

QUR'ANIC ODYSSEY

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*For the sake of God
In honour of the pledge I made
That I would devote my life in His cause
If He gave me guidance*

*Bear witness that I continue to deliver His message
But God is witness enough*

CONTENTS

Introduction	6
Chapter 1: Zul-Qarnayn's Journey to the Land of Gog and Magog	8
Qur'anic Verses on Zul-Qarnayn's Journey	9
Exegesis of Qur'anic Verses 18:83-97	11
Exegesis of Qur'anic Verses 18:98-108 and 21:95-100	32
Chapter 2: Etymology	44
Chapter 3: Other Eschatological Prophecies	58
Colonization of Space	59
Partial Lunar Eclipse of June 26, 2010	66
Eruption of Icelandic Volcano, Eyjafjallajökull, on April 14, 2010	73
Chapter 4: Organization of the Qur'an	80
Chapter 5: A Corrupted World	84
The Islamic World	85
The Second Coming of Jesus is a ' <i>Hadith Zone</i> ' Fabrication	96
The Qur'an Refutes the Second Coming of Jesus	98
The Islamic World – Summary	108
The Non-Islamic World	109
Chapter 6: God's Grace and Mercy	114
Prophet Muhammad was not the Last Messenger	118
The Difference between a Messenger and a Prophet	123
The Seal of the Prophets	130
The Last Warner of the Final Hour	131
Conclusion	140
References	142
Bibliography	145

FIGURES

1. Trade Routes in the 1 st Century	12
2. Geographical Region of the Loess Plateau	13
3. Loess Plateau, ‘Most Erosion Prone Soil on Earth’	13
4. Yellow River, Aerial View	13
5. Yellow River, seen from Downtown Lanzhou	13
6. Founding Dynasties of China along the Yellow River Basin	15
7. Geographical Region of the Yellow River	15
8. Geographical Region of the Gobi Desert	18
9. Topographical Map of the Korean Peninsula	19
10. Geographic Distribution of Sinitic Language Families	20
11. Han Commanderies, 2CE	23
12. Goguryeo & Proto-Three Kingdoms, 001CE	24
13. Goguryeo at its height, 476CE	24
14. North and South Korea	25
15. The Nakdong River	27
16. The Silk Road, Hexi (Gansu) Corridor	28
17. The Korean DMZ	39
18. Partial Lunar Eclipses of 26 July 1972 and 26 June 2010 with U. Mag. of 0.54	59
19. Images of the 38 th Parallel	62
20. Redoubt Volcano in Alaska, 21 April 1990 Eruption Cloud	64
21. Eyjafjallajökull Volcano in Iceland, April 2010 Ash Cloud	64
22. Eyjafjallajökull Ash Plume, 17 April 2010, Satellite View	65
23. Ash Cloud on 15 April 2010	66
24. Ash Cloud on 16 April 2010	66
25. Composite Map of Volcanic Ash Cloud Spanning 14-25 April 2010	66
26. Airspace Completely or Partially Closed to IFR Traffic on 18 April 2010	68

TABLES

1. Summary of Qur’anic Verses 18:83-97	31
2. Summary of Qur’anic Verses 18:98-102 and 21:95-100	43
3. Partial Lunar Eclipses with Umbral Magnitude of 0.54, 601CE to 3000CE	58
4. Countries with Airspace Closings due to 2010 Eyjafjallajökull Eruptions	69
5. Gregorian and Islamic Calendar Dates of Prophecies	72
6. ‘End of Days’ Super Heroes and Villains in ‘The Hadith Zone’	87
7. Prophet Muhammad was not the Last Messenger – Summary	108

NOTES

1. Abdel Haleem’s English translation of the Qur’an is referenced throughout for all Qur’anic citations, with the following changes:
 - The spelling of the name ‘Dhu ’l-Qarnayn’ is changed to the more phonetically intuitive ‘Zul-Qarnayn.’
 - The term ‘unlettered prophet’ is replaced with ‘gentile prophet.’
 - ‘Prophet’ in parenthesis () as stated in the original translation is omitted.
 - In some instances, explanatory remarks are inserted in parenthesis ().
2. Key portions of Qur’anic verses and referenced quotations are highlighted in bold to draw the reader’s attention.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1960 Hollywood western classic, *'The Magnificent Seven,'* a small Mexican farming village is viciously and repeatedly raided by a marauding outlaw gang. Each year the village is left *'ruined'* through pillage and plunder by these fierce, highly skilled gunmen riders. It seems the outlaws' only means of existence and sole purpose is systemic raids of targeted villages, while the raids themselves act as practice sessions to further hone their looting skills. Naturally, the farming community is no match for the outlaws, with neither the skills nor the arms necessary to defend itself. Out of desperation, the villagers – left with only meagre harvest rations after an entire year having tilled the land and suffered from repeated confiscation of their wealth, murder of their people and rape of their women – spend what little remain of their resources, and recruit seven professional gunmen (hence the movie title) to fight the fearsome bandits and once and for all put an end to the recurring raids that are literally *'ruining their land.'*

This unlikely Hollywood movie backdrop is a befitting analogy that aptly portrays the scene faced by the agrarian highland community rescued by the messenger, Zul-Qarnayn, about two thousand years ago in the Korean Peninsula as described by the Qur'an in verses 18:92-98. Rather than engage in battle with the heavily armed and fierce warrior horsemen, Zul-Qarnayn instead blocked the only readily accessible alpine passageway to the community and erected an impenetrable iron barrier that *'filled the gap between two mountainsides.'* The Qur'an asserts this iron barrier will remain standing until God's Promise is fulfilled – and God never breaks His Promise.

In the pages to follow, evidence is presented to show God's Promise – that He will level the earth and resurrect the dead – is about to be fulfilled within our very generation. The verses that describe Zul-Qarnayn's journey are analyzed in detail and correlated to specific physical land formations in the context of historical and contemporary geopolitical events. Definitive arguments identify Gog as present day North Korea (DPRK, Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea) and Magog as South Korea (ROK, Republic of Korea). The inevitable conclusion is thus reached that the prophecy of the *'surge of Gog and Magog against each other'* has already been fulfilled with the onset of the Korean War in 1950; which has technically not ended as only an armistice was signed and not a peace treaty.

The realization of other Qur'anic prophecies, including key geological and celestial events as well as the technological progress of human civilization, add to and solidify the mounting proof that mankind, though unaware, is in its final throes. These include the April 14, 2010

eruption of the Icelandic Volcano, Eyjafjallajökull, the June 26, 2010 partial lunar eclipse that produced a half moon, and man's efforts to pioneer space colonization that began fifty years ago with the first manned space flight. The coalescing of these events as foretold by their associated Qur'anic eschatological verses serves as a beacon for the imminent arrival of the Final Hour.

God, however, does not destroy a community unless it has become corrupt and gone astray – this has always been God's practice and God does not change His practices. The development of human civilization is now at such a scale that it is effectively one global community. It will be demonstrated the entire global community – including the Islamic and non-Islamic worlds – to a large extent currently meets God's criteria of corruption, and is therefore slated for destruction by the arrival of the last, overwhelming Earthquake. The Islamic world has taken the Hadith, which are historical documents – the narrations of the *alleged* actions and sayings of Prophet Muhammad – as religious doctrine, and thereby corrupted the true teachings of the Qur'an. Meanwhile, the non-Islamic religions follow misguided or altered Scriptures, and the secular world, by definition, is Godless.

God's practice has also been to extend His Mercy to all individuals who lived in a doomed community but heeded God's signs and returned to the path of true guidance before the certain end came upon them. His Mercy was even offered to Pharaoh and his people, who had placed the Children of Israel in bondage and slaughtered their sons. Surely, then, there can be no doubt God's Mercy extends to everyone alive today. But since Prophet Muhammad was ^{33:40} *'...the seal of the Prophets...'*, God has encompassed the entire world in His Mercy by preserving His Words intact and unaltered in the Qur'an, and by including eschatological verses; so that mankind may reason and determine *'End of Days'* signs through them.

The purpose of this work, therefore, and its real value, is only for people to recognize and reflect on *'End of Days'* signs, and in so doing, perchance make the effort to take God into their lives in a truly meaningful way, by following the guidance illuminated in the Qur'an...before it is too late.

CHAPTER 1

Zul-Qarnayn's Journey to the Land of Gog and Magog

God states in the Qur'an the arrival of the Final Hour is a time ^{7:187} *...that is momentous in both the heavens and earth...* This momentous time is inextricably linked to the fate of the peoples of Gog and Magog when they will be *'let loose'* and *'surge against each other.'* It is therefore of supreme consequence to determine the entities called *'Gog and Magog.'* God furnishes the means to identify Gog and Magog through the revelation of verses that describe the major landscapes associated with each of the three communities Zul-Qarnayn encountered along his travels. These landscapes function as key *geographic markers*, while the descriptions of each community yield political, military, economic and cultural insights, in both

historical and contemporary settings, in the context of Empire.

A complete text of the English translation of the verses that describe Zul-Qarnayn's journey to the land of Gog and Magog is provided. This is followed by a detailed exegesis that systematically breaks down, elucidates and puts into perspective the meaning and context of each verse. As the exegesis progresses verse by verse, so too does the mystery of Zul-Qarnayn's journey unravel in concert; culminating with the irrefutable identification of Gog and Magog as present day North and South Korea.

Qur’anic Verses on Zul-Qarnayn’s Journey and the Peoples of Gog and Magog

18:83-108

⁸³They ask you about Zul-Qarnayn. Say, ‘I will tell you something about him.’ ⁸⁴We established his power in the land, and gave him the means to achieve everything. ⁸⁵He travelled on a certain road; ⁸⁶then, when he came to the setting of the sun, he found it (seemed to be) setting into a muddy spring. Nearby he found some people and We said, ‘Zul-Qarnayn, you may choose (which of them) to punish or show kindness to.’ ⁸⁷He answered, ‘We shall punish those who have done evil, and when they are returned to their Lord He will punish them (even more) severely, ⁸⁸while those who believed and did good deeds will have the best of rewards: we shall command them to do what is easy for them.’ ⁸⁹He travelled on; then, ⁹⁰when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no shelter from it. ⁹¹And so it was: We knew all about him.

⁹²He travelled on; ⁹³then, when he reached a place between two mountain barriers, he found beside them a people who could barely understand him. ⁹⁴They said, ‘Zul-Qarnayn, **Gog and Magog** are ruining this land. Will you build a barrier between them and us if we pay you a tribute?’ ⁹⁵He answered, ‘The power my Lord has given me is better than any tribute, but if you lend me your strength, I will put up a fortification between you and them: ⁹⁶bring me lumps of iron!’ and then, when he had filled the gap between the two

mountainsides (he said), ‘Work your bellows!’ and then, when he had made it glow like fire, he said, ‘Bring me molten metal to pour over it!’ ⁹⁷Their enemies could not scale the barrier, nor could they pierce it, ⁹⁸and he said, ‘This is a mercy from my Lord. But when my Lord’s promise is fulfilled, He will raze this barrier to the ground: my Lord’s promise always comes true.’ ⁹⁹On that Day, We shall let them surge against each other like waves and then the Trumpet will be blown and We shall gather them all together. ¹⁰⁰We shall show Hell to the disbelievers, ¹⁰¹those whose eyes were blind to My signs, those who were unable to hear. ¹⁰²Did they think that they could take My servants as masters instead of Me? We have prepared Hell as the disbelievers’ resting place.

