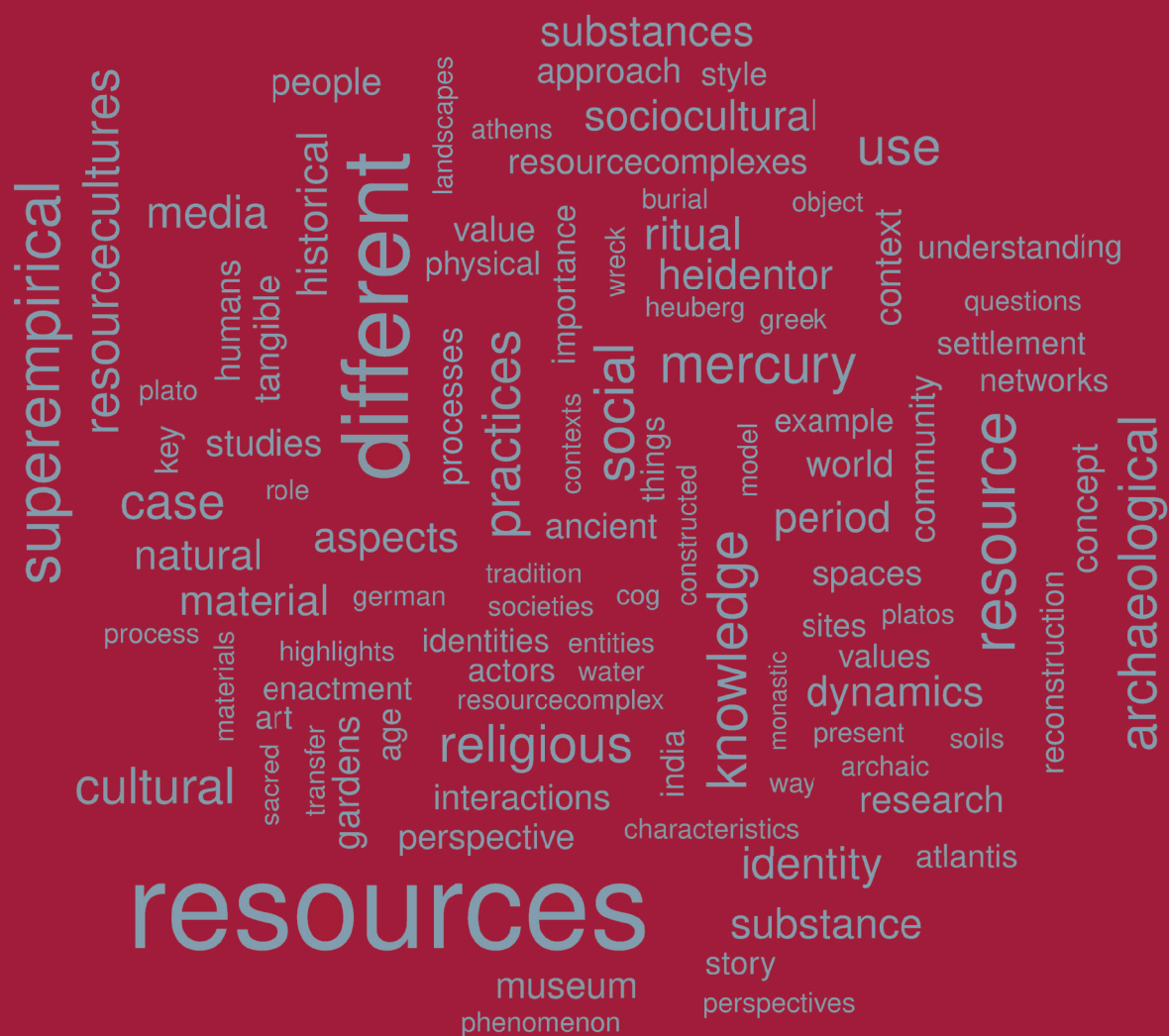


## RESSOURCENKULTUREN 13

# EXPLORING RESOURCES

ON CULTURAL, SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS OF RESOURCECULTURES



### Editors

Tobias Schade,  
Beat Schweizer,  
Sandra Teuber,  
Raffaella Da Vela,  
Wulf Frauen,

Mohammad Karami,  
Deepak Kumar Ojha,  
Karsten Schmidt,  
Roman Sieler &  
Matthias S. Toplak

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# RESSOURCENKULTUREN

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# **RessourcenKulturen**

## Band 13

### **Serie's Editors:**

Martin Bartelheim and Thomas Scholten

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## Preface of the Editors

This book is one of the results of the multiple co-operations and discussions in interdisciplinary and cross-sectional working groups of the SFB 1070 RESOURCECULTURES, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). It was initiated and realised by a group of postdocs of the SFB 1070 with the aim, to present case studies, which apply the new extended SFB-conceptualisation of resources as means to construct, sustain and alter social relations, units and identities.

Accordingly, resources are seen as contingent means of social practices of actors that depend on cultural and social appropriation and valuation. They constitute ResourceCultures. Resources in this sense are part of networks or bundles of tangible and intangible elements of social and material spaces, which are not conceivable without each other, evolve over time and have a specific spatial distribution. In order to explore resources in this way, the SFB developed two analytical tools: ResourceComplexes with regard to intentional und functional dimensions and Resource-Assemblages with regard to contingency and historicity.

The individual chapters of the book were written in English and German by former and current members of the SFB – postdocs, PhD-students and principal investigators. It comprises the work of social and cultural anthropologists, archaeologists, geoscientists, philologists and historians.

The different styles of the contributions represent the disciplinary and interdisciplinary diversity of the SFB 1070 RESOURCECULTURES. Most chapters address a multiplicity of topics around contingency and interactions that lead to changes in the ways resources are perceived, used and valued. Thus, all chapters contribute to our understanding of resources as culturally defined means for identity formation and basis for social relations, but approach the topic differently.

Assigning them to topics or headings in order to structure the book would not do justice to the complex and diverse ideas that are discussed in each chapter. Thus, the editors chose a random order of the contributions to illustrate the contingency aspect. The plurality of disciplines, research topics and studies within the SFB 1070 RESOURCECULTURES is also reflected on the book cover. A word cloud based on the English summaries shows the entanglement of ideas discussed and analysed within the collaborative research centre. An exception concerning the random ordering of contributions was made for the introduction of the SFB speakers. This was placed at the beginning in order to provide the reader with the basic conceptual terms of the interdisciplinary research group and to integrate slight differences between contributions due to further development of theoretical terms and concepts.

As the editors of this volume, we would like to thank Martin Bartelheim and Thomas Scholten in their function as series editors for supporting the idea of this book project. Of course, the SFB 1070 RESOURCECULTURES and thus the German Research Foundation (DFG) stimulated intensive discussions and conceptual cooperative work within the Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen. Further, we thank all authors for their valuable contributions and the peer reviewers for their time and their constructive criticism. Last but not least we are grateful for the support of Marion Etzel, Hannah Mäder, Uwe Müller, Monice Timm and Henrike Srzednicki of the editorial staff. Without all of them, this book would not have been possible.

Tobias Schade, Beat Schweizer, Sandra Teuber, Raffaella Da Vela, Wulf Frauen, Mohammad Karami, Deepak Kumar Ojha, Karsten Schmidt, Roman Sieler and Matthias S. Toplak.



Irmgard Männlein-Robert

## Forget about Atlantis

### Plato's Invention of Tradition or Symbolic Dimensions of Knowledge

Keywords: knowledge, past, memory, transfer, fiction, history

#### Summary

The Atlantis story is to be found in two of Plato's dialogues: in 'Timaeus' and 'Critias' (this study mainly focusses on the version in 'Timaeus'). The setting and context of these dialogues is a conversation between Socrates and a few others on the ideal state. It is Socrates' friend Critias who tells the hitherto unknown war story between the contrary states of ancient Athens and Atlantis, about the war between them, and how the ancient Athenians triumphed. In this regard, ancient Athens is said to have been – once upon a time – the ideal state. This is relevant and important, especially for Plato's (mainly) Athenian audience and his intention with these texts. The detailed description of the chain of tradition, through which Critias has learned about ancient Athens and Atlantis, is regarded as an example of a quasi-historical apparatus of remembering and certification. The main focus will be on the phenomenon of 'transfer' in this chain of tradition, which proves itself to be a key phenomenon. The different modes of transfer that are analysed imply a personal, temporal, and spatial shift of knowledge, power, or culture. The supposed reconstruction of knowledge about prehistoric actions turns out to be (mainly) the fiction of a story which is intended to stabilise the Athenian identity now and in the future. Without memory and recollection knowledge transfer cannot be achieved and, therefore, neither any adaption to

new spaces, cultures, people, or contexts. So, it will be proposed that in Plato's famous story of ancient Athens and Atlantis the phenomenon of transfer proves to be a dynamic literary method to construct a 'historical tradition' which is meant to be an important symbolic ResourceComplex for the contemporary Athenians and for Plato's projects of future ideal states. The aim of this paper will be to evaluate different values constructed by the Atlantis story as 'historical' resource.

#### Zusammenfassung

Die Atlantis-Erzählung findet sich in zwei Dialogen Platons: im 'Timaios' und im 'Kritias' (im vorliegenden Beitrag liegt der Fokus hauptsächlich auf der Version im 'Timaios'). Schauplatz und Kontext dieser Dialoge ist ein Gespräch zwischen Sokrates und einigen anderen über den idealen Staat. Sokrates' Freund Kritias erzählt die bis dahin unbekannte Geschichte vom Krieg zwischen den konträren Staaten Urathen und Atlantis, in dem die Einwohner Urathens triumphal siegten. Urathen soll also – in prähistorischer Zeit – der genannte Idealstaat gewesen sein. Das ist vor allem für Platons (hauptsächlich) athenisches Publikum und seine Intention mit dieser Erzählung relevant. Die detaillierte Beschreibung der Traditionskette, durch welche Kritias von der kriegerischen Auseinandersetzung zwischen Urathen und Atlantis erfahren hat, darf dabei als Beispiel für einen quasi-historischen Erinnerungs- und Beglaubigungsapparat gelten. Das Hauptaugenmerk wird in diesem Beitrag auf dem Phänomen des 'Transfer' in

dieser Traditionskette liegen, das sich als Schlüsselphänomen erweist. Die verschiedenen Formen des Transfers, die analysiert werden, implizieren nämlich eine persönliche, zeitliche und räumliche Verschiebung von Wissen, Macht oder Kultur. Die vermeintliche Rekonstruktion von Wissen über prähistorische Handlungen entpuppt sich also (vor allem) als Fiktion einer Geschichte, welche die athenische Identität jetzt und in Zukunft stabilisieren soll. Ohne Erinnerung und Rückbesinnung kann kein Wissenstransfer und damit auch keine Anpassung an neue Räume, Kulturen, Menschen oder Kontexte erfolgen. Daher wird vorgeschlagen, dass sich in Platons berühmter Geschichte über Urathen und Atlantis das Phänomen des Transfers als dynamische literarische Methode zur Konstruktion einer ‚historischen Tradition‘ erweist und dass diese für die zeitgenössischen Athener und für Platons Projekte zukünftiger Idealstaaten als wichtiger symbolischer Ressourcen-Komplex fungiert. Das Ziel dieses Beitrags wird sein, verschiedene Werte zu analysieren, die durch die Atlantis-Erzählung als ‚historische‘ Ressource konstruiert wurden.

## Introduction

This paper is closely related to a current research project (within SFB 1070) which is focused on the analysis of the literary (re-)construction of the past as resource knowledge. Specifically, the role and valuation of real, reconstructed, or fictitious historical knowledge as a resource in philosophical and political discourses are examined on the basis of relevant literary and rhetorical texts of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC that were written in or related to Athens. In the scope of our research, we are mainly concentrated on rhetorical speeches and philosophical utopian texts by Plato, as, for example, ‘Politeia’ and ‘Nomoi’. The focus remains on Athens as the political situation of this previously leading city has become extremely difficult in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent.: the Athenians have had a famous and glorious past, but after their defeat in the Peloponnesian War they find themselves in an inferior position for many decades – a situation that has shaken the long-lasting positive identity and demoralised the Athenians, but also has stimulated them to create

political concepts, which were partly based on old, real, or fictitious models (Welwei 1999; Piepenbrink 2001; Tiersch 2016).

This paper concentrates on some texts composed by the famous Athenian philosopher and literary author Plato in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC in which he discusses the war of prehistoric Athens against the legendary island state Atlantis. Many interesting literary and philosophical aspects under discussion here must be omitted in order to strictly focus on Plato’s invention of the Atlantis tradition, which turns out to be a multi-layered and symbolic ResourceComplex and which is supposed to encourage and to appeal to the contemporary Athenians.

Until the present day, Plato’s Atlantis creates diverse associations: mostly, we remember the island Atlantis as a paradise situated on the other side of the Pillars of Heracles, in the Atlantic Ocean, which is supposed to have sunk into the sea within one night, a thousand years ago, due to an earthquake and flood catastrophe, and which especially archaeological non-professionals believe to have discovered in many places around the world (for instance, Crete, Santorini, Troy, America, Uppsala, or Heligoland; Nesselrath 2002, 7–12; Vidal-Naquet 2006, 9–16 and 57–140). Those more familiar with the works of the Greek philosopher and literary author Plato will know Atlantis especially as the dangerous opponent of prehistoric Athens. Plato describes to us the brutal urge for territorial expansion of the megalomaniacal island kingdom, which was rich in natural resources and feudally structured and which is said to have conquered almost the entire Mediterranean region. The philosopher lets this urge end though with ancient Athens’ military triumph. In doing so, Plato constructs an impressive diptych in which the naval power Atlantis is confronted with ancient Athens, an agricultural and conservative land power. As the only state in the entire Mediterranean region, ancient Athens was able to affront the aggressive potentate of the Atlantic Ocean and, in doing so, prevail heroically. Plato is merely concerned with the depiction of the exemplary Athenians whom the degenerate inhabitants of Atlantis declare war upon – and lose.

The history of the war between ancient Athens and Atlantis appears in two of Plato’s dialogues: in

‘Timaeus’, and in ‘Critias’. In ‘Timaeus’ it is included as a story told by Critias in the introduction passage immediately before the great cosmological speech of the main figure in this dialogue, Timaeus (Ti. 20c4–27b6). In the dialogue ‘Critias’ it functions as the main story of the protagonist Critias (Crit. 108c5–121c5). It is possible that Plato wanted to add a third dialogue named after Hermocrates. The dialogues ‘Timaeus’ – ‘Critias’ – ‘Hermocrates’ would then have been a trilogy, composed after the dramatic model, which, however, stayed a fragment (O’Meara 2010, 397–402; 2012, 5). Besides Plato’s *œuvre*, we have no knowledge of the Atlantis story, therefore, all our information about it is based on what Plato puts into the mouth of his dialogue character Critias.

Through embedding the story of ancient Athens and Atlantis in these literary/philosophical dialogues, narrative coordinates of hermeneutical importance develop. This way, signals can be found in the dialogical parts framing the passages of the Atlantis story (in the so-called ‘frame-dialogues’). Here, the author Plato lets his dialogue figures, especially Socrates and Critias, reflect on a specific – philosophical – form of poesis and in this very context the story on ancient Athens and Atlantis is told. For sure, the Atlantis story is quite complex, rich in narrative structures and in *topoi* of different literary genre, mainly epic ones (for the many epic/homeric patterns and motives see Szlezák 1993, 236 f.; Nesselrath 2002, 29, 20–22). Scientific research of the past years and decades could plausibly show Plato’s literary strategy as highly relevant for the history of ancient poetics: his Atlantis story can be distinguished from a fairy tale (here ‘myth’), as well as from an empirical, factual report (here ‘historia’) and can, therefore, be called a ‘true’ fiction in a philosophical sense (after Martin 1976 now Gill 1977, 287–344; 1979, 64–78; Erler 1997a, 83–98).<sup>1</sup> According to the scientific *communis opinio*, basically since Aristotle (Diogenes Laertius III 37 = Aristot. frg. 73 Rose;

Breitenberger 2006, 336 f.), Plato’s Atlantis story is ‘philosophical poetry’ in prose.

In the following, the literary characteristics are differentiated a bit further and it will be attempted to relate them to the concept of creating symbolic values and resources. The focus will be on the phenomenon of ‘transfer’, which proves itself to be a key phenomenon, a method of Plato’s poetical/literary technique. The concept of transfer has originally been established in the field of psychology in which learners transfer recently learned insights to new topics and apply them to new contexts. Transfer also means a mental change-over, e.g. in the translation of a text (Wichter 2003, 67–95), but ‘transfer’ can also describe a temporal or spatial shift of knowledge, power, or culture.<sup>2</sup> Signifying a shift from one level of meaning to another, the ‘transfer’ comes close to the rhetorical term ‘metaphor’ (Rolf 2005). Every type of transfer has two pragmatic components since a person can only ‘transfer’ those things that are remembered. Without memory and recollection, there is no transfer achieved and, therefore, also no adaption to new spaces, cultures, people, or contexts. Therefore, it will be proposed that in Plato’s famous story of ancient Athens and Atlantis, the phenomenon of transfer proves to be an important literary strategy to construct a quasi ‘historical’ tradition. As Plato uses this ‘tradition’ in contexts of future ideal states, the invented ‘history’ of Athens and Atlantis is to be seen as a symbolic Resource-Complex, highly relevant for the identity of Plato’s Athenian audience.

## 1. The Texts and Plato’s Literary Strategy

The story of Atlantis and ancient Athens has been handed down to us in two of Plato’s dialogues, ‘Timaeus’ and ‘Critias’, in both cases the philosopher Socrates and mainly Critias, an Athenian politician, are the most relevant dialogue figures (Nesselrath 2006, 41–54). Critias functions as the narrator of the dispute between ancient Athens and

<sup>1</sup> The entire distinction made by Plato’s pupil Aristotle, who in his ‘Poetics’ (c. 9) argues and explains the specific truth of poetry in relation to the factuality in historiography is well known, see Erler 1997b, 80–100; Schmitt 2008, 372–426.

<sup>2</sup> The transfer of culture has been established terminologically mostly as *translatio*, e.g. *translatio studii* or *translatio imperii*. Still instructive is Worstbrock 1965, 1–22.

Atlantis in both of the dialogues. So far, his identity cannot be clarified without a doubt. Plato's uncle, who shares the same name (ca. 460–404 BC), and who belonged to the 30 tyrants, is not a possible candidate due to the immanent chronology of both dialogues.<sup>3</sup> Here, only the discussion about a 'middle' Critias and the intended anachronism as a hint to the fictionality of these figures, provided by the author Plato, is mentioned.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1. The Dialogue 'Timaeus'

In the first part of the introduction, Socrates and Timaeus recapitulate a conversation of the previous day, a talk about the ideal state (Plat. Ti. 17a2, b2, c1; c1–3. Ti. 17c1–19b2).<sup>5</sup> Socrates now wants to see this ideal state 'in motion'. He wants to know how the ideal state would prove itself in the case of an aggressive situation, more precisely, in the case of war (Ti. 19c3: ἄθλους, 19c4: ἀγωνιζομένην, 19c5: πόλεμον). Therefore, Critias is asked to tell his story from old and oral tradition again as he obviously did the evening before, but in short (see Ti. 20d1: λόγον εἰσηγήσατο ἐκ παλαιᾶς ἀκοῆς). Critias tells the story about ancient Athens and Atlantis. This story proves to be an experiment, evaluated critically by Socrates if it meets the requirements of his ideal state 'in motion'. In our context, not the Atlantis story itself, but the frames around the story and the constructed 'tradition' of this story are important. Therefore, let us first consider the 'chain of tradition' through which our Critias has learned about the story:

<sup>3</sup> This 'younger' Critias would be ten years old in 450 BC. As the age of his eponymous grandfather, Critias the older, for this point in time is indicated as 90 years, therefore he must have been born in 540 BC. At this time Solon, who supposedly told him about Atlantis, was already almost 20 years dead. See Nesselrath 2006, 43–50.

<sup>4</sup> The 'middle' Critias was son of Leaidēs and grandfather of the tyrant Critias. This Critias was about to be exiled by *ostrakismos* (480 BC), so he must have been of political relevance; in this sense first Burnet 1914, 338 and 351. For the dispute on the identity of the narrator Critias see Brisson 1994, 513–515 and Nesselrath 2002, 18 with note 39, and 41 with 53 f. For intended anachronisms see Nesselrath, 2002, 22–24 and Erler 2007, 69–71; Clay 1999, 15–17.

<sup>5</sup> On the discrepancies between the ideal state in 'Politeia' and in 'Timaeus' and 'Critias' see Hirzel 1895, 256 f.; Herter 1975, 289–298.

The narrator Critias had learned about this story as a ten-year-old boy from his already aged, 90 years old namesake and grandfather Critias the Elder. During the Apaturia festival, his grandfather was talking with his friend Amyndros, who praises the wise and famous politician Solon as a poet. Critias the Elder, therefore, refers to a 'logos' (a story) which he had learned from his father Dropides who had received it from his friend Solon. Solon again learned about it from Egyptian priests in Sais who, again, had learned about it from written Egyptian documents, dating back 8000 years. The documents were created 1000 years after the events had taken place. The event presented by the narrator Critias can therefore be dated back 9000 years before Solon. It falls into a quasi-prehistoric time, only remembered in the written tradition of the priests of Sais. Critias now describes the conversation between Solon and an Egyptian priest in great detail which, at first, is about 'old occurrences' (Ti. 22a1: τὰ παλαιά). In contrast to the 'young' Greeks<sup>6</sup> the 'older' Egyptians, living in a safe area, have recollected events of natural disasters. Thus, they do know about ancient Athens' outstanding act, its military victory against Atlantis. So far for the 'old' story.

Back to the narrator, the younger Critias, in 'Timaeus'. Critias describes how he felt reminded (ἀναμνησκόμενος) of this very story of ancient Athens and Atlantis when he was listening to Socrates' draft of the ideal state the day before (Ti. 25d7–e5). Socrates confirms the close affinity between the two states as well as the story's true character (Ti. 26e4–5: τό τε μὴ πλασθέντα μῦθον ἀλλ' ἀληθινὸν λόγον εἶναι πάμμεγά που). After this short version of ancient Athens and Atlantis (see Ti. 25e1: ὡς συντόμως εἰπεῖν with reference to 21a7–25d6), a longer one is supposed to follow, but now Timaeus is giving his long speech about the creation of the world.

<sup>6</sup> The sentence of the priest is famous: Ti. 22b4–5: 'O Solon, Solon, you Greeks are always children, yet there is no old Greek' (ὦ Σόλων, Σόλων, Ἕλληνας ἀεὶ παῖδες ἔστε, γέρων δὲ Ἕλληνα οὐκ ἔστιν).



## 1.2. The Dialogue ‘Critias’

Let us now move to the Atlantis version in the dialogue named ‘Critias’. Before the narration the protagonist (Critias) performs a manoeuvre characteristic for ancient (epic) poets: they normally start their performance with an invocation of the Muses to give support.<sup>7</sup> Thus, Critias invokes the gods, but, to be more precise, he invokes the mother of the muses, Mnemosyne.<sup>8</sup> She is already considered to be the personified cause for the muses in the genealogical description of the archaic poet Hesiod (‘Theogonia’ 53–67). She is the goddess of memory (Arrighetti 2006, 194–202) on whose support the success of his speech is based (Plat. Crit. 108d2–4: [...] κλητέον καὶ δὴ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα Μνημοσύνην. σχεδὸν γὰρ τὰ μέγιστα ἡμῖν τῶν λόγων ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ θεῷ πάντ’ ἐστίν). Invoking the Muses or Apollo is a traditional poetic gesture, but calling upon Mnemosyne is definitely not common in Greek poetry; however, it can be found once more in Plato’s *oeuvre* when Socrates turns to the muses and Mnemosyne before a longer presentation in the dialogue *Euthydemus* (275c5–d2).<sup>9</sup> Since Solon’s famous ‘muse elegy’ starts with ‘Mnemosyne’ as the first word (frg. 13, 1 W.), Critias’ reference to Mnemosyne in the ‘Critias’ dialogue can be decoded as a quotation of Solon. Above, Mnemosyne is the personification of ‘recollection’ and ‘memory’. With Mnemosyne, a new hermeneutic perspective opens up since Critias stresses that the following narration is up to **him** now; it relies on **his** memory (see Crit. 108d4: μνησθέντες γὰρ ἰκανῶς; εἰ: μνησθῶμεν). For that reason, he does not require divine support, and he emphasises his own memory performance many times.<sup>10</sup> So, this unusual invocation is to be taken as a programmatic self-assurance of the own mental capacities before a complex narration.

7 David 1984, 39, states that Critias acts like a rhapsode, also O’Meara 2010, 399, whereas Erler, 1997a, 86, rather considers him gesturing like a poet; see also Brisson 1982, 56 f.; Arrighetti 2006, 190 f., and Gill 1993, 63 with note 66.

8 Regali 2006, 65–88, especially 72 interprets this as a compensation for the originally poetic composition of the whole *logos* by Solon.

9 See – but without invocation of Mnemosyne – Plat. Tht. 191d4–e1 (memory).

10 On this see also David 1984, 34 f. As a result, the gesture of invoking the Muses is formally adopted.

Critias then delivers a description in a quite static picture, first of ancient Athens: its inhabitants have many things in common with the two gods Athena and Hephaestus, especially the warriors living separately on the acropolis; they are very talented in matters of warfare, craftsmanship, and intellect (Crit. 109b1–112e10). A description of the conditions on the island Atlantis follows: Atlantis is closely connected with Poseidon. There, a magnificent temple has been built in his honour on the hill where the king’s castle is located. The number of armed forces on hand is huge. However, in the same way as Atlantis’ wealth and power is increasing, the population is depraved.<sup>11</sup> For that reason, Zeus, father of all gods, decides to exact revenge on the Atlanteans (Crit. 121b9–10), calls in a general assembly of the gods, but we do not know, what he wanted to tell them, as here the texts stops (Plato probably never completed it).<sup>12</sup>

## 1.3. Plato’s Literary Strategy: The Invention of a Tradition

We may identify ‘poetic gestures’ and references to poetry as signals or markers of fiction (Gill 1977; 1979; Erler 1997a; 1997b),<sup>13</sup> mainly the invocation of the goddess of memory and the complicated tradition of the story told. In addition, we

11 This depiction of Atlantis refers to Athens as a decadent city, see Vidal-Naquet 1989, 216–232.

12 For a survey of scholarly literature on the problem whether the text is interrupted here by Plato intentionally or not see Nesselrath 2006, 34–41; that Plato has created ‘Critias’ as a fragment has recently been argued by Lukinowich 2001, 72–79.

13 But there are more signals. Just to mention one out of many: the phenomenon of time. Here the extreme temporal distance in which the ‘prehistoric’ war between Athens and Atlantis – 9000 years before Solon – is described and this is a clear sign of fiction. The chain of tradition namely has got a gap of 1000 years between the decline of ancient Athens and Atlantis due to earthquakes and floods until the written documentation of the events in Egypt. Only the Attic highlanders, always the only ones to survive such catastrophes, are able to remember the names of mythical heroes and hand them down orally. But we may ask, how the Attic illiterate highlanders are supposed to preserve such a complex description of human and religious conditions in ancient Athens and Atlantis, and how they could hand it down all the way to Egypt? This gap is quite remarkable. In addition, just to mention it, there is another gap, a gap of about 20 years in the chain of tradition which lies between Solon’s death (ca. 560 BC) and the birth of Critias the Elder (540 BC).

find frequent references to the ‘authenticity’ of the story, many and rich material details, and the fact that Critias hints explicitly to the historicity of the text (a ‘logos’!). In ancient literature, all these features are to be meant as characteristics of fictional and utopian texts (Clay 2012). The certification apparatus with detailed facts and numerical data, which alludes to Greek historiography, for example, Herodotus, is subverted by the poetic elements mentioned before. Nonetheless, the whole Atlantis story gives the impression of being historical, but evades all factual examination.

What can we summarise so far? In both dialogues (‘Timaeus’ and ‘Critias’) we find implicit and explicit signals pointing to the fact that the two versions of the Atlantis stories belong to a new, special type of poetry, a poetical fiction in prose (Regali 2012, esp. 39–43). By doing so, Plato creates with his Athens/Atlantis story an example of poetry based on philosophical values. This poetical fiction in prose does neither belong to traditional Greek myth nor is not bound to historiographic precision of facts.

## 2. Modes or Poetics of Transfer

Let us now focus more on Plato’s strategy of constructing recollection and memory, as both play an essential role in the context of the Atlantis story: already in the beginning of the ‘Timaeus’ dialogue, Socrates reminds the others of the discussion on the ideal state the day before. In the beginning of ‘Critias’, he explicitly refers to the importance of Mnemosyne. Without memory, there are neither tradition nor storytelling. Regarding the essential stages of memory and the above-mentioned chain of tradition<sup>14</sup> for the Atlantis story, we can identify a special Platonic poetical strategy, which I call ‘poetics of transfer’: I would like to emphasise six modes of transfer:

### 2.1. Vertical Transfer

In general, the phenomenon of an older person instructing a younger person is a recurring stereotype since archaic literature. Here, the narrator Critias is instructed in his youth by his grandfather; the context is a rhapsodic agon during the Apaturia festival, where the boys recite popular poems of Solon (Ti. 21b5–7).<sup>15</sup> Critias, the grandfather, has himself been instructed about the Egypt narration in his youth by his father Dropides, a friend of the respected poet and politician Solon (Ti. 20d8–e3). Solon, again, has learned about the prehistoric events in ancient Athens and Atlantis by the Egyptian priest at Sais. Solon himself is Greek and, hence, in comparison with an Egyptian, member of a ‘young culture’. Vertical transfer now describes the transfer of a story from old to young, which can happen across generations. The instruction of a younger person by an elder has, for ages, had a considerable symbolic value (see David 1984, 40 with note 3) and has even brought about an own literary genre in Egypt, the so-called wisdom literature (see Welliver 1977, 52 f.; on ‘wisdom literature’ see West 1978, 3–25). We see wisdom and knowledge to be symbolic resource complexes.

### 2.2. Horizontal Transfer

The war story between ancient Athens and Atlantis is handed down in multiple stages. One especially important stage is the Greek Solon who learns about it from an Egyptian priest. As soon as Solon brings this story from Egypt to Greece, he carries out an intercultural transfer. The Greek tradition of this narrative can be referred back solely to the person of Solon. Consequently, the figure of this great politician and poet proves to be

<sup>14</sup> A corresponding stemma is provided by, e.g., Clay 1999, 19.

<sup>15</sup> The festival of Apaturia is an initiation ceremony for young men (including the sacrifice of beard or hair respectively), for which reason this ceremony – a *rite de passage* – is highly relevant and meaningful. In our context the initiation is that Critias is entrusted with knowledge (i.e. the story of Atlantis) by an older authority (i.e. Critias the Elder). Thus Tulli 1994, 102 with note 16, rightly emphasises the symbolic value of the Apaturia (esp. of the third day, the so called ‘Koureotis’).



the crucial link in the tradition of the story; from the Greek perspective, Solon proves to be the narrative's first concrete, quasi-historical evidence. So, the author Plato uses Solon's good standing among the contemporaries of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC and presents him as a reliable figure in the chain of temporal and spatial transfer of the Atlantis story.

### 2.3. Medial Transfer

Solon also proves to be a figure of the medial transfer. According to Critias, only with him, his – probably not historical<sup>16</sup> – stay in Egypt, the old written documents on ancient Athens and Atlantis become subject of a conversation (Solon – priest). It was he, who turned the written logos on ancient Athens and Atlantis, which has been archived for 8000 years in Egyptian temples, into an oral story: first between himself and the Egyptian priest, then in the conversation between Solon and Critias the Elder, afterwards in the conversation between Critias the Elder and Amyndros, and lastly, in the dialogues 'Timaeus' and 'Critias'.

The now oral tradition of what has so far only been preserved in written form has been initiated by Solon. This makes the story about ancient Athens and Atlantis dynamic and attractive in Greek contexts. Since Solon is not only acknowledged as a politician, but also as a poet (Arrighetti 2006, 194–202), a second facet of the medial transfer becomes visible: this becomes apparent in the Apaturia scene with the boys reciting Solon's current songs, or when Critias refers to Solon's 'logos from Egypt' (Ti. 21c5–6) or explicitly talks about Solon's Atlantis' poetry' (Crit. 113a4: ποιήσιν).<sup>17</sup> Thus, the narrator Critias turns Solon into the key figure

within the tradition of the Atlantis story. But Solon is seen not only as a figure of cultural contact between Egypt and Greece, but also as a **poet** who planned to present this story in a poetic manner. However, due to his extensive political commitment, he was never able to do so.<sup>18</sup> When Critias refers to Solon as his source for the Atlantis story and when he follows his tradition, this is an important signal for the fact that Critias is now referring back to Solon's poetical plan: Critias wants to realise this and wants to bring the 'Egyptian logos' into poetical shape and into a new medium.

### 2.4. Semantic Transfer

This mode of transfer can be identified only in the dialogue 'Critias' (113a–b). After Critias has told the story of ancient Athens and before he talks about the conditions in Atlantis, he explains (Crit. 113a–b) why the people of Atlantis have **Greek** names in his story, although they are non-Greek barbarians. Here, once again, we find an explicit reference to Solon: since Solon wanted to use the story for his poetry, he inquired about the 'meaning' (δύναμις) of the foreign names of the Atlantis people. Already the Egyptians had changed these foreign names into their own language and fixed them in written form. Solon learned about the meaning of every name and transferred the formerly Atlantic, then Egyptian names in a more general sense into Greek and wrote them down.<sup>19</sup> His manuscript has supposedly been handed down to Critias through his grandfather Critias the Elder.<sup>20</sup> Such systematic and serious research for a planned poetical *œuvre*, clearly proves Solon to be an early *poeta doctus*. Regarding the phenomenon of multiple transfers, shifts, and translations, which become

<sup>16</sup> This is what many recent scholars in the field of historiography would argue for, e.g. Oliva 1988, 37 f., and Hölkeskamp 1999, 44–59, esp. 46 and 55 f., who exposes the topic of a 'travelling' *nomothetes*. In contrast see, e.g., Luce 1978, 60 f., who despite inconsistencies and anachronisms trusts in the ancient *vitae*, just as, e.g., Griffiths 1985, 5 f. We may also question Plato's stay in Egypt which is probably a (re-) construction from certain passages in the work of Plato by later authors, see Erler 2007, 46 f., and Männlein-Robert 2009.

<sup>17</sup> The only literary records besides Plato himself are to be found in Plutarch (i.e. in early Imperial times) who for his part refers to Plato obviously.

<sup>18</sup> Like the poem of Solon, Plato's 'Critias' remained unfinished, see David 1984, 50–52, who as a result advocates a utopic character of the dialogue. For the convincing interpretation of an ambitious project of Plato see Tulli 2013, 269–282.

<sup>19</sup> In Crit. 113a7–b2 the Egyptian priests are explicitly called *μετενηνοχότας*, about Solon is said that he is *ἀναλαμβάνων εἰς [...] φωνὴν ἀπεγράφετο*. Herodotus also offers Greek equivalents for Egyptian gods (and their names), see Griffiths 1985, 26.

<sup>20</sup> For the relevance of familial bonds in this context see Tulli 1994, 101 f.

visible when looking at the names of the people of Atlantis, it can be seen that at every stage of remembering this story a translation in the general sense occurs, as well as a semantic transfer of the Atlantic names into the own language and writing system of the respective translator occurs. A reliable acquisition and tradition of such old, foreign, and distant narratives can apparently only be achieved through adaptation and translation into one's own language and writing, thus, into one's own culture. In doing so, the *δύναμις*, the meaning of the names, not single or even individual personalities are of importance. It is not about individuals, but types. Therefore, Plato's Atlantis story turns out to possess a general and philosophical character and functions as a model.

## 2.5. Transfer as Recollection

Plato describes the story about ancient Athens and Atlantis as something which is often in danger of getting lost down the centuries. The reasons given are natural catastrophes and lacking memory of people which endanger the transfer of knowledge. Memory and recollection prove to be essential conditions of knowledge and as a means of communication and transfer of it. Regarding the memory and tradition of the events around ancient Athens and Atlantis, we can speak of collective memory (following Maurice Halbwachs 1967) which has preserved the events over a long series or chain of single steps or stages, and in doing so, even transcends space and time. Also, well-known categories can be applied easily in our case: those are, for one, **communicative** memory, which especially speaks of the oral tradition from one person to another, and **cultural** memory, which records and conserves memories that are not bound to people. In doing so, I would like to modify the concept of **collective** memory and suggest another subcategory, namely that of **personal** memory. This means the possibilities of an individual person to remember remote events. In Plato's dialogues 'Timaeus' and 'Critias', memory is given only to Critias: in great detail, Critias describes his effort to remember the story: in the evening, on his way home after the dialogue about the ideal state, he told the others his first version of the

story. After that, all night long, he went over the whole story again and brought everything back to his memory, since as a child he had repeatedly asked his grandfather about the Atlantis story and had fixed it in his memory in his youth. By stressing the fact that Critias has to renew his memories of the Atlantis story, gather all the facts, tentatively go through and differentiate everything, in my opinion, it becomes very clear that his memory is not only a transfer from old knowledge into presence. His renewal turns out to be a **production** of this narrative as well. This means that Critias 'creates' the Atlantis story in his multiple attempts again and again. Next to the facts and data from the past which survive in the collective memory, or better, in the cultural memory, Critias' memorisation does not only prove to be a complex re-construction, but also a **con**-struction, a **com**-position.<sup>21</sup>

## 2.6. Transfer as Transposition

As Critias says in the beginning (Ti. 26c–d), he wants to 'transfer the ideal citizens and the ideal state, about which you [sc. Socrates] have yesterday told us in a myth, now into the realm of truth'.<sup>22</sup> The ideal state is, thus, supposed to be tested for his suitability in an 'experiment'. In doing so, Socrates' ideal state is explicitly equated with ancient Athens' prehistoric state. It is all about testing a poetic model, which has been designed after philosophical standards.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Critias' entire Atlantis story turns out to be a narrative back-projection of an ideal state (namely Athens)

<sup>21</sup> In this context we may remember a very apt remark by Edmund Husserl (1928, §7, 382–385), according to which 'Vergangenheit immer von der Gegenwart her konstituiert wird'.

<sup>22</sup> Ti. 26c7–d3: 'Now, let us translate the citizens and the city that you have depicted as in a myth yesterday, into reality; and let us locate them as if they were just here holding that those citizens invented by you were truly our ancestors the priest was talking about.' (τοὺς δὲ πολίτας καὶ τὴν πόλιν ἦν χθὲς ἡμῖν ὡς ἐν μύθῳ διήμισθα σύ, νῦν μετενεγκόντες ἐπὶ τάληθές δεῦρο θήσομεν ὡς ἐκείνην τήνδε οὔσαν, καὶ τοὺς πολίτας οὓς διενοοῦ φήσομεν ἐκείνους τοὺς ἀληθινούς εἶναι προγόνους ἡμῶν, οὓς ἔλεγεν ὁ ἱερεὺς).

<sup>23</sup> See, however, Görgemanns 2000, 410–412, who interprets the term 'truth' (ἀληθής) as a hint to empirical facticity, not to Platonic ontology.

which was designed to be a present or future model for the contemporary Athenians.

### 3. Conclusion

Knowledge of the past is to be regarded as a valuable symbolic resource, especially in terms of state theory and philosophy as well as concrete politics, and also for future ideal, utopian state concepts. The poetically stylised story of old Athens' victory over Atlantis, presented in a complex chain of transfers, is obviously an artistic and meaningful invention of tradition. This 'tradition' is presented as 'remembered knowledge' of a prehistoric past which is to be made available as a resource in contemporary philosophical and political discourse: the prehistoric Athenians proved to be brave, prudent, and god-fearing citizens, thus embodying ideals that played an important role in Plato's utopian models of state. In this way, Plato's fictional construction of (remembered) knowledge, the narrative of the legendary victory of the exemplary old Athenians against the corrupt Atlanteans may be interpreted as an innovative bundle or

complex of (symbolic) resources with an intended effect and dynamic on the contemporary social and political life of the Athenians. So, let – the presumably historic – Atlantis be sunk (wherever) and forget about it, but keep in mind the necessary chains of tradition in inventing such a successive myth. In the end, this whole story is about Athens, about the symbolic 'memory' of past qualities and the stimulation of current moral and political resources of the Athenian citizens in the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC.

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## RESSOURCENKULTUREN 13

# EXPLORING RESOURCES

This book presents case studies of the SFB 1070 RESOURCECULTURES, which use an extended resource definition. Resources are analysed as contingent means to construct, sustain and alter social relations, units and identities. Accordingly, resources are seen as means of social practices of actors that depend on cultural and social appropriation and valuation. They constitute ResourceCultures.

The contributions cover the topics of cross-sectional working groups and conferences that shaped the interdisciplinary collaboration on cultural, spatial and temporal dimensions of resources and ResourceCultures.



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