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**Behind Renaming: State, Minorities and Toponym Changes in Almaty and  
North Kazakhstan Oblasts since 1991**

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*To ama and aita,*

**Abstract:**

Lately renaming of districts, towns and villages in Kazakhstan has drawn attention amongst experts, journalists and curious onlookers equally. The topic has caused particular interest within heated debates on Kazakhstan's nation-building path and the role that national minorities are meant to occupy in that process. In fact, both media and academia have often portrayed policies of renaming in the country as another sign of an ongoing process of "Kazakhization".

During the last decades, scholarship involved in the study of toponyms has developed approaches closer to critical studies in the belief that the study of the landscape, and the elements which conform it (as it is the case of place-names) can be a useful tool in order to expose the prevailing ideologies behind the ones who author it through acts such as naming and renaming practices, or in other words, the ones who hold the power over it.

Therefore, the objective of this work is to understand the attitudes of the Kazakhstani state towards its national minorities through the analysis of the acts of renaming which took place since its independence.

**Keywords:**

Toponyms, Renaming, National Minorities, Kazakhstan, Nation-Building



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## Introduction:

In recent times, media in Kazakhstan has been preoccupied with headlines regarding the renaming of various villages, cities, streets and districts. Various articles have underlined that sometimes these acts took place despite not existing a clear consensus amongst the people inhabiting those places<sup>12</sup>, particularly where national minorities make up an important share of the population. One of the most recent examples was the case of the city and region of Zyryanovsk in East Kazakhstan. On 28 December, 2018 their names were changed to Altay<sup>3</sup>. When the announcement took place, different articles<sup>4</sup> started to mushroom highlighting the opposition of the dwellers to the measure adopted in the local community meeting. Yet, this is not the only case of recent renaming in minority inhabited areas. The same day, the Zelenovsky district in East Kazakhstan region was renamed “Bayterek”<sup>5</sup> (the Kazakh word for tall poplar, which gives its name to the most famous tower in the capital). And some months earlier, during the summer, two more districts were renamed in the Pavlodar region<sup>6</sup>, while, the South Kazakhstan region changed its toponym

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<sup>1</sup> Переименования в Казахстане: как избежать конфликтов на этой почве? (Renaming in Kazakhstan: How to avoid Conflicts on This Ground?) Kokshetau Asya, 18.03.2019 <https://kokshetau.asia/obshchestvo/38415-pereimenovaniya-v-kazahstane-kak-izbezhat-konfliktov-na-etoj-pochve>

<sup>2</sup> В Казахстане переименовали район несмотря на протесты местных жителей (District Renamed Despite the Protests of Local Residents in Kazakhstan), Fergana Agency, 03.01.2019. <https://fergana.agency/news/104023/>

<sup>3</sup> Decree “On the renaming of Zyryanovskiy district and the city of Zyryanovsk, East Kazakhstan region, into the Altai district and the city of Altai, East Kazakhstan region”, (О переименовании Зырянковского района и города Зыряновск Восточно-Казахстанской области в район Алтай и город Алтай Восточно-Казахстанской области), № 821, 28.12.2018. [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal\\_acts/decrees/o-pereimenovanii-zyryanovskogo-raiona-i-goroda-zyryanovsk-vostochno-kazahstanskoi-oblasti-v-raion-altai-i-gorod-altai-vostochno-kazahstansko](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/o-pereimenovanii-zyryanovskogo-raiona-i-goroda-zyryanovsk-vostochno-kazahstanskoi-oblasti-v-raion-altai-i-gorod-altai-vostochno-kazahstansko)

<sup>4</sup> Suprunova, E. “What do you call the city...” (Как вы город назовёте...), Vremya, 12.10.2018 <https://time.kz/articles/territory/2018/10/12/kak-vi-gorod-nazovete>.

<sup>5</sup> Decree “On the renaming of the Zelenovsky district of the Eastern Kazakhstan region”, (О переименовании Зеленовского района Западно-Казахстанской области) No 820, 28.12.2018. [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal\\_acts/%20decrees/o-pereimenovanii-zelenovskogo-raiona-zapadno-kazahstanskoi-oblasti](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/%20decrees/o-pereimenovanii-zelenovskogo-raiona-zapadno-kazahstanskoi-oblasti)

<sup>6</sup> On 4 August, 2018 Kachir district was renamed to Terenkol and the Lebyazhinsky district to Akkuly, in Pavlodar region, where according to the 2009 census, more than the 52% of the population is made up by national minorities. [http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal\\_acts/decrees/o-pereimenovanii-kachirskogo-lebyazhinskogo-raionov-pavlodarskoi-oblasti?%20q=%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2](http://www.akorda.kz/ru/legal_acts/decrees/o-pereimenovanii-kachirskogo-lebyazhinskogo-raionov-pavlodarskoi-oblasti?%20q=%D0%BF%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2)

to Turkestan<sup>7</sup>. These, of course, are only some of the most recent examples which took place in some of the areas where national minorities are settled in high numbers<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, since Nursultan Nazarbayev's resignation, and the consequent renaming of the capital to 'Nur-Sultan', proposals to replace the names of other cities where many members of the Slavic minorities live have proliferated<sup>9</sup>, even though it seems that they are not being seriously considered yet. For example, Azamat Baitenov, head of the press service of the akim of the Pavlodar region, told Sputnik news agency's branch in Kazakhstan that the issue of changing the name of the city of Pavlodar is not being discussed<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, as reported by Tengrinews agency the Department of Culture and Language Development of the Semey akimat stated that so far no appeals or official statements have been received in this regard. At the same time, the akimat reminds that in 2007 the city was already renamed by the former president from Semipalatinsk to Semey.<sup>11</sup>

In addition, scholars and academic papers have frequently mentioned different examples of renaming acts that have taken place in Kazakhstani soil as one of the different evidences of the 'Kazakhization' processes (or ethno-nationalizing policies) that the state

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<sup>7</sup> "Decree on some issues of the administrative-territorial structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan" (О некоторых вопросах административно-территориального устройства Республики Казахстан) No 702, 19.06.2018. <https://primeminister.kz/%20ru/news/all/prezident-podpisal-ukaz-o-pereimenovanii-uzhno-kazahstanskoi-oblasti-v-turkestanskuu-16714>

<sup>8</sup> As exposed in the 2009 census, in East Kazakhstan region ethnic Russians make up more than the 40% of the population.

<sup>9</sup> Different Kazakh media outlets reported that Deputy Chairman of the Ak Zhol Party Kazbek Isa suggested renaming Petropavlovsk, Pavlodar and Semey, three cities where the Slavic minorities make up an important part of the population [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/esche-tri-goroda-predlozili-pereimenovat-v-kazahstane-365769/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/esche-tri-goroda-predlozili-pereimenovat-v-kazahstane-365769/)

<sup>10</sup> Sputniknews Agency: *Власти Павлодара и Петропавловска ответили на предложение о переименовании городов* (Authorities of Pavlodar and Petropavlovsk responded to the proposal to rename both cities), 26.03.2019 <https://ru.sputniknews.kz/regions/20190326/9671450/pavlodar-pereimenovanie-otvet.html>

<sup>11</sup> Tengrinews: *В акиматах Семей и Степногорска ответили на предложения о переименовании*, (The akimats of Semey and Stepnogorsk replied to the proposal about their renaming) 27.03.2019. [https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/akimatah-semeya-stepnogorska-otvetili-predlozheniya-365892/](https://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/akimatah-semeya-stepnogorska-otvetili-predlozheniya-365892/)

is carrying out (Aleynikov, 2014; Burkhanov, 2017; Diener, 2015; Jha, 2003; Kesici, 2011; Ó Beacháin and Kevlihan, 2013) since its independence.

As indicated by Owen J. Dwyer and Derek H. Alderman in their work Memorial Landscapes: Analytic Questions and Metaphors (2008), an important part of the work on landscapes (and within them, place-names) shows landscapes as a text. This metaphor understands that processes such as naming and renaming constitute a way to manifest stories “on and through the landscape” (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008: 169). According to this view, landscapes are “initially authored”, and later reproduced by different actors (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008: 169) or changed, in case that a site has its name altered.

Many authors have focused their attention on the role played by the elites in all these processes (Forest, Johnson and Till, 2004: 361), arguing that dominant social classes and their representatives have used the different vessels of memory, in this case, toponyms, as an “instrument of rule” (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2006: 349). Thus, according to this approach toponyms represent the priorities of former (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, Azayahu, 2010: 459 and Forest, Johnson and Till, 2004: 360) and current (Berg and Kearns, 1996: 99) administrations and regimes, by which governments make their mark on the landscape (Whittlesey 1935 in Cohen and Kliot, 1991:654) and show their political agendas to a “larger public” (Forest, Johnson and Till, 2004: 358). After all, “naming is power” (Tuan, 1991:688).

In this line, place-names (and their changes) may be used as a method to identify the different stances that the state defends in different issues, such as the place that national minorities should occupy in the configuration of a new state. After all, 1991 witnessed the collapse of the Soviet Union and, with it, the emergence of states such as Kazakhstan that

had to figure out what to do with the ethnic mosaic that they inherited with their newly-won independence. As it is shown in the All Union Census of 1989<sup>12</sup>, ethnic Kazakhs at that time constituted less than the 40% of the population of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, numbers that put them really close to the ethnic Russian population of the territory. Contrary to Soviet times and according to the census of 2009, currently ethnic Kazakhs make up the majority of the population of the republic constituting 63.1 per cent of the inhabitants, while the population of ethnic Russians has dropped from 37 per cent of 1989 to 23.7 per cent in current times. And even though the ethnic mosaic has experienced important changes, shining the spotlight on this issue in such an ethnically diverse state, could be a good indicator of those trends in Kazakhstani soil.

And even if renaming is not a phenomena only characteristic to Kazakhstan, it sure represents a paradigmatic case. Recall that even though it has already been nearly 30 years since the country's independence, toponyms are still being replaced in present-time. One of the most emblematic examples being the capital per se, which has had four different denominations since 1991.

Therefore, this research seeks to analyse the political attitudes of the Kazakhstani government towards national minorities since 1991 through its landscape. In other words, the objective of this work is to show the way that place-names (and their development) have depicted the relation between the Kazakhstani state and the minorities inhabiting the territory, during the last 30 years.

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<sup>12</sup> All Union Population Census of the year 1989 (Всероссийская перепись населения 1989 года. Национальный состав населения по республикам СССР). [http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng\\_nac\\_89.php?reg=1](http://www.demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng_nac_89.php?reg=1)

By analyzing and contextualizing the various waves of renaming of human settlements that have taken place since its independence, it will be easier to clarify the nature of the relations between the state and the national minorities of Kazakhstan in the different chapters of its most recent history.

In order to do so, the research will answer the following research questions:

- Central question:
  - **What does the renaming of places show about the state attitudes towards national minorities in post-Soviet Kazakhstan?**
  
- Sub-questions:
  - Is the renaming of districts, cities, towns and other settlements an isolated practice or a systemic approach?
  - Which were the policies regarding national minorities issues that were being enacted during those specific moments?
  - In which areas were acts of renaming more prolific?
  - Are settlements inhabited by certain minorities more targeted than others?
  - Which kind of toponyms are being replaced? And by which?

For this purpose, the typology, geographic distribution and temporal trends of the various acts of renaming which took place in heavily minority populated areas of Kazakhstan since the republic's independence were analysed. The loci for the study were the oblasts with an important share of national minority dwellers. In this case, the research focused on two oblasts of Kazakhstan, specifically the one with the highest proportion of Slavic minorities, the North Kazakhstan region (where also, national minorities constitute more than 65% of the population and only the ethnic Russian population constitutes 50,2%), and the one with

the highest number of the non-Slavic minorities, the Almaty region, where national minorities make up more than 30% of the total share of the population<sup>13</sup>.

Chapter 1 introduces the existing literature concerning the critical study of the cultural landscape, toponyms and naming and renaming processes, by examining the politics of place-naming practices, paying particular attention to their connection to the ones in power.

Chapter 2 will describe the adopted research methodology and the rationale behind it. It will define the sample, elaborate on the data collection and the research approach, and it will also explain the research limitations of the study.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of every analysed district and its ethnic demography, mainly concentrating on dynamics between the diverse ethnic groups inhabiting the analysed territories and the typological characteristics and development of their toponyms.

Chapter 4 explores and elaborates on all the different big renaming waves that the two regions have undergone since December 1991 up to this day, with the corresponding historic and political contextualization. Reference will also be made to the legal developments.

Lastly, chapter 5 offers the main findings and conclusions that this study has produced.

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<sup>13</sup> The Agency on Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2011) Results of the 2009 National Population Census of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Available in [https://www.liportal.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/oeffentlich/Kasachstan/40\\_gesellschaft/Kaz2009\\_Analytical\\_report.pdf](https://www.liportal.de/fileadmin/user_upload/oeffentlich/Kasachstan/40_gesellschaft/Kaz2009_Analytical_report.pdf)



## **Chapter 1. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework:**

### **1.1. Why Place-Names? The Connection Between Renaming and Power**

In his book *The Book of Disquiet* Fernando Pessoa reflected about the performative power of naming (and, hence, renaming) in the following manner: “Civilization consists on giving something a name that doesn't belong to it and then dreaming over the result. And the false name joined to the true dream does create a new reality. The object does change into something else, because we make it change. We manufacture realities.” Yet, the Portuguese author does not only note the power that place-names have to alter, shape and influence reality, he also points out to the role of the ones, to use his own words, manufacturing these realities. As it can be inferred from the lines above, names are not creating or changing the world around them by themselves, it is somebody's decision and action that makes this happen.

Pessoa, however, was not the only one coming to these conclusions. In the last few decades, and in a less literary realm, scholars have dedicated a lot of pages and effort to untangle such matters and, most specifically, they have thoroughly studied the geography of place names, drawing on recent cultural theories that help to understand the power charged nature of naming and toponyms from a critical approach (Alderman, 2000; Alderman, 2002; Alderman, 2008; Azaryahu, 1996; Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009; Berg and Kearns, 1996; Cohen and Kliot, 1992; Crang and Travlou, 2001; Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004; Jordan, 2012; Kadmon, 2004; Kearney and Bradley, 2009; Kearns and Berg, 2002; Kostanski, 2014; Monmonier, 2006; Myers, 2009; Nash, 2009; Rofe and Szili, 2009; Rose-Redwood, 2008; Rose Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu, 2010; Swart, 2008; Withers, 2000; Yeoh, 1996; Zelinsky, 1982).

Yet, historically scholarship concerning toponymic research has set its focus in the past in the belief that a country's history could be tracked through its place names (Rickard, 1968 in Kearns and Berg, 2002: 285). In such manner, they were utilized to expose "patterns of naming" and these recurrences were treated as pharos for deducing landscape and settlement histories (Pirie, 1984: 51 in Yeoh, 1996: 298). During that time, scholars would analyse toponyms through what Yeoh designates as "somewhat antiquarian and esoteric appeal" (Yeoh, 1996: 298). Indeed, it seems that anthropologists such as Franz Boas and his disciples guided many culturalist in geography from the USA to perceive toponyms as "rich in genetic meaning", and therefore, as sources that revealed the "imprint of past cultures" on the landscape (Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009:6). Some examples of this kind of work can be found in and on Kazakhstan. For example, in the paper *Ethnographic Development of Kazakh Toponymy* the authors analyse the etymology of Kazakhs toponyms to gather information about "the distant past of the Kazakh people" (Bugybayeva, Zhadraveva, Kabulova, Shekerbekova, Bogatov and Berkinbayeva, 2015: 462) based on the assumption that toponyms reveal a neutral account of history. The same can be said about Tleuberdiev, Shvaikovskiy and Ibragimova's study on toponyms of Southern Kazakhstan (Tleuberdiev, Shvaikovskiy and Ibragimova, 2014).

Thus, this approach to study the landscape and place names implies that place names are "evidence of innocent histories", (Kearns and Berg, 2002: 285 and Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009:7) and they frequently appear to be "authentic and unproblematic representations of history" (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008: 168), landscapes, and hence, its place names are often not as innocent as they seem (Duncan and Duncan, 2004 in Duncan and Duncan, 2009: 231). Through the authority that it is conferred to them and through what Berg and Kearns refer to as a "hegemonic myth of mimesis" (Berg and Kearns, 1996: 105), or in other words, their repeated use, place names end up sanctioning particular ways of

knowledge and names for the landscape, while excluding others (Melville, 2006 in Rose Redwood, Alderman and Azaryahu, 2010: 463). Accordingly, these “historic” place-names are “retained and recycled as signifiers of heritage, obscuring the loss of cultures and practices in which the text was originally grounded” (Yeoh, 1996: 299).

As Dwyer and Alderman rightfully point out in their research on “memorial landscapes”, “what is commemorated is not synonymous with what has happened in the past”, instead, this commemorated past has been and is constantly designated as “memorable and significant” (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008: 167). Research regarding names in post-colonial territories have highlighted numerous times how maps helped update the territorial dispossession of the native populations and the different ways in which European maps presented reality according to the Western gaze (Withers, 2000: 533). Thus, place names cannot be considered as mere vestiges of the past, probing that history is neither innocent nor arbitrary (Herman 1999: 76 in Kearns and Berg 2002: 285).

## **1.2. Importance of toponymic analysis: Place-names as a text**

For the purpose of this research it would be really interesting to borrow the concept of text metaphor developed by Owen J. Dwyer and Derek H. Alderman in their research concerning memorial landscapes (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008), because of its highly applicable character to place names, due to their commemorative nature, since academia has repeatedly highlighted the role of place-names as memorials (Alderman, 2000 ; Alderman, 2002; Azaryahu, 1996).

As indicated by the recently mentioned authors scholars, an important part of the work in the topic shows landscapes as a text. This comparison understands that processes such as naming and renaming constitute a way to manifest stories “on and through the

landscape” (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008: 169). According to this view, landscapes are “initially authored”, and later reproduced by the different actors who consequently interpret these places (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008: 169). Therefore, this approach stresses a critical reading of the landscape, as a way to unveil “the force of dominant ideas and prevailing practices, as well as the idiosyncrasies of a particular author” (Ley & Duncan, 1993:329 in Yeoh and Kong, 1996: 53).

This idea of the landscape as a text that is written, read, erased and re-written, has already been around for some time (Duncan and Duncan, 2009: 229). For example, Yeoh emphasizes that, amongst different purposes, place names have been ‘read’ as “signifiers of wider societal trends” (Yeoh, 1996: 298). Borrowing again from Dwyer’s and Alderman’s description of memorial landscapes, they can also be considered as “being impartial recorders of history” (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008: 167 talking about memorials) Maoz Azaryahu has often talked about them as presenting a “distinguished map of meanings” (1996: 328), a metaphor that has also been used by Michael J. Watts which has also pointed at landscapes and, hence, toponyms as “ways of seeing” (Watts, 1992). The American cultural geographer Wilbur Zelinsky described place-names as “rich sources of information about the past and present physical, social and cultural geography of places” (Zelinsky, 1982: 94). Reuben Rose-Redwood and the already mentioned Alderman and Azaryahu have also defined landscapes as a cartographic text (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, Azayahu, 2010: 459) and, finally, Nancy and James Duncan have referred to them as palimpsests defined by these experts as “documents partially erased and overlain with newer forms and patterns holding a wealth of information and clues to their histories by those who were able to recognize significant features and relate these to a larger system of landscape features” (Duncan and Duncan, 2009: 228).

In fact, as Crang and Travlou mention in their paper *The City and Topologies of Memory, Environment and Planning*, already in Medieval times thinkers made use of maps, as a way to organise different concepts, giving ground to abstract ideas (Connerton, 1989: 37 in Crang and Travlou, 1999:165). Thus, and drawing on D.W. Meinig's idea quoted by Nancy and James Duncan: "The eyes should not just be opened to what lies before them but also to what lies within the heads of the ones who, produce, reproduce and alter place-names" (Meinig, 1979b: 33–4 in Duncan and Duncan, 2009: 225).

