Bygone Geography I: Forgotten Cities



Generally speaking, collective memory is formed according to any given community's (desired) legacy. As might be expected, this does not necessarily correspond to what really happened.If something–be it a person, an event, or the existence of an entire metropolis–does not play a key role in the favored historical narrative, it will eventually be discarded as time goes by.This is especially the case when it comes to sacred histories and national origin stories.

False memory is either a matter of remembering things that never actually happened (the Mandela Effect) or omitting things that actually happened (selective forgetting). While the former are fascinating (mythical cities that are likely figments of people's imaginations), the latter will be addressed in the present piece.

The erasure of historical facts can be illustrated by major cities that no longer exist: neither in fact NOR in the minds of those who are now living. This is not to be confused with FICTIONAL cities that, it is supposed, no longer exist–as with, say, the Edenic "Arcadia" in Greek legend; or "Camelot" in English legend.Note, for example, what was posited in Judaic lore as the first city: that of Enoch in the land of Nod… which likely corresponded to a Sumerian or Assyrian city in Chaldea (perhaps Ur.)

Sanctified folklore is a funny thing, and often involves as much confabulation as obfuscation–a fact of which we are reminded every time we hear tales of the lost city of Atlantis…or of El Dorado.

The aim here is to point out the demise of ACTUAL urban centers (that is: social hubs that were commercially and/or geo-politically significant enough to have played a notable role in history). {1}This is a good way to illustrate that our present understanding of the world AS WE NOW KNOW IT rarely reflects salient facts about the world as it used to be.

Here, we will look at over FIVE HUNDRED cities that no longer exist; and see how many of them still play a role in our collective memory.(Spoiler alert: Not many.)Here's a chance to survey the great metropolises that, once a major force in the world, no longer exist–either physically or in our collective memories.What happened to Kart-Hadasht?It was a Phoenician metropolis–likely founded by Queen Dido of Tyre.Then it became became a Punic / Carthaginian port.It no longer exists; yet we now refer to it as **"Carthage"** in history books.

In western Arabia (corresponding to "Thamud" in the Koran; present-day Hijaz), there were several cities that no longer exist.Three of the most notable were in the north, on the Mesopotamian frontier: **Adummatu** [alt. "Dumah"] (Sumerian; later rendered "Dumat al-Jandal" in Arabic), **Hira[h]** (the Lakhmid capital; near the site of Mohammedan "Kufa"), and **Dedan** (Lihyanite, then Nabatean; later rendered "Al-Ula" in Arabic).

In eastern Arabia (known at the time as "Dilmun"), there was the city of **"Gerrha"**.

And in the south (Yemen / Hadhramaut), there were the Minaean / Qatabanic oasis settlements of **Timna** and **Qarnawu**; as well as the Himyarite cities of **Shabwa** and **Zafar** [alt. "Dhafar"]. {2}Further back in time, there were the Sabaean cities of **Kaminahu**, **Haramum**, **Marib** (site of present-day "Sana'a"), **Nash[a]n**, and **Nash[a]q**…all of which later became Minaean.

Arabia is not the only place where this happened.In Anatolia, there was a prehistoric urban center now referred to as **"Chatalhoyuk"**.At one point, this may have been the largest human conglomeration on the planet.Meanwhile, the city of **"Arkaim"** in central Asia dates back to the 20th century B.C.

Chinese civilization dates back to the Bronze Age as well. {5}Behold ten of the great cities in **China** that are long-gone:

- Lou-lan [Kang-ju Sogdian / Uyghur]
- Huo-zhou [Yuan / Ming; alt. “Gao-chang”; “Kara-khoja”; Kang-ju Sogdian / Uyhgur]
- Da-ding (Jurchen)
- Xuan-Quan
- Cadota [a.k.a. “Niya”; “Jung-jue”; Han]
- Wang-cheng [later site of Luo-yang; Zhou]
- (Yan)-Xia-du [Zhou, then Yan]
- Ye [Wei]
- Fushi-cheng
- Gao-Chang [alt. “K[h]ar[a]-[k]Hoja”; “Huo-zhou” in Chinese] and Ordu-balik [alt. “K[h]ar[a]-balghasun”; “Mu-balik” / “Kharbalgas” in Mongolian] (Uyghur / Gok-turk); Xi-zhou (Tang); later “Khocho” / “Qocho” / “Idiqut” at the site now known as Gao-Chang in Xin-jiang.

In my essay on the “Forgotten Diaspora”, I reviewed the history of the **[k]Hazars**.Here are eight of THEIR major cities:

- Balanjar
- Samandar
- [k]Hazaran
- Samosdelka
- Sarighsin (alt. “Saksin”); later the Kipchak “Sarai”, capital of the Golden Horde
- Xacitarxan; later the site of “As[h]trakhan”
- S[h]arkil
- Atil (Semitic: “Khamlij”)

We can travel across the globe and encounter numerous other instances.Here are 130 other major cities that no longer exist:

- Hrocas Burh [alt. “Roxburgh”] **(Pictish / Scottish)**
- Birka **(Norse / Viking)**
- Tartessos and Kelin **(proto-Celtic Iberian)**
- Carissa **(Turdetani Andalusian)**
- Bocchoris **(Roman Andalusian)**
- Reccopolis **(Visigoth Andalusian)**

- Noreia **(Celtic Alpine)**
- Marklo **(Saxon)**
- Lugdunum **(Roman Gaul)**
- Aquincum **(Roman Pannonia)**
- Phasis [of Kolkis] **(Greco-Kartvelian; i.e. Old Georgian)**
- Sarepta [rendered “Zarephath” in Biblical Hebrew], Dor, Arwad, and M-R-T [alternately rendered “Amrit” / “Marat”; Hellenic “Marathus”] **(Phoenician)**
- Sulkoi **(Punic / Carthaginian / Sardinian)**
- Tharros **(Phoenician / Sardinian)**
- Utica, Leptis Magna, Tharras, Kerkouane, and [h]Adrumet[um] **(Phoenician, then Numidian / Punic / Carthaginian, then Roman)**
- Ruspina **(Punic Tunisian)**
- Mansuriya **(Fatimid Tunisian)**
- Napata, Kerma, [Old] Dongola, and Meroe **(Nubian)**
- KRTN [alt. “Kirthan”; a.k.a. “Cirta”] and Tugga **(Numidian Berber; Punic)**
- Djenne-Djenno **(Malian)**
- Gedi **(Swahili)**
- Great Zimbabwe **(Shona)**
- Kyrene [alt. “Cyrene”] **(Libyan)**
- Sijilmasa **(Moroccan Berber)**
- Kohaito, Aksum [Hebrew: Kitor], and Adulis **(Sabaean / Aksumite)**
- Opone and Malao **(Abyssinian Berber)**
- Kilwa Kisiwani **(Swahili)**
- Kurkuma [alt. Gurgum; Karkemish] and Bogaz-köy **(Hurrian / Assyrian)**
- Azalzi / Izala [later Achaemenid; then Syriac: “Merida”; later rebuilt as Kurdish “Merdin”], Washukanni, and Urkesh **(Hurrian)**
- Purushanda, Hattusha, [Ka]nesh[a], Kadesh [not to be confused with the Midian / Canaanite city of the same name], Melid(du) [also Akkadian, Luwian, and Urartian; located at Arslan-tepe], Alala[k]h, Wilusha / Wilusia, Nesha / Anisha, and Kussara **(Hittite)**
- Tuwanuwa [later called “Tyana” in Cappadocian Greek] **(Hittite / Luwian)**
- Hattina and Kunalua / Kinalua / Kalneh [of Pattin / Unqi] **(Luwian)**
- Mu[t]-sa[t]-sir, Arzashkun [Armenian: “Ardzik”], and Erebuni **(Nairi / Urartian)**
- Sis, Ani, Turuspa [alt. Tushpa / Tosp; Van; Shamirama-kert], Artsakh(i), Tigrana-kert [alt. Tigrana-van; Nakhi-je-van], Kummuh [alt. Shamu-shat; Samosata; briefly “Antiochia in Commagene”], Arta-shat [alt. Artaxata], and–during the Middle Ages–Dvin **(Armenian)**

- Arpad [alt. Hittite / Luwian], Amida [the site of present-day Diyarbakir], and Sam'al [likely the site of the antecedent Hittite colony, "Yadiya"] **(Aramaean)**
- Kabyle, Istros [alt. Histria; originally Milesian, later Roman], Eion, Panticapaeum (originally Milesian, later Turkic and Byzantine), and Seuthopolis **(Thracian)**
- Gordion / Gordium, Amorion / Amorium, and Derinkuyu (Phrygian)
- Juliopolis [alt. "Basilaion"; originally Galatian], Tamatarcha, and Phanagoria [originally Greek, then Turkic] **(Byzantine)** {3}
- [Old] Ryazan [dubbed "Pereslavl" by the Kievan Rus] **(Slavic; then Russian)**
- Maghas **(Alan)**
- Teleda **(Azeri)**
- Kuhna [g]Ürganj [alt. Old Urgench], Takshashila, and Firozkoh [Ghorid] **(Sogdian; Persio-Indian)**
- Sagala / Sakala **(Greco-Indic / Scythian)** {21}
- Mouru /Margu / Merv [alt. Seleucid "Antiochia Margiana"] **(Persian, then Greco-Bactrian and Kushan, then Sogdian, then Oghuz Turkic, then Uzbek)**
- Tara-maith[o] (Greek / Persian / Sanskrit); then Ta-li-mi (Kushan); then Tu-mi (Chinese); then [Old] Termez **(Turkic)** [not to be confused with the new Termez, erected nearby]
- Bolghar **(Volga Bulgar)**
- Balasag[h]un / K(h)ar(a)-Balg(h)as(-un) / Go-Balik / Ordu-Balik / Mu-balik / Quz Ordu and Ordu-kent [alt. "Suyab"] **(Turkic / Mongolian / Sogdian)** {22}
- Beitian and Kroran(a) [alt. "Loulan"] **(Kang-ju Sogdian)**
- Chimgi-Tura and Isker / Qashliq [a.k.a. "Sibir"] **(Tatar; Turko-Mongolian)**
- Qara Qorum [alt. "K[h]ar(a)-korum"], Sarai, Avarga [capital during Mongol Empire], and Otrar [originally "Parab" in Persian; then "Kang-ju" in Chinese] **(Mongolian)**
- Almalik **(Karluk)**
- Besh-balik **(Uyghur)**
- Jiaohe / Yarghul **(Jushi / Tocharian)**
- Melikawat **(Khotanese / Tocharian)**
- Wanggeom-seong [Gojoseon], Sabi [Baekje], Jolbon and Gungnae [Goguryeo], and Gyeongju [Silla] **(Korean)**
- Yamatai and Asuka **(Japanese)**
- Lamphun / Haribhunjaya and Pagan **(Mon / Burmese)**
- Sukhothai and Ayutthaya **(Siamese)** {6}
- Angkor and Mahendra-parvata **(Khmer)**

- Indra-pura [alt. Dong Duong; now the site of Da Nang], Simha-pura [now the site of Tra Kieu], and My Son **(Cham-pa / Vietnamese)**
- Ma-i **(Philippine)**
- Muaro Jambi **(Sri-Vijaya)**
- Pagar-Ruyung **(Sumatran)**
- Wilwatikta [alt. Trowulan] **(Majapahit)**
- Pakuan Pajajaran [alt. “Dayeuh Pakwan”] **(Sundanese / Javanese)**
- Nan Madol **(Micronesian)**

In the **Americas**, there were many cities–most of which ceased to exist pursuant to the arrival of European colonialists in the 16th century.In the plains of central North America, there was a metropolis that archeologists now refer to as **“Cahokia”**–an urban center that was well over triple the size of Paris at the time.Here are forty more:

- Caral (the oldest city in the Americas, dating to 2,600 B.C.; pre-Incan)
- Sipan, Pañamarka, and Gua-Kocha (Moche / Chimu)
- Huaricanga (Norte Chico)
- Kuelap (Chachapoyas)
- Cahuachi (Nazca)
- El Tajin, Te-ayo[k], and Cempoala (Totonac)
- Tula (Toltec)
- Angamuco, Azcapotzalco, Xochicalco, Teotihuacan, and Tenochtitlan (Nahuan / Aztec)
- Saksay-waman [at Cusco], Chuqi K’iraw, Tiwanaku, Choquerquirao, as well as the semi-mythical cities of “Cuidad Perdida” [the Lost City of the Sierra Nevada] and “Paititi” (Quechua / Tahuantinsuyu / Inca)

Mayan cities included:

- Pelenque
- Becan
- Uxmal
- Tikal
- Hol-mul
- Calak-mul
- complex on the Aguada Fenix plateau
- Dzibilchaltun
- Kaminaljuyu

- Coba
- Caracol
- Oxwitik [“Copan”]
- Mayapan
- Yaxchlan
- Yaxha
- Nakbe
- Chichen Itza

Also notable are the cities at Monte-grande in the Amazon; as well as **El Seibal** and **El Mirador**. (Mythical cities like the “lost city of gold” are discussed in the Appendix.)

We often forget that the world as we think of it now is not the world as it has always been.We are perfectly aware that the world has changed over time, and that it is different now from how it used to be.The point is that we subconsciously think of history through a lens that is only appropriate for today.While certain things are timeless (moral principles, logic, and basic standards of weal / dysfunction), we are apt to misread history by thinking of other eras in terms that we derive from present circumstances.“What did Paris used to be like in Classical Antiquity” is a nonsensical question, as the place where the city now exists wasn’t PARIS.Indeed, EUROPE wasn’t even a thing.

It is worth exploring other regions of the world, in which urban centers have changed EVEN MORE.

In Mesopotamia, there were innumerable major cities that have been lost to time–as with the fabled Chaldean city known as “Ur” [literally, “city” in Old Assyrian], in which was found the largest Ziggurat ever built. {7}This includes **the first city in the world, Eridu[g] (dating to the 54th century B.C.)**, putative home of the god, Enki; and site of the first king, “Alulim”.Here are FIFTY of the most notable Mesopotamian cities that no longer exist–most of them **Sumerian / Akkadian**:

- Uruk / Eresh
- Umma
- Mardaman [site of present-day Bassetki, in Kurdistan]
- Dur-Gurgurri [alt. “Bad-tibira”]
- Dur-Kurigalzu (Kassite)
- Dur-Katlimmu

- Dur-Sharrukin
- Aburru [alt. “Abarsal”] (Mariote)
- Upi[ja] / Akshak[“Opis” in ancient Greek]
- Larsa
- Isin
- Nippur
- Zimbir / Sippar[a] (location of the Tablet of Shamash; the cylinder of Nabonidus; and the tablets on which the Epic of Gilgamesh were composed)
- Kish
- Harbidum
- Rapiqum
- Lulubum
- Simurrum
- Malgium
- Ma-al-gi-im [alt. “Malgium”]
- Lagash
- Assur [alt. “Ashur”]
- Akkad [alt. “Agade”], which would serve as the capital city of the Akkadians
- Nuzi / Gasur
- Nagar / Nawar
- Nabada
- Zabala[m]
- Nineveh (the ruins of which were razed by “Daesh” in 2015)
- Harran[u][Greek: “Karrai”, Romanized to “Carrhae”; Hebrew: “Haran”; referred to as “Hellenopolis” by the Greco-Romans]
- Kutha
- Nehardea (Judaic)
- Pum-bedit[h]a (Judaic) {8}
- Sura (Judaic)
- Khattushash
- Kazallu
- Tarbisu
- Girsu
- Adab / Udab
- Eshnunna
- Barsip[pa]
- Shuruppag (later Chaldean)
- Kalhu [perhaps the Biblical “Calah” or “Nimrud”]

- Kan Digirak [“Gate of God”; Akkadian: “Bab-ili”; Hellenized to “Babylon”]
- Kardban-dad (Old Persian; “Mahuza” in Parthian; “Mahoze” in Syriac; “Al-Mada’in” in Arabic)
- Arrap[k]ha (Akkadian) {9}
- [k]Tesfon [later: Persian “Ctesiphon”]
- Alkosh
- Mari (later: Nabataean)
- Charax Spasinou (Characene / Mesene)
- Irridu (Mittani / Hittite)

Many of those cities later became Assyrian.**Assyrian** cities outside of Mesopotamia included:

- Shekhna / Shubat-Enlil
- Emar
- Terqa / Sirqu
- Halabiye
- Ekallatum (originally Amorite)
- Tuttul (originally Amorite)
- Emesa
- Rasappa / Resafa (Hebrew “Rezeph”; Greek “Raphes” / “Rhesapha”; Byzantine “Sergiopolis” / “Anastasiopolis”; Latin “Risapa”)
- Apamea [not to be confused by the Median city by the same name; nor with the Greco-Roman city by the same name in Syria]
- Imgur-Enlil (Syriac: “Bet Labat”; Romanized to “Balawat”)
- Tushhan (originally Mitanni, now in Kurdistan)
- Kyinda (Assyrian), then Anazarbos (Cilician Greek), then Dio-Caesarea / Caesarea ad Anazarbum / Anazarba (Roman), then Justin-opolis (Byzantine), then Ayn Zarba (Arab), then Anazarva (Armenian)

None exist anymore.Later, Arab cities arose in southern Mesopotamia–such as Wasit and Al-Qadisiyya[a]…as well as the city of Hatra [“Beit Elaha” in Syriac; referred to as “Al-Hadr” in Arabic] farther north.They are long gone–and mostly forgotten–as well.

Meanwhile, in Persia, there were also many cities.Tun [alt. “Taban”] was once a bustling metropolis, founded by the Medes / Elamites; and is now just a small town called “Ferdows”, home of the most famous medieval Persian author.Here are 27 more **Persian** cities that no longer exist:

- Dur Untash (Elamite)
- Anshan (Elamite)
- Hagmatana [Greek: “Ekbatana”] (Elamite, then Median) {10}
- Shush (Elamite) [Greek: Sousa; now the site of Susa]
- Karkashshi [Greek: “Garkasia”]
- Ganzak [as “Gazaka”, it served as the capital of the kingdom of Atropatene; Latin “Ganzaga”; Arabic “Janza”] (Median, then Achaemenid, then Parthian, then Sassanian, then Armenian)
- Haozdar (Achaemenid)
- Pasargad[ae] (Achaemenid)
- Zranka (Achaemenid) [in Drangiana; now the site of Zaranj]
- Parsa [Greek: “Persepolis”] (Elamite / Median, then Achaemenid, then Sassanian) {11}
- Taryana (Achaemenid), then Ormizd-Ardashir (Sassanian) {12}
- Gor (Achaemenid), then Ardashir-Khwarrah (Sassanian)
- Seleucia / Zeugma (Parthian)
- Patigrabana [site of present-day “Mashhad”] (Parthian)
- Nisa [alt. “Partha-u Nisa”; later “Mithradat-kert”] (Parthian)
- Dur[a] Europos (Parthian)
- Artemita / Chalasar (Parthian), then Dasta-kert (Sassanian)
- Abi-ward (Sassanian)
- Ni-Shapur (Sassanian)
- Gonde-Shapur [from “Gund-dez-i Shapur; rendered “Beth Lapaṭ” in Syriac; “Bendosabora” in Greek] (Sassanian)
- Istakhr (Sassanian)
- Hdatta [Syriac: “New-kert”] (Sassanian)
- Laodikeia [Median]
- Apamea [Median; not to be confused with the Persian city by the same name on the Euphrates River in Mesopotamia OR with the Greco-Roman city by the same name in Syria]
- Beyhagh [alt. “Sabzevar”] (Indo-Iranian; Bactrian)
- Baxtri / Baxli / Bahlika [Greek: “Baktra”; “Balkh”] (Indo-Iranian; Bactrian)
- Konji-kala [now the site of Ashkabat] (Khwarezmian)

In the Levant, there were many cities that no longer exist–most of them Amorite. {20}The oldest **Semitic** (i.e. Canaanite) cities were Ebla, Emar, and Ugarit (now the site of Ras Shamra).The Phoenician cities of Byblos, Siduna (now “Sidon”), and Tyre still exist.Here are 32 more from the distant past:

- Bo[t]zra (Edomite)
- Kabzeel (Edomite)
- Elath (Edomite)
- Kedar (Midian / Moabite)
- She[c]hem / Sichem
- Dothan [Biblical home of Joseph and Elisha]
- Alala[k]h / Alakhtum (originally Amorite, though also Hittite)
- Kedesh (Tyrian)
- La[c]hish
- Laish (later rendered “Dan”; alt. “Leshem” / “Laysha”)
- Jarmuth
- Usha
- Shaaraim
- Keilah
- Yizre-El [Romanized: “Jezreel”]
- Jericho (now occupied by a town of the same name)
- Megiddo
- Ashkelon (Phoenician, then Philistine)
- Jabneh (renamed “Jamnia”, Greco-Roman; “Ibelin”, medieval Latin; “Yibna”, Arabic; now the site of the Israeli city of “Yavne”)
- Has[h]ura [later rendered “Hazor”]
- Gazru [later rendered “Gezer”]
- Yenoam
- Gadara (in Perea)
- Amathus (in Perea / Gilead)
- Ramot[h] (in Perea / Gilead)
- Bet[h] Haram [Roman: “Livias”] (in Perea / Gilead)
- Dibon [alt. “Old Dhiban”] (Moabite; in Perea / Gilead)
- Sin (in Syria)
- Caesaria Palaestina [Maritima] (not to be confused by cities named “Caesaria” elsewhere)
- Kapharnaoum [Capernaum] (in Galilee)

- Samaria (after the region by the same name) [later named “Sebaste” by the Romans]
- Aburru / Abarsal

There were also Canaanite cities that were distinctly Philistine–as with Gath, Timnath / Timna[r], Gerar, and Ekron. {13}And some were distinctly Aramaean–as with Adinnu, Hadatu, and Gozan[a]. {14}

East of the Jordan River, in Gilead / Moab / Nabataea (and Midian farther south), the Canaanite city of Pel [alt. “Sela”] was renamed “Rekem[e]” by the Midianites.It was then referred to as “Rakmu” by the Nabataeans, who made it their capital.We now refer to it by its Greco-Roman moniker: “Petra” [simply meaning “rock”].Once the major Levantine mercantile and religious hub (of the Nabataeans), it is now only ruins.

This happened with other **Nabataean** cities as well–such as Hegra (originally “Dedan”; later rendered “Al-Hijr” / “Mada’in Saleh”), the resurrected “Ebla”, Haluza / Halasa (a.k.a. “Chellous” / “Eloysa” in Greek; “Khalasa” in CA), Leuke Kome, Avdat (a.k.a. “Obodat”), and Tadmur (more famously known by its Romanized moniker, “Palmyra”).

In **Egypt**, there was a long-lost Amratian / Gerzeh city now referred to as “Nagada”.There was also a major Hyksos city named “Itj-Tawy”.Here are thirty more:

- Per-Wsjr [Greek: “Bousiri”; Arab: “Abusir”]
- Per-Wadjet [Greek: “Bouto(s)”]
- Per-Atum [Greek: “Hero-opolis”; Semitic: “Pi-thom”]
- Per-Ramesi-su [later rendered “Pi-Ramesses”]
- Per-Amun [Greek: “Pelousion”; Roman: “Pelusium”; Semitic: “Sin”]
- Per-Bast(et) [Greek: “Boubastos”, Romanized to “Bubastis”; Coptic: “B[o]ubastis”; Hebrew: “Pi-Beset”]
- Hat-wuret / Hut-waret [Greek: “Avaris”]
- Menefer [Greek: “Memphis”; Hebrew: “Noth”]
- Kiemro [Greek: “Naukratis”]
- Zau [alt. “Sais”]
- Abdju [Greek: “Abydos”; not to be confused with the Greek city by the same name in Mysia]
- Menouthis [Greek: “Isiopolis”] (Greco-Roman)
- Herakleion [alt. “Thonis”] (Greco-Roman) {15}

- Sena [Greek: “Pelousion”; Roman: “Pelusium”; Aramaic: “Seyan”; Hebrew: “Sin”]
- Akhet-Aten [Semitic: “Amarna”]
- Behdet [Greek: “Edfu”]
- Nenj-nesu[t] [Greek: “Herakleo-polis”]
- Nekhen [Greek: “Hierakon-polis”]
- Nekheb [Greek: “Eileithyias-polis”]
- Khemenu [Greek: “Hermou-polis”; Coptic: “Shmun”]
- Aw[a]nu / Iunu [Greek: “Helio-polis”]
- D’nt / Djanit [Coptic: “Thennisi”; Greek: “Tanis” / “Tinnis” / “Tennis”] {16}
- Tjenu [Greek: “Thinis”]
- Wase[t] [Greek: “Thebai”; Anglicized to “Thebes”] {17}
- Hebet [Greek: “Hibis”; now the site of Kharga]
- Ta-ynt-netert [alt. “Tantere”/ “Tentyra”; “Nekhen-tori”; Romanized: “Dendera”]
- Tahpanhes [Greek: “Daphnae Pelusium”; Hebrew: “Taphnas”]
- Shedet [Greek: “Krokodilo-polis”; Coptic: “Phiom”; Romanized: “Arsinoë”; Arabized: “Fayyum” / “Faiyum”]
- Berenike [Greek: “Troglodytika”] (Ptolemaic)
- Myos Hormos (Ptolemaic)

Note that almost every city ended up being assigned a Greek moniker.

