



Foto: Sevket Kurtius / Ilhan Durupinar 1959

PART 1:

The Boat in the Mountains

When I first saw this object in 1983, my first reaction was that this was just a landslide area where the object was formed naturally and by chance. But then I saw the object from a helicopter and could see that it lay at the beginning of the bottleneck. It looked just like when you fly over the Atlantic and see the gargantuan boats floating down there.

According to aerodynamic and physical laws it made sense that the "Ark" lay precisely where it did in the middle of a mudslide. Then I understood that the formation had not emerged around the great stone which we are quick to conclude.

It is independent of the stone. It is its own entity.

(Dr. Salih Bayraktutan, Professor of Geology)

Chapter 1

Is this the Ark?

“There’s the Ark!” said Elin Berglund and pointed toward the top of the rugged, gray-brown rock of a mountain.

“Where?” asked the rest of us, full of expectation and impatience after having traveled the past two days.

“It’s there, next to that green area...”

After a while, some caught a glimpse of a symmetrical outline. I couldn’t see it though and stood spying with my binoculars for a long time.

We found ourselves less than five kilometers from the site that many claim to be the actual ruins of Noah’s Ark!

It wasn’t on Mt. Ararat where so many Ark-hunters had otherwise searched for hundreds of years. It lay on the other side of the Aras valley, amidst a mountain range not known to most people from the western world. It lay about 12 miles southeast of the foot of Mt. Ararat - on the Iranian border.

A Mysterious Object Appears

Until April/May of 1948, there was nothing to see of the Ark in these Kurdish mountains. Only mud and grass covered the slope where the broad-shaped object suddenly appeared out of the mud one day. For one reason or another, the slope was named “Mashur” which means resurrection.

In 1948 there were a number of earthquakes in that area of Turkey, and from one day to the next a shape of something was seen sticking up out of



Elin Berglund (No. 2 from the left) and the Danish Ark-hunters with a look of expectancy and hope towards the “Ark” up the mountain while Dr. Salih Bayraktutan (right) returns to “the boat-shaped object” that he has researched over the past 20 years.



The Danish expedition at the signpost indicating Nuhun Gemisi, Noah’s Great Boat, just before the first trip into the mountains on the left. Journalist Joachim Frøsig from the Danish television station TV2 is on the right.



Geologist Dr. Salih Bayraktutan was one of our guides. Here he is together with TV-journalist Joachim Frøsig.

the mud that was not there before. From a distance, it was possible to see that the shape was an outline of what looked like a gigantic boat...

The local Kurdish people in the nearest village, Uzengili, tell that right away they associated the shape with Nuhun Gemisi – Noah's boat. Maybe it was because the outlined object was large and had the form of a boat, or maybe because an old woman had had a dream not long before in which she herself – by her account - was given a message that Noah's Ark would appear and that a local man by the name of Hassan was to guard it.

Reshit, the young shepherd boy who saw the strange shape first, soon told about it in the town Dogubayazit - Turkey's eastern-most city. A well-off local farmer took the news with him on a trip to Istanbul, 1,300 km west. Before the news got out to the western world, an American journalist in Istanbul had a mix-up with his geography. Until that time, interest in finding Noah's Ark had been concentrated on Mt. Ararat, and therefore, he assumed that this was once again a Mt. Ararat story. That is why he placed Reshit's find "2/3 of the way up the mountain of Ararat".

Ark hunters tried to get this new, sparse information to fit together with that which they had already collected. For many years they were convinced that this Reshit, whom they never found again, had seen the Ark on Mt. Ararat. In the meanwhile the boat-shaped object was allowed to lie untouched for 11 years...

Footnotes

¹ Clifford L. Burdick, PhD. writes in "Ararat - the mother of Mountains" CRSQ Vol. 1 No. 4 June, 1967, that Mt. Ararat is composed of at least three volcanic layers from different eras during and after the Flood (spoken of in the Bible) and that the entire northeast side of Mt. Ararat was blown away under an enormous volcanic eruption, which probably happened some time after the water had sunk - an eruption that could compare to the one that buried Pompeii under lava.