¹⁰³Say, ‘Shall we tell you who has the most to lose by their actions, ¹⁰⁴whose efforts in this world are misguided, even when they think they are doing good work? ¹⁰⁵It is those who disbelieve in their Lord’s messages and deny that they will meet Him.’ Their deeds come to nothing: on the Day of Resurrection We shall give them no weight. ¹⁰⁶Their recompense for having disbelieved and made fun of My messages and My messengers will be Hell. ¹⁰⁷But those who believe and do good deeds will be given the Gardens of Paradise. ¹⁰⁸There they will remain, never wishing to leave.

21:95-100

⁹⁵No community destroyed by Us can escape its return, ⁹⁶and when the peoples of **Gog and Magog** are let loose and swarm swiftly from every highland, ⁹⁷when the True Promise draws near, the disbelievers' eyes will stare in terror, and they will say, 'Woe to us! We were not aware of this at all. We were wrong.' ⁹⁸You (disbelievers) and what you

worship instead of God will be fuel for Hell: that is where you will go – ⁹⁹if these (idols) had been real gods they would not have gone there – you will all stay there. ¹⁰⁰There the disbelievers will be groaning piteously, but the (idols) will hear nothing.

Exegesis of Qur'anic Verses 18:83-97

18:83 *They ask you about Zul-Qarnayn. Say, 'I will tell you something about him.'*

It can be surmised from this verse that a group of people from the Prophet's community enquired about Zul-Qarnayn. The story of Zul-Qarnayn's journey, in turn, was revealed to address the request. Notice the narrative begins with 'something about him,' or alternatively, 'a remembrance of him:' as is plain from the Qur'anic discourse, God did not detail an extensive biography, but disclosed only the portion of Zul-Qarnayn's travels necessary to achieve His intended purpose.

Note: There are historical accounts that offer explanations on how the Prophet's community knew about Zul-Qarnayn in the first place. These accounts, however, are immaterial and remain outside the scope of this analysis. This paper will rely, as much as possible, on only Scripturally derived interpretations.

18:84 *We established his power in the land, and gave him the means to achieve everything.*

Here, it is clearly stipulated Zul-Qarnayn held a position of leadership amongst his people. Only a leader with vested authority has 'established power in the land' and by virtue of this authority the availability and capacity to deploy resources that 'gave him the means to achieve everything.' It is consequently made evident Zul-Qarnayn occupied the seat of a high level office with considerable

resources at his disposal, including command of military forces. Of particular importance, the words 'power' and 'achieve everything' strongly infer the tasks assigned by God and associated abilities given to Zul-Qarnayn were significant in both 'scope and scale.'

The concept of significant 'scope and scale' is a central and paramount guiding principle that will be used throughout to unravel the mystery of Zul-Qarnayn's journey; the validity of its use will become axiomatic as the exegesis progresses.

18:85 *He travelled on a certain road;*

In keeping with the central guiding principle of significant 'scope and scale,' the suggestion is Zul-Qarnayn travelled a great distance along this road, and hence the road was well established during his time, quite extensive and likely spanned many lands. Of all roads extant in antiquity, these criteria are perhaps best met by the ancient Silk Road. The name 'Silk Road' is misleading, as it was not simply a singular road, but rather an elaborate, intercontinental network of trade routes that stretched from Asia, through the Middle East and into Europe. The Silk Road consisted of both overland and maritime trade routes (Figure 1). Since the verse states, 'He travelled on a certain road,' obviously Zul-Qarnayn travelled on an overland route. Unlike the Roman Empire, which strategically built stone roads to support its military campaigns, the overland routes of the Silk Road

were formed ‘naturally’ by the movement of traffic:

‘The Silk Road, which cut through many deserts, was actually opened by the feet of travelers to and from China and West Asia who passed along it with their horses and camels.’ [43]

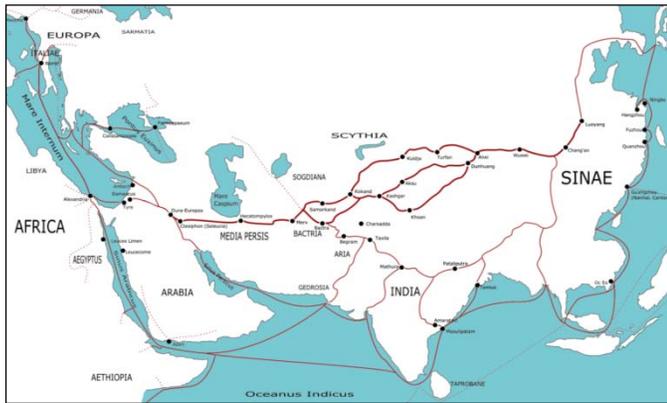


Figure 1: Trade Routes in the 1st Century [3]

The formation of the various trade routes that comprised the Silk Road was an evolutionary process that took place over thousands of years dating back to some of the most ancient civilizations. [45] The main path of the ancient Silk Road, however, is most commonly associated with a caravan trail opened up during the Western Han Dynasty in the 1st century BCE, which linked China to the West. [44] [45]

18:86 then, when he came to the setting of the sun, he found it (seemed to be) setting into a muddy spring...

Bodies of water can be grouped according to two basic functions; those that collect and move water, such as rivers and streams, and those that primarily hold water, such as lakes and oceans. [67] A ‘muddy’ appearance is produced by water that

carries silt in suspension. It is impossible for a relatively stationary body of water to appear ‘muddy’ because silt cannot be held in suspension due to lack of flow and will deposit on the waterbed leaving the top levels clear. Wetlands such as swamps and marshes with water shallow enough for their muddy waterbeds to show through and thereby discolour their surface appearance, do not appear as ‘a muddy spring’ because they are checkered with abundant aquatic vegetation. Any pooled shallow expanse of water without aquatic vegetation – that functions to retain water – would quickly evaporate. With the principle of ‘scope and scale’ in mind, the only alternative is a large moving body of water which further eliminates the possibility of creeks, streams and small tributaries. Naturally occurring large springs are also discounted; springs contain some of the purest and clearest water in the world as the water is filtered by soil and rock before it emerges. Hence, by method of elimination, the verse can only refer to a major ‘muddy’ river.

China’s second longest river and sixth longest in the world, is called the Hwang Ho or Huang He, but most often known simply as the Yellow River. The name ‘Yellow River’ describes the perennial reddish-yellow colour of the muddy water in the middle to lower courses of the river. The Chinese even poetically term the river, ‘the muddy flow.’ [41]

An examination of the geology of the Yellow River and its surrounding terrain reveals how its reddish-yellow hue is attained. The Yellow River is commonly divided into three stages. In its upper reaches, the Yellow River starts off clear and begins to gather rain water and ice melts from surrounding hills and mountains. As it travels

through its middle reaches, the river passes through the Loess Plateau (Figures 2 and 3).



Figure 2: Geographical Region of the Loess Plateau



**Figure 3: Loess Plateau;
'Most Erosion Prone Soil on Earth'**

It is the peculiar and unique nature of this widespread plateau that gives the river its distinct reddish-yellow colour. Loess is a type of soil known as *'the most erosion prone soil on earth'* and the plateau readily releases large amounts of mud and sand as it is eroded by the river and the elements. [5] By the time the Yellow River passes through the Loess Plateau, it is the most sediment-laden and literally, *'the muddiest river in the world.'* By way of comparison, the Yellow River on average carries 3.5 times more silt than the

Colorado River, which carved out the Grand Canyon, and 35 times more silt than the Nile. [4]

The Yellow River then enters its lower reaches, begins to slow down, and no longer having sufficient velocity for the accumulated silt to remain in suspension, the river starts to unload sediment and creates an elevated river bed. The volume of sediment deposited is so massive that a surreal reddish-yellow 'river above ground' is produced – a rather unusual geological formation at a vast scale.



Figure 4: Yellow River; aerial view



Figure 5: Yellow River; seen from downtown Lanzhou

If 'a picture is worth a thousand words' then the views in Figures 4 and 5 speak volumes and

highlight the beauty, hue and grandeur of the Yellow River. If Zul-Qarnayn approached the middle to lower reaches of the Yellow River, it would indeed seem like ‘a muddy spring’ as the sun set behind it.

The question remains, ‘why can it not be any other major muddy river?’ Taking into account the principle of significant ‘scope and scale’ and that no other major river in the world carries as much silt as the Yellow River, the answer is further revealed as the exegesis progresses.

18:86 ...Nearby he found some people and We said, ‘Zul-Qarnayn, you may choose (which of them) to punish or show kindness to.’ 87 He answered, ‘We shall punish those who have done evil, and when they are returned to their Lord He will punish them (even more) severely, 88 while those who believed and did good deeds will have the best of rewards: we shall command them to do what is easy for them.’

Note the verse says ‘nearby’ and not ‘at’ (the muddy spring), with the implication the community was not necessarily located immediately adjacent to the Yellow River and may have been found a short distance away within the Yellow River basin.

Another clue is advanced with the pronouncement, ‘...We shall punish those who have done evil, and when they are returned to their Lord He will punish them (even more) severely.’ Whenever God wills punishment on a people, without exception they are always a prosperous and well established

community, not a newly formed or emerging society. This has always been God’s practice:

6:6 Do they not realize how many generations We destroyed before them? We established them in the earth more firmly than you, sent down abundant rain on them from the sky and made running rivers flow at their feet, yet We destroyed them for their misdeeds and raised other generations after them.

19:74 We have destroyed many a generation before them who surpassed them in riches and outward glitter!

28:78 ...Did he not know that God had destroyed many generations before him, who had greater power than him and built up greater wealth?...

And since God does not change His practices:

33:62 This has been God’s practice with those who went before. You will find no change in God’s practices.

48:23 such was God’s practice in the past and you will find no change in God’s practices.

35:43 ...Do you expect anything but what happened to earlier people? You will never find any change in God’s practice; you will never find any deviation there.

A well established and wealthy community, therefore, is another criterion that must be met:

‘The Yellow River basin is called the ‘the cradle of Chinese civilization.’ It is the birthplace of the

northern Chinese civilizations and was the most prosperous region in early Chinese history.' [4]

Commencing approximately 2000BCE the first Chinese dynasties were established along the middle to lower reaches of the Yellow River (Figure 6). Over several dynastic periods, the Yellow River basin experienced nearly two thousand years of settlement and expansion until ancient China entered its most prosperous era during the Han Dynasty (206BCE–220CE). Known as *'the golden age of Chinese history,'* the Han Dynasty spanned over four centuries and emerged as China's fifth dynasty and second imperial dynasty. [47]

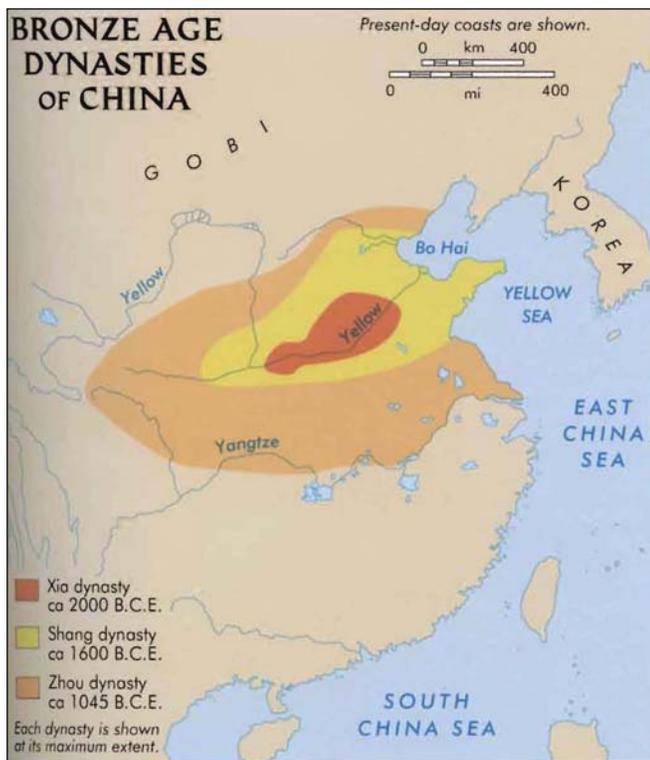


Figure 6: Founding Dynasties of China Along the Yellow River Basin [42]

The Han Dynasty is separated into two distinct periods. During the Western Han period (206BCE–9CE), Xi'an was the kingdom's capital and seat of power. In the 1st Century BCE, the main path and

eastern terminus of the Silk Road was extended to Xi'an, [46] which is located in the Yellow River basin near the river's middle reaches:

'Xi'an, known as Chang'an in ancient times, is one of the oldest capital cities in China. During the Western Han...it was China's political, economic, and cultural center...as the hub of international traffic...it ranked with Rome, and subsequently, Istanbul, in importance...As the starting point for the Silk Road, Xi'an played an important role in east-west exchange.' [46]

'It was...a cosmopolitan metropolis...a consumer city, a city whose existence was not primarily predicated upon manufacturing and trade, but rather boasted such a large population because of its role as the political and militaristic center of China. By 2CE the population was 246,200 in 80,000 households. This population was mostly scholar gentry whose education was being sponsored by their wealthy aristocratic families. In addition to these civil servants was a larger underclass to serve to them.' [48]



Figure 7: Geographical Region of the Yellow River; Upper, Middle, Lower Reaches progress west to east

In the Eastern Han period (25CE–220CE), the capital was moved further east to Luoyang, at the trail end but still within the Yellow River's middle reaches (immediately west of Zhengzhou, Figure 7).

Thus, the middle reaches of the Yellow River as the site Zul-Qarnayn first visited conforms to the following criteria:

- By the 1st Century BCE, it was innervated by the main corridor of the Silk Road connecting China to the West; part of the most extensive network of trade routes in ancient times.
- It is carved by massive flows of 'muddy water' over long distances that appear as '*a muddy spring.*'
- It was the location of the most established and prosperous communities of ancient China.

At this point in the exegesis, there is good reason to make the suggestion Zul-Qarnayn's first destination was one of the firmly established and affluent communities that thrived along the middle reaches of the Yellow River, accessible by the Silk Road, no earlier than the 1st Century BCE during the reign of the Han Dynasty. Xi'an, in particular, the cultural center of Imperial China and the starting point of the Silk Road, was of primary importance in '*east-west exchange.*' It was, moreover, the seat of political, economic and military power; a place from which a ranked individual would have established '*power in the land*' and '*the means to achieve everything.*'

Upon reaching the Yellow River community, Zul-Qarnayn, a chosen messenger of God, was given

the ability to distinguish between those who followed God's guidance from those who had gone astray and spread corruption; '*...you may choose (which of them) to punish or show kindness to.*' By God's authority Zul-Qarnayn upheld justice; he punished the bad but showed kindness to the good.

A number of further deductions can now be made:

1. Good and evil are determined not only from people's actions, but also and sometimes more so, by their speech. Hence, in order for Zul-Qarnayn to make true judgement on individuals living within the community – a heavy moral undertaking as it affected each person's fate – it was incumbent he was fluent in their language. If Zul-Qarnayn could not comprehend a word of what was spoken by the community, he could not possibly pass judgement on individuals amongst them. This is akin to Prophet Muhammad assuming the role of a judge in the Medinan community without understanding Arabic and therefore unable to converse with his people, relying instead on interpreters; a highly unrealistic scenario.

In China, since dialects are far and varied, it can be surmised Zul-Qarnayn spoke the precise or very near dialect of the Yellow River community; with the implication Zul-Qarnayn was a native of the Han Empire, raised in one of the communities of the Yellow River basin. This is consistent with the Qur'anic teaching that God has sent many messengers, each to their own communities:

^{6:130}*'Company of jinn and mankind! Did messengers not come from among you to recite My revelations to you and warn that you would meet this Day?'*...

^{39:71}*Those who rejected the Truth will be led to Hell in their throngs. When they arrive, its gates will open and its keepers will say to them, ‘Were you not sent your own messengers to recite the revelations of your Lord to you and warn you that you would meet this Day?’...*

^{30:47}*Before you (Muhammad), We sent messengers, each to their own people: they brought them clear proofs and then We punished the evildoers. We make it Our duty to help the believers.*

It is incomprehensible that one of the most prosperous, well established, highly populated and significant civilizations of ancient times was not sent messenger(s) of their own. Zul-Qarnayn was one such messenger, sent to ancient China.

2. No community would permit a lone individual to essentially ‘walk in unannounced,’ pass judgement and then punish whoever he chooses. Zul-Qarnayn needed the support of substantial military forces to exert his authority and will over the community, especially since it was a prosperous community, presumably with armed forces of its own. He was given neither the strength nor capability to dispense punishment single handedly (see commentary on verse 18:95); he did not possess superhuman strength like the Biblical figure Samson. It follows Zul-Qarnayn either travelled with significant military forces at his command, or held a position of authority over regional militia.

3. While the Qur’an does not detail the nature of the punishment, with established authority and military forces at his command Zul-Qarnayn possessed the means of administering whatever

form of punishment he pleased; whether physical, economic, or both. Punishment of those who spread corruption in the land, by one means or another, has always been a mainstay of God’s established practices.

It is of value to note, as the verses punctuate, that those who committed evil were not only punished in this life but will also suffer the ultimate and more humiliating punishment in the hereafter, whereas the believers who did good deeds were treated with kindness and will have even greater rewards in the next life and suffer no hardship.

^{18:89}*He travelled on; then...*

Notice the verse does not say, ‘He continued with his travels on the same road,’ only ‘*He travelled on.*’ If ‘the same road’ was added, it would by necessity limit Zul-Qarnayn’s journey to only a particular route of the Silk Road, but since this is not the case, other routes which may or may not be part of the Silk Road can be explored.

^{18:90}*when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no shelter from it.*

The physical landscape that provides no shelter from the sun is a desert. In continuation with the central guiding principle of significant ‘*scope and scale,*’ it is posited Zul-Qarnayn’s second destination was the Gobi Desert, the largest desert in Asia that covers parts of northwestern China and southern Mongolia. ^[7] If Zul-Qarnayn left by the middle reaches of the Yellow River and headed

northeast, the path would lead him to the Gobi desert (Figure 8), where he found the sun ‘*rising on a people*’ who were provided ‘*no shelter from it.*’

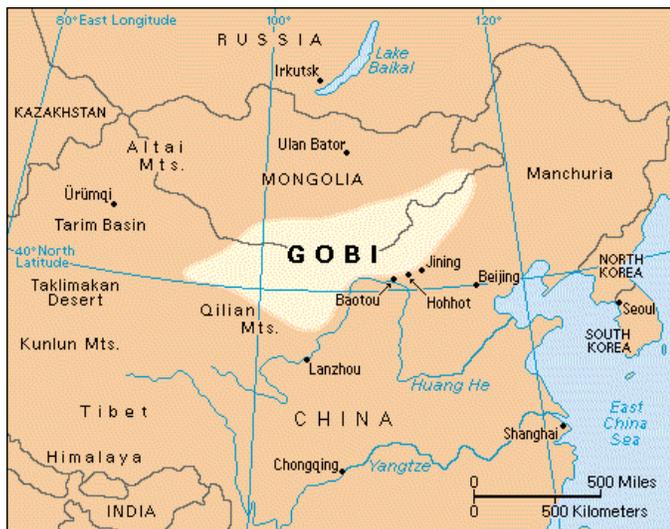


Figure 8: Geographic Region of the Gobi Desert

The cryptic and generalized description of verse 18:90 begs the question, ‘why did God include a narration bereft of detail?’ No information is revealed about the community Zul-Qarnayn encountered other than the inference they lived in a desert. As Figure 8 highlights, however, the Gobi Desert is the key ‘*Landscape Bridge*’ linking the middle reaches of the Yellow River (Huang He) to the Korean Peninsula when a northeastern route is followed. It is exceedingly difficult to decipher Zul-Qarnayn’s journey without identification of the Gobi Desert – a significant, large-scale, defining land formation in Asia. It would appear, then, these clues are imparted – each at the appropriate level of detail – so that mankind may unlock the identities of Gog and Magog; and hence serve as one last opportunity, as part of His Mercy and divine plan, for the acceptance of the Qur’an as an authentic and protected Scripture authored by God.

Thematic Consistency

To stress, once again, the unifying theme running throughout Zul-Qarnayn’s journey thus far: God first unveiled a clue by announcing, ^{18:84} ‘*We established his **power** in the land, and gave him the means to **achieve everything.***’ Right away, it is implicitly understood Zul-Qarnayn did not travel only a few miles, cross a tiny creek, and arrive at a small desert plain. Everything is magnified to a large scale: the Silk Road, the most extensive network of trade routes in the ancient world; the Yellow River, China’s second longest and the world’s muddiest river snaking over 5,400km; the Gobi Desert, Asia’s largest desert covering 1,300,000 sq. km. ^[7] The thematic consistency of scale and the relative proximity of each landform support and add credence to the journey as described. Each new verse brings with it more implications and resultant criteria, filtering out alternatives and narrowing the possibilities, eventually making it impossible for all – *but the one authentic route* – to meet the mounting conditions.

^{18:91} ***And so it was: We knew all about him.***

God states in the Qur’an:

^{6:59} ***He has the keys to the unseen: no one knows them but Him. He knows all that is in the land and sea. No leaf falls without His knowledge, nor is there a single grain in the darkness of the earth, or anything, fresh or withered, that is not written in a clear Record.***

7:6-7 *We shall certainly question those to whom messengers were sent – and We shall question the messengers themselves – and, with full knowledge, for We were never far from them, We shall tell them what they did.*

And so, through the description of Zul-Qarnayn’s journey, the same message is repeated here, ‘*We knew all about him.*’ Truly God’s knowledge encompasses all things.

18:92 ***He travelled on;***

Again, as this is a general statement, and does not mention a specific road, no restrictions are applicable on the direction Zul-Qarnayn may have travelled.

18:93 *then, when he reached a place between two mountain barriers, he found beside them a people who could barely understand him.*



Figure 9: Topographical Map of the Korean Peninsula

After the Gobi Desert, Zul-Qarnayn journeyed towards his third and final destination narrated in the Qur’an. Since ‘*he reached a place between two mountain barriers,*’ and with the principle of significant ‘*scope and scale*’ as a guide, it is proposed Zul-Qarnayn travelled east to one of the most mountainous peninsulas in the world – the Korean Peninsula (Figure 9). Evidence is now presented to support this view.

The characterization, ‘*...he found beside them a people who could barely understand him,*’ is subtly delineating and thus mandates exposition in the context of language genealogy and associated geographies. The implication of ‘*barely understand*’ is minimal mutual intelligibility rather than mutually intelligible or mutually incomprehensible. [9] As concluded in the exegesis of verses 18:86-88, Zul-Qarnayn spoke the Chinese dialect of the Yellow River community he visited on his first destination. Hence, another criterion can now be applied: the languages of the Yellow River and highland communities (i.e. Zul-Qarnayn’s first and third destinations respectively) must share only minimal mutual intelligibility.

This criterion rules out the possibility of a highland community that spoke only native Korean. Korean is a different language altogether than Chinese, and is classified either as a ‘language isolate’ or less commonly as part of the Altaic language family. [8] A ‘language isolate,’ as the name implies, is an independently evolved language and unrelated to any other language genealogy, while the Altaic languages spread across a wide northern geographical arc stretching from Eastern Europe to northeast Asia but never penetrated south into mainland China. [68] The languages of China, on

the other hand, are part of the Sino-Tibetan family, a very different family of languages.^[9] Korean and Chinese languages, therefore, are mutually unintelligible. If the highland community spoke only native Korean, they would not even *'barely understand'* Zul-Qarnayn. This criterion effectively limits Zul-Qarnayn's last destination to only Chinese colonies of the Korean Peninsula or its surrounding regions.



Figure 10: Geographic distribution of Sinitic language families

Minimal mutual intelligibility is tied to the concept of dialects. Figure 10 depicts the geographic distribution of Sinitic language families. The classification and relationships of Chinese dialects is complex and contentious. At a basic level,

however, the main family groups of the Sinitic languages are generally considered mutually unintelligible; for example, Mandarin and Cantonese. Dialects within a region of the same language group vary in degrees of mutual intelligibility; Beijing and Sichuan speech are dialects of Mandarin and are somewhat mutually intelligible.^[9]

The map confirms the regions that encompass Xi'an (i.e. in the vicinity of the Yellow River's middle reaches, Zul-Qarnayn's first destination) and the northern Korean Peninsula (near Zul-Qarnayn's third destination) are part of the Mandarin language group; by far the largest language group by geography and population. Since the regions are far apart, the level of mutual intelligibility of their respective Mandarin dialects is certain to be only marginal – exactly as described in the Qur'an by the term *'barely understand'* 1400 years ago. It is important to note Figure 10 reflects a contemporary distribution; Han colonies of ancient Imperial China penetrated deep into the peninsula, implanting their culture within their administrative territories:

'China's colonial policy does not seem to have been marked by severe political repression. It appears that the Chinese were content to exercise a certain degree of control while permitting substantial political freedom to the people they governed. Nonetheless, the Chinese administration had considerable impact on the life of the native population and ultimately the very fabric of Old Choson society became eroded.'*^[10]

*An ancient Korean Kingdom, 2333BCE-108BCE.

To continue with the analysis, the verse clearly implies Zul-Qarnayn visited a hillside and not a valley community; *‘then, when he reached a place between two mountain barriers, he found beside them a people...’* The community is not described as located between ‘two mountains,’ but as residing beside ‘two mountain barriers.’ The two are very different settings. If the community was found between two entire mountains it must by necessity lie in an expansive valley, but as it is situated, instead, alongside ‘two mountain barriers,’ the intimation is a highland community nestled beside two mountainsides. The two mountainsides, or barriers, unquestionably comprise a segment of a single larger mountain, which in turn is part of any mountain range found in ancient Imperial China’s occupied regions within the greater Korean Peninsula.

18:94 They said, ‘Zul-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog are ruining this land. Will you build a barrier between them and us if we pay you a tribute?’

This is the first mention of Gog and Magog in the Qur’an. The verse is also the linchpin that fully unravels their identities, and, by consequence, verifies Zul-Qarnayn’s journey as described:

1. The highland community could not have been under direct occupation by Gog and Magog, for if they were, a barrier would be of no value. Since they asked for a barrier to be erected, it can be concluded the community was neither inclined towards warfare nor capable of effective self defense. The people only wanted to be left alone in peace and carry out their livelihood, which almost certainly consisted of small scale agriculture and

raising livestock. Consider now, the historical evolution of the hillside agrarian communities in the Korean Peninsula, dating back to the era of the Bronze Age (1500-300BCE):

*‘The territories ruled by Bronze Age chieftains were not very extensive. **They controlled a modest agricultural population that farmed the narrow plains beyond the earthen fortifications they built on hillside plateaus.** Although these small walled-town states (sometimes called tribal states) retained a tribal character, their political structure was built around a territorial unit that subsumed populations other than the tribe alone. These walled-town states were the earliest form of state structure to exist in Korea, and thus they represent the origins of Korean political culture.’^[11]*

2. Without protection, such a community would be an easy and attractive target for raids. As payment of tribute was volunteered, it is a reasonable assumption the raids were recurrent; tribute would not be offered if the community experienced a history of only one single raid with no threat of future attacks. The raids, most assuredly, were of sufficient intensity ‘to ruin the land’ by depleting their stores of food, seizure of their wealth, damage of their property, and abuse of their people – on an ongoing basis – indeed nothing short of a nightmare scenario; and thus the analogy with the movie, ‘*The Magnificent Seven.*’

In addition, payment of tribute would only be offered – it was their idea, not Zul-Qarnayn’s – if it was already an established custom. It can be argued the tribute was merely a generic fee for service; a contract any community in such jeopardy would offer. However, this is not the case. The payment

of tribute, or a tributary system, is peculiar to ancient China and is reflective of China's unique perspective on empire and governance. The tributary system was the method Chinese royalty employed to establish their relationship with greater China. The offer to pay tribute is perhaps the most important clue to validate Zul-Qarnayn's journey and thereby confirm the true identities of the peoples of Gog and Magog. Here is a closer look at what a tribute is and how a tributary system is organized:

*'The term **tributary state** refers to one of the two main ways in which a pre-modern state might be subordinate to a more powerful neighbour. The heart of the relationship was that the tributary would send a regular token of submission (**tribute**) to the superior power. This token often took the form of a substantial transfer of wealth, such as the delivery of gold, produce, or slaves, so that **tribute might best be seen as the payment of protection money...***

***An unusually elaborate and formalized tribute system developed in East Asia.** Historically, the Emperor of China saw himself as the emperor of the entire civilized world. It was not possible for such an emperor to have equal diplomatic relations with any other power, and so **all diplomatic relations in the region were constructed by the Chinese as tributary.** The disdain of the state ideology of Confucianism for trade, and the conceit that Chinese civilization had no need of products or technology from outside meant **that trade, when it was permitted, was also constructed as tributary.** Diplomatic missions and trading parties from non-Chinese regions were interpreted in Chinese records as being tributary, regardless of*

the intention of those regions. Under this construction, the goods received by China constituted a tributary offering, while those that the visitors received were interpreted as gifts that the emperor in his kindness had bestowed upon his distant tributaries.' ^[12]

'In China, the tribute system began from ancient China period to provide both an administrative means to control their interests, as well as a means of providing exclusive trading priorities to those who paid tribute from foreign regions. It was an integral part of the Confucian philosophy and was seen by the Chinese as equivalent to the familial relation of younger sons looking after older parents by devoting part of their wealth, assets, or goods to that purpose. Political marriages also existed between the Chinese empire and tribute states...' ^[12]

Throughout the history of Imperial China, the tributary system was far reaching and extended to greater China in virtually all directions. A far from an exhaustive list of tributaries of Imperial China includes Cambodia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam in the south; Tibet, Nepal and India in the west and southwest; the Confederate Nomadic Tribes across the north; Korea and Japan in the east. ^[69] There is no other empire that was known for implementation of a tributary system at remotely near this scale and intrinsic to their philosophy on culture and statecraft. China's imposed tributary relationships, therefore, are consistent with the central guiding principle of significant '*scope and scale.*' It thus follows, by corollary, the highland community Zul-Qarnayn visited must be in a tributary region of ancient Imperial China as a further criterion.

The tributary system of Imperial China was established by the 1st Century BCE during the Han Dynasty and administered by means of organizational districts called commanderies (Figure 11). Han commanderies penetrated the northwest and central regions of the Korean Peninsula, and Chinese immigrants, who settled in the colonized territories, brought with them considerable inflows of Chinese culture. Amongst the host of influences exerted by the Chinese, two particularly notable, were language and the collection of tributes. Hence, the communities of the greater Korean Peninsula controlled by Chinese commanderies retained minimal comprehension of Manchurian dialects, while at the same time were accustomed to the tributary system; thus the Qur’anic verses, ^{18:93} ‘...he found beside them a people who could **barely understand him**,’ who volunteered, ^{18:94} ‘...Will you build a barrier between them and us if we **pay you a tribute?**’

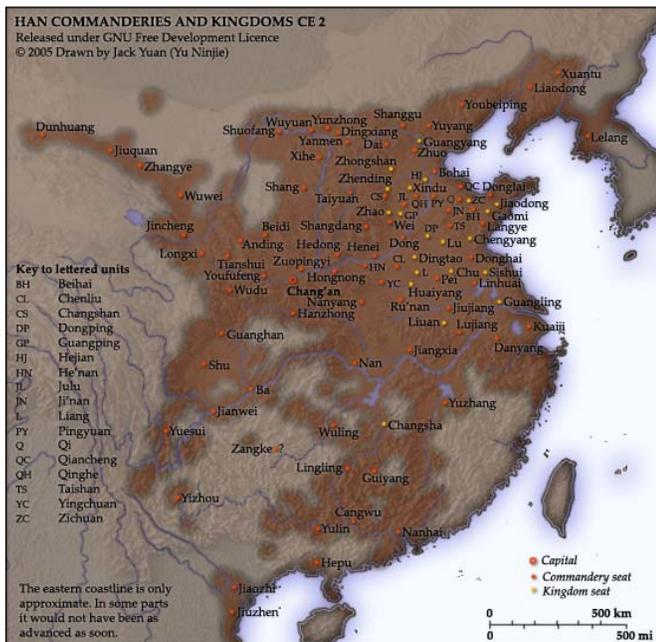


Figure 11: Han Commanderies, 2CE

Note: The Lelang Commandery (108BCE–313CE) penetrated the heart of the Korean Peninsula with its capital located at present day Pyongyang. It grew to be the principle commandery in the Korean Peninsula and throughout the four centuries of its establishment there was a continuous influx of Chinese immigrants who settled in the peninsula. Records indicated Lelang consisted of 25 prefectures, 62,812 houses, with a population of 406,748. It was eventually defeated by the Kingdom of Goguryeo in 313CE. ^[13]

3. Successful recurrent raids of the highland community demonstrate the aggressive nature and military character of Gog and Magog. Raids imply speed and cannot be conducted in mountain highlands on foot; they must be executed on horseback. Effective raids on horseback require skilled horsemen warriors who are not only able to negotiate treacherous mountainous terrain, but can do so with speed and agility while at the same time wield weapons of war. Only an engaged class of warrior horsemen have the ability to repeatedly carry out such raids – it is not a hobby that can be pursued part time; it is a profession that requires commitment and continuous practice to hone a very specialized skill set. For the profession to be justified, a solitary village would not suffice but require the wealth from many villages. Once raided, villages needed time to recover and build up enough resources – ‘to fatten up’ – for further attacks to be worthwhile. It would seem, therefore, the community Zul-Qarnayn rescued was not the only community subjected to intermittent raids by Gog and Magog, but one of many, whose resources were exploited to support the fierce warriors.

