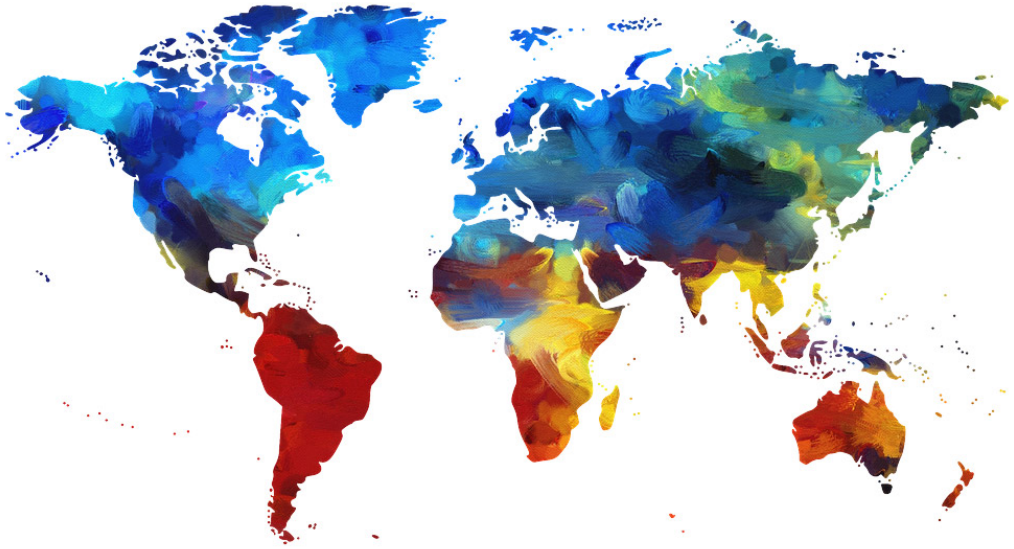
Bygone Geography III: Regional Name Changes



Things have not always been how we now think of them.As we saw in the previous essay, this goes for places as well as for people.

In part II of this series, I enumerated cities that have undergone changes in identity.Onomastic metamorphoses typically track with the prevailing (collective) narrative…which is usually dictated by those in power. As it turns out, the victors not only write the history, they determine **identities** (be they of tribes, institutions, or territories); thereby controlling how the rest of us tend to think about things.The same phenomenon has occurred with how any given peoples tend to label regions of the world.

Onomastic transitions occur in many contexts.What we call X reflects the stories we tell ourselves about what X "really is". This is true whether X is a heroic figure, an auspicious event, or a hallowed place.Just as it explains why Christians refer to the fabled Jewish carpenter from Galilee as "Jesus Christ" while Muslims refer to Mohammed of Mecca as "the Prophet", narrative discrepancy accounts for why some people refer to Canaan as "Palestine" and others as "Israel".**(For more on that, see my essay: "The Land Of Purple".)**

Typically, naming-disparities reflect the existence of different (communal) perspectives–impressions that are often culturally-informed, and sometimes tribally mandated. Identities become deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness; and determine how we “carve up” the world in which we find ourselves. Naming schemes are tailored to accord with our own heritage–usually to bolster the image of the in-group.

This is no less true when it comes to geographical demarcation. When it comes to how territory is labeled, there are numerous examples of onomastic transformation–or just onomastic disparity. Upon surveying the history of MAPS, we find that moniker-alterations reflect how any given people sees itself (spec. its legacy and its claims upon certain lands)…vis a vis how OTHERS see that people.Whatever that claim happens to be, it is rationalized via some kind of Grand Narrative–replete with a sensational foundation myth (followed by a self-serving sacred history).All of it–from etiology to eschatology–serves to legitimize whatever tribe-centric worldview happens to be on offer.

Ethno-centrism often translates to geo-centrism.It’s why the Romans simply referred to the Mediterranean Sea as “Our Sea” [“Mare Nostrum”].Who’s else would it possibly be? And as we’ll see, many countries fashioned themselves as being located at the center of the world.

Meanwhile, the Greeks referred to the Red Sea as “Maris Erythraei” [Erythrean Sea], which was associated with the Abyssinians (Sabaeans, then Aksumites) and Yemenis (esp. Himyarites). But, of course, that’s not how the locals thought of that particular body of water. For the Greeks, it was located at the world’s periphery; for the locals, it was at the center of their purview.

Self-identity is always charged with meaning. Never mind just tribes; it is not uncommon for the identities of **entire countries** to shift from epoch to epoch.

There are drawbacks to such onomastic conceit. For, once christened, the genealogy of a land’s identity is typically obfuscated by the incipient narrative. The way WE happen to now think about things is how they must INHERENTLY be…as if our taxonomy were somehow written in the stars. And so most of us are unaware what **“Aotearoa”** might be; but we are all aware of **New Zealand**.

Here are forty notable examples from around the world:

1. In **East Africa**: the Swahili coast used to be referred to as Tanga-nyika [sailing wilderness] and Zanji-barr [black coast; Latinized to “Zingium”].Mapungubwe became Munhumutapa, was then christened “Rhodesia” by British colonialists, and is now Zimbabwe.
2. **Mauretania** now encompasses Morocco, Western Sahara, and Mauritania.
3. **Numidia** (which included Kabylia) is now Tunisia and northern Algeria.Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Marmarica are now Libya (from the Roman moniker, “Libycus Nomus”). “Libya” was ostensibly based on the fabled daughter of King Epaphus of Egypt; yet was most likely based on the Phoenician moniker, “Libu”. The region was occupied by the Phoenicians in the Bronze Age, by the Punics / Carthaginians in Classical Antiquity, and by the Vandals in Late Antiquity.
4. **Nubia** was originally known as the western part of “Kush”.It is now the Sudan.
5. **K’mt** was dubbed “Misru” in Akkadian, “Mizra[im]” in Ancient Hebrew, and “Kimi” / “Keme” in Coptic.It was then dubbed “Aigyptos” by the Greeks, “Aegyptus” in Vulgar Latin, “Mizraim” in the Old Semitic languages, and “Ofir” in medieval Hebrew.(The Nile delta region was referred to as “Goshen” in Classical Hebrew.Upper Egypt was called “Pathros” / “Pathoures” or “Thebaid” by the Greeks.)The country is now called “Misr” / “Masr” in Arabic; “Egypt” in English.
6. **D’mt** (the African Horn) was referred to as “Saba” in Classical Antiquity (hence the Sabaeans).The Egyptians referred to it as “Ta Netjer[u]” [“Land of God”] and “Pwenet” [alt. “Land of Punt”; on which the Biblical “Put” is based].It then came to be known as “Abyssinia” (with Aksum in the north and Sidama in the south).During medieval times, it was considered the eastern part of “Kush”.It is now Somalia and Ethiopia.
7. The **Italic peninsula** was the land of the Tyrrhenians / Tyrsenians [“Turrhenoi” in Attic Greek; “Tursenoi” in Ionic Greek; “Tursanoi” in Doric Greek].It was then dubbed “Hesperia”.The southern end of the peninsula was known as “Lucania” to the natives (with the toe called “Bruttium”, then “Calabria”; the heel called Apulia), “Megale Hellas” to the Greeks, and “Magna Graecia” to the Romans.Throughout the Middle Ages, it was comprised a myriad kingdoms– from Genoa, Milan, Lombardy, and Venice (in the north) to Naples, Calabria, and Sicily (in the south); with Tuscany, Lazio, and Campania in the middle.It is now Italia.(Note that the modern state of Italy was only established in the 1860’s.)

8. The Greek island of **Corsica** gets its name from “Corsis”, which was a variation on “Cyrnos”…which was derived from “Seirinoydai” [Island of the Sirens].Few now associate it with the fabled island in Homer’s Odyssey.
9. **Gaul** became Gallia, then [west] Frankia, and is now France.Its northwest region was known as Aremorika (land of the Celtic “Aulerci”) in ancient times; then Neustria in the Middle Ages.Its northeast region was Austrasia.Aquitaine was in the southwest; Burgundy in the southeast.Occitania was alternately known as Septimania and “Gallia Narbonensis” in Roman times.
10. **The Kvenland** was named “Kalmar-unionen” [“Kalmar Union”] during the Renaissance.Its northern half has traditionally been referred to as “Sapmi” / “Saami-land” [land of the Saami]; and has been variously referred to as Lap-land and Fenno-scandia.The Nordic portion of Europe is now called “Scandinavia” (based on the moniker used by 6th-century Roman historian, Jordanes: “Scandza”). {1}
11. **Albion** was referred to as “Prydain” [alt. “Ynys Brydein”] by the Welsh and as “Britannia” by the Romans.It was comprised of Alba / Prydyn (i.e. Pict-land; then Land of the Scotti; now Scotland), Anglia (Land of the Angles; now England), Cymru (rendered “Walhaz” by the Saxons; now Wales), and the Land of Eiru (Ireland).It is now Eire (Ireland) and Great Britain (based on the Celtic term, “Prettani”). {2}
12. **Iberia** [i.e. the Iberian peninsula; not to be confused by the Georgian region by the same name] became Hispania–then a conglomeration of kingdoms.In the northwest, Callaecia [“Galicia”] was named after the indigenous Callaeci people.(Also note “Asturias” in the north.)During the Dark Ages, the Iberian peninsula was the Visigoth Kingdom.Roman Aquitania became Vasconia, then Gascony, then Pamplona, before being referred to as Basque country.Tarragona and Lheida became Catalonia in the northeast.The east (notably, Valencia) existed as the Kingdom of Aragon, while the center was Castile.Lusitania (the western end of the Iberian peninsula) was dubbed “Gallaecia” by the Romans; and is now Portugal (based on the Roman “port of the Gaels”).The southern end was Baetica.Throughout the Middle Ages, the Iberian peninsula (especially the Moorish south) was referred to as Andalusia [“Al-Andalus”].
13. **Old Saxony** is now Deutschland (Germany).During the Middle Ages, the western region (the Rhineland, Swabia, Hessia, Thuringia, and western Saxony) was part of “Lotharingia”.During its Celtic and Roman phase, the southeast region (Bavaria) was part of “Vindelicia”.During the Renaissance and Enlightenment, much of northern Europe was referred to as “Hansa Teutonica” [alt. “Dudesche Hanse” in German; the “Hanseatic League”].

14. Norig became Noricum, then **Galicia** (not to be confused with the region on the north-western Iberian peninsula by the same name; itself originally “Callaecia”), then Rugi[i]land (named after the Germanic tribe, the Rugii)… before eventually being named “Öster-reich” [a.k.a. **“Austria”**], the lower part of which was medieval Carinthia.Galicia also encompassed parts of Lower (northern) **Silesia**, which is now southwest Poland.Kashubia and eastern Pomerania (a.k.a. “Pomerelia”) is now north Poland.Mazovia is now northeast Poland.**Volhynia** was southeast Poland, stretching into northwestern Ukraine and Belarus (i.e. Greater Lithuania).Southeastern Poland was once part of Polesia–a land originally known for the Drevlians which stretched eastward across what is now southern Belarus and northern Ukraine.Medieval names for Poland were [Land of the] “Lyakhi” (Polan) and “Civitas Schinesghe” (Piast). It was also considered the land of the “Wends” [western Slavic tribes]. “Poland” is derived from Land of the Polans.
15. **Bohemia, Moravia,** and Upper (southern) **Silesia** now comprise the Czech Republic.The northern Slavic lands (from Greater Lithuania to eastern Germany) included “Lusatia”.
16. Land of the Cimmerians became **Sarmatia** (Greco-Roman).Crimea was known as “Taurika”.The region was part of the Hunnic Empire, then the land of the Avars during the Dark Ages.It is now Ukraine.Western Ukraine was **Ruthenia** (based on the original name for the entire Slavic region: all of far-eastern Europe (the northern end of which became Greater Lithuania: at one point, Europe’s largest commonwealth). THAT became Kievan Rus. It is now the European part of Russia (west of the Ural mountains). The eastern end (i.e. northeast Asia, comprised largely of Siberia) was the land of the Xiongnu, then of the Xian-bei, and then of the various Turkic peoples, the Mongols, Khitans, Liao, etc.
17. **Bessarabia / Moldavia** and **Podolia** are now southwestern Ukraine and Moldova.Volhynia is now northwestern Ukraine (as well as southeast Poland and into southern Belarus.)Polesia is northern Ukraine and southern Belarus.
18. **The Pontic / Volga Steppes** was the land of the Huns [simply meaning “People” in Old Turkic], then of the Alans.It was [k]Hazaria [land of the Khazars] in the Dark Ages; and stretched through “Zhety-su” (the Almaty region).It now encompasses eastern Ukraine, Chechnya / Dagestan (the northern Caucuses), and western Khazakstan.Prior to the [k]Hazars, the Romans referred to the northern end of the Caucuses as “Circassia”.The southern Caucuses now encompass Georgia, Shirvan, and Armenia.The name “Caucuses” is derived from the Scythian moniker, “kroy-khasis”, meaning glistening snow.Kolkhis [alt.

"Colchis"] (Greek) was later known by the Romans as Egrisi / Lazika and Kartli.It was also known as "Iberia" (not to be confused with the region in western Europe by the same name).It then became Georgia and Abkhazia.Meanwhile, the archaic Kingdom of "Biai-nili" (alt. "Biaini") was variously dubbed "Hayasa-Azzi", "Urartu", "Arsissa" (alt. "Arsene"), and "Van" (land around the lake by the same name).This likely corresponded with the Kingdom of Ararat in the Hebrew Bible (a moniker based either on "Urartu" or the Akkadian / Assyrian name for the region, "Aratta").It was then known as "Arme-Shupria"; then as "[Land of the] Nairi" (alt. "Nihriya"); then as "Urartu" / "Aratta".It was later called "Hayk", and is now "Hayastan".In most countries today, it is rendered "Armenia", a name based on the Old Persian "Arminiya", which was based on the Elamite "Harminu[ia]".The homeland of the Armenian is NOT in what is now "Armenia"; rather, it was in eastern Anatolia (in the vicinity of Lake Van, within the modern nation of "Turkey"). And as stated below, much of Eurasia came to be called "Tatar-stan".

19. **Illyria**, heart of the Macedonian Empire, became "Rumelia" under the Ottomans.("Rum" is the Arabic moniker for Rome; and primarily referred to those of the Byzantine Empire.)The region is now simply referred to as the "Balkans".**"Pannonia"** was at the northern end, which is now Slovenia / Croatia. **"Dalmatia"** was temporarily called "Ragusa"; and is now Croatia / Bosnia / Kosovo / Montenegro.Serbia, which was "Duklja" ["Diokleia" in Greek; "Dioclea" in Latin], is to the east.During Russia's Soviet era, most of the region was rendered "Yugo-slavia" [Land of Southern Slavs; i.e. Slovenes, Croats, Bosnians, Kosovans, Montenegrins, and Serbs].Arbena / Arvana is now Albania.Northern Macedonia is still along the boarder of Greece.
20. **Dacia** came to be comprised of Wallachia, Moldavia, and Transylvania.It was alternately dubbed "Trans-nistria"; and now encompasses Romania and Moldova.What is now Hungary, Northern Romania, and Moldova fell within the domain of the Avars, then the Bulgars during the Dark Ages.Hungary, known as "Bash-gird" in ancient times, then "Etelköz" in the Middle Ages, would eventually become the land of the Magyars (a Turkic people who had migrated from the east), which it remains to the present day.
21. **Thrace** was part of Greek "Lysimachos", which included Lydia.It was then Odryssa during Classical Antiquity; then Zagura in the Middle Ages.It is now Bulgaria (including northwestern Turkey around Byzantium, including Hellespontos / the Bosporos / the Dardanelles).
22. Luwiya was referred to as **"Lydia"** in Classical Antiquity–which was comprised of Phrygia [Land of the Mushki], Bithynia, Mysia, Caria, and Lykia [alt. Lycaea].It

was originally known as Assuwa (Hurrian), then Arzawa (Hittite, then Luwian).The Greeks referred to the coastal region as “Aeolia”, then “Ionia”, then Paphlagonia / Pergamon (“Pergamum” by the Romans, after the city of the same name).It is now western Turkey.

23. Overall, **Anatolia** was initially known as “Hatti matu” [land of the “Hatti”; Hittite], then as “Lydia”.Its central to eastern part was comprised of Galatia, Pontus, Cappadocia, and Cilicia (alt. “Sophene”).During medieval times, the Germans referred to it as the “Morgenland” (place where the sun rises); a vague region that may have included the Levant.Its southeastern region has always been part of Kurdistan.The region is now Turkey.(Cyprus was known as “Alashiya” in ancient times.)
24. Mitanni (Hurrian / Hittite);Hanigalbat (Assyrian); Naharin (Egyptian) is now **Kurdistan**.The Sumerians originally referred to it as the “Land of Karda”.During the Assyrian Empire, northern Mesopotamia was also referred to Nineveh (after its principle city).When it was part of the Armenian Kingdom, it was called “Adiabene”.The Persian end of Kurdistan was known as “Gaugamela”.Arabs referred to it as “al-Jazira” in the Middle Ages [not to be confused with al-Jazeera, meaning “the island”].
25. **Mesopotamia** was variously Sumer[ia], Assyria, and Babylonia. Eastern Mesopotamia: Originally the land of “Nod”; then dubbed “Shin’ar” (Canaanite), “Shanhar[a]” (Hittite), and “Sngr” (Egyptian).Its Biblical (Hebrew) name was “Shinar”.It was known as “Bet[h] Nahrain” (House of Two Rivers) in Aramaic.Its southern region was sometimes referred to as “Chaldea” [alt. “the Chaldees”]; and later, “Kashdim”.It was referred to as “Khvarvaran” by the Persians.During Late Antiquity, it was generally referred to by its Syriac name (from the Aramaic, “Bet Nahrain”); or by its Hebraic offshoot: “Aram-Naharaim”.The Chinese referred to it as “Dashi Guo”.It is now named “al-Iraq”, a moniker based on a vulgarization of the Sumerian city, “Uruk”.
26. Amurru (the Amorite moniker) became **Phoenicia** [“Land of Purple”], which became “Itur[a]ea” under the Romans; “S[h]uristan” by the Persians; and is now Lebanon.The region roughly corresponds to “Aram Zoba” in the Hebrew Bible.Subar[tum] was referred to as “al-Sham” by medieval Arabs; and is now Syria (stretching across the upper Levantine region).Assyria was “Athura” in Assyrian.
27. Epirus, Macedonia, Boeotia, Aetolia, Aeolia (named after King Aeolus; later dubbed Thessalia / Thessaly), Attica, the Peloponnese (e.g. Athens, Achaea, Corinthia, and Arcadia), Euboea, and Kaptara / Kaphtor / Keftiu [alt. “Kretes”;

a.k.a. “Crete”] are now collectively known as the Hellenic Republic (a.k.a. **“Greece”**).The region was known as “Yaw[n]an” in Aramaic / Syriac.

28. **Trans-oxiana** [alt. “Trans-oxania”] was a vague term for the region spanning central Asia–from the Caucuses, across the Eurasian Steppes, to the Mongol “Ordus” [place of palaces] (i.e. Mongolia), to the Altai mountains.This region was the homeland of the Cimmerians, the Huns, and the myriad Turkic tribes.In the Greco-Roman world, it was known as Scythia / Sak[h]a–which had also been dubbed the vague “Yamna”. The label “Scythians” often conflated the Cimmerians with the various Turkic tribes populating the Eurasian Steppes. It was referred to as “Cumania” [alt. “Comania”] by the Turkic-Mongol peoples (part of which was “Zhetysu”); which later became the Kanghar Union (which incorporated lands of the Kimeks, Karluks, and Kypchaks).It was then referred to as “Ma-wara al-Nahr” [land beyond the river] by the Arabs; and “Desht-i Kipchak” [land of the Kipchaks] by the Persians.Later, it was referred to as “Pole Poloveckoe” / “Poloveckaja Step” by the Russians.Its eastern end was named “Xvarazm”–a vague term for the myriad peoples of northeastern Asia. {11}The region now encompasses Tatarstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Badakhshan, and Kyrgyzstan. In the northern regions, the label “Sibera” derived from Turko-Mongolic moniker: “Sibir”. West Sibera was known as “Yugra” / “Yamalia” (Siberian peoples were known as “Samoyed”).
29. **Persia** was originally known as “Aryanem Vaejah” [Land of the Aryans].Its earliest inhabitants were the Kassites–with the land of the Elamites [“Suz”; i.e. Elam] on the southern end (now known as Khuzestan); and the land of the Guti [basis for “Gutium”] at the northwestern end. The north was alternately known as “Mania” / “Mannea” (land of Urartian / Hurrian peoples, the Mannaeans) during much of the Bronze Age. It then became “Media” / “Mada” (land of the Medai / Medes) during the Iron Age.It was then known as “Eran Shahr” under the Achaemenid Empire, which was referred to by the ancient Greeks as “Antigonos”.During Classical Antiquity, the northeast was referred to as “Hyrkania” by the Greeks (likely based on the Akkadian “Urkananu”), which was later dubbed “Varkana” then “Karkan” / “Gurgan” then “Tabaristan” by the Persians.Western Persia was originally known as “Gutium”; then referred to as “Khuzistan”. During the early Middle Ages, the north was called “Daylam[an]” (alt. “Tabaristan”); and the south was called “Elam” (its archaic name) or “Shiraz”.The entire region has now adopted its ancient moniker, “Iran”. {3} What was called “Adurbadagan” [alt. “Aturpatakan”] by the Achaemenids, Parthians, and Sassanians (“Atropatene” by the Greeks), is now Azerbaijan.

30. Gandhara, Punjab, and Sindh (as well as eastern Balochistan and Waziristan) are now the modern nation-State, **“Pakistan”** [Land of the Pure” in Middle Persian, which was rendered in the national language, “Urdu”, itself a variation on Hindi].
31. Kasparia is comprised of Balti-yul [a.k.a. Baltistan] in the north, (Tibetan) Ladakh in the southeast, and (Hindu) Jammu in the southwest.It is now called **“Kashmir”**, a contraction of “Kashyapa Mir” [“lake of Kashyapa”; named after the fabled “rishi” in Vedic lore]. {4}In Classical Antiquity, its southeastern part (near Bengal) was “Magadha” / “Sunga” / “Pala”, which corresponded with the eastern end of “Nanda”.
32. **Bengal** was originally known as “Mala”; referred to as [land of the] “Gangaridai” by the ancient Greeks.It was comprised of Vanga and Samatata.It then became [v]Anga / Pundra; then Kamarupa; which would correspond with the eastern end of the Nanda Empire (later the eastern end of the Mauryan Empire).To the west was Davaka, which was later referred to as “Asam”.Pursuant to the British exit (after the Second World War), Bengal was briefly considered East Pakistan before achieving independence–as “Bangladesh”.
33. Pagan [the region, not the city] became **Burma** before being named “Mya-ma” [a.k.a. “Myanmar”; meaning “fast, strong”].
34. After the Fu-nan era, northern Siam was Hariphun-jaya (Mon); then Dvara-vati (Mon) / Singha-na-vati (Lan-Na); then Ngoen-yang; then Lavo (Mon) / Lan-Na (Lan-Na); and then–most famously–the Kingdom of Ayutthaya (Siamese; based on the Vedic “Ayodhya”, reputed birthplace of Rama).In mid-Siam, the antecedent to Ayutthaya was Sukhothai (Siamese).It is now **Thailand**, stretching all the way down to Malaya (as of 1948).Lan Xang became Isan (now northeast Thailand) and Lao.In the south, “Kadaram” (Tamil) became “Sai Buri” (Siamese), then “Kedah” (Malay).
35. **Taiwan** was called “Formosa” by the Portuguese and the Dutch.The Chinese government now insists on referring to it as “Zhong-hua Min-guo”. {5}It currently fashions itself as the Republic of China; which is independent from the **People’s** Republic of China (a.k.a. “China”).Meanwhile, China considers the island “Chinese Tai-pei” to remind everyone that they stake their claim upon the it.
36. After the Fu-nan era, Van Lang (land of the “Au Lac”) bifurcated into northern and southern regions.In the south was “Lam-Ap” (“Lin-yi” in Chinese) [alt. “Nagara Cham-Pa” (“Chiem Thanh” in Chinese); i.e. land of the “Cham”].In the north was “Dai Viet”; which became “Thuan Viet” during the Chinese “Nan-Yue”

period.From the 2nd century thru the 19th century, the majority of the region remained a confederation known as “Cham-Pa” (“Zhan-cheng” in Chinese).It is now Nam-Viet (a.k.a. **“Vietnam”**).

37. Fu-nan became Vnom [alt. “Nokor Phom”] (Old Khmer), which became Chenla (Chinese), then Angkor / Kamboja (Khmer); and is now **Cambodia**. (The Khmer Rouge temporarily re-christened the nation “Campuchia”.)
38. Silla became Goryeo, and is now the **Korean peninsula**.(Goguryeo is now North Korea.)
39. Wa was alternately referred to as Yamatai-koku / Yamoto-koku.It is now Nihon [alt. “Nippon”; Land of the Rising Sun] (a.k.a. **“Japan”**).
40. Sumatra, Bali, and Java now comprise **Indonesia**.Pu Luo Jong [alt. “Pulau Ujong”] is now Singapore Island (based on the Pali moniker “Singha Pura”, meaning city of the lion).Sri-Vijaha, on the Malay peninsula, is now “Malaysia”.

In modern times, we have seen various instances of geographical re-branding–as when Mobutu Sese Seko re-named Congo “Zaire”; and when the French re-named Burkina Faso “Haut Volta”. {6}

The most ridiculous of such branding schemes was the former Gola Kingdom in West Africa (now Liberia).Its urban center was named “Cape Mesurado” [alt. “Mont-serrado”] by the Portuguese, then “Christopolis” by the Americans who were enslaving its native population (Liberians), and then “Monrovia” after U.S. President Jame Monroe.Oddly, it retains this last moniker to the present day. {7}

Ask the next American history buff where the nation called “Lenape-Hoking” was located.A blank stare is typically the reaction.Answer: It was the original name for the land that now encompasses western Long Island, New York City, southern New York State, all of New Jersey, eastern Pennsylvania, and Delaware (i.e. one of the most significant areas in what is now the United States of America).It was occupied by the “Lenape” tribe.(WHO?Exactly.)How many Americans are aware of this?Since the Lenape now have ZERO geo-political significance, this fact has been relegated to complete irrelevance–irrespective of its historical saliency.Most Americans don’t even pretend to be aware about such things.Few even care to know. {8}

Sometimes naming conventions catch on…even across cultures and epochs. The Persian suffix, “-[i]stan” for “Land of” was adopted by the Kurds, Tatars, Kazakhs, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Turkmen, and Afghans to name their respective lands.In the Caucuses, the Avars / Dargins refer to their region as “Dag-e-stan”.

This nomenclature was also adopted by Muslims living east of the Hindu Kush when they established their modern nation-State: “Land of the Pure” (“pak” is Middle Persian for purity). The suffix was even adopted by local ethnic groups–like the Waziris, Baloch, and Pashtun.Meanwhile, India was alternately referred to as “Hindu-stan”; Kashmir as “Baltistan”; and Kushan / Tukhara as “Tokharistan”. The land of the Sak[h]a[s] (Scythians) was sometimes referred to as “Sakastan” / “Sagastan” / “Sijistan”. {10}The ancient Persian label for Phoenicia was “S[h]uristan” [possibly: “Land of Ashur”].And to this day, Persians refer to Arabia as “Arab-e-stan”.

Such nomenclature was eschewed by Bengals (who opted for **“Bangla-desh”** instead of “Bengal-istan”; as “desh[a]” is Sanskrit for “land”), Mongols (who opted for **“Mongol Ulus”** instead of “Mongol-istan”; though “Mogholestan” is sometimes used as an exonym), and post-Ottoman Turks (who opted for the Anglicized **“Türkiye”** instead of “Turk-istan”).As a reminder that the origins of the Turkic peoples was in central Asia, during the Ottoman era, Occidentals often referred to its farthest (eastern) reaches, vaguely, as “Turkestan” (though not quite as vague as “the Orient”).

Interestingly, the Azeris opted for Azerbaijan instead of “Azeri-stan”; as there happened to be homophony with the ancient Persian “Aturpatakan[a]”…which was later rendered “Adharbadhadjan”…which served as a rough cognate for the present moniker.

As it turns out, there’s a lot in a name!Ten more fascinating case-studies:

ONE: China’s ancient (Ching) name was “Tian Chao” [“Heavenly Empire”].It was alternately referred to as “Tian-Xia” [“Everything Under Heaven”]; and as “Tabghach” in Old Turkic (in association with the Xian-bei people).It is comprised of many regions with a variegated array of labyrinthine histories.

During Antiquity, the Greeks referred to China as “Serika” (alt. “Serice”; and its people as “Seres”). The Romans rendered this “Sina[e]”. During the Middle ages, things started to change even more. China was referred to by medieval Europeans as “Cathay” / “Cathai” (derived from the Uyghur moniker for the Khitans: “Xitay”), which was rendered “Khata[y]” by the Persians, and then “Qata” / “Qita” by the Arabs. This was rendered in Slavic / Turkic as “Kitay” and in Turko-Mongolic as “Kitad”.

Much of western China is actually Tibet, which is comprised of three regions: Ü-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham; yet the current government insists on referring to it as “Xi-zang”.It was originally “Zhang-Zhung”, then “Ringpung-pa”, then “Tsang-pa”.

In the northeast, Manchuria (land of the Manchu) is now referred to as “Heilong-jiang”. It was originally the land of the Jurchen and Khitan peoples.

In the southeast, “Heung Gong” is now referred to as “Xiang-Gang” [alt. “Hong Kong”; “Fragrant Harbor”].Guang-dong was originally part of Nanyue, then Bao’an, then Xin’an.Formerly “Mazi” / “Manchin” (Latinized to “Mangi”), it was given the Anglicized moniker, “Canton” while part of the British Empire.

The northern rim is now referred to as “Nei Mongol”.From [d]Zung[h]aria [“Dzun-ghar” means West Land] (a.k.a. “Turkestan”; formerly known as “Xi-Yu” or “Uyghuria”; the land of the Uyghurs, which is now dubbed “Xin-jiang” by the Chinese for propagandistic purposes) in the northwest…going eastward through Qing-hai and Sichuan…all the way to Manchuria in the northeast…and southward to Guang-dong in the southwest, “China” now labels a vast expanse, encompassing a vast mosaic of different regions.

Currently, the entire country is collectively referred to as “Zhong-guo” [Middle Kingdom]; alternately rendered “Zhong-hua Min-guo” [“Middle-people’s Kingdom”].The nation-state’s official name is “Zhong-hua Ren-Min Gong-he-guo”, roughly translated as “Middle-people’s Kingdom of Gong”; though–for simplicity’s sake–people tend to just translate it as the “People’s Republic of China”, with its Orwellian “communist” overtones. {9}

This is a reminder that it is not uncommon for nations to fashion themselves to be not only CONCEPTUALLY at the center of the world, but GEOGRAPHICALLY at the center of the world.

What we now call “China” has most of its history in the eastern half.It went through many periods: Xia to Shang to Zhou to Qin…after which extensive Balkanization set it (during the “Warring States” period), involving a potpourri of states (Yan, Zhao, Qi, Wei, Chu, Yue, etc.)The next phases consisted of Han to Jin to Song to Sui to Tang to Song (again) to Yuan to Ming to Qing.

“Chin[a]” is a play on the “Qin” dynasty (where “Q” is pronounced “Ch”), which–funny enough–was itself derived from the Sanskrit word, “c[h]ina”.It was on that phoneme that the Persian moniker “Chin” and the Greco-Roman moniker “Sinae” were based; as well as the Japanese “Shina” / “Zhina”.

Since Mao Tse-Tung’s disastrous reign, the Chinese government has been persnickety about what things are called–especially contested areas.Most notably, they refuse to refer to Tibet as “Tibet”; or to even acknowledge its existence as a country.As far as they are concerned, that it REALLY IS Tibet is entirely beside the point.They re-label it so as to deny it any distinct identity; and re-write history to justify their position.

TWO: The island now known as “Sri Lanka” was originally referred to as “Lak-diva”–a moniker derived from the “Elu” Prakrit.The Tamils called it “Eelam”; the Sinhalese called it “Lanka”.The two ethnic groups have been claiming the island for themselves for millennia–a feud that persists to the present day.

As a kingdom, the island was first known as Tambapanni, then Upatissa Nuwara, then Anuradhapura.The ancient Greeks called it “Taprobana” after the first kingdom.The Persians called it “Serendip[pa]”; on which the Romans based the Latinized “Serendivis” (basis for the term “serendipity”).Later, medieval Greeks re-named it “Sielen Diva”…on which the Europeans based their myriad variations of the familiar moniker, “Ceylon” (primarily a vulgarization of the Portuguese “Ceilão”).Like any other place on earth, the island’s identity is a function of those who stake their claim upon it.

