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## **ON SOME CURRENT TRENDS IN KAZAKH ANTHROPOONYMY (Based on Materials from Almaty)**

This research paper offers a study of newborns' names in Kazakhstan over the last two decades — from 2000 to 2018. The present study investigates changes and current trends in the national anthroponymicon, attributable to historical, social, political events that have taken place during the last 30 years. The data obtained from official documents (birth records of the Archives of the Department of Civil Registration and Apostilling of the city of Almaty) consisted of personal names of both genders. The current study relies on quantitative and qualitative methods. The authors show that there has been a significant change in the naming practices of newborn children in Kazakhstan. The data for the years 2000, 2010, and 2018 reflects the drift of parental tastes towards indigenous names, including names associated with national historical figures, and also the trend in favor of Arabic names associated with Islam and common to most Muslim societies. This trend, however, goes along with the opposite one, namely with the emergence of newly borrowed European names and naming patterns (particularly, double names unusual in the traditional Kazakh anthroponymicon). The quantitative analysis shows the increasing diversity of personal names in use with female names displaying a greater degree of innovativeness than male personal names.

**K e y w o r d s:** Kazakh language, anthroponym, personal name, first name, naming of newborns, socio-onomastics, onomastics of Post-Soviet states.

## 1. Introduction

Despite the fact that Kazakh anthroponymy was well studied in accordance with the established classical traditions of onomastics, modern Kazakh anthroponymic system was never subjected to a detailed analysis. However, numerous research observations confirm that various political and economic changes in society, different historical events, and globalization processes make their own adjustments to the structure of anthroponymicon worthy of being studied.

In Kazakhstan, the theoretical framework of anthroponomastics has been developed since 1960s by several linguists and scholars who investigated the etymology of Kazakh anthroponyms and studied naming patterns, including their synchronic and diachronic aspects, ethnolinguistic and linguocultural characteristics, semantic and structural features [see Musabaev, 1959; Zhubanov, 1966; Zhanuzakov, 1971; Madiyeva, 2004].

The analysis of literature shows that there are several distinct periods in the development of the Kazakh naming system:

- 1) the ancient Turkic period (5<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> c.),
- 2) the medieval period (10<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> c.),
- 3) the early modern period (17<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> c.),

4) the Soviet period — the latter being characterized by active borrowings from the Russian language, the languages of the nations of the USSR, the emergence of international names, and the formation of new names based on the Kazakh language [Zhanuzakov, 1971, 16–23].

Madiyeva emphasized another period in the development of the Kazakh naming system: the Post-Soviet period. This period is characterized by a new concept of name-giving trends: the emergence of new borrowings from a broader European list of names, the revival of indigenous, national names, the creation and distribution of names associated with historical, national figures. For instance, newborns often receive such names as *Abylai (Abylaikhan)*, *Kazybek*, *Abai*, *Shokan*, *Mukhtar*, *Tomiris (Tumar)*, *Kamarsulu*, *Ulpas*, and so forth [Madiyeva, 2010, 40].

In her research on the anthroponymic system of the Kazakh language, Kuldeeva [2001] reports on the development, during the period of 1920–2000, of personal names indicating the changes in naming patterns as attested in five large cities of Kazakhstan. The present study continues Kuldeeva's efforts in tracking the trends of evolution of the modern Kazakh anthroponymic system focusing on the last two decades that, as it will be shown below, display noticeable innovations as compared to the previous periods.

## 2. Research Methodology

Understanding the nature of anthroponymy requires strong reference to documentary sources. According to Hammersley and Atkinson [1989], researchers should consider official documents as social artifacts and should judiciously examine them rather than

merely considering them as resources of information. For the purpose of our systemic investigation into the sociolinguistic aspects of naming newborns in today's Kazakhstan, we apply a descriptive linguistic approach to document analysis. We consider official documents (birth records), gathered from the database at the Departments of Civil Registration Offices of Almaty. Almaty is the largest city of the Republic of Kazakhstan, with a population estimated at 1,843,103 as of October, 2018. It was the capital of Kazakhstan until 1997 and remains the scientific, educational, cultural, historical, economic, financial and industrial center of the country. Therefore, one can reasonably posit that the trends found in Almaty reflect the evolution of the Kazakh personal name system, at least, in larger cities of the country.

We apply a statistical data analysis to quantify these data, presenting the ten most frequent masculine and feminine names from 2000, 2010, 2018 showing the percentage of native and borrowed names.

In classifying and analyzing data, in order to understand the choice of these particularly by young parents and how socio-political factors have affected the naming practices, we took the following steps:

- 1) we retrieved the personal names of babies born in 2000, 2010, and 2018,
- 2) we focused on the meaning of those personal names and analyzed their semantic features that was used a simple classificatory basis,
- 3) we analyzed the percentage of native and borrowed names, by gender,
- 4) we tried to give possible explanations for new names (neologisms) found in our selected set.

### **3. Findings**

For the purpose of the research, first names were gathered from birth records held at the Archives of the Department of Civil Registration and Apostilling at the Department of Justice of the City of Almaty. Personal names of newborns were analyzed for the years 2000, 2010 and 2018 aiming to reveal modern naming trends in Kazakhstan.

#### **3.1. Naming Trends of Newborns in 2000, 2010 and 2018**

Based on data retrieved from the database of the Department of Civil Registration (Almaty neighborhoods: Almaly, Auezov, Bostandyk, Zhetisu, Medeu, Turksib), the number of ethnically Kazakh newborns comprised 6,934 (masculine — 3,586, feminine — 3,348) in 2000. There were 9,093 birth records (masculine — 4,570, feminine — 4,523) in 2010, and, finally, around 17,607 birth records (masculine — 9,007, feminine — 8,600) in 2018. All these data were collected and analyzed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS software.

Our quantitative analysis shows that the total number of masculine and feminine names chosen in each of the considered years evolved. In 2000, the nomenclature

comprised 644 male and 469 female names, while in 2010 these numbers were 632 and 483 and in 2018 — 791 and 538 respectively.

Table 1 (below) indicates the most frequently chosen masculine names in 2000, 2010 and 2018.

*Table 1*  
**Frequency of male names in 2000, 2010 and 2018**

Male names (2000)	Rate %	Male names (2010)	Rate %	Male names (2018)	Rate %
<i>Temirlan, Timur</i>	13,8	<i>Alikhan</i>	19,1	<i>Alikhan</i>	39,9
<i>Alisher</i>	9,3	<i>Erasyl</i>	17,4	<i>Aisultan</i>	33,4
<i>Sanzhar</i>	8,7	<i>Miras</i>	14,6	<i>Amir</i>	27,3
<i>Daniar</i>	7,9	<i>Ali</i>	14,2	<i>Alinur</i>	24,4
<i>Arman</i>	7,6	<i>Beibarys</i>	13	<i>Ali</i>	20,4
<i>Dias</i>	7,5	<i>Temirlan, Timur</i>	12,8	<i>Dinmukhammed</i>	19,6
<i>Iliyas</i>	7,3	<i>Dinmukhammed</i>	12,7	<i>Ramazan</i>	18,2
<i>Azamat</i>	6,9	<i>Nurali</i>	12,5	<i>Alan</i>	16,8
<i>Dinmukhammed</i>	6,4	<i>Dias</i>	12,3	<i>Mansur</i>	15,8
<i>Daulet</i>	6	<i>Amir</i>	12	<i>Temirlan, Timur</i>	15,7

The table shows that the male name system displays a greater variability as compared to feminine nomenclature, as only two names are present in all three columns, these are *Temirlan / Timur* and *Dinmukhammed* — the memorative names bestowed in honour of *Amir Temir*, a medieval Central Asian, Turkic-Mongolian military leader and conqueror, and *Dinmukhammed Konaev*, a Soviet statesman, the first Secretary of the Communist Party of the Kazakh SSR.

*Table 2*  
**Frequency of female names in 2000, 2010 and 2018**

Female names (2000)	Rate %	Female names (2010)	Rate %	Female names (2018)	Rate %
<i>Aruzhan</i>	34,5	<i>Amina</i>	32,9	<i>Aisha</i>	67,3
<i>Diana</i>	20,5	<i>Kausar</i>	32,3	<i>Rayana</i>	55,3
<i>Anel</i>	15,6	<i>Aruzhan</i>	29,1	<i>Madina, Medina</i>	53,5
<i>Dana</i>	14,7	<i>Aisha</i>	28,4	<i>Aizere</i>	52,2
<i>Madina, Medina</i>	14,5	<i>Ayaulyym</i>	27,1	<i>Amina</i>	52
<i>Kamila</i>	14,3	<i>Madina, Medina</i>	24,8	<i>Ailin</i>	50,2

*End of table 2*

Female names (2000)	Rate %	Female names (2010)	Rate %	Female names (2018)	Rate %
<i>Aigerim</i>	14,1	<i>Aizere</i>	22,8	<i>Aiaru</i>	47,8
<i>Aidana</i>	13,9	<i>Aiyym</i>	22,4	<i>Kausar</i>	40,7
<i>Asel</i>	11,3	<i>Diana</i>	22,2	<i>Ayala</i>	34,4
<i>Alina</i>	10,7	<i>Zhanel</i>	21,5	<i>Tomiris</i>	27,9

For the years 2000 and 2010, three feminine names, *Aruzhan*, *Madina*, and *Diana*, were the most popular. Accordingly, four feminine names as *Amina*, *Kausar*, *Aisha*, *Madina* (*Medina*) were repeatedly chosen by parents in 2010 and 2018. Interestingly, the personal name *Madina* (*Medina*) kept the same trend throughout the whole period under study. The popularity of this name that comes from the name of the city in Saudi Arabia can be explained by the growth of religious sentiment in society.

### 3.2. Semantic features of the names

The analysis of literature shows that, from the semantic point of view, the names of the Kazakh name-giving tradition can be grouped as follows: 1) descriptive names, 2) desiderata names, 3) commemorative names, 4) ethnohistorical names [Zhanuzakov, 1982]. This classification may apply to both male and female names that we will consider separately.

For boys, desiderata names represent the parents' desires and wishes for their sons to be strong, powerful, clever, respectful, to live long life, being safe and sound. The following frequently chosen masculine names in 2000, 2010, 2018 can be referred to as desiderata names:

- *Aisultan* (Kazakh, Arabic): Kaz. *ai* ‘moon’ + Arab. *sultan* ‘governor, ruler’ [Zhanuzakov, 2008, 119];

- *Amir* (Arabic): ‘Governor, chief,’ ‘Instruction’ [Ibid., 114];
- *Mansur* (Arabic): ‘Winner, victorious,’ ‘All-powerful, almighty’ [Ibid., 90];
- *Miras* (Arabic): ‘Heritage, legacy, descendant’ [Ibid., 94];
- *Daulet* (Arabic): ‘Wealth, happiness,’ ‘State, empire’ [Ibid., 56];
- *Sanzhar* (Arabic): ‘Emperor, ruler’ [Ibid., 114];

- *Temirlan* (Old Turkic): *temir* ‘iron’ + affix *-lan*. This name is given wishing a baby to be as strong as iron [Ibid., 125]. As it was mentioned above, the name traces back to the founder of the Timurid Empire and thus can also be considered commemorative.

The term *ethnohistorical names* relates mainly to religious beliefs as well as to the totemism and taboo practices of the past that reflect the cultural traditions of the ethnos. Among the names listed in Table 1, the following may be included into this group:

- *Ali* (Arabic) < *gali* ‘noble, highest’ [Zhanuzakov, 2008, 33];

- *Alinur* (Arabic): *gali* ‘noble, highest’ + *nur* ‘beam, light, ray’ [Ibid., 33];
- *Dinmukhammed* (Arabic): *din* ‘religion’ + *Mohammad* ‘Honored, glorious’ [Ibid., 123];
- *Iliyas* (Hebrew): ‘Power, strength’ [Ibid., 136];
- *Nurali* (Arabic): ‘Ali’s light’ or ‘Ali’s children’ [Ibid., 100–101];
- *Ramazan* (Arabic) < *Ramadan*, the name of the ninth month meaning ‘burning, hot.’ At this time in Arabia all vegetation usually burns because of severe drought, and historically this is also a pasting period [Ibid., 110]. While collecting data we found out that boys bearing the name *Ramazan* were born during the Ramadan.

The term *commemorative names* refers to the names given as a sign of respect for historical figures, folk heroes, famous people, as well as in memory of ancestors and close relatives. This group comprises the following names from our list:

- *Alikhan* (Arabic, Kazakh): Arab. *gali* ‘noble, highest’ + Kaz. *khan* [Smagulov, 2013, 297]. The name refers to Alikhan Bukeikhanov (1866–1937), a Kazakh statesman, politician, publicist, writer, the leader of Alash party;
- *Alisher* (Arabic, Persian): Arab. *gali* ‘noble, highest’ + Pers. *sher* ‘lion’. The name remains among the most popular due to the reverence for Alisher Nawai, a medieval Turkic poet, philosopher and statesman;
- *Erasyl* (Kazakh): ‘The most precious, true knight.’ *Erasyl* is the birth name of Kabanbai Batyr, a national hero who led the military campaign against the Djungars in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. The name is given as a marker of support of the idea of national unity of the Kazakhs during the revival of cultural and historical values;
- *Beibarys* (Old Turkic): *bek, bei* ‘strong, stable, prominent,’ ‘head of the clan or tribe’ + *barys* ‘panthera pardus, leopard’ [Smagulov, 2013, 54]. The name refers to Beibars (1223–1277), the Sultan of Egypt from the Mamluk Bahri dynasty.

Interestingly, *descriptive names* that are reflective of certain physical traits of a child (cf. traditional names such as *Sarybas* ‘Red-haired,’ *Kokkoz* ‘Blue-eyed’), indicate the day and the month of a child’s birth (e.g. *Duisenbi* ‘Monday,’ *Akpan* ‘February’), the birth order (e.g. *Besbai* ‘The fifth,’ *Segizbai* ‘The eighth’), various events that take place during the birth of a child (e.g. *Karzhau* ‘Born while it was snowing,’ *Kosherbai* ‘Born during the moving period (in nomadic times)’) are seldom used these days.

Another almost extinct group of names are *totemic names*, one of the subgroups of *ethnohistorical names* that appeared in ancient times when blue wolf and blue bull were perceived as totemic symbols and their names were given to newborns, e.g. *Boribai* (*bori* ‘wolf’ + *bai* ‘rich’), *Bukabai* (*buka* ‘bull’ + *bai* ‘rich’). Nowadays such names are extremely rare. The birth records analysis shows that, as of today, descriptive and totemic male names may occur mainly as part of surnames inherited from ancestors and coming from respective personal names.

As for girls, the *desiderata names* express the parents’ wish for their daughters to grow beautiful, honest, kind-hearted, wise, educated and honorable. Cf.:

- *Aruzhan* (Kazakh, Persian): Kaz. *aru* ‘beautiful girl’ + Pers. *zhan* ‘soul’ [Zhanuzakov, 2008, 142];
- *Alina* (Germanic): ‘Precious, dearest, honorable’ [Smagulov, 2013, 25];
- *Ayaulym* (Kazakh): ‘Respected, honorable, dearest’ [Ibid., 37];
- *Dana* (Persian): ‘Skilled, sagacious, virtuous’ [Zhanuzakov, 2008, 151];
- *Kamila* (Arabic): ‘Perfection, entirety, completeness’ [Smagulov, 2013, 112–113].

Surprisingly, the names that convey the parent’s wish for their daughters to give birth to boys in the future (cf. traditional names of this kind that contain the word *ul* ‘son’: *Ultuar* ‘Who will give birth to a son,’ *Ulbolesyn* ‘Let it be a son,’ *Ulbebek* ‘Baby boy’) have fallen out of use in recent years.

The ethnohistorical group of names includes personal names related to religion, e.g.:

- *Aisha* (Arabic, Hebrew): ‘Loving life, cheerful’ [Zhanuzakov, 2008, 139].

