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ISLAM AND ECOLOGY: ENVIRONMENTAL THEME IN THE TAFSIR AL-QUR'AN TEMATIK [THEMATIC EXEGESIS OF THE QUR'AN] OF THE INDONESIAN MINISTRY OF RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

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Abstract

Environmental damage remains one of the most pressing global challenges in which Indonesia is facing floods, droughts, deforestation, and biodiversity loss. Beyond scientific and policy-based solutions, religious and ethical perspectives are essential to strengthen ecological awareness. This paper examines the Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik [Thematic Interpretation of the Qur'an] published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, specifically the volume on Pelestarian Lingkungan Hidup (Environmental Conservation), to explore its contribution to environmental discourse. Employing textual analysis and participatory observation, given the author's direct involvement in the writing, compilation and peer-review process, the study reveals how the exegesis conceptualizes human beings as khalifah (stewards) mandated to preserve the earth. Qur'anic terms such as jibāl (mountains), al-baḥr (seas), riyāḥ (winds), and fasād (corruption) are contextualized within ecological functions and the risks of human exploitation. The findings show that this exegesis not only provides theological justification for environmental protection but also inspires eco-pesantren initiatives, academic works, and grassroots movements in Indonesia. The study concludes that thematic exegesis offers a transformative religious framework that complements global sustainability efforts by integrating Qur'anic principles with contemporary ecological concerns.

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INTRODUCTION

Thematic exegesis is one of the interpretative models introduced by exegetes to provide answers to contemporary social issues through the guidance of the Qur'an. In practice, a *mufassir* does not interpret the verses sequentially according to their order in the *mushaf*, but rather collects all or a selection of verses from various

chapters (*sūrah*s) that address a specific topic. These verses are then interconnected and synthesized, leading to a comprehensive conclusion regarding the issue in question from the perspective of the Qur'an (Al-Firmawi 1977) (Said 1991) (Muslim 2000).

The *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* [Thematic Exegesis of the Qur'an] published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia is the result of collective research and writing by a team established in 2007, following the recommendations of the 2006 Qur'anic Scholars Conference [*Musyawah Ulama al-Qur'an*]. The background of this work is inseparable from the dynamics of religious life in Indonesia, serving as a direct translation of the mandate of Presidential Regulation No. 7 of 2005.

In 2007, Ministry of Religious Affairs formed a team consisting of structural officials (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009) and Qur'anic scholars from various Islamic scientific traditions and religious organizations. The team included the Head of the Research and Development Agency and Training (*Badan Litbang*) and the Head of the Qur'anic Manuscript Review Board (*Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an*) as advisors; Dr. Muchlis Muhammad Hanafi, MA as Chair; Prof. Dr. H. Darwis Hude, M.Si. as Vice Chair; and Dr. H. M. Bunyamin Yusuf Surur, MA as Secretary. The members comprised prominent scholars such as Prof. Dr. H. M. Abdurrahman, MA; Prof. Dr. Phil. H.M. Nur Kholis Setiawan, MA; Prof. Dr. Hj. Huzaimah T. Yanggo, MA; Prof. Dr. H. Salim Umar, MA; Prof. Dr. Rosihon Anwar, MA; Prof. Dr. Muhammad Chirzin, MA; Dr. H. Asep Usman Ismail, MA; Dr. H. Ahmad Lutfi Fathullah, MA; Dr. H. Setiawan Budi Utomo, MA; Dr. Hj. Sri Mulyati, MA; Dr. H. Muslim Gunawan; Dr. H. Ahmad Husnul Hakim, MA; Dr. H. Ali Nurdin, MA; H. Irfan Mas'ud, MA; and Dr. H. Abdul Ghafur Maimun.

Between 2008 and 2012, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* produced 23 thematic volumes, published sequentially each year. The themes include:

2008: i) The Qur'an and the Empowerment of the Poor [*al-Qur'an dan Pemberdayaan Kaum Dhuafa*], ii) Building a Harmonious Family [*Membangun Keluarga Sakinah*], iii) Interfaith Relation [*Hubungan Antar Umat Beragama*].