THREE: There used to be a region referred to by the Sumerians as “Melukhkha” (likely the Indus Valley civilization around the ancient city, Harappa).It was first officially known as “Jambudvipa” by its inhabitants.The north was called “Arya-varta” (esp. during the Nanda and Maurya period), itself comprised of Kuru, Panchala, and Kosala.This was then referred to as “Uttaranchal” [later rendered “Uttara-khand[a]”; Northern Land], comprised of “Manas-khand[a]” and “Kedar-khand[a]”; and is now sometimes dubbed “Devbhumi” [Land of the Gods].In the west was Rangpur, which became Anarta, then Gurjara, then Saurashtra / Sorath, and is now Gujarat.In the center was “Malav[a]” (a.k.a. “Malwa”).In the east, the fabled land of “Kalinga” roughly corresponded to what became “Orissa” (alt. “Oddiyana”; now named “Odisha”).

This all persisted through the Gupta period.

The south was called “Pandyas” (alt. “Dravida”, after the Dravidians, who had migrated from the north) in Classical Antiquity.It was then called “Tamil-akam” during the Sangam period.The central part of India came to be called the “Deccan” (which included areas in the south, like Karnataka).The fabled land of “Vraja Bhoomi” became “Braj” / “Brij”, now Uttar Pradesh.

Prior to British colonialism, there was no “Pakistan”.That part of the region–known in ancient times as “Sindhu”–was comprised of the Punjab, Baluchistan, and Sindh. (Ironically, “India” is a Hellenized version of “Sindh”, which the British erroneously applied to the entire region during its colonial period.)

The entire region was later renamed “Nabhi-varsa”…and then “Bharat[a]”…and then “Hindustan”.The region now encompasses Pakistan, Kashmir, India, and Bangladesh.India (a moniker based on the Sanskrit term, “Shindu”, meaning Land of the Indus River) has re-adopted its ancient name, “Bharat[a]”.

FOUR: The aforesaid Transoxiana stretched across the Eurasian Steppes, and was home to the fabled Silk Road, which was pioneered during the Gök-türk and Onoq (a.k.a. Western Turkic) Khaganates.Through the Eurasian Steppes, it corresponded with what would be [k]Hazaria and then (Kipchak) Cumania.The southeastern-most part of the region–spanning from eastern Persia to the Hindu Kush–has had myriad names, depending on who was doing the naming and how it was carved up.To mention sixteen:

- Sibyrtios (Greek) [possibly the basis for “Siberia”]
- Ma-wara an-Nahr [alt. “Land Beyond the River” in Arabic]
- Oshru-sana / Us[t]ru-shana [alt. “Suduj-shana”]
- Great Liao (Chinese)
- Qara Khitai (Khitan)
- Vaek-r-ta
- Peithon
- Xiyon [alt. Xion / Xyon]
- Margiana (“Margus” in Latin)
- Daxia (“Ta-Hsia” in Chinese)
- Ta-Yuan (Chinese for “Great Ionian”)
- Seyansih
- Saka[-stan] {10}
- Sijistan {10}
- Zavolistan / Zabulistan

The region now encompasses Khorasan province (in eastern Iran), through Turkmenistan, and into Afghanistan.

The eastern-most end of this massive swath of land stretches through Afghanistan and into Pakistan (an area comprised of Pakhtun-khwa, Waziristan, Sistan, and western Baluchistan).This was at various times referred to as Indo-Scythia (in reference to the Eurasian steppes) or Indo-Parthia (in reference to Persia) by Western geographers.It was comprised of:

- “Haraiva” (Aryan); “Aria[na]” [alt. “Ariane”] (Hellenic)
- “Kirman” (Aryan); “Karmania” (Hellenic)
- “Harauti” (Aryan); “Arachosia” (Hellenic)
- “Zranka” / “Zarangiana” (Aryan); “Drangiana” (Hellenic)
- “Mak[r]a” (Aryan); “Gedrosia” (Hellenic)

This end of the region has most commonly been referred to as “Bactria”–named after the ancient city of Baktra (alt. “Balkh”).Thus “Bactria” has traditionally been used to name the eastern-most reaches of the Persian realm, beyond Khorasan and toward the Hindu Kush.Other names have included:

- Turan [alt. “Tuzh”] (Land of Tur)
- Khwarezm[ia] {11}
- Bukhara (after the city by the same name)
- Gandhara
- Ghazna
- Tukhara / Tokharistan (the Kushan name for their homeland)
- Kushan (the non-Kushan name for Tukhara)
- Kuchi / Qiuzi / Yue-zhi (the Chinese name for Kushan)
- Kucha[r] (the Uyghur name for Kushan)
- Sug[u]da / Sogd / Sogdia[na]
- Kang-ju

It was also the land of the Kidarites and Hephthalites.This area has a mesmerizingly complex history, as it changed hands many times: from the Tahirids to the Saffarids to the Samanids to the Ghaznavids to the Ghurids to the Mongols to the Timurids to the Safavids to the Kartids and Muzzafarids to the Mughals to the Hotaks to the Afsharids.

During Late Antiquity, the Hindu Kush was referred to as “Khanoum” by the Seleucid Persians.

FIVE: The area traditionally referred to as the “Levant” (briefly referred to as “Greater Syria” in the early 20th century) encompasses the Sinai, Canaan, trans-Jordan (the land to the east of the Jordan River), Lebanon, and Syria.The ancient Egyptians referred to it as “Retjenu”.

Originally, the upper Levant was referred to as “Ebir-Nari” by the Akkadians.That was the basis for “Abar-Nahara” in Aramaic, and then “Aber Nahra” in neo-Aramaic (i.e. Syriac).It was then “Yamhad”.The ancient Greeks referred to it as “Itouraia”.Meanwhile, it was called “Aram” in Ancient Hebrew, which was a derivative of the alternate Akkadian name, “Amurru[m]”. (This may have been another possible location for “Uz”, home of the prophet, Job…though it may well have been to the south, in Edom rather than Aram.) Hence the name for its indigenous people, the Aramaeans.(Judaic tradition fashions this moniker as a reference to Noah’s grandson, Aram, via Shem; hence “S[h]emitic”.) {12}This is confusing, as the same region was also considered the land of the Ebla-ites (named after the city of Ebla).At its northern end, it was also known as “Hamath” and “Luhuti”.The region was also associated with various cities: Tyre, Ugarit, Ebla, Sidon, Bibloa, etc. (see part one of this series, on forgotten cities).

From before Classical Antiquity, the area along the Mediterranean coast was Phoenicia.The region, from “Tur Lebnon” [Mount Lebanon] to “Ceole-Syria” [the Bekaa Valley] was re-named “Iturea” by the Romans (based on the ancient Greek moniker).

Later, the area was referred to as “Al-Sham” by the Arabs.It now encompasses the modern nation-states of Lebanon and Syria.

The mid- to lower-Levant has traditionally been referred to as (the ethnically-neutral) “Canaan”, based on the Canaanite name “Kn’n” (Akkadian “Kinahhu” / “Kinahni”; Eblaite “Ka-na-na[-um]”; Phoenician “Khna”); which was Old Assyrian for “Land of Purple” (see my essay by that name for more on this history).It was referred to explicitly as “Canaan” throughout Classical Antiquity by virtually everyone (including the Exilic Period, during which much of the Hebrew Bible was composed). {13}The Neo-Assyrians (a.k.a. “Babylonians”) referred to this as the Land of the Hatti (ref. the Babylonian Chronicles).Starting in the 12th century B.C., the Egyptians had referred to it as “Retjenu”.

To the west of the Jordan River, Canaan was comprised of Philistia in the south and Galilee in the north.The ancient Egyptians referred to this area as “Amor” / “Amurru” (due to its inhabitants, the Amorites).However, as mentioned above, they referred to the entire Levantine region (from the Negev up to northern Syria) as “Retjenu”.

Note that when Herodotus went to Canaan in the 5th century B.C., he referred to its residents as “Palaistine” / “Palentinias”.(There was no mention of any people who fashioned themselves “Israelites”.“Israel” referred to a group of people, not to a tract of land.)Later, the Romans christened it “Palestina”, after the former indigenous population, the Philistines.

