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**Esboco do Theatro das Operacoes das Cordilheiras do e do Norte do Paraguay  
organizado pela Commisao d'Engenheiros. V. do Rosario Febreiro de 1870**

**Stock#:** 60449gb  
**Map Maker:** Anonymous  
**Date:** 1870  
**Place:** n.p.  
**Color:** Pen & Ink  
**Condition:** VG+  
**Size:** 35 x 30.5 inches  
**Price:** SOLD



**Description:**

***Detailed Brazilian Manuscript Map from the War of the Triple Alliance—with Rio de Janeiro as the Prime Meridian!***

Minutely-detailed and carefully drawn map showing the mountainous region northeast of Asunción, Paraguay, the primary conflict zone during the War of the Triple Alliance, also known as the Paraguayan War (1864-70).

The map shows what is now the border region of Brazil and Paraguay; the two countries are today split at the Apa River near 22°S on this map. Before the war, practically all of the territory shown here was considered Paraguayan, although Brazil disputed the claim of land north of the Apa. After Paraguay's crushing defeat at the hands of Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, the land passed definitively to Brazil.

The Brazilian origin of the map is underlined not only by the use of Portuguese, but also by the use of Rio de Janeiro as the prime meridian. Although not common, the meridian was employed sporadically by mapmakers and increasingly under the rule of the Brazilian Empire (1822-1889). Only fourteen years after this map was drawn, the International Meridian Conference, at which Brazil was represented by the Director of the Imperial Observatory of Rio de Janeiro, officially selected Greenwich as the internationally-recognized Prime Meridian.



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The title of the map, written in red ink at the top, translates to:

*Sketch of the Theater of Operations of the Mountains and the North of Paraguay Organized by the  
Commission of Engineers.*

The map shows an array of geographic features, especially the many streams and rivers that feed into the mighty Paraguay and Paraná Rivers. These larger rivers act as western and eastern bookends to this map. Sprinkled across the waterways are many small settlements.

Also shown, marked with crossed swords, are the battles that took place in this theater of the war. These battles are listed chronologically in a legend to the right. They date from the later stage of the war, between April 1867 and late 1869. In addition to the dates of the battles shown, there is a list of distances that had been verified by Brazil's army engineers and those that still needed to be confirmed.

The information contained in this key shows the ground work Brazil was laying in anticipation of taking over the land north of the Apa if Paraguay was defeated, which it was in 1870. Its engineers were not only supporting the troops fighting the Paraguayan soldiers, but they were also performing surveying work to allow for freer movement between Brazil's Mato Grosso province (today Mato Grosso do Sul state) and Paraguay.

### **The War of the Triple Alliance**

The War of the Triple Alliance, also known as the Paraguayan War or, in Paraguay, the Great War, was the bloodiest inter-state conflict ever to take place in Latin America. While estimates vary and cause considerable contention, it is thought that 60%, and possibly more, of Paraguay's population was wiped out. The hundreds of thousands of men who lived in Paraguay prior to the war were reduced to only 28,000, as much as a 90% loss.

Border disputes in the region were nothing new by the 1860s. Spain and Portugal had fought over the precise location of the frontier between their empires since the fifteenth century. After the Latin American states gained their independence in the early nineteenth century, the new nations inherited the disputes that concentrated in the Rio de la Plata basin, which was where Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil, and Argentina all converged.

A catalyst for the War of the Triple Alliance was Brazil's interference in a Uruguayan civil war in 1864. Emperor Pedro II wanted to ensure that his preferred Colorado Party prevailed; with Brazilian aid they did and the Colorados continued to rule Uruguayan politics uninterrupted until the 1950s. Paraguay's leader,



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Francisco Solano López, had supported the other contender, the Blanco Party, and saw Brazil's interference as a dangerous precedent that undermined Paraguayan sovereignty and the regional balance of power.

López's father, Carlos Antonio López, had begun Paraguay's accelerated industrialization in the decades prior to the war. Paraguay had one of the first railways in South America and revenue came from a shipyard and a large foundry. At the time, the only way for freight and people to travel south from southern Brazil was to navigate the Paraguay River, further enhancing the nation's importance.

In response to the Brazilian aggression in Uruguay, López threatened to unleash his army, which, thanks to conscription, included every man of fighting age in Paraguay. When Pedro II did not back down, López attacked Mato Grosso, to the north of the area shown on this map. On May 1, 1865, the president of Argentina, Bartolomé Mitre, signed an alliance consisting of Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, which was now controlled by the Colorados. These three combatants formed the eponymous Triple Alliance.

Although the alliance outnumbered Paraguay's population 25 to 1, López had amassed a powerful, if antequely provisioned, army. In 1865, López's forces made early gains. They advanced in both Uruguay and Brazil, but soon had to withdraw due to logistical problems and the amassing of the Allied Army. In June of that year, the Brazilian Navy defeated the Paraguayans at Riachuelo, opening the way for a blockade of Paraguay's rivers. The landlocked country was now cut off from the outside world.

López and the Paraguayan army did not surrender, however. Instead, they entrenched themselves and expanded the draft to include all men, leaving few to work the fields and causing many to starve. It is during this period, 1867-9, that the battles listed on this map took place. Father south, in February 1868, the allied troops under the Brazilian *marquês de Caxias*, took the crucial fortifications at Humaitá; this opened the way to the capital, Asunción.

In December of 1868, at the Battle of Lomas Valentinas near Asunción, the balance of the Paraguayan army was defeated. This is one of the battles listed in the legend to the right. López fled north, where he would be killed at the Battle of Cerro Cará on March 1, 1870, just weeks, or perhaps days, after this map was finished.

Paraguay was utterly devastated by the war—politically, economically, and demographically. The country lost territory to Brazil and Argentina. The allies continued to occupy the country until 1876 and levied a large indemnity on the nation (which was never paid). Even today, Paraguayan politics and economics refer to and are impacted by the outcome of the War of the Triple Alliance.



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This map was completed on behalf of Brazil's army engineers by V. do Rosario in February of 1870. Although Rosario's biography remains a mystery, it is known what the Brazilian engineers played a crucial role in the war. They arranged for the transport of men and munitions over rivers, constructed bridges and roads, and designed fortifications and strongholds. This map was most likely part of their output in facilitating the Brazilian army's movements.

Maps like this are detailed reviews of an important event in Latin American history; they are also rare survivals. Although the war is little known outside of the region, it was decisive for the development of Paraguay as a country and was the bloodiest conflict between Latin American states to date. The map would be an insightful and dynamic addition to any collection focused on Latin American, Paraguayan, and/or Brazilian maps.

**Detailed Condition:**