DIGITAL CLASSICS ONLINE

Altinum: a *Wikidata* Project for Digital Epigraphy and Prosopography

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Abstract: *Altinum* is the first Latin epigraphy project to be hosted on *Wikidata*, the collaborative database maintained by the Wikimedia Foundation. Launched in 2024, the project involves importing information about epigraphic artefacts from the Roman period originating in Altinum, a municipality in eastern Veneto, being also the first attempt of a digital prosopographic corpus of the municipality. The data have been sourced from *EDR*, *EDCS*, analogue catalogues, and unpublished theses. Once the data are integrated into *Wikidata*, users can formulate queries to generate graphs and tables, obtain statistics, and reconstruct family trees. As *Altinum* demonstrates, this approach not only expands the epigraphic *corpus* and prosopographical data but also makes it increasingly accessible in a collaboratively editable, multilingual and interdisciplinary database with the possibility of highly customisable queries.

Introduction

This paper presents the first publication on the *Altinum* project, which was conceived in 2024 as part of my Master's thesis at Ca' Foscari University.[1] The title was quite telling: *Altinum: a Wikidata Project for Digital Epigraphy*[2], focusing on a digital epigraphic study dedicated to Altinum, the municipal entity that originally gave rise to the Venetian settlement. Thanks to Professor Lorenzo Calvelli (Università Ca' Foscari) and Camillo Carlo Pellizzari di San Girolamo (Scuola Normale Superiore), the project developed to encompass a digital component, an epigraphic section, and a prosopographical survey. The aim was to catalogue inscriptions already published in existing epigraphic databases, transcode them, and channel the extracted data into a new database that has, for over a decade, demonstrated its potential across numerous fields of knowledge: *Wikidata*.

The rationale behind choosing a new database may not be immediately apparent. *Wikidata* serves as a data repository capable of providing customisable representations when queried by users. Moreover, it is an ecosystem that fosters collaborative, interdisciplinary, and multilingual engagement. Its structure enables a community to act, cooperate, correct, improve, query, compare, create, and delete. The advancement of humanities research, particularly the increasing interconnection between multiple fields of knowledge, necessitates the use of tools that can handle such a vast amount of information. Unlike traditional epigraphic databases, which provide only predefined queries and support a limited number of languages chosen by administrators, *Wikidata* overcomes these obstacles. The possibility of a project integrating multiple related fields of study is a goal we have pursued since the rise of the Digital Humanities[3]: one need only consider the challenges of conducting palaeographic or geological re-

1 Freely available and readable http://hdl.handle.net/10579/27792 (last access 11.07.2025).

2 https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/User:Anna_Clara_Maniero_Azzolini/Altinum (last access 11.07.2025).

search using existing epigraphic databases. The scholarly goal of *Altinum* is to assess the operability of *Wikidata* in the field of epigraphy, a domain where its application is still in its early stages.

A first part of this contribution will focus on a more detailed analysis of the internal structure of *Wikidata*, illustrating its technical components, advantages and even difficulties. The 'behind the scenes' of the *Altinum* project will then be explained in detail, outlining the obstacles and methodology adopted for the import of epigraphic and prosopographical data. Examples of RDF formulation and SPARQL queries will accompany the descriptions, as well as the prosopographical data modelling adopted for the project.

Architecture of *Wikidata*

Premise

Wikidata is a collaborative, multilingual knowledge base designed for both humans and machines.[4] It organises data to make it easily searchable and analysable. A logical statement such as 'Altinum is located in Veneto' contains data and relationships between them: Altinum (subject) is located in (predicate) Veneto (object). Data are then composed within the knowledge base to form an indissolubly logical connection (in *Wikidata*, a statement such as 'Altinum is located in stone' would not establish a logical subject-predicate-object relationship and would therefore be flagged as a constraint violation). Structured data, therefore, can include any kind of information, provided it follows a logical structure. The knowledge base can be queried to extract specific information and establish connections.

Another key feature of *Wikidata* is its multilingual nature. Unlike other databases, this resource is highly accessible, currently supporting 621 recognised languages.[5] This is unsurprising, as *Wikidata* is designed as a collaborative knowledge base that grants users full control over resources and data management. This multilingual approach is a necessary factor in fulfilling one of its primary objectives: accessibility. *Wikidata*'s collaborative model means that decisions and changes are driven by community contributions. This system ensures continuous data verification and, crucially, easy modification. If a user were to enter the incorrect statement 'Caesar was a king' into *Wikidata*, another user could quickly correct it to *'Caesar was a dictator'*. A more restrictive control system would slow down edits, increasing the risk of errors spreading.

Wikidata's utility extends beyond Wikimedia projects, as many external websites and databases draw upon its data. An institution might initially decide to import data from an external database into *Wikidata* and then extract it in an analytical format in order to use it in a new portal or database. However, few institutional projects focus exclusively on contributing data to *Wikidata* as an end in itself. Consider, for example, the epigraphic project IDEA, which compiles and analyses inscriptions from the archaeological site of Dura-Europos in Syria. Its creators agreed to use *Wikidata* as a tool for developing a new, independent website[6]: they extracted data from digital platforms, primarily within the academic domain, and imported them into *Wikidata* in a structured format according to a specific data model, before exporting them in an analytical format to IDEA.[7] Similarly, *Altinum* extracts data from

3 On the use of *Wikidata* in the Digital Humanities Zhao (2023) and, in the field of epigraphy, Orlandi (2021); Lorito (2018); Heřmánková et al. (2022).

4 See in particular the analysis by Kaffee et al. (2017). On *Wikidata* as a tool for research Mora-Cantallops et al. (2019).

5 https://www.wikidata.org/w/api.php?action=query&meta=wbcontentlanguages&wbclcontext=term&format=json&formatversion=2 (last access 11.07.2025).

6 https://duraeuroposarchive.org/ (last access 11.07.2025).

7 Thornton et al. (2024).

the epigraphic databases *EDR* and *EDCS*, as well as from analogue sources[8], to import them into *Wikidata* with the aim of obtaining structured data, structured queries, and ultimately contributing to a broader epigraphic project within this environment. Special mention must be given to Pietro Ortimini's project, *Greek Metrical Inscriptions (GMI)*[9], which catalogues Greek metrical inscriptions using the Wikibase software that underpins *Wikidata*.

From a licensing perspective, *Wikidata* is a free and open knowledge base, and its data are licensed under Creative Commons CC0.[10] This means that the data can be fully and freely reused. The only condition to massively import data into *Wikidata* is that the original source of the data must comply with the same licensing rule or grant *Wikidata* the legal right to operate under these terms.[11] This was precisely the case for the *Altinum* project: due to the incompatibility between *EDR*'s licence CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 and *Wikidata*'s CC0, it was necessary to obtain written permission from *EDR*'s management to export and import data. The data were then deposited in Zenodo under Creative Commons CC0[12] by *EDR* administration, which was cited as the source in the project to ensure both the legal and scholarly validity of the imported data within the user community.

Data Linking: Resource Description Framework

Extracting information is the primary reason why most users register data within a database. But how can this data be effectively retrieved? Let us imagine that we have entered details into *Wikidata* regarding archaeological artefacts from a museum. Our database would include the identifying name of each artefact, the date of discovery, the name of the archaeologist who supervised the excavations, and other relevant information, all interlinked. Depending on their needs, a user may wish to extract all artefacts discovered in a given year, those excavated by a specific archaeologist, or those belonging to the same museum.

The type of web that *Wikidata* belongs to is known as the Semantic Web, an extension of the broader web. In this environment, information within a text is encoded using ontologies and precise rules provided to the database[13], ensuring that all data are machine-readable. The semantic web can leverage the Linked Open Data system (LOD)[14], enabling data sharing and reuse. In 2006, Berners-Lee outlined the principles of Linked Data, emphasizing the use of URIs (Uniform Resource Identifiers) to uniquely identify resources. These URIs should be resolvable via HTTP, allowing standardized access to data. Additionally, data should be published in a structured, machine-readable method such as RDF (Resource Description Framework), and datasets should be interlinked to enable the construction of a global network of interconnected data, facilitating the expansion of available information. This framework is viable only if all nodes within the network meet the following conditions [15]:

8 Pivetta (1997/1998).

9 https://greek-metrical-inscriptions.wikibase.cloud/wiki/Main_Page (last access 11.07.2025).

10 https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/wikidata:Copyright (last access 11.07.2025).

11 https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/wikidata:Data_donation (last access 11.07.2025).

12 https://zenodo.org/records/11530904 (last access 11.07.2025).

13 Möller / Heath et al. (2007). In Digital Humanities Hyvönen (2020).

14 Hyvönen (2020), 3 tab. 1; Erxleben et al. (2014). In epigraphy: Tupman (2021).

15 Middle (2024).

- They are available on the web in any format and under an open licence.
- They are structured and machine-readable.
- They use a non-proprietary format.
- They employ RDF and SPARQL.
- They properly identify entities.

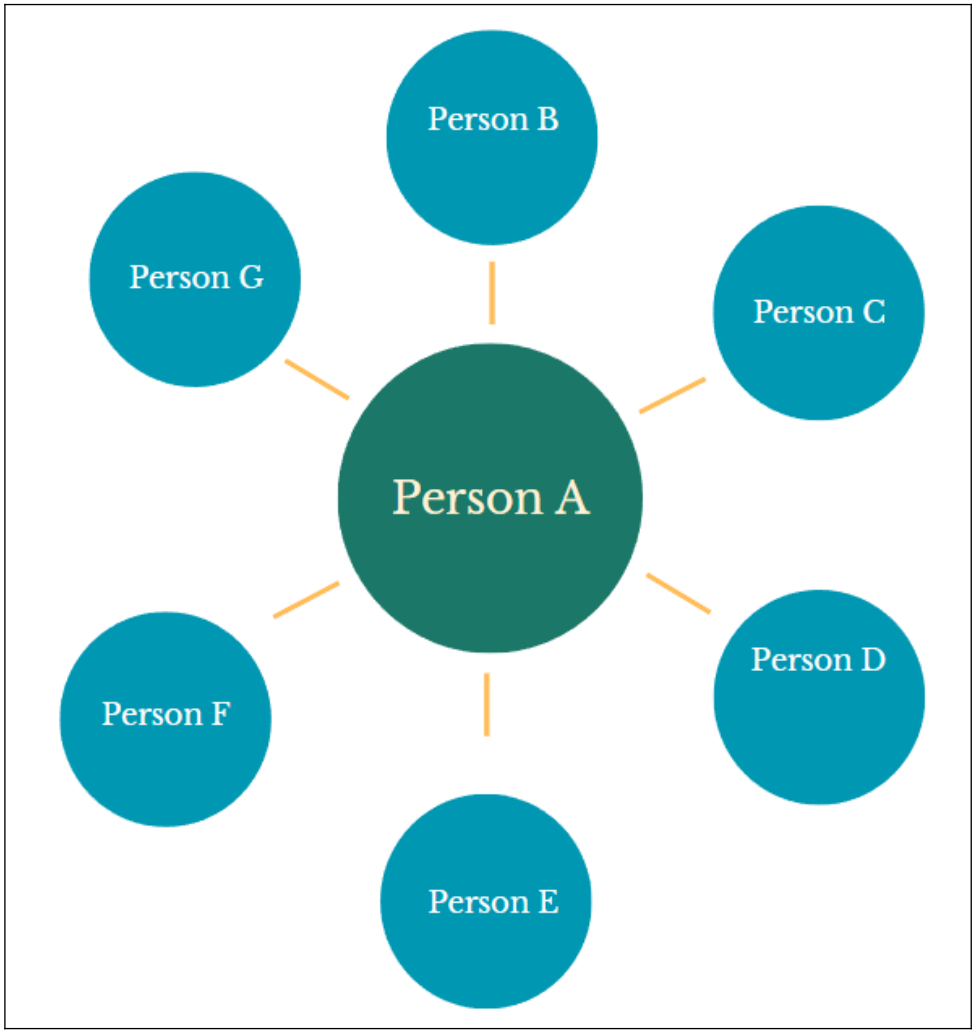


Fig. 1: Example of friendship graph.

To better understand how data are interrelated according to the RDF standard, a friendship relationship graph is often used as an illustrative example.

Each entity is connected by a link that identifies its relationship to another: Person A is a friend of Person B. However, if we were to structure such information in the network, we would have to resort to a machine-readable and therefore always valid scheme. In order to do so, a structure with logical meaning is required, i.e. one consisting of a subject, a predicate and an object. 'Person A is a friend of Person B' will thus be the minimum proposition or statement that cannot be further broken down without losing its logical and declarative functionality. Person A will be the subject, Person B the object while 'is friend of' will act as a bridge between the two, as a link in the direction Person A → Person B, a predicate making explicit the relationship between the former and the latter. Without a single element of what is called a 'triple' in computer language, the machine would not be able to interpret any information (and neither would a human). The minimum fundamental structure is represented below:

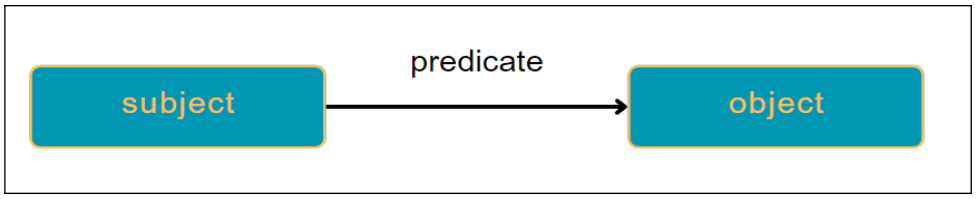


Fig. 2: Logical structure of an RDF triple.

At this point, it will be easily understood that the word 'person' alone does not constitute a machine-readable element of the declaration but is merely human-readable. This word must be matched by a readable code, i.e. a URI (a document, a postal code, a Uniform Resource Name or URN such as a particular ID or namespace defined by a programmer, or an ISBN: in short, anything that uniquely identifies a node and is machine readable[16]).

Virilis is a significant person for Publicia Amabilis:

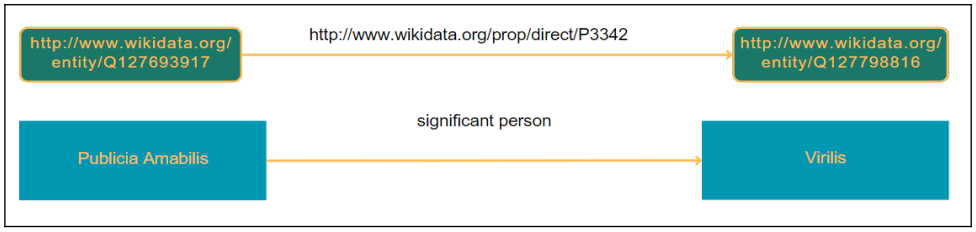


Fig. 3: Example of an RDF triple.

Overview of the Data Model (Items, Properties, Statements)

Having so far briefly described the RDF structure, it will be appropriate to present how it works within *Wikidata*, and thus how data are hierarchized not from the point of view of interconnections but from the ontological point of view. Let us imagine that we wish to enter prosopographical information on individuals who lived in a given *municipium* of the Roman era: this will include data such as name, era, friends and family, occupations and so on. Such data will need to be entered into *Wikidata* in a specific data model, collaboratively developed by the *Wikidata* community itself. First, an item describing the character must be created (a special page 'create a new item).[17] The item defining the individual will then be created along with its name (label) in whatever language or graphic system we want, and a summary description also in whatever language or alphabet we want. The item will be identified by an alphanumeric code consisting of the letter Q and an increasing number: this code is both a machine-readable and unambiguous identifier that distinguishes possible homonymy between several items. It is also possible to include alongside the item description its aliases, with which we imagine another user could search for its name.

From the creation of *Wikidata* on 29th October 2012 to 4th February 2013, an item only possessed the characteristics described so far, with additional links to any Wikipedia articles on the topic (sitelinks). Just four months after its creation, in 2013, the situation in the database changed considerably. New components were added: statements, i.e. information structured in triples concerning a given item ('Publicia Amabilis lived in Altinum'). Since then, it has been possible to add qualifiers and references to the statements (there is for example the possibility of entering a property as 'source of the statement', P248).[18]

16 Note that in an RDF triple, the subject and predicate must always be URIs, while the object may or may not be.

17 https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Special:NewItem (last access 11.07.2025).

18 References also follow the logic of the subject-predicate-object triple or, better, item-property-value, but also property-property-value or lexeme-property-value. In the case of references, the subject is the reference itself, predicates are the various properties (one or more) used within it, and objects are the values of these properties.

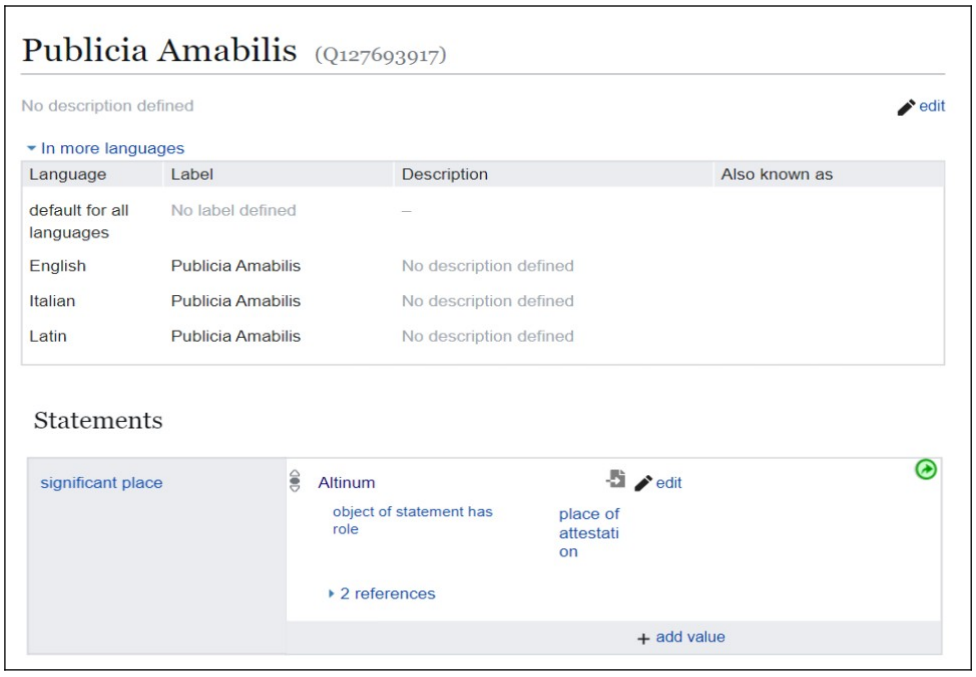


Fig. 4: Example of the layout of the statement 'Publicia Amabilis lived in Altinum'.

Tab. 1 provides a concise list of some of the properties in *Wikidata* that are particularly pertinent from a prosopographical perspective.[19] As can be seen, the property identifier consists of an alphanumeric code preceded by the letter P instead of Q. Whereas Q identifies an item, P identifies the property, i.e. the predicative function of our statement. However, this is not the only difference between the two. A further distinction emerges in the processes of creation and utilisation: items can be created arbitrarily by any user, whereas properties require proposal and can only be created by designated creators and administrators.[20] For example, to declare that an individual 'is a friend of' another in *Wikidata*, one uses the generic property 'significant person' (P3342) with the qualifier 'object of statement has role' (P3831) or 'subject has role' (P2868), specifying 'friend' (Q17297777) as a value. The *Wikidata* community usually prefers generic properties, avoiding 'friend of' in favour of the more versatile 'significant person'. An organized system facilitates queries whilst inconsistencies in the data modelling make them more difficult to write.[21]

***Wikidata* property**	***Wikidata* English label**
P31	instance of
P21	sex or gender
P569	date of birth
P3342	significant person
P106	occupation

19 Sandboxe items are useful for gaining experience in structuring data. There are some, e.g. https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q4115189 (last access 11.07.2025).

20 The page for requesting the creation of a property is: https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/wikidata:Property_proposal (last access 11.07.2025).

21 If the property 'friend of' existed, one user could use it, while another could enter a friend as 'significant person'. Whoever queries the database would have to consider both properties, risking overlooking one of them and altering the result. For further discussion, see https://www.wikidata.org/w/index.php?title=wikidata:Events/Data_Quality_Days_2022/Modeling_data&oldid=2018180212 (last access 11.07.2025).

P3831	object of statement has role
P248	stated in
P25	mother

Tab. 1: Selection of properties.

The Role of SPARQL in Data Querying: the *Wikidata* Query Service (WDQS)

Following the entry of data, the objective of *Altinum* is to query the database in order to conduct statistical and prosopographical investigations and to obtain visualisations of the data using to the wide variety of graphs available. The *Wikidata* Query Service[22] reaches its full potential when handling large-scale investigations. With two caveats: the variable of incompleteness of the result (e.g. if not all the data have been entered into the database) and the time factor (i.e. the more complex the bindings in the syntax of our statement are, the longer the query will take to extract the data[23]). Although a query builder is available[24], it is more efficient to interact directly with the machine when dealing with large datasets. It is important to note that, in order to achieve this, a fundamental understanding of the RDF standard alone is insufficient. It will be necessary to have a language through which to tell the database when we are talking about an item, a property, a reference and so on. The language that will be needed to extract data by querying the WDQS is SPARQL[25].

The following example illustrates the essential components of the SPARQL language through a prosopographical query. The query investigates the records of 'persons who lived in Altinum and held the office of military tribunes'. First of all, a SPARQL query necessitates fundamental components; in this instance, the most common SELECT and WHERE will be utilised. Specifically, SELECT denotes the variables to be returned, in this case 'person', with each variable preceded by a question mark.[26] The initial line of the query reads as follows[27]:

```
SELECT ?person
```

The WHERE section tells the database the meaning of the variables in the SELECT section and the conditions to be fulfilled in order to be extracted as results. In our case, therefore, the variable ?person must fulfil the two conditions 'held the office of military tribune' and 'lived in Altinum'. Curly brackets open and close the section.

```
SELECT ?person
WHERE
{
}
```

22 https://query.wikidata.org/ (last access 11.07.2025).

23 Since its inception, WDQS has always had a timeout limit of 60 seconds: thus, if the query does not succeed in less than one minute, it fails.

24 Which, as the page itself mentions, is 'ideal for users with little or no experience in SPARQL', https://query.wikidata.org/querybuilder/?uselang=it (last access 11.07.2025).

25 For an official guideline see https://www.w3.org/TR/sparql11-query/ (last access 11.07.2025). It was first introduced in 2008 by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).

26 Or $. Variables are named arbitrarily by the creator of the query, on the sole condition that they are preceded by ? or $ and do not contain the same symbols inside.

27 The subject is unified by convention in the singular.

Within the curly brackets, the two statements (the conditions) are formed into subject-predicate-object triples. In order to make the whole sentence machine-readable, it is necessary not only to use the identifiers of the properties and items, but also to respect an order within the sentence and to prefix the identifiers to indicate their role. The prefixes 'wd:' and 'wdt:' mark the object and the predicate respectively as known components of the triple[28] (in our case the subject ?person is a variable); if the object is also unknown, it must also be entered as a variable. Each triple is followed by a full stop (or by a semicolon if the query contains multiple triples with the same subject).[29] An example of a query with an unknown subject is[30]:

```
SELECT ?person
WHERE
{
?person wdt:P39 wd:Q849288; # Person holding military tribune office
wdt:P7153 wd:Q441542. # Person with significant place Altinum
}
```

While an example of a query with an unknown object is[31]:

```
SELECT ?position
WHERE {
wd:Q127694103 wdt:P39 ?position. # Position held by Manius Titius
}
```

By then including the ?personLabel in the SELECT section, the query service will return not only the identifier but also a human readable label. The user will also be able to indicate the preferred language of the result: with [AUTO_LANGUAGE] we will search all results in the interface language of WDQS. If English is our interface language, WDQS will extract the label 'en' if it exists, or otherwise extract the item's QID. In place of [AUTO_LANGUAGE], the language of preference may be entered between the inverted commas.

```
SERVICE wikibase:label { bd:serviceParam wikibase:language "[AUTO_LANGUAGE]". }. #
Get labels
```

And thus, the final query:[32]

```
SELECT ?person ?personLabel
WHERE
{
?person wdt:P39 wd:Q849288; # Person holding military tribune office
wdt:P7153 wd:Q441542. # Person with significant place Altinum
```

28 wdt: links the item to the value (or values) that the property takes, considering only the value with the best rank and excluding the deprecated ones. https://www.mediawiki.org/wiki/Wikibase/Indexing/RDF_Dump_Format (last access 11.07.2025).

29 Accompanying the query is an explanation preceded by #, which is ignored by the query.

30 URL to the query https://w.wiki/DRFp (last access 11.07.2025); URL to the result https://w.wiki/DRFq (last access 11.07.2025).

31 URL to the query https://w.wiki/DPxq (last access 11.07.2025); URL to the result https://w.wiki/DPxt (last access 11.07.2025).

32 URL to the query: https://w.wiki/DRFy (last access 11.07.2025); URL to the result: https://w.wiki/DRFz (last access 11.07.2025).

```
SERVICE wikibase:label { bd:serviceParam wikibase:language "[AUTO_LANGUAGE]". } #
Get labels
}
```

Or by changing language to Latin:[33]

```
SELECT ?person ?personLabel
WHERE
{
?person wdt:P39 wd:Q849288; # Person holding military tribune office
wdt:P7153 wd:Q441542. # Person with significant place Altinum
SERVICE wikibase:label { bd:serviceParam wikibase:language "la". }
}
```

Admittedly, this is a complicated language for information that we would be able to obtain in a much simpler way from the *EDR* database from which the information is retrieved. However, such a query is constructed according to the minimal basic structure needed to extract a much larger amount of data. An example is 'find inscriptions from Altinum that mention individuals belonging to the *gens* Iulia who are freedmen'[34]:

```
SELECT DISTINCT ?inscription ?inscriptionLabel ?person ?personLabel WHERE {
 ?inscription wdt:P31/wdt:P279* wd:Q1640824;
      wdt:P1071 wd:Q441542;
      wdt:P6568 ?person.
 ?person wdt:P7153 wd:Q441542;
       wdt:P5025 wd:Q127693269;
       wdt:P3716 wd:Q841571;
       wdt:P1343 ?inscription.
            SERVICE wikibase:label { bd:serviceParam wikibase:language
"[AUTO_LANGUAGE],mul,en". }
}
```

Another example is 'find significant persons related to Caetronia Maxima'[35]:

```
SELECT ?person ?personLabel WHERE {
 ?person wdt:P3342 wd:Q127693919 .
SERVICE wikibase:label { bd:serviceParam wikibase:language "[AUTO_LANGUAGE],en". }
}
```

The results can be visualised in graphs, grids, tables, maps, as well as in animated charts where the characteristics of each entity can be explored by moving the cursor over them:

33 URL to the query: https://w.wiki/DRF$ (last access 11.07.2025); URL to the result https://w.wiki/DRG5 (last access 11.07.2025).

34 URL to the query https://w.wiki/DPv9 (last access 11.07.2025); URL to the result https://w.wiki/DPvB (last access 11.07.2025).

35 URL to the query https://w.wiki/DPvC (last access 11.07.2025); URL to the result https://w.wiki/DPvF (last access 11.07.2025).

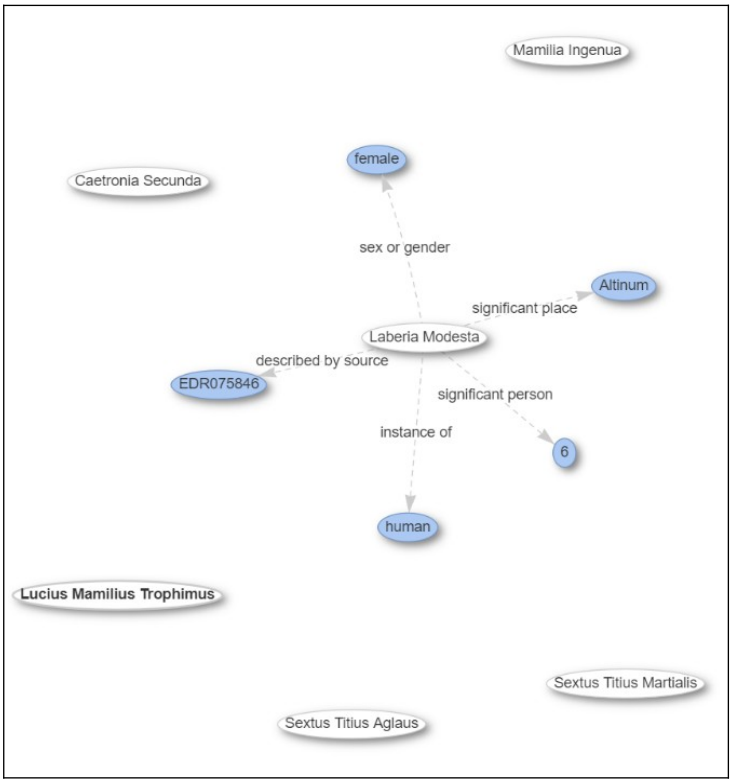


Fig. 5: Example of an animated graph (result to Caetronia Maxima query).

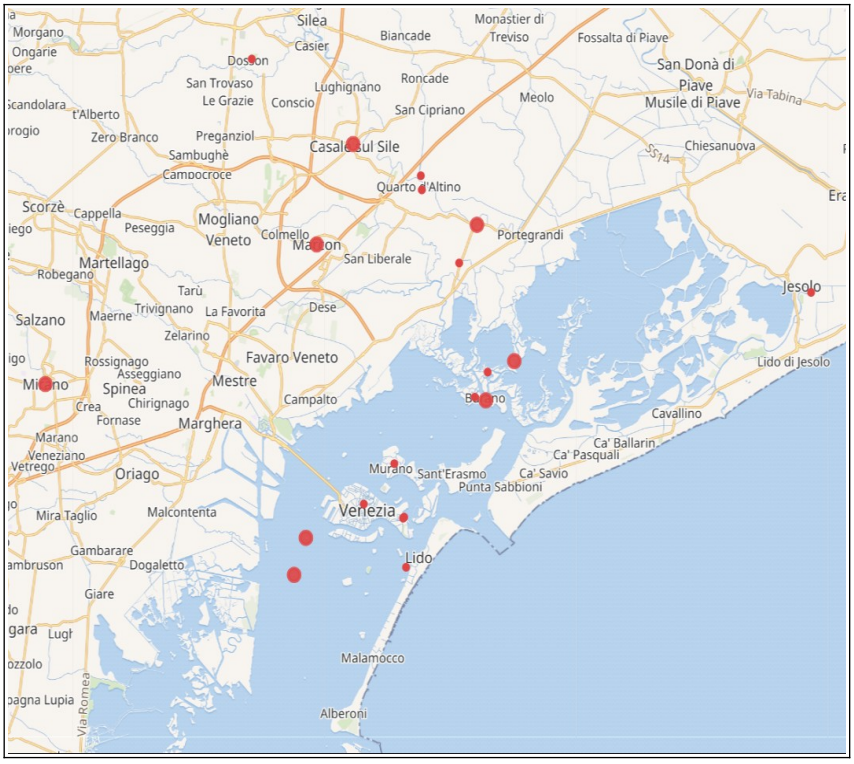


Fig. 6: Map of the sites of discovery of Altinum inscriptions. URL to the query https://w.wiki/DRHL (last access 11.07.2025); URL to the result: https://w.wiki/DRHN (last access 11.07.2025).

Behind the Scenes of the *Altinum* Project

At this stage, it is useful to outline the technical procedures that enabled the integration of epigraphic and prosopographic data from the inscriptions. As mentioned above, the *Altinum* project retrieved data from other databases, from unpublished analogue catalogues and from my personal examination of inscriptions to extract prosopographic information. With the help of tools for mass editing, the massive data import was successful: out of a total of 644 inscriptions, 665 individuals and 218 *gentes* imported,[36] almost 30,000 changes were made in *Wikidata*, a mass of data that would have made the manual entry process longer than necessary. The description of the import process is intended to demonstrate the replicability of the process in other contexts and projects, even from other databases. As said, *Wikidata* guarantees good reusability thanks to its CC0 licence, which allows free use of the data without restrictions: however, this licence is not always compatible with databases with more restrictive licences, requiring specific solutions for data integration.[37]

The *Altinum* project seeks to apply the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) to the modelling of epigraphic data, taking advantage of the flexibility and accessibility of *Wikidata*. However, the lack of a unified controlled vocabulary and the absence of established epigraphic standards require further alignment to improve the interoperability of the dataset with other digital resources.

Entering Epigraphic Data

The first step was to extract the data into a CSV format. Data from *EDR* and *EDCS* had to be made compatible with the *Wikidata* ontology. To do this, another CSV was prepared containing the data to be transcoded. For each *EDR* field, a property in *Wikidata* was identified, or its creation was proposed to the community. An example of this is the property 'writing technique' (P12876), which corresponds to the *EDR* field *scriptura*: the properties 'writing system' (P282) or 'writing style' (P9302) were not at all relevant to epigraphy. The creation of the items in *Wikidata* required an effort of reflection from an ontological point of view, although it did not require prior discussion with the community.

Once the items and properties had been determined, it was possible to create statements, which govern the logical discourse in *Wikidata*, consisting of a property and a value (a QID or a text string if the property allows it or a URL etc. according to the property's datatype). Items about concepts in *Wikidata* should possibly be based on controlled vocabularies, in order to assure a consistent understanding of each term. The reference vocabulary for the project was therefore that of EAGLE (Europeana Network for Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy)[38] which, although extensive and epigraphically quite satisfactory, does not always seem to correspond the unambiguous understanding of its terms by the wider community (especially those not versed in epigraphy) nor does it follow either the ISO standard for multilingual thesauri (ISO 25964-2:2013) or the IFLA guidelines.[39]

Another problem was the translation of the *EAGLE* terms, which coincided with the *EDR* vocabulary, into *Wikidata* entities: fortunately, many had already been created and existed in *Wikidata*, and only in

36 As of 13.03.2025. The individuals catalogued in the project are actually more than 850, but those not mentioned in inscriptions published in *EDR* or *EDCS* were not included in *Wikidata* yet. URLs to the queries: (*gentes*) https://w.wiki/DRwc (last access 11.07.2025), (inscriptions) https://w.wiki/DRwb (last access 11.07.2025), (persons) https://w.wiki/DRwg (last access 11.07.2025). URLs to the results of queries: (*gentes*) https://w.wiki/DRwj (last access 11.07.2025), (inscriptions) https://w.wiki/DRwk (last access 11.07.2025), (persons) https://w.wiki/DRwi (last access 13.03.2025).

37 If a project requires a different licence, it will still be possible to create other *Wikibase* instances, which allow one to choose a licence compatible with any requirement.

38 https://www.eagle-network.eu/resources/vocabularies/ (last access 11.07.2025).

39 https://www.iso.org/standard/53658.html (last access 11.07.2025); https://www.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/assets/hq/publications/professional-report/115.pdf (last access 11.07.2025).

a few cases was it necessary to intervene in order to organise the information more effectively.[40] For the definitions of the terms I created ex novo I often made use of the descriptions offered by the online *EDR* Handbook[41], where for each section and lemma the summary and sufficient characteristics are presented.

Among the technical challenges of the transcoding process, the chronological issue deserves special mention. The chronological system in *Wikidata* works in an obsolete way in the epigraphic context: The system rightly provides the use of the qualifiers P1319 ("earliest date") and P1326 ("latest date") and aligns with the standard adopted by *EDR*. In order to include an interval in *Wikidata* it is necessary to specify an intermediate date, using P571 ("inception"), which is not at all consistent with the epigraphic perspective, but rather with the mechanical reasoning of the computer, which, given two extremes, chooses an intermediate date. A clearer example follows.[42]

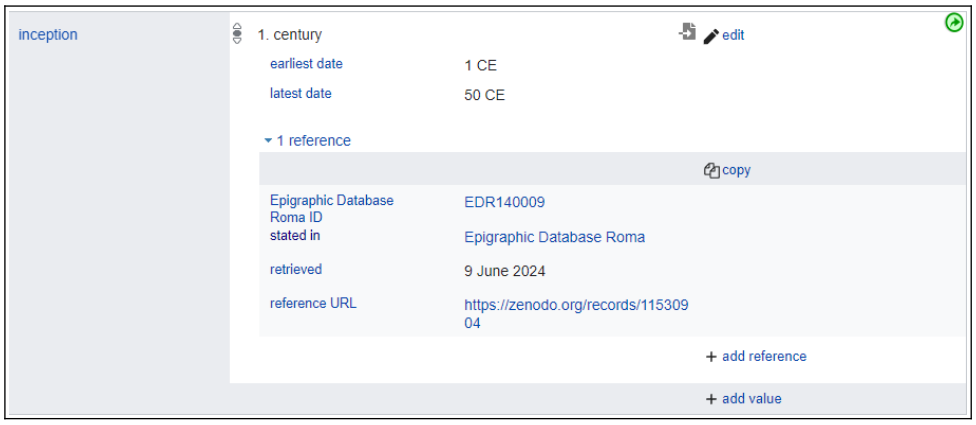


Fig. 7: Display of property P571 'inception' of *EDR*140009 (Q126687969).

As is frequently the case in epigraphy, it is indeed possible to refer to a specific time period in *Wikidata* without resorting to the use of extremes ('earliest date' and 'latest date'). However, it was necessary to adopt this solution in order to align as closely as possible with the data model of *EDR*, which relies on this fragmentation (without resorting to intermediate dates). Let us imagine that we want to search for all inscriptions datable to the 3rd century AD. We would have to resort to writing a date (not immediately accessible and understandable) according to the format of *Wikidata*: +200-01-01T00:00:00Z/9[43] as the earliest date and +300-01-01T00:00:00Z/9 as the latest date, where + stands for AD, T00:00:00Z indicates the time, which by convention is fixed at midnight UTC, and /9 indicates the precision of the dating: 6 - millennium, 7 - century, 8 - decade, 9 - year, 10 - month, 11 - day (and the expected, but not technically usable yet, 12 - hour, 13 - minute, 14 - second)[44]. The indication of precision is considered necessary for *Wikidata* coding and more faithful to the *EDR* standard, but not more searchable, given the complexity of the solutions adopted.

Concerning *EDCS*, the transcoding of its data was faster than that of *EDR* data. Primarily because *EDR* provides more diverse and larger quantities of structured data. Furthermore, unfortunately *EDCS* does not specify its license, which officially forbade me from importing its data into *Wikidata*. However, after creating a CSV file with all the entries not present in *EDR* (which were not downloadable from the site), it became evident that only a portion of them met the project's quality standards. This portion was small enough to avoid any concerns of copyright infringement. In fact, for the only in-

40 It should be noted that in some cases the items and properties had already been created by https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/wikidata:WikiProject_Epigraphy (last access 11.07.2025).

41 http://www.edr-edr.it/en/Guida_coll_en.php?lang=en (last access 11.07.2025).

42 https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Q126687969#P571 (last access 11.07.2025).

43 Whereas in *EDR*, third century AD means the century starting from 201 AD.

44 https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/Help:Dates (last access 11.07.2025).

scriptions not found in *EDR* I used the *EDCS* ID[45], added as a label to the newly created entries, along with minimal data such as the dating and the limited terminology used to describe the inscription type. Other data were deduced a posteriori, such as certainly alphabet and language. In any case, it was stipulated that the source of each statement should always be cited and the link to the *EDCS* page included. The transcoding of *EDCS* data partly relies on the properties and items already established for *EDR*. It was decided not to import the bibliography either from *EDCS* or *EDR*: this is an operation that requires the input of thousands of items into *Wikidata* (as one can imagine, in order to cite an author and an article, it is first necessary to create all the metadata within the database), a time-consuming task, not necessary at the moment.

Once the fields and values of *EDR* had been transcoded into the corresponding properties and values of *Wikidata*, the next step was to import the data. For the massive operations, I used the tool designed by Magnus Manske QuickStatements (QS).[46] Examples of inscription pages follow.

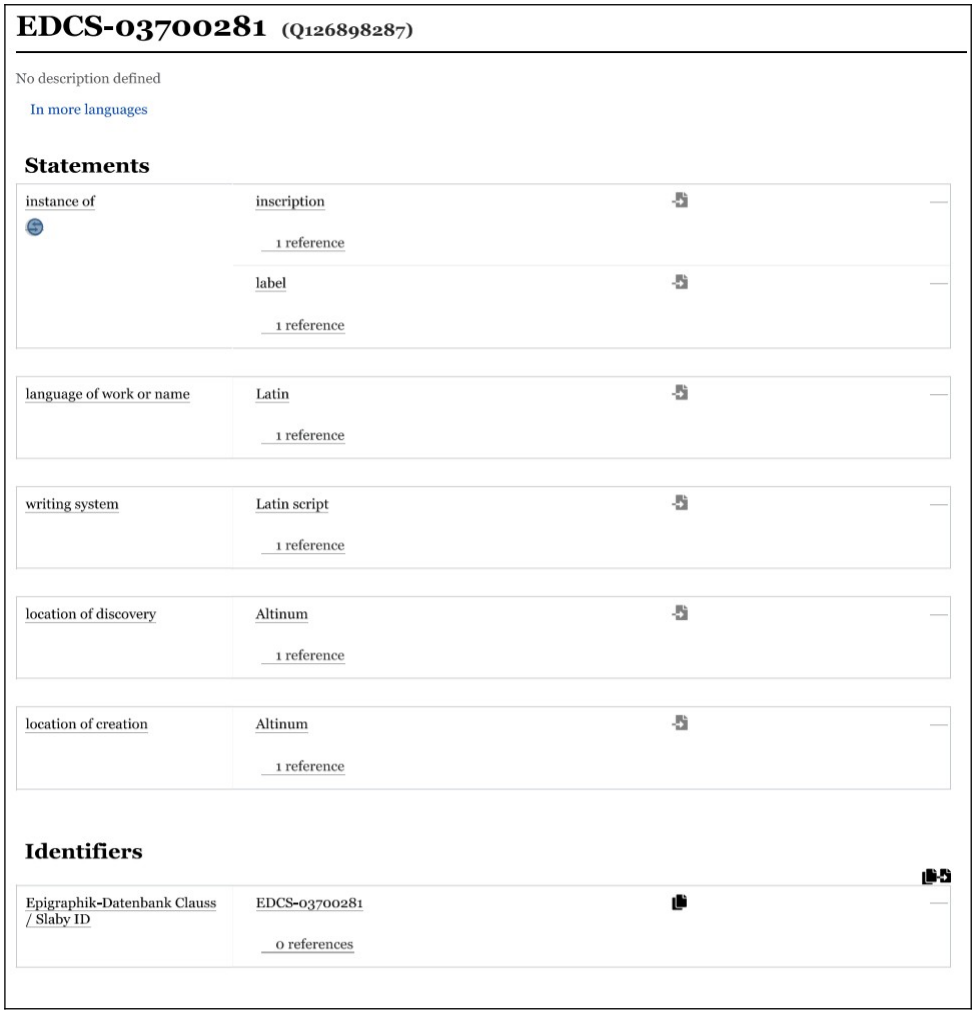
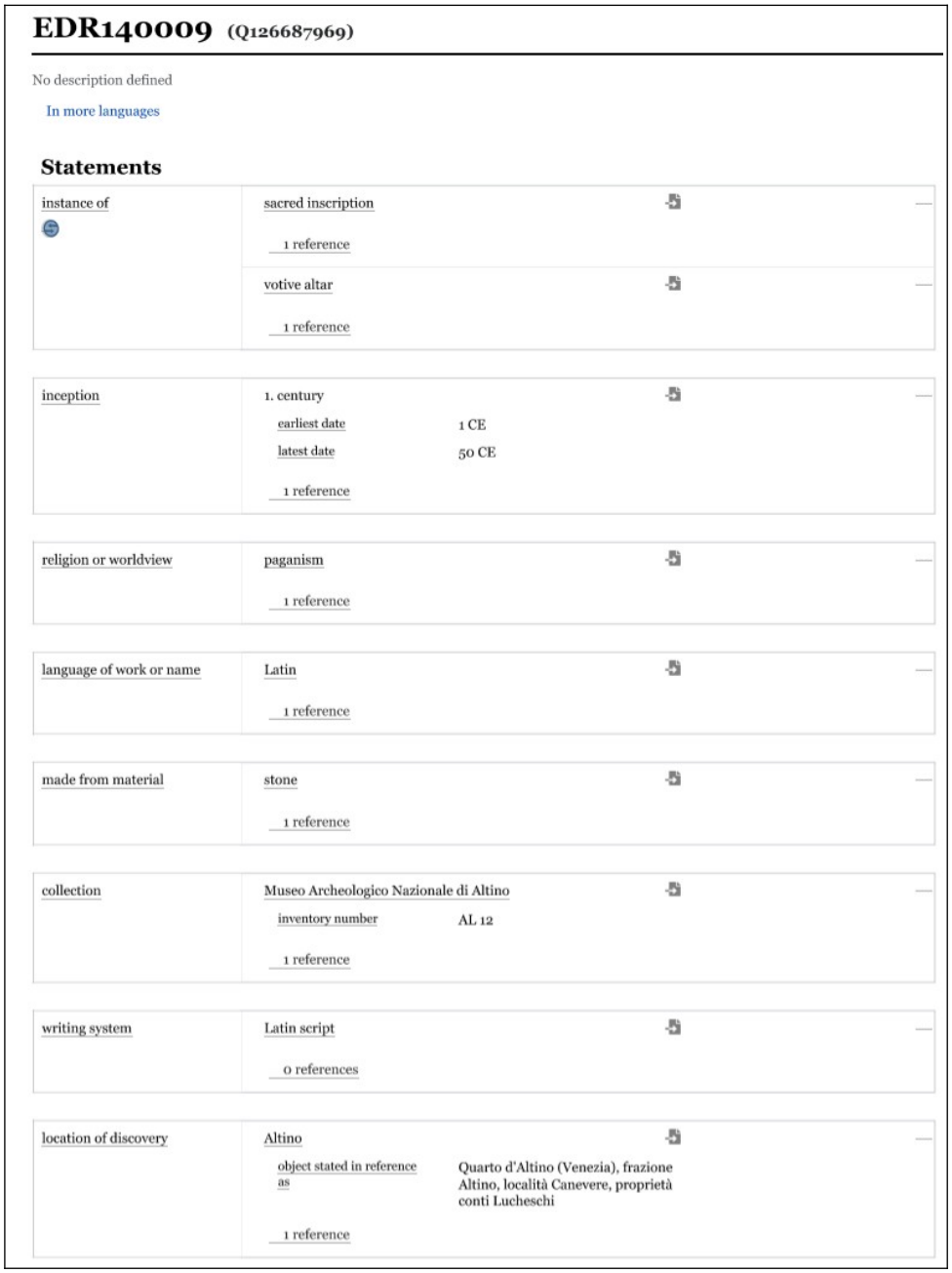


Fig. 8: Example of an *EDCS* inscription in *Wikidata*.

45 I obtained the correspondence of *EDR* and *EDCS* thanks to IDR, that associates *EDR*, *Trismegistos*, *EDCS*, *CIL* (etc.) IDs by entering a single identifier. https://id-resolver.inscriptiones.org/ (last access 11.07.2025).

46 https://quickstatements.toolforge.org/ (last access 11.07.2025). For massive import, the OpenRefine software (https://openrefine.org/ [last access 11.07.2025]) can be used and also bots can be programmed in Python using the Pywikibot library (documentation on https://doc.wikimedia.org/pywikibot/master/ [last access 11.07.2025]).



EDR140009 (Q126687969)

No description defined

In more languages

Statements

instance of	sacred inscription 1 reference	
	votive altar 1 reference	
inception	1. century earliest date: 1 CE latest date: 50 CE 1 reference	
religion or worldview	paganism 1 reference	
language of work or name	Latin 1 reference	
made from material	stone 1 reference	
collection	Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Altino inventory number: AL 12 1 reference	
writing system	Latin script 0 references	
location of discovery	Altino object stated in reference as: Quarto d'Altino (Venezia), frazione Altino, località Canevere, proprietà conti Lucheschi 1 reference	

Fig. 9a: Example of an *EDR* inscription in *Wikidata*, part 1.

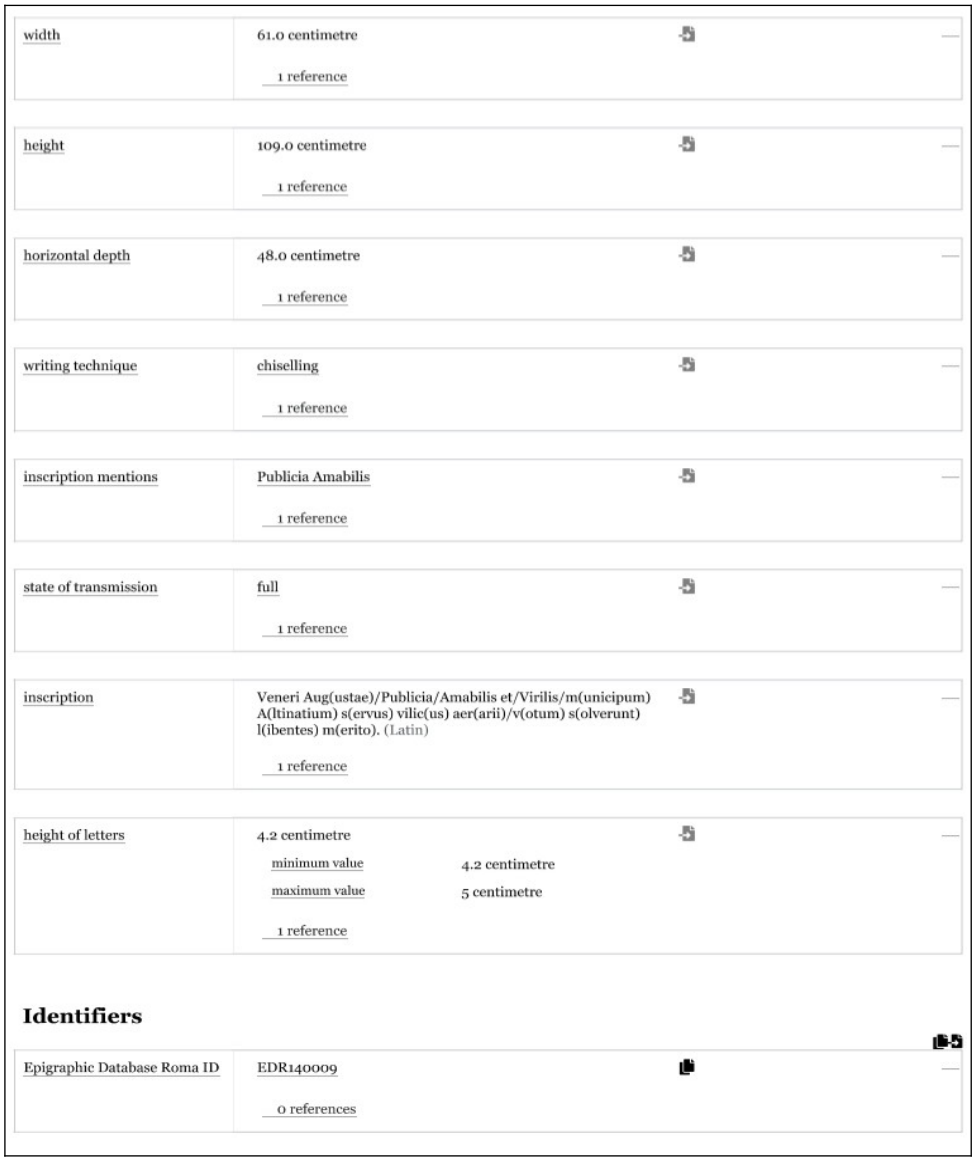


Fig. 9b: Example of an *EDR* inscription in *Wikidata*, part 2.

Entering Prosopographical Data

Once the insertion of the inscriptions was completed, the following step was then the final part of my work, namely the insertion and query of prosopographic data. I relied on the unpublished thesis of Barbara Pivetta[47], who catalogued the *gentes* and individuals mentioned in the inscriptions published up to that time (1998), as well as some that were yet to be published. Pivetta had catalogued 642 individuals, giving the bibliography of the inscriptions in which they were mentioned and, most importantly, any links with other individuals and the nature of their relationship. Each individual was catalogued by an identifier chosen arbitrarily by Pivetta, then retained as the value of P958 in references ("section, verse, paragraph or clause").

After incorporating the information from Pivetta's work, an additional 200 individuals could be added to the 642 catalogued here.[48] These were identified through onomastic data (father, master, and patron) and a closer analysis of the inscriptions – which sometimes revealed individuals not recorded by Piv-

47 Pivetta (1997/1998).

48 As said, only a few could be entered into *Wikidata* as many were recorded in inscriptions not found in *EDR* or *EDCS*.

etta, particularly servants. The first step was once again to create a CSV file structured according to the data required for import into *Wikidata*.[49] It was essential to encode key attributes that define an individual, such as name and gender: for instance, 'gender' corresponded to property P21, while the name was recorded both as a label (consistently in the three project languages – Italian, English, and Latin) and under property P1559, 'name in mother tongue'. Again, the project made use of *Wikidata*'s tools for massive import (QuickStatements), data extraction (*Wikidata* Query Service) and visualisation (such as EntiTree[50], an external tool for the construction of family trees and social networks). Currently, the focus of the *Altinum* project is on the survey of the female social network and marital relationships witnessed in Altinum inscriptions.

Below is a list of data transcoding based on the model adopted for the project.[51] While some descriptions were created ad hoc, others were used as they had already been established and discussed by the community.

Individuals Mentioned in the Inscriptions

Field name in Zenodo	***Wikidata* property**
ID *EDR*	To be used to create link with inscription • from person to entry: described by source (P1343): work where this item is described • from inscription to person: inscription mentions (P6568): item about a person or an object mentioned in the inscription's text. Use on Wikimedia Commons on media files
Name	Latin label + name in native language (P1559): name of a person in their native language
Gender	sex or gender (P21): sex or gender identity of human or animal. For human: male, female, non-binary, intersex, transgender female, transgender male, agender, etc. For animal: male organism, female organism. Groups of same gender use subclass of (P279)
Status	social classification (P3716): social class as recognized in traditional or state law
Age at the time of the event	age of subject at event (P3629): the age of the subject according to the cited source at the time of an event. Used as a qualifier of significant event property
Gens	gens (P5025): a clan or group of families from Ancient Rome who shared the same nomen
Provenance	place of birth (P19): most specific known birth location of a person, animal or fictional character
Significative Place	significant place (P7153): significant or notable places associated with the subject
Time	time period (P2348): time period (historic period or era, sports season, theatre season, legislative period etc.) in which the subject occurred or with which it is

49 Since *Wikidata* requires sources to be accessible and publicly available, the data I reused from Pivetta, together with the data I added, were published at https://zenodo.org/records/13773103 (last access 11.07.2025).

50 https://www.entitree.com/ (last access 11.07.2025).

51 https://zenodo.org/doi/10.5281/zenodo.12751850 (last access 11.07.2025).

	associated
Father	father (P22): male parent of the subject. For stepfather, use "stepparent" (P3448)
Mother	mother (P25): female parent of the subject. For stepmother, use "stepparent" (P3448)
Son/Daughter	child (P40): subject has object as child. Do not use for stepchildren – use "relative" (P1038), qualified with "type of kinship" (P1039)
Sibling	sibling (P3373): the subject and the object have at least one common parent (brother, sister, etc. including half-siblings); use "relative" (P1038) for siblings-in-law (brother-in-law, sister-in-law, etc.) and step-siblings (step-brothers, step-sisters, etc.)
Spouse	spouse (P26): the subject has the object as their spouse (husband, wife, partner, etc.). Use "unmarried partner" (P451) for non-married companions
Type of spouse	significant event (P793): significant or notable events associated with the subject
Other relative	relative (P1038): family member (qualify with "kinship to subject", P1039; for direct family member please use specific property)
Type of relative	kinship to subject (P1039): qualifier of "relative" (P1038) to indicate less usual family relationships (ancestor, son-in-law, adoptions, etc); indicate how the qualificator item is related to the main item (qualifier of relative (P1038): family member (qualify with "kinship to subject", P1039; for direct family member please use specific property))
Significant person	significant person (P3342): person linked to the item in any possible way
Object of statement has role	object of statement has role (P3831): (qualifier) role or generic identity of the predicate value/argument of a statement ("object") in the context of that statement; for the role of the item the statement is on ("subject"), use P2868 (qualifier of significant person (P3342): person linked to the item in any possible way)
Occupation	occupation (P106): occupation of a person; see also "field of work" (Property:P101), "position held" (Property:P39)
Member of	member of (P463): organization, club or musical group to which the subject belongs. Do not use for membership in ethnic or social groups, nor for holding a political position, such as a member of parliament (use P39 for that)
Position held	position held (P39): subject currently or formerly holds the object position or public office

Significant Place

Value name in Zenodo	*Wikidata* item
Altinum (default value)	Altinum (Q441542): *ancient city in Veneto and archaeological site in the Italian municipality of Quarto d'Altino (VE)*
Aquileia	Aquileia (Q2859274): *ancient Roman city now Aquileia, Province of Udine, Friuli–Venezia Giulia, Italy*
Roma	Rome (Q220): *capital and largest city of Italy*
Sardegna	geography of Sardinia (Q3760293): no description
Forum Cornelii	Forum Cornelii (Q3748870): *ancient Roman city (modern Imola)*
Luni	Luna (Q579763): *frazione of Italy*
Opitergium	Opitergium (Q130297514): *Ancient Roman settlement in the Venetia region*

Genders

Value name in Zenodo	*Wikidata* item
Male	male (Q6581097): *to be used in "sex or gender" (P21) to indicate that the human subject is a male or "semantic gender" (P10339) to indicate that a word refers to a male person*
Female	female (Q6581072): *to be used in "sex or gender" (P21) to indicate that the human subject is a female or "semantic gender" (P10339) to indicate that a word refers to a female person*
Not determinable	Unknown value

Status and Relationships

Reference property	*Wikidata* item
social classification (P3716)	• freedman: freedman (Q841571): *person who has been released from enslavement* • slave: slave (Q12773225): *person in a state of slavery* • ingenuus: ingenui (Q11926664): *legal term of ancient Rome indicating a person who was born free*
gens (P5025)	Abeia, Abidia, Abiria, Accia, Acellia, Acilia, Acutia, Aelia, Aemilia, Aeolia, Aequania, Aetriaca, Afinia, Ancharia, Annia, Antonia, Apertia, Aponia, Appuleia, Apronia, Aquilia, Aquilina, Aratria, Arcia, Aria, Arnia, Arruntia, Asconia, Asinia, Atia, Atilia, Attia, Auceia, Aulia, Aurelia, Avillia, Axia, Baebia, Baetia, Barbia, Braeta, Braetia, Caecilia, Caelia, Caesia, Caetronia, Calaecinia, Calventia, Cannusia, Cardia, Carminia, Cassia, Cassidia, Catius, Caulia, Caupia, Centia, Cervonia, Cethega, Ciceria, Cincia, Cleppia, Clodia, Cocceia, Coelia, Combulia, Cornelia, Cossutia, Crassicia, Cusonia, Didia, Domitia, Duronia, Egnatia, Elonia, Ennia, Epidia, Etuvia, Fabia, Fabricia, Faleria, Fannia, Faustina, Favonia,

