

Features of the Heaven in the Qur'an: Focusing on the Relationship between God and Human Beings

Aya Yamaguchi¹ and Shigeyuki Okazaki¹

¹Department of Architecture, Mukogawa Women's University, Nishinomiya, Japan

Corresponding author: Aya Yamaguchi, Department of Architecture, Mukogawa Women's University, 1-13 Tozaki-cho, Nishinomiya, Hyogo, 663-8121, Japan, E-mail: a_ymgc@mukogawa-u.ac.jp

Keywords: Islam, the Qur'an, Types, Heaven, Sky, God, Human Being

Abstract: In this paper, we analyze and clarify the features of the Heaven as described in the Qur'an, which plays a decisive role in the formation of the Islamic worldview. In this study, 310 Arabic verses were analyzed, including *سما*, which literally means "the Heaven." The letters A, G, and H are used to describe the Heaven, God, and human beings, respectively, and are used in four themes from the descriptions of the Heaven verses. "Relationship between the Heaven and God" is R(A,G); "Relationship between the Heaven and human beings" is R(A,H); "Relationship of the Heaven as the place where God and human beings interact" is R(G,A,H); and "State of the Heaven" is S(A). From the analysis of the 310 Heaven verses, it was possible to extract 26 "types of the Heaven." In each theme, the various features of the Heaven are understood more clearly.

1. Introduction

In this study, we consider the view of nature in the Islamic world. Islam was born in the arid and semi-arid regions of the Arabian Peninsula and is a widely practiced faith centered on the Middle East. While the natural environment in this region is harsh, it also has a beautiful and comfortable environment overflowing with nature, with an abundance of flowers, fruit trees, and fountains in both public and domestic spaces.

This paper focuses on the concept of "the Heaven" in the Qur'an. The dome in Islamic architecture stands out its appearance, decorates building interiors gorgeously, and symbolizes paradise and the universe. Islamic cosmology is based on the Qur'an and Hadith (the record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Mohammed), and the Heaven recorded in the Qur'an is also an important subject in Islamic cosmology.¹

Therefore, we analyze and clarify the features of the Heaven as described in the Qur'an, which plays a decisive role in the formation of the Islamic worldview. Moreover, even among the creations of God, the creation of the Heavens and the Earth are considered to be special. This paper will discover the relationship between God and human beings, and to consider how this relationship is to be understood.

There are few studies extracting the elements of nature as written in the Qur'an and focusing on the relationship between God and human beings. Fukami (2006)² extracts twenty types of descriptions on "words and phenomena regarded as natural" in the Qur'an, discusses its concept of nature, and shows the Qur'an's admiration for water and its importance in arid regions. However, there is no mention of the relationship between these natural elements and God and human beings. The author of this study³ took up the concepts of Earth, Sun, Moon, Star, Mountain, River, Valley, Tree, and Fountain as written in the Qur'an, focusing on the relationship between God and human beings and analyzing it. Among them, the features of the sun and the moon reveal three things: God creates and operates them, God dissolves when the last day approaches, and God is to be worshiped. The stars reveal five things: God creates, God dissolves them when the last day approaches, they are the proof of God's promise, God is to be worshiped, and God leads human beings.

2. Research Text and Methodology

2.1. RESEARCH TEXT

We analyzed 310 Arabic verses⁴, including *سما* (اسماء), which literally means "the Heaven," but which we translate here as "the Heaven verses." When analyzing the Heaven verses, we used *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. The Qur'an is comprised of 114 chapters, with each chapter comprising of multiple verses. In listing each of the Qur'an verses, the numbers of the chapter and the verse are written in as *chapter: verse*.

2.2. METHOD OF ANALYSIS

(1) Letters describe key concepts. The Heaven is "A," God is "G," and human beings are "H" in the Heaven verses. The explanation is illustrated by examples (Figure 1).

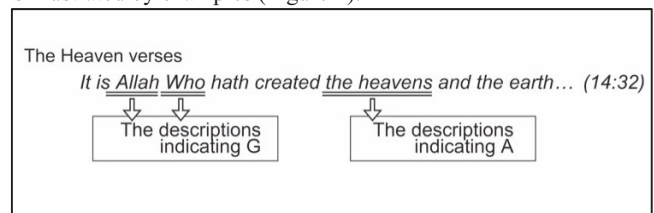


Figure 1. Example: Descriptions indicating G and A.

