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HISTORICAL FIGURES IN RURAL STREET NAMES OF NORTHERN KAZAKHSTAN: FROM SOVIET TO NATIONAL PANTHEON

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Abstract. *Introduction.* Street renaming in post-Soviet states is usually read as a tool of national resymbolisation. Kazakh scholarship, though, rarely leaves the capitals and describes the process from the state's point of view. *The aim of the study* is to shift attention to the rural level and to the ethnically mixed north of the country, examining whose names appear on rural streets in four regions (Akmola, Kostanay, Pavlodar and North Kazakhstan oblasts) from 2008 to 2025. *Materials and methods.* The material is a database of 2987 street renamings in villages, auls, settlements and district towns, compiled from official normative legal acts. *Results.* Personal names turned out to be the largest category of new names: 39,8%, or 1188 renamings referring to 373 people. In the replaced layer this category was the smallest (21,1%). The two pantheons barely overlap. Lenin, who led the old layer with 159 streets, gives way to the educators Ybyrai Altynsarin (68) and Abai (67). The share of ideological names stays almost the same, but their content changes completely. Within one legal procedure the regions act differently. Akmola oblast gathers the fullest national pantheon. There was no single nationwide wave; the regions went through the active phase in different years. *Conclusion.* We read all this as resymbolisation of space, not depoliticisation. The rural street is a place where state symbolic policy meets local memory.

Keywords: nation building, collective memory, local communities, national identity.

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СОЛТҮСТІК ҚАЗАҚСТАННЫҢ АУЫЛДЫҚ КӨШЕ АТАУЛАРЫНДАҒЫ ТАРИХИ ТҮЛҒАЛАР: КЕҢЕСТІК ПАНТЕОННАН ҰЛТТЫҚ ПАНТЕОНҒА

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Андатпа. *Kipicne.* Посткеңестік мемлекеттердегі көшелердің атауын өзгерту әдетте ұлттық қайта символдандыру құралы ретінде қарастырылады. Қазақстандық зерттеулер бұл процесті негізінен астаналар мысалында және мемлекет тұрғысынан сипаттайды. *Зерттеудің мақсаты* – назарды елдің ауылдық деңгейіне және этникалық құрамы аралас солтүстігіне аудару, Солтүстік Қазақстанның төрт облысында (Ақмола, Қостанай, Павлодар және Солтүстік Қазақстан облыстары) 2008-2025 жылдары ауылдық көшелерге кімнің есімдері берілгенін талдау. *Материалдар мен әдістер.* Негізге ресми нормативтік құқықтық актілер бойынша жиналған, ауылдардағы, кенттердегі және аудандық маңызы бар қалалардағы 2987 қайта атаудың тізілімі алынды. *Нәтижелер.* Жалқы есімдер жаңа атаулардың ең үлкен санаты болып шықты: 39,8%, яғни 373 адамға сілтейтін 1188 атау. Бұрынғы атауларда бұл санат, керісінше, ең аз (21,1%) болды. Екі пантеон бір-бірімен дерлік сәйкес келмейді. Ескі қабатта 159 көшеге есімі берілген Ленин ағартушылар Ыбырай Алтынсарин (68) мен Абайға (67) орын береді. Идеологиялық атаулардың үлесі бұрынғы деңгейде сақталғанымен, олардың мазмұны толық өзгерді. Бір құқықтық рәсім аясында өңірлер өздерін әртүрлі ұстайды. Ақмола облысы барынша толық ұлттық пантеон жинайды. Қайта атаудың бірыңғай республикалық толқыны болған жоқ, өңірлер белсенді кезеңнен әр жылдары өтті. *Қорытынды.* Мұның бәрін біз кеңістікті деполитизациялау емес, оны ұлттық тұрғыда қайта символдандыру деп қарастырамыз. Ауыл көшесі мемлекеттік символдық саясат жергілікті жаппен кездесетін орынға айналады.

Түйінді сөздер: ұлттық құрылыс, ұжымдық жады, жергілікті қауымдастықтар, ұлттық бірегейлік.

Алғыс. Мақала Қазақстан Республикасы Ғылым және жоғары білім министрлігінің «Жергілікті ұжымдық жадының жергілікті қауымдастықтың дамуына әсері» (ЖТН АР26104221) тақырыбындағы гранттық қаржыландыру жобасын жүзеге асыру аясында дайындалды.

