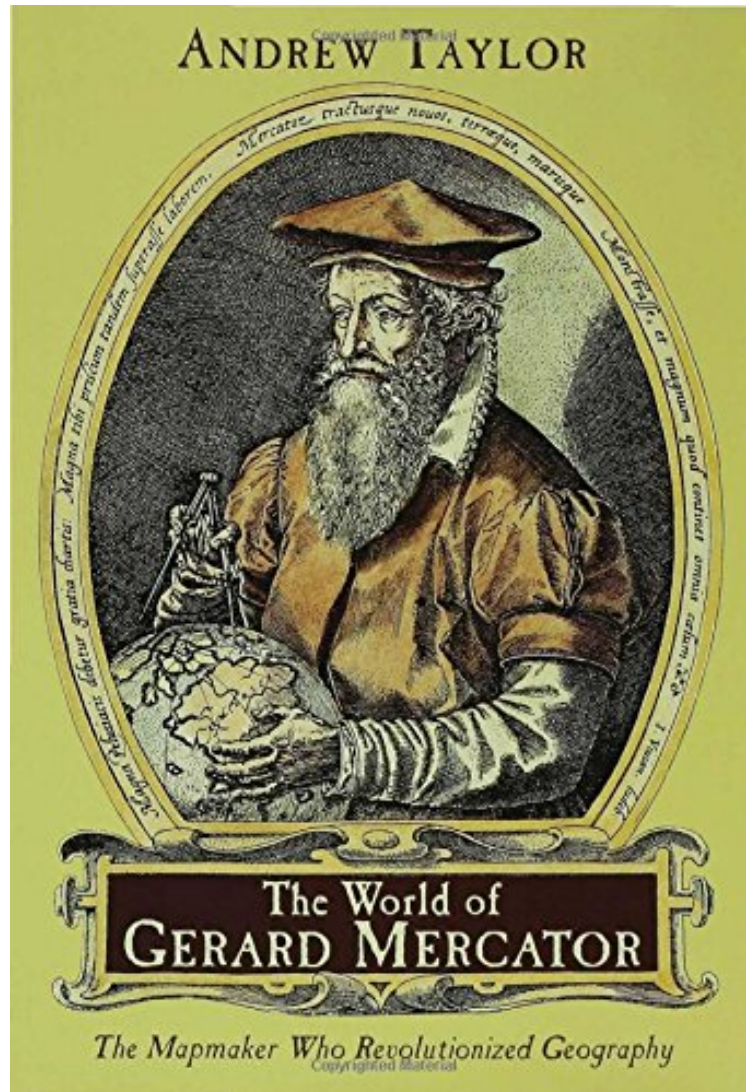


The World of Gerard Mercator: The Mapmaker Who Revolutionized Geography

Andrew Taylor

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#2094559 in Books Walker n Company 2004-11-01 2004-11-01Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.26 x 29.21 x 5.72l, 1.05 #File Name: 0802713777272 pagesBrown hardcopy with gold lettering, jacket with picture of Mercator.291 | File size: 64.Mb

Andrew Taylor : The World of Gerard Mercator: The Mapmaker Who Revolutionized Geography before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The World of Gerard Mercator: The Mapmaker Who Revolutionized Geography:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Nancy H. StockGood book3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Mercator - An interesting life.By CustomerI had reservations about how exciting the life of a

mapmaker who never left Europe could be, but I was pleasantly surprised with how readable and interesting Taylor makes Mercator's life. As a student of religion, my only complaint is how one-sided Taylor presents the religious conflicts in the book. Many of the statistics cited about the suppression of religious freedom by execution by the inquisition have been shown in recent decades to be grossly exaggerated by Protestant reported with a decidedly biased point of view. Taylor admits this, but only once, and rather late in the book. In the point of view of the book, anyone connected to the Catholic church is presented as a Luddite stuck in the past, while anyone connected to the reformation was progressive and forward-thinking. The reality was not so black and white. Even with these small caveats, I highly recommend this book to anyone wondering about how mapmaking has evolved since medieval times. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The meticulous mapmaker By Adam Claxton This biography of the sixteenth century mapmaker Gerard Mercator achieves its goal of getting to the heart of the man and the age in which he lived. It was a period where both church and science were clashing head-on and the world as many people knew it was expanding exponentially. Treading carefully between the Christian versus Protestant conflict raging throughout Western Europe, Mercator dedicated his life to scholarly understanding and the pursuit of geographical exactness. His meticulously crafted maps and globes were sought after by royalty, merchants, academics and nobility alike. It was the mapmaker's eye for accuracy lead to his most famous achievement - the Mercator Projection. It is here that I became a little frustrated that the author didn't expand on Mercator's projection and its usage in both ancient and modern contexts. At the very least one or two simple illustrations to convey the principles would have been a help. Needless to say this book is still a good entry point for those who wish to study both the man and the prevailing history of the sixteenth century.

