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## The World of Arabic Nicknames

**Bushra Zawaydeh, Ph.D.**

Senior Linguist

Basis Technology Corp.

# What is a nickname?

- A nickname is a name that identifies a person, place, or event that is different from the formal given name of the referent.
- Nicknames are often not legally registered in one's official documents.

*Examples:*

⇒ *Muammar Qathafi* →

- Al-Akh al-Aqid
- Amin al-qawmiyyah al-Arabiyyah
- Sahib al-Kitab al-Akhdar

'Brother Colonel'

'Keeper of Arab Nationalism'

'Owner of the Green Book'



# Why study nicknames?

- Studying nicknames is important for national security because they are used as aliases. Instead of using one's real name, one may use a nickname to hide their identity.
- A term for such usage is "nom de guerre" (i.e. war name). Resistance fighters, terrorists, and guerilla fighters use pseudonyms to hide their identities and protect themselves and their families from harm.



# Importance of studying nicknames

- Understanding the pseudonyms used by radical groups sheds light on their future intentions, perceptions, motivations, and connection to the cause. (Guidère, 2006).

Abu Hamza al-Muhajir (Abu Ayyub Al-Misri) → chief of Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

- ⇒ *Hamza Ibn Abd Al-Muttalib* → Prophet Mohammad's uncle. One of the bravest protectors of Islam.
- ⇒ *Muhajir* → he immigrated to Iraq to fight. Or it could refer to “hijra” of companions of Mohammad from Mecca to Medina.



# Polymorphism

- The same individual may have many nicknames/aliases.
- used at different occasions by different people.



# When & Why are nicknames used?

- Friendly daily conversations (face to face, on the phone, letters, e-mails, etc). Used for endearment or respect.
- Monarchs may be known by other nicknames.
- ‘Nabaz’ nicknames used to insult others (ex. Enemies), or used in the formation of swear words.
- Concealing identity:
  - ⇒ *Computer users: Chatrooms, e-mails, blogs, used as “usernames”.*
  - ⇒ *Literary pen names – publishing authors.*
  - ⇒ *Stage names (ism shuhra)- actors, singers, dancers, etc.*
  - ⇒ *Criminals, terrorists, etc (takhallus) – especially the leaders have pseudonyms.*

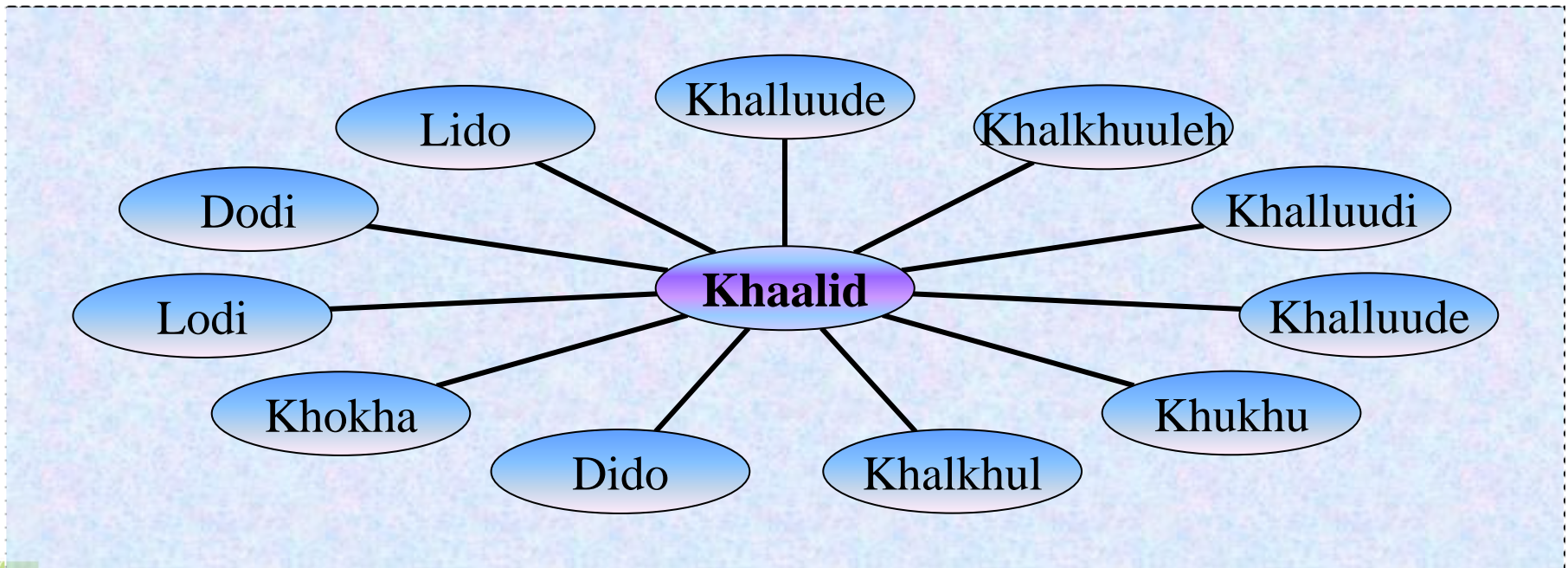
# Types of Arabic nicknames

- |               |                   |           |
|---------------|-------------------|-----------|
| 1. Asma' Dal' | Hypocoristics     | أسماء دلع |
| 2. Kunya      | Abu X             | كنية      |
| 3. Nasab      | Ibn X patronymics | نسب       |
| 4. Laqab      | description       | لقب       |
| 5. Nisba      | origin of person  | نسبة      |
| 6. Nabaz      | insulting names   | نبز       |

عسيرة والقاب معاوي

# Hypocoristics

- Arabic hypocoristic formation is very generative.
- Generation is largely based on the root of the name (Zawaydeh and Davis, 1999).
- “Khalid” خالد has the following Jordanian and Egyptian nicknames:



# Hypocoristics: Template CVC.CVVC(V)

- In these names, the consonants in the full names are the same as the ones in the root.
- Final [a] surfaces when the last root consonant is a guttural or [r].

<i>Root</i>	<i>Meaning of root</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Template CaCCuuC(e/a)</i>
bšr	<i>give good news</i>	bušra بشرى	baššuur(a)
xld	<i>Eternal</i>	xaalid خالد	xalluud(e)
wld	<i>Give birth</i>	waliid وليد	walluud(e)

# Hypocoristics

- Different names with the same root consonants have the same hypocoristic.

<i>Root</i>	<i>Meaning of root</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Template</i> CaCCuuC(e/a)
Hsn	<i>good</i>	Hasan حسن	Hassuun(e)
Hsn	<i>good</i>	Huseen حسين	Hassuun(e)

# Hypocoristics

- Names with four root consonants follow the same pattern.

<i>Root</i>	<i>Meaning of root</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Template</i> CaCCuuC(e/i/a)
mrym	Mary	Maryam مريم	maryuum(e)
brhm	To look steadfastly	?ibraahiim إبراهيم	barhuum(e)

# Hypocoristics

- When a full name has an affixal consonant, be it a prefix, suffix, or infix, the affixal consonant does not appear in the hypocoristic.
- ✓ Hypocoristic contains only root consonants, regardless of what other consonants may be in the name.

<i>Root</i>	<i>Meaning of root</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Template</i> CaCCuuC(e/i/a)
Hmd	<i>praise</i>	muHammad محمد	Hammuud(e)
Hmd	<i>praise</i>	?aHmad أحمد	Hammuud(e)
Hmd	<i>praise</i>	Haamid حامد	Hammuud(e)

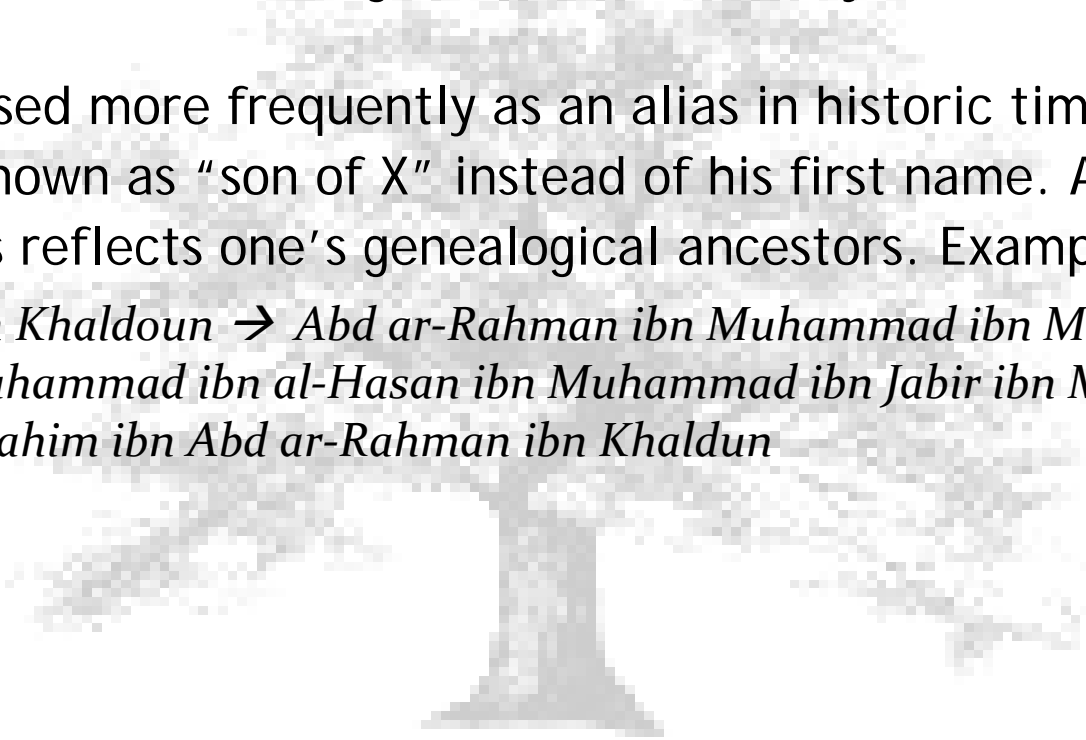


# Usages of Kunya

- Used daily as an honorific to show respect to elders.
- Used by young men to address each other, for fun. Even one who is not married, or doesn't have a son may be called Abu X.
- As a "nom de guerre". For example, "Abu" nicknames were popular among PLO leaders.
  - ⇒ *Yasir Arafat* → *Abu Ammar*
  - ⇒ *Mahmoud Abbas* → *Abu Mazen*
- A terrorist may be known by a Kunya name.
  - ⇒ *in India, the nickname "Abu Al-Qama" was used by a member of the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba لشکر طیبہ in the Mumbai terror attacks (11/26/2008)*

# Nasab

- Nasab is a patronymic or a metronymic name. The word “Ibn” or “bint” (i.e. son/ daughter of) followed by the father’s name.
- Was used more frequently as an alias in historic times. The person was known as “son of X” instead of his first name. A chain of names reflects one’s genealogical ancestors. Example:
  - ⇒ *Ibn Khaldoun* → *Abd ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Jabir ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Abd ar-Rahman ibn Khaldun*



# Nasab .. current usage

- It is a standard way of reporting names in Saudi Arabia, and the Arabian Gulf.
  - ⇒ ***The head of the House of Saud:*** *Muhammad bin Saud bin Muhammad bin Muqrin bin Murkhan bin Ibrahim bin Musa bin Rabi'a bin Mani' bin Rabi'a al-Muraydi Al-Dur'a al-banafi Al-Adnani*
- Used online as alias names. Next word could be a colloquial or MSA adjective, a noun, a person's name, or a place name.
  - ⇒ *Ibn Falastine*                    '*son of Palestine*'
  - ⇒ *Ibn Hajar*                        '*son of a stone*'



