



GREEN SUFISM MOVEMENT IN INDONESIA (CASE STUDY IN PESANTREN EKOLOGI OF ATH-THAARIQ WEST JAVA)

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Abstract

This research explores efforts in environmental preservation as a response to the global ecological challenges affecting humanity. It specifically focuses on how Sufi-inspired environmental practices are implemented at the Ath-Thaariq pesantren (Islamic boarding school) in West Java, Indonesia. Through qualitative research methods, including interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study gathers insights. The findings reveal two main outcomes. First, the curriculum at Ath-Thaariq incorporates lessons on ecology, the cultivation of plant seeds, and the conversion of waste into organic fertilizers, highlighting these activities as key to its environmental conservation strategy. Second, the school's leadership has committed to reforestation and the protection of natural habitats, inspired by Sufi values such as zuhud (asceticism), gratitude, community support, love, and blessings, alongside practices like tafakkur (meditation) and tadabbur (contemplation). These insights not only shed light on the contribution of Sufism to environmental conservation but also suggest pathways for incorporating Sufi philosophies into modern environmental education. This shift towards integrating Sufi teachings in education represents an innovative approach for Islamic schools globally, promoting a comprehensive framework for environmental care.

INTRODUCTION

The pressing environmental crisis we face today is a direct threat to human existence, calling for immediate action from experts.(Charmetant, 2018) Despite numerous strategies in play, there's a consensus that these approaches often don't fully tackle the growing challenge. This situation underscores the overlooked importance of human spirituality in addressing environmental issues.(Aboul-Enein, 2018) The detrimental impact of consumerism on the environment, leading to severe and unpredictable climate changes, underscores the need for a shift in behavior. These climate changes, influenced by human actions, affect the survival and distribution of species. It's crucial to explore the potential synergy between spiritual communities and conservation efforts, as spirituality can be a powerful ally in conservation. (Leese, 2019)

Sufism, with its deep spiritual roots in Islam, explores the ethical and aesthetic connections between humans, the divine, and the natural world. Yet, its potential in environmental conservation has been minimally tapped, with a focus primarily on personal spirituality rather than environmental action. Sufism's teachings on asceticism, patience, and love have seldom been connected with ecological consciousness, reflecting its traditional focus on inner spiritual growth.(Irawan et al., 2022)

The link between Sufism and environmental care is not widely recognized, with many assuming religious practices are confined to personal piety or afterlife preparations. I argue that this connection is critically relevant in today's context of environmental degradation. Scholarly research must delve into how Sufi principles can intersect with modern environmental concerns, urging followers toward ethical and sustainable practices.(Rozi, 2019)

Recent academic efforts have started to shed light on Sufism's potential in environmental advocacy, yet these studies often remain theoretical, focusing on Sufi teachings and the views of prominent Sufi scholars without much emphasis on practical application. This paper seeks to bridge that gap by closely examining how Sufism can actively contribute to environmental conservation, emphasizing real-world applications and efforts

At the Ath-Thaariq pesantren, alongside religious studies, students receive hands-on training in gardening, seed cultivation, waste recycling into organic fertilizer production, and animal husbandry. Unlike exclusive Sufism characterized by rigid adherence to rituals and individual piety, the Sufi model practiced at this pesantren eschews such rigidity. (Millah et al., 2020)

This research not only aligns with the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) in life sciences and physics but also contributes to Islamic Studies through the proposition of eco-Sufism – a framework integrating Sufi values with environmental conservation strategies. Additionally, it refines Annemarie Schimmel's phenomenological approach by incorporating subjective insights from Sufi practitioners and employing Action Research to implement environmental protection programs.

By examining the nexus between Sufism, pesantren, and environmental education, this article investigates the resurgence of Islamic green-Sufism through environmental education within the broader Islamic educational landscape, particularly within pesantren. Given the pivotal role of pesantren in Indonesian Muslim education, their exploration is imperative for understanding how Sufism can inform environmental preservation efforts. This study aims to demonstrate the practical application of Sufi teachings in environmental conservation within the Ath-Taariq pesantren community, thereby reshaping discourse on the relationship between Sufism and environmental ethics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religion undeniably serves as a wellspring of intellectual vigor, symbolic potency, moral resonance, dedication to simplicity, and love, while also fostering a harmonious relationship with nature, all of which contribute to reshaping attitudes, values, and practices for a more promising future on Earth. (W. A. Bauman et al., 2017) Various terms such as “green faith” (Glaab & Fuchs, 2018), “green religion” (Carlisle & Clark, 2018), “green sisters” (Rakoczy, 2015), and “spiritual ecology” (Sponsel, 2012) have emerged from religious traditions.

Numerous Sufi luminaries have delved deeply into cosmology, the nature of the universe, and their profound reverence for the natural world. Figures such as Ibn ‘Arabi, Hazrat Inayat Khan, Rumi, Hossein Nasr, and Vaughan Lee (Vaughan-Lee & Hart, 2017) have articulated views on the relationship between nature and divinity, as well as the imperative to honor and cherish nature. Their perspectives significantly contribute to shaping the theoretical framework of this research, portraying Islam’s mystical dimension that emphasizes harmonious and loving connections between humans, God, and the environment. Within Sufism, Allah’s creations are regarded as sacred, with the universe seen as a manifestation of God’s love for humanity.

Irawan’s research, “Environmental Protection From The Perspectives of Indonesian, Sufi And United Kingdom Muslim Environmentalists”, (Irawan, 2016) explores environmental ideologies through the lenses of various thinkers, including Fachruddin Mangunjaya from Indonesia, (Mangunjaya & McKay, 2012) the authors argue that while state-sponsored efforts to preserve Indonesia’s natural resources have been needed, their effectiveness has been limited due to the paucity of available arable land and the frequent conflicts conservation policies have generated among local populations. Rather than a top-down structural approach, they argue, what is needed is an innovative approach that includes education at the grassroots, which in Indonesia will combine Islamic principles of environmental protection with traditional methods of conservation. After a section presenting an Islamic theology of creation care and then highlighting some projects in the Muslim world, the spotlight is turned on Indonesia, where a number of initiatives involve the cooperation of religious leaders, eco-friendly pesantren (religious boarding schools Hossein Nasr representing Sufism, (Nasr, 1990) and Fazlun Khalid (Khalid, 2010) from

England. However, this study predominantly focuses on theoretical discourse without providing practical examples of environmental conservation efforts.

Another study by Irawan and Nasution, "Dynamics of Sufism and Environment Studies in Indonesian Islamic Higher Education Institutions" (Irawan & Nasution, 2020), examines the interplay between Sufism and environmental studies in Indonesian higher education through scholarly works such as theses and dissertations. Notably, this research overlooks the practical application of Sufism within Islamic boarding schools.

Irawan's research on a Sufi Approach to Environmental Ethics, applying Ibn 'Arabi's Concept of Tajalli: A Sufi Approach to Environmental Ethics" (Irawan et al., 2021), delves into Ibn 'Arabi's concept of tajalli to propose a novel approach to environmental ethics. However, it does not explore practical examples of environmental conservation.

Anies Rohidayah's study, "Eco-Sufism In Ahmad Tohari's Selected Literary Works" (Rohidayah, 2018), analyzes ecological themes in Tohari's literary works through an Eco-Sufism lens. While emphasizing the restoration of harmonious relationships between humanity, God, and nature, this research does not specifically address environmental protection in Islamic boarding schools.

Llewellyn Vaughan Lee and Hart's book, "Spiritual Ecology: 10 Practices to Reawaken the Sacred in Everyday Life" (Vaughan-Lee & Hart, 2017), offers inspiring and practical guidance for reconnecting with the sacred in daily life and transforming our relationship with the Earth. However, it does not delve into practical examples of environmental conservation within Islamic boarding schools.

Rahmi Meldayati's research, "Psycho-Ecology Perspective of Ibn 'Arabi" (Meldayati, 2016), examines the environment from Ibn 'Arabi's perspective and suggests his thoughts as a foundation for environmental sustainability. Unlike the author's study, this research does not explore practical environmental conservation in Islamic boarding schools.

Throughout the literature review, it becomes apparent that studies specifically addressing environmental protection practices in Islamic boarding schools based on Sufi doctrines are scarce.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative methodology with a phenomenological approach, drawing inspiration from Schimmel (Schimmel, 1994). Through this approach, researchers aim to delve into the experiences and knowledge held by Ustadz (Islamic scholars) and the student community regarding the nexus between Sufism and environmental concerns. The investigation focuses on elucidating how Sufism's principles are manifested, interpreted, and integrated into the ethos of environmental preservation. Primary data sources encompass leaders of the pesantren (Islamic boarding school) and its students.

Data collection encompasses observation, documentation, and in-depth interviews, augmented by triangulation techniques. Interviews serve as a primary means to glean

insights into both the conceptualization and practical application of Sufism within the realm of environmental conservation. Moreover, the snowballing model is employed during interviews to validate and enrich the data by exploring various Sufistic values. Additionally, researchers observe the day-to-day activities within the pesantren community, encompassing religious rituals, worship, and interactions with the environment.

Subsequently, data are subjected to meticulous processing and critical analysis, leveraging a hermeneutical and phenomenological approach rooted in Heideggerian philosophy (W. Bauman, 2017). This theoretical framework facilitates an in-depth exploration of the social construction inherent in Berger and Luckman's theory, ultimately yielding a comprehensive understanding of the process of externalizing, objectifying, and internalizing Sufi teachings concerning environmental stewardship. Socio-cultural analysis further elucidates the interpretation and implementation of Sufism's environmental doctrines within the pesantren community.

RESULTS

The Intersection of Pesantren and Sufism in Indonesia

Historically, the establishment of pesantren, as illustrated through Claire Holt's theory of change and continuity, denotes a shift wherein pesantren no longer solely embodies Islamic significance but also embodies the essence of Indonesian identity (Dhofier, 1980). This institution, reminiscent of its existence since the Hindu-Buddhist era, shares a profound bond with Sufism (Howell et al., n.d.). As a pivotal axis of social, cultural, and religious dynamics within traditional Islamic societies, pesantren has engendered a subculture known socio-anthropologically as the pesantren community. This is evidenced by its dual functions: serving as educational establishments with distinct pedagogical systems and fostering a culture of da'wah (Islamic propagation) that internalizes Islamic values within both the pesantren community and the broader populace. Martin van Bruinessen acknowledges the tradition of Islamic boarding schools as a cornerstone in transmitting traditional Islam in Indonesia. (Van Bruinessen, 1998)

The intimate relationship between pesantren and Sufism, driven by both historical and sociological factors, is profound. Historically, the evolution of Sufism was influenced by a decline in Islamic intellectual activity during the 12th and 13th centuries. (Khasan, 2010) Islam's introduction to Indonesia, facilitated by Islamic preachers, missionaries, or Sufis via the Bengal region of India, resulted in an early Indonesian Islam imbued with Sufistic elements. Given its inherent characteristics, Islam found ready acceptance in Indonesia.

Kiai (respected Islamic scholars) play a pivotal role in perpetuating Sufism and tarekat (Sufi orders) within pesantren. Often serving as murshids (spiritual guides) of specific tarekat, Kiai uphold continuity with the initial process of Islamization in Southeast Asia. Sufism emerges as a crucial factor in the Islamization process, contributing to the enduring presence of Sufistic values within Indonesian Islam.

Sufism inherently emphasizes moral and ethical values toward God, humanity, and the universe. Core themes encompass the purity of the heart, noble character, asceticism, patience, love, and compassion, constituting foundational principles of Sufi life (Van Bruinessen, 1998). Despite previous neglect, Sufism's relevance to environmental discourse is increasingly recognized. The desecration of the environment, attributed to spiritual voids and moral decay, underscores the urgency of integrating Sufism's spiritual teachings with environmental conservation efforts .

