

# The Issue of Rendering Personal Names in the Context of Transition of Turkic Languages to the Latin Script: A Case Study of Azerbaijani, Turkish, and Kazakh Languages – A Secondary Publication

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**Abstract:** The paper deals with a comparative and contrastive analysis of the experience Azerbaijani and Turkish languages have gained in the transition to the Latin script. The methods of rendering personal names from European languages which, similarly to Azerbaijani and Turkish, use the Latin alphabet into the specified Turkic languages and vice versa are considered. The author presumes that the way the problem of rendering personal names as a special category of proper names is solved provides the grounds for giving an opinion on how successful the integration of a language that has switched to a Latin-based alphabet into a family of languages and cultures sharing the similar Latin alphabets has been or is going to be. In this respect, the study is topical since it enables one, by considering similar experiences of the languages involved, to forecast the trajectory the Kazakh language, intending to switch to the Latin-based alphabet in the near future, is going to follow. The novelty of the study consists of the linguistic forecasting method applied, which implies solely the study of the real experience of the languages subject to study and therefore provides the forecast with one hundred percent verifiability to be achieved once Kazakhstan has entirely transitioned to the Latin script. The theoretical value of the research consists in a contribution it makes to the methodological basis of the comparative and contrastive studies of related languages, including the creation of alphabets for them, as well as in the possibility of making use of the results achieved herein in further studies aimed at theoretical comprehending the peculiarities of a language functioning in the translation aspect after it transitions to a new alphabet. The study has made it possible to identify the methods of rendering personal names from/to European languages, used nowadays in Turkish (absolute and relatively complete transfer) and Azerbaijani (transcription and transliteration) languages. Through the prism of practical experience of these languages, an objective forecast is made with respect to the Kazakh language in case of its complete transition to the Latin-based alphabet. The paper concludes that the Kazakh language has reasons to follow either the way of Turkish, as the language of the state, which to a certain extent has managed to successfully integrate into Europe in cultural, economic, and political terms, and what Kazakhstan certainly strives for, or the way of Azerbaijani, to which the Kazakh language is connected with ties of a shared cultural and historical past.

**Keywords:** Latin script; Translation; Language policy; Personal name; Azerbaijani language; Kazakh language; Turkish language

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## 1. Introduction

It is expected that in the near future, Kazakhstan will fully transition to the Latin script. According to the former President of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev, such a significant step in the country's socio-political life should contribute to the unification of Kazakhstan, which serves as a successful example of interethnic harmony and tolerance, with world culture <sup>[1]</sup>. The idea itself is commendable, but the ultimate result of such linguistic integration into Europe, where the majority of languages also use the Latin alphabet for their writing systems, remains to be seen. However, this result can be forecasted based on the study of precedent cases of languages transitioning from another alphabet to Latin. Remarkably, examples of such languages can be found among the Turkic languages related to Kazakh: Turkish and Azerbaijani. Like Kazakh, the switch of alphabets in Turkish (replacing the Arabic alphabet with Latin <sup>[2]</sup>) and Azerbaijani (replacing Cyrillic with Latin <sup>[3]</sup>) languages, if the possible political and economic motives were considered, was driven by the desire to draw closer to Europe and integrate into its culture. This desire was evident in the newly formed Turkish Republic in the 1920s following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and in Azerbaijan after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the 1990s.

The success of language integration into Europe can be judged, among other things, by how personal names from languages that have transitioned to Latin are transmitted into European languages. The highest degree of integration is achieved when personal names are transmitted in the same way as within the European community when translating from one European language, based on the Latin alphabet, to another, which may use a slightly modified version with diacritics but is also Latin. According to the established tradition in Europe, personal names are transmitted not through transliteration or transcription but through direct transfer without any changes, maintaining their original spelling. This approach is advocated by methodological recommendations developed by the European Commission for authors and translators translating into English <sup>[4]</sup>.

Turkish has succeeded in this regard: personal names from European languages are transmitted to Turkish and vice versa almost identically. The original Turkish spelling of proper names remains virtually unchanged for all European languages using the Latin script.

However, the same cannot be said for Azerbaijani, from which names continue to be transmitted to various European languages, often indirectly through Russian, by transcribing Cyrillic (written in Cyrillic) versions of personal names, as if Azerbaijani continues (as it did in Soviet times) to use Cyrillic. As a result, each European language has its own variant of writing the proper name. It can be assumed that the differing results in implementing the transition to the Latin script, particularly in the issue of transmitting personal names, stem from different views on this issue overall and different priorities within the language policies of each of the two states.

The goal of this article is to study the experience of Turkic languages transitioning to the Latin script. The research tasks are as follows:

- (1) To study the experience of transitioning to Latin using Turkish and Azerbaijani languages as examples;
- (2) To conduct a comparative analysis of the existing methods of transmitting personal names from these languages and the methods adopted in most European languages;
- (3) To forecast the optimal solution to the problem of translating proper names for the Kazakh language.

## 2. Latinization for the Kazakh language

As stated in the introduction, in the foreseeable future, the Republic of Kazakhstan will undergo a transition from Cyrillic to a writing system based on the Latin alphabet. The introduction of Latinization is one of the

projects included in the “agenda for the coming years” aimed at implementing the Third Modernization of Kazakhstan, the beginning of which was announced in the spring of 2017 by the then President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, N.A. Nazarbayev <sup>[5]</sup>. The significance of this project, as explained by N.A. Nazarbayev, states the following: “The transition to the Latin script has its deep historical logic. It is both the features of the modern technological environment, the features of communication in the modern world, and the features of scientific and educational processes in the 21st century” <sup>[5]</sup>. According to the plan presented in the article, the transition of the Kazakh language to Latin was planned to be carried out gradually over eight years. By the end of 2017, it was envisaged to develop and adopt a “unified standard version of the Kazakh alphabet in the new graphics,” from 2018 onwards, to begin preparing personnel for teaching the Kazakh language based on the new alphabet, as well as textbooks for secondary schools, dedicate the following two years to necessary organizational and methodological work, and by 2025, to completely switch all document management and publishing activities in the country to Latin <sup>[5]</sup>. In accordance with the established schedule, several versions of the future alphabet were developed and submitted for consideration, one of which was ultimately approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated October 26, 2017, No. 569 “On the Translation of the Alphabet of the Kazakh Language from Cyrillic to Latin Graphics” <sup>[6]</sup>. However, the version of the Kazakh Latin script proposed by N.A. Nazarbayev, consisting of 32 letters, did not gain wide acceptance primarily due to the presence of numerous apostrophes, which, in the opinion of users, only caused confusion and made the text unreadable, as well as due to the inability to convey the phonetic diversity of the Kazakh language <sup>[7]</sup>. With the same number of letters in the alphabet, Kazakh linguists proposed to eliminate these shortcomings using diacritical marks, namely, acute accents and digraphs, which found reflection in the new version of the alphabet approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan <sup>[8]</sup>. In the revised version of the Latin script, the following changes were made: the letters A’ a’ [ə], G’ g’ [ɢ], I’ i’ [и, й], N’ n’ [н, нг], O’ o’ [ə], S’ s’ [ш], C’ c’ [ч], U’ u’ [у], Y’ y’ [y] were replaced with Á á [ə], Ğ ğ [ɢ], I, ı [и, й], Ќ ќ [н], Ó ó [ə], Sh sh [ш], Ch ch [ч], Ú ú [у], Ý ý [y] respectively.

From the history of the Kazakh language writing system, it can be established that the aforementioned attempt to reform the alphabet is by no means the first. The first attempt to introduce an alphabet based on the Latin script was made as part of the language policy adopted in the USSR in the 1920s. As noted by D.A. Amanzholova, “the language policy of the Bolsheviks was part of a complex of measures aimed at asserting social justice and self-determination of peoples, especially considering that the level of literacy of the majority of the population of the former Russian Empire was unsatisfactory, with more than 60 peoples lacking a writing system, including the Kazakhs, who used the Arabic script” <sup>[9]</sup>. The result of implementing this language policy was the introduction of a new Kazakh alphabet based on the Latin script, approved by the Central Election Commission (CEC) and the government of the Kazakh Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic (KazASSR) on July 25, 1929 <sup>[9]</sup>. Officially, Latinization was maintained until 1940, although the transition to this script in various spheres of society and the state occurred with varying degrees of success.

Regarding the difficulties on the path to achieving a full transition to the new Kazakh alphabet and abandonment of the Arabic script, it is mentioned, for example, in the protocol of the meeting of the CEC of the KazASSR on January 1, 1932. According to this protocol, by 1932, the introduction of the Latin script was most actively progressing in educational institutions, which could not be said for the state apparatus, where regional institutions had transitioned to the new alphabet by 60%, district ones by only 40%, and in some districts they continued to use the Arabic alphabet as before <sup>[10]</sup>. The lack of significant results in transitioning the population of the republic to Latin led to the necessity of another reform of the writing system in 1940, and this time Cyrillic became the basis for the alphabet, which continues to be used in Kazakhstan to this day.

Based on the above, the first Kazakh Latin script somehow managed to exist for eleven years. As for the alphabet approved under N.A. Nazarbayev, the current leader of the republic has decided to postpone the full transition to the new script, planned, as noted earlier, for 2025. The explanation for this can be found in the speech of the current President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, given at the first meeting of the National Council on June 16, 2022: "...Some representatives of the public are concerned that we still cannot move away from Cyrillic. First of all, this is a very complex issue from a linguistic point of view. This should be clearly understood. ...Transitioning from Cyrillic to Latin by artificial means, simply by replacing the corresponding letters, is impossible. Otherwise, it will lead to a big mistake. The most important thing is for citizens, especially our youth, to clearly know the spelling of all Kazakh words in Latin. That is, we need to revise the spelling rules that exist in our language. ...I have instructed the Institute of Linguistics to conduct special work on the new orthography of the Kazakh language. Only then can we talk about transitioning to Latin. We must not rush." [11].

Regardless of how soon the establishment of Latin in Kazakhstan as the sole script for writing in the Kazakh language will be witnessed, let's assume that Kazakh linguists have been tasked with developing recommendations regarding the transliteration of proper names, particularly personal names, from the Kazakh language to European languages using the Latin script, and vice versa. With a certain degree of confidence, it can be said that the success of Kazakhstan's lingua-cultural integration into the European language and cultural family will depend on the decision made in this matter. It can be speculated that to find the optimal solution, specialists will study the relevant experiences of countries that relatively recently also transitioned to the Latin script. In this regard, the practical application experience of the Latin script in two languages related to Kazakh in terms of belonging to the common Turkic language group, namely Turkish and Azerbaijani languages, could be of interest. If relying on the experience of these languages, particularly in the matter of transferring personal names to/from European languages, the Kazakh language, as it seems, may follow one of two opposite scenarios – either the scenario of the Turkish language or the scenario of the Azerbaijani language.

### 3. Scenario of the Turkish language

The modern alphabet of the Turkish language based on Latin takes its origins from Law No. 1353 on Acceptance and Application of Turkish Letters, which was adopted by the leadership of the Turkish Republic headed by M.K. Atatürk on November 1, 1928 [2]. Developed to replace the Arabic script, on which the text of the law was written at the time of its publication in No. 1030 of the "Official Gazette of the Turkish Republic" dated November 3, 1928 [2], the Turkish Latin alphabet consists of 29 letters. Some of the letters in the alphabet contain diacritical marks – Ç ç [ch], Ğ ğ [g, silent], Ö ö [o, ö], Ş ş [sh], Ü ü [u, ü], one letter to distinguish it from another similar-sounding letter (İ i [i]) is deprived of its original sign – I ı [ı]. One letter, retaining its original spelling, acquires a Turkish pronunciation – C c [dj]. In addition to the alphabet letters, circumflexes may be used above vowels in some words to soften the preceding consonant: â, î, û.

As of today, the transfer of proper names from European languages using the Latin script to the Turkish language is regulated by rules established by the Turkish Language Association at the Atatürk Supreme Council for Culture, Language, and History. In the first of the points dedicated to the transfer of proper names to the Turkish language from languages using the Latin script, the following is stated:

"1. Proper names belonging to languages using the Latin letters for writing should be transmitted in their original spelling: Beethoven, Byron, Cervantes, Chopin, Eminescu, Grimm, Horatius, Molière, Puccini, Rousseau, Shakespeare; Bologna, Buenos Aires, Iorga, Ile-de-France, Karlovy Vary, Latium, Loire, Mann,

New York, Nice, Rio de Janeiro, Vaasa, Wuppertal, etc. In parentheses, you can indicate how such names are pronounced in the original languages: Shakespeare (Şekspir) and so on.”<sup>[12]</sup>. It is important to note (however, the essence of this note is explained in the second point of the rules) that this refers to those proper names that do not already have established equivalents in Turkish (Napolyon, Şarlken, Şarl (Demirbaş Şarl); Atina, Brüksel, Cenevre, Londra, Marsilya, Münih, Paris, Roma, Selânik, Venedik, Viyana, Zürih; Hollanda, Letonya, Lüksemburg).

Users of the Turkish language (authors, translators, editors, etc.) strictly adhere to the prescribed rule. The most illustrative examples confirming this can be excerpts from various materials published in Turkish media, covering current events in politics, science, sports, etc.:

- (1) *İtalya’da pazar günü Temsilciler Meclisi ve Senato üyelerinin belirlendiği erken genel seçimleri, aşırı sağcı lider **Giorgia Meloni**’nin “İtalya’nın Kardeşleri Partisi” (FdI) kazandı* [In Italy, the early general elections, where the members of the House of Representatives and the Senate are determined, were won by the leader of the far-right party Giorgia Meloni’s “Frères d’Italie” (FdI)]<sup>[13]</sup>.
- (2) *NATO Genel Sekreteri **Jens Stoltenberg** ile Avrupa Komisyonu Başkanı **Ursula von der Leyen**, Belçika’nın başkenti Brüksel’de bir araya geldi. NATO ve AB, işbirliği konusunda Ortak Deklarasyon yayınlamayı planlıyor* [NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in the Belgian capital Brussels. NATO and the EU plan to publish a Joint Declaration on cooperation]<sup>[14]</sup>.
- (3) *Curtin Üniversitesi’nden araştırmayı yöneten **Kate Trinajstić**, Birleşik Krallık’ın (BK) kamu yayımcısı BBC’ye açıklamasında, “Bu evrimimizde çok önemli bir nokta. İlk dönemlerden beri evrimleşen vücut yapımızı ortaya koyuyor. Bunu ilk defa bu fosillerde görüyoruz” dedi* [Kate Trinajstić, who led the research at Curtin University, said in her statement to the UK’s public broadcaster BBC, “This is a very important point in our evolution. It reveals our evolving body structure since the early periods. We see this for the first time in these fossils”]<sup>[15]</sup>.
- (4) *Son karşılaşmalar öncesinde B Ligi’ne düşmesi kesinleşen İngiltere, sahasında Almanya ile 3-3 berabere kaldı. Ev sahibinin golleri, 71’inci dakikada **Luke Shaw**, 75’inci dakikada **Mason Mount** ve 83’üncü dakikada penaltıdan **Harry Kane**’den gelirken; Almanya’nın gollerini ise 52’nci dakikada penaltıdan **İlkay Gündoğan** ve 67 ile 87’nci dakikalarda **Kai Havertz** kaydetti* [Before the final matches, England, who is certain to be relegated to League B, drew 3-3 with Germany at home. The host’s goals came from Luke Shaw in the 71st minute, Mason Mount in the 75th minute, and Harry Kane from the penalty spot in the 83rd minute; Germany’s goals were scored by İlkay Gündoğan from the penalty spot in the 52nd minute and Kai Havertz in the 67th and 87th minutes]<sup>[16]</sup>.

The situation is somewhat different when it comes to translation in the opposite direction. It is difficult to find a straightforward explanation as to why different sources within the same language approach the transfer of Turkish proper names differently. It would seem that there are corresponding regulations, so why not adhere to them? For example, in the methodological recommendations for authors writing in English and translators translating into this language for the European Commission, the following instruction is given:

“5.2. Personal names should be written with the original diacritics preserved. For example: Cañete, Malmström, Šefčovič.”<sup>[4]</sup>.

This requirement, not containing any language or diacritical restriction, and therefore allowing the widest interpretation in terms of its practical applicability, judging by numerous materials published in English-language media, is not always fully complied with when authors (translators, editors, etc.) have to deal with Turkish proper names. It is enough to compare materials from various publications, for example, in English,

to see that Turkish proper names are translated in one of two ways, with the choice of one or the other method being a personal decision of the publication, dictated by its editorial policy. Otherwise, how to explain the different spellings of the same name in two (or three) publications from the same country? At the same time, this policy does not exclude the possibility of simultaneous use (in different texts, of course) of both translation methods. This can be confirmed by entering the proper name in the search bar on the official website of the publication successively in two variants of its spelling – in the original Turkish with all diacritical marks preserved and, let's call it, "European" without preserving these marks. For clarity, let's take, for example, the name and surname of the current Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, which together contain four letters with diacritical marks. The variants of translation of the specified personal name by one or another method in materials posted on the official websites of some British and American publications are presented below.

(1) Regarding full transliteration (without preserving diacritical marks):

- "Many Asian countries, especially Malaysia and Indonesia, show great interest in our defense industry products. Agreements are being signed," Turkish foreign minister **Mevlut Cavusoglu** told a press conference in Tokyo <sup>[17]</sup>.
- At the United Nations, the change was requested in a letter from Foreign Minister **Mevlut Cavusoglu** of Turkey that was received on Wednesday and took effect immediately, according to a spokesman for the U.N. <sup>[18]</sup>.
- Turkish Foreign Minister **Mevlut Cavusoglu** on Sunday began his trip to Greece with an unofficial visit to the northeastern province of Thrace, where most of Greece's Muslim minority resides <sup>[19]</sup>.
- But Turkey's foreign minister, **Mevlut Cavusoglu**, told reporters the agreement was only a "pause" in Turkey's latest military operation against its long-standing regional enemy. "We got what we wanted," Cavusoglu said <sup>[20]</sup>.

(2) Absolute transliteration (with preservation of diacritical marks):

- The Turkish foreign minister **Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu** held a meeting yesterday in Ankara between the Syrian opposition and the regime aimed at establishing a "permanent" solution to the ongoing crisis, according to Russian news agencies <sup>[21]</sup>.
- The comments by the foreign minister, **Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu**, came moments after the Israeli prime minister, Yair Lapid, announced the resumption of full diplomatic relations, including the reappointment of ambassadors <sup>[22]</sup>.
- "A dialogue process began with Israel after the new government took office," said Turkish Foreign Minister **Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu**, in an apparent reference to Israel's longest-serving leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, who left office in June 2021. "The appointment of ambassadors was among the steps we said we would take to normalize relations." <sup>[23]</sup>

This is the current state of affairs regarding the transfer of personal names from/to European languages from Turkish and vice versa today. However, it cannot be ruled out that over time, under the influence of new political, social, economic, and other factors, there may arise a need to require – and this requirement will have to come directly from the state – the writing of personal names in only one way. It is quite likely that the choice will be made in favor of accurately reproducing the original spelling. The fact that at the request of the Turkish authorities, the UN recently approved a change in the spelling of the country in all official documents in languages whose writing is based on the Latin script, from *Turkey*, *Türkei*, *Turquie*, etc. to the only acceptable *Türkiye* from now on <sup>[24]</sup>, suggests that the first step in this direction has already been taken.

## 4. Scenario of the Azerbaijani language

By its birth, or rather, revival, considering the previous Soviet experience (1928–1939) of using the Latin alphabet, modern Azerbaijani Latin owes its origin to the Decision of the Nationalities Council of the Supreme Soviet of the Azerbaijan Republic dated December 25, 1991, No. 34 entering into effect of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On Restoration a Latin-based Alphabet of Azerbaijani” (*Latin qrafikalı Azərbaycan alifbasının bərpası haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikası Qanununun qüvvəyə minməsi qaydası barədə*)<sup>[3]</sup>. The day of the full transition of the Azerbaijani language to Latin is considered to be August 1, 2001. This date, which is now celebrated in the Republic of Azerbaijan as the Day of the Azerbaijani Alphabet and Language, was indicated as the deadline for ensuring the “full transition to the Latin script of newspapers, magazines, bulletins, books, and other printed materials published in the country in the Azerbaijani language” in the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated June 18, 2001, No. 506 “On Improving the Application of the State Language”<sup>[25]</sup>. Containing 32 letters, the Azerbaijani alphabet in terms of its letter composition completely repeats the Turkish alphabet, but is supplemented by three letters that are not present in Turkish: Ə ə [a, e], X x [x], Q q [g].

If the method of transferring Turkish personal names from/to European languages using the Latin script and vice versa is transliteration (relative or absolute), then in the case of the Azerbaijani language, traditional methods of transferring personal names are considered to be transliteration and transcription. Transliteration (with the degree of accuracy allowed by the Latin script of a particular European language) as a translation method is used to transfer Azerbaijani personal names to European languages whose writing is based on the Latin script. For the translation of foreign (European) personal names into Azerbaijani, transcription is used. This can be confirmed by the example of the following information message, describing a meeting between the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov (Azerbaijani: Ceyhun Bayramov), and the President of the United States, Joe Biden, published by the Press Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan on the official website of the ministry in Azerbaijani and English languages.

- *21 sentyabr tarixində Azərbaycan Respublikası xarici işlər naziri Ceyhun Bayramov Nyu Yorkda BMT Baş Assambleyasının 77-ci sessiyasının yüksək səviyyəli həftəsi çərçivəsində Amerika Birləşmiş Ştatlarının Prezidenti Co Bayden tərəfindən təşkil edilən rəsmi qəbulda iştirak edib*<sup>[26]</sup>.
- On September 21, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan Jeyhun Bayramov participated in the official reception organized by the President of the United States of America Joe Biden on the sidelines of the high-level week of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly in New York<sup>[27]</sup>.

To demonstrate the stark contrast between approaches to transferring personal names from Azerbaijani and Turkish languages, for example, into English, one can cite the following excerpt from a news article in the British newspaper *The Guardian*, featuring the aforementioned foreign ministers of Turkey and Azerbaijan:

“Armenia should cease its provocations and focus on peace negotiations and cooperation with Azerbaijan,” Turkey’s foreign minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, tweeted after a phone call with his Azerbaijani counterpart, Jeyhun Bayramov<sup>[28]</sup>.

Anyone who has ever translated documents knows that transliteration and transcription have been and continue to be the only correct methods for transferring proper names when language pairs involve languages that use completely different alphabets for writing. Thus, transliteration and transcription are used to transfer proper names from Russian to absolutely all languages that do not use Cyrillic, and vice versa. These same methods are still used today to translate personal names from the Kazakh language, which has not yet transitioned to Latin. During the “Cyrillic era” (1940–1991), translators also resorted to these methods when

translating to/from the Azerbaijani language. However, the fact that transliteration and transcription continue to be in use in the Azerbaijani language today, thirty years after the decision to transition to the Latin script and twenty-one years since its widespread adoption, raises doubts among Azerbaijani society about the expediency of maintaining outdated methods of transferring personal names. This fact is considered a real problem by part of the country's population, which must be addressed urgently. Their concerns and viewpoints on this issue are expressed in publications on various portals, blogs, and websites, primarily by those whose professional activities are somehow related to language – journalists, translators, editors, writers, publicists, etc. Some of their considerations are of particular interest.

The essence of the inadequacy of continuing to use transliteration and transcription is articulated by publicist E. Mirzeyev as follows: "...It can be said that in all languages and countries (including Turkey!) that use Latin letters, people's names and surnames are written without any changes, while we continue to write the names of all people, even the names of historical figures, using the transcription system as we hear it, without any logic (for example, İ. S. Bax instead of I. S. Bach (the horror, in this case, is that there is a little-known English composer with this surname!), Kondoliza Rays instead of Condoleezza Rice, Corc Buş instead of George Bush, Rixard Vaqner instead of Richard Wagner, ...Eko instead of Eco), which ultimately leads to total illiteracy and inaccuracy..."<sup>[29]</sup>.

