

The Lost Continent

Gerd Leptin gazed wearily at the choppy ocean waves as he tossed his diving equipment into the corner of the small boat. The murky water had impeded his search for the third straight day. He was tired, sore, and emotionally drained. At age 58 he was becoming too old for these dives. After each exploration it seemed to take longer for his depleted body to return to normal.

"It's down there," he told his son, nodding in feigned certainty. He ran his fingers through his wet, thin gray hair. "A building, a road . . . Maybe just a wall. But some concrete evidence of its existence must still exist." He took a deep breath as he seated himself on the side of the accelerating motorboat that headed back to a nearby island. The owner, Chino, glanced back momentarily at the two explorers, but kept his attention on the rough waters he traveled.

"If anyone finds it, it will be you," his son, Chad, assured him.

Gerd shook his head in approval. "A lifetime of searching . . . It should amount to something soon."

"You made the search for the Lost Continent your life's work," Chad reminded him. "Books, television appearances, guest speaker tours . . . You have contributed so much already."

Gerd took a deep breath before replying, "Except concrete proof. That's the problem. Fifteen thousand years ago a great civilization existed at this very spot. They probably gave us our culture, medicines, architecture, science, and maybe even our religions. But now we can't even find one piece of evidence to prove they existed.

"And who will believe me without the evidence? The ocean floor has been mapped countless times, and there is no submerged continent anywhere. A few miles from these volcanic islands the ocean floor drops 2,000 feet. These are the tops of subterranean mountain ranges, not a continent."

"Don't forget, the sea level has risen in the past fifteen thousand years," Chad reminded him. "There's a lot of submerged coastline that was once above the water."

"The sea has risen a few hundred feet because there isn't as much ice at the poles. If the ocean floor were 100 or 200 feet below us then we would have an argument. But it's not hundreds of feet deep, it's thousands."

"But you've explained that," Chad encouraged his father. "Earthquakes, violent volcanic eruptions, and massive crustal displacement. And who knows what else could have happened? The Earth's entire crust was changed in a giant cataclysmic upheaval. And we do have some ancient writings that clearly establish the continent's existence."

"But are those writings an historical record?" Gerd questioned him. "Or are they merely stories and myths to advance a moral argument?"

Gerd and his son grew quiet as they watched the sun slowly descend in the Western sky. The glowing yellow ball had nearly reached the ocean's surface. Chad caught his father's eyes and then nodded toward Chino. Chino was one of the few natives of the islands with a college education. They had discussed him several times the past few days. Surely he would know the latest island rumors and discoveries.

"Chino, what are your thoughts on lost civilizations?" Gerd asked him, getting right to the point of the matter. "Do you believe an advanced race of people existed beneath these waters?"

Chino smiled as he steered the boat, but kept his focus fixed on the approaching island. "I've read some pretty wild things about the Lost Continent. They had airplanes, television, and maybe even computers – just like today. And they say it all existed thousands of years ago. Me? I don't believe such a civilization existed. But every year it brings a few explorers to the islands and it helps pay my bills."

Chad shrugged his shoulders. "He's honest if nothing else."

"Those feats are highly exaggerated," Gerd said with a smile. "They were advanced for their time but they were still an ancient civilization."

Chino continued, "But it's like you said, the ocean is thousands of feet deep. How can an entire continent just sink into the water like that? Wasn't it supposed to have happened in a single night? Doesn't sound possible to me." Chino slowed the boat as he brought it into port. "Well, here we are."

"You know, I've been thinking about that part of the legend," Chad addressed his father again. "From the writings it said the people became corrupted by their wealth. They grew warlike and attacked their neighbors without provocation. What if the rest of the world joined forces and launched a single massive military strike against them? Couldn't they be defeated in a single night?"

"I suppose that's possible," Gerd replied in a melancholy tone. The boat had come to a stop and one of the local boys tied it to the dock.

“But how do you explain an entire continent sinking?”

He stood up to leave the boat but gazed at the rugged ocean waves one last time. Gerd appeared reflective, seemingly mesmerized by the water. He had dedicated his entire adult life to a single dream, and that dream – the discovery of the Lost Continent – remained unfulfilled. Yet within him a glimmer of hope still flickered. That night he added a single paragraph to his journal:

“Fifteen thousand years ago an advanced civilization existed that dominated the ancient world. It possessed an astonishing amount of wealth, and its beauty and natural resources were world renowned. But in one single horrific night of devastation it vanished forever beneath the seas that surround this island. Only God knows what precious secrets were submerged with it. I am certain that someday we will find the conclusive evidence that proves its existence. It will then move from the realm of myth to the arena of historical fact. History books will finally be able to include an authoritative account about the civilization that once existed beneath these murky waters. And the entire world will learn about the ancient Lost Continent of America.”