2009: i) Economic Development of the Ummah [*Pembangunan Ekonomi Umat*], ii) Health in the Perspective of the Qur'an [*Kesehatan dalam Perspektif al-Qur'an*], iii) Ethics in Family, Society, and Politics [*Etika Berkeluarga, Komunikasi dan Informasi Bermasyarakat dan Berpolitik*], iv) Environmental Conservation [*Pelestarian Lingkungan Hidup*], v) The Women's Status and Roles [*Kedudukan dan Peran Perempuan*].

2010: i) Work and Labor [*Kerja dan Ketenaga Kerjaan*], ii) Law, Justice, and Human Rights [*Hukum, Keadilan dan HAM*], iii) The Inevitability of the Hereafter [*Keniscayaan Hari Akhir*], iv) Education, Character Building, and Human Resource Development [*Pendidikan, Pembangunan Karakter dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia*], and v) Spirituality and Morality [*Spiritualitas dan Akhlak*].

2011: i) Social Responsibility [*Tanggung Jawab Sosial*], ii) Youth Development [*Pembangunan Generasi Muda*], iii) Communication and Information [*Komunikasi dan Informasi*], iv) The Qur'an and the State [*al-Qur'an dan Kenegaraan*], and v) The Qur'an and Diversity [*al-Qur'an dan Kebhinekaan*].

2012: i) Prophethood in the Qur'an [*Kenabian dalam al-Qur'an*], ii) *Jihād*: Meaning and Implementation [*Jihad: Makna dan Implementasinya*], iii) The Qur'an and Contemporary Issues I [*al-Qur'an dan Isu-Isu Kontemporer I*], iv) The Qur'an and Contemporary Issues II [*al-Qur'an dan Isu-Isu Kontemporer II*], and v) Islamic Modernization [*Modernisasi Islam*].

A significance publication is in the 2009 on Environmental Conservation issue. This theme is highly relevant for presentation at the International Conference on Islam and Ecology at the University of Münster, Germany. It holds threefold importance. First, it highlights Indonesia's academic and scholarly contributions to ecological awareness. Second, it provides a theological foundation derived from Qur'anic exegesis to strengthen ecological consciousness, as such awareness becomes more powerful when rooted in sacred texts. Third, the work inspired subsequent academic contributions and environmental movements led by activists drawing upon insights from this Thematic Exegesis.

This paper therefore analyzes how the theme of Environmental Conservation was developed within the the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* [Thematic Exegesis of the Qur'an], the involvement, and methodological approaches of its authors, as well as the process of public review by Indonesian Qur'anic scholars. It combines textual analysis of the exegesis with firsthand testimony from the author as one of the contributors who experienced the discussions from the initial stage of: i) determining the theme, ii) formulating sub-themes, iii) writing assigned sections, iv) presenting and defending the drafts in team discussions, and v) revising based on feedback. The paper concludes by demonstrating how Indonesian experiences, as represented by Qur'anic scholars, contribute to nurturing ecological awareness within Indonesian society today.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design with a library research approach, focusing on thematic Qur'anic exegesis related to environmental conservation. The primary object of the study is the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, particularly the volume *Pelestarian Lingkungan Hidup* (Environmental Conservation). The research aims to examine how ecological issues are interpreted within the Qur'anic framework and how the exegesis contributes to environmental awareness and sustainability discourse in Indonesia.

The population of this research consists of the entire series of *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs between 2008 and 2012. However, the sample of the study is limited specifically to the volume on *Environmental Conservation*, as it directly addresses ecological themes, environmental ethics, and human responsibility toward nature. In addition, several supporting academic works, books, journal articles, and environmental movement reports related to Islamic ecology and eco-theology in Indonesia were selected purposively as secondary data sources.

Data collection was conducted through documentation and participatory observation techniques. Documentation involved collecting and examining primary and secondary written sources, including the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik*, classical and contemporary tafsir references, academic publications, government documents, and environmental movement reports. Participatory observation was also employed because the author was directly involved in the writing, discussion, compilation, and peer-review process of the thematic exegesis. This involvement enabled the researcher to obtain firsthand information regarding the formulation of themes, sub-themes, methodological discussions, and revision processes within the exegesis team.

