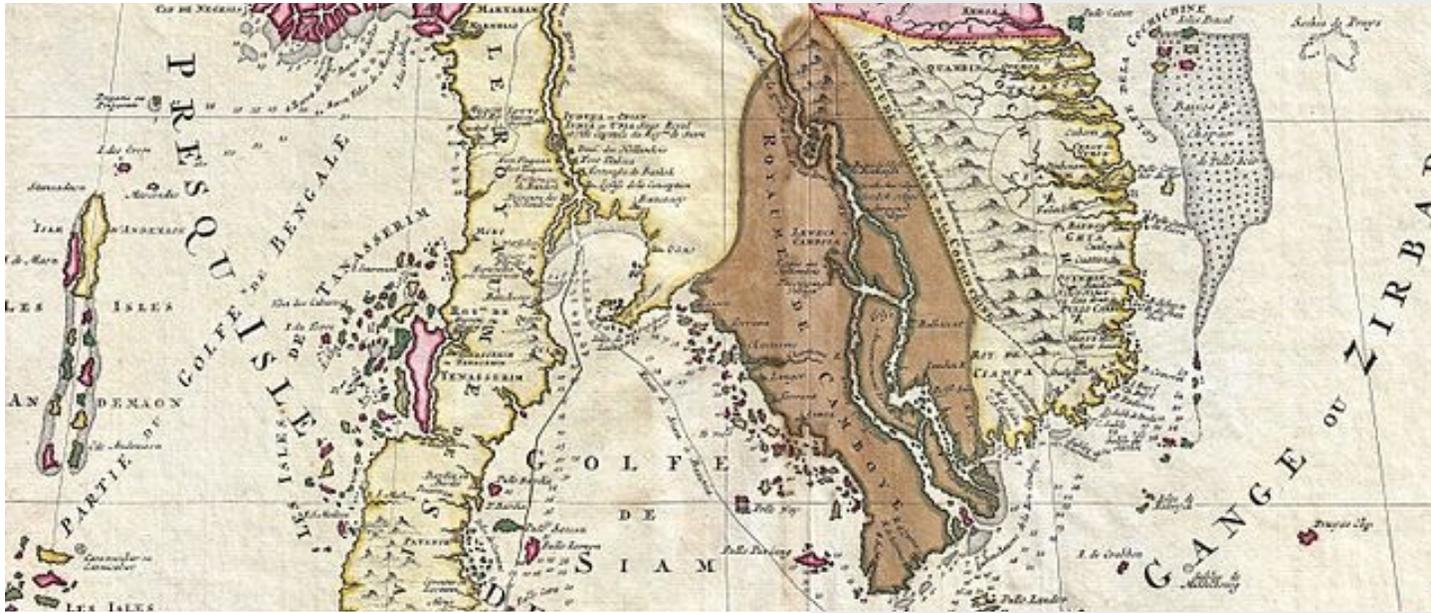


# Primary Source Collection #4: *Analyzing Maps*



## Introduction

Included in this primary source collection are five maps. The first was created by Joaquín Torres García in the 1940s and the second by Richard of Haldingham around 1300. Though chronologically far apart, these first two sources disrupt common assumptions about maps by illustrating a different orientation of the world than what we are most familiar with today. The third, produced by the imperial government of India provides an example of how colonial powers aimed to define and control territory through scientific surveys, while the final two maps focus on the region of Siam. The Map of Siam and Its Dependencies from 1857 and George Curzon's map of the "Siamese Boundary Question" from 1893 illustrate the ways borders change over time and competing claims to territory. Together, these sources can help us consider the arguments maps make. Discussion questions are also provided for each source to help guide your reading.

