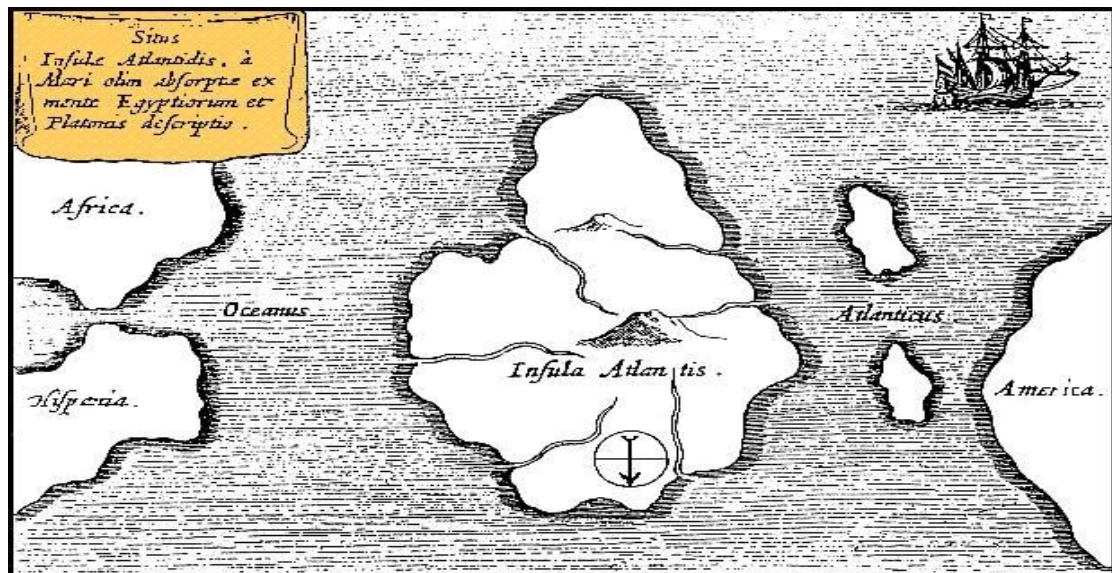


# 'Lost' City of Atlantis: Fact & Fable

The idea of Atlantis — the "lost" island subcontinent often idealized as an advanced, utopian society holding wisdom that could bring world peace — has captivated dreamers, occultists and New Agers for generations. Thousands of books, magazines and websites are devoted to Atlantis, and it remains a popular topic. People have lost fortunes — and in some cases even their lives — looking for Atlantis.



## The origins of Atlantis

Unlike many legends whose origins have been lost in the mists of time, we know exactly when and where the story of Atlantis first appeared. The story was first told in two of Plato's dialogues, the "Timaeus" and the "Critias," written about 360 B.C.

Though today Atlantis is often conceived of as a peaceful utopia, the Atlantis that Plato described in his fable was very different. In his book "Encyclopedia of Dubious Archaeology," professor of archaeology Ken Feder notes that in Plato's story, "Atlantis is not a place to be honored or emulated at all. Atlantis is not the perfect society ... Quite the contrary, Atlantis is the embodiment of a materially wealthy, technologically advanced, and militarily powerful nation that has become corrupted by its wealth, sophistication, and might." As propaganda in Plato's morality tale, the Atlantis legend is more about the city's heroic rival Athens than a sunken civilization; if Atlantis really existed today and was found intact and inhabited, its residents would probably try to kill and enslave us all.

It's clear that Plato made up Atlantis as a plot device for his stories, because there are no other records of it anywhere else in the world. There are many extant Greek texts; surely someone else would have also mentioned, at least in passing, such a remarkable place. There is simply no evidence from any source that the legends about Atlantis existed before Plato wrote about it.

