

The Escalada, a.k.a. Ashburnham, Morgan 644, New York I, Magius Beatus.

The first Beatus derivative map, by order of date, is known by several names: *Escalada*, *Ashburnham*, *Morgan 644*, *Ashmolean*, *New York I*, and/or *Magius* (the *Ashburnham* name is derived from one of its prior owners, G. Libri, the Earl of Ashburnham; the first name indicates its place of origin and the last its possible author, Maius/Magius). The curious dating of its parent manuscript, *The Commentary of the Apocalypse* by Beatus of Liébana (died 798), leaves it an open question as to whether it was written and illustrated in 894, 926 or 950-60 A.D. But whether of the late ninth or early 10th century, this map of the world contained in the manuscript is one of the very earliest cartographical documents now known to exist in original form. This copy of the Beatus *mappa mundi* design had been traditionally ascribed to the work of a man named Obeco, who, according to the historian Raymond Beazley, apparently used a very inferior intermediate Beatus copy for reference. However, more recent scholars such as John Williams assign the authorship to the scribe Magius from the monastery of San Miguel de Escalada, near Leon and dates this map from 940-945 instead of 926.

As in nearly all medieval European maps, this rectangular world-picture measures 51 x 36 cm (20 x 14 inches), occupying two pages of the manuscript and is oriented with the East at the top where can be seen a framed picture of Adam and Eve in the *Earthly Paradise* in Asia. Adam and Eve are shown clutching their fig leaves while a serpent looks on from a nearby tree. As in all other Beatus copies, the earth is surrounded by a continuous ocean, here painted ochre and scattered with decorative blue fish, uncolored boats and a nine square islands. The Mediterranean occupies the center with square islands arranged like stepping-stones. The Nile flows into it from the west, while the *River Tanais* [the Black Sea/Don River complex], unlabeled and painted blue, flows straight north to the circumfluent ocean. Only one other river is depicted and it appears to be the Danube, though it also is unlabeled.

The *Escalada Beatus Commentary of the Apocalypse* (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 644) is an illuminated manuscript with miniatures, which described the end of days and the *Last Judgment*. Having been created at some time in the 10th century, this derivative is the oldest example of a revived Spanish apocalypse tradition. The *Apocalypse* and the commentary on this scripture by Saint Beatus of Liébana became one of the most important religious texts of the Middle Ages, and is very profusely illustrated.

Despite the organic and coherent nature of the *mappae mundi* found in the Beatus codices, attributes to which Beatus researchers 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 *mappae mundi* 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 *mappaemundi*, 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 Ila* stemma. The *Family Ila* consists of the following maps:

- *Mappamundi of Escalada* (tenth century) #207.2
- *Mappamundi of Valcavado* (970) #207.4.
- *Mappamundi of Urgell* (last quarter of the tenth century) #207.8. Note 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 *mappamundi*, 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 *mappaemundi* of *Family IIa*, and is therefore included here.
- *Mappamundi of Fernando I & Sancha, a.k.a. Madrid* (1047) #207.11.
- *Mappamundi of Silos, a.k.a. London* (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 *Rhyphlean 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 (in the *Escalada* map Jerusalem is represented by a colored symbol designed with two towers, crowned by an overhanging end-section, which flanks a facing split into two sections or stories).
- 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.
- The myth of the Phoenix Bird – *Hic abe Fenix* [Here [is found] the Phoenix Bird] to the west of India.

While all *Beatus mappaemundi* are oriented with East at the top, the *Urgel* and *Escalada mappaemundi* are the only two *Beatus* maps that are rectangular in shape, the remaining twelve *Beatus mappaemundi* are either oval, circular or rectangular with slightly rounded corners (*Girona* and *Valcavado*).

