Christians like insatiably hungry wolves to food.”⁵¹

This is how the Armenian historian Aristakēs Lastivertč’i, writing in the late 1070s, described the year 1045. In doing so, he framed the Armenian experience of the eleventh century in two distinct halves. The period until 1045 was conceptualized in terms of the gradual and inexorable expansion of the Byzantine Empire, culminating in the annexation of the Armenian Kingdom of Ani, the displacement of its social elite, and the decline of its society. The period after 1045, on the other hand, was defined by the Seljuk Turks. Interactions between the Seljuks and Armenian communities were constructed in terms of destruction, brought about by divine punishment and framed by apocalyptic biblical paradigms. Some fifty years later, the Armenian chronicler Matt’ēos Urhayec’i (Matthew of Edessa) shared this view, writing from his vantage point in the early twelfth century:

“I myself had considered writing about the bitter events of these latter days of ours, about the terrible wrath which the Armenian people bore from the long-haired and loathsome nation of Edomites—the Turks—and from their brothers, the Byzantines.”⁵²

Matthew’s equivalence between the Seljuk and Byzantine Empires and the comparable damage they inflicted on the Armenians tends to compound the idea that the Armenian experience of the eleventh century was characterized by loss and dislocation. Both Aristakēs’ and Matthew’s reflections have proved remarkably durable and continue to define much of our understanding of Armenian history at this juncture.⁵³

50 Aristakēs Lastivertč’i, *Patmut’iwn Aristakisi Lastivertč’woy*, 55.

51 Aristakēs Lastivertč’i, *Patmut’iwn Aristakisi Lastivertč’woy*, 64–5.

52 Urhayec’i, *Žamanakagrut’iwn*, 112–13.

53 Greenwood, “Aristakes Lastivertč’i and Armenian Urban Consciousness,” 88.

The way in which scholarship has characterized the historical experience of Armenian communities in the eleventh century has undoubtedly been crystalized by the selective treatment of Aristakēs Lastivertc‘i and Matt‘ēos Urhayec‘i. This approach has subsequently reproduced a discursive framework that situates itself firmly within the horizons provided by these two key primary sources. The realities of losing independence to Byzantine and Turkish expansion and the subsequent dislocation of Armenian communities have always sat uncomfortably within the nationalist and methodologically state-based conventions of Armenian historiography, which privileges periods in which Armenian-speaking communities became organized into proto-states or kingdoms.⁵⁴ Secondary works have consequently tended to focus on the conditions that preceded the loss of Armenian kingdoms to the Byzantine Empire in the tenth and early eleventh centuries or, more commonly, jumped to the re-emergence of Armenian-led states in Cilicia at the end of the century.⁵⁵ Cowe, for example, has argued that the tenth and eleventh centuries are “pivotal for an understanding of the Armenian Middle Ages, marking as they do the zenith of the renewed Armenian Kingdom under the Bagratuni dynasty in the tenth, its gradual demise in the first half of the eleventh century, and the subsequent transition via a Sebastia-Cappodocia interlude toward the establishment of another state to the south of historic Armenian lands, in Cilicia.”⁵⁶ Though the narratives of Aristakēs and Matt‘ēos make for compelling reading, they were created using specific literary and ideological frameworks. Perhaps unsurprisingly, a re-assessment of these two historiographical works has been a key feature of more recent studies, which have begun to re-frame the Armenian experience of the eleventh century.

Published in 2017, Greenwood’s article *Aristakēs Lastivertc‘i and Armenian Urban Consciousness* set out to tackle what he describes as the ‘unhappy narrative’ of the period and, in doing so, marked a particular change of direction in approaching eleventh-century Armenian history.⁵⁷ In a short but deep-diving analysis, Greenwood argues that the *History* and its discussion of interactions with the Seljuk Turks reveal the emergence of an urban consciousness amongst Armenian communities in the eleventh century, challenging a long-term scholarly contention that frames urban spaces as an alien element in medieval Armenian society. Drawing on understudied colophon and epigraphic evidence to support his re-reading of Aristakēs, Greenwood’s reflection on eleventh-century Armenian communities is defined by transformation, not destruction.

