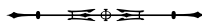


# ANCIENT SOURCES FOR THE ATLANTIS STORY

**I**n addition to the well-known citations from Plato, Atlantis is mentioned in several other ancient sources. Here is a selection of these tantalizing glimpses into ancient Greek and Roman thought on the distant Atlantic Isle and associated matters, adapted for modern readers.

**From Herodotus (ca. 480–420 BCE),  
*The Histories*:**

“From the Garmantians at a distance again of ten days’ journey there is another hill of salt and spring of water, and the people dwelling round it are called Atarantians, who alone of all human beings about whom we know are nameless; for while all taken together have the name Atarantians, each separate man and woman of them has no name given to them. These utter curses against the Sun when he is at his height, and moreover revile the sun with all manner of foul terms, because it oppresses them by its burning heat, both themselves and their land. After this at a distance of ten days’ journey there is another hill of salt and spring of water, and people dwell round it. Near this salt hill is a mountain named Atlas, which is small in circuit and rounded on every side; and so exceedingly lofty is it said to be, that it is not possible to see its summits, for clouds never leave them either in the summer or in the winter. This, the natives say, is the pillar of the heavens. After this mountain these received their name, for they are called Atlantians; and it is said that they neither eat anything that has life nor have any dreams.”<sup>1</sup>



**From Diodorus Siculus (90–30 BCE),  
*The Library of History*:**

***Book 3, Chapter 4:***

“The Atlantides inhabited a rich country bordering upon the ocean, and were esteemed to excel all their neighbors in civil reception



and entertainment of strangers; and they boast that the gods were born among them.”<sup>2</sup>

***Book 5, Chapter 15:***

“In a word, this island is so delightful that it appears to be the abode of the Gods rather than of human beings.”<sup>3</sup>



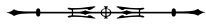
**From Plutarch (46–120 CE), *Life of Sertorius*:**

“Here [Sertorius] met with sailors recently arrived from the Atlantic islands, two in number, divided from one another only by a narrow channel, and distant from the coast of Africa ten thousand furlongs. These are called the Islands of the Blest; rains fall there seldom, and in moderate showers, but for the most part they have gentle breezes, bringing along with them soft dews, which render the soil not only rich for plowing and planting, but so abundantly fruitful that it produces spontaneously an abundance of delicate fruits, sufficient to feed the inhabitants, who may here enjoy all things without trouble or labor.

The seasons of the year are temperate, and the transitions from one to another so moderate, that the air is almost always serene and pleasant. The rough northerly and easterly winds which blow from the coasts of Europe and Africa, dissipated in the vast open space, utterly lose their force before they reach the



islands. The soft western and southerly winds which breathe upon them sometimes produce gentle sprinkling showers, which they convey along with them from the sea, but more usually bring days of moist bright weather, cooling and gently fertilizing the soil, so that the firm belief prevails even among the barbarians, that this is the seat of the blessed, and that these are the Elysian Fields celebrated by Homer.”<sup>4</sup>



**From Aelian (175–235 CE), *Various Histories*:**

“Theopompus relates the particulars of an interview between Midas, King of Phrygia, and Silenus. Silenus was the son of a nymph and, thanks to this, while being less than a god, was more than a human, and immortal. After they had discussed various matters Silenus told Midas: ‘Europe, Asia, and Libya are islands washed on all their shores by the ocean, and there is but one continent, which is situated outside these limits. Its expanse is immense. It produced very large animals, and people twice as tall as those common to our climate, and they live twice as long.’”<sup>5</sup>

**Aelian’s Final Comments to the Readers**

“Those who regard Theopompus of Chios as a writer in whom you can put your

trust can believe this story. As for me, with this story as with many others, I only see him as a spinner of tales.”<sup>6</sup>

**And from *The Nature of Animals*:**

“ . . . Those living near the Ocean tell the tale that the ancient Atlantean Kings, tracing their lineage from Neptune (Poseidon), wore bands made from the sea–rams upon their heads, as an imperial insignia, while the queens likewise wore circlets made from the female sea–rams.”<sup>7</sup>



**From Proclus (412–485 CE), *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*:**

“The historians who speak of the islands of the exterior sea tell us that in their time there were seven islands consecrated to Proserpine, and three others of immense extent, of which the first was consecrated to Pluto, the second to Ammon, and the third to Neptune. The inhabitants of the latter had preserved a recollection (transmitted to them by their ancestors) of the island of Atlantis, which was extremely large and for a long time held sway over all the islands of the Atlantic Ocean. Atlantis was also consecrated to Neptune.”<sup>8</sup>

**Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, *The History of Herodotus*, vol. 1, secs. 184–185, trans. G. C. Macaulay (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1890); available online at [www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext01/1hohf10.txt](http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext01/1hohf10.txt).

<sup>2</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, bk. 3, chap. 4, trans. George Booth (1700; London: W. McDowall for J. Davis, 1814), 194–201.

<sup>3</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, bk. 5, chap. 15 (selection); new translation by the staff of the Rosicrucian Digest, based on the French of Monsieur l’Abbé Terrasson, *Bibliothèque Historique de Diodore de Sicile*, (Paris: Hachette, 1865), with reference to the translation in Ignatius Donnelly, *Atlantis the Antediluvian World: A Modern Revised edition*, ed. Egerton Sykes (New York: Gramercy Publishing Company, 1949), 24–25. (Used by permission of Garber Communications, 1 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003.) French edition of Diodorus available online at <http://remacle.org/bloodwolf/historiens/diodore/index.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Plutarch, “Life of Sertorius,” *Plutarch’s Lives*, trans. John Dryden, ed. and rev. A. H. Clough (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1859); available online at <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/plutarch/lives/chapter41.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Claudius Aelianus, *Varia Historia*, bk. 3, chap. 15, (ca. 200 CE),

cited in Ignatius Donnelly, *Atlantis the Antediluvian World: A Modern Revised edition*, ed. Egerton Sykes (New York: Gramercy Publishing Company, 1949) 24–25. (These lines are used by permission of Garber Communications, 1 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003.)

<sup>6</sup> Claudius Aelianus, *Varia Historia*, bk. 3, chap. 18, (ca. 200 CE); new translation by the staff of the *Rosicrucian Digest*, based on the French translation in M. Dacier, Aelianus, *Histoires Diverses*, (1772; Paris: de l’Imprimerie d’Auguste Delalain, 1827); available at <http://remacle.org/bloodwolf/historiens/elien/table.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Claudius Aelianus, *De Natura Animalium*, bk. 15, chap. 2; new translation by the staff of the *Rosicrucian Digest*, based on the Latin translation by Friedrich Jacobs in the Frommann edition (Jena, 1832); available online at [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Aelian/de\\_Natura\\_Animalium/15\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Aelian/de_Natura_Animalium/15*.html).

<sup>8</sup> Proclus, *Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, 117. 10–30, trans. August Boeckh (1785–1867), cited in Ignatius Donnelly, *Atlantis the Antediluvian World: A Modern Revised edition*, ed. Egerton Sykes (New York: Gramercy Publishing Company, 1949), 24. (These lines are used by permission of Garber Communications, 1 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003.)