Mount Cudi—
True Mountain of Noah’s Ark

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(A defense of the Cudi Dagh site has been published previously by Bill Crouse in Archaeology and Biblical Research vol. 5, #3, Summer 1992; TJ vol. 15(3); and in The Explorers of Ararat, edited by B.J. Corbin, chapter 7.)

For its historical claims the first eleven chapters of Genesis are possibly the most attacked section of the entire Bible, and the story deemed most implausible, without a doubt, is the story of Noah’s Ark. That there could be such a great flood, a ship of 450-500 feet in length containing pairs of every air-breathing animal in the land, and only eight survivors, is usually treated by most critics as the equivalent of a nursery tale for children. Hence, it’s no secret that theological liberals view the Biblical story of Noah’s Ark as “the impossible voyage,” and we suspect, for many evangelicals, the search for Noah’s Ark constitutes “the impossible quest.”

Though evangelicals fully believe that the Flood was a historical event, the attempt to discover the Ark’s remains stretches credulity. The whole issue of the search for Noah’s Ark is not helped by the fact that its “discovery” is frequently announced by a press that is not only gullible, but also enables the spread of sensational stories by indulging those looking for a moment of publicity.

All would agree that the discovery of the Ark’s remains would be a find unprecedented in the history of archaeology. Finding an artifact from antediluvian times would be second to none, with the potential to alter the currents of thinking in several disciplines. Nevertheless we do make such a claim, as we believe the German geologist, Dr. Friedrich Bender, discovered remains of Noah’s Ark of the Biblical Flood story in 1953. His scientific test results, coupled with other historical studies presented here, give credence to the idea that the final berth of Noah’s ship has, in fact, been located. (See the Bender article later in this issue.)

The modern search for Noah’s Ark began in 1948 when an alleged eyewitness claimed he stumbled onto the Ark high on the snowcap of Mt. Ararat (Smith 1950: 10). Since then others have made similar claims. Based on these alleged eyewitness accounts, many expeditions have been launched, innumerable hours have been spent in research, and large sums have been spent trying to verify what many critics said was a waste of time.

Mt. Ararat in northeastern Turkey. The Ahora Gorge is clearly seen in this view of the northern side of the mountain. Though this towering volcanic peak, having a permanent snowcap from about 14,000 ft to its summit at 16,945 ft, is the focus of most modern searches for Noah’s Ark, it does not have the support of the historical sources we find for Mt. Cudi.

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For the most part, the search has been confined to the massive 16,945 ft (5165 m) Mt. Ararat in northeastern Turkey. Despite Herculean efforts and countless heroic attempts, no Ark remains have ever been properly verified at this location. We believe there are a number of reasons why these efforts failed.

First, there is the mistaken belief by many that the Bible designates Mt. Ararat as the landing place. Contrary to this belief, the author of Genesis does not designate a specific mountain. As most of our readers are already aware, the 8:4 passage refers only to a mountainous region, i.e., the mountains of Ararat, which did not extend as far north as the present-day Mt. Ararat.

Secondly, the searchers proclaim the sheer number of sightings that have been on Mt. Ararat, particularly during WW II. They argue, “Where there is smoke, there must be fire.” However, these numerous eyewitness accounts have not been helpful in locating the lost artifact. The accounts are often contradictory, and under close scrutiny, most are suspect. There exists an incredible amount of lost documents, lost photos, and lost witnesses. Accompanying the missing evidence and contradictory testimony are many implausible ad hoc arguments. A few of the sightings have been made by pilots who appear to be of reputable character. However, these sightings, in our opinion, are explainable by the fact that the mountain has an abundance of large blocks of volcanically-produced basalt, and when seen under the right conditions, they can easily resemble a huge barge. Photographs of some of these formations are enough to take your breath away!

Third, the mountain is a volcano with no alluvial evidence. While there is sedimentation on the mountain, it is from volcanic action and not from flooding. This is a very stubborn fact that cannot readily be explained, had a great flood once inundated the mountain.

Fourthly, Mt. Ararat has been thoroughly searched over the last 50 years. Neither fixed-winged aircraft, helicopters, nor satellite imagery have turned up any undeniable evidence.

In this article we would like to propose another site located in the Cudi Mountains in southeast Turkey, just east-northeast of the Turkish city of Cizre. This site is not only well attested by ancient tradition and an abundance of literature, but by some well known authorities in archaeology. We will go so far as to say that the location of the Ark’s ruins was well known in this region up until about the end of the first millennium AD. Ancient chroniclers recount that it was a site for pilgrims and rites of veneration and worship (Ritter 1844: 154). Consequently, over the millennia, pilgrims carried off pieces of the Ark for relics and talismans as would be expected, and by the seventh century AD, according to one account, its final remaining beams were carried off for the construction of a mosque (Komroff, ed. 1989: 284).

After this, its secret seems to be remembered only by the local villagers as the scene shifts to Agri Dagh, or Mt. Ararat as it was later to become known. Hence, from about the 13th century, that
majestic, 16,945 ft (5165 m), snow-capped mountain, which many of the ancients said could not be climbed, became the focus of the Noah’s Ark traditions.

To the Armenians, present-day Ararat was always called Massis. From antiquity to the present, the Turks have called it Agri Dagh. We must, however, note that there is at least one clear exception. The fifth century historian, Philostorgius (c. 368–c. 439), makes the following geographical observation:

The Euphrates, however, to all appearance, takes its rise among the Armenians; in this region stands the Mount of Ararat, so called even to the present day by the Armenians,—the same mount on which the Holy Scripture says that the ark rested. Many fragments of the wood and nails of which the ark was composed are said to be still preserved in those localities. This is the place where the Euphrates takes its rise (Book III, Chapter 8).

If the Armenians called it “Ararat” at this early date, we have no other evidence for it. We believe there is reason to doubt the accuracy of Philostorgius at this point. While he is certainly correct here in his description of the source of the Euphrates being near Mt. Ararat, he is notorious for his inaccurate geography in the corpus of his works (Cross 1974: 1086). It seems rather strange that he would be in disagreement with many others of the same time period. After him we find no other clear references till the middle of the 13th century. When Marco Polo traveled past Ararat in the 13th century on his way east, he was told by the locals that the mountain sheltered the Ark of Noah (Polo 1968: 34). This suggests that the tradition arose some time prior to Polo’s trip, and by the end of the 14th century it seems to have become fairly well established. Prior to this time, the ancients argued that the remains of the Ark of Noah could be found on another mountain currently known as Cudi Dagh. Let us now look at the evidence from what we believe are those compelling ancient sources.

Cudi Dagh is located approximately 202 mi (325 km) south of Mt. Ararat in southern Turkey and within 9.3 mi (15 km) east-northeast of Cizre, and within sight of the Syrian and Iraqi borders. The Tigris River flows at its base. The coordinates are 37 degrees, 23 minutes N, and 42 degrees, 26 minutes E. In the literature there are many variant spellings, but all are cognates.

Over the centuries it has been called Mt. Judi, Mt. Cardu, Mt. Quardu, Mt. Kardu, the Gordyene mountains, the Gordian mountains, the Karduchian mountains, the mountains of the Kurds, and to the Assyrians, Mt. Nipur. It is also important to note that at times this mountain has even been called Mt. Ararat. At about 6853 ft (2089 m) it is not a terribly high mountain, though it is often snow-capped most of the year.

Cudi Dagh overlooks the all-important Mesopotamian plain and is notable for its many archaeological ruins in and around the mountain. There are also many references to it in ancient history. Sennacherib (late seventh century BC), the powerful Assyrian king, carved rock reliefs of his victories in battle in the vicinity (King 1913). The Nestorians, a sect of Christianity, built several monasteries around the mountain, including one on the summit called the Cloister of the Ark; it was destroyed by lightning in AD 766. The Muslims later built a mosque on the site. In 1910, Gertrude Bell explored the area and found a stone structure still at the summit in the shape of a ship, called by the locals Sefinet Nabi Nuh, the Ship of Noah. Bell also reported that annually on September 14, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Sabians and Yezidis gathered on the mountain to commemorate Noah’s sacrifice (Bell 2002: 289–294).

The evidence for this site as the landing place of Noah’s Ark, coupled with the findings of Bender, is compelling. If all we had to go by were the ancient references, the evidence for this site easily outweighs the evidence in the literature for Mt. Ararat. Some of the more important ancient witnesses to this alternate location are the following.

Jewish Literature

The Samaritan Pentateuch

This manuscript contains the first five books of the Old Testament and puts the landing place of Noah’s Ark in the Kurdish
mountains north of Assyria. The Samaritan Pentateuch was the Bible used by the Samaritans, a Jewish sect which separated from the Jews about the fifth century BC. Ancestry-wise they were of mixed blood, dating back to the time the Assyrians deported many from the Northern Kingdom. The Assyrians then colonized the area with citizens from that country. The Samaritans were the result of the intermarriage between the Jews who were not deported and these new Assyrian colonists. Their version of the Pentateuch shows a definite propensity to update geographical places and harmonize difficult passages. There is much evidence that the Samaritan Pentateuch was formulated during the fifth century BC, though the earliest manuscript extant today dates to about the 10th century AD. Even though this reference does not mention a specific mountain, it does narrow it down considerably to a mountain range north of Assyria. There is some evidence that these Hebrew tribesmen from the northern kingdom populated the area in and around Cudi Dagh.

The Targums

The targums are paraphrases in Aramaic that were made for the Jews after they returned from the captivity in Babylon (see Neh 8:8). After their long captivity many of the Jews forgot their native tongue (Hebrew), only understanding the Aramaic language of their former captors. These paraphrases were originally oral. They were rather loose paraphrases, and in some instances were like running commentaries. The targums later attained a fixed form and were written down and preserved. They give Bible scholars a valuable tool for textual criticism and interpretation. Three of these targums at the Gn 8:4 reference (Onkelos, Neofiti, and pseudo-Jonathan) put the landing place of the Ark in the Qardu (wdrq, i.e., Kurdish) mountains. It is possible they did not know of the kingdom of Urartu (Ararat) by this time, since it had ceased to exist around the seventh century BC (Lang 1980: 13).

The Book of Jubilees

This book belongs to a group of writings known as the Pseudepigrapha. Scholars date it about the middle of the second century BC (Charlesworth 1985: vol. II, 44). It has been called the “Little Genesis” and is known for its extensive geographical details. Scholars believe it was originally composed in Hebrew, but only fragments of the Hebrew text remain. The English translations were made from a combination of Ethiopic, Syriac (eastern Aramaic), and Latin texts. The author of Jubilees men-

Satellite view of Mt. Cudi, circled in red. It is at the northern edge of the Mesopotamian plain, near Cizre and Silopi.

Stone structure called by the locals “Sefinet Nebi Nuh,” the Ship of Noah.
tions the landing place of the Ark on several occasions as being on “the top of Lubar (לובל) one of the mountains of Ararat” (5:28). In 7:1 he says, “Noah planted a vine on the mountain on which the ark rested, whose name is Lubar, (one) of the mountains of Ararat.” Later the author tells us that when Noah died, he was “buried on Mt. Lubar in the land of Ararat” (10:15). This designation for the landing-place of the Ark is a mystery, and it seems to have originated with the Book of Jubilees. If it could be known, the Genesis Apocryphon, which is missing the text at Gn. 8:4, might also give Lubar as the site of the Ark’s landing since it names it as the place where Noah planted the vine. Other literature, papyri 4QpsDn and 6Q8, and the Midrashic Book of Noah, likewise, give this name. Later, Epiphanius (fourth century) and Syncellus (ninth century) assign this name to the mountain of the Ark. Sayce suggests that the lu may come from another ancient name of the Urartian region, which when combined with baris yields lubar (Sayce 1882: 389). Steiner believes that since some of the documents noted above were in Aramaic, the etymology of the word should be sought there. He notes that there is an Elephantine document of the fifth century BC where the word lubar is descriptive of a piece of wood used to repair a boat. He also notes the relationship of lubar to labiru in Akkadian, probably a cognate word used to describe wood. While there is some uncertainty, lubar seems more likely to point to the southern region than to Mt. Ararat (Steiner 1991: 248). Cassuto is also of the opinion that Mount Lubar is possibly identical to the Baris of Nicholas (Cassuto, 1965, 105).

Josephus

His writings date from the late first century AD. Josephus was a man of Jewish birth, but was loyal to the Roman Empire. He was a man of great intellect and a contemporary of the Apostle Paul. As an official historian of the Jews for the Roman Empire, he had access to all the archives and libraries of the day. He mentions the remains of Noah’s Ark, and where it landed, on several occasions.

Then the ark settled on a mountain-top in Armenia...Noah, thus learning that the earth was delivered from the flood, waited yet seven days, and then let the animals out of the ark, went forth himself with his family, sacrificed to God and feasted with his household. The Armenians call that spot the Landing-place, for it was there that the ark came safe to land, and they show the relics of it to this day (Antiquities I: 90–92; LCL 4: 43, 45).

