



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

Morte del Capitano Kook

Stock#: 85923
Map Maker: Formaleoni
Date: 1785
Place: Venice
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 7 x 6.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Rare Italian "Death of Captain Cook" Engraving

Nice example of this rare image of the death of Captain James Cook at the hands of Native Hawaiians, during his third and final voyage.

Cook's death in Hawaii is one of the iconic images of the 18th Century. With a number of contemporary engraved depictions in the 18th Century, it is also a fascinating study in how the information of Cook's death was disseminated.

Captain James Cook was killed in Hawaii on February 14, 1779. He and his men had spent the two months on the Big Island and been well received. They departed in early February 1779 but returned due to storms and the need for ship repairs. The second reception turned hostile, and tensions between the sailors and the natives increased. When Cook went ashore to investigate, a scuffle occurred and Cook was killed.

Conflicting accounts regarding Cook's death circulated, as there was some confusion over whether Cook was facing the Hawaiians and whether he had ordered his men to shoot at the islanders. Lieutenant James King, who was on the voyage but did not witness the incident, reported that "it was remarked that while he faced the natives, none of them had offered him any violence, but that having turned about, to give his orders to the boats, he was stabbed in the back, and fell with his face into the water."



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Morte del Capitano Cook

There are at least 4 major English works depicting the scene, one of which shows Cook on the attack, but most show him facing away from his attacker.

The present image suggests that Cook was facing away from his attacker, but is a curious depiction in general. The scene is reversed, with Cook facing the water to the right of the image, and suggests that the few British seaman accompanying Cook were largely indifferent to his plight, unlike the more traditional images by the major British artists:

- [Webber / Bartolozzi](#)
- [Carter](#)

Rarity

The image is rare on the market. This is the first separate example we have ever seen.

Detailed Condition: