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Naming in Arabic

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Naming in Arabic

by

Samir A. Hawana

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of The Requirements for the Degree of

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

When Benjamin L. Whorf said that speech is the best show man ever puts on, he could have modified his statement by adding that personal names are the cleverest manifestations of that show. Many of us tend to accept our names as bestowed by our parents and exert little effort, if any, to understand their significance or even their literal meaning. The writer's wife has a rather rhythmical name, Maha, and many friends expressed their admiration of its musical tone. When asked about the meaning of her name, Maha will always answer "it means the eyes of the wild cow." It was a surprise to her husband to find out that Maha, in Arabic, means simply "the wild cow." Such instances of misunderstanding of one's own name lead the writer to assume a widespread lack of awareness on this topic.

As a fully bilingual Arab student in the United States, the writer has encountered many curious questions by American colleagues about the meaning of different personal names. Clearly, the topic is worth exploring in order to add to the body of knowledge about Arabic and the Arabs.

The old Arabic saying "strive to have a part of your name," suggests that in the Arab tradition personal names are projected attributes desired for the offspring when the parents bestow the names on their children. Names are im-
Important. Psychologists can look at a name as a source for exploring the person's family background since names are auspicious. In old China, for example, the child was given a name that connoted a grand meaning or attribute. But the name was kept secret and replaced by another common name until the child was old enough not to be affected by the "evil eye." Sociologists and anthropologists can benefit in studying personal names and their significance within the context of a given culture. In the case of the Arab culture the pious say "if you have a hundred sons, call them all Muḥammad." Hence, this name is the most common name in the Islamic world. The name of the Prophet is an indicator of a degree of religiousness in that part of the world, or of the salient effect of religion on that culture, a theme which preoccupies sociology and other kindred disciplines.

Names are labels of differentiation and identification. One always starts, when introducing himself, by stating his name. The family name, where it exists, might give a good indication of locations, trades, and occupations. A name may often be a clue to the nationality, religion, or race of its bearer. If a researcher is interested in Islam and/or Arab culture he can reach important references concerning these topics by studying the ninety-nine divine names of God in Arabic and their usage as personal names.
Before probing into this subject a brief linguistic description of Arabic is in order.  

The Arabic language is a Semitic language used by more than one hundred million people in what is known as the Arab World (all of North Africa, most of the Arabian peninsula, and parts of the Middle East). Classical Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, is the religious language of Moslems and is uniform throughout the Arabic speaking world since the Qur'an has maintained only one version. Encyclopaedia Britannica reports that "the earliest known written Arabic is a royal funerary inscription dating from AD 328." Arabic has six vowels, three long and three short (\([a] ; [i] ; [u] ; -- [ā] ; [ī] ; [ū] \)). As a rule, words begin with a single consonant followed by a vowel, and usually long vowels are followed by a single consonant. An Arabic word is composed of two parts: the root (three consonants) which provides the lexical meaning of the word and the pattern (vowels) which gives its grammatical meaning. Hence the consonants "sh-r-b" combined with \([-[a]-[ā]-]\) gives  

\[\text{sharāb} \] "a drink" and with \([-[ā]-[i]-]\) becomes \[\text{shārib} \] "one who drinks." Arabic uses grammatical markers extensively to denote the subject, object, and tense. Affixes are used for similar purposes as the markers as well as for denoting pronouns, definite articles, and prepositions. Dual form...
and gender differentiation are not used for the first person. Gender differentiation is not found in the second person. The cases in which an Arabic noun appears are three: nominative, genitive, and accusative. Feminine can be generated usually from any word by adding an open, long [-ā] at the end written as t (٨م), or h (٨). Hence Zaki (a male's name) becomes zakiya (a female's name).

Colloquial Arabic has many dialects, usually mutually comprehensible. The chief dialect groups are those of Arabia, Egypt, North Africa, and the Fertile Crescent. The increase of literacy rate in the Arab world has helped to make the influence of the classical Arabic more apparent and more tangible.

Arabic and Islam are so much tangled together that it is impossible to deal with one without dealing with the other. As noted above, Arabic is the language of the Qur'an. Except for the heart of Arabia, the rest of the region was introduced to Arabic through Islam. Hence, the synonymity is always taken for granted in the Arab world. Even in the Moslem, non-Arabic speaking regions, Arabic is the religious language. Regardless of the native tongue of the Moslem, he or she is expected to pray and read the Qur'an in Arabic. Needless to say, however, Islam does not render all its followers conversant in Arabic. Nor does it confine the
understanding of Islam to native speakers. Personal names derived from the Qur'an are used by all types of Moslems, whether or not they speak Arabic. Likewise all Moslems place a high importance on personal names, especially those which express the divine attributes of God.
CHAPTER II. WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Before dealing in details with the subject of personal names in Arabic, it is proper to ponder some aspects of the most common theories about naming in general.

Juliet of Capulet, lamenting her lover's name, asked Romeo:

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy; Thou art thyself, though not a Montague. What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, nor any other part Belonging to a man. O, be some other name! What's in a name?

Shakespeare summed up the issue of names and their relationship to the future or fate of their bearers in the previous quotation.

Perhaps the most controversial interpretation of names has been John S. Mill's. Personal names, Mill contended, are signs, i.e., intentional manifestations of sounds or letters. He insisted that names are meaningless or non-connotative marks. They only help distinguish individuals as a mark of a chalk would distinguish a house. He said:

When we predicate of anything its proper name, when we say, pointing to a man, this is Brown or Smith, or pointing to a city, that is a York, we do not merely by so doing convey to the reader any information about them, except that they are their names.

One need only examine John S. Mill's name per se to discover that his interpretation of names falls short of the
The name John suggests that its bearer is not by any means a Moslem or a Hindu. It does, however, indicate a rather high probability of being a Christian. The surname Mill may shed light on his ancestral occupation or location. Hence, names may indicate several things (religion, occupation, and even race). Some names connote the place of origin. A vivid example would be Muldauer which carries the name of a region now part of the Soviet Union, Moldavia. Furthermore, it shows that persons with this surname have some relation to German speaking countries, as Muldauer in German means "one who is from Moldavia." So is the case with the Arabic surname Al-Misri which means literally "the Egyptian."

John S. Mill was not the only logician who concluded that names are meaningless. Frege, Russell, and Strawson also subscribed to this belief. 8

Renowned linguists, however, have endorsed a different point of view. A. Gardiner argues that personal names are words and not noises. He writes, "A proper name is a word, and being a word partakes of the fundamental twosidedness of words as possessing both sound and meaning." 9 H. Sorensen has accepted Gardiner's analogy but questions the existence of meaning in proper names like Paris which obviously once had a meaning currently known to nobody. He also rejects Mill's argument regarding the arbitrariness
of names by observing, for example, that "a child should have its father's surname." 10

The most comprehensive work about European names is Elsdon Smith's book entitled The Story of Our Names. 11 Smith tries to give a history of the origin of naming patterns in the West. His scholarship deals vividly with the surnames and how they originated. However, his coverage falls short of including non-Western patterns.

A book similar to Smith's is Our Names, 12 by Lambert and Pei. The latter authors have preoccupied themselves too much with examples and not with the theory. Their unique contribution to the field can be identified in their treatment of the names originating in Western mythology and religion. Extensive references up to 1952 on the topic can be located in Personal Names: A Bibliography. 13

It seems that there is an overall pattern of objectives in selecting a name. 14 The following is a discussion of those objectives. However, they are by no means exclusive. One is always aware of names that are unique.

Honoring another person by using his name as part of the name for one's child is the most common objective. Usually the name is derived from a given name of a grandparent or more distant ancestor, a parent, uncle or an aunt, or from a given name of a friend. It follows that the name may be derived from a name of a famous person and used for
admiration and honor. Some names were once chosen for their descriptive denotations, like Rufus (red-haired), Calvin (bald), Paul (small), and Ursula (little she-bear). The attributes found in an object (usually favorable) may be used as names. Examples on this type of names are, Leo (lion), Pearl, Ruby, and Daisy. Names that have religious associations are very common in the Western world. Names like John (gracious gift of God), Hope, Grace, David, Elizabeth, and Joseph are very common among Christians and/or Jews. Some names appear in an odd spelling like Libertine (liberty), and Ethyle (Ethel).

