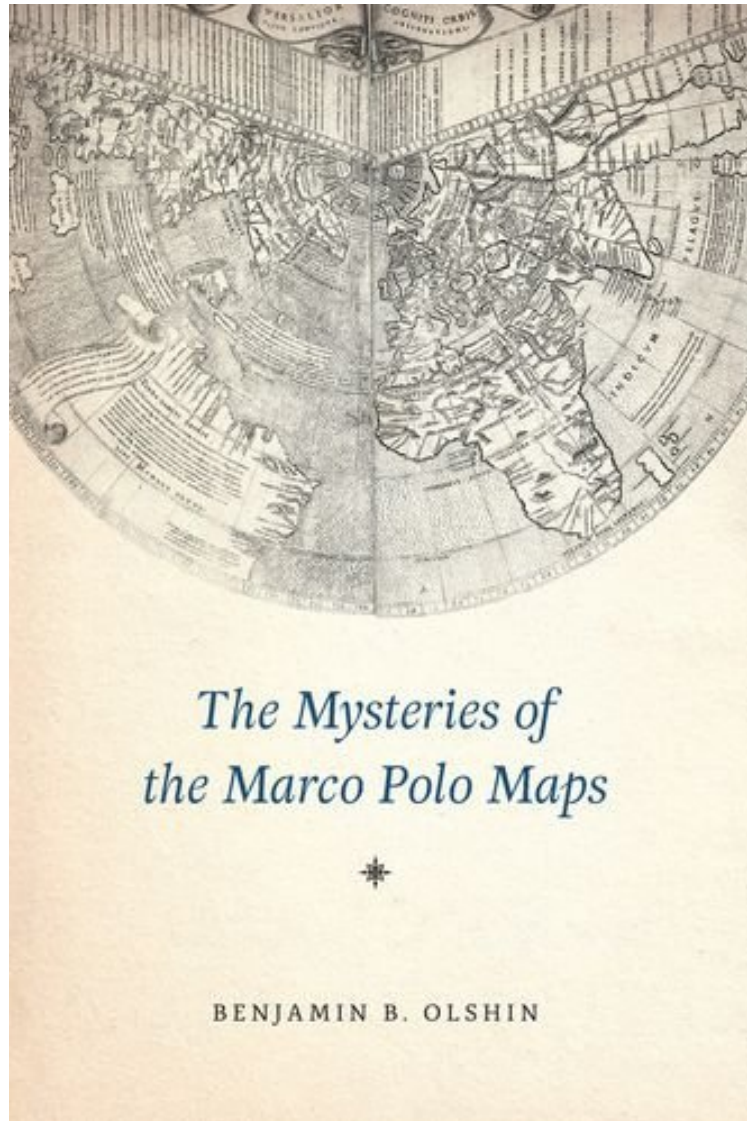


(Mobile ebook) The Mysteries of the Marco Polo Maps

The Mysteries of the Marco Polo Maps

Benjamin B. Olshin

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Benjamin B. Olshin : The Mysteries of the Marco Polo Maps before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Mysteries of the Marco Polo Maps:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is an excellent read on what it takes to track down and ...By David S.This is an excellent read on what it takes to track down and uncover all the disparate elements related to something as old and intriguing as the Marco Polo maps. It's like a more scholarly version of The DaVinci Code.2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Advertisement is pretty accurate but it is denseBy Dan MaclemoreDoes not

promise more than it delivers. Advertisement is pretty accurate but it is dense. Read the first chapters, skimmed the middle and read the ending. 9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating stuff

By Thomas Reiter

I just finished this very interesting book, and wanted to post a quick review. This book, by an actual "historian of cartography" (and university professor), describes the rather enigmatic and utterly unique collection of maps which were apparently brought from Italy by an immigrant in the early 20th century. Despite this person's attempts to engage the Library of Congress to study the maps during the 1920s-1950s, only cursory examinations were performed (including by the FBI), and after a single journal article about the maps was published in 1948, the collection completely disappeared from view. The author is to be commended for bringing these maps back to light, tracking down the current owner, and conducting the first rather thorough study of the maps. In what might be the ultimate commercial accolade for any historian of cartography, at the time of writing this review, the author's book is ranked #1 by in the Atlas category...bravo!