	Firmia, Flavia, Folia, Fulvia, Furia, Gallia, Gavia, Grattia, Helvia, Helvidia, Herennia, Hostilia, Iulia, Iunia, Laberia, Laelia, Lartia, Lartidia, Latuonia, Licinia, Livia, Lollia, Lucana, Lucretia, Macioria, Maecenas, Maecia, Magia, Maicia, Mamilia, Manilia, Manlia, Mannia, Maria, Messia, Mestria, Mettia, Minucia, Mulvia, Munatia, Muria, Murria, Murtia, Mutia, Muttiena, Naevia, Nigidia, Nonia, Notellia, Novia, Numeria, Octavia, Ogia, Olia, Oppia, Ostilia, Ostoria, Paconia, Paescia, Paetinia, Papiria, Passena, Percennia, Peticia, Petronia, Pinnia, Pisidia, Plautia, Plotia, Poblicia, Pollia, Pompusia, Pontia, Popilia, Porcia, Postumia, Potia, Pupia, Putinia, Quinctia, Quinctilia, Remmia, Ruferia vel Rufertia, Sabina, Saenia, Safinia, Salvena, Satria, Saufeia, Seia, Sempronia, Senatia, Sescinia, Sevia, Sextia, Sextilia, Sicinia, Sintia, Sippia, Sosia, Statia, Tablinia, Tarutia, Tatia, Tattia, Tecina, Terentia, Tettenia, Titia, Titiena, Titurnia, Tommonia, Trebia, Trosia, Tufidia, Tullia, Turellia, Ulpia, Upsidia, Urtia, Vaccia, Valeria, Valgia, Varia, Veidia, Veronia, Vettia, Veturia, Viceria, Vilonia, Volumnia, Volusia
significant event (P793)	• contubernium • matrimonium • concubinatus • conubium
relative (P1038) with qualifier kinship to subject (P1039)	• father-in-law father-in-law (Q13204680): *male parent-in-law* • mother-in-law: mother-in-law (Q723868): *female parent-in-law* • amita: paternal aunt (Q5992509): *male parent's sister* • ancestor: ancestor (Q402152): *person from whom another person is descended* • daughter-in-law: child-in-law (Q2096646): *child's spouse* • grandfather: grandfather (Q9238344): *male grandparent* • maternal uncle: maternal uncle (Q4120409): *mother's brother* • paternal uncle: paternal uncle (Q12158205): *father's brother* • father-in-law: co-father-in-law (Q1498282): *father-in-law of one's child* • great-grandchild: great-grandchild (Q26237579): *grandchild's child* • grandson of grandfather: son's son (Q23684609): *male child of son* • uncle's nephew: niece or nephew (Q76477): *child of a sibling or half-sibling*
significant person (P3342)	• friend: friend (Q17297777): *companion or acquaintance*

with qualifier object of statement has role (P3831); use for servants owned by (P127) and for masters owner of (P1830)	*whom one regards with affection, affinity, or loyalty* • servant: item to be encoded with property owned by (P127): *owner of the subject* • freedman freedman (Q841571): *person who has been released from enslavement* • owner: to be encoded with the property owner of (P1830): *entities owned by the subject* • patron: patron (Q127800348): *individual who held a legal bond with his own freedman, now a member of his own gens* • delicatus: delicatus (Q130297560): no description or Q130297570: no description • collibertus: collibertus (Q127952883): *in ancient Rome, slave manumitted, along with others, by the same master*

Occupation/Other

Reference property	Name of item in inscriptions + identifier in *Wikidata*
position held (P39)	• sevir: seviratus (Q3958547): *magistracy of ancient Rome* • quattuorvir: Quadrumvir (Q23830356): *member of a college composed of four individuals holding institutional positions within a Roman municipality* • quattuorvir iure dicundo: quattuorvir iure dicundo (Q127638194): *Roman-era municipal magistrate in charge of the administration of justice* • quattuorvir aedilicia potestate: quattuorvir aedilicia potestate (Q127637725): *municipal magistrate from the Roman period with the role of overseer of the relevant municipality* • tribune: tribune (Q190401): *elected Roman officials* • decurion: decurion (Q1163056): *leader of ten legionaries* • augustalis: Augustalis (Q127690291): *Roman-era priest devoted to the cult of the imperial family* • veteran: veteran (Q4010462): in ancient Rome, soldier at the end of his service • praefectus fabrum: praefectus fabrum (Q3909815): *Roman military position* • priest: priest (Q42603): *person who consecrates his life to some divinity and whose main functions are to direct religious rites and offer sacrifices to the divinity (for a minister use Q1423891)*
member of (P463)	• Collegium funeraticium: Funerary institution (Q127633859): association raising funds for a collective burial • Collegium of lanarii purgatores: Q127701633: no description

	• Collegium of centonarii: Q127704335: no description If not just a member but a patron of the college then code with subject has role (P2868) and patronus (Q14052743): patron in ancient Rome
occupation (P106)	• physician: physician (Q39631): *professional who practices medicine* • pantomime: roman and greek pantomime (Q31183419): *a person who was involved in pantomime in ancient Greece and ancient Rome* • public freedman: public freedman (Q127701365): *former Roman slave belonging to and emancipated from a community* • mensor: agrimensor (Q396762): *surveyor in the Roman Empire* • sailor: sailor (Q45199): *person who navigates water-borne vessels or assists in doing so* • dispensator: dispensator (Q97190455): *butler or manager of payments, usually of a servile nature, in a private house or imperial office* • curator: legal guardian (Q157509): *person who has the legal authority to care for the personal and property interests of another person or comunity* • vilicus aerarii: vilicus aerarii (Q127797349): *in charge of the treasury of the municipia of the Roman Empire* • soldier: Roman legionary (Q17346959): *professional soldier of the Roman army* • veterinary: veterinarian (Q202883): *professional who treats disease, disorder, and injury in animals* • evocatus: Evocatus (Q568404): *a class of voluntarily reenlisted soldier in the Ancient Roman army* • procurator: Q3922473: no description
part of (P361)	imperial freedman: familia Caesaris (Q106602279): *set of slaves and freedmen who were in the service of the Roman emperor or under his patronage*
social classification (P3716)	• eques: equites (Q122166): *the lower of the two aristocratic classes of ancient Rome* • public slave: vilicus aerarii (Q127797349): *in charge of the treasury of the municipia of the Roman Empire*

Conclusions

This research methodology integrated traditional epigraphic sources with innovative digital tools, overcoming the limitations of conventional methods while encountering significant challenges. These included the compatibility of database licences with *Wikidata*, which required careful management work, highlighting the importance of ethical and legal use of the data, as well as the structuring and transcoding of the data: the creation of new entities in *Wikidata* required in-depth analysis on a controlled vocabulary to ensure terminological consistency. The EAGLE project provided a landmark, but its application in *Wikidata* required adaptations to meet academic and non-academic requirements.

The use of SPARQL showed the query potential of *Wikidata* for the study of the Altinum *corpus*, but also the difficulties related to the complexity of the language, which requires training or external support. This underlines the need to find more effective solutions for academic research through the WDQS.

Despite some challenges and the need for (albeit basic) technical training, *Wikidata* has proven to be an effective tool for epigraphic and prosopographical research, enabling flexible and multilingual data visualization while accommodating various research needs.

The next step will be collaborative: in fact, *GMI*, *Altinum*, *IDEA* and other projects shall work together to create a common data model that can lead to the expansion of the *Wikidata*:WikiProject Epigraphy[52] in alignment with FAIR Epigraphy principles.[53] This objective will result in the creation of a proper epigraphic dataset in *Wikidata*, expanded and categorised in the many disciplinary applications that epigraphy (not only Greek and Latin) entails.

52 https://www.wikidata.org/wiki/wikidata:WikiProject_Epigraphy (last access 11.07.2025).

53 Heřmánková et al. (2022); Cenati et al. (2021).

List of Abbreviations

CSV	Comma Separated Values
FAIR	Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable
Fig.	Figure
HTTP	Hypertext Transfer Protocol
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
IDR	Inscriptiones Identifier Resolver
ISBN	International Standard Book Number
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LOD	Linked Open Data
RDF	Resource Description Framework
SPARQL	SPARQL Protocol and RDF Query Language
Tab.	Table
URI	Uniform Resource Identifier
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
URN	Uniform Resource Name
QS	QuickStatements
WDQS	Wikidata Query Service

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Digital Corpora

EAGLE	Europeana Network for Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy
EDCS	Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby
EDR	Epigraphic Database Roma
GMI	Greek Metrical Inscriptions
IDEA	International (Digital) Dura-Europos Archive
TM	Trismegistos

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Figure and Table References

Figg. 1–3: Anna Clara Maniero Azzolini.

Figg 4–9: https://www.wikidata.org (last access 11.07.2025).

Tab. 1: Anna Clara Maniero Azzolini.

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