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# Monsters at the End of Time: Gog and Magog and Ethnic Difference in the Catalan Atlas (1375)

Thomas Franke

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**MONSTERS AT THE END OF TIME:  
GOG AND MAGOG AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCE  
IN THE CATALAN ATLAS (1375)**

by

**THOMAS FRANKE**

**BACHELOR OF ARTS, UC IRVINE 2012**

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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## Abstract

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Although they are only mentioned briefly in Revelation, the destructive Gog and Magog formed an important component of apocalyptic thought for medieval European Christians, who associated Gog and Magog with a number of non-Christian peoples. Modern scholarship has focused primarily on medieval representations of Gog and Magog as Jews, largely dismissing other sources as obscure derivatives of these anti-Semitic depictions. However, the Catalan Atlas (1375), which depicts Gog and Magog as Tartars, problematizes this characterization. Created by Abraham Cresques, a Jewish cartographer, for Pedro IV of Aragon, I argue that the Atlas modifies traditional Christian apocalyptic narratives—and particularly those involving Gog and Magog—to critique Christian thought about the past, present, and apocalyptic future. This conclusion stresses the importance of analyzing depictions of Gog and Magog within their immediate historical contexts and challenges the primacy that has been given to anti-Semitic representations of Gog and Magog.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Part I: Gog and Magog in the Middle Ages.....	14
Chapter One: Revelation's Real Monsters.....	15
Chapter Two: Augustinian Alexander.....	45
Part II: Gog and Magog in the Catalan Atlas.....	74
Chapter Three: Obscured Identities.....	75
Chapter Four: Making the Local Foreign.....	105
Conclusion.....	126
Bibliography.....	131

## List of Figures

Figure 1: The Battle of Gog and Magog in the Wellcome Apocalypse

Figure 2: Sketch of the “Giants in Guildhall,” early modern statues of Gog and Magog

Figure 3: Antichrist converting the Jews in the Wellcome Apocalypse

Figure 4: Alexander the Great praying to God to enclose Gog and Magog in Thomas of Kent’s *Alexander*

Figure 5: Thirteenth-century sculpture of the blindfolded Synagoga from a German cathedral

Figure 6: The German Ebstorf World Map, 1235

Figure 7: Detail of Gog and Magog from the Ebstorf World Map

Figure 8: The English Psalter World Map

Figure 9: Detail of the Monsters in the English Psalter World Map

Figure 10: Detail of a monster disrupting its border in the English Psalter World Map

Figure 11: Detail of monsters disrupting their borders in the Ebstorf World Map

Figure 12: Detail of the text describing Gog and Magog in the Fra Mauro World Map

Figure 13: The map panels of the Catalan Atlas

Figure 14: Detail of the apocalyptic narrative in the Catalan Atlas

Figure 15: Detail of the Prince of Gog and Magog in the Catalan Atlas

Figure 16: Detail of a crowned figure bearing palms in the Catalan Atlas

Figure 17: Detail of Alexander the Great interacting with Satan on the Catalan Atlas

Figure 18: Detail of Nubia in the Catalan Atlas

## Introduction

*Satan shall be loosed out of his prison and shall go forth and seduce the nations which are over the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog: and shall gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they came upon the breadth of the earth and encompassed the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And there came down fire from God out of heaven and devoured them.*

Revelation 20:7-9

The Book of Revelation is replete with bizarre monsters and creatures. Locusts in the shape of horses, a leopard with the feet of a bear, and the Evangelists' beasts covered in eyes represent just some of Revelation's more striking phantasms. Among these creatures Gog and Magog seem rather nondescript, lacking any physical description and enjoying only a brief reign of terror before being struck down by God. But from these relatively mundane figures medieval theologians, historians, artists, and cartographers crafted a diverse array of interpretations and depictions of the Last Things. These peoples and their monstrous legacy in the Middle Ages are the subject of this work.

Even before the earliest theologians and exegetes were able to offer their interpretation of Revelation's Gog and Magog, whose names appear only two other times in the Bible, they were characterized by obscurity. A variation of the pair of names, Gomer and Magog, first appears in Genesis as the grandsons of Noah, sons of Japheth.<sup>1</sup> Gog and Magog appear again in the apocalyptic Book of Ezekiel, but here Gog is a person, Magog is a land, and both are enemies of God.<sup>2</sup> It is unlikely that Gomer and Magog were interpreted by medieval theologians as bearing any relation to Revelation's Gog and Magog since Japheth was thought to be the father of Europe. Ham, the son who

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 10:2 (Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition).

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. 39:6.

laughed at Noah's nakedness, became the father of Africa would have been a much more likely progenitor of God's enemies, being associated both with a foreign land and with being Noah's bad son.<sup>3</sup> Ham was thought to be a direct ancestor of Nimrod, the blasphemous architect of the Tower of Babel. Because of the Septuagint's use of the Greek word meaning "giant" to describe him, Nimrod was understood by some medieval exegetes to be a giant.<sup>4</sup>

Ezekiel's construction of Gog and Magog, on the other hand, if not a source for Revelation's depiction, certainly bore similarities to it. For instance, whereas Revelation's Gog and Magog march upon "the camp of the saints," Ezekiel's will "come upon my people of Israel like a cloud, to cover the earth."<sup>5</sup> Medieval artists and theologians, though by no means uniform in their understanding of how the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel related to the Gog and Magog of Revelation, seem to have sometimes conflated the two. The illustrations of Gog and Magog in the fifteenth century Wellcome Apocalypse, for example, depict the narration of Revelation at length and features a Gog and Magog clad with shields, swords, and mail (Figure 1). Comparing this image with Ezekiel's description of Gog and Magog suggests the former's indebtedness to the latter, as, in Ezekiel, God describes Gog and Magog as "horsemen all clothed with coats of mail, a great multitude, armed with spears and shields and swords...all with shields and helmets."<sup>6</sup> This conflation, of course, does not change the fact that Ezekiel's and Revelation's Gog and Magog are inherently different entities. Despite its brevity and its

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<sup>3</sup> On the association of Noah's sons with continents, see Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100-1450* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 37-8.

<sup>4</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 23.

<sup>5</sup> Ezek. 38: 14.

<sup>6</sup> Ezek. 38: 4-5.



obscure relationship to the other Gog and Magogs in the Bible, the passage in Revelation mentioning Gog and Magog became the centerpiece of many medieval narratives and interpretations concerning the Last Things. Although Ezekiel's rendition of Gog and Magog did inform some medieval interpretations of the apocalypse, it was less popular throughout the Middle Ages than Revelation's Gog and Magog were.



Figure 1: The Battle of Gog and Magog in the Wellcome Apocalypse, Folio 25 r., England c.1420-30 (Source: Wellcome Library, wellcomeimages.org).

The variety of roles that Gog and Magog played in medieval apocalypticism are too many and varied to list here in their fullness. However, particularly by the later Middle Ages, Gog and Magog were frequently depicted as being grotesque and monstrous. One common feature of these depictions was the ingestion of vermin and insects, an act which Christians understood to be particularly defiling.<sup>7</sup> Often these practices of grotesque diet also included the consumption of human flesh. Visual renditions of Gog and Magog frequently depicted the pair as giants well into the sixteenth century, as the now destroyed Gog and Magog statues in London show (Figure 2). The association of Gog and Magog with giants was so prevalent that one of the villainous

<sup>7</sup> Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 214.

giants in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century *History of the Kings of Britain* is named Gogmagog.<sup>8</sup> Despite their inauspicious beginning in Revelation, by the later Middle Ages Gog and Magog were squarely situated as monsters. This variety in interpretations and depictions means that even amongst medieval monsters—beings best described by Sarah Alison Miller as “slippery, messy, and terribly attractive”—Gog and Magog are particularly elusive.<sup>9</sup>



Figure 2: Early Modern statues of Gog and Magog, London. F.W. Fairholt, *Gog and Magog, the Giants in Guildhall*, 1859 (Source: Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants*, 30).

Given their monstrous heritage, an overview of scholarship on medieval monsters will be helpful in situating my study. Paul Freedman and Gabrielle Spiegel have asserted that American scholars of the twentieth-century have been drawn to study medieval history because of its subject matter’s inherent difference from modernity—its alterity.<sup>10</sup> Although perhaps not universally true, this assertion does seem to accurately represent many categories of twentieth-century academic inquiry into the Middle Ages, such as

<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin Classics, 1966), 72-73.

<sup>9</sup> Sarah Alison Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Freedman and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American Medieval Studies,” *American Historical Review* 3 (1998): 677-704.

those concerned with medieval magic, sex, and mysticism. But if Freedman and Spiegel's assertion about the role of alterity in modern scholarship on the Middle Ages is correct, it seems that monsters have possessed *too* much alterity to be consistent topics of scholarly inquiry.

J.R.R. Tolkien's 1936 essay "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics" was the first significant attempt by a medievalist to grapple with, and make meaning of, the monsters in medieval literature.<sup>11</sup> Tolkien's defense and exploration of monsters is rather limited, though, in that it is restricted to *Beowulf* and is premised primarily on the mythic cultural resonances of dragons and giants in a society rich with pagan literary traditions. Tolkien repeatedly claims that historians, whose primary interest was in the "search of facts and chronology," are unfit to appreciate or to deconstruct the literary or cultural significance of *Beowulf's* monsters and symbolism.<sup>12</sup> Tolkien's claims about the limits of historical readings of *Beowulf* may have rung true with regards to contemporary historians keen on empiricist approaches to historical research as first articulated by Leopold von Ranke.<sup>13</sup>

However, Tolkien's argument in favor of the cultural and literary importance of *Beowulf's* monsters is very much akin to the work of modern day historians in its insistence that the text should be read through the lens of its historical setting. It is only because dragons represent mythic enemies of God in early Germanic Christian culture, Tolkien argues, that the dragon in *Beowulf* is worthy of consideration by scholars. Thus,

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<sup>11</sup> J.R.R. Tolkien, "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," in J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Monsters and the Critics and Other Essays*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 5-48.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 28.

<sup>13</sup> On American attitudes towards historical research before World War II and the centrality of von Ranke's empiricism to those attitudes, see, Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 30-31.

despite Tolkien's ostensible aim of demonstrating the importance of monsters within literary, rather than historical, contexts, his argument for these monsters' literary merit is premised upon the specifics of their immediate historical contexts. Despite this early and considered approach to the monsters of the Middle Ages, few of Tolkien's contemporaries or immediate successors bothered to investigate the role of the monster and the monstrous in medieval literature and culture. Even near contemporaries who did conduct studies of monstrous topics—including Andrew Runni Anderson's study of Gog and Magog published in 1932—did not frame their subjects primarily as monsters.<sup>14</sup>

It was not until 1986, with John Block Friedman's publication of *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, that monsters once again became the focus of a sustained academic study.<sup>15</sup> Unlike Tolkien, whose endorsement of monsters as a legitimate topic of study was limited to *Beowulf*, Friedman contended that all medieval depictions of monsters offer a rich insight into how their creators constructed the identity of Christians. Friedman argues that medieval European understandings of where monstrous races resided were shaped by the ever-changing understanding of the relationship between Christendom and the rest of the world. Friedman argues that the monster functions as a foreign Other against which 'civilized' European—and, though not acknowledged by Friedman, masculine—identity was constructed. Friedman's work began the process through which the monster was legitimized as a field of serious academic inquiry. Through both its strengths and its limitations, Friedman's work

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<sup>14</sup> Andrew Runni Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1932)

<sup>15</sup> John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

provided the framework within which Jeffrey Jerome Cohen produced his landmark “Monster Culture (Seven Theses).”<sup>16</sup>

In “Monster Culture,” Cohen argued that the study of monsters would benefit from looser conceptions of temporal and geographical specificity. Cohen framed his approach to achieving this slack as experimental—a set of seven theses about the function of monsters in the cultures that produce them. These theories placed the embodiment of monsters as a central component of their analysis. The ways in which monsters are embodied, Cohen argued, reify society’s boundaries and norms by violating them. Cohen’s seven theses became the theoretical touchstone for subsequent scholarship on medieval monsters, as some of the first edited collections dedicated to monsters indicate.<sup>17</sup>

Inasmuch as his inventive “Seven Theses” provided a framework for subsequent studies of monsters, Cohen’s first monograph, *Of Giants*, provided a model of how such a theoretical approach to medieval monsters could be executed. In *Of Giants* Cohen implicitly expands the theoretical claims he makes in “Monster Culture.” Cohen admits as much in his Prologue, in which he outlines the theorists and philosophers who most influenced his approach to monsters, among them feminist theorists Elizabeth Grosz and Julia Kristeva. As Cohen’s reference to these scholars suggests, Cohen examines his sources— medieval histories, romances, biblical exegesis, and saints’ lives—through the lenses of feminist and discursive theories of subjectivity and embodiment in order to demonstrate the centrality of the giant’s body to learned constructions of medieval

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<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3-25.

<sup>17</sup> See Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills, eds., *The Monstrous Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

masculinity. That is, for Cohen, when compared to the body of the chivalric knight, the body of the giant—be it grotesque, stately, or dismembered—is a tool through which medieval English Christians constructed elite masculine identity.

Cohen's theoretical innovations produced a methodology that was proudly uninterested in two things that are of the utmost importance for historians—chronological and geographical specificity. This is most evident in Cohen's frequent conflation of the monster's body, its symbolic meaning, and the changes those two things underwent over time. Thus, in his discussion of two Old English texts, the eighth-century poem "The Ruin" and the eleventh century *Beowulf*, Cohen suggests that the two works—which appear in separate manuscripts and were created as many as three centuries apart—be read together through the Freudian "Two Father" theory to better conceptualize the role of giants in medieval thought.<sup>18</sup>

Not surprisingly, the flood of insights spawned by Cohen's approaches to monsters is also notable for its decided resistance to historicizing monsters. For example, art historian Asa Mittman predicated an argument about the identity construction of Anglo-Saxons upon the thirteenth-century Hereford World Map. The spatial relationship between the Map's depiction of England, the monsters of the Antipodes, and Jerusalem, Mittman asserts, is a testament to the fact that Anglo-Saxons perceived themselves as being liminal and as inhabiting a remote and monstrous land. Mittman bolsters this assessment by referencing Adomnan of Iona (c. 627-704) and Bede (c. 672-735), authors who were writing six centuries before the Hereford World Map was created.<sup>19</sup> Although Mitman's approach to assessing medieval identity formation is provocative and has

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<sup>18</sup> Cohen, *Of Giants*, 14-16.

<sup>19</sup> Asa Mittman, *Maps and Monsters in Medieval England* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 35-7.

produced a host of compelling analyses, his resistance to chronological specificity could use some refining.

Historical research on related fields further suggests that Mittman's approach to monsters, though appealing, is not thoroughly historical. Studies of medieval mappae mundi, of shifting constructions of Jerusalem, and travel narratives such as Mandeville's travels, have all demonstrated that the notion of Jerusalem as the geographical center of the world was a relatively late development of medieval Christian conceptions of the world, not emerging in earnest until the twelfth century.<sup>20</sup> Mittman's study of monsters is not the only one to make compelling but un-historicized claims about the role of the monsters in medieval identity construction.

That a lack of historical specificity has characterized much of the scholarship on monsters since Cohen's initial theses is largely a byproduct of the fact that monsters—which appear almost exclusively in literary and artistic sources—have primarily been the purview of literary critics and art historians. Nevertheless, the current lack of historical approaches to medieval monsters needs to be rectified. Monsters have certainly been a useful vehicle through which scholars have explored issues of medieval identity formation and constructions of Others. But an historical analysis of monsters stands to further enrich our understanding of how monsters—or rather, medieval notions about monsters—shaped medieval history. Such an analysis requires that texts depicting

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<sup>20</sup> On the late medieval development of depicting Jerusalem as earth's center, see Philip S. Alexander, "Jerusalem as the *Omphalos* of the World: On the History of a Geographical Concept," in *Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Dorset, UK: Continuum, 1999), 110-113; Anna-Dorothee von den Brincken, "Jerusalem on Medieval Mappaemundi: a Site both Historical and Eschatological," in *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and Their Context*, ed. P.D.A. Harvey (London: British Library, 2006), 362. On Jerusalem's lack of centrality in some medieval travel narratives, see Iain Macleod Higgins, "Defining the Earth's Center in a Medieval 'Multi-Text': Jerusalem in *The Book of John Mandeville*," in *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 40-42.

monsters be interpreted through two lenses. Because, by the high Middle Ages, virtually all medieval monsters belonged to larger currents of intellectual thought, these texts must first be positioned in relation to the trends of which they were a product. After considering these texts' broader intellectual contexts, these texts need be analyzed through the lens of the immediate social and cultural contexts in which they were created. While this has not been an explicit goal of recent studies of monsters, other branches of medieval historical research have demonstrated this.

J.R.S. Phillips, for instance, has demonstrated how integral medieval notions of monsters—such as those depicted in the *Book of John Mandeville*—shaped Christopher Columbus' conception of the New World, as well as other early modern depictions of Native people.<sup>21</sup> Even more telling, as it is more squarely situated within the Middle Ages, is the observation made by Irina Metzler about the role that monsters played in the European expectations about the East. Metzler shows that the fourteenth-century missionary John of Marigolli, who—surprised not to find the one-footed Sciapod in India—deduced that the Antique traveler who first wrote about the Sciapod must have mistaken the parasols commonly used by Indians for a large foot.<sup>22</sup>

This process of mediating monstrous expectations about non-Europeans with mundane experiences was not limited to ideas about monsters. Peter Jackson, for instance, has demonstrated that the Franciscan missionary William of Rubruck (c. 1220-1293), though capable of arguing against or disproving tenets of Manichean beliefs, was not prepared for the seemingly practical task of identifying a Manichean in the flesh. As

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<sup>21</sup> J. R. S. Phillips, *The Medieval Expansion of Europe, Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 246.

<sup>22</sup> Irina Metzler, "Perceptions of Hot Climate in Medieval Cosmography and Travel Literature," *Reading Medieval Studies* 23 (1997): 73-4.



such, William mistook a Manichean congregation for a Catholic one as a result of misunderstanding their iconographic symbols.<sup>23</sup> With these observations in mind, it seems safe to say that despite the alterity of monsters, in some respects their role in medieval history is not unique to them. As the aforementioned examples suggest, monsters associated with specific non-Christian peoples offer one clear means through which a thoroughly historical study of monsters can be conducted. Because they were so often conflated with religious or ethnic groups with which Christians had first-hand experience, Gog and Magog are attractive subjects with which to demonstrate this historical approach to the study of medieval monsters.

This examination proceeds in two parts. In Part One, I trace a broad history of medieval European interpretations of Gog and Magog in hopes of supplementing the more specific histories that previous scholars have written, particularly those focusing on Christian depictions of Gog and Magog as Jews. In Chapter One, “Revelation’s Real Monsters,” I will propose that Gog and Magog’s medieval legacy deserves reinterpretation. Although Gog and Magog were frequently associated with Jews, this association was by no means as monolithic as current scholarly narratives suggest it was. I also suggest that these scholarly narratives, currently preoccupied with “traditions” of representing Gog and Magog, would be better served by approaching texts depicting Gog and Magog through the lens of the conventions they employ. In order to demonstrate this point, I will pay particular attention to one prominent convention of apocalyptic narratives: representing Gog and Magog as real people.

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Jackson, “William of Rubruck in the Mongol Empire: Perception and Prejudices,” in *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery, and Observation in Travel Writing*, ed. Zweder von Martels (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 71.

After focusing primarily on literal interpretations of Gog and Magog in Chapter One, in Chapter Two, “Augustinian Alexander,” I uncover the influence of allegorical interpretations of Gog and Magog on the later medieval depictions of the pair. In the high and late Middle Ages, literal interpretations of Gog and Magog were more popular than allegorical ones due in part to the popularity of Peter Comestor’s twelfth century *Historia Scholastica*. However, by examining two important medieval world maps—the English Psalter World Map (1265) and the Fra Mauro World Map (1459)—I will argue that some Christians, wary of interpreting Gog and Magog literally, were able to adopt the conventions of literal interpretation as a means to mask, though not erase, their preference for allegorical interpretation. In so doing, I challenge the modern notion that medieval depictions of Gog and Magog as real people were necessarily endorsements of Gog and Magog’s literal existence.

Part Two marks the beginning of the kind of historically-focused analysis of a medieval depiction of monsters that has thus far been lacking in scholarship on medieval monsters. Having established a broad context of strategic approaches to depicting Gog and Magog in the later Middle Ages in Part One, I will embark on a study of Gog and Magog as they appear in the fourteenth-century Catalan Atlas, a world map commissioned from Abraham Cresques, a Jewish cartographer living on the Mediterranean island of Majorca. In Chapter Three, “Obscured Identities,” I conduct a close reading of the Atlas’s substantial apocalyptic narrative by focusing on three of its primary figures: Alexander the Great, Antichrist, and the mysterious Prince of Gog and Magog.

This examination will reveal a subversive critique of Christian apocalypticism that differs in content, but not in method, from the strategically allegorical depictions of Gog and Magog discussed in Chapter Three. Finally, in Chapter Four, “Making the Local Foreign,” I examine the relationship between the Atlas’s depiction of Gog and Magog as Tartars and contemporary Iberian Christian attitudes towards, and relationships with, Tartars to argue that these figures are best understood not as a part of a tradition, but as an expression of the immediate social and intellectual pressures between Christians and Jews that characterized Spain in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. My hope is that this focused study of the Catalan Atlas’s Gog and Magog will demonstrate the utility of placing geographical and chronological restraints on the study of monsters by pointing to insights that a sweeping theoretical examination would not be able to uncover sufficiently.

## Part I: Gog and Magog in the Middle Ages

## Chapter One:

### Revelation's Real Monsters

The later Middle Ages witnessed the creation and dissemination of some of the most influential and graphic European sources to depict Gog and Magog. The *Book of John Mandeville* (c. 1360), a fantastical travelogue recounting the journeys of its fictitious titular traveler, was one of the most popular of these sources. First written in Anglo-Norman, by the first half of the fifteenth century the *Book* had been translated into eight vernacular languages and existed in both insular and vernacular Latin editions.<sup>24</sup> The *Book's* account of Gog and Magog, Revelation's destructive assistants to Satan, and their past, present, and future, largely reflects contemporary thought about Gog and Magog.

East of Cathay, Mandeville recounts, there are many countries and islands. The first geographical feature that Mandeville describes in this region is the Caspian Mountains, behind which dwell twenty-two kings and their subjects. These people, who were enclosed there by Alexander the Great with the assistance of God and who now pay tribute to the Queen of Amazonia, are "the Jews of the Ten Tribes, who are called Gog and Magog" and who only know how to speak Hebrew.<sup>25</sup> Mandeville's description of Gog and Magog concludes by noting that, "in Antichrist's time," these people will escape to slaughter the world's Christians. But they will not be alone. They will receive help from the rest of the world's Jews, who have learned Hebrew to "know how to speak to them [Gog and Magog] and lead them into Christendom to destroy Christians."

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<sup>24</sup> Iain Macleod Higgins, *Writing East: The "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 35-6.

<sup>25</sup> John Mandeville, *The Book of John Mandeville, With Related Texts*, trans. Ian Macleod Higgins (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 2011), 157.

A majority of this narrative is not unique to the *Book*, as many sources that depict Gog and Magog include some, if not all, of the same information. The notion that Gog and Magog were Jews, for instance, first appeared in Peter Comestor's twelfth-century *Historia Scholastica*.<sup>26</sup> As a result of Peter's *Historia*, romances recounting Alexander's life and deeds, frequently reproduced in later medieval Europe, came to include this detail as well.<sup>27</sup> An equally important popular text to depict Gog and Magog as Jews before Mandeville's *Book* was the *Letter of Prester John*, supposedly written by a fictitious Christian Eastern king and first disseminated in the last quarter of the twelfth century. All three of these sources circulated through Europe in a number of renditions throughout the Middle Ages well before Mandeville. Moreover, although the Hereford and Ebstorf maps' large size, complexity, and intricate details meant that they could not be reproduced as easily as their textual counterparts to depict Gog and Magog, such as *Mandeville* or *Alexander* romances, they both contained much of the same information as those counterparts. The number of late medieval sources to depict Gog and Magog as Jews has prompted many scholars, most notably Andrew Gow, to assert that, as far as medieval European Christians were concerned, Gog and Magog were Jews.

The popularity of the sources that depict Gog and Magog as Alexander's enclosed Jews, however, is not as monolithic as the above overview of these texts suggests. Taking note of these sources' geographical origins helps to make this point. With the exception of the *Alexander* textual tradition and the Frenchman Peter Comestor's *Historia*, all of these sources originated in either England—*The Book of Mandeville* and the Hereford World Map—or Germany—*The Letter of Prester John* and the Ebstorf Map. But it is not

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<sup>26</sup> Andrew Gow, *The Red Jews: Antisemitism in an Apocalyptic Age, 1200-1600* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 25.

<sup>27</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 230.

just in origin that Germany and England are most closely associated with the concept of a Jewish Gog and Magog. Extant medieval German manuscripts of Mandeville's *Book*, for instance, outnumber manuscripts in any other language, while the number of German and English manuscripts combined (147) easily surpasses the combined number of manuscripts extant in all other languages (129).<sup>28</sup> Moreover, other less-popular texts from England and Germany are notable for perpetuating the image of Gog and Magog as Jews. The fifteenth-century English Wellcome Apocalypse, for instance, devotes at least six illustrations to depicting Gog and Magog and Antichrist's followers explicitly as Jews, and Gow has noted the propensity of German sources to depict Gog and Magog as Jews (Figure 3).<sup>29</sup> This information strongly suggests that portrayals of Gog and Magog as Jewish was far more a reflection specifically of English and German rather than broader medieval European thought.