It should be noted that the religious name *Aisha* given after the Prophet Muhammad’s wife has always been very popular among the parents;

- *Amina* (Arabic): ‘Honest, loyal,’ ‘Safe, well-wishing, charitable’ [Zhanuzakov, 2008, 144]. *Amina* is also the name of the Prophet Muhammad’s mother.

Only one name in Table 2 can be considered as commemorative *strictu sensu*:

- *Tomiris* (Persian): the name alludes to Tomyris (Thomyris, Tomris) who reigned over the Massagetae, a Scythian nomadic tribe, in the 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC and defeated Cyrus the Great [Zhanuzakov, 2008, 244]. Although, the historical Tomyris was the ruler of an Iranian speaking tribe, she is now widely regarded as part of the ancient history of Kazakhstan.

### **3.3. The percentage of original and borrowed names in 2000, 2010, 2018**

Table 3 (below) indicates the number of masculine and feminine personal names in Almaty city during last two decades and the percentage of indigenous Kazakh (Turkic) names, as well as those borrowed from other languages and hybrid names<sup>1</sup>.

The table shows that the variety of names (corresponding to the entire number of names chosen for newborns in one year) and the rate of Kazakh names tends to increase during the last two decades. Having carefully analyzed the data, we noted that names of Arabic origin predominate both in masculine and feminine categories between 2000 and 2018. The rate of male names adopted from other languages, such as Latin, Greek, Mongolian, Slavic, English, Spanish, slowly decreases, while for the female names these figures are less stable. One can also observe that the rate of hybrid names has markedly decreased in both masculine and feminine names.

<sup>1</sup> By “hybrid” we mean names combining morphological elements belonging to different languages, e.g. *Ernazar* (Kaz. *er* ‘boy’ + Arab. *nazar* ‘purpose, intention’, ‘viewsight’), *Aishabibi* (Arab. *aisha* ‘lively, energetic’ + Pers. *btib* ‘mistress, lady’), etc.

Table 3

**The rate of Kazakh (Turkic), borrowed, and hybrid personal names  
in 2000, 2010, 2018**

Year	Number of names	Original Kazakh (Turkic) personal names	Borrowed personal names			Hybrid names
			Arabic	Persian	Other languages	
Male names						
2000	644	28,73 %	28,26 %	6,68 %	5,73 %	30,60 %
2010	632	30,06 %	32,28 %	5,22 %	5,07 %	27,37 %
2018	791	32,62 %	35,02 %	5,56 %	4,81 %	21,99 %
Female names						
2000	469	28,99 %	23,88 %	13,22 %	18,12 %	15,79 %
2010	483	30,23 %	26,29 %	9,52 %	20,08 %	13,88 %
2018	538	33,83 %	25,65 %	10,60 %	17,47 %	12,45 %

It should be noted that many names, borrowed into the Kazakh name system from Arabic and Persian long ago are no longer perceived as loans (e.g. *Asem*, *Dina*, *Kamar*, *Ali*, *Alikhan*). Ordinary name-bearers would most probably consider them as indigenous.

### 3.4. New and Exotic Names

Along with traditional names, parents often choose unusual, exotic or radically new names for their children. For instance, names adopted from West European languages have recently become much more common among young citizens. These include masculine names such as *Oscar*, *Daniel*, *Rafael*, *Samuel*, *Roland*, *Edward*, *Einar*, and feminine names such as *Angelika*, *Bella*, *Vanessa*, *Giselle*, *Chiara*, *Rebecca*, *Sabrina*, *Diana*, etc.

Interestingly, after the OSCE Summit held in Astana in 2010, some of the parents decided to name their newborns as *Nursammit*, *Sammit*, *Sammitkhan*, *Samita*. Some young parents even choose the name *Asiada* for their daughters to commemorate the 7<sup>th</sup> Asian Winter Games held in Astana and Almaty (Kazakhstan) in January and February, 2011.

There are also parents opting for rare or even exotic names to their children, aiming to make the name unique, unusual. They do not pay much attention to the meaning of these names and their foreign origin. We have come across such examples as *Akzhuzik* ‘White ring,’ *Tattiaru* ‘Sweet girl,’ as well as a number of double and compound names having different (non-Kazakh) origin and thus obscure in meaning, e.g. *Elisar Yan*, *Hanna Okoye*, *Miriamrada*, and others.

