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AXIS OF EVIL MAPPING NEWSLETTER #11 OF 2020 – December (sent early January, 2021)

INTRODUCTION

This will be the last Axis newsletter for 2020, a year most of us would like to pretend never happened. Travel is still greatly restricted, and little is happening in the world of mapping. We are hunkered down at home, as are most readers, so let's share virtual Seasons greetings and wishes for a happier and healthier 2021. Thank you for your continued support of ITMB over the past 40 years. Keep safe, keep healthy, and keep hoping. Next year WILL be better. Please check the New Releases later in this newsletter.

GOOD NEWS FOR TRAVELLERS

Starting December 19th, Canadians can fly to Hawaii, in the USA. Until vaccination is generally available, anyone flying to Hawaii from Canada will have to show a very recent Covid test result showing that one is negative. This might not be all that easy to obtain at a time when testing facilities are hard-pressed to keep up with demand, but this is the first sign I have seen of international travel starting to get better. There have been talks about establishing links between Hong Kong and Singapore for Covid-free travel, but these have been postponed as infections have increased. Also, the 'bubble' that existed in Atlantic Canada has disintegrated due to climbing infections, so we're not out of the woods by a long shot! However, As I write, travel to Britain is suspended for most travellers, due to the discovery of a particularly virulent strain of the virus. However, Britain, Canada, the EU, Bahrain, and now the USA, have approved vaccines and have already started inoculating individuals, so hope is very much on the horizon. Japan and China are anxiously awaiting a proven vaccine.

DISCOVERIES THAT ARE CANADIAN

What better way to end the year than with everyday things that are nowadays pretty universal? The game of baseball is now played in many countries around the world. It is enormously popular in Japan, for instance, and who can forget that famous ballgame between Jimmy Carter and Fidel Castro in the waning days of American hostility to Cuba? Baseball is actually a Canadian 'discovery', not an American one. The first baseball game was held in Ontario on June 4th, 1838, and the rules haven't changed much in the intervening 182 years! It even became popular in South Vietnam, as portrayed in the Robin Williams movie 'Good Morning, Vietnam!'

Canadians like to think that they invented the game of lacrosse, but it was a well-developed indigenous game long before the first settlers arrived in the Americas. However, it was first developed as an 'organized' game in the European sense by Canadians, and spread to the USA. Football also originated in Canada and spread to the USA. Its origins are based in rugby, which had been imported into Canada from Britain. The Americans shortened the playing field and modified some of the rules to meet their requirements, but the game is essentially the same in both countries. As far as I know, what we call football in North America is unique to this continent. Soccer, which the rest of the world calls football, is only mildly popular in North America, though gaining strength, particularly in schools. Rugby is still popular in many parts of the Commonwealth.

Similarly, basketball originated in Canada, but was embraced in the USA thanks to a Canadian sports instructor who was working in the USA. Originally, the 'basket' a player would throw the ball into in order to gain a point was an apple basket. The referee would then have to climb a ladder to recover the ball. This proved inconvenient, so the bottom of the apple basket was cut away, allowing the ball to fall to the ground. In the early days, apple baskets were more robust than those used today, having metal hoops to bind them together. Today's metal ring at the top of the stringed net is still called a hoop. This game is now popular around the world, but nowhere as much as in the USA.

Here's one I didn't know. The light bulb has always been credited to Thomas Edison, and he certainly developed the concept of a bulb that would light up, but the actual light bulb was invented and patented by two Canadian engineers in 1874 (July 24th, specifically). They lacked the financial resources to develop their patent and sold it to Edison in 1879. He was able to use his ingenuity and the much larger American market to advantage and refined electric bulbs into the product we know today as the incandescent bulb, which has spread around the world, so Edison gets the credit for something he didn't actually invent. The Canadian inventors died in obscurity.