Sufism serves as a vehicle for soul purification, intellectual enrichment, and eternal bliss, fostering spiritual consciousness wherein love for the universe reflects love for God. The Sufi conceptualization of nature encourages harmonious relationships with both God and the environment, facilitating environmental stewardship.(Ahmad, 2019) Destruction of nature, within the framework of Sufi doctrines, parallels the desecration of life and disrupts the medium of communion with God. Hence, preserving nature assumes paramount importance, as it embodies God's divine creation—a source of life and enlightenment. (Suwito, 2017)

The integration of environmental preservation into Sufism underscores a shift toward a more holistic understanding of piety. Environmental consciousness, informed by Sufi principles, cultivates reverence for the environment, shaping attitudes and behaviors toward sustainable living. Consequently, the spiritual dimension of human-nature interaction positively impacts both human welfare and environmental sustainability. Such endeavors are vital for fostering a collective consciousness that recognizes the sanctity of nature and embraces a unified responsibility toward its preservation .(Irawan et al., 2022)

For Sufis, the environment serves as a manifestation of divine creation, embodying the sacred names of Allah. Hence, efforts to protect the environment are regarded as acts of worship, reflective of reverence for God's creation. This paradigm seeks to restore the sanctity of nature, recognizing it as an integral component of divine existence. Notably, figures such as Ibn 'Arabi, Jalaluddin Rumi, Hossein Nasr, Said Nursi, and Llewellyn Vaughan Lee have expounded upon this concept in their cosmological works.(Vaughan-Lee, 1995)

Sufism, interwoven with environmental studies, represents a paradigm shift toward ethical living in harmony with nature. Unlike conventional Sufi doctrines, which may engender exclusivity or religious conflicts, this paradigm unites humanity in a shared responsibility for Earth's stewardship. It underscores the interconnectedness of all life forms, affirming humanity's role as custodians of the planet and fostering a sense of global kinship.

Profile of Pesantren of Ath-Thaariq

The Ath-Thaariq Pesantren, established in 2008 by Ustadz Ibang Lukman Nurdin and Umi Nissa Saadah Wargadipura, embodies an innovative approach to education centered on ecology. Occupying 8500 square meters of land, the pesantren is meticulously organized

into distinct zones, including agricultural, plantation, hatchery, and livestock areas. Commonly known as the “Kebon Sawah Ecology Boarding School,” this institution is nestled amidst verdant rice fields and vegetable gardens, adjacent to the Garut Regency Regional Government office in Cimurugul Hamlet, Sukagalih Village, Tarogong Kidul District, Garut Regency, West Java. (Millah et al., 2020)

The school’s overarching mission is to disseminate knowledge and cultivate a cadre of agroecological practitioners dedicated to preserving and nurturing the Earth, its inhabitants, and future generations. Furthermore, the institution aspires to serve as a beacon for sustainable agricultural practices, exemplifying a model where diverse agricultural yields can flourish without compromising existing ecosystems. In tandem with this vision, the pesantren actively safeguards habitats, upholds biodiversity, and ensures fair pricing for its harvested produce, aligning with the principles of social, economic, and ecological justice. (Sj & Jason Dy, 2019).

Ecology teaching in Pesantren

The Ath-Thaariq Pesantren has integrated ecological principles into its educational framework since its establishment in 2008. Residents actively participate in ecosystem maintenance, combining religious studies with ancient farming methods to uphold environmental sustainability and foster harmonious relationships with nature. In a conversation with Ustadz Ibang and Umi Nissa, Umi Nissa expressed the sentiment that “Ecology is our home, many come and go from home; hence someone has to keep it from getting damaged. If not us, then who?”

The pesantren extends its doors to all who seek knowledge, emphasizing the preservation of three invaluable resources: water, forests, and mines, which Ustad Ibang regards as non-negotiable. Emphasizing the maternal essence of nature, Ustad Ibang views ecological stewardship as a moral imperative. He describes the pesantren as a modest endeavor to safeguard the Earth through gardening, farming, and seed production.

Ustad Ibang and Umi Nissa collaborate in revitalizing the ecological ethos of the pesantren, with Ustad Ibang focusing on imparting ecological theology and Umi Nissa overseeing biodiversity management. Both envision the pesantren as a nurturing ground for future farmers and advocates for reforestation efforts. Despite the challenges posed by environmentally unfriendly industries, the At-Thariq Ecology Islamic Boarding School continues to thrive, boasting over 500 plant species in its Kebon Sawah area.

Furthermore, the pesantren’s cultivation of rice, ready for harvest within a month or two, serves as a testament to the feasibility of small-scale food production. Ustad Ibang envisions the blessings of abundant harvests sustaining the pesantren’s residents, while also serving as a replicable model for sovereign, independent, and blessed institutions.

