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The German Explorers of Cudi Dağı

114 years of examining the real landing place

Timo ROLLER*

Figure 1: Looking down from Cudi Dağı (© Hans Thoma)

German explorers have visited the summit of Mount Cudi since 1899. Unique photographs were taken and much fascinating information has been assembled. Although I did not visit the site so far myself, I was able to explore the summit by using Google Earth images, through which I indeed managed to put together many important pieces of the jigsaw puzzle on the possible location of what may actually remain of Noah's ark.

Johannes Lepsius

Figure 2: Johannes Lepsius (Lepsius House, Potsdam)

The first photo ever taken on the summit of Mount Cudi stems from Johannes Lepsius and dates to the summer of 1899. It is printed in his book »Ex Oriente Lux«, in which he reports his »Besteigung des Ararat« (»Ascent of Ararat«). He explains: »Not the ›Masis‹ at the border of Russia, but the Cudi on the northern edge of Mesopotamia is the Ararat of Scripture as (found) in oriental tradition«. [1]

Lepsius was born in Berlin on December 15, 1858, while his father Karl Richard Lepsius (1810–1884) is considered to be the founding father of German Egyptology, who in turn was a friend of the famous naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859). Lepsius' mother, Elizabeth (1828–1899) was the daughter of the famous composer Bernhard Klein (1793–1832) and the great-granddaughter of the writer Friedrich Nicolai (1733–1811). Consequently at Lepsius' home several influential personalities within the fields of politics, culture and ecclesiastical life regularly gathered.

Johannes Lepsius himself had studied math and philosophy, while he received a doctorate in Theology in 1880. While he was an assistant reverend at the German Lutheran state church in Jerusalem he made his first trip to the Orient in 1884. Through his work at an orphanage he became closely acquainted with the major problems at stake in the region, which were mainly caused by clashes between different cultures within the Middle East. He also founded his own relief organization. Lepsius died on February 3, 1926.

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Figure 3: First photograph ever taken of »Cudi, the mountain of the ark: place of worship for the muslims« (Johannes Lepsius)

In 1899 Lepsius and his comrades climbed to the top of Cudi starting the ascent at Şırnak. Finally they reached the summit and as he comments:

»It was noon when we arrived at the top and rode up the final flat vaulted elevation. Before us we found a square structure of hewn, roughly piled stones, one might have considered it to be a primitive watch tower. Some remains of vaults could infer that there once might have been a monastery here. Currently the open rooms appeared to serve as storage facilities for the pilgrims that came for the autumn festival. A crude staircase led to a walled patio, to which a ruined tower was attached.

Westward, a second crude construction nodged on to an elongated ridge, of the same nature and purpose as the first. [...]

›Over there‹ – he pointed to a circular terrace, perhaps some 30 meters below us, which was shaded by a lonely tree – ›he built an altar and sacrificed and prayed there.‹ ›During Fall, many people get together here, many of them coming from afar. Here the Christians are gathering and over there (at the other walled space) the Yezidis and the Muslims. There they slaughter eat and sing.‹« [2]

Concerning the question, where the mountain of Noah's ark is to be located, Lepsius wrote:

»There can be no doubt that the ›Masis‹ –called ›Ararat‹ by the Europeans – on the border of Russia, Persia and Turkey cannot be related to the tradition, while all the main features which are significant for the biblical history and Babylonian tradition concerning the flood, most clearly fit in with the Syrian Arab tradition on Cudi as the veritable ›Ararat‹.« [3]

Gertrude Bell

Figure 4: Gertrude Bell

The merits of Gertrude Bell regarding the exploration of Cudi Dağı can not be fully appreciated, for the British explorer (who has been called »the female Lawrence of Arabia« and the »Queen of the Desert«) has left the world with the most spectacular images and vivid descriptions, which are the most precious to be found on Mount Cudi, also still after more than one hundred years when she herself was on the summit on May 13 of 1909. But as she was not German, I will not comment any further on her work. The most important sources to consult are: her book »Amurath to Amurath« (1911, repr. 1924) as well as the website www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk

Friedrich Bender

Figure 5: Friedrich Bender (© by himself)

The next German explorer happens to be a geologist (he was also very well known: in 1984 he was awarded the German Federal Cross of Merit) and he was the next person, who reached the summit of Mount Cudi during Easter of 1954 (according to some information it was in 1953 – but his own records appear to be contradictory here). The person in question is Friedrich Bender, a professor and president of the Federal Institute of Agricultural Research (today known as the »Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources«) [4]. In June 2009 I myself had the opportunity to meet his widow, Mrs. Sigrid Bender, who showed me several personal documents and numerous pictures that had belonged to her deceased husband.

Friedrich Karl Heinrich Bender was born on September 17 of 1924 in Ziegenhain in the German State of Hesse. He respectively attended elementary and high school in Bad Hersfeld, Kleve and Wetzlar. In 1941 he was drafted into the Wehrmacht during World War II and was sent to the front-line in Russia. After the war and subsequently to his return to Germany, Bender studied geology in Stuttgart and began his professional career in northern Germany in 1951. As this geologist states in the preface to his book »Wanderungen« (»Wanderings«), he investigated »in vieler Herren Länder« (i. e. »all over the world«) and adds: »I had the rare privilige and the good health to get to know virtually every country of the world.« [5]

In the early 1950s, Bender worked as a geologist in Anatolia and had close contact with the locals. It was through a discussion with a Hodja – an Islamic scholar – about the Bible and the Quran that Friedrich Bender went on his journey to Cudi Dağı. Because they had been discussing the story of Noah the latter made a lasting impression on Bender's mind and this gave rise to his plans to make the trip. His wife told me: »Fritz was very mixed up after the visit and went introvert«. In an issue of the journal »Kosmos« from the year 1956 Friedrich Bender describes how a muslim Hodja (priest) had told him about Mount Cudi and writes:

»The remains of the old vessel covered in sand are apparently still up on Mount Cudi today. He (the Hodja) himself had been there some twenty years before and had seen the place with his own eyes. The place was a sacred place of pilgrimage for all true believers in Kurdistan and northern Arabia. He said that no Christian had ever been there before, but he felt that I might be able to find a guide, who could accompany me through this rough terrain.« [6]

Figure 6: Bender floated down the river Tigris with a raft made of animal skins (© Friedrich Bender)

On several images Bender has documented his adventurous journey to Mount Cudi. He describes his arrival on the summit as follows:

»After a further climb of some ten minutes my guides showed me the place, which they considered to be the landing place of Noah's Ark at a height of some

2000 meters above sea level. There was an approximately 300 meter long open trough oriented in southern direction towards the plain, located immediately below the summit of Cudi Dag. Above the trough I found ruins of a small mosque or shelter of thick, roughly hewn boulders. A walled stone with strange, unfamiliar characters also struck me.« [7]

The uniqueness of Bender's expedition was that he has actually excavated there!

»We immediately began to clear away the 1 to 2 meter thick snow blanket in several places on the edge of the trough, because I had been told that remains of wood were found in the sand underneath the snow. In reality we hit on finely grained calcareous sandstone, which also contained grains of quartz. Despite my scepticism, my excitement reached its zenith when after one meter we hit on brown sand discolorations, in which we uncovered the remains of totally decayed black wood. At first I believed that these were the remains of an old camp fire. But soon I discovered that the wood was bonded by asphalt! (I carried some chemicals with me, which usually help to extract bitumen, oil and asphalt from rocks). We continued our dig with renewed fervor, but below the level of one meter the sand proved to be the frozen. Excavations in the deeper parts of the trough were prevented by the snow which rose to several meters. We were granted no more success.« [8]

Figure 7: Bender and his guides while digging for pieces of wood (© Friedrich Bender)

The following results of the detailed investigation were also achieved by this geologist:

»After the thorough extraction of the asphalt with the use of tetrachloride, the wood fragments were subsequently dated according to the ^{14}C-method in Hannover at the Lower Saxony State Office for Soil Research, which produced the model age of 6635±280 years before present/BP (i.e. before 1950). A second test, which used up the remaining available material, confirmed this result. The only possible source of error to be considered could have been an incompletely separated piece of asphalt, whose age certainly amounted to more than 50,000 years. If so, this would raise the apparent age by a maximum of some 400 years, but only if the carboniferous heterogeneity within the extrinsic portion contained in the cleaned sample still amounted up to 5%, which may be regarded as unlikely.« [9]

His wife told me of a »four and a half centimeters piece of decayed wood«. Unfortunately, no photo of this is available.

