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Carte generale des decouvertes de l'Amiral de Fonte representant la grande probabilite d'un Passage au Nord Ouestg par Thomas Jefferys . . . 1768



Stock#: 84035
Map Maker: Diderot / de Vaugondy

Date: 1772
Place: Paris
Color:
Condition: VG+
Size: 14 x 11.5 inches

Price: SOLD

Description:

A Fascinating Map of an Uncertain Pacific Northwest

This is an interesting map centered on the northwest coast of America, and extending from Siberia to Greenland. Not just one, but many Northwest Passages are shown in this map dedicated to the cartographic debates of the era.

This area was cartographically contentious enough that Diderot dedicated most of his ten-map *Enyclopedie* supplement to the region so as to be able to show the various possibilities. This map eschews the more realistic nature of the other maps in the work, and shows many myths regarding the region. Despite this, parts of the map, especially in Alaska, are accurate for their time and based on the cutting-edge Jeffrey's map.

Prior to Cook's first voyage, English, French, and Russian cartographers were actively debating the cartography of the region in the North Pacific between Asia and North America. The Russian explorations of the first half of the 18th century, including those by Bering, Tchirikow, and others, had been reported by De L'Isle, who had worked with the Russians and was privy to their latest discoveries. These reports were used by Jeffreys, who is cited as a key source in this map.

To the east of Alaska, the somewhat realistic cartography gives way to a mythic portrayal. Diderot shows many interesting features and notes who discovered or mapped them. Off the coast of a northern horn of Alaska (as indicated by the Japanese), the islands of Ye-Oue can be found, where the pygmies supposedly

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reside. No Sea of the West is shown, and the Straits of Juan de Fuca are narrow and reach the Atlantic just north of Hudson Bay. Many other rivers and lakes create additional circuitous Northwest Passages. The River of the West, forerunner of the Columbia, is shown with at least two different possibilities, after Russian and French maps. Diderot cites an Indian cartographer "Ochagach" as indicating a mountain chain with translucent rocks, near the location of the Rocky Mountains. A reference is even made to the Chinese Fusang. Evidently, the map is very well researched, and is one of the best collections of cartographic myths on a single work from the 18th century, rivaling Buache's maps, from which Diderot obviously drew some inspiration.

Detailed Condition: