

“The War Between the Two Capitals Revisited: A Digital Humanities Supported Prosopographical Perspective”

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Mongol and non-Mongol generals played a leading role in the conquest of the Southern Song Dynasty (南宋朝 1127-1279), the establishment of the Yuan dynasty (元朝 1271-1368) and the unification of China after more than three hundred years of disunion. Less than a century later, the military commanders became once more important but this time as players in the court's political intrigues. The changes in the role of the Yuan commanders became especially clear in the civil war that broke on August 1328 known as the “War of Restoration”. After the death of Yesün Temür, (Taiding 泰定, r. 1323-1328) a succession struggle began between the supporters of Yesün Temür's son in Shangdu (上都) and the supporters of Qaishan's (Wuzong 武宗, r. 1307 – 1311) son Tugh Temür (the future Wenzong 文宗 r. 1328-1332) in Dadu (大都). This war turned out to be the most deadly and destructive civil war in Yuan history.

My presentation seeks to reexamine this turning point in the Yuan military system through a prosopographic lens by examining biographies of known and lesser-known Yuan commanders and soldiers who participated in the civil war. These biographies will be read, translated, indexed, compiled and analyzed through the use of online prosopographical databases such as the Jerusalem-based ERC project “Mobility, Empire and Cross Cultural Contacts in Mongol Eurasia”, and the Harvard University's “China Biographical Database Project” (CBDB). The Jerusalem Database also enables the researchers to locate information on these Yuan generals from non-Chinese, mainly Persian, sources.

In this paper, I will map these commanders' and soldiers' movements and visualize their social networks, in order to demonstrate how the usage of prosopographic analysis provides a better understanding of the structure, function and administration of the military in the in the most important Mid-Yuan civil war.