



Tradition and Sentiment in Indonesian Environmental Islam¹

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Abstract

In 2010–2011, new public messages circulated in Indonesia's public sphere to “green” Islam. Formal and semi-formal religious education increasingly reflected and supported new ecological curricula and models. Messages of “eco-dakwah” (religious and environmental outreach) by religious authorities connected theory and practice, long established in the *pesantren* (*madrasa*) tradition. This paper highlights two affective strategies that were emerging as forms of environmental Islam: first, adapting “tradition” to be a resource for experiential awareness; and, second, the related expectation that feeling and emotion carry persuasive power to alter perception and inspire action. This *dakwah* cast moral sentiment and action in this world with respect to natural states anticipated in the world to come.

Keywords

Islam, Qur'an, environment, Indonesia, emotion, education

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The world's most populous Muslim-majority country, Indonesia, is known transnationally for highly effective strategies of Islamic outreach (*dakwah*). In the twenty-first century, committed religious leaders circulated Muslim ecological messages, a trend here called “eco-*dakwah*.” In these modes of preaching, teaching and example, traditional ideas in mainstream Indonesian Islam and Muslim religious “culture” were recast as environmental discourses, and vice-versa. In Indonesia, formats for new messages of religious ecological engagement in the public sphere included, for example, many types of formal and semi-formal curricula. Although full-scale Muslim ecological religious preaching was only just beginning to emerge during the period of my visits in 2010 and 2011, some *kiai* (religious teachers and preachers) were self-consciously developing materials for public outreach. Some of these invoked affect and feeling in order to enhance persuasive effect, as had occurred in other forms of Islamic religious *dakwah* in previous decades.²

Across dimensions of public teaching, preaching and discussion, Indonesian Muslim religious ecological outreach highlighted experiential knowledge and heartfelt, applied practice. The authority of proven visibility was evident in institutions labeled recently to be “eco-*pesantren*” (ecological traditional religious boarding schools), and these values were also a basis for new religious curricula developed by leadership of the national organization, Muhammadiyah. In 2010 and 2011, I visited (and in many cases, re-visited) fourteen *pesantren* (*madrasas*), residential Islamic schools often associated with the networks of the organization, Nahdlatul Ulama³ (NU) on Java and also spent time at the headquarters of Muhammadiyah in Jogjakarta. Additionally, I had conversations at offices of NGOs and other organizations in Jakarta.

I begin this paper by presenting, first, some public environmental programs in Indonesia conveyed through NGOs and semi-formal curricula, both religious and secular. Second, the essay turns to Muslim religious authority that connected environmental theory and practice, represented

² See Gade 2004 and Gade 2008 for a study of emotion in contemporary Indonesian Muslim religious revival and a survey of traditions of religious sentiment in Islam, respectively; foundational anthropological studies of affect in Indonesian cultures and politics include H. Geertz 1959, U. Wikan 1995 and B. Stoler 2009; Indonesianist C. Geertz defined “cultural systems” of religion in terms of “moods and motivations” in 1973.

³ Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) are two national Islamic voluntary organizations founded in the twentieth century in Indonesia. It is commonly said by observers that Muhammadiyah is more “modernist,” whereas NU is more “traditionalist.”

by the movement called “eco-*pasantren*.” Third, I discuss how the adapted and authoritative messages of eco-*dakwah* echo established patterns in Indonesian Islamic preaching, such as the idea of cultural “traditions” like recitation and song. As with other forms of religious *dakwah* in this context, these performances drew self-consciously on the persuasive power of affect and feeling, both as directly experienced and also as expressed through sentiment. In this environmental ethics, grounded in *hadith* and Qur’an, emotion was expected to make meaningful ecological theory and practice that connected to impending experiences of satisfaction and regret in this life and the next.

Adapting Messages

Framing Problems and Solutions

New public messages circulate in Indonesia with respect to countless environmental challenges. In 2010, these included strategies to sell “green” products to consumers, like plastic grocery bags that, some say, will rapidly decompose, and mass marketing at “green shopping nights” at big-city mega-malls. Billboards advertise residential communities, which, like the lush golf courses they also resemble, are said to be “green.” There were also messages that were officially promoted, such as Jakarta’s “bike to work” campaign, led by Indonesia’s First Lady in 2010, along with the closure of one of the city’s main avenues to motorized traffic for a few hours on the weekend. Messages across Indonesia’s diverse faith communities were also “going green,” as environmentalists and conservationists recognized the authority and potential persuasive power of religious voices.

For many, the problem was seen to be personal habits like “lifestyle” and littering, while for others it was rooted more deeply in practices of industries such as energy, logging, mining, and palm oil; for a few, establishing global structures such as fair and binding international protocols for greenhouse gas emissions was seen to be an even more relevant challenge. However, there was at least one overall theme that prevailed, which was that it was imperative to educate public attitudes and perceptions about the environment. Projects of numerous NGOs, along with new formal and semi-formal curricula and practices at older “traditional” institutions, shared the fundamental goal to guide and instruct social and structural change with respect to ecology.

Semi-Formal Curricula and NGOs

In 2010, many trends in “green Islam” in Indonesia were related to REDD (Reduction of Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation) and REDD +, the names given to the proposed United Nations scheme for carbon preservation. These had enjoyed much initial support from Norway in the form of a billion dollars to protect Indonesia’s extensive rain forests in 2009. Hundreds of millions of dollars were also said to have been promised for Indonesia by the USA, despite the apparently muted profile of the issue during President Barack Obama’s long-awaited return to visit to Indonesia in late 2010. How some transnational NGOs approached specifically Islamic religious bodies in Indonesia was admittedly tentative. Nevertheless, many environmentalists and conservationists recognized that it was essential to have the support from within local and national religious networks in order to implement programmatic change in Indonesia (Mangunjaya 2011), for example, with the World Bank’s “Faith and Environment Initiative,” entitled “Islamic Boarding Schools and Conservation,” in 2004–2005.