### **1.3. Everydayness of place-names as a way of legitimation**

Lawrence D. Berg and Robin A. Kearns have rightly summarized the idea underneath the next section "naming is a form of norming" (Berg and Kearns, 1996: 99). The landscape, through the creation and use of particular place-names serves as a legitimizing factor for a certain vision of the past, the present and, hence, the future. As it will be shown in the following paragraphs, many experts in this subject have argued for the role of toponyms as a tool of legitimation and the characteristic that makes such a powerful legitimation force: they are everywhere and everyday (Alderman, 2008 ; Azaryahu, 1996 ; Duncan and Duncan, 2009 ; Jordan, 2012 ; Kearns and Berg, 2002 ; Rofe and Szili, 2009; Rose Redwood, 2008 ; Rose-Redwood, Alderman, and Azaryahu, 2010 ; Yeoh, 1996 ; Yeoh and Kong, 1996).

Place-names impregnate everything around us in our everyday life: our daily verbal and visual vocabulary. They can be found on road signs, addresses, advertising billboards and, definitely, on maps (Alderman, 2008: 196). They offer an "immediate and practical reality" that other symbols are unable to render (Rofe and Szili, 2009: 364) especially since they form part of every person's "routinised biographical traces" (Yeoh and Kong, 1996: 55). People bump into names in a casual manner, in a mundane context (Azaryahu, 1996:

320). And they are imbued with a utilitarian value: they serve to locate sites (Azaryahu, 1996: 321). All these different intrinsic features of toponyms: their “apparent dailiness and insignificance” and their “recurrent and unreflected use” in different contexts (Azaryahu, 1996: 321), their “materiality and apparent stability” (Duncan and Duncan, 2009: 230) and their tangibility, familiarity and unquestionability (Duncan and Duncan, 1988: 123 in Azaryahu, 1996: 319) serve as a way to reify and legitimate hegemonic discourses and particular visions of the past (Rose-Redwood, 2008: 432).

Simultaneously, it introduces them into a “shared cultural experience” (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, Azaryahu, 2010: 459) that is ingrained into practices at the most intimate level, in the everyday life (Azayahu, 1996: 328), into “mundane spheres of human experience” (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, Azayahu, 2010: 460), but most importantly it includes all those narratives in areas that are perceived as being excluded of the spheres of political control (Azaryahu, 1996: 328). Thus, the pragmatic or utilitarian function inherent to toponyms contributes to the reification of certain discourses by its integration into the physical environment, while at the same time, that very same function prevents individuals of being aware of the symbolic meaning that characterizes toponyms (Azaryahu, 1996: 320). Daniels explains this bifold effect appropriately in the following quote: Place can be depicted as “a dialectical image, an ambiguous synthesis whose redemptive and manipulative aspects cannot be finally disentangled, which can neither be completely reified as an authentic object in the world nor thoroughly dissolved as an ideological mirage” (Daniels, 1989: 206 in Yeoh and Kong, 1996: 53). Some could have tried to argue that the symbolic function of toponyms could be just attributed to those considered to be commemorative. Indeed, different academics have tried to clarify them as commemorative and non-commemorative toponyms (Rose Redwood, 2008: 435), yet as it

has been explained in previous paragraphs, this would just underestimate the symbolic value that all place-names possess (Rose Redwood, 2008 and Cohen and Kliot, 1992).

Indeed, many experts have defined place names in those terms: as “narrative constructions”, shaped by dominant, or hegemonic, cultural forms (Kearns and Berg, 2002: 288), as “expressions of ideological value” and as “symbolic elements of landscape” which reveal local and national goals and sentiments (Cohen and Kliot, 1991: 653), as “pure projections of ideas” (Jordan, 2012: 126), as “politically embedded” and “discursively loaded” rhetorical tools (Rofe and Szili, 2009: 364), as “imaginary totalizations produced by the eye” (de Certeau, 1984: 93–117 in Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009:10) or as the final touch that converts the landscape into “sophisticated visual ideologies” (Williams, 1977 in Watts, 1992: 123). Ultimately, a text where priorities of certain people are written and read (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, Azayahu, 2010: 460).

#### **1.4. The writers and rewriters of the text: Place-names and power**

In the previous sections of this chapter, which have explained the tradition of analyzing the landscape as a text imbued with a symbolic meaning that is written and rewritten, erased and read (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008: 169), it has already been hinted that a crucial part of this metaphor is played by the author, or authors, that inscribe those words in each page of the book that forms the landscape (Dwyer and Alderman, 2008: 170). Thus, in this last section we will bring the “authorship” to the fore in order to incite a reflection on the act of writing (Harley 1988 in Harris, 1991: 678) or, more precisely, on the acts of naming and renaming, and its relationship with power.

Many authors influenced by Pierre Nora’s work regarding the sites of memory (1989) have focused their attention on the role played by the elites (Forest, Johnson and Till, 2004:

361), since as Jordan rightfully noted even the question of who dominates can be given an answer by reading the landscape (2012: 119). As previously discussed, “naming is a form of norming” and as such it is really important to reflect about the actors involved in such a process of authorization through naming and mapping (Withers, 2000: 534). After all, and paraphrasing Kearney and Bradley’s reflection on memory, quite often these processes have more to do with who produces and reproduces those toponyms than the product itself (Kearney and Bradley, 2009:89 and Till, 2005: 18 in Rose-Redwood, 2008: 432).

Hoelscher and Alderman have underlined how dominant social classes and their representatives have used the different vessels of memory, in this case, toponyms, as an “instrument of rule” (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2006: 349). Again, Derek H. Alderman in his work *Place naming and the Interpretation of Cultural Landscapes* points out the manipulation that place names can be subjected to by dominant social actors and groups in order to make certain historical narratives to prevail while silencing others (Alderman, 2008: 204), or in Maoz Azaryahu’s words, validating its own 'theory of the world' in the landscape (Azaryahu, 1996: 312). Finally, according to De Certeau, as “manifestations of power”, official place denominations conform “constellations” that serve hierarchic and semantic organisers of the landscape surface in accordance with what some believe to be the “proper rationalities” and “historical justifications” (de Certeau, 1984: 93–117 in Berg and Vuolteenaho, 2009:10)

In summary, toponyms represent the priorities of former (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, Azayahu, 2010: 459 and Forest, Johnson and Till, 2004: 360) and current (Berg and Kearns, 1996: 99) administrations and regimes, by which governments make their mark on the landscape (Whittlesey 1935 in Cohen and Kliot, 1991:654) and show their political agendas to a “larger public” (Forest, Johnson and Till, 2004: 358). It is clear, as Constantin

wrote, “for power to ‘speak’ socially, power must ‘speak’ with space.” (Constantin, 1987: 219 in Myers, 2009: 95).

Usually, the authors of these texts are of a city-text are mostly less familiar members of committees and local administrations with the prerogative of naming and renaming the different sites of a country (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, Azayahu, 2010: 460). This initial or local decisions are not random, they respond to conscious processes of deliberation (Zelinsky, 1992: 171 in Kearns and Berg, 2002: 286) and they express ideological commitments and political concerns of local elites (Rose-Redwood, Alderman, Azayahu, 2010: 460) that are mostly aligned with the ones at the highest level (especially in authoritarian countries, but not only). All in all, in most countries, central government agencies are in charge of making the last call in issues concerning the designation of place-names (Cohen and Kliot, 1992: 661). And the reason behind this is simple: Naming equals power.

First of all, because as it has been discussed in the first paragraphs of this chapter it brings places to life, it creates them. The geographer Yi Fu Tuan highlighted this specific feature of place names when noting that toponyms are replete of “the creative power to call something into being, to render the invisible visible, to impart a certain character to things” (Tuan, 1991:688).

In addition to this, naming was one of the main practices to claim territory, both materially and symbolically, (Alderman: 2008, 199) and there is not many things that show the control over something than its possession. In this line, the “power of nomination” has been defined as “the first step in taking possession” (Robinson, 1989: 160 in Yeoh, 1996: 299)

as a “declaration of ownership” (Kearney and Bradley, 2009:81) and as an “act of appropriation” (Azaryahu, 1996: 313).

The mere ability to control the meanings of the landscape is already a relevant expression of power (Entrikin, 1991: 52 in Azaryahu, 1996: 312). This ability to control these “instruments of meaning” (Rofe and Szili, 2009: 361), where some groups exert greater control to name while others lack of it, is directly related to power (Matthews, 1995:456 in Alderman, 2008: 198). Moreover, the “selective way” whereby such relations of power recreate the dominance of some ideologies over others is directly related to power (Rose Redwood, Alderman, Azayahu, 2010: 462).

These different features show one more time a two-fold function, landscapes, and more specifically, toponyms both depict and structure power relations (Leitner and Kang, 1999: 215). As Harris summarizes: the exercise of power “shapes space, and space shapes social power” (Harris 1991: 678 ), making the politics of naming places in both a “politics of space” (handing power to who names and controls space) and a “spatialized politics” (by which the space per se grants the prerogative to speak) (Keith and Pile, 1993 in Berg and Kearns, 1996: 111).

This is by no means to suggest that the ones holding the power in these processes always bypass the wishes of the people. In fact, there is a large volume of literature which discusses the role of the ones lacking power in shaping the map and the different naming and renaming processes (Forest, Johnson and Till, 2004 ; Myers, 2009 ; Rose-Redwood, 2008). However, it is often the case that they pay attention to people’s visions and ideas, in order to manipulate them, shape them in their favour (Bodnar 1992; Gillis 1994 in Hoelscher and Alderman, 2006:349) and to boost their legitimacy (Forest, Johnson and

Till, 2004: 375). Or, post-totalitarian societies may develop a top-down rather than a more participatory culture of public memory, ultimately placing greater constraints on the ways in which a nation can imagine a new identity for itself. (Forest, Johnson and Till, 2004: 375).

To sum up, the main contention here is that the ones hanging onto power make use of different strategies (the ones listed above included) in order to shape the landscape according to the “ruling sociopolitical order” (Azaryahu, 1996: 312). But, also, that the aforementioned landscape serves as a mirror of the ideologies, discourses, objectives and rhetoric beneath those in power. The foregoing argument suggests that a focus on toponyms and its replacement (especially in minority inhabited regions) could serve to untangle the different positions that the ruling elites may have regarding different issues, such as the place that national minorities should occupy within the nation.

In order to prove this, the following chapters will move from the theoretical dimension, to the map of Kazakhstan, and read (to follow up on the text metaphor) the meanings interred behind the practices of renaming that took place since the country declared its independence, in December 1991.

Thus, in the following pages I will present my research on toponyms in Kazakhstan. In so doing, I wish to contribute to understanding the nature of the relations between the state and the national minorities in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan through the study of toponyms and its development.

In the end, as Edward W. Soja recalls, “a whole history remains to be written of spaces, which would at the same time be the history of powers” (Foucault, 1980: 149 in Soja, 1989: 21) and, hopefully this research will assist in doing so.

## Chapter 2. Research Methodology

As it has been outlined in the previous chapter, toponyms (and the acts of naming and renaming which took place since December 1991) and its analysis play a pivotal role in the solving of the research question. Therefore, the analysis of the toponymic landscape will be the core of this research.

According to different academics, the symbolic meaning of a toponym (and hence its renaming) will remarkably vary according to the socio-spatial context within which it is located (Azaryahu, 1996; Dwyer and Alderman, 2000; Rose-Redwood, 2008). It seems obvious that it does not have the same symbolic meaning to give a new denomination to the capital of a country than to a small lane in the outskirts of a town. Therefore, this research will not be focusing on street names or names of schools, airports or theaters. Instead, this project will analyse names and acts of renaming which took place between December 1991 and June 2018 of administrative-territorial units that are considered to be part of the system of administrative-territorial structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Article 1 of the “Law on the administrative-territorial structure” of the year 1993: districts (rayon), municipalities (selskiy okrug) and settlements like cities (gorod), and villages (selo or aul). Nevertheless, city districts will not be included within this study.

The introduction covered the fact that some experts in the field have briefly mentioned the process of renaming (and different examples of it) in their studies on Kazakhstan, particularly in research concerning identity, language policies and nation building issues (Burkhanov, 2017; Diener, 2015; Jha, 2003; Melich and Adibayeva, 2013; Ó Beacháin and Kevlihan, 2011; Ó Beacháin and Kevlihan, 2013; Putina, 2018; Sinyachkin and Sinyachkina, 2018), and some studies have been carried out concerning renaming of

street names (Bekus and Medeuova, 2017). However, no in-depth research has ever been done on such a large scale, including the analysis of the renaming of toponyms of all the settlements in minority populated oblasts, showing the specific time when those renaming events took place and contextualizing them within the policies that were being adopted at the time. Thus, this study will provide a coherent narration based on the complete empirical data, and not only some acts of renaming, that although illustrative, they are far from being representative.

The first step towards being able to identify all the renamed urban settlements in both regions being analysed for this study was the creation of a dataset comprising all the renamed urban settlements. In order to do so, the last official list of settlements prior to the country's independence was compared to the current official data.

Initially, the list of 1989 was contrasted with the different cartographic resources available at the official sites of the akimat (local government) of the different districts conforming both regions, as well as the map of the Almaty oblast, available to the public on the official website of that region. However, in many cases the material had not been updated or was insufficiently detailed. That is why, the list was cross-checked once more against the information included in the documents regarding the establishment of the polling stations in the different districts of both regions at the Presidential elections of June 2019, and/or the December 2018 Parliamentary elections. The information was completed with other official documents accessible from each district's website.

However, reconfigurations of territorial administrative structures were not only common practice during Soviet times (Diener, 2015: 471), but after independence, many regions, districts, municipalities and urban settlements were not only renamed but also merged,

moved or eliminated. Hence, the second step was to find official proof regarding the different territory transfers which affected both analysed cases, in online and offline archives.

This enabled the identification of the new toponyms that have arisen since 1989, and to track their old names, from both online and off-line archival sources. In the cases where an official document which supported the information regarding the renaming of a specific location could not be retrieved, the akimat of the respective municipality or district was contacted to obtain the relevant information. In the case of renaming acts affecting municipalities, if the specific decree was not found, but the above mentioned municipality seems to consist of the same urban settlements that the previous one, then, it has been considered as a renamed one.

Some names, although not officially renamed have experienced changes in their transcriptions. These will not be included as acts of renaming although they would be discussed later as part of the findings.

In addition to this, it should be noted that if an urban settlement used to be a different object other than a city, a town, a village or an aul (such as a station, a hydroelectric power plant or a collective farm (kolkhoz)) prior to 1989, and later on has had its status upgraded , it has been considered beyond the scope of this study and therefore excluded. The same applies to urban settlements which have had their status downgraded and currently figure as a station or a disambiguation. Moreover, the acts of renaming that affected urban settlements that had already been deleted have also been excluded from this research.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that if an urban settlement was enclosed in the 1989 list, but has no longer been featured in any of the current lists, it is assumed that it was deleted, or that it has not been included due to an acute depopulation. For example, according to the official website of the akimat of Ualikhanov district (North Kazakhstan region), 27 urban settlements comprise the district. However, in their count the villages of Karamyrza and Malkara were also included. Both villages have been excluded from the latest lists, presumably because as it is noted in the akimat's website they are nearly depopulated. Thus, in this research, it is considered that Ualikhanov district is formed by 25 urban settlements, and not 27.

Once the dataset was compiled aspects such as the different existing trends concerning the time distribution of the renaming process, the geographical distribution of the renamed places, since place-making is always located in specific time-space contexts (Rogers, 1992:245 in Yeoh and Kong, 1996: 53), or of course, the typologic classification of the renamed toponyms were defined. This work was essential to identify the peak years where renaming occurred, and thus, (and as a way to contextualize the acts of renaming in the state-national minorities relations) to find different policies and laws concerning issues affecting national minorities adopted at the time (particularly the ones dealing with citizenship and migration, language policies, and minority participation in the public sphere). For this part, archives (including on-line ones) and secondary sources such as academic papers and journalistic articles were also consulted.

Regarding their typologic categorization, the replaced toponyms have been classified as the following: 1. Soviet-Slavic; 2. Slavic; 3. Kazakh; 4. Soviet-Kazakh; 5. German; 6. Soviet-German and 7. Other. Toponyms such as 'Mirnoe', or 'Avangard' which at a first glance are not specifically Soviet but they have certainly had a strong association with the

Soviet imaginary have been counted as toponyms with Soviet connotations. Toponyms classified as other are mainly names formed by a Kazakh and a Russian word (4 out of 5), the only exception is a municipality designation which most likely is connected to the Uyghur people.

In the course of this study, primary and secondary sources were used. One of the basic sources employed is the last published volume of the *Administrative and Territorial Division of the Kazakh SSR (1989)*. This publication has had a central role in assisting the identification of all the acts of renaming that took place, since it provided the raw material to compare it with the current list of settlements in both regions. Furthermore, the other two main pieces of documentation for the successful completion of this research project were the *Directory of the History of the Administrative and Territorial Division of the North - Kazakhstan Oblast (20.07.1936 - 01.01.2007)* and the *Directory of the History of the Administrative and Territorial Division of the Almaty region (10.03.1932 - 01.01.2000)*, found in the National Academic Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Nur-Sultan and in the State Archives of Almaty Oblast (located in Karasay district of the Almaty region), respectively. Other valuable sources were the cartographic resources available on the official sites of the Almaty and North-Kazakhstan region (oblast) or other administrative documents which include an updated list of each region's urban settlements (i.e. reports on the boundaries of polling stations for the 2019 presidential elections).

Furthermore, additional documents of administrative and legal nature such as laws, decrees, policies, concept notes were also analysed. Moreover, other official reports and statistical data regarding issues such as demography were also consulted. Finally, secondary sources included academic book and papers, as well as journalistic articles.

Concerning some basic concepts, it is important to highlight that, along this study the concepts of National minorities and Ethnic minorities will be used as synonyms, due to the highly primordialistic discourse that can be found in the Central Asian states, where nation and ethnicity are used are interchangeable concepts, (most probably as a result of the policies carried out during Soviet time). The same goes for the use of the terms groups and communities, since I will be giving the 'group' the same definition as the one provided by Benedict Anderson for his 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 2005).

Another term that will appear is the term 'oralman'. Bonnenfant explains the term as follows, "the term 'oralman' was originally created as a legal term in order to define the legal status, rights and privileges granted to ethnic migrants. This term is the most commonly used in the discourse of the political and cultural elite, as well as in that of the public. The word is derived from the verb 'oralu' (to return) and 'man' the nominalizing suffix in the Kazakh language" (Bonnenfant, 2012: 42).

For reasons of linguistic efficiency, when utilizing terms such as 'currently' or 'nowadays' the actual meaning will be as of June 2018 since this study will only be covering renaming acts which occurred until that moment.

One of the most obvious setbacks of this study is that the quantitative data referring to the demography was based in the last published census, which dates from 2009. According to the last census carried out in the year 2009, Kazakhs make up 63.1% of the population in Kazakhstan. However, the massive migrations of the minorities, particularly the Slavic and German populations inhabiting the main urban settlements and the regions located in the North and the East of the country and the ethnic Kazakhs that are resettling in Kazakhstan as part of the oralman policies, mean that the configuration of the ethnic map in the last 10

years has undergone some changes. And although some estimations could be made, I believe that at this point it is more reliable to use the existing official data.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to obtain information regarding the specific date of 32 acts of renaming, all 32 of them in Almaty region. However, it should be highlighted that these only account for the 11 per cent of all the acts of renaming which occurred (288). Therefore, it can be stated that the current sample will still be relevant enough to be able to extrapolate a conclusion out of it.

