The Girona Beatus mappamundi, ca. 975, Museo de la Catedral, MS. 10, Girona, Spain
The Girona Beatus.
This 10th century Beatus mappa mundi is so named because it is currently conserved at the Cathedral of Girona in Spain, although it was created perhaps at the monastery of San Salvador de Tábara (Zamora) (some authors use the spelling “Gerona”). As a reference, this map falls into Peter Klein’s “Fourth Recension” and Wilhelm Neuss’ Family IIb stemma. The Girona map has been classified as belonging to the Beatus Family IIb group, which consists of the following maps:

- Manuscript of Tabara (970). Although its mappa mundi has not survived, as we said in reference to the manuscripts of the Commentary on the Apocalypse which contain the mappa mundi, it must have been very similar to the maps of Las Huelgas and Girona.
- Mappa mundi of Girona. (975) #207.6.
- Mappa mundi of Turin (first quarter of the 12th century) #207.15.
- Mappa mundi of Manchester (ca. 1175) #207.20.
- Mappa mundi of Las Huelgas (1220) #207.24.
- Mappa mundi of San Andrés de Arroyo (ca. 200 - ca. 1248?) #207.26.

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

- The toponyms are virtually identical. Gonzalo Menendez-Pidal recognized the following as being inherent traits of these maps: the inclusion of Cappadocia and Mesopotamia, as well as the addition of the names of Gallia Belgica and Gallia Lugdunensis (instead of just the basic Gallias as shown in the maps of Family IIA). These maps do not contain all the references pertaining to the apostolic geography.
- The captions are the same, repeating the reference to the Amazons, to the River Nile and the fourth part of the world (except in the Manchester and San Andrés de Arroyo maps, which lack them). Also, in all of them there are texts relating to Dacia, and to the frontiers between Europe and Asia.
- The elements of physical geography are the same and are shown in a similar way. The ones that stand out are the following:
  1. The Red Sea does not connect the west and the east (except in the Turin map), but rather, its course is interrupted before reaching the Far East and penetrates inland, thus forming the Gulf of Arabia. Parallel to it is the Persian Gulf, so that both of them form the Arabian Peninsula. An inland sea, and not the Red Sea, separates off the fourth part of the world. Among the hydrographic elements, the River Nile stands out, as it has a double branching—western and eastern—the latter branch approaching close to the East African lake. The River Danube branches into four, combined in a two plus two format, which finally join up into a single river: the most southerly branch is the one with the name flumen Danubius. None of them disgorge into the encircling ocean, and one of them, possibly the Rhine (named Ren) emanates from an orographic feature which we can identify as the Rhyphean Mountains (illustrated further to the west than in the maps of the IIA family), or more probably as the Alps, due to their geographical position. The flumen Eusis (colored red) appears to be duplicated in Asia and Europe. In the Iberian Peninsula we find the Tajo and another river, the Guadalquivir or the...
Guadiana. A North African river (colored red) rises among some mountains next to an area occupied by the Garamantes, Baggi and Getuli and flows towards the interior of the continent. In Mesopotamia there is a river that could be the Tigris or the Euphrates. The River Jordan is divided into two branches where it crosses the Lebanese Mountains (except in the San Andrés de Arroyo map).

2. Regarding the mountains and mountain chains, the one we might identify due to its location as the mons Aquilo in the maps of Family IIa, has been modified into two mountain chains at the far north-east of the world (except in the San Andrés de Arroyo map which excludes this item). These mountain chains are shown merging in a similar way to the Pillars of Hercules, except in the Las Huelgas map, where they appear parallel. The Caucasus Mountains are the source of the Asiatic flumen Eusis. In Armenia there is another mountain. In Asia we also find the Lebanese Mountains; Mount Carmel; Mount Sinai; a mountain in Arabia; as well as others in the vicinity of Antioch and India. In the northeast of Europe we see the Rhyphian Mountains, which, in comparison with the maps of family Ha, seem to have been displaced towards the west, although they might be the Alps. The French Alps and the Pyrenees are shown as being parallel. A mountain in the centre of Europe, which is not named, becomes the source of the European flumen Eusis. In North Africa there are three mountain chains arranged in a parallel form and perpendicular to the Mediterranean Sea. There is also a mountain in the region settled by the Garamantes, Baggi and Getuli, which is the source of a river that flows out into the Mediterranean Sea. In West Africa are the Pillars of Hercules. To the south of them, are the montes at luni. Parallel to the Red Sea is a mountain chain that is unidentified.

3. The islands have a rectangular shape, except in the Las Huelgas map, where one also finds similar irregular shapes and orographic elements in the encircling ocean, and in the San Andrés de Arroyo map, where they are oval with wavy outlines. The number of islands increases in the maps of family lib, and curiously more of them are unidentified, compared with only one island lacking a name in the far southeast of the world in the maps of the Ila Family. Perhaps, in addition to modifying the islands into decorative features, the reason for the absence of names could stem from the unreadable nature of the island toponyms in the reference map. This explanation could be valid especially for many of the islands in the Mediterranean Sea, where we run into extreme cases, such as the Manchester map, in which none of the islands has a name. One supposes that, due to the manipulation of the codices, the central zone of the reference map suffered from much wear and tear, and the reading of the place-names was rendered complicated or even impossible. In the maps in this group, the islands are also shown both in the encircling ocean and in the Mediterranean Sea, except in the map of San Andrés de Arroyo, which shrinks the Mediterranean into a narrow channel of water, as if it were a river, and hence, its islands are transferred into the ocean. Thus we find in the encircling ocean of this map the following islands, starting from the east, clockwise: Cecilia; Sardinia; Bitinia insula; Tile insula;
Maiorga; Lino de Suez; Anglia; Irlanda; Scocia; and [...jarchia. In the remaining maps, the islands of the ocean are as follows: Taprobane; Chryse and Argyre; an unidentified island to the far southeast; Scaria insula (now lacking a name); the Fortunate Isles; Ireland; Great Britain; Thanatos; Thule; and an unidentified island in the Manchester map. Many of the numerous islands of the Mediterranean Sea lack any identification or are now unreadable. The following can be recognized in some maps, from west to east: Corsica; Crete; Sicily; Samos; Tarsus; and Cos.

4. The northeastern zone of the world is described as desert and a sandy area. Also, the maps of Girona, Las Huelgas and Turin allude to Ethiopia and India being likewise.

5. The Earthly Paradise is illustrated by means of original sin, and the River Jordan seems to rise there (except in the San Andrés de Arroyo map).

6. There is no homogeneity in the depiction of cities within the maps of this group, and this ranges from their total absence to a truly profuse decoration: the maps of Girona and Turin do not include any image; that of Manchester shows only the city of Jerusalem; that of Las Huelgas enhances the decorative interest by including, besides Jerusalem, the images of Ascalon and Babylon; and lastly, the San Andrés de Arroyo map shows all the cities, and also illustrates with symbols of cities certain elements of the physical or human geography.

7. Except for the Turin map, there are drawings of fish, marine animals and ships in the encircling ocean. By contrast with Family IIa, those of Family IIb display a certain tendency towards introducing sea monsters, especially the maps of Girona, Manchester and San Andrés de Arroyo.

A more careful comparison between the maps of this Family by Sandra Sáenz-López Pérez allows us to form deeper links between certain ones. Undoubtedly the closest relation is found between the maps of Girona and Turin; and not surprisingly, the Turin manuscript is thought to be a copy of the Girona one. Despite the difference in the shape of the map (Girona is rectangular and Turin circular), and other details (such as the presence of winds solely in Turin, not in Girona; the absence of depictions in the encircling ocean in Turin; or the extension of the Red Sea from east to west, also in the Turin map), the coincidences between both these mappae mundi are clear-cut: neither of them has pictures of cities; in both there is a mention of St James the apostle; and the serpent of temptation is coiled along one of the sides of the rectangle of the Earthly Paradise, as if it were a support for it, and this occurs likewise in the Manchester map. Allegedly, as we have already mentioned, the Las Huelgas map was a faithful copy of that of Tabara, and the Girona map was also similar to it. However, we cannot ascertain very much on this topic, as the Tabara map no longer exists.

On the map in the manuscript of Beatus’ The Commentary of the Apocalypse of St. John now in Girona, Spain, which is dated 975, has a rectangular shape with rounded corners, parchment colored background, colored illustrations of geographical features with the Garden of Eden (Adam and Eve), many cities identified, the Antipodes and numerous rivers. Mountains are represented in multiple colors and appear as floral-like designs (except the depiction of the Atlas Mountains [montes atluni] in West Africa which are uncolored). All but two of the rivers are colored blue with the exception of a North African river and the Eusis River which are colored red. There are two mountains and a lake in West Africa that remain uncolored. The Red Sea is so colored and extends
the entire east-west length of the unnamed African continent. There is an east-west sea that runs parallel with the Red Sea, however the Red Sea separates off near Arabia and proceeds inland, creating the Arabian Gulf [sinus Arabicus], although the placement of the name seems to refer to the Nile River’s eastern branch.

In the *Earthly Paradise* the background is colored green to allude to a luxuriant paradisical garden and the serpent is no longer coiling about a tree but around a support structure. As in most of the Beatus maps Adam is portrayed on the left side, and Adam and Eve cover their groin areas with their hands indicative of the fact that the “original sin” has already been committed as explained in *Genesis*. One might also point out that, aside from the physical features of mountains and rivers, this illustration is the only one on the *Girona* map. Next to this illustration is the Mount of Lebanon that divides the River Jordan into two branches.

Europe and Asia Minor are labeled along with the legend *Hic capat Garope* [here begins Europe] between Europe and Asia. The name *Garupe* that appears in the maps of the Beatus Family IIb must be interpreted as an orthographic error for Europe.

Among the *mappae mundi* of the Beatus codices, the maps of *Girona*, *Las Huelgas* and *Turin* of Family IIb, as well as the *Saint-Sever* map from Family I, include the caption referring to the land of the Amazons (mythical women who lived without men and who were warriors), repeated practically in an identical form, with slight orographic differences: *Timiscifici campi deserti in ac regione gens amazona fertus abitasse* [The desert plains of the Temiscirians in this region are said to be inhabited by the amazons]. This region, in the *Family IIb* maps erroneously place this caption in the southeastern area, specifically between Abicusia and India, instead of in the vicinity of the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea or Asia Minor.

The northern part of the circumfluent ocean is filled with both ships and sea creatures, while the rest of the ocean has no ships but many sea creatures, and four of these are more monsters than fish. To the right (in the south) there is a hybrid terrestrial-aquatic creature with a dog’s head and a fishy body which seems to be a *canis marinus* or sea-dog, and at the top left (in the northeast) there is a remarkable hybrid marine chicken, both of these the sort of hybrid sea monsters discussed in Chet Van Duzer’s *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps*. At the top right (southeast) corner of the map there is a fish with a serrated back, which is the *serra* or “saw-fish”, a traditional sea monster mentioned by Isidore and other authors which is said to cut ships open when swimming under them. At the bottom of the map, in the west, there is a man inside a huge sea monster, and this man can only be Jonah, whom God had a sea monster swallow for three days in order to protect him from a storm. The identification of the man as Jonah is confirmed by his gesture: he holds one hand up to his mouth to indicate that he is speaking, which is the artist’s way to indicate that Jonah is praying from inside the belly of the monster (*Jonah* 2:1-9). In medieval art Jonah is almost always represented in the mouth of the monster, rather than in its belly, so this image of Jonah is unusual. There are two ninth-century illustrated Byzantine *psalters* in which Jonah is depicted inside the monster, so there are precedents for the image of Jonah on the *Girona* Beatus *mappa mundi*, but it is not clear how the artist of the *Girona* Beatus would have been influenced by a Byzantine iconographic tradition. So the image of Jonah on the *Girona* Beatus *mappa mundi* is something of a mystery.
A marine chicken on the Girona Beatus mappa mundi

The fish displayed in the encircling ocean appear to be chasing one another where they are biting at each other. Also in this encircling ocean are seven named islands: Tabrotune Insula, Crise et Argire Insula, Furtinarum Insula, Scotia Insula, Britania Insula, Tantutos Insula and Tile Insula) and two unnamed islands.

The Pillars of Hercules are shown in the shape of “bird’s wings” in western Africa (not on the Iberian peninsula and northwest Africa) and titled Dvo Alpes contra aresibi [two mountains confronting each other].

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.
In the far western area of the world, just opposite the coast of the Iberian peninsula, a man, probably Jonah, is shown inside a large sea monster on the Girona Beatus mappa mundi.

**Location:** Museo de la Catedral de Girona (Spain), Num. Inv. 7 (11), ff.54v-55 [llb]

**Size:** 400 x 260 mm.

**REFERENCES:**
- Bagrow, L., *History of Cartography*, Plates XV, XVI.
- Hapgood, C., *The Maps of Ancient Seakings*, p. 5; Figure 1.
The Beatus Maps: Girona

*Nordenskiöld, A. E., Facsimile Atlas*, p. 33, Figure 17.

*illustrated

The image of St. James in the Girona Beatus manuscript is the earliest, extant portrait of the apostle. Here he appears with the other apostles in a group portrait mentioning the places where they preached (ff. 52v-53r)
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