

Green Islam and Green Pesantren:

An Ethnographic Reflection on Pesantren “Annuqayah”, Madura Island, Indonesia

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Abstract: This article presents a new trend of ‘green Islam’ in the Indonesian Islamic community specifically in Islamic education (eco-*Pesantren*) (Arnez 2004, Gelling 2009, Gade 2019). It will elaborate my ethnographic reflection on the case study of my PhD fieldwork in *Pesantren* “Annuqayah”, an Islamic boarding school that won recognition for its nature conservation efforts via a Presidential prize (Kalpataru 1981). I identify that its green vision is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings, providing the theological, philosophical, and ethical foundations that the *Pesantren* translates and transforms into green initiatives through the educational system and community engagement with local people. I argue that local efforts – such as those which have been developing in *Pesantren* “Annuqayah” and other green *Pesantren* in Indonesia – could contribute to and build collaborative actions for the future of sustainable development.

Keywords: religion and ecology, green Islam, green *pesantren*, *Pesantren* “Annuqayah”

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“Future studies may explore different channels through which the “greening” of Islam is expanding in various world regions. In particular, Muslim leadership on national and local scales may have an important impact on the presence of environmentalism among local communities.”
(Jens Koehrsen, 2021) 1

1. Introduction

This short article is a concise version of my doctoral thesis. The basic intention of my research project is to observe and present the local context of religious community – specifically Muslim community in Indonesia – by exploring what has been developed in *Pesantren* “Annuqayah” in dealing with environmental issues and problems. Borrowing Eriksen’s term (2015) in the introduction of his influential book *Small Places, Large Issues*, I attempt to depict

¹ Jens Koehrsen is a professor in religion and economics at Centre for Religion, Economy and Politics, University of Basel, Basel. The quotation refers to his recommendation for further research on today’s Muslim environmentalism particularly in dealing with climate change. I quote it from “Muslims and Climate Change: How Islam, Muslim Organizations, and Religious Leader Influence Climate Change Perceptions and Mitigation Activities”, *WIREs Climate Change*, 2021.12 (3), p.1-19.

‘the context of particular’ and ‘local conditions’ (small place) by exploring the way in which *Pesantren “Annuqayah”* conceptualizes and practices religious (Islamic) and social foundations on the environment. At the same time, I also correlate my ethnographic reflection to theoretical issues in the study of religion and ecology (large issue).²

The *pesantren* movement is a genuine establishment of Islamic education in Indonesia (Madjid 1997, Dhofier 2011). According to Mastuhu (1994), *pesantren* have been known since the 13th century AD. He identifies that a *pesantren* comprises at least three aspects. The first of these aspects is the actors (*kyai*: Muslim cleric as the peak leader, *ustaz*: teachers and administrators, and *santri*: students). The second is facilities such as a mosque, the *kyai*’s house, the *ustaz*’ houses, dormitories, schools, and other educational buildings. The third aspect is the education ‘software’ such as the vision/mission of organization, its curriculum, learning sources (holy book, classical books), learning and teaching methods and evaluation. Today, according to statistical data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2016), there are 28,961 *pesantren* in Indonesia.

Kyai has ‘an important impact’ as the key figure in *pesantren*, as indicated by Koehrsen (2021). Interestingly, *Pesantren “Annuqayah”* has not only influenced the local community but also inspired other communities on a national scale. One of the recognitions is that *Pesantren “Annuqayah”* awarded Kalpataru (the most prestigious prize from the Indonesian President for an individual or institution in preserving the environment) in 1981 when only a few individuals or organizations were concerned with environmental issues.

To have a clear picture of my fieldwork and analysis of research findings, there are three main aspects to represent my thesis. The first element is historical point of view. As the genuine Islamic educational system and institution in Indonesia (Madjid 1997, Dhofier 2011), *pesantren* has been contributing to environmental education and movement, at least in the last three decades (Schwencke 2012, Mangunjaya 2014, Reuter 2015, Gade 2019). *Pesantren “Annuqayah”* is one of the early *pesantren*, with a long history in dealing with environmental issues and problems due to geographical reasons: Most of the regions in Madura island are dry lands with limestone.