The *Escalada* map contains a series of differences and deficiencies that even set it apart from the other *Beatus mappa mundi* of *Family Ila*. For example, it lacks the place names *Assyria* and *Asturias*, which are present in all the rest; it includes the names of the continents and other place names such as *Italy*, *Armenia* and *Paradise*, not incorporated in the remainder; its version of the place name *Lidia* is written erroneously as *Libia* in the other maps of its same *Family*; the *Pyrenees* are not shown, whereas they are present in the remainder; in the far east, to the north of *Chryse* and *Argyre*, there is an island, perhaps *Taprobane*, that is not shown in the other maps of this *Family*; and the *Red Sea* is not polychromed in the color of its name, whereas this is the case in the remainder. Although these divergences between the *Escalada* map and the other *mappaemundi* of *Family Ila* might be minimal, it is important to single them out as they are the grounds for proposing that this map was not the prototype or matrix of this *Family*, in other words, that the remainder were not copied from it. Also, by extension, they support the case for rejecting the idea that the *Escalada* manuscript was the edition renovated ca. 940.

The *Escalada Beatus* contains preliminary material with brilliantly painted Evangelist portraits (f. 1-9), *Beatus' Commentary on the Apocalypse*, (f.10-233), excerpts from *Isidore of Seville's De ad finitibus et gradibus* and of his *Etymologies* (f.23 [4r-237r]), *St. Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*, (f. 239-293), and a third exposition of the *Apocalypse* (f.294-299). This last is a synopsis of a variety of sources and, apparently, a later addition. The *Sealing of the Elect* and the *Last Judgment* are two notable illuminations contained in the *Escalada Beatus* codex. Its current dimensions are 38.7 x 28.5 cm (15 x 11 inches). Early folios indicate the removal of the original gold and redrawing of letters by *Maius*, the creator of the manuscript, and his assistants.

The 300 leaves of the manuscript are of fine-quality parchment, thick and uniform in color. Margins are wide, script and illuminations, generally well preserved. Several folios are damaged by dampness or fire. The colors are remarkably well preserved and vibrant. *Maius* is identified as the works maker by means of a colophon on f.293 and a memento on f.233. The colophon also provides a cryptic date and references to the commissioning abbot and the monastery of *St. Michael*.

The collation of the original quires is difficult to determine due to the loss of some leaves. In the course of combining bi-folios into quires, the medieval bookmakers needed a system by which they could keep the various quires in their proper order. Catchwords eventually became the standard tool for this purpose. The *Escalada Beatus*, however, does not utilize this technique. Instead, this manuscript makes use of signatures consisting of Roman numerals followed by the letter "Q". There are two

miniature-bearing folios signed in this fashion. Intact quires consist of eight leaves (four bi-folios). Most signatures are in the corner of the lower margin of the final verso. The fact that these signatures are Roman numerals, and not Arabic, suggests against the bookmakers being local or Mozarab vocations to the monastery scriptorium. At the same time it is seen as evidence dating the manuscript to the first half of the tenth century. The opening folios (f.1-9) seem to be a later addition, not only because they lack these signatures, but because they are composed of two sets of three bi-folios.

The depiction of the *Earthly Paradise*, labeled *Paradisus*, and the act of Original Sin is initiated in the *Escalada mappamundi*. Adam and Eve are portrayed, along with the serpent wound around the red *Tree of Life* (shown baring fruit) and the red *Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil* (similar to a sorghum tree) is to the right of Adam.

Decorative mountains topped with token vegetation are placed around the map, some with names, others without. The orographic elements of the Beatus maps are illustrated in a conventional manner, and are often far removed from any naturalism. In the maps of *Family Ila* can be seen: the *Rhyphcean Mountains* which are shown as being in *Gothia*; the *mons Aquilo* as being in the far northeast of the world; the *mons Sauceranus* and the *mons Ceraunius*; the Caucasus Mountains; the Lebanon Mountains which are shown duplicated in the Asian continent, once on the verso folio and again on the recto; the *Taurus Mountains*; the *Pillars of Hercules* in *LIBIA* with the caption *Duo Caples contrarii sibi* [two mountains confronting each other]; the French Alps; the Pyrenees, except in this *Escalada* map; as well as some unnamed others such as the four mountain chains in Europe, which are parallel to each other and perpendicular to the Mediterranean Sea; the mountain to the west of India; and the Egyptian one. On most of the mountains on the *Escalada* map there appears a form of green vegetation; particularly noticeable is what appears to be sorghum in Asia Minor. This feature has caused researchers to label this map as the most naturalistic of the Beatus *mappaemundi*.

