

Excerpt from
Gog and Magog on *mappaemundi* and Early Printed World Maps: Orientalizing
Ethnography in the Apocalyptic Tradition By Andrew Gow
augmented with referenced maps and references to relevant monographs

Belief in the fast-approaching end of this world and in the Last Judgment, a core component of pre-modern European religion and culture, had a profound influence on *mappaemundi* and early printed maps. As with many abstract concepts, medieval and early modern Christians gave this set of ideas concrete form in numerous ways. One of the most revealing and useful ‘concretizations’ of apocalyptic angst was the legend of the destroyers Gog and Magog. This medieval tale was based on the *New Testament's* distortion of “Gog from the land of Magog” (Ezekiel 38-39) in *Revelation* 20,7-8 as Gog and Magog. The peoples thus invented found their way beyond ecclesiastical circles via popular legends and stories, especially the Alexander cycle. Far from representing only physical geography and a largely legendary ethnology, *mappaemundi* charted the “history of salvation” (*Heilsgeschichte*) and the temporal relations of past, present and future via depictions of apocalyptic figures, many of them alien destroyers.

The Alexander legend of later antiquity, based broadly on Josephus recounting, tells how Alexander, marching eastward, came upon wild peoples (*feras gentes*) or unclean peoples (*immundas gentes*), who ate human flesh and had other equally vile customs. To keep them from destroying the rest of the world, Alexander drove them between two mountains, then asked God to push the two mountains together and imprison them. This story found its way not only into later versions of the Alexander legend, but also into the *Qu’ran* and the influential Greek *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius, which date from the end of the seventh century. The *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* is a seventh century apocalypse that shaped the eschatological imagination of Christendom throughout the Middle Ages. The work was written in Syriac in the late seventh century, in reaction to the Islamic conquest of the Near East, and is falsely attributed to the fourth century Church Father Methodius of Olympus. It depicts many familiar Christian eschatological themes: the rise and rule of Antichrist, the invasions of Gog and Magog, and the tribulations that precede the end of the world.

Around 700 C.E., this latter text was translated into Latin by the monk Peter in Merovingian Gaul and very widely disseminated in the west, where it became a standard of Christian *apocalypticism*. In this version, the unclean peoples originally thought to have been enclosed by Alexander were identified with Gog and Magog, the apocalyptic destroyers of *Ezekiel* 38-39 and *Revelation* 20,8. The Pseudo-Methodian *Revelations* enjoyed an uninterrupted popularity; they were printed in numerous editions during the 15th and 16th centuries. Gog and Magog were, in all these versions, enclosed only temporarily: at the end of time, God would allow them to escape from their eastern prison and devastate Christendom. The *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius also prophesied that the Antichrist would deceive and gather in the scattered Jews to Jerusalem, where they would serve him as their Messiah. This vilification is easily recognized as a hostile reading of the apocryphal fourth book of Ezra. It originated in the prophecy of the Tiburtine Sibyl and would prove to be prophetic regarding the medieval development of the story of Gog and Magog: here apocalypticism met anti-semitism, in which it found unusually fertile soil.

The famous *Historia de preliis magni Alexandri* started out with the title *Nativitas et victoria Alexandri Magni*. This was a 10th century Latin translation of the Greek Alexander

romance by the Pseudo-Callisthenes. It proved very popular in Latin and in numerous vernacular translations, and was printed early on as the *Historia de preliis Alexandri magni*. The later, interpolated versions of the 11th and 12th centuries, (between 1185 and 1236), describe the enclosure of Gog and Magog by Alexander to protect the world from these savage nations. This story was a best-seller throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern era. It was printed in numerous versions, both Latin and vernacular.

Not only did versions of these canonical texts continue to circulate until well past the Reformation, the stories they contained seeped into all manner of medieval exegetical and literary works. Gog and Magog became a *topos* of salvation-history. Of considerable historical interest is the frequency with which Gog and Magog appeared on early world maps. Their survival on world maps well beyond the point at which the dominant cultural and intellectual discourses had cast strong doubts on their existence is also worth exploring. Mapmakers are notoriously conservative, but the continued appearance of Gog and Magog on late 16th and 17th century maps demands more of an explanation, which in turn requires a history of the theme itself.

Important sources for traditional cartography are to be found in literary, exegetical and theological texts, and in many other contexts. Out of these grew mapmakers' depictions of the legendary peoples Gog and Magog. The sheer antiquity of this tradition suggests that even before the west had very much of a clear identity, the Gog and Magog story was part of the rich fund of story and lore inherited from antiquity and cherished - if somewhat tattered by frequent handling - until the advent of more skeptical and critical approaches to tradition and authority. Thus, western identity, from its earliest beginnings, rests on this and other such views concerning "who was out there" and who was not "like us". Tradition, especially of the hallowed Biblical and quasi-biblical sort, defines both form and content for the middle ages and for the early modern centuries.

By the 12th century, western Christians had by and large come to believe a number of things about Gog and Magog: they were the same as the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel; they had been enclosed behind an impenetrable wall until the end of time by Alexander; and that they would break out at the time of Antichrist and devastate the world. While world maps often record a variant based on this conflation as *iudei clausi* [enclosed jews] or *iudei inclusi*, many place both these imaginary Jews and Gog and Magog in the far northeastern part of Asia.

Late-antique and medieval world maps, from Jerome's map of the Orient (see *monograph* 225.4) to the *Catalan Atlas* of 1375 (#235), generally used the term Gog and Magog to refer to the much-storied apocalyptic destroyers. Other genres, especially those produced for a more general (particularly a vernacular) readership, tended after 1200 to refer to the ten tribes, the Red Jews, etc. Later maps commonly use the terms *iudei clausi* or *inclusi*, mirroring a different mindset more oriented toward social realities and



conflicts. However, throughout this period, *Gog* and *Magog* usually appear in the far north and/or east, often in a separate peninsula or surrounded by a wall, a mountain chain or kept in by a gate. Later medieval and early modern maps continue the tradition, but with significant differences.

Gog and *Magog* appeared on Arabian maps as *Yajoj wa Majoj* from the 10th century they appear on Al-Idrisi's map of 1154 (#219) under the same names. What direct influence Arabic maps had on later western cartography is hard to tell, but Al-Idrisi's map, made as a metal plate for Roger of Sicily, was famous. Al-Idrisi's map places *Gog* and *Magog* in northern China, behind a great wall with a tower and a door; at the wall is an inscription, translated as "*belongs to the Kufaya mountain range which encloses Gog and Magog*". An explicit reference to *Dul-Karnai'in* (an Arabic name for Alexander, among others) by the gate, leaves no doubt as to Idrisi's source.



Al-Idrisi's world map (see monograph #219) with Gog and Magog behind the wall and circled in red. Note, this map is oriented to the south so here Gog and Magog are in the proximity of China.

The British Library's early 11th century *Cottonian Anglo-Saxon map* (#210) places *Gog* and *Magog* hard by the northern ocean, west of the Caspian Sea and the ten tribes appear in the middle east. The map's author had not yet identified these peoples with one another. The two legends are treated separately, as in patristic literature.

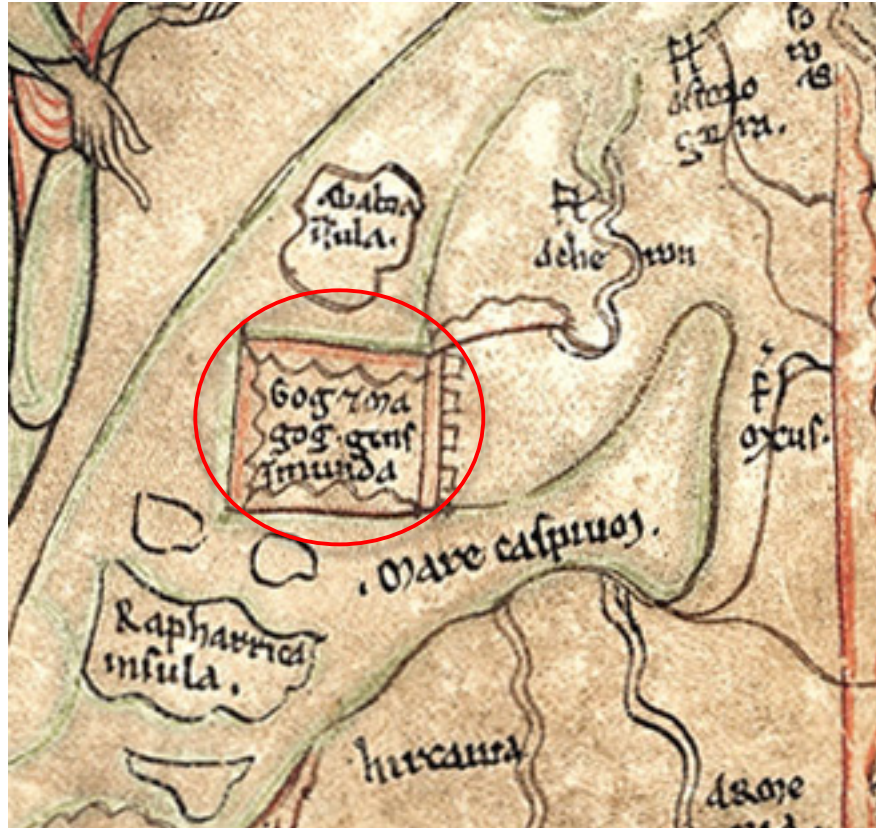
To the west of the Caspian Sea can be found *Gog and Magog*, adjoined by the *Turchi*; the *Bulgari* is placed between the Danube and the Arctic Ocean; and *Taprobane* [Sri Lanka] occupies the place usually given to the *Terrestrial Paradise*. The *Cottonian map* places *Gog and Magog* hard by the northern ocean, west of the Caspian Sea and the Ten

Gog and Magog

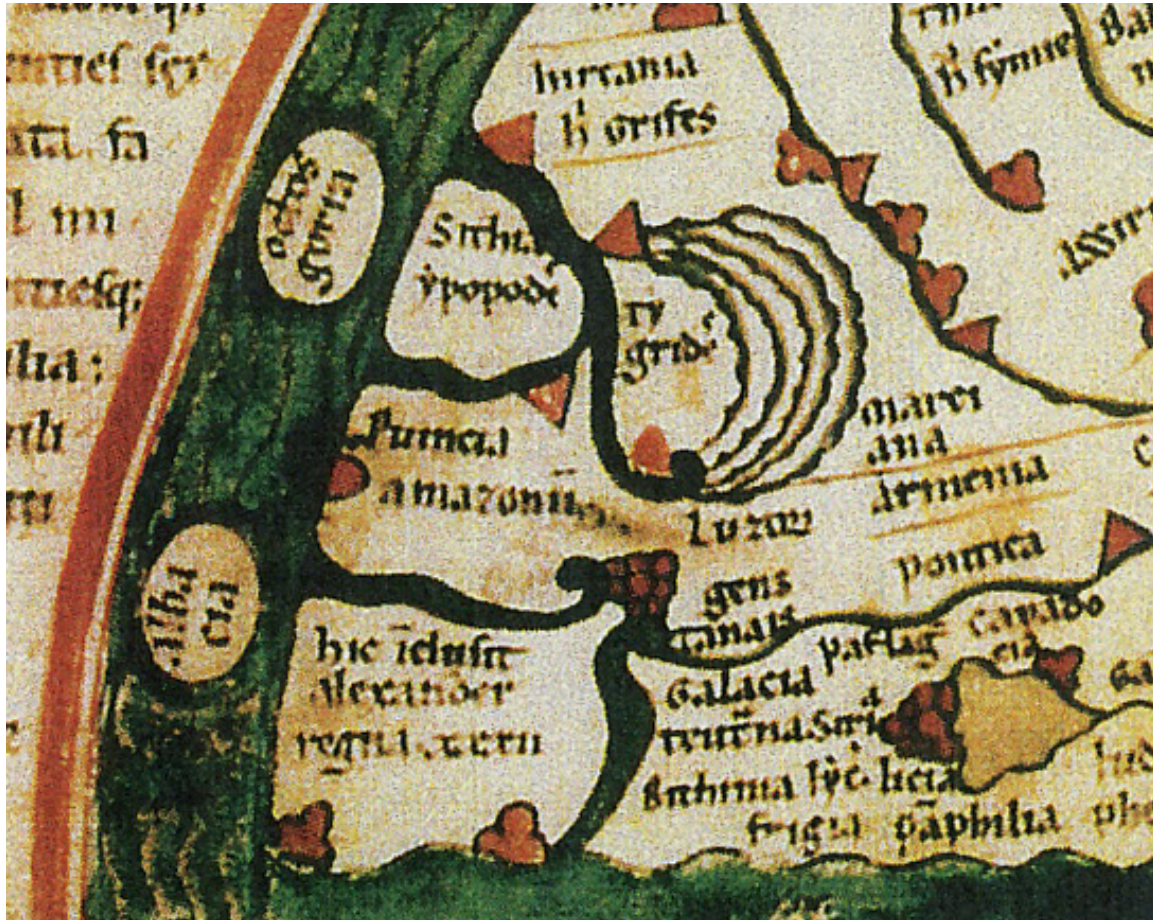
Lost Tribes appear in the Middle East. The map's author had not yet identified these peoples with one another. The two legends are treated separately, as in patristic literature.



In the 12th century, a *mappamundi* that was until recently attributed to Henry of Mainz, now known as the *Sawley map* (#215) put Gog and Magog on a peninsula surrounded by mountains and blocked at its south end by a wall, suggesting the Alexander story was the source of this detail.



A map in the 1120 Ghent manuscript of the *Liber Floridus* by Lambert de Saint-Omer (c. 1050-1125) is labeled *Globus terre* and *Augustinus elementa mundi* (#217). In the northeast corner, surrounded by a semicircular ring of water, called *mare caspium*, is an island on which are the words Gog Magog, another reference to the Alexander legend. This seems to fit well with the contemporary view of Gervase of Tilbury (c.1150-c.1220), who wrote in his *Otia imperialia* (a collection of geography, history and curiosities, composed around 1212 for the entertainment of Otto IV), that *in India there is a Mons Caspius, after which the Caspian Sea is called, between which and the [same] sea Gog and Magog, most savage peoples, were enclosed by Alexander*. The far east is still psychologically very far off indeed in the 12th century, the original context of this map. The position of Gog and Magog, just beyond “Babylon”, in or at the edge of the Caspian Sea, bespeaks a view of a much smaller world than the one later maps (such as those of *Ebstorf* and *Hereford* - #224 and #226) would represent. A less clear reference to the Alexander legend appears on the *London Psalter map* (second half of the 13th century, *Book II*, #223): *in the northeast, a mountain chain in which a large gate is placed separates an unnamed region from the rest of the world*.



The *Ebstorf* and *Hereford* world maps (between 1214 and 1273 and between 1276 and 1305, #224 and #226 respectively) are very similar and may derive from a common source. As in the *Revelations* of the Pseudo-Methodius, *Gog* and *Magog* (on the *Ebstorf* map) are cannibals; they are pictured in the midst of a northeastern area walled-off by mountains through which a passage, named *Porte Caspie*, leads. The creatures are eating human body parts (recognizable as feet and hands) and drinking the blood flowing out of them; a footless, handless victim is also depicted. According to the caption, *Alexander enclosed two wild nations, Gog and Magog, who will be the companions of Antichrist. They eat human flesh and drink human blood.* The Turks (Islam) are also written into this hostile ethnography: on the edge of the map, but in Europe, is the caption *The city and island of Taraconta which is inhabited by Turks of the race of Gog and Magog, a barbarous and wild people*

who eat the flesh of young people and aborted fetuses. This is a traditional story taken from Ethicus Ister. On the other hand, charges of cannibalism leveled against the Jews of Fulda in 1235 - an early example of the ritual murder libel - provide a vivid backdrop to the cannibalism depicted on the *Ebstorf* map and suggest that the identification of Gog and Magog with Jews was not merely literary, but spilled over into real life.

