

ISLAMIC ECOTHEOLOGY STUDIES: AN EXPRESSION OF THE HARMONY OF THE COASTAL COMMUNITY OF KONDANG MERAK TOWARDS NATURE

Zainur Rofiq Hadiyatullah

State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang
rofiqzainur2904@gmail.com

Umami Ulfatus Syahriyah

Raden Rahmat Islamic University Malang
Umami210121@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The ecological crisis has become a crucial discourse, because there has been massive pollution, deforestation, and global warming. Of course, Islam as a religion that is rahmatan lil alamin does not only provide mercy for humans but all of nature, including the environment. In this case, humans as creatures who get the mandate as khalifah fil ardh should strive for all forms of activities that preserve the environment. This research departs from the natural beauty that is always maintained at Kondang Merak Beach and this is inseparable from the harmonious relationship between the community built towards nature. So this research aims to examine the concept of Islamic ecotheology embodied by the coastal community of Kondang Merak Beach through various activities so as to realize a form of harmonization with nature. This research uses a qualitative method with an analytical descriptive approach. Data collection was conducted through field observations, in-depth interviews with local communities, especially fishermen, and documentation. Direct observation was conducted to understand the natural conditions at Kondang Merak Beach, while in-depth interviews explored the views of the community regarding the role of ecotheology in their daily activities. The results showed that the Kondang Merak coastal community expresses a harmonious relationship with nature through environmentally friendly seafood collection activities, mangrove planting, coral reef planting, and the tradition of picking the sea / sea alms. These efforts are based on individual awareness of responsibility as a khalifah on earth. This awareness forms a collective habit in preserving the environment while strengthening the value of community spirituality. Thus, this study shows that environmental management based on Islamic ecotheological values can strengthen the harmonious relationship between humans, nature and God.

Keywords: Islamic Ecotheology, Kondang Merak, Harmony with Nature

ABSTRAK

Krisis ekologi menjadi wacana yang krusial, pasalnya telah terjadi pencemaran, deforestasi, dan pemanasan global secara besar-besaran. Tentunya Islam sebagai agama yang rahmatan lil alamin tak hanya memberikan rahmat bagi manusia saja melainkan seluruh alam, termasuk lingkungan. Dalam hal ini manusia sebagai makhluk yang mendapatkan mandat sebagai khalifah fil ardh sudah sepatutnya untuk mengupayakan segala bentuk kegiatan yang melestarikan lingkungan. Penelitian ini berangkat dari keindahan alam yang senantiasa terjaga di Pantai Kondang Merak dan hal ini tak terlepas dari hubungan harmonis antara masyarakat yang dibangun terhadap alam. Sehingga penelitian ini bertujuan

untuk mengkaji konsep ekoteologi Islam yang diwujudkan oleh masyarakat pesisir Pantai Kondang Merak melalui berbagai kegiatan sehingga mewujudkan bentuk harmonisasi dengan alam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif analitis. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi lapangan, interview mendalam dengan masyarakat setempat, khususnya nelayan, dan dokumentasi. Observasi langsung dilakukan untuk memahami kondisi alam di Pantai Kondang Merak, sementara interview mendalam mengeksplorasi pandangan masyarakat terkait peran ekoteologi dalam aktivitas sehari-hari mereka. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat pesisir pantai Kondang Merak mengekspresikan hubungan yang harmonis terhadap alam melalui kegiatan pengambilan hasil laut yang ramah lingkungan, penanaman mangrove, penanaman terumbu karang, serta tradisi petik laut/sedekah laut. Upaya tersebut didasari oleh kesadaran individu akan tanggung jawab sebagai khalifah di bumi. Kesadaran ini membentuk kebiasaan kolektif dalam menjaga kelestarian lingkungan sekaligus memperkuat nilai spiritualitas masyarakat. Dengan demikian studi ini menunjukkan bahwa pengelolaan lingkungan berbasis nilai-nilai ekoteologi Islam dapat memperkuat hubungan harmonis antara manusia, alam, dan Tuhan.

Kata Kunci: Ekoteologi Islam, Kondang Merak, Keharmonisan terhadap Alam

INTRODUCTION

The environmental crisis is one of the most pressing global challenges of this century. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and increasing pollution are aspects of the environmental crisis that impact ecosystem health and the quality of human life. The ongoing Industry 4.0 not only brings positive impacts, but also negative ones, such as air, water, and soil pollution, as well as the accumulation of waste that damages the balance of the ecosystem.¹ The last two years have seen rapid global warming, which is why the temperature increase is more than double what it was before the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century. According to Rick Spinrad, Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), this problem is due to human activities, especially the burning of fossil fuels for transportation and power generation as well as cement manufacturing, deforestation, and agriculture.²

Indonesia is one of the countries that has extraordinary natural wealth and potential. However, the reality is that more than 100,000 square miles of forests in Indonesia have been deforested. So that this problem is also the cause of increased carbon dioxide gas emission.³ In addition, deforestation also causes accelerated global warming. As

¹ Judit Oláh et al., "Impact of Industry 4.0 on Environmental Sustainability," *Sustainability* 12, no. 11 (2020): 4674.

² Deena Robinson, "15 Biggest Environmental Problems of 2024," *Eart.Org*, last modified 2024, accessed January 3, 2024, <https://earth.org/the-biggest-environmental-problems-of-our-lifetime/>.

³ Herpita Wahyuni and Suranto Suranto, "Dampak Deforestasi Hutan Skala Besar Terhadap Pemanasan Global Di Indonesia," *JIIP: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pemerintahan* 6, no. 1 (2021): 148–162.

forest areas are depleted, nature's ability to absorb carbon is reduced, leading to extreme climate change.⁴

Besides having vast forests, Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world with more than 17,000 islands stretching from Sabang to Merauke. These coastal treasures not only offer stunning natural scenery, but also serve as important habitats for biodiversity. In addition, Indonesia's coasts support the economy through fisheries and tourism, providing livelihoods for millions of coastal communities.⁵ Unfortunately, this tremendous potential faces various challenges, such as environmental pollution due to plastic waste and other waste, which threatens the sustainability of the coastal ecosystem and the welfare of the community.⁶

Humans are creatures created to utilize all the potential that exists in nature. In Islam, humans have a responsibility as caliphs on earth, one of whose main tasks is to protect the environment so that it remains sustainable for future generations. Unfortunately, due to human greed and negligence in managing nature, the environment has suffered significant damage. The failure of humans to protect nature stems from the mindset of humans themselves. A materialistic mindset that creates a greedy character and views nature as a material that is only exploited for its own benefit without realizing that there is a spiritual dimension of nature that must be respected and maintained.⁷

This phenomenon can have serious implications, where the great natural potential may no longer be enjoyed by the next generation, who only inherit a degraded environment. This is in line with Allah's words in Surah Ar-Rum verse 41:

*"There is corruption on land and in the sea because of the deeds of men, so that Allah may taste to them some of the consequences of their deeds. May they return (to the right path)"*⁸

The quotation of the verse provides an understanding that humans as caliphs are leaders who are able to bring significant changes. In the hands of a wise leader, the nature around us will be maintained and preserved, but also vice versa if the leader is greedy and tyrannical, then nature will experience damage and even experience disasters that can harm humanity. Quraish Sihab explains that humans are very suitable to be caliphs because they have adequate facilities, such as physical power, thinking power,

⁴ Clearestha Nakita and Fatma Ulfatun Najicha, "Pengaruh Deforestasi Dan Upaya Menjaga Kelestarian Hutan Di Indonesia," *Ius Civile: Refleksi Penegakan Hukum dan Keadilan* 6, no. 1 (2022): 92–103.

⁵ Mukhamad Fredy Arianto, "Potensi Wilayah Pesisir Di Negara Indonesia," *Jurnal Geografi* 10, no. 1 (2020): 204–215.

⁶ Maria Fatima, "Identifikasi Pencemaran Di Daerah Pesisir Pantai Tanjung Pinggir Batam: Identifikasi Pencemaran Di Daerah Pesisir Pantai Tanjung Pinggir Batam," *Altasia Jurnal Pariwisata Indonesia* 4, no. 1 (2022): 8–17.

⁷ Badru Tamam, "Ekoteologi Dalam Tafsir Kontemporer" (2021) hal 2.

⁸ Departemen Agama RI, "Al-Quran Dan Terjemahannya," *Semarang: CV. Al-Waah* (2004).

heart power and the ability to live.⁹ If these four potentials are well honed, then humans will have an extraordinary ability to do big and crucial things such as preserving nature. With these four powers, humans, especially Muslims, should be the pioneers in shaping a character that loves and preserves nature as a whole.

The existence of Islam as a religion of *rahmatan lil alamin*, which is a religion full of compassion, love and peace that leads to the goal of benefit for humans. As Allah says in QS. Al-Anbiya verse 108: *"And We did not send you (Muhammad) but to (be) a mercy for all the worlds"*.¹⁰ Zaid Al-Iyash explained that *rahmatan lil alamin* is the concept and culture of love and compassion brought by the Prophet Muhammad Saw. when humans are in the midst of hatred and hostility.¹¹

Researchers from various disciplines are trying to unravel the root causes of environmental damage. Similar efforts are also made by Muslim scholars, especially Islamic theologians, who try to overcome the mindset that lacks environmental care by providing a comprehensive understanding of the importance of protecting the environment, based on the analysis of the verses of the Qur'an and Hadith.¹² According to Hanafi, Islamic theology not only discusses ideology and religious doctrine both classical and contemporary, but Islamic theology also discusses ideological revolutions to respond to contemporary problems such as natural environmental problems and others.¹³ In contemporary theological studies, a new study has emerged that connects Islamic theology or kalam science with environmental ecology, so that the idea of Islamic ecotheology emerges.

This research discusses the efforts of the Kondang Merak coastal community in realizing a harmonious relationship with nature. Then the researcher dissects it in the perspective of Islamic ecotheology.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative field research method with descriptive analytical technique. The research location is Kondang Merak Beach, Sumberbening Village, Bantur District, Malang Regency. The research was conducted on July 13, 2024 and further research was conducted in the form of interviews on November 01, 2024. The data was collected through observation, interviews, and

⁹ M Quraish Shihab, *Khilafah: Peran Manusia Di Bumi* (Lentera Hati, 2020) hal 21.

¹⁰ RI, "Al-Quran Dan Terjemahannya."

¹¹ Khairan Muhammad Arif and Islam Moderasi, "Tela 'ah Komprehensif Pemikiran Wasathiyah Islam, Pespaktif Al-Qur 'an Dan As Sunnah," *Menuju Islam Rahmatan Li Al-Alamin*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Ikadi, 2020) (2020).

¹² Tamam, "Ekoteologi Dalam Tafsir Kontemporer."

¹³ FARKHAN D W I RAHMADANI and Tsalis Muttaqin, "ANALISIS BUKU 'AGAMA RAMAH LINGKUNGAN PERSPEKTIF ALQUR'AN' KARYA MUJIYONO ABDILLAH (Upaya Mengintegrasikan Ayat-Ayat Al-Qur'an Tentang Lingkungan Hidup Dengan Sains)" (UIN RADEN MAS SAID, 2023).

documentation. Observation was done directly by observing the nature of Kondang Merak beach. Interviews were conducted in depth with residents and representatives of Kondang Merak fishermen. Documentation is done by reading literature related to the theme discussed, namely related to Islamic ecotheology and Kondang Merak Beach.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Kondang Merak Beach



Picture 1: Kondang Merak Beach, Sumberbening, Bantur
(Sumber : <https://www.timenews.co.id>)

Kondang Merak Beach is a beach located in Sumberbening Village, Bantur District, Malang Regency. Kondang Merak beach area is located in the western part of Balekambang Beach. To enter this beach area, visitors must pass through a protected forest area.

Based on the purpose, visitors who come not only want to enjoy the beautiful natural scenery but there are students from junior high school to college who want to do practicum. The practicum can be in the form of observing plant species that grow around the beach and some do nature conservation.¹⁴

This beach has its own charm because it still presents a beautiful and cool view, the beach water looks clean without any scattered garbage. This cannot be separated from public awareness of environmental cleanliness.

In addition to having a beautiful view, this beach also has a complete coastal ecosystem, namely around the coastal area there are still thriving mangrove forests, many seagrass beds and coral reefs. These three ecosystems must always be maintained in balance. Because by preserving the mangrove ecosystem, it will reduce sedimentation and input from other land to seagrass and coral reef

¹⁴ Wawancara dengan Pak Sumarlan, 13 Juli 2024

areas. When this beach is well maintained, these three ecosystems will grow well too so that natural life is balanced.¹⁵

Seagrasses are also the only flowering plants that produce seeds and can adapt to water areas. Seagrass has a very important role in maintaining the coastal ecosystem. Among its functions are as a nutrient filter, breaking and reducing waves and currents that go to the beach. Restraining erosion, primary producers, as a habitat for marine animals, as well as nursery and rearing ground for various types of biota.¹⁶

Based on the research of Yeremias Binsasi et al, 29 fish species were recorded with a total of 734 individuals. There is also the most species of reef fish *scolopsis lineata* and the least type of *dendrohiruz zebra*. This diversity is inseparable from the characteristics of coral reefs found on Kondang Merak beach. Some factors that have the potential to damage these coral reefs are the activities of fishermen who lean their boats so that they damage coral reefs and cause the diversity of marine biota to decrease.¹⁷

The environmental conservation program carried out by Kondang Merak fishermen includes collaborating with the environmental conservation institution Sahabat Alam so that it can realize Kondang Merak ecotourism. This community was originally formed from the concern and concern of ala lovers for the destructive attitude of fishermen. On the side of improving the economy of fishermen, the nature around the coastline also remains beautiful and sustainable.

Some of the things done by this community are educating fishermen to use environmentally friendly tools when looking for marine products. This empowerment activity has a positive impact on the fishermen of Kondang Merak and changes their behavior and involves them in conservation activities. Sahabat Alam provides awareness of the importance of protecting the natural environment as well as providing new livelihood alternatives for fishermen.¹⁸

2. Expression of the Coastal Community of Kondang Merak Beach in Establishing Harmony with Nature

a. Capturing Seafood in an Environmentally Friendly Way

The consequence of the existence of natural resources is to protect them through conservation activities. The fishermen at

¹⁵ Andik Isdianto et al., "Pantai Kondang Merak: Bertahan Secara Ekosistem Atau Bertumbuh Secara Ekonomi," *Jurnal Education and development* 8, no. 4 (2020): 224.

¹⁶ 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, 2023.

¹⁷ Yeremias Binsasi and Emanuel M Y Hanoe, "Keanekaragaman Jenis Ikan Karang Di Zona Intertidal Pantai Kondang Merak," *BULLET: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu* 2, no. 1 (2023): 42–47.

¹⁸ Iis Tri Septyawati et al., "Sahabat Alam Berkolaborasi Dengan Nelayan Kondang Merak Mengelola Wisata Alam Berbasis Konservasi Di Desa Sumberbening Kecamatan Bantur Kabupaten Malang," *Jurnal Integrasi dan Harmoni Inovatif Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial* 1, no. 3 (2021): 293–300.

Kondang Merak Beach protect the sustainability of the beach by catching fish in an environmentally friendly manner.

“ If there is conservation here, if the fishermen are fishing, the main rule is not to break the law, the way to catch is environmentally friendly, not allowed to use potassium, drugs.



As long as it's environmentally friendly, it's okay.”¹⁹

Picture 2: tools for catching octopus

b. Planting Mangroves and Coral Reefs

The coastal community of Kondang Merak has an awareness to maintain and care for mangrove forests. They do not want the mangrove forest to run out and become extinct so they make conservation efforts by planting mangroves and coral reefs with several environmental conservation organizations, students and some school students.

“Here the beauty is maintained, if in the peacock condor it lives on the coast. Maybe this is one of the remaining mangrove protection forests. In this coastal area, the remaining forest is maintained, if it is not maintained, it will run out.”²⁰

“There is also mangrove planting, coral reef planting. The nature community provides to continue such activities.”²¹

¹⁹ Wawancara dengan Bapak Sumarlan, 13 Juli 2024

²⁰ Interview with Mr. Sumarlan, 13 Jule 2024

²¹ Interview with Mr. Sumarlan, 13 Jule 2024



Picture 3 : Mangrove Forest in Kondang Merak Beach Area

"Allah created humans as caliphs on earth to protect and care for the preservation of nature. Humans in this case are not allowed to always have an anthropocentric view and benefit themselves. The orientation of life that they run must be in accordance with God's command, namely Allah SWT. The duty of humans as caliphs on earth is to enjoin the good and forbid all forms of evil.²²

