



Maps, Myths, and Men: The Story of the Vinland Map

By Kirsten A. Seaver

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The "Vínland Map" first surfaced on the antiquarian market in 1957 and the map's authenticity has been hotly debated ever since—in controversies ranging from the anomalous composition of the ink and the map's lack of provenance to a plethora of historical and cartographical riddles. *Maps, Myths, and Men* is the first work to address the full range of this debate. Focusing closely on what the map in fact shows, the book contains a critique of the 1965 work *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation*; scrutinizes the marketing strategies used in 1957; and covers many aspects of the map that demonstrate it is a modern fake, such as literary evidence and several scientific ink analyses performed between 1967 and 2002. The author explains a number of the riddles and provides evidence for both the identity of the mapmaker and the source of the parchment used, and she applies current knowledge of medieval Norse culture and exploration to counter widespread misinformation about Norse voyages to North America and about the Norse world picture.

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Maps, Myths, and Men: The Story of the Vinland Map By Kirsten A. Seaver Bibliography

- Rank: #1773174 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Stanford University Press
- Published on: 2004-06-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x 1.10" w x 6.00" l, 1.47 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 480 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In a superlative piece of cross-disciplinary detective work, Norwegian independent scholar Seaver deconstructs the machinations, manipulations and odd stroke of genius that have played into the story of the Vinland map. Allegedly dating from 1440 and ostensibly showing extensive medieval Norse exploration of the North American coasts, the map rocketed out of obscurity—"the black hole of provenance"—with the publication of a lavishly illustrated volume entitled *The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation* in 1965. The stunning revelation of the map—and the publication of a volume prepared with peculiar secrecy by scholars from top-name institutions—received intense international press coverage, but was greeted with skepticism in many quarters. A meticulous guide, Seaver leads us through the minutiae of ink analysis, handwriting and strangely located wormholes. Her investigation culminates in the doomed Austrian monastery of Stella Matutina, where a brilliant Jesuit cartographer, Josef Fischer (1858–1944), worked on a "jeu d'esprit" that would sabotage Nazi propaganda by "proving" the global reach of the medieval Catholic church while flattering the Nazis' interest in Norse origins. Through his well-intentioned forgery, Fischer set in motion a different kind of legend. Once German soldiers forced their way into Stella Matutina, the gates opened to a world of pilfering, profiteering and eventually marketing blitzkrieg. Illus.

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Review

"Seaver has created the definitive portrait of the Vinland Map controversy and has shown us a route home." (*Science Magazine*)

"It is an enjoyable book to read, and the author writes in such an enthusiastic way that the book reads almost like a detective story." (*Canadian Journal of History*)

"In *Maps, Myths, and Men*, Kirsten A. Seaver provides a supremely well-researched and documented account of the map's nearly forty-years of public controversy....As well as providing the most detailed account and analysis of the map available, Seaver has also provided a book which allows historians and scholars to reflect more widely on the ways in which personal lives and situations interfere with and inform objective scholarship." (*Itinerario*)

"...a fascinating and very readable investigation..." (*Viking Heritage Magazine*)

"...the sustained and comprehensive argument presented here is a masterly synthesis that should represent the last word on one of the most contentious debates in modern medieval scholarship." (*Speculum*)

"In a superlative piece of cross-disciplinary detective work, Norwegian independent scholar Seaver deconstructs the machinations, manipulations, and odd strokes of genius that have played into the story of the Vinland map." (*Publishers Weekly*)

About the Author

Kirsten A. Seaver is an independent historian, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, London, a novelist, and a translator. She is the author of *The Frozen Echo* (Stanford, 1996).

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Willard Sarvis:

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