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Map of Albi as a Geopolitical Cryptogram. A Proposal for a New Interpretation

Mapa z Albi jako geopolityczny kryptogram. Propozycja nowej interpretacji

ABSTRACT

This article on the one hand is intended to present the history of research on the Albi map, and on the other, to show that the map is essentially a graphical cryptogram. The essence of this cryptogram is the schematic shape of the Mediterranean, which resembles the shape of a human head. The head has a horrible, almost diabolical profile, and its face is turned to the left, towards the geographical North. The lands surrounding this profile serve only as a kind of portrait framework. The analysis of this caricatural cryptogram, taking into account the time and place of the map's creation and the geopolitical context, suggests that the anonymous author of the Albi map seems to silently accuse the leaders of the Christian world of allowing Islam to dominate the Mediterranean.

Key words: Map of Albi, Anthropomorphism, Geopolitical Cryptogram, Europe, North, Rome, Christianity, Islam

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The map that is the subject of this analysis is one of the oldest surviving maps of the world because it is dated either to the 8th or 9th century. However, the map of Albi (fig. 1)¹ has never aroused much interest among researchers². It is usually mentioned as a formality, because a cartographic relic of this class cannot be omitted, but neither the legends surrounding it nor its graphic aspect attract the attention of historians of cartography. Meanwhile, it is worth looking at this map not so much from the perspective of history of maps, but through a prism of potentially encoded graphic patterns that have so far been overlooked by historians of

¹ Map of Albi, original source: Albi, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms 29, sheet 487 (original size: 290 x 230 mm; date of creation: 8th or 9th century). Map 'metrics': K. Miller, *Mappaemundi. Die ältesten Weltkarten*, III. Heft, *Die kleineren Weltkarten*, Stuttgart 1895, p. 57; M. Destombes, *Mappemondes A.D. 1200–1500. Catalog prepare par la Commission des Cartes Anciennes de l'Union Géographique Internationale*, 'Monumenta Cartographica Vetustioris Aevi I' 1964, 46, 22, 1; J. Strzelczyk, *Gerwazy z Tilbury. Studium z dziejów uczoneści geograficznej w średniowieczu*, in: *Monografie z Dziejów Nauki i Techniki*, vol. 66, Wrocław–Warszawa 1970, p. 208; J.G. Arentzen, *Imago mundi cartographica. Studien zur Bildlichkeit mittelalterlicher Welt- und Ökumenekarten unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Zusammenwirkens von Text und Bild*, 'Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften' 1984, 53, pp. 48–50; A.H. Sijmons, H. Wallis, *Atlas de Santarém. Fascimile of the Final Edition 1849. Explanatory Notes*, Amsterdam 1985, p. 49 (plate 4, no. 1); A.D. von den Brincken, *Fines Terrae. Die Enden der Erde und der vierte Kontinent auf mittelalterlichen Weltkarten*, 'Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica' 1992, 36, pp. XVIII–19 (27), 32–33; L.S. Chekin, *Northern Eurasia in Medieval Cartography. Inventory, Text, Translation, and Commentary*, 'Terrarum Orbis' 2006, 4, pp. 93–94 (VII. 1.). The text of the map's legends: M.F. le Vicomte de Santarém, *Essai sur l'histoire de la cosmographie et de la cartographie pendant le Moyen-Âge*, vol. 2, Paris 1850, pp. 26–31; J. Lelewel, *Géographie du Moyen Âge*, vol. 1, Bruxelles 1952 (reprint: Amsterdam 1966), p. LXXVIII; K. Miller, *Mappaemundi*, pp. 58–59; F. Glorie, *Mappa mundi e codice Albigenesi* 29, in: *Itineraria et alia geographica, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*, vol. 175 Turnholti 1965, p. 469; L.S. Chekin, *op. cit.*, pp. 94–95 (VII.1.). Text fragments from the map's legends: H. Wuttke, *Ueber Erdkunde und Karten des Mittelalters*, Leipzig 1853, pp. 26–28; L. Bagrow, R.A. Skelton, *Meister der Kartographie*, 5th ed., Berlin 1985, p. 52; A.D. von den Brincken, *Fines*, pp. 33, 151, 173; eadem, *Herausragende Plätze der antiken Geschichte im Bild der mittelalterlichen Ökumene-Karte (9. bis beginnendes 14. Jahrhundert)*, in: *Geschichtsdeutung auf alten Karten. Archäologie und Geschichte*, ed. D. Unverhau, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, vol. 101, Wiesbaden 2003, pp. 39–40; eadem, *Studien zur Universalkartographie des Mittelalters*, in: *Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte*, ed. Th. Szabó, vol. 229, Göttingen 2008, pp. 666–667; R. Galichian, *Countries South of the Caucasus in Medieval Maps. Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan*, London 2007, p. 44; Ch. Deluz, *Une image du monde. La géographie dans l'Occident médiéval (Ve–XVe siècle)*, in: *La terre. Connaissance, représentations, mesure au Moyen Âge, L'Atelier du Médiéviste*, ed. P. Gautier Dalché, vol. 13, Turnhout 2013, p. 32; M.T. Nurminen, *Die Welt in Karten. Meisterwerke der Kartographie*, transl. G. Beitscher, G. Seidel, Darmstadt 2017, pp. 42–43. Source of the copy: L.S. Chekin, *op. cit.*, p. 394 (VII.1.). Map redraws (fig. 2–3) were made by the author of the article.

