

Dutch Constellations

As we all know, a mayor export product of the Netherlands is Astronomers...

([Kuiper](#), [Oort](#), [Kapteyn](#), etc)

What most of us don't know is that at least twelve of the eighty eight constellations we now know were invented by these 17th century Dutchmen

[Frederick de Houtman \(1571–1627\)](#),

[Pieter Dirkszoon Keyser \(1540 –1596\)](#)

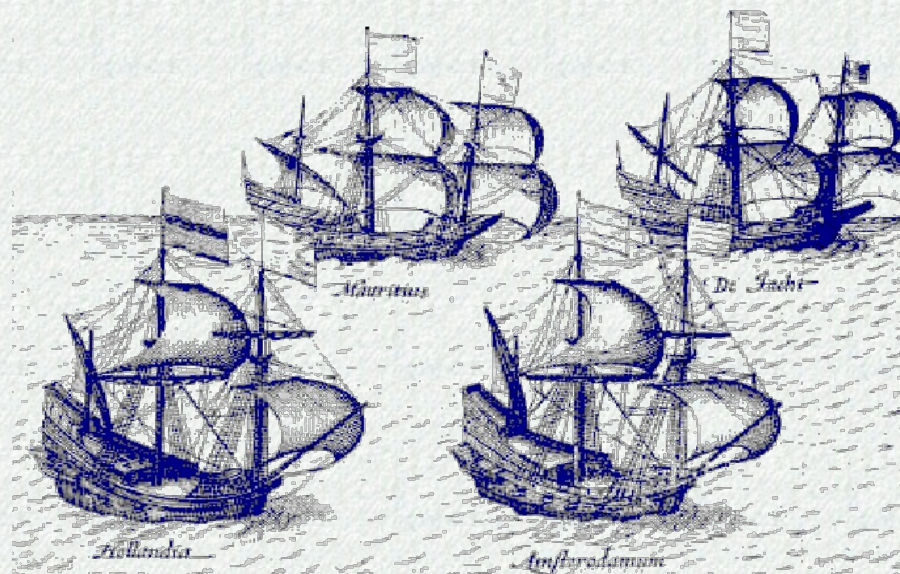
[Petrus Plancius \(1552 –1622\)](#)

(Dutch constellation inventors)

The oldest surviving catalogue of the southern stars was made by the Dutch Mariner Fredrick de Houtman (1571–1627) Compiled while on Sumatra and later on published in Amsterdam(in 1603). Only about half a dozen remaining copies are known, (one of them in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. A facsimile of it was privately published in 1927 by the British astronomers H. H. Turner and E. B. Knobel.)

In his catalogue, de Houtman lists 304 stars, although coordinates are not given for one of them (in the tail of Scorpius). In his introduction to his dictionary of the languages of Malay and Madagascar, de Houtman states that he made some observations of the southern stars on his first voyage in 1595–1597, and revised and increased the number on his second voyage, 1598–1602. The astronomical catalogues were added as extra part of the dictionary. (handy when traveling to the Indies, navigational information plus local languages)

How much of de Houtman's work was copied from his countryman Pieter Dirkszoon Keyser (c.1540–1596), who did not survive the first voyage, remains open to speculation. Astronomy was of strategic importance as a tool of navigation on the brand new trade route to Java. Both sailors had instructions to do measurements. This was information deemed of strategic importance! At that time it was believed that compass needles showed deviations, the further one penetrated to the south. The Famous Petrus Plancius or in plane Dutch, "Pete Flatfoot", had instructed Frederick de Houtman in astronomical positioning, in order to examine this phenomenon. And he asked the navigator Pieter Keyser, to make observations of the



The 12 new constellations listed by de Houtman, with their present-day names in brackets, are as follows:

[De Paradijs Voghel \(Apus\)](#)

Het Chameljoen (Chamaeleon)

Den Dorado (Dorado)

Den Reygher "The Heron" (Grus)

De Water slang (Hydrus)

De Indiaen (Indus)

