

## Re: ATLANTIS: The Final Countdown...

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So, now we know some of the players in the strange and complicated last stages of the Antediluvian Age, we've met the Unity and Zadatharion and Aradel, the Orichalcum Guild and the Circle of Ten, we've over an overview of the shape of the world (though only an overview, that Antediluvian World was a complex politically, socially, linguistically, and culturally as our own).

We've also observed that this age of rapid advance in psychic and physical science, engineering skill, and military, economic, and social power all post-dated the Golden Age of Atlantis. This is true, but it hinges upon how one defines the phrase 'Golden Age'. In terms of contentment, moral and social advancement, things like justice, interpersonal loyalty, simple kindness, the Golden Age ended not too long after the birth of the Unity and the death of the Eldest. If one measures 'golden' terms of power and knowledge, wealth and influence, engineering skill and sophistication, the Antediluvian Age was still golden and getting ever more so.

By the year 4860 BC, several lines of development were converging, technologically and socially. Unfortunately, one of those lines was the Unity's 'rationalization project', now 190 years old. The effect of this had always been slow, gradual, a slow-drip of toxin into the veins of Atlantean society, its effect had been slow as well. Day to day, month to month, even year to year, it was all but imperceptible. Decade to decade, though, it was becoming significant, especially as the older generations who could remember a better way, a better time died, one by one, Atlantis and the Antediluvian World were changing one funeral pyre at a time.

Already, Atlantean society was courser, crueler, than it had been, social ties beyond family and clan were weaker, cynicism waxed as examples of genuinely noble behavior became harder and harder to find. As the intangible glue that bound society together weakened, diluted, the ceremonies of loyalty, the words and the rituals and the penalties for violation became louder and more prevalent and pervasive. Where once a personal agreement between two heads of aristocratic clans, with no ritual or ceremony, was enough to conclude a binding agreement, now elaborate rituals with witnesses and threats and exchanges of hostages were used to ensure loyalty and assuage the

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ever-growing fear of treachery, a fear that grew in Atlantean hearts as they themselves became more treacherous.

Not that they usually thought of themselves in those terms, there were endless rationalizations, but deep in their souls the Atlanteans knew, and as the contrast between the standards of a few generations before and their present became more and more visible, they began to try to denigrate their past, or to persuade themselves that nothing had really changed and that the past had been no better morally and ethically than their present...but they knew better, and the knowledge bred both shame and resentment, emotional states the Unity could not even comprehend.

The Unity was frustrated by the results of its project, it had succeeded to a degree in making the non-member Humans around it more predictable...but the side effects were many and generated a general decline in the operational efficiency of a society it still hoped to use for its own purposes, and the Unity lacked the ability to grasp just why this side-effect was happening. It tried and tried to 'model' the problem mentally, but it lacked the empathy with normal Human minds to succeed.

That did not lead it to suspend the project, however. Indeed, even if it had done so, that would not have undone the damage that had already been slowly inflicted over the previous 190 years.

There were other beings who might have been able to do something about the problem...if they recognized that it existed. Zadatharion, for example, certainly recognized that Atlanteans, for all their impressive technological and social accomplishments, were showing signs of a treacherous nature and a society that looked less morally advanced than some barbarians the mightiest of the Avatars had known. Zadatharion, though, had come to Atlantis after the imposed decline and had never seen the Atlanteans in their greater days.

Aradel, though, had spent most of her remembered life in Atlantis, she had been there from the first founding thousands of years before, she did recognize the change, and was repelled by it. Unfortunately, she did not know what was causing it, even after Zadatharion recruited/drafted her into his war against the Unity, she did not realize that the Unity was behind Atlantis' growing moral and social corruption, the idea that an intentional plan was pressing this change would have seemed paranoid even to her. She tended to credit the change to the shock of the Eldest's death and the tremendous increase in wealth and power over such a short period of history, just a few generations had seen life and society transformed radically. [1]

Now, though, the moral decline was accelerating for a variety of reasons.

[1] There was an element of truth in this, of course. Even without the Unity, the Atlantean social structure, evolved to operate under an immortal monarch, would have been heavily strained by the demands of the changes now occurring.

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