Surnames display more genealogical significance than personal names. The etymology of the surname of a given family usually reflects the history and the evolution of that family. The most common type of surnames in the West are the patronymic names ending in son or sen, a Scandinavian pattern that influenced Western Europe and the United States. Examples on this type are numerous, Johnson, Frederickson, Robertson, Christiansen, Jensen, and Olsen. An old verse says:

By Mac and O,
You'll always know
True Irishmen they say;
for if they lack
Both O and Mac
No Irishmen are they.

Surnames may indicate the place from which the family
bearing the name came, or where they lived. Place names eventually become surnames, often after the family has moved elsewhere. Hence Morttam to denote the town of Mortham in Cheshire; Smalleys from the town bearing the same name in Derbyshire. It is impossible not to quote the verse pertaining to this topic:

In ford, in ham, in ley, in ton
The most of English surnames run. 16

Surnames may identify occupations held by the family at one time (even currently). Examples on this pattern are Smith, Miller, Weavers, Clark (from clerk), Lorrimer (one who made bits for horses), Baker and Barker (not one who shouted for customers but one who worked with bark which was used in the processes of preparing leather).

At least part of the answer, then, to Juliet’s question is that naming practices once examined reveal much about a people. To some degree, understanding of names supports understanding across cultures.
CHAPTER III. RELIGIOUS NAMES

The Old Testament provides a never-ending source of Hebrew and Aramaic names for the languages of the world. Almost every name that ends in -el is of Hebrew origin (the -el suffix is Hebrew for "God" or "of God"). Names such as Michael (he who is like God), Gabriel (God has healed), and Joel (the Lord is God) have maintained a high degree of preference among conservative religious families of both convictions (Christianity and Judaism). The affix el may appear as a prefix in names like Elizabeth (consecrated to God), and Elihu (the Lord is Jehovah) as well as in many other names. The name of Jehovah or Jahweh in Hebrew appears in disguised, subtle form in such names as Zachary or Zachariah (Jehovah has remembered), where z-ch-r (remember) is the root of the verb and the ending -ah denotes Jehovah, also in Uriah (Flame of Jehovah), Matthew (gift of Jehovah), Jeremiah (exalted of Jehovah), Joseph (will increase), Simeon or Simon (granted by God in answer to a prayer), and in Ezra (help).

Joseph and John are among the most common names in use today. The Hebrew form of John is Yōhānān (Jahweh has been gracious) the root being h-n-n. Its popularity is "attested by the list in the calendar of Christian saints of no fewer than one hundred Saint Johns, with John the Baptist and John
the Evangelist heading the list,17 and John Neumann being the most recently canonized.

Jesus is not a common name among English speakers, but in the Spanish-speaking world it is much favored as a name. Christianity gives a long list of Christian names starting with Christ. We hear of Christian, Christina (Kirsten as a Scandinavian variant), Christopher, or (Christ bearer). The name Christ itself is not Hebrew, but Greek; the Hebrew form is Messiah and the Arabic مَسِيحُ. The three forms mean "anointed." Jesus on the other hand is the Hebrew Joshua, and Arabic يِسَعُ, and means "God is deliverance."

Greek Christian names are numerous. Baptiste, a very popular French name, means "he who baptizes," and Anastasia is "pertaining to the Resurrection." "Gifts of the Lord" in Greek range from Theodore and Theodora or Theodosia to Dorothea, Dorothy, and plain Dora.

Latin also contributes in this field. It supplies Dominic (pertaining to the Lord) derived from Dominus which has relatives in the Romance words for "Sunday" (the day of the Lord): Dimanche in French, Domingo in Spanish, Domenica in Italian. Noël, sometimes anglicized into Newell is Natalis (pertaining to the birth of Christ); it also is the French word for Christmas. Benedict is "blessed" and Pius is "devoted."
Spain and Italy have typical Christian feminine names, which coincide with forms of Catholic belief. Conception in Spanish, Concetta in Italian, remind their bearers of the Immaculate Conception. The Italian Rosario and Rosaria are the rosary, and Annunziata, often incorrectly rendered in English as Nancy, is a reminder of the Annunciation; the Spanish Mercedes is the "mercies of God," Consuelo is "consolation," Dolores is "sorrows" (of the virgin). The Spanish Carmen, feminine, and the Italian Carmine (masculine) and Carmela (feminine), refer to "Our Lady of Mount Carmel."

Protestant countries have similar practices as evident from several English and puritan names still around (Prudence, Faith, Hope, Charity, Piety, even Justice, Silence and True Love). Germanic names that extol God are relatively few, as against the many that extol prowess in warfare or strength and leadership. Still, we can encounter Godfrey (or Gottfried, in its German version, or Geoffrey, Jeffrey in the later French development), which means "God's peace," along with Godwin, "God's friend" and Goddard, "God's strength." The os- of Oscar, Osmond, Oswald, is also a reference to God.

Religious names abound in countries whose faith does not come from the Old or New Testaments. Krishna (Hindu
God), is a common first name among Hindus in India, Hsitata has a reference to Buddha, the religious name of Gautama, founder of the Buddhist faith. Similarly, religious concepts and practices are primary sources for the names of Moslems and Arabs. Once westerns recognize the substantial part which religion has played in their own European naming practices, then they can better appreciate and understand some of the major conventions and complexities of Arab naming, since these too flow from religious principles.
CHAPTER IV. NAMING IN ARABIC

It is safe to generalize and say that the onomastic practice in Modern Arabic does not follow closely that of the Western World. For the sake of simplicity the discussion of this point will be confined to the Arabic personal names. Surnames will be touched upon at the end of this chapter.

Religion plays a significant part in the Arab parent's choice of personal names. Christian Arabs are not likely to choose Muhammad for a name. Moslems would never pick George either. In some instances, one can be reasonably certain that a person is not a member of a specific sect of Islam because of his name. It is most unlikely to find, for example, a person with a name of 'Umar to be a Shi'i.18

Christian Arabs tend to employ Arabic names that are descriptive in nature depending on the orthodoxy of their conviction. Names like Samir (the narrator), Walid (the newborn), Nabil (noble), and As'd (the happier) are commonplace among Christians living in a Moslem dominated country. In countries like Lebanon where Christians are not a minority, names like George, William, Tony, Antoine, Michael, and René (notice the French influence) are widespread. Female Christian names follow the same pattern as the males. Hence we encounter georgette, antoinette, michaelle,
Marie, and Christine, also Rose, Maha (the wild cow), Rabab (a musical instrument), and Su‘ād (happiness).

Biblical references in personal names among Christians are apparent in names like Ḥanā (John), Yūsif (Joseph), 'Lyās (Elias), Dawūd (David), Yaqūb (Jacob), 'Brāhīm (Abraham), Ḥisā (Jesus), and Isḥāq (Isaac).

Moslem's personal names may be categorized into two broad divisions: religious and nonreligious names. The latter includes a myriad of names pertaining to objects and animals, descriptive connotations, and abstracts. As noted above, depending on the conservativeness of religion in the Arab countries, personal names that fit those subcategories may be attributed to one group or the other. Akram (more generous) is traditionally an Arabic name for a conservative family male Moslem. As'ad (the happier) is common for followers of both religions. Generally speaking, in the category of objects and animals, Moslems of all persuasions use names like Ḥusām (a sword), and Suhayl (little plain), and Nasīm (breeze), Dīb (wolf), Nimír (tiger), and Fahid (leopard). Descriptive names are very broad and difficult to handle in any research since there are no regulations or traditions that govern their formations. They run from Jamīl (beautiful), ‘adīl (fair or just), and Ṣадīq (truthful) to Tāriq (the knocker), Na‘īl (the obtainer), and Ṣān (the stabber). Modern Arabs are fond of abstrac-
tions in personal names. One can safely assume that in every Arab family there is a name that signifies an idea like \( \text{Kamāl} \) (perfection), \( \text{Jamāl} \) (beauty), \( \text{Ḥasan} \) (goodness), \( \text{Ḥusayn} \) (little goodness), \( \text{Iḥsān} \) (charity), and even \( \text{Ighrā'} \) (seduction). Some Arabic names have their roots in different languages. Persian contributed \( \text{Ṣurān} \) (happiness), \( \text{Thurayā'} \) (a necklace), \( \text{Ṣhirin} \) (sweet), and \( \text{Fayrūz} \) (a rare stone).

Hebrew loaned some of its biblical names like \( \text{Ṣara} \) (Sarah), \( \text{Ḥraham} \) (Abraham), and \( \text{Yaʿqūb} \) (Jacob). Consequently Europeans are sometimes confused when they meet Arabs with Hebrew names.

