



Forging the Past: Invented Histories in Counter-Reformation Spain

Katrina B. Olds

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Spain's infamous "false chronicles" were alleged to have been unearthed in 1595 in a monastic library deep in the heart of the German-speaking territories of the Holy Roman Empire by the Jesuit priest Jerónimo Román de la Higuera. Though rife with anachronisms and chronological inaccuracies, these four volumes of invented "truths" about Spanish sacred history radically transformed the religious landscape in Counter-Reformation Spain and were not definitively exposed as forgeries until centuries later, after nearly two hundred years of scholarly debate.

In this fascinating study, Katrina B. Olds explores the history, author, and legacy of one of the world's most compelling and consequential frauds. The book examines how a relatively obscure Jesuit priest so successfully fabricated a set of supposedly historical documents that they were accepted as authentic for generation after generation. The chronicles' influence was so powerful, in fact, that they continued to shape scholarly discourse, religious practice, and local heritage throughout Spain well into the twentieth century, despite having been debunked as forgeries in the eighteenth. Olds's fascinating analysis brings together intellectual, cultural, religious, and political history while reinvigorating an ongoing debate on the uses and abuses of history and the nature of historical and religious truth.

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