Lastly, there must be an acknowledgment that this is a rather ambitious project. Time and resources unfortunately allowed the project to only concentrate on two of the 10 oblast were national minorities make up at least the 25% of the total population. Even if the used sample was defined in order to best represent the general situation pertaining ethnic minorities in the analysed country, this research should be understood as an attempt, in preliminary fashion at least, to outline some of the existing discursive politics of/in place regarding national minorities in Kazakhstan.

### **Chapter 3: Ethnic demography and renaming practices in the districts of Almaty and North Kazakhstan oblasts**

Kazakhstan is currently formed by fourteen regions (oblasts) and, as of 1 June, 2019, 18,485,760 people are permanently residing Kazakhstan, and nearly 37 per cent of its population is made up of national minorities. Albeit the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan was the only former republic where the titular nation did not form the majority, but a plurality. As the 1989 Soviet census shows, ethnic Kazakhs will constitute less than the 40% of the population of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic, percentage that put them really close to the number of ethnic Russians inhabiting the territory. Thus, in 1991 Kazakhstan found itself with a quite peculiar ethnic mosaic, with a heavily inhabited Russian and European (Polish, Ukrainian, German) north and with a substantially Kazakh and Turkic (Uzbek, Uyghur) south (Peyrouse, 2008: 107). However, as explained in the introduction, for the purpose of this research all the attention will be focused on the North Kazakhstan and the Almaty region.

The following chapter will show the portrayal of national minorities in the cultural landscape of the chosen regions, through the analysis of the changes that the toponyms have or have not experienced, their typology and their relation with the number of inhabitants belonging to the different ethnic groups settled in each of the districts. The main reason for doing so is to understand whether the presence of national minorities is a variable affecting the number and etymologic origins of the replaced toponyms.

In order to get a clearer picture, first the overall situation regarding demography and toponym changes in each region will be introduced and, afterwards, the data concerning the situation in the districts that conforms the oblast will be analysed in detail.

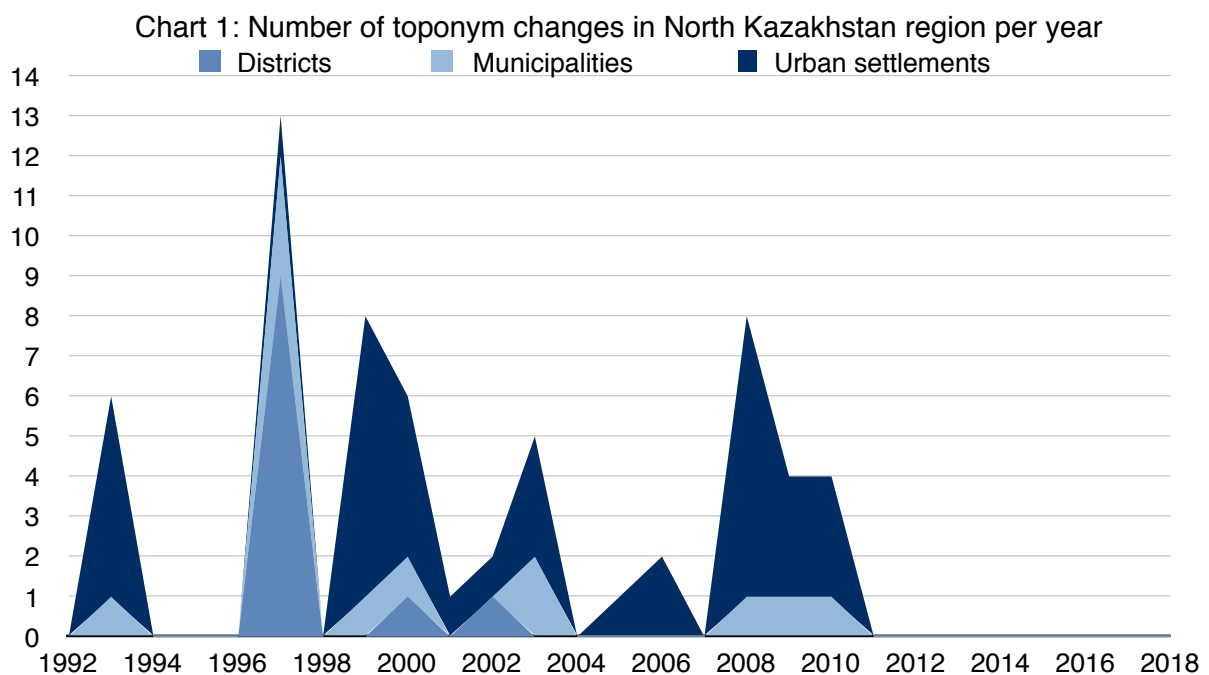
### **3.1. The North Kazakhstan region**

The North Kazakhstan region is located in the north of the country, bordering Russia and other three regions of Kazakhstan: Pavlodar, Akmola and Kostanay. The region consists of thirteen districts: Akkaiyn, Akzhar, Aiyrtau, Esil, Gabit Musirepov, Kyzylzhar, Magzhan Zhumabaev, Mamlyut, Shal akyn, Taiynsha, Timiryazev, Ualikhanov and Zhambyl. North Kazakhstan is the region with the highest concentration of Slavic minorities. With a total population of 596,535 inhabitants, national minorities form approximately 67 per cent of the total number of people inhabiting the region. Ethnic Russians, the second largest ethnic group in the country, represent the largest ethnic group of North Kazakhstan, making up 50.5 per cent of the total number of inhabitants. Ethnic Ukrainians constitute nearly 5 per cent, while Poles and Belarusians comprise the 2.34 per cent and the 1.15 per cent, respectively. For instance, North Kazakhstan is the region with the largest community of Poles in Kazakhstan, since nearly half of their community (41 per cent) is settled there. Many of the Poles living in the area are the off-spring of the victims of mass deportation that took place in the second half of the 1930s and during the period of World War. That is why most of them originated mostly from the Western part of the Ukrainian Republic of the U.S.S.R. (and to a lesser degree the Belarussian S . S . R.) and the Eastern Polish territories the Red Army had occupied (Igicka, 1998: 997 - 998). Other minorities that make up an important number of the population in the region are the Germans (3.5 per cent) and the Tatars (2.2 per cent). It should also be highlighted that most of these ethnic groups are linguistically russified: particularly dramatic is the situation regarding communities such as the Polish, Ukrainian and Belarussian people (Smagulova, 2008: 448)

Other neighbouring regions are also heavily inhabited by national minorities, in general, and Slavic minorities, in particular. For example, ethnic Russians make up between 35 and

43 per cent of the population in Kostanay, Karaganda, Akmol, Pavlodar and East Kazakhstan regions. This location is a “product of history” (Laruelle, 2018: 68), a result of the first Cossack and military incursions which led the way to the sizable migration of agricultural settlers (Diener, 2015: 475), Russian old-believers’ presence since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Peyrouse, 2007: 498) and the century-long colonization of Siberia (more than 1.5 million Russian settlers in the Kazakh steppes by World War I), in addition to the Soviet relocation policies pursued by the Soviet regime (Laruelle, 2018: 68), from the Stalinist deportations to the 1950s Virgin Lands campaign (Schatz, 2000).

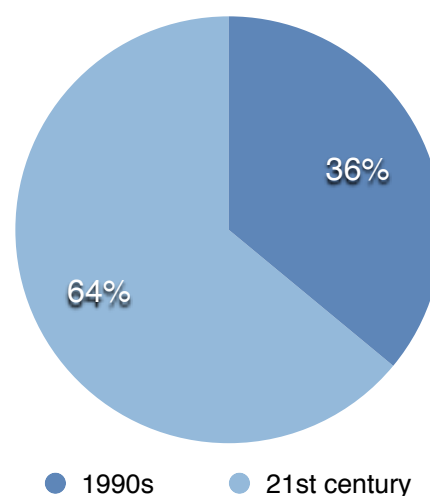
In addition, the six aforementioned regions are the area where ethnic Germans predominantly live (around 80 per cent of the whole community). Prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, nearly a million ethnic Germans were established in Kazakhstan, mostly the descendants of the ones who had left Central Europe over 200 years before as well as the victims of the Stalin-era deportations. Yet, their number has clearly diminished in the last thirty years, since a great part of them took advantage of Germany's ethnically based citizenship regime and went back to “a strange homeland” (Brown, 2005: 625).



Overall, 60 acts of renaming took place in the North Kazakhstan oblast. Chart 1 focuses on the quantity of replaced toponyms per year. It is worth noting that there was almost no name changes until the year 1997 (6). Indeed, most of the renaming occurred upon the arrival of the 21st century.

This information becomes even more obvious if district names are excluded from the analysis. In order to picture that, chart 2 provides the proportion of renamed data in each time frame, but excluding district-designations. This graph clearly shows that the prominence of acts of renaming exponentially grew with the advent of the new century. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that not even one act of renaming was recorded after the year 2010 in that region.

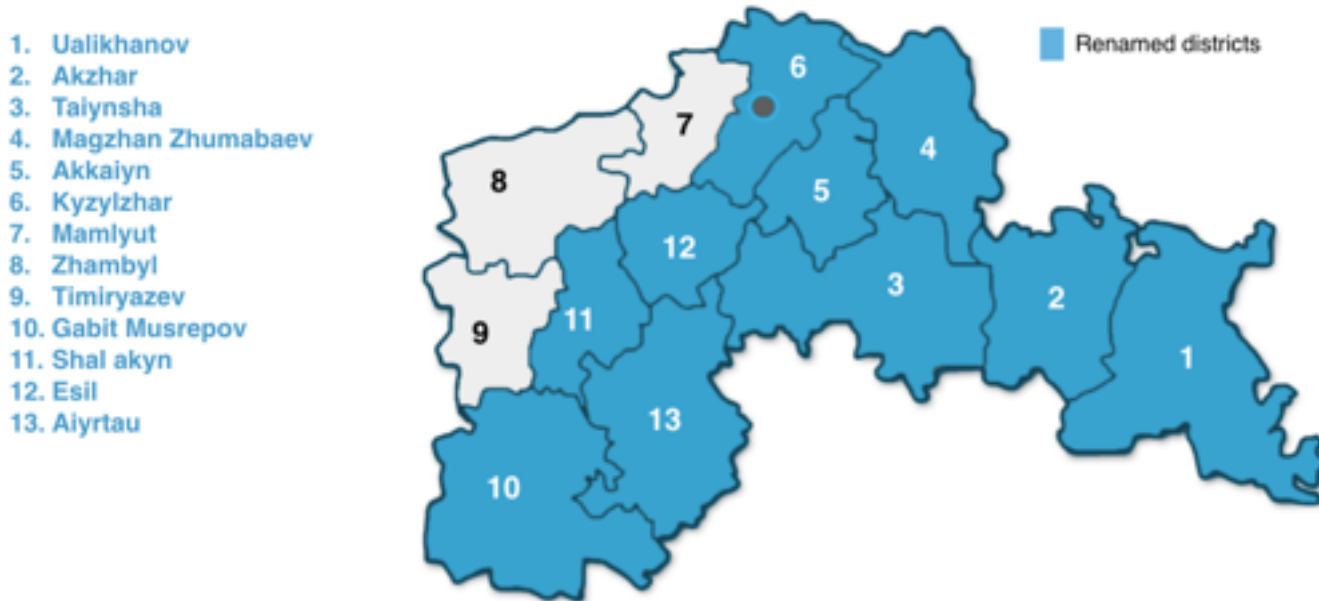
**Chart 2: Share of replaced toponyms by time of renaming**



Even though, for example, remnants of the Slavic people's presence can still be observed through the profuse Slavic-sounding village or town designations which still prevail in most of the districts that constitute the North Kazakhstan oblast, to be fair, the situation concerning the district-names could not be more different.

As map 1 shows, 10 out of the 13 *rayons* in North Kazakhstan region have been renamed. All of them were given Kazakh sounding names. Indeed, nowadays, 11 of the districts hold Kazakh-sounding denominations. The only two district-designations which are not

connected to the titular nation are among those which have not been replaced during the

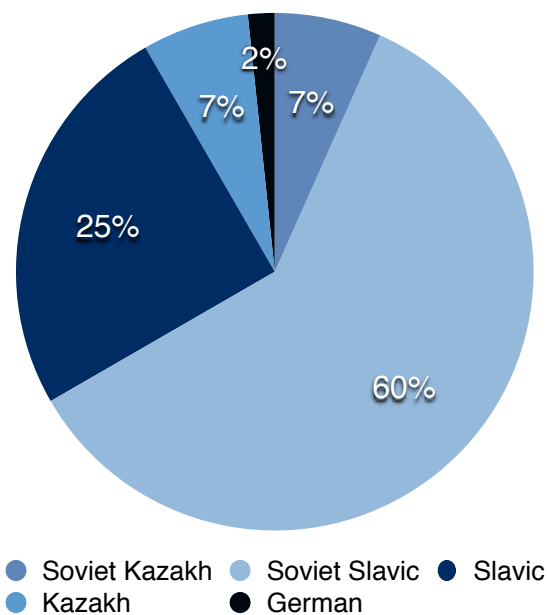


Map 1: Renamed districts in North Kazakhstan region with data compiled by the author.

analysed period (Timiryazev and Mamlyut districts).

Before turning to the analysis of the specificities which occurred in the districts, it is important to briefly mention the overall classification of the replaced toponyms based on its typology in the region as a whole. The predominance of Slavic toponyms (Soviet included) amongst them is highly notorious. Figure 3 shows that in total, Soviet and non-Soviet Slavic toponyms represent the 85 per cent of the whole, while Kazakh place names make up a mere 14 per cent (designations with Soviet connotations included). Lastly, it should be highlighted that only one denomination with

Chart 3: Typology of replaced toponyms in North Kazakhstan



links to a different ethnic group (German) other than the two previously discussed have been vanished from the map.

### **3.1.1. Renamed toponyms and size of national minority population per district**

Along the vast steppes of the region, when it comes to renaming, not all the districts have been subjected to the whims of Kazakhstani officials to the same degree. There are certain districts that have experienced modifications within their territory's limits in a higher frequency than others.

National minorities make up at least half of the population in 11 of the 13 *rayons* which constitute the North Kazakhstan oblast. The only two exceptions are Ualikhanov (11.3 per cent) and Akzhar (22.6 per cent) districts. Moreover, in some of them, the titular nation does not even account for the 30 per cent of the population (besides the two aforementioned ones, Magzhan Zhumabaev, Taiynsha, Mamlyut and Kyzylzhar districts). Does this fact make them more likely to be subjected to renaming policies? If naming policies would be carried out mainly targeting geographical locations populated by ethnic minorities, we might expect to see a relationship between the frequency of replaced toponyms and the number of national minority representatives inhabiting the territory.

Table 1 showcases side by side the proportion of ethnic minority dwellers and the number of replaced designations in each district. The three districts where the highest amount of renaming acts was recorded are Ualikhanov (15), Ayrtau (10) and Akzhar (7). In Ualikhanov rayon, altogether, 4 municipalities and 10 urban settlements were renamed, in addition to the district toponym *per se*. In Ayrtau, despite none of the still existing municipalities was renamed, it ranks second in North Kazakhstan in terms of renaming. Nine urban settlements had its name replaced during the analysed period, as well as its

own designation. Akzhar had its own name changed. Moreover, one municipality and four urban settlements were also renamed within its territorial boundaries.

**Table 1: Renamed toponyms and size of ethnic minority population per district in N.K region**

Districts	% National minorities	Number of replaced toponyms
Aiyrtau	61.1	10*
Akzhar	22.6	7*
Akkaiyn	66.5	2*
Gabit Musrepov	68	5*
Esil	59	1*
Kyzylzhar	75	2*
Magzhan Zhumabaev	71	4*
Mamlyut	74.1	0
Shal akyn	54	6*
Taiynsha	73.2	3*
Timiryazev	61.75	2
Ualikhanov	11.3	15*
Zhambyl	53	3

\* It includes one replaced district toponym, or 2 in the case of Gabit Musrepov. Source: Compiled by author.

The former and the latter also constitute the ones with the largest settlements of ethnic Kazakhs in North Kazakhstan, the only two where national minorities represent less than one-quarter of the total population. The only exception is Aiyrtau district. Second in terms of frequency of toponym replacement, this administrative unit conforms only the seventh largest settlement of members of the titular nation in the oblast.

On the obverse side of the coin, we find one district where not even one act of renaming has been carried out during the analysed timeframe, even two if district-name renaming are excluded: Mamlyut and Esil. They are followed closely by Kyzylzhar district where only one urban settlement had its designation removed. In this case too, an interesting

tendency is spotted. Both Mamlyut and Kyzylzhar constitute the districts with the largest number of people belonging to national minority groups (75 per cent and 74.1 per cent, respectively). The only anomaly here is Esil, where national minorities, only make up 59 per cent of the population. Nevertheless, it should still be taken into account the fact that, even in this district, national minorities form a majority. In fact, no district where national minorities integrate at least 70 per cent of the total number of inhabitants has experienced more than 4 acts of renaming within the borders of its territory (no more than 3, if district names are excluded).

Between both ends, Shal akyn district was the one where renaming was the most frequent. It had six replaced designations (half of them belonged to urban settlements). In the district of Gabit Musrepov, one municipality and two urban settlements have been renamed. In addition, its toponym was replaced twice. Magzhan Zhumabaev experienced four acts of renaming, which affected the district-name and three more urban settlements. As table 1 shows, three acts of renaming were reported in Taiynsha (including its district name and two village designations). Meanwhile, only three urban settlements were renamed in Zhambyl. Finally, Timiryazev and Akkayin districts, which had two toponyms replaced each.

### **3.1.2. Typology of replaced toponyms and size of national minority population per district**

Table 2 compares the percentage share of national minorities within each district of the region to the number of renamed place-names shorted by typology within these same districts. Overall, there appears to be an abundance of Slavic names (both Soviet and non-Soviet) in all *rayons*, except for Aiyrtau. This fact may be the key to understand the reasons why this district became an oddity in first place.

When contrasted to the information gathered in section 5.1.3., it seems that Ualikhanov and Akzhar districts (the ones with the highest share of national minority dwellers and two of the three most prolific districts in terms of renaming in the region), had an obvious predominance of Slavic-sounding toponyms replaced. Aiyrtau district, on the contrary, is the one with the highest amount of Kazakh-sounding toponyms replaced in the district, although not the majority. For instance, non-Slavic toponyms have mainly been changed, not in the districts with a high number of ethnic Kazakhs, but in districts where these practice has been the most frequent, such as Ualikhanov, Aiyrtau, Akzhar and Shal Akyn.

**Table 2: Typology of replaced toponyms and size of national minority population in N.K region**

Districts	% National minorities	Soviet-Slavic toponyms	Slavic toponyms	Soviet-Kazakh toponyms	Kazakh toponyms	Other
Aiyrtau	61.1	3*	3	2	2	-
Akzhar	22.6	6*	-	-	-	1
Akkaiyn	66.5	1				
Gabit Musrepov	68	3*	2*	-	-	-
Esil	59	1*				
Kyzylzhar	75	1	-	-	1*	-
Magzhan Zhumabaev	71	4*				
Mamlyut	74.1	-	-	-	-	-
Shal akyn	54	4*	1	-	1	-
Taiynsha	73.2	3*	-	-	-	-
Timiryazev	61.75	-	2	-	-	-
Ualikhanov	11.3	7	6	2*	-	-
Zhambyl	53	2	1	-	-	-

\* It includes one replaced district toponym, or 2 in the case of Gabit Musrepov. Source: Compiled by author.

In any manner, the vast majority of Northern Kazakhstan's cultural landscape remains Slavic-sounding, with the only exceptions of Ualikhanov and Akzhar districts (the only ones with a clear majority of ethnic Kazakhs in the region).

