

Socio-Cultural and Linguistic Features of Anthropocentric Factors in The Formation of Anthroponyms In the English And Karakalpak Languages

Shamshetova Biybiayim Janibek kizi

Independent Researcher at Berdaq Karakalpak State University, Uzbekistan

Received: 25 April 2026; **Accepted:** 19 May 2026; **Published:** 08 June 2026

Abstract: This article examines the historical development of English personal names within the framework of anthropocentric, socio-cultural, and linguistic factors. It demonstrates that English anthroponymy is a multilayered system shaped by successive historical strata, including Celtic and Roman heritage, Anglo-Saxon Germanic naming patterns, Scandinavian influence, Norman-French domination, Christianization, the Reformation, and the later impact of Renaissance, Enlightenment, and Victorian cultural transformations. Special attention is paid to the formation of biblical, saintly, and virtue names, the emergence of hereditary surnames, and the increasing standardization of naming practices from the early modern period onward. The study also highlights the role of industrialization, urbanization, literacy, and civil registration in the regulation and stabilization of personal names in the nineteenth century. In addition, contemporary English anthroponymy is analyzed as a dynamic system influenced by globalization, multiculturalism, migration, and popular culture, including media, cinema, and music. The findings show that personal names in English function not only as linguistic identifiers but also as markers of religious affiliation, social hierarchy, cultural identity, and individual self-expression. The article concludes that English anthroponymy represents a dynamic linguocultural phenomenon reflecting the interaction between historical memory, social change, and anthropocentric values.

Keywords: English anthroponymy: personal names, onomastics, anthropocentric factors, socio-cultural factors, linguistic development, naming traditions, historical linguistics, cultural identity, globalization.

Introduction: The formation of English anthroponymy is closely connected with the ancient ethnic, historical, religious, and cultural strata of the British Isles. This process cannot be attributed to a single historical period or the influence of one language alone; rather, it constitutes a complex historical and linguistic system that emerged through the interaction of Celtic, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, Norman-French, Christian, Puritan, literary, and modern global influences [1]. Therefore, the development of personal names in English should be examined not merely as a process of name replacement, but also as a phenomenon closely associated with religious beliefs, social structure, cultural preferences, the need for personal identification, and anthropocentric values within

society.

The earliest layers of English anthroponymy are linked to the Celtic and Roman periods of Britain. From the eighth century BCE onward, the territory of Britain was inhabited by Celtic tribes, including the Britons, Picts, and other ethnic groups, each possessing its own distinctive naming system. The Roman conquest, which began in the first century CE, exerted a considerable influence on the language and culture of the island. Under the influence of Roman administration and the Latin writing system, certain Celtic names began to be recorded in official documents in Latinized forms. At the same time, Roman personal names were also used to some extent within the local population. For example, names belonging to the Roman

anthroponymic tradition, such as Marcus, Gaius, and Lucia, were employed by Roman citizens and by members of the local population who had undergone Romanization.

However, as the Roman Empire weakened and the Roman legions withdrew from Britain in 407 CE, most Latin personal names gradually fell out of active use. Celtic names, on the other hand, either survived in limited regions following the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons or disappeared from common usage. Many of them were later revived, particularly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when interest in historical and cultural heritage increased. One notable example is the name Arthur, which, owing to its legendary Celtic origins, regained popularity and became an important element of the later English anthroponymic system. The name Arthur is one such legendary name of Celtic origin that later regained popularity within the English anthroponymic system [2].

The period from the fifth to the eleventh centuries occupies a significant place in the history of English anthroponymy as the Anglo-Saxon era. Following the decline of Roman influence, Germanic tribes from continental Europe—the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes—began to migrate to Britain [3]. These groups established a new ethnic and linguistic foundation on the island, laying the groundwork for the emergence of Old English. During the Anglo-Saxon period, personal names were predominantly characterized by a two-component Germanic structure. In such names, each element possessed an independent lexical meaning, and together they formed a unified semantic concept.

