

The Vinland Map and the Tartar Relation: New Edition

By R. A. Skelton, Thomas E. Marston, Mr. George D. Painter

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The Vinland Map, dated to about A.D. 1440—at least fifty years before Columbus landed in the Americas—is a unique map of the world that shows an outline of the northeast American coast and a legend describing its discovery in about 1000 by Leif Eiriksson, the Norseman from Greenland. The map was published by Yale University Press in 1965 and generated an enormous amount of debate. Chemical analysis of the ink later suggested the map might be a forgery, but recent appraisals of both scientific and humanist evidence argue that it is indeed authentic.

Now, on the thirtieth anniversary of its original publication, here is this classic of historical cartography in a new edition. It reprints unaltered the original text on the Vinland Map and an account of Friar John of Plano Carpini's mission to the Mongols from 1245 to 1247, with which the map had at some stage been bound. To this have been added a new introduction by George D. Painter, sole survivor of the original team of editors, who discusses the verification of the map's authenticity; a new essay by Wilcomb E. Washburn, director of the Smithsonian's American Studies Program, on the map's provenance and the tests that have been performed on it; and a new discussion of the map's compositional and structural aspects by Thomas A. Cahill and Bruce H. Kusko, of the Crocker Historical and Archaeological Projects at the University of California, Davis. There is also an account by Laurence C. Witten II, the rare-book dealer who sold the map to the benefactor who donated it anonymously to the Yale University Library.

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover
The Vinland Map, dated to about A.D. 1440 - at least fifty years before Columbus landed in the Americas - is a unique map of the world that shows an outline of the northeast American coast and a legend describing its discovery in about 1000 by Leif Eiriksson, the Norseman from Greenland. The map was published by Yale University Press in 1965 and generated an enormous amount of debate. Chemical analysis of the ink later suggested that the map might be a forgery, but recent appraisals of both scientific and humanist evidence argue that it is indeed authentic. Now, on the thirtieth anniversary of its original publication, here is this classic of historical cartography in a new edition. It reprints unaltered the original text on the Vinland Map and an account of Friar John of Plano Carpini's mission to the Mongols from 1245 to 1247 (the Tartar Relation), with which the map had at some stage been bound. To this have been added a new introduction by George D. Painter, sole survivor of the original team of editors, who discusses the verification of the map's authenticity; a new essay by Wilcomb E. Washburn, director of the Smithsonian's American Studies Program, on the map's provenance and scientific testing; and a new discussion of the map's compositional and structural aspects by Thomas A. Cahill and Bruce H. Kusko, of the Crocker Historical and Archaeological Projects at the University of California, Davis. There is also an account by the rare-book dealer Laurence C. Witten II, who died while this new edition was in preparation, of his acquisition of the map in 1957.

About the Author

The late **R. A. Skelton** was superintendent of the Map Room of the British Museum. The late **Thomas E. Marston** was curator of medieval and renaissance literature at the Yale University Library. **George D. Painter** is assistant keeper emeritus of printed books at the British Museum and the author of *Marcel Proust: A Biography*.

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