https://doi.org/10.14428/rete.v7i0/Tubingen

Scholars and Literati at the University of Tübingen (1477–1800)

David de la Croix
IRES/LIDAM, UCLouvain

Robert Stelter
University of Basel

This note is a summary description of the set of scholars and literati who taught at the University of Tübingen from its inception in 1477 to the eve of the Industrial Revolution (1800).

1 The University

The establishment of a university in Tübingen was a bold venture by Eberhard I (1445–1496), Duke of Württemberg, which was reflected in the mantra of the university: Attempto! Several universities already existed in cities of the German-speaking territory. The universities of Basel, Freiburg, Heidelberg, Ingolstadt, Trier and Mainz had already been established by the second half of the fifteenth century. To establish the University of Tübingen, Eberhard I proceeded in two steps. First, he requested the reallocation of the income of the chapter of canons, a non-monastic community of priests serving in a church, to prepare the financial endowment for the university (the chapters of canons (*Chorherrenstift* in German) were often used to finance the universities, as in Heidelberg). A papal edict of Pope Sixtus IV in 1476 approved the request, under the condition of an examination and the approval of Abbot Heinrich Fabri. Second, he requested the papal bull to establish the University of Tübingen. Pope Sixtus IV granted the request, giving the University of Tübingen the usual rights and privileges, and the right to award doctorates. Lecturing commenced in 1477. Despite the measures taken by Eberhard I to guarantee its funding, the University of Tübingen struggled financially, and remained modest in size and impact until the Industrial Revolution. It did, nonetheless, survive among some difficult competition (Teufel 1977). Since 1769, the university has been called Eberhard Carls University of Tübingen. Carls Eugene, Duke of Württemberg, added his name to that of the founder of the university. He was also "Rector perpetuus" (perpetual rector) between 1767 and his death in 1793. Nowadays, the University of Tübingen is not only among the oldest full universities in Germany, it has also overcome its history of mediocrity.

2 Sources

Conrad (1960) provides a comprehensive list of scholars and literati active at the University of Tübingen. We added some additional observations from a variety of books, including Maggiolo (1983) and Michaud (1811), and digital sources such as the *Repertorium Academicum Germanicum* (Schwinges and Hesse 2019).

3 Some statistics

Table 1 displays some descriptive statistics. Overall, we link 424 scholars to the University of Tübingen. We observe the year and place of birth for roughly two-thirds of the scholars in the first period until 1526. Data for both improve quickly, with the data on birth dates improving slightly faster. With the onset of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), we document birth years for more than 95% of Tübingen's scholars. The average age at first appointment was below 34 years over the whole time period, making it similar to the nearby University of Heidelberg (De la Croix and Stelter 2022).

Period		nb.	% birth year	mean age	mean age	life exp.
Start	End	obs	known	at appoint.	at death	at 30
1477	1526	89	66.3	31.8	59.8	60.9
1527	1617	135	77.8	33.3	60	59.9
1618	1685	67	97	38.4	60.9	59.7
1686	1733	55	94.5	31.5	63.1	64.3
1734	1800	78	97.4	33.1	60	58.8
1477	1800	424	84.2	33.6	60.6	60.6
		% birth place known	median distance birth-institution	% with Wikipedia	% with Worldcat	
1477	1526	64	102	42.7	41.6	
1527	1617	76.3	133	57	71.9	
1618	1685	86.6	140	73.1	89.6	
1686	1733	92.7	84	76.4	92.7	
1734	1800	96.2	59	69.2	93.6	
1477	1800	81.1	105	61.3	75	

