

11500 years ago...

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Μυκηολόγος

I.1

Time and time again the vessel shattered against the fury of the “wandering stones”, and for as many times men stubbornly restarted weaving the thread of their everlasting wander.

Obscure Penelopes of the knowledge, stimulated by an unequalled curiosity, they wanted to tear open the veil that divides the cave from the light, breaking the archaic code of prohibitions, whilst placing themselves as the sole part of becoming.

Not by chance, the great Florentine Poet put on Odysseus’s lips, the hero per excellence set against the son of Peleus whose sole feature was strength, the immortal lines “*fatti non foste a viver come bruti, ma per seguir virtute e canoscenza...*”.(1)

On one side strength, on the other the longing for knowledge. On one side the old world of Atlantis and of Dorian conquerors, on the other the innovation introduced by the fullness and dignity of the symbolic universe of Hellenics.

So there are the Pillars of Hercules... and there is Odysseus.

There is taboo... and there is the ancient dream of man.

For us, today, the outermost frontier is represented by the cosmos... our ancestors found such frontier on the dark wave next to the farthest barrier of that which was in those times their sensible universe: at that time, an inviolate and inexplicable sea.

For the Greeks the first geographic and cultural barrier is the Bosphorus. Jason and the Argonauts succeed in violating this limit.

Then, here is Sicily and the odyssey of the first lone navigators (2).

It is not by chance that the poet Homer (Od., XII, 61) talks about Πλαγκταὶ πέτραι (3).

And these words, this epithet, remind us promptly of another, more recent expression: αὶ Συμπληγάδες πέτραι (Πλαγκταὶ Συμπληγάδες) . Same etymon, same meaning .

Finally the outermost part of Mediterranean Sea, to the west .

I.2

At the end of the Wurmian Ice Age the eastern part of Mediterranean was separated from the western one.

Two huge basins whose level, compared with today, was much different: approximately 150/200 meters lower.

The emerged lands were actually nearer to each other, more so than today.

Moreover the eastern basin’s level (present-day Ionian Sea) was lower than the western one.

A proof can be found in the bigger depth of this sea together with the configuration of the underwater ridge: tides and currents caused the water to fall from the western basin to the eastern one.

Such phenomenon in the middle part of Mediterranean Sea, together with the one which some people describe as plate sliding, but which we prefer to ascribe to the gradual expansion of our planet (4), brought the coasts of Sicily and Calabria much closer, but also caused the appearance of a wide platform in the southern part of Sicily, exactly between it and Tunisia.



Ancient Mediterranean

This phenomenon ended with the melting of the ice at the end of the Wurmian Age, and it further redesigned the outline of the mainland. This did not only happen here, but also in Aegean Sea (cfr. myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha) and even in the Black Sea (as proven by the latest researches carried out).

All that happened approximately 11500 years ago.

The fact that the Mediterranean area was usually subjected to such phenomena is proved by the recent discovery of the skeleton of a prehistoric whale in the area between Egypt and the Sudan.

I.3

As stated above, in early times the Pillars of Hercules were probably to be identified with αἱ Συμπληγάδες (πέτραι), the “dark Symplegades” as Euripides called them at the beginning of his *Medea*. Known also as “Cianee Islands”, they once were at the entrance of Pontus and it was easy to crash against them.

As you can see, it is a cyclic image of that widening horizon that from time to time redefines itself toward larger and larger spaces.

With regard to the Canal of Sicily and the whole area to the north and to the south of our biggest Island, we must remember that if northwards there are underwater volcanoes, the biggest of which is Marsili, also southwards there are important hotbeds of the god Hephaestus: among them, the Island Giulia or Ferdinanda or Graham that from time to time makes the Canal boil, still showing a certain vitality after that fateful 1831, between March and August, when it almost caused an unprecedented diplomatic case.

All that in an area going from the Aegadian Islands to Mt. Etna, to the Aeolian Islands, to the underwater Marsili hotbeds all the way to Mt. Vesuvius and the area of Flegrea. It is not by chance that here, in the vicinity of Lake Averno, our ancestors had placed one of the entrances to Hades.

But even in the ancient times this area was not free from tremors (5).

In this regard, and in relation to the devastations of nature in this geographical area, we must add another element; a reference to lake Pergusa whose birth, due to a tectonic collapse, was certainly observed by the native people of ancient Sicily.

This phenomenon happened in our geological era, but at such a distant time that no documented trace remains, only a myth (6).

Over centuries or millennia, the currents in the Canal of Sicily have accumulated sandbanks dragged by these very currents and by the western waters whirlpool caused by the greater depression of the Ionian basin.

The result was thus a pincers-shaped cost outline with two almost symmetrical entrances and a natural port inside (λιμὴν), as Plato says.(7). A big port.



Picture 1; variation of that reported by Vittorio Castellani (8)

I started dealing with this phenomenon, even if “en passant”, at the time of my university studies in Messina; 45 years ago. And, in my graduation thesis, I briefly described the phenomenon in the Aegean Sea.



Aegean Sea

I am glad that I found a confirmation to this hypothesis also in the central part of the Mediterranean .

I.4

Now I do not pretend to state that Atlantis is “here” or “there”.

On the contrary I am sure that in the absence of converging historical – geological - archaeological data and above all in the absence of findings, no one can reasonably state to be able to solve this mystery.

But I am also certain that the information given by Plato reveals very important details. In this particular case, geological and historical-linguistic data, as we will see, agree.

Nor can it be a legend, as someone surmises, considering the testimonies supporting the data included in the two Platonic Dialogues.

It would seem that Plato drew from reliable and competent source the news about the legendary Atlantis.(9)

In fact you can read in Diogenes Laertius:

“Some people say, among them also Satirus, that Plato wrote to Dion in Sicily asking him to buy for one hundred minas the three Pythagorean books by Philolaus. They said in fact that he was well-off because he received more than eighty talents from Dyonysius”.

Other people say that Plato would have received these books because he managed to obtain from the Tyrant of Syracuse the liberation of one young follower of Philolaus (Lives of Philosophers, VIII, 85, op.cit.).

There is also the testimony of Aulo Gellio (Noctes Atticae, III, 17, 1-2) in which one can read:

“Memoriae mandatum est Platonem philosophum tenui admodum pecunia familiari fuisse atque eum tamen tris Philolai Pythagorici libros decem milibus denarium mercatum. Id ei pretium donasse quidam scripserunt amicum eius Dionem Syracosium.”

Well, the poor Plato (10) received the three sacred books from the just as poor Pythagorean Filolao (who apparently sold them because he was in need) thanks to the generosity of his friend Dion.

And in any case, with these 3 letters the silence on the Pythagorean school ends (11).

It is from these three books, that did not reach us, that he probably drew many of the news regarding Atlantis.

In any case, the testimony is trustworthy and refers us to that elitist and fine culture group the philosopher of Samos had in Croton.

It concerns the general discourse on the news regarding the mythical island of Atlantis.

Concerning the placing of the Pillars of Hercules in the Canal of Sicily we find a comforting rapid passage in Strabo (Geogr., III). In fact he says:

“*The Gaditans remember that an oracle prophesied to the Tirii, that they should establish a colony beyond the Pillars of Hercules*”.

If we consider the hypothesis that the legend was originally born within the Mediterranean, Phoenician area, we can also suppose that it alludes to the bigger among Phoenician colonies, i.e. Carthage, whose foundation, on the basis of the official chronology, would date to the eighth century b.C., but that, maybe, should be backdated (12).

We know very well that the Phoenician penetration to the West preceded the Greek one, if we accept what Thucydides says about Greeks in Sicily (VI, 2, 6); when they appeared, the Phoenicians would have left most of the island taking refuge in the north-western part (and Thucydides alludes to a – be careful – pre-colonial phase).

In short, the colony of Carthage, near present-day Tunis, could be “beyond the Pillars of Hercules” only if we place them there where we show: i.e. between Sicily and Tunisia.

II.1

All the above comments came as an afterthought. At the beginning of my research my attention was turned to a careful rereading of the two Platonic dialogues; the one of *Timaeus* and the one of *Critias*.

I dedicated the little time that various commitments, from family to politics to literature, left to me from October 1999 to January 2000, to the linguistic analysis of the text. However I am not an archaeologist and my only competence – if I have any – is the historical-linguistic one.

The rest followed.

Only at a subsequent moment, in fact, and with the support of what Plato says, I went into that above mentioned small geological and geographical analysis.

II.2

The great Greek philosopher (*Timaeus* 24e-25abcd, *Critias*, 108e-109a), first in a quick and concise way and then in a more detailed one (in *Critias*), relates about Atlantis the information that reached him from tradition and sources.

The story seems vacuous, as the ghost of something that does not exist anymore, but only apparently so; taking a closer look, there are some elements that certainly can help us say something more and new about this *vexata quaestio*.

Our attention, in rereading Plato, focused on some particular glosses:

μείζων - μείζω

θάλασσα - πέλαγος - πόντος

λιμὴν

Γάδειρον - Εὐμηλον

Although we did not have at our disposal a critical edition, the analysis of such terms provided us with important information.

Over the centuries, annotators assumed that *beyond the Pillars of Hercules* actually meant *beyond the Straits of Gibraltar*. We, after having carefully reread Plato, are certain that things are different; and we are going to explain the reasons why.

Let's start from *Critias*.

Reference is made to an era more than 9000 year before the one of the Author, and he says: “...island of Atlantis, which, as we said, was at that time greater in extent than Libya and Asia, while now, sunk by earthquakes, is an insurmountable barrier of mud that stands in the way of those who sail from here to reach the open sea, therefore the journey does not go further” .(13)

Here is the first linguistic datum on which to ponder.

Plato says:

“ἦν δὴ Λιβύες καὶ Ἀσίας μείζω νῆσον ὅσας ἔφαμεν εἶναί ποτε...”.

And in *Timaeus*:

Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν ὑμῶν καὶ μεγάλα ἔργα τῆς πόλεως τῆδε γεγραμμένα θαυμάζεται, πάντων μὴν ἐν ὑπερέχει μεγέθει καὶ ἀρετῇ· λέγει γὰρ τὰ γεγραμμένα ὅσιν ἡ πόλις ὑμῶν ἔπαυεσέν ποτε δύναμιν ὕβρει πορευομένην ἅμα ἐπὶ πᾶσαν Εὐρώπην καὶ Ἀσίαν, ἔξωθεν ὀρμηθεῖσαν ἐκ τοῦ Ἀτλαντικοῦ πελάγους.

Τότε γὰρ πορεύσιμον ἦν τὸ ἐκεῖ πέλαγος· νῆσον γὰρ πρὸ τοῦ στόματος εἶχεν ὃ καλεῖτε, ὡς φατε, ὑμεῖς Ἡρακλέους στήλας, ἡ δὲ νῆσος ἅμα Λιβύης ἦν καὶ Ἀσίας μείζων, ἐξ ἧς ἐπιβατὸν ἐπὶ τὰς ἄλλας νήσους τοῖς τότε ἐγίγνετο πορευομένοις, ἐκ δὲ τῶν νήσων ἐπὶ τὴν καταντικρὺ πᾶσαν ἠπειρον τὴν περὶ τὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκείνον πόντον.

Μείζω / μείζων does not mean “larger”, but simply “more powerful, more important”. On the other side you have only to interpret Plato with Plato; regarding the size of the island, he tells us that its size is 3000 stadia by 2000 stadia. That's all.

And not only this. In *Timaeus* he states that “that power (δύναμιν) invaded the whole of Europe and Asia”. Practically he repeats mir-

ror like, with another, more circumscribed term, the same idea: the fact that the island of Atlantis was more powerful, more equipped, more important of all the reigns of that time.

The meaning is made clearer by that *μεγάλα* (*μεγάλα ἔργα*) and by that *μεγέθει* (*μεγέθει καὶ ἀρετῇ*) refer to the strength and the valour of Athens.

On the other hand, the Greek word *μέγας* must be reverted to the Sanskrit root *MAG/MĒG* from which also *μάχομαι*, meaning “to fight”, derives and this in turn, in an agglutinated way, must be reverted to *μῆν + ἄγω* which makes it clear, had it been necessary, that fighting is a typical and honourable activity of man. Alexander himself was called “Great” not for his height, obviously, but for his great achievements. Therefore the image of an island, which seemed huge to everybody and which, thought time, gave birth to the most fantastic hypothesis, should be scaled down. (14)

Moreover there is a rather interesting datum: “while now, sunk by earthquakes, is an insurmountable mud...”. Already in Plato’s time, it was still possible to notice some traces of what happened and of what remained of that island. This is important, and the language of the philosopher reflects faithfully, reconstruct, testify, describes with precision if not the exact location, contained in ancient texts, that we lazy modern readers refer to, at least its location in Mediterranean, in that big quagmire where so many people, just like frogs, look on. And he then adds: “that stands in the way of those who sail from here to reach the open sea (*ἐπὶ τὸ πᾶν πέλαγος*)”. It would be better to express *πᾶν* with “in each direction”.

Here we must stress that, when talking about *the sea* in the mentioned passages, Plato uses three terms only apparently similar: one, generic, *θάλαττα*; then *πέλαγος* to show the *open sea*; finally *πόντος* to indicate a *bound sea suitable for coastal navigation*. And it is not by chance that the first, primitive term, is feminine and indicative of the maternal and uterine mood; the last one, masculine, corresponding to the behaviour of Hellene and non-Hellene sailors, who dared defy the waters and

the uncertainties of new journeys; the second term is neuter because it is and represents the sign of the divinity and of the unfathomable mystery beyond the visible horizon. Now, when in the passage in question Plato talks about *open sea*, it means that he wants to compare the inland sea, for example the Aegean or another inland sea, where coastal navigation made it possible to reach every island and any nearby land, with another, wider and open, sea, without immediate and visible references, which some people today ingenuously call “ocean”.

Translating the Platonic text everybody says “coming forth out of the Atlantic Ocean (*πελάγους*)...”. Obviously they are wrong. Plato never used the term “Ocean”.

It is necessary to state, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, that the term “ocean” is our own, and it would be wrong to read the past according to our present cognitive and symbolic parameters.

Let us continue with the analysis of the Platonic text.

So, *coming forth out of the Atlantic “sea” Atlantis invaded the whole Europe and Asia. In those days that sea was navigable* (an indication that in Plato’s time – or at the time of the writer who told the event – it was no more), *and in front of that entrance...* Here it is, finally! Just in front of that entrance (the presumed *Pillars of Hercules*) there was the island of Atlantis. And from it, *it was possible to reach the other islands... and from the islands to the entire opposite continent that surrounded that true sea* (*περὶ τὸν ἀλιθηνὸν ἐκεῖνον πόντον*).

Here the first distinguishing report. It is an inland sea, but because of its depth and dangerousness the philosopher, and the people of those times, view it as a real sea.

And here was Atlantis. It is the first sufficiently detailed information.

But does *in front of that entrance* mean “on this side” or “on the other side” of such entrance?

The only possibility we have, following the indication of the philosopher, is that the *Pillar of Hercules* were noting more than the narrow

sea passage between the south-eastern coast of Sicily and the coast of Tunisia. As we anticipated. Hardly twenty kilometres or so; maybe less.



Picture 2; variation of that reported by Vittorio Castellani (8)

Spiridon Marinatos liked to believe that Atlantis was Santorini. But this is not borne by Plato's testimony, since he tells us that the kings of the island “ruled the regions of Libya that are on this side of the Straits as far as Egypt, and Europe as far as Tyrrhenia”. It means that such Straits should be close to Libya, in its central part; and after all, it would have been extremely strange that people living in an area close to Hellas would fight against the people of Hellas.

This is the most important passage of the whole description. But we will come back to it.

“In fact – it goes on – everything is included in the limit of the entrance I talked about and appears like a port characterised by a narrow entrance”. This detail too is noteworthy: it is not a simple “passage”, a strait, or, as everybody would like, the present Strait of Gibraltar, since in it “appears like a port (λιμὴν) characterised by a narrow entrance”. Then it goes on: “the other sea, on the contrary, you can really call it sea and that land that completely surrounds it can really and correctly call it continent.”

Here it starts appearing the real location, if not of Atlantis, at least of the Strait in question and of the surrounding lands. The hint is clear: we refer to the area, shown in maps 1 and 2,

situated between Sicily and Tunisia. We have a Strait and we have a natural port; so a sea that, even if inland, is a true sea and a land completely surrounding it and that can be called continent. Even better, the Pillars of Hercules are not the closest point between Sicily and Tunisia, but a narrow alley that should have been at the level of the island of Malta and that encompasses the natural port mentioned by the philosopher.

But he does not stop here.

“In this Island of Atlantis... royal dynasty dominating the whole island and many other islands and parts of the continent: moreover they ruled the regions of Libya that are on this side of the Strait as far as Egypt, and Europe as far as Tyrrhenia...”

(πρὸς δὲ τούτοις ἔτι τῶν ἐντὸς τῆδε Λιβύες μὲν ἦρχον μέχρι πρὸς Αἴγυπτον, τῆς δὲ Εὐρώπης μέχρι Τυρρηνίας...)

It ensues that, from the physical point of view of a Greek living in the heart of Hellas, it exists a “strait” beyond which lies Atlantis and that the latter “dominated... the regions of Libya that are on this side” of said strait. So ancient Libya, and Northern Africa, extended both sides of such strait. It is obvious that if by Pillar of Hercules we mean present-day Gibraltar, saying “the regions of Libya that are on this side etc” would be tautological, excessive, overabundant, unnecessary and superfluous; because they are really located on this side of Gibraltar; neither can we affirm that Plato would allude to that part of present-day Morocco beyond Gibraltar, since the description is geographically well limited: “on this side of the Strait as far as Egypt.” So it is as if he would have said: “in the central part as far as Egypt”. Moreover if Atlantis was as powerful as the philosopher rightly says and since it was located beyond the Pillars of Hercules, why should it have extended its rule only on this side and not also “on the other side”?

The fact is that he wanted to point out the quadrants where such rules extended upon: from Tunisia to Egypt, and from Phoenician Europe till Tyrrhenian; that is Atlantis had its own sphere of influence on the present eastern Maghreb (obviously in order to rule the

commercial trade that in that area was very flourishing) and then on the easternmost part of Mediterranean Sea, and then till the areas of Asia Minor that had not yet been colonised by the Hellenes. They were relegated north of Crete, in Aegean Sea, and from here till Helle-spont.

But let's come back to *Critias*.

Here (108e) you read: "... it was 9000 years ago, when, as it is told, the war started among the people living beyond the Pillars of Hercules and those who lived on this side; now we must describe perfectly this war"

We must stress, here, the passage "those who lived on this side (τοῖς ἐντὸς πᾶσιν)". Here the Author want to point out first of all the fact that there had been an enormous coalition of all the people living in the eastern Mediterranean area, above all the Hellenes, to oppose those, who led by Atlantids, wanted to conquer even that part of the world that was "visible" in those times.

As to the "people living beyond the Pillars of Hercules" it absurd to think, believe, assume that Plato wanted to hint to other people. To whom? Maybe to Amerindians? Why does he not limit himself to saying "the Atlantids", but on the contrary he says "all the people etc, etc."; should such coalition against the Hellenes, led by the inhabitants of Atlantis, include "Americans", Cubans, the inhabitants of Who Knows Where, and so on? Certainly no! This thing seems to be much too obvious to spend more time on it.

Going further we find the description of the island (113c fol.). We can read that the central part of the island of Atlantis, where there was the town of the greater of the 10 kings, first of all had a diameter of 5 stadia, that is little less than 1000 m (since one stadium is about 177,60 m); that around this town there were 5 defensive walls, 3 water and 2 earthwork walls; that beyond the walls there was a plain extending for 3000 stadia on the two sides and 200 stadia from the last wall to the sea; that there was plenty of wildlife, and even the elephant could be found among the animals. An important notation, this one regarding the elephant, since we know well that this animal (a

variant species, "dwarf" elephant) had its habitat exactly in that latitude: in Sicily.

Then there is another geographical reference: the most important part faced the (open) sea, while on the other side it faced the the region of Gades.

We must go on carefully.

Most people mean, to bolster the hypothesis Pillar of Hercules = Gibraltar, "near Cadiz".

The fact is that Plato simply says "the twin (scil. of Atlas) who born after him, and obtained as his lot the extremity of the Island towards the Pillars of Hercules, facing the country which is now called the region of Gades (ἐπὶ τὸ τῆς Γαδειρικῆς νῦν χώρας) in that part of the world, he gave the name which in the Hellenic language is Eumelus (Εὐμηλον), while in the language of the country which is named after him, Gadeirus."

In fact he does not say "near" nor "in the vicinity"; he only says "towards"; it only means it faced that region, that, for some reason, must have been well known; but it leaves aside, obviously, the notion of vicinity.

The Greek name of Gadeirus, Εὐμηλον., is interesting. It (cfr. μέλας, but in Hom. (η 104) μήλοπα "couleur de coing") (15) shows us how Hellenes called Atlas' brother; moreover if we analyse the etymon of the name that apparently is not Greek, as Plato said, that is Gadeirus (Γάδειρον) therefore the name of the region of Gades, we note that it reverts to a Greek etymon; in fact we have γᾶ (land) and δειράς / δειρή (sscr. *drsat*) (neck, rock, yoke, chain, necklace).

The first term is clearly Doric, and it disclose the antiquity of the term (somewhere else we showed as the first Dorian invasion must be set around the 16th century b.C. (16); the second recalls the probable configuration of the area ruled by Gadeirus: "A strip of land" or "a string of islands". This might be a valid hypothesis in order to fix the exact location of Atlantis.

Certainly not of Cadiz.

Then, it could be possible, in the analogy with the Greek name Eumelus, that Gadeirus would also mean "with earth-coloured back". It is not the first time in fact that the a term has a dual,

ambivalent etymon; that it contains the whole strange magic of the word.

“A *string of islands*”? The fact is interesting, even if it does not offer any another starting points for a probable surmise. The fact is that in the central eastern Mediterranean there are “strings” of Islands galore; from the Dodecanese to the Aeolians, since they are not only “a series of Islands”, but also because they are volcanic and

Finally, everything concurs to point to the above-mentioned area as the only one possible in which to identify the location of the ancient Atlantis. That fact that men's and writers' imagination made this land a mysterious place of spirit and the ultimate haven for dreams, well, this lies obviously outside of the research and analysis of the text.

Plato's words are enough for us. This is not bad.

Notes:

