Bygone Geography II: City Name Changes

How we think about things now is not necessarily how those things used to be. Nevertheless, so far as our current worldview is concerned, we are content to simply assume that the way we currently think about the present state of affairs necessarily informs us about the sequence of events that yielded our way of seeing the world.

Such is the conceit of any given tribe's sanctified narrative…not only about itself, but about the larger world in which it is situated. Our histories often only highlight what is salient to our own (incumbent) worldview; and thus reflect OUR OWN interests in the here and now.We would much prefer history to somehow legitimize the legacies we have constructed for ourselves; so we tailor our narratives accordingly.

Consequently, cherished myth (especially regarding one's own tribe's ostensibly glorious origins) takes on the dazzling sheen of REAL HISTORY, occluding anything that does not fit the desired narrative.

Identities change over the course of epochs; and we are often reticent to think of anything–be it people in stories or entire metropolises–as they may have originally existed.Why?Because it NO LONGER MATTERS–at least, not to us.If it doesn't serve a purpose, here and now, there is little incentive to shine a light on how things may have really been (i.e. what REALLY happened).

Such blithe dissimulation occurs across cultures.It is not just that most Muslims refuse to think of "Medina" (that is: City of the Prophet) as Yathrib; it's that no self-respecting New Yorker thinks of his city as New Amsterdam, let alone as the former land of the Lanape…just as few Israelis are inclined to think of Tel Aviv as Joppa…or of Jerusalem as the "City of Shalem".

We LIKE to believe that the way we have come to fancy things automatically reflects how they have always been.This is especially so with the (typically overwrought) material found in hallowed folklore.What we call things is a reflection of they way we WANT to think about them. And–conversely–how we think about things often affects how we label them.

Note that we tend to only think about any given city in terms of its CURRENT identity, not in terms of what it may have been in other contexts–contexts with which we are likely unfamiliar; and for which we are not in the least concerned.All that matters is how the most recent authorities ended up defining it.Yet it is rarely acknowledged where a name may have come from; especially if it derives from the moniker of an era we would much prefer be forgotten.

The Spanish city, **Madrid**, was named "Magerit" in Old Castilian, which was based on the Moz-Arabic "Matrit", which was based on the name given to it by the Andalusian Arabs in the 8th century: "Majrit".During the Roman Empire, it was referred to as **"Ursaria" / "Ursalia"**.In medieval Hispanic legend, it was said that the city was founded by the Tyrrhenians as "Metragirta" (alt. "Mantua Carpetana"), and so was accorded a magnificently ROMAN heritage.This chimerical past had the benefit of glossing over the Moorish influence altogether; and–to top it off–the manufactured etiology made for a gratifying story.

That it was farce did not prevent denizens of the proudly Castilian city from fashioning themselves as descendants of a glorious NON-Moorish past.For it was PALATABLE farce.Its appeal lent it gravity. And so it went.

Sometimes, nobody can agree what the place mentioned in folklore might have been–as with the Biblical “Tarshish”, which is now variously considered Tyre (Phoenician / Aramaic “Sur”; Hebrew “Tzor”) or Carthage…or possibly even Sardinia (depending on who one asks).Mention of “Aphek” could have referred to any of several Philistine locations.And then there’s the fabled place of gold, “[h]Avila[t]h” / “[h]Evilas”, which may have been referring to what is now called “Mahd al-Dhahab” in the Hijaz.

We encounter a similar ambiguity in the Koran (89:7-10), when the authors refer to “Iram”, a pagan city with massive pillars (a city that the Abrahamic deity punished along with “Aad”, “Thamud”, and whatever city served as the home of the Pharaoh).This “city of pillars” might have referred to a place in Egypt (perhaps Alexandria, Heliopolis, or Waset / Thebes) or to the Biblical “Aram” (perhaps Damascus) or to “Edom” (a place in the southern Jordan Valley; probably Petra) or even to “Babili” (a.k.a. “Babylon”; possibly Nippur or Isin); but there is no way to tell.Presumably, god would have foreseen this confusion…had he actually been the author of Islam’s holy book (and so just NAMED the place to which he was referring when he was delivering what was supposed to be the final revelation to all mankind).

Alas. Such confounding vagaries are exactly what we should expect if the material was composed by people who couldn’t see beyond their own provincial concerns.

The bottom line, though, is that naming something gives one a sort of power over that thing; for one has thus DEFINED what that thing IS (and how we are supposed to think about it).

Onomastics can apply to major cities as much as to anything else (e.g. prominent people).There are myriad examples of the phenomenon.We might note that the national capital of the United States of America, the **District of Columbia**, was originally **Georgetown** (after King George II of Britain).It would then be named after George Washington, who–conveniently enough–had the same first name.

Those in the United States are rarely aware of city name-changes–even over the course of their relatively short history.**Jersey City** (British, then American) was originally **“Pavonia”** (Dutch).**Philadelphia** (British, then American) was originally **“Sak-i-mauch-heen Ing”** [Anglicized to “Shakamaxon”] (Lanape).**Baltimore**

(Catholic) was originally **“Providence”** (Puritan).And **“El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles de Porciuncula”** [The Village of Our Lady, the Queen of the Angels of ‘Little Portion’] was eventually abridged to **“Los Angeles”**.

The origins of a city is not always straight-forward–as with the Eurasian city of Kazan, which was some combination of Tatar, Bulgar, and Kipchak in its earliest days.(The fact that it has always been known as “Kazan” actually makes this more confusing.Sometimes name-changes help to make things more clear.)

And sometimes a fictional city corresponds to a real city.It turns out that the fabled **“Aquae Sulis”** (Roman) of Arthurian legend corresponds to what is now **Bath**, England.

Here are 76 other examples:

1. **Coimbra** (medieval Latin) was originally **“Aeminium”** (Roman / Lusitanian)
2. **Stockholm** (Swedish) was originally **“Agnafit”** (Old Norse)
3. **U-Trecht** (Netherlandish) was originally **“Traiectum”** (Roman)
4. **Liège** (Walloon) was originally **“Leodium”** (Roman)
5. **York** (Northumbrian) / Jorvik (Norse) was originally **“Eboracum”** (Roman)
6. **Hamburg** (Hanseatic / Germanic) was originally **“Treva”** (Roman)
7. **Mainz / Mentz** (Gallic, then Frankish, then German) was originally **“Mogontiacum”** (Roman)
8. **Salzburg** (Bavarian, then Austrian) was originally **“Juvavum”** (Roman)
9. **Praha** [Anglicized to “Prague”] (Czech) was originally **“Stare Mesto”** [“Prazske”] (Old West Slavic; Bohemian)
10. **Novgorod** (medieval Russian) was originally **“Holmgard[r]”** (Varangian)
11. **Ulyanovsk** (Soviet Russian) was originally **“Simbirsk”** (Russian)
12. **Paris** (Frankish) was originally **“Lutetia”** (Gallo-Roman)
13. **Campulung** (Wallachian, then Romanian) was originally **“Jidava”** [“Jidovi”] (Dacian / Roman)
14. **Roma** [Rome] (Roman / Italian) was originally **“Sabinium” / “Latium”** (Estruscan) [though Roman myth said that it was first named “Pallantium” after the Arcadian city of Pallantion by Evander, son of the Cimmerian sybil]
15. **Jad[e]ra / Zad[e]ra** [rendered “Zara” in Italian and “Zadar” in Croat] (Dalmatian, then Croatian) was originally **“Iader[a]”** (Illyrian)
16. **Akhisar** (Turkic) was originally **“Thyateira”** (Lydian / Greek)
17. **Konia** [Konya] (Turkic) was originally **“Ikonion”** (Phrygian / Greek; Romanized to “Iconium”)

18. **Edirne** (modern Turkish) was originally **“[h]Adriano-polis”** [likely the location of Thracian “Uskudama”, site of the semi-mythical “Orestias”] (Greek)
19. **Alashe[k]hir** [red city] (modern Turkish) was originally **“Phila-delphia”** (Greek)
20. **Kayseri** (modern Turkish) was originally **“Mazaka”** (Hittite; then Cappadocian)
21. **Yere-van** (Armenian) was originally **“Erebuni”** (Urartian)
22. **Basra** (medieval Arab) was originally **“Prat d-Maisan”** (Aramaic / Syriac) [alt. “Charax”]
23. **Fallujah** (Arab; adopted from the Syriac, “Pallgutha”) was originally **“Pumbedita”** (Babylonian Aramaic)
24. **Ras al-Khaimah** (modern Arab) was originally **“Julfar”** (Armenian, then Azd)
25. **Arslan Tash** (Turkic, then Arab) was originally **“Hadatu”** (Aramaean, then Assyrian)
26. **Anbar** (Syriac / Arab) was originally **“Peroz-Shapur”** [rendered “Bersabora” in Greco-Roman] (Sassanian)
27. **Nablus** (Arab) was originally **“Flavia Neapolis”** (Roman) [possibly the site of the Samaritan village of “Ma-bartha”]
28. **Varna** (Varangian / Slavic, then Bulgar) was originally **“Odessos”** (Thracian / Carian / Miletian; then Roman)
29. **Lod** (Masoretic Hebrew) was originally **“Dio[s]-polis”** (Ancient Greek)
30. **Alexandria** (Macedonian, then Ptolemaic Egyptian) was originally **“Ra-Kedet”** [Romanized to “Rhakotis”] (Ancient Egyptian) {1}
31. **Mendefera** (Tigrinya Ethiopian) was originally **“Adi Ugri”** (Aksumite)
32. **Essaouira** (Moroccan Arab) was originally **“Mogador[ia]”** (Berber)
33. **Casa-blanca** (Portuguese) was originally **“Anfa”** (Berber)
34. **Berbera** (Somali) was originally **“Malao”** (Sabaean)
35. **Kinshasa** (Teke / Bantu) was originally **“Leopold-stadt”** (Belgian)
36. **[k]Haifa** (Semitic) was originally **“Sycaminum” / “Sycaminon”** (Greco-Roman)
37. **Al-Qahirah** (modern Arab; from the Coptic “Kahir”; Romanized to “Cairo”) was originally **“Fustat”** (Umayyad, then Abbasid; a Syriac moniker coined by Amr ibn al-As ibn Wa’il)
38. **Medina** [city] (Mohammedan Arab) was originally **“Yathrib”** (Syriac)
39. **Najaf** (modern Arab) was originally **“Kufa”** (Old Arabian)
40. **Riyadh** (Najdi; modern Arab) was originally **“Hajr”** (ancient Arabian; Banu Hanifa)
41. **Sana’a** (Yemeni) was originally **“Marib”** (Sabaean / Himyarite)

42. **Sa’dah** (Yemeni) was originally **“Karna”** (Minaean)
43. **Baraqish** (Yemeni) was originally **“Yathill”** (Minaean)
44. **Ahvaz** (modern Iranian) was originally **“Hormuzd Aradashir”** (Sassanian)
45. **Shiraz** (Middle Persian) was originally “Tira-zish” (Seleucid / Parthian)
46. **Baku** (Azeri) was originally **“Bad-kube”** (Old Iranian)
47. **Merv** (Persian) was originally **“Antiocha ton Margiana”** (Hellenic Greek)
48. **Bag-ram** (Dari / Pashto) was originally **“Kapisa”** (Vedic)
49. **Panja-kent** (Tajik) was originally **“Panche-kanth”** (Sogdian)
50. **Ko-kand / Ko-kon** (Uzbek) was originally **“Khava-kand”** (Sogdian)
51. **Kara-shar** (Uyghur) was originally **“Agni” / “Arshi”** [rendered in Chinese: “Yen-qi”] (Tocharian)
52. **Jalala-bad** (Dari / Pashto) was originally **“Adina-pur[a]”** (Gandharan)
53. **Charsadda** (Dari / Pashto) was originally **“Pushkala-viti”** (Gandharan)
54. **Islama-bad** (Punjabi) was originally **“Raj Shahi”** (Mughal)
55. **Agra** (Maratha) was originally **“Akbar[a]-bad”** (Mughal)
56. **Chitto-garh** (Rajput) was originally **“Chitra-kuta”** (Maurya)
57. **Mysuru** [Anglicized to “Mysore”] (Kannada) was originally **“Mahi-shapur[a]”** (Sanskrit)
58. **Shang-du** (Mongol) was originally **“Kai-ping”** (Yuan) [though written as Cian-du by Marco Polo; and dubbed “Xan[a]du” by later Europeans]
59. **Kashi** (modern Chinese) was originally “Kash[i]-gar” (Persian / Sak[h]a, then Uyghur) / **“Shri-kri-vati”** (Sanskrit)
60. **An-yang** (modern Chinese) was originally **“Yin”** (Shang)
61. **Dun-huang** (Tocharian / Han Chinese) was originally **“Sha-zhou”** (Yue-zhi, then Xiong-nu)
62. **Wu-wei**; Gan-su (modern Chinese) was originally **“Liang-zhou”** (Sui, then Tang)
63. **Cang-zhou** (modern Chinese) was originally **“Le-shou”** (Sui, then Tang)
64. **Xu-zhou** (modern Chinese) was originally **“Peng-cheng”** (Wei)
65. **Deng-feng** (modern Chinese) was originally **“Yang-cheng”** (Xia)
66. **Gong-yi** (modern Chinese) was originally **“Zhen-xun”** (Xia)
67. **Chong-qing** (modern Chinese) was originally **“Jiang-zhou”** (Ba, then Qin)
68. **Kun-ming** (modern Chinese) was originally **“Tuo-Dong”** (Nan-zhao)
69. **Gyeong-ju** (modern Korean) was originally **“Seorabeol”** (Silla)
70. **Pago** (Burmese) was originally **“Hongsa-wati”** (Mon)
71. **Luang Phabang** (Lao) was originally **“Chiang Thong”** (Lan Xang)
72. **Chiang-mai** (Lan-Na / Lavo; then Siamese) was originally **“Wiang Nopburi”** (Lawa)

73. **Krung-thep** (modern Thai) was originally **“Thon-buri” / “Bang-ko[k]”** (ancient Siamese) {7}
74. **Hanoi** (Vietnamese) was originally **“Thang Long”** (Dai Viet)
75. **Naha** (modern Japanese) was originally **“Shuri”** (Ryukyuan)
76. **Singa-pur[a]** [from the Sanskrit for “Lion City”; Anglicized to “Singapore”] (modern Malay) was originally **“Temasek”** (Old Javanese / Old Malay)

