

Cartographic complexities and geopolitical enigmas: the case of Franz von Weiss' maps

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Abstract:

In the second half of late 2000's we came across the twenty-one sheets of the map made by the Austrian military cartographer Franz von Weiss published in Vienna in 1829 under the title *Carte der Europaeischen Türkei nebst einem Theile von Kleinasien*. This map, unknown until then in Greece, piqued our interest also for the additional reason of the date of its publication: an important year in the historic period of the creation of the independent state of Greece (1830) – result of the Greek Revolution of 1821. The study of the map began immediately with a first interesting result: its geometric similarity with the relevant maps made by the French military cartographer Pierre Lapie, published in 1822 and 1826 – equally important dates for the period concerned. In the context of the research started then, it was not a difficult task to know about the second edition of the 1829 Weiss' map made by the British military cartographer Thomas Best Jervis in 1854, for the needs of the Crimean War; this re-edition of the 1829 Weiss map was already more widely known. What was not widely known was a brief mention about a previous Weiss' map – supposed to be made in 1821, in seventeen sheets – under the title *Geographische Karte des Osmanischen Reiches* as was noted by Kretschmer, et al. (1986), reported by Livieratos (2011). No other information was given on this note except that it was on the same scale as that of the 1829 Weiss map.

A search of this map revealed that its existence was largely unknown. A digital copy provided by the Austrian State Archives in 2010 unveiled some of the unknowns about this map: for example, that it is manuscript and coloured and that the date of its creation covers the period 1819-23 – not 1821, as previously published; this – 'unknown' – Weiss map was recently presented by Livieratos (2022), in the context of the 200 years (1821-2021) from the Greek Revolution, presenting relevant information and comparative enquiries regarding its relation with the later printed Weiss map of 1829, but also with the apparently similar maps by Lapie – of 1822 and 1826.

The study of the two Weiss' maps and of the two Lapies' maps – all appeared between 1820 and 1830 – especially combined with the Jervis' intriguing comment on the reprint of 1829 Weiss' map, complicated much of the possible relationship and the geopolitical contexts between the Austrian and French maps, with respect to their sources. The reasoning on those issues shows how the cartographic complexities and geopolitical enigmas stand behind the military map production in the post-Napoleonic period of European cartography, concerning – mainly – the geometric shaping but also the thematic content of the maps – the toponymy remaining an issue per se. In his 1854 reprint of 1829 Weiss map, Jervis made a strong statement with which the Weiss map was involved with the actions of the Austrian field marshal prince Schwarzenberg and with 'remarkable Russian cartographic material', involving thus Vienna with St. Petersburg in the context of cartographic material. This Jervis-'touch' in 1854 on the reprint of the 1829 Weiss map, creates a series of questions and enigmas about the cartographic involvement of Vienna with St. Petersburg in the first decades of the 19th century.

In the attempt to find relevant answers to the cartographic questions and for solving the enigmas, a historic path is followed, which can connect not only the cartographic engagement of the two aforementioned capitals, but also the French cartography of the period involving cartographers' actions in Constantinople, Paris and again St. Petersburg. Was there a circuit of cartographic complexity between Paris – Vienna – St. Petersburg – Constantinople that was finally summed up in Weiss' maps? The cartographic enigma of this very probable circuit of cartographic complexity is reinforced – except for Jervis' commentary – by the found similarities (Fig. 1) of the maps of Weiss with the French maps by Choiseul-Gouffier, Barbié du Bocage and Lapie, as test cartographic analysis shows.

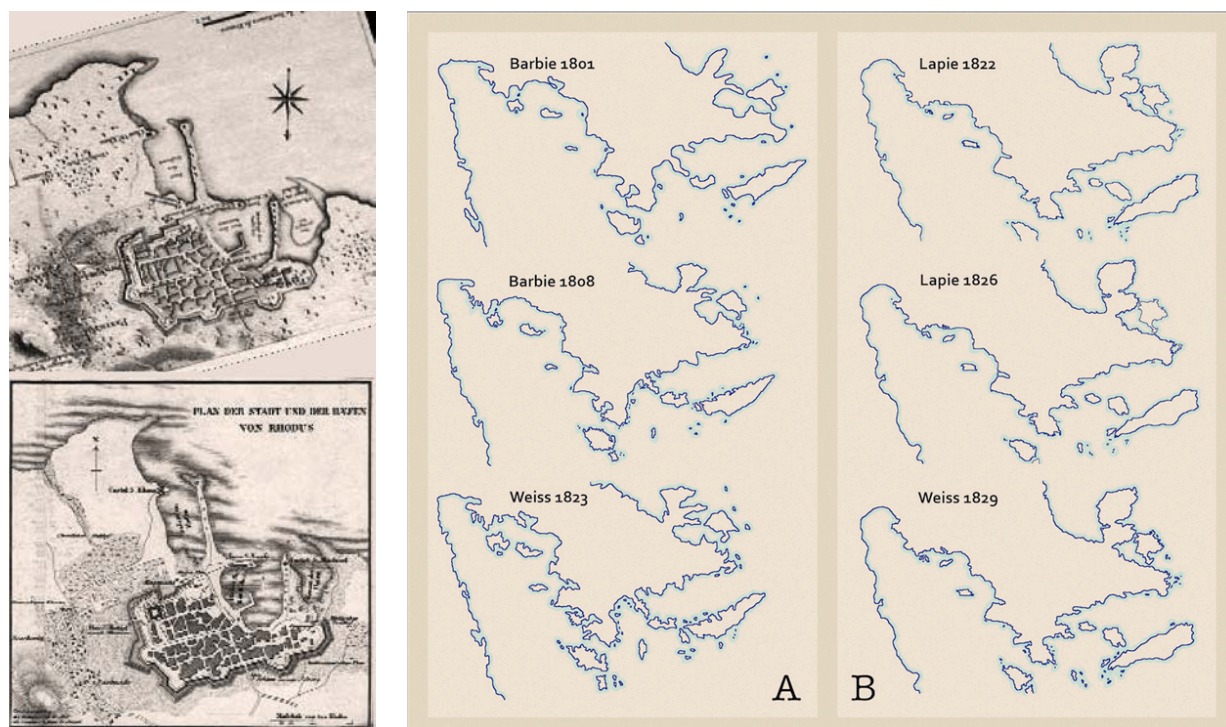


Figure 1. *Left up*: Town and port of Island of Rhodes in Choiseul-Gouffier's map. *Left down*: Town and port of Island of Rhodes in Weiss' map; after Livieratos (2009). *Right*: Coastline typologies of French maps and Weiss' maps. Test area: Argolis and Island of Hydra, NE part of Peloponnese; after Livieratos (2021)

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