Дәйексөз үшін: Шәкенов Ә. Солтүстік Қазақстанның ауылдық көше атауларындағы тарихи тұлғалар: кеңестік пантеоннан ұлттық пантеонға // Отан тарихы. 2026. Т. 29. No 3. 1268–1280-бб. [ағылшын тілінде]. DOI: 10.51943/2788-9718_2026_29_3_1268-1280

ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ ЛИЧНОСТИ В НАЗВАНИЯХ СЕЛЬСКИХ УЛИЦ СЕВЕРНОГО КАЗАХСТАНА: ОТ СОВЕТСКОГО ПАНТЕОНА К НАЦИОНАЛЬНОМУ

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Аннотация. *Введение.* Переименование улиц в постсоветских государствах обычно рассматривают как инструмент национальной ресимволизации. Казахские исследования при этом почти не выходят за пределы столиц и описывают процесс с точки зрения государства. *Цель исследования* заключается в смещении внимания на сельский уровень и на этнически смешанный север страны, а

также в анализе того, чьими именами называют сельские улицы в четырех областях Северного Казахстана (Акмолинской, Костанайской, Павлодарской и Северо-Казахстанской) за 2008-2025 годы. *Материалы и методы.* Основой послужил реестр из 2987 переименований в селах, аулах, поселках и городах районного значения, собранный по официальным нормативным правовым актам. *Результаты.* Имена собственные оказались самой крупной категорией новых названий: 39,8%, или 1188 переименований, отсылающих к 373 лицам. В прежних названиях эта категория была, наоборот, самой малочисленной (21,1%). Два пантеона почти не совпадают. Ленин, чьим именем в старом пласте названо 159 улиц, уступает первенство просветителям Ыбыраю Алтынсарину (68) и Абаю (67). Доля идеологических названий держится почти на прежнем уровне, хотя их содержание сменилось целиком. Внутри одной правовой процедуры регионы ведут себя по-разному. Акмолинская область собирает наиболее полный национальный пантеон. Единой общереспубликанской волны переименований не было, регионы проходили активную фазу в разные годы. *Заключение.* Все это мы читаем как ресимволизацию пространства, а не как его деполитизацию. Сельская улица оказывается местом, где государственная символическая политика встречается с локальной памятью.

Ключевые слова: нациостроительство, коллективная память, местные сообщества, национальная идентичность.

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Introduction. Street renaming is a visible form of symbolic politics. Through it the state and local communities decide which people get remembered in everyday life. A street name hangs on a plaque, goes into addresses, directions and official records, and so returns to a person day after day. Names of real people, anthroponyms, are the most telling here. Unlike neutral or abstractly ideological names, they say directly whom a society counts as its heroes.

This paper looks at the people behind the new rural street names in four regions of northern Kazakhstan. We do not count renamings or semantic types for their own sake. We ask which people appear in the new names, how the choice varies by region and what the regions have in common. The rural level was chosen on purpose. Cities have been studied many times. Villages, auls and settlements have almost always stayed on the margins. Yet it is here that symbolic policy comes closest to local memory: to the names of fellow villagers, local front-line soldiers and district figures who rarely enter the national pantheon. Comparing four oblasts shows where a common frame dictates the choice of names and where local circumstance does.

Literature Review. Since the critical turn in this field [Azaryahu, 2011], street naming has been read as a field of symbolic commemoration. The official past gets written into daily routine until it looks natural. This is explained through banal nationalism [Kashfi, 2023]. The urban text still stays open to contestation [Vlahova-Angelova, 2023: 397]. A further reading approaches renaming through the psychoanalysis of identification [Chandrashekar, 2024].

Regime change is the best-documented trigger. The list covers revolutionary Iran [Kashfi, 2023], republican Turkey [Dalgıç, Yıldırım Okta, 2023], post-socialist Romania [Rusu, 2021, 2024; Crețan, Matthews, 2016], post-Dayton Bosnia [Robinson, Pobrić, 2006], post-genocide Rwanda [Amini Ngabonziza, Rosendal, 2025], post-Franco Spain [Ruipérez Núñez, Dinas, 2023] and the four successive administrations of Gaza [Helles, Moser, Carkner, 2024]. War works as a related catalyst behind the Ukrainian campaigns [Gnatiuk, Pisotska, Polhun, Zapototska, 2023; Zymovets, 2025; Vira, 2024]. Renaming can also run bottom-up [Shields, 2023; Alderman, Inwood, Stack, 2024]. In a consolidated democracy it may follow local ideology rather than the will of residents [Ruipérez Núñez, Dinas, 2023].

Who gets to name the streets is itself an open question. In some cases the authority moves between administrative levels [Rusu, 2024; Ochman, 2025]. In others it goes through commissions [Robinson, Pobrić, 2006; Helles, Moser, Carkner, 2024]. It can also sink into clientelist ties, and then no coherent programme comes out at all [Fauve, 2015: 391–392].

Outcomes vary widely. The range starts with total erasure [Amini Ngabonziza, Rosendal, 2025; Dalgıç, Yıldırım Okta, 2023]. Erasure can also be selective. Almaty kept non-political Russian names [Kaşıkçı, 2019: 1352], while Astana even expanded its list of Soviet figures linked to Kazakhstan [Zhiyenbayev, Sabitov, Aitbayev, 2025]. The range ends with near-zero change in Sofia [Vlahova-Angelova, 2023: 405]. Substitution within one category has also been found [Zymovets, 2025]. Deliberate neutralisation is another recurring outcome [Rusu, 2021; Vira, 2024; Ruipérez Núñez, Dinas, 2023]. This logic has been extended to relocated monuments [Harrison, 2012].

A new name on paper does not mean people accept it. Researchers explain the pushback differently. Some see hidden ideology behind it [Creţan, Matthews, 2016]. Others find a mix of distrust, cost and habit that cannot be pulled apart [Ochman, 2025]. Sometimes it is quiet everyday resistance [Amini Ngabonziza, Rosendal, 2025]. Sometimes just inertia with no politics in it [Gnatiuk, Pisotska, Polhun, Zapototska, 2023]. By method the studies fall into two camps. One builds quantitative models [Rusu, 2021, 2024; Tiwari, Ambinakudige, 2022]. The other asks people how they live with the names [Fauve, 2015; Ochman, 2025; Shields, 2023]. Surveys remain a rarity [Rees, Webb Williams, 2017].

Writing on Kazakhstan is plentiful, yet the authors disagree about the basics. A study of Almaty finds the Soviet layer surviving [Kaşıkçı, 2019: 1355–1356]. A study of Astana finds the nation writing its own biography into the city [Bekus, Medeuova, 2017: 14–16]. It has been argued that the map turned Kazakh without any conflict [Zhiyenbayev, Sabitov, Aitbayev, 2025]. Others doubt there was ever a plan behind it [Fauve, 2015: 394]. Nearby stand studies of language policy [Pitina, 2018], supra-ethnic identity [Rees, Webb Williams, 2017], sacred geography [Tsyrempilov, Bigozhin, Zhumabayev, 2021] and demographic change [Campos, Kuzeyev, 2007]. The trouble is that nearly all of this describes two capitals. Nobody has explained why the regions behave differently [Pitina, 2018; cf. Rusu, 2021, 2024]. Nobody has looked at the Russian-speaking north. The sources are documents and nothing else, and decommunisation is not told apart from derussification. We fill this gap. Our material is the rural toponymy of four northern oblasts and the full body of official acts for 2008–2025.

Materials and Methods. The material is a register of street renamings in four regions (Akmola, Kostanay, Pavlodar and North Kazakhstan), 3219 entries for 2008–2025. From this array we took the rural subset. A record entered the analysis if it named a settlement type (village, aul, settlement or station) or if the column "town of district significance" was filled. We excluded only renamings in cities of oblast significance and in the oblast centres. Villages subordinated to urban akimats stayed in: they belong to the rural level. After selection, 2987 renamings remained.

The unit of count is a single renaming: one line of the register, backed by a separate legal act. We sorted the names into three semantic categories: personal, ideological and neutral. This article deals with the first. Spellings were reduced to a single form in advance, otherwise one person would split into several entries. Ybyrai Altynsarin and Ybyraia Altynsarina, Dinmukhamed Qonaev and Dinmukhamed Kunaev, Lenina, Lenin and V. Lenina each stand for one person. Within the personal category we set apart groups for the analysis: figures of culture and scholarship, Alash and national movement figures, khans and sultans, batyrs, biis, participants of the Great Patriotic War, state and public figures, local and other persons, Russian and Slavic names.

The limitations should be named at once. The data are spread unevenly across oblasts and years. This reflects how complete the available acts are, not the real intensity of the process. So we compare oblasts by shares, not absolute figures, and treat the findings for Kostanay oblast, with its small sample, as preliminary. Sorting names and assigning people to groups involves some interpretation. To keep the result reproducible, we followed fixed rules. One more caveat: an old name is what stood on the sign at the moment of renaming. So it is more precise to speak of names replaced in 2008–2025 than of Soviet names.

Data source. The empirical base consists of official normative legal acts on the renaming and naming of parts of settlements: decrees of akimats, decisions of city, district and rural maslikhats and of akims of rural districts, adopted under the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On the Administrative-Territorial Structure of the Republic of Kazakhstan". Each change of name in the array refers to a distinct act, duly published and entered in the state register of normative legal acts kept at the Institute for Legislation and Legal Information under the Ministry of Justice. So the information has juridical weight. It reflects not intentions or discussions but legally binding decisions, each with a date of entry into force, an issuing authority and an old and a new designation. A few examples. An act of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan of 22.05.1998 No. 466 marked the anniversary of the writer Khamit Ergaliev. A resolution of a joint meeting of the maslikhat and akimat of Shymkent of 21.12.2006 fixed three kinds of operations

(naming newly created parts, naming streets without names, changing official names). Resolutions of the akim of the village of Talap in 2024-2025 replaced Shkolnaya, Michurina and Molodezhnaya with Täuelsizdik, Bulanty and Zhibek zholy. A resolution of the akim of Karaotkel selo, Tselinograd district, of 18.09.2025 gave a street the name of Kappas Kerkeev. The common legal form of these acts, with obligatory marking of the previous and current name, the settlement's status and its administrative subordination, made the documents structurally uniform and allowed the data from the four oblasts to be merged into one database.