<sup>28</sup> Higgins, 35-6.

<sup>29</sup> See Gow, *The Red Jews*.

Figure 3: Antichrist converting Jews, Folio 11 r., Wellcome Apocalypse. From: Wellcome Library, wellcomeimages.com (accessed December 13, 2013).

Examining the distribution of another highly popular medieval travelogue, the Venetian merchant Marco Polo's *Travels* (c.1300), further suggests that the idea of Alexander's enclosed Jews did not have a monopoly on late medieval thought about Gog and Magog. Polo's *Travels* describes Gog and Magog and does not suggest that they are Jews. Rather, for Polo, these names represent two geographical regions.<sup>30</sup> Although the number of extant copies of Mandeville's *Book* (276) significantly outnumbers those of the *Travels* (135), Polo's text was translated into a number of vernacular languages and was an important source of later medieval thought about the world beyond Europe. The *Travels* was disseminated particularly widely in both French and Italian.<sup>31</sup> Unlike the *Book*, however, Polo's *Travels* was not translated into English until the sixteenth century. Prior to this, it existed in England only in Latin editions and did not circulate amongst the laity in significant numbers.<sup>32</sup>

By contrasting the translation and dissemination of the *Book* and the *Travels* I do not suggest that Marco Polo's text most accurately reflects medieval French and Italian ideas about Gog and Magog or that Mandeville's text most accurately reflects their English and German counterparts. Because Mandeville's travelogue exists in more French copies than Polo's, and because, across languages, the former exists in so many more copies than the latter, such an assertion would be untenable. Rather, I highlight the fact that Mandeville's depiction of Gog and Magog as Jews did not go unrivaled and held more influence in some parts of Europe than in others. But the geographical distribution

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<sup>30</sup> Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, trans. Ronald Latham (New York: Penguin Group, 1958), 49.

<sup>31</sup> Suzanne M. Yeager, "The World Translated: Marco Polo's *Le Devisement dou monde*, *The Book of Sir John Mandeville*, and Their Medieval Audiences," in *Marco Polo and the Encounter of East and West*, ed. Suzanne Conklin Akbari (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 161.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*



of texts depicting Gog and Magog and the languages into which they were translated are not the only reason to question the prevalence of the Jewish Gog and Magog.

In addition to these regional limitations, portrayals of Gog and Magog as Jews were a markedly late medieval phenomena. Again with the partial exception of the *Alexander* texts, all of these sources were first produced after the twelfth century. Gog and Magog certainly appear in earlier textual and visual sources, but not with the same graphic detail and Judaized qualities that the aforementioned sources feature. For example, the Anglo-Saxon World Map, produced in England in the first half of the eleventh century, names, but does not depict or describe, Gog and Magog and their place of enclosure. The early twelfth-century Silos Beatus Map, based on the eighth-century commentary on the Book of Revelation by the Spanish monk Beatus of Liébana, does not even depict Gog and Magog.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, many English and German sources contemporary with Mandeville and his ilk were not uniform in their treatment of the pair. Unlike its near contemporary the Hereford World Map, for instance, the English Psalter World Map (1265) depicts the Caspian Gates containing Gog and Magog but does not provide any images or details about its inhabitants.

Despite these caveats, the notion that later medieval people overwhelmingly associated Alexander's enclosed people with Jews has structured most of the modern scholarship on Gog and Magog and the sources that depict them. Andrew Gow's history of the medieval development of Gog and Magog has been particularly impactful in this regard. Although Gow's larger study is situated primarily within early modern Germany, his discussion of Gog and Magog's medieval development is broad in scope. This approach results in a picture of Gog and Magog's medieval legacy that is almost

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<sup>33</sup> Peter Barber, "Medieval Maps of the World," in *The Hereford World Map*, 1-44.

teleological in its insistence that the earliest writers to depict Gog and Magog—who, as mentioned above, did not depict Gog and Magog as Jews— set the stage for depictions that became gradually more anti-Semitic over time. Despite these drawbacks, Gow’s narrative has been useful in establishing a clear chronology of sources to depict Gog and Magog as well as in highlighting the ways that certain narrative traditions—such as the Alexander Romances—underwent change over time. Moreover, the profusion of later medieval sources to depict Gog and Magog as Jews gives this narrative some credence.

However, Gow’s treatment of medieval depictions of Gog and Magog is underpinned by the problematic premise that the disparate medieval sources to depict Gog and Magog form a tradition of representation.<sup>34</sup> The problems caused by this assumption are immediately evident in Gow’s own treatment of three sources that do not fully conform to this supposed tradition. For Gow, the English Psalter Map, which does not Judaize Gog and Magog, is mentioned only as a “less-clear reference” to the Alexander legend; Matthew Paris’ identification of Gog and Magog as Mongols in his *Chronica Maiora* is less important than Matthew’s conviction that the Mongols are one of the Ten Lost Tribes; and the Catalan Atlas’s identification of Gog and Magog as Tartars, the pejorative moniker for Mongols, is just a “slightly-altered traditional story.”<sup>35</sup> In short, sources that do not fit neatly into the anti-Semitic tradition of representation that Gow identifies are construed as either masked references to that tradition or unimportant aberrations from it. In its preference for the general over the particular, this approach is problematic. However, this approach has gone unquestioned by subsequent studies of

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<sup>34</sup> The importance of tradition for Gow can be seen in: Gow, *The Red Jews*, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Gow, “Gog and Magog on ‘Mappaemundi’ and Early Printed World Maps: Orientalizing Ethnography in the Apocalyptic Tradition,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 2, no.1 (1998): 71; *The Red Jews*, 55; “Fra Mauro’s World View: Authority and Empirical Evidence on a Venetian Mappamundi,” in *The Hereford World Map: Medieval World Maps and Their Context*, 408.

specific depictions of Gog and Magog.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the only substantial dissent from Gow's view has also been framed by the premise that Gog and Magog's historical importance is tied to their inclusion within a tradition.

Scott Westrem's interpretation of Gog and Magog serves as a complete antithesis to Gow's. Far from constructing a monolithic tradition—or any tradition, for that matter—Westrem posits that Gog and Magog functioned as something like an identity-non-specific “bogeyman” meant only to inspire fear through vague invocations of Otherness.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, even in their capacity as vague bogeymen, Westrem continues, Gog and Magog represent a negligible part of medieval thought. That is because sources depicting Gog and Magog, Westrem asserts, are too few in number and too inconsistent in the ways in which they deploy and identify these apocalyptic destroyers to be construed as an important component of medieval thought.<sup>38</sup> For all of their disagreements, Westrem's conclusion is just as problematic as Gow's in that it suggests that the meaning and importance of individual sources can be deducted from the impact that much larger groups of sources did or did not have. Even if Westrem's claim that Gog and Magog are represented in an insignificant number of medieval sources is true—a claim which is not supported with clear evidence and which is problematized by the popularity of the aforementioned texts that depicted Gog and Magog—it does not rob Gog and Magog of significance in the sources in which they appear.<sup>39</sup> Regardless of their prevalence throughout the Middle Ages, it cannot be denied that Gog and Magog bore a

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<sup>36</sup> Bettina Bildhauer's subsequent studies of Gog and Magog have relied heavily on Gow's narrative. See Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010), 160-163.

<sup>37</sup> Scott D. Westrem, “Against Gog and Magog,” in *Text and Territory*, 54–75.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* Westrem makes an obscure reference to the statistical work of van der Bricken in his footnotes with regards to Gog and Magog's presence on maps and provides no direct evidence for his claim that Gog and Magog were not significantly represented in textual sources.

specific significance for the creators of the texts in which they were depicted. For Gow and Westrem, Gog and Magog are either a monolithic tradition or they are without meaning.

Given the limited framework within which these two formative narratives of Gog and Magog's medieval history operate, it is necessary to revisit medieval texts and interpretations of Gog and Magog. In doing so, what will become apparent is that Gog and Magog did not enjoy an ever-developing tradition of representation. Rather, I show that early medieval interpretations of Gog and Magog fell into one of two categories: allegorical or literal. Richard Emmerson has made this same distinction in early representations of Gog and Magog, but his tracing of these traditions is brief and deserves to be expanded upon.<sup>40</sup> Although both of these modes of interpretation were equally represented in the works of early medieval writers, the literal interpretation began to predominate in the twelfth century and remained the more influential tradition well into the fourteenth century, a fact attested to by Mandeville. Although they represented two very different ways of thinking about Gog and Magog, literal and allegorical interpretations of Revelation's assistants to Satan both emerged first in the fifth century. However, the first major text to interpret Gog and Magog literally—the Alexander romances—had predecessors that date back to the third century and, as such, will provide the starting point for this discussion of Gog and Magog.

The Greek *Alexander Romance* texts attributed to Pseudo-Callisthenes provided the most enduring and popular framework for representing Gog and Magog throughout the Middle Ages. These stories were first written in the third century CE and presented

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<sup>40</sup> Richard Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 84.

themselves as factual accounts of Alexander's deeds and travels. In their earliest Greek renditions, these texts did not include any information about Gog and Magog. However, beginning with the fifth-century Syriac renditions of the narrative, the *Alexander* texts began to include detailed narratives describing how Gog and Magog came to be enclosed.<sup>41</sup> By tying Gog and Magog into the narrative of a historically real person, the *Alexander* texts insisted upon the literal existence of the pair. However, in these earliest renditions of the tale, Alexander's historical Gog and Magog are not explicitly labeled as the Gog and Magog of Revelation. Considering the multiple Gogs and Magogs in the Bible, this ambiguity suggests that Alexander's Gog and Magog and Revelation's Gog and Magog were not necessarily synonymous with one another in these early texts.

According to the earliest versions of *Alexander* to include details about Gog and Magog, Alexander's confrontation with Gog and Magog was the result of a war Alexander waged against Eurymithres, a king who refused to acknowledge the authority of Macedonia.<sup>42</sup> In the heat of the conflict, Eurymithres' troops launched a failed surprise attack against Alexander's massive army. Eurymithres' troops, severely depleted in number by the attack, were then pursued by Alexander's army between two large mountains. Upon seeing these mountains, the pagan Alexander prayed to God in hopes that the mountains would come together to enclose these men. These men, as in Mandeville's text, are said to be twenty-two kings with their subjects, among whom are the people of Gog and Magog.<sup>43</sup> "Immediately," one version of the text relates, "the

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<sup>41</sup> Emeri J. van Donzel and Andrea Barbara Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 21.

<sup>42</sup> Pseudo-Callisthenes, *The Greek Alexander Romance*, trans. Richard Stoneman (New York: Penguin, 1991), 185.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

mountains came together, though they were previously 18 feet apart.”<sup>44</sup> Although some medieval authors often noted that the pagan Alexander was “unworthy” of God’s assistance, this scene represented something of a climax in many other later renditions (Figure 4). Peter Comestor, for example, highlighted God’s assistance of Alexander as a testament to the rewards that await faithful Christians. Imagine what God will do for the faithful, Comestor declares, if he was willing to assist a pagan with such a monumental task.<sup>45</sup> Alexander then completes his entrapment of these people by building a large bronze gate between the mountains’ narrow opening around which he plants brambles.

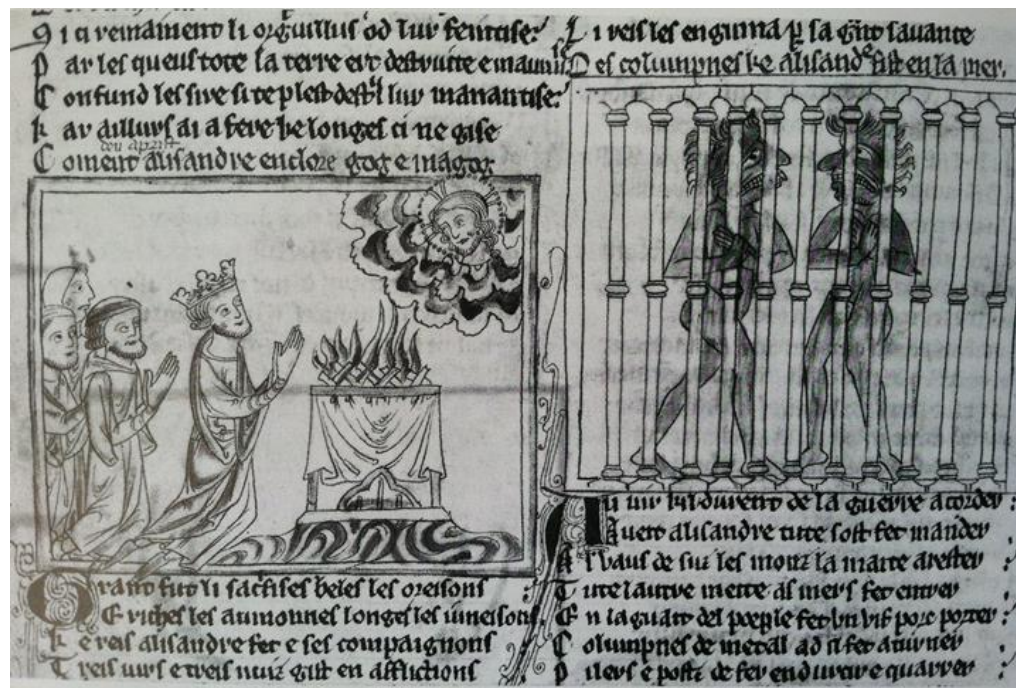


Figure 4: Alexander praying for the enclosure of Gog and Magog in Thomas of Kent’s *Alexander* (Source: Debra Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, 230).

The narrative ends by suggesting that the Gog and Magog enclosed by Alexander are the same Gog and Magog of Revelation, saying that “Alexander, seeing all this, was

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Comestor, *Historia Scholastica*, Pat. Lat. 198:1498. “Deus quid facturus est pro fidelibus suis, si tantem fecit pro infideli?”

afraid that they would come out and pollute the inhabited world.”<sup>46</sup> This association between Alexander’s Gog and Magog and the apocalyptic destroyers is tentative at best. The group’s apocalyptic potential is presented as a supposition of the Alexander and not as any kind of explicit Christian prophecy, and as such reflects Alexander’s paganism and unfamiliarity with Revelation. Because Alexander was a pagan living before the advent of Christianity and the creation of Revelation, it would have been anachronistic for the romance’s Christian author to suggest that Alexander had any reason to believe that Gog and Magog were apocalyptic peoples. In spite of Alexander’s lack of definite source material, the author of the early *Alexander* romances may have been suggesting that the reality of this group’s apocalyptic destruction is so obvious that even the pagan Alexander can recognize its truth. This is certainly the logic that explains why the pagan Alexander would pray to God for assistance.

One element that factors heavily into Alexander’s fear about the fate of Gog and Magog is their monstrosity, an innovation of the *Alexander* texts not present in Revelation’s account of Gog and Magog. It is only after their enclosure that the monstrosity of Gog and Magog and their fellow captives is revealed. After they are sealed behind Alexander’s Gate, they are said to eat a wide variety of grotesque foods, including worms, snakes, aborted fetuses, and unformed embryos.<sup>47</sup> Instead of resulting from their enclosure, the outward monstrosity of these peoples—which is an invention of the *Alexander* romances—is presented as one of Alexander’s initial justifications for entrapping them.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

That Gog and Magog were simultaneously perceived as real people and as monsters may seem, at first glance, to be a contradiction. However, as John Block Friedman has demonstrated, in Antiquity the notion that people living outside of the Roman Empire were monsters or monstrous was common.<sup>48</sup> After the Christianization of Rome in the fourth-century, moreover, the contradiction between monstrosity and humanity was somewhat elided by St. Augustine, who insisted that monsters were men created by God as demonstrations of the diversity of God's creation. David Williams has shown that this Augustinian conception of monstrosity was the predominant mode for interpreting monsters until at least the thirteenth century, when Thomas Aquinas's interpretation of monsters as ciphers of sin began to gain currency.<sup>49</sup> Given this conception of monsters' place in the world, then, Gog and Magog's monstrosity and literal existence do not contradict one another.

Even after the circulation of these fifth-century Syriac renditions of the *Alexander* legends, different versions of the *Alexander* narrative did not uniformly recount Alexander's enclosure of Gog and Magog. Moreover, those that included the narrative did not explicitly conflate Alexander's Gog and Magog with Revelation's Gog and Magog. As such, in late antiquity the apocalyptic Gog and Magog were not necessarily accepted as being a group of historically real people. This point is made particularly clear when considering allegorical interpretations of Gog and Magog that were near contemporaries of the earliest literal interpretations.

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<sup>48</sup> Friedman, *The Monstrous Races*, 26.

<sup>49</sup> Although Williams traces this change throughout his book, he outlines it succinctly in his introduction. See David Williams, *Deformed Discourse: The Function of the Monster in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 6-7.



Whereas literal interpretations of Gog and Magog originated in vernacular popular literature, Emerson has noted that the allegorical interpretations originated with the Church Fathers and were more popular in patristic than in lay texts.<sup>50</sup> Augustine discussed Gog and Magog in some depth in his immeasurably influential *City of God* (c. 426) and made it clear that Gog and Magog were not to be understood as “some barbarous nation established on some part of the earth” or “some other foreign people.” Rather, he insisted, Gog and Magog were meant to be taken as “the nations in which, as we have indicated above, the devil is shut up” and from which the devil will emerge to persecute Christians in the apocalyptic last days.<sup>51</sup> Although by Augustine’s time, nearly two centuries had passed since the first Alexander romances had been written, the romances’ inclusion of Gog and Magog was a near-contemporary phenomenon. Augustine was heavily influenced by Jerome’s writings on Gog and Magog in which Jerome claimed that Gog was a Hebrew term for “roof” and Magog “under the roof.”<sup>52</sup> Despite Jerome’s primacy in this interpretation, the continued popularity of the *City of God* throughout the Middle Ages meant that Augustine was more often referenced by later medieval writers who interpreted Gog and Magog literally, a point that I highlight Chapter Two.

In the context of Christian thought before the sixth century, then, interpretations of Revelation’s Gog and Magog were far from unanimous in their understanding of how Gog and Magog would contribute to the Last Things. However, the foundation had been laid for early medieval writers to declare confidently that Gog and Magog were a

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<sup>50</sup> Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 84-5.

<sup>51</sup> Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 994.

<sup>52</sup> Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 85.

historically real people, an assertion that would be accepted for the rest of the Middle Ages. One of the earliest and most influential non-Alexander texts to depict Gog and Magog was the seventh-century Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. It is in the Pseudo-Methodian Apocalypse that the details of Gog and Magog's monstrousness—an innovation of the Alexander texts—are first explicitly inserted into the narrative of Revelation. The combination of these two previously distinct features of Gog and Magog narratives provided a framework that would be heavily utilized by subsequent medieval writers.

Pseudo-Methodius—an unknown seventh-century Syriac author who wrote under the pseudonym Methodius in honor of the fourth-century Greek martyr—closely followed the narrative of his source material in noting that Alexander had enclosed Gog and Magog with a combination of manpower and prayer. As Alexander had feared, though, that enclosure was only temporary and would be rendered futile when God allowed Gog and Magog to escape and wreak havoc on Christendom in the End Times. As such, the Alexander narrative of the Pseudo-Methodian Apocalypse is framed within a larger account of the realization of Revelation and is not concerned with any other aspect of Alexander's life or deeds. The influence that the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius exerted on medieval apocalyptic thought was immense: first translated into Latin in the eighth century by a Merovingian monk known only as Peter, the text was reproduced in both Latin and the vernacular well into the sixteenth century.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> On the translation of the Syriac into Greek and Latin, see Benjamin Garstad, introduction to: Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse. An Alexandrian World Chronicle*, trans. Benjamin Garstad (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2012), ix. On the medieval popularity of Pseudo-Methodius, see *Ibid.*, ix-x and Anderson, *Alexander's Gate*, 49.

Pointing to the fact that later medieval writers who were familiar with Pseudo-Methodius—such as the twelfth-century Peter Comestor—conflated the Ten Lost Tribes with Gog and Magog, Gow has argued that Pseudo-Methodius’s Apocalypse is important for the ways in which it invited the conflation of apocalyptic horrors with anti-Semitic depictions of Jews. Gow notes that this conflation is not achieved explicitly, as Pseudo-Methodius does not claim that Gog and Magog are the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel. Rather, Gow argues, Pseudo-Methodius’s coupling of the Gog and Magog narrative with a claim that “the Antichrist would deceive and gather in the scattered Jews to Jerusalem, where they would serve him as their Messiah” proved to be “fertile soil” for the union of apocalypticism and anti-Semitism that would shape “the medieval development of the story of Gog and Magog.”<sup>54</sup>

Gow’s observation may be useful in tracing the history of Christian conceptions of the Jewish Gog and Magog. However, at least in its earliest two extant renditions, the association of the Antichrist with Jews in Pseudo-Methodius’s Apocalypse is not as clear as Gow suggests and deserves clear delineation. Moreover, his assessment of Pseudo-Methodius’s historical importance is teleological in its suggestion that Pseudo-Methodius’s text is best read in conjunction with later medieval writers rather than on its own terms. Therefore this moment in the history of apocalyptic thought must be reexamined. A reevaluation of Pseudo-Methodius’s text can offer a more nuanced assessment of the work’s importance in the history of thought about Gog and Magog.

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<sup>54</sup> Gow, *The Red Jews*, 25-6.

There is no doubt that anti-Jewish themes are present within Pseudo-Methodius's account of the Antichrist's rise to power.<sup>55</sup> There are two instances in which vaguely anti-Jewish sentiments manifest themselves in his Apocalypse. Both instances occur within the text's account of the Antichrist's origins. It is the text's characterization of the lands from which the Antichrist emerges and the identification of the group to which he belongs that present the most persuasive evidence of any anti-Jewish material in the Apocalypse. These examples provide a broad framework within which the subsequent narrative of Antichrist's rise to power takes place.

Although the text does not explicitly associate the Antichrist's homelands with Jews, its characterization of these places offers clear parallels to some elements of negative depictions of Jews by Christians first deployed in the early days of Christianity: stubbornness and blindness.<sup>56</sup> Regarding the lands in which the Antichrist will be born and raised, the text says that he will be "born at Chorazin and raised at Bethsaida" and will rule at Capernaum and that each city will have been glad to have abetted him.<sup>57</sup> Ostensibly, the rationale for making Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum the homes of the Antichrist rests on the biblical accounts of Matthew and Luke in which the three cities rejected the miracles of Christ.<sup>58</sup> Who better for them to praise than the Antichrist who, as the antithesis of Christ, will perform false and inefficacious wonders to the pleasure of non-believers? A closer look at the logic that allowed for these three cities to be

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<sup>55</sup> Langmuir rejects the validity of the term anti-Semitism in any historical period, which I do not observe. However, Langmuir distinguishes between the anti-Judaism of antiquity and later medieval anti-Jewishness. Regarding classical anti-Jewishness, see Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 57-62.

<sup>56</sup> On the early Christian origins of the image of Jews as stubborn or blind, see Langmuir, *Towards a Definition of Antisemitism*, 104-5.

<sup>57</sup> Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, 133.

<sup>58</sup> Matt. 11: 20-24; Luke 10: 13-15.

understood as the harbingers of the Antichrist suggests the passage's anti-Jewish underpinnings.

Not only will these lands house the Antichrist, Pseudo-Methodius says: they will “be glad” to be associated with him, a characteristic that may be informed by negative Christian depictions of Jews. In characterizing these cities' inhabitants as happy accomplices to the Antichrist, Pseudo-Methodius attributes to them a characteristic that would otherwise be absent—or at best, implicit—in the narrative. While these peoples could be understood to be simply unfaithful or lapsed Christians, there is more reason to suspect that these cities are meant to be taken as inhabited by Jews. The cities are not said to be tricked or deceived by the Antichrist, as the inhabitants of Jerusalem are later described, or to have been faithful Christians who are led astray. Rather, they are perpetual rejecters of Christ, aligning them with tropes of stubbornness and blindness frequently deployed by Christians in derogatory depictions of Jews.

A number of themes of medieval Christian thought about Jews insisted on the stubbornness or blindness of Jews to the truth of Christ. These tropes often pertained directly to Christian apocalyptic thought. As Regula Meyer Evitt has noted, even the vaguely positive notion that Jews would convert at the eschaton allowed contemporary Jews to be characterized as blind to the true faith until Christ's reappearance. But these themes were common in a number of milieus of Christian thought about Jews.<sup>59</sup> One of the most recognizable medieval images designed to remind its Christian viewers of the blindness of Jews to the true faith was the personification of the Synagogue, a

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<sup>59</sup>Regula Meyer Evitt, “Eschatology, Millenarian Apocalypticism, and the Liturgical Anti-Judaism of the Medieval Prophet Plays,” in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. van Meter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 212.

blindfolded woman who was often paired with the sword-wielding Church, or Ecclesia (Figure 5). Given the prevalence of the trope of Jews' willful blindness—the Synagogue, after all, has chosen not to remove her blindfold—Pseudo-Methodius' Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum seem to be invoking Christian perceptions of Jewish stubbornness in casting them as perpetual rejecters of Christ.



Figure 5: Thirteenth century sculpture of the blindfolded Synagogue from a German cathedral

(Source: Artstor)

Similarly, Pseudo-Methodius's identification of the Antichrist with the Tribe of Dan—one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel thought to have fallen into heresy—could also be read as conflating Jews with the apocalypse, though again only tentatively. Pseudo-Methodius's association of the Antichrist with one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel seems

to be a clear enough indication of his anti-Jewish sentiments. However, the rationale he provides to justify this association is less obviously based on an anti-Jewish agenda than might be expected. The first reason provided by Pseudo-Methodius for the Tribe of Dan's inclusion in this apocalyptic narrative comes from "the prophecy of the patriarch Jacob, which says 'Dan shall be a serpent.'"<sup>60</sup> Moreover, Pseudo-Methodius asserts that "Judas Isacriot, betrayer of the Lord, was himself from the tribe of Dan."<sup>61</sup> While these mitigating factors may not completely vindicate any impression of anti-Jewish rhetoric from Pseudo-Methodius's association of the Tribe of Dan with the Antichrist, they are not as self-evidently anti-Jewish as Gow suggests.