De Vlieghe (Musca)

De Pauw (Pavo)

Den voghel Fenicx (Phoenix)

Den Zuyder Trianghel (Triangulum Australe)

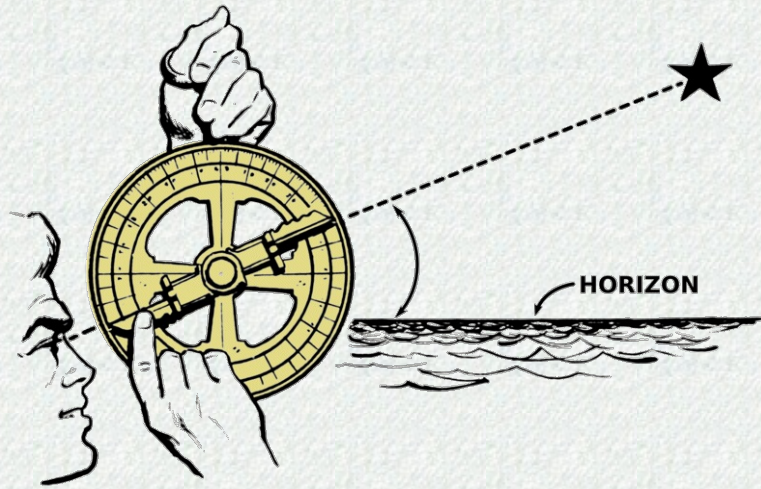
Den Indiaenschen Exster, op Indiesch gheenaemt Tucan

"The Indian magpie, named Tucan in the Indies" (Tucana)

De vlieghende Visch (Volans)

In addition, he listed stars in the pre-existing constellations of Ara, Argo Navis, Centaurus, Corona Australis, Crux, Lupus, and the southern part of Eridanus, which he called "den Nyl", the Nile. He also named Monoceros, (the Unicorn), Columba, which he called "De Duyve met den

heavens and map the southern skies, he equipped him with the tools to do so. (probable with an [Astrolabe](#)).



Pieter Platvoet was one of the founders and advisers of the [Dutch East India Company](#) the first great Multinational.

So Next time you look up at night to see the stars over Australia, remember the first European Mariners that charted the waters and the skies of "Down Under"...



Olyftak", the dove with olive branch, formed from nine stars that Ptolemy had listed near Canis Major the tail of Scorpius, and Camelopardalis, the Giraffe, made up from faint stars uncharted by Ptolemy. These three Platvoet constellations are also still accepted by modern astronomers. So Pieter Platvoet added three more constellations to the twelve non classical Dutch constellations as he prepared his Sky globe in 1598. There are no known copies of his globe in existence today. (Check your loft!)

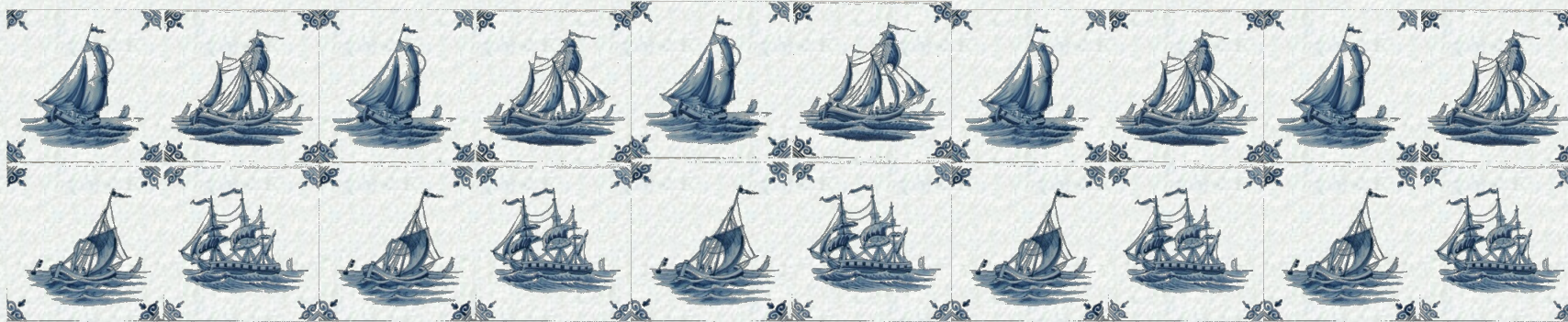
(This picture depicts the Southern sky, and is probably copied from the globe)