Categories of names. All street names, both replaced and assigned, fall into three semantic categories. Personal names are formed from the name, surname or sobriquet of a specific person, in any form or spelling: pure anthroponyms (Abai, Lenina, Ybyrai Altynsarin), names with initials and in the genitive (V. I. Lenin, imeni Kirova), and names that include a title or rank inseparable from the person (Bogenbai batyr, Tole bi, Abylai khan). Ideological names point to a political ideology, state symbolism, party institutions or slogans, and to specific historical dates, anniversaries or campaigns of the era: Sovetskaya, Kommunisticheskaya, Komsomolskaya, Oktyabrskaya, Tselinnaya, 50 let Oktyabrya in the replaced layer; Täuelsizdik (Independence), Dostyq (Friendship), Birlik (Unity), Beibitshilik (Peace), Zheltoqsan, 25 let Nezavisimosti in the assigned one. The defining trait of this category is the tie to a political institution, an idea or a landmark date. Neutral names are everyday, geographic, natural, economic and descriptive names with no ideological or personal charge: Shkolnaya, Stepnaya, Naberezhnaya, Vostochnaya, Elevatornaya, Sadovaya, plus numbered designations (No. 1, No. 14) and abstract well-wishing names (Bolashaq, Zhastar, Koktem). Assignment to categories followed the canonical spelling of the name. Borderline cases between ideological and neutral (Mira, Molodezhnaya, Yubileynaya) were resolved in favour of the neutral category by a rule fixed in advance.

Discussion. The results reach beyond the narrow task of describing the rural toponymy of four oblasts. They allow something to be said about the very nature of renaming as symbolic politics in post-Soviet Kazakhstan.

The chief thing this material shows is that renaming streets does not remove ideology from public space but replaces it with another. Two independent observations lead to this. First, the share of ideological names in the old and new layers is almost the same, 23,1% against 28,9%, while the content has changed. Soviet slogans and anniversaries have given way to words of independence, unity and peace. Second, the pantheon changed completely, yet its role stayed the same. The street still honours the "right" heroes; only the set of heroes has become the opposite one.

This fits the familiar view of ononymy: through the names of streets the state inscribes its version of history into everyday life. In such a logic renaming is not an abandonment of symbolism but its recoding. The Kazakhstani case confirms what is visible among the neighbours too. Dismantling the Soviet layer does not "zero out" the map but fills it with new national content. What disappears is exactly the unmarked anonymous stratum of common and numbered designations, whereas the symbolic designations expand.

The sharp tilt towards names (nearly half the new names are personal) and the very choice of figures show that rural toponymy works as a channel for assembling national identity. The new pantheon builds a coherent genealogy of the nation: from the pre-modern past (khans, batyrs, biis) through the figures of the early-twentieth-century revival (Alash) and the classics of culture to the war heroes read in a new way. It is telling that the Alash figures, a stratum of memory rehabilitated relatively recently, hold a prominent place in the new layer. This means that toponymic policy quickly absorbs the renewing national narrative.

Who ended up at the top matters too. Not rulers and not warriors, but educators, Altynsarin and Abai. National self-definition thereby shifts from the military-political tradition to the cultural and educational one. In this the Kazakhstani case differs from models where the new toponymy is built above all on military or state-heroic symbolism.

One of the most substantive observations is the stable difference among the oblasts under one and the same procedure. Renaming is framed by the common norms of the law on administrative-territorial structure, but it is decided locally, by akimats and maslikhats. Hence the room for local specificity that the data display well. The four oblasts follow four models: Akmola the "canonical", fullest one; Pavlodar the military-heroic; North Kazakhstan the maximally personalised, resting on fellow countrymen; Kostanay the local-polyethnic.

North Kazakhstan oblast is especially interesting. National figures and local natives (that same Magzhan Zhumabaev) stand there in one layer. This means that toponymic nation-building runs not only "top down", relaying the common canon, but also "bottom up", fixing local memory. The largest group of the personal layer, local and other persons, confirms it. Commemorating a fellow countryman is an independent

and weighty motive, not a residual column. So the village street is an arena where national politics meets communities and their memories.

The yearly dynamics complete the picture. There is no single wave; the oblasts split into "early" and "late". For all the uniformity of norms, the process ran in a decentralised way, at a tempo set locally. In this rural renaming differs from one-off centralised campaigns. It is closer to a slow process launched from below, stretched across a decade and a half and, by the close of observation, still unfinished.

The conclusions have their limitations. The data are uneven across oblasts and years, which again speaks of the completeness of the acts rather than the real intensity. Hence we compare oblasts by shares, and the findings for Kostanay oblast remain preliminary. Sorting names into three categories and people into groups involves some interpretation. To keep the result reproducible, we followed fixed rules. Finally, only four northern oblasts are covered. Whether these models hold in other parts of the country, above all in the south and west with their different ethnic composition and history, remains an open question.

Results. General architecture of the 2-layer. Personal names lead among the new names. They cover 1188 of the 2987 renamings, or 39,8%. Neutral names had 937 streets (31,4%), ideological ones 862 (28,9%). The replaced layer looked different. There neutral names came first with 1601 (55,8% of 2870), ideological ones gave 664 (23,1%), personal ones only 605 (21,1%). Another 117 streets had no name at all and got one for the first time.

Table 1 – Structure of the Two Layers of Street Names by Semantic Category

Category	Old names	Percentage	New names	Percentage
Personal names	605	21,1	1188	39,8
Ideology	664	23,1	862	28,9
Neutral	1601	55,8	937	31,4
Unnamed (assignment)	117	-	-	-

Note: The table brings together old and new names across the three categories. The key shift is immediate: personal names were the smallest group (21,1%) and became the largest (39,8%), while the share of ideological names barely changed and neutral names fell markedly. The 117 previously unnamed streets are shown separately.

The two layers were analysed separately. All spelling variants of one person were reduced to a single form. Case forms, Russian and Kazakh scripts, full and short versions of a name (Ybyrai Altynsarina / Ybyraia Altynsarina / Y. Altynsarina; Lenina / Lenin / V. Lenina / Vladimir Lenin) were counted as mentions of one person. The new personal layer refers to 373 distinct persons, the old one to 127.

Table 2 – Annual Number of Street Renamings by Oblast, 2008–2025

Year	Akmola	Kostanai	Pavlodar	North Kazakhstan	Total
2008	47	–	–	2	49
2009	378	5	4	–	387
2010	116	6	32	8	162
2011	–	–	–	1	1
2012	–	–	1	–	1
2014	1	2	1	–	4
2015	11	13	12	2	38
2016	55	–	29	1	85
2017	313	3	134	2	452
2018	539	78	125	23	765
2019	80	9	65	11	165
2020	28	2	128	2	160
2021	2	–	–	85	87

2022	84	3	22	100	209
2023	100	9	130	111	350
2024	56	—	13	1	70
2025	1	1	—	—	2

Note: The table shows the distribution of renamings by year across the four oblasts. The peak falls on 2018 (765); together with 2017 it accounts for over 40% of the whole array. The oblasts passed through the active phase at different times — Akmola in 2009 and 2017–2018, North Kazakhstan only in 2021–2023. Years with single records (2011, 2012, 2014) reflect gaps in the data, not a halt in the process.

The oblasts peak in different years. Akmola in 2018 (539), Kostanay also in 2018 (78), Pavlodar in 2017 (134), North Kazakhstan in 2023 (111). What all four share is a late start. Before 2015 mass renamings are almost absent; the sole exception is the Akmola surge of 2009, 378 renamings with hardly any participation from the neighbours. The process unfolds from 2016-2017 and nowhere ends by the close of the period. In 2023-2024 renaming continues in every oblast.

The chief difference between the oblasts is when the active phase came. By this trait they split into two models. Akmola and Pavlodar are “early”: their wave fell on 2017-2020. Akmola in fact has two peaks, an early one in 2009 and the main one in 2017-2018, after which activity subsides. Pavlodar held a high tempo longer, from 2017 to 2023. North Kazakhstan is “late”: almost nothing before 2020 (no more than 23 renamings a year), while 85% of its array falls on 2021-2023, when the neighbours were already easing off. Kostanay, with its small volume, gave a single notable surge in 2018 (78 of 131), at the common peak. So there was no single nationwide wave. Akmola travelled the road first and finished earliest, Pavlodar stretched it across the whole period, and North Kazakhstan joined in several years late.