It is interesting that Josephus says the remains of the Ark existed in his day, though he himself was not an eyewitness of them. Also, his mention of an unknown Armenian source is intriguing, even if the fact that he calls them Armenians. They were first called Armenians by the Greek historian Hecataeus (from Miletus), who wrote of the Armenoi in the sixth century BC. Josephus, who also undoubtedly used the Septuagint (the Greek version of the OT, translated about 200 BC), knew that it substituted “Armenia” for “Ararat” where it occurs in the Hebrew original in Is 37:38. At the time Josephus wrote, near the end of the first century AD, the Armenians were officially still a pagan nation. However, there is a tradition that some Armenians had been converted by this time through the missionary efforts of the apostles Bartholomew and Thaddeus (Lynch 1990: 276–77). The big question is, was Josephus quoting Christian Armenians at this early date, or were these pagan Armenians of which he spoke? The answer could be significant if the Armenians had this tradition before they officially converted to Christianity as a nation in 301.

Concerning the Armenian name for the landing place, William Whiston, in his translation of Josephus, has the following footnote:

This Apobaterion, or Place of Descent, is the proper rendering of the Armenian name of this very city. It is called in Ptolemy Naxuana, and by Moses Chorenensis, the Armenian historian, Idsheuan; but at the place itself Nachidsheuan, which signifies The first place of descent, and is a lasting monument of the preservation of Noah in the ark, upon the top of that mountain, at whose foot it was built, as the first city or town after the flood. See Antiq. B. XX. Ch. 2. sect. 3; and Moses Chorenensis, who also says elsewhere, that another town was related by tradition to have been called Seron, or, The Place of Dispersion, on account of the dispersion of Xisuthrus’s or Noah’s sons, from thence first made. Whether any remains of this ark be still preserved, as the people of the country suppose, I cannot certainly tell. Mons. Tournefort had, not very long since, a mind to see the place himself, but met with too great dangers and difficulties to venture through them (Whiston trans. 1998 reprint: 38).

Whiston wants to identify the apobaterion, “the place of descent,” with the modern city of Nakchichevan situated about 65 mi (105 km) southeast of Ararat in Azerbaijan. Ark researchers...
in the past have used this footnote as a seemingly early (100 AD) evidence for Mt. Ararat being the site for the Ark’s landing place. However, we must ask if this is the intent of Josephus, or actually the 19th century (1867) interpretation of Whiston? There seems to be linguistic and other evidence that the latter is the case. First of all, to identify the current Mt. Ararat as the landing place of the Ark, as per the footnote of Whiston, is contrary to Josephus clearly identifying it elsewhere as a mountain in Gordyene. Second, the early Armenian historians identified the Gordyene (Gortuk) mountains as the landing place of Noah’s Ark at least up to the 10th century. Thirdly, according to the Armenian language scholar Heinrich Hübschmann, the city of Nakhichavan, which does mean “Place of First Descent” in Armenian, was not known by that name in antiquity. Rather, he says the present-day name evolved to “Nakhchavan” from “Naxcavan.” The prefix *Nax* was a name, and *avan* is Armenian for “town.” It was not known as Nakhchavan until the 10th century (Hübschmann 1901: V: 73). The second quote follows right after the first, and is perhaps the most important reference, and is largely from the above-mentioned Chaldean priest, Berossus. We quote here the entire paragraph:

This flood and the ark are mentioned by all who have written histories of the barbarians. Among these is Berossus the Chaldean, who in his description of the events of the flood writes somewhere as follows: ‘It is said, moreover, that a portion of the vessel still survives in Armenia on the mountain of the Cordyaeans, and that persons carry off pieces of the bitumen, which they use as talismans.’ These matters are mentioned by Hieronymus the Egyptian, author of the ancient history of Phoenicia, by Mnaseas and by many others. Nicolas of Damascus in his ninety-sixth book relates the story as follows: ‘There is above Minyas in Armenia a great mountain called Baris, where, as 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’ (Antiquities I: 93–95; LCL 4: 45, 47).

Again, note that Josephus is not an eyewitness, rather he is quoting all the ancient authorities he had access to, most of which are no longer extant, and indeed are known only from his quotations of them. It is impressive to us that Josephus seems to indicate there is a consensus among the historians of his day, not only about the remains of the Ark still existing, but also concerning the location.

Josephus, in order to more specifically locate the Ark’s remains, quotes the work of Nicholas of Damascus, friend and biographer of Herod the Great and the Roman Emperor Augustus. Nicholas claimed that he put great labor into his historical studies and apparently had access to many resources. It is possible he was one of Josephus’ main sources. His story of the Flood, however, does deviate from the Biblical account in that he has some surviving the Flood outside the Ark. His location for the final resting place of the Ark seems to be in harmony with the Gordyene, i.e., the Cudi site. He claims the Ark landed above Minyas on a great mountain in Armenia. According to ancient geographers, Minyas (same as Mannea, or Minni) was a country slightly below and to the east of Armenia, below present day Lake Urmia. Louis Levine says the land of Mannea …extended from Parsua in the south to Urartu in the north, and that it bordered Zamua and Assyria in the west. The eastern extent of the Mannea is indeterminable. In terms of the modern map, Mannea extended from the shores of Lake Urmia in the north to the Lake Zeribar region in the south, and the *chaîne magistrale* of the Zagros probably acted as its western frontier (Levine 1973: 116).

The name Nicholas gives this mountain, Baris, however, is a mystery. According to Lloyd Bailey, the Greek word *baris* means “height” or “tower,” and even “boat” (Bailey 1989: 216)! Others identify Baris with Lubar, as mentioned earlier.

The third reference to the remains of the Ark is found in *Antiquities* 20: 24, 25:

Monobazus, being now old and seeing that he had not long to live, desired to lay eyes on his son before he died. He therefore sent for him, gave him the warmest of welcomes and presented him with a district called Carron. The land there has excellent soil for the production of amomum in the greatest of abundance; It also possesses the remains of the ark in which report has it that Noah was saved from the flood—remains which to this day are shown to those who are curious to see them (LCL 10: 15).

The context of this incidental citation of the Ark’s remains has to do with a certain royal family in the Kingdom of Adiabene, of which the King and Queen were converts to Judaism. The capital of this kingdom was at Arbela (modern-day Erbil in Iraq). In the immediate context of the above citation, Monobazus, the man who converted, gives his son Izates the land of Carron. The clues given as to the location of the Ark’s remains in this passage are not unequivocal. The remains are said to be somewhere in a country called Carron, which must be found in the greater country of Adiabene. Why? Because the king could not have given what was not his, Carron must be found within the kingdom of Adiabene.

It is fairly certain that Adiabene is bounded by the Tigris on the west and the Upper (north) and Lower (south) Zab Rivers. Today this would be largely northeastern Iraq but would include the Cudi Mountain range. The land of Carron presents some difficulties. It is mentioned only by Josephus. There does seem to be some doubt about the text here since the Loeb edition emends the text to read “Gordyene.” Note how easy it would have been for someone reading a hand-written Hebrew text (assuming he was) to make a mistake: יַעַר = kardou. Here is what the Greek word καρόν (Carron) would look like in Hebrew: יִכֵּר. Notice the subtle difference of the *daleth* and the *resh*. If Josephus did misread these two similar letters in the Hebrew alphabet, then he is not giving us a second location for the remains of Noah’s Ark. He may have associated Adiabene with Gordyene since they were next to each other. Bailey believes there is precedent for this (Bailey 1989: 66). Pliny, the Elder, a Roman author and contemporary of Josephus, places the city of Nisibis in Adiabene when it is actually located to the west of Gordyene (Pliny 6.16). It is interesting to note also that Hippolytus (second century AD) agrees. He says, “The relics of the Ark are...shown to this day in the mountains called Ararat, which are situated in the direction of the country of Adiabene.” This would be correct since he wrote from Rome (Hippolytus, second-third century: 149).

A fourth reference in Josephus is found in *Against Apion* (1.20: 104 *Bible and Spade* 19.4 (2006))
130), where he reiterates his earlier reference to Berossus. He notes that

This author, following the most ancient records, has, like Moses, described the flood and the destruction of mankind thereby, and told of the ark in which Noah, the founder of our race, was saved when it landed on the heights of the mountains of Armenia (LCL 1: 215).

We find it interesting that in this passage Josephus believes he was quoting from “some ancient records,” and, that he corrects Berossus by changing the name of the hero from Xisuthrus to Noah.

From the above references, there seem to be grounds for arguing that Josephus pinpoints the Gordyene site (Cudi Dagh) as the landing place of Noah’s Ark. While we cannot say this with absolute certainty, we feel we can conclude that nowhere does Josephus say anything definitive that might lead us to assume that present-day Mt. Ararat is in view. We also disagree with Bailey, who believes that Josephus gives three different locations for the Ark’s final resting place (Bailey 1989: 66).

Benjamin of Tudela

Writing in the 12th century, he says he traveled two days to Jezireh Ben Omar, an island in the Tigris on the foot of Mt. Ararat...on which the ark of Noah rested. Omar Ben al-Khatab removed the Ark from the summit of the two mountains and made a mosque of it (Komroff ed. 1989: 284). The ruins of this city, Jezireh Ben Omar, are located at the foot of Cudi Dagh, now the modern Turkish city of Cizre. Here also is evidence that this mountain was also called Mt. Ararat. What he could mean by the “two mountains” is somewhat problematic. The Cudi Mountain range does have two higher peaks that are of similar altitude, though the reference still is uncertain.

Pagan

Berossus

A Chaldean priest of Bel and historian writing in the third century BC, Berossus shows the influence of a Hellenistic Mesopotamia. His major work, *Babyloniaca*, was published about 275–280 BC, but only survived insofar as it was quoted (mostly third-hand) by others—by Alexander Polyhistor, a first century BC Greek historian and native of Miletus, and by Josephus at the end of the first century AD, as already noted. He is also quoted by several others as late as the ninth century AD (Synclerus). He wrote in Greek, but according to Komoroczy, he knew Akkadian. If he was priest of the Esagila, he also had to know some Sumerian. And in the Marduk temple of Babylon he could also study the texts in cuneiform writing (Komoroczy 1973: 127–128). Berossus’ account borrows heavily from the Babylonian version of the Flood account as one would expect. He notes that a portion of the ship which came to rest in Armenia still remains in the mountains of the Korduaians of Armenia, and some of the people, scraping off pieces of bitumen from the ship, bring them back and use them as talismans (Burstein 1978: 21). Some believe that Berossus was acquainted with both the Hebrew version, which puts the Ark in Armenia (Urartu), and a Babylonian text that puts the Ark in the Gordyeaen Mountains. They conclude the reason he mentions both territories is that he is trying to reconcile the two accounts (Parrot 1953: 61). This may be true, but it is an argument from silence. The fact is, this location, Cudi Dagh, is both in the Gordyeaen Mountains and within the borders of ancient Armenia (Urartu). It may be that Berossus is just trying to be precise!

The very fact that he narrows the location to Armenia, in light of the Babylonian Flood story that locates the landing place on Mt. Nisir, is an intriguing thing to consider. To clarify the point, Berossus, who had the Babylonian account in front of him, knows that his Babylonian text says “on the mountain of Nisir the boat held fast” (Gilgamesh 1972: 111), but does not in his own account write that the Ark’s landing was on Nisir!

Christian Sources

Theophilus of Antioch of Syria

He was the Bishop at Antioch, a city not too far removed from the Cudi site. He does not mention it by name, but notes that “the remains are to this day to be seen in the Arabian mountains” (ad Autolyicum, lib. iii, c. 91). It is not likely that the great bishop is referring to the mountains of Saudi Arabia. The Greek word *arabia*, in the strict sense of the term, means “desert” or “wilderness,” and during the early second century it often referred to the desert areas east of Syria (Arndt and Gingrich 1957: 103). Cudi Dagh is not directly east of Syria, but if you go east from the northermost tip of Syria you would be right at Cudi Dagh. It is not a positive directive, but most certainly does not refer to Saudi Arabia or Mt. Ararat.

Julius Africanus

He lived in the first half of the third century. He may have been born in Jerusalem. His major work was a history of the world in five volumes, some of which survived in the writings of Eusebius, and later in Synclerus. In the section describing the deluge in the extant writings of Julius, he states: And Noe was 600 years old when the flood came on. And when the water abated, the ark settled on the mountains of Ararat, which we know [emphasis ours] to be in Parthia; but some say that they are at Celanenae of Phrygia, and I have seen both places (1994:6:131). Some are quick to say Africanus was mistaken, but in fact, the Parthian Empire lasted into the first part of the third century and did extend eastward into the area of Cudi Dagh.

Eusebius

 Bishop of Caesarea in the third century AD, he was the first great historian of the church, and in his two-volume work *Chronicle*, he notes that a small part of the Ark still remains in the Gordian Mountains (Eusebius 1818 : 1: 36–37). This seems to be a clear reference to this southern mountain range.

The Peshitta

The Peshitta is a version of the entire Bible made for the Syrian Christians. Scholars are not sure exactly when it was translated, but it shows up for the first time around the beginning of the fifth century AD; however, Syriac versions of the Pentateuch may have been circulating as early as the middle of the first century (Harrison 241: 1969). In Genesis 8:4 it reads “mountains of Quardu”
for the resting place of Noah’s Ark. This version also shows a definite influence by the targums mentioned above.

**Faustus of Byzantium**

Faustus was a historian of the fourth century AD. Very little is known about him except that he was one of the early historians of Armenia, though he was of Greek origin. His original work is lost but has survived through translations. It is from Faustus that we first hear the story of St. Jacob (Hagop) of Nisibis, the godly monk who asks God to see the Ark (Garsoian, Book III, Chap .XIV, 87: 1989). After repeatedly failing to climb the mountain, an angel rewards him with a piece of wood from the Ark. It is this story that is oft-quoted in succeeding centuries, and the location given for the event in these later sources is the Mt. Ararat of the north. However, please note, Faustus, the one who presumably originated the story, puts this event not on Mt. Ararat of the north, but in the canton of Gordukh in southern Armenia. The St. Jacob of the story was the Bishop of Nisibis (modern Nusaybin), a city which is only about 75 mi (120 km) from Cudi Dagh.7

Mt. Ararat, to the bishop, was a mountain far to the north. If Faustus had meant this mountain, he undoubtedly would have called it by its Armenian name of Massis, as he does elsewhere in his work (Garsoian, Book III, Chap. XX, 96: 1989). As noted earlier, Armenian historians are in agreement that the early Armenian traditions indicated the southern location as the landing place of the Ark (Thompson 1985: 81). From the 13th century, however, all Armenian sources support the northern location as the landing place of the Ark.

Wouldn’t it be strange for the Syrian bishop to ignore what his own Syrian Bible told him was the landing place of Noah’s Ark? Also, St. Jacob’s own student, St. Ephraem, refers to the site of the landing as “the mountains of Qardu.” It is hard to believe that one of his intimates could be that confused! The natives of the area, even as late as the beginning of the 20th century, tell the story of St. Jacob the Bishop and similar traditions associated with Mt. Ararat, i.e. the city built by Noah and his grave, etc. (Bell 2002: 293).

**Epiphanius**

The Bishop of Salamis, Epiphanius was born in Palestine and was a fierce opponent of heresy in the fourth century AD. On two occasions he mentions that the Ark landed “in the mountains of Ararat in the midst of Armenia and Gordyene on a mountain called Lubar” (Panarion 1.i.4). In fact, he says the remains are still shown, and that if one looks diligently he can still find the altar of Noah. He seems to be acquainted with the Jewish writings, notably the tradition of Jubilees (noted earlier), in that he puts the Ark specifically on a mountain called Lubar. What he adds here is a slight measure of exactness when he comments that it is in the “midst,” “middle,” or “between” Armenia and Gordyene.

**Chrysostom**

He was known for his oratory and was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fourth century. While he does not get very specific, it is notable that he says you can still go there and view the remains. He writes in one of his sermons:

Let us therefore ask them (the unbelieving): Have you heard of the Flood—of that universal destruction? That was not a threat, was it? Did it not really come to pass—was not this mighty work carried out? Do not the mountains of Armenia testify to it, where the Ark rested? And are not the remains of the Ark preserved there to this very day for our admonition? (Sermon, “On Perfect Charity,” trans. John W. Montgomery, The Quest For Noah’s Ark, p. 73.)

Chrysostom seems to be saying, “If you don’t believe God will judge again, you can still go and see the evidence for his judgment in the past.”

**Isidore of Seville**

He was the Archbishop of Seville, Spain. He wrote in the sixth and seventh centuries, and was known as a very careful scholar of the Middle Ages. In his compilation of all knowledge (summa) he writes: “Ararat is a mountain in Armenia, where historians testify that the Ark came to rest after the Flood. So even to this day wood remains of it are to be seen there” (Lindsey 1911: 14, 8, 5).

**Eutychius**

Patriarch of Alexandria in the ninth and 10th centuries and of Arabic origin, he had a background in medicine before he became a leader in the church. His most important work is Nazm al-Gewahir (Chaplet of Pearls), a history of the world from Adam to 938. He says, “The Ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, that is Jabal Judi near Mosul” (Eutychius, 41). Mosul is a city near ancient Ninevah about 81 mi (130 km) south of Cudi Dagh. This is a very precise geographical reference. He may have been influenced by the Quran, but he specifically adds the referent “Mosul.”

As noted earlier, sometime around the 10th and 13th centuries, Christian sources begin to point more specifically to Mt. Ararat of the north as the landing place.

**Muslim Sources**

**The Quran**

The Quran, dating from the seventh century, says: “The Ark came to rest upon Jebel al Judi...” (Houd 11:44). The modern Muslim Encyclopedia is familiar with the early traditions that the Ark came to rest on Cudi Dagh. However, the writer of the article under Jebel Judi believes Mohammed was referring to the Judi Mountains in Saudi Arabia. This is not certain. Mohammed was very familiar with Christian and Jewish traditions, not to mention the fact that he may well have traveled to this area during his days as a merchant. In the English translation of the Quran made by George Sale in 1734, a footnote concerning the landing place of the Ark states that the Quran is following an ancient tradition (Sale 1734: 195, 496; Weil 1846: 54). At least the following Muslim sources seem to agree.

**Al-Mas’udi**

A 10th century Muslim scholar and native of Baghdad, he was known for his travels. “...[T]he ark stood on the mount el-Judi. El-Judi is a mountain in the country Masur, and extends to Jeziarah Ibn ‘Omar which belongs to the territory of el-Mausil. The
mountain is eight farasangs [about 30 mi (48 km) - ed.]28 from the Tigris. The place where the ship stopped, which is on the top of this mountain, is still seen” (Young 32). This puts one right on Cudi Dagh! Remains were still seen in the 10th century, and notice his precision about the location.

Ibn Haukal

He was also a 10th century native of Baghdad, and an early Muslim geographer. He places Cudi near the town of Nesbin (modern Nusaybin) and mentions that Noah built a village at the foot of the mountain. As earlier noted, Nusaybin is about 75 mi (120 km) west of the site.

Ibn al-Amid or al-Macin

In his 13th century history of the Saracens, he informs us that the Byzantine emperor, Heraclius, climbed Mount Judi to see the site in the seventh century after he conquered the Persians. He does not mention whether or not he was giving an eyewitness account (Erpenius 1625).

Zakariya ibn Muhammad al Qazvini

He was a Muslim geographer of the 13th century from modern Qazvin, Iran. He was not a traveler, but compiled his two major works from the writings of others. He reports that wood from the Ark was still seen on Cudi Dagh as late as the Abbasid period (eighth and ninth centuries AD) (Hamd-Allah Mustawfi, 1340, trans. by G. Le Strange, 1919, 184). He reports that wood was removed and used to construct a monastery (others say a “mosque”).

