




## Article

# Factors Influencing the Choice of a Child's Name and Its Relationship with the Religiosity of Interfaith Marriages: Orthodox (Slavic) and Muslim (Turkish)

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**Abstract:** Names symbolize an individual's identity, highlighting their unique attributes and representing their religious and cultural background. Names often serve as initial indicators of individuals' cultural identities and beliefs. In the context of interfaith marriages, the names given to children can offer symbolic insights; however, a comprehensive exploration of the religious, national, and cultural factors underlying such naming choices is required. In many cases, the social environment of interfaith couples exerts pressure on the couple to choose a name aligning with their religion and identity, whether willingly or unwillingly. Antalya, a Turkish province that initially attracted a substantial Slavic population for tourism but subsequently witnessed a significant influx of permanent residents due to the ample employment prospects in the tourism sector, is notably distinguished by its increased Slavic demographic relative to other Turkish urban centers. In this context, Antalya garners notice because of the prevalence of interfaith marriages. This study investigates the preferences of Orthodox (Slavic) and Muslim (Turkish) couples within the region in terms of how they name their children and the factors influencing their preferences. This study systematically gathers and assesses the factors influencing the naming choices of children of these interfaith couples, particularly their correlation with religiosity. To accomplish this, a semi-structured interview prepared by the researchers was employed for data collection, and the data were subsequently analyzed using document analysis.

**Keywords:** interfaith marriages; interreligious interaction; naming tradition; anthroponomy; onomastics



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## 1. Introduction

The contemporary landscape of population movements has witnessed a surge in interfaith marriage, driven by economic incentives, conflicts, climatic conditions, educational pursuits, and tourism-related travel. Such unions pose multifaceted challenges, with a central issue being how religions approach marriages with individuals of differing faiths. Even when religious disparities do not hinder interfaith marriages, these couples frequently encounter social hurdles and exclusion in their daily lives. Families and social circles, often contingent on their religiosity, are resistant to and ostracize those who enter such unions. Couples in interfaith marriages grapple with dilemmas concerning their children's religious affiliations and where and how they will receive religious education. The process of making these choices typically starts with the fundamental inquiry of which party will be responsible for selecting the child's name and the extent to which the chosen name should reflect religious and cultural affiliations.

To discern the factors shaping the naming choices of couples in interfaith marriages, a comprehensive understanding of the rationale behind these choices is critical. Naming is a tradition. As the names given to children in interfaith marriages may, at first glance, give a symbolic idea of the child's religious and cultural background, the religious, national, and

cultural reasons underlying the choice of the name should be examined in detail. However, the impact of interfaith marriages on the customary practice of naming children is an area that remains relatively unexplored in the literature. This domain falls under the purview of anthroponomy, the study of personal names<sup>1</sup>.

Names often serve as initial indicators of individuals' cultural identities and beliefs. A crucial aspect of the naming tradition is its connection to religion and religious practices. The relationship between naming and religiosity is evident in almost all cultures. Celaledin Çelik particularly emphasizes the collective significance of individuals joining a community through birth, especially in more traditional societies, reinforcing the community's historical and cultural identity (Çelik 2005, pp. 32–33). Hence, the naming of a child is far from a straightforward or routine procedure.

Names, in addition to accentuating an individual's unique characteristics, serve as emblematic representations of religious and cultural identity. Antalya, a province distinguished by a heightened Slavic population compared with other Turkish urban centers, is notable for the prevalence of interfaith marriages. This study investigates the factors underlying the naming customs of interfaith Orthodox Slavic and Muslim Turkish couples, with a focus on religious factors, along with social and cultural determinants. The findings regarding the factors influencing the selection of names for the children of these Orthodox Slavic and Muslim Turkish couples and their relationship with religiosity have been collected using semi-structured interviews prepared by the researchers and evaluated through document analysis.

In this context, it is critical to underscore the significance of ascertaining the extent to which participants are swayed by their respective religions and cultures in naming their children, the reception they encounter from their social circles, both before and following the naming process, and whether the geographical region in which they reside influences their naming choices, which are all in line with the research objectives. In many cases, the social circles of these couples exert pressure, whether willingly or unwillingly, for them to choose a name that aligns with their own religion and identity. The repercussions of such pressure may include exclusion from family and social circles; the fear of these repercussions may also significantly influence the naming decisions.

