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Atlantis under Ice? Part 1



Atlantis is seen by many as the lost civilization *par excellence*, the “mother” of all civilizations. It is a pity that, despite much searching of the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean for the mysterious island described by Plato, nothing convincing has ever been found. Neither unknown submerged archaeological remains nor sunken continents have been unearthed. Could it not be, some have wondered, that Atlantis did not end up under the sea at all but still exists somewhere else? And maybe we cannot see it because it is hidden in plain sight? This is the opinion of those who believe that Antarctica was in fact once free of ice and is where the ancient lost civilization can be found.

Something Strange

It all began in the mid-1950s with

the observation of a scholar of ancient maps, Captain Arlington H. Mallery. Mallery had a revelation upon examining a map discovered a few years earlier in Turkey. The map, created in 1513 CE by the Turkish Admiral Piri Ibn Hacı Mehmet, better known as Piri Re’is, was drawn on a gazelle skin treated and colored in watercolor. It was also lost for over 400 years. In 1929, during the transformation of the old Istanbul Imperial Palace into today’s Topkapi Archaeological Museum, the map reappeared. It caused surprise, because it placed South America in the correct longitudinal position in relation to Africa—an unusual feature for sixteenth-century maps.

What struck Mallery, however, was something else. In fact, he was convinced that the strip of land depicted in the extreme south of the map represented the coast of Antarctica free from

ice. Subsequently, scholar Charles H. Hapgood hypothesized that the accuracy of the longitude on the Piri Re’is map could not be explained on the basis of the sixteenth-century science of navigation. In particular, Hapgood claimed, there was “a surprising concordance with the seismic profile of the Earth of Queen Maud in Antarctica” detected only in 1954 through seismic surveys (Hapgood 1966). It followed that the map had to be based on older maps made by travelers of an unknown but advanced civilization that existed before the Ice Age.

Although noted writers such as Rand and Rose Flem-Ath and Graham Hancock wrote bestsellers in the 1990s hypothesizing that this unknown civilization was Atlantis, an Italian engineer beat them to the punch. Flavio Barbiero first mentioned the hypothesis in 1974 in his book *A Civilization under Ice*.

Universal Cataclysm

Barbiero's theory starts from the hypothesis that about 12,000 years ago, Earth was tilted differently from how it is today. It rotated perpendicular to the ecliptic plane, so the seasons stably coincided with the climatic bands. Alaska and Siberia, as well as Antarctica, were ice-free, and their climate was mild. This contrasted with Europe and Northwest America, which were covered by polar ice.

Barbiero's theory continues that in Antarctica in particular, a very advanced marine civilization flourished, in which metallurgy had been invented and architecture, technology, art, and high-level science flourished. Meanwhile, in the rest of the world man was still in the Stone Age. Ten thousand years ago, after about 2,000 years of progress, this civilization called Atlantis suffered a devastating catastrophe that almost completely annihilated it. A comet or asteroid about six miles in diameter struck near Florida, causing a series of almost instantaneous global transformations.

The Earth's axis of rotation changed; the poles suddenly moved thousands of miles to where they are today. The impact raised a cloud of dust that triggered torrential rains, with the consequent lowering of temperatures and the start of the great glaciation. The cooling was so fast that it took the great mammoths grazing around Siberia by surprise, as evidenced by the fact that in the stomach of a specimen found there were still the remains of the last meal of vegetation from the temperate zones. It had frozen without having had time to decompose. But the most devastating effect was the cyclopean wave caused by the impact of the fireball. This wave would have engulfed all lands, including Atlantis-Antarctica.

Barbiero hypothesized that thanks to its fleets of massive ships, part of the population of Atlantis managed to escape and reach America, Africa, and Asia. Meanwhile, on the mother island, it began to snow for weeks or perhaps even months, until a frozen blanket, many meters thick, finally buried Atlantis along with all those who had not

managed to escape to safety. The survivors, scattered around the world, began to interact with the Paleolithic locals, teaching them to cultivate the fields and accelerating the development of civilization, thus suddenly originating the Neolithic age.

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The Evidence

The theory is very fanciful and elaborate, so one wonders: Where is the evidence? First, Barbiero contends as proof the sudden disappearance of dozens of animal species that populated the northern hemisphere 12,000 years ago: mammoths, mastodons, woolly rhinos, reindeer, ancient bison, horses, camels, saber-toothed tigers, and so on. What other than a sudden glaciation, which came within a few days after the sudden shift of the north pole, could have caused such a massacre?

As more proof, Barbiero offers the great similarities between myths and legends of peoples around the world, from the Bible to Mesopotamia, from the myth of the island of Mu in North America to the Incan myth of Viracocha. Each contains a flood that overwhelms the world and then someone who comes from the sea and teaches how to cultivate the land. These legends could be clear proof that the memory of the phenomena following the change of Earth's axis has remained deeply rooted in the memory of the peoples. Other legends spread everywhere could tell us that the celestial body that hit Earth was probably a comet. Just think of ancient superstitions of comets as messengers or carriers of serious calamities and the atavistic fear that still takes hold of

us whenever some unusual astronomical event occurs.

As for his belief that Atlantis can only correspond to Antarctica, Barbiero acknowledges that "nowhere archaeological remains have been found. A civilization of that size, in Europe for example, would have left ample traces" (Barbiero 1974). Then he reasons that because Atlantis was such a huge civilization, and we have not found any traces of it (he admits there should have been traces somewhere), then those traces *must* be hidden somewhere. Where? "Obviously" under the ice of Antarctica! Also, in his view Antarctica is the only continent that reflects Plato's description: an island with an area of millions of square kilometers, surrounded by an ocean in turn surrounded by a continuous strip of continents, rich in metals and favored (before the flood) by a mild climate. As further proof of this, Barbiero maintains that "all the planispheres prior to the discovery of America are actually manipulated maps of Antarctica: all ancient peoples conceived the world as a large, almost circular island, surrounded by the ocean, and this in turn from distant, unreachable and mysterious lands" (Barbiero 1974). For example, looking at the planisphere taken from the "Grandes Croniques" of Saint Denis (1364–1372), Barbiero recognizes "the Ross Sea on the top right, the Mackenzie Bay on the left and the Weddell Sea below" as well as the "thick network of channels similar to that described by Plato" (Barbiero 1974). Not to mention the Piri Re'is map, which would reproduce the profile of Antarctica without its ice cover. According to Barbiero, it is clear that all these medieval maps derive from older maps, perhaps from the library of Alexandria before it was destroyed.

It is all very suggestive, in theory, but where are the facts? Just a single brick or item from Atlantis would be enough, but does it exist? This is what we shall see in the second part of this series. ■

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Atlantis under Ice? Part 2



Atlantis? It is hidden in plain sight, under the thick ice of Antarctica! This claim was made popular in the 1990s by pseudo-archeological theories in many popular books. But the original idea was born in Italy in 1974, when engineer Flavio Barbiero first mentioned it in his book *A Civilization under Ice*.

The premise is intriguing: About 10,000 years ago, Earth was hit by a comet or asteroid, causing a series of almost instantaneous global transformations. The axis of rotation changed, the poles suddenly moved thousands of kilometers, and the impact raised a cloud of dust that triggered torrential rains, with the consequent lowering of temperatures and the start of the great glaciation. People of Atlantis—an ad-

vanced marine civilization that flourished on the continent of Antarctica—were forced to flee, when the change in temperatures caused snow to fall for weeks (and perhaps months), until a frozen blanket, tens of meters thick, finally buried Atlantis with all those who had not managed to escape. The survivors, scattered around the world, began to interact with the Paleolithic locals, teaching them to cultivate the fields and accelerating the development of civilization, thus suddenly originating the Neolithic age.

Where Is Everyone?

Barbiero recognizes that all these claims can at best be considered suggestive and that only the discovery of

archaeological traces of Atlantis would be considered evidence. “It would be enough to find even a single brick to prove its existence and revolutionize all ancient history and geology from its foundations.”

However, the “brick” of Atlantis is still missing. Not only have no traces of prehistoric human life ever been found on Antarctica, but there are none in the places where the Atlanteans would have repaired after the flood. If indeed these highly evolved people brought civilization to America, Africa, and Asia 10,000 years ago, there is no trace of them. The first signs of higher civilization are much more recent, dating back to 4000 BCE with some rare exceptions. Barbiero’s answer is that the Atlanteans, being sailors, settled mainly on the

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coasts of the various countries, and the coasts, following the melting of the ice, ended up submerged at a depth of 130 meters. Likewise, the remains of the Atlantean cities created when the Sahara was fertile would have ended up in the desert sand. Indeed, these Atlanteans seem very unfortunate.

