

CARTOGRAPHIA OBSCURA

*Notes from the desk of Shal Osterley, Historian
and Collector*

The Janin Atlas

[ODN 203.0]

- *Circa 800 OC*
- *Egg-based pigment on goat skin*
- *2 hands wide*

This piece is one of the oldest maps of Midgard.¹ The sage Durayah,² after consulting with appropriate spirits and tomes, determined that it dates to over 800 years ago. I obtained this document from the estate of Lord Janin of Capleon at a reasonable cost; I suspect its prior owner was not fully aware of its provenance.³

This work shows no earlier influence, either in the presentation, orientation, or content of the cartography. That it is so complete is quite surprising,

¹ I am, of course, not considering the apocryphal maps of the early Elvish civilizations. While no doubt those maps exist, their caretakers are unknown and unwilling to divulge their wards. My not inconsiderate wealth would be at the disposal of anyone willing and able to make those maps available.

² May his soul be at rest. Wherever it may be.

³ Nor was I completely willing to share that history until the sale was made.

and indicates a sophistication of representation and scope of area that is almost preternatural. Yet it also shows none of the classic indications of magical influence [ODN 202.0, ODN 336.1], implying a completely mundane creation.⁴

When compared to atlas fragments of only a few hundred years later [ODN 177.1, ODN 202.0], the representation of the known world is primitive and shows many inaccuracies.⁵ Several of these inaccuracies show up in later atlases [ODN 139.0, ODN 115.0, ODN 162.1], which both fixes its position in time and reveals its influence on later cartographers. It can be assumed, therefore, that this map had some contemporaneous exposure. The fact that this is the only remnant copy is surprising.⁶

The inaccuracy of this map increases the further from the coastline – I believe this fact betrays the original cartographer as a sailor. Yet there are no celestial navigation markings, which may indicate that the intended use of the map was for land-based travel.⁷ This incongruity leads one to believe this map was made

⁴ I withhold my opinions on magical cartographers, the likes of Al-Tara of Mardas Vhula-gai, out of civility.

⁵ Such as the almost comically inaccurate placement of the Cloudwall Mountains.

⁶ Perhaps the information on this map, for some reason, was considered dangerous or unwelcome. Or they were used into dissolution.

⁷ Woe to anyone who tried to travel a-land using this map!

commercially – that is, its intended audience was different than the person creating it.

As the earliest known representation of the known world, this map is both unique and invaluable. But its other ethnographic layers make it also an important milestone in the history of cartography.⁸



⁸ I have entered an arrangement with the scribes at the Academia Althusia to provide replicas of this work, and other work in my collection. My assistant will be more than happy to negotiate a reasonable compensation for their top-quality work.