This study focuses on the naming preferences of the children of Orthodox Slavic and Muslim Turkish couples, refraining from delving into the theological stances of Christianity and Islam regarding interfaith marriages, as this is a distinct, comprehensive subject. Nevertheless, it is a reasonable presumption that couples from diverse religious backgrounds, irrespective of their degree of religiosity, may be influenced in their choices of names for their children. For individuals who identify as religious or devout, the religious perspectives of their respective faiths on these marriages hold particular significance. Hence, this study highlights the imperative of considering the varying viewpoints of different religions on marriages involving individuals of differing faiths<sup>2</sup>. In this vein, to clarify the factors influencing the naming choices of couples in interfaith marriages, an introduction of the broader naming traditions prevalent among Slavic and Turkish cultures is essential. This examination will provide context for the interpretation of the data in terms of the continuity of cultural traditions.

## 2. Tradition of Naming

The inclination to comprehend and designate entities is inherent to human nature. This process necessitates the identification of connections, commonalities, and disparities among the persons or objects subject to comprehension and nomenclature. Neglecting these disparities often leads to the use of species names as a means of expounding on the existence of entities. Similarly, human names serve to accentuate the distinguishing characteristics of individuals. Names serve as integral indicators of the proclivities, inclinations, religious convictions, worldviews, social structures, traditions, and customs of the name-givers.

The names employed to express an individual's existence are laden with religious, national, and cultural connotations that are emblematic of the individual's position within

the social milieu (Örnek 1995, p. 148). Names mirror the sociocultural context of the name-giver. An examination of the historical tradition of nomenclature within Slavic and Turkish communities reveals the influence of diverse belief systems, such as Paganism or Shamanism, on the selection of names, irrespective of the individuals' religious affiliations. Notably, this influence has not remained constant over time; naming customs have evolved in tandem with evolving belief systems and the religions embraced by societies. From the standpoint of religious faith, it is feasible to distinguish the naming proclivities shaped by Turkish culture with reference to Shamanism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and the Islamic period. Parallely, among Slavic communities, distinct periods can be discerned, marked by shifts in the influence of Paganism, Christianity, and the church, all playing a role in the evolution of naming practices in the community.

One noteworthy aspect is the pronounced influence of ancestor veneration, a significant element within Turkish Shamanism, on the tradition of nomenclature. Small figurines, referred to as "töz" or "tözlər", discovered in the tents of the Altai people, symbolize the spirits of ancestors (İnan 2000, pp. 2, 42). Turkish Shamanism is deeply influenced by animism, specifically, the belief in spirits. This belief manifests itself in everyday religious and folklore-based rituals, rooted in a conviction that shamans derive their powers from their deceased ancestors and various assisting spirits. Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of the genealogies of the members of these communities is imperative to the nomenclature. According to Altai beliefs, Shamanism preaches unwavering loyalty and obedience to God and spirits (Hoppal 2012, p. 21; Potapov 2012, pp. 13, 100). Even in contemporary times, the imperative of recognizing the seven ancestors persists, underpinned by the aspiration to harness the powers of these spirits (Yeşildal 2018, p. 53). During the Uyghur period, the Turkish populace adopted religious belief systems such as Buddhism and Manichaeism, evident in the personal names used, which predominantly carried religious connotations. This evidence indicates that Shamanism continued to have an influence over the culture despite the introduction of new religious paradigms<sup>3</sup>.

During periods of close interaction with China, the names of Turkish rulers gradually took on Sinicized attributes, although such a transformation was not widespread among the general populace. However, the advent of Islam exerted a significant influence on Turkish naming conventions, with Arabic influences becoming conspicuous (Rásonyi 1963, p. 66; Acıpayamlı 1992, p. 2). In one of the earliest Islamic-era texts, *Dîvânü Lügâti't-Türk*, approximately 20% of the names from a roster of 110 individuals had origins in Arabic (Amanoğlu 2000, pp. 12–13), demonstrating the substantial impact of Islam on Turkish naming practices.

