Collegial Leadership and Election in Muhammadiyah: Institutional Ways to Diffuse the Religious Authority of Leaders

Hyung-Jun Kim

An Overview on Ottoman Manuscript Collection in Sayyid Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas Library

Mehmet Özay

The Rise of Cinematic Santri in Post Authoritarian Indonesia: Figure, Field, and the Competing Discourse

Ahmad Nuril Huda
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Exploring Modernity, Nurturing Tradition:
The Pesantren Leaders’ Journey in Japan
Mardian Sulistyati

Locality, Equality, and Piety: *Pesantren* Ecofeminism Movement in Indonesia

**Abstract:** The ecofeminism movement in Indonesia is generally territorial and intersectional but tends to be secular. This study shows the emergence of ecofeminism ideas integrated with Islamic values in the form of pesantren. Unlike other ecofeminisms—which were generally born as a response to women and environmental issues an sich, pesantren ecofeminism was an effort to rise from the mental-class and economic-class trauma of peasant society. I used a subsistence perspective which led me to the Pesantren Ekologi Ath-Thaariq in Garut, West Java, Indonesia. I combined Harvard and Longwe frameworks to analyze pesantren’s activity, access, control, and equivalence level. This article contains the pesantren ecofeminism concept in viewing the environment through faith, local wisdom, and piety. This study further examines the ability of pesantren to break unequal power relations between humans and between humans and non-humans instead of continuing the patriarchal tradition and its kiai-centric system.

**Keywords:** Ecofeminism, Pesantren, Ethic of Piety, Gender and Ecology, Subsistence Perspective.

Kata kunci: Ekofeminisme, Pesantren, Etika Kesalehan, Gender dan Ekologi, Perspektif Subsistensi.

ملخص: إن تطورًا حركة النسوية البيئية في إندونيسيا هو بشكل عام إقليمي ومنطق، ولكنه يميل إلى أن يكون علمانيًا وخارجيًا من العقيدة الدينية. توضح هذه الدراسة ظهور الأفكار النسوية البيئية المتكاملة مع القيم الإسلامية في شكل المدارس الداخلية الإسلامية (بيسانترين). على النقيض من الأفكار النسوية البيئية الأخرى - والتي تكون بشكل عام كرد فعل على قضايا المرأة والبيئة، فإن النسوية البيئية في بيسانترين هي جهد للنهوض من صدمة الطبقات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية لمجتمع الفلاحين. لقد استخدمت منظور الكفاف الذي قاد إلى بيسانترين الطارق الإسلامي في منطقة جاروت، جاوة الغربية، إندونيسيا. أما بالنسبة لتحليل أنشطة بيسانترين والوصول إليه والسيطرة عليه ومستوى التكافؤ فيه، فقد قمت بدمج إطار هارفارد التحليلي وإطار لونغوي. تصور هذه المقالة كيف تنبت الحركة النسوية البيئية للبيسانترين منظورها البيئي من خلال الإنسان والحكومة المحلية والتنقل. تبحث هذه الدراسة كذلك في قدرة بيسانترين على كسر علاقات القوة غير المتكافئة بين البشر والعلاقة بين البشر وغير البشر، بدلاً من استمرار التقاليد الأبوية ونظامها المتمركز حول كياي (الأستاذ الديني).

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية البيئية، النسوية البيئية في بيسانترين، أخلاقيات الكفاف، النوع الاجتماعي والبيئة، منظور الكفاف.

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In the vocabulary of ecological ethics, ecofeminism—an integration of feminist discourse and critical ecology—is a relatively new concept. As a movement, ecofeminism grew rapidly, taking root, and was divided into several schools of thought typology. Ecofeminists criticize each other and have a dialectic with various possibilities for unraveling the root problems of the relationship between nature and humans (Greeta Gaard 1993; Mies and Shiva 2014; Tong and Botts 2018). It implies that ecofeminism is not a monolithic ideology. In the context of Indonesia, the study of ecofeminism is quite developed and has multiple perspectives. Some of them are migrant workers (Prusinski 2013; Ramdhon 2014; Sukses 2014); women batik makers (Demartoto 2014; Handayani and Kristijanto 2014; Hunga 2013; Soetjipto, Kristijanto, and Hunga 2013); and environmental management through local wisdom (Astuti 2012; Wulan 2007). Some academics have also succeeded in discussing the ethics of ecofeminism in the Islamic study space (Fahrurrazi 2018; Nurani 2017; Qori’ah 2018; Sururi 2014), although they have not yet reached the level of movement practice.

I offer two concepts that are to be combined: (a variant of) pesantren and ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is the view that there is a direct relationship between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature (Candraningrum 2015; Mies and Shiva 2014; Session 1987); and pesantren as pillars of Indonesian Islamic education that hold the romance of social change (Bruinessen 1995, 21; Dhofer 2011, 41; Steenbrink 1986, 20). Both have a similar history. Ecofeminism is against the inequality of developmentalism, while pesantren is against colonialism. Therefore, this study aims to open a discourse—if the term finding is deemed unideal—on the home-grown ecofeminism movement in the form of pesantren.

I argue that the ecofeminism of pesantren can be interpreted as an ethic-cum-movement that goes beyond its predecessor’s ecofeminism. In its pursuit of liberation, the concept endeavors to break free from various forms of dualism. Cultural ecofeminists, as outlined by Daly (1978, 1984) and Griffin (1978), serve as a point of departure. The narrative extends to the rejection of skepticism rooted in religious anthropocentrism, aligning with the perspectives of spiritual ecofeminists like Starhawk (1989, 1990). Additionally, the discourse seeks emancipation from the constraints of bodily enculturation and
the denial of biological destiny, concepts championed by transformative ecofeminists such as Dinnerstein (1989) and Warren (1995, 1996). Furthermore, the narrative distances itself from moral assumptions linking the equal rights of animals with women, echoing the sentiments of vegan ecofeminists as articulated by Kao (2006), Regan (2004), and Singer (2009). In addition, pesantren ecofeminism’s uniqueness is their faith ethics as the basis for ecological and social justice.

This article is one of my independent research narratives from 2015-2019 on the Pesantren Ekologi Ath-Thaariq in Garut, West Java, Indonesia. I adopted the subsistence perspective initiated by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (2014)² in determining the ideal research subject. This perspective helped me look holistically and comprehensively at several grassroots movements before finally deciding on the Pesantren Ekologi Ath-Thaariq (hereafter I mention briefly Ath-Thaariq). After making an approach and getting approval from the pesantren, I began to do fieldwork. My first live-in was a month in mid-2015 and one week in early 2017. Interviews are usually serious and casual. Data exploration is often done during pengajian, discussions, nongkrong santai, gardening, mealtime or kitchen work. Apart from that, I conduct interviews through meeting rooms such as seminars, jamborees, folk festivals (both facilitated by pesantren and other parties), and online observations of the pesantren’s social media. Next, I analysed the fieldwork data using the Harvard and Longwe analytical framework matrix to see activity, access, control, and equality in the pesantren. I explain the results of the matrix freely and without structure in the article descriptions. The key questions are: (1) epistemologically and ontologically, what are the theoretical construction of the ecofeminism movement in the pesantren? (2) Socio-culturally, what factors gave birth to this movement?

To parse the questions above, I use a genealogical approach to examine the intersection of ecofeminism ethics and pesantren values. This approach allows me to discuss the roots and the ethical discourse of ecofeminism and the existence of pesantren, both of which have historical similarities. The following section describes the models, movements and values of pesantren ecofeminism and how Ath-Thaariq develops ecological piety as its principal value.
A Brief Genealogy of the Ecofeminism and Its Unfinished Dialectic

This section discusses the emerging context of ecofeminism in response to at least two things. First, the views and practices of anthropocentrism and androcentrism that trigger environmental problems and gender inequality. Second, the character and pattern of previous feminist movements still rely on the principle of masculinity—which incidentally is anti-feminine and anti-ecological. As an ideological movement, ecofeminism has various thought processes that have made dialectics and criticized each other. This section is essential for building a theoretical framework that will form the basis for further analysis of pesantren ecofeminism. First of all, I need to elaborate on the concept of modernization and the paradigm of developmentalism as the entry point for this article’s academic debate.

Two decades ago, academic studies showed how Indonesian system of natural resource management and the capital-oriented economy gave rise to an environmental crisis and a method of gender-based discrimination (Bertaux and Crable 2007; Boserup and Kanji 2007; Eckersley 2001, 23–26; Fakih 2008, 35–36; Phillips and Ilcan 2014, 1970–99). One of the reasons is that development ideas are low in involving women’s values and perspectives—both in terms of sexuality and gender (Babacan 2009, 44–61; Fakih 2008, 35–36). Most women’s presence and role are forgotten and erased when the development narrative is formed (Bearfield 2009; Burnier 2005; Miller 2009; Ramdhon 2013). The concept of women in the development ideology is nothing more than a strategy of developmentalism in controlling women rather than liberating them (Fakih 2013; Rismawati 2012).

The concept of ecofeminism also emerged through Francoise d’Eaubonne as a critique of the developmental system that works with capitalism (Eaton 2003, 23–35; Tong and Botts 2018, 260). Ecofeminists believe that women’s domination and power have the same pattern because women are often identified with nature (Session 1987). However, the merging of feminist and ecological ethics is not solely due to dualism. The character of previous feminist movements, it must be admitted, sparked the birth of ecofeminism. Previously, almost all the feminist movements that aimed to end the oppression of women used ideologies, epistemologies and theories based on the principle of masculinity—which incidentally was anti-feminine and anti-ecology (Seidler 2014, 285–328; Wulan 2007). The lack of feminist movement...
methodologies finally raised the concerns of Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva. These two ecofeminists deconstruct the perspectives and character of the feminist movement.

In its debate, ecofeminism grows into several type of thoughts. First, Nature or Radical-cultural Ecofeminism proposed by Mary Daly and Susan Griffin. Natural Ecofeminism believes that the traditional traits associated with women, such as caring, loving and sensitivity, are not merely the result of cultural construction but also from women’s actual biological and psychological experiences. This school rejects the assumption of women’s inferiority as natural and the premise of men’s superiority as cultural (Daly 1978; Griffin 1978; Tong and Botts 2018, 204–6). Therefore, the power of women is the only hope for nature. Even Daly in *Gyn/Ecology* speculates that matriarchy was the original order before patriarchy. Therefore, liberating women by placing them back in their natural initial order can liberate them from men who are domesticating and destroying them (Daly 1984, 25).

The critique of ecofeminism in relation to nature comes from Janet Biehl, who thinks their optimistic view is misleading women. According to Biehl, the relationship between women and men is, in fact, very degrading to women. The negative cultural burden women have been born with for centuries cannot be removed by reclaiming. Nature ecofeminists err when biological women assume that women are unique ecological creatures. This assumption is believed only to limit the potential and ability of women in regard to the traditional values of women themselves (Tong and Botts 2018, 14–16).

Spiritual Ecofeminism was proposed by Starhawk, Carol Christ, and Diann Neu. Spiritual Ecofeminism draws strength from a variety of earth-based spiritualities. Spiritual ecofeminists must let go of their masculine elements and unite with the universe to try earth-based spiritualities. In contrast to natural ecofeminists, who reject the relationship between women and nature, spiritual ecofeminists celebrate the relationship between the two. Spiritual ecofeminists believe there is a close relationship between the destruction of the environment and the belief that God gave humans dominion over the earth—through religious doctrines. However, they insist that whatever theology/religion/spirituality a woman adopts can be of great power as long as she can purify her religion of patriarchal ideas (Starhawk 1990; Tong and Botts 2018, 207–9). Criticism of this school comes from
Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva. They think that spiritual ecofeminists are too euphoric to spend time in the moonlight, chanting mantras, meditating and sending each other vibes or messages (Mies and Shiva 2014, 16–20).

Transformative or Social-constructionist Ecofeminism was proposed by Dorothy Dinnerstein and Karren J. Warren. With a solid socialist tradition, this ideology seeks to eliminate the social system that creates workers and capitalists, along with women and men. Transformative ecofeminists believe that the experience of traditional traits in women will only make women subject to responsibility and unequal treatment with nature. Women will be continuously subordinated to men and subordinated to culture if women do not fight back (Tong and Botts 2018, 210–12). In subsequent developments, self-criticism came from Warren, who saw that transformative ecofeminists had failed to read how the system of human oppression against non-humans occurred (Dinnerstein 1989; Tong and Botts 2018, 274–78; Warren 1995, 1996).

Global Ecofeminism was proposed by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva. In contrast to other ecofeminisms, closely related to the dichotomization of women and men in viewing environmental issues, global ecofeminism is more fluid and open to gender relations by eliminating the labeling of certain sexualities. This flow works with the characteristics of (1) the intersectionality of the system of oppression; (2) emphasizing the diversity of women’s experiences; (3) rejecting the logic of domination; (4) rethinking the meaning of being human, conscious and rational—which has been used to distinguish humans as superior to other creatures; (5) rely on traditional feminine ethics that are to interweave, connect, and unite people; (6) believes that science and technology are only used to maintain the continuity of the Earth (Warren 1995, 118).

Fifth, Vegan or Vegetarian Ecofeminism. In general, vegans are against the consumption of meat and anything made from or are related to animals. The vegan ethic is solidarity with the suffering of animals in livestock systems or laboratory experiments (Kao 2006). In comparison, vegetarians do not eat meat but are tolerant of animal products. Ecofeminists, both vegan and vegetarian, are often morally contradictory: contextual and universal. Contextualists recognize people who use animal products, such as indigenous tribes in the interior, which
cannot survive except by hunting. However, urban communities must not use them because now there are many alternatives such as plant-based protein and calcium (Kao 2006, 12). While universalists hold an absolute value that animals must be protected so that hunting and processing for any reason is not justified (Regan 2004; Singer 2009). Apart from the moral debates between contextualists and universalists, both have the same political stance: the responsibility to free animals from oppression by humans or the destructive systems humans create (Tong and Botts 2018, 282–84).

Environmental Ecofeminism was brought to life by Anne Primavesi. This stream focuses on those in the North who use fossil fuels to the South’s detriment (Tong and Botts 2018, 215–16). The North-South label was from Willi Brandt’s research that called rich and developed countries the “North” and poor and developing countries as the “South.” Primavesi argues that it is unfair for people in the North to use three times more of the Earth’s resources than people in the South (Primavesi 2000, 94). So far, the South has been exploited for the benefit of the North. According to Primavesi, feminists must take action on consumerism and stand for Southern justice (Tong and Botts 2018, 215–16).

All the standpoint typologies above show that ecofeminism is not a monolithic and finalized ideology. Ecofeminists come with many modes of thinking, criticize each other and have a dialogue on the various possibilities in unraveling the root problems of the relationship between nature and humans. The grassroots ecofeminist movement from one region to another may be different. In Indonesia, for example, ecofeminists in Kendeng who are against cement factories have different patterns and movements from ecofeminists who are against mining in Molo. Even though they both suffered environmental damage from big corporations, the cultural trajectories that built the Kendeng and Mollo communities differed (Sulistyati 2018). The ideological tendencies and the ecofeminist movement are indeed diverse but mutually reinforcing. In the following section, I will identify how pesantren (and) ecofeminism were born and grew to form the union.

**Indonesianness Roots of the Pesantren Ecofeminism**

Apart from the discourse on developmentalism and ecofeminism, as discussed earlier, we also need to understand the agrarian system in Garut during the Colonial Era. After that, the discussion continues on
post-colonial agrarianism (1945) to the political transition period after the fall of the New Order (1998-1999). Even though they seem to be a distant link, these two eras are a mosaic that forms Ath-Thaariq and the pesantren ecofeminist movement. This discussion traces the manifesto of pesantren ecofeminism more radically. Another important thing, in contrast to the previous ideology of ecofeminism, Islam’s value plays a significant role in shaping the ethical framework of the pesantren ecofeminism. This section will show how organic intellectuals, to borrow Antonio Gramsci’s term, responded to land monopolies, established pesantrens and then put it into practice as a movement that I identify as Indonesian-home-grown ecofeminism.

Garut is known for its fertile land surrounded by six mountains and some active volcanoes. The large amount of forests and gardens gives Garut the highest agricultural productivity in Java. Thus, Garut has two strategic functions: a buffer for environmental balance and a supplier of staple foods (hitterland) in West Java. Unfortunately, Garut has been the arena of land tenure since the colonial period and even after independence (Li 1999, 1). Talking about peasant life would only be complete after discussing colonial feudalism. It was a system where the king, the king’s family and the nobles were the lords while the peasants were the servants. This feudalistic economy places land under the absolute ownership of the master. The grassroots society have no right to own or control land—even if they belong to the masters who can be mobilized. This system has had a tremendous and traumatic impact on the people’s mental (class) and economic (class) formation, which makes our nation suffer in a structural way (Rachman 1999, 15–16, 51).

After Indonesia’s independence, Sukarno decolonized by changing the direction of land policy and overhauling land tenure systems. In this process, the Undang-Undang Pokok Agraria/UUPA (Basic Agrarian Law) was successfully passed and aspired to become the official reference for land reform policies (Harsono 2008, 2–3; Sukarno 1965). Unfortunately, this law stopped during the Suharto regime. In this era, land concessions for domestic and foreign projects were widely opened—signalling the start of the period of ‘predatory bureaucratism’ in Robison’s terms (Robison 1997, 29–63). In the context of Garut, the two most significant types of landowners are Perum Perhutani and state-owned or private plantations. The majority of their land
is obtained through coercion and manipulation, thus inviting local
resistance (Wargadipura 2005).

The fall of Suharto gave momentum for grassroots revival. The
movements that flourished during this transitional period were
generally local, self-taught and diverse. In the regions, there were
encounters between agrarian activists, students and farmer groups.
They built typically patterned alliances: peasant leaders set up local
organizations, while activists and students introduced agricultural
reform. Furthermore, the farmers’ unions formed up to the district level
for the purpose of mass mobilization. One of the alliances that emerged
from this process was the Serikat Petani Pasundan/SPP (Pasundan
Farmers Union). When it was proclaimed in Garut on January 24,
2000, the SPP consisted of fewer than fifty peoples’ groups involved
in agrarian conflicts in three districts: Garut, Tasikmalaya and Ciamis.
However, SPP is a continuation of the mentoring work carried out by
students and youth in Garut since the early 1980s (Lucas and Warren

Two influential figures who participated in initiating the birth of
SPP were Nissa Wargadipura and Ibang Lukmanurdin. Nissa and
Ibang had previously been active in the farmer advocacy movement
through the Forum Pemuda, Pelajar dan Mahasiswa Garut/FPPMG
(Youth and Student Forum)—which Ibang also initiated. FPPMG,
apart from working on agricultural issues, also covers labour and poor
urban issues. It was not without reason that the three central issues
were the main focus of the student youth movement in Garut at that
time. From the 1960s until the end of the 1990s, a series of agricultural
problems in the Garut region emerged non-stop (Wargadipura 2005).

Although the national political situation provided opportunities
for the growth of various grassroots movements, it still did not bring
significant changes to the peasants. According to Nissa, almost all
farmers were in debt, ranging from small-scale debts for their daily
needs in food stalls to large-scale loans to brokers. On a large scale,
farmers were in debt for capital requirements and production costs
such as seed procurement, land management, seeding and fertilizer and
pesticide procurement. These debts were ideally repaid after harvest.
However, regarding harvest time, two possibilities were sure to happen:
profit or loss. As a result, if the yield is successful, the farmer’s life
becomes very consumptive for material expenditures that increase
prestige. Meanwhile, if the harvest fails, losses and debts would pile up. Not a few farmers switch professions because they lose their land to pay debts. Unfortunately, this condition had an impact on the fate of girls. Marrying off their young daughters was a way to reduce their burden on their parents’ lives.

Two decades into their role as environmental activists, Nissa and Ibang realized something more strategic and radical. The politicization of natural resources, ecological imbalances, food sovereignty crises, debt bondage and child marriage are increasingly difficult to overcome. Nissa and Ibang felt the need to change their strategy, which had previously focused on agrarian advocacy and protest actions, to a more substantive act: the education movement. Education is considered the most effective and ideologically pure strategy to solve these deep-rooted problems. Thus, they matured the idea of alternative education.

The idea of a pesantren for sovereignty was born in agricultural politics and social phenomena. It was not without reason that the two activists chose pesantren. They were not forgetful of history. They understand very well how pesantren has a long history of resistance to colonialism. For most of the grassroots community, pesantren is (still) a trusted social institution because it combines education and religious functions. With such roles and functions, pesantren are seen as the most strategically important medium to disseminate and embody environmental ethics concepts.

Finally, in 2008, Ath-Thaariq was established in the Cimurugul Village, Tarogong Kidul District, Garut. Residents name it the Pesantren Kebon Sawah (“Paddy Field” Pesantren) because it is a day-to-day activity for the pesantren that stands right in the middle of their sawah area. The sawah is the rest of the housing projects and local government offices. The position adequately represents the pesantren’s mental attitude and standpoint: resistance to developmentalism that disrupts the ecological balance and farmers’ livelihoods.

**Pesantren Kebon Sawah: The Growing Home**

My initial impression upon entering Ath-Thaariq was one of informality, familiarity, and unpretentiousness. This impression was unlike what I got in other pesantren which are generally formal, hierarchical and tidy. Ath-Thaariq has three buildings: the main house/cottage, a male dormitory and a bamboo pavilion. In addition, Nissa and Ibang divide
the pesantren’s land into a zoning system: food zone, seeds saving zone, conservation plant zone and livestock (fish and poultry) zone.

The first building is a house. Nissa (as a nyai), Ibang (as a kiai), their three children and female santris inhabit this two-story building. The rooms on the first floor are occupied by Nissa, Ibang and their children, while female santris occupy the rooms on the second floor. Also available are shared kitchens, bathrooms and a large hall usually used for learning, playing, meeting and even gathering with pesantren relatives. On one side of this house’s room is a shelf containing books that santri can freely access. However, some things need to be criticized. In terms of the arrangement, for example, the collection books are messy and need to be more organized. Likewise, the data collection system is minimal, with titles and quantity of copies. Besides grants, almost all the collections are privately owned by Nissa and Ibang. The pesantren needs to pay attention to the revitalization of its library in terms of quality, quantity and organization. The improvement is vital to the enrichment of the santri and anyone who wants to study at this pesantren.

The second building is a dormitory for male santris. The building is unique and separate from the main house. In addition to male santris, this dormitory is also usually occupied by outside guests (male) Both groups and individuals come to study temporarily. The third building is a bamboo pavilion for worship, study, discussions and other pesantren activities. This building was built with two materials: bamboo and palm fiber. The entire family of the pesantren performs collective worship at this pavilion every day.

In this pesantren, a zoning system is divided into several zones. The food zone is where the primary needs for daily food are planted, such as sorghum, corn, tubers, rice (a source of carbohydrates) and various vegetables (a source of vegetable protein). Then in the seeds saving zone, more than 400 plant seeds (food and medicine) are cultivated both from local Garut and other areas. The seeds were collected from everywhere, through the hands of the santri and the peer partner of the pesantren. Everyone is free to collect and exchange seeds. “The seeds of these farmers can be passed on, generated and stored. If this seed is planted and grown, it will become the source of life for all living things around it,” said Nissa.

Meanwhile, as water absorbers and providers, bamboo and woody or perennial plants have been planted in the conservation zone. Plants
in this zone should not be cut or uprooted. In addition to the drop zone, there is also a livestock zone consisting of poultry and fish. The livestock here provides animal protein sources and natural nurses for soil fertility. Some are deliberately left naturally present among them, namely wild plants. These weeds are not seen as parasites but rather as ecological balancers.

The pesantren area, which is not so vast, makes it easier for the santris to live and absorb their applied knowledge. With only 8,500 square meters of land, all pesantren’s daily food needs are supplied independently. Not an inch of land is idle. Also, in the pesantren area, the appearance of animals already rare in urban areas can be found naturally. We will quickly find fireflies, butterflies, dragonflies, crickets, caterpillars, various types of frogs, worms, owls and snakes that are deliberately allowed to live naturally without disruption to their habitat.

This condition is not common even in pesantren or ecological-based schools. They are trying to restore and maintain a unified ecosystem and food chain. Dragonflies and frogs signify that the water around the pesantren is clean and not exposed to waste. Butterflies are a sign of air that is free from pollution. Worms are carriers and an indication of the availability of nutrients and soil fertility. Snakes are kept alive by leaving the bushes along the ditches passing through fields and pesantren plantations. They are responsible for controlling the rat population. I did not encounter this ecosystem view in residential and office areas outside the pesantren area. However, Nissa and Ibang’s principle of consciously allowing their plantations to be messy and inhabited by dangerous animals, such as snakes, worms and caterpillars, are not without protest from several parties. Some parties outside the pesantren are worried that the snakes left behind are hazardous for the santris.4 When I asked the santris about this concern, they answered confidently that the snake would not disturb them if it or its habitat were not disturbed.

According to Nissa, the ecological situation being cared for in this pesantren is vital for children or santris to learn more about biodiversity, not only from texts. My memory was still apparent when Nissa explained how we should treat turmeric, marigold, and tomato plants. “Marigolds will distract insects because of their bright colour and bad smell. Meanwhile, turmeric root is in charge of repelling
disease, germs and bacteria that will attack tomato plants so that tomatoes can grow healthy,” explained Nissa. That’s how Nissa and Ibang introduced hetero-culture-based agroecological agriculture. They believe this farming model will benefit themselves and their families, the environment and a better future.

We know that Dhofier formulates an educational institution worthy of being called a pesantren if it has five essential elements: the cottage, mosque, santri, teaching classical Islamic texts and Kiai (Dhofier 2011, 44). Pesantrens must survive by adapting and competing with other modern educational institutions (Hamdi 2017, 56). However, Ath-Thaariq proves that pesantren must go beyond. For this pesantren, survival is done by planting. To plant means to fight, which also means to take care of life—growing traditionally against modern methods full of genetically modified seeds, pesticides, and chemical fertilizers, which cause ecological damage and humanitarian crisis, even faith. The adoption of this attitude inherently reverts the pesantren to its historical legacy, marking a milestone of resistance and liberation from various manifestations of oppression and destruction.

The Equality of Nature, Animals, and Humans

“I teach you the Übermensch. The human is something that shall be overcome,” (Nietzsche 2005, 11). It is said that humans, like animals, know well the conditions of nature and the signs that nature proclaims. However, the more human civilization develops, the more humans lose their sensitivity to the sounds of nature. The construction of the human world has removed nature from its axis mundi. Nature is no longer the center of human discourse. Instead, humans are now the centre of ecosystem discourse. This perspective is increasingly destructive, especially in developing countries with unlimited natural resources, such as Indonesia.

Based on the findings of Global Forest Watch, throughout 2018, humans have removed 12 million hectares of the rainforest with a deforestation rate of 30 football fields per minute. This data was taken using satellite imagery and remote sensing of tropical forests from Brazil, Latin America, Indonesia, Asia Pacific to Africa. What is surprising is that several new deforestation hotspots such as illegal mining, illegal logging and expansion of cocoa plantations have been found in green belt countries such as Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Moreover, statistics
show beef production in Brazil and palm oil in Indonesia as the biggest drivers of global deforestation (Pendrill et al. 2019).

The hegemonic power of man over nature and animals has been built strongly into the structure of modern science. Science places nature as an object of research and a source of capitalist exploitation, thus distancing humans from their sensitivity to nature. It can signify that humans are no longer aware of their bodies. The body becomes just an instrument ignored by human reason and instinct—to live in harmony with nature and ecosystems. Human sensitivity to nature is no longer included in the vocabulary of culture and knowledge because the body becomes nothing more than a tool. There is a political problem in human ecological consciousness when looking at the world. Awareness that is built without first constructing a perspective on other creatures and awareness of human interdependence.

Against animals, humans also build a privilege. Humans image themselves as the main species, as Übermensch—borrows Nietzsche’s term. Several cultures in Indonesia are proud to use animals as swear words for bad behaviour in spoken language; Anjing! Monyet! Babi! Buaya Darat! and so forth. It is not surprising that relations and respect are also marginalized by the form of language, cultural formation and new epistemes and logos that continue to construct humans as the axis of universal discourse. Awareness of this non-hierarchical position is essential in understanding oppression, exploitation and capitalization, which have been the main criticisms of this thesis from the beginning.

Nissa and Ibang fully understood this critical situation and how urgent the need for awareness was when they established Ath-Thaariq. The pesantren was built on the fundamental idea that nature also talks with humans and builds discourse with humans as long as humans are open to maintaining an equal relationship with nature. An effort to fight the construction of knowledge considered negligent and arbitrary towards nature is underway. At the Jambore Perempuan Pejuang Tanah Air 2017, Nissa said that the authentic experience of the body with nature must be considered when producing sustainability policies.

This basic understanding of nature is stated in every activity at Ath-Thaariq. There exists hardly any hierarchy positioning humans, including the entire pesantren community, at the pinnacle. The occurrences in nature are perceived as part of a natural cycle, and appreciation is extended for acts of kindness. There is an evil that is reaped for the evil that
is done. At Ath-Thaariq, we will see how the conversation between humans and nature will naturally affect the relationship between the two. When humans are willing and able to build an ecological sense in themselves and speak “as” nature, they will have ethical awareness of it. It is an understanding that makes oneself aware of every good or damage done. Nature is always speaking in our bodies, so as long as we know how to listen (ecological unconscious), we will be able to talk about it (ecopsychology) (Trumpeter 1992). These democratic conversations and experiences can help humans be more eco-friendly and thus avoid their selfishness and arbitrariness.

In this kind of relationship, when looking at natural disasters, humans will understand more and then do self-introspection instead of feeling threatened—as in the view of modern society in general. Those who do not empathize with nature will walk away without understanding why disasters occur. Natural disasters are often accepted (while denying their existence) as the sound of nature disconnected from its connection with human behaviour. Let us take a moment to remember the Garut flash flood on September 21, 2016, which was the worst flood in the last fifty years (Arumningtyas 2016; Prakasa 2016).

Ecological disasters often bring dark stories
Especially for those who have never sinned
The torn belly of the earth
The back of the planet is sliced off
Evidence of poor ecological management
More market and capital oriented
As a result of an arrogant spatial layout that is only profit-oriented
While ecology has never been placed as the subject of development and political decisions
My dear city, let’s build a more safe and service-oriented nature
The gray night of our Garut City.
21 September 2016⁵.

Nissa’s statement via Facebook reflects how natural disasters are seen as an emotion that does not just appear. It is a reaction to what humans have done. Conversation with nature has likely transformed humans to empathize with nature. We should underline that hearing nature is an integral part of human nature, even before humans learn a language and think logically (Schultz 2002). Nissa’s connectedness is also seen in the following phrase: “No one ever wanted. Nevertheless, making him not angry is wiser. Do not come back again, O great anger…”⁶
What is phrased above gives strength to Nissa and the entire Ath-Thaariq to recover. How they responded to the flash flood was progressive and conscious. On the same day, the Ath-Thaariq took the initiative to become a basecamp for volunteers and search and rescue (SAR) teams from outside Garut, opening a shared kitchen with residents and volunteers from various regions. Ath-Thaariq works to seek recovery due to flash floods for up to a whole month. Organically, the division of tasks applies: to making food, procuring medicines, clothes, blankets, sanitary napkins and diapers, distributing aid to refugee posts and also providing assistance and psychological resilience. The food provided by the pesantren is the main point of focus for their ideology. All food ingredients and the packaging are obtained directly from the pesantren garden. Instead of supplying instant noodles or canned food for aid, the pesantren made their rustic-style menu: nasi liweut ungu with anchovies, peanuts, scrambled eggs and tempeh mixed with moringa leaves. They used herb seasoning (bay leaves, lemongrass, blue pea flowers, cinnamon, etcetera) as stamina boosters. All food was wrapped in banana leaves and then grilled. They believe this menu is more humane, beneficial, healthier, more nutritious, easy to make and can last up to three days. In addition, this method also does not add to the waste of plastic and cans. The pesantren also provides volunteers free food, so that community service activities are not disrupted.

As a home, Ath-Thaariq is a starting point for children, adults, anyone and from anywhere to tell stories of resistance. It is not just a cozy space to learn the Al-Quran but fosters a deep root of “who am I,” “where am I” and “what are our goals” as part of the ecosystem—rooted to localize themselves. In this house, God’s creations live in harmony and converse with each other as a created community. Each creature goes through a process of realizing its dependence on other creatures. This awareness shapes the preparedness and volunteerism of the santris to take care of nature, including rising and introspecting themselves when natural disasters occur.

An Ethic of Piety as the Basis of Pesantren Ecofeminism

If we look at the ecofeminist thinking I explained at the beginning; we will understand that the transformative is the ecofeminist way of theology. It departs from the praxis of faith experienced in specific
histories, beliefs and tragedies. This process differs from Western theology, traditional theology or dominant theology, which departs from theory and faith that is taught and believed.

In feminist thought, the body is the main issue in divinity because there is an awareness that the body (of a woman) is almost always the object of oppression. Body and faith are manifestations of religious experience in highlighting the feminine side and love for others and non-human entities such as nature and animals. Even Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether insist that women who adopt any theology, religion or spirituality tend to connect more with the highest entity or most profound source of meaning that is embodied rather than disembodied (Daly 1978; Ruether 1975). It explains the existence of the Goddess—or God of Women, to borrow the translation of the Gadis Arivia (2014)—which is the oldest concept of theistic belief before the advent of monotheism (Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Starhawk 1989, 16). The Goddess is more holistic in representing the values and issues of the body and needs of women, such as monthly menstruation and the symbiosis of pregnancy—which is not obtained from God, who is represented as male/masculine (God).

In comparison, I examine Mary Daly’s thoughts in Beyond God the Father. Daly questions the orientation of men’s thinking in religion with an interesting linguistic discussion. For example, the word God is a verb. That is, God is no longer seen as the “Supreme” but as “Continuing to Be” (Daly 1973, 19–20). However, later in his other book, Gyn/Ecology, Daly shows the violent side of religion against women and nature. From here comes the transformation (need) to shift from masculine patriarchal (religion/God) power to feminine power and prioritize love. These traits are found in women so that God is no longer seen as a verb but as a “Self” (her-Self) (Daly 1978; Suchocki 1994).