As for his explorations on Cudi, Bender concludes: »I personally think that is worthwhile to pursue the matter. Again and again one finds a grain of truth shrowded in ancient traditions, and often one has started to explore things based on less indicative evidence than what is presented here.« [10]

He himself indeed pursued the matter further, but without reaching a satisfactory interpretation and without getting to the summit again. In 1991 he visited the foot of the Cudi mountains for a last time, but the political circumstances and his health did not allow him to climb the mountain again. Bender had sought to bring the archaeological finds of Leonard Woolley at Ur in Lower Mesopotamia in line with the Cudi Dağı Ark tradition. Although it is known today that the clay levels which Woolley associated with the biblical deluge only represent a small flood on limited scale, Bender wished to find out if the Mesopotamian inundation (located by Woolley) could be reconciled with the tradition of the boat that would have landed at the findspot, which according to his understanding was located at an altitude of some 1700 meters. His basic theory, which he had already published in 1972 was as follows: »The height of the findspot at some 750 meters above the gravel terraces in the plain is difficult to explain, if one seeks to explain the find as the remains of a shipwreck. Several geological observations, however, do suggest that there have been very recent techtonic elevations on the southern edge of Taurus in Southeastern Turkey. « [11]

His geological studies at the foot of the Cudi chain in autumn of 1988 showed some discrepancies between the geological attribution of the terrace gravel to the Quartery (according to him some 300,000 to 350,000 years old) and the ^{14}C dating which resulted in a date range between 675 and 13,950 years. Finally the mystery remained unsolved for Friedrich Bender and in a letter to a friend dated to July 1992, he wrote that »the story still excites me even after 40 years«.

Friedrich Bender died on May 27, 2008 and was buried in the cemetery of Spangenberg.

The Hans Thoma Team

Figure 8: Hans Thoma, Otmar Reiter and Christoph Thoma (© Timo Roller)

»We struggled ourselves forward on the winding pilgrimage path up to the summit of Cudi Da(gh) in the scorching heat of the afternoon hours. It is us, five climbers from Bavaria, a bearded guide with two mules, an Islamic mullah with guiding skills and a ten year old interpreter called ›Kiek mal‹, who has been to school in Berlin for two years and who starts every sentence with this standard phrase. In addition two soldiers accompanied us.« [12]

This is a report of Christoph Thoma, who attended the summit of Cudi together with his dad and other companions back in 1983. Even though the ultimate goal of these ambitious climbers was to head for the 5000 meter high Mount Ararat, the trip to Mount Cudi appears to have left a strong impression on the group. Christoph Thoma writes:

»All of a sudden the light goes out, just at the moment when we finally reach the

putative anchor site of the ark. Our Hodja is praying. The six of us share two cans of beer. Iron reserve of the backpack. We unroll our sleeping bags on the muddy floors of the leaf huts which stood next to two stone houses. Our priest calles one of the buildings a ›church‹, the other one a ›mosque‹. Believers of different religions come here for pilgrimage. [...]

Agonizing thirst wakes us early. [...] We view Noah's first housing and numerous cisterns which date back to the archaic past. But in summer these are all empty. A stone igloo by the way side fascinates us: on the inside of the semi-circular kraal dozens of delightful small prams made of brightly colored rags and woolen threads are dangling. The Hodja explains: ›They were brought by women who can't have children. For from this spot spread life throughout the world.‹« [13]

Figure 9: Small prams in the ruins on top of Mount Cudi (© Hans Thoma)

Hans Thoma told in his 1991 book »Türkei – Trekking unterm Halbmond« (»Turkey – trekking underneath the crescent«):

»The little exciting and especially for alpine proportions tiny challenge of Mount Cudi is soaked with mythology like a sponge. Near the landing place are simple structures made of quarried boulders like booths with roofs made of brushwood and dried leaves. They are given names such as "Noah's house" and "Noah's shrine". The unsuspecting unbelievers are awaited by heartwarming devotional places on the Cudi plateau. Walls have been erected in the midst of a treeless field. They resemble primitive altars, barely chest high, semicircular in form. The inside of the walls are hung with doll-like small replicas of cradles. Colorful scraps of clothing, floral, polka dots, red, white, blue with yellow, like tiny hammocks affectionately suspended by woolen threads and attached to dry twigs and plant stalks, which are caught in the rubble. Devout and hoping proffered votive offerings deposited by women who implore the blessing of children in this place, which brought new life to the earth after the flood.« [14]

The members of the Thoma crew climbed the mountain with armed escorts and under adverse conditions: the water supplies were running out because of a miscalculation of the guides. Probably heat and thirst prevented more detailed investigation of the terrain on the mountain top. Nevertheless, the view from Cudi and the ruins have been captured quite impressively on high quality photographs.

Figure 10: Sunrise at the landing place of the ark (© Hans Thoma)

During my research I travelled to Landshut in September 2009. I met the then 84-year-old Hans Thoma, his son Christopher and his companion Otmar Reiter. They showed me two small pieces of rock from Mount Cudi, kept by Hans Thoma in an old film box. I was able to take pictures of them in detail – and even examine them later with the help of geologists and archaeologists. But at first glance they seemed

fairly unspectacular and probably they are just charred pieces of limestone.

Figure 11: Remains of the ark? (© Timo Roller)

Unfortunately, the location of the discovery site can not be clearly proven. Christoph Thoma writes:

»As a farewell the Hodja gave us a few chunks of hazelnut-sized, crumbly, blackish substance. He related that he had dug them out of the ground of the landing site. None of us had watched him do this. But – and this is a curious fact – also the people here at the village of Besiri wear such clumps as amulets around their necks. The Hodja declared unequivocally: these are remnants of Noah's ark.

Are these truly our final relics? Hans immediately remembered an article he had read back in 1972. There he found the enigmatic sentences: remains of wood from a pilgrim's place on mount Cudi, found in 1953 by Dr. Friedrich Bender and dated with the help of ^{14}C. After the removal of bitumen bonding an age of 6500 years had been established for the wood. ›And exactly at that time‹ so argued Otmar ›significant parts of Mesopotamia had perportedly been flooded.‹

So have we really found remains of Noah's Ark, or more properly said have received them as a gift from our Hodja? ›Let's go with Goethe,‹ says Andy, 'he advised the people to worship the inscrutable.‹ ›And Peter fell into the car seat saying: ›The rest of it is just faith, isn't it?‹« [15]

»We are proud of this gift. The Lower Saxony State Office for Soil Research [Friedrich Bender himself did the examination] investigated our relics by the ^{14}C method. Result: 19,850 years old humus substance.« [16]

Another great merit of the Thoma crew are the imprints of some bas-reliefs which they have made with silicone. These millennia-old monuments are severely threatened by decay, but fortunately the inscriptions were already translated 100 years ago.

I am glad to have a real Sennacherib relief up in my office, it is an almost unique piece of ancient art.

Figure 12: A copy of the Sennacherib bas-relief found at Mount Cudi (© Timo Roller)

My own Research

In 2007 I published my first book »Bible Earth«. It leads you to many important Holy Places with the famous application of Google Earth. Later I found newly uploaded high-resolution satellite images of Cudi Dağı with Google Earth and connected them geographically with pictures and descriptions of different sources. I published an article about my exploration on my website, and so Bill Crouse contacted me. His

earlier work had helped me a lot in my research and since that first contact we use to share our results on the subject. My German base has been a great help because of the important explorers whom I introduced to you who mainly published in German.

I was able to collect the first photograph of the summit and the most important geological documentation, which had been collected by German explorers and which may now serve as a basis for further - international - research. By comparing many photos with the satellite images of Google Earth, I was able to locate the exact peak of the mountain range and identify the remains of the ruins. I am convinced that some structures are still awaiting discovery and that an archaeological expedition could prove to be very rewarding.

I don't think one is able to find an intact ark trapped in the ice of a glacier like explorers hope to find on Mount Ararat. They are searching at the wrong place but also on Cudi only very little remains will have been preserved to the present day. There is no glacier to preserve it, while the ark must have been destroyed through erosion and catastrophes that occured during the many millenia of its history and surely many pieces of the wood must have been removed by generations of pilgrims.

The researchers who only focus on Mount Ararat expect to find the ark trapped in glacial ice. But as it seems, they are looking in the wrong place. As there is no glacial ice on Cudi very little must be left of the Ark itself - if anything at all. But it may be possible to uncover the foundations and other remains of structures built during the changing architectural history on the summit of which we only still see small ruins today. The monastery burnt back in the 8th century or the fortress which was conquered by Sennacherib evidently some 1500 years earlier, could be promising targets for archaeological excavations. And in the case that researchers will find some rotten remains of a wooden structure, this could perhaps bring to light a plausible explanation: Could the sinking waters of the deluge in the days of Noah have allowed the huge ship to settle gently on top of this mountain which the muslims know as Al Cudi and which also Christians should finally realize is indeed one of the »mountains of Ararat« as described in the Bible?

The following tables and the enclosed pictures show an overview of my geographical research with Google Earth and many of the other sources. I hope these results will serve as a basis for further research with me as a further German explorer – embedded into an international working group finding out more and more about the true landing place of Noah's ark.

Identifying the exact summit with Google Earth

Because the summit of Mount Cudi is a plateau rather than a peak it was not clear were the exact »landing place« was at the start of my research. Therefore I had to find some striking landmarks on the photographs available and compare them with

the images of Google Earth. As you can see on the following pictures I found some of such and succeeded in identifying the place visited by Lepsius, Bell, Bender and the Thoma team and so I was able to determine the coordinates of the place where the ark had probably stranded.

Figure 13: Landmarks on the Bell panorama photograph as compared with Google Earth

ID	Description	Distance to Summit	Position	Coordinates (E/N)	Above Sea Level
1	Mountain near Aydin	44 km	14°	42.6200, 37.7500	2825 m
2		0,8 km	16°	42.4982, 37.3732	1864 m
3		1,25 km	40°	42.5039, 37.3745	1821 m
4	Mountain near Senoba/Uludere	30 km	54°	42.7700, 37.5200	2679 m
5		3,9 km	59°	42.5333, 37.3838	1735 m
6		3,7 km	80°	42.5358, 37.3717	1861 m
7	»Ice Tongue« on Bell photo	1,6 km	88°	42.5133, 37.3666	1897 m
8	»Gabriel's Gate«	0,85 km	116°	42.5035, 37.3629	1844 m
9	Derebasi summit	0,9 km	256°	42.4854, 37.3642	1886 m
10	Derebasi valley	2,0 km	242°	42.4757, 37.3579	1396 m
11	Derebasi slope	2,75 km	218°	42.4759, 37.3468	1132 m
12		0,22 km	225°	42.4937, 37.3648	1947 m
13		7,6 km	191°	42.4786, 37.2995	703 m

ID	Description	Distance to Summit	Position	Coordinates (E/N)	Above Sea Level
14		9,2 km	196°	42.4672, 37.2877	681 m
15	Hill near Silopi	11 km	185°	42.4834, 37.2688	678 m
16	Southern mountain chain near Dayrabun (Iraq)	31 km	184°	42.4713, 37.0913	1040 m

Table 1: Landmarks around Cudi summit

Figure 14: Landmarks on Bell's photos compared to HPG image found in the internet in 2008

Figure 15: Landmarks L1 to L8 shown on Bell panorama picture

Figure 16: Cudi mountain chain as seen from Silopi

Figure 17: Looking down from the summit towards Silopi

Figure 18: Remarkable rock formation near the »landing place« identified on a photo found in »panoramio.com«

Points of interest on the summit of Cudi Dağı

I was able to identify some of the ruins that are shown on the photos of the Cudi explorers in Google Earth. In addition, there are several places visible on the satellite images of Google Earth which may to be identify with remains of the sacred buildings that once have been there and were destroyed or decayed a long time ago. I have drawn them into the screenshot here.

Figure 19: The points of interesting on the top of Mount Cudi

ID	Description	Coordinates (E/N)	Above Sea Level	Remarks
1	Main building (»Sefina«)	42.495493, 37.366209	1999 m	
2	Cistern	42.494299, 37.366241	1991 m	
3	Small igloo-shaped building (now destroyed)	42.496880, 37.367847	1980 m	Position uncertain
4	Eastern corner of the suspected monastery wall	42.497862, 37.365324	1954 m	

ID	Description	Coordinates (E/N)	Above Sea Level	Remarks
5	Southwestern Corner of the suspected church	42.493101, 37.365157	1965 m	
6	Possible place where Bender found remains of decayed wood	42.496222, 37.365053	1968 m	

Table 2: Points of interest with there exact location

Figure 20: Photographs of the places on the top of Mount Cudi as shown on images found in the internet. As you can see, the igloo-shaped ruin »C3« has been destroyed within approximately the last five years.