Religious names are not as complex to categorize as secular ones. These names can be classified into two types: Those pertaining to the attributes and names of God (with some modifications), and those pertaining to the names of the Prophet Muhammad, his disciples, and the known pious. The teaching of the Prophet very greatly influenced the personal nomenclature of the early Moslems, as is evident from the widespread usage of names he liked. Names in the early Islamic era were very auspicious and important to the person's religious status. The Prophet said:

You must not name your slaves \( \text{Yasār} \) (abundance), \( \text{Rahāb} \) (gain), \( \text{Najīh} \) (prosperous), \( \text{Āflah} \) (felicitous), because if you ask after one of these your domestic
servants, and he be not present, the negative reply will express that abundance, or gain, or prosperity, or felicity, are not in your dwelling.  

And the Prophet also said: "Call your children after your Prophet," hence the popularity of the name in the Arab World. *Muhammad* (highest praise) appears in many different forms all akin to "praise" like *'amad*, *Hamdan*, *Mahmud*, and *Hamid*. In some countries, like Egypt, the name is used in a dual form *Muhammadayn* (two Mahommads) to express a double blessing. In the same country the name is used to precede any personal name. Thus, if a person is named *Samî* he is listed as *Muhammad Samî* although he usually goes by his original, i.e., second, name.

The compound given name employing *Muhammad* as the first component added to the name of his cousin *Ali* is very common among both major factions of Islam (Shi'a and Sunna). This type of name was introduced to Arabic through foreign influence mainly Persian.

The pivotal religious name in Islam is *Allah* (the name of the Creator of the Universe). The name is derived from *ilah* (god) with the addition of the definitive article *al*. Various theories suggest that the root of the name *Allah* comes from *Lāh* (the secret one).

The most common type of compound names is that which is prefixed with *abd-* meaning "servant or slave." Islam
discourages its followers to use this prefix before any name except the names of God. Thus there is the well-known Abdullāh (servant of God) equivalent to the German Gottschalk or the Irish Gilchrist or Abdūlmassīḥ (servant of Christ). For the sake of variety the name Abdullāh may be modified by substituting one of God's standard names of which there are ninety-nine known in Islam.⁴² Thus one man may be Abdurrahmān (servant of the merciful), another Abdulazīz (servant of the praised), or Abdulkarīm (servant of the bountiful).

The attributes of God as expressed in the ninety-nine names are divided into the asmāʾ al-jalāliyah, or the glorious attributes, and the asmāʾ al-jamāliyah, or the terrible attributes. Such names as ar-Rahim (the merciful), al-Karīm (the generous), and al-Quddūs (the holy) belong to the former; and al-Qawī (the strong), al-Muntaqīm (the avenger), and al-Qādir (the powerful), to the latter.

Linguistically the ninety-nine names may be roughly divided into three types: adjectives, nouns, and phrases. The divine names that are considered adjectives connote superlative or exaggerated attributes. The mechanism by which such adjectives are formed in Arabic is fairly complex, though it can be classified into five major categories. It is important to remember that the root of most verbs in Arabic is a three-consonant structure that is
susceptible to any change through employing the proper affixes. Hence the root $f-\text{-}1$ (read fa' al) means merely "to act". By substituting the needed consonants in the root $f-\text{-}1$ one can accomplish the generation of profuse new words. An example of this mechanism follows:

abstract root $f-\text{-}1$ (to act)
generated root $q-t-1$ (to kill)

In generating the exaggerated or "superlative" adjectives in the names of God, Arabic has used five rules of derivation. The reader should note the vowel patterns in these derivations:

a) from fa'īl as in al-'azīz (the mighty), and al-Karīm (the generous),
b) from fa'ūl (as in al-Ṣabūr (the patient), and al-Ghafūr (the forgiver),
c) from fa'āl as in al-Qahhār (the dominant), and al-Jabbār (the repairer),
d) from fa'lān as in Rahman (the merciful).
e) from fa'īl as in az-Zahir (the evident), and al-Batin (the hidden).

