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A GEOGRAPHICAL EVALUATION OF THE AKTOBE OBLAST'S TOPONYM CHANGING AND ELIMINATION DYNAMICS FROM SOVIET NAMES

One significant component of cultural heritage is represented by regional toponymy. In post-Soviet nations like Kazakhstan, the decommunization – the process of dropping Soviet names – is a dynamic process now underway. Old names for geographical features and settlements are accepted and then given new ones as part of this process. The nation's historical and cultural legacy must be preserved, and this procedure is crucial to that goal. An examination of oikonyms in the Aktobe oblast demonstrates that decommunization brought about modifications linked to historical events in addition to affecting names connected to revolutionary and Soviet personalities. This is a continuous process that is built upon the creation of geographic databases. It is essential to remember that place name modifications are taken into account in relation to their frequency and sociolinguistic characteristics. A semantic categorization of place names in the Aktobe oblast was done using data analysis, and the changes in these names throughout the time under consideration were examined. The structure of renaming types in the post-Soviet era is analysed, and two major phases of transition are recognised. A considerable portion of toponyms were discovered to have had their names changed, which suggests that the cultural landscape of the area has changed. First and foremost, changes in the republic's geopolitical and socioeconomic landscape are to blame for the renaming. The post-Soviet era saw particularly notable developments, mostly related to the de-Sovietization process. Previous cultural strata underwent changes, which were reflected in the compression of old toponyms. The research examines the factors leading to recent alterations in the names of rural villages in the Aktobe oblast, as well as matters like the frequency of name recurrence. The research looks closely at how the Soviet names of the city of Aktobe were cleared of oikonyms and urbanonyms. Undertaken with student engagement, this field of study offers a comprehensive grasp of the dynamics and importance of the decommunization-desovetization process. The survey was completed by 76 students in the geography educational programme. A sociolinguistic study involving pupils was carried out to discern the current onomastic condition in the region.

Key words: toponymy, decommunization, desovietization, urbanonym, Aktobe oblast.

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Ақтөбе облысындағы ойконимдердің кеңестік кездегі атауларынан арылуы және қазіргі өзгеру динамикасын географиялық тұрғыдан бағалау

Аймақтық топонимика мәдени мұраның маңызды аспектісі. Посткеңестік елдерде, оның ішінде Қазақстанда декоммунизация деп аталатын кеңестік атаулардан арылу процесі белсенді түрде дамып келеді. Осы процестің аясында географиялық нысандар мен елді мекендердің ескі атаулары қайтарылып, жаңалары қабылданды. Бұл процестің еліміздің тарихи-мәдени мұрасын сақтау үшін маңызы зор. Ақтөбе өңіріндегі ойконимдерге жасалған талдау көрсеткендей, декоммунизация революциялық және кеңестік қайраткерлерге байланысты есімдерге әсер етіп қана қоймай, тарихи оқиғаларға байланысты өзгерістерге де әкелді. Бұл кеңістіктік деректер қорын әзірлеу негізінде жүзеге асырылатын үздіксіз процесс. Жер-су атауларының өзгерістері олардың жиілігі мен әлеуметтік лингвистикалық аспектілері аясында қарастырылатынын атап өткен жөн. Деректерді талдау негізінде Ақтөбе облысындағы жер-су атауларының семантикалық классификациясы жүргізіліп, олардың қарастырылып отырған кезеңдегі өзгерістері зерттелді.

формацияның екі маңызды толқыны анықталып, посткеңестік дәуірдегі атауларды өзгерту түрлерінің құрылымы талданды. Топонимдердің едәуір бөлігінің атауы өзгертілгені анықталды, бұл аймақтың мәдени кеңістігінің жаңарғандығын көрсетеді. Атаулардың жаңғыруы, ең алдымен, республика аумағындағы геосаяси және әлеуметтік-экономикалық өзгерістерге байланысты. Ерекше маңызды атаулардың жаңғыруы посткеңестік кезеңде, негізінен десоветизация процесіне байланысты болды. Бұрынғы мәдени қабаттардағы өзгерістерді көрсететін ескі топонимдер сығымдалған. Зерттеуде соңғы жылдардағы Ақтөбе өңіріндегі географиялық атаулардың жаңару үдерістері, соның ішінде өңірлердегі ауылдық елді мекен атауларының өзгеруі, атаулардың қайталану жиілігі сияқты мәселелер талданған. Зерттеуде Ақтөбе қаласының ойконимдері мен урбанонимдерінің кеңестік атаулардан арылуы жан-жақты қарастырылған. Бұл бағыттағы зерттеулер студенттердің қатысуымен жүзеге асырылды және декоммунизация-десоветизация процесінің динамикасы мен маңызы туралы толық түсінік берілді. Сауалнамаға «География» білім беру бағдарламасының 76 студенті қатысты. Облыстың қазіргі ономастикалық жағдайы сараланып, студенттермен әлеуметтік лингвистикалық зерттеулер жүргізілді.

Түйін сөздер: топонимия, декоммунизация, десоветизация, урбаноним, Ақтөбе облысы.

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Географическая оценка динамики изменения и избавления ойконимов от советских названий в Актюбинской области

