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## Atlantis as Antarctica

Ever since the great American horror writer Edgar Allen Poe wrote about a lost city in Antarctica in his 'The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym', which appeared in 1838, arguments have raged on whether or not this frozen continent once supported human life.

Although Antarctica is the only major continent that has never produced any evidence of human occupation, it was Professor Charles Hapgood of Keene College, New Hampshire, who first drew attention to the fact that the continent appears on ancient portolans (port to port nautical charts) that long antedate the discovery of Antarctica by Capt. James Cooke in 1773-4. More important, some of these maps appear to show the landmass as it was before the ice obliterated its coastal features. In his opinion, these nautical charts were constructed from age-old source maps that had been copied and re-copied across many thousands of years and were the handiwork originally of a sophisticated sea-faring culture that existed as early as 7000 BC.

Hapgood pointed out that although most estimates suggest that Antarctica became icebound as much as 300,000 years ago, core samples from the Ross Sea area show evidence of pollen spectra from a relatively green environment as late as 4000 BC. He also proposes that the ice only fully engulfed the landmass following a polar shift in c. 9500 BC, a date coinciding with the end of the last Ice Age. All these ideas are outlined in Hapgood's extraordinary book *Maps of the Ancient Seakings*, first published in 1966.

Spurred by Hapgood's theories of a pre-ice Antarctica and a polar shift at the end of the glacial age, Canadian writers Rose and Rand Flem-ath proposed in their 1995 book *When the Sky Fell* that the Antarctic continent was Plato's Atlantis. They pointed out that this huge landmass matches Plato's description of the island in both the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, which he asserts was the size of Libya (North Africa) and Asia put together. Furthermore, Antarctica lies beyond the Pillars of Hercules as also stated by Plato.

Antarctica as Atlantis is an attractive proposition. However, this theory has major drawbacks. For example, Plato states that Atlantis was placed in the Atlantic Ocean which lay opposite the Pillars of Hercules, mythical rocks which stood either side of the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. It also seems certain that the legendary island lay in the west since the name Atlantic is derived from Atlas, the Titan of Greek mythology, who was granted dominion over the lands of the Far West. This included the ancient kingdom of Mauritania (modern Morocco, Algeria and the Western Sahara) where we find Mount Atlas, which legend

asserts is the petrified Titan supporting the heavens on his shoulders. Those who inhabited the region were known as the Atlantes (after Herodotus) or the Atlantioi (after Diodorus Siculus), while islands placed in the Atlantic Ocean were known as Atlantides, 'daughters or Atlas'. It was from this tradition that Plato chose the name Atlantis, 'daughter of Atlas', for the utopic world he describes in the Timaeus and Critias, written c. 350 BC. There is even a small island called 'Atlantis' said by the Roman writer Pliny to have laid off the West African coast, although this is clearly not the same one alluded to by Plato hundreds of years beforehand.

Thus we can see that Plato's Atlantis was thought to lie in the direction of the setting sun, where the various Isles of the Blest, or Fortunate Isles, were also thought to lie, and not south in the direction of the South Pole.

In addition to these facts it can be shown that the immense size attributed by Plato to his Atlantic island empire relates not to its geographical extent but to the regions of the ocean over which the kings of Atlantis were considered to hold dominion. This is verified in the knowledge that the Atlantic Empire consisted of a whole series of islands which lay in front of an 'opposite continent', an allusion most probably to the Americas, reached via a series of 'other' islands. Accommodating these facts into the Antarctica-Atlantis hypothesis would mean attempting to prove that the 'opposite continent' was either Australia or South America, with the 'other' islands being those of Indonesia, Melanesia or Micronesia. It just does not make sense (anyway, these are the remnants of James Churchward's lost continent of Mu, and not Atlantis!).

The biggest argument against Antarctica being Atlantis is the sheer fact that no reliable evidence of human occupation has ever come to light, even though the continent really does appear on pre-discovery maps. We must therefore look elsewhere for the true location of Atlantis.

Reading list:

Hapgood, Charles, Maps of the Ancient Sea Kings, 1966, Turnstone Books, London, 1979

Flem-ath, Rand, and Rose Flem-ath, When the Sky Fell: In Search of Atlantis, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1995



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