

## PLATO'S ATLANTIS ACCOUNT — A DISTORTED RECOLLECTION OF THE TROJAN WAR

*Summary. Parts of the lower town of Mycenaean Tiryns, Greece, became devastated and buried 3–5 meters deep during a torrential flood which coincided with a major earthquake at the transition from Late Helladic IIIB2 to Late Helladic IIIC1 (c. 1200 BC). These catastrophes contributed locally to the rapid demise of the Mycenaean civilization which commenced at this chronological boundary. Such a collapse of an early Greek civilization accompanied by a simultaneous earthquake and flood is described by Plato (Timaeus 25D) in the legendary Atlantis account. Plato's report revolves around a war between an ancient Greek civilization and a mighty force abroad, called Atlantis. If the former coincides with Mycenaean Greece, the most obvious candidate for the latter must be Troy. Hence, the thus far inexplicable story of Atlantis might well represent an Egyptian recollection of Troy and the Trojan War, distorted by transmission and translation.*

### INTRODUCTION

The only sources of the Atlantis legend are two fictitious conversations between historic people in *Timaeus* (21E–25D) and *Critias* (113A–121C), in which Plato assimilated a mixture of historical facts, precise technical information, myth and exaggeration to portray two remarkably developed civilizations which, he claims, existed long before Classical Greece. The lack of other independent descriptions of Atlantis, however, and some ostensibly absurd details in the account are generally taken as hints for a fictitious character of the story (Stewart 1905; Barker 1918; Cornford 1937; Rosenmeyer 1949a; Kahn 1962), despite Plato's repeated assurance that it rests on authentic and reliable information (20D; 21A; 26E).

The recent discovery of a simultaneous earthquake and flash flood at Tiryns (Zangger 1991a), however, revealed some striking parallels between the archaeological record of the LH IIIB/C transition and Plato's description of a collapsing heroic civilization in pre-Classical Greece. The Mycenaean culture and the one described by Plato were both Greek, possessed the knowledge of writing, consisted of a highly stratified and meticulously organized society, had intense contacts to countries abroad and thrived at a time when war-chariots and bronze weapons were in use. They both experienced a sudden collapse that was accompanied by a simultaneous earthquake and flood — and taking the *Iliad* into account — they also both boosted a united Greek army and successfully fought a state abroad.

The main part (113A–121C) of Plato's account, however, consists of a description of the Greek's opponent, Atlantis. Since the most prominent legendary war in the Late Bronze Age Aegean was the Trojan War, Troy is examined here as a likely candidate for Plato's Atlantis. It will be argued that the narrative attributes several characteristics to Atlantis which are unique to Troy, as known from its environmental setting (Cook 1973; Rapp & Gifford 1982; Korfmann 1986; Neumann 1986), material culture (Schliemann 1880; Blegen *et al.* 1958; Podzuweit 1982) or as described in the Homeric epics (Leaf 1912; Thornton 1984). Among others, these parallels include a location at narrow straits with difficult navigability (*Timaeus* 24E), troublesome northern gales (*Critias* 118A; *Iliad* 8.499; 12.115; 13.724; 18.174; 23.64; 23.297), comparable architecture and city design (*Critias* 116A), a lineage going back to Atlas (*Timaeus* 25A; Apollodorus 3.12.1), a pair of hot and cold springs (*Critias* 113E; 117A; *Iliad* 22.147–156), identical army forces (*Critias* 119A–B), a decisive war involving navies of 1200 ships (*Critias* 119B, *Iliad* 2) and deadliest perils (*Timaeus* 25C; *Iliad* 1.10) — as well as an ultimate victory by the Greeks (*Timaeus* 25C).

#### PLATO'S ACCOUNT

The books in which Plato illustrated Atlantis, including its war against his ancient Greek forefathers, belong to what is generally considered an unfinished trilogy (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1920; Welliver 1977): only the first volume, *Timaeus*, was completed; the second one *Critias*, breaks off in mid-sentence near the conclusion of the description of Atlantis and a third one, *Hermocrates*, though forecasted in the previous books (108A; 108C), was never begun.

In *Timaeus* Atlantis is only briefly mentioned

in the introduction (21E–25D) and has no significance for the main body of text (27C–91C) which discusses physics, the origin of the universe, biology and anatomy (Gill 1977). Plato summarizes scientific doctrines from earlier and contemporary physicists such as Empedocles, Alcmaeon, Thaetetus and Eudoxus and from the medical schools of Syracuse, Cos and Cnidos (Lloyd 1968). The book provides what Plato considers an accurate synopsis of the then known elements of astronomy, the structure of matter and human physiology.

The second volume of the trilogy, *Critias*, was apparently meant to recollect the history from man's first appearance to historic times (Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1920). It begins with a recollection of oral traditions providing some plausible observations about early over-exploitation of natural resources in ancient Attika and the ensuing soil erosion (111). A number of recent landscape reconstructions in Greece have verified this part of *Critias* (van Andel & Zangger 1990; Zangger 1991b). The second main topic in *Critias* is the exhausting description of Atlantis (113A–121C), concentrating almost exclusively on technical details about architecture, natural resources, land and water management and political organization. The final volume of the incomplete trilogy, *Hermocrates*, may have been intended for current (4th cent. BC) history (Cornford 1937; Lee 1965).

The context of the Atlantis account in a treatise summarizing contemporary knowledge of physical sciences and history, supports Plato's claim that the story rests on historic events. But if such a remarkable place existed, it should be mentioned in more than one text. Furthermore it would be unlikely to have escaped the attention of century-long archaeological fieldwork.

Philological research has produced numerous suggestions for places and events

that could have incited Plato's inspiration, e.g. the town of Helike which was destroyed during an earthquake in 373 BC (Taylor 1926; Frutiger 1930; Herter 1944; Giovanni 1985), the Persian War (Pallottino 1952; Skemp 1952; Welliver 1977) and the Sicilian city of Syracuse in general or Dionysius' residence in particular (Rudberg 1917; Corbato 1953). The thus far most widely accepted Atlantis-hypothesis, however, evolved from a 'Times' letter by K.T. Frost, published on 19 February 1909. Frost recognized parallels between Plato's description of ancient Aegean civilizations and Arthur Evans' finds at Minoan Knossos (Frost 1913). His ideas experienced a revival in the late 1960's through Marinatos' excavations at Akrotiri, a village that fell victim to the eruption of Thera (Luce 1969; Marinatos 1986). But recent pottery, radio-carbon and dendrochronological dates have shown that this eruption took place in the second half of the seventeenth century BC, thereby predating the peak of the Minoan civilization by more than a century (Warren 1984; Aitken 1988; Manning 1988). Consequently, today few scholars would support the notion that the Atlantis account is a distant reflection of the Minoan collapse (Vitaliano 1971; Chadwick 1976; Ramage 1978).

### *The Transmission*

According to Plato (20E–21E) the legend originated during Solon's (640–560 BC) visit to the episcopate government in Saïs (Egypt); a journey that is historically conceivable, because several ancient Greek authors refer to Solon's travel to Egypt (Plutarch, *Life of Solon* 31; Diogenes Laërtius 1.50) and one of the few surviving fragments of his writings recollects impressions gained at the Canopic mouth of the Nile. While conversing with Solon about history, the priests in Saïs retrieved from hieroglyphic inscriptions the story of an earlier

Greek civilization and its war against Atlantis. Solon took notes of the conversation and intended to use the Atlantis theme for an epic prose. He conveyed the narrative to Dropides — a relative and 'very dear friend' (20E) — as emphasized in now lost poems by Solon. Dropides transmitted the story to his son, Critias the elder. Critias the younger, grandson of the former and narrator of the account in Plato's books, first heard about Atlantis during an *Apaturia* feast, held in October in honour of Dionysus, when he was ten years old and his grandfather close to ninety years of age (21B). Critias emphasized that, as a child, when his grandfather was in possession of Solon's manuscript, he learned Solon's account by heart; but meanwhile he owned these writings himself, probably having inherited them (113B). Analysis of Athenian family lines have revealed that this transmission is historically possible (Rosenmeyer 1949b; Davies 1971; Luce 1978). Considering Plato's repeated claim that the story recollects historic events, one may infer that he did indeed use information from abroad, in which case a transmission involving Solon appears plausible. But the narrative was obviously distorted by transmission and translation. Plato even states explicitly that Solon obscured the original names of the account in an attempt to recover their Greek meaning.

### *Distortions*

Several details in the Atlantis account are contradictory to today's image of Mediterranean prehistory. Firstly, Plato claims the events took place 8000 and 9000 years before Solon's time, although the account mentions the existence of writing, a united Greek army, citadels, bronze weapons, chariots, shipyards and horse-race courses. This level of cultural and technical achievement corresponds to the Late Bronze Age (1600–1150 BC) but to no

other period before Classical Greece. The discrepancies in dating might have resulted from a confusion between the civil solar calendar and the religious lunar calendar which were used in Egypt simultaneously (Parker 1950; Spanuth 1979). Considering the 8000 years may have been lunar years which need to be converted by division with 12.37 (the number of moons per year in a Metonic Cycle of eight years), the actual war between Greece and Atlantis would have taken place during the thirteenth century BC — more precisely between 1318 and 1207 BC depending on whether Solon's visit took place in 560 BC or in 590 BC and whether 8000 or 9000 years are used for the computation. A thirteenth century date corresponds to the degree of technical development as described by the account (Brandenstein 1951; Steuerwald 1983) as well as to the traditional date of the Trojan War.

Some absolute measurements appear to have been distorted too. While the city of Atlantis is said to have had a diameter of five stades (c. 900 m), the plain around the city was 3000 by 2000 stades (c. 540 km by 360 km), thus completely disproportionate to the size of the town. Because of such distortions it would be nonsensical to consider Plato's account to be historically accurate. Therefore, the objective of this commentary is not to verify the historicity of the account, but rather to detect the place and event that served as a model at its core. If such a kernel of historic truth existed, even people involved in the transmission (including Solon and Plato) evidently did not recognize it (Frost 1913).

#### MYCENAEAN GREECE

Although a context for Atlantis has been sought all over the world, Mycenaean Greece, an obvious candidate for the heroic age depicted in *Timaeus* 21E–25E, has never been

seriously examined in this pursuit. The leading Egyptian priest, however, while talking to Solon, describes a Greek civilization that is highly reminiscent of Homer's heroic age. Noticing Solon's unawareness that '*the noblest and most perfect race amongst men were born in the land where you now dwell*' (23B), he portrays the Greeks as having '*surpassed all men in every virtue*' (24D), adding that, '*many in truth and great are the achievements of your State, which are a marvel to men as they are here recorded*' (24D). Such heroic virtues recall the Late Bronze Age when Greece possessed '*the most splendid works of art*' (23C) as documented in the monumental architecture and Mycenaean craftsmanship.

Furthermore, the Egyptian priest remarks that writing was once known and practiced in mainland Greece, an observation that is verified by the Linear B tablets at Pylos, Mycenae and Tiryns. The people of Archaic and classical Greece, however, including Solon and Plato, were unaware of their predecessor's knowledge of writing. Rhys Carpenter therefore declared that the entirely exact statement in the Atlantis account about the loss of writing in ancient Greece should convince the most skeptical scholars of the genuineness of Solon's conversation with the Saitian priests, because Plato could not have known about his predecessors' literacy (Carpenter 1966).

The ancient Greek civilization is said to have been highly stratified and '*supremely well organized*' (23C); professions were divided into priests, shepherds, hunters, farmers, military and craftsmen, subdivided by their occupation (24A). This social stratification again corresponds to the organization of the Mycenaean society as evident from the Linear B tablets, the Late Bronze Age architecture and Homer's epics. The Linear B tablets describe a hierarchical system, with the *Wanax* as the king and foremost leader, followed by the *Lawagetas*, the so called leader of the people.

A group of *hequetai* or 'followers', constituting the nobility, escorted the king (Chadwick 1976). Altogether 26 professions have been distinguished from the Linear B tablets of which 23 were also known to Homer (Luce 1975).

The priest highlights the role of warfare in ancient Greece, mentioning a military class that was kept apart from all others 'to devote itself solely to the work of training for war' (23B). At several occasions the Greek state is praised as 'the bravest in war' (23C) with soldiers equipped 'with shields and spears' (24B). Once again attributes that are highly applicable to the Mycenaean society, characterized by Lord William Taylour as appearing to have 'loved strife for its own sake' (Taylour 1983). Citadel walls up to 7 m thick, numerous bronze weapons, complete bronze armors and images of arms and war-chariots in the archaeological record, troops, armory and chariots mentioned on Linear B tablets and ubiquitous combat scenes in Homer's poems bear evidence of the Mycenaean proclivity to warfare.

One exploit of the ancient Greek state, however, 'stands out above all others both for magnitude and nobleness' (24E). Shortly before its own sudden demise the Greek army 'stayed the course of a mighty host' (24E). It 'stood pre-eminent above all in gallantry and all warlike arts, and acting partly as leader of the Greeks and partly standing alone by itself when deserted by all others, after encountering the deadliest perils, it defeated the invaders' (25C). Here too, the Egyptian recollection of the war parallels Homer's *Iliad*: both accounts mention a united army led by the Greeks, both mention deserting troops and deadliest perils and both attribute the final victory to the Greeks.

Natural catastrophes occurred after the war: 'But at a later time there occurred portentous earthquakes and floods, and one grievous day

and night befell them, when the whole body of your warriors was swallowed up by the earth ...' (25D). Quite opposed to the conventional belief that Atlantis was destroyed by such natural disasters, the priest states explicitly that they occurred in Greece — although Atlantis is said to have disappeared 'in like manner'. The flood came down from heaven (23A) and not in the form of a tidal wave as was suggested during the course of the Thera discussion. The archaeological and geological record document analogous events from the LH IIIB/C transition at Tiryns where a catastrophic flash flood buried parts of the lower town under up to 4.8 m of silt (Zangger 1991a). The flood occurred virtually simultaneously with an earthquake detected in the archaeological record, and it was triggered by a sudden change in a river course which may have been caused by collapsing banks.

According to the Egyptian's recollection, the natural catastrophes in Greece had one particularly remarkable effect: the selective eradication of higher echelons. The priest emphasized this phenomenon several times: (1.) 'All the herdsmen and shepherds that live in the mountains are saved, but those in the cities of your land are swept into the sea by the streams' (22E). (2.) 'It leaves none of you but the unlettered and uncultured, so that you become young as ever, with no knowledge of all that happened in old times in this land or in your own' (23B). (3.) 'Whereas your people and the others are but newly equipped, every time, with letters and all such arts as civilized states require' (23A). The end of the Bronze Age in Greece was indeed accompanied by a selective disappearance of the city populations consisting of the leading classes, aristocrats and officers, while the bulk of the people lived on. The priest repeatedly states that the population density in Greece dropped dramatically after the catastrophes, and that it took a long time until a genuine civilization with an organized

society and possessing the knowledge of writing was reinstalled.

*'From them both you yourself are sprung and the whole of your existing city, out of some little seed that chanced to be left over; but this has escaped your notice because for many generations the survivors died with no power to express themselves in writing'* (23C). From a sixth century BC perspective the above statement represents a valid characterization of the developments in Greece after the Late Bronze Age collapse: population density dropped, writing was lost, the traditional aristocratic system was abandoned and for several generations Greece experienced what is generally perceived as a dark age.

#### ATLANTIS/TROY

If the Greek culture described in *Timaeus* coincides with Mycenaean Greece, its arch-enemy, Atlantis, ought to be Troy. The term 'Atlantis', an adjective derived from 'Atlas', denotes a *patronymikón*, a word which describes a father/daughter relation; literally translated it means 'Atlas' daughter' (Luce 1969). Atlas and his mortal daughter Electra are indeed at the source of the legendary Trojan lineage; Electra's offspring were the inhabitants of Troy. According to Apollodorus (3.12.1) and Homer (*Iliad* 20.215) the genealogy of Troy until the Trojan War included: 1. Atlas; 2. Electra; 3. Dardanus; 4. Erichthonius; 5. Tros; 6. Ilus; 7. Laomedon and 8. Priam. Greek traditions know Priam as the Trojan leader; Laomedon, his father, was the erector of the fortress' walls. Trojans, Ilians and Dardanians are the names of the peoples fighting the Greeks. Thus, the name of five progenitors (out of eight) were actively used in the Homeric vocabulary. It would not seem implausible if there were even older traditions going back to the very first fore-father, Atlas, or his daughter 'Atlantis'.

Such a parallel between Trojans and Atlanteans has been recognized before. Jacob Bryant says in his encyclopedia *Analysis of Ancient Mythology* (1776) about Troy: 'The common opinion is, that the city was built by Ilus, the son of Dardanus who must consequently have been of the same family a Merop-Atlantian.' If this was indeed a very ancient name for the Trojans, it would not be surprising to find it used in Egypt, the native land of the Atlantis legend, because the Egyptians had a tendency to apply outdated names to new populations occupying the same area (Millard 1984).

The location of Atlantis, although described in detail, remains inexplicable with respect to Holocene topography and cultural history: *'For the ocean there was at that time navigable; for in front of the mouth which you Greeks call, as you say, "the pillars of Heracles," there lay an island which was larger than Libya and Asia together; and it was possible, for the travellers of that time to cross from it to the other islands, and from the islands to the whole of the continent over against them which encompasses that veritable ocean. For all that we have here, lying within the mouth of which we speak, is evidently a haven having a narrow entrance; but that yonder is a real ocean, and the land surrounding it may most rightly be called, in the fullest and truest sense, a continent'* (24E). The value of Egyptian hieroglyphic documents suffers considerably from the imperfect system of vocalization used to transcribe foreign place names (Barnett 1975), thus errors are bound to have been introduced when the Saitian priests translated the account from over 500-year-old hieroglyphic inscriptions into Greek. Looking from a maritime perspective, the text states that Atlantis lay in front of the entrance to a narrow water way (*'in front of the mouth . . . having a narrow entrance'*); Plato's text emphasizes the difference between the 'ocean' (*pelágos*)

on this side of the straits, the 'passage' itself (*stóma*) and the 'sea' (*póntos*) on the other side. Two narrow straits in the Mediterranean fit this description reasonably well: The Straits of Gibraltar leading to the Atlantic Ocean and the Dardanelles leading to the Black Sea, but only the latter contains a '*stóma*' (Dardanelles and Bosphorus), leads to a sea called *Póntos* in Greek (*Póntos Euxínus*) that is surrounded by a continent '*in the fullest sense*'. Furthermore, only Dardanelles and Bosphorus lay within reach of Mycenaean ships.

Solon apparently helped the translation ('*as you say, are called . . .*') by introducing the term '*the pillars of Heracles*', which is generally used to identify the Straits of Gibraltar. But the phrase already belonged to the Greek vocabulary before the passage into the Atlantic was known (*Odyssey* 1.53–54). Therefore, Richard Hennig (1927) concluded, that only since 500 BC 'the pillars of Heracles' denote the Straits of Gibraltar, before that time the term was applied to a different locality. Servius (on Vergil's *Aeneid* 11.262; c. 400 AD) provided a hint where the original pillars of Heracles might have been:

*Columnas Herculis legimus et in Ponto et in Hispania*

(We pass through the pillars of Heracles in the Black Sea as well as in Spain). At the time of Solon's visit in Egypt the idiom had possibly just changed its meaning. Hearing about a narrow water way in a distant place, Solon may have suggested the passage into the Atlantic, because at that time it was the most distant place reached by Greek vessels.