54 Greenwood, “Social Change in Eleventh-Century Armenia,” 196–7; Aslanian, “From Autonomous to Interactive Histories,” 95–7.

55 Garsoïan, “The Byzantine Annexation,” 187–98.

56 Cowe, “Armenian Integration to the Sebastia Region,” 111.

57 Greenwood, “Aristakes Lastivertc‘i and Armenian Urban Consciousness,” 88.

Nicholas Matheou's 2018 thesis, *Situating the History Attributed to Aristakēs Lastiverc'i, 1000–1072*, shares a great deal with Greenwood's approach and goes further. Matheou's study provided a new and dynamic critical apparatus with which to better understand the *History* of Aristakēs.⁵⁸ This complete reappraisal of the source brings greater consideration to the aims and ideological horizons of the composition and seeks to place the work within the context of the agency and historical situation of its author. In doing so, Matheou implements an effective critique of the methodologically nationalist appropriation of the eleventh century by drawing our attention to the circumscribed use of the *History* in projecting a singular, national reading of Armenian history.⁵⁹

In 2017, Tara Andrews' foundational study on the *Chronicle* of Matthew of Edessa: *History as Apocalypse in a Crossroads of Cultures: Matthew of Edessa and His Chronicle* brought a dynamic and much-needed re-assessment of this valuable twelfth-century source. Setting the composition in the context of its creation and the apocalyptic ideological framework of its narrative, Andrews challenges the reader to rethink the hostility that is often assumed to be inherent in Matthew's survey of eleventh-century events.⁶⁰ Andrews' work is arranged in terms of interactions between Armenians and their neighbours, and her chapters that examine exchanges with the Byzantine and Seljuk Empires do not follow the traditional narrative of loss and dislocation. Through a new reading of the *Chronicle*, complex interplays and the multiple lived realities of Armenian communities are put at the forefront of the argument, whilst wholesale assertions about loss and dislocation are challenged. As Andrews, Greenwood, and Matheou have proven, there is more valuable information in the works of Aristakēs Lastiverc'i and Matt'ēos Urhayec'i which can be unlocked by re-reading them within a more nuanced and thoughtful framework.

Another route to re-considering the narrative of eleventh-century Armenian history can be found in a set of largely neglected material. A complementary and equally important source for the eleventh century is a collection of fifty-five colophons, which offer a series of unique insights into Armenian communities and their experiences of this period. Colophons transmit a range of information concerning the manuscripts in which they are found: they provide crucial data about the sponsorship, dating, and production of medieval codices, offering a window into the processes of production behind any given codex and the lived reality of those responsible for its creation and use. That colophons themselves represent a sophisticated literary genre is being increasingly recognized. The burgeoning field

58 Matheou, "Situating the History Attributed to Aristakēs Lastiverc'i."

59 For further development of this argument, see: Matheou, "Hegemony, Counterpower, and Global History," 208–36.

60 Andrews, *Matt'ēos Urhayec'i and His Chronicle*.

of ‘colophonology’ is beginning to connect these unique sources across linguistic and disciplinary boundaries, telling us more about the trans-regional stylistic and rhetorical patterns that colophons convey.⁶¹ The Armenian colophon tradition is particularly rich and, whilst its historical and literary value has been demonstrated by Sanjian and Zakarian from the thirteenth century onward, a thorough study of the period that pre-dates the thirteenth century remains a major desideratum.⁶² The potential of eleventh-century colophons has been demonstrated by Greenwood, who used a small selection from the period to support his argument regarding Armenian urban identity.⁶³ Concurrently, Mathews and Van Lint have highlighted the value of using the colophon from the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem (ms. 2556) to comment on contemporary reactions to the “turbulent decades of Seljuq conquest.”⁶⁴ Despite their value, no historical database contains information drawn from these rich sources. The 1988 out-of-print edition of Artašes Mat’evosyan remains the only way to access this valuable earlier material, and this is perhaps why their full value has yet to be utilized. There are several challenges that hinder the use of this publication: colophons are not always represented in their entirety, shelfmarks and foliation are not up to date, there is no indication of the editorial work behind the transcription, which masks key linguistic and scribal features, nor does the collection contain a supporting apparatus to further facilitate the study of the material, which, to date, remains untranslated.⁶⁵ One of the outputs of the RELEVEN project will be the *Digital Corpus of Eleventh-Century Armenian Colophons*: encoded according to the TEI-XML standard, it will be provided with accompanying translation, a scholarly apparatus and manuscript images visualized in the open-source software Edition Visualisation Technology (EVT).