The ancient Hebrews referred to the upper half of Canaan as “Samaria” (in which was the kingdom of Israel, so the story goes) and the lower half as “Judea” (in which was the kingdom of Judah, so the story goes).The Old Semitic moniker for the former was “Shomron” and for the latter was “Yehud[ah]”–both of which were then used in Hebrew.(A Jewish person is thus often referred to as a “Yehudi”.)Only in the modern era was this stigmatizing as a Jewish “homeland” (“eretz [y]Israel”) by Revisionist Zionists. {13}

During the Holy Roman Empire, Canaan was intermittently considered the (Roman Catholic) Kingdom of Jerusalem; though the Ottoman Empire maintained the Romanized name (“Palaestina[e]”)–thereby associating that moniker with Dar al-Islam.(The modern Arabic moniker, “Filastin” is based on the Roman name, which itself has nothing to do with Islam; as its etymology is based on the Philistines.)It is now Palestine; which contains–in large part–the ethno-State of “Israel”. {14}

To the east of the Jordan river, the region was comprised of Aram[ea] in the north, Ammon in the middle, and Moab (dubbed “Peraea” by the Romans) in the south. (Aramaean tribes had come from even further east.)It was alternately referred to as “Karkor” in the Hebrew Bible.It then became Nabataea.It was sometimes referred to as “Gilead” in medieval Judaic folklore.It is now the (Hashemite) Kingdom of Jordan.

To the far south, the region was originally Se’ir / Edom, later rendered “Idumaea” during Classical Antiquity.

SIX: During Classical Antiquity, northwestern Arabia was referred to as “Midian” [rendered “Madyan” in Classical Arabic] (not to be confused with the Median Empire, land of the Medes, in southern Persia; a.k.a. “Elam”); as with the Biblical land from whence Jethro hailed (based on the name of Abraham’s son via his concubine, Keturah).In Classical Hebrew, it was referred to as “Uz”; as with the Biblical land

from whence Job hailed.It was then referred to as “Thamud”–which is why we encounter that moniker in the Koran’s seventh Surah.By medieval times, it was referred to as the Hijaz.

The northern end of Arabia was dubbed “Kedar” (hence the “Qedarites”); and later the “Nafud”.The southern part of Arabia was “Hadhramaut”, with Yemen sometimes designated as “Himyar”.In the Koran, it is referred to as “Ad” and “Al-Ahqaf” [sandy plains; sand-dunes].Meanwhile, central Arabia has historically been referred to as the “Najd” (with the northern end of the desert called “Nafud”).At the eastern end of the peninsula was the archaic land of “Dilmun”–referred to as “Makkan” / “Magan” by the Sumerians, then as “Tylos” by the Greco-Romans, then as “Awal” by pre-Islamic Arabians (alt. “Mazun”).It was alternately dubbed “Beth Qatraye” in Syriac.This area now encompasses “Bahrayn” [“two seas”], “Katara” [now rendered “Qatar”], “Arabiyyah al-Mutahidah” [“Arabians who are united”; typically rendered the “United Arab Emirates”], and “Oman”.

The majority of Arabia is now–tragically–associated with the (Wahhabi) House of Saud–first as “Emirate of Diriyah”, then as “Saudi Arabia”. {15}

SEVEN: The British colonies of America were originally referred to–colloquially–as “Columbia”.Columbia came to be the name of the dauntless frontier-spirit of those moving to the New World, personified as a valiant female.Pursuant to the instantiation of American Exceptionalism, she was re-branded as the patron saint of Manifest Destiny.Later still, she was transplanted by “Lady Liberty” (a re-purposing of the Roman “Justitia”, herself derived from the Greek goddess, Dike). {16}

They were rendered the original twelve (then thirteen, once Delaware broke off from Pennsylvania) confederated States of America (ergo the “Articles of the Confederation”) after independence in 1783.This would be rendered the “United States of America” in the advent of the drafting of the Constitution of the new Republic in 1787.

Later, the French “Louisiana” territories, the (formerly Mexican) Republic of Texas, the Russian colonies of America (“Alyaska”; now rendered “Alaska”), and the islands of Hawaii would all be incorporated into the union.All of it was seized from myriad indigenous American tribes, even as the native population was systematically eradicated.

In the French colonies of the northeast coast, there was “Nova Scotia” (meaning “Not Scotland”), “Quebec” (based on the Algonquin “Kebec”, meaning “where the rivers meet”), and Newfoundland (originally “Mi’kma’ki” before it was settled by Norsemen).

“Latin America” effectively refers to the entirety of land in the Western Hemisphere barring the United States and Canada–thus spanning from Cape Horn up to the Rio Grande.The progeny of the European colonialists in North America now fashion themselves as “Americans”, though this is typically a colloquialism for citizens of the United States.The moniker “America” derives from the name of the Italian explorer, “Amerigo Vespucci” (itself based on the Latin name, “Americus”).“Canada” derives from the Iroquois term for settlement, “Kanata”.“Mexico” derives from the Aztec / Nahuatl moniker, “Mexica”.

EIGHT: Belgium is comprised of Wallonia (a concatenation of French Walloon, Luxembourgish, and German oriented around Brabant, in the Ardennes region) and Flanders (the Flemish off-shoot of Netherlands).During the Roman Empire, it was part of “Gallia Belgica”–itself named after a Celtic / Germanic people dubbed the “Belgae”.The current national boundary is the result of a long history of convoluted interplay between Frisian (Dutch) and Burgundian (French) fiefdoms.So WHAT IS “Belgium”?It derives its name from the Roman moniker.

NINE: Batavia was originally located within “Gallia Belgica”.During the Middle Ages, it became Nederlanden [“low lands”], which is now sometimes associated with one of its parts, “Holland” (i.e. the region along the western coast)…even as all its parts (from Frisia in the north to Brabant in the south) share a common Netherlandish heritage.Frisia is now comprised of Friesland and Groningen; Salland is now Overijssel; Hamaland is now Gelderland.Even the Dutch can’t all agree on the details of their country’s labyrinthine history, what with Viking and Germanic conquests.

Interestingly, New York state in the U.S. was originally “New Netherlands”, Australia was originally “New Holland”, and New Zealand gets its name from “New Zeeland”.

TEN: What are now the Baltic states used to be Livonia.Wend-land (the lower Baltic region, associated with the Slavic peoples, otherwise known as the “Wends”) became Prussia / Pomerania (spec. under the Teutonic Order); and now encompasses north-eastern Germany, northern Poland, and a Russian exclave (which was created pursuant to the Second World War around what used to be Sambia).

One might wonder: Are natives of what used to be Königsberg (hometown of Immanuel Kant) now to be considered “Russian”?Apparently. Once more, we see that identity is tied to geography insofar as geography is tied to nationality…which is often a function of ethnicity, and vice versa.But not necessarily.Plenty of ethnic Germans are now Russians (in terms of nationality) in that Prussian exclave.

Pursuant to the establishment of modern nation-states, respective histories have become even more consolidated, and thus obfuscated.After the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, there was a haphazard cobbling-together of myriad vassal kingdoms to yield what we now call “Spain” (pace Catalonia and Basque country), “France”, and “Italy”.Recall, for example, the (Hapsburg) Austro-Hungarian Empire as a sovereign unity–even as Austria is Germanic and Hungary is Magyar.And never mind obsolete designations like Austrasia, Frankia, and Lotharingia. {17}

Meanwhile, massive nation-states like Russia (pace annexes like Crimea and Chechnya) and China (pace Hong Kong) are essentially a conglomeration of myriad countries–each of which boasts its own distinct heritage / culture.Indeed, from Tibet to Manchuria, China is hardly a unified country.(Note, for example, that “Nan Yue” is now the Guang-dong region.)National identity is not so straight-forward after all.Just ask the Tatars, the Tibetans, and the Taiwanese. {18}

Today, many countries are not officially named what English-speakers routinely call them.For example, Switzerland is the “Confoederatio Helvetica” [Confederation of Helvetia].