Региональная топонимика представляет собой важный аспект культурного наследия. Процесс избавления от советских названий, известный как декоммунизация, активно развивается в постсоветских странах, включая Казахстан. В рамках этого процесса возвращаются старые названия географических объектов и населенных пунктов, а также принимаются новые. Этот процесс важен для сохранения историко-культурного наследия страны. Анализ ойконимов в Актюбинской области, показывает, что декоммунизация не только затронула названия, связанные с революционными и советскими деятелями, но и привела к изменениям, связанным с историческими событиями. Это актуальный процесс, который проводится на основе разработки пространственных баз данных. Важно отметить, что изменения географических названий рассматриваются в контексте их частоты и социолингвистических аспектов. На основе анализа данных проведена семантическая классификация названий местностей Актюбинской области и изучено их изменение за рассматриваемый период. Выделены две важные волны трансформации, а также проанализирована структура видов переименований в постсоветскую эпоху. Было установлено, что значительная часть топонимов была подвергнута переименованию, что свидетельствует об изменении культурного пространства области. Трансформация названий обусловлена, прежде всего, геополитическими и социально-экономическими изменениями на территории республики. Особенно значимые изменения произошли в постсоветский период, преимущественно в связи с процессом десоветизации. Старые топонимы подверглись сжатию, отражая изменения в предшествующих культурных слоях. В исследовании анализируются процессы изменения географических названий в Актюбинской области за последние годы, в том числе изменения названий сельских поселений в районах, такие вопросы, как частота повторения названий. В исследовании всесторонне рассмотрено избавление ойконимов и урбанонимов города Актобе от их советских названий. Исследования в данной области проводятся с участием студентов и обеспечивают полное понимание динамики и значимости процесса декоммунизации-десоветизации. В опросе приняли участие 76 студентов образовательной программы «География». Дифференцирована современная ономастическая ситуация региона, проведены социолингвистические исследования со студентами.

Ключевые слова: топонимия, декоммунизация, десоветизация, урбаноним, Актюбинская область.

Introduction

The process of evaluating the processes of change and the removal of oikonyms from Soviet names in contemporary Kazakhstan is complex from a geographic perspective. Many places, geographical features, and administrative divisions have changed their names since the early 1990s, when the Soviet Union collapsed, to distance themselves from their communist past and take on more traditional, historically significant, or ethnically fitting names. In different parts of Kazakhstan, this process of oikonym change happened to varied degrees and with diverse dynamics. Name changes might happen swiftly and easily in certain places, but they can also need drawn-out debates and public surveys in other areas. The public's perception and the actions of local communities, which may favour or oppose changes, are important variables affecting the dynamics of change in oikonyms. The political environment and the power of local authorities are significant additional factors. Changes in oikonyms bring with them a number of difficulties and issues, including maintaining historical memory, honouring the cultural legacy of different ethnic groups, and coordinating new names with official records and mapping information. That being said, the process of purging Soviet names from oikonyms may generally be described as a slow, evolutionary shift meant to bring them into compliance with contemporary norms and reality. It is a reflection of a society's aspiration to reinforce its geographic and cultural identity while simultaneously seeking self-identification and reintegration into the global community.

The change of geographical names first of all results in updating maps. The composition of the population has much effect on the transformation of names. For example, the major part of the Aktobe oblast is populated by the Kazakh people so they demanded changing the names or returning the former names of settlements. Several symposiums and seminars were held regarding this issue, i.e. concerning the study of names of land and water bodies, settlements.

Many countries see a dynamic process of decommunization aimed at changing symbols and names related to the Soviet period of history. Scientists from post-Soviet countries present a broad overview of the transformations of oikonyms in their works (Teslenok S.A. et al., 2017:13; Gerasimenko T., Iskaliyev D., 2021:23; Gnatiuk O., Basik S., 2023:63; Ustavshchikova S., 2018:95). The change of oikonyms is a phenomenon that takes place not only in Kazakhstan but also in other post-Soviet countries. For example, it is clearly visible in Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and other countries how the names of streets, settlements and even geographical names have changed resulting in the formation of a new linguistic layer. In this respect T. Gerasimenko and N. Sviatosha specify in their studies that the change of names of settlements in Tajikistan began in 1992 (Gerasimenko S., Sviatokha N., 2020:320).

To a significant extent, these changes were associated with the construction of new national, political, and regional identities (Temirbayeva R.K. et al., 2022:43). Such construction occurred either "from above," meaning it was initiated and controlled by authorities of various levels through the "ideologization" of space, or with the participation of society and economic entities – in this case, typically outside of political and ideological purposes (Hubner E., Dirksmeier P., 2023:103).

We witness an opposing trend in the post-Soviet era that is defined by desovietization and derussification. All over the post-Soviet space, these changes are occurring at a rapid speed. Many post-Soviet researchers find it difficult to adjust to the process of eliminating names with "Soviet" and "Russian" connotations. However, this phenomenon is not unique to Kazakhstan but is also observed in other post-Soviet states.

The qualities of the called thing are reflected in each name, which determines how well it fits into different historical, geographical, and linguistic contexts. A significant amount of variety exists in the toponymic complex as a whole as well as in individual names, both across time and in place (Basik S., Rahautsou D., 2019:107; Rusu M., 2019:48; Gnatiuk O., Glybovets V., 2020:139).

During the Soviet period the names of land and water bodies, streets and settlements were given in a massive and unsystematic way and many of them were frequently repeated. That was the influence of the Soviet regime and the ideology of that time. The spelling of oikonyms in Russian also affected the meaning of the name of a settlement.

Regional and critical toponymy is still a little-studied area. The most critical issues presenting problems in the study of this field are the following: incomplete databases; no accurate differentiation of ethnolinguistic strata in regional toponymy; little number of historical and linguistic studies does not enable to restore the names of settlements at different stages (Rusu M., 2021:269; Chloupek B., 2018:23).

We shall be interested in the following elements of developments in post-Soviet Kazakhstan's toponymy in the current study:

- Sociocultural: as a method of identity construction; Sociological: as a component of all-encompassing social change;

- Politico-geographical: as a center-periphery diffusion phenomena, reflecting spatial-temporal disparities in components and regional practices of identity building;

- Political and managerial: as practices of identity management for political reasons.

The research aims to assess the contemporary dynamics of changes in toponyms in the Aktobe oblast from a geographical perspective.

For a long time, different layers of toponyms from various historical-geographical stages of development coexisted on the territory of the Aktobe oblast. Numerous factors influence the change of modern toponyms. Mass migration of representatives of other nationalities to their historical homeland has led to changes in toponymic layers. Russian toponyms appeared on the map of Kazakhstan in the late XIX century, with the majority emerging during Soviet times, after the formation of the Kazakh SSR. Russification and the ideological use of toponymy partially accompanied the renaming process.