The place is now known as Ahora Ravine, where an earthquake again in 1840 wiped out a village and St. James' monastery, which lay a bit up the side of the mountain.

Large pieces of the mountain were spread kilometers around, and the ash spread over an area of 100 square miles.

Close to the mountain, the ash was many hundreds of feet thick, and 10 miles from the mountain, it was multiple feet thick, Burdick believes.

Captain Ilhan Durupinar

One day in the summer of 1959, a Turkish captain and cartographer by the name of Ilhan Durupinar flew over the area and photographed the boat-shaped object from the air. The picture was printed, among other places, in what at that time was called LIFE magazine.

This started a great new interest in finding Noah's ark - on Mt. Ararat. It was plain to see that the boat-shaped object did not lie on this mountain, but very few had this insight. Whatever the case, it was over in the mountains - somewhere.

At the same time, an American team had come down to research the object, but they had no great success. Disappointed to find nothing but earth, they went home; again, the find was forgotten for more than a decade.

In the middle of the 70's, a very special American became interested in the object. But the leading Ark-hunters didn't take this man seriously. The Ark was supposedly located on Mt. Ararat, or so they thought without a doubt. But this special American had uncovered more and more for each year, and one day the Turkish authorities recognized his find and declared it a protected national park.

The Turkish military had constructed a gravel road so that when conditions were acceptable – that is, clear of snow - it was possible to drive almost all the way up the steep mountain road. It was relatively easy for us to find the place.

"It's time to go," shouted Elin.



We quickly got into the little bus we had rented and drove up the snowy gravel road.

When we got around the last hairpin turn at an elevation of well over 6,500 ft., the “Ark” suddenly appeared on the hillside to our left.

“It’s practically in a valley! Didn’t the Ark land on a mountain?” I commented to Elin who had been here before and was the guide for our trip.

“Yes, but the Ark hasn’t always lain here. It sailed down here from the mountain there.” She laughed and pointed up toward a steep crest of 8,800 ft. I later found out that the crest was given a Turkish name that, when translated, means “the anchor place of heroes”.

There it was – the boat-shaped object – like a mighty ship on its way down the valley from its first haven, the twin mountains of Yidityatađi which can be seen in the background.

When Mt. Ararat Exploded

Dr. Salih Bayraktutan, the geologist we hired to travel with us, explained that mud from multiple enormous mudslides had washed down through the valley together with huge amounts of water from punctured pre-historic lakes. His theory was that the boat-shaped object had earlier lain up by the crest and had slid down together with the mud mass to its present position. This had happened many, many years ago, maybe multiple thousands of years.

It is possible that the mudslide happened at the same time that a big part of Mt. Ararat almost exploded under an enormous volcanic eruption¹, which blew 1/6 of the mountain away.

It is not known exactly when this happened, but it must have been an eruption of the same magnitude as Mount St. Helens, which exploded on a



“Jetzt gehen!” said the Turkish chauffeur (left).

Sunday morning, the 18th of May, 1980 in Washington State. St. Helens' explosion spread ash all the way to Japan...

The earthquake on Mt. Ararat left an enormous gap in the mountain - the so-called Ahora Ravine. Strangely enough, this same Ahora Ravine is where many Ark-hunters have searched and continue to search for the Ark in vain. Up until now, no one has found conclusive evidence of the Ark on Mt. Ararat,

but the hunt has continued year after year.

Now we were here, looking at the only sign of a pre-historic ship lying here in the mountains. And it didn't lie on Mt. Ararat, but rather some 12 miles southeast, on an unknown and over-looked mountain...

Like a Mirage...

The Turkish chauffeur stopped and ordered us to get out in German, “Jetzt gehen!” He had been a guest worker in Germany. We got out to admire the fabled “ship”, which at this point only looked like a peculiar heightening in the landscape. I think that we all felt the wind of history, as if we were set 5,000 years back in time to the days of Noah...

We quickly captured the area on film and in pictures, even though we would soon have the opportunity to get some better ones. We kept ourselves in subconscious reverence at a distance of 1500 ft. It was as if we didn't dare risk the chance that it could be a mirage that would disappear before we got up to it.

Could this really be the Ark...?

From our studies beforehand, we knew that we wouldn't find a well-kept wooden Ark untouched through at least 4,500 years² of harsh climate. We knew that it would be more of a type of imprint in the earth. The wood would either have decayed or been petrified after all of these years. But just to find the smallest sign that the Ark actually existed was an extreme sensation. And here we stood, looking at a formation that was 518 feet long - the same length the Ark had according to the Bible.

Could it be that Noah's good ship had again reared its head after all these years where the Ark only existed in stories and myths?

Salih and Hassan

While we stood atop a hill with a view of the “Ark”, Dr. Salih Bayraktutan, the Turkish scientist, held a geologic lecture that we shall come back to later. Salih is a geologist and professor at Atatürk University in Erzurum. He has patiently worked with the find for almost 20 years without being able to finish his research both due to a shortage of supplies and partners

that deserted him.

I tried to translate the confusing man for the group, but his sentences were longer than the Ark itself, and in the end I let him explain without any disruptive interruptions. He was finished before he noticed that I wasn't translating anymore.

Salih was not lacking in self-irony, and he got along well with Danish television TV2's photographer, Magnus Platz, whose cunning and dark Danish humor is not for beginners.

Magnus and TV2's journalist, Joachim Frøsig, got a hold of Hassan, an old Kurd from the near-by village, Uzengili, in the meantime.

In the TV-feature they recorded Hassan claimed that back in 1948, when the object first appeared, a neighbor-woman was given a message in a dream that the Ark would be found and that he, Hassan, should guard it. Hassan does this today and willingly brews up Turkish tea for pilgrimaging foreigners that have traveled from distant lands to see his good ship: Nuhun Gemisi.

The Wyatt Mystery..

The TV team stood on the edge of the hilltop and let Hassan, via a Kurdish translator, tell how one day many years ago he had seen a mystical stranger lay down and sleep on top of the boat-shaped object.

Hassan, with disbelief and caution, got closer. Turks say that Kurds always sleep with a knife on them, but this guy seemed to be unarmed. Hassan crept close to the sleeping stranger and put a gun in his face. The stranger, as in a surprise attack, tried to gather his thoughts and explained that he had been wandering about in the mountains trying to find the place that the Turkish pilot had revealed from the air. Exhausted, he laid himself down to sleep on the "Ark". This is what had happened up until the two met each other, and immediately after, they became life-long friends.

Hassan's friend was now dead. His name was Ron Wyatt from Nashville, Tennessee.

Wyatt was a mystery that I had to explain. Before we started our journey, I read many articles about this man. There were a lot of critical articles that claimed that he was a deceitful fortune hunter. Some tried to embarrass him by suggesting that he should rather have written series about Indiana Jones. Actually, Kurdish terrorists abducted him. People around him were killed; he was accused of espionage and had been imprisoned in Saudi Arabia. Comparing him with Indiana Jones was really not that far off the mark.

As usual, the source of the criticism was a group of American creationists who were convinced that the Ark lie on Mt. Ararat instead of here.

It was difficult for us outsiders to understand this discord. And it didn't make it easier finding the truth.

I asked Elin, who had known Wyatt personally and been together with him on an expedition to Egypt shortly before his death in 1999, what her impression of the man was. She had only good things to say about him.



Hassan remembers when "the Ark" emerged from the mud.

TV-photographer Magnus Platz shot four hours of video from the first Danish expedition in May 2001. It was cut down to 9 minutes and 30 seconds before it was shown on national television.





But I took her assurance with a grain of salt.

Now it was not about getting off course, but rather finding the truth about Noah's Ark - no matter what I thought about Wyatt.

The Flood...?

Geologist Salih Bayraktutan had now finished his lecture on how the formation could not have possibly been naturally formed and why it stayed standing with its sharp edges despite the violent erosion of the landscape and the sedimentary movement underground.

Finally, we were headed toward the formation. We were finally on our way to "the Ark". We were about to walk on "something" that may have carried Noah and his family, together with a lot of animals, through the Flood over 4,500 years ago.

The Flood...? Yes, but wasn't that just a story...?

Now it was time to dive into it. We knew the American scientists had recently found new evidence of "the Flood" in the Black Sea - only 185 miles northwest of our Ark find. There had also been geological signs in other parts of the world of a catastrophic flood centuries ago.⁴ The signs have been interpreted differently - all after the geologist's personal convictions.

There were both Christians and non-Christians on the team. Some believed completely and unshakingly in the Bible. Some doubted. A few had a different religion. But whatever we believed, we knew that both the Flood and the Ark were two of mankind's greatest riddles, which were not only described in the Bible but also in other ancient historic sources.

Noah and the Ark are a part of world culture. Almost all children have heard the story. It is not only found written in Christianity and Judaism but also in Islam's holy book, the Qur'an. Among Native Americans and the Chinese, this story is known. Throughout the whole earth, stories about a great and mighty flood - and eight forefathers, which many cultures have made into gods - can be found.

Were they only myths, or was there a historical happening behind them? - a part of the world's very first pre-historic story?

The further I dove into this pre-history with the ancient sources, the more exciting it got. We will come back to all of this later, and you will be amazed - just as I have been time and time again.

Could It Lie on Mt. Ararat?

While we traveled over toward the boat-shaped object, we had the mighty Mt. Ararat on our left-hand side. It stood as a constant challenge for our interest of the new find.

In the years after our first expedition to the Durupinar find, I have followed the investigation of the Ark on Mt. Ararat through books and articles. The last 50 years of research has been mostly concentrated on climbing on Mt. Ararat. There have been innumerable books written about the fantastic stories that circulate and about people that think they have seen the actual Ark on

Footnotes

² According to the Bible's chronology, there should have been ca. 6,000 years from the creation of Adam until now. The Flood came in the year 1656, according to this calculation - that is 2344 B.C. (ca. 4,348 years ago - in 2004). This is in agreement with the Hebrew, Egyptian, and Babylonian astronomical chronologies (according to Davidson and Aldersmith).

Author and journalist Rene Norbergen estimated ca. 3398 B.C. after having studied the *Greek Septuagint* version of the Old Testament. This version was made for the Egyptian king, Ptolemy II Philadelphus' (287-47 B.C.) large library in Alexandria. The transcriptions of this are older than the later Hebrew Massorah transcriptions.

³ The biblical telling of a worldwide flood because of the evil of mankind can be found in Genesis, chapters 6-8 in the Old Testament of the Bible.

⁴ See the map with markings of where stories of the Flood are later in this book.

the great mountain.

Therefore, it came as a shock when I heard about the Durupinar find, which wasn't on the infamous mountain at all.

If Durupinar contains the ruins of the Ark, many of these stories and accounts must not be true. This was not a nice thought. Now I had an even larger study in front of me when we returned home. In the coming chapters, we will go through the results of the research I have done.

We will also meet the oldest "survivor" of the first modern expeditions in 1960 on Mt. Ararat, the artist Alfred Lee, whom I have interviewed. He has personally known many of the people that claim to have seen Noah's Ark on Mt. Ararat. He has painted their stories. And he has also been on Mt. Ararat himself and looked for the Ark. He still believes that he knows where it is. And he is waiting for a sign from God – and then he will go out again. But until then, he is trying to keep his Ark-fever under control – that is, if the sign comes.

Some of what he can tell and that which I have found out will most likely shock many of those interested in the Ark.

But let's not dawdle.

Whether you are convinced one way or the other, the story of Noah's Ark will never again be just an innocent fairy tale after you've read this book. I can promise you that much.

*We walked around "the
Ark" for hours
investigating it...
In front ship builder
Niels Lind.*





*We traveled to the easternmost and poorest part of Turkey...
 Our route on the 2001-expedition included Abraham's town Harran and Sanli Urfa
 (once Ur) in Southern Turkey and an outing to a possible Tower of Babel
 under the dammed-up Euphrates River.
 More on that in chapter 12.*