(2) The letters describe the following four themes from the descriptions of the Heaven verses:

- The relationship between the Heaven and God is R(A,G);
- the relationship between the Heaven and human beings is R(A,H);
- the relationship of the Heaven as the place where God and human beings interact is R(G,A,H); and
- the state of the Heaven is S(A).

The explanation is illustrated by examples (Figure 2).

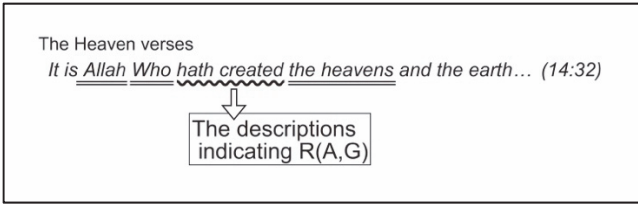
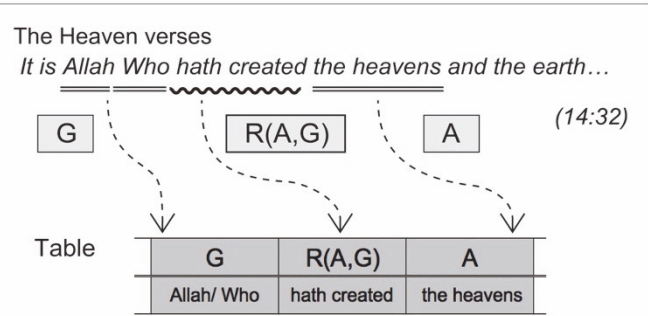


Figure 2. Example: Descriptions indicating R(A,G)



The Heaven verses that were similar in content were summarized

29:61	-	-	who	has created	the heavens	-	-	-
30:8	-	-	Allah	did Allah create	the heavens	-	-	-
30:22	-	-	His Signs	is the creation of	the heavens	-	-	-
31:10	-	-	He	created	the heavens	-	-	-
31:25	-	-	who/ "(Allah)".	created	the heavens	-	-	-
32:4	-	-	Allah Who	has created	the heavens	-	-	-
35:1	-	-	Allah/ Who	created (out of nothing)	the heavens	-	-	-
35:3	you	to give you sustenance	Allah/ a creator	a creator	the heaven	-	-	you
36:81	-	-	He Who	created	the heavens	-	-	-
38:27	-	-	We	create	heaven	-	-	-
39:5	-	-	He	created	the heavens	-	-	-
39:38	-	-	Allah	created	the heavens	-	-	-
39:46	-	-	Allah/ Creator	Creator of the heavens	the heavens	-	-	-
40:57	-	-		the creation of	the heavens	-	-	-
42:11	-	-	(He is) the Creator of	the Creator of	the heavens	-	-	-
42:29	-	-	His Signs	is the creation	the heavens	-	-	-
43:9	-	-	Who	created	the heavens	-	-	-
44:38	-	-	We	created	the heavens	-	-	-
45:22	-	-	Allah	created	the heavens	-	-	-
46:3	-	-	We	created	the heavens	-	-	-
46:33	-	-	Allah, Who	created	the heavens	-	-	-
50:6	-	-	We	have made /adorned	the sky/ it	not look	they/ above them	-
50:38	-	-	We	created	the heavens	-	-	-
52:36	-	-		create	the heaven	-	-	-
57:4	-	-	He/ Who	created	the heavens	-	-	-
64:3	-	-	He	has created	the heavens	-	-	-
65:12	-	-	Allah is He Who	created seven Firmaments	the seven heavens	-	-	-
67:3	-	-	He/ Who	created	the seven heavens	-	-	-
71:15	-	-	Allah	has created	the seven heavens	-	-	-
79:27	-	-	Allah	create	the heaven	-	-	-

“Types of the Heaven”

(3) The letter code system is used in the table below in describing the Heaven, God, Human Beings, and the following four themes (Figure 3). According to the descriptions, the Heaven verses that were similar in content were summarized and were called the “types of the Heaven.”

(4) In each of four themes, features of the Heaven are discussed and clarified on the basis of the types of the Heaven. These relationships between these themes have been illustrated in four schemas (Figures 4, 5). However, in R(A,G), it does not matter whether God or Heaven is the subject of those relationships because both God and the Heaven can be the subject in Qur'an verses.

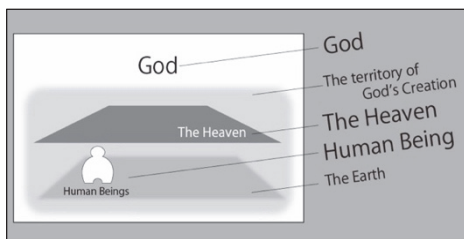


Figure 4. Explanation of the schema

Figure 3. An example of putting descriptions indicating G and A, R(A,G) into a table and summarizing the Heaven verses.

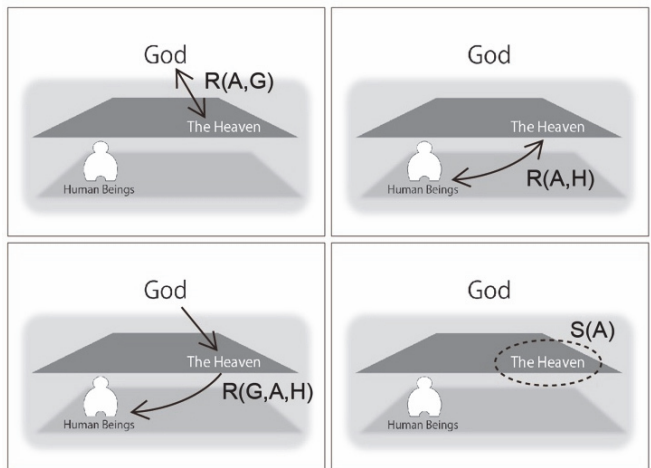


Figure 5. Four schemas diagram the relationship between the Earth and God and human beings in four themes

3. Types of the Heaven

From the results of the analysis, the types of the Heaven were categorized. The content of each of the types of the Heaven, and the Heaven verses that belong to each of the types of the Heaven, are shown below (Table 1).

3.1. THE TYPES OF THE HEAVEN THAT ARE SIMILAR IN CONTENT TO R(A,G)

The seventeen types of the Heaven that are similar in content to R(A,G) were the following:

- (1) the Heaven that God created;
- (2) the Heaven that God sends down rain from;
- (3) the Heaven that God has dominion over;
- (4) the Heaven that God is the Lord of;
- (5) the Heaven that God adorned;
- (6) the Heaven that God sends down a plague from;
- (7) the Heaven that become the proof of God's promise;
- (8) the Heaven where God exists;
- (9) the Heaven that God made as a canopy;
- (10) the Heaven that God raised;
- (11) the Heaven that God constructed;
- (12) the Heaven that God will roll up;
- (13) the Heaven that God completed;
- (14) the Heaven that God sustains;
- (15) those in the Heaven belong to God;
- (16) those in the Heaven are known by God;
- (17) those in the Heaven praise the Glory of God; and
- (18) those in the Heaven bow down to God.

3.2. THE TYPES OF THE HEAVEN THAT ARE SIMILAR IN THE CONTENT OF R(A,H)

The type of the Heaven that was similar in the content of R(A,G) was the following:

- (19) the Heaven that human beings look up toward.

3.3. THE TYPES OF THE HEAVEN THAT ARE SIMILAR IN THE CONTENT OF R(G,A,H)

The four types of the Heaven that are similar in the content of R(G,A,H) were the following:

- (20) the Heaven from which God gives human beings sustenance;
- (21) the Heaven from which God sends rain to human beings;
- (22) the Heaven from which God sends down a plague to human beings; and
- (23) the Heaven from which God sends a table prepared for human beings.

3.4. THE TYPES OF THE HEAVEN THAT ARE SIMILAR IN THE CONTENT OF S(A)

The three types of the Heaven that are similar in the content of S(A) were the following:

- (24) the Heaven will be rent asunder;
- (25) the Heaven will be changed form; and
- (26) the Heaven is as wide as paradise.

4. The Features of the Heaven

From the analysis of the 310 Heaven verses, it is possible to extract 26 types of the Heaven. The features of the Heaven are shown below in each theme.

4.1. R(A,G)

- Seventeen types belong to the R(A,G). R(A,G) are the most frequent and valuable types (Table 1).
- The types of the Heaven that God creates the Heaven exists the most. The number of verses is 59 (Table 1, (1)).
- There are six types of God's creation and the description of the creation, the most frequent among the extracted Types. As shown in Figure 6, the creation of the Heaven by God has been expressed in various ways. From this we can see the importance of the creation of God.

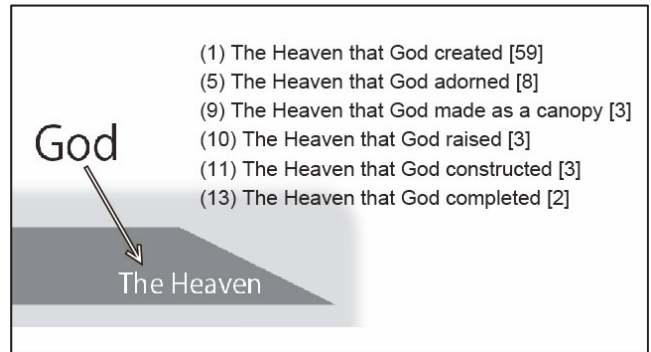


Figure 6. The schema shows the features of the Heaven that God created, and the description of that creation.

- The next most common types relate to God's dominion over and sustaining of the Heaven by God. The Heavens follow God, and God's maintaining of the Heaven is seen. (Figure 7). The existence and operation of God shows that Heaven exists.

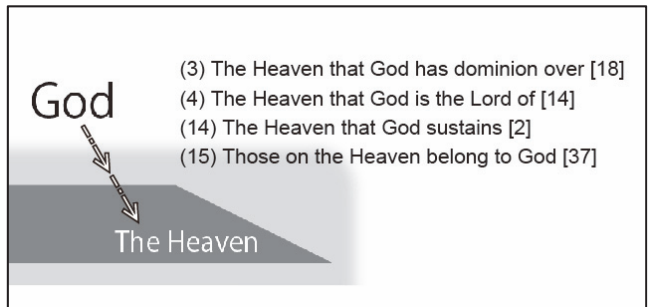


Figure 7. The schema shows the features of the Heaven that are heavenly governance by God.

- Figure 8 shows contradicting aspects, that God graces humans with rain or sends punishments from the Heaven.

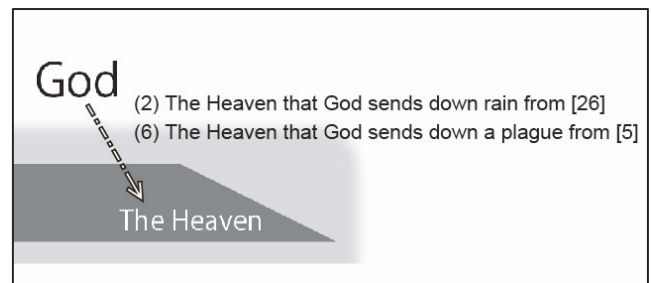


Figure 8. The schema shows the features of the Heaven that God graces humans with rain or sends punishments from the Heaven.

- The Heaven praises God and bows to God. Here, the features that the Heaven believes in and worships God are shown (Figure 9). Here, the Heaven is expressed as a human being who "declares" and "praises" and "bows down."

Table 1. The list that shows the types of the Heaven, the Heaven verses belonging to the types, and the numbers of the Heaven verses in each of the four themes.

