

## Ecological View From The Perspective of Quranic Verses: Contesting the Idea of Religion and Environment

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### Abstract

This research aims to know the relation between religion and environment in a deep comprehensive understanding. How religion and environment in some extents they are too related. In Islam for example, concept of shari'a seemingly agreed and supported the idea of nature and animal conservation. But, in some extent they are contradictory. This contradictory discourse could be seen from any kinds of texts of religious scriptures in how they deal with preservation of nature and animal (killing animal). The role of religious text we may say "yes" that it deal and closely related how the ecological views are constructed. How it overcomes the natural degradation, pollutions for instance. But, religion also should be understood as an orientation of the cosmos and how actually our human existence has an important role to the world. In broadest sense, we understand that religion also means of how people know the limits of reality and how humans interact with their own environment. Religion often talk about the cosmological stories, systems and symbols, ritual practices, norms and ethics, the history, and the institutional structure that transmits the view where human beings as an integral part in the world—and has a sense of responsibility towards nature. This article use the analytical approach in analyzing the issue of religion and environment. Thus, the relation between Islamic law, Quranic verses and Shari'a are compatible in responding the issue of environment.

**Keywords:** Religion, Ecology, Quranic Verses, and Shari'a

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## 1. Introduction

As an introduction of this writing, we may clarify whether the issue of environment and religion is the discipline that need more evaluating and concern in it. This paper discusses the most essential issue regarding with the concept of ecology and religion from a deeper analysis. The writer wishes that the balance of nature can be achieved from any destrcutives attitudes from human itself. As muslim who belief in certain religious texts like *Quran* for example; there can be found in quranic verses about the preservation of nature and animal. This react influences in how Muslim capable in negotiating role by implementing the awareness of preserving environment. In this extent, the writer sees that the analysis in religious text regarding with environment issue is as an important part to be understood.

Recently, There are many worried about environmental degradation and pollutions existing in the world today which had been increasing significantly. The environmental degradation is a natural process, because of integration of nature and human life. Exactly, the environmental problem is caused by unrestrained of human consumptive behavior. Islam was underscored the relation system between human and nature since the first creation, that is called as "khalifah fi al-ardh". Restrained of consumptive behavior was explained and clarified by the commandment of God in Holy Quran or by Hadits how to treat the animals, all kind of plants, and surroundings.

Although we conscious that every religion has its own role in addressing the environmental damage, the least religious perspective on environmental variation can help identify the problem and solve it. Historian *Lynn White (1968) once wrote in The Historic Roots of our Ecologic Crisis*: "What do people do to the environment depend largely on what they think about their relationship with the environment". Here is the idea of religious doctrines which usually contains beliefs that could be able to drive the believers (*religious believer*) to do deal with environment. The doctrine of the relationship between humans and the environment which are described by religion usually will significantly influence the religious appreciation of the environment. In other words, with regard to the

preservation of the environment, religion is expected to answer the question: What is the relationship between humans and the environment, how the sacred texts talk about the environment and how religious values can encourage effective environmental ethics. For example, we see how the doctrine of Islam on the environment that can drive the people to mindfully trying to save the environment.

Natural law is already running start out of balance due to human action. Action against the exploitative of nature and disrupt natural ecosystems will lead to adapt itself to the way he was. Thus, any natural disasters befall in many Countries in the world, without exception Indonesia. For example, the global warming is struck the earth which can result in erratic weather in parts of the world. Hence, human interaction with nature must work in harmony and mutual benefit. The study of the process of mutual interaction between living and non-living beings with environment is called ecology. The word ecology was first introduced by the German biologist *Ernst Haeckel named in 1866*. Ecology has a very broad scope of the study, so it can be coupled with a variety of scientific studies or multidisciplinary. One area that is used as the object of ecology is human, human ecology later is born.

Basically, Ecology comes from the Greek: *oikos* which means *house or place to live* and *Logos* which means *science*, so in terms of language, ecology is the study of organisms in the house. Ecology generally is defined as the study or the study of the relationships of organisms or groups of organisms with their environment. The term was first introduced by a German biologist *Ernest Haeckel in 1866*. Ecology at the moment has a very wide scope but can be classified into several categories. According to the division of ecology, it can be categorized as: marine ecology and marine, freshwater ecology, terrestrial ecology and terrestrial, estuarine ecology and grassland ecology.

Various environmental problems were occur, especially in Indonesia lately, such as lack of clean water sources, either from the ground or from rivers. The pollution also caused by car exhaust and burning of forests, landslides, floods that—inundated paddy fields and residential areas even to the big city—lack even the extinction of animal populations—which is the destruction of the ozone layer filters sunlight into the earth, until the overflow problem of hot mud from the earth displacing life around.

Environmental damage seems to be a process that cannot be avoided due to the nature of human life and the environment interact. However, there should be an attempt to control the environmental impacts that have little impact on

the natural habitat. The theory of environment, in fact—has developed since the 18th century—due to human journey eventually have to deal with the problems caused by the rapid advancement of the science of environmental management knowledge, technology, and the industrial revolution in the 17th century.

However, modern practice for the conservation of nature (*nature conservation*) is still looking for an alternative form of the right. Natural environmental crisis that is happening today, is due to human error (*human error*) in response to the ecological problems. According to the historian, Lynn White, what is done by humans on the ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to what is around them. More pointedly said that human ecology is strongly influenced by beliefs about our nature and destiny, that is, by religion. White further argues that that the current ecological crisis does not end unless we find a new religion or a religion long we think again. What we do about ecology depend on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one.

Environmental damage seems to be a process that can not be avoided due to the nature of human life and the environments interact. However, there should be an attempt to control the environmental impacts that have a little impact on natural habitat in this universe. Environment Theory, in fact, it has developed since the 18th century, due to human journey eventually have to deal with the problems caused by the rapid advancement of the science of environmental management knowledge, technology, and the industrial revolution in the 17th century. However, modern practice for the conservation of nature (*nature conservation*) is still looking for an alternative form of the right. The natural environmental crisis which is happening today, among other things, is due to human error (*human error*) in response to ecological problems.<sup>1</sup>

More pointedly said that human ecology is strongly influenced by beliefs about our nature and destiny, that is, by religion.<sup>2</sup> Lynn White further argues that that the current ecological crisis does not end unless we find a new religion or a religion as long as we think again. What we do about ecology depend on our

<sup>1</sup> Ecology is the study of the interrelationships between living creatures with their environment. Word-ecological || introduced by Ernest Haeckel, German biologist in 1869. ||-Oikos means house or dwelling, and-logos' means study or studies. Thus, ecology is the study of home or dwelling of creatures. Source: Resosoedarmo S, 1985, page. 1

<sup>2</sup> White, Jr. L. Science, *The ahistorical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*, Vol. 155 (3767) 1967, hal. 1203. This article is very popular among environmentalists.

ideas about the “man nature relationship”. The more scientific and technological condition are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one (what we believe in).

In Islam for example, the idea about maintenance of environment has clearly found in everyday practical elements of its adherents. How human behave to deal with their own surroundings environment. Cited from hadith—as one of the Islamic religious text, repertoire of nature conservation and environmental elements are contained in the daily behavior which exemplified by Prophet Muhammad SAW. It approximately in fourteen centuries ago, including in the urban setting and allocation of natural resources genuine. Islam definitely speak about the boundaries which means to be *halal* and *haram*. For example Islam also known detail about unlawful region, the area which set aside to protect the resources so as not to be disturbed by anyone.<sup>3</sup> In Islamic concept, set area should not be disturbed and violated by whomever and use the rule of balancing ecosystems, restricting water flows, maintaining some public facilities and certain cities. In the *haram* area, public facilities such as wells (water reservoirs) must be protected from damage—whatever it is. Space for operation and defense of the well is also provided, including protecting the water that is not polluted. Prophet Muhammad provides a resting place for cattle as well as providing space for irrigation facilities.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, writer also interest in looking at some of the repertoire of Islam about the environment and conservation in a global review. One of the discussion is how the Muslim jurists (*fujaha*) in the early Middle Age has had fairly extensive insight establish Sharia—which then has very important implications for the conservation of nature and animal.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. Islam and Environment

