

A Theoretical Model of the Influence of Geographical Setting and Regional Ecosystem on the Determination of the Miracle of Ṣālih's She-Camel (‘A)

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Introduction

The miracles of the prophets were extraordinary acts performed to verify the truthfulness of their divine missions. The prophets maintained that a miracle is an act that no one besides God Almighty is capable of producing, and therefore it serves as definitive evidence of the authenticity of their claim to have been commissioned by God. In the Holy Qur'an, references to prophetic miracles are frequently accompanied—either explicitly or implicitly—by descriptions of the places in which they occurred or by characteristics of the geographical environment associated with them. Such references raise several important questions: Why does the Qur'an not always specify the precise location of a miracle? How does the study of place contribute to a deeper understanding of the miracle itself? What message might such an approach convey to contemporary readers, and what previously unexplored dimensions of the Qur'an might it reveal? Considering the diversity of prophetic miracles, geographical studies may also help answer questions such as: Why was a particular miracle manifested in a specific form? What relationship exists between the miracle and the natural and human geography of its setting? Why did each prophet receive a miracle distinct from those of other prophets? Addressing these questions through an interdisciplinary perspective can contribute significantly to the development of new approaches to contemporary religious studies. Just as the identification and analysis of the geographical characteristics of a region, within the framework of educational exegesis, can lead to a deeper understanding of the Qur'an's guidance for the moral and spiritual development of individuals and society, so too can the study of place illuminate the rationale behind the specific form of divine miracles.

Materials and Methods

The present study employs **Grounded Theory** as its principal qualitative research methodology. This approach develops theoretical models inductively from systematically collected data in order to explain broad patterns of action and interaction. Data analysis was conducted through the three standard stages of grounded theory coding: **open coding**, **axial coding**, and **selective coding**, while also taking into account contextual conditions, interactions, and

consequences within the paradigm model. Although grounded theory commonly utilizes interviews and observations, documentary sources may likewise serve as primary research data. Accordingly, the present study draws upon Qur'anic verses, classical and contemporary Qur'anic commentaries, historical geographical works, modern studies concerning the region of al-Ḥijr and the people of Thamūd, as well as geographical resources including scholarly articles, maps, satellite imagery, and field investigations. During data collection, 223 Qur'anic verses related to geographical locations were initially identified. In addition, sixty-one verses specifically concerning al-Ḥijr and the people of Thamūd were examined and coded. Owing to the limitations of article length, only a representative selection of these verses and their corresponding analytical codes is presented.

Results and Findings

Open coding of the Qur'anic verses, together with the analysis of historical and contemporary studies, revealed numerous direct and indirect indications of a relationship between the ecosystem of al-Ḥijr and the miracle of Ṣāliḥ's she-camel. Through axial coding, these findings were organized into three major analytical categories. Analysis of the first category demonstrated that the people addressed by Prophet Ṣāliḥ (ʿA) were the people of Thamūd and that his principal miracle consisted of the emergence of a she-camel from a mountain. The Qur'an identifies them as **Aṣḥāb al-Ḥijr**, indicating their close association with that geographical region. The second category established that al-Ḥijr was an identifiable geographical location—a town situated between the Ḥijāz and Greater Syria (al-Shām). The third category showed that al-Ḥijr was a mountainous region whose inhabitants possessed exceptional expertise in stone carving, as evidenced by the large number of surviving inscriptions and rock-cut monuments. Camels occupied a central place in the social and economic life of the region, while water represented an especially valuable resource. The findings further indicate a meaningful relationship between the miracle of the she-camel and the form of divine punishment inflicted upon the people of Thamūd.

Conclusion

The miracles of the prophets were extraordinary acts intended to demonstrate the truthfulness of their divine missions. The findings of this study indicate that several factors influenced the particular form of prophetic miracles, among which natural and human geographical conditions occupy a prominent place. One of the miracles repeatedly emphasized in the Holy Qur'an is the emergence of Prophet Ṣāliḥ's (ʿA) she-camel from the heart of a mountain. Open coding of the Qur'anic verses, together with historical and geographical evidence, demonstrates that numerous explicit and implicit textual indications point to a close relationship between the ecosystem of al-Ḥijr and this miracle. Axial coding enabled these data to be synthesized into three principal categories. The third category, in particular, revealed that al-Ḥijr was a mountainous region inhabited by a people renowned for their mastery of stone carving, with the largest surviving body of inscriptions from that era originating there. Camels likewise held exceptional significance within their society, while the scarcity and importance of water profoundly shaped regional life. The central phenomenon identified in this study—the relationship between the miracle of the she-camel and the

geographical characteristics of al-Ḥijr—suggests that the selection of this particular miracle corresponded closely to the environmental and cultural realities of the region, including both the symbolic importance of the camel and its miraculous emergence from solid rock. More broadly, this core finding contributes to a deeper appreciation of the hidden dimensions of the Qur’anic text and provides further evidence for its transhistorical nature. As scientific knowledge advances, including in fields such as geography, additional dimensions of the Qur’an’s precision and miraculous character continue to emerge, demonstrating the enduring relevance and profound depth of divine revelation.

Keywords

Holy Qur’an, geographical setting, Ṣāliḥ’s she-camel, Thamūd.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics

The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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