Thus, this part will be concisely elaborated in the second chapter by tracing the historical background of *pesantren* since the colonial era to the present development. It will also explain the history and the development of *Pesantren “Annuqayah”* (in Chapter 3) as the early awardee of Kalpataru, an annual presidential prize for an individual, group, or institution that is considered a significant contributor to preserving nature and finding an alternative solution to current environmental problems in Indonesia. In further discussion, it will explore how *Pesantren “Annuqayah”* upholds its green vision from generation to generation and realizes green initiatives until the present day.

The second aspect is a theoretical formation of ‘green Islam’. It will track the conceptual frameworks from global environmental movements, particularly within world religions’ contributions (Tucker 2006, Bauman, Bohannon & O’Brien, 2011) to build a ‘global human solidarity’ and ‘ecological civilization’ (Angus, 2016, p.196) in dealing with the Anthropocene. It will then view how Islam could contribute to the global problems of ecological crises by tracing the Islamic environmentalism or so-called ‘Globalized Eco-Islam’ (Schwencke 2012, p.10) and a new trend of ‘green Islam’ in the Indonesian Islamic community and Islamic

² In term of methodology, I mostly rely on step-by-step methods of ethnography formulated by Madden (2013) in his work *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*. I stayed in *pesantren “Annuqayah”* for about six months in doing ethnographic research, talking to people, being with people, looking at people, and engaging in description, analysis to interpretation, and interpretation to story.

education (Arnez 2004, Gelling 2009, Gade 2019). This global perspective will be discussed in the first chapter as a literature review to bring the context from the global trend of the environmental movement to the current trend in the Muslim community, particularly a new look of an *eco-pesantren* or – as I call it – ‘green *Pesantren*’. Furthermore, what I found from what has been generated in *Pesantren “Annuqayah”* theoretically can be classified into three perspectives, with theological, philosophical, and ethical foundations. These religious foundations are rooted in Qur’anic verses, *hadith* (a collection of traditions containing sayings of the prophet Muhammad which, with accounts of his daily practice) and *aqwalul ulama* (legal opinions of Islamic clerics) related to environmental issues. They are then compiled and formulated into Islamic jurisprudence on the environment or *fiqh al bi’ah*. From this theoretical formation, I then create an analogy of parts of a tree and their functions to ‘a tree of green vision and action’ of *Pesantren*’ to explain the root, trunk, branches, flowers and fruit of the environmental program that I found in *pesantren* (presented in the last section of Chapter 4). After reflecting on the dynamic, contested and adaptive religious (Islamic) and sociocultural tradition practiced in *Pesantren “Annuqayah”* compared to *Pesantren Modern Daarul Uluum Lido*, I also offer some propositions for the future development of green *Pesantren* in Indonesia.

The last aspect is a practical exploration of green *pesantren*. By analyzing in thematical ways, I present various environmental programs that have been running until today in *Pesantren “Annuqayah”*. Seven green initiatives have been implemented both in educational milieu and in community engagement with local people: 1) reforestation, 2) conservation areas, 3) herbal plantations, 4) green curricula, 5) green art, 6) green energy, and 7) women green activists. In short, after reflecting on self-criticism from *pesantren*, the aim is to build internal capacity and uphold collaborative actions with external institutions. It can be encapsulated that *pesantren* face internal challenges to build their capacity from individual to institutional, yet they also have mobilizing potencies as an ‘asset’ to contribute to a broader level, from the local to national and global environmental movements. According to Gade (2019), what has been emerging with Muslim environmentalism in Indonesia specifically with the contribution of green *pesantren* is as coherent and flexible as any other mainstream global environmentalism. Thus, green *pesantren* could design an ‘agenda of healing’ for today’s global ecological crisis as Berry (1988, p.20) suggested, reflecting an agenda where every member of the ‘earth community’ plays a role to change individual, organizational, societal, and global into a better ‘only our home of planet’. Meanwhile, externally, outside-*pesantren* entities from local people near *pesantren* to national – governmental or non-governmental – and international organizations are expected to continually support what has been developed by green *pesantren*. The more collaborative the agenda that is upheld and designed, the more influential *pesantren*’s contribution to the future development of green *pesantren*. These synergic factors (internal and external) will be a determinant for the future development of green *pesantren* to build a collaborative agenda with more influential and massive contributions locally, nationally, and globally.

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