### **3.2. The Almaty region**

The Almaty region is located on the South-Eastern end of Kazakhstan, in the border with Kyrgyzstan and Xinjiang (China). The region is composed of seventeen districts: Aksu, Alakol, Balkhash, Enbekshikazakh, Eskeldi, Ile, Karasay, Karatal, Kegen, Kerbulak, Koku, Panfilov, Raiymbek, Sarkan, Talgar, Uyghur and Zhambyl. This oblast has the highest proportion of non-Slavic minorities, as previously mentioned in this chapter. Out of its 1,223,181 inhabitants, 32.35 per cent belong to an ethnic minority group, and even though ethnic Russians represent the largest non-titular group (almost 16 per cent), this region has the largest concentration of ethnic Uyghurs in the country (around 65 per cent of the whole community lives in the Almaty oblast), constituting the second largest national minority in the whole region (8 per cent of the region's population).

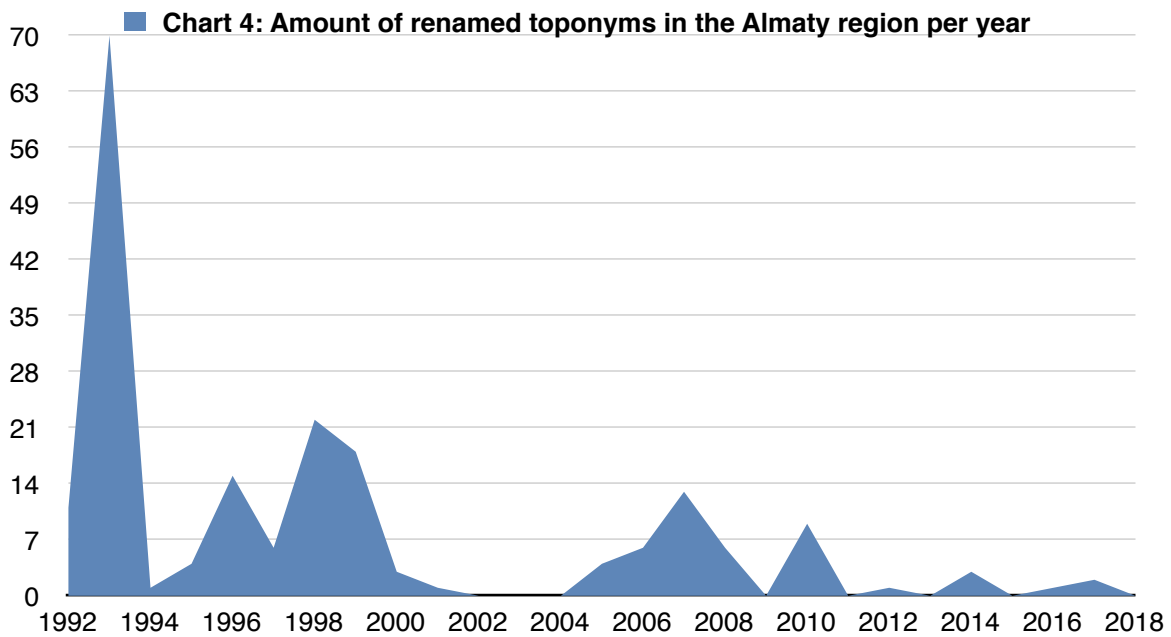
Many of the Uyghurs living in this area are the ones whose ancestors left China encouraged by the Russians, after they returned the occupied territory of the Ili Sultanate to the Qing Empire in accordance with the St Petersburg Treaty of 1881 (Hsü, 1965 in Kamalov, 2012: 344). In the course of the last two centuries, the Uyghurs have bestridden the border that currently separates the Xinjiang Province in China from the southeastern part of Kazakhstan (Oka, 2006: 368). In the decade of the 1930s, many Uyghurs moved to Xinjiang to escape the Soviet policy of collectivization and the consequent famine. And, on the contrary, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Dungans from the Ghulja region emigrated on a massive scale to Soviet Kazakhstan prompted by Mao's

collectivization and the increasing tensions in Sino-Soviet relations (Clark and Kamalov 2004 in Kamalov, 2012: 344).

The oblast is also home for the biggest settlement of ethnic Turks (nearly 37 per cent of them live in the Almaty region), ethnic Koreans (15.56 per cent), ethnic Azeri (17.45 per cent), and ethnic Kurds (35.27 per cent) in Kazakhstan. Other smaller groups inhabiting the region are Tatars, Chechens, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Dzungars. The presence of many of these communities (like Tatars, Chechens, Ukrainians or Turks), not only in the Almaty region but also in the North Kazakhstan oblast and Kazakhstan in general, is largely the result of the Kazakh SSR becoming the destination of people deported during and after the Second World War, in addition to the location of various gulags (Schatz, 2000: 75). For instance, the overwhelming majority of the Koreans in Kazakhstan are the offspring of migrants from the northern part of the Korean Peninsula who relocated in the Russian Far East around 200 years ago. Koreans were one of the ethnic groups more suffered the devastating power of the Stalinist regime, and in 1937 they were massively deported to Central Asia (Oka, 2006: 373). Ushtobe, the center of the Karatal district would become the destination of the first train of forcibly displaced Koreans from Russia (Oka, 2006: 376 - 377). That is why, the largest settlement of people belonging to that ethnicity (after the city of Taldykorgan, where they conform more than 8 per cent of the population) is situated in the Karatal *rayon*.

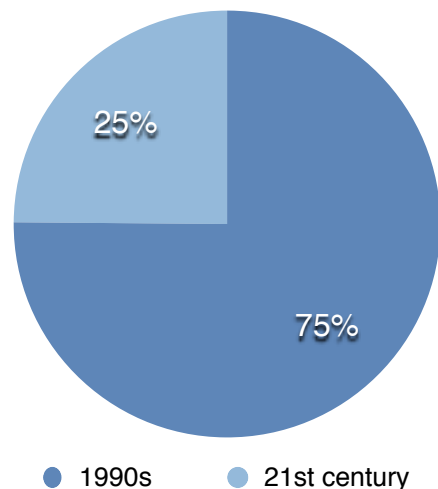
Other regions have also an important share of non-Slavic minorities. For instance, Turkestan is the region where ethnic Uzbeks (the third largest non-titular group in the country) and ethnic Tajik predominantly live. Or the Zhambyl region, which hosts one of the largest communities of Dungan people in Kazakhstan (according to the latest census, more than 83 per cent of the whole community lives in Zhambyl). However, the Almaty

region is not only the one with the highest share of non Slavic minorities, but it also hosts one of the most heterogeneous groups of national minorities.



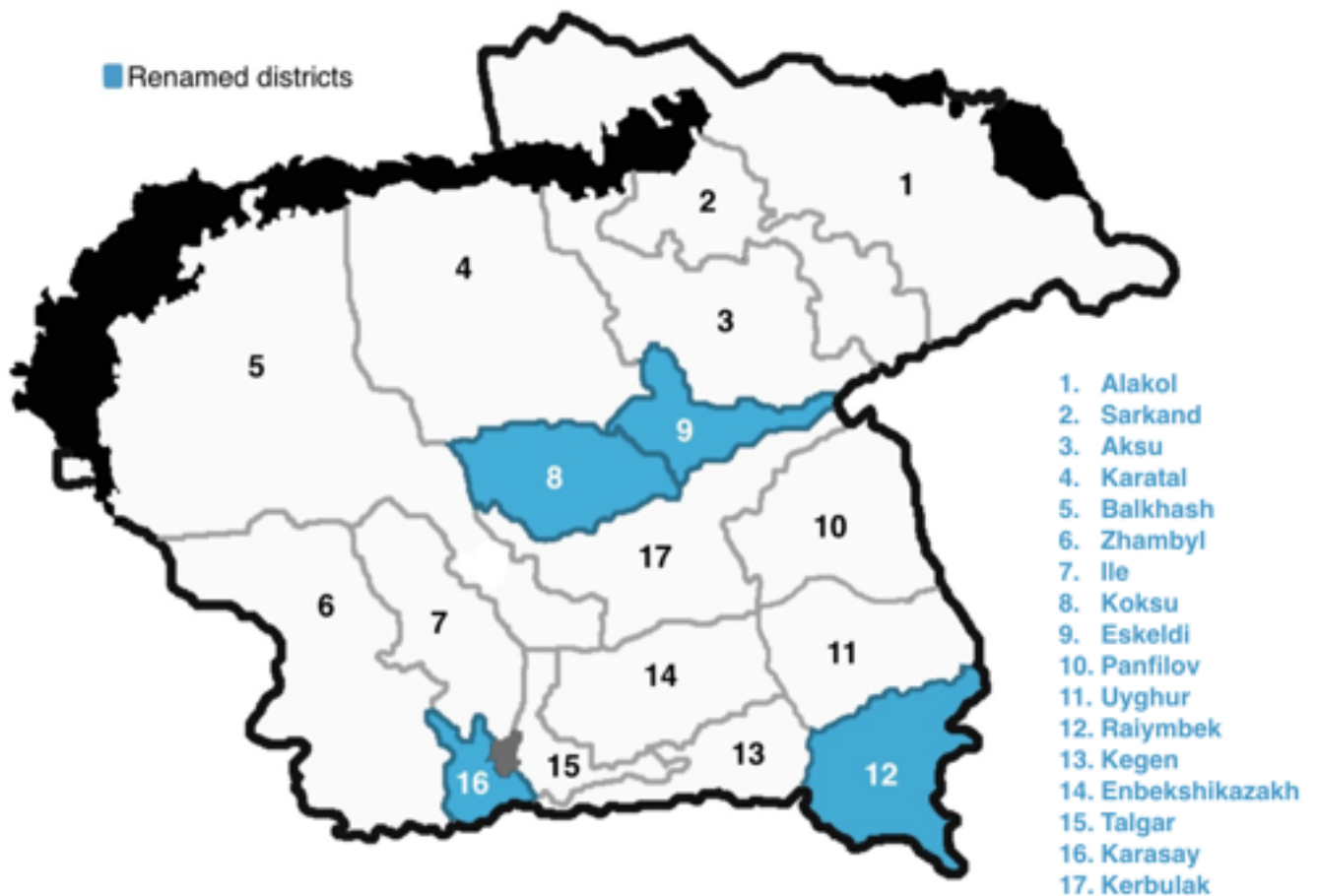
The region is undeniably the most prolific one in terms of renaming. Overall, Kazakhstani authorities have carried out 228 acts of renaming within the borders of the oblast, as opposed to the 60 executed in the Northern oblast. Graph 4 also shows that this region not only differs from its Northern counterpart in terms of quantity of these acts but also in terms of their temporal distribution. Contrary to what was observed there, the main renaming period in Almaty region took place in the last decade of the 20th century, in the aftermaths of Kazakhstan’s Declaration of Independence.

**Chart 5: Renamed place designations by time of execution in Almaty region**



In fact, as portrayed in figure number 5, around three quarters of the acts of renaming were executed prior to the arrival of the new century. And despite a clear decrease of acts of this kind can be spotted, place designations are still being replaced up to this day.

Unlike the trends in North Kazakhstan, the Almaty region map largely lacks typologic diversity. As it occurs in the former oblast, the practical totality of the main administrative units in Almaty nowadays hold designations linked to the titular nation. All but Uyghur district. However, this is not the result of a massive renaming process, as opposed to what was seen in North Kazakhstan.

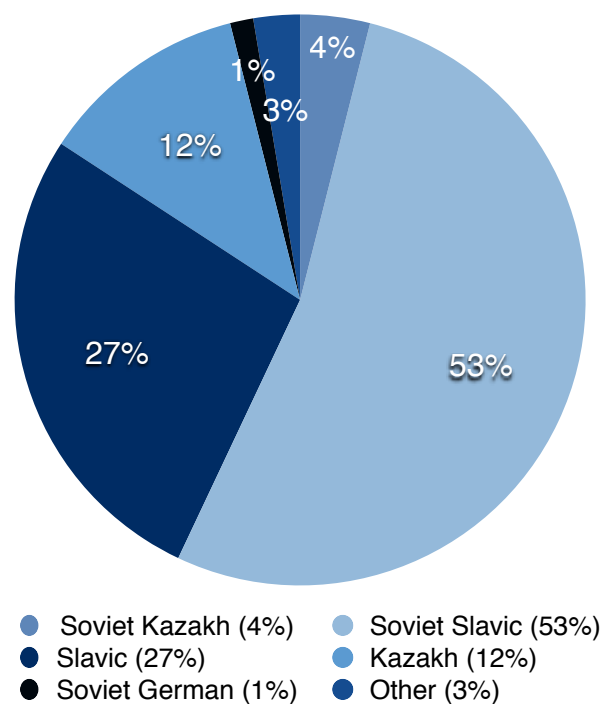


Map 2: Renamed districts in Almaty region with data compiled by the author.

For instance, within the analysed period, only one more district had a non-Kazakh denomination. Koksu district was called Kirovo (Soviet-Slavic) until 1993, year when it was renamed. Was this measure motivated because the toponym was Slavic or because it had clear Soviet connotations? It is hard to say. The truth is that at present-time no other Slavic designation exists, while the toponym ‘Panfilov’ with a clear connection to the local Soviet imaginary still remains untouched. Furthermore, most of the municipalities and urban settlements within the oblast’s limits hold designation linked to the titular nation.

When talking about the typologic classification of the toponyms that were replaced, however, discrepancies between both regions become less obvious. In Almaty, the largest group of removed place-names is conformed by Slavic ones, with Soviet connotations (53 per cent) or without them (27 per cent). Overall, they make up around the 81 per cent of the total, an overwhelming majority of the targeted toponyms by the renaming policies. This data is in line with the 85 per cent recorded in the Northern oblast. Nevertheless, the authorities in Almaty region have replaced a superior number of Kazakh toponyms within their territorial boundaries (38 as opposed to the 8 which took place in North Kazakhstan). However, in proportion they move along similar numbers (16 per cent in Almaty and 14 per cent in North Kazakhstan).

**Chart 6: Typology of replaced toponyms in the Almaty region**



In addition, three locations under a Soviet German toponym and, a municipality holding what is most likely an Uyghur denomination had their name replaced.

### 3.2.1. Renamed toponyms and size of national minority population per district

**Table 3: Renamed toponyms and size of national minority population per district in Almaty**

Districts	% National minorities	Number of replaced toponyms
Aksu	5.3	5
Alakol	17.7	30
Balkhash	8.4	5
Enbekishikazakh	46	18
Eskeldi	25.8	20*
Ile	38.6	8
Karasay	31.1	21*
Karatal	39.9	18
Kegen	0.9**	2
Kerbulak	13.5	19
Koksu	20.5	15*
Panfilov	32.9	9
Raiymbek	0.9	2*
Sarkand	20.4	12
Talgar	41.7	25
Uyghur	57.7	2
Zhambyl	18.5	17

\* It includes one replaced district toponym.

\*\* On 23 May, 1997, the Kegen district had ceased to exist as an independent administrative-territorial unit, as many other districts did in that period, and consequently its territory was transferred to Raiymbek district. Nevertheless, in March 2018, Kegen district was once again formed, respecting the administrative territorial organization that it had in 1989. As a result of this administrative re-distribution, the census 2009 does not include data concerning the ethnic composition of this rayon. Thus, the numbers corresponding to Raiymbek district are utilized for the sake of this research. It should be noted that the information displayed in some of the municipalities official websites, confirm that the demographic situation in both Raiymbek and Kegen was equivalent. In five of the 11 municipalities which disclose demographic information regarding the ethnic composition of their inhabitants national minorities constitute less than 1 per cent of the population. Moreover, in some cases there would be no citizens belonging to an ethnic minority group.

In order to proof if any connection exists between the density of ethnic minority population in a territory and the number of acts of renaming taking place in that same territory, this section pursues a more detailed analysis and, hence, examines the frequency of acts of

renaming as opposed to the existing proportion of national minority inhabitants in each of the districts that constitute the Almaty region.

Regarding the demographic composition, this region appears to be a far cry from the North Kazakhstan example. National minorities only make up the majority of the population in Uyghur district. As its name suggest, this *rayon* constitutes the biggest settlement of ethnic Uyghurs in the region. It is also the only main regional territorial-administrative unit where this community forms the largest ethnic group, representing more than half of the population (55.5 per cent). Nevertheless, six more districts have sizable national minority communities where they account for at least 30 per cent of the total population: Panfilov, Enbekshikazakh, and Talgar, with important settlements of ethnic Uyghurs (forming 27, 18.5 and 10.4 per cent, respectively), Karatal, with a notorious Korean community that represents a little bit less than 10 per cent of the district's population and Ile, and Karasay. Ethnic Russian communities account for the 15 - 26 per cent of the inhabitants in all of the afore-mentioned districts, except for Panfilov where their presence does not surpass the 5 per cent.

Table 3 juxtaposes the share of national minority dwellers and the number of replaced designations in each district. The three districts where the highest number of renaming acts took place are Alakol (30), Talgar (25) and Karasay (21). The last two are the only ones where national minorities account for at least 30 per cent of the population. In Talgar, even though national minorities represent such an important share of the population, and the district per se was never renamed, the process is not alien to the administrative unit. Not only 25 toponyms were replaced since December 1991, but most importantly nearly all the current municipalities that conformed the district had their denominations changed. In the case of Karasay, besides the district, 19 urban settlements and two municipalities were

renamed. On the other side we found Alakol, where national minorities constitute less than 18 per cent. There more than the half of the municipalities have had their toponyms replaced (12 out of 22 municipalities) and nearly the 40 per cent of the urban settlements were renamed (18).

There is no district which is alien to renaming practices. Seven more rayons experienced between 10 and 20 acts of renaming. For example, Eskeldi had its district's name removed with the arrival of the 21st century, and during the analysed time interval 14 more urban settlements and five municipalities were renamed. The same amount of urban settlements and municipalities had its toponym replaced in Kerbulak, while Enbekshikazakh had one less municipality renamed. The situation was not far from the one in Karatal. In that district, twelve urban settlements and five municipalities were renamed (one of them, twice). The authorities in Zhambyl carried out seventeen toponym replacements (affecting three municipalities and 14 urban settlements). In Koksuz district, five municipality denominations had its designation replaced, in addition to the nine place-names belonging to urban settlements. Meanwhile, in Sarkan four municipalities and eight urban settlements were renamed.

Moreover, if the most prolific districts in North Kazakhstan are taken as a measurement pole, only 5 out of the 17 rayons in Almaty experienced less than 7 acts of renaming in the analysed time interval (7 is the number of replaced toponyms in Akzhar district, the one ranking third in terms of renaming frequency in the Northern oblast). In fact, three of them merely experienced two toponym changes within the analysed period: Uyghur, Kegen and Raiymbek districts. Recall that Uyghur district is the only one where ethnic Kazakhs do not constitute a numeric majority in the whole region. However, in Kegen and Raiymbek districts the presence of ethnic minorities is completely anecdotal (less than 1 per cent in

each). The same occurs with districts such as Aksu and Balkhash. Even though ethnic Kazakhs surpass the 90 per cent of the population, these districts are amid the ones which experienced very few acts of renaming (five each).

### 3.2.2. Typology of replaced toponyms and size of national minority population per district

Table 4: Replaced toponyms per typology and size of ethnic minority population per district in Almaty region

Districts	% National minorities	Soviet-Slavic toponyms	Slavic toponyms	Kazakh toponyms	Soviet Kazakh toponyms	Other
Aksu	5.3	-	2	-	3	-
Alakol	17.7	13	15	1	1	-
Balkhash	8.4	-	-	3	2	-
Enbekishi kazakh	46	7	8	2	-	-
Eskeldi	25.8	6	10	2*	-	2
Ile	38.6	5	1	2	-	-
Karasay	31.1	17	-	3*	-	1
Karatal	39.9	12	1	3	-	1
Kegen	0.9**	1	-	-	-	1
Kerbulak	13.5	13	5	-	-	1
Koksu	20.5	11*	-	2	2	-
Panfilov	32.9	3	0	3	1	2
Raiymbek	0.9	1	-	1*	-	-
Sarkand	20.4	6	6	-	-	-
Talgar	41.7	18	7	-	-	-
Uyghur	57.7	-	1	1	-	-
Zhambyl	18.5	6	7	4	-	-

\* It includes one replaced district toponym.

\*\* See explanation in Table 3.

Table 4 measures the proportion of ethnic minority dwellers in each district of the Almaty oblast in contrast to the number of replaced denominations classified by typology within these same districts. Again, there dominance of Slavic names (both Soviet and non-

Soviet) in every district is irrefutable. For the most part, only the districts where changes of Slavic and Soviet Slavic names dominated were Kazakh-sounding designations replaced (with or without Soviet connotations). The only exceptions are Balkhash (5 out of 5 were Kazakh toponyms), Aksu (3 out of 5), Uighur (1 out of 2) and Panfilov (4 Kazakh, 3 Slavic, 1 half Russian, half Kazakh and 1 most likely Uyghur toponym).

The reason for these districts becoming the exception to the rule is indeed in the landscape. When look closely in detail to the remaining toponyms of the district the answer is clear. It is impossible (or nearly impossible in cases such as the one of Panfilov) to encounter urban settlements or municipalities with other than Kazakh sounding names.

For instance, in the case of the Uyghur district, the only non-Kazakh place which had its toponym renamed was the only remaining Slavic-designation in the whole district.

The current lack of diversity in the toponymic map of certain districts may also serve to explain the oddity witnessed in section 3.2.1. Up to these moment, it seemed that, in general, the districts where more frequently experienced acts of renaming were also the ones which were predominantly inhabited by members of the titular nation. However, Raiymbek and Kegen only underwent 2 acts of renaming each.

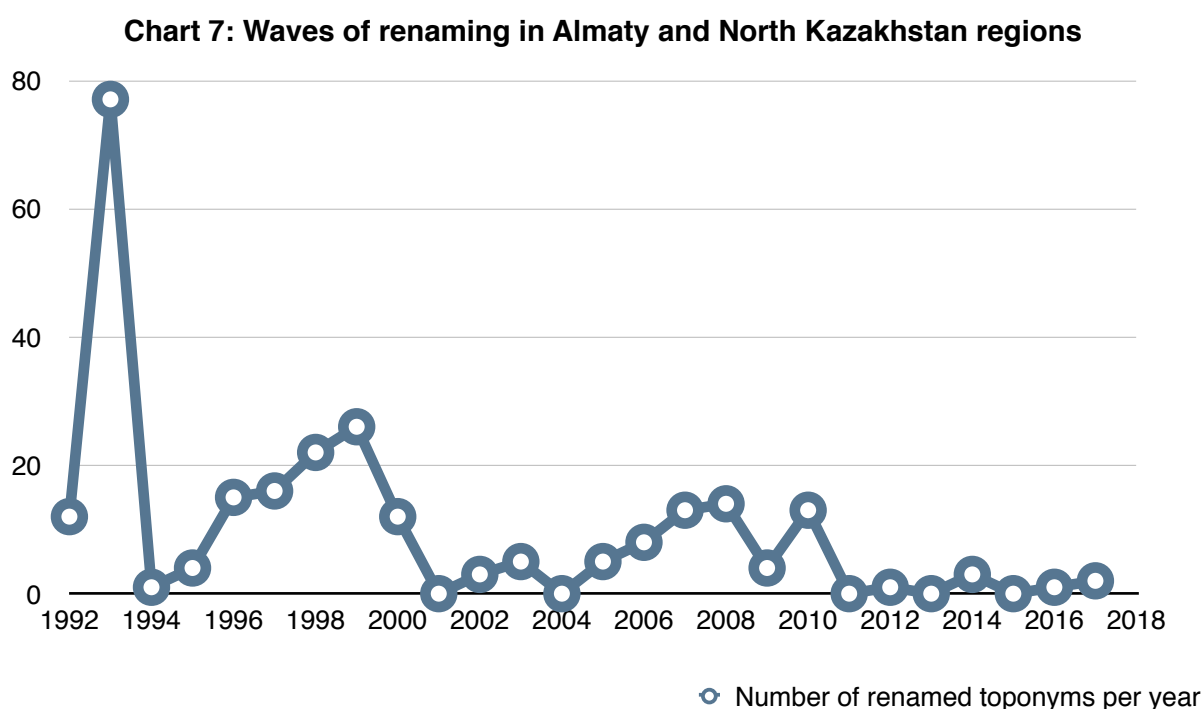
Recall that regarding the ethnic composition of the district, the presence of national minorities in this district is extremely vestigial. As stated in the latest census, 99.1 per cent of the total population are members of the titular nation. Therefore, considering the number of representatives of the titular nation, it may appear shocking that Raiymbek and Kegen are the rayons with the least amount of toponyms renamed in the whole region. Besides the district denomination, only one municipality was renamed in the former, the only one

with a non-Kazakh sounding toponym. Thus, in the year 1995 its Soviet place-name Lenin was replaced by the Kazakh-sounding 'Uzak batyr'.

In the latter, the only non-Kazakh toponym of the district was also replaced right after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the year 1992, the village of 'Oktyabr' (October in Russian language) was renamed 'Tumenbay'. Hence, currently, as it occurs with the district's ethnic mosaic, both Kegen's and Raiymbek's maps are completely Kazakh.

Overall, the results show that most frequently targeted territories by Kazakhstan's ruling elites renaming policies are also the ones where ethnic Kazakhs make up the majority of the population, with few exceptions like the case of Ayrtau (where nearly half of the renamed toponyms were Kazakh-sounding), or Kegen and Raiymbek districts, where all the place designations but the few ones which were removed were already connected to the titular nation.

## Chapter 4: Contextualizing the renaming waves



Since December 1991, 288 acts of renaming affected the districts (15), the municipalities (73) and the urban settlements (200) of Almaty and North Kazakhstan regions. As it is shown in chart 7, there were three moments where there was a clear preponderance of this kind of practice. The first, just after Kazakhstan became an independent state, between 1992 and 1993. Then again in the late 1990s, more specifically in the 1996-1999 period. And, finally, although not as salient as in previous processes, between the years 2006 and 2010.

Therefore, the following chapter will examine in more detail into the three main renaming waves that both oblasts have experienced since Kazakhstan's declaration of independence to this day, with the respective legal and political contextualization.

#### **4.1. 1992 - 1993: Post-independence renaming adrenaline**

The demographic situation of the country by the end of the Soviet period (where ethnic Kazakhs represented less than the 40 per cent of the population, as previously mentioned in this study) was not particularly conducive to the pursue of ethno-nationalist policies. However, the adoption of different documents concerning language policy in 1989 - 1990 already confirmed the existing atmosphere of “high spirits and great expectations” of a rapid shift towards encouraging the role of the titular nation by the time of Kazakhstan’s independence (Dadabaeva and Adibayeva, 2010: 137).

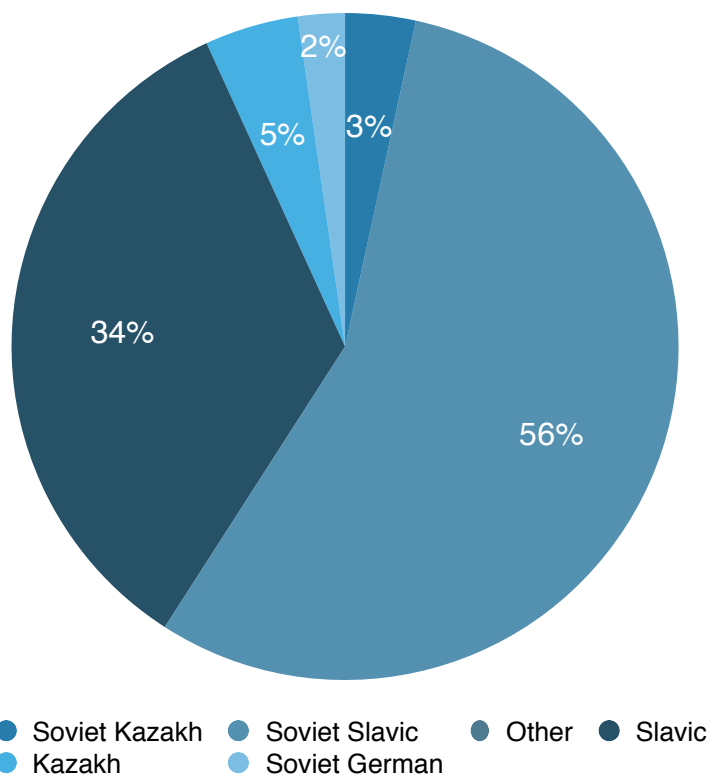
Thus, that euphoria which commenced with the 1987 ‘Resolution on Improving the Study of the Kazakh Language’ (the first document in decades noting Kazakh language as an issue worthy of attention (Fierman, 1998: 175)), the 1989 ‘Law on Languages’ and the 1990 ‘State Program on the Development of the Kazakh Language and Other National Languages in the Kazakh SSR in the Period up to 2000’ could still be felt in the months upon the collapse of the Soviet state.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought an ideological vacuum that had to be filled quickly. This void made Kazakh nationalism gain momentum and prompted Kazakh people to believe that they had a leading position in the new state and that it was the moment to revive their culture, their history and their language (Dadabaeva and Adibayeva, 2010: 137). In fact, article 8 of the December 1991 Declaration of independence showcases the relevance of these ideas at the time. The document identifies the strengthening of the national dignity of the Kazakh nation as one of the most important duties of the State (‘Declaration of independence’, 1991). Yet, amidst those important obligations, the article also singles out the revival and development of culture, traditions and language, of the Kazakh nation and of representatives of other nationalities living in Kazakhstan. Moreover,

in the preamble, the Declaration also mentions the will of the people of Kazakhstan, instead of the Kazakh people. These dichotomous trends will find a mirror in the landscape.

As the graph presented at the beginning of the chapter demonstrates, the years 1992 and 1993 were the most prolific ones in terms of renaming. Acts of this kind during this period constitute 30 per cent of the total.

Chart 8: Typology of renamed toponyms in 1992-1993



As figure 8 depicts, the overwhelming majority of the replaced toponyms were Slavic-sounding (90 per cent). While around 8 and 2 per cent, were Kazakh and German-sounding respectively. Overall, they were replaced by Kazakh sounding designations. In addition, as chart 8 shows, toponyms with Soviet connotations were also some of the most targeted ones. More than the

half of the renamed places had Soviet-Slavic denominations (49), forming 56 per cent of the total number. The second group were non-Soviet Slavic names (30), followed by Kazakh-sounding toponyms (4), Soviet-Kazakh (3) and German-Soviet (2). In total, only three of the renamed toponyms were district names.

Nevertheless, it is time to pinpoint the geographic distribution of the acts of renaming. As it has been hinted in the previous chapter the majority of toponym changes at that time

occurred in the Almaty oblast. Since it has to be recalled of what was at stake at that time. National minorities represented from 70 to 80 per cent of the population in the seven northern regions of the country, almost all of which neighboured Russian territory, including the North-Kazakhstan region (Peyrouse, 2008: 107). Hence, while 81 acts of renaming can be accounted for in the Almaty region, during the same period, only 7 took place in the North-Kazakhstan region. The district of Alakol had the most places renamed in those years (24), followed by Kerbulak (10), the Almaty Zhambyl (8) and Sarkan, Koksu and Eskeldi which each experienced seven acts of renaming. Thus, even the six aforementioned districts situated in the Almaty region had each more places renamed than the whole North Kazakhstan region put together within the same period. In fact, only two districts were affected: Akzhar and Aiyrtau (besides Akkayn that had its district name replaced), with the former constituting one of the few where ethnic Kazakhs make up the majority of the population.

At this time, Kazakhstan's leaders were conscious of the challenges that the demographic situation entailed, they commenced to encourage the return of the Kazakh diaspora to its "historic homeland", and to adopt different documents that had this idea engrained. For instance, in 1992 the main legal document defining the eligibility for migration to the republic in the framework of the ethnic return-migration policy was passed. Indeed, the law establishes as its main purpose to form the legal basis for the regulation and organization of resettlement in Kazakhstan and for the creation of the necessary living conditions in the new place for refugees and for people and families returning to their historic homeland (Art. 3 Law on Immigration, 1992). Moreover, according to this law, the people who are qualified to obtain the refugee status are on the one hand, people of the Kazakh diaspora residing in other states who are compelled to return to the Republic of Kazakhstan because of their persecution and oppression, restriction of their rights and freedoms, or

because of a well-founded fear of being so, as well as for reasons of connection with their historical homeland. On the other hand, compatriots and people of indigenous ethnic origin who have fled the territory of Kazakhstan as a result of mass repressions, violent measures and persecution, as well as prisoners of war, and their descendants who are now returning to their homeland (Art. 17 Law on Immigration, 1992).

However, legislation and other official documents prior to the 1992 law on migration were already underlining the special position of ethnic Kazakhs living in other countries within the migration policy. In fact, a resolution passed on 18 November 1991, just weeks before Kazakhstan's declaration of independence, defined 'the procedures and conditions of the relocation to Kazakh SSR for persons of Kazakh ethnicity from other republics and abroad willing to work in rural areas' (Bonnenfant, 2012: 37).

The Law on Citizenship from the same year, despite granting equality to every citizen "irrespective of their origin, social and property status, race and nationality" and other circumstances (Art. 5, Law on Citizenship 1991), lays down in its article 3 that Kazakhstan "shall create conditions for the return to its territory of persons who were forced to leave the territory of the Republic during the periods of mass repressions, violent collectivization, as a result of other inhumane political actions, and their descendants, as well as the return of ethnic Kazakhs residing in the territory of other states" (Art. 3, Law on Citizenship 1991). In 1992, it was already obvious that officials in Kazakhstan were developing a quite active homeland rhetoric (Bonnenfant, 2012: 31). In September that year the first Qurultay (Congress) of the World Kazakhs was convened and that is where it was decided to establish a permanent institution for dealing with the affairs related to the Kazakh diaspora. Hence, the World Association of the Kazakhs (Duniezhuzi Qazaqtary Qauymdastyghy) was born in 1992 (Bonnenfant, 2012: 33).

The first Kazakh Constitution adopted in January 1993 also positioned the titular nation in a more “elevated” status than the other national groups in the territory. This is clear in the way it handles the language issue. The Kazakh language is granted state language status, while Russian is defined as the language of inter-ethnic communication. Meanwhile, the Constitution only refers to “other” languages in order to guarantee their protection, and prohibit discrimination based on language (Fierman, 1998: 180). It also makes it compulsory that the candidates for President of Kazakhstan be able to speak Kazakh (Article 114 of 1993 Constitution in Ó Beacháin and Kevlihan, 2013: 343).

However, as the data collected regarding the renaming show, defining the state policy during that period as plain nationalizing would be in the very least an oversimplification. The first paragraph of the Constitution opened with a reference to 'We, the people (narod) of Kazakhstan', clearly a non-ethnic entity. Even though it should be noted that it also states that “the Republic of Kazakhstan as a state system is self-determined by the Kazakh nation,” (Polsto, 1998: 56 and Dadabaeva and Adibayeva, 2010: 138).

Finally, concerning the legislation regulating the acts of renaming, it would not be until the December of 1993 that the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Administrative-Territorial Structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan was passed. Therefore, the replaced toponyms during this first wave were not included under it. Instead, the analysed decrees on renaming of certain administrative-territorial units of the Republic of Kazakhstan approved in the years 1992 and 1993<sup>14</sup> include a statement justifying the decision as a form “to revive the national toponymy”, “to restore the original historical and geographical names of administrative and territorial units”, in accordance with the ideas of the local

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<sup>14</sup> See Appendix 2: Database Sources.

Councils of People's Deputies and on the basis of the conclusion of the State Onomastic Commission under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

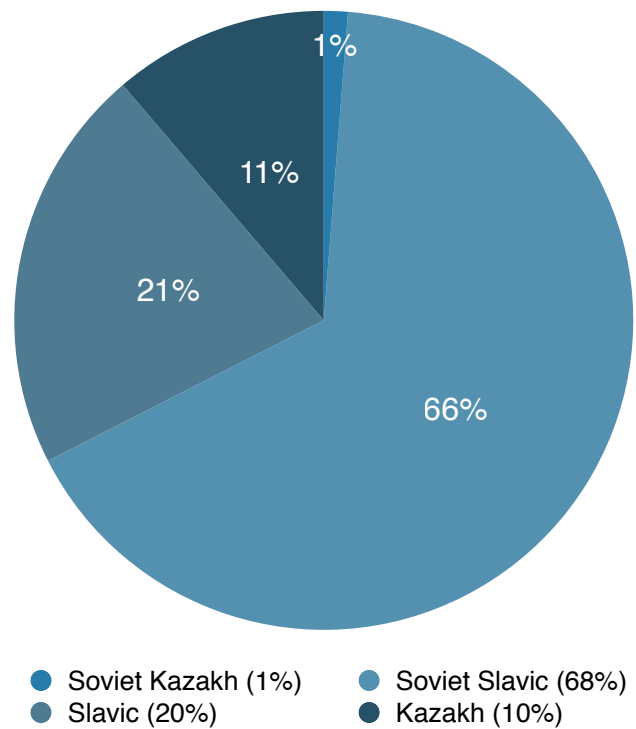
#### **4.2. 1996 - 1999: Ethnic mosaic changes, renaming continues**

The 1994 - 95 period became a turning point in terms of non-titular emigration. Uncertain of their status in post-Soviet Kazakhstan many members of the Slavic minorities, as well as Germans began to leave the country upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, in those years the emigration flow reached its peak. According Kazakhstan Statistical Agency's estimates, 481,000 people left Kazakhstan in 1994, decreasing to 309,600 in 1995 and then to 229,400 in 1996. Altogether, a total of 1,846,466 people left formally Kazakhstan in the 1990s (Statisticheskii Biulletin 1997: 12 - 15 in Dave, 2004: 453). Throughout the decade, the ethnic Kazakh share of the population increased, while the proportion of ethnic Russians, and other Slavic and European minorities did not stop decreasing. In this context, the titular nation passed from being a plurality to becoming a majority in "their own" territory. These changes in the ethnic mosaic became more noticeable, or at least continued, the trends that have been spotted in previous years.

The second big renaming flow, took place just after those peak years of emigration which occurred in Kazakhstan. Thus, between the years 1996 - 1999, 80 place names were replaced in the two regions, 28 per cent of the total number of renaming acts which took place during the complete analysed period. This constitutes the second largest renaming wave in Kazakhstan's recent history. Yet, it should be highlighted that, even though the number of replaced toponyms is quite close to the 1992-1993 one, a further observation should be made. The first wave comprises two years, while the second one, four. Thus, despite almost the same amount of renaming events happening during both waves, the first one took half the time.

A clear predominance of Slavic toponyms can be spotted once again amid the replaced place-names, (they conform 87 per cent of the renamed designations), both of Soviet (67 per cent) and non-Soviet nature (21 per cent). However, in this case, as chart 23 shows, the number of removed Kazakh toponyms (9) more than doubles the ones replaced during the previous wave (4). Finally, a Soviet Kazakh place designation was renamed. Thus, on the contrary to what happened to Slavic toponyms, the renaming of Non-Soviet Kazakh names is more prolific than the one affecting Kazakh toponyms with Soviet connotations.