This brings us to the approach of the present case study within the RELEVEN project. In his article *Raiders and Neighbours: The Turks (1040–1304)*, Dimitri Korobeinikov first suggested that Armenian colophons might provide an alternative route to understanding the Armenian experience of the eleventh century, specifically in terms of the relationship between Armenians and the Byzantine Empire.⁶⁶ Comparing the colophon evidence with the historiographical, Korobeinikov concluded that “one should treat with caution the blood-curdling descriptions of the Turkish invasions found in the Byzantine and Armenian sources, for these

61 Kiraz and Schmidtke, *Literary Snippets*.

62 Zakarian, *Lived Reality in Medieval Anatolia and the Caucasus*; Sanjian, *Colophons of Armenian Manuscripts 1301–1480*.

63 Greenwood, “Aristakes Lastivertc’i and Armenian Urban Consciousness,” 97.

64 Van Lint and Mathews, “The Kars-Tsamandos Group,” 85–96.

65 Mat’evosyan, *Hayeren Jer’agreri Hišatakaraner 5–12 Dd.*

66 Korobeinikov, “Raiders and Neighbours,” 692–727.

incursions had yet to break Byzantine power in Armenia, and extensive areas were more or less unscathed.”⁶⁷ The use of Armenian colophons to rethink this period is precisely the basis on which the present RELEVEN case study seeks to build. In contrast to the historiographical narratives of Aristakēs and Matt’ēos, which are anxiously preoccupied with the destructive effects of Byzantium and the Seljuq Turks, few colophons reflect on this presence so clearly. Instead, they tend to contain different representations of relations between Armenians and the Byzantine Empire, reflections on Perso-Islamic ideals of rulership, and a variety of different priorities about the lived realities of the eleventh century; rarely do they project disruption or loss in the style of the historiographical material. There is no doubt that the arrival of the Seljuks represented an uncertain period of transition for Armenian communities, who had relied on localized political systems as well as Byzantine Imperial structures to support their everyday lives, but this does not mean everyone perceived the effect of the Seljuks in the same way. The introduction of Armenian colophons into the RELEVEN database will not only supply new data regarding people, places, and texts but also provide a highly effective method of querying the production of the past in the more familiar eleventh-century Armenian historiography. Utilizing the interplay between these sources, this case study aims to cut through the traditional readings drawn from the historiographical source material and gain new perspectives on the historical experiences of Armenian communities during the eleventh century.

The Letters of Michael Psellos: Networks, Diplomacy, Mobility (Anđelović)

The value of letter collections for historical research on pre-modern societies has long been recognized.⁶⁸ Epistolography has been perceived as a more ‘trustworthy’ genre for historical research than historiography as, to a certain extent, it presents both a ‘mirror’ of a letter’s author and adjusts the content, tone, and language register to a recipient.⁶⁹ Letter-writing as a literary genre with immediate social impact is thus particularly present in the case of early Christianity,⁷⁰ Late Antiquity,⁷¹ and

67 Korobeinikov, “Raiders and Neighbours,” 701.

68 See, for example: Gully, *The Culture of Letter-Writing in Pre-Modern Islamic Society*.

69 On these features of Byzantine letter-writing, see: Papaioannou, “The Epistolographic Self,” 333–52.

70 For the importance of letters in early Christian context it suffices to mention that, of the twenty-seven books that make up the New Testament, twenty-one are in the form of letters.

