

# The Biggest Mapping Mistake of ALL TIME

- Humans have always searched for mythical, \_\_\_\_\_ places: Atlantis, El Dorado, Shangri-La, but none of them have actually been found, besides one.

Paper maps, \_\_\_\_\_ maps, animated maps.

So I'm sitting there looking through some maps and I **stumble upon** this.

This is a super old British map of North America with a \_\_\_\_\_ off the West Coast. The island is labelled **California**.

Okay, so clearly some **cartographer** just got this totally wrong and made a \_\_\_\_\_, right? But wait, here's another and another and another.

What is going on here? This one's from 1785 or from 1750. This one's from 1690 and from 1650. Like, these maps of California as an island are \_\_\_\_\_ 200 years. Drawn by the Dutch and the Germans and the British and the \_\_\_\_\_, everyone is making a map showing California as an island.

***Is this like a tectonic plate's thing?***

***Was California an island?***

Because as we dug, we found thousands of these maps. California as an island everywhere. I had to get to \_\_\_\_\_ of this to \_\_\_\_\_ what was going on here.

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Luckily, I live in Washington DC  
so there's somewhere I need to go  
visit to **figure** this **out**.

**QUESTION:**

*In case you are in DC and  
you are looking for **a nuclear  
fallout shelter**, what can it  
be?*

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**3:06** Oh my God. This is really weird. I'm looking at these \_\_\_\_\_ maps, 1600s.

California is an island. But then look at this one. This is a map from like a few  
\_\_\_\_\_ earlier and it shows California **accurately** mapped earlier, like, decades  
earlier in like the 1500s.

They had it right and it looks pretty accurate to the California we know today. And  
then, suddenly the whole world started \_\_\_\_\_ California as an island.  
What?

*This is super weird.*

The story of a mythical place called California, full of \_\_\_\_\_ and magic and  
\_\_\_\_\_, **fueled** by people who weren't totally **grounded in reality** but rather in dreams  
of something bigger, something different, something that may or may not \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

This island teaches us something bigger than just how humans draw maps, it's actually  
more about how humans want to see the world, about how \_\_\_\_\_ spread  
and why.

So let me show you how, for hundreds of years, California was an island and how it still  
kind of is.

- **5:03** Hey, wake up for a second. Do you mind if I \_\_\_\_\_ with you about something?

- I make YouTube videos and, in order to do that, I have a business that \_\_\_\_\_ me to do that and the business is from \_\_\_\_\_.

And so I'm making a video today that's sponsored by a company called Storyblocks, which is a company I've used for like a decade, even before they came to sponsor a video.

Storyblocks is like a

\_\_\_\_\_ of visual and audio assets that you can use to make your videos better.

So creators of all size, small, medium, large, giant creative teams, can \_\_\_\_\_ to Storyblocks at whatever budget or price point they need and can have an \_\_\_\_\_ library of like 4K amazing **stock footage** that is **diverse**, that is **ever-growing**.

There's like thousands and thousands of clips. I use this all the time for my videos. One of the big \_\_\_\_\_ for creators is that it's really hard to go out into the field and shoot stuff and so when you're making a video, you don't have a lot of like really good \_\_\_\_\_ assets.

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6:46

Okay, this is California and this is Baja, California, which is a part of \_\_\_\_\_. And this is the Sea of Cortez. It's not a **full-blown** sea, it's actually a \_\_\_\_\_, the Gulf of California. But we call it the Sea of Cortez.

*Let's talk about*

*how this became an island.*

California originally was an idea, a myth. It was a \_\_\_\_\_ setting written into this novel from 1510 in Spain, like, 500 years ago.

California was like Atlantis or the Garden of Eden. The author described it as an island \_\_\_\_\_ by black women, without any men existing there. On the entire island there was no metal other than gold and it was \_\_\_\_\_ by Queen Calafia, hence California.

Again, it was a fake place, this is not a real place. This is a guy writing a novel about a fake place. But while the author doesn't say exactly where this is, he basically says that it is, quote, "at the \_\_\_\_\_ the Indies."

This novel was published in Spain about 50 years after the \_\_\_\_\_ of the printing press. So printed books were like a new technology, a big thing, and this book was really popular.

So Spanish \_\_\_\_\_ in the 1500s were out there exploring the world and reading this book while they were out to sea. So it's like 10 years after Columbus and Spain is sending people to \_\_\_\_\_ the new world and by "explore" we mean **extract resources** and destroy the \_\_\_\_\_ and make Spain rich.

**8:48** And one of those expeditions had this guy on board, Hernán Cortés. He came over as a young **dude** but he quickly became one of the most **shrewd**, \_\_\_\_\_, detail-oriented colonizers that Spain had.

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He goes on a big expedition

where he takes his 500 men and 16 horses to go \_\_\_\_\_. But Cortés was secretly **harboring another goal** for this \_\_\_\_\_, he was reading the romance novel that everyone else was reading and he kind of wanted to find California, the **fictional** place in the book.

So Cortés, after he stumbles upon a great civilization, **allies with** their enemies and \_\_\_\_\_ them with his guns and his **smallpox**, small side note that can be covered in a different time. He didn't **have permission** to do this and the Spanish leadership were kind of \_\_\_\_\_.