Greece was originally “Hellas”, and is now the “[h]Elliniki Dimokratia” [Republic of Hellas; alt. Hellenic Republic].“Greece” derives from the Roman moniker for the region, “Graecia”.Such discrepancy is not uncommon.Those who speak English often render the names of countries differently–as with:

- **“Scotland”** for Alba
- **“Germany”** for Deutschland {19}
- **“Finland”** for Suomi {20}
- **“Hungary”** for Magyar-orszag
- **“Armenia”** for Hayastan
- **“Albania”** for Shqiperia
- **“Georgia”** for Sa-kartvelo [from the Greek “Kartvelia”]
- **“Greece”** for the [h]Elliniki Dimokratia [Hellenic Republic; Republic of Hellas]
- **“Egypt”** for Masr {21}

- **“India”** for Bharat[a]
- **“Korea”** for Han-guk [“North Korea” for Joseon / Choson]
- **“China”** for Zhong-guo
- **“Japan”** for Nihon [alt. Nippon, meaning Land of the (Rising) Sun]

Sometimes, this is merely a matter of phonetics–as with, say, “Ireland” for Eire, “Denmark” for Danmark, “Norway” for Noreg[r], “Sweden” for Sverige, “Austria” for Oster-reich, “Spain” for España, “Poland” for Polska, “Hawaii” for Owyhee, and “Algeria” for al-[d]Jezairi. And what the British colonialists referred to as “Kenya” is variously called Kirinyaga (Kikuyu), Kirenyaa (Embu), and Kiinyaa (Kamba).(The Greco-Romans referred to the Swahili coast–up to the African Horn–as “Kyeneion”.)In such cases, the discrepancy can be attributed to a skewed (Anglicized) way of pronouncing the native moniker. {22}

In some cases, though, the identity of a land (with respect to its indigenous population) is completely ignored in favor of the current inhabitants’ perception of it.Thus Moroccans refer to their country (formerly a Berber region) as THE Kingdom of Maghreb–even though it is merely one of several nations in the Maghreb (each of which has its own Berber heritage).

Another interesting note: In medieval times, the Norse referred to the Muslim lands as “Serkland” [Land of the Saracens].

In sum: There is much more to a name than the moniker itself.Conventional taxonomy is often comprised of loaded terms–replete with an array of calcified legacies and stigmas.When it comes to LAND, a moniker is often about staking one’s claim–ensuring things are identified in a manner that comports with the favored worldview (while abetting the desired ideology).This is why Texans are not inclined to think of their state as “Comancheria” (land of the Comanches).It is why many Cambodians still fancy themselves to be the (Khmer) progeny of the glorious Angkor.It is why Revisionist Zionists insist on referring to Canaan as “Judea and Samaria”.And it is why gringos refer to “THE United States of America” when that nation is, in fact, one of TWO “united states” in North America.That Mexicans demure on this point reveals much about power asymmetries.

FOOTNOTES:

{1The Nordic region is comprised of many parts.Jut-land, Cimbria, and Zea-land are now Danmark (Anglicized to “Denmark”).Horda-land / Haloga-land became Nord-mad[r] / Nord-weg[r], then Nor[th]-wegia (with Trondelag and Halogaland in the north; Vingulmork and Rygjafylke in the south).That was then collectively referred to as “Norsk[a]”; and is now Noreg[r] (Anglicized to “Norway”).Svea-land in the north and Göta-land in the south were collectively referred to as “Svensk”; which is now Sverige (Anglicized to “Sweden”).Western Karelia and Oster-land is now Suomi (a.k.a. “Finland”).The eastern end (i.e. the Baltic region) was referred to as “Karelia” throughout the Middle Ages, which was the northern-most portion of Greater Lithuania. It is now partly in northwestern Russia.}

{2Thus North Umbria (comprised of Bernicia and Deira), Mercia, East Anglia, and Wessex became England; Alba (comprised of Caledonia and Argyll) [alt. “Hen Ogledd”; land of the Picts] became Scotland; Hibernia became Ireland; and Cambria (comprised of Gwynedd and Powys) became Wales.}

{3Persia was successively dubbed “Media” / “Mada” [land of the Mada / Medoi / Medai / Medes] (Median), then “Haxamanishia” [alt. “K-shassa”; “Vakana”] (Achaemenid), then “Basileia ton Seleukidon” (Seleucid), then “Gurgan” [alt. “Parthia”] (Parthian), and then “Eran-Shahr” (Sassanid).Pursuant to the Muslim conquest, the moniker continued to change.The Abbasids and Tahirids / Saffarids referred to western Persia as “[d]Jebel”.During the (Daylamite) Buyyid period, the north was dubbed “Rey” [not to be confused the the city “Rey” (alt. “Shahr-i Ray”)], and was alternately known as “Rhages” / “Rhagai” or “Arsacia”.Meanwhile, the south was dubbed “Fars”, and was alternately referred to as “Shiraz”.During the Seljuk era, the region was referred to as “Samaniyan” (based on the Samanid and Ghaznavid moniker); and then as “Gurkaniyan” (Mongol / Ilkhanate; then Timurid)… before the Safavids (followed by the Afshars and Qajars) started referring to it as “Iran”.This last moniker was derived from is ancient name, “Eran-Shahr”.}

{4The religions of Baltistan were originally Bön and Tibetan Buddhist.Its people spoke their own Tibetic language, Balti.However, during the Mughal era, it became heavily influenced by Sufism (namely: the Kubrawiyya Order and the Noorbakhshia sub-sect), and consequently started using Urdu (an adaptation of Hindi which uses an Arabic-inspired script).}

{5Such moniker-by-fiat is about laying claim to X–where X can be a heroic figure, an auspicious event, a special artifact, or a hallowed place.It’s not for nothing that nationalist Turks are reticent to call Kurdistan “Kurdistan”.Meanwhile, there are geo-political reasons for why nationalist Chinese aren’t very keen on calling Tibet “Tibet”.See footnote 18 below.}

{6When those with humanist ideals call for “wiping Israel from the map”, this means to re-define the nation-state (both in terms of geography and ideology).That is, said “wiping” would transpire in the same way that Israel wiped “Palestine” off the map and China wiped “Tibet” off the map.This is analogous to how, say, Burkina Faso transplanted “Upper Volta”, Benin transplanted “Dahomey”, Zimbabwe transplanted “Rhodesia”, eastern Congo transplanted “Zaire”, and Western Sahara (claimed by Morocco) transplanted the “Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic”. (See footnote 23 below.)We now find “Russia” on maps because the U.S.S.R. is no longer on them.There is no longer “Prussia” or “Yugoslavia”.When Bangladesh transplanted “East Pakistan”, it was a GOOD thing for the residents of the country-in-question; for it was a matter of LIBERATION (after having endured a genocide).Map-wiping has been a vocation since time immemorial.Some of it has been for the better (the German Democratic Republic being wiped off the map), some of it for the worse (Tibet being wiped off the map).There are, of course, insidious versions of calls for “wiping X off the map”; but the problem in such cases is not the map-wiping PER SE, but the malice behind the call (and what it ALSO aims to do).For bad actors, map-wiping is a tacit call for ethnic cleansing–as when Revisionist Zionists wiped Palestine off the map.To support Judeo-fascist policy in the Levant is to support another holocaust (this time with Judeo-Supremacists as the perpetrators).We will know that genuine democracy has finally come to the Levant when maps read “Canaan” where “Palestine” and “Israel” had once been written.}

{7Just as obnoxious, European slavers named the Caribbean island of Hispaniola “Saint Domingue” [alt. “San Domingo”; “Saint Dominic”]; which was later bifurcated into Haiti and the Dominican Republic.}

{8Why bother?There are fewer than 16,000 Lenape remaining–the vast majority of whom were exiled to reservations in Oklahoma and Wisconsin; and subsequently expunged from the “official record” long ago.That was before the Dutch arrived, re-naming the region “New Netherlands” and the major port city “New Amsterdam”… which was before British colonialists re-named it all yet again (after York, England).Meanwhile, the various Wampanoag tribes (notably, the “Massachusett”) occupied eastern Long Island and all of southern New England.(“New Netherlands” is

not to be confused with “New Holland”, the original name for Australia.)Meanwhile, what became Maine was originally part of Massachusetts; and what became the commonwealth of Virginia was originally “Tsenacommacah” (Powhatan).}