² It is also relatively rarely reproduced. Currently, probably the most faithful with regards to color copies of this map are published in: R. Galichian, *op. cit.*, p. 44, fig. 14a, and above all 45, fig. 14; M.T. Nurminen, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

cartography, as they should in fact be the subject of research by historians of ideas. The essence of the issue to be discussed below is illustrated as a prologue by the last two drawings (fig. 2–3). They will be constantly referred to in the following analysis of Albi map graphical design. As one can see, they show what remains after ‘cleaning’ the map outlines from internal dividing lines and legends. Thus, it is a diagram of a map that the draftsman drew when starting his work. It is this ‘clean’ outline of the map that seems to reflect the original idea of a medieval cartographer – to depict the Mediterranean Sea so that, with the help of its schema, it would be possible to express thoughts that can only be expressed through a well-thought-out cryptogram. It was no coincidence that the medieval draftsman chose the ‘backbone’ of the then maps, i.e. the Mediterranean Sea, and shaped it into a caricature of the left profile of a human head (fig. 3). Each viewer has to look at them, but not everyone will read this cryptogram, focusing on the seemingly more important content of the legends and the political and administrative divisions of the ecumene, which in this case are in fact to veil the essence of things.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

As an introduction, however, it is necessary to recall some basic information about the map as such. It contains 49 legends that are worth recalling here, using the alphabetical order within individual continents: (Asia) – *Alenxandria* (sic!), *Antiochia*, *Arabia*, *Armenia*, *Babillonia*, *Caspium*, *Cymiricum mare*, *Deserto*, *Egyptus*, *Fison*, *Iherusalem*, *India*, *Iudea*, *Media*, *Nilum*, *Persida*, *Pontum*, *Rubrum*, *Sina*, *Tigris*; (Europa) – *Adrias*, *Agaiia*, *Atenas*, *Barbari*, *Britania*, *Gallia*, *Gotia*, *Ionium mare*, *Ispania*, *Italia*, *Macedonia*, *Renus*, *Rodanum*, *Roma*, *Tracia*; (Africa) – *Afriga* (sic!), *Cartago*, *Etiopia*, *Ganges fluuius*, *Libiæ*, *Mauritania*, *Nomedia*, *Zephirus*; (Insulae ‘in Maro Nostro’) – *Creta*, *Cursica* (sic!), *Cypra*, *Sardinia*, *Sicilia* and the

term *Oceanum* next to the Straits of Gibraltar³. Even a cursory reading of the legends shows that they lack a kind of classic notion used by cartographers of the time, namely the term *Paradisus*. The author of the map did not find a place for paradise on it, although he did mention the rivers associated with it at that time on the strength of centuries-old tradition. It remains an open question whether he did it deliberately, or, for example, due to a lack of space or because he considered paradise to be a spiritual reality that had been lost by mankind once and for all. However, looking at the caricature of the Mediterranean, one gets the impression that the cartographer could not and did not want to place paradise above the caricature of the head, as paradise is a kind of a crown of the most sublime human desires and aspirations. The draftsman was therefore not a hypocrite, but someone who tried to express his opinion on the contemporary world.

The Map of Albi was discovered by Guglielmo Libri (1 January 1803 – 28 September 1869). He is also the author of the first description of both the manuscript containing the map and the map itself. This description proves that G. Libri was aware of the importance of his discovery: ‘A collection written in the 8th century [...]. It consists of different extracts from ecclesiastical authors; there is also an anonymous geography treatise and a world map. The writing is sometimes uncial, sometimes Merovingian. All the names written on this world map are in small uncial letters. [...] This precious document [...] is perhaps the oldest figured geographical monument in the world’⁴. Manuel Francisco le Vicomte de Santarém (18 November 1791 – 17 January 1856) returned to the subject of the map of Albi a few years later⁵. Apart from providing the legends of the map (cf. annotation 1), the most important observation from his description is: ‘In a manuscript kept in the library of Alby [...] there is a geographical map, colored in green, of the same period as the rest of the manuscript, which is a square folio, on parchment, from the 7th to the 8th century’⁶.

³ List of the map’s legends from: F. Glorie, *op. cit.*, p. 469.

⁴ ‘[...] un recueil écrit au VIIIe siècle [...] Il se compose de différents extraits d’auteurs ecclésiastiques; on y trouve aussi un traité de géographie anonyme et une mappemonde. L’écriture est tantôt onciale, tantôt mérovingienne. Tous les noms écrits sur cette mappemonde sont en petites lettres onciales [...] ce document précieux [...] est peut-être le plus ancien monument géographique figuré qui existe au monde’. G. Libri, *Notices des manuscrits de quelques bibliothèques des départements*, Paris 1842, p. 50; Cf. M.F. le Vicomte de Santarém, *Essai*, vol. 2, p. 25.

⁵ His full name was: Manuel Francisco de Barros e Sousa de Mesquita de Macedo Leitão e Carvalhosa, Le Vicomte de Santarém.

⁶ ‘Dans un manuscrit conservé à la bibliothèque d’Alby [...] on trouve une carte géographique, coloriée en vert, de la même époque que le reste du manuscrit, qui est in-

The map was also featured in the Santaréma Atlas, published in 1849⁷. In the same year the facsimile of the map was reproduced in the 'Catalog général des manuscrits'⁸. The note in this catalog also lists all the treaties contained in the codex of Albi and includes a remark about the map itself: 'This manuscript [...] contains 156 pages and is incomplete. The treaties it contains are of different scripts [...]. Number 10 is a very rough world map, executed at the end of the 7th or at the beginning of the 8th century. The writing is uncial'⁹. Eustachy Januszkiewicz (26 November 1805 – 27 August 1874) informed Joachim Lelewel (22 March 1786 – 29 May 1861) about the publication of the above note and the facsimile of the map, about which the historian writes directly in the first volume of 'Géographie du Moyen Âge', published in 1852¹⁰. This reproduction served J. Lelewel both to read the map's legends (cf. annotation 1) and to place a much smaller copy of it among the maps added to the *Prolégomènes* of the said first volume¹¹. In the opinion of the Polish researcher, the map of Albi 'est construite sur la description d'Ethicus'¹². J. Lelewel referred to Pseudo-Aethicus' (the 6th/7th century) writing, entitled *Cosmographia*¹³. The next researcher who worked on this map was Heinrich Wuttke (12 February 1818 – 14 June 1876) with his study dating back to 1853. At the beginning of his considerations, he stated that the rectangular shape of the map was suggested to its author by the text of Matt 24: 31: 'And he will send out his angels [...] they will gather his elect from the four winds [...]'¹⁴. Then H. Wuttke repeats the thesis that the map was created in the 8th century. However, he added a further specification to this date: 'Merwingerzeit' [sic!] – 'the period of Merovingian rule'¹⁵. H. Wuttke also put forward the

folio carré, sur parchemin, du VII^e au VIII^e siècle'. M.F. le Vicomte de Santarém, *Essai*, vol. 2, pp. 24–25.