**Chart 9: Typology of renamed toponyms in 1996-1999**



The districts more affected by renaming processes were once more in the Almaty region. Nearly 28 per cent of them took place in the Talgar district (22), while around 16 per cent happened in the Karasay district (12). And four more districts in the Almaty oblast had 4-5 municipalities or settlements renamed. If we exclude the districts where the only replaced toponym was their own district name, just six out of the 13 districts in North Kazakhstan region could count as districts which have experienced acts of renaming during the second wave. Whilst in the same scenario, 10 out of 17 districts of Almaty region underwent some renaming in this time interval.

On balance, within this time frame, there were three times more renaming acts in the Almaty region than in North Kazakhstan, since nearly 76 per cent of the acts of renaming

occurred in the former oblast alone. Although it is worth highlighting that the number of places that had their toponym replaced in the latter experienced an important increase (20), when compared to the previous period. In 1992-1993, 7 geographical objects were renamed, while in 1996 - 1999, the number increased to 20. Most importantly, during this time 8 of the current 13 districts that conform North Kazakhstan region were renamed within this second renaming wave. The renaming of the main administrative territorial units of the oblast coincided with a mayor reconstitution of Kazakhstan's internal territorial boundaries. The changes, which particularly affected almost every Slavic-dominated border oblast, enlarged the size of these regions, hence, increasing the ethnic Kazakh share in the reconstituted units. For example, a big part of what was once the Kokshetau region was transferred to North Kazakhstan oblast. As a result, the only oblast retaining a Russian majority was the aforementioned North Kazakhstan region (Dave, 2004: 445 - 446). Yet, non-predominantly Slavic oblasts were also subjected to some re-structuring. For instance, the Taldykorgan region was deleted, while its territory was transferred to the Almaty region. As it occurs with renaming, the creation and merger of various administrative units is not a practice of the past. Indeed, in March 2018 Kegen district, which had been ousted from Almaty region's map during the 1997 "administrative gerrymandering" (Dave, 2004: 445 - 446), was once again formed in the same territory it occupied in pre-independence times.

Therefore, the wave of district-name renaming could be interpreted as another effort of 'Kazakhifying' the map of the regions heavily inhabited by national minorities, particularly considering that 7 out of the 8 toponyms were replaced by Kazakh sounding names. However, it should be noted that all the district designations replaced in the North Kazakhstan region at that time have one thing in common and it is not their Slavic nature, but their Soviet connotations. Seven toponyms were Slavic-Soviet, while the remaining

one was Soviet-Kazakh. Moreover, as it has been previously mentioned, not all the new toponyms were Kazakh-sounding, since, as detailed in Chapter 3, Kuibyshevskoe district (nowadays, Gabit Musrepov district) was renamed Tselinnyi (Slavic-sounding toponym). Although it is undeniable that the fact that 88 per cent of the renaming acts affected Slavic sounding toponyms (both Soviet and non-Soviet) it does show that there is definitely something to it.

One of the other main shifts in Kazakhstan was that the exhilaration prompted by the freshly achieved independence had already vanished, possibly due to the country's increasingly grievous economic situation (Fierman, 1998: 177). This could probably explain the reasons behind the sudden halt that Kazakhstan experienced in the years 1994 -1995 in terms of renaming. Despite this, the state commenced to adopt a series of legislative acts and policy documents that would tackle questions of identity, nation-building, national minorities and language policies in the year 1995 and will go on through up to the wake of the new century.

The main legal document that was adopted at the time was the 1995 Constitution (currently in force). As it happened with the 1993 Magna Carta, a few brush-strokes of ambiguity are present. Even though the formula "We, the people of Kazakhstan" is maintained in the Preamble, it adds an ethnic undertone with the introduction of the "creating a state on the indigenous Kazakh land" to it (Constitution of the RK, 1995).

Once again, discrimination under reasons such as race, nationality and language are completely forbidden (Art. 14). However, the role of the titular nation is still emphasized in the way that the Constitution addresses language issues. The President should still be fluent in the state language (Art. 41) as well as the chairpersons of the Parliament

chambers (Art. 58). Kazakh language keeps its status as “state language” while Russian language ceases to be the “language of inter-ethnic communication” (Constitution of the RK, 1993) to gain some kind of “official recognition”. According to article 7, “Russian language shall be officially used on equal grounds along with the Kazakh language in state institutions and local self-administrative bodies” (Constitution of the RK, 1995). The reason for such a vague description was the rejection to the suggestions of referring to Russian as an “official” language (Fierman, 1998: 179). When it comes to other minority languages, nothing specific is stated, besides the prohibition to discriminate on language grounds and the promise to ensure the right to use its own “native language and culture, to freely choose the language of communication, education, instruction and creative activities” (Articles 14 and 19). A similar dynamic will be present in other legal and policy documents concerning language issues in 1996 and 1997, as it will be further discussed in the following pages. However, before analyzing them, it would be interesting to comment on two other contradictory moves made by Kazakhstan’s leaders in that year of 1995.

As of March 1995, the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan (Assambleia narodov Kazakhstana) was established by a presidential decree in order to ‘strengthen public stability and interethnic accord’ (Oka, 2006: 367). This measure would guarantee some sort of participation in the public sphere of groups not belonging to the titular nation. Yet, while President Nazarbayev created a platform where representatives of different national groups could express their concerns and propose ideas about the ways to manage ethnic diversity (Davenel, 2012: 20), three months later, the ‘Concept for the Establishment of a Historical Consciousness of the Republic of Kazakhstan’ was accepted. This document replicates the idea present in the 1995 Constitution of the indigenous nature of ethnic Kazakhs in the Kazakh territories within the borders of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Kesici, 2011: 49 - 50). This idea also subsists in the ‘Order on the Conception of the Formation of

State Identity of the Republic of Kazakhstan' (1996). It also argues that the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan was inhabited by the ethnic groups that had become the basis of the Kazakh people. It mentions large empires and separate khanates of Turkic peoples in the territory, as the ancestors of the Kazakhs. This, of course, implies a special status of the Kazakh people as to other peoples of Kazakhstan (Order on the Conception of the Formation of State Identity of the RK, 1996). This idea of the Kazakh historic ascendancy is further confirmed in other statements found in the Order such as the one that defends that "the state has historically emerged as a national one in the sense that, as a rule, its founder and social base is a certain ethnic community", that "the ethnic centre of Kazakhs is Kazakhstan", and especially when it assures that "historically, [...] there were no other ethnic groups on the territory at the time" and it was not until after a while when "the great steppe began to receive representatives of other peoples". In spite of this, it does acknowledge that nowadays the state will protect the interests of both the host and its guests (Order on the Conception of the Formation of State Identity of the RK, 1996).

As it was previously hinted, the documents dealing with language issues were developed along the same lines. The 'Concept on the Principles of Language Policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan' adopted in November 1996 would largely focus on the "problems affecting the state language" and on defining "the tasks of the state to create conditions for the development of the Kazakh language as the state language". On the other hand, it also acknowledges that the new social and political realities of Kazakhstan as a sovereign state require a language policy that "meets the needs of the country's multi-ethnic population and takes into account the specific linguistic, demographic and political situation" (Concept on the Principles of Language Policy, 1996). Nevertheless, as it was the case with the 1995 Constitution, other languages also appeared to "warrant less attention" in this Concept, shifting much of the Kazakhstan government's responsibility for protection of

“other” languages to other entities such as the respective national-cultural centers in Kazakhstan (Fierman, 1998: 179). Other languages are also briefly mentioned in the Law on Languages adopted in the year 1997. The document also merely guarantees their protection and prohibits the discrimination based on language (Art. 7). Moreover, it vaguely states that the state should take care of “creating conditions for the study and development of the languages of the people of Kazakhstan (Art. 6). Meanwhile, it sets the status of Kazakh and Russian languages in the same terms as the 1995 Constitution had done two years earlier (Art. 4 and art. 5). It does, however, introduce an idea that has not been reproduced since the Declaration of Independence of 1991. In its article 4, the ‘Law on Languages’ states that it is the duty of every citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan to master the state language.

In addition, the document includes some articles which directly refer to onomastics, renaming and toponyms. Yet, this was not the first legislative act in this realm. As it has already been mentioned, it was not until December 1993 that the first legislation directly addressing renaming of geographical objects was passed. The ‘Law on the Administrative-Territorial Structure of Kazakhstan’ describes which competences the different, state, regional and local bodies have in this regard (Art. 11, 12, 13 and 14 Law on the Administrative-Territorial Structure, 1993). However, it does not specify under which circumstances a territory should be renamed, yet it does include the list of documents and materials required to solve administrative-territorial structure issues within the regions. Interestingly, article 15 specifies that an act of scientific expertise and economic calculation of the changes and renaming has to be provided in order to be able to approve the replacement of toponyms (Law on the Administrative-Territorial Structure, 1993). The ‘Order on Naming and Renaming of Entities, Organizations, Institutions, Railroad Stations, Airports, and Geographical Objects in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Change in Their

Spelling' approved in March 1996 (at the beginning of this renaming wave) does include more precise instructions. According to the order, "historical-geographical toponyms that were unreasonably changed in the past due to various subjective circumstances should be gradually restored" and the new names should be assigned taking into account "national and linguistic peculiarities, as well as geographical, historical and social conditions" It also opens the door, however, to rename those places after people who have made a significant contribution to the history, science, culture, literature and art of Kazakhstan or to state or public figures of international importance. Moreover, the order stipulates the prohibition to assign names of living people to the objects (Order of Naming and Renaming of Entities, 1996).

The 1997 'Law on Languages' also includes some of the criteria that was already specified in the 1996 Order (Art. 25.5), and it adds other requirements like the condition that within one administrative-territorial unit it is only possible to assign a name to one settlement (Law on Languages, 1997). In addition, the 'Law on Languages' describes the purpose and competences of the Republican Onomastic Commission (Art. 25), the body in charge of overseeing every renaming process based on the 1993 'Law on the Administrative-Territorial Structure'. Hence, contrary to what had occurred during the first renaming wave, all the acts of renaming that took place during the 1996 - 1999 period were regulated by specific laws.

Many other official documents were approved at that time, especially regulating linguistic issues such as the 1997 'Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on TV and Radio Broadcasting', the 1998 'Decree on expansion of the usage of the state language in state bodies' or the '1998 State program of the functioning and development of languages' (Smagulova, 2008: 449 - 450).

Simultaneously, the adoption of different legislation and policies encouraging the return of the Kazakh diaspora to its “historic homeland” continued. For instance, in 1997 a new ‘Law on Migration’ was passed. The new law eliminated the precondition of being a descendant of victimized people leaving the door open to all foreign citizens of Kazakh origin who were permanently settled outside of Kazakhstan before its independence (Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Population Migration, 1997 in Bonnenfant, 2012: 37). The 1998 ‘Concept on Repatriation of Ethnic Kazakhs to their Historical Homeland’ actually identifies the repatriation of Kazakhs to their historical homeland as “one of the main priorities of the migration policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan” (Concept on Repatriation, 1998).

Halfway this renaming wave, Nazarbayev presented to the world his long-term program “Kazakhstan 2030”. With that “foundational” speech, the President at the time seemed to establish a new beginning after the initial post-independence “abyss of chaos and disorder” and a move toward a new “stage of stabilization,” during which the state could “afford facing the future, contemplating [upcoming] development, making elaborate plans” (Nazarbayev, 1997 in Ambrosio and Lange, 2014: 540). That is why it is remarkable that he chose that same moment to introduce the civic term “Kazakhstani” (which would include every citizen of the country, as opposed to the ethnic-sounding “Kazakh”), and to explicitly list the factors uniting all citizens of Kazakhstan, bringing to the fore the “common history” of suffering and shared delights of achievements or the common future portrayed in the “children who are destined to jointly live and work this land” (Nazarbayev, 1997 in Kesici, 2011: 52). This move comes after all those policies that placed ethnic Kazakhs and the culture always in a privileged position, even when the multi-ethnic character of the republic was being recognized and amidst one of the highest peaks of renaming since 1991. This peak will come to an end during the year when the results of the first Post-Soviet census were released. The 1999 census advanced the ‘officialization’ of the titular

nation as the majority (Dave, 2004: 440). Its consequences will be unveiled in the following section.

### **4.3. 2007 - 2010: Renaming well into the new century**

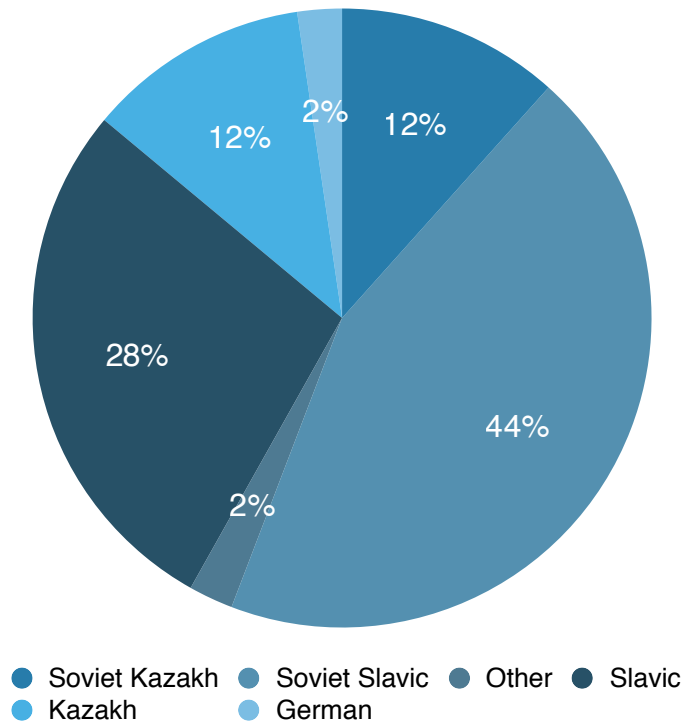
With the advent of the new century, ethnic Kazakhs had already achieved to cross the “crucial demographic and psychological barrier” and formed a majority with 53.4 per cent (Dave, 2004: 441) of the total population. After the 1999 census results were published, the titular nation evolved from “a suffering minority” to a “majority group” (Dadabaeva and Adibayeva, 2010: 138). But, how did this new reality shaped (and/or was reflected) in the landscape?

The first few years of the 21st century were rather calm in terms of renaming. In the first seven years 30 places had their name removed, with years such as 2001 and 2004 in which not even one toponym was replaced. However, with the year 2007 a new wave of renaming commenced, the last of the analysed period. Within this time interval, 43 acts of renaming took place in the Almaty and North Kazakhstan regions, making it the least fecund of the three renaming flows (less than the 15 per cent of the totality of the acts of renaming, in comparison to 30 per cent of the first wave and 29 per cent in the second one). It also comprised 4 years, just like the second one, thus, it lasted two more than the first one.

Regarding the typology, as chart 10 indicates, for the first time Soviet-Slavic names do not conform the majority of the renamed places, although they are still the most targeted group (44 per cent, with 19 toponyms being replaced). Slavic denominations (Soviet and non-Soviet included), on the contrary, still make up nearly three thirds of the total sum of removed place-designations (72 per cent). As a novelty, the share of replaced Kazakh-

sounding toponyms increases during this time-lapse, making up the 22 per cent and, in fact, it becomes the highest number in any other renaming wave (10 Kazakh-sounding toponyms were renamed in this period, while during the first wave and the second wave it was 7 and 9). It should also be highlighted that the great majority of the Kazakh-sounding names (3 Soviet and 5 Non-Soviet) were replaced in the Almaty region, while only 2 Kazakh Soviet-sounding names had their designation subject to changes in the Northern oblast.

**Chart 10: Typology of renamed toponyms in 2007 - 2010**



Finally, for the first time, a German toponym with no Communist connotations is replaced.

Concerning the geographic distribution of the acts of renaming, the previously established trend continues. The Almaty region is where most of the renaming takes place. Nearly two thirds of the acts of renaming occurred in the aforementioned oblast (27), while just 15 names were replaced in the North Kazakhstan region. However, compared to previous renaming waves, it is worth noting the exponential increase of the North Kazakhstan's share of replaced toponyms. For instance, in the 1992 - 1993 period, less than 8 per cent of the renaming takes place there, while, in the following period, the percentage increases to 22 per cent. Finally, in the period from 2007 to 2010, the share of toponym changes in the North Kazakhstan region surpasses the 25 per cent of the total amount of renaming during that period. This is also the time interval where the highest number of North

Kazakhstan districts were affected by this process. During the first period only 2 out of the 13 districts were exposed to some renaming. During the second period, if district-name replacements are not being considered, only six districts suffered renaming practices inside their borders (although the number increases to 11 if the former ones are also taken into account). Meanwhile, in the last renaming wave, urban settlements and municipalities of nine districts had their names replaced.

During the first decade of the new century, Kazakh ruling elites had understood that the policies that they would adopt had to start focusing on the implementation of the already existing policies. This is particularly clear in the documents passed regarding language issues. Authorities in Kazakhstan came to the conclusion that granting Kazakh language state language status was not enough (Beisenova, 2013: 653). Thus, in the year 2000, the 'State Program on the steady transition of the documentation proceedings into Kazakh language in the state institutions 2001- 2010' was approved, and it was followed by the 2001 'State program of the functioning and development of languages for the years 2001 - 2010'. As it was briefly mentioned, during those first years there was a renaming impasse, particularly acute in the Almaty region where only 3 urban settlements were renamed between the years 2000 and 2004. Despite the renaming being slightly more common in the North Kazakhstan region (12), the numbers were especially low at this time.

Concerns about the slow implementation of Kazakh within state structures, prompted the government to take more active measures. The new campaign '2007 is the year of the Kazakh language' was launched in 2007 (just as the new renaming flow began) by the end of which every state structure should have considerably raised both the volume and quality of the paperwork in Kazakh language and the availability of services in Kazakh. Moreover, the state injected a considerable amount of public money in the budget for language

planning in order to support the campaign (Smagulova, 2008: 452), yet it was far from being fulfilled (Melich and Adibayeva, 2013: 271). In addition to this, Russian-secondary schools were given orders to allocate more hours to Kazakh language (Smagulova, 2008: 456) and, in November of 2007, the corresponding authorities included issues related to terminology unification and language standardization in the agenda of the newly formed State Commission on Language Policy Improvement (Smagulova, 2008: 452).

Simultaneously, Kazakhstan's government announced the introduction of the 'Trinity of the Languages' cultural project, where an attempt to enlarge the multi-language framework including Kazakh, Russian and English into the category of the prior languages was made by the state (Melich and Adibayeva, 2013: 271). Yet, after the adoption of a project which had the multi-ethnic nature of the country in mind, more policies oriented to the implementation of a full-scale functioning of the state language were passed. Thus, in the year 2010 (the last one included in this third renaming wave), the project 'The functioning and development of languages of Kazakhstan for 2011-2020' was adopted. The program aimed to deal with the problem of functioning of the state language 'as the most important factor for strengthening national unity" and the conditions for its full implementation, while preserving the languages of all ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan (Aksholakova and Ismailova, 2013: 1580).

In terms of political participation, the years prior to the third renaming wave were quite eventful. With the adoption of the 2002 'Law on Political Parties', the prohibition to create parties based on ethnicity or nationality was established (Art. 5, paragraph 8 Law on Political Parties, 2002). Moreover, since the law was passed the technical difficulties to register a political party dramatically increased. According to the new law, in order to register, a party should have at least forty thousand members. Furthermore, the party

should be present in all regions, cities of national importance and the capital, and each of them should be constituted of no less than six hundred members (Art. 10, paragraph 6 Law on Political Parties, 2002). In addition, as a result of the institution of a single constituency system, MPs would no longer be connected to their regions of origin (Davenel, 2012: 22).

While all those policies leading to the restriction of the participation of national minorities in the public sphere were being enacted, the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan (APK) was gaining more weight. In 2007, the Assembly became a “constitutionally-recognized body” with the right to send nine members to the legislature (Melich and Adibayeva, 2013: 270). However, some had shown their concerns of the institution being perceived as a “grouping of presidential loyalists representing the country’s ethnic groups” (Lillis, 2009 in Melich and Adibayeva, 2013: 270). In addition, at that moment it changed its name to ‘the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan’, in singular. This transformation seemed as a way to promote the idea that President Nazarbayev had achieved the successful integration of the different ethnic groups into one civic nation (Oka, 2009: 23 in Davenel, 2012: 20). This underlying idea to expand the boundaries of the nation, crystallizes with the ‘National Unity Doctrine’ presented in May 2010.

The document identifies three main principles. First, the ‘One land, one fate’ principle, where the common destiny and history of all the citizens of the country “regardless of ethnic origin” is cherished. The ‘Different origins, equality of chances’ principle, where as the name indicates emphasizes equality of opportunities of all the citizens of Kazakhstan and past measures such as the ban of political organizations formed on the basis of ethnic or religious principles are presented as a step towards it. And lastly, ‘Development of the National Spirit’, which enlists the revival and development of “spirituality, culture, traditions

and language” as one of the most important duties of the state and in the same fashion as the 1997 ‘Law on Language’ already did, identifies mastering the state language as a responsibility of every citizen of Kazakhstan. At the same time, it adds that the state should take care of satisfying the spiritual, cultural and linguistic needs of all ethnic groups living in Kazakhstan (National Unity Doctrine, 2010). The document also expands in the idea of inter-ethnic harmony as being one of the main achievements of the Kazakhstani state and Nazarbayev’s policies (National Unity Doctrine, 2010).

In the same line as other documents that have been featured along this research, the “Doctrine” highlights the special status that the Kazakh people occupy within the republic in different occasions (National Unity Doctrine, 2010). Nevertheless, it does show a notorious shift since it puts in the very center of its policy values of a more civic nature. Still, the migration policies oriented towards the growing of the Kazakhs share of the population were still ongoing. In the beginning of 2009, Kazakhstan’s ruling power adopted a new programme called ‘Nurly Kosh’ targeting oralmans, skilled former citizens of Kazakhstan as well as citizens living in depressed zones in order to increase the volume of migration to under-populated regions, by offering certain incentives (Bonnenfant, 2012: 37).

By the end of the decade, the Kazakh population managed to surpass the 10 million mark for the first time (Ó Beacháin and Kevlihan, 2013: 343) and a further decrease of the countries Slavic (and European) minorities took place, as the existing demographic tendencies had already predicted.

## **Chapter 5. 'Names have spoken': Main findings and conclusions**

Throughout the last several decades, Kazakhstan's cultural map has been experiencing numerous changes and modifications, steadily but relentlessly. After a thorough process of reading "on and through the landscape", the results speak for themselves.

However, before presenting the study's conclusions, some remarks regarding renaming practices in Kazakhstan are in order.

### **5.1. Renaming, a non systematized-systematic process:**

The Almaty and the North Kazakhstan regions have witnessed numerous and repeated waves of place renaming, fact that makes patent that, far from being an isolated practice, the replacement of toponymic designations is an inseparable occurrence of the republic's most recent history. However, some of the examples found along this study put under question that these decisions were always regulated by a clear plan of action or set of criteria.

For instance, renaming policies had remained unregulated during the first years of the 1990s, and the only existing legal provisions afterwards were considerably vague (see Chapter 4.2).

#### **5.1.1. New toponyms, Slavic toponyms**

The results show that the general tendency is to "baptize" the geographical objects with names with Kazakh connotations. But even this has not always been the rule. For example, the Gabit Musrepov district was called 'Kuibyshevskoe' (Soviet-Slavic denomination) until the year 1997 when it was renamed 'Tselinnyi' (Slavic toponym). In the

same *rayon* both, the municipality and the village of ‘Kuibyshevskoe’ (Soviet-Slavic toponym), were replaced by another Slavic sounding toponym ‘Novoishimskoe’, and not a Kazakh one.

### **5.1.2. De-Sovietization of place-names**

It could be argued that there is also an ideological component to the renaming, since in some occasions, the toponym change is set to deprive the toponym from its Socialist character. In Koxsu region, a noteworthy case in this regard can be found. The village ‘10 let Kazakhskoi SSR’ (literally, 10 years of Kazakh SSR), was renamed to ‘10 let Kazakhstana’, deleting the direct reference to its Soviet past, but retaining the original Russian. Yet, sometimes, the opposite circumstance may be spotted. For instance, in the year 2012, ‘Kyzylshkol’, which is formed by the Kazakh word ‘Kyzyl’ (red) and the Russian word ‘shkol’ (school) was changed to ‘Kyzylmektep’. The new designation kept the Kazakh beginning, with a clear Soviet overtone, while replacing the Russian part, for its Kazakh translation (mektep also means school).

Nevertheless, it appears that, if “kept local” even Soviet toponyms may work out. Some toponyms with Soviet connotations were replaced by other names of the same typology. The village of ‘Masak’, which is most likely associated with the Soviet imaginary, was replenished by ‘Kaztay Ultarakov’ after a local Soviet hero that fought in the “Great Patriotic War” and was born in Kegen district. During the last decades, various Kazakh-sounding denominations of non ideological nature have been exchanged by others, that although still Kazakh, they have an inherently Soviet character. For instance, the village ‘Ashchybulak’, located in the Ile district, was renamed after ‘M. Tuimebaev’ in the year 1999. As the corresponding decree indicates, M. Tuimebayev was a “Hero of the Socialist Work”. Or the Soviet-Slavic village of ‘Molodezhnyi’ in Panfilov, which was renamed

'Golovatskiy', after Nikitin Golovatskiy, a "Hero of Socialist Labour" who also happened to be a former director of a collective farm in the same *rayon*.

### **5.1.3. Phonetic renaming**

In order to find a replacement for an ousted toponym, as an alternative, Kazakhstani officials have also chosen to look for "possible candidates", based on phonetic similarities. For example, in the late 1990s the Soviet-Kazakh toponym 'Orakbalga' (a combination of the Kazakh words for the hammer and sickle) was replaced by the Kazakh name 'Orakty Batyr' (Balkhash). Or the village of 'Karla Marksa', situated in the Zhambyl district of Almaty, in 1993 was renamed 'Karaarsha'.

### **5.1.4. 'Kazakhifying' place designations**

Another quite common practice consists of translating the former Slavic designation into its counterpart in the state language. Thus, villages such as 'Belokamenka' are renamed 'Aktasty'. Or the village-toponyms like 'Klyuchevoe' are translated to its Kazakh version 'Kainarly'. Less frequent than the former examples are names which have just one of their elements changed. For example, the aforementioned 'Kyzylshkol' (see section 5.1.2.) or the settlement known as 'Ulken Shygan' in Panfilov district. Upon its renaming, it was called 'Bolshoy Shygan' ('ulken' and 'bolshoy' are the terms for "big" in Kazakh and in Russian, respectively). This is especially recurring in denominations formed by both a Kazakh and a Russian word. Sometimes, however, this kind of toponyms are renamed altogether. For instance, one of the villages situated in the Eskeldi district was formed by the Kazakh word Kyzyl (red) and the Russian word 'Oktyabr' (October). In 2006 it was completely replaced by the Kazakh toponym 'Orkusak'. Or the village situated in the Kegen district known, until the year 2010, as 'Malyi Zhalanash' (formed by a Russian and a

Kazakh word) was altogether renamed after the Kazakh historian and professor Akay Nusipbekov.

Despite toponyms with modified transcriptions have been left outside this research, it is worth clarifying that in multiple cases, this practice has enable Kazakhstani officials to erase the Slavic connotations from a toponym. For example, place-names with the Slavic ending ‘-skoe’ or ‘-ov’:

- Ishimskoe → Esil
- Bidaiykskoe → Bidaiyk
- Birlikskoe → Birlik
- Kyzyltuskie → Kyzyltu
- Bulanov → Bulan

Nevertheless, it should be noted that, most often, the root of the toponyms is Kazakh. Hence, most likely these denominations were subjected to a process of Russification by adding the element ‘-skoe’ in the first place.

#### **5.1.5. “Restoration” of historical names**

Recall that the 1996 ‘Order on Naming and Renaming of Entities, Organizations, Institutions, Railroad Stations, Airports, and Geographical Objects in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Change in Their Spelling’ states that “historical-geographical toponyms that were unreasonably changed in the past due to various subjective circumstances should be gradually restored”. Even if elucidating whether the new toponyms were the actual historic toponyms is beyond the scope of this research, it is worth pointing out a certain trend which not only demonstrates the lack of consistency of the Kazakhstani

ruling elites while carrying out their renaming policy, but it also questions the idea of historic restoration as a motive (at least, always).

Certain geographical objects or territorial-administrative units have been subjected to name transformations in multiple occasions, the most notable being the case of Gabit Musrepov (Kazakh denomination). This Northern district was named 'Kuibyshevskoe' (Soviet-Slavic) until the year 1997 when it was renamed to 'Tselinnyi' (Slavic). Be as it may, in the year 2002 it was once again renamed to Gabit Musrepov. Urban settlements have also been doubly renamed. For example, in 1993, the village 'Kirovo' (Soviet-Slavic) of Karatal district had its toponym changed. From that moment it was going to be known as 'Karashengen' (Kazakh). However, in 2010, it was once again renamed, this time as 'Zholbarys batyr' (Kazakh).

#### **5.1.6. Antidote against duplicated toponyms**

When talking about street names, Azaryahu once wrote that "the symbolic function of a street name as a vehicle for commemoration is subordinate to the practical function; a basic rule is that no two streets in a city should have one and the same name" (1996: 312). Indeed, the existence of two toponyms within the boundaries of the same administrative unit could have been one of the reasons motivate their renaming. Yet, according to the results, in some districts, a settlement is given a name that already exists in the same region. Or even worse, there is a case in Aiyrtau district where two locations shared the name 'Volodarskoe' and they were both renamed to the same toponym 'Saumalkol' (in 1993 and 1997, respectively).

### **5.1.7. Administrative re-structuring as a renaming method**

Administrative redistribution is not an unknown practice to the Kazakh leadership. This seems obvious after the important re-structuring process that the whole country have undergone in the year 1997. Many regions and districts disappeared while their territory was being scattered. However, sometimes, redistribution also entailed a hidden process of renaming, particularly concerning municipalities. For example, in 1997 a decree abolished the municipalities of 'Mar'evka' and 'Terensay' in Shal Akyn district (Sergeevka at the time) and the municipality of 'Ayutas' was formed in their place.

Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the case of the deleted administrative-territorial units such as regions and districts differs from the aforementioned example. For instance, both of the oblasts that ceased to exist in 1997 held Kazakh-sounding designations (Kokshetau and Taldykorgan). Regarding rayons, the number of deleted units with Slavic and Kazakh sounding names is proportional to the ones that "survived" the process.

For example, in Almaty region, six districts were abolished (Kapal, Burlyutobe, Kurtin, Chilik, Gvardeyskiy and Uygentas). Five out of six of them had Kazakh-sounding toponyms, although it should be reminded that the district of Uygentas was known as Andreevka (Soviet-Slavic denomination) until it was renamed in the year 1993. Recall that the overwhelming majority of the district designations in the territory are also Kazakh-sounding. Meanwhile, Kazakh officials deleted ten districts in what is now the territory of North Kazakhstan oblast (Arykbalyk, Leninskiy, Ruzaevka, Chistopolsky, Sokolovka, Valikhanov, Vozvyshenka, Kellerovka, Chkalovo and Presnovka). Only two of them held Kazakh sounding names. Amidst the ones that did not disappeared in the re-structuring, there were also two rayons with Kazakh toponyms (Zhambyl and the Soviet-Kazakh

Kyzyltu) while the remaining 11 did not. Yet, as it was explained in Chapter 4, most of them were soon renamed.

## **5.2. Renaming and its effect amid different ethnic minority groups:**

The research demonstrated that not every national minority group suffered the effects of renaming to the same extent. The various charts concerning the typological classification of the replaced toponyms along chapters 3 and 4 prove that the main target of the acts of renaming were Slavic sounding toponyms, even if toponyms of Soviet nature are to be excluded.

Nevertheless, those acts of renaming were carried out in most of the cases in districts where the presence of Slavic minorities was not so pronounced. To convince oneself of this, one has only to look at the toponymic map of the North Kazakhstan region. In a region formed by 185 municipalities only 11 have been renamed (yet one of them held a Kazakh-sounding toponym), while out of more than 600 urban settlements only 38, (32 with Slavic designations, Soviet or not) had their denominations changed during the analysed period. Furthermore, in most of the districts the cultural landscape is predominantly Slavic, with the only exceptions of Ualikhanov and Akzhar, districts which happen to be the only ones in the oblast where national minorities do not make up the majority of the population.

This scenario could not be more different when addressing toponyms connected to other ethnic minority groups. The presence of Slavic minorities in Kazakhstan is by far the only one that is properly acknowledged in the Kazakhstani map, since they are actually one the only communities which is close to being proportionally represented. The case of the Uyghurs in the Almaty region is quite significant, since even though they are the third

largest ethnic group in the oblast (forming 8 per cent of the total number of inhabitants) their toponymic footprint is almost exclusively limited to the name of the district where they represent a clear majority, Uyghur district. The same situation applies to other national groups in the region, like Koreans.

Actually, nowadays, it is nearly impossible to stumble upon toponyms which are not of Kazakh nature in the Almaty region. At this moment, no more than 25 non-Kazakh place designation have remained after the different renaming waves. In fact, most of the districts have a maximum of two or even no Slavic sounding toponyms.

The German case also merits an additional comment. After the renaming of the village of 'Naydorf' in the year 2008, the only remaining German toponym (besides settlements named after German Socialist figures such as 'Telman') in North Kazakhstan region is 'Peterfeld'. Considering the size and the history of this ethnic group in the area, this fact comes as at the very least surprising. Nevertheless, it cannot be ruled out that German toponyms had been wiped out from Kazakhstan after World War II, as it occurred in other Soviet republics at the time (Diego Gordon, 2017: 19).

Therefore, it is safe to affirm that Slavic minorities are the ones that suffered the effects of Kazakh leadership's renaming policies the most. However, it is also important to underline that Slavic minorities are the only ones which have proportionally been represented in the map, leaving other ethnic groups such as Uyghurs or Koreans "out" of Kazakhstan's cultural map.

### 5.3. Conclusion

This study has argued that place renaming is one of the main strategies used by the ruling elites of a country in order to shape the landscape according to their own priorities and political agendas. Consequently, reading the “text” which this landscape constitutes is an unparalleled indicator of the ideologies, discourses, objectives and rhetoric beneath those in power or, as it was the case in this particular research, to comprehend the Kazakhstani state’s political attitudes towards their national minorities. After carrying out a thorough analysis of the frequency, typology and temporal distribution of the renaming acts which have taken place in Almaty and North Kazakhstan oblasts since the country’s declaration of independence, and comparing the results with the on-going demographic trends and the various legal and political documents adopted within that time interval, names have spoken.

Since 1991 Kazakhstan’s cultural landscape has been undergoing what could be called as a cautious process of “Kazakhization”, marked by the demographic trends. The vast discrepancies existing between the realities in the Almaty and the North Kazakhstan regions confirm it. As it is exemplified in the case of the former, the territories where ethnic Kazakhs constitute a majority or areas with important settlements of national minorities which have long accepted their “secondary role” in the republic, according to the “principle of the right of a titular nation to govern a territory known as its exclusive patrimony” (Davenel, 2012: 20) have nearly been completely “Kazakhified”, while toponyms with a connection to representatives of national minorities (mainly Slavic) have already (almost totally) disappeared. In fact, the local and regional governments of the oblast have already shown their intentions to complete this process in the foreseeable future with the adoption of different decrees after June 2018<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> See Annex 2. Database sources.

However, the situation changes regarding territories where national minorities constitute the majority of the population, as it is observed in the case of Northern Kazakhstan. Renaming practices are rare there, and its toponymic landscape remains mainly Slavic, even nowadays.

The temporal distribution of these acts also highlights the determinant role of demography within the renaming process in Kazakhstan. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, officials in Almaty region did not wait long until they gave full rein to their renaming desire, particularly in regards to toponyms with Slavic connotations. Meanwhile, ruling elites in Northern Kazakhstan treaded warily in this field, restricting themselves to carrying out such acts until the late 1990s, when a demographic shift was already apparent. The cautious attitude which characterized the implementation of the renaming politics in minority heavily populated areas was not unique to this field. As it was discussed in chapter 4, state's language policies, for example, also provide one good example of such dynamics in the republic.

The bottom-line conclusion is that demography, along with the emigration of numerous non-titular groups, the oralman relocation policies and the increased birth-rate of ethnic Kazakhs, is the main variable defining the various political processes taking place in the country (Dave, 2004: 444 - 445). And renaming is both part and reflection of these dynamics.

It appears that scholars that defended that Nazarbayev regime has been "astute in maintaining a careful public balancing act on particularly sensitive issues" (Ó Beacháin and Kevlihan, 2013: 346) may have been right all along. At least, the results of this

research seem to corroborate it. Renaming has and is happening, especially regarding Slavic-sounding toponyms, but, mainly, outside Slavic minority heavy populated areas.

In spite of the complicated ethnic mosaic inherited from the Soviet period, following the December 1991 Declaration of Independence, Kazakhstan, with such an approach, has managed to avoid inter-communal tensions that other former republics did not. And when facing the choice between advancing the development of Kazakh national culture and language and the preservation of interethnic harmony, the latter has prevailed, at least, for the most part.

