

— THE WARS OF —
ATLANTIS

An underwater scene with a blue-green tint. In the foreground, a dark, ornate mask with intricate carvings lies on the seabed. In the background, several ancient stone columns and a partial structure are visible, suggesting a submerged city. A school of fish swims in the middle ground. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and ancient.

PHIL MASTERS

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INTRODUCTION: HISTORIANS OF THE ATLANTEAN AGE

The study of the Atlantean Wars is the art of extracting truths from ancient texts.

In general, the deeper scholars look into the past, the more they are obliged to study physical objects rather than textual sources. The transformation from history to prehistory comes when this shift from history to archaeology is complete; when there are no written texts, knowledge must be derived from the artefacts and other physical remains.

Atlantean studies flip this right back around. Atlantis is, famously, lost – sunk beneath the ocean waves. Our knowledge of that era comes almost exclusively from written materials, themselves quite ancient, and from more exotic sources yet. There are few physical remains of the Atlantean age.

PLATO

The name of Atlantis comes to us, originally, through the father of western philosophy. The classical Greek philosopher Plato presented his ideas in the form of a series of ‘dialogues’ between the earlier philosopher Socrates and other citizens of Athens. One of these, the *Timaeus*, is primarily about the creation and nature of the world, but early on, one of the speakers, Critias, mentions a story which he heard in his childhood from his aged grandfather, also named Critias. The old man claimed in turn to have received the story from Solon, a legendarily wise Athenian leader, who was a friend of his family.

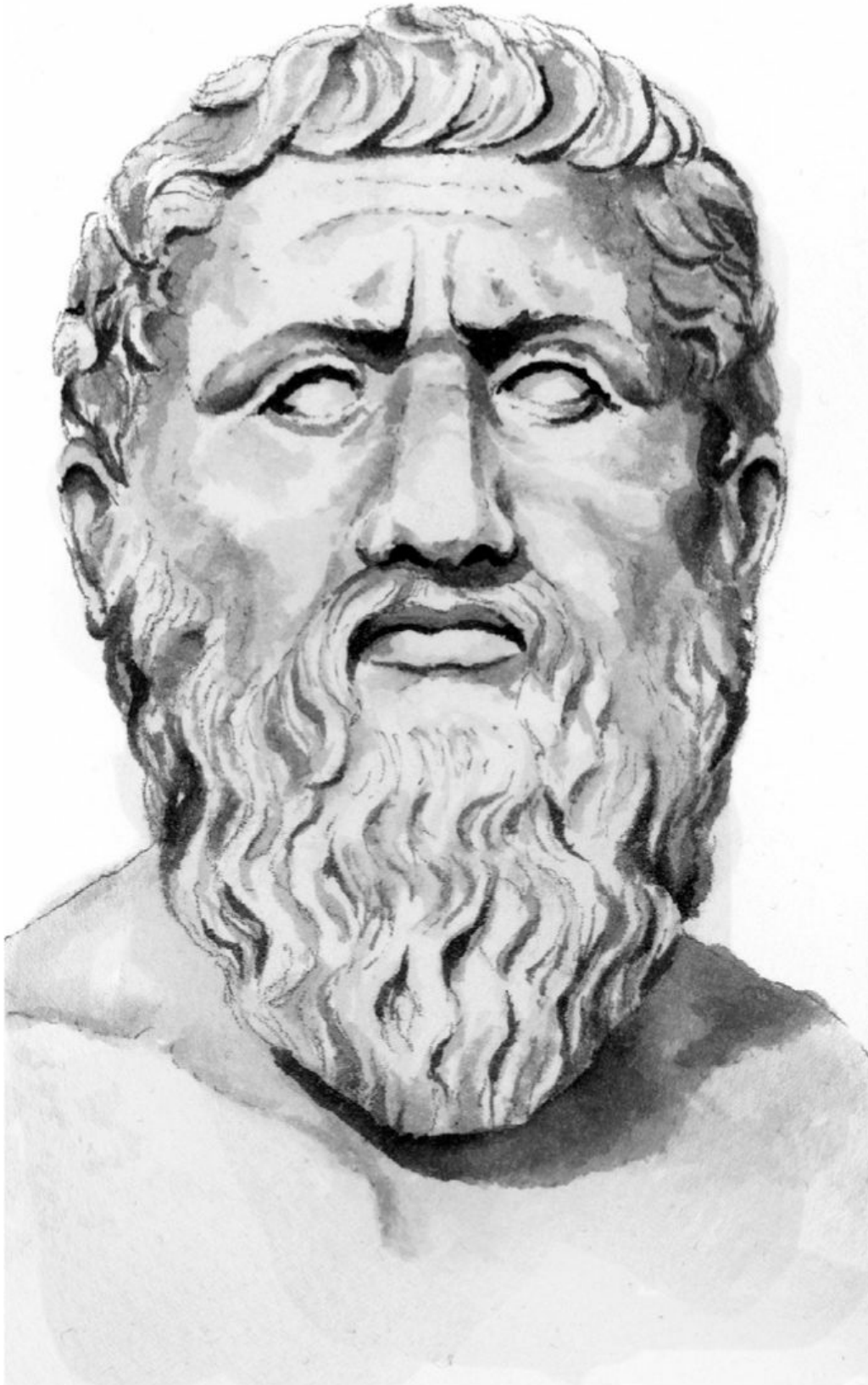
Solon visited Egypt at one point in his life, and according to this story, while he was there, in the city of Sais, he fell in with some friendly local priests. One of them, amused by Solon’s discussions of ancient history, told him that the Athenians had forgotten most of their own past – but the Egyptians had preserved much important information, notably including the story of Atlantis.

Atlantis was, the priest said, a great island in the Atlantic Ocean (‘beyond the Pillars of Hercules’, those being the promontories on either side of the Straits of Gibraltar), which was once ruled by a great empire. This was linked to the history of Athens because, when the Atlanteans grew arrogant and attempted to conquer the rest of the world, the Athenians of the time took the lead in stopping them and driving them back. However, shortly afterwards, Atlantis sank beneath the sea in some kind of catastrophe, which, the priest implied, also shattered civilization in much of the rest of the world, explaining why so few records or memories remained from the era.

However, Critias stops himself before the digression goes too far; the intention is that the details of the story should appear in the next dialogue, known as the *Critias*. This does indeed take up the story of Atlantis. However, unfortunately, although this describes the geography and government of Atlantis in some detail, the text is incomplete; it seems that Plato never finished the book. It actually stops at a point where the gods have observed that the Atlanteans have fallen into decadence, and are about to decide how to chastise them; the implication is that, if the war of conquest had not already started, the gods probably encouraged it, and then devastated Atlantis in its aftermath because the inhabitants had shown themselves to be beyond hope.

However, none of this is stated or described, and no one else offered any continuation of the story.

Some of Plato's followers thought that the whole thing was a fable; others believed otherwise, even travelling to Egypt in search of confirmation, but although some Egyptians were prepared to agree with them, nobody turned up any more of the history at the time. And so the story of Atlantis went on hold for a few centuries.



Plato. The father of western philosophy is also our primary source for the history of Atlantis. This image is based on classical sculptures and descriptions of the great man.

THREE KEY ATHENIANS

Solon (c. 630–560 BC), a politician, poet, and traveller, was known as one of the ‘Seven Wise Men of Greece’. When Athenian society seemed to be on the verge of collapse, he was given the power to revise the whole system, which he did, replacing aristocratic rule with something more democratic and rewriting the whole legal system. However, because his changes were basically moderate, designed not to hurt anyone too badly, he didn’t really satisfy anyone, and to escape the controversy, he left the city to travel the world for a few years, taking in Egypt along with other lands.

Socrates (c. 470–399 BC) is one of the founding figures of western philosophy, although none of his own writing survives. He apparently developed a method for examining subjects – mostly issues of ethics and morality – by intensive questioning. Ultimately, his habit of questioning everything seems to have led to his demise, as he was put on trial for ‘impiety’ – actually, perhaps, for challenging the customs of his society at a time of large-scale insecurity – and condemned to death.

Plato (428/427–348/347 BC) was a student of Socrates who sought to understand everything about the universe, primarily by looking at the most basic ‘forms’ of things. It has been said that all philosophy since Plato is a set of footnotes to his analysis. Plato has also been called the father of fascism, as the ‘ideal state’ described in some of his writing is totalitarian and anti-democratic. His descriptions of Atlantis and its Athenian enemies may be coloured by this aspect of his thought.

DIODORUS SICULUS AND AFTER

The next major source of Atlantean lore is Diodorus Siculus, a Sicilian-born Greek historian who worked in the Roman Empire in the 1st century BC. His encyclopaedic Historical Library includes a section on the mythic history of the ‘Atlanteans’. However, he appears to be describing a rather different people here – specifically, the inhabitants of north-west Africa, around the Atlas Mountains, who in Roman times would have been native tribes or Phoenician colonies. His stories of divine ancestors and battles with Amazon warriors don’t relate clearly to Plato’s version – but by Plato’s account, Atlantis did invade and conquer that part of the world, which hints at an answer to the problem. His Atlanteans could have been colonists and conquerors from the island, who first fought and then allied with local Amazon tribes; the stories of their divine ancestry may be seen as garbled versions of the history of Atlantis given by Plato, and Diodorus’ accounts of the Amazons launching eastwards wars of conquest should be read as garbled descriptions of the actions of combined Atlantean-Amazon armies.

After Diodorus, though, Atlantis was largely forgotten, in any form. A few medieval writers referred to Plato’s story, but they were mostly interested in his philosophy, and tended to see Atlantis as a mystical symbol rather than as anything historical. Things picked up a little in the Renaissance, when the ‘rebirth of learning’ brought more scholars back to Plato, just as Columbus and other explorers were proving that there were in fact lands across the Atlantic Ocean. (Plato had hinted briefly that there were other continents beyond Atlantis.) Some thought that the Americas actually were Atlantis, others stuck with the idea of a lost and sunken island, and others again suggested that Atlantis was somewhere else entirely. And some simply used the name, or borrowed a few ideas or images from Plato.



Solon and the Priests. According to Plato, when the Greek traveller Solon arrived in the Egyptian city of Sais, he fell into conversation with some friendly local priests, the oldest of whom told him the story of Atlantis.

THE VICTORIAN AGE

This sort of theorizing reached a climax in the late 19th century, when mysticism collided with garbled versions of the new sciences of the time. Notably, American politician and all-purpose fringe theorist Ignatius Donnelly (1831–1901) declared that Atlantis was the source of all great early human achievements, being the original home of human civilization; any human religious myths that didn't actually derive from Atlantean sunworship were really garbled stories of the Atlantean royal family.

Thus, the idea that Atlantis might really have existed, perhaps somewhat as Plato described it, came back into vogue. A weirder version of the legend appeared courtesy of the mystical Theosophical movement, and especially its leading figure, Helena Blavatsky, who wrote about great cycles of human evolution, involving a series of superhuman but oddly limited races, among which the Atlanteans were relatively recent. The idea of lost continents was popular at the time, with theories about 'Lemuria' in the Indian Ocean and 'Mu' in the Pacific, and Blavatsky also made use of the former.



Ignatius Donnelly (1831–1901). The noted American politician, writer, and fringe theorist concluded that Atlantis was the source of all humanity's early great achievements, bringing the story back to the centre of popular attention.

THE HALL OF RECORDS

In the 20th century, researchers and mystics on the fringes of conventional science and archaeology began to accumulate enough information that existing Atlantean lore could be collated into a coherent story – especially once certain long-predicted discoveries came to pass.

Edgar Cayce, was an American Sunday School teacher, faith healer, and psychic. Although he defined himself as a more or less mainstream Christian (despite his evident belief in reincarnation), he was noted for providing psychic readings and prophecies while lying in a hypnotic trance. Hence, he became known as the ‘Sleeping Prophet’.



Edgar Cayce (1877–1945). The ‘Sleeping Prophet’ was an American psychic who probed Atlantis’s history, surviving remnants, and place in the world’s destiny with his mental powers.

Some of his pronouncements concerned Atlantis, although what he describes often seems to resemble Blavatsky’s visions more than Plato’s account. However, he did predict the rising of Atlantis, starting in 1968 or 1969, which has been taken as a prediction of the discovery of an underwater road (which cynics claim is natural ‘beachrock’) off Bimini, in the Bahamas, or possibly an underwater earthquake in the region of the Azores.

The most important prediction made by Cayce, though, was that an Atlantean ‘Hall of Records’ would in time be discovered under or very near to the Sphinx, in Egypt. (Actually, Cayce said that there were three great troves of Atlantean lore awaiting discovery, one in the Yucatan, one in a sunken area which would rise again, probably near Bimini, and one in Egypt – but it is the last which concerns us here.) This collection of data, left as a kind of time capsule in the wake of the disaster which destroyed the island, would restore a great deal of lost knowledge about the ancient history of

humanity.

Cayce's modern followers therefore naturally take a lot of interest in archaeological research in that location, including the use of ground-penetrating radar and other modern tools. Around 2011, rumours began to circulate that the Hall of Records had been discovered. This was of course great news for students of Atlantean history, although converting such ancient texts, written in the most obscure of languages and scripts and prone to crumbling under the sheer weight of time, into useful data must necessarily be a huge and lengthy task.

Thus, the rest of this book builds on a combination of currently available sources – Plato as the primary reference, Diodorus Siculus as a secondary source, and whatever can be extracted from the Hall of Records to tie them together, reconcile them, and fill in the gaps. In the process, various other legends and fringe theories also turn out to fit the story – although there are still some tantalizing gaps and uncertainties.

THE AGE OF THE SPHINX

Mainstream scholarship considers that the Great Sphinx of Giza, the world's oldest monumental sculpture (and it is truly monumental – around 240ft long and 66ft high), dates back to the reign of the Old Kingdom Egyptian Pharaoh Khafre, around 2,500 BC. Khafre was the builder of the nearby Pyramid of Khafre and the son of Khufu, the builder of the even larger Great Pyramid; one theory is that workers quarrying stones for the Great Pyramid left a large outcrop of less useful rock, which Khafre subsequently ordered sculpted into a sphinx with his own face.

However, there are radical alternative theories about the age of the Sphinx, largely based on erosion patterns in the surrounding enclosure, which seem to have been caused by water – despite the fact that Egypt in Khafre's time lacked the rainfall necessary to cause such erosion. The last time that the Egyptian climate would have been wet enough to cause such erosion may have been around 7,000–5,000 BC. Some theories suggest that the Sphinx is even older, though that may be an attempt to make this theory fit with Edgar Cayce's visionary prophecies.

This leads into the whole question of the dates of the Atlantean Wars. According to Plato, the Egyptian priests said that they took place some 9,000 years before their time (that is, in around 9,500 BC), which is also the age they give for the first foundation of Athens; however, they also said that their own city was founded a thousand years after Athens – and yet they had records from that time, and Egypt took part in those wars. Cayce described the fall of Atlantis as a multi-stage process, spread over centuries and even millennia, but dates the final disaster to about 10,500 BC. However, none of these dates can be taken as completely reliable; in the absence of dateable remains (at least until the contents of the Hall of Records are made accessible to the public), it's probably best just to think of the Fall of Atlantis as taking place in a misty prehistory.



The Great Sphinx of Giza. The Sphinx is an ancient and monumental relic of Egyptian civilization; quite how ancient is an interesting question. Edgar Cayce revealed that an Atlantean Hall of Records would in time be discovered under or very near to this gigantic sculpture, allowing the full history of the Atlantean Age to be told.

THE LAND OF ATLANTIS

Atlantis was a large island, apparently located not very far west of the Straits of Gibraltar. Plato described it as being 'larger than Libya and Asia put together'; this could mean anything from North Africa west of Egypt plus modern Turkey, up to an impossibly large combination of all of what are today called Africa and Asia. Even the smallest interpretation would make it a very large island, so it may be safe to assume that any geographical records were garbled over time, or that the Egyptian priests exaggerated to Solon. Still, Atlantis was able to support a nation that could conquer and hold much of the Mediterranean region.

It was certainly a fertile land, producing a wide range of edible fruits, pulses, and chestnuts. It was also rich in minerals; the Atlanteans constructed a lot of impressive buildings out of local stone, and were skilled in working a range of metals for both decorative and practical purposes.



The Foundation of Atlantis Having fallen in love with a mortal woman on the island of Atlantis, the god Poseidon here manifests his full divine power to create three circular 'moats' – great channels of water – around a low mountain on the central plain of the island, so his

offspring can grow up there in safety. He will also draw springs of hot and cold water up from the mountain. As his pregnant lover watches, the god creates a whole lush landscape that will one day become the heart of an imperial capital.

THE CREATION

When the senior gods divided the world between them, the island that would later be called Atlantis was assigned to Poseidon, presumably because it was in fact an island rather than a full-size continent, and hence came under the authority of the god of the sea. When he surveyed this territory, Poseidon found that there was a great fertile plain on the south-east coast of the island, facing onto the sea. A little more than six miles from the sea, in the midst of that plain, stood a low mountain – not much more than a hill – which the god discovered one day was the home of a mortal family.

The father of this family was named Evenor; his wife was Leucippe, and they had just one child, an adult daughter named Cleito. At some point after Poseidon first encountered them, Cleito's parents died, and Poseidon found that he was falling passionately in love with their daughter. Being a god, he offered to make her land a home fit for his lover and any demi-divine children she might bear. He created a series of three vast circular moats around the mountain, with bands of land between them. As humanity in general had not yet really mastered water travel, this made the mountain very secure. To make it comfortable, Poseidon drew two springs of water up from the earth – one of warm water and one of cold. He also ensured that the land would produce all sorts of food in great profusion.

POSEIDON

The god credited with the foundation of Atlantis was one of the greatest of the Greek deities. Along with Zeus, the king of the gods, and Hades, the lord of the underworld, Poseidon was the son of the Titan Cronus, the former ruler of the universe. After Zeus led a successful revolt against the Titans, the three brothers divided the world between them, and Poseidon became ruler of the seas. Hence, he was often worshipped by sailors and fishermen. He was also responsible for earthquakes and other natural disasters, commanded countless huge and terrible sea monsters, and was a god of horses and charioteers.

Although Poseidon was secondary to Zeus, he was supreme in his own realm, and could not be expected to back down from his brother over important matters without an argument. He was certainly not a god whom mortals should annoy; he was perfectly willing to devastate whole cities if they angered him. He wasn't especially malicious, as Greek gods went, but he commanded a lot of violent power.

The royal family of Atlantis weren't Poseidon's only mortal descendants; like other gods, Poseidon took a healthy interest in mortal women, despite his marriage to the sea nymph Amphitrite. She appears to have been more tolerant of her husband's infidelities than some goddesses, although she did transform the beautiful nymph Scylla into a hideous monster in a fit of jealousy. She too could control sea creatures, especially seals and dolphins.



Poseidon, God of the Sea. One of the three greatest gods in the Greek pantheon, Poseidon reshaped the island of Atlantis to provide a safe home for his lover, the local woman Cleito, and founded the ruling dynasty of the Atlantean Empire by fathering ten sons with her.

DIVISION BY TEN

Soon, Cleito did indeed bear children for Poseidon; in fact, she produced five sets of male twins. Poseidon declared them the rulers of Atlantis, dividing the island into ten principalities. The eldest was named Atlas, and the island and its surrounding ocean came to be named after him; Poseidon made him the overall king, with direct rule over the mountain where he was born and the surrounding plain. His younger twin brother, whose name can be rendered as 'Eumelus' in Greek or 'Gadeirus' in the ancient language of Spain, received the part of the Atlantis directly facing the Pillars of Hercules and that part of Spain that thus came to be called 'Gades' in ancient times – or 'Cadiz' in the modern age. The names of the other sons, in the Greek forms given by Plato, were, in birth order, Ampheres, Evaemon, Mneseus, Autochthon, Elasippus, Mestor, Azaes, and lastly Diaprepes.

The descendants of Poseidon and Cleito proved to be a wise and noble family, at least for a good few centuries, and Atlantis prospered under their rule, which passed from fathers to eldest sons for

many generations. Indeed, Atlantis grew uniquely wealthy, from trade, from tribute from client states, and from its own natural resources. Its mineral wealth included the metal orichalcum – valuable in that time, just a name to later ages.

ORICHALCUM

The legendary metal of Atlantis is also mentioned in other ancient sources, but quite what it actually was is unclear. It's likely that different sources mean different things by the name; it doesn't help that Plato said that the metal was only known by this name in his time, although some later sources talk about it as currently in use.

'Orichalcum' literally means 'mountain copper'. Assuming that it wasn't some magical substance lying off the periodic table, it may (sometimes) have been some kind of alloy of copper with gold, tin, or zinc (perhaps a bronze variant of striking attractiveness), chalcopyrite (a copper iron sulphide mineral), or even a gold-silver alloy. However, Plato talks about it as a naturally occurring mineral, second in value only to gold, and describes the walls of Atlantis as flashing with the 'red light of orichalcum'. Its use seems to have been mostly or entirely decorative, but given its association with Atlantis, it was doubtless used to embellish the weapons and armour of high-ranking Atlantean warriors.

THE ISLAND REALM

Atlantis was geographically varied as well as rich in natural resources, but the area around the capital was the heart of the kingdom, and the centre of the Empire's power.



The World in the Age of Atlantis. This map appears to show the world as perceived by the Atlanteans, although the style and some of the names attached to outlying features suggest that it was created in the post-Columbian Renaissance period, with reference to classical Greek and Roman sources as well as surviving Atlantean data. It may anticipate or be contemporary with the work of 17th-century scholar Athanasius Kircher.

THE GREAT PLAIN

Much of Atlantis was somewhat mountainous, with highlands often running right up to the coast; many of the small coastal towns had good harbours but poor roads. The great south-eastern plain was one

exception to this rule – although it was in fact bordered on three sides by mountain ranges (and hence was sheltered from cold north winds). Those mountains were considered especially imposing and beautiful, with numerous small villages and extensive upland meadows supporting a lively pastoral society.

The plain was roughly rectangular in shape, about 370 miles by 250 miles. In the early days of Atlantean glory, once the great Empire was established and organized, one emperor launched a vast engineering project; an irrigation system that transformed the wide, hot plains into a lush and highly productive agricultural region. The key element of this was a gigantic canal, around 650ft wide and 100ft deep, which ran around the entire outer edge of the plain, even running parallel and close to the coast, giving it a total length of some 1,200 miles. This collected all the water running off the surrounding mountains, balancing and regularizing the flow; it was also connected to the great ship canal which ran from the capital city to the sea.

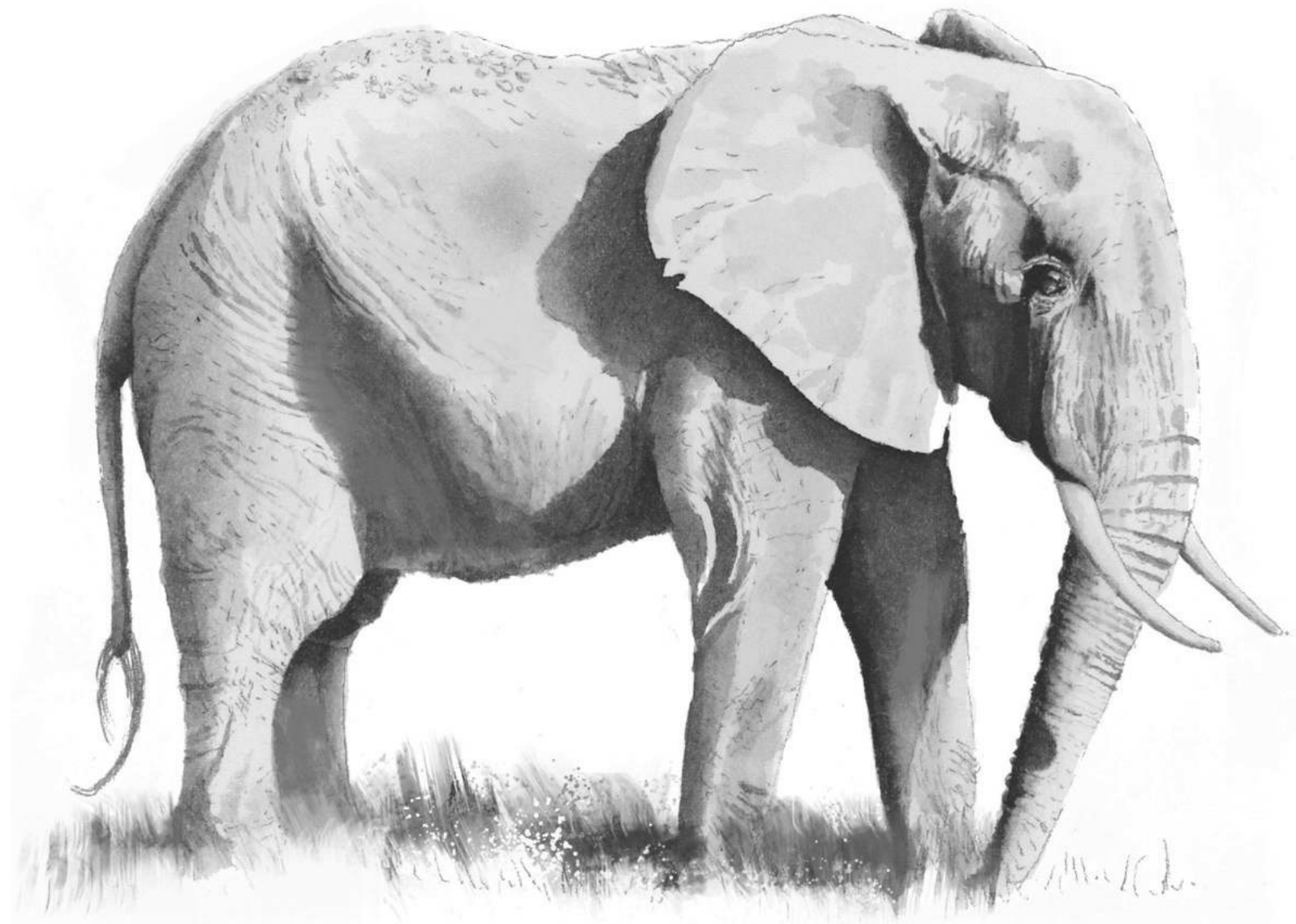
Water from the great perimeter canal was distributed to farmlands on the plain by a system of smaller channels, about 100ft wide, which ran inwards roughly every 12 miles. Further, even smaller channels ran between these, bringing water wherever it was needed. As well as forming a huge, reliable irrigation system, these canals facilitated extensive movement of produce and raw materials from the plains and the surrounding mountains to the capital city and the coast. Timber was brought down from the mountains as great rafts of logs, providing the city and its shipyards with all the wood they needed; meanwhile, the plains produced two good harvests a year, being watered by the rains in winter and the canal system in summer, and the surplus produce was also taken to the city by boat.

ATLANTEAN WILDLIFE

For the most part, Atlantis appears to have shared the typical ecology of the Mediterranean region, and particularly North Africa, at the time. Plato noted that there were multiple types of wilderness environment, each supporting its own set of species, including lakes, marshes, rivers, mountains, and plains. There were also certainly extensive forests, as the Atlantean Empire was never short of wood for construction work.

However, Plato also made special note of the presence of one particular species, commenting that Atlantis had a great number of elephants. These were most common in the southern parts of the island, on a similar latitude to the parts of Africa where elephants are usually found – although in fact, there were also wild elephants in North Africa until Roman times. Atlantean elephants may have been related to or the same species as the African forest elephant, as found in the Congo Basin, which is nowadays regarded as a species in its own right (*Loxodonta cyclotis*), distinct from the African bush elephant (*Loxodonta africana*). On the other hand, native North African elephants may have been another distinct species again, and the Atlantean animals may have been related to those – or they may have been yet another species, unique to the island.

African elephants are notoriously harder to tame than the Asian species, but the feat isn't actually impossible, as the Carthaginians would prove when they used North African elephants in their wars with Rome. Hence, the Atlanteans may have managed the same thing – why else would Plato have singled out the species for special mention, after all?



Atlantean Elephant. This animal is clearly a close relative of the African Forest Elephant – probably the same species, in fact. Given the geographical proximity of Atlantis to the African creature’s habitat, this is not particularly surprising.

THE REST OF THE ISLAND

With direct control over this vast and productive agricultural region, the Emperor of Atlantis commanded massive resources, but his nine fellow rulers could draw on more than barren mountains for their own wealth. Even the uplands were often highly productive, and there were also smaller plains, along with great forests in the south where the famous elephant herds grazed.

Still, it required a tradition of great diplomatic skill, strong family loyalty, and some carefully calculated distracting imperial expansion, to keep the others from casting avaricious eyes on the capital region. The descendants of Eumelus had the most frequent and closest contacts with other lands, thanks to the fact that their own principality faced the mouth of the Mediterranean, which was already a centre of civilization, and hence they tended to be drawn to ideas of expansion; most of the emperors went along with this, if only in case the ‘Eumelians’ were otherwise tempted to turn their ambitions landwards, using wealth from trade and foreign mercenaries to challenge the power of the capital.

Other regions included the smaller fertile plain in the north of the island (ruled by the descendants

of Mneseus) and the semi-desert parts of the south (ruled by the family of Azaes) that provided most of the Atlantean army's elephant corps. However, the division of responsibilities around the family was not solely a matter of geography; for example, the descendants of Diaprepes were said to run a formidable spy network, supposedly on behalf of the Empire as a whole.



The Island of Atlantis. A somewhat stylized map, bearing a close and interesting resemblance to one drawn in the 17th century by Renaissance thinker Athanasius Kircher. If this map is as old as the style implies and draws on authentic Atlanteanera data, it suggests that Kircher too had access to such information (perhaps simply to this map), although his surviving writings do not mention the fact.

THE CAPITAL

The most spectacular place in all the Empire, though, was the capital city which grew up on and around the mountain where the ten ancestral princes were born. As the Atlantean Empire grew, the Atlanteans constructed more and greater buildings in the city, and added decoration to existing structures, to demonstrate their power; as they grew in confidence, they converted the wide defensive moats which Poseidon had created into bustling circular harbours, linked to the sea, as well as using them as clear markers for the city's social divisions.

The mountain itself thus became a moated citadel, somewhat over half a mile in diameter. This was surrounded by a circular channel 600ft wide, which was surrounded by a ring of land 1,200ft wide. Then came another circular waterchannel, also 1,200ft wide, then a band of land and another band of

water each 1,800ft wide, beyond that were sprawling suburbs. A ship canal, 300ft wide and 100ft deep, ran from the outermost circular channel the six miles to the sea; in addition, the Atlanteans constructed tunnels, wide and high enough for the largest ships of the time, between each of the circular channels, using cut-and-cover construction, so that even the innermost could serve as a harbour. Lastly, they built bridges across each of the circular channels; each bridge was 100ft wide, and they were all aligned, so that a grand, dead straight avenue ran from the outskirts of the city to the central citadel. Furthermore, the bridges had aqueducts built into them to convey water from the springs in the heart of the city to the outer zones.

Rather curiously, the tunnels were placed hard by the bridges and the grand avenue; in fact, they may have run directly under the road in some places. This seems like an entirely gratuitous piece of added engineering complexity, but from the Atlantean point of view, it served two good purposes. Firstly, anyone approaching the citadel, by road or by ship, more or less had to come along the same straight, formal line of approach, which had great ceremonial and psychological effects. And secondly, they could focus the city's defences at a few key points. Great fortified towers controlled the ends of the bridges and the adjacent entrances to the ship tunnels, both of which could be closed off with huge gates in the event of the city being attacked.

Of course, the Atlanteans never expected their city to be attacked, at least once their power was established. However, the early generations of the dynasty reckoned that they were building for the benefit of future ages, and did not wish to leave anything to chance. This also explains why the city had a good scattering of guardhouses throughout its area. The guard forces were carefully assessed by leaders drawn from the highest levels of society; the more they trusted a guardsman, the closer to the centre of the city he would be posted. The most trusted men of all were assigned to the central citadel, and even given quarters there so that they could guard the royal family full time.



The Capital of Atlantis This picture shows the distinctive layout of the city, with its alternating rings of land and water, the 'moats' doubling as sheltered harbours. Note the horse-racing track running around the entire circumference of the outermost land ring. The artist has somewhat foreshortened the length of the canal running out to the sea, which was actually several miles from the city. Although this scene comes from early in the history of the city, before urban development begins to sprawl far beyond the outer ring-harbour, a number of secondary bridges have already been constructed across the ring-harbours, in addition to those that help make up the great processional way.

THE CITADEL

The heart of the capital city of Atlantis was a place of political and religious power, and was decorated and maintained accordingly. The whole innermost island was surrounded by a wall which was plated with orichalcum, which made it flash a metallic red in sunlight. Within that wall, at the very centre of the island, on the site where the first ten princes were born, was a temple dedicated to Cleito and Poseidon. This was surrounded by a wall which was heavily embellished with gold, and was barred to all but the royal family and a few high priests, although the people of the whole island made pilgrimages to the outer gates, usually to present offerings from the annual harvest to the royal family in their aspect as demigods.

The temple itself was about 600ft long and half that in width. Those who glimpsed it over the wall or through the gates considered that it looked quite strange, as it dated to the very early days of the tenfold kingdom, and the basic architecture was barbaric by later standards; then, in later periods, the exterior had been heavily embellished, mostly with silver, with gold on the building's soaring pinnacles. The result was, perhaps, more dramatic than elegant. Likewise, the great interior ceiling

was plated with intricately carved ivory, also embellished with gold, silver, and orichalcum, while the walls, pillars, and floor were all heavily decorated with orichalcum. A grandiose decorated altar stood at one end of the interior space, and the temple was downright cluttered with gilded statues, including one of Poseidon in a chariot drawn by six winged horses, so large that the god's head nearly touched the ivory ceiling, along with a hundred nereids (female sea spirits) riding dolphins and various other religious images contributed by assorted devout donors over the centuries.

Other gold statues stood outside the temple in the enclosed courtyard. Most of these depicted members of the royal family – descendants of the first ten princes and their wives – although others were donations from elsewhere on the island, or from conquered or client cities overseas, making for a diverse assortment. Most significantly, from the Atlantean point of view, in front of the main entrance to the temple stood a broad, low pillar made of solid orichalcum, dating back to the age of the first kings of Atlantis and inscribed with the basic laws of the Empire – most importantly, the rules governing precedence and relationships between the ten royal lineages, as laid down by Poseidon himself.

Somewhere nearby, the hot and cold springs originally drawn from the earth by Poseidon still flowed; as these had great practical value as well as sacred status, they were carefully maintained and protected. (The water was always very pure and drinkable.) The Atlanteans enclosed the springs themselves in buildings as ornate as everything else within the citadel-island, then planted gardens and groves of trees around them for show. More importantly, they made the springs the centre of an extensive system of water supplies and public baths.

The water was channelled first into a whole set of cisterns, some open and some enclosed; some of the latter were designed to double as public baths in wintertime. Other dedicated baths served the royal family, were attached to the private houses of wealthy individuals, or were open to the public. In fact, the citadel and the ring islands around it had public baths for men, for women, and for horses and cattle – and even the latter had some degree of ornamentation, as all the public buildings in the city were designed to glorify the Empire.

Equally, water drained from these baths was not wasted, but was mostly used to irrigate the city's gardens and other green spaces. Within the citadel, this water was directed to a kind of religious park, the 'Grove of Poseidon', which held a whole assortment of tall, healthy trees of different species. There was also a large and heavily decorated palace complex for the regular use of the Emperor, his family, any visiting princes, and the court.



The Temple of Poseidon in Atlantis. According to Plato, this was 200m (600ft) long and 100m (300ft) wide, 'and of a proportionate height, having a strange barbaric appearance'; this picture shows the temple as having an even more archaic, less classical form than Plato himself probably imagined. He also described the exterior as being covered with silver, with pinnacles plated with gold.



Atlantean Public Baths. Atlantis had separate public bath buildings for men, women, and horses and cattle, some enclosed for use in winter, all with stylishly adorned architecture. This illustration shows an enclosed women's bath; the Atlanteans seem to have been less sexist than classical Greek culture, and hence to have provided comparable facilities for men and women. The Gorgones mask which is serving as a decoration is presumably a military campaign trophy – unless it indicates something more sinister.

THE CIRCLES

Developments on the rings of land between the circular harbour-channels were designed for both aesthetics and health, without the regal formality of the citadel. Most of the building work was carried out with considerable efficiency, thanks to the intelligence and dedication of early emperors; the local stone proved to be good building material, and as the Atlanteans excavated ship-tunnels and also partially underground docks, and levelled the ground, the stone they extracted would immediately be used somewhere nearby for building work. This stone was of three different types, one white, one black, and one red, and some of the more ornate buildings used these colours to great decorative effect. Each ring island was surrounded by a tall, strong stone wall, plated with metal; the outer ring's wall was covered with brass or bronze, and the inner ring had tin (or, more likely, some kind of tin-based alloy with a high silvery sheen).

The ring islands held gardens and places of exercise, including facilities for the training of horses. The outer, broader ring was also laid out with a horse-racing track, around 600ft wide, which formed a complete circle around the ring island. Hence, each lap of the track was a distance of nearly six and a half miles, and parts of that ring were also taken up with facilities for the audience.

The circular channels also served as harbours, bringing ships right into the heart of the city; those docks, excavated into the banks of the channels in the early days of the city, could each hold two

substantial ships – although as Atlantean naval architecture became more grandiose, some had to be adapted to take a single outsize vessel. The ring islands thus also had to find space for warehouses and markets – and also, as the Empire grew and expanded overseas, extensive military stores, including armouries and government repair facilities for warships. Although the great naval dockyards were down on the coast, the centre of the city became less and less a place of trade over the years, and more and more a hub of military activities, as infantry drilled on the exercise grounds and cavalry trained on the horse tracks, before both marched aboard military transports to set off on expeditions of conquest.



Horse Racing in Atlantis. An important feature of the capital city of the Atlantean Empire was a major horse-racing track, and this picture shows a race in progress. The riders have just the simplest of saddles and no stirrups; despite Atlantis's generally remarkable level of technological sophistication, equestrian equipment was still at a Bronze Age level.

THE OUTER CITY

The citadel and the rings of land around it were of finite size, and were carefully watched by the city guards, in order to ensure security. Hence, as the Empire grew in strength and power, the city sprawled far beyond the outermost channel. However, this expansion was ultimately constrained by the city's approximately circular outer defensive wall, which touched the coast at the point where the ship canal reached the sea. This was thus six miles out from the outermost circular harbour, with a total length of around 38 miles, enclosing an area of over a hundred square miles. Although this stone wall was robust enough, it was nothing like as tall or substantial as the metal-plated walls around the inner rings; nor could the Atlantean army hope to man it very heavily, even at the height of the Empire. Indeed, for many generations of peace, at least on the island itself, the outer wall served as little more than a marker. However, its psychological value was immense. It showed when the city ended and began, and building outside it was unthinkable.

It took many generations for the population of the city to fill this space, but ultimately they managed to do so. It helped that the Atlanteans preserved a tradition of embellishing every neighbourhood with parks, gardens, sacred groves, and exercise grounds, on the precedent set by the citadel. This

tradition was enforced by royal decree, so few builders dared encroach on those official open spaces. Also, and partly because of the need to keep those gardens irrigated, the city needed extensive water supplies, and even the reliable springs in the citadel were not enough to support the entire population; large parts of the area were taken up with reservoirs and giant cisterns, drawing water from the canals flowing in from the surrounding plains.

In fact, the city within this greater outer wall grew increasingly crowded, pushing the limits of the building technology and city planning of the age. The areas around the commercial docks were especially busy; not only did trade with the Empire and beyond bring in merchants and their wealth, but the necessity of feeding this vast population led to an unceasing flow of grain-barges from the plains, and supply ships from further afield. At its height, the capital of Atlantis was an extraordinary patchwork of city-sized neighbourhoods, and few of the population realized how often it teetered on the brink of disaster. The water kept flowing and the food barges kept coming, but that perhaps proved that the gods favoured Atlantis.

For a while.

THE LANGUAGES OF ATLANTIS

The language of the island of Atlantis was called Senzar. This language's relationship to others is hard to trace; it seems to have belonged to a unique family all of its own. The Atlantean Empire and its rivals also used local languages of the time, which were, in contrast, related to identifiable modern tongues.

Senzar was written in an incredibly sophisticated script including a lot of information-dense symbolism; decoding all of the Senzar texts found beneath the Sphinx in Egypt is likely to be the work of lifetimes. As these Senzar texts are the only source of information on some of the internal workings of the Empire, and on Atlantean strategic thinking during the wars of conquest and revolt, much of the information in this book must be considered provisional. There may be great discoveries still to come in Atlantean studies.

POLITICS AND POWER

Technically speaking, the Empire of Atlantis became an absolute monarchy with theocratic elements and a system of delegation of power across multiple provinces. That is to say, the Emperor was in principle the absolute ruler, as befitted someone of proven divine descent, and in his personal holdings, including the capital, his power was indeed unlimited. However, the nine other provinces were ruled by 'kings' who were also descended from the god, and who therefore claimed similar powers within their own territory. The Emperor's ultimate supremacy was guaranteed by the laws ordained by Poseidon at the foundation and inscribed on the orichalcum pillar in the capital – but by claiming that privilege, even the Emperor had to admit to being bound by divine law.

On the other hand, the ordinary people of the Empire had very little recourse to that law, apart from appeals to a ruler's conscience; the Ten Kings of Atlantis had powers of life and death, and were generally fully willing to exercise them. This was fine so long as the high-minded traditions of Atlantis were respected in spirit as well as to the letter, but as the Empire grew more decadent, the common people had an increasing number of reasons to feel oppressed. The best solution to this that most emperors could come up with was imperial adventurism; not only did expansion into new lands bring in more wealth, to keep the people well-fed and generally comfortable, military glory overseas provided an outlet for restless and aggressive citizens. The army, originally the preserve of a distinct military caste who were trained in combat skills and indoctrinated with loyalty to the Empire from childhood, increasingly accepted any man with nothing better to do with his time – of whom there were growing numbers as families outgrew their allotted farms or traditional family craft shops. This made the army much bigger but very much less reliable.

ROYAL CEREMONIES

However, the system of court protocols did at least keep the ten royal families more or less united. This was reinforced by a system of royal meetings and exotic ceremonies laid down in the early days, perhaps by Poseidon himself.

By these rules, the ten kings met formally at the temple of Poseidon in the capital at alternating intervals of five and six years ('giving equal honour both to the odd and to the even number'). At the beginning of these meetings, a number of sacred bulls were released into the temple precincts, and then the kings were left alone in there with them. They first offered prayers to their divine ancestor that they should provide him with an acceptable sacrifice; then, they were required to hunt down one of the bulls, armed only with staves and lassos, and drag it to the ancient orichalcum pillar. There, they cut the bull's throat so that its blood flowed down over the inscribed laws of Atlantis, dismembered it, and burned its limbs nearby. Then they ceremonially purified the column.

After that, they took a large bowl of wine, and each of them threw in a clot of bull-blood, and then they put the remainder of the bull's carcass on the fire. Then they each took a cup of wine from the bowl, and poured that on the fire too. Then, each of them repeated a set of great and terrible sacred oaths that were inscribed on the pillar, drinking more of the bloody wine as they did so. These oaths required them to judge fairly according to the laws on the pillar, to obey them as closely as possible themselves, to punish anyone who broke them, and never to command others to break Poseidon's

laws or to accept commands to do so. Such a strict set of conditions, superseding even the Emperor's authority, might actually have been a recipe for trouble over the years as the Ten chafed under the stern restrictions – but the oath incorporated into the text called down terrible divine curses on anyone who broke these rules. It is not known how often, if at all, Poseidon did in fact punish oath-breakers, but the force of these words was evidently strong enough to keep Atlantis effectively unified for many generations.

This bloody and violent ceremony created a strong emotional bond between the ten kings, and served to remind them that the power they shared came from their divine ancestor. To reinforce the point further, the Ten performed their sacred duty as a council of judges immediately after taking the oaths. As darkness fell in the temple in the evening after the sacrificial hunt, and the embers of the fire cooled, the kings put on beautiful azure robes, extinguished all the flames and torches around the temple precincts, and sat cross-legged on the ground together next to the ashes of the sacred fire. If any of them had formal complaints or accusations against another, or a border dispute or jurisdictional issue to settle, the others would decide the issue; they would, naturally, also discuss matters of imperial policy and long-term plans. This meeting was always expected to last through the night; as dawn broke, the Ten would inscribe a summary of their decisions and judgements on a golden tablet, which they would then ceremonially deposit in the temple as a permanent record of the meeting.

THE LAW OF UNITY

Along with all the ceremonies and protocols, Poseidon's law laid one very important duty on the lords of Atlantis; not only were they forbidden from ever taking up arms against each other, but in the event of any kind of internal revolt (or, it was assumed but not written, external attack), all of the Ten were to come to the aid of the one under threat. The Empire was required to act as a single body against any attempt to overthrow the Emperor from within their own territory. They were also required to consult each other about certain key matters of policy, most especially decisions about whether to go to war. Naturally, the Emperors, the descendants of Atlas, always had the casting vote, and in practice they could usually win most policy arguments if they chose to use all of their influence and call in some favours. The Emperor was supreme among the Ten, although he could not exert his powers of life and death over the other nine or their immediate families without the consent of the majority. If any of the kings was a minor or was otherwise unable to travel or vote, he was considered to abstain on all matters; regents for underage kings were appointed by the Emperor.

Thanks to the force of the great royal oaths, this collegiate approach worked quite well in any matter which could wait for decision until the next formal five- or six-yearly meeting of the ten kings. On rare occasions, this led to a dispute festering for several years, or even some unfortunate individual being held prisoner for that long, but in emergencies, the Emperor could always work to call a special meeting; after all, if six of the ten came together, the unanimous agreement of that group had the force of absolute law. Things could admittedly get a little cumbersome if a crisis blew up while the ten kings were scattered, but in practice this only became a really serious problem once – during the final war and the fall of Atlantis.

ATLANTEAN ARMED FORCES

The Atlantean army was organized on the basis of a draft, which in turn was based on the

administrative divisions of rural areas. At least, this was true of the Emperor's personal domain; the nine other princes were permitted to run things differently, in whatever way they chose, within broad outlines set by Poseidon's laws – but most followed the same basic pattern.

For this purpose, the central plain was divided into 60,000 approximately square 'lots' of just over a mile on each side; the inhabitants of each lot were required to work together to provide or support a contingent of troops with its own leader, who in turn was responsible for organizing the group, which was to consist of two heavy spearmen, two slingers, three stone-throwers (burly individuals who could throw stones by hand to useful effect, and generally served as sappers and porters), and three light javelinmen. In addition, each lot was required to provide four sailors for the imperial navy, which consisted of 1,200 ships (implying crews of 200 men per ship) Every six lots had to work together to provide two light spear-armed cavalymen with their horses, and one war-chariot with two horses and a crew of two – a javelin-armed warrior and a driver – along with a groom to support the cavalry and chariots, who was expected to fight on foot with small shield and light spear when required. These grooms were often transported to and sometimes around the battlefield on 'their' chariot; hence, they could provide useful close support to the chariots in battle, protecting their flanks and rear from enemy skirmishers or cavalry, covering the retreat after an unsuccessful chariot charge, and so on. The 'lot leaders' could take various roles, more or less according to taste and what the Emperor declared was needed; most but not all of these were armed as and served with the heavy spearmen, but some brought their own additional chariots or horses to show off, and others were permitted to organize the army's logistical support or to act as staff officers for the Emperor.

The Emperor's personal army thus consisted, in theory, of 10,000 chariots, 20,000 light cavalry, 60,000 'lot leaders', 120,000 rank-and-file heavy spearmen, 120,000 slingers, 180,000 stone-throwers, 180,000 javelinmen, and 10,000 grooms as 'chariot infantry'. In practice, not every lot was always able to muster or equip its full contingent, and for generations, some preferred to pay for mercenary contingents as some kind of substitute. In any case, it was very rare for the entire imperial army to be mustered for battle at once, let alone the full army of the ten kings. Usually, one-quarter of the lots would be required to provide their forces for one season; when that period ended, another would take over the job. This did not lead to quite as many problems of continuity as might be thought, as much of each army consisted of mercenaries hired by the lot leaders, and at the change of seasons, all that changed was who was paying each of the troops. Still, many an Atlantean force ground to a halt for a few days at the turn of a season, while a lot of administrative matters were sorted out.

Also, once an army was mustered, the contingents from each lot were not usually kept together; that would have been militarily inefficient. Instead, the heavy spearmen formed a great bloc at the centre of the line of battle, usually in ranks eight deep with men from neighbouring lots forming up close together (if only because they had trained together), while the chariots formed two similarly substantial blocs on their immediate flanks, ready to charge the enemy on command (or just at the first opportunity, if glory was a big concern that year). The cavalry were usually organized into 'regiments' of a few hundred each, by region, to act as scouts, skirmishers, and encircling forces; how well they were used was perhaps the prime measure of an Emperor's competence in battle. The light missile troops were supposed to be grouped into fair-sized units to perform various functions, not least clearing bad terrain of enemy ambushes, but too many Atlantean lords just placed them as a great loose screen in front of the spearmen, to slow the enemy down and blunt any enemy charges briefly

before they withdrew (or fled, or died).

All this left one obvious anomaly. Because the capital formed only a fairly small part of the imperial province when these rules were laid down, there was little specific provision for the urban population to provide troops. In the early days, many of the residents of the city actually had close connections to specific areas of the countryside, being landowners or farm supervisors who merely visited the city for long periods on business; they took responsibility for raising troops through the locations of their country homes, and indeed often served as lot leaders in wartime. Others were in fact members of the military class, and were the very people who were supported by the military taxes on the countryside; they were based in the city for training purposes, or served the Emperor and his court as guards, watchmen, or staff officers. Later, though, with the growth of an urban mercantile and artisan class, the full-time city residents increasingly gained a reputation as parasites who didn't shoulder their share of the burden of military responsibilities. Much of the growing outer city actually expanded over the original grid of lots, and each old lot still carried a responsibility to provide troops – but the more city-dwellers there were on a lot, the less it cost any one of them, as opposed to the onerous burden on less densely populated rural lots. The city did impose its own taxes, some of them for specifically military purposes, and some of these could be fairly heavy, but country-dwellers still tended to think of city folk as fat and rich and well able to afford these taxes – especially when they could pass them on in the prices they charged rural visitors to the city.

Despite various emperors' best efforts in making these arrangements fair and effective, this led to a great deal of bitterness and grumbling in the later days of the Empire. By the time that the Greek-led powers invaded the island and marched on the capital, hastily raised rural-based troops were notably unenthusiastic about protecting it, as well as being poorly trained compared to the old, mostly mercenary forces, which had by then largely been wiped out or scattered.



Atlantean Heavy Spearman. The mainstay of the Atlantean army, these heavy infantry fought in close formation, much like classical Greek hoplites. Their armour and equipment also slightly resembled hoplite gear – but with some distinctive differences, such as the high, pointed helmet here, which appears to be decorated with boars' tusks like some later Bronze Age Greek headgear, and the rectangular shield. The face of the latter would probably be decorated with the image of some kind of sea monster or bull, in honour of the god Poseidon.



Atlantean Javelinman. Less wealthy or lower-status troops served in the Atlantean army as skirmishers. Under competent commanders, these would protect the flanks of the heavy spear formations, screen against enemy light cavalry, and seize rough terrain that would have broken up close-order formations attempting to cross it. This individual has at least purchased or been issued with a good bronze helmet, possibly an heirloom from an earlier generation of heavy spearmen. His wicker shield is large but lightweight and quite flimsy.



Atlantean Stone-Thrower. Although every man in the Atlantean army was supposed to be a fighting soldier, and a heavy pebble hurled by this burly peasant conscript could do real damage, his main function in the field was to act as a sapper or porter. Full-sized Atlantean armies had a lot of such troops, giving them extensive options for constructing temporary fortifications or just moving material around, but at the cost of severe supply problems. Hence, many armies on campaigns of conquest left most such men at home or garrisoning port cities.

PROVINCIAL ARMIES

As noted above, most of the nine subsidiary kings organized their armies on similar lines to the Emperor's force, though none were as large, and some, being less wealthy, fielded markedly fewer chariots or even heavy spearmen. In theory, the full island empire could muster an army of millions, but that would have been a logistical nightmare; in practice, a force of a couple of hundred thousand men was considered large. Leadership could also be a problem when units came from more than one province, unless the Emperor was present (and happened to be competent, which surprisingly many were); none of the other nine kings were supposed to have precedence over each other, and too many emperors preferred to avoid letting any of them become too experienced as a war leader, in case that led to excessive ambition. Nonetheless, most troops on a given campaign would usually come from a single province, to avoid squabbling or clashes of wills, and some of the leaders did in fact become experienced – and ambitious, though these ambitions were usually directed towards foreign adventures rather than power grabs back home.

Thanks to this traditional military system, Atlantean armies employed a good mix of chariots, cavalry, heavy spearmen, and light missile troops and skirmishers; some regions produced mostly archers rather than slingers or stone-throwers, so an army might include a fair few of those among the light troops. As Plato tells us, the island had many herds of elephants, so it would have been quite strange if the Atlanteans hadn't employed a few war-elephants too, maintained by the inhabitants of some of the southern forest regions on a similar basis to chariots among the people of the plains.