The data were analyzed using descriptive-analytical and thematic analysis methods. First, the collected data were classified

according to ecological themes discussed in the exegesis, such as mountains, seas, winds, environmental cleanliness, and environmental destruction (*fasād*). Second, the interpretations were analyzed contextually to identify their theological, ethical, and ecological dimensions. Third, the study examined the influence of the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* on environmental awareness movements, eco-pesantren initiatives, and contemporary Islamic ecological discourse in Indonesia. Through this analytical framework, the study seeks to demonstrate the contribution of thematic Qur'anic interpretation in strengthening environmental ethics and sustainability awareness within Muslim society. Read already published work in the same field.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Environmental Conservation

The theme of Environmental Conservation [*Pelestarian Lingkungan Hidup*] was introduced in early 2009, when the team recognized that environmental damage had already manifested its negative consequences. Issues such as greenhouse gas effects, global warming, irregular seasons, prolonged droughts during the dry season (Estiningtyas and Boer 2012), and recurring floods in various parts of Indonesia were already evident at that time. All of these phenomena are interconnected with the damaged state of nature and the environment, resulting from excessive exploitation. Deforestation, uncontrolled forest burning, low public awareness of proper waste management, and the diminishing availability of green spaces are clear indicators of environmental destruction.

This environmental crisis drew the attention of many stakeholders, including the government, the academic community, and environmental activists. Among the issues that attracted significant concern were prolonged droughts and floods during heavy rainfall, both of which had a direct impact on widespread crop failures across Indonesian agricultural regions (Nurzannah 2025). Such conditions demanded serious attention, as crop failures threatened national food production.

The Thematic Exegesis Team identified issues related to environmental conservation to be examined through the lens of the Qur'an. Their workflow began with determining priority themes for each fiscal year, as the program was funded by the Research and Development Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. At the start of each year, the team decided on the main theme, discussed the relevant sub-themes, and distributed writing assignments among members. The process of sub-theme formulation was particularly dynamic. The team engaged in intensive three-day discussions, involving external experts as resource persons relevant to the topic. The sub-themes were then agreed upon and distributed among team members, who were given one month to complete their assigned sections.

A set of six methodological steps guided the writing process: (1) Collecting all Qur'anic verses related to the sub-topic. (2) Arranging them according to their chronological revelation. (3) Considering *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) to contextualize the verses. (4) Complementing the discussion with hadiths and scholarly opinions. (5) Analyzing the verses comprehensively, reconciling between *'ām* (general) and *khāṣ* (specific), absolute and *muqayyad*, among others. (6) Drawing conclusions for each sub-theme (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009).

After sub themes had been drafted, each draft underwent peer discussion within the team. Every writer acted as both presenter

and discussant. Drafts were presented, critiqued, and defended, with feedback meticulously recorded. Authors were then given one week to revise and resubmit the draft to the secretary.

This internal peer-review model ensured several positive outcomes. First, it minimized plagiarism, whether intentional or self-plagiarism. Second, it enhanced the quality of writing through comprehensive team discussions. Third, it validated references to *tafsīr*, *hadīths*, and scholarly works. Fourth, even before publication, substantive revisions had been made to strengthen the drafts.

In 2009, the team produced five themes, with Environmental Conservation undergoing the most extensive discussions due to its urgency and significance. The theme was divided into ten sub-topics: i) Introduction; ii) The Existence of Mountains; iii) The Existence of Seas; iv) The Existence of Water; v) The Existence of Clouds and Winds; vi) The Existence of Plants and Trees; vii) The Existence of Animals; viii) Environmental Cleanliness; ix) Environmental Degradation; x) Qur'anic terminology on environmental damage.

Why is an introduction necessary in this Thematic Exegesis? The answer lies in its function as a prologue underscoring the importance of the theme. It highlights the role of humans as *khalīfah* (vicegerents) and caretakers of the earth, a point that must be strongly emphasized. This is because much of the environmental destruction results from human greed and exploitative behavior toward nature. The Thematic Exegesis stresses the significance of the human role as *khalīfah*, bearing a central responsibility to preserve and maintain the earth.

