

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL

SOME NOTES ABOUT CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGLISH GIVEN NAMES FROM THE ANTHROPONOMASTIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT: Like those in other cultures, English given names attract great interest from researchers. The history, language and culture of England in particular and Great Britain in general are vividly illustrated through English-language personal names. By employing secondary data analysis, the study sets out to examine the cultural and historical characteristics of English given names based on an anthroponomastic perspective. To provide an onomastic overview of the personal name, the article first explores the basic functions and properties of this special linguistic unit. The article then focuses on discussing nine collected origins of English given names whereby their cultural and historical characteristics are revealed.

KEY WORD: English given name; anthroponomastics; language; culture; history.

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1. Introduction

Our personal names are an incredibly significant part of our identity. They give us a sense of who we are, the communities in which we belong, and our place in the world. A personal name is “the set of names by which an individual person is known”, and that can be seen as a word-group, with the understanding that “they all relate to that one individual” when taken together (Room, 1996, p.79). In linguistic classification, personal names are studied within a specific onomastic discipline, called anthroponomastics or anthroponymy (Colman, 2009; Crystal, 2003).

For the core Anglosphere, nearly all individuals possess at least one given name (also known as a first name, forename, or Christian name), together with a surname (also known as a last name or family name). Surnames often signify that an individual is a member of a family or clan, though the specific link varies: they may be given at birth, adopted, changed upon marriage, and so on. In English-speaking cultures, just one given name is used in normal speech, when there are two or more. People are aware also that their names each carry different significance, that the surname is a family name, that the first or given name is the one most used and informal, and that the second or middle name may be slighted altogether, or in some cases used in lieu of the first name. In a fundamental sense, a name is equated to the individual. A name is “a person’s social, cultural, and legal identity” (Blount, 2015, p. 616).

Based on an anthroponomastic perspective, this paper focuses on English-language given names used by English speakers in England in modern times. It first addresses basic functions and properties of personal naming systems in general. The discussions then draw attention to historical aspects of English-language personal naming systems, including sources of names and changes in their use and frequency through time in order to highlight the cultural and historical characteristics of this interesting component in the English personal name structure.

2. A brief overview of functions and properties of personal names

2.1. Basic functions of personal names

Coates (2006, p.312) alluded to functions of proper names when clarifying the term *names* thus: “Names is a technical term for a subset of the nominal expressions of a language which are used for referring (‘identifying or selecting in context’) and, in some cases, for addressing a partner in communication.”. Similarly, Lyons (1977, pp.216-7) holds that names, as they are employed in everyday-language behaviour (i.e. in discourse) “have two characteristic functions: vocative and referential.” Following Bhat (1979, p.107) “...proper names are assigned to objects only when they have to be constantly distinguished from other individual objects, and have to be individually referred

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to on different occasions.”. It is evident from these scholars that the two main functions of proper names (personal names in particular) are referring (referential) and addressing (vocative).

The referential function, despite many disagreements on various aspects of names, thankfully causes little dispute amongst name scholars. Hall et al. (2004) pointed out there is evidence from cognitive psychology that children grasp this function of names as early as at the age of two, and both five-year-olds and adults “give strikingly similar explanations why some things have proper names: because they need to be singled out from others” (p.6). To refer, a proper name serves as a participant argument in an utterance, i.e. refers to some object or individual, and “simply distinguishes a certain company from others” (Coates 1994, p.3370). In other words, as described by Lyons (1977), names are used “simply to draw the hearer’s attention to the presence of the person being named or to remind the hearer of the existence or relevance of the person being named” (pp.216-7). In order to fulfil this function, a name itself must have certain uniqueness in context that makes it distinct from other names, e.g. *Jack is in the library and Gill is in the library*.

