

Corcaig Ceann an Domain

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This map is entitled Corcaig Ceann an Domain (“Cork, the Head of the World”), which is inspired by the Latin phrase *Roma caput mundi*. It is painted with acrylics on canvas board, and finished with coffee stain and shellac, and the map is orientated to the east. The aim was to make a map from the perspective of Cork being at its centre and distort the world around it. The central landmass is Ireland with a disproportionately sized Cork: on the left is the Shannon estuary, and further above is Galway Bay and Lough Neagh. Surrounding Ireland is Iceland on the lower left, Iberia on the lower right, Norway and Britain to the top, and India and the Caspian Sea at the top right. The map is inspired by medieval world maps, or *mappae mundi* (in particular, the Cotton World Map found in a manuscript held in the British Library - Cotton MS Tiberius B. V, f. 56v) which were produced in what is now Britain, France and Germany from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries.

These maps share little (and arguably no) relationship with the modern discipline and concept of cartography, and exist in an altogether separate paradigm of production, composition and consumption. This contention was elaborately explored in Matthew Edney’s *Cartography: The Ideal and Its History* (2019) and has become a topic of discussion at the proceedings of the International Conference for the History of Cartography and the International Society for the History of the Map. In particular, the standard historiography of maps has come under criticism for producing teleological narratives of map history which presuppose certain values and ideals as to what a map is, and is for, which largely originated in recent centuries.

These kinds of medieval maps are primarily concerned with relaying events in time (predominantly biblical, classical, and sometimes near historical) and setting them in the context of space. They appeared in bound manuscripts like the Cotton World Map, as well as standalone large wall maps (such as the Hereford and Ebstorf maps). Usually, they depict the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe, which were situated in the northern habitable zone of the Earth, as it was understood from the climate zone theories appropriated from classical and late antique cosmology. They were often oriented eastwards toward Paradise and centred their projection on Jerusalem, giving prominence to the biblical world.



Corcaig Ceann an Doimain
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They are representative of encounters of several kinds: on one level, they reveal encounters with landscapes, peoples, and cultures that are at the margins of or altogether removed from the mapmaker's knowledge and offer historians valuable insights into how these mapmakers understood their world in relation to others. But the encounter which these maps are perhaps

most concerned with could be said to be the immaterial relationship between the self and others. The didactic genre of *speculum* (“mirror”) literature became widely popular in the late medieval period. The thirteenth century Old Norse *Konungs Skuggsjá* (“King’s Mirror”), which takes the form of a dialogue between father and son discussing politics and morality intended as an instructional manual of sorts, also included discussions of the shape of the world and of its ‘marvels’. What sort of cosmologies and metaphysical lenses frame our everyday lives (consciously or unconsciously), how might they influence our ethical and spiritual development, and ultimately, influence how we encounter, reckon with, and ultimately relate and act with others?

Further Reading

- Bodewitz, H.W. (2019) *Vedic Cosmology and Ethics: Selected Studies*. Edited by Heilijgers, D.H., Houben, J.E.M., and van Kooij, K. Leiden: Brill.
- Edney, M. (2019) *Cartography: The Ideal and Its History*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Faucher, N. and Mäkinen, V. (eds.) (2022) *Encountering Others, Understanding Ourselves in Medieval and Early Modern Thought*. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Moore, R. (2019) ‘Empire Without End at the Ends of the Earth: Ireland and Thule in Roman Imperial Ideology’, *Classics Ireland*, 26, pp. 58–85.
- Lavezzo, K. (2006) *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature, and English Community, 1000-1534*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Scully, D. (2016) ‘Medieval Maps and Diagrams’, in Hourihane, C. (ed.) *The Routledge Companion to Medieval Iconography*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 399–411.
- Terkla, D., and Millea, N. (eds.) (2019) *A Critical Companion to English Mappae Mundi of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. Suffolk: Boydell Press.

Source Material

- London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius B V/1, f. 56v.
- Holm-Olsen, L. (ed.) (1983) *Konungs Skuggsjá*. Oslo: Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-Institutt.