A name-change is not always so straight-forward.Note, for example, the current capital of China.It began as **“Kjaeng”** during Xia rule.The city was then renamed at least sixteen times:

–> Ji-cheng **(Zhou) –>** Guang-yang-jun **(Qin) –>** Ji-cheng **(Xian-bei) –>** Yan-jing [Capital of Yan] **(Yan) –>** Fan-yang **(Han) –>** Ji-Xian, then Zhong-du **(Jin) –>** Zhou-jun **(Sui) –>** You-zhou **(Tang) –>** Nan-jing [Southern Capital] **(Liao) –>** Zhong-du **(Jurchen / Manchu) –>** Khan-Balik [Romanized as “Cambaluc”] **(Mongol) –>** Ta-du [Big City; Romanized as “Da[i]du”] **(Song, then Yuan) –>** Bei-ping [Northern Peace; Romanized as “Peking”] **(Ming) –>** Sun-tian / Jing-shi **(Yongle) –>** before adopting its contemporary **(Qing)** moniker: **Bei-jing** [Northern Capital]. {2}

Over the centuries, **Varanasi**, the ancient Vedic city on the Ganges River, has been variously referred to as “Kasika” [the shining one], “Avi-mukta” [never forsaken], “Ananda-vana” [forrest of bliss], and “Rudra-vasa” [home of Rudra].

In the United States, few are aware of the onomastic history of its largest city.What began as **Manna-hata** (Lanape) was rendered Nouvelle Angoulême (by the French), then as Nieuw Amsterdam (by the Dutch), and finally as **New York** (by the British). {3}In Canada, few are aware that **Toronto** used to be York (British), which was **Tkaronto** (Iroquois) before that.

Renaming urban centers has a long history going back to the Minoan city of Knossos…which was rendered Heraklion (Greco-Roman), then Kandiya (Umayyad / Abbasid), then Megalo Kastro (Byzantine), then back to Kandiya [Romanized to “Candia”] (Ottoman), before finally being christened **Heraklion** again (modern Greek).

Batnan was originally a Sumerian settlement in Syria.Over time, it was alternately “Batnai” (Greek), “Batnae” (Latin), and “Pirsus” (Kurdish).It is now the site of Turkish “Suruç”, which is based on the Syriac name for the region, “Serugh”.

Here are 76 other notable instances where the onomastics underwent numerous turns:

1. Ancore / Helicore (Bottiaean) –> Antigoneia (Antigonid Macedonian) –> Nikaia (late Macedonian) –> Nicaea (Roman) –> **Iznik** (medieval Turkic)
2. Adma [alt. “Admi” / “Admum” in Aramaic] (Assyrian) –> Urhay (Aramaic) –> Orrh[o]a (Greek) –> Edessa (Seleucid) –> Justinopolis (Byzantine) –> Urhai (Syriac) –> Sanli-Urfa [“Glorious Urfa”] (Arab) –> **Urfa** (modern Turkish)
3. Garsaura (Ancient Anatolian) –> Archelais (Cappadocian Greek) –> Colonia (Roman) –> **Aksaray** (modern Turkish)
4. Marqas [of Gargum] (Kurkumaean / Luwian; Hittite; Assyrian) –> Germanikeia (Greek) –> Germanicia Caesarea (Roman / Byzantine) –> Marash (Syriac, then Arab) –> **Kahraman-Marash** (Ottoman / Turkish)
5. Uskudama (Thracian) –> Hadrianopolis (Roman) –> [h]Adrianoupolis (Byzantine) –> **Edirne** (Ottoman / Turkish)
6. Byzantion (Thracian) –> Byzantium (Megara Greek) –> Constantinople [alt. New Rome] (Roman) –>Basileia ton Romaion (Byzantine) and Mikli-gard[r] / Miklegarth (Norse) –> **Istanbul** (Ottoman / Turkish)
7. Eumolpiada (early Thracian) –> Theopompis / Philippopolis (Macedonian) –> Kendrisia / Pulpu-deva (later Thracian) –> Odryssa (Odrysian Thracian) –> Trimondium (Roman) –> Phinepople (medieval European) –> Papaldiv (medieval Bulgar) –> Filibe (Ottoman) –> **Plovdiv** (modern Bulgar)
8. Harranu [“path”] (Akkadian / Assyrian / Hittite) –> Hellenopolis (Greek) –> Carrhae (Roman) –> **Harran** (Arab)
9. Ha-lam [alt. Halman] (Sumerian / Eblaite) –> Armi (Hittite) –> Hadad (Amorite, then Aramaean) –> Halba / Halab (Assyrian / Babylonian) –> Khalpe / Khalibo[n] (Greek) –> Boroea (Greco-Roman; Seleucid) –> Alep (Byzantine) –> **Aleppo** (Romanized)
10. Reshina (Akkadian / Assyrian) –> Sikkan (Aramaean) –> Raisena (Greek) –> Resaina (Roman) –> Theodosiopolis (Byzantine) –> Sere Kaniye (Kurdish) –> **Ras al-Ayn** (modern Arab)
11. Elat[h] (Edomite) –> Ayla (Aramaic) –> Berenice (Ptolemaic)–> **Aqaba** (Arab)
12. Arrap[k]ha (Gutian, then Hurrian, then Assyrian) –> Athura (Persian) –> Karkha d-Bet Slokh (Aramaic / Syriac) –> **Kirkuk** (Kurdish and Turkmen)
13. Zamani (Aramean) –> Amid (Assyrian) –> Amida (Greco-Roman) –> Amed (Kurdish) –> Kara [h]Amid (Oghuz Turkic) –> Diyar[u] Bakr (Arab) –> **Diyarbakir** (Turkish)