For the addressing (vocative) function, according to Kobeleva (2008, p.35), the vocative or phatic role is the use of proper names as forms of address when they either “constitute a sentence of their own or appear as extrasentential elements” to form social relationships or attract someone’s attention rather than to “impart information”. A vocative expression (a name) in this case is an expression of direct address, wherein the identity of the party being spoken to is set out expressly within a sentence. Lyons (1977, p.217) emphasises that the difference between the referential and vocative function of proper names is “systematised in many languages as distinction between what are called terms of reference and terms of address”. It is obvious that in English, alongside the pronoun *you*, standardised politeness forms (Mr, Ladies and Gentlemen, Sir), kinship terms (Auntie, Mum, Dad) and some occupational titles (Chef, Doctor, Professor), proper names are the most common vocatives (Kobeleva 2008). Take the following examples: “*Come on, Dizz*”, or “*Dizz, your laptop is infected by malicious software*”. Here, the vocative function is indisputable because *Dizz* clearly plays the role of a vocative expression indicating the party who is being addressed.

Besides referential and vocative functions, proper names also have socio-pragmatic function. In this sense, they are used as a means of illustrating emotions. The relationship strata between people may also be revealed by ways of using names, especially with personal names. Socio-pragmatic functioning of proper names is a language universal but its manifestation changes in different cultures. It is usually unique to each language. In other words, the form this function takes can vary from language to language. In English, for instance, addressing someone by using his or her first, family or full name reveals many hidden signs of relationship such as social position, formality, intimacy, etc. Addressing the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (2019-2022) as *Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson - Boris Johnson - Johnson - Boris* may, for example, reveal much about the addresser. Meanwhile, in Vietnamese, people address using given names alone or with a proper title or kinship terms in both formal and informal situations. This indicates relationships of many types between people. For example, the country’s current Prime Minister’s full name is *Phạm Minh Chính*, in which *Chính* is given name. Depending on the relationship between him as addressee and others as addressers, he may be called *Chính*, *Ông Chính* (Mr), *Anh Chính* (Brother), *Chú Chính* (Uncle) or *Đồng chí Chính* (Comrade) or *Đồng chí Thủ tướng* (Comrade Prime Minister), etc. However, in an administrative or highly political environment, the same addressers will use his full name to address him, e.g. *(Đồng chí) / (Thủ tướng) Phạm Minh Chính* (Comrade)/ (Prime Minister) + full name).

In short, in terms of functional characteristics, personal names can be used to refer to an entity or to address a partner, and through variation on both these parameters, show emotions in communication. In other word, personal names have referential, vocative and socio-pragmatic functions.

2.2. Basic properties of personal names

As name scholars point out personal names always have the property of individuation (Blount, 2015; Coates 2006; Nyström, 2016; van Langendonck, 2007). They are used to identify, or point to, the person who bears the name in question, viz., “mere identification” (Trieu, 2018, p.42). Every member

of every society is given at least one personal name, a name that is unique to the recipient and distinguishes him or her from other members of the society. Only one name was assigned in the earliest nomenclatures, but other names were added as individuation became more difficult due to population growth and the same name being assigned to more than one individual. In English, these included “descriptors like *Big John* or *Ivan the Terrible*, nicknames like *Bear* or *Blondie*”, and ultimately surnames and middle names; the fundamental idea is that “each person is entitled to being individuated” (Blount, 2015, p.618).

Another fundamental property of personal names is that they categorize their bearers. The most obvious example is the inheritance of a surname or family name. In the modern world, all people who are given a surname at birth belong to the category designated by the name. Names are also recognized as culturally appropriate, and giving a child a name or names places the child in a societal group that represents the culture in question.

It is obvious that the personal name goes far beyond merely labelling the person; it is part of the social, cultural, and historical system.

3. Cultural and historical characteristics of English given names

Hanks and Hodges (1990, p.vii) consider a person’s given name is “a badge of cultural identity”, for “the names that people bear are determined in large part by the culture that they belong to”. Similarly, Nguyen (2021, p.62) claims that proper names are “deeply rooted in the culture of the speakers”. Cultural identity is closely allied to religious identity; religious affiliation and native language are often key factors, overtly or subliminally, in the choice of an appropriate name for a new member of a family. Like those in other cultures, English-language personal names go through periods of innovation or conservatism, or ups and downs due to a contemporary fashion or foreign factors. There have been points in English history where more than half the people had one of ten common names: *John, David, Margaret, Michael, Peter, Robert, Paul, Susan, James and William* (Withycombe, 1977, p.xxvii). At other times, parents have used names from new sources for their children or even created names ex nihilo. Where parents used to choose names mostly from their own family history, it is now very common for parents to look for new names. Names like *Percy, Arthur, Joan, Ashley and Doris* can be assigned to specific decades, for example, *Arthur* in the first decade of the 20th century and *Joan* in the 1930s (see Table 1; Hanks & Hodges, 2001).

Table 5. Changes in name popularity

Name	Ranking			
	1904	1934	1974	2008
BRIAN	Nitt	4	51	324
DORIS	3	Nitt	Nith	2729
DOROTH Y	5	Nitt	Nith	839
JEAN	Nitt	2	Nith	1732
JOAN	Nitt	4	Nith	2287
ARTHUR	5	Nitt	Nith	606

Nitt: not in Top 10 – Nith: not in Top 100

Very few English given names currently in use actually originated in the English language (Coates, 2006). Hough (2000) maintains that a great number of names currently in use in the English-speaking world originate from “biblical, classical and vernacular sources”, with smaller groups deriving from “literary coinages, vocabulary words, names from other languages, and transferred uses of surnames and of place names” (p.3). This results in a very different linguistic mix from that of ordinary vocabulary. In the next sections, based on the anthroponomastic perspective, both synchronic and diachronic, English given names are categorised historically and culturally, but not necessarily chronologically, in order to highlight their cultural and historical characteristics. The history and sources/origins of given names are reviewed based on the frequency and popularity of given names used in England in modern times as described and explained by Hanks et al. (2006).

3.1. Names of saints

The first important and most numerous source for English given names as well as those used throughout the core Anglosphere is the names of the saints. Hanks (2010, p.viii-ix) asserted that a significant number of very widely used names “owe their importance to the fact that they were born by early, famous or canonised Christians”. Many of the most popular names are derived from the names of learned Church Fathers (*Basil, Augustine, Gregory*), innumerable martyrs (*Agnes, Laurence, Sebastian*), mystics, ascetics and visionaries (*Anthony, Francis, Teresa, John*), founders of religious orders (*Benedict, Bernard, Dominic*), etc., (Hanks, 2010). Although Christian saints have been venerated since the second century, the practice of naming babies after saints only really caught on after the 12th century. According to Withycombe (1977, p.xxvi), at the end of the 12th century, the commonest men’s name in the records is *William* (15%) followed by *Robert* (11%), *Ralph* (10%), *Richard* (8%) and *John* accounting for only 2%. However, about a hundred years later, *William, Robert* and *Richard* represented 14%, 11% and 10% respectively, but *John* jumped to the first place with 25%. The names like *Anthony, Christopher, Francis, George, Gregory* or *Stephen* for men and *Helen, Ann, Mary, Katherine, Melanie, Joan* or *Agnes* for women were chosen to associate the baby with that particular saint, who would function as their patron, protector, or exemplar. Today, children are still named after particular saints, even if their parents, not in every case, realise that they are participating in this practice.

One other result of the increasing use of saints’ names in the later Middle Ages was the adaptation of men’s names for women. For example, the name *Joan* was given to girls in order to place them under the patronage of St. John (the derivational direction is obvious in the original French: *Jean* ‘John’ >> *Jeanne* ‘Joan’). Following the same principle, a few examples of female names derived from male names still commonly found today are *Davina, Paula, Patricia, Alexandra, Philippa*, etc. Despite being found occasionally during the Middle Ages, these names were not regularly used as given names until the 19th century (Hanks et al., 2006).

According to Withycombe (1977) and Hanks et al. (2006), after the Protestant Reformation, the practice of using saints’ names fell out of favour because it was associated with Roman Catholic religiosity, and it became more common to use names from the King James Bible. With the Reformation all the names of non-scriptural saints fell into disgrace and were for the most part speedily discarded, for example, *Austin, Bennet, Christopher, Clement, Martin, Quentin, Theobald, Viel* (Withycombe, 1977, p.xxxvi). Of course, there was some overlap between Biblical and saints’ names (names like *Paul, Mark, and John* are found in both sources, see the Biblical names below), but after the Reformation it became more common to use names from the Hebrew Bible.⁶ Names like *Isaac, Jacob, and Samuel* became common among Christians (although they had always been used by Jews), and in some places it became popular to use obscure Biblical names like *Ahijah* and *Azariah*. Sometimes a saint’s name was re-introduced in another form: *Hannah*, for example, is just the spelling of *Anne* that was used in the King James Bible; it was used as a name simply because it was in the Bible (Withycombe, 1977).

3.2. Names from the Bible

Another important source of first names used in England is names from the Bible (mainly male names). The following account is elaborated from the research by Withycombe (1977) and Hanks et al. (2006).

Biblical names were introduced to England from the continent following the Norman Conquest in 1066, and were augmented by others during the Puritan movement of the 17th century. The version of the Bible in question is the translation of 1611, the King James Bible, which had official status in

⁶ The Reformation was a major movement within Western Christianity in 16th-century Europe. The Reformation was the start of Protestantism and the split of the Western Church into Protestantism and what is now the Roman Catholic Church. It is also considered to be one of the events that signify the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the early modern period in Europe (Cameron, 2012).

English-speaking countries, i.e. England, Wales, and Scotland (the newly-created Britain dating from 1603). Most names of this type are from the Old Testament. Some of the most common ones among them are *Adam*, *Benjamin*, *David*, *Jacob* and *Joseph*, and female names like *Deborah*, *Eve*, *Rebecca*, *Ruth*, and *Sarah*. In fact, such names have been in use for so long that a few of their pet forms (hypocoristic forms) have become as popular as the original, and have become names in their own right. *Sarah*, for instance, has given rise to other names like *Sadie* and *Sally* that now work as independent names. Biblical names became fashionable during the 12th and 13th centuries, especially those of the apostles and the evangelists. During the 13th and 14th centuries a number of names taken from the Old Testament began to be chosen. The popularity of the medieval mystery plays may also have helped in this process, since these featured biblical characters. Girls too were baptised with biblical names: *Mary* for the first recorded time in 1203, *Elizabeth* in 1205, and *Anne* in 1218. Biblical names eventually became the most widespread of all first names.

Besides the Old Testament, the New Testament also contributed a few frequently-used names such as the names of the four evangelists, *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John*, and Twelve Apostles, principally *Peter*, *James*, *Andrew*, *Thomas*, *Philip*, *Bartholomew*, *John* and *Simon* (but never *Judas*).

3.3. Names from the Celtic tradition

Another source of “English” given names is the Insular Celtic tradition. As Hanks (2010) reveals, *Barry*, *Brian*, *Bridget*, *Donald*, *Duncan*, *Ian*, *Kenneth*, *Kevin*, *Neil* and *Sheila* all come from Irish and Scottish Gaelic, while *Gareth*, *Gladys*, *Gwendolen* and *Trevor* originate from Welsh. These names are the anglicised forms of the original Celtic names. Except *Gareth*, which is the authentic Welsh form, other names like *Ewan*, *Euan*, *Owen* and *Eugene* are the anglicised forms of the traditional Gaelic name *Eóghan*. According to Hanks (2010), a number of Scottish surnames have become common as conventional English given names, including *Keith*, *Douglas*, *Fraser*, *Graham*, and *Leslie*. The latter, in the *-ie* spelling, has become conventionalised as a female name. The spelling *Lesley* is used for both sexes although it is more popular as a male name.

3.4. Dithematic names

It is universally agreed that old names in many European languages are composed of two common words that are put together (Colman & UPSO, 2014). They are termed dithematic names. This appears to be a very ancient Indo-European naming pattern, since it is found in Ancient Greek, Slavic, Germanic, Celtic, and Romance languages, which all began to separate from their common root at least 3500 years ago (Kaleta 2004; Pulgram, 1960). Each language had a limited set of words that could usually be used as first or second elements. For example, the name *Richard*, which was brought to England by the Normans, derives from two Germanic words meaning ‘power’ and ‘strong’. Another example is the case of *Roger*, which was also brought to England by the Normans. This name derives from two Germanic words meaning ‘fame’ and ‘spear’ (Richardson 1974, pp. 63-9).

3.5. Names as a consequence of invasions

Before 1066:

Other English names were brought to the country via the act of invasion (the Norman Conquest in 1066). Southern Britain was controlled by the Roman Empire between the first and the fifth centuries. Prior to Roman invasion, the Iron Age Britain of the Celts already had cultural and economic links with Continental Europe, but the Roman invaders introduced new developments in culture, agriculture, urbanisation, industry and architecture, leaving behind a heritage that is still apparent today. In terms of onomastics, the Roman legacy is slight, evident more through place-names than given names.⁷

⁷ See Rivet and Smith (1981); Coates and Breeze (2000). As a result of the Roman conquest, many Roman place names appeared, particularly in association with military settlements. After the collapse of Roman Britain, few of these place names survived. Most Roman sites are known by later names; many are distinguished as Roman sites by the suffixes *chester/cester/caster* or element *Strat* (from the Latin *castra* ‘camp’ and *via strata* ‘street’), but with no reference to the Roman name (Room, 1996; Reaney, 1960). Also,

Later invasions from the continent during the Middle Ages had a greater impact on English nomenclature. Many researchers mention the existence of dithematic names among these ‘invasion’ names as well as other certain borrowings (Coates, 2006; Hough, 2000; Stewart, 1979; Withycombe, 1977). These two-element names have entered English usage from a variety of languages: some like *Edward*, *Edmund*, and *Audrey* (though the last has been modified by travelling through French) have survived from Old English, while others (such as *Conrad*, *Roger*) were introduced directly from German, or indirectly from Old Norse by the Normans. Many of them have been altered over the years into another form entirely. Take *Ralph* and *Audrey* as examples: the two were both two-element names that have been so modified over the centuries that they now appear to be one-element names. In fact, *Ralph* derived from a Norman French name, *Raulf*, a contracted form of the Germanic personal name *Radulf*, derived from *rad* ‘counsel’ + *wulf* ‘wolf’ (the spelling with *-ph* is due to the classical influence in the 18th century), while *Audrey* is a much altered form of the Old English female name *Æðelpryð*, derived from *æðel* ‘noble’ + *pryð* ‘strength’ (Hanks & Hodges, 2001). Beside Germanic related names, the stock of English given names include Scandinavian exports such as *Eric*, *Harold* and *Ronald*.

Incidentally such dithematic names are generally known as Germanic names although they are not purely Germanic in origin (Bredehoft, 2003; Colman & UPSO, 2014). Surprisingly, unlike male names, English female names with a Germanic origin are much fewer in number, but there are some examples. *Alice* (via French) and *Mildred* (Germanic, Old English – revived in the 19th century) are two of them.

The “meanings” of these names were treated differently in different cultures. The Old English and Old German two-part names that show combinations like “war A” or “peace B” are usually dithematic, i.e. they consist of two elements without any presupposition of syntactic or semantic connection between them. For example *Edith*, rather than meaning ‘war of wealth’ is simply a name consisting of two elements: ‘wealth’ and ‘war’. Greek combinations seem to be more closely connected to their meanings. One example is the name *Eunice*, the Latinised form of the Greek name *Εὐνίκη* (*Eunike*), which means ‘good victory’ (Behind the Name, 2021). However, it is generally safe to say that these names have not been attached to any particular meaning for at least 1000 years. In Old English, alliteration (i.e. the use of names beginning with the same letter for members of the same family) was “particularly common in Old English kingdoms from the earliest recorded genealogies down to the Norman Conquest” (Withycombe, 1977, p.xxiii). For example, a father named *Ælfwine* might name his children *Ælfred*, *Ælfwyn*, *Æflæd* and *Ælfthryth*. Again, the sound and history of the name, but the lexical meaning, was of importance.

After 1066:

A great change came over the personal nomenclature of the English following the Norman Conquest. The Normans of north-west France brought many names to England as a result of the invasion of 1066. This invasion was the route for many pre-Christian Germanic (usually male) names to reach England - such as *Charles*, *Henry*, *Robert* and *William* and a certain number of ultimately Biblical names of Latin and others of Breton/Brittany origin – like *Ives*, *Samson* and *Alan*. However, as a result of the Norman Conquest, the personal names that had been used by those of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian descent mostly fell out of fashion. Within a few centuries, most Old English names had virtually disappeared. Some remained in use long enough to be used as patronymics in surname formation. Withycombe (1977, p. xxv) maintains that few Old English names survived for one of the two reasons: “either they were names of saints (e.g. *Edward*, *Edmund*, *Hilda*, *Mildred*, *Cuthbert*) or they were names of former kings of the house of Wessex (e.g. *Alfred*, *Edgar*, *Ethelbert*)”. Similarly, Clark and Jackson (1995, p.281) also contends that by the 13th century, names of pre-Conquest types had become “rare except among peasantry”, and were “virtually extinct” within two further generations. A few that survived into later times (like *Edmund* and *Edward*) “were mostly ones tacitly reclassified as

according to Coates (1988, pp. 40-7), the Roman-period name often appears as a shortened form before the *-chester* element (e.g. *Manchester*, *Winchester*, *Lancaster*, *Binchester*).

Thus, the influence of Latin on British place names is generally only slight.

‘saints’ names’, and especially royal saints’ names popularised through readoption by later royalty.” (Clark & Jackson, 1995, pp.241-98).

3.6. Puritan names

To gain a thorough understanding of the English nomenclature, it is important to bear in mind Puritan naming practices. Puritans did contribute a few names that actually originated in the English language to today’s English given name stock. The Puritans, a fundamentalist English Protestant sect of the 16th to 18th centuries, wished to “differentiate their own children” from those who they regarded as “the godless masses” (Smith-Bannister, 1997, pp.3-6). Most Puritans tended to use Old Testament biblical names instead of saints’ names (Bardsley, 1880). Some, however, thought that using any name from the Bible was blasphemous, and took to using vocabulary words (and phrases) instead, such as *Prudence*, *Charity*, *Constance*, *Praise-God*, *Livewell*, *Temperance*, etc. Some examples of unfamiliar names include *Lamentation*, *Redeemed*, *Be-faithful*, and *The-peace-of-God* (Chevalier, 2006; Dodge, 1928; Withycombe, 1977). These virtue names are often equated with Puritan names, though in fact they were used by only a small minority of Puritan parents. The Puritan influence on English names lessened in the 18th century, but a few have remained popular to the present day. Despite having once been outmoded, some Puritan names such as *Grace*, *Faith* and *Hope* are now back in use with somewhat higher frequencies compared to those during the 20th century. The 2008 figures released by The Office of National Statistics show the rankings of *Grace*, *Faith* and *Hope* as 4th, 80th and 155th respectively. The data from Ancestry (2021) has been filtered for the numbers of these three names (registered as forenames in England); their popularity is then found to have gone up and down over the past century (see Table 2).

Table 6. Number of Puritan names registered

	1905	1940	1980	2005
Faith	114	86	131	2,411
Grace	4,979	383	476	17,741
Hope	185	13	24	1,656

Source: Ancestry.co.uk

3.7. Inherited names

Another source of English given names is from family names, i.e. inherited names, or surnames. Some surnames that have been adopted as Christian names include *Douglas*, *Dudley*, *Keith*, *Neville*, *Sidney*, *Stanley*, and *Stuart*. Many of these surnames are now used as first names in English. Take, for instance, the name *Digby*. This is sometimes used as a first name but in fact originated as a surname. According to Hanks and Hodges (2001), it was originally a place-name in Lincolnshire and derives from the Old Norse words *diki* (meaning ‘ditch’) and *byr* (meaning ‘settlement’). *Howard*, *Stanley*, *Percy*, and *Neville* are all names of English noble families from the Middle Ages that have become widely used as first given names. More recently, *Tyler* and *Hunter* have been introduced through the same method, i.e. from family names to first names.

Using surnames as first names, which can also be found in other cultures, is an interesting post-Reformation development in Britain. Aristocratic families began the practice of using surnames as Christian names in the 16th century. Withycombe (1977, p.xli) mentioned one of the earliest examples noted about “*Lord Guildford Dudley*, son of the Duke of Northumberland and husband of *Lady Jane Grey*, whose mother’s maiden name was *Guildford*”. In the 17th and 18th centuries, it became increasingly common to preserve surnames from the female side in this way, though families further down the social scale rarely followed this practice before the 18th century. As Hanks et al. (2006) state, this fashion became increasingly popular in the Victorian era to preserve the name of the female line.

This phenomenon became more frequent in the 19th century. In most cases “it originated because of close relationship or connection between families - usually by marriage” (Hanks et al., p.xiv). For example, a bride from a rich and powerful family would christen her first-born with her own maiden surname and the conjunction of the two names would be taken as symbolic of the union between the two families. However, sometimes the name of a prominent and ancient family would be taken as a

given name by people who bore no relation to the family. Gradually, the practice became more and more widespread. Hanks et al. continued to assert that use of the mother's maiden name as a second given name has been an especially common practice among English speakers through the 20th century. At the present time, though family names are still generally given as second or middle names, they are found less frequent as first names. It also became increasingly common to use the mother's maiden name as a second Christian name. However, the use of surnames as Christian names is now much more common in the US than in England (UK). Withycombe (1977, p.xlii) revealed that "three out of four eldest sons of American families of any pretensions bear their mothers' maiden names either as first or as middle names."

3.8. Literary names

The last but not least important source of English given names is that of classical borrowing or so-called literary names. Hough (2000) determined that many of the classical names have been transmitted as the names of Christian saints are actually from Latin or Greek, deriving either from the names of actual people or from the names of characters in Roman or Greek mythology or history. Some examples are *Anthony* (from the Roman *Antonius*), *Dominic* (from the Latin name *Dominicus*), and *Catherine* or *Katherine* (from the Greek *Aikaterine*). However, it makes sense to divide those with a religious source from those with a classical-only source. The most obvious source of *Dominic* is from a 13th century saint while *Catherine* derives from a first-millennium counterpart. Those names that do not appear to have arrived via saints' names include *Diana*, *Phoebe*, *Phyllis*, *Marcus* and *Philip* (Butler, 2008; Hanks & Hodges, 2001).

Names of classical antiquity, such as *Horace* or *Julius*, also became fashionable among the educated classes in the 16th and 17th centuries, although they never became as popular as those derived from the Bible. As explained by Hanks and Hodges (2001), classical culture had its principal centre in Italy, and all things Italian were fashionable at the relevant period. Therefore, names that had been invented to sound like classical names had the added virtue of sounding Italian. This has shaped the direction of female naming, to a considerable extent, right up to the present day. For example, in the 18th century upper-class families began the fashion of using the Latin form of girls' names like *Anna* or *Maria*.

Some classical names were used as far back as the Middle Ages, but the more obscure classical names did not spread into general English until later. *Cynthia* and *Melissa* are two of the most common names that derive from the classical revival of the 17th and 18th centuries. Other names like *Olivia* were invented to sound like classical names, even though they are not authentic⁸.

3.9. Names from other sources

There are, of course, other sources for English given names. Some modern names are taken from other modern languages, or really do derive from common words. Some are even coined or blended. Withycombe (1977, p.xlvi) comments that in the present day, "the tastes in names have become more and more eclectic". Smart (1995) specifically noted that:

The present century has seen an increasing search for unusual names, most markedly for girls, but in some circles acceptable for boys also. Idol-names, once from films but now more likely from television and popular music, gain transient popularity but ridicule from other milieux. These sources have led to the ransacking of other languages and traditions for names and other forms of native names (pp. 784-5).

In addition, the number of given names has increased considerably. Many can no longer be classified as Christian names for they have been given without baptism or have been chosen by people of different religions (e.g. *Mohammed*, *Muhammad*, and variants). Modern names include those taken from flowers and plants or gemstones and other desirable objects, foreign names (like the

⁸ This Latinate name was first used by Shakespeare for the rich heiress wooed by the duke in *Twelfth Night* (1599). Shakespeare may have taken it as a feminine form of *Oliver*, or he may have derived it from the Latin *oliva* 'olive' (Hanks et al., 2006).

Russian *Natasha*, the French *Nicole*, or the Italian *Gemma*), those of film stars and pop stars (especially American ones), and invented names (Hanks et al., 2006; Hanks, 2010). There was still a strong conservative naming tendency in England before the 21st century. Besides the presence of hypocoristic forms of some traditional names (those that end in *-ie*), no elements that are not traditional, recently coined or imported from other languages, or generally too new to be accepted as normal given names were found when comparing the lists of top-10 names for boys and girls in 1949 and 2008.

However, the figures of 2020 aside with the rise of the name *Muhammad* (fifth in 2020) show that modern Britain as a multicultural and multiracial country is truly recognised, at least in terms of onomastics (see Table 3).

Table 7. *The top-10 names for boys and girls in 1949, 2008 and 2020*

Rank no	Male			Female		
	1949	2008	2020	1949	2008	2020
1	John	Jack	Oliver	Ann(e)	Olivia	Olivia
2	Richard	Oliver	George	Mary	Emily	Amelia
3	Peter	Thomas	Arthur	Elizabeth	Ruby	Isla
4	David	Harry	Noah	Jane	Grace	Ava
5	Charles	Joshua	Muhammad	Susan	Jessica	Mia
6	Michael	Alfie	Leo	Margaret	Chloe	Ivy
7	William	Charlie	Oscar	Sarah	Sophie	Lily
8	Robert	Daniel	Harry	Caroline	Lily	Isabella
9	Christopher	James	Archie	Jennifer	Amelia	Rosie
10	James	William	Jack	Frances	Evie	Sophia

Source: Withycombe (1977); Office for National Statistics (2020)

4. Conclusion

It can be concluded that English given names have abundant and diverse cultural and historical characteristics as regards their origins. They could derive from names of saints or names found in the Bible. Among the names of the pre-Norman Conquest, survived a handful of names from the Celtic tradition as well as Germanic dithematic ones. The invasions, especially the Norman Conquest, were the route for many new names to anchor themselves to the English name stock. They also caused many Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian names to fall out of fashion and gradually disappeared. A breath of fresh air coming into English naming systems when Puritans started to use vocabulary words to name their descendants with some names of this practice still enjoying very high popularity today. Like that in other cultures, using surnames as first names was once quite common in Britain, especially since the post-Reformation time. Another remarkable source of given names is from classical antiquity with the names deriving from either names in Roman or Greek mythology or history. Last but not least, that many new given names come into use because of modern name coinage or blends alongside with many others “being imported” from other modern languages makes the recent evolution of English given names utterly noticeable.

Evidently, the philosophy behind Shakespeare’s “A rose by any other name” somewhat ignores the cultural and historical significance of a name. Individuals know primarily about how personal names are to be used or employed, but even much of that knowledge tends to operate out of awareness, a property of cultural cognitive systems (Blount, 2014). This study deals with the cultural and historical significance of English given names in a quite modest way. There particularly, in the English-language context, given names do tell a lot of things that attract researchers of not only language but also other fields to conduct further studies.

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Đôi nét về đặc điểm lịch sử - văn hóa của tên gọi người Anh từ góc nhìn nhân danh học

Tóm tắt: Tương tự như tên cá nhân trong các nền văn hóa khác, tên gọi người Anh thu hút được mối quan tâm lớn từ các nhà nghiên cứu. Lịch sử, ngôn ngữ và văn hóa của nước Anh nói riêng và Vương quốc Anh nói chung được phản ánh một cách sinh động qua tên cá nhân trong tiếng Anh. Thông qua phương pháp phân tích dữ liệu thứ cấp, mục tiêu của nghiên cứu là dựa trên quan điểm danh xưng học để tìm hiểu các đặc điểm văn hóa và lịch sử của các tên riêng chỉ người trong tiếng Anh. Để có một cái nhìn tổng quan về tên người trong ngôn ngữ, bài báo tìm hiểu các chức năng và thuộc tính cơ bản của đơn vị ngôn ngữ đặc biệt này. Phần trọng tâm của bài báo đi sâu thảo luận về 9 nguồn gốc của tên riêng chỉ người trong tiếng Anh, qua đó làm nổi bật các đặc điểm văn hóa và lịch sử của tên gọi người Anh.

Từ khoá: tên gọi người Anh; nhân danh học; ngôn ngữ; văn hóa; lịch sử.