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Mähsette-Kuiuab. Chief of the Cree-Indians.

Stock#: 77704
Map Maker: Bodmer
Date: 1844 circa [but printed circa 1922]
Place: Leipzig
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 12 x 15.75 inches
Price: \$ 395.00



Description:

Cree Medicine Man or Conjurer by Karl Bodmer

A beautiful hand-colored engraving of a Cree medicine man, after Karl Bodmer, and originally issued as Vignette XXII in the atlas to Prince Maximilian of Wied's famous travel account of the Western Plains, *Travels in the Interior of North America* (1839-43).

Maximilian's monumental account first appeared in German (1839-41), followed by a French translation in 1840-43 and an English edition in 1843. A Paris-issued pictorial atlas contained eighty-one aquatint plates (48 "imperial" folios and 33 smaller "vignette" plates often called quarto in size), engraved and etched on metal sheets, after paintings by Karl Bodmer, and which accompanied all three editions. The plates are outstanding authentic depictions of the western plains and Native Americans by a highly skilled European artist. Bodmer avoided romanticizing his subjects, and attempted to record the people and places he encountered as true to life as possible.



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This portrait of Mähsette-Kuiuab has the three captions in German, French, and English; a reference to Bodmer can be seen in the inscription in the lower left "Ch. Bodmer pinx ad nat."; the print is undated.

The following passage, from the English translation of Maximilian's narrative, describes the subject of the present portrait:

Several Cree Indians arrived at Fort Union, among them the celebrated medicine man, or conjurer, Mähsette-Kuiuab (le sonnante), whose portrait Mr. Bodmer had great difficulty in taking, because he could not get him to sit still. He was suffering severely from an affection of the eyes; complained of his poverty, and wanted to borrow a horse, promising to pay for it at a future date. This man is highly respected among his countrymen, because his incantations are said to be most efficacious; and even the engagés of the Company firmly believe in such mummeries.

According to Howes, the vignette plates in the original issue of the pictorial atlas did not have the special blindstamp with Bodmer's name which is requisite on first issues of the larger folio plates. The atlas was reprinted in 1844 by the London engraver Edward Lumley. There was also a later 1922 Leipzig edition with the plates restruck on India paper and mounted on thicker sheets. The present print appears to be one of the reissues.

Detailed Condition:

Hand-colored engraved print. Plate impression approximately 12 1/2 by 9 1/2 inches, on sheet measuring 12 by 15.75 inches. Some tiny areas of negligible surface abrasions to blank areas of the sheet (image not affected). Otherwise, clean and very good. Vivid hand coloring, heightened with gum arabic.