



### The Seu de Urgell Beatus.

Produced in the last quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, this map now resides in the Museo Diocesá de La Seu d'Urgell, Lérida (in the Catalan Pyrenees of Spain), as part of the Beatus' *Commentary of the Apocalypse of St. John*, Num. Inv. 501, folios VIv-VIIr.

Despite the organic and coherent nature of the *mappae mundi* found in the Beatus codices, attributes to which Gonzalo Menendez-Pidal and Carlos Cid Priego refer, a detailed comparison highlights numerous similarities among and differences between these maps. Because of these, the cartographic corpus of the Beatus can be subdivided into families or groups which, in turn, coincide with the groupings within which the Beatus codices have been organized, based on the artistic analysis of the manuscripts: *Family I*, the oldest, pertaining to the editions of Beatus himself of 776 (*Family Ia*) and of 784 (*Family Ib*), and *Families IIab*, derived from the posthumous edition of ca. 940. The names we use to refer to the *mappae mundi*, as well as the manuscripts to which they belong, are related to their place of origin, to the addressees of the codices, or to the place in which they are currently preserved. As a reference, this map falls into Peter Klein's "Third Recension" and Wilhelm Neuss' *Family IIb* stemma. The *Urgell mappa mundi* has been classified as belonging to the Beatus *Family IIb* group which consists of the following maps:

- *Mappa mundi* of Escalada (tenth century) #207.2.
- *Mappa mundi* of Valcavado (970) #207.4.

- *Mappa mundi* of Urgell (last quarter of the tenth century) #207.8. Note, as seen above, this map has no polychromy, neither does the rest of the quire in which it is found.
- *Codex of El Escorial* (ca. 1000). It does not include the *mappa mundi*, and instead there appears the illustration of the *Earthly Paradise*. Although other scholars have concluded, based on studies of the text and illustrations, that the Beatus of El Escorial belongs to family I, this image is closer to the *Earthly Paradise* of the *mappae mundi* of Family IIa, and is therefore included here.
- *Mappa mundi* of *Fernando I & Sancha* (1047) #207.11.
- *Mappa mundi* of *Silos* (1091-1109) #207.16.

Sandra Sáenz-López Pérez has identified the following common features of this Family of Beatus *mappae mundi*:

- The toponyms are practically identical. Gonzalo Menendez-Pidal was aware of the confusion between Rome and Marseilles as being an inherent trait of these maps. They include all the toponyms relating to the apostolic geography.
- The captions which refer to the *Phoenix Bird*, to Arabia, to Ethiopia, to the fourth part of the world and to *Gothia* are the same in each.
- The elements of physical geography are the same and are represented in a similar manner. The following traits in particular define this group:
  - The Red Sea separates off the fourth part of the world, linking the west to the east.
  - As regards hydrography, the River Nile follows a single route towards the west of Africa; the River Danube, also with a single route, flows into the encircling ocean. The same occurs with the *River Tanais*; and *Gothia*, as a result, is represented as an island.
  - As regards the mountains and mountain chains, there are depictions of the *Rhyphcean Mountains* within *Gothia*; also of the *mons Aquilo*; *mons Sauceranus*; *mons Ceraunius*, the Caucasus Mountains; the Lebanon Mountains (in duplicate); the Taurus Mountains; the *Pillars of Hercules*; the Pyrenees (except in the *Escalada* map); the French Alps; and others not identified by name, such as the four mountain chains in Europe, perpendicular to the Mediterranean sea and parallel to each other; the mountains of Egypt; and the mountains to the west of India.
  - The islands have a rectangular form and are shown not only in the encircling ocean but also in the Mediterranean Sea. The oceanic islands are as follows, starting with the east, and going clockwise: *Chryse* and *Argyre* (in the map of *Fernando I & Sancha* divided into two); an unidentified island in the far south west (except in the *Fernando I & Sancha* version, where it does not appear); *Scaria insula*; the Fortunate Isles; Ireland; Great Britain; *Thanatos*; and *Thule*. Those of the Mediterranean Sea, from west to east: Gades; Menorca; Mallorca; Corsica; Crete (except in *Silos* and *Fernando I & Sancha*); Sicily; Samos; and Tarsus.
  - The desert and sandy zones coincide in all these maps and are located in the north-eastern and south-western extremes of the world.
- The *Earthly Paradise* is illustrated with the image of the original sin.
- The only city represented is Jerusalem.

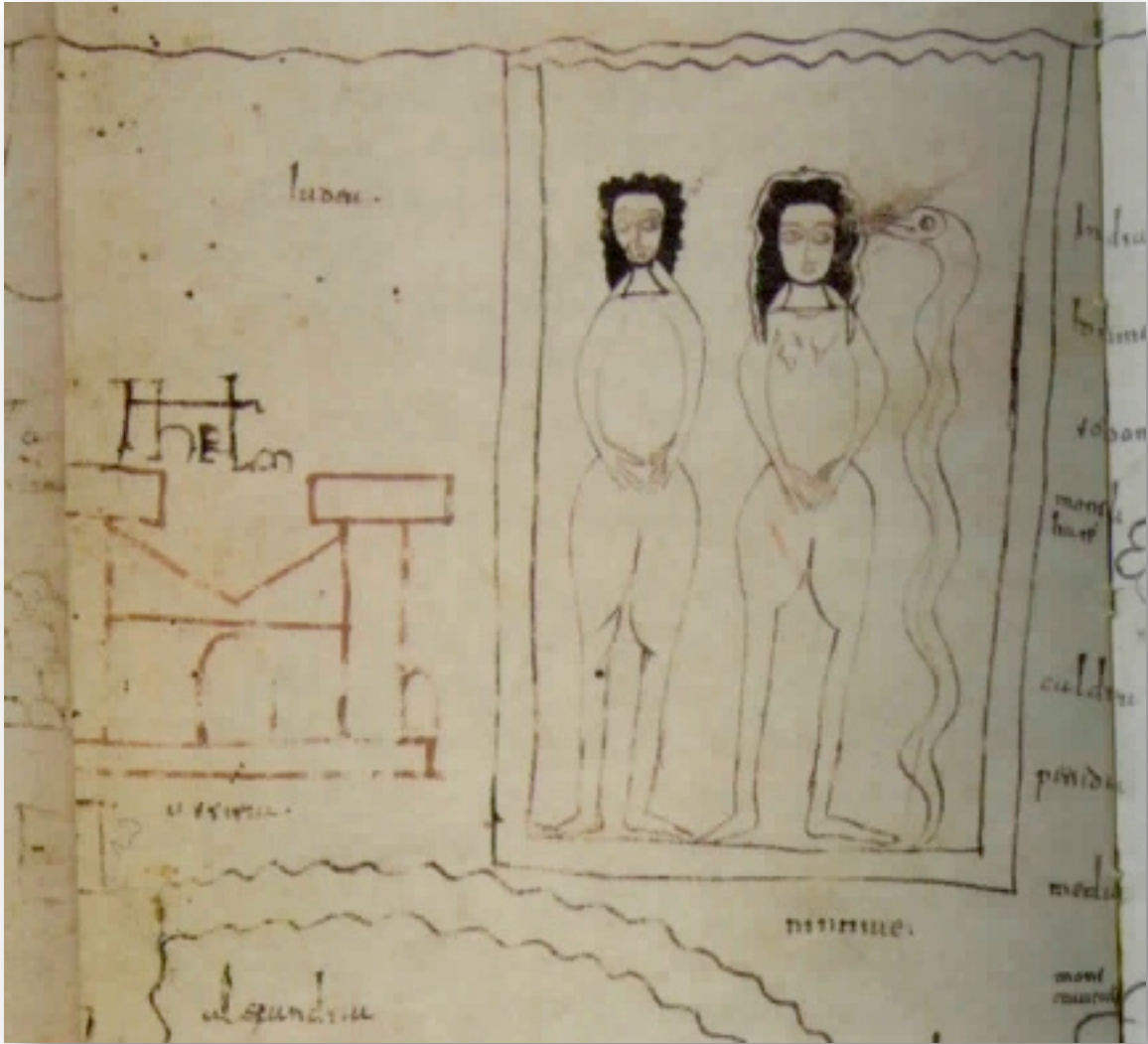
- The encircling ocean appears decorated with fish, which are also present in the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea in the map of *Silos*; in the case of the *Escalada* and *Valcavado* maps the ocean also portrays ships.

While all *Beatus mappae mundi* are oriented with East at the top, the *Urgell* and *Escalada mappae mundi* are the only two *Beatus* maps that are rectangular in shape, the remaining twelve *Beatus mappae mundi* either oval, circular or rectangular with slightly rounded corners (*Girona* and *Valcavado*). Also the *Urgel mappamundi* is the only surviving *Beatus* map that is not polychromed. The map is outlined in black ink, with the city of *Iherusalem* being emphasized by using red ink. The *Urgell*, *Turin* and *Milan mappae mundi* are devoid of fish, sea creatures and boats decorating the encircling ocean, displaying only a scattering of a few islands. In the *Urgell mappa mundi* there are eight islands displayed: *Crie et Argire Insula*, *Insula*, *Scaria Insula*, *Furtunarum Insula*, *Scotia Insula*, *Britania Insula*, *Tantutos Insula* and *Tille Insula*. In the Mediterranean Sea the *Urgell mappa mundi* also displays eight islands: *Caddis*, *Min[ori]ca*, *Ma[iori]ca*, *Corsice*, *Cretis*, *[Sicili]a*, *Sam[ino]* and *Tar[sis]*.

The *Pillars of Hercules* are shown in western Africa (not on the Iberian peninsula and northwest Africa) and titled *Duo Calpes contrarii sibi* [two mountains confronting each other].

In the *Earthly Paradise* Adam (left) and Eve (right) are portrayed covering their groin areas with their hands indicative of the fact that the “original sin” has already been committed as explained in *Genesis*; along with the free-standing/floating-in-air serpent, but without the *Tree of Knowledge* or the *Tree of Life*.

In the region of Ethiopia there is a caption that states the following: *In Ethiopia there are fearsome people with their different faces and monstrous appearance. It extends to the frontier of Egypt. It is full of a quantity of wild beasts and serpents. Here there are precious stones, cinnamon and balsam.*



*Detail of the Urgell Beatus mappa mundi showing the Earthly Paradise, Adam and Eve, the serpent and Jerusalem drawn in red on the left.*

**Location:** Museo Diocesano de La Seu d'Urgell (Spain), Num. Inv. 501, ff. VI<sup>v</sup>-VII [IIa],  
**Size:** 402 x 265 mm.

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