

WILDANA WARGADINATA

IFFAT MAIMUNAH

ROHMANI NUR INDAH

**ECO-RELIGIOUS APPROACH TO DEFORESTATION BY INDONESIAN
ISTIGHOSAH COMMUNITY**

Wildana Wargadinata

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang Indonesia.

Email: wildana@bsa.uin-malang.ac.id

Iffat Maimunah

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang Indonesia.

Email: iffatmaimunah@uin-malang.ac.id

Rohmani Nur Indah

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang Indonesia.

Email: indah@bsi.uin-malang.ac.id

Abstract: This paper aims to explain the involvement of an istighosah community in environmental conservation in Indonesia. The data were obtained through the method of observing religious activities and conservation actions, interviewing the community leaders, and documenting the existence and activity of worshipers. The finding confirmed three aspects. First, the implementation of Sufism teachings is an alternative in nature conservation, not only aiming to meet the spiritual needs of pilgrims, but also fostering awareness of pilgrims to prevent damage to nature. Second, what is shown by pilgrims is very closely related to the human urge to always realize its basic capacity as a leader for nature. The forest is considered as a brother that the sustainability must be guarded, preserved, and guaranteed. Third, the teachings of Sufism become the basis for the group to act to be involved in caring for nature. This doctrine is inherited through formal media such as recitation and carried out in the form of direct action. Therefore, further studies are needed to explore the involvement of other religious organizations in the effort to conserve the environment in a sustainable manner.

Key words: Indonesian istighosah community, the teachings of Sufism, conservation, deforestation, eco-religious approach, environmental preservation.

1. Introduction

Avoiding deforestation by institutions directly engaged in environmental preservation has become common knowledge, but the involvement of Sufis in nature conservation is not well known. Religious institutions began to care about environmental issues, outside the fields of conventional cultivation. This involvement has become very contextual given the fact that in the period 2009-2013, there were millions of hectares of Indonesian forest area lost. 690 thousand hectares in Riau province, 619 thousand hectares in Central Kalimantan, 490 thousand hectares in Papua, 448 thousand hectares in East Kalimantan, and 426 thousand hectares in West Kalimantan. In fact, Forest Watch Indonesia predicts that by 2023 natural forests in several provinces in Indonesia will be depleted which will impact ecosystem imbalances, including human life in the future (Buditama 2014). This fact of forest destruction began to come to the attention of religious activists who manifested itself in the form of a movement against deforestation.

The studies of the involvement of religious groups in environmental preservation still focus on religious activities, not much has examined the involvement of religious groups in fields outside of religion. At least there are two trends that can be seen in relation to the role of religion in forest management. First, studies that see religious groups as social forces that focus on religious ritual activities, and are very far from caring and involvement related to environmental issues (Islam & Islam 2015; Karim 2016; Muchtar 2013; Wekke 2015). Second, studies showing religious groups as agents of change that also have the opportunity to be involved in matters outside of religion (Nashir 2010; Syahminan 2012), including in environmental management (La Fua 2014; Nurmardiansyah 2014; Thamrin 2013). From current studies, it appears that the involvement of religious groups, especially Sufis, is not yet fully known.

This paper aims to provide an explanation of the involvement and contribution of local Sufi groups, an Indonesian istighosah community in efforts to prevent deforestation. This issue covers three questions. First, how is the practical implementation of the teachings of Sufism pilgrims of the community in an effort to reduce deforestation and forest destruction? Second, how does their doctrine base on the involvement of pilgrims in environmental conservation? Third, how does this internalization of Sufism in the context of forest conservation take place?

This paper is based on three arguments. First, the open and widespread implementation of religious teachings will be able to reduce the rate of forest loss. Increasing public awareness of the importance of preserving the forest can be done through religious movements. Second, pilgrims have a high commitment to be involved in the process of

preventing the loss of forest land. The teachings will provide a deeper understanding of human nature which must actively contribute to other God's creatures, especially nature. Third, the process of planting the teachings of Sufism is carried out in a sustainable manner and touches the basic aspects of human life so that anyone will take part in forest sustainability.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sufism and Community

Since its emergence, Sufism has become an interesting phenomenon (Al-Haramain 2011). Sufism is one element of contemporary Sufism that may appeal to the modern mind (Khanam 2006). The point of view in Sufism terminology states that humans are limited creatures that survive and created to worship God (Kosasih 2015).

