

# Environmental and Climate Change in South and Southeast Asia

*How are Local Cultures Coping?*

*Edited by*

Barbara Schuler



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# Contents

Foreword	VII
<i>Carmen Meinert and Claus Leggewie</i>	
Preface	IX
<i>Barbara Schuler</i>	
Abbreviations	X
List of Figures and Tables	XIII
Glossary	XV
Notes on Contributors	XVII
Conventions	XXI

Introduction – The Dynamics of Climate and the Dynamics of Culture	1
<i>Barbara Schuler</i>	

## PART 1

### Ideas

- 1 Cosmos, Commodity, and Care: Three Layers in Hindu Environmental Awareness 27  
*Albertina Nugteren*
- 2 Ideas and Images of Nature in Thai Buddhism: Continuity and Change 43  
*Martin Seeger*
- 3 Shifting Notions of Nature and Environmentalism in Indonesian Islam 75  
*Monika Arnez*

## PART 2

### Past

- 4 Irrigation in South Thailand as a Coping Strategy against Climate Change: Past and Present 105  
*Janice Stargardt*

- 5 **The Emergence of the Cryoscape: Contested Narratives of Himalayan Glacier Dynamics and Climate Change** 138  
*Marcus Nüsser and Ravi Baghel*

PART 3

**Present**

- 6 **A Shift in India's Domestic and International Climate Policy?** 159  
*Joachim Betz*
- 7 **New Politics, Old Paradigms: Urban Environmentalism and the Reshaping of New Delhi** 185  
*Somnath Batabyal*

PART 4

**Prospects**

- 8 **Environmental Justice in Thailand in the Age of Climate Change** 211  
*Susan M. Darlington*
- 9 **Mitigating Climate Change: An Additional Role for Technology and Policy in India as well as International Arenas** 231  
*Rüdiger Haum*
- 10 **Institutional Dynamics of Climate Change Adaptation in Southeast Asia: The Role of ASEAN** 254  
*Dennis Eucker*

**Bibliography** 281

**Index** 318

# Shifting Notions of Nature and Environmentalism in Indonesian Islam

*Monika Arnez*

## Abstract

This article traces global ideas of nature in Islam and analyses local developments in environmentalism in Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country. Based on theological considerations of cosmos, earth and humans, it investigates how religious scholars (*ulama*) of the Muslim world argue for environmentalism. Moreover, since Muslim actors in environmental debates have a tendency to differentiate from the West and resort to Islamic norms and values, this essay addresses the question of how Muslim authorities, from international as well as national Indonesian backgrounds, articulate cultural and religious identities. In this context, the issue addressed is how classical literary sources and traditional cultural elements are used in controversial debates on environmentalism. Furthermore, this paper analyses how the largest Indonesian Muslim welfare organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama, and its affiliated Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), have been responding to environmental challenges.

## 1 Introduction

Across the globe, climate change has a variety of impacts on human life. The frequent occurrence of natural disasters like forest fires, droughts and floods has plunged the livelihoods of many people into crisis. Although often affected by these negative impacts, many countries with a predominantly Muslim population face economic and political problems, and as such climate change is not their first priority. This is exacerbated by the fact that the local population is often unaware of global warming so it cannot personally relate to it.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Nugteren (see her article in this volume) has also observed this for South Asia.

Foltz observed that Islam “has not figured prominently in emerging discussions on religion and the environment”,<sup>2</sup> but environmental awareness of Muslim authorities has been increasing in the last few years. This is reflected, for instance, in measures taken by institutions, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Muslim actors and governments. Since the new millennium, especially the World Summit on Sustainable Development of 2002, the idea of Islamic sustainable development has taken hold in the Muslim world. From that time onwards, ulama (religious scholars) in Muslim countries have united efforts in addressing climate change, hoping that an appeal to the Islamic *ummah* (community) can impact positively on Muslims’ behaviour towards nature and thus mitigate the effects of the environmental crisis. In this context, it is also worth mentioning that predominantly Muslim countries have organised an increasing number of environmental workshops and conferences in the last few years. For instance, the Muslim Seven Year Action Plan (M7YAP) was drawn up at the 2008 conference in Kuwait city.<sup>3</sup> The M7YAP proposed ideas on introducing new concepts for green mosques and green *hajj* (pilgrimages to Mecca), distributing books on Islamic environmentalism and training of local authorities on climate change issues and the re-introduction of Islamic rituals from an environmental perspective.<sup>4</sup> Complementing this cross-border initiative, local Muslim leaders have brought in their own ideas on how to address climate change.

As far as international governments are concerned, they acknowledge that climate change is a serious issue, and many of them have taken concrete steps to mitigate the effects of global warming by introducing new regulations and establishing environmental institutions. The current Indonesian government, aware of its high emission rates, prides itself on ensuring sustainable development. At the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen,

2 Foltz, Richard C., “Islam,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 212.

3 Saniotis, Arthur, “Muslims and Ecology: Fostering Islamic Environmental Ethics,” *Contemporary Islam* 6 (2012): 163. M7YAP was declared in June 2009 in Istanbul, and the Muslim Association for Climate Change Action (MACCA) was established to implement it. For a summary of the project see Earth-Mates Dialogue Center (EDMC) with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC). “The Muslim 7-Year Action Plan (M7YAP) To Deal with Global Climate Change,” last modified September 20, 2009, accessed December 7, 2012. <http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/Muslim-7YP.pdf>.

4 For a summary of the project see: “The Muslim Seven Year Action Plan on Climate Change 2010–2017 – Summary,” last modified September 20, 2009, accessed December 7, 2012. [http://www.bcca.org/ief/fl/WindsorARCMuslim\\_summary091020.pdf](http://www.bcca.org/ief/fl/WindsorARCMuslim_summary091020.pdf).

it formulated the objective to reduce greenhouse emissions in Indonesia by 26 per cent by 2020.<sup>5</sup>

However, the general acceptance of the fact that environmental issues deserve more attention does not mean that ideas related to these topics are uncontested. In Indonesia, for instance, the exploitation of resources, in particular timber, is a major issue, and influential actors remain engaged in illegal logging practices.<sup>6</sup> A recent example demonstrating this is the crackdown on Greenpeace Indonesia. In August 2011, the influential Indonesian Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, MUI) accused this organisation of having received money from gambling operations in the Netherlands,<sup>7</sup> and the Betawi Brotherhood Forum (Forum Betawi Rempug, FBR) wanted to dissolve it, alleging that it had not been legally registered.<sup>8</sup> However, the reproaches rather seem to have been a pretext for keeping Greenpeace from meddling in unfair practices of palm oil production.<sup>9</sup> For prior to FBR's protests, Greenpeace had publicly criticised logging practices, and, as a result, the export of crude palm oil (CPO) to several European countries had been prohibited.<sup>10</sup>

Although power political interests are not the focus of this article, the example of Greenpeace points to tension between 'western ideas' and a wish for indigenous authenticity through religion and/or culture. The growing influence of transnational Islamist groups in Indonesia, such as Hizbut Tahrir or the

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- 5 REDD Indonesia, "Pidato Presiden Republik Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono di CIFOR tentang <kesetaraan pertumbuhan pembangunan berkelanjutan> [Speech by the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono in CIFOR about <Equal Growth for Sustainable Development>]," last modified July 10, 2012, accessed October 1, 2012. <http://blog.cifor.org/10156/pidato-presiden-republik-indonesia-susilo-bambang-yudhoyono-di-cifor-tentang-kesetaraan-pertumbuhan-berkelanjutan/#.UMrziKxgQfy>.
  - 6 Cribb has shown that the New Order took some significant steps in environmental protection; however, illegal logging had already been a problem in this period. Cribb, Robert, "Environmentalism in Indonesian Politics," in *Towards Integrated Environmental Law in Indonesia?*, ed. Adriaan Bedner and Nicole Niessen (Leiden: CNWS), 48.
  - 7 Puji, Siwi Tri, "MUI nyatakan dana lotere Greenpeace haram [MUI Declares Lottery Funds of Greenpeace Forbidden by Islam]," published by *Republika.co.id*, August 4, 2011, accessed August 12, 2013. <http://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/umum/11/08/04/lpeec7-mui-nyatakan-dana-lotere-greenpeace-haram>.
  - 8 "5 Pemicu Kontroversi RUU Ormas [5 Initiators of the Controversy about the Mass Organisation Bill]," published by *Tempo.co*, July 3, 2013, accessed August 12, 2013. <http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2013/07/03/078493040/5-Pemicu-Kontroversi-RUU-Ormas>.
  - 9 The attempt at relocating the organisation was successful; the office of Greenpeace Indonesia is now in Tebet, South Jakarta.
  - 10 Puji, Siwi Tri, "MUI nyatakan dana lotere Greenpeace haram."

Muslim Brotherhood, has a negative effect on the perception of Western institutions.<sup>11</sup> However, Muslim minorities, for example, Shiite circles<sup>12</sup>, also criticise a loss of values in the context of environmental problems. For example, Seyyed Mohsen Miri, the former rector of the Shiite Islamic College for Advanced Studies (ICAS), directs his criticism at the West and indigenous Muslims when he states that the ‘Western’ preoccupation with inventing new technologies and striving for modernising human life has resulted in a neglect of fundamental Islamic values. In this context Kula’s statement, “the current Islamic environmental concern is often more related to the West than to the environment itself”,<sup>13</sup> may be exaggerated, but it is undeniable that many Muslim scholars identify Western secularism, claims to power, and capitalism as causes of environmental problems.

There is consensus in the Muslim world that humans’ failure to behave in an appropriate ethical manner is a result of having lost Islamic values and ethics; however, there are divergent opinions on the causes of the loss. As reviving traditional cultural elements seems to be one strategy of counteracting the degradation of nature, this article analyses the respective transnational ideas of different Muslim actors. Within the Indonesian context, it looks at the ways in which the Muslim mass organisation Nahdlatul Ulama and its affiliated Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*)<sup>14</sup> understand environmentalism. Which local strategies do they apply to achieve an increasing awareness of environmental issues in Muslim communities? Which role do cultural elements play here? Before analysing these issues in more detail, this contribution starts by describing central elements from Islamic sources many Muslim scholars refer to, thus characterising the relationship between cosmos, earth and humans. Therefore, the following paragraph provides the basis for the subsequent discussion on

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11 Some recent studies reveal that this influence also has its limits. For example, van Bruinessen has shown for Cirebon in North Java that smaller Islamic NGOs in cooperation with Muslim mass organisations and *pesantren* can serve as a partner by reviving cultural traditions such as arts as a resource. Cf. Bruinessen, Martin van, “Ghazwul fikri or Arabisation? Indonesian Muslim Responses to Globalization,” in *Dynamics of Southeast Asian Muslims in the Era of Globalization*, ed. Ken Miichi and Omar Farouk (Tokyo: Japan International Cooperation Agency), 30.

12 Although Sunnis are the majority in Indonesia, the number of Shiites has been growing since democratisation. Although sometimes associated with liberal Islam, they do not necessarily agree with its practical interpretations. See: Marcinkowski, Christoph, “Aspects of Shi’ism in Contemporary Southeast Asia,” *The Muslim World* 98.1 (2008): 50.

13 Kula, E., “Islam and Environmental Conservation.” *Environmental Conservation* 28 (2001): 2, accessed October 10, 2012. doi 10.1017/S03768892901000017.

14 Another term used for these Islamic boarding schools is *pondok pesantren*.

different ideas related to environmentalism. How do Islamic scholars argue for environmentalism, based on ideas of nature found in the Qur'an and *hadith* (sayings of prophet Muhammad)?

## 2 Theological Considerations of Cosmos, Earth and Humans

### 2.1 *The Oneness of God, and the Balanced Cosmos*

Although religions provide a variety of answers on the intended relationship between the cosmos, humans and the earth, those answers are guided by theological concepts on how the universe is organised. Islam is based on the concept of the oneness of God (*tawhid*),<sup>15</sup> the essence of Islamic monotheism. *Tawhid* refers to the belief in God's singularity. As the fundamental principle of Islam, *tawhid* is expressed through the first words of the testimony of faith: "There is no God but God." Islam strongly rejects polytheism, and, in addition to the testimony of faith, several verses of the Qur'an indicate that there is only one God.<sup>16</sup> According to the Qur'an, God's oneness can neither be broken down into smaller units nor can it be divided. All forms in the universe other than God are unique variants of His creation. By worshipping Him, they can come closer to God, although they can never reach divinity. As far as humans are concerned, *tawhid* is at the heart of human action and social life. Thus, the term also serves as a guide to contemporary Muslims on how to behave adequately: to serve God, one must do his or her best for the benefit of all creatures. Therefore, it can be argued that *tawhid* is an Islamic doctrine with an ethical dimension.

According to Muslim scholars, unity, balance and harmony are important aspects of the universe. Several verses of the Qur'an describe the universe as a beautiful and harmonious place, a result of divine creation. The first line of argument, which relates to the issue of cosmic symbiosis (*takāful*),<sup>17</sup> is referred to here because Islamic scholars use it to argue for the necessity to preserve nature and counteract climate change. God has created the universe, the environment, humankind and other creatures, and all of them are imbued with their own value. Each creature and everything that God created points to His greatness and wisdom, as well as the enormous diversity of life. They praise God in their own way, even though humankind might not be able to understand this:

15 Spelling variants Tauhid, tawhid, Ar. *tawhīd*.

16 For instance: 'there is no God but God' (*Surat* 47:19) or He is the "creator of all things" (*Surat* 6:102).

17 This term is also often used to refer to joint guarantee in a business undertaking, a principle accepted in Islam.

Prophet, do you not see that all those who are in the heavens and earth praise God, as do the birds with wings outstretched? Each knows its [own way] of prayer and glorification. God has full knowledge of what they do.<sup>18</sup>

The Qur'an highly values natural resources, especially trees and water. A good world is compared to a fruit-bearing tree with strong roots and branches reaching high into the sky.<sup>19</sup> God rewards humans who believe in this world, but punishes those who don't for their wrongdoings, in this life and the hereafter. Islamic tradition rejects cutting down trees without an apparent legitimate reason because such behaviour is in contradiction with God's creation. It is noticeable that in Islamic tradition the *himā*, areas the local population protects, contribute to the health of the environment.

Qur'anic verses mention that God has created water, which ensures humans' survival on earth. When performing the five prayers, water is a necessary, purifying resource for ablution, and in paradise believers are promised rivers of pure water.<sup>20</sup> Islam, based on the concept of goodness (*khayr*), will protect nature if the protection of nature is considered positive in itself. However, the only creatures able to preserve the environment are humans, since God entrusted them with the task to look after the earth, to be his representatives on earth.

## 2.2 *Distinguished by God: Humans' Cosmic Duty*

In the context of environmentalism, the cosmic balance between God, humans and nature is often addressed to highlight their responsibility. To maintain this balance, humankind has to worship the creator, obey His rules, act responsibly towards nature, preserve life and avoid abuse and wastefulness. Humans are capable to do so because God created a perfect world in which man, as the caliph or vice regent of God on earth (*khalifa*, lit. successor), was given a unique position: only to humans did God confer the right to shape nature according to his own wishes. In the environmental discourse, especially on climate change, Islamic scholars frequently draw on verses of the Qur'an to highlight man's role as *khalifa*, such as "I am putting a successor on earth";<sup>21</sup> and, "It is he who made you successors on the earth and raises some of you above others by rank, to test

18 Haleem, M. A. S. Abdel, *The Qur'an: A New Translation of M. A. S. Abdel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 223–224 (Surat 24:41).

19 Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 160 (Surat 14:24).

20 Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 332 (Surat 47:12).

21 Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 7 (Surat 2:30).

you through what He gives you".<sup>22</sup> These verses, especially the latter, do not only indicate that the Almighty has created everything on earth and in the sky for man, but they also appeal to the faithful to maintain the balance on earth by behaving friendly towards other creatures and preserving nature. Hence, based on the concept of *khalifa*, several Muslim scholars such as *kiai*<sup>23</sup> Muhammad indicate that nature is not man's property:

All was water, indiscriminate. [...] Nature is not man's true property. Man's property is only left for trust, a deposit or a loan which, when time comes, must be returned in its original condition.<sup>24</sup>

If they are able to do so, humans are supposed to return this loan in a better condition, more beautiful than before. To achieve this aim, the Qur'an reminds them of their duty to refrain from overexploitation of natural resources:

It is He who produces both trellised and untrellised gardens, date palms, crops of diverse flavours, the olive, the pomegranate, alike yet different. So when they bear fruit, eat some of it, paying what is due on the day of harvest, but do not be wasteful: God does not like wasteful people.<sup>25</sup>

Other Islamic sources also reject the excessive use of commodities, as the following example reveals. A *hadith* narrates that people would not receive God's grace on the Day of Resurrection if they had not shared abundant water with others. Withholding Grace would be the punishment for those having withheld resources they had not created.<sup>26</sup> Another *hadith* says that Prophet Muhammad, when being passed by a Bedouin called Sa'd, asked him about his wastefulness since he used a lot of water for his ablution. When Sa'd asked the Prophet if there could be any squandering in ablution, he responded: "Yes, even if you

22 Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 93 (Surat 6:165).