- (1) It is the canto of Dantean Ulysses, Inferno XXVI.
- (2) The Greeks call Italy "Esperia" because they closed there their representation of the world and therefore at that longitude, more or less, they should have fixed the extreme limit for their range of action and for their vision of the world.
- (3) In the short passage of sea separating the Island of Lipari from the Island of Volcano, you might recognise the two reefs, the two "*planktai petrai*". At this regard a further specification. The expression does not mean "*wandering stones*" (which we also used at the beginning of this short essay), but simply "*stones to crash against*". Finally, the reefs do not move (in fact they could not); it is the poetical superimposition of two meaningful images: the one of the strong motion of the waves and the one of the vessels crashing against such rocks.
- (4) cf. S. Warren Carey, *La terra in espansione*, ed. Laterza, Bari, 1986. Analysed here from a geological point of view, we deduced the phenomenon from a particular physical and astronomic analysis.
- (5) Diodoro Siculo in the III book of his *Stories* (but Matone before him) tells us about the disappearance of the lake Tritonis invaded by the sea water of an earthquake that destroyed the shores.
- (6) Memento kept in Kore-Persephone myth, which was kidnapped by Ades while she was picking up flowers around Enna and who taken to ktonio reign – deaths' reign - through a deep and dreadful chasm. This myth, told on a number of occasions by many Greek and Latin authors among which Callimachus, Strabo, Ovidius, Diodorus Siculo, Cicero and above all Claudianus with its "*De Raptu Proserpinae*", in the ancient times made the richness of the city of Enna, raising it to the standing of sheer holy city, place of pilgrimages and of flourishing trades and of travels of illustrious representatives of Hellenic-Roman koine.
- These activities, more than being described by various ancient authors, and above all by Cicero in his *Verrine*, are testified by the very interesting remains that in these last years, starting from post-war period with the first surface reconnaissance led by the renowned scholar Luigi Bernabò Brea and by the archeophyle from Enna, baron Potenza, are coming to light in the pergusina rise of Cozzo Matrice, from where you enjoy one of the most beautiful sight of the whole basin and in which people found out a small natural cavity which was used by local people as substitute of the Plutonic entrance.
- The ancient name, Pergo, calls us back to a Greek-Anatolian origin of the term. It is testified by Gr. *πέργαμον* and in Attic popular *περγάση* (Stef.Biz.), from which, later, German *burg / berg*. It is interesting the fact that we find it testified as *πέργαμα* (Τροίας), so the way of the term could be: Crete (not testified yet), Troy, Greece, and then Sicily.
- (7) The *Odyssey* draft certainly follows closely such scheme, from time to time adjusting the story to the ex-

- pansion of the Greeks towards more and more distant goals. In fact Odysseus (op.cit., XII) went through, on advice of Circe, near the eoliane cliffs turns towards Sicily: *Θρινακίην δ' ἐς νῆσον ἀφίξσαι...* (see 127; cf. also 429). But is it really Sicily? We have some doubts, since it would be happened after the passage between Scilla and Cariddi. If Scilla and Cariddi would really represent the edge of the Calabrian and Messinisan coast, Homer would not express himself like that: in this case Odysseus would have already reached Sicily. On the other side *λιμέν* could not be there, in the place which many people identify like the natural port of Messina (a sickle, from which the ancient name of Zancle). And then there were not even that big river, "*στήσαμεν ἐν λιμένι γλαφυρῶ ἄγχ' ὕδατος γλυκεροῖο*" (v.305) that the Poet talks to.
- (8) V. Castellani, *Quando il mare sommerse l'Europa*, ed. Ananke, Torino, 1999.
 - (9) My friend Prof. Emilio Spedicato kindly informed me at this regard.
 - (10) Here "poor" literally, if we want to believe Isocrates who says about the intellectuals lived in great poverty in the democratic Athens that was very lavish towards athletes. Just like today. Nothing seems to be changed in the habits of politicians.
 - (11) Fr. 14 A 17 DK (Giamblico, *Vita pitagorica*, 199). See also Diogene Laerzio, VIII, 84-85 (cf. *I Presocratici*, Laterza, Bari, 1990⁴, page. 130).
 - (12) It is maybe a simple surmise, born from the great love for the Latin poet Virgil, who makes Carthage build during Enea's wandering (another aetiographic myth) after Troy's fall.
 - (13) Plato, *Timaeus and Critias*, edited by Enrico V. Maltese, Newton C. ed., Roma, 1997.
 - (14) But there is another linguistic datum that supports such reading. The term *Atlantis* comes from Greek, obviously, and in detail from $\sqrt{\alpha\theta\lambda-}$ of *ἀθλέω* which means "*to fight, to compete*"; therefore the term *Atlantis* identifies a nation of warriors and / or of people able to perform impressive exploits. And, I presume, not only war, considering the description of the city Atlantis made by Plato.
 - (15) P. Chantraine, *La formation des noms en grec ancien* (p. 258).
 - (16) R. Vieni, *La lingua dei Micenei*, Cz, 1990.

Essential bibliography:

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