The only city symbol is the one for Jerusalem. *LIBIA* [Africa, which is subdivided to include the label of *EZIOPIA*) is the area depicted on the right and *EUROPA* [Europe] is to the left, separated by a strip representing the Mediterranean Sea and its islands; and *ASIA* is labeled across the top. Province-boundaries of Africa, as they were understood, are marked by ornamental trees. All the *mappaemundi* of *Family Ila*, as well as those of *Milan*, *Saint-Sever* and *Lorvão* of *Family I*, conceive of Ethiopia as a land where precious stones, cinnamon and balsam abound, but one finds lurking natural dangers in this region, specifically serpents and the inhabitants, horrible monstrous beings with different faces. Although the maps of the Beatus codices only allude in writing to these dangers, the depiction of the serpents in the Ethiopian region is relatively common in mediaeval cartography. These maps of the Beatus codices repeat the textual information on Ethiopia in an almost identical form, with some orthographic differences: *Eziopia ubi sunt gentes diuerso uultu et monstruosa specie orribilis precensa est usque ad fines Egipti ferarum quoque et serpentium, referta est multitudine ibi gemme pretiose, cinnamum et balsamum*. [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.]

The western border of Asia is formed by the series of rivers and narrow seas from the *River Tanais* [Don River] to the Nile. As mentioned above, the only rivers specifically depicted are the Nile, the *Tanais* and the Danube, which are represented like inland seas; whereas the Persian and Arabian Gulfs and other seas are represented by symbols resembling mountains.

In the encircling great ocean, colored ochre instead of the more conventional greenish-blue, are placed nine (five named, four unnamed) rectangular-shaped islands labeled *Britania Insulae*, *Tile Insulae*, *Crise et Argire Insula*, *Scotia Insula* and *Tantutos Insula* and stylized fish which appear to follow regular courses, as if to indicate the direction of ocean currents, or possibly the periodic wanderings of tunny or herring shoals (this latter device was first employed by Macrobius in the fourth century A.D., see #201). This Beatus derivative omits nearly all of the rivers, cities, and hamlets given on the other copies. While difficult to see because they are uncolored, the boats in the *Escalada* map show the hull divided length-wise into sections, the keel, a prominent upper gunwale, the protruding bow and the reduced poopdeck (for the two ends of the ship are asymmetrical), a visible row of oars and no sails. Also there are some precise examples, such as the boat located between *Tantutos insula* and *Tile insula*: we can see a triangular structure on the boat that perhaps alludes to a Roman sail. The fish, however, are colored blue some of which spout water from their mouths and to the south of the fourth part of the world, there are two elongated animals. As for the Red Sea [*Mare Rubrum* and not colored red but is colored ochre like the encircling ocean], it seems to be a generic name covering the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, as parts of a single body of water, are occasionally conflated in medieval maps. The Indian Ocean appears in the form of a straight, narrow band of water extending the width of the map south of Africa and Asia and connecting at either end with the earth-surrounding stream. The Mediterranean Sea and the Nile River are also colored ochre; while the *River Tanais* and Danube are colored blue; the *River Tanais* running straight from the Mediterranean Sea to the encircling ocean.

The most unusual feature of this map, and this is a characteristic of all Beatus maps, is the existence of a southern continent, land representing the northern littoral of an austral continent. It is separated from Africa by a band of water, here labeled the *Mare Rubrum*. A legend upon that strip of land reads (in translation) as follows:

Deserta Terra vicina solida ardore incognita nobis.
Desert or wilderness land, neighboring [and] firm, unknown to us
[because of] the burning heat.

Longer inscriptions appear on other versions of the Beatus map, and their variety reveals the confusion about the location of this fourth continent. The conventional interpretation is that it indicates the presence of a continent in the southern hemisphere, as was shown on zonal maps (see #201, Macrobius). The confusion is heightened by reference to the *Antipodes*, which properly speaking should be located in the Western Hemisphere, not the Eastern. This feature has earned the Beatus maps a special category within the medieval map classification, that of "quadripartite maps".