The maps' unique and rather strange set of features, including Italian, Latin, Chinese and Arabic script, Ptolemaic mapping coordinates and location names (before Ptolemy's work had been re-introduced to Europe), lack of apparent connection to Polo's other writings (no mention of the maps in his account, little reference to places described in his account in the maps), and writings purportedly by Polo's little-known daughters etc, make it very difficult to make sense of these documents' origins, but the author does an admirable job of examining and describing all of the relevant issues to the extent possible, including the provenance and "chain of custody" of the maps, all the while readily admitting when his research can carry him no further (as is often the case). In his concluding chapter, the author describes further research needed, etc. Throughout the book, the author weighs arguments for and against the case that the maps are simply (but hardly simple!) forgeries. This is a serious piece of research, so anyone looking for something like Gavin Menzies' tomes should look elsewhere (indeed, probably not surprisingly, Menzies' work is not mentioned by the author at all). Also, in the interest of full disclosure, no mention of aliens, Atlantis, or similar topics--this is "just the facts" type stuff... As serious research into a very complex topic, the book provides few definitive answers, so readers seeking "closure" might be disappointed, but to expect otherwise does not seem realistic in this case. I should also mention the illustrations in the book. I've got the Kindle edition; while reading it on a Kindle device provides the standard low-quality black and white images, if you read the Kindle version on an iPad, etc. the picture quality is not bad. The bad news is that while some of the photos are "in color" the maps themselves seem to have been inked in black and white, so don't expect to peruse glorious multi-hued maps in this volume. The book is short (176 pp according to , although I'm not sure as I've got the Kindle version), and I read it in less than a day; much of the book is taken up by appendices, notes, etc., so the text itself (including illustrations) takes up about 58% of the total page count. Finally, while I've given the book five stars, before doing so I debated knocking off a star for the following issues: 1) The book is a bit dry, although not unbearably so; 2) the author has an irritating habit of quoting some Latin, Italian, or other foreign language text and not providing an English translation (sometimes he provides a translation and sometimes he doesn't). While you can generally figure out the meaning from the context and his comments about the foreign text, it is annoying... 3) The book is expensive, especially on a per page basis. Generally, however, I don't reduce ratings for pricing issues, and in this case in particular I think the author more than deserves any meager sums that end up in his pocket from this book.

In the thirteenth century, Italian merchant and explorer Marco Polo traveled from Venice to the far reaches of Asia, a journey he chronicled in a narrative titled *Il Milione*, later known as *The Travels of Marco Polo*. While Polo's writings would go on to inspire the likes of Christopher Columbus, scholars have long debated their veracity. Some have argued that Polo never even reached China, while others believe that he came as far as the Americas. Now, there's new evidence for this historical puzzle: a very curious collection of fourteen little-known maps and related documents said to have belonged to the family of Marco Polo himself. In *The Mysteries of the Marco Polo Maps*, historian of cartography Benjamin B. Olshin offers the first credible book-length analysis of these artifacts, charting their course from obscure origins in the private collection of Italian-American immigrant Marcian Rossi in the 1930s; to investigations of their authenticity by the Library of Congress, J. Edgar Hoover, and the FBI; to the work of the late cartographic scholar Leo Bagrow; to Olshin's own efforts to track down and study the Rossi maps, all but one of which are in the possession of Rossi's great-grandson Jeffrey Pendergraft. Are the maps forgeries, facsimiles, or modernized copies? Did Marco Polo's daughters whose names appear on several of the artifacts preserve in them geographic information about Asia first recorded by their father? Or did they inherit maps created by him? Did Marco Polo entrust the maps to Admiral Ruggero Sanseverino, who has links to Rossi's family line? Or, if the maps have no connection to Marco Polo, who made them, when, and why? Regardless of the maps' provenance, Olshin's tale stretching from the remote reaches of the northern Pacific to early Chinese legends takes readers on a journey confounding yet fascinating, offering insights into Italian history, the age of exploration, and the wonders of cartography.

Olshin's book tugs powerfully at the imagination of anybody interested in the Polo story, medieval history, old maps, geographical ideas, European voyages of discovery, and early Chinese legends.