14. Azal / Marib (Sabaean / Aksumite) –> Auzalites (Himyarite) –> **Sana’a** (Hadhrami; then Yemeni)
15. Rabbat[h] Ammon (Ammonite) –> Philadelphia (Greek) –> **Amman** (Arab)
16. B[e]it La[k]h[a]mu / Lachama / Lahmi (Amoritic, then Philistine) –> Ephrath[ah] (Canaanite) –> Bit L-H-M [House of Bread] (Aramaic) –> **Beit-Le[c]hem** [Romanized to “Bethlehem”] (Classical Hebrew) {4}
17. Ya-Pho (ancient Egyptian) and Joppa (Canaanite) –> Gush Dan (Israelite) –> Ioppe (Ancient Greek) back to Joppa (Roman) –> Jaffa (medieval Palestinian) –> **Tel Aviv** (Israeli) {5}
18. Nbwt (pre-Dynastic Egyptian) –> Nakhen (ancient Egyptian) –> Ombos (Hellenic) –> Hierakon-polis (Greek) –> Al-Kom Al-Ahmar (ancient Arabian) –> **Naqada** (modern Arab)
19. Per-Medjed (ancient Egyptian) –> Pemdje (Coptic) –> Oxyrhynchus (Greek) –> **El Bahnasa** (contemporary Egyptian)
20. Tamiat (ancient Egyptian) –> Tam Het (Coptic) –> Tamiathis (Greek) –> Damietta (Latin) –> **Dumyat** (modern Arab)
21. Luny (ancient Egyptian) –> Erment (Coptic / Ptolemaic) –> Hermonthis (Greek) –> **Armant** (modern Arab)
22. Ta-ynt-netert (pre-Dynastic Egyptian) –> Nekhen-tor (ancient Egyptian) –> Tentyra (Greek) –> Tentyris (Roman) –> **Dandarah** (modern Arab) [Romanized to “Dendera”]
23. Barara (Aksumite) –> **Addis Ababa** (Ge’ez; then Amharic) and Finfinne (Oromo)
24. Oko (Yaruba) –> Lago[s] de Curamo (Portuguese) –> **Lagos** (Nigerian)
25. Oea (Phoenician) –> Trables (Berber) –> **Tripoli** (Romanized Arab) {6}
26. Ikosion (Phoenician, then Carthaginian) –> Icosium (Roman) –> Al-Jaza’ir Bani Mazghana –> Alger / **Algiers** (French)
27. Spahan (Elamite / Median / Achaemenid) –> Aspadana (Greco-Roman) –> **Isfahan** (Arabicized Persian) {8}
28. Taryana (Elamite / Median / Achaemenid) –> Bet Huzaye [house of of the Huzis] (Syriac) –> **A[h]vaz** (medieval Persian)
29. R[h]ages (Median) –> Arsacia (Greek; Arsacid; Achaemenid) –> Europos (Seleucid) –> Rhaga[e] (Greco-Roman) –> Rey [alt. Rayy] (Qajari / Seljuk) –> **Tehran** (modern Iranian)
30. Zadrakarta (Median / Achaemenid) –> Jurjan / Gurgan (Parthian / Sassanian) –> Ester-abad [alt. Astarabad] (Safavid) –> **Gorgan** (modern Persian)
31. Nautaca (Persian) –> Kesh (Sogdian, then Turkic-Mongol) –> **Shahr-i Sabz** (Uzbek / Tajik)

32. Cyropolis (Achaemenid) –> Alexandria Eschate (Macedonian) –> Leninabad (Soviet) –> **Khu-jand** (Tajik)
33. Chach (Persian) and Zhe-shi (Chinese) –> Bin-kath (Samanid) –> Tosh-kand[a] (Turkic / Sogdian) –> **Tash-kent** (Russian)
34. Haraiva [on which the ancient name for the region, “Ar(e)ia” was based] (Old Persian) –> Alexandreia he en Ariois [Romanized: “Alexandria Ariorum”] (Macedonian) –> **Herat** [from Old Dari: “Hereyrud”] (modern Afghan) {1}
35. Jaguda (Mauryan) –> Ghazna (Greco-Indic) –> **Ghazni** (Kara-Khanid / Samanid)
36. Kuhan-diz (Greco-Bactrian)–> Drap-saka (Kushan) –> Kata-kand [Old Fort] (Turkic / Sogdian) –> Walwalij / Varvaliz (Khotanese) –> Kuhandiz (Uyghur / Timurid) –> **Kunduz** (Afghan)
37. Mundigak (Median) –> Alexandropolis [in Arachosia] (Macedonian) –> Iskandar[iya] [the Pashto version of “Alexandria”] (Greco-Bactrian / Indo-Scythian / Kushan) –> Gundopharron (Indo-Parthian) –> **Kanda-har** (Mughal) {1} {10}
38. Krokola (Ancient Greek) –> Barbarikon (Bactrian) –> Debal (Arab) –> Kolachi (Baloch) –> **Karachi** (Pakistani)
39. Ashaval[i] (Bhil / Adivasi) –> Karna-vati (Chaulukya) –> **Ahmeda-bad** (Rajasthani / Gujarati)
40. Kakamuchee / Galajunkja (Vedic) –> Mahikawati (Rajasthani / Gujarati) –> Bombay[m] (British Indian) –> Bambai (Hindi) –> **Mumbai** (Marathi)
41. Amer (Matsya) –> Jai-nagara (Rajput / Mughal) –> **Jai-pur** (Rajasthani)
42. Indra-prastha (Pandava, then Nanda, then Maurya, then Kuru) –> Lal Kot (Tomara) –> Qila Rai Pithora (Chahamana / Chauhan) –> [New] **Delhi** (Ghurid; as a Sultanate)
43. Nagarkot / Trigarta (Vedic) –> Bhimagar (Kuru) –> **Kangra** (Rajput)
44. Pallava Puram [alt. “Pallavaram”] (Pallava) –> Madras (Tamil) –> **Chennai** (Telugu)
45. Begur (Western Ganga, then Chola) –> Bengaval-uru [City of Guards] (Vijayanagara / Chalukya, then Kannada) –> Anglicized to **Bangalore** (Anglicized)
46. Wirye-seong (Baekje and Goguryeo / Koguryo) –> Han[-san-]ju (Silla) –> Nam-gyeong (Goryeo) –> Han-yang (Goryeo) –> Han-seong (Joseon) –> Keijo [alt. Gyeong-seong] (Japanese) –> **Seoul** (contemporary Korean)
47. Zhen-xun (Xia Chinese) –> Bo-luo (Shang Chinese) –> Cheng-zhou (Zhou Chinese) –> Dong-du [Eastern Capital] (early Tang Chinese) –> Xi-jing / Jing-luo [Western Capital] (Song Chinese) –> Shen-du [Divine Capital] (late Tang

Chinese) –> Luo-yi / Luo-zhou / Pin-cheng (various medieval Chinese) –> **Luo-yang** (Northern Wei; modern Chinese)

48. Xin and [Old] Xian-yang (Qin) –> Chang-an [Perpetual Peace] (Western Han) –> Xi-jing [Western Capital] (Eastern Han) –> Da-xing (Sui) –> back to Chang-an (Tang) –> **Xi-an** [Western Peace] (Ming)
49. Jian-ye (Eastern Wu) –> Jian-kang (Eastern Jin) –> Jin-ling (Tang) –> Ying-tian (Ming) –> **Nan-jing**
50. Hou Cheng –> (Yan)–> Shen-zhou (Liao) –> Shen-yang (Yuan) –> Mukden; Sheng-jing (Jurchen / Manchu / Qing) –> back to **Shen-yang** (Manchu)
51. Xi-fu (Wu) –> Lin-an / Qian-tang (Song) –> Qin-sai (Mongol) –> **Hang-zhou** [Romanized to “Hang-chou”] (modern Chinese)
52. Tan-zhong (Han) –> Long-jing [Dragon City] (Tang) –> **Liu-zhou** (modern Chinese)
53. Shen-chang (Chu) –> Hua-ting (Tang) –> Nan-hui-zui (Qin) –> **Shang-hai** [upon the sea] (Song)
54. Kingdom of Dian (Han) –> Kun-zhou (Sui) –> Tuo-dong (Tang Chinese) –> **Kun-ming** (Yuan, then Mongol, then Ming)
55. Ta-Liang (Han) –> Bian-liang [alt. Bian-zhou] (Tang) –> Dong-jing [alt. Bian-jing] (Song) –> Nan-jing (Jurchen / Jin)–> **Kai-Feng** (modern Chinese) {2}
56. Pan-yu (Qin Chinese) –> Xing-wang (Southern Han) –> **Guang-zhou** (Guang-don / modern Chinese) {11}
57. Basay (Ketagalan) –> Ta-bei (Qing Chinese) –> Tai-hoku (Japanese) –> **Tai-pei** (Taiwanese)
58. Uda [Keishi] (ancient Japanese) –> Heian-kyo (Yamato) –> Kyo no Miyako (Edo) –> **Kyoto** (modern Japanese)
59. Morinomiya (Kofun) –> Osumi, then Naniwa (Asuka) –> **Osaka** (Sengoku, then modern Japanese)
60. Muzasi (Ainu) –> Edo (ancient Nihon-jin) –> **To-kyo** (modern Japanese)
61. Prey Nokor (Khmer) –> Gia-Dinh (Trieu Nam-Viet) –> Sai-Gon (modern Vietnamese) –> **Ho Chi Minh City** (communist Vietnamese)
62. Sunda Kelapa (Taruma-Nagara) –> Jayakarta (Javanese) –> Batavia (Dutch) –> [d]**Jakarta** (modern Indonesian)
63. Singi-dlun (Thracian / Dacian) –> Singidunum (Celtic / Roman / Byzantine; then Ostro-goth; then Slavic; then Avar / Bulgar) –> **Belo-grad** [Romanized to “Belgrade”] (Serbian)
64. Leo[n]-polis [Lion City] (Greco-Roman) –> Lemberg (Germanic) –> Lvihorod (Old Slavic) –> Ilvav (Old Turkic) –> Ilyvo (Magyar) –> **Lviv / Lvov** (Polish / Galician / Ruthenian)

65. Nyen (Ingrian / Finnic) –> Saint Peters-burg (Czarist Russian) –> Petrograd (Bolshevik) –> Leningrad (Soviet Russian) and back to **Saint Petersburg** (contemporary Russian) {12}
66. Tsaritsyn (Czarist Russian) –> Stalingrad (Soviet Russian) –> **Volgo-grad** (modern Russian)
67. Twangste (Sambian / Teutonic) –> Kenigsbarg (Low German) –> Kunnegsgarbs (Old Prussian) –> Königsberg (High German) –> **Kalinin-grad** (Russian)
68. Istropolis (Greek) –> Posonium (Roman) –> Istropolis (Byzantine) –> Brezalauspurc (Pannonian / Bavarian) –> Pozsony (Hungarian) –> Pressburg (Germanic) –> Presporok (Slovak) –> **Bratislava** (modern Slavic) {9}
69. Aquincum (Roman) –> Buda (medieval Hungarian) –> **Buda-Pest** (Austro-Hungarian) {13}
70. Ledenets (Old East Slavic) –> Lyndanisse (Danish) and Lindanisa (Livonian / Teutonic) and Lindanäs (medieval Swedish) –> Räfälä (Hanseatic) and Reval[a] (Germanic) and Kolyvan (Russian) –> **Tallinn[a]** (Estonian)
71. Noviomagus (Roman) –> Spira (Frankish) –> Civitas Nemetum (Teutonic) –> **Speyer** (German)
72. Kaupangen (Old Norse) –> Nidaros (medieval Norse) –> **Trondhiem[r]** (modern Norwegian)
73. Ticinum (Alpine Gaulish; Ligurian) –> Papia (Roman) –> **Pavia** (Lombard)
74. Argentoratum (Gallo-Roman) –> Strassburg (German) –> **Strasbourg** (French)
75. Turones (Gaulish) –> Caesarodunum (Roman) –> **Tours** (Frankish, then modern French)
76. Hispalis (Roman) –> Ishbiliyya (Moorish) –> **Seville** (Castilian)

Each of these moniker alterations shows that the way people think about things–in this case, cities–is often a function of who is telling the story.And who is telling the story is often determined by who “wins” (read: who is in power).Note that for every occurrence of a “–>”, there is likely a fascinating story to be told.Also note that in many of the cases, the transition indicated no a MERE re-naming, but a reincarnation.That is, rather than just a moniker alteration, the new culture redefined the city itself, fashioning it according to its own culture.Oftentimes, the city as it was under the first name has little in common with the city as it NOW is.This re-vamping is not merely attributable to the passage of time; it is primarily a matter of a change in cultural stewardship.

As with all other contents of history, how we now think of things does not necessarily reflect how others thought of the same things in bygone eras.The “trap” is that we are inclined to assume that how we think of things today indicates how those things have always been.This often goes for an entire metropolis as much as it does for a historical figure or historical event.

Choice of moniker also reflects the manner in which the object of interest (be it a place, a person, or event) has been stigmatized; or–as the case may be–the way those in power want it to be stigmatized.

Some cities–like, say, **Bu[k]hara**–have had so many names, it’s almost pointless to try to map who called it what and when.(It began with the Sogdian name, **“Buxarak”**, meaning “Place of Good Fortune”; and was alternately dubbed “Bumis-kat” / “Numij-kat”.)

Other cities have had several identities WITHOUT having their name changed.Take, for example, the history of **“Turpan”** [alt. “Turfan”].Ethnically, it was originally **Jushi** (and was known as “Jiaohe” / “Yarghul” in Tocharian).It then became Han, then Xiong-nu, then Sogdian, then Tang, then Tibetan, then Uyghur, then Kyrghiz, then Kara-Khitan, then Mongolian, then Moghul, then Timurid, and then (Ming) Chinese… while retaining the same moniker.It has been Chinese ever since.

It is only natural to assume that our favored portrayals are the most accurate portrayals; as we are inclined to attribute to ourselves an acuity that we often do not have.For once we have become sufficiently infatuated with our reveries, we fancy ourselves to be unimpeachable authorities on the credence of our own version of things.

Gone is the record of the origins of what we now recognize as OUR OWN version.Oftentimes, we don’t even CARE to know what those origins might be, as it would not serve our purposes.Such selective memory can also involve strategic FORGETTING.Note the erasure of entire cities from the narrative (see the previous essay on “Forgotten Cities”).

When we don’t care to recognize what actually occurred (or even fear that it may undermine our current worldview), we simply make something up–a “just so” story that comports with our Grand Narrative.Medieval Catalonians told of **“Barcelona”** being founded by famed Carthaginian general, Hamilcar Barca–who purportedly christened the city “Barcino” in the 3rd century B.C.This legend is appealing, yet the account is spurious–as the Carthaginians never made it that far north.No matter; it

makes for a great story.In reality, the location was referred to in the ancient Iberian language as **“Barkeno”** (rendered in Greek: “Barkinon”), which later became “Barcino” then “Barcilonum” during the Roman Empire.During the Middle Ages, it was referred to as “Barchenona” (and variations thereof).

Etymology is sometimes denied simply in order to uphold the desired cultural legacy.**Lava Puri** (Vedic) went through Hindu, then Ghaznavid, then Ghurid, then Mughal, then Sikh eras, before simply being named **“Lahore”**–which is now considered Punjabi, yet is actually based on the name for its (Hindu) temple to Lava / Luv / Loh: “Lava-puri” / “Loh-awar”.Meanwhile, the majority ethnic Pashtuns of **“Kabul”** fancy it to be a traditionally Pashtun city…even though the name is based on the Vedic **“Kubha”**.(Subsequently, the Achaemenids called it “Kabura”; then the Sassanians, “Kapul”…before being adopted by the Mughals in its familiar form.)

It is common for an etymological metamorphosis to be based primarily on phonetics.The Carthaginian (Punic) port in northern Morocco was **T-N-G**, which was rendered “Tanga” in Greek, “Tingi” in Berber, and “Tingis” in Latin.This last would be rendered “Tanger” in the Romantic languages.It would then be Arabized to “Tanja[h]”, and finally Anglicized to **“Tanjiers”**.

Sixty other examples of onomastics based on morphological adjustments:

1. **Malidiya** (Hittite) –> Melitea (Urartian) –> Meliddu (Akkadian / Assyrian) –> Melitea (Urartian) –> Melitene (Greco-Roman) –> **Malatya** (Turkic / Ottoman) {14}
2. **Attaleia** (Greek) –> Adalia (medieval Turkic) –> **Antalya** (Turkish)
3. **Ancyra** (Roman / Byzantine) –> Angora (medieval European) –> **Ankara** (Turkish)
4. **Antioch** (Roman) –> Theopolis (Byzantine) –> Antakiyyah (Arab) –> **Antakya** (Turkish)
5. **Zmyrna** [alt. “Smyrna”] (Aeolian Greek, then Ionian Greek) –> **Izmir** (Turkic)
6. **Tarsa** (Hittite) –> Tarsisi (Akkadian / Assyrian) –> Tarsos (Ancient Greek) –> Antiochia [of Cydnus] (Greco-Roman) –> Juliopolis (Byzantine) –> **Tarsus** (Anglicized Turkic)
7. **Sur** (Phoenician) –> Tzor (Aramaic) –> **Tyre** (Greco-Roman)
8. **G-B-L** (Phoenician / Ugaritic) –> **Byblos** (Greek)
9. **Emes[a]** (Syriac / Greek) –> **Homs** (medieval Arab) [likely the site of the Aramaean “Hamath” / “Zobah”]

10. **Tragourion** [Romanized as “Tragurium”] (Greek) –> **Trogir** (Croatian)
11. **Bizye** (Thracian) –> **Vize** (Turkic)
12. **Nasibina** (Akkadian / Assyrian) –> Nisebin (Aramaean, then Kurdish and Yezidi) –> Antiochia Mygdonia (Seleucid) –> Nsibin (Syriac) –> **Nusaybin** (Arab; Anglicized to “Nisibis”)
13. **T-M-S[h]-K[a]** (Akkadian / Assyrian) –> Damas[k] (Old Aramaic) –> Damaskos (Ancient Greek) –> Dameshek (Classical Hebrew) –> Darmsuk (Syriac) –> **Dimashq** (Arab; Romanized to “Damascus”)
14. **Garshu** (Ancient Semitic) –> Gerasa (Greco-Roman) –> **Jerash** (Arab)
15. **M-N-B-G** (Aramaean) –> Lita-Ashur (Phoenician / Assyrian) –> Bambyce, then Hieropolis, then Hierapolis (Greek) –> Mabbog (Syriac) –> Minbic (Kurdish) –> **Manbij** (Arab)
16. **Laodikea [ad Libanum]** (Greco-Roman) –> Ladhiqiyyah (Alawite Arab) –> **Latakia** (Anglicized Syrian) {15}
17. **Be’erot / Biruta** (Phoenician) –> Laodikea (Seleucid / Hellenic) –> Berytus (Roman) –> **Beirut** (Byzantine, then modern Lebanese) {15}
18. **Mabatha** (Samaritan) –> Mamorpha (Greek) –> Flavia Neapolis (Roman) –> **Nab[u]lus** (Syriac / Arab)
19. **Akka** (Akkadian; ancient Egyptian) –> Adko (Canaanite) –> [Antiokheia] Ptolemais [in Phoenicia] (Hellenic / Prolemaic) –> Colonia Ptolemais (Roman) –> Akka / Akko (Judean) –> Ak[r]e (Koine Greek) –> Ako (Byzantine) –> Saint John d’Acre (Frankish) –> **Acre** (Romanized modern)
20. **Baal-bek** (Canaanite) –> Baal-gad / Baal-ath (Ancient Hebrew) –> Heliopolis Syriae (Greek) –> Balabakka (medieval Arab) –> **Balbik** (modern Lebanese)
21. **Yavne / Jabneh** (Hebrew) –> Iamnia (Greek) –> Ibelin (Frankish) –> Yibna (Arabic) [Anglicized to “**Jamnia**”]
22. **Atharaa** (Canaanite) –> Adraa (Seleucid) –> Edre’i (medieval Hebrew) –> Adhri’at [Romanized to [Adratum”] (medieval Arab) –> **Daraa** (modern Arab)
23. **Ashdod** (Ugaritic, then Philistine) –> Azotus (Greco-Roman, then Byzantine) –> Mahuz Azdud (Arab) –> back to **Ashdod** (Hebrew)
24. **Ophlah / Ofel** (ancient Egyptian) –> **Afula** (Hebrew)
25. Ipu / **Khent-Min** (ancient Egyptian) –> Panopolis (Ptolemaic) –> K-Min; Kmim (ancient Coptic) –> Khemmis (Hellenic) –> **Akhmim** (Arabic)
26. **Swenet** (ancient Egyptian) –> Syene (Coptic / Ptolemaic) –> **Aswan** (contemporary Egyptian)
27. **Tamiat** (Coptic / Ptolemaic) –> Tamiathis (Greek) –> **Damietta** (contemporary Egyptian)

28. **Maqad-i Shah** (Persian) –> Muqdisho (Muzaffar Berber) –> **[x]Hamar** (Somali; Anglicized to **“Mogadishu”**]
29. **Baxtri** (Avestan) / **Balhika** (Sanskrit) –> Bakhlo (Bactrian) –> Baktra (Greek) –> **Balkh** (modern Persian)
30. **Baga-dad** [“God-given”] (Old Persian) –> **Baghdad** [alt. “Madinat al-Salam”] (Abbasid; modern Arab)
31. **Almatu** (Old Turkic) –> Alma-Ata (Russian) –> **Almaty** (Kazakh)
32. **Mara-kand[a]** (Ancient Greek / Macedonian) –> Samara Khanda (Sassanian) –>Fara-sia’ab [“beyond the black river”; rendered “Afrasiab” in Pahlavi] (Sogdian) –> **Samar-kand** (Gok-turk; then Uzbek)
33. **Khava-kand** (Turkic-Mongol) –> **K[h]o-kand** (Uzbek)
34. **Puru-shapur[a]** (Gandharan, then Mauryan, then Kushan) –> Parashawar (ancient Pashtun) –> **Peshawar** (Ghaznavid, then Mughal / Durrani)
35. **Z[a]ranka** (Achaemenid) –> Drangiana / Zarangia[na] (Macedonian / Seleucid / Greek) –> **[d]Zaranj** (Pashto)
36. **Madhu-van / Madhu-pura** (Yadu / Yavana; Seleucid) –> **Mathura** (Nanda / Mauryan; Kushan)
37. **Ajaya-meru** (Chahamana / Chauhan) –> **Ajmer** (Rajasthani)
38. **Hoeng Gong Zai** (Guang-dong-wa) –> **Hong Kong** (Anglicized Cantonese)
39. **Londinion** (Brittonic) –> Londinium (Roman) –> **London** (Anglo-Saxon) {16}
40. **Caer-dyf** (Old Welsh) –> Caer-dydd (modern Welsh) –> **Cardiff** (English)
41. **Anslo** (Old Norse) –> Christiania (Renaissance Norwegian) –> **Oslo** (modern Norwegian)
42. **Hellssingeforss** (medieval Swedish) –> **Helsinki** (Finnish)
43. **Turicum** (Roman) –> Ziurichi (Germanic Alemanni) –> **Zurich** (Swiss)
44. **Heiligen-berg** (Celtic / Roman) –> Bergheim (Swabian) –> **Heidelberg** (German)
45. **Treuorum** (Celtic) –> Augusta Treverorum (Roman) –> Treves (Frankish) –> Triers (French) –> **Trier** (German)
46. **Gyddanyzc / Kdanzk / Gdanzc** (Bohemian / Kashubian) –> Gedania / Gedanum / Dantiscum (Latin) –> Dan[t]zig (Teutonic / Pomeranian / Pomerelian) –> **Gdansk** (Polish)
47. **Massalia** (Phocian Greek) –> **Marseilles** (French)
48. **Nikaia** (Gallic Greek) –> **Nice** (French)
49. **Cenabum** (Gallic) –> civitas Aurelianorum [city of the gens Aurelia] (Roman) –> **Orléans** (Merovingian / Frankish; then modern French)
50. **Vedunia / Vindo-bona** (Roman) –> Wenia (Old High German) –> **Wien** (Austrian; Romanized to **“Vienna”**)

51. **Kart-Juba** (Carthaginian) –> Colonia Patricia (early Roman) –> Qurtubah (Arab Andalusian) –> **Cordoba** (medieval Roman; then modern Spanish)
52. **Gadir** (Phoenician, then Carthaginian) –> Agadir (Berber) –> Gadeira (Greek) –> Gedes (Roman) –> Qadis (Arab) –> **Cadiz** (Spanish)
53. **Fiesole** (Etruscan; Latinized as “Faesulae”) –> Fluentia, then Florentia (Roman) –> Florence (Frankish Tuscan) –> **Firenze** (Florentine Italian)
54. **Venetiae** [land of the Veneti] (Roman) –> Venice (Frankish Lombard) –> **Venezia** (Venetian Italian)
55. **Parthe-nope** (Greek) –> **Napoli** [Anglicized: Naples] (Neapolitan Italian)
56. **Taurinum** (Roman) –> **Torino** [Anglicized: Turin] (Piedmontese Italian)
57. **Hyele** (Phokaean / Ionian) –> Ele[a] (Classical Greek) –> **Velia** (Oscan; Cilentan Italian)
58. **Taras** (Spartan; Greek) –> Tarentum (Roman) –> **Taranto** (Italian)
59. **Acragas** (Ancient Greek) –> **Agrigento** (Sicilian)
60. **Odessos** [not to be confused with the Milesian colony in Bulgaria by the same name] –> **Odessa** (Ukrainian)

In such cases, a change of culture simply led to a change in pronunciation. {17}This was a natural progression of phonetics rather than a calculated revamping of nomenclature.In such cases, we are dealing with adaptation rather than obfuscation.However, etymology is not always so straight-forward.The Etruscan city of **Velzna** [alt. Velusna] either became Ouolsinii (Greco-Roman), in which case it is now Bolsena / Volsinii…or it became what was dubbed “Urbs Vetus”, in which case it is now **Orvieto**. {18}

In Kurdistan, the Hittite city of **“Arbilum”** became “Arbel[a]” in Syriac, which was Romanized to “Erbil”.The Sumerians and Akkadians called it “Arba-u Ilu”, the Assyrians called it “Urbelum” / “Urbilum”, the Persians called it “Arbaira”, and the Byzantines referred to it by its Syriac moniker: **“Arbela”**.The Kurds now call it “Hawler” so as to lend it a distinctly Kurdish pedigree.

Sometimes, we encounter runaway phonetic transmogrification.In India, **Bhrigu-kachchha** [“Bhrgu’s riverbank”; with myriad variants like Bhrigu-pur, Bhrigu-tirtha, Bhrigu-shetra, Bhrigu-kaksha] was alternately dubbed Bharu-kachchha.The Mughals then used an abbreviated form “Bharuch”…which was rendered “Bhadoch” (Maratha) and “Broach” (British).It was also referred to as “Barygaza” [“deep treasure”; Romanized to **“Bargosa”**].

The prime example of a metamorphosis in appellation based on phonetics is the Jebusite / Amorite city, **[u]Ru-salim[-a]**, which was named after the Canaanite deity, Shalim.It was referred to in Middle Persian (Pahlavi) as “Kang Diz Huxt”; and was rendered, “Yerushalem” in Ancient Hebrew; then “Yerushalayim” in Mishnaic Hebrew; then “al-Quds” in Arabic.For more on the history of **Jerusalem**, see my essay on “City Of The Beloved”.

It is not uncommon for the name of a city is changed for re-branding purposes.The Polish re-named **Frankenstein** (Silesian / Germanic) “Zabkowice Slaskie” following the Second World War.(The Germans had actually derived the name by combining two faltering settlements, Frankenberg and Löwenstein, in an attempt to burnish the municipality’s image.)Hungarians combined Buda and Pest (Magyar) to yield **Budapest**. The Chinese combined Wu-chang with Han-Kou to yield “Wu-Han” in Hu-bei [northern lake] province. Etc. {13}

Sometimes name alterations do not correlate with outright changes in culture.Rather, they simply indicate an adjustment in how people speak about things.For instance, the moniker for **Copenhagen** (Denmark) changed from era to era, yet the city was always Danish: **Portus Mercatorum** [“Merchant’s Harbor” in Latin] to Kobmanna-havn [“Merchant’s Harbor” in Danish] to Hafn[ia]…and finally to Koben-havn.So the city has been primarily conceived as a mercantile port from its inception.

There are many examples of name-changes which are strictly attributable to re-labeling within the same culture.For instance, the current Mongolian capital of **“Ulan-Baat[a]r”** [Red Hero] used to be called **“Daa Khuree”** [Great Settlement] by the Mongols.(The Chinese referred to it as “Da Kulun”; the British as “Urga”). {19}

Oftentimes, how people think about X correlates with how they choose to name X.So how others SUBSEQUENTLY think about X is influenced by its name–replete with a repertoire of entrenched stigmas.This goes for people and objects as well as for places: hence the salience of BRANDING.The point is that nomenclature does not create Reality; it only informs the perception of it.Sometimes stigmatization accurately reflects Reality (irrespective of its name, Copenhagen REALLY IS a mercantile port); oftentimes it does not.As those in power change, stigmas are adjusted to suit their interests.

In sum: Things were not always what we currently think them to be.The alterations of the identities of major cities illustrates this.Note that the same kind of etymological transformation can be found with the naming of deities (so as to assert ownership and novelty).

And so it goes: Revision occurs not only with the identity of people and events, it happens with the identity of places as well.If we can be misled about the history / identity of major cities (most of which still tangibly exist), we can certainly be misled about folkloric figures, who survive only as abstractions within the customized annals of our “histories”.