Atlantean elephants may have been of a smaller species or subspecies, akin to African forest elephants or North African elephants, but they could still have been very useful in warfare. War elephants have always been notoriously tricky to use effectively, being prone to panic and expensive to maintain, but competent commanders knew their uses – which were primarily to intimidate enemy irregulars and cavalry. (Horses who are unaccustomed to elephants will rarely go near them if they can help it.) The big trick was to keep them safe from enemy missile fire. Neither Plato nor Diodorus Siculus discuss the Atlantean elephant force, so it was probably a relatively small body; transporting elephants from the island to the mainland would have been difficult, after all. (The armies who eventually invaded Atlantis may thus have had rather more elephants to deal with than they had ever fought at home.) Opinions are divided as to whether such smaller elephants were able to carry protective 'towers' for their crews; more likely, each carried a couple of warriors riding astride, along with their driver. Other armies have favoured pairs made up of a spearman, to fend off any brave enemies who ventured close to attack the beast, and an archer, to provide some long-range combat capability; the Atlanteans most likely did the same.



Ceremonial Bull Hunt In an Atlantean royal ceremony, a number of sacred bulls are set loose in the precincts of the temple of Poseidon, and the ten kings of the Empire must hunt them down with staves and lassos, capture one, drag it to a sacred pillar, cut its throat, dismember it, and burn its limbs. Note that the kings are wearing their traditional symbols of rank; simple fish-skin headbands, treated to glitter like metal. The kings were supposed to be left alone for this ceremony, but on this occasion, an audience has been allowed access to the temple; also, the kings do not appear to be cooperating very well. Hence, this particular scene may come from the late, decadent phase of Atlantean history.

THE ATLANTEAN NAVY

As an island power, Atlantis obviously needed a navy as part of its military strength, to project power overseas – and ultimately as a shield against invasion, although the arrogant Atlanteans never thought in those terms, which explains in the end why they failed to prevent the one great seaborne assault they ever faced. Plato speaks of ‘triremes’ in their harbours, and the number of crew per ship supplied by the military draft system – 200 – was in fact the same as the standard crew of a classical Greek trireme. However, their ships were not actually identical to triremes of Plato’s day.

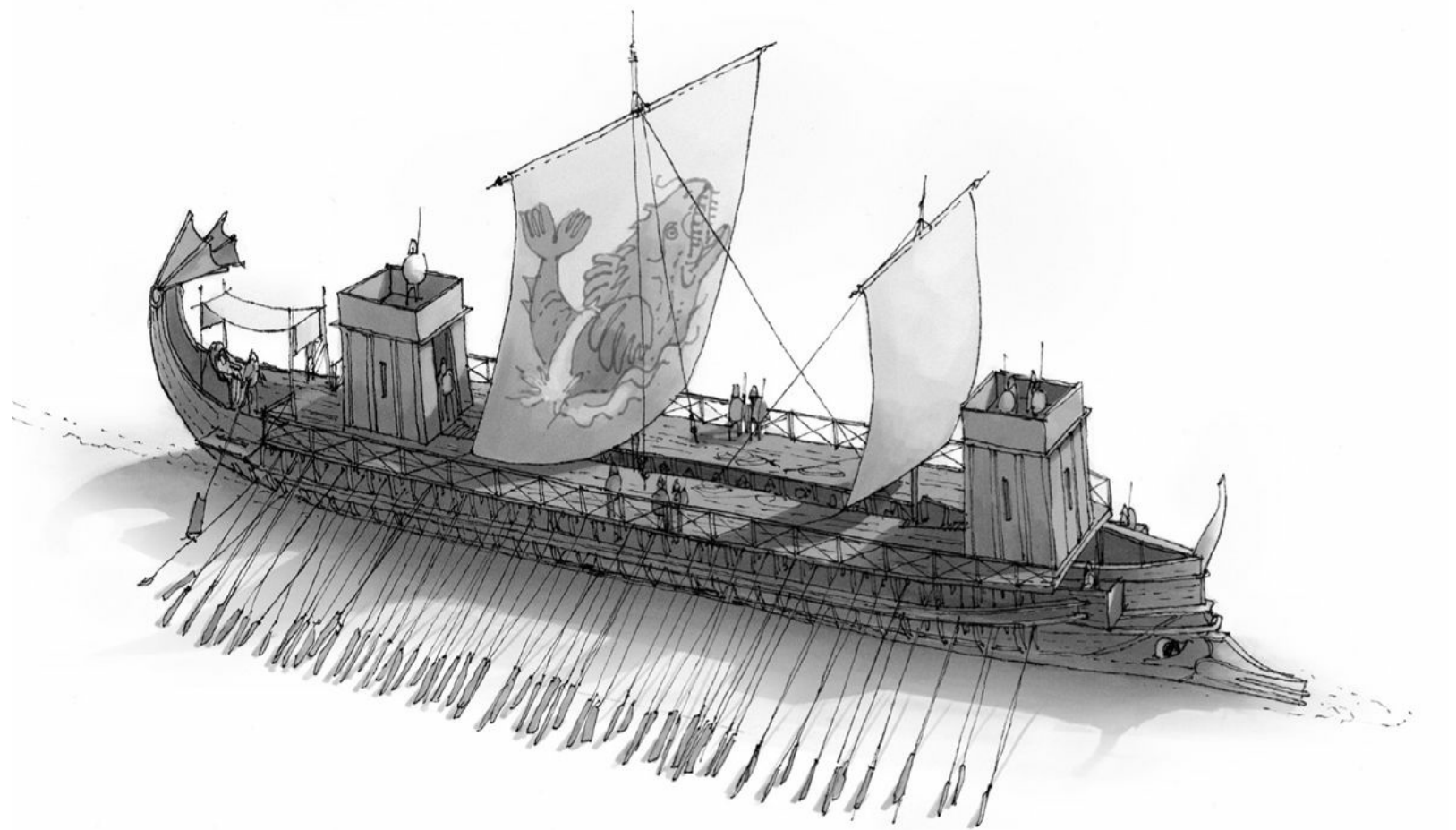
A difference was unavoidable. Greek warships were designed to operate in the relatively calm Mediterranean, and to cover comparatively short distances, being beached or docked at the end of almost every day. Hence, they could rely on oar propulsion, with just small auxiliary sails. Atlantean ships had to operate in the great, wide, wind-blown Atlantic, which has always been unforgiving of purely oar-powered ships, and were later used for long-range campaigns along the length of the Mediterranean. Things in the Atlantic were a little calmer (and a lot narrower) in those days, with the great island occupying a large part of the ocean, but even so, Atlantean ships needed robust

construction, high sides to prevent too much sea coming in the oar-ports, and substantial sails as well as oars. They had fewer oarsmen than classical triremes, but carried as many crew to permit changes of shifts on long journeys and to handle the sails.

They also needed plenty of deck and hold space, because for most of their history they served more as military transports than as battleships. Atlantis never faced a true naval rival until near the end of its history, but it needed to transport huge armies to Europe and Africa to carry out its plans of conquest. Even the significant naval assaults on Greece were mostly a matter of landing over-sized raiding parties.

Hence, a typical Atlantean military ship had higher, rounder sides than a classical trireme, with a substantial mast for its large square sail, and oar-ports for only a part of its length – usually two rows, occupying perhaps half the length of the ship. The Atlanteans had centuries of shipbuilding experience, so these vessels were surprisingly fast and robust, and handled quite well, but they weren't quite as well made as might have been expected, largely because major naval forces usually carried priests of the royal blood, who could petition Poseidon for calm seas and favourable winds.

Some of these ships had small rams, but the design lacked the speed and agility for that mode of combat, and anyway Atlanteans fought few sea battles. When they did fight, with the number of troops they could carry, their best option was usually to grapple enemy vessels for boarding, using similar techniques to those they had evolved for storming enemy ports from the sea. Atlantean captains preferred to carry heavy infantry for this purpose; the few missile troops and very occasional siege engines found on board served simply to harass and weaken the enemy before the melee began.



Atlantean Ship. Although Plato wrote about 'triremes', Atlantean vessels were in fact more versatile and robust than this term implies, being capable of operating in the open Atlantic Ocean. This is an exceptionally large, powerful ship, with two masts and more oars than

most Atlantean craft; it also mounts a ram, suggesting that it is one of the Empire's front-line combat vessels, and two 'castles' which may have served as firing platforms for missile troops, or which may as easily have been positions from which priest-aristocrats could supplicate their ancestor Poseidon for aid.

CONSOLIDATION AND AMBITION

Establishing and stabilizing the Atlantean Empire had taken many generations – not all of the inhabitants of the island felt obliged to obey anyone just because he claimed to be descended from Poseidon – and after that, more generations were spent consolidating power and developing the island to the full. At times, the ten kings all seemed devoted to the arts of peace, playing highly competitive one-upmanship games with their sponsorship of architecture and urban construction. Inevitably, though, there came a time when some of them began to dream of more power – and with any ideas that might threaten the Emperor rendered risky by those sacred vows and the threat of Poseidon's wrath, the only real options for expansion were overseas. And they had those huge armies, formed originally for defence and to ensure internal security, but fully capable of other uses.

Hence, this dynamic, successful, and increasingly arrogant culture began to look outwards – and the first region which the Atlanteans considered was, inevitably, the nearest familiar land, meaning the coastal areas of southern Spain and north-west Africa. The descendants of Gadeirus led the discussions, as their lands faced that way and they had decent ports and naval forces of their own; their first overseas outpost may well have been 'Gades', on the site of modern Cádiz, where they transformed a haven for Atlantean trade ships into a full-scale town and subjugated the surrounding countryside. They followed up on this by planting similar colonies on the African coast, closer to the capital of Atlantis. Farms and quarries, initially created simply to support the maritime outposts, became profitable in their own right – and the age of Atlantean colonialism had begun.

However, these lands, although sparsely populated, were not uninhabited. The colonists and permanent trading colonies would prove to need not only supplies but also defence against raids by local tribes, leading to the planting of permanent military garrisons; but equally, the locals could make valuable trade partners – or, once they were effectively overawed by the might of the Atlantean military, valuable subjects. To the lords of Atlantis, who thought of themselves as demigods, the latter seemed the natural and appropriate choice.

Thus it was that the old Atlantean ideal, of building a perfect, orderly state on their home island under the precise laws laid down by Poseidon, was increasingly put aside in favour of a dream of imperial glory. Gold, once a fine decorative material, became a mark of success and a useful basis for bribery in dealings with local chiefs, and some contingents of the military levy became mercenaries, on duty all year round.

Nevertheless, the first simple conquest phase soon came to an end, as the most obvious paths to empire brought the armies of Atlantis into conflict with opponents who could stand up to them. For a while, as this book will describe, they and their allies swept all before them; at its height, the Atlantean Empire would encompass everything in and around the Mediterranean as far as Tyrrhenia, in Italy, and Egypt, while their fleets and their Amazon allies were probing into Asia and Greece. The last was their crucial, fatal error, as it led in turn to the formation of a determined and capable alliance which was to bring them down. What the Greek-led coalition could not anticipate, however, was how catastrophically the war would end for everyone.



Central American Pyramid. One of the few hints of Atlantean cultural influence found among the civilizations of the Americas lies in the design of the local sacred pyramids.

THE FAR WESTERN CONTINENTS

A substantial island in the middle of the North Atlantic, with a dynamic civilization with some tradition of seafaring, could be expected to represent a link to the American continents; Plato certainly said that Atlantis ‘was the way to other islands, and from these you might pass to the whole of the opposite continent’. And indeed, some researchers claim that there was significant contact between Atlantis and the early civilizations of Central America, including a strong cultural influence. Some even claim that Atlantis inspired traditions of pyramid-building in both the Old and New Worlds, although the great American pyramid-builder cultures arose much later than those of Egypt.

However, despite intensive scholarship out on the fringes of academic respectability, there is remarkably little evidence of Atlantean outposts in the Americas. Most Atlantean imperial efforts seem to have been directed towards Europe and North Africa, which were both closer and richer. In addition, the gods who founded and oversaw Atlantis found most of their worshippers in Europe, and may well have exerted a decisive influence in this regard.

Atlantis had, at most, trading outposts and exploratory missions in the far western lands. The majority were sponsored by the descendants of Elasippus, who had been assigned the western coastlands of Atlantis; these princes sometimes tried to use the many skilled sailors they ruled to seek out and exploit new sources of wealth beyond the western horizon. Unfortunately, none of these projects ever made much profit, and their sponsors were unable to talk any other princes into helping to finance anything larger.

These outposts had relatively little influence on local cultures in the Americas, and were too small and hygienically run to introduce European diseases to the area (so the inevitable great epidemiological disaster would only happen millennia later, after Columbus). Then, when Atlantean civilization fell, the outposts were too small and poor in resources to survive for more than a few months. They left very few remains – just some pavements in the Caribbean, and a legend of a blond god from across the ocean in the land that would one day become Mexico.

Nor did the Atlanteans apparently say much to their European and African rivals about the Americas. Perhaps they regarded them as a moderately valuable trading secret; more likely, they saw them as trivial. Ironically, some later European explorers and geographers would wonder if the newly discovered Americas were Atlantis, but they mostly soon decided that this was not the case.

RIVAL NATIONS

Although Atlantis was the greatest power in the world in its time, it found itself facing serious competition, especially in the very areas into which it sought to expand. That was no coincidence; it never really wanted to build a truly colonial empire, exploiting previously lightly inhabited territory, but mostly sought the plunder, glory, and already-developed resources that could be acquired by conquering other nations. The Atlanteans did establish those colonial towns early on, in what are now Spain and North Africa, but soon found themselves fighting wars of conquest – and even making alliances, especially when some fights went unexpectedly against them.

THE AMAZONS

The first culture which Atlantis had to deal with whose citizens were seriously capable of challenging local Atlantean power were the Amazons, who at the time ruled a large part of north-west Africa. The Amazons had a strikingly feminist set of cultural traditions, going back into prehistory. Not only were they frequently, even usually, ruled by queens, but they actually required women as well as men to train as soldiers and to serve in the army for some years, in which time they were prohibited from marrying, and indeed had to remain virgins. This was particularly important because the Amazons were a militaristic and often expansionist nation; female soldiers were important and respected.

As this implies, Amazon culture was a centralized monarchy. Although many Amazons were semi-nomadic herders roaming the plains of North Africa, their culture was based on a volcanic island named Hespera, which at that time lay just off the African coast, west of the Pillars of Hercules, where the High Atlas Mountains ran down to the sea in what is now Morocco. In fact, Hespera stood in the midst of a tidal salt-marsh called the Marsh Tritonis, at the mouth of a river called the Triton (possibly the modern Sous River).

Hespera was a fertile island with many fruit trees, valuable gemstone mines, and a number of communities. When the Amazon monarchy had subsumed all of these except the sacred city of Menê (which lay near the active volcanic crater, which the Amazons regarded with superstitious dread), some time before they encountered the Atlanteans, they founded one new town, which they named Kherronesos, to serve as their capital. They then began expanding into neighbouring areas, obliging local tribes to pay them tribute – which ultimately brought them into conflict with the Atlantean colony towns.



Amazon Ambush This skirmish takes place during the early conflicts between Atlantis and the local Amazons in North Africa. A party of Amazon horse archers (some of them women, in the Amazon tradition) is engaging an Atlantean force, but they may have bitten off more than they can chew. They are firing on an Atlantean war-chariot and escorting infantry, and have done some damage, but an Atlantean war-elephant is already coming up in support. The Atlantean chariot warrior has made the mistake of favouring a long spear rather than the more usual javelins, which is little use in this engagement.

EGYPT AND THE SHEMSU HOR

Ancient Egypt was a nation defined by the River Nile, which brings water and fertile silt to both its long valley ('Upper Egypt') and its broad delta ('Lower Egypt'). This was just as true in the Atlantean era as in historical ages, and in fact most of the major towns of that first era survived as major communities in classical times. Probably the greatest of these in the Atlantean age was Sais, in the western delta, a city then consisting mostly of temples, schools, and government buildings.

Atlantean-era Egypt was a theocracy, ruled by a strange and possibly nonhuman priestly oligarchy, the Shemsu Hor ('Companions of Horus'). The origin of this caste, or clan, or race, remains deeply obscure, and may be a secret older even than Atlantis. They were a secretive and exclusive group who were never seen with children, but who presumably produced such, because they didn't appear to recruit outsiders either. Not even their most trusted servants or slaves were given access to the inner courts of their great communal temple-houses, so what happened within remains unknown.

And the other thing about the Shemsu Hor was that they appeared barely human, although it was hard to tell. Their bodies were human enough, but their skulls were strangely elongated, far longer

than any normal human's. However, such elongation can be the result of deliberate deformation in infancy; human tribes or groups who achieve this effect do so by tightly binding the skulls of their infants while they are still developing. Still, it is possible that some later groups who practiced this skull-binding did so in an attempt to emulate the natural appearance of the Shemsu Hor.

In addition, all of the Shemsu Hor wore full-face beaked masks in imitation of the god Horus when out in public – so the actual appearance of their faces was never seen, and may have been quite inhuman. Anyway, the overall effect of the elongated skulls and bird-masked faces was distinctly uncanny, but what made the Shemsu Hor respected was that each of them apparently had the status of a high priest, as of right, and they were all able to commune directly with the gods. They also functioned as scholar-magicians, although their magic was more a matter of subtle ceremonies and specialized knowledge than flashy spells. Only occasionally would a convocation of Shemsu Hor petition the higher powers for miracles, and these would then more likely be subtle twists of destiny than earthquakes or thunderbolts. Still, Egypt prospered under their rule, thanks to their exact understanding of the seasons and the behaviour of the Nile floods; all they required in return was the absolute loyalty of the population.

Their Egypt was thus very stable and orderly, as a result of which they had no interest in conquest or expansion; that would just have destabilized things. They maintained an army, but it was organized to repel and suppress disorganized barbarian tribes on the borders, not to handle full-scale battles against comparable opposition. This left the Shemsu Hor totally unprepared for attacks by the later Atlantean-Amazon alliance, although they put up a fair fight, adapted their tactics only a little bit too late, and eventually formed a valuable part of the alliance which drove Atlantis back, supplying knowledge – of the world and of the supernatural – more than military strength.



The Elongated Skull Phenomenon. The masked Shemsu Hor priest-lords of Egypt were noted for their elongated skulls, giving them an inhuman appearance. They may not in fact have been entirely human; however, some later human cultures have given their children similarly elongated skulls by a practice of head-binding in infancy, as seen here, possibly originally in imitation of ... whatever the Shemsu Hor were.

THE PROTO-ATHENIANS

The most important rival of all, at least from Solon and Plato's point of view, was the other nation that gave Atlantis a hard fight, and ended up leading the resistance; the Greeks, or rather perhaps Proto-Greeks, and most especially the inhabitants of what would one day be called Athens.

This nation was centred on a city on the same site as modern Athens, although the geology of the area was a little different at the time, with gentler slopes on the hillsides around the Acropolis. That hill had temples to Athene and Hephaestus at the summit, all surrounded by a palisade fence enclosing sacred gardens and the communal houses of the nation's warriors.

Proto-Athenian society was based on a system of hereditary castes. Although some movement between castes was possible, usually at the start of adulthood, the warrior caste claimed descent from founding demigods, and entry to that group by anything other than birth was extremely difficult. Those of them who were based in the city lived within the sacred compound atop the Acropolis; although they lived in family groups with houses assigned to them as their own, the whole caste held all its property in common, and most of its members' daily life and social occasions took place in communal halls and gymnasia. Most of these were located on the north side of the hilltop, but in summer they made much use of gardens and open-air facilities on the southern side of the hill. They prided themselves on living simply, in well-maintained but unadorned houses, and on their strong group loyalty. Their traditions were designed to prevent them from exploiting the other castes for anything other than food supplies and other necessities of life, and for the most part the system worked. Members of other castes – artisans and some of the rural workers who were based in the city – lived on the slopes around the Acropolis and on the surrounding plains. The society was ruled by a council of elders, mostly drawn from the warrior caste and senior families, who selected the overall rulers from among their number. As these rulers were expected to double as war-leaders, they were almost always respected members of the warrior caste.

TERROR OF THE GORGONES

The Gorgones were described by Diodorus Siculus as inhabitants of what are now known as the Atlas Mountains. They were enemies of the Atlantean colonists, and subsequently of the Atlantean-Amazon alliance. However, although the Amazon army was able to crush the Gorgones in a pitched battle, it never managed to conquer the forested upland areas to which these enemies then retreated, despite resorting to large-scale attempts to burn them out. In other words, the Amazons ran into the common problems of a regular, urban-based army fighting 'barbarians' who used guerrilla tactics. Hence, when another army arrived in the area under the leadership of the Proto-Athenians, seeking to expel the Atlanteans rather than to conquer the area, it found local allies in the Gorgones.

But the Proto-Athenians never quite trusted them. Nobody else ever actually liked the Gorgones, and the feeling was mutual. A clue to the reasons for this lies in their name; the Gorgones were the source of some terrifying monster myths for later Greek peoples. They were seen as truly savage wielders of dark magic.

Like the Amazons, the Gorgones had a matriarchal culture, but in their case, it was dominated by a ruling caste who were believed to possess dark powers. Like the Shemsu Hor, these rulers went masked, perhaps even because the faces behind those masks were no more human than the masks themselves. In later Greek art, the ‘gorgon’ was a terrifying figure with staring eyes, whose gaze could turn a man to stone, and the face of the gorgon was commonly used as the design for an artistic mask; this suggests what the masks worn by the rulers of the Gorgones looked like. It’s also possible that the masks themselves were magical.

Incidentally, while the various cultures in this story may seem very different, there are hints of cross-connections. There was matriarchal rule among Amazons and Gorgones, masked rulers among the Gorgones and the Shemsu Hor – and the monstrous associations and more-than-human ruling factions suggest a link to the Atlanteans. It is possible that the eventual destruction of Atlantis served to cover up some old, dark secrets.



The Mask of the Gorgon. This is the traditional image of the face of the monstrous Gorgon from Greek art. It may have represented a distorted memory of the hideous and possibly magical masks worn by the matriarchal rulers of the tribal Gorgones of North Africa, a sinister and little-understood faction in the Atlantean Wars.

OTHER REGIONS

There is little evidence of other nations having any great power in the Atlantean period, but there do appear to have been urban societies in ‘Tyrrhenia’, in what is now Italy (until that was conquered and subsumed by the Atlantean Empire), and in the Levant and Asia Minor (though those took a battering from Amazon incursions after the conquest of Egypt). Both supplied minor forces to the alliance which defeated Atlantis. The Tyrrhenians and some cities in Asia Minor seem to have followed broadly the same cultural patterns as the Proto-Greeks; little is known about the other Asian cities, which may not have been very highly developed at this date, but they may have somewhat resembled

their later Bronze Age descendants in the same region.

THE FIRST ATLANTEAN WARS

The lords of Atlantis had a fabulously rich homeland, but it was probably inevitable that they would eventually start seeking to build an empire overseas; otherwise, they might have started fighting for power at home. Anyway, they knew that they were demigods, which easily leads to brash overconfidence. Unfortunately, their idea of empire-building was too often to crush and incorporate those of other peoples.

THE AMAZON WARS

Many of the very first Atlantean moves were constructive and peaceable. Among other things, they had planted that cluster of colonies and trade depots on the Atlantic coast of North Africa. These were modest-sized communities by Atlantean standards, but impressive compared to anything seen outside of Atlantis at this time. However, the Atlanteans still had a degree of arrogant disdain for the capabilities of other peoples, while their nearest neighbours in the area happened to be the expansionist, militaristic Amazons. The Atlanteans saw the Amazons as weird but weak barbarians who consented to be ruled by mere women, and they treated Amazon emissaries with outright contempt, refusing to discuss alliances or to treat these neighbours as anything like equals.

Thus it was that the angry Amazon Queen Myrina launched an attack on the Atlantean towns, the richest potential conquests in the region. The first assault was aimed at the town named Kernê, which actually held the largest Atlantean military garrison. Despite being outnumbered and less combat-hardened than the attackers, the Atlantean troops confidently marched out to give battle.

It was in fact a hard fight – the Atlanteans were well-armed and brave – but the Amazons eventually swept the Atlantean force off the field, then stormed into Kernê before the stunned defenders could close the gates. Acting by what passed for the customary rules of war at the time, the Amazons sacked the city with brutal efficiency; Myrina calculated that it was necessary to break the Atlanteans of their arrogant attitudes, and so her forces put most of the male population to the sword, took the women and children into slavery, and then razed the town.

Myrina's ruthlessness paid off. Stunned by the loss of their strongest defensive force in the colony towns, the other Atlantean communities sued for peace, hoping at least to buy time until a stronger military force could be brought from Atlantis – a slow process at this time, as the Atlantean transport fleet was still fairly small. For her part, Myrina – after surveying her losses from the battle of Kernê and the strength of the defences of other Atlantean towns, which from now on would most likely be defended properly – received the Atlantean emissaries with haughty politeness. The other colonists, who had regarded the governor of Kernê as rather stiff-necked, decided to play along.

The ensuing agreement was in fact reasonably good for both sides. The Atlantean colonies recognized the Amazons as the dominant power in the area, agreeing to pay modest tribute by way of rent for the sites of the colonies; and they switched their tone from disdain to politeness, showering Myrina with gifts and ceremonial honours. The Amazons in turn would allow most of the Atlantean colonies to rule themselves as they saw fit, with just a few outlying communities coming under Amazon authority, and granted favourable terms to Atlantean traders. It was an armed truce, especially once Atlantean reinforcements began to trickle into the colony harbours, but after an

Amazon deputation visited Atlantis and returned with reports of the full power of the island, Myrina wisely chose to accept the new status quo. She did found a new, Amazon-run city, also named Myrina, on the former site of Kernê, largely occupied by the slaves she had taken from the old colony, which served to remind the Atlanteans of what their new neighbours were capable of.

At this point, the Atlantean colonies decided to see if these formidable warriors could solve another problem for them. From the time of their first arrival, they had been suffering petty but often unpleasant harassment from another local people on their other flank, the barbarian Gorgones. Now they described this problem to Myrina, suggesting politely that the Amazons, as rightful overlords of the region, might want to do something about this menace to profitable trade. Atlantis would be happy to provide supplies and some auxiliary troops.

Myrina, who still had expansionary ambitions, and who had heard a little about the Gorgones from before the time of the coming of the Atlanteans, took the bait (while recognizing that this was what it was), and launched a probing raid through Atlantean territory at known Gorgones tribal strongholds in the mountains. She calculated the challenge with some skill; the Gorgones, provoked by the invasion, mustered a substantial force to meet it on a battlefield of Myrina's choosing, which was open enough to allow the Amazon cavalry to operate effectively.

The result was a clear Amazon victory; many of the Gorgones were slaughtered, and 3,000 were taken prisoner and enslaved. However, many more got away, fleeing into the upland forests of their home region. This left Myrina with a problem, as her army was less well equipped to fight on that terrain, and the Gorgones sensibly refused any more pitched battles, but took to guerrilla tactics with enthusiasm. She tried setting fire to great areas of woodland, seeking to burn the Gorgones out and force them into confrontation in the open once again, but her commanders never knew which areas to burn; the forests were too large, and the enemy knew the terrain too well.

And so Myrina simply declared victory and withdrew. She presented her new Atlantean allies with some slaves and a little plunder (while keeping any captured enchanted masks for herself), and informed them that they would no longer have to worry about Gorgones raiders or banditry – a promise which basically held true, at least until the disastrous later days of Atlantean power.



Myrina, Amazon Queen. The imposing warrior-queen of Atlantis's Amazon allies is shown here equipped as a horse archer, placing her in the military traditions of her people; hence, she wears light thigh-length armour made from the skin of a giant snake, and a suitably regal but open-faced helmet. The relatively limited protection provided by this array may have contributed to her eventual death in battle.

IMPERIAL EXPANSION

Despite the loss of one colony town and a little dignity, the Atlanteans were feeling pleased with themselves at this point. They had supply depots and a workable relationship with a local power that could provide interpreters and be induced to suppress banditry. Now their ships began probing into the Mediterranean – looking for trade opportunities, according to what they told the people they met at this time, but the discussions in the councils of the ten kings were clear; the dream of conquest was becoming irresistible. The Amazons, who understood all about military expansionism, guessed as much, and simply set to work negotiating themselves a good share of the profits.

The initial Atlantean campaigns were simple and met little resistance, as they asserted control of the islands of the western Mediterranean and the coastlands of North Africa. The sparse local populations were in no condition to resist, and mostly offered fealty and tribute promptly to avoid being enslaved. Eventually, the Atlanteans felt that they had sufficient forward bases to launch an assault on a more substantial and valuable prey: Tyrrhenia.

Landing troops from the sea against determined opposition can be hard and dangerous, but fortunately for the Atlanteans, the land they had chosen to assault was not too densely populated, and their attack was more or less unexpected. They seized a few coastal villages with adequate harbours, and began pouring in their vast army. By the time that local chiefs and kings realised what they were dealing with, the Atlanteans had the largest single force in Italy, which nearly outnumbered all the local forces put together. They were unaccustomed to siege warfare, but they had Amazon advisors to help with that, and they were short of neither resources nor engineering skill. The Tyrrhenian cities, on the other hand, were disunited; they had never previously faced a threat strong enough to challenge all of them at once.

Perhaps the only thing that slowed the Atlantean conquest down was that they were unaccustomed to playing multiple opponents off against each other; on more than one occasion, they turned down tentative offers from Tyrrhenian kings who would have been quite happy to work with Atlantis to crush their neighbours. It had taken a local victory to make the Atlanteans treat the Amazons with any respect, and no Tyrrhenian city ever managed that. Instead, the Atlanteans were determined to dominate all of the cities equally – and within a couple of years, they had more or less succeeded. It never occurred to them that other nations, watching this, would draw the conclusion that a war with Atlantis (or rather, with the Atlantis-Amazon alliance, as the invaders sometimes presented themselves) was likely to be a fight to the death.



Horseman Executing a 'Parthian Shot'. This combat technique, named for a later nation of expert horse archers, allows an expert rider to fire backwards while escaping pursuit by slower opponents. The Amazon cavalryman shown here wears a bronze helmet and a protective shirt made from the skin of a giant snake.

AMAZON ARMED FORCES

The Amazons of the Atlantean era were a sophisticated but militaristic culture, deploying well-organized armies. These were combined-arms forces, employing both infantry and cavalry. As ancient armies went, they were also notable in that they included both male and female troops.

While accounts of later Amazonian nations and war-bands insist that they were entirely female, only forming temporary liaisons with men in order to conceive children, the Amazons who confronted and sometimes allied with Atlantis deployed forces with roughly equal numbers of men and women. Their feminism lay in the facts that they were usually ruled by women, and that they had any female soldiers at all, let alone large numbers. To cultures such as the later Greeks, who believed that a woman's place was strictly in the home, this was all very strange.

In any case, drawing on both sexes for soldiers enabled a relatively small nation to field substantial armies. (The drawback was that a bad defeat in any war could knock the nation's population back quite badly, and leave them needing a long time to recover to full strength.) According to Diodorus Siculus, Queen Myrina, the commander of Amazon forces in the Atlantean Wars, led an army of 30,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry.

The other notable thing about the Amazons was that their armour and shield-coverings were often made of the skins of giant snakes. It seems that North Africa held a substantial population of some now-unknown species of very large serpent at the time. In fact, there were reports of gigantic snakes in this region as late as the Roman period, some of them dangerous enough that Roman forces encountering them were obliged to use siege artillery to kill them. It seems that their scaled hides, properly prepared, made more than adequate protection, and the Amazons were experts in the necessary skills.

These troops were armed on fairly standard Iron Age lines, with swords, spears, and bows. Significantly, their cavalry were very skilled archers, able to shoot backwards from the saddle while evading their opponents – a trick later mostly associated with Asian horse archers and known as the ‘Parthian shot’ after one nation that used it. This made Amazon armies very effective on open battlefields, and they had the discipline and courage to storm enemy fortifications when necessary; but like many ‘regular’ armies with a liking for cavalry, they had difficulty suppressing irregular opponents who were using guerrilla tactics in forested or mountain territory.

THE CONQUEST OF EGYPT

Meanwhile, combined Atlantean and Amazon armies were continuing to advance along the southern coast of the Mediterranean, building depots and military encampments as they went, supported by the Atlantean navy. By now the Amazons, hearing their allies’ exaggerated boasts of triumphs and plunder on the other side of the sea, were beginning to chafe at the less exciting nature of their own accomplishments. If the Shemsu Hor heard about this new threat on their western horizons and hoped to dissuade it from attacking by diplomacy or by their own reputation as uncanny, powerful priest-lords, their hopes were sadly misguided.

For their part, the Amazons, who had previous distant knowledge of Egypt acquired through traders, provided some useful intelligence. They recognized that a rapid attack was desirable before the Shemsu Hor leaders realized that they were dealing with something more serious than the usual bands of desert raiders they could so easily suppress. They also warned the Atlanteans about the theurgic powers possessed by the Shemsu Hor, in terms strong enough that the Atlanteans took them seriously, and summoned royal princes from their island home to petition their own divine ancestors to balance this threat.

Whether Poseidon truly answered these requests is unclear – but then, it’s equally uncertain which powers the Shemsu Hor could actually invoke, though they named Horus in their public declarations. In any event, after a few scouting raids by Amazon light cavalry had probed the Egyptian borders, the entire invading army hit the western Nile Delta in force. A strong line of border fortifications crumbled within days, and then the invaders set to work taking town after town. Sais itself, which happened to be located in the path of the first wave of invasion, fell after a few weeks, even before the Shemsu Hor were able to muster a full-sized field army.

But the Shemsu Hor were never based in just one town, and soon a more than adequate force was marching down the Nile. The ensuing battle took place in the central delta region. It should have been an equal contest; even fielding only a fraction of the military capabilities of their land, the Egyptians significantly outnumbered the Atlantean-Amazon army, and the Shemsu Hor leaders, although inexperienced, were imbued with the warrior wisdom of the falcon god Horus himself. But they were too arrogant, and too dependent on their divine powers. In answer to their invocations, a fierce desert sun beat down on the battlefield and in the eyes of attackers who should have been parched and weary – but the Atlanteans arrived with a storm from the sea at their backs, which blotted out the sun while the Egyptian chariot horses became skittish and uncontrollable. After a day’s hard slog between the two infantry forces, the Egyptians collapsed as Atlantean chariots and cavalry worked their way around and struck at their flanks.

Now, though, with the western delta and its granaries secured, it was the Atlanteans' turn to become complacent. They settled down to consolidate their hold on the conquered area as reinforcements showed up by stages along the coast route. With the arrival of a small contingent of South Atlantean war-elephants, the invaders assumed that everything that followed would be a mopping-up operation.

Then they discovered that the Shemsu Hor had been recruiting hard all that time, and that they were now facing three armies, each as large as the one they had beaten at the Battle of the Delta (if not perhaps quite as well-trained, but the Egyptians depended little on the skills of their rank and file). It was going to be a long, hard slog, as the Atlantean-Amazon forces pushed east and south. They won four battles out of five over the next three years, but they had to earn their victories.

The Atlantean fleet had played an invaluable supporting role in the advance through North Africa. While the Atlantean-Amazon army advanced along the coast, moving through lightly inhabited areas, the fleet kept it supplied in an impressive exercise in logistics, whatever the local terrain. Then, when the forces arrived in the Nile Delta, the fleet played an active role in the capture of several coastal towns, enforcing blockades that starved the defenders out and sometimes even landing forces in the face of opposition or behind Egyptian lines.