71 Trapp, *Greek and Latin Letters. An Anthology with Translation*.

Byzantium,⁷² whereby elites in the Christian context not only showcased their literary interests through letters but also advocated their ideologies and maintained power. Eleventh-century Byzantium is not an exception, and of 15,000 Greek letters from the period between 300 and 1500 CE that have come down to us,⁷³ about 3.6 percent were authored by a single person—Michael Psellos.

Born to a middle-class family in central Constantinople near the monastery of *Ta Narsou* in 1018 as Konstantinos, Psellos was one—and often referred to as the most prominent—of the influential polymaths belonging to the mid-eleventh-century elite, educated in rhetoric, law, and philosophy.⁷⁴ Psellos served in provincial administration before a spectacular career in the state apparatus, especially under the patronage of the emperor Konstantinos IX Monomachos in the years 1042–1055, after which he experienced disfavor and a short monastic retreat. The turbulent period for this rhetorician, teacher, diplomat, and philosopher was followed by him serving as an imperial advisor, most notably to Isaakios I Komnenos (1057–1059) and Michael VII Doukas (1071–1078).⁷⁵ Psellos died in or shortly after 1078, and his life and career thus tie in with the so-called ‘short’ eleventh century, that is, the period between the death of Basil II in 1025 and the rise to power of Alexios Komnenos in 1081, “the pivotal period in Byzantine history”⁷⁶ that saw significant shifts in terms of the political and economic circumstances of the Empire.⁷⁷

Moreover, it is Psellos’ towering literary output that has preoccupied the attention of modern scholars who have studied what he can tell us about philosophy, politics, and the highly rhetorical literary culture of Byzantium of his era more generally.⁷⁸ Psellos’ literary production surpasses in volume the oeuvres of many other authors not only of the eleventh century but of the Byzantine millennium altogether. Although he is mainly known for his *Chronographia*, a historiographical

72 For letter-writing in Byzantium in general, see the collection of essays in Bernard, “Michael Psellos,” 125–45; Riehle, ed., *A Companion*.

73 Riehle, ed., *A Companion*, 2. For the importance of letter-writing in middle Byzantium and especially on the forms of addressing in Byzantine epistolography, see: Grünbart, *Formen der Anrede*.

74 For the most concise biography of Psellos, see: Rosenqvist, *Die Byzantinische Literatur*, 100–4.

75 For Psellos’ relationship to the emperors during his lifetime in more detail, see: Jeffreys, “Psellos and ‘His Emperors,’” 73–91.

76 Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*, xxviii.

77 For Byzantium in the eleventh century in more detail, see: Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025–1204*, 99–114; Haldon, *A Social History of Byzantium*, 191–2; Bernard, *Writing and Reading Byzantine Secular Poetry*, 10–7; Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood*.

78 For more on Psellos’ literary output, see: Ljubarskij, Η προσωπικότητα και το έργο του Μιχαήλ Ψελλού. On Psellos’ rhetorical self in his writings, see: Papaioannou, Η ρητορική και ο λογοτέχνης.

narrative and philosophical tractate covering the time from Basil II to Michael VII,⁷⁹ Psellos wrote numerous other pieces in nearly every Byzantine genre, composing letters, orations, rhetorical exercises, poems, histories, etc.⁸⁰ Living at the time when as many as thirteen emperors and empresses governed the empire with only three patriarchs at the head of the Constantinopolitan see during the same period (1025–1081), Psellos positioned himself at the crossroads of imperial and ecclesiastical elites and thus witnessed the fragility of the imperial power and a tumultuous *Kaisergeschichte*. Psellos' contact with members of the Constantinopolitan elite, as well as of the provincial ones and with monastic centres, is conspicuous, particularly in the case of Psellos' epistolographic corpus that presents an invaluable source of the social, intellectual, and political history of eleventh-century Byzantium.