A biography of the mapmaker who revolutionized geography The story of discovery and mapmaking is one of pushing back shadows," writes Andrew Taylor, and "none in the last two thousand years achieved as much as Gerard Mercator in extending the boundaries of what could be comprehended." His life encompassed most of the turbulent, extraordinary sixteenth century, a time when revolutions would engulf religion, science, and civilization. Almost extinguished by the Inquisition, Mercator's genius lay in making maps, and his achievement did nothing less than revolutionize the study of geography. Appropriately for an era undergoing radical change, Mercator was full of contradiction, tied to knowledge and beliefs of the past while forging a new path. He never traveled beyond northern Europe, yet he had the imagination to draw the entire world anew and to solve a problem that had baffled sailors and scientists for centuries: how a curved Earth could be faithfully rendered on a flat surface so as to allow for accurate navigation. His "projection" was so visionary that it is used by NASA to map Mars today. Andrew Taylor has beautifully captured Mercator amidst the turmoil and opportunity of his times and the luminaries who inspired his talent?his teacher and business partner, Gemma Frisius; the English magus, John Dee; his benefactor, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, his cartographic collaborator, Abraham Ortelius. The World of Gerard Mercator is a masterful biography of one of the men most responsible for the modern world.

From Publishers Weekly Maps today strike us as fairly innocuous charts of the world. But 500 years ago, an era when political power and religious authority were in flux, maps were fraught with implications that made owning the "wrong" map a cause for execution. Into this world came Flemish mapmaker Gerard Mercator (1512–1594), whose new technique forged modern cartography as we know it. Mercator devised an ingenious compromise between accurately depicting the varying lengths of latitudinal circles between the poles and the equator and accurately depicting geographic details that is the basis for nearly all maps in use today. British historian Taylor (God's Fugitive) neatly surveys Mercator's invention along with the rest of his professional career, while delving into hardships caused by the Inquisition, which arrested him on suspicions of Lutheran heresy, and the bubonic plague, which touched his family. The background material on 16th-century exploration and European politics is effectively presented, helping readers to understand how Mercator was able to successfully navigate a web of political intrigues. Taylor also discusses modern attempts to "correct" various distortions in the comparative sizes of major land masses. This occasionally lively chronicle should appeal to a core audience of history and geography buffs. 40 bw illus. and 7 maps. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Mercator's physical world in the 1500s was small: raised in modern-day Belgium, he lived and worked in Duisburg in modern Germany, and never put to sea. Historically, though, his times were large: voyages of discovery extended horizons and stoked imperial competitions while the Reformation upset faiths and lives—including Mercator's own. As readers might recall from a comparable recent biography (Nicholas Crane's *Mercator*, 2003), the Inquisition imprisoned Mercator but released him after a strenuous appeal by his "doughty" wife, as biographer Taylor describes Barbe. This incident is an example of Taylor's psychological approach to his subject. Inferring Mercator's traits from the handful of surviving comments about his personality, Taylor portrays a man of native caution and natural affability who was as esteemed in his time as he is famous in ours for the Mercator projection. Clarifying the technique's superiority to preceding methods of flattening out a curved surface, and chronicling the globes and maps Mercator produced, Taylor delivers a ready and readable understanding of Mercator in his intellectual and religio-political contexts. Gilbert

TaylorCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reservedAbout the AuthorAndrew Taylor is a historian and the author of *God's Fugitive*, a biography of the great British explorer C. M. Doughty. He lives in England.