The Surroundings of Cudi Dağı

The towns of Şırnak, Cizre and Silopi surrounds the Cudi massif in three direction: North, west and south. Immediately at the foot of the mountains, there are some small abandoned villages which are listed in the next tables. They are known under different names and are mentioned partly in the records of the explorers. The map notes the locations of the listed places.

ID	Name	Alternate Names	Direction to Summit	Coordinates (E/N)	Above Sea Level	Remarks
1	Sirnak		N	42.45, 37.52	1350 m	Capital of Şırnak Province and venue of the Noah Symposium.
2	Cizre		W	42.18, 37.33	380 m	Noah's tomb is worshipped here.
3	Silopi		S	42.47, 37.25	500 m	
4	Kemerli		N	42.49, 37.41	1150 m	
5	Anilmis	Gündükremo, Zemo	N	42.51, 37.40	1200 m	
6	Boyunyaka	Ipsindarük	N	42.50, 37.40	1250 m	

ID	Name	Alternate Names	Direction to Summit	Coordinates (E/N)	Above Sea Level	Remarks
7	Görümlü		SE	42.57, 37.34	900 m	
8	Koyunören	Besiri	SE	42.54, 37.34	950 m	The inhabitants own wooden remains according to C. Thoma.
9	Derebasi/	Giricülyan, Kericulya	SW	42.46, 37.35	1000 m	According the Bender, the summit lies 3000 to the northeast from here.
10	Kösreli	Hassana	SW	42.42, 37.34	850 m	Gertrude Bell had her camp here.
11	Hebler	Hisar	W	42.36, 37.37	620 m	
12	Sah	Caglayan	W	42.33, 37.38	560 m	

Table 3: Towns and villages arround Cudi Dağı.

Figure 21: A map of the surroundings of Mount Cudi

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Sigrid Bender, Hans Thoma and Otmar Reiter for providing me their extensive evidence and sharing their knowledge about Mount Cudi with me. I also appreciate their permission to publish their unique photographs and Friedrich Bender's text.

In addition, a thank you to Dr. Peter van der Veen, whose indication was the starting point of my research about Mount Cudi and who supported me to translate this paper. Finally, I want to express my appreciation to Bill Crouse: His research is invaluable and I am blessed to cooperate with him since 2008. I have learned a lot!

Notes

[1] Lepsius 1903, p 101

[2] Lepsius 1903, p 109–110

[3] Lepsius 1903, p 111

[4] http://www.bgr.bund.de/DE/50JahreBGR/DE/Praesidenten/praesidenten_inhalt.html

[5] Bender 1996, p 7

[6] Bender 1956, p 152

[7] Bender 1956, p 154

[8] Bender 1956, p 154–155

[9] Umschau 72 (1972), issue 1, see appendix below

[10] Bender, 1956, p 155

[11] Umschau 72 (1972), issue 1, see appendix below

[12] C. Thoma, 1990, S. 168–169

[13] C. Thoma, 1990, S. 170, 172

[14] H. Thoma, 1991, S. 130–131

[15] C. Thoma, 1990, S. 175

[16] C. Thoma, 1984

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Appendix

Wooden remains from the »Landing spot of Noah's Ark«, aged about 6500 years by Prof. Dr. Friedrich Bender, President of the Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources in Germany from 1975 to 1985

Extended unpublished version, translated by F. Bender (German version published in the magazine »Umschau 72 (1972), Issue 1, pages 20–21)

14C-dating done by State Geological Survey of Lower Saxony, Hannover

Wooden remains from Cudidag, a mountain range on the Northern edge of Mesopotamia, have been dated by the 14C-method; they are approximately 6500

years old, hence pre-Sumarian. According to archaeological findings, southern parts of Mesopotamia were flooded at that time. On account of compelling geological and geomorphological reasons the flood possibly can have reached this area but never the 300 km to the north situated Mount Ararat in the high alpine region where, according to biblical tradition, Noah's Ark should have landed. The place of discovery of the wooden remains is in the area which, in the Gilgamesh-Epos an in the Koran, is defined as »the landing place of a ship«. The altitude level of the discovery spot at 750 m above the terraced of the Tigris alluvial gravels plain is hardly explainable if the findings are to be recognized as remains of the ship. Some observations, however, point to very recent, structural uplifts in the area of the southern Taurus edge in south-east Turkey.