Table 1: Summary statistics by period

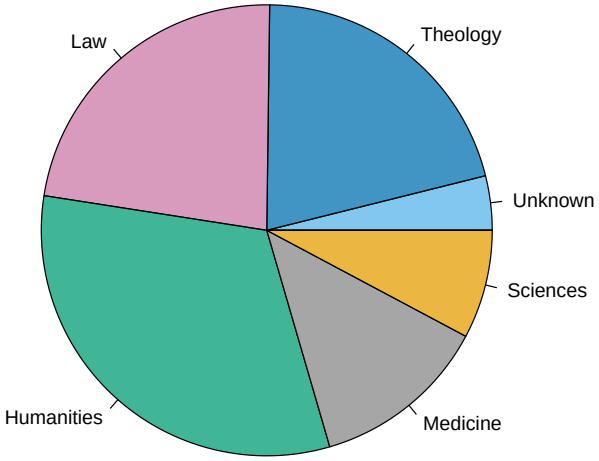

Figure 1: Broad fields at the University of Tübingen

Only during the Thirty Years' War did scholars have higher ages at their first appointment, with the average being more than 38 years. The mean age at death and life expectancy are also in line with other universities of the time. The average levels of 60.6 years in 1477-1800 and the absence of any clear trend is similar to the documented mortality patterns in Heidelberg (De la Croix and Stelter 2022) and the overall Holy Roman Empire (Stelter, De la Croix, and Myrskylä 2021). The median distance between the place of birth and activity is generally relatively low. After 1685, the median distance declined to only 59 kilometers. The coverage of scholars in Wikipedia and Worldcat is relatively high. While we do not find any article in Wikipedia or a footprint in Worldcat for around 60% of the scholars in the first period, this improved quickly thereafter. Overall, more than 60% of the scholars are notable, as they have a Wikipedia article. Three-quarters are covered in Worldcat, with a maximum of roughly 94% close to the onset of industrialisation.

4 Fields

The University of Tübingen was established as a full university. Figure 1 shows the dominance of humanities, which includes the faculty of arts. The three higher faculties of law, theology and medicine make up most of the rest of the fields, with science contributing 10%.

5 Place of birth

Figure 2 displays the documented birthplaces of scholars and literati active at the University of Tübingen per period. The majority of scholars was born around Tübingen in the early years of the university. A very few scholars came from France, the Netherlands or Great Britain. In the following period 1527–1617, the university attracted more scholars over longer distances, and birth places were spread across central Europe. With the onset of the Thirty Years' War, scholars' birth places were basically limited to the north east of Tübingen. In the last two periods, the distance of birthplaces decreased significantly. In the lead-up to the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, we only document four scholars that were attracted over longer distances.

6 Human capital of scholars and literati

For each person in the database, we compute a heuristic human capital index, identified by combining information from Worldcat and Wikipedia using principal component analysis. We also compute the notability of the university at each date by averaging the human capital of the scholars active in Tübingen 25 years before that date. Details are given in RETE in volumes 1–5. Figure 3 shows the names of all the scholars with a positive human capital index.

The orange line plots the notability of the University of Tübingen. The aggregated notability quickly raised to a level around 5 at the beginning of the 16th century and fluctuated around this level until the Industrial Revolution. The turn of the 17th century is an exception, when the notability of the University of Tübingen reached a clear peak.

7 Top 5 professors

We now provide a brief overview of the five professors with the highest human capital index. All five worked during the Reformation period og the mid-16th century.

Philipp Melanchthon (Bretten 1496 – Tübingen 1560) the Wunderkind, close confidant and friend of Martin Luther, was born Philipp Schwarterdt. After the death of his father in 1508, he went to live with his grandmother – a sister of Johannes Reuchelin. As early as in 1509, he matriculated from the University of Heidelberg. The university would not admit him to the Magister, saying he was too young, so he moved to Tübingen, where he was also active as lecturer. In 1518, Reuchlin recommended Melanchthon to Frederick III, Elector of Saxony, as Professor of Greek at the University of Wittenberg, where he met Martin Luther. Melanchthon's mission was twofold: the re-creation of schools and the selection and education of a new generation of clergy. He wrote the first Lutheran theological treaty, the *Loci communes* and became the father of Christian-Humanistic education. He died after a short illness and was buried beside Luther in April 1560 in the All Saints' Church in Wittenberg (Bornkamm et al. 1961).