In this context, the Kondang Merak community has played its role as khalifatullah, by instilling awareness and actively participating in protecting the coastal environment. Initially, those who were the pioneers of environmental destruction turned into people who were keen on preserving nature. This is as expressed by Mr. Subagyo:

So, I am here as the head of the fishermen's association, what we prioritize is the form of public awareness first. Those who initially became destroyers how to become activists of environmental sustainability. I used to be a destroyer too, the first person in the peacock in the field of damage was me. Gradually, I realized that nature needs to be protected and preserved for sustainability, especially if it has to do with fishermen, for long-term catches. All of that takes a process, not an instant realization. Alhamdulillah, the process that we went through produced positive results in the community. All people can change and can be aware, from there we have agreed not to do any more damage.²³

With the awareness of these mistakes, the community has already had the provision to foster ecological awareness. They have realized from their mistakes that exploiting nature brutally will only damage it and harm humans in the long run.²⁴

²² Itsna Latifah, "Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ekologi Yusuf Al-Qaradawi Dan Seyyed Hossein Nasr," *Al-Thiqah: Jurnal Ilmu Keislaman* 7, no. 1 (2024), hal 173.

²³ Interview with Mr. Aral Subagyo, 01 November 2024

²⁴ Endang Sulastri, Trisakti Haryadi, and Elyvia Inayah, "Tingkat Kesadaran Ekologis Masyarakat Kampung Laut, Kabupaten Cilacap, Jawa Tengah," *Jurnal Kawistara* 9, no. 1 (n.d.): 78–90.

The people of Kondang Merak believe that if they want a prosperous life, they must care for and preserve nature. Because the damage done by humans today has a long-term impact on the future, whether it is the decline and destruction of marine catches or the destruction of forest ecosystems that can cause flash floods. Because what humans do to nature, will return as feedback to humans again. Like humans throwing gold, nature will return it in the form of gold. But if humans throw machetes, then nature does not hesitate to give the same reply and even worse.

*So we have a principle, if we want to live prosperously we must coexist with nature, that's our principle. We avoid any form of damage to nature because we already know that if there is damage then the future will not be good, whether in the sea or the forest. If it's in the sea, the long-term catch will be damaged, if it's in a forest that's been cleared and plundered, there will be flash floods, that's for sure.*²⁵

c. Petik Laut/Sedekah Laut

The people of Kondang Merak not only establish a good relationship with nature, but they also have a theocentric attitude, realizing a form of gratitude to God for the abundant blessings in the form of marine products. They realize this gratitude through sea alms or what is commonly called petik laut.

*"Petik laut is a form of gratitude to God and nature. In other places, the purpose is the same. Petik laut is for fishermen and sedekah bumi is for farmers. The performance here is as simple as possible, because it minimizes costs too. Actually, if there are fishermen here and they have a wish, it is called petik laut. If there is no larungan only, but every petik laut always has larungan."*²⁶

²⁵ Interview with Mr. Aral Subagyo, 01 November 2024

²⁶ Interview with Mr. Aral Subagyo, 01 November 2024

This petik laut tradition is carried out for two days with a series of activities on the first day in the form of a Qur'an recitation, melekan (making tumpeng decorations), followed by the second day of kenduri/selamatan, joint prayers (in Javanese and Islamic ways) and larungan (floating tumpeng offerings to the middle of the sea).

Picture 4: Selamatan in Petik Laut activity



Picture 5
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Larungan in Kondang Merak Beach

From the information above, it can be concluded that the expression of the coastal community of Kondang Merak Beach in maintaining natural beauty is done by planting mangroves, planting coral reefs and catching marine products in an environmentally friendly way. In addition, they express their gratitude for the abundance of nature through a tradition of picking the sea.

3. Ecotheology of the Coastal Community of Kondang Merak Beach

The concept of ecotheology is a combination of ecological science and theology. etymologically, ecology itself comes from the

Greek “oikos” (household) and “logos” (science). Ecology means the science that discusses living things and their homes or the science of the household of living things. This study examines how a species interacts with other species and how the impact of these interactions on the environment, including how a species can experience extinction.²⁷ According to Lawrence B. Slobodkin, a species can survive from extinction if humans can help nurture and maintain the population of the species from environmental destruction.²⁸

The meaning of theology is defined by William L Reese as a discourse of reason concerning God.²⁹ Reese further explains that theology is a scientific discipline that talks about the truth of revelation and the independence of philosophy and science.³⁰ This definition is slightly different from the meaning of kalam science or Islamic theology, Islamic theology means what science talks about God, the truth of revelation, and matters concerning God.³¹ In particular, kalam science is concerned with understanding the attributes of God (Allah), His relationship with the universe, and how humans should understand God's existence, destiny, and will in life.

The discipline of theology is trying to deal with contemporary issues such as environmental problems, so a new approach to environmental theology or ecotheology has emerged. The discipline of ecology is a human expression that seeks to find the truth about the source by observing the surrounding nature. Meanwhile, the science of theology seeks to understand the source in the realm and conversation of divinity.³² Menurut Nelson Bock, ada kemungkinan manusia dapat memahami gagasan ketuhanan dengan mengamati gagasan alam yang dapat di jangkau.³³ According to Nelson Bock, there is a possibility that humans can understand the idea of divinity by observing the idea of reachable nature. This premise is similar to the Islamic concept of “undzur fi khalqillah wa la tandzur fi dzatillah” where in understanding the realm of divinity, humans cannot and are unable to directly see and study God's substance. This understanding requires the right means, namely understanding and studying the surrounding nature as God's creation. Mujiono argues that ecotheology is a formulation of theology that discusses the interrelationship between religion and nature or between religions

²⁷ Michael Begon and Colin R Townsend, *Ecology: From Individuals to Ecosystems* (John Wiley & Sons, 2021) hal 12.

²⁸ Slobodkin, L. B. (2003). *A Citizen's Guide to Ecology*. A Citizen's Guide to Ecology. Oxford University Press New York, NY. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780195162868.001.0001>

²⁹ William L Resse, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, (USA: Humanities Press Ltd, 1980), h. 28

³⁰ William L Resse, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*.

³¹ Bambang Qomaruzzaman, “Teologi Islam Modern: Renaissance” (Pustaka Aura Semesta, 2020) hal 2.

³² Zulfikar and Azkiya, “Eco-Theology in Tafsir Al-Azhar: Hamka's Efforts in Building a Paradigm and Environmental Awareness.”

³³ Nelson Bock, “An Eco-Theology: Toward a Spirituality of Creation and Eco-Justice,” *CrossCurrents* 63, no. 4 (2013): 433–446.

and the environment.³⁴ It can be concluded that ecotheology studies how humans protect and preserve the environment based on religious ethics.

Little by little, the Qur'ān reveals the interconnectedness of religion and science. This is in line with the expression that “the Qur'ān is shalih li kulli makan wa zaman”, which means that the Qur'ān is dynamic and can provide a foundation for finding relevance in contemporary issues, including ecotheology. This phrase is evidence that the Qur'ān is like a veiled woman, who only reveals herself to her relatives and close ones.

The Qur'an underlies that one of the duties of humans on earth is as caliphs. Caliphs or leaders who are given the mandate to maintain, care for, and maintain the prosperity of nature and everything in it in order to fulfill their needs. In Islam, preserving nature is not only a form of culture and ethics, but also a religious guidance that must be implemented. Based on this ethic, humans, especially Muslims, have no reason to refuse to preserve the sacredness of nature from exploitation activities that are detrimental to themselves.³⁵ Allah says in QS. Al-An'am verse 165 :

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيعُ الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“It is He who has made you caliphs over the earth, and has exalted some of you above others to test you for what He has given you. Verily your Lord is swift in His punishment. Indeed, He is the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”³⁶

The verse means that Allah made humans as caliphs and plays an important role in keeping everything on earth in balance. Everything that is determined by Allah is sunatullah, to test humans how they respond to the gifts that Allah has bestowed. Quraish Shihab explains that the use of the word khalifah in the plural in the verse implies the khalifah function that everyone carries out. Meanwhile, the task of humans as caliphs will not be carried out if they do not get help from others.³⁷ Allah has given gifts to humans in the form of physical power, thinking power, heart power and the ability to live. Despite having these four powers, humans still need the help of others who have different skills to manage nature wisely.

Through the explanation of QS. Al-An'am verse 165, provides awareness to humans that the use of natural resources always requires other humans. So it is expected that the latest innovations will emerge in the use of natural resources that are environmentally friendly and reduce excessive exploitation. With the management of a

³⁴ Tamam, “Ekoteologi Dalam Tafsir Kontemporer.”

³⁵ Khairul Fuad, “Paradigma Teologi Lingkungan Dalam Islam Dan Eco-Pesantren,” *Sosiologika: Jurnal Sosiologi Pembangunan Indonesia*, no. Vol 1, No 1 (2018): Pembangunan Sosial dan Masyarakat Sipil di Indonesia (2018): 46–70, <http://journal.unas.ac.id/sosiologi/article/view/361/267>.

³⁶ RI, “Al-Quran Dan Terjemahannya.”

³⁷ M Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Misbah, Jakarta: Lentera Hati*, vol. 4, 2002, hal 373.

good system, the function of caliph can be carried out regularly. This is in accordance with the word of Allah in Q.S Hud verse 61:

هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا

*"He has created you from the earth (land) and made you its prosperous owners."*³⁸

The meaning of the word ista'marakum is to ask people to build prosperity by building houses, farming and others by utilizing the potential of nature without destroying it.³⁹ In a book entitled Ri'ayah al-Bi'ah fi Shari'ah al-Islam Yusuf Qardhawi describes several Islamic concepts in protecting the environment, as follows:

a. Tree planting and reforestation

According to Yusuf Qardhawi there are two considerations of the importance of planting trees to the environment, the first consideration is the consideration of benefits as Allah says:⁴⁰ *"We have poured out water abundantly (from the sky), then We divided the earth well, then there We grew grains, and grapes and vegetables, and olive and date trees, and (shady) gardens, and fruits and grasses. (All this) for your enjoyment and for your livestock."* (Q.S Abasa : 24-32)⁴¹

The second consideration is beauty. After Allah describes the pleasures of plants, dates, zaintun, grapes and the like, He says: *"Look at the fruit when the tree bears fruit and (also look at) its maturity. Surely in such are signs for those who believe."* (Q.S Al-An'am: 99).⁴² In this verse, people are commanded to look at ripe fruits as a form of beauty and form gratitude. Imam Qurthubi argues that farming is part of fardlu kifayah, so the government should encourage people to do it, one of which is by planting trees.⁴³

The Kondang Merak community actively participated and collaborated with related parties in carrying out this activity. They plant mangrove trees and coral reefs to preserve the nature there. They collaborate with environmental conservation organizations, schools, pesantren and students. In this case, in addition to forming harmonious relationships with nature, the community has built harmonious relationships with other humans through mutual cooperation and social cooperation activities.

b. Maintaining cleanliness and protecting natural resources

Maintaining cleanliness is the main foundation for Muslims, especially in matters of worship. This is shown that one of the

³⁸ RI, "Al-Quran Dan Terjemahannya."

³⁹ Yusuf Qardlawi, *Islam Agama Ramah Lingkungan*, 1st ed. (Jakarta: Pustaka Al-Kautsar, 2002) hal 90.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ RI, "Al-Quran Dan Terjemahannya."

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Qardlawi, *Islam Agama Ramah Lingkungan*, Hal 85.

requirements for cleanliness and purity of the place and clothes used in carrying out prayers and other worship. As Allah says: "Verily, Allah loves those who repent and purify themselves" (Q.S Al-Baqarah: 222).⁴⁴

Preserving natural resources is essentially preserving the enjoyment of God that has been granted to humans. Therefore, every human being has an obligation to protect and preserve nature. At this point Allah says: "And do not make mischief on the earth, after (Allah) has repaired it".⁴⁵ In this verse, Allah forbids people from doing damage on earth. This prohibition covers various aspects, such as damaging social relations, physical and mental health of others, life and sources of livelihood such as agriculture, trade, and so on, as well as environmental destruction and other similar things.

From the results of observations on July 13, 2024, showing the nature of Kondang Merak Beach which is still very beautiful, the beach water also looks very clear so that we can see coral reefs and moss at the bottom of the beach. The mangrove forest also looks lush and the environment looks clean because there is no garbage scattered around, the air is still cool. Thus, the community has a concern for the cleanliness of the environment around the beach.

c. Friendly to the environment

Islam educates every Muslim to always interact well with the surrounding environment. As mentioned in the saheeh hadith narrated by Muslim from Syada bin Aus, that the Prophet Muhammad SAW said: "Verily Allah obliges to do good to everything".⁴⁶ If we carry out what has been required by Allah SWT, then His blessings and mercy will always be sufficient for humans.⁴⁷

This concept has been implemented by the coastal community of Kondang Merak Beach through environmentally friendly fishing. People are not allowed to catch marine products using bombs and potassium, but only use fishing rods and nets. Although technology is advancing and humans are becoming modernists, nature must still be preserved by treating it kindly. As Sayyid Husein Nasr argues, the ecological crisis that occurs because humans exploit nature too brutally. Advanced technology is used to scoop up nature. Because modern humans tend to be materialistic and pursue the worldly, they lack spiritual beliefs.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ RI, "Al-Quran Dan Terjemahannya."

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Qardlawi, *Islam Agama Ramah Lingkungan*.

⁴⁸ Faisol Nasar, "Spiritualitas Ekologi (Eco-Spirituality) Pasca Tragedi Banjir Bandang Di Daerah Jember Utara Dan Kontribusinya Pada Lingkungan Rawan Bencana Banjir (Studi Living Al-Qur'an)," *Studi living Al Qur'an* (2019) hal 237.

In addition, Kondang Merak Beach fishermen have a long-term awareness of marine products. None of the fishermen there catch baby lobsters. If they want to catch them, they must go through several government procedures. This is one of the efforts of fishermen to be friendly to the environment by thinking about long-term marine products.⁴⁹

The long-term orientation of the community is affirmed by Khalil Mays, who explains that nature is an infinite gift from Allah Swt. Thus, protecting and preserving it for future generations is a necessity.⁵⁰ But on the contrary, when humans do not have ethics towards nature, there is an ecological crisis. Thus, to overcome the ecological crisis, Yusuf Qardhawi, offers good environmental maintenance as done by the coastal community of Kondang Merak beach.⁵¹ So it is inevitable if it is concluded that humans who are pious in carrying out their worship are certainly ecologically pious, because the mandate to protect the environment is included in the commandments contained in the Qur'an for humans. So that a harmonious relationship with nature, humans and God of the universe is realized.

Harmonious relationships with nature are clearly realized through conservation activities, harmonious relationships with humans are realized from a variety of conservation activities that involve many people so that good relations are always established in community cooperation. Then the harmonious relationship with God is realized in the form of sea alms/picking the sea which is a form of community gratitude for the gift of His creation that provides extraordinary benefits to humans.

CONCLUSION

Islamic ecotheology is an approach that integrates ecological principles with Islamic teachings to build responsible environmental awareness. In this perspective, nature is seen as a trust or entrustment from God that must be taken care of by humans. The concept of Islamic ecotheology is rooted in the belief that humans are khalifah (caretakers) on earth, with the responsibility to preserve and maintain the balance of the ecosystem. Humans cannot directly study and understand the realm of divinity, these efforts require a medium, namely in the form of observing and studying the surrounding nature, this is in accordance with the Islamic concept of “undzur fi khalqillah wa la tandzur fi dzatillah.”

The expression of the Kondang Merak community in maintaining harmony with nature is reflected through several community activities, the first is through the tradition of sea alms or sea picking. This tradition aims to express gratitude to God for the blessings of nature that provide benefits to humans. In addition, the coastal community of Kondang Merak Beach

⁴⁹ Interview with Mr. Aral Subagyo, 01 November 2024

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Latifah, “Tafsir Ayat-Ayat Ekologi Yusuf Al-Qaradawi Dan Seyyed Hossein Nasr”, hal 160.

also realizes a harmonious relationship with nature through mangrove planting activities, coral reefs, maintaining the cleanliness of the beach environment, and taking natural products in an environmentally friendly way. These efforts are based on individual awareness to form habits in maintaining and preserving the environment. Indirectly, the community's efforts in carrying out their mandate as khalifahs who care about nature also increase the value of spirituality in themselves.

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