# Laqab

- This is a description of the person, that could be considered a title of nobility.
- It is often a two-word phrase, which often indicates the person's occupation, importance, or appearance. Originally, it was used as a nickname, and later adopted to be a title given to important people.
  - ⇒ *Sayf al-Din*                      *'The sword of the religion'*
  - ⇒ *Nasir al-Dawla*                *'the helper of the dynasty'*
  - ⇒ *Al-Jahiz*                         *'the goggle-eyed'*

# Laqab Styles

- A physical or personal quality. The phrase could be metaphorical. These could also be used as surnames.
  - ⇒ *Al-Tawil*                      ‘*the tall one*’                      (*could be a surname*)
  - ⇒ *Al-Andalib al-Asmar* ‘*the dark nightingale*’ (*Singer Abd Al-Halim Hafiz*)
- Expressing adoration or reliance on God, or lineage to the Prophet. Some use compound structures with words such as “Allah”, “Abd”, “al-Din”, “al-Islam”, “al-Dawlah”, or words used in titles:
  - ⇒ *Al-Ra’is Al-Mu’min* ‘*the faithful president*’                      *Anwar Al-Sadat*
  - ⇒ *Amir Al-Mu’minin* ‘*prince of the believers*’                      *Husni Mubarak*
  - ⇒ *Sayf al-Islam*                      ‘*sword of Islam*’                      *Osama Bin Laden*

# Nisba

- An adjective derived from the place of origin, birth, residence, or occupation. It could be also a clan, tribe, or family.
- Formed by adding -iyy/-iy at the end of the word. Usually preceded by al- definite article.
- This form is also used for surnames.
  - ⇒ *Abu Ayyub **al-Misri*** (from Egypt)
  - ⇒ *Salah al-Din **Al-Ayyoubi*** (founder of Ayyoubi dynasty – conquered crusaders)
  - ⇒ *Al-Ansari* → fighters born in Iraq (Ansar al-Sunna group)
- This type of structure is used frequently to coin new surname aliases.



- Nabaz could be metaphors that are used to describe somebody that is disliked or considered to be an enemy.
- Jihadi style writings use such metaphors abundantly.

## Communism/ Soviet Union/ Russian army

⇒ *Red Cancer/ Crayfish*

⇒ *Red Octopus*

⇒ *Red Devil*

⇒ *Red Plague*

⇒ *Red crawling*

السرطان الأحمر

الأخطبوط الأحمر

الشیطان الأحمر

الطاعون الأحمر

الزحف الأحمر



# Conclusion

In this talk we surveyed different methods of coining nicknames/ aliases in Arabic, how and when they are used. A point to remember is that nicknames are symbolic, and provide an insight about the person's mentality, mood, origin, and way of thinking.

鉴于对人类家庭所有成员的固有尊严及其平等的和不朽的权利的承认, 乃是世界自由、正义与和平的基础, 鉴于对人权的无视和侮蔑已发展为野蛮暴行, 这些暴行玷污了人类的良心, 而一个基于互相谅解和信任的普遍自由正在为人类和匮乏的世界的来临



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شكراً *Shukran* Thank You!



باس الحرية والعدل والسلام في العالم.  
غاية ما يرنو إليه عامة البشر انبثاق عالم  
حماية حقوق الإنسان لكيلا يضطر المرء  
جديد إيمانها بحقوق الإنسان الأساسية  
مي قدماً وأن ترفع مستوى الحياة في جو  
إعارة حقوق الإنسان والحريات الأساسية

لما كان الاعتراف بالكرامة المتأصلة في  
ولما كان تناسي حقوق الإنسان وازدرا  
يتمتع فيه الفرد بحرية القول والعقيدة و  
آخر الأمر إلى التمرد على الاستبداد والذ  
وبكرامة الفرد وقدره وبما للرجال والنسا  
من الحرية أفسح. ولما كانت الدول الا