

Onomastics and Terminology in Kazakh Religious Dastans

Bekzhan Abdualiuly

Department of Kazakh Linguistics, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Raikhan Doszhan*

Peoples' Friendship University named after Academician A.Kuatbekov, Shymkent, Kazakhstan

Syrym Zhanzhigitov

Department of Kazakh Linguistics, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Aidana Ainabek

Department of Kazakh Linguistics, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Ybray Turanov

Department of Kazakh Linguistics, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Birzhan Akhmer

Department of Kazakh Literature, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Abstract—This study addresses the lack of a systematic linguistic description of religious onomastics in Kazakh qissa-dastans, where proper names carry a strong text-forming and ideological load. The article identifies and lexico-semantically organises the onomastic units found in religious dastans, refining their terminological status and classification principles within an Islamic worldview. The analysed material includes theonyms and divine epithets, names of prophets, companions and revered figures, sacred place names and names of worship sites, as well as otherworldly names referring to angels, Paradise, Hell and eschatological objects. The methodology combines continuous sampling from the Babalar Sözi corpus with descriptive and contextual analysis, lexico-semantic grouping, componential analysis and terminological verification. The study proposes a two-component classification model based on the opposition pänilik (this-worldly) versus bāqilik (otherworldly), and clarifies how general onomastic terms such as theonym and agionym can be applied to Islamic folkloric material. The results show that proper names structure narration, map sacred geography and character hierarchies, and serve a didactic function, while also revealing continuity between Tengri-related and Islamic naming traditions. These findings support the further development of a terminological framework for Islamic religious onomastics in Turkic contexts.

Index Terms—religious onomastics, sacred names, theonyms, mythonyms, Islamic discourse

I. INTRODUCTION

One of the areas in the language of religious dastans that requires special attention is religious onomastics. Religious onomastics is the totality of all proper names related to religion and lexical units used with the meaning of a proper name. It includes the names of the Almighty Creator, place names, the names of characters of human and spiritual nature, the proper names of temples, Paradise and Hell, animals, and other categories. Onomastic names are key elements shaping the content of religious dastans, because knowledge of the characters, angels involved in events, living creatures, and the places where events occur is mediated through these names. Onomastic data are important for identifying both continuity and difference between life reality and artistic reality. From a linguistic perspective, the study of religious onomastics requires a multidimensional approach, but the central task is systematisation. Systematisation involves, first, establishing a terminological basis and, second, developing a classification. Although proper names have been observed in texts of various types, Islamic religious onomastics has not yet been addressed as a specialised and comprehensive research field.

One of the sources of religious onomastics preserved to the present is the corpus of religious legends and qissa-dastans shared by Muslim peoples. In line with the purpose and content of Kazakh folklore, the grouping of religious onomastics has its own specific features. The main idea of religious dastans is to call people to faith, to promote Islam, to announce Paradise to those who follow Allah's righteous path, and to warn of severe punishment for those who deviate. In Islamic understanding, existence is divided into two worlds: *жалган дүние* (the transient world, where the living dwell) and *шын дүние* (the true world, entered after death). A person arrives in the transient world for a short испытание and, when the time comes, departs to eternity, receiving the outcome of good and bad deeds. Accordingly, concepts related to the Creator

are conceptualised in two dimensions: *пәнилік* (this-worldly) and *бақилық* (otherworldly/eternal). Therefore, when classifying religious onomastics, we distinguish *пәнилік кеңістік онимдері* (onyms of the this-worldly space) and *бақилық кеңістік онимдері* (onyms of the otherworldly space).

Finally, while the inner content of Kazakh folkloric religious onomastics is grounded in Islamic concepts, agionyms in Russian have been formed within a Christian framework. Because the two religious systems differ substantially, even the direct use of agionymic terms without translation cannot yield identical inner content.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In Kazakhstan, research on religious onomastics in folklore has become active only relatively recently. Linguistic studies of Kazakh *дини дастандар* (religious epic narratives) focus on systematising onomastic vocabulary that conveys Muslim tradition, Qur’anic and Sunnah-based plots, and legends about prophets and saints. Scholars note that dastans include real and mythic locations (e.g., Mecca, Medina, Baghdad) alongside “miraculous” toponyms, and that semantic transformation is frequent: common nouns can function as unique proper names (e.g., *қала* (lit. “city”), *шаһар* (lit. “town”), or animal terms), which matches general onomastic patterns described by Biyarov (2012). Syncretism between pre-Islamic and Islamic layers is also emphasised, for instance in parallel blessings *Тәңір жарылқасын* (lit. “May Tengri grant mercy”) and *Алла жарылқасын* (lit. “May Allah grant mercy”). Domestic scholarship further describes multiple sacred-name categories: Karibay and Zhakupov (2022) systematise theonyms and related groups (names of the Almighty, angels, prophets, and companions), Uali (2015) analyses *агионимдер* (names of saints) in Kazakh mytho-religious worldview.

In international scholarship, names connected with deities and sacred realities are treated as a special class of onyms - theonyms, and the study of theonymy has developed as a distinct branch of onomastics (Malsagova, 2011). Podolskaya (1988) defines theonyms as the names of deities within a given pantheon. Interest in the broader “language of religion” has expanded through the development of theolinguistics in Russian linguistics (Bugaeva, 2015, 2021), where a comprehensive approach to religious vocabulary is advocated. Theoretical foundations of sacred onomastics are advanced by Alekseev (2015), who stresses the multidimensional nature of name systems and the need to account for cultural-religious context and mythological associations when analysing theonyms. Alongside theory, applied and typological work is represented by Zybina (2016) on teaching agionyms, Shahin (2016) on general onym classification in Turkish, and “pseudo-sacralisation” (also reviewed on *onomastics.ru*). Sohiba (2022) likewise highlights the value of theonym study for linguistics, history, and religious studies.

Overall, the literature suggests that sacred onomastics is a relevant and promising research area: Kazakhstani studies have established core categories and demonstrated the tight linkage between epic naming and Islamic ideology, while international research offers a developed conceptual toolkit and diverse methods. Newer approaches further broaden the field: Tlegenova et al. (2024) introduce corpus-based analysis of mythonyms and theonyms. At the same time, many issues remain open (e.g., comparative perspectives and the evolution of sacred names), which supports the need for further integrated research combining domestic and international approaches.

III. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The empirical basis of the article comprises texts of Kazakh religious *qissa-dastans*, in which onomastic vocabulary functions as a key device for plot construction and for conveying religious-ideological meaning. The primary corpus is drawn from the one-hundred-volume series *«Бабалар сөзі»* (lit. “Words of the Ancestors”), specifically volumes 1, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 16, because these volumes contain religious epic texts with systematically represented proper names, sacred nominations, and names of spaces and objects belonging to the *пәнилік/бақилық* worldview (*пәнилік* = this-worldly, transient; *бақилық* = otherworldly, eternal), as well as editorial glossaries and commentaries explaining archaisms and religious vocabulary.

For sampling and comparison within the corpus, the study uses the following *qissas* and *dastans*: *Qissa Bādir*, *Ghazauat Sultan*, *Dariğa Qyz*, *Qissa Jūmjūma*, *Qissa Zarqūm*, *Üshbu Qissa Zeñgir Jühūd*, *Qissa Waqīğa Kerbala Üshbu-dür*, *Qaqpaңa Tūsken Kiiktiñ Hikayasy*, *Qissa Qaharman*, *Qūbas*, *Syrshy Molla*, *Qissa Anhaziret Rasuldyñ Mi’rajğa Qonaq Bolğany*, *Muhammed-Qanapiya*, *Hikayat Täjilmälik*, *Haza Kitap Muhammed-Hanafia*, and *Qissa Shahizinda*. These sources were selected because they represent different narrative types of religious folklore (Mi’raj-centred narration, heroic/ghazauat plot-lines, and *qissa-hikayat* storytelling models) but share a common pattern: sacred names and toponyms, names of heavenly and posthumous spaces, anthroponymic series, and the onymisation of common nouns serve as “anchors” of the text’s semantic organisation.

The theoretical and methodological framework draws on scholarship in the language of religion and theolinguistics (Bugaeva, 2015, 2021), sacred onomastics and terminology (Podolskaya, 1988; Alekseev, 2013, 2015; Zybina, 2016), broader conceptual work on religious naming (Armstrong, 2018), and onomastic classification in Turkic contexts (Shahin, 2016), alongside related studies (Timofeev, 2001; Biyarov, 2012; Malsagova, 2011; Ondasynov, 1974). The study follows lexico-semantic and onomasiological approaches and applies continuous sampling, descriptive and contextual analysis, lexico-semantic grouping, componential analysis, terminological verification, comparative analysis, and lexicographic/etymological commentary where needed. The research procedure included: (1) reviewing domestic and

international scholarship to define concepts and classification principles; (2) compiling a corpus from «*Бабалар сөзі*» and extracting onomastic units with contexts; (3) refining working definitions and distributing material into the macro-zones *пәнилік/бақилық* and internal categories; (4) analysing each group for naming patterns, variants, oppositions, and ideological functions; (5) comparing the results with existing sacred-onomastic schemes and identifying continuity between *Тәңірлік* (Tengri-related worldview) and Islam in theonymy; and (6) summarising findings in a terminologically consistent classification and interpretive conclusions.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results in four interconnected thematic blocks. First, it clarifies the terminological foundations of religious onomastics and evaluates how established onomastic labels can be applied to Islamic folkloric material. Second, it describes the system of names associated with the *пәнилік* (this-worldly) domain in religious dastans, focusing on anthroponyms, toponyms, and other name-types that structure earthly sacred history. Third, it analyses the onomastic model of the *бақилық* (otherworldly) domain, including angel-names, Paradise and Hell naming, and other eschatological place- and object-names. Finally, it examines divine names and epithets, showing how theonyms function linguistically and ideologically in the Kazakh religious epic tradition.

A. The Terminological System of Religious Onomastics

Within scholarship on Muslim cultures, large-scale, systematic work aimed specifically at reconstructing the history of Islamic religious onomastics and establishing its terminological inventory is not widely evident. A thematically close contribution is Uali's (2015) study on agionyms in Kazakh mythic-religious worldview. Although the author discusses Kazakh agionyms, the article does not foreground terminological clarification and largely employs established labels without detailed adaptation to Islamic material.

A different direction is represented by the Turkish scholar Ibrahim Shahin, who in *Adbilim (Cerceve, Terim, Yontem ve Siniflandirmalariyla)* proposes Turkish renderings for a range of onomastic terms across the general chapters of the work (Shahin, 2016). This may be regarded as an important early step (within Turkic scholarship) toward developing an onomastic terminological inventory in Turkish; however, religious onomastics as a specialised domain is not treated there in a focused or fully developed way.

In Western scholarship - including Russian-language research - religious onomastics has been addressed more comprehensively (Bugaeva, 2021, pp. 162-175). Within theology, concepts and names have long been systematised and a stable terminological apparatus has been established (Armstrong, 2018). The term theology (Greek *theos* 'God' + *logos* 'teaching, discourse') is a widely used philosophical designation with an ancient tradition. The later term theolinguistics emerged within this broader field; however, because linguistics is an autonomous discipline, the literal interpretation of the label may appear conceptually awkward. In practice, there is no separate "language science about God"; rather, theolinguistics is treated as a branch of linguistics that studies language phenomena related to religion. One definition states that theolinguistics "attempts to describe the words a person may use in relation to God" (Bugaeva, 2015, p. 293). More broadly, theolinguistics can be understood as the linguistic study of general language issues connected with God and religious communication.

A key onomastic term closely connected to this field is theonym (Greek *theos* 'God' + *onym* 'name'), defined as the names of deities within any pantheon (Podolskaya, 1988, p. 124). Functionally, theolinguistics addresses broader language questions, whereas theonymy focuses specifically on proper names in the religious sphere. Another directly related subfield is sacred onomastics. The notion of sacrality derives from *sacral / sacrum* (lit. 'holy, dedicated to God') and denotes, in a broad sense, what relates to God, religion, the heavenly realm, the afterlife, miracles, and mysterious powers - i.e., what is set apart from ordinary objects, notions, and phenomena. Sacrality is associated with reverence for highly valued ideals and stands in opposition to secularism and worldliness. From this perspective, the categories "sacrality" and "religious onomastics" substantially overlap.

Within the sacral sphere, proper names are often grouped under the label agionym. An agionym can be understood as a set of names used to denote persons or entities characterised by sacral status. The agionymic system is complex and includes several subgroups forming an onomastic field of holiness: theonyms; agio-anthroponyms (names of saints); agio-toponyms (place names connected with sacred figures or sacred sites, including settlements and streets named through sacred-site labels); eortonoms (names of church feasts/holidays); ecclesionyms (names of temples and monasteries); and iconyms (names of icons) (Zybina, 2016, pp. 114-119). These labels have become standard in many languages and are therefore widely used in scholarship. When systematising onomastic vocabulary in religious dastans, such frameworks can serve as an initial reference for grouping and ordering onyms. At the same time, these terms are historically rooted in Christian conceptual traditions; therefore, the agionymic framework does not fully coincide with Islamic conceptual categories and value structures. This discrepancy requires special research, because the religious onomastic space shared across Muslim cultures calls for a terminological system that adequately reflects Islamic conceptual distinctions.

B. Onyms of the Пәнилік Space (This-Worldly Space)

In the language of religious dastans, the onyms of the *пәнилік* space (*пәнилік* lit. "this-worldly, transient") appear mainly as anthroponyms (personal names) and toponyms (place names), and more rarely as animal names. When religious

onomastics is systematised within the scope of agionyms (names associated with sacrality), the most frequent category is agio-anthroponyms - the names and laqab-names (laqab “honorific epithet/nickname”) of sacred and revered persons. Episodes connected with the Prophet’s life and with Islam are grounded in historical events and figures; however, in folklore these persons are presented as holy and endowed with exceptional abilities. Likewise, the figures referred to as shariyars and sahabas (sahaba “Companion of the Prophet”) are not treated as ordinary people, since they saw the Messenger and walked alongside him. Belief in their ability to receive knowledge from the unseen (ghayb) motivates appeals for help; for instance, Ali’s supplication in a moment of distress is expressed as follows:

*Yes, my lord, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman,
Grant help - you were dearer to me than life.
Fatima, my true beloved lawful wife,
Husayn, Hasan, and my children,
If you do not help me now,
I have no strength left against the champion.
My companions - thirty-three thousand comrades,
Each one like a thousand-strong tiger,
Why have you been unaware of me,
Why did none of you stand by me at such a time?*
(Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 70)

In passages of this type, Muhammad the Prophet and his lineage, wives, daughters, caliphs, and companions are portrayed as sacred persons capable of perceiving the unseen; therefore, their names in folkloric usage can be classified as agio-anthroponyms. The names of prophets mentioned in the Qur’an also occur frequently (Adam Ata, Ayyub, Dawit, Daniyal, Eskendir, Jaqiya, Jusip, Isa, Luqpan hakim, Musa, Nuh, Salyh, Suleyimen, Ybrahym, Ydyris, Ysmayyl, Ysqaqq, Iliyas, Shugaiyb, Shish, etc.).

A notable anthroponymic feature of religious dastans is the extensive use of laqab-names. Honorific epithets granted to revered figures function with diverse semantic nuances, for example: Muhammad, Nurmuhammad, Nurkhayrulla, Paygambar, Haq Paygambar, Habib, Saruar, Haziret Rasul, Mustapa, Basafa, Ahmed (Babalar Sozi, 2004, pp. 29-86). Ali is likewise referred to through multiple laqab-forms (e.g., Sherim, Murtaza, Haydar), as illustrated in the following lines: “O Sherim, hold your wrath within!” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 33); “Murtaza is your ancestor - the lion.” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 49); “There Ali Haydar arrived...” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 82).

In religious thought, the human being is connected with both realms: in life one belongs to the *пәнилік* world, and after death to the *бақилық* world (*бақилық* lit. “otherworldly, eternal”). Yet a special case appears in narratives where the Prophet enters the *бақилық* space while still alive - most notably in the Mi’raj narrative; as Muhammad ascends, the spirits of prophets, beginning with Adam, come to support him (Babalar Sozi, 2004, pp. 64-67). Sacred persons may also provide aid during their lifetime. Thus, when Imam Mahdi faces Ali in combat (not knowing he is fighting his father), he prays for support: “Help me, Haziret Ali, my ancestor” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 55).

