



Environmental Awareness: A Phenomenological Study of Al-Faruq and Bahrul Hidayah Islamic Boarding Schools in Bandung

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Abstract: Environmental issues facing the Muslim world have become an integral part of Muslim life. When Islam examines ecological issues, it gives rise to environmental ideas rooted in constructive theology. This theology places significant emphasis on the relationship between humans, nature, and God. Religious doctrines have demonstrated profound concern for environmental issues. In human relationships with the divine, nature is also regarded as a fellow creature of God. In their relationship with the divine, humans rely on nature as a conduit to comprehend it. *Pesantren*, an Islamic educational institution, cannot be distinguished from environmental issues. One researcher's observation of *pesantren* environments revealed a deficiency in environmental management awareness. This research employs a descriptive-qualitative method, underpinned by a religious phenomenological approach, to examine the awareness of environmental theology in the boarding schools Al-Faruq and Bahrul Hidayah. The research process was structured into three phases: orientation, exploration, and member check. The data sources employed in this study were purposive sampling, encompassing figures deemed significant, such as *kiai/ustaz*, *santri*, environmental activists, and the surrounding community. The data collection process involved observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The initial study, entitled "Humans as God's Representatives (khalifah)," posits that humans bear the responsibility to preserve nature. This is because nature is his entrustment. Second, it is imperative to acknowledge God as the pivotal element within the cosmos. In this context, it serves as the focal point of pedagogy (tawhid), signifying that all human actions are directed towards God. Third, in Boarding Schools Al-Faruq and Bahrul Hidayah, environmental preservation is obligatory, as it is aimed at ensuring the safety, welfare, and sustainability of humans. Even the implementation of prayer rituals requires water for ablution (wudu) and the utilization of nature as a form of therapy.

Keywords: *Pesantren*, *Environmental Awareness*, *ecological theology*.

Introduction

Pesantren, a religious institution, is obligated to assume a role in addressing environmental challenges. This obligation stems from the fundamental role of *pesantrens* in community development, fostering spiritual growth, promoting moral integrity, and providing education that shapes the nation's moral compass. Furthermore, *Pesantren* responds to the environmental crisis through the Environmental Fiqh book (Fiqh al-Bi'ah, 2006). In 2006, Nahdlatul Ulama initiated a project. This initiative was spearheaded by the prominent Ulama from Nahdlatul Ulama. *Pesantren* must maintain its relevance by adapting to contemporary issues, as it plays a pivotal role in environmental stewardship. (Mangunjaya, 2014) Furthermore, *pesantrens* have become a subject of concern for the global community. These

institutions are regarded as pivotal centers of cultural exchange and conduits for the dissemination of modernization concepts from urban centers (F. M. Mangunjaya, Heriyanto, & Gholami, 2007). In his article, "Shifting Notions of Nature and Environmentalism in Indonesian Islam," Schuler argued that the environmentally friendly movement in Indonesia is an induction of belief values (theology) driven by Islamic organizations, especially *pesantren* communities. Notably, several *pesantrens* have focused on the environmental rescue movement. Some of these institutions have been recognized as having the highest accolade bestowed by the government for their contribution to environmental conservation. For instance, Annuqayah Islamic Boarding School in Guluk-Guluk, Sumenep, and Al-Ittifaqiyah Islamic Boarding School in Ciwidey, West Java, have been honored with the Kalpataru award in recognition of their pioneering initiatives in environmental preservation. In response, the Ministry of the Environment (KLH) of the Republic of Indonesia initiated an *ecopesantren* program in 2008. The *eco-pesantren* initiative can be conceptualized as an endeavor to designate *pesantren* as "environmentally friendly" on the condition that these institutions demonstrate their contribution or participation in environmental conservation and preservation.

