

Construction of Qur'anic Ecotheology through Semantic Analysis of the Verses of the Cosmos in Surah Al-Wāqī'ah

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Eco-theology; Semantic Analysis; Surah Al-Wāqī'ah; Cosmic Verses; Islamic Environmental Ethics	This study explores the Qur'anic concept of eco-theology through a semantic analysis of cosmic verses in Surah Al-Wāqī'ah. It aims to uncover how the Qur'an constructs the theological and ethical relationship between God, human beings, and the natural world. Using Toshihiko Izutsu's semantic method, the research analyzes key cosmological terms—such as mā' (water), fākihah (buah-buahan), shajar (pohon), nār (fire), and nabāt (plants)—to identify their basic and relational meanings within the surah. This qualitative library research collects primary data from classical and contemporary tafsīr works, Arabic lexicons, and semantic studies. The findings reveal that Surah Al-Wāqī'ah presents nature not merely as a physical phenomenon but as an ontological sign (āyah) of divine order, emphasizing human dependence and responsibility toward creation. The Qur'an constructs an eco-theological worldview that integrates tawhīd, moral awareness, and ecological balance. This study contributes to the development of Qur'anic eco-theology by showing how the semantic structure of the text can serve as a foundation for Islamic environmental ethics and contemporary ecological awareness.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid degradation of the global environment, such as deforestation, pollution, and climate crisis, indicates not only ecological damage but also a profound spiritual and moral crisis in humanity's relationship with nature. Within the Islamic worldview, the natural environment is not an independent entity to be exploited; rather, it is a manifestation of divine signs (āyāt Allāh) that reflect the unity and harmony of creation. The Qur'an presents nature as an integrated system of moral and theological meaning that demands human reflection, gratitude, and responsible action. This perspective forms the essence of Qur'anic eco-theology (al-'ilm al-bī'ī al-ilāhī), which connects faith (īmān), ethics (akhlāq), and ecology (bi'ah). Among the Qur'anic chapters, Surah Al-Wāqī'ah provides rich cosmological imagery that relates closely to the concept of divine order and environmental interdependence.

The surah presents a theological narrative of creation, sustenance, and resurrection by referring to natural elements such as soil, water, fire, and vegetation. These verses invite humans to realize the interconnectedness between their existence and the natural world under divine governance. Thus, Al-Wāqī'ah offers a profound theological and ethical framework for understanding nature as part of spiritual accountability before God.

Previous studies on Qur'anic eco-theology have generally focused on thematic interpretation (tafsīr mawḍū'ī) or philosophical reflections on environmental ethics (Nasr¹, 1997; Foltz¹, 2003; Zafar, 2021). However, few have applied a linguistic-semantic approach to reveal how the Qur'an constructs its eco-theological worldview through the interrelation of key cosmological terms. Toshihiko Izutsu¹'s semantic method provides a valuable framework to uncover the internal conceptual network of Qur'anic vocabulary and its worldview (weltanschauung). By analyzing the relational meanings of key terms within Surah Al-Wāqī'ah, this study aims to reconstruct the Qur'an's eco-theological concept from within its own linguistic system.

The significance of this research lies in its attempt to bridge textual analysis and ecological ethics through semantic exegesis. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the semantic meanings of key cosmological terms in Surah Al-Wāqī'ah?
2. How do these terms interrelate to form the Qur'anic worldview of nature?

3. How does this worldview contribute to constructing a Qur'anic model of eco-theology relevant to the contemporary environmental crisis?

Through these objectives, the study contributes both theoretically—to the development of semantic Qur'anic studies—and practically—to the foundation of Islamic environmental thought that promotes ecological consciousness grounded in divine unity (tawḥīd).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive design using a semantic analysis approach based on Toshihiko Izutsu¹'s theory of Qur'anic semantics. The research focuses on exploring the network of meanings (semantic fields) among key cosmological terms in Surah Al-Wāqī'ah to reconstruct the Qur'an's eco-theological worldview. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth interpretation of linguistic, theological, and ethical dimensions within the Qur'anic text.

1. Research Type and Approach

The study adopts a library research (dirāsah maktabiyyah) model, which involves collecting and analyzing textual data from classical and contemporary sources. The semantic approach is chosen to identify both the basic meanings and relational meanings of key terms related to natural phenomena (such as turāb, mā', nār, and nabāt) within the linguistic system of the Qur'an. This approach highlights how the Qur'an constructs its unique worldview (weltanschauung) regarding the relationship between God, human beings, and nature.

2. Sources of Data

Primary sources consist of the Qur'an—particularly Surah Al-Wāqī'ah—and major exegetical works such as Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, al-Marāghī, and Tafsīr al-Mishbāḥ by Quraish Shihab¹. Secondary sources include linguistic references such as Lisān al-'Arab, Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah, and Izutsu¹'s works (Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an, God and Man in the Qur'an), as well as relevant studies on Qur'anic eco-theology and environmental ethics.

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data are collected through documentary analysis and textual interpretation. The researcher identifies and classifies verses in Surah Al-Wāqī'ah that contain cosmological vocabulary, then records their linguistic usage, contextual meaning, and

intertextual relationship with other Qur'anic verses.

4. Data Analysis Procedure

The semantic analysis follows Izutsu¹'s six-step framework: a) Determining the key terms (*mufradāt*) relevant to the research theme (cosmic and natural phenomena) b) Identifying their basic meaning based on classical lexicons. c) Tracing their historical usage in pre-Islamic and Qur'anic Arabic (diachronic and synchronic analysis). d) Tracing their historical usage in pre-Islamic and Qur'anic Arabic (diachronic and synchronic analysis). Determining their relational meaning within the syntactic and thematic context of Surah Al-Wāqī'ah. e) Constructing the semantic field to identify interrelations among key terms. f) Deriving the Qur'anic worldview (*weltanschauung*) and eco-theological implications of these meanings.

5. Validity and Interpretation

To ensure the validity of interpretation, the study applies triangulation of sources (cross-referencing multiple *tafsīr* and linguistic works) and contextual consistency by interpreting words within the Qur'an's holistic framework. The analysis aims not merely to extract lexical meaning but to uncover the conceptual structure that underlies Qur'anic eco-theology.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Semantic Field of Cosmic Verses in Surah Al-Wāqī'ah

The linguistic structure of Surah Al-Wāqī'ah reveals a complex network of cosmic imagery that forms a theological reflection on the relationship between God, nature, and human beings. The surah employs several key terms that refer to natural phenomena, such as *turāb* (soil), *mā'* (water), *nār* (fire), *nabāt* (plant growth), and *samā'* (sky). These terms are not only descriptive but also carry relational meanings that reflect divine power and the moral order embedded within the cosmos.

Semantic analysis shows that each of these terms functions within a coherent conceptual field. For example, *turāb*—which literally means “earth” or “dust”—signifies the origin and final destiny of human existence. It represents humility, dependence, and the reminder of mortality. Meanwhile, *mā'* (water) symbolizes divine mercy and sustenance; it is both the physical source of life and the metaphysical symbol of purification and divine generosity. The term *nār* (fire) bears a dual meaning: it signifies

both divine punishment and transformative energy within creation. The interplay among these terms forms a theological narrative of balance, renewal, and accountability.

When these words are examined through Izutsu¹'s semantic framework, their relational meanings create a web of associations that constitute the Qur'an's worldview (*weltanschauung*). The language of Al-Wāqī'ah presents the cosmos as a dynamic arena of divine activity in which every element of nature reflects God's attributes (*asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*). Thus, nature is not an independent entity but a medium for perceiving divine order.

2. Theological Meaning of Natural Phenomena

The structure of Surah Al-Wāqī'ah establishes a theological rhythm that links the reality of the natural world with the eschatological vision of resurrection. The verses that describe the sprouting of plants, the flowing of water, and the burning of fire (verses 63–73) serve not merely as natural descriptions but as epistemological signs that guide human reflection toward divine omnipotence. Each natural element functions as an *āyah kawniyyah* (cosmic sign) that confirms both the existence and sovereignty of God.