In 1603 Johann Bayer published his [Uranometria](#), he copied the names and constellations used on the sky globe, and this work was so influential, the names are still in use today.

My sources, the websites I checked you can find down the page.

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The index

http://members.home.nl/wkv/the_sky.html

The page:

<http://members.home.nl/wkv/goingdutch.doc>

<http://members.home.nl/wkv/nederlandsesterrenbeelden.doc>

Sources:

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrus_Plancius

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jan_Huyghen_van_Linschoten

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerard_Kuiper

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oort>

Corona Australis

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corona_Australis

Crux

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crux>

Dorado

<http://www.iau.org/static/public/constellations/gif/DOR.gif>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorado_\(constellation\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorado_(constellation))

Eridanus

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Grus

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Hydrus

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ptolemy>

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uranometria>

Tools:

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[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/90/Astrolabe_\(PSF\).png/800px-Astrolabe_\(PSF\).png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/90/Astrolabe_(PSF).png/800px-Astrolabe_(PSF).png)

The VOC

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Apus

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Ara

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Argo Navis (See Carina, Puppis, and Vela)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argo_Navis

Canis Major

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Carina

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Camelopardalis

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrus_\(constellation\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydrus_(constellation))

Indus

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Lupus

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Monoceros

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Musca

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Pavo

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Phoenix

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Puppis

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puppis>

Scorpius

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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scorpius>

Triangulum Australe

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Tucana

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[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camelopardalis_\(constellation\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camelopardalis_(constellation))

Centaurus

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Chamaeleon

<http://www.iau.org/static/public/constellations/gif/CHA.gif>
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Columba

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Vela

<http://www.iau.org/static/public/constellations/gif/VEL.gif>
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Volans

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pictures:

