Over 2,000 years ago, Pytheas of Massalia now Marseille embarked on an unprecedented journey to lands beyond the known boundaries of his world: the wilds of northern Europe. He was the first Greek to do so, and upon his return, he chronicled his adventures in *On the Ocean*—alas, no longer extant. Many ancient writers put little stock in its revelations. The Roman geographer Strabo and the Roman historian Polybius, for instance,
questioned whether Pytheas even made the voyage. The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek all.

But Oxford archeologist Cunliffe The Ancient Celts argues that there is enough evidence to prove that Pytheas discovered tin fields in Brittany, amber forests in the Baltic region and Ultima Thule, or Iceland. In this dramatic piece of historical detective work, Cunliffe employs archeology, literary studies, geography and imagination. The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek recreate Pytheas's possible routes from the Mediterranean to Iceland and back home again.

Cunliffe also draws on the writings of Pliny the Elder and the geographer Dicaearchus to demonstrate that several of Pytheas's near contemporaries welcomed his discoveries about the nature of the solstice and the influence of the moon on the tides. Although Cunliffe often has to speculate in the absence of Pytheas's own words, he nevertheless amasses strong evidence that Pytheas did indeed make his voyage. What Cunliffe neglects to do, however, is make Pytheas the convincing, three-dimensional hero of his own tale.

May Cunliffe's book has been tapped as a main selection of the Natural Science Book Club and an alternate selection of the History Book Club, and Penguin has already bought the paperback rights.

The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek by Barry Cunliffe Book Review

Around b. Beginning with an invaluable pocket history of early Mediterranean civilization, Cunliffe illuminates what Pytheas would have seen and experienced — the route he likely took to reach Britannia, then Britain, Iceland, and Denmark; and evidence of the ancient cultures he would have encountered on shore. The discoveries Pytheas made would reverberate throughout the civilized world for years to come, and in recounting his extraordinary voyage, Cunliffe chronicles an essential chapter in the history of civilization.


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The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek : Barry Cunliffe :


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Community Reviews. Showing Average rating 3. Rating details. More filters. Sort order. As I was starting this I wondered how the author was going to deal with the inevitable scarcity of source material, and indeed the source material proved to be VERY thin. The author has had to create The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek out of nearly nothing, and has succeeded in doing so.
Unfortunately Pytheas’ original account "On The Ocean" has long been lost and we know of his travels is taken from quotations included in later works by other authors. We can be fairly sure that he travelled around the coast of Armorica Britany and that he circumnavigated Britain. Pytheas was also the first person to describe the land he called Ultima Thule, where there was 24 hour daylight in midsummer and where a further day's sail north the traveller encounters the "congealed sea", widely believed to be a reference to sea ice. The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek, Mr Cunliffe comes down firmly in favour of Iceland as the location of Ultima Thule, with his reasons set out in the book.

Essentially the author uses archaeology to fill in what we have lost of Pytheas’ own The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek, describing the types of society Pytheas would have encountered in his ports of call. For me there is something very appealing about imagining the time when Britain, later to produce so many world "discoverers", was itself a remote and mysterious land, known only through garbled rumour and regarded as being on the edge of the world.

Pytheas deserves a place in the Pantheon of great explorers. Well done to the author for telling us of his astonishing achievements. View 2 comments. Around 2,000 years ago a man called Pytheas set off from the Greek colony of Massalia Marseille in what is now southern France to explore the extreme north of the known world and beyond. He visited Britain, the Orkneys, and probably the Shetlands and even Iceland. Barry Cunliffe also makes The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek case for him having visited Heligoland, but on much less clear evidence.

Pytheas then returned home and wrote a book called 'On The Ocean' which has not survived but is quoted and referenced in other Greek Around 2,000 years ago a man called Pytheas set off from the Greek colony of Massalia Marseille in what is now southern France to explore the extreme north of the known world and beyond.

Barry Cunliffe has done a great job of piecing together the evidence and providing background from his position as an expert on Iron Age archaeology to fill in what we have lost of Pytheas’ own The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek, the evidence and providing background from his position as an expert on Iron Age and Celtic Britain but most of the story of Pytheas’ voyage is conjecture or deduction, and the greater part of the book is background. Nevertheless it was very interesting and gave me a different perspective on early British history. View 2 comments. Around 2,000 years ago a man called Pytheas set off from the Greek colony of Massalia Marseille in what is now southern France to explore the extreme north of the known world and beyond.

The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek Greek works that do survive. Despite the cover blurb, which warns that "Pytheas' own account was destroyed", I was expecting this book to contain rather more about Pytheas and his explorations than it did.

Barry Cunliffe has done a great job of piecing together the evidence and providing background from his position as an expert on Iron Age and Celtic Britain but most of the story of Pytheas’ voyage is conjecture or deduction, and the greater part of the book is background. Nevertheless it was very interesting and gave me a different perspective on early British history. View 2 comments. Around 2,000 years ago a man called Pytheas set off from the Greek colony of Massalia Marseille in what is now southern France to explore the extreme north of the known world and beyond.

It left me with a huge regret that Pytheas' own account of his voyage has been lost to the world, but that is hardly Professor Cunliffe's fault, and in this volume he has done what he could to repair the loss. Apr 29, Jessica Snell rated it really liked it Shelves: history,non-fiction.

I enjoyed this book. It got a little tedious at times only because I didn't share the author's The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek in mathematics and astronomy, but my shortcomings are hardly his fault. My only other criticism is that this book could have been vastly improved by more and better maps. I was struck by I enjoyed this book.

I was struck by how following just one subject - in this case, Pytheas - in detail can illuminate a score of other topics. This book covered geography, burial customs, sailing ships, map-making, astronomy, archeology, the nature of scholarship both in modern and ancient times, and many other subjects, all because the author was trying to illuminate the life of one man.

Mar 30, Victor rated it really liked it Shelves: history. Pytheas apparently went north through the Loire valley to Armorica now Brittany and from there went to Britain, Ireland, and may have traveled as far north as Iceland — publishing his account as On The Oceans in BC.

The only downside is the lack of footnotes, which was a conscious choice on Cunliffe's part - he makes up for it mostly by having an extensive bibliography. All in all, an enjoyable and fascinating read. This is an enchanting little book. Unfortunately Pytheas' work doesn't survive except in references by other, later-day authors. So Cunliffe embarks on a quest to extrapolate from what little we know, and give an account of Pytheas' travels. In doing so he presents the reader with a wealth of knowledge and information, from metallurgy to astronomy and from trade routes who would've thought!

It's a remarkable piece of work, if you consider this is all crammed into small pages, and it makes for a wonderful read. Whether it's to imagine Pytheas sitting, probably next to a fire at the far north of the British islands and exchanging stories with the natives about the megalithic monuments and their legends "the natives there are very friendly towards Greeks"an amazing image in itself, The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek to learn about how goods and knowledge flowed throughout Europe we tend to consider ancient civilisations rather compartmentalised it keeps you wanting for more.

The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek is a good read for anyone into exploration and ancient history. He explored lands which were completely a mystery to those living in the Mediterranean.

Upon his return Pytheas wrote a book detailing his voyage. Unfortunately, On the Ocean has not survived, so author Barry Cunliffe The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek is a good read for anyone into exploration and ancient history. Unfortunately, On the Ocean has not survived, so author Barry Cunliffe has pieced together the tale using references in ancient texts, archaeology, anthropology, and geography. The evidence he provides to explain his theories is always fascinating.

Cunliffe is an The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek who has written many articles and books on Iron Age Britain. He is an expert in this period, but his writing can be a bit dry; more informational and not so dramatic.
Sailing the rough Atlantic and meeting unknown Celtic tribes must have been exciting and dangerous, but any thrilling tales Pytheas might have shared are lost. Jan 23, Mark rated it really liked it. Shelves: history, nature, travel, journeys, medieval, renaissance. One of those books that grabs you and really doesn't let up on your imagination. Pytheas was poo-pooed by Strabo and Polybius and yet cited by Pliny and others.

But Mr. Cunliffe stitches together what we know, and what we theorize, and what is very likely to have actually happened. This is relevant to our modern day because just as in the same way that exoplanetary photography is stretching our idea of the possible universe so Pytheas stretched the minds of the Greeks and the intelligentsia and academia of his day.

I found it fascinating. Jul 12, Alain rated it really liked it. I was hoping for The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek, much more. This is a slim volume and the author has packed it with his anthropological observations of some of the cultures of the area mostly instead of dealing with practical matters more directly affecting a traveller in those lands.

What languages did they speak? What kinds of roads did they have? The biggest disappointment was his position that Pytheas did not have a ship but sort of "hitched" rides on those of others, in between land trips. Worse, he says absolutely nothing on the kind of options available for a land trip at the time.

Still, its a very "pro" book. View 1 comment. I love this kind of book where someone The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek to fill in the blanks of a historical event which is so long in the past that only scraps of the true story survive.

In this case the explorations of Pytheas to the unknown lands of northwestern Europe where written down in BC. The original has been lost, of course, but was in the Alexandria library long enough for other historians to report parts of what was written.