

Re: The Vinland Map's Ink

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In support of his theory, Enterline wrote this....

"The bible of conservators at that time (1950s) was the 1937 edition of Plenderleith, which advocated the same treatment for parchment manuscripts as for paper: regular household bleaching fluid*, sodium hypochlorite."

I have obtained a copy of Plenderleith (1937). Chapter IV addresses practical methods of cleaning and repair. It is true that no specific distinction is drawn (in the 1937 edition) between the methods used for parchments and papers. However, Plenderleith does indicate that the use of hypochlorite bleaches will cause problems for iron-gall inks. He states (page 48) rather specifically: "Any signatures in iron-gall inks will disappear unless they are protected beforehand." For protection, he describes a local application of a celluloid solution in 5% acetone applied to the print while it is dry and removed after the bleaching, when it is again dry, by an acetone wash. Such a warning followed by a specific conservation procedure renders the Enterline hypothesis implausible. Clearly, if the ink must be protected during the cleaning process, it cannot also be "contaminated" with anatase from some blotting paper during the bleaching stage. The simple fact that hypochlorite bleaches are damaging to iron-gall inks should have been a red-flag to any conservator considering cleaning the Vinland Map.

Enterlines goes on to write:

Plenderleith described a bleaching method to be used on a document whose ink was unknown and possibly fugitive.⁹ The method avoids the more usual procedure of immersion in bleaching fluid. Instead, a piece of dry tissue paper is laid on the face of the document. Then one brushes liquid bleach onto this paper and lets it soak through, peeling away the tissue before drying occurs.

However, Plenderleith says this (page 49) with regard to "fugitive" prints:

"In such cases the prints are laid face down on glass, and a pad of wet blotting paper applied to the back for a few minutes and then removed;

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after this the minimum of bleaching solution is applied to the moist back of the print by a camel-hair brush. It permeates the paper, having a mild bleaching action on the front."

Again, if the document is positioned FACE DOWN on glass and it is wetted with a blotting paper ON THE BACK, especially one that has not itself been in bleach, the addition of anatase from the blotting paper can never reach the ink!

Enterline also wrote this in an asterisked footnote...

"More recent editions of Plenderleith endorse the modern practice of never bleaching parchment."

Add the fact that bleaches harm parchments and and the Enterline hypothesis for the Vinland Map becomes a candidate for the trash bin.

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