Another interesting recent trend in name-giving is the emergence of double names that may be written separately, together or with a hyphen. *Ali-bogenbai*, *Azamat Farabi*,

*Suleimen Omirkhan* are the examples of double masculine names, accordingly, *Asyl-Dara, Aishagulden, Muntaz Makal* are examples of double feminine names.

Finally, the State programs “Cultural Heritage” and “Spiritual Revival” have seen their impact in the growing popularity of traditional and new names containing the elements *el* ‘country’ and *ult* ‘nation,’ e.g.: *Baiel* ‘Wealthy country,’ *Elbasy* ‘Leader of country,’ *Elkanat* ‘Wings of country,’ *Elmura* ‘Heritage of country,’ *Elsunkar* ‘Country’s falcon,’ *Eltore* ‘Lord of country,’ *Ultyran* ‘Eagle of nation.’

### Conclusion

Most of traditional Kazakh personal names are formed from nominal words of the Kazakh language having positive meaning [Zhanuzakov, 1971; Kuldeeva, 2001]. The analysis of documentary sources shows that there is still a large layer of indigenous personal names given in accordance with national traditions. These names include *Symbat* ‘Gracefulness, elegance,’ *Zhaina* ‘Shine, be beautiful,’ *Moldir* ‘Bright, transparent,’ etc. A certain number of names came to the Kazakh naming system with the spread of Islam, these are names of Arabic and Persian origin. However, phonetically, grammatically and culturally assimilated within the Kazakh onomasticon, these names are no longer regarded as loans (*Azamat, Ali, Alisher, Mukhammed, Sultan, Aisha, Asyl, Fatima*, etc.).

The analyzed data shows the growing popularity of indigenous names and names associated with national historical figures. This trend is counter-balanced by the opposite one: alongside the growing number of traditional Kazakh (Turkic) personal names and the names of Arabic origin closely related to Islam, there is also a constantly growing cluster of newly borrowed Western names. Interestingly, the proportion of such names is significantly higher among female names, while the names chosen for boys turn out to be much more conservative. The quantitative data also shows that the variety of personal names in use (i.e. the number of names used in each year) is constantly growing making the national anthroponymicon more and more diverse and linguistically variegated.

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

Arab.	Arabic
Kaz.	Kazakh
Pers.	Persian

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**О НЕКОТОРЫХ СОВРЕМЕННЫХ ТЕНДЕНЦИЯХ  
В КАЗАХСКОЙ АНТРОПОНИМИИ  
(на материале города Алматы)**

В настоящей статье анализируются изменения в выборе имен для новорожденных в Республике Казахстан за два десятилетия — в 2000–2018 гг., вызванные историческими, социальными, политическими событиями и процессами, происходившими в последние 30 лет. В статье исследуются данные, полученные из официальных источников (данные архивов отделов регистрации актов гражданского состояния г. Алматы), которые включают в себя как мужские, так и женские имена, выбиравшиеся родителями для своих детей в 2000, 2010 и 2018 гг. В исследовании используются как количественные, так и качественные методы. Авторы показывают, что за указанный период состав личных имен новорожденных заметно изменился. Данные 2000, 2010 и 2018 гг. отражают смещение родительских предпочтений в сторону традиционных казахских имен, в том числе имен, связанных с фигурами национальной истории Казахстана, и имен арабского происхождения, отсылающих к исламской традиции и характерных для большинства мусульманских культур. В то же время отмечен и обратный тренд — появление большого числа заимствованных западноевропейских имен и антропонимических моделей (в частности, возникновение двойных имен, не свойственных для традиционного казахского антропонимикона). Кроме того, количественный анализ показывает неуклонно возрастающее разнообразие используемых личных имен, а также тот факт, что инновации в большей мере характерны для женских имен, нежели для мужских.

**Ключевые слова:** казахский язык, антропонимы, личное имя, имянаречение, социоономастика, ономастика постсоветского пространства.

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