The genesis of the discourse on environmental theology can be traced to the contributions of Lynn White, (1967) Toynbee, and Daisatsu Ikeda (Clark, 2004). It was concluded that the ecological crisis was caused by the anthropocentric worldview of monotheist religions (Quddus, 2017). The imperative to subjugate nature has engendered an instrumentalist approach to the environment, supplanting a respectful stance. This has fostered the proliferation of science and technology, which has proven detrimental to the environment. To overcome this, White proposed a shift from monotheism to pantheism and the tenets of Eastern religious traditions, positing that these philosophies can serve as the foundation for spiritually oriented cosmology. This thesis posits that this approach is necessary to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the subject. White (1967) not only critiqued monotheistic religions (i.e., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) but also targeted the ideology of Marxism and the ideologies of Enlightenment modernism, such as Deweyan pragmatism and the American concept of economic development. In doing so, he classifies these ideologies as heretical or Judeo-Christian heresies. The following is a list of critiques of monotheistic teachings (Gloser, 2002; Miller & Spoolman, 2007), which demands an end to the non-ecological Jewish, Christian, and Greek philosophical ideologies of human domination, dominion, and control over the earth. These ideologies are predicated on the notion that humans are part of the Earth, and that Earth does not belong to humans. Ziauddin Sardar (1996) also made this argument.

According to environmental ethicist Willis Jenkins, White's writings have exerted a significant influence on the development of religious ethics concerning environmental issues. (Jenkins, 2009). According to Jenkins, Lynn White provoked controversy by contending that the origins of the ecological crisis resided in religious cosmology, particularly in the anthropocentric and instrumentalist perspectives of Western Christianity. Conversely, White's approach to correlating the moral ramifications of religious cosmology with environmental concerns has contributed to the evolution of the academic domain of environmental and religious ethics (Jenkin, 2009). Accordingly, White's work has had a profound and extensive impact not only on the field of environmental ethics, but also on that of religious ethics.

White's thesis has been met with rejection and criticism in nearly all discourses and debates concerning the origins of the environmental crisis, particularly from religious

communities such as (Gardner, 2002) As stated in the work of Foltz, Denny, and Azizan, 2003; Sayyed Hosein Nasr, 1996). The critique leveled by environmentalists has prompted scientists to engage in collaborative efforts with religionists, who wield considerable influence over society. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that White's critique of monotheism plays a pivotal role in the formulation and reinterpretation of the concept of theology and ethics of monotheism, with the objective of enhancing its environmental sustainability. In this regard, the development of a theology grounded in ecological awareness and wisdom—often termed “ecothology”—emerges as a pressing imperative.

A significant challenge in contemporary society is the integration of religious spirituality into scientific knowledge. To address this challenge, it is imperative that religious traditions enhance engagement with environmental concerns. Taylor (2004) The present study is grounded in the theoretical framework proposed by Gardner (2002). The author posits that the integration of religion constitutes a scientific imperative, as religion possesses at least five assets that are instrumental in preserving Earth and establishing a world that is socially and ecologically just. These five significant assets are: First, the capacity to shape a cosmology (worldview) in accordance with an ecological vision is imperative. Second, moral authority is necessary. Third, a substantial following is essential. Fourth, significant material resources are crucial. Fifth, the capacity to build a community is indispensable.

View Nasr, (1996) The prevailing factor contributing to the environmental crisis is a spiritual problem. The planet is currently experiencing significant ecological distress caused by human actions that have been detrimental to the environment. In this context, this study proposes a novel approach to address ecological challenges by leveraging religious values (spirituality) and moral wisdom (ethics) to restore balance in a chaotic contemporary environment. This study poses the following question: What is the state of environmental awareness in *pesantrens* salafi? The objective of the present research is to examine how *pesantrens*' spiritual awareness responds to environmental challenges.

Literature Review

The following is a list of environmental problems according to Davary (2012), which is due to the uprooting of human existence and the separation between culture and nature. This disruption of the balance or equilibrium between humans and nature engenders chaos in the environment (Cuddington, 2001). (Cuddington, 2001) The issue of environmental degradation is escalating, underscoring the imperative for an adaptive ethic that is receptive to devising targeted and adaptable solutions to address the intricate and expanding array of complex challenges (Tampubolon, 2020). (Tampubolon, 2020) It has been demonstrated that human beings have a tendency to overlook the fundamental essence of their own existence. (Anwar, 2020).

According to Gardner (2002), in his research posits that the integration of religion is a scientific imperative in fostering environmental consciousness, particularly within the context of *pesantren*. He asserts that religion possesses at least five assets that are instrumental in endeavoring to safeguard the planet and cultivate a socially and ecologically equitable global society. These five assets are as follows: First, the capacity to establish a cosmology (worldview) that aligns with an ecological vision is paramount. Second, moral authority is crucial. Third, a substantial following is essential. Fourth, significant material resources are indispensable. Fifth, the capacity to establish communities is vital. These elements have also been observed in previous research. Mangunjaya (2014) In contemporary context, religious institutions and scholars have demonstrated a notable propensity to formulate responses to environmental challenges. This has led to collaborative efforts among religious leaders and scientists to

present arguments advocating for the environmental sustainability of religion. These arguments often involve the presentation of novel interpretations of religious texts to highlight their relevance to environmental issues. This collaborative effort between religionists and scientists signifies a new paradigm of interdisciplinary thinking, wherein both groups engage in profound reflections on the fate of the universe. The onus falls upon environmental theology to devise solutions to the manifold ecological crises afflicting the world. To this end, it is imperative that environmental theology develops a novel paradigm to surmount the prevailing natural challenges. *Pesantren*, an Islamic educational institution grounded in theological knowledge, serves as a nexus for collaboration between *santri* and scientists. The potential for collaboration between these two groups to address ecological crises is significant given the historical division between *santri* and religionists. The significance of collaboration between religionists and scientists has been extensively researched, with numerous studies addressing this topic (Assya'bani, 2017; Foltz, R. C., Denny, F. M., & Azizan, 2003; Sayyed Hosein Nasr, 2005). The relationship between humans, nature, and God is understood to imply the expectation that it will foster human awareness of the importance of preserving nature (Assya'bani, 2017).

In some of his research, Abu Sayem (2018, 2021, 2019) reveals the importance of spirituality in overcoming the environmental crisis, as he supports Nasr's thesis that the ecological crisis occurs because of a spiritual crisis and not because of the modern perspective of environmental ethics. Through religious spirituality, humans can sense the problem and can be convinced to treat nature in a very simple way. He also proposed a perennial philosophy rather than a materialistic philosophy with a dualistic paradigm and then suggested reviving traditional metaphysical understanding to think deeply about the intimacy between humans and nature. Traditional science and religious spirituality, coupled with sacred sciences, worked in the past towards environmental sustainability, Nasr (Foltz 2005). suggested a paradigm shift from a modern scientific worldview to a spirituality-based worldview of nature.

Pesantren is the basis of the spiritual training of *santri*. Through his research (Anwar & Rosyad, 2021) that the understanding of environmental theology in *pesantrens* must go through the basic principles of environmental theology based on the Qur'an, the Prophet's Sunnah, and classical scholars. This is because humans are an integral part of nature. Nature as a representation of His presence and the position of humans as *khalifatullah fi al-ardi* are cosmic entities that cannot be separated. (Maftukhin, 2016). Even *pesantrens* are required to internalize the value of classical Islamic teachings that are engaged in responding to the needs of Muslims due to the urgent needs of the people. The disasters that occur more frequently have strengthened the ideology of the *pesantrens* to be transformed into a concrete action (Tolchah, 2016).

The discourse on environmental theology, by its very nature, establishes a paradigm concerning environmental issues that is predicated on its reflection on Islamic values and traditions. The forest, which is the dominant environment in which his *pesantren* is located, has led him to a cosmic awareness of the importance of maintaining God's mandate to humans. This awareness is expressed through the "words of the forest" (*kalam rimba*), which are disseminated to the *santri* and the broader community surrounding the *pesantren*. (Mahzumi, 2018) The exploration of the spiritual value of environmental ecology contributes to the rich tapestry of Islamic prophetic ecology, offering insights into alternative and transformative ecological concepts (Khitam, 2011). Environmental theology can be defined as a branch of theology that focuses on the environment as its object of study. This discipline is formulated based on the values and principles of Islamic teaching. Environmental theology is

a scientific discipline that engages with the fundamental tenets of Islam concerning the environment. (Nafisah, 2018) This research employs Sayyed Hossein Nasr's analytical paradigm, which posits that humans are caliphs.

Methods

This research method was descriptive-qualitative, and is seen as a research procedure that can produce descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people or behavior that can be observed" (Moleong, 1998). Meanwhile, 'descriptive research is intended for exploration and clarification of a phenomenon or social reality, by describing a number of variables related to the problem and unit under study' (Faisal, 1995). (Faisal, 1995)." The qualitative descriptive method is aimed at analyzing the phenomenon of environmental awareness in *the boarding schools of Al-Faruq* to determine the *pesantren* community's awareness of overcoming environmental problems such as floods, landslides, and waste problems. The data sources in this study are divided into two: primary data and secondary data.

The objects of this research were *the boarding schools Al-Faruq* and Bahrul Hidayah, located in Bandung Regency. The main data sources (primary sources) used in this research come from field information derived from several kiai or ustaz caregivers of Al-Faruq and Bahrul Hidayah boarding schools and *santri*, who study in some of these schools. Secondary data sources used in this research come from field information from the community around the boarding schools Al-Faruq and Bahrul Hidayah environmental activists, and Basarnas agencies. The literature that is a secondary data source includes documents that are the results of research reports (journals, academic research, articles, magazines) related to environmental theology issues as well as books written that are considered relevant to the problem being studied. In terms of data collection, researchers directly collect data in the field in real situations. The data collection techniques used in this study were observation and in-depth interviews. The data analysis in this study uses qualitative analysis processes according to Miles and Huberman (1992). can be explained in three steps: data reduction (*data reduction*), data presentation (*data display*), and conclusion (*conclusion and drawing*).

Results

Environmental Crisis and Its Impacts on *Pesantren* Communities

Based on observational data, documentation, and interviews conducted by researchers at *the boarding schools Al-Faruq* and Bahrul Hidayah *pesantren*, after the data were collected, they were recorded and analyzed. The results of this research are as follows:

The effects of the environmental crisis can certainly be felt by anyone, including the people of *pesantren* Salafi Al-Faruq and *pesantren* Bahrul Hidayah, namely, erratic climate change, the causes of which are: (1) *global warming* (global warming), the loss of the Earth's balance, which has an impact on the uncertainty between the dry season and the rainy season; (2) the destruction of natural resources (land, air, and water) due to many factories and residential complexes standing on green land; and (3). *Deforestation* (forest degradation and forest fires) has occurred in the conservation areas of Masigit Kareumbi Buru Park, Cibodas Mountain, and Mandalawangi Mountain, causing the destruction of biodiversity and triggering floods and landslides.

The impact of environmental problems is significantly rooted and sourced from human behavior itself, which is consumptive and exploitative. The environmental awareness of the community is still low as stated by Ustaz Apip that the impact of the destruction of the forest can be felt by me, such as flash floods that often occur, even though this is a highland.

Meanwhile, in Ustadz Aziz's view, the blame is not only for the community but also for government policies that are misdirected and seem to ignore the environmental order that is only concerned with development but does not care about its ecological impact. For example, the layout of the neighborhood is wrong, and the government's regulation on green open space has not been fully implemented.

The most important factor in overcoming the flood problem is the awareness of each individual in protecting the environment. The most important issue that must be considered is individual awareness of behavior towards the environment. Many people are unaware and often treat nature arbitrarily and irresponsibly. Some people often litter or cut down trees in conservation areas with the unfortunate consequence that these actions will have an impact on environmental damage on a macro scale and will cause floods and landslides on a micro scale. People know that through their actions, whether it is littering or cutting down trees, disasters will occur due to repetition.

The Role of *Pesantren* in Environmental Education and Community Awareness

Pesantren as an educational institution is expected to be able to form a cosmological *worldview* through the educational model it teaches. *Pesantren salafi Al-Faruq* as a *pesantren salafi* under the Nahdlatul Ulama organisation. In addition, the *pesantren* cannot be separated from the community because it is part of the community. The relationship between ustaz and his students in *Al-Faruq pesantren* has two patterns, namely the informal father-son relationship pattern and the semi-formal teacher-student relationship. The informal father-son relationship pattern is a relationship that exists between ustaz and *santri*, like a father-son relationship. The relationship is built because the kiai is a role model so that behavior must be obeyed like parents. The teacher is the source of the blessing of knowledge; obeying him is part of the learning process. This view is as seen in the statement of one of the students from the *Al-Faruq pesantren*, who stated that the students here are mostly boarding students, including himself, but according to him, the presence of the *Al-Faruq pesantren* can provide enlightenment to the community around Tenjolaya Village. Ustadz Dadi or ustaz Aziz as the caregiver of the *pesantren* does not charge fees to his students for those who have please pay the dues, but if you do not have it, it is free, sometimes even giving money to his students and providing food to his students. This makes me love him for his generosity and simplicity.