Put another way: If people can’t even agree on the history / identity of entire metropolises (which we can still see and touch), it is easy to not get the story straight when it comes to historical figures–especially those we have been told about since upon mother’s knee.Characters in a story (especially when heroic) are much more nebulous than the ruins of an ancient city.After all, personages (and their deeds / words) are not open to archeological scrutiny–at least not directly. So we should be especially cautious when hearing about (excessively lionized) folkloric figures: what they did and what they said.

FOOTNOTES:

{1“Alexandr[e]ia” / “Alexandroupolis” was a moniker assigned to myriad cities… pursuant to the conquests of Alexander the Great.“Herat” was Alexandria in Aria.“Khujand” was Alexandria Eschate in Sughd (Sogdia).“Kandahar” was Alexandria in Arachosia.“Bagram” [originally “Parwan”; then “Kapisa”] was Alexandria in Paropamisadae [Gandhara] (a.k.a. Alexandria on the Caucasus).There was Alexandria on the Oxus, Alexandria in the Indus Valley, Alexandria Susiana in lower Mesopotamia, etc.The Alexandria in northern Syria (now southeastern Turkey) was “Iskandarun” (Frankish: “Alexandretta”).The most famous Alexandria retains its name to the present day: the one in Egypt (Egyptian “Rha-kotis”; Hellenic: “Therapeutai”).}

{2Not to be confused with the modern **“Nan-jing”** [southern capital], which was Romanized to “Nan-king” in the same way that “Bei-jing” was Romanized to “Pe-king”. As stated above, the CURRENT “Nan-jing” was originally “Jian-ye” (Eastern Wu)…then “Jian-kang” (Eastern Jin), then “Jin-ling” (Tang), then “Ying-tian” (Ming)… before adopting its familiar moniker.}

{3The city was briefly named New Orange in 1673-74, when it was temporarily re-taken by the Dutch.This is a reminder that how we think of things–or at least how we are behooved to think of things–is often determined by who's in charge.Vestiges of New York City's Dutch past can be found in the Anglicized versions of the original Dutch monikers: **"Brooklyn"** for Breuckelen, **"Flushing"** for Vlissingen, and **"Harlem"** for Nieuw Haarlem.}

{4This is Romanized to "Bethlehem".It was first dubbed "House of Bread / Fertility" by the early Canaanites ("Lehem" is a variation on "Lah[a]mu", the Canaanite deity of bounty / fertility).It was then re-dubbed "House of Meat" in Arabic; as "Bayt Lahm" is a cognate of "Beit Lehem".There is no town about which more legend has been confabulated.Romantic tales of the virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth (as the Christ) came to be told as an actual historical account–replete with "three wise men" from the East following a star all the way to a manger.The town likely entered Christian folklore (as the birthplace of the "King of the Jews") because it had been the purported birthplace of King David.}

{5The old part of the city is still referred to as "Jaffa".}

{6Ancient Cyrenaica and Marmarica (present-day Libya) had several towns that had Carthaginian / Roman names–that is, prior to the Arab conquests of the Maghreb.Phthia is now **"Bomba"**, Paliurus is now **"Timimi"**, Antipyrgus is now **"Tobruk"**, Gonia is now **"Acromah"**, Tetrapyrgia is now **"Sallum"**, Petras Maior is now **"Bardia"**, Darnis is now **"Darnah"**, and Zygra is now **"Sidi Barrani"**.Cyrene and Timgad no longer exist.}

{7The Siamese city is now known in the West by the Romanized version of its ancient name: "Bangkok".}

{8It is unclear what the city was referred to during the Parthian and Sassanian era.During the modern era, the name has been Romanized variously as "Sepahan", "Ispahan", and "Esfahan".}

{9This is probably the basis for the Magyar (Hungarian) name, "Pozsony".}

{10During the pre-Islamic period, this region changed hands so many times, it is difficult to ascertain who, exactly, was calling this location what, and when.It is unclear at what point the moniker "Kandahar" started being used for the city.The Umayyad or–later–Abbasid conquerers may have first used the name.All we can say for sure is that the Mughals eventually adopted it.}

{11The Portuguese often conflated the city, Guang-zhou, with the region in which it was located, Guang-dong, referring to them both as “Ciudad de Can-tao”–the Romanized version of which is “Canton”.Hence the ethnic designation, “Cantonese”.}

{12The transition from Tsarist to Soviet Russia during the First World War entailed many name-changes–attesting to the inclination to re-brand even cities.For example, the Tuvan city of Belo-Tsarsk was briefly renamed “Khem-Beldir” by the Bolsheviks, and then “Kyzyl” during the Soviet era.The ancient Armenian city of Alexandro-pol was re-named “Lenin-akan” during the Soviet era; and is now “Gyumri”.}

{13Sometimes, cities on opposing sides of a river are conjoined physically as well as etymologically.This also occurred with the Western Zhou cities of Feng and Hao, yielding the modern “Fenghao”.Other times, a single city skirting a river is bifurcated into separate municipalities–as with Kansas City in Missouri and Kansas City in Kansas.}

{14This is the site of Arslan-tepe.}

{15It was not uncommon for cities to be named “Laodikeia”.For example, the Sassanian city of Nahavand was for a time also referred to by that moniker, though it was also dubbed “Antiochia” in Media / Chosroes / Persis.}

{16As Welsh legend goes, the location was founded by the apocryphal figure, Lludd map Beli Mawr (alt. “Lludd Llaw Ereint”; alt. “Lud, son of Heli”).This name may have been a variation on the mythic Welsh figure, Nudd…who was, in turn, based on the the mythic Irish figure, Nuada.}

{17Sometimes, naming discrepancy is merely a reflection of the phonetic idiosyncrasies endemic to transliteration.Few are bothered by English-speakers calling Lisboa **“Lisbon”** or Napoli **“Naples”** or Varzsava **“Warsaw”** or Praha **“Prague”** or Moskva **“Moscow”**.The point is: There is much more to a name than just the label itself.Is Jerusalem in “Palestine” or “Israel”?Either way, it is located in what used to be called Canaan.Sometime such discrepancies are innocuous; but not always.}

{18The name of several municipalities in Tuscany and Umbria derived from an Etruscan (then Greco-Roman) antecedent: **Arezzo** from “Arritim” (Arretium); **Cerveteri** from “Caisra” (Agylla, Caere Vetus); **Cortona** from “Curtun” (Cortonium);

Volterra from “Felathri” (Volaterrae); **Populonia** from “Fufluna” (Populonium); **Perugia** from “Perusia”; **Vetulonia** from “Vetluna” (Vetulonium); **Targuinia** from “Tarchna”; and **Fiesole** from “Vipsul” (Faesulae).In Campania, **Salerno** is from “Irna” (Salernum”) and **Padova** (“Padua”) is from the Greco-Roman “Patavium”.}

{19Often, though, this reflects an evolution of the indigenous language: Tiflis became **T’bilisi** (both Georgian); Curubis (Roman Tunisian) became **Korba** (medieval Tunisian); and Dagon (Mon) became **Yangon** (Burmese)…which was later Romanized to “Rangoon”.}