Acıpayamlı posits that in Turkish naming customs, it is significant to name individuals after deceased family elders, religious leaders, the prophet, their spouses, offspring, and the four caliphs (Acıpayamlı 1992, pp. 6–7)<sup>4</sup>. Recent data from the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs reveal that in 2022, the most prevalent names given to Turkish infants include Alparslan, Yusuf, Miraç, Göktaş, Ömer Asaf, Eymen, Aras, Ömer, Mustafa, Ali Asaf, Zeynep, Defne, Asel, Zümra, Elif, Asya, Azra, Nehir, Eylül, and Ecrin, which predominantly have religious connotations (T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı—Nüfus ve Vatandaşlık İşleri Genel Müdürlüğü 2022). The preference for religiously grounded names among male children may be attributed to the pre-eminence of male religious leaders. However, whether these names are preferred because they were the names of family elders or due to religious reasons cannot be determined from these data. Even though it is not difficult to assume that naming preferences were influenced by religious reasons during a certain period among older generations, to ascertain this, parents need to be asked about the reasons behind their name choices.

In Turkish communities where Islam failed to establish a profound presence, a predilection for Slavic names has been observed since ancient times. This can be traced to the practice of christening children with the name of the first person to enter the child's room, as documented in Altai (Radloff, *Lose Blötter aus Sibirien I*, 337 as cited in *Rásonyi 1963*, p. 73). Furthermore, the influence of Christian Slavic names has permeated the nomenclature cus-

toms of select Central Asian Turks in recent history ([Rásonyi 1963](#), p. 73). It is noteworthy that this influence, as mentioned by Rásonyi, primarily affects individuals who, despite their faith, do not prominently manifest their religious beliefs in their everyday lives.

Historical texts have statistically analyzed the influence of Slavic beliefs on naming practices. B. D. Bondaletov undertook an examination of the distribution of pagan and baptismal names within the Laurentian Chronicle, and the analysis revealed a transition from predominantly pagan names before the 10th century to a noticeable surge in Christian names as time progressed. In the 11th century, non-Christian names accounted for 77.4% while Christian names constituted 22.6% of the total. In the 12th century, these proportions had shifted to 68.9% non-Christian names and 31.1% Christian names. By the 13th century, the balance had tilted further, with 39.3% non-Christian names and 60.7% Christian names, and by the 14th century, non-Christian names had diminished to 9.6%, while Christian names dominated at 90.4% ([Bondaletov 1983](#), p. 105).

The conversion of populations in urban areas such as Kyiv and Novgorod to Orthodoxy through mandatory baptism ceremonies was accompanied by the adoption of Christian names sourced from Byzantine tradition. Following the canonization of certain Knyazs (princes) and ascetics as saints, their original pagan names were reconfigured as calendar names. Thus, Slavic names such as Boris, Boyan, Vladimir, Vsevolod, Vyacheslav, Gorazd, Kuksha, Lyudmila, Mstislav, Rostislav, Svyatoslav, Yaropolk, Yaroslav became calendar names. Later, Bogolep, Vladislav, Vadim, Vera, Nadezhda, Lyubov, Zlata, Lyudina, Militsa, Razumnik, the Varangian names Gleb, Igor, Oleg, Olga, and the Lithuanian name Dovmont were added to the roster ([Dianova 2019](#), p. 74).

Subsequent to the adoption of Christianity, a convention was established wherein names were selected from a roster of saints' names. Nevertheless, this convention did not entirely supplant Slavic names, as some remained within the calendar. New names typically emerged upon the canonization of new saints. The names of the earliest Christians were derived from the names of the places they came from. To ensure that the origins of their ancestors were not forgotten, names of this nature were advised. Not only their names but also the lives they led were preserved in the collective memory of the people, particularly through hagiography, hymns, iconography, and during religious services held on the days dedicated to them. The practice of giving canonical names originated from the belief that the names of saints were protected by God; these names were given to gain the protection of the corresponding saint. This tradition became more prevalent with the acceptance of Christianity in Russia ([Duka 2011](#), pp. 170–71).

