

Re: Kirsten Seaver's Vinland Map book– first thoughts

Source: <http://sci.tech–archive.net/Archive/sci.archaeology/2004–07/2236.html>

From: David B (*tronospamchos_at_tesco.net*)

Date: 07/25/04

Date: Sun, 25 Jul 2004 10:13:25 GMT

D. Spencer Hines wrote in message ...

>

>[*Father Josef Fischer S.J. ("Dating all the way back to 1440, the only person in the world who could have made the Vinland Map").*]

>

>*The material in quotation marks above was supposedly written by Kirsten Seaver.*

>

>*Hilarious!*

It was (page 296), but it's not typical.

>*She sounds like a real fruitcake -- and certainly no Historian.*

If I gave that impression, I'm sorry. Although she has perhaps been too attached to one or two theories, she has presented a great deal of food for thought about the Vinland Map, in addition to providing large amounts of useful background information. For example she questions Thomas Marston's casual treatment in VMTR of the repairs to several pages of the "Speculum" volume, apparently (as noted by T.C. Skeat of the British Museum in 1967) the result of attempts to remove library ownership stamps, and using paper which may be the same as that in the endpapers of the "Tartar Relation" volume. Another small but interesting point is the advice of an expert on bookworms, that it is very odd for a book to be found with multiple wormholes through the face of the pages but none through the spine or page edges. One of the more startling claims is that there appears to be no evidence that the celebrated examination of the "Speculum" covers (revealing the ghosts of the original pastedowns) took place in 1966 as claimed by everybody except Witten. The more I learn about the history of the Vinland Map since 1957, the more I'm intrigued by Laurence Witten's strange 1989 essay.

>*Two pages for the Kensington Runestone?*

>

>*That sounds like about a page and a half too much.*

I tend to agree, but that does include the whole of the alleged background to the KRS, with brief references to the Newport Tower, Henry Sinclair etc.

David B.

> "David B." <davidb@tronospamchos.freemove.co.uk> wrote in message
> news:cdu9uu\$fgd\$1@newsg4.svr.pol.co.uk...
>
> | Kirsten Seaver's new book "Maps, Myths, and Men" (ISBN 0–8047–4963–9)
> | is
> | extremely informative. The title, however, gives a clue that the
> | information is by no means restricted to the subject indicated in her
> | subtitle: "The Story of the Vinland Map". Leaving aside the hundred
> | pages
> | of notes, bibliography and index, it is probable that a good couple of
> | hundred pages are devoted to various background issues, including a
> | great
> | deal about known early maps of the North Atlantic area, a 60–page
> | chapter
> | on the Norse "in and near North America"– mercifully dismissing items
> | like
> | the Kensington Runestone in a couple of pages– and a 77–page final
> | chapter
> | interweaving information about the construction of the Vinland Map
> | with the
> | biography of Father Josef Fischer S.J. ("Dating all the way back to
> | 1440,
> | the only person in the world who could have made the Vinland Map").
> |
> | Surprisingly, the central claim about the purpose of the map– that it
> | was
> | intended to be found by the Nazis who would be unable to cope with its
> | mixed message of bold Aryan exploration and Roman Catholic world
> | domination– is given very little space, just a couple of paragraphs.
> | Even
> | then, Seaver suggests that "Not in his worst nightmares during that
> | dark
> | period in his life could Fischer have foreseen what actually happened
> | when
> | the map surfaced in public". Much more detail, however, is given to
> | the
> | background for the theory, particularly the overt and implied
> | references to
> | the Church. A point Seaver rightly (but perhaps over–enthusiastically)
> | emphasises is that the map is meant to represent a globular Earth, on
> | which
> | the influence of Rome ultimately met itself going east and west. The
> | key
> | suggestion, which may or may not fall into the "over–enthusiastic"
> | category, is that Bishop Eirik, after his work in Vinland early in the
> | 12th

>| century, would have gone west to reach his next alleged destination,
>the
>| "wintery east" (an improved translation of the phrase "orientem
>hiemale").
>| We readers can't dismiss this idea as anachronistic, because of course
>the
>| caption referred to is a fake. This Kirsten Seaver pretty much takes
>as
>| given. Very little of the book is devoted to explaining the evidence
>that
>| the map is a forgery (at this point I'd better declare my personal
>interest
>| and say that if that's all you want to know, you should read my little
>book
>| instead).
>|
>| Old favourites like the anatase debate and the wormholes are covered,
>of
>| course, and the book has probably the best compilation of information
>about
>| the British Museum tests in the late 1960s, but Seaver is more
>interested
>| in the reluctance of the map's owners (and the authors of the 1965
>official
>| book) to acknowledge the many problems. This is obviously the most
>dramatic
>| aspect of the book, but its impact is rather dissipated by the
>structure of
>| the text. Although it appears to be arranged in clearly defined topic
>| sections, there are all sorts of overlaps, and many matters are
>considered
>| over several chapters. As a result, it is very difficult to gain an
>| impression of the chain of cause and effect in the story of the map;
>the
>| book is better considered as a series of linked essays, with a
>mercifully
>| effective index for anybody who wishes to investigate any particular
>matter
>| in detail. Although I remain unconvinced by some of Seaver's
>conclusions, I
>| learned a great deal (including one or two things I should have known
>| already– d'oh).
>|
>| David B.
>