Now, however, as the invaders advanced up the Nile, the fleet, and the Atlantean princes in charge of it and their admirals, found themselves twiddling their thumbs. This led them into a serious long-term mistake.



Shemsu Hor Charioteer. The long-skulled priest-lords of Egypt helped establish that country's long tradition of chariot warfare. This individual is driving a typically sophisticated vehicle of a type that would not be matched for thousands of years; the quivers for javelins or arrows remind us that it is suited for military service or hunting, although the chariot would carry a crew of two in battle. Like all Shemsu Hor seen in public, the driver wears a falcon-mask that honours the god Horus.

RAIDS ON GREECE

As Atlantean armies had conquered their way through North Africa and Italy, they had occasionally

found themselves fighting small but competent mercenary forces from an unknown land, or suffered nuisance raids by seafaring buccaneers from the same region. Now, with time to collate their intelligence, they identified the source of these nuisances – the lands of Greece, north across the sea. Thinking to punish what they saw as provocation (from peoples who actually had no organized foreign policy), and looking for glory, the Atlantean navy undertook to strike back at these ‘barbarians’.

Taking most of the fleet, the Atlantean admirals launched what was basically a reconnaissance in force, burning a few seaports, taking some slaves, and raiding into the territory of the strongest Proto-Greek city-state, Athens. They then sailed back to Egypt in triumph.

Even if they hadn’t been vainglorious about their achievements, this would have been a mistake on several grounds. For one thing, the main access point to the lands of the gods was in Greece, atop Mount Olympus, and the Proto-Greeks were devout worshippers of the pantheon; some of these actions had a taste of blasphemy. More significantly, the Atlantean attack was large and violent enough to unnerve everyone in Greece, convincing the Proto-Greeks that Atlantis might be a threat; but it did nothing like enough damage to reduce the Proto-Greeks’ military power significantly. It also introduced the Proto-Greeks to Atlantean military technology, giving them a hint of what they would have to face or match.

However, the Proto-Greeks were smart enough not to attempt immediate revenge, and anyway they lacked the naval power to launch a counterattack. Instead, the cities spent some time arguing about significance and priorities, and struggled to obtain information on these new enemies. The whole effort might actually have come to nothing, if their opponents had not come to them.



Atlantean Slinger. A rather wild-looking individual from one of the less wealthy mountain regions of Atlantis, equipped with just a sling, a small wooden shield, and a large knife. He is probably a shepherd by upbringing, and he may have become very skilled with his sling through long practice, then turned to mercenary service as (hopefully) a path to greater wealth.

AMAZON ADVENTURISM

The key point now was that divisions were appearing between the two elements of the Atlantean-Amazon land forces. The deal between Atlantis and the Amazons was, essentially, that the former could lay claim to the wealth of Egypt's cities, while the horse-oriented culture of the Amazons could lay claim to more open lands around and beyond them. Now, though, even as they won their Egyptian war, forcing the Shemsu Hor to sue for peace, the Atlanteans were bogged down assimilating their conquests, installing governors and dealing with the stubborn pride of their new Shemsu Hor subjects. Indeed, some of the Shemsu Hor actually retreated beyond the southern borders of Egypt as others

offered surrender. These hold-outs organized small, efficient, chariot-based forces, and took to harassing the conquerors.

The Amazons had no taste for the hard slog of imperial bureaucracy, and saw that if they wanted their own conquests, they had to take them for themselves. So Queen Myrina mustered an army in the eastern delta and led it further east and north. This force included most of the Amazon cavalry, enough Amazon infantry to support them, a few chariot-riding Atlantean nobles who wanted a chance at more glory than Egypt seemed to offer (plus their personal retinues), and, rumour claimed, one or two renegade Shemsu Hor. It also included plenty of carts and mules to keep it supplied. Some Atlantean leaders saw this departure as a betrayal, as they were still spread thin in Egypt, but most were happy to see their grumbling allies leave. The excellent Amazon light cavalry were little use in this war of consolidation, after all.

And so it was a highly mobile force which crossed the Sinai Peninsula and erupted into the Levant. Myrina's first opponents there were desert nomads, who were easily crushed whenever they were foolish enough to give battle to the invaders, but as the Amazons moved north, she ran into more settled societies. Some of these they defeated in battle, but this was far less of a systematic conquest than the Atlantean campaign in Egypt; Myrina was generally happy to terrorize each village and city into paying her enough tribute in supplies for her to keep going onto the next. In the absence of strong central governments in the region, the force simply rolled through until it entered the region of Cilicia (what is now southern coastal Turkey), where it found a cluster of petty city-states. These were used to playing military-political games with each other, making and breaking alliances at whim; faced with an army that had each of them outclassed, all of them promptly raced to offer fealty to Myrina for fear that their neighbours would ally with her first against themselves. Myrina was happy enough to accept these offers, as this gave her a base of operations in the region. She skirmished with the inhabitants of the Taurus Mountains to the north-east, until they withdrew to the high ground, giving her forces free passage to the north.

The renewed expedition thus reached as far as the Black Sea. All along the way, Myrina suppressed any local tribes who looked inclined to resist her before setting the limits of her grandiose territorial claims at various arbitrary points, usually along the lines of local rivers. She did endeavour to stabilize her 'conquests' by founding towns, or at least permanent military encampments, at various points, usually naming them for the generals from her force whom she left in charge, but this left her stretched for numbers. Still, this sweeping expedition could be considered to be an impressive reconnaissance in force, or at least a giant pillaging operation.

THE AEGEAN CAMPAIGN

After a couple of years rampaging around Asia Minor, Myrina withdrew to Cilicia. She had a good reason for this; once there, she linked up once again with the Atlanteans – specifically with the Atlantean fleet, whose admirals had kept in touch with her and who shared her taste for wide-ranging glory. Now, she had use of maritime transports – and the fleet, having taken a large contingent of Amazon infantry on board back in Egypt – had enough troops available to return to Greece and assert a little more dominance. However, Myrina and the Atlantean princes were shrewd enough to be methodical about this, now that they were hoping for slightly more permanent conquests.

Their idea was to launch an extended campaign, using the islands of the Aegean Sea as stepping-stones on their way to the Greek mainland. After taking a couple of small islands by way of rehearsal,

the invaders seized the island of Lesbos, which Myrina declared would be the capital of her Greek conquests. She spent some months establishing a military town there, naming it 'Mytilene' after her sister. (It survives to this day as the capital of the island.) Then the fleet and its Amazon marines set to work methodically securing one island after another.

This continued until a day when Myrina and the flotilla she was commanding at the time were caught at sea by a furious storm. The Olympian gods were paying some attention to events by then, and it is possible that this was a sign of divine displeasure – or it may just have been a natural event. In any case, Myrina certainly felt the need to pray for deliverance, and to promise the goddess whom she worshipped that she would show proper gratitude if she survived. At length, her ship was blown into the lee of an uninhabited island, where it was able to ride out the abating storm in safety.

Myrina staggered ashore, and declared that the island matched a sacred vision which she had received. Therefore, she said, the island itself was sacred to the goddess. This was the island now known as Samothrace, in the northern Aegean, and Myrina spent some time establishing altars and shrines there, along with an outpost to maintain them; it would retain an air of sacred significance into classical times.

In practice, at this point, the island was a symptom of the growing problem with Myrina's campaign; her forces were spread too thin, and she lacked strategic focus. Meanwhile, the Atlantean naval commanders wanted a greater victory to report than Myrina's methodical island-hopping had yet provided. When Myrina returned from Samothrace, they demanded a council of war on Lesbos, and forced her hand.

RAID ON ATHENS

In fact, the Athenian naval commanders demanded that the fleet should be committed to an assault on what they now knew, from interrogation of the peoples of the captured islands, to be the strongest and best-respected city-state on the mainland: Athens. If that could be taken, or at least humbled, they calculated, the rest of these annoyingly independent-minded outlanders would soon fall into line – and no barbarian town could hope to stand before the might of Atlantis ... and its allies.

Myrina was not really much inclined to argue; in truth, she wanted a little glory for herself. And so, the island garrisons were stripped of as many troops as they could spare, the fleet was loaded with supplies, and the whole force sailed south and west across the breadth of the Aegean.

A little rough weather along the way was no discouragement; only a few ships were damaged or scattered, and both commanders and troops remained confident. However, while Myrina's preparatory campaign had given the attackers a firm base, it had also alerted all Greece to the existence of a growing threat – and the military caste in Athens was sensible enough to keep a watch. The Atlanteans had no chance of achieving surprise.

The first battle in the Atlantean-Athenian War was fought at sea. In fact, it consisted of a series of naval skirmishes. The Athenian peacetime fleet had no real chance of stopping the might of Atlantean naval power, but it could delay it by a day or two, and then shadow it as it found beaches on which to land infantry. And so it was that, when the invaders' Amazon marines attempted to storm ashore, they were met by much of the military power of Athens.

They had their own advantages, of course, not least a fair amount of experience in such actions, but even so they were driven back from the first three attempts. Eventually, parties found themselves on land, but scattered up and down the coast of the region of Attica, and mostly locked in patchy

skirmishes with reacting Athenian columns. A few Amazon parties did reach the outskirts of Athens itself, and even took some plunder and started some fires, but those forces were soon either destroyed or forced to retreat in haste to the landing beaches to be sure of getting away when the fleet, lacking a secure harbour, was obliged to withdraw.

Which it was, soon enough. The raid had not been a glorious success, and although the Atlantean nobles told a story of grand victories and humbled barbarians, supported by a little plunder and a few captive slaves, they understood that. Greece was at the limits of their reach, and any further attacks would need stronger forces and careful planning.

The Proto-Athenian military caste, on the other hand, felt humiliated and angry. They were proud warriors, and yet their own city had been attacked by outlanders, with parts of it being burned before the enemy sailed away unpunished. Apart from the blow to their pride, this was politically dangerous. The lesser castes in Athens had always been told that the tribute they had to pay to the military caste ensured their security, while the other city-states and tribes in Greece were generally kept cowed by fear of Athenian superiority. The Atlanteans had called all this into question; unless Athens could reclaim its aura of invulnerability, there might be trouble.

Atlantis was going to have to pay.

DIVINE ATTITUDES

The great Atlantean campaign of conquest did not go unnoticed in realms beyond the Earth. After all, the Atlanteans periodically petitioned Poseidon for aid, while the Shemsu Hor called on their patron Horus – or perhaps some Olympian deity who adopted that guise when dealing with the Egyptians. When the invaders seemed to approach Mount Olympus itself, however briefly, the gods in residence could no longer look on these events with entirely detached amusement.

And so Zeus called a council, at which everyone was casting glances at Poseidon. The Atlanteans were his clients, ruled by his descendants, and while it was entirely within his domain to sponsor an island empire, and he was fully entitled to be pleased by their achieving success by means of the rules he had established, nevertheless when they threatened to conquer much of the world, the other deities felt that a mark was being overstepped. Poseidon grumbled that this was never a task which he had assigned to them, but the others suggested that a divine reminder might have been in order some time since. At best, Poseidon was inattentive; at worst, he looked over-ambitious.

Nor were the gods happy at the successes achieved by the Amazons in alliance with Atlantis. Athene, normally the patroness of warrior women, claimed that their worship was never directed to her; indeed, their assault on her favoured clients in Athens offended her. It seemed that they revered some unspecified mother-goddess, but no one on Olympus acknowledged them. If someone was sending Myrina visions, it was unclear who. Zeus had to intervene more than once when dark aspersions were cast between various goddesses.

In the end, the gods agreed to stand back, for now, save that Athene was permitted to inspire the warrior caste of Athens with strategic insights and a little charisma. It was always better for mortals to resolve such issues themselves if possible, and if the Atlanteans and Amazons had overreached themselves, a few defeats might serve to remind them of their place.



Finding Local Guides In the later stages of the Atlantean Wars, as the Proto-Athenian-led liberating armies advance along the coast of North Africa, they have to deal with the various peoples of the Atlantean-conquered areas. Here, among ruins of unknown origin, a masked, long-skulled Shemsu Hor priest-lord is acting as negotiator to a group of suspicious Gorgones tribesfolk. The Gorgones leaders too are masked, and have a large war-party behind them, while the Shemsu Hor rides a chariot and is escorted by a couple of Egyptian infantry as bodyguards. Behind him, an armoured Proto-Athenian Officer is watching impatiently from his own, less technologically advanced chariot.

RESISTANCE AND COUNTER-ATTACK

In point of fact, by now, despite their string of early successes, the invading Atlantis-Amazon alliance seemed to be encountering serious resistance everywhere, if only because they were spread thin holding down their conquests while engaging in adventurous scouting raids. When the fleet sailed back into the mouth of the Nile, it discovered that Atlantean troops could not be spared for a second raid on Greece, because too many of them were in Upper Egypt, attempting to push the borders of the Atlantean Empire southwards in order to eliminate the threat from renegade Shemsu Hor. Amazon garrisons were being withdrawn from Asia, as Myrina's conquests were proving too expensive to hold, but that was a lengthy, delicate process – and it also left the fleet without bases to the east. Consolidation seemed to be the order of the day.

This could have been fine, and indeed things became quiet for a year or so. But then, a newly built Proto-Athenian fleet began raiding the remaining Atlantean coastal holdings. Following this, some of the small port-towns on the Asian coast, who had always chafed under the domination of the arrogant Amazons and Atlanteans, began closing their gates to the outsiders – and it turned out that their armed forces were being reinforced by parties of elite Proto-Athenian warriors.

The Atlanteans should really have crushed these 'rebellions', but their leaders found that storming poor fishing towns was expensive, hard work, and somehow less glorious than conquering cities in Tyrrhenia and Egypt, while the Amazons were engaged trying to carve out pasture-based holdings in the hills inland. This complacency soon cost the invaders dearly, as the Greeks built secure bases, and then began raiding into Lower Egypt itself.

THE REBEL ALLIANCE

Even that should have been no more than a nuisance, but the Atlanteans had made yet another error; they had trusted the conquered Shemsu Hor far too much. They thought that the priest-lords had accepted a forced alliance, not realizing that, to the Shemsu Hor, Atlanteans and Amazons alike would never be more than presumptuous barbarians. Hence, the 'friendly' Shemsu Hor in Egypt were actually more than willing to provide a communication channel between the Proto-Athenians in the north and the 'renegade' Shemsu Hor in the south. It was a remarkably secure and efficient channel, too; it may well have involved supernatural powers. Anyway, the Shemsu Hor were very good at keeping secrets.

The combination of Proto-Athenian military skill and subtle Shemsu Hor wisdom proved formidable. However, the Atlanteans failed to recognize the problem, mostly because the southern Shemsu Hor were never more than a petty and largely passive threat, and they calculated that Athens lacked the forces to threaten them. Indeed, the seaborne attacks on Atlantean holdings soon ended, as the Athenian fleet withdrew north and began harassing the remaining Amazon outposts in the Aegean, and even the nuisance land raids out of Asia diminished in frequency. What the Atlanteans failed to understand was that the Aegean actions served a far more important purpose than just liberating a few small islands.

Their real purpose was to demonstrate to other Greeks, especially some warlike tribes of the semi-barbarian north, and to some of the peoples of Asia Minor, that Athens could and would defeat these

strange outlanders, and hence that allying with Athens was a relatively safe and effective route to glory, plunder, and revenge. Athens found at least two war-leaders prepared to join their side this way: a freebooter from northern Greece named Mopsus, actually a charismatic exile from his homeland, and an Asian named Sipylus. Both provided fresh troops, whom the Athenian fleet quietly shipped southwards. Then, the combined force struck, on the exact day that the Shemsu Hor reported that the annual Nile floods would begin, playing havoc with communications up and down the Nile valley and across the delta.

Atlantean and Amazon border forces fell back before the initial onslaught, planning to rally a few miles westwards and link up with the main body of the army into a grand force that could crush the attackers. But among the floods, the Atlantean leaders were never able to complete the strategic manoeuvre, especially as their supply system within Egypt began to break down mysteriously – the dashing Amazon cavalry and formidable Atlantean chariots bogged down in the seasonal mud – and reports began to come in of Shemsu Hor assaults in the south. The Proto-Athenians were able to defeat the army of occupation piecemeal.

The Atlanteans were angry at what they saw as betrayal by the Shemsu Hor, but also worried; one or two reports of assassinations were enough to make them fearful of the enigmatic masked theocrats. Suddenly, Egypt seemed much less hospitable than they had thought. A retreat back to the colony towns of north-west Africa seemed merely good sense; after all, they had strength in depth there, and they still held Tyrrhenia. The fact that what they saw as good sense looked like cowardice and humiliation to the proud warrior Amazons barely crossed their minds.

And it was true that the Proto-Athenians did not, at first, follow them into the uncertain deserts. They needed to secure Egypt and recover strength of their own; they also wanted to take a look at some of what they had captured. Atlantean weapons and armour were not massively superior to Proto-Athenian equipment, but they were better in some small ways, which interested the highly professional warrior caste. As it turned out, Egypt held craftsmen who were fully willing and able to re-equip the Proto-Athenian troops as requested, and the Shemsu Hor permitted this freely. They calculated that the Atlantean threat still needed to be eliminated properly, or their temples would again come under threat, in a year or five years or ten. Hence, what the Atlanteans thought was a comfortable respite actually favoured their enemies far more than themselves; a great counter-invasion was shaping up in the Nile Delta.



Shemsu Hor in Darkness. The long-skulled Shemsu Hor seem to have vanished in the confusion of the collapse of Atlantean Age civilization. However, some scholars believe that they became the secret rulers of Egypt for thousands of years. Here, two such masked conspirators meet in the shadows to discuss their plans.

EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES

Egypt in the Atlantean age was a literate, orderly society under the firm control of the Shemsu Hor, with little interest in expanding beyond its borders. Hence, its army was organized as a defensive force, and relied on numbers and determination (inspired by the rulers' supposed semi-divine nature) rather than complex tactics or equipment.

The vast mass of troops were peasant levies, raised by a complex system of rotas and mostly fighting as spear-armed infantry. Every man was responsible for providing his own equipment, which usually meant just a spear and a large, light, rectangular shield, although armies usually also included a fair number of archers. Regular drills and musters were organized at the village level, but were surprisingly thorough; the army could at least execute simple manoeuvres reliably in the field.

This mass of spearmen might occasionally be reinforced by barbarian mercenaries, usually recruited from just over the nation's borders, who were less reliable or dedicated but more habitually warlike. The army's most colourful troops, though, were its long-skulled Shemsu Hor charioteers – probably mostly younger sons of the ruling class, although details of how these warriors were selected are as shadowy as everything else about the rulers of Egypt in this age.

The Shemsu Hor rode into action on lightweight, two-man chariots which were as technologically sophisticated as any wheeled vehicle seen before the Roman Empire. Each carried one driver and one spearman, both masked as usual for their class; they acted as both scouts and standard-bearers, coordinating themselves by some enigmatic means (allegedly magical). The chariots moved around the battlefield, probing and checking for weaknesses on either side, then taking command of groups of infantry to reinforce their own lines or pressure the enemy.

This decentralized system of leadership was more effective than it had any right to be, but failed in the face of aggressive Atlantean and Amazon forces with better equipment, especially once Amazon horse archers learned to target the Egyptian charioteers at every opportunity.

COUNTER-STROKE

When it came, the Greek-led move was well organized and well planned. The Atlanteans and Amazons had left garrisons along the coast road, intended to delay any enemy armies and give warning of their approach, but these simply gave the Proto-Athenians a series of heartening easy victories and some experience with their new equipment. Nor were they moving through truly hostile territory; each liberated port town and petty kingdom had, it seemed, suffered enough under Amazon dominance or Atlantean arrogance that it was keen to become an ally to the counter-invaders.

THE DEATH OF QUEEN MYRINA

Soon enough, the counter-attack reached north-west Africa and the lands of the major Atlantean colonies – and also the eastern borders of the Amazon domains. The Greek-led forces were actually feeling overstretched by now, and were prepared to pause for breath; they might have considered armistice terms if their enemies had offered. However, they were denied the chance.

Among their field commanders, Mopsus, the northern Greek exile, was somewhat unpopular with the Proto-Athenians and Shemsu Hor, who considered him erratic (though effective in the attack), but he was popular with the irregulars and mercenary troops for his sheer style. These troops considered the plunder they had so far received to be less than adequate, and Mopsus spotted the opportunity to acquire loot and glory for himself – both of which he could exploit to return to his homeland and perhaps seize power.

Mustering a savage contingent of nomads, exiles, and mercenaries, including a large force of Asian troops under Sipylus, Mopsus executed a completely unexpected night march from the alliance encampment, catching everyone (on both sides) unawares with a sudden attack across the border into Amazon territory. It was a wildly foolhardy move, but Mopsus was lucky (or well informed); the bulk of the enemy army had already withdrawn westwards, with the Atlanteans anxious to reach the shelter of their own colony towns, and Mopsus caught only a tired and disorganized rearguard force under the command of Queen Myrina herself, who was anxious to secure her eastern territories. In a confused battle in the Amazon camp, Mopsus's personal force cornered the queen, who was killed by Greek spears. The rest of the Amazon force, shocked and disheartened, were routed by Sipylus and his savage war-bands.

This success brought Mopsus and Sipylus all the glory they wanted, and their force proceeded to run riot across Amazon territory, wiping out Amazon forces in detail. The Proto-Athenians shook their heads at the untidiness of the whole business, hid their envy of the glory gained by these northern and eastern barbarians, and marched on through, leaving Mopsus to his plundering. Their objective was more serious; the Atlantean colony towns.

PROTO-ATHENIAN ARMED FORCES

The nation occupying the region which, in Plato's time, would be known as Athens, and which may already have carried something like that name, comprised a rugged, independent-minded mountain people who were in the process of transforming themselves into an urban culture, and who already dominated Greece. The army which fought Atlantis consisted almost entirely of members of a military caste, trained from youth and well equipped thanks to the compulsory support of the other classes. This meant that the Proto-Athenian army was smaller in comparison to its population base than that of some other nations, but every man in it was trained from youth as a soldier; their weapon skills, tactical understanding, and morale were all excellent. It could usually put around 20,000 men into the field at any time, but they also effectively had deep reserves, as more members of the military caste were always in training or off-duty but

still in fighting trim.

Tactically, 'Proto-Athens' had apparently adopted a system similar to that of their distant descendants, the classical Greeks, with a heavy emphasis on spear-armed infantry fighting in tight formations. A few leading members of the warrior caste rode in chariots and wore even heavier bronze armour than the rest, but these mostly served as scouts, officers, and a mobile striking force that could exploit weaknesses in the enemy line of battle. Unlike the Greek nobles of the later Homeric era, these chariot warriors accepted that they had to work with the infantry, rather than seeking out heroic one-on-one duels. Perhaps the biggest weakness of the Proto-Athenian army was a severe shortage of light infantry, as members of the military caste all expected to serve as heavy infantry or chariot warriors, as a point of dignity – but during the Atlantean Wars, this weakness was largely covered by the presence of more lightly equipped allies.

'Proto-Athenian' military technology and organization improved throughout the Atlantean Wars, as the Greek forces progressed from gadfly seaborne raiding and disorganized resistance to the invaders to fighting and winning pitched battles, and then to acting as the most effective element of large, unwieldy alliance armies. In order to fight and defeat the Atlanteans on Atlantean terms, the Greeks had to learn from their opponents, and also from their allies; by the end of the wars, they increasingly resembled the Atlanteans in equipment and tactics. Light troops still mostly came from allied nations, but the best of these were now trusted to work closely with the Proto-Athenians, and some troops from every nation had learned to operate as reasonable cavalry.

CONQUEST OF THE COLONIES

On the way they acquired more forces; every hill-tribe and independent trade-town which they found still seemed keen to contribute warriors to the cause. In any case, local communities suspected that they had a choice between donating supplies voluntarily or having them taken anyway, and those who came fully aboard had the best chance of making some return on the contribution. The weirdest of these new allies, and the most significant in many ways, were the Gorgones.

The Proto-Athenians saw these people merely as a large barbarian tribe who had given both the Atlanteans and the Amazons considerable trouble, who knew the country well, and who were said to have significant mystical powers. The Shemsu Hor knew a little more, and may have been worried about what they had to deal with here – but they were also even more enthusiastic to have the Gorgones on their side rather than opposing them. Anyway, several important mountain passes led through Gorgones territory, and several of their strategic plans would work better if their forces could use these freely and the Atlanteans could not. And so, as the combined army moved west, its leaders sent careful embassies into the upland forests.

They were gratified by the results. The Gorgones, it seemed, had been angered by the Amazon campaigns against themselves, and their masked witch-queens hungered for revenge. They were even willing to commit a few warriors to the actual battles, as well as giving the Proto-Athenians and Shemsu Hor free passage. All they asked in return was free access to various temples and sacred places in the territories that they were about to help take. The Athenians smiled to themselves about barbarian superstitions, and agreed freely; the Shemsu Hor were a little uncomfortable, but they were the junior partners in matters of strategy, so all they could do was resolve to watch the Gorgones carefully.

And so the counter-invasion force together launched a methodical campaign, moving just fast enough to keep the Atlanteans off-balance; the Amazons were too distracted by grief for their queen and by succession disputes to be much help now. Numbers and the defensive advantage should have favoured Atlantis at this point, but they were simply not receiving the support they felt they needed from their homeland; the kings and nobles who had remained at home on Atlantis itself still formed the majority in council, and were asking why they should waste lives and treasure on a empire-building project that was clearly not worth the effort.

It has been suggested that the abrupt and stunning collapse of Atlantean morale had another cause.

The Gorgones, it has been suggested, had been brewing great, dark curses to call down upon those who had massacred their warriors and driven them into the barren mountains. Atlantis had perhaps previously benefited from divine blessings that shielded them against such dark powers, but now the gods, annoyed by Atlantean arrogance, had obliged Poseidon to withdraw his shielding favour. This would certainly explain why the counter-invasion was so effective; within little more than a year of the death of Queen Myrina, every Atlantean colony town in Africa was under siege if not already taken, and all of them fell within months. Meanwhile, the Atlantean garrisons in Italy found themselves unsupported and facing a series of local revolts, and began a process of fairly well-managed withdrawal. Even Gades and the other Atlantean holdings in Spain began to reconsider their position, although they actually considered declaring neutrality; Atlantis was doing little for them, after all, and they were now established enough to survive on their own resources.

However, although the Proto-Athenians did not realize it, and the Shemsu Hor only had fearful suspicions, the counter-invasion was already creating trouble for itself. The Gorgones, given free access to captured temples and places of power, were allowing their dark impulses to run riot as their fastidious allies turned their gazes aside, and were conducting blasphemous rites that were outraging the powers of Olympus. The gods were growing tired of all these mortals.



Proto-Athenian Infantryman. This figure is typical of Greek troops from early in the Atlantean Wars, before their armour and weapons began to show more influence from their Atlantean enemies. The banded bronze armour and 'boar's tusk' helmet are both remarkably similar to designs from the Mycenaean Bronze Age, which may have been influenced by ancient folk memories or surviving Atlantean Age art. In combat, this man would fight primarily with a long spear, in a close formation with others similarly equipped.

ASSAULT ON ATLANTIS

In any case, the war was not yet over. The final stage came when the grand alliance, having regrouped and ensured that they had driven the Atlanteans from Europe and Africa completely, decided to end the threat for good and all. Despite the auguries that some of their priests were claiming to have read, which warned of dark consequences if they overreached themselves, they decided to launch another

counter-invasion, this time against Atlantis itself. Hence, while the Atlanteans on their ‘invulnerable’ island were still deciding how to describe their defeat and who to blame for it, their enemies, full of brash confidence, prepared a great fleet, manned it with seasoned troops, and set sail across the Atlantic.

This was not totally unexpected, of course; some of the lords of Atlantis had some idea how to run spy networks. However, the first line of defence of their homeland was never meant to be mere military strength; all of Atlantis was a land sacred to Poseidon, ruled by kings who were both demigods and high priests. Now, they called on their divine ancestor to punish the blasphemers on the horizon.

And Poseidon did respond, in accordance with ancient pacts. The god of the sea and of monsters sent some of his creatures to scatter the invaders. However, the Atlanteans had overestimated their own standing in the eyes of the gods, and underestimated their enemies. The Proto-Athenians were great warriors, perhaps inspired by the power of their patron, the warrior goddess Athene, while the Shemsu Hor knew rituals and words of power which could ward off even monsters sent by Poseidon – they too had a god on their side, after all. And what greatly unnerved Proto-Athenians and Shemsu Hor was that the small group of masked Gorgones on their ships were also useful in this conflict; they used some kind of blood magic, and whenever one of the sea monsters was injured, the Gorgones could use its own blood to power spells which blasted these creatures with pain and terror.

Hence, the invasion fleet reached the shores of Atlantis largely intact. The Atlanteans had expected Poseidon’s creatures to scatter it, and so were slow to respond, allowing the attackers to land largely unopposed. Worse, a determined and truly heroic Proto-Athenian force stormed ashore first and seized the fortifications at the entrance to the ship canal, where the capital of the Empire came down to the sea, granting the attackers a route directly into the city itself. This exposed the fatal weakness in the grandiose design of the city; a seaborne attacker who broke through at that one point was inside the place’s first line of defence before the battle had even really started, and even had the option to sail right up to the circular defences of the inner city.

Of course, any such seaborne attack was likely to suffer harassment from the adjacent banks of the canal, unless those were cleared of Atlantean missile troops – but the resolute and capable Proto-Athenian soldiers were up to that task. Days of brutal street-fighting followed, but that gave the advantage to the best individual soldiers, who were the heroes from Greece. Meanwhile, the huge Atlantean army, potentially so formidable in set-piece battles on open ground, found itself having to make its way through the maze of streets of the outer city. Its greatest potential advantages – sheer numbers, the highly effective massed chariots, and the war-elephants – were largely neutralized.

But the invading commanders knew that this advantage couldn’t last forever; eventually, the full weight of the nine other kingdoms of Atlantis would come bearing down on the beachhead in the city. So they resolved to keep up the momentum of their attack, aiming to seize the inner rings of the city and break the Empire’s resolve before numbers could tell. And, even against the best soldiers Atlantis could produce – the professional defenders of the capital, backed by the blessings of Poseidon himself – the attack ground forward. Even the metal-plated walls of the inner circles failed to hold them off, as Shemsu Hor diviners identified every weakness in the defence.

Meanwhile, behind them, their Gorgones auxiliaries plundered temples and slaughtered civilians. Perhaps the Proto-Athenians and Shemsu Hor thought that this would break the spirit of the defenders; perhaps they were just past caring in their headlong charge towards victory or death. Unfortunately,

they failed to recognize that, in a war which the gods themselves were watching closely, permitting such outrages was fatally bad tactics.

THE ALLIANCE FLEET

The invasion of Atlantis required a fleet, of course, but the Proto-Athenians and their allies had the core of one to hand. The Atlanteans, who simply had no idea how to manage when faced with defeat, had been careless enough to leave many of their vessels in harbour, intact, when their colonial ports were captured. Some rebuilding and expansion were required, but the Proto-Athenians were fair sailors and shipwrights themselves; also the Atlanteans had actually recruited a number of crews and workers from local populations, and these people were generally easy enough to bring over to what now looked like the winning side.

The invasion needed more than captured vessels and whatever could be built in a few months, of course, but it turned out that the alliance had more ships to hand. Both the Greeks and the Tyrrhenians of Italy had made some study of the Atlantean fleets which had attacked their lands, captured a few, and built some partial imitations; indeed, the Proto-Athenians had emulated the Atlantean strategy of supporting land forces with transport ships when marching the length of North Africa. Now, combining these with many more captured vessels, the alliance had an adequate invasion fleet.



Perils on the Sea As the counter-invasion of Atlantis crosses the ocean, one of the ships – an oar-and-sail vessel, based on Atlantean designs but less sophisticated – is attacked by a sea monster, sent by Atlantean priests of Poseidon. However, it has its own supernatural protection. Proto-Athenian warriors on the deck fight back with swords and spears, although they have not had time to don full armour, while on the stern of the ship, a Greek priest is frantically calling on the goddess Athene for aid. More immediately effectively, though, a masked Gorgones sorceress is on deck, gathering blood-power from the battle itself to turn against the monster.

DIVINE WRATH

Unfortunately for all concerned, the gods of Olympus did not like what they were seeing at all. Poseidon disliked the way that mortals had assaulted his favoured island, while most of the other gods were equally annoyed that Poseidon's descendants had become so decadent and attempted to conquer the rest of the world. Thanks to Atlantean arrogance in the early stages and the grim determination of their enemies later on, the war had proved brutal and absolute, with temples and sacred groves burned and sacked everywhere the fighting passed. Apparently worst of all for the standing of the alliance was the presence among their forces of those few, unreliable Gorgones – or indeed, perhaps, the mere fact of anyone else talking to the Gorgones at all. It seems that their style of magic in particular was somehow blasphemous, and offended the gods in some truly personal way. Perhaps they worshipped older deities – the Titans whom the Olympians had allegedly deposed, or something else ancient and inhuman – and their actions in the war threatened to return those dark powers to the world.



The Closing of the Gates of Olympus. The total destruction of Atlantis was probably the greatest catastrophe ever caused by large-scale divine meddling in the mortal world. It certainly seems to have deterred the gods from further such interventions, and caused them to close the arcane portals between their world and our own, as seen here.

Squabbles were raging across Olympus even before the alliance fleet had set out, distracting

Poseidon from sending his worshippers enough aid to stop it. Eventually, Zeus himself lost his temper – always a terrifying event, even for other gods – and declared that it might be necessary to burn the problems down to the roots. Unfortunately, none of the other gods could talk their ruler back from his vow to himself to eliminate these problems, and when Gorgones plunderers ran amok in the temples of Atlantis, actually desecrating some of them into places of dark and blood-drenched power, few could find the impulse to try.

Hence, by the time that an elite Proto-Athenian warrior band was smashing its way into the citadel of Atlantis, the gods were set on punishing all of the mortals involved. A council of the most powerful Olympians had declared that the Atlanteans, formerly considered the best of mortals, had become decadent and unworthy, with Zeus overruling Poseidon's increasingly weak objections. Unfortunately, with the Atlanteans' enemies being, as it seemed to the gods, blasphemous and hubristic, the consensus on Olympus was that both sides should face divine punishment. The Olympians, always prone to dramatic gestures and symbolism, chose the moment of apparent alliance triumph to chastise both sides.

But even so, what followed seemingly ran out of hand. Much later, Plato would claim that Zeus only wanted to chasten the Atlanteans (and probably also the Proto-Athenians), so that they would learn better and return to their old, virtuous ways. If so, Zeus himself, working before all the other gods on Olympus, made a terrible error – because the dead learn no lessons.

