

## **Ecotheology In Promoting Environmental Sustainability: Conserving The Eco-Friendly Islamic Doctrine In Jambi Province**

**Abdul Halim, Muhammad Rafii, Edy Kusnadi**

UIN Sulthan Thaha Saifuddin Jambi

Email: [abdulhalim@uinjambi.ac.id](mailto:abdulhalim@uinjambi.ac.id), [Muhammad.rafi@uinjambi.ac.id](mailto:Muhammad.rafi@uinjambi.ac.id), [edykusnadi@uinjambi.ac.id](mailto:edykusnadi@uinjambi.ac.id)

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### **Abstract**

*Ecotheology is an important part of the modern century in the study of theology, the development of theological work is motivated by changes in human life in seeing things, such as the environment or nature. This paper seeks to sharpen eco-theological potential for environmental sustainability in Jambi province. Thus he encourages the preservation of eco-friendly Islamic doctrines through normative messages in addressing the position of nature for humans. This is emphasized in maintaining the environment as human attachment to nature, created in a balanced way, and the creation of nature for human life. This value is in line with the practice of the Jambi Malay Muslim community which has customary rules in maintaining the environment, land and forests. This spirit in customary law is a representation in the preservation of environmentally friendly Islamic teachings for the Jambi Malay Muslim community.*

**Keywords:** *Ecotheology; Environmental Sustainability; Environmentally Friendly; Islamic Doctrine*

### **Abstrak**

*Ekoteologi adalah bagian penting dari abad modern dalam studi teologi, pengembangan pekerjaan teologis didorong oleh perubahan dalam kehidupan manusia dalam melihat hal-hal, seperti lingkungan atau alam. Dokumen ini bertujuan untuk mengasah potensi ekologi-teologis untuk keberlanjutan lingkungan di Provinsi Jambi. Dengan demikian ia mendorong pelestarian doktrin Islam yang ramah lingkungan melalui pesan normatif dalam menangani posisi alam bagi manusia. Hal ini ditekankan dalam mempertabankan lingkungan sebagai keterikatan manusia terhadap alam, diciptakan dengan cara yang seimbang, dan penciptaan alam untuk kehidupan manusia. Nilai ini sesuai dengan praktik komunitas Muslim Jambi Malaysia yang memiliki aturan kebiasaan dalam menjaga lingkungan, tanah dan butan. Rob ini dalam bukum kebiasaan adalah representasi dalam konservasi ajaran Islam ramah lingkungan bagi komunitas Muslim Jambi Malaysia.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Doktrin Islam; Ekoteologi; Keberlanjutan Lingkungan; Ramah Lingkungan*

### **Introduction**

Environmental and natural issues have become a discussion that never ends in human life. From philosophical matters to practice in human life which has actually become an integral part of human survival. Several studies on the environment and nature both in a theological-philosophical as well as practical and ethical framework can be found in a number of comments that can be used as reference material in the future.

The environment is one of the many critical issues that arise as a challenge for the survival of living things. According to Islam all creation belongs to Allah. Animals and plants are human partners in the universe. Earth, sky, water and air are for human food. The role of humans on this planet is that of guardians. Earth is a temporary residence for him. He will be rewarded or punished in the afterlife according to his actions towards God's creation. Humans as an integral part of nature have the right to use natural resources, but may not disturb the balance of the environment as a whole. A disturbed natural balance will eventually end in self-destruction.<sup>1</sup>

Based on ethical-theological studies, it can be concluded that humans are managers of nature as well as preservers of nature. With this understanding, the environment that has been entrusted to

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<sup>1</sup>Haleema Sadia Mian and A Ur Rahman, "Environmental Ethics of Islam," *Journal of Culture, Society and Development* 1 (2013): 69–74, [https://hazaraislamicus.hu.edu.pk/public/uploads/2013/Issue\\_2/09-environmental-ethics-of-islam-1.pdf](https://hazaraislamicus.hu.edu.pk/public/uploads/2013/Issue_2/09-environmental-ethics-of-islam-1.pdf).

humans needs to be managed wisely, responsibly and as productively as possible for the benefit and continuity of future generations.<sup>2</sup> This view then strengthens the theological-practical argument that nature is not an object that does not move and has an impact. However, it can give birth to various problems, such as natural disasters, natural damage, to the destruction of the universe.