Nata (2013) concluded that Sufism is an exercise of the soul through activities that free the soul from the influence of the mortal world. In other words, it is associated with spiritual practice with the aim of always being close to God, human social life and natural surroundings. Polat (2017) argues that Sufism is more than just spirituality, it analyzes a kind of life and the world, intellectually, mentally and actively describes the relationship between an individual and God, humans and nature. Budhwani & McLean (2019) said that Sufism had influenced the way of life of people in some parts of the Middle East, Africa, and South and Central Asia. Sufi teachings have involved people in many aspects, including politics. Nurani (2018) says that in an urban community. Understanding Sufism is the basis for finding alternative solutions to life's problems.

2.2. Ecoreligius (Religious and Environmental Relations)

The welfare of a community is synergistically dependent on the welfare of other creatures and the earth. This form of eco-religious focuses on the relationship between religion and the environment (Aboul-Enein 2017). This construction implies that one's awareness of his responsibility towards the Divine is directly responsible for what God has created (Aboul-Enein 2017). This argument is corroborated by El Jurdi et al (2016) that the theory of environmental ethics is derived from the Koran values and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (hadith). Quoting Ozdemir (2003), the Koran refers to nature as God's creation and orderly, meaningful, and purposeful regulations. It manifests the power, wisdom, and grace of the Creator (in El Jurdi et al. 2016).

Religion also has a role in the process of local energy transition and environmental sustainability. The study of religion and sustainability provides various examples where religion influences a systematic environment in three potential functions: (1) campaigning and

intermediation in public space, (2) embodiment of transition in the form of participation in environmental sustainability projects, and (3) dissemination of values and a worldview that supports environmentally conscious actions (Koehrsen 2015). Jenkins and Chapple (2011) state that religious environmentalism refers to at least three different movements: (a) the actions of religious and community leaders on the environment, (b) political environmentalism supported by religious resources, and (c) environmental movements which are defined as religious movements.

2.3. Internalization of Values

Changes in the environment and nature have encouraged humans to internalize the values and rules that have existed in the direction of sustainable nature protection movement. Usually, internalization is always associated in economic relations (Chou 2010; Roehrich et al. 2017) and childcare patterns (Barni et al. 2011) but basically internalization is related to the process of deepening values and teachings. Niman (2019) explained that internalization is a process of planting and deepening values by making in-depth efforts through coaching, teaching, and habituation which is done in stages so that it requires ongoing time. Dimitratos et al. (2011) explain that the internalization process involves a shift in structure and values from external to internal controls involving the integration of existing rules, the results of which will direct individuals to the concepts of "good" and "not good" in behavior. In this case, Barry et al. (2012) reflect the process of internalization with the behavior of an individual who internalizes values by being influenced by actors, the media, and the environment in providing teachings that shift to new values.

Then, the internalization of values is reflected through the depiction of religious doctrines that influence individual behavior in protecting nature. According to Chuvieco (2012), the internalization of religious values forms a human relationship with nature where religion teaches attitudes and moral ethics to care for nature around it. Botero et al. (2014) stated that religion is a strong mechanism in the enforcement of social rules that results in the improvement of nature's preservation through morally implanted care. In this case, morality refers to good and bad deeds that show the internalization of belief values into the realm of individual behavior regulation (Barni 2011). Moral in human and natural relations is usually indicated by conservation measures. According to Koehrsen (2015), conservation is a sustainable change to save future generations and nature from damage.

2.4. Involvement of the Community in Environmental Conservation

Environmental disasters have become a serious problem in the Middle Ages with many environmental pollutions of natural resources, the

extinction of various species and excessive exploitation of the environment. Phenomenological discourse about Islamic textuality is very much centered on Sufism (Kooria, 2018). Rasngat and Marzuki (2015) said that most Sufism believes that everything that exists is part of God. Therefore, it refers to holistic view where the presence of nature is not only placed as a hierarchy in the creation of God. Quoting Madjid (1992), nature was created by God seriously, not made randomly and not wrong. The Koran provides a positive-optimistic view of nature that can provide a living experience for humans in creating happiness and sadness (in Rasngat & Marzuki 2015).