In **Greece**, many cities no longer exist–as with the storied city-states of Salamis and Kition [Latin: Citium] (on Cyprus); Sparta [“Lakedaemon” in Laconian Greek], Pellana, and Corinth (on the Peloponnese; i.e. Lakonia); Miletus (in Ionia); and Troy (originally the Hittite “Wilusha”, in Troas). {18}Others are possibly mythical, such as Oichalia in Thessaly (see Appendix).Here are 75 more:

- Knossos (Minoan)
- Akrotiri (Minoan)
- Phaistos (Minoan)
- Zakros (Minoan)
- Vlochos (Minoan)
- Thera on Kalliste [Santorini] (Minoan, then Phoenician, then Dorian)
- Kydonia (Crete)
- Phaistos (Crete)
- Gortyn[a] (Crete)
- Karthaia (Kea)
- [h]Alikarnassos [Roman: “Halicarnassus”] (Mycenaean)

- Mykene / Mukanai [Roman: “Mycenae”] (Mycenaean)
- Orchomenus (Boeotia)
- Orchomenus (Arcadia)
- Lykosoura (Arcadia)
- Bassai (Arcadia)
- Teuthis (Arcadia)
- Phigaleia (Arcadia)
- Megalopolis (Arcadia)
- Iolcus (Aeolia)
- Pergamon [later: Pergamum] (Aeolia)
- Aigai[ai] [Roman: Aegae[ae]; Ottoman Turk: Nemrut-kale / Kalesi] (Aeolia / Cilicia)
- Eretria (Euboia)
- Pella (Macedonian)
- Aigai (Macedonian)
- Heraclea Lyncestis (Macedonian)
- Kourion (Cyprus)
- Segesta, Eryx, and Entella (originally Elymian; Sicily)
- Nisaea / Megara (Attica)
- Kolophon (Ionia)
- Apasa [Arzawan / Luwian]; Ephesus [Achaean / Mycenaean Greek] (Ionia)
- Stagira [Macedonian] (Ionia)
- Teos (Ionia)
- Pylos (Achaea) {19}
- Helike (Achaea) {15}
- Dyme (Achaea)
- Boura (Achaea)
- Pellene (Achaea)
- Aigeira (Achaea)
- Sikyon (Achaea)
- Tenea (Achaea)
- Ancient Messene (Achaea)
- Araethyrea / Arantea / Phlius (Achaea)
- Argos [Argead; now the site of a town by the same name] (Achaea)
- Phokaia [Roman: “Phocaea”]
- Pleuron (Aetolia)
- Calydon (Aetolia)
- Sybaris (Magna Graecia)

- Segesta / Aigesta (Elymian)
- Eryx (Elymian)
- Entella (Sicanian)
- Bouthroton / Buthrotum (Epirus)
- Dodona (Epirus)
- Termessos (Pisidia)
- Sagalassos (Pisidia)
- Etenna (Lydia / Pisidia)
- Sardis (Lydia)
- Pelopia [Roman: “Thyateira”; now the site of “Akhisar”] (Lydia)
- Amyklai [Roman: “Amyclae”] (Sparta / Laconia)
- Abydos [not to be confused with the Egyptian city by the same name] (Mysia)
- Knidos (Caria)
- Patara [later: “Arsinoe”] (Lycia)
- Arnna [later: “Xanthos”] (Lycia)
- Perperene [alt. “Theodosioupolis”, not to be confused by cities in Arcadia, Armenia, and Osroene that went by the same name] (Mysia / Anatolia)
- Perge (Pamphylia / Anatolia)
- Kummanni (Kizzuwatna)
- Oshakan, Tushpa, Musasir / Ardini (Urartian / Shurili)
- Hassam / Hassuwa / Khash-shum (Hurrian / Armani-Subartu / Shupria)
- Termessos (Anatolia)
- Laodikeia Combusta [alt. “Laodicea”; a.k.a. “Claudio-laodikia”] (Pisidia / Anatolia) [not to be confused with other Greek cities that went by the same name in Arcadia, Phrygia, and Pontus; or the Phoenician / Syrian cities that are now Beirut and Latakia; or the one in Media / Persia now named “Nahavand”]
- Phanagoreia [later: (k)Hazarian; then Genoese “Matrega”] (Crimea)
- Myrmekion (Crimea)
- Hermonassa [later, (k)Hazarian “Tamantar-khan”] (Crimea)
- Olbia (Scythia)

Note that one of the oldest settlements, Akrotiri (a Minoan colony on Santorini that dates back to the 5th millennium B.C.) was never a city.

A slew of **Greco-Roman** cities that no longer exist–such as Ikonion, which later became the Roman “Iconium”, then “Claudio-conium”, then “Colonia Aelia Hadriana”.(The city was originally Hittite; and later Phrygian.It would become the site of Seljuk city of “Konya” in the 11th century.)Here are 40 more (no longer extant) Roman cities that were formerly Greek:

- Chalcedon (Bithynia)
- Nikaea (Bithynia)
- Sirmium (Pannonia)
- Dioclia (Thrace / Illyria)
- Sirmium (Thrace / Illyria)
- Derbe (Galatia)
- Lystra [dubbed “Colonia Iulia Felix Gemina” by the Romans] (Galatia)
- Krenides [later “Philippoi”; Romanized to “Philippi”] (Anatolia)
- Dardanos [Roman: “Dardanium” / “Dardania”] (Troas)
- Tenea [Trojan] (Troas)
- Perge / Perga (Pamphylia)
- Kyzikos [Roman: Cyzicus] (Mysia)
- Etruscan “Clevsin” [Greek: “Klysion”; Roman: “Clusium”] (Etruria)
- Etruscan “Cisra” [Greek: “Agylla”; Roman: “Caere”] (Etruria)
- Etruscan “Veii” [Greco-Roman: “Veius”] (Etruria)
- Etruscan “Velch” / “Velx” [Greco-Roman: “Vulci”] (Etruria)
- Scylletium / Scolacium /Minervium (Bruttium)
- Oscan, then Etruscan, then Roman “Pompeii” (Campania)
- Syedra (Cilicia)
- Pantikapaion [Roman: Panticapaeum; now the site of Kerch] (Crimea)
- Cherson[esos] [alt. “Khersones”] (Taurika; i.e. Crimea)
- Hyele [alt. “Ele[a]”; Roman: “Velia”] (Magna Graecia)
- Euboean, then Etruscan “Kumai” (Magna Graecia)
- Euboean “Naxos” (Magna Graecia)
- Euboean “Kume” / “Kuma[i]” (Magna Graecia)
- Greek “Poseidonia” [Roman: “Paestum”] (Magna Graecia)
- Greek “Thourioi” / “Thouriom” [Roman: “Thurii” / “Thurium”; alt. “Copia(e)”] (Magna Graecia)
- Akragas (Magna Graecia)
- Eryx (Sicilia)
- Thannuris (Byzantine in Syria)
- Gadara [Seleucid: “Antiokheia Semiramis”] (Syria / trans-Jordan)

- Apameia [a.k.a. “Shepham” in Hebrew; not to be confused with the Persian city by the same name in Mesopotamia; nor with the Median city by the same name] (Syria / trans-Jordan)
- Amathus (Syria / trans-Jordan)
- Livias (Syria / trans-Jordan)
- Cyrrhus [Greek: Kyrrhos / Hagiopolis] (Syria / trans-Jordan)
- Resaena [alt. “Rhesaina”; a.k.a. “Theodosiopolis”] (Syria / trans-Jordan)
- Gerasa [based on the Assyrian “Garshu”; later rendered Jerash in Arabic] (trans-Jordan)
- Scythopolis [now the site of “Beit She’an”] (trans-Jordan)
- Apollonia [rendered “Sozusa Palaestina” by the Byzantines; “Arsuf” by the Arabs] (Levant)
- Sufetula [Berber: Sbeitla] (Tunisia)

Other Roman cities included Alba Longa on the Italic Peninsula, the port city of Lavinium (just outside Latium), and Sirmium (formerly Illyrian, in Pannonia); as well as Conimbriga (Lusitania) in what is now Portugal.