Johannes Reuchlin (Pforzheim 1455 – Stuttgart 1522) was among the most famous humanists of his time. He visited the Latin school in Pforzheim and was very proud of his hometown – he used the suffix "Phorcensis" (of Pforzheim) (Schwab 1998). At the age of 14 years, he moved to the recently established University of Freiburg. After two years, he moved back to the Latin school in Pforzheim where he taught until he received the offer from Margrave Friedrich of Baden to accompany his third son to Paris (Zeus 2011). There, he met Rudolf Agricola (De la Croix and Stelter 2022) and Johan Heynlin. The former encouraged him to learn Greek and he followed the latter to the University of Basel. In Basel, he completed his Baccalaureus (1475)

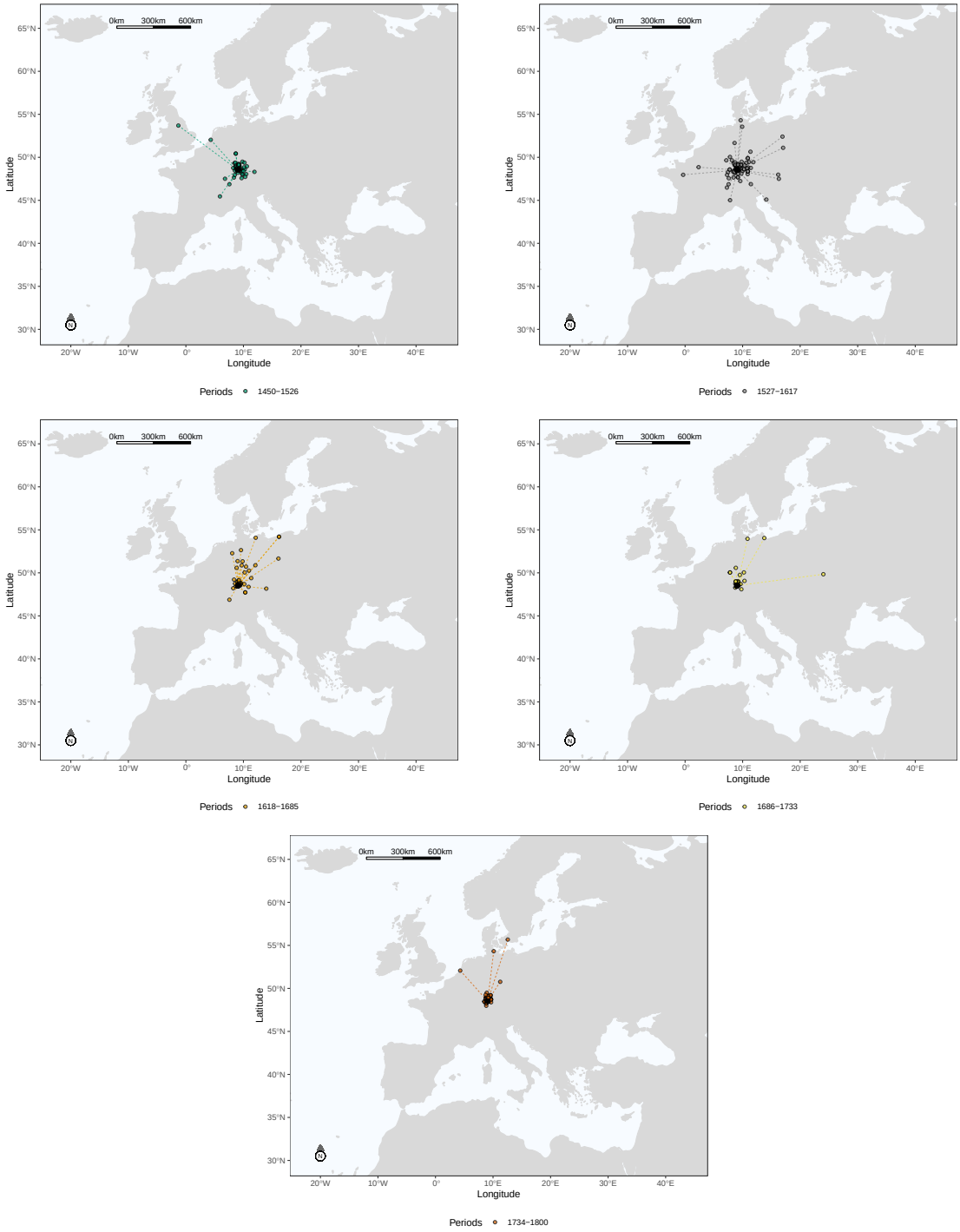

Figure 2: Places of birth of the scholars and literati at the University of Tübingen

and Magister (1477). In December 1481, he matriculated at the University of Tübingen, where he taught poetics. In addition to his legal career – he was one of the three highest judges of the Swabian League for 11 years – he continued his studies in Paris, Orleans and Poitiers. After a short intermezzo at the University of Ingolstadt in 1520, he moved back to Tübingen in 1521. As a humanist, he fought vehemently against the burning of Jewish books.