Themes	Types of Heaven	The descriptions indicating each theme with similar contents	The Heaven verses belonging to the Types of Heaven	Number of verses
R(A,G)	(1)	the creation, creation, create, created, has created, hath created, Creator, the Maker, have made, is due the primal origin	2:117, 2:164, 3:190, 3:191, 6:1, 6:14, 6:73, 6:79, 6:101, 7:54, 7:185, 9:36, 10:3, 10:6, 11:7, 12:101, 14:10, 14:19, 14:32, 15:85, 16:3, 17:99, 18:51, 20:4, 21:16, 21:56, 25:59, 27:60, 29:44, 29:61, 30:8, 30:22, 31:10, 31:25, 32:4, 35:1, 35:3, 36:81, 38:27, 39:5, 39:38, 39:46, 40:57, 42:11, 42:29, 43:9, 44:38, 45:22, 46:3, 46:33, 50:6, 50:38, 52:36, 57:464:3, 65:12, 67:3, 71:15, 79:27	59
	(2)	send down water, send down rain, sends down rain, sendeth down rain, sends...down rain, poured out rain, will send... pouring abundant rain, cause the rain to descend, will send rain, caused rain the rain...send down, sends down water, has sent down water, send down pure water	2:22, 2:164, 6:6, 6:99, 8:11, 10:24, 11:52, 13:17, 14:32, 15:22, 16:10, 16:65, 18:45, 20:53, 22:63, 23:18, 25:48, 27:60, 29:63, 30:24, 31:10, 35:27, 39:21, 43:11, 50:9, 71:11	26
	(3)	belongth the dominion, doth belong the dominion, belongs the dominion	2:107, 3:189, 5:17, 5:18, 5:40, 5:120, 7:158, 9:116, 24:42, 25:2, 39:44, 42:49, 43:85, 45:27, 48:14, 57:2, 57:5, 85:9	18
	(4)	the Lord of	13:16, 17:102, 18:14, 19:65, 21:56, 23:86, 26:24, 37:5, 38:66, 43:82, 44:7, 45:36, 51:23, 78:37	14
	(5)	His design comprehended, have set out the zodiacal signs, made constellations, have indeed decked, comprehended in His design, adorned, adorned...with lights, adorned...with Lamps	2:29, 15:16, 25:61, 37:6, 41:11, 41:12, 50:6, 67:5	8
	(6)	sent on...a plague, will send on...thunderbolts (by way of reckoning), sends down...mountain masses (of clouds), rain down...a shower of stones	2:59, 7:162, 8:32, 18:40, 24:43	5
	(7)	By...	51:7, 85:1, 86:1, 86:11, 91:5	5
	(8)	is...in, is in	6:3, 43:84, 67:16, 67:17	4
	(9)	has made...your canopy, have made...as a canopy, has made...as a canopy	2:22, 21:32, 40:64	3
	(10)	raised	13:2, 55:7, 88:18	3
	(11)	stand by, construct, structure	30:25, 51:47, 91:5	3
	(12)	roll up, well be rolled up	21:104, 39:67	2
	(13)	gave order and perfection to completed	2:29, 41:12	2
	(14)	Sustainer, sustains	13:16, 35:41	2
	(15)	belong, belongs, belongth, do belong, doth belong, His are	2:116, 2:255, 2:284, 3:109, 3:129, 3:180, 4:126, 4:131, 4:131, 4:132, 4:170, 4:171, 6:12, 10:55, 10:66, 10:68, 11:123, 14:2, 16:52, 16:77, 20:6, 21:19, 22:64, 24:64, 30:26, 30:27, 31:26, 34:1, 39:63, 42:4, 42:12, 42:53, 48:4, 48:7, 53:31, 57:10, 63:7	37
	(16)	know, knows, hath knowledge, nothing is hidden, doth know, brings to light,	2:33, 3:5, 3:29, 5:97, 6:59, 10:18, 14:38, 17:55, 18:26, 21:4, 22:70, 25:6, 27:25, 27:65, 29:52, 34:2, 35:38, 49:16, 49:18, 57:4, 58:7, 64:4	21
	(17)	declare, do celebrate, let it declare, doth declare, praises	17:44, 24:41, 57:1, 59:1, 59:24, 61:1, 62:1, 64:1	8
	(18)	bowed to, do prostrate, doth obeisance, bow down in worship, be praise	3:83, 13:15, 16:49, 22:18, 30:18	5
R(A,H)	(19)	see, look, Behold, beholders	2:144, 7:185, 10:101, 15:16, 34:9, 50:6	6
R(G, A, H)	(20)	sustains, give you sustenance, gives you sustenance, has subjected to your (use), sendeth down sustenance, sends down Sustenance	10:31, 27:64, 31:20, 34:24, 35:3, 40:13, 45:5	7
	(21)	sent down rain...for your sustenance, caused rain to descend on you, sendeth down rain...to feed you, sends you down rain, will send rain to you	2:22, 8:11, 14:32, 27:60, 71:11	5
	(22)	sent on...a plague, will send on...thunderbolts (by way of reckoning), sends down...mountain masses (of clouds), rain down...a shower of stones	2:59, 7:162, 8:32, 18:40	4
	(23)	send down to us a table set, send us...a table set	5:112, 5:114	2
S(A)	(24)	shall be rent asunder with clouds, will be rent asunder, is rent asunder, are almost, rent asunder, will be cleft asunder, is cleft asunder	25:25, 42:5, 55:37, 69:16, 73:18, 77:9, 82:1, 84:1	8
	(25)	will be changed, are ready to burst, break, cause a piece of the sky to fall, will bring forth a kind of smoke (or mist) plainly visible, will be like molten brass	14:48, 19:90, 30:48, 34:9, 44:10, 70:8	6
	(26)	a Garden whose width ...of the heaven	3:133, 57:21	2

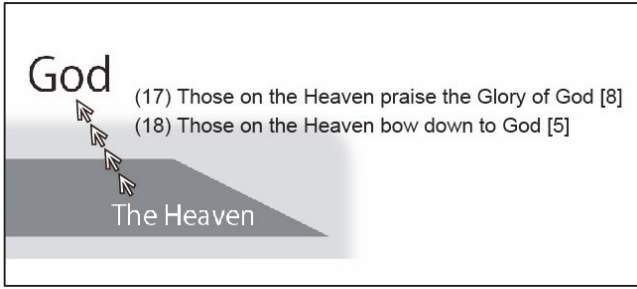


Figure 9. The schema shows the features of the Heaven that believes in and worships God.

- On the last day, the feature that God will roll up the Heaven was shown (Figure 10).

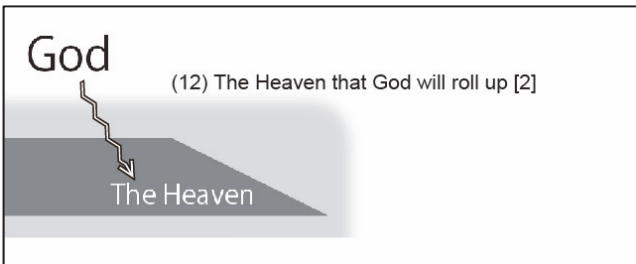


Figure 10. The schema shows the features of the Heaven will be rolled up by God on the last day.

- There is a feature that the Heaven is thin enough to be lifted up by God, because when God created the Heaven, God made the Heaven as a canopy and raised it up. Also, it is rolled up when the last day comes (Table 1 (9), (10), (12), Figure 10).
- Most of the features concerning creation, maintenance, and termination, which is an important act of God (Figure 6, 7, 10).
- In typing, the number of R(A,G) types is overwhelmingly large. According to the types of R(A,G), the Heaven is understood as emphasizing the relationship with God.

4.2. R(A,H)

- There is only one type in R(A,H) (Table 1), and describes human beings looking up to the Heaven (Figure 11).

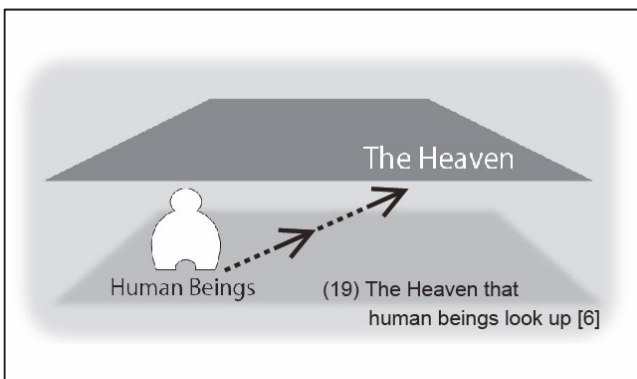


Figure 11. The schema shows the features of the Heaven to which human beings look.

- Since there is only one type found regarding the relationship between the Heaven and human beings, it is considered to be very weak compared to the relationship between God and the Heaven.
- Apart from looking up, there is no situation that human beings do something with regard to the Heaven.

4.3. R(G,A,H)

- There are four types in the R(G,A,H) (Table 1).
- Two types show features that God gives human beings rain of grace (Figure 12). In R (G,A,H), this feature exists the most.

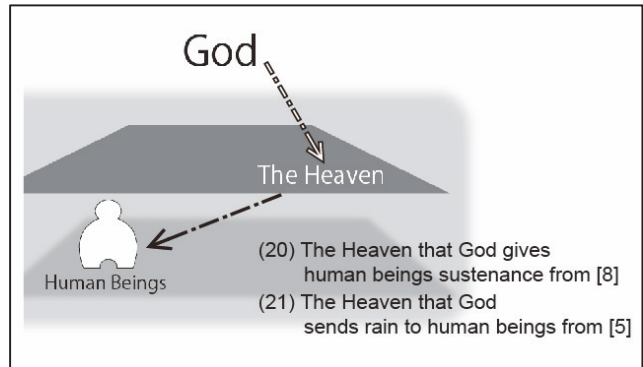


Figure 12. The schema shows God graces human beings with rain from the Heaven

- Figure 13 shows features that God sends down human beings a plague from the Heaven. God sends “a plague,” “thunderbolts,” “mountain masses of clouds,” and “a shower of stones” to human beings through the Heaven (Table 1, (22)).

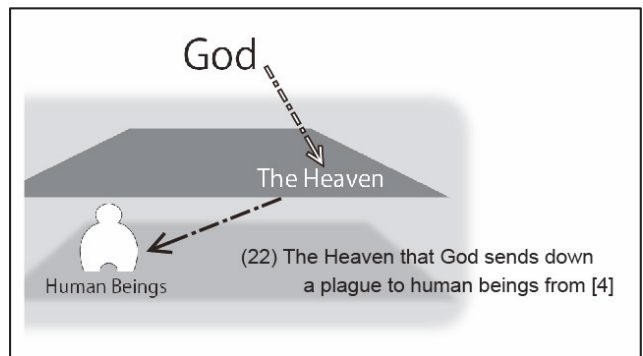


Figure 13. The schema shows that God sends down human beings a plague from the Heaven.

- Figure 12 and 13 show contradictory features that God gives human beings rains of grace or punishment. These features are added to God's relationship with human beings that are abundantly displayed in R(A,G).
- The feature in R(G,A,H) shows that God has given grace or punishment from the Heaven. God allows punishment and the blessing of rain from the Heaven, and shows the polestar of life to human beings.

4.4. S(A)

- There are 3 types in the S(A) (Table 1).
- On the last day, the Heaven changes its shape (Figure 14).
- The Heaven is a wide paradise (Table 1, (26)).

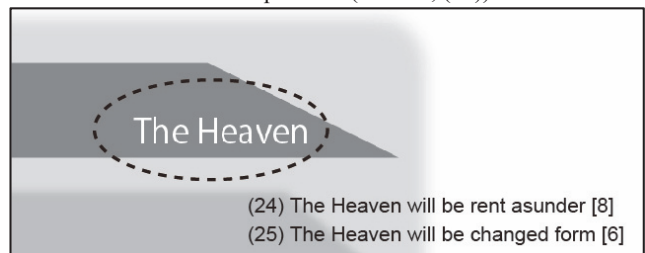


Figure 14. The schema shows the Heaven changes its shape on the last day.

5. Conclusion

This study attempts to consider the view of nature in the Islamic world. In this paper, we focused on the Heaven, which is an important subject in the Qur'an. From the analysis of the 310 Heaven verses focusing on the relationship between God and human beings, it is possible to extract 26 "types of the Heaven."

From the results of the analysis, the findings are as follows.

- 1) The features in relationship between the Heaven and human beings is only that human beings look up toward the Heaven.
- 2) The features of the Heaven in the Qur'an are very strong in relation to God and make humans more aware of God's existence and greatness.
- 3) The Heaven shows God's will for human beings and so becomes a device by which God sends rain to human beings.

Compared with the Sun, Moon, Star, Mountain, River, Valley, Tree, and Fountain, there are over five times more verses about the Heaven. In addition, the features of the Heaven are drawn in various ways. All four had the features of being created and maintained by God and being erased on the last day. However, for the creation of the Heaven by God, various expressions are made, and it is written about in detail, compared to other aspects of creation. By the will of God, the features of rain, grace, and punishment can only be given by the Heaven (Figure 15).

The Heaven has become a bridge between God and human beings. From these findings, in spaces where one might feel the presence of God more strongly such as mosques or shrines, there may be a causal connection in that the spaces' structures and decorations recall the Heaven with the use of domes and stars.

Finally, the features of nature in the Qur'an focusing on the relationship between God and Human Beings are understood from this research and the results in author's study (Figure 16).

Endnotes

1. According to Malek C. and Maeda, K. (2014).
2. According to Fukami, N. (2006).
3. According to Yamaguchi, A. and Okazaki, S. (2014), Yamaguchi, A. (2015), and Yamaguchi, A. and Okazaki, S. (2016)
4. According to Kassis, H. E. (1983).

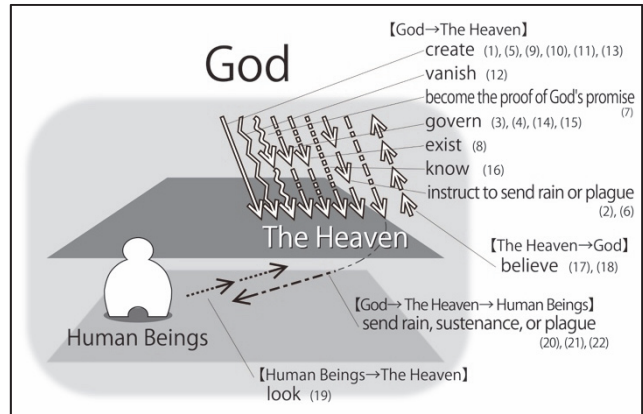


Figure 15. The schema shows the Features of the Heaven

References

Chebel, M. and Maeda, K. (2014). *Dictionary of Islamic Symbols*. Akashi co. (In Japanese)

Fukami, N. (2006). *Conception of Nature viewed from Definition of Qur'an: A consideration of Islamic aquatic culture*. Holy Water-Comparative Study of Christian World and Islamic World, Laboratory of Regional Design with Ecology, Hosei University History Project. pp. 20–33 (in Japanese).