The cultural-geographical situation in the Aktobe oblast, as well as throughout the entire post-Soviet space, has undergone significant changes at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries (Urazaeva K.B. et al., 2008:168). One of the essential aspects of focused modeling of onomastic space in modern Kazakhstan is national identification mainly through the names of geographical objects which is opposed to ideas having lost their value during the Soviet period. Street names, regional names, and many more things are only a few examples of the various ways in which the toponymic environment is evolving (Gridina T., Konovalova N., 2019:34).

Currently the process of updating the names of settlements and streets in the Aktobe region is in progress. Due to the growing size of the city its streets are given new names and streets with former Soviet names are renamed. Transformations in the geopolitical and political system, socio-cultural transformations are expressed in the change of street names. Streets and squares are important images of the urban environment. Renaming of the streets with Soviet-era names is a component of the overall process of urban planning and public infrastructure changes. The change of street names calls forth various reactions across the population and has an effect on sociocultural relations. To a great extend it is due to the multinational composition of the urban population and the cost of new street name signs.

Research materials and methods

The research into language development management in the Aktobe oblast yielded data characterizing the changes in street names in settlements and cities. Cartographic and geoinformation techniques were used to construct maps for historical geography and cultural heritage preservation purposes. The following materials were used as the source for the study: normative legal acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan from 1991 to the present, scientific literature, cartographic works, periodical press materials and alongside with that the documents of the Aktobe Oblast Department for the Development of languages and materials of the Institute of Geography on the "State Catalog of Geographical Names of the Republic of Kazakhstan", published in 2016 were analyzed (Abdrahmanova S.A. et al., 2016:530).

The cartographic method was widely applied in research work. That's due to the fact that this method, as some scientists consider, allows to gain insight into the main factors of historical and geographical processes in the region – the features of settling, past migration processes in the region, the culture of native peoples, interethnic ties, etc. (Chloupek B., 2018:23; Rose-Redwood R. et al., 2010:453).

The research work was carried out on the basis of drawing a comparison between maps of different periods, content analysis, geographical information, statistical and survey studies.

The population differs in its attitude on changing toponyms preserved from the Soviet period. A special survey aimed at solving this problem was conducted in November 2023. Students of the "Geography" Educational program took part in this survey.

The survey questions posed to the students were as follows:

1. Are you satisfied with the level of toponymic work in the Aktobe oblast?

2. Do you consider the toponyms given during the Soviet era important today?

3. In your opinion, what criteria are important when renaming and assigning new names to streets?

4. Are there many names of people in street or city names that you have never heard of?

5. What obstacles do you think exist when assigning names to streets for distinguished local figures in the Aktobe oblast?

6. Do you believe that principles of transparency and public participation will be upheld in naming and renaming settlements and objects?

7. Do you support the new names assigned to unnamed streets due to renaming or new assignments?

8. Do you think it is necessary to adhere to the principle of "Restoring historical names" when changing the names of settlements and streets?

9. How do you feel about the renaming efforts underway in the city?

10. What are your thoughts on the frequency of name repetition in the Aktobe oblast?

Results and discussion

Especially with regard to the numerous monument names honouring Civil War and revolutionaries, the ideological ideals of the Soviet period were realised. Lenin and his comrades, as well as Marx and Engels, are the names of the major thoroughfares in nearly every administrative territory of the former USSR. Basic ideological motifs, such as "shock labor," "virgin land cultivation," "fulfilling the five-year plan in four years," etc., served as the motivational basis for naming significant objects. This included linguistic policies, which frequently went against national customs. When the circumstances for this process developed, such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union, language democratisation, processes of actualizing national self-identity, etc., it became necessary to reject "everything Soviet" due to these biases in the actions of local authorities towards the adoption of Soviet ideological principles into the nominative system (Gnatiuk O., Melnychuk A., 2024:34). In the Aktobe oblast, the Russian toponymic layer formed in two stages. Several Russian names appeared before the revolution, while the majority emerged during the Soviet period. Toponymy became standardised and unified, and many facets of Kazakh society became Sovietized (and desovietized) and ideologicalized as a result of the rise of the national Soviet intelligentsia under the conventional system of government. Oikonyms changed primarily due to political changes. The year 1991, the collapse of the USSR, and the creation of independent states within the CIS marked a challenging period in Kazakhstan's history. From this moment, toponymic transformation began.

In the district, not only oikonyms but also street names, previously known as "Soviet" names, have been changed. For example, "Trud" (Labor), "Stroiteley" (Builders), "70th Anniversary of October," and so on. Street names were changed by the decision of the city authorities. They adopted the names of Kazakh figures, public figures, poets, and writers (Urazaeva K.B. et al., 2009:200).

Since 1990, more than 150 oikonyms have been renamed in the Aktobe oblast (Figure 1). As shown in Fig. 1, the majority of changes or renaming of oikonyms in the Aktobe oblast occurred during the period from 2001 to 2010 (99 names). In the years 1990-2000, oikonyms in the Mugalzhar, Khromtau, and Kobda districts were changed. The renaming of names from 2011 to the present corresponds to settlements in the Martuk district. Additionally, in some districts, distorted names of settlements were corrected (Oyyl, Konyrat, Mamyr, etc.). As seen from the data, the change of oikonyms was mainly carried out in areas favorable for agriculture. This is confirmed by the transformation of toponyms in the Martuk, Kargaly, Alga, and Kobda districts.

The map was compiled and supplemented by the authors based on atlases of toponyms of the Aktobe oblast (Aktobe oblysy zher-su ataularynyn atlasy, 2012:40; Aktobe oblysy zher-su ataularynyn atlasy, 2019:22).

The highest number of name changes in the last twenty years occurred in 2012, with approximately 340 oikonyms changing their previous names. Figure 2 shows the proportion of renamed settlements by district.

