

Tore Sørensen

# Scams and hoaxes. Incidents from the cultural history of deceit

## Bløffer og bløffmakere. Episoder fra bedrageriets kulturhistorie

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Scams and Hoaxes. Incidents from the Cultural History of Deceit is a non-fiction book of a different kind. It is more like a road movie through history where you encounter famous scientists, side by side with all kinds of strange creatures. The book describes remarkable and crafty hoaxers who operated in the grey zone within fields like science, literature, entertainment and media.

In 1867, for example, a literary forger was able to convince several members of the French Academy of Sciences of the existence of historic letters from the famous French philosopher Blaise Pascal that could prove that Pascal had discovered the law of gravitation before Newton. In another incident in 1925, the chemist Franz Tausend was able to hoodwink the German General Ludendorff and a number of investors into believing that the war debts incurred by Germany after World War I could be repaid in gold produced by modern alchemy. Other impostors have succeeded in convincing people of the discovery of mermaids, fossilized sea monsters, oversized mammoths, buried stone giants, archaeological treasures or manuscripts that would "cause the history of the world to be rewritten".

A successful scam does not necessarily require the victim to be a gullible nitwit. Sometimes it suffices to be just a little careless with the data or the sources.

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Tore Sørensen is a translator and was previously a music journalist and singer in the pop group The Tables. The author discovered the strange power of scams when he was able to publish a review of his own band. This momentous experience led to exhaustive studies of the literature on historically successful ruses and rogues. He currently publishes the magazine Kuriositetskabinettet (The Cabinet of Curiosities), calls himself a hoaxologist and is curator of the Oslo Humbugotheque, probably Norway's largest collection of literature on the topic. This is his first book.

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Andresen&Butenschøn Forlag AS  
Huitfeldtsgate 15  
Pb 2336 Solli  
0201 OSLO  
e-mail: sommerfelt@abforlag.no  
Phone: +47 23 13 69 33 / +47 41 41 37 69

