

Cartography and the collected nation in Joachim Lelewel's geographical imagination: a revised approach to intelligentsia

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1. Lelewel as a case study for the early nineteenth-century intelligentsia

IN THIS PAPER, I seek to analyze the material culture of map production, consumption, and dissemination for the case of Joachim Lelewel, whom I take as an example of a modern advocate for a complex form of statehood and nationhood, and not simply just another Polish irredentist nationalist among other members of the nineteenth-century intelligentsia. I pose the following questions:

(a) Whom did Lelewel include and exclude from his maps? (b) Where were his centerpieces and why were they selected? (c) In which territorial terms did he frame and memorialize his own geographical imagination?

Joachim Lelewel (1786-1861), the early-nineteenth-century Polish emigre, liberal social activist, and polymath historian, was an avid—and even obsessive—collector of ancient, medieval and modern maps. Following the third partition of the Rzeczpospolita in 1795, Lelewel devoted himself to a study of history that drew heavily from the historiosophical and historiographical legacies of the Enlightenment and German romantic nationalist idealism. However, one of the neglected aspects of Lelewel's writings is his affinity for geography and cartography. After graduating from the University of Vilnius (Wilno, Vil'na) in 1808, his first (quite unsuccessful) professional position was as a teacher of history and ancient geography at the Krzemieniec Lyceum. Amassing over 4,000 maps in his private collection in Vilnius, toward the end of his life Lelewel wrote the vast five-volume history of geography, *Geographie du moyen âge* (1852-7), a *magnum opus* of varied sorts.

With special attention to the modern project of nation- and state-building in the partitioned Rzeczpospolita, Lelewel attempted to transform the study of geography from antiquarianism into science by the systematic gathering of foundational and teleologically ordered maps, and according to a positivist interpretation of maps as authentic historical facts, privileged sources, and classifiable doc-

uments, rather than as metanarrative texts, signifiers, or commodities. Obviously, the defunct Rzeczpospolita lacked the political ability to form its own Royal Geographical Society on the English model. Meanwhile, the Habsburgs collected and drew ornate maps of Galicia and Lodomeria, and the Russian tsars—busy thoroughly surveying and surveilling their potentially unstable Western borderlands and expanding eastward into Siberia, Central Asia, and the Far East—would concentrate their resources in the Military-Topographical Map Depot (established in 1797) and the official Russian Imperial Geographical Society, a more colonial project, established in 1845. Axiomatic to Lelewel's geographical and historical imagination was the memorialized association of territoriality and national identity, the 'historical' pre-1772 demarcations of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth which included the assimilable multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual *kresy*.

2. Cartography, power/knowledge, and the paradigms of nationalism

In his seminal writings on nationalism, Anthony Smith has outlined the benefits and limitations of numerous paradigmatic approaches, ranging comparatively beyond 'Europe' into a discussion over *la longue durée* of Persia, Israel, and Greece, in search of 'modern' nations with particular (i.e. real) civilizational foundations (see, e.g., Smith 2000). According to him, in contra-distinction to Hobsbawm and Gellner, nations cannot simply be invented *ex nihilo* or reduced to a developmental process of modernization, industrialization, and mass or popular political culture resulting in a form of 'false consciousness'. For the case of Lelewel and post-partitioned Poland, however, perhaps an analysis of territoriality and geographical space, as suggested by Benedict Anderson (1991) and Thongchai Winichakul (1994), is more instructive. Conceptions of space and territory, sacred and secular, usefully supplement such ideational debates about the reorientation and instrumentalization of historical time.

As Brian Porter has convincingly argued in his book, *When Nationalism Began to Hate* (2000), the idea of a restored 'multicultural' Poland during the nineteenth century, including Jews, Ukrainians, Lithuanians, Belorussians, and Prussian Germans, was rarely sketched by intellectuals according to actual territorial boundaries. It was more of an imaginative fantasy, although one which naturally prompted radical political and social actions and counter-reactions, not just among Poles, but in differing waves

among each of the variously assimilated or non-assimilated cultures and ethnicities of the *kresy*. When the name of Poland itself became merely a *gubernija* and subsequently a forbidden term of opprobrium among the Russian administration after the uprising of 1863, and renamed 'the Vistula land', Lelewel was no longer alive to work toward its realization. In the phrase of Jean Baudrillard, he became a connoisseur of selected 'beloved objects' (i.e. *collected maps*). Thus did Lelewel's beloved professional labor as a didactic historian and geographer, influenced principally and dually by the West European Enlightenment and Romanticism, serve to lay the teleological groundwork for those nation- and state-builders who would strive for the culmination of his memorialized 'cartographic fiction'.

3. Lelewel's Geographies, Histories, and 'science' of collecting

Traditional focus among scholars of Polish history and historiography has been toward Lelewel's political stance as a proponent of democratic republicanism, first while teaching from 1821-31 at the University of Vilnius, and then in exile in Paris and Brussels. As part of the 'wielka emigracja', Lelewel has been presented as one of the foremost nation-builders of the early nineteenth century, a precocious, remarkable representative of radical romantic liberalism and an inspiration for the Society of Philomaths (*Towarzystwo Filomatów*), whose members included Adam Mickiewicz. For Lelewel, who deeply researched the history of numismatics, old maps were more than simple antiquarianism. In fact, his predominant interest in geography and cartography may be considered practically as a longstanding scientific fantasy, the attempt to transform an aesthetically oriented antiquarianism into an organized system of data classification and factual categorization. As a man with a severe case of bibliophilia, Lelewel the emigre was a historian, researcher, and librarian extraordinaire, financing the publication of *Numismatique du moyen âge* (1835) and *Géographie du moyen âge* (1852-7) with his own money. His *Géographie* was finally published in Brussels at the expense of 9,500 francs, a very high sum for that time.

Lelewel's extraordinarily wide, scattered, and (one might say) even messianic scientific interests included a bibliographical compilation of Polish libraries and their cartographical holdings. While in Brussels he collected 315 atlases, which cost him 8,000 francs. In his patriotic idealization of the 'gentry democracy' of the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, he edited literally thousands of histori-

cal maps, sometimes anonymously, including the famed *Historia narodu polskiego* of Adam Naruszewicz, published first in Warsaw in 1786, and reprinted with his editing job in 1824 with 50 revised maps. Altogether, according to Zbigniew Rzepa (1980), the maps which Lelewel preserved and edited were used in a total of 457 publications by 1850, a vast testament to his erudition and range of scholarly activity. He even reviewed Nikolaj Karamzin's monumental *Istorija russkogo gosudarstva* ('History of the Russian State') in the journal *Severnyj archiv* in 1823, and persuasively contested the long, presumably organic continuity of Russian state-building and territorial expansion.

In the Polish historiographical narrative Lelewel's democratic republicanism and zeal for Polish independence is frequently contrasted socially and politically with the monarchism and mere desire for Polish autonomy within the Russian Polish Kingdom proposed by Adam Czartoryski. Considering the cities of Pskov and Novgorod as unique cases of early Slavonic 'gminowładztwo' (communal self-government, proto-democracy, or 'conservative utopia'), and seeking the origins for the genesis and continuation of 'gentry democracy' within a multicultural yet 'Sarmatian' (multiethnic and theoretically inclusive yet Polonocentric) territorial homeland, he researched what he construed as the original ancient history and localization of the first Slavic peoples, namely in central Europe, Lithuania, and Russia. Lelewel's passion for a scientific archaeology, scientific cartography, and scientific history was influenced by and modeled upon the ideas of the renowned German geographers Alexander von Humboldt and Karl Ritter. In fact, he eagerly published his first atlas, *Dzieje starożytne: Od początku czasów historycznych do drugiej połowy wieku szóstego ery chrześcijańskiej*, in Vilnius in 1818. Later works would include his *Atlas do historii i geografii starożytnej* (1828), *Atlas do dziejów polskich z dwunastu krajobrazów złożony* (1829); *Dzieje Polski Joachim Lelewel potocznym sposobem odpowiedział, do nich dwunastcie krajobrazów skreśli* (1829, with titled maps); *Histoire de Pologne par Joachim Lelewel: Atlas contenant les tableaux chronologiques et généalogiques, et les cartes géographiques de différentes époques* (1844); *Geschichte Polens von Joachim Lelewel: Atlas enthaltend die chronologischen und genealogischen Tafeln und die geographischen Karten der verschiedenen Zeiträume* (1847); and lastly *Géographie du moyen âge, étudiée par Joachim Lelewel. Atlas composé de cinquante planches gravées par l'auteur, contenant*

145 *figures et cartes géographiques générales ou spéciales* (1852-7). Dividing Polish national history schematically into chronological order (850, 992, 1025, 1139, 1270, 1333, 1375, 1500, 1572, 1586, 1673, 1772-95) to show its origins and cartographical changes, Lelewel intended in his publications to reach both a Polish audience and a West European community of sympathizers for independence. Lelewel collected and reproduced not only Polish maps for the territories of the old Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, but also Latin and Greek maps, Arabic cosmographical maps, in addition to maps in French, German, Italian, and Spanish. His interest in Spain as another nation-state on the margins of Europe remained with him throughout his life, as one possible parallel for the origins and development of Polish civilization. However, perhaps not altogether surprisingly, Lelewel was limited in his vision by an inability to envisage the replication of nation-building movements among smaller and more 'ethnographic' peoples during the early nineteenth century, and while he remained pro-Semitic and 'multicultural' (his family was partly of German origin), he did not perceive the perennial continuities or social construction of these other imagined communities. Simonas Daukantas, a student of Lelewel at the University of Vilnius, who attended his classes on occasion but proudly skipped them because he said there was nothing more to learn, viewed Lelewel less heroically as a terrible compromiser, a Polish political and cultural imperialist, and, in his own words, 'a crowner' who only pretended to be sympathetic with the awakening Lithuanian cause (Krapauskas 2000, 67-8). Daukantas would later become one of the principal builders of modern Lithuania with his own 'scientific' scholarship, which undoubtedly owed a great deal to Lelewel's historical, geographical, and geopolitical strategies. As Andrzej Walicki (1994e, 18) has written,

[i]n his idealization of the old Sarmatian Commonwealth Lelewel attached importance to its multiethnic and, so to say, 'multicultural' character. In this respect, too, the gentry democracy served him as a model for a future Poland, seen by him as a nation where no differences would exist among the peoples: Polish, Lithuanian, German, Samogitian, Ruthenian, of which it is composed. He overlooked the fact that despite this original indifference toward language and ethnicity, the culture of the gentry had undergone a process of homo-genization, resulting in a homogeneous culture of 'Sarmatianism.' And it did not occur to him that political awakening of the peasant population of the former Commonwealth might result in consoli-

dating the ethno-linguistic differences within it and thus give birth to new nations.

4. Conclusion: Purposes of maps and map collecting—symbolic identities

In my view, the problematic concepts of nationality and identity have often been conflated and employed indiscriminately in recent scholarship by historians of 'Central' and 'Eastern' Europe, i. e. the former captive nations of the Eastern bloc. Such an analytical enterprise, moving neatly in strides from Phase A (cultural and linguistic coordination) to Phase B (social organization) to Phase C (political mobilization), is employed to suggest a kind of Whig national *and* regional metanarrative (the Fukuyama thesis) from slavery to freedom, oppression to liberation, and progressive emergence from the dark throes of nineteenth-century Great Power colonialism and imperialism toward a grand European liberal democratic constitutive state of being. Of course, the post-1991 context of globalization and European integration cannot simply be pushed aside when writing about the age of geopolitical restoration, nation-state power balances, and imperial territorial legitimacy established in 1815 by the Treaty of Vienna, and redefined along the vague lines of national self-determination in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles. When one examines the contemporary Basque question or Kurdish question, or asks whether Russia or Turkey or 'the Balkans' are indeed part of 'Europe', or considers the varying waves of emigration and immigration to and from northern, southern, western and eastern 'continental' Europe, such Eurocentric spatial teleologies and uses of metacartography are greatly challenged.

Debates about the entire notion of an 'intelligentsia' generally take place on the plane of unbounded ideas with lesser attention accorded to territory, material culture, space and place. Lelewel's geographical exceptionalism for a romanticized Rzeczpospolita represents the continuance of a very old and seemingly timeless debate about which nations 'belong' to Europe, Western civilization, etc. Of course, Lelewel's own 'identity' as a member of the early nineteenth-century Polish intelligentsia and a diaspora activist for a restored Rzeczpospolita was not *merely* symbolic. But following from Homi Bhabha's (1994) notion of 'performative ethnicity' especially as applied to postcolonialist intellectuals, Lelewel was indeed a great archival collector and systematizer, a subversive activist and actor who appealed to 'the West' while operating within its rules, strategies, and limitations, mobilizing his talents and mate-

rial resources to this end. Polish geography and cartography, lacking the political apparatus of a state or a homogeneous nation or ethnicity around which to organize itself, circumstantially either had to join the Russian military-topographical service of state surveying and surveillance, or go underground or abroad after 1795, 1831, and 1863. As an exiled academician Lelewel employed a kind of futuristic logic, perhaps unconsciously foreseeing that the territoriality of the Rzeczpospolita could only exist for the moment as a memorialized commodity, an idea to be stored materially in the archives and to be disseminated among a receptive wider audience only at a later date.

In conclusion, Lelewel's geographical imagination, by which I mean a sense of fixed place and space, necessarily presupposed the kind of Polish romantic national, ethnic, and cultural exceptionalism, *primus inter pares*, which was a common discursive practice at that time: multiethnic and 'multicultural' in practice, but bearing its own strong national, ethnocentric, and universalizing civilizational imperative. In other words, Daukantas was partly right: with his teleological myths of ethno-national origins and civilizational foundations firmly established, and despite his cosmopolitan liberalism on a West European terrain, Lelewel could only pay lip service to other nation- and state-building movements. The didactic maps which he drew, edited, preserved, and deployed in his educational and progressive history and geography textbooks would come to be seen as 'authentic' sources, mathematically measurable memorials to scientifically verifiable territories, and constitutive parts of the early nineteenth-century Polish intelligentsia's various streams of rationalism, romanticism, liberalism, messianism, and positivism: the national *idée fixe* of restoring (or separating) the Commonwealth with often vague, mythical, undefined, modified, or hastily sketched actual cartographical boundaries within the *kresy*. The performative emigre and political activist who fled to Paris and Brussels from Vilnius in 1831 indisputably included and centered Poland within 'Europe', and on a grand *civilizational*, not a mere ethnographic or national scale. For the case of Joachim Lelewel, who had at least a spatial answer to his own infamous rhetorical question, '*Polska, ale jaka?*', memory and territoriality ultimately underscored and perhaps undermined his own imaginative conception of nationality and identity.

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