Umi Nissa underscores the familial bond shared with all who labor as farmers, rooted in a deep understanding of the struggles faced by agricultural communities. Their learning model diverges from conventional pesantren education, emphasizing academic rigor

alongside practical ecological stewardship. The pesantren's motto, "Care for the Earth, Others, and the Future," encapsulates their holistic approach to education. (Diva Kautsar, Nurul, 2020)

Ecological learning at the pesantren encompasses both theoretical and practical dimensions, with activities ranging from seeding and planting to post-harvest processing. Weekly farming sessions engage local children, fostering a sense of connection with nature and promoting hands-on learning experiences. The pesantren's permaculture-based approach prioritizes sustainable agricultural practices and ecosystem protection, guided by principles of environmental stewardship. (Iqbal, Donny, 2015)

Through their multifaceted curriculum, Ustad Ibang and Umi Nissa aim to cultivate a generation of eco-conscious leaders capable of addressing pressing environmental challenges. Their commitment to holistic education, grounded in Islamic principles and ecological ethics, reflects a vision of a harmonious coexistence between humanity and the natural world.

Producing Plant Seeds/hatchery and Making Organic Fertilizer

The students at Ath-Thaariq Pesantren are instructed in the art of agriculture and plantation management using organic seeds, particularly focusing on the cultivation of local seed varieties. These seeds, carefully developed, are sown and flourish across the agricultural expanse of the Ath-Thaariq school, contributing to the exceptional quality of rice produced. Umi Nissa highlights their practice of blending various seed types to enhance mutual resilience, ensuring a robust agricultural yield. With agricultural produce serving as the primary sustenance for pesantren families, concerns such as escalating chili prices or rice shortages are non-existent, as affirmed by Umi Nissa: "We are free from food difficulties." Additionally, she emphasizes their priority on seed cultivation, consumption, and distribution among the residents as a fundamental aspect of their mission. (Iqbal, Muhammad, 2019)

Moreover, the processed goods crafted from their agricultural bounty adequately fulfill the pesantren community's needs. In addition to an assortment of Nusantara herbal teas, offerings include herbal salts, crystal sugars, and a variety of magical teas. The pesantren's culinary repertoire features dishes like tofu cakes wrapped in turmeric leaves, stir-fried greens, and assorted leafy delicacies, providing a diverse and nourishing diet. Umi Nissa reassures that the sustenance provided is plentiful for daily consumption, echoing sentiments of contentment and abundance. (Qori'ah, 2018)

The students are equipped with the knowledge and skills to produce their compost from organic matter and livestock waste, eschewing chemical additives. Emphasizing organic methods, the pesantren ensures that garden management relies solely on organic fertilizers derived from livestock manure. Consequently, the reliance on external fertilizers is eliminated, promoting a sustainable agricultural ecosystem free from the detrimental

effects of chemical inputs. Through innovative approaches like utilizing kitchen waste and catfish pond water for organic fertilizer production, coupled with environmentally conscious practices such as preserving rice field snakes to mitigate rodent infestations, the pesantren maintains pest-free fields and gardens for nearly a decade.

Sufism Doctrines in Farming and Gardening Activities

Holding unto the motto “Care for the Earth, Others, and the Future”, Pesantren Ath-thaariq is known to apply Sufistic values to stimulate the love and interest of the students towards gardening and farming activities. The following Sufistic doctrines are seen as the driving factors for the birth of the environmentalism movement in this ecological boarding school, where the developed teaching model is to integrate these messages into environmental preservation. Likewise, the ecological movement that took place in Islamic boarding schools with these doctrines had transformed the character of pesantren residents in performing environmentalism or environmental preservation movements.

The following are the Sufistic doctrines taught by the Ath-Taariq pesantren, which foster the students’ spirit to cultivate crops and protect the environment.

Zuhud and Gratitude

Zuhud is the attitude of feeling complete towards worldly pleasures. The students are educated and trained to live modestly and frugally, as well as prohibited from consuming anything in excess even though their crops are abundant. These individuals have been accustomed to consuming food from the tubers and vegetables they grow. The concept of zuhud applied at the Ath-Thaariq Islamic boarding school is believed to be effective enough to be used as a moral and spiritual basis through a frugal and simple lifestyle to save the environment.

