

## IT'S A JUMBLE OUT THERE

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Dear Anabelle Van Landers:

These questions may be a bit out of the ordinary for your column, but I have never known you to fail a reader, and I am sure that you won't let me down. I am, frankly, nearing my wit's end, and you are my last hope.

It all began several months ago when, for a paper I was writing, I needed to know the generic term for a citizen of the new African state of Benin (formerly Dahomey). Was such a person a Beninan, a Beninian, a Beninese, a Beniner, or what? An almanac provided the answer: a Beninese. But then. I wondered, how does the almanac know this? To what source did the almanac refer for its information? A dictionary? If so, how then did the dictionary know that the proper term for a native of Benin was Beninese and not Beninan? To what ultimate authority did the dictionary refer on this question? Is there some little-known, quasi-governmental commission of senior lexicographers which meets in quiet conclave every now and then to decide these matters for the rest of us?

And whoever it is that decides these things, Ana, why in Heaven's name are they so crazily inconsistent in the kinds of modifiers which they assign to place names? Are they simply playing with our minds? I mean, if an inhabitant of Italy is an Italian, shouldn't a gentleman of Germany be called a Germanian? And if a cow-herder in Somalia is a Somali, why isn't his counterpart in Australia an Australi? And if things of Burma are Burmese and not Burmanian, shouldn't things of Panama be Panamese and not Panamanian?

And furthermore, Ana, why is a person of Portugal a Portuguese and not a Portugali, whereas one born in Bengal is not a Benguese but a Bengali? And why are there millions of Argentinians but no Argentinese, and not a single Chinian whilst so many Chinese? And if Grecians are also Greeks, are then Thracians nominally Threeks? Are Frisians then Freeks, and Ghentians then Geeks?

And also, Ana, if citizens of the Congo are called Congolese, why do we hear much of Moroccans and nothing of Moroccolese? And why then may we label a subject of Prince Rainier a Monacan or a Monagasque, but never a Monacolese? And if the things of Ireland are Irish, are the Things of Iceland therefore Iceish? Or Greenland, Greenish? Or New Zealand, New Zealandish? (Or is that too outish?) And if Poland is peopled by

Poles, does it follow that Holland is habited by Holes? (And if so, are Poles and Holes complimentary when they meet, or poles apart?)

And another thing, if the Lebanese are lodged in Lebanon, shouldn't the Sudanese be situated in Sudanon? The Japanese in Japananon? Bhutanese in Bhutanon? The Gabonese in Gabanon? And if Laotian lovers logically lair in Laos, do Tahitian trysters take the air in Taos? And tell me, Ana, if the home of the Huns is called Hungary, why aren't the fens of the Finns known as Finngary?

And linguistically speaking, if Ireland's idiom is Erse, does that mean that Thailand's talk is Terse? (And if Irish is actually Erse, wouldn't Welsh really be Werse?)

And if, historically, the Franks came to France and became French, does that mean that the Danes came to Dance and became Dense? Or to put it another way, if the French were once the Franks, were the Danes once the Danks? And were the Swedes in those days the Swanks, and Russians the Ranks, the Prussians the Pranks, the Spanish the Spanks, the Croats the Cranks, and the Yemeni the Yanks? (As bad as this is, it might have been worse--suppose that the ancestral name of the French had been the Frinks. What might one then imagine to have been the ancient appellations of the Finns, the Dutch, the Poles, the Serbs, the Welsh, the Slovaks, the Scots, and the Styrians?)

But on the other hand, if the English derive their name from the Angles, might the Spanish be named after the Spangles? The Danish after the Dangles? Bangladeshis after Bangles? Tanzanians after Tangles? Manchurians after Mangles? New Finns after old Fangles? (Have I covered all the angles?)

And lastly, Ana, if a Switzerlander is a Swiss does that make

a Michigander a Miss?

A Kirghiz a Kiss?

A Cuban a Cuss?

A Württemburger a Wüss?

A Mesopotamian a Mess?

Lesothoans likely Less?

A Bosnian a Boss?

A Lombard a Loss?

A Bavarian a Bass?

A Gambian a Gass?

So tell me, please tell me, O syndicated Ana, fount of wisdom, what are the answers to these, my many carking and sleep-plaguing questions?

--Sheldon in Sheboygan

I Canada Seychelles--and Idaho If'nI Bolivia! Oman! Yukon me Aegean and Algeria and Albania and Algeria Samoa! Anatolia!

--Ana