Leonhard Fuchs (Wemding 1501 – Tübingen 1566) matriculated at the age of 12 years at the faculty of arts at the University of Erfurt, where he also received his Baccalaureus artium (B.A.). He interrupted his studies for two years to establish a private school in his hometown Wemding, before he continued his studies in 1519 in Ingolstadt. Two years later he switched to medicine and completed his doctorate in 1524. By 1526, he was already a professor of medicine. Since he was Lutheran, and the University of Ingolstadt was Catholic, he had to escape in 1533. In 1535, he was appointed to the University of Tübingen. He remained there until the end of his life and contributed to the reputation of the university. His well-known *De historia stirpium commentarii insignes* provided a description of hundreds of plants, with pictures, and established his reputation as a father of botany. The plant genus Fuchsia is called after him (Hirsch 1878).

Johannes Oekolampadius (Weinsberg 1482 – Basel 1531), born as Johannes Heussgen, was a well-known theologist and humanist. He studied law, theology, Hebrew and classic languages in Bologna, Heidelberg, Tübingen and Stuttgart. During his studies, he met Melanchthon and Reuchlin. In 1513–1514, he was lecturer at the University of Tübingen. In 1515, he moved to Basel where he worked with Erasmus von Rotterdam on editing the *Novum Instrumentum omne*. He became a doctor of theology and the reformer of Basel (Wagenmann 1887).

Johannes Brenz (Weil der Stadt 1499 – Stuttgart 1570) the Elder was a Lutheran theologian and student of Johannes Oekolampadius in Heidelberg, where he also listened to the disputation of Martin Luther (for more details see De la Croix and Stelter (2022)). He had close contacts with Ulrich, Duke of Württemberg, who engaged him to reform the University of Tübingen in 1537/38 (Hartmann 1876).

8 Who's who on the moon

Another way to measure the notability of individuals is to look for signs of recognition such as street names, names of schools, research institutes, prizes and lunar crater names. Craters on the moon were named after the following five professors, in recognition of their contribution to the advancement of sciences.

Johann Gottlieb Friedrich Bohnenberger (Calw 1765 – Tübingen 1831) was a physicist, astronomer and mathematician. He was an extraordinary professor at the University of Tübingen from 1798 and became an ordinary professor 5 years later. He contributed to the measurement of instrumental errors, introduced the Kater's pendulum and engaged in the improvement of astronomical observations (Bundschuh 1955).

Johann Kies (Tübingen 1713 – Tübingen 1781) studied theology and mathematics before he became a professor of mathematics and physics as well as astronomer of Berlin's observatory. In 1754 he was appointed professor of mathematics in Tübingen. His comprehensive life work relates to all parts of astronomy (Günther 1890).

Michael Mästlin (Göppingen 1550 – Tübingen 1631) was a theologian, mathematican and astronomer, well known as a promoter of Johannes Kepler. After a short period in Heidelberg (see also De la Croix and Stelter (2022)), he replaced his promoter Philipp Apian at the University of Tübingen in 1584. Here, he taught for more than 47 years and was held in high esteem (Bialas 1987).

