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Carte Du Cours Du Maragnon ou de la Grande Riviere Des Amazones . . . Levee en 1743 et 1744....par M. de la Condamine . . .

Stock#: 61614
Map Maker: Bellin
Date: 1757
Place: Paris
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 14.5 x 7 inches

Price: SOLD

Description:

Fine Map of the Amazon River From the Exciting La Condamine Expedition

Detailed regional map, showing the course of the Amazon River from the Andes to the Atlantic. It was originally drawn by Charles Marie de la Condamine, a French savant who journeyed to South America to measure the arc of the meridian and returned to the Atlantic via the Amazon.

The map shows the northern section of South America, which is today comprised of Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana. Here, the main political units are Brazil, held by the Portuguese; Guiane, which is split between Dutch and French control; and the Spanish and Portuguese missions in north-central and northwest South America. These missions were run principally by the Jesuit order.

The main focus is the Amazon River and its tributaries. Overlaying the map is another, phantom river. This is the outline of the most famous map of the Amazon River to precede this example. It was printed in Quito in 1707, the first map to be printed there. The author was Father Samuel Fritz, a Jesuit missionary, who is referenced in several notes on this map.

The title explains that this map was taken from a variety of modern manuscript sources, but the main source was la Condamine, a French academician who had been part of a scientific voyage to Peru in the 1740s. Another note at the bottom of this example explains that this map was originally published by la Condamine, which it was, in 1745. The present edition was published in another important book, Prevost's *L'Histoire Generale des Voyages*.

Antoine Francois Prevost (1697-1763) was a soldier, a priest, and a novelist. Fleeing after he left his abbey





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without leave, Prevost ended up in England. Later, he lived in The Hague and, after reconciling with his religious order, in Chantilly, and, while in exile again, in Brussels and Frankfurt. From 1746 to 1759 he published the first fifteen volumes of the *Histoire générale des voyages*, which encompassed historical and recent voyages to destinations around the world.

Mapping of the Amazon River Basin

From the sixteenth century, the Amazon had been shown as a vast yet undefined river. Although still uncharted by Europeans, the Amazon Basin was of utmost importance to the Spanish and Portuguese as somewhere in the river's bends was the boundary between these two massive empires.

The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) supposedly set the boundary line at 370 leagues west of Cape Verde, leaving the Portuguese only a sliver of eastern South America. However, expeditions up the Amazon River pushed Portuguese holdings far into the interior. This can be seen on this map with the label of the Portuguese missions across the center of the continent. Particularly contentious was the mouth of the Rio Negro, the Amazon's largest northern tributary. The Spanish urged missionaries to spread their work from the Maynas region east toward the Rio Negro.

Fritz, sent to the Amazon in 1686, was one of the missionaries to carry out this plan of Portuguese containment. He ultimately produced several maps of the region, four of which survive today. Only one of these was printed, in 1707 in Quito.

The La Condamine Expedition

After Fritz's map, referenced in this example, La Condamine's was the next to offer Europeans a new view of the river basin. In 1735, La Condamine left France as part of a geodesic expedition to Peru. They journeyed through Spanish America under the supervision of two Spanish naval officers, Antonio de Ulloa and Jorge Juan.

The expedition was trying to settle a disagreement amongst the followers of Newton and Cassini about the shape of the earth. To do so, they needed to measure the distance of the arc of the meridian near the equator, hence their destination of Peru. A corresponding expedition was sent north, to Lapland, to perform similar measurements closer to the North Pole.

The Lapland expedition quickly returned to France and confirmed Newton's hypothesis that the globe bulged near the equator and was slightly flattened at the poles. The Peru expedition was not so lucky. La Condamine did not get along with his travel companions and their surveying activities were plagued by



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squabbling. Members of the expedition went mad, became ill, and one was trampled by a crowd in a bull ring.

Finally finished with his measurements in 1743, la Condamine decided to return to France via the Amazon River. This would give him novel information to share with the *Académie des Sciences*, as the shape of the earth question had already been settled. La Condamine had already sent back the first samples of rubber to the *Académie*, and he was the first European to describe curare arrow poison and to discern the correct use of quinine in fighting malaria.

La Condamine published several books, maps, and articles about the expedition. This map originally appeared in 1745 in the *Mémoires de mathématique et de physique tirés des registres de l'Académie royale des sciences* (Plate 8, p. 492).

This map chronicles one of the most interesting exploration expeditions to the Amazon. It was based on la Condamine's important map and appeared in a bestselling and prominent travel collection. It would make an impactful addition to any collection of South America or Amazon maps.

Detailed Condition: