



## EXPLOITATION OF NATURE AND SPIRITUAL DECADENCE: ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ISLAM THROUGH RITUAL AND RELIGIOSITY AS THE FOUNDATION OF HUMANITY

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### Abstract

The large-scale exploitation of nature currently occurring in Indonesia reflects a crisis of spirituality among modern humans in their understanding and treatment of nature. The loss of sacred awareness of nature as God's creation has led to an exploitative, rather than participatory, relationship between humans and nature. This study aims to examine the connection between the exploitation of nature and spiritual decadence, as well as how Islamic values can provide a relevant and transformative ecological ethical framework. The method used is a qualitative study with a literature review approach, involving critical analysis of Islamic texts and spiritual ecology theories from thinkers such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Roy A. Rappaport. The results of the study show that Islamic principles such as Tawhid, Khilafah, Amanah, and Shari'ah have strong potential to shape spiritual-based ecological awareness. Additionally, rituals in traditional and religious communities also function as ecological and moral mechanisms. In conclusion, the reconstruction of Islamic spiritual values in an environmental context is essential to address contemporary ecological crises, particularly in Indonesia.

**Keywords :** Exploitation, Decadence, Ecological, Rituals

### Abstrak

Eksplorasi alam secara besar-besaran yang saat ini terjadi di Indonesia mencerminkan krisis spiritualitas di kalangan manusia modern dalam pemahaman dan perlakuan mereka terhadap alam. Hilangnya kesadaran suci terhadap alam sebagai ciptaan Tuhan telah menyebabkan



hubungan yang eksploitatif, bukan partisipatif, antara manusia dan alam. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara eksploitasi alam dan kemunduran spiritual, serta bagaimana nilai-nilai Islam dapat menyediakan kerangka etika ekologi yang relevan dan transformatif. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi kualitatif dengan pendekatan tinjauan literatur, melibatkan analisis kritis teks-teks Islam dan teori ekologi spiritual dari pemikir seperti Seyyed Hossein Nasr dan Roy A. Rappaport. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa prinsip-prinsip Islam seperti Tawhid, Khilafah, Amanah, dan Syariah memiliki potensi kuat untuk membentuk kesadaran ekologi berbasis spiritual. Selain itu, ritual dalam komunitas tradisional dan keagamaan juga berfungsi sebagai mekanisme ekologi dan moral. Kesimpulannya, rekonstruksi nilai-nilai spiritual Islam dalam konteks lingkungan sangat penting untuk mengatasi krisis ekologi kontemporer, terutama di Indonesia.

**Kata Kunci :** Eksploitasi, Kemunduran , Ekologis, Ritual

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global environmental crisis is marked by a striking increase in the rate of deforestation, widespread pollution, and excessive exploitation of natural resources, thereby disrupting ecological stability and human well-being. According to a report by *Global Forest Watch*, from 2002 to 2024, Indonesia lost 10.7 million hectares of primary rainforest, accounting for 34% of total tree cover loss during the same period. The total area of primary rainforest in Indonesia decreased by 11% during this time. In Indonesia, the top five regions are responsible for 59% of all tree cover loss between 2001 and 2024. These regions include Riau (4.30 Mha), West Kalimantan (4.21 Mha), Central Kalimantan (3.86 Mha), South Sumatra (3.29 Mha), and East Kalimantan (3.13 Mha) (*Global Forest Watch*, 2024). Behind the visible symptoms of ecological issues lies a deeper crisis in the form of a decline in human spirituality, reflected in a reduced awareness of intrinsic value and interconnectedness in all forms of life. This spiritual erosion fuels a utilitarian attitude toward nature, reducing it to a mere collection of resources to be exploited for economic gain, thereby disregarding the sacredness and inherent functions of nature (which are inseparable from human life) (Arifah et al., 2022).

