

Activity 2. Placing Yourself at the Center

Instructions: There are a series of pre-Columbian “world” maps available on Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_world_maps, accessed June 4, 2010). They include a reproduction of the oldest known world map, the *Imago Mundi* of 6th century BC Babylonia and the Anaximander map (ca. 550 BC), which shows the known world in circular form radiating out from the Aegean Sea. Anaximander was a Greek philosopher and a contemporary of Pythagoras. Other interesting maps located at the site include one from 1154 AD by Moroccan cartographer al-Idrisi that shows the south hemisphere at the top of the map. Most of these maps are circular and show either the land of the mapmaker or a religious site (Jerusalem) at the center. Examine these maps and discuss (a) why do so many of these maps present the world as a flat disk and (b) why do so many of these societies place themselves at the center of human civilization?