

An Ancient Map of the World

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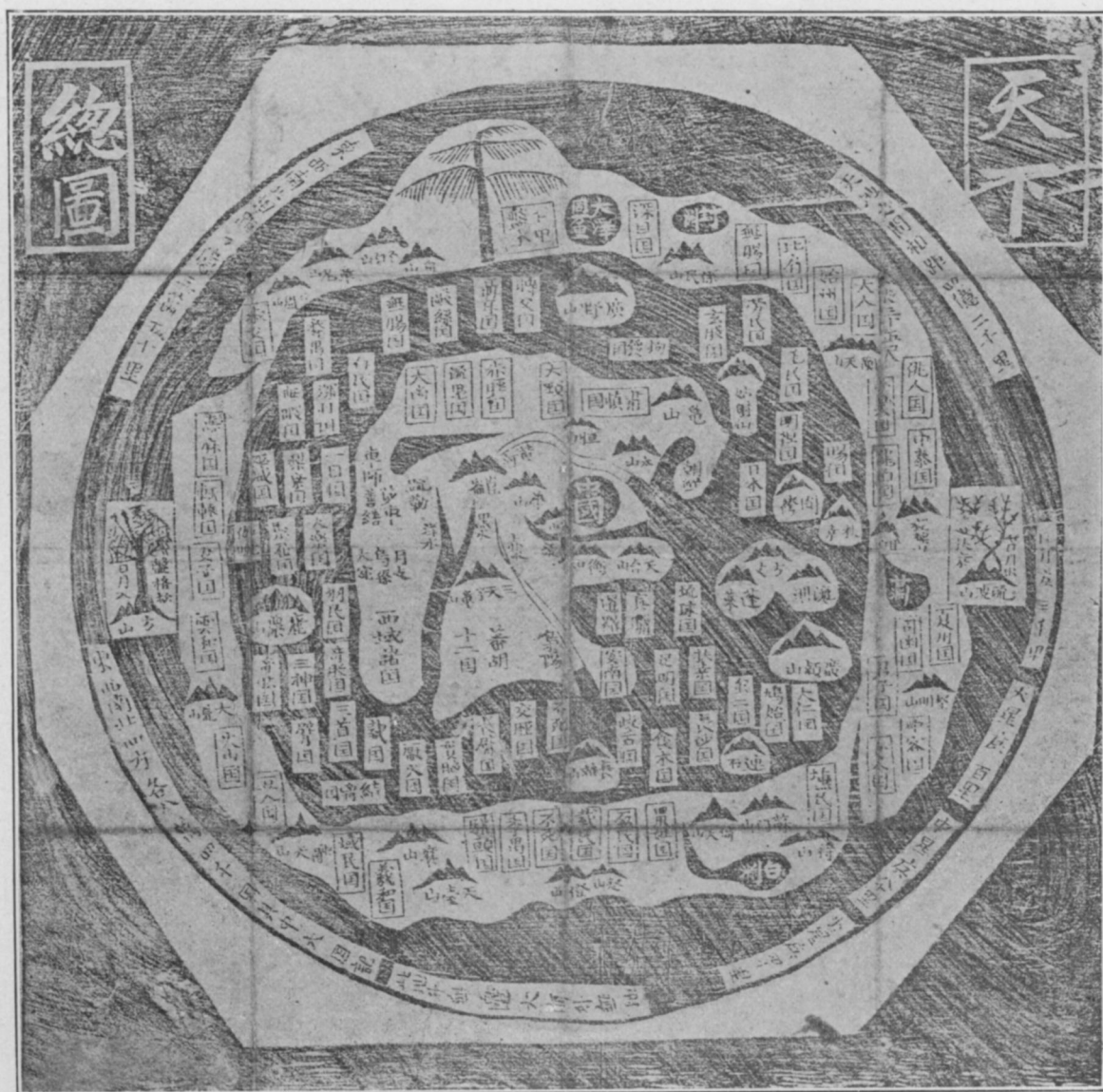
AN ANCIENT MAP OF THE WORLD.

In the old European maps of the world we find that, starting from some well-known centre and branching out toward the four points of the compass, the details become less and less definite, until at last the cartographer was compelled by the lack of definite knowledge to draw heavily upon his imagination, and peopled the distant seas with all sorts of grotesque conceits. The imagination abhors a vacuum, and, so long as no rational explanation of a phenomenon is forthcoming, man is forced to supply the void from the fertile realms of fancy.

That human nature is the same the world over is shown by the accompanying map of the world as conceived by the Chinese and Korean mind. The only difference between this map and those of the Middle Ages in Europe is one of degree. The Oriental has allowed himself to draw more heavily upon his imagination than the Occidental dared to do. As Italy was the geographical centre of the world as known to the Occident, so China, the "Middle Kingdom," was the centre of all things to the denizen of the Far East.

It will be noticed that the centre of the map contains a single continent; that this is surrounded by a sea filled with island kingdoms; that this, again, is surrounded by land in the shape of a ring, and that about the whole flows the great ocean, which, according to the cartographer, is represented (150) as an "endless sea." The map is complete, and nothing is conceded as being unknown. It was not deemed wise to allow the public to suspect that there was any land that the cartographer did not know.

It appears that this central continent represents Asia alone, India being at the southwest corner. The only rivers definitely given are the Yellow River, the Yang-tse, and the Mekong, all of which are represented fairly well. The general course of each of these is approximately as given here. It is interesting to note that China proper is represented as lying between the Yellow River and the Yang-tse, which, as history proves, was the real birthplace of the Chinese people. Korea and the Yellow Sea are also well represented, but when we go farther afield than this we find confusion at once. Annam is not far out of the way; but the land to the west of it, which must represent Siam and Burmah, is highly fanciful. The water to the east of India must be the Bay of



Bengal, and the two forks at the head of it may represent the Irrawaddy and Salween Rivers. If this is so, the Kwen-lun Mountains (123) are not far enough out of their proper place to call for severe criticism. The unnamed lake to the north of these mountains may be the Caspian Sea, by a stretch of the imagination.

We note that the name of the map is put at the two upper corners, and means (146) "Under the Heavens" and (147) "The Whole Map." Around the edge are arranged some statements of a general nature—namely, that the distance around the world is some thirty million miles; that the world contains eighty-four thousand different countries; that it is surrounded by a limitless ocean; that the stars vary in width from twelve to thirty miles; that the sun and moon are nine hundred miles wide, and that the heavens and the earth are separated by a distance of 120,000,600 miles (English). The definiteness implied in the last 600 miles is conclusive as to the accuracy of the figures!

It is not necessary to go over the whole map and mention each land in particular, but there are certain ones that demand a word of comment. In the far north we find, for instance, the "Covered Lake" (4). This might well refer to the great ice-covered Arctic Ocean; and the "Land Without Sunshine" (6) is not a bad description of the sub-Arctic winter. The "Land where Political Divisions were First Made" is a pretty conceit (8), but we wonder that the Chinaman should have conceded the invention of that contrivance to another people. If we were to attempt a comparison between these names and those of European myth and legend we should say that this corresponds in a melancholy manner with the story of Pandora and her box.

One of the most important of these names is that of Pusang (17), to the extreme right of the map. In Korean and Chinese legend this land lay 70,000 *li*, or 21,000 miles, to the east of China. In that country grew enormous trees, 400 feet in height. Some people think this refers to America; and it certainly matches the facts very well. The distance is exaggerated, but the fact that it lies far to the east, and that it grows such phenomenal trees, would indicate that the land mentioned is the Pacific coast of America; but it will be noted that there are two other places named Pusang as well (67) and (76), so that it appears that the Chinese were in the dark as to its exact location. Somewhat north of this Pusang lies "Heaven Balance Mountain" (10), which reminds us forcibly of the tale of Atlas. If we might give reins to fancy, we could easily conceive that the "Land of Superior Men" (22) referred to the Aztec

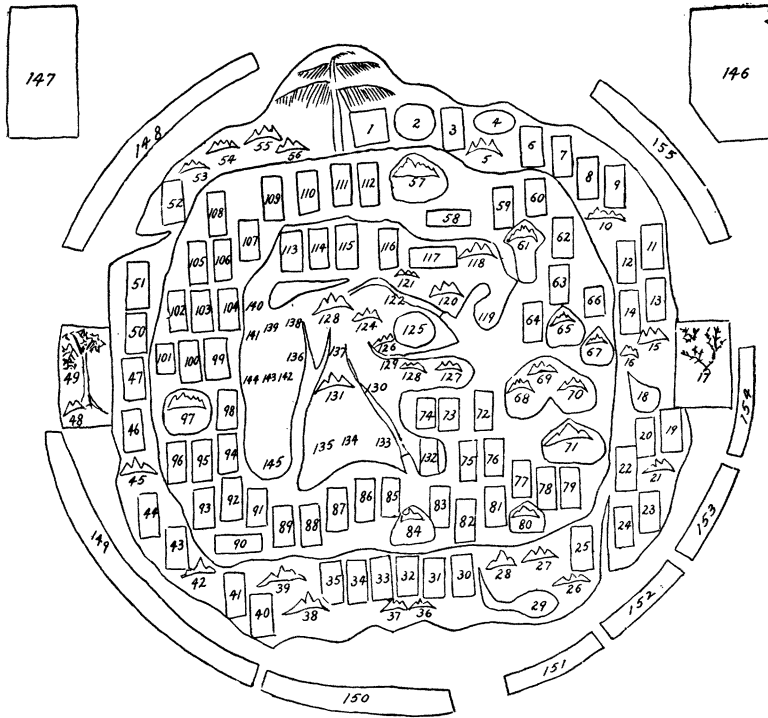
civilization, which may have been in its zenith at the time this map was made. In the "Land of Women" (24) we find a counterpart to the Amazons of our Western mythology.

Passing around to the south, we come to the "Land where People do not Die" (33), evidently the Sheol, Happy Hunting-grounds, Valhalla of the West. The "Land where People have Animals' Heads" (35) is a Brobdingnagian conceit, as also is the "Land of Giants" (9). In the far west we find the "Cloud-governed Land" (46). Surely this cannot mean England. And yet how apposite!

Passing around to the northeast, again, we find the "Land of Hairy People." This may possibly refer to the Ainus. If 64 represents the southern island of Japan, and 68 the middle island, then 62 might easily stand for the Hokkaido or North Island, where the Ainus live. The land numbered 65 is right beside Japan, and is called "Land of Asking Trousers," but we would hardly dare say that this refers to the fact that this useful garment has, until lately, not been in common use in Japan. "Glass Bead Land" or Loo-choo Islands seems to lie too far away from Japan; and we can make nothing of the large island containing 68, 69, and 70, which seems to lie partly between Japan and Loo-choo. Siam is mistakenly made an island, and is placed (74) north of Annam. "The Land where Wood is Eaten" (82) may refer to the fact that so many of the people in Polynesia live on fruits almost exclusively. The "Land of Fire-haters" (89) lying near the Equator, is well named, though it is hard to recognize it as any existing people.

Passing toward the west, we find the four contiguous peoples called respectively "Extraordinary Land," "Land of Good Agriculture," "Land of Musical People" and "Land of Vain People." These are about where Europe ought to be, and whether the names are apposite the reader must judge for himself. Norway might be called the "Deep Sun Land" (106), as the sun does not rise high in the heavens even in summer.

But, seriously, it is impossible to verify more than a few of the places on this map. From a genuinely geographical standpoint it is worthless, but to the student of folk-lore it opens a wide field of study. All these places and peoples are mentioned in one place or another in Chinese and Korean literature, and the time may come when it will be possible to verify a large number of the names. At any rate, this map should be preserved for purposes of reference when the great subject of Chinese lore is thoroughly opened up.



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SEUL, KOREA.

H. B. HULBERT.

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