

# Islam and Ecology: Tracing the Historical Roots of Environmental Awareness in Classical Islamic Tradition

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**Abstract:** This study is motivated by the urgent need for an eco-theological paradigm in addressing the global environmental crisis, while also emphasising that Islam has an ecological heritage that has been neglected in historical discourse. This research aims to uncover the historical roots of environmental awareness in classical Islamic tradition by tracing religious texts, the thoughts of earlier scholars, and the socio-ecological practices of pre-modern Muslim societies. This research is qualitative in nature, focusing on a normative approach. The research method used is descriptive analysis, providing a description of Islam and ecology and an analysis of the historical roots of environmental awareness in classical Islamic tradition, sourced from classical interpretations, hadith, and fiqh works related to the management of nature and the environment. The novelty of this research lies in the re-reading of classical Islamic documents through an ecological lens, which has rarely been touched upon in Islamic historiography studies. The results of the study show that principles such as mizan (balance), khalifah (the role of humans as guardians of the earth), and islah (improvement) have been the basis of environmental ethics since the beginning of Islamic civilisation. The contribution of this study is to provide a strong historical basis for the development of contemporary Islamic environmental ethics and to encourage the integration of Islamic values into modern ecological policies.

**Keywords:** Islamic Ecology, Environmental Awareness, Environmental Ethics, Ecological Interpretation.

## Introduction

The current environmental crisis is not merely an ecological issue, but has become a multidimensional problem that affects social, economic and spiritual life (Marianta, 2011). Amidst rapid development, humanity often forgets the principle of sustainability rooted in religious values and local culture (Arifani, 2015). In the context of Islam, the relationship between humans and the universe is not exploitative, but is based on the principles of balance (mīzān) and trust (amanah) (Wulan, 2025). Unfortunately, ecological values in classical Islam are often considered outdated or irrelevant by modern ecological discourse. This study aims to re-examine classical Islamic texts in order to reinforce Islam's position as a religion that historically and theologically upholds environmental ethics.

The phenomenon of environmental damage in Indonesia shows an alarming trend (Saputra & Sueb, 2020). Massive deforestation in Kalimantan and Sumatra, river pollution in Java, and the plastic waste crisis on the coast indicate low ecological awareness among the community. The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB) recorded more than 1,500 hydrometeorological disasters throughout 2023, most of which were triggered by ecological damage (Napitupulu et al., 2025). In fact, Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, and should be able to use Islamic values as inspiration in preserving nature. This fact raises the question: Why have Islamic teachings, which are rich in ecological messages, not been able to shape a collective awareness of the environment? In the Qur'an, Allah says:

وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا

“And do not cause corruption on the earth after (Allah) has set it right” (QS. Al-A'raf: 56). (Soenarjo, 2019).

This verse explicitly prohibits all forms of ecological damage and emphasises the importance of maintaining harmony after the natural order has been restored. This prohibition is not only normative in nature, but also contains a strong ethical warning. In classical Islamic

tradition, this verse was used as a basis by scholars in discussions of agricultural fiqh, water management, and even public policy in the classical Islamic era, such as during the Abbasid Caliphate (Soenarjo, 2019). Unfortunately, in the study of Islamic history, the ecological dimension is often marginalised. The focus of study tends to be on theological, political, and legal aspects, while the relationship between Islam and nature has not been seriously studied in a historiographical approach. This creates a gap in Muslims' understanding of the ecological heritage of the past. In fact, classical texts of tafsir, hadith, and fiqh contain a wealth of guidance on natural resource management, animals, and principles of sustainability in life. Therefore, it is very important to re-examine classical documents using a thematic-ecological approach. This study attempts to answer a crucial question: Was there a systematic ecological awareness in classical Islamic tradition? To answer this question, the author examines classical Islamic texts such as Tafsir al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi, and fiqh works by Imam al-Ghazali and al-Mawardi. This research also compares the social practices of early Muslim societies in environmental management, such as irrigation systems, forest conservation, and waste management. Thus, this study is not only historical but also applicable to building a contemporary Islamic ecological narrative that is strongly rooted in the classical intellectual heritage (Rizani et al., 2024).