Sufism content relating to the environment has so far not been updated to modern times. For example, the concept of love in Sufism needs to be extended from concepts that are solely directed towards God's love to concepts that are also directed towards the love of nature (Irawan 2017). Developing Sufism into a more systematic environmental spirituality is a necessity amidst the systematic ecological damage that has been brought about by modern human greed and the reckless use of technology (Irawan 2017).

The majority of Muslim countries have developed environmental management systems that include conservation zones, wildlife reserves, land grants, charitable donations, protection of water resources and inspection of natural use. These environmental steps are guided by the principles of Shari'ah to protect and promote ecological management (Saniotis 2011). The involvement of the teachings in environmental preservation, for example, can be reviewed through eco-pesantren (religious school) lessons. The general idea and concept adopted for the eco-pesantren plan are recycling. Eco-pesantren is defined as boarding schools that use a sustainable system in building and managing students, mosques, and kyai houses. Eco-pesantren is also defined as knowledge relating to boarding school and the natural environment (Bahri 2018).

3. Methods

At first the istighosah community named "Lintas Ghaib" was engaged in spiritual martial art activities, slowly religious activities began to be offered. The community circle is currently centered in the Nurussalam Singgahan Islamic boarding school, Tuban, East Java Indonesia. This pesantren has spearheaded various activities within the framework of environmental conservation, specifically, forests.

The topic of this study on deforestation was chosen in view of the enormous impact on human life, including the occurrence of environmental crises such as global warming, forest fires, drought, floods, erosion, pollution, and various other forms of disasters occurring in Indonesia. One of the religious groups, namely the istighosah community,

has carried out various activities that fall within the framework of environmental conservation, especially forests. This religious group was chosen based on the reason that they carry out many activities in the context of preserving the forest.

As analysis material, the data needed is in the form of qualitative data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation studies. The observations focused on some of the activities of the istighosah community, recitation which contained teachings that were very pro-environment. In addition, the researchers also observed forest conservation activities both routine and ceremonial in nature. The routine activities include care and nurseries while ceremonial activities are in the form of replanting cooperation with many parties. To complete the data, several important figures were interviewed. Among these figures were Nur Nasroh Hadiningrat (Nurse of Pesantren Nurussalam Walisongo), Anshakhul Balaya Mangkunegara (Chairperson of the istighosah community), Armaya Mangkunegara (Trustees of the istighosah community). The informants provide the data on the involvement of pilgrims in efforts to reduce the rate of forest destruction occurring so far in East Java, Indonesia.

The data obtained through several methods above are then grouped according to their respective trends into three sections based on research questions. The analysis employed a constructivism approach that looks at the process of involvement of pilgrims in an effort to reduce the rate of deforestation.

4. Findings

4.1. Practical Implementation of Sufism Teachings

The istighosah community "Lintas Ghaib" made a positive effort in reducing the rate of forest destruction. In this effort, the community was initially a forum for students who studied spiritual martial art. The students who are mostly young are still interested in things that are considered extraordinary and related to challenges. In addition, this community is also one of the means or fields of religious propaganda conducted by the boarding school. The existence of spiritual martial art is basically a da'wah or sermon strategy aimed at certain people. In the next journey, the orientation of the community activities was developed in the direction of spirituality and social development.

The background of members of the istighosah community is quite diverse. Most of the members are Nurussalam pesantren alumni and students. But not a few members who come from outside the boarding school environment. Information about this community spread by word of mouth makes members of the community continue to grow to reach around 35 thousand worshipers in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore,

Australia, and Abu Dhabi (A. Balaya, interview, September 10, 2019). In addition, cooperation is also carried out with various parties, such as vocational forestry department and regional government (A. Balaya, interview, July 22, 2019). The activists of the community are important figures involved in forest preservation efforts, besides there were also other figures in the community around the pesantren.

4.2. Basis for the Doctrine of Jamaah Engagement

The task of humans on earth is to manage the earth and its contents, as a manifestation of the implementation of God's commands as humans are the substitute (caliph) of God on earth. Thus basically the effort to preserve the universe is God's command, so carrying it out is considered worship. It is this awareness that ultimately protects humans so that in the process of managing the earth, humans are not arbitrary and obeying their passions. Because what is done will be held accountable before God in the future (N.N. Hadiningrat, interview, July 26, 2019)

What humans do to the earth and its contents in the context of becoming a caliph will be held accountable, as a consequence of man's position as a servant of God. The basic obligation to preserve nature in addition to the awareness that nature is a mandate given by God to humans is also an awareness among the members of "Lintas Ghaib" that people must have morals towards nature. This awareness arises from the traditions of Javanese people who emphasize a culture of reciprocity and respect for fellow beings (A. Naja, interview, July 25, 2019)

4.3. Internalization of Sufism in Forest Conservation

The transfer and inheritance of values in terms of environmental preservation adopted in the "Lintas Ghaib" community is carried out through the method of inheritance from generation to generation, then to worshipers through recitation forums. The position of the community is centered in the boarding school. Through recitation in some routine activities, the teachings of the importance of preserving the forest were conveyed (A. Balaya, interview, August 20, 2019).