Also, the attitude of zuhud and modesty is shown by not consuming plant products in excess. Ath-Taariq Islamic boarding school families consume food crops according to the available harvest, hence, they do not depend on one food type. The students are accustomed to eating tubers, bananas, and other foods besides from rice to meet their carbohydrate needs. In addition, they eat vegetables grown in their gardens, and all the agricultural products on the Pesantren’s land are used to meet the food needs of the family.

Their simplicity can be seen from the students’ consumption patterns of their crops and although modest, their food is varied, consisting of more than rice. The form of gratitude taught to the students does not involve eradicating plant pests with chemicals since it will damage the soil and plants and tarnish the sanctity of the earth given by God. According to a casual statement by Ustad Ibang “Just let the snake existing around the garden to eat the rats”. Consequently, the ecosystem on the agricultural land will remain clean, safe, and healthy. The attitude of zuhud and gratitude can be ammunition for the students to study hard and earnestly. This is proven by almost all the students who managed to get good

grades in their respective schools. According to Ustad Ibang, seven students obtained cum laude scores.

Kinship and Mutual Assistance

The concept of kinship and mutual assistance in the teaching and learning process are important strategies taught to students at the pesantren of Ath-Thaariq. These individuals are committed to feeling the same fate, sharing responsibility, and are ready to fight together in farming, protecting, and preserving the environment. With the spirit of kinship and equality, they are taught to place themselves as people who are aware of their position and have a high sense of shared responsibility. Consequently, the students do not act selfishly because they are an inseparable part of other people, with the same rights and responsibilities in maintaining and consuming the crops obtained.

Fulfillment of the life necessities in the Ath-Taariq environment uses principles from santri for santri. This implies no production is intentionally sold or traded but is offered to friends and relatives who want to buy in the case of excess food or new herbs. The students are trained to produce and reproduce their own life, to stand on their own feet, and to consume products grown personally. Furthermore, all agricultural products on the pesantren land are indeed used to meet the food requirements of the family and then sold to grow the economic life of the institution in the case of an abundant harvest. Umi Nissa considered that the concept of good agriculture should prioritize its own food needs first before thinking about selling the products. Therefore, the pesantren first meet the needs for nutrients, vitamins, carbohydrates, and vegetables. The proceeds from the sale of agricultural products in the pesantren are used for their infrastructural and students' education requirements, where Umi Nissa made sure all his students in the school received free education. (Iqbal, Donny, 2015).

Food ingredients for pesantren family are sourced from agricultural products, hence, they are never worried by the rise in chili prices or afraid of rice shortage. Consequently, Umi Nissa stated, "We are free from food shortages". In addition to having quality seeds and agricultural products, the processed goods they make are more than adequate in meeting the needs of the pesantren's family. Also, herbal salts and crystal sugar, and magic tea in addition to Nusantara herbal tea are produced.

The commitment to the concept of kinship as fellow creatures given the mandate by God to inhabit this earth is the answer to the fate of the environment in the future. In the pesantren, there is no distance between the kyai and the santri, where the teachers and administrators unite with students as a harmonious, peaceful, and happy family. Consequently, umi Nissa shows a merging of farming and education systems in a family called an agrarian.

Another example of the success of this ecology boarding school alumnus is the formation of families and ecological communities. These societies include Saung Rangkai Tegal Lega Bungbulang, Buruang Bumi Agroecology Tangoli Cibalong, Hanum Cilacap Creative

House, and Halimun Bogor Agrarian. Umi Nissa stated that “We hope students think and act to save the ecology, social and economy” (Iqbal, Muhammad, 2019)

This pesantren has produced 1,400 alumni in almost a decade with several of them opening their own institutions. Moreover, this is one of the requirements for those who want to study in this school. Therefore, the knowledge gained can be shared with parents and the next generation, transmitting this farming movement as a habit in the community. (Official NET News, n.d.).

Love and Blessing

Aligned with its founding vision, this ecological pesantren instills a profound love for the environment in all its students through tangible actions and experiences of joy amidst nature. Rooted in teachings about the harmonious interplay between God, humanity, and the natural world, students are enjoined from engaging in any form of environmental degradation. The pleasure derived from spending time cultivating their preferred plants reflects the deep affection students harbor towards nature, compelling them to immerse themselves in gardening activities. Moreover, the environmental advocacy fostered by the Ath-Taariq pesantren, grounded in Sufistic values, warrants widespread support through disseminating information, visiting the pesantren, and procuring seeds for personal gardens.

The founder of the pesantren underscores that all communal endeavors are underpinned by divine blessings. According to Ustad Ibang, activities like cultivating plants using organic seeds and fertilizers are believed to yield greater benefits and blessings. Recognizing the intrinsic rights of not just humans but also animals and nature at large, the mission of the ecological Islamic boarding school is deemed meaningful only through divine grace.

Ustad Ibang shares the transformative journey of a student who, once ensnared by drug addiction, found healing and restoration through immersion in agricultural pursuits. The therapeutic effect of engaging with nature, breathing clean air, and participating in gardening activities such as seed preparation, nurturing seedlings, planting, and tending to growing plants is profound. Gardening, in this context, is perceived as both a means of attaining food independence and a pathway to recovery for those grappling with addiction.

The lush vegetation surrounding the pesantren, indicative of fertile soil, facilitates bountiful harvests, which in turn translates into pesticide-free meals for the community. Ustad Ibang and Umi Nissa vehemently oppose monoculture farming practices, underscoring the disparity between Indonesia’s agrarian potential and the prevailing policy landscape. Despite the daunting decision to integrate religion with ecology in establishing the pesantren, divine guidance was sought and eventually embraced, trusting in the promise of blessings.

While the pesantren garners significant interest from parents seeking to enroll their children, admission is capped at 30 individuals to ensure effective learning without financial burden. The pesantren’s ethos prioritizes blessings over financial gain, reflected in its

provision of education at no cost. Students are required to bring only basic clothing, as the true wealth lies in the abundance of crops they will cultivate and take home upon completion of their studies. These crops, sown and nurtured by the students themselves, not only serve as tangible expressions of their learning but also yield economic returns, with current students reaping substantial proceeds from the sale of plant seeds and vegetables. (Iqbal, Donny, 2015)

In line with the ethos of Islamic boarding schools, where learning is free, prospective students need only demonstrate a sincere intent to learn and integrate into the pesantren community, united in their pursuit of food sovereignty. Additionally, external individuals are welcome to partake in short-term study programs, becoming alumni of Pesantren Ath-Taariq upon completion. This inclusive approach has seen thousands of students graduate from the pesantren since its inception in 2008, hailing from diverse regions across Indonesia and abroad.

Tafakkur and Tadabbur (Meditation and Contemplation)

In this pesantren, students are nurtured to engage in tafakkur and tadabbur, encouraging them to ponder the potentialities of nature and deeply contemplate the diverse array of plants that can flourish from the soil, respectively. Prior to engaging in farming activities, students are encouraged to regularly practice both concepts, granting them the freedom to develop their agricultural skills from seed cultivation and planting to harvesting. Alongside their religious studies, students are tasked with tending to plants, nurturing the soil, and crafting organic fertilizer. Occasionally, they are afforded opportunities to venture into the mountains or visit the beach. (NEWS MNCTV, n.d.)

The absence of Wi-Fi in the pesantren environment, coupled with limited signal reception, liberates students from the habitual consumption of social media. Ustad Ibang underscores that tafakkur amidst nature offers students a unique opportunity to comprehend its wonders, with farming emerging as a delightful means to acknowledge the power and magnificence of Allah. As a result of their contemplation, students naturally mature, finding solace in their hearts and deriving invaluable lessons from their farming experiences. Moreover, they exhibit renewed vigor, resilience, humility, interpersonal warmth, and an augmented faith in God.

Farming serves as a conduit for students to recognize God's boundless creativity in conceiving myriad plant species. Consequently, students remain endlessly fascinated by nature's phenomena, as they are taught to cultivate seeds that can yield an assortment of vitamins, medicines, and daily necessities. Furthermore, Ustad Ibang emphasizes that Islam not only addresses basic sustenance but also underscores the imperative to safeguard the environment, emphasizing the rights of animals, the environment, and humanity.