To understand the basis upon which people make decisions regarding the specific translation of personal names into Azerbaijani and the logic they follow in doing so, journalist N. Aliyeva attempts to ascertain: "Stefan Sveyq, Ştefan Çveyq, or perhaps Ştefan Tsveyq? In fact, none of them! The correct version is the one presented in the identity document, i.e., Stefan Zweig! ...I took these three translation options for the name of the famous Austrian writer Stefan Zweig from the page of the website..., where the translation into Azerbaijani of the novella 'The Letter from an Unknown Woman' was posted by translator Ilkin Seyidzade, as well as from his own website. ...The fact that we 'translate' the name and surname of a person, but not only do we do it incorrectly, but also in the same text, two or more 'translation' options are offered... indicates the dire state in which we find ourselves today regarding this issue. The German, English, French, and American press convey the Italian name Giovanni in the same way as Italians themselves – Giovanni. However, the Azerbaijani press Azerbaijani-izes this name and 'translates' it into Azerbaijani as Covanni. ...Personal names are a special category and should be written the same way as in the original..."<sup>[30]</sup>.

Famed Azerbaijani composer F. Allahverdi does not hide his outrage: "...We write the surname we pronounce as Şekspir using the entire family of alphabets based on the Latin script as Shakespeare. Only we, like cuckoos, write Şekspir. So why is that? Because at one time, we used Cyrillic (and, of course, were trained in the transcription of foreign proper names using Cyrillic), and today we have created a remarkable synthesis of two traditions of name transmission. ...If we use the Latin script, it means we are full-fledged members of the family of Latin alphabets. We must respect others, and others – us. If we write the surname of their writer as Shakespeare, then they, for example, should write the surname of our singer as Üzeyir Mehdizadə, and not Uzeyir Mehdizada or Mehdi-zadeh..."<sup>[31]</sup>.

In an attempt to draw the attention of the academic community to the current problem and to invite colleagues to discuss it, translation scholar and practicing translator, Professor of the Azerbaijan University of Languages, Gylindzhan Bayramov made a corresponding attempt. In his presentation at the International Scientific Conference "Intercultural Dialogue: Linguistic, Pedagogical, and Literary Aspects"<sup>[32]</sup>, held from November 25 to 26, 2010, in Baku, G. Bayramov, using numerous examples of unsuccessful translations, pointed out the paramount importance of solving the problem, which literally consists in transforming proper names when transferring from one language to another. He addressed everyone with the following appeal:



“...Let’s not adapt our names, let’s at least convey them to languages using the Latin script as they are. Let’s preserve the original spelling of personal names when translating from languages with Latin script. In this case, no one will be able to transform our names as they see fit, and our names will not be distorted...” [32].

Despite the calls from individual citizens concerned about the indicated problem, whose views from eleven and twelve years ago were acquainted with, the existence of innumerable examples similar to those presented in this section confirms that the issue of transferring personal names in Azerbaijan continues to persist and that after another decade, the situation has not changed. Whether these and similar calls will find a response in the future is an open question.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion of this study, let’s venture to forecast which of the scenarios considered Kazakhstan is more likely to choose. Considering the geopolitical and geoeconomic role that Kazakhstan aspires to play in resolving global and regional issues, its desire to strengthen its authority on the international stage, and its willingness to integrate into the pan-European family of languages and cultures, there is a high probability that, by transitioning to the Latin script, the Kazakh language will follow the path of the Turkish language. Given the long-standing and time-tested experience of the Turkish language, it appears to be the optimal means of achieving the country’s goals and objectives and bringing it closer to Europe. On the other hand, the Kazakh language shares a common historical past, a common experience of brief use of the Latin script, and a common experience of using Cyrillic with the Azerbaijani language. From this perspective, there are no objective reasons to exclude the possibility that, at least initially after the transition to the new Kazakh Latin script, personal names in Kazakhstan will continue to be transcribed by inertia, i.e., a situation similar to that observed in Azerbaijan today may emerge. The choice of how to spell one’s name in European languages is ultimately preferred by the current leader of Kazakhstan, whose fate it will likely be to make a somewhat fateful choice for the country, between the transcription from Kazakh Cyrillic *Kassym-Jomart Tokayev* or the original Kazakh *Qasym-Jomart Toqayev*, will be revealed with time. As they say, time will tell.

## Disclosure statement

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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