One of the studies that has developed in discussing environmental issues is ecotheology or environmental theology. Environmental theology is a science that discusses the relationship between religion and nature, which is primarily related to environmental issues. Environmental theology is a way to bring God into an ecological aspect. This conception arose as a response to the issue of environmental crises that had occurred since the Middle Ages.<sup>3</sup> From a theological perspective, the environmental crisis is what is happening right now and cannot be separated from human behavior which, consciously or not, has damaged the earth's ecosystem so that its balance is threatened.

The Islamic approach to the environment is holistic and firm. The verses of the Koran that explain nature and natural phenomena are more numerous than the verses that deal with commandments and sacraments.<sup>4</sup> The centrality of the environment in sharia and Islamic teachings is represented in the correct order and forbidding the wrong, showing an affirmative sustainability agenda. Thus this paper seeks to portray the potential of environmental theology in preserving the spirit of environmentally friendly Islam.

## Method

This research uses literature study. Researchers analyzed eco-theological issues in the customary law of the Jambi people. This is based on the adage "adat bersendi syara', syara' bersendi Kitabullah" which animates all customary rules. This study aims to present eco-theological aspirations in various customary regulations covering land and forest issues. Data collection was carried out by reading the customary law of the Jambi Malay community, sorting and mapping according to the research topic. The data obtained were analyzed descriptively-constructively to obtain the content of the environmentally friendly Islamic spirit in customary regulations carried out by the Jambi Malay community in their daily lives.

## Discussion

Environmental issues that are increasing in the view of Muslims continue to be the concern of Muslims. In Indonesia, for example, the two largest Muslim organizations viz Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah put environmental issues under serious study. NU has published a book entitled "Fikih Energi Terbarukan: Pandangan dan Respons Islam atas Pembangkit Listrik Tenaga Surya (PLTS)" and "Fiqih Penanggulangan Sampah Plastik". The first book contains an explanation of the destruction of nature that causes climate change and global warming. Meanwhile, the second book reminds people that the dangers of plastic waste pollution are getting more urgent, NU urged the government to make stronger efforts to suppress and control the rate of plastic waste pollution in Indonesia.

Meanwhile Muhammadiyah cooperates with the Ministry of Environment to publish a book entitled "Teologi Lingkungan (Etika Pengelolaan Lingkungan dalam Perspektif Islam)". This book emphasizes that the concept of environmental theology was introduced as an effort to save the

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<sup>2</sup>Kalis Stevanus, "Pelestarian Alam Sebagai Perwujudan Mandat Pembangunan: Suatu Kajian Etis-Teologis," *KURIOS (Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen)* 5, no. 2 (2019): 94–108, <https://sttpb.ac.id/e-journal/index.php/kurios/article/view/107/0>.

<sup>3</sup>M Maftukhin, "Teologi Lingkungan Perspektif Seyyed Hossein Nasr," *Dinamika Penelitian: Media Komunikasi Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 16, no. 2 (2016): 337, <https://ejournal.uinsatu.ac.id/index.php/dinamika/article/view/216>.

<sup>4</sup>Riham R. Rizk, "Islamic Environmental Ethics," *Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research* 5, no. 2 (2014): 194–204, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JIABR-09-2012-0060/full/html>.

environment through a religious values approach. This concept reminds us that Islam sees the environment as an inseparable part of faith in Allah. Human treatment of nature shows one's morals and faith. Thus protecting the environment is an obligation as is the obligation of worship which has social nuances in Islam.

The environmental crisis has become a global issue and takes forms in various fields. This includes physical crises such as those of water, earth, air, and climate, as well as biological environmental crises such as the extinction of valuable endangered plants and animals. The root of the problem could be related to human economic needs. This economic activity as the main pillar of development which to a certain extent turns out to be a priority for the state, causes damage and lacks control, and its defiance is ignored.<sup>5</sup>

Observing the facts above, it is clear that the current environmental crisis demands awareness and concern from all elements of society, which are not only limited to environmental activists but also all members of society such as the general public, academics, scholars, and the government.

### **Ecotheological Spirit towards Environmental Sustainability**

In this discussion, theology is understood as religious teachings related to the existence or existence of God. The free meaning of theology can be understood as an effort to "present" God in human activity. Practically, theology becomes a normative guide for humans in dealing with nature and its environment. The relationship between humans and the natural environment has been confirmed by the Quran and Hadith, which basically contain the message; relationship of worship and faith, sustainable use, care for all creatures.<sup>6</sup>

Ecotheology is a bound relationship between the theological perspectives contained in religious teachings and ecology which specifically talks about nature. With the continuity of life in accordance with theology, all aspects of life will naturally continue to be maintained. Therefore, humans occupy an important position in maintaining environmental sustainability and balance for the survival of humans and other living things. Environmental preservation means making efforts to utilize, develop, maintain, restore, monitor and control the environment. Because environmental preservation has a foundation of responsibility, sustainability and benefits that aim to produce sustainable environmental management.

The scope of ecotheology relates to efforts to manage, care for and preserve the environment by humans as a form of "environmental responsibility" to God and as caretakers and prospers of the earth. Buya Hamka builds a paradigm and is environmentally sound according to eco-theological views. In interpreting verses about the environment, it appears that Hamka is trying to respond to environmental damage by offering efforts to preserve the environment through a balance between human rights and obligations towards nature and respect for human rights based on the scriptures. It does this by basing every human activity on the following paradigm:<sup>7</sup>

- 1) Recognizing the natural environment to know God;
- 2) Environment/nature as an intermediary to get closer to God;
- 3) Humans play a role in preserving nature;
- 4) Utilizing Natural Resources on the basis of faith in Allah; as well as

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<sup>5</sup>Nafisah Nafisah, "Environmental Theology In Islam And Christianity (A Study of the Thoughts of Mujiyono Abdillah and Robert P. Borrong)," *Analisa: Journal of Social Science and Religion* 3, no. 1 (2018): 41–58, <https://journal.blasemarang.id/index.php/analisa/article/view/605>.

<sup>6</sup>Ilyas Asaad, *Teologi Lingkungan (Etika Pengelolaan Lingkungan Dalam Perspektif Islam)* (Jakarta: Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup Dan Majelis Lingkungan Hidup Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2011), 8.

<sup>7</sup>Eko Zulfikar and Nadia Azkiya, "Eco-Theology in Tafsir Al-Azhar: Hamka's Efforts in Building a Paradigm and Environmental Awareness," in *Proceeding International Conference on Quranic Studies*, vol. 1 (Kudus: IAIN Kudus, 2023), <http://proceeding.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/ICQS/article/view/422>.

## 5) Managing vacant land as utilization of natural resources.

Nature in Islamic doctrine is a verse as well as a manifestation of the form of Allah. The Koran is known as the word of God which is a qauliyah verse, so nature is believed to be a kauniyah verse that exists in the universe. Ecological unity is a creature that always glorifies God. In the Qur'an there are many things about nature that glorify Allah.

In the view of Islam, nature has never been positioned as an inanimate object that can be traded and utilized like objects in general. If nature is damaged ecologically, physically or socially, then it will have an impact on other damage, poverty, conflict, loss of biodiversity, and so on. Ontologically nature is not merely an object, but it is a living being and is beneficial to the lives of other creatures. This is the basis of the Islamic perspective on the existence of nature.<sup>8</sup>

The Quran confirms the theological promise that the earth will be inherited by the righteous. This statement is something that is imperative, so that the earth is managed and empowered with piety, not depravity and human greed. The Koran mentions that natural management cannot be separated from tawhid, balanced, and economical (not exploitative) values. God commands to prosper the earth, not only to dig and enjoy the results, but to help maintain its balance. Therefore, the Quran forbids "destruction of the earth" (ifsad). The destruction in question is destroying the orderly divine order, both theological and cosmic order.<sup>9</sup>

A search of various Islamic texts (especially the Koran) reveals that the position of humans as caliphs on earth is not unconditional to give vent to their desires for nature. Humans are created with various advantages that enable him to become caliph, but that position is given by God to humans complete with all the tasks given. This task makes the concept of a caliph on earth not support exploitative anthropocentrism towards nature.<sup>10</sup>

The environment where humans live is a necessity to maintain its sustainability. Sustainability in Islamic studies can be interpreted by the expression maintenance, namely *hifzhu'l bi'ah*. In the Quran the urgency of environmental sustainability with maintenance is recorded in several matters;<sup>11</sup> 1) Human dependence on nature, 2) Everything is created in balance, 3) Everything in nature is for the benefit of humans, 4) Nature as a source of sustenance or human life.

The above statement emphasizes that humans as creatures who manage nature must consider the continuation or impact of their various actions on nature. Some of these exigencies imply that humans, nature, and God occupy the same relationship. Humans cannot arbitrarily treat nature as a second-class creature, because humans can live with their dependence and attachment to nature.

Destruction of nature is a "manifestation" of disbelief. The manifestation is meant because in several verses of the Koran, the term *fasaad* is used as an indirect indication of disbelief. The Qur'an clearly mentions the existence of disbelief if one's opinion that nature was created in vain, because this is related to the denial of the lordship of Allah. In fact, this assumption can have broad implications, namely the loss of awareness of moral obligations and the loss of theological beliefs.<sup>12</sup> Environmental issues based on the perspective of the Koran are efforts to interpret Islamic teachings and the theology of environmental preservation is a necessity.

Ecotheology should be the foundation for knowledge developed from the Qur'an and Hadith, philosophical knowledge such as faith and practical knowledge such as *fiqh*. Theology is indeed the

<sup>8</sup>Ahmad Nashih Luthfi, *Membangun Bersama Rumah Agraria* (Bantul: Baitul Hikmah, Sajogyo Institute, dan Magnum Pustaka Utama, 2019), 2.

<sup>9</sup>Wardani Dan Mulyani, "Eko-Teologi Al-Quran: Sebuah Kajian Tafsir Al-Quran Dengan Pendekatan Tematik," *Jurnal Ilmu Ushuluddin* 12, no. 2 (2011): 187.

<sup>10</sup>Ahmad Khoiril Fata, "Teologi Lingkungan Hidup Dalam Perspektif Islam," *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 15, no. 2 (2014): 131–47, <https://ejournal.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/ululalbab/article/view/2666>.

<sup>11</sup>Tim Penulis, *Pelestarian Lingkungan Hidup* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an Kemenag RI, 2009), 12.

<sup>12</sup>Mulyani, "Eko-Teologi Al-Quran: Sebuah Kajian Tafsir Al-Quran Dengan Pendekatan Tematik," 188.

basis for fiqh. Therefore, the theological teachings in the sources of Islamic teachings regarding environmental preservation need to get a large portion of matters related to Muslims such as the environment. Because, in general, the jurisprudence studied and taught focuses on religious jurisprudence, even though environmental issues originating from Islamic teachings can be developed.

