Handout 1: Comparing Historical Maps

Name: _____ Class Period: _____

Questions to discuss with your partner as you examine the maps and the descriptions that follow.

What do you see?

What does that make you wonder?

Do you see any similarities between the maps?

Do you see any differences?

How do they compare to modern maps?

What might the maps tell us about the world view and experiences of those who made them?



Map B



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History and Description of the Maps

Richard J. Smith on what we can learn from ancient, medieval, or modern maps:

"For encapsulating a worldview there is nothing quite like a world map. As with other forms of cartography, mappaemundi--whether medieval or modern, Asian or Western--tell us about values and attitudes, aims and aspirations, hopes and fears; but they express them on a particularly grand, indeed global, scale. To the extent that such productions in any given society share affinities across space and time, they reveal significant features of that culture's self-image (and, of course, its conceptions of the "other"; and to the degree that they do not, they suggest changes, ruptures, tensions, and conflicts within the larger cultural system."

Mapping China's World: Cultural Cartography in Late Imperial Times Richard J. Smith Rice University

Map AStrabo's World Map A.D. 18Sources: http://www.henrydavis.com/MAPS/AncientWebPages/AncientL.htmlhttp://cartographic-images.net/Cartographic Images/115

Strabo was born in c. 64 B.C.E in present day Turkey. It said that he spent much of his life traveling to Ethiopia, Tuscany, Asia Minor, Egypt, Kush, and through other parts of the Mediterranean world and the Near East. In c. 44 B.C.E. he moved to Rome and where he used his travel experiences and additional research to write. He is most famous for his 17-volume work Geographica, which described the geography, culture, and history of people and places from different parts of the world in his time. It included information on Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia and North Africa. Strabo's maps are reconstructions based on information in the Geographica.

Map B Orbis Terrarum A.D. 20 Reconstruction from Raisz

The Roman Map Reconstruction Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa

Sources: http://cartographic-images.net/Cartographic_Images/118_Agrippa.html http://www.myoldmaps.com/maps-from-antiquity-6200-bc/118-agrippas-orbisterrarum/118-agrippa.pdf

Agrippa was an architect, a general, and was involved in politics. Copies of this map that depicts the whole world as it was known at the time, were taken all over the Roman Empire, however, no copies survived. This map is a reconstruction based on later maps that had been based on earlier Roman maps and from descriptions found in the works of other classical geographers. This map shows three continents and was designed to emphasize Rome and the Roman Empire. India, China (Seres), and Russia (Scythia and Sarmatia) are included on the edges of the map, while the Roman Empire is in the center. Because the map was posted publicly in a portico, it is thought that it must have actually been a rectangle, not a circle.

Map CSihai Huayi Zongtu"Complete Map of the Four Seas, China, and the Barbarians"1532

This map is now located in the library at Harvard university. It depicts China, Korea, Siberia, Japan, Nepal, India, Persia, and Rome. The East China Sea and "Western Sea" are also shown. China's landscape is detailed and in India the Himalayas, Ganges and Indus are shown.