All historical calendar names, regardless of their origins in the Russian language, bear cultural and historical significance within the Russian context<sup>5</sup>. The third stage in the development of Russian names, which persists to the present day, commenced with the decree issued by the RSFSC Council of People's Commissars on 23 January 1918. This decree marked the formal separation of church and state, with civil registration of births replacing traditional church baptism. Consequently, numerous foreign names have been integrated into Russian nomenclature, including names such as Zhanna, Inessa, Eduard, and Timur. Furthermore, the revolutionary period brought about changes in traditional beliefs and lifestyle, giving rise to the emergence of new Russian names ([Suslova and Superenskaya 1991](#), p. 62).

In the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution, a substantial number of children were named after historical figures. Even within prominent families, it is documented that grandmothers clandestinely arranged church baptisms for their grandchildren. Nevertheless, the influence of active anti-religious propaganda was discernible; some individuals refrained from bestowing names associated with particular saints. Consequently, new names were devised and foreign names were incorporated, often without an awareness of their similarity to established Russian names in a different linguistic guise. The practice of inventing names first took root in urban centers where revolutionary ideologies began to influence people's beliefs. Specialized studies and literary works have provided informa-

tion regarding the names introduced during this period (Suslova and Superenskaya 1991, p. 63)<sup>6</sup>.

### 3. Name Choices of Orthodox Slavic–Muslim Turkish Couples/Data Collection

The study was conducted with members of the Başkent Culture and Arts Friendship Association, who are Orthodox Slavic and Muslim Turkish individuals in interfaith marriages living in Antalya. Ethical approval for the study was granted via Akdeniz University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board. Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection tool. The information addressed in the study was obtained from interviews conducted with 30 participants. 5 of the participants were male and 25 were female. This section of the study will focus on the factors that influenced the choices of names based on the interviews and presents the reasons why couples chose names and the data regarding this question. These data will be evaluated in relation to Slavic and Turkish naming traditions when necessary.

#### 3.1. Reasons for Selection

The participants were asked about the reasons for their name choices. They were asked if their name choices were based on personal preferences, family traditions, popularity of names, etc. When multiple factors influenced the name choices, all of them were expressed by the participants. The main factors that stand out among the reasons for name choices are personal preferences; cultural, national, and religious values; using international names; and the popularity of the names. The proportion between the reasons for the name choices and the whole are as follows:

Family tradition: (1.8%) Veysel.

International names (easy pronunciation for both languages): (18.5%) Alina, Artur, Asya, Aylin, Buse, Derya, Dilara, Elisa, Lina, Timur.

Name popularity: (16.7%) Adelina, 2 × Alisa, Asya, Berk, Emir, Melissa, Mira, Selin.

Personal preferences (liking the sound or meaning): (24.1%) Alara, 2 × Alisa, Asya, Batuhan, Buse, Dilara, Elisa, Giray, Lorin, Mina, Sergen Mete.

Desire to choose unpopular names: (5.5%) Mina, Sergen Mete.

Lack of a religious reference: (1.8%) Armin.

Cultural, religious, and national values: (22.2%) Ali, İlhan, Kuzey, Mehmet Salih, Melisa Meryem, Mikail, Mustafa Kemal, 2 × (name not specified).

Ideological and political views: (3.7%) Deniz, Helin.

Preferences of family and close circle: (5.6%) Ahmet, İlayda, Milena.

This question regarding the reasons for the name selection aims to understand the reasons for choosing religious names. It can be understood from the responses that the name Veysel, an Islamic name chosen for the child of one of the couples who had an interfaith marriage, was not chosen for religious reasons. This name was selected by the Muslim Turkish father based on family traditions. Here, we see a traditional name selection based on culture and the Turkish understanding of lineage. Although the name is religious, the family defines itself as secular, and religious factors were not predominant in the choice of this name. Similar finds are observed for the name Ahmet. Ahmet is also an Islamic name, but the participant stated that this name was chosen based on the preferences of the extended family and close circles, emphasizing that the religious context did not affect the name selection. Ali, İlhan, Mehmet Salih, Meryem, Mikail, and Mustafa Kemal are names that reflect “cultural, religious, and national values”, as expressed by the couples who chose these names. Mustafa Kemal is the name of the founder of the Republic of Türkiye, one of the most important leaders in Turkish history. A participant’s statement that they made the name choice based on “cultural, religious, and national values” is meaningful in this context. Meanwhile, the name Armin was chosen due to the “lack of a religious reference”, making it a reconciliatory option for families in interfaith marriages. Deniz is a name that came to the forefront in Turkish political history in the late 1960s, representing



left-wing ideologies; the couple that chose this name indicated that the choice was “based on ideological and political views”.

