

# Understanding Hadith on Nature Conservation: An Effort to Reinforce Ecological Piety

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## Research article

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# Understanding Hadith on Nature Conservation: An Effort to Reinforce Ecological Piety

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## Abstract.

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Natural disasters are a key issue of contemporary society and an inspiration for the emergence of new theories such as theories of eco-theology, eco Sufism, *fiqh al-bi'ah*, ecofeminism, biocentrism, and anthropocentrism. These theories were initiated to seek solutions to natural disasters. However, disasters and calamities continue to occur. One of the causes is the lack of human awareness of the importance of environmental conservation. This article formulates comprehensively the Prophet's teachings on nature conservation with a focus on two questions: (1) What are the forms of nature conservation? and (2) What understanding can be derived from the teaching? Based on the linguistic analysis with the contextual approach, it is concluded that Islam has introduced the concept of nature conservation from the beginning including: (1) nature conservation phases in the forms of (a) maintenance, preservation, and processing of land and (b) protection and prevention and (2) understanding of these shapes leads to motivation and responsible elements in conservation programs to actualize ecological piety.

**Keywords:** ecotheology, *fiqh al-bi'ah*, *hadith*, conservation, understanding

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## 1. Introduction

Various problems that occur in rainy season such as floods and landslides, as well as long dry season that bring droughts and forest fires, not only occur in Indonesia but in various parts of the world. [1] [2] [3] The attitude of the society is also different in dealing with it. One party makes it a serious problem that must be immediately solved, so that required various rules and policies through presidential decree, regulation [4] [5] nor environmental care institutions to develop programs that are preventive and curative. [6] [7] [8] [9] On the other hand, the phenomenon is considered routine and natural custom which is finally accepted in the absence of an effort.

Aside from being a central issue of contemporary society, the above issues have inspired Muslim and non-Muslim theologians to come up with the best solution. Various

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studies and researches have produced new theories, both paradigmatic-ecological such as ecotheology, ecosufism, *fiqh al-bi'ah*, or ethics such as ecofeminism, biocentrism, anthropocentrism. [10] [11] [12] [13] According to Aziz, one of the causes of natural destruction is the transcendental paradigm factor that considers environment is not part of religious obligation (Islam). Therefore, human must have three paradigms of nature conservation in exploiting nature, including: *al-intifa'*, *al-i'tibar*, and *al-ishlah*. [11] These three ethical environments not only talk about the pattern of triangular interactions among humans, nature and living things, but also illustrate the pattern of triangular interactions among human (caliph), nature, and God, known as "*habl minannas, habl minal alam, and habl minallah*", or the term "*habl ma'a ikhwanih, habl ma'a bi'atih, and habl ma'a khaliqih*" [11] [5]

According to Quddus, through the paradigm of ecology, human is required to have an integral and ethical-theological and ethical-anthropological dimensional environmental insight. Through his comparative study of the principles of Islamic ecotheology and modern environmental ethics, Quddus formulates three relevant Islamic ecological principles as the basis of today's ethical management of nature: the principles of monotheism (unity of all beings), the principle of *amānah-khalīfah* (honesty-leadership), and *ākhirah* (responsibility). [10] [14] Furthermore, this transcendental theology paradigm is expected to immerse religion and contribute to solve various problems of the ummah. In this case, religion is no longer seen only as a matter of "heaven" and busy with "defending God", but it is the solution to the contemporary current problems of Muslims and humans in general. [14] [15] [2]

The study of the ecological paradigm above states that the essence of religious teachings teaches to maintain unity, balance and sustainability of the ecosystem. [16] [17] However, in the applicative level, the normative teaching has not been implemented properly. There is still an imbalance between theoretical insight and the practical attitude of society. Some people have cognitive awareness of the importance of preserving nature, but it has not been reflected in its practical behavior. Meanwhile, some are actively involved in the environmental conservation agenda, but have cognitive awareness that their activities are part of the theology's teachings [18] [19] so that what has been formulated by academics and embodied by practitioners has not been able to solve the very complex ecological problems in reality.

The religion of Islam based on the Qur'an and hadith has taught its people about human relations with its environment. In general, Allah has provided important clues in the Qur'an regarding environmental conservation efforts. Then the Holy Prophet through his sunnah explains it by providing more specific signs and restrictions. The importance

of studying environmental problems from the perspective of the Sunnah of the Prophet who has been codified in various books of hadith starts from here.

The focus of the study of this article is to formulate the Prophet's teachings on comprehensive nature conservation and to explore the meaning of ecological hadith linguistically for the sake of contextualization. The exploration of the meaning of this hadith aims to provide a theological and ethical foundation to the society which implies the growth of ecological awareness that the environment is also a blessing from Allah which must be preserved and accounted for in the afterlife. As for the formulation of the problem in this discussion are: 1) How are the forms of environmental conservation taught by the Prophet? 2) What patterns of understanding can be taken from the teaching? Furthermore, this research is expected to erase the stigma of the society towards the religion which is understood to be limited to the worship services in the narrow sense, as well as to contribute positively to the problem of nature conservation.

## 2. Method

Nature conservation is the protection, preservation and utilization of ecosystem to secure the existence, sustainability of natural resources and biodiversity. Since this term is not found in hadith editorial, the data explorations are diverted to the relevant terms. The word "nature" itself contains at least three components, i.e human, animal, and plant. In this context, nature is focused on plants or crops. The search of the hadith in this article uses two methods: 1) *Takhrij al-hadis bi al-lafdzi*, i.e the searching of hadith through key words assumed to lead to the theme (indicative term). 2) *Takhrij al-hadis bi al-maudhu'* is a thematic search of hadith. [20] [21] Meanwhile, the understanding of meaning is done using the contextual method through the process of linguistic analysis and socio-historical context. [21] [22]

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Categorization of Hadith

The searching of hadiths about nature conservation through keyword *gharasa* (غراس) and *zara'a* (زراعة) discovers 20 scattered hadiths in various hadith books, either separately or collected in a single book. The word *gharasa* appears 20 times, while the word *zara'a* appears 11 times. While using thematic search of hadith, they are found in several different themes, such as in chapter of faith, alms and others. Based on these

findings, variations of hadiths about nature conservation can be categorized as follows: 1) Maintenance, preservation and processing of land; 2) protection and prevention. From the text side, the first category of hadith is usually expressed in the style of preaching (*khobar*), advice (*targib*) and command (*amr*); while the second hadith is in the form of prohibition (*nahy*) and threat (*tarhib*). Hadiths on the maintenance and preservation of nature can be seen in the following table:

TABLE 1: Hadiths on The Suggestion of Planting Tree.

No	Theme	HADITH	
		Mukharrij	Number
11	Eminence of planting and its reward	Al-Bukhari	2152 , 5553
		Muslim	2900,2901,2903, 2902, 2904
		Al-Tirmizi	1299&1303
		Al-Darimi	2496
		Ahmad bin Hanbal	12038,12910,13064, 13065, 25798 &26095. 12529, 14668
22	Planting tree even though the doomsday is in sight	Ahmad bin Hanbal	12512 & 12435
33	Cultivate less productive land ( <i>ihya al-mawat</i> )	Al-Bukhari	2167
		Al-Tirmizi	1299 & 1300
		Al-Darimi	2493
		Abu Dawud	2671 & 2672
		Ahmad bin Hanbal	13753, 13842, 14109, 14310, 14383, 14550 & 13976
		Malik	1229 & 1230

While the Prophetic hadiths on protection and prevention can be seen in the following table 2:

TABLE 2: Hadiths on Protection and Prevention

No	Theme	HADITH	
		Mukharrij	Number
1	Prohibition of cutting down the tree	Abu Dawud	4561
22	Prohibition of defecation under the tree	Ibnu Majah	323
23	Prohibition of damaging plants in the Land of Haram (Mecca and Medina)	Bukhari	1703,1262,1484,1702



of reforestation, conservation and cultivation must be done simultaneously. For the Indonesian context, the meanings contained by terms *garasa* and *zara'a* can lead to tasks and responsibilities carried by different departments, ie forestry, plantations, and agriculture. All these three must work together in formulating their vision, mission and action.

Mentioning separately shows indicates a particular emphasis. In some narrations, the term *gharasa* is associated with the term date palm, [23] No. Hadith: 2900; 2901; 2903, [25] No. Hadith: 2496, [26] No. Hadith: 1259; 14668. The date palm (*nakhl/phoenik dactylifera*) in the Arab cultural structure has its own meaning. In Arab societies, palm tree in addition to occupying a central role as a state foreign exchange, it is also known to contain very complex compounds, such as minerals, sugars, fats, proteins, fiber and some vitamins. [27] In accordance with the complexity of its content, it is medically beneficial to both physical and spiritual health. [27]

Why should date palm? In terms of shape, the fruit is shady, easy to pick, and eaten in a raw or cooked, and can be used as a drink. The roots are down and directly absorb water from the earth. The date palm cannot bear fruit in a short time. That is, if the desired plant is a long term one, then the term used is *gharasa* and not used term *zara'a* as in the type of date palms (*an-nakhl*). While the term *zara'a* for short-term, fast-growing crops such as grain-like plants, *Habbatus sauda'*, rice, corn, or wheat. Noticing the urgency of the date palm in the Arabic context, the Prophet still ordered to plant it even if the apocalypse was in sight. [26] No. Hadith: 12512, 12435.

If the two terms are linked to the Indonesian context, the term *gharasa* tends to mangrove, teak, mahogany, coconut (*cocos mucifera*) tree, sugar palm (*arenga piñata*), gypang (*corypha utan*), palm or siwalan (*borassus flaberrifol*), nipah (*nypa fruticans*), sago (*metroxylon sago*), zalaca (*salacca zalacca*) and rattan (*calamus rottan*), [28] while the term *zara'a* leads to a similar plant of rice, tubers, and vegetables. In addition, the mention of dates in the hadith shows an example of orientation in the process of planting not only for plants that can be harvested but also plants that are long-term. This shows the *futuristic* teachings of the Prophet that man can now enjoy the results of the work of his predecessors. Therefore, the living human now must think about the life of the next generation.

The end of the narrative of the hadith is closed with the word "*shadaqah*" or "*ajr*." In the context of the whole word and relation between the two previous types of words, it is understood that any role and activity that man performs, both as subject (actor, producer) and object (consumers), should be religion-oriented, not just worldly needs. The agenda and activities which lead to the process of preservation and conservation





There are several keywords that need to be elaborated, namely "sidrah (lote tree), *yastadhillu biha* (for taking shelter) and *qatha'a abatsan wa dhulman* (cut down in vain and unjust) *shawwaba* (drowning the head).

*Sidrah (Ziziphus mauritiana)* is one of the fruit tree species mentioned in the Qur'an and hadith which is often used in the treatment tradition of Prophet Muhammad (*Tibb al-Nabawi*). In Indonesia, this plant is known as *bidara tree*. In the Arabian Peninsula, this plant usually grows in hot deserts, so it is often used to take shelter and take the fruit at once by people who are on the way or when looking for grass, dwelling, shepherding place and other purposes. The lote tree is a type of tap root plant that can grow up to 15 m tall, and contains multiple benefits in it. Almost all of its parts, ranging from roots, bark, wood, leaves, and fruit can be used for health and nutrition as well as materials for household appliances. [29] Seeing its significance to the context of the Arab region, the Prophet severely criticized its logging. The threat (*tarhib*) is the Prophet's concern for the environment.

In Indonesia, especially in the region of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) and Bali, there is also a kind of lote tree called sealote tree (*Strychnos lucida R.Br.*). This plant, widely used to treat some diseases such as malaria, fever, skin diseases, blood circulation disorders, relieve pain, stimulate the nervous system and increase appetite. Active substances contained in it are *strychnine*, *loganin*, *brusin*, *tannin* and *steroids*. Parts of plants used as medicinal ingredients are stems, skin and fruit. Sea lote tree has the potential to be used in rehabilitation activities in dry climates and effort to control landslide. [31]

In addition to the lote tree logging, in another hadith the Prophet also forbids the cutting of trees and plants in Makkah and Medina, as hadith from Amir bin Sa'ad, the Messenger of Allah said: "I made the city of Medina a haram, that is between the two hills rocky black. Do not cut down the trees, and do not kill the animals [32] No. Hadith: 2426, [23] No. Hadith 1703; 1262; 1484; 1702. The Prophet made these two areas as *hima* (forbidden areas) that were protected by nature. [16]

#### 3.2.4. Hadith about The Prohibition of Defecation Under a Protected Tree.

(Mu'adz said): Indeed, I have heard the Messenger of Allah say: "Fear you of the three cursed deeds, which are defecation in public places, in shelter, and in the middle of the road." [32] No. Hadith: 323.

In general, the hadith above contains the prohibition of defecation (*al-mala'in*) in three places, namely: (1) water sources (*al-mawarid*); 2) shelter (*al-dhill*); and 3) middle of the road. Those places are public facilities that must be preserved from all forms of pollution. The hadith indicates that the Prophet was very concerned about ecological sterility.

#### 4. Discussion

Based on the findings above, this article entirely provides foundation and can be used as basic step in environmental law (*fiqh al-bi'ah*). The exploration of meaning from the source of the hadith concludes about obligation to preserve and protect nature's sustainability for the sake of survival and life. Preserving life is obligatory, then all tools and media that support the realization of the goal become obligatory also, It is in accordance with Qaidah Ushuliyah "*ma la yatimmu al-mandatory illa bihi fa huwa wajib*" or "*al-amr bi syay'in amrun bi wasa'ilih.*"

On the other hand, in the context of ecological theory and paradigm, the findings in this article are an affirmation of the construction of the ecotheological paradigm. If ecotheological is more based on the Qur'an in formulating environmental conservation all this time, this study completes and refines the formulation. If this study is connected with the paradigm of *ecosufism*, it is in line with the ethical offer of *ecosufism*. The ethical-spiritual consciousness which is derived from the hadith interpretation about nature conservation strongly supports the theory.

If this study is associated with the paradigm of *fiqh al-bi'ah*, a proverb is worthy to put forward "*Al-Insan ibn bi'atih*" (Humans are children of their environment). This Arabic proverb implies that human have symbiotic-mutualism relationship with their environment. On the one hand, they were raised and influenced by their environment, and on the other hand they also play major role in maintaining and preserving the environment. Thus, human must be harmonious with their environment by not exploiting and destroying it. In turn, human awareness of ecology is expected to foster an attitude of ecological piety.

#### 5. Conclusion

Based on linguistic analysis and contextual approach to the hadiths and key terms in it, it can be concluded that Islam from the beginning has introduced the concept of nature conservation, which includes:

1. Form of nature conservation: a) <sup>1</sup> maintenance, preservation, and processing of land; b) protection and prevention

2. Understanding of those forms leads to motivation and responsible elements in conservation programs include: what, who, and how a) Motivation in preserving and conserving nature is the motivation of worship; b) about what is planted, the Prophet suggested to plant all kinds of trees and plants grown in the short and long term that serve as food producer and protection (nature reserve); c) who is involved in this task is human, both personally and institutionally; both private and public. As for d) about how this program can be done, it can be done through reforestation program (replanting the bare forests), *revitalization* of dead land through *ihya 'al-mawat* program, vegetable cultivation, and reserve (protection) of nature. The analysis of hadith above portrays synergistic and balanced relationship between subject and object; between religious production and consumption activities.

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