⁷ M.F. le Vicomte de Santarém, *Atlas composé de mappemondes, de portolans et de cartes hydrographiques et historiques depuis le VI^e jusqu'au XVII^e siècle*, Paris 1849, board 4.

⁸ *Catalog général des manuscrits des bibliothèques publiques des départements*, vol. 1, Paris 1849, a reproduction of the map can be found on pp. 486 and 487.

⁹ 'Ce manuscrit [...] contient 156 pages et est incomplet. Les traités qu'il renferme sont de différentes écritures [...]. Le n^o 10 est une mappemonde très grossière, exécutée à la fin du septième ou au commencement du huitième siècle. L'écriture est onciale'. *Ibidem*, p. 487.

¹⁰ J. Lelewel, *Géographie du Moyen Âge*, vol. 1, p. LXXVIII.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, after p. CXXXVI, board 4. dated 5 January 1852. J. Lelewel did not have any copy of the map of Albi when working on his atlas, cf. J. Lelewel, *Géographie du Moyen Âge*. *Atlas*, Bruxelles 1849.

¹² J. Lelewel, *Géographie du Moyen Âge*, vol. 1, p. LXXVIII.

¹³ This treatise was published by Alexander Riese (2 June 1840 – 8 October 1924), cf. *Geographi Latini Minores*, coll. A. Riese, Heilbronn 1878 (reprint: Hildesheim 1964), pp. 71–103.

¹⁴ The Bible translation source: *Biblia Tysiąclecia*, 2nd edition, Poznań–Warszawa 1971.

¹⁵ H. Wuttke, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

hypothesis that the author of the map of Albi had briefly seen the map of Cosmas Indicopleustes (the 6th century), and then tried (quite ineptly) to repeat the same scheme by drawing his own map¹⁶. As a consequence, the German researcher formally linked the map of Albi with the Byzantine cartographic tradition, suggesting that it is its distant (and somewhat distorted) echo. In his opinion, the map's legends were supposed to come from Julius Honorius' *Cosmographia* (the 4th/5th century)¹⁷, and therefore from the writing with the same title as Pseudo-Aethicus' treatise¹⁸. A dozen or so years later, in 1871, to be precise, the German researcher again took up the subject of the map of Albi. He then repeated his earlier opinion about the relationship between the shape of the map and the above-mentioned verse from the Gospel of St Matthew (24:31). He also recalled the map's dating and its potential formal relationship with the Kosmas map. A novelty of sorts was the supposition that the place where the map, inspired by the Cosmas' model of the ecumene, was created may have been Ravenna, 'because there they got acquainted with Greek scripts for a long time'¹⁹. Thus, the German author makes an allusion to the Byzantine exarchate of Ravenna, which was established in 584 and existed until 751, when the city was conquered by the Lombards. He also criticised J. Lelewel's opinion that the work of Pseudo-Aethicus was the source of the legends about the said map²⁰. The Italian geographer Giovanni Marinelli (28 February 1846 – 2 May 1900) returned to the issues related to this map in 1882²¹. His dissertation was translated into German in 1884, which greatly expanded the scope of its scientific influence. G. Marinelli took over from H. Wuttke the thesis about the formal similarity of the of Albi to the Cosmas' model of the world²². On the other hand, his term 'Merwingerzeit' had undergone a certain significant transformation, becoming a kind of the second name of the map of Albi: 1. 'the 8th century Merovingian map of the Alby library'²³; 2. 'the so-called Meroving map

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*. The text of the treatise can be found in: *Geographi Latini Minores*, pp. 21–55.

¹⁸ On the work of Julius Honorius and Pseudo-Aethicus, see: J. Strzelczyk, *op. cit.*, pp. 82–83.

¹⁹ 'weil sich dort noch lange einige Bekanntschaft mit griechischen Schriften erhielt'. H. Wuttke, *Die Karten der seefahrenden Völker Südeuropas bis zum ersten Druck der Erdbeschreibung des Ptolemäus. Zur Geschichte der Erdkunde im letzten Drittel des Mittelalters*, Dresden, 1871, p. 7.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 7, annotation 1.

²¹ G. Marinelli, *La geografia e i Padri della Chiesa*, 'Bolletino della Società Geografica Italiana' 1882, 16, 5–7, pp. 472–498, 532–573.

²² G. Marinelli, *Die Erdkunde bei den Kirchenvätern*, transl. L. Neumann, Leipzig 1884, pp. 67–68.

²³ 'die merovingische Karte der Bibliothek von Alby aus dem 8. Jahrhundert'. *Ibidem*, p. 11.

from Alby²⁴. G. Marinelli also strongly argued with J. Lelewel's thesis about the relationship between the map of Albi with Pseudo-Aethicus' treatise²⁵. In his opinion, the map 'actually belongs to the first book of the Histories of Orosius'²⁶. This study also includes its reproduction²⁷. The next serious analysis of the map was presented by Konrad Miller (21 November 1844 – 25 July 1933) in 1895. He took over the term 'Merowingerkarte' from the German translation of G. Marinelli's dissertation²⁸. He also emphasized, as had already been done by G. Libri (1842) and the authors of the 'Catalog général des manuscrits (1849)', that 'the map is written entirely in little uncials'²⁹. He quoted H. Wuttke's thesis about the formal similarity of the map of Albi to the Comas' model of ecumene³⁰ and, like his compatriot and G. Marinelli, rejected J. Lelewel's supposition that the map had been drawn on the basis of the description contained in Pseudo-Aethicus' treatise³¹. K. Miller also seems to lean towards the thesis of the just cited Italian researcher about the relationship between the map of Albi and the first book of Orosius' work (c. 385 – c. 420)³². Finally, he, too, incorporated a reduced redrawing of the map into his analysis³³. The thesis about the factual dependence of the map on the text of Orosius was then taken over by Théophile Simar (5 February 1883 – 7 July 1930)³⁴ and Richard Uhden (1 April 1900 – 1 August 1939)³⁵, followed by the authors of syntheses crucial for the contemporary history of cartography: Marcel Destombes (27 July 1905 – 26 November 1983)³⁶ and David Woodward (29 August 1942 – 25 August 2004)³⁷. Following from the authority of these researchers, this opinion was propagated by Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, who would frequently recall it in

²⁴ 'die sogenannte Merowingerkarte von Alby'. *Ibidem*, pp. 66–67.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 67 and annotation 17. Cf. also *ibidem*, p. 11, annotation 27.