For instance, the name Æthelstan consisted of the Old English elements *æthel* (“noble”) and *stan* (“stone”), conveying the meaning “noble stone.” Similarly, *Frīðuwulf* was composed of elements meaning “peace” and “wolf,” while *Mærwine* combined the meanings “famous” and “friend.” Likewise, in the name *Eadgar*, *ead* denoted “prosperity” or “wealth,” whereas *gar* meant “spear.” In the name *Ælfred*, the elements *ælf* (“elf”) and *ræd* (“counsel” or “advice”) were combined.

Within the Anglo-Saxon naming system, a personal name was regarded not only as a means of identification but also as a cultural symbol expressing desirable qualities, protection, good fortune, or symbolic power. Consequently, elements such as *ælf*, *wine*, *wulf*, and *ead* appeared repeatedly in numerous names. From an anthropocentric perspective, this phenomenon is particularly significant, as parents expressed their hopes and aspirations concerning a child’s future destiny, virtues, and social position through the selection of a name. During this period,

individuals were generally given a single personal name, and the modern system of hereditary surnames had not yet emerged. When additional identification was required, a person could be distinguished by reference to a father’s name, a nickname, an occupation, or a place of residence.

METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

Beginning in the seventh century, the process of Christianization intensified among the Anglo-Saxons. After Christianity was introduced to the Kingdom of Kent by Saint Augustine in 597 CE, new layers of personal names began to emerge alongside the new religious environment. The practice of assigning children the names of saints or biblical figures during baptism gradually became widespread. In this context, a personal name came to be interpreted as a symbol of religious protection, spiritual continuity, and moral virtue. As a result, names associated with biblical traditions and the broader Christian heritage entered the English anthroponymic system. Initially, such names were used more frequently among clergy, nobility, and members of the upper social strata than among the general population. Names of biblical origin, such as John, as well as other names widespread throughout Christian Europe, were gradually integrated into the English naming tradition. Nevertheless, up until the eleventh century, traditional Anglo-Saxon names such as *Æthelred*, *Alfred*, and *Edward* continued to be widely used alongside the newly introduced Christian names. As a result, names associated with Hebrew-Biblical and Christian traditions entered the English onomasticon. Initially, such names were used more actively among the clergy, nobility, and upper social classes than among the general population. Biblical names such as John, as well as names widespread within the Christian cultural sphere of Western Europe, gradually became integrated into the English naming system. Nevertheless, indigenous Anglo-Saxon names such as *Æthelred*, *Alfred*, and *Edward* continued to be widely used until the eleventh century.

From the late eighth century onward, Scandinavian tribes, commonly known as the Vikings, began to arrive in Britain. Vikings originating from present-day Denmark and Norway established a historical and cultural region in the northern and eastern parts of England known as the Danelaw. Since Old Norse was closely related to Old English, certain Scandinavian names were relatively easily assimilated into the English linguistic environment. Names such as *Knut*, *Olaf*, and *Sweyn* were encountered in England during the Viking Age. In some cases, Scandinavian pronunciation also influenced the phonetic development of local names. For example, the

transformation of the Anglo-Saxon name Æthelthryth into its later form Audrey is associated with processes of historical phonetic simplification and linguistic adaptation. In general, by the beginning of the eleventh century, Germanic names of Anglo-Saxon and, to some extent, Scandinavian origin constituted the dominant layer of English anthroponymy.