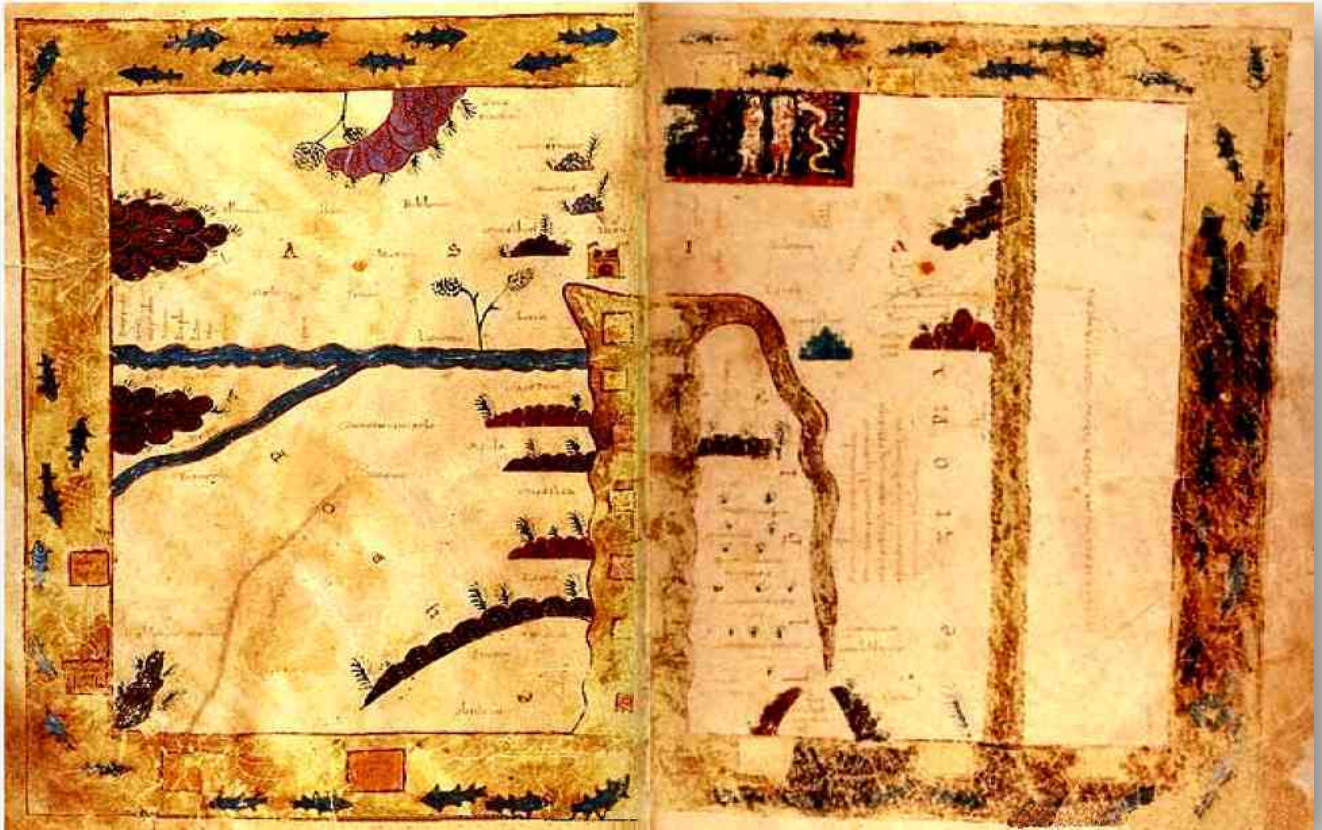
Location: Pierpoint Morgan Library, MS M644, fols. 33v-34, New York.