The use of the term 'island' does not argue against correlating Atlantis with Troy. The hieroglyphic sign often rendered in translation as 'island' symbolizes merely a sandy tract or shore and 'is widely used as a determinative symbol for foreign lands or regions beyond the Nile valley' (Carpenter 1966). Thirteenth

century Egyptian inscriptions usually refer to the Aegean as 'the islands': 'As for the foreign countries, they made a conspiracy in their islands' (Pritchard 1969; Gardiner 1971), or: 'Now the northern countries which were in their islands were quivering in their bodies' (Sandars 1978). The *Iliad* called Agamemnon the ruler 'of many islands and all the Argive lands' (2.108) and: 'To the islands' appears as a common phrase in Hittite texts from the thirteenth century BC in particular when they refer to *Ahhiyawa* which is generally identified with Achaea or Achaean Greece (Sommer 1932; Starke 1981; Easton 1985). Contemporary Egyptian records frequently used the expression 'the islands of the Great Green' and most historians agree, that this idiom denotes the Aegean islands including the continental shores (Jones 1924; Vercoutter 1954; Edel 1966; Haider 1988).

Regarding the significance of Atlantis, many translations state that it '*was larger than Libya and Asia together*' (24E); the Greek text, however, uses an adverbial idiom instead of an adjective, hence 'to be of greater significance' appears to be a better translation (Pischel 1982). Therefore, the limits Libya and Asia appear to mark the sphere of influence of the Atlanteans, rather than their territory.

The account states that '*the ocean there was at that time navigable*' (24E), thus emphasizing that the knowledge to navigate this passage once existed but was later lost, a fact that is fully applicable to the Dardanelles and Bosphorus. Today, few archaeologists will doubt that the Achaeans at least occasionally navigated into the Black Sea (Labaree 1957), but not long ago it was assumed that the strong currents in the Bosphorus prevented this voyage until the invention of the Ionic pentakonter, c. 680 BC (Carpenter 1948). There are no finds indicating exchange across the Bosphorus from the tenth to eighth century BC (Koromila 1991), thus the impression given by the

account, that the straits used to be navigable in the past (13th cent. BC), but that this potential was lost (for a few centuries) confirms the parallels between the location of Atlantis and Troy.

'*Bordering on the sea and extending through the centre of the whole island there was a plain, which is said to have been the fairest of all plains and highly fertile; and, moreover, near the plain, over against its centre, at a distance of about 50 stades, there stood a mountain that was low on all sides*' (113C). Heinrich Schliemann described Troy in a very similar way as 'situated on a low height in the plain; that is to say, nearly in its centre.' Troy is enclosed by a fertile alluvial plain on its southern, western and northern sides. The plain is 'bordered on the sea' by a narrow strip of low mountains which drop steeply into the sea on the western side of the Yeniköy ridge. Hisarlik itself, the knoll on which Troy rests, lies 'near the plain, over against its centre' forming a mound 'low on all sides'. Fifty stades, or nine kilometres, is the distance between Troy and Besik Bay, today the nearest natural harbour for Troy.

