

Article

Toward an Onomastic Account of Vietnamese Surnames

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Abstract: This article presents a comprehensive exploration of Vietnamese surnames, with a specific focus on those attributed to the Kinh people, from an onomastic perspective. Beginning with a broad overview of general studies on Vietnamese names, the paper introduces the prevailing name structure, which follows the format [Surname + (Middle name) + Given name]. The study then delves into a careful examination of Vietnamese surnames, addressing key facets such as their origin, distinctive characteristics, quantity, and distribution. Notably, the article emphasizes the widespread usage of the Nguyễn surname, offering arguments and insights into its prevalence. Furthermore, the paper discusses the intricate nature of the meanings associated with Vietnamese surnames and highlights the legal considerations surrounding them. By combining historical context with cultural significance, the article aims to provide valuable insights into the complexities inherent in Vietnamese surnames. Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the historical roots and cultural significance of Kinh group surnames within the broader context of Vietnamese onomastics.

Keywords: family name; Vietnamese personal name; Kinh people; Nguyễn surname; name model

1. Introduction

1.1. Vietnamese Personal Names

The population of Vietnam, as per the 2019 Census, stands slightly above 96 million. The majority of this population, 85.3%, comprises the Vietnamese people, alternatively known as Viet or Kinh. Despite the coexistence of 54 ethnic groups within the nation, the Kinh, acting as a unified social and ethnic majority, wield considerable influence across political, economic, and linguistic spheres. The Kinh community serves as custodians of the predominant culture, and generally, the designation “Vietnamese” is commonly used interchangeably with “Kinh” and vice versa. In Viet Nam, the populace predominantly communicates in Vietnamese, the official national language, which is also the language of the Kinh. This language is characterized as a tonal monosyllabic Mon–Khmer language.¹

The term “Vietnamese personal names” can be understood in two ways. Specifically, it refers to the names of Kinh individuals, referred to here as VPNs (Vietnamese personal names). In a more general sense, VPNs encompass the personal names of all Vietnamese people, irrespective of their ethnic background. While the main focus of this article is to describe Kinh personal names, the author uses the broader term VPNs due to the aforementioned considerations. When precision is required, the author opts for expressions such as “Vietnamese personal names” or “personal names of the Kinh people/group”.

As Nguyễn (2010) holds, it is important to clarify that the term “VPNs” primarily denotes “Vietnamese given names” in this context. However, in a broader sense, it is occasionally employed to encompass other components such as surnames and middle names within the overall structure of Vietnamese names. Additionally, within this article, the expression “structure of VPNs” is loosely indicative of the various models of Vietnamese given names, while the term “pattern” is utilized to denote the individual elements constituting these models (see Section 2 below).



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1.2. Research Studies on Vietnamese Personal Names

The examination of Vietnamese proper names, which includes personal names, seems to have begun a bit later compared to onomastic studies in European countries, including Britain. As per [Phạm \(1996\)](#), during the period spanning the 1930s to the 1950s, a handful of scholars, including [Phan \(1930\)](#) and [Đào \(1951\)](#), initiated the exploration of VPNs. However, their work predominantly consisted of presenting overviews or proposing further investigations into various facets of Vietnamese personal names, such as the origin of surnames, the rationale behind naming, naming practices, or alterations in given names.

Only in the 1960s, gaining more prominence in the 1970s, did a notable cohort of researchers from diverse fields start displaying significant academic curiosity in the examination of proper names. This interest was spurred by urgent requests from education reformists advocating orthographical standardization, particularly concerning the practical aspect of capitalizing proper nouns/names. Within their individual discourses, academics from a variety of fields—including philosophy, linguistics, history, and ethnography—were all forced to address the onomastic characteristics of given names. This was especially clear in their attempts to clarify name patterns and identify their functions within the naming system. The exploration of VPNs can be classified into distinct categories, encompassing historical, ethnographic, sociological, and linguistic perspectives (see [Diệp 1986](#); [Hồ 1967a, 1967b](#); [Lê \[1992\] 2005](#); [Nguyễn 1973b](#); [Nguyễn 1967](#); [Nguyễn 2010, 2022](#); [Phạm 1996, 2003](#); [Thái 1963](#); [Trần 1960](#)).

Scholars with backgrounds in history, ethnography, and sociology typically center their attention on delineating personal names and elucidating the rationale behind changes and evolutions in Vietnamese society over historical periods. In contrast, as [Nguyễn \(2010\)](#) maintains, researchers employing linguistic approaches predominantly delve into the orthography of proper names or other facets related to the standardization of VPNs (see [Hoàng and Nguyễn 1984](#); [Hồ 1976](#); [Lê 1972](#); [Lê \[1992\] 2005](#); [Lê and Nguyễn 1962](#); [Nguyễn 1973a](#); [Nguyễn 1972a](#); [Nguyễn 1995](#); [Nguyễn 1972b](#); [Nguyễn 1979](#)). In brief, whether rooted in linguistic or non-linguistic frameworks, as per ([Phạm 1996](#), p. 25), prior investigations into VPNs predominantly center around four key aspects: (1) the origin of personal names (including surnames); (2) the structure of personal names; (3) historical and cultural characteristics and naming practices; and changes and developments of names through historical periods.

This article aims at contributing to a comprehensive understanding of Vietnamese surnames, particularly those associated with the Kinh people, by exploring their historical roots, cultural significance, and the inherent complexities within the broader context of Vietnamese onomastics. It commences by introducing the topic of “Vietnamese Personal Names” followed by an overview of existing studies in the same domain. Section 2 delves into the “Structure of Vietnamese Personal Names” establishing a foundational understanding. The focal point of the research lies in Section 3, concentrating on “Vietnamese Family Names (Surnames).” Subsections cover the origin, distinctions between given names, middle names, and surnames, along with discussions on characteristics, quantity, and notable instances such as the prevalence of the Nguyễn surname. The section concludes by addressing the meanings associated with Vietnamese surnames and relevant legal considerations, offering a concise and comprehensive insight into the intricacies of Vietnamese family names.

2. Structure of Vietnamese Personal Names

The structure of Vietnamese personal names is generally non-controversial, with two universally acknowledged models ([Lê \[1992\] 2005](#); [Phạm 1996](#); [Nguyễn 2010](#)). The first model (Model 1), widely prevalent today, follows the pattern of [surname + middle name + given name] (e.g., *Triệu Thị Trinh*, *Khúc Thừa Dụ*, *Nguyễn Ái Quốc*, *Võ Thị Sáu*). [Surname + given name] (such as *Phùng Hưng*, *Đình Diên*, *Phạm Hùng*) is agreed as the second model (Model 2). Concerning the comprehensive structure of VPNs, which includes the surname, middle name, and given name, [Trần \(1984\)](#) contends that the evolution of this

nomenclature framework began in the third century BC and gradually gained prevalence, reaching widespread usage by the mid-20th century.

Nguyễn's analysis, based on the names of 333 members of Parliament (MPs) in 1946 and candidates for the 2006 university entrance exams in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, reveals a decline in the traditional structure of Model 2 (a monosyllabic surname and a monosyllabic given name). While 51 out of 333 MPs in 1946 adhered to this model (15.31%), in 2006, only 267 out of 39,159 candidates in Hanoi followed suit (0.68%). In Ho Chi Minh City, among 57,327 candidates, merely 479 retained this traditional model, accounting for 0.83% (2010, p. 58).

The initial component of Vietnamese personal names' structure, the surname, frequently comprises a single syllable (a monosyllabic surname). However, as asserted by (Lê [1992] 2005), aside from one-syllable surnames, there exists a limited number of Vietnamese surnames composed of more than one word or syllable. In such instances, surnames are either compound or joint surnames (e.g., *Tôn Thất Tùng*, *Nguyễn Lê Tuệ Minh*).

Concerning the middle name, a conventional agreement posits that the majority of middle names are monosyllabic. However, Phan (1972), Nguyễn (1975), Phạm (1988), and (Lê [1992] 2005) argue that the prevalence lies in middle names with two or more syllables (disyllabic or polysyllabic). Furthermore, in certain cases, a complete name may encompass more than one distinct middle name. As per these scholars, in a female name such as *Lê Thị Thu Hằng*, for example, *Thị* and *Thu* are two separate middle names. In this article, a different view on this issue is held in the case of the aforementioned example. It is posited that there exists only a single middle name, denoted by the word/syllable *Thị*. *Thu* is one part of the disyllabic given name *Thu Hằng*, since the meaning of the name becomes fully apparent only when considered as a two-word denomination. *Hằng* may refer to the "moon" or "Goddess of the Moon", or it may refer to human characteristics such as durability, determination, or loyalty, while *Thu* lexically means "Autumn". *Thu Hằng* would refer to an "Autumn moon", which is considered a very beautiful female name in Vietnamese culture. The parents of this girl likely intend to underscore the notion that "our daughter possesses a beauty akin to the moon in Autumn."

On the given name, as (Nguyễn 2010, p. 59) discusses, in contrast to the surname, there is a consensus among most researchers that both monosyllabic and disyllabic (compound) given names exist, with monosyllabic names outnumbering disyllabic ones. Nevertheless, owing to the widespread adoption of the [Surname + Middle name + Given name] model and customary addressing norms, numerous researchers propose the delineation of compound given names (Phan 1972; Nguyễn 1973a). For example, in the case of the name *Nguyễn Ái Quốc*, where *Ái Quốc* constitutes a singular nominal expression meaning "patriot", the researchers assert that the name should be parsed into two parts, with *Ái* serving as the middle name and *Quốc* as the given name.

In fact, this poses a current challenge in the processing and study of VPNs. Additionally, it extends to a more profound and enduring issue in onomastics, namely, the meaning or sense of proper names. In the given example, when considering the name strictly as a label for a particular individual, the optimal approach is to deconstruct the name into three segments (*Nguyễn*—surname; *Ái*—middle name; *Quốc*—given name). However, if the emphasis is on the "sense" or "content" of the name, it should remain undivided. This is because only when *Ái Quốc* is treated as a single given name does the complete meaning of the name ("patriot") become fully conveyed.²

Given the phonological attributes of the Vietnamese language and adherence to traditional stereotypes, a majority of traditional Vietnamese given names are monosyllabic. Phạm (1996) notes that monosyllabic given names constitute approximately 83%. Nevertheless, there has been a substantial increase in the number of given names with more than one syllable, typically with two syllables, in recent years (Lê [1992] 2005; Nguyễn 2010).

Vietnamese monosyllabic names exhibit minimal or no clear gender distinctions. Although it is theoretically feasible to differentiate male from female names, such distinctions are largely relative and arbitrary due to the absence of firm rules. In Vietnamese, being

an analytic language with names derived from lexical words, determining the gender of an individual with a monosyllabic main name is challenging. Conversely, disyllabic main names display more evident gender-specific characteristics. The following examples, drawn from [Nguyễn \(2010\)](#)'s work, illustrate the challenges in determining gender solely based on main names in Vietnamese culture. For instance, discerning the gender of an individual with the main name *Hạnh* "happy", "happiness" proves impractical. However, Vietnamese adults commonly attribute a gender association, associating a compound given name such as *Thúy Hạnh* with a woman and *Đức Hạnh* with a man. When employed as middle names or positioned preceding monosyllabic given names, morphemes such as *Thúy* and *Đức* significantly impact the likelihood of being associated with a specific gender. Traditionally, *Thúy* "deep blue" serves as a middle name for women, while *Đức* "morality" is a middle name for men.

The inclination of Vietnamese individuals towards choosing compound given names stems from the belief that only word compounding can capture beauty and moral nobility ([Lê \[1992\] 2005](#)). It is unsurprising that a predominant proportion of names signifying aesthetic qualities are allocated as female given names, such as *Hiền Thục* "graceful", *Hiếu Thảo* "devoted", and *Ánh Hằng* "moon light". Compound names signifying moral nobility typically align with male given names such as *Tuấn Tài* "talent", *Trung Nghĩa* "noble loyalty", *Đức Nhân* "man of morality", "gentleman".

Officially, VPNs do not undergo ellipsis or truncation. This practice is avoided to prevent a given name from potentially becoming another. Vietnamese, being an isolating language, maintains a stable word form, and grammatical categories are not expressed through affixes. However, as previously noted in supporting the separation of disyllabic names, the first component in compound names can be considered the middle name and is frequently omitted in everyday conversation. For example, the name *Hồng Thuý* may be truncated to the second element, which is *Thuý*. This form of ellipsis is prevalent in informal communication ([Nguyễn 2010](#)).

In brief, Vietnamese name researchers may diverge in their perspectives on specific facets of VPN patterns. Nevertheless, there is a prevailing consensus that at least two overarching models of VPNs exist: [Surname + Middle name + Given name] and [Surname + Given name]. These name patterns can be nested within each other to form a structure like this: [Surname + (Middle name) + Given name], where the middle name component may or may not be present.

3. Vietnamese Family Names (Surnames)

3.1. The Origin

This section presents a concise overview of the origins of VPNs. Delving into the "organic" relationships, particularly existential connections, between the surname and other components within the structure of VPNs, an investigation is undertaken to explore the origins of both the given name and the middle name.

3.1.1. Given Names and Middle Names

In Vietnamese, as reported by ([Lê \[1992\] 2005](#)), [Phạm \(1996\)](#), [Nguyễn \(2010\)](#), various terms refer to the given name, such as "tên đẻ" (birth name, given at birth), "tên bộ" (registered name), "tên cá nhân" (personal name), and "tên chính" (main name). The given name is often referred to as "first name" in English, reflecting its position preceding the surname. However, in Viet Nam and numerous other East Asian countries, the given name consistently follows the surname or family name. This distinction arises from the societal emphasis on individualism or collectivism within these respective cultures (see [Hofstede 2001](#)).

VPNs, akin to names in other cultures, have a historical origin dating back to the time when humans first started naming entities. [Trần \(1984\)](#) ethnologically suggests that the practice of using vocabulary words as personal names in Viet Nam traces back to the third century BC. However, the exact inception of personal names remains uncertain.

Notably, many Vietnamese given names originated as vocabulary words. Despite this clarity regarding given names, there are varied views on the origins of other elements in personal names, such as middle names.

Researchers express differing opinions on the origin of Vietnamese middle names. [Trần \(1984\)](#) contends that Vietnamese middle names have ancient roots, originating alongside surnames around 300 BC. Conversely, [Nguyễn \(1975\)](#) argues that Vietnamese middle names emerged later than surnames. According to this researcher, until the 20th century, most Vietnamese full names consisted of only two elements—surname and given name.

3.1.2. Surnames

As can be seen from the name structure, the Vietnamese surname does not appear last; rather, it comes first. This is why the terms “family name” or “surname” are employed instead of “last name” to prevent any potential confusion.

Debates about the origins of Vietnamese family names present two opposing views. One perspective argues that Vietnamese people lack distinct surnames, attributing their names predominantly to Chinese influences. Scholars such as [Nguyễn \(1967\)](#) and [Nguyễn \(1975\)](#) assert the Chinese origin of all Vietnamese surnames. In contrast, proponents of an alternative viewpoint, including [Hồ \(1967b\)](#), [Trần \(1984\)](#), and ([Lê \[1992\] 2005](#)), advocate for the coexistence of borrowed Chinese surnames and authentic Vietnamese family names. Despite contrasting stances, these perspectives contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex history of Vietnamese family names.

Drawing on ethnographic evidence, [Diệp \(1986\)](#) and [Diệp and Đào \(1990\)](#) propose a hypothesis suggesting that indigenous Vietnamese surnames emerged from place-names in the Red River delta. For instance, the prevalent surname *Nguyễn* might trace its roots to Old Vietnamese terms for spring, canal, or small river “*nguồn, ngòi*”, originally denoting those residing alongside such water bodies (see also [Nguyễn 2010](#)). [Trần \(1984\)](#), in an effort to establish the local origin of Vietnamese surnames, posits that they evolved from traditional totems such as *Gà* (Chicken tribe) and *Trâu* (Buffalo tribe). According to this scholar, these names, now acknowledged as surnames, began to be adopted at the start of the first millennium.

The perspective posited is that Vietnamese surnames can encompass both indigenous names and linguistically borrowed surnames, primarily derived from Chinese origins. Due to the early period of Chinese dominance, family names in Viet Nam have a much longer history compared to many other regions worldwide. It cannot be denied that the idea of adopting surnames stems from the intersection and influence of Chinese culture.

According to [Nosowitz \(2017\)](#), the concept of a family name was unfamiliar to most societies unless they were subjected to conquest by cultures that utilized such naming conventions. Notable conquerors introducing family names included the Romans, Normans, Chinese, and later the Spanish, Portuguese, Germans, and Americans. It was the Chinese who introduced family names to Viet Nam. The presence of surnames in Viet Nam traces back to 111 BC, marking the commencement of an extended thousand-year occupation by the Han Dynasty from China (although there were brief attempts at independence before the Vietnamese successfully ousted the Chinese in 939 AD). The period prior to this remains uncertain regarding how the Vietnamese managed names, given the absence of written records. Before the dominance of the Chinese, it is likely that the Vietnamese had not used family names. While some reports suggest otherwise, there is a lack of clear scientific evidence to support this claim.

According to [Lê \(\[1992\] 2005\)](#) and [Biện \(2015\)](#), during the period before the Chinese domination, the Vietnamese people, like many other ethnic groups, used only personal names in addressing each other. There is no evidence of surnames among the Vietnamese during this time. The earliest records mentioning Vietnamese having surnames indicate that, at the latest, by the first half of the 2nd century, the Vietnamese started using surnames, either independently or through cultural interaction with the Han culture. This absence of family names was not unusual in historical contexts, as much of the world did not

adopt them prior to the 18th century. Instead, “patronymic” names were more widespread, referencing only the immediately preceding generation. Such names are still prevalent in various parts of the world, notably in Scandinavia and the Middle East. Surnames ending in *-son* or including *Ben* or *Ibn* typically signify patronymic names (Nosowitz 2017).³

From a historical and cultural perspective, it can be easily observed that the surnames of contemporary Vietnamese people mostly belong to the 16 ancestral lineages that once held significant influence in history. In chronological order, these surnames are *Thục, Trưng, Triệu, Mai, Khúc, Lý, Phùng, Kiều, Ngô, Đinh, Lê, Trần, Hồ, Mạc, Trịnh, and Nguyễn*. Individuals may either be direct descendants of these names or adopt them, either by borrowing or being compelled to use them, even if they are not truly related to the original lineages (Nguyễn 1998).

In feudal times, Vietnamese individuals often adopted the family name of the ruling authority as an expression of loyalty. This practice involved the frequent changing of names to align with the succession of rulers. Families sometimes voluntarily changed their surnames to that of the ruling dynasty to demonstrate loyalty. Individuals, such as *Nguyễn Trãi*, were granted new names by the king, such as *Lê Trãi*, aligning with the ruling dynasty.⁴ Others were compelled to change their surnames to that of the current dynasty, especially after the overthrow of a previous dynasty, as a way to show allegiance to the new ruling power. In many cases, the government forced the populace to abandon their original surnames to adopt a national identity, preventing dissenting groups from attempting to overthrow the ruling dynasty or causing unrest among those associated with the recently toppled regime for political reasons (aligning with fate or divine will). During the time of Gia Long and Minh Mạng in the Nguyễn Dynasty (early 19th century), individuals with the surname *Lê* were required to change their surname to *Nguyễn*. This was done because, during that period, leaders of movements opposing the dynasty often bore the surname *Lê* (Lê [1992] 2005).

In addition, the act of changing surnames in the history of Viet Nam comes from various other reasons. Some individuals changed their surnames to evade taxes, avoid military responsibilities and penalties, or due to urgent situations where they were compelled to alter their names to avoid undesirable consequences. Under the Vietnamese feudal regimes, when one person in a family was accused, sometimes the entire family had to bear the consequences, and changing the surname could be a measure to distance themselves from the reputation or relationship with the accused. Furthermore, to adhere to the avoidance of the royal name taboo, many individuals were compelled to change their surnames whenever a new lord, king, or dynasty ascended to power.

In terms of new surnames, the last ruling family in Viet Nam, the Nguyễn Dynasty, which ruled from 1802 to 1945, contributed a number of names and surnames. The descendants of this *Nguyễn* family, from the reign of Minh Mạng (1820–1841) onwards, have differentiated themselves by lineages and generations through various distinct “new” surnames. In order, the descendants of the same generation carry different individual surnames, though there is an implicit understanding that they all belong to the *Nguyễn* family (e.g., *Công Tăng Tôn Nữ, Tôn Thất*...). In general, these “new” surnames serve to identify individuals as belonging to the royal *Nguyễn* family and as descendants of the emperors’ branches. However, these surnames are not considered surnames in the traditional sense.

Last but not least, the source of many Vietnamese surnames is from Chinese names. Back in history, the Vietnamese people originated from the southern plains of the Yangtze River in China to the Red River Delta in Viet Nam today. Faced with Han Chinese invasions, their ancestors had to migrate southward and establish a nation in the Red River Delta, Northern Viet Nam, around the 4th century BC. Subsequently, there was a process of expanding the territories by various dynasties moving southward. The southward expansion halted when the French occupied and established French Indochina. On the other hand, the country experienced a thousand years of domination by the Han Chinese and later by various Chinese dynasties. Some soldiers came to Giao Chỉ (ancient name for northern Viet Nam) and chose to settle, establishing families and generations. Additionally, the nation

has also welcomed many Chinese immigrants seeking refuge or resettlement. Notably, members of the Ming dynasty's nobility settled in Southern Viet Nam after their homeland was invaded by the Manchu (Qing) forces.

This is the historical reason for some Vietnamese surnames of Chinese origin, such as *Khổng, Lưu, Trương, Mai, Lâm, Lữ, Nhan, Sủ, Tăng, Trịnh, Vương*, etc., or of Khmer (Cambodian) origin such as *Thạch, Sơn, Danh, Kim, Lâm*, etc., which were bestowed by the Nguyễn dynasty. Additionally, surnames of Cham origin such as *Chế, Chiêm*, etc., or those of ethnic minorities such as *Linh, Giáp, Ma, Đèo, Kha, Diêu, Vi, Quách, Nông, Chử, Ngân, Ông, Trà, Lang, Lục, Sầm*, etc. (see [Lê \[1992\] 2005](#)).

3.2. Main Characteristics of Vietnamese Surnames

Vietnamese surnames, with their rich historical and cultural significance, exhibit distinctive characteristics that set them apart from naming conventions in other parts of the world. These names play a crucial role in distinguishing individuals based on their origin and lineage, embodying a connection to the past.

The primary function of Vietnamese surnames is to identify individuals sharing a common ancestry or lineage from those with different origins. These names are often accompanied by given names and, in some cases, a middle name. While the inclusion of a middle name is common, it is not mandatory. The position of the surname is at the forefront of the full name, emphasizing its significance in personal identification. In contrast to Western and some Asian countries, where individuals address each other by their surnames, Vietnamese people use given names for communication. Single given names such as *Hùng, Trang, Tuấn, Linh*... are typical and reflect a personal and informal approach in addressing one another.

A peculiarity of the Vietnamese denomination system is observed in the marital practices of Vietnamese women. When marrying, women traditionally retain their maiden surnames instead of adopting their husband's surname. However, in certain contexts, it is acceptable for individuals to use the husband's given name to refer to the wife. For example, if *Trần Thị Thuận* married *Nguyễn Đức Long*, she might be referred to (unofficially) as *Mrs Long*.

The influence of Chinese culture is evident in Viet Nam, especially among those of Chinese descent. Many new surnames have been introduced, contributing to the cultural diversity of Viet Nam. The Kinh people, primarily comprising the Vietnamese majority, typically have single-syllable surnames, though exceptions such as *Hoàng Phủ, Tôn Thất*, and *Tôn Nữ* exist. In contrast, other ethnic minorities often have surnames consisting of two syllables or more. In recent times, there has been a trend of Vietnamese individuals creating new surnames. An example is the *Khiếu* surname, reflecting the dynamic nature of Vietnamese naming conventions and the evolving cultural landscape ([Lê 2013](#), pp. 28–31).

In short, Vietnamese surnames play a pivotal role in preserving cultural identity and familial connections. Their unique characteristics, from their function in distinguishing individuals to the influence of historical and cultural factors, contribute to the rich tapestry of Viet Nam's naming traditions.

3.3. The Quantity

In contrast to the great quantity of given names, Vietnamese surnames are significantly outnumbered. This discrepancy arises from the linguistic principle that virtually every word in the Vietnamese lexicon can be employed as a given name, thereby amplifying the overall count of given names.

Regarding the quantity of surnames in Viet Nam, [Lê \(Lê \[1992\] 2005, pp. 38–56\)](#) indicates that there are approximately 1050 Vietnamese surnames, encompassing those of all 54 ethnic groups in the country, with 165 identified as Kinh surnames. However, the “precise number of Kinh surnames remains uncertain” and further onomastic studies are required for a more accurate determination ([Lê \[1992\] 2005, p. 38](#)). Many researchers, when addressing the count of Kinh surnames, generally employ the term “several hundred”,

refraining from providing an exact enumeration. Although (Phạm 1996, p. 53) concedes his inability to present a comprehensive list of Kinh surnames, the researcher does furnish a catalog of 174 monosyllabic Kinh surnames, which is regarded as the most comprehensive to date. It is noteworthy that the majority of Kinh surnames are monosyllabic, while the rest are either joint or compound surnames. During the research studies conducted by the author on Vietnamese names, a systematic cataloging process identified 312 distinct surnames within the Kinh population (see Appendix A). This pivotal finding is rooted in the analysis of data from the 2006 university entrance examination, which encompassed 883,835 candidates who participated in the exams nationwide. The statistics were officially disclosed by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in 2006. This database includes essential information fields regarding candidates, encompassing full names, birthdates, gender, birthplaces, ethnicity, schools, districts, and provinces. Extracting data from individuals self-declaring as “Kinh” in the ethnicity field yields a total of 312 records. It is important to note that this information is self-reported by the candidates and has not undergone a verification process for accuracy (see also Nguyễn 2010).

According to Lê ([1992] 2005), the *Nguyễn* family name is the most populous in Viet Nam, comprising 38.4% of the population. The second-largest is the *Trần* family name with 12.1%, followed by the *Lê* at 9.5%, the *Phạm* at 7%, the *Hoàng/Huỳnh* at 5.1%, the *Phan* at 4.5%, and the *Vũ/Võ* at 3.9%. These seven family names alone account for 80.5% of the population. The *Nguyễn* surname, along with 13 other common ones, make up approximately 90% of the population of Viet Nam.

Figure 1 presents 14 common surnames of the Vietnamese people along with their respective population percentages as compiled (Lê [1992] 2005).

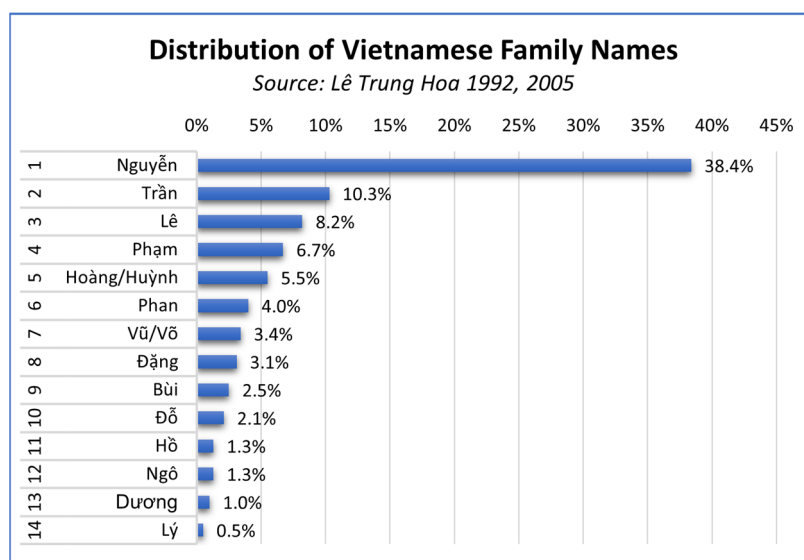


Figure 1. Fourteen most popular surnames (Lê [1992] 2005).

Nevertheless, the compilation of the 15 common surnames among the Vietnamese people in the book *100 Common Surnames in Viet Nam* published by the Viet Nam Social Sciences Publishing House in 2022 (NXBKHXH), presents slightly different percentages.

As seen in Figure 2, the 15 most common surnames in Viet Nam collectively constitute well over 90% of the population. In contrast, the 15 most popular surnames in the United States represent less than six percent of the population (Nosowitz 2017).

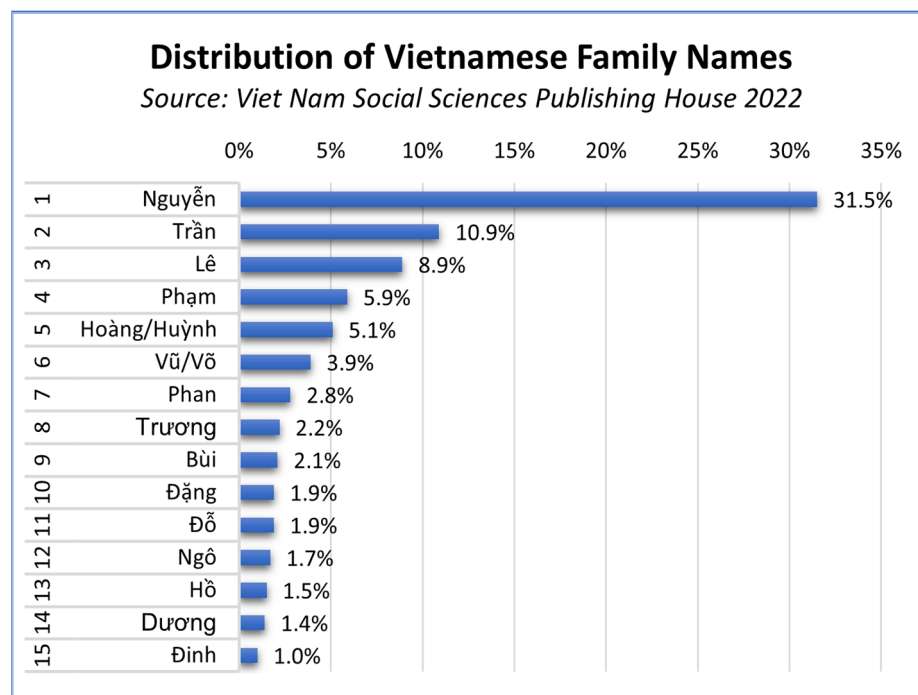


Figure 2. Fifteen most popular surnames (NXBKHXH 2022).

3.4. The Nguyễn Surname

As regards the popularity of *Nguyễn*, this family name is unarguably the most common surname of the Vietnamese people (as *Kim* and *Park* are in Korea). By some estimates, 30 to 39 percent of Vietnamese people bear this surname (Lê [1992] 2005). The author's compilation and analysis of the 100 most commonly occurring surnames from a list of 883,835 candidates aforementioned reveals that the *Nguyễn* surname was identified as representing 31.5689% at the national level, with percentages of 30.61% in Ho Chi Minh City and 39.01% in Hà Nội (see Appendix B; see also Nguyễn 2010).

Nosowitz (2017) learned from the censuses in the Anglosphere in the first two decades of the 21st century that *Smith* is still the most commonly used surname. As per the 2010 US census, approximately 0.8% of Americans bear this surname. According to the data from the 2015 KOSIS census, the three most commonly occurring surnames in Korea are *Kim*, *Lee*, and *Park*, representing 21.5%, 14.7%, and 8.4% of the population, respectively. Meanwhile, in Viet Nam, the prevalence of the *Nguyễn* surname is staggering, constituting a remarkable 30% to 40% of the entire population. It is not an exaggeration that for approximately every three Vietnamese individuals, one bears the surname *Nguyễn* (noting that the country's population was about over 96 million in 2019).

But why is *Nguyễn* so populous? Regarding the *Nguyễn* surname, it holds an additional, somewhat perplexing reason for its prevalence, especially from a Western perspective. According to Lê ([1992] 2005), during the reign of Trần Thái Tông in 1232, after seizing power from the Lý dynasty, Trần Thủ Độ—the de facto ruler—citing the reason that the Trần family had the same surname as the Lý family, ordered all individuals with the surname Lý, who were descendants of the just-overthrown royal family, to change their surname to *Nguyễn*. However, the true intention was to eliminate the Lý royal family from memory by effectively discontinuing the use of the Lý surname. This historical event adds another layer of complexity to the prevalence and significance of the *Nguyễn* surname.

Moreover, the tradition of adopting the ruler's family name as a display of loyalty likely explains the abundance of *Nguyễn* in Viet Nam. Similar instances occurred in Korea with the surname *Park*, originating from King Hyeokgeose Park, the founder of a thousand-year dynasty. While this naming practice is not unique to Viet Nam, it reflects a historical tendency, as seen in Korea where the name *Park* (or *Bak* precisely) was embraced by many

after a peasant revolution in 1894 as a symbol of caste system abolition (Chung 2014, p. 71). The *Nguyễn* surname, originally significant, became even more prevalent as it evolved into the ruling lineage dominating the entire country for several centuries. With more than 300 years spanning nine lords and thirteen kings (until 1945), this family name experienced substantial growth. This does not include the additional families who adopted the *Nguyễn* surname as a distinguished reward granted by the king for their loyalty (the king's surname).

Besides its popularity, the pronunciation of the *Nguyễn* surname is also significantly impressive. There is a myth that one cannot be proficient in the Vietnamese language if they cannot pronounce the *Nguyễn* surname correctly. These variations are not necessarily wrong, but a fundamental challenge arises from the fact that there is not a universally accepted pronunciation for *Nguyễn*. The initial “Ng” sound is unfamiliar to Western ears as the beginning of a word. Viet Nam encompasses various dialects, with the primary division hinging on geography, particularly between the north and south. In the south, where sounds are often clipped, *Nguyễn* might be pronounced akin to “Win” or “Wen”. Conversely, in the north, the pronunciation tends to retain the full sound, resulting in something closer to “N’Win” or “Nuh’Win”, all compressed into a single syllable as best as possible. For a more technical characterization of the pronunciation, see footnote 5.⁵

Interestingly, *Nguyễn*—the most widely used name—also happens to be the most challenging to pronounce!

3.5. Vietnamese Surnames—The Meaning

All Vietnamese surnames have linguistic origins. Yet, as the aforementioned researchers emphasize, the majority of Vietnamese surnames are now etymologically opaque, being regarded more as names than as words.

In Vietnamese, another term referring to the mass is “trăm họ”, which literally means “hundred surnames.” As Lê ([1992] 2005) and Lê (2013) maintain, among the surnames some trace back to three or four thousand years, to a time when each tribe had its own symbol, be it a plant, an animal, or an object. Subsequently, certain families adopted these symbols as their surnames, for example, the surname *Âu*. Others symbolize professions, such as the surname *Đào* “potter”, or reflect the way of life of a tribe, as in the case of the surname *Trần* “fishery at river lower reaches.” Some denote the origin of the tribe or family. Initially, surnames were tribal names, which is why in English, they are referred to as “patronyms to distinguish them from “family name”.

Originally recorded in Classical Chinese, later supplemented with Nôm script (ancient Vietnamese Chinese script) and eventually romanized into Quốc ngữ (national language script, romanized writing system), Vietnamese family names have undergone significant influences along their historical journey. They have undergone transformations or misconceptions, making it challenging for contemporary individuals to grasp their original meanings. Despite sharing the same pronunciation as today, not every character necessarily evokes the same meaning. For instance, the surname *Đinh* is now understood to mean “citizen” or “person”, but its historical meaning may have been different. *Quách* carries the connotation of something sturdy, resistant, and simultaneously signifies an outer layer. The surname *Lê* originally meant “common people” in a general sense (Lê [1992] 2005).

For the reasons mentioned, when these surnames are recorded, they are understood as being written as a common noun but not necessarily interpreted to have the exact same meaning as that noun. Similar to how the English have surnames such as *Butcher*, *Baker*, and *Smith*, which may indicate their ancestors’ professions, the characters in these surnames do not necessarily have to evoke actions, states, or objects associated with the noun. This is especially true since the introduction of the Latin alphabet, where characters are less pictorial and can be more prone to misunderstandings. Surnames listed in contemporary dictionaries should not be considered definitively meaningful. Therefore, it is not possible to assert that a surname written in a certain way must mean a specific thing, or that it is equivalent to a common noun describing an object or action.

3.6. Vietnamese Surnames—Legal Issues

As observed by [Thiều \(2023\)](#), in the Civil Code of 2015, the right to have a surname and given name is regulated in Article 26, part of Section 2 concerning personal rights.

Within the specific factors that define an individual, the surname and given name are often considered the most fundamental. The surname of an individual notionally reflects their bloodline origin, while the given name serves as a unique identifier for each person. Article 26, Section 1 of the Civil Code of 2015 affirms: “Individuals have the right to have a surname and given name (including a middle name, if any). The surname and given name of a person are determined based on that person’s birth registration.” This provision highlights the intimate connection between the right to have a surname and given name and the right to register one’s birth. In essence, the surname and given name of an individual correspond to the entries in their birth registration document.

The determination of an individual’s surname at birth is regulated under Section 2, Article 26 of the Civil Code of 2015, specifically stating: “The surname of an individual is determined by agreement between the father’s surname and the mother’s surname; in the absence of an agreement, the child’s surname is determined based on customary practices. In cases where the father’s surname cannot be determined, the child’s surname is determined based on the mother’s surname.”

In the case of abandoned children, when the biological parents cannot be identified and the child is adopted, the surname of the child is determined based on the surname of the adoptive father, or of the adoptive mother as agreed upon by the adoptive parents. If there is only one adoptive parent, then the child’s surname is determined by that person’s surname. If the abandoned child has not been adopted, and the biological parents cannot be identified, the child’s surname is determined based on the proposal of the head of the childcare facility or the requestor for the child’s birth registration if the child is temporarily under their care.

Therefore, compared to the regulations on the right to have a surname and given name in Article 26 of the Civil Code of 2005, the provisions on this right in the Civil Code of 2015 have been expressed more clearly. This is evident through the addition of the possibility of including a middle name (if any) in Section 1 and the determination of the surname for the person born, based on the agreement between the father and mother. In cases where there is no agreement between the parents, the surname of the child, during the birth registration process, is determined based on customary practices.

4. Conclusions

In summary, this study has used the lens of onomastics to conduct a detailed investigation of Vietnamese surnames, with a focus on those associated with the Kinh group. The article effectively presents a comprehensive analysis of Vietnamese naming customs, outlining the widely used [Surname + (Middle name) + Given name] structure. Through a thorough investigation of the origin, unique traits, distribution, and quantity of Vietnamese surnames, this study has shown the diverse range of naming customs that exist within the Kinh population. The focus on the ubiquitous Nguyễn surname has revealed intriguing insights into its widespread usage, further deepening our understanding of its cultural prevalence. Additionally, the discussion on the meanings associated with Vietnamese surnames and the legal considerations surrounding them has underscored the intricate nature of these linguistic artifacts.

Unlike given names, which theoretically could be derived from any lexical words, the inventory of Kinh family names remains relatively limited, documented at several hundred (174 as per [Phạm Tất Thắng’s](#) findings in 1996 and 312 based on this current dataset). Furthermore, the semantic distinctions of Kinh family names often elude clarity and contemporary understanding. The primary challenges encountered in this research pertain to the acquisition of comprehensive, reliable, and current data. Notably, the research faces the limitations of a database that, while of high quality, is dated back to 2006. Consequently, the study underscores the necessity for future investigations to diligently amass data

reflective of more recent demographic shifts and nomenclatural developments in the realm of Vietnamese family names, particularly within the Kinh ethnic group. More studies and discussions are recommended to help uncover the many facets of Vietnamese surnames and to help people understand the rich linguistic history that has shaped the identity of the Kinh ethnic group and the Vietnamese people as a whole.

This study aspires to serve as a substantive scholarly asset, targeting academics, researchers, and enthusiasts intrigued by the complexities, historical development, and cultural relevance of Vietnamese surnames. By intertwining historical context with cultural insights, the article contributes to an enriched understanding of onomastics in Viet Nam. It endeavors to present a nuanced perspective on the intricate interplay among language, history, and identity within the specific domain of Vietnamese onomastics, fostering a comprehensive appreciation of the subject matter.

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Appendix A

Table A1. List of 312 surnames of the Kinh people.

List of 312 Surnames of the Kinh People					
1	Ái	105	Hoa	209	Phí
2	An	106	Hoà	210	Phó
3	Ăn	107	Hoài	211	Phong
4	Anh	108	Hoàng Phủ	212	Phú
5	Ánh	109	Hoàng/Huỳnh	213	Phù
6	Ao	110	Hồng	214	Phùng
7	Ấu	111	Hứa	215	Phương
8	Ấu	112	Hùng	216	Quách
9	Ấu Dương	113	Hưng	217	Quán
10	Bá	114	Hướng	218	Quản
11	Bạc	115	Hy	219	Quang
12	Bạch	116	Kha	220	Quàng
13	Bàn	117	Khà	221	Quảng
14	Bàng	118	Khai	222	Quế
15	Bành	119	Khâu	223	Quốc
16	Bảo	120	Khiếu	224	Quyền
17	Bế	121	Khoa	225	Sái
18	Bì	122	Khổng	226	Sâm
19	Biện	123	Khu	227	Sâm
20	Bình	124	Khuất	228	Son
21	Bồ	125	Khúc	229	Sử
22	Bùi	126	Khương	230	Sùng
23	Ca	127	Khuru	231	Sỳ
24	Cà	128	Kiều	232	Tạ
25	Cai	129	Kiểu	233	Tán
26	Cái	130	Kim	234	Tấn

Table A1. Cont.

List of 312 Surnames of the Kinh People					
27	Cam	131	Kinh	235	Tăng
28	Cầm	132	Kông	236	Tào
29	Cần	133	La	237	Tất
30	Cảnh	134	Lã/Lữ	238	Tề
31	Cao	135	Lạc	239	Thạch
32	Cáp	136	Lại	240	Thái
33	Cát	137	Lâm	241	Thắm
34	Chăng	138	Lăng	242	Thân
35	Chế	139	Lành	243	Thang
36	Chiêm/Chim	140	Lãnh	244	Thanh
37	Chử	141	Lầu	245	Thành
38	Chu/Châu	142	Lê	246	Thào
39	Chung	143	Lèng	247	Thập
40	Chúng	144	Lều	248	Thế
41	Chương	145	Liên	249	Thi
42	Cổ	146	Liệp	250	Thiểm
43	Cổ	147	Liêu	251	Thiếu
44	Công	148	Liêu	252	Thiệu
45	Cổng	149	Linh	253	Thịnh
46	Cù	150	Lò	254	Thoa
47	Cự	151	Lô	255	Thôi
48	Cung	152	Lỗ	256	Thống
49	Dã	153	Lộ	257	Thục
50	Đắc	154	Loan	258	Tiếp
51	Đái	155	Lộc	259	Tiết
52	Đàm	156	Long	260	Tiêu
53	Đan	157	Lù	261	Tinh
54	Đang	158	Lư	262	Tô
55	Đặng	159	Lục	263	Tôn
56	Danh	160	Lương	264	Tôn Nữ
57	Đào	161	Lương	265	Tôn Thất
58	Đầu	162	Lường	266	Tông
59	Đậu	163	Lưu	267	Tông
60	Đèo	164	Luyện	268	Tổng
61	Diêm	165	Ly	269	Trà
62	Diễn	166	Lý	270	Trác
63	Diệp	167	Ma	271	Trần
64	Diệp	168	Mã	272	Trang
65	Điều	169	Mạc	273	Tráng
66	Điều	170	Mạch	274	Trâu
67	Đinh	171	Mai	275	Tri
68	Đinh	172	Man	276	Tri
69	Đinh	173	Mấn	277	Triệu
70	Đỗ	174	Mang	278	Trình
71	Đỗ	175	Mạnh	279	Trịnh
72	Đoái	176	Mâu	280	Trung
73	Doãn	177	Mâu	281	Trưng
74	Đoàn	178	Mậu	282	Trương
75	Đoạn	179	Mễ	283	Từ
76	Đối/Đái	180	Miêu	284	Tuấn
77	Đôn	181	Minh	285	Tướng
78	Đổng	182	Mộc	286	Tướng
79	Đồng	183	Mông	287	Ty
80	Đồng	184	Mùa	288	Uân