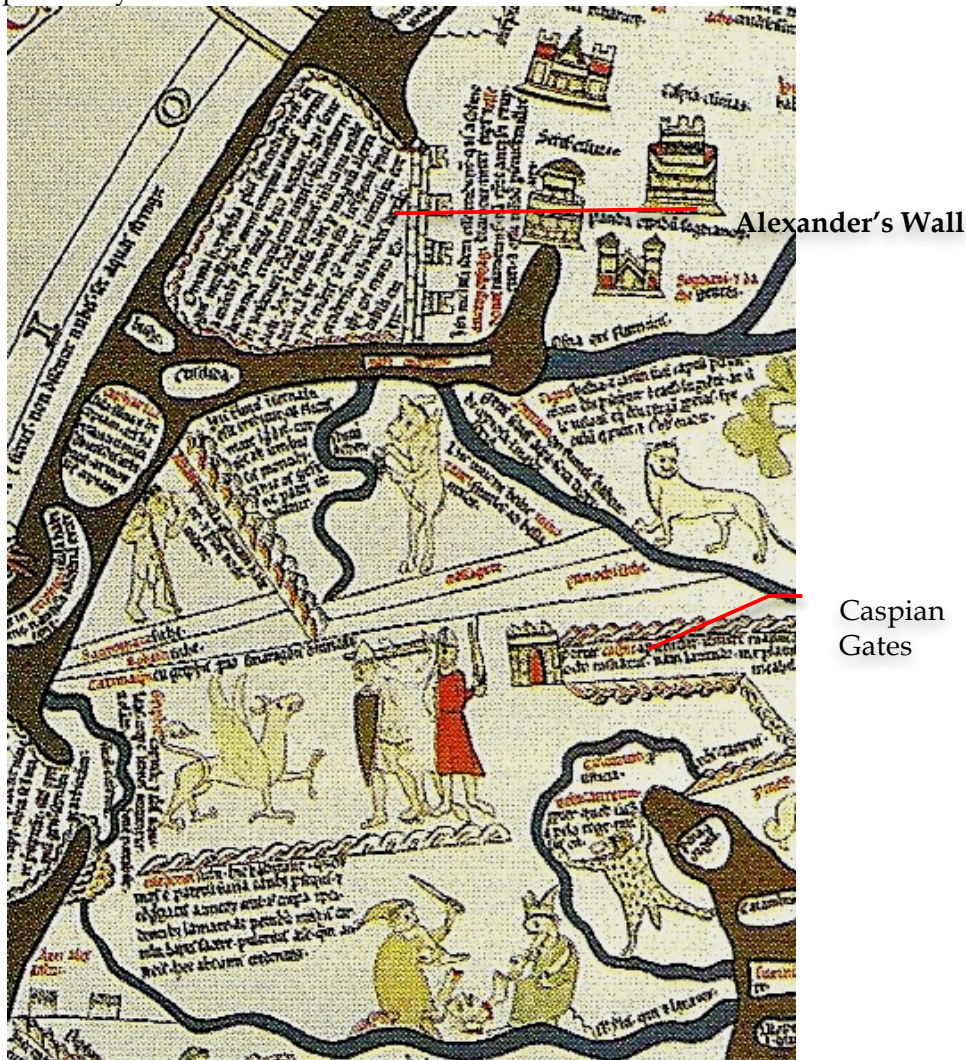


An extensive area of northern Asia is cut off by the sweeping curve of the Caucasus. Its principal feature is a territory that projects as a rectangle into the cosmic ocean. This is the home of the dreaded man-eaters Gog and Magog, symbols of all the hordes of oppressors that might at any time overwhelm peaceful humanity. The castellated lines indicate the walls that Alexander the Great was reputed to have built here for extra protection. Gog and Magog are shown on the *Ebstorf* map as cannibals; they are pictured in the midst of a northeastern area walled-off by mountains through which a passage, named *Porte Caspie*, leads. The creatures are eating human body parts (recognizable as feet and hands) and drinking the blood flowing out of them; a footless, handless victim is also depicted. The

In the Middle Ages scholars were also greatly interested in the exploits of Alexander the Great who became legendary, therefore a number of drawings and inscriptions in Asia are associated with him: i.e., five bell-tents, the central one with a cross, rising from an altar-style base on the boundary between Asia and Africa; a gateway with opened doors at the end of an eight-mile mountain pass, representing the Caspian Gates through which Alexander was said to have passed on his way north; the city of *Choolissima*, conventionally drawn, capital of the land of Magog, taken by Alexander after a long siege; two islands in the northern ocean, *Miopar* and *Mirabilis*, appeased by presents and entreaties; the island of *Terraconta* inhabited by intractable cannibalistic Turks "from the stock of Gog and Magog"; and finally the battlemented wall with which he imprisoned "the accursed descendants of Cain". Below this area is the land of the *Scythian* races. Obviously knowledge of this part of the world was very limited and the space was thus filled with dramatic pictures.

The tale of cannibalism is repeated on the *Hereford* world map: on a five-sided peninsula, enclosed on four sides by mountains and to the south by a wall. The inscription states that *the horrors in this place are worse than can be imagined, it is intolerably cold and a cutting wind (called "bizo" by the inhabitants -- cf. Fr. "bise") blows from the mountains. The inhabitants are without culture, feed on human flesh and blood, descend from Cain and were enclosed by God through Alexander the Great--in his presence, an earthquake brought down the mountains around them and where there were no mountains, Alexander built a wall. To the south of this wall another caption states that those enclosed here are the same cannibals mentioned by Solinus, who will break out at the time of Antichrist and devastate the world. Finally, the island of Terraconta is said to be inhabited by Turks of the race of Gog and Magog, a barbarous and wild people who eat the flesh of young people and aborted*

foetuses much as on the *Ebstorf* map. There is elsewhere on the *Hereford* map a depiction of cannibals eating human body parts, though without an explanatory caption in proximity.



A few contemporary examples that also relate to geography but come from very different kinds of sources will suffice to show that this is not just mapmakers' superstition or fantasy. The philosopher and scientist Roger Bacon (ca. 1220-after 1292) wrote in his "collected works", the *Opus Maius* (ca. 1265), that a knowledge of geography was necessary to know about the Ten Lost Tribes, that is, Gog and Magog. He was concerned with where they are, not only so that the nations in those places [the north, where Alexander enclosed Gog and Magog] might be converted, not only to save Christians who are held captive there, but also on account of the persecutions of the Antichrist, such that we might know whence he is to come and when. Bacon's concerns are grounded in Biblical authority, though he follows contemporary convention in confusing the ten tribes with Gog and Magog. Marco Polo (1254-1324) seems to have asked about Gog and Magog on his journeys through Mongol China: "It is the place which we call in our country Gogo and Magog, but they call it Ung and Mungul, and in each province there was one people, in Ung were the people of Gog and in Mungul lived the Tartars."



Ranulph Higden's world map, c. 1350 (#232) shows a walled-off area in the northeast, south of the Caspian Sea. That the Caspian is not an inland sea but open to the ocean signals this depiction's conservatism. The text specifies that Gog and Magog will break out at the end of the world and do great damage, and that they were enclosed by Alexander. Higden's work seems to have been very popular: around 185 Latin manuscripts traceable to Higden's design.

The *Catalan Atlas* of c.1375 (#235) reflected Catalonian sea-going trade and knowledge in the 14th century and had a number of predecessors, notably northern Italian maps from which Catalan cartographers seem to have adopted details for the far east--details that derive from Marco Polo's famous account. Gog and Magog figure very prominently on the map of 1375. In the northeast corner of Asia, enclosed by the Caspian Mountains, is a mounted

figure, 'the great lord, prince of Gog and Magog. He will come at the time of Antichrist with a great following. His followers hold a baldachin above him. The captions note that Alexander enclosed 'the Tartars Gog and Magog' in the Caspian Mountains (with the aid of Satan!) as well as other nations who dared to eat raw flesh and with whom the Antichrist will come. This slightly altered traditional story was not an optional part of a world map, nor was it susceptible to 'critical realism' (even though its author, Cresques, doubts that Alexander could have got so far to the east). So even if the cartographer was skeptical, his audience clearly expected to find these details in this place. As if to complete the 'apocalyptic geography', in another mountainous cell beside that of Gog and Magog, Christ distributes the palms of immortality to the faithful (kings, nations, bishops, monks). A caption cites *Isaiah* 66, 19 to the effect that at the time of judgment the Lord will send out prophets to convert distant nations who have not yet heard of him. This effectively ties the ends of the earth to the End of the World. The rotation that forces the reader to study the northern part of the map from the top reinforces the sense that the north is separate from the rest of the world.

Alexander the Great is shown in the upper right half of the map. There we are told that Satan came to his aid and helped him to imprison the Tartars Gog and Magog. Alexander then had two bronze figures made by which to bind them with a spell. The reference is to the gate that Alexander is supposed to have built in the *Caspian Mountains* to exclude Gog and Magog, who are here equated with various Central Asian tribes. The

text on the map specifically refers to the *"various tribes who have no scruples about eating any kind of raw flesh..., the nation from which the Antichrist will come forth,"* but which will ultimately be destroyed. There is a further allusion to Alexander having erected two trumpet-blowing figures in bronze; these, according to various medieval legends, resounded with the wind and frightened the Tartars until the instruments were blocked up by various nesting birds and animals. The text freely combines the medieval legend of Alexander with biblical traditions. This applies equally to the corresponding scene, where the great lord and ruler over Gog and Magog is shown with his men, the devil painted on their banners: *"He will march out with many followers at the time of the Antichrist"* but will ultimately be defeated as predicted in the *Book of Revelation* (20: 7-10). To the south are those who will be sent to declare his glory among the Gentiles. The text here refers to *Isaiah* 66:19: *"I shall send those who are saved to the peoples of the sea, to Africa and Lydia";* and further, *"I will send to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles."* To this prophetic inscription is added a text about the *Antichrist*.



The people of Gog and Magog following their monarch, bearing banners with the emblem of the devil, detail of the Catalan Atlas portion of Asia.

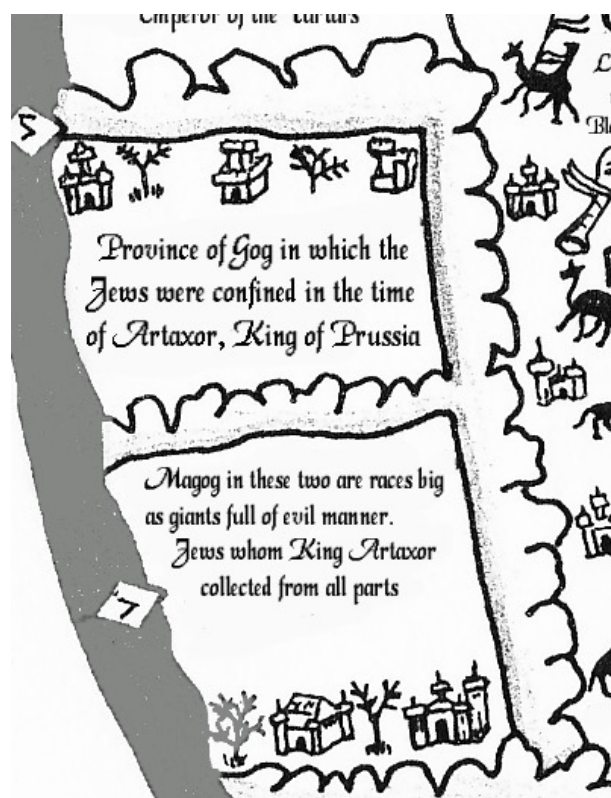


Alexander the Great accompanied by Satan, who helped him imprison the peoples of Gog and Magog, and the two bronze statues of trumpeters he ordered erected. Wind blowing through the trumpets frightens the Tartars, detail of the map of Asia

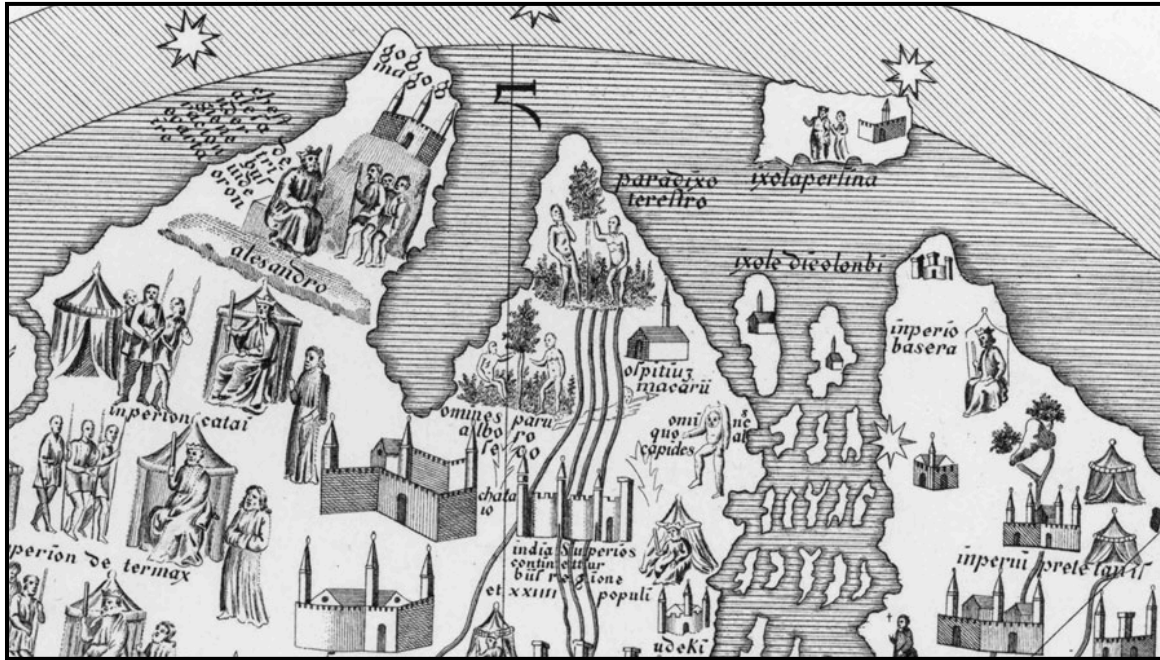
In *Mandeville's Travels*, the enormously popular 14th century armchair travelogue and catalogue of wonders, the narrator claims that the Jews of the Ten Tribes, whom men call *Goth and Magoth*, were enclosed in the 'Caspian Mountains' by Alexander, and that they will escape at the time of Antichrist and slaughter Christians in great numbers. Not merely a book of fables to contemporaries, *Mandeville's Travels* both reflected and reproduced the world view of literate Europeans in the later Middle Ages.

The so-called *Borgia map* (#237), a round *mappamundi*, probably of south German manufacture, was engraved (anonymously) on a copper plate around 1430. In the far east, within two square regions surrounded by mountains and oriental-looking towers or fortifications, are the captions: "*The province of Gog, in which, at the time of Artaxerxes, king of the Persians, the Jews were enclosed*" and "*Magog in these two [regions] are huge peoples, giants, full of all evil customs. They [are those who] Artaxerxes collected from all parts of Persia*". The coasts of the Black and Mediterranean Seas follow ancient and medieval tradition; indeed, the map seems very medieval in form. Nonetheless, the shape of Africa and northern Asia suggests the influence of Catalan world maps, that is, the reception of new knowledge. The Portuguese 'discoveries' and the west coast of Africa (Cape Bojador, 1434) do not appear. The confusion of the monstrous and evil peoples Gog and Magog with Jews is typical for the time. It is worth noting that the exile of the Ten Lost Tribes is attributed (as in most medieval sources) not to Salmanassar (II Kings 17), but (incorrectly) to the Persian King Artaxerxes. This king, according to the apocryphal fourth book of Ezra or Esdras (7,7) *allowed* the Jews of his realm to emigrate to the Holy Land, but did not *collect* them. Biblical accuracy was not a priority in this type of text/map. This is the first map known to me to list the *iudei inclusi* - whom it implicitly identifies as Gog and Magog.

Gog and Magog



On Andrea Bianco's 1436 map (#241), in the north of Asia, on a peninsula that stretches far out into the sea, are the words "Gog Magog chest Alexander gie ne roccon ecarleire de tribus iudeoron" [Gog and Magog of the Jewish tribes whom Alexander enclosed in the rocks (mountains) ages ago]. Gog and Magog begin at this time, following the trend established by the 12th century in popular exegesis, to be confused on world maps with Jews, especially the Ten Lost Tribes. However, this map's treatment of Gog and Magog is different from that on any other map. Bianco depicts this land as an extension of Asia that juts out into the blue border surrounding his map, as if beyond the middle of d'Ailly's equinoctial circle (#238).



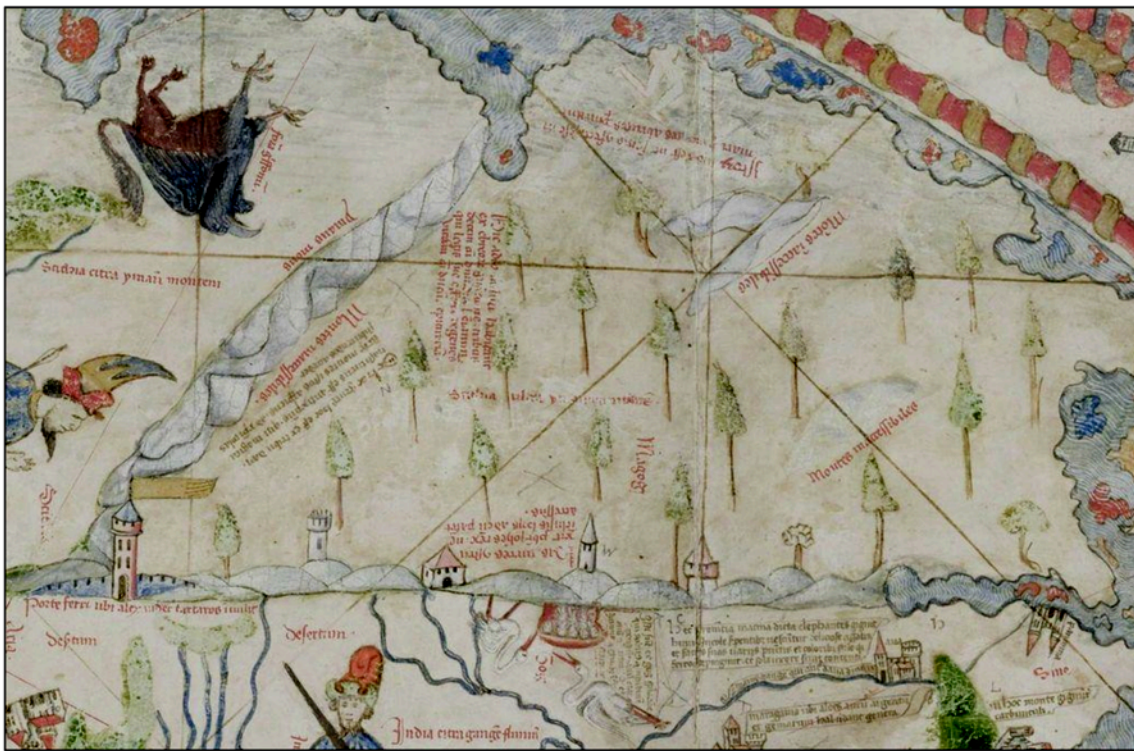
Detail of Bianco's 1436 mappamundi showing Adam & Eve, the Terrestrial Paradise and the four great rivers (right) and the location of the notorious Gog and Magog on a peninsula (left)



The Benedictine monk Andreas Walsperger of Constance made a world map in 1448 (#245), which is now in the Vatican. Destombes transcribes a caption in the far northeast: "Waldachat, the capital of Cathay, where the Great Khan resides, Cannibals eat human flesh [figure of a cannibal]; Gog and Magog, land of the Red Jews enclosed by the Caspian Mountains". Walsperger's map testifies generally to an enduring belief in fables and monsters: "And around this pole [the Antarctic one] are most amazing monsters not only of the animal variety but even among humans".

A Genoese world map of 1457 (#248) abandons the northeastern quarter of Asia to the apocalyptic peoples: surrounded by impassible mountains and in the north and east by the ocean is a large territory in which are placed trees and fortresses. In this enormous prison, labeled *Scythia ultra Ymaum montem* [Scythia beyond Mount Ymaus], is the word MAGOG in large letters (perhaps in Ezekiel's sense as a country?). D. Wuttke (*Karten der seefahrenden Volker*) provides a

transcription of the captions in the margins and in the figure. The relevant ones here read (in the west): "From this people, that is from the tribe of Dan, Antichrist or [...] will be born, who, opening up these mountains by means of nefarious arts [...] will come to the mountain chain that encloses them"; in the north-west: "Up to here live the ten enclosed tribes of the Hebrew race." In the southwest corner is a tower and a wall, underneath which is the caption "The iron gates where Alexander enclosed the Tartars". The Jews and the Tatars are in the foreground here. *Magog* (Gog is missing), the Tartars, the Ten Lost Tribes, the Antichrist and the Alexander story are mixed as though they naturally belonged in the same place - as they by then did, at least in the literature and exegesis directed to the literate but not learned. This point is made forcefully by the carefully empirical skepticism of the contemporary cartographer Fra Mauro. Moreover, there seems to be some doubt about the identification of the people enclosed. As mentioned above, the inscription at the gate states that Alexander enclosed the Tartars. In the enclosed area, "*Magog*" is inscribed in a style used elsewhere to indicate names of regions, but the Tartars are not mentioned. The same is true of "*Gog*," which is written just outside the enclosure, along with a picture of two cranes attacking dwarves, the latter likewise identified as *Gog*. Inside the enclosure, inscriptions identify the Hebrews, who lead an excessive lifestyle, and the tribe of Dan, from which the Antichrist will be born.



Detail of so-called Genoese World Map: Region enclosed by Alexander (*Magog*)

Fra Mauro, a Camaldolese monk is best known for the 1459 *mappamundi* (#249). Despite its firm roots in medieval learning, this remarkable map points toward a very different cartographic method. Traditional and humanistic learning, practical knowledge of "political geography" not surprising for a resident of the commercial metropolis of the western Mediterranean, and a hard-boiled common sense vie for space on this densely packed work. Mauro criticizes and emends Ptolemy whenever he feels

he has less 'corrupt' or more recent information. It is worth citing Mauro's text at length because it is of the greatest cultural and historical interest, demonstrating the gulf that separates him from many contemporary and later cartographers:

Some write that at the foot of the Caspian Mountains or a little ways distant are those people, who, as one can read, were enclosed by Alexander the Great. But this opinion is clearly erroneous and cannot be maintained in any way.

But it is certainly known that there is great diversity in the peoples who live around this mountain such that so great a number of people could not be unknown. Especially since these parts are civilized enough to be visited frequently by our [merchants] as by other peoples, who are Sorsams, Mingresi, Armenians, Circassians, Tatars and many other people who constantly travel this way. Therefore if these peoples were those who were enclosed by him, I believe that [travelers] would be aware of it, and they would be known to us. [...] Therefore I conclude that these [enclosed] peoples are a long way from the Caspian Mountains, and are surrounded by impassable mountains and by the Ocean Sea as though by three cords, and they are under the reign of Tenduc, and are called *Ung* and *Mongul*, which the common people call *Gog* and *Magog*, thinking that they are those who will break out at the time of the Antichrist. But this error certainly originates with some who distort Holy Scripture to suit their own beliefs. I base my argument on the authority of St. Augustine, who in his book on the City of God reproves the opinion of those who say that *Gog* and *Magog* means those people who will be the followers of Antichrist. And Nicholas of Lyra agrees with this judgment, and interprets these two names according to the *hebraica veritas* [true Hebrew text and meaning of the Bible].