23 *Kiai* is a title given to religious teachers and leaders of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) on Java. A *kiai* carries out various roles as he owns and manages a *pesantren*, but he also teaches and leads prayers.

24 Muhammad, Husein, "Manusia dan tugas kosmiknya menurut Islam [Humans and their Cosmic Duty According to Islam]," in *Menanam sebelum kiamat: Islam, ekologi, dan gerakan lingkungan hidup* [Planting before Doomsday: Islam, Ecology, and the Environmental Movement], ed. Fachruddin M. Mangunjaya, Husain Heriyanto and Reza Gholami (Jakarta: Conservation International 2007), 4.

25 Haleem, *The Qur'an*, 91 (Surat 6:141).

26 Sahih Al Bukhari, chapter no. 41, *hadith* no. 553, accessed March 3, 2013. <http://ahadith.co.uk/chapter.php?cid=127>.

are on the bank of a flowing river."<sup>27</sup> Wastefulness towards nature in any form is clearly discouraged here because excessive use of any natural resources contradicts with Islamic teachings.

However, humans, as God's vice regents on earth, do not necessarily perform their task well. In contrast to other creatures, humans are inclined to violate God's rules since they are able to choose freely and exert power over others. In this regard it is frequently stated that man's thoughts and actions must be based on Islamic ethics (*akhlak*)<sup>28</sup> to preserve nature. Consequently, human freedom is limited by the ethical codes of *akhlak*. Only those Muslims who have adhered to the moral codes in this world will be rewarded with Paradise, whereas those who have not will suffer in Hell. When caring for nature in this world, the faithful act in a manner that is consistent with *akhlak*, and at the same time they prepare for the afterlife, where they will live in a peaceful and verdant environment, in communion with God and the angels. According to Muslim faith, all devotees who have been rewarded for their good deeds with a blessed afterlife will enjoy the pleasures of paradise together. Doing something good for nature, be it in terms of planting trees or behaving in an environmentally friendly way, is tantamount to serving God through stewardship. Muslims regard a harmonious communal life with nature as a necessary prerequisite for reviving spiritual and cultural values that have been lost in modern society. However, many Muslim actors taking part in environmental debates have a tendency to differentiate from the West, resorting to Islamic norms and values, setting a religious basis for environmentalism. After providing an insight into this debate, this paper will outline specific Indonesian responses to traditional environmental discussions. Which ideas do Indonesian Muslims, arguing within the framework of Islam and local culture, propose for the purpose of environmental protection?

### 3 Articulating Cultural and Religious Identities

#### 3.1 *Islamist Environmentalism and Eco-Mysticism*

Islamists, who have gained importance in the Muslim world due to the revival of Islam since the Iranian revolution in 1979, reject materialistic and capitalistic approaches as they are 'not in accordance' with Islamic values. Relating to environmental problems, Ignatow argues that nearly all Islamists claim for

27 Sunan Ibn Majah, chapter no. 2, *hadith* no. 425, accessed March 3, 2013. <http://ahadith.co.uk/chapter.php?cid=147&page=16>.

28 The term refers to individual behaviour and the code of ideal behaviour for all Muslims, which is based on the commands and prohibitions of the Qur'an and Sunna.

cultural authenticity, viewing Islam as “the authentic source of environmental consciousness, preceding Western environmentalist ideas”,<sup>29</sup> whereas modernism is rejected. Environmental Islamists believe that the West has caused the present environmental problems, including global warming, by overproducing resources and leading an excessive lifestyle.<sup>30</sup> Ignatow gives Ali Bulaç as an example, who claims in his book *Religion and Modernism (Din ve Modernizm, 1995)* that Western welfare and civilisation have produced too many consumables and possessions, thus falling into the trap of materialism.

However, it is not only Islamist environmentalists who argue for the need of cultural authenticity, but also Muslim intellectuals from other backgrounds, for instance mysticism. The following examples reveal how selected Sufis refer to and interpret classical Islamic literature and Islamic philosophical considerations on the relationship between man and nature, as well as indigenous concepts of environmental protection, to argue for a revival of tradition and authentic Islamic values. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a well-known Islamic scholar born and raised in Iran, has written extensively about the relationship of God, nature and humans.<sup>31</sup> After writing his PhD thesis about cosmology at Harvard University, he has taught Islamic studies in the US since 1984. He propagates the argument that the loss of values in Muslim countries can be attributed to the influence developed countries have exercised on the Muslim world:

In its effort to look for power within the intrigues of the political world and the world’s present economic situation, in spite of its best efforts, the Muslim community is always behind in creating ever changing technologies, and has to borrow them constantly from the Western world [...].<sup>32</sup>

As far as the stances of Muslims towards environmentalism are concerned, this illustrates that the border between Islamism and Sufism may become blurred.

29 Ignatow, Gabriel, “Globalizations and the Transformation of Environmental Activism: Turkey since the 1980s,” *Globalizations* 5,3 (2008): 438.

30 Elites in developing countries are also sometimes mentioned in this context. See Foltz, “Islam,” 212.

31 Among his well-known books are *The Encounter of Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968) and *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines. Conceptions of Nature and Methods used for its Study by the Ikhwan Al-Safa, Al-Biruni, and Ibn Sina* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1964).

32 Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, “Masalah lingkungan di dunia Islam kontemporer [The Problem of the Environment in the Contemporary Muslim World],” in *Menanam sebelum kiamat [Planting before Doomsday]*, ed. Fachruddin M. Mangunjaya, Husain Heriyanto and Reza Gholami (Jakarta: Conservation International 2007), 47.

It is interesting to observe here that Nasr argues along the same line when he depicts the century-long dominance and colonisation of the Muslim world by Western countries as the major cause for deteriorating values. This, he asserts, has had the consequence that Muslim countries could not compete with Western countries in technological development. According to him, a significant challenge for Muslim governments and groups now is how to exercise influence on vibrant discourses without losing their Islamic principles. Another problem he addresses is that man has become the measure of all things since the Renaissance era, and a God-centered worldview was substituted by an anthropomorphic one.<sup>33</sup> When God is no longer the central reference point, nature becomes a mere functional entity to serve the people, and the ecological crisis, including global warming, is the logical consequence. He reminds his readers that as a *khalifa* of God on earth, man does not only have rights but also carries responsibility for his environment.<sup>34</sup>

Another idea he postulates is reviving tradition, which is gaining popularity in a few places. Referring to the appreciation of nature, he mentions traditional societies as positive examples, which, in his opinion, regard nature as their wives, whereas modern Western countries treat nature as property to be bought, sold, and consumed.<sup>35</sup> Being aware that ordinary people often do not know much about environmental problems, including global warming, he further argues that classical Persian literature reflecting an Islamic view towards man, nature and God, might be used to raise their ecological awareness. In this context, he takes the Persian author Saadi as an example, who lived in the 13th century and was acquainted with Sufi practices. Among the different aspects of this topic treated in his *The Rose Garden (Gulistan)*, written in 1258, Saadi emphasises that all creatures, including humans, should perform their duty to praise God:

'Twas but a bird at early dawning wailed  
 Yet over strength, sense, power her note prevailed;  
 My friend to whom my cry came marveled much,  
 I could be moved to tears and prayers by such,

33 "The Islamic Perspective on the Environmental Crisis: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal" (transcript of a conversation between Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Muzaffar Iqbal, recorded in Sherwood Park, Canada, on February 19, 2007), published by TheFreeLibrary.com, last modified June 22, 2007, accessed November 20, 2012. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+Islamic+perspective+on+the+environmental+crisis+%3A+Seyyed+Hossein...-a0164596587>.

34 Nasr, "Masalah lingkungan di dunia Islam kontemporer," 57.

35 "The Islamic Perspective on the Environmental Crisis."

