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Idols of the Mandan Indian. Götzenbilder der Mandan Indianer. Idoles des Indiens Mandans. (Tableau 25)

Stock#: 94169
Map Maker: Bodmer
Date: 1839 - 1842
Place: Paris, Coblenz and London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 10.25 x 14.5 inches
Price: \$ 3,500.00



Description:

In the realm of Karl Bodmer's oeuvre, "Idols of the Mandan Indians" stands out as an evocative image, imbued with a sense of brooding solemnity akin to the dramatic landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich. The scene is bathed in the glow of moonlight, providing a backdrop that underscores the spiritual and cultural significance of the depicted moment.

The artistry of Bodmer is evident in the intricate depiction of two effigies, representing deities significant to the Mandan tribe: the sun, symbolizing the Lord of Life and the creator of all things, and the moon, the Old Woman Who Never Dies, associated with the life-sustaining elements of corn and buffalo.

The original watercolor, *Mandan Shrine* (KBA 302), upon which this tableau is based, was likely initiated



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in the field and completed either during Bodmer's stay at Fort Clark or later upon his return to Europe. The detailed rendering of the hide-wrapped poles in the scene was informed by Bodmer's first-hand observations outside the Mandan village, Mih-Tutta-Hang-Kusch.

The figure featured in the print is particularly intriguing. In the earliest states of the print, the figure differs from the one in KBA 302, appearing instead in two different poses on a separate sheet, KBA 337. This print, therefore, is a composite, skillfully crafted from two independent parts. The ultimate figure, potentially representing the "young Indian" who guided Bodmer to the "medicine site," was included in the print after the third state.

This tableau stands as a significant image of early ethnographic interest in Native American cultures, and particularly illuminates the spiritual life of the Mandan tribe. It provides a valuable insight into the respectful and meticulous approach Bodmer took in documenting indigenous cultures, rendering them with a depth and complexity that challenges and enriches our understanding of these societies.

State

Ruud's 2nd of 4 states, with the French and German titles corrected to "Götzenbilder" and "Idoles" but without the date added.

See *Karl Bodmer's North American Prints* for a discussion of the extensive changes made to this, one of the earliest of the prints.

Detailed Condition:

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