The Beatus Maps: The El Burgo de Osma Map

The El Burgo de Osma Beatus.
The El Burgo de Osma map of 1086, named after the Spanish town of Osma (or Uxama) which is located 56 kilometers to the southwest of Soria, in the valley of the Douro, (this area was an ancient stronghold of Sertorius, and St. Dominic, once a canon of the Church), was first described by the historian Konrad Miller. Both Konrad Miller and C.R. Beazley refers to it as a more distant relative of the Saint-Sever Beatus mappa mundi, which, according to these two scholars, it almost equals in value and with which it has common ground in its general delineation of lands, rivers and seas.

As a reference, this map falls into Peter Klein’s “First Recension” and Wilhelm Neuss’ Family I stemma. The Beatus Family I consists of the following maps:

• Mappa mundi of Saint-Sever (third quarter of the 11th century) #207.13.
• Mappa mundi of El Burgo de Osma (1086) #207.14.
• Mappa mundi of Milan (late 12th century or beginning of the 13th) #207.26
• Mappa mundi of Navarre (late 12th century) #207.23.
• Mappa mundi of Lorvão (1189) #207.22. Only half of the map survives, specifically the recto folio that relates to Africa with the fourth part of the world and the south of Asia. The map is badly bound into the codex, appearing in inverted form, in other words, with the west in the upper section.
• Mural mappa mundi from the church of the monastery of San Pedro de Rocas in Orense (middle or late 12th century). This monastery, founded originally as a hermitage and carved out of the rock of a hillside, has been linked with the diocese of Astorga due to its hermit-related history. Sadly, the mural map is in a very bad state of preservation and only some fragments are visible, based on which Serafin Moralejo Alvarez partially reconstructed the map.

The physical geography is more defined than in the maps of Families Ilab, especially in Saint-Sever. The River Tanais, whose name is in written form, appears to rise in the Rhyphian Mountains and is punctuated along its course by widenings and narrowings: it flows out into a lagoon, the paludes Meotis [the Azov Sea], whose name is shown in the maps, and subsequently continues until the ponto Euxino [Black Sea], without being identified in the maps of El Burgo de Osma and Milan. In the Saint-Sever map it appears written as Eusinus pontus, Equor ponti and Elles pontum. The Caspian Sea is shown as a gulf in the far north-east of the encircling ocean, both in the maps of El Burgo de Osma and Milan as well as in Saint-Sever. Except for the maps of Lorvão and Navarre, there are gulfs shown on the west coast of the African continent, one in the maps of El Burgo de Osma and Milan, two in that of Saint-Sever. The Adriatic Sea is shown in the map of Saint-Sever, where it is called sinus Noricum and sinus Adriaticus, as also in the El Burgo de Osma and Milan maps. Except for the Lorvão map, the Red Sea appears as two gulfs— the Arabian and Persian Gulfs— perpendicular to the sea that separates off the fourth part of the world, which in the Saint-Sever map is also identified as the Red Sea. There are rivers shown such as the Tigris and Euphrates in the maps of El Burgo de Osma and Saint-Sever, and the Jordan rising in the Lebanese Mountains and divided into two tributaries whose course is later combined so as to disgorge into a lake, the Dead Sea.

Sandra Sáenz-López Pérez has singled out among them the following common traits:

• In the Saint-Sever and Navarre maps the cardinal points are shown by means of caption strips and the winds appear in a written form in the first of these (all twelve winds), or illustrated in the second one (eight of them).
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- Within the maps which comprise the Family I, the maps of El Burgo de Osma, Milan, Navarre, Lorvão and the painting of San Pedro de Rocos show a stronger connection as they share a series of characteristics which usually do not appear in the other maps of the Beatus codices, not even in the Saint-Sever map:
  - The maps of El Burgo de Osma, Milan, Lorvão and San Pedro de Rocos represent the world in a circular shape (as do the maps of Turin and San Andres de Arroyo of the IIb Family).
  - The Earthly Paradise is represented by a paradisiacal hydrography, either by means of the four rivers—the Tigris, Euphrates, Gihon and Phison—flowing from the fountain of Paradise in the map of El Burgo de Osma, Milan and Navarre, or by a mere allusion to this fountain in the case of the map of Lorvão.
  - The maps of El Burgo de Osma, Milan, Lorvão and San Pedro de Rocos include the depiction of the apostles, and insert by this method the apostolic geography in an artistic form.
  - The maps of El Burgo de Osma, Navarre and Lorvao illustrate and/or allude textually to the sciopods in the fourth part of the world.

The Beatus maps seem to have had a special objective of portraying the spread of the Christian Faith over the known world through the efforts of the twelve apostles. This religious theme is explicitly expressed most clearly on the El Burgo de Osma mappa mundi in a series of pictures of the twelve apostles; each apostle is located approximately in the locality where tradition fixed his preaching and his diocese. A note in the accompanying The Commentary of the Apocalypse of St. John Beatus tells us plainly that these vignettes were an essential feature of the map from the beginning; that they illustrated the preaching or sowing of the Word ‘in the field of this world’; and, by implication, that the apostolic portraits were placed in certain definite cities or regions to which their work had special reference. Further, this distribution (Divisio Apostolorum) was conceived as follows: to Peter was given Rome; to Andrew, Greece or Achaia; to Thomas, India; to James, Gallecia (Spain); to John, Assiria [Asia]; to Matthew, Macedonia; to Philip, Gallia [France]; to Bartholemew, Licaonia [Lycaonia]; to Simon Zelotes and Egypt; to Matthias, Judea; to James, the brother of the Lord a.k.a. Alphaeus, Iherusalem [Jerusalem] was assigned; while for Paul there was no such definite location, as his mission was to all the world. On the El Burgo de Osma map Peter is actually shown enclosed in a towered church in Rome, with Paul nearby. Paul’s portrait, however, appears on the map along with that of St. Peter’s at Rome, as co-founder of the Apostolic See. The apostle James gets an even larger church in Spain. The El Burgo de Osma map leaves out (in the pictures, though not in the text) the apostles Thaddeus and Judas the brother of James, making up the full number with Paul and Matthias. As mentioned above, the accompanying Commentary of Beatus describes all of this in detail, but the pictures themselves have only survived in the El Burgo de Osma Beatus map, the 12th century Milan/Oña Beatus derivative and the partial remains of the 1189 Lorvão Beatus variant. The portraits, curiously, are all of one type, and that type is an intensely sacerdotal one.

Geographically, the El Burgo de Osma map presents a confusion of lands and seas, placing Palestine in the interior of Africa and southern Italy next to Jerusalem; but nevertheless it contains some valuable reminiscences of original matter not so prominent elsewhere. Again, the El Burgo de Osma map has much in common with the Saint-Sever
mappa mundi, especially in its general form, and, after the ‘Aquitanian’ copy, it is generally considered by some as the best example of this school or group of designs originated by Beatus. In some areas it indeed must take first place, as more directly representing the Beatus prototype. Thus, in its pictures of the twelve apostles it explains to us the very fons et origo of the Beatus scheme; like the Beatus Navarre mappa mundi of 1250, it represents the sciaepods, or shadow-footed men, of the Southern Continent, an important feature of the primitive work; while none of the other Beatus derivatives gives so good of a delineation of the Lighthouse-Towers at Alexandria and Brigantia (Spain). Here, again, probably original Beatus material is reproduced. Other pictorial elements also include a fortification in Carthage and city symbols for Toledo, Tyre, Troy, Constantinople and Antioch.

All of the mountains on this map are colored green so that there is no distinction whatsoever between northern and southern orography in relation to different climatic conditions. The display of deserta is depicted near the Red Sea, presumably being associated with the journey of the people of Israel to the Promised Land across the Sinai desert. The map also alludes to the land of Goshen, by means of a place name, as being the starting point of this Exodus.

The names of the three known continents are given as EOROP[A], ASIA, AFRICA and LIBIA. In Libia-Africa the red wall shown near the mouth of the single-track Nile River is Alexandria, with faro, the famous Lighthouse of Alexandria just below. The city of Alexandria is displayed by means of a rectangle of thick red lines adjacent to the River Nile, with the place name inside the lines. The Nile River is shown originating from an oval-shaped lake, rather than from a mountain range. Next to this lake is the caption: “This spring is cold by day and warm by night”. African provinces shown include Ethiopia, Egyptus, Getaulia and two Mauritianas. Between the Mauritanien Sitifensis and Mauritania Tingitana, the sea penetrates inland on the African coast in a pronounced way, so as to suggest that perhaps there is an attempt to depict the headland of Mons Abila (Djebel Musa), one of the Pillars of Hercules, which lies on the Strait of Gibraltar at the entrance-way to the Mediterranean. The Red Sea is displayed as two strips of water colored red, perpendicular to the sea that separates off the fourth part of the world. These two inlets represent the (unnamed) Arabian and Persian Gulfs. The El Burgo de Osma map marks four green-colored African Alps, two on the south coast, two towards the west.

In between Asturia and Gallecia (Spain) there appears another tower indicated as being a lighthouse (faro). This is the Roman lighthouse of Brigantia (known as the Tower of Hercules and La Coruña [Old Castle]). Inside Europe the region of Gallecia is separated from the rest by a red line, apparently a later addition. The vignettes inside Spain are accompanied by the legends of Asturia, St. Jacobus and Toledo. The flumen Durius [River Duero] is depicted along with the flumen Minei [River Miño]. Elsewhere in Europe, as noted, there are the vignettes of the apostles St. Paul and St. Peter near Roma, separated by the flumen Tiberius [Tiber River], and a large building near the Black Sea, labeled Constantinopolis. The flumen Tanais [Don River] is depicted rising from the Rhynphae Mountains, as described in the geographical texts since the age of Antiquity. Along its course distinctions are made between the River Don, the Azov Sea (designated by name) and the Black Sea, by means of narrowings and widenings of the various expanses of water of which it is composed. The flumen Danabius [Danube] is depicted as a single-track river flowing into the River Tanais and originating from the interior, but not specifying any mountains or lake as its source.
In northern Asia, just to the east of Troy and the Black Sea, one of the largest provinces shown is Armenia. It is located between Aluania [Albania] and Frigia and the mountains of Aquilonis, Mons Caucasus and Mons Taurus. The last two are shown as one large chain stretching from the eastern ocean almost to the Aegean Sea. Aluania is shown located west of Mare Caspium and a green mountain range called Mons Aquilonis. The rivers Tigris and Euphrates flow from the south of these mountains down into the southern seas. The flumen Iorddanis [River Jordan] rises in the Mountains of Lebanon, emerging from two feeder rivers (the Ior and Dani Rivers) and disgorges into the Dead Sea. Mare Caspium is shown as an inlet from the northern seas and has the two rivers of Cirus and Oxus flowing into it from the Caucasus Mountains. The other provinces in Asia include Hyrcania, Capadocia, Isauria, Licuonia, Mesopotamia, Fenicia, Parthia, Assiria, India, Babilonia Judea, Palestina and others. Mare Rubrum is shown colored red, as a twin-bayed inlet from the southern seas. These two bays should be the Arabian and Red Seas. The vignettes of apostles Thomas, Johannes and Bartolomeus are located in north Asia with Jacob and Mathias in south Asia. Here the named twelfth apostle, Thaddeus is missing, while the name of Mathus appears once again in Eastern Europe.

Saint James the Greater in Santiago de Compostela, Toledo and Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Rome on the El Burgo de Osma mappamundi. Note the red line separating Gallecia [Spain]
Although the El Burgo de Osma map is devoid of the usually dominant illustration of Adam and Eve, in their place the cartographer has represented Paradise simply by a square with the ‘springs’ of the four sacred rivers. The Earthly Paradise is a place that is built into the cartographic image of the world, because in the Middle Ages there was still a theological tradition that it existed on earth, even though it was inaccessible. One of the issues of major transcendence was its whereabouts. Paradise had been positioned in many different places in the world, at the four cardinal points; however, the most oft-repeated location was in the East, due to the symbolic value given to it by the Christian mediaeval mentality, as explained when we referred to the division of lands in the maps of the Beatus codices, and which the biblical texts placed as follows: “And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed”. It is here, in the East, in the far east of Asia, where the Earthly Paradise is situated in the mappa mundi of the Beatus codices. Given that the maps are oriented in the literal sense of the word, the site of Paradise is found in the upper portion. The version of El Burgo de Osma is the only one that makes reference to the biblical Eden as an Asiatic region in proximity to Paradise. The Earthly Paradise is also isolated and access to it was impossible, and hence it was named hortus conclusus [enclosed garden]. The mappa mundi of the Beatus codices solve the depiction of the barrier to Paradise by means of a surrounding frame-like railing, which in turn is the mechanism by which it acquires a square, rectangular or semicircular shape. We are seeing, then, a stylized depiction of its enclosure. The Earthly Paradise in the mappa mundi of El Burgo de Osma is identified in writing (PARADISUS). Within this rectangle are drawn the four rivers by means of thick wavy lines which, having parted from a central source, moved towards the four corners, thus being arranged in the form of an “X”. The central spring is circular and there is a written inscription inside, fons. The four rivers are identified by their names with the flumen Fison moving towards the far northeast, the flumen Eufrates toward the southeast, the flumen Geon to the southwest and the flumen Tigris toward the northeast. The X-form of the rivers may have come from the idea that the gospels are to be disseminated to the “four corners of the world” to which Beatus of Liébana refers to in his Commentary on the Apocalypse.

The El Burgo de Osma map is especially valuable in its representation of the Levant or Eastern Mediterranean, of the Nile, of Mount Taurus and of the island Taprobane [Sri Lanka]. A total of 36 islands are distributed throughout the encircling ocean and Mediterranean, with fish, but no boats, intermixed with the standardized islands. The fish are white, line-drawn in black and highlighted with other red lines and black dotted patterns and are swimming almost perpendicular to the coast. They are all of the same size except for the fish swimming near the Galician coast (possibly a trace of pro-St, James fanaticism by the map’s author). In the mappa mundi of El Burgo de Osma the coastlines appear as interrupted courses showing inlets in the form of gulfs – e.g., the mare Caspium [Caspian Sea] in the far northeast and an inlet (sinus) on the southwest coast of Africa (Gulf of Guinea?), just south of two mountain ranges (Adlans mons [Atlas Mountains] and Alpes quo Egypte montuosa [Alps in the mountainous part of Egypt]). The Adriatic Sea is only shown in the form of a stretch of water at a perpendicular angle to the Mediterranean that separates the Italian peninsula from the Balkan one.

The fourth continent is cut off from Libia [Africa] by water and has a red sun-disk on it to illustrate its torrid climate. Another unusual feature of this Beatus derivative is the presence in this continent of a sciopod, a naked one-legged man, shielding himself
from the red sun (sol) with his single enormous foot. The inscription tells us that: This region remains uninhabitable and unknown to us on account of the heat of the sun. It is said that the sciopods live there, who have single legs and [travel] with amazing speed. The Greeks call them sciopods, because, lying supine on the ground during the summer, they are shaded by the great size of their feet. A sciopod appears on one other Beatus mappa mundi, the Navarre, now in Paris, but without the text, and a text combining sciopods and the Antipodes is also in the Lorvão manuscript in Lisbon.

**Location:** Archivo de la Catedral de Santiago, Spain Cod. 1, ff.34v-35 [I]

**Size:** 360 x 225 mm.

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El Burgo de Osma, 1086, Archivo de la Catedral Cod. 1, ff.34v-35 [I]
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The map (Branch I) in the Burgo de Osma codex of Beatus' Commentary on the Apocalypse, Archivo de la Catedral, Cod. 1, ff.34v-35. (Reproduced with permission from Menéndez Pidal, 'Mozárabes y asturianos en la cultura de la alta edad media')
The Beatus Maps: The El Burgo de Osma Map
For all names and toponyms see Konrad Miller’s redrawing of the map (above and below).

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Beatus, Apocalipsin. Dated 1203 CE.
Cathedral library, Burgo de Osma. MS Cod. 1, ff. 34v-35.

Size approximately 37.5 x 33 cm.