

MAPS FIT FOR A KING Pg 16

# dig<sup>®</sup>

INTO HISTORY

Just How Big is  
Earth, Anyway?  
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How to Name  
a Mountain  
Pg 44

# Mapping the World





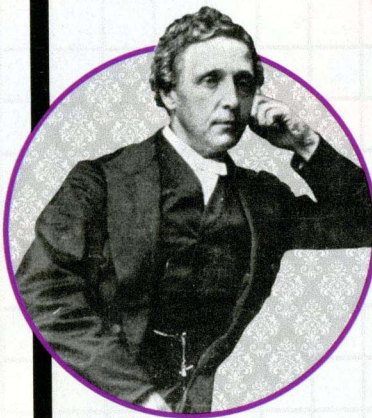
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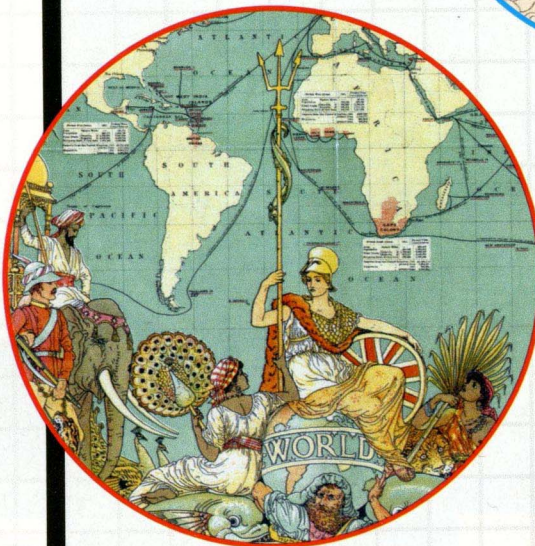
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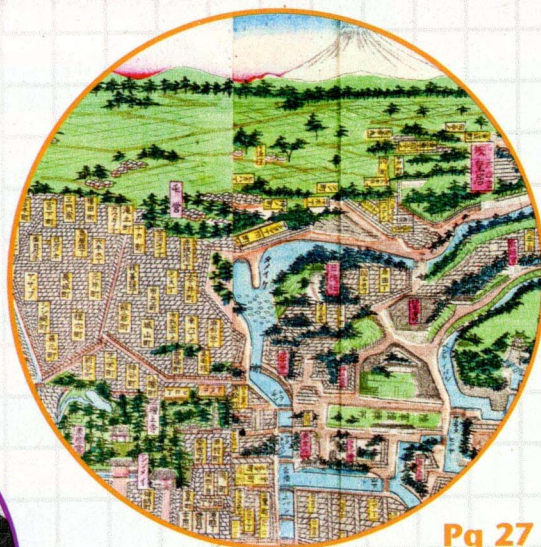
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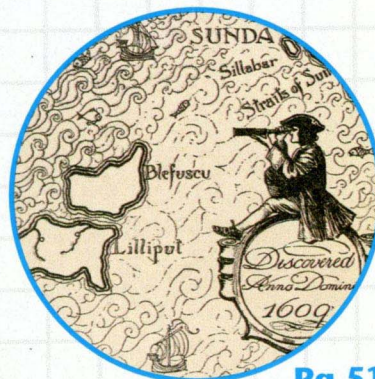
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Gerardus Mercator and  
Jodocus Hondius (left and  
right, respectively) were  
two of the most famous  
mapmakers of the 15th  
and 17th centuries.



GERARDUS MERCATOR NATUS  
RUPELMUNDÆ III NON. MARTII ANNO  
CIDI XII: VIXIT ANN. LXXXII. M. VIII. D.  
XXVI: DENATUS IV NON. DECEMBRIS  
ANNO CIDI XCIV.

IUDOCUS HONDIUS NATUS IN  
PAGO FLANDRIÆ DICTO WACKENE XVI  
KALEND. NOVEMBRIS ANNO CIDI LXIII:  
VIXIT ANN. XLVII. M. VII. D. XXIX: DENAT:  
US XIV KAL. MARTII ANNO CIDI CXII.

# In the Beginning

by Patrick Wertmann



**W**hat would you do if you had invited friends to your house and they asked you for directions? Well, you could draw a map!

And, if you did, you most likely would include your street and theirs, as well as the landmarks between the two, such as a school or a supermarket. Using these places on the map as markers, your friends can then plan the best route to take.

Generally speaking, a map is an illustration of the earth's surface, and a person who draws maps is called a cartographer. But how are maps made?

In prehistoric times, hunters would sometimes draw their hunting territories on cave walls. In the millennia that followed, maps would have been painted by hand on various materials, including parchment, clay, ivory, and even the hide of an animal.

Fast forward to modern times. With the invention of such tools as compasses, telescopes, and sextants, cartographers were able to define and show distances much more accurately. Today, aerial photography, satellite images, and computer software such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) have made mapmaking even more precise. For example, mapmakers are now able to illustrate the physical features of our earth. Using satellite images, they can create three-dimensional maps that are exceptionally correct.

Do all maps show the same contents? No! There are many different types of maps. Physical maps give us views of the earth's continents, mountains, forests, and waterways. Political maps identify countries and their boundaries. Economic maps offer information about the agricultural products or minerals found in a certain region. There are also maps that detail the climate or the population density in a particular location.

Of course, there are maps that offer details other than those connected with land

masses. Nautical maps, for instance, are important tools for ship captains. They include information about the depth of the water, land formations along the coastline, navigational dangers, harbors, and bridges. They also provide data on tides and currents, as well as the earth's magnetic field.

Just as nautical maps help a ship's captain, so aeronautical maps help airplane pilots to determine position and altitude, and assist ground controllers in airport towers with planning and deciding the best route to a particular destination. In emergency situations, aeronautical maps can help responders locate an alternative landing area.

Today, people who have no special map training can observe the world from above without having to leave their homes. Most likely, you have used software such as Google Earth or Google Maps. Thanks to satellite images, we can now easily spot the smallest details of our house and environment by using the Internet. Not everyone, however, is fond of these tools, because their easy access may lead to violations of privacy. Lawmakers around the world are presently addressing this issue.

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**Patrick Wertmann** is a Sinologist and art historian living in China.