Yea, unto madness; but I gave reply:  
 “What! Shall a bird praise Allah and not I?”<sup>36</sup>

The eagerness of all creatures to praise God can be seen as a prerequisite for a harmonious life and a balanced cosmos. However, Nasr does not only consider classical texts appropriate for proselytisation (*dakwah*) but also modern poetry because both can encourage ordinary people to take greater responsibility for environmental protection and think critically about their own role within the cosmos. The philosophical-mystical approach taken by Nasr is also shared by other Islamic environmentalists such as Massoumeh Ebtekar, the first female vice president of Iran,<sup>37</sup> and Seyyed Mohsen Miri, former rector and active lecturer at the Islamic College for Advanced Studies (ICAS) in Jakarta. Both, in accordance with Nasr, propose to seek answers to environmental challenges in Islamic sources, and assume that environmental problems cannot be solved within the realms of the secular. Miri also argues that science and modernisation are inevitably leading to the destruction of philosophical, cultural and spiritual elements, so that the essence of humans is reduced to purely materialistic and scientific matters. The consequence is a downgrading of culture:

Such a perspective will gradually make spiritual life, aims, hopes, happiness and holiness disappear, since the natural substance is being cut off from the soul, from the invisible world, and from the perfect purity and permanent truth of the creators of high philosophy.<sup>38</sup>

Both Miri and Ebtekar take the thoughts of the Persian philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā, a representative of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy,<sup>39</sup> as a model of

36 Arnold, Edwin, trans., *The Gulistan. Being the Rose Garden of Shaikh Sa'di* (London, New York: Harper & Brothers 1899), 117.

37 She was also the head of the Department of the Environment in Iran from 1997 to 2006 and is currently working as an associate Professor for Cellular and Molecular Immunology at Tarbiat Modares University in Tehran.

38 Miri, Seyyed Mohsen, “Prinsip-prinsip Islam dan filsafat Mulla Shadra sebagai basis etis dan kosmologis lingkungan hidup [Islamic Principles and the Philosophy of Mulla Shadra as Ethical and Cosmological Basis for the Environment],” in *Menanam sebelum kiamat* [Planting before Doomsday], ed. Fachruddin M. Mangunjaya, Husain Heriyanto and Reza Gholami (Jakarta: Conservation International 2007), 25.

39 His birthname was Muhammad ibn Ibrahim ibn Yahya al-Qawami al-Shirazi. For further details of his life see: Kalin, Ibrahim, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mulla Sadra on Existence, Intellect and Intuition* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), xivff.

Islamic environmentalism. The reason Miri provides for the significance of Ṣadrā's philosophy is that his considerations counter a secularised view of nature. Miri uses Ṣadrā's text as an appeal to his readers to go back to their spiritual roots, to the purity and holiness of God, to their own self and nature.<sup>40</sup> Relating to the four journeys Ṣadrā proposes to undertake in trying to reach four stages of cognition, Ebtekar observes that they are necessary to achieve inner peace and balance, which, according to her, is a prerequisite for good leadership. In her description of these journeys on which the traveller transcends his ego, continues his path to the truth by penetrating the spiritual realm to overcome excess and indifference, and finally returns from God to the people, she highlights the third journey's purpose to install peace in the minds and hearts. For her bringing the spirit and the material world into balance is a prerequisite for solving pressing social and environmental problems:

It also seeks to regain the confidence that we have lost in their hearts and minds of the youth. It is an indication of the intrinsic ties between the spirit and the material world – an essential message for the leaders and politicians who claim to be searching for solutions to the quagmires of global warming, war and sense of insecurity and lack of confidence.<sup>41</sup>

These examples reveal that Muslim authorities use Islamic philosophical ideas and classical literature as a means of reviving spiritual values and creating a sense of community, with the purpose of addressing environmental challenges across borders. With regards to the Indonesian context, Muslim actors, aware of Indonesia's role as a big carbon producer, have also increased their efforts to counteract global warming. On the one hand Indonesia's Muslim scholars rely on theological arguments commonly related to in other parts of the Muslim world, but on the other hand they make use of special Indonesian institutions<sup>42</sup> to mitigate the effects of climate change. Among others these are pesantren, Islamic boarding schools belonging to one of the largest educational systems in the world, and the deep-rooted Muslim mass organisations Nahdlatul Ulama

40 Miri, "Prinsip-prinsip Islam dan filsafat Mulla Shadra," 26.

41 Ebtekar, Massoumeh, "Leadership for Peace and Sustainable Development: The Spiritual and Feminine Factor," *Farzaneh* 15,5 (2008): n.p. <http://en.farzanehjurnal.com/index.php/articles/no-15/6-no-15-5-leadership-for-peace-and-sustainable-development-the-spiritual-and-feminine-factor>.

42 Indonesia plays a significant role in Islamic environmentalism. For instance, Schwencke calls Indonesia a 'hot spot for conservation activities and civil society action'. See: Schwencke, A. M., *Globalized Eco-Islam: A Survey of Global Islamic Environmentalism* (Leiden: Leiden Institute for Religious Studies, 2012), 62.

(NU) and Muhammadiyah<sup>43</sup>, which are larger than any other Muslim welfare organisations. Both refer to themselves a ‘moral movement’, characterised by upholding and spreading Islamic values. They officially declared themselves a moral movement in 2006, as a response to the vibrant discourse on pornography and widespread corruption.<sup>44</sup> One difference between the two is that traditional elements such as the veneration of saints play a role for NU, whereas Muhammadiyah strongly rejects this practice. Although in recent years both organisations have lost members, who felt attracted by Islamist groups, especially the Welfare and Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), the Indonesian branch of Hizbut Tahrir (HT), they still claim a membership of millions.<sup>45</sup> These institutions have the potential to influence the community, due to the great number of pesantren and members in the mass organisations. The following paragraph starts with a sketch of pesantren as important traditional educational institutions. Afterwards, it presents local approaches of pesantren affiliated with the largest Indonesian Muslim mass organisation, NU, towards environmentalism, Islamic education and entrepreneurship.

### 3.2 *Local Responses: ‘Eco-Pesantren’ and Muslim Mass Organisations*

Pesantren have been an integral part of Indonesian culture for a long time. There are different theories on the origin of pesantren, for instance that some of the nine saints (*wali sanga*) have established them or that they were learning centres inspired by pre-Islamic institutions.<sup>46</sup> Bruinessen observes that there is

43 Muhammadiyah is the second-largest Indonesian Muslim mass organisation. Its members mostly belong to the urban middle class, and it has a large network of universities, and schools.

44 “Warta NU-Muhammadiyah Akan Deklarasikan Gerakan Moral Anti-Pornografi [Reports that NU and Muhammadiyah will Declare an Anti-pornography Morality Movement],” published by NU Online, last modified January 31, 2006, accessed December 7, 2012. <http://www.nu.or.id/a,public-m,dinamic-s,detail-ids,1-id,4077-lang,id-c,warta-t,NU+Muhammadiyah+Akan+Deklarasikan+Gerakan+Moral+Anti+Pornografi-.phpx>.

45 The problem of losing members to PKS has already given rise to intensive discussions in Muhammadiyah circles since 2008. One example worth mentioning here is a meeting of *Nasyiatul Aisyiyah*, the young women’s body of Muhammadiyah, which was held in the Al Ahzar Suryowijayan mosque in Yogyakarta, Central Java, to tackle the problem of a loss of members. Author’s fieldnotes, May 25, 2008.

46 The first theory relies on *The History of the Land of Java (Babad Tanah Jawi)*, the official chronicle of the kingdom of Mataram; the second mentions *mandala* and *ashrama* as institutions that have influenced pesantren. See: Pigeaud, Theodore G. Th., *Literature of Java: Synopsis of Javanese Literature 900–1900 A.D.*, vol. 1 (The Hague: Nijhoff 1967), 76; De Graaf, H. J., and Theodore G. Th. Pigeaud, *De eerste moslimse voorstendommen op Java:*

little information about the origins of pesantren, although he suggests that colleges at the Al Azhar University in Cairo (*riwaq*) provided models for pesantren in the late 18th and 19th centuries, and the Sawlatiyya<sup>47</sup> in India did so at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>48</sup> According to him, institutionalised education was an exception before the 18th century, and passing *hajis*, pilgrims to Mecca, or Arab traders provided informal basic education:

The most interested students would visit the *‘ulama* at home and even stay there, and the really ambitious would seek more learning in Java or, when possible, Mecca. It seems highly likely to me that this was also the situation in Java and Sumatra during the first centuries of islamisation, and that the first *pesantren* proper were not established before the 18th century.<sup>49</sup>

Since then, however, the number of pesantren has been steadily increasing,<sup>50</sup> and they have become a significant part of Indonesian culture and the educational system. Since Indonesia gained independence, pesantren, Muslim religious schools (*madrasah*),<sup>51</sup> and Western-style governmental schools have been shaping Indonesia's education system. Whereas the state has taken over part of the *madrasah* and schools, pesantren have remained private institutions usually run by a *kiai*. Although classical texts such as the yellow books (*kitab kuning*)<sup>52</sup> determine the religious contents taught in pesantren, everyday

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*studien over de staatkundige geschiedenis van de 15de en 16de eeuw* (S Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1974), 246–247. For a summary of assumptions on the origin of pesantren see: Qomar, Mulamil, *Pesantren: Dari transformasi metodologi menuju demokrasi institusi* (Jakarta: Erlangga, 2005), 8.

47 A *madrasah* based on educational reform in Indian Islam.

48 Bruinessen, Martin van, “*Pesantren* and *kitab kuning*: Maintenance and Continuation of a Tradition of Religious Learning,” in *Texts from the Islands: Oral and Written Traditions of Indonesia and the Malay World* [*Ethnologica Bernica* 4], ed. Wolfgang Marschall (Bern: University of Bern, 1994), 131, 137.

49 Bruinessen, “*Pesantren* and *kitab kuning*,” 133.

50 Azra, Afrianty and Hefner estimate the number of pesantren at 10,000. See: Azra, Azyumardi, Dina Afrianty, and Robert W. Hefner, “*Pesantren* and *madrasa*,” in *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, ed. Robert Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 173.

51 *Madrasah* combine the traditional focus on religious education with non-religious subject matters.

52 Due to the colour of the paper on which early Middle Eastern editions found in Indonesia were printed, these classical commentaries compiled by Muslim theologians are known as “yellow books”. See: Bruinessen, “*Pesantren* and *kitab kuning*,” 121.

practice shows that there is more flexibility in handling teaching material. On the whole, pesantren, traditionally located in rural areas, are relatively open to educational innovations.<sup>53</sup> Their main purpose is to convey profound knowledge about Islam, make children familiar with Islamic values through *kitab kuning*, and foster social cohesion.

With the increasing rise in consciousness of ecological problems in pesantren in the 1980s and the 1990s, and the advent of cultural Islam, some progressive pesantren have started to address topics such as environmentalism,<sup>54</sup> religious tolerance, gender equality and human rights.<sup>55</sup> As Ibu Zaimah, Head of the Subdivision for Social Organisation in the Ministry of Environment, indicates, pesantren Abah Anom in Suryalaya, which focused on irrigation and environmental irrigation,<sup>56</sup> was the first 'eco-pesantren' the Ministry of Environment cooperated with in 1980, although the term was not yet used. As in other pesantren, the *santri*, Islamic boarding school students, and the local population highly esteem and respect the figure of the kiai, and his teaching strongly influences them. This is in line with the fact that, according to Javanese concepts of power, the social environment attributes charismatic power to a kiai. As a role model for the community, he is first and foremost an example for careful interaction with the natural environment when tackling ecological issues.<sup>57</sup>

Factors such as the authority of kiai, their public visibility, charisma, and the possible influence pesantren can exert on environmental issues because of their strong connection with nature have prompted former Environment Minister Muhammad Hatta to transform existing boarding schools into eco-pesantren. When Hatta and Sultan Hamengkubuwono X debated this issue in November

53 Azra, Afrianty, and Hefner assert that this is also true for other Muslim schools in Indonesia. See: Azra, Afrianty and Hefner, "Pesantren and madrasa," 174.

54 However, since pesantren may be Salafist, modernist, traditionalist and/or Sufi in nature, they are not always open-minded towards concepts of environmentalism. In Salafist pesantren there is no curriculum, and students of pesantren will only hear the words of the kiai and the *kitab kuning*.

55 NGOs such as the Paramadina Foundation and the Muslim mass organisations also promoted such ideas in the 1980s and 1990s. See: Fealy, Greg, and Virginia Hooker, ed., *Voices of Islam in Southeast Asia: A Contemporary Sourcebook* (Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), 48.

56 A pesantren of the Sufi order Qodiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyah, founded in 1915. The good cooperation in terms of ecological issues might be explained with the fact that pesantren Abah Anom Suryalaya's branch of the Qodiriyyah-Naqsyabandiyah order strongly supported President Suharto's government in the New Order era. See: Howell, Julia Day, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival," *Journal of Asian Studies* 60.3 (2001): 714.

57 Gade, Anna M., "Tradition and Sentiment in Indonesian Environmental Islam," *Worldviews* 16 (2012): 269.

2009, they reached an agreement to rename and develop 90 pesantren into eco-pesantren, hoping that these will become centres for environmentally friendly conduct and serve as models for the community.<sup>58</sup> Some pesantren with innovative initiatives for environmental protection have obtained the Kalpataru prize, an award of the Indonesian government for interesting ecological concepts.<sup>59</sup> According to the Indonesian Ministry of Environment, ten pesantren have received this award so far.<sup>60</sup> Ibu Zaimah argues that these award winners are important role models for the community:

[...] of course, we turn informal leaders, who have already proven their care for their environment, into models, creating pioneers. And it is these leaders we ask to go out the people, saying come on, let's plant trees.<sup>61</sup>

The idea that pesantren are valuable institutions for tackling climate change was also under discussion at the International Muslim Conference on Climate Change in Bogor, West Java, from 9 to 10 April, 2010. The participants passed a resolution to initiate eco-pesantren as pilot schemes for environmentalism,<sup>62</sup> assuming that they encourage values such as a sense of community, responsibility, and honesty. Another reason for this decision was the assumption that pesantren incorporate Islamic teachings about environmental care and resourcefulness in their curricula. The following section shows how three pesantren with ties to the Muslim mass organisation NU in the region of Yogyakarta, Central Java, understand and practice environmentalism.<sup>63</sup> The examples are pesantren located in Bantul regency:<sup>64</sup> Al-Imdad in Kauman hamlet, Wijirejo village, Pandak subdistrict, Islamic Studies Center (ISC)<sup>65</sup> Aswaja

58 Susanto, Slamet, "Ministry Launches Eco-'pesantren' Program," *The Jakarta Post*, November 6, 2009, accessed November 16, 2012. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/06/ministry-launches-ecopesantreno39-program.html>.

59 This prize has been awarded since 1982.

60 Interview with Ibu Zaimah, November 23, 2012. This interview was carried out by Eva Nisa.

61 Ibid.

62 Simamora, Adiando P., "Muslim Countries to Lead on Green Issues," *The Jakarta Post*, April 12, 2010, accessed November 26, 2012. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2010/04/12/muslim-countries-lead-green-issues.html>.

63 Nahdlatul Ulama was established in Surabaya in 1926 by a group of ulama, Hasjim Asj'ari (d. 1947), Wahab Chasbullah (d. 1971) and Bisri Syamsuri (d. 1980). NU exerts influence on pesantren through kiai, who are often NU officials.

64 Bantul regency is located in the southern part of Yogyakarta Province. Research in these pesantren was carried out in August 2013 and February 2014.

65 Aswaja (*Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah*) is the NU ideology; "Lintang Songo" (nine stars) stands for the nine saints (*wali songo*).

Lintang Songo in Pagergunung hamlet, Piyungan subdistrict, and pesantren Al Furqon in Murtigading village, Sanden subdistrict. These Islamic boarding schools have in common that they have ties with NU and are located in rural areas. Moreover, environmental issues have become part of their everyday life<sup>66</sup> in the last years, when the local Yogyakarta government, in particular the Regional Environment Agency DIY Yogyakarta,<sup>67</sup> put more emphasis on implementing environmental education. One measure taken was inviting kiai, informing them about ways to protect the environment and providing pesantren with necessary tools such as composters.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that the selected pesantren cooperate with the Regional Environment Agency DIY Yogyakarta, and kiai H. Heri Kuswanto bin KH Muhammad Zaidan<sup>69</sup> even works together with six ministries.<sup>70</sup>

Another avenue the heads of the pesantren explored to widen their scope and increase their opportunities was entering the formal structure of NU or becoming a party member of PKB (Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa National Awakening Party), a party with close ties to NU. Kiai Heri is affiliated with PKB, and he was a member of the provincial parliament in Bantul. Muhammad Irfan Chalimy,<sup>71</sup> head of pesantren Al Furqon, is a NU member, and kiai Habib A Syakur, the head of pesantren Al-Imdad, is also the head of the Association of Islamic Boarding Schools (Rabithah Ma'ahid Islamiyah, RMI) in Yogyakarta. This institution is connected to NU and serves to implement its policies within pesantren.

The religious leaders' affiliation with NU shapes their attitude towards environmentalism in several respects. They believe in the importance of *kitab*

66 It should be pointed out here that by no means all pesantren are active in environmentalism. According to Isti Zusriana, the current chairwoman of Fatayat NU Bantul, most pesantren in Yogyakarta do not yet have a similar programme. Private communication with Isti Zusriana, August 26, 2013.

67 Badan Lingkungan Hidup Pemerintah DIY (Regional Environment Agency). DIY stands for: *Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta* (Special Province of Yogyakarta).

68 Interview with Muhammad Irfan Chalimy, August 26, 2013, pesantren Al Furqon.

69 As he is usually called kiai Heri, this term will be henceforth used in the article.

70 The pesantren works together with the Kantor Wilayah Kementerian Agama DIY (Regional Office of the Ministry of Religion), Dinas Kehutanan dan Perkebunan DIY (Agency for Forestry and Horticulture), Dinas Pertanian DIY (Agency for Agriculture), Dinas Kesehatan Pemerintah Kota Yogyakarta (Health Agency), Dinas Pendidikan Kota Yogyakarta (Agency for Education), Dinas Perindustrian, Perdagangan, Koperasi dan UKM Provinsi DIY (Agency for Industry, Trade, cooperatives and Small and Medium Enterprises). It has received several awards, for example for its land usage and environmentalism in August 2010, issued by the State Ministry of Environment.

71 He does not yet carry the title kiai as he is still too young. He now manages pesantren al Furqon because his father died.

*kuning* for the education of the santri and they emphasise the significance of tradition. Their aim is to 'preserve good things from the past'<sup>72</sup> and accommodate modern elements through a combination of entrepreneurship, environmentalism, and traditional Islamic education. Thus, the pesantren continue providing Islamic training such as *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tajwid* (science of Qur'an recitation), *hadith* and *tasawuf*<sup>73</sup> but they now also impart practical knowledge about recycling, composting waste, building fish ponds and planting various trees species and vegetable crops. The kiai agree that santri and the local communities should learn to not throw away or burn rubbish but rather collect and compost it. Each of the pesantren acquired several composters, partly with the support of the Regional Environment Agency, thus acting as role models for the community. Habib A Syakur<sup>74</sup>, kiai of pesantren Al-Imdad in Kauman hamlet, explains that he wishes to develop santri into entrepreneurs with a strong Islamic background. His pesantren attracts santri from the area of Yogyakarta but also from other provinces, for instance West Java, Lampung (South Sumatra), and West Kalimantan. The reason, as kiai Habib asserts, is that his institution provides an inexpensive but solid Islamic education.<sup>75</sup> His pesantren has become more accepted in the last few years; in 2010 only 30 santri had been enrolled, and at present 215 santri stay in Al-Imdad. For this purpose, the santri are involved in several activities, for instance waste management. They collect non-organic waste, which the school then sells for recycling purposes. Moreover, they separate organic waste from plastic rubbish, pile it up for several days, and add bacteria to it. Afterwards, they sift it and leave it to stand for some more days. It is then ready to be used as fertiliser and soil for crops such as eggplants, chilli, and trees, in particular teak trees and yellow mimosa planted on the land of the pesantren.<sup>76</sup> The santri also assist in activities related to working on the wet rice fields in the afternoon, filling polybags with eggplants, chilli and other vegetables and cleaning the pesantren grounds. Kiai Habib says they grow teak trees for their own needs but they have also planted trees on the slopes of volcano mountain Merapi to prevent erosion. He narrates that he also visited numerous mosques and encouraged the *ustadz* (Islamic clerics) to plant trees on its grounds, five teak trees, five mahogany and ten

72 Several informants have mentioned this characteristic.

73 Mysticism or mystical practice itself, which is guided by the concepts of Islamic mystics and regulated by particular orders or brotherhoods (*tarekat*).

74 As people usually call him kiai Habib, this term will henceforth be used in this paper.

75 Interview with kiai Habib, pesantren Al-Imdad, August 22, 2013. If not mentioned otherwise, the author conducted the interviews.

76 Ibid. Kiai Habib also points out that he has encouraged the local community to give vegetable seeds to the pesantren.

yellow mimosa, but not all of them still take part in these activities. Moreover, he asserts that such environmental efforts are useful for the following purposes: the santri learn life skills, the pesantren itself becomes more efficient, and they have a positive impact on the environment.<sup>77</sup>

In a similar way, kiai Heri highlights the benefits for the santri. He recounts that his pesantren provides them with deep Islamic knowledge, life skills, and it teaches them a high degree of social responsibility. According to him, a mixture of religiosity and practical skills is vital for the future perspectives of the santri.<sup>78</sup> Despite the fact that this Islamic boarding school does not offer any regular school education, several practice programmes aim to ensure that santri will become small or medium scale entrepreneurs or farmers.<sup>79</sup> For instance, the santri can acquire experience in raising animals and producing local products such as snacks. Moreover, on five hectares of land the santri learn how to plant wet rice and grow vegetables. According to kiai Heri, it would be ironic if the rice for the pesantren needed to be bought, although there was enough land for planting.<sup>80</sup>

As can be expected from the textual culture of the pesantren, readings of traditional texts do complement environmental practices. Muhammad Irfan Chalimy, for example, head of the pesantren Al Furqon, located in the village Murtigading in district Sanden, refers to concrete Islamic sources as a basis for his environmentalism. Referring to Surat Ar-Rum (30th surah of the Qur'an), he claims that Islam forbids humans to destroy the earth. He argues that although God has envisioned people to perfect nature, many humans cause destruction. However, by reconsidering their actions they could return to the right path. Another example he provides is a debate between God and an angel, where God explains that humans should be his vice regents on earth. The angel disagrees, adding for consideration that humans are not necessarily reliable because they are passionate and wish to control others. The angel does not understand why God does not choose angels to become his vice regents on earth as they do not know *nafsu* (desire, yearning, passion) and thus, in his opinion, are more trustworthy. God closes the conversation, arguing that having *nafsu* is not an

77 Interview with kiai Habib A Syakur, pesantren Al-Imrad, August 22, 2013.

78 Interview with kiai Heri, pesantren Aswaja Lintang Songo, August 23, 2013.

79 In the morning the 61 santri who currently stay in the pesantren go to a near-by school and return to the pesantren in the afternoon, where they participate in evening prayers, discussions and instructions, for instance on *fiqh*, *aqidah* (creed), *akhlak* and *tarikh* (Muslim history).

80 According to kiai Heri, it would be ironic if the rice for the pesantren needed to be bought, although enough land was available to plant it. Interview with kiai Heri, pesantren Aswaja Lintang Songo, August 23, 2013.

impediment for humans becoming his vice regent. If they learn to control their feelings, thus the argument, they will be superior to angels.<sup>81</sup>

Kiai Habib A Syakur argues in a more general way when he puts forward that Islam requires humans to protect the environment. Kiai Heri argues that he does not use any particular texts on environmentalism in his pesantren but his approach is more pragmatic: which measures can pesantren take to become more environmentally friendly? One method he refers to is collecting water from ablution and re-using it for fish ponds. In line with the *hadith* on wastefulness of water mentioned above,<sup>82</sup> kiai Heri rejects wastefulness and emphasises that as water is precious, it needs to be re-used. He describes pesantren as institutions that are able to cause a change in the attitude of the community and the santri towards the environment.<sup>83</sup> This, in kiai Heri's opinion, is not possible without a solid religious education, which should begin when children are one or two years old and continue until they are adults. An essential aspect of this education, he suggests, is to teach children to respect and correct Islamic behaviour. Muhammad Irfan Chalimy also points to the importance of pesantren as a holistic educational system, when he refers to his school as an umbrella for long-lasting common learning.<sup>84</sup> Thus, he shares the assumption that becoming a santri is a life-long process of learning and teaching, which also carries an element of Indonesian nationality.<sup>85</sup> Thus, staying true to one's nation and its educational system is a declared aim of the pesantren under study. Another goal is to preserve cultural elements. According to Muhammad Irfan Chalimy, one of these is Sufism, which is deeply rooted on Java and exerts a strong influence on his pesantren. Practices such as *zikir* (chanting in praise of Allah) and the development of the pupils' secondary virtues, politeness and respect, are indicative of this.<sup>86</sup> However, he thinks he is still too young and inexperienced and his "heart is not yet steadfast" to take the consequences for his own emotional life. In contrast to what Anna Gade has observed for

81 Interview with kiai Heri, pesantren Aswaja Lintang Songo, August 23, 2013.

82 Sunan Ibn Majah, chapter no. 2, *hadith* no. 425, accessed March 3, 2013. <http://ahadith.co.uk/chapter.php?cid=147&page=16>.

83 "Pesantren can be agents of change; they can change the character of the *santri* and the society," Interview with kiai Heri, pesantren Lintang Songo, August 23, 2013.

84 Interview with Muhammad Irfan Chalimy, August 26, 2013, pesantren Al Furqon.

85 This idea was put forward by Baso. See: Baso, Ahmad, *Pesantren Studies 2a. Buku II: Kosmopolitanisme Peradaban Kaum Santri di Masa Kolonial* [Pesantren Studies 2a. Book II: The Cosmopolitan Culture of Muslim Seminarians in the Colonial Era] (Jakarta: Pustaka Afid, 2012), 87.

86 His personal relation to Sufism is marked by the influence of his own father, who had a Sufi teacher. Interview with Muhammad Irfan Chalimy, August 26, 2013, pesantren Al Furqon.

pesantren Al-Ittifaq,<sup>87</sup> he does not appeal to the community to change their hearts by “realising the consequences of one’s positive and negative feelings”.<sup>88</sup> However, his pesantren is an example of preserving religious and cultural elements and giving santri the prospect to become independent and develop the necessary skills to be future entrepreneurs or farmers. Results from a questionnaire reveal that almost a third of the santri consider becoming an entrepreneur an attractive career option, whereas almost none of them have career aspirations in farming. They would like to work in a job where they can earn more money than their parents, most of whom are seasonal workers. Another explanation they give is that they want to be useful for society.

Within wider NU circles, traditional practices are also kept alive, as Ibu Susiana, Secretary of the Muslimat NU Foundation for Education (Yayasan Pendidikan Muslimat NU), and secretary of its Research and Development Department narrates. She points out that planting a coconut tree when a baby is born, a practice of NU families, is meant to revive spiritual values to foster environmentalism. As a symbol of the people’s strong ties to nature, coconuts or other gardening products are offered when the child has grown up and the wedding ceremony is taking place. Thus, the child gets an understanding of caring for the environment, which, according to Ibu Susiana, is an element of Islamic teaching.<sup>89</sup> She highlights that if people do fell a tree, a new one must be planted, and thus conservation is enabled. Ibu Susiana claims that in this sense women, particularly in rural areas, are important multipliers because they have a close relationship with nature. For her, women combat the negative effect of modernisation by preserving tradition.<sup>90</sup>

These examples showed that although religious leaders do not explicitly address climate change as a topic, they carry out environmental practices or in the case of Ibu Susiana’s example, local rituals and encourage the local Muslim communities to do something good (*amr ma’ruuf*). However, NU also established special departments to tackle climate change. An important trigger certainly was the tsunami that devastated the North Sumatran province Aceh in December 2004. In 2005 NU established its Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (Penanggulangan Bencana Berbasis Komunitas, CBDRM), launching community projects such as ‘Pesantren and community involvement in managing disaster risks in coastal areas through mangrove planting’ in Bron-dong district, Lamongan, East Java, in 2010. In this project NU involved coastal

87 This pesantren is located in Ciburial Village, near Bandung in West Java and also has a Sufi background.

88 Gade, “Tradition and Sentiment in Indonesian Environmental Islam,” 284.

89 Interview with Ibu Susiana, November 20, 2012, Muslimat NU, Jakarta. This interview was carried out by Eva Nisa.

90 Ibid.

communities in conservation efforts, mobilised pesantren and taught people how to plant and nurse mangroves.<sup>91</sup> One of CBDRM's prominent characteristics is that it uses local knowledge to tackle environmental problems, as Avianto Muhtadi, the current head of the Nahdlatul Ulama Climate Change and Disaster Management Institution (Lembaga Penanganan Bencana dan Perubahan Iklim Nahdlatul Ulama, LPBI NU), CBDRM's successor organisation, emphasises:

This [community based]<sup>92</sup> concept does not come from outside but elicits one's own local and traditional knowledge, since it is the communities themselves that know the state of their environment, the topography, geography and everyday practices. Religion and norms are expressed, they unite and converge and become a communal lifestyle in these areas.<sup>93</sup>

CBDRM, however, regarded as an 'ad hoc response' to disasters, with the purpose to curb the most harmful effects,<sup>94</sup> was substituted by LPBI NU subsequent to its 32nd Muktamar held in Makassar from 22–27 March 2010. LPBI NU continues the community-based approach but sets different priorities than CBDRM, with a more pronounced focus on disaster management and advocacy. Projects launched so far relate to waste management, advocacy, and policy. The first one, 3R (Reuse, Reduce, Recycle), implemented in West Java, familiarised the local people with waste management machines and informed them how to use compost efficiently, similar to the case studies of pesantren. The second programme, Institutional Advocacy for Disasters (Advokasi Kelembagaan Bencana, AKB), aimed at informing local communities about existing regional laws on disaster management through announcements (*wara-wara*), as well as gatherings at which Islam is discussed (*pengajian*). Moreover, it pushed regional governments in eight East Java regencies<sup>95</sup> to enact new regional laws on this

91 "Pesantren and Community Involvement in Managing Disaster Risks in Coastal Areas through Mangrove Planting," published by Mangroves for the Future, accessed December 4, 2012. <http://www.mangrovesforthefuture.org/assets/Repository/Documents/012-SG-ID-01-06-07.pdf>.

92 Author's addition.

93 "LPBI NU, garda depan penanganan bencana di NU [LPBI NU, the Avant Garde of Dealing with Disasters in NU]," published by NU Online, last modified June 28, 2010, accessed December 4, 2012. <http://www.nu.or.id/a,public-m,dinamic-s,detail-ids,5-id,23553-lang,id-c,halaqoh-t,LPBINU++Garda+Depan+Penanganan+Bencana+di+NU-.phpx>.

94 Ibid.

95 The regencies were Trenggalek, Tulungagung, Malang, Lumajang, Pasuruan, Mojokerto, Lamongan, and Bojonegoro.

issue.<sup>96</sup> In cooperation with the National Board on Disaster Management (Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana, PNPB) the third programme combined activities in managing disasters. In addition to raising disaster management and climate change issues, NU also launched a more general programme in 2007, the National Movement for Forestry and the Environment (Gerakan Nasional Kehutanan dan Lingkungan, GNKL), which mainly deals with forest conservation in areas close to pesantren. NU-affiliated kiai consider reforestation and other conservation efforts a part of a Muslim's service to God (*ibadah*) and a responsibility of man's function as *khalifa*.<sup>97</sup>

Many activities of the NU environmental departments<sup>98</sup> are similar in that they assist the government in increasing the communities' awareness of environmental problems by training local authorities, holding workshops, and disseminating brochures for different target groups, including children. NU has often been criticised for 'political opportunism', due to its support of the government. In this context, however, Bruinessen convincingly argues that in the case of NU political accommodation is not based on expedience but might rather be considered a matter of principle. Moreover, he points out that many kiai consider "one hour of political chaos (*fitna*) worse than a century of tyranny, in line with the Sunni tradition of political conservatism".<sup>99</sup> Although the latter statement might sound somewhat exaggerated, I agree with Bruinessen that

96 "Langkah LPBI NU dalam penanggulangan bencana [Measures Taken by LPBI NU to Handle Disasters]," published by NU Online, last modified July 17, 2012, accessed December 6, 2012. <http://www.nu.or.id/a,public-m,dinamic-s,detail-ids,5-id,38862-lang,id-c,halaqoh-t,Langkah+LPBI+NU+dalam+Penanggulangan+Bencana-.phpx>.

97 For instance, kiai KH Noor Nasroh Hadiningrat, head of the pesantren Wali Sembilan Gomang in Singgahan, East Java, emphasises this aspect. See: "Kiai NU se-Tuban Sepakat Lestarkan Hutan [Kiai of NU in Tuban Agree to Preserve the Forest]," published by Shvoong, last modified April 20, 2012, accessed December 7, 2012. <http://id.shvoong.com/society-and-news/opinion/2284646-kiai-nu-se-tuban-sepakat/>.

98 It should be pointed out here that the second-largest Indonesian mass organisation, Muhammadiyah, has also set up their own departments for tackling environmental problems, including climate change. It has founded its first environmental institution in 2002, the Institute for the Study and Empowerment of the Environment (*Lembaga Studi dan Pemberdayaan Lingkungan*, LSPLH). Furthermore, it established the Environmental Institute (*Lembaga Lingkungan Hidup*, LLH) in 2005, and the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC) in 2007. Subsequent to its 46th Muktamar from July 3 to 8, 2010, Muhammadiyah changed LLH to Environment Council (*Majelis Lingkungan Hidup*, MLH), with the purpose of 'accelerating the transformation of the environmental movement within the Muhammadiyah body'. One of MDMC's roles is to support the victims of disasters.

