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VOC VESSEL NAMES: WHAT NAMING PATTERNS REVEAL ABOUT THE NAME-GIVERS' MINDSETS

Jan Tent

Abstract

Studies of proper names have revealed naming patterns which may provide insights into the attitudes and values of the contemporaneous name bestowers. This essay analyses the names conferred upon the vessels of the United East India Company or Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), in order to ascertain whether there are any distinct naming patterns. This onomastic analysis helps show prevailing attitudes and values in the VOC and the Dutch Republic over two centuries, from 1606 to 1803.

Keywords

United East India Company, Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), vessel names, naming patterns, onomastics.

Introduction

The primary *motivation* to confer a proper name upon an entity such as a person, place or object is 'to distinguish' it from other entities in its class. The naming process must also have an underlying *intention*, which should settle upon what the name intends to do: for instance, to commemorate or honour, to foreground a physical characteristic or to reflect the feelings or attitudes of the namer. Once this decision has been made, the choice of the name-form or *expression* of the intention which will best achieve this end, is determined.¹ The linguistic subfield of onomastics suggests that the choice of name-forms may include eponyms, toponyms, descriptors or invented name-forms.²

The names given to people, places, brands, products, cars, aircraft and ships can reveal much about the socio-cultural and political dispositions

of the namers at the time of the naming.³ For instance, the place-naming practices during the Dutch, French and English maritime exploration of Australia's coasts between 1606 and 1803, reflect the socio-political mindsets of the namers at the time. In particular, the Dutch tended to name geographic features after officials of the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC or United East India Company). The French were inclined to name places after scientists, literary figures, philosophers, as well as some military and naval figures, thus reflecting their commitment to some of the tenets of the enlightenment. Meanwhile, the British favoured naming features after the nobility and political figures, because naming places for influential people was seen as a convenient way of establishing a national identity in far-flung places, whilst also gaining favour with social and political leaders in patria – the homeland.⁴

Another onomastic domain illustrating the socio-cultural and political dispositions of name bestowers is that of ship names.⁵ A number of studies from the mid-twentieth century onwards have highlighted this phenomenon to varying degrees. With one exception, none of these publications can categorically be considered quantitative studies, because they tend to concentrate on select samples of individual names upon which only generalised comments are made.⁶ Although very comprehensive, the studies by Kennedy and Jones do provide some statistics (a few simple percentages). However, they do not make any pronouncements on general naming patterns based on these statistics, nor what these naming patterns may reveal. One recent study on ocean liner names of the twentieth century has shown how they reveal quite distinct naming patterns and how these reflect nationalistic posturing of the time.⁷

Since the aforementioned studies have unambiguously illustrated how naming patterns can reveal societal and political attitudes, the question arises as to what the names of VOC vessels may tell us about the culture and politics of that company and that of the Dutch Republic.⁸ In view of the extensive records of the VOC, as well as a number of sources that catalogue the many voyages undertaken by the company to the East Indies, it seemed such a study may well be relatively straightforward to conduct.

Unfortunately, only a few brief exposés have been published on the names of VOC vessels. For instance, the internet *VOC-site*

comments sparingly about vessel names other than they were generally geographical names (including country estate names), some personal names and animal names. This is despite its extensive database of vessels and their names.⁹

A detailed volume on the VOC trade in Asia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, dedicates a one page-long survey of the naming of vessels.¹⁰ It broadly echoes the *VOC-site*'s statements, however the brief survey offers much more detail – perhaps because it is based on a database of 8,194 documented voyages.¹¹ The survey provides the following insights.

- Vessel names were often connected with the chamber which constructed the vessel, especially cities within the regions where the chambers were situated.
- Other names in patria were also used, including districts, country estates, buildings and other cities, especially during much of the seventeenth century.
- Names of animals were employed, especially in the seventeenth century, but tended to be bestowed upon smaller vessels projected for service in Asia. Hookers, in particular, were given names of particular groups of animals.
- Names of flora (trees, plants and their products) were also used, but less often, as were names of professions and trades.
- Names from literature (the Bible and classics) were infrequently given to vessels.
- Throughout the eighteenth century, especially during its last quarter, Asiatic geographical names were reasonably common.
- Uncommon names were those of celestial bodies, with the exception of 'Sun' and 'Moon'.
- During the eighteenth century, VOC directors showed a penchant for personal names, with many women's names being used, including those of directors' wives.
- The names of late governors-general of the East Indies also appeared occasionally.
- In the latter years of the VOC, names of foreign military men, explorers and politicians were used on rare occasions, thus showing a political tinge.
- During this period, allegorical names also became more common,

especially for hired vessels. Such names occasionally appeared before this time, but did so more during the VOC's final fifteen years.

These general observations are interesting in themselves, but without any numerical data to support them, they cannot be said to be very convincing. The addition of numerical data must be accompanied by an explanation of what naming patterns (should they exist) might reveal about socio-political values and attitudes in the VOC and/or the Dutch Republic.

A brief internet article on VOC vessel names lists 514 vessels that made a total of 732 voyages to and from the East Indies between 1595 and 1650.¹² The data are extracted from Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffer's 'Overview of voyages', classifying the names under eight categories: 'local city names', 'foreign city names', 'animals', 'astronomical', 'people', 'religious', 'miscellaneous' and 'unidentified'. Unfortunately, the figures cited do not tally and various vessel names have been incorrectly interpreted and classified. Nevertheless, the article does have some value in that it shows the majority of vessel names are toponyms from the Dutch Republic.

Another article examines Dutch warship and merchant vessel names from the fifteenth through to the nineteenth centuries.¹³ It provides some numbers of vessels with certain name-types, but they are overall unhelpful in providing any clear-cut picture of naming practices. The paper's short section on VOC vessel names echoes much of what the foregoing literature suggests regarding the composition of names, but once again, no figures are provided. Apart from the occasional very brief statement on what general naming trends may signal about contemporaneous society and politics, the article does not enter into any discussion of the significance or meaning of VOC vessel naming patterns.

The compilation of an inventory of vessel names, as seen on the websites of van Overbeek and the Huygens Instituut, is only an initial step. Also required is an analysis of the name-types, followed by a tally of their frequency and distribution to ascertain whether there are any naming patterns. Finally, onomastic conclusions should be drawn as to whether these patterns can disclose anything about the socio-political

attitudes of the time. The overall lack of such deductions was the impetus for the current study. The focus of previous authors on this topic has been ‘what’; the focus here attempts to answer ‘why’.

Background to the VOC

The VOC was established in 1602 by the States General of the Dutch Republic. The company was an amalgamation of a number existing trading companies that ventured to the East Indies and Asia.¹⁴ The VOC comprised six Chambers, one each in the port cities of Hoorn, Amsterdam, Delft, Rotterdam, Enkhuizen and Middelburg. The six Chambers raised the start-up capital for the company, which was governed by seventeen delegates (known as the *Heeren XVII* or ‘Lords Seventeen’) from the Chambers. Each Chamber built and maintained its own vessels and managed its own warehouses. However, the naming of vessels was decided in meetings of the *Heeren XVII* and not by the Chambers who may have constructed the vessels themselves.¹⁵ Nonetheless, vessels often bore the names of toponyms surrounding the Chamber to which the vessel belonged.

The VOC expanded to become largest commercial enterprise in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and was one of the most important players in the development of global trade. The States General granted the VOC quasi-sovereign powers, which included the ability to wage war, negotiate treaties, establish colonies, mint its own coins, and imprison and execute convicts.

The VOC became the largest trading company in the world, which enabled it to monopolise the trade in spices and exotic goods, then onsell these throughout Europe and Asia. During the almost two centuries of its existence, the VOC equipped some 4,720 voyages to Asia and 3,360 homeward voyages.¹⁶ Extensive smuggling, corruption and increasing administrative costs in the late 1700s saw the company enter into bankruptcy and it was formally dissolved in 1799.

The rapid and vast build-up of its merchant fleet during its operation was concomitant with the beginning of European empire building. These concurrent events provide fertile ground for investigating whether commercial, political and social attitudes existent in the Dutch Republic during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is reflected in the names of VOC vessels.

Methodology

An Excel spreadsheet of 2,311 vessel names was created from scratch using two sources: The *VOCsite*: ‘Overzicht VOC-Schepen’ and the Huygens Instituut, ‘Overview of voyages’.¹⁷ The *VOCsite* also covers the so-called Voorcompagnies ‘Pre-companies’ and includes vessels’ names; and if known, the date when a vessel was built or employed by the VOC; vessel-type; *lastmaat* or *last* (deadweight tonnage); and a brief log of its voyages.¹⁸ For some vessels a thumbnail history is given.

The spreadsheet contains the following variables: ‘vessel name’; ‘name-type’; ‘decade’ in which the vessel was built or in the employ of the VOC; where known, the ‘vessel-type’; its ‘last’; and to which VOC ‘Chamber’ it belonged. Even though a sizable number of different vessels had the same name-form, they were nevertheless counted individually because the emphasis of this essay is on individual vessel names, not the number of vessels that bore particular names. The reuse of a name-form provides insights into contemporaneous naming practices and attitudes. Quite often a vessel was renamed during its service; these names were included in the spreadsheet. The rationale for this approach is as follows.

As explained above, a vessel is given a name in order to distinguish it from other vessels. Proper names are linguistic expressions that have much in common with the Saussurian concept of a ‘linguistic sign’. The Swiss structural linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, defined the ‘linguistic sign’ as the indissoluble relationship between the ‘signifier’ (the name) and the ‘signified’ (what it represents or to what it refers).¹⁹ In the same way, a vessel’s proper name is not merely ‘an appellation *for* a vessel’ – it represents the relationship *between* the vessel and its name.

For instance, the records show there were at least nine vessels with the name-form *Arend* (‘Eagle’) in the employ of the VOC at various times. These vessels were built at different moments in different places, belonged to different Chambers and were different types of vessels with varying lasts. For the current purposes, their names are all considered *different* vessel names, not the *same* name appearing on different vessels. We may say they share the same ‘name-form’. A ‘vessel name’ should therefore be seen as ‘a vessel *and* its name’. In other words, if a single entry for *AREND* appeared in a register of VOC vessels, it would be akin to a single entry for *JOHN HOWARD* (that represented

all the ‘John Howards’) in a dictionary of biography or Wikipedia. All ‘John Howards’ are *distinct* individuals with *distinct* histories and each should be given his own biographical entry. The same applies to all the vessels bearing the appellation *Arend* – all *distinct* vessels, with *distinct* histories. We should therefore say that all the vessels with the appellations *Arend* have the same linguistic ‘name-form’, but not the same ‘name’.²⁰

Typology design

As the foregoing has indicated, at times a degree of arbitrariness enters into the classification of a name under one or other category. This is an important issue in the classification of any group of entities or concepts. An attendant issue is that of the design of a typology to be employed, which will have inevitable and varying degrees of arbitrariness in the establishment of its categories or classes. However, for a typology to be efficacious it needs to be composed of categories that are mutually exclusive. If an entity or concept can be catalogued under two or more classes, then the typology may be deficient in some way.

In order to study the complex array of animal and plant species in the world, they need to be organised into types or classes. This makes it possible to describe and analyse them and ultimately to distinguish between them. This principle also applies to vessel names, with each name-type being a class of name that shares essential properties. It is in the determining of these properties that introduces degrees of arbitrariness.²¹

A first requirement for rigour in any classification scheme is the definition of the entities to be considered as individuals. What counts as an individual for purposes of a particular classification must be defined in each instance. What functions as an individual in one classification scheme may be seen as a subclass of an individual in another class. For example, the classification of language varieties may be accomplished through geographical boundaries or linguistic distinctions. In the latter, depending on what linguistic criteria are deemed distinctive, a language variety may be considered an individual (i.e. a distinct language) or a subclass thereof (i.e. a dialect of that language).

In the typology employed here, the class ‘Biological’ is a conflation of names referring to ‘botanical’ entities and of ‘zoological’ beings.

In another typology, these two classes may have been kept distinct. Indeed, the ‘botanical’ and ‘zoological’ names may well be subdivided into further distinct flora and fauna categories, such as ‘plants’, ‘trees’, ‘fruits’ or ‘products’ thereof. Fauna may be subdivided into ‘mammals’, ‘fish’, ‘birds’, ‘insects’, for instance. Indeed, some of the literature cited above has done precisely that. Such divisions do make for more distinct and mutually exclusive classes of names, but the problem is that too many numerically small classes of individuals make it difficult to draw more meaningful conclusions and then to discern potential naming patterns.

Ultimately, knowledge obtained from an analysis of name-types after classification through grouping names using a typology adds to our understanding of onomastic changes over time. It may also add to our predictive power of name bestowal since from a given synchronic system, certain developments may be likely, others less likely, whilst still others may be practically excluded. The typology employed in this study ought to be viewed as only one technique under which vessel names may be classified. Other researchers can determine how effective they consider it to be.

The typology

The typology devised for VOC vessel names was based on a semantic analysis of a name’s referent and where recorded, plus the origin and/or intention of the name. At an elementary grammatical level, vessel names are derived from two classes of noun: proper and common. ‘Eponymous’ and ‘Toponymous’ names generally derive from existing proper names (Figure 1), whereas the other name classes tend to stem from common nouns.²² Table 1 enumerates the various name classes employed in this study.

‘Titles’ are included under ‘Eponymous’ because they are associated with personal names. Some mythical names are grammatically common nouns, e.g. *draak* and *meermin*, but have been classified under ‘Eponymous’ given they usually function as proper names.

Although some of the ‘Astronyms’ under ‘Toponymous’ are grammatically common nouns, they are nevertheless considered ‘Geographic’ names and have been classified under ‘Toponymous’ because, like the proper names under ‘Toponyms’, they also refer to



Figure 1: The *fregat* with the eponymous name *Peter en Paul* on the II, viewed from three different angles – stern, port/stern and bow/starboard – at the start of its maiden voyage to the East Indies. The vessel was named after the patron saints of St. Petersburg, the capital of Russia at the time of Tsar Peter the Great, who participated in the construction of the vessel. The Tsar is seen sitting at the helm of the sloop on the left. Painting by Abraham Storck, ca. 1698–1701. The vessel’s name should be seen as a metonym for St. Petersburg and the Tsar; not a name directly honouring the Biblical figures St. Peter and St. Paul. Source: Collectie J.H.H. Leonhardt, Stadsarchief Amsterdam. Image File 010097000020.

places or geographic features. ‘Demonyms’ generally comprise a toponymic name-form plus an adjectival suffix. Given their underlying toponymic reference, they have been classified under ‘Toponymous’.

The ‘Vocational/Functional’ class of names refers to occupations or activities performed by people. ‘Vessel-type’ names, although relatively small in number, fit well under this classification given vessel-type names usually signify the vessel’s function.

As the name suggests, the ‘Miscellaneous’ class consists of names that do not neatly fit into any group. Moreover, some such names number too few to warrant being categorised into a class of their own.

Name interpretation

Care must be taken when interpreting the meaning of vessel

Table 1. ‘Principle’ and ‘Specific’ vessel name-types identified.

Principle	Name-type	
	Specific subgroups	Examples
Eponymous	Personal	<i>Susanna Catherina, Elisabeth, Gustaaf Willem, Jan en Kornelis, Erasmus, Franklin</i>
	Family name	<i>Oranje, Nassau, Geelvinck</i>
	Full name	<i>Angelique Benech, Maria de Medici</i>
	Titled name	<i>Kroonprins van Bantam (Crown Prince of Bantam), Vrouwe Anthoinetta Koenrardina (Lady AK), Sint Nicolaas, Gouverneur-Generaal Maatsuijker, Generaal Washington</i>
	Title	<i>Prins (Prince), Erfprins (Hereditary Prince), Gouverneur-Generaal, President, Koning William (King William), Soesoehoenan (Javanese title), Neptunus, Juno, Draak (Dragon), Phoenix, Achilles, Meermin (Mermaid)</i>
	Literary / mythical	<i>Behemoth, Peter en Paul</i>
	Biblical	
Toponymous	Toponym (patria)	<i>Breda, Rijswijk, Leiden, Amsterdam, Overijssel, Huis te Bergen (House at Bergen) Oranje Zaal (Orange Room), Hof Niet Altijd Zomer (Not Always Summer Court)</i>
	Toponym (expatria – Europe, Asia, elsewhere)	<i>Hamburg, Lapland, Europa, Luxemburg, Stad Keulen (City of Cologne), Banda, Goa, Japan, Azië, Makassar, Kasteel Batavia (Batavia Castle), Zwavelberg (ZA), Amazone, Bethlehem, Zuidpool (South Pole), Massachusetts, Amerika</i>
	Astronym ^a	<i>Maan (Moon), Ster (Star), Zon (Sun), Noordster (North Star), Pollux</i>
	Demonym / Ethnonym ^b	<i>Maleier, Afrikaan, Phoenicier (Phoenician), Vlaming (Fleming)</i>
	Geographic	<i>Heuvel (Hill), Kaap (Cape), Pool (Pole), Voorland (Foreland),^c Vrije Zee (Safe Sea)</i>
Optative / Aspirational / Allegorical ^d	Moral & commercial tenets / Desirable qualities	<i>Zoetigheid (Sweetness), Gelukkig Uur (Happy Hour), Boni (‘Of the Good’), Oplettendheid (Alertness), Lijdzaamheid (Patience), Oppas (Watchfulness), Sparen (Save), Broederlust (Brotherly Love), Buitenzorg (Sans Souci), Concordia, Dankbaarheid (Gratitude), Eendracht (Concord), Gerechtigheid (Righteousness), Getrouwigheid (Faithfulness), Harmonie (Harmonie), Hoop (Hope), Weltevreden (Well Contented), Vriendschap (Friendship), Vrede (Peace), Fortuin (Fortune)</i>

Biological	Zoological	<i>Kabeljauw</i> (Codfish), <i>Dolfijn</i> (Dolphin), <i>Adelaar</i> (Eagle), <i>Bij</i> (Bee), <i>Leeuw</i> (Lion), <i>Piton</i> (Python), <i>Pitoor</i> (Bittern)
	Botanical	<i>Granaatappel</i> (Pomegranate), <i>Klapperboom</i> (Coconut Tree), <i>Klaverblad</i> (Cloverleaf), <i>Nagel</i> (Clove) <i>Komkommer</i> (Cucumber), <i>Zonnebloem</i> (Sunflower), <i>Pisang</i> (Coconut), <i>Berkhout</i> (Birchwood),
Vocational / Functional	Occupation	<i>Zoutmaker</i> (Saltmaker), <i>Kuiper</i> (Cooper), <i>Sleuteldrager</i> (Key Bearer), ^c <i>Suikermaalder</i> (Sugar Grinder), <i>Tinzoeker</i> (Tin Finder), <i>Bleker</i> (Bleacher), <i>Bode</i> (Messenger), <i>Boetzelaar</i> (Modeller), <i>Matroos</i> (Sailor), <i>Amfioenkramer</i> (Opium seller)
	Activity	<i>Negotie</i> (Negotiation), <i>Snauw</i> (Snarl), <i>Aventurier</i> (Adventurer), <i>Beschermer</i> (Protector), <i>Experiment</i> , <i>Zeevaart</i> (Seafaring), <i>Kruiser</i> (Cruiser), <i>Lacher</i> (Laughter), <i>Snuffelaar</i> (Sniffer), ^f <i>Zijdeteelt</i> (Sericulture)
	Vessel-type ^g	<i>Boot</i> (Boat), <i>Buis</i> (Drifter), <i>Loodsboot</i> (Pilot boat), <i>Kogge</i> (Cog ship), <i>Spaans Galjoen</i> (Spanish Galleon), <i>Snauw</i> (Snow)
Miscellaneous	Tools, implements, gemstones, events, meteorological phenomena, elements, etc.	<i>Bijl</i> (Axe), <i>Pijlswaart</i> (Arrowhead), <i>Bijl</i> (Axe), <i>Bierkan</i> (Beer tankard), <i>Diamant</i> (Diamond), <i>Nachtglas</i> (Night Hourglass), <i>Nijptang</i> (Pinchers), <i>Handboog</i> (Longbow), <i>Luchtbol</i> (Air Balloon), <i>Meiboom</i> (Maytree), <i>Rommelpot</i> (Friction Drum), <i>Dageraad</i> (Dawn), <i>Wind</i> , <i>Vuur</i> (Fire), <i>Water</i> , <i>Regenboog</i> (Rainbow)
a	The name of a star, planet, constellation or other celestial body.	
b	A name identifying a group of people (inhabitants, residents, indigenes) in reference to their ethnicity, place of origin or residence.	
c	The portion of the shore usually left outside of a protecting dike or embankment for the purpose of breaking the force of the waves.	
d	An affective name expressing a moral, commercial aspiration, wish or desire; something to be desired. Many of these are allegorical names. They reveal a symbolic use of a name or word to convey a hidden or ulterior meaning, typically a moral, political or commercial one; a metaphorical representation.	
e	Most likely a metaphorical reference to St Peter.	
f	Unlikely to refer to one who literally sniffs. More likely it denotes someone who busies themselves in searching around, especially for something of their liking; to seek out. This sense fits the VOC's principal ambition in seeking new markets and riches.	
g	The name of the vessel sometimes does not correspond to the type of vessel it is.	

names. At first reckoning, a name's meaning or referent may appear transparent, however further etymological or historical investigation sometimes reveals that its referent may be more opaque, often the result of the metaphorical use of the name. Some names, however, remain enigmatic.²³ The following VOC vessel names serve as examples of ambiguity.

Aap

Even though many VOC vessels bear the names of ordinary mammals, birds or fish, a *hoeker* and a *pantchiallang* each bore the name-form *Aap* (literally 'Monkey / Ape').²⁴ The *hoeker* was bought in 1664 by the chamber of Amsterdam and the *pantchiallang* belonged to the VOC in Batavia. The names most likely refer not to a primate, but more likely to the following.

Colloquially, a sum of money saved up and laid down; a carefully guarded treasure. In the past people sometimes used ceramic figurines in the shape of monkeys in which to keep money. *Aap* thus became a name for the 'piggy bank' of the day and, on transfer of its contents, metaphorically the money saved up. The French magot 'hoard, nest egg, monkey' also unites the three meanings.²⁵

Moreover, the 'hoard' of spices and other valuable goods contained in the hold of the vessel may well serve as an allegorical reference to the colloquial *aap*. Notwithstanding that the VOC's principal interest was in making profit, it seems reasonable to speculate that this was the intended referent for the vessels' name-forms. An *aap* could also refer to either a pantograph or a storm staysail, neither of which seem probable candidates.

Pimpel

The name of a *hoeker* purchased in 1664 by the Chamber of Delft, may also have a number of referents. Given the wide variety of names that VOC vessels bore, the *hoeker* may have been named for one of the following:

- a. a bird, the blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*);
- b. a small knobbly glass for brandy or other spirits;
- c. a species of nasturtium, so named for its resemblance to the small, knobbly glass;
- d. a name for a species of East Indian hornet, once again named for its resemblance to the small, knobbly glass;

- e. a dialectal term for a butterfly (though this appellation seems unlikely, given it is a dialectal name from the southern provinces).²⁶

Oranjeboom

Although vessels bore the names of trees and other flora or products thereof, the name *Oranjeboom* (literally ‘Orange Tree’), in all likelihood is a metaphorical reference to the royal House of Orange (Figure 2). During the Eighty Years’ War (1568–1648), the orange tree represented the flourishing of the House of Orange. After the assassination of Prince William (‘The Silent’) of Orange in 1584, the fate of the dynasty depended on his two sons, Maurits and Frederik Hendrik. Maurits chose the motto: *Tandem fit surculus arbor*, ‘At last the shoot becomes a tree’, which was represented on his coat of arms by a cut orange tree stump with two shoots emanating from it. After this, the orange tree became a symbol of the House of Orange.

Notenkraker

The name of an early eighteenth-century *sloep* (or *chialoup*) which literally refers to a pair of pincers used to crack nuts, i.e. ‘nutcracker’.²⁷ This appellation is not out of the ordinary given various VOC vessels carried the name of a tool or implement, e.g. one of Willem de Vlamingh’s vessels had the name *Nijptang*, ‘Pincers’. Nevertheless, given many vessels bore the names of animals, *Notenkraker* may just as well have referred to the bird species *Nucifraga caryocatactes* the ‘spotted/Eurasian nutcracker’ or a squirrel.²⁸

Visvliet

The name of an 880-ton vessel (type not recorded) built in 1752 belonging to the Chamber of Middelburg, in the province of Zeeland. It is named after the Zeeland VOC director Visvliet; one of the few instances where the name of a VOC administrator was used to name a vessel.²⁹ Since such ‘Eponymous’ names, are a rarity, the name could have referred to a *visvliet* ‘fish(ing) stream’ or indeed the village of that name in the province of Groningen.

Name-types in general

A tally of name-types (Table 2) shows that ‘Toponymous’ names form a clear majority (55 per cent). The bulk of these (80.3 per cent) are of placenames in patria. Not surprisingly, the names of vessels belonging



Figure 2. Linen damask table napkin with the *Oranjeboom* and the coat of arms of Prince Maurits, ANO 1601. Source: Rijksmuseum. Object reference: BK-14865.

to a particular Chamber tended to be of places situated in the Chamber's province.³⁰ Using such names was a convenient way of advertising to whom the vessel belonged and to impress rival Chambers or nations. Naturally, most 'Toponymous' names are from the western provinces of the Dutch Republic, viz. North Holland, South Holland, Zeeland and Friesland, where the six Chambers were located. The use of placenames from the homeland is a custom long practised in vessel naming, dating back to the ancient Egyptians.³¹

Toponyms from abroad also figure as VOC vessel names, 61 per cent of which were situated in Asia. Expatria names serve two functions: they either indicate where the vessel was built or show the extent of the VOC's reach in its trading sphere. A sizable number of VOC vessels were constructed in the East Indies, mostly in Rembang and Juwana, where smaller vessels, such as *pantchiallangs* and *sloeps* were constructed for the intra-Asian trade. The Chambers in the Republic were not involved in the building, purchase or naming of vessels in the East Indies.³²

Table 2. Overall numbers and percentages of 'Principle' and 'Specific' name-types.

		Name-types	
Principle (n, per cent of total)		Specific (n, per cent within each principle class)	
Eponymous	266 (11.5 per cent)	Personal name	102 (38.3 per cent)
		Family name	19 (7.1 per cent)
		Titled name	64 (24 per cent)
		Title	20 (7.5 per cent)
		Literary / mythical	46 (17.3 per cent)
		Biblical	15 (5.6 per cent)
Toponymous	1,272 (55 per cent)	Toponym (patria)	1,021 (80.3 per cent)
		Toponym (expatria – Europe, Asia, elsewhere)	185 (14.5 per cent)
		Astronym	51 (4 per cent)
		Demonym / Ethnonym	10 (0.8 per cent)
		Geographical	5 (0.4 per cent)
Optative	167 (7.2 per cent)	Moral & commercial tenets / desirable qualities	167 (100 per cent)
Biological	423 (18.3 per cent)	Zoological	357 (84.4 per cent)
		Botanical	66 (15.6 per cent)
Vocational / Functional	104 (4.5 per cent)	Occupation	62 (59.6 per cent)
		Activity	29 (27.9 per cent)
		Vessel-type	13 (12.5 per cent)
Miscellaneous	79 (3.4 per cent)	Tools, implements, gemstones, events, meteorological phenomena, elements, etc.	79 (100 per cent)
Total	2,311		2,311

The next most frequent name-type are 'Biological' names, comprising 18.3 per cent of the total. 'Zoological' names were especially popular, making up 84.4 per cent of 'Biological' names. These usually belonged to smaller vessels and those built in the East Indies and intended for the Asia trade.³³ 'Botanical' vessel names generally include names of plants producing fruits and spices, as well as the names of the plant products themselves. Such names indicating the products vessels carried.

'Eponymous' names are the next most common, 11.5 per cent of the total. Of these, 'Personal' names are in the majority – 38.3 per cent. If 'Optative', 'Vocational/Functional' and 'Miscellaneous' names are combined they comprise only 15.1 per cent of all name-types. Although

‘Optative’ and ‘Vocational/Functional’ names are not used all that often, they are in themselves quite telling in that they expose some of the prevailing Calvinist attitudes within the VOC and the Dutch Republic, signalling the moral/commercial tenets, desirable personal qualities, as well as occupations that were useful or admired. Names such as: *Sparen*, *Getrouwigheid*, *Weltevreden* and especially *Fortuin*, *Negotie* (perhaps in bargaining for good prices), *Aventurier*, *Zeevaart* and *Zijdeteelt* being good examples. It is possible that an ‘Optative’ name on a vessel may have been employed in an attempt to imbue the vessel, as well as those who sailed in it, with the qualities the name connoted.

‘Miscellaneous’ names are an ad hoc collection comprising a diverse set of items and concepts, which include tools, implements, gemstones, events, meteorological phenomena or elements. Naming vessels after such artefacts and environments may be seen as hinting at the VOC’s maritime commercialism and perhaps some of those things most valued by the Calvinist Dutch.

Principle name-types by decade

When naming practices across the 23 decades of the VOC Asian trade operations are considered (Table 3), we see a steady increase in ‘Eponymous’ names during the second half of the eighteenth century. Many of these names were derived from family members of VOC Directors or wealthy merchants – especially females.³⁴ This was an effective way of displaying one’s wealth and influence, a prevalent preoccupation in the Dutch Republic.

‘Toponymous’ names had a relatively stable popularity across both centuries, however these seemed to wane in the final two decades of the VOC’s existence. Vessels bearing names of Dutch places and trading posts in Asia can be seen as calling cards, signifying presence and ownership – a form of national branding. Moreover, the VOC’s venture should not only be seen as a commercial enterprise, but also as political resistance against the Spanish and Portuguese, who dominated the Asian trade routes prior to the seventeenth century. The Dutch were also engaged in a war (the ‘Eighty Years War’ or the ‘Dutch Revolt’) against Philip II of Spain, the nominal sovereign of the Netherlands. Naming vessels after places in patria was a very effective symbolic means of declaring these acts of resistance.

‘Optative’ names were not all that popular overall, however they were

Table 3. Overview of 'Principle' name-types by decade.

Decade	Eponymous (per cent)	Toponymous (per cent)	Principle name-type			Miscellaneous (per cent)	Total # vessels / decade
			Optative (per cent)	Biological (per cent)	Vocational (per cent)		
1580–89	–	1	–	–	–	–	1
1590–99	2 (6)	17 (55)	6 (19)	4 (13)	2 (6)	–	31
1600–09	4 (5)	51 (67)	2 (3)	17 (22)	2 (3)	–	76
1610–19	9 (12)	39 (50)	11 (14)	16 (21)	3 (4)	–	78
1620–29	13 (11)	74 (61)	6 (5)	26 (21)	2 (2)	–	121
1630–39	9 (9)	66 (69)	1 (1)	18 (19)	1 (1)	1 (1)	96
1640–49	10 (12)	31 (36)	7 (8)	31 (36)	5 (6)	2 (2)	86
1650–59	13 (11)	64 (52)	2 (2)	32 (26)	5 (4)	8 (7)	124
1660–69	7 (5)	83 (55)	6 (4)	53 (35)	3 (2)	–	152
1670–79	12 (9)	79 (62)	1 (1)	20 (16)	11 (9)	5 (4)	128
1680–89	12 (7)	95 (53)	7 (4)	48 (27)	8 (4)	10 (6)	180
1690–99	12 (9)	65 (47)	7 (5)	50 (36)	6 (4)	8 (6)	138
1700–09	11 (6)	90 (53)	11 (6)	29 (17)	12 (7)	18 (11)	171
1710–19	15 (11)	81 (57)	4 (3)	24 (17)	14 (10)	5 (3)	143
1720–29	11 (11)	54 (55)	6 (6)	6 (6)	7 (7)	5 (5)	99
1730–39	8 (7)	79 (74)	4 (4)	9 (8)	6 (6)	2 (2)	107
1740–49	11 (10)	73 (65)	17 (15)	5 (4)	4 (4)	3 (3)	112
1750–59	12 (15)	57 (73)	4 (5)	4 (5)	1 (1)	–	78
1760–69	14 (25)	41 (59)	5 (7)	6 (9)	–	3 (4)	69
1770–79	13 (16)	42 (51)	15 (18)	7 (9)	2 (3)	3 (7)	82
1780–89	55 (27)	77 (38)	39 (19)	16 (8)	9 (5)	6 (12)	202
1790–99	12 (34)	12 (34)	6 (17)	4 (11)	1 (3)	–	35
1800–09	1	1	–	–	–	–	2
Totals	266 (11.5)	1,272 (55)	167 (7.2)	423 (18.3)	104 (4.5)	79 (3.4)	2,311

relatively popular in the first three decades. Perhaps they represented a vain hope of imbuing the vessels with the qualities of their respective names, instilling those qualities in those who sailed in them, or signalling to observers the noble Calvinist principles of the VOC. After this initial period, 'Optative' names waned until the mid-eighteenth century when there seemed to be a resurgence, especially in the last three decades of the Company's existence – perhaps in a futile attempt to rekindle the zeal and commercial success during the previous 150 years.

'Biological' names were most widespread during the seventeenth century, with a sudden decline after 1720–29. Perhaps this decline was as a result of fewer, smaller vessels being built in the Republic during this period. After the 1730s, such vessels were largely built in Asia, where the *Heren XVII* did not have a say over vessel naming.

'Vocational' names had a short burst of popularity during the first four decades of the eighteenth century. With the exception of the first and penultimate decades of the eighteenth century, there was a small increase in their popularity. 'Vocational' names that denoted occupations or activities may be viewed as a direct influence of the strong Calvinistic work ethic so prevalent in the Republic at the time. In this manner, such names may be seen to function optatively. In Calvin's theology, 'there would be no employment so mean and sordid

(provided we follow our vocation) as not to appear truly respectable and be deemed highly important in the sight of God'.³⁵ Not only did Calvin free people to pursue upward mobility to the glory of God, but he also freed people to enjoy the fruits of their labour. To Calvin, riches were not the 'evil' the monastics had deemed. This philosophy plays out in the lives of many burghers of the Dutch republic, as so superbly portrayed by Simon Schama in his seminal work *The Embarrassment of Riches*.³⁶ Indeed, as the poet and playwright Gerbrand Bredero (1585–1618) showed in his social satire *Spaanschen Brabander*, 'The Spanish Brabanter', bankruptcy was a basic sin in the Calvinist republic.³⁷ The relief above the entrance door to the old Bankruptcy Chamber in Amsterdam tellingly illustrates this point also. It depicts the Fall of Icarus, representing the 'reward for high-flying ambition and folly'.³⁸ Moreover, Isaac le Maire (the father of Jacob le Maire, the European discoverer of Cape Horn), who went bankrupt, was even shamed in death by his epitaph:³⁹

Here lies buried Isaac le Maire merchant who during his actions in most quarters of the world has been so richly blessed by the lord God that over 30 years he lost (excepting his honor) more than 1,500,000 guilders. Was taken to rest by the Lord on September 20 Anno 1624.

The epitaph is a clear expression of how social status in the Dutch Republic was mainly determined by income.

'Miscellaneous' names remained relatively sparse through the Company's history.

The reasons for the waxing and waning of some name-types over the two centuries is difficult to determine. Often the numbers of name-types involved are too small from which to draw any definitive conclusions. As Table 3 illustrates, the overall number of vessels being built, bought or hired over the two centuries also fluctuated. Perhaps economic ebbs and flows, as well as conflicts with the Spanish, French and English were responsible for this variability. However, there seems to be no agreement among scholars as to when economic down-turns occurred in the Republic and to what extent they influenced the economy.⁴⁰ The sudden decline in VOC vessel numbers between 1630 and 1650 is perhaps explained by the decades-long world economic crisis that began around 1620.⁴¹

Specific name-types by century

A dissection of the specific name-types across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also provides some useful naming trends (Table 4). The table shows a variegated picture of naming trends over the two centuries. The numbers of names for most of the specific name-types are relatively small, too small from which to draw any definitive conclusions. What stands out are those name-types with large and noteworthy differences in numbers. Female personal names were double the number of male names during the eighteenth century. The female names were generally the wives and daughters of VOC officials and ship-owning merchants. Perhaps this reflected in a perverse way the Calvinist ethos of modesty. To name a vessel after oneself would be a demonstration of haughtiness, but to name a vessel after one's wife or daughter would accomplish two things at once – a show of unpretentiousness whilst at the same time showing ownership of the vessel. 'Titled names' also increased quite considerably in this century. Naming a vessel after a titled individual can be seen as a way of gaining favour with that person.

There was a substantial decline in the number of domestic town and province names in the eighteenth century. However, the reverse occurred with building or country estate names increasing almost fourfold. Is the

Principle name-types	Specific name-types	17 th century	18 th century	
Eponymous	Personal name	Female	17	46
		Male	17	22
	Family name	12	7	
	Titled name	17	47	
	Title	8	12	
	Literary / mythical	22	24	
	Biblical	10	5	
Toponymous	Toponym (patria)	Town / province	467	334
		Country estate / building	45	175
	Toponym (expatria)	Europe	18	21
		Asia	74	39
		Elsewhere	18	15
	Astronym	34	17	
Demonym / Ethnonym	2	8		
Geographical	1	4		
Optative	Moral & commercial tenets / desirable qualities	56	111	
Biological	Zoological	269	88	
	Botanical	42	24	
Vocational / Functional	Occupation	28	34	
	Activity	10	19	
	Vessel-type	10	3	
Miscellaneous	Tools, implements, gemstones, events, meteorological phenomena, elements, etc.	34	45	

decline of homeland town and province names a reflection of the steady decline of the VOC during the eighteenth century? If so, this does not explain why building or country estate names increased. These names derived from country estates owned by wealthy merchants and VOC Directors. During the eighteenth century, many such people moved out of the cities to escape over-crowding and the stench of sewage.⁴² This may explain the increase in such names. Expatria names seemed to be relatively stable with the exception of the decline of toponymous names from Asia, perhaps also revealing a decline in the fortunes of the VOC. ‘Astronyms’ also declined during this century (Figure 3). However, ‘Optative’ names doubled in number. Could this also be explained by the waning fortunes of the VOC during this century?

Perhaps the most striking difference in naming trends is shown by the ‘Zoological’ names, with the seventeenth century having three times as many vessels bearing such names than in the eighteenth century. Given smaller vessels often carried ‘Zoological’ names, the decline in building such vessels during this century may help explain the falling-off of such



Figure 3: The launching of the *hoeker Zon* at the shipyard at the Oostindisch Zeemagazijn in Amsterdam. In attendance is the Stadthouder William V and Princess Wilhelmina of Prussia, 2 June 1768. Source: Rijksmuseum. Object reference: RP-P-1944-2080.

names. ‘Botanical’ names almost halved during the eighteenth century. With the exception of vessel-type names, ‘Occupation’ and ‘Activity’ names slightly increased during the eighteenth century.

The reasons for many of these fluctuations in naming patterns are difficult, if not impossible, to elucidate. Perhaps they are just a reflection of varying naming fashions not associated with socio-political forces. What does seem to be clear though – and reflected in the naming of vessels – is that ‘Toponymous’ names from the home country and vessels’ destinations were extremely common overall. A parallel can be seen in the names given to individual airliners nowadays, where such names also signal country of origin and destinations of the airline.⁴³

What perhaps may be considered more telling than actual vessel names – in regard to the prevailing attitudes and values in the Dutch Republic – were the names that were not used. What is not seen in the database are saints’ names and very few ‘Biblical’ or religious names, all of which were common vessel names pre-Reformation.⁴⁴ The Dutch Calvinist ethos must be deemed as the driving force behind the absence of these name-types.

Name-types by Chamber, vessel-type and last

The following analyses are based upon name-types by Chamber, vessel-type and *last* when and where such information was available in the sources consulted.⁴⁵ Most VOC vessels were built by the company’s six Chambers in their home ports. However, a number of vessels were also hired, bought, taken as booty or built in Asia. For 461 (20 per cent) of vessel names in the database it is unknown or unrecorded where they were built or to which Chamber they belonged. For the 1850 vessels (80 per cent) where the Chamber is known, the majority are listed as belonging to Amsterdam (892), followed by Middelburg (368), Delft (130), Enkhuizen (127), Rotterdam (124) and Hoorn (114) (see Table 5). Another 95 vessels were registered in Asia. For the sake of efficiency and usefulness, only the most numerous vessel name-types are enumerated.⁴⁶ With the exception of Hoorn and Asia, no noteworthy differences in name-type are revealed. Since smaller vessels, which often had ‘Zoological’ names, were not built as often in Hoorn, the small number of such name-types under that Chamber may be explained. Hoorn compensates for this in its higher percentage of

Table 5. Most numerous name-types by VOC Chamber.

Chamber	Zoological Names (per cent)	Eponymous Names (per cent)	Dutch toponyms (per cent)	Sub-totals of most numerous name-types (per cent)	Total number of named vessels
Amsterdam	110 (12)	103 (12)	454 (51)	667 (75)	892
Middelburg	41 (11)	41 (11)	222 (60)	304 (83)	368
Delft	23 (18)	15 (12)	67 (52)	105 (81)	130
Enkhuizen	20 (16)	14 (11)	60 (47)	94 (74)	127
Rotterdam	21 (17)	14 (11)	63 (51)	98 (79)	124
Hoorn	6 (5)	15 (13)	71 (62)	92 (81)	114
Asia	44 (46)	4 (4)	7 (7)	55 (58)	95
Totals	265 (14)	206 (11)	944 (51)	1,415 (77)	1,850

‘Toponymous’ names. The majority of the vessels built there were over 500 tons, which always tended to be given ‘Toponymous’ names (Table 7). Vessels built in Asia and used in the intra-Asia trade tended to be smaller vessels and hence bore ‘Zoological’ names, as was the fashion for smaller vessels.

For 747 (32.3 per cent) of vessels in the database it is not known what kind of vessel they were. Of the remaining 1564 vessels, 110 (7 per cent) were excluded from the count because each of these vessel-types numbered no more than 15 in total – numbers too small to show any meaningful naming trends. The 1454 remaining vessels comprise the most numerous vessel-types built or employed by the VOC (Table 6).⁴⁷ The general preponderance of ‘Zoological’ names for smaller vessels, viz. *pantchiallangs*, *hoekers* and *galjoots* is echoed by these figures. Interestingly, *fregats* see a higher proportion of ‘Eponymous’ names than any other vessel-type. However, their number is too small from which to draw any viable conclusion as to why. Dutch toponyms featured significantly for names of larger vessels, such as *jachts/pinases*, *fluyts*, *retourships* and *hekboots*. The larger the vessel, the more important they were, being accordingly bestowed with ‘Toponymous’ names from the motherland. Such larger vessels may be compared to a navy’s capital ships.

Naturally, a vessel’s *last* is to a certain extent determined by the type of vessel it is. However, different vessel-types could vary considerably in their *last*, because vessel-types were also determined by their shape and rigging. Over the VOC’s two centuries most vessel-types changed in these regards. Of the 2311 vessel names in the database, for 546 (23.6 per cent) the *last* is unknown or unrecorded in the sources used. The remaining 1765 (76.4 per cent) vessel names have *lasts* ranging

from 50 to 1300 tons. These were arranged into 14 groups of 100 *last* (\approx tons) each (50–99, 100–199, etc. to 1300 *last*) and enumerated (Table 7). Again, only the most numerous vessel name-types are enumerated.⁴⁸

This table clearly reveals that vessels under 500 tons often had ‘Zoological’ names and that those less than 200 tons comprised a smaller percentage of ‘Toponymous’ names. This distinction probably reflects the attitude that a smaller vessel did not merit such a grand name.

Table 6. Most numerous name-types by vessel-type.

Vessel-type	Zoological Names (per cent)	Eponymous Names (per cent)	Dutch toponyms (per cent)	Sub-totals of most numerous name-types (per cent)	Total number of named vessels
<i>jacht/pinas</i>	90 (20)	37 (8)	208 (46)	335 (73)	457
<i>fluyt</i>	48 (13)	38 (10)	204 (56)	290 (80)	364
<i>retourschip</i>	8 (5)	18 (12)	100 (64)	126 (81)	156
<i>sloep</i>	21 (16)	13 (10)	16 (12)	50 (39)	129
<i>panchiallang</i>	45 (47)	7 (7)	2 (2)	54 (56)	96
<i>hoecker</i>	45 (47)	10 (11)	17 (18)	72 (76)	95
<i>galjoot</i>	21 (31)	5 (8)	9 (13)	35 (52)	67
<i>hekboot</i>	2 (4)	–	31 (66)	33 (70)	47
<i>fregat</i>	4 (5)	10 (23)	12 (16)	26 (61)	43
Totals	284 (20)	138 (10)	599 (41)	1,021 (70)	1,454

Vessel-types enumerated are the most common (numerous) of vessel-types built or employed by the VOC. Other types number too few to be able to discern any practical naming trends. Some confusion exists regarding the designations of *jacht* and *pinas*. In the early seventeenth century, at least, no distinction was made between them. In lists of VOC vessels, both names are sometimes used for the same ship. This is why *jacht* and *pinas* have been classified together.

Table 7. Most numerous name-types by *last*.

Last groups	Zoological Names (per cent)	Eponymous Names (per cent)	Dutch toponyms (per cent)	Sub-totals of most numerous name-types (per cent)	Total number of named vessels
50–99	58 (61)	2 (2)	12 (13)	72 (76)	95
100–199	49 (35)	11(8)	44 (31)	104 (73)	142
200–299	20 (15)	13 (10)	77 (58)	110 (83)	132
300–399	30 (21)	17 (12)	66 (46)	113 (79)	143
400–499	17 (14)	15 (12)	70 (57)	102 (83)	123
500–599	10 (7)	20 (14)	73 (51)	103 (72)	144
600–699	13 (5)	30 (13)	144 (60)	187 (78)	239
700–799	2 (2)	8 (8)	64 (65)	74 (76)	98
800–899	9 (3)	40 (12)	208 (63)	257 (78)	330
900–999	1 (4)	5 (18)	17 (61)	23 (82)	28
1000–1099	4 (15)	3 (11)	12 (44)	19 (70)	27
1100–1199	9 (4)	42 (17)	142 (56)	193 (76)	253
1200–1299	1 (10)	2 (20)	5 (50)	8 (80)	10
1300	–	1 (100)	–	1 (100)	1
Totals	223 (13)	209 (12)	934 (53)	1,366 (77)	1,765

Conclusion

The social and political structure that evolved with the economic transformation of Dutch life in the Republic was complex but was primarily marked by the predominance of the business classes and Calvinist philosophy. The resulting societal attitudes bled into the VOC mentality and was consequently directly and indirectly echoed in the naming of its vast fleet. Many of the observations made by Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffner on VOC vessel naming have been corroborated by the current analysis.⁴⁹ Some of the rationalisations for vessel naming patterns may be directly substantiated by the documented Calvinist and mercantile culture of the Dutch Republic. In some cases, their significance may be speculated upon, whilst for others it has not been possible to venture a resolution.

The foregoing analysis and discussion show that names of vessels and their concomitant meanings are multifarious and complex. Two types of name dominate, viz. 'Toponymous' and 'Eponymous'. The dominance of the former may be explained by the symbolic power that placenames have as emblems of personal, community and national identity. Placenames lie close to people's hearts since they trigger a mental relationship between the names themselves and the denizens of the named places.⁵⁰ 'Where do you come from?' is one of the opening questions people ask about each other upon first meeting. It is an important question because it identifies and defines a person. Two of the most common facets of personal identity are *place* (of origin, residence or occupation) and the *language/dialect* spoken. Placenames allow these two dimensions to be simultaneously communicated, given that an individual's language variety is ordinarily linked to their place of origin.

'Eponymous' names serve multiple purposes. They can signify who the owner of the vessel is, either by family name or by the given name of a family member. In the latter case, unpretentiousness is maintained. The use of titled names or family names of the nobility is a way of gaining favour with influential people in patria. Names consisting of a title only are an indirect means of recognising such people, as are the 'Vocational/functional' which reflect Calvinist thinking. Conversely, the infrequent use of titles and titled names, as well as Biblical names, also betray Calvinist principles.

Numerous socio-linguistic studies have shown how societal attitudes are revealed through language use. These studies are valuable in understanding how human societies behave and develop. Bestowing proper names on people, geographic features and inanimate objects, like ships, is just another facet of linguistic behaviour. Studying naming patterns is an onomastic approach to investigating socio-linguistic behaviour. When the proper names of any semantic domain are considered collectively, they often reveal naming trends which can be used as windows into historical layers of contemporaneous societal attitudes and beliefs. The collected names of VOC vessels are an example of this association.

In addition, proper names are a valuable resource for linguists, psychologists, sociologists and historians, who are all ultimately concerned with understanding and explaining human behaviour. Language is patterned, systematic behaviour that relies on natural rules which enable words and sentences to be fashioned. Linguists endeavour to describe these rules and systems of language, which in turn allow this linguistic patterned behaviour to be uncovered. These patterns then provide windows into the workings of the human brain. Onomastics helps us to understand the structure, formation and use of proper names, which also provides a window into how the human brain works.

Endnotes

- 1 David Blair and Jan Tent, 'A Revised Typology of Place-naming', *Names*, vol. 69, no. 4, 2021, pp. 30–47. The authors do not declare that these decisions necessarily constitute an overtly conscious process.
- 2 'Eponym' is used here to refer to a personal name and/or title. A 'toponym' refers to placename.
- 3 See for example: Steven D. Sargent, "'Saints" Cults and Naming Patterns in Bavaria, 1400–1600', *Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 76, no. 4, 1990, pp. 673–96; Susan Cotts Watkins and Andrew S. London, 'Personal Names and Cultural Change: A Study of the Naming Patterns of Italians and Jews in the United States in 1910', *Social Science History*, vol. 18, no. 2, 1994, pp. 69–209; Scott Smith-Bannister, *Names and Naming Patterns in England, 1538–1700*, Oxford University Press, 1997; Michael H. Kelly, 'Regional Naming Patterns and the Culture of Honor', *Names*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1999, pp. 3–20; Ryan P. Brown, Mauricio Carvallo and Mikiko Imura, 'Naming Patterns Reveal Cultural Values: Patronyms, Matronyms and the U.S. Culture of Honor', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2014, pp. 250–62.
- 4 Jan Tent and Helen Slatyer, 'Naming Places on the "Southland": European Place-Naming Practices from 1606 to 1803', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2009, pp. 5–31.
- 5 'Onomastics' is the academic discipline concerned with the study of the origin, forms, structures and use of proper names.
- 6 See: Thomas Davys Manning, 'The Society's Annual Lecture / Ship Names', *Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 43, no. 2, 1957, pp. 91–100; Thomas Davys Manning and Charles F. Walker, *British Warship Names*, Putnam, 1959; Don H. Kennedy, *Ship Names: Origins and Usages During Forty-five Centuries*, University of Virginia Press, 1974; Rudolf Simek, 'Old Norse Ship Names and Ship Terms', *Northern Studies*, vol. 13, 1979, pp. 26–36; Michael Seymour, 'Warships' Names of the English Republic, 1649–1659', *Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 76, no. 4, 1990, pp. 317–24; Malcolm Jones, 'The Names Given to Ships in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth Century England', *Nomina*, vol. 23, 2000, pp. 23–36; Kenneth Fraser, 'The Politics of Naming Warships', *Nomina*, vol. 35, 2012, pp. 131–40; Andrei V. Grinëv, 'Russian Ship Names: Ships on the Shores of Russian America', *Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 101, no. 2, 2015, pp. 200–12; Malcolm Jones, 'Ship Names', in Carole Hough and Daria Izdebska (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Names and Naming*, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 655–60; Mark A. Russell, 'Steamship Nationalism: Transatlantic Passenger Liners as Symbols of the German Empire', *International Journal of Maritime History*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2016, pp. 313–34; Rachael Pasierowska, 'All Aboard the *King George* and *Happy Captive*: European Shipnaming Practices in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, 1750–1755', *International Journal of Maritime History*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2022, pp. 183–95.
- 7 Jan Tent, 'The Flag-waving Names of Ocean Liners', *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 109, no. 3, 2023 (DOI: 10.1080/00253359.2023.2225314).
- 8 The term 'vessel' is used here rather than 'ship' because the types of vessels used by the VOC ranged from small boats and tenders to large *retourschepen* or 'return ships'.

- 9 Jaap van Overbeek, 'Naamgeving van de Schepen', *De VOC-site*, www.vocsite.nl/schepen/, 2023, accessed May 2023.
- 10 Jacobus R. Bruijn, Femme S. Gaastra and Ivo Schöffner, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, Vol. I: *Introductory Volume*, Rijks Geschiedkundige publication, Grote serie, vol. 165, pp. 54–5, <https://resources.huysgens.knaw.nl/das>, 1987, accessed 6 May 2023.
- 11 Huygens Instituut, 'Overview of Voyages', *The Dutch East India Company's Shipping between the Netherlands and Asia 1595–1795*, <https://resources.huysgens.knaw.nl/das/voyages?clear=1>, 1987, accessed 6 May 2023.
- 12 Sara L. Uckelman, 'Names of Ships in the VOC between 1595 and 1650', www.ellipsis.cx/~liana/names/other/vocships.html, 2011, accessed 6 May 2023.
- 13 Willem Voorbeitel Cannenburg, 'Scheepsnamen Vroeger en Nu', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen der Naam-kundecommissie van de Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, XVIII*, N.V. Noord-Hoollandsche Uitgeveres Maatschappij, 1960, pp. 1–16.
- 14 For a useful summary of the history of the VOC, see Femme S. Gaastra, 'The Dutch East India Company: A Reluctant Discoverer', *The Great Circle*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1997, pp. 109–23.
- 15 Pieter van Dam, *Beschryvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie*, vol. 1.1., no.63, Martinus Nijhoff 1927, p. 453, <https://resources.huysgens.knaw.nl/retroboeken/vandam/#page=0&accessor=toc&source=1>, accessed 6 May 2023; Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffner, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, p. 54.
- 16 VOC Kenniscentrum, 'Oprichting Organisatie en Ondergang van de VOC', Huygens Instituut, Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, <https://voc-kenniscentrum.nl/vocbegin.html>, n.d., accessed 6 May 2023; Huygens Instituut, 'Introduction', *The Dutch East India Company's Shipping Between the Netherlands and Asia 1595–1795*, <https://resources.huysgens.knaw.nl/das/EnglishIntro>, 1987, accessed 6 May 2023.
- 17 Jaap van Overbeek, 'Database van schepen', *De VOCsite: 'Overzicht VOC-Schepen'*, www.vocsite.nl/schepen/lijst/, 2023, accessed 6 May 2023; Huygens Instituut, 'Overview of voyages', *The Dutch East India Company's Shipping Between the Netherlands and Asia 1595–1795*, <https://resources.huysgens.knaw.nl/das/voyages>, 1987, accessed 6 May 2023. A substantial list of VOC vessel names may also be found in Robert Parthesius, *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters*, Amsterdam University Press, 2010. However, his list only spans the years 1595 to 1660 and deals with the shipping network in Asia. The list also does not indicate to which Chamber the vessel belonged. This list was therefore, not used.
- 18 The pre-companies were the trading companies that traded in Asia between 1594 and 1602, before being forced to merge by the States General to form the VOC due to destructive competition.
- 19 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de Linguistique Générale*, 5th Edition, Payot, 1955, *passim*.
- 20 This definition of 'vessel name' is analogous to that embraced by the Australian National Placenames Survey for 'toponym'. See: David Blair, *The Australian*

- National Placenames Survey: Principles and Practice*, ANPS Technical Paper No. 4, Placenames Australia, 2022 [2017], p. 2, www.anps.org.au/upload/ANPSTechPaper4.pdf, accessed 6 May 2023.
- 21 For a seminal treatise on this topic see: Paul F. Lazarsfeld, ‘Some Remarks on the Typological Procedures in Social Research’, *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, vol. 6, 1937, pp. 119–39.
- 22 ‘Eponymous’ – using the proper name of a person, a title or other named entity. ‘Toponymous’ – using the proper name of a place (province, town, country estate or building) or a common name for a geographical feature.
- 23 Voorbeitel Cannenburg, ‘Scheepsnamen Vroeger en Nu’, *passim*; Uckelman, ‘Names of Ships in the VOC between 1595 and 1650’, *passim*; Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffner, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, p. 55.
- 24 The *hoeker* (‘hooker’) was originally a fishing vessel, but was also used for merchant shipping; a fairly flat-bottomed vessel, broad in bow and stern, usually with two or three masts, but particularly distinguished by the cabin at the stern projecting above the deck; sometimes rigged as barques. The *panthialleng* is a traditional merchant vessel from the East Indies. It has a strongly curved bow and stern and a rounded bottom with keel. A deckhouse was built over most of the vessel’s hull; steered with a side rudder. The vessel has a very wide and low gaff sail with boom. The jib is connected to a long bowsprit.
- 25 Definitions derived from *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, <https://gtb.ivdnt.org>, 2023, accessed 6 May 2023.
- 26 *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, accessed 6 May 2023. Since the majority of possible senses of the term refer to an animal or plant, it was decided to classify the name as a ‘Biological’ name (see Table 1).
- 27 English meanings of Dutch vessel-type names are not attempted here because translated English dictionary equivalents for them do not accurately define their Dutch senses. Moreover, their Dutch senses vary as well. The issue of the difficulty in classifying VOC vessel-types is highlighted by Parthesius in his *Dutch Ships in Tropical Waters*, pp. 16–18.
- 28 *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, accessed 6 May 2023. It was decided to classify this name under ‘Miscellaneous’ (see Table 1).
- 29 Jaap van Overbeek, ‘Database van schepen’, accessed 6 May 2023.
- 30 As also noted by Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffner, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, pp. 54–5.
- 31 Kennedy, *Ship Names*, pp. 14–28. See also: Voorbeitel Cannenburg, ‘Scheepsnamen Vroeger en Nu’, *passim*; Manning, ‘The Society’s Annual Lecture’, *passim*; Manning and Walker, *British Warship Names*, *passim*; Simek, ‘Old Norse Ship Names and Ship Terms’, *passim*; Seymour, ‘Warships’ Names of the English Republic’, *passim*; Jones, ‘The Names Given to Ships in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth Century England’, *passim*.
- 32 Jacobus C. Overvoorde and Petrus de Roo de la Faille, *De Gebouwen van de Oost-Indische Compagnie en van de West-Indische Compagnie in Nederland*, A. Oosthoek, 1928; A. Hans Bonke, ‘Het Eiland Onrust. Van Scheepswerf van de VOC tot Bedreigd Historisch-archeologisch Monument Handel, Productie en Consumptie’, in

- Michiel H. Bartels, Erich H.P. Cordfunke, Herbert Sarfatij, et al. (eds), *Hollanders Uit en Thuis: Archeologie, Geschiedenis en Bouwhistorie Gedurende de VOC-tijd in de Oost, de West en thuis: Cultuurhistorie van de Nederlandse Expansie*, Verloren, 2002, pp. 45–60.
- 33 As also noted by Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffner, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, pp. 54–5.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 John Calvin (trans. John Allen), *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 6th Edition, Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-School Work, 1921, p. 650.
- 36 Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of the Dutch Culture in the Golden Age*, Fontana Press, 1991.
- 37 Gerbrand Bredero, ‘Spaansche Brabander Jerolimo’, in *Werken van G.A. Bredero. Dramatasche Werken Deel II*, S.L. van Looy, 1924, pp. 219–304. www.dbnl.org/arch/bred001jank03_01/pag/bred001jank03_01.pdf, accessed May 2023.
- 38 Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, p. 343.
- 39 Author’s translation of le Maire’s tombstone inscription. Source: C.W. Bruinvis, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Grafsteen_van_Isaac_Le_Maire_en_vrouw.png
- 40 Jonathan I. Israel, *Dutch Primacy in World Trade 1585–1740*, Oxford University Press, 1989, especially pp. 377–98.
- 41 Ibid., pp. 121–96.
- 42 *Een Maakbaar Land*, Part 6, *De Gouden Eeuw*, (13 part series), Matthijs Cats, Roel van Dalen, Gerda Jansen Hendriks, et al. (directors), NTR/VPRO, 2013, <https://archieff.ntr.nl/goudeneeuw/krant/afleveringen/index.html#/overzicht/6/>, accessed 6 May 2023.
- 43 Sheila Embleton and André Lapiere, ‘Commercial Aircraft Naming: History of Naming of Means of Transport’, in Ritva L. Pitänen and Kaija Mallat (eds), *You Name It: Perspectives on Onomastic Research*, Studia Fennica, Linguistica 7, Finnish Literature Society, 1997, pp. 217–36.
- 44 Voorbeitel Cannenburg, ‘Scheepsnamen Vroeger en Nu’, pp. 6–8.
- 45 Vessel-types are hard to define. Each type could vary greatly in size and over the years their designs could change. Therefore, vessel-type and its *last* do not correlate neatly.
- 46 The most numerous name-types columns show the number of each name-type for each Chamber, plus their respective percentage of the total number of named vessels for that Chamber. The ‘Sub-total’ column shows the sum of the most numerous name-types for each Chamber, plus its percentage of the total number of named vessels in that Chamber.
- 47 The most numerous name-types columns show the number of each name-type for each vessel-type, plus their respective percentage of the total number of named vessels in that vessel class. The ‘Sub-total’ column shows the sum of the most numerous name-types for each vessel-type, plus its percentage of the total number of named vessels in that vessel class.
- 48 The most numerous name-types columns show the number of each name-type for each *last*, plus their respective percentage of the total number of named

vessels in that *last* class. The ‘Sub-total’ column shows the sum of the most numerous name-types for each *last*, plus its percentage of the total number of named vessels in that *last* class.

- 49 Bruijn, Gaastra and Schöffner, *Dutch-Asiatic Shipping in the 17th and 18th Centuries*, pp. 54–55.
- 50 See: Botolv Helleland, ‘Place Names as Identity Markers’ *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Onomastic Sciences*, York University, 2009, pp. 501–10; Botolv Helleland, ‘Place Names and Identities’, in Botolv Helleland, Christian-Emil Ore and Solveig Wikstrøm (eds), *Names and Identities. Oslo Studies in Language*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2012, pp. 95–116. <https://journals.uio.no/public/journals/1/images/osla-4-2.pdf>, accessed 6 May 2023; Shukran Qazimi, ‘Sense of place and place identity’, *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2014, pp. 306–10. https://revistia.com/files/articles/ejsr_v1_i1_14/ShukranQ.pdf, accessed 6 May 2023.