

WILLEM JANSZON BLAEU
1571-1638

Blaeu was born in Alkmaar in 1571. He started his career as a carpenter and a clerk in the Amsterdam mercantile office of his patrician cousin Cornelis Pieterszoon Hooft. He was however very much interested in astronomy, navigation and cartography and in 1595-1596 worked for a few months at Tycho Brahe's observatory on Hven (Denmark). After his return to Amsterdam, Blaeu married Marietje Cornelisdochter and established himself as a dealer in globes and maps. He also made globes and maps himself and became quite renowned for his productions. His first terrestrial globe dates from 1599, his first celestial globe from 1602.

Blaeu's shop on the IJ (the bay near Amsterdam, from where ships departed for the Indies) soon became a center where merchants and navigators exchanged information on the art of navigation, the location of far-away ports and islands, and discoveries of new continents. On the basis of old and new information Blaeu produced his first map of the world, his *Nova universi terrarum orbis mappa*, in 1605, soon to be followed by his nautical atlas, *Het Licht der Zeevaart* (1608). He moved his shop to the Damrak, where he also published maps made by others. His magnum opus was his atlas of the world published in 1634, the *Novus atlas*.

In the meantime, Blaeu had become official cartographer of the Dutch East India Company (1633) and he had also become involved in the assessment of Galileo's method of finding longitude by means of the four satellites of Jupiter, offered to the States General in 1635. In 1637 Blaeu moved his printing house to the Bloemgracht, while his bookstore remained at the Damrak. Blaeu died on 21 October 1638. His business was continued by his sons Joan and Cornelis.

Primary works

Nova universi terrarum orbis mappa (Amsterdam, 1605); *Het Licht der Zeevaart* (Amsterdam, 1608); *Novus atlas* (Amsterdam, 1634), translated into Dutch as *Toonneel des Aerdrycks*, 4 vols (Amsterdam, 1635-1645). *Tweevoudigh Onderwijs ...*, translated by Martinus Hortensius as *Institutio astronomica de usu globorum et sphaerarum coelestium ac terrestrium, duabus partibus adornata, una secundum hypothesin Ptolemaei, per terram*

quiescentem, altera juxta mentem N. Copernici, per terram mobilem (Amsterdam, 1635).

Secondary sources

P.J.H. Baudet, *Leven en werken van Willem Jansz. Blaeu* (Utrecht, 1871, supplement 1872); *idem*, *Notice sur la part prise de W. J. Blaeu dans la détermination des longitudes terrestres* (Utrecht, 1875); E.L. Stevenson, *William Janszoon Blaeu* (New York, 1914), with reproduction of the 1605 world map; E.L. Stevenson, *Terrestrial and celestial globes*, 2 vols (New Haven, 1921); H. Richter, 'William Jansz. Blaeu with Tycho Brahe on Hven', *Imago mundi* 3 (1939) 53-60; J. Keuning, 'Blaeu's Atlas', *Imago mundi* 14 (1959) 74-89; J. Keuning and M. Donkersloot-de Vrij, *Willem Jansz. Blaeu. A biography and history of his work as a cartographer and publisher* (Amsterdam, 1973); C.A. Davids, *Zeevezen en wetenschap. De wetenschap en de ontwikkeling van de navigatietechniek in Nederland tussen 1585 en 1815* (Amsterdam, 1986) *passim*; P.C.J. van der Krogt, *Globi Neerlandici. The production of globes in the Low Countries* (Utrecht, 1993); A. Bekkerner, 'De Spaanse Atlas Mayor van Blaeu: nieuwe gegevens', *Caert-thresoor* 16 (1997) 71-76; K. Zandvliet, *Mapping for money. Maps, plans and topographic paintings and their role in Dutch overseas expansion during the 16th and 17th centuries* (Amsterdam, 1998).
D.J. Struik in: *DSB*, vol. 2, 185-186; J. Keuning in: *MNBW*, vol. 10, 74-78.

[K.v.B.]