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КРЕМЛЕНА ГРАД. Kremlenagrad, Castellum urbis Moskvae . . .

Stock#: 47466
Map Maker: Gerritsz / Blaeu
Date: 1662
Place: Amsterdam
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG+
Size: 19 x 15 inches
Price: \$ 3,500.00



Description:

Refined, Intricate Plan of the Kremlin, from Blaeu's Atlas Maior

Fine, old-color example of Blaeu's rare plan of the Kremlin, which appeared only in his monumental *Atlas Maior*.

The plan shows in exceptional detail the heart of Moscow's inner walled fortress and the Kitai Gorod, or Fortified City.

The Kremlin was founded in 1147 at the junction of two rivers, the Moskva and the Neglinnaya, which can be seen here. As Moscow grew, the Kremlin became the royal, religious, and secular heart of the city.

The plate was first engraved by Hessel Gerritsz, who had been apprenticed to Willem Janszoon Blaeu, in Amsterdam in 1613 or 1614. In the original state, the Kremlin plate was dedicated to "*Magno Domino Caesari, et Magno Duci Michaeli Foedorovits,*" whose election to the Moscow throne in February of 1613 marked an end of the so-called Times of Troubles and established the Romanov dynasty. The dedication originally was signed "*ab Hesselio Gerhartio,*" but this has been erased in this state, and the recipient of the dedication has changed.

The plan features a legend containing 32 numbered items, pointing out the properties of the prominent political figures and the city landmarks with the Latin explanations. Some of the legend items contain Russian words transcribed using Latin characters, many of which appear to represent distorted phonetic renditions rather than transliterations of a written original; for example, *Mstislavsky* becomes



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Mesiesloffski.

The Kremlin plate has a sibling, [a simultaneously engraved plan of the entire city known as "Reigning city of Moscow"](#) ("Царствающей градъ Москва"). Both plans are consistently oriented with west-by-south at the top. The Moscow plate is referred to in the dedication on the Kremlin plate, whose object is "*Castellum cum tribus contiguis Urbibus Moskuae*," whereas the privilege in the lower right corner explicitly applies to both plates: "*Tabulas Civitatis et Castelli Moskuae.*"

The dedication accurately recites the "long" title of Michael Feodorovich; however, it randomly mixes the Latin translations with the transliterations from Russian. It is, therefore, likely that the dedication was engraved in a hurry.

What makes the plans of Moscow and the Kremlin unique in Dutch cartographic heritage is the extensive use of Cyrillic lettering in the engraving. The plan of the Kremlin has the title (Кремлена Градъ), the names of the cardinal points of the compass (Сиверь, Стꙋкъ, Лѣтне, Западъ), and the names of two rivers (Москва река, Неглина река) rendered in Cyrillic characters. The title and points of the compass use what is known in Russian as *вязь* (*Vyaz'*, meaning linking or weaving), that is, a calligraphic style which combines a two-dimensional arrangement of letters with the extensive use of ligatures.

History and states of the plates

Very few prints were pulled from the Kremlin and Moscow plates in their respective first states. Those first imprints were likely intended to serve as gifts to the Tzar and key Moscow government figures. This Kremlin example is a second state, which was made by Joan Blaeu and used, along with the second state of the Moscow plate, in his *Atlas Maior* starting in 1662.

The signature of Hessel Gerritsz was erased (as hinted by the asymmetry of the closing line of the dedication) and the name in the dedication was changed to Alexio Michaelovits, who ascended to the throne after the death of his father in 1645. Curiously, the engraved title remained intact and no longer matched the actual title used by the Tzar at that time. Apparently, the discrepancy did not matter for the new, purely commercial intent of the plate.

A widely-circulated theory attributes both the Kremlin and Moscow plans to a single hypothetical manuscript source (now lost without trace), which allegedly originated within the Moscow government offices in 1597–1605. This theory, which was deeply rooted in Imperial Russian and early Soviet historiography, was solidified in its present form by S.A. Klepikov under the direction of M.N Tikhomirov. It has become historical canon in post-Soviet Russia, and sometimes casts its spell upon Western scholars as well.



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In reality, identifying the actual sources from which the two plans were compiled is an exciting problem in the history of Russian and Dutch cartography. For example, the Russian word Кремль (*Kremlin*), which denotes an inner fortified castle within a town, was relatively new at the start of the seventeenth century. The previously used forms were: Кромъ (*Krom*), Кремникъ (*Kremnik*), or Кремленикъ (*Kremlenik*). Nowhere can the form *Kremlena* be found in medieval Russian sources. Furthermore, the word *Kremlenagrad* did not enter the Russian language until late nineteenth century, when Gerritsz' plate first appeared in print in Russia, in a popular scientific publication in Moscow.

Several plausible solutions exist that explain these discrepancies. They are most often attributed to the "foreign engravers" who allegedly misread and messed up several letters. However, one can note that for a foreigner, a Cyrillic text in *Vyaz'* calligraphy hardly represented a word as a sequence of letters, but rather an ornament which had to be copied in its entirety. Making an error in an individual letter is, therefore, quite unlikely.

Another observation is that three out of four cardinal point names on the Kremlin plan do not belong to the Great Russian dialect of the Russian language spoken in Moscow. These words represent its northern Pomor dialect, which is widely spread along the coast of the White Sea. In particular, it is spoken in Arkhangelsk, which was then a major Dutch trading base. In fact, the words Стꙋкъ (East) and Лѣтне (South) regularly cause confusion among Muscovite authors who tend to see them as another instance of "an obvious error by a foreign engraver." In reality, they might be clues to the sources of the plan.

The plans were both included in Joan Blaeu's famous *Atlas Maior*, the largest and most expensive project of its kind to that date. Sadly, in February 1672 a fire destroyed the Blaeu publishing house, destroying the Moscow plate. The Kremlin plate survived, however, but was apparently damaged. It lost its decorative border. The plate was later used by Frederik de Wit and, thereafter, by Peter van der Aa, under their own signatures.

This second state, therefore, only appeared in Blaeu's atlas and was the best plan of its kind to appear in a commercial atlas in the seventeenth century.

Detailed Condition:

Old Color.