Why are mountains, seas, water, clouds, and the sky prioritized for discussion through Qur'anic verses? This is indeed an important question in relation to environmental conservation. In the Qur'anic perspective, mountains serve as stabilizers of the land; seas are primary sources of rainfall and transportation, while simultaneously potential sources of disaster; water is the source of life when managed properly, but can cause floods when mismanaged; clouds, containing winds, have a strategic function in regulating the earth's temperature; and the sky represents the vast horizon that frames human vision. All these natural elements represent integral components of the environment.

B. Examples of Exegesis in the Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik [Thematic Tafsīr of the Qur'an]

The following are several examples of interpretations presented by the team regarding environmental conservation

1. Mountains

The Qur'an refers to mountains with several terms: *jabal* (mentioned 5 times), *jibāl* (plural, 37 times), *rawāsī* (8 times), and *a'lām* (2 times).

The word *rawāsī* derives from *rasā-yarsū-raswan*, meaning firm, strong, or steadfast. It appears eight times, consistently describing mountains as stabilizers of the earth's crust. In four instances (al-Ḥijr [15]:19; Luqmān [31]:10; Qāf [50]:7; al-Naḥl [16]:15), mountains are described as "cast upon the earth" (*alqā fi al-arḍ*), signifying their role as anchors (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009).

The term *al-a'lām* is interpreted by lexicographers such as Ibn Saydah and al-Hayānī (cited in *Lisān al-'Arab*) as "tall mountains," while al-Zamakhsharī's *al-Kashshāf* similarly interprets them as elevated peaks.

The term *jibāl* is associated with multiple functions: i) high elevation (Hūd [11]:43; al-Mursalāt [77]:27), ii) strengthening the earth (al-Ra'd [13]:3; al-Anbiyā [21]:31), iii) appearing immobile (al-A'rāf [7]:143), iv) serving as shelter (al-Nahl [16]:81) (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009)(Az-Zen 1989).

Chapter Fāṭir [35]:27 also highlights the diversity of mountain rocks in varying colors. Mountains were created with stones of various hues—white, red, and even black. According to the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik*, from a scientific perspective it is often detected that certain groups of rocks possess strikingly bright colors, most frequently white, while others are dark green, and still others black. Some rocks are also gray, pink, or even red in color (Az-Zen 1989).

Beyond their role as sites of human settlement, mountains—referred to in the Qur'an with the term *jibāl*—are also described in the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* as vital sources of livelihood. Tall mountains, particularly volcanic ones, are often covered with dense forests that provide habitats for a wide range of animal species, while simultaneously serving as reservoirs of abundant freshwater springs. The richness of forest ecosystems and the availability of water resources constitute essential life-supporting systems not only for humans but also for the broader spectrum of living beings.

From the perspective of the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik*, the significance of mountains lies in their ecological position and multifaceted functions. The Qur'an provides a detailed and profound account of their existence, emphasizing their indispensable role in sustaining life on earth. Mountains are portrayed as pegs, anchors, and stabilizers of the planet, preventing disruption of the earth's balance. Furthermore, they function as repositories of mineral resources beneficial for human civilization, as natural habitats, and as critical sources of water for the survival of all species (Az-Zen 1989). In this sense, mountains embody an integrated ecological system that reflects divine wisdom and sustains the continuity of life.

2. Seas

The Qur'an's treatment of the sea (*al-baḥr*) is striking, especially considering that it was revealed in a desert environment to a Prophet who neither resided in coastal regions nor had experience navigating vast oceans (Az-Zen 1989). This underscores the Qur'an's extraordinary breadth of perspective. The *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* highlights that the sea's significance can be understood in light of human civilization. Historically, societies established settlements, centers of trade, and eventually large cities along coastlines because maritime routes facilitated mobility, economic exchange, and cultural interaction. Indeed, many metropolitan centers originated from coastal villages. It is therefore unsurprising that the Qur'an speaks extensively about the sea and maritime realities.

The Qur'an employs two primary terms in reference to the sea, *al-baḥr* and *al-yamm*. *Al-Baḥr* means sea of a volume of water (Ibn Manzūr 2003), antonym of *al-barr* which means land. i) *Al-Baḥr*, mentioned 38 times, generally meaning “sea” in contrast to *al-barr* (land). Its plural, *al-biḥār*, denotes oceans. The sea is frequently used as a metaphor for vastness and limitlessness, as in al-Kahf [18]:109, which compares divine words to an ocean whose waters would be exhausted before His words are completed. ii) *al-Yamm*, occurring seven times (al-A'rāf [7]:136; Ṭāhā [20]:39, 78, 97; al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:7, 40; al-Dhāriyāt [51]:40), always in the context of the narrative of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh. Scholars differ on

whether *yamm* is synonymous with *baḥr* or specifically denotes a wide river resembling the sea.

Regarding the term *al-yamm*, scholars differ in their interpretation. Some consider it synonymous with *al-baḥr* (sea), while others understand it as referring specifically to sea waves. Notably, the word consistently appears in singular form, never in dual or plural. Referring to *Lisān al-'Arab*, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* explains that *yamm* originates from the Syriac language, later Arabized to denote both saltwater seas and large rivers of freshwater (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009).

The seven occurrences of *al-yamm* in the Qur'an all appear in the context of the story of Prophet Moses and Pharaoh. In these instances, the term is more appropriately interpreted as a wide river resembling the sea but consisting of freshwater rather than saltwater. This interpretation is supported by the narrative of Moses' mother (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009), who set her infant adrift on the river as an act of protection, as explicitly described in al-Qaṣaṣ [28]:7:

“And We inspired the mother of Moses, ‘Suckle him; and when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear or grieve. Indeed, we will return him to you and make him one of the messengers.’”

The sea is described as an expansive body of water, seemingly without boundaries, that connects one place to another. It provides a medium of navigation for vessels of all kinds, from the smallest boats to large ships, including offshore oil platforms and other maritime industries. The Qur'an also refers to another remarkable phenomenon concerning the sea: the meeting of two bodies of water with distinct characteristics. Despite the visible turbulence of their waves, each retains its own properties without merging completely. This is articulated in al-Furqān [25]:53:

“And it is He who merges the two bodies of water: one fresh and sweet, and the other salty and bitter. And He placed between them a barrier and an insurmountable boundary.”

This phenomenon refers to two distinct bodies of water one fresh and the other salty that flow side by side without mixing, a reality that the Qur'an presents as a divine blessing for humankind. Referring to contemporary oceanographic research, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* notes that marine scientists have discovered the existence of natural barriers between different seas. These barriers, which move along the interface of two bodies of water, are referred to as a “front” (*jabhah*). Through this natural separation, each sea maintains its unique characteristics in accordance with the ecological systems and living organisms that inhabit it (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009).

Ultimately, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* emphasizes that the sea constitutes a vital source of sustenance, as it contains a wide variety of marine life that continuously reproduces and sustains ecological balance while serving as a food supply for humanity, both directly and indirectly. The reproduction of marine organisms occurs at a remarkable rate and in great abundance. A single fish, for instance, may produce millions of eggs during each reproductive cycle. Once hatched, a portion of these become food for larger fish, forming an integral part of the marine food chain.

Al-Nahl [16]:14 further affirms this role of the sea as a source of sustenance:

“And it is He who subjected the sea for you so that you may eat from its tender meat and extract from it ornaments which you wear. And you see ships plowing through it, that you might seek of His bounty and that you may be grateful.”

The *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik*, referring to the commentary of al-Zamakhsharī, explains that the “tender meat” (*lahman tariyyan*) mentioned in the verse refers specifically to fish, while the “ornaments” (*hilyah*) denote pearls. The interpretation of “tender meat” as fish is also consistent with al-Mā'idah [5]:96, which explicitly states that all game from the sea, regardless of type, is lawful (*halāl*) for consumption (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009).

Nevertheless, alongside its many benefits for life, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* also underscores the dangers that may arise from the sea. Al-Infītār [82]:3 employs the expression “*wa-idhā al-biḥāru fujjirat*” (“and when the seas are set ablaze/overflow”), alluding to the potential hazards of the ocean. These dangers are not limited to surface currents that can sweep away any object, but also include powerful subsurface currents and the darkness of deep-sea trenches. The bursting forth of seawater whether through sudden tidal surges or large-scale inundations such as tsunamis illustrates the destructive potential of maritime disasters. For this reason, anticipatory measures are imperative. Mitigation strategies, such as the cultivation of mangroves along coastlines, are necessary to reduce the scale of destruction and to safeguard both human settlements and ecological systems from the immense risks posed by the sea.

3. Winds

The third discussion, as another example, concerns the wind. The *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* begins by defining wind as air in motion, which occurs due to differences in atmospheric pressure. Wind flows from areas of high pressure to areas of low pressure, or from regions of higher temperature to those of lower temperature (“Edukasi.Net: Pengertian Angin” 2009).

In the Qur'an, wind is referred to using two distinct terms: *rīḥ* in the singular form and *riyāḥ* in the plural. Generally, the Qur'an employs the plural form *riyāḥ* ten times [e.g., al-Baqarah (2):164; al-A' rāf (7):57; al-Hijr (15):22; al-Kahf (18):45; al-Furqān (25):48; al-Naml (27):64; al-Rūm (30):46, 48; Fāṭir (35):9; al-Jāthiyah (45):5] to describe winds that are beneficial and life-giving. By contrast, the singular form *rīḥ* appears eighteen times, with the exception of one verse in Yūnus [10]:22 (*rīḥ ṭayyibah*, a “good wind”), to denote winds that bring disaster [e.g., al-Anbiyā (21):81; al-Ḥajj (22):31; al-Aḥqāf (46):24, among others]. For this reason, it is not surprising that a ḥadīth recommends supplicating to God that the winds be made *riyāḥ*—carriers of mercy—rather than *rīḥ*, which bring disaster (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009).

In Arabic, the term *rīḥ* is defined in multiple ways: as “a fresh breeze” (*nasīm al-hawā*), “air in motion” (*al-hawā idhā taḥarrakat*), and, by extension, “mercy and power” (*al-raḥmah wa al-quwwah*) (al-Lugha al-'Arabiyya 2004).

In relation to the meaning of *rīḥ* as “power” or as a source of energy that can be harnessed by human beings, the phrase *rīḥ ṭayyibah* in Yūnus [10]:22 at first glance appears to refer merely to a favorable wind that enables the movement of sailboats. However, when examined alongside al-Anfāl [8]:46, wind is portrayed not only as moving air and as an essential element in the process of rainfall, but also as a source of energy capable of propelling large

vessels and, more broadly, as a form of wind power beneficial for human technology. This interpretation is reinforced by Sād [38]:36 “*We subjected to him [Sulaymān] the wind, blowing by his command wherever he directed*”—and Saba' [34]:12 “*And to Solomon [We subjected] the wind; its morning course was a month, and its evening course was a month*”. Both verses highlight the use of wind as an extraordinary source of energy within the narrative of Prophet Sulaymān (AS).

The interpretation of Sād [38]:36 and Saba' [34]:12 explains that when Prophet Sulaymān undertook a journey from morning until midday by means of the wind, the distance he covered was equivalent to that of a swift camel's travel over the course of a month. Similarly, when he traveled from midday until evening, the distance was again equal to a month's journey. The type of wind subjected to and harnessed by Prophet Sulaymān possessed extraordinary power, as also indicated in al-Anbiyā' [21]:81, where it is described as *rīḥ 'āṣifah* (a fiercely blowing and mighty wind).

Thus, the meaning of *rīḥ* as power and energy corresponds closely with modern scientific realities, wherein humanity has learned to harness wind energy for various purposes that facilitate human activity, such as generator for electricity, modes of transportation, renewable non-fossil energy, and other technological applications (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009).

a. Environmental Damage

The fourth example concerns the dangers of environmental destruction, which serve as a reminder of human's responsibility toward nature. Such awareness is essential for ensuring ecological sustainability and for minimizing the extent of environmental degradation that may otherwise result in catastrophic natural disasters.

The most common term used by the Qur'an to describe the notion of damage is *fasād*. In its various derivations, the word appears approximately fifty times throughout the Qur'an. Lexically, *fasād* denotes “something that departs from balance.” Its semantic scope, however, is broad, encompassing the spiritual and moral dimensions of the human soul, the physical condition of the body, as well as any phenomenon that deviates from its proper equilibrium.

According to the findings of the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik*, the term *fasād* in the Qur'an can be classified into five distinct meanings. First, it refers to *deviant and harmful behavior*. This is explicitly mentioned in al-Baqarah [2]:11: “*...do not cause corruption on the earth*.” Here, *fasād* denotes acts of deviation, such as inciting non-believers to oppose Islam. Second, it refers to *disorder or chaos*. This is reflected in al-Anbiyā' [21]:22: “*...had there been within them [the heavens and the earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined*.”

The third meaning of *fasād* is *destructive behavior*, namely the act of ruining or devastating anything whether objects or people through various means such as burning, demolishing, rendering powerless, and stripping away dignity. This is illustrated in al-Naml [27]:34: “*...Indeed, when kings enter a city, they ruin it and render the honored of its people humbled*.”

The fourth meaning of *fasād* is *negligence or indifference*. This refers to the failure to uphold responsibilities or to safeguard the welfare of others, as implied in al-Baqarah [2]:220, where those who neglect the care of orphans are described as causing *fasād*

(corruption). In this sense, corruption is not only active destruction but also the absence of due care and accountability.

The fifth meaning of *fasād* pertains to environmental destruction. This is most explicitly expressed in al-Rūm [30]:41: “Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what human hands have wrought, so that He may let them taste part of what they have done, that they might return [to righteousness].” Here, *fasād* encompasses ecological crises, such as floods, droughts, famine, crop failure, and environmental imbalance, all of which stem from human irresponsibility and exploitation of nature.

In addressing the notion of various damage on land and sea, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* refers to the opinions of classical exegetes. They enumerate various forms of destruction, including major floods, prolonged droughts, water scarcity, senseless loss of life, fires, drowning, acts of injustice, deviant behaviors, crop failures, and economic crises (*Tafsir Al-Qur'an Tematik* 2009).

The consequences of environmental degradation, as outlined above, ultimately point back to humanity as the primary agent responsible for managing nature. While human beings have been granted the freedom to utilize and administer the natural world, such authority must always be exercised within the framework of accountability. It thus becomes clear that humanity's role is that of a regulator, caretaker, and steward not an absolute ruler. Accordingly, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* emphasizes that humans must not act arbitrarily toward nature and the environment, for all actions will be subject to accountability before God, the ultimate Giver of Mandate, who has entrusted humanity with the role of *mustakhlif*.

C. Environmental Awareness Movements in Indonesia

The *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* on Environmental Conservation represents an effort to integrate ethics and religion into ecological awareness. Raising environmental consciousness is notoriously difficult, as consumerist and hedonistic lifestyles remain dominant across both developed and developing nations (Abdurrahman 2007). One of the primary causes of environmental degradation is the pursuit of hedonistic lifestyles, which often manifests in the relentless extraction of natural resources. Such practices are predominantly exploitative in nature and inevitably lead to ecological damage.

The *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* was distributed to Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia to be important sources on qur'anic exegesis within the Indonesian context. Its importance lies on at least three aspects. First, *tafsir* literatures are dominated by book in standard Arabic, which are not easy to disseminate to Muslim community which mostly not so familiar with the Arabic. The presence of *al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya* [the Qur'an and its Translation] by the Ministry of Religious Affairs plays an important role in enabling ordinary Muslims to read the message of the Qur'an. Second, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* also helps students, scholars on non Islamic studies to familiarize with the understanding the message of the Qur'an, especially the importance of natural preservation. Third, ordinary Muslims can also have an access to the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik*, because it is also published in E-format that can be downloaded through the website of Board of Qur'anic Text Review [*Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf al-Qur'an*].

Islamic scholars, Muslim activists and also institutions in Indonesia have campaigned for preserving the environment by promoting

ecological awareness through many form of activities. They create programs, make publications, such as books, articles, modules and others to promote awareness of the danger of environmental damage. They build also networks to strengthen their activities. Since 2010-an many works have been published. To trace the importance of the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik*, many publications related to the same issues can be found. Examples are among others:

1. Fachrudin Mangunjaya (2015): *Mempertahankan Keseimbangan: Perubahan Iklim, Keanekaragaman Hayati, Pembangunan Berkelanjutan, dan Etika Agama* (Maintaining Balance: Climate Change, Biodiversity, Sustainable Development, and Religious Ethics) (Mangunjaya 2015).
2. Fachrudin Mangunjaya (2021): *Generasi Terakhir: Aktivisme Dunia Muslim Mencegah Perubahan Iklim dan Kepunahan Lingkungan Hidup* (The Last Generation: Muslim Activism to Prevent Climate Change and Environmental Extinction, based on eco-pesantren activism) (Mangunjaya 2021).
3. Dihyah (2024): *Bumi Ruhani: Meresapi Ajaran Islam dalam Mengatasi Krisis Lingkungan* (Spiritual Earth: Absorbing Islamic Teachings to Overcome the Environmental Crisis) (Dihyah 2024).
4. Ilfi Nurdiana et al. (2025): *Eco-Teologi: Mewujudkan Green Campus dan Eko Pesantren* (Eco-Theology: Realizing Green Campus and Eco-Pesantren) (Nurdiana 2025), by academics at UIN Malang.

These literatures share a common concern: the earth has aged, and nature has undergone significant change. Yet many remain unaware that human lifestyles and patterns of consumption have accelerated environmental degradation. The planet's balance is threatened as greed erodes natural defense systems such as ecosystems and climate stability. While global challenges like climate change continue to be negotiated, developing countries, including Indonesia, still rely heavily on exploitative resource use. This dependence undermines biodiversity and accelerates the extinction of species essential to ecological equilibrium.

It is widely recognized that biodiversity must be preserved and utilized sustainably as a foundation for ecological balance and as a key resource for sustainable development. These works not only present facts but also propose solutions, ranging from government policy to religious wisdom and ethics, as part of efforts to sustain life on earth. Furthermore, they explicitly cite Qur'an verses as the basis of their arguments.

One notable initiative was Mangunjaya's Eco-Pesantren Program (2021–2024) that mentioned in his book entitled *Generasi Terakhir: Aktivisme Dunia Muslim Mencegah Perubahan Iklim dan Kepunahan Lingkungan Hidup*, involving 50 pesantrens [Islamic boarding school] across Sumatra, Banten, West Java, Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java, engaging 75,954 students in workshops, training, and conservation projects (“EMIS Kementerian Agama RI Statistik Pondok Pesantren” 2025). Successful pesantrens in this program received awards, and the program inspired broader awareness (Mangunjaya 2015).

Several of these works and environmental awareness initiatives have been directly influenced by the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik*, particularly the volume on Environmental Conservation, which is

frequently cited as a primary reference (Nurdiana 2025). This shows that the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* has contributed significantly to raising awareness of environmental degradation while also inspiring movements, programs, and conservation efforts. Thus, scriptural exegesis plays a vital role in shaping behavioral change among believers, especially within the context of Indonesian society.

CONCLUSION

The *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, particularly the volume on Environmental Conservation, constitutes a landmark contribution to Indonesian Qur'anic scholarship. It is distinctive for several reasons: (1) It aligns with the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM), thus bridging government policy and religious scholarship. (2) It was authored collectively by Qur'anic scholars from diverse academic and organizational backgrounds, ensuring methodological rigor and authoritative quality.

Specifically, the Environmental Conservation volume not only enriches Qur'anic discourse on ecology and reinforces the fiqh principle of *hifz al-bi'ah* (preserving the environment), but it has also profoundly influenced environmental activism and academic literature in Indonesia.

This demonstrates that Qur'anic exegesis, when contextualized to address contemporary issues, can inspire ecological ethics and mobilize practical conservation efforts. In the Indonesian context, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* has proven instrumental in fostering ecological awareness, contributing both to scholarship and to the wider movement for environmental sustainability.

It can be said, the *Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik* demonstrates how scriptural interpretation can serve as both an intellectual and practical response to the urgent ecological crises of our time. By integrating Qur'anic principles with contemporary environmental discourse, it not only affirms humanity's role as *khalifah* (stewards of the earth) but also offers a religiously grounded framework for sustainability. This dual function, enriching scholarship while inspiring ecological praxis, highlights the enduring relevance of Qur'anic exegesis in addressing global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

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