99 Bruinessen, "Pesantren and kitab kuning," 125.

stability, as well as nationalism, are guiding principles of NU scholars. KH Said Aqiel Siradj, the current chairman of the Central Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (Pengurus Besar Nahdlatul Ulama, PBNU), has put forward in this context that the Indonesian nation is a gift from God people should be thankful for.<sup>100</sup>

The Indonesian Ministry of Environment also co-published a major publication of NU's eco-theology,<sup>101</sup> *Jurisprudence of the Environment: Environmental Ethics*,<sup>102</sup> another indication of NU's readiness to assist the government in implementing its programmes. This book resulted from a meeting of religious scholars in Lido, Sukabumi, West Java, in May 2004. The purpose of this meeting was to bring a group of experts together with the purpose of creating a theology of the environment and subsequently using the results as a reference work in the community. This text contains source collections of classical texts, in addition to commentaries and summaries. In their debates, the ulama discussed how *kitab kuning* deal with environmental issues and how to use natural resources in a more sustainable way. One important work they referred to is *Islamic Jurisprudence and its Proofs*,<sup>103</sup> a text published by Wahbah al-Zuhaili, an expert of contemporary *fiqh* and a well-known Islamic scholar born 1932 in Damascus. His works have become compulsory reading for students of *tafsir* (exegesis of parts of the Qur'an), and Islamic law in Indonesia. He received his degree from the *Syariah* department<sup>104</sup> of the Al Azhar University in Cairo in

100 Quoted in "Meneguhkan Visi Kebangsaan Nahdlatul Ulama [Strengthening the Vision of Nationalism in Nahdlatul Ulama]," published by NU Online, last modified February 6, 2013, accessed September 18, 2013. <http://www.nu.or.id/a,public-m,dinamic-s,detail-ids,4-id,42323-lang,id-c,kolom-t,Meneguhkan+Visi+Kebangsaan+Nahdlatul+Ulama-.phpx>.

101 Amri points out that, in 2007, Muhammadiyah also formulated its eco-theology. See: Amri, Ulil, "Divine Power: Faith-based Mass Groups Take on Climate Change," *Strategic Review* 1.1 (2011): 99. Muhammadiyah's Environment Council MLH has also published books based on their eco-theology, for instance: Majelis Lingkungan Hidup, Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup, ed., *Akhlaq Lingkungan: Panduan Berperilaku Ramah Lingkungan* [Environmental Ethics: A Guide to Environmentally Friendly Conduct] (Jakarta: Majelis Lingkungan Hidup PP Muhammadiyah, Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup Republik Indonesia, 2011), together with the Indonesian Ministry of Environment. This book argues that the present environmental destruction is a result of human misperception and wrongdoings and provides examples from Islamic sources on how Muslims should behave in an environmentally friendly manner.

102 Muhammad, Ahsin Sakho et al., ed., *Fiqh lingkungan; fiqh al-b'iah* [Jurisprudence of the Environment: Environmental Ethics], 2nd edition (Jakarta: Conversation International, 2006).

103 Zuhaili, Wahbah, *Al-fiqh al-Islami wa adillathu* [Islamic Jurisprudence and Its Proofs] (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1984).

104 Department for Islamic Law.

1956. The book *Islamic Jurisprudence and its Proofs* is based on religious scholars who represent the four *madhab*.<sup>105</sup> In addition to matters of legal issues and worship, it also discusses contemporary socio-political and economic issues. Relating to the fourth volume of this work,<sup>106</sup> the ulama concluded that humans may only use their rights as long as they are in accordance with Islamic rules and do not result in damage or danger for individuals or groups. Furthermore, based on volume three<sup>107</sup> they stated that an individual may construct any building on his property as long as it does not obstruct the neighbours' sun and air. A target of criticism, however, is the government's land use policy. Kiai KH Asyhari Abta of pesantren al-Munawwir, Krapyak, Yogyakarta, criticises the government for taking away land use rights from the people, especially for traditional land (*tanah adat*) and cemeteries, as it opposes *fiqh*. He asserts that in this way enterprises can easily exploit land resources.<sup>108</sup> The kiai suggests that the government only issues user licenses for businesses (Hak Guna Usaha, HGU) on a case-by-case basis.

#### 4 Concluding Remarks

One idea Muslim scholars share on environmentalism is that man's role is to keep the balance and harmony of the universe by performing good deeds. Thus, in relation to the theological framework of environmentalism, many of them highlight the prominent role of humans as *khalifa*, which not only contains rights but also the duty of basing his thoughts and actions on *akhlak* to preserve nature. They argue that only this Islamic moral approach mitigates climate change effects and ensures environmental protection. Across the borders between Islamic religious currents such as Sufism and Islamism, the wish to preserve one's identity and revive traditional cultural values guides the ideas on environmentalism in the Muslim world. In this context, pieces of classical Persian literature such as the *Gulistan* by Saadi, or Islamic philosophy like Mullā Ṣadrā's, serve to create a vision of what an ideal relationship between God, man, and nature should be. As selected examples indicate, several ulama propose that these sources are important to reject a secular worldview, rediscover one's spirituality, and find inner equilibrium and peace. They see secularism,

105 The Hambali, Hanafi, Maliki and Syafi'i are the four schools of thought concerning the interpretation of Islamic law.

106 Volume IV, 30.

107 Volume III, 13.

108 Muhammad, Ahsin Sakho et al., *Fiqh lingkungan*, 82.

connoted with Western capitalism and claims to power, as a primary cause of environmental degradation. In a world of increasing insecurity Muslim scholars construct Islam as a moral-religious counter-model, which may restore morality, prevent further destruction and raise ecological awareness. However, in Indonesia, this does not only relate to the increasing influence of Islamist groups such as HTI or the Muslim Brotherhood. Rather, also adherents of traditional Islam and Sufis tend to use this argument, thus distinguishing themselves from the West and creating their own identity through elements of traditional culture.

Both the government and Muslim actors are becoming increasingly aware that environmental protection is necessary. Several Muslim CSOs hosted the International Muslim Conference on Climate Change in Bogor in 2010 to counteract environmental degradation. Moreover, the government turned a considerable number of *pesantren* into *eco-pesantren* with the aim to mitigate the damages of climate change and ensure sustainable development. Governmental authorities realised that they needed to address local communities to increase awareness of environmental problems. Thus, they contacted local religious leaders and tried to persuade them of the benefits of implementing waste management programmes, for instance. There are several reasons why Muslim scholars in NU and affiliated *pesantren* have welcomed such efforts. First, political accommodation is strong within NU circles. The article showed that the Ministry of Environment co-authored part of NU's eco-theology, and NU also carries out its activities in close cooperation with the local government. At this point, I would like to re-iterate Amri's statement that the government lacks programmes at the grassroots level and so has to rely on mass organisations such as NU.<sup>109</sup> Acknowledging their support of governmental initiatives, I further argue, however, that the Muslim mass organisations also serve as moral guides for the government by advising authorities and proposing their own ideas. One example is when NU's National Movement for Forestry and the Environment (GNKL) at a national gathering on sustainable forest management and civil society empowerment in July 2012 issued advice (*tausiyah*) urging the government to take forceful measures to prevent enterprises from destroying the forests and the environment. It further reinforced that destroying the environment is prohibited (*haram*) and must be regarded as a criminal act (*jinayat*).<sup>110</sup>

109 Amri, Ulil, "Divine Power," 106.

110 Mangunjaya, Fachruddin Majeri, and Jeanne Elizabeth McKay, "Reviving an Islamic Approach for Environmental Conservation in Indonesia," *Worldviews* 16 (2012): 303.

Another reason why religious scholars support the environmentalist cause is that it adds to the common good of the nation, the people, local communities and the santri. Based on verses of the Qur'an and *hadith*, they consider that in this way santri and local people are encouraged to live in harmony with nature. The practice programmes, tree and crop planting, animal husbandry and waste management serve to solve environmental problems, teach santri practical skills and make the pesantren more profitable. The kiai believe that they provide attractive perspectives for their santri as they teach them how to live in accordance with Islamic regulations, provide them with entrepreneurial skills and guide them towards independence. The fact that the number of pupils has been rapidly increasing in these pesantren in the last years is indicative of the fact that this combination is well received among the pupils' parents.

An additional element worth mentioning here is that although religious authorities play an important role in conveying ideas about climate change, they are not the only ones who encourage an environmentally sensitive way of life. Rather, traditional local practices such as planting coconut trees when a child is born into an NU family also serve to foster sustainable development. While it is safe to assert that the organisations and actors presented in this article have increasingly become aware of their responsibility towards nature, further research is required to analyse the impact of local practices, eco-theology and proselytisation.