Table A1. Cont.

List of 312 Surnames of the Kinh People					
81	Du	185	Mục	289	Ung
82	Dư	186	Ngạc	290	Ứng
83	Đức	187	Ngân	291	Ứng
84	Dương	188	Nghị	292	Uông
85	Đương	189	Nghiêm	293	Văn
86	Đường	190	Ngô	294	Vạn
87	Duy	191	Ngọc	295	Vàng
88	Giả	192	Ngọc	296	Vàng
89	Giản	193	Ngôn	297	Vàng
90	Giang	194	Ngũ	298	Vi
91	Giàng	195	Nguy	299	Viêm
92	Giảng	196	Nguyễn	300	Viên
93	Giao	197	Nhâm	301	Việt
94	Giáp	198	Nhan	302	Vĩnh
95	Hà	199	Nhữ	303	Vông
96	Hạ	200	Niê	304	Vu
97	Hán	201	Ninh	305	Vừ
98	Hàn	202	Nông	306	Vũ/Vô
99	Hàng	203	Ồ	307	Vương
100	Hầu	204	Ong	308	Vưu
101	Hầu	205	Ông	309	Xa
102	Hề	206	Phạm	310	Xung
103	Hình	207	Phan	311	Y
104	Hồ	208	Phi	312	Yên

Appendix B

The top 100 surnames were compiled at both regional (Ha Noi and HCM City) and national levels, encompassing a total of 883,835 candidates—39,159 from Ha Noi and 57,327 from HCM City. It is essential to note that these statistics encompass surnames from all 54 ethnic groups in Vietnam, with the Kinh group being predominant, constituting 86.21% of the population, as per the General Statistics Office of Viet Nam in 2006. This table is extracted from (Nguyễn 2010, pp. 333–34).

Table A2. The top 100 Vietnamese surnames.

HCM CITY				HÀ NỘI			NATIONAL		
		Count	Per.		Count	Per.	Count	Per.	
1	Nguyễn	17,546	30.61%	Nguyễn	15,025	39.01%	Nguyễn	279,014	31.5689%
2	Trần	6291	10.97%	Trần	2953	7.67%	Trần	83,582	9.4568%
3	Lê	4627	8.07%	Lê	2866	7.44%	Lê	76,584	8.6651%
4	Phạm	3474	6.06%	Phạm	2371	6.16%	Phạm	56,736	6.4194%
5	Huỳnh	2014	3.51%	Vũ	1703	4.42%	Hoàng	26,961	3.0505%
6	Vô	1632	2.85%	Đỗ	1565	4.06%	Vũ	26,907	3.0444%
7	Phan	1502	2.62%	Hoàng	1430	3.71%	Bùi	24,867	2.8136%
8	Trương	1255	2.19%	Bùi	1012	2.63%	Phan	21,662	2.4509%
9	Vũ	1228	2.14%	Ngô	904	2.35%	Đỗ	21,612	2.4453%
10	Bùi	1165	2.03%	Đặng	795	2.06%	Vô	18,484	2.0914%
11	Đỗ	1116	1.95%	Dương	625	1.62%	Đặng	17,877	2.0227%
12	Đặng	1091	1.90%	Đào	614	1.59%	Ngô	15,848	1.7931%
13	Ngô	984	1.72%	Phan	517	1.34%	Huỳnh	15,106	1.7092%
14	Hồ	868	1.51%	Đinh	444	1.15%	Trương	13,796	1.5609%
15	Hoàng	844	1.47%	Trịnh	394	1.02%	Dương	12,921	1.4619%
16	Dương	824	1.44%	Trương	346	0.90%	Đinh	12,243	1.3852%
17	Đinh	588	1.03%	Tạ	308	0.80%	Hồ	11,481	1.2990%
18	Đoàn	569	0.99%	Đoàn	307	0.80%	Trịnh	9019	1.0204%

Table A2. Cont.

HCM CITY				HÀ NỘI				NATIONAL			
		Count	Per.		Count	Per.		Count	Per.		
19	Lâm	556	0.97%	Chu	303	0.79%	Đào	8924	1.0097%		
20	Trịnh	501	0.87%	Lưu	298	0.77%	Đoàn	8559	0.9684%		
21	Mai	499	0.87%	Hà	263	0.68%	Hà	8518	0.9638%		
22	Lý	471	0.82%	Cao	251	0.65%	Mai	7951	0.8996%		
23	Lưu	435	0.76%	Mai	213	0.55%	Cao	6691	0.7570%		
24	Đào	419	0.73%	Lương	205	0.53%	Lương	6444	0.7291%		
25	Lương	404	0.70%	Vương	205	0.53%	Lưu	5199	0.5882%		
26	Hà	398	0.69%	Phùng	190	0.49%	Tạ	3968	0.4490%		
27	Cao	369	0.64%	Hồ	141	0.37%	Phùng	3872	0.4381%		
28	Thái	282	0.49%	Nghiêm	125	0.32%	Lâm	3668	0.4150%		
29	Tô	244	0.43%	Đàm	124	0.32%	Chu	3292	0.3725%		
30	Châu	225	0.39%	Võ	95	0.25%	Lý	3249	0.3676%		
31	Vương	222	0.39%	Tô	90	0.23%	Thái	2794	0.3161%		
32	Tạ	218	0.38%	Triệu	88	0.23%	Nông	2685	0.3038%		
33	Phùng	208	0.36%	Lại	86	0.22%	Tô	2475	0.2800%		
34	Tăng	197	0.34%	Thái	72	0.19%	Vương	2241	0.2536%		
35	Quách	150	0.26%	Lý	68	0.18%	Đàm	1800	0.2037%		
36	Văn	138	0.24%	Chữ	62	0.16%	Triệu	1726	0.1953%		
37	Hứa	130	0.23%	Quách	59	0.15%	Quách	1636	0.1851%		
38	Diệp	109	0.19%	Kiều	56	0.15%	Văn	1601	0.1811%		
39	Từ	107	0.19%	Lâm	54	0.14%	Lại	1553	0.1757%		
40	Hồng	104	0.18%	Lã	46	0.12%	Châu	1529	0.1730%		
41	Lại	103	0.18%	Tổng	46	0.12%	Tổng	1486	0.1681%		
42	Chu	100	0.17%	Phí	45	0.12%	Vì	1409	0.1594%		
43	La	97	0.17%	Đồng	44	0.11%	Đồng	1330	0.1505%		
44	Giang	94	0.16%	Doãn	40	0.10%	Kiều	1293	0.1463%		
45	Chung	93	0.16%	Công	38	0.10%	Tăng	1056	0.1195%		
46	Đàm	92	0.16%	Khúc	38	0.10%	Thân	1026	0.1161%		
47	Tổng	82	0.14%	Văn	37	0.10%	Hứa	964	0.1091%		
48	Huỳnh	67	0.12%	Bạch	37	0.10%	Lò	936	0.1059%		
49	Trang	66	0.12%	Tăng	27	0.07%	Đậu	886	0.1002%		
50	Tôn	66	0.12%	Giang	27	0.07%	Ma	844	0.0955%		
51	Lư	63	0.11%	Khổng	24	0.06%	La	825	0.0933%		
52	Triệu	61	0.11%	Thạch	23	0.06%	Nghiêm	781	0.0884%		
53	Kiều	60	0.10%	Âu	22	0.06%	Từ	743	0.0841%		
54	Liêu	56	0.10%	Khuất	21	0.05%	Thạch	726	0.0821%		
55	Mã	51	0.09%	Tưởng	21	0.05%	H'	653	0.0739%		
56	Đồng	50	0.09%	Hoa	20	0.05%	Y	646	0.0731%		
57	Thân	46	0.08%	Từ	20	0.05%	Huỳnh	645	0.0730%		
58	Lữ	46	0.08%	Huỳnh	20	0.05%	Lã	623	0.0705%		
59	Dư	44	0.08%	Cù	19	0.05%	Lường	618	0.0699%		
60	Lai	35	0.06%	Khương	19	0.05%	Mạc	591	0.0669%		
61	Mạch	34	0.06%	Cung	19	0.05%	Bạch	574	0.0649%		
62	Lã	34	0.06%	An	18	0.05%	Diệp	546	0.0618%		
63	Tất	33	0.06%	Đậu	17	0.04%	Tôn	545	0.0617%		
64	Lục	33	0.06%	Mạc	16	0.04%	Lục	531	0.0601%		
65	Bành	32	0.06%	Kim	16	0.04%	Doãn	523	0.0592%		
66	Âu	32	0.06%	Quản	16	0.04%	Lữ	507	0.0574%		
67	Quan	31	0.05%	Phương	15	0.04%	Ninh	499	0.0565%		
68	Khru	31	0.05%	Tôn	15	0.04%	Kim	486	0.0550%		
69	Nghiêm	31	0.05%	Thành	15	0.04%	Mã	481	0.0544%		
70	Thạch	30	0.05%	Phó	15	0.04%	Phí	465	0.0526%		
71	Thiếu	30	0.05%	Nông	15	0.04%	Giang	442	0.0500%		
72	Viên	28	0.05%	Thắm	14	0.04%	Bế	440	0.0498%		

Table A2. Cont.

HCM CITY				HÀ NỘI			NATIONAL		
		Count	Per.		Count	Per.	Count	Per.	
73	Tiêu	28	0.05%	Nhữ	14	0.04%	Giáp	416	0.0471%
74	Đoàn	27	0.05%	Dư	14	0.04%	Thiếu	403	0.0456%
75	Phương	27	0.05%	Ninh	14	0.04%	Khổng	391	0.0442%
76	Nhan	26	0.05%	Lục	14	0.04%	Danh	375	0.0424%
77	Ninh	26	0.05%	Cần	13	0.03%	Cù	361	0.0408%
78	Khổng	24	0.04%	Thiếu	12	0.03%	Khuất	351	0.0397%
79	Ông	24	0.04%	Đình	11	0.03%	Lô	345	0.0390%
80	Trầm	22	0.04%	Vi	10	0.03%	Dư	322	0.0364%
81	Bạch	22	0.04%	Đường	9	0.02%	Chung	279	0.0316%
82	Đường	21	0.04%	Hứa	8	0.02%	Trang	278	0.0315%
83	Hàng	21	0.04%	Thân	8	0.02%	Vy	278	0.0315%
84	Nhâm	21	0.04%	Hy	8	0.02%	Lư	266	0.0301%
85	Trà	20	0.03%	Nhâm	7	0.02%	Khương	263	0.0298%
86	Phù	20	0.03%	La	7	0.02%	Đường	248	0.0281%
87	Vòng	19	0.03%	Hạ	7	0.02%	Quảng	247	0.0279%
88	Kha	19	0.03%	Lữ	7	0.02%	Hồng	243	0.0275%
89	Thi	18	0.03%	Ma	7	0.02%	Tiêu	242	0.0274%
90	Lạc	18	0.03%	Tào	7	0.02%	Nhữ	241	0.0273%
91	Ngụy	17	0.03%	Ngạc	6	0.02%	Phương	232	0.0262%
92	Du	16	0.03%	Cổ	6	0.02%	Khúc	231	0.0261%
93	Kim	16	0.03%	Thịnh	6	0.02%	Cần	226	0.0256%
94	Phó	16	0.03%	Cát	5	0.01%	Ấu	220	0.0249%
95	Khương	16	0.03%	Đới	5	0.01%	Lăng	218	0.0247%
96	Liên	16	0.03%	Bành	5	0.01%	Trình	211	0.0239%
97	Ngũ	16	0.03%	Châu	5	0.01%	Liêu	203	0.0230%
98	Mạc	15	0.03%	Trang	5	0.01%	Sầm	198	0.0224%
99	Doãn	15	0.03%	Lai	5	0.01%	Biện	190	0.0215%
100	Quang	14	0.02%	Lều	5	0.01%	Trà	186	0.0210%

Notes

- ¹ In terms of origin, according to Mai et al. (1997), purely Vietnamese words are formed on the basis of the vocabulary of the South–East Asian and Tay–Thai languages (see also Edmondson 2006, pp. 432–37).
- ² The name *Nguyễn Ái Quốc* holds profound significance in Vietnamese history and national pride. It served as a pseudonym, translating to “Nguyen the Patriot”, used by Hồ Chí Minh—the founding father of modern Vietnam—before he gained widespread recognition by his eventual name. The adoption of this pseudonym symbolized his unwavering commitment to the Vietnamese pursuit of independence, initially against French colonists and later against the Japanese during World War II.
- ³ Such English names are only etymologically patronymic, unlike *Ibn X*, *Ben/Bar X*, which are literally patronymic.
- ⁴ Nguyễn Trãi (1380–1442) was a distinguished Vietnamese Confucian scholar, renowned poet, adept politician, and master strategist. His capabilities were often ascribed to almost miraculous or mythical deeds during his role as the principal advisor to Lê Lợi, who led the resistance against the Ming dynasty and founded the Later Lê dynasty and became the first king of the restored kingdom of Đại Việt. Nguyễn Trãi is credited with composing crucial political statements for Lê Lợi and motivating the Vietnamese populace to actively rebel against Ming dynasty rulers. Additionally, he authored the “Great Proclamation upon the Pacification of the Wu”. As a very important figure of the country, the name Nguyễn Trãi is used to name many important entities (see also Phùng 2016).
- ⁵ IPA pronunciation of *Nguyễn*
(Hà Nội): [ɲwiənʔ¹]
(Huế): [ɲwiənʔ¹]
(Hồ Chí Minh City): [ɲwiənʔ¹]

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