{9One needn’t be a connoisseur of philology to recognize that playing fast and loose with the translation of “Zhong-hua Ren-min Gong-he-guo” elides what is behind the moniker.The meaning of “Gong” in this context is variegated.It was the name of the vaunted clan of the fabled Zhou dynasty, which traces its lineage back to the quasi-mythic “Yellow Emperor” [“Huang-di”].In bygone eras, “Gong” was another name for “He-nan” [“south of the river”; alternately dubbed “Zhong-zhou”, meaning “middle land”], which is considered the birthplace of the Chinese people (also known in Chinese etiological myths as “Zhong-li”).(The Yellow River valley was the cradle of Chinese civilization.)Thus the entirety of China is sometimes colloquially referred to as “Henan” (i.e. “Gong”), in a similar way that the Netherlands is sometimes–inaccurately–referred to as “Holland”.(Note that “hua” means prosperous; “ren” means humanity, while “ren-min” is a narrower way of referring to “the People”; and “guo” means country.)This is another illustration of how concern for a gilded legacy informs identity.The NAME of this particular country, then, is not merely what we normally suppose it to be: The People’s Republic of China.The word “China” is actually derived from the “Qin” dynasty of the 3rd century B.C. (where “q” is pronounced “ch”).Nomenclature is a prime way to burnish a legacy, and to claim ownership.}

{10Sistan was alternately known as Sak[h]a[s] (alt. “Sakastan”) and Sagistan (alt. “Sijistan”).Land of the Sak[h]a[s] was another way of saying the land of the Scythians (i.e. Scythia).}

{11“Xvarazm” was Romanized to “Khwarezmia” [alt. “Chorasmia”].It was derived from the Avestan “Xvairizem”, which was rendered “Huwarazmish” in Old Persian.}

{12The land of the “Amurru” (Amorites) was originally referred to as “Mar-tu” by the Sumerians.It was then variously dubbed “Amurrum” / “Tidnum” / “Ebir-Nari” (Akkadian), “Abar-Nahara” (Aramaic), “Aber-Nahra” (Syriac), “Amar” (Egyptian), “Amorratoi” (Greek), and “Aram” / “Emori” (Hebrew).The Phoenicians simply considered it the northern part of “Khna” [Canaan; “Land of Purple”].This upper Levant is now comprised of two nation-states: Syria and Lebanon.}

{13This particular Levantine region was never considered “Eretz Yisreal” [the land of Israel] until the post-War era–in the advent of Revisionist Zionism (see footnote 14 below). In explore this topic in my essay: “The Land of Purple”.}

{14This tract of land is now contentiously referred to as “Eretz [y]Israel” by Revisionist Zionists–a contrived term that is extremely misleading, and based on faux history (a matter I address in my essay: “The Land Of Purple”).Judeo-fascists in the region insist that the Creator of the Universe not only picks his favorite group of people; but that he is also a real-estate agent. (A real-estate agent, that is, who allocates tracts of land according to ethnicity.See footnote 13 above.)This is one of the prime examples of different tribes insisting that a certain geographical region was bequeathed explicitly to THEM by divine ordinance, thereby tying their heritage–replete with tribal honor–to a specific piece of real estate.Hence the obsession of “blood and soil”.The imbroglio started after the First World War, when the British Empire divvied up the Middle East into four “Mandates”: the Mandate of Syria and Lebanon (counted as one; later rendered the French Mandate), the Mandate of Palestine (including trans-Jordan), and the Mandate of Mesopotamia (which never materialized).Pursuant to the Second World War, accommodations were made for Jewish exiles to settle in parts of this Mandate…and a hastily-cobbled-together partition plan (U.N. Resolution 181) was left in place in a ham-fisted effort to placate disputing parties.In reality, a tinder-box was created, in which Judeo-fascists, swept up in Messianic fervor, sought to annex the Levant, evicting (or exterminating) its indigenous population in a vicious ethnic-cleansing campaign in a bizarrely ironic reprise of the German “lebensraum”.}

{15In a twist of irony, the rise of the U.S.-supported House of Saud (read: Wahhabi fascism) and the rise of the Nazi regime (fascism based on the notion of a vaunted Germanic “herrenvolk”) occurred concurrently: in the 1930’s.The rise of Revisionist Zionism (fascism based on Judeo-Supremacy) and a panoply of fascist dictatorships across Europe–animated by Roman Catholicism–would occur in the next decade.}

{16The female personification of a nation is not uncommon; and goes back to the Roman goddess, “Dea Roma” c. 200 B.C.–a moniker that persisted until the adoption of Christianity as the imperial religion in the 4th century A.D.Other examples include:

- “Fjallkonan” for Iceland
- “Moder Svea” for Sweden
- “Suomi-neito” for Finland

- “Bavaria” for Germany
- “Eriu” for Ireland
- “Britannia” for England
- “Nederlandse Maagd” for Holland
- “Marianne” for France
- “Hispania” for Spain
- “Helvetia” for Switzerland
- “Italia Turrita” for Italy
- “Polonia” for Poland
- “Rodina-mat” [alt. “Rossiya Matushka”] for Russia
- “Mayr Hayastan” for Armenia
- “Kartvlis Deda” for Georgia
- “Nena Shqiperi” for Albania
- “Melita” for Malta
- “Bharat[a]-Mata” for India
- “Banga-Mata” for Bengal
- “Ungnyeo” for Korea

The eponymous Europa represents a long tradition that dates back to the Greek “Athena”, patroness of the nation-state, Athens.}

{17And never mind the complex implications of British / Dutch / Belgian / French / Spanish / Portuguese / German colonialism across the globe.(It might be noted that some Meso-Americans are still Mayans and some Canadians are still Cree.)It goes without saying that these hegemonic “commonwealths” involved anything but a common wealth (i.e. the universal enfranchisement of their subjects)…or even the recognition of all residents as fellow human beings.More than just universal suffrage, what makes a nation GENUINELY democratic is the State ensuring that all civilians are both free (in both the positive and negative senses) and well-informed.In his “Nations And Nationalism”, Ernest Gellner held that the pivotal element in a modern nation-state is the government’s programmatic effort to educate everyone within its realm.The key to civil society, then, is to provide quality education to all citizens–irrespective of socio-economic status.For only then, Gellner pointed out, can a shared identity as fellow citizens (i.e. transcendence of socio-economic divisions) emerge.This is a reaffirmation of one of Thomas Paine’s many crucial insights.A genuine commonwealth ends up trumping disparate ethnic identities, thereby fostering communal solidarity.}

{18We could go on and on.Is Taiwan and Hong Kong a part of China?Is Catalonia part of Spain?Is North Ossetia part of Georgia?Is Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) part of Azerbaijan or Armenia?Is Ulster in Britain or Ireland?Is Jerusalem in Palestine or Israel?Is Cyprus part of Greece or Turkey?Is Sri Lanka Sinhalese or Tamil?Is Kashmir part of Pakistan or India…or Tibet…or none of the above?Is Crimea and Donbass–nay, eastern Ukraine–properly part of Ukraine or Russia?Did Silesia belong to Prussia or Austria?Is Western Sahara part of Morocco?Try asking the Turks where Kurdistan is.Then try asking the Chinese where Tibet is.See how far the conversation gets.}

{19Deutschland has a plethora of monikers–as it is a conglomeration of several different lands–from the Rhineland to Saxony and Bavaria (which incorporated several medieval lands like Frankonia and Thuringia).In most Romance languages, the modern nation is referred to by some variation of “Alemannia” (after the ancient tribe that occupied the region).In most Slavic languages, it is some variation on “Nimey”.And in most Scandinavian languages, it is some variation of “Tyskland”.The Anglicized moniker is derived from the Roman moniker, “Germania”.}

{20“Finland” derives from the Roman moniker “Finlonti”, meaning Land of the Finns.}

{21“Egypt” derives from the ancient Egyptian term, “Hiku-Ptah”, referring to the temple of Ptah in Memphis.The country was originally known as “K’mt”.}

{22Meanwhile, English-speakers retain the name of certain other countries in lieu of translating them into English.Hence instead of Beautiful Port and Beautiful Coast, they say Puerto Rico and Costa Rica.(Such inconsistency also occurs with city names.They don’t call the largest city in Brasil “Saint Paul”, they call it “Sao Paulo”; yet they call the largest city in Thailand “Bangkok” instead of “Krung-Thep”.)Labeling schemes are inconsistent in ways we rarely notice.Untutored perception often leads to misconceptions–which is why we say “peanuts” even though they are legumes.}

{23This does not count instances of Anglicization–as with Tanzania from “Tanganyika” and Swazi-land from “Eswaitini”.Bu-Ganda is now U-Ganda.}