One onym linked to both worlds is *Ібіліс* (Iblis), who, according to the narrative tradition, came to earth with Adam and Hawwa after expulsion from Paradise and acts against humankind until the end of time. The Kazakh expression *үмітсіз шайтан* (lit. “a hopeless devil”) reflects the belief that he has no hope for salvation and therefore seeks to lead people astray. A lexicographic comment explains *Әзәзіл* as a name of Iblis and describes him as an “instigator” who diverts from the right path (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 321). Alongside Iblis, he is also called Shaytan and Lağin (“accursed”). Religious dastans frame earthly life as a test in which humans choose between the righteous path of the Creator and the strategies of Iblis, and the fruit of that choice is realised in the Hereafter.

A classificatory question may arise concerning angels, who appear to move “between” realms. An angel is a being of the unseen (ghayb) and comes to this world only by God’s command, so it cannot be treated as equally belonging to both domains. By contrast, *непілер* (fairy-/spirit-like beings in folklore) are depicted as inhabitants of this world, even if they rarely appear to humans; their dwelling is described as beyond *Қан тауы* (lit. “Mount Qap”), and they may migrate into human lands.

Another major group of *пәнилік* onyms in dastans comprises place names, including agio-oikonoms (sacred settlement names) and agio-oronyms (sacred mountain names). Relief-related examples include Baghdad Mountain (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 124), Mount Uhud (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 11), Nur Safa (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 59), Mount Tur (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 29), and Mount Qap (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 239), as well as a wooded area (Qalan) (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 90) and the desert of Karbala (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 200). Some toponyms are historically stable and widely recognised (Sham, Misyр, Madina, Mekke, Baghdad), functioning as sacred loci in Muslim cultural memory. Folkloric language also refers to distant wondrous places such as Shyn-Mashyn (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 120) and settlement names shaped by Persianate elements, such as Haramabad (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 239), alongside many other city and village names.

Hydronyms are also attested, for example Nil (Nile) (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 227), Qylzam and Abhayat (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 116), and Bahyr Oman (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 30). Names of sacred buildings (ecclesionyms in a broad sense) appear as well: Masjid al-Haram, al-Aqsa, and the Kaaba (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 64). Weapon names are part of the onomastic repertoire too: Ali’s swords Zulfiqar, Qamqam, and Samsam (Babalar Sozi, 2004, pp. 14-15).

Finally, religious dastans frequently use common nouns with proper-name force. Wondrous cities may be referred to simply as *қала* (lit. “city”) or *шаһар* (lit. “town”), and animal terms may function similarly: the speaking saiga is identified as *куик* (lit. “saiga”), and heroic mounts are often called *ам* (lit. “horse”) or *тұлпар* (lit. “steed”) rather than by distinct names. A famous proper-name zoonym is Dul-dul: “I received from Allah the name Duldul” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 40), described as a wondrous steed and the faithful companion of Haziret Ali.

C. Onyms of the Бақилық Space (the Otherworldly/Eternal Space)

Religious dastans portray an image of the *бақи* world (*бақи/бақилық* lit. “eternal; otherworldly”). The structure of the *бақилық* space is generally divided into *Ғарыш* (the Throne-space; the cosmic realm associated with the Divine Throne), *Алланың Дәрғаһы* (lit. “God’s Court/Presence”), the layers of the sky (heavenly levels), *жұмақ/жәннат* (Paradise), and *тамұқ/тозақ* (Hell). Each of these, in turn, contains further subdivisions, and each subdivision is designated by its own proper names. The *бақилық* world is described in particular detail in the *Миғраж* narrative (*Миғраж*: the Prophet’s ascension), where Muhammad (the Prophet; hereafter “the Prophet”) is said to have been raised to the Divine Presence. The narration mentions the heavenly levels and the angels found there, the prophets, and the “places” assigned to those who lived on God’s path or, conversely, deviated from it. In this process, the text employs a substantial number of onomastic names.

When these names are grouped by semantic domains, they are treated here as “onyms of the *бақилық* space”. However, because the focus is specifically on their religious nature, many labels used in general onomastics do not always map neatly onto the Islamic material. Therefore, it becomes necessary to introduce and apply categories based on the internal semantic features of these onyms.

One class of beings frequently mentioned in folkloric discourse is angels. Religious legends describe their number as immense, yet only a limited set of angel-names are explicitly given. For example, the text lists “four *muqarrab* angels” (*muqarrab* “closest [to God]”, i.e., angels especially near to God): *Жәбірейіл*, *Әзірейіл*, *Мекайыл*, *Ысрапыл* (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 116). The term *muqarrab* functions as a collective label, distinguishing these four as especially close to God. Each has a specific role: *Жәбірейіл* is the angel who brings revelation/message from God; *Әзірейіл* is the angel who takes souls (the Angel of Death); *Мекайыл* is associated with controlling natural phenomena (wind, rain, and the distribution of sustenance); *Ысрапыл* is associated with announcing the Day of Judgment and, in narrative tradition, with communicating divine commands within the angelic realm.

Other angelic figures appear in the grave scene: *Мәңкүр* and *Нүңкүр* (Munkar and Nakir; angels who question the deceased). The text describes how, after burial, when people have walked away, the deceased is “revived” in the grave and the questioning begins: “Two persons revived [him] and pressed him harshly, demanding answers” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 94). Depending on the correctness of the answers, the person’s record-book of deeds is given from the right or the left side. The “book of deeds” is narrated as being written down by angels: “From birth, my deeds were written down - angels took them into the record” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 94). These recording angels are named *Кираман* and *Катибин* (Kiraman Katibin; angels who record speech and actions). Two angels write down human words and deeds, noting whether they are good or bad.