The ancient Kingdom of Goguryeo (or Koguryo, 37BCE–668CE) ruled over much of the greater Korean Peninsula for over 700 years (Figures 12 and 13). The mountainous land of Goguryeo could not support adequate agriculture to sustain its population. As a result, a highly skilled military class evolved to forcibly appropriate resources from surrounding lands. The Goguryeo military was robust – reputed for its aggressive cavalries of skilled horsemen who regularly embarked on raids – and to a large extent developed as a result of conflict and served as a bulwark against Imperial China’s forces in the Korean Peninsula; eventually routing the Chinese by the early fourth century:

*‘Goguryeo developed from a league of various Yemaek tribes to an early state and rapidly expanded its power from their original basin of control in the Hun river drainage. **The Goguryeo homeland was said to be mountainous and lacked arable land and could barely feed its own population. Goguryeo was known for being fond of raiding their neighbors so they could expand their resource base. In the time of king Taejo of Goguryeo in 53CE, five local tribes were reorganized into five centrally ruled districts. Foreign relations and the military were controlled by the king. Aggressive military activities may have allowed Goguryeo to exact tribute from their tribal neighbors and to even dominate them politically and economically.***’ [14]



Figure 12: Goguryeo & Proto-Three Kingdoms, 001CE



Figure 13: Goguryeo at its height; 476CE

‘Thus Koguryo came into being and proceeded to develop in a context of conflict with the Chinese. Accordingly Koguryo was in need of strong military forces, and in the course of its early armed struggles the military character of Koguryo’s ruling elite was continuously reinforced. It would appear that even in times of peace this warrior aristocracy did not engage in any kind of productive activities, but devoted itself entirely to training for combat. For the warriors of Koguryo, in fact, warfare was the most productive activity they might pursue, as is indicated by their consuming interest in such spoils of war as land, populations, and domestic animals. Only through warfare, it seems, could they compensate for the inadequacy of the resources within their boundaries. It is no wonder, then...the Koguryo people gave the impression to the Chinese of being vigorous, warlike, and fond of attacking their neighbors.’ [15]

'In the north, Koguryo, with its fast-moving cavalry and mobile populations, became a powerful force in the territorial struggles of northeast Asia – in constant conflict with the Chinese states to the south and west and the Manchurian tribes of the north. Koguryo was an aggressive, warring state, its forces capable of repulsing invasion attempts by the full strength of Chinese arms and even of harboring dreams of aggression against that powerful western neighbour.' ^[16]

4. It is implausible that agrarian highland communities with limited resources could survive repeated raids by not one, but two different military tribes (i.e. Gog and Magog). This was not a war where allies joined forces to mount a combined attack against a common formidable enemy. These were recurrent raids with the intent of resource acquisition through pillage and plunder or the receipt of tribute through the instilment of fear. Continuous forced transfer of wealth was the prize. If two separate aggressive tribes partnered in combined larger raids, or tag teamed in alternate raids, there simply would not be enough booty to go around, nor could the assaulted communities recover from such severe and repeated onslaught. The villages would be raided to extinction and the strategy rendered counter-productive. More to the point, two highly skilled armed tribes would no doubt be at war with each other in competition over potential gains. It is apparent this scenario is not even a remote possibility.

The only credible conclusion that can be reached is Gog and Magog are not two separate tribes, but one single tribe. They are one people of the same ethnic stock. God uses the term, 'Gog and

Magog,' as a literary device to show they are one people who are later divided. That is why both names have 'Gog' in common; 'Gog and Magog' even sound as if they are 'from' and 'of' each other.

It does not seem reasonable that God, who is the All Wise, the All Aware, purposefully selected the related names 'Gog and Magog,' if they referenced two separate and completely unrelated tribes. It seems more appropriate, given He is the Most Gracious, Most Merciful, that the term 'Gog and Magog' was deliberately chosen as an understated means to help mankind unlock their identities. The one tribe of Gog and Magog refers, therefore, to arguably the world's most homogeneous ethnic group of people alive today; the divided inhabitants of the Korean Peninsula, or present day North and South Korea (Figure 14).



Figure 14: North and South Korea

Note: It is suggested that Gog denotes the abbreviated first three letters of the ancient Kingdom of Goguryeo, and is further discussed in chapter 2, 'Etymology.'

18:95 He answered, 'The power my Lord has given me is better than any tribute, but if you lend me your strength, I will put up a fortification between you and them:'

Servants of God do not accept tribute payments; their reward is with God alone. God's Grace is far better than any tribute. And so, Zul-Qarnayn asked nothing from the community other than 'their strength,' or manual labour. Any notion, therefore, that Zul-Qarnayn was some sort of 'superman' is immediately dispelled for he would not require the 'strength of people' and be able to construct the fortification all alone. Instead, Zul-Qarnayn was given, above all else, the qualities of intelligence, wisdom and faith. As part of his faith, and as a messenger of God, Zul-Qarnayn was inspired to oversee the design, engineering and construction of an impenetrable and enduring fortification, and to ensure the fortification would serve the purpose of protection and separation of the hillside community from the one tribe of Gog and Magog. It must again be stressed; it does not seem at all conceivable that a barrier was erected to keep out two different warrior tribes: Gog and Magog is one tribe which is later divided.

18:96 'bring me lumps of iron!' and then, when he had filled the gap between the two mountainsides (he said), 'Work your bellows!' and then, when he had made it glow like fire, he said, 'Bring me molten metal to pour over it!' 97 Their enemies could not scale the barrier, nor could they pierce it.

By the instructions, '*bring me lumps of iron... Work your bellows... Bring me molten metal to pour over it,*' it is evident Zul-Qarnayn managed the project, allocated resources and directed work. The work is also sequenced in a rational order: iron is first brought in, the gap is filled, and the iron is then heated and sealed with molten metal; functioning, most probably, as protection against rust. The iron barrier was purposefully engineered to the necessary dimensions (width, thickness and height) to effectively seal the passageway and hence, '*Their enemies could not scale the barrier, nor could they pierce it.*' The filled '*gap between two mountainsides*' references the very same passageway Zul-Qarnayn first used to gain access to the community as previously related in verse 18:93, '*then, when he reached a place between two mountain barriers...*' Without doubt, Zul-Qarnayn carefully surveyed and selected an appropriate construction site along the passageway where the gap could most easily and effectively be sealed: for example, a narrowing where the two mountainsides joined above to form an arched opening that could be completely sealed off to achieve an entirely impenetrable and non-scaleable fortification.

The project, though manageable – as the construction site was located, as distinguished earlier, between two mountain barriers and not two

entire mountains (the latter a daunting challenge even by today's standards) – was nonetheless assuredly a 'mega-structure' for its time and aligned with the principle of significant 'scope and scale.' The technological limitations of the ancient period entailed substantial labour requirements as attested by Zul-Qarnayn's request from the community to '...lend me your strength...' A protracted time frame was thus essential to complete the project, as enormous quantities of iron ore needed to be transported over considerable distances by horse-drawn vehicles via winding mountainous routes. This corroborates the prior determination the highland community faced intermittent raids over spread intervals by the one tribe of Gog and Magog. Given the extended timelines involved in the construction project, the alternative of more frequent raids by two separate tribes raises the certain prospect of a mid-construction attack by one tribe or the other; with potentially devastating consequences. However, the Qur'an does not suggest, or give even the slightest hint that a battle took place between Zul-Qarnayn's forces and those of Gog and Magog.

The infrastructure and supply chain necessary to support large-scale ironworks introduces yet another criterion: iron culture in the region must be well advanced during Imperial China's occupation of the Korean Peninsula. Broadly defined, the Iron Age in China is dated at 600-200BCE and introduced to the Korean Peninsula in 400–60BCE. The Korean Peninsula is noted for its rich reserves of iron ore deposits that were mined as early as the 2nd Century BCE and distributed throughout the peninsula; particularly to the Lelang (or Lo-lang) commandery (with ancient Pyongyang as its capital, Figure 15):



Figure 15: The Nakdong River

'Around 300 BCE, iron technology was introduced into Korea from China. Iron was produced locally in the southern part of the peninsula by the second century BCE. According to Chinese accounts, iron from the lower Nakdong River valley in the southeast, was valued throughout the peninsula and Japan.' [18]

'The Chinese were able to command the labour services of the native population they governed, for example for the large-scale cutting of timber. It is known, too, that iron ore from deposits in the southeast corner of the peninsula was supplied to Lo-lang.' [19]

The ability of the Chinese, furthermore, to 'command the labour services of the native population they governed' substantiates the Qur'anic account, '...lend me your strength...' Only the authority of a high ranked office could approve large-scale projects, recruit labour from indigenous populations and requisition large quantities of iron ore and related building supplies at the very outskirts of its administrative territories.

There can be little doubt, therefore, Zul-Qarnayn was a respected leader of the Chinese elite with firmly established *‘power in the land’* and *‘the means to achieve everything.’*

Zul-Qarnayn’s Route

Significant evidence has now been presented to firmly make the case Zul-Qarnayn visited an agrarian highland community in a Chinese administered region of the Korean Peninsula during the colonial period (100BCE~300CE) – most notably the principle commandery of Lelang, which occupied the central regions and effectively bifurcated the peninsula in two – a foreshadow, perhaps, of a divided ‘Gog and Magog’ in centuries to follow. But is there, at this point, sufficient information to ‘fill in the missing pieces’ and finalize the specifics of Zul-Qarnayn’s route? To gain insight on this question, it may prove useful to re-examine verses 18:86 and 18:90:

18:86 then, when he came to the setting of the sun, he found it (seemed to be) setting into a muddy spring. Nearby he found some people and We said, ‘Zul-Qarnayn, you may choose (which of them) to punish or show kindness to.’

18:90 when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no shelter from it.

Throughout Zul-Qarnayn’s journey, the Qur’anic narrative stated the obvious ‘without actually stating the obvious.’ As a case in point, implicit in the phrases *‘setting of the sun’* and *‘rising of the sun’* is travels which are generally westward and eastward respectively. That is to say, Zul-Qarnayn

must have traveled west on his first destination and east on his second. And considering, as it has been established Zul-Qarnayn held the position of a high ranked office – almost certainly during the reign of the Han Dynasty – and that power and authority was seated in the kingdom’s capital, his route can now be traced:

The only way to approach the Yellow River in a westerly direction is along the Hexi (Gansu) Corridor, departing from Xi’an, the starting point of the Silk Road, and heading towards Lanzhou (Figure 16). The principle of significant *‘scope and scale’* enforces that a major route of the Silk Road be followed:

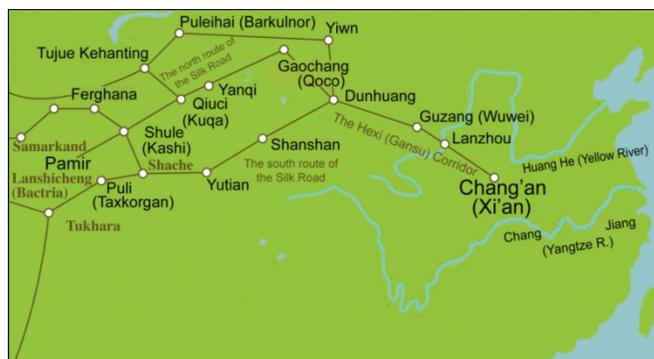


Figure 16: The Silk Road; Hexi (Gansu) Corridor ^[21]

‘Hexi Corridor, also Hexi Zoulang, which is known as the main path of the ancient Silk Road, is a east-west stretching trading route starting from the ancient capital Xi’an and reaching Dunhuang via oasis scattering in the long and narrow desert between Lanzhou and the northern part of the Qilian Mt. Range. For reasons of simple geography, travellers leaving or entering China to or from Central Asia and the West have always been channelled through this narrow strip of land that runs 1000km northwest of Lanzhou.’ ^[20]

Traveling west along the Hexi Corridor – the main artery of the Silk Road developed and controlled by the Han – Zul-Qarnayn approached the middle reaches of the Yellow River near Lanzhou, well into the Loess Plateau, by which time the river had taken on its rich ochre-yellow colour (Figure 5); where he found the sun seemed to be *‘setting into a muddy spring.’*

Having reached a region near Lanzhou, the second leg of His journey is dictated by the requirement to arrive at the Gobi Desert by way of an eastern direction, *‘when he came to the rising of the sun,’* again leaving only one possibility; a northeastern route looping around the top of the Yellow River, turning eastward into the Gobi Desert (Figure 8),

where he found the sun *‘rising on a people for whom We had provided no shelter from it.’*

His third leg of the journey is straight-forward; due east from the Gobi Desert towards the mountainous Korean Peninsula; ^{18:92}*‘He travelled on; ’*⁹³*then, when he reached a place between two mountain barriers, he found beside them a people who could barely understand him.’*

Thus, Zul-Qarnayn travelled in three different directions; west, northeast, and east – visiting three separate communities along the way, according to God’s command:

^{18:91}*And so it was: We knew all about him.*

Summary of Qur'anic Verses 18:83-97

Zul-Qarnayn was a messenger of God and held a position of leadership and authority amongst the aristocracy in ancient Imperial China. He travelled to three different communities within the Chinese Empire sometime between the 1st Century BCE and 3rd Century CE during the reign of the Han Dynasty. On his first destination, he journeyed west by way of the ancient Silk Road, to a community near the middle reaches of the Yellow River where the sun seemed to be *'setting into a muddy spring.'* It was an established and prosperous community, and Zul-Qarnayn punished *'those who had done evil'* while those who believed and did good deeds were treated with kindness. On his second destination, he travelled northeast, and then turned east into the Gobi Desert as he approached *'the rising of the sun'* where he encountered a people who were *'provided no shelter from it.'* On his third destination, he headed due east towards the Korean Peninsula where he found a highland people who complained, *'Gog and Magog are ruining this land.'* The one tribe of Gog and Magog was the ancient Kingdom of Goguryeo: a mountainous land of aggressive warrior horsemen in the habit of conducting

repeated raids on their neighbours, including, and targeting specifically, the Chinese commanderies of the Korean Peninsula. Zul-Qarnayn used his established *'power in the land'* and *'the means to achieve everything'* given to him by God to build an iron fortification so *'their enemies could not scale the barrier, nor could they pierce it.'*

Zul-Qarnayn's travels as presented is not only credible, but upon scrutiny, the only route possible. Through inference and deduction, each verse adds mounting conditions, principles and criteria that forge inextricable linkages in the context of geopolitical history and Empire, bound and anchored by a *common period* and the relative proximity of unmistakable large-scale physical land formations which God furnished as timeless *geographic markers*. With discernment and critical review of these key 'linkages and anchors' (Table 1) not only is Zul-Qarnayn's journey unraveled and convincingly affirmed, but by consequence, it is a poignant reminder and undeniable evidence of the authenticity of the Qur'an as God's literal and protected Word.

Table 1: Summary of Qur’anic Verses 18:83-97

<p style="text-align: center;">Qur’anic Verse Key Words in Bold</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Key ‘Linkage and Anchor’ Timelines in Bold</p>
<p>^{18:84}<i>We established his power in the land, and gave him the means to achieve everything;</i></p>	<p>Zul-Qarnayn occupied the seat of a high ranked office with substantial resources and military forces at his command; The central guiding principle of significant ‘<i>scope and scale.</i>’</p>
<p>^{18:85}<i>He travelled on a certain road.</i></p>	<p>The expansion of the Silk Road – <i>the most established and extensive intercontinental trade network of ancient times</i> – in the 1st Century BCE to Xi’an.</p>
<p>^{18:86}<i>then, when he came to the setting of the sun, he found it (seemed to be) setting into a muddy spring...</i></p>	<p>The Yellow River, China’s second longest river and the most silt-laden in the world; termed by the Chinese as ‘<i>the muddy flow;</i>’ The first leg of Zul-Qarnayn’s journey was in a <i>westward</i> direction along the Hexi Corridor – <i>the main path of the ancient Silk Road</i> – developed and controlled by the Han Dynasty.</p>
<p>^{18:86}...Nearby he found some people and We said, ‘Zul-Qarnayn, you may choose (which of them) to punish or show kindness to.’ ⁸⁷<i>He answered, ‘We shall punish those who have done evil, and when they are returned to their Lord He will punish them (even more) severely.’</i></p>	<p>God’s practice of physical and/or economic punishment, at His discretion, on only well established and affluent communities; The Yellow River basin was the most prosperous region of ancient China and called ‘<i>the cradle of Chinese civilization;</i>’ The Han Dynasty (206BCE–220CE) is renown, in particular, as ‘<i>the golden age of Chinese history;</i>’ Zul-Qarnayn spoke the specific or closely related dialect of the Yellow River community and was a native of the Han Empire.</p>
<p>^{18:90}<i>when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no shelter from it.</i></p>	<p>The Gobi Desert, Asia’s largest desert – <i>the key ‘Landscape Bridge’</i> – linking the middle reaches of the Yellow River basin to the Korean Peninsula; The second leg of Zul-Qarnayn’s journey was in a northeastern direction, turning <i>east</i> into the Gobi Desert.</p>
<p>^{18:93}<i>then, when he reached a place between two mountain barriers...</i></p>	<p>The Korean Peninsula – one of the most mountainous peninsulas in the world.</p>
<p>^{18:93}...he found beside them a people who could barely understand him.</p>	<p>The concept of minimal mutual intelligibility and dialects; The geographic regions of Mandarin within the distribution of Sinitic language families.</p>
<p>^{18:94}<i>They said, ‘Zul-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog are ruining this land...</i></p>	<p>The rise of the Kingdom of Goguryeo (37BCE–668CE) in the Korean Peninsula – reputed for an aggressive military character with skilled cavalries who were ‘<i>fond of raiding their neighbours;</i>’ The abbreviated ‘Gog,’ common to ‘Gog and Magog’ – the one tribe later divided.</p>
<p>^{18:94}...Will you build a barrier between them and us if we pay you a tribute?’ ⁹⁵<i>He answered, ‘The power my Lord has given me is better than any tribute...</i></p>	<p>The imposition of Imperial China’s tributary system (1st Century BCE) in the Korean Peninsula administered by the expansion of Chinese commanderies; The principle commandery of Lelang (108BCE–313CE) in the central region of the Korean Peninsula.</p>
<p>^{18:95}...but if you lend me your strength, I will put up a fortification between you and them:</p>	<p>The ability to command large-scale native labour by Chinese commanderies.</p>
<p>^{18:96}bring me lumps of iron!’ and then, when he had filled the gap between the two mountainsides (he said), ‘Work your bellows!’ and then, when he had made it glow like fire, he said, ‘Bring me molten metal to pour over it!’</p>	<p>The introduction of iron technology to an iron rich Korean Peninsula (300BCE); Known large quantity shipments of iron ore from the Nakdong River valley to the Lelang commandery (200BCE onwards).</p>

Exegesis of Qur'anic Verses

18:98-108 and 21:95-100

18:98 and he said, 'This is a mercy from my Lord...'

The construction of an iron fortification was a mercy from God because it put a decisive end to the recurrent raids that were literally '*ruining their land.*' The alternative of a stationed Chinese garrison or relocation of the community would not only be cost prohibitive but ultimately ineffective as Goguryeo eventually conquered the Chinese commanderies and occupied most of the Korean Peninsula and parts of Manchuria (Figure 13). The barrier safeguarded the village and blocked the only easily accessible alpine passageway; lengthy and arduous alternate routes were undoubtedly an ample deterrent which rendered raids impractical. Thus, for the ancient highland farming community the iron fortification was truly a lasting mercy from God, delivered through His servant Zul-Qarnayn.

18:98 ...But when my Lord's promise is fulfilled, He will raze this barrier to the ground: my Lord's promise always comes true.'

Many traditional Qur'anic commentators interpret the promise referred to in this verse as the destruction of the iron barrier. However, this is a misguided view. The verse does not state God's promise is to '*raze this barrier to the ground.*' The destruction of the barrier is the natural consequence of the *fulfillment* of God's promise, not the promise itself. God's binding promise again and again

throughout the Qur'an and repeated here, '*But when my Lord's promise is fulfilled...my Lord's promise always comes true,*' has always been that mankind will certainly face the Day of Judgement, and on that Day, everyone will be resurrected and held accountable for their faith and actions:

37:18-21 Say, 'Yes indeed, and you will be humiliated.' Just one blast and – lo and behold! – they will look and say, 'Woe to us! This is the **Day of Judgement**' (It will be said), 'This is the Day of Decision, which you used to deny...'

44:40-41 **The Day of Decision** is the time appointed for all; a Day when no friend can take another's place.

3:8-9 'Our Lord, do not let our hearts deviate after You have guided us. Grant us Your mercy: You are the Ever Giving. Our Lord, **You will gather all people on the Day of which there is no doubt: God never breaks His promise.**'

10:4 **It is to Him you shall all return – that is the true promise from God.** It was He who created (you) in the first place, and He will do so again, so that He may justly reward those who believe and do good deeds. But the disbelievers will have a drink of scalding water, and agonizing torment, because they persistently disbelieved.

God further states on the Day of Judgement the mountains will turn to dust and the earth will be leveled flat:

*18:47 One day We shall **make the mountains move**, and you will see **the earth as an open plain**. We shall gather all people together, leaving no one.*

*20:105-108 They ask you about the **mountains**: say, '(On that Day) **my Lord will blast them into dust and leave a flat plain**, with no peak or trough to be seen. On that Day, people will follow the summoner from whom there is no escape; every voice will be hushed for the Lord of Mercy; only whispers will be heard...'*

If the mountains will turn to dust when God's promise is fulfilled, then by consequence, so too must the iron barrier that fills the gap between the two mountainsides, and thus validates, '*...when my Lord's promise is fulfilled, He will raze this barrier to the ground...*'

It stands to reason that since the iron barrier will remain standing until the arrival of the Final Hour, in principle the barrier can be found. This, however, at the current historical and geopolitical juncture, is a virtual impossibility. After two thousand years, not only is the barrier buried beneath layers of sediment and vegetation, but the region is an unending sea of densely forested mountain ranges with unexplored and uncountable 'dead end' mountain passes in the most isolated and inaccessible country in the world – the hermit state of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea (DPRK), or North Korea.

18:99 On that Day, We shall let them surge against each other like waves and then the Trumpet will be blown and We shall gather them all together.

Again, many traditional commentators assert an iron barrier will first be 'razed to the ground' and thus 'release' Gog and Magog upon the world. This is an altogether outlandish interpretation, not grounded in reality, and part of fantasy land. In this make believe world, millions of people somehow survive and prosper while completely secluded and hidden behind an iron barrier undetected for millennia. They are supposedly patiently waiting for the destruction of the barrier and will then 'surge' upon the world, which will be caught unaware. They continually attempt but are unable to destroy this 'magical' iron barrier until God razes it, yet possess the power to 'rain down Armageddon' and overwhelm the entire global civilization.

Other commentators suggest the iron barrier is an allegory, that the story of Zul-Qarnayn's construction of the fortification is some sort of metaphor and not to be taken literally. However, there is nothing whatsoever metaphorical about the description of the iron barrier or Zul-Qarnayn's travels; the verses are clear and precise, and as has been amply demonstrated, backed by geographic and historical facts. The following is an example of an allegorical verse from the Qur'an:

24:35 God is the Light of the heavens and earth. His Light is like this: there is a niche, and in it a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, a glass like a glittering star, fuelled from a blessed olive tree from neither

east nor west, whose oil almost gives light even when no fire touches it – light upon light – God guides whoever He will to his Light; God draws such comparisons for people; God has full knowledge of everything.

There is an unmistakable and stark contrast in content, articulation, and tone between verse 24:35 that describes the Light of God and the verses that recount Zul-Qarnayn's journey; one is unquestionably allegorical while the others are clearly defined and tangible.

Verse 18:99, in fact, could not be any more explicit; Gog and Magog will not be 'let loose' against the world but instead will 'surge against each other.' The iron barrier will be 'razed to the ground' upon the fulfillment of God's promise at some point after the release of Gog and Magog, not prior to. The war of Gog and Magog, or North and South Korea, is in truth a mercy from God, for it is the key sign that His binding promise – The Resurrection – is about to be fulfilled; only then will the barrier be razed to the ground.

The Day and the Hour

The verse begins, 'On that Day, We shall let them surge against each other...' This implies the onset of the Day of Judgement must be in advance of, or coincide with, the commencement of the war of Gog and Magog, **and further implies the Day will begin without mankind's awareness.** This is an absolutely critical concept – one which Islamic scholars have completely overlooked – and will now be expounded upon in detail.

There is a difference between the Day of Judgement and the Final Hour. The Hour is a subset of events within the Day. Hence whatever happens during the Hour is also something that is automatically part of the Day of Judgement, but not necessarily the other way around. The Qur'an describes the Hour as a horrific occurrence that will *suddenly* overtake mankind:

6:31 **Lost indeed are those who deny the meeting with their Lord until, when the Hour suddenly arrives, they say, 'Alas for us we disregarded this!' They will bear their burdens on their backs. How terrible those burdens will be!**

12:107 **Are they so sure that an overwhelming punishment from God will not fall on them, or that the Last Hour will not come upon them suddenly when they least expect it?**

22:55 **The disbelievers will remain in doubt about it until the Hour suddenly overpowers them or until torment descends on them on a Day devoid of all hope.**

43:66 **What are they waiting for but the Hour, which will come upon them suddenly and take them unawares?**

The Day of Judgement is never described this way in the Qur'an – not even once – that it will *suddenly* arrive without warning. As the verses above clearly indicate however, the connotation with 'suddenly' and the 'Hour' is firmly established. This distinction between the Day of Judgement and the Final Hour is crucial; with the implication the Day of Judgement – since it will not appear suddenly – will commence without

mankind's realization it has begun. Hence, God's promise of Resurrection will indeed be fulfilled on the Day of Judgement but not until the sudden arrival of the Final Hour. This is made possible because a Day by God's measurement is a great breadth of time when referenced by human standards:

^{22:47}*They will challenge you to hasten the punishment. God will not fail in His promise – a Day with your Lord is like a thousand years by your reckoning.*

^{32:5}*He runs everything, from the heavens to the earth, and everything will ascend to Him in the end, on a Day that will measure a thousand years in your reckoning.*

^{70:1-4}*A man (mockingly) demanded the punishment. It will fall on the disbelievers – none can deflect it – from God, the Lord of the Ways of Ascent, by which the angels and the Spirit ascend to Him, on a Day whose length is fifty thousand years.*

Since the Qur'an compares God's Day to a thousand or even fifty thousand human years, the message is not that it is an exact equivalent; only that a Day is a very long period or what can be considered a *Divine Epoch* – a segment of events within God's grand design – characterized by specific, distinguishing features. Consequently, each Divine Epoch, or 'Day,' according to God's standard, is not discerned primarily by length of time, but by what *transpires* during each period. Hence, Divine Epochs are not necessarily of equal duration, and may be considerably shorter or longer than one another.

In the case of the Day of Judgement, this particular Divine Epoch, as outlined in verse 18:99, is marked by a sequence of at least three important events. These events do not define the entire Day of Judgement – God knows best what constitutes its entirety – but mark only mankind's final time on earth. In human terms, these events, variously termed '*End Times*,' '*End of Days*' or '*Eschatological*' events, may transpire over decades, or perhaps even longer time spans covering several generations. The essential point, however, as will now be discerned, is that the Day of Judgement has already begun, but without mankind's awareness:

1. '*On that Day, We shall let them surge against each other like waves...*'

The war of Gog and Magog, or North and South Korea, will begin. And, in fact, this prophecy has already been realized, over sixty years ago upon the start of the Korean War (1950–1953). The prophecy, however, may not yet have fully played out and may still be unfolding, as the Korean War has technically not ended: no peace treaty has ever been negotiated and only a fragile truce is in place. Tensions between the two Koreas, as of this writing, are on a knife's edge and open hostilities may be sparked at any time. A resumption of the Korean War, and another surge of Gog and Magog '*against each other like waves*,' is still, therefore, a distinct possibility. The fulfillment of the prophecy, however, is not dependent upon nor does it necessitate a renewed armed conflict. In either case – with or without a physical resumption of the Korean War – the prophecy of the war of Gog and Magog has already come to pass. It further entails, by definition, that by 1950 upon the onset of the

war, and possibly much earlier, the Day of Judgement had already begun.

2. **'...and then the Trumpet will be blown...'**

At some point after the 'surge' of Gog and Magog has commenced the Final Hour will suddenly arrive; though only God knows exactly when. The events of the Final Hour include the Last Earthquake and the sounding of the Trumpet:

^{22:1}*People, be mindful of your Lord, for the earthquake of the Last Hour will be a mighty thing: on the Day you see it, every nursing mother will think no more of her baby, every pregnant female will miscarry, you will think people are drunk when they are not, so severe will be God's torment.*

^{39:68}*the Trumpet will be sounded, and everyone in the heavens and earth will fall down senseless except those God spares. It will be sounded once again and they will be on their feet, looking on.*

3. **'...and We shall gather them all together.'**

All generations since the time of Adam will be Resurrected from the earth and brought before God for judgement:

^{78:18-23}*A Day when the Trumpet will sound and you will come forward in crowds, when the sky will open up like wide portals, when the mountains will vanish like a mirage. Hell lies in wait, a home for oppressors to stay in for a long, long time.*

^{99:1-8}*When the earth is shaken violently in its (last) quaking, when the earth throws out its burdens,*

when man cries, 'What is happening to it?', on that Day, it will tell all because your Lord will inspire it (to do so). On that Day, people will come forward in separate groups to be shown their deeds: whoever has done an atom's-weight of good will see it, but whoever has done an atom's-weight of evil will see that.

The verses on Zul-Qarnayn's journey close with the warning that Hell is the place for disbelievers, regardless if they, in their own view, are under the illusion and have convinced themselves they are doing good work, whereas those who believe and do good deeds will be given Paradise as their final home:

^{18:100-102}*We shall show Hell to the disbelievers, those whose eyes were blind to My signs, those who were unable to hear. Did they think that they could take My servants as masters instead of Me? We have prepared Hell as the disbelievers' resting place.*

^{18:103-108}*Say, 'Shall we tell you who has the most to lose by their actions, whose efforts in this world are misguided, even when they think they are doing good work? It is those who disbelieve in their Lord's messages and deny that they will meet Him.' Their deeds come to nothing: on the Day of Resurrection We shall give them no weight. Their recompense for having disbelieved and made fun of My messages and My messengers will be Hell. But those who believe and do good deeds will be given the Gardens of Paradise. There they will remain, never wishing to leave.*

21:95 No community destroyed by Us can escape its return.

This verse is a prelude to the second mention of Gog and Magog in the Qur'an; a reminder that the war of Gog and Magog is the key event before the arrival of the Final Hour when all generations will be brought before God.

21:96 and when the peoples of Gog and Magog are let loose and swarm swiftly from every highland.

The characteristics of Gog and Magog at 'End Times' continue to be illuminated by this description, which affirms their identities through the addition of yet further qualifications – qualifications that are met, exclusively, by only the Korean people:

1. Genetic Homogeneity

God refers to the one tribe by the names, 'Gog and Magog,' both during the time of the messenger Zul-Qarnayn (18:94) and two thousand years later at 'End Times' (21:96), when, as a divided people and as mutual enemies, their war is prophesized. This is exceedingly consequential. It implies the genetic constitution of the peoples of 'Gog and Magog' must be maintained – as a separate and distinct ethnicity – in spite of the passage of two millennia; otherwise they would no longer be the peoples of 'Gog and Magog,' but diverse, heterogeneous people due to the subsequent blending with assorted populations. And, in order to be the one tribe of 'Gog and Magog' which was originally 'ruining their land,' it further

necessitates the tribe's genetic constitution must be homogeneous to begin with. Hence, a divided people at 'End Times' – who are arch-enemies and who share a common, preserved genetic homogeneity throughout the millennia – is another key identifier of the peoples of Gog and Magog.

The Korean people are in fact considered amongst the most homogeneous in the world:

'Although a variety of different Asian peoples had migrated to the Korean Peninsula in past centuries, very few have remained permanently, so by 1990 both South Korea and North Korea were among the world's most ethnically homogeneous nations. The number of indigenous minorities was negligible. In South Korea, people of foreign origin, including Chinese, Japanese, Westerners, Southeast Asians, South Asians and others were a small percentage of the population whose residence was generally temporary.'

Koreans tend to equate nationality or citizenship with membership in a single, homogeneous ethnic group or "race" (minjok, in Korean). A common language and culture also are viewed as important elements in Korean identity. The idea of multiracial or multiethnic nations, like the United States or India, strikes many Koreans as odd or even contradictory.' [22]

'...few other peoples assert such distant origins, with a continuously distinct ethnicity and language down to our time...few of the world's peoples live in a nation with no significant ethnic, racial, or linguistic difference: Korea is indeed one of the most homogeneous nations on earth, where ethnicity and nationality coincide.' [2]

The homogeneity of the Korean people was the result of thousands of years of evolution through a unique set of contributing factors that together exerted their influences and can be traced back to the peninsula's Neolithic age commencing in approximately 6,000BCE:

'Neolithic culture in Korea thus experienced three major stages of development, quite likely reflecting three successive waves of migration down into the peninsula. Unlike the case of Korea's Paleolithic populations, the ethnic stock of these Neolithic people is seen as continuing unbroken to form one element of the later Korean race. It is believed, then, that in the course of a long historical process these Neolithic inhabitants merged with one another and, combining with the new ethnic groups of Korea's bronze Age, eventually came to constitute what we now think of as the Korean people.'^[22]

Geography also played a substantial role; surrounded by ocean on three sides and shielded by a fortress of mountains, the peninsula was a natural enclave for isolationism. Once the region's tribes 'merged with one another' during the Neolithic period to form one ethnic stock, the peninsula's terrain and geography ensured the maintenance and propagation of the people's homogeneity. The mountainous peninsula, especially in the northern regions, acted as an inherent fortification that discouraged infiltration. The 'alpine fortress' was heavily manned by the war-like tribe of Goguryeo, which guarded the peninsula against invaders, repulsing even the might of the Chinese Empire:

'Koguryo, with its long experience of fighting the Han commanderies, distinguished itself from the rest of the tribes even in the bronze culture stage, which had to retreat before each Han invasion. Acting as a breakwater in the north, Koguryo was the first to emerge as an ancient state power capable of resisting the waves of invaders from Manchuria...because Koguryo emerged as a power in Northeast Asia a few decades earlier than the others, it could borrow from Chinese culture selectively according to its own standards. And, by avoiding a blind acceptance of Chinese culture, it could act as a cultural breakwater at the Liao River against the expansion of Chinese culture.'