Among the hadiths that emphasise environmental awareness is the saying of the Prophet SAW:

إِنَّ الدُّنْيَا حُلْوَةٌ خَضِرَةٌ، وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مُسْتَحْلِفُكُمْ فِيهَا فَيَنْظُرُ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ

“Verily, this world is beautiful and green, and Allah has made you caliphs in it, so He will see how you act’ (HR. Muslim).

This hadith explains the role of humans as caliphs on earth, not absolute owners, but responsible managers. In the context of Islamic history, this understanding formed the basis for many environmental policies derived from religious ethics.

The fiqh principle of “ما لا يتم الواجب إلا به فهو واجب” (Something that is not complete without it, then it is also obligatory) can be applied to ecological issues. Preserving the environment is part of the obligation to preserve life (hifz al-nafs) and future generations (hifz al-nasl). Therefore, all means that support nature conservation become a collective obligation. Unfortunately, this rule is rarely contextualised in contemporary education and fatwas related to ecology. This reinforces the urgency of research to rediscover the relevance of classical fiqh to environmental issues.

Most contemporary literature discussing ‘Islamic eco-theology’ focuses on normative approaches or environmental philosophy, but few systematically trace its historical roots. In fact, the historical record of classical Islamic civilisation reflects a concern for ecosystems, even before the term ‘ecology’ was known. For example, water management in hisbah, the prohibition of indiscriminate tree burning in jihad fiqh, and animal preservation in qurban law demonstrate a very high level of ecological sensitivity. However, this discourse has not been developed in depth in Islamic historical studies. In Indonesia, there is still a lack of studies that integrate classical Islamic history and modern environmental policy. Many Muslim environmental activists do not yet have a historical basis for formulating their narrative of struggle. As a result, there is a disconnect between Islamic intellectual heritage and contemporary ecological activism. In fact, integrating classical heritage into the environmental movement can strengthen religious legitimacy and foster Islamic value-based ecological awareness. This is where the importance of this research lies, in filling this discourse gap.

Previous research shows that ecological values in Islam have received academic attention through various approaches, ranging from ethics and policy to social institutions. Muhammad Faisal reviews ecological interpretations in three Nusantara tafsir (Tafsir al-Azhar, Tafsir al-

Misbah, and Tafsir Kemenag), emphasising that protecting the environment is a religious commandment, as reflected in Quranic verses such as QS. Al-Baqarah: 30 and QS. Ar-Rum: 41 (Faisal & Baihaqi, 2025). M. Syauqi explores the role of the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, which are rich in ecological messages, such as the prohibition of destroying nature and the encouragement to plant trees, as well as reinforcing the concept of khilafah as a divine mandate to manage the earth fairly and sustainably (Syauqi et al., 2025). Meanwhile, Abd. Rahman highlights the importance of environmental education in an Islamic perspective that emphasises the integration of spiritual values, ethics, and learning practices in shaping ecological awareness (Rahman, 2025). The three of them agree that Islam has a strong normative foundation to respond to the global environmental crisis through a holistic theological, ethical, and educational approach (Nasrudin & Solehudin, 2021).

The initial hypothesis in this study is that ecological awareness in classical Islam has existed and been formulated through applicable Sharia principles. These principles are not only theoretical, but are manifested in socio-political practices in various eras of Islamic rule. Therefore, nature conservation is not only part of individual ethics, but also a public policy derived from religion. If this hypothesis is proven, then there needs to be a recontextualisation of classical Islamic teachings into modern education curricula and environmental regulations.