## PRIMARY SOURCES

AMÉRICA INVERTIDA

HEREFORD MAPPA MUNDI

THE GREAT TRIGONOMETRICAL  
SURVEY OF INDIA

MAP OF SIAM AND ITS  
DEPENDENCIES, 1857

THE SIAMESE BOUNDARY  
QUESTION

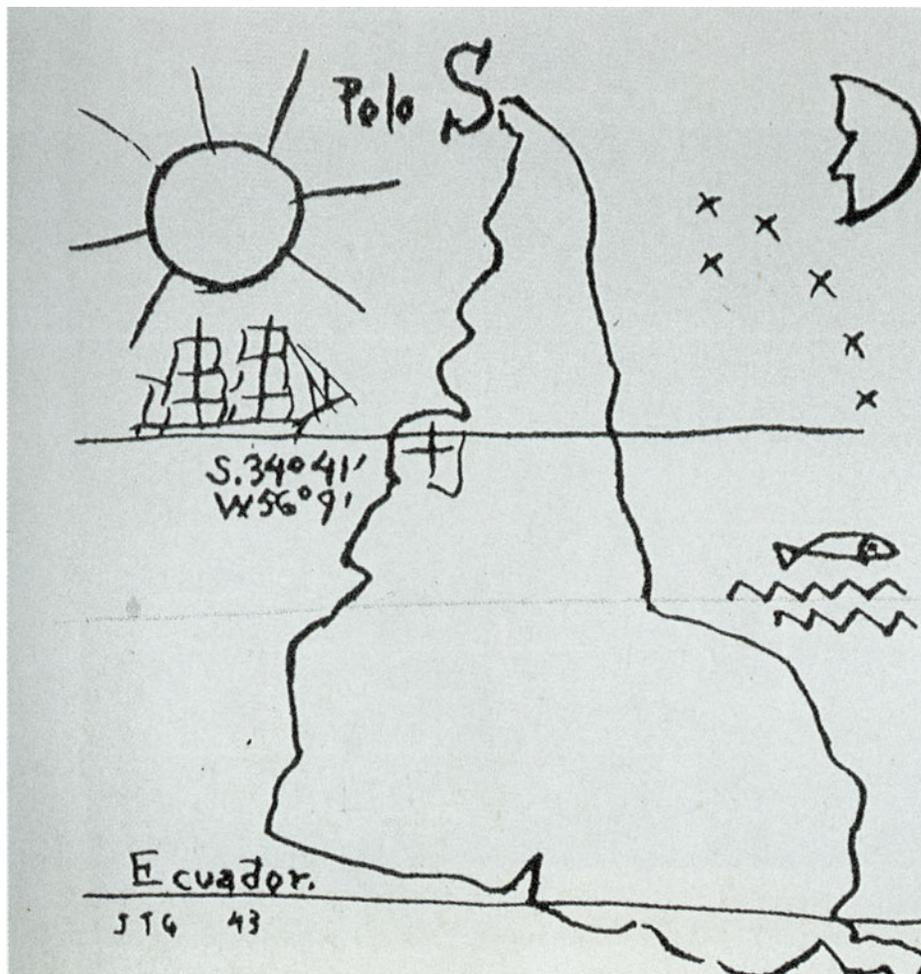
# Primary Source 1: *América Invertida*

Maps have arguments. Most world and regional maps produced today feature the north at the top and the Atlantic in the center, but this orientation is arbitrary. In fact, it is only one of countless potential orientations for the three-dimensional space that is our globe. World maps oriented with north at the top, privilege the northern hemisphere. South America, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand are marginalized in the bottom. Atlantic-centered maps leave Pacific Islanders wondering how far away Hawai'i actually is from Samoa, and usually leave Asia, Australia, and New Zealand warped along the edge. These maps indirectly argue for a Euro-American centered world. Historically, however, many maps featured an east- or west-at-the-top orientation. Artist Joaquín Torres García, a famous Uruguayan painter who pioneered many methods in Constructivism, sketched "América Invertida" in 1943 to challenge the north-facing biases of his colleagues from the northern hemisphere.

Source: Joaquín Torres García, "América Invertida," 1943.

## Discussion Questions:

- What do you notice about South America when the south is at the top?
- How does Torres García frame his drawing? What is included in the frame, and what is left out? What is included in the map, and what is left out? Think about natural features, political boundaries, etc.
- What might Torres García be arguing with this map? Who might find this argument compelling?



## Primary Source 2: *Hereford Mappa Mundi*

This introduction contains spoilers – before reading, check out the discussion questions and the map below! *Hereford Mappa Mundi*, which is created to an unknown author in England around the year 1300CE, is a classic T and O map with the east, where the sun rises, at the top. This style of map was common in the Mediterranean region for many centuries. At the center is Jerusalem, depicted with a circular battlemented wall, and at the top of the map in an island at the edge of the world is the Garden of Eden. The image features numerous Biblical references with Jesus sitting enthroned at the apex of the image above Eden, Noah's Ark, and the Red Sea and the Exodus (look at the bridge across the Red Sea, which is colored red). The mapmaker highlighted waterways and cities, suggesting that those features carried more value at the time than political boundaries and roads, which tend to dominate maps today. And, yes, that is a giant unicorn in north Africa. What else can you find? For an annotated and zoomable version of the map, try the following link: <https://www.themappamundi.co.uk/>.

Source: Richard of Haldingham, "Hereford Mappa Mundi," c. 1300.

### Discussion Questions:

- Take a look at the map. Where is this? Can you identify any locations on the map? How is space represented?
- What is at the center of the map? The top? How about at the far edges? What does the orientation say about the map's creator and potential viewers? How does religion inform this map?
- What features does the map's author highlight? Why might the author highlight those places? What does it say about which types of spaces were important at the time?





# Primary Source 4:

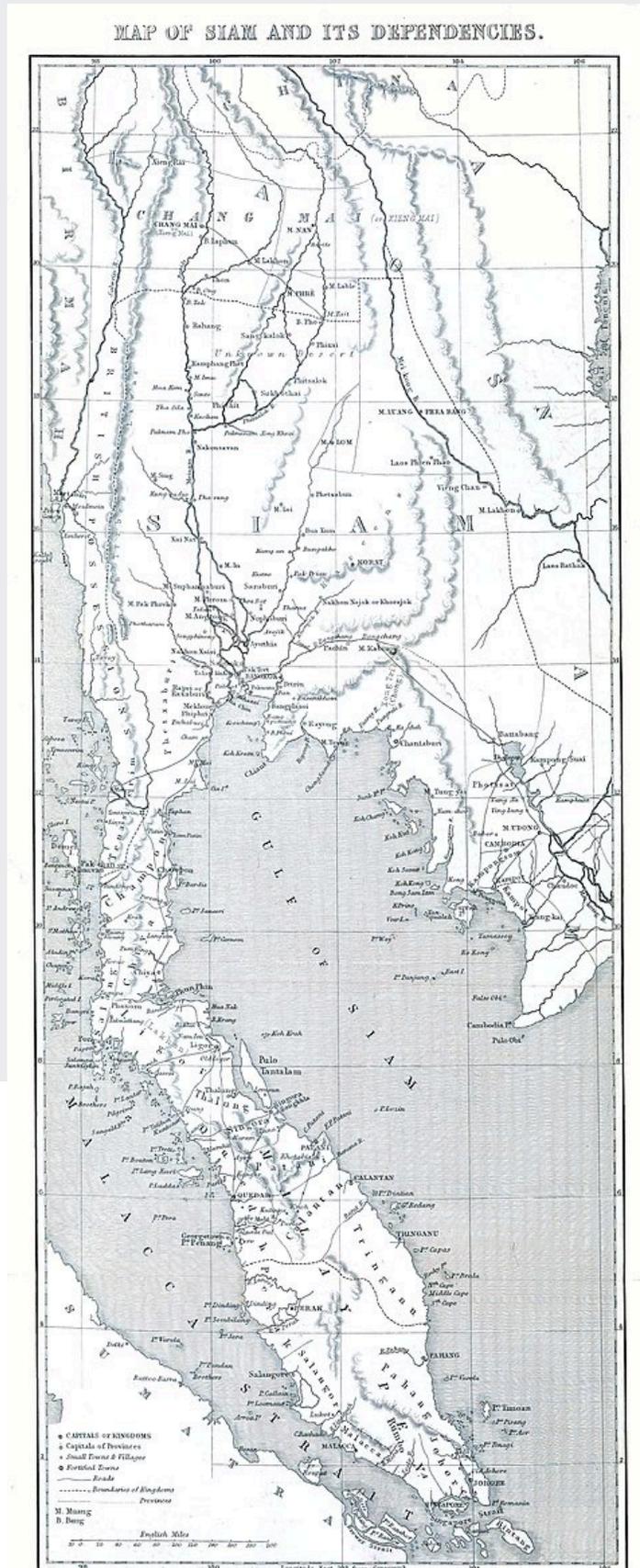
## *Map of Siam and Its Dependencies, 1857*

This 1857 map of Siam and its dependencies, which was commissioned by Sir John Bowring, who also negotiated the Treaty of Friendship between Siam and Great Britain two years earlier, contains relatively favorable borders for the Kingdom of Siam because both parties desired to limit French colonial claims in Indochina. Notice that the disputed territory of Kedah, which appears here as Quedah, lies squarely within Siamese territory. Also observe that the borders between Siam and its northern neighbors are still unsettled. The eastern borders of Siam, which would eventually bump up against several kingdoms that would become French Indochina, swelled beyond contemporary borders, though they appear within the Garnier line seen in Map #5.

Source: John Bowring, "Siam Map, 1857," 1857.

### Discussion Questions:

- What features appear on the map? What types of borders or boundaries does the map include? How do these features differ from those that appeared in the Mappa Mundi?
- Compare the borders of this map with the language that appears in Article III of the 1826 treaty between Britain and Siam. How might a line on a map shape future territorial disputes or claims?
- Who might find a map like this useful? Who is the intended audience of the map?

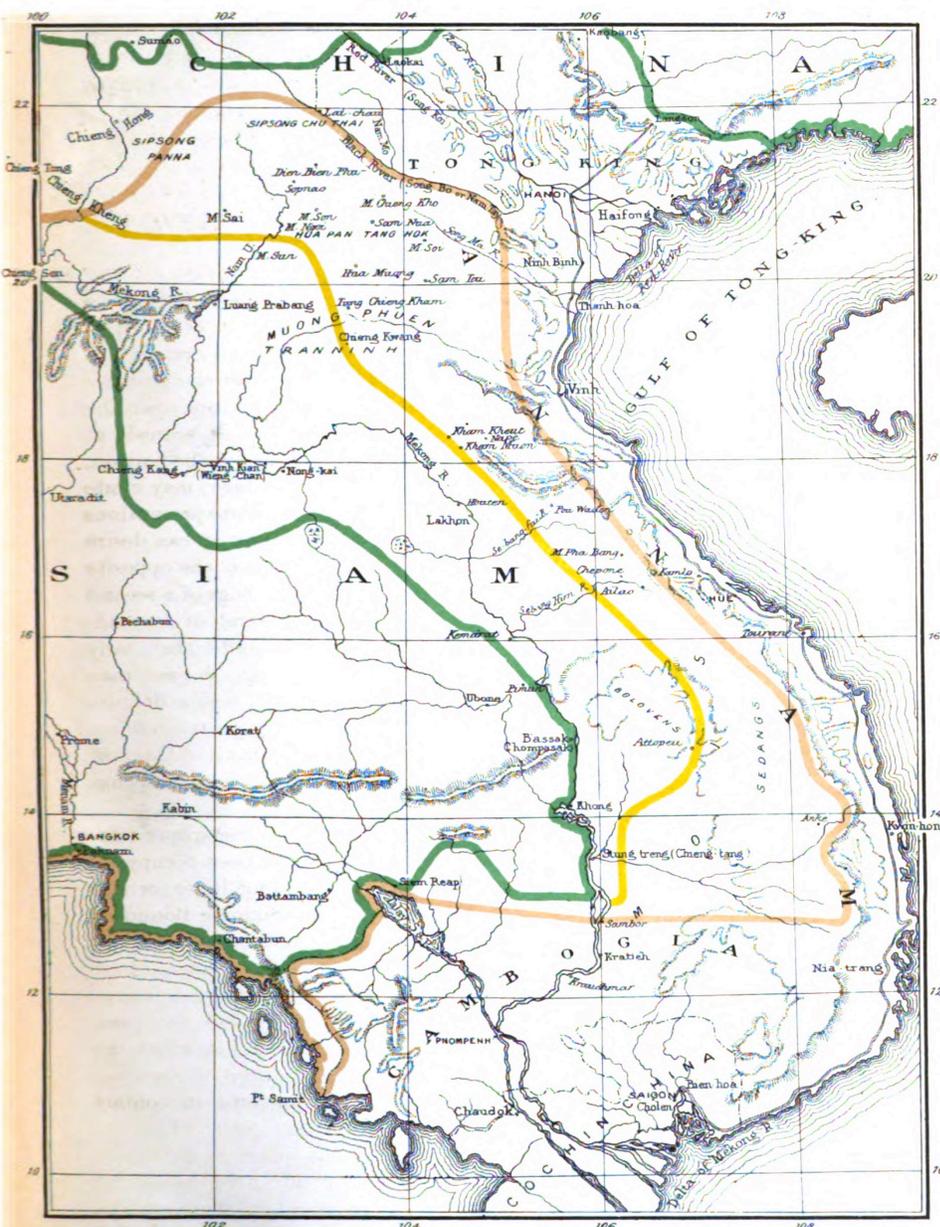


# Primary Source 5: *The Siamese Boundary Question*

George Curzon, who would serve as the Viceroy of India for the British Empire at the turn of the century, attached this map to a brief history article he wrote on the Siamese boundary question. Curzon was a famous conservative colonialist who wrote the map with the British geopolitical competition with France, which had recently colonized Indochina, in mind. In the text of the article, he proposed several measures that the British could undertake to counteract French encroachments in what he considered a British sphere of influence. Members of the Royal Thai Survey Department would later use the Curzon map to justify their historical claims over certain territories. Notice that the lines, which mostly adhere to longitudinal lines, are relatively arbitrary for highly irregular terrain.

Source: George N. Curzon, "The Siamese Boundary Question," *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review* no. 34 (July-December 1893): 34-55.

## FRENCH INDO-CHINA AND SIAM.



St. Matthews & Co. Ltd. London  
