



Revealed: Snowboarding's missing link

So you thought snowboarding started in the 1960s? You may have to think again. As Jimmy Petterson reports from a remote location in Turkey, the pundits may be 370 years out!

On the final day of a recent trip to heliski in the Kaçkar Mountains of northeastern

Turkey, bad weather thwarted our plans, rendering flying impossible. But here I was not secluded in an isolated lodge, BC-style. In Turkey, a day of culture and history can easily be substituted for pumping powder. And it was my good fortune to chance upon an unwritten page of snowsports history.

In various villages of the Kaçkars, the locals have been entertaining themselves for four centuries during the long, hard, and isolated

winters by gliding around their local mountains on predecessors of the snowboard called Lazboards.

(The Laz people are an ethnic group from the Black Sea areas of both Turkey and Georgia.) And I was determined to visit the village of Petran in order to see the Laz people in action on their home-made boards.

After a long taxi ride that culminated in 12 switchbacks up a steep mountain road, I was met at the village mosque by three or four villagers. They invited me for tea and cookies, and then showed me the amazing Turkish sport that apparently beat

Jake Burton by as much as 370 years.

Looking very similar to Sherman Poppen's 1965 invention, the Snurfer, this forefather of the snowboard is about two feet wide and eight feet long, and looks a little like a flat toboggan. The rider's feet are not attached with any kind of binding, so he controls the board by holding a cord connected to the front, and helps steer by holding a long stick in his other hand, dragging it behind the board like a primitive rudder. It was described in a recent *Turkey Heliski* newsletter as "a plank with some string and a few bits of wood added on".

After finishing his tea, Ali Kurt, 53, took me outside to demonstrate what Lazboarding was all about. According to Kurt, 90% of the locals participate in boarding—it is indeed one of the only forms of entertainment that this poor mountain village has to offer, and it's been passed down from father to son for generations.

'It was a truly unforgettable moment... we knew that snowboarding was born in these mountains in deepest Turkey a very long time ago'