The Norman Conquest of 1066 marked a decisive turning point in the historical development of English personal names. The Normans, who arrived from the Duchy of Normandy, established a new ruling elite in England and brought with them the Anglo-Norman language, French courtly culture, and continental European naming traditions. As a result, the social prestige of native Anglo-Saxon names declined, while names introduced by the Normans increasingly came to symbolize nobility, official status, and high social rank. This process clearly illustrates the anthropocentric nature of naming practices: a personal name was no longer merely a means of individual identification but also became a marker of social affiliation, cultural prestige, and political authority. The names introduced by the Normans were derived from two principal sources. The first layer consisted of Christian, saintly, and biblical names that were widely used throughout continental Europe. Names such as John, Thomas, Nicolas, and Katherine belong to this category. The second layer comprised names of Norman-Frankish and Scandinavian-Germanic origin. Through this channel, names such as William, Robert, Richard, Henry, Roger, and Hugh became firmly established within the English anthroponymic system. In addition, Celtic-origin names associated with Normandy and Brittany, including Alan and Brian, also entered the English naming tradition. The Norman period likewise witnessed changes in the system of female names, as the practice of deriving feminine forms from masculine names became increasingly common. Name pairs such as Patrick/Patricia and Henry/Henrietta may be regarded as later manifestations of this tendency [4].

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries following the Norman Conquest, the diversity of English personal names temporarily decreased. Historical evidence suggests that a limited number of names became extremely popular during the Middle Ages and gradually dominated the naming repertoire of society. Records from the thirteenth century indicate that a large proportion of English men bore only a few common names, such as John, William, Robert, Richard, or Henry. By the fourteenth century, these names remained among the most frequently used male names. Among women, names such as Elizabeth, Mary, Joan/Jane, Anne, and Alice were particularly widespread [5].

This phenomenon can be explained, on the one hand, by the preference of the Christian Church for religiously significant names and, on the other hand, by the custom of repeating names across generations within families. The practice of naming a child after a parent, a godparent, or a patron saint contributed to the continuous recurrence of the same names over extended periods of time.

Another significant stage in the development of the English anthroponymic system was the emergence of surnames. During the Anglo-Saxon period and prior to the Norman Conquest, a single personal name was generally sufficient for identifying an individual. However, beginning in the twelfth century, the growth of population records, inheritance laws, property relations, taxation, and administrative institutions created a need for additional means of identification.

Initially, Norman nobles employed locative bynames to indicate their place of origin or territorial possessions. Expressions in the form of de + place name, such as de Montgomery, de Warenne, and de Vere, signified an individual's territorial affiliation and landownership status.

Subsequently, surnames based on patronymics, occupations, and nicknames became increasingly common. For example, an expression such as Richard son of John gradually evolved into the surname Johnson, while an occupational designation such as William the Smith eventually gave rise to the surname Smith. English surnames originated from various sources: patronymic surnames such as Johnson and Williams were derived from the father's name; locative surnames such as Attwood, York, and Oxford indicated a place of residence or geographical origin; surnames such as Smith, Taylor, Knight, and King were associated with occupations, titles, or social status; and surnames such as Brown, White, Small, and Goodchild developed from physical characteristics, behavioral traits, or nicknames.

DISCUSSION

Even today, common surnames such as Smith, Brown, Johnson, Williams, and Taylor preserve traces of the identification needs and social structures that characterized earlier periods of English society [6]. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the combination of a given name and a hereditary surname had become the standard anthroponymic model throughout England, although patronymic forms such as -son, Fitz-, and the Welsh prefix ap- survived for a longer period in certain regions. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Renaissance and the Reformation fundamentally transformed attitudes toward personal names in England. Following the break

with the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, when King Henry VIII declared the independence of the English Church, perceptions of certain names associated with Catholic saints began to change. Although saintly names such as Nicholas, Catherine, and Francis did not disappear entirely, Protestant communities increasingly favored biblical names, particularly those associated with figures from the Old Testament. Consequently, names such as Abraham, Daniel, David, Jacob, Sarah, and Rebecca became more widely used among Protestant families during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this period, the choice of a personal name became an important means of expressing religious identity and confessional affiliation.

