

Title: *King-Hamy world map*

Date: 1502

Author: Amerigo Vespucci ? Nicolo Caveri [Canerio]

Description: This is a world chart, including America, with portions of West Indies, Venezuela, Brazil and Newfoundland. The map is unbound and it was originally a rolled chart; it is now flattened and mounted under glass. Drawn on parchment, f. 1 (full skin) it measures 23 x 37 inches including the left extension (map size is 20.9" x 30.4"). The top and bottom borders are decorated with gold in a trellis pattern and latitude scales form borders on the left and right. Black and red ink are used for nomenclature in a minuscule script with area names in square capitals; land masses are outlined in color with islands painted in blue or red, gold or silver; 12 compass roses are provided with the usual 32 rhumb line network in black, red, and green ink for principal directions; double latitude scales (numbered 5° higher on right than on left) and a double equator (to compensate for magnetic variation) are displayed, but, of course, no longitude scale is given; distance is indicated by a series of small circles in lower right corner; decorated with a few very faded figures and vignettes.

Possibly made in Italy after a Portuguese prototype early in the 16th century. The scholars A. Magnaghi in *Il planisfero del 1523 della Biblioteca del Re in Torino* (Florence 1929) and G. Caraci in *Tabulae geographicae vetustiores in Italia adservatae* (Florence 1932) 3:62 attribute this chart to Amerigo Vespucci. The current name of this map is derived from the following acquisition history. It belonged to arctic traveler Richard King (1811?-76) and was bought in London by Alphonse Pinart (1832-1911); not in his 1884 sale. Obtained from him in Paris in 1885 by Dr. Jules Theodore Ernest Hamy (1842-1908). Finally A. S. W. Rosenbach sold this chart to Henry E. Huntington in 1923.

The *King-Hamy Chart* of 1502 is based partly on Ptolemaic and partly on *portolano* traditions, with recently discovered lands added by an early explorer, thought to be Amerigo Vespucci. The European section seemed to be based on the most accurate of the *portolano* [nautical] charts. This world map provides evidence of numerous and extensive geographical and geological changes since the first prototypes of its original local maps were drawn. It was interesting to note that in placing the center of the *portolano* chart in the Indian Ocean, the cartographer made it possible to construct a world map embracing all of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas as well.

As already noted, the *King-Hamy* map was associated with the name of Vespucci. However, Dr. Charles Hapgood and his students became convinced that, while the compilation of the map was undoubtedly Vespucci's, the actual drawing of it could not have been Vespucci's work. Vespucci claimed to be able to find longitude by astronomical observation. However, at one point in his travels he established his longitude at 150° west of the meridian at Alexandria, which would have put him in Santa Barbara, California, much further west than he ever traveled, bringing his methodology into question.

Examination of the *King-Hamy* map reveals two surprising facts. First, the originally separate Mediterranean map had been oriented to magnetic, and not to true, North. The compiler had not understood this, and thus introduced an error into the map. Second, it is probable that the compilation of this separate *portolano* with the rest of the map was made after the introduction of the compass into Europe in the 13th century, for it was only after this that a magnetic orientation was applied to the charts.



The Geography of the Map

From 1502, it indicates northern Siberian rivers emptying into the Arctic Ocean, but this area is now under ice. The chart also shows glacial actions in the Baltic countries, and even shows an ancient Suez canal. It also shows what are today huge islands in southeast Asia, but joined to land.

One of the greatest puzzles of the *King-Hamy* map is India. It is shown as a truncated peninsula, with a large landmass lying as an island to the south. In an obviously controversial theory, Hapgood and his students considered the possibility good that this was not a result of bad cartography, but rather the influence of an ancient time when the plains of India were flooded and the southern part of the peninsula, ancient *Draoidia*, was an island. Because the mouths of the Ganges River, across the whole extent of India, was correctly placed, and that the map represents latitude and longitude fairly well, they proposed that *Dravidia* was perhaps the center of a great maritime civilization, and an advanced culture that was very old when Egypt was young. Also, there is geological evidence for the flooding of the northern plains of India, presented by A. K. Dey of the Geological Survey of India. In a paper entitled "The Shores of India", he followed elevated beaches into the interior as far north as the estuaries of the Indus. There is also literary evidence, traditions of ancient Indian literature, the *Vedas*, which tells of a time when *Dravidia* was an island.

There are additional suggestions of geological changes on the *King-Hamy* map. There is a vast extension southward of the Asian landmass, which interestingly, was also postulated by Alfred R. Wallace, co-discoverer of the theory of evolution. He studied the distribution of species in the islands of Indonesia and concluded there was much evidence for a very recent connection between Java, Sumatra, Borneo and the mainland of Australia. He also reported native traditions that placed this connection in the very recent past, only a few thousand years ago.

Hapgood also considered it highly likely that the Mediterranean portion of the map was originally drawn before the explosion of Thera about 1400 B.C. Finally, this *portolano* chart indicates many more rivers than exist today in Europe and North Africa. This seems to concur with the change of climate, known actually to have occurred in fairly recent times.

As mentioned, the *King-Hamy* map was named after its first finder and publisher, respectively, as its original maker remains unknown. It is thought to be one of the first maps to depict Newfoundland with a place name. World maps, such as this one, are scaled down representations of the earth's surface. They are therefore ideal documents to prove that a discovery has taken place. The *King-Hamy* map is also a nautical chart, meant to assist mariners. Given the difficulties in measuring direction and distance over the open sea, most 16th century navigators practiced what is called "parallel" or "latitude" sailing. This required the captain to sail along the coast of Europe until he reached the latitude of the place he wanted to go to. He would then leave the European coast and use his trustworthy cross-staff to stay on that latitude until he got to the other side. Thus the distance he traveled would be along one line of latitude and a relatively straight course. The captain would estimate the distance between Europe and his destination on which would then be translated onto a map.



Below is an extract from the book by Kirsten A Seaver entitled *The Frozen Echo: Greenland and the exploration of N America ca AD 1000 to 1500*, Published by Stanford University Press. From page 286:
“The anonymous sea chart known as the *King-Hamy* map is an intriguing piece in the

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