Perhaps divine anger overruled divine wisdom on this occasion. Perhaps, in seeking to punish an island which had been raised by divine patronage, the gods were playing with forces greater than even they could control. Perhaps the dark magic of the Gorgones had raised pre-human forces that the gods found it difficult to overcome, or perhaps that Gorgones magic amplified the power of divine punishment in ways that the gods did not anticipate. It may well not have helped that Zeus demanded that Poseidon should actively cooperate in the punishment – the Atlanteans were his responsibility, after all – and Poseidon was a god, not just of well-aimed thunderbolts like his brother, but of earthquakes and tidal waves. Perhaps Zeus insisted that Poseidon exert his full power, without quite appreciating what that implied. In any event, the exercise of power that was supposed to devastate Atlantis and scatter both sides' armies instead destroyed the island entirely. In brief, the world shook, and Atlantis sank beneath the waves. The entire island vanished within hours (Plato says 'within a single day and night'), and the onrushing ocean obliterated everyone, Atlantean and invader alike. Perhaps a few lucky ships from both sides managed to remain afloat; later accounts suggest that many of the city's buildings remained recognizably intact beneath the sea, implying that the waters hit with only moderate force. The island eventually sank to the full depth of the surrounding ocean, although a few of the higher mountains seem to have survived to form small islands in the Atlantic, and Plato claimed that the process left shallow waters over muddy shoals just outside the Pillars of Hercules, rendering the ocean effectively unnavigable in that region. In fact, he rather curiously claimed that the shoals were still present in his time, although many Greek sailors could have told him that ships quite regularly ventured out into the Atlantic and returned safely.



The Catastrophe When the gods chose to punish both Atlantis and its invading enemies, the ensuing destruction was absolute. Most accounts and depictions show the island being devastated piecemeal by volcanic eruptions or earthquakes before sinking beneath the waves more or less intact, but this image shows something even more cataclysmic.

Apparently, part of Atlantis, adjacent to the capital city, has already sunk dramatically, and the rest will soon follow; meanwhile, eruptions are throwing up clouds of volcanic ash as the sea pours into the new abyss. If this is an accurate depiction of the last moments of the city, none of the invading force which had been plundering the citadel just moments before could conceivably have survived.

GLOBAL DEVASTATION

The consequences of this divine act were obviously devastating – but actually much more so, it seems, than the gods themselves expected, and on a very much wider scale. The Olympians did not always have judgement to match their power, and on this occasion, they misjudged spectacularly.

Basically, the disaster caused the complete collapse of civilization throughout the Mediterranean region, in Italy, Greece, Egypt, and elsewhere. Curiously, the ultimate consequences did not involve much change in sea levels, which should logically have fallen with the removal of such a mass of land – but perhaps the gods attempted to compensate for this effect somehow, and the very act of adding more water caused more problems. Certainly, it seems that Greece suffered catastrophic floods, so that the city that would one day be called Athens had to be re-founded later by refugees and country folk returning to the region from the high mountains. On the other hand, Sais largely survived, along with other Egyptian cities, although the Shemsu Hor government apparatus took a bad mauling. And perhaps the people of adjacent coastal lands took their famous flood legends from this time.

The worst devastation outside of Atlantis itself, though, was not surprisingly suffered by the

Amazon-dominated regions of North Africa, many of which were shattered by what would nowadays be called tsunamis. The Amazon heartlands suffered especially badly, as the Marsh Tritonis was torn apart by a combination of giant waves, sea level shifts, and earthquakes. The geological activity initiated by the gods triggered a series of volcanic eruptions on Hespera, which then partly sank like an echo of Atlantis; the remnants fragmented into a cluster of small rocky islands, which in turn sank or were eroded away in the next few centuries. The site is no longer identifiable, and Kherronesos and all the other Amazon cities on the island were lost. With the Atlantean trade-towns doing little better, and with the region already being on the verge of collapse in the wake of conquest by Proto-Athenians and pillaging by their barbarian allies, civilization in the area was reduced to rustic, semi-nomadic tribalism.



The Decline of Civilizations. The annihilation of an entire island continent and of the military forces of its enemies, with ensuing seismic and climatic side-effects, brought about the total collapse of Atlantean Age civilization. Here, wanderers erect ragged tents in the ensuing wilderness.

ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

The account given in this book represents the best ideas we have about the history of Atlantis and the Atlantean Wars, as affirmed by the father of western philosophy and the secret records beneath the Sphinx. But it's possible that there has been some distortion in the transmission, and that some of the details are wrong.

Some modern writers certainly think that references to 'gods' in classical texts actually refer to something else, seen through the distorting lens of superstition. At the simplest, the fall of Atlantis may have been a natural disaster, with 'the gods' being blamed after the event by people who couldn't believe that some things were just accidents. Was there a war? Who were the two sides? Did the disaster happen at such a crucial moment? Who knows? Coincidences do happen. On the other hand, losing a large island, without leaving much evidence of geological catastrophe, and so completely that little evidence is left for later generations, is quite a dramatic and unusual natural disaster.

So an alternative might make more sense. Those 'gods' may not have been paternalistic supernatural shapeshifters, but actually technologically highly advanced space aliens, manipulating primitive human society as an experiment or for some obscure reasons of their own. A sufficiently advanced technology could influence the Earth's geology on a large scale, and the 'Children of Poseidon' may have been the products of advanced genetic engineering. Perhaps the aliens carefully located that experiment in a geologically unstable area, to make disposing of the results of failure much simpler.

The 'ancient astronauts' may have tinkered only with Atlantean society and biology, and then become annoyed when their products misused their enhanced abilities to pick fights with other humans (which they didn't even win) – or they may have been running multiple experiments. If they were experimenting on the Proto-Athenians, it was probably just with their society, but their meddling in Egypt may have been even more overt than it was in Atlantis; after all, the Shemsu Hor, with their masks, their 'misshapen' skulls, and their claims to companionship with a sky-god, sound as if they may themselves have been alien.

And what were the Gorgones? The products of a rival alien race or faction, with their (inhuman?) leaders concealing their nature behind masks? Or humans who had the temerity to recognize what the aliens were doing, thanks to their own mastery of psychic powers, and who refused to play any part in this scheme, but who instead stood for human independence?

THE AFTERMATH

The sinking of Atlantis evidently had consequences that the gods had not anticipated, even if they were intending, in a broad and ruthless way, to wipe the slate clean. The world was much changed, and humanity was thrown far back. The history of ‘Atlantis after Atlantis’ is entangled in the story of humanity’s slow climb back to civilization, and in the attempts of later ages to comprehend the past.

IN THE WAKE OF THE CATASTROPHE

Although the gods somehow ensured that the sinking of an entire large island didn’t affect worldwide sea levels too much, or cause a large enough climatic disaster to wipe humanity out entirely, they failed to prevent all the inevitable side-effects. The disruptions to ocean currents and weather patterns were certainly sufficient to crash the civilizations of Greece and Egypt, even without the social disruption caused by the near-obliteration of their ruling and military classes. In effect, the disaster reset history to a start condition, at least around the Mediterranean, probably around the entire Atlantic, and possibly everywhere in the world that some kind of civilization existed. Greece and Egypt were so wounded that they took centuries or millennia to recover, while the Amazon cities of the African coast suffered even worse, being effectively wiped out.

The Amazons were not entirely annihilated as a people, but they were reduced to the status of horse-riding nomads. To compound the problem, weather patterns shifted especially radically across their home area, transforming the reasonably rich pasture lands which they had previously exploited so efficiently to arid semi-deserts. Within a few years, it was clear that the Amazon culture could no longer survive in that region, and so, perhaps recalling the mobile campaigns of Queen Myrina, the entire nation set out en masse to seek a new home.

The story of that great migration is lost entirely; it is not even clear whether the Amazons struck out north through Europe, looking for cooler climes, or eastwards through Egypt and Asia Minor, along the same path as Queen Myrina’s army. However, we do know where the Amazons finally came to rest: in Central Asia, the heartlands of most of the great horse-nomad peoples throughout later history. They were still to be found there, as a distinctively matriarchal nation or tribe, in the ages of later Greek civilizations, and are frequently mentioned in myths and histories. By then, they were a purely female group, only meeting and mating with men from neighbouring tribes briefly in order to produce their next generation. They and the Greeks also seem to have preserved their ancient enmity; Greek legends usually described them as more or less hostile.



Amazon Migration. In the wake of the fall of Atlantis, the entire surviving Amazon nation was obliged to migrate en masse from North Africa to Central Asia. Here we see just a small part of this great forced folk-wandering.

LATER HISTORY

The ages after the Great Catastrophe are generally poorly documented, sometimes because writing was actually forgotten in large areas, so great was the fall. The Gorgones certainly vanish from the record, probably wiped out by other local human tribes after too many of their masked sorcerous leaders died on Atlantis and their home forests were largely destroyed by climate change. The Shemsu Hor also disappeared, but there are hints that they in fact slipped into the shadows, becoming the secret masters of Egypt while preserving some of their secret lore, and perhaps ensuring the eventual resurgence of a new Egyptian civilization remarkably similar to the one they had ruled openly. Modern archaeologists say that crop-growing was introduced (or reintroduced) to the region around 5,000 BC, and date the foundation of the First Dynasty and the Old Kingdom to just after 3,000 BC, but details remain very hazy at that distance. The later Shemsu Hor seem to have been based in the city of Nekhen, in Upper Egypt; kings from there eventually reunited the country and established the doctrine that they were manifestations of Horus.

Meanwhile, the Greek lowlands had fallen back to Stone Age technology, or had simply been depopulated entirely by floods and tidal waves; only slowly did society re-establish itself, unknowingly building its towns on the barely visible foundations of ancient cities such as Proto-Athens. (The Egyptian priests hinted to Solon that other civilizations actually arose in the same area in the intervening period, only to be wiped out in other disasters.) Bronze-working returned to the

area around 3,000 BC, but urban civilization only began to be restored nearly a thousand years after that. Without the secret guidance of the Shemsu Hor and the reliable Nile floods, Greece lost its ancient traditions almost entirely, remembering nothing but the names of a few towns and islands.

VERNE'S ACCOUNT

French writer Jules Verne, one of the founding fathers of science fiction, mentions a visit to the ruins of Atlantis in his *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* in 1870. That's a work of fiction, of course, but maybe his account has some fragments of truth; it's certainly evocative.

The novel is an account of the travels of a scientist, Professor Aronnax, as the prisoner and guest of the mysterious Captain Nemo aboard his wonderful submarine, the *Nautilus*. One night, as the *Nautilus* is resting on the seabed, Nemo comes to Aronnax and proposes an excursion in diving suits. They walk for two miles by the light of an undersea volcano, passing through a copse of drowned trees and ascending an undersea mountain before coming in sight of a mass of ruins. Aronnax is excited, but fails to guess what he is seeing:

There, indeed, under my eyes, ruined, destroyed, lay a town – its roofs open to the sky, its temples fallen, its arches dislocated, its columns lying on the ground, from which one could still recognize the massive character of Tuscan architecture. Farther on, some remains of a gigantic aqueduct; here the high base of an Acropolis, with the floating outline of a Parthenon; there traces of a quay, as if an ancient port had formerly abutted on the borders of the ocean, and disappeared with its merchant vessels and its war galleys. Farther on again, long lines of sunken walls and broad deserted streets – a perfect Pompeii escaped beneath the waters. Such was the sight that Captain Nemo brought before my eyes!

Where was I? Where was I? I must know, at any cost. I tried to speak, but Captain Nemo stopped me by a gesture, and picking up a piece of chalk stone, advanced to a rock of black basalt, and traced the one word:

ATLANTIS.

THE REDISCOVERY OF ATLANTIS

The Greeks certainly lost the knowledge of Atlantis; as Plato said, that had to be recovered from Egypt. Later writers sought to confirm and expand on the information provided by Plato, but it seems that the Egyptian priest-lords could tell them little more – or perhaps, chose to keep what they knew secret, presumably for fear of exposing the existence of their own secret and inhuman overlords. (Maybe they punished the elderly priest who told Solon the story for giving away this ancient secret.) Hence, later writing about Atlantis is terribly distorted; Diodorus Siculus acquired the most information on the topic, but his account is highly confused. The Roman Pliny the Elder claimed that there was in his time an island named Atlantis out in the ocean, but that looks like a reference to the Canary Islands, with the ancient name attached, along perhaps with a hint of a memory of Hespera.

As to the gods of Olympus, who had brought about the great fall – they too withdrew into the shadows and the heavens, in parallel to the Shemsu Hor and maybe for similar reasons. Perhaps they had simply learned better than to meddle too much in human affairs, albeit at hideous cost. They continued to be worshipped in Greece, of course, and the Greeks retained the best information as to their names and nature. The portals through which they had once passed at will to the mortal world were closed and eventually sealed. It does seem, though, that at some point, they arranged for the Atlantic beyond the Pillars of Hercules once more to become navigable; the Egyptians, having turned almost entirely inwards, paid no attention to this fact, but told Solon that the ocean was still closed to shipping. This explains the confusion in Plato's account, given that he should have known how things stood in his own time, but hated to contradict the account given by the honoured Solon.



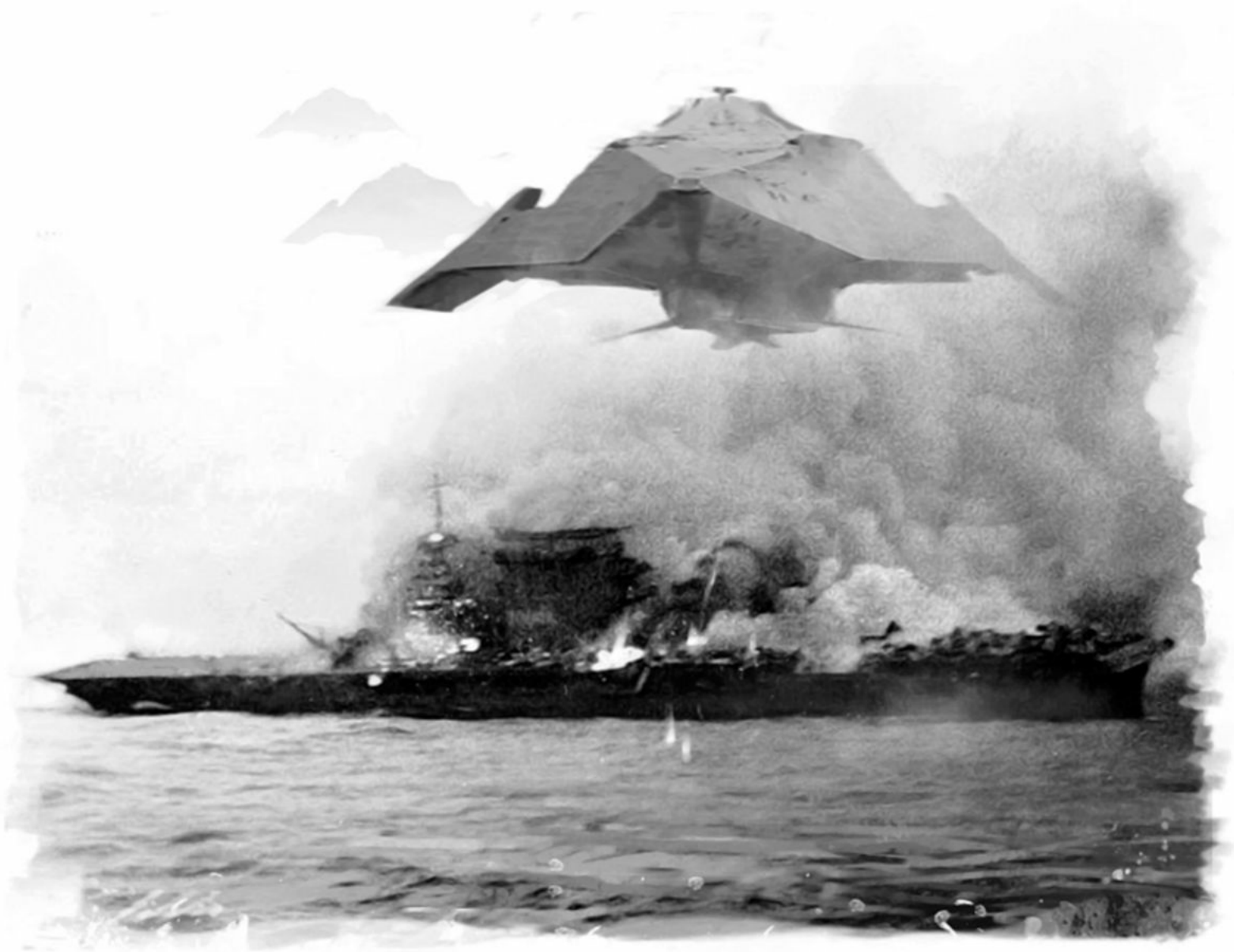
Atlantis According to Verne. In this scene from Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, the narrator and the enigmatic Captain Nemo leave Nemo's amazing submarine, the *Nautilus*, in diving suits one night to visit the ruins of Atlantis. The two men have just climbed an underwater mountain; their view of the ancient scene is illuminated by a volcano. Most of the remains are some way below them, but here they survey some outlying remains.

MODERN AGES

So perhaps Atlantis is lost entirely, any remains obliterated by time in the depths of the Atlantic, the best accounts of its nature scrambled by time, confusion with other ideas and other lost lands, and the inevitable distortions that come with psychic and mystical perceptions. The likes of Ignatius Donnelly and Helena Blavatsky too often had their own axes to grind (and bills to pay), and even Edgar Cayce sometimes came up with predictions that are hard to fit with later history. The abandoned gods and hidden Shemsu Hor overlords may prefer things that way; if they have any power in the modern world, it must be based on secrecy – and if they lack power, they would fear exposure above all. (It is, incidentally, no great problem at all to think that Atlantis may remain undiscovered on the seabed. Despite advances in submersible technology, the vastly greater part of the world's ocean depths remain simply unexplored by humanity. There is a lot of sea, and only a few explorers.)

On the other hand, and thanks to Plato, Atlantis may be lost, but it has never been forgotten. Modern movies and TV series still depict it from time to time, even if they confuse the original account

horrendously. Maybe, one day, the truth will arise once more from the depths. That said, with modern visions of Atlantis being tentatively linked to other worrying enigmas such as UFOs and the Bermuda Triangle, that day of revelation might be more than a little terrifying.



Atlantean UFOs. There are many theories and wild stories in circulation about Atlantis today, including some which tie the lost land into reports of sinister Unidentified Flying Objects. If Atlantis remains an active but hidden power beneath the waves, it might one day choose to assert its control of the world's oceans – by force.

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