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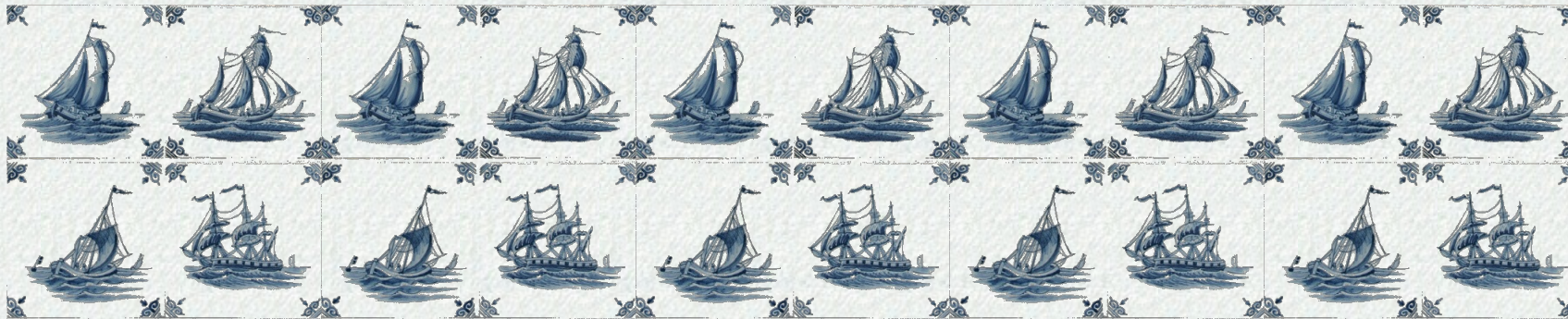
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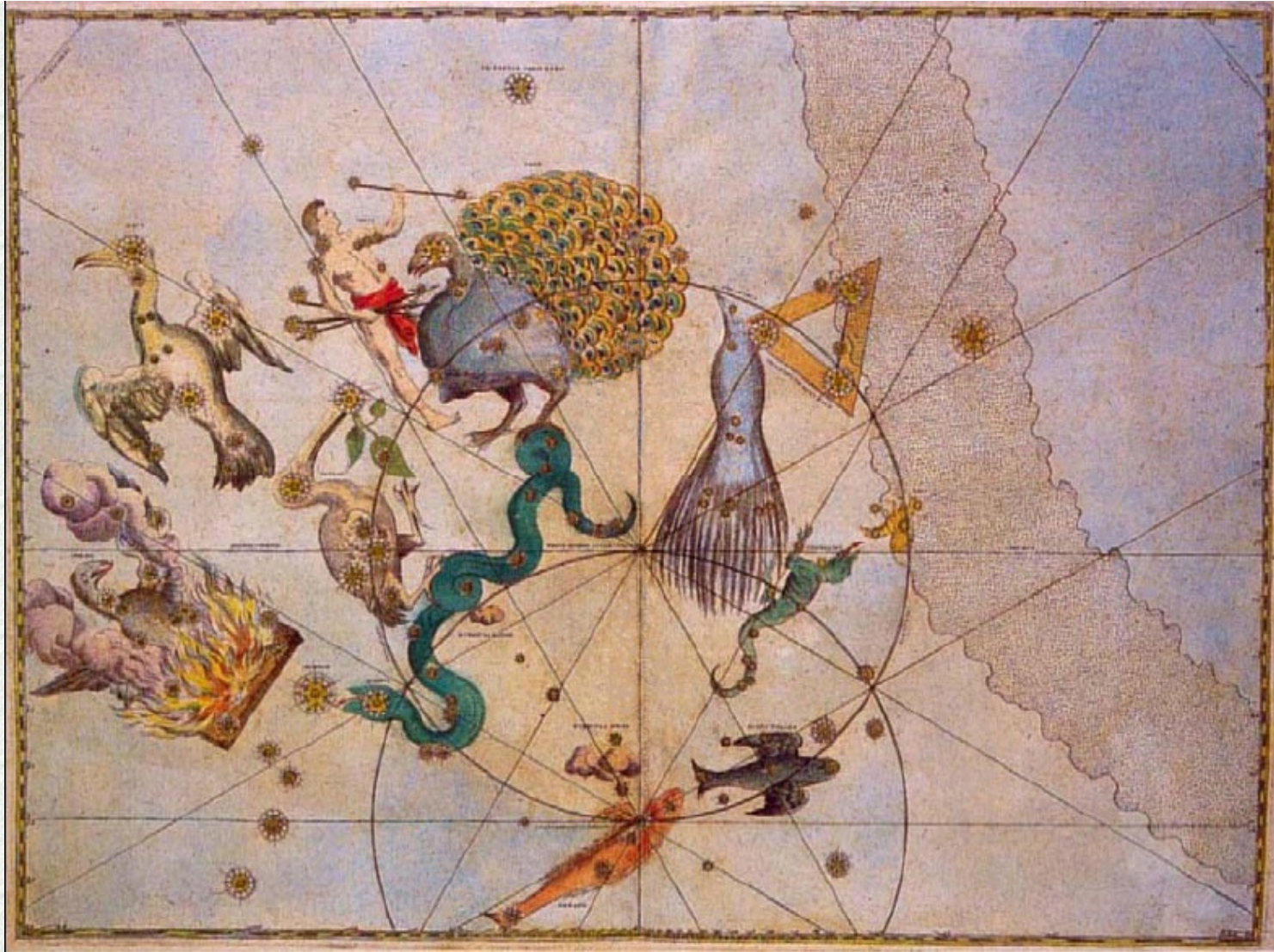
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Johann Bayer 1603, Uranometria.