The community used various media to convey messages and teachings. The message delivered was not limited to the teachings of Sufism in general, but also provided an enrichment of insight in the importance of environmental preservation through various activities. The teachings are carried out by Gomang pesantren stakeholders, such as Gus Aang and Gus Naja who preach in their respective communities. Ecological da'wah in the community is also carried out by participating in preserving various traditions.

The need to be ethical in nature must also be supported by the understanding that all beings in the universe are like interrelated webs. The existence and absence of one being will affect other beings. This awareness will also give birth to deeper wisdom (A. Naja, interview, July

25, 2019). Awareness of ethics and wisdom in dealing with nature will ultimately lead to wisdom and caution in behaving with nature. So wisdom and caution in dealing with nature also need to consider the presence of all creatures. In this case, the community always emphasizes on its members to prioritize ethics in acting (A. Balaya, interview, July 25, 2019).

In addition to spreading understanding about ethics on the environment and forests, the Nurussalam boarding school and the "Lintas Ghaib" community also spearheaded various rehabilitation activities on degraded forest land. The real action of the Nurussalam pesantren in the reforestation programs totaling around 240 hectares. In addition to greening or replanting the lands, the pesantren is also trying to save several springs at several points. Quoted from the Gomang boarding school online page, the Gomang boarding school has succeeded in rehabilitating around 8 springs in Singgahan and surrounding areas. After the rehabilitation effort, now 14 springs have spouted water. Greening efforts, land rehabilitation and saving water sources around Gomang covering around 140 hectares of forests (A. Naja, interview, 13 September 2019)

5. Discussion

5.1. Implementation of Open Doctrine

The existence of the istighosah community is a sign of the transformation of the practice of Sufism. Protecting the environment from damage with spiritualism or religion is the teachings of Sufism. It breaks the assumption and image that the starting point of environmental damage lies in the perspective and behavior of humans when dealing with nature. Quoting Nasr's (2003) statement, environmental damage that occurs throughout the world today is a result of spiritual emptiness. It makes humans less wise (amoral) in treating nature. For Nasr, religion plays a role in helping to overcome environmental problems. In Nasr's view, nature is a manifestation of God. Nasr described that God is the center, while nature is a manifestation of the names and attributes of God. That is the essence of monotheism where nature, humans, and God are mixed in a holistic relationship.

The teachings of Sufism that are more individualized (exclusive) are contextualized into teachings that can be enjoyed by many parties. When the Sufism group generally chose silence as a method of practicing the teachings, the "Lintas Ghaib" community was more progressive by carrying out real activities. Love of God is attributed to nature as His creation. Nature, in this case, the forest, is not just a plant that can be arbitrarily treated according to human will. However, forests are human partners so that they also have the same rights to live, develop, and survive for all their rights. The concept of "self", as such, not only refers to

the gross human body but also refers to "the forest" as another self. So, once again it is emphasized that the teachings of Sufism no longer stop at the teachings that are specifically owned by its members, but extend through the activities carried out by the community.

5.2. Community Commitment to Environmental Care

The mission of realizing human nature as a caliph is reflected in the forest conservation activities carried out by the community in Tuban. The Caliph himself is a basic task of human beings other than as a servant of God. Behind the human nature as a caliph, there are responsibilities, namely creatures that must not damage, may not tarnish other creations and various other prohibitions. One of the tasks of the Caliphate of humans is to create a more peaceful, prosperous and safe life. Thus, destroying nature means denying or rejecting 'his destiny' as a caliph (Masrusi 2014). Irawan (2017) added that developing this Sufism into a more systematic environmental spirituality and becoming a necessity amidst the systematic ecological damage that has been brought about by modern human greed and the reckless use of technology.

