



Conference Abstract

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Competing Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

Additional information is available at the end of the article.

Conference Abstract

MOUNTAINS DRIFT LIKE THE CLOUDS DO

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Abstract

The Holy Qur'an speaks about various geomorphological features of the Earth and the most frequently mentioned mountains. The word "mountain" carries a literal and metaphorical meaning. For instance, metaphorically the word mountain can be used for worldly powerful personalities, regimes or countries. In this presentation, however, only its literal significance will be explored. The Holy Qur'an, revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) more than 1400 years ago, gave hints on the formation of mountains, their drift, and their significance for humanity long before modern science revealed them. Until the 20th century, people had believed that mountains and continents were stationary and do not move at all.

During the 16th to 19th centuries, scientists had noted that the shapes of continents on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean (most notably, Africa and South America) seem to fit together but they could not give any reason for their observation. It was at the beginning of the 20th century when a German Scientist,

Alfred Wegener, first presented his hypothesis to the German Geological Society on January 6th, 1912 [7] that the continents once formed a single landmass, called Pangaea, before breaking apart and drifting to their current locations (Fig.1). Wegener was the first scientist who used the phrase “continental drift” (1912, 1915) [8] and formally published the hypothesis that the continents had drifted apart using the evidence of matching plant and animal fossils on the corresponding shores of different continents (Fig.2).

However, Wegener could not correctly explain the mechanism for the drifting continents. It was in 1931, when a British Geologist, Arthur Holmes, proposed a mechanism of drifting continents whereby the movement of continents is triggered by convection cells in the Earth’s mantle (Fig.3). At a single continental scale, the active movement of the leading edge of Afro-Arabian Plate was recorded by Akbar et al (ADSPE, 1994) through their pioneer work on mapping of in-situ stresses in the subsurface of Arabian Peninsula using borehole damage data from 100s of oil and gas wells drilled across the Peninsula (Fig.4).

The Holy Qur’an hinted at the process of the continental drift in the 7th century, long before scientists of the 16th - 20th centuries put forward their theories about the subject:

“And thou seest the mountains, which thou thinkest to be firmly fixed, pass away (drift) as the clouds pass away (drift) – the handiwork of Allah who has made everything firm and strong” (27:89)

The Holy Qur’an says, “the mountains you see, you reckon them to be firmly fixed; in reality they are drifting as the clouds do.” As it will be explained in the presentation, the mountains that we see on the earth’s surface are fixed to the continents. So, when the continents move, the mountains move with them as their attachments.



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