The account continues to provide a description of Atlantis with superfluous detail including further parallels with Troy. For example, only two ancient Greek texts, the *Iliad* and the Atlantis account, depict a city that is characterized by a pair of hot and cold springs (*Critias* 113E; 117A; *Iliad* 22.147–156). Moreover, in both texts the city is said to have suffered from northern gales (*Critias* 118A; *Iliad* 8.499; 12.115; 13.724; 18.174; 23.64; 23.297) — an attribute that still today characterizes Troy (Neumann 1986). Furthermore, Atlantis is said to have possessed a navy comprising 1200 ships (119B), while Homer recounts the forces of the united Greek army to have encompassed 1185 ships (*Iliad* 2.500–786). Atlantis was also characterized by artificial channels which were partly 'bored'

through the bedrock (115D). One of these channels had its entrance from the sea at a distance of fifty stades (c. 9 km) from the royal citadel and was 'one hundred feet in depth' (115D). There are actually two artificial canals at Troy which fit this description — one at Besik Bay and one north of Yeniköy near ancient Sigeum. Although they have not received much attention, some authors considered them harbour entrances and/or of prehistoric date (Forchhammer 1850; Schliemann 1880; Brückner 1912).

The Atlantis account describes how the aristocratic rulers slaughtered bulls, spilled their blood over pillars and finally burnt their extremities over open fires (119E–120A). The archaeological record of Troy VI produced a place that may reflect these rituals. During the excavations in 1933, Carl Blegen discovered a disproportionately long and narrow building (c. 5 × 16.5 metres) called Anta House (Squares G–H 9) just outside the entrance to the South Gate (Blegen *et al.* 1953; Blegen 1963). In this house Blegen excavated through 1.4 metres of stratum after stratum of burnt debris mixed with animal bones indicating a long continuity in the custom of burning fires. The fireplace was much too extensive for an ordinary hearth; moreover the lower part of the burnt debris predated the building itself. Blegen concluded that the structure was a religious edifice that housed a cult which required burnt offerings. He interpreted the area just outside the gateway as sacred ground and considered the presence of four or more stone pillars set up against the south face of Tower VII as significant in this connection, for 'they are surely the visible symbols of a cult'.

#### COUNTER-ARGUMENTS

When translated literally some details in *Timaeus* (21E–25D) and *Critias* (113A–121C)

contradict the impression that the Atlantis account might be an Egyptian version of the story of the Trojan War. Firstly, the Egyptian priest, while addressing Solon, generally refers to Greece as 'your people' (23A), 'your land' (22E), 'your country' (23A), 'your state' (24D; 24E; 25B) or 'the land where you now dwell' (23B). Only on one occasion he uses, the term 'the Athenian State' (23C), a connotation that implies a Classical as opposed to a Late Bronze Age context. Considering the number of equivocal expressions used to denote Greece, the term might be a misinterpretation introduced by Solon or Plato. Secondly, Atlantis is identified as the initial attacker in the war, whereas conventional wisdom has assigned this role to Greece. Thirdly, the Egyptian priest attributes the civilization demise in Greece to the natural catastrophes, because both incidents occurred simultaneously. The events at Tiryns, however, were strictly of local character, though they may have been magnified in ancient lore. Finally, Atlantis is said to have disappeared 'in like manner' (25D) without clarification whether this implies further earthquakes and floods or just burial under alluvium.

## DISCUSSION

If we can trust the transmission described by Plato, Solon almost certainly did not realize any parallels between Atlantis and Troy while

he was talking to the priests in Saïs (Frost 1913). Plato too misinterpreted Solon's notes when he embarked on writing his eclectic trilogy of science and history. Plato evidently considered Atlantis to have been in the far west, because the entire work was conceived with a western scheme in mind. Later, Plato may have realized the parallels between Atlantis and Troy — at that point he abandoned the whole project in mid-sentence, because he did not intend to glorify a place in Anatolia so shortly after the Persian War. Hence, the proposed hypothesis that the Atlantis account is nothing but an Egyptian description of Troy and the Trojan War would solve many problems: the prevailing notion that Plato actually assumed he was handing down historic events, the inexplicable amount of detail in the account, the unfinished nature of *Critias*, the lack of any alternative descriptions of Atlantis, and the unsurpassed splendour of the place. When identified with Troy there would be numerous alternative descriptions and the site of the most famous western legend would be analogous to one of the most important archaeological sites in the Eastern Mediterranean.

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