Apart from being a form of scholarship, this research is also a spiritual and moral effort to give voice to nature from an Islamic perspective. Environmental damage is not only a physical crisis, but also a crisis of spirituality and ethics. Islam, as a religion of mercy for the universe (rahmatan lil 'ālamīn), has a moral responsibility to remind humanity to respect and protect His creation. In this context, reviving the classical Islamic ecological heritage is a form of *iḥyā' al-turāth* (reviving heritage) that is contextual and solution-oriented. By rediscovering classical Islamic traditions in their view of nature, this research contributes to strengthening the narrative of sustainability from within Islamic civilisation itself. At the same time, it challenges the dominance of Western ecological discourse, which is often secular and anthropocentric. Islam offers a spiritual and cosmic paradigm, in which all creatures have intrinsic value because they are part of God's creation. Therefore, through this historical-ecological approach, it is hoped that a collective awareness among Muslims can be rebuilt regarding the importance of protecting the earth, not merely as a resource, but as a sacred trust from Allah SWT.

### Methods

This study employs a historical qualitative approach based on an in-depth exploration of classical Islamic textual sources, using content analysis methods to interpret the meaning structures, frameworks of thought, and theological messages contained in tafsir, hadith, fiqh, and relevant historical documents. Through this approach, the study not only shows how early Muslim scholars and intellectuals understood the relationship between humans and nature, but also evaluates the flexibility of these concepts when faced with contemporary environmental issues such as ecological crises, natural resource degradation, and climate change. The analysis process is carried out by comparing the interpretations of classical scholars with modern environmental discourse to identify common ground, tensions, and potential reinterpretations, thereby building an epistemological bridge between the past and the present. Thus, this study offers a synthesis that combines the depth of Islamic thought with a modern ecological perspective, while opening up new space for the development of Islamic eco-theology based on classical manuscripts that are more contextual and responsive to the challenges of the 21st century. It is hoped that the results of this study will not only add to the academic repertoire, but also be used as a reference by academics, scholars, and policymakers in formulating more sustainable religious strategies and public policies.

## Results and Discussion

### Islamic Cosmology in Classical Texts: Nature as a Creature and a Sign of God

Based on classical Islamic cosmology, the universe is understood not only physically but also spiritually. It is part of creation that reflects the attributes of Allah (Asmaul Husna), as stated in QS. Fussilat [41]: 53.

سَتُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْأَفَاقِ وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِ بِرَبِّكَ أَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ

We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. Is it not sufficient that your Lord is a witness over all things? (Soenarjo, 2019).

This verse became the basis for classical scholars in asserting that nature is ‘ayat kauniyah’, signs of God in creation. Both al-Tabari and al-Qurtubi’s interpretations emphasise that all creation has a spiritual connection and serves as a reminder to humans of God’s oneness and power. In Tafsir al-Tabari, the view of nature is largely described in the form of narratives of creation and the structure of the heavens and the earth. Al-Tabari interprets QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 164 as a verse that explains the order of the universe as proof of monotheism. He emphasises that rain, plant growth, and the cycle of day and night are forms of ‘dalā’il al-rubūbiyyah’ (signs of divinity) that are instructive and spiritually educational. This interpretation rejects the worldview that separates science and spirituality, and instead integrates them. In Al-Jami’ li Ahkam al-Qur’an, al-Qurtubi often associates verses on creation with calls for tafakkur (contemplation). He views every element of nature: water, wind, plants, and animals as spiritual entities that call on humans to know their Lord. QS. An-Nahl [16]: 65–69 is interpreted by him as a reflective instruction on the functioning of the universe, not merely a natural phenomenon. Nature becomes a field of contemplation, not an object of exploitation. This concept is important in the formation of Islamic ecological ethics, because it places nature as a subject that must be respected.

The concept of khalifah in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30 affirms the position of humans as trustees on earth. In classical interpretations, such as al-Tabari, the duty of khalifah is not to exploit, but to maintain balance and justice on earth. This concept is reinforced by the hadith of the Prophet SAW: ‘The world is green and beautiful, and Allah has made you khalifah in it...’ (HR. Muslim). Thus, the relationship between humans and nature in Islamic cosmology is symbiotic and responsible, not domineering. Contemporary studies have found common ground between classical Islamic cosmology and modern science. It is explained that the concept of the ‘Big Bang’ corresponds to QS. Al-Anbiya [21]: 30.

أَوَلَمْ يَرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

“Do the disbelievers not know that the heavens and the earth were once joined together, then We separated them, and We made from water every living thing? Will they not then believe?” (Soenarjo, 2019).

This shows that Islamic cosmology has long contained rational and empirical elements, as well as spiritual ones (Makiah, 2021). One important innovation is understanding nature not as a passive object, but as a ‘moral subject’ that has rights in Islamic ethics. In Imam al-Ghazali’s view, every creation has a spiritual function; trees, water, and animals have a role in the cosmic order. Therefore, destruction of nature is a violation of God’s order (Gufon & Hambali, 2022). This approach is in line with the concept of maqashid al-syari’ah in preserving life (hifz al-nafs), offspring (hifz al-nasl), and even property (hifz al-māl) in the context of natural resources.

The classical Islamic cosmological understanding is highly relevant in responding to the modern environmental crisis. By framing nature as part of God’s revelation, ecological awareness becomes part of worship, not just activism. This can strengthen the Islamic values-based

environmental movement. Islamic ecological education must begin to include the interpretation of kauniyyah verses in the curriculum, as well as making environmental fiqh part of contemporary Islamic literacy. Thus, the classical heritage is not only historical, but also transformative.

On the other hand, the integration of these cosmological values requires the strengthening of contextual and adaptive environmental fiqh. Basic principles of sharia such as maqāṣid al-sharī'ah can be the basis for formulating legal responses to real issues such as pollution, deforestation, waste, water management, and energy consumption. By understanding the environment as a public trust that must be preserved for the common good, fiqh no longer stops at classical texts but develops as an ethical instrument capable of assessing human actions in an ecological context. Fatwas on sustainability, guidelines for ecological muamalah, and affirmations of moral responsibility towards nature can emerge as part of contemporary Islamic literacy. This effort is not actually a new innovation, but a continuation of the Islamic intellectual tradition that has always encouraged ijtihad in accordance with the needs of the times.

The relevance of classical Islamic cosmology is also strengthened when translated into the world of education. Islamic ecological education needs to combine the interpretation of kauniyyah verses with modern environmental science, so that students are invited to read nature as a text of revelation as well as a scientific object. A curriculum oriented towards this integration will produce an ecological understanding that is theological, ethical, and empirical. Through an interdisciplinary approach, students can understand cosmic balance (mizān), the principle of sustainability, and the moral consequences of human actions on the ecosystem. Learning does not stop in the classroom but is extended through field practices such as energy audits in mosques, waste management in Islamic boarding schools, or environmentally friendly cultivation as part of the appreciation of worship values. Thus, education becomes a strategic space for changing the ecological mindset and behaviour of the community.

Socially, when ecological values are framed as religious obligations, environmental movements gain a broader basis for legitimacy and mobilisation. Mosques, Islamic boarding schools, religious study groups, and zakat institutions can become centres for consistent, structured, and sustainable Islamic-based ecological movements. This spiritual approach is able to transcend the boundaries of activism rhetoric, which is often temporary in nature, because it is rooted in religious identity, rituals, and solidarity. However, the implementation of this approach still faces challenges, such as a lack of environmental literacy among religious educators, resistance from economic actors, and the tendency of some groups to interpret texts literally. These challenges require intensive cooperation between scholars, academics, environmental scientists, and policymakers to develop contextual and effective models of praxis.

Therefore, classical Islamic cosmology functions not only as a historical legacy but also as a transformative epistemological resource. When kauniyyah verses and environmental fiqh are revived in education, policy, and religious culture, Islamic tradition has the potential to give rise to a holistic ecological paradigm that is spiritual, scientific, and ethical. In this way, the classical intellectual heritage becomes not only a trace of the past, but a motor for change towards a more just and civilised environmental sustainability in the future.

### **Ecological Principles in Classical Fiqh**

The concept of al-mizān or balance is a fundamental principle in the Qur'an that is invaluable in shaping Islamic ecological ethics. In QS. Ar-Rahman [55]: 7–8, Allah says:

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ

“And He raised the sky and established the *mīzān* (balance), so that you may not disrupt that balance.”

This verse has become the basis in *fiqh* for rejecting all forms of imbalance, whether in consumption, exploitation of resources, or in the treatment of living creatures. Scholars such as al-Syatibi associate *mīzān* with *maslahah* (public interest), indicating that environmental destruction is a violation of the principles of *sharia* itself.

Classical *fiqh* contains an important rule: ‘*La ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*’ (do not cause harm to yourself or others), which has significant ecological implications. In the context of natural resource management, *fiqh* scholars such as al-Mawardi emphasise that all forms of exploitation must consider their impact on the environment and society. For example, the prohibition on dumping waste into rivers or excessive land drainage is not only a technical issue, but also a moral and legal one. This is relevant to the issues of water pollution and deforestation in Indonesia, which threaten the lives of future generations. In Islamic *fiqh*, ownership of nature is limited and conditional. The concept of *al-milkiyyah al-muqayyadah* (ownership limited by the public interest) indicates that one may not exploit resources such as water, grasslands, or forests if it threatens ecological balance and the public interest. In *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, Imam al-Ghazali explains that rights to land and water are a trust, not an absolute right. This approach is in line with the idea of communal ownership in the management of shared resources (commons), which is also echoed in modern agrarian policy.

Water is an important element in environmental *fiqh*. In many *fiqh* books, including al-Mudawwanah and the works of the Maliki school of thought, it is discussed that water should not be withheld or misused if it harms the general public. Imam Malik emphasised that rivers should not be blocked if it interferes with the flow of water to other people’s agricultural land. This principle is highly relevant in the context of Indonesia, which is experiencing a clean water crisis in many regions due to water privatisation and river pollution. Classical *fiqh* provides a strong basis for advocating water justice as part of the *maqashid syariah*.

*Fiqh* also discusses the treatment of animals in great detail. Imam al-Nawawi and al-Ghazali emphasise the prohibition of torturing animals, even when slaughtering them. (Fatahuddin, 2017) In *Iḥyā’*, al-Ghazali quotes a hadith: ‘Verily, Allah requires *ihsan* in all things, including slaughtering.’ Animal protection is not just a matter of compassion, but a reflection of broader ecological justice. In the era of modern industrial livestock farming, which is rife with exploitation, this classical view provides an alternative based on Islamic values. The principle of *maslahah mursalah* (benefits not explicitly regulated in the text but in accordance with the spirit of *sharia*) is an important instrument for adapting *fiqh* to contemporary ecological issues. Al-Shatibi explains that any policy or action that brings collective benefits and prevents harm can be the basis of law. This opens the door for fatwas on forest conservation, prohibitions on illegal logging, and pollution control. With this basis, Islamic fatwa institutions in Indonesia can formulate dynamic legal responses to the current ecological crisis.

Indonesia, as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, faces major challenges in environmental conservation. (Astiwara, 2024) However, the legacy of classical *fiqh* has not been fully utilised in formulating environmental policies or movements. By fostering awareness of the principles of *mīzān*, *ḍarar*, and *maslahah*, and integrating them into curricula, sermons, and fatwas, Islam can become an ethical force in sustainable development. *Fiqh* is not only a legal instrument, but also a moral guide in maintaining balance between humans and nature. These three principles provide a normative framework that can strengthen the ethical

aspects of environmental regulation, while providing religious legitimacy for conservation efforts. If the principle of *mīzān* is combined with an analysis of environmental carrying capacity, for example, it can enrich the technocratic approach with a moral-spiritual dimension regarding cosmic balance. Similarly, the principle of *ḍarar* can strengthen the ethical basis for policies to prevent ecological damage that impacts public safety, while *maṣlahah* offers normative rationality for setting development priorities that are long-term and ecologically just.

Indonesia has an epistemological opportunity to develop an environmental fiqh model compatible with contemporary needs if the integration of these values is carried out through academic studies, curriculum development, and the elaboration of fatwas based on scientific research. An interdisciplinary approach involving the study of tafsir, uṣhul fiqh, ecology, and public policy analysis can produce a new paradigm that combines modern scientific methods with an Islamic ethical framework. If the interpretation of *kauniyyah* verses is included in the Islamic higher education curriculum, and environmental fatwas are formulated taking into account scientific findings on ecosystem degradation, then fiqh can function not only as a normative device, but also as a moral guide that guides human interaction with nature in the context of sustainable development. Thus, the utilisation of classical heritage does not stop at the historical level, but develops into an epistemological foundation that is relevant to environmental policy transformation in Indonesia.

### **Social-Ecological Practices in Early Islamic Civilisation**

The *hisbah* system in early Islamic civilisation served as a mechanism for moral supervision, social ethics, and public environmental management. *Muḥtasib* (*hisbah* officers) not only supervised markets and scales, but also controlled city sanitation, land use, water management, and public road cleanliness. (Arifah, 2023) Al-Mawardi in *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah* emphasised that one of the duties of the *muḥtasib* was to protect the rights of the community from damage caused by other parties, including environmental damage. Thus, *hisbah* was an early system of environmental supervision based on religious values. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW and the *Khulafaur Rasyidin*, the practice of *hisbah* proved to play an important role in environmental protection. In Medina, the Prophet established an area known as *ḥimā'* or a no-exploitation zone for the protection of animals and vegetation. In Kufa, the irrigation system was managed based on the principle of fair distribution, with the *muḥtasib* acting as a mediator in resource conflicts. This system shows that social regulation in Islam is not repressive, but rather educational and preventive in maintaining social and ecological ecosystems holistically.

*Waqf alam* is a form of *waqf* dedicated to environmental conservation, such as land, forests, water, or parks intended for the benefit of the people. (Amir Sup, 2021) In Islamic history, there is a practice of *waqf* wells (*waqf "ayn mā"*) by Uthman bin Affan to provide clean water for the people of Medina. In addition, there are many historical records of protected forests, gardens, and agricultural land that were donated as *waqf* to preserve the local ecosystem. This practice is concrete evidence that Islam has a tradition of sustainable social and religious resource conservation. The practice of *waqf* in Islam is not merely a charitable act, but also a reflection of collective responsibility for sustainability. In fiqh *waqf*, an important condition is that the benefits of *waqf* assets must be sustainable and not cause damage. (Hidayat, 2023) Thus, endowed forests cannot be cut down indiscriminately, and wells cannot be commercialised in a detrimental manner. In this context, natural *waqf* creates a model of fair and sustainable social ownership, in stark contrast to the capitalist paradigm that prioritises profit over the environment.

Indonesia, as a country facing an ecological crisis, has great potential to revitalise the *hisbah* and natural *waqf* systems. Institutions such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) or the National Zakat Agency (Baznas) can develop the role of environmental *hisbah* through fatwas and

mosque-based education. In addition, waqf administrators can be directed to manage customary forests, water catchment areas, or coastlines as ecologically productive waqf areas. This concept is in line with the green waqf trend that has begun to develop in Malaysia, Turkey, and the Middle East as a religious response to global climate change. Although it has potential, the revitalisation of hisbah and natural waqf in the modern era faces structural and ideological challenges. Modern states have separated religion and public affairs, while the hisbah system is often considered part of ancient classical law. On the other hand, waqf administration is often hampered by poor governance and a lack of ecological literacy among managers. Therefore, institutional reform based on *maqāsid al-syarī'ah* is needed to make classical Islamic values the pillars of contemporary environmental policy. To address these challenges, an integrative model between classical fiqh and modern public policy is needed. Local governments can collaborate with Islamic organisations in implementing the principle of environmental hisbah, for example through market sanitation and industrial waste supervision based on fatwas. Similarly, natural waqaf can be used as a green financing scheme based on Islamic social funds. In this way, the socio-ecological heritage of Islam will not only be a romanticised part of history, but also a concrete and participatory solution in the global sustainability agenda.

### **Recontextualising Classical Islamic Ecological Values in the Face of Modern Environmental Challenges**

Climate change, environmental pollution, water crises, and biodiversity degradation are not merely technical issues, but also reflections of ethical and spiritual crises. Modernisation, which tends to be exploitative, has neglected the principles of balance (*mīzān*), trustworthiness, and *maslahah* as guidelines for sustainable living. (Wenehenubun, 2025) This is where the importance of recontextualising classical Islamic teachings lies: strengthening the awareness that protecting the environment is part of worship. With this approach, Islam is not only relevant but is actually very much needed in shaping an alternative ethical and spiritual development paradigm.

The concept of humans as *khalīfah fī al-arḍ* (God's representatives on earth) must be revitalised in educational curricula, Friday sermons, and public literacy. The role of *khalīfah* carries inherent ecological responsibilities. (Wibisana, 2015) This can be seen in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30 and the hadith of the Prophet SAW which refers to the world as a 'field of trial' for human leadership. In the context of public policy, the *khalīfah* paradigm can be integrated into the principles of environmental governance, green city planning, and long-term resource utilisation. Islam teaches that power over the earth is not ownership, but a trust that must be accounted for.

Fatwa institutions such as the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Dar al-Ifta in Egypt, and the Council of Ulema in Turkey have begun to issue ecological fatwas related to water conservation, waste management, and the prohibition of excessive deforestation. For example, MUI Fatwa No. 30/2010 states that environmental destruction that causes public harm is haram. These fatwas show that Islamic law is dynamic and capable of responding to contemporary ecological challenges. (Supian, 2020) However, their implementation is still limited. Efforts are needed to strengthen socialisation, integration into state regulations, and the empowerment of mosques as centres for environmental advocacy.

The concept of *maslahah* (public interest) in fiqh *ushul* has great potential in formulating sustainable development policies. (Ayu, 2024) Al-Syatibi in *al-Muwāfaqat* explains that the objectives of sharia are to protect five things: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property. (Nurwahidah, 2024) In the modern context, protecting the environment is part of protecting life and lineage. Therefore, development projects that threaten ecological balance should be



considered not *maslahah*, even if they are economically profitable. This framework can be the basis for evaluating mining projects, large-scale land clearing, or reclamation that sacrifices coastal ecosystems.

The Qur'an explicitly prohibits *fasād fī al-arḍ* (corruption on earth) in QS. Al-A'rāf [7]:56 and QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:11. Classical scholars understand *fasād* not only in a social or moral context, but also in an ecological context. By reinterpreting this verse ecologically, we can understand that illegal logging, marine pollution, and habitat loss are concrete forms of *fasād*. Therefore, the inclusion of these verses in environmental awareness campaigns will provide strong spiritual legitimacy and touch the emotional aspects of Muslims. Amidst the dominance of secular development and capitalist economic paradigms, Islam offers an alternative paradigm that places humans, nature, and God in a sacred and harmonious relationship. Islamic ecotheology, rooted in classical interpretation, environmental fiqh, and *tawhīd* values, can become the philosophical foundation of green development (Widistuty, 2025). Initiatives such as eco-mosques, green Islamic boarding schools, and *santri* communities that care about the environment are concrete examples of the implementation of classical values in a contemporary local context. (Junianto, 2025) This shows that the revitalisation of classical Islamic teachings is not a utopia, but a necessity that can be pursued.