[24]

To be identified, therefore, as Gog and Magog, not only are all the migratory, geopolitical, military and cultural factors necessary for the evolution of homogeneity, but the isolated mountainous region must also be connected to a mainland that features the specific large-scale physical land formations and communities in a historically verifiable context – *all in relative proximity* – as narrated by the verses on Zul-Qarnayn's travels. This is an inimitable and virtually impossible feat: there is only one population in the world that can and does fit the bill to a tee – the divided people of the Korean Peninsula.

Note: The requirement of genetic homogeneity dispels the argument Gog and Magog are two separate and distinct tribes for it would obligate two separate tribes, instead of one, first attain homogeneity through a 'lengthy historical process,' then independently sustain isolation for over two millennia, and then – even though they are isolated tribes – set themselves against each

other as the key marker for the arrival of the Final Hour. Given the factors involved in the evolution and subsequent preservation of homogeneity, and the fact they must be the very same tribes who were originally raiding the ancient highland community concurrently, this scenario is implausible at best.

2. An Entirely Mountainous Land

To ^{21:96}, ‘...swarm swiftly from every highland’ augments the verse, ^{18:93}, ‘then, when he reached a place between two mountain barriers, he found beside them a people...;’ for it entails not only did Zul-Qarnayn visit a highland community, but adds to the qualification with the inference the entire territories inhabited by the peoples of Gog and Magog must be largely mountainous. The Korean Peninsula is 70% alpine (Figure 9) – it is essentially an expansive highland and further evidence of a divine and predetermined plan.

3. A Possible Second ‘Surge’ of Gog and Magog?

The release of Gog and Magog is mentioned twice in the Qur’an; once in verse 18:99, and the other in verse 21:96. Whether this foreshadows a second ‘surge,’ and a physical resumption of the Korean War, remains unknown. It is, however, an unnerving fact that for the past sixty years, the Korean Peninsula has experienced directly opposing, large-scale militarization on both sides of the Korean Demilitarized Zone (Figure 17) – a thin strip of land approximating the 38th parallel which divides the two Koreas. The Korean DMZ is the most heavily militarized border in the world, with 1-1.2 million troops on the north side of it, and another 500,000-600,000 troops on the south.

With escalating regional tensions and the DMZ literally bulging at the seams, the two halves of the Korean Peninsula appear to be awaiting God’s command to be ‘let loose’ and once again ‘surge against each other like waves.’

Note: The prophesized release of Gog and Magog mentioned in two separate Qur’anic verses, and its potential significance, is further explored in chapter 4, ‘Organization of the Qur’an.’

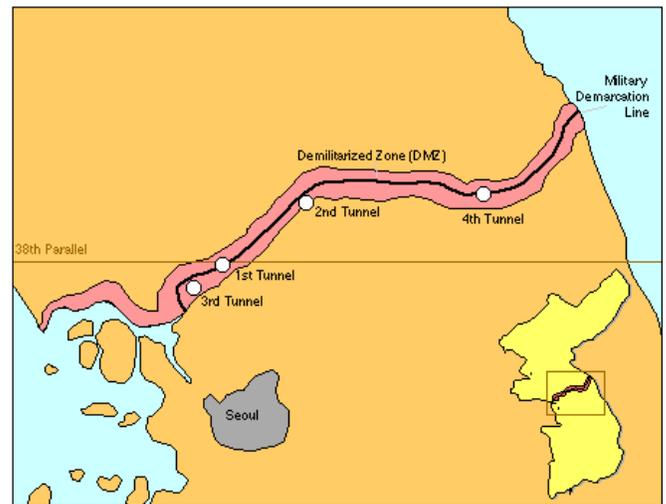


Figure 17: The Korean DMZ is shown in red; [25]
Military Demarcation Line (MDL) denoted by black line

4. A Mainly Land Based War

The Qur’an describes the war of Gog and Magog as mainly land based, fought by infantries with fast-paced ground assaults as suggested by, ‘swarm swiftly from every highland.’ This is a direct result of the peninsula’s mountainous terrain; the verse accurately depicts the nature of the Korean War during the years 1950-1953, and is equally applicable in the event of a resumed conflict:

‘Unlike in the Second World War (1939–45), in which the tank proved a decisive weapon, the Korean War featured few large-scale tank battles.

The mountainous, heavily forested terrain prevented large masses of tanks from maneuvering. In Korea, tanks served largely as infantry support.’^[30]

5. A Quickly Escalating War

To be ‘let loose’ and to ‘swarm swiftly,’ as described in verse 21:96, connotes the conflict, once begun, will quickly escalate – an almost immediate ‘all-out war.’ This is a precise characterization of the start of the Korean War: on June 25th, 1950, backed by Soviet air support, North Korea launched a full-scale surprise invasion, sweeping across the 38th parallel with 231,000 soldiers, 380 tanks and 200 artillery pieces against an unprepared South Korean force consisting of 98,000 soldiers, zero tanks and a mere ‘22-piece air force.’^[30] The conflict, however, rapidly escalated from an isolated civil war into an expanded, intensely devastating proxy war involving the full might of foreign powers – including the U.S.-led United Nations supporting the South, and China, with Soviet material assistance, intervening on behalf of the North – as each side sought to protect and enlarge their respective spheres of influence. As the war progressed it eventually settled into a stalemate, with equal troop strengths of approximately 1.2 million soldiers deployed on either side; locked in pitched battles across a continuous front that ran the full width of the peninsula, roughly bordering the 38th parallel, afterwards to become the Korean DMZ, which cut the peninsula in half.

Over half a century later, with the exception they are now virtually all native Korean personnel, the combined peninsular troop strength has reached

almost the same levels as they were at the height of the war. There is little doubt that should the war actively resume – with nearly two million soldiers facing each other across the Korean DMZ – in what has become one of the most densely militarized regions in the world, Gog and Magog would once again immediately be ‘let loose and swarm swiftly from every highland.’

21:97 when the True Promise draws near, the disbelievers’ eyes will stare in terror, and they will say, ‘Woe to us! We were not aware of this at all. We were wrong.’

This verse can be interpreted in one of two ways:

1. Soon after Gog and Magog have been released, a time span which can take several generations according to God’s relative time scale, the Last Earthquake will suddenly arrive – ^{56:2}‘no one will be able to deny it has come’ – though the promise of Resurrection will not yet have been fulfilled. At this point, through the recognition the Final Hour has indeed arrived, and the True Promise of Resurrection is about to be fulfilled, ‘the disbelievers’ eyes will stare in terror, and they will say, ‘Woe to us! We were not aware of this at all. We were wrong.’
2. The alternative, and more commonly held view, is that after mankind has been Resurrected, ‘the disbelievers’ eyes will stare in terror’ with the realization God’s Promise is true, and they are about to face Judgement.

Regardless of whichever scenario, by then it will be too late; acceptance of truth, after manifestation

of punishment, has never been accepted by God. This too, has always been God's practice:

^{38:1-3}...By the Qur'an with its reminding...! Yet the disbelievers are steeped in arrogance and hostility. How many generations We have destroyed before them! They all cried out, **once it was too late**, for escape.

^{23:64-67}When We bring Our punishment on those corrupted with wealth, they will cry for help: **'Do not cry out today: you will get no help from Us. Time and time again My messages were recited to you, but you turned arrogantly on your heels, and spent the evening making fun of (the Qur'an).'**

^{5:36-37}If the disbelievers possessed all that is in the earth and twice as much again and offered it to

*ransom themselves from torment on the Day of Resurrection, **it would not be accepted from them** – they will have a painful torment. They will wish to come out of the Fire but they will be unable to do so: theirs will be a lasting torment.*

As with Zul-Qarnayn's journey and the first mention of Gog and Magog in chapter 18, the second mention of Gog and Magog in chapter 21 closes with the same warning; hell is the destiny of the disbelievers:

^{21:98-100}**You (disbelievers) and what you worship instead of God will be fuel for Hell: that is where you will go – if these (idols) had been real gods they would not have gone there – you will all stay there. There the disbelievers will be groaning piteously, but the (idols) will hear nothing.**

Summary of Qur'anic Verses 18:98-108 and 21:95-100

Zul-Qarnayn's journey and the construction of the iron barrier was not only a mercy for the people of the highland community – who, about two thousand years ago, were saved from the scourge of recurrent raids administered by Gog and Magog – but also a mercy for the last generation of Adam. Through the tale of Zul-Qarnayn's travels and the description of the divided tribe's characteristics at '*End Times*' (Table 2), God provides the means to identify the peoples of Gog and Magog and their all-out war as one final opportunity for mankind to recognize and accept the truth of the Qur'an. At some point after the start of the Korean War (i.e. 1950), an overwhelming Earthquake which engulfs

the entire world will overtake mankind – firmly establishing the arrival of the Final Hour; the Day of Judgement, however, would already have begun without any obvious signs. The mountains along with the iron barrier will turn to dust, the earth will be leveled and become an open plain, the Trumpet will be sounded, and all generations will be gathered before their Lord to face judgement. Those who believed and did good deeds will be given the Garden of Eternity as their own, whereas those who disbelieved and spread corruption will be led to Hell in their throngs. And God's binding Promise will be fulfilled – God never breaks His Promise.

Table 2: Summary of Qur’anic Verses 18:98-108 and 21:95-100

<p style="text-align: center;">Qur’anic Verse Key Words in Bold</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Deduction</p>
<p><i>18:94</i> They said, ‘Zul-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog are ruining this land...;</p> <p><i>21:96</i> and when the peoples of Gog and Magog are let loose...</p>	<p>A ‘pure race’ of common homogeneity throughout the millennia;</p> <p>A divided people of one ethnic stock.</p>
<p><i>18:99</i> On that Day, We shall let them surge against each other like waves...</p> <p><i>21:96</i> and when the peoples of Gog and Magog are let loose and swarm swiftly from every highland;</p>	<p>Gog and Magog at ‘End Times’ are not only a divided people, but are also mutual enemies;</p> <p>The land of Gog and Magog is primarily mountainous;</p> <p>Characteristics of the Gog and Magog war:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly escalating. • An ‘all-out war’ with wave upon wave of attacks. • Principally a ground war, fought by infantries with rapid waves of attack. • A possible second ‘surge’ / resumption of an armed conflict.
<p><i>18:99</i> On that Day, We shall let them surge against each other like waves...</p>	<p>The onset of the Day of Judgement either coincides with, or has commenced prior to the release of Gog and Magog ‘against each other’ (i.e. 1950) – but without any obvious supernatural signs. The Hour, however, has yet to arrive.</p>
<p><i>21:97</i> when the True Promise draws near, the disbelievers’ eyes will stare in terror...</p> <p><i>18:98</i> ...But when my Lord’s promise is fulfilled, He will raze this barrier to the ground: my Lord’s promise always comes true.’</p> <p><i>18:99</i> ...and then the Trumpet will be blown and We shall gather them all together.</p>	<p>The sudden arrival of the Final Hour will be established by the Last Earthquake soon after the war of Gog and Magog has begun, which, according to God’s measurement of time, may take several generations;</p> <p>The mountains and the iron barrier will be razed to the ground, and the earth leveled flat. The Trumpet will be blown, and all mankind will be gathered before their Lord to face Judgement – thus marking the fulfillment of God’s Promise of Resurrection.</p>

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