Studies discussing natural exploitation and spiritual decadence are quite extensive and have several diverse research focuses. For example, the first study looks at the use of natural resources over a period of 40 years and the impact of natural abuse (Peñuelas et al., 2021). This study examines how the exploitation of nature often stems from the perception of nature as merely an object for economic gain. Second, studies that look at the relationship between literature and the environment (Wardani, 2024). This study raises the theme of stories that contain criticism of anthropocentrism, a view that prioritizes economic interests over ecological well-being. Third, studies that examine that exploitation and environmental damage are explained in the context of human sin (Cloete, 2023). This study offers a Christian response to contemporary ecological threats and draws on existing spiritual traditions to propose Christian ecological spirituality as the basis and means for ecological conversion, reform, healing, and renewal. Fourth, the study sees capitalism as one of the main factors behind the exploitation of natural resources (Devseshan, 2024). Previous studies have not examined natural exploitation and spiritual decadence as ethical responsibilities towards nature.



This study aims to examine in depth the relationship between massive exploitation of nature and the decline of spiritual values in modern society, as well as to explore how Islamic teachings position human ethical responsibility towards nature as part of worship and piety. Viewing rituals and religion as social and ecological regulatory systems, when ritual structures weaken, collective regulatory systems governing human-environment relations also disappear. By re-examining the spiritual dimensions of Islam that emphasize harmony between humans and the environment, and evaluating the relevance of Islamic environmental ethical principles in addressing the current global ecological crisis. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to efforts to reconstruct spiritual-ecological awareness in Muslim societies and offer an alternative approach rooted in religious values to contemporary ecological challenges.

Excessive exploitation of nature occurs as a result of the reduction of spiritual and ethical values in modern human life, which ignores the principle of ecological responsibility as taught in Islam. The tentative hypothesis of this study is that environmental degradation is not only a technical or economic problem, but reflects a paradigm shift in humanity from a sacred attitude toward nature to a purely materialistic and anthropocentric approach. Philosophically, nature is viewed as the verses of God (signs of Allah's greatness), and humans are entrusted as stewards, not rulers. Through this study, the author seeks to interpret that reckless exploitation of nature reflects a breakdown in human thinking about the nature of themselves and the world.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method, which aims to explore and analyze in depth the relationship between nature exploitation, spiritual decadence, and ethical responsibility from an Islamic perspective. The research specifically adopts two main corpuses of thought first, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's spiritual ecological view, which asserts that the environmental crisis is a reflection of humanity's disconnection with the sacred dimension of nature; second, Roy A. Rappaport's anthropological view, which sees religious rituals as regulative systems that bind humanity's relationship with nature and shape humanity itself. Data was obtained from several of Nasr's works, including *Religion & The Order of Nature* (1996) and *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (1968), as well as works by Rappaport such as *Pigs for The Ancestors: Ritual and Ecology of a New Guinea People* (1984) and *Ritual and Religion in The Making of Humanity* (1999). Scientific journal articles, supplementary books on ecology and religion, information from the media, and other pertinent scholarly sources were the sources of secondary data. This abundance of literature allows scholars to develop a thorough and multidisciplinary framework of thought by acting as both a supplement and the basis for conceptual discussion between discourses. Thus, using religion and ritual as key components influencing human ethics, this research approach not only yields textual analysis but also offers a solid argument for connecting the exploitation of nature with spiritual decadence.

The philosophical consideration that both of these works reflect profound interdisciplinary thinking served as the basis for their selection. While Rappaport demonstrates how rituals are not only religious expressions but also ecological and collective moral mechanisms in maintaining the order of life, Nasr highlights the metaphysical and cosmological aspects of Islam that are sacred and essential to nature. Combining these two methods, the study aims to reveal the spiritual and ethical aspects of religious rites as the basis for forming ecological responsibility.



The data processing and analysis in this study were conducted in three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and data verification. First, data reduction was carried out by filtering and sorting data on ritual practices and spiritual understanding of Muslims regarding their responsibility towards the environment. Information that was not relevant to the focus on the relationship between spirituality, ecological ethics, and environmental crisis was eliminated to maintain the sharpness of the analysis. Second, data presentation was organized into descriptive narratives that illustrated the relationship between religious understanding, ritual practices, and ecological awareness. Third, data verification was conducted by drawing preliminary conclusions, which were then tested through theoretical comparison (Nasr and Rappaport) and data triangulation to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the analysis.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Exploitation of Nature as a Symptom of Spiritual Decadence

The exploitation of nature as a symptom of spiritual decadence is a perspective that views environmental degradation not only as an ecological problem, but also as a reflection of a crisis of religious and moral values in society. In this view, destructive actions against nature are manifestations of a loss of awareness of the deep connection between humans and the universe, as well as a lack of responsibility for environmental sustainability (Putra & Keluanan, 2022). The decline of spirituality is reflected in various aspects of modern life, including excessive materialism, uncontrolled consumerism, and selfish individualism. Industrialization has indeed brought about a paradigm of instrumental rationality that emphasizes efficiency, productivity, and economic logic over moral, emotional, or spiritual considerations (Amir Sup, 2020).

When humans lose respect and connection with nature, they tend to exploit natural resources excessively without considering the long-term consequences. These exploitative actions not only damage the physical environment but also erode the spiritual values that should guide human behavior toward nature. The loss of this spiritual awareness also affects how humans view themselves and their place in the world. Humans begin to feel disconnected from nature and see it merely as an object to be exploited for personal or group gain (Flores, 2019).

The country of Indonesia has a majority population of 87.08% who are Muslim, totaling 245,973,915 people (Muhammad, 2023). Reaching a paradoxical critical point Indonesia, as one of the countries with the largest Muslim population in the world, has become one of the most vicious destroyers of nature. This destruction of nature is actually being carried out by the highest authority of the country, namely the government of the Republic of Indonesia, through national strategic projects. National Strategic Projects (PSN) are infrastructure and non-infrastructure development programs designated by the Indonesian government as priorities to accelerate economic growth, equitable development, and improve the welfare of the people. PSN is regulated by Presidential Regulations (Perpres), Perpres No. 3 of 2016 on the Acceleration of the Implementation of National Strategic Projects (last revised: Perpres No. 109 of 2020) and Perpres No. 56 of 2018 on Amendments to Perpres No. 58 of 2017 on the Spatial Planning of National Strategic Areas (Database Peraturan BPK, 2020).

In his book *Religion and The Order of Nature*, Seyyed Hossein Nasr outlines several points regarding the existence of nature as a representation of God. Nasr reveals that in order to preserve nature, we must remember that nature is a theater or representation of God's creativity and presence. Nature has been sanctified by the most sacred. If humans destroy it, there will be desacralization. This indicates a transformation of humans who have lost their sacred center (Nasr, 1996). Is the exploitation of nature only carried out by modern societies?



Nasr acknowledges that the destruction typically carried out by traditional societies is often local in nature and frequently a consequence of modern discoveries. Meanwhile, modernized regions around the world are almost entirely responsible for the technologies enabling large-scale destruction of nature, extending even to higher layers of the atmosphere. Nasr refers to this phenomenon as the illusion of human greed, which is justified in the name of human well-being (Nasr, 1996). Due to the prevalence of utilitarian rationalism, people now only see nature as an economic entity, disregarding its sacred and spiritual aspects. Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that this viewpoint put humanity at the centre of all measurements without transcendent responsibility, severing the link between God, humanity, and nature. Rather, a sacred cosmology that views nature as a reflection of Divine Reality is what Nasr suggests. Humanity is called to restore ecological balance as a form of spiritual responsibility and to be a steward, not a ruler, of nature through the principle of the unity of existence (Sayem, 2021).

Nasr revealed that only religion and philosophy rooted in religion and intellectualism are capable of saving the natural environment. In fact, through the traditional view of achieving a peaceful life in Heaven or the afterlife, this can be obtained by living harmoniously on Earth or in the world. Modern humans, who have obscured the religious perspective on the natural order and marginalized religion itself, have not only caused the extinction of many plant and animal species. But they have also nearly driven humanity itself to the brink of extinction (Nasr, 1996). As a result, we can combat environmental harm holistically by utilising Islamic teachings. Preaching is positioned as a vehicle for ecological education in addition to delivering religious teachings. Muslims are encouraged to view the environment as God's creation with spiritual significance rather than just as a commodity through preaching. Dakwah promotes sustainable lifestyles, raises awareness among all people, and instills moral responsibility for future generations and other living things (Sule & Musa, 2025).

Why is the exploitation of nature referred to as a symptom of spiritual decadence. In practice, there has been a paradigm shift in modern society. If we look closely, nature, which was once sacred, has become a resource to be exploited on a massive scale. In many traditional cultures, nature is viewed as a sacred entity, inhabited by spirits, or even considered a manifestation of the divine. Local rituals and traditions often reflect a high regard for nature, such as traditional ceremonies before planting or harvesting, which aim to seek permission and express gratitude for nature's bounty (Rappaport, 1968). Extensive research conducted by Roy Abraham Rappaport in Papua New Guinea, specifically in the Tsembaga region of the Maring tribe, found that the rituals performed by the tribe had no negative impact on the environment. In fact, they had a positive impact on the environment. The Tsembaga tribe is not just a group of ordinary people, but rather an "ecological population" within an ecosystem. The rituals they perform are interpreted as a unique way for the Tsembaga tribe to interact and maintain balance with other components of their ecosystem. This means that rituals are not just cultural practices, but also have an ecological function (Rappaport, 1968).

### **Islamic Principles as Basic Ethics in Ecology**

Actually, many individuals have tried new concepts from modern philosophy to formulate ways to save nature. However, Nasr argues that philosophical knowledge or ideas can indeed change the way we think and see the world, especially on the topics of agnosticism and nihilism. However, these things are not enough to truly improve the basic condition of humans, which is needed in order to better respect nature. Cosmologically, humans were created to seek something Absolute and Unlimited. But there are times when they have found





it, they reject the Absolute. They reject the Divine Principle, which results in them absolutizing themselves over knowledge of nature in the guise of science. Humans should reflect on this instead of forcibly imposing that infinite absoluteness upon themselves. Spiritual creativity is replaced by “inventive genius,” leaving behind endless experiments with nature and the production of gadgets and products in the form of waste and garbage that continues to pile up, as well as the creation of increasingly vast barren lands (Nasr, 1996).

In practice, religion is essential to guide and even transform human activities so that they can provide spiritual meaning to the relationship between humans and nature. Religious values and ethics are not enough, because religious ethics cannot coexist with views of the natural order that radically reject the basic premises of religion and claim a monopoly on knowledge about the natural order. Islamic principles play an important role as the basis of ethics in ecology. Islam emphasizes harmonious relationships between humans and nature, with key principles such as responsibility as khalifah (stewards), justice, moderation, and respect for all of creation. These values form the foundation of ecological ethics that are relevant for addressing current environmental challenges. Holistically, Islam views the existence of nature not merely as something that exists, but as something that has a hierarchy or value as a creation of Allah. The creation of nature was created by Allah in earnest (bil haqq), not created intentionally (la'ab), and not created in the wrong way (bil bathil). Because the existence of nature is something that is true, the Qur'an has taught a positive, optimistic view of nature, in which nature can provide life experiences for humans in creating happiness and sadness (Madjid, 1999).

Islam explains that the universe is teleological because of its diversity. Living beings, both human and non-human, develop in interdependence with one another and function as representations of Allah's creation. This symbolism reinforces the fundamental Islamic concept known as tauhid, which states that Allah SWT has the right to protect and preserve existing values (Jusnaidi & Marsuki, 2016). There are at least six Islamic principles that can provide an Islamic response to the ecological crisis, namely Tawhid, Khilafah, Amanah, Shari'ah, 'adl, and I'tidal. The principle of Tawhid in Islam is not only a theological doctrine, but also a comprehensive cosmological and ethical foundation. Tawhid affirms that all existence originates from one Divine source and that everything in nature is interconnected in a unified system. Therefore, nature cannot be viewed as a separate entity or merely an object of exploitation, but rather as a manifestation of God's will and part of the sacred divine order. Consequently, actions that destroy nature are seen not only as ecological mistakes, but also as spiritual violations of the principle of Tawhid (Nasr, 1996).

Second, the concept of Khilafah is even mentioned in the introduction of the book *Religion and The Order of Nature*, in the form of a complete verse, namely Q.S Al-Baqarah: 30. The concept of the Caliphate provides a picture that humans have limited authority but a great responsibility to protect, care for, and preserve nature as part of God's mandate. This position is not a license to exploit the earth, but rather a spiritual mandate to uphold justice and balance in our relationship with nature. As Parvez Manzoor explains, the caliphate requires humans to act based on values such as amanah (trust), 'adl (justice), and i'tidal (balance). Failing to fulfill the functions of khilafah means betraying God's trust and causing ecological damage that is not only physical but also spiritual. Thus, khilafah becomes the foundational principle of human ethical responsibility toward nature within the framework of Islamic teachings (Nasr, 1996).



Third, Amanah literally means “trust” or “entrustment,” understood as the spiritual responsibility given by God to humans over His creation. The concept of amanah is rooted in QS: Al-Ahzab: 72, which states that the heavens, the earth, and the mountains were reluctant to bear the amanah, but humans accepted it. In Nasr's view, this indicates that humanity bears a tremendous moral and cosmic burden in maintaining the harmony and sanctity of God's creation (Nasr, 1996). Rejecting the divine trust means betraying one's divine duty and causing corruption (fasād) on earth. Therefore, the modern ecological crisis, within Nasr's framework of thought, is not merely the result of technical or economic errors, but a form of betrayal of the divine trust. Therefore, to heal this crisis, humanity must once again recognize its responsibility as stewards of creation and act with the awareness that it is carrying out a sacred duty directly entrusted by the Creator (Sayem, 2023).

Fourth, Shari'ah is not only a formal legal system, but also a comprehensive way of life that regulates human relations with God, other human beings, and the universe. The laws governing nature cannot be separated from the laws governing humans. In the context of Islamic ecological ethics, Shari'ah serves as a normative framework that binds human behavior to be in harmony with the cosmic order established by God (Nasr, 1996). Fifth, ‘adl is a fundamental principle in Shari'ah that guarantees balance and harmony in the relationship between humans, God, and nature. In Islamic cosmology, justice is not merely the social distribution of rights, but includes placing everything in its rightful place, including in the treatment of nature (Nasr, 1996). When humans exceed their limits and exploit nature without regard for its rights, they are acting unjustly and violating the principle of ‘adl.

The concept of ‘adl in Islam is closely related to balance (mizan) as explained in the Qur'an (QS Ar-Rahman: 7–9). Within Nasr's framework, the principle of justice requires humans to treat nature not only ethically and efficiently, but also sacral and spiritually. Damaging the environment is not merely a violation of ethics, but a violation of the divine order established on the basis of cosmic justice. Therefore, to resolve the ecological crisis, humanity must return to the principle of justice in a deeper and more holistic sense, as embraced in traditional Islam, where justice is a form of obedience to God's law that encompasses the entire cosmos (Rachmatullah et al., 2020).

Fifth, I’tidal, which means balance, moderation, and proportionality, is a Qur’anic value that is closely related to the concepts of mizan (balance) and ‘adl (justice). This principle guides humans to avoid excess (israf) in utilizing natural resources and to maintain harmony between human needs and the rights of nature. In Islamic cosmology, the entire universe was created in perfect balance by God, and humans are asked not to disturb that balance. Nasr asserts that the ecological damage occurring today is the result of humanity's failure to uphold the principle of i’tidal. Instead of living within the bounds of balanced needs, modern civilization tends to pursue excessive exploitation that leads to environmental degradation. In the traditional Islamic perspective revived by Nasr, i’tidal is not merely individual ethical behavior but part of the metaphysical and spiritual order of the cosmos, where humans must align themselves with God's order. Thus, in the context of the ecological crisis, returning to I’tidal means restructuring consumption patterns, production, and relations with nature within a spiritual framework, not merely technological or economic (Nasr, 1996).



### **The Function of Rituals in Instilling Ecological Ethics**

In *Pigs for the Ancestors*, Roy A. Rappaport describes rituals as a vital homeostatic mechanism in maintaining the ecological balance of the Tsembaga Maring society in Papua New Guinea. In this system, rituals are not merely religious or symbolic activities, but highly effective instruments for regulating the relationship between humans, animals (especially pigs), and the natural environment. When the pig population begins to exceed reasonable limits and puts pressure on land resources and food production, the community does not respond immediately with technical or administrative measures, but rather through the performance of a large ritual called kaiko. This ritual marks the appropriate time to sacrifice a large number of pigs, reduce ecological pressure, and simultaneously strengthen social cohesion. Thus, kaiko serves as a tool to stabilize imbalances within the socio-ecological system (Rappaport, 1968).

Rappaport explains that this ritual cycle functions like an automatic feedback system, with rituals being performed when social and ecological indicators (such as excessive pig populations or complaints from women whose fields have been disturbed) begin to show signs of tension. In this case, rituals play a regulatory function without having to rely on a centralized political authority. Rituals also regulate protein allocation through the collective distribution of pig meat, ensuring that the community's nutritional needs are met within an integrated spiritual and ecological framework. Therefore, for Rappaport, rituals are not merely cultural reflections but adaptive mechanisms that maintain system balance, prevent overexploitation, and ensure long-term ecological and social sustainability (Rappaport, 1968).

One of the important functions of rituals in the Tsembaga Maring community is to instill sacred values towards nature and living creatures within it. Pigs, as the center of this community's ritual practices, are not only viewed as commodities or food sources, but as creatures with strong spiritual and symbolic meanings. Through the kaiko ritual, the process of sacrificing pigs is associated with the relationship between humans and their ancestors. Pigs are offered as a form of respect to ancestors and as a spiritual statement to balance the human world with the spirit world. Thus, interactions with pigs and the surrounding environment are not carried out carelessly, but within a religious framework that encompasses respect, emotional attachment, and a sense of responsibility (Rappaport, 1968).

These sacred values create behavioral boundaries against the exploitation of nature. For example, because animals such as pigs are part of religious structures and rituals, they cannot be killed or consumed at any time, but only during moments determined by sacred cycles. This indirectly controls the consumption and conservation of natural resources, as the relationship between humans and nature is framed within a relationship that is not only pragmatic, but also normative and spiritual. Nature becomes part of the moral structure of the community. Through the repetition of rituals involving the entire community, these values are passed down across generations, making the sacredness of nature part of the collective consciousness that limits destructive actions. Rappaport shows that this is the main strength of traditional ritual systems, which integrate ecological functions into systems of values and meaning, making sustainability not merely a rational goal, but a moral and spiritual obligation (Rappaport, 1968).

Rappaport, in his book *Ritual and Religion in The Making of Humanity*, explains that rituals are not merely a means of conveying meaning, but concrete actions that apply and embody meaning (Rappaport, 1999). Unlike myths, which can be told without personal implications from the narrator, rituals explicitly bind the participants to what is being done. When someone engages in a ritual, they are not only expressing something, but also becoming





part of the order of meaning that is being expressed. For example, in the context of rites of passage, someone who performs a coronation or purification ritual is not merely symbolizing social transformation, but actually experiencing that transformation socially and cosmologically.

The role of rituals as a means of instilling ecological ethics can be seen from the fact that rituals actively function as ecological regulatory systems, particularly in non-industrial societies such as Tsembaga Maring. Here, Rappaport emphasizes that time in the context of rituals is not only symbolic or spiritual, but also contains a repetitive structure that regulates ecological cycles. Through the example of the kaiko cycle, it is demonstrated that ritual actions performed periodically have a direct effect on the environment, such as controlling pig populations that, if left unchecked, would disrupt gardens and food resources. In systemic terms, rituals play a role in restoring the social-ecological system to a state of balance after experiencing tension or stress (Rappaport, 1999).

Rappaport states that periodic repetition of rituals not only creates social order, but also controls the flow of energy and matter within ecological systems. When these cycles function properly, they can serve as highly precise regulatory tools, even though they are not consciously structured like modern laws or policies. Rappaport wrote that “to impose recurrence upon a process is to regulate it,” emphasizing that by regulating the timing and intensity of rituals, societies are able to regulate ecological processes such as pig reproduction, land use, and food distribution. This means that ecological values such as consumption restrictions, land conservation, and animal population balance are culturally internalized through rituals, without having to be understood in scientific language. Thus, rituals create an ecological ethics rooted in collective action and cultural cycles, rather than in explicit instructions or doctrines (Rappaport, 1999).

## Discussion

Raising the issue of natural exploitation and the decline of spirituality in modern society is very necessary these days. A strong philosophical foundation in the thinking of Seyyed Hossein Nasr is essential for observing the issues of natural exploitation and spiritual decline. In the context of modern Western philosophy, the anthropocentric paradigm inherited from the era of modernity is increasingly seen as the cause of the exploitation of nature. This view reduces nature to a practical object and places humans at the center of everything. The ecological crisis, which is not only technical but also epistemological and ethical, has been caused by the contemporary worldview that prioritizes the unlimited domination and exploitation of nature. The basic principles of modernity, such as the dualism of human nature and the primacy of reason, which actually distance humans from the larger ecological order, are questioned by contemporary environmental philosophy (Peruzzo Júnior & Oliveira, 2025). We should not disregard all environmental ethics and view nature as an inanimate object that we can take as we please. Integrating philosophy, education, and ecological action within the framework of religion requires a concerted effort. According to this story, the misuse of nature is interpreted as a result of philosophical education's inability to create a harmonious cosmological relationship between people and their surroundings (Peters et al., 2025).

Islamic principles as the basis of ecological ethics offer a solid spiritual and normative framework for addressing contemporary environmental crises. Principles such as *Tawhid*, *Khilafah*, *Amanah*, *Shari'ah*, *'Adl*, and *I'tidal* are not merely theological teachings, but also applicable ecological moral guidelines. *Tawhid* instills an awareness of cosmic unity and the



interconnectedness of all beings, while Khilafah and Amanah affirm humanity's responsibility as stewards of the earth entrusted to us by God. Values such as 'Adl and I'tidal demand ecological justice and a moderate approach to the exploitation of natural resources. It is important to remember that the environmental crisis stems from a betrayal of divine trust and can be healed by restoring this spiritual awareness (Nasr, 1996). This discussion highlights the importance of an eco-theological approach rooted in revelatory values, rather than merely technical solutions, in order to foster a transformative ecological ethical paradigm within Muslim societies and the wider global community (Sayem, 2023).

In Rappaport's perspective, rituals play a role that goes beyond religious symbolism; they are a systemic device that regulates the relationship between humans and nature. In societies such as Tsembaga Maring, the kaiko ritual is used to manage ecological cycles. When the pig population exceeds a certain threshold and begins to damage crops, a pig sacrifice ritual is performed to reduce ecological pressure and strengthen social cohesion. These actions, though rooted in religious and mythological frameworks, have real ecological functions, namely maintaining balance between human populations, animals, and natural resources. Thus, rituals serve as a medium that unites spiritual values, social systems, and ecological regulation in the form of structured and repetitive actions (Rappaport, 1968). A similar study by Strathern & Stewart (2021) in the *Palgrave Handbook of Anthropological Ritual* also notes that in many indigenous communities, interaction with nature is always mediated by rituals as a form of respect and ecological control. Thus, rituals are not relics of the past, but rather ecological and ethical mechanisms that are relevant even in the midst of the current global environmental crisis (Strathern & Stewart, 2021).

As a view that rituals can instill sacred values in nature. Within Rappaport's framework, nature and living beings are not treated merely as economic objects, but as part of a sacred relational system. In the Tsembaga Maring community, for example, pigs are not just livestock, but creatures bound by relationships with ancestors and collective rituals. The sacrifice of pigs in kaiko can only be carried out within a specific spiritual framework, and the act serves as a moral reinforcement towards nature (Rappaport, 1999). The religious symbolism embedded in rituals can shape a sturdy environmental ethic. In many religious traditions, such as Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs, the relationship with nature is always articulated in the form of rituals or liturgies that connect creation with the transcendent. Through collective participation in rituals, values about boundaries, respect for life, and responsibility for the earth are effectively instilled in the social consciousness (Balabanski, 2024). Thus, rituals become a means not only to convey ethics, but also to bring them to life collectively and symbolically within society.

The discussion on Natural Resource Exploitation and Spiritual Decadence is still highly relevant because the country is facing a worsening ecological crisis, coupled with a weakening of ethical and spiritual awareness in treating nature. Indonesia, as a megabiodiversity country, continues to experience significant environmental damage due to massive deforestation, unsustainable mining, river pollution, and the conversion of peatlands into monoculture plantations. Deforestation is defined as the conversion of natural forest cover into non-natural forest cover. Natural forests are forests that were not created by humans, neither in the form of planted forests nor in the form of plantations (Gaveau et al., 2021).

Deforestation between 2017 and 2021, with an average rate of 2.54 million hectares per year equivalent to six times the size of a soccer field per minute has pushed Indonesia to the



brink of a climate crisis. This situation shows that Indonesia's forests are not in good condition. High levels of forest resource degradation are occurring in almost every region. For example, Kalimantan still shows an average deforestation rate of 1.11 million hectares per year, followed by Papua at 556,000 hectares per year, Sumatra at 428,000 hectares per year, Sulawesi at 290,000 hectares per year, Maluku at 89,000 hectares per year, Bali Nusa at 38,000 hectares per year, and Java at 22,000 hectares per year. The massive destruction of Indonesia's forests has been revealed through the increasing sophistication of remote sensing technology, which is now capable of calculating forest damage in greater detail (Aulia et al., 2023). The main causes of destruction are the conversion of forests for mining, plantations, energy projects, and infrastructure development, including the mega-project of the National Capital City (IKN). Ironically, the energy transition that is supposed to save the environment has instead given rise to new threats such as the development of Energy Plantation Forests (HTE), which have the potential to sacrifice natural forests.

From this data, the exploitation of natural resources and spiritual decadence can be viewed from an environmental ethics perspective that links ecological degradation with the moral crisis of humanity. In the context of Indonesia, this crisis has become increasingly apparent with the rise of deforestation, which not only threatens ecological sustainability but also reflects humanity's disconnect from local spiritual and cosmological values. Local wisdom should be able to serve as an ethical framework that unites humans, nature, and spirituality in interdependent harmony. When humans begin to view nature solely as an object of economic exploitation, cosmic ethical values such as these are cast aside, resulting in ecological alienation that deepens spiritual decadence (Christiawan, 2017).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that massive exploitation of nature is not only an ecological or economic issue, but also a reflection of the spiritual decadence of modern humans who have severed their connection with transcendental values. The main findings indicate that Islamic values, such as Tawhid, Khilafah, Amanah, Shari'ah, 'Adl, and I'tidal, have ethical and cosmological foundations capable of shaping a more sacred and sustainable ecological paradigm. Additionally, rituals both within the Islamic context and local cultures, as analyzed through Rappaport's theory play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance through integrated social, spiritual, and ecological mechanisms. Therefore, Islamic da'wah can be positioned as a holistic alternative solution to address environmental degradation. Da'wah is not merely about conveying religious teachings but also serves as an educational medium for ecology. Through da'wah, Muslims are encouraged to understand the environment as God's creation with spiritual value, not merely an economic object. Da'wah serves as a means to foster collective awareness, promote sustainable lifestyles, and awaken moral responsibility toward fellow creatures and future generations.

In response to the research question, namely whether the exploitation of nature correlates with spiritual decadence and how Islam provides an ecological ethical framework, the results of the study show that the exploitation of nature is indeed a symptom of the loss of human spiritual awareness of the sanctity of creation. Islam offers an alternative paradigm rooted in revelatory values that are both normative and transformative, capable of redefining the human-nature relationship within an ethical and spiritual framework. Religion, in this case Islam, has proven not only to possess normative potential but also operational potential to guide humanity toward a harmonious and sustainable relationship with the natural world.



The implications of these findings emphasize the importance of integrating spiritual and religious dimensions into environmental policy and ecological education. The Islamic ecological paradigm can serve as an important foundation for building collective ecological awareness, particularly in Indonesia as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. For further research, the author recommends a thematic interpretation of Quranic verses related to cosmology and environmental ethics, as well as an exploration of religious ritual practices in Indonesian Muslim communities in maintaining a sacred relationship with nature. Additionally, comparative studies with other religions or interdisciplinary approaches between theology, sociology, and ecology are highly recommended to enrich perspectives and practical applications.

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