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JOACHIM LELEWEL – THE HISTORIAN THAT MASTERED COLOR

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Joachim Leleweł's set of colors (pigments) (19th century)

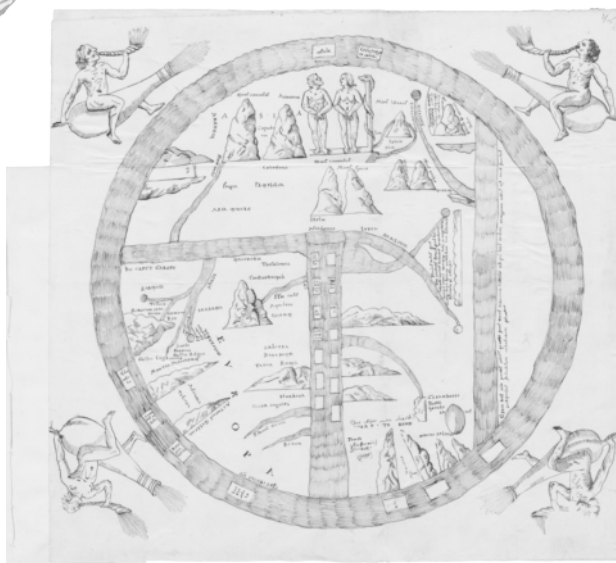
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Established back in 1570, Vilnius University Library has many unique collections in its rich stores. Among the most significant ones is a collection of old cartography, rare books and documents gathered by the historian **Joachim Lelewel** (1786–1861). The distinguished historian, bibliologist, numismatist and professor of Vilnius University bequeathed his personal collection to Vilnius University Library.

Joachim Lelewel was a scholar of a worldwide renown. His contribution to historical geography, numismatics, bibliography and other areas of science is being analysed by researchers of various countries. Joachim Lelewel delivered lectures at Vilnius University 1815 through 1818 and 1822 through 1824. He was very popular among students and his lectures were crowded with listeners. His innovative approach, criticism towards reputable works of Polish and Russian historians and his rebellion against authorities captured the attention of both students and the tsarist Russian authorities. Due to a court case of Philomaths and Philarets, he was forced to leave the university. After that he lived in Warsaw, Paris and Brussels, but Lelewel never forgot Vilnius. The greatest passion of the professor was collecting of cartography.



Map of the world. Manuscript copy by Joachim Lelewel (19th century). Original copy (12th century) is kept at Turin National University Library. From *Imagines Mundi*, a notebook with 43 manuscript maps by Lelewel. Combining together the following four fragments will make a 12th century map of the world.



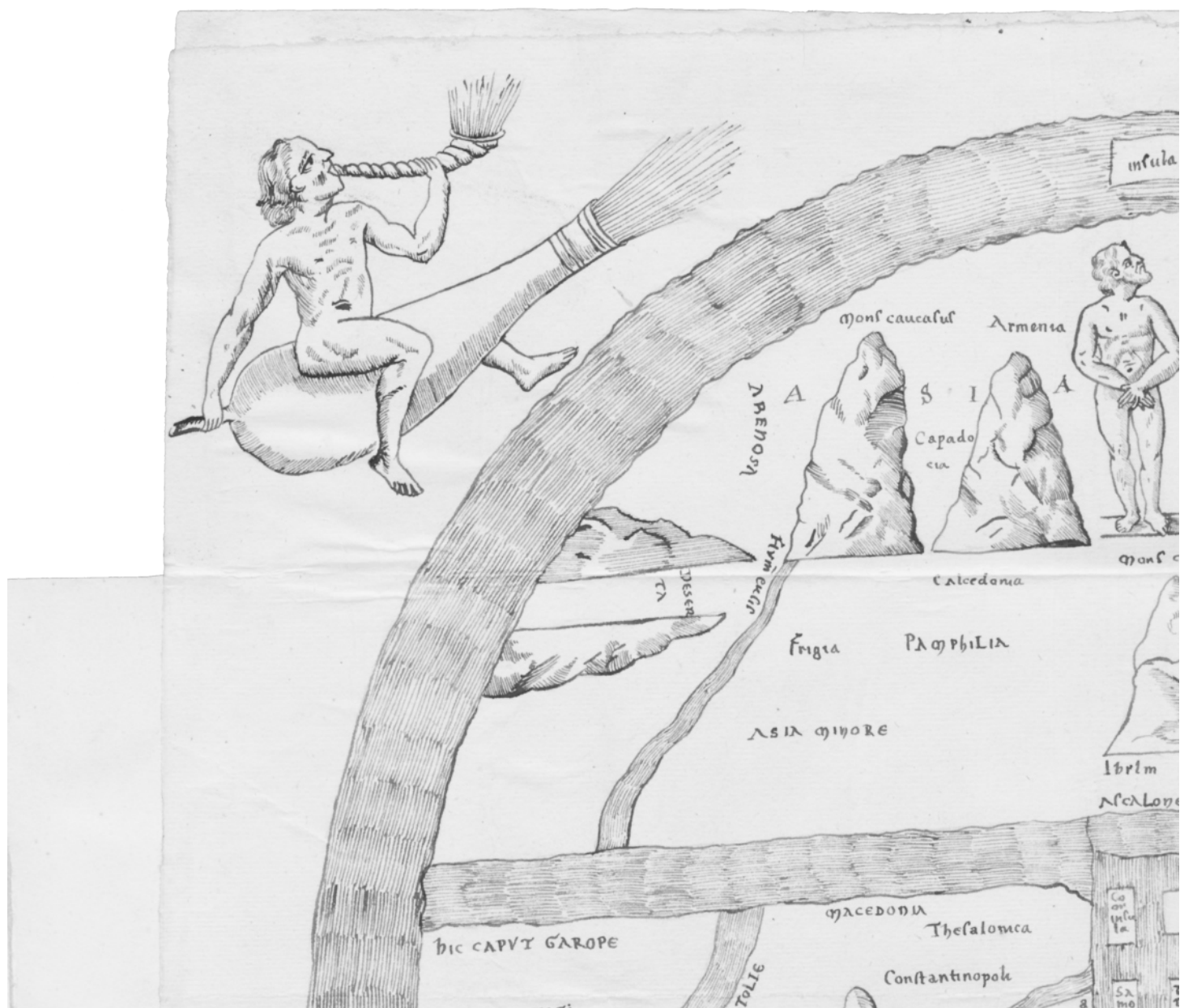
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Joachim Lelewel's personal collection of old cartography is a core element of the library's cartography collection, the richest in Lithuania and one of the most interesting in Eastern Europe. Joachim Lelewel's collection contains atlases by Ptolemy, Gerardus Mercator and Jodocus Hondius and many such masterpieces. Lelewel's collection makes up 70 per cent of the old atlases collection of Vilnius University Library.

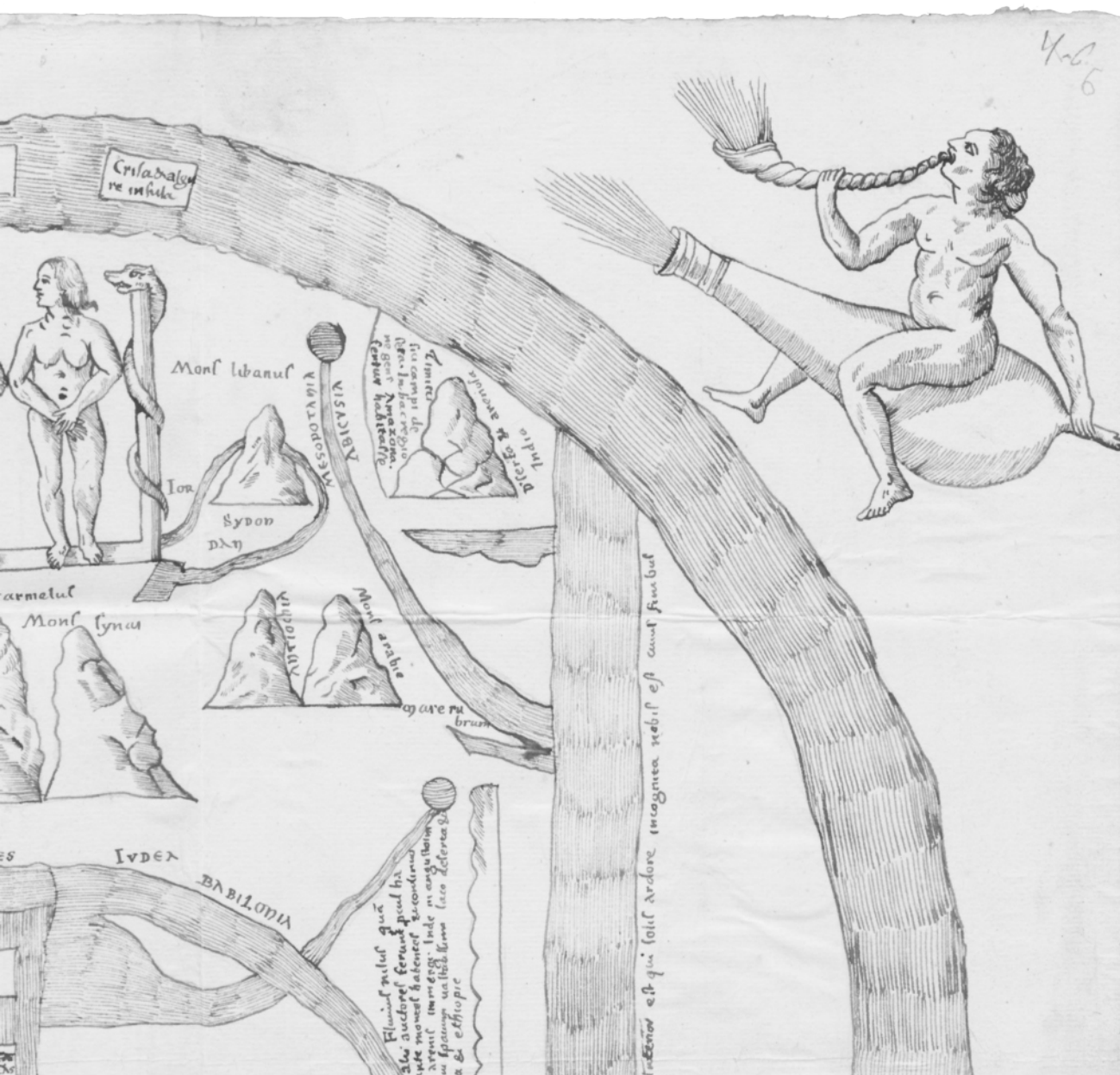
Map of the world. Manuscript copy by Joachim Lelewel (19th century). Original copy (12th century) is kept at Turin National University Library. From *Imagines Mundi*, a notebook with 43 manuscript maps by Lelewel.
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Beatus of Liébana was a Spanish monk, who in the second half of the 8th century wrote a twelve-volume work called *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. Beatus laboured on his *Commentary* in the belief that the world would end in the year 800. Though the prophecy was not fulfilled neither in the 9th, nor in the following centuries, the monk's manuscript continued to be held in high esteem and many copies of his text were produced in the medieval monastery scriptoriums. In the upper part, the round world map, which is depicted in the manuscript copies of Beatus – a so-called *mappæ mundi* – portrays the first people, Adam and Eve, in Eden. The round map shows the then-known parts of the world – Asia, Europe and Africa. In accordance with Pliny's worldview, Beatus left some space on the right side of the map for the fourth, a yet undiscovered region of the world. This early image of the world is oriented differently than it is usual today – the upper part of the map shows the East and not the North as it is customary.

Map of the world. Manuscript copy by Joachim Lelewel (19th century). Original copy (12th century) is kept at Turin National University Library. From *Imagines Mundi*, a notebook with 43 manuscript maps by Lelewel.
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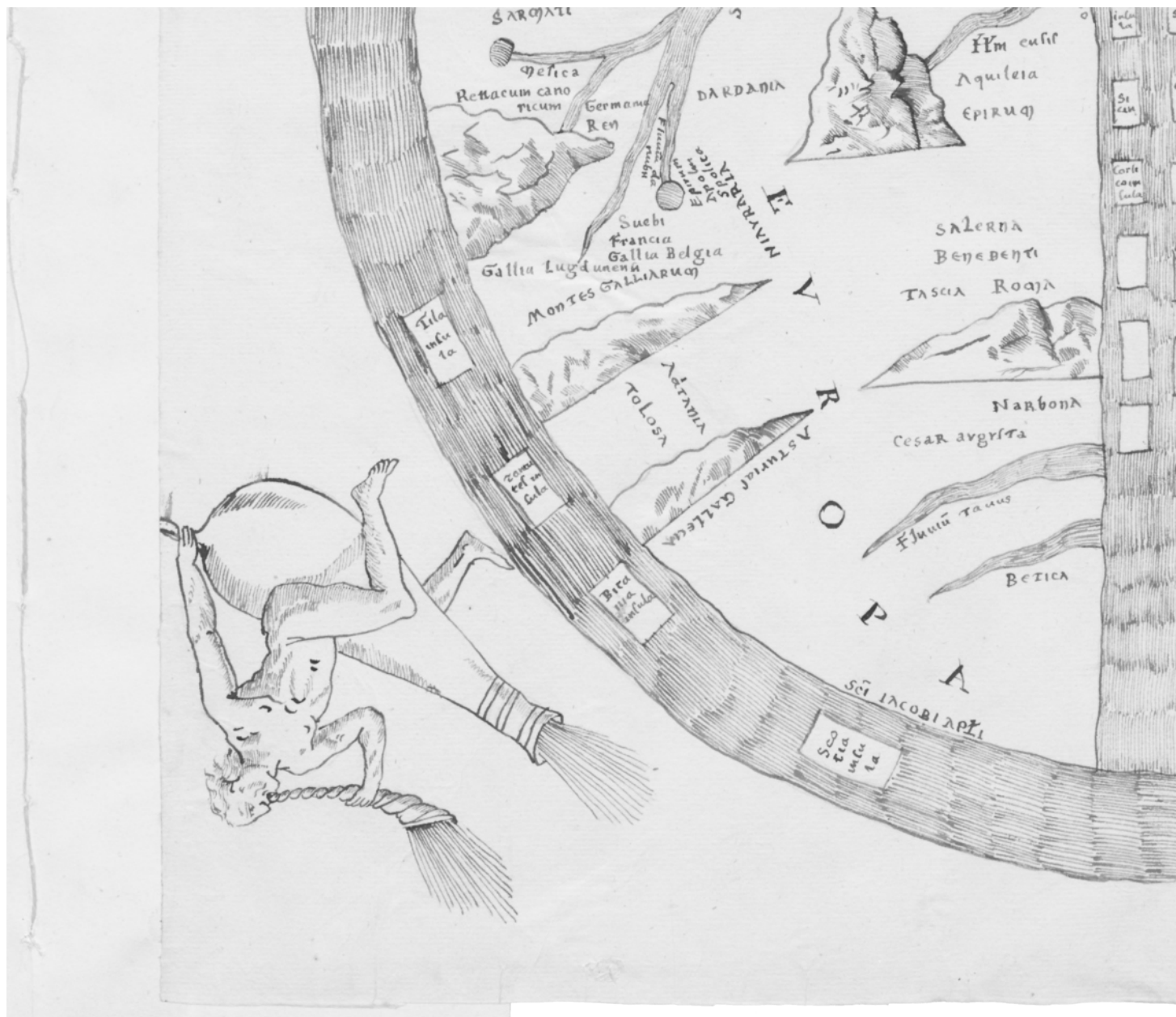
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Beatus' manuscript has not survived and only copies of it have reached the present day. One version of this so-called Beatus' map was copied by Joachim Lelewel in the 19th century. Lelewel's manuscript map – a copy of a copy – depicts a 12th century document kept at Turin National University Library.

Map of the world. Manuscript copy by Joachim Lelewel (19th century). Original copy (12th century) is kept at Turin National University Library. From *Imagines Mundi*, a notebook with 43 manuscript maps by Lelewel. 3/4



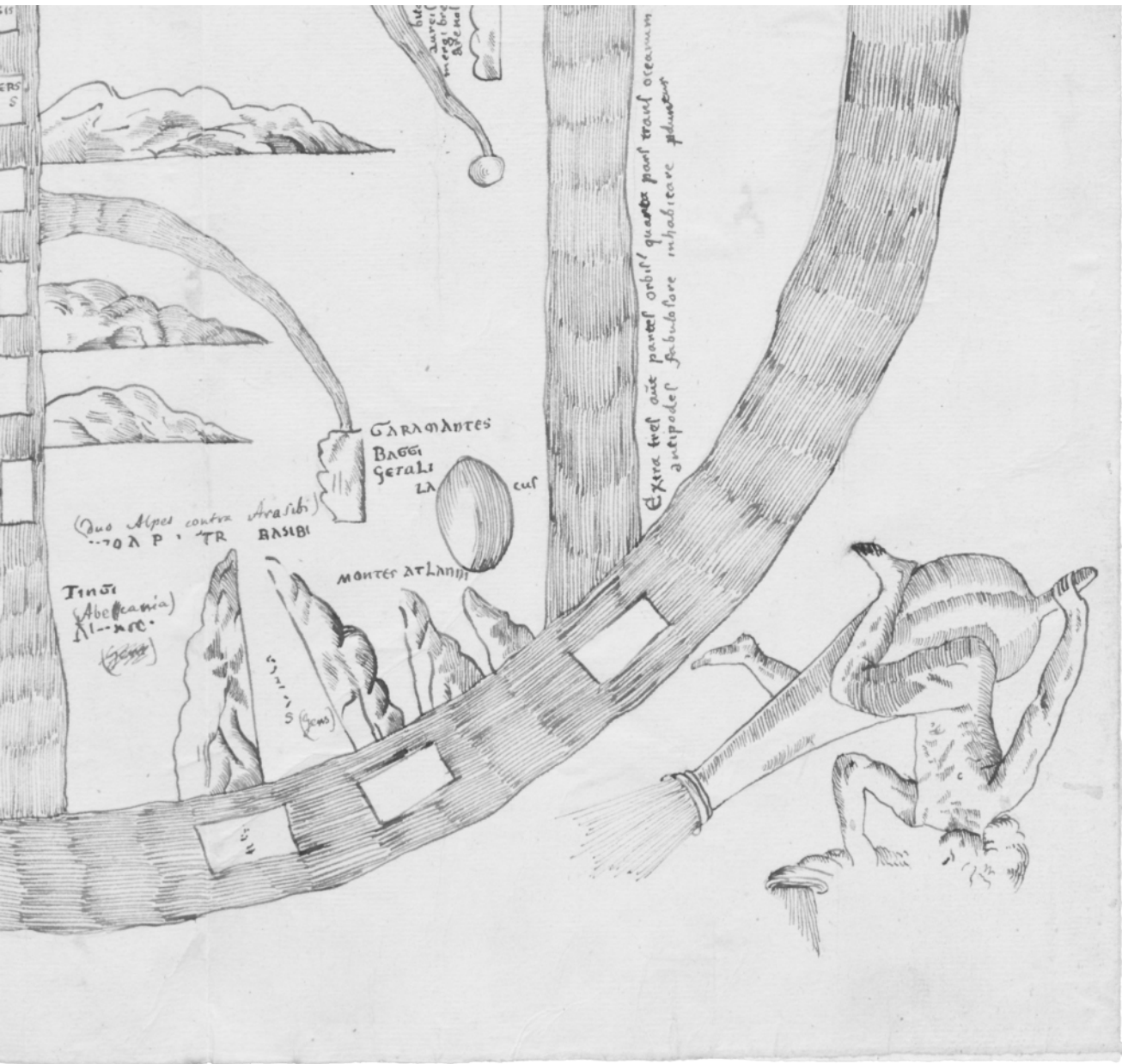
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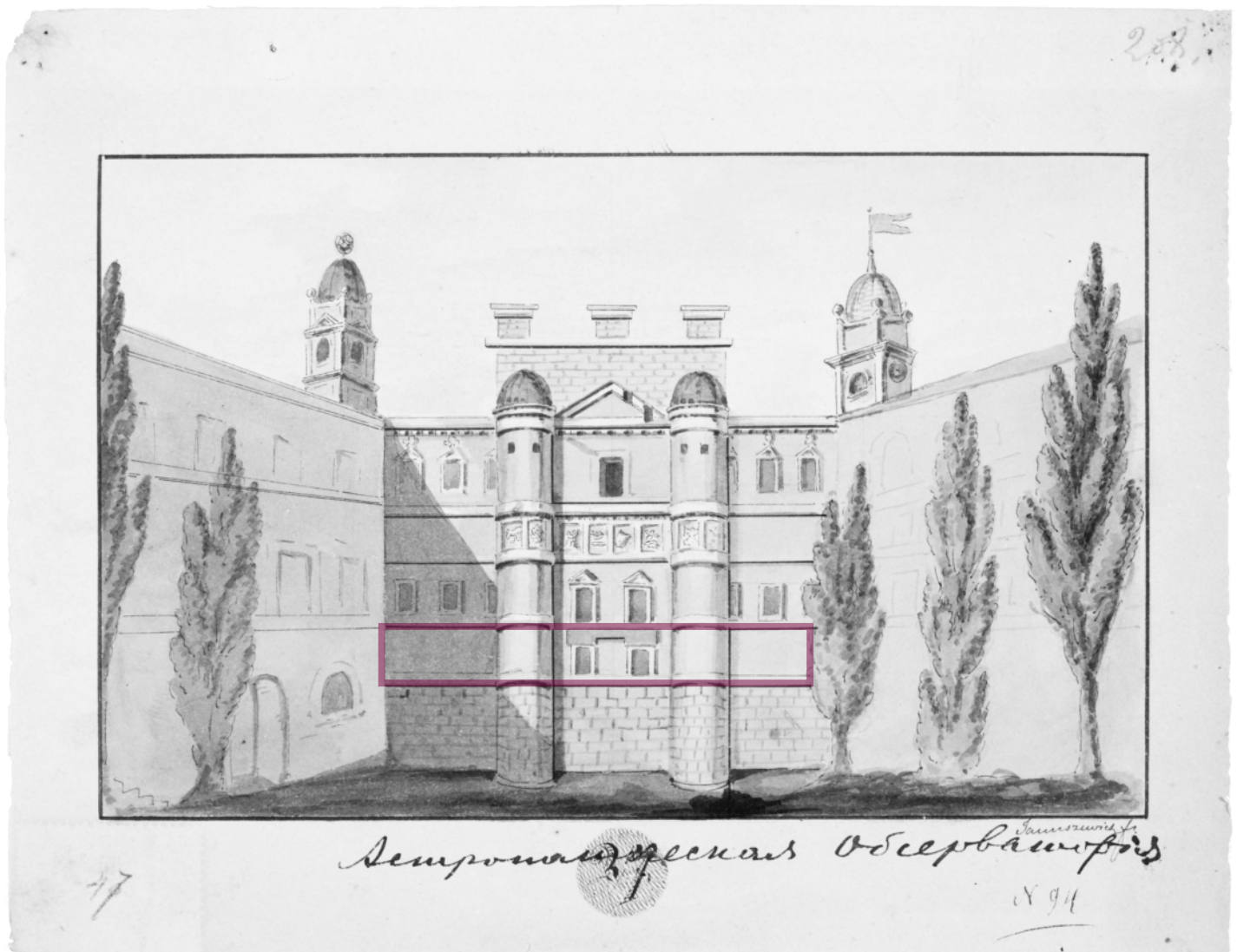
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The professor lived in the apartment which was situated in the central campus of the university. Students that wished to chat, discuss or consult with the professor would often gather there.

Old Astronomical Observatory of Vilnius University. Marcelli Januszewicz's watercolour, 1836.



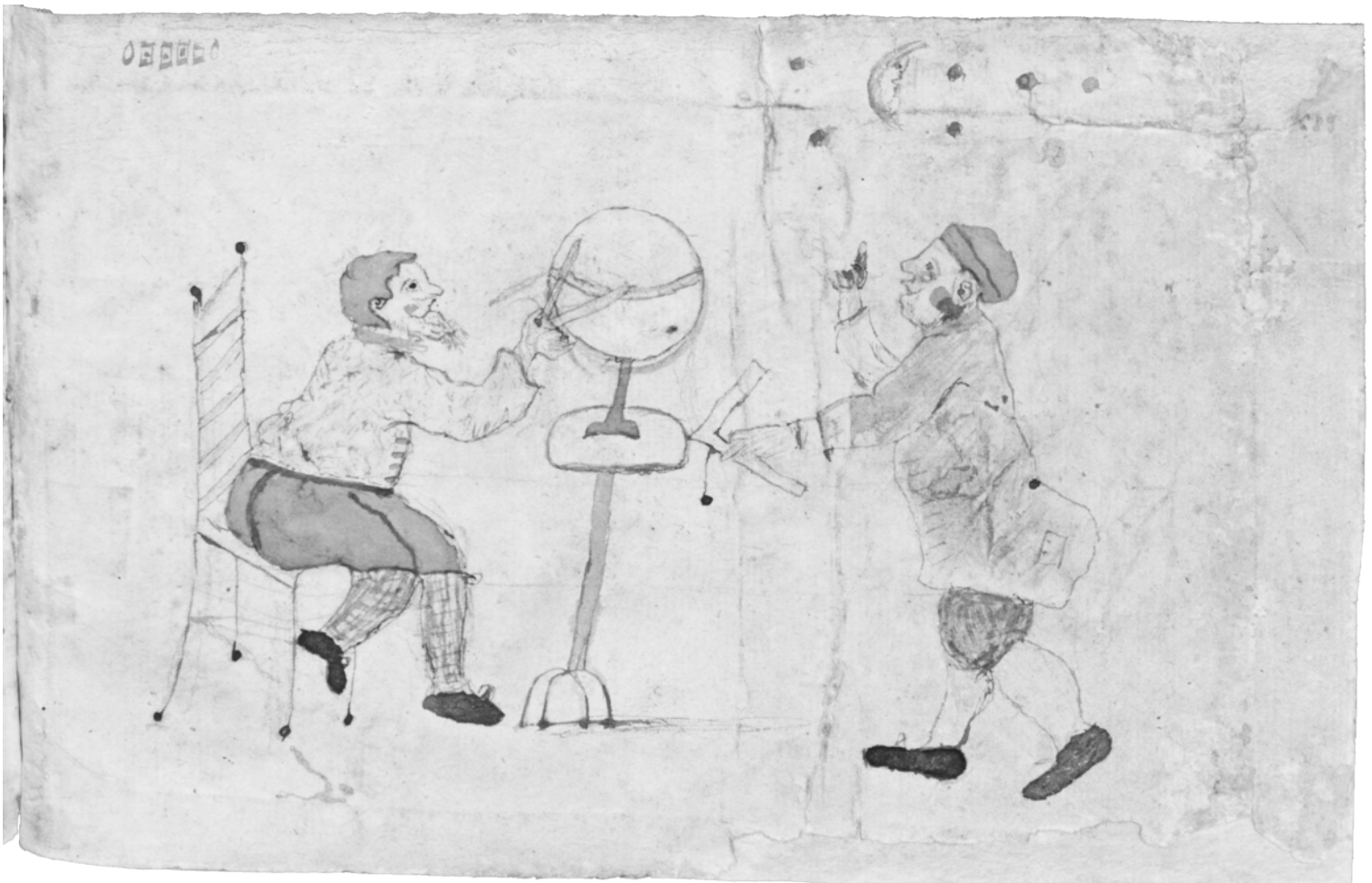
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At the end of cartography atlas owned by Joachim Lelewel is a colored drawing. It might be that these two characters were drawn by Lelewel himself.

The drawing is in Petrus Bertius' atlas *Tabularum geographicarum contractarum libri quinque*, published in Amsterdam in 1606.



When looking through the pages of the digitised atlas, you will see the drawing, as well!

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According to stories by his contemporaries, Joachim Lelewel was a very diligent and modest person who would spend all his savings on acquisition of atlases and books. He also was a gifted artist, so when it was impossible to acquire some atlases or maps, he would copy them. In its stores, VU Library keeps Lelewel's paintbrushes, colors and carbon paper used for copying. It is said that the professor would spend his money solely on books, milk and bread. Lelewel needed lots of bread as he would feed it to mice in order to protect his precious collection from destruction.

Fragment of a copper engraving
by unknown artist portraying an
allegorical scene. 18th century.
Engraving from Žibuntas Mikšys
collection



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In memory of Joachim Lelewel, one of the most spectacular halls of the university library was named after the distinguished scholar himself. While he was studying in Vilnius University, Lelewel learned how to draw here, in this exact hall. Lelewel's drawing teacher was Jan Rustem, the most prominent Vilnius artist of the second half of the 19th century and a professor of the Drawing and Painting Department at Vilnius University.

Joachim Lelewel Hall at Vilnius University Library. 2020.



Take a look at the colors of Joachim Lelewel Hall murals and a fresco from the 18th century, only recently discovered by restorers!

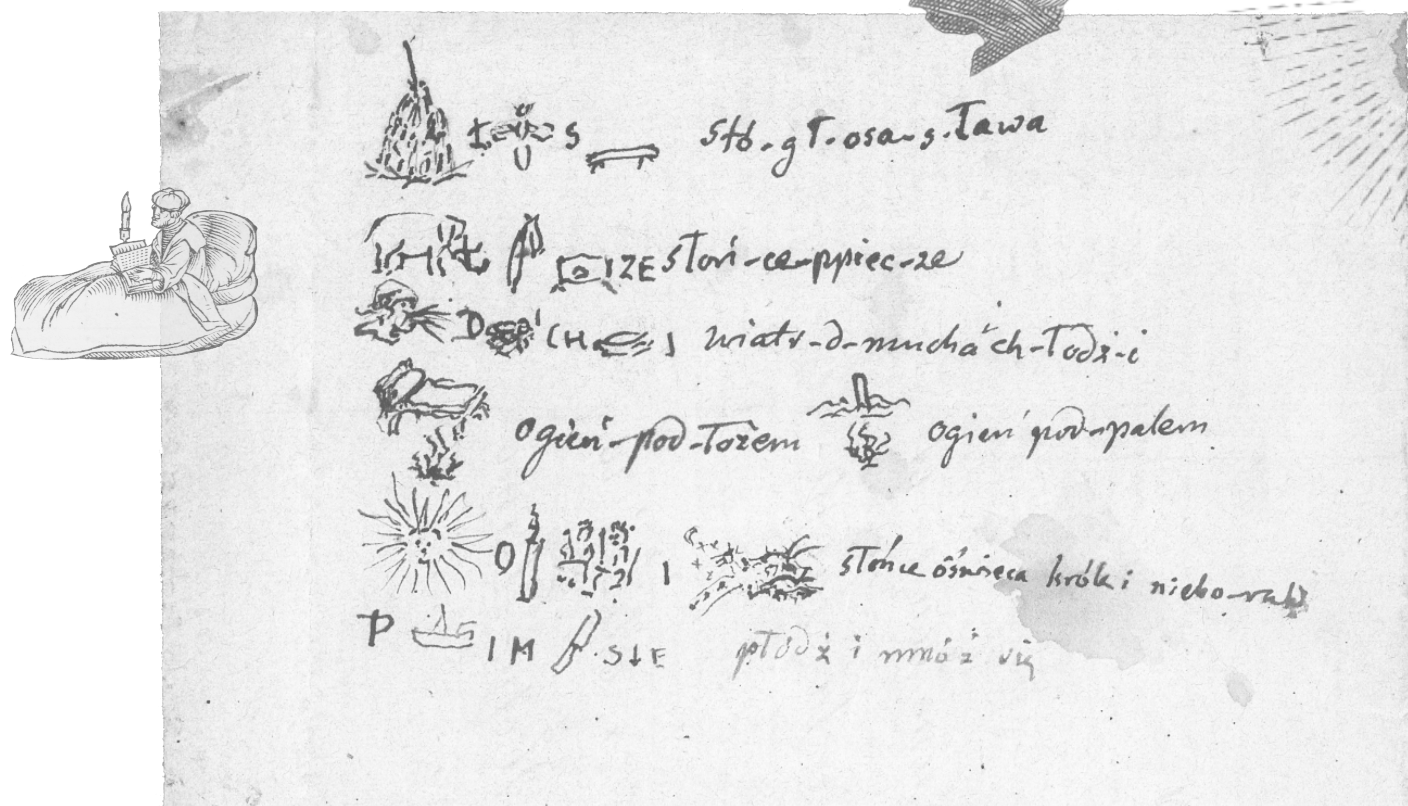
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Joachim Lelewel's archive contains a small piece of paper – a fragment of an invitation to visit Notre-Dame de Paris – bearing a charade created by the scholar (19th century) that has survived to the present day. Drawings of the charade contain a coded message in the Polish language that has not been decoded yet.

Illustrations taken from Vilnius University Library collections



We hope that you make some exciting discoveries!
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