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Bison-dance of the Mandan Indians in front of their Medicine Lodge in Mih Tutta-Hankush. Bistontanz der Mandan Indianer vor der Medezin hütte in Mih Tutta Hangkusch. Danse du bison des Indiens Mandans devant la Loge de Medecine a Mih Toutta Hangkouche. (Tableau 18)

Stock#: 94170
Map Maker: Bodmer

Date: 1839 - 1842
Place: Paris, Coblenz and London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 17.5 x 14.5 inches

Price: SOLD



Description:

A compelling hand-colored aquatint with etching by Karl Bodmer, illustrating an important ceremonial dance of the Mandan tribe, produced for the first edition of Prince Maximilian's *Travels in the Interior of North America*.

This is one of the best-known images produced from Bodmer's travels with Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied, a German explorer with whom he undertook a voyage up the Missouri River between 1832 and 1834. As part of their expedition, they documented and observed the Mandan people, an indigenous tribe of the Great Plains. This print captures a sacred Mandan Buffalo Bull Society ritual, which they witnessed on April 9, 1834, at Fort Clark.

The composition of the tableau is noteworthy for its complex interplay between empirical observation and artistic interpretation. Bodmer's depiction of the dance varies somewhat from Maximilian's account, suggesting that the ceremony's fast pace required a certain degree of post-event reconstruction. Despite this, the costumes' detailed representation aligns closely with Maximilian's description, as confirmed by Bodmer's studies of the costumes.

Bodmer's preparatory studies of individual figures and their attire, made five days before the event, are reflected in the accuracy of the costumes reproduced in the print. The central figure, for instance, mirrors the costume of the Leader of the Mandan Buffalo Bull Society from Bodmer's studies. The intricate shield designs and other elements also find faithful reproduction in the print.



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This print's creation process is believed to have been a combination of direct observation, memory, and studio composition in Paris, aided perhaps by posed models. The tableau bears a striking contrast to a related work in the Baltimore Museum of Art, both in stylistic approach and intensity.

The historical and cultural context of the depicted event, combined with the distinct visual style and meticulous detail, make this print a valuable representation of Mandan culture as witnessed by European explorers in the early 19th century.

State

This is Ruud's 2nd of 4 states, the first state being an unobtainable rarity thought to have been produced in as few as three copies. Chardon aîné et Aze is recognized as the printed. Bougeard is listed as the printer in the first and third states. The reason for this back-and-forth is undetermined.

Detailed Condition:

Aquatint, etching, and roulette, hand-colored and heightened with gum arabic. With the Bodmer blindstamp below center imprint line.