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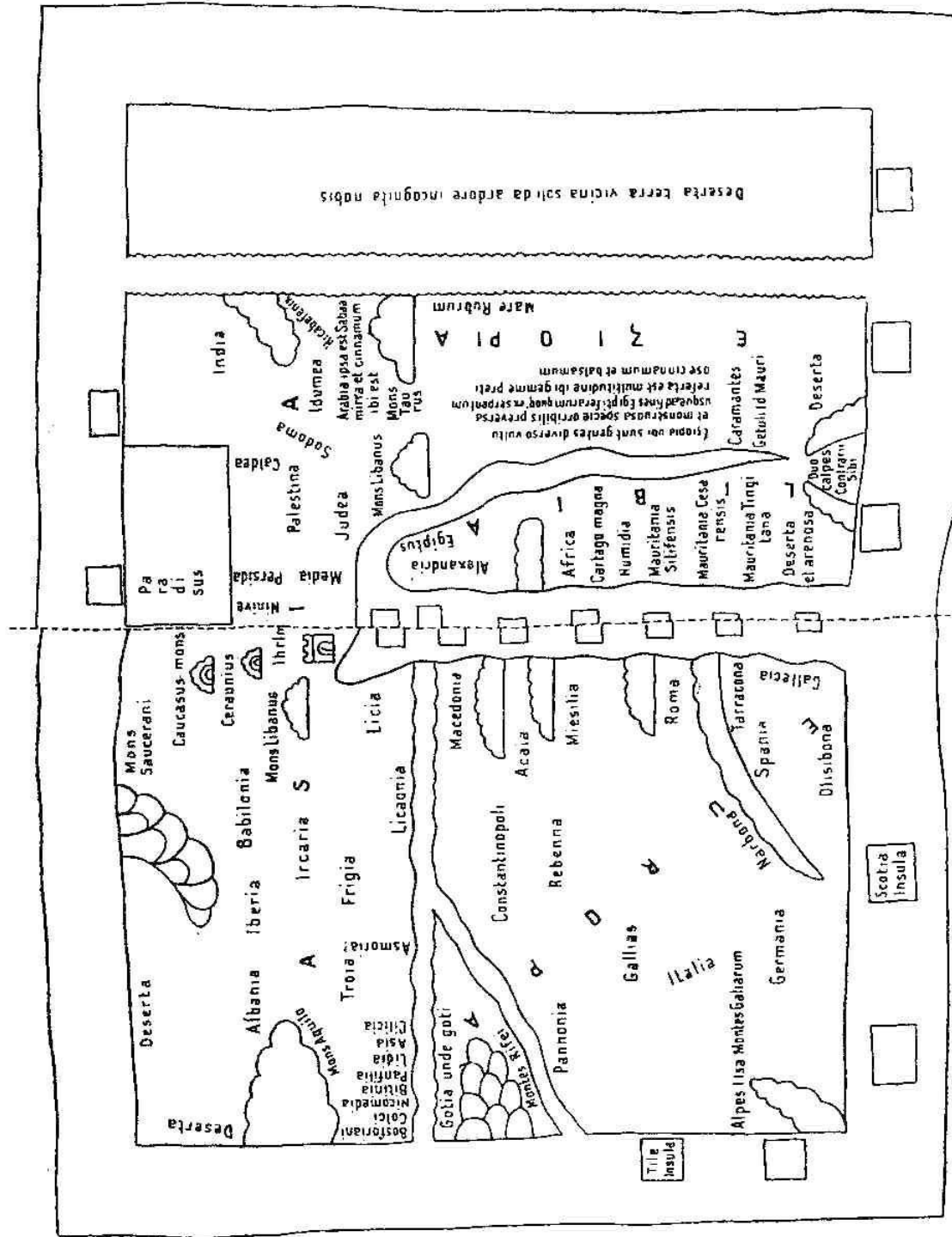
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*illustrated



*The Escalada, a.k.a. Ashburnham, Morgan 644, New York I, and/or Magius,
Beatus mappamundi, 926 A.D., 51 x 36 cm (20 x 14 inches)*



Branch IIa map in Beatus' Commentary, now in New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, M. 644, ff.33v-34. (Reproduced with permission from Menéndez Pidal, 'Mozárabes y asturianos en la cultura de la alta edad media')