In these derived names one can observe the derivational specification of the concept of action conveyed by the triconsonantal root. There appears a sense of verb process
in the previous examples that distinguishes them from those which suggest the agent of the action. Such names are evident in al-Muṭṭi (the giver), and al-Manī' (the withholder). Names may include abstract nouns to suggest the epitomy of the specific attribute. Hence one encounters as-Salām (the peace), al-ʿādil (the just), and al-Ḥaqq (the truth).

Although names of God like Malik al-Mulk (the ruler of the kingdom) and Zul-Jalāliwal-Ikram (the Lord of majesty and liberality), are not used as personal names with the addition of abd- for stylistic reasons, yet one component of the phrase is used. Thus we have Abdujalāl (the servant of majesty) and Abdulmalik (the servant of the ruler).

Followers of a major sect of Islam, "Shi'a", use abd- before names that are considered divine in their belief but not attributes of God. Those semi-divine names belong to the twelve Immams (saints) who are all considered descendents of Immam Ali Bin AbīTaḥlib (the cousin of the Prophet). Hence we hear names like AbdulḤasan (the servant of Ḥasan), AbdulḤusayn (the servant of Ḥusayn), and AbdulRiḍā (the servant of Riḍa).

Before we leave off the discussion of personal names a brief notation on Arab female names is in order. In the Moslem tradition women are named in honor of the daughters
and wives of the Prophet or his disciples, the most common names being Khadija (the Prophet's first wife), 'aishā (the Prophet's last wife), Zaynab (the Prophet's daughter), and Faṭimā (the Prophet's daughter). Linguistically feminine names can be formed by adding [-ā] written as ṣ or ḥ. So names like (m) Samīr is (f) Samīrah, (m) Jamīl is (f) Jamīla, and (m) Latīf is (f) Latīfa. Hence it is a rule of thumb in Arabic to identify the feminine names by their long-voweled endings. However there are names like Riyyād, Bahjat, Ṣahāb, Ḩasan, and ʿusmat that are common for both sexes.

Another feature of Arab naming is the use of the Kunya, a type of metonymy which produces nicknames and epithets. In old Arabia, and to some extent in modern conservative Arab countries, the Kunya is used with a boy's name as a sort of lucky augury, wishing him to have a son, and a person is named in anticipation of the son with abu- (father of) and a given name, hence ʿAbuMahammad (the father of Muhammad). But the Arab grammarians generally count the Kunya with "name," "title," and as one of the forms of the proper noun, and that is always used in the possessive case, being consistently formed by prefixes abu (father of), ʿumm- (mother of), ʿibn- (son of) and bint- (daughter of). The use of Kunya seems to have originated in the tribal, habitual rallying-cry of the Arab warrior in the battlefield. One
can readily picture the daring indefatigable warrior advancing into the field shouting: "I'm so and so, the son of so and so!" and meeting with a reply of the same nature from the other side. So the warrior was not only able to terrify his enemies by mentioning to them names that spelled awe and terror like ́abs (frowning), Taʾān (stabber), and alʾās (the difficult), but also to identify himself correctly to persons belonging to different tribes, who could attest his account of himself. The Kunya is thus bound up with genealogy. Generally speaking, it was employed as a means of elevation and exaltation of a person's name. Also it was regarded as a good substitute for the name, as Abū Lahab had substituted a regular name for Abdul-ʾuzzā.24

So much importance was given to it that not unfrequently people were known by their Kunyas far better than by their names. Hence famous persons in the history of Islam like Abuhurayra (one of the Prophet's disciples), Ibsina (the father of medicine in old Arabia), and Abutammam (a major poet), are all known by their Kunyas rather than their own names. The old Arabic proverb: "The kunyas are warners and the names are reducers" well mirrors the Arab's belief in the importance of using patronyms, matronyms, and technonyms as against the use of their real proper names. The reason is not difficult to understand for the whole thing
depends upon the Arabs' keen sense of honor and their enormous pride not only in their own personal achievements but also in the greatness and glory that they have inherited from their ancestors. The Arabic (and especially the pre-Islamic) poetry is full of long, drawn out expressions of this pride. In fact, quite a library full of poetry has been collected and designated as the Fayhrīyyat (self-laudatory poems).