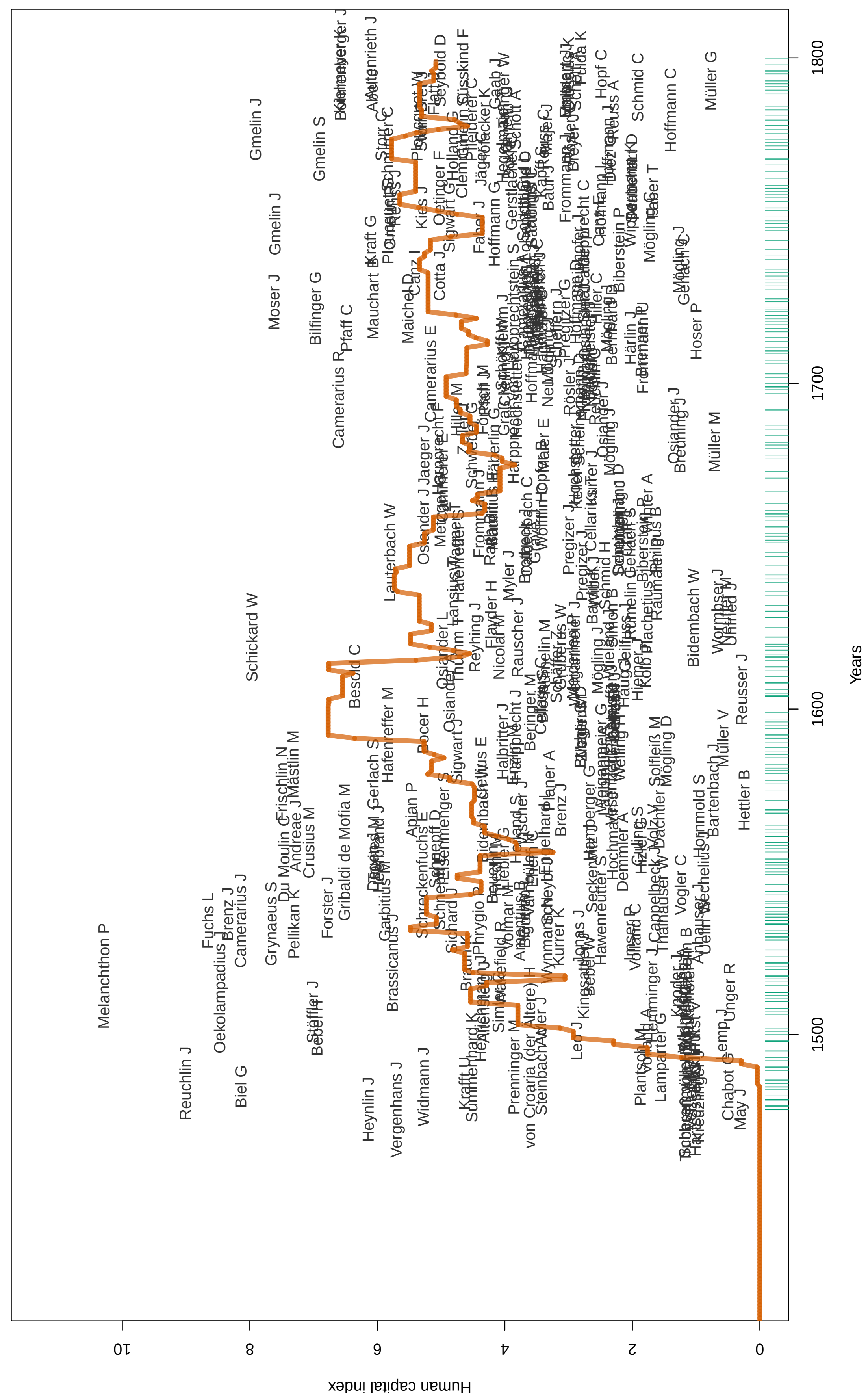

Figure 3: Famous scholars and university notability (orange)

Wilhelm Schickard (Herrenberg 1592 – Tübingen 1635) was a student of Mästlin. In 1619 he became professor of Hebrew, and gave private lectures in mathematics, before he replaced Mästlin as professor of astronomy. By 1651 Giovanni Riccioli had labeled a lunar crater "Schickard" on his map of the moon (Günther 1890).

Johann Stöffler (Munsingen 1452 – Tübingen 1531) was mathematician and astronomer. He studied in Ingolstadt. In 1511, at the age of 59, he was appointed to the Chair of Mathematics and Astronomy at the University of Tübingen, where Melanchthon was one of his students. As in the case of Schickard, Giovanni Riccioli dedicated a lunar crater "Stoefler" to him in his 1651 map of the moon *Almagestum novum astronomiam* (Hartfelder 1893).

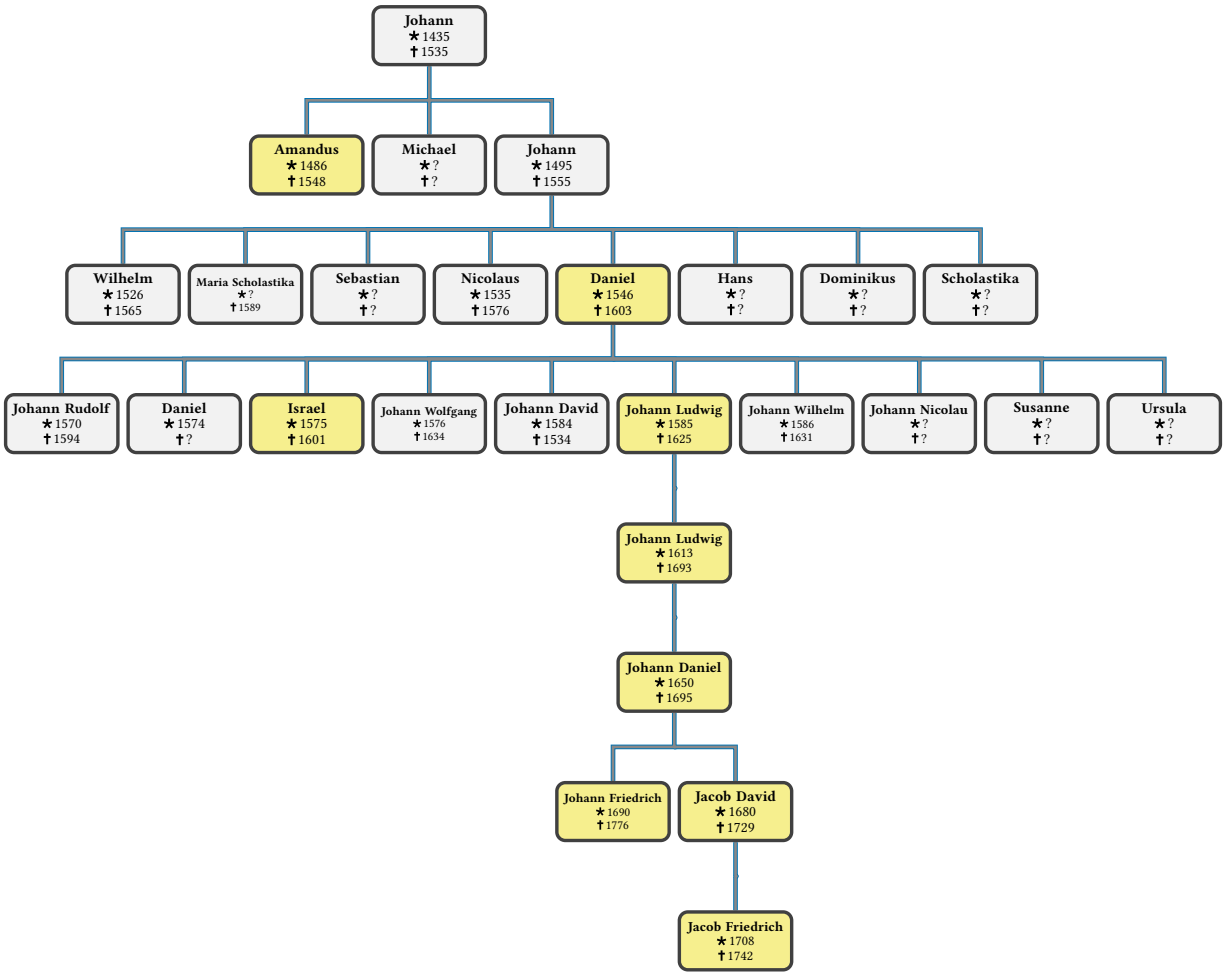

Figure 4: The Mögling family. Professors at Tübingen in yellow squares

9 Families of scholars

We counted 47 father-son pairs among the professors at the University of Tübingen. Among them is the Mögling family. This lineage spans six generations, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century (De la Croix and Goñi 2020). The first three generations were professors of medicine. Johan David Mögling (1650-1695), however, switched to law and his descendants followed. In the first and fifth generation, the lineage members held a professorship elsewhere: Daniel Mögling (1546-1603) at Heidelberg, and Johan Friedrich Mögling (1690-1766) at Giessen. Figure 4 shows a simplified genealogical tree of this family, based on https://gedbas.genealogy.net/.

