

Typology of Male Forenames in Jordan: A Sociocultural Study

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Abstract

The present paper addresses the typology of male forenames in Jordan of a sociocultural point of view. Forenames among the Jordanian society are of great importance as in any other society because they show how people think when choosing a name. The paper considers forenames used by Jordanian people as not being arbitrary headings but sociocultural titles of important sociocultural functions. The paper investigates the typology of forenames in Jordan which includes religious names with its types, names of Arab historical characters, names of weapons, titles of nobility besides others.

Keywords: Jordan, Forenames, Typology, Sociocultural, Religious names, Arab Tribal Figures, Names of weapons.

Introduction

The Arab community of Jordan uses many names of different forms and sources to name the newborn ones. Forename is a personal identity accompanies its bearer all life so parents pay great attention when choosing a name for their child. The name exceeds its narrow linguistic meaning to become a social and functional merit that affects to a very certain degree the social and emotional sides of the bearer.

The sources of forenames might be similar between cultures with some privacy for each one. The Jordanian society is part of the Arabic Islamic culture. There is an Arab wisdom says that it is the duty of the father to choose a noble mother, a good name for his child besides teaching him writing and reading. Parents do their best to choose an aesthetic and acceptable name for their child because changing the name of the child after being registered legally is a complicated process.

The typology of forenames into various types as presented in the present study emphasizes the fact that choosing names is strongly based on sociocultural considerations. Actually names in general and forenames in particular are not chosen arbitrarily. The present study shows the social and cultural practices and beliefs which influence choosing forenames in Jordan. The data of the study shows that many of these forenames are not only used by the people of Jordan such as the religious names among others. Generally, it is found that name givers are influenced by religion more than other sources of forenames followed by name from the Arabic heritage.

Theoretical Framework

Omer (2005: 3) said that "a personal, proper noun is given shortly after birth, in many Arabic countries, usually on the third day, but sometimes on the seventh day after birth. Examples of such names are Muhammad, Ali, Musa "Moses" and Ibrahim "Abraham". Adults are seldom called by their Ism; socially, this is considered slight to address or refer to an elder or parent by their Ism directly."

Windt-Val (2012: 273) had a study which is an attempt to show the close connection between a person's given name and their feeling of identity and self. She added that this connection is very important – it has even been stated that the parents' choice of name for their child will have an influence on the development of the personality of the child. Moreover, she pointed that personal names and place names are some of the most important tools of the author in the creation of credible characters placed in a literary universe that gives the impression of being authentic.

Gerba (2015:20) pointed out that "names are classified according to the social categories to which they refer and the meaning they convey. Besides, explanation of name givers' idea was considered as a single name can be chosen by different parents for different reasons. For example, guutaa which mean 'full' is a name given by some parents to indicate they do not want another baby. In this case, guutaa refers to the last baby of the parents. In contrast, the same name can be given to another baby by other parents who wish to be rich.

The parents may have expectations of unfulfilled wishes for prosperity. They expect that the wishes could be fulfilled after the birth of the baby. This implies the meaning of Oromo personal name is context-dependent. A single name can have different possible meanings when embodied in different circumstances of birth. This could further express that the exact meaning of one's name can only be found in the minds of the name-givers and the context of naming. As a result, I tried to classify Oromo personal names on the basis of their meanings or themes, how and when of naming."

Al-Zumor (2009: 15-16) mentioned the following: "Naming is a specific linguistic act, intimately linked with values, traditions, hopes, fears and events in people's lives. Names reveal the many preferences of their owners (or givers) in terms of real life objects, actions, features and beliefs (Rosenhouse, 2002). Personal naming practices offer important insights into the patterns of social and cultural organisation of communities and can be a key to broader cultural changes. They tell us about the categorisation of the new-born infant (e.g. sex, social group) and the name giver, and often tell us what is seen as significant about the background and the circumstances at the time of birth. In naming a new baby, and consciously choosing a word to refer to a new person, that word has enormous symbolic power: it will identify the person, and at the same time the name can send a message, express a hope or prayer, perpetuate a cultural or religious tradition."

Katakami (1997: 204) pointed out that the basic principle of naming is to name the newborn after another person. Especially it is important to name a baby after its grandparent. This principle is related to the fact that persons in the same and alternate generation-sets are regarded to be in the same category.

Eslami-Rasekh & Ahmadvand (2015: 6) said that " a name, known to speakers as first name, forename, Christian name etc, is a means of referring to persons; it differentiates between members of a family or a society in a narrower sense than last names which identify tribes and people related by blood, and are considered to be the inheritance of individuals from ancestors. A first name is purposefully given to a child by parents, grandparents, godfathers, local clergymen, etc. before or after the birth, unlike the family name which is a predetermined reference device necessary for official addressing in the sense that a group of individuals, regardless of sex, carry a common family name but have each different first names in which choice parents have a say and vary across different genders."

Typology of Forenames

1. Religious Names

Names of religious origin have clear presence in names in Jordan. Islam as the religion of the great majority of Jordanians has a brilliant effect on choosing names. Many Jordanian Christians adopt name of Islamic origin like Abd-Allah and Abd-Alnur besides names derived from the Bible. The following is a show of types of religious names used by Jordanians for their male and female children.

1.1. Names of Males

1.1.1. Abd (Abed) + one of the ninety-nine Attributes of Allah

The words Abd (Abed) means ' slave ' in Arabic. It precedes one of the ninety divine attributes of Allah. These divine attributes are mentioned in the Holy Quran and in Sunnah (i.e. the speeches by Prophet Mohammad). Names as Abd – Alkareem, Abd- Alraheem, and Abd- Asalam are examples. The following are the ninety divine attributes of Allah: Allah, Alraheem, Alrahman, Almalek, Alqudoos, Alsalam, Almu'men, Almuhaimen, Alazeez, Aljabbar, Almutakabbir, Alkhliq, Albari', Almusawwir, Alghafur, Alqahir, Alwahhab, Alrazzaq, Alfattah, Ala'lim, Alqabidh, Albasit, Alkhafidh, Alrafii', Almu'iz, Almuthil, Alsameei', Albasiir, Alhakeem, Ala'dl, Allateef, Alkhabeer, Alhaleem, Ala'theem, Alghafoor, Alshakoor, Aa'ali, Alkhabeer, Alhafeedh, Almuqeet, Alhaseeb, Aljaleel, Alkareem, Alraqeeb, Almujeeb, Alwasii', Alhakeem, Alwadood, Almajeed, Alba'th, Alshaheed, Alhaq, Alwakeel, Alqawi, Almateen, Alwali, Alhameed, Almuhsi, Almubdi, Almuueed, Almuhi, Almuheet, Alhai, Alqauum, Alwajid, Almajid, Alwahid, Alahad, Alsamad, Alqadir, Almuqtadir, Almuqaddim, Almu'khir, Alawwal, Alakhir, Aldhahir, Albatin, Alwadhi', Almuaa'li, Albarr, Altawwab, Almuntaqim, Ala'fu, Alrau'uf, Aljamei', Almuqset, Alghani, Almughni, Almani', Aldhahir, Alnafi', Alnur, Alhadi, Albadee', Albaqi, Alwareth, Alrasheed, Alsabuur, Malik Almulk, Thu Aljalal wal Ikram.

1.1.2. Names and Attributes of Prophet Mohammad

Names and attributes of Prophet Mohammad are widely used in Jordan. It is a great honor to name a boy child after the name Mohammad which is the most popular name among Muslims not only in Jordan. The prophet has other names which are also widely used such as Ahmad, Mustafa, and Mahmud. Other attributes of the prophet are Mukhtar, Altayyeb, Althahir, Alameen, and Alsadeq. The name Mohammad is accompanied in many cases with another name or adjective such as Mohammad Nur, and Mohammad Ameen.

1.1.3. Names of Prophets, Good Men and Apostles

The religious influence on the names of Jordanian males is not only limited to the ninety attributes of Allah and the names of Prophet Mohammad but it extends to the names of the prophets, good men and apostles mentioned in the Holy Quran. Names of prophets and apostles like Adam, Idrees, Noah, Hud, Saleh, Ibrahim, Ishaq, Ismae'el, Ya'quub, Yusuf, Shua'ib, Musa, Haroon, Dawood, Sulaiman, Ayyub, Yunos, Yahia, I'esa, Zakariya, Elya, Alyase', Lut, and Yunos are commonly used in Jordan besides names of good men as Luqman and Imran whose names and stories are mentioned in the Holy Quran and Alkhder whose stories is only mentioned in the Holy Quran.

1.1.4. Names of Angels

The Holy Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Mohammad mentioned names of certain angels whose names are used as male names by many Jordanians as Jebreel, Maleq, Makaeel, and Radhwan.

1.1.5. Words from the Holy Quran

Many Quranic words are used as male names of Jordanian males. Some of these names are titles of Quranic suras i.e. chapters as Taha , Yaseen, Muzzammel, and Muddaththir whereas others are words elicited from the Holy Quran such as Jihad, Qanet, Muneeb, Munther, Rasheed, Madyan, Ameen, Mu'men, Muslim, Imam, Natheer, Naseer, Muhsen, A'kef, Seraj, Sajed, Shaker, Khaleel, Qareen ,Rasuul, Ihsan, Islam, Qabas, A'rafat among many others.

2. Names of Historical Characters

Many of these names relate to the Prophet Mohammad's family, his companions and other Arab and Muslim figures. Alqasim, Ibrahim and Abd-Allah are the names of the prophet, they all died very young. Many Jordanians like to name one of their male children with the name Qasim. Many fathers whose name is Mohammad like to name their elder son Qasim. Names of the prophet companions' names are also used such as Omar, Ali, Othman, Hamza, Abu Bakir, Khaled, Mus'ab, Suhaib, Bilal, Mu'away, Mu'ath, Zaid, A'bbas, Hassan, and Husein among many others.

Other Arab and Muslim historical figures' names are Tareq, Ziyad, and Salah besides many others. Names of Arabic poets as Hassan, Bashshar , Duraid, and Zuhair are used as male names by many Jordanians.

3. Names of Old Arab Tribal Figures

Names of old Arab tribal characters are common as male names in Jordan as Qusi, Nizar, Lua'i, Manaf, Umayyah, Wa'el, Ya'rub, Qais, U'dai, Hashem, and Hatem.

4. Names of Modern-Age Figures

The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of nationalism in the Arab world, thus many Arab leaders appeared in some Arab countries who had great presence among the Arabs such as late Egyptian president Jamal Abd-Alnassir and the late Iraqi president Saddam Hussein whose names are used as male names by many Jordanians. Names of Arab leaders such as Muammar, Bin Bella and Bomedyan besides name of non-Arab leaders such the Pakistani leader Mohammad Janah and the Indian icon Ghandi are used in Jordan. Western famous military leaders such as Laurence and Rommel are also used by many Jordanian. Names of the male members of the royal family are also used as the names of the two late kings Talal and Hussein. Names of some Jordanian famous figures are also used by many Jordanians as the names of the two late prime ministers Hazza' and Wasfi besides the name of the late military chief Habes.

5. Names of Tribes, Clans and Septs

It is common among many Jordanian families to name one of their male children after the name of their tribe, clan or sept or to name the child with a name derived from the name of his tribe, clan or sept such as Azzam Alazzam, Rabba' Rababa'h, Jarrah Aljarrah and Hazeem Hazaymeh. Names of old Arab tribes are also used as Mudhar , Tamem, Qahtan, Adnan, Madyan, and Awais.

6. Names of Weapons and Medals

Names of traditional weapons and medals are used as male names in Jordan. The leadership in wars and chivalry are the responsibility of men in the society. As a society admires bravery and knighthood, people of Jordan like to name their male children with names reflect those norms. Such names include among many others: Sahn'arrow', saif' sword' , lewa' ' flag', husam ' sword' , Taj ' crown ' , Wesam' medal', Muhannad' sword', and Senan' spear'.

7. Times

It is common practice to name a newborn with names relate to times in Jordan. Names of certain Hijri months as Ramadan, Sha'ban, and Rajab are used as male name in Jordan.

Name of days as Juma' "Friday" and Khamees "Thursady" are also used. Seasons' names such as Rabee' "spring" and Shteawi "winter" are used as male names. Parts of the day are also used as male names such as Leal "night ", Nahar "day" and Asir, Asri and Aseel "afternoon ", Sabah " ,Subhi " morning", and Azal " times".

8. Directions

The directions Yasar, Aysar "left", Ayman " right" are used as male forenames in Jordan.

9. Military Titles and Ranks

It can be said that no single Jordanian family is empty of one member at least who served in the army or other military forces such as police or civil defense. As a result a number of military titles and ranks are used as male names in Jordan. Such names are Rai'd' major', Lewa' "general ", Musher "field marshal". Other military titles that are used as male names are Fandi, Harbi and A'skar.

10. Fauna Names

Many male names are derived from fauna names. Some of these names reflect the environment in which the families live in whereas in other cases they are not necessarily reflecting the environment itself but reflect the social norms of power and beauty. Names of fierce animals are used as male names in Jordan such as Asad "lion" besides other names of the lion like Layth, Dhrgham, Osama, Hayder, Baihas, Hamza, and Ward in addition to the diminutive name Usaid "small lion". Other names are Fahid, Theeb, Thyab, Nimr. Name of tame animal like Jawad "horse" is used. Names of predatory birds are also used such as Saqur, U'qab, Nawras, Shaheen, Nisr, and Baz.

11. Kinship Names

Forenames show the sociocultural atmosphere in Jordan. Actually once the name is given to the person, it becomes his/her property as well as the family. Family members hope to maintain the family name so the name has important function in binding the child into the family unit. Thus in many cases children are named after their first rank relatives particularly grandparents. Naming a child after his alive or late grandparent is common in Jordan. In other cases the name of a late relative (i.e. brother, son, uncle, or cousin) is also used to name the newborn. Such naming is a remembrance of the grandparents. Jordanians also name their new babies with the name of their close ancestors to indicate the love they have for them. Through this name people remember the existence of the late ones in their memory. In very few cases a boy might be named after his father's name. A name might be given to a newborn after the name of a dear friend either alive or dead.

12. Honorifics and Titles of Nobility

Arabic language is rich with words of nobility, chivalry, and power. Jordanian society flairs to adopt many of these words as male names. Such words are not limited to the followings but are examples: Fares, Nabeel, Thabit, Shahem, Sayyaf, Ameer, Sultan, Sanad, Shujaa', Dhafir, Muntaser, Mansuur, Khalefah, Nai'b, and Qahir.

13. Celestial Bodies and Natural Materials

Certain names of celestial bodies and related words are used as male names in Jordan. The words Shamis "sun" and Dhyaa' "light" are accompanied with the word aldeen "religion" to make the male names Shamis-Aldeen and Dhyaa'-Aldeen. The words Shihab " falling star ", Badir " full moon ", Badran " two crescent ", Rai'd " thunder" , Hilal " crescent ", Najim "star" and Shamsi " sunny " Thalji " snowy" Mata and Gayth both mean " rain " are also male names. Suhail which is an Arabic name of a star is commonly used as male name. Some natural materials such as hajar "stone", Safwan "hard stone", U'shub "grass", Wadi "valley", Qabas " piece of fire " , Naseem" breeze" are used as male names.

14. Instruments of Light

Certain tools used for lighting are used as male names by many Jordanian families. Such names are Masha'l "torch ", Qandeel, Misbah, Siraj all mean "lamp".

15. Names Express Exaggeration

A number of male names express exaggeration such Hawwash" the most quarreled ", A'ssaf " the most injustice", Ghassab " the most assault" , A'zzam " the most inviter" , Affash " the worst one", Dhayyaf " the most hospitable " and Sayyaf " the most use of sword".

16. Parts of the Body

Few internal parts of the body are used as male names in Jordan such as Fua'ad "Heart" and A'qil "Mind ".

17. Western Names

As an open and mobile society, the Jordanian community has a trend to adopt western names for the newborns. The borrowed western names are both for males and females despite the fact that the great majority of these western names are female ones. Muslim and Christian Jordanians use such names but with a note that some western male names of biblical origin are limited to Jordanian Christians such Michelle and Paul. The followings are the pretended motives for using western names by many Jordanians. Prestige: many Jordanians like to name their new child with a prestigious and distinguished name so they adopt western names. Direct Contact: thousands of Jordanians live, work and study in western countries and even get married to western women or from Russia and Ukraine where thousands of Jordanian students studied in these two countries. Cultural Influence: mass media make the cultural influence of the western countries so clear in many aspects of life in Jordan which among them the names of both males and females. Besides, Jordan was under the British mandatory for a period of time which also left some print on the way of living in Jordan. In addition to that Jordan has a minority of Jordanian Christians who use many western and Christian names for their new born children. Laurence, Alexander "skandar in Jordanian Arabic", Qaysar "Caesar", Dani from Danielle which is used in Jordan as male name are common in Jordan. Jordan Christians also use western names like Michael, Paul, William, George, Martin, Victor, and Peter.

18. Adjectives of Beauty

The adjectives of beauty Jameel "beautiful", Waseem " handsome", Baha' " glamour ", Dhya' " light ", Anwar " the lighter", Zahir " shining", Zahran " lighting ", Sabeeh " beautiful face ", A'nbar " perfume ", Muneer " lightsome", Waddah " clear light " are used as male names in Jordan.

Conclusion

The typology of make forenames in Jordan show a number of sources from which these name are elicited. These sources vary from religious ones to Arabic heritage and foreign names. The study shows that Jordanian society likes to choose nice names for the newborns and that people pay good attention to pick a suitable name. The study is an attempt to be a sociocultural mirror for this part of the social traditions in Jordan.

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