



ARARAT

ARARAT, MOUNT (Pers. Kūh-e Nūh, Arm. Masis or Masik, Turk. Ağr dağ or Eğri dağ), extinct volcano in the northeastern extremity of Turkey close to the Iran-Soviet frontiers. Mt. Ararat rises more than 4000 m above the plains of the Araxes basin (İğdir depression, altitude 875 m) to the northeast and more than 3000 m above the Doğu Bayazıt depression (altitude 2000 m) to the south. The mountain is a range made up of two summits, Great Ararat (5,165 m) in the northwest and Little Ararat (3,925 m) in the southeast, and a narrow connecting ridge approximately 2687 m high and 14 km long which is called Serdar Bulak after a spring situated lower down.

Ararat is the same word as Urartu, the ancient kingdom on one of whose mountains Noah's ark was said to come ashore (Gen. 8:4). It is the name given to the volcanic massif by the Europeans, who reasoned that the region's highest mountain ought logically to be the ark's landing place. This notion, however, is quite recent. Early Armenian tradition (up to the 10th century A.D.) and Islamic tradition (based on Qur'ān 11:46) set the ark's landfall on Mount Jūdī, which after the Arab conquest was generally identified with a range only 2,100 m high in the Jazīra (southeast of Siirt in what is now Turkish territory: 37° 24' north latitude 42° 32' east longitude), though the earliest Arab authors placed it in Arabia (in Moḥammad's lifetime this term had probably denoted the whole West-Arabian mountain system). The names given by the Arab geographers to Great and Little Ararat are *Jabal al-Ḥāret* (The Ploughman's Mountain) and *Jabal al-Ḥowayret* (the same in the diminutive form). [See also [Ayrarat](#).]



The volcanic massif from which the cones of Great and Little Ararat rise covers approximately 1,200 km² and towers on the southeastern side above a Paleozoic basement slit by the trenches filled with recent deposits which form the Araxes and Doğu Bayazıt plains. The two principal cones are for the most part composed of recent (Upper Pliocene and Quaternary) andesitic lavas, but have a complex morphological history as there are several satellite cones and some lateral flows of more recently erupted basalt. The present limit of permanent snow is about 4,000 m. Great Ararat has a large ice cap, but Little Ararat has no glaciers. From the ice cap numerous tongues of ice descend in valleys, the most important being the Abich glaciers to the northeast and the Parrot glacier to the northwest, both of which come down to about 3,800 m. To the north, in the “Valley of Hell” (*Cehennem Dere*), the earthquake of 20 June 1840 gave rise, three days later, to a downsip of the end of the ice tongue together with great masses of mud and water, leaving a rock glacier buried under morainic débris. This “regenerated glacier” still exists today, with its front at an altitude of only 2,300 m.

The same catastrophe destroyed the large Armenian village of Arguri, situated at 1,740 m altitude and inhabited by 1,600 people, and the monastery of St. James 3 km further up the same valley. Since then, the Ararat range has been devoid of permanent human settlements; it is now occupied only in summertime by the flocks of local Kurdish shepherds. There must have been a fairly dense population in the middle ages before the Turkish invasions. Moqaddasī (p. 380) in the 4th/10th century, wrote of 1,000 villages on the spurs of the mountain. Forest vegetation, which in natural conditions could thrive in the altitude zone of approximately 2,100-2,800 m, has today completely disappeared but in the middle ages (according to Eştakrī, p. 191) was still in existence.

From the 10th/16th to the 12th/18th century, the Ararat range formed part of the frontier between the Turkish and Persian empires and was important in the Ottoman-Safavid wars. The summit and northern slopes of Great Ararat and the eastern slopes of Little Ararat were in Persian-controlled territory. Under the Torkamāñçāy treaty of 1828, the northern slopes and the summit of Great Ararat were ceded to Russia, and Little Ararat became the point where the Turkish, Persian, and Russian imperial frontiers converged; but under the Moscow treaty of 16 March 1921, which realigned the Turco-Soviet frontier on the Araxes river, Great Ararat was included in Turkish territory, and since the Turco-Persian agreement of 31 January 1932 whereby part of the eastern slope



of Little Ararat stretching 5 or 6 km from the crest was transferred to Turkey, this summit also has lain wholly within Turkish territory.

The first recorded ascent of Ararat was made in 1829 by Friedrich Parrot, a professor at the University of Dorpat, and many more ascents were made during the 19th century. Valuable studies of the geology were published in the 19th century by H. Abich (who climbed the mountain in 1845) and in the 20th century by H. Blumenthal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

M. Streck and F. Taeschner, "Aghrı Dagħ," in *ET*² I, pp. 251f.

M. Streck, "Djüdi," in *ET*² II, pp. 573f.

On the geology: M. M. Blumenthal, "Der Vulkan Ararat und die Berge seiner Sedimentumrandung," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Fen Fakültesi Mecmuası, Seri B: Tabii İlimler*, 23, 3-4, 1959, pp. 177-327, with 16 phot., 13 fig., and 2 inset maps.

H. F. B. Lynch, *Armenia*, 2 vols., London, 1901, gives a detailed and almost exhaustive bibliography of relevant material including Russian works published up to that date (vol. II, pp. 480-82).

Most useful among the numerous travel accounts are F. Parrot, *Reise zum Ararat*, Berlin, 1834; M. Wagner, *Reise nach dem Ararat und dem Hochland Armenien (1843)*, Stuttgart, 1847; J. Bryce, *Transcaucasia and Ararat*, London, 1877; J. Leclercq, *Voyage au Mont Ararat*, Paris, 1892; E. Chantre, "L'Ararat," *Annales de Géographie*, 1893, pp. 81-94; H. F. B. Lynch, op. cit., vol. I, pp. 156-99.

(X. de Planhol)