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 Zeevaert* (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*

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[K.v.B.]