Until recently, all Psellos' 556 letters (518 Psellos' and 38 of uncertain authorship but attributed to Psellos), addressed to more than 150 different, often unidentified recipients, were "scattered over various collections."⁸¹ Every attempt at studying Psellos' letters entailed the consultation of numerous publications, sometimes with conflicting attributions and datings, which did not help this fascinating epistolographic collection attract a wider audience, especially compared to Psellos' historiographic writings. In 2019, however, all Psellos' letters were finally brought together in an excellent edition prepared by Stratis Papaioannou.⁸² This edition facilitates our research to a considerable extent and further points out the benefits of the letter collection of Psellos as a Byzantine elite official for our knowledge of the period. Despite the lack of evidence suggesting that Psellos intended to compile his letters into a collection and the absence of any original manuscripts from his lifetime containing his correspondence, the afterlife of this epistolographic corpus testifies to Psellos' letter-writing as an epistolographical model in the subsequent centuries of Byzantine literature.⁸³ The main interest of the Byzantines in Psellos' letters was primarily due to their literary qualities, which made them suitable for school exercises.

79 On *Chronographia*, see: Pietsch, *Die Chronographia des Michael Psellos: Kaisergeschichte, Autobiographie und Apologie*.

80 In an impressive catalog of everything believed to have been written by Psellos and of all printed editions of his works since the fifteenth century as well as of the bibliography, editions, and translations of each of Psellos' texts until the year 2005, P. Moore lists as many as 1,100 works attributed to Psellos and 1,790 manuscripts containing at least one work by Psellos, see: Moore, *Iter Psellianum*.

81 Lauxtermann and Jeffreys, eds., *The Letters of Psellos*, 11. More precisely, Psellos' letters were scattered over nine major collections and partially in various studies, see: Lauxtermann and Jeffreys, eds., *The Letters of Psellos*, 447, for the list and overview of these collections.

82 Psellos, *Epistulae*.

83 On the legacy of Psellos' letters, starting with the twelfth century, see: Papaioannou, "Fragile Literature," 289–328 as well as Grünbart, "The Letters of Michael Psellos," 933–46.

This interest was particularly due to the letters' allusive rhetoric and irony despite these features also having been labeled as obscuring our knowledge of the period. Yet, beyond their literary appeal, Psellos' letters are invaluable for offering insights into politics, diplomacy, power, and mobility within Byzantine society during the mid-eleventh century. As such, Psellos' letters provide us with knowledge that ties in with the main themes of the RELEVEN project—people and movement, place and space, and textual production.

Psellos' letters, which were sent to over 150 different recipients, already make up a significant source of material in the *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*. This material has been updated and supplemented with a more detailed list of Psellos' addressees in the edition by Papaioannou. In addition to personal names, these recipients belonged to different social classes and their dignities and titles are more often than not stated in the letters. Psellos owned at least four monasteries outside Constantinople, and numerous letters sent to the *kriteis* of the provinces where these letters were located present a unique insight into how the Constantinopolitan elite-maintained power and negotiated ownership and economic aspects of their properties. What is more, letter carriers figure prominently in Psellos' letters, and we know of numerous cases where a carrier of Psellos' letter is a person on whose behalf Psellos sent a letter, informing us about the carrier's path, expectations, and activities. For instance, a monk carrying a letter in c. 1065 visited a highly positioned official at Byzantine court, switching various costumes and acting now as a bishop and now as a theatrical character, playing different tragic and comic songs, bathing the official, making his bed, and tending his horses, at the same time being a good scribe.⁸⁴ As such, Psellos' letters thus not only contribute to our knowledge of prosopographical data but also of the mobility of letters, their production, and the process of writing, sending, and receiving a letter in eleventh-century Byzantium.

While Constantinople, quite expectedly, occupies the central position in Psellos' oeuvre, the topographical information Psellos' letters provide us with is unique. As mentioned above, Psellos' recipients occupied different social positions—emperors, patriarchs, provincial elites, metropolitans, bishops, monks—and many of them were based on the Byzantine periphery at the moment of receiving a letter. Not including all the place names mentioned by Psellos, he dispatched letters to as many as forty locations outside Constantinople, spanning from Cyprus and Antioch in the southeast to Dyrrachium on the western border of the empire. The distribution covers all the Byzantine provinces, including smaller towns and metropolitan sees in between, showcasing Psellos' wide network of associates and ecclesiastical structures. Thanks to Psellos' frequent positioning as a broker, we are informed of the mobility of individuals and even groups in the Byzantine countryside and their