The people called *Hu[ng]*. These two countries are ruled by Tenduc. Of these it is commonly believed that these people enclosed by Alexander in these countries of Hung and Mongul derive their names from these two aforementioned countries, which are called among us *Gog* and *Magog*, which opinion I do not believe. This [land of] Mongul is inhabited for the most part by Tatar folk. [In the far north-east, at the edge of the "occean", is this legend:] Some believe that these mountains are the Caspian Mountains. But this belief is not correct.

Mauro hesitates to banish *Gog* and *Magog* entirely, as he suggests they must be far away, surrounded by mountains and the sea (as on most world maps at the time). Yet he also denies their apocalyptic role, appealing to St. Augustine. He may even have in mind older versions of the Alexander legend, in which not *Gog* and *Magog*, but twenty-two (or twenty-four) unclean nations were enclosed. Finally, in the second text alluding again to the enclosed nations, Fra Mauro notes that these areas (*Hung* and *Mongul*, the names Marco Polo reports are used for *Gog* and *Magog*) are under the reign of Tenduc and rejects the opinion that they are identical with *Gog* and *Magog*, as *Mongul* is inhabited by Tatars (Mongols). Therefore, he undermines the possibility he allowed in the other text that the enclosed peoples might still exist somewhere far from the Caspian. The *Caspian Mountains* he essentially dismisses as a fable, though he cites elsewhere the Alexander story as a source: a city called *Bucifala* was named by Alexander in honor of his horse. Nonetheless, *Gog* and *Magog* continued to appear on world maps for almost two centuries. The medieval world-view died very hard indeed.

Ptolemaic world maps (based on Ptolemy's description of the world, #119) enjoyed a vogue among humanists in the 15th century and helped establish a more

‘secular’ image of the world beyond Europe. Generally, they eschewed the legendary contents of medieval cartography. One variant of this classicizing cartography is the “Sallust” map (#205). The Genevan Sallust map is one of many made in the 15th century as illustrations to the *De bello Iugurthino*. Unlike any other maps of this kind, this one seems to have been influenced by non-humanistic texts/culture and thus includes the *iudei inclusi* and Gog and Magog, who live in different but abutting territories.



In a circular world map from 1470 included in a Ptolemaic atlas in the Stiftsbibliothek at Zeitz, (#251), one reads north of the Caspian Sea, almost at the end of the world, the legend: “Gog and Magog//the Jews of the 10 [tribes] [of Caspia?]/are enclosed here”. Directly outside the gate holding them in are the characteristic legends “here the pygmies fight with the cranes” (a reference to the ancient tale of the pygmies and the cranes) and “here men eat the flesh of men”. Within the enclosure is a crowd of people, the only ones depicted on the entire map, wearing pointed hats - a clear though exaggerated reference to the “Jew’s hat” of medieval custom. The confusion of Gog and Magog with the Ten Lost Tribes is not surprising unless contrasted with the careful scholarship of a

Fra Mauro. Although this map derives, along with Walsperger's 1448 map, from a common original, circular in form, made around 1425 at the abbey of Klosterneuburg, and therefore is not Ptolemaic in origin, some Ptolemaic maps adopted the legend of the enclosed Jews, which, along with Gog and Magog, was passed down well into the 16th century. This longevity may have been based on a sense of Biblical authorization, the extreme distance at which these peoples were placed – "orientalized" and "septentrionated" to the far end of Asia- or a popularity exceeding that of other medieval legends.



Two very 'medieval' little maps, mere woodcuts that cannot compete with the elaborate learning of large *mappaemundi* or Ptolemaic maps, appeared around 1480. Hans Rust's map, *Das ist die mapa mundi*, was printed in three editions at Augsburg (#253.2). At the top left, by Persepolis, Parthia and the Euphrates is a mountain chain, from which a head topped by a pointed Jew's hat protrudes. The text reads "*Caspian Mountains Gog and Magog enclosed*" [*berg Caspij verschlossen Gog Magog*]. A similar map by Hans Sporer, Nuremberg (?) c. 1480, survives and it is worth noting that precisely this detail survives when dozens of others had to be eliminated for reasons of space.



The *Insularium* of Henricus Martellus, a German cartographer active in the 1480s at Florence, contains a world map (#256) of decidedly Ptolemaic character that would exert considerable influence on cartography and exploration as the basis of Martin Behaim's famous 1492 globe (#258) and as part of Columbus' world-view (#257). On



Martellus' map, in the far northeast, surrounded by mountains, is the caption "Iudei clausi". Behaim's globe followed tradition in many details; his depiction of the southeast coast of Africa was already quite outdated, as Fra Mauro had had a more accurate knowledge of this area. However, Behaim's cartographic team depicted neither Gog and Magog nor the *enclosed Jews*. This is particularly striking given that they relied heavily on the Marco Polo tradition for much of Asia and referred to the Venetian many times on the globe itself.

Juan de la Cosa accompanied Christopher Columbus in 1493 and later made three other voyages to the Americas. His chart of the world of 1500 (#305), which in other contexts is of interest for the depiction of the "new" world, shows in the "old", in the far northeastern corner of Asia, enclosed by a great semicircular river and split by a broad moat, "R[egio] Got" and "R[egio] Magot": above R. Got is a dog-headed figure. Above R. Magot is a humanoid monster whose face is in its chest and who holds in each hand what appears, from the color and shape, to be a piece of meat. The topos of Gog and Magog as *anthropophagi* has been merged with Solinus' *blemmyae* in the latter example, with another legend concerning men with dog's heads in the former.

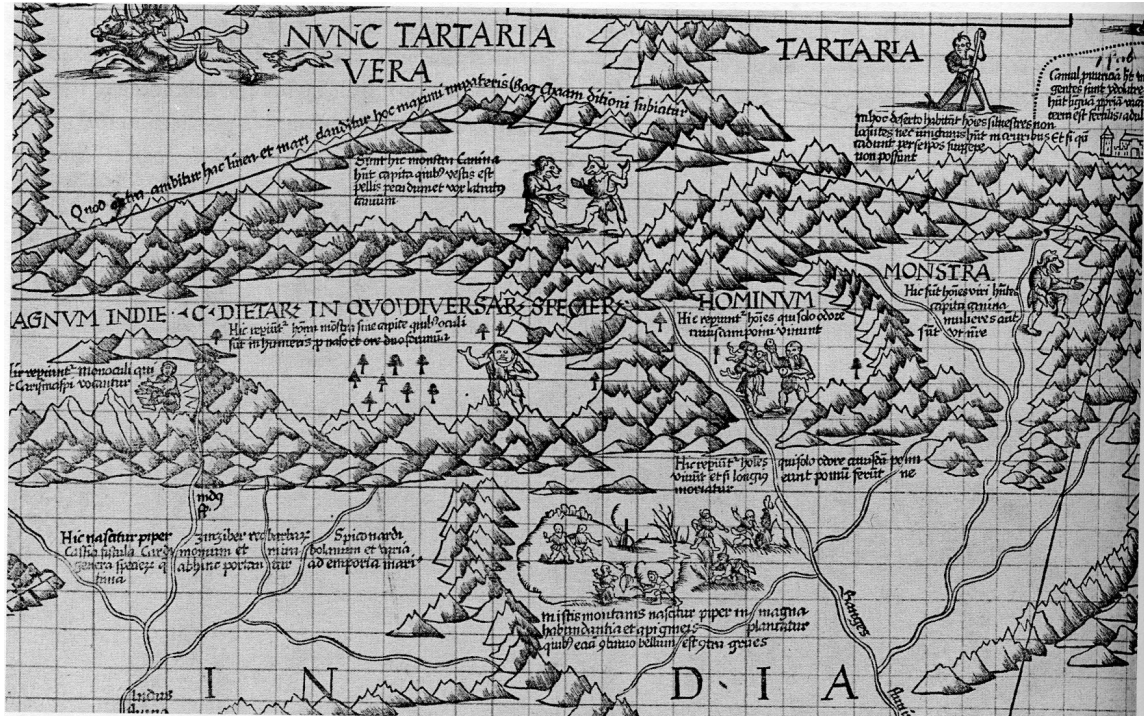
In the top right corner at the farthest limits of the map's coverage in northern Asia de la Cosa places the monsters Gog and Magog, one half dog and the other half with his head on his chest, apparently eating human flesh



The early 16th century contains no turning point as regards Gog and Magog. Francesco Roselli's 1508 oval woodcut map (#315) shows the *iudei clause* enclosed within mountains; beside them is Magog. One reason for the continued popularity of this medieval theme may be the surge in apocalyptic expectations around the beginning of the century, reflected in the burgeoning pamphlet literature of an apocalyptic nature: prognostications of floods and the end of the world had been popular since the 1470s; rumors of the Ten Lost Tribes leaving their eastern places of exile to free their co-religionists in the Christian diaspora circulated among Jews all through the 15th century and reached Christian circles in the early 16th century. The publication of new editions of the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius, such as Michael Furter's 1498 Basel edition, which includes a dramatic woodcut of Gog and Magog breaking out of their rocky confinement (labeled "*How Gog and Magog, leaving the Caspian Mountains, capture the land of Israel*"), must have contributed a good deal to raising the apocalyptic temperature, as (in Germany) did the perennially popular "Anti-Christ books", a genre of popular apocalyptic exegesis related to the vernacular historiated Bibles and that dates back to the late 14th/early 15th century.



Martin Waldseemüller's *Carta Marina* of 1516 (#320) uses the caption "*The Great Tartar Gog Khan King of Kings and Lord of Lords*", a confusion of the Tatar/Mongol Khan with Gog, perhaps a hang-over from Marco Polo's long-lasting description of the area. This caption was to reappear on several maps. Antoine de la Salle's map of 1522 mentions Goc and Magoc. Peter Appian's Ingolstadt map of 1530 contains both the *iudei clause* and Magog, as does an anonymous Nuremberg print of 1535: the *iudei clause* are north of Gogh et Magogh. One 1535 map of eastern Asia labels the northeastern coast AMAGOUCH; in the ocean off the north coast of China are numerous tents, at the centre of which is the well-known text: *the Great Tartar Gog Khan King of kings and Lord of Lords*. Gog and Magog have "gone native" in the far east, devoid of original context but evidently still powerful to conjure with. Another map of Asia, *Asiae Novissima Tabula*, uses exactly the same caption in the far northeastern corner of Asia, north of China, underneath *Mongul*. Waldseemüller's agglomerative caption clearly expressed connotations and images useful to other cartographers.



Gerard Mercator's early world map of 1538, a nice cordiform affair modeled on the work of Oronce Fine, included in the far northeast of Asia the caption *Amagoch*. Giacomo Gastaldi and Matteo Pagano's Venice map of 1550 mentions Gog; various later Gastaldi maps (e.g. 1555), and Paolo Forlani's map of 1560 feature *Balor* and *Giog*; whereas Gastaldi's 1561 Venice map shows neither *iudei clause* nor *Gog and Magog*, but *Tartari provincia* throughout northeastern Asia. The old legends seem to be drying up. However, Gerard Mercator's 1569 Duisberg map, his first using the projection that bears his name, cites Marco Polo: "*Mongul which we call Magog*".



Indeed, Marco Polo's authority continues to influence depictions of the Far East on world maps well into the 17th century. On Rumold Mercator's map of Asia in *Atlas sive Cosmographia meditationes de fabrica mundi et fabricati figura* (Duisburg 1595), in the far northeast corner of Siberia are, three hundred years later, Polo's *Vng al[ias] Gog* and *Mongul al[ias] Magog* and on the sheet entitled "*The Arctic Pole and a description of the adjacent lands*", again in the far northeastern corner of Siberia, are *Ung*, called *Gog* by us and *Mongul alias Magog*. The same text appears on a polar map of c. 1600: *Septentrionalium Terrarum descriptio Per Gerardum Mercatorem*. The Helmstedt Globe [Helmstedter Erdglobus], from the end of the 16th century, lists in far northeastern Asia, reading from north to south: *Bargu*, *Tatar (the river)*, *Ung which is called Gog by us*, *Mongul*.

Willem Janszoon Blaeu's globe, dated 1640, though probably 1648, labels far northeastern Asia as follows: *the farthest cape is Bargu; then come Mongul, Tekmongul and Sumongul, Ung and Tenduc (the kingdom ruled by Christians at the time of M[arco] the Venetian, 1290)*. In Vincenzo Coronelli's *Libro dei Globi* (Venice 1693/1701), on the map gore depicting China and northeastern Siberia, are *Magog et Mongal* and underneath this *Gog-IaGog et Ung*. Marco Polo's authority as 'someone who had been there' was clearly strong even in the 17th century - rather an irony, since he was drawing more on his own pre-programmed western Christian view of China than on his experience. 'Empirical' observation and tradition were perhaps less distinct than modern scientific terminology suggests.

The term 'ethnography' might seem misleading when applied to a legendary people, especially since this people and their characteristics are of secondary importance compared to their function in a specific context. Yet precisely the apocalyptic role of Gog and Magog requires and justifies their continued existence in a certain area as a people with certain (horrific) characteristics that are specified both in text and in images. Even as the medieval tradition of Gog and Magog loses its piquancy, showing up more and more frequently without commentary, Gog and Magog remain a necessary part of European views of the world. It might be argued that their gradual relegation to the far northeastern corner of Asia, to an area largely unknown to Europeans, explains their survival on maps. I would like to suggest that they are confined to the unknown end of the world precisely because they are the unknown End of the World - they fill in, take over where all other knowledge ceases, they explain the inexplicable and help make intelligible the geographic and temporal extremes of an otherwise increasingly finite, known world.

For many cartographers of the high Middle Ages, and for some in later periods, Gog and Magog's disgusting association with cannibalism and uncleanness was in the foreground, part of the apocalyptic charge sheet. The relative lack of such detail on later maps does not necessarily mean mapmakers were reproducing a purely obligatory trope: the hotter apocalyptic climate of the later period may well have made such detail unnecessary. On the other hand, more precise Biblical scholarship, especially in the 16th century, may have helped suppress such "additional" details, which I argue happens to the legend of the *Red Jews*. But Gog and Magog far from disappear with the advent of 'empirical' cartography. The slow emergence of a more 'empirical' approach to mapmaking, founded on the assumption that personal experience of a place was more credible than ancient tradition, pushed Gog and Magog to the outer margins of the world, to the ends of the earth where Marco Polo surmised they must be - since they clearly were not anywhere the mapmakers' informants had visited (cf. Mauro). Tradition was being contested, yet it sometimes masqueraded as empirical evidence. While tradition continued well into the 17th century to be used to fill crucial gaps, Swift remarked trenchantly at the end of this period (1733):

*So Geographers in Afric-Maps With savage Pictures fill their gaps
And o'er uninhabitable
Downs Place Elephants for want of Towns.*

The following is an excerpt from the *Geographicus Rare Antique Maps Blog*, April 1, 2010

The appearance of the lands of *Gog* and *Magog* in many early maps is one the most interesting and enduring examples of Biblical lore being translated into the cartographic medium. The kingdoms of *Gog* and *Magog* appear in many early maps of Asia and the World produced between about 1200 to 1750. Generally these kingdoms are situated somewhere west of the Caspian Sea and, more frequently, to the north of China around Mongolia or Siberia. How did they get there?

The tale of *Gog* and *Magog* is, of course, Biblical in origins with elements in Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions. They appear in Genesis and Ezekiel as cursed grandchildren of Noah and are set up early on as enemies of the righteous. The most alarming mention of *Gog* and *Magog* appears in Revelation 20:7-8:

... And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed from his prison, and shall go out to seduce the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, *Gog* and *Magog*, and shall draw them to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea...

But who exactly where *Gog* and *Magog* and where did this terrifying empire have its lands? The Biblical location "the four corners of the earth", is not exceptionally helpful save that it puts these nations at the extreme edge of existence. The Jewish historian Josephus associates *Magog* with the Scythians. In antiquity Scythia was an empire to the north of Parthia or Persia that included much of central Asia as far east as India and Tibet.

Building Alexander's Walls

The Building of Alexander's Gates from an early Arabic manuscript.

The Alexander Romance, a c. 300 CE compendium of stories and myths associated with Alexander the Great, brings *Gog* and *Magog* into a historical context. Apparently when Alexander marched his army into the Caucasus he discovered a people beset and harassed by the empires of *Gog* and *Magog* to the north. Alexander responded to this threat by constructing an enormous wall of adamantine between two mountains known as the "Breasts of the World". Today this is commonly associated with the Caspian Gates of Derbent. This mighty wall, reminiscent of the Great Wall of China, stretches some forty kilometers between the Caspian Sea and the nearby mountains, effectively blocking passage through the Caucasus. Though Alexander had nothing to do with this wall, it was actually constructed by the Sassanid Persians to defend against Gokturk invasions, it does once again place the lands of *Gog* and *Magog* somewhere to the north and west of the Caucasus.

Pliny too locates *Gog* and *Magog* behind a great set of gates in the Caucasus, describing a place where the mountains have been torn asunder and "gates have been placed, with iron covered beams, under the center of which flows a river emitting a horrible odor. On this side of it on a rock stands the fortress called Cumania, erected for the purpose of barring the passage of the innumerable tribes."

The *Qur'an* next takes up this story and adds its own more mythical element. The great hero Dhul Qarnayan (literally "two-horned one", a reference to the ram horns Alexander wears on coins minted during his rule to indicate his descent from the

Gog and Magog

Egyptian god Amun) is said to have walled the infernal armies of *Gog* and *Magog* behind a great gate where they will remain – until doomsday. At this point, when *Gog* and *Magog* are let loose and they rush headlong down every height (or advantage). Then will the True Promise draw near. (*Qur'an* 21:96-97).



The building of Alexander's Gates from an early Arabic manuscript.

Al-Idrisi World Map

Al-Idrisi's world map (*see monograph #219*) with *Gog* and *Magog* behind the wall and circled in red. Note, this map is oriented to the south so here *Gog* and *Magog* are in the proximity of China.

In the ninth century the Caliph Al-Wathik-Billa actually sent out an expedition, under one Sallam the Interpreter, to discover the Gates of Alexander. Sallam is said to have searched the Caucasus high and low without success before heading deeper into Asia where he discovered the mighty wall. Sallam's report influenced a number of important Islamic geographies, most importantly for this story, the 12th century

geographer Muhammed al-Idrisi, who was employed by the Sicilian monarch Roger II. Idrisi directly associates Alexander's Gates, and consequently *Gog* and *Magog*, with the Great Wall of China. Idrisi's work includes some of the most sophisticated and advanced cartographic work of pre-modern Europe and profoundly influenced European cartography for the next several hundred years. Though not widely distributed in his lifetime, nor solely responsible for the presence of *Gog* and *Magog* in later European maps, the influence of Idrisi's map and geographical notations cannot be ignored in any consideration of how these Biblical kingdoms/figures entered the mainstream of later European cartography.

In the rest of Europe, tales of *Gog* and *Magog* and the horrors associated with them were a constant element in mediaeval religious rhetoric, which preached of an imminent "end of days". Saint Augustine in his 15th century religious classic "City of God" discourses at length on the duo suggesting that when "final judgment is imminent . . . the whole city of Christ being assailed by the whole city of the Devil, as each exists on earth . . . which he names *Gog* and *Magog*". Augustine did not associate *Gog* and *Magog* with an actual place, but rather with an evil that existed all around us. Even so, this concept must have been too abstract for the medieval man who continued to look for the lands of *Gog* and *Magog*. History was about to oblige.



In 1241 CE the hordes of Ghengis Khan swept out of Asia destroying and conquering everything in their path. The brutal, efficient, and alien Mongols must surely have seemed to be the wrath of god unleashed – the prophesied end of days had come and with it, *Gog* and *Magog*. One Russian chronicler says: "In those times there came upon us for our sins unknown nations. No one could tell their origin, whence they came, what religion they professed. God alone knows who they were, God, and, perhaps, wise

men learned in books.” The period of the Mongol invasions lasted roughly from 1241 to 1285 CE. Nonetheless, after devastating the Chinese Empire, sacking Baghdad, laying waste to Russia, and storming into Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, and Poland, the invincible hoard simply vanished ... or so it must have seemed in Europe. In fact, beset with internal political turmoil and the death of the Great Khan, the hoards retreated to Central Asia in order to reorganize. At this time Europe, who had yet to rediscover Ptolemy and truly develop a modern cartographic tradition, wasn’t actively making maps, but when it did, a place of origin Tartars or Mongols (*Gog and Magog*) would have to be identified.

Marco Polo, in his *Travels*, is possibly the first European literary figure to identify *Gog and Magog* with the Tartars. Polo, claimed to have lived in China from 1271 to 1298, where he became an important functionary in the court of Kublai Khan. Polo worked for years as an emissary of the Great Khan and traveled extensively throughout the vast empire. Much of the information about Asia appearing on early maps of the continent, including the *Vinland* map (#243) and the Waldseemuler world map (#310), can be directly linked to Polo’s narratives. Polo associates *Gog and Magog* with the lands of Tenduk, a province to the north of China ruled by Prester John. In Polo’s narrative *Gog* is translated as *Ung* and *Magog* is the home of the Tartars. Ibn Battuta, the great 14th century Moroccan traveler, referring to the tale of Dhul Qarnayan, supports Polo by himself connecting the Great Wall of China with the gates setup to restrain *Gog and Magog*, “Between it [the city] and the rampart of Yajuj and Majuj is sixty days’ travel.”

Though many dispute the validity of Polo’s journals, his impact on the European conception of the world was profound. With the rediscovery of Ptolemy’s *Geography* by Italian humanists and the development of a sophisticated European cartographic tradition the need for more advanced and updated Ptolemaic maps emerged. Many of these maps referenced Polo and al-Idrisi in adding *Gog and Magog* in the unknown lands of east Asia, thus influencing the cartographic representation of this area for centuries to come.

Today *Gog and Magog* are considered by many scholars to be a Jungian representation of “the other”, “the frontier”, or both.

References:

- Anderson, A. R., *Alexander’s Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations*, 1932.
The Chatauquan, Chatauqua Literary and Scientific Circle, Chatauqua Institution, vol 3, pp. 304.
Augustine, Saint, *The City of God*, (Translated by Marcus Dods), page 658.
Boyle, J. A., “The Alexander Romance In The East And West”, *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, 60 (1977), pp. 19–20.
Gow, Andrew, *Gog and Magog on mappaemundi and Early Printed World Maps: Orientalizing Ethnography in the Apocalyptic Tradition*
Lester, Toby, *The Fourth Part of the World: The Race to the Ends of the Earth, and the Making of History’s Greatest Map*, pp. 45-64.
Pliny, *Natural History*, (translated by H. Rackham).
The Bible
The Qur’an
Stoneman, Richard (editor and translator) (1991). *The Greek Alexander Romance*. New York: Penguin. ISBN 0-14-044560-9.
Yule, Henry; Cordier, Henri (1923), *The Travels of Marco Polo*, Mineola: Dover Publications, ISBN 9780486275864.

Gog and Magog



1697 Rossi Map of Asia - Magog appears north of China.



Gog and Magog in Sanson's 1691 world map