

# Noah's Art by JB Dukes

## Prologue

In the folklore of all continents there is found a memory of the ancient land that sank beneath the waves and of a righteous survivor. The Babylonians called him Ziusudra or Xisuthras, son of Oliartes. The Chinese called him Yao or Fo-Hi. The Indians call him Satyavatra, the sun-born monarch. The Greeks and Egyptians called him Atlas, eldest son of Clieto and Poseidon. Others called him Prometheus, Deucalion, Heuth, Incachus, Osiris, Dagon.

Many would say that these are parallel accounts, arising from similar but not identical sources; whether those sources are ancient story telling traditions, moralistic myths or historical events. Anthropologists might call this an analogous phenomenon: many similar instances of a story genre arising from many analogous origins. Others would say that the traditions must share a common lineage: either a set of similar flood-survival events experienced around the world during a time of great global inundation, such as the drawing to a close of the last great ice age approximately 10,000 years ago, or in the extreme, a single flood survival event, experienced before the dispersion of modern humans across the globe. This is what anthropologists might call a homologous folkloric tradition: many diverse versions shaped by a single source.

Among those tending to interpret the many flood stories as homologous are traditionalists within the three great Semitic religions: in order or appearance, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Among these three faiths, scholars have long been fascinated by the idea of identifying an actual geographical location for the resting place of a wooden ship supposedly built by the man we know as Noah (the revered prophet Nooh in Islam).

Since the historical or anthropological significance of this global

## Noah's Ark by JB Dukes

ancient story is also thickly overlain with religious significance, the search for the Ark has been conducted with passion, often by extremists, and ironically (since all three of these religions are supposed to be concerned with truth), with not a small degree of bias. Of course, there is bound to be disagreement when religion is involved.

It is not at all far fetched to suppose that for some at their respective extremes of various belief spectra, those disagreements may mingle with other dimensions of fanaticism to fuel extreme and hostile actions...



*"There is above the country of Minyas in Armenia a great mountain called Baris, where, the story goes, many refugees found safety at the time of the flood, and one man, transported upon an ark, grounded upon the summit; and relics of the timber were for long preserved; this might well be the same man of whom Moses, the Jewish legislator, wrote."*

(Nicholas of Damascus, quoted by the Jewish historian Josephus sometime between 37 and 100 AD)

*"El Judi is a mountain in the country of Masur, and extends to Jezirah Ibn 'Omar which belongs to the territory of el-Mausil. This mountain is eight farsangs [about 32 miles] from the Tigris. The place where the ship stopped, which is on top of this mountain, is still to be seen."*

## Noah's Ark by JB Dukes

(Al-Mas'udi, Muslim historian, writing in 956 AD)

*“We flew down as close as safety permitted and took several circles around it. We were surprised when we got close to it, at the immense size of the thing, for it was as long as a city block, and would compare very favorably in size to the modern battleships of today. It was grounded on the shore of the lake, with one-fourth underwater. It had been partly dismantled on one side near the front, and on the other side there was a great doorway nearly twenty feet square, but with the other door gone. This seemed quite out of proportion, as even today, ships seldom have doors even half that large...”*

(Alleged quote from Lieutenant Roskovitsky of the Russian Imperial Air Force, 1916, published in the *New Eden Magazine*, California, 1939)

*“During the month of July, 1951 a team of Russian experts, were surveying the valley of Kaat. Perhaps they were busy in finding out a new mine. They noticed a few pieces of rotten wood ...They excavated the place with deep interest...(and found) quite a good amount of wood and many other things. They also found a long rectangular wooden plate... measuring 14" by 10"... Seven experts after eight months of research came to the conclusion that this plate was of the wood used in making Noah's Ark and that the Prophet Noah had put this plate on his Ark for the safety of the Ark and for receiving favour of Allah. In the centre of the plate, there is a drawing of palm shape on which some words of ancient Saamaani language are*

## Noah's Art by JB Dukes

*written....The plate is still preserved at the Centre of Fossils Research, Moscow, Russia.”*

(From a pamphlet published in December 1961 by Hakeem Syed Mahmood Gilani, professor at Osmania University, India and allegedly reported in the London Weekly-Mirror January 1954; Bathrah Najaf: Iraq, February 1954; and other newspapers.)



In the year 2000, while some are breathing sighs of relief at the safe passing of the Millennial celebrations, a sense of disquiet is rising in the intelligence agencies of the West. It would be wrong to call it organisational panic, for the cogs of the bureaucracies turn too slowly for that. But many of the more insightful are worried – very worried. Their awareness of an emerging new security risk – it cannot not yet be called an understanding - is growing by the day. It is fed by reports of mobile phone traffic, money transfers and people movements and a new style of intelligence that they all find so difficult to evaluate – political, financial, socio-linguistic, theological and behavioural profiling of many disparate groups of extremists. The data reveal the existence of hitherto unacknowledged and unmapped networks of grass-roots fundamentalist groups with pretensions at international terrorism. That is the problem. They are organised but not organised. ‘Self-organising’, the technical experts call it. Spontaneous; bottom up; complex-adaptive behaviour. Like ants. But unlike ant colonies, not dense with activity and easily spotted, but spread widely and sparsely. Strong through diversity; resilient through decentralisation; deadly and infectious through compellingly contagious ideas. It is as though a rising sun of religious fervour has concentrated the melanin of the body-Islamic and all of a sudden a rash of

## Noah's Art by JB Dukes

malignancies has simultaneously broken out. Lying dormant for years, they have sprung to aggressive life, invisibly and spontaneously reproducing through unseen and incomprehensible connections and threatening havoc not only to their hosts, but more particularly to their enemies. Caught unawares at the turn of the Millennium by the surprise onset of a new security landscape that some are calling 'the new Cold War', security agencies are slowly and reluctantly realigning their resource deployments to mine the overwhelming flood of chaotic data; identify patterns; and develop credible analysis and counter-terrorism strategies. Rumours abound: one in particular – of an imminent massive and audacious hit. But it is only one amongst many and it is impossible to distinguish the components of one rumour from those of many others. This means that the intelligence response looks as fragmented as the phenomenon it is trying to track. But slowly and surely, some patterns have started to emerge. A few are old patterns that are already on file and have been taken out, dusted-off and examined afresh.

One in particular goes back a very long way...