The ancient references cited above—pagan, Jewish, Christian and Islamic—seem to clearly point to a long and old tradition that the Ark of Noah landed in a mountain range north of Assyria, a site that was both within the ancient region and kingdom of Urartu, as noted in Gn 8:4, and within the land of Armenia and Kurdistan. While it may not be conclusive in itself, it certainly is more compelling than the rather late and questionable evidence of Kurds. While visiting Kurdistan in the 19th century, he wrote:

Israel Joseph Benjamin was a Jewish scholar and traveler who adopted the name “Benjamin the Second” after the famous Jewish traveler, Benjamin of Tudela, who lived in the 12th century AD. He traveled throughout the Ottoman Empire looking for Jewish communities. While visiting Kurdistan in the 19th century, he wrote:

Six hours’ journey from the town rises the summit of a great mountain, which joins the chain of mountains of Kurdistan. The Jews believe that this is Ararat, and that here the Ark of Noah rested after the Deluge. If this really be true the place is very remarkable for its ancient associations. We find in the Bible the word Ararat, which the Targum Onkelos translates by Touri Kardu (mountain of Kurdistan); from which the country received its name. The mountain is very steep, almost perpendicular, and it takes six hours to reach the summit from the bottom. Wonderful things are here related of the Deluge. One of the Kurdish tribes annually towards the end of June, ascends the mountain, and spends there the whole day in devotional exercises, they use on the occasion large lighted torches. They believe themselves descended from the royal house of Sennacherib; and retain the tradition that King Sennacherib himself had divine service performed in memory of the Ark. On descending the mountain they bring with them some remains of the Ark, which according to their assertion, is still deeply buried in the earth. The little pieces received are in the form of planks; some whitish grey; some black and pierced with holes. It is not possible for me to give a more accurate account of this Kurdish ceremony; for it did not take place during my stay; and I can only repeat what I heard in answer to my questions.

At the base of the mountain stand four stone pillars, which, according to the people residing here, formerly belonged to an ancient altar. This altar is believed to be that which Noah built on coming out of the Ark. They likewise assert that his remains are buried in this vicinity; they do not however specify the exact spot. I myself obtained several fragments of the Ark which appeared to be covered with a kind of substance resembling tar; but of these, as well as of many other things, I was robbed between Bagdad and Constantinople...(Benjamin 1863: 93–94).

Benjamin himself was given a piece of the ruins from the site, which he said had the appearance of tar on it.

W.A. Wigram, author of numerous histories of the area around Cudi Dagh and the Assyrian Church, wrote in 1914:

Still, of all survivals from early ages in this land, whether monumental, superstitious, or religious, none is more remarkable than the “Sacrifice of Noah.” It must be understood that
no people here, save the Armenians, look on the great cone which we call Ararat, but which is locally known as Agri Dagh, as the spot where the ark rested. The biblical term is “the mountains of Ararat” or Urartu, and the term includes the whole of the Hakkari range. A relatively insignificant ridge, known as Judi Dagh, is regarded as the authentic spot by all the folk in this land; and it must be owned that the identification has something to say for itself. It is one of the first ranges that rise over the level of the great plain; and if all Mesopotamia (which to its inhabitants was the world) were submerged by some great cataclysm, it is just the spot where a drifting vessel might strand.

Whatever the facts, the tradition goes back to the year AD 300 at least. That date is, of course, a thing of yesterday in this country; but the tale was of unknown antiquity then, and is firmly rooted in the social consciousness now. In consequence, Noah’s sacrifice is still commemorated year by year on the place where tradition says the ark rested—a *ziaret* which is not the actual summit of the mountain but a spot on its ridge. On that day (which, strange to say, is the first day of Ilul, or September 14 of our calendar, and not May 27 mentioned in the account in Genesis) all faiths and all nations come together, letting all feuds sleep on that occasion, to commemorate an event which is older than any of their divisions.

Christians of all nations and confessions, Musulmans of both Shiah and Sunni type, Sabaeans, Jews, and even the furtive timid Yazidis are there, each group bringing a sheep or kid for sacrifice; and for one day there is a “truce of God” even in turbulent Kurdistan, and the smoke of a hundred offerings goes up once more on the ancient altar. Lower down on the hillside, and hard by the Nestorian village of Hasana, men still point out Noah’s tomb and Noah’s vineyard, though this last, strange to say, produces no wine now. The grapes from it are used exclusively for *nipukhta* or grape treacle, possibly in memory of the disaster that once befell the Patriarch (Wigram 1914: 335–36).

And finally, Sir Henry Rawlinson asserts his opinion after a lecture given by James Bryce to the Royal Geographical Society of London. It was at this lecture that Bryce relates the story of his ascent to the summit of Mt. Ararat in 1876, and his subsequent discovery of a piece of wood. In this lecture, Bryce had made the case that Mt. Ararat was the Biblical Ararat and the landing place of Noah’s Ark. Rawlinson, great scholar that he was, disagrees. Whoever kept the minutes of the meeting summarized his remarks:

The mountain in question [Agri Dagh], however, had nothing whatever to do with biblical Ararat. No one who had really gone into the question could doubt that the popular notion was a fallacy. The mountain had never been called Ararat in the country from the remotest times to the present day. The name Agri-Dagh, and Ararat did not apply to that part of Armenia at all. The history of those countries from the earliest antiquity, was now, owing to the decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions, almost as well known as that of Greece or Rome. There were contemporary annals of Assyria, dating two thousand years before Christ, in all of which Ararat was as often spoken of and marked geographically as was Ninevah or Babylon. It was the name of a province which might be called Southern Armenia. It never extended further north than Lake Van, but included what was now called Persian Kurdistan, being the country east of Ninevah, and between the valley of the Tigris and the Persian plateau. In the Chaldean legend of the Flood, made known by the late Mr. George Smith, the Ark was made to rest upon Mount Nizer, which was explained to be another name for the range of Judi. It was immediately east of the basin of the Tigris, in the very centre of the province called Ararat—so called, it must be observed, not in one or two solitary instances, but throughout Assyrian history; the name, moreover, having been taken up by the Greeks, and passed on the Armenians. Even in the geography of Moses of Chorene, the province of Ararat had nothing to do with the Northern Armenia. The mountain north-east of Mosul, which, at the present day, concentrated in itself all the biblical traditions referring to Ararat, was still called Jebel Judi, and was visited by thousands of pilgrims annually in search of relics of the Ark, who bore away with them amulets made of small portions of wood which they found at the top of the mountain, no doubt supplied periodically by the priests. The practice had been going on for centuries, and was mentioned over and over again in history. He had himself seen troops of pilgrims going to the mountain of Judi from all parts of the East (Bryce 1877–1878: 184–85).

That Rawlinson knew his geography and his Assyrian history is well attested. While he himself had never seen the ruins, he was certainly acquainted with the tradition.

Conclusion

We are well aware of the fact that most religious relics should be viewed with a great deal of skepticism. However, with regard to possible remains of the Ark of Noah, we would like to postulate that remains of the Ark would be a different kind of relic. Consider hypothetically: if such an Ark vessel once really existed, with the Scriptural dimensions of nearly 500 feet in length and being built of a durable wood and coated with a preservative such as tar, wouldn’t it make sense that it would have taken centuries, even millennia, to decay, and that everyone in the general vicinity would know where such a hulk would lie? We are not talking about a small relic that cannot be readily seen by the general populace. Over the centuries, indeed millennia, people would know about it; it would be a topic of conversation and people would want to see it. In other words, in the case of the Ark of Noah, it is easy to imagine that a piece of wood from the Ark would be highly venerated and a prized possession, resulting in its being gradually dismantled by the faithful. At some point during the first millennium it seems the final large pieces of the Ark disappeared. As we noted earlier, one writer claimed that as Islam moved into the area, beams were removed to put into a mosque. Currently it is our assumption, as Bender discovered, that the only remains to be found would require some excavation.

We believe the traditions regarding Cudi Dagh are reliable. Bender’s tests proved the remains are ancient, and to confirm the thesis that they are remains of the Ark of the Biblical Flood, we believe core holes should be drilled, and with positive results, then latitudinal and longitudinal trenches should be dug using proper archaeological protocol. Hopefully, at some point, the Turkish government will grant the permits for such a project.
Thanks

We would like to thank the following people for their help in various ways in our research. Some knew what we were working on, other did not. Some will agree with our conclusions, others will not. However, we thank all of them for their contributions, big or small, in making our research project a success: Dr. Hagop Aynedjian, Dr. John Baumgardner, Dr. Helene Dallaire, Eric Engleman, Dr. Tom Finley, an anonymous geologist, Kathleen Hurley, Dr. Gordon Johnston, Dr. Charles A. Kennedy, Dr. David Livingston, Nancy Kandoian, David Nazarian, Robert Nedswick, Walter Pasaged, Dr. Elaine Phillips, Ivan Reynoso, Nate Schmolze, Dr. Halvor Ronnings, Brad Sparks, Dr. Mark Wilson. The librarians at the Fair Lawn (New Jersey) Public Library and New York Public Library, as well as the libraries at the Austrian National Library, Columbia University (Avery, Burke, Butler and Lamont libraries), Drew University, Princeton University, Princeton Theological Seminary, University of Vienna, and Western Michigan University.

Notes


2 Some evangelical skepticism about searching for Noah’s Ark was voiced in Eternity, Feb. 1978. See also the video by Hugh Ross, The Universal Flood in the Genesis and Science series, Part 6, 1993, distributed by Reasons to Believe.

3 For the most complete history of the search for Noah’s Ark, see: B.J. Corbin, ed., The Explorers of Ararat (Long Beach, CA: Great Commission Illustrated Books, 1999).

4 The writer of the excellent article in the Encyclopedia of Islam (M. Streck) believes Europeans were responsible for the Armenian tradition that led to Mt. Ararat becoming the landing place of the Ark. He thinks, and we agree, that they mistakenly transferred the name of the Armenian district of Ayarat to the mountain named Massis through a misinterpretation of Gn 8:4. This belief was undoubtedly solidified by the fact that it was the highest mountain in Armenia. Why wouldn’t the Ark land on the highest mountain?

5 One writer believes Ararat-Urartu means mountainous country or land. Oktay Belli believes Urartu is not an ethnic term but a geographical one meaning mountainous terrain. See his The Capital of Urartu: Van, 20.


7 According to scholars, the Mt. Ararat area did not come under the Urartian kingdom until the ninth century BC under the leadership of Menau (810–786 BC). See: Edwin M. Yamauchi, Foes from the Northern Frontier (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1982), 34. See also: Piotrovsky, 65.


9 One man, Porcher Taylor, a former employee of the CIA, using the Freedom of Information Act, has obtained high-resolution satellite photos. He believes a certain object on the west side of Ararat near the summit is man-made, though it has been thoroughly examined by explorers. See: Timothy W. Maier, “CIA Releases New Noah’s Ark Photos,” Insight, 13 November 2002.

10 Edwin M. Yamauchi suggested this site as early as 1978 (“Is That an Ark on Ararat?” Eternity, Feb. 1978). Lee A. Spencer and Jean-Luc Lienard were also early advocates of this site in an unpublished paper dated 1985. It can now be found on the Internet at http://origins.swau.edu/papers/global/noah/default.html.

11 According to Armenian tradition, Massis was named after a certain Amasia, a grandson of Haik, a descendant of Japheth. Amasia supposedly settled at the foot of the mountain and named the mountain after himself. S. Eprikian, Penashkanhik Pararun (Venice: 1903). This work is in Armenian.

12 Another early traveler in the area of Ararat in the 13th century who mentions the tradition of the Ark on Ararat is William of Rubruck. See: Manuel Komroff, ed., Contemporaries of Marco Polo (New York: Dorset Press, 1989), 202. Vincent of Beauvais, an encyclopedist, also wrote of the traditions of Ararat in the same century.

13 L.W. King translated the cuneiform on the several rock reliefs carved by Sennacherib, and proves that this mountain was once known as Nipur. L.W. King, Studies of Some Rock Sculptures and Rock Inscriptions of Western Asia,” Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology XXXV (1913). This should not be confused with the Sumerian city of Nippur.

14 Faustus refers to the mountain as Ararat but puts it in the canto of Gortouk. Benjamin of Tudela likewise refers to it as Ararat.

15 L.W. King, “Studies of Some Rock Sculptures and Rock Inscriptions of Western Asia.”

16 According to the chronicle of Zuqnin there were many who lost their lives in the conflagration. “A huge and dense gathering of Nestorians took place in the monastery of Beth Kewala (the Ark) on the mountains of Qardu. They celebrated a feast as they had custom to in the place where the ark (of Noah) came to rest. As a huge crowd gathered there in the middle of Later Tsur (November), lightning occurred in the sky and fire came down from high and consumed that shrine and burnt it, together with the people inside. Fire turned its stones into lime and even the people who were outside it did not survive this conflagration. It consumed all of them and no one escaped.” The historian goes on to say that 700 or 800 people perished along with many animals. The account really sounds extreme but the writer seems to indicate that the event was a punishment from God for venerating the site. See Part IV, pp. 204–205.


18 The Turkish city of Cizre, which lies at the foot of the Cudi Mountains, was known to contain a large contingent of Jews in antiquity. See: Dickson 1910: 361.

19 Where Isaiah 37:38 notes that the sons of Sennacherib’s sons escaped to Ararat, the Isaiah Targum has Kardu for Ararat in the Masoretic text.

20 The Genesis Apocryphon also names “Lubar” as the site where Noah planted the vine. Since the manuscript is fragmentary, it is not known whether or not it names “Lubar” as the landing place of the Ark. Charlesworth believes there is definite evidence of the influence of Jubilees in the Genesis Apocryphon. Charlesworth, p. 43.

21 The Armenians seemed to emerge after the collapse of the Urartians in the late sixth century BC.


23 Hieronymus the Egyptian is not known. Mnaseas was a Greek writer at the end of the third century.


25 It is important to note that during the time that Berossus wrote, the Armenian Kingdom covered this area. See: Historical Atlas of Armenia (New York: Armenian National Education Committee, 1987), 10ff.

26 The mention of Nisir as the landing place for the Ark in the Babylonian flood story is apparently the only time it occurs. Speiser is confident that it is to be identified with Pir Omar Gudrun in the Zagros Mountains (Speiser 1928).

27 Jacob of Nisibis was one of the prominent figures at the Council of Nicea in 325. He was known for his ability to perform miracles and was known as the Moses of Mesopotamia. He was also a figure in the evangelization of Armenia.

28 An ancient Persian unit of measuring length: One farasang (parasang) equals about 6 kilometers.
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Zuqin
Wood Remains from the “Landing Site of Noah’s Ark” Nearly 6500 Years Old

By Friedrich Bender

(Reprinted by permission from UMSCHAU-Kurzberichte aus Wissenschaft und Technik, vol.72, no. 1. Translated from the original German by W. Pasedag, ABR.)

Tectonic Lifting of the Taurus Mountains of Turkey

Wood remains from Cudidag, a mountain range at the northern rim of Mesopotamia, were dated with the $^{14}$C method; they are 6500 years old, i.e. pre-Sumerian. According to archaeological findings, parts of Mesopotamia were flooded at that time. Compelling geologic and morphologic reasons limit this flooding to this region, and exclude the high peaks of Ararat, located about 300 km [186 mi] further north, the landing site of the ark according to Biblical tradition. The wood remains were found in a location called the “landing site of the ship” according to the Gilgamesh Epic and the Koran. If the find is considered to be the remains of a ship, it is difficult to explain the altitude of its location, about 750 m [2460 ft] above the rubble terraces of the plain. There are some observations, however, which point to a geologically very young tectonic lift in the region of the southern rim of the Taurus Mountains and southeastern Turkey.

According to the Gilgamesh Epic, the “landing place of the ship,” and hence the northernmost range of the Flood, is to be found between the rivers Tigris and Zab (at the mountain of Nisir). The Old Testament locates it on the “mountains of Ararat.” The Koran (XI. Sura, 44) mentions the mountain Cudi (Cudidag, Al-Jûdi) as the landing place of the Ark of Noah. The Cudidag is a massif of the southernmost Taurus ranges in Eastern Turkey, between the Tigris and Zab, which is covered by a group of terraces. There are several observations, however, which point to a geologically very young tectonic lift in the region of the southern rim of the Taurus Mountains and southeastern Turkey.

Reports of Kurdish Muslims that the Cudidag was a pilgrimage destination where “pieces of wood from Noah’s Ark,” relics of great value, could be dug up. My guides’ constraints during this climb did not permit me to obtain detailed records of the geologic-Quaternary stratigraphy. The Cudidag is a southern-oriented anticlinal (geologic saddle with a steep southern flank) of Jurassic and Cretaceous limestone with a west-southwest to east-southeast oriented axis. The spine of the mountain reaches about 1800 m [5905 ft] above sea level. Two parallel fault lines, with heavily faulted and displaced middle-Eocene limes between them, accompany the steep southern flank. Further south, Neogene (young Tertiary), presumably Pliocene, land and river sediments are covered by large terraces of rubble (L. Benda, U. Staesche, verbal communication). They cover the substrate in obliquely oriented layers (i.e. diagonal to the substrate orientation), and are tectonically displaced themselves. At least three (at the Tigris five?) distinct terrace levels are discernible, declining towards the south from the edge of the mountains (1000 m [3280 ft]) to 500 m [1640 ft] above sea level. Their relative ages are unclear. West of Cizre, similar rubble lies between quaternary basalt (Altinli 1963). The wood remains were found in an open syncline (basin) at the upper southern slope of the Cudidag, about 3000 m [9843 ft] northeast of the Kurdish village of Kerikulya, at about 1700 m [5577 ft] above sea level (exact altitude uncertain), which is about 750 m [2460 ft] above the highest of the rubble terraces. The shallow basin, open towards the south, is surrounded by the thickly banked, massive limestones and dolomites of the “Cudi Group” (Altinli 1963). On the 6th of April, 1953, it was largely snow covered. Underneath the snow cover was a loamy silt sediment, which turned to a dark brown to black color at 0.80 to 1.00 m [2.6 to 3.3 ft] depth, and contained crumbly, up to pea-sized decayed wood remains. Many of the small wood fragments were bound together by an asphalt- or tar-like substance. My Kurdish guides did not permit any further digging or detailed examination. They considered the location a holy place.

Following a thorough dissolution of the asphalt with carbon tetrachloride, the wood fragments were radiocarbon dated by the Bureau for Earth Sciences of Lower Saxony in Hannover. A theoretical age of 6635 +/- 280 years BP (before 1950) was determined. A second measurement, which consumed all of the remaining material, confirmed the result. The only conceivable source of error is a potentially incomplete removal of the asphalt binder, whose age surely exceeded 50,000 years. In this case, assuming that the carbon contamination was up to 5% (which is considered unlikely), the maximum increase in the apparent age would be 400 years.
The age of wooden residues found on the Cudidag in the southernmost Taurus Ranges is about 6500 years according to radiocarbon dating. Remains of a ship may be discerned here. Their location could be explained by a strong uplifting of this mountain area.

Notes

1Friedrich Bender received his PhD in geology from the University of Heidelberg in 1949. He became one of the most prominent geologists in Europe, as he published numerous books and journal articles in his field. In the 1950s he was hired as a petroleum geologist by a Turkish firm searching for oil in eastern Turkey. He spent five years in this region, based in Camp Raman near Baturan. Upon his return to Germany, Dr. Bender worked as a professor and director in the Federal Institute for Soil Research (now the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources) in Hannover, Germany. This article was published during Dr. Bender’s tenure at the Institute. The Institute’s website is at http://www.bgr.bund.de.

2This suggestion by the author that the flood was local, not universal, is one with which ABR does not agree. Further, we disagree with the proposed dates for the Flood and the >50,000-year age for the asphalt. That said, the primary point of the article—the finding of ancient wood remains and bitumen on Mt. Cudi—is one that stands on its own merits, and warrants inclusion of the article in this issue.

3See note 2 above.

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