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Map of the West India & Bahama Islands with the adjacent Coasts of Yucatan, Honduras, Caracas &c. . . . 1838

Stock#: 57025
Map Maker: Wyld
Date: 1838
Place: London
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 30.5 x 20.5 inches
Price: \$575.00



Description:

Fine Map of the Caribbean Showing the Compelling Mosquito Coast

Strikingly-detailed map of the Caribbean by James Wyld. It prominently features the Mosquito Shore, an important site for British, Spanish, and Miskito relations in Central America.

First published in 1825, this map focuses on the Caribbean at a time when much of the territory was controlled by European powers. It shows not only the Caribbean islands, but also the southern tip of Florida, the entirety of the western coast of Central America, and the northern coast of South America.

The map also shows the topography of the islands, soundings in fathoms, and the names of port cities and geographic features. The territories are defined by which European nation possessed each area (British, French, Spanish, Dutch, Danish, Swedish), as can be seen in the table in the upper right corner which specifically lists which territories belonged to which nation. Place names are shown in a number of languages, including English and Spanish.

Wyld was renowned for his fine engraving style and it shows on this example. The map's title contains subtle decoration, while the landmasses are covered in fine detail along the mountains, rivers, and coastlines. It includes a scale in British miles just under the title.

Early European Colonialism in the Caribbean

The aim of this map is to delineate European possessions in the region. For Europeans, the Caribbean represented new opportunities for trade and wealth. It was clear that they were less interested in the rich



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culture of the islands and more concerned with the resources and opportunities they presented. The region was home to precious metals, sugar cane, exciting flora and fauna, as well as land for plantation agriculture, usually worked by slave labor imported from Africa.

In 1502, Christopher Columbus sailed through the Caribbean and along the coast from the Bay of Honduras to Panama. He learned much about the region and made initial contacts, paving the way for European settlements. By 1510, the Spanish had created permanent productive colonies, but at a cost. European disease, as well as conflict, decimated the local populations. By the early seventeenth century, other Europeans began to make contact with Caribbean territories. The Dutch, French, and English all established imperial holdings in the region, supported by slaves from Africa.

Britain in Central America: The Mosquito Kingdom

Interestingly, the territory called "Mosquito Shore" can be seen on Wyld's map along the eastern coast of Central America. The area had been visited by European sailors since the early-sixteenth century. Englishmen began to frequent what is now Belize on the Bay of Honduras in the mid-seventeenth century, cutting logwood to export to Europe to use as prized dyes in the textile industry. During this period of initial settlement, Spanish forces would occasionally invade, causing the English to hide until they could return to Belize.

The local Miskito Indians retained control over the territory and they served as English trade partners and allies throughout this period. This strong partnership was forged in opposition to the Spanish, who had settlements nearby.

After the Seven Years War, the Spanish asserted a claim to the Mosquito Shore, arguing that it belonged to the Spanish Empire. The 1783 Treaty of Versailles resolved some of the discrepancies. It required British evacuation of the "Spanish Continent," referring to Central and South America, except for Belize. Neither country was completely satisfied with this arrangement.

Until the turn of the nineteenth century, the Spanish continued to attempt to colonize the Mosquito Shore, but without much practical success. The resistance of the Moskitos persisted as the Spanish tried to claim their land and were unable to provide the same quality of trade goods they had been accustomed to with the English. By the early 1800s, the English were able to forcefully drive out the Spanish and restore their relations with the Miskitos.

This conflict is a great example of how a nation can assert diplomatic claims over a territory yet not have practical power without the force to remove competition and the cooperation of the local population. The



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fascinating history of this region makes the Mosquito Shore a compelling portion of Wyld's map. Collectors interested in Belize, Central America, and Caribbean maps would find this example intriguing.

Detailed Condition: