



**Barry Lawrence Ruderman
Antique Maps Inc.**

7407 La Jolla Boulevard
La Jolla, CA 92037

www.raremaps.com

(858) 551-8500
blr@raremaps.com

[Title Page] *Novus Atlas Sinensis a Martino Martinio . . .* (Heightened in Gold)

Stock#: 96322
Map Maker: Blaeu
Date: 1655 circa
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 10.5 x 16.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

This title page for Blaeu's *Novus Atlas Sinensis a Martino Martinio* is a striking original hand-colored example, heightened in gold, published in 1655. Its allegorical scene, rich with symbolism and artistic mastery, depicts the gateway to China being flung open, accompanied by the Latin phrase "clausa recludo" ("I open the closed places"). Alongside a group of angels examining a map of China and a globe oriented toward Southeast Asia and a partially known Australia, it pays tribute to the Jesuit efforts to bring Christianity to China and the significant advancements they made in the geographical understanding of the region.



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The context of the 17th century saw an intensified interaction between European powers and the Far East. Jesuit missionaries, of whom Martino Martini was a prominent figure, were at the forefront of this interaction. Through their travels, observations, and scholarly pursuits, they played a pivotal role in transmitting knowledge about China to Europe. Blaeu's atlas, featuring Martini's work, symbolizes this transmission and embodies the zeal of Jesuit missionaries in both religious conversion and geographical exploration.

The title page's visual composition is not only aesthetically pleasing but also deeply emblematic. The top of the scene showcases the Jesuit symbol IHS, radiating light onto the world, with allegorical symbols for Christianity reflecting this light to ignite a torch held by a winged angel atop the gateway to the Middle Kingdom. A procession of angels bearing symbols of Christian faith adds further layers of meaning, representing the spiritual mission of the Jesuits in China.

Martini's contribution to the mapping of China constituted a revolutionary development in geographical knowledge. His reporting offered the first substantial advancement in understanding the region in nearly five decades. This improvement was not merely a scholarly achievement; it shaped the portrayal of China throughout the remainder of the 17th century, influencing trade, diplomacy, and cultural exchange.

In conclusion, the title page of *Novus Atlas Sinensis a Martino Martinio* serves as both a historical document and a work of art. It encapsulates the Jesuit missionary zeal, the era's cartographic innovations, and the complex interplay between religion, exploration, and the growing European fascination with the Orient. Its beauty and symbolic richness offer a unique lens through which to view a transformative period in the history of East-West relations.

Detailed Condition:

Original hand-color heightened in gold.