When honorific titles came into use in Arabic, they exhibited a tendency to displace the original name; thus the title Saladin took the place of the warrior's original name, Yūsuf-BinAyyūb (as a matter of fact, Saladin is pronounced Salahiddīn (the good of the religion) but western pronunciation distorted its form). -Dīn (religion) has been used as a suffix with many names with its first component signifying its glory and welfare. Names like ḍizdīn (the strength of religion), Fakhriddīn (the pride of religion), and Sayfuddīn (the sword of religion) are quite common in modern Arabic names.

By way of contrast, surnames in Arabic, at least in the form in which we know them, are latecomers. The pattern of surnames in Arabic follows that of the Western World except in the employment of patronymics. While in the West the name Johnson is commonly used as a surname, its Arabic
equivalent is very rare in pattern and meaning. 25

Arabs use names connoting occupation in their family names. Such names range from alHaddād (the blacksmith), allājahām (the butcher), alḤalwānī (the confectioner), and alKhayāt (the tailor) to alKhūrī (the bishop), Ashaykh (the chief). Names ending in -ji (Turkish for "owner of") refer to specific occupations. Such names with the Turkish ending reveal a general chronological fact about the family bearing the name since the Turks occupied the Arab world between 1516-1914 A.D.

References to natural objects and animals are very common in modern Arabic surnames. So we encounter Tayara (airplane), Bahr (sea), dhahab (gold), and Dik (rooster), Sabi (lion), Ḥūt (whale). Family names may reflect names of regions, cities, and even villages in the Arab world. The intercultural phenomena among the Arabs are apparent in the fact that most countries have within their borders families with names of cities and regions in other Arab countries. Hence we have Maṣrī (the Egyptian), Bayrūtī (from Beirut), Nabulsī (akin to Nablus in the West bank), Ṣidawī (from Sidon in Lebanon), Qudsī (from Jerusalem), Fayūmī (from al-Fayūm in Egypt), and Hijāzī (from Hijāz in Saudi Arabia). Some surnames may go further as to suggest ethnicity like Kurdī (akin to the Kurds), Turk, and Hindi.
Descriptive or attributive names are probably the most common. Indeed surnames like asSayid (the master), alMansur (the victorious), and assaghir (the small) constitute the major bulk of surnames in Arabic. Eccentric surnames can be listed under this category. Such names as far (mouse, Sus (chick), Nisf (one-half), or Talatwa (three ounces) do occur in Arabic although very rarely.

Turkish and Persian have influenced some of the surnames in Arabic. The Turks have left behind in the Arab countries families bearing names like Agha and Yakan. Persian participated in forming the names Maktabi (akin to Lyceum in Persian), Khán (master), Bahbahāni (from Bahbahān, a city in Iran), and Bahnām (Persian for December).

The influence of the different cultures that came in contact with the Arabs was not detrimental in shaping a new pattern of their naming. As a matter of fact the contrary is true. With the spread of Islam to non-Arabic speaking regions Arabic names have had a great impact on those non-Arab cultures in the matter of choosing personal names. The increasing practice of American Blacks selecting Arabic names is probably the most striking example of the productivity of those names in the West.
FOOTNOTES


2 Transliteration of Arabic alphabet will follow henceforth the system used by Library of Congress, 1976 as presented in Appendix A, with two variations: a dot (.) will replace the omitted value in the first letter of the chart of the Library of Congress, and mark (<) will appear instead of (‘) for the seventeenth letter in the same chart.


6 Ibid., ll. 36-43.


8 For references on the arguments of the logicians see Farhang Zabeeh, What is in a Name? (Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), pp. 9-38.

9 Ibid., p. 39.

10 Ibid., p. 44.


14 For more comprehensive discussion on the general pattern of naming see Elsdon Smith, The Story of Our Names, Chapter I (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950).


16 Ibid., p. 50.

17 Eloise Lambert and Mario Pei, p. 43.

18 One of the two major sects of Islam. The origin of the word "Shi'a" is "shaya'a" meaning "to side with." Followers of Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib were called "Shi'a" since they sided with him in his attempt to defend his right to inherit the top position in the Islamic world, i.e., "Khilafa."


20 Ibid., p. 429.


22 See Appendix B for a list of the ninety-nine divine names of Allah.

23 See the genealogical chart of the twelve Imams in Appendix C.
24. *Abūl-ţuzā* was one of the numerous uncles of Prophet Muhammad. He was his archenemy, too. He was nicknamed *Abū-Lahab*, confirmed as his own true name in the Qur'ān.