Anyway, Cortés sends out a mission to go explore a \_\_\_\_\_ off this coast. Holy shit, they found something! Cortés is so **giddy about** this new discovery that he writes a letter back to the king saying that his men talked to some \_\_\_\_\_ who, quote, "affirm that there is an island inhabited only by women. It's only 10 days away and that this island is very rich in \_\_\_\_\_, and gold."

Cortés is just to the right of the Indies, which is exactly the location \_\_\_\_\_ in the book for California.

***Cortés just discovered California !!***

**11:37** But this is not what the king of Spain **signed up for**.

So he cuts off all of the \_\_\_\_\_ for any of these like expeditions.

So Cortés turns to his own personal wealth and starts funding these expeditions \_\_\_\_\_, to go map out and find California, the island.

He personally goes on a voyage and starts mapping and mapping, and he's finding what looks like an island. And they \_\_\_\_\_ a colony right here on this island and they name the island California, after the island of Queen Calafia from the book.

He's looking up this massive gulf that he thinks is like a full-blown sea that you can like circumnavigate, but he's just like at the bottom of Baja, California, the \_\_\_\_\_.

### **What's crazy is what happens next.**

Even though Cortés found out that California wasn't an island, California still somehow managed to make the world believe that it was an island for \_\_\_\_\_.

Spain was really busy conquering and \_\_\_\_\_ and **pillaging** a lot of other places in the region. That is until the late 1500s, where they catch wind of a British sailor who happens to be their literal **sworn enemy**, who apparently just landed here in what was gonna become Oregon to \_\_\_\_\_ all of this land for Britain.

And Spain was like, oh shit, we gotta get back in the game up there in that place. We can't be asleep at the wheel while the British are showing up on the \_\_\_\_\_ of North America. So they send out this expedition of guys to go map the West Coast of California. Because, after all, if you can map something you can \_\_\_\_\_ it.

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**14:34** This guy, Fray Antonio de la Ascensión, a Spanish dude who wasn't really a sailor or an explorer or a \_\_\_\_\_, he was kind of like a Catholic priest. Aboard this expedition there were legit map makers and Fray Antonio was literally the \_\_\_\_\_.

But Fray Antonio is actually the most important person in this entire story, because he had an agenda. He really wanted Spain to \_\_\_\_\_ more \_\_\_\_\_ in California. It was his life's mission to sell the idea of Spain coming to California and setting up more **permanent** \_\_\_\_\_. No one on board this expedition was on the same page, they were there just simply \_\_\_\_\_ the West Coast.



So they're passing like right here on their way to the West Coast and Fray Antonio writes, "Here begins the \_\_\_\_\_ of the sea of California which continues all the way up north into this \_\_\_\_\_ that actually goes above North America. And that, if you go, you can find passage and \_\_\_\_\_ to Spain."

Hey, Antonio, you're sitting on the side of a \_\_\_\_\_ right here looking at basically this. And from that you've **deduced** that California is an island?



**16:55** Anyway, this expedition goes on to fulfill its original

\_\_\_\_\_,  
they mapped the West Coast of California and they create this decent \_\_\_\_\_ map.

But Fray Antonio walked away from this mission with a very different \_\_\_\_\_. He was

convinced that California was an island and that there was a mythical northern \_\_\_\_\_ that existed all the way back to Spain.

The confidence in this guy is **astounding**. Fray Antonio makes a big **ruckus** about this. He tries to get Spain to \_\_\_\_\_ their maps to make California an island.

For the next two decades, he continues to **pitch** his fake version of California. Sending **loads of** \_\_\_\_\_ and maps, all with the hope that Spain would catch on and come settle California. And he started to actually gain some \_\_\_\_\_.

Early 1600s is like the golden age for pirates. Thousands of pirates were sailing the seas and because Spain was like the best at stealing stuff and conquering places, a Spanish ship was always like \_\_\_\_\_ for the pirates.

One such Spanish ship was sailing back from the new world to Spain and onboard this ship was one of Fray Antonio's letters with a \_\_\_\_\_ of his fake map that showed California as an island. And the ship was taken over by \_\_\_\_\_ pirates. They took the ship, they steal all the stuff, and they stumble upon this fake map.

And the pirates are like, whoa, look at this. The Spanish have California as an island. Maps back then were kind of a \_\_\_\_\_, they didn't share maps very much. So these Dutch guys thought that they just discovered a big Spanish secret that California is an island and that there's actually a strait that goes over the \_\_\_\_\_ North America.

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**19:36** So this map from Fray Antonio gets back to the Netherlands which, at the time, were \_\_\_\_\_ as like really good map makers and sailors.

**And boom.**

A few years later, the fake news just got retweeted. Here it is, this little map on the \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ of some Dutch Atlas. You see, for the first time, California not connected to the mainland.

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*But wait, Cortés already mapped this and showed that this wasn't an island like 100 years ago.*

*No, what is happening?*

*The answer is Fray Antonio and pirates.*

Word eventually spread to \_\_\_\_\_, where a famous map maker made this map.

Then to Germany, then to France, then to Italy, then to Sweden, and \_\_\_\_\_ is now drawing California as an island and Austria is drawing California as an island.

**And now Japan is drawing California as an island.**

**And so, yeah, this is how it happened.**