Tadabbur, synonymous with introspection and profound contemplation of nature's existence, fosters in students an increasing appreciation for nature's beauty and serves as a manifestation of God's love. According to Ustad Ibang, the benevolence of nature toward

humanity parallels the unconditional love and generosity of a mother toward her children. Tadabbur constitutes a pivotal activity imparted by the pesantren to students. Ustad Ibang elucidates that the concept transcends mere observation, encompassing active farming endeavors and reflection on the magnificence of Allah's creation and its manifold benefits. This practice is envisioned to enhance students' spiritual intelligence.

Redefining the Discourse on the Correlation between Sufism and Environmental Preservation

The Pesantren of Ath-Thaariq stands as a guiding light, fostering the growth of pious and insightful young farmers in Indonesia, who are set to invigorate the country's farming traditions through its graduates. These individuals are expected to lead the charge in revitalizing their local communities as educators, activists, leaders, and government officials upon their return. A new approach to environmental guardianship is being cultivated. Students engage actively with their surroundings and peers, developing a deep sense of divine presence, which represents a significant transformation in Sufi teachings. This evolution moves beyond mere ritualistic practices to imbue students with a deeper spiritual appreciation for the environment and its inherent truths.

Nonetheless, The Pesantren of Ath-Thaariq community encounters several obstacles. A notable issue is the limited human resources, with the educational team mainly consisting of Ustad Ibang and his wife, Umi Nisa. This scarcity hampers the enhancement of education that integrates religious or Sufi principles with environmental awareness. The recruitment of more skilled educators is crucial for the effective and efficient delivery of educational programs. Furthermore, all staff members need to expand their understanding and engagement with environmental issues.

Additionally, there is a lack of curriculum focused on Sufism and environmentalism. Employing a variety of environmental communication methods, both active and passive, is essential for facilitating impactful learning and teaching. These methods should include written resources like lesson plans and fact sheets, as well as audio-visual tools and hands-on environmental projects.

Another challenge is the insufficient support from local government authorities. Despite the potential impact of Sufi principles practiced by the Ath-Thaariq Pesantren on environmental preservation, these efforts have not received substantial support from local governance. This lack of enthusiasm from officials highlights the necessity for increased advocacy and collaboration to promote awareness and participation in pesantren-led environmental projects.

Given Indonesia's position as the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, it has the capacity to be a pioneer in fostering intellectual and cultural progress in the Islamic community. This calls for more focused research on environmental conservation through a Sufistic lens. Such an endeavor aligns with the principles of neo-Sufism, as promoted by scholars like Fazlurrahman and John O. Voll, who emphasize engaging contemporary Sufis in discussions on relevant social theories. The Ath-Thaariq Pesantren's commitment to

promoting neo-Sufism and modern interpretations of Sufism that encourage environmental mindfulness highlights the urgent need for scholars, observers, and practitioners of Sufism to deepen their research into the connections between Islamic Sufism and global challenges like the environmental crisis.

Conclusion

Drawing from the detailed analysis presented, it's evident that a profound link exists between Sufism and environmental stewardship. The environmental protection initiatives by Ath-Taariq pesantren community underscore the deep connection between Sufi teachings and ecological care. The Sufi principles, through their application, foster a holistic view that advocates for environmental preservation. This perspective greatly influences one's approach towards the environment, guiding decisions and actions towards nature. The teachings of Sufism instill in the pesantren community an understanding of the inseparable bond between belief and action, thought and practice, highlighting that Sufi teachings are integral to addressing real-world environmental challenges. Sufism and environmental research aim not just at theoretical development but also at making tangible contributions to a healthier, sustainable world. This encourages scholars, religious figures, and Sufism enthusiasts to critically examine the role of Sufism in responding to environmental crises and its potential to positively shape our planet's future. The pesantren leaders embed Sufistic teachings in students, cultivating an ethic of gardening and farming, based on principles such as asceticism and gratitude, community and support, love and reverence, as well as deep reflection and contemplation. These teachings have significantly propelled the environmental movement. The application of Sufi principles within the pesantren adapts to the context, transcending mere individual ritual observance to embrace a comprehensive strategy for environmental preservation, offering spiritual resilience now and into the future. Hence, the researchers advocate for the integration of an eco-Sufism curriculum in Islamic educational frameworks. This study's scope was limited to certain Sufi practices impacting environmental conservation, leaving room for further research in areas like food security, biodiversity, and environmental innovation within the pesantren setting.

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