The Beatus Maps: Milan, a.k.a. Mapa de Oña

The Milan or Mapa de Oña Beatus derivative, 12th century, MSS F. 105 sup. Dela Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Ms. F. 105. SUP., folios 71v-72r, Milano, Italy
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The Milan, a.k.a. Mapa de Oña Beatus.
In addition to the fourteen mappae mundi preserved in the illuminated manuscripts of the Commentary on the Apocalypse by Beatus of Liebana, a mention of two other maps: the mappa mundi from the miscellaneous manuscript of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan (Ms. F. 150 SUP., folios 71v-72r), produced in the Hispanic peninsula, possibly in the scriptorium of the monastery of San Salvador de Oña (Burgos), at the end of the 12th century or the beginning of the 13th; and the map from the middle or end of the 12th century depicted on the wall of the “left-hand” chapel or Gospel chapel of the church of the monastery of San Pedro de Rocas (Orense). The maps of Milan and of San Pedro de Rocas were copied from a mappa mundi of the Beatus codices; however their purpose was altered from being an illustration of the Commentary on the Apocalypse by Beatus of Liebana to one whereby, quite possibly, these images were to become tools used in the Middle Ages to perform spiritual pilgrimages. Although these latter images do not form part of a manuscript of the Commentary on the Apocalypse by Beatus of Liebana, the Milan mappa mundi will be included in this study of the mappae mundi of the Beatus codices, due to it being a copy of its cartographic model. What is apparent in the Milan mappa mundi is its many similarities to the El Burgo de Osma Beatus mappa mundi, especially by its depiction of the twelve apostles, the Earthly Paradise and its circular shape. As a reference, this map falls into Wilhelm Neuss’ Family I stemma that organized the Beatus mappae mundi into related “families”. The Beatus Family I comprises 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.

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

- 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 Rhypsean Mountains and is punctuated along its course by widenings and narrowings: it flows out into a lagoon, the paludes Moeitis [the Azov Sea], whose name is shown in the maps, and subsequently continues until the posto 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 northeast of the circumscribing 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.

- 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).
- 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 Rocas 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:
  o The maps of El Burgo de Osma, Milan, Lorvão and San Pedro de Rocas represent the world in a circular shape (as do the maps of Turin and San Andres de Arroyo of the Family IIb).
  o 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.
  o The maps of El Burgo de Osma, Milan, Lorvão and San Pedro de Rocas include the depiction of the apostles, and insert by this method the apostolic geography in an artistic form.
  o The maps of El Burgo de Osma, Navarre and Lorvão illustrate and/or allude textually to the sciopods in the fourth part of the world.

In the Milan mappa mundi the three continents (EVROPE, ASIA and AFRICA) are explicitly labeled, with the “E” of Europe inexplicitly actually placed east of the River Tanais in the territory of Asia. Usually in the Beatus mappae mundi Africa is not labeled. In addition, as mentioned above, the “fourth part” (quarta pars) of the world is displayed south of the oecumene [inhabited or habitable world].

The encircling ocean is devoid of fish, boats and sea monsters, but does include nine islands, seven of which are identified as Argine, Cris, Britannia, Socia, Tile, Fortvnarem Insula and Speridis and two are left unidentified. This ocean also contains two gulfs: the mare Carprvm [Caspian Sea], which forms a “T” in the northeastern region in Asia; and, on the Atlantic coast of Africa, just south of the Pillars of Hercules the encircling ocean forms a sinus, or gulf, possibly representing the Gulf of Guinea that includes an island.

The Mediterranean Sea is devoid of any islands and is one of only three Beatus mappae mundi to show the Adriatic Sea, the other two being the El Burgo de Osma and the Saint-Sever. The Red Sea is depicted as two strips of water colored red and perpendicular to the sea that separates off the fourth part of the world. These two inlets represent the Arabian and Persian Gulfs. A caption placed in the fourth part of the world states: The Red Sea is so named because it is colored with reddish waves; however, it does not possess this quality by its nature, but its currents are tainted [and stained] by the neighboring shores because all the land surrounding that sea is red [and close to the color of blood]. From there a very intense
vermilion may be separated out, [as well as other pigments with which the coloring of paintings is varied. Therefore, since the soil has this nature, it is washed away in rivers, and whatever pigment is eroded lends color to the water, It is for this reason that] red gemstones are found on these shores).

The flumen Tanays, the River Tanais [today’s Don River] seems to originate near the Rhyphian Mountains in the North. This river essentially forms the boundary between Europe and Asia. Along its path as illustrated by a series of “bulges” are the Azov Sea [paludem Theotis] and the Black Sea. The Jordan River rises in the Mountains of Lebanon, emerging from two feeder rivers which have a later confluence, and disgorges into a lake titled fons Iordanis. The Nile River is represented as a single-track course with its origin in a circular lake in the far western part of Africa with the caption: This spring is cold by day and warm by night. This river is shown to terminate as a delta flowing into the Mediterranean Sea.

Cultural place-names and most captions are colored in red, while most geographical physical/natural features are in black ink. Mountains and mountain chains are illustrated using triangular shapes. Only mons Sina is colored something other that grey, having been given a coat of orange. Of all the Beatus mappae mundi, only the Milan mappa mundi displays the Mount of Olives that is positioned realistically next to Jerusalem. The territory between the Pillars of Hercules, placed in the western coast of Africa, is the caption: Duo Calpes contrary sibi – two mountains confronting each other, and appears to be populated by Gens, possibly the Berber people dwelling in the valley of the Atlas Mountains. Other significant mountains displayed on the Milan map include Mount Sinai (mons Sina), Mount Olympus (mons Olimpus), the Pyrenees (without a name), the Caucasus.

The mappae mundi of El Burgo de Osma, Milan and Lorvão, as well as the mural painting of San Pedro de Rocas incorporate into the cartographic depiction the heads or busts of the twelve apostles, located in the places that they evangelized. Peter and Paul in Rome, Andrew in Achaia, Thomas in India, John in Asia, Matthew in Macedonia, Philip in Gaul, Bartholomew in Lycaonia, Simon the Zealot in Egypt, Matthias in Judea, St James the Lesser (alias Alphaeus) in Jerusalem and (a displaced) St James the Greater in Spain (Galicia).

The Earthly Paradise is labeled PARADISVS and is displayed as a rectangle with a curved eastern side to accommodate the encircling ocean. Within in this “box” are drawn the four rivers emanating from a central source forming an “X”: the flumen Fison moving towards the northeast, the flumen Eufrates towards the southeast, the flumen Geon to the southwest and the flumen Tigris toward the northeast. There is no depiction of the “original sin” with Adam and Eve and the serpent.

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.

And, of course there is the “fourth part of the world”, the antipodean region, south of the African region and separated from the other three by the Red Sea and another east-west body of water that runs parallel. Here there is the long caption derived literally from the Etymologiae of St. Isidore: Apart from these three parts of the world there exists a fourth part, beyond the Ocean, further inland toward the south, which is unknown to us because of the burning heat of the sun; within its borders are said to live the legendary
Antipodes. To emphasize the extreme heat a yellow sun with red rays is portrayed in this inaccessible part of the world.

**Location:** Dela Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Ms. F. 105. SUP., folios 71v-72r, Milano, Italy.

**REFERENCES:**

- Bagrow, L., *History of Cartography*, Plates XV, XVI.
- Hapgood, C., *The Maps of Ancient Seakings*, p. 5; Figure 1.
- Nordenskiöld, A. E., *Facsimile Atlas*, p. 33, Figure 17.

*illustrated*