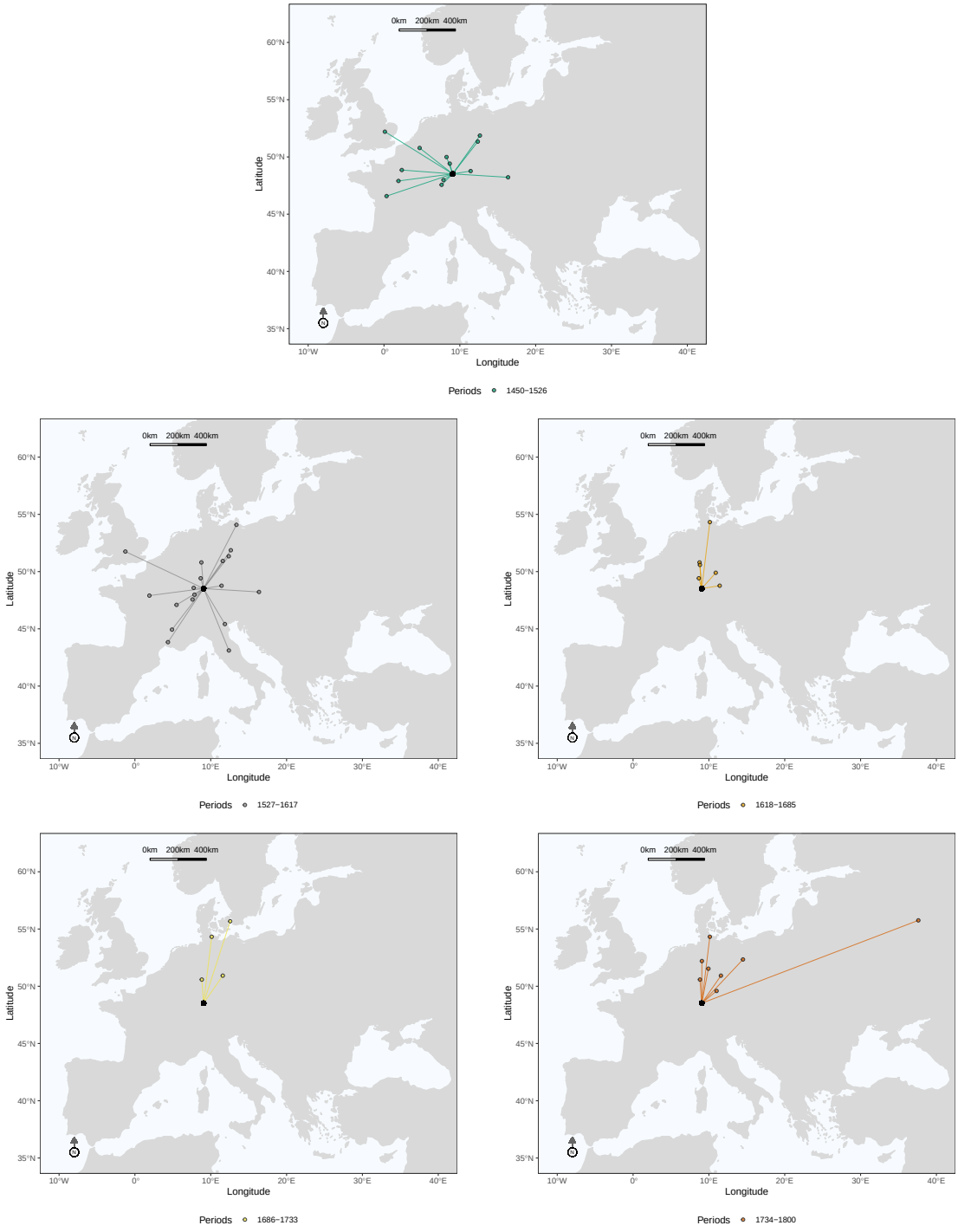

Figure 5: Links between Tübingen and other universities through scholars' mobility, by period

10 University network

Here, we assume that when a professor occupied a position in more than one university over his/her life, this established a link between those universities. The universities with which the University of Tübingen was linked in each period are displayed in Figure 5.