The Puritans exerted a particularly significant influence on naming practices during the Reformation era. Rather than giving their children traditional saintly names, they preferred names that conveyed moral and religious values. As a result, so-called “virtue names” such as Faith, Hope, Charity, Grace, and Mercy emerged. These names are noteworthy because they transformed abstract ethical and spiritual concepts into personal names. In some Puritan families, even exceptionally long phrase names were used. For example, the name Through-Much-Tribulation-We-Enter-the-Kingdom-of-Heaven represented an attempt to express religious convictions and moral principles directly through naming [7]. Although such extreme forms did not survive for long, names such as Hope, Grace, and Mercy remained within the English anthroponymic system and later became established as widely used female names. Moreover, because many Puritans migrated to North America during the early seventeenth century, a number of biblical and virtue names also became deeply rooted in the American Protestant naming tradition.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represent a new stage in the development of English personal names. The Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, increased social mobility, and the expansion of literacy all influenced naming practices. During this period, the custom of using multiple given names—namely a first name and a middle name—spread beyond the aristocracy and became common among broader social groups. Traditions such as preserving family history through names, naming children after grandparents, or using the mother’s maiden surname as a middle name gained popularity. This development demonstrates the role of personal names as instruments of genealogical memory and familial identification.

The growing interest in classical antiquity inspired by the Renaissance and Romanticism contributed to the popularity of names associated with the Greco-Roman

world, such as Alexander, Julius, and Cassandra, particularly among educated families. Attention was also given to Latinized forms of traditional names; for instance, Ann increasingly appeared as Anna, while Mary was often rendered as Maria. During the nineteenth century, renewed interest in national history and medieval heritage led to the revival of Anglo-Saxon and medieval names such as Alfred, Edgar, Emma, and Matilda. Similarly, fascination with Arthurian legends and Celtic heritage contributed to the resurgence of names such as Arthur, Brian, and Brenda within the English naming repertoire.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the historical development of personal names in English is a complex process shaped by the intersection of different historical periods, languages, religions, social needs, and cultural influences. The ancient Celtic and Roman layers, Anglo-Saxon two-component Germanic names, Scandinavian influence, Norman-French dominance, Christianity and the Reformation, the formation of the surname system, the Renaissance and Victorian historical legacy, as well as modern global migration, literature, cinema, popular culture, and individualism have collectively transformed the English anthroponymicon into a multilayered system.

The coexistence of names such as Oliver, Olivia, William, Richard, Robert, Edward, Alfred, Jacob, Noah, Mary, Elizabeth, Kevin, Oscar, Fiona, Amelia, Emma, Muhammad, Aisha, and Ibrahim, originating from diverse historical and cultural sources, clearly demonstrates this multilayered nature [8]. Therefore, English anthroponymy should be regarded as a dynamic linguocultural phenomenon that embodies human historical memory, religious belief, social status, cultural taste, and personal identity.

REFERENCES

1. Zgusta, L. Name. Personal names // Encyclopaedia Britannica: elektron resurs. – Britannica, 2026. – Murojaat qilingan sana: 30.03.2026.
2. Insley, J. Historical Onomastics // The New Cambridge History of the English Language. Context, Contact and Development. – Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2025. – P. 791–848. – DOI: 10.1017/9781009205702.023.
3. St. Augustine of Canterbury // Encyclopaedia Britannica: elektron resurs. – Britannica, 2026. – Murojaat qilingan sana: 02.05.2026.
4. Chetwood, J. A. Re-evaluating English Personal Naming on the Eve of the Conquest // Early Medieval Europe. – 2018. – Vol. 26, no. 4. – P. 518–547. – DOI: 10.1111/emed.12298.

5. Morris, D. The Rise of Christian Names in the Thirteenth Century: A Case Study of the English Nobility // Nomina. – 2005. – Vol. 28. – P. 43–54.
6. Zgusta, L. Name. Family names // Encyclopaedia Britannica: elektron resurs. – Britannica, 2026. – Murojaat qilingan sana: 30.03.2026.
7. Nair, G.; Scherr, J. “Especiall vertues”: abstract qualities and women’s names in England, 1540–1850 // Nomina. – 2012. – Vol. 35. – P. 21–47.
8. Baby names explorer // Office for National Statistics: elektron resurs. – ONS. – Murojaat qilingan sana: 16.04.2026