Pesantren Al-Faruq and *Pesantren Bahrul Hidayah* aim to shape the character of their students who have responsibilities as caliphs. In educating their students, both *pesantrens* not only provide Islamic knowledge education in the form of theory, but also in its application in daily life. *Pesantren* accommodates both forms of theory and action. *Santri* is equipped with knowledge about the environment sourced from Islamic sciences and social sciences, but must also be able to be applied in the *pesantren* environment in particular and in the wider community.

Understanding the environment must be based on tawhid, such as the opinion of ustaz Apip, who revealed that in the context of environmental problems, the value of tawhid must be used as the basis for the guidance or actions of students and the community in understanding this nature. Nature must be seen as a verse or symbol so that it can lead humans to arrive at true reality. Nature was indeed created for humans, but the various rights that humans have are only in the form of utilization rights that will later be held accountable.

Theological Foundations and Practical Actions in Environmental Stewardship

In this context, *Pesantren* Bahrul Hidayah provides a theological understanding as a basis for understanding the environment because God has entrusted humans to protect it. The universe and all the creatures in it are the *iradah* (will) of Allah, which was created with the aim of being a path or guide to reach the true reality. Likewise, the doctrine taught the *santri* of *Pesantren* Al-Faruq that Tawhid must be used as a guide in environmental doctrine, as confirmed by ustaz Aziz that the concept of Tawhid can be used as a source of environmental theology doctrine. This is because all appearances of the universe are signs (*verses*) of Allah's existence. Everything is a manifestation of Allah, and everything comes from Him. Therefore, the basic principles of all Islamic teachings must be based on Tawhid. According to him, contemplating the principle of environmental theology and practising it in Islamic law, while linking faith with the environment, can start through the practice of prayer. Through prayer, we can reflect on humanity's relationship with God and the planet, and how we live on it.

Everything in this universe is a sign (verse) of the Creator's greatness. In this context, it can be understood that nature or the environment is not an object that means nothing and has no purpose of creation. Nature is a sign (*ayat*) of God's "existence." Nature becomes a clue and a way to arrive at knowledge of God's self. Indeed, humans are endowed with reason and mind to capture the signs of God's greatness on Earth, not to exploit nature through human intelligence. Many times, God threatens humans who destroy nature. God strongly dislikes those who do damage on earth, as hinted in (QS. Al-Baqarah, 60).

Loving the environment in a *pesantren* departs from simple things that are visible, not necessarily imagining a broad problem. As described by *Pesantren* Al-Faruq and *Pesantren* Bahrul Hidayah, caring for the environment must start from ourselves and enter the environment where we live. Overcoming environmental problems is not sufficient with lectures, but there must be real action. In this case, both *pesantrens* have implemented an environmental agenda that departs from awareness, even by forcing *santri*. One way to understand God's verses on Earth is by contemplating them.

Discussion

First, humans as caliphs. According to Nasr, the position of humans as caliphs is clear. This is the Qur'an reference in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]:30. The quality of a khalifah is measured by God using the barometer of servitude (*'ubudiyyah*) to God. In the principle of environmental theology, it means understanding that God created humans from the land, and humans must do whatever it takes to protect it, protect it, and manage it as a gift contained in it by maintaining its balance and not destroying it. *Pesantren* is an educational institution that forms the characteristics of Muslims who obey and have good morals as exemplified by the Prophet. It is humans who must have responsibility in managing their environment, if not humans who will manage it, because humans are equipped with reason and mind. What ustaz Aziz stated above is used as the basis for Islam's responsibility in managing the environment.

In Ustaz Apip's perspective, to carry out this khilafah mission, humans have been given God an advantage over other creatures, namely the perfection of creation and reason that God does not give to other creatures. Armed with this intellect (reason and conscience), humans should be able to carry out the mandate of becoming leaders and representatives of God on Earth. As the leaders of all creatures, humans must be able to uphold trust and justice in the midst of their natural environment on Earth, including in the social environment. Therefore, I always emphasize to Bahrul Hidayah students that the sustainability of nature is determined by human actions. According to Nasr, humans are servants of God (*'abd Allah*), which is why they must obey Him. (Yaakob & Moris, 2012).. In this context, Nasr also asserted

that humans should not only be caliphs on the one hand, nor should they only be caliphs on the other. However, these two sides must be attached so that he is a servant who is always obedient to God who created him.

As God's representative, humans must preserve nature. This was because nature was his entrustment. The boarding schools of Al-Faruq and Bahrul Hidayah base their environmental theology teachings on Khalifah Allah. In Nasr's view (1983), humans are 'in charge' of what they represent. In other words, in the same way that God cares for nature, humans must nurture and maintain nature. Human beings play an important role in this process.

Second, God is the center of the cosmos. In this case, the center of the teaching is tawhid. The important aspect of monotheism is not only the affirmation of the Oneness of God but also the connection with all His creations. Knowing that God is the creator of the universe and the sole ruler of all creatures. One way to understand the concept of tawhid in relation to the environment, in the boarding schools Al-Faruq and Bahrul Hidayah, one of the exercises is through prayer. Prayer is a ritual that is obligatory in Islamic law; if you leave prayer, then the person will sin and later will be put into hell. Prayer is a bridge between man and God because before a person performs prayer, he must first ablute using water. The water used must be pure and clean; therefore, the environment must be kept clean.

Nasr sees the relationship between the diverse nature and God as one face with a thousand mirrors. God is one; it is just that the reflections are many, so the universe "contains" This means that when you want to perform the ritual of prayer, it contains three aspects: humans, nature, and God. To recognize God, one must go through nature. To describe the reality of the universe, Nasr then details the explanation of the pattern of the relationship between God, humans, and the universe, which he sees as a mutually encompassing relationship. This mutually encompassing relationship is a manifestation of the Reality of the Absolute Nature of Godhead. In the context of the reality of Godhead as described above, humans are then seen as a bridge between heaven and earth, an instrument that becomes the embodiment and crystallization of God's Will on earth. (Nasr, 1981). Therefore, every creature must be treated with the principle of tawhid or referring to its creator. Indeed, Allah did not create his creatures in vain; in fact, every creature he created has value and meaning. Moreover, Allah created everything *bilhaqq*—in truth and for truth.

Third, nature is theophany. Furthermore, to return world civilization to the sacred, Nasr (1981) offers a solution, which is to put nature as theophany, which means 'seeing God, ' in its form, which is reflected in the reflection of His forms of creation. This means that when humans destroy nature, they destroy God's creations. In the boarding schools Al-Faruq and Bahrul Hidayah, maintaining the environment is obligatory because it aims at the safety of human welfare and sustainability, even for the implementation of prayer rituals that require water for ablution.

The tradition of *pesantren salafiah* provides awareness to modern society that it needs to put back its understanding of the existence of self, nature, and God, and how the relationship between the three can take place in harmony. This has been uprooted so far. Seeing nature through the eyes of intellect is a perspective that does not see nature as a pattern of externalized and crude realities, but as a theatre in which divine attributes are embedded. Like thousands of mirrors depicting a beloved face, it is like theophany of a singular reality at the center of the human personality itself. To see nature as a theophany is to see the reflection of the presence in nature and its forms (Nasr, 2004). In short, God is the Center, while nature and human beings are manifestations of God's attributes. That is the essence of the teaching

of monotheism, where nature, humans, and God are combined in a holistic relationship. Through this framework, Nasr invites us to contemplate that human nature is an integral part of nature, whereas the universe reflects a divine power.

Conclusion

This study found several findings on environmental awareness from the perspective of *pesantrens salafi*, namely, *first*, humans as God's representatives (khalifah); therefore, humans must preserve nature. This is because nature is his entrustment. *Second*, God must be used as the center of the cosmos. In this case, it is the center of teaching (tawhid); all human actions must go to God. *Third*, in the boarding schools Al-Faruq and Bahrul Hidayah, preserving the environment is obligatory because it aims to ensure the safety, welfare, and sustainability of humans, even for the implementation of prayer rituals that require water to wash (*wudu*) and place nature as theophany.

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