In Barat[a] (from the Hindu Kush, across India into Bengal) many cities no longer exist–the oldest of which was Harappa, located in the Sindh (from the Indus Valley civilization, which began over five millennia ago). {4} Two other major cities of the Indus Valley civilization were Lothal and Kukkuta[r]-ma [alt. “Mohenjo-Daro”]. There was also Lanka[-puri], a quasi-mythical island city that may have been located on Sri Lanka.Here are thirty more long-lost **Indian** cities:

- Tos[h]ali[alt. “Toshala”; “Kalinga”]
- Taks[h]a-s[h]ila[alt. “Taxila”]
- Rakhi-Garhi
- Dhola-vira
- Ganveri-vala
- Kapila-vastu (Shakya)
- Pushkala-vati (Gandhara)
- Chandra-ketugarh (Bengal)
- Durjaya [Pala / Kamarupa] (Bengal)
- Mahas-thangarh [Bangarh] (Bengal)
- Gauda [alt. Gour; a.k.a. “Lakhnauti”] (Bengal)
- Ayodhya / Saket[a]
- Dvaraka[alt. “Dvaravati”, purported birthplace of Krishna; now the site of Dwarka]

- Vijaya-Nagar[a][City of Victory]
- Kushi-Nagar[a] [alt. Kusha-wati; Kushi-nara]
- Nagar[a]-Junakonda
- Ahi-kshetra [alt. “Ahichchhatra”]
- Sanchi
- Hampi
- Kaushambi [Pali: “Kosambi”] (Vatsa)
- Patta-dakal
- Raja-griha [a.k.a. “Giriv-raja”; now “Raj-gir”]
- Patali-putra / Kusuma-pura (Magadhan, then Mauryan) [now “Patna”; Bihar]
- [r]Ishipatan[a] [alt. “Mriga-dava”; a.k.a. “Sarnath”]
- Hastina-pur[a]
- Mahishmati (Haiheya / Avanti)
- Lodarva (Rajput)
- Muciri / Muziris [a.k.a. “Muracippattanam”]
- Mansura (Abbasid; in Sindh)
- Anuradha-pur[a] (Tamil / Sinhalese; in Sri Lanka)
- Polonnaruva (Sinhalese; in Sri Lanka)

Many of these cities have been mostly forgotten; as their relevance to the incipient cultures waned at some point in the past.Thus few of them play a prominent role in contemporary folklore.As far as many of us today are concerned, they may as well have never REALLY existed…if if we like to leave them in some of our stories.

Who would have guessed that in a single Endnote, I could enumerate 350 cities that were once a significant part of our world, but no longer exist?Barring a few of the more celebrated cases (we’re all aware of the legends of Babylon, of Sparta and Troy, and of the grandeur of Angkor Wat), what were once societal centers are now mostly lost to history.Our world has changed significantly over the ages; and so, then, has HOW WE THINK ABOUT our world.

If one were to go to the area in which any of these cities once existed, to what extent does the prevailing historical narrative REFLECT the existence of these cities (as they actually were)?The answer in most cases: Not much.

In creating “histories” to suit ourselves, just as much is jettisoned as is fabricated.After all, elision and confabulation tend to go hand in hand (hence sins of both omission and commission).Just as unscrupulous as remembering what never

really happened, we often fail to have any memory of certain things that transpired. (For example, how many Lebanese now recognize Sidon to be “Siduna”, the original capital of Phoenicia?)

But for the enterprise of modern archeology, such urban centers–often hubs of entire societies–would now be lost to history; as the days that they played a key role in hallowed folklore have long since passed.Barring a few instances, the folklore that now survives has no use for such places.So far as we’re now concerned, they needn’t be part of history.If something does not serve a purpose in a sacred history, then it will not be included.So far as many are concerned, such places may just as well have never existed.Any role they might have played in ACTUAL history is a moot point; and so is summarily elided.(We often forget that elision rarely announces itself as elision; and so ascribe to the final product a historical fidelity that does not actually exist.)

Of course, several of these places remain in folklore to this day, and so have not been forgotten altogether; yet MOST of them do not remain in our most cherished historical accounts.How many of these places survive in the collective memory of those who now live in the same region?It is safe to say that today, far more people know about, say, Las Vegas (Nevada) or Hollywood (California) than about ANY of these cities.What we KNOW invariably ends up being a function of what we care about in our own lives.

The point here is simple: When ENTIRE METROPOLISES can be erased from Grand Narratives, then our capacity for obfuscation is plain to see.Surely, then, people and events can be omitted from the official record with nary the bat of an eyelash.Such redactions in our “collective memory” typically occur in whatever manner that the powers-that-be wish.To reiterate: The FACT OF the redaction is itself redacted…along with that which was redacted.If it no longer suits the prevailing narrative, then its salience steadily evaporates over time.(Rarely does it vanish overnight.Amnesia tends to happen over the course of generations.)

The selective omission of places illustrates how collective memory works.But the same goes for the FABRICATION of places–nay, of entire lands (as I show in the Addendum).If something farcical is needed to bolster the desired narrative, then it will be furnished–and clandestinely inserted–as needed.And so a humble Jewish carpenter from Nazareth can be made into god incarnate…and a Qurayshi merchant

can be rendered the Seal of all Abrahamic prophets.Even the AUTHORS THEMSELVES of the sanctified folklore can be conjured to serve a purpose (as I also show in the Addendum).

History is–in large part–recorded by the victors; which means it is recorded in the manner that they see fit.SACRED histories–meanwhile–are largely CREATED BY the victors (to serve their purposes).False (collective) memory–as well as its corollary, False Consciousness–is not a glitch; it is a feature.It is often confabulated by design…a design that does not announce itself in the confabulation.

And so it goes: Sacred histories are typically engineered to serve the interests of those in power; and upheld by those who's power is predicated on the MAINTENANCE OF those histories.Hence the importance of disinterested-ness in conducting historical inquiries.Vested interests can only serve to sabotage scholarship of ANY kind; and this is especially so when it comes to fleshing out what REALLY HAPPENED.Setting aside coveted narratives is no easy task when we find ourselves LIVING BY those very narratives.

At the end of the day, we remember what we want to remember; and end up forgetting what we'd prefer to forget.This is usually not done deliberately (that is: as a matter of calculation).We are often unaware of the architects–or even the architecture–of the stories that we like to tell ourselves about what's REAL.

Over FIVE HUNDRED cities have been enumerated in this essay…only a few of which remain in our folklore.The point here is simple: If people can indulge in (strategic) forgetting when it comes to entire metropolises (for which there is still material evidence), surely they can do so for people and events (for which scant evidence is available, in the form of documentation).This is especially the case when those who wrote the favored accounts want us to remember only certain things…and forget everything else.

FOOTNOTES:

{1In this survey, I include only significant urban centers; not settlements (e.g. Mesa Verde) or palaces (e.g. Machu Picchu) or fortresses (e.g. Sikayauvati in Persia, Kyz Kala at Masada, Sigiriya in Sri Lanka) or necropolises (e.g. the Naqsh-i Rustam in Persia) or temple complexes (as with Dahshur in Egypt, Gobekli Tepe in Anatolia, or Ghagha-Shahr in Sistan)…of which their have been innumerable, scattered across the globe.There have likely been thousands of small colonies that have been lost to

time.Archeology has uncovered a plethora of important sites that may have been large towns, but do not qualify as having been major cities.It is, of course, not big news that most of these are long-gone.}

{2Now the site of Beihan. Note: The Arabian “Timna oasis” is not to be confused with the site of “Timna” in the Negev desert, site of Egyptian copper mines from the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age.}

{3This city was originally “Hermonassa” (Greek).It was then re-named “Tmutara-khan” (Cimmerian, then [k]Hazar)…before being overtaken by the Byzantines.}

{4Other major sites in the region do not quite qualify as having been cities–such as Kalibangan and Rakhi Garhi.}

{5There were also unknown cities at Liye [Chu, then Qin], Yan-shi, Zheng-zhou, and Yin-xu [Shang].}

{6Towns by the same name now exist at both sites.}

{7Interesting tid-bit.While “Ur” meant “city” in the original Assyrian, it means “fire” in the Semitic languages (both Hebrew and Aramaic).So when the 1st-century Hebrew scribe, Jonathan ben Uzziel transcribed Genesis 15:7, in which Abraham was said to have “been brought from Ur of the Chaldeans”, he wrote it as Abraham having been delivered from the fire of the Chaldeans; hence tales of the furnace in the Book of Daniel.}

{8“Pumbedit[h]a” was the Aramaic name, which was rendered “Pallgutha” in Syriac.The Hellenic moniker was “Pallacottas”.It is roughly the site of present-day Fallujah.}

{9Now the site of Kirkuk.}

{10Now the site of Hamadan.}

{11Now the site of Takht-i Jamshid.}

{12Now the site of Ahvaz.}

{13Ashkelon is now the site of the town of Asqalan in the Gaza strip.The ancient Philistine cities of Gaza [from the Egyptian “Ghazzat”; later “Azzati”] and Ashdod remain in modern forms.}

{14Minor towns like Be’er-Sheva [Seven Wells] and Sepphoris [alt. “Tzipori”; a.k.a. “Dio-Caesaraea”] are not counted here.Nor are apocryphal cities like “Shittim” in Moab [Arabic: “Abila”] and “She’arayim” in the Valley of Elah.Nor are quasi-mythical settlements like Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Zoar in the plains of Gilead.See also footnote 20 below.}

{15Possibly the basis for the legend of Atlantis.}

{16Tanis was referenced in “Raiders Of The Lost Ark” as the hidden location of the Ark of the Covenant.}

{17This included the “Karnak” and “Luxor” temple complexes.}

{18The well-known name “Troy” is derived from the Greek “Troia”.The Romans referred to the city as “Ilium”, based on the Archaic Greek “[w]Ilion”…which was, in turn, based on the Hittite moniker, “Wilusha”.}

{19Achaea corresponds to what we now call the Peloponnese.Pylos now exists as a small town, built on the same site.This is a common phenomenon.Resurrecting the name does not entail contiguity–as is also the case with, say, Ryazan in Eastern Europe, Tarsus in Anatolia, Babylon in Iraq, Kermanshah in Persia, Urgench in Bactria, or Ayutthaya in Thailand.}

{20There are several semi-mythical cities that are Biblical–such as Gibeon, Ai, Tirzah, Aphik, Sukkot, Horonaim, Bochim, Ziklag, Arimathea, She’arayim, Tarshish, Debir (a.k.a. “Kiriath-Sepher”), Eglon, as well as the Idumean port-cities of E[t]zion-Geber and (Midian) Elath.This is in addition to the so-called “Levitical Cities” (e.g. Gibbethon and Ben-e-Barak).There is an archeological site that indicates a settlement corresponding to the port-city of “Dor”; but there is limited archeological evidence for most of these fabled cities (see footnote 14 above). **For a survey of fictional places in the world’s many folkloric traditions, see the Appendix.**}

{21Now the site of the Punjabi city of “Sialkot”.}

{22“Ordu” means capital; “Khara” / “Balik” means city.}



APPENDIX: Mythical Lands

Some narratives posit a fantastical land–as with the (ubiquitous) Norman legend of “Cockaigne” or the French legend of the Brocéliande forest. This is indicative of the tendency to conflate fantasy with Reality.

SOME of these wondrous destinations may well be based on real places. Yet–as it usually the case–the myth neglects to announce where, exactly, farce takes over. (Such an announcement is rarely made, lest it “spoil the mood” and compromise its purchase on our imaginations.) It is precisely this blurring which enables the meme to be so beguiling..and thus to flourish.

We are all inclined to imagine some marvelous “never-never” land in a far-off place. Prefer your fantasy world in a video game? Voyage to the magical land of Hyrule (“The Legend of Zelda”). Technology now allows us full immersion in hyper-stimulating environs–a supercharged way to quench our thirst for enchantment. (Though with video-gaming, escapism has become interactive–more a simulation than a mere story. We participate in the narrative at our own discretion; and exit it whenever we wish.)

Medieval European folklore posited a mysterious land in the far north, referred to as ultima Thule / Tile (an uncharted place at the outer fringes of the known world, usually in the far north).

Here are FORTY more examples:

- **The Hindu legends** of **“Videha”** and of **“Sveta-Dvipa”** [White Island, the abode of Vishnu] {A}
- **The Jain legend** of **“Saket[a]”**
- **The Buddhist legend** of **“Jambu-dvipa”** [Island of the Jambu trees]
- **The Tibetan legend** of **“Shambhala”** (with its city of “Kalapa”) and the mythical Mount Potalaka
- **The Tamil / Dravidian legend** of **“Kumari Kandam”** / “Kumari Nadu”
- **The Chinese legend** of **“Peng-lai”** / “Ho-rai”
- **The Korean legend** of **“Asadal”**
- **The Japanese legend** of **“Takama-ga-hara”**
- **The Siamese legend** of **“Muang Thaen[g]”** and of **“Ko Kaeo Phitsadan”** [Magical Island]
- **The Malay legend** of **“Gangga Negara”**
- **The Sumerian legend** of **“Aratta”** (a place of gold and jewels, home of Inanna); as well as the mythical Cedar Forest in the Far East (ref. the Epic of Gilgamesh; likely Elam or Dilmun), at the far end of which there is the mountain known as “Mashu”
- **The Persian legend** of “Kaaf-kuh” / **“Kuh-i Kaaf”** {B}
- **The Greco-Roman** legend of **“Atlantis”** {C}
- **The Greek legend** of **“Themiskyra”** [in Pontus, fabled city of the Amazons]; of the blissful gardens of **“Erytheia”** (the Red Isle, associated with Tartessos); and of **“Gela”** (city of luxury)
- **The Judaic legend** of **“Gan Eden”**
- **The Arabian legend** of **“[w]Ubar”**
- **The Turko-Mongolic legend** of **“Ötüken”**
- **The Gothic legend** of **“Arheimar”**
- **The English legend** of **“Avalon”**
- **The Welsh legend** of **“Annwn”** and of **“Cantref y Gwaelod”**
- **The Irish legend** of **“Hy-Brasil”** and of **“Tir na nOg”**
- **The Norman legend** of **“Ker-Is”** [a.k.a. “Ys”]
- **The Spanish legend** of **“Cibola”**
- **The Flemish legend** of **“Luilekkerland”**
- **The Norse legend** of **“Vineta”** {D}
- **The Finnish legend** of **“Pohjola”** (a local to the far north) and **“Vainola”**
- **The Slavic legend** of **“Buyan”**

- **The Dacian / Romanian legend** of **“Solomanari”** [a.k.a. “Sholomance”] (in the Carpathian Mountains)
- **The Maori legend** of **“Hawaiki”**
- **The Hawaiian legend** of **“Kahiki”**
- **The Yaruba legend** of **“Ile-Ife”** / “Ife-Lodun”
- **The Incan legend** of **“Paititi”**
- **The Aztec legend** of **“Aztlan”**
- **The Mayan legend** of **“Xibalba”**
- **The Taino legend** of **“Aumatex”**
- **The Toltec legend** of **“Tollan”** {E}
- **The Iroquoian legend** of **“Saguenay”**

Other quasi-mythical places that may or may not refer to a real place include:

- **“Hyper-borea”**, an uncharted land to the far north and/or the from the far east, according to ancient Greek lore
- The Kamyaka Forest (on the banks of the Saraswati River) and the Khandava Forest (around present-day Delhi), replete with the mythical Kuru city of **“Indra-prastha”** in Hindu lore
- **“Suvarnabhumi”**, the “Land of Gold” of southeast Asia in Theravada Buddhist lore
- **“Chryse”** / “Aurea Regio”, the Golden island in Greco-Roman lore
- **“Ophir”**, the land of wealth in Hebrew lore

These are fictional lands within our own world. Such places are not to be confused with para-cosms (fictional WORLDS). In other words: These fictional lands are ontologically different from the other-wordly realms of ancient cosmologies. Fictional lands in modern literature include Ursula K. Le Guin’s “Orsinia” and Jonathan Swift’s “Lilliput”. Modern para-cosms include J.R.R. Tolkien’s Middle Earth (in the Lord of the Rings); Frank Herbert’s star-system (including the planets “Caladan” and “Arrakas”; in Dune); and George Lucas’ “galaxy far far away” (in Star Wars).

