# Early 19th-century Italian School. Gladiatorial Sacrifice



600 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Paper

Width : 40 cm

Height : 34 cm

## Description

EARLY 19TH-CENTURY ITALIAN SCHOOLAfter a composition by Francesco Saverio CLAVIGERO(1731-1787)Sacrifizio GladiatorioThe Aztec Gladiatorial SacrificeEtching and aquatint, heightened at the time with gouache and watercolour.Plate taken from Giulio Ferrario's monumental work Il Costume Antico e Moderno o storia del governo, delle milizie, della religione, delle arti, scienze ed usanze di tutti i popoli antichi e moderni, published in Milan by Vincenzo Batelli, circa 1820-1826.Presented in a period French Restauration giltwood frame, decorated with bands of gadroons and beading.Dimensions including frame: H. 34 × W. 40 cm.This print bears witness to early 19th-century Europe's fascination with pre-Columbian civilisations and

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their ritual ceremonies. It depicts the Tlahuahuanaliztli, or Aztec gladiatorial combat, a sacrificial ritual associated with the worship of the god Xipe Totec.At the centre of the composition, two warriors confront one another upon the temalacatl, an imposing circular sacrificial stone adorned with bas-reliefs. The captive prisoner of war, restrained by an ankle shackle, is armed with a training weapon resembling the macuahuitl, the formidable wooden club traditionally fitted with obsidian blades, here depicted without its cutting edges. Opposite him stands an elite Aztec warrior, recognisable by his military attire and spectacular feathered headdress. Around the platform, dignitaries and spectators witness this ritual duel, whose carefully staged presentation lends the scene a distinctly theatrical quality.The iconography belongs to the tradition established by the Jesuit scholar and historian Francesco Saverio Clavigero, author of the celebrated Storia antica del Messico, published in 1780-1781, which played a major role in introducing European audiences to the history and customs of pre-Columbian Mexico. Giulio Ferrario subsequently adapted and disseminated this imagery in his extensive encyclopaedic work devoted to the dress, institutions and customs of ancient and modern peoples.