As of right now, the Republic has instituted a State Onomastic Commission to streamline the process of renaming topographic objects (mostly ergonomic) in accordance with the new notion of state language policy. The names that are part of Kazakhstan's onomastic space should be highly associative semiotic signs that serve as both an address and an encapsulation of a potent national potential that is intimately associated with the country's history, economy, and culture (Polozhenie o Respublikanskoi onomasticheskoi komissii, 2022). To govern the process of naming state officials and people who have significantly influenced the republic's advancement in the domains of science, culture, literature, and the arts on geographic objects, guidelines have been devised in this respect.
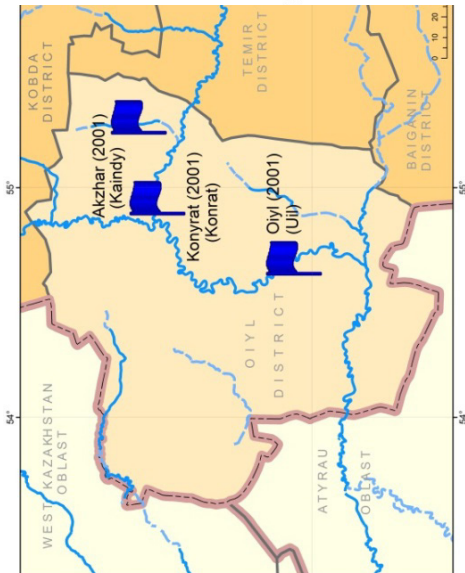
There is now 87 streets and communities named after the poet Abai, just in the Aktobe oblast. This is a clear example of the extensive occurrence and "repetition" of memorial names for geographic features, according to official records from the regional onomastic commission. Furthermore, 29 localities and streets have the name Aliya Moldagulova in honour of the Soviet Union's Hero. Figure 3 shows the prevalence of name duplication in the Aktobe oblast.
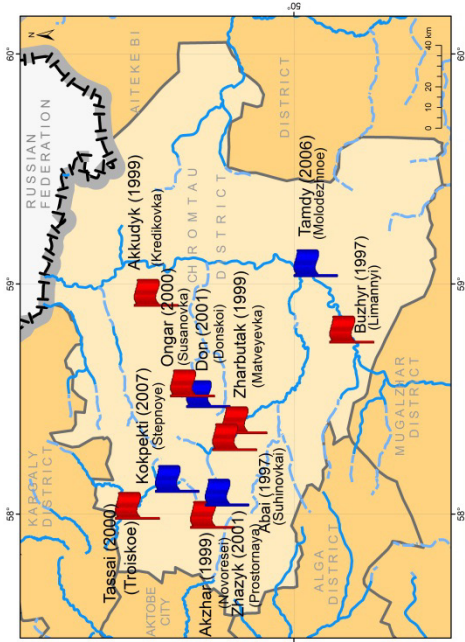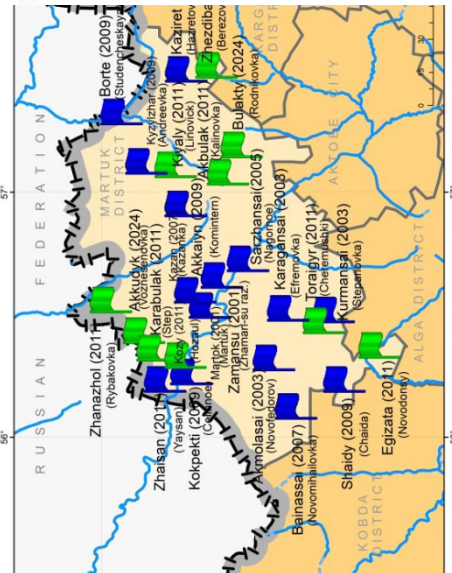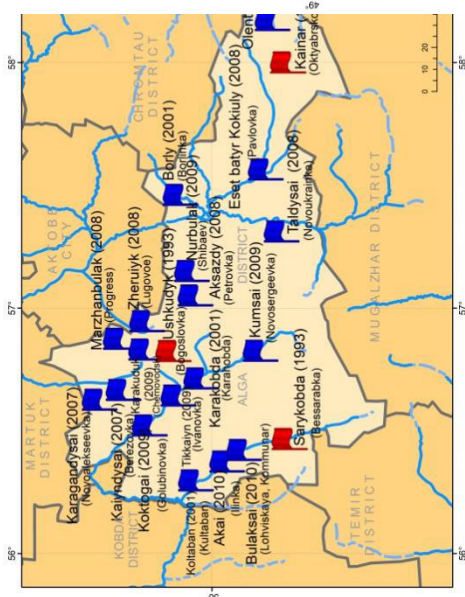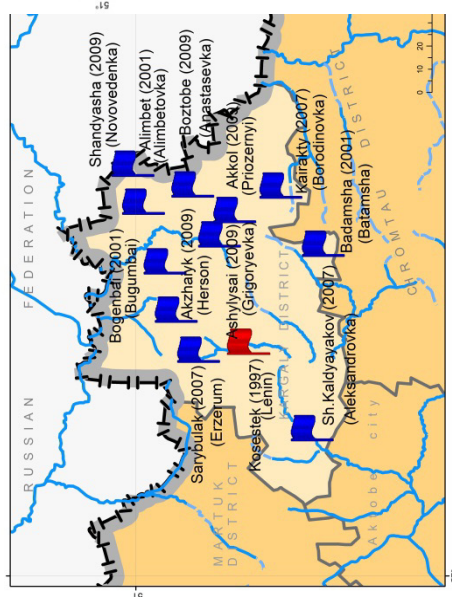
Chromtau district
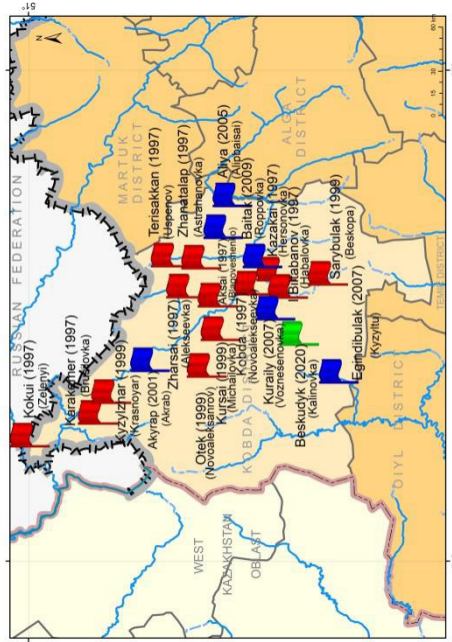
Oiyl district

Alga district

Kobda district

Martuk district

Kargaly district
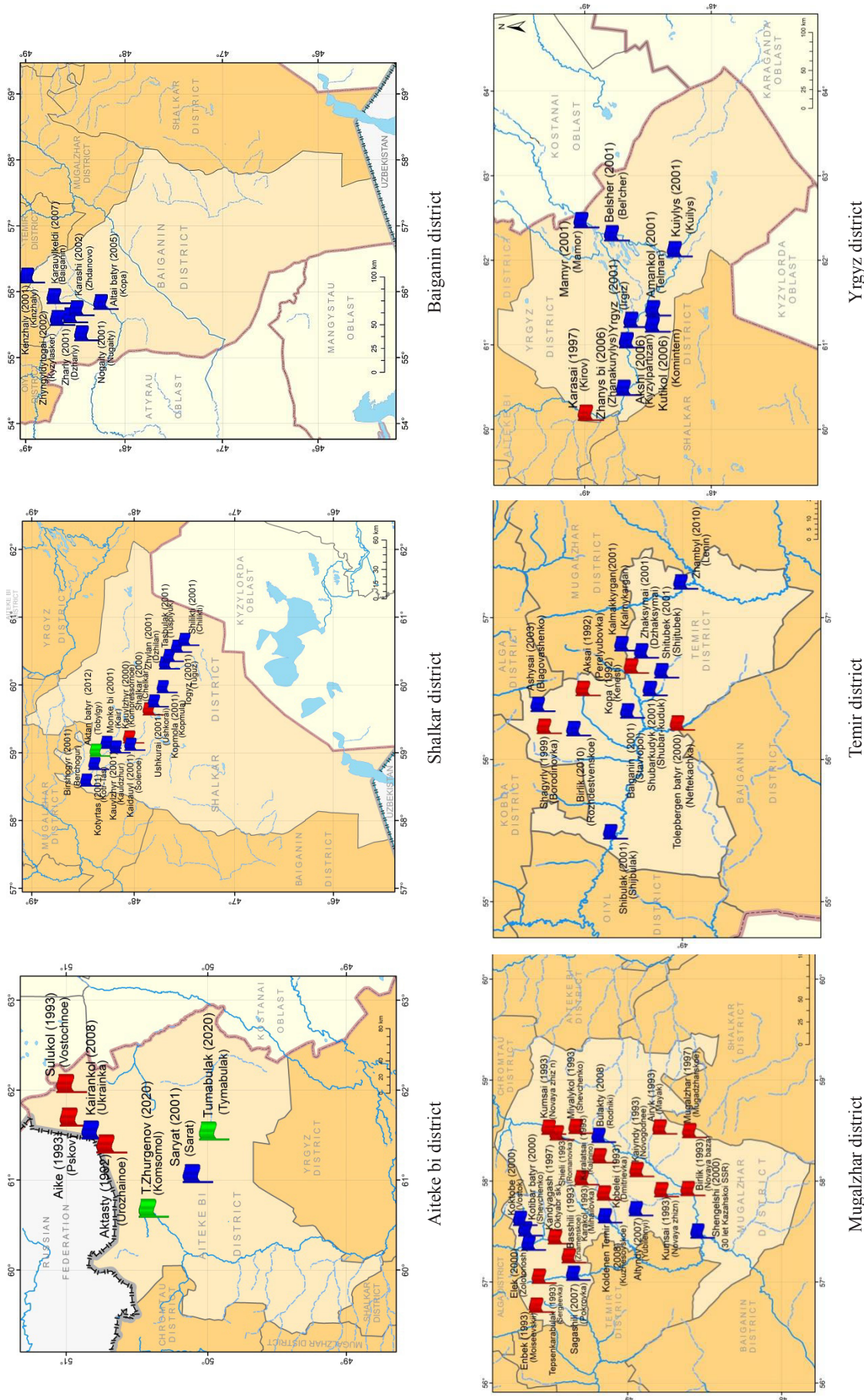
Figure 1 – Changes in Oikonyms by Districts of Aktobe oblast

Baiganin district

Shalkar district

Aiteke bi district

Yrgyz district

Temir district

Mugalzhar district

■ Oikonyms that changed in the period 1992-2000   ■ Oikonyms that changed in the period 2001-2010   ■ Oikonyms that have changed since 2011

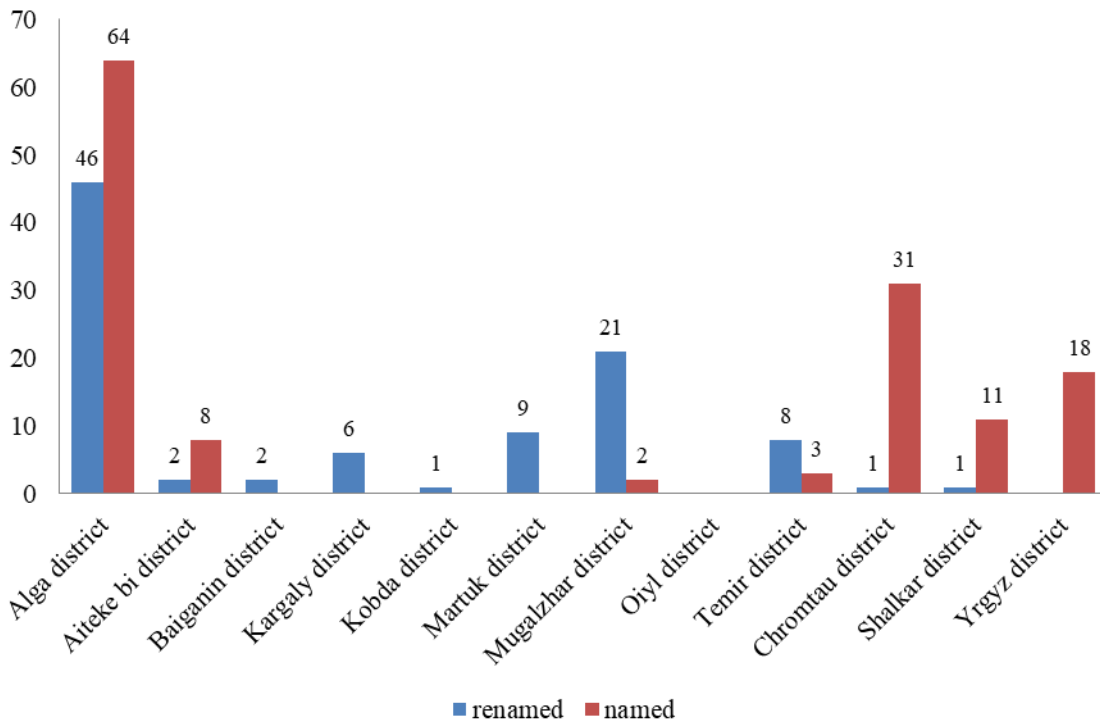■ Oikonyms that changed in the period 1992-2000