Entire lands were often fabricated in folklore; so it is no stretch to acknowledge how facile it would be to fabricated PEOPLE. There is a reason that, as much as the English-speaking world might like to talk about **Camelot**, nobody in their right mind is actually trying to find it. It’s the same reason contemporary Greeks are not

wondering where **Gerenia** might be. (The Greeks also posited **Zerzuza**, the "City of Dionysus" purportedly located in the Maghreb.) And it is the same reason no Filipinos are looking for **Biringan**.

It seems easier to disavow the existence of a fabled land–or metropolis–than that of a fabled personage. For we have fully mapped the planet Earth in a way that we could never fully map human history. Geographical cartography is something tangible whereas historiographic cartography asks us to navigate an abstract realm.

The fact remains: It is no more difficult to make up a place than it is to make up a person. In fact, while story-tellers are fabricating magical characters, they may as well fabricate magical lands as well. It comes as no surprise, then, that this was done in Islamic folklore: the mythical Island of "Jezirat al-Tennyn".

Sometimes, the hypothesized place is used for propagandistic purposes. The most famous case of this was the Spanish legend of the hidden Amazonian city of gold (alternately dubbed **"Manoa"** / **"Quivira"** / **"Beimeni"** / **"Z"**). It was considered by some to be the seven lost cities of "Cibola" (listed above; found in the tales of "El Dorado"). {F}

The search for a mystical place goes back to the Chinese legend of Xu Fu, who–in the 3rd century B.C.–embarked on a quest to find the elixir of life in a far-off land across the sea (sometimes referred to as the mountain-island, **"Peng-lai"**). The narrative gimmick continues to the present age. (Mormon cosmology, for example, posits the planet, **"Kolob"** [alt. the name of the star around which the planet orbits]…though each of the "chosen" purportedly gets to be sovereign over his own planet in the hereafter.)

Many dream of a magical land "somewhere over the rainbow"; so we are naturally drawn to tales that posit such places. For many, such an idea has irresistible allure–especially when the ACTUAL environs within which one finds oneself are less than ideal.

These mythical places usually have to do with where the tribe came from (origins) and/or where its chosen few may be going (destination). Ergo the Japanese etiological myth of "Onogoro-Shima" (also note "Yama-tai-koku" of the Yamato people) in conjunction with the eschatological myth of "Takama-ga-hara"…or the Norse etiological myth of "Muspelheim" and "Niflheim" in conjunction with the eschatological myth of "Valhalla". Religious Jews posit "Zion" as both existential origin and ultimate destination for the chosen group (i.e. themselves).

The ancient Indians posited the Kingdom of **Ayodhya** (a.k.a. “Saket”). The Ancient Siamese posited **“Muang Thaeng”** as the homeland of their people, whose denizens were the descendants of the great **“Khun Borom”**. The Aztecs posited **“Aztlan”** as the homeland of their people–a gilded etiology that imbued them with a special position in the grand cosmic scheme. The Romans spoke of “patria”.

Revisionist Zionists use the Torah as the title-deed to Canaan–a reification of “Israel” from an ethnic group to a modern nation-state. This lexical re-purposing took “Beth Israel”, which did not refer to a place (it referred to the diaspora of Hebrews), and conjured a chimerical “Eretz Israel”, which demarcates a certain tract of land. (For more on this, see my essay: “The Land Of Purple”.)

Later, Renaissance Europeans posited **“Arcadia”**, a utopia (involving visions of pastoral bliss) based on the verdant Greek province by the same name.

In Persian lore, we hear of legendary places like **“Airyanem Vaejah”**, which may have referred to Sogdiana or Bactria. (God only knows.)

Reactionary ideologues tend to envision their own “return to Eden”–some idyllic epoch of THEIR OWN (imagined) history that has been lost, and must be resurrected before they can fulfill their own glorious destiny.

The Khmer Rouge posited **“Angkor”**, based on a (bygone) halcyon era of agrarian splendor. (“Angkor” roughly means “Greatest” or “Supreme”.) Indeed, the largest temple ever built–the Buddhist “wat” at Yasodharapura in present-day Cambodia–was associated with this ideal. Bringing one’s society back to a mythic “golden age” is a common motif of propagandists. (During his reign of “Kampuchea”, Pol Pot’s agenda was to restore “Angkor” to its former glory.) This is typically a right-wing (i.e. reactionary) phenomenon–as with, say, Vladimir Putin’s current vision for Russia.

Sometimes, people simply re-name places in order to get things to accord with their own myths. Such is the case with the Anatolian city of Edessa. {G} In a gambit to equate the location with “Ur Kasdim” (the “Ur” of the Chaldeans from which the Aramaean patriarch, Abraham hailed, according to the Torah), the Ottoman Turks [“Osmanli”] re-named it “Urfa”. {H} Though based on an absurd supposition, this christening is illustrative of the power of folklore (i.e. its ability to trump common sense).

Despite its comic untenability, the myth about “Urfa” (esp. with regard to Abraham) persists to this day. {H} For places are often (re-)named so as to comport with whatever lore locals happen to espouse at the time…which is, more often than not, about themselves.

This is especially so with key cities–often re-named for the sake of re-branding. Indeed, toponymy operates in much the same way as other onomastics (in which proper names take on a life of their own). The most well-known example is the Thracian city of Byzantion, renamed “Byzantium” by the Greeks, then “Constantinople” by the Romans [later, the Byzantines], and then “Istanbul” by the Ottomans [i.e. the Turks]. This is yet another illustration of the fact that IDENTITY is not so straight-forward…and things have not always been how we think of them today. In each case, we are reminded that it is those in charge who dictate what something IS (and, purportedly, what it has ALWAYS BEEN). When it comes to cities, the phenomenon is not uncommon. (I will explore such onomastic metamorphoses in the next part of this series: “City Name Changes”.)

In the Koran, we are told about a city [“Iram”] of the pillars. This is likely a take-off on ancient tales of the Egyptian city of “Iwnw” [“the Pillars”], renamed Helio-polis [“City of the Sun”] by the Greeks (due to it being the site of the Temple of Ra-Atum); which was rendered “O[w]n” / “Awnu” in Semitic tongues.

Other lands mentioned if folklore could refer to any of a number of places–as their manner of conception reflects a very crude understanding of geography. For example, the early Hebrews posed “Havilah” (likely somewhere in northeastern Arabia / southeastern Mesopotamia) and “Shur” (likely near the Sinai peninsula). Such primeval conceptions are reified over and over again…and eventually sublimated, such that the final caricature is treated as an accurate historical portrayal. When these places become the stuff of sanctified lore, they become completely divorced from that on which they were originally based.

When it comes to obscure places in the archeological record, some locations remain a mystery–as with the distant locals of “Meluhha” and “Magan” in Sumerian records (which could have been in either northern Africa, southern Arabia, or as far east as the Indus Valley).

Earnest-ness often entails becoming overly-engrossed, and thus delusional. A key feature of obsession–regardless of the context–is becoming (eagerly, blissfully) disconnected from historical Reality. This tendency is especially operational when it

comes to folklore. It is plausible to speculate that, in more primitive times, in all their discussion of Middle Earth (or of the United Federation of Planets), the most ardent fans would eventually start to believe much of what they talked about was part of THEIR world. Becoming immersed in imaginary worlds is something we all do–hypnotic and addictive as they can often be. It is not uncommon for actors to be seen by fans AS the characters they play rather than who they really are (i.e. actors). When such intoxication takes hold, the mind becomes confused–and can no longer shift easily between fantasy and Reality.

{A Also referenced is the Kingdom of “Kalinga”, which probably corresponded to Orissa (now named “Odisha”) in eastern India.}

{B This mythical mountain (at the edge of the world) was the source of the Arabian legend of “[d]Jabal Qaf”.}

{C For thousands of years, the legend of Atlantis has captured our imaginations and even enthralled us–as legends tend to do. Plato referenced the fabled island kingdom in his “Critias” and “Timaeus”. Related to Atlantis is the legend of a magical, underground world called “Agharti” (a.k.a. “Agartha”), the subject of medieval French occultism (ref. the etiologies of the Occitan fabulist, Antoine Fabre d’Olivet). Tales of the lost city of may have been inspired by the ACTUAL lost city of Helike in Achaea; which was submerged in a natural catastrophe c. 373 B.C. Another city that submerged was the Minoan (then Mycenaean) Pavlo-petri off the coast of Laconia, which dates back five millennia. Another fabled island that was supposed to have sunk was “Kumari Kandam” in Tamil legend. Later tales of Atlantis may have been encouraged by the (now underwater) Egyptian city of Heracleion (a.k.a. “Thonis”), which dated back to the 12th century B.C. and LITERALLY sank (in the late 3rd / early 2nd century A.D.) due to having been built on coastal silt. Of course, aficionados of the legend of this sunken city-state are looking in the wrong place. Atlantis is not in the ocean; it’s in the Timaeus.}

{D Note “Asgard”, the celestial kingdom in which is located the great hall, “Valhalla”, as well as the magnificent “Breidablik” (home of the god, Baldr). There is also “Folkvangr”, in which is located the great hall, “Sessrumnir”. The nine realms of the world tree, Yggdrasil, in Norse mythology were: As-gard[r], Mid-gard[r], Ut-gard[r] / Jötun-heim[r], Vana-heim[r], Alf-heim[r] / Ljosalf-heim[r], Svartalfa-heim[r], Nifl-heim[r] / Hel-heim[r] (alt. Nifl-hel), Muspells-heim[r], and Svartalf-heim[r] / Myrk-heim[r] (alt. Nidavellir).}

{E Legends of the proto-Aztec city of Teotihuacan (later known as “Tula”) were based on this city. Also of note is the Nahua / Culhua legend of “Chico-moztoc”, said to have been the birthplace of mankind. This is one of many “Eden” variations around the world.}

{F These tales were likely inspired by the Tibetan legend of seven idyllic “beyul” [hidden valleys] known as “Nghe-Beyul Khembalung”. They may have also been inspired by the Judaic legends of “Ophir” (depicted as a city of gold and peacocks in the Hebrew Bible). Legends of mysterious lost cities proliferated during the earliest era of exploration in the “New World”. Another was the so-called “Ciudad Blanca” [“White City”; a.k.a. city of the Monkey God], said to be located in the rain-forests of Mosquitia (present-day Honduras). Explorers have often let their imaginations run amok, and hypothesized fantastical cities in mysterious lands–as with European’s hubbub about “Houssa” in the middle of the “Dark Continent”.}

{G The city was originally named “Adma” by the Assyrians (alt. “Admum” in Aramaic). The ancient Greeks referred to it as “Orrh[o]a”, probably after its name in Syriac: “Urhay”. “Urhay” was also the basis for “Urha” in Armenian, “Ar-Ruha” in Arabic, and “Riha” in Kurdish. The Seleucids re-named it “Edessa” after the Macedonian capital by the same name. The Byzantines then re-named it “Justin-opolis” after Emperor Justinian. Pursuant to the Muslim conquests, it was re-named yet again: “Sanli-Urfa” [“Glorious Urfa”]. This was the site of the Aramean city of “Paddan-Aram” [from the Aramaic “Field of Aram”]; also referred to as “Aram-Naharaim” in the Torah. Yet THAT place probably correlated with the Assyrian city of “Harran[u]” in Hanigalbat…which, in turn, corresponded to what the ancient Egyptians called “Nahrima” / “Naharin” when referring to Mitanni. That is the region Arabs refer to as “al-Jazeera” in northern Iraq (a.k.a. Kurdistan). In any case, Abraham was considered “Aramaean”, which means that he could have hailed from anywhere east of the Levant. Whether he was from Harran or from Ur, he eventually made his way to southern Canaan (near Hebron); and even ventured as far as the Sinai in eastern Egypt.}

{H It only takes a brief glance at a map to see how outrageous this claim is. On the one hand, Muslim Turks seem unable to make up their minds about whether the key events in Abraham’s life occurred in south-central Anatolia (i.e. “Aram-Naharaim”; what was dubbed “Hanigalbat” by the Assyrians) or in the Hijaz (beyond the southern edge of what the ancient Hebrews referred to as “Midian” and the ancient Greeks referred to as “Madiam”). On the other hand, one would have to suppose that the purported patriarch, while in southern Anatolia / northern Mesopotamia,

decided at some point–for no apparent reason–to migrate south across more than 2,000 kilometers of barren desert to a distant location which, at the time, had no significance whatsoever. We are invited to imagine he undertook this arduous journey as if there was suddenly a pressing need for him to erect a shrine to the Abrahamic deity in as remote a place as possible. (For more on this matter, see my essay, “Mecca And Its Cube”.) The Muslim Turks who concocted this myth about Abraham’s location did not think it through very well. But no matter. Simply declaring that the Syriac city of Urhay (originally Adma / Admu[m]; dubbed “Antiochia ad Callirhoem” by the Romans”; rechristened “Justin-opolis” by the Byzantines; what is now called “Urfa” by the Turks, and known as “Edessa” by most of the world) was the site of Abraham’s storied escapades was easy to do. The historiographical modification was done despite the presence of the Kaaba (the cubic shrine that Mohammedan lore insists Abraham personally built) in Mecca–well over 2,000 kilometers to the south. Abraham was allegedly Aramaean / Chaldean. His purported birthplace, Chaldea (the region in which “Ur” was located) was east of Babylon–almost 2,000 kilometers away from Edessa. [“Ur”, shorthand for “Ur Kasdim” in the Biblical context, could have alternately referred to “Urkesh”, “Urartu”, “Urfa” or the city of “Urim” / “Uru[k]”.] Tracking the course of Abraham’s storied life, we can see that his migration from Chaldea (i.e. “Ur Kasdim”) to the Negev (in southern Canaan) would have been a straight shot westward (1,200-1,300 kilometers across Mesopotamia) at roughly 31 degrees north latitude. (In Judaic lore, Abraham is primarily associated with the Amoritic city of “Hebron”, at the northern end of the Negev desert, on the west bank of the Jordan River.) Along this path, a detour to Edessa would have entailed venturing above the 37th parallel (almost 670 kilometers north of a direct route). A detour to Mecca would have entailed venturing down to almost the 21st parallel (close to 1,100 kilometers south of a direct route). In order for Turkish lore to make sense (whilst keeping tales of the Meccan cube intact, per Mohammedan lore), Abraham would have had to have taken BOTH detours. The best that can be said is that, in Genesis 12:1, we are told that the Abrahamic deity delivered a message in Abraham in Harranu (later named “Hellenopolis” / “Karrae” by the Byzantines), which was located at the northern edge of Mesopotamia, only about 40 kilometers south of Edessa. Note that it is not ONLY Abraham who must be magically transported to Edessa in order for this gambit to work; as Nimrod is also inserted into the local mythology of “Urfa”. (Nimrod was a Biblical character based on the Sumerian / Akkadian god, Ninurta; and often associated with the Sumerian king, Sargon of Akkad.) Hence Nimrod must be re-located from Shinar in south-eastern Mesopotamia all the way to Edessa. (Note: “Shinar” was a moniker for Babylonia derived from the Akkadian, “Shumer”;

probably corresponding to “Uruk”.) As if to make matters even more confused, THAT re-location is inconsistent with the Arab re-naming of the Assyrian city, Kalhu, after Nimrod. (Kalhu was likely the referent for “Calah” in the Hebrew Bible.) The problem with re-naming Kalhu “Nimrud” is that it was over 500 kilometers due-east of Edessa (and over 700 km north of Uru[k]), in upper Mesopotamia (just south of Nineveh). This is all a moot point anyway, as **these are fictional characters**. In a sense, then, we are entitled to pretend that they lived wherever we want them to have lived–be it in Chaldea, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Arabia, or Nebraska. A final note: There is additional mythology surrounding Nimrod in Mohammedan lore. For example, the ancient Sumerian / Akkadian city of Barsip[pa] is sometimes equated with both Nimrod and the Tower of Babel. In reality, it was the site of a ziggurat to Marduk’s son, Nabu.}