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## 7. Appendix 1: List of renamed toponyms

### Almaty region:

<b>AKSU DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Kyzyltu	Balrlybek Syrttanov
U. Settlement	Kyzyltan	Oytogan
U. Settlement	Kyzyltu	Balrlybek Syrttanov
U. Settlement	Sadovoe	Almaly
U. Settlement	Zarechnoe	Aktogan

<b>ALAKOL DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Andreevka	Kabanbay
Municipality	Dzerzhinsky	Tokzhaylau
Municipality	Gerasimovka	Sapak
Municipality	Glinovka	Ushbulak
Municipality	Komsomol	Kolbay
Municipality	Mayskoe	Aktubek
Municipality	Nikolaevka	Akzhar
Municipality	Oktyabr	Ekpindi
Municipality	Osinovka	Terekti
Municipality	Rybach'e	Kamyskala
Municipality	Sotsyaldy	Kaynar
Municipality	Saratovka	Kyzylkaiyn
U. Settlement	Andreevka	Kabanbay
U. Settlement	Chistopol'skoe	Aktubek
U. Settlement	Dzerzhinsky	Tokzhaylau
U. Settlement	Furmanovo	Ushkaiyn
U. Settlement	Gerasimovka	Sapak
U. Settlement	Glinovka	Ushbulak
U. Settlement	Karla Marksa	Alemdy
U. Settlement	Konstantinovka	Kokzhar

<b>ALAKOL DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
U. Settlement	Kyzylashchi	Zhumakhan Balapanov
U. Settlement	Nadezhdovka	Konyr
U. Settlement	Nikolaevka	Akzhar
U. Settlement	Obukhovka	Bulakty
U. Settlement	Osinovka	Terekti
U. Settlement	Rybach'e	Kamyskala
U. Settlement	Saratovka	Kyzylkaiyn
U. Settlement	Sotsyaldy	Kaynar
U. Settlement	Tonkeris	Ashim
U. Settlement	Uspenovka	Bibakan

<b>BALKHASH DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Kuygan	Balatopar
U. Settlement	Mirnoe	Bura
U. Settlement	Karagash	Miyali
U. Settlement	Kuygan	Balatopar
U. Settlement	Orakbalga	Orakty Batyr

<b>ENBEKSHIKAZAKH DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Aleksandrovka	Saymasay
Municipality	Evgenemalovodnoe	Baydibek bi
Municipality	Kuplastov	Baltabay
Municipality	Novoalekseevka	Bayterek
Municipality	Oktybr'skoe	Bartogay
U. Settlement	Aleksandrovka	Saymasay
U. Settlement	Avangard	Mayskoe
U. Settlement	Druzhba	Dostyk
U. Settlement	Lenino	Tole bi
U. Settlement	Kulikovka	Sarybulak
U. Settlement	Krasnyi Vostok	Orikti

<b>ENBEKSHIKAZAKH DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
U. Settlement	Kyzylzhide	Aktogan
U. Settlement	Malovodnoe	Baydibek bi
U. Settlement	Masak	Kaztay Ultarakov
U. Settlement	Novoalekseevka	Bayterek
U. Settlement	Oktybr'skoe	Khusaiyn Bizhanov
U. Settlement	Sovet	Kyzylzhar
U. Settlement	Zhanaturmys	Zhunisbay Kaiypov

<b>ESKELDI DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Taldykorgan	Eskeldi
Municipality	Furmanovo	Kaynarly
Municipality	Krupskoe	Baktybay Zholbarys
Municipality	Troitskoe	Kokzhazyk
Municipality	Tselinny	Akyn Sara
Municipality	Otenay	Yntymak
U. Settlement	Belokamenka	Aktasty
U. Settlement	Berezovka	Korzhymbay
U. Settlement	Budennyi	Matay Baisov
U. Settlement	Kalinovka	Koktobe
U. Settlement	Klyuchevoe	Kaynarly
U. Settlement	Krupskoe	Baktybay Zholbarysuly
U. Settlement	Kyzyl-Oktyabr'	Orkusak
U. Settlement	Malinovka	Terekti
U. Settlement	Malogorovka	Bokterli
U. Settlement	Tel'man	Syrymbet
U. Settlement	Troitskoe	Kokzhazyk
U. Settlement	Tselinny	Akyn Sara
U. Settlement	Zarechny	Moynak
U. Settlement	Zarya Kommunizma	Otenay

<b>ILE DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Lenino	Bayserke
Municipality	Komsomol	Ashchibulak
U. Settlement	12 dekabrya	Zhapek batyr
U. Settlement	Ashchibulak	M. Tuimebayev
U. Settlement	Dmitrievka	Bayserke
U. Settlement	Energetichesky	Otegen batyr
U. Settlement	Nikolaevka	Zhetygen
U. Settlement	Shilikemer	Nurgisa Tlendiyev

<b>KARASAY DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Kaskelen	Karasay
Municipality	Oktyabr'	Irgeli
Municipality	Novochemolgan	Zhana Shamalghan
U. Settlement	50 let Kazakhskoy SSR	Merey
U. Settlement	Avangard	Raiymbek
U. Settlement	Chapaev	Koktogan
U. Settlement	Internatsional	Aytey
U. Settlement	Krasnyi Vostok	Akzhar
U. Settlement	Lenino	Karatobe
U. Settlement	Madeniet	Aksengir
U. Settlement	Menzhin	Batan
U. Settlement	Mirnoe	Kumtogan
U. Settlement	Pervomayskoe	Bekbolat
U. Settlement	Plodoyagodnoe	Shalkar
U. Settlement	Politotdel	Zhalpaksay
U. Settlement	Put' Il'icha	Koksay
U. Settlement	Pryamoy put'	Irgeli
U. Settlement	Stakhanovo	Ulan
U. Settlement	Ushkonyr	Shamalghan
U. Settlement	Voskhod	Dolan

<b>KARASAY DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
U. Settlement	Vtoraya Pyatiletka	Alatau

<b>KARATAL DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Karashengen	Zholbarys batyr
Municipality	Kirovo	Karashengen
Municipality	Leninsky	Bastobe
Municipality	Pervoe maya	Aytubi
Municipality	Tel'man	Eskeldi
Municipality	Zhanatalap	Balpyk
U. Settlement	Dal'niy Vostok	Kaynar
U. Settlement	Dostizhenie	Kokdala
U. Settlement	Dzerzhinskoe	Kyzylzhar
U. Settlement	El'tay	Karazhide
U. Settlement	Krasny Vostok	Kanabek
U. Settlement	Leninsky put'	Bastobe
U. Settlement	Novaya zhizn'	Kishitobe
U. Settlement	Novy mir	Zhylybulak
U. Settlement	Oktyabr'	Ortatobe
U. Settlement	Pervoe maya	Kokpetki
U. Settlement	Primorets	Ushkomey
U. Settlement	Tel'man	Eskeldi

<b>KEGEN DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
U. Settlement	Oktyabr'	Tumenbay
U. Settlement	Malyi Zhalanash	A. Nusipbekov

<b>KERBULAK DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Chkalovo	Shubar
Municipality	Golubinovka	Zhaynak batyr
Municipality	Il'ichevsky	Karashoky

<b>KERBULAK DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Kalinovka	Taldybulak
Municipality	Leninnsky	Kaspan
U. Settlement	Budennoe	Beriktas
U. Settlement	Chkalovo	Shubar
U. Settlement	Golubinovka	Zhaynak batyr
U. Settlement	Kalinino	Basshi
U. Settlement	Kalinovka	Taldybulak
U. Settlement	Kholmogorovka	Shagan
U. Settlement	Krasnogorovka	Karymsak
U. Settlement	Krugnoe	Kurenbel
U. Settlement	Kyzylshkol	Kyzylmektep
U. Settlement	Lugovoe	Terisakkan
U. Settlement	Pervoe maya	Aktobe
U. Settlement	Razvil'noe	Zhanalik
U. Settlement	Uritskoe	Akbastau
U. Settlement	Vodnoe	Kainarly

<b>KOKSU DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Kirovo	Koksu
Municipality	Bol'shevist	Enbekshi
Municipality	Kirovo	Balpyk
Municipality	Kyzylaryk	Musabek
Municipality	Kyzylbulak	Kablisa
Municipality	Oktyabr'	Zharlyozek
U. Settlement	10 let Kazakhskoi SSR	10 let Kazakhstana / Kazakstannyn 10 zhyldygy
U. Settlement	30 let Kazakhskoi SSR	Nadirizbek
U. Settlement	Amangel'dy	Zylikha Tamshybay
U. Settlement	Engel's	Zhetizhal
U. Settlement	Kirovo	Balpyk / Balpyk bi
U. Settlement	Lenino	Mambet

<b>KOKSU DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
U. Settlement	Oktybr'	Zharlyozek
U. Settlement	Yubileinoe	Akshatogan
U. Settlement	Zhenis	Maulimbay

<b>PANFILOV DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Barakhodzir	Aydarly
Municipality	Bolshoy Shygan	Ulken Shygan
Municipality	Ortalyk	Usharal
U. Settlement	Dimitrov	Dikankayrat
U. Settlement	Kyzyl-Djambul	Akkudyk
U. Settlement	Molodezhny	Golovatsky
U. Settlement	Sotszhol	Boribay bi
U. Settlement	Ulkenagash	Aulieagash
U. Settlement	Zharkent	Kyrykkudyk

<b>RAIYMBEK DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Narynkol	Raiymbek
Municipality	Lenin	Uzak batyr

<b>SARKAN DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Antonovka	Koylyk
Municipality	Novopokrovka	Almaly
Municipality	Pokatilovka	Ekiasha
Municipality	Veseloe	Shatyrbay
U. Settlement	Antonovka	Koylyk
U. Settlement	Kirovo	Taskudyk
U. Settlement	Krasnyi rybak	Shubartubek
U. Settlement	Novopokrovka	Almaly
U. Settlement	Veseloe	Shatyrbay
U. Settlement	Pokatilovka	Ekiasha

<b>SARKAN DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
U. Settlement	Proletariy	Birlik
U. Settlement	Zhdanovo	Erkin

<b>TALGAR DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Dzherzhinskoe	Besagash
Municipality	Frunze	Nura
Municipality	Gornyi sadovod	Beskaynar
Municipality	Kalinino	Tuzdybastau
Municipality	Kirovo	Kaynar
Municipality	Krasnoe pole	Guldala
Municipality	Oktyabr'	Alatau
Municipality	Razdol'noe	Kendala
U. Settlement	Dzherzhinskoe	Besagash
U. Settlement	Frunze	Tuganbay
U. Settlement	Gagarino	Almerek
U. Settlement	Gornyi sadovod	Beskaynar
U. Settlement	Gorny Oktyabr'	Koktobe
U. Settlement	Kalinino	Tuzdybastau
U. Settlement	Kazstroy	Bereke
U. Settlement	Kirovo	Erkin
U. Settlement	Klyuchi	Karabulak
U. Settlement	Krasnoe pole	Guldala
U. Settlement	Mirnoe	Ostemir
U. Settlement	Oktyabr'	Nura
U. Settlement	Privolnoe	Daulet
U. Settlement	Razdol'noe	Kendala
U. Settlement	Sverdlovo	Kishi Bayserke
U. Settlement	Vostok	Sulusay
U. Settlement	Yubileynoe	Kolsay

<b>UYGHUR DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Podgornoe	Kyrgyzsay
U. Settlement	Bodety	Kepebulak

<b>ZHAMBYL DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Roslavl'	Matibulak
Municipality	Fabrichny	Kargaly
Municipality	Novorossiysk	Sholakkargaly
U. Settlement	Karla Marksa	Karaarsha
U. Settlement	Sergeevka	Besmoynak
U. Settlement	Kuybyshevo	Karasay
U. Settlement	Novorossiysk	Kasymbek
U. Settlement	Fabrichny	Kargaly
U. Settlement	Gorny	Tanbalytas
U. Settlement	Karasu	Sarybay bi
U. Settlement	Kirovo	Umbetaly Karibaev
U. Settlement	Kokozek	Sauryk batyr
U. Settlement	Pokrovka	Sunkar
U. Settlement	Prudki	Akkaynar
U. Settlement	Roslavl'	Matibulak
U. Settlement	Talap	Suranshy batyr
U. Settlement	Taran	Balgabek Kydyrbekuly

North Kazakhstan region:

<b>AKKAIYN DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Sovetsky	Akkaiyn
Municipality	Leninskoe	Lesnoy

<b>AKZHAR DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Leningradskiy	Akzhar

<b>AKZHAR DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Leningradsky	Akzhar
Municipality	Chistyakovskoe	Alkaterek
U. Settlement	Chistyakovskoe	Alkaterek
U. Settlement	Kuibyshevskoe	Daut
U. Settlement	Kuzbasskoe	Aksay
U. Settlement	Naydorf	Askary
U. Settlement	Sovkhoznoe	Akzharkyn

<b>AIYRTAU DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Volodarsky	Ayrtau
U. Settlement	Kenashchi	Akan seri
U. Settlement	Kyzylasker	Kumtokken
U. Settlement	Naslednikovka	Bayan
U. Settlement	Madeniet	Karasay batyr
U. Settlement	Oskan	Ukili Ybray
U. Settlement	Vostochnoe	Egindiagash
U. Settlement	Volodarskoe	Saumalkol
U. Settlement	Volodarskoe	Saumalkol
U. Settlement	Zlatogorka	Agyntay batyr

<b>ESIL DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Leninskiy	Esil

<b>GABIT MUSREPOV DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Kuibyshevsky	Tselinny
District	Tselinny	Gabit Musrepov
Municipality / Town	Kuibyshevskoe	Novoishimskoe
U. Settlement	Gabrilovka	Kokalazhar
U. Settlement	Zapadnoe	Toksan bi

<b>KYZYLZHAR DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Bishkul	Kyzylzhar
Municipality	Elitnoe	Bayterek

<b>MAGZHAN ZHUMABAEV DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Bulaevo	Magzhan Zhumabayev
U. Settlement	Furmanovka	Bayterek
U. Settlement	Krasnoe	Nogaybay
U. Settlement	Lenino	Bayshylyk

<b>SHAL AKYN DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Sergeevka	Shal Akyn
Municipality	Mar'evka	Ayutas
Municipality	Terensay	Ayutas
U. Settlement	Chapayevskoe	Mergen
U. Settlement	Lenino	Yskak Ibyraev
U. Settlement	Oktyabr'skoe	Uzynzhar

<b>TAIYNSHA DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Krasnoarmeisky	Taiynsha
U. Settlement	Krasnoarmeisky	Taiynsha
U. Settlement	Oktyabr'skoe	Aymak

<b>TIMIRYAZEV DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
Municipality	Priozerno	Akzhan
Municipality	Stepnoe	Kurtay

<b>UALIKHANOV DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
District	Kyzyltu	Ualikhanov
Municipality	Chapayevskoe	Kulykol
Municipality	Chekhovo	Akbulak
Municipality	Chernigovskoe	Kundybay
Municipality	Tolbukhino	Telzhan
U. Settlement	Chapayevskoe	Kulykol
U. Settlement	Chekhovo	Akbulak
U. Settlement	Khersonskoe	Karaterек
U. Settlement	Komsomol'skoye	Akkudyk
U. Settlement	Kyzyltu	Kishkenekol
U. Settlement	Novokrasnovskoe	Mortyk
U. Settlement	Ozernoе	Tileusay
U. Settlement	Pyatoe dekabrya	Bereke
U. Settlement	Stepnoe	Kobensay
U. Settlement	<b>Tolbukhino</b>	Telzhan

<b>ZHAMBYL DISTRICT</b>	<b>Old Designation</b>	<b>New Designation</b>
U. Settlement	Kirovka	Baimaganbet Iztolin
U. Settlement	Komsomo'lskoe	Uzynkol
U. Settlement	Zapadnoe	Nurymbet

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#### **4. Decrees and Legal Decisions (by chronological order)**

##### **4.1. Almaty region**

- *Resolution on Renaming and Ordering the Transcription in Russian of the Names of Certain Administrative-Territorial Units of the Republic of Kazakhstan* [О переименовании и упорядочении транскрибирования на русском языке наименований отдельных административно-территориальных единиц Республики Казахстан"], 08.09.1992. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/P920001800>
- *Resolution on the Regulation of Transcription in Russian of Kazakh toponyms, the Name and Renaming of Individual Administrative and Territorial Units of the Republic of Kazakhstan* [Об упорядочении транскрибирования на русском языке казахских топонимов, наименовании и переименовании отдельных административно-территориальных единиц Республики Казахстан], 04.05.1993. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/P930004000>

- *Resolution on the Regulation of Transcription in Russian of Kazakh toponyms, the Name and Renaming of Individual Administrative and Territorial Units of the Republic of Kazakhstan № 2410-XII* [Об упорядочении транскрибирования на русском языке казахских топонимов, наименовании и переименовании отдельных административно-территориальных единиц Республики Казахстан], 07.10.1993. Retrieved from: [https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc\\_id=1002411#pos=0;0](https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=1002411#pos=0;0)
  
- *Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on the Abolition of Borlitolbinsky district of Taldykorgan region* [Об упразднении Борлитобинского района Талдыкорганской области] (№ 3371) 28.02.1997. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/U970003371>
  
- *Presidential Decree on Measures to Optimize the Administrative-Territorial Structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan (№ 3466)* [О мерах по оптимизации административно-территориального устройства Республики Казахстан], 22.04.1997. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/U970003466>
  
- *Resolution on measures to implement the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Changes in the Administrative-Territorial Structure of Almaty, East Kazakhstan, Karaganda and North Kazakhstan Regions (№ 865)*, [О мерах по реализации Указа Президента Республики Казахстан "Об изменениях в административно-территориальном устройстве Алматинской, Восточно-Казахстанской, Карагандинской и Северо-Казахстанской областей], 23.05.1997. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/P970000865>
  
- *Presidential Decree on Renaming and Changing the Transcriptions of the Names of Individual Administrative-Territorial Units of the Aktobe, Almaty and West Kazakhstan Regions (№ 356)* [О переименовании и изменении транскрипций названий отдельных административно-территориальных единиц Актюбинской, Алматинской и Западно-Казахстанской областей], 10.03.2000. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/U000000356>
  
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- *Resolution on the Renaming Some Municipalities and Villages of the Region* [Облыстағы кейбір ауылдық округтер мен ауылдардың атауын өзгерту туралы] (N 1983) 08.05.2007. Retrieved from: <http://adilet.zan.kz/kaz/docs/V07D0001983>
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- *Resolution on Renaming Some Rural Districts and Villages of the Almaty Region* No. 2046 [О переименовании сельского округа и села в Алматинской области] 19.03.2010 . Accessed in 13.07.2019: <http://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/V10D0002046>
- *Resolution on Attributing the MTF (dairy farm) settlement of Aschibulak municipality of Ile district the category of village and assigning it the name of Tole bi* (N 2051) [Об отнесении населенного пункта МТФ (молочно-товарная ферма) Ащибулакского сельского округа Йлийского района к категории сел и присвоении ему наименования - село Толе би] 21.05.2010. Accessed in 11.07.2019: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/V10D000205>
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- *Resolution on Some Transformations in the Administrative-Territorial Structure of the Almaty region* (N° 2417) [О некоторых преобразованиях в административно-территориальном устройстве Алматинской области], 30.07.2013. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/V13D0002417>

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- *Resolution on Renaming Some Administrative-Territorial Units of the Almaty Region (N° 2990)* [О переименовании некоторых административно-территориальных единиц Алматинской области], 29.12.2014. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/V14D0002990>
  
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- *Resolution on the Draft of the Presidential Decree on Changes in the Administrative-Territorial Structure of the Almaty Region (No. 132)* [Об изменениях в административно-территориальном устройстве Алматинской области], 17.03.2018. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/P1800000132>

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- *Resolution on Renaming Some Administrative-Territorial units of the Almaty Region (N° 4746)* [О переименовании некоторых административно-территориальных единиц Алматинской области], 14.06.2018. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/V18D0004746>
- *Resolution on Renaming Some Administrative-Territorial Units of the Almaty Region (N° 4969)* [О переименовании некоторых административно-территориальных единиц Алматинской области], 20.12.2018. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/V18D0004969>

#### 4.2. North Kazakhstan Region

- *Resolution on Renaming and Ordering the Transcription in Russian of the Names of Certain Administrative-Territorial Units of the Republic of Kazakhstan* [О переименовании и упорядочении транскрибирования на русском языке наименований отдельных административно-территориальных единиц Республики Казахстан"], 08.09.1992. Retrieved from: <https://zakon.uchet.kz/rus/docs/P920001800>
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## 5. Other relevant online resources:

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- Official Website of the Akimat of Esil District: History of the Esil District: [http://esl.sko.gov.kz/page/read/Istoriya\\_rajona.html?lang=ru](http://esl.sko.gov.kz/page/read/Istoriya_rajona.html?lang=ru)
- Official Website of the Akimat of Kyzylzhar District: History of the Kyzylzhar District: [http://kzh.sko.gov.kz/page/read/Kratkaya\\_istoricheskaya\\_spravka.html?lang=ru](http://kzh.sko.gov.kz/page/read/Kratkaya_istoricheskaya_spravka.html?lang=ru)
- Official Website of the Akimat of Magzhan Zhumabaev District: History of the Magzhan Zhumabaev district: [http://mzh.sko.gov.kz/page/read/Istoriya\\_rajona.html?lang=ru](http://mzh.sko.gov.kz/page/read/Istoriya_rajona.html?lang=ru)
- Official Website of the Shal Akyn District: History of the district: [http://shn.sko.gov.kz/page/read/Istoriya\\_rajona.html?lang=ru](http://shn.sko.gov.kz/page/read/Istoriya_rajona.html?lang=ru)
- Official Website of the Akimat of Talgar District: *History of Talgar District*. Accessed in 26.05.2019: <https://www.akimat-talgar.gov.kz/p/talgar>