27

Figure 2 – Percentage of Renamed Settlements in Aktobe oblast by Districts
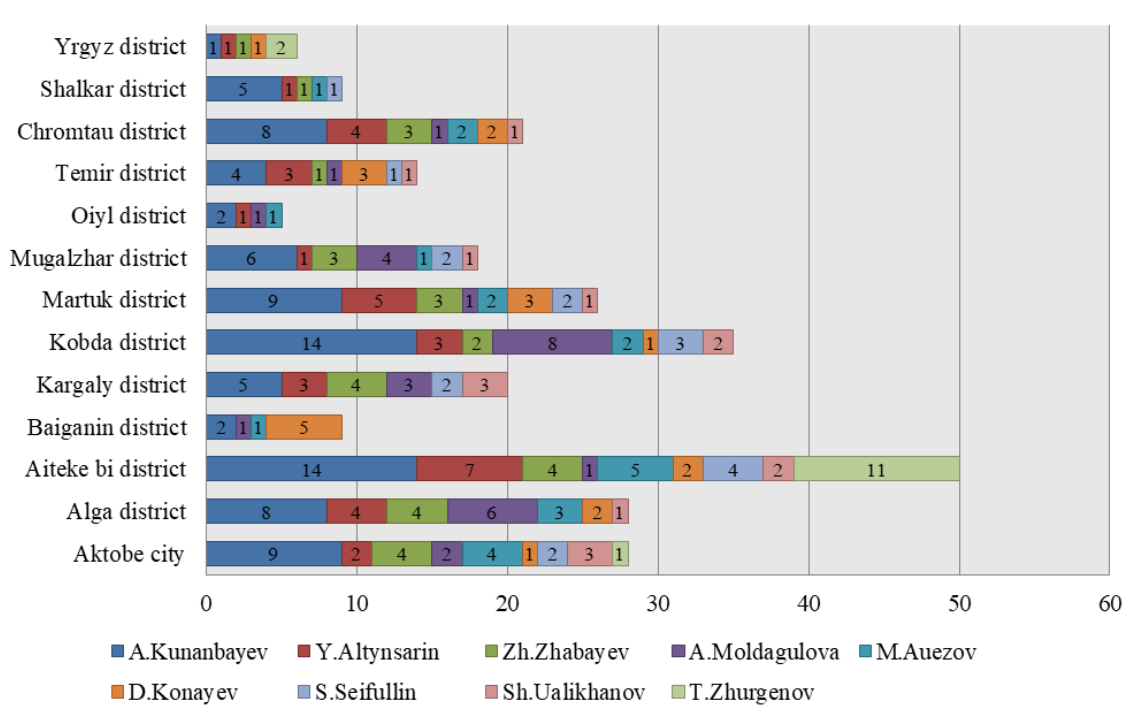

Figure 3 – Frequency of Name Repetition in Aktobe oblast

In March 2018, the administration of the city of Aktobe organized an international conference "Onomastics: Research and Experience," during which the main strategies for changing the names of urban objects in the region were defined during a briefing with representatives of the media: 1) Names that are ideologically out of date should be "aligned" with recent historical occurrences and national customs, implying a "name change."; 2) To restrict, if feasible, the naming of municipal landmarks after prominent figures from society and politics (for instance, several instances of local government petitioning the onomastic commission have been documented); 3) The Kazakh people's ethnic characteristics should be used to name settlements, streets, or specific urban objects (such as stadiums, parks, cultural palaces, schools, etc.) that do not already have names of well-known individuals who have made significant contributions to the development of national culture, art, or science; 4) Naming urban objects that have a strong connection to the national language, such as those with mythological motifs; 5) Excluding the use of multiple identical names and "numerological" designations for residential objects (Zarechnyj 1, Zarechnyj 2, Zarechnyj 3; Batys 1, Batys 2).

The onomastic condition in Kazakhstan is reflected directly in the created tactics. Following the lifting of the recent ban on name changes, 224 streets in Aktobe have been renamed, and over 100 additional streets, municipalities, and villages are scheduled to be renamed. A plethora of items in need of names has emerged as a result of the ongoing creation of new local districts. It has been discovered that there are 157 nameless streets in the expanding city of Aktobe (Figure 4).

With numerous geographical landmarks bearing names that have remained unchanged since the time of Tsarist Russia, such Demidovka, Voznesenovka, Velikhovka, and Petropavlovka, the topic of changing them is frequently debated in Kazakhstani media. The need of "giving true national names" to the Kazakh people is also emphasised at the same time (Shaukulova A., 2018).
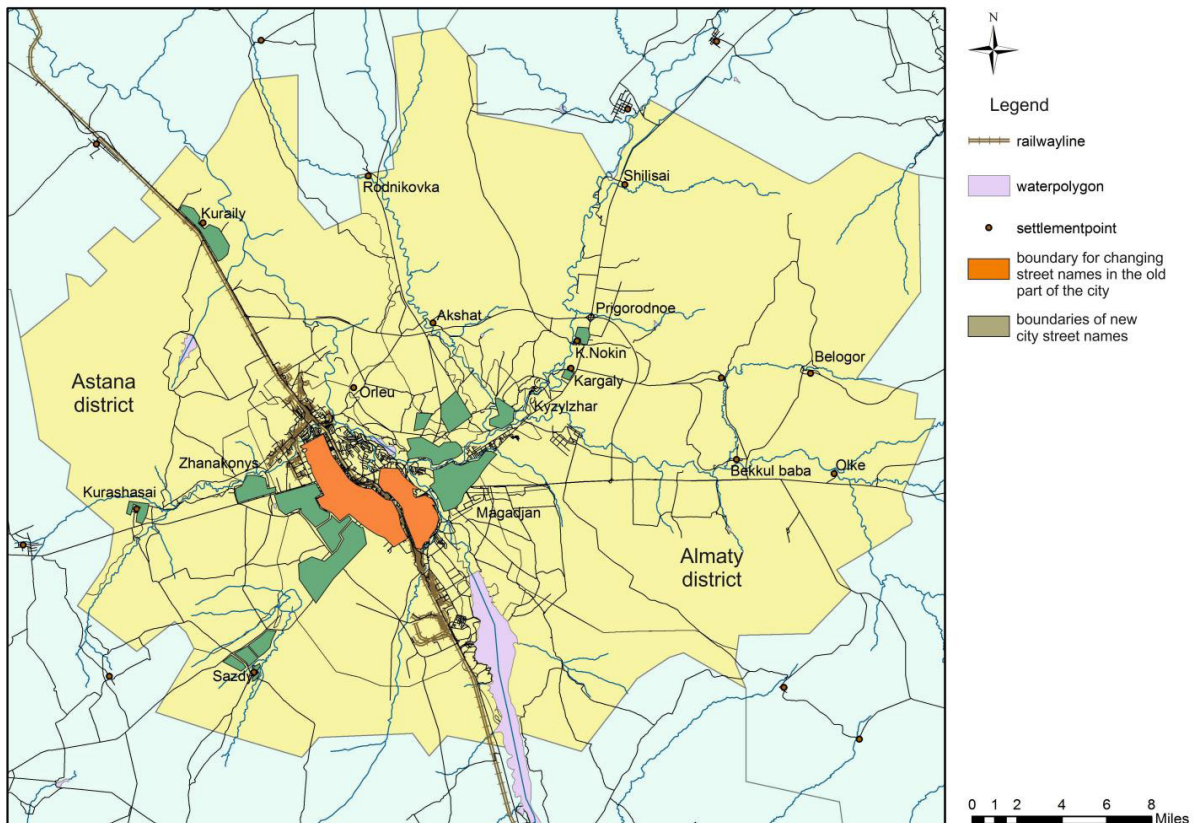

Figure 4 – Boundaries of Street Name Changes in the City of Aktobe and its Suburbs

It is possible to identify both objective and subjective justifications for renaming urban objects by taking into consideration the developed methodologies. The naming of many unnamed streets and the alteration of numerical ergonyms (for example, 11 mkr, 12 mkr, Аҟzhar-1, Аҟzhar-2, Batys 1, Batys 2, etc.) are objectively justified. The most obvious justification is the desire to uphold national goals by giving a famous person's name a memorial title. As a result, a number of streets and other urban features in the city of Aktobe now have the names of notable public and political personalities from Kazakhstan, as well as poets, authors, cultural icons, and heroes from the country's epic tales. Much of this collection of names "rejects" the range of naming practices that arose throughout the establishment and historical evolution of ergonomic systems in this area. We may use a variety of groupings of organisations whose names have been altered or are presently being considered for change to represent this. The names of streets that serve as orientation markers show where the street is located within the city, taking into account any surrounding objects: Yugo-Zapadnaya, 1 (now S. Mukanova Street); Centre (Ortalyk) – (now M. Bukenbaeva); Depovskaya (S. Zhamankulova), Zarechnaya (G. Zhubanova), Sovkhozny Proezd – Ush Tagan, Garnizonnaya – Zh. Dosmuhameduly; together with Vokzalnaya, Stantsionnaya, Privokzalnaya, Pochtovaya, Stadionny dead-end pools, Residential pool Zarechny, and more were modified.

The following are the names of ideological figures associated with Soviet reality and symbols: Party Alley XX Congress – K. Ospanov; October 50th anniversary –T. Akhtanov; Oktyabrya 70th anniversary—Jeruyik; Oktyabrskaya—D. Berkimbayev; Oktyabrsky boulevard – Abaya prospect; Kommunisticheskaya – Yu. Altynsarin; Kolkhoznaya – Altai batyr; Sovetskaya – M. Otemisova; Komsomolskaya – Karasai batyr; Pravda – Karagul batyr; Prospekt Truda – Sankibai batyr; Druzhba – E. Taibekov, and others. Some of the names, including Profsoyuzny tupik, Novokooperativnaya Street, Industrialnaya Street, etc., are continually changing. The following street names have been replaced in honour of communist (revolutionary) movement leaders and ideologists: K. Marx, F. Engels, V. Lenin, and others; also honoured are heroes of the American Civil War: Engels – Brothers Zhubanov, Kirov – Eset batyr, Frunze – Zhankozha batyr, Frunze tuyiki – Izgilik, K. Liebknecht – Scherniaz, Schmidt – Moncke bi, R. Luxembourg – D. Nur-

peisova, Kuibyshev – Samruk, Kotovsky – Gabit Musiperov, Vorovskogo – Zangar, and others. The names of the occupations of the workers were used to rename streets: Fabrichnaya (street S. Kurmanalina), Svyazistov (street M. Prozorova), and Stroitelnaya (street Ryskulova).

There has been minimal modification in the names of streets and ergonyms that honour Patriotic War heroes and events. In the city of Aktobe, names like Z. Kosmodemyanskaya, N. Gastello, the 101st Rifle Brigade, Victory Avenue, A. Maresyev, O. Koshevoy, and other names of Soviet Union heroes have been preserved (Sultangalieva G., Kubenova G., 2006:120). Nonetheless, there are a few rare instances of ergonym names changing within this category; these primarily pertain to S. Tyulenin Street, which was renamed in honour of M. Ospanov, the first Chairman of the Majilis of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Voroshilov Street, which became T. Zhurgenov Street.

