

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE
AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES
c/o INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY
PRINCETON, N. J. 08540



July 9, 1992

Mr. Rainer W. Kühne
Lechstr. 63
W 3300 Braunschweig
Germany

Dear Mr. Kühne,

The Publications Committee has voted not to accept your article "The Quest for Historical Elements in Plato's 'Critias'" for publication in Hesperia.

A copy of the comments from one of the readers is enclosed in hopes that it may be helpful .

We appreciate, however, that you chose to submit your article to our journal and wish you greater success elsewhere.

Sincerely yours,

Marian H. McAllister
Marian H. McAllister
Editor of Publications

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Report on "The Quest for Historical Elements in Plato's "Critias"

Attempts such as that made in this article at finding Bronze Age historical memories in later literary works are old-fashioned, and misconceived in perspective. While the author quite sensibly outlines in his section 2 the many objections which have been raised to the historicity of the war between Atlantis and prehistoric Athens, he has not fully assimilated the force of those criticisms which focus on the clear hints of mythologizing which Plato has left us and on the traces of irony both in the way Plato constructed his logos and in the context in which he placed it. I should need a much better explanation, for instance, of exactly how non-Egyptian second millennium history was first encoded in Egyptian documents and then transmitted to Solon. Incidentally, almost every aspect of Solon's journeys abroad is conventional and/or thoroughly fictionalized. The author underestimates the degree to which Plato and his contemporaries had the sense to look around them and discern what might be considered plausible features of early Athens, such as the Bronze Age acropolis or the vicissitudes of Athens toward the end of the Bronze Age. Finally, it is certainly a fatal error when one begins to pick and choose among the motifs which are to outward appearance equal parts of a seamless narrative in order to affirm or deny their historicity. Naturally, Plato's schematized Atlantis bears no resemblance to any historical social or geographical context. But once we have discarded it, we are no longer entitled to credit other features of his story as historical, unless it can be shown on internal grounds that they hold a privileged or special place in the narrative.

Judging from the above, I should not recommend that this article be published in Hesperia.