In explaining the relationship between Islam and the environment, the public will immediately turn to the Qur'anic verses as the primary guide to religious Muslims. How Al-Quran speaks about the cosmos? In answering the question about the nature of human relationships, Normanul Haq (2001) mentions that—the Quran has clearly speak of three levels simultaneously: *metaphysics*, *naturalistic* and *human*. The third level of reality in the language of the Quran can not be

<sup>3</sup> Abdullah Omar Nasseef, *The Muslim Declaration of nature*, (Hindia: Gitanjali Publishing Hose, 1989), page. 24.

<sup>4</sup> Ziauddin Sardar, *Masa Depan Islam*, (Bandung: Pustaka Bandung, 1987), page. 240

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

separated and interrelated, between, revelation (God), nature and human. This relationship is critical and fundamental. Speaking about the idea of cosmological reconstruction of the Qur'an we can see that the historical-naturalistic closely related to transcendental eternal, and this means that there is no ontological separation between revelation and natural environment. In human psychological instinct, everything is drive to human of how humans behave towards the environment. Natural creation for human beings is regarded as a means to think (Al-Quran Surah 3: 190).

Thus, Quran emphasizes on the transcendent significance of nature, because nature can not explain the incident by itself. Nature in the Quran language is understood as a sign—that there is something outside of them, which points to a transcendent entity (Q-S 6:97-99).<sup>6</sup> So, nature is a symbol of God's existence, which means that God speaks to man through nature. If someone with a deeper analysis to see how the Qur'an speaks about the creation of the universe, according to Normanul Haq, there are at least three perspectives of natural characteristics: *First*, that the natural phenomenon has regularity, coherent and elegant balance (QS 27:88). *Second*, nature has no warranty for exists by itself, and *last*; Nature is regarded as the embodiment of God's love or in other words, God's love is manifested in the creation of the all universe.

With the doctrine of the close relationship between the creation of the transcendence of God, then Muslims consider that the balance of nature is a manifestation of God's mercy to man. Because nature is a sign of the reality of the transcendent and the proof of his affection, the human appreciation of nature is something that is unavoidable. Not the attitude of preserving the balance of nature or even to deliberately make mischief on earth means not appreciate the affection given by the transcendent and the Essence automatically mean innocent. The problem is, even though the doctrine held by every religion through their sacred text—for the preservation of nature, but sometimes human beings forget to practice it more. Here is a challenge for people who has faith to realize its belief how to unearth sacred values into real life in the community. The question then is how to increase religious awareness for nature conservation. Are not humans "Caliph" on earth right?

By considering the issue above, at least this paper contributes idea and discipline that the implementation of the nature conservation has been fully backed by religious doctrine that—sometimes people give a lot of their conception in interpreting the doctrines of the religion. Clearly, the natural explanation as

<sup>6</sup> Explained detail in Al-Quran 6:97-99.

something to be kept its sustainability is a blending of religious studies and ecology in the context of economic and human religious culture—that should refer to the religious texts and interpreted as a special relationship between nature and the environment. As this article will explain more in a descriptive study of Islamic law—and how ecological systems that exist today is being preserved by mankind for life continuity seen from quranic verses perspective.

### 3. Conservation (*Nature Protection*)

In Islam, the provisions regarding with the protection of nature, is included within the framework of the rules of *shari'a*.<sup>7</sup> Wildlife is included as the provision which generally known as *hima* in the rule of Islamic law. *Hima concept*, according to Omar Naseef, reserves are established solely for the conservation of wildlife and forest, from the core of the environmental legislation of Islam (*special area established for the protection of wildlife and forests, which are the core environmental laws of Islam*).<sup>8</sup> Thus, *hima* is an effort to protect the rights of indigenous natural resources. *Hima* established solely to preserve wildlife and forests. In the present concept, as also used in Indonesia, this is the same function of *hima* with the function of nature reserve (*cagar alam*).<sup>9</sup>

According to Prophet Mohammad, *hima* is the area around Medina as an effort to protect plants and other wildlife, as has been disclosed upfront. As Follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad A Caliph assigns too few *hima*. Caliph Umar Ibn Khattab, for example, set the *Hima Al-Syaraf* and *Hima al-Rabbah* which large enough near *Dariyah*. Caliph Uthman Ibn Affan, extending *Hima al-Rabbah* narrated that can accommodate 1,000 individual animals each year. The number of *Hima* specified in western Arabia has planted by grass since the beginning of Islam era, and it is considered by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as an example of the longest in the prudent management of grasslands in the world.<sup>10</sup>

The fact above provides an understanding of Islam, that since the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW has regard for the environment as one of the important support to all human life. Maintain the natural environment is a necessity in Islam, which means that maintaining the natural environment is worship. Shari 'a is a system of values; it is there to embody the inherent values

<sup>7</sup> Abdullah Omar Naseef, *The Muslim Declaration...*, page 124-125.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Ziauddin Sardar, *Masa Depan Islam...*, page. 240

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Page 241.

in the concepts of Islam, such as *Monotheism (tauhid)*, *caliphate*, *istishlah*, *halal* and *haram*. The main purpose of this system is to realize the universal common good for all God's creatures, including human welfare in the present and in the future (*the Hereafter*). The purpose of the universal common good is something which is typical of Islamic law and is an important implication of the concept of monotheism. Humans can obey the Creator of all life in a way that works for the common good of all beings universally.<sup>11</sup> These parameters can distinguish the behavior of Muslims to obey the rules, because if a rule is included in the elements of the *Shari'a* then it contains elements of worship. Keeping the natural environment is one of the pilgrimages (*worship manifestation to god*).

#### 4. The Animal Rights

Prophet Muhammad SAW has assured that wildlife and other natural resources have the right in Islam. This is exemplified by his treatment of animals, plants, and other natural resources. In the history life of Prophet Muhammad, It personally narrated that the Prophet Muhammad behaves very love for animal's world. The Prophet Muhammad prohibits the weighing animals (*like camels, sheep*) with a heavy load cargo. Prophet Muhammad ordered that riding an animal with good deeds behavior and the animal should be being in good health. Then Prophet Muhammad SAW tells people who happen to keep animals in order to maintain it properly. If the animal is going to eat (*killed to be eaten*), let him in good condition anyway, not in pain. Prophet Muhammad SAW prohibiting the killing of animals, but allow to kill the animals that are about to be consumed.<sup>12</sup>

Many things can be learned from the policies and the wisdom of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. It takes through hadith narrations regarding with living creatures. The Concern of Prophet Muhammad SAW with the nature conservation and the environment has indeed been included—because it carries treatise to make improvements in all areas (*ishlah*), and still relevant to be implemented by mankind in all ages. In Islam, animal rights are also protected. Actually, one characteristic of Islamic law is that all animals have legal rights that must be implemented by the state. Classical Islamic jurist, *Ibn Izzudin Abdis Salam*, states that the rights of animals to be one element of the *Shari'a*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Page, 237.

<sup>12</sup> Moenawar Cholil, *Kelengkapan Tarikh Nabi Muhammad SAW*, Jilid VIII, (Jakarta: PT Bulan Bintang, 1994), hal. 15

<sup>13</sup> Omar Naseef, *The Moslem Declaration...*, page 124.

Animal rights above, according *Izzudin Abdu Salam* is that human beings should provide food for them (animal). If the animal is old or sick resulting in no longer profitable to humans, human must not burden him beyond the ability of the animal, the animal should not be put together with everything that can hurt him, both derived from an animal of its own kind or other animal species, to gore or bite. Humans have to slaughter animals in a good way, should not be skinned or break the bones so that her body became cold and his life drifting.<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the formulation *Izzuddin Abdus Salam*, humans should not kill the baby animals in front of the animal, but had to separate them first. Humans should give comfort to the place of rest and drinking places their pets. Humans must put male and female animals together in mating season. Humans should not throw regarded animals as hunted animals, and should not be shooting them with anything that makes their bones broken, or destroy their bodies in any way that makes their meat unlawful to eat. Of such provisions, it is clear that good treatment to animals, both pets and wild animals, is emphasized in Islam, unless the animal is endangering human lives. For wild animals, their natural life should be maintained for their survival. Hunting and uncontrolled deforestation will certainly disturb and make the lives of the displaced wild animals, and even going extinct.<sup>15</sup>

At the present time, the use of animal power to help human nature is still very vital. In some parts of Indonesia, there are still many animals use for the benefit of human, such as buffalo or cattle for plowing. Horses, buffalo, or beef for transport services, and others. Similarly, a dwindling population of wild animals and even some already extinct because their habitat is disturbed or intentionally hunted for skins, tusks, or feathers. Several types of species (*animals*) have to be used as toys and locked eyes and human satisfaction. In addition, many animals are used for testing experimental drugs in medicine. Not infrequently these animals abused or neglected their rights to live. Though scientific evidence suggests that animals experience pain and stress, as well as what is perceived by humans. Similarly, the treatment picture of the modern human toward animal life is very poor. There are still many who do not realize that these animals have the right to be treated well, in fact they actually also have rights. Our responsibility to accept their rights of life is one obligation as a divine creator that human must keep the existence of environment. One of the solutions is by keeping well the existence of animal

<sup>14</sup> Othman B. Llewellyn, *Traditional Islamic Principles of Built Environment*, (Routledge: 2003), 208

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

rights in order to keep far from the extinction.

## 5. The Pattern of Human Consumption

In the Quran, as the main source of Islamic Shari'ah, Allah has clearly mentioned about the food that may be eaten and also which should not be eaten. It can be listened to, explained in Surat Al-Baqarah verse 172 and 173:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَاشْكُرُوا لِلَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيمَانَهُ تَعْبُدُونَ - ﴿١٧٢﴾  
إِنَّمَا حَرَمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أَهْلَلَ بِهِ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ فَمَنْ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ  
وَلَا عَادٍ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ - ﴿١٧٣﴾

*The Meaning: "O you, who believe, eat among goodly sustenance which We have given you and be grateful to Allah if it is really only in Him you worship. He has only forbidden you carrion, blood, pork, and animals (when slaughtered) called (name) except Allah. But whoever in urgent situations (to eat) when he was not wanted and never an (often) exceeds the limit, then there is no sin for him. Allah is forgiving, and most Merciful"*

In Islamic law, based on the above verse, and as applied in legal jurisprudence, legal provisions are also stipulated in maintaining human consumption behavior. Islamic law is very strict with practical legitimacy that have common effects on consumer behavior. If seen, the behavior of choosing good food and halal (*halalan thayyiban*) seen clearly correlated closely with the interests of the environment and ecosystem aspects. For example, within the framework of Islamic law, is forbidden eat any bird claws, like an eagle (eagle) and all clawed birds that eat carrion. Ecologists agree that *war birds claws and meat eaters is necessary to protect the ecosystem, because it reduces the rodent pest*. Condor bird scavengers in Africa is one of the top predators are very important to maintain the balance of African savanna ecosystems. Jurisprudence provision forbids consuming any animal fangs, such as lions, tigers, wolves, bears, cats, elephants, and others. *From the ecological aspect, the presence of these animals is necessary to balance the ecosystem*. If the tiger population is reduced due to human consumption, for example, the number of wild boar will increase.

Thus, Islamic law also forbids eating other animals such as pigs, dogs, wild animals and other prey animals, including animals that live in the water except a

fish. If the exploitation is done for human consumption is not controlled, it will surely destroy human life itself because sometimes the animals were not healthy to eat, and even cause disease and destroy the natural ecosystem. Shari'a important role as solutions to current human consumption behavior is an urgent matter. Many changes that occur in nature, including the extinction of several species of animals on earth due to hunting, trade (*both legal and illegal*),<sup>16</sup> the end is for human consumption, either directly or indirectly. Extinction of species could also be due to habitat loss because they have to compete and fight with human land.

Consumption patterns that have been established in Islam is a powerful legitimacy of Islamic teachings that are classified into *ubudiyah* affairs. Thus, obey will be rewarded. Allah SWT recommends that people eat good food-good, as His Word, among others, in Surat An-Nahl verse 114:

فَلْكُوا مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالٌ طَيْبًا وَّا شَكُرُوا بِنَعْمَتِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ إِيمَانَهُ تَعْبُدُونَ - ١١٤

*Meaning: So eat of the lawful and good of the sustenance which God has given to you, and celebrate the favors of Allah, if you worship only Him.*<sup>17</sup>

Based on this verse, Muslim jurists, through jurisprudence, establish certain animal's *halal* and *haram*. Thus, it would greatly help the determination as to which animals may be eaten and what should not be eaten by a Muslim. All forms of prohibition and permissibility in *fiqh* (*Islamic Jurisprudence*) was formulated by the jurists, as well as worship, is also having a strong mission to the preservation of nature and environment. In the current era, the concept of *halal* and *haram*, unconsciously a common view is the forerunner of modern society in directing consumers to consume environmentally friendly products via mechanism eco labels or green label (green label). Every food product labeled *halal* that can be connoted by a Muslim is safe to consume.

## 6. Conclusion

Islam is recognized by adherents as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. An Islamic rule about the ecosystem, which is sourced from the *Al-Quran and Hadith* verily is a mercy for human life and all species in nature. Habits and behavior of the Prophet in the maintenance environment (*plants and animals*) are examples of how to be

<sup>16</sup> The worried about Non-Trade animals freely raised to the International Convention on Trade of Endangered Flora and Fauna (*Convention International Trade of Endangered Species on CITES*).

<sup>17</sup> See Detail in *al-Quran Surah an-Nahl* verse: 114.

good with ecologiocal system and environment. It reflects a pattern as a good to build ecosystem maintenance. In short, Islam representative by *Islamic Sharia* was very care with the protection of animals in regarding with the preservation balance between human and nature. Human is the decision maker of where will our environments being (Khalifah fil arld).

In modern era, Muslim societies need to combining the quran as an exegesis message with ecological knowledge in build a better human beings. Sharia should be understood as way of life by Muslim majority. Besides, implementing the *Shari'a* rules as *mahdhah worship*—from ecological perspective Muslims can also understand the meaning of worship in relation to nature then—the balance of the ecosystem can created. However, The discussions with the environmental aspects of the Shari'ah has not been so under the spotlight in Indonesia. Though some obedience Muslims in choosing halal/lawful foods still be adhered by majority Muslims in this country. Based on the data above, one thing that needs attention is behavior of the majority Muslim community in Indonesia is crucial awake and preserve to balance of the ecosystem.

The relation between quranic verses and environment need more analytical to get away from contemporary problems of pollution etc in creating good sustainability in human's life. The balance of ecosystem is understood as achievement in creating human consciousness to get aware with the environmental issue sorrounding them. Human awareness is the key of how the quranic verses is understood to broadly response the ecological problems nowadays.

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