In the first two periods, we observe a relatively extensive and branched network, including important universities, like the University of Paris. With the onset of the Thirty Years' War, we observe the same radical change already documented for the birth places. In the subsequent periods, the network was much smaller and limited to the North East of Tübingen. The network reached a minimum in 1686–1733 where it only included four universities, compared to 18 universities in the period before the Thirty Years' War.

11 Anecdotes

The mother of university foundation – the historical role of women in universities is rather limited. One of the formative women in the South-West of Germany is Mechthild of the Palatinate. Although it was Eberhard the Bearded, who founded the University of Tübingen, it was his mother, who encouraged him to do so. Before this, in 1457 she had already encouraged her second husband Archduke Albrecht to establish the Albertina in Freiburg.

Acknowledgments

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 883033 "Did elite human capital trigger the rise of the West? Insights from a new database of European scholars." Robert Stelter acknowledges financial support from the Max Geldner Foundation.

First version July 9, 2022

References

Bialas, Volker. 1987. Mästlin, Michael. In *Neue deutsche biographie,* 15:644–645. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119211637.html.

Bornkamm, Heinrich, Maria C. Hörter, Heinrich Kühne, Johann Lissenberg, and Wilhelm Maurer. 1961. *Philipp melanchthon 1560-1960.* 's-Gravenzande: Europ. Bücherei.

Bundschuh, Franz. 1955. Bohnenberger, Johann Gottlieb von. In *Neue deutsche biographie,* 2:421. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116232897.html.

Conrad, Ernst. 1960. *Die Lehrstühle der Universität Tübingen und ihre Inhaber (1477-1927).* Tübingen.

De la Croix, David, and Marc Goñi. 2020. Nepotism vs. intergenerational transmission of human capital in academia (1088–1800). CEPR Discussion Paper No. 15159. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3807314.

De la Croix, David, and Robert Stelter. 2022. Scholars and literati at the university of Heidelberg (1386–1800). *Repertorium Eruditorum totius Europae* 6:25–34.

Günther. 1890. Kies, Johann. In *Allgemeine deutsche biographie,* 15:725. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116169125.html.

Hartfelder, Karl. 1893. Stoeffler, Johannes. In *Allgemeine deutsche biographie,* 36:317–318. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118798979.html.

Hartmann. 1876. Brenz, johannes. In *Allgemeine deutsche biographie,* 3:314–316. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118515128.html.

Hirsch, August. 1878. Fuchs, leonhart. In *Allgemeine deutsche biographie,* 8:169–170. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd119059487.html.

Maggiolo, Attilio. 1983. *I soci dell'accademia patavina dalla sua fondazione (1599).* Accademia Patavia di Scienze Lettere ed Arti.

Michaud, Joseph-François. 1811. *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne, 45 vols.* Paris: Bureau de la Biographie Universelle.

Schwab, Hans-Rüdiger. 1998. *Johannes reuchlin deutschlands erster humanist – ein biographisches lesebuch.* München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag.

Schwinges, Rainer Christoph, and Christian Hesse. 2019. Repertorium Academicum Germanicum. Https://en.rag-online.org/.

Stelter, Robert, David De la Croix, and Mikko Myrskylä. 2021. Leaders and Laggards in Life Expectancy among European Scholars from the Sixteenth to the Early Twentieth Century. *Demography* 58:111–135. https://doi.org/10.1215/00703370-8938107.

Teufel, Waldemar. 1977. Die Gründung der Universität Tübingen. Wagnis und Gelingen – Anstöße und Vorbilder. In *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Universität Tübingen 1477–1977,* edited by Martin Decker-Hauff, Gerhard Fichtner, and Klaus Schreiner. Attempto Verlag GmbH Tübingen.

Wagenmann, Julius August. 1887. Oekolampad, Johannes. In *Allgemeine deutsche biographie,* 24:226–236. https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd11709711X.html.

Zeus, Marlis. 2011. *Johannes reuchlin humanist mit durchblick.* Karlsruhe: Helmesverlag.