### 3.2. Who Made the Name Choice?

In the study, participants were asked who selected the name. This question aimed to determine whether there is a traditional understanding that prioritizes giving a name approved by the community when naming the newest member of the family. In traditional societies, the process of naming a child is not left solely to the child’s biological parents, and close relatives of the child’s biological parents may be involved in this process. This traditional understanding of naming a child was observed among a few participants in interfaith marriages. In 4 of the 48 names given by the participants, the opinion of the extended family, namely, close relatives of the child’s biological parents, was considered. Names were primarily selected through the joint decision of the mother and father; 30 names (62.5% of all names in the study) were chosen in this manner.

Mother (Slavic-Orthodox): (14.6%) 2 × Alisa, Artur, Asya, Aylin, Dilara, Meryem.

Father (Turkish-Muslim): (14.6%) Alara, Elisa, İlhan, Melisa, Mustafa Kemal, Veysel.

The parents together: (62.5%) Adelina, Ahmet, Ali, 3 × Alisa, Armin, Asya, Batuhan, Berk, Buse, Deniz, Derya, Emir, Giray, Helin, İlayda, Kuzey, Lina, Lorin, Mehmet Salih, Melissa, Mikail, Milena, Mira, Selin, Timur, 2 × (name not specified).

With the extended family: (8.3%) Elisa, Mina, Sergen Mete.

### 3.3. The Impact of Religious Beliefs on Daily Life Choices

During the interviews, the participants were asked the extent to which their religious beliefs influenced their daily life choices. As naming children is one of these choices, the information about whether religious beliefs had an impact on individuals’ decision-making process was considered important. The participants described themselves as believers, religious, or secular. When participants define themselves as ‘religious’, it means that they fulfil all the requirements of their religion. Defining themselves as ‘believers’ means that their religious beliefs influence their daily life choices to a certain extent. For the most part, the participants expressed that their religious beliefs did not influence their daily life choices. One participant (Muslim) identified as “a religious”, 10 participants (6 Orthodox, 4 Muslim) as “believer”, and 19 participants (18 Orthodox, 1 Muslim) as “secular”. Below, the total percentage of how participants described themselves in terms of religious beliefs and the names they chose for their children are listed to observe the impact of participants’ descriptions of their religious beliefs on their name choices.

Religious (3.3%) Mehmet Salih, Mikail.

Believer: (33.3%) 3 × Alisa, Ahmet, 2 × Asya, Berk, Dilara, Elisa, İlayda, İlhan, Milena, Mira, 2 × (name not specified).

Secular: (63.3%) Adelina, Alara, Alisa, Armin, Artur, Aylin, Batuhan, Buse, Deniz, Derya, Elisa, Emir, Giray, Helin, Kuzey, Lina, Lorin, Melisa, Meryem, Melissa, Mina, Mustafa Kemal, Selin, Sergen Mete, Timur, Veysel.

Of the 30 participants, only one identified as religious. Among those who identified themselves as believers, two people chose religious names (Ahmet, Elisa). One chose a name based on “being an international name”, and the other based on “the preferences of family and social circles”. These participants did not directly relate their name choices to their beliefs. Among other religious individuals, 80% chose non-religious names for their children. Given that participants who identified themselves as secular chose religious names (Emir, Meryem, Mina, Mustafa, and Veysel) based on reasons such as “being popular names, adhering to family traditions, and being associated with religious, national, and cultural values” (see Section 3.1), it can be said that there is often no direct connection between definitions of religious beliefs and the tendency to choose religious names.

### 3.4. Impact of Birthplaces on Name Selection

Choosing a name appropriate to the geographical location where couples from different cultures plan to live together can be preferred, as it may facilitate the cultural adaptation of children. Based on this, it was thought that the birthplaces of the children might influence the selection of names. The birthplaces of the children and the associated name choices are as follows:

Türkiye: (68%) 3 × Alisa, Armin, Artur, 2 × Asya, Batuhan, Berk, Buse, Deniz, Dilara, Giray, Helin, İlayda, Kuzey, Lina, Lorin, Mehmet Salih, Melisa Meryem, Melissa, Mikail, Mina, Mira, Mustafa Kemal, Sergen Mete, Veysel, (name not specified).

Russia: (21.3%) Adelina, Alara, Ali, Alisa, Aylin, 2 × Elisa, Emir, İlhan, (name not specified).

Ukraine: (4.3%) Milena, Selin.

Belarus: (6.4%) Ahmet, Derya, Timur.

Of the 32 names given to children born in Türkiye, 7 are associated with Slavic culture (3 × Alisa, Armin, Artur, Lina, Melissa), while Lorin and Mira are rarely preferred in Slavic culture. Therefore, 28.1% of children born in Türkiye were named in accordance with Slavic preferences. Meanwhile, of the 10 names given to children born in Russia, half (Alara, Ali, Aylin, Emir, and İlhan) are suitable choices from Turkish culture. Of the participants' children, two were born in Ukraine. One of them was given a name suitable for both cultures (Selin), while the other was given a name suitable for Slavic culture (Milena) (33.3%). In Belarus, one of every three children born was considered to have a suitable name that can be preferred in both cultures (Timur), accounting for 33.3%. The other Belarus-born children were given names (Ahmet, Derya) that were suitable within the Turkish cultural context (66.7%). As can be seen, it was not possible to establish a direct relationship between the names chosen for children and the place of birth for children born in Türkiye, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine.

### 3.5. Disagreements in Name Selection

During the interview, the participants were asked whether there were any disagreements between spouses or with their close social circles during the naming process. The study found that couples who chose religious names for their children did not experience disagreements either among themselves or with their social circles. Therefore, there does not appear to be a direct relationship between the choice of religious names and conflicts with the social environment and family members in this study. However, one participant mentioned that their Orthodox spouse's grandmother did not like the name they had chosen for their children and raised objections. However, they resolved this issue internally and it did not affect the naming process. Another participant mentioned that their Muslim spouse did not want the name they chose for their child because it was considered a "Christian name". This disagreement was resolved by giving the child two names. Overall, couples reported a high level (86.7%) of agreement and a low level (13.3%) of disagreement during the naming process. The fact that naming did not lead to a high level of disagreement could be attributed to the mutual respect of spouses for each other's religious and cultural values. Further, the high rate of international name preferences may have contributed to fewer disagreements in naming choices.

## 4. Conclusions

The study gathered data from 30 participants via semi-structured interviews. An examination of the data regarding naming practices reveals that participants prioritized names that were easily pronounceable in both languages, with no specific phonetic features exclusive to either language. While some participants favored names with associations to Slavic culture, such as Adelina, Alina, Alisa, Armin, Artur, Elisa, Lina, Lorin, Melissa, Milena, Mira, others leaned toward names with Turkish cultural connotations, like Ahmet, Ali, Aylin, Batuhan, Berk, Derya, Dilara, Emir, Giray, İlhan, Kuzey, Mehmet, Melisa, Mete, Mina, Salih, Selin, Sergen, and Veysel.

Participants predominantly self-identified as secular, suggesting that their religious beliefs had minimal influence on their daily life decisions, including naming practices. The reasons that participants expressed as prominent factors in their choice of names, such as personal preferences, cultural, national, and religious values, international name preferences, and popular name choices, are parallel and significant. In the case of four children, the parents opted for double names. In the case of one of these double names, namely “Meryem”, which was regarded as a Christian appellation, a disagreement was observed with the Muslim spouse, necessitating the selection of an alternative name to resolve this dispute. No rationale was proffered for the selection of the three other double names, namely, “Mehmet Salih”, “Mustafa Kemal”, and “Sergen Mete”. Notably, all these instances of double naming conform to the conventions of Turkish culture and do not involve the fusion of names from distinct cultural backgrounds. In this regard, there is no substantial evidence to suggest that giving double names is related to the interfaith nature of the marriages. It can be argued that the adoption of double names primarily hinges upon individual preferences and choices.

In the study, a total of 48 names were documented, with two names not being disclosed by the participants. Among these names, 12 exhibited religious connotations, constituting 25% of the total. However, upon closer examination of the motivations behind choosing these religious names, it was observed that the name “Veysel” was selected by parents who identified themselves as secular and was described as a choice aligned with “family traditions” stemming from the influence of the Muslim spouse. The other seven religious names were given by individuals who self-identified as secular, while two were chosen by individuals who identified as believers. The rationale for these religious names was articulated as “religious, cultural, and national values” in three instances (Ali, Meryem, Mustafa), one was selected for its popularity (Emir), and another was based on the opinions of their families and close circles (Ahmet). One parent, who named their child “Elisa”, identified as secular and mentioned that their choice was based on “personal preferences”. Notably, “Mina”, a name linked to a Sahaba (companion of the Prophet), was chosen by a parent who identified as secular, citing their decision as being influenced by “personal preferences” and the fact that it was “not a popular name”. The three names with religious connotations in the study were chosen by parents identifying as religious. Two of these names possessed Islamic qualities (Mehmet Salih), while the third (Mikail) was a commonly recognized religious name in both Islamic and Christian contexts. One of the participants who identified as religious selected “Elisa” due to its ease of pronunciation in both languages. Meanwhile, the other religious participants chose the name Ahmet based on the preferences of their parents and close circles.

Within the scope of the study, it was hypothesized that naming choices might influence the cultural integration of children in the geographical region of their birth. Consequently, the birthplaces of the children and the compatibility of the chosen names with the prevailing religion and culture in these regions were examined. However, no data emerged to suggest a direct correlation between the names assigned to children born in Türkiye, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine and the geographical contexts of their birthplaces.

The analysis reveals that naming preferences are predominantly influenced by contemporary trends that do not conform to any specific religious criteria. Some of these names include Dilara, Helin, İlayda, Mira, Melisa, and Selin. Names such as Timur, which exhibit commonality in naming traditions in both cultures, and names derived from geographical locations (Alara and Asya) can also be included in this category. In the context of interfaith marriages, the inclination toward these modern and fashionable names is perceived as a significant factor in fostering harmony among couples, their families, and social circles. Remarkably, 86.7% of participant couples affirmed that they encountered no challenges with their spouses or social networks during the naming process. In this respect, choosing names that can prevent disputes is a reasonable outcome, especially in interfaith marriages.



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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In this branch of onomastics, proper names are examined concerning their historical development and various language and culture issues (Aksan 2009, p. 32). This research field falls within the purview of not only linguists but also anthropologists, sociologists, folklorists, and legal and religious scholars.
- <sup>2</sup> Studies pertinent to interfaith marriages and the approaches of religions to these unions include the following: (Locke et al. 1957; Heiss 1961; Hepps and Dorfman 1966; Yinger 1968; Rosenbaum and Rosenbaum 1994; Call and Heaton 1997; Birtwistle 2010; Suomala 2012; Çiğdem 2015; Ciocan 2016).
- <sup>3</sup> In Uyghur texts, names carrying the meaning of “hazret”, along with adjectives such as “tengri” and “tengrim”, are found. These names are derived from nature and are related to the Shamanistic beliefs of ancient Turks. Among these names, some names symbolize strength and durability, such as “Temür” for “iron”, as well as cosmic (astral) designations often used for women, such as “Ay” for “moon”, “Kün” for “sun”, and “Tolun” for “full moon”. Positive connotation adjectives such as “Arıg” for “clean” and “Bilge” for “wise” are also observed, along with protective names that may be explained by naming taboos, such as “Kiçig” for “small”. Peter Zieme mentions the name “Sevindi”, a verb meaning “rejoiced”, while examining the names in a document registered under the number U 1568 in the Turfan Collection of the German Academy of Sciences. A similar usage is observed among Uyghur names. Some examples provided by Zieme include “Kondi”, meaning “he/she arrived”, “Turdi”, meaning “he/she stopped/stayed”, “Keldi” meaning “he/she came”, and “Yandibay” meaning “he/she turned”. Zieme draws attention to a name that lacks traces of ancient Turkish beliefs and is clearly influenced by Buddhism from China: Tayşingdu. This name is formed by combining the words “Tayşing” and “tu”. “Tayşing” is borrowed from the Chinese, meaning the “Great Vehicle” doctrine in Buddhism (Sanskrit *Mahāyāna*). Meanwhile, “Tu” is an abbreviation of the nickname “Tutung” (Zieme 1977, pp. 81, 83).
- <sup>4</sup> Other striking elements of the naming traditions among the Turks are as follows: In Anatolia, to prevent new pregnancies, the last child born is given names such as “Yeter”, “Yetişir”, or “Kâfi” (Acıpayamlı 1974, p. 24). Families with a succession of daughters who now want to have a son give their last born child names such as “Döne”, “Döndü”, and “Yeter”. Families whose children do not survive give names such as “Dursun”, “Durmuş”, “Yaşar”, “Baki”, “Yeter”, “Durali”, “Durhasan”, “Duran”, “Durdu”, and “Hayati” to their last born children. Names such as Hüdaverdi and Allahverdi are also preferred by families who have a child after a long time. Further, during the pre-Islamic period, families whose children did not live preferred names such as İt, İtbaba, İtbarak, İtbey, İtkulu, Yılan, Şeytan, and Sarıkine to protect them from evil spirits and the evil eye and in the Islamic period, as Azrail. Names such as Satılmış, Ökkaş (the name of a bed), Süppü (the name of a garbage dump) originate from the tradition of selling the child that arose due to death (Schimmel 1989, p. 37; Acıpayamlı 1992, pp. 8–9; Düzgün and Yeşildal 2023, pp. 15–30) are also in this direction.
- <sup>5</sup> The rules for selecting and giving names vary according to different ethnic, religious, and local traditions. The most common practice is naming newborns after a saint associated with the nearest holiday to the child’s date of birth. It was traditionally avoided, and in some cases forbidden, to give a name associated with a holiday occurring before the child’s birthday. In Polish belief, it was thought that giving a name that was associated “backward” with the calendar would hinder the child’s growth. This belief is also found in Ukrainian and Serbian traditions. In all Slavic traditions, it is common to name children after their parents, grandparents, or with special rules and customs. In Western Bulgaria, giving children the names of their grandparents was rare, and it was even rarer to name children after their parents. In Russian tradition, it was a custom to name the first male child after the paternal grandfather, the second after the maternal grandfather, and the third after the father. Similarly, female children were named after their grandmothers and mothers. Unusual, rare, or forgotten names were believed to have the power to prevent the death of a newborn in a family where other children had passed away (Petruhin et al. 1995, p. 203).

- <sup>6</sup> During the mid-1920s, there was a significant surge in efforts to introduce new names. Among the names that emerged during this period are Gomer “Homer”, Goratsiy “Horace”, Garibaldi “Giuseppe Garibaldi”, Zhores “Jean Jaurès”, Kromvel “Oliver Cromwell”, Amper “Ampere”, Volt “Volt”, Devis “Davis”, Bosfor “Bosporus”, Volga “Volga”, Yevraziya “Eurasia”, Kolhida “Colchis”, Volya “Volition”, Duma “Duma”, Nauka “Science”, Partiya “Party”, Komissara “Commissioner”, Mopr “abbreviation of International Organisation for Assistance to Fighters for Revolution”, Lunachar (is derived from the surname of the Russian Marxist revolutionary Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky), Natsional (is formed from the word international), Proletkulta “a portmanteau of the Russian words ‘proletarskaya kultura’, proletarian culture”, Radishcha (is derived from the surname of the Russian poet and philosopher Aleksandr Nikolayevich Radishchev), and Tribun “Tribune”. In the 1920s many names were created in honour of Vladimir Lenin: Vladlen/a and Vladilen/a (from the first syllables of Vladimir Lenin’s name), Vilor/a (from the initials of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and “Oktyabrskaya Revolyutsiya October Revolution). However, by the 1940s, there was a noticeable transition toward older, more traditional Russian names. Although, some names introduced in the 1920s persisted and became deeply ingrained in everyday life, numerous other names introduced during that period fell out of favor and ceased to be commonly used (Suslova and Superenskaya 1991, pp. 64–65).

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