Moreover, whereas Gow asserts that Pseudo-Methodius prophesies that Jews will worship the Antichrist as their Messiah, there is no clear indication, at least in the earliest extant Greek and Latin versions of his Apocalypse, that that is the case. In fact, Pseudo-Methodius consistently suggests that it is faithful Christians who will be led astray by the wonders and deceit of the Antichrist. When discussing the Tribe of Dan, for instance, Pseudo-Methodius notes that, as mentioned above, Dan is a snake that "biteth the horse heel, so that his rider shall fall backward," where the horse's rider is to be taken as representing "the holy ones ... that is to say [those] mounted upon the true faith."<sup>62</sup> These holy ones, he continues, will be led astray by the Antichrist's false miracles and wonders. Drawing attention to all of the details of Pseudo-Methodius's representation of the Tribe of Dan suggests that it is not Jews but lapsed or recalcitrant Christians whom Pseudo-Methodius casts as apocalyptic villains. Thus, the narrative of the Antichrist found in Pseudo-Methodius' Apocalypse clearly implicates impious Christians rather than Jews in

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<sup>60</sup> Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, 135.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

the success of the Antichrist. Given the lack of substantial anti-Jewish sentiment in the Apocalypse's account of the Antichrist, the idea that the text's importance lies in its association of Jews with apocalypse needs to be reconsidered.

Much more substantial than the Apocalypse's implication of Jews in the narrative of the Christian apocalypse—and in fact even more substantial than the role the text attributes to lapsed or impious Christians—is the text's polemical representation of Muslims who, it should be noted, feature heavily in the text's rendition of the Gog and Magog narrative. Written in Muslim-ruled Mesopotamia, Pseudo-Methodius' reactionary anti-Islamic agenda in the Apocalypse has been widely noted by scholars of Byzantine apocalypticism.<sup>63</sup> In Pseudo-Methodius's rendition of the Gog and Magog narrative, borrowed heavily from the Alexander tradition, Alexander's enclosed people are in fact the apocalyptic Gog and Magog, and are explicitly identified as Muslims or “the sons of Ishmael.” In addition to engaging in the same grotesque habits of consumption as their earlier Alexandrian counterparts, these Islamic peoples of Gog and Magog are said, not unlike the Antichrist, to practice demonic magic. This particular feature, not present in Alexander narratives or in later medieval accounts of Gog and Magog, may be a manifestation of Christian polemics associating Islam with the worship of idols or demons.<sup>64</sup>

Gow asserts that later medieval sources that depict Gog and Magog as Jews, such as Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, exploited Pseudo-Methodius's loose association of Jews with the apocalypse. However, given his prominent depiction of destructive

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<sup>63</sup> Paul Julius Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 13; Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 72; van Donzel and Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Sources*, 26-31.

<sup>64</sup> Pseudo-Methodius, *Apocalypse*, 99.



apocalyptic Muslims, and his comparatively sparse discussion of apocalyptic Jews, this claim needs to be revised: what is notable about later medieval sources to make use of the Pseudo-Methodian Apocalypse such as Comestor's *Historia*, is not their thematic continuities with Pseudo-Methodius's text but their blatant modifications and innovations of it. Bernard McGinn offers an interpretation of Pseudo-Methodius's legacy that explains these innovations and suggests a model for interpreting Gog and Magog's medieval history that is preferable to that of Gow's and Westrem's traditions.

McGinn explains that although Pseudo-Methodius casts Gog and Magog as Muslims, "by a unique stroke of luck the text also could be used to explain the apocalyptic significance of enemies that seemed more terrible than these," such as Mongols or Jews.<sup>65</sup> It was not the literal details of this early account of Gog and Magog, McGinn suggests, that were most influential in later depictions of them. Rather, it was the text's worldview that subsequent writers found useful when crafting their own renditions of the apocalypse. As such, as McGinn suggests, Pseudo-Methodius's influence is not in his specific identification of Gog and Magog with Muslims so much as in his identification of conflicts with non-Christians as a sign of the Last Things. With this interpretation in mind, the development of medieval interpretations of Gog and Magog seems to be less indicative of an all-encompassing tradition than of the selective use of conventions by the writers and artists who depicted Gog and Magog. Rather than the inevitable byproduct of Pseudo-Methodius's vision of the apocalypse, Comestor's *Historia* and its Jewish Gog and Magog seem to be the result of Comestor's

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<sup>65</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 72.

transplantation of the Pseudo-Methodian worldview into his own contexts.<sup>66</sup> This selective deployment of particular features or conventions of past texts is not unique to Comestor.

Gow has argued that, because Matthew Paris aligned the Mongols with the image of the Jewish Gog and Magog in his *Chronica Maiora* (c.1259), Matthew's Gog and Magog are indicative of the progressively anti-Semitic trajectory of Gog and Magog narratives of the high and later Middle Ages. While this is certainly a compelling claim, it does not take Matthew's work, which was written within only a few decades of the Mongol invasions into Poland and Hungary in 1236, on its own terms. The information that Matthew includes in the *Chronica* regarding the Mongols derived from an interview that a Hungarian bishop conducted with Mongol prisoners of war, the text of which Matthew reproduced in his work. While it is this Hungarian bishop that aligns Mongols with the Jewish Gog and Magog, Matthew would have had good reason to accept such an association.

This bishop's conflation of the Mongols with the Ten Lost Tribes and, more importantly, Matthew's acceptance of that conflation seems to be less the product of Matthew's own desire to perpetuate an anti-Semitic view of the apocalypse than of Matthew's attempts to make the Mongol invasions conform to Comestor's vision of history. As a monk living in thirteenth-century France, Matthew would have been familiar with Comestor's *Historia* before penning his *Chronica*. The *Historia Scholastica*

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<sup>66</sup> James Morey's study of Comestor's *Historia* suggests that Comestor's perception of Jews is not as dire as Gow suggests. Morey notes that, throughout the *Historia*, Comestor defers to Jewish interpretation of the Old Testament and acknowledges his indebtedness to these interpretations. Moreover, for Comestor Alexander's enclosed people are the apocalyptic Ten Lost Tribes but are never called Gog and Magog. Comestor's sources and representations of Jews require further study. See James Morey, "Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase and the Medieval Popular Bible," *Speculum* 68, no. 1 (1993): 6–35.

received papal approval at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, at which point it became part of a “core curriculum” for many monasteries.<sup>67</sup> More immediately indicative of Matthew’s own familiarity with the text is the fact that, as Morey has noted, the *Historia* had unprecedented influence on the writings and thought of thirteenth-and fourteenth-century France, one of the regions in which the *Historia* enjoyed the most popularity.<sup>68</sup> Given the prevalence of the *Historia* and its literally real Jewish Gog and Magog in thirteenth-century France, Matthew’s Mongol Gog and Magog represent his attempt to fit the events of his own day into received frameworks of historical thought.

Matthew’s bishop certainly draws from negative tropes of apocalyptic Jews in the parallels he notes between the Ten Lost Tribes and the Mongols. However, because these parallels are based on the bishop’s attempt to reconcile the information he gathers from his interviews with preconceived notions about Gog and Magog, they demonstrate an attempt to fit the previously unknown Mongols into a Christian view of history through a quasi-empirical means. Like Gog and Magog, who were thought to have been enclosed behind the Caspian Mountains, the bishop discovers that the Mongols emerged from beyond mountains.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the bishop relates, the Mongols wrote in “Jewish” letters.<sup>70</sup> While the Mongol script is characterized as Jewish in nature, Felicitas Schmieder has suggested that this association derived from the fact that the Mongols’ Turkic script, which was related to Hebrew through their shared origin in the Aramaic alphabet, would have, to a Christian bishop, seemed as unintelligible as Hebrew script.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Morey, “Peter Comestor,” 6.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series (London: Longman, 1872), 75. “Quaesivi ubi esset terra eorum, et dixerunt quod esset ultra quosdam montes...”

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. “Literas habent Judaeorum, quia prius proprias literas non habuerunt.”

<sup>71</sup> Felicitas Schmieder, “Christians, Jews, Muslims—and Mongols: Fitting a Foreign People into the Western Christian Apocalyptic Scenario,” *Medieval Encounters* 12, no. 2 (2006): 281.

The most blatantly anti-Semitic of these parallels is the bishop's assertion that the Mongols, as members of the Ten Lost Tribes, consumed vermin—"frogs, dogs, and serpents."<sup>72</sup>

As indicated above, the consumption of vermin—a sort of shorthand for moral depravity and bodily pollution—was a popular feature of descriptions of Gog and Magog both before and after the people were associated with Jews, though it took on new, more anti-Semitic resonances once accusations of blood libel and host desecration began to be made against Jews in the high Middle Ages.<sup>73</sup> Again, Schmieder suggests that this exaggerated claim may have derived from the fact that Mongols, like Jews, observed dietary practices that Christians found alien and concerning.<sup>74</sup> This seems to be yet another exaggerated interpretation of observable facts. Both the Bishop and Matthew note ways in which Mongols are markedly non-Jewish, further demonstrating the ways in which the *Chronica's* Gog and Magog were an attempt to rectify received knowledge with tradition as opposed to a simple acceptance of anti-Semitic tropes. For example, Matthew makes notes that the Mongols do not speak Hebrew, an issue which the Hungarian bishop does not address.<sup>75</sup> The bishop does note that, in response to being asked about their religion, the Mongols reported that they believed in nothing.<sup>76</sup> While this would certainly not have been endearing to a Christian audience, the Mongols' report that they believed in nothing would not have clearly aligned them with Jews, either.

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<sup>72</sup> Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 75. "...comedunt enim ranas, canes, et serpents, et omnia indifferenter."

<sup>73</sup> On the consumption of vermin as defiling, see Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 214. See also above, Introduction, n.7.

<sup>74</sup> Schmieder, "Christians, Jews, Muslims—and Mongols," 281.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, 75. "Quaesivi de fide; et ut breviter dicam, nihil credunt."

For Gow, Pseudo-Methodius's Apocalypse, Peter Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, and Matthew Paris' *Chronica Maiora* represent the development of anti-Semitism in medieval Christian thought about the Last Things and particularly Gog and Magog. But as the above discussion has highlighted, there is no demonstrable anti-Semitism to be found in Pseudo-Methodius's text, the earliest of the three, particularly when compared to Pseudo-Methodius's treatment of Muslims. As such, there is no reason to suppose that Pseudo-Methodius represents a predictable predecessor to Comestor's Jewish Gog and Magog. Rather, Comestor—much like Matthew after him—observed his predecessor's convention of interpreting Gog and Magog as literally real, but imposed an identity onto the pair that made more sense to him. Pseudo-Methodius, Comestor, and Matthew each created texts that reflected their own interpretations of their immediate circumstances as it fit into already existing historical narratives and frameworks. Given the fact that these three texts do not neatly fit into Gow's conception of a medieval tradition of representing Gog and Magog as Jews, sources that seem to fit this tradition deserve reevaluation. In offering new interpretations of these texts, I argue that depictions of Gog and Magog often reflected attempts by medieval Christians to interpret their immediate social-political contexts through the lens of accepted knowledge. The German Ebstorf map, finished around the year of 1235, demonstrates this point.

Like Mandeville's *Book*, the Ebstorf Map (Figure 6) unambiguously draws on anti-Semitic imagery in its depiction of Gog and Magog. The Ebstorf Map, which today survives only as a reproduction in the Ebstorf nunnery, depicts Gog and Magog in a way that modern scholars have unanimously recognized as anti-Semitic. In the northeast corner of the map—which, like most medieval mappae mundi, was oriented with East at

the top—Gog and Magog are depicted graphically eating a bloody dismembered person (Figure 7). Bettina Bildhauer has noted that the Ebstorf’s Gog and Magog “are drawn with stereotypical ‘Jewish’ features, as identified in medieval anti-Semitic visual art ... elongated eyes and deformed noses shown in profile.”<sup>77</sup>

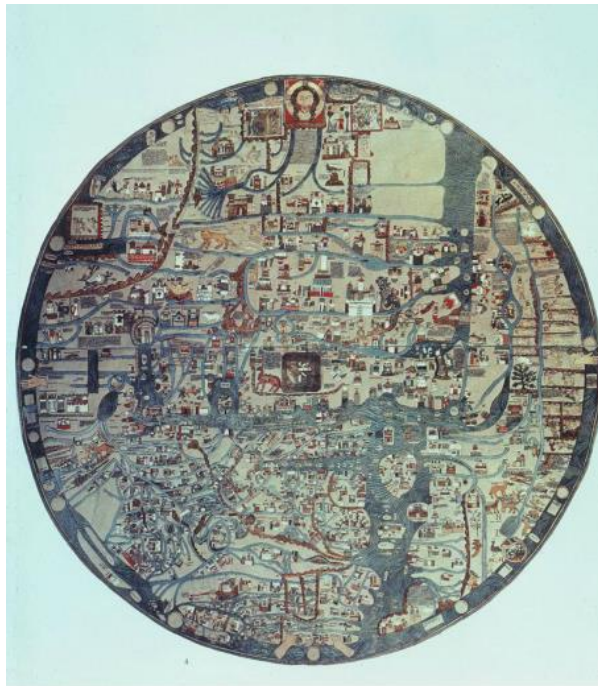


Figure 6: Ebstorf World Map, 1235, facsimile (Source: Artstor)

While this late medieval source certainly depicts Gog and Magog as Jews, it too is best understood as a reflection of its creator’s attempt to fit his immediate world into the larger scheme of Christian history outlined by works such as the *Historia Scholastica*. Whereas Matthew Paris’s bishop had to strain to perform some interpretive acrobatics to reconcile the information he received from his captives with accepted tradition in order to fit Gog and Magog into Peter Comestor’s anti-Semitic framework, the task was somewhat easier for the makers of the Ebstorf Map. That is, the map was produced less than two decades after Jews in Fulda had been accused of ritually killing a Christian child

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<sup>77</sup>Bettina Bildhauer, “Blood, Jews and Monsters in Medieval Culture,” in Bildhauer, *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, 80.

in 1235, the first recorded accusation of ritual murder in Germany.<sup>78</sup> Surely, for some Christians, this event would have served as an immediate reminder of the eternally destructive Jewish Gog and Magog found in Comestor's *Historia*. The proximity of this accusation to the Ebstorf Map's creation problematizes the idea that the Ebstorf's Jewish Gog and Magog are a simple reproduction of received knowledge and thus participants in a tradition of representation. Rather, though this mode of representation was certainly legitimized by its textual predecessors, it was also the product of its creator's immediate circumstances.



Figure 7: Detail of Gog and Magog on the Ebstorf Map. (Source: Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*, 160).

Because of the immense popularity of both Pseudo-Methodius and Petrus Comestor throughout the Middle Ages, tracing the influence of their depictions of Gog and Magog as literally real people is relatively straightforward. Less self-evident though, particularly after the twelfth century, is the debt of later medieval eschatological thought to Augustine's allegorical interpretation of Gog and Magog. In order to better illuminate

<sup>78</sup> Gow, *The Red Jews*, 49;

allegorical components of later medieval depictions of Gog and Magog, it is important to draw attention to early medieval texts that discuss Gog and Magog allegorically. In so doing it will be possible to highlight later medieval sources that are indebted to Augustine's allegorical approach to Gog and Magog.

One of the clearest and most popular examples of an early apocalyptic thinker whose views resonated with Augustine's vision of the allegorical Gog and Magog was the eighth-century Spanish monk Beatus of Liébana (c. 730-800). Although Beatus wrote and compiled a number of texts, he is best known for his *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, or *Commentary on the Apocalypse*. John Williams has noted that the only portion of the *Commentary* which Beatus actually wrote was the one-page introduction; the rest of the *Commentary* consisted of passages from other authors, which Beatus intermingled with one another.<sup>79</sup> Beatus's sources, whom he lists in his introduction, include Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, Fulgentius, Gregory, Tyconius, Irenaeus, Apringius and Isidore, although he also borrows from other influential authors as well, such as Bede.<sup>80</sup>

Beatus' passages on Gog and Magog are clearly derived from Jerome who, as already noted, provided the basis for Augustine's interpretation. Although, unlike Augustine, Beatus does not explicitly decry the idea that Gog and Magog are real people living in foreign lands, he does say that they are "all of the impious among the corners of the earth whom he [Antichrist] led into one perdition with him ... For Gog is interpreted as meaning 'covered': Magog 'by belief' or 'by the roof,'" thereby aligning himself

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<sup>79</sup> John Williams, "Isidore, Orosius and the Beatus Map," *Imago Mundi* 49 (1997): 7.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*



clearly with Augustinian notions of Gog and Magog's allegorical nature.<sup>81</sup> Beatus, then, offers a clear-cut early example of the adoption of an Augustinian allegorical understanding of Gog and Magog.

The ways in which subsequent eschatological writers adopted this Augustinian viewpoint, however, become less clear in the twelfth century. The twelfth century visionary Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135-1202) offers one particularly innovative example of how Augustine's allegorical interpretation of Gog and Magog featured prominently in apocalyptic narratives of the Last Things.<sup>82</sup> For Joachim, Gog and Magog are not the world's sinners and lapsed Christians as they were for Augustine. Nor were they a literally real people who would appear with Satan as a part of the Last Things. Rather, for Joachim, Gog and Magog's appearance in Revelation is to be read as an allegorical clue about the emergence of a literally real person: the apocalyptic Antichrist. That is, Gog is the Antichrist and he will command Satan's army, Magog, in his final assault on the faithful.<sup>83</sup> Joachim's reading is obviously indebted to Ezekiel's Gog and Magog, where the former is the prince of the latter. The influence of Augustine's allegorical interpretation on Joachim's vision is less clear. McGinn, however, notes that this understanding of Gog as a man and Magog as an army was based on Augustine's *tectum* and *de tecto* interpretation of the pair.<sup>84</sup> Augustine asserts that Gog "means 'roof,' and 'Magog' 'from a roof' or 'a house' and 'one who comes forth from the house'" and that,

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<sup>81</sup> Beatus of Liébana, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*, ed. Romero Pose (Rome: Instituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1985), 358. "...omnes impios quos inter angulos terrae seduxit in una secum perditione ... *Gog* enim interpretatur 'tectum': *Magog* 'de dogmate' sive 'de tecto'."

<sup>82</sup> Bernard McGinn, "Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist," *Church History* 47, no. 2 (1978): 166.

<sup>83</sup> Joachim of Fiore, "Book of Figures, The Fourteenth Table, the Seven-Headed Dragon," trans. Bernard McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-En-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Franciscans, Savonarola* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979), 140.

<sup>84</sup> McGinn, "Angel Pope and Papal Antichrist," 166.

such, Gog and Magog simply represent the lands from which the devil and the unfaithful will emerge in the End Days.<sup>85</sup>

Joachim's mode of interpreting Gog and Magog was not particularly influential on subsequent interpretations of the pair. However, it is important for the way in which it neatly demonstrates that Augustinian proclivities for interpreting the Last Things could be masked by innovations and idiosyncrasies, particularly in the later Middle Ages. But, as I demonstrate in the next chapter, innovation and obscurity were not the only manners through which writers and artists crafted allegorical interpretations of Gog and Magog in the later Middle Ages. Just as medieval writers and artists could adopt the conventions of their predecessors as a means for offering new interpretations of Gog and Magog's ethnic identity, so too could they adopt the conventions of depicting Gog and Magog as literally real people to mask allegorical interpretations of Gog and Magog and Augustinian conceptions of history.

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<sup>85</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 992.

## Chapter Two:

### Augustinian Alexander

The manner in which medieval thinkers interpreted Gog and Magog had implications beyond whether or not a source's creator believed that Gog and Magog literally existed. Often, a source's interpretation of Gog and Magog reflected its interpretation of the apocalypse more generally. Bernard McGinn has offered definitions for the two modes of apocalyptic belief that dominated medieval Christian thought. McGinn refers to these two modes as eschatology and apocalyptic eschatology, but for the sake of ease I refer to them here as eschatology and apocalypticism. Eschatological beliefs, McGinn notes, are "a form of belief about the nature of history that interprets historical process in the light of the final events."<sup>86</sup> An example of this mode of interpreting the apocalypse is the belief in apocalyptic resurrection, which can vindicate worldly persecutions in the present day by projecting spiritual justice into the future.<sup>87</sup> This type of apocalyptic belief was common amongst the Church Fathers and their immediate predecessors.

Among the Church Fathers, Augustine's version of eschatological belief exerted the most influence over subsequent exegetes and theologians of the early Middle Ages. Augustine, like his contemporary theologians and his successors such as Bede and Beatus, believed that he was living in the last age of the world.<sup>88</sup> But for Augustine and for other eschatological exegetes, this was not a reason to suppose that the precise details of the Last Things were knowable. Those who supposed to know the date or the details of

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<sup>86</sup> Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 13.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Emerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*, 84.

the events of the apocalypse, Augustine declared, “make use of human conjectures, and offer no firm evidence from the authority of canonical scripture.”<sup>89</sup> Rather, Augustine’s vision of the end focused heavily on the Antichrist, who he knew, thanks to the Bible, would come to power and persecute the Church before Christ’s Final Judgment. Augustine’s focus on the Antichrist, an arguably biblical figure, characterizes the eschatology of Augustine’s successors such as Bede as well, and held sway over medieval apocalyptic thought well into the twelfth century. Given Augustine’s commitment to the unknown nature of the Last Things, the fact that he interpreted Gog and Magog allegorically is not surprising. Although allegorical interpretations of Gog and Magog were not always indicative of eschatological interpretations of the apocalypse, they are a more standard feature of eschatological thought than of its counterpart, apocalypticism.

McGinn asserts that apocalypticism, or apocalyptic eschatology, is a subgenre of eschatology that was characterized by more deterministic narrative arcs of the Last Things.<sup>90</sup> Apocalypticism’s status as a subgenre of eschatology is due to the fact that apocalypticism, like eschatology, still interprets history “in light of final events.” However, this mode of apocalyptic belief often produced a vision of the end structured around an imminent crisis followed by a judgment and ultimately remedied with a reward.<sup>91</sup> Even more characteristic of apocalypticism is the assertion that the apocalypse is imminent, if not already taking place, a belief that allows for the discernment of the Last Things in past and present events alike.<sup>92</sup> But just as Augustine’s unknowable and

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<sup>89</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 901.

<sup>90</sup> McGinn, *Antichrist*, 13.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

eschatological apocalypse lent itself to an allegorical interpretation of Gog and Magog, so too did the apocalypticism of writers such as Pseudo-Methodius lend itself to literal interpretations of the pair.

But apocalypticism and literal interpretations of Gog and Magog did not always go hand in hand. Williams has noted that Beatus' *Commentary* was driven by his "anticipation of the end of ordinary time" due to calculations that placed Beatus in the last half-century before the beginning of the apocalyptic Seventh Age.<sup>93</sup> But Beatus's personal apocalypticism did not alter the allegorical nature of his depiction of Gog and Magog. Interestingly, however, the Silos Beatus (1091), one of the most famous Beatus manuscripts, accompanies the text of Beatus' allegorical Gog and Magog with a depiction of Gog and Magog as literally real people.<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Joachim of Fiore's apocalypticism did not compel him to interpret Gog and Magog literally. In fact, Joachim's allegorical interpretation of Gog as Antichrist, along with being in concordance with the biblical text of Ezekiel, was not unlike Augustine's eschatology in its emphasis on a scripturally-based apocalypse. But while apocalypticism and literal interpretations of Gog and Magog did not always go hand in hand, such interpretations characterized the most popular works of apocalypticism in the later Middle Ages, particularly Pseudo-Methodius's *Apocalypse*, the *Alexander Romances*, Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica* and *The Book of John Mandeville*.

The fact that these texts, and their apocalyptic eschatological worldviews, were produced and popularly disseminated in the later Middle Ages is not mere coincidence.

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<sup>93</sup> Williams, "Isidore, Orosius, and the Beatus Map," 7.

<sup>94</sup> See Joaquín Yarza Luaces, "Enluminures du Beatus de Ferdinand I<sup>er</sup> et Doña Sancha," in *Beatus de Liébana: L'Apocalypse de Jean: Splendeur de l'enluminure espagnole du xi<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. Jacques Robert (Paris: Catelva Éditions, 1998), 233-4.

Brett Whalen has noted that the twelfth century saw a marked increase in the prevalence of apocalypticism. This rise in apocalypticism, Whalen demonstrates, was largely the byproduct of papal reform movements which often adopted apocalyptic language in their critiques of their opponents.<sup>95</sup> These movements gave way to a new theology of history in which Augustine's injunction against correlating historical events with biblical ones was largely ignored.<sup>96</sup>

Joachim's apocalypticism is in many ways the culmination of twelfth-century "reformist apocalypticism," as Whalen terms it, as Joachim correlated Scripture and history in a manner that was more complicated and did a more thorough job of aligning worldly and spiritual history than any of his predecessors. This newly emergent view of history sought to identify signs of the apocalypse's imminence in historical and contemporary sociopolitical realities, a hallmark of apocalypticism. As such, popular works of apocalypticism in the Middle Ages, or works which heavily featured an apocalyptic eschatological worldview, were very much representative of larger trends in apocalyptic thought. In this context, literal interpretations of Gog and Magog flourished.