Another angel-name appearing in the dastans is *Ризуан* (Ridwan; traditionally, the angel guarding Paradise): “In Rayhan they sent word to Rizuan” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 56). His role is to guard the gates of Paradise; some sources also describe him as the leader of the angels of Paradise.

While the etymology (original lexical meaning) of many angel-names is not transparent to a broad readership, their function effectively becomes their “meaning” in cultural understanding. Thus, even if the lexical origin of *Жәбірейіл* is not obvious, Muslim readers recognise him as a bearer of good news and divine assistance, often associated with protection. *Әзірейіл*, by contrast, is associated with fear and death. In folklore reception, readers are typically more interested in the answer to “who is this?” than in the deep etymology of the name. This highlights the nominative function of onyms: over time, the role of an angel becomes inseparable from the semantic aura of the name. In this way, *Жәбірейіл* and *Әзірейіл* come to symbolise hope and dread within Muslim cultural consciousness.

The otherworldly destination of human beings, determined by their performance in the “test” of the transient world, is conceptualised as Hell and Paradise. In folkloric narration, their numbers are presented as seven and eight respectively: “All seven Hells appeared,” or “All eight palaces of Paradise appeared” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 72).

Hell-names. As noted above, the semantic profile of an onym is best interpreted through its narrative content. For Hell, this includes the number of levels, their function, and the general types of punishment. Folkloric descriptions include statements such as: “Below Hell is fire, above Hell is fire; if you believe, on the right is fire, on the left is fire,” and “I saw sixty kinds of torment.” The text also lists specific Hell-names and associates each with a type of sinner:

- “I first saw a Hell called *Аужа* - the place of those without fasting and prayer;
- Second, I saw a Hell called *Шақыт* - the place of thieves and adulterers;
- Third, I saw a Hell called *Нақбыр* - the place of those who grieved their parents;
- Fourth was a Hell called *Расыт*...
- Fifth was *Лазыт*...
- Sixth I saw *Катим*...
- Seventh I saw *Жаһаннам*...” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 95)

Here, the words *тамұқ* and *тозақ* function as general terms for Hell, while the listed names specify its internal divisions in the folkloric model.

Paradise-names. Folkloric discourse contains fewer explicit lists of Paradise levels; however, the terms *жәннат*, *жұмақ*, and *пейіш* (all “Paradise”, used as near-synonyms) are employed. Two names that appear as specific Paradise designations are *Фирдоус* (“the Paradise called Firdaws...”) (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 216) and *Райхан* (a Paradise garden-name in the text: “In Rayhan graze a hundred thousand steeds”) (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 56). In the glossary of the same corpus, *Нығмет* is explained as “one of the Paradises described in the Qur’an” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 344). These examples show that folkloric usage does contain names of Paradise “types,” yet not all are systematically enumerated.

Importantly, differences emerge when folkloric naming is compared with lists offered by religious scholarship based on Qur’anic interpretation. In some scholarly enumerations, for instance, the number of Paradise levels is given as seven and Hell as eight, and the proposed labels differ from the folkloric set. For general reference, one list of Paradise names is: Jannat, Firdaws, ‘Adn, al-Khuld, an-Na’im, al-Ma’wa, Dar as-Salam. A corresponding list for Hell may include: an-Nar, Jahannam, Jahim, as-Sa’ir, Saqar, Hutama, Laza, Dar al-Bawar. Thus, some discrepancies are observable between folkloric naming and doctrinal/philological reconstructions: both the numbers and the sets of names do not always coincide.

Other onyms of the *бақилық* space are introduced through lines such as: “The angel said: ‘This is *Ғарыш*’,” “He entered a place called *Афақ*,” “If I go further, I shall reach the *Дәрғаһ*.” In these contexts, *Ғарыш* (the Throne-space), *Афақ* (described as the angel *Жәбірейіл*’s “place”), and *Дәрғаһ* (God’s Presence/Court) function as proper names denoting specific otherworldly locations (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 68).

Another key place-name is *Ғарасат* (the Judgment Assembly/Field): “He will drive [them] to the field of *Ғарасат*” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 161). Here, the semantic equivalents “field/arena” indicate the site of judgment and sentencing in the Hereafter. The same label can also function as a day-name: “On the day of *Ғарасат* you will be in sorrow” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 160).

In the *бақилық* domain, the text also mentions proper names for a “tablet/book,” a plant, a throne, a bridge, and a mountain. These include Lawh al-Mahfuz and Lawh al-Qalam (the Preserved Tablet/Tablet of the Pen; the cosmic record where all events are written), ‘Arsh wa Kursi (God’s Throne and Footstool), Sidrat al-Muntaha (the Lote Tree at the utmost boundary; a sacred tree in the cosmic realm), and the *Сурат* Bridge / *Қыл көпір* (lit. “Hair-thin bridge”; the bridge of trial in the Hereafter). One punitive location is named *Секрат* Mountain, and another is *Азабан* Water: “He led [him] to a mountain called *Секрат*,” “Its water was called *Азабан*” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 109).

In the didactic language of folkloric texts - addressed to pious Muslims and urging them not to deviate from religion, to know that every act is accountable, and to strengthen discernment between good and evil - onomastic names occupy a distinctive place. Because the Islamic onomastic space is grounded in religious worldview and Muslim traditional values, its names require analysis both through their semantic features and through their religious-cognitive function. Each of these names not only designates a specific entity but also encodes ideational oppositions - good versus evil, punishment versus bliss, joy versus sorrow - thus serving binary ideological purposes within the narrative.

