MARTINI, Martino (1614-1661). *Atlas nuevo de la extrema Asia, o descripcion geographica del imperio de los chinas*. A [sic] Amsterdam : en casa de Juan Blaeu, 1658

[6], 211, [19], XVI, 47, [3] p., [1] f. engravings.: il., maps ; 2º

Catalogue References: [], [], []1, A-Q2, R1, S-T2, V1, X-Z, Aa-Oo2, Pp1, Qq-Tt2, Vu1, Xx-Zz2, Aaa1, Bbb-Ddd2, Eee1, Fff-Xxx, A, bb-dd, a-m2, []1

Contemporary parchment binding with gilding (volutes, florets and fillets) on the boards and spine, and the remains of clasps with green cord. Gilt edges.

It was common practice during the period of hand printing that the purchaser of a book would commission a binding according to his own tastes and wealth. In this case, by contrast, the binding was completed as part of the publication process. In other words, Joan Blaeu bound Martini's atlas and the volumes emerged from the workshop completely finished and ready for use. The finished product served to display the prosperity and vigour of Blaeu's firm. The binder may, in fact, have been the celebrated Dutch bookbinder, Albert Magnus (1642?-1689).

Old catalogue references shelf-marks on front end-paper: 400/1/2 ; D-147/1/2 ; G-36=1ª-N. 6

The work contains 17 double-page copper engraved maps, hand-coloured in outline and wash, 13 are included in the catalogue references signatures.

It includes an additional frontispiece, copper-engraved and hand-coloured in outline and wash, that corresponds to the original Latin version of this Spanish translation. The frontispiece reads: *Novus atlas Sinensis a Martino Martinio Soc. Iesu descriptus et Seren.mo Archiduci Leopoldo Guilielmo Austriaco dedicatus*.

The author, Martino Martini, was an Italian Jesuit who went to China as a missionary in 1642. Recalled to Rome in 1651, he brought back numerous Chinese documents, including many maps. During his voyage home, he wrote a description of China based on his personal experience and his reading of Chinese documents. When his ship was captured by the Dutch, his return was diverted to Amsterdam, not Rome. There in Amsterdam, he made the acquaintance of Joan Blaeu. Martini was insistent that Blaeu prepare engravings of his maps and publish them.

Martini's work was the first in Europe to show all the provinces of China. Until then, they had been practically unknown. His work continued to serve as the most authoritative study of Chinese lands until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Martini, who returned to China in 1656 and remained there until his death, is equally celebrated for his influential role in the protracted and controversial theological debate over Chinese rituals and the acceptability of allowing new converts to continue venerating their ancestors.

Joan Blaeu published the maps of China in five languages: Latin, French, Dutch, German and Spanish. In these languages, the maps were published separately and as part of the *Theatrum orbis terrarum* and, later, in the *Atlas Maior*. In Spanish, they appeared separately and as a tenth volume of the works known as the *Nuevo Atlas* and the *Atlas Mayor*.

The UB's Rare Book and Manuscript Library also contains a specimen copy of the Latin edition, published in 1655 under the title *Novus Atlas Sinensis*. The catalogue reference call number is 07 135/1/9.

The work is divided into several parts: a long foreword by Martini, a general map of China, a geographical description of China's fifteen provinces (each preceded by the corresponding map), a geographical description of Japan (with a map of Japan), a catalogue of all the places in the "Empire of China", additional remarks on the "Kingdom of Cathay" by Jacobus Golius and, lastly, the "History of the War with the Tartars" by Martini himself. An appendix reproduces a letter from the Jesuit Francisco Brancato (his name appears hispanicized).

The printer/publisher Joan Blaeu (1597/98-1673) was the son of Willem Janszoon Blaeu (1571-1638), who founded the Amsterdam firm that was to become the most important producer of maps in the seventeenth century. Succeeding his father at the helm of the company, Joan published the famous *Atlas Maior*, which contained approximately 600 maps over eleven volumes. The Latin edition was followed by versions in French, Dutch, Spanish (the earlier-mentioned *Nuevo Atlas* and *Atlas Mayor*) and German.

The splendour of the Blaeu empire came abruptly to an end on 23 February 1672, when a fire consumed the workshop and a considerable number of the copper plates were destroyed or severely damaged.

(MRF)