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## JOACHIM LELEWEL (1786–1861)

Joachim Lelewel – great Polish patriot, notable historian, respected numismatist – was a scholar of broad interests. Next to ancient history<sup>1</sup> his studies extended to the medieval and early modern age. Other interests included bibliography and cartography, historical geography, numismatics and the history of coinage and its circulation, from the ancient through to the modern age.<sup>2</sup> In his studies – and this was new for his times – Lelewel had a preference for an in-depth and impartial criticism of historical sources, and took interest in social issues. Not limiting himself to the written sources he drew on the results of archaeological work<sup>3</sup> and published coin finds. This occasionally brought him into conflict with other scholars who tended to focus on mere descriptions of events. According to his contemporaries Joachim Lelewel aspired to an in-depth and modern approach to history.<sup>4</sup> While Poland's past was his main concern he took interest also in the history of India, Scandinavian countries and Spain.



Fig. 1. A portrait medal of Joachim Lelewel commissioned by the Polish Archaeological and Numismatic Society, Łódź Branch, State Mint Warsaw. Design: Jerzy Jarnuszkiewicz. Bronze. Collections of the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography of Łódź (scale 75%).

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\* Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Łódź.  
@: mielmar@umk.pl

<sup>1</sup> Zawadzki 1952.

<sup>2</sup> From a very rich literature, see e.g.: Haisig 1961.

<sup>3</sup> Abramowicz 1991, pp. 13–6 & 19–30.

<sup>4</sup> Abramowicz 1968, p. 214; Więckowska 1980, p. 16.

Joachim Lelewel (Fig. 1) pursued his scholarly activities during a singular period in the history of Poland – after the loss of its independence and during a struggle by Poles to regain it. At first Lelewel was active mainly in Warsaw, then in the autonomous Kingdom of Poland, and in Vilna, incorporated into Russia – he had studied in Vilna (starting from 1804), and began his research and teaching in that city. Between 1815 and 1819 he gave lectures on general history at what was still the Polish University of Vilna, and in 1819–1821 he resided in Warsaw where he was associated with the Warsaw University Library (lecturing in history and giving a course in bibliography at the Department of Sciences and Fine Arts). In 1821 he returned to Vilna where he obtained the degree of full professor and, a year later, he took up the Chair of History of the university there. In 1824 he was removed from this post by the authorities for promoting patriotic views. After the defeat of the November Uprising in 1831 (at which time he was a member of the National Government) he emigrated to France. Forced by the French authorities to leave, he took up residence in Brussels, Belgium.<sup>5</sup>

Joachim Lelewel's interest in coins and in the history of coinage started in his family home. His father, Karol Maurycy Lelewel (1748–1830), in 1778–1794 treasurer general of the National Education Commission (institution central for the Polish education), had built up a coin collection, which he subsequently offered to the Warsaw University Library. He is credited with passing his interest in numismatics on to his sons. Joachim's younger brother, Prot (1790–1884) recalled the lessons learned from his father's collection and his guidance. He went on to write a well-informed report about archaeological discoveries made near the family estate at Wola Cygowska.<sup>6</sup>

One of the professors of the Vilna University was Ernest Groddeck (1762–1825), a graduate of the University of Göttingen. His lectures on the Greek language and literature included references to archaeology and numismatics of ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>7</sup> Their impact on young Joachim Lelewel is evident, and for many years to come he would remain in correspondence with E. Groddeck, sharing his professor's view that numismatics is a branch of philology, in a broad sense of this term.

J. Lelewel put his knowledge of numismatics to good use in the Krzemieniec Gymnasium (later, Volhynian Lyceum), established by Tadeusz Czacki (1765–1813; see A. Bursche, in this volume), where he worked from March 1809 until December 1810.<sup>8</sup> The Lyceum had among its resources some of the holdings from the coin collection of King Stanislaus Augustus (1732–1798), who had reigned in 1764–1795. During his stay in Krzemieniec,

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<sup>5</sup> See Wysokińska & Pirard 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Lelewel 1966, p. 42; Kolendo 1986, pp. 41–7.

<sup>7</sup> Oko 1936, pp. 402–4; Abramowicz 1992, pp. 6–8.

<sup>8</sup> Kolendo 1998b, p. 145.

J. Lelewel devoted himself to some duties associated with numismatic materials; he took part in unpacking and organising the royal collection. For many years to come he would be in correspondence with F. Skarbek-Rudzki, the curator of the numismatic collection in Krzemieniec.<sup>9</sup>

In 1822 Joachim Lelewel returned to Vilna. As a lecturer at its University he continued to pursue his interest in numismatics. This discipline became a fixed element of his university lectures. These enjoyed a great popularity at time, drawing an audience of nearly 400 students. In Vilna, J. Lelewel studied engraving with J. Saunders, another lecturer of the University of Vilna. He put the skills acquired at the time to good use when preparing illustrations to his later works on numismatics.

A likely turning point in the numismatic interests of Joachim Lelewel<sup>10</sup> came with the discovery in 1824 of a hoard of early medieval coins at Trzebuń (in Stara Biała commune, Płock district, Mazowieckie voivodship).<sup>11</sup> This treasure included Arabic, Sasanian, German, Czech, Moravian, English and Scandinavian coins. The study of these coins led J. Lelewel to develop an interest in Sasanian and Islamic coins. This is suggested by remarks found in his correspondence (three letters addressed to F. Skarbek-Rudzki, his acquaintance from Krzemieniec) on the subject of the hoard from Orsza (today's Vorsha, Belarus) discovered in 1822.<sup>12</sup> Upon his return to Warsaw in 1824 Lelewel engaged in ordering the numismatic collection of the Warsaw Society of Letters.<sup>13</sup>

Living in exile, Joachim Lelewel continued developing his numismatics studies (Fig. 2). Their results became especially noticeable after his departure from France, which he did ostentatiously on foot. On his way to Belgium, he met with local bibliophiles and coin collectors, and inspected some numismatic collections.<sup>14</sup> In August 1833 at Abbeville, he paid a visit to Jacques Boucher de Perthes (1788–1868), recognized as the founder of the French prehistoric archaeology. The two outstanding researchers were brought closer by their interest in numismatics, as suggested by the contents of their correspondence.<sup>15</sup> At Abbeville, J. Lelewel examined the family collection of coins amassed by Jacques and his father. He made drawings of some pieces which had attracted his interest. Some coins were offered to him and he received them with the intention of passing them on to the

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<sup>9</sup> Kolendo 1998b, pp. 143 and 146.

<sup>10</sup> See Abramowicz 1992, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> Lelewel 1826; Gorlińska *et al.* 2015, pp. 445–55, no. 181.

<sup>12</sup> Lelewel 1835, part 3, p. 83; Kolendo 1973.

<sup>13</sup> Grabski 1961; Kolendo & Męclewska 1987; Kolendo 1998a.

<sup>14</sup> Lelewel 1835, pp. ii–iv & xii.

<sup>15</sup> Abramowicz 1974, pp. 108–113; Abramowicz 1993, pp. 5–8; Abramowicz 1997.

museum in Warsaw.<sup>16</sup> In the political situation of the time sending a donation directly to Warsaw was not possible; ultimately, J. Lelewel submitted these coins to the Ghent University.<sup>17</sup> In his *Numismatique du Moyen-Age* he thanked J. Boucher de Perthes for his hospitality.<sup>18</sup>

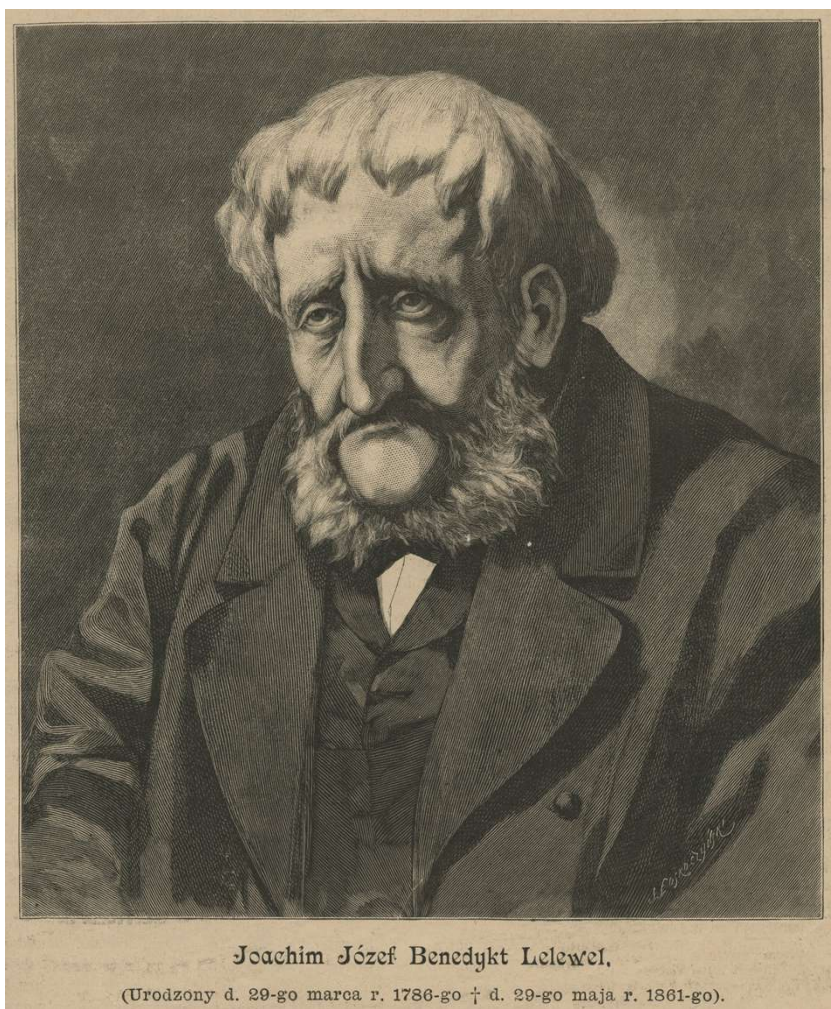


Fig. 2. Joachim Józef Benedykt Lelewel, engraving by J[ózef] Ł[oskoczyński] (1857–1928). *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*. 1886, no. 178, p. 337.

<sup>16</sup> Abramowicz 1974, p. 108 – a letter from J. Boucher de Perthes to M..., dated 1833.

<sup>17</sup> Abramowicz 1974, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Lelewel 1835, pp iii & xii.

Another significant encounter at Abbeville was with the librarian and bibliographer F.-C. Louandre.<sup>19</sup> In 1835 Joachim Lelewel published his work *Numismatique du Moyen-Age considérée sous le rapport du type; accompagnée d'un atlas composé de tables chronologiques, de cartes géographiques et de figures de monnaies gravées sur cuivre* in Belgium (Paris and Bruxelles). The reception of this book is confirmed eloquently by the list of its subscribers. Another notable contribution by J. Lelewel was an article on Polish coinage featured in *La Pologne illustrée* by L. Chodźko, published in Paris in 1843, republished, in Polish, in pamphlet form (*O monecie polskiej...*) in Poznań in 1862. Presenting the history of Polish coinage from its beginnings until the 18<sup>th</sup> century Lelewel drew on materials from Poland. This publication demonstrates the research method presented in Lelewel's *Numismatique du Moyen-Age*. One characteristic footnote in this work contains a reference to Tadeusz Wolański (1785–1865), a known collector of antiquities active in Greater Poland<sup>20</sup> and his collection of Polish coins which included specimens described by J. Lelewel as “made by some wit to fool the gullible”. A contribution which may be said to encapsulate Joachim Lelewel's studies of the Polish coinage is his work *Pieniądze Piastów*.<sup>21</sup>

In concerning himself with the Middle Ages J. Lelewel did not turn his back on earlier coinage, publishing *Etudes numismatiques et archéologiques*, premier volume, *Type gaulois, ou celtique*, Bruxelles 1841. Lelewel is rightly counted among the pioneers of Celtic numismatics.<sup>22</sup>

He died in Paris and was buried in Montmartre Cemetery. In 1929 his remains were taken to Vilna and buried in Rossa (Rasa) cemetery.

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<sup>19</sup> Abramowicz 1974, p. 17; Abramowicz 1993, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> Abramowicz 1970, pp. 64–72; Suchodolski 1997.

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