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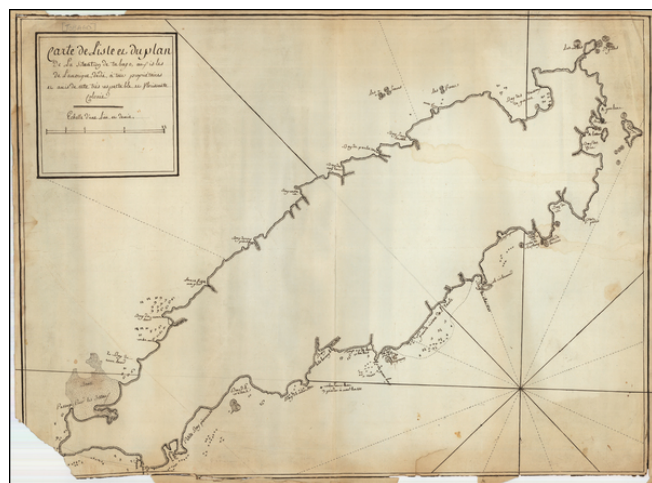
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Carte de L'isle et du plan de la Situation de Tabago, aux isles de L'Amerique, dedie a tous proprietaires et amis de cette tres respectable et florissant Colonie

Stock#: 55383
Map Maker: Anonymous
Date: 1773 circa
Place: Tobago?
Color: Pen & Ink
Condition: Good
Size: 23 x 17 inches
Price: \$3,500.00



Description:

French Manuscript Map of Tobago Revealing its Complex Colonial History

Manuscript map showing the island of Tobago and revealing its complicated history of European settlement.

The map shows continued interest in Tobago across Europe and could have been drawn during the decade France controlled Tobago after the Treaty of Paris (1783-93).

The pen-and-ink manuscript map shows the outline of Tobago with a simple compass rose. Maritime settlements and geographic features ring the island. The title translates from French as:

Map of the Island and Plan of the Situation of Tobago, in the Islands of America, dedicated to the Proprietors and Friends of this very respectable and flourishing Colony

The map is similar to the map included in John Fowler's *A Summary Account of the Present Flourishing State of the Respectable Colony of Tobago in the British West-Indies* (London: A. Grant, 1774). The title in Fowler's original reads:

A Map of the Island and Plan of the Settlement of Tobago in the West Indies Humbly Dedicated to all the Proprietors and Friends of this very respectable and flourishing colony.



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Tobago in 1773 was indeed a flourishing colony. In the previous decade, it had been surveyed and split into estates to be used as slave plantations to grow sugar. Prior to the British planting, Tobago had long been a strategic location for the French, English, Dutch, and Couronians (now Latvians) in the centuries after Columbus encountered the island in 1498. In addition, the indigenous people of the island mounted a fierce, sustained resistance to European invasion. This map offers glimpses into this fraught imperial past and shows the changeable nature of power in the early modern Caribbean.

Colonial efforts in Tobago in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

Although many Caribbean islands changed hands during the imperial infighting between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, Tobago was especially prone to the power shifts of global politics. Control over the island changed no less than 33 times between 1498 and 1814. Spain controlled the island for most of the sixteenth century with little actual presence on the island. However, by the seventeenth century it was no longer able to keep their imperial rivals at bay.

The Dutch attempted their first colony in 1627, clustering their settlement near what is now known as Great Courland Bay, labeled here as *Bay du Courland*. This effort lasted until 1632, and the Dutch made another focused attempt to colonize the island from 1654 to 1678, during which time they were confronted by the British, French, and the indigenous peoples.

The Treaty of Breda of 1667 agreed that the island would remain in Dutch hands, but the British and indigenous islanders attacked yet again in 1670. The Treaty of Westminster in 1674 again confirmed Dutch control. Two years later, the French attacked. After a second French assault in 1678, Tobago shifted to French control. The Treaty of Nymwegen named Tobago a French possession. However, the constant fighting and treaty-breaking led the European empires to agree to make Tobago a neutral territory where the original inhabitants could remain without interference.

The Caylus Incident and the first surveys of Tobago

In 1749, the Marquess de Caylus, the governor of French-controlled Martinique, authorized French settlers to build on Tobago, offering them protection. 300 buccaneers ventured to the island with orders to build a fort near Rockly Bay, the site of a decisive Dutch naval defeat by the French in 1677.

Typical of the easily-unbalanced power arrangements that kept the Caribbean in near-constant imperial conflict, the governor of Barbados—an English possession—balked at the move. He ordered British ships to Tobago to demand the French cease construction. The French did vacate, but they left roughly 130 settlers behind.



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This conflict came during the negotiations of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chappelle, which reiterated Tobago's historic neutrality. Debated in 1748 and signed in 1749, the Treaty forced France to promise to evacuate all disputed lands until their possession was decided via diplomacy in Europe. Both Britain and France sent commissioners to Tobago to assess the situation. They oversaw the destruction of the French fort and the evacuation of the settlers.

Due to the heightened tensions caused by the Caylus incident, Britain undertook a series of surveys of Tobago in the 1750s. They found remnants of the Caylus settlers still living on the island, as well as some English and Spanish, who lived off the turtle hunting. They shared the island with the indigenous population and seasonal groups of Europeans who came as log cutters and traders.

The conversion of Tobago into a British plantation colony and John Fowler's Summary Account

The tenuous neutrality of Tobago was shattered when the British occupied the island in 1763, at the close of the Seven Years' War. They continued their surveys in the 1760s and 1770s. The interior was divided into estates, which were offered for sale to enterprising citizens hoping to strike it rich in the colonies.

A comparison of Thomas Jefferys' two maps of Tobago, dated 1765 and 1775, show the massive difference. The first has an empty interior and uses names based on the accounts of traders and buccaneers. The second includes English toponyms like names Hillsborough Bay and Richmond Island, as well as the seven divisions of land that were to be used for plantations.

Jefferys, Kitchin, and other English mapmakers, including John Byres, who conducted a survey of the island himself, published maps of the island in the 1770s. John Fowler, about whom very little is known, also added a map as part of his pamphlet promoting settlement of the island. He published the work in 1773 and included a map. This manuscript example is a copy of the Fowler's map, although the interior is left blank, perhaps indicating that it is unfinished.

Fowler's work begins with a historical account that argues for an English claim despite lapses in control and settlement. This is followed by an overview of the present state of the island, touting the commercial potential of the island as a sugar cane producer. He is careful to stress that there are already many society ladies present to lend an air of civility to the colony. The third part is taken up with a list of the estate sales, to which the printed map corresponds. The fourth part has a transcript of the first grand jury held on the island (the two accused were acquitted) and the fifth section, an appendix, offers sailing directions to the "principal bays of Tobago". Fowler's work was a guide for those headed to plumb the riches of the island and the copyist of this map likely was caught up in the same fever that had Fowler so excited.



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Many heeded Fowler's call to settle (and forced others, Africans peoples thrust into slavery, to settle as well), but the island was still not free of imperial conflict. The French were displeased at the British development of Tobago and, in 1781, attempted to regain the island. The Treaty of Paris of 1783 awarded Tobago to the French, which led to a decade-long attempt to colonize the island yet again. This effort broke off in 1793 during the French Revolution. The manuscript map could have been drawn by a French enthusiast during this time.

The British took advantage of the turmoil in France to attack the island and were the administrative rulers until 1802, when the Treaty of Amiens again gave the island over to French control. The British took the island back the next year. In 1814, British control was recognized by the French and the island remained a British possession until independence in 1962 as part of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Courland and the Lampsins colonies

As another example of the little-known histories preserved in this map, the northwestern coast includes both Great Courland Bay and Little Courland Bay. The mention of Courland indicates a surprising colonial past. During the interim period between Dutch colonial attempts in the mid-seventeenth century, another colonial actor came to Tobago: the Couronians. Courland was once an independent state situated on the Baltic, where modern-day Latvia is today. The Couronians arrived in 1654 and settled near Great Courland Bay, which they named for their homeland and patron, the Duke of Courland.

The Couronians lived peacefully with other Europeans on the island, in particular with the renewed Dutch efforts led by two merchants from Vlissingen, brothers Adrian and Cornelis Lampsins. However, in 1658, the Duke of Courland was taken prisoner by Charles Gustavus, the King of Sweden. Seeing an opportunity for, without the connections of their patron, the Courlanders were poorly supplied, the Lampsins contacted the Couronian settlers, who surrendered control of their settlement to the Dutch. They established their own colony, which they called *Les Quartier des Trois Rivieres* at Little Courland Bay, named on this map as, "*L Baye du Courland.*"

Also seeing opportunity in the unrest of the island, the French too made a claim on Tobago at this time. In 1658, the French named Tobago as one of the islands granted to the French West India Company. There had previously been some French presence on the island, but not an administrative or a commercial prerogative.

The opportunists were to join forces in 1662, when the Lampsins settlers applied for and received the grant of the island from Louis XIV. The French West India Company gave up their claim in favor of the newly named Baron of Tobago, Adrian Lampsins. Hubert de Beveren was named governor and he set



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about strengthening the island's defenses.

The Courland claim was not dead, however. In 1664, Charles Gustavus signed the Treaty of Oliva, which, among other stipulations, freed the Duke of Courland. The Duke, livid at the incursion of his colony, demanded that Tobago be given over to his control. This demand was refused and led the Duke to seek the help of France's rival, England. Charles II agreed to grant the Duke the island on the condition that only Englishmen would settle there. The grant excited several British merchants and investors. In 1666, a small contingent set out to make good on the Duke's claim, i.e. to seize the island, and they succeeded in doing so, if only for a brief period until the French routed them.

As related above, by this time the Dutch had again begun a colonization project on Tobago and their claim was recognized, but never respected, in the 1660s and 1670s. Tobago would continue to shuffle amongst the great European imperial powers, but the attempts by Courland and the Lampsins brothers shows the opportunities for enterprising individuals at the liminal edges of empire.

This map is a previously unrecorded example of the geography of Tobago. Manuscript maps of this age and condition are rare. The map captures the complexity of Tobago's colonial past, a complexity that also applied to the larger Caribbean region where empires employed entrepreneurs and pirates, in addition to armies and navies, to make their quixotic claims. It would be a beneficial addition to any collection of Caribbean cartography.

Detailed Condition:

Lower left corner torn away. Narrow margins, with some loss.