One of the causes of the destruction of the universe is the transcendental paradigm which assumes that conservation is not emphasized by Islam. Through the conservation paradigm; ecotheology, environmental philosophy, and eco-sufism, in exploiting the universe, humans must balance three aspects; al-intifa', al-i'tibar, and al-ishlah.<sup>13</sup> These three environmental ethics not only investigate how humans behave towards the universe, but also maintain relationships between beings in this universe, between humans and humans, humans and all other creatures.

### **Expression of Eco-Friendly Muslim Community in Jambi**

The Malay people have a high civilization in maintaining an order of cultural values concerning socio-economic, political, religious, environmental, artistic, technological and other aspects. These values are contained in the local wisdom of the Malay people. The inherent characteristics of local wisdom are dynamic, sustainable and acceptable to the community.

Approximately 82.3% of the area of Jambi Province consists of forest areas. These forests are divided into: 1) protected forests and nature reserves; 2) reserve forest, this forest is reserved for production or clearing of agricultural areas; and 3) secondary forest and grasslands.<sup>14</sup> This division is to limit and differentiate areas or nature that can be managed by the community or not. In general, these issues are regulated in law or customary rules.

In the context of environmental wisdom, the core of Malay culture is the concept of customary land. Customary land is land or forest space that is regulated in such a way by indigenous peoples that is useful for carrying out the life system of the Malay people. It is on this customary land that the division of the forest is regulated according to the existing tribes, gardens and original sources. The forbidden forest is a manifestation of part of the customary land. It also includes cultural aspects related to the production, distribution and consumption of food. Therefore, every cultural core is always related to ecosystems, economics, and social structures.

Customary law is law that is not written or determined like other laws originating from the Western (Colonial) world such as Criminal Law, Civil Law, Commercial Law and so on. Even though this customary law is not written, it has great power and influence in society when compared to the written or codified laws.

But it is better if customary law is also called "original law", it is born from below or from the community which is of course also in accordance with the interests and beliefs of the indigenous people. Therefore, customary law is not standard, it can be changed by the community through deliberations.<sup>15</sup> Customary law that cannot be replaced is customary law derived from Islamic shari'ah. This reinforces the slogan of the Jambi Malay community "adat bersendi syara', syara' bersendi kitabullah, syara' mengato adat memakai".

Wisdom in preserving Malay customary lands is represented in social values, customary norms, environmental ethics, belief systems, traditional spatial planning patterns, simple environmentally friendly equipment and technology. The existence of customary land has a positive impact on the Malay community with nature and the environment that originates from religious values, customs,

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<sup>13</sup>Abd Aziz, "Konservasi Alam Dalam Perspektif Etika Islam," *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 19, no. 2 (2014): 304–21, <https://e-journal.metrouniv.ac.id/index.php/akademika/article/view/417>.

<sup>14</sup>Hartono Margono, Mujilan, and J.R. Chaniago, *Sejarah Sosial Jambi: Jambi Sebagai Kota Dagang* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1984), 11.

<sup>15</sup>Syahrial De Saputra, *Peranan Lembaga Adat Melayu Bangko, Provinsi Jambi* (Tanjung Pinang: Departemen Kebudayaan dan Pariwisata Balai Pelestarian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, 2008).

ancestral advice or local culture. The values contained in the customary land system have the function of environmental wisdom built naturally in a community to adapt to the surrounding environment.<sup>16</sup>

Regarding land law, besides being subject to the Basic Religious Law, they still adhere to customary law. As has happened in the case of inheritance, resolved in the Banding Court to the High Court and Cassation to the Supreme Court, the result was that many decisions of the District Court and High Court were annulled because they were not in accordance with local customary law.

One of the Jambi Malay customary rules is “Siur Bakar”. Siur means lighting a torch (fire) burning houses, gardens, fields or burning the country with a torch. Bakar namely deliberately burning houses, buildings, fields, gardens and so on until they are all gone. One of the reasons for this legal arrangement is that it is environmentally friendly, so that burning does not have a negative impact on community agriculture or create an unhealthy climate.

Furthermore, in the Nan Duo Belas Law, as explained earlier, the Nan Duo Belas Law also regulates homeland, forests, agriculture, livestock and so on, as described in the seloko adat as follows:

*Hutan lepeh rimbo tenang*

*Umo berkandang siang, ternak berkandang malam*

*Kerimbo bebungo kayu (pancung alas) ke ayik bebungo pasir*

*Ke tambang bebungo emeh*

The meaning of the four verses is: Concerning the forest there are rules, where is owned land and customary land and loose forest belongs to the king. *Umo berkandang siang, ternak berkandang malam*, meaning that every person who farms and owns a rice field must take care of his farm, whether it is an electric fence or guarded every night or day. Likewise those who have livestock are regulated to confine all their livestock at night and may not wander into the middle of the village or residential areas.

In the case of making cages for livestock or agricultural owners, they must comply with the provisions stipulated in adat, namely: *unja empat sedepo, pengapit bulu, pengebat rotan getah, belah empat tahan injak tanah ugah*. In line with the verse above, that each party, both farmers and breeders, has their own duties and obligations towards someone's property. This is to maintain the unity and integrity of fellow citizens, and avoid disputes and quarrels.

Traditional seloko as part of Jambi Malay customs and culture, is a valuable legacy that should be preserved and actualized in people's daily lives.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the philosophy contained in it is ethical, moral and moral values which apart from being traditional and cultural values, are religious and spiritual values that should be part of the norms of people's lives.<sup>18</sup>

Substantially the various rules contained in the Jambi Malay traditional seloko contain various messages of guarding, maintaining, and restoring various agriculture, forests, and the community's environment. This is a reminder that customary rules animate Islamic messages regarding security and care for the environment or nature.

The argument that can be put forward is that every customary rule that is discussed always refers to and returns to Islamic law. Islam is the inspiration for various community arrangements in managing the environment. This confirms that Islam, which contains eco-friendly doctrines, is relevant for infiltration into various cultures and customary rules of society.

Because it is undeniable, sometimes some Malay people are more obedient to the customary rules put forward by traditional leaders, traditional leaders represent someone who is fair, wise, and

<sup>16</sup>Husni Thamrin, “Marjinalisasi Tanah Adat Dan Kearifan Lingkungan Orang Melayu,” *Sosial Budaya* 11, no. 1 (2014): 19–33, <https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/SosialBudaya/article/view/824>.

<sup>17</sup>Supian Ramli, “Filosofi Dan Aktualisasi Seloko Adat Di Bumi Tanah Pilih Pusako Betuah Kota Jambi,” *Titian: Jurnal Ilmu Humaniora* 2, no. 1 (2018): 1–28, <https://mail.online-journal.unja.ac.id/titian/article/view/5213>.

<sup>18</sup>Muhammad Rafi'i, *Islam Nusantara Perspektif Abdurrahman Wabid: Pemikiran Dan Epistemologinya* (CV Literasi Nusantara Abadi, 2021).

broad-minded. Therefore, traditional leaders continue to serve as role models for some communities in demanding that they address various issues, including the environment.

### Conclusion

Ecotheology as a concept and discourse on the development of Islamic studies in the field of theology and Islamic teachings shows the relevance and influence of Islamic teachings to various changes in the world. Islam, which contains transcendent doctrines regarding the relationship between humans and nature, reinforces that Islam places every creation of God in the same position. This confirms that the relationship between humans and nature or the environment is a discussion that continues to strengthen human existence on the one hand and nature on the other. Jambi people participate in preserving environmentally friendly Islamic teachings in regulations or customary law. This has great potential because humans will be bound by customary rules that are produced continuously based on Islamic values. This has been hereditary among the Jambi Malay Muslim community. As with culture in general, customary rules also follow and can change with the development and changing times. Islam, as many people have concluded, is a trend and standard for Malay society in deciding every social problem, individually or in groups.

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