Kassis, H. E. (1983). *A Concordance of the Qur'an*. University of California.

Ali, Y. A. (2010). *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. Pacific Publishing Studio.

Yamaguchi, A. and Okazaki, S. (2014). "Types of Mountains in the Qur'an: With a Focus on the Relationships between God and Man and Mountain." Institute of Turkish Culture Studies, *Intercultural Understanding* (4), 43–49.

Yamaguchi, A. (2015). "A Study on the Features of Nature in the Qur'an: Focusing on the Relationships with God and Human Beings." PhD Thesis, Mukogawa Women's University, Nishinomiya, Japan.

Yamaguchi, A. and Okazaki, S. (2016). "Features of the Earth in the Qur'an: Focusing on the Relationship between God and Human Beings." 4th International Conference on Archi-Cultural Interactions through the Silk Road, Mukogawa Women's University, Nishinomiya, Japan, July 16–18, 2016. Selected Paper, pp. 93–98.

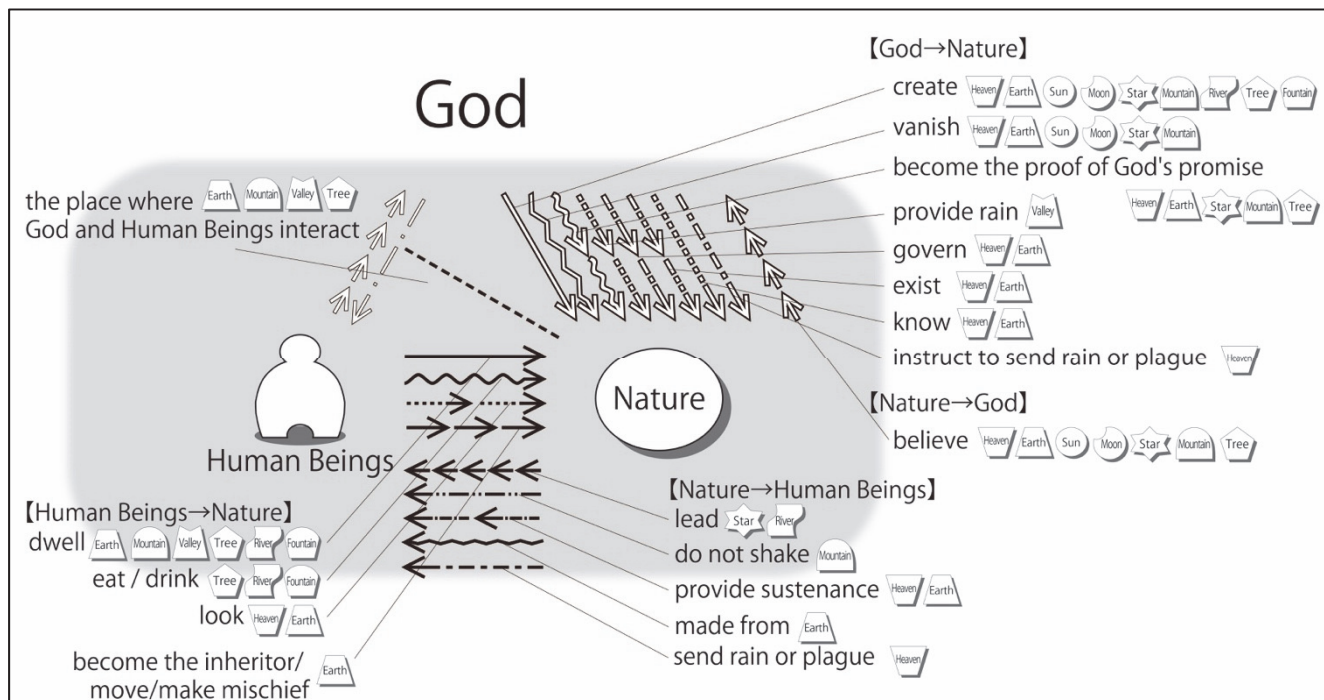


Figure 16. Features of Nature in the Qur'an focusing on the Relationship between God and Human Beings