D. Divine Names

In the Islamic world, including the religious worldview of Muslim Turkic peoples, the names of the Creator constitute the primary linguistic basis through which believers relate to God Himself. For this reason, their study has its own importance and specific features. In onomastics (the linguistic field that studies naming), such names are referred to by the term theonym (theos “God” + onym “name”), i.e., “the names of gods within any pantheon” (Podolskaya, 1988, p. 124). Theonymy (the totality of divine names) and theonymics (the study of the origin, development, and functioning of theonyms) form a major domain within the study of sacred naming. Accordingly, its problems can be divided into general issues (shared across human conceptions of the divine) and specific issues (determined by particular religions and belief systems). On the one hand, many common ideas about God have formed in human cognition; therefore, similarities can be found in both terminology and naming practices. On the other hand, the theonymic lexicon of ancient polytheism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam displays distinctive features rooted not only in the names themselves but also in the underlying religious worldviews. In this article, the theonyms attested in folkloric language are tied to Islam and thus belong to the “specific” dimension of theonymic study.

When analysing the linguistic nature of divine names, some researchers pose the question: “Nouns are divided into common nouns and proper nouns - where do we place ‘God’?” Can God have a proper name? The main function of proper names is to distinguish entities in the world from one another. Yet God is one; therefore, one might argue that there is no need for a distinguishing proper name, and in such a case the word “God” shifts from a common noun toward a proper-name function. In polytheistic systems the situation is different: if there are many gods, proper names are required to differentiate them (e.g., in ancient Greek tradition: Zeus, Athena, Poseidon, Apollo, Hephaestus, etc.) (Timofeev, 2001, p. 88). Scholarly views also diverge on whether theonyms should be treated strictly as proper names. Some researchers interpret theonymic material within the domain of proper names, as the label itself suggests, whereas others consider it an object not only of onomastics but of a broader lexical space with distinctive structural-semantic features (Alekseev, 2013, pp. 301-309).

Islam, too, affirms the oneness of the Creator, yet among Turkic peoples three principal naming forms have become established under various historical conditions: *Тәһірі*, Allah, and *Құдай* (all “God” in different layers of usage). In

addition, Arabic and Turkic traditions employ numerous “Beautiful Names” of Allah (al-Asma’ al-Husna; divine epithets). This raises a practical classificatory question: should these units be treated as common nouns, or should they all be placed in the category of proper names? The terms theonymy (the set of divine names) and theonymics (the linguistic study of how theonyms arise, develop, and function) have their own scope and distinctions (Malsagova, 2011, p. 7). The specific nature of Turkic religious consciousness - formed through historical interaction between Islam and *Тәңірлік* (Tengri-centred belief tradition) - also shapes the meaning and usage of these terms. The fact that divine names have not been systematically collected and their features have not been comprehensively studied to date suggests that the relevant conceptual apparatus has not yet fully stabilised in our linguistic tradition.

In oral tradition, theonyms do not only perform a nominative function (simply “naming” God); they also describe the perceived nature of the Creator in Islamic doctrine and in popular belief. Theonyms combine with other words, form collocations, and develop semantic continuity, thereby conveying a wide range of information about God and expanding their meaning in discourse. In this sense, the language of oral literature is highly informational: it transmits religious knowledge as part of a tradition maintained over centuries.

Turkic conceptions of God are tightly connected to both ancient *Тәңірі* belief and the later adoption of Islam. Although differences exist between these traditions, the shared principle of recognising the One Supreme Power brought them into a common conceptual sphere. As a result, the two systems did not simply negate one another; rather, they coexisted in a form of resonance and mutual accommodation. Over time, the influence of Islam increased - especially as it offered an elaborated doctrinal system addressing creation, social life, and moral order. Yet *Тәңірі* tradition did not disappear; instead, it continued to be preserved in language, customs, and elements of religious practice.

Islam’s long-term diffusion across the Great Steppe was characterised less by conquest than by a philosophy grounded in compatibility and synthesis. One indicator is the persistence of Tengri-related elements in collective memory. In the language of religious dastans, religious naming units from Old Turkic and Arabic frequently appear as near-synonyms, signalling this compatibility between two belief systems. The integration of *Тәңірлік* elements into Islamic usage - and the blending of practices and concepts from both sides - contributed to shared semantic zones in Turkic vocabulary and in Arabic/Persian loan units, thereby fostering synonymy among terms and theonyms. A clear example is the functional equivalence of the blessings: *Тәңір жарылқасын - Алла жарылқасын - Құдай жарылқасын* (all lit. “May God grant mercy/blessing”). Such parallel phraseology demonstrates new patterns of linguistic development emerging from multilingual religious contact.

Turkic equivalents of Allah’s “Beautiful Names” - for instance *Жаратқан* (lit. “Creator”; Arabic al-Khaliq “the Creator”), *Жалғыз* (lit. “One/Only”; Arabic Ahad “the One”), *Сақтаған* (lit. “Protector”; Arabic al-Hafiz “the Preserver/Guardian”) - may function sometimes as proper names and sometimes as common nouns, depending on context.

A belief shared across Muslim communities is that Allah is One, without deficiency; the First and the Last of all existence; the Creator of the world; the One who determines human destiny and accepts prayers. Within this conceptual frame, a unique image of Allah is shaped in linguistic consciousness. Different facets of this image are expressed through epithets - these are the Beautiful Names of Allah. It is widely held that addressing Allah through His Beautiful Names is one of the conditions for the acceptance of supplication; this is stated in Prophetic tradition as well. Religious dastans follow a convention of opening discourse with Allah’s name, for example: “First, one should remember the name of Allah, relying on His grace and weeping in plea” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 239). Remembering Allah, praying, and imploring constitute a form of both hidden and explicit dialogue between the Creator and the servant.

In oral literature, and particularly in religious dastans, narration frequently uses Allah’s names and descriptive means that specify His attributes. The following examples show several divine name-forms and epithets: “The One God, *Хақ Тағала*, issued a command” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 129); “If the King God Himself does not grant help...” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 219); “Help me,” he said, “O the Only One and the Ever-Existing” (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 189). Here, units such as *Бір* (lit. “One, unmatched”), *Құдай* (Creator of the world), *Хақ* (lit. “Truth”), *Тағала* (lit. “Exalted, Most High”), and *Патша* (lit. “King”; from Arabic Malik “Sovereign”) occur as divine naming forms; additionally, words like *Жалғыз* (“Only”), *Бір* (“One”), *Өзі* (“Himself”), and *Бар* (“Existing”) may function with proper-name force in discourse. The lexical composition of divine names in religious dastans reflects elements from Turkic, Arabic, and Persian. Strictly as core theonyms, *Тәңірі*, Allah, and *Құдай* most clearly carry proper-name status and can substitute for one another, whereas many other “Beautiful Names” shift between proper-like and common-like usage, with their theonymic function becoming fully visible only within context.

In religious dastans, the Creator is named by a range of forms used with proper-name force. In Turkic (Kazakh) usage these include: *Тәңірі*, *Көк* (lit. “Sky/Heaven” as a sacred designation), *Бір* (“One”), *Бар* (“Existing”), *Жаратқан* (“Creator”), *Жалғыз* (“Only”), *Ие/Еге* (“Lord/Master”), *Өзі* (“Himself”), and *Сен* (“You”, used in direct address). In Persian-derived usage: *Khuda / Құдай* (lit. “Lord, Master”), *Khudavand(a)* (lit. “Lord; Creator-Lord”), *Padshah / Padishah* (lit. “King; supreme ruler”), *Parvardigar* (lit. “Creator; Lord”) (Ondasynov, 1974).

Arabic “Beautiful Names” are employed in poetic address as follows:

I implore You alone.
O Rahim, O Rahman,
O Sama’, O Subhan.
O Qadir, O Mawla,

O Hannan, O Mannan.
 O Karim, O Jabbar,
 O Qahhar, O Sattar.
 You are the One who blesses, the Protector.
 O Dhu'l-Jalal, O Karim,
 You know my state.
 (Babalar Sozi, 2004, p. 247)

When a character is in distress, he names Allah's Beautiful Names, implores Him, speaks with Him, and seeks help. The emotional state within this dialogic moment adds new semantic colouring to the epithets: textual meaning intensifies the perception of divine attributes and draws the servant closer to the Creator. Because religious works prioritise the propagation of Islam, the narrator employs numerous formulae to express devotion and worship; many of these are linked to Allah's exalted names. Such extralinguistic factors not only shape the believer's image of the One Creator but also increase the stylistic and expressive power of divine names, deepening the informational content carried by meaning.

This discussion summarises what the two-level model reveals about the onomastic system of Kazakh religious dastans and how these findings relate to broader work in folkloristics and onomastics. Building on a unified terminological approach, the analysis classified extracted onyms according to the Islamic two-world worldview - the *пәнилік* (this-worldly, transient) domain and the *бақилық* (otherworldly, eternal) domain - and then examined how names function as carriers of religious meaning and ideology. Across the *пәнилік* sphere, the texts are densely populated with sacred anthroponyms and toponyms from Islamic cultural memory; the repeated invocation of prophets, companions, and revered figures gives narration a didactic orientation and anchors it in Qur'anic ethics, a tendency consistent with observations that religious anthroponyms shape an "Islamic" narrative model and strengthen moral-philosophical interpretation (Abisheva et al., 2022). Sacred place names likewise operate as coordinates of a "spiritual geography", linking religious ideals with cultural memory (Vakhidova & Sadullayeva, 2025).

The *бақилық* onomasticon is equally structured: angel-names, named sections of Paradise and Hell, and eschatological objects create a detailed afterlife topography that reinforces the idea of moral choice in earthly life. Even when folkloric lists vary from some doctrinal enumerations, the underlying binarity remains stable: each name indexes affiliation with one of the two realms and contributes to the opposition of hope/fear and reward/punishment. The results also support an ethnolinguistic view of syncretism: Islamic naming practices in the epic are adapted to local linguistic cognition and coexist with Tengri-related layers, rather than simply replacing them (Dosmurzinov, 2023; Duisen et al., 2025). Overall, the proposed division into *пәнилік* and *бақилық* proves productive for systematisation and interpretation, showing that sacred names form the narrative framework, encode religious ideology, and preserve culturally specific continuity - while also indicating the need to further refine a terminological base for Islamic religious onomastics in Turkic traditions.

V. CONCLUSION

Within the scope of this article, three interrelated issues of religious onomastics were addressed: (1) building a workable terminological base and classification; (2) explaining how names operate as carriers of religious ideology; and (3) tracing continuity between *Тәңірлік* belief and Islam.

In religious dastans, proper names structure the narrative by marking places of events, characters, animals, objects, and instruments, and by organising these elements into a coherent "religious space". This makes it possible to distinguish between this-worldly and otherworldly onyms and to classify their internal types. Because naming differentiates entities, it also clarifies relations between humans and Allah, humans and *Ібиліс*, and humans within the two-world model; therefore, the study separates issues that are common to religious onomastics in general from those that are specific to Islamic material.

At the same time, names function not only as labels but also as ideological signals. The key oppositions *пәнилік* vs. *бақилық*, Paradise vs. Hell, compassion vs. cruelty are expressed through naming, supporting the rejection of evil and the pursuit of good. In this sense, the name of Allah evokes supreme power, Paradise and Hell encode hope and fear, and *Әзірейіл* and *Жәбірейіл* acquire stable symbolic meanings. Finally, the synonymic alternation of *Тәңірі*, *Құдай*, and Allah in dastan discourse indicates continuity between the older Tengri-centred layer and Islamic tradition: not all religious concepts entered the language only in Arabic form, and local linguistic adaptation produced stable functional equivalents. Overall, religious onomastics in folkloric language remains insufficiently described in contemporary linguistics, and further research is needed to define its scope and to develop a fuller terminological framework for Islamic onomastics in Turkic contexts.

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Bekzhan Abdualiuly is a Doctor of Philological Sciences and Professor at the Department of Kazakh Linguistics of L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. Over the years, he has been awarded the academic titles of Professor (2014, “Regional Social-Innovative University,” Shymkent) and Honorary Professor (2016, Ili Pedagogical University, China). Since 1999, he has been working at Eurasian National University, where he teaches courses in Kazakh onomastics, historical grammar, and linguo-folkloristics. He is the author of more than 220 scientific publications, including six articles in Scopus-indexed journals, as well as a number of monographs and textbooks (Kazakh Anthroponym Formation, Kazakh Toponymy, Turkic Names, etc.). He has actively contributed to projects funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Kazakhstan and has delivered lectures at universities in Kazakhstan and China. ORCID iD: 0000-0003-1481-8850 Email:

bekzhan_a7@mail.ru



Doszhan Raikhan (born March 15, 1962, Dolanaly village, Kerbulak District, Almaty Region) is a Doctor of Philological Sciences and Professor at A. Kuatbekov Peoples’ Friendship University (Shymkent, Kazakhstan). She graduated from al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Arabic Studies, Faculty of Philology) and defended her Candidate dissertation in 1992 and her Doctoral dissertation in 2009 on the morphological structure of 11th–12th century Turkic written monuments. She has held senior academic and administrative positions, including Head of the Arabic Language Department and Vice-Rector for academic and research areas, and has completed research internships in Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. She is the author of around 200 scholarly works (monographs, dictionaries, textbooks) and has participated in national funded projects, including AP08855686 and AP23489736. ORCID iD: 0000-0002-2799-9921 Email: raidoszhan@gmail.com



Syrym Zhanzhigitov (born September 6, 1996, North Kazakhstan Region) earned his PhD in Kazakh Language and Literature from L.N. Gumilyov ENU in 2023 and is currently pursuing postdoctoral research under the state-funded project AP25793567 on developing linguistic conflict competence among future legal professionals. He works as a senior lecturer at the Department of Kazakh Linguistics and as a researcher at the Institute of Legislation and Legal Information under the Ministry of Justice. He is involved in several national research projects (AP23488671, AP23489736) focusing on legal linguistics, digital discourse, and AI-based linguistic tools. He has authored 20+ articles in CCSES-recommended journals, 6 Scopus-indexed articles, and holds 2 certificates of authorship. ORCID iD: 0000-0002-7814-1378 Email: syrymphd@gmail.com



Ainabek Aydana (born May 12, 1993, Zhemisti village, Saryagash District, Turkestan Region, Kazakhstan) earned her PhD in “Training Teachers of Kazakh Language and Literature” from L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University in 2024 and is currently preparing for her dissertation defense. Since 2024, she has been working as a Chief Manager at the Quality Assurance Department of ENU. She is the author of 2 publications in Scopus-indexed journals and 1 article in a CCSES-recommended journal, and has participated in more than 10 international and national conferences. Her research interests focus on methodological approaches to integrating Kazakh and Nogai onomastic vocabulary into educational programs, as well as the study of toponyms. ORCID iD: 0009-0006-1742-0468 Email: aydanayerkinkyzy@gmail.com



Ybray Turanov (born September 9, 1984) is a Kazakh language and literature teacher and a PhD doctoral student at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University (since 2023) in the program “Training Teachers of Kazakh Language and Literature.” He earned his Bachelor’s degree in 2006 and completed his Master’s degree at ENU (2011–2013), and his dissertation topic is “Kazakh Anthroponymy of the Early 20th Century.” He has taught in schools in Astana and Akmola Region and currently works at an IT school-lyceum in Karaotkel village. He has published 10+ articles in CCSES-recommended journals, 2 articles in Scopus-indexed journals, and has presented at 25+ international and national conferences. ORCID iD: 0009-0008-2858-0218 Email: bereke1984@mail.ru



Akhmer Birzhan Yermekuly was born on August 23, 1993, at Aktogay station in the Ayagoz district of the Abai region. In 2017, he graduated from Shakarim State University of Semey (Kazakhstan) with a degree in «Kazakh Language and Literature». In 2021, he earned his Master’s degree in the same major from L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. Currently, he is a PhD student at the Department of Kazakh Literature at L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University. Research interests: theoretical issues of literature, poetics, semiotics. ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0926-171X> Email: birzhan.akhmer93@gmail.com