In this sense, the surah situates humanity within a moral-ontological relationship with creation. Humans are reminded that they do not produce water, germinate seeds, or control fire by their own power (Q.S. Al-Wāqī'ah: 68–73). This recognition fosters theological humility and ethical restraint. Through this discourse, the Qur'an constructs an eco-theological awareness—that humans are trustees (*khulafā'*) of the earth, bound by moral responsibility (*amānah*) to preserve ecological balance.

This theological orientation resonates with Seyyed Hossein Nasr¹'s notion of “sacred ecology,” where environmental care is seen as an act of worship and cosmic harmony. It also parallels Izutsu¹'s view that Qur'anic concepts are interconnected through moral and ontological polarity—between *īmān* (faith) and *kufr* (denial), *ḥayāh* (life) and *mawt* (death), *raḥmah* (mercy) and *'adhāb* (punishment). The semantic structure of Al-Wāqī'ah reflects this polarity by juxtaposing the natural order with the afterlife, reminding humans that neglecting divine order leads to both spiritual and ecological imbalance.

3. Constructing the Qur'anic Eco-Theological Worldview

The semantic network of cosmic terms in Surah Al-Wāqī'ah forms the foundation for constructing a Qur'anic eco-theology grounded in three interrelated principles:

a. Tawhīdic Unity of Creation

All elements of nature—soil, water, plants, and fire—are integrated manifestations of divine unity. This perspective eliminates dualism between the sacred and the natural, presenting creation as intrinsically connected to divine will.

b. Ethical Stewardship (Khilāfah and Amānah)

Human beings are not masters of the earth but trustees who must uphold justice and balance (mīzān). The failure to recognize this stewardship results in environmental corruption (fasād fī al-arḍ).

c. Spiritual Awareness and Accountability

Ecological care is presented as a spiritual act rooted in remembrance of God. The Qur'an situates ecological responsibility within eschatological awareness—reminding believers that they will be held accountable for their treatment of the earth. From these three principles, the Qur'anic eco-theological model that emerges from Surah Al-Wāqī'ah emphasizes that environmental ethics is not merely a social responsibility but a form of theological consciousness. It integrates the linguistic message of the Qur'an with the moral and ontological dimensions of faith.

4. Discussion: Implications for Contemporary Eco-Theology

The findings of this study have broader implications for developing an Islamic response to the modern environmental crisis. The semantic reconstruction of Qur'anic eco-theology demonstrates that ecological consciousness must be rooted in spiritual awareness rather than purely scientific or utilitarian ethics. By reviving the Qur'an's linguistic worldview, Muslims are reminded that protecting the environment is an extension of worship (ʿibādah) and gratitude toward the Creator.

Moreover, this study bridges the gap between traditional exegesis and contemporary ecological discourse. It highlights how Qur'anic semantics can contribute to interdisciplinary fields such as environmental philosophy, sustainability studies, and Islamic education. Incorporating this eco-theological vision into educational curricula and public discourse can cultivate an ethic of ecological responsibility grounded in faith, balance, and compassion.

CONCLUSION

The semantic analysis of cosmic verses in Surah Al-Wāqī‘ah reveals that the Qur’an constructs an eco-theological worldview grounded in the unity of creation, divine sovereignty, and human responsibility. Each natural element—soil, water, fire, and vegetation—serves not merely as a physical reality but as a sign (āyah) that points to the transcendence and providence of God. Through its linguistic structure, Al-Wāqī‘ah integrates metaphysical insight with ethical imperatives, reminding humanity of its position as a trustee (khalīfah) and caretaker of the earth.

This study contributes to Qur’anic studies by demonstrating that the semantic approach can uncover the internal coherence and theological depth of environmental discourse in the Qur’an. The eco-theological framework emerging from Surah Al-Wāqī‘ah provides a spiritual and ethical foundation for Islamic environmentalism, emphasizing that protecting nature is both an act of faith and an expression of gratitude.

Future research is encouraged to apply similar semantic analyses to other Qur’anic chapters or to integrate Qur’anic eco-theology with contemporary sustainability paradigms. Such efforts will strengthen the integration of Islamic thought with global environmental ethics and contribute to the renewal of spiritual ecology in the modern world.

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