Returning to Ruether’s view of the spirituality of women’s bodies, Ruether believes faith is not belief in the “Supreme.” She believes in the power of belief built through connectedness. Human encounters with one another, self-recovery, experience and acceptance of the body and nature are divine processes in themselves. Thus, religion is seen as a continuous personal dialogue that is nurtured and then grows (Ruether 1993, 70–71). I see the need to discuss this point of view here. From the critical reflection on the anthropocentric (which justifies human power over nature) and androcentric (which explains the power of
men over women), ecofeminism spirituality opens our eyes to see the relationship between environmental degradation and religious dogma (monotheism). God gave humanity domain over the Earth. Thus, spiritual ecofeminists believe that as long as religion cannot escape patriarchal and misogynistic values, women must leave it and switch to an Earth-based spirituality.

According to Starhawk, Earth-based spirituality carries three core concept. First, with the first being immanence, where every living thing holds value and every sentient being possesses power. For Starhawk, spirituality is an energy generator and a trigger for continuous action toward the balance of beings and the universe. So that when the earth is damaged, our consciousness will demand that we do something to stop the damage and make efforts to restore the land (Starhawk 1989, 177–78).

The second concept is interconnectedness. Connectedness necessitates a broad view of ourselves and the creation outside of us. The more we understand that we are nature, the more we will realize our oneness with all that exists: humans, the cycles and processes of nature, animals and plants. We will create chaos when we ally with humans and against nature (anthropocentrism, for example); or ally with nature and against humans (extreme environmentalism such as ecoterrorism, for example). There must always be a middle ground to meet one and all interests (Starhawk 1989, 178). The third concept of Earth-based spirituality, perhaps the most important, is the compassionate lifestyle of women. Starhawk claims that the spirituality of ecofeminists provides caring and compassion. It enables them to identify powerlessness and the structures that perpetuate that powerlessness as the roots of hunger, overpopulation and ecological degradation (Starhawk 1989, 179–80).

We can conclude that the spirituality of ecofeminism is traditionally born from the appreciation of worshiping ancient goddesses and earth-oriented indigenous rituals. The female body and nature are sacred and similar: both givers of life (Eisler 1990, 23). Spiritual ecofeminists are comfortable with this analogy. Consequently, the existence of women is more advantageous than men in building a relationship with nature.

This line of thinking equipped me to understand the theological process at the Ath-Thaariq. If classical spiritual ecofeminists build spirituality and faith on their bottom-up spirituality approach, Ath-Thaariq is the opposite. This pesantren directs that building faith is the
first and foremost thing. Faith is grown by reciting the scripture (for any religion in general). “Without faith, a person cannot have ecological awareness,” said Ibang. Thus, we can overcome the ecological damage caused by human activities by strengthening human faith itself.

Even though faith is the key at the Ath-Thaariq itself, it is highly discouraged to debate three things: God, the Holy Scriptures, and the Prophet. Nissa and Ibang know that these three things can be divisive because there will always be differences in thoughts and beliefs. For them, there is no quarrel in believing in religious teachings; instead, it is a difference that we must respect. The principle of universality is thought to unite differences. Like the initial ideals of the pesantren, to strengthen public knowledge of ecological issues which incidentally are universal, genderless and not insulated by religion or ethnicity. As a reasoning activity about theological and ecological piety—adopting the Ibang’s term, I saw a continuous self-upgrading spirituality in Ath-Thaariq. I group these processes into interpretation, contact and caring.

The first way is reinterpretting the teachings of faith to be closer to its source (Al-Quran/Holy Scriptures and traditions). If classical spiritual ecofeminists consider environmental degradation the result of God giving humans power over the Earth, in this pesantren, power is interpreted as protecting (power-from-within), not controlling (power-over). Among the verses that Nissa and Ibang often refer to is Q.s. Ibrahim: 32, Q.s. al-Zukhruf: 13 and Q.s. al-Ḥajj: 65 that emphasize that the relationship between humans and nature is not between the conqueror and the conquered, nor is it between master and servant, but a relationship of togetherness in submission to Allah Swt.

In the verses above, there is the term sakkhara (subduing). According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, it does not mean the conquest or exploitation of nature wildly and without human control, but control over something indeed permitted by God. Such mastery must still consider and align with the balance of God’s laws (sunnatullāh). That is the mandate of Allah given to His caliph, humans (Nasr 1990, 96; Taufik 2019). Therefore, in this context, the concept of man as khalifatullāh fī al-ard must be understood not in the sense of domination over the Earth because this meaning tends to place humans as superior to nature or the environment. An ideal understanding is put forward by Mustafa Abu-Sway, who defines khalifatullāh fī al-ard as an attitude of responsibility towards the environment. According to this
argument, the concept of God’s representative will only be functional if the use of nature is placed within the framework of management that is full of responsibility and moral ethics (Sway 1998). A similar opinion is expressed by Yusuf Qaradhāwī, who connects *khalīfatullāh fī al-ard* with ‘*ibādah*, which includes the effort to plant, improve, live and avoid destructive things (Qaradhāwī 2002, 25–26).

So, the meaning of *khalīfatullāh fī al-ard* in an ecological framework is universal, caring and embracing all the world’s prominent biotic families. They are bound by ethical values that arise from religious traditions and the wisdom of human civilization. From this ecological meaning, *khalīfatullāh fī al-ard* is not like a king. Still, a combination of kings, prophets, moralists, adherents of ethics, and responsibilities that lead to environmental preservation. This power is also the spirit of Pesantren at-Thariq and is believed to give every creature an inherent ability, which makes it what it should be. Like a seed that can take root, grow, flower and bear fruit, as well as humans who can use the reason of their faith to care for, maintain, and protect. In this *pesantren*, when reading the Al-Quran, the *santri*s must have ecological perspectives. Even when planting, the *santri*s are taught to practice theological perspectives. So, spirituality is grown through recitation activities and farming, nurturing and harvesting activities—all done traditionally. Tradition is the keyword in this phase. Return to the noble agricultural model and preserve local values. Nissa and Ibang often make an analogy with “home” as a place where we return to both theological and ethnological meanings.

The second way is contact with all sorts of things that happen. This way carries the spirit of contextual existential experience. Theological considerations are almost always related to the principles of ecology and femininity. The principle of ecology means considering the issue of environmental balance and sustainability. At the same time, the principle of femininity means considering ethnic issues and vulnerable groups in a more comprehensive struggle. As I explained in third subsection, these two significant agendas were the forerunner to establishing Ath-Thaariq.

The third way is caring. This way may be the phase that completes the process of theology and ecology. I want to take a straightforward example: family food security. At the *pesantren*, the *santri*s are provided with a basic knowledge of agriculture and animal husbandry as much as possible. The goal is for family nutrition and nutrition to be fulfilled
independently, starting from their home page. If the family needs are fulfilled, and there is excess food, the next step is to share it with neighbors or people in need. It is the simple principle of balanced caring. Does it not take a healthy and strong mind and body to help the weak? I will not repeat the description of how pesantren play a role in disaster relief. This caring perspective (spiritually-theologically/first channel and socio-ecological/second channel) allows them to identify powerlessness and the structures that perpetuate powerlessness as the root of hunger, poverty, overpopulation and systemic environmental degradation.

If we reread the three ways, there are similarities with the core concept of earth-based spirituality by Starhawk. The embodiment of God’s verses and noble traditions as awareness as well as immanent strength and awareness to open contact with all existential experiences, which later gave birth to the interconnection of ecological interests and feminist agendas (the struggle for justice for the weak and weakened); and caring as a compassionate lifestyle. These three forms and processes of spirituality, in my opinion, are manifestations of new possibilities of ecofeminist spirituality.

Conclusion

If nowadays pesantren are required to survive by adapting and competing with modern educational institutions (Hamdi 2017, 56), Ath-Thaariq proves otherwise: survival is not merely a matter of competition—or must become more modern. For them, survival is done by planting. Planting means fighting, which also means caring for life. Specifically, this study compiles a new movement terminology: pesantren ecofeminism. A grassroots community movement in response to developmentalism and the politicization of natural resources that have caused, among other things: the cultural trauma of the community, the cycle of socio-ecological-economic crises and the loss of cultural values and ancestral traditions in managing nature. Pesantren ecofeminism is a movement with a global outlook that is not only internalized by women but can apply to all and every human being. It is not narrowly interpreted as a unification of ecofeminism and pesantren. As an idea of ecofeminism, it breaks away from the assumptions of dualism, bodilyism and religious anthropocentrism. As a pesantren, it breaks away from the Kiai autonomy tradition and fosters equal relations between Santri, Kiai and Nyai.
Theoretically, the ecofeminism of the pesantren is constructed through three concepts: (1) the institutional concept of growing houses; (2) the concept of activism: planting, reciting, and learning; (3) the ethical concept of piety ethics. Pesantren ecofeminism believes that justice is the highest manifestation of piety. Therefore, the first thing that must be cultivated to achieve ecological justice is ecological piety. Since ecological piety stems from faith, developing faith is paramount. This belief distinguishes pesantren ecofeminism from other ecofeminism thoughts. In building a pious ethic (theological, ecological, social), ecofeminism in pesantren applies three ways of reasoning: interpretation, connectedness and caring—which I also define as a process of self-upgrading spirituality.

“Interpretation” means returning to the faith close to its source (Al-Quran/Scripture and local wisdom). In this pesantren, santris must wear ecological glasses when mengaji (reading Al-Quran) and theological glasses when practicin menanam (farming activities). Spirituality is not only grown in worship but also in farming for life. Local custom is the keyword in this phase. We must return to noble farming ways and preserve local values. Thus, we will move toward the “connectedness” phase. This phase is a deepening of existential experience. Theological considerations are almost always related to the principles of ecology and femininity. Ecological principles include being aware of the equilibrium and sustainability. While the femininity principles include being aware of all ethnic issues, the struggle of the vulnerable groups, and the displaced community groups—to obtain their right to life. This awareness will then bring us to the caring phase. Perhaps, this is a phase that completes the process of theology and ecology. This caring perspective based on locality enables santris (and everyone) to identify the global structural powerlessness—hunger, poverty, overpopulation and systemic environmental degradation.
Endnotes

1. The pesantren is an Islamic education system that has grown since the beginning of the arrival of Islam in Indonesia. Pesantren implement the traditional education dormitory system, where students live together and study under a teacher known as a Kiai.

2. Some of the basic principles of this perspective are (1) economic motivation which is not a capitalistic principle but the value of life; (2) grassroots vitality; (3) knowledge from, by and for the community; (4) natural resources for shared livelihoods; (5) equal cooperation between women and men.

3. The principle of masculinity has been a mainstream view affirmed through patriarchal culture for centuries. Patriarchal culture has the following assumptions: (1) identification of women with the physical or nature; (2) identification of men with intellect; (3) dualistic assumptions on physical inferiority and mental superiority.

4. On July 16, 2015, Nissa, through her personal Facebook account, documented a photo of the Schneider Snake (Bungarus Fasciatus) which was accidentally seen crossing the rice fields of the pesantren with the photo caption: "Before Eid, we must keep checking the rice fields. Meet a kind neighbor (the snake -trans.) who helps us balance the ecosystem. Greet him only in the heart. Thank you for meeting us and for helping us so often. The house of God’s creatures at the pesantren." The photo received many responses from netizens, especially regarding concerns and warnings about the venomous snake. Nissa also responded by saying: "We have already informed the children. Explain it from afar. We know very well that this striped snake is dangerous. However, killing him was absolutely impossible, especially in front of children. The only way, avoid it. Thank you.”

5. One of the documentations of Nissa Wargadipura’s Facebook status was on September 21, 2016, when responding to the flash flood that hit Garut and its surroundings.

6. Nissa Wargadipura’s Facebook status quote was on September 21, 2016.

Bibliography


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روفين ر. ميتكال بيتيار (جامعة ميتكال بيتيار)
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مراجعة اللغة الإنجليزية:
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موسي ببول

مراجعة اللغة العربية:
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