Whilst according to the Gilgamesh-Epos the »landing spot of the ship« and consequently the northern end of the flooding of Mesopotamia is to be sought between the Tigris and the Great Zab rivers (at Mount Nisir), the Old Testament (Genesis 8,4) relocates this place to »the Mount Ararat«. In the Koran (XI. Sure 44) the mountain Cudi (Cudidag, Al-Judi) is described as the landing spot of Noah's Ark. The Cudidag is a part of the southern most Taurus mountain range in east Turkey between the Tigris and the Great Zab rivers and, therefore, coincides with the area mentioned in the Gilgamesh.

For geological and geomorphological reasons the northern borderline of a traceable pre-Sumarian flooding of Mesopotamia is naturally more likely to be found at the first mountain ranges which tower over the plain in the north than at Mount Ararat (5165 m) at a distance of 300 km farther to the north.

During spring time 1953 [1954?] I was able to climb the Cudidag in East Turkey and salvaged wooden remains with traces of asphalt. This undertaking was based mainly on news from Kurdish Muslims, according to which the Cudidag was reputed to be a place of pilgrimage where digging was done for »wooden pieces of Noah's Ark« which where considered to be of great value as relics. The attendant circumstances during the climb prevented detailed geological research. The Cudidag is a south vergent anticline (geological saddle with a steep south flank) consisting of Jura and Cretaceous limestone with a WNW-ESE running axis. The mountain ridge comes up to approximately 1800 m above sea level. The precipitous south flank is accompanied by to parallel running main fold zones amongst which very disturbed middle Eocene limestome is observed. South of this lies Neogene (Late Tertiary), presumably Pliocene river sediments cover wide areas. Terraced river gravels and terraced talus fans at the foot of the mountain range overlie the late Tertiary rocks. They overlie the Neogene sequences with a steep, angular disconformity. The old (high) terraces are tectonially uplifted as well. It is possible to differentiate between at least three terrace levels (five at the Tigris river) with dip from the edge of the

mountain range (about 1000 m above sea level) towards the south (to about 500 m). Their ages in detail are unknown. West of the town of Cizre, similar terrace gravels are intercalated by Quaternary basalt layers. The discovery spot of the examined wooden remains lays in a basin on the upper south slope of the Cudidag, about 3000 m north-east of the Kurdish village Kericulya, approximately 1700 m (elevation not certain) above sea level and, therefore, approximately 750 m above the highest terrace. The flat basin open to the south is surrounded by extensive limestone and dolomitic of the »Cudi Group«.



On 6th of April 1953 [more likely 19th April 1954!] most of the basin was snow-covered. Underneath was a not loamy fine sandy sediment which at depth of 0.80 to 1.0 m was coloured dark brown and blackish and contained pea-sized, brittle decayed wooden remains. Most of these wooden pieces were cemented by an asphalt or tar-like substance. More intense digging and closer investigation was not allowed by the Kurdish guides who honoured the discovery spot as a specially sacredly relic.

After thorough dissolution of the asphalt with tetrachloride, the wooden fragments were dated according to the 14C-method, and the model age of 6635±280 years (before 1950) established. The second test, when all available material was used up, confirmed this result. As an only possible source of error, a contamination with incompletely separated asphalt, which age certainly was higher than 50,000 years, could be considered. Then the apparent age increase could be maximal 400 years if the carboniferous heterogeneity was even 5% in the cleaned sample, which can be regarded as unlikely.

Should the examined wood have been transported by the flood of Mesopotamia to the present point of discovery, the altitude of 750 m above the highest terraces would be hard to explain. Some observations might allow the conclusion that a very recent geological upwards movements in the area of the Taurus edge occured: The Neogene sequences are uplifted to a nearly vertical position in approaching the mountain range, Quaternary terraces where included in the continuing uplift movements. In the epeirogenetic rise (uplift of an extensive region) younger sediments where also included, as for example in the foreland of the Cudidag where Pleistocene sediments under more recent alluvial deposits appear to a considerable ascent of the Taurus in this area are also to be taken from the observations by Bobek who states values for lift since the older Pliocene in the Bitlis Cay area up to 1500 metres. Recent geological ascent could have taken place at the main fault zones of the southern edge of the Cudidag.