25. Unlike European practices, Arabs rarely employ patronymics as family names. Patronymics in Arabic are commonly nicknames.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Mrs. LaDena Bishop, thesis editor, is most especially thanked for her time and interest in checking this work for its accuracy and style. To Pat Gunnells, the writer expresses thanks for her time-consuming effort of turning his handwriting into a neatly-typed form.

Many thanks go to all my friends who supported me during this study. Most notably, David Windom, whose interest in naming let me feel encouraged all the time he was around. Walid Hawana, Aziz El-Hout, and Abdurida Bahman insisted on giving me lists of names from all over the Arab world; for their help the writer is obliged.

My daughter, Juan, inspired me with her seemingly non-Arabic name and all its implications.
### Letters of the Alphabet

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### Vowels and Diphthongs

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### Letters Representing Non-Arabic Consonants

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Figure 1. Transliteration of Arabic alphabet (Source: Library of Congress, 1976, p. 15)
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<td>4.</td>
<td><strong>Al-Quddûs</strong></td>
<td>The Holy</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td><strong>As-Salâm</strong></td>
<td>The Peace</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td><strong>Al-Mu'mîn</strong></td>
<td>The Faithful</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td><strong>Al-Muhaiman</strong></td>
<td>The Protector</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><strong>Al-'Azîz</strong></td>
<td>The Mighty</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td><strong>Al-Jabbar</strong></td>
<td>The Repairer</td>
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<td><strong>Al-Qahhâr</strong></td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td><strong>Al-Wahhâb</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Ar-Razzâq</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Al-Muqît</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Al-Hasîb</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Al-Jalîl</strong></td>
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<td>42.</td>
<td><strong>Al-Karîm</strong></td>
<td>The Generous</td>
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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td><strong>Ar-Raqîb</strong></td>
<td>The Watcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.** Divine attributes of Allah (Source: *Dictionary of Islam*, 1895, pp. 141-142)
44. Al-Mujib The Approver
45. Al-Wasi The Comprehensive
46. Al-Hakîm The Wise
47. Al-Wadud The Loving
48. Al-Majîd The Glorious
49. Al Bais The Raiser
50. Ash-Shahîd The Witness
51. Al-Hagg The Truth
52. Al-Wakil The Advocate
53. Al-Qawî The Strong
54. Al-Matin The Firm
55. Al-Wâli The Patron
56. Al-Hâmîd The Laudable
57. Al-Muhsî The Counter
58. Al-Mubdî The Beginner
59. Al-Mu'îd The Restorer
60. Al-Muhyî The Quickener
61. Al-Mumît The Killer
62. Al-Hâiy The Living
63. Al-Qâiyûm The Subsisting
64. Al-Wâjîd The Finder
65. Al-Majîd The Glorious
66. Al-Wahid The One
67. Ab-Samad The Eternal
68. Al-Qâdir The Powerful
69. Al-Muqtâdir The Prevailing
70. Al-Muqaddim The Bringing forward
71. Al-Mu'akklar The Deferrer
72. Al-Awwâl The First
73. Al-Ăkhîr The Last
74. Az-Zâhîr The Evident
75. Al-Bâtin The Hidden
76. Al-Wâli The Governor
77. Al-Mutsâlî The Exalted
78. Al-Barr The Righeous
79. At-Tauwab The Acceptor of Repentance
80. Al-Muntaqîm The Avenger
81. Al-'Afûw The Pardoner
82. Ar-Ra'ûf The Kind
83. Maliku 'l-Mulk The Ruler of the Kingdom
84. Zu'l-Jalâli wa'l The Lord of Majesty and Liberality
85. Al-Muqsît The Equitable
86. Al-Jamî' The Collector
87. Al-Ghânî The Independent
88. Al-Mughnî The Enriched
89. Al-Mu'tî The Giver

Figure 2 (Continued)
90. Al-Mani' The Withholder
91. Az-Zarr The Distresser
92. An-Nāfi' The Profiter
93. An-Nūr The Light
94. Al-Hādī The Guide
95. Al-Bādi' The Incomparable
96. Al-Baqī The Enduring
97. Al-Wārith The Inheritor
98. Ar-Rashīd The Director
99. As-Sabūr The Patient
Figure 3. Genealogical chart of the twelve Imams