The World Bank’s initiative also sponsored work in the area of environmental *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), for which an Arabic term has recently been coined, “*fiqh al-bi’ah*” (environmental religious law). In 2004, organized by the World Bank and Conservation International, legal scholars were invited to hold extensive discussions to develop the new academic field (Muhammad et al. 2006; see also Alie Yafie 1994). Among the outcomes of this was a re-intellectualization of original Islamic ideas such as “*hima*” and “*harim*” (conservation and protected areas), which also relate naturally to the conservationist aspects of present proposals under REDD. Also in the area of law, an initial *fatwa* (non-binding legal opinion) against harmful environmental practice circulated after 2003, following a conference of scholars at *pesantren* Al-Wasilah in Garut, West Java, organized by the *pesantren*’s *kiai* (leading religious scholar), K.H. Thonthawi Djauhari Musaddad.⁴ This activity was preceded by a workshop held at Al-Wasilah

⁴ Here is my translation of the key language which appears at the end of the *fatwa*, from Indonesian: “Anyone who destroys the environment, it is as if he or she has transgressed and defied (*melanggar dan memerangi*) the command of God Most High and His Prophet. In so doing, he or she has sowed destruction on the face of the earth (*berbuat kerusakan di muka bumi*) with an impact that amounts to the destruction of the natural resources that are essential needs of each and every creature on the face of the earth.” (Yamin 2007: 224; emphasis mine). Through personal communication, K.H. Thonthawi explained that the Qur’anic command not to “corrupt the earth [environment],” carries a severe penalty like other transgressions of limits (*hudud*) with criminal punishments specified in the Qur’an. This indicates that “to corrupt the earth” was an offense against others (not primarily God).

in 2002, “Islam and Conservation,” with over three hundred attendees and organized in cooperation with the Alliance of Religion and Conservation (UK), the World Bank, and other others.

In my own conversation with K.H. Thonthawi, key author of the above *fatwa* in 2003, at his *pesantren* in West Java, however, the *kiai* explained painstakingly that he distinguished social messages about the environment that were meant just for the “*otak*” (“brain,” mind, intellect) from those that really reached the “heart.” He claimed norms that were merely from the “*otak*,” such as rationalized rules and laws, can always be avoided somehow through clever thinking, or even just flat-out ignored. However, he said, true religious norms (here meaning also environmental norms) are not issued or processed by the human brain; they come straight from and go straight to the “*hati*” (heart).⁵ Accessible teaching based on this insight, not on a scholarly *fatwa*, was the basis for the living *eco-dakwah* this traditional religious scholar had been bringing directly to Indonesian villages for a decade. K.H. Thonthawi commented that the people with whom he worked in the villages already understood the significance and seriousness of environmental issues. They are the ones affected already, and they are “ready for anything” (“*masyarakat desa siap untuk apa-apa*”), like planting trees for reforestation, he said. According to him, it was just the planners who still could not, or would not, understand (see Musaddad 2010).

To some extent, the programmatic ideas developed in Indonesia with the support of NGOs, like “*hima*” and “*harim*,” were implemented in practice. In cooperation with several international organizations, one “*eco-pesantren*” not far from Jakarta, for example, had established a dedicated “Harim Zone,” which saw many international visitors each year. The *kiai* of this *pesantren*, Darul Ulum, K.H. Ahmad Yani, explained the program for the Harim Zone as follows: each *santri* (student) had to plant a tree within the eight-hectare boundary area two years before graduation. He or she was to care for the tree, and each student would receive a final grade on how well his or her tree had thrived—or not. In addition Friday mornings were dedicated to required clean-up in the river bed running adjacent to the Harim Zone (incidentally, not far from an extraction location used by a company that bottled water for commercial sale).

“If you damage the ecosystem of a mountain,” he explained, “it is really as if you killed a person.” “The loss,” he went on, “can be in the millions.” He quickly added that does not even mention the loss of species.

⁵ K.H. Thonthawi explained it with these words: “The laws of religion are not ruled by the mind; they are not necessary to rationalize; they are always [already] present in the heart” (*Hukuman agama tidak dihaki oleh otak—bukan akal—sudah hati*).

Another educational project connected to national and transnational environmental networks, especially the body recently set up to address climate change challenges, was The Climate Project Indonesia (TCP). Unlike the Indonesian Youth Forum, which has become an active organizer on this issue as well, the TCP is affiliated with the organization founded by former United States Vice President Albert Gore, who, like President Obama, also visited Indonesia in 2010. In 2009, the TCP released a film, *Lakukan Sekarang Juga* (“Just Do It Now”), on the model of Al Gore’s award-winning film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. The one-hour movie presents scientific models for global warming as well as interviews with Indonesians about their experiences (with climate disturbance now making planting and fishing seasons unpredictable, etc.), and outlines plans for the adaptation and mitigation of the effects of present and future climate change. The video comes with a training booklet to guide presenters in directing discussion after showing the film to community groups. In 2010, the time of my visit, TCP trainers were making the trip to Nashville, Tennessee, to train with former Vice President Gore in person in the USA. The Indonesian Director of TCP was keen on developing trainers who could engage religious communities in order to better reach and educate audiences.

Formal Curricula: Secular and Religious

In around 2003, the national government introduced a formal curriculum for public schools for all grade levels, for which individual schools could elect to “opt in” or “out.” Some religious schools also adopted the curriculum. A survey of the textbooks at the primary through junior high school level indicates a characteristic Indonesian synergy of social studies and environmental studies, with the idea of lived “environment” encompassing human, and paradigmatically familial, interactions (for example, Witarso 2010). The curriculum also focuses especially at the primary level on ecological messages that were already familiar at the time of the early “environmental movement” in the late 1960s and early 1970s, such as picking up litter.

In 2010, the national Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah, was in the process of developing a pilot curriculum to formalize environmental education in its own schools (Mawardi et al. 2009). One Muhammadiyah school, near the national center of the organization in Jogjakarta, had been nationally recognized for achievement in this area. There, following the model of the government’s new curriculum, teachers had come up with their own materials on site for teaching and learning environmental studies

as part of the flexible “local content” component of the national curriculum set by the central organization of Muhammadiyah.

New materials used for teaching and learning environmental studies at this award-winning Muhammadiyah school included a short video found on the Internet’s “YouTube” website, “8 Minutes Climate Issues.” In Indonesian, the short film shows effects of catastrophic environmental change. “It always makes students cry,” remarked the teacher. He said that it gripped emotional attention at the start of the academic unit on ecology, and that after being moved to tears the children were motivated to learn more in the lessons to follow. Along with a school curriculum for environmental studies, the Environmental Committee of Muhammadiyah’s Central Board in Jogjakarta was also at the time (2010–2011) developing systematically a compatible “theology,” which features “seven principles of environmental ethics,” as well as a theorization of key Qur’anic ideas such as “the earth,” “*al-ard*” (*Teologi Lingkungan* 2008, by Mawardi et al.; recent Indonesian works attempting a similar academic project include Mufid 2010).⁶

Part of the context for Muhammadiyah’s development in the area of curriculum and religious doctrine, in addition to the work of NGOs and formal schooling mentioned above, was the official announcement of “*eco-pesantren*.” *Pesantren*, traditional religious schools, have tended to be located in rural areas. In 2009, State Environment Minister Gusti Muhammad Hatta announced the new national program of “*eco-pesantren*,” renaming longstanding institutions and practices. Although leaders would commonly cite core goals such as instilling a “love of nature,” a firsthand survey of teaching and learning at these institutions shows less of a drive to develop a formal or semi-formal curriculum. Instead, the authority and model of individual charismatic teachers and preachers (*kiai*) were the essence of the adaptation and application of ecological practices at the traditional institutions. There, and consistent with Sufi-influenced traditions of pedagogy, environmental teaching was to reach “the heart” through modes that were both immediately externally apparent on the one hand, and directly internally experienced on the other.

⁶ See Manjunjaya and McKay, “Reviving an Islamic Approach for Environmental Conservation in Indonesia,” in this volume, for more discussion of educational initiatives, including the recent materials by Mangunjaya, *Islam Peduli Lingkungan* (for which I attended an intensive “launch” teacher workshop for Muhammadiyah educators already teaching an environmental studies curriculum in 2011).

“Eco-*pesantren*”

In general, religious Muslims serving the Ministry of the Environment and other organizations that promoted environmental values who already had longstanding connections to *pesantren* were the same as those who had coined the new designation, “eco-*pesantren*.” Prior to 2009, there had been some effort on Java to found new institutions as “eco-*pesantren*” from the ground up, necessitating imaginative shaping of the idea. For example, Darut Tauhiid in Bandung, headed by the national personality Aa Gym, was establishing an “eco-*pesantren*” in 2008-2010; and, “Hifdhul Bi’ah,” inspired by the founding vision by the late Dr. Kusnadi Hardjasoemantri on the slopes of Mt. Merapi near Jogjakarta, had been intended as a dedicated “eco-*pesantren*” and environmental education center before the project stalled in 2006. One way to understand the phenomenon labeled “eco-*pesantren*” on Java, however, is as a re-casting of old patterns and practices that have long existed, especially with respect to the relationship shared by these institutions with the agricultural communities that usually surround them. As expressions of environmental theory and practice, “eco-*pesantren*” could be said to represent a combination of various global “environmental utopias” (Guha 2006 : 71-89), resonating with strains of ecological thought and practice that emerged across Asia, North America, and elsewhere in the last century.

When Indonesian discussants began imaging a history for traditional institutions now newly called “eco-*pesantren*,” there were at least two developments of the twentieth century that were often said to be the antecedents of the twenty-first century concept. First was the boy scouts. Project-based scouting activities such as local area clean-up (often riverbeds), as well as “outdoor recreation” (rope courses are popular in eco-*pesantren*), were two elements that were said to distinguish Islamic schools officially named “eco-*pesantren*” apart from the usually rural and often agrarian *pesantren*.

Second, technical agricultural colleges with a Muslim character that had started in the 1950s and 1960s were what some wished to consider the original “ecological *pesantren*.” These Islamic schools, like Darul Fallah in Bogor, had long provided training in “modern” agricultural techniques and still provided plant stock to farmers nationally. In 2010 these institutions were, however, admittedly no longer said to be leading global trends of “environmental studies,” a much newer field from the 1980s. And even after half a century, these old “modern” agricultural *pesantren* had not yet blended religious and technical material in teaching and learning.

Following on the announcement of “eco-*pesantren*” in 2009, some semi-official points were quickly developed in order to define them for purposes like those of the Ministry of Environment. These criteria were supported by new competitions in environmental “proposals” solicited from *pesantren* in areas such as grounds improvement and library acquisitions.⁷ Below, I offer description of “eco-*pesantren*” based on firsthand composite observations at more than a dozen schools, some of which were already participating as designated “eco-*pesantren*” with the government’s program, while some did not. Despite the diversity of these institutions and the differences in the personal styles of their *kiai*, there was remarkable uniformity with respect to four general themes.

Autonomy and Enterprise

A value and practice shared across the *eco-pesantrens* surveyed was self-sufficiency. Evident to varying degrees, this was usually cast more in terms of institutional autonomy than “sustainability.” It was commonly said to be a characteristic that defined a particular institution as being an “eco-*pesantren*.” The outstanding example is the massive school, Al-Zaytun, located near the northern coast of Java at Indramayu, which produces its own food and materials. With the exception of the production of “*biodiesel*” fuel from animal waste, which was in place or planned at several institutions, across the sites I visited, there was little or no active discussion of becoming self-supporting or going “off the grid” in terms renewable energy. I only heard one example of wind or solar energy being discussed seriously, as a part of the plans for one institution (Darut Tauhiid).

Related to autonomy was the *pesantrens*’ focus on enterprise. *Pesantrens* are traditionally quite entrepreneurial, and *eco-pesantrens* would often harvest or manufacture goods for sale, such as yogurt. Also common was a connection to the tourist industry in some form or another. For example, the “outdoor activities” available at the *pesantrens* or the land it owned could represent a commercial interest, and when scheduled groups came to several *pesantrens* (such as for corporate retreats or transitional retirement preparation), the rope courses were said to be a welcome diversion from many hours spent sitting in lectures and training sessions.

⁷ The criteria for the competition in proposals from prospective “eco-*pesantren*” conducted by the Ministry of the Environment in 2010 were: 1. Teaching and Curriculum; 2. Clean Grounds; 3. Resource Management /Waste Management; 4. Library Resources; and, 5. Love/ Care for Environment.

Modeling and Social Involvement

At various *eco-pesantrens* there was a core expectation that the design and practice of the school as it related to the environment would serve as a model for others, whether in terms of student learning, local farms and communities, or also farther afield in national “society.” One widespread example of this was the practice of recycling water for ritual ablutions, *wudu*. At many locations, besides the pleasant and relaxing grounds, the symbolic significance of water-reuse from the mosque was the first feature that indicated the school was an authentic “*eco-pesantren*.” More than one *kiai* also pointed out another “water cycle” on site that was open to thoughtful reflection, in that the wastewater from the latrines fertilized the ponds of the school’s fish farm.

Some of the most in-depth personal communication I had on the point of the instructive and modeling function of Indonesian religious institutions with respect to environmentalism was with the prominent academic scholar outgoing Rector of the National Islamic University in Jogjakarta, UIN Sunan Kalidjaga, Dr. Amin Abdullah. Dr. Abdullah had long been a leading conservationist who began to publish material on Islam and the environment as far back as the 1970s. Dr. Abdullah explained how in his tenure as rector of the university, he felt an obligation to put his ecological values into practice. Just as with Indonesian public school curriculum, “social ecology” and justice was seen to be “environmental” as well as “ecological.” (we discussed the example of disabled and wheelchair access to buildings.) Environmental measures, such as restoring the riverfront area near campus, were also to serve as a model to other public institutions. Another example of practice at a *pesantren* serving self-consciously as a demonstrative model to others was the attempt at *Pesantren Pabelan* in Central Java to encourage villagers not to burn garbage (such as plastic water bottles), based on new knowledge of the toxic danger of old practices of waste incineration.

Some “*eco-pesantren*,” such as *Al-Ittifaq* in West Java, are renowned for positively empowering social groups. The famous agricultural cooperatives there were started by the father of the current *kiai*, K.H. Fuad Affandi (Manshur 2009), and the *kiai* himself is fond of calling his *pesantren* the “*tarekat sayuriyya*” (as if it were a fictitious Sufi lineage, the “Vegetables”). At this *pesantren*, every bit of land as far as the eye can see is used for cultivation; whereas elsewhere house yards might have flowers or decorative trees, here every square meter seemed to have been planted with green beans, potatoes, carrots, containers of strawberries or the like. At *Al-Ittifaq*,

villagers' produce is packaged as a cooperative effort to distribute to grocery store chains at a higher price than that in the local market.

Water and Trees

Practical religious teaching about the environment in *eco-pesantren* tended to cluster around two themes, trees and water. Not only is the sustainability of these resources critical to the future survival of Indonesians, along with the rest of the human race, they also feature in *hadith* material which is conveyed on the authority of the Prophet Muhammad. The *hadith* about trees are chiefly about planting or preserving them, “even when doomsday is coming” in one instance; *hadith* concerning water tend to emphasize the requirement to provide water for use by all and the value of reviving parched arable land. One such *hadith*, commonly cited in Indonesia is:

The reward accruing from seven things continues to reach the person concerned, even if he is in his grave: knowledge he has taught, water he has provided for the public benefit, any well he has dug, any tree he has planted, a mosque he has built, recitations of the Qur'an bequeathed to him, and children who pray for him after his death (Al-Munawi, *Fayd al-Qadir*).

The practices of the “*eco-pesantrens*” rendered this symbolic, moral and eschatological system known from scripture visible through practices related to actual water and real trees.

The necessity of plentiful and clean water for *wudu'*, for example, is a common theme of Muslim Indonesian environmental theory and practice. There is a story told by the head of one conservation NGO in Jakarta of *kiai* being convinced to support a conservation project in Sumatra because of the need to preserve natural watersheds to guarantee clean and plentiful water for *wudu'*. Another *kiai* explained that preserving clean water should carry the same status as the legal obligation of prayer, *salat* (one of the “five pillars” of Islam), because ritual purity is a necessary condition for *salat*, and that is impossible without water. (And, he quickly added, “Of course, it's not just for the sake of performing our *salat* that we must all care for the environment.”)

Trees are decoratively “green,” even as the practice of tree planting may resonate not just with the words of numerous *hadith* and proposals for future carbon preservation but also with the colonial past of Javanese plantations. In current Indonesian religious and ecological discourse, the monetary value of trees is sometimes also noted along with the spiritual reward said to come with planting them, whether as a cash crop like slow-growing

teak wood, or as part of REDD+ schemes, or even possibly as both.⁸ K.H. Thonthawi of Pesantren Al-Wasilah said he explained to villagers the benefit of actual trees themselves before discussing their religious benefit (“reward”).⁹ Referencing a *hadith*, K.H. Thonthawi said that a person who plants a thousand trees would get the same heavenly reward as if he or she had established a mosque (and, with a gentle, wry smile, commented, “And nowadays the mosques are all empty of people anyway”). So then, all you ever need to do in order to be rich in the hereafter (“*kaya dalam akhirat*”), he explained, was to plant trees! He then leaned forward, saying that people ask him all the time in the villages, “If I plant trees will my sins *really* be forgiven?” “And I answer, sure, of course they could—[*laughing*] just as long as you don’t forget to make your *salat*.”

Indonesians involved in reforestation efforts also cast them as urgent in present terms, such as in West Java, which suffers from soil erosion and degradation and flooding due to logging and unregulated development. The mosque at Al-Ittifaq has pillars of unhewn tree trunks to commemorate the widespread reforestation project led by K.H. Fuad Affandi in the hills around Ciwidey. Pesantren Al-Wasilah in Garut, West Java, has no actual residential students. Instead, the *kiai* himself, K.H. Thonthawi, a former student of the *kiai* of Al-Ittifaq, is known for traveling the district to carry out energetic activism (which he terms “*kaderisasi*” or “caderization”) in community empowerment and reforestation (Yamin 2007). During what he calls his “*kampanye lingkungan*,” or “environmental crusade,” K.H. Thonthawi traveled around villages in the province organizing community groups, providing them with seedlings he carried on the back of his motorbike from the stockpile that filled the front rooms of his home.

⁸ The teaching of Nasruddin Anshoriy, head of “Pesan Trend Ilmu Giri” in Central Java (the school’s name is a play on the word, “*pesantren*,” as well as the important local site, Imo Giri), prior to the catastrophic eruption of Mt. Merapi in late 2010, included a program by which newlyweds plant trees when they marry. And every time the couple has sexual relations for a month after the wedding, they must plant another tree, he explained. And if they are a good couple, he went on, imagine the great number of trees they might plant! Imagine too all the future rewards, he concluded: the children, the trees (as in the *hadith*), the carbon offset, as well as the cash value of the mature trees once the children (and the trees) are all grown up.

⁹ For example, “Trees protect you,” K.H. Thonthawi explained in personal communication. You can go under them in a big rain and stay dry. Then there underneath, the water seeps into the roots. And when the rain stops, you can just kick the tree and water showers down again. The leaves stay wet on the ground. When the sun comes out, the damp leaves protect the soil and keep it moist. The trees protect the water (“*dilindungi oleh pohon*”). “A tree is like forever; how much *kontribusi* (contribution, benefit) is there from just one tree?”

Apparent Curriculum

Perhaps most importantly, the feature that all these schools share is the authority of the *kiai* (for example, see van Bruinessen 1995), a religious teacher who, if he or she is committed to ecological issues and awareness, may build the institution around this vision and core values. Many with whom I spoke, including *kiai* with ecological commitments, did not yet recognize intrinsic substance in the newly-coined term, “eco-*pesantren*.” What was meaningful to many about ecological practice as applied in the *pesantren* tradition was the principle of proven, practical visibility. This was also usually first theorized when I asked knowledgeable participants to reflect on what *was* an “eco-*pesantren*.” Time after time, *kiai* with whom I spoke across Java would spontaneously offer similar phrases to express this idea, and sometimes these words seemed to be all they wished to relate on the subject. For example, they would point to their school’s grounds and instruct, “Look, what do you see, here is the proof.” Or, “Here, the whole world is our classroom. Just judge for yourself.”

Below, I turn to the features of various *kiai*’s religious teaching and preaching about the environment, beyond when it was expected to be profoundly apparent and externally self-evident. When formed explicitly as a message of eco-*dakwah*, effective teaching was still expected to be accessible, direct and immediate. Environmental realities, as religious truths, were said to be made internally meaningful through sincere sentiment and the heart-felt depth of lived “tradition,” and developing such strategies was discussed avidly among activists, religious educators (including those affiliated with Muhammadiyah), and *kiai* at “eco-*pesantren*”. An affective teaching was expected to carry a more persuasive “*pendorong*” (motivating effect) than intellectualist appeals of the more rationalist or systematic approaches, such as with scripturalist or legal reasoning, that were seen to be less connected to the human depth of lived experience.

Anticipation and Affect in Eco-*Dakwah*

Teaching the “Love of Nature”

A phrase I was told by several *kiai* in answer to the question, “what is taught about the environment at their ‘eco-*pesantren*?’” was, “love and knowledge of the natural world.” At some institutions, teaching ecological “love and knowledge” did take the form of disseminating information, usually from the *kiai* to the local population. This was a longstanding pattern in

“environmental” practice; for example, in the era of President Suharto, *kiai* were enlisted nationally as authorities to promote the notion among local farmers that it was not “*haram*” (“forbidden” according to religious law) to use “organic fertilizer” (dung) as an alternative to chemicals on food crops (however, “organic” methods were also not generally encouraged in this period). Today, many *pesantren* leaders are active in promoting agricultural education in areas such as rice planting, irrigation, and pesticide use, as well as disaster response (such as at Pabelan in Central Java). More generally, when I would ask *kiai* how students (*santri*) at the school were taught “love and knowledge” in an “open classroom,” usually *kiai* said that it just had to come “individually,” from each person’s own “heart.”

However, when committed religious leaders brought environmental messages before social groups more widely in the form of self-conscious *dakwah*, there were some common intellectual themes. When *kiai* were asked on what they would preach, if, for example, they were to give a *khutbah* (Friday sermon) on the subject of religious ecology, one claimed that he taught that environmental justice was a “sixth human right.” As many as half a dozen with whom I spoke used the bipartite conceptualization, “*hablun min Allah, hablun min al-nas*” to relate “vertically connected” and “horizontally connected” ethics, bound to God and to humankind respectively, within an ecological framework.