84 Psellos, *Epistulae*, 167.

dependence on provincial heads, with Psellos as an influencing reference. A notable example is a group of monks from Kappadokia at the reception of the *krites* of this Byzantine province asking for a certain favor in c. 1065, with Psellos acting as a mediator. Residing in Constantinople, Psellos introduced the monks through the letter as a powerful asset and recommendation.⁸⁵

Last, epistolography as a genre in general and Psellos' letters in particular represent an unparalleled source for textual production. The letters serve not only as witnesses to the production and mobility of texts in the relational context of senders, scribes, carriers, and recipients, but they also contain references to other works of literature. This is particularly the case with Michael Psellos, whose education in rhetoric, philosophy, law, and Christian teachings made him quote ancient authors such as Homer, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as the Bible and the Church Fathers. These quotations often point to a shared cultural and educational interest between Psellos and his recipients, either as his ex-pupils or as his former colleagues, at the time of correspondence with Psellos occupying important offices in the state apparatus or in the Church.⁸⁶ A letter from c. 1045 to an unnamed churchman and Psellos' former fellow student abounds in Homeric references and reflects a deep knowledge of the *Odyssey* by both Psellos and his correspondent, wherein Psellos desperately asks his friend to provide him with a copy of Plutarch.⁸⁷

Covering the focal research points of the RELEVEN project—prosopographical research, transregional mobility and topography, and textual and literary production—the letters of Michael Psellos represent an invaluable primary source for the social, cultural, political, economic, and literary history of eleventh-century Byzantium. With the recent appearance of a single and updated edited critical volume—for the first time—the letters of Psellos provide us with unique insight into “monastic governance, tax systems, judicial procedures, court ceremony,”⁸⁸ the discourse of patronage, educational, political, and cultural interests of the Constantinopolitan elite, as well as into the mobility and practices of marginalized groups such as nuns and monks. Psellos' letters, therefore, represent a convenient research subject for a novel “relational approach”⁸⁹ and digital methods such as network analysis, visualization through maps, and topic modelling, allowing us to further situate this fascinating diplomat, advisor, philosopher, teacher, and rhetorician and his contemporaries alike into the social world of eleventh-century Byzantium.

85 Psellos, *Epistulae*, 724.

86 Bernard, “Educational Networks in the Letters of Michael Psellos,” 13–41.

87 Psellos, *Epistulae*, 616.

88 Bernard, “Michael Psellos,” 142.

89 Preiser-Kapeller, “Letters and Network Analysis,” 460.

Dissemination and outlook

One of the main aims of the RELEVEN project is to develop and demonstrate a new set of practices for the digital collection of data about historical persons, places, and texts; it follows that one of the most important outputs of the project will be the dataset itself. This will be released according to the FAIR principles and with due attention to the archiving and preservation of the data that we collect. Another important aspect of the project is the need to acknowledge and reuse existing data collections, which implies a data-level interlinkage between our data set and several others, including the *Prosopography of the Byzantine World*, the Pleiades gazetteer, the Syriaca dataset, and more. A website is currently under development which will showcase some of the advantages of our data collection methods. Users will have the ability not only to browse our data collection but also to visualize the differing—and sometimes conflicting—viewpoints about the life and career of a person, or the borders of a territory, or the genesis or transmission of a text.

Beyond their representation in the dataset and website visualizations, the project team has also had the opportunity to present our methods and our findings to fellow scholars at several major conferences both in medieval history and in digital humanities. We maintain an active online presence on our website and social media, where we inform the interested public about our activities and progress.

The case studies presented here, apart from forming an important part of our data collection, will comprise the basis for a jointly-authored book in which we take a fresh, trans-regional, and interconnected look at the connections between persons, their conception of the places they inhabited, the texts they produced and the trends and ideas that circulated in these texts during a century that was so formative for so many of the national groups that now inhabit Europe, the Caucasus, and the Near East.

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