



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

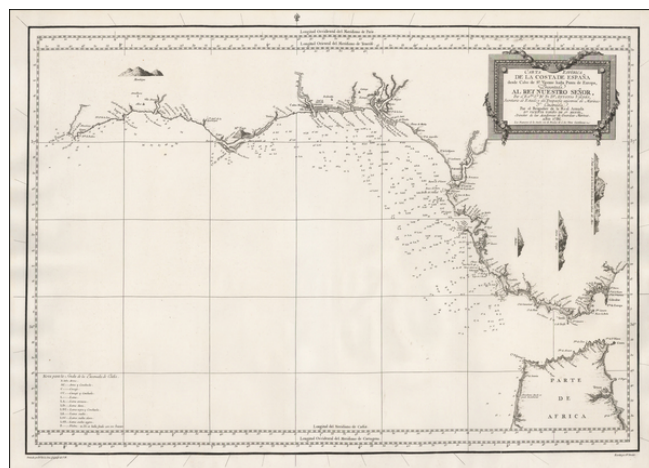
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Carta Esferica de la Costa de España desde Cabo de Sn. Vicente hasta Punta de Europa . .. Año 1786 . . .

Stock#: 46300
Map Maker: Tofiño de San Miguel
Date: 1786
Place: Madrid
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 33.5 x 24 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

A highly detailed and historically important separately-issued sea chart of Southwestern coasts of Spain and the Straits of Gibraltar, issued by the Spanish Armada Real.

This finely engraved and carefully constructed chart embraces the entire Atlantic coast of Andalusia, as well as the southern littoral of the Algarve and the Straits of Gibraltar. The coastlines are carefully delineated by trigonometric surveys and the seas feature a wealth of hydrographic information, including bathymetric soundings and also, unusually, keys to the composition of the ocean floor, denoted by acronyms (explained in the table in the lower left of the chart).

This particular work is one of the most important sea charts printed in Spain during the 18th Century, for it is the first Spanish-issued accurate general chart of this critical region. Cadiz, located near the center of the composition, was, since 1717, the headquarters of the Armada Real, while the Straits of Gibraltar, as the gateway to the Mediterranean, was one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. The chart is based on careful surveys conducted under the auspices of Admiral Don Vicente Tofiño, one of the era's most talented marine cartographers and a revolutionary naval administrator.

The chart plays a role in the grander story of the Ilustración Borbonica, or the Spanish Enlightenment Era, during which progressives like Tofiño sought to challenge Spain's traditional orthodoxy by seeking scientific discoveries and modernizing institutions and processes. Up to this time, the Spanish Crown had maintained a regime of cartographic secrecy, under which it generally forbade maps to be printed, for fear that vital geographical intelligence could fall into the hands of the nation's enemies. This policy of secrecy had detrimental affects on the Armada Real, as while Spanish pilots had made many fine manuscript



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surveys, the ban on printing ensured that accurate charts were not readily available to Spanish officers. In fact, until the publication of the present chart, Spanish officers habitually had to rely on Jacques-Nicolas Bellin's questionably accurate chart of this region, which by this time was over three decades old. Tofiño realized that creating a modern hydrographic office, producing printed charts, was mandatory if Spain was to develop a world-class navy that could compete with the likes of Britain's Royal Navy.

Admiral Don Vicente Tofiño de San Miguel, (1732-95), was the Director of the Academia de la Guardia Marina (Cadiz), an institution that essentially functioned as both the royal naval college and the repository for the Navy's surveys. Along with like-minded naval officers, notably the esteemed Admiral José de Mazarredo y Salazar, he battled conservative elements in Spanish government in an effort to overturn the policy of cartographic secrecy. While important maps and charts from Spanish sources had been published with Madrid's blessing since at least the 1730s, these instances were episodic and fleeting, and were seen merely as exceptions to the ban on publishing. Tofiño and Mazarredo were looking for nothing short of permission for the Armada to regularly publish a wide variety of charts based on new, groundbreaking surveys. By the 1780s, their efforts were yielding success.

The present chart represents an early example of the "Carta Esfericas", or large-scale, separately-issued sea charts that would be published by the Armada over the decades to come. A masterly example of advanced hydrography, it was engraved by Juan de la Cruz Cano y Olmadrilla (1734-90), perhaps the most talented map designer in Spain, best known for his monumental wall map of South America (1775). The chart had considerable practical importance, for it would have been the chart of record used by the Armada Real during the upcoming Napoleonic Wars, during which the region was a major focus of naval conflict (including the Battles of Cape St. Vincent in 1797 and the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805).

In the years that followed the publication of the chart, Tofiño and Mazarredo managed to recruit some of the finest scientific minds and greatest explorers of the era, including Dionisio Alcalá Galiano, Cosme Damián de Churrua y Elorza, and Alessandro Malaspina. This brain trust developed one of the most impressive and consequential circles of geographic knowledge in the world. This led to the formation of the Dirección de Hidrografía in 1797, the centralized chartmaking and publishing institution that Tofiño had long hoped to create. Under its auspices, many fine Carta Esfericas and sea atlases were issued, such as the *Portulano de la America Setentrional* (1809) and the *Portulano de los Estados Unidos* (1818).

Detailed Condition: