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The Diachronic Evolution of Personal Names in English and Uzbek Languages

Gulshoda Avloyorova Shahrisabz

State Pedagogical Institute Teacher Of The Department Of Foreign Language Practice And Theory, Uzbekistan

Abstract: This study explores the historical development of personal names in English and Uzbek, focusing on how naming conventions have evolved through different historical periods. The research highlights the impact of major historical events, religious transitions, and cultural exchanges on name formation and usage. By analyzing personal names from ancient times to the modern era, this study provides insight into the dynamic relationship between language, identity, and history in both linguistic traditions.

Introduction: The study of personal names provides a window into the historical and social changes that have influenced linguistic traditions. Across centuries, English and Uzbek naming systems have undergone significant modifications, shaped by shifting political regimes, religious transitions, and cross-cultural interactions. This study focuses on the diachronic analysis of personal names, tracing their evolution from ancient times through medieval and modern periods. By examining these changes, we gain a deeper understanding of how names serve as markers of historical and societal transformations.

Ancient naming traditions

In early English history, names were primarily of Germanic origin, with strong ties to nature, warfare, and personal attributes. These names were often constructed using meaningful compounds that reflected the values of the time. Old English names frequently consisted of two elements, each contributing a specific meaning to the overall name. For instance, Alfred ('elf counsel') combined 'ælf' (elf) with 'ræd' (counsel), emphasizing wisdom and supernatural guidance. Similarly, Eadric ('rich in fortune') derived from 'ead' (wealth, fortune) and 'ric' (ruler, powerful), signifying leadership and prosperity.

Other common Old English names included Wulfstan ('wolf stone'), Beornwulf ('warrior wolf'), and Godric ('God's ruler'), which showcased the period's emphasis on strength, religious devotion, and warrior-like qualities. Additionally, names like Cuthbert ('famous brilliance') and Leofwine ('beloved friend') highlight the social values of honor and companionship.[4,36]

With the arrival of Christianity in England, many Anglo-Saxon names began to incorporate biblical influences. However, traditional Germanic names remained prevalent until the Norman Conquest introduced a new wave of naming conventions.

Uzbek names in the ancient period were largely influenced by Turkic traditions, with names often derived from natural elements and heroic attributes. Examples include Bozog'lan ('young falcon'), Temir ('iron'), and Kuchkar ('ram').[9,15] These names signified strength, resilience, and connection to the natural world, which were central themes in early Turkic societies. Additionally, names such as Barchin ('silk fabric'), Alpamir ('brave leader'), and To'lanboy ('full moon boy') reflected societal values, heroism, and admiration for celestial elements. Names like Erkin ('free'), Botir ('hero'), and Sayfiddin ('sword of faith') were given to boys to symbolize courage and leadership, whereas names such as Oygul ('moon flower'), Guldasta ('bouquet of flowers'), and Zuhra ('Venus') for girls emphasized beauty, nature, and grace.[7,17] The connection to nature and cosmic elements in naming practices underscored the deep spiritual and environmental awareness embedded in

ancient Turkic societies.

Medieval period and religious influence

The medieval period brought profound changes to English names due to the Norman Conquest in 1066. The dominance of Norman-French culture led to the widespread adoption of names such as William (from Old Norman 'Willaume'), Henry (from Old French 'Henri'), and Robert (from Old High German 'Hrodebert').[12,234] Additionally, the spread of Christianity contributed to the prevalence of biblical names like John, Thomas, and Elizabeth, reflecting the deepening religious influence on English-speaking societies.

In Uzbekistan, the spread of Islam during the medieval period introduced Arabic and Persian names, many of which remain common today. Names such as Muhammad, Abdulloh ('servant of God'), and Zaynab became widespread due to religious significance. Persian influence also brought poetic and nature-related names like Dilorom ('heart's delight') and Gulnora ('flower of light'), demonstrating the fusion of linguistic and cultural elements during this period.[8,18]

Renaissance and early modern naming trends

The Renaissance era in England saw a revival of classical Latin and Greek names, inspired by the resurgence of interest in antiquity. Names such as Julius, Augustus, and Helena gained popularity among the educated elite. The influence of literature also played a role, with names from Shakespearean works, such as Olivia, Cordelia, and Hamlet, becoming fashionable.

During this period, Uzbek naming traditions maintained strong ties to Persian and Arabic sources, though some regional variations began to emerge. The influence of Persian court culture led to the adoption of names associated with royalty and scholarship, such as Firuz ('victorious') and Ulug'bek (named after the famous astronomer and ruler).[7,85] The blending of local Turkic and Persian traditions further enriched the Uzbek anthroponymic landscape.

Modern period and the impact of globalization

In contemporary English-speaking societies, naming conventions have been shaped by globalization, media, and cultural shifts. The 19th and early 20th centuries saw an increase in Victorian-era names such as Charlotte, Albert, and Beatrice, reflecting the values of the time. The mid-to-late 20th century introduced more diverse and unconventional names, such as Dylan, Taylor, and Madison, influenced by popular culture, literature, and media figures.[3,78]

Uzbek names underwent significant changes during the Soviet era, as Russian naming conventions were introduced into the region. Names such as Sergey, Olga, and Viktor became common, reflecting political and ideological shifts. However, following Uzbekistan's independence in 1991, there was a resurgence of traditional Uzbek and Islamic names. Names like Amir ('prince'), Shahrizoda ('city-born'), and Temurbek ('leader Temur')[10,112] gained renewed popularity, emphasizing national identity and historical heritage.

CONCLUSION

The study of personal names is not only relevant for historical linguistics but also for understanding the broader relationship between language and human identity. Names are more than mere labels; they serve as reflections of cultural belonging, personal aspirations, and societal values. Throughout history, naming conventions have been instrumental in marking social class, religious identity, and ethnic affiliation. Additionally, geopolitical changes, migration, and colonization have left lasting imprints on the anthroponymic landscape, demonstrating how names transcend individual identity to become historical markers of civilizations.

Future research in this area may focus on the role of digital media, migration, and socio-political changes in influencing naming trends. The rise of digital identity and virtual communities has also introduced a new dimension to personal naming conventions, as individuals increasingly choose pseudonyms, screen names, and online identities that differ from their given names. By exploring these factors, we can further understand how personal names continue to adapt and evolve in an ever-changing world, reflecting the dynamic relationship between language, culture, and identity.

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