As Chapter One's discussion suggested, by the thirteenth century most sources that depicted Gog and Magog accepted that they were Alexander's enclosed peoples. Moreover, as Gow has noted, by the later Middle Ages Christians contemplating a *mappa mundi* would expect to see Gog and Magog depicted behind Alexander's gates. As a result of these developments, scholars have taken at face value depictions of Gog and Magog as Alexander's enclosed peoples. However, Chet van Duzer has noted that, in a

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<sup>95</sup> Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). See in particular Chapter 3, "Reformist Apocalypticism and the Battlefield of History."

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

slightly different context, the ways in which medieval maps depicted monsters reflected not only the mapmaker's vision of the world, but the vision of the world that the mapmaker knew his audience would expect.<sup>97</sup> As such, depictions of Gog and Magog on mappae mundi cannot always be safely assumed to reflect a mapmaker's literal interpretation of Gog and Magog so much as his recognition that his audience was expecting such a depiction. This point can be further inferred from the fact that, even when depicted as Alexander's enclosed peoples, Gog and Magog were represented in a number of diverse ways.

The thirteenth-century English Psalter World Map, or Psalter Map, offers a particularly interesting and fruitful case of allegory buried under an Alexander narrative (Figure 8). The Psalter Map makes prominent reference to the Alexander texts in its depiction of Alexander's Gate in its northeast corner. While Alexander's Gate is depicted, Gog and Magog are not. Moreover, the Psalter Map does not offer any textual description of Gog and Magog in the same way that its contemporary maps do. The English Hereford World Map, for instance, does not depict Gog and Magog, but includes a great deal of text describing Gog and Magog's origins and habits.<sup>98</sup> Conversely, as discussed in Chapter One, the Ebstorf World Map includes only a brief textual account concerning Gog and Magog but depicts them in great detail.

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<sup>97</sup> Chet Van Duzer, "The Sea Monsters in the Madrid Manuscript of Ptolemy's Geography (Biblioteca Nacional, MS Res. 255)," *Word and Image* 27, no. 1 (2011): 115.

<sup>98</sup> For a succinct discussion of the Hereford Map's monstrous contents, see Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*, 14-16, 21. For a longer discussion, see Naomi Reed Klein, *Maps of Medieval Thought: The Hereford Paradigm* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2001), 141-65.



Figure 8: The English Psalter World Map (Source: Artstor)

It is possible that this sparse rendition of Gog and Magog simply represented a less-common version of the Alexander romance in which Alexander's enclosed people and Revelation's Gog and Magog were not one and the same. As already noted, early renditions of the Alexander romance were not explicit in their association of Alexander's Gog and Magog with Revelation's Gog and Magog. Moreover, even late medieval renditions of the Alexander romance—such as the thirteenth-century *Libro de Alexandre* and even the *Historia Scholastica*—sometimes discussed Alexander's enclosure of the Ten Lost Tribes without explicitly labeling them as Gog and Magog.<sup>99</sup> As such, the Psalter Map would not have been alone in depicting Gog and Magog as a part of an Alexander narrative that was not explicitly linked with the Gog and Magog of Revelation. Given the importance of Christian salvation history in medieval world maps, including images of Alexander's Gog and Magog that were intended to be distinct from

<sup>99</sup> Peter Such and Richard Rabone, trans., *Book of Alexander=Libro de Alexandre* (Oxford: Aris & Phillips, 2009).



Revelation's Gog and Magog would make little sense, as it is the narrative of Revelation that makes Alexander's Gog and Magog intelligible within a Christian vision of history. If the Psalter Map's Gog and Magog were not meant to represent Revelation's Gog and Magog, then the image would have little to say about Christian salvation history. It seems much more likely that Gog and Magog represent a part of the theology of history adhered to by the Psalter Map's creator.

The lack of detail in this depiction of Gog and Magog has prompted scholars to regard it as an obscure reference to the tradition of depicting Gog and Magog as Alexander's enclosed peoples. Although curious, the lack of detail in the Psalter Map's depiction of Gog and Magog in and of itself does not indicate anything. Due to the Psalter Map's relatively lackluster depiction of Gog and Magog, few modern discussions of medieval eschatology—and even fewer discussions of Gog and Magog—even mention the Psalter Map. However, a broader examination of the map and its contexts suggests that the map's depiction of Gog and Magog is of a piece with the map's larger worldview and can offer us a more nuanced understanding of the mode in which the map interprets the apocalypse.

Studies of medieval cartography or monsters frequently mention the map, but in these discussions the question of the map's eschatology is only tangentially addressed by recognizing that the map depicts the gate that Alexander built to contain Gog and Magog.<sup>100</sup> These approaches must be complemented by an examination of the map's eschatology and worldview in order to more fully understand its meaning and its monsters. By examining the Psalter Map's depictions of the monstrous races in the Antipodes, the southwest corner of the world, and Christ, and comparing these depictions

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<sup>100</sup> See, for instance, Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*, 40-1.

to the way that those same features are depicted on the two other major world maps created in the same century as the Psalter Map, it becomes clear that the Psalter Map's vision of history and of eschatology is heavily Augustinian in nature.

Of these three features, the one that most immediately suggests an Augustinian worldview is the map's depiction of the monstrous races (Figure 9). The detail with which the monsters in the southwest corner of the map are depicted suggests that Gog and Magog's absence is not indicative of a rejection of the reality of monsters or fantastic creatures. Asa Mittman has suggested that the monsters included on the Psalter Map may have been a part of the mapmaker's "ideological attempt to control the wild, teeming mass of freak-show oddities" housed in the world.<sup>101</sup> Certainly, the monsters in the southwest corner of the Psalter Map are by no means benign, as some are depicted eating what appear to be human limbs or riding unusual beasts. Despite their ferocity, these oddities seem remarkably glum: the two cannibals that initiate this series of monsters look pained. More important than this, though, is the monsters' enclosure within their frames. These monsters, the only ones represented on the map, are tidily kept within the frames of their images, their bodies contorted to fit in the small spaces allotted to them. Thus contained, these figures do not seem intended to invoke fear or anxiety. Rather, in their restriction and somber expression they seem to be representative of Augustine's interpretation of the role of monsters in God's plan.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 54.



Figure 9: Detail of the monsters on the lower right-hand corner of the Psalter Map. Detail from British Library, *Magnificent Maps: Power, Propaganda, and Art*, [www.bl.uk/magnificentmaps](http://www.bl.uk/magnificentmaps) (accessed March 9, 2014).

Augustine discusses monstrous races at considerable length in *The City of God*, but he by no means wholeheartedly endorses their existence. “It is not,” Augustine assures his readers, after describing some of the monstrous races he has heard of, “necessary to believe in all the kinds of men which are said to exist.”<sup>102</sup> However, Augustine contends that if monsters do exist, they are either men or they are not men. If these monsters, he continues, “derive their origin from that one man Adam,” they are the creations of God who, in their diversity and bodily difference, embody God’s powers of

<sup>102</sup> Augustine, *City of God*, 705.

creation.<sup>103</sup> Although he does acknowledge that these monsters may not be men, Augustine does not speak at length about this and chooses instead to elaborate on how they can be understood as types of humans.<sup>104</sup> The brevity with which Augustine treats the idea of inhuman monsters, and his comparatively more involved description of the relationship between monsters and God if they are men, suggests that he tolerated the notion that monsters existed as testaments to God's power continuously subjected to his will. Given that medieval maps sought to integrate history and theology by mapping both onto the world, it is not unreasonable to think that someone sympathetic to Augustine's interpretation of monsters would have depicted them in the manner found on the Psalter Map.



Figure 10: A monster with a disrupted frame on the Psalter World Map (third monster from the top). Detail from British Library, *Magnificent Maps: Power, Propaganda, and Art*, [www.bl.uk/magnificentmaps/](http://www.bl.uk/magnificentmaps/) (accessed April 23, 2014)

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 706.

<sup>104</sup> Augustine questions whether or not monstrous races are men at the beginning of his discussion of monsters. See Ibid., 705.

When compared to the Hereford and Ebstorf, the Psalter Map's depiction of monsters seems even more closely aligned with an Augustinian worldview. The first important point of comparison between these three maps and their monsters is the relationship between the monsters and their frames. With one exception, all of the Psalter Map's monsters are painstakingly restrained to their frames. The one exception, a monster slightly protruding from his frame, seems to be the product of an artist's error rather than a conscious decision, as the frame was clearly erased and redrawn to accommodate the extra space taken up by the monster (Figure 10). The Hereford and Ebstorf Map are less careful to keep their monsters enclosed behind frames. In the Ebstorf, for instance, monsters—including Gog and Magog—break out of their frames with alarming regularity in a way that is clearly a planned element of the image (Figure 11).<sup>105</sup> Unlike the Psalter map, in which the artist had to edit the image to allow the monster to protrude, on the Ebstorf protruding parts of monsters were clearly a part of the design, as limbs and weapons neatly foreground the decorated frames that they break. The Hereford, moreover, while it does not feature monsters protruding from their frames, depicts monsters as living rather comfortably within them.

Furthermore, the Ebstorf and the Hereford World Maps feature multiple unframed monsters and oddities outside of the southwest corner of the map. The Psalter Map, by contrast, offers very little by way of visual wonders or marvels aside from its southwestern monsters. Mittman has identified over ten locations on the Hereford World Map outside of the Antipodes on which monsters appear, and at least three places in

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<sup>105</sup> On the implications of figures that break through or challenge the restrictions of their borders, see Bildhauer, "Blood, Jews and Monsters," 82.

which monsters appear outside of the Antipodes on the Ebstorf Map.<sup>106</sup> In the Hereford and Ebstorf Maps, then, monsters are markedly more free and threatening than they are on the Psalter Map.



Figure 11: Monsters interacting with their frames in the Ebstorf World Map. From Artstor (accessed March 9, 2014).

One common explanation for the features of any medieval map is the map's limited space; this feature is or is not included, scholars often reason, because the mapmaker simply had no room to do so. While the physical space of a map certainly limits the amount of detail that can or cannot be included, the details that the artist chooses to include or exclude stand to tell us a great deal about the ideological work the mapmaker is attempting to accomplish, and not simply about the physical size of the map. Thus, far from simply being an artifact of the Psalter Map's small size, the cramped, unobtrusive monsters on the Psalter Map communicate an Augustinian understanding of

<sup>106</sup> For Mittman's graphic which points out the occurrences of monsters on the Hereford Map, see Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*, 40.

monsters as men who are subject to God's plan and structuring of the world and are not free to disrupt Christendom. Thus, rather than a simple reproduction of a feature common in medieval world maps, the Psalter Map's monsters reflect the mapmaker's tendency to modify typical images to communicate specific ideological ends. The Psalter Map's depiction of Christ also features some elements this effect.

The Psalter Map features a fully embodied Christ towering over the globe while holding a smaller globe in his hand, representing his dominion over the earth. In depicting Christ in this way, the Psalter Map highlights Christ's mastery over the world even more clearly than the map's monsters do, as Christ both watches over the earth and holds it firmly in his grasp. Although not a unique image in the tradition of medieval artistic depictions of Christ, the Psalter Map is notable for being the only one of the three maps which depicts Christ in such a way. For the Psalter Map, the unfolding of worldly history centers on Christ. Comparing this image with the Ebstorf's depiction of Christ makes Christ's centrality in the Psalter clear.

The Ebstorf does not depict Christ in his entirety. Rather, Christ's head, hands, and feet are separated and spread along four outer points of the map, which is crowded with images of cities and historical points of interest. Thus the Ebstorf seems to invite its audience to read the historical actors and events it depicts as signs of the divine plan, an interpretive approach reminiscent of apocalypticism's approach to deciphering the Last Things that is virtually impossible to do in the Ebstorf map. Comparing the Psalter Map's Christ to the fully-embodied Christ on the Hereford map suggests that the Psalter Map understands Christ to be much more involved in worldly affairs than the Hereford does.

The Hereford Map depicts Christ in a manner similar to that of the Ebstorf, appearing in his entirety above the world. However, the Hereford Christ seems more removed from worldly matters than the Psalter Map's Christ. Unlike the Christ in the Psalter Map, the Hereford Christ is not associated with any image signifying his dominion over the world, much less a globe. Rather, he is displaying the wounds of his crucifixion. Whereas the Psalter Map's Christ looms large over the world, the Hereford Christ is removed from the world and seems to be depicted in a distinct spiritual space, as the saved are depicted entering heaven on his right while the damned are thrust into hell on his left. Compared to the Psalter Map's Christ, the Hereford Christ's role seems to be more spiritual than worldly, an idea that is reflected in the aforementioned freedom with which marvels and terrors traverse the Hereford Map. Christ's ability to structure the world is another element of the Psalter Map which, compared to the Ebstorf and Hereford, seems to mark it as a product of a tradition sympathetic to an Augustinian worldview.

The Psalter map was roughly contemporary with a resurgence of Augustinian ideologies thanks to the rise in Scholasticism, which suggests that this depiction of Christ is a visual representation of broader trends of Scholastic thought. In his discussion of Scholastic responses to apocalypticism in the thirteenth century, McGinn notes that both Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure were disturbed by the ways in which the apocalyptic eschatology of Joachim of Fiore envisioned a world in which historical actors, and not Christ, were central to the culmination of God's plan. In response, McGinn argues, both Scholastics offered correctives to Joachite apocalypticism that placed Christ at the center



of the world's history.<sup>107</sup> Though the Christ-centered nature of history in this case is the product of Scholasticism rather than of Augustine's direct influence, McGinn notes that this Christ-centered theology of history was indebted to Augustine.<sup>108</sup> The creation of the Psalter Map was contemporary with this Scholastic advocacy of a Christ-centered theology of history, and, as noted above, visually presents Christ more prominently than the Ebstorf Map does, suggesting its Scholastic sympathies.

The Augustinian resonances of the Psalter Map's monsters and its depiction of Christ suggests that its interpretation of the Last Things would be equally Augustinian. As the only element of the Psalter Map to directly pertain to the apocalypse, it is likely that Gog and Magog's gate would be a means for the mapmaker to communicate this eschatological vision of the apocalypse. A mapmaker guided by an Augustinian interpretation of the apocalypse would be aware of Augustine's claim that Revelation's Gog and Magog do not represent a real group of people, which would explain the Psalter Map's sparse depiction of the pair. The mapmaker's decision to depict Alexander's Gate, and not Gog and Magog, offered a means for the mapmaker to avoid directly violating Augustine's injunction against Gog and Magog's literal existence while still accommodating the apocalyptic expectations of his audience. The maker of the Psalter Map would probably have expected his audience to regard and assess his map more closely than the makers of the Hereford or Psalter did. As opposed to these much larger world maps, the Psalter Map, as its name indicates, was housed in a psalter—a small prayer book—meaning that its readers would be more likely be able to regard all of its features.

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<sup>107</sup> Bernard McGinn, "The Abbot and the Doctors: Scholastic Reactions to the Radical Eschatology of Joachim of Fiore," *Church History* 40, no. 1 (1971): 40.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 38, 40

Mittman's assertion that medieval mapmakers privileged their own ideological aims above the expectations of their audience is certainly applicable to large world maps meant to hang on walls, as no one looking at such a map would be able to closely examine and engage with every element of the map.<sup>109</sup> However, the notion of the creator as his own audience cannot be productively applied to smaller, more accessible maps like the Psalter Map. Although not necessarily subversive, given the continued reverence for Augustine throughout the Middle Ages, the Psalter Map's depiction of Gog and Magog makes it clear that later medieval depictions of Gog and Magog were not necessarily as straightforward as they may seem to modern scholars. Furthermore, the Psalter Map's strategic adoption of conventions of literal depictions of Gog and Magog as a means to communicate an eschatological interpretation of apocalypse is neither explicit nor unique.

Though not a contemporary or immediate successor of the Psalter Map, the fifteenth-century Fra Mauro World Map (1459) explicitly demonstrates that mapmakers could include literal depictions of Gog and Magog in their works while still advocating an Augustinian interpretation of the pair.<sup>110</sup> The Fra Mauro Map was commissioned by Alfonso V, king of Portugal, from a Venetian monk and cartographer for whom it is named, and who died shortly after the map was completed.<sup>111</sup> Mountains called "Caspian Mountains" are mentioned no less than four times on the Fra Mauro World Map: twice in

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<sup>109</sup> Mittman, *Maps and Monsters*, 59.

<sup>110</sup> Piero Falchetta, *Fra Mauro's World Map: With a Commentary and Translations of the Inscriptions* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), 614-17. For the significance of the Fra Mauro Map in the history of cartography in the early modern period, see Denis E. Cosgrove, "Images of Renaissance Cosmography, 1450-1650," in *The History of Cartography* Volume 3, ed. David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 64.

<sup>111</sup> M.C.A. de Challaye, "Notice Historique sur le Planisphère du Moine Camaldule Fra Mauro, Existant dans la Bibliothèque de Saint-Marc, a Vénice," *Bulletins de la Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest*, 6 (1852): 350-4.

Asia, once in central Asia, and again in Russia. Moreover, although it does not depict Alexander’s Gate, the Russian Caspian Mountains include a note about suspiciously similar “Iron Gates.” While Fra Mauro, the creator of the map, did not depict the gates of Gog and Magog, or, for that matter, Gog and Magog, he included a lengthy note describing Gog and Magog near one of its Asian Caspian Mountains (Figure 12). This note begins inconspicuously, stating that “Some write that on the slopes of Mount Caspian, or not far from there, live those peoples who, as one reads, were shut in by Alexander.”<sup>112</sup> After this unremarkable opening, however, Fra Mauro quickly launches into a number of critiques.



Figure 12: Detail of the text describing Gog and Magog on the Fra Mauro World Map. From *Fra Mauro's World Map: With a Commentary and Translations of the Inscriptions*, ed. Piero Falchetta (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006), CD-ROM (accessed May 1, 2014).

The first seeks to challenge notions about Gog and Magog’s literal existence, and does so by arguing that literary and religious texts that posit Gog and Magog as people living behind the Caspian Mountains are contradicted by empirical fact. The belief that Gog and Magog live near the Caspian Mountains is wrong, Fra Mauro declares, because

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 617.

the “Georgians, the Mingrelians, the Armenians, the Circassians, the Tartars,” and the many other groups who live near the mountains in question have not noticed the presence of such peoples.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, Fra Mauro notes, these regions have been traversed by European Christians, and “it is not possible that such a large number of peoples should remain unknown given that these regions are fairly well known to us.”<sup>114</sup> But the fact that Gog and Magog have not been noticed by anyone does not rule out their existence. Rather, Fra Mauro states, it is possible that they simply live somewhere else: “these peoples are very far from the Mount Caspian and are, as I said, at the extreme limit of the world.”<sup>115</sup> This initial modification to Gog and Magog narratives seems to be minor. But Fra Mauro’s critique of Gog and Magog does not end there, and goes so far as to suggest that Gog and Magog do not literally exist at all.

Even if Gog and Magog may live in a far corner of the earth, Fra Mauro asserts, they are not the people foretold in Revelation. To think that these people and the people of Revelation are one and the same, Fra Mauro asserts, simply reflects “the way some force the Sacred Scriptures to mean what they want them to mean. So, I am not differing from the authority of St. Augustine” in suggesting that the literally real Gog and Magog are not the Gog and Magog of Revelation.<sup>116</sup> Thus for Fra Mauro, even if a people called Gog and Magog are discovered to be living in some far corner of the earth, Augustine was right all along in asserting that these people are allegorical. Fra Mauro’s lengthy engagement with Gog and Magog is atypical when compared to many other medieval writers who depicted Gog and Magog. However, it neatly embodies Fra Mauro’s

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

tendency to critically engage with sources that had been influential in medieval cosmographical and historical thought, which he indulged throughout his world map.<sup>117</sup> Including such a lengthy exegesis would be unmanageable in the diminutive Psalter Map. Furthermore, given the fact that the Psalter Map was created before the Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe prompted Franciscan and Dominican envoys to travel East, it would not have been able to make use of the same geographical-empirical argument that Fra Mauro does.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, both the Psalter and the Fra Mauro World Maps demonstrate a mixture of apocalyptic imagery and eschatological interpretation of the Last Things as a means for catering to an audience's expectations. In both of these maps the blending of eschatological and apocalyptic elements manifests in depictions of Gog and Magog that are deceptive in their apparently literal interpretation of the pair.

The blending of eschatological and apocalyptic conventions in these maps does not provide a lens through which one can examine every medieval world map. However, it does produce a set of questions that can be applied to at least some sources. For instance—as Fra Mauro demonstrates—a map's association of Gog and Magog with a specific ethnic group does not occur in a cultural-social vacuum. Moreover, as both the Psalter and the Fra Mauro maps make clear, a mapmaker's decision to depict Gog and Magog as being literally real is not synonymous with that mapmaker's uncomplicated endorsement of such a view. With these observations in mind, one can give a nuanced treatment of the nature of the Catalan Atlas's depiction of Gog and Magog as Tartars.

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<sup>117</sup> Fra Mauro's critical engagement with his sources is particularly notable in his relationship to Ptolemy, whose cosmography he adopted but whose geography he rejected. See: Joachim Lelewel, *Géographie du Moyen Age* Tome I (Amsterdam: Meridian Publishing, 1966), 95.

<sup>118</sup> On the encyclopedic nature of the Fra Mauro map and Fra Mauro's use of historical sources, see: Pauline Moffitt Watts, "The European Religious Worldview and Its Influence on Mapping," in *History of Cartography* Volume 3, 382 and Challaye, "Notice Historique," 351-2.

Just as the aforementioned depictions of Gog and Magog represent a sort of hybrid between apocalypticism and eschatological interpretations of the apocalypse, so too is the Catalan Atlas characterized by various types of hybridity (Figure 13).



Figure 13: The Catalan Atlas's map panels (Source: Abraham Cresques, *Catalan World Atlas in Mapamundi: der katalanische Weltatlas vom Jahre 1375*, ed. Georges Grosjean).

The Catalan Atlas was commissioned in 1375 by the king of Aragon, Pedro IV (1319-1387), as a gift for the king of France, Charles the Wise (1338-1380). Pedro commissioned the map from the cartographic workshop of Abraham Cresques (1325-1387), a Jewish cartographer who worked on the island of Majorca, located approximately 170 miles from the coastal city of Valencia. By the fourteenth century Majorca was renowned for the high-quality maps and navigational tools that were produced there. Among the Majorcan cartographers, Cresques's workshop was particularly renowned; during the latter half of the fourteenth century Pedro IV and his son and successor Joan I (r. 1387-1396) both commissioned multiple works from the workshop.<sup>119</sup> The fame of the Cresques workshop survived Abraham's death, as his son Yehuda continued to be an active producer of maps and navigational tools into the fifteenth century. Before launching into an analysis of the Catalan Atlas's depiction of

<sup>119</sup> Clara Estow, "Mapping Central Europe: The Catalan Atlas and the European Imagination," *Mediterranean Studies* 13 (2004): 3.

Gog and Magog, I will first draw attention to some of the map's characteristic stylistic elements and influences. Taking stock of these general features of the Atlas will highlight its hybridity, a term that I have utilized deliberately for the way in which it aligns the Atlas with medieval monsters as theorized by Jeffrey Cohen.

In his seminal “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” Cohen observes that monsters are “disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist any attempt to include them in any systematic structuration.” As a result of this hybridity, Cohen continues, the monster “refuses easy categorization.”<sup>120</sup> The same is true for the Catalan Atlas. The Atlas blends various cartographic conventions and reflects the ethnic and religious diversity of the society in which it was produced. These factors have made it a source that is difficult for scholars to easily pin down. Before discussing scholarly approaches to the Atlas, though, I must assess the various ways in which its creation and its stylistic elements imbue the Atlas with hybridity.

Firstly, the immediate contexts surrounding the Atlas's production—namely the fact that it was produced by a Jewish cartographer for a Christian king—speaks to the hybridity of this map when compared to the aforementioned maps. That a Christian king would patronize a Jewish artisan for a luxury good such as a gift map is, in many ways, representative of fourteenth-century Spain. Compared to other European countries, in the fourteenth century the Crown of Aragon housed a substantial non-Christian population. David Nirenberg has suggested that the “sheer numbers of non-Christians in Iberia rendered them less exotic” to fourteenth century Iberian Christians.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, that Pedro commissioned a high-status luxury good from a Jewish artisan is indicative of the

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<sup>120</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, “Monster Culture (Seven Theses),” 6.

<sup>121</sup> David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 21.

proximity of some medieval Christian kings to some of their elite Jewish subjects, a relationship that Nirenberg argues motivated some Christians to perpetrate acts of anti-Jewish violence in fourteenth-century Spain. Nonetheless, the fact that an artistic production commissioned for a Christian audience was made by the workshop of a Jewish cartographer is an element of sociocultural hybridity absent from most other extant medieval Christian world maps produced in medieval Europe, which were largely created in monasteries. The inter-confessional nature of the Atlas' production is not the only or the most intriguing facet of the Atlas's hybridity.

The Atlas, although a map of the world, does not belong to the *mappa mundi* genre characterized by the Ebstorf, Hereford, Psalter, and Fra Mauro World Maps. The most obvious discontinuity between these *mappae mundi* and the Atlas are the manners in which they are visually arranged. Whereas *mappae mundi* are round and organize the three continents of Africa, Asia, and Europe in the well-known medieval T-O pattern, the Atlas is square and organizes continents in a way similar to modern maps. One of the most historically significant ways in which the Catalan Atlas resonates more closely with modern maps than with medieval *mappae mundi* is the way in which it depicts Asia, as the Catalan Atlas is the first medieval map to depict Asia as its own continent.<sup>122</sup> A less obvious, but equally important, element of the Atlas's layout that separates it from *mappae mundi* is its directional orientation. Unlike *mappae mundi*, which were oriented with the East at the top of the map, the Atlas was oriented with the North at the top, just as modern Western maps. These elements of the Atlas' organization and layout are meant to reflect navigational charts, a genre of map far removed from the more ideologically

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<sup>122</sup> Estow, "Mapping Central Europe," 6.



driven mappae mundi which was more heavily in use in the Mediterranean than throughout the rest of Europe.

The specific type of map upon which the Atlas was based is the portolan chart, a type of map used by Mediterranean sailors that was particularly popular between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>123</sup> That portolan charts, as opposed to mappae mundi, would have been the main visual reference for Cresques's Atlas is hardly surprising given the context in which it was produced. Firstly, the fact that mappae mundi were largely produced in monastic settings makes it unlikely that a Jewish cartographer and navigator would use them as his main reference point for his own work. More specifically, as Tony Campbell notes in his contribution to the *History of Cartography* series, portolan charts were so prevalent in Catalan and in Italian contexts that it is difficult to be sure where the form first originated.<sup>124</sup> Because Cresques's Catalan workshop was heavily staffed by both Catalan and Italian navigators and cartographers, it is no surprise that even an artistic work produced from the workshop would heavily reference portolan charts. That Cresques had produced portolan charts for the king before beginning work on the Catalan Atlas makes his decision to use the portolan chart rather than the mappae mundi even less surprising.<sup>125</sup>

While Cresques's choice to model his Atlas on portolan charts is unremarkable, the Atlas's apparent distinction between the theologically informed mappa mundi and the navigational portolan chart is not as tidy as it at first seems. In fact, some of the outward elements of the Atlas that seem to neatly align it with the portolan chart belie the fact that

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Tony Campbell, "Portolan Charts from the Late Thirteenth Century to 1500," in *The History of Cartography* Volume 1, ed. J.B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 372.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 442.

the Atlas utilizes the form of the portolan chart primarily for decorative value. Although the lines that cover the map are meant to represent the directional lines of portolan charts, their function on the Atlas is purely decorative and they bear no navigational meaning. Moreover, the Atlas draws much of its content and information from narrative travel accounts, rendering some of its details inaccurate.<sup>126</sup> That these decorative features figure so heavily in the map's appearance and content raises the question of why Cresques would present his Christian audience with something that resembles a portolan chart but which in fact does not bear the charts' same functionality.

The most immediate explanation for this disparity is the fact that the Atlas was intended to be a decorative gift rather than a practical navigational tool. But, if the Atlas was intended as a decorative object, why would Cresques have opted for the form of the portolan chart rather than the more stylized and familiar *mappa mundi*? Perhaps the most immediate answer to this question is that Cresques, as an established cartographer and a practicing Jew, would have had more interest in demonstrating his skill as a cartographer than in wholeheartedly endorsing the Christian vision of history and salvation, the explicit aim of a *mappa mundi*. Whether or not this was the primary factor in Cresques's approach to drafting the Atlas is immaterial, as the portolan-like Atlas would have had specific connotations to a Christian audience, particularly one outside of the Mediterranean.

While, as noted above, the form of the portolan chart was predominantly utilized in the Mediterranean context, it would not have represented a mere facet of cartographical practice to a wider European audience. Robert Bartlett has noted that Mediterranean cultures were in contact with many more parts of the world than most of

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<sup>126</sup> Estow, "Mapping Central Europe," 7.

their more landlocked counterparts were. By the second half of the fourteenth century countries like Italy had trading relationships with more parts of the world and more fully developed navies than, say, France.<sup>127</sup> Thus to a French viewer such as Charles the Wise, the format of the portolan chart could represent the worldliness and transoceanic prowess of Mediterranean seafarers. In fact, if Spain as a whole was markedly more diverse than the rest of Europe in the Middle Ages, Majorca was even more so.

Fourteenth-century Majorca was a particularly diverse center of cross-confessional contact and exchange. A “waystation for European and African traders with commercial ties to the Low Countries and Asia,” Muslim, Jewish, and Christian travelers and merchants came through the island, sometimes settling and working there for significant periods of time.<sup>128</sup> But there is a more immediate way in which the Catalan Atlas represents the worldliness of its creators, as Joachim Lelewel has noted that the Atlas reflects commercial exchange between Aragon, Wismar, and the Ukrainian city Lviv.<sup>129</sup> To its audience, then, the Atlas would have been as much a source of knowledge about the wider world as it would have been an emblem of France’s relationship with the cosmopolitan and exotic Mediterranean. Moreover, for Pedro, the Atlas would be a testament to his region’s superior navy and worldliness.

While the decorative features of the Atlas reference portolan charts as a means of exemplifying the Atlas’s connection to the wider world, other features that decorate the Atlas—particularly in its depiction of Asia—draw explicitly from elements characteristic of mappae mundi. In particular, the Atlas’s inclusion of an apocalyptic narrative in its

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<sup>127</sup> Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change 950-1350* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 293.

<sup>128</sup> Estow, “Mapping Central Europe,” 2.

<sup>129</sup> Lelewel, *Géographie du Moyen Age* Tome I, 65-6.

depiction of Asia—in which Gog and Magog play a central role—betrays the influence of mappae mundi upon the Atlas.<sup>130</sup> Overlaying elements of narratives of salvific history onto physical geography was a key feature of mappae mundi, as is evidenced by the centrality of Jerusalem on such maps.<sup>131</sup> The apocalyptic narratives on mappae mundi, as has already been discussed, frequently hinged upon depictions of Gog and Magog. The same is true for the Atlas which, like mappae mundi, places these people in the easternmost corner of the world, a commonality between the Atlas and mappae mundi that is masked, in part, by the different directional orientations of mappae mundi and the Atlas. Thus, while the decorative nature of the Atlas's navigational lines and some of its geographical features somewhat destabilizes its categorization as an Atlas, its invocation of elements of the mappae mundi clearly exemplifies its hybrid nature.

The Atlas's inclusion of a seemingly traditional apocalyptic narrative speaks to another important element of hybridity around which the Catalan Atlas is structured: its relationship to its source material. The *Travels* of Marco Polo was one of the main source texts for the information about Asia found on the Catalan Atlas.<sup>132</sup> As Kim Phillips has pointed out, the Atlas's depiction of Cathay as a heavily urbanized region filled with cities draws heavily from Marco Polo's accounts of his travels through China.<sup>133</sup> Polo even appears on the Atlas traveling east towards Asia, further signaling the map's indebtedness to Polo's *Travels*. The Atlas's utilization of Polo's text, however, is not consistently faithful. In fact, in its narrative of Gog and Magog, the Atlas directly

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<sup>130</sup> Pinhas Yoeli, "Abraham and Yehuda Cresques and the Catalan Atlas," *The Cartographic Journal* 7, no. 1 (1970): 25.

<sup>131</sup> Evelyn Edson, "The Medieval World View: Contemplating the Mappamundi," *History Compass* 8, no. 6 (2010): 506-8.

<sup>132</sup> Estow, "Mapping Central Europe," 5.

<sup>133</sup> Kim Phillips, *Before Orientalism: Asian Peoples and Cultures in European Travel Writing, 1245-1510* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 149.

contradicts Polo's text. Whereas Polo unequivocally states that Gog and Magog cannot be Tartars, the Atlas insists that Gog and Magog are Tartars.<sup>134</sup> Thus, even in its relationship to a source which it clearly relies upon for much of its information, its use of that source is far from faithful or straightforward. The monstrous marvels that the Atlas depicts throughout Asia, which include mermaids and pygmies, though not contradictions of Marco Polo's text in the same way that is the identification of Gog and Magog with Tartars, further represent elements of the map that depart from Polo's *Travels*, which lacks a substantial discussion of monsters or monstrous beings. Fittingly, then, the monsters on the Catalan Atlas—and their relationship to the Atlas's source materials—embody yet another element of the source's hybridity.

Some scholars of the Atlas have suggested that *The Book of John Mandeville* was another of the Atlas's influences.<sup>135</sup> However, unlike the *Travels*, the *Book* is not explicitly referenced in the Atlas. Moreover, the first Spanish copy of Mandeville was not commissioned until 1380, the year in which the Atlas was completed and delivered to its royal French recipient.<sup>136</sup> Given the cosmopolitan nature of fourteenth-century Iberia, and Majorca, it is certainly possible that copies of *Mandeville* were available to Cresques's workshop in Latin or perhaps even Italian. However, no argument has been put forth to demonstrate such a presence, and no specific features of the Atlas have been linked to Mandeville. Moreover, the Atlas and Mandeville differ substantially in many of their narrative and geographical details. As such, in this discussion, Mandeville will not be

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<sup>134</sup> Marco Polo, *The Travels*, 49.

<sup>135</sup> Phillips makes this claim in passing. Her evidence however, is all material that is found in Marco Polo as well. Thus, that Mandeville is necessarily a source is not satisfactorily demonstrated.

<sup>136</sup> Rosemary Tzanaki, *Mandeville's Medieval Audiences: A Study on the Reception of the Book of Sir John Mandeville* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 13.

considered as a source for the Atlas. For the time being, however, it is worth mentioning that *Mandeville*, like Polo's *Travels*, does not associate Gog and Magog with Tartars.

A Christian patron and a Jewish artisan, the outward appearance of a portolan chart coupled with details common in monastic mappae mundi, and subtle but important departures from a source text that ostensibly informs the entire map: these are just some of the elements demonstrative of the Catalan Atlas's hybridity. These tensions and contradictions within the map resulted in a product that, like Cohen's monster, cannot be easily categorized by those who approach it. In fact, scholarly approaches to the Catalan Atlas tend either to dismiss the Atlas because of its complexity or to conduct interpretations of the Atlas that do not take its complex relationship with genre and sources into consideration.

Gow's treatment of the Atlas as a curious deviation from mainstream European cartography clearly demonstrates the former tendency.<sup>137</sup> An even starker example of the Atlas's tendency to be overlooked by scholars is found in a recent study of constructions of difference in late medieval Iberia which discusses Gog and Magog but which does not even mention the Atlas.<sup>138</sup> Clara Estow, conversely, has conducted a study of the Atlas in which she suggests that the Atlas's exotic depiction of Asia was intended to normalize distant lands for a Christian audience by making distant curiosities and riches knowable and desirable.<sup>139</sup> While this claim is compelling, it demonstrates the latter of the aforementioned tendencies in its failure to address how the Atlas's complicated relationship with genre and its sources inform such a reading. Regardless of their

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<sup>137</sup> Gow, "Fra Mauro's World View," 405-14.

<sup>138</sup> Jean Dangler, *Making Difference in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 132, 137.

<sup>139</sup> Estow, "Mapping Central Europe," 15.

avoidance of the map's tensions and hybridity, these approaches still offer valuable insights into the Atlas by providing social, political, and artistic contexts as lenses through which the map can be analyzed.

For Cohen and other scholars since the publication of Cohen's "Seven Theses," the hybridity of the monster's body is an impetus for engagement. The monster's body, Cohen insists, "exists only to be read."<sup>140</sup> Having demonstrated some of the broad ways in which it embodies a monstrous sort of hybridity, the same can be said of the Catalan Atlas. Rather than being avoided or overlooked, the Atlas's hybridity should be explored, or at least entertained, as an important part of its meaning and significance. The aforementioned tensions are just some of the most obvious examples of the Atlas's readable hybridity. But other, more subtle, features of hybridity significantly impact the map's meaning, and particularly its apocalyptic narrative.

Given the aforementioned ways in which Christian monastic mapmakers were able to make subtle or explicit alterations to received traditions, it is certainly not impossible that a Jewish cartographer working for a Christian king might make the same kinds of alterations. As Chapter Three will argue, the cartographer who created the Catalan Atlas in fact made a number of alterations to the sources he referenced. But unlike its Christian counterparts, whose idiosyncratic depictions of the apocalypse hinged upon whether or not Gog and Magog were literally real, the Catalan Atlas takes a number of liberties with virtually every part of its detailed apocalyptic narrative. As such, I now explore the ways in which the Atlas's depiction of the apocalypse, which at first glance appears unproblematic and traditional, makes selective use of different narrative conventions to achieve subversive aims.

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<sup>140</sup> Cohen, "Monster Culture," 4.

## Part II: Gog and Magog in the Catalan Atlas



### **Chapter Three: Obscured Identities**

Whereas the Psalter and Fra Mauro World Maps discussed in Chapter Two provide different rationales for interpreting Gog and Magog allegorically, both maps were produced by and for Christians. As such, neither rejects Christian understandings of Gog and Magog. Rather, they insist that allegorical interpretations of Gog and Magog, as first put forth by Augustine, are more accurate than literal ones, which, as Fra Mauro argued, have been disproven by Christian incursions into the East. Thus, although both maps reject popular understandings of Gog and Magog, neither is incendiary and both make use of sources that were well-regarded by their coreligionists. The Catalan Atlas, however, was produced within a very different context.

Rather than a monk-made Christian *mappa mundi* concerned with aligning the physical world with a Christian perception of history, the Atlas was commissioned from a Jewish cartographer by a Christian king and was meant to resemble portolan charts. As such, it cannot be assumed that the Atlas takes the same kind of Christian-centered approach to depicting Gog and Magog as the aforementioned *mappae mundi* do. In fact, even a cursory evaluation of the components of the Atlas's Gog and Magog narrative reveals some startling discrepancies between the Atlas and the Christian sources of which it ostensibly makes use. I argue that, in making these departures from his source material, Cresques sought to critique Christian apocalypticism. I show that the means through which Cresques achieved this critique was to draw attention to elements of Christian apocalyptic narratives that Christians often ignored in order to produce a "shadow text," a concept that I discuss in more detail below.



Figure 14: Detail of the apocalyptic narrative in the Catalan Atlas

Before noting and assessing the significance of these discrepancies, however, a brief survey of the Atlas’s apocalyptic narrative as told through the Atlas’s illustrations will provide a useful framework for my subsequent analysis, as it highlights the tension between the Atlas’s seemingly straightforward imagery and its more problematic textual content (Figure 14). Two images are central to the Atlas’s rendition of the apocalypse. Moving from West to East on the Atlas, the first component of the Atlas’s pictorial apocalyptic narrative is Gog and Magog, enclosed behind the Caspian Mountains in a land labelled “GOGIMAGOG” in red and blue lettering. Gog and Magog, rather diminutive figures, are shown holding a pendant with the image of a scorpion and are accompanied by a larger mounted figure, identified by the accompanying legend as the Prince of Gog and Magog (Figure 15).<sup>141</sup>

<sup>141</sup> Jean Alexandre Buchon, *Notice d’un atlas en langue catalane* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1839), 146. “Le grand seigneur prince de Gog et de Magog. Il viendra au temps de l’Antéchrist avec une nombreuse suite.”

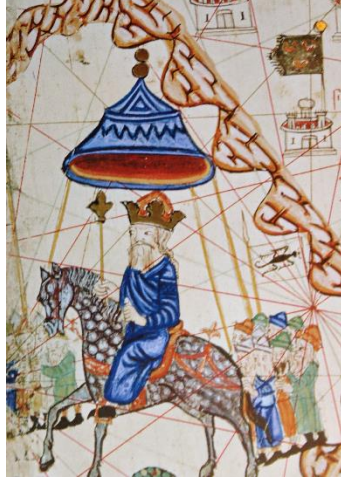


Figure 15: The Prince of Gog and Magog with Gog and Magog

Whereas Gog and Magog represent Bernard McGinn's punishment phase of apocalyptic eschatology, another of the Atlas' apocalyptic figures seems to represent the reward phase. In this image, directly east of GOGIMAGOG, a bearded and crowned figure is shown distributing what appear to be palms to the people crowded around him (Figure 16). Although this image is not accompanied by a legend, it has generally been interpreted by scholars as depicting Christ distributing palms to his followers at the end of Antichrist's apocalyptic tribulations.<sup>142</sup> The Atlas's pictorial presentation of the Last Things, although seemingly straightforward, is complicated in a number of ways. One of the most immediate factors to complicate this narrative is the Atlas's legends, which contain text pertaining to the apocalypse.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. This is the interpretation against which Sandra Saen-López Pérez positions her interpretation of the image, discussed in more detail below. See Sandra Saen-López Pérez "La Representación de Gog y Magog y la Imagen del Anticristo en las Cartas Náuticas Bajomedievales," *Archivo Español de Arte* 78 (2005): 263-276.



Figure 16: The palm-bearing figure on the Atlas

The first element of the Atlas’s textual apocalyptic narrative that gives pause occurs in the Atlas’s account of Alexander’s enclosure of Gog and Magog. Although couched within a predictable narrative, the Atlas’s account of Alexander’s exploits in the East—including his conflict with Gog and Magog—features a marked departure from contemporary Christian renditions of the Alexander legend. On its surface, the Atlas’s account of Gog and Magog’s enclosure seems unremarkable: Gog and Magog are depicted as literally real and cannibalistic people—in this case Tartars—enclosed by Alexander. Moreover, the Atlas warns its audience that Gog and Magog are “the species of man who will come with the Antichrist.”

Unlike many other popular narrative sources depicting Gog and Magog, the Atlas includes an account of the peoples’ eventual downfall, noting that “they will in the end be destroyed by fire, which will descend from heaven” to destroy them.<sup>143</sup> This forceful depiction of Gog and Magog’s defeat, though anomalous, is not the most curious part of the Atlas’ Alexander narrative, however. Rather, it is one specific detail of the Atlas’s

<sup>143</sup> Buchon, *Notice d’un atlas*, 146. “C’est là l’espèce d’hommes avec laquelle viendra l’Antéchrist. Ils seront enfin détruits par le feu, qui descendra du ciel et les confondra.”

account of Alexander's eastward endeavors that is of interest: the association of Alexander with Satan. The Atlas, in its entry for the Caspian Mountains, reads: "There he [Alexander] almost died, but Satan dragged him from danger by his art; and, with the aid of the same art, Alexander imprisoned the Tartars Gog and Magog ..." <sup>144</sup> This association of Alexander with Satan represents a striking departure from the Atlas's contemporary sources and deserves further examination. It also seems likely that this detail of the Atlas's account of Alexander is also visually depicted on the Atlas. Alexander is portrayed only once on the Atlas, and placed alongside an unnamed demonic figure (Figure 17). Jean Alexandre Buchon, the French translator of the Atlas, suggests that this image depicts Alexander commanding a "bizarre Indian divinity," but given the Atlas's textual account of Alexander's life, it seems more likely that Alexander fraternizes with Satan. <sup>145</sup>

Firstly, it is important to note that Alexander was not beyond reproach within Christian contexts, least of all in later medieval Spain. As David Nirenberg has pointed out, *El Libro de Alexandre*—the poetic Catalan rendition of the Alexander legend first written in the twelfth century and immensely influential in subsequent Spanish Alexander texts—is structured around a critique of Alexander's stubbornness and pride. <sup>146</sup> In *El Libro*, however, this critique does not extend to attributing Alexander's successes with demonic assistance. The account of Alexander's enclosure of Gog and Magog in the

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<sup>144</sup> Jean Alexandre Buchon, *Notice d'un atlas en langue catalane* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1839), 145: "Là il faillit mourir, mais Satan le tira de danger par son art; et, à l'aide de ce même art, il renferma là les Tartares Gog et Magog... Alexandre enferma aussi dans ce lieu diverses espèces d'hommes qui osent manger de la chair crue. C'est là l'espèce d'hommes avec laquelle viendra l'Antéchrist. Ils seront enfin détruits par le feu, qui descendra du ciel et les confondra."

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., "Il paraît donner un ordre à une bizarre divinité de l'Inde."

<sup>146</sup> David Nirenberg, "Discourses of Judaizing and Judaism in Medieval Spain," *La Corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures*, 41, no. 1 (2012): 215-16.

*Libro* is framed as an act willed by God.<sup>147</sup> This is typical of medieval renditions of Gog and Magog's enclosure, which generally claim that the pagan Alexander prayed directly to God for assistance. Moreover, in illustrated manuscripts, such as Thomas of Kent's thirteenth-century *Alexander*, Alexander's petition to God to enclose Gog and Magog depicts a pious and upstanding Alexander in contrast to an ugly and monstrous Gog and Magog.<sup>148</sup> As a pagan, however, Alexander's piety was generally limited to accounts of his enclosure of Gog and Magog.



Figure 17: Alexander and Satan on the Catalan Atlas

In fact, many aspects of later medieval renditions of the Alexander narrative cast Alexander in a less than pious light, but even these narratives did not go so far as to associate Alexander with Satan. In his survey of medieval magic, for instance, Richard Kieckhefer offers some observations about the role of both demonic and natural magic in later medieval thought about Alexander. Kieckhefer notes that, by the later Middle Ages, some strands of the Alexander romance tradition came to associate Alexander with

<sup>147</sup> Such and Rabone, *Book of Alexander*, 553.

<sup>148</sup> For a discussion of the contrast between the white Alexander and the black Gog and Magog in this image, see: Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, and Jews*, 230.

magic, and specifically with magically enhanced gems. Throughout the Middle Ages, enchanted objects were often met with skepticism by ecclesiastics and sometimes posited to be conduits for demonic power. Initially, then, the association of Alexander with magical gems seems to provide a potential explanation for the Catalan Atlas's association of Alexander with Satan. However, rather than putting Alexander in cooperation with demonic forces, these gems—though said to have originally been the property of demons—ultimately resulted in conflicts between Alexander and the gems' demonic owners. Alexander's defeat of the demons in this contest results in his ability to use the gems—said to have occult properties rather than demonic power—and his banishment of the demons from his camp.<sup>149</sup>

Accounts of Alexander's enchanted gemstones, and the conflicts with demons that those gemstones provoked, were not the most influential sources for the association of Alexander with magic. In fact, the most popular source through which Alexander was associated with magic was the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Secret of Secrets*, first translated into Latin from Arabic in the twelfth century. This text, ostensibly a guidebook for Alexander written by Aristotle, contains a great deal of information about natural magic. As “the most influential work” in the medieval genre of books of secrets, the *Secret of Secrets* was most likely the vehicle through which many people came to associate Alexander with magic.<sup>150</sup> Again, however, like the romances with Alexander's gems, the *Secret of Secrets* did not construe Alexander's magic as demonic. As Kieckhefer notes, many of the magical recipes included in the *Secret of Secrets* are examples of natural, and not

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<sup>149</sup> Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 113.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 142-3.

demonic, magic. As such, the *Secret of Secrets* does not provide any substantial evidence for an association of Alexander with demonic magic or Satan.

The lack of a clear basis for the Atlas's association of Alexander with Satan seems to suggest that Cresques deliberately included this problematic detail, a suggestion that is akin to what Gow and Westrem have suggested about Cresques's engagement with his source material. Both scholars have noted that Cresques expressed doubt about the veracity of the Alexander legend. Specifically, they note, Cresques questioned whether it was really possible for Alexander to have traveled as far to the east as his legends report. Both Gow and Westrem assert that it is probably evidence of Cresques's rational and thoughtful engagement with his fantastic source material.<sup>151</sup> As I discuss in more detail below, this was not the only departure Cresques made from his source material. Gow and Westrem both attribute Cresques's modifications to a sort of scholarly rationality. However, there is reason to believe that his association of Alexander with Satan was, at least in part, a response to the Christian tendency to use Alexander narratives as vehicles for promoting anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish ideas.

The Alexander legends, though not universally characterized by anti-Semitic sentiments, often contained elements that were decidedly anti-Jewish. The most immediate example of this, of course, is Alexander's enclosure of the Jewish Gog and Magog. Yet, as Nirenberg has pointed out, the Spanish *Libro*, while depicting Gog and Magog as members of the Ten Lost Tribes, also critiques Alexander's Judaizing tendencies. Moreover, Nirenberg asserts, Alexander's stubbornness—the ultimate cause of his downfall in the *Libro*—was meant to be reflective of Jews' following the "letter" rather than the spirit of Scripture, a common critique leveled against Jews in the Middle

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<sup>151</sup> Gow, "Fra Mauro's World View," 408-9; Westrem, "Against Gog and Magog," 62.



Ages.<sup>152</sup> The Alexander legend's propensity for critiquing Jews and Judaizing may have motivated Cresques, the Jewish cartographer charged with the Atlas's creation, to disassociate Alexander from both Christian and Jewish identities.

From Cresques's vantage point, identifying Alexander with either a Christian or Jewish identity could be a means for the Atlas's audience to make anti-Jewish associations. If Alexander was depicted as a quasi-Christian figure praying to God to enclose Gog and Magog, he could be thought of as enclosing the Jewish cannibals Gog and Magog. On the other hand, if his religious or cultural associations were left vague, his Judaizing could be read as the cause of his downfall, particularly to a Spanish audience. By identifying Alexander as a beneficiary of Satan's power, Cresques seems to be labeling him as a pagan, a figure consistently identified with demonic powers in the later Middle Ages.<sup>153</sup> This reckoning of pagans as demonic is a prominent feature of both Mandeville's and Marco Polo's travel narratives. A strong association of Alexander with paganism would not have been unheard of given the fact that Alexander was a pagan when he was not enclosing Gog and Magog. Considered alone, this particular innovation does not seem to dramatically impact the Atlas's overall apocalyptic narrative. However, examining the other major apocalyptic figures on the Atlas reveals more innovations and ambiguities and suggests that this is just the first of the Atlas's many critiques of Christian apocalypticism.

Much like the Atlas's rendition of the Alexander legend, the text on the map pertaining to the Antichrist is not accompanied by an image and, by means of its apparent

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<sup>152</sup> Nirenberg, "Discourses of Judaizing and Judaism," 215.

<sup>153</sup> On the association of pagans with demonic rites in the fourteenth century, see Marco Polo, *The Travels*, 253 and Nicolau Eymeric, *Directorium Inquisitorum*, in *Witchcraft in Europe, 400-700: A Documentary History 2nd. Edition*, ed. Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 120-6.

straightforwardness, seems to conceal more than it reveals about the rest of the Atlas. The text pertaining to the Antichrist on the Atlas is cursory and closely follows Pseudo-Methodius's narrative, simply mentioning that Antichrist will be born in Chorazin and will come to power in Jerusalem where he will preach that he is the son of God.<sup>154</sup> Compared to the detailed Alexander and Gog and Magog material found on the map, the brevity with which Antichrist is discussed is somewhat surprising. While, as Gow has noted, a learned medieval audience would certainly expect to see material pertaining to Gog and Magog on a world map, in an account of the apocalypse as detailed as this one such an audience would probably expect more substantial information about Antichrist. A brief overview of some of the key features of medieval attitudes and approaches to the Antichrist will serve to demonstrate the striking nature of the Atlas's brief treatment of the subject.

While in Chapters One and Two I stressed that Gog and Magog, unlike the rest of Revelation's monsters, were understood by many to be literally real monsters, it is important to draw attention to the fact that Antichrist was also a literally real figure of the apocalypse for medieval Christians. Unlike Gog and Magog, however, the Antichrist needed to be allegorically interpreted in order to be constructed as a being who would literally exist. That is because, unlike Gog and Magog, Antichrist is not mentioned in Revelation, a surprising fact given the consistency with which he appears in medieval apocalyptic narratives. That is not to say, however, that the concept of an Antichrist was absent from the Bible. In his epistles, John uses the term "antichrist" five times, though often he is referring to a class of individuals rather than a specific person, such as when

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<sup>154</sup> Buchon, *Notice d'un atlas*, 146. "Antéchrist. Ce personnage sera élevé à Corozain en Galilée, et quand il aura trente ans, il commencera à prêcher à Jérusalem et contre toute vérité il dira qu'il est le Christ fils du Dieu vivant, et on dit qu'il réédifiera le temple."

he says that “even now there are become many antichrists.”<sup>155</sup> John is more specific about what constitutes an antichrist in another letter, in which he says that “many seducers are gone out into the world who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a seducer and an antichrist.”<sup>156</sup> Moreover, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark both record Jesus warning his followers that “there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect,” a concept that clearly informed medieval depictions of the Antichrist.<sup>157</sup>

These passages, while they certainly influenced concepts about Antichrist, were not used as direct sources to demonstrate the Antichrist’s integral role in the Last Things. Rather, medieval exegetes often interpreted the Beast from the Sea, described with great detail in Revelation 13, as the beast representing Antichrist.<sup>158</sup> Unlike the more worldly Antichrists depicted in the sources thus far—whose power is rooted in their ability to rise to positions of political and social power—the Beast from the Sea is an otherworldly monster with seven heads and ten crowned horns, described as being like a leopard with the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion.<sup>159</sup> The discontinuity between the unwieldy beast described in Revelation 13 and the human Antichrist of medieval apocalyptic thought could only be bridged by allegory; unlike Gog and Magog, whose presence on earth was thought to be directly mirrored in the text of Revelation, the Antichrist’s literal existence was only understood through an interpretation of the Beast from the Sea.

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<sup>155</sup> For this specific passage, see 1 John 2:18. For the other four uses of the term antichrist, see 1 John 2:18, 2:22, 4:3, and 2 John 1:7. The word antichrist appears twice in 1 John 2:18, where John claims that the singular Antichrist his audience is anticipating is in fact many antichrists.

<sup>156</sup> 2 John 1:7.

<sup>157</sup> Matt. 24:24; Mark 13:22.

<sup>158</sup> Rev. 13:1.

<sup>159</sup> Rev. 13:2.

Despite the departure from Revelation required to depict the Antichrist as a human who would literally exist, the figure of the persecutory and embodied Antichrist was popular in medieval apocalypticism. As Richard Emmerson has noted, the high and late Middle Ages saw the development and profusion of a subset of apocalyptic writings devoted entirely to recording the life of Antichrist. In the twelfth century Hildegard of Bingen, for instance, described Antichrist's conception by a mother who has been "nurtured in vice" by Satan before rising to power and drenching the church "in the blood of the righteous."<sup>160</sup> Joachim of Fiore, also in the twelfth century, blended the allegorical and the literal when suggesting that the seven heads of the Beast from the Sea represent seven historical antichrists, the last of whom would be the apocalyptic antichrist.<sup>161</sup> Joachim's blending of the allegorical Beast of the Sea with the literal existence of antichrists found precedent in antique and early medieval exegetes, as evidenced by Beatus of Liébana, whose *Commentary on the Apocalypse* includes a delineation of the historical figures associated with each of the Beast's seven heads.<sup>162</sup>

Perhaps the source that is most indicative of medieval beliefs in Antichrist's reality, however, is the tenth-century letter of Bishop Adso to the Ottonian queen Gerbera entitled "Letter on the Origin and Time of the Antichrist." This letter, in which Adso notes that Gerbera had requested information about the Antichrist, details the life of the Antichrist from the time of his conception through his rise to power and eventual downfall. On its surface, Adso's letter is an account not unlike that of the Pseudo-Methodian Apocalypse. Bernard McGinn's explanation as to why Gerbera would have commissioned information about the Antichrist certainly makes the parallel between the

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<sup>160</sup> Hildegard of Bingen, *Scivias*, trans. Mother Colomba Hart (Mawah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1990), 501.

<sup>161</sup> Whalen, "Dominion of God," 117.

<sup>162</sup> Beatus, *Commentarius*, 360-1.

letter and Pseudo-Methodius's text apparent. Like Pseudo-Methodius, whose vision of the Last Things was clearly informed by his distaste for his immediate social and political contexts, McGinn asserts that Gerbera was likely prompted by "the state of social disorder" and violence in which she lived.<sup>163</sup> But there is reason to believe that this text is indicative of a more personal anxiety about the existence of the Antichrist demonstrative of the immediate sense in which he was thought to literally exist.

In her recent translation of Adso's letter, Patricia Skinner has suggested that this text was probably the result of Gerbera's fear that she would give birth to the Antichrist. This is further suggested, Skinner asserts, by the frequency with which this text was included in books made for medieval queens and noblewomen.<sup>164</sup> Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, moreover, had noted that Adso's letter "found its way into one of the most popular spiritual encyclopedias of the Middle Ages, Honorius Augustodensis' *Elucidarium*," which was transmitted in both Latin and vernacular renditions.<sup>165</sup> While this text, with its wide circulation, was certainly not only targeted to and read by women, it did give rise to a trend of depicting the Antichrist's birth as a relatively normal, though sometimes exceptionally bloody, birth.<sup>166</sup>

Given this rich tradition of narrating the life and crimes of Antichrist, it is somewhat surprising that the Catalan Atlas deals with Antichrist in such a cursory manner. However, it is this point at which the textual and pictorial narratives of apocalypse, which have thus far been treated separately, must be considered together.

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<sup>163</sup> Bernard McGinn, *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letters of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-En-Der, Joachim of Fiore, the Spiritual Franciscans, Savonarola* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979), 81.

<sup>164</sup> Patricia Skinner, "Fear of Giving Birth to the Antichrist, France, Mid-tenth Century," *Medieval Writings on Secular Women*, ed. Patricia Skinner (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 2, 8.

<sup>165</sup> Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Woman Born: Representing Caesarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 133.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 128-133.

Considering the map's apocalyptic texts and images—which do not always obviously reference one another—together demonstrates the subversive ways in which they inform one another to critique multiple aspects of Christian apocalyptic belief. The work of Sandra Saenz-López Pérez offers an ideal model for conducting such an analysis of the Atlas's texts and images.

In her provocative study of the Catalan Atlas's unlabeled palm-bearing figure, mentioned earlier as the figure of reward typical in apocalyptic eschatology, Pérez demonstrates the use of considering the Atlas's seemingly unrelated apocalyptic texts and images. As noted above, the scene of Christ distributing palms to his followers is not accompanied by a textual entry. The image, however, has seemed self-explanatory enough for editors such as Buchon to assert confidently that “Christ is represented crowned like a king distributing the immortal palm to his faithful followers, kings, peoples, bishops, and monks.”<sup>167</sup> Pérez contends that this interpretation, not explicitly supported by the text of the Atlas, is incorrect. Rather, she continues, there are convincing reasons to interpret this palm-bearing figure as the Antichrist, who, the Atlas notes, “will say that he is Christ, the living son of God,” performing false miracles.<sup>168</sup>

Beginning in the twelfth century, Pérez notes, Christian accounts of the life of the Antichrist featured a false miracle that closely resembled the action of the Atlas's crowned figure. Specifically, it was said that Antichrist would bring life to dry branches, causing them to flower and bear fruit. In so doing, he would be able to convince some Christians that he truly was the son of God. Pérez notes that a number of influential apocalyptic texts, including Herrad of Landsberg's *Hortus Deliciarum* of c.1170-90, the

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<sup>167</sup> Buchon, *Notice d'un Atlas* 146: “Dans l'autre compartiment est représenté le Christ couronné comme un roi récompensant de la palme immortelle ses fidèles sectateurs, rois, peuples, évêques et moines.”

<sup>168</sup> Pérez, “La Representación de Gog y Magog,” 263-276.

Anglo-Norman Apocalypse group of texts produced from the 1250s through the fifteenth century, and the French *Lambeth Apocalypse*, mention Antichrist performing this specific miracle.<sup>169</sup> Moreover, Pérez examines the figures depicted at the feet of the Atlas's enigmatic crowned figure—paying particular attention to their clothing—to suggest that these people are not, as Buchon asserted, devout kings, clerics, and priests, but a hodgepodge of lay and secular figures from an assortment of social positions.<sup>170</sup> The diverse nature of this gathering, Pérez claims, is more indicative of a group of Christians led astray by Antichrist's false miracles. Pérez's interpretation of this figure suggests that the Atlas uses seemingly unrelated texts and images to produce a complete, if somewhat obscure, narrative. Furthermore, Pérez's reading addresses the problem of the Atlas's sparse account of the Antichrist's life.

One potential objection to Pérez's interpretation of the Christ/Antichrist figure is its counter-intuitiveness: what reason could Cresque possibly have for constructing such a convoluted narrative? I argue that such a narrative would be an ideal means for Cresques to carry out a critique of Christian apocalypticism, as it would probably go unnoticed by a Christian audience casually regarding the map. This is certainly the way in which the critique in the Atlas' Gog and Magog material, in which an apparently standard image is complicated by its much less prominent legend, functions. But the comparison of Pérez's Christ/Antichrist to the Atlas's Gog and Magog material does not, on its own, sufficiently indicate a consistent mode of critique. After all, the Gog and Magog image is complicated by its accompanying text whereas, in Pérez's analysis, text and image complement rather than complicate each other. However, Pérez's

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 268-270.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 270-271.

Christ/Antichrist is not the only obscure apocalyptic figure of the Catalan Atlas. The prince who features so prominently in the Atlas's depiction of Gog and Magog, for instance, poses his own set of interpretive problems. Addressing these problems will demonstrate that the Prince of Gog and Magog is of a piece with Pérez's Christ/Antichrist in that it meets its Christian audience's apocalyptic expectations while also subverting them.

The "great lord, prince of Gog and Magog" is unique to the Catalan Atlas, being absent from every major account of Gog and Magog. The lack of a clear precedent for the Prince of Gog and Magog and the Atlas's failure to suggest that he represents a specific historical figure means that there is no self-evident way in which an analysis of this figure could best be approached. However, perhaps the clearest component of medieval apocalypticism with which the Prince of Gog and Magog can be associated is the late medieval trend of depicting multiple Antichrists as a feature of the Last Things. As such, I will begin my examination of this enigmatic figure by demonstrating the somewhat general ways in which medieval Christians could have understood him as a type of antichrist.

Although the Prince of Gog and Magog is not identified as the Antichrist—and certainly cannot be *the* Antichrist—there are compelling reasons to believe that he represents *an* Antichrist and is thus another component of the Atlas's pictorial Antichrist narrative. To include multiple antichrists within one apocalyptic narrative would not have been unusual in the later Middle Ages, when the arrival of multiple antichrists was a common enough feature of apocalyptic narratives. The justification for such a scenario was to be found in the very nature of the beast from Revelation associated with



Antichrist, the Beast from the Sea. Many apocalyptic thinkers—not least Joachim of Fiore—asserted that the seven heads of the Beast represented seven historical antichrists, the last of whom would be the apocalyptic Antichrist. Although these antichrists were often thought to have been spread throughout history, it was sometimes suggested that the final two antichrists would be near-contemporaries, with the sixth antichrist setting the stage for the final Antichrist’s rise to power. This may be the function of the Prince of Gog and Magog on the Catalan Atlas.

With these broad trends in medieval apocalypticism in mind, there are more immediate reasons to suspect that the Prince of Gog and Magog was, in fact, intended to be read as an antichrist. The most immediate and perhaps obvious reason is that—keeping in line with Revelation’s decree that Gog and Magog will rise to assist Satan in his assault on the holy—Gog and Magog were almost always depicted as close companions or assistants of the Antichrist. Thus, any kind of leader associated with Gog and Magog could reasonably be interpreted as an Antichrist. Even more suggestive evidence of the Prince of Gog and Magog’s status as an antichrist can be gleaned from examining the other rulers who are depicted on the Atlas.

Virtually every other leader or royal person depicted on the Catalan Atlas is someone of historical or mythical significance, such as the Queen of Sheba, Marco Polo, and Kublai Khan (1219-1294). Moreover, other tribes of monstrous or foreign peoples that are described at length—such as the black-skinned giants of Sumatra who are said to eat white foreigners—are never depicted with rulers unique to the Atlas.<sup>171</sup> Thus, the prominent depiction of a figure of nobility or royalty with no meaningful historical or

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<sup>171</sup> Buchon, *Notice d'un Atlas*, 139: “...il y a des hommes d’une grande taille, c’est-à-dire de douze coudées, comme des géants, très-noirs et dépourvus de raison. Ils mangent les hommes blancs étrangers, quand ils les peuvent attraper.”

mythic identity would be inconsistent with the rest of the Atlas. This component of the Atlas, along with the frequency with which Gog and Magog are paired with the Antichrist, suggests that the Prince of Gog and Magog is a continuation of the Atlas's Antichrist narrative. While the Prince of Gog and Magog's status as an antichrist is not a surprising or unusual feature of the Atlas's apocalyptic narrative, his prominence in a narrative associating Gog and Magog with Tartars is. While there is no reason that a princely figure could not be included in a description of the Last Things wherein Gog and Magog are Tartars, the Catalan Atlas is the only source to make such an association.

Christians certainly recognized that many groups of Mongols served under various princes and delegates. Travel accounts after the fourteenth century often featured encounters with Mongols and descriptions of—if not encounters with—Mongolian princes and royalty. For example, the travel account of William of Rubruck, a fourteenth-century Franciscan missionary sent to the Mongol territories on a fact-finding mission, is structured around the various princes and nobles William had to placate in order to gain access to a Mongol prince.<sup>172</sup> Similarly, Marco Polo relates in his travel account a meeting with a Mongol Khan. Polo also speaks frequently of various Mongol—or Tartar—princes and territories with whom he does not have direct contact. These accounts, though, do not seem like likely sources for the Atlas's Prince of Gog and Magog, as they emphasize the decentralized and hierarchical nature of Mongol society and political power. As Katharine Park has noted of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century travel accounts, Christians traveling through Mongol territories often highlighted the

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<sup>172</sup> On the dynamics of these various interactions, see A.J. Watson, "Mongol Inhospitability, or How to Do More with Less? Gift Giving in William of Rubruck's *Itinerarium*," *Journal of Medieval History* 37, no. 1 (2011): 90–101.

diversity and separateness of Mongol provinces.<sup>173</sup> Thus, travel accounts describing Mongol society do not seem to be a likely source for the notion of a Tartar Prince of Gog and Magog.

Visions of the apocalypse in which Muslims played an integral role in the destruction of Christians frequently hinged upon the presence of a singular princely or royal figure and, as such, provide a more likely source for the Prince of Gog and Magog. Joachim of Fiore's interpretation of the seven historical antichrists, for instance, features three Muslim leaders. The first of Joachim's Saracen antichrists is Muhammad, a feature of Joachim's theology of history that is somewhat unsurprising given the fact that, beginning in the twelfth century, Islam was seen less as a pagan practice and more as a heresy.<sup>174</sup> The fifth antichrist, Joachim continued, was Mesemoth, a past, and apparently fictional, Muslim king. The sixth and penultimate antichrist identified by Joachim was the contemporary Saladin.<sup>175</sup> Although the final antichrist was not always posited to be a contemporary Muslim ruler, the association of Muslims with apocalyptic figures continued well into the early modern period.<sup>176</sup> Thus, the Atlas's Tartar Prince of Gog and Magog seems to owe its origin to anti-Muslim strains of apocalyptic thought, which raises the question: would the Christian audience for whom the Atlas was intended find the presence of an antichrist prince, a figure prominent in narratives about apocalyptic Muslims, in a depiction of the Tartar Gog and Magog out of place?

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<sup>173</sup> Katharine Park. "The Meanings of Natural Diversity: Marco Polo on the 'Division' of the World," in *Texts and Contexts in Medieval Science: Studies on the Occasion of John E. Murdoch's Seventieth Birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 134–47.

<sup>174</sup> Alberto Ferreiro, "Simon Magus, Nicolas of Antioch, and Muhammad," *Church History* 72, no. 1 (2003): 53.

<sup>175</sup> Joachim of Fiore, "Book of Figures, The Fourteenth Table, the Seven-Headed Dragon," trans. Bernard McGinn, in *Apocalyptic Spirituality*, 136.

<sup>176</sup> Akbari, "The Rhetoric of Antichrist in Western Lives of Muhammad," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 8, no. 3 (1997): 297.

There is reason to think that the conflation of these two traditions of apocalypticism, though certainly novel, would not have been incomprehensible to an audience of late fourteenth-century Christians. Before the fourteenth century Tartars and Saracens were hardly, if ever, conflated by Christians. In fact, through the end of the thirteenth century there were hopes among Christians that the Tartars would assist in the defeat of the Saracens, a component of then-contemporary thought about the Mongols that I discuss in more detail in Chapter Four. The end of the thirteenth century, however, saw the conversion of prominent Tartar princes to Islam, a development that resulted in the partial elision of Tartars and Saracens by Christians.

This partial conflation can be seen as early as 1300 in Marco Polo's *Travels*. Although Marco Polo generally discusses Tartars and Saracens as separate groups, there are telling moments in which he conflates the two. Although Polo often describes Tartar people with admiration, he notes with dejection that "their stock has degenerated. Those who live in Cathay have adopted the manners and customs of the idolaters and abandoned their own faith, while those who live in the Levant have adopted the manners of the Saracens."<sup>177</sup> Elsewhere he notes that the Tartars of Tabriz were being converted to Islam, as well.<sup>178</sup> Perhaps most telling is his unqualified merging of Tartars with Saracens uncharacteristic of the rest of the text's discussion of Tartars. In his account of the Cathayans' attempt to kill the Khan, Polo notes that the reason for their discontent was that the Khan "set over them Tartar rulers, mostly Saracens."<sup>179</sup> This is not the only reason to believe that Christians in the last quarter of the fourteenth century would have found the Catalan Atlas's apparent blending of Tartars with Muslims unsurprising.

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<sup>177</sup> Marco Polo, *Travels*, 101.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

Núria Silleras-Fernández has demonstrated the complicated ways in which Tartar and Saracen identities could be simultaneously delineated and elided by Aragonese royalty, one of Cresques's immediate audiences. As a symbol of wealth, status, and worldliness, queen consorts such as Elionor de Sicilia (1325-75) and Maria de Luna (1358-1406) dressed their black female slaves in such a way as to identify them as "Muslim" and "exotic." As they were reconstituting the ways in which their slaves projected identity to onlookers, these women remained mindful of their slaves' ethnic identities. Elionor, for instance, recorded having one *sarracena* and two Tartar slaves in her retinue.<sup>180</sup> Thus, distinctions between Tartar and Saracen could be useful, as in this case in which such a distinction increased the perceived diversity and worldliness of a queen's collection of slaves. But a desire to visually present black or non-European bodies as foreign produced an image of exoticness that was not specific to a slave's actual place of origin since as Fernandez notes, it was a slave's youth and black skin that made her a worthy object of display.<sup>181</sup> Given his close relationship with the Aragonese court, Cresques probably had some notion of the ways in which his royal patrons would have understood Tartar and Saracen identity as he planned the Catalan Atlas's depiction of Gog and Magog.

While the presence of a princely figure in the Atlas's depiction of Gog and Magog may have been an attempt to conflate Tartar and Saracen identities, there is another strand of Christian thought which the Prince of Gog and Magog may be referencing: that of the legend of Prester John, a Christian king in Africa. Beginning in the second half of the twelfth century Prester John, discussed briefly in Chapter One, was frequently the

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<sup>180</sup> Núria Silleras-Fernández, "Nigra Sum Sed Formosa: Black Slaves and Exotica in the Court of a Fourteenth-Century Aragonese Queen," *Medieval Encounters* 13, no. 3 (2007): 560.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 555.

locus of apocalyptic hopes for Christians. Although the infamous *Letter of Prester John* had been circulating in Europe since at least 1165, it was not until after the Fifth Crusade (1213-1221) that the legend of Prester John took on an apocalyptic dimension. Chronicles of the Fifth Crusade related a Muslim prophecy that foretold that Prester John would join forces with a European prince to defeat the non-Christians of the East, killing some and converting others.<sup>182</sup> Moreover, the splendor of Prester John's victories would inspire non-Christians the world over to convert to Christianity.

Though not self-evidently apocalyptic, this component of the legend of Prester John referenced a longstanding component of Christian understandings of the trajectory of history. While the conversion of the world to Christianity was not in and of itself foreseen as an apocalyptic event, some medieval Christians saw it as a prerequisite to apocalypse per Christ's claims in the Gospel of John that the future would see "one fold and one shepherd."<sup>183</sup> Thus, unlike Gog and Magog, who represented the terrors and horrors of the apocalypse, Prester John was emblematic of an arguably bright spot of the events leading up to the apocalypse. This legend in and of itself, however, does not explain how or why the Prince of Gog and Magog could have arguably been a reference to Prester John. However, examining two specific historical iterations of the Prester John legend demonstrates that Prester John would have been a particularly appropriate figure to represent the Prince of the Tartar Gog and Magog.

Both Gog and Magog and the Tartars were, at various historical moments, thought to be the subjects of Prester John and to play an important role in bringing about the apocalypse, although neither figured in the chronicles of the Fifth Crusade discussed

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<sup>182</sup> Whalen, "Dominion of God," 150.

<sup>183</sup> John 10:16.

above. Before the arrival of Mongols in Europe and in the imaginations of European Christians in the last half of the thirteenth century, Tartars were, obviously, absent from legends about Prester John. Gog and Magog, on the other hand, had been staples in texts about Prester John since *The Letter of Prester John* first circulated in the second half of the twelfth century. *The Letter* was largely dedicated to listing the many fantastic peoples over whom John ruled, including the cannibalistic Gog and Magog. Unlike the Antichrist, who was thought to lead Gog and Magog into battle against Christians in the end days, Prester John subjected Gog and Magog to his rule. The same was not true of the Mongols, whose relationship with Prester John, in the minds of Christians, was of a rather different nature.

Whereas Gog and Magog's role in the apocalypse was predicated on their current containment, the idea that the Mongols would assist in bringing about the apocalypse was based on the apparent freedom with which they entered Europe once they had attacked parts of Eastern Europe in 1236. The Christian reaction to the Mongol invasions of Poland and Hungary will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Four. For now, all that needs to be noted is that Mongols became important actors in newly revised renditions of the Prester John legend, if only briefly. Although initially portrayed by Matthew Paris as the true Gog and Magog, Mongols soon came to occupy a positive place in Christian eschatology as Prester John's assistants in the destruction of the Saracens. Unlike Gog and Magog, subjected to imprisonment under Prester John's rule, Christians believed that Mongols would move through the world under Prester John's guidance.<sup>184</sup> This was a clear continuation of Christian hopes during the Fifth Crusade that John would vanquish

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<sup>184</sup> Charles Burnett and Patrick Gautier Dalché, "Attitudes Towards the Mongols in Medieval Literature: The XXII Kings of Gog and Magog from the Court of Frederick II to Jean de Mandeville," *Viator* 22 (1991): 158; Schmieder, "Christians, Jews, Muslims—and Mongols," 279.

the Saracens and bring the world under one fold.<sup>185</sup> However, the historical moment in which Gog and Magog could be convincingly construed as the subjects of Prester John was brief.

Although belief in the arrival of Prester John, or one of his offspring, persisted throughout the Middle Ages, any hope that the Tartars were acting under his charge when they invaded did not. The defeat of Christian knights by Mongol forces in Silesia and Hungary in 1241 was the first step in the dampening of this optimism, which was further deflated in 1260 by the defeat of the Mongols by Muslims in the Battle of Ain Jalut.<sup>186</sup> By the 1290s, when prominent Mongol princes began converting to Islam, the notion that the Mongols had been working towards Christian ends had been largely shattered.<sup>187</sup>

The relatively short life of the association of the Tartars with Prester John, from 1236 to around 1300, seems to complicate the possibility that the Tartar Prince of Gog and Magog, illustrated in the late fourteenth century, could be a reference to Prester John. Moreover, whereas the failure of the Mongols to conform to Christian expectations imposed limits on the duration of Prester John's association with Mongols, the recognition that Prester John could not live forever limited the time in which he was attributed with keeping Gog and Magog contained. By the 1360s, for instance, *The Book of John Mandeville* attributed this feat to the Queen of the Amazons. Thus, Prester John's association with Gog and Magog and with the Tartars was necessarily brief and long predated Cresques's inclusion of the Prince of Gog and Magog on the Catalan Atlas. To

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<sup>185</sup> Whalen, "Dominion of God," 150-6.

