Postcolonial anthroponyms in Jordan

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Abstract: The study investigates anthroponyms in Jordan, tackling questions related to gender, ethnicity and the conventions involved in the naming practices. Lists of the top 50 names for female names and top 50 male names for the years 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985 and 1995 were used to identify morphological and phonological features of feminine and masculine anthroponyms. Political, social and economic factors affected the naming practices that had undergone considerable change since 1945. Conventional and unconventional aspects in both feminine and masculine anthroponyms were identified. Further research on the role of gender in naming processes is recommended.

Keywords: anthroponyms, onomastics, postcolonial, toponyms.

Introduction

Once a human being sees life, he is given a name that accompanies him all his life and even after death. Despite the fact that naming is a universal process, each culture gives names its own flavour. In Arab countries, naming practises tend to be affected most of the time by religious beliefs, family values, medical conditions of the baby or the mother, how the new born looked, or the conditions that accompanied the mother during labour. Environmental factors, hopes, ambitions, political factors and drastic social changes affect naming practices. The families' social and cultural background plays an important role as well.

The relation between culture, names and naming practices has been studied by many scholars such as Alford (1988), Goodenough (1965), Lieberson and Bell (1992), Rymes (1996) and Su and Telles (2007). Geertz (1973: 363) postulates that naming is a crucial aspect of converting "anybodies" into "somebodies". Wilson (1998), Nicolaisen (1976, 1978) and Holland (1990) consider proper "personal" names as part of language as code that is made meaningful in a social world. The social context for naming is also stressed by Herzfeld (1982) and Searle (1958) who argues that proper names do not mean in themselves, but "descriptive backing" is available that points to the identity of the named. Kripke (1980: 104) postulates that proper names are "rigid designators" that continues to act as referents as long as links remain "through a community of speakers to the person in question".

For Derrida the "proper" name is a vehicle for self-generation; it "becomes the agency to which the recognition of this identity [of the subject] is confided" (1997:

250). Butler (1993: 187) argues that naming is a prime example of the way power as discourse may be performed.

The Arabic equivalent of name, *ism*, is derived from the root *wasm*, which means an identifying sign thus it identifies the one it is given to. A reference is made to naming in the holy Qur'an as shown by the following verse followed by a translation.

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يَا زَكَرِيَّا إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَى لَمْ نَجْعَل لَّهُ مِن قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا

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We give you the glad tidings of a son whose name will be Yahya (John) we have given that name to no one before him. (The Qur'an, 19:7)

Muslim scholars classified names into four categories summarized by Abu Zaid (1995) as follows:

1. Acceptable names: Those are the names derived from people's own culture and environment and that do not contradict Islam such as *Saʕeed* ('happy'), *Jameel* ('beautiful') and *Muna* ('hope'). Muslims are neither ordered to give such names nor to avoid them.

2. Favoured names: Those are the names that have religious connotations such as *ʕAbdullah* and *ʕAbdulrahman*. Prophet Mohammed said "Of all your names I do like the most *ʕAbdulla* and *ʕAbdulrahman*".

3. Unfavoured names, which have unacceptable religious, linguistic or social connotations. It was reported that Prophet Mohammed hated the name *ħarb*, which means 'war' and changed the name of a *ʕAsyeah*, which means 'one who does not obey Allah', into *Jameela*, which means 'beautiful'.

4. Forbidden names: Those are the names that are not allowed for having connotations that contradict Islam such as *khaleq* ('creator'), *Malek elmolouk* ('king of kings') or *ʕAbd shams* ('slave of the sun'). An important naming principle is that children carry their fathers' names and should not under any case have their mothers' names as their middle or family name.

Though names and naming practices are highly important in Arabic culture, modern studies that tackle naming practises in Arabic are very rare despite the fact that Muslim scholars had written dictionaries of names and nicknames decades ago. A recent work was carried out by Abu El-Haj (1998, 2001), who analyzed an Israeli archaeological project to rename the Israeli landscape with "true" biblical names thus erasing all original Palestinian names.

The relationship between naming and ethnicity was tackled by Kim and Lee (2011) who investigated how young Korean American children and the adults around these children performed naming practices and what these practices meant to the children. Abel and Kruger (2007) investigated naming and gender concluding that the similarities between human and dog naming practices reflect a pervasive gendered naming phonology.

The relationship between naming practises and the place has been tackled by

Pratt (1998). How place-based identities develop are discussed by Relph (1976). Individual self-identity is recorded in places (Brace, Bailey and Harvey 2006), and to discover place is to discover the human self (Casey 2001; Heidegger 1962).

The interrelations of place and people are stressed by Basso (1996), Casey (1996) and Tamisari (2002). Thomas (2001: 173) views place as a "relational concept" that is embedded in the ontology and epistemologies of people throughout the world. David and Wilson (1999) note the importance of acknowledging people's changing interactions with place.

Ethnic groups giving up their traditional first name to name of the dominant ethnic group voluntarily is discussed by Weitman (1987) and Watkins and London (1994). Jews who wanted to avoid discrimination and assimilate to the German culture have often used German first names and filed applications instead of their family names especially after the 1937 decree in Germany (Bering 1987, 1992; Beck-Gernsheim 2002). In another example, Kang (1971) concluded that 36.2% of the Chinese students at the University of Michigan gave up their original Chinese names and replaced them with American ones.

Gerhards and Hans (2009) studied the naming practise as an acculturation process. Their study covered Turkish, Southwest European, and former Yugoslav immigrants in Germany. Their study revealed that acculturation in terms of name giving depends on several factors: the cultural boundary between the country of origin and the host society, the parents' sociostructural integration in terms of education and citizenship, interethnic networks, and religious affiliation. Postcolonial studies have focussed on the relationship between 'space' and 'place' and their intersections with identity (e.g. Carter et al.1993; Darian-Smith et al. 1996).

Clarkson (2008) presents a new view dealing with how names refer not to the place named, but *to the namer* who gave the object's name, and to this process of naming. In the context of colonialism, Clarkson points out that *the namer* is always the white, Christian European, who assigns names to himself and to all others. Ibn Khaldun in his Introduction maintains that the conquered follows the conqueror in his culture and this might explain why English remained clear in the naming process of people and places in Jordan even after independence.

> Being in the position of the one who chooses the names is to be in the position of power; but since names speak of the relation between namer and named, the name for the other is also a way of positioning the self. […] We use names to refer to something, or to call someone at a place in language, but equally, the names we use give an indication of the place from which we call. That name-place is at a complex intersection of social, cultural, and historical routes (Clarkson 2008: 135).

Naming processes in Arabic have always been affected by political, religious and social factors. Most pre-Islamic era's anthroponyms had precise meanings that denoted personal, physical or social traits. Prophet Mohammad recommended the change of some names with negative associations; Muslims developed a tendency

for anthroponyms that have positive connotations. There is an Arabic proverb which says that personality is affected by one's proper name. Though the naming process is still affected by Islam, globalisation has affected the naming process considerably. Old people nowadays do always have a problem in pronouncing and understanding many recent anthroponyms brought by globalisation.

Jordan was under British colonisation for twenty five years during which English was the prevailing medium of communication. Cultural colonisation manifestations radically grew in different facets of Jordanian society and the question of, "excuse me what does your name mean?" is no longer uncommon.

The present study investigates postcolonial naming practices in Jordan tackling the following questions:

1. Is there a clear cut distinction between what is conventional and what is not in naming processes?

2. What are the morphological and phonological features of Jordanian postcolonial anthroponyms?

3. What role does ethnicity play in the naming process in postcolonial Jordan?

4. Is there a difference in the naming process as far as gender is concerned?

Methodology

Lists of the top 50 names for female names and top 50 male names for the years 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985 and 1995 were used to study morphological and phonological anthroponyms in Jordan. The top ten female names and top ten male names for these years were then identified and compared as far as frequencies, morphological and phonological features.

Conventional/unconventional in the naming process

What is conventional and unconventional is not static. It is affected by social, political and even environmental factors. Though what is conventional for a given culture might be unconventional for another, some sort of agreement exists on the general standards for conventional/unconventional. Both positive and negative traits could be assigned to conventional/unconventional processes and things.

According to article (38) of the Jordanian civil law, each person has the right to have a surname and a family name and his sons and daughters carry his family name. It is worth mentioning here that the structure of anthroponyms in Jordan consists of the given name followed by the father's name, grandfather's name and family name. Naming is considered a private family matter and the government does not interfere in the naming practices unless the name contradicts social and religious values or violate the public order. Unconventional names in Jordan have meanings related to a specific time, place or a historical event. Some of these female names were related to precious materials such as *Fidda* and *Dahab* meaning 'silver' and 'gold' respectively.

The words *strange*, *weird*, *rare* and *old* are used to refer to the unconventional

anthroponyms in Jordan. In a news report by Ali (2014), the weirdest names which were prohibited were *Jahannam* ('hell') and *ʿUzarʔeel* ('angel of death'). Other weird names that found their way to actual use were *Dumuʿ* ('tears') and *ʿAthab* ('torture').

As far as male anthroponyms are concerned, anthroponyms related to courage derived from animals' names were used such as *Asad* ('lion'), where 332 examples were reported, *Ṣaqer* ('eagle') (3590) examples, *Nemer* ('tiger') and *Hazzaʿ* which means 'the strong lion' (1030) (Ali 2014). Other anthroponyms related to personal traits such as *Shahm*, *al-shahm* and *Nashmi* were considered unconventional. In some cases, the unconventional might end as conventional. It was unconventional to name after countries but since the Israeli colonisation of Palestine in 1948, about 1893 girls have been named *filasṭeen* after *Palestine*, the stolen homeland. Other unconventional names are cities names such as *ʿAmman* the capital with 97, *ʿAjloun* (19) and *Zarqa* (17).

Politics has its shades as well where 109 are named *Saddam Husain* and 4998 are named Saddam. After the brutal burning of the Jordanian pilot captive Muʿaath by ISIS in 2014, the number of the new boys named after him was 455 in the six months following his tragic end. Other unconventional names are *Qidr* (444) which means 'pot' and *Ṣahen* which means 'plate' (27) and *Thaljeh* (165) ('snow').

Gender issues have been observed in an ongoing research by the researcher where she is trying to investigate the changing role of gender in the naming practices in Jordan. The general remark that can be made at this stage is that more modern names are given to females. While it is the convention to name the first son after his grandfather, when it comes to females a war between the parents and their-in-laws might break out. In some cases the father wants to name his daughter after his mother whose name is usually old-fashioned while mother wants a modern name usually from TV movies or dubbed Turkish drama.

Morphological and phonological features of Jordanian anthroponyms

In this section, results obtained for analysing samples for the years 1945, 1955, 1965, 1975, 1985 and 1995 are presented. The first part deals with the frequency of the top ten female and top ten male anthroponyms.

Table 1. Top ten female anthroponyms 1945–1995

Year	Female names
1945	*Faṭima, Mariam, Amena, ʿAisha, Khadija, Jamila, ħalima, Samira, Yusra Rasmeyya*
1955	*Faṭima, Mariam, Amena, ʿAisha, Samira, Ṣabah, Yusra, Huda, Fatheyya, Khadija*
1965	*Faṭima, Eman, Muna, ħanan, Mariam, Feryal, Amal, Najah, Ibtisam, Amneh*
1975	*Eman, Faṭima, Manal, ʿAbeer, Amal, hanan, Khulud, Ghada, Mariam, Muna*
1985	*Eman, ʔAlaʔ, Rasha, Faṭima, Nur, Aman, ħeba, Asmaʔ, Maha, ʿUla*
1995	*ħaneen, Israʔ, Nur, Hadeel, Alaʔ, Rawan, Heba, Sara, Aseel, Farah*

As Table (1) clearly shows, a tremendous change took place between 1945 and

1995 where female anthroponyms were basically religious in the years 1945, 1955 and 1965. The name *Faṭima*, for example, was common since it is the name of one of Prophet Mohammad's daughters, while *Khadija* is the name of his wife. Another common name for that period was *Mariam*, a name that is still widely respected among Muslims as a symbol of piety since it refers to Virgin Mary. Muslims still love this name though it is not widely used nowadays though there is along chapter in the *Qur'an* devoted to Virgin Mary and named after her. Those names disappeared from the 1995 top ten list and were replaced by other names with some religious connotations such as *Isra*ʾ and *Ala*ʾ that are taken from the *Qur'an*. As far as phonological and morphological features are concerned, there was a change in the number and structure of syllables. Most names for the year 1945 ended in the feminine suffix /ya/ as in *Fawzeyya*, *Fatheyya*, *Ruqayya*, *Turkeyya* and *Rasmeyya*, while very few names with two syllables were found such as *Hend*, *ʿAlia*, *Muna*. In 1955, more anthroponyms consisting of two syllables were found such as *Amal*, *Maha*, *Hend*, *Reema*, *Nada Nuha*, *Hana*. The results for the year 1965 indicated use of names ending in glottal stop such as *Wafa*ʾ, *Haifa*ʾ, *Hana*ʾ, *Sana*ʾ, *Raja*ʾ, *Neda*ʾ, *Maysa*ʾ and *Safa*ʾ, in addition to *Rana*, *Nuha*, *Suha*, *May*, *Zain* and *Hala*. In 1975, foreign names such as *Suzanne* and *Lara* and Turkish ones such as *Murvet* and *Jihan* joined the list, while in 1985 new names such as *Lama*, *Yara*, *Hala*, *Linda Sali* and *Danya* appeared, though names ending in glottal stop such as *Wafa*ʾ, *Isara*ʾ, *Safa*ʾ and *Hana*ʾ still topped the list. New names such as *Leen*, *Tala*, *Sali*, *Rama*, *Madlin*, *Rawand* and *Sandra*, religious names such as *Salsabeel Anfal*, *Tuqa* and *Sundus* and names ending in the vowel /a/ such as *Lana*, *Lara*, *Dana* and *Rula* were frequent for the 1995 sample.

Male anthroponyms (1945–1995)

Gender plays a great role in the naming practices not only in Jordan but in all Arab Societies. While anthroponyms associated with femininity and beauty are assigned to females most of the time, names associated with the man's role as the supporter and protector of the family are given to males. Another factor is related to religious beliefs. Since Prophet Mohammad is widely loved among Muslims and is considered as an example to be followed, most Muslims like to name their sons *Muḥammad*, *Aḥmed* or *Muṣṭafa* after him. The Prophet's name is Mohammad but he is referred to as *Aḥmed*, *Maḥmoud*, *ṭaha* and *Mustafa* in the *Qur'an*. The common practice is to name the boy after his grandfather, the father of his father, a habit derived from the belief that it is the son who preserves the family name not the daughter since his future sons will carry their father's name as their middle name and then their family name. To illustrate this, consider the following situation:

Suppose that there is a person named *Aḥmed*, whose father is named *Mohammad* and whose grandfather is named *Ali*; his name will be *Ahmed Mohammad Ali + family name*. If Aḥmed has a son, in most cases, he will name his first son *Mohammad* after his father, so his son's name will be *Mohammad Aḥmed Mohammad + family name*, as opposed to the daughter, who will keep her father's name, grandfather's name and

family name even after marriage but her sons and daughters will carry their father's sure, middle and family names. Top ten male anthroponyms in the following table provides a clear illustration of such a naming practice. Notice consistent use of the name *Mohammed* and *Ahmed*.

Table 2. Top ten male anthroponyms

Year	Top ten male anthroponyms
1945	*Muhammad, Ahmed, Mahmoud, Ali, Ibrahim, Yusuf, hasan, ʿAbdalla, Musa, Khaled, ʿAbed + elqader, lraheem, Al-rahman, al-Kareem, Alfataah*
1955	*Muhammad, Ahmed, Mahmoud, ʿAli, Ibrahim, Yusuf, Khaled, husain, hasan, ʿAbdalla*
1965	*Muhammad, Ahmed, Khaled, Mahmoud, Ali, Ibrahim, Jamal, ʿOmar, ʿAbdalla, hasan, ʿAmmar*
1975	*Muhammad, Ahmed, Khaled, Mahmoud, ʿAli, Ibrahim, Raʿd, ʿOmar, Firas Ayman, ʿAbdalla, Yusuf*
1985	*Muhammad, Ahmed, Mahmoud, ʿAli, ʿAbdalla, ʿOmar, Ibrahim ʿala?, hamza, Anas, ţareq*
1995	*Muhammad, Ahmed, Mahmoud, ʿOmar, ʿAbdalla, hamzeh, Ibrahim, ʿAli, Khaled, Anas, Yazan*

Phonological and morphological features of male anthroponyms were found to be more consistent than the females'. In 1945 names following the formula of *faʿ'il*, i.e. agent as in *Qasem, Majed, ʿAdel, Fayez, Salem, Saleh* and *Khaled* were the most frequent. The same applies for 1955, where agent formula *Saleh, Salem, Fayez, Basem, Qasem, ʿAtef, Mazen, Majed* and *Hashem Maher* were still common. In 1965 *afʿal* formula, which is used to derive the comparative form of verbs to form comparative adjectives was very frequent with names such as *ʿAmjad, ʿAyman, ʿAkram* and *ʿAnwar* and less compound anthroponyms with *ʿAbed* were found.

In 1975 new anthroponyms appeared such as *Waʿel, Bassam, Zeyad* though compounds with *ʿAbed* were still common along with *Af'ʿal* formula such *Ashraf, Amjad* and *Asʿad*. Names ending in the vowel /i/ such as *Shadi* and *Fadi* were frequent in addition to *Niḍal* and *Jihad*. Rare compounds and more names ending in glottal stop such as *Bahaʿ* and *dʿeyaʿ* were also noticed.

More names with the *afʿal* formula such as *ʿdham* and *ʿnwar* and the emergence of names taken from Islamic history such as *ḥuthayfah, ʿUbayda, Baraʿ, Muʿaweyya* and *Şuhaib* were clear in 1985. War in Iraq had its effects on the naming processes so names such as *Şaddam* and his son *ʿuday* became more frequent. Less compounds, more monosyllabic names and more anthroponyms ending the vowel /i:/ such as *Fadi, Shadi* and *Sami* were found. In 1995, less compound names and more names from Islamic history such as *Şuhaib, ʿUbada, Qutaiba, ʿUbayda, ḥuthafya* and *Aws* were frequent while names such as *Thaʿer, Nidl* and *Jihad* were still common.

Naming practices and ethnicity

Since 95% of the population in Jordan are Muslims, it is normal to find *Ahmed*, *Mohammed* and *Mahmoud* as common anthroponyms. To be named *Qesta* or *Banyout* in Jordan is to be in a very critical situation as pointed out by Nemri (2015).The unfamiliar names are usually associated with other ethnic groups of the Jordanian society such as Circassians and Armenians. For these groups, anthroponyms constitute a main component of identity in which ethnic minorities take pride despite the embarrassment they might cause. Orthodox Christians, for example, use the name *Qesta*, *Khristu* or *Banyout*. Qesta is taken from King *Constantine*. A person with this name decided to choose other names for his sons so that they do not face the same trouble.

Abkar Quforkyan, one of the 15 Jordanians who carry this name, views it as a symbol of identity and loyalty to his homeland, Armenia. He named his sons *Armeen*, *Qufork* and *Rafayeel*, saying that he is a Jordanian citizen of Armenian origin that he is proud of. Armenians were 10,000 when they were expelled from their homeland and now they are 3500 because of immigration to Europe. With their number decreasing, new naming practices emerged. Nareen Markeryan, a member in the Armenian Rescue Society says "We support the names that reflect our ethnicity, in addition to that, names are the only means of preserving our identity". In the last decades, some start using names such as *Jack* and *Kristin* or *Marcel* to simplify pronunciation but such an act is viewed as giving up Armenian identity (Nemri 2015).

The Circassians

Circassians living in Jordan are about 150,000. They do not find any problem in using Arabic and Islamic names since they knew Islam more than 400 years ago and seem to be more open to Arab names than the Armenians. Most of the time they have both Circassian and Arabic anthroponyms. They try to avoid uncommon names such as *Shumaf* or *Murnar*. For them, their identity is kept through their family names that are not changed. Some of the easy Circassians names are still used such as *Nart*, *Yanal*, *Sirsa*. The most common is *Aram* with a count of 1024, while the figure for *Nart* is 309.

Conclusion

Naming practices in the Jordanian society have undergone considerable change from 1945 to 1995. Colonisation did not have a noticeable effect on the naming practices as far as anthroponyms were concerned. A clear distinction between what is conventional and not in the naming practices was found. Furthermore, ethnicity as well as gender had their effect on the naming processes.

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