



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(Malaspina Expedition): [Group of six manuscript documents, signed, related to a future assignment for the officers of the Malaspina expedition, including a voyage to chart the coast of Guatemala and to explore Nicaragua, proposed by the viceroy of New Spain]

Stock#: 101838
Map Maker: Revillagigedo, Count of / Valdes
Date: 1792 1793
Place: Mexico and Madrid
Color: Pen & Ink
Condition: VG
Size: 13.5 x 9.25 inches blue portfolio
Price: \$ 12,500.00



Description:

The King Praises the Malaspina Expedition

While the Viceroy of New Spain Plans New Explorations in Guatemala and Nicaragua

With An Early Reference to Inter-Oceanic Exploration in 1793

A fascinating group of six original manuscripts regarding planned exploration projects to chart the coast of Guatemala and another to explore Nicaragua, set forth by the Viceroy of New Spain, the Count of Revillagigedo. These fresh exploration projects, in the wake of Spain's efforts in Pacific exploration during the 1790s, were in fact designed for the officers of the noted Pacific expedition under Alejandro Malaspina.

After the Malaspina expedition completed their first visit to Vancouver Island, the Conde de Revillagigedo, Viceroy of New Spain, heard news of the Strait of Georgia and ordered two new ships built, the Mexicana and Sutil. These were to sail through the strait in search of a Northwest Passage under Revillagigedo's own men. But when Malaspina returned to Mexico he coopted the expedition, and replaced



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(Malaspina Expedition): [Group of six manuscript documents, signed, related to a future assignment for the officers of the Malaspina expedition, including a voyage to chart the coast of Guatemala and to explore Nicaragua, proposed by the viceroy of New Spain]

the Viceroy's officers with his own, Dionisio Galiano and Cayetano Valdés. The result was an uneasy situation wherein Malaspina and Revillagigedo both sent orders and suggestions to the two ships on their journey, each carefully attempting to keep the expedition in hand without openly contradicting the other.

When Galiano and Valdés returned at the end of 1792, Malaspina was already on his way to the Philippines, and Revillagigedo seized the opportunity to make a contribution which was definitively his. In this series of letters and notes, we see the Viceroy suggest that the Mexicano and Sutil, this time under the command of Juan Bernaci (or Juan Vernacci) and Secundino Salamanca, be sent on a mission to chart the coasts of Guatemala, as well as make a "physical and political" examination of Nicaragua.

The two officers, Vernacci and Salamanca, are mentioned in instructions issued by Revillagigedo to Malaspina, as transcribed and translated by John Kendrick:

The exact definition of the intervening coast [i.e from the volcanoes of Guatemala], and particularly the examination of the Puerto de Ventosa immediately on the coast of Tecoahtepeque [sic] are now new objectives you must assume, although you should add next to those already indicated an exploration of the further coasts of Guatemala and particularly the Golfo of Amapala and the Golfo de Nicoya.... Many reasons of equity and of a just sharing of work, command, and responsibility lead me to believe that among you are those who should be directed with anticipation to... and leave to Frigate Lieutenants Don Juan Vernacci and Don Secundino Salamanca the care of the tasks which include outside the Golfos de Amapala, Papagayo, and Nicoya, and inside (on the return of the goleta to San Blas from Realejo) a hydrographic map of the Golfo de Nicaragua and Rio de San Juan made with exactitude, so that neither the system of defense nor of trade should lack those data without which the successful provisions for the prosperity and security of that region would be very exposed.
- The Voyage of the Sutil and Mexicana 1792: The Last Spanish Exploration of the Northwest Coast of America. Translated by John Kendrick.

The first two letters in our group, both dated November 30, 1792, and likely sent together, introduce the Guatemala expedition idea to the recently promoted Captain general of the Navy, Antonio Valdés. The first, written in a secretarial hand and signed by the Viceregal Secretary Antonio Bonilla, is a copy of a letter sent to the Conde de Aranda, then Secretary of State. It explains that Galiano and Valdés have returned to Mexico with their ships, and the survey of Guatemala and Nicaragua (of clear interest to Aranda's office), which Revillagigedo is quick to point out was not accomplished by Malaspina, has not yet commenced as the Viceroy is waiting for approbation from the King for the expedition. The second letter,



Barry Lawrence Ruderman Antique Maps Inc.

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(Malaspina Expedition): [Group of six manuscript documents, signed, related to a future assignment for the officers of the Malaspina expedition, including a voyage to chart the coast of Guatemala and to explore Nicaragua, proposed by the viceroy of New Spain]

in the same secretarial hand but signed in manuscript by Revillagigedo and addressed to Valdés, introduces the first and asks the question directly - are the officers free to go on this mission, or does the King wish them to return to Spain?

Inter-Oceanic Route Explorations in 1793

The above letter is interesting for mentioning the need to survey a possible route between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans via the Gulf of Nicaragua and the San Juan River. This may be a reference to an early Spanish plan for a possible canal using the San Juan River as an access route to Lake Nicaragua.

The following documents show that the Viceroy was nothing if not persistent, with a brief manuscript note signed by the Duke of la Alcudia (Manuel Godoy, who had just become the most powerful man in Spain after succeeding Aranda's position), written to Antonio Valdés. In it, he informs Valdés that he has received an interesting letter from the Viceroy of Mexico describing the aforementioned plans, which he considers "would certainly be very useful if done as swiftly as possible," [our translation] likely hoping to improve Spain's charts of the Antilles with a war against France on the horizon. Valdés tenders Godoy his disappointing reply with a brief autograph note: he has already received a similar letter from the Viceroy and responded in the negative. All four officers, Galiano, (Cayetano) Valdés, Vernacci, and Salamanca, are requested to return across the Atlantic for new assignments. The proposed mapping of Central America, the Captain general has decided, can instead be assigned to the new expedition which has just left Spain to create an *Atlas Americano*.

The final document, a three-page autograph letter dated Feb. 27, 1793, likely a retained draft, with significant corrections and emendations, is signed by Valdés and addressed to Revillagigedo. Valdés conveys His Majesty's thanks to the Viceroy for his news of the Malaspina expedition and his contributions towards its success, and then delivers the order for the officers to return home. The war with France would break out sooner than anticipated, curtailing Spanish advances in geographical knowledge, with the survey of Central America postponed for nearly twenty years.

Here follows selected translations of extracts.

Viceroy Revillagigedo to Antonio Valdés. Nov. 30, 1792:

The attached copy of the letter that I address on this date to the Count of Aranda will inform Your Excellency of the reasons that compel me to suspend the reconnaissance of the coasts of Guatemala,



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(Malaspina Expedition): [Group of six manuscript documents, signed, related to a future assignment for the officers of the Malaspina expedition, including a voyage to chart the coast of Guatemala and to explore Nicaragua, proposed by the viceroy of New Spain]

which could not be completed by the Schooners under the charge of Don Alexandro Malaspina, and the physical and political examination of the Gulf of Nicaragua.

As this Expedition was to be undertaken by the Frigate Lieutenants Dr. Juan Bernaci, and Don Secundino Salamanca, I have arranged for these two officers to move and remain in this Capital until the sovereign resolutions of the King are notified to me: in which case I will provide the commissioners with the aid they need for the aforementioned reconnaissance; or for their prompt return to Spain. God keep Your Excellency for many years. Mexico. November 30, 1792.

Spanish original:

No. 182.

La copia adjunta de carta que d'rijo con esta fecha al Señor Conde de Aranda instruirá á V.E. de las causas que me obligan á suspender los reconocimientos de las costas de Guatemala, que no pudieron perfeccionar las Goletas del cargo de Dn. Alexandro Malaspina, y el examen fisico y politico del Golfo de Nicaragua.

Como de esta Expedicion devian encargarse los Tenientes de Fragata Dr. Juan Bernaci, y Don Secundino Salamanca, he dispuesto que estos does oficiales se trasladen y subsistan, en esta Capital hasta que se me avisen las soberanas resoluciones del Rey: en cuio caso franquearé á los comisionados los auxilios que necesiten para los indicados reconocimientos; ó para su pronto regreso á España. Dios Guarde á V.E. M[ucho]s A[ño]s. Mexico. 30 de Nov. de 1792

Antonio Bonilla, copy of a letter sent to the Conde de Aranda, Nov. 30, 1792:

Excellent Sir: Having completed the Reconnaissance Expedition in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which I report to Your Excellency in letter No. 121 of this date, the hydrographic surveys that could not be carried out by the corvettes under the charge of Don Alexandro Malaspina on the coasts of Guatemala should continue, also conducting the physical and political examination of the Gulf of Nicaragua, and its communication with the North Sea through the San Juan River. These important and extensive explorations were proposed to me by the Chief of the aforementioned corvettes, asking me to entrust them to the Frigate Lieutenants Don Juan Bernaci, and Don Secundino Salamanca. But although I recommended it in letter no. 72 of January 3rd of this year through the Ministry of Your Excellency's charge, it also states that they would not be executed until having the



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(Malaspina Expedition): [Group of six manuscript documents, signed, related to a future assignment for the officers of the Malaspina expedition, including a voyage to chart the coast of Guatemala and to explore Nicaragua, proposed by the viceroy of New Spain]

sovereign approval of the King. As I have not received it, I have arranged for the mentioned Frigate Lieutenants Bernacci and Salamanca to move to this Capital, where they will stay until His Majesty decides whether the mentioned expeditions should be carried out or not. In the first case, I will without delay take the necessary measures for the new pressing of the Schooners Sutil and Mexicana, which will be carried out with lesser costs in the Department of San Blas, from where they will be transferred to Acapulco with the sea officers and crew needed for the enterprise...

Spanish original:

No. 125.

Exmo. Señor, Concluida la Expedicion de Reconocimiento en el estrecho de Juan de Fuca, de que doy cuenta a V.E. en carte No. 121 de esta fecha debian continuarse los hidrografos que no pudieron perfgr. las corvetas del cargo de Dn. Alexandro Malaspina sobre las costas de Guatemala, egecutandose tambien el examen fisico y politico del Golfo de Nicaragua, y su comunicacion con el Mar del Norte por el Rio San Juan. Me propuso estas importantes y prolixas exploraciones el Geje de las referidas corvetas pidiendome que las confiare á los Tenientes de Fregata Don Juan Bernaci, y Don Secundino Salamanca; pero aunque la recomiende en carta no. 72 de 3 de enero de este año por el Ministerio del cargo de V.E. expone tambien que no se executarian hasta tener la soberano aprovacion del Rey. Como no la he recevido he dispuesto que los mencionados Tenientes de Fragata Bernacci y Salamanca se trasladen a esta Capital, donde subsituran hasta que S.M. resuelva si han de executarse o no las mencionadas expediciones. En el primer caso tomare sin demora las providencias conducentes al nuevo apresso de las Goletas Sutil y Mexicana, que se verificara con menores costos en el Departamento de San Blas, de donde se transferiran a Acapulco con los oficiales de Mar y Tripulacion que necesiten para la empresa...

Duke of Alcudia to Antonio Valdés, Feb. 24, 1793:

I hereby attach to Your Excellency a letter from the Viceroy of New Spain concerning the physical and political examination of the Gulf of Nicaragua and its communication with the North Sea, which will certainly be very useful to be conducted as soon as possible: so that upon learning from another letter, you may kindly tell me if the Viceroy's proposal for its execution by the individuals and in the terms he proposes can be approved. God keep Your Excellency for many years... February 24, 1793. The Duke of Alcudia.



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(Malaspina Expedition): [Group of six manuscript documents, signed, related to a future assignment for the officers of the Malaspina expedition, including a voyage to chart the coast of Guatemala and to explore Nicaragua, proposed by the viceroy of New Spain]

Notation in Valdés's hand, Feb. 27, 1793:

The Viceroy has presented the same to me, and I tell him that these [officials] should return to Spain, since the reconnaissance in question can be carried out by the surveyors who have gone to create the American Atlas and have [equal?] [?] due to the [?] of astronomical instruments they have taken. Dated on February 27, 1793.

Spanish original:

Paso adjunta á V.E. una carta del Virrey de Nueva España relativa al examen fisico y politico del Golfo del Nicaragua y su comunicacion con el Mar del Norte, el qual sera ciertamente muy util que se haga con la proximidad posible: a fin de que enterandose V.E. de otra carta, se sirva decirme si podrá aprobarse al Virrey el que se execute por los sujetos y en los terminos qe. propone. Dios g[uarda] á V.E. m[uchos] a[ños] ... 24 de Febrero de 1793. El Duque de la Alcudia

Notation in Valdés's hand:

Que me ha expuesto lo mismo el Virrey y le digo que estos [oficiales] regresen á España, pues el reconocimiento de que trata podran hacerlo los vergananes que han ido a formar el Atlas Americano y tienen [ejuales?] proporciones por la [?] de instrumentos astronomicos que han llevado. F[ec]h[ad]o en 27 de febrero de 1793.

Antonio Valdés to Viceroy Revillagigedo:

From your letter dated November 30, No. 181, and the documents accompanying it, the King is informed of the explorations carried out in the Strait of Juan de Fuca by the frigate captains D. Dionicio Alcalá Galiano and D. Cayetano Valdes, with the Schooners Sutil and Mexicana under their command, assisted by their seconds, the frigate lieutenants D. Juan Vernaci and D. Secundino Salamanca. It has been very satisfying for His Majesty to hear all the news of this expedition, and the perseverance with which these officers overcame the great obstacles that opposed their operations: the poor condition of the ships, the stormy weather, and the lack of knowledge regarding the seas they navigated. For all these reasons, His Majesty further applauds the activity, application, and zeal they have shown, and which will be duly rewarded, as recommended in your aforementioned letter. His Majesty is equally pleased with the abundant support that facilitated the success of this expedition; and for which His Majesty commands me to express to you his royal



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(Malaspina Expedition): [Group of six manuscript documents, signed, related to a future assignment for the officers of the Malaspina expedition, including a voyage to chart the coast of Guatemala and to explore Nicaragua, proposed by the viceroy of New Spain]

gratitude.

Another letter from you, No. 182, discusses whether the reconnaissance of the coasts of Guatemala should be carried out by Vernaci and Salamanca; to which I reply by order of His Majesty: that it will be carried out by the ships employed in the operations for the Atlas of the Mexican Gulf; and that it is His Royal Will that Alcala, Galiano, Valdes, Vernaci, and Salamanca should come to Spain immediately to engage in other matters of the Royal Service. May God Preserve You Many Years. Aranjuez, February 27, 1793. Valdéz.

Spanish original:

Por la carta de Vd. de 30 de Noviembre No. 181 y documentos que acompaña, queda el Rey enterado de las exploraciones executadas en el estrecho de Juan de Fuca por los capitanes de fragata D. Dionicio Alcala Galiano y D. Cayetano Valdes, con las Goletas Sutil y Mexicana de sus mandos, ayudar de sus segundos los tenientes de fragata D. Juan Vernaci y D. Secundino Salamanca: habiendo sido de mucha satisfaccion para S.M. todas las noticias de esta expedicion, y la constancia con que superaran dichos oficiales los grandes obstaculos que oponian á sus operaciones la mala clase de los Buques, lo tiempos borrascosos, y la obscuridad de noticias de los mares que navegaban: por todo lo qual aplaude mas S.M. la actividad aplicacion y celo que han acreditado, y que premiara oportunamente, como en la citada carta lo recomienda V.S.: de que no queda menos satisfecho S.M. por los abundantes auxilios con que facilitó el logro de esta expedicion; y por los quales me manda S.M. manifestar á V.S. su real aguado.

Otra carta de V.S., no. 182, trata de si han de executarse por Vernaci y Salamanca los reconocimientos de las costas de Guatemala; á que contesto de orden de S.M.: que se practicarán por los Buques empleados en las operaciones para el Atlas del Seno Mexicano; y que es su Real Voluntad que desde luego vengán á España Alcalá, Galiano, Valdes, Vernaci, y Salamanca, para ocuparse en otros obgetos del Real Servicio. D. Ge. á V.S. ms. a[ño]s. Aranjuez 27 de febro. de 1793. Valdéz.

In sum, a varied and revealing collection of correspondence shining light on the status of late period Pacific expeditions post-Malaspina. It is worth remembering that since official publication of the results of the Malaspina expedition was canceled, any contemporary documentation touching on the expedition is especially notable. These documents are also interesting for reflecting intriguing issues of interpersonal



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

(Malaspina Expedition): [Group of six manuscript documents, signed, related to a future assignment for the officers of the Malaspina expedition, including a voyage to chart the coast of Guatemala and to explore Nicaragua, proposed by the viceroy of New Spain]

and international politics which influenced Spanish decision-making in the last decade of the 18th century.

Rarity

Original 18th-century manuscript documents concerning Spain's explorations in the Pacific and Central America are very rare in the market.

Provenance

Maggs Bros., with ca.1920s printed Maggs manuscript folder.

Detailed Condition:

Folio. Six manuscript documents, signed, (some autograph, others secretarial). [11] pages total. November 30, 1792 - February 27, 1793. Each document signed by an important Spanish figure, including the Viceroy of New Spain, the Conde de Revillagigedo; Captain General of the Navy Antonio Valdés; the Conde de Aranda; and Manuel Godoy. Each of the six separate documents (3 single folio letter sheets and 3 bifolia). Very faint old dampstaining along gutter of entire group, otherwise only an occasional bit of tanning or soiling. Most docketed on verso or integral blank. Overall condition is excellent. In a blue cloth folding case.