Table 3 – Replaced Personal Names (Old Layer): Figures and Their Distribution by Oblast

Figure	Akmola	Kostanai	Pavlodar	North Kazakhstan	Total
Lenin	61	17	43	38	159
Kirov	18	1	11	11	41
Karl Marx	12	1	3	12	28
Kalinin	6	3	4	8	21
Chapaev	10	2	1	8	21
Gagarin	10	—	6	3	19
Kuibyshev	6	1	3	5	15
Frunze	6	1	5	—	12
Thelmann	7	—	3	1	11
Engels	5	1	2	2	10
Dzerzhinsky	2	—	4	4	10
Gorky	6	—	2	2	10
Titov	5	—	3	—	8
Abai	6	1	—	1	8
Chkalov	6	—	—	1	7
Voroshilov	3	—	1	3	7
Budyonny	2	1	1	3	7
Komarov	3	1	3	—	7
Krupskaya	3	—	1	3	7
Sverdlov	4	1	—	1	6
Pushkin	6	—	—	—	6
Pugachov	3	—	1	2	6
Ostrovsky	5	—	—	—	5
Uritsky	3	—	—	2	5
Michurin	4	—	—	1	5

Note: The table gathers the historical figures whose names streets bore before renaming. The list is almost entirely Soviet: Lenin leads with 159 streets (a quarter of all replaced names), followed by party figures, Marxist theorists, soldiers and cosmonauts, and Lenin ranks first in all four oblasts. The only Kazakh name near the top, Abai, stands merely fourteenth.

Table 4 – Assigned Personal Names (New Layer): Figures and Their Distribution by Oblast

Figure	Akmola	Kostanai	Pavlodar	North Kazakhstan	Total
Ybyrai Altynsarin	54	1	10	3	68
Abai	37	4	5	21	67
Aliya Moldagulova	19	–	14	11	44
Bauyrzhan Momysuly	15	1	11	4	31
Shoqan Ualikhanov	14	–	3	13	30
Saken Seifullin	25	–	2	1	28
Mukhtar Auezov	20	–	5	3	28
Abylai khan	16	–	3	8	27
Manshuk Mämetova	15	–	9	3	27
Akhmet Baitursynuly	17	–	7	1	25
Zhambyl	13	–	3	8	24
Kenesary	19	–	1	4	24
Dinmukhamed Qonaev	15	1	3	4	23
Alikhan Bokeikhan	18	–	3	2	23
Magzhan Zhumabaev	10	–	–	11	21
Qanysh Satbaev	11	–	9	–	20
Aqan seri	11	–	–	6	17
Bogenbai batyr	10	–	6	–	16
Qazybek bi	11	–	3	2	16
Tole bi	12	–	1	–	13
Raqymzhan Qoshqarbaev	9	–	1	3	13
Qabanbai batyr	9	–	3	–	12
Baluan Sholaq	11	1	–	–	12
Sabit Muqanov	5	–	–	6	11
Zhumabek Tashenev	7	–	3	1	11
Qazhymuqan	8	–	3	–	11
Al-Farabi	9	–	1	1	11
Qurmangazy	8	–	1	1	10
Talgat Bigeldinov	7	–	1	2	10
Shamshi Qaldayaqov	6	–	2	2	10

Note: The table shows the figures whose names streets bear after renaming. At the top are the educators Ybyrai Altynsarin (68) and Abai (67), followed by writers and scholars, batyrs and biis, war heroes and Alash figures. The regional anchoring is clear — Altynsarin is almost entirely Akmola-based, while the local native Magzhan Zhumabaev is concentrated in North Kazakhstan oblast. Russian and Slavic names appear only occasionally.

Regional profiles. Akmola oblast produced the largest array: 1811 renamings. Here the old layer was mostly neutral. Of 1696 names (a further 115 streets had no name at all), neutral ones accounted for 1084, that is 63,9%, ideological ones for 344 (20,3%), personal ones for 268 (15,8%). Lenin came first with 61 streets, then Kirov (18) and Karl Marx (12). In the new layer personal names move ahead with 690 (38,1%), then neutral (618, 34,1%) and ideological (503, 27,8%). The personal list is led by Ybyrai Altynsarin: 54 streets, three quarters of all his streets across the four oblasts are here. Then Abai (37), Saken Seifullin (25), Mukhtar Auezov (20). The oblast's pantheon is the fullest and most "canonical": from educators and Alash figures (Bokeikhan 18, Baitursynuly 17) to khans (Kenesary 19) and biis (Tole bi 12, Qazybek bi 11).

Kostanay oblast produced the fewest: 131 renamings. The three categories are spread more evenly here than anywhere else. In the old layer ideological names were slightly ahead (48, or 36,6%), followed by neutral (44, 33,6%) and personal (39, 29,8%). First, as everywhere, was Lenin (17). In the new layer ideological names keep the lead (50, 38,2%), then personal (44, 33,6%) and neutral (37, 28,2%). The personal list is scattered and almost without a core. Only Abai occurs more than three times (4); the rest appear once or twice. This oblast has the highest share of local and Slavic names and the weakest reliance on the national Kazakh pantheon. Khans, biis and Alash figures are nearly absent. The sample is small, so these figures show a direction rather than an exact structure.

Pavlodar oblast is the middle case by volume: 696 renamings. In the old layer (695 names) the majority was neutral with 386 (55,5%), personal names gave 161 (23,2%), ideology 148 (21,3%). Lenin is represented especially densely: 43 streets, the second result after Akmola oblast. In the new layer the three categories almost level out: ideological 241 (34,6%), personal 240 (34,5%), neutral 215 (30,9%). The personal list leans towards the military and traditional line. It is led by Aliya Moldagulova (14) and Bauyrzhan Momysheuly (11), with Qanysh Satbaev (9), Manshuk Mametova (9) and Bogenbai batyr (6) prominent. Batyrs and war heroes are stronger here than in the other oblasts.

North Kazakhstan oblast gave 349 renamings. It is the most personalised in both layers. Already in the old layer (348 names) personal names were ahead with 137 (39,4%), ideology gave 124 (35,6%), neutral names only 87 (25,0%). Besides Lenin (38), there is an unusual amount of Karl Marx (12) and Kalinin (8). In the new layer personalisation is the highest in the sample: personal names 214 (61,3%), while ideological and neutral ones are almost equal and less than a third as large (68 and 67). The list is marked by fellow countrymen and rulers: Abai (21), Shoqan Ualikhanov (13), Magzhan Zhumabaev (a native of this region, 11), Abylai khan (8), Zhambyl (8), Säbit Muqanov (6). National figures and local natives stand here side by side, in one row.

Renaming the same street twice within the period was rare. Six such chains were found in the whole array. Three are in Akmola oblast, two in Pavlodar, one in Kostanay. In North Kazakhstan there were none. In the village of Novorybinka, Akkol district, Parkovaya Street was renamed Tselinnaya (2010) and then Tyng igerushiler (2023). In the village of Ornek in the same district, Tsentralnaya Street became Mektep and, in the same year 2009, the street of Dauletbai Akhmetzhanov. In Atbasar district, Zavodskaya Street was renamed after Ivan Diachenko and then Yntymaq, both operations in 2010. In the village of Amangeldy, Kostanay oblast, Abaya Street received the name of Syrbai Maulenov (2020) but was renamed the same year to Abai Qunanbaev, in effect returned to the same figure in a fuller form of the name. In Pavlodar oblast, Klubnaya Street in the village of Mamait Omarov went from Klubnaya to Aktogai (2010) and then to Rashat Bekzhanov (2017), while in the village of Pavlodarskoe Torgovaya Street was renamed Qasym Qazhy and then Isabek Ishan (both in 2023). Half the chains fit into a single calendar year, which looks less like a new cycle than an adjustment of a decision just taken. And in all six cases the final name turned out to be Kazakh, either a figure's name or a national-symbolic term.

Data analysis. From the figures of the previous section one can move to their interpretation. The material shows several stable regularities. They appear at different levels: in the ratio of the old and new layers, in the make-up of the personal stratum, in the dynamics by year, and in the differences among the oblasts.

Comparing the two layers reveals the main shift at once. Formerly neutral names prevailed (55,8%), and personal names were the smallest category (21,1%). Now personal names have come first (39,8%), and the share of neutral ones has fallen almost by half (31,4%). In essence the very principle of naming has changed. A Soviet rural street described the terrain and the economy: Stepnaya, Shkolnaya, Naberezhnaya, numbers. A new street above all bears someone's name. Personalisation here is not a side effect but the core of the whole process. Nearly every second street becomes a personal one.

The share of ideological names, by contrast, has hardly changed: 23,1% against 28,9%. This matters. Renaming does not remove politics from space; it turns it in another direction. Ideology does not leave, another ideology takes its place. What contracts is the neutral, "nameless" layer, and the space it frees is taken by names and symbols.

If the personal layers are examined apart, it becomes clear that the old and new names barely coincide. These are two different pantheons. The old is led by Lenin, with 159 streets and a quarter of all replaced names, and is built entirely on the Soviet hierarchy: party and state figures (Kirov, Kalinin, Kuibyshev, Sverdlov), theorists of Marxism (Marx, Engels), soldiers and heroes (Chapaev, Frunze, Budyonny), cosmonauts (Gagarin, Titov, Komarov), Russian classics (Pushkin, Gorky). Kazakh names here can be counted on the fingers, and the first of them, Abai, stands only fourteenth with eight streets.

The new layer is led by educators, Altynsarin (68) and Abai (67), and its core is made up of figures of national culture and history: writers and scholars, Alash figures, khans, batyrs and biis, war heroes now read anew. Russian names, so numerous in the old layer, all but vanish in the new. The pantheon, then, was not adjusted but changed wholesale. The Soviet-Russian hierarchy gave way to the Kazakh one. And the fact that the ideological share held steady while its content changed completely, with the Soviet slogans (Oktyabrskaya, Komsomolskaya, Tselinnaya) gone and Tauelsizdik, Dostyq and Birlik in their place, proves once more that space was not depoliticised but recoded.

The yearly dynamics refute the idea of a single nationwide campaign. True, 2017-2018 hold more than 40% of the array, but the oblasts pass through the active phase at different times and fall into two models. The "early" ones, Akmola and Pavlodar, unfold the process in 2017-2020, and Akmola has an earlier surge in 2009 as well. The "late" one, North Kazakhstan, is almost dormant before 2020, and 85% of its renamings fall on 2021-2023, when the neighbours were already slowing.

This asynchrony is telling. Renaming rested on the uniform standards of legislation but ran in a decentralised way. Its pace was set at the local level, not by a single republican timeline. The earlier note about missing values applies here too. The dips of 2011-2014 and the drop in 2024-2025 are not actual pauses, so the interpretation of trends should rest on the shares of active periods rather than on the raw numbers of boundary years.

The differences among the oblasts are stable, and unequal data volume alone cannot explain them. They add up to four models.

Akmola oblast follows the "canonical" model. The pantheon is full and balanced and contains everything from educators and Alash figures to khans and biis. Proximity to the capital, it seems, nudges it to keep to the national template.

Pavlodar oblast leans towards the military and traditional line. War heroes (Moldagulova, Momyshuly, Mametova) and batyrs are more prominent here than elsewhere. But its three categories in the new layer have almost levelled out, with ideology even slightly ahead, which makes it the least personalised of the large oblasts.

North Kazakhstan oblast is the most personalised of all: personal names 61,3%, more than three times the ideological or the neutral ones. Its distinctive feature is that the national and the local meet closely. Beside Abai and Ualikhanov, at the top stands the local native Magzhan Zhumabaev, and the line of rulers is notably strengthened (Abylai khan). Tellingly, the old layer here was also more personalised than elsewhere (39,4%). So renaming moved from a "personal" toponymy to a "personal" one again; only the pantheon changed.

Kostanay oblast stands apart. Its volume is the smallest, yet its share of local and Slavic names is the highest and its reliance on the national Kazakh canon the weakest. Khans, biis and Alash figures are almost absent. But caution is needed here. The sample is small (44 new and 39 old personal names), the striking shares rest on single mentions, and they show a tendency rather than a stable structure.

On the whole the data describe the renaming of rural streets as a national resymbolisation of space rather than its depoliticisation. The semantic frame is common. The Soviet-Russian layer of names and ideology is displaced by the Kazakh national one, but each oblast fills the frame in its own way, and in time the process ran out of step. Repeated renamings are rare: six cases in the whole array, half of them an adjustment within a single year. Decisions, then, were mostly final, and in disputed cases the choice inclined every time towards Kazakh national names.

Conclusion. We analysed 2987 street renamings in the settlements of four oblasts of Northern Kazakhstan for 2008-2025. The results lead to several conclusions.

The renaming of rural streets is a national resymbolisation of space, not its depoliticisation. The Soviet-Russian layer of names and ideology is replaced, step by step, by the Kazakh national one, but the symbolic saturation of space itself goes nowhere. The share of ideological names holds at its former level, though their content has changed completely. What recedes above all is the neutral, nameless layer.

The main strategy of the new toponymy is personalisation. Personal names have become the largest category of new names (39,8%), though earlier they were the smallest (21,1%). The old and new pantheons barely overlap. The place of Lenin, who led the former layer by a wide margin, is taken by the educators Altynsarin and Abai. The new pantheon adds up to a coherent genealogy of the nation, from khans, batyrs and biis through Alash figures and the classics of culture to war heroes, and in it the cultural-educational line clearly outweighs the military-political one.

Under a single procedure the oblasts behave differently. Akmola keeps to the fullest, "canonical" model, Pavlodar to the military-heroic, North Kazakhstan to the maximally personalised one resting on fellow countrymen, Kostanay to the local-polyethnic. The notable share of local and district figures shows that rural toponymy fixes not only national but also local memory.

In time the process ran out of step. There was no single wave. The oblasts passed through the active phase in different years. Decentralised in tempo and unfinished by the close of the period, in its result it nonetheless remained mostly final. Repeated renamings are single instances, and in disputed cases the choice fell each time on Kazakh national names.

Further research may proceed along several lines: applying the results to other regions of Kazakhstan, contrasting rural toponymy with urban, exploring the link between the local variants identified and the ethno-cultural background and collective memory of a given region. Another task will be to trace how residents take up these new names in everyday speech.

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