**YELLOW LINE** — Frontier between Annam & Siam as drawn by F. Garnier (1866-8)  
**PINK LINE** — Frontier as drawn on Siamese Government map by J.M. Carthy (1887)  
**GREEN LINE** — Hypothetical Frontier as drawn on French map by F. Schrader (1892)

### Discussion Questions:

- What story is this map telling? Contrast this with a map that you might have seen in an American history textbook that shows the expanding borders of the United States over time. How do the stories that those two maps compare?
- How might the Thai government use maps like these to claim territories in the more recent past and present?
- This is a big picture question. Think about maps as historical tools. In what ways should we rely on historical maps to think about and settle contemporary territorial or maritime disputes? What happens when historical maps feature contrasting claims? If you are interested in seeing this issue play out today, look up China's famous nine-dashed-line map which it uses to claim nearly the entire South China/West Philippine/East Vietnamese Sea.

# Image Citations:

## Page 1:

Joachim Otten, Map of the Kingdom of Siam and its Tributaries, c. 1710, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1710\\_Ottens\\_Map\\_of\\_Southeast\\_Asia,\\_Singapore,\\_Thailand\\_\(Siam\),\\_Malaysia,\\_Sumatra,\\_Borneo\\_-\\_Geographicus\\_-\\_Siam-ottens-1710.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1710_Ottens_Map_of_Southeast_Asia,_Singapore,_Thailand_(Siam),_Malaysia,_Sumatra,_Borneo_-_Geographicus_-_Siam-ottens-1710.jpg)

## Page 2:

Joaquín Torres García, América Invertada," 1943, URAA, Fair Use, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joaqu%C3%ADn\\_Torres\\_Garc%C3%ADa\\_-\\_Am%C3%A9rica\\_Invertida.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joaqu%C3%ADn_Torres_Garc%C3%ADa_-_Am%C3%A9rica_Invertida.jpg)

## Page 3:

Richard of Haldingham, "Hereford Mappa Mundi, c. 1300, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hereford\\_Mappa\\_Mundi.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hereford_Mappa_Mundi.jpg)

## Page 4:

Government of India, "1922 Index of Great Trigonometrical Survey of India," 1922, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1922\\_Index\\_of\\_Great\\_Trigonometrical\\_Survey\\_of\\_India.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1922_Index_of_Great_Trigonometrical_Survey_of_India.jpg)

## Page 5:

John Bowring, "Siam Map, 1857," 1857, Public Domain, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Siam\\_map\\_1857.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Siam_map_1857.jpg)

## Page 6:

George N. Curzon, "The Siamese Boundary Question," The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review no. 34 (July-December 1893): 34-55, Fair Use.