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A Physical Planisphere wherein are represented all the known Lands and Seas W.th The Great Chains of Mountains w.ch traverse the Globe.... Adapted to Monsr. Buache's Memoir...

Stock#: 56630
Map Maker: Gentleman's Magazine

Date: 1757
Place: London
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG
Size: 11.5 x 12.5 inches

Price: SOLD

Description:

***Striking Planisphere Showing Buache's Watershed Theories, Printed in* Gentleman's Magazine**

Nice example of the *Gentleman's Magazine* edition of Philippe Buache's seminal work on mountain chains and watersheds of the world. The map shows the dissemination and popularity of geographic ideas and also features the mythical Sea of the West.

Printed in 1757, this is a slightly revised version of Buache's *Planisphere Physique ou l'on voit du Pole Septentrional ce que l'on connoit de Terres et de Mers Avec les Grandges Chaines de Montagnes,* based on a paper Buache gave at the *Acàdemie des Sciences* in Paris in 1752. The Buache map was one of the first thematic maps.

An unusual projection, the continents are shown radiating from a central point, the North Pole. The most prominent features are the mountain ranges, which divide the land and the seas. Some are actual mountain ranges, others are placed where Buache hypothesized they must be, for example along the sea

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floor.

The geography of Europe, Asia, and Africa appear familiar, but the outlines of the Pacific region are less so. Australia, here labeled as the South Continent and New Holland, is incomplete and connected via a land bridge to New Guinea. Van Diemen's Land is included, but it is not labeled as in the Buache edition. Ringing the entire map are the unshown "Antarctic Lands."

Another change from the Buache predecessor is that on Buache's map, New Holland extends far to the east, to an island called *Terre de St. Esprit;* here it is Holy Ghost Island. This is a reference to *Austrialia de Espiritu Santo*, a land contacted in 1606 by Pedro Ferdinand de Quiros. Here the dotted line connecting the two is excluded.

Also missing is the southern rim that Bauche created, hobbling together the expeditions of Edmund Halley, Abel Tasman and others to show the southernmost extent of human exploration up the mid-eighteenth century. The *Gentleman's Magazine* edition prefers to focus on the watersheds, which are clearly the main feature of the map and the accompanying article. They snake across the oceans, with some islands shown in their tracks; Buache believed these islands to be the tallest peaks of his hypothesized underwater mountain ranges.

Sea of the West

Another notable feature is the Sea of the West in the interior of North America. This sea had first appeared on charts published by Johann Baptiste Nolin in ca. 1700 but had quickly disappeared thereafter. Although the great French geographer Guillaume De L'Isle never published a map showing the sea, he had postulated that it could exist, and that it might connect to a Northwest Passage through New France, not through English territory farther north. Nolin had plagiarized the idea from Guillaume, as the latter testified when suing the former for plagiarism. He said, the Sea of the West "was one of my discoveries. But since it is not always appropriate to publish what one knows or what one thinks one knows, I have not had this sea engraved on the works that I made public, not wanting foreigners to profit from this discovery" (as quoted in Pedley, 109).

The Sea of the West began to appear again in the 1752, when Joseph-Nicolas Delisle, Guillaume's brother, and Buache, his son-in-law, published a map showing the Russian discoveries in the far north Pacific. Buache had reviewed his father-in-law's papers and read of the Sea of the West. He and his uncle included the sea on their map, which was also presented to the *Acàdemie*, and it spread to other maps thereafter. To learn more of the 1752 map, see here.

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Buache's watersheds and mountain ranges—a significant contribution to the history of geography and cartography

Buache was the first geographer to survey a river basin and suggested that the basin had topographical unity in a paper given to the *Acàdemie* in 1752, as mentioned in the title of this map. Although the word watershed did not come into use until the early nineteenth century, based on the German *wasserscheide*, Buache pioneered the important concept in this paper, the *Essai de géographie physique*. Buache's theories of watersheds and mountain ranges raised interest across Europe; they were clearly of enough interest that the *Gentleman's Magazine* translated the map and part of his *Essai* in the March 1757 issue of the periodical (pp.109-111).

In the essay, Buache proposed a world unifying system of geography. Buache hypothesized that the world was marked by mountain ranges which cross continents and demarcate vast river basins. These basins empty into three large seas called the Ocean (Atlantic), Sea of the Indies (Indian), and the Great Sea (Pacific). These seas are referred to in this map in the ring describing the Antarctic Lands. In turn, these seas are further divided into maritime basins by underwater mountain ranges. These marine ranges are the extension of their terrestrial counterparts, visible only where the occasional island peaks above the surface.

His theories proved controversial as well. Indeed, they were born out of controversy. When Buache was rising to scientific prominence, a trans-Channel debate was raging over the shape of the earth. Followers of Isaac Newton believed the world to be a flattened spheroid, while supporters of Cassini thought it to be elongated at the poles. The controversy was eventually settled when Maupertuis measured the length of a degree of latitude in Lapland, comparing the distance to that at the latitude of Paris and found the results to support Newton. Some at the French court were still clinging to the Cassinian theory, and Buache stepped into the fray to suggest that it was not the shape of the earth that needed so much attention, but its geographic composition.

This map, and the accompanying memoir, also led to political reflections about the nature of geography and the inherent differences assumed to exist between nations. Buache's world-unifying mountain ranges, as well as his geological and mineralogical maps produced with the botanist Jean-Étienne Guettard, showed that geological and geographical features extended beyond and through national boundaries. This work helped to reorient geography from the study of the distribution of empires, nations, and peoples to a more scientific study focused on the composition of the world, no matter who lived where; in effect, Buache's work made geography more physical scientific and less anthropological.

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Buache’s mountain ranges and watersheds continued to spark interest long after their initial publication. Alexander Humboldt was determined to prove Buache wrong with regard to his suggested mountain range splitting the Amazon and Orinoco river basins. In 1800, Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland navigated via the Cassiquiare to prove there was no such mountain range and that the rivers’ basins communicated directly with each other. Humboldt’s comments on Buache’s theories reveal deeper tensions between eighteenth-century theoretical geography and early-nineteenth century fieldwork geography. They also show the importance of Buache’s ideas and maps for the history of geography and cartography.

Detailed Condition: