



**Native Americans – Bodmer, Karl (1809-1893).** Sih-Chidä & Mahchsi-Karehde. Mandan Indians. [Tab. 20]. Paris, Coblenz and London: [1839-1842]. Hand-coloured aquatint engraving by Hürlimann after Bodmer. Plate mark: 19 3/4 x 16 3/8 inches. Sheet size: 24 7/8 x 17 7/8 inches. \$4,500

A fine full-length double portrait by Bodmer, composed from sketches made during the winter of 1833-1834 during the travelers sojourn at Fort Clark, on the banks of the upper Missouri River. On the left stands Sih-Chidä ('Yellow Feather') a young warrior who was fascinated by the work of the two foreigners. His portrait was carried out over three days in early December 1833. In it, he wears the beaded hair brows with long strings of dentalium shells and beads, a member of the Dog Society, the cluster of feathers at the back of his head may be an insignia of that group. Around his neck is draped a tippet of otter fur, the ends fringed with quill-wrapped leather. His heel-trailers are made of otter fur lined with red cloth and represent battle exploits. On the right is Mahchsi-Karehde ('Flying War Eagle'), who at just over six feet was the tallest of the Mandan. He also showed much interest in Bodmer's work, and over the winter was a frequent visitor, often bringing friends to look at Bodmer's drawings. He was a member of band of warriors that regulated the important affairs of the tribe. The wolf tail on his heels and painted eagle feather in his hair denote battle coup. His rich clothing and general demeanor all denote a proud and successful man.

Karl Bodmer's images show great versatility and technical virtuosity and give us a uniquely accomplished and detailed picture of a previously little understood (and soon to vanish) way of life. Swiss-born Bodmer was engaged by Prince Maximilian zu Wied-Neuwied (1782-1867) specifically to provide a record of his travels in North America, principally among the Plains Indians. In the company of David Dreidoppel (Prince Maximilian's servant and hunting companion), their travels in North America were to last from 1832 to 1834. Well-armed with information and advice, the party finally left St.Louis, on the most important stage of their travels, aboard the steamer Yellow Stone on April 10 1833. They proceeded up the treacherous Missouri River along the line of forts established by the American Fur Company. At Bellevue they encountered their first Indians, then went on to make contact with the Sioux tribe, learning of and recording their little known ceremonial dances and powerful pride and dignity. Transferring from the Yellow Stone to another steamer, the Assiniboin, they continued to Fort Clark, visiting there the Mandan, Mintari and Crow tribes, then the Assiniboins at Fort Union, the main base of the American Fur Company. On a necessarily much smaller vessel they journeyed through the extraordinary geological scenery of that section of the Missouri to Fort Mackenzie in Montana, establishing a cautious friendship with the fearsome Blackfeet. From this, the westernmost point reached, it was considered too dangerous to continue and the return journey downstream began. The winter brought its own difficulties and discomforts, but Bodmer was still able to execute numerous studies of villages, dances and especially the people, who were often both intrigued and delighted by his work. The portraits are particularly notable for their capturing of individual personalities, as well as forming a primary account of what were to become virtually lost cultures.

Graff 4648; Howes M443a; Pilling 2521; Sabin 47014; Wagner-Camp 76:1. (#4255)

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