<sup>186</sup> Schmieder, "Christians, Jews, Muslims—and Mongols," 283.

<sup>187</sup> John Toland, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 206-7.



suppose that Prester John is posited as a harbinger of the Last Things on the Catalan Atlas, then, seems pure anachronism.

But Cresques was certainly not opposed to willful acts of anachronism, as evidenced by his decision to depict Gog and Magog as Tartars or Mongols. Marco Polo's account of his travels, a main source for Cresques, discusses Gog and Magog and the relationship between Alexander and Tartars at some length. However, Polo's discussion of Alexander's enclosed people is explicit in its insistence that the Tartars are not the people enclosed by Alexander:

Alexander had a tower and fortress built here, so that the natives could not sally out to attack him. This was called the Iron Gates. It is the place where the Alexander Book relates that he shut in the Tartars between two mountains. In fact they were not Tartars, but people called Comanians and various other races besides, because there were no Tartars at that time.<sup>188</sup>

The notion that Alexander's enclosed people were Tartars, Polo insists, is total anachronism. This is not the only difference between the Atlas and its source text. According to Polo, for instance, the names Gog and Magog indicate two separate provinces and the people who inhabit them.<sup>189</sup> GOGIMAGOG on the Catalan Atlas, however, is one large land mass and there is no apparent distinction between the people of Gog and the people of Magog. Most significantly, Alexander is not mentioned at all in conjunction with these places.

Given Cresques's propensity to rely on outdated models of apocalyptic thought and to contradict his source texts, then, the temporal distance between Prester John legends and the Catalan Atlas does not immediately rule out the possibility that the Atlas is referencing Prester John in its figure of the Prince of Gog and Magog.

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<sup>188</sup> Marco Polo, *Travels*, 49.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

Considered together, moreover, these dual narratives about Prester John—John as the suppressor of Gog and Magog and John as the Christian impetus for the Mongol incursion into Europe—feature elements that echo in the Catalan Atlas’s narrative concerning the Prince of Gog and Magog. Like Prester John, the Prince is Gog and Magog’s sovereign and leads Tartars into Christendom as part of the events leading to the Apocalypse. The one significant difference between notions of an apocalyptic Prester John and the Prince of Gog and Magog is that the Prince’s Gog and Magog are Tartars. This is not the case in Prester John narratives, in which Gog and Magog are enclosed Jews and the Tartars are Christian allies under John’s command. Moreover, identifying Gog and Magog with the Tartars would have been a virtual impossibility within Prester John narratives, in which Prester John is consistently a positive heroic figure; such an identification would have meant either that John had failed to keep Gog and Magog under sufficient subjection or that he was an active participant in the destruction of Christendom. This latter possibility, unthinkable for Christians anticipating Prester John’s assistance, is exactly the narrative of the Prince of Gog and Magog.

While, according to the logic of Christian apocalypticism, the Prince of Gog and Magog is totally incompatible with Prester John, the Prince seems to exemplify a figure that, in a quite different context, Dyan Elliott calls a “shadow text.”<sup>190</sup> Elliott expounds upon the notion of a shadow text in her discussion of the discernment of spirits, the process through which later medieval church officials attempted to differentiate between divine and demonic inspiration. Elliott argues that Jean Gerson, a fifteenth-century theologian and one of the primary developers of the theory of the discernment of spirits,

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<sup>190</sup> Dyan Elliott, “Seeing Double: John Gerson, the Discernment of Spirits, and Joan of Arc,” *American Historical Review* 107, no. 1 (2002): 26–7.

created a shadow text of Joan of Arc in his attempts to defend her as being divinely inspired. That is, Gerson's opponents produced a negative characterization of Joan that was predicated upon their rejection of Gerson's positive claims. Thus, where Gerson claimed that Joan was attempting to bring peace to France, his opponents blamed her for the increased violence that had followed her arrival into the public eye. As Elliott eloquently phrases it, "an argument's rejected truths may coalesce" into a negative double of that being defended.<sup>191</sup> Elliott's notion of a shadow text provides a useful lens through which one can understand the relationship between Prester John and the Prince of Gog and Magog.

Although Prester John was not, like Joan of Arc, being actively defended by Christians while the Catalan Atlas was being produced, there are ways in which he represented a set of "rejected truths," especially the point of view of non-Christians such as Cresques. Considered together, Matthew Paris's Tartar Gog and Magog, *The Letter of Prester John's* Jewish Gog and Magog, and the association of the Tartars with Prester John represent a set of contradictions in later medieval Christian thought about the Last Things. Prester John could not be the heroic captor of the Jewish Gog and Magog while also commanding the Tartars, thought to be Gog and Magog before considered Prester John's charges. Reconciling these kinds of conflicts between different strands of apocalyptic thought was not the concern of most medieval Christians. As Marco Polo's and Fra Mauro's critiques of Christian interpretations of Gog and Magog demonstrate, when faced with these kinds of discrepancies, Christians could often assert that their predecessors were simply incorrect.

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 27.

To someone like Cresques, however, who would have had no interest in validating a view of history in which his coreligionists were often cast as villains, these contradictions could have provided tempting fodder for critiquing the malleability of Christian apocalyptic thought. This is particularly true for the idiosyncrasies in the Prester John legends, which could be resolved by positing Prester John as a figure whose role in the apocalypse is not unlike that of the Prince of Gog and Magog. The only way in which these conflicting accounts of Prester John and Gog and Magog could be fully reconciled was if Gog and Magog, whom Prester John suppressed, were Tartars, thought to be Gog and Magog. If that had been the case then Prester John, just like the Prince of Gog and Magog, would have been responsible for ushering in the Last Things by leading the Tartars, Gog and Magog, into Christendom.

The Prince of Gog and Magog may represent a shadow text of Prester John without being a direct reference to the mythic hero. The fact that Prester John appears nowhere on the Catalan Atlas—a curious omission given the Atlas’s tendency to depict mythical figures from throughout history—allows for the possibility that Cresques’s Prince of Gog and Magog is meant to be a hostile interpretation of Christian legends about Prester John. Prester John is mentioned on the Atlas, though not in reference to the actual person. Rather, in the legend for Nubia, it is mentioned that the Nubian king is in constant war with the Christians under the dominion of the emperor of Ethiopia, “the land of Prester John” (Figure 18).<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Buchon, *Notice d'un Atlas*, 115. “Ce roi est toujours en guerre avec les chrétiens de Nubie qui sont sous la domination de l’empereur d’Éthiopie, du pays du prêtre Jean.”



Figure 18: Detail of Nubia from the Catalan Atlas.

This entry's association of John with Africa suggests that the Prince of Gog and Magog, located in Asia, could not be Prester John. However, given the Atlas's propensity to critique tenets of Christian apocalyptic thought, it is more likely that this diffusion of Prester John characters in Africa and Asia aims to critique another aspect of Christian thought about Prester John: his inconsistent physical location. Due in part to what Bernard Hamilton has called later medieval Europeans' "imperfect grasp of world geography," in which the locations of Africa and India were constantly in dispute, the supposed location of Prester John was inconsistent across renditions of his legend.<sup>193</sup> Although the earliest accounts of Prester John's life placed his kingdom in Asia, beginning in the fourteenth-century new accounts began to assert that his kingdom was located in Ethiopia.<sup>194</sup> Thus, just as the Atlas exploits the contradictory Prester John narratives to produce the subversive figure of the Prince of Gog and Magog, so too does

<sup>193</sup> Bernard Hamilton, "Continental Drift: Prester John's Progress through the Indies," in *Medieval Ethnographies: Medieval Perceptions of the World Beyond*, ed. Joan Pau Rubiés (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 121.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

its subtly point to the conflicts in Christian thought about Prester John's geographical location.

I have used the lens of the shadow text to argue that the Prince of Gog and Magog represents a critique of conflicting Christian attitudes and narratives surrounding Prester John. However, this lens can be used as a framework for understanding the other two prominent apocalyptic figures depicted on the Atlas, and can thus demonstrate the logic behind the critique that Cresques carried out through these figures. As shadow texts, the Prince of Gog and Magog, the Satanic Alexander, and the Christ/Antichrist all highlight and magnify the logical and historical failures of various components of Christian apocalypticism. Whereas Christians attempted to supplant Alexander's paganism by depicting him as a pious petitioner of God, the Atlas reminds its audience that, on fourteenth-century Christianity's own terms, the notion of an almost-Christian pagan was an impossibility. Christian narratives of the Antichrist's life highlight the Antichrist's status as a false Christ, but the Atlas foregrounds the fact that Christians will be deceived by Christ's imposter—and perhaps already may have been in their assumption that its palm-bearing figure is Christ.

## Chapter Four:

### Making the Local Foreign

The Catalan Atlas's Gog and Magog, like its Alexander, Antichrist, and Prince of Gog and Magog, are a means through which Cresques critiques contemporary Christian apocalypticism. While the aforementioned figures all critique Christian conceptions of the apocalypse, "los Tartares Gog e Magog" use apocalyptic imagery as a means to critique contemporary Christian anxieties about the relationships between pagans and other non-Christians.

Thus far I have made two primary arguments. In Part One, I argued that the thirteenth century saw the emergence of a new moment in the history of the depiction of Gog and Magog in which the formerly distinct literal and allegorical traditions of interpretation began to be blended with one another by Christians unconvinced of Gog and Magog's literal existence. So far, in Part Two, I have argued that the apocalyptic narrative of the Jewish maker of the Catalan Atlas highlighted unsavory aspects of three prominent figures of Christian apocalypticism—Alexander the Great, Antichrist, and Prester John—to carry out a sustained, if subtle, critique of Christian apocalypticism. Now, in this concluding chapter, I demonstrate how these two conclusions inform one another when investigating Cresques's intended meaning of his depiction of "los Tartares Gog e Magog." That is, in the same way that the Fra Mauro and English Psalter World Maps adopt a literal depiction of Gog and Magog to mask their commitment to Gog and Magog's status as allegorical figures, so too was Cresques's decision to depict Gog and Magog as Tartars—a recognizable if outdated mode of representation by the last quarter of the fourteenth century—a means for him to make a much more complex set of claims.

But unlike the two Christian world maps, the claims made by the Catalan Atlas's Gog and Magog are critiques of contemporary Christian worldviews. But before investigating the ways in which the Atlas's Tartar Gog and Magog serve to carry out this critique, one must discuss and contextualize the details of their appearance on the Catalan Atlas.

Much like the Gog and Magog of Revelation, the Gog and Magog of the Catalan Atlas are notable for the paucity of their accompanying text. Moreover, a majority of this text—which is found in the Atlas's entry for Alexander—closely follows Revelation.<sup>195</sup> The only departure from Revelation's narrative, in fact, is the identification of Gog and Magog as cannibalistic Tartars, something that is not discussed at any length other than to mention that they are Tartars and that they “dare to eat the flesh of men.”<sup>196</sup> By the fourteenth century, representing Gog and Magog as cannibals was unexceptional and was a feature of most descriptions of Gog and Magog, including *Mandeville's Travels*, Matthew Paris's *Chronica Maiora*, and the Ebstorf and Hereford World Maps. Moreover, the Atlas's choice of Tartar identity stands to reveal much more about Gog and Magog's function within Cresques's larger critique than the peoples' cannibalism.

But in order to better understand the Catalan Atlas's construction of Tartar identity, its exotic depiction of Asia—where all of its Tartars are found—must first be examined. In Chapter Three, I noted that Spain—and particularly Majorca—was

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<sup>195</sup> Buchon, *Notice d'un Atlas*, 145. “Alexandre enferma aussi dans ce lieu diverses espèces d'hommes qui osent manger de la chair crue. C'est là l'espèce d'hommes avec laquelle viendra l'Antéchrist. Ils seront enfin détruits par le feu, qui descendra du ciel et les confondra.”

<sup>196</sup> The Atlas's labelling of Gog and Magog as cannibals is a bit convoluted. After recounting Gog and Magog's enclosure by Alexander, the legend states that “Alexander also locked in this location diverse species of men who dare to eat raw flesh,” suggesting that Gog and Magog and these cannibals are not one and the same. However, concerning these cannibals, the Atlas continues by saying that “This is the species of man who will come with Antichrist. They will in the end be destroyed by fire, which will descend from heaven and will confuse them,” suggesting that Gog and Magog are cannibals. This may reflect the fact that, in some renditions of the enclosure narrative, Gog and Magog were two kings whose people were not cannibals until they were enclosed with their cannibalistic allies.



markedly more diverse than most of northern Europe in the fourteenth century. Far from being immune from depicting foreign peoples and places as exotic, however, diverse Majorca proved to be fertile ground for wondrous depictions of the foreign. The Atlas's easternmost panel is the most richly decorated on the Atlas and depicts more peoples and points of interest than any other part of the Atlas. Moreover, Asia features a number of curious monsters and peoples.

Mermaids, snakes, underwater treasures, beastly fish, and other wonders run rampant throughout the Atlas's Asia. In Cathay, a group of respectable-looking men are depicted cremating their naked compatriot in a regal crematory while, further north, pygmies fight a crane with sticks. While throughout the rest of the Atlas, only royal figures feature gold illumination, in Asia islands and treasures, along with royal figures, are illuminated. Generally speaking, then, the Atlas's depiction of Asia is markedly more exotic and alluring than the rest of the lands depicted on the map. How exactly this exoticism informed the Atlas's construction of Tartar identity can be seen by a close examination of its Tartar figures.

Like Gog and Magog, Tartars are explicitly mentioned two other times on the Atlas. The first of these two references seems somewhat insignificant in understanding the Atlas's construction of Tartars, in that it only relates that Tartars refer to the island of Taprobane, which is inhabited by a monstrous race of men, as Magno-Caulij.<sup>197</sup> The other reference to Tartars on the Atlas seems to be of more significance, as it pertains to Kublai Khan, "the greatest prince of all the Tartars." The legend for Kublai Khan notes that "This emperor is richer than all of the other emperors in the world. He has, to guard him,

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<sup>197</sup> Buchon, *Notice d'un Atlas*, 139: "L'île Taprobane. Cette ile est appelée par les Tartares Magno-Caulij."

twelve thousand knights.”<sup>198</sup> These two references to Tartars, on their surface, seem unrelated to one another, but are in fact united by the fact that they both construe Tartars as exotic. In the case of Kublai Khan, this exoticism is exhibited through the Khan’s material wealth, whereas the Tartars associated with Taprobane are construed as exotic by being associated with hostile foreignness.

The exoticism of Kublai Khan is rather self-evident when considering the Atlas’s representation of his extreme wealth. That Kublai Khan’s status as the “greatest prince of all the Tartars” would be tied to the fact that he is the richest man in the world may not necessarily seem like a narrative device designed to represent him as exotic. However, as Suzanne Akbari has noted, medieval Christians—though not purveyors of Orientalism in the same way that their imperial counterparts of the modern era were—frequently associated the East with luxury and riches as a means to construct it as Other.<sup>199</sup> And Kublai Khan is not generically wealthy. Rather, along with being referred to as the richest man in the world, the Khan’s wealth is made manifest in his superfluously large army. That the Khan’s wealth manifests itself in such a visible and exorbitant way suggests that he is being associated with a luxurious and exotic image of the East more strongly than just a general statement about his wealth would.

The Tartars who call Taprobane Magno-Caulij, though also construed as foreign, are constructed as exotic through a rather different device. While Kublai Khan is represented as exotic by means of his exuberant material wealth, the Atlas’s Tartars that call Taprobane, supposedly the farthest point of the Orient, Magno-Caulij are made

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 141: “Le plus grand prince de tous les Tartares. Il s’appelle Oloug-Bek qui veut dire grand Khan. Cet empereur est beaucoup plus riche que tous les autres empereurs du monde. Il a pour sa garde habituelle douze mille chevaux.”

<sup>199</sup> Akbari, *Idols in the East*, 74.

implicitly exotic through their association with some of the Atlas's most foreboding monsters, black giants. While the other monsters depicted throughout the Atlas's Asia are said to reside in specific geographical locations, none are represented as territorial or enforcing any kind of cultural or geographical borders. The black giants of Taprobane are an exception to this, as they are said to eat the white foreigners that they find on their island.<sup>200</sup> The Atlas's audience would surely have identified with these endangered white foreigners, as whiteness was a lauded trait among Christians in medieval Europe—and especially Spain.<sup>201</sup>

There are other ways in which these inhospitable giants are unique among the Atlas's monsters. Generally, the Atlas only describes the physical appearance and cultural practices of the monsters it depicts. Thus, the Atlas simply notes that the sirens are women that have the parts either of fish or of birds, that some societies in the East cremate their dead, and that the naked fish-hunting men of the Asian islands are savages. While these figures are all meant to inspire curiosity and wonder, only the black giants of Taprobane are described as being hostile or violent towards outsiders, much less outsiders who resembled European Christians' perception of themselves. Although Tartars are only distantly associated with these monsters, having only given the giants' residence an alternate name, the association of the Tartars with these monsters is significant, as it places them in direct contact with the most Eastern—and thus the most foreign and violently anti-European—of the Atlas's monsters. The association of Tartars with monsters and the resplendent wealth of the Great Khan, furthermore, cross paths in

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<sup>200</sup> Buchon, *Notice d'un Atlas*, 139-40. "Elle est habitée par des homes bien différentes des autres... il y a des hommes d'un grande taille, c'est-à-dire de douze coudées, comme des géantes, très noirs et dépourvus de raison. Ils mangent les hommes blancs étrangers..."

<sup>201</sup> See Carmen Caballero-Navas, "The Care of Women's Health and Beauty: An Experience Shared by Medieval Jewish and Christian Women," *Journal of Medieval History* 34, no. 2 (2008): 154.

the Atlas's legend for the gryphon. The gryphon, the Atlas says, is only caught (ostensibly by Tartars) to be put in service of the Great Khan.<sup>202</sup> The exotic nature of these Tartars is of a piece with the Atlas's depiction of Asia overall and it is within this exotic and lavish setting that the foreboding Gog and Magog appear. Far from being innovative, these exotic depictions represent some facets of contemporary European thought about Tartars, particularly among royalty.

With the rise of desire for Mongolian gold-woven brocade, or *panno tartarico*, among Europeans in the last quarter of the thirteenth century, Tartars began to be associated with a kind of exoticness that was immediately accessible to European elites. Lauren Arnold, an expert on European-Asian artistic and cultural exchange, has noted that, in attempts to encourage diplomatic relations with Europe, Mongol khans often bequeathed luxury gifts to the Franciscan missionaries sent to proselytize to them. *Panno tartarico*, or *nasij* cloth, was an item that Mongol khans were particularly fond of gifting, as acceptance of such a rich gift was perceived as “diplomatic acknowledgement on the part of the Europeans of their submission to Mongol will.”<sup>203</sup> *Panno tartarico* was coveted by the Italian merchants who accompanied these Franciscans and became a substantial presence in European royal and ecclesiastical inventories by the first quarter of the fourteenth century.<sup>204</sup> Emperor Charles IV of Bohemia, for example, is thought to be responsible for the abundance of *panno tartarico* that has been inventoried in St. Vitus's Cathedral in Prague. The fact that Charles was painted draped in *panno tartarico*,

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<sup>202</sup> Buchon, *Notice d'un Atlas*, 136: “Dans ces îles naissent beaucoup de bons gerfauts et faucons que les habitants n'osent jamais prendre que pour l'usage du grand chan, seigneur et empereur du Catay.”

<sup>203</sup> Lauren Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures: The Franciscan Mission to China and Its Influence on the Art of the West, 1250-1350* (San Francisco: Desiderata Press, 1999), 18.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

however, is more representative of the cloth's widely-acknowledged status as an exotic symbol of luxury.<sup>205</sup>

In fact, it is not in royal inventories so much as in artistic works that the medieval European perception of *panno tartarico* as a rich and exotic product is most fully demonstrated. Charles was not the only medieval figure to be depicted in *panno tartarico*; Arnold points to a number of prominent wall paintings whose subject is portrayed in rich gold *panno tartarico*. Colleen Ho has noted that this *nasij* cloth was sometimes featured in European paintings of later Middle Ages, and was a particularly prominent feature of Italian works.<sup>206</sup> Interestingly, Ho notes that, at least among Italian artists, the interest in Mongol exoticism extended even further than paintings, with fourteenth-century Italian artists demonstrating an interest in reproducing Mongol scripts. But paintings were not the only artistic productions to invoke the Tartar goods as a symbol of exoticism.

Though not as prevalent as in paintings, major vernacular literary works of the later Middle Ages also portray Tartar goods as emblems of exotic grandeur. Given the aforementioned Italian interest in Tartar exoticism, it is not surprising that Dante invokes Tartars in describing the striking colors of a beast guarding the eighth circle of Hell, Geryon, in the *Inferno*. Confronted with the image of the beast, Dante the traveler notes that "Never in cloth did Tartars make" the extraordinary colors of the beast.<sup>207</sup> Arnold notes that Boccaccio also makes a reference to luxurious eastern goods, though this

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 131-2.

<sup>206</sup> Colleen Ho, "Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century European-Mongol Relations," *History Compass* 10, no. 12 (2012): 951.

<sup>207</sup> Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto XVII.

reference is not as self-evident as Dante's.<sup>208</sup> Other later medieval vernacular authors recognized the exoticism of Tartar goods. Chaucer, for instance, references exotic Tartar goods in "The Knight's Tale" when he describes Arcite as wearing "cote-armure" made "of clooth of Tars/ Couched with perles white and rounde and grete."<sup>209</sup> These three examples, though brief, are not insignificant. Rather, Arnold argues, their authors specifically referenced Tartar goods because of their audiences' preconceived notions about Eastern exoticism.<sup>210</sup>

Noting that fourteenth-century European paintings and vernacular literature associated *panno tartarico* with exotic foreignness helps to contextualize the Catalan Atlas's depiction of Tartars, and suggests that Cresques was not exactly innovative in his decision to portray Tartars as exotic and worldly. However, it also belies the fact that this perception of foreignness was predicated on the presence and availability of Tartar goods in Europe. The only way through which Tartar goods were able to be construed as coveted and foreign was through their diffusion throughout Europe. As demonstrated above, this diffusion of eastern goods found its way not only into the collections of lay and secular royalty, but also into popular notions of the exotic and the luxurious expressed in widely-disseminated vernacular literature and very public wall paintings. The foreignness of these goods, and by extension the people whence they came, was predicated on their presence and availability within Europe.

The tension between the availability of Tartar goods and their perceived exoticness does not inform how we may interpret Cresques's Tartar Gog and Magog any more than it may inform our notions of how Europeans constructed ethnic difference in

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<sup>208</sup> See: Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures*, 119.

<sup>209</sup> Geoffrey Chaucer, "Knight's Tale," 2160-61.

<sup>210</sup> Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures*, 29.

the Middle Ages more generally. Equipped only with this observation, all that can be said about the Catalan Atlas is that, like a variety of contemporary artistic productions, it construes Tartars as exotic others in part by associating them with lavish material goods.<sup>211</sup> In the context of fourteenth-century Iberia, however, the tension of the local and the foreign takes on a somewhat different nature and provides a useful lens through which to interpret the Tartars Gog and Magog. This is because, unlike most of the rest of Europe at the time, Iberia housed a significant number of Tartar slaves.

With the exception of Castile, which housed an almost exclusively Saracen slave population, fourteenth-century Iberia's diverse slave population was heavily comprised of Tartars, and particularly Tartar women. Although in origin the term Tartar was a pejorative name for Mongols, in fourteenth-century Spain "Tartar" was understood to be a discrete ethnic identity not unlike Russians, Turks, or Black Africans.<sup>212</sup> From the point of view of native Iberians in the later Middle Ages, Tartars as an ethnic group were characterized by short stature and round, flat faces.<sup>213</sup> Given these outward signifiers of ethnic difference, even those Tartars who converted to Christianity—whether slave or free person—would be identified by their masters and onlookers as Tartars before they would be identified as Christians.<sup>214</sup> Spanish constructions of Tartars as a distinct ethnic group, separable from Iberia's native Christian, Jewish, and Muslim populations, were so common that in 1374, when a weaver's apprentice was erroneously accused by his peers of being an escaped Tartar slave, his supposed physical resemblance to Tartars gave his

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<sup>211</sup> These artistic productions include Simon Martini's 1333 painting *Annunciation* and a fourteenth-century painting of Carl V of Bohemia. See Arnold, *Princely Gifts and Papal Treasures*, 121.

<sup>212</sup> Debra Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars: Slavery and Mastery in Fifteenth-Century Valencia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 1-2.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

accusers' claims credence.<sup>215</sup> Thus, whereas *panno tartarico*'s presence in a variety of European contexts and settings propelled European constructions of Tartars as foreign and exotic, the presence of Tartar slaves helped normalize the conception of Tartars as perpetual Others.

The Otherness of Tartars was often compounded by the anxieties that slavery generated for slave owners and other free people. Slaves in later medieval Europe presented a number of problems for their free counterparts. Perhaps the most routine of these problems was a fear of slaves escaping and trying to live as free people. Debra Blumenthal suggests that, as early as the fourteenth century, anxiety about the ability of slaves to escape and never be caught prompted a number of legislative penalties for anyone who employed a fugitive slave, which became the norm by the middle of the fifteenth century.<sup>216</sup> While a slave's route to freedom could include escaping his (or more often, her) master's homes, it could also involve the more violent mechanisms of injuring or killing the master. Slaves who did kill his masters commonly claimed that they acted out of grief or anger toward their masters, rather than out of a desire to escape. Blumenthal notes that this defense was so common that it held little weight with officials.<sup>217</sup> The anxieties produced by slaves' attempts to escape or potential to harm their masters evidences that slavery and slaves were both a ubiquitous and highly regulated feature of daily life in later medieval Iberia, a fact highlighted by two very different aspects of slavery.