As social beings, humans cannot stand alone. He must be on the side of other creatures including animals and plants. The commitment of pilgrims to devote themselves to God, increasingly obtaining its context when humans are able to make God's creation as part of him. Rasngat and Marzuki (2015), argue that the Koran has been thinking of a positive-optimistic view of nature where it can provide a living experience for humans in creating happiness and sadness.

5.3. Internalization of Continuous Teachings Value

The teachings of Sufism as practiced by the community do not stop at how to shape human attitudes that have better personal spiritualism. The inherited teachings must be able to change the mindset of pilgrims in a direction that is more contributive to the interests of many parties. Thus the dynamics of the relationship are not mutually destructive but maintain each other. This is in line with the thought (Aboul-Enein, 2017) that the Koran promotes the concept of human creation as a part of a large community of beings and that the welfare of each member of the community is synergistically dependent on the welfare of other creatures and the earth. This form of eco-religious focuses on the relationship between religion and the environment.

The teaching of Sufism that is open directly touches on aspects of basic human needs. A forest conservation movement is a form of gratitude to nature. The teachings of Sufism have become an important medium in bringing people to a high awareness of the importance of the existence of the forest in which various benefits can be obtained. This concept reinforces the statement of Saniotis (2012) that the three basic ethical ideas are monotheism/Divine unity (God created the universe and that all

existence reflects unity in plurality), the Khilafah/guardianship of human beings needs to refrain from delinquency (actions that lead to damage environment) and akhirah (this shows that human beings are not only required to be servants of God on earth but will also be held accountable in the afterlife if someone deviates).

6. Conclusion

The involvement of the "Lintas Ghaib" istighosah community in efforts to tackle deforestation reinforces the argument that preserving nature is the responsibility of all parties. Human capacity referred to as the caliph on the earth, as a guardian of nature can be realized in various ways. What is shown by the community is very closely related to the human urge to always realize its basic capacity as a caliph/leader for nature. Deforestation that occurs everywhere is not only a phenomenon that threatens the existence of nature but also threatens human survival in general. The practice of Sufism as demonstrated by this study as well as providing an explanation that groups that have been considered only focus on fulfilling the spiritual-spiritual intentions, were able to translate Sufism into a more technical-worldly domain. The forest is even considered as a brother, which must, therefore, be preserved, preserved and guaranteed its sustainability.

This paper confirms three important things. First, the teachings of Sufism are able to provide a framework specifically for the community to carry out various forest preservation efforts. The fact that natural damage continues to be a starting point for pilgrims to reforest with the aim of restoring the existence and function of forests as part of human life. The teachings of Sufism do not stop at study forums, istighosah, and various media that have been used by the community "Lintas Ghaib", but have been distracted into real social practices that are more concrete and successfully involve many parties. Wisdom, love, and concern for God's creatures emphasized in the teachings of Sufism are realized through the cultivation of awareness of the importance of the sustainability and preservation of nature, especially forests for life.

Second, the doctrine of Sufism which has been widely understood as part of abstract-spiritual life is applied to social practices that are real-worldly by not leaving the essence of the doctrine based on the nobility and sincerity of the soul in doing something. Forests, although in the real nature are positioned as dead, on a more spiritual level are partners or parts that cannot be separated from humans. Because forests are also part of God's creatures that cannot stand alone. This effort is an important point for the community to be disseminated to the wider society. This example will be a step forward for the community's participation to be part of overall forest preservation. The teachings of Sufism practiced by

pilgrims touch more tangible aspects so that it will move other elements of the community to take part as caliphs even on a narrower scale.

Third, the internalization of the values of Sufism is not only passed on through religious media but also channeled through natural media. The teachings of Sufism which are taught exclusively have also turned into teachings that are more open and become part of the dynamics of community life. The internalization of teaching values is carried out with its main mission of fostering public awareness to carry out and become an important part of the natural maintenance cycle. The aspect which is touched in the process of instilling teaching values is the aspect of the needs or necessities of human life which is more basic, that forests are part of human life. In fact, the decreasing quantity of forests will also be followed by a higher risk of threats to human life. This encouragement is the embryo of the success of the community in gathering pilgrims and communities to be involved in preserving nature, especially forests. There is a more communal relationship between Khaliq (God) and makhluq (human) through the intermediaries of the caliph (human) through the teachings of this Sufism.

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