“This is a fascinating but very mechanistic hypothesis, which is based on assumptions, in the current state of our knowledge, which cannot be demonstrated,” archaeologist and best-selling writer Valerio Massimo Manfredi (2012) told me.

In fact, too many factors are assumed (the impact of a comet; the shifting of poles; the sudden glaciation; the fact that the Atlanteans were sailors with huge ships and therefore ready to save themselves; the lack of archaeological

evidence because it was all hidden by water, ice, or sand; etc.) to try to prove something not known to have even happened. When Plato wrote for the first time of Atlantis, he did so in two philosophical dialogues in which he imagined a perfect society that ended in ruin for its pride. It’s an imaginative hypothesis that Barbiero takes literally.

The Extinction of Mammoths

According to Giorgio G. Bardelli, zoologist at the Civic Museum of Natural History of Milan:

The fact is that no evidence has ever been found in Antarctica (fossils, archaeological remains, artifacts, etc.) of the existence, on that continent, of a human civilization. On the contrary, the numerous cores performed in the Antarctic ice, often a few thousand meters, have made it possible to reconstruct the climatic history of the earth over a period of several hundreds of thousands of years, during which Antarctica has always been covered by ice and characterized by conditions, similar to the current ones, completely incompatible with the existence of a human civilization. (Bardelli 2012)

Not even geoscience leaves room for misunderstandings. Says Francesco Paolo Sassi of the Department of Geo-

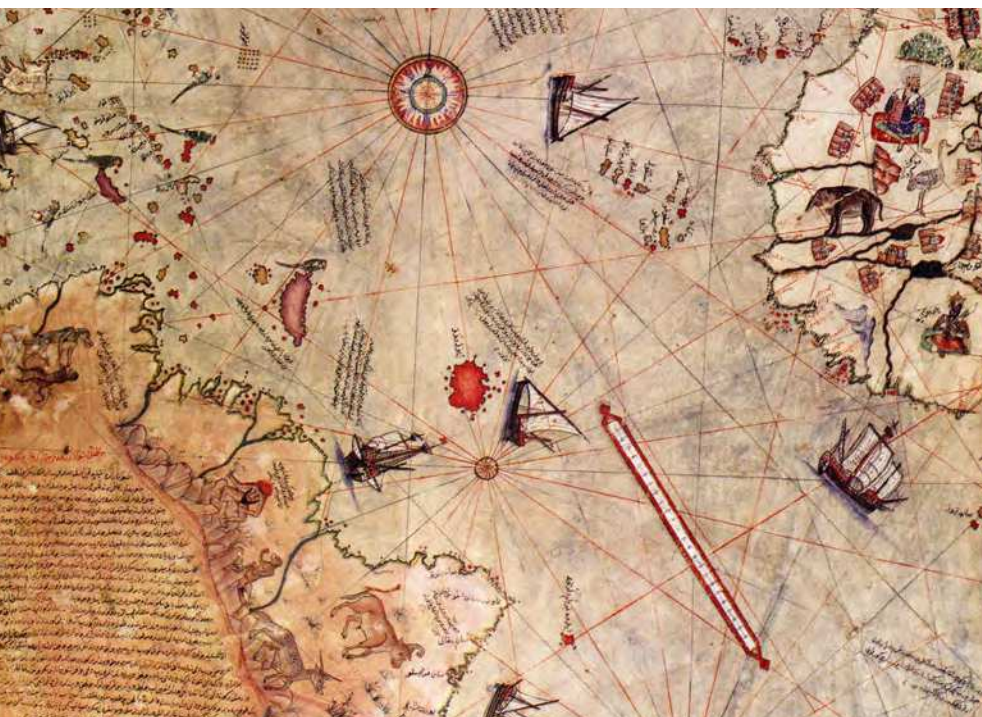
sciences at the University of Padua:

In the popular imagination, climatic variations are often associated with a “pole shift,” but the geological evidence shows that climatic variations are normally due to other causes—astronomical, geological—of the climate system. Paleoclimatology is able to document the climatic variations of the last 10 million years. In particular, in the last 10,000 years there have been no sudden and traumatic changes in temperature, except for an event lasting a few centuries around 8,200 years ago (of maximum hemispheric scope) and a modest change in the distribution of solar radiation due to astronomical causes. Orbital but very significant hydrological consequences in the intertropical belt were produced in several stages but culminated around 4–5 thousand years ago, which led to the desertification of the Sahara. In conclusion, there is no geological evidence of an impact around 10,000 years ago that produced climate cooling. (Sassi 2012)

But if there was no instant Ice Age, how could that mammoth freeze with the herbs that grow in temperate zones still in its stomach? Bardelli has the answer:

The fact is that mammoths populated tundra environments, such as the one found today in the northernmost regions of Eurasia or Canada. It was therefore not a question of temperate environments. They were not temperate environments; neither they were covered with ice. They were generally plains rich in lichens, mosses, herbaceous plants but also trees typical of cold climates such as birches and conifers. The short Arctic summer, with the thawing of the superficial portion of the frozen ground, the so-called permafrost, transforms a part of these environments into marshy areas, in which mammoths and other large animals could get trapped and die, and then be preserved entirely due to the frost. It must also be said that mammoths did not go extinct everywhere at the same time, as should have happened following a sudden and short-lived catastrophe. The last specimens even survived up to the Holocene, that is, up to less than 4,000 years ago, on the island of Wrangel in the Arctic Ocean. (Bardelli 2012)

And all the other animal species that suddenly went extinct 10,000 years ago?





Bardelli also has the answer for that:

The extinction of the great Pleistocene fauna did not occur simultaneously throughout the world. For example, in America it occurred about 12–13,000 years ago, in Australia about 50,000 years ago. Some scholars think that man may have played a role in the disappearance of many species, given that the dates roughly coincide with the colonization of those lands by our species, but the question is controversial. In any case, as for all other biological crises, even that of the megafauna of the Pleistocene is probably due to complex of causes, which did not happen simultaneously and in the same way on all continents. It is widely believed among most scholars that the climate changes that repeatedly occurred during the Quaternary were the most important cause. (Bardelli 2012)

Philosophers and Cartographers

Finally, what about the cartographic evidence? As for the Piri Re'is map, it has now been established that it does not depict Antarctica but is rather the folded continuation of Brazil. According to scholar and art historian Diego Cuoghi:

The representation is deformed, bent to the right, most likely to adapt to the particular shape of the parchment. Let us remember that the longitude would have been calculated in a precise way only in the following century, so considerable

approximations were used in the maps. Although deformed, some details such as the Gulf of San Matias and the Valdes peninsula can be recognized, and the end could be Tierra del Fuego. If we look closely at the lower right end, the one that should represent Antarctica, we see the drawing of a snake, and in the note by Piri Reis we read: "This land is uninhabited. Everything is in ruins and it is said that large snakes have been found. For this reason the Portuguese infidels have not landed in these lands which are said to be very hot." Certainly such a description has nothing to do with Antarctica. (Cuoghi 2012)

As for the other medieval maps, the round one would be a shape with precise meanings. Says Cuoghi:

Those representations were composed according to the tripartite scheme: Asia (top) Europe (bottom left) and Africa (bottom right). The world, at the center of which is Jerusalem, is surrounded by the ocean, beyond which the twelve winds are depicted. There are also many fortified cities (Rome, Athens, Constantinople ...) and various regions (Spain, England, Greece ...), all with their names clearly visible. In almost all those cited by Barbiero, the Earthly Paradise is also depicted. This type of globe did not take into account geographic knowledge but was intended as an ideal and philosophical representation and was based on the O-T scheme, derived

from the manuscripts of Isidore of Seville. (Cuoghi 2012)

The Last 'Hope'

Despite extensive evidence against his idea and scant evidence for it, Barbiero was so convinced that he went so far as to organize an expedition crossing the Strait of Magellan in a rubber dinghy, risking his life just to land in Antarctica and prove the validity of his hypothesis. And today he would be ready to do it again. He has said:

I pinpointed the exact spot via satellite. If I had the money to organize an expedition, I would go without fail. This is the place where the Mount of Poseidon is, meter plus meter minus. I would also have the tools to do a survey and to have a confirmation. (Stella 2001)

But maybe it won't even be necessary. If climatic trends continue, Antarctica will soon be largely ice-free, and nature will undertake to confirm or debunk a theory that is certainly ingenious but decidedly false. ■

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