The names of streets reflecting geographical features have been changed as well. For instance, Steppnaya Street was renamed to A. Smagulov Street, and Belogorskaya Street was renamed to Aktau Street. There are no street renamings honouring great figures in science, literature, art, or international culture. Avenues such as Tchaikovsky, Turgenev, Pushkin, Lomonosov, Nekrasov, Shevchenko, Mendeleev, and so on are still unaltered. Streets named for poets and authors from the Soviet Union have occasionally had their names changed. For instance, M. Gorky Street was renamed to Asau Barak, and D. Bedny Street was renamed to Kasym Khan. Streets named after external characteristics have also changed. For example, Fan Street was renamed to I. Biltabanov Street, Minor Alley was renamed to Fairground Street, and Dull Alley was renamed to Kokzhiyek Street. Currently, the list of changing ergonyms in this group includes Snezhnaya, Kovyl'nyj, Letnyaya, and Zvezdnaya Street.

Table 1 presents the findings of the student survey.

As part of the organically evolving toponymic system, the names are being replaced from the established motivating paradigm of Kazakh toponyms. Finally, it should be highlighted that the primary trend of intentional modelling of the onomastic continuum in the contemporary region is the expression of national identity against the background of concepts that have become obsolete in the context of the Soviet Union.

Table 1 – View of young people to the level of onomastic works of the Aktobe oblast

№	Survey questions	The answer is surveying		
1	The level of onomastic works in the Aktobe oblast	High 51	Average 25	Low 0
2	The modern meaning of the name, given in the Soviet era	High 0	Average 9	Low 67
3	Important criteria when changing and assigning new names of streets	Durability 0	Achieve justice without succumbing to corruption 0	Both criteria are important 76
4	Are there names of people you have never heard of in the names of streets or settlements	Right 20	I will refrain 14	Against 42
5	What obstacles do you think exist when assigning names to streets for distinguished local figures in the Aktobe oblast	Requires many documents 15	There are not enough state awards for a local figure 11	Both criteria are important 50
6	Do you believe that principles of transparency and public participation will be upheld in naming and renaming settlements and objects	High 0	Average 9	Low 67
7	Do you support the new names assigned to unnamed streets due to renaming or new assignments	I support 71	I will refrain 5	I don't support 0
8	Do you think it is necessary to adhere to the principle of "Restoring historical names" when changing the names of settlements and streets	I support 69	I will refrain 7	I don't support 0
9	How do you feel about the renaming efforts underway in the city	I support 76	I will refrain 0	I don't support 0
10	Estimation of the frequency of repetition of the name in the Aktobe oblast	Many repetitions in oikonyms 65	Not many repetitions in oikonyms 11	I didn't notice any repetitions 0

According to the youth, the level of onomastic work in the region is high. The current significance of names from Soviet times is irrelevant for the youth. Some of them admitted that they didn't know the Soviet people at all. They believe that the most important criteria for changing and assigning new street names are the fame and obscurity of the person. This information has been analyzed in Table 1.

The process of changing and eliminating Soviet names of geographical objects, known as decommunization and desovietization, is of vital importance in modern society. Regarding the post-Soviet countries such as Kazakhstan, this process is critically significant and is of interest to researchers and society as a whole because of the following reasons:

1. Historical changes: during the Soviet period the Soviet names of geographical objects and settlements in post-Soviet countries were appointed by the "ruling" circles and the former names were replaced in accordance with the mandative ideol-

ogy. The modern change of names reflects historical changes and the striving of each nation to reassess its history and cultural heritage;

2. Symbolic meaning: Decommunization matters symbolically for society as changing the names of geographical objects expresses a change in personality and values. This process is of help for the countries to pass the transition period and consolidate their new identity;

3. Sociocultural changes: The change of oikonyms testifies to sociocultural changes in society including the development of the language, culture and values. It can also have an effect on the perception of different ethnic and socio-cultural groups and interaction between them;

4. Geopolitical context: The change of geographical names in post-Soviet countries is connected with the transformations in the geopolitical context, such as the striving for national identity, sovereignty and integration into the global community;

5. The study of the dynamics in oikonyms' changes speaks of a scientific interest to research the sociocultural transformation processes and the dynamics of geographical names in the context of the changing socio-political environment.

On the whole the geographical assessment of the dynamics of changing and using Soviet names of geographical objects represents the study allowing an understanding of the decommunization and desovietization processes and their impact on the sociocultural and geopolitical dynamics of post-Soviet countries.

Conclusion

The study of the dynamics of changes in geographical names in the Aktobe oblast is of importance to perceive decommunization and desovietization processes in the post-Soviet space. The oikonyms and urbanonyms of the oblast over the specified period which are under discussion reveal a significant number of changes that point at geopolitical, socio-economic and cultural transformations in Kazakhstan.

The analysis of changes in the names of land and water bodies, settlements of the Aktobe oblast opened the way to get insight into two important waves of transformation, the sources of which are associated both with geopolitical events and sociocultural changes in the republic. Special attention is focused on the process of sovietization and its impact on the structural and semantic features of toponyms. The study verified significant changes in the cultural space of the oblast and also pointed out that the changes of geographical names are connected not only with political changes but also with transformations in previous cultural strata.

An important part of the study was a survey conducted with the participation of students of the Geography program. This survey provided additional data on the perception and value of changes in geographical names and also exposed that students are not indifferent to the changes occurring in the society. Sociolinguistic studies were conducted which brought to light numerous aspects of the onomastic situation in the oblast.

On the whole this study represents an important contribution to understanding and studying the decommunization and desovietization processes in Kazakhstan in the context of changes in geographical names and also demonstrates the active participation of students in research work.

Naturally occurring nominative vectors, which are less prominent in the names of urban objects, still offer orienting and distinctive marking reasons that are customary for ergonomic systems that emerge on their own. We identify strategies of tracing and metaphor representing the national mindset of Kazakhstan from the perspective of the nominative procedures characteristic of natural nomination.

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