

ARTICLE

Hidden Map of North America in “Bacchus” by Leonardo da Vinci

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ABSTRACT

The object of this research is a “Bacchus” created in 1510-1515 by Leonardo da Vinci. By moving the detail of the painting, the map of North America is obtained, on which the present United States and Mexico are imprinted. The detail was drawn along the pale lines.

The map we have shown in the painting is almost identical to the modern map of North America. The right part of the map shows a tree. In our opinion, Leonardo symbolically painted a tree of life, associated with the newly discovered land at that time.

1. Introduction

Bacchus, formerly Saint John the Baptist, is a painting based on a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci. It is presumed to have been executed by an unknown follower, perhaps in Leonardo’s workshop. The drawing is assigned to Leonardo da Vinci’s second Milan period^[1]. The painting shows a male figure with garlanded head and leopard skin, seated in an idyllic landscape. He points with his right hand off to his left, and his left hand grasps his thyrsus and also points down to earth.

2. Methodology/Methods

The object of this research is a “Bacchus” (Figure 1). The painting with dimensions 177 cm X115 cm is created in 1510-1515.

Through the program Paint X, we moved one detail

to the top left of the painting (Figure 2). The detail was drawn along the pale lines.



Figure 1. “Bacchus” by Leonardo da Vinci

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Figure 2. The moving detail is represented by a red outline

3. Results

By moving the detail given in Figure 2, the map of North America is obtained, on which the present United States and Mexico are imprinted (Figure 3). The map we have shown in the painting is almost identical to the modern map of North America.



Figure 3. Image after drawing detail moving

The map accurately depicts the contours of the Gulf of California and Mexico. The right part of the map shows a tree. In our opinion, Leonardo symbolically painted a tree of life, associated with the newly discovered land at that time.

4. Discussion

The discovery of new land by Columbus has always been considered a milestone, even though Leif Ericsson had previously reached the American coast five centuries earlier.

On October 12, 1492, Columbus set foot on American soil (the Bahamas), though he thought it was East Indies.

In 1502, a Florentine explorer Amerigo Vespucci came to the conclusion that Columbus was mistaken and that it was not India. The new land was later renamed America in his honor ^[2].

It is logical that cartography was relevant in Europe for this period. Maps were inaccurate in the Renaissance era. But the maps drawn by Leonardo were distinguished by accuracy. An example of this is the town plan of Imola created in 1502. Leonardo also produced a map of Chiana Valley (1502), which he surveyed, without the benefit of modern equipment ^[3]. In 1515, Leonardo created a map of the Roman Coast. Leonardo da Vinci compiled this map to dry the swamps.

Donato Pezzutto studied Leonardo's works in a geographical aspect. He determined and found that the landscapes in the individual paintings reflect specific geographical locations using a cartographic perspective ^[4].

Although Leonardo is considered to be the greatest man of the Renaissance, he was not recognized as the creator of the world map. It should be noted, however that Leonardo created the map, which is one of the first to show America. At that time, there were many attempts to reflect the round surface of the earth in a plane. Leonardo solved this problem quite originally. He depicted the surface of the earth as an eight octant petals in two florets ^[5].

The source of the data on the world map created by Leonardo da Vinci is probably information from the travels of Amerigo Vespucci. An accurate description of Antarctica and the Arctic on this map is noteworthy ^[6]. The name of Florida (Terra Florida), correctly placed opposite Cuba, was used for the first time on Leonardo's globe, one year after Ponce de Leon's expedition to Florida ^[7]. There is a version that Leonardo may have received information about Antarctica from a Portuguese traveler Tristao di Cunha who in 1514 was the ambassador to Rome ^[5].

The first map of North America was created and

published in 1566 by Zaltieri (Figure 4). Italy played a leading role in cartography during this period, which was mainly due to the travels and discoveries of Marco Polo, Columbus, Vespucci, Cabot, and Verrazano, who explored the America's east coast.



Figure 4. The first map of North America published in 1566 by Zaltieri

It follows from the above that Leonardo painted “Bacchus” during the period when he was engaged in cartography. The contours on the map discovered by us in this painting are more accurate than on the first map of North America printed in 1566 by Zaltieri.

The right part of the map shows a tree. In our opinion, Leonardo symbolically painted a tree of life, associated with the newly discovered land at that time. The tree of life first appears in Genesis 2:9 and 3:22-24 as the source of eternal life in Garden of Eden.

Our attention is drawn to Leonardo's allegorical drawing (1508-1516) (Figure 5). This drawing shows an animal sitting on a ship with a compass pointing at an eagle perched on a globe. The emblem of Isabella, the Queen of Spain in that era, has been inset for comparison, supporting the suggestion that the navigation target represents the Spanish throne (which was actual patron of Columbus' voyages to the Indies) ^[5]. Slightly to the left of the center of the drawing is a tree that we think has the same content as the tree on the map. In our view, Leonardo in both cases painted a tree of life, associated with America.



Figure 5. Allegorical drawing of river navigation (1508-1516) by Leonardo da Vinci

5. Conclusion

Our research shows that by moving one detail of the painting a map of North America is obtained that is almost identical to the modern map.

The tree depicted on the map is, in our view, the tree of life associated with America.

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