Both K.H. Fuad Affandi and K.H. Thonthawi (discussed in more detail below), as well as K.H. Ahmad Yani at Darul Ulum (where there is the “Harim Zone”), all located in West Java, said that they commonly preached that the idea of “*sunnah*” (implying the idea of “*Sunnat Allah*,” as commonly distinguished from the “*sunnah*” of the Prophet Muhammad) should be understood as the entire natural world, or the “Creation of God” (“*Penciptaan Allah*”).¹⁰ At least one *kiai* presented ecological praxis as an autonomous, independent dimension of religious ethics, on an equal basis with duties and responsibilities to the Creator as well as other created beings. K.H. Fuad Affandi of Al-Ittifaq connected all aspects of creation with the Islamic concept of *sunnah*, asking, for example, “Which of these four things can you take away: the tiger, the deer, humanity, or wood [i.e. trees].” The answer is, none of them! They are all interconnected, all the “*sunnah*” of God’s creation. “The danger,” he concluded, “would be if any one of them were ever to disappear” (*Bahaya—hilang satu*).

¹⁰ Compare Swearer 1997 on Southeast Asian Thai Buddhist ecological recasting of the core concept of “*dhamma*.”

“Tradition” as a Resource

The potential of “tradition,” a concept often naturalized in Indonesia through imaginaries of “local culture” or nationhood, for propagating and preserving religious teachings and practices has been an important discussion in Indonesian academic fields of *dakwah* (such as at National Islamic Universities) for some time. For many, like the prominent contributors to a volume of collected essays, published in 2010, *Kearifan Lingkungan Budaya Indonesia* (“Environmental Knowledge in Indonesian Culture”), and including the author of the lead article, the Sultan of Jogjakarta himself, “tradition” is the way to link theory and practice for environmental protection and conservation. Others called “tradition” the “paradigm” and the “strategy” (the terms, like “*tradisi*,” are used in Indonesian) for linking religion and ecology, such as through traditions of West Java (Sunda) and Central Java, as well as Islamic teachings derived from *hadith*.¹¹

In 2010, I observed many specific instances of “tradition” being deployed self-consciously to develop ecological messages. For example, in 2006 the Department of Environmental Affairs for the island of Java, in cooperation with other agencies, released a video and comic book for children, “Si Acil” (a shortened version of the phrase, *Anak Cinta Lingkungan*, “A Kid Who Loves the Ecosystem”), under the title “Pollution in the Solo River” (*Pencemaran Bengawan Solo*). Its star is a figure from the ancient epic, the Mahabharata, known in Java as “Gatot Koco [Kaca]” (Skt. Ghatotkacha), who in this episode saves the endangered Solo River from the perils of industrial pollution through the intervention of superheroic power, organized community support, and ultimately the rule of law.

“Tradition” is often presented in affective terms, evident in a new idea called “Eco-Sufism” (e.g., Suwito 2010), which was explained to me in various ways. By 2011, it was being developed as a basis for planned trainings for national environmental leaders along the lines of intensive “training” (see Rudnyckyj 2010 for comparison). In the tradition of Sufi “spiritual accounting” (e.g. Al-Muhasibi, d. 857), the planned program would guide

¹¹ K.H. Thonthawi explained in personal communication that his first inspiration for developing religious and environmental teaching together came when he visited Bali and began to reflect on the role of the “natural world” in the Hindu religious traditions. (“When they do their rituals in their religion, they need flowers. So, automatically, they look after the flowers. They don’t kill cows. And so I began to think.”) He also said that the “beginning of his story” with environmental activism was in 2000–2001, when he first participated in a program with the World Wildlife Federation (WWF).

participants to account for their past shortcomings, recognize the need for change, and repent. I attended an “eco-*dhikr*” which, it was reported by one of the founders of this program, represented “Eco-Sufism,” led by Nasruddin Anshoriy at his mountain center near the slopes of Mt. Merapi in Central Java. The ritual observance corresponded to traditional Javanese calendrical practices of recitation, and opened with an invocation for environmental well-being. Meanwhile in West Java, traditional recitation dedicated to the environment had been recast as *Salawat Lingkungan* (“environmental devotions,” discussed below) by K.H. Thonthawi.

When K.H. Thonthawi spoke of the role of *kultur masyarakat kita* (“the culture of our people”) in fostering ecological awareness and activism, such as with the practice of *salawat*, he spoke primarily in terms of felt experience rather than intellectualist expression or representation. Religion links meaningful *kultural* experience to socio-economic, scientific or *structural* factors, he said (using these terms in Bahasa Indonesia). The most important point K.H. Thonthawi emphasized for bringing together realities of the social and natural world in environmental *dakwah* was *ikhlas-syukur*, feeling sincere and grateful. For this, he went on, one needs to *memberi kebahagiaan kepada sesama*, or to “make each other happy” (for which he quoted scriptural support in Arabic from both Qur’an and *hadith*). For example, whenever there’s a wedding out in a village, K.H. Thonthawi said, he always goes. And he always dances there too; they know him as the *kiyai* who plants trees and gets up and dances at all the weddings, two means of embodying the core values of human depth and connection that are found at the heart of his environmental teaching.

Both K.H. Thonthawi as well as K.H. Fuad Affandi (of Pesantren Al-Ittifaq) emphasized the experiential, affective and emotional dimensions of their eco-*dakwah*. Each had affective “strategies,” including the “tradition” of song, for rendering religious and environmental perceptions immediate, palpable and motivational. Specifically, each had come to deploy ideas from Islamic emotion theory familiar from Qur’an and *hadith* in order to foster ecological conviction and commitment, whether with the anticipation of satisfaction and reward on the one hand, or with the warning of future regret and suffering on the other.

Reward and Satisfaction

K.H. Thonthawi comes from a prominent family of Muslim traditional educators, and he is known throughout Indonesia for his masterful knowledge

of *hadith* (a reason for the authority of his *fatwa* on the environment from 2003). He is known informally as *Kiai Bendok* because he is said never to wear any headgear in public except for a traditional Sundanese (West Javanese) *bendok*. But in conversation, he did not discuss fine points of Islamic legal and scriptural interpretation, or even relate very much specifically about Sundanese tradition in a substantive way. He began with the provocative statement that caring for the environment is more important than “religion,” “if the whole purpose of religion is really to improve people [*memberbaikkan orang*].” And, that religious groups and institutions like *pesantrens* needed to be at the forefront (*paling depan*) of ecological action today. And, finally, that the “entry point” for this to happen must be the recognition that ecology is a “moral problem.” Then, he offered five systematic points of his public preaching, or *dakwah*, on religion and ecology, building on ideas about the experience of reward in this world and the world to come.

His teaching emphasized positive divine and ecological reward for environmental action more than negative risk of irresponsibility.¹² In explaining what it is he preaches to Indonesian Muslims, K.H. Thonthawi began by quoting the following *hadith*, among many others he cited obliquely: “[Narrated Anas bin Malik:] Allah’s Apostle (the Prophet Muhammad) said, “There is none among the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird or a person or an animal eats from it, but that this is regarded as a charitable gift for him” (Bukhari, variant in Muslim).

He explained that for his preaching across the countryside, the question is how to convey to villagers a *dorongan agama* (“religious impetus”) to environmental action. Just to know that there is such a reward (for planting trees, for example), and that such-and-such is exactly what it is said to be, may still not be enough to get people to act. This was his main point: people need to *feel* something to become motivated, and that it is, in fact, this very feeling, itself, which in turn is ultimately rewarded by God.

¹²⁾ The national religious personality Yusuf Mansur began his career a decade ago as *da’i sedekah*, preaching on the future reward for charitable actions, in popular books and broadcasts such as *The Miracle of Giving* (2008). Since then he has turned to the promotion of programs for Qur’an reading and memorization. In 2010, his Ramadan television broadcast for children, hosted by lively puppets every afternoon for the month, dedicated a whole show to Islam and the environment. Recently, the idea of Islamic charitable giving has been applied in ecological theory and practice in Indonesia through new recycling programs that re-designate rubbish to be *sedekah*, material of value (charity) to be meritoriously “given back” or “donated” for reuse.

To explain, he retold a famous story found in *hadith*, in which a prostitute brings water to a thirsty dog. According to the report, the Prophet Muhammad said that all her sins would be forgiven for this act of loving-kindness.¹³ The reward for the woman in the *hadith* was not just on account of her action, K.H. Thonthawi said, but God rewarded her for her *rasa kasih saying kepada makhluk*, her “feeling of care and concern for living creatures.” Thus the most important point for obtaining divine reward and caring for the environment (which had already been established as an Islamically required and rewarded action, as in “not to corrupt the earth”) is feeling and emotion. K.H. Thonthawi called this sentiment, in his own words, *saling menyayangi* (“caring for one another”), and he explained that this feeling of compassion was the “closest door to heaven” (*pintu terdekat masuk surga*).

However, “Not one of you could ever buy your own way into heaven [*tiket surga*].” K.H. Thonthawi said he also preached to the people (here he was also drawing on key ideas from *hadith*) that the “ticket to paradise” is only through the “mercy of God,” and that this mercy itself can only come first through God’s forgiveness. And if you love and care for God’s creation, if you care for the environment sincerely through sentimental modes, you may get this *ampun Allah* (“forgiveness of Allah”) automatically. And then with this you can enter heaven. You can in fact return, in this way, to the original state of humanity (Adam) in heaven, by His will. Of this affective calculation, he concluded: *Logik!*

K.H. Thonthawi’s reforestation campaign in recent years has allowed him to develop popular *dakwah* that draws on traditional religious-cultural practices, including *salawat* (Arabic devotional song). In the early twenty-first century, the *salawat* tradition had seen a massive revival in Indonesia. For example, in 2010, the performer Habib Syech bin Abdul Qodir Assegaf was drawing crowds in the hundreds and even the thousands across Java for his performances of this material usually dedicated to venerating the Prophet Muhammad. To connect “tradition” and ecology, as K.H. Thonthawi was doing with *salawat*, was also an emerging trend in some Javanese popular music, such as “Hiphop Jogja.”

¹³ K.H. Thonthawi said that he would ask the villagers when he retold the story, “How big was her sin?” And they say, “Bigger than big!” And so, if a sin “bigger than big” (he laughs at the phrase) can be forgiven, just by giving some water to a dog (an animal, he points out, not even considered to be clean in Islam), then how much forgiveness must there be from planting a tree? Quickly he added, “But please, don’t misunderstand this.” You can’t just go and do whatever you please and then try to make up for all of it just by feeding some hungry dog.

K.H. Thonthawi's *Shalawat Lingkungan* was taught to twenty-five village groups who were active in the tree planting mobilization. A version from Sundanese, transcribed and translated into Bahasa Indonesia by Kafil Yamin, is as follows:

Salawat Lingkungan (from Arabic and Sundanese):

Allahumma shalli wa sallim' alaihi [Muhammad]

*Wa 'ala ahlihi wa shahbihi ajma' in*¹⁴

Come on, let's plant trees

To care for the environment

So that the *ummah* will prosper

In this life and the next

Come on, let's plant trees

The forest will turn green

While people can (still) cook rice

The *ummah* is cooking rice¹⁵

The version that I recorded sung by K.H. Thonthawi was in Bahasa Indonesia (it calls upon humanity to “care for the environment,” not to “plant trees” specifically). He claimed that the sentimentally affecting devotions conveyed all five systematic points of the *dakwah* he had developed on ecology.¹⁶

Punishment and Regret

Another effective register used in Islamic preaching about the environment came from the reminder that future regret, as anticipation of punishment in this world and the world to come, is a natural consequence for action (or inaction) in the present. The Qur'an evidences this religious truth in vivid, dynamic dialogical and dramatic modes, and it has also been elaborated in foundational Sufi traditions, such as with the spiritual states of *tawbah* (remorseful repentance) or *huzn* (grief and sadness). In Indonesia's era of *reformasi* since the end of the Suharto regime in 1998, many religious

¹⁴) This untranslated material is in Arabic, not an Indonesian language, and is a definitive part of the *shalawat* tradition. It calls down peace and blessings on the Prophet Muhammad.

¹⁵) *Yamin* 2007: 246-247. English translation is mine.

¹⁶) The five points are, in order: 1. charitable acts (*sedekah jariah*); 2. showing gratitude (*tanda syukur*); 3. the means of divine forgiveness (*jalan mendapatkan ampunan*); 4. mutual respect and good-will (*saling menyayangi/menyalaminya*); and, 5. feeling sincerity and warmth (*ikhlas-syukur*). These points are also given and discussed based on interviews with K.H. Thonthawi in *Yamin* 2007; for further discussion by K.H. Thonthawi himself, see <http://www.vimeo.com/hijau>.

performers have enacted publicly the begging of God's forgiveness in popular *dhikr* (e.g. K.H. Arifin Ilham, who is famous for weeping as he beseeches divine mercy, repeating *Astaghfirullah* or *Ya Ampun*). In popular music, the Malaysian *nashid* group, Raihan, topped religious charts regionally in recent years with a hit distributed by Warner Music, *Demi Masa*, that combines well-known verses of the chapter of the *Qur'an*, 103 Al-'Asr (which begins, "By Time, truly humanity is in loss"), with the famous *hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad, known as "five before five," which expresses above all ideas of anticipating lifelong regret based on life choices made in the present.¹⁷

In West Java, K.H. Affandi reported that he had already composed "hundreds" of songs personally, and that the recording group, Raihan (above), had once stayed at his own *pesantren*, Al-Ittifaq, to rehearse, even using some of his material (such as an arrangement of the traditional devotional song recorded by more than one contemporary group, *Tombo Ati*, or "Medicine for the Heart"). While some environmental religious teaching in Indonesia emphasized the idea that environmental degradation would lead to "hell on earth" for present human existence, the following composition, typically, presents future torment ambiguously as a punishment for this world as well as the next. In this framework, religious Muslims understand ultimate judgment for care of the earth in cosmological terms, following the *Qur'an's* depiction of the Day of Reckoning, in terms of responsibilities that are personal, communal, and global. This perspective focuses temporal frames back onto the present with respect to the *Qur'anic* depiction of answering the questions of generations to follow on the ultimate Day of Accounting, when even the Earth itself shall speak in testimony.

Here is a translation of the lyrics to one of K.H. Affandi's original environmental compositions, *Cinta Alam* ("Love of Nature"), as sung in 2010 by one of the *santri* (students) at Pesantren Al-Ittifaq:

Cinta Alam (from Bahasa Indonesia)

Allah has commanded
 Love of beauty [*keindahan*]
 Humanity's whole universe
 Is intimately connected [*menjalin persahabatan*]
 Draw near, feel loving-kindness [*menghampiri menyayangi*]
 Care for, protect this world

¹⁷ The *hadith* translates as: "Take benefit of five before five: your youth before your old age; your health before your sickness; your wealth before your poverty; your free-time before your preoccupation; and, your life before death."

Come, let's all together
 Care for and protect
 The beauty we have
 Enchanting it day and night [*siang malam mempesona*]

We will all regret
 Suffer and weep
 If/when this beautiful world
 Becomes degraded and polluted
 Come, let's all together
 Care for and protect our world

Stop the destruction
 And corruption of the earth
 Humans will be buried
 Their torment ever-greater¹⁸

Typical of K.H. Affandi's *eco-dakwah*, the song's words connect this world to the next in terms of Qur'anic and environmental warnings of consequences for actions, and it features prominently emotional responses such as "regret" and "weeping."

This approach by a "traditional" scholar also represents the recognition that a primary response to environmental challenge among members of many faiths, including Islam, is fundamentally Qur'anic, at least with respect to the text's description of typical human proclivities: denial, forgetfulness, complacency, and not realizing or simply not wishing to be concerned with clear signs of imminent change. For K.H. Fuad Affandi, this recognition actually inspires a positive message for self-determination and awakening, as in his motivational rhetoric when discussing environmental activism and community empowerment, *Walaupun tidak tahu apa-apa, tapi bias apa-apa, tapi apa-apa bisa*: "Even if you don't know a thing, you can still do anything, and everything is possible."

Conclusion

In Indonesia at the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, religious Muslims were developing numerous strategies to teach, preach, and learn about the environment, from formal curricula to legal injunctions, and even film. At traditional Islamic institutions called *pesantrens*, direct experience relating ecological theory and practice was cast as inherently

¹⁸⁾ A performance by *santri* of the song as recorded at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittifaq in 2011, used with explicit permission, is available on <http://www.vimeo.com/hijau>.

persuasive. In addition, authoritative religious scholars known as *kiai* at Javanese “eco-*pesantrens*” typically used established aspects of Islamic *dakwah* (outreach) that was seen to elicit sentiment, such as “tradition” and song, when they preached publicly about environmental challenge and crisis.

The examples discussed above, *Salawat Lingkungan* and *Cinta Alam*, also suggest how contemporary Indonesian eco-*dakwah* generates sentimental and experiential depth for the citation of the “ecological verses” of the Qur’an (such as those on “stewardship,” “oppression,” and responsibility), and the citation *hadith* on trees and water (see also Foltz 2002). In Indonesian eco-*dakwah*, registering the emotional impact of consequences for present actions, such as reward and regret, is expected to lead to a profound “change of heart.” In this religious theory and practice, feelings and sentiment take the form of an awakened environmental awareness and a sincere engagement that is energized by the realities of this world—and the anticipation of individual and communal experience within the state of the world to come.

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