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It is fairly well-known that it was a Canadian that developed the time zones used around the world today, while working in England. Prior to Standard Time, every city and country created its own concept of time, leading to absolute chaos. Each railroad company would have its own time system, as well as every city, leading to 'train time' as opposed to 'real' time, generally based on the time applicable at point of origin and by the number of hours the journey would take. Ship time was different from land time, and no countries would accept the time designations of other countries, leading to ridiculous situations where the time in Paris had to be different than the time in Brussels for nationalistic purposes. A ship leaving New York would stay on New York time until it reach Southampton, or Milan, at which time everyone would adjust to local time. Chaos reigned supreme, but who could solve the problem?

There was general agreement that the status quo was both confusing and irrational, but it took a Canadian mathematician to come up with the extremely sensible designation of Greenwich as a starting point and time zones of an hour apart from each other, based roughly on lines of longitude, to create a standardized time system for the entire world. The line determined to be 'ground zero', so to speak, still exists at Greenwich Observatory in modern-day London, England, and can be freely visited, although one has to pay a small fee to stand on the actual line. This leads us to the next article fairly seamlessly.

VIRTUAL TRAVEL TO LONDON

London is one of the great travel destinations of the world; unfortunately, at the moment, cut off for us by Covid. However, we can visit it virtually. There are so many attractions to see in London that it would take the rest of this newsletter to list them. I wish to focus on theatres, the ones performing with live actors, not cinemas. In 2020, the great concentration of theatres in London are in the West End, specifically, in Soho, along or near Shaftesbury Avenue, off Piccadilly Circus, but this has not always been the case.

Although entertainment and travelling troubadours have existed as long as people have gathered together, the concept of a building specifically for performing first evolved in London during the reign of Elizabeth 1, in the 1570s. Due to rising Puritanical fervor, all forms of entertainment in the City proper were curtailed to the point that playhouses like the Red Lion and the Curtain were built outside of the legal jurisdiction of the City. They were followed by the Theatre (partly owned by Shakespeare and built north of the then-City, in Finsbury), the Rose, and the Bear Garden (both built south of the Thames). The Globe, built and largely financed by Shakespeare in 1599, was sustainable because, by that time, London had a population of around 200,000. The theatres of that era were quite large, enabling up to 3,000 people to attend a performance, and audiences wanted new plays all the time. This created an astonishing demand for new plays, met by an array of gifted playwrights such as Ben Jonson, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare.

In recent years, a replica of the Globe Theatre has been recreated fairly close to its original location on the south bank of the Thames, and can be visited. It puts on Elizabethan-era plays during summer months. Few such plays have survived to modern times, and, no doubt, few would be understandable to modern audiences as originally written. Fortunately, Queen Elizabeth was fond of plays, and this carried on into the reign of King James, but all theatres were banned during the era of Parliamentary rule from 1642 to 1660. Most plays were destroyed by the fanatical Puritans during this time period.

Fortunately for us, two author/editors preserved many of Shakespeare's plays in a volume called the First Folio. This was like an encyclopedia, and brought together 18 of his plays in a format that survived Puritan extremism and preserved Macbeth, the Tempest, Julius Caesar, the Taming of the Shrew, and many other plays for generations yet to be born. 38 of Shakespeare's plays have survived to modern times, but some are lost forever, such as Love's Labour's Won and Cardenio. Only 230 plays out of an estimated total of 3,000 written by all playwrights between 1570 and 1642 have survived to modern times, so the fact that so many of them are Shakespearian is amazing.

To this day, Shakespearian festivals abound, and centres exist in various parts of the world to keep such plays alive. The modern renditions follow the originals fairly faithfully, given that the English of Shakespeare's time would be unintelligible to us. No doubt, the versions we have today are shortened versions of much longer renditions popular centuries ago. As a point of trivia, six signatures of William Shakespeare have survived to modern times. Each is spelled differently, and none are spelled Shakespeare.

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The modern theatres of London mostly date from Victorian times. I have fond memories of watching marvelous plays as a young man from the cheap seats at the top of the upper balcony, known as the Gods for being so far from the stage. For anyone visiting London, a night at the theatre is a 'must do' and I deeply regret that Covid has prevented Lan and I from visiting the world centre of creative theatre during 2020. Better times will return, and the lights of theatres will shine again. The magic of theatre is the ability to suspend belief, tell stories, and make magic appear onstage. Actors turn dreams into eternal truths. One day, soon I hope, we will all re-discover magic on stage.

MORE TRAVEL TRIVIA

1. The British-based P & O Line (for Pacific and Orient) is the oldest cruise line in the world, having been founded in 1838, followed closely by Cunard in 1839 (operating under their original name of British and North American Steam Packet Company). Of course, for many years, all water-born transport was simply engaged in carrying passengers from point of origin to destination. Holland America became the first company to take passengers on pleasure cruises, in their case from Amsterdam to Copenhagen and back. They were also the first to sail from the USA, with a cruise from NYC to the Holy Land and back, in 1910.
2. SOS, the universal Morse code message for ships in distress (planes use Mayday!), was first used in January 1909 when two ships collided off of Nantucket. The code means Save Our Souls. The fourth time the signal was sent out was when the Titanic sank after hitting an iceberg in 1912. A sister ship, built after the Titanic, was still under construction when World War 1 broke out. The British government completed it, converting it into a hospital ship as it could carry three times the number of passengers as Titanic. The Britannic was hit by a torpedo and sunk in 1916. A later sister ship carried passengers until decommissioned in 1935.
3. More 'modern' cruise lines came into existence long after WW2. Princess Cruises began in 1965 with one small ship sailing between San Diego and Acapulco. Carnival Cruises started inauspiciously in 1972 with a ship that grounded on its maiden voyage. Royal Caribbean started in 1971. With the exception of 2020, cruise lines have experienced double-digit growth each year ever since.
4. Chile's Atacama Desert, stretching 600 kms from Peru to just north of Santiago, is the driest in the world. Surprisingly, almost a million people live in this dry desert, relying on underground water and heavy fogs for moisture. The main town of San Pedro is a tourist attraction.
5. The letter 'B' does not exist in the Tahitian language. Thus, the real name for Bora Bora is Pora Pora, meaning 'first born'. Early European explorers mistook the P for a B, and the name has stuck.
6. The tallest pyramid in the world is the one called 'Great', just outside of Cairo, Egypt, built in 2566BC or thereabouts in Giza. It is named for Pharaoh Khufu, who is better known by his Greek name of Cheops. The pyramid used to be taller than it is today. It has lost 10 metres, or 30 feet, over the years, due to pilferage. The largest pyramid in the world is Quetzalcoatl, southeast of Mexico City (4.3 million cubic feet in size).
7. The largest office building in the world is the Pentagon, the headquarters of the US military, in Arlington, Virginia. Construction started on Sept. 11th, 1941 to provide temporary office space for the war most people could see coming. The five-story building has five sides, hence its name, and 6,636,360 square feet of space. Parts of the complex can be toured, but not in 2020.
8. Yonge Street, in Ontario, is the world's longest street, stretching 1,178 miles. The initial portion, from Toronto's waterfront to Lake Simcoe, was built, with assistance, by my ancestors, as a form of portage around Niagara Falls. The roadway proved so useful that it was extended over time to reach Rainy River, on the border with Minnesota, by-passing the Great Lakes altogether.
9. The world's largest library is the Library of Congress, in Washington, DC. The map division stores over six million maps, including all of ITMB's releases. The world's largest museum is also in Washington, the Smithsonian, a complex of 17 different buildings. It is also the most-visited museum in the world. The National Air and Space portion alone hosts nine million visitors per year.
10. The Wright Brothers were NOT the first to fly an airplane. That honour belongs to Samuel Pierpont Langley, who sent a pilotless aircraft 4,200 feet across the Potomac River in 1896. Despite lavish funding from the War Department, Langley failed to develop a workable pilotable craft. That was left to the Wright Brothers, in Kitty Hawk, NC, in 1903. The rest is history.

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TELEVISION AS A MEANS OF LEARNING HISTORY

In the Era of Covid, we are all probably watching more televised programming than is good for us. I know that Netflix has reported significant up-ticks in subscribers, and no doubt YouTube is quite happy as well. Recently, we started watching Resurrection on Netflix. This is a Turkish-made historical drama, in (I presume, Turkish) with very good English sub-titling about the origins of the Ottoman Empire that arose during the 12th to 14th centuries, and dominated Eastern Europe and western Asia for centuries. Modern-day Turkey evolved out of the dissembling of the Empire at the end of WW1. This is a series of half-hour-long presentations relating the story of the Kayi tribe and its leaders with a vision, Suleyman and his son Ertugul.

Naturally, the text is fictionalized, as no one knows what people actually said to each other seven hundred years ago, and each episode appears to have at least one sword fight, as well as a revered mullah instructing viewers in the value of the Koran, but the sets are very realistically crafted and the acting is generally very good. I presume that it is reasonably historically correct. I recommend others to watch this on-going series of soap-opera-like presentations simply because the formation of the varied nomadic Islamic tribes into a cohesive whole is not something most of us in the Western World know much about. Nation states as we understand the term were just forming at the same time in Europe, so it is interesting to watch the same conflictive struggles taking place in central western Asia, with the Mongols and the Byzantine empires vying for control and the Turkmens (as they called themselves) caught between two great forces of change.

The first year of episodes concentrates on the nomadic tribe's migration to a spot about two days by horseback east of Aleppo, in modern-day Syria, and their encounters not only with hostile already-settled local tribal groupings, but with the Templars, who at that time held much territory, and influence, in the region. Naturally, the sheep-herding Turkmen nomads are portrayed as being valiant warriors and the Templars as evil-doers, but the broad swath of history seems to be reasonably accurately portrayed. By the end of year one of the series, the Templar castle threatening the tribe had been successfully captured and was then destroyed, which makes no sense from a Western modern-day perspective, but these people lived in tents very similar to modern-day Mongolian gers, so why would they want a stone castle? Year 2 concentrates on dealing with Mongol expansion, and Year 3 with establishing a base on the Byzantine Empire's borders – all exciting action drama stuff!

Ertugul, as the hero, of course had to undergo many trials and tribulations, and there are numerous sword fights and assignation plots, but the essence of the story increasingly focused on the need of all Turkmen nomadic groupings to unite to fend off powers that were changing their world in ways they scarcely understood. This was, after all, the final stages of the end of the era of crusades, and not yet time for the conquest of Constantine, now known as Istanbul, or the rout of the Mongols, who were still expanding their empire and threatening central Asia. In fact, the Mongols presented the greatest threat to the Turkmen at this time, not Europeans.

As a historical side note, ancient peoples, even nomads, were quite well-versed in geographical knowledge, and were great traders. They certainly knew about China and Genghis Khan (well, everyone did I guess) and in the Great Khan's descendants who expanded the Mongol Empire greatly, pushing ever westward and displacing millions in the process. The Mongols were greatly feared, as they behaved very brutally with anyone who opposed them. This is where the Kayi 'tribe' comes into play as a force denying them access into Anatolia, which is south of Ankara in modern-day Turkey. The primary figure initially is Suleyman Shah, the tribal head, and today regarded as the grandfather of the Ottoman Empire. He was buried in a tomb in what would become Syria in modern times, then, with Trump withdrawing support from the Kurds in Syria, Turkey swooped in and essentially annexed the northern portion of Syria, removing Suleyman's remains and building a brand new tomb for the hero, in Birasek, Turkey.

I believe that this series of episodes is well-researched, and is certainly realistic about portraying the technology of warfare at that time, and especially about tribal customs and lifestyles, which have, generally speaking, carried through to modern times. We have a situation in the world today where two long-time protagonists, Iran and Saudi Arabia, are locked in competition to dominate the world of Islam. We, as Westerners and non-Muslims, have made little effort to understand the essence of the conflict, or the role secondary players such as Turkey or Syria play as elements of a battle for religious and political power..

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The present is the culmination of past events. The series of presentations on Netflix called Resurrection is well-worth any time invested, so I encourage readers to search for it on Netflix and immerse yourself in a learning experience. One does not have to agree with every point of view it expresses to understand its essence, but references to the Old Testament are common, making one aware that Christianity, Judaism, and Islam share a common origin. I really enjoy the herding scenes and carpet-making as I've seen them in villages across the region in days gone by, and the realistic wooden wagons. They even have a caravanasi, which I'll leave you to discover. Those in the on-going Resurrection portrayal are grappling with what is, for that time, utterly new – the concept of a state of governance larger than that of the loose grouping of related individuals forming a 'tent', or as we would call it, a village of gers (yurts). It really is worth watching, and far more entertaining than Fox News!

A SAD WAY TO END THE YEAR

It is with sadness that I have to report the death of our pet cat, Kitty, who contracted a cat form of a Covid-type of infection, and died of suffocation as its tiny lungs slowly filled with liquid. There is, of course, no vaccine for such viruses, or treatment. All we could do is make Kitty as comfortable as possible during its last few hours. Both boys were very sad, as are all of us.

WORK IN PROGRESS - all sellers/librarians please note

ITMB, as of the end of December, 2020, has ample inventory of almost all of the titles traditionally carried as part of our publishing line, and we continue to expand our line by developing brand new titles. The following titles are under development, with our best guess as to the future:

Amsterdam and Central Holland – The city of Amsterdam is one of the most touristic cities in Europe. It is also special to me, as I lived on Singel canal for a summer as a young man and had the opportunity to explore the city in depth. Like many cities, As part of our long-term plan to gradually expand ITMB's coverage of Europe, a new edition of Amsterdam is long overdue. The other side of the sheet is still evolving, and might either be a detailed regional map of the hinterland of the city, or complete coverage of the country.

Balkans – ITMB has mapped many of the Balkan countries as individual maps that would constitute the region known as the Balkans, but never the region itself. This is in the process of rectification. Lan is in the early stages of preparing a double-sided map showing the entire Balkans region, plus Greece, on one side, and a detailed map of the mountainous interior of the region on the other side. This should be ready for release sometime in 2021.

Cape Town and the Garden Route – This is a title we have wanted to do for years. South Africa, as a country, has stumbled badly since ZANU took over the reins of power. However, things seem to be getting better touristically, so we have started developing a new double-sided map of one of the most touristic parts of all of Africa. The city side artwork is almost completed, and we are working on the southern coastline of South Africa at the moment.

Cyprus – This is a popular European travel destination. We spent two weeks here a couple of years ago and felt that ITMB could produce a better map than any we could find. The country has a troubled modern history, and finds itself divided into two semi-hostile portions. The southern two-thirds are what used to be 'British' Cyprus and is now the remaining portion of the EU country called Cyprus. It is prosperous, part of the EU, and very touristically attractive, basically Greek as a population. The northern third is known as Turkish-controlled Cyprus and results from a Turkish invasion over 30 years ago and is predominately Turkish populated. It is an interesting, if somewhat less prosperous, part of the island of Cyprus. One can travel between the two portions. It is currently at press and expected in Feb. 2021.

Dubrovnik and the Croatian Coast- We were privileged to participate in a ten-day cruise from Porec to Dubrovnik and found it to be such a wonderful learning experience that we wanted to create the perfect map of this wonderful area. Covid has enabled us time to concentrate on developing new titles, and mapping Dubrovnik has been a real treat. As with all brand new titles, this one will be ready when it is ready, and not a day sooner. Due in 2021.

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Florence and Northeastern Italy – One of the most-visited cities in Europe is Florence. This second edition map is being developed as a double-sided city and regional map covering all of Tuscany and surrounding provinces. The city itself needs no introduction to map sellers, so all I'll say is that it covers the urban area in excellent detail, showing all attractions. The regional side is still a work in progress, but by its name, should cover from Venice to Milan to below Sienna. As with other Covid-era mapping projects, this one will await a safe travel advisory for release.

Georgia and Tbilisi – The Caucasus region has been volatile ever since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1989. ITMB first published a map of the Caucasus region in the mid-1990s, noting various breakaway mini-states/autonomous regions and the fracturing of the region into mutually hostile nation states. As a result, it is very difficult to map a country like Georgia accurately. How does one portray the various autonomous regions? What is the correct border between Georgia and its neighbouring states? How can one prepare a map of Georgia without including parts of Russia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan? One might as well ask 'What is the sound of one hand clapping?' The time has come to prepare a detailed map of Georgia as it is today without unduly combining it with artwork covering neighbouring states as an integral part of the artwork. Thus, Lan is working on a detailed map of the country on one side, and a first-ever detailed map of Tbilisi on the second side. We had planned to visit Georgia in 2019, but delayed the trip due to difficult flight arrangements. Now, of course, we wish we hadn't as it is much more impossible to visit Georgia today than a year ago. ITMB publishes an excellent map of Georgia combined with Armenia, another country we would love to visit. We are not expecting Georgia to be completed before mid-2021.

Maui – I'm not yet sure exactly what Lan is preparing, but it has long been our goal to expand our coverage of the various islands of Hawaii and the Maui/Lanai portion of the state is the only part left unmapped on detail. We already have a map of the State as an entity, with separate maps of Big Island, and Oahu/Honolulu, it is about time that we concentrated on the remaining islands. Details will follow.

Nevada and Northern California – This title will focus on the State of Nevada and add to our growing range of American titles; due in the spring of 2021.

Russia's Heritage Cities – The current edition is out of inventory and consideration of a fresh edition suspended until travel to the central portion of Russia is more safely accomplished. The heartland of Russia is known as 'the Rus', covering a relatively compact geographic area centred on seven heritage cities – the Golden Ring. Russia has been particularly hard-hit by the virus, so at the moment, travel to that country is extremely risky.

Surinam – This title is out of stock indefinitely. We hope to re-release it in 2021, depending on safe travel provisions.

Wales and Cardiff – Lan is working on a more detailed map of Wales than we have been able to produce to date. I've reviewed the artwork, and it looks pretty good. The reverse side will be a detailed map of Cardiff, the nation's capital, which I haven't yet seen. No idea when this project will be completed!

NEW RELEASES FOR OCTOBER, 2020.

Japan Central Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2021 1:600,000 ISBN 9781771293907 UPC 817712939074 \$13.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – This is a brand new title for ITMB, a double-sided map covering the 'core' regions of Japan most visited by tourists exploring Japan. Side 1 covers from Tokyo north to Sendai/Nigata and west to Nagoya. Side two covers all of Japan as far as Hiroshima. **AVAILABLE**

Mount Fuji/Kanto Region Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2021 1:65,000/1:600,000 13.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP - The volcanic cone of Mount Fuji is Japan's most popular touristic attraction. Located a short train ride west of Tokyo, Fuji attracts millions of visitors each year. Side 1 focuses on the mountain itself, showing rail connections, surrounding towns, roads on the lower slopes, hiking trails, and accommodations close to the summit. Side 2 shows the overall region from Tokyo to Nagoya and north to Nigata. This is a brand new ITMB title. **AVAILABLE**

Spain North Rail and Road Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2021 1:700,000 ISBN 9781771297226 UPC 817712972262 \$13.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – Spain is the most visited travel destination in Europe, but no one has published a rail map of the country – until now. This map covers the northern half of the country from Barcelona to Santiago de Compostela and as far south as Madrid/Toledo. **AVAILABLE**

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Tofino & Southern Vancouver Island Travel Reference Map 1st Ed. 2021 1:47,000/1:200,000 ISBN 9781771298001 UPC 81771298014 \$11.95cdn/us E9.50 8.95GBP – Vancouver Island is one of the marvels of tourism in Canada. It is, in fact, so big that it needs to be explored in sections to reach its full potential. Tofino is the westernmost town on the island and is home to the great Pacific fleet of fishing boats. It is also the westernmost leg of the ten thousand kilometer-long Trans-Canada Highway, and the beginning of the Trans-Canada National Hiking Trail. AVAILABLE

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