²⁶ 'in Wirklichkeit zum ersten Buch der Historien des Orosius gehört'. *Ibidem*, p. 67.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 68, fig. 8.

²⁸ K. Miller, *Mappaemundi*, p. 57.

²⁹ 'die Karte ist ganz in kleinen Uncialen geschrieben'. *Ibidem*.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 59 and annotation 1.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 58, fig. 12.

³⁴ Th. Simar, *La Géographie de l'Afrique centrale dans l'antiquité et moyen age*, 'Révue Congolaise' 1912–1913, 3, pp. 160–161.

³⁵ R. Uhden, *Zur Herkunft und Systematik der mittelalterlichen Weltkarten*, 'Geographische Zeitschrift' 1931, 37, p. 334.

³⁶ D. Woodward, *Medieval Mappaemundi*, in: *The History of Cartography*, vol. 1, *Cartography in Prehistoric, Ancient, and Medieval Europe and the Mediterranean*, eds. J.B. Harley, D. Woodward, Chicago–London 1987, p. 347.

³⁷ M. Destombes, *op. cit.*; see: J. Strzelczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

many of her works³⁸. The view of the German researcher, who took it over without proof as an *argumentum ex auctoritate*, is sometimes heavily criticized³⁹, which, however, does not prevent other adepts of the history of cartography from continuing to refer to it⁴⁰. It is also worth mentioning that H. Wuttke's thesis concerning the dependence of the map of Albi on the Cosmas Indicopleustes' map has never been rejected. Among others, such highly-regarded researchers as Th. Simar⁴¹, M. Destombes⁴², and Hermenegildo García Aráez⁴³ used to refer back to it. However, the aforementioned cartographic historians did not write directly about the relationship between the two images of the ecumene, but rather cautiously formulated the hypothesis about the Byzantine influences discernible in the map's graphical design. On the other hand, a more unequivocal stance on this issue, which is a kind of return to the 'pure' thought of H. Wuttke, seems to have been taken by Maja Kominko in 2005⁴⁴.

³⁸ Cf. A.D. von den Brincken, *Mappa mundi und Chronographia. Studien zur imago mundi des abendländischen Mittelalters*, 'Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters' 1968, 24, pp. 139–140; eadem, *Die Ausbildung konventioneller Zeichen und Farbgebungen in der Universalkartographie des Mittelalters*, 'Archiv für Diplomatik. Schriftgeschichte, Siegel- und Wappenkunde' 1970, 16, p. 340; eadem, «...ut describeretur universus orbis». Zur Universalkartographie des Mittelalters, in: *Methoden in Wissenschaft und Kunst des Mittelalters*, ed. A. Zimmermann, 'Miscellanea Mediaevalia' 1970, 7, p. 265; eadem, *Weltbild der lateinischen Universalhistoriker und -kartographen*, in: *Popoli e paesi nella cultura altomedievale, Spoleto, 23–29 April 1981*, 'Settimane di Studi del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo' 1983, 29, 1, p. 390; eadem, *Fines*, pp. 32, 195; eadem, *Roma nella cartografia medievale (secoli IX–XIII)*, in: *Roma antica nel Medioevo. Mito, rappresentazioni, sopravvivenza nella 'Respublica Christiana' dei secoli IX–XIII, Atti della Quattordicesima Settimana Internazionale di Studio, Mendola, 24–28 agosto 1998, Milano 2001*, p. 212; eadem, *Herausragende*, p. 27; eadem, *Jerusalem on Medieval Mappaemundi: A Site Both Historical and Eschatological*, in: *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and Their Context*, ed. P.D.A. Harvey, London 2006, p. 359; eadem, *Beobachtungen zum geographischen Berichtshorizont der lateinischen Weltchronistik*, in: *Iulius Africanus und die christliche Weltchronistik*, ed. M. Wallraff, 'Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur' 2006, 157, p. 166; eadem, *Studien*, pp. 37, 99, 128, 250, 595, 651, 688, 710.

³⁹ This opinion was recently repeated by, among others, S. Pinet, *The Task of the Cleric. Cartography, Translation, and Economics in Thirteenth-Century Iberia*, Toronto 2016, p. 148, annotation 26.

⁴⁰ M. Hoogvliet, *Pictura et scriptura. Textes, images et herméneutique des mappae mundi (XIII^e–XVI^e siècle)*, 'Terrarum Orbis' 2007, 7, p. 134, annotation 85.

⁴¹ Th. Simar, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁴² M. Destombes, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴³ H. García Aráez, *Los mapamundis de los Beatos. Origen y características principales*, 'Miscelánea Medieval Murciana' 1993–1994, 18, p. 56.

⁴⁴ M. Kominko, *The Map of Cosmas, the Albi Map and the Tradition of Ancient Geography*, 'Mediterranean Historical Review' 2005, 20, pp. 163–185. Unfortunately, I was unable to retrieve the latter article.

This quite detailed presentation of a specific *Urgeschichte* of the research on the Albi map shows that in fact these original findings have largely retained their relevance to this day. This applies both to determining the time of its creation and to its alleged dependence on geographical and cartographic sources from late antiquity. The terms 'Merwingerzeit' and 'Merovingerkarte' (or 'Merowingerkarte') have not become obsolete either, as in fact both of these terms can be translated descriptively as 'a map from the Merovingian period'. The 'godfather' of this term is, as mentioned above, H. Wuttke, and its promoters are G. Marinelli and K. Miller. Despite some criticism from P. Gautier Dalché, it has been used until today⁴⁵. This eminent French historian of cartography based his reservations on a codicological argument⁴⁶. However, this criticism did not result in the rejection of the second name of the Albi map by the scientific community.

It is also worth focusing a bit longer on the legends of the map discussed here. Above all, the names on it have been cited, according to a critical edition from 1965 by François Glorie. There is a total of 49 of these legends. Meanwhile, most scientific studies assume that the Albi map contains 50 geographical names. There are also as many legends in the lists by J. Lelewel (1852), K. Miller (1895), and Leonid S. Chekin (2006) – cf. f.n. 1. This difference is due to the fact that F. Glorie did not include Ravenna in his list of toponyms. Doubts in this regard were raised by the Portuguese researcher M.F. le Vicomte de Santarém in 1850, when, having analyzed the original map, he commented: 'In the central part [of Italy] we read the word Roma, and further on Ruaria? (Maybe Rhetia)'⁴⁷. Meanwhile, J. Lelewel, who was using a copy, without hesitation assumed the reading of *Ravenna*. H. Wuttke acknowledged Santarém's dilemmas. However, although he noted that the Portuguese had seen the original version of the map, he had no doubts himself that this sequence of letters should be

⁴⁵ Cf. R. Uhden, *op. cit.*, pp. 334, 338; L. Bagrow, R.A. Skelton, *op. cit.*, p. 54; J. Strzelczyk, *op. cit.*, p. 208; J.G. Arentzen, *op. cit.*, p. 48; D. Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 360; R. Galichian, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁴⁶ P. Gautier Dalché, *De la glose à la contemplation. Place et fonction de la carte dans les manuscrits du haut Moyen Âge*, in: *Testo e imagine nell'Alto Medioevo, 15–21 April 1993*, vol. 2, 'Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo' 1995, 41, 2, p. 758, annotation 166: 'On ne sait d'ailleurs pourquoi les historiens de la géographie continuent de l'appeler «carte mérovingienne»: l'écriture est une minuscule visigothique (non mérovingienne) ['We do not know why geography historians continue to call it a «Merovingian map»: the writing is a minuscule Visigothic (not Merovingian)']. Cf. S. Pinet, *op. cit.*, p. 148, annotation 26.

⁴⁷ 'On lit dans la partie centrale [de l'Italie] le mot *Roma*, et plus loin *Ruaria*? (Peut-être *Rhetia*). M.F. le Vicomte de Santarém, *Essai*, vol. 2, 28.

interpreted as *Ravenna*⁴⁸. In 1871 he even recognized, as noted above, that it was Ravenna, mentioned among the map's legends, that could be the place of its origin, as Emilie Savage-Smith recently repeated⁴⁹. The stance of H. Wuttke was welcomed by K. Miller⁵⁰. Then it was confirmed and somewhat fixed by the authority of Leo Bagrow (5 July 1881 – 9 August 1957) and Raleigh A. Skelton (21 December 1906 – 7 December 1970)⁵¹. However, after 1965, many researchers believed that the *Ravenna* toponym appears on the original map of Albi. These are, among others: A.-D. von den Brincken⁵², L.S. Chekin⁵³, and Ruben Galichian⁵⁴. Meanwhile, both Santarém and F. Glorie, who analyzed the original map of Albi, concluded that the word *Ravenna* could not be read out of the letters there. In the current state of affairs, there have been two sets of legends of this map in the scientific circulation: one containing 50 of them, the other 49. However, the dominant view today is that the *Merovingerkarte* has 50 names, including *Ravenna*.

H. Wuttke's thesis, according to which the Albi map is to be an ineptly prepared copy of the Cosmas' model of the world, was undoubtedly formulated too radically. In fact, the next generations of cartographic historians tried to tone it down, as mentioned above. However, this opinion, in all its radicalism, provides an apt reflection of a fundamental problem with the said map. The point is that the map (although it is not the only such case) in a way does not fit the graphical patterns of medieval Latin maps known today. The map of Albi, as has been emphasized by the authors of map classification systems for a long time⁵⁵ (and by many contemporary researchers, including the

⁴⁸ H. Wuttke, *Ueber*, p. 27, annotation 1. In the said annotation the German historian pointed out a few other actually erroneous readings of the Albi map legends to the Portuguese.

⁴⁹ E. Savage-Smith, *Cartography*, in: *A Companion to Mediterranean History*, eds. P. Horden, S. Kinoshita, New York 2014, p. 185.

⁵⁰ K. Miller, *Mappaemundi*, p. 58.

⁵¹ L. Bagrow, R.A. Skelton, *op. cit.*, p. 52. The first edition of this work was published in 1963.

⁵² A.D. von den Brincken, *Fines*, p. 33.

⁵³ L.S. Chekin, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁵⁴ R. Galichian, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁵⁵ Cf. M.C. Andrews, *The Study and Classification of Medieval Mappae Mundi*, 'Archaeology' 1926, 75, p. 70; R. Uhdén, *op. cit.*, pp. 334, 338; M. Destombes, *op. cit.*, pp. 17 and 23; D. Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 347; E. Edson, *Maps in Context: Isidore, Orosius, and the Medieval Image of the World*, in: *Cartography in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Fresh Perspectives, New Methodes*, eds. R.J.A. Talbert, R.W. Unger, *Technology and Change in History*, vol. 10, Leiden–Boston 2008, p. 230. On the history of map classification systems, see: M. Destombes, *op. cit.*, pp. 8–16; D. Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 295, tab. 18.1; E. Edson, *Maps*, pp. 219–221; A. Krawiec,

above-mentioned A.-D. von den Brincken⁵⁶ and Jörg-Geerd Arentzen⁵⁷, Pascal Arnaud⁵⁸ and Marjo T. Nurminen⁵⁹, who followed in their footsteps), although it is a map of the ecumene and not of the world, it does not have the characteristics of medieval T–O maps. This is because it does not include the Don (ancient *Tanais*), the river which ancient and medieval geographers considered to be the border between Europe and Asia and which, as we know, played a key role (next to the Nile and the Mediterranean) in the cartographic T–O model. It should also be emphasized that the very shape of the Albi map differs from the T–O model (cf. annotation 66).

The map's draftsman was also very sparing in the use of colors. Land has the natural color of the parchment sheet on which the map was drawn. The color of the seas and rivers raises some controversy among researchers. According to Santarém, they are coloured green (cf. annotation 6). This color is confirmed by the above-mentioned (cf. annotation 2) color reproductions of the map of Albi. Whereas in 1970 A.-D. von den Brincken stated that seas (including the Red Sea) and rivers are blue (blau)⁶⁰. The fact is that the green on parchment used by the draftsman lost its original intense color with time and became rather greenish-blue. This is what may have confused Professor Brincken, especially if she obtained her knowledge of the map's colors second-hand, that is, from reproductions. However, this controversy does not change the fact that the map in question was made of two colors: the natural color of the parchment and green. Thanks to this, the draftsman got a strong contrast between the outline of the lands and seas, and in particular between the contour of the Mediterranean Sea and the surrounding parts of the ecumene. In this way, the viewer was given a chance to notice a graphical cryptogram, i.e. a caricature of the left profile of a human head (fig. 3), which draftsman gave to this basin. In such a situation, one should look at the map of Albi from a different angle than it has been so far attempted. There are many premises that the diagram of the Mediterranean Sea shown on it is the key to a deeper understanding of it, or to reaching its hidden meaning.

Ciekawość świata w średniowiecznej Polsce. Studium z dziejów geografii kreacyjnej, Poznań 2010, pp. 64–68.

⁵⁶ A.D. von den Brincken, «...ut describeretur universus orbis», pp. 265–266; eadem, *Studien*, p. 99; *Fines*, p. 33. This suggestion can also be found in L. Bagrow, R.A. Skelton, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁵⁷ J.G. Arentzen, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁵⁸ P. Arnaud, *Plurima orbis imago. Lectures conventionnelles des cartes au Moyen Âge*, 'Médiévales' 1990, 18, p. 37.

⁵⁹ M.T. Nurminen, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁶⁰ Cf. A.D. von den Brincken, *Die Ausbildung*, a table between p. 336 and p. 337; eadem, *Studien*, p. 124.

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This left profile of the human head has a very prominent nose and mouth wide open. The nose is the Black Sea (*Pontum*), and the open mouth forms the Apennine Peninsula (*Italia, Roma*). The outline of the mouth is marked by the large upper lip which is the Adriatic Sea (*Adrias*). The eyes are Crete and Cyprus (*Creta, Cypra*), while the large left ear includes two legends: *Iudea* and *Iherusalem*. This diagram clearly shows that the face of the head in question is facing Europe and its ear is facing Asia. The Mediterranean Sea depicted in this way, if it is to be considered a deliberate caricature, forces one to decode this graphical cryptogram. Since the head is the main seat of the human senses, it seems fitting to attempt to analyze the schema from this perspective. Let the mouth formed by Italy with Rome be the starting point. It is, therefore, a place that speaks to the rest of Europe. But this speech floats from caricatured lips. The sense of smell, then, is 'the Black Sea nose', cutting deep into the northern parts of the ecumene. You could say that while Europe is spoken to from Rome, the areas north of the Black Sea are examined 'by smell'. However, just like the mouth, the nose also constitutes a caricature. The sense of hearing is needed in the Palestine. The 'Palestinian Ear', with Jerusalem at its center, is listening attentively. The Middle East areas are therefore examined 'by ear'. This suggests that, according to the author of the map, this is where the most important messages come from, those that should be listened to very carefully in order to be learned of and understood properly. The eyes are Crete and Cyprus. They are facing Europe. It should be emphasized that three of the four senses, i.e. smell, hearing, and sight, are located in the eastern part of the Mediterranean. Only the mouth, the vocal organ and the place where both the sense of taste and food intake are located, are found in the western part of this basin. As a consequence, on the 'sensual' east-west axis the East has a clear advantage. The West has only 'Roman lips' which seem to correspond to 'the ear of Jerusalem'. This may be the link between the news from the Middle East and the line of political directives coming from Rome. It would, therefore, be a kind of an allusion to the then geopolitical situation of the Mediterranean world and the stance of Western Christianity, or more precisely the Roman decision-making center, towards the expansion of Islam. The 'geography of the senses' interpreted in this way seems to indicate that the author of the cartographic caricature in question tried to expose the weakness of Rome, which, in the face of various signals of the gravity of the situation, limited itself only to... talking, eating, and drinking.

The above 'geography of the senses' is in a way a contradiction of the vignette of Rome on *Tabula Peutingeriana*⁶¹, the graphical design of which

⁶¹ *Tabula Peutingeriana*. Original Source: Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 324 (original size: 6750 x 340 mm; date of creation: 4th century/Copy

seem to suggest that all roads of the empire lead to the metropolis on the Tiber⁶². Thus the latter map underscores Italocentrism, prominent for centuries in Roman imperial propaganda, and the importance of the Eternal City itself. These praises of Italy, well known from ancient literature, were based mainly on the idea of soil fertility and good climatic conditions, and on the thesis about the central location of the Apennine Peninsula in the Mediterranean basin, i.e. more generally on the idea of the beauty of this region of Europe, in the broad sense of the term⁶³. Meanwhile, the Albi map clearly marginalizes and disparages Italy. Its author, therefore, rejected the graphical *laus Italiae* in favor of a satirical and realistic depiction of the place and role of the peninsula in his contemporary times. Therefore, it is worth attempting to interpret this cartographic cryptogram even further.

The starting point will be the obvious conclusion that the 'facial' shape of the Mediterranean Sea on the Albi map repels the viewer with its ugliness. For both the outline of the head and the face are disgusting. This is how the author of the map seems to perceive, what had been proudly referred to only about four centuries earlier as *Mare Nostrum*, uniting the peoples inhabiting its coasts. However, by the time when the map was created, the situation had changed completely. Hence the sea has the shape of a ghostly head. The left profile was not chosen randomly, since the left side was, according to the authority of the Bible, considered to be worse⁶⁴. The face turned towards the North is almost satanic, which corresponds with the appearance of the head as such. It is hard to resist the impression that the Albi map draftsman wanted to express his geopolitical beliefs about the situation of the Mediterranean world in which he lived very clearly. In this variant of interpretation the 'Roman

from 12th/13th century). Text of the map's legends: K. Miller, *Die Peutingerische Tafel oder Weltkarte des Castorius*, Stuttgart 1916; *Tabula Peutingeriana: Codex Vindobonensis 324*, vol. 1, *Vollständige Faksimile-Ausgabe im Originalformat*, ed. E. Weber, Graz 1976; *Tabula Peutingeriana. Die einzige Weltkarte aus der Antike*, intr. and comm. M. Rathmann, 2. Aufl., Darmstadt 2017.

⁶² Cf. P. Kochanek, *Winiety metropolii Pentarchii na mapach średniowiecznych i wczesnonowożytnych*, 'Vox Patrum' 2014, 62, p. 218, annotation 26.

⁶³ Cf. P. Kochanek, *Pesymizm schyłku Republiki Rzymskiej. Idea starzenie się świata i następstwa imperiów*, in: *Veritatem in caritate, Księga Jubileuszowa z okazji 70. urodzin Księdza Biskupa Profesora Jana Śrutwy*, eds. W. Depo et al., Lublin 2011, pp. 574–578.

⁶⁴ On the 'inferiority' of the left side to the right side cf. O. Nussbaum, *Die Bewertung von rechts und links in der römischen Liturgie*, 'Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum' 1962, 5, pp. 159, 161–162; U. Deitmaring, *Die Bedeutung von rechts und links in theologischen und literarischen Texten bis um 1200*, 'Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum und Deutsche Literatur' 1968, 98, pp. 265–292. See also: P. Kochanek, *Anatole – Dysis – Arktos – Mesembria*, 'Vox Patrum' 2008, 52, 1, p. 486, annotation 41; idem, *Schemat Krzyża i Grobu Chrystusa w kartografii średniowiecznej i wczesnonowożytniej*, in: *Święte wizerunki w przekazie Dobrej Nowiny*, ed. N. Widok, Opolska Biblioteka Teologiczna, vol. 161, Opole 2017, p. 140 and annotation 30.

lips' directing their message towards the North, that is towards the diabolical – in the Christian sense – side of the world, appear even as a mouthpiece of Satan. Such an approach raises the question of who and why could perceive Rome in such categories in the 8th or 9th century.

It is known that the map was most likely created in Spain or Septimania⁶⁵, i.e. in southern France, between Garonne and the Rhone. Those lands in the 8th century were temporarily ruled by the followers of Islam. Its author was undoubtedly a Christian, perhaps a Benedictine monk. In fact, the Albi map seems to relate to two issues. On the one hand, it presents the ecumene as such, which is (literally) a graphical frame for the head portrait mentioned above⁶⁶. On the other hand, it seems to be a graphical criticism of relations prevailing in small areas that were still in the hands of Christians at that time. Turned to the left, and geographically speaking to the North, the face looks at the traditional, as already mentioned, symbol of evil, towards the frosty land of Satan. It should also be recalled at this point that the North and its inhabitants have always been, in the opinion of the Mediterranean peoples, cruel and dull barbarians⁶⁷. Consequently, the faced turned toward the North suggests a regression of civilization, and even a return to the original state of humanity's barbarity. This belief corresponds to the biblical vision of the enemy from the North, embodied

⁶⁵ Cf. F. Glorie, *op. cit.*, p. 468; P. Arnaud, *op. cit.*, p. 37; P. Gautier Dalché, *op. cit.*, p. 758, annotation 166; I. Baumgärtner, Die Wahrnehmung Jerusalem auf mittelalterlichen Weltkarten, in: *Jerusalem im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter: Konflikte und Konfliktbewältigung – Vorstellungen und Vergegenwärtigungen*, eds. D. Bauer, K. Herbers, N. Jaspert, *Campus historische Studien*, vol. 29, Frankfurt am Main 2001, p. 279; F. Michelet, *Centrality, Marginality and Distance: Britain's Changing Location on the Map of the World*, in: *The Space of English*, eds. D. Spurr, C. Tschichold, Tübingen 2005, p. 58; L.S. Chekin, *op. cit.*, p. 93; N. Lozovsky, *The Uses of Classical History and Geography in Medieval St Gall*, in: *Mapping Medieval Geographies. Geographical Encounters in the Latin West and Beyond, 300–1600*, ed. K.D. Lilley, Cambridge 2013, p. 76, annotation 34; S. Pinet, *op. cit.*, p. 148, annotation 26.

⁶⁶ J.G. Arentzen, *op. cit.*, p. 50, believes that the outline of the ecumene on the Albi map has the shape of a horseshoe, an opinion repeated by, among others: Fabienne Michelet (idem, *op. cit.*, p. 59), Leonid S. Chekin (idem, *op. cit.*, p. 93), Paul D.A. Harvey (idem, *Medieval Maps of the Holy Land*, London 2012, p. 11) and Simon Pinet (idem, *op. cit.*, p. 148, annotation 26). Whereas A.D. von den Brincken, *Fines*, p. 33, sees an inverted U in the shape of the ecumene. This pattern is repeated by Ingrid Baumgärtner (eadem, *op. cit.*, p. 279).

⁶⁷ I have compiled the ancient and medieval sources on this subject in: P. Kochanek, *Die Vorstellung vom Norden und der Eurozentrismus. Eine Auswertung der patristischen und mittelalterlichen Literatur*, in: *Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz. Abteilung für Abendländische Religionsgeschichte* vol. 205, Mainz 2004, pp. 226–227, annotation 234; idem, *Etnomedycyna hippokratejska a geopolityczna myśl grecka w V w. p.n.e.*, in: *Kontrowersje dyskursywne. Między wiedzą specjalistyczną a praktyką społeczną*, eds. A. Jabłoński, J. Szymczyk, M. Zemła, *Studia nad Wiedzą*, vol. 4, Lublin 2012, pp. 36–38, annotations 34–35.

by Gog and his savage hordes (Ezek 38–39)⁶⁸. The betrayal of God as the cause of this state of affairs is almost an imposing punch line that the map maker probably wanted to smuggle. Therefore, on the one hand, it is a reflection on the situation of the then Christian world, which was systematically and quickly diminishing as far as its geographical range is concerned; and on the other hand, it is a way of presenting not only the scale but also the causes of the successes of the Islamic offensive: Christians have turned away from God, and the punishment for this is the expansion of the Muslim world. The author's reasoning seems to be very close to one of the basic theses of Augustine (13 November 354 – 28 August 430), the master of Orosius, expressed in his *De civitate Dei*, according to whom the victorious invasions of barbarians falling on individual nations are not the result of force these invaders possessed, but the result of the internal weakness of a given state. This, in turn, has its source in religious and moral decline. Thus, it was not the strength of Islam, but the weakness of Christian Europe that led to this situation. The blame lies with those in danger, not with the aggressor. The latter is only the punishing hand of Providence, or a kind of 'scourge of God'. The author of the map makes a kind of graphical examination of conscience and tries to persuade the viewer of his image/vision of the ecumene to such a stance. This element suggests that the map's graphical design may be an expression of the personal beliefs of an anonymous priest or learned monk – the alleged author of the map. His extremely critical views on the Roman center of the Christian remnants of the ecumene are striking. The author of the map recognized Rome as the main perpetrator of the situation, because the signals coming from the Middle East for a long time had not been understood there. Such an approach should not come as a surprise, as both the author of the Albi Map and St Augustine operated in similar historical contexts, when the barbarian onslaught was flooding the Christian world.

However, the 'Jerusalem ear' can also have another function. It can be interpreted as an indication of a way out of the situation. One just needs to listen to the words of Christ who once spread the Good News in distant Palestine. In this sense, the pair of legends *Iudea* and *Iherusalem* would oppose the terms *Italia* and *Roma*. With Palestine under the dominion of the Islam followers, this opposition was a potential call for a spiritual, evangelical renewal akin to what the Benedictine congregation of Cluny would soon propose to Europe. Could the author of the map have been

⁶⁸ On the graphical presentation of this problem in cartography, cf. P. Kochanek, *Kluczura północno-wschodniej Azji na mapach średniowiecznych i wczesnonowożytnych*, 'Vox Patrum' 2016, 65, pp. 211–344.

a clergyman who diagnosed the geopolitical situation at that time from the perspective of Christian ethical and moral ideals? The essence of this diagnosis would be to return to life in the spirit of Christ's Gospel⁶⁹.

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As an epilogue to the above analyses it should be recalled that the history of cartography can indicate many examples of anthropomorphic maps⁷⁰. The most famous are those by Opicinus de Canistris (1296 – ca. 1353)⁷¹. However, the Albi map is not considered a map with anthropomorphic features at all. It seems, however, that it has all the features of such a map, as presented in the course of the above arguments.

(translated by LINGUA LAB)

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⁶⁹ When analyzing the map in question from a completely different perspective, i.e. without paying attention to the caricature encoded in its graphical design, one can reach a completely different conclusions. Cf. E. Edson, *The Oldest World Maps: Classical Sources of Three VIIIth Century Mappaemundi, Ancient World*, 1993, 24, 2, p. 177. 'The map would have been as useful a reference work as the chronicle or the dictionary'.

⁷⁰ Cf. P. Kochanek, *Kartografia antropomorficzna a europejska ideologia hierarchii narodów*, in: *Kreowanie społeczeństwa niewiedzy*, eds. A. Jabłoński, J. Szymczyk, M. Zemła, *Studia nad Wiedzą*, vol. 7, Lublin 2015, pp. 101–159.

⁷¹ The maps by Opicinus de Canistris have survived in the Vatican Library in two codices: 1) Cod. Pal. Lat. 1993, published by Richard Salomon (22 April 1884 – 3 February 1966), cf. R. Salomon, *Opicinus de Canistris. Weltbild und Bekenntnisse eines avignonnesischen Klerikers des 14. Jahrhunderts*, 1. Bd.: *Textband*, 2. Bd.: *Tafelband*, Studies of the Warburg Institute I A-B, London 1936; 2) Cod. Vat. Lat. 6435, published by Muriel Laharie (1947–2015), cf. M. Laharie, *Le journal singulier d'Opicinus de Canistris (1337 – vers 1341): Vaticanus Latinus 6435*, vol. 1–2, *Studi e Testi*, vol. 447–448, Città del Vaticano 2008. See also: M. Laharie, *Les cartes anthropomorphes d'Opicinus de Canistris (1337)*, in: *Géographes et voyageurs au Moyen Âge*, eds. H. Bresc, I. Tixier du Mesnil, Paris 2010, pp. 67–87; K. Whittington, *Body – Worlds. Opicinus de Canistris and the Medieval Cartographic Imagination*, in: *Studies and Texts*, vol. 186, Toronto 2014; P. Kochanek, *Kartografia*, pp. 109–111.

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STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł ten ma z jednej strony przybliżyć historię badań nad mapą z Albi, z drugiej zaś pokazać, że mapa ta jest w gruncie rzeczy kryptogramem graficznym. Istotą tego kryptogramu jest schematyczny kształt Morza Śródziemnego, które przypomina kształt ludzkiej głowy. Głowa owa ma okropny, niemal diaboliczny profil, a jej twarz jest zwrócona w lewo, czyli w kierunku geograficznej Północy. Ziemie otaczające ten profil pełnią jedynie funkcję swego rodzaju ram portretu. Analiza tego karykaturalnego kryptogramu, uwzględniając czas i miejsce powstania mapy oraz kontekst geopolityczny, pozwala wysunąć hipotezę, że anonimowy autor mapy z Albi wydaje się milcząco oskarżać przywódców świata chrześcijańskiego o dopuszczenie do sytuacji, w której islam zdominował basen Morza Śródziemnego.

Słowa kluczowe: mapa z Albi, antropomorfizm, kryptogram geopolityczny, Europa, Północ, Rzym, chrześcijaństwo, islam

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