The recontextualisation of classical Islamic ecological values requires cross-sector collaboration: scholars, government, academics, and civil society. The state can create environmentally friendly policies based on Sharia values, while scholars can reinforce them through fatwas and education. Islamic educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools and madrasas can become centres of eco-theological transformation. By restoring values such as *khalifah*, *maslahah*, and *fasād* in policy and practice, Islam can play a strategic role in shaping a sustainable civilisation that is not only modern but also spiritually dignified.

The recontextualisation of classical Islamic ecological values ultimately requires a more systematic methodological construction so that the integration of Sharia values into public policy does not stop at symbolic normative articulation. This effort requires the development of an epistemological framework capable of harmonising textual authority, scientific findings, and contemporary socio-ecological dynamics. In this context, strengthening Islamic eco-theology research and expanding the study of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* are crucial foundations for formulating environmental policies that are responsive to empirical challenges. In addition, policy evaluation instruments are needed to measure the alignment between principles such as *mīzān* and *dar' al-fasād* with sustainability indicators, so that religious values can function not only as moral inspiration but also as operational orientation in development planning. This approach opens up space for the emergence of the concept of sustainable fiqh, which is capable of integrating economic needs, ecological protection, and the preservation of human dignity as a single ethical entity.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of the recontextualisation of these values is highly dependent on the ability to synergise spiritual ethics with data-based governance and scientific evidence. This integration enables the transformation of theological concepts such as *khalifah* and *maslahah* into policy parameters that have practical relevance, for example in water management, energy conservation, climate change mitigation, and biodiversity conservation. This approach, which combines scientific rationality and Islamic ethical foundations, can strengthen social legitimacy while improving the accuracy of policies in responding to ecological damage. In the Indonesian context, the synergy between religious values and modern science has the potential to produce a distinctive model of environmental governance, one that emphasises not only economic growth but also ecological sustainability and moral integrity. Thus, classical Islamic values are not

merely reproduced as historical heritage but developed as epistemic infrastructure for a sustainable and resilient civilisation.

### Conclusion

Discussions on classical Islamic cosmology, ecological fiqh, socio-ecological practices in early Islamic civilisation, and efforts to recontextualise these values in the face of the modern environmental crisis show that Islam has an adequate epistemological and ethical foundation to form a sustainable ecological paradigm that is compatible with contemporary demands. Islamic cosmology views nature as *āyat kauniyyah*, which contains spiritual and moral values, so that the relationship between humans and the environment is positioned as a theological mandate connected to the principles of *tawhid* and worship. Fiqh principles such as *mīzān*, *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*, *maṣlahah*, and *al-milkiyyah al-muqayyadah* provide a normative framework consistent with modern environmental ethics because they establish the obligation to maintain moral-ecological order as a manifestation of humanity's function as *khalifah*. A historical study of institutions such as *ḥisbah* and *waqf alam* shows that ecological values in Islam have been implemented in social mechanisms oriented towards public interest and the protection of natural resources. In the context of a global environmental crisis that encompasses ecological degradation as well as ethical and spiritual crises, the recontextualisation of Islamic ecological values has become increasingly significant through the integration of the concept of *khalifah* into the curriculum, the formulation of fatwas based on scientific research, and the formulation of public policies that take into account the principles of environmental fiqh. Thus, the intellectual heritage of classical Islam cannot be reduced to historical artefacts, but rather constitutes a potential epistemic infrastructure for shaping reflective, integrative, and long-term ecological ethics and environmental policies, while offering a comprehensive and relevant Islamic ecological paradigm for modern sustainable development.

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