Firstly, the medical examinations that slaves were subjected to before they could be sold positioned them, not unlike *panno tartarico*, as goods or objects. Before a

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., 153.



potential buyer finalized the purchase of a slave, the slave would often be subjected to an invasive physical examination in which he would be examined for both external and “hidden” defects.<sup>218</sup> One prominent feature of these examinations was a pronounced detail in a slave’s mouth and teeth. Selling a slave with undisclosed physical or mental defects was often a basis for lawsuits between a slave’s current owner and the agent from whom he bought the slave.<sup>219</sup> Thus, these examinations and any shortcomings or disabilities they revealed were an integral tool for assessing a slave’s monetary value, codifying the status of the slave as property. This process of objectification problematizes the notion that slaves were primarily a site of fear for their masters. Another component of later medieval Mediterranean slavery further demonstrates that slaves were not substantial sources of dread for their free counterparts.

The integration of many slaves into their communities—or at least into their owners’ families—demonstrates their status as an unexceptional presence. As Blumenthal’s study of later medieval slavery has demonstrated, slaves often attained the status of familiars in the communities where they lived.<sup>220</sup> Moreover, slave owners often stipulated in their wills that their slaves be freed and given some modicum of support, whether in the form of money or apprenticeships.<sup>221</sup> But wills could also be used as a tool with which slave owners could exert control over their slaves even after death. In lieu of granting slaves their freedom, some slaveholders used their wills to arrange marriages or new owners for their slaves.<sup>222</sup> Even slaves that were freed found difficulty in fully

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<sup>218</sup> Carmel Ferragud, “The Role of Doctors in the Slave Trade during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries within the Kingdom of Valencia (Crown of Aragon),” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 87, no. 2 (2013): 147.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 148-152.

<sup>220</sup> Blumenthal, *Enemies and Familiars*, 153.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, 126-7.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

integrating into the communities of their former captors. This difficulty was often compounded by a freed slave's ethnic identity, as the case of Anthoni, a freed Tartar slave who was unable to establish himself in the community where he was once enslaved, demonstrates.<sup>223</sup> Despite his freedman status, Anthoni was suspected of being a slave on a number of occasions and was jailed and held captive as a result.<sup>224</sup> Just as slaves—from the point of view of Iberians who were born free—were a common if continually excluded part of society, so too were foreign Tartars.

Benjamin Liu has demonstrated that, unlike their contemporaries in other parts of Europe, Christian Iberians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were not particularly perturbed by the thought of a Tartar incursion into Europe. Liu notes that, in at least one thirteenth-century text, the Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe was a source of humor and was regarded as overblown when compared to contemporary “pressing local conundrums” generated by Christian-Muslim relations.<sup>225</sup> Even after the Mongol incursions into Eastern Europe, the figure of the Tartar was often understood as non-threatening. This can be witnessed, Liu demonstrates, in Alfonso X's *Libro de Juegos* (1238), in which Tartars—though portrayed with characteristically “Tartar” features—are depicted in “a moment of studied and civilized leisure that could not be further from the frenzied barbarians” that appeared in Matthew Paris's work.<sup>226</sup>

Thus Tartars, in their capacities both as slaves and as imagined foreign peoples, were characterized by a non-threatening Otherness that was both the basis for their exclusion from larger Iberian society—as in the case of freed slaves—and highly visible

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 239-40.

<sup>225</sup> Benjamin Liu, “The Mongol in the Text,” in *Under the Influence: Questioning the Comparative in Medieval Castile*, ed. Cynthia Robinson and Leyla Rouhi (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 296.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

within local contexts. With these observations about Tartars we may now turn to an analysis of the Catalan Atlas' Tartar Gog and Magog.

The foreignness of the Atlas' Asia, and thus of Gog and Magog, has often been taken at face value. These places and peoples are depicted as exotic and foreboding in European sources, in this reading, because they were understood as such by the creators and audiences of these sources. Certainly Pérez, Estow, and Gow all unquestioningly accept that Gog and Magog are depicted as Tartars because Tartars are foreign. However, as I have demonstrated, these "foreign" peoples and the goods they produced were a highly visible part of European, and particularly Iberian, life in the later Middle Ages. Moreover, the foreignness that these scholars attribute to Tartars has been assumed to be a progenitor of anxiety among medieval Christians. This is particularly evident in Pérez's analysis of the Atlas, in which she asserts that the Atlas's Gog and Magog are depicted as Tartars because Christians feared a Tartar invasion. These are two trends in modern discussions about medieval depictions of ethnic and religious difference that clearly deserve further investigation. In fact, Clara Estow's analysis of the Atlas offers one alternate mode in which Asia's exoticness can be read.

The treasures and wonders populating Asia, Estow suggests, may have been an element of the map designed to spur interest in eastward travel. Although Estow suggests that the Mongol invasion of Eastern Europe would have been a source of anxiety and fear for the Atlas' audience, a notion that Liu problematized, she astutely suggests that this resplendence and detail of the map's easternmost panel "renders the unknown more knowable, reduces the anxiety and uncertainty of venturing into distant lands and waters, and promises rich rewards, such as diamonds, pearls, and gold to those willing to

undertake the journey.”<sup>227</sup> Estow’s compelling argument draws attention to the fact that the foreignness of the Atlas is very much a construct crafted by Cresques.

Where I depart from Estow is in her suggestion that this knowingly-constructed vision of the East, at least as it pertains to the Atlas’s Tartars and Gog and Magog, was a result of the fact that the East “beckon[ed] the mapmaker, the authorities that informed its content, [and] the patrons who commissioned it.”<sup>228</sup> Given Cresques’s aforementioned propensity for critiquing Christian understandings of history—and the ways in which other artists, including Chaucer and Dante, invoked Eastern exoticism—there is reason to think that Cresques’s decision to portray such a local presence as one of the East’s most exotic peoples may have carried with it a more subversive meaning. The fact that some of the most prominent Tartars on the map take part in the Atlas’s apocalyptic narrative, which critiques virtually every trope of Christian apocalypticism which it depicts, further suggests that Cresques’s Gog and Magog are a subversive presence on the map. While the Atlas certainly makes Tartars foreign and exotic—not to mention harbingers of apocalyptic destruction—there is reason to think that Tartars were not the intended target of Cresques’s critique so much as Christian theological ideas regarding the Tartars.

Given the Atlas’s critique of the Prester John legend, discussed in Chapter Three, the Atlas’s depiction of Gog and Magog could potentially be read as an extension of that critique. That is, Prester John’s association with Gog and Magog and the Tartars—after the Tartars had already been posited as being Gog and Magog—provided a rich set of contradictions through which John could be construed as a fearful figure of the apocalypse. So too could the Tartars’ initial association of Gog and Magog have taken

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<sup>227</sup> Estow, “Mapping Central Europe,” 15.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

precedence over their subsequent construction as possible allies with Christians for Cresques's critique of Christian apocalypticism. By constructing Tartars as a foreign, exotic, and ultimately destructive presence in the world—all notions that had been proposed by Christians in a variety of contexts—Cresques could be insisting that contemporary notions of Tartars as potential allies was nothing but a Christian fever dream.

Yet, as I discussed above, Iberian Christians were not nearly as concerned with destructive Tartars as their contemporaries throughout Europe. Thus, if Cresques's critique was designed to highlight the tension between Christian fears and optimism regarding Tartars, the court of the Crown of Aragon, Cresques's patrons, would not have been an ideal audience. It is certainly possible that Cresques had in mind as his audience the court of Charles the Wise, the intended ultimate recipient for the Catalan Atlas who would have been more apt to perceive Tartars as fearful. However, given Cresques's frequent contact with Pedro, who frequently patronized work from Cresques, it is more likely that Cresques would have been more familiar with Pedro's apocalyptic expectations than with those of Charles. But if the contradictory images of apocalyptic Tartars would not have been an apt reference for Cresques's Tartar Gog and Magog, contemporary Iberian constructions of Tartar identity, which Pedro adhered to and perpetuated, nonetheless provide a backdrop against which Cresques's polemical aims can be illuminated.

One of the biggest influences on Christian conceptions of Tartars in the later fourteenth century was Ramon Llull, a Franciscan philosopher on the island of Majorca who was born in 1232 and wrote and lived into the first quarter of the fourteenth century.

Llull advocated for a number of missionary and crusading missions to convert Saracens, Jews, and pagans to the “one fold.” Like Prester John, who was to convert some Saracens to Christianity with his inspirational military prowess and killing others, Ramon Llull advocated converting some infidels by preaching and others by force. Among the pagans that Llull hoped to convert, of course, were the Tartars, to whose conversion Llull dedicated an entire book, *Libre del Tartar* (c.1271).

Liu has characterized the Lullian construction of Tartar identity as malleable and highly context-specific.<sup>229</sup> That is, Llull asserted that in spite of their pagan beliefs, Tartars could be easily converted. The notion that Tartars could be easily converted was partially based on travel narratives written by Christians who ventured into Mongol territories.<sup>230</sup> Marco Polo, for instance, asserts that, because Tartars practiced a form of paganism that did not invoke demons, they were more likely to convert to Christianity than demonic idolaters.<sup>231</sup> Despite Llull’s apparent optimism about Tartars’ ability to join the “one fold” of Christianity, the supposed ease with which Tartars could be converted was also a source of concern for Llull. That is, Llull thought Tartars could be converted to Judaism and Islam just as easily as they could be converted to Christianity.<sup>232</sup> This was a view that was adopted by Iberian Christians—and particularly by members of the Iberian royalty—throughout the fourteenth century.

Given the fact that the Mongol invasions of Eastern Europe were regarded by many Iberians as less pressing than more local conflicts between Muslims and Christians, it is not totally surprising that the conversion of local Tartars to Christianity was a cause

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<sup>229</sup> Liu, “The Mongol in the Text,” 294.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>231</sup> Polo, *The Travels*, 98.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 298.

for celebration in fourteenth-century Iberia. In 1274, James I of Aragon attended the public baptism of two Tartars, while James II of Aragon became the godfather of a Tartar jongleur who converted to Christianity in 1320.<sup>233</sup> These two examples indicate the primary difference between the Lullian worldview and its subsequent adoption by Iberians; whereas Lull was concerned with the conversion of non-Christians on a global scale, his Iberian successors were more concerned with the conversion of local pagans.

While Lull was primarily concerned with the possibility of Tartars converting to Islam—a pressing fear given the fact that contemporary Tartar princes seemed to be rapidly converting to Islam—fourteenth-century kings of Aragon were more concerned with the conversion of Tartars to Judaism. Given the prevalence of Tartar slaves in Iberia, the fear that Tartars might convert to Judaism was unsurprising, fueled by the fact that Jews could own Tartar slaves. As Liu explains it, “despite their distinctly Lullian resonances,” later Christian means for preventing Tartar conversion “seem much less attuned to [Lull’s] vast vision of Tartar conversion in the larger world ... and much more in keeping with the rising anti-Jewish sentiment and legislation within the Iberian Peninsula.”<sup>234</sup> Two prescient examples of this anti-Jewish legislation occurred in the same period in which the Catalan Atlas was commissioned and produced.

Pedro and his Castilian counterpart, Juan, each passed a piece of legislation regulating Jewish-Tartar relations; the two pieces of legislation act as virtual bookends to the production of the Catalan Atlas. In 1369, six years before Cresques began work on the Catalan Atlas, Pedro signed a law that prohibited the Jews in Barcelona from owning

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., 308 and 317.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 298.

slaves.<sup>235</sup> Then in 1380, the year in which the Atlas was completed, Juan passed an ordinance forbidding Jews from proselytizing to Tartars.<sup>236</sup> Liu notes that this legislation was “directed more against Jews than on behalf of Tartars,” as this ordinance was passed “despite that fact that the Tartar population in Castile was negligible if not nonexistent” at the time.<sup>237</sup> Although these laws would not have directly impacted Cresques, who lived neither in Barcelona nor in Castile, Liu shows that they represent concretizations of widespread contemporary anxieties. Moreover, Liu notes that the Castilian ordinance was based on other pieces of Aragonese legislation, demonstrating that Pere’s Barcelonan legislation was not an isolated incident of such regulation within Aragon.<sup>238</sup> In an unrelated, but equally telling, legislative act, in 1381 Pedro began investing Jews suspected of invoking demons.<sup>239</sup> Thus, this legislative trend provides a more telling background against which Cresques’s Tartar Gog and Magog can be interpreted.

Rather than confronting Christian apocalypticism proper in its depiction of Gog and Magog as Tartars, the Atlas’s Gog and Magog serve as a vehicle through which Cresques critiques the contemporary Christian conceptions of Tartars and anxieties about their Judaizing. By placing Tartars within a squarely exotic and foreign frame of reference, Cresques highlights their paganism. Within the framework of the Catalan Atlas, to be a pagan is to be in the service of Satan, an idea put on full display in the Atlas’s Satanic Alexander. Just as the Satanic Alexander highlights the incompatibility of Alexander’s paganism with Christian depictions of Alexander as a pious tool of God’s

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Michael A. Ryan, *A Kingdom of Stargazers: Astrology and Authority in the Late Medieval Crown of Aragon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 121.



work, the Tartar Gog and Magog represent a dismissal of Christian attempts to bring the pagan Tartars into the Christian fold. “These people whom you covet,” Cresques seems to be saying, “are your enemies.” Whether in the proximity of Jews, Muslims, or Christians, Tartars will be the destroyers of Christendom.

Unlike the Satanic Alexander, the Christ/Antichrist, and the Prince of Gog and Magog, which represent rather general critiques of Christian thought, the Tartar Gog and Magog clearly represent inter-confessional tensions that would have most immediately informed Cresques’s view of the world and of history. As such, they are probably the core from which the rest of the Atlas’s apocalyptic polemic sprouts. Christians misinterpret their present circumstances by fearing Jews more than Tartars, Cresques asserts, just as they misinterpret their past and their future. Their reverence for Alexander, a beneficiary of Satan, and Prester John, the leader of a pagan horde, is unsurprising given their optimism that Tartars may convert to Christianity.

In his influential *Communities of Violence*, David Nirenberg argues that, particularly in fourteenth-century Spain, some acts of violence served as a means through which often latent inter-confessional tensions could be acted out and resolved. For example, he demonstrates that violence against Jews in the first half of the fourteenth century often represented a calculated means through which Christians could demonstrate against the king for the favor he showed towards his Jewish subjects.<sup>240</sup> Cresques’s sustained critique of the Christian worldview, achieved through a deceptively straightforward and appeasing presentation of Christian apocalyptic narratives, seems to serve a similar purpose. This suggests that instances of apparently peaceful cooperation between Christians and Jews in late medieval Spain may potentially be understood as a

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<sup>240</sup> Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence*, 50.

means through which inter-confessional tensions were expressed as a kind of complement to the conflicts Nirenberg identifies.

Although seemingly benign, medieval relationships of patronage or instances of cross-confessional borrowing could certainly be characterized by tensions and conflicts. In his study of astronomy in later medieval Spain, Bernard Goldstein has characterized astronomy as a kind of “neutral zone” in which Jews and Christians could freely borrow from one another’s intellectual traditions and in which Christians frequently patronized Jews.<sup>241</sup> However, even within the framework of this “neutral zone,” Goldstein notes that Christians, whether patronizing Jews or collaborating directly with them in translating Arabic texts, were not always eager to acknowledge the contributions of their Jewish counterparts, and thus often did not.

Conflicts between Christian patrons and Jewish clients were not always so subtle. Phillip Nothaft’s study of a late medieval Christian school text that included a transcription of a Jewish astronomical text offers one clear example of an overt conflict. Although the text was included for the precision with which it calculated the lunar cycles, it was frequently coupled with the addendum that the Jews’ superior ability to follow the course of the moon derived from the fact that Jewish men menstruated, and needed to keep track of the moon so that they could know when to expect their next bleeding.<sup>242</sup> In some cases, tensions between patrons and their clients found expression outside of texts, as in 1381 when the governor of Majorca commanded that one of his Jewish clients, Vidal Afrahim, not be allowed to leave the island until he completed the work that the

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<sup>241</sup> Bernard Goldstein, “Astronomy as a ‘Neutral Zone’: Interreligious Cooperation in Medieval Spain,” *Medieval Encounters* 15, no. 2 (2009): 159–74.

<sup>242</sup> Philip E. Nothaft, “The Meaning of ‘Judaeus’ and the Myth of Jewish Male Menses in a Late Medieval Astronomical School Text,” *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 7, no. 1 (2013): 73–91.

governor had commissioned from him.<sup>243</sup> Thus patronage, particularly between Jews and Christians, was often characterized by both subtle and pronounced tensions that could be either intellectual or more practical in nature. Neither the lack of conflict between Pedro and Cresques nor the Catalan Atlas's lack of overt critique or condemnation of Christian apocalypticism immunize it from functioning as a polemical text. Moreover, they are certainly not reasons to believe that Cresques was unaware of, or unaffected by, the Christian-Jewish conflicts that characterized his age.

Cresques did not have access to the same kinds of royal resistance as did his Christian counterparts, who in Nirenberg's estimation were able Jews who were under royal protection as a means of harming the king. Moreover, he would have no motive to engage in such an open act of critique against such an influential patron. Damaging such a relationship surely could not have boded well for the reputation of one of the most renowned cartographers of his day. Thus, Cresques's most strategic—and, because of its subtlety, perhaps the most gratifying—option for critique was to couch it in appeasement. Rather than making a radical departure from tradition, Cresques drew on a set of established and acceptable conventions—Alexander as pagan, Antichrist as wonder-worker, and Gog and Magog as Tartars—to mask an idiosyncratic and ultimately subversive image of Christian history. Like the crowd gawking in wonder at the Antichrist's miracles, upon seeing the Catalan Atlas's seemingly standard apocalyptic narrative Cresques's Christian audience would have regarded it with approval, unwittingly condoning a vision of history that condemned them.

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<sup>243</sup> Ryan, *Kingdom of Stargazers*, 114.

## Conclusion

In treating a single source's depiction of Gog and Magog on its own terms, I have offered insight into how sources depicting Gog and Magog—often lumped together in deceptively tidy groupings—can be productively approached by historians as windows into the intellectual and social tensions that framed their creation. The polemical resonances of the Tartar Gog and Magog on the Catalan Atlas would be impossible to appreciate if these figures were primarily framed as belonging or not belonging to larger traditions of representation. A study of these figures that treats them as self-contained units of meaning, uninformed by other elements of the source in which they appear, would be equally unhelpful in this regard. These approaches would also mask the impact Gog and Magog have on the meaning of the rest of the Atlas's apocalyptic narrative.

Moreover, examining these figures challenges the notion that medieval depictions of a literally real Gog and Magog represented a writer's or an artist's uncomplicated endorsement of Gog and Magog's existence. As such, the idea that literal depictions of Gog and Magog necessarily embodied either fear or a desire to dominate the ethnic groups with which Gog and Magog were associated must also be revisited. Certainly the Fra Mauro and English Psalter World Maps demonstrate this point. Although instructive, these maps do not provide a sufficient framework through which other renditions of Gog and Magog should be interpreted. That is, these maps rely on a strict dichotomy of literal and allegorical interpretations of Gog and Magog. While this dichotomy may certainly be complicated by the immediate contexts of a source's production, it still hinges on the issue of the nature of Gog and Magog's role in the Last Things. For Cresques, this is no point of concern.

Thus, the unique and counterintuitive way in which Cresques's Atlas makes use of conventions of Christian apocalypticism offers scholars insights into apocalyptic texts more generally. The Atlas's apocalyptic narrative problematizes generalizations about how depictions of ethnic Others as monster or monstrous functioned for a medieval audience. Debra Higgs Strickland, for instance, has claimed that Christian fears about Islam's potential to surpass Christianity in both numbers and influence fueled Christian depictions of Muslims as Cyclopes.<sup>244</sup> Suzanne Conklin Akbari has made similar observations regarding the motivation for Christian depictions of Muhammad as an Antichrist.<sup>245</sup> Speaking specifically about depictions of monstrous non-Christians in medieval apocalypticism, Strickland has also said that the motivations for such depictions were reactionary in nature.<sup>246</sup> While these observations are certainly valuable and hold true in the specific instances that these scholars examine, the Tartar Gog and Magog of the Catalan Atlas reveal that they must accommodate a wider range of possibilities. In depicting Gog and Magog as monstrous Tartars, Cresques was not expressing a fear of Tartars so much as a virulent distaste for the restrictions placed on Jewish communities which were spurred by a Christian fear of Jewish proselytizing.

A comparison of some features of the Atlas's Gog and Magog narrative to those of Pseudo-Methodius and Matthew Paris, whose reactionary constructions of Gog and Magog have been discussed above at length, further suggests that the Atlas's apocalypse is not reactionary in nature. Whereas the Atlas has been shown to be deceptively complex, the works of Pseudo-Methodius and Matthew Paris are characterized less by

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<sup>244</sup> Debra Higgs Strickland, "Monstrosity and Race in the Late Middle Ages," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Monsters and the Monstrous*, ed. Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 174.

<sup>245</sup> Akbari, "The Rhetoric of Antichrist," 297–307.

<sup>246</sup> Strickland, *Saracens, Demons and Jews*, 211.

innovation than by attempts to reconcile the authors' immediate contexts with received knowledge about Gog and Magog. Pseudo-Methodius virtually implants the Muslims into an otherwise typical Alexander narrative by casting them as Gog and Magog. Matthew Paris, working under a different set of presumptions, attempts to reconcile Peter Comestor's Jewish Gog and Magog with the invading Mongols by noting parallels between Mongol society and the society of the supposedly Jewish Gog and Magog: both write in foreign characters, both live near the mountains, and both engage in questionable dietary practices. This kind of reconciliation is not characteristic of the Catalan Atlas.

While my discussion has primarily focused on a specific variety of monstrous people, these conclusions can be productively applied to the study of monsters more generally. Literary and artistic studies of monsters, in their rejection of strict chronological or geographical bounds, have offered sensitive insights regarding how monsters fit into medieval systems of thought and value. Moreover, they have offered a set of reflections about how texts depicting monsters can be approached. The monster's proximity to its holy counterparts, its place of origin or dwelling, its use of language, and the details of its bodily appearance: these are just some of the features that these studies have shown to be important considerations when approaching any medieval depiction of a monster. But for historians these approaches also have their limits, which has created a gap in recent scholarship on monsters. By approaching monsters with both geography and chronology heavily in mind, my study has offered one path to filling this gap.

Jeffrey Cohen has asserted that "the giant is simply too large to be reduced to a narrative of historical causation."<sup>247</sup> As the preceding chapters have shown, this is certainly not true for Gog and Magog, least of all in the Catalan Atlas. The social and

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<sup>247</sup> Cohen, *Of Giants*, 3-4.

intellectual contexts that informed the sophisticated polemics of the Catalan Atlas were overrun by the military and political developments that took place in the decades following the Atlas's completion. In 1392, the appearance of the militarily powerful Tartar prince Timur, a recent convert to Islam, became a source of concern for Christians in Spain.<sup>248</sup> This infused Tartars with a ferocity and a foreignness that, only a decade or so earlier, was unthinkable. While it did not prompt any notable depictions of Tartars as Gog and Magog, it certainly robbed Cresques's fearsome Tartars of their polemical implications.

The tensions between Aragon's Jewish and Christian populations that provided the framework for Cresques's mode of critique also changed in character soon after the completion of the Atlas. Although Abraham Cresques died in 1387, his son Yehuda inherited his mantle, receiving the nickname "the map Jew" from his coreligionists and enjoying continued patronage from Pedro and his successor, Joan I. On August 1, 1391—nearly contemporary with Timur's rise in prominence—the Majorcan peasantry revolted against their local rulers and, unable to assail their residences, turned their attention to Majorca's Jewish ghetto where they killed 300 Jews, perhaps an unsurprising turn of events given Nirenberg's thesis. Yehuda and his mother survived the attack, but were forced to convert to Christianity along with the rest of Majorca's surviving Jews. In 1394, the now Christian Yehuda—who had taken the name Jaume Ribes after his conversion—moved to the court of Joan I, and then his successor Marti, in Barcelona.

But in 1410, upon Marti's death, the demand for Yehuda's services in Aragon ceased and he moved to Portugal, where he had been invited to live by Prince Henry "the Navigator." Although it is supposed that Jacome of Majorca, the head of the cartographic

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<sup>248</sup> Liu, *The Mongol in the Text*, 320.

school that Henry founded in 1419, and Yehuda Cresques, or Jaume Ribes, are one and the same, there is no work definitively associated with Yehuda or testifying to his life after 1410.<sup>249</sup> Yehuda's life and work after his father's death was thus characterized by instability and uncertainty. While his father spent his entire life working on Majorca and enjoyed the continuous support of powerful patrons, Yehuda changed names, homes, and patrons too many times for his legacy to be known. Surely the instability of Yehuda's life, as for most of Aragon's *conversos*, deprived him of some of the confidence that had emboldened his father to so cleverly critique his patrons. Thus, Aragon's changing relationship with the world and with its Jewish subjects washed away and obscured the historical moment in which the Tartar Gog and Magog, at least from the point of view of one Jewish cartographer, were ideal vehicles for a subtly damning critique of the Christian vision of history.

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<sup>249</sup> For a full description of Yehuda's life, see Yoeli, "Abraham and Yehuda Cresques," 27.



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