

## **Eco-Theology: Islamic Ethics and Environmental Transformation in Islamic Boarding Schools**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Environmental problems, both on a national and global scale, are not merely technical issues but mostly come from human behavior. Environmental problems indicate moral problems; ways of human behavior in responding to the environment. Efforts to save the earth (environmental conservation) require changes in human behavior in interacting with the environment. This study aims to describe the environmental transformation in Bendakerep, Cirebon, through the application of ecotheology. Moral theory and liberation theology are used to approach environmental transformation. Based on the ethnographic method and the living religion approach, it can be described that ecotheology has been transformed in order to free society from environmental crises and humanitarian crises. The environmental transformation starts from community dialogue about the problems of their environmental life, intensive study of the text of the holy book (Al-Qur'an and Hadits) in Islamic Boarding School (pesantren) through the guidance of kyai to environmental conservation actions driven by pesantren for the benefit of society. Communities with environmental transformation are enlightened so that they can restore the local wisdom of their environment for the welfare of life.*

**Keywords:** *Ecotheology; Environmental Transformation; Liberation Theology; Eco-Pesantren*

### **ABSTRAK**

Permasalahan lingkungan hidup, baik dalam skala nasional maupun global, bukan sekedar persoalan teknis semata, namun sebagian besar bersumber dari perilaku manusia. Masalah lingkungan menunjukkan masalah moral; cara perilaku manusia dalam menyikapi lingkungannya. Upaya penyelamatan bumi (pelestarian lingkungan) memerlukan perubahan perilaku manusia dalam berinteraksi dengan lingkungan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan transformasi lingkungan di Bendakerep, Cirebon melalui penerapan ekoteologi. Teori moral dan teologi pembebasan digunakan untuk mendekati transformasi lingkungan. Berdasarkan metode etnografi dan pendekatan religi yang hidup, dapat digambarkan bahwa ekoteologi telah bertransformasi guna membebaskan masyarakat dari krisis lingkungan dan krisis kemanusiaan. Transformasi lingkungan dimulai dari dialog masyarakat tentang permasalahan kehidupan lingkungannya, kajian intensif terhadap teks kitab suci (Al-Qur'an dan Hadits) di Pondok Pesantren (pesantren) melalui bimbingan kyai hingga didorong oleh tindakan pelestarian lingkungan. oleh pesantren untuk kemaslahatan masyarakat. Masyarakat dengan transformasi lingkungan diberikan pencerahan sehingga dapat mengembalikan kearifan lokal lingkungannya demi kesejahteraan hidup.

**Kata Kunci:** *Ekoteologi; transformasi lingkungan; teologi pembebasan; pesantren ramah lingkungan*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Human beings, as *homo ecologicus*, tend to understand the environment constantly and are identified as intelligent beings. Intelligent beings are always required to consider their reasoning, although, in reality, it is precisely to consider the situation and environmental conditions. This thesis confirms that humans, as intelligent beings have the opportunity to become the most potential creatures to develop their instinct of concern for the environment to prevent damage to nature (Zen MT, 1980). However, the potential of man's ecological concern is defeated by his reasoning, so the development of man's ecological potential has the probability to vary. Human ecological behavior is factually not exclusive but universal; it does not belong to a particular society but belongs to all human beings, although the degree varies in each community. Several cases of illegal logging and land exploitation for the benefit of companies, for example, environmental pollution due to mining activities, have made the world temperature hot (Abdillah, 2010; Capra, 1997). Neglect of this problem can adversely affect human survival and ecology (Chapman, 2000; Kerap, 2010). Such environmental neglect and destruction are contrary to Law No. 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management.

Religion in the context of neglecting environmental damage exists to solve this humanitarian problem, among others, through the understanding of contemporary Islamic theology. It is based on the theologians' view that theology in the contemporary era is not solely theocentric, oriented towards the interests of God (*tanzīh*), but rather anthropocentric, spirit and movement for solving every human problem (Abdullah, 1995; Madjid, 1999). Theology as the intellectual expression of religion asserts its broad scope, including responding to contemporary challenges that are constantly present at all times. The problem of humanity and nature based on the perspective of contemporary theology is becoming an urgent need at this time (Berger, 1991), such as the emergence of the idea of ecotheology or so-called theology with environmental insight. The concept of ecotheology in the Islamic world, as explained by (Hanafi, 1984), is included in the three of parts of contemporary theology, in which there are liberation theology and feminism theology.

Since the New Order, The Bendakerep community in Cirebon has been in poor condition due to their damaged area. It is because of massive environmental exploitation through sand mining activities, both by companies and by the local community, *Gurandil*. Sand mining activities cause the environment to be damaged, and landslides often occur. In addition, sand mining activities that are taken through excavations using heavy equipment make the area quite dangerous because there are many giant holes covering the community's

residential area through the holes. Since they are flooded with water, making the area a worrying place, especially for children, because the holes are quite deep. In addition, sand mining activities have created a shift in people's behavior. Rural communities, which have held the tradition of "guyub" since the beginning, have begun to be abandoned now. School education has been neglected by society. There has been a recent hedonistic lifestyle among people who estimate the urban lifestyle.

Based on the problem, what can be done to solve environmental damage in theoretical discourse and praxis movements? This research is the most significant work from the context of Bendakerep Cirebon, which explores environmental damage in community residential areas by actively listening to people's life stories, which have not been written or previously recorded by academic researchers. This research, borrowing the term (Ammerman, 2006), is living religion research that uses relevant ethnographic techniques to be explored in the case of environmental damage experienced by the Bendakerep community in Cirebon as a theological reflection and Islamic action in practical.

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *1. Ecotheology in Islam: Theology as Liberation*

The term ecotheology is a creative-innovative theology of theological dynamics in Islamic studies is a theological formulation that examines the relationship between religion and nature (environment). In general, Ecotheology starts from the premise of the relationship between humans' religious (spiritual) paradigm and the destruction of nature, ensuring an understanding of the relationship between God, humans, and nature systemically. Systemic relations affirm God as the creator of humans and nature, the owner of humans and nature, and functionally God as the preserver of humans and nature. Ecotheology in Christian teachings teaches "humans as the image of God." This meaning confirms that God calls man to participate in the preservation of the integrity of His creation (Banawiratma, 1993). In this context, human is positioned as cooperator and cocreator of the creator who can creatively act in the transformation and conservation of nature.

The concept of ecotheology in Islamic circles emerged as a demand for religious consciousness with full involvement and partiality to the environment that aims and plays a role in deconstructing and retesting human attitudes and behavior towards nature. The vision and mission of a human with theology must come to the aspect of salvation that is universal because this whole vast realm will be a mercy for humans (Nasution, 1998). The difference between Islamic ecotheology and radical anthropocentrism theology in the West is in the

humans' position in the environment proportionally. Humans are an integral part of the environment with all their advantages. Human beings have the same ecological rights as other components of the environment, including the right to life, the right to live, the right to work, and the right to have an ecological niche in the environment. Humans are only mandated by God to empower the environment (*tanfi' al-bi'ah*), not to exploit it (*tamlik al-bi'ah*), even if the environment is created for the benefit of humans (Nasr, 2005).

*Ecotheology* in Islam describes the ontological relationship between God and His creatures. According to (Nursi, 1998), in its relation to God, Nature is the manifestation (*tajalli*) of God and, in the context of his relationship with humans, is the most powerful postulate of the existence of God. The essence of nature is the mighty book, while the Qur'an as expounds. Nature is not an ordinary book but a wonderful work of art full of meaning. Nature that reflects the beauty of God's *asma* becomes the mirror of God so that it becomes sacred and should not be damaged. Whoever crosses that view is against God. Mismanagement and empowerment of nature can result in pollution, environmental crises, degradation of environmental quality, and natural disasters. Damaging the environment as a decline and adversely affecting self-quality indicates the deprivation of the existence and life of the universe and seeking to challenge and deprive God of his rights and power (Omvedt, 2017). Believer reflects or practices environmental theology in the process towards the salvation of all of God's creation.

The emergence of ecotheology based on this perspective reflects a serious new shift toward environmental problems. Religious values are believed to have a high ability to influence the worldview of their adherents and move their behaviors very strongly. Concern for the environment relies heavily on the packaging of religious teachings aspects regarding the environment presented and explored by its characters with modern and ecological language and idioms (Abdillah, 2010). The world's major religions can be a buffer for people's awareness of the importance of environmental conservation through their teachings. Religion is considered the basis of human theology and morals, both at the individual and social levels, through dogmas and doctrines to create a fair, balanced, ecological, participatory, and sustainable society. Thus, it is expected to be able to overcome humanitarian crises, including loss of meaning in human life, scientific arrogance, improving sporadic nature and glamorous lifestyles, the collapse of beliefs, and disregard for things beyond the scope of ratio and logic, and so on.

## 2. *Pesantren and Kyai for Environmental Transformation*

*Pesantren* (Islamic boarding school), a non-formal educational institution, is an integral

part of the community and is their reference in the development of education, society, and culture. The effectiveness of the role of *pesantren* as agents of change in the community's life is proven in the success of various development programs. Nowadays, the *pesantren* have transformed themselves solely from a place of learning into environmental transformers. There is the labeling of *pesantren* that concerns environmental issues, for example, *eco-pesantren* (Mahzumi, 2017; Siswanto, 2008; Zuhaeriah, 2019). This *eco-pesantren* first appeared in 2005 and was initiated by Eco *Pesantren* Darut Tauhid, led by K.H. Abdullah Gymnastiar, by applying the principles of sustainable development. This *eco-pesantren* program was nationally launched in 2008 by the Ministry of Environment; its objective is to make *pesantren* a center of excellence with environmental insight for the *pesantren* community and the surrounding community. The expectations of *pesantren* based on *eco-pesantren*-based are: (1) the development of environmentally friendly *pesantren* policies, (2) the development of a nature-based environmental curriculum, (3) the development of extracurricular activities based on *tadabbur alam* (Getting Closer to Nature), and (4) the development and or management of facilities and infrastructure supporting *pesantren* (Ministry of Environment & Muhammadiyah, 2011).

Based on the characteristics of the *pesantren*, the involvement of cleric (*kyai*) in Indonesian history as a cultural broker (Geertz, 1960) and *intermediary forces* (Horikoshi, 1987) is needed. The heir of the prophets, namely a *kyai*, is still believed by the people to be a respected and sacred figure. There are two main factors in favor of having an honorable place respected and sacred by society. First, the dimension of knowledge he has, especially religious science, so that it becomes a reference for the community. Secondly, *kyai* usually come from wealthy families, although it is rare to find a poor *kyai* when just starting teaching (Turmudzi, 2021). The great influence of *kyai* in society indirectly positions *kyai* as the highest authority within the community; even formal government, such as village government, can be subject to *kyai*. In addition, *Kiai* in society also acts as a religious figure which includes the role of the spiritual, educational, agent of change, environment, and socio-culture, and even acts as a figure involved in politics both as a participant, supporter, and actor (Turmudzi, 2021). In an effort to preserve the environment, *Kyai* can be referred to as his role in pronouncing (translating) religious symbols, modern idioms, and ecological in line with the character of society and the dynamics of the local environment.

In contrast to researchers such as (Tholchah, 2016) (Nuha, 2017), and (Nisa et al., 2017), (Mukholisah et al., 2018), and (Mahzumi 2017), which in their research, they only

interviewed *kyai*, this research conducted interviews, as well as follows the activities and agendas of *kyai* in guiding the community in environmental conservation.

### C. RESEARCH METHODS

This study had the research context, namely the Bendakerep community in Cirebon, whose environment has been affected by damage due to environmental exploitation since the New Order period by sand mining activities. Actually, the Bendakerep community in Cirebon has local wisdom about forest resources conservation, namely: *leuweng titipan* (protected), *leuweng cover* (reserve area), and *leuweng garapan* (opened for agricultural land). Since the activities of sand mining, local wisdom about the environment has shifted to become a land for sand mining which has an impact on environmental damage, the uprooting of the joints of people's lives "*guyub*," neglect of children's school education and the emergence of hedonistic attitudes among the community.

To help solve environmental problems in Bendakerep Cirebon, researchers gathered the community to explore environmental problems experienced by the community caused by sand mining activities. The community was invited to dialogue and discuss (seminar) about solving their environmental problems. The discussion was held in the Bendakerep Argasunya Harjamukti area in Cirebon, a village about three kilometers from Argasunya, where the *Salafi Pesantren* Bendakerep in Cirebon stands. The implementation of the dialogue facilitated citizens to voice their aspirations and freedom of desire, particularly to revitalize their environment. In this *pesantren*, the community is also fostered to carry out environmental conservation. *Pesantren* began to introduce Environmental *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) theoretically and practically in promoting the community for environmental conservation.

This research used ethnography, and researchers became ethnographers at the same time, as a way of calling for environmental conservation actions that started from dialogue and discussion to break the silence of the community by speaking in discussion forums, including the study of the Qur'an and Hadith through Environmental *fiqh* in *pesantren*. This research was different from ethnographic research in general. In general, the study of ethnography about religion focuses extensively on what people believe rather than what they experience, what they do, or what they understand as "religious" or "spiritual." Anthropology has attempted to describe, classify, and explain religious beliefs and practices (Bowie, 2021). The study is very interesting, but it loses a lot of the so-called "religion" or "spirituality," especially in the daily life of ordinary people. Religion is not merely an

abstract collection of fixed doctrines or scriptures, which cannot be separated from all, the agency of human presence as part of reality and at the same time as an assessment of the reality seen in practice. Relating to this (Asad, 2001) criticizing Smith and Geertz, both, despite the subject of their study of humans, often ignore religious practices and fall into too narrow categorizations about religion or culture.

The study of religion needs to be viewed from the “lived experiences” perspective; religiosity refers to the representation of the experiences and choices of a particular person. (McGuire, 2008) using the term lived religion and (Bourdieu, 1977) calling everyday life. The focus of analysis through everyday life emphasized habitus in language, which has become a daily practice. The subjects are studied by people perceived to have no authority in the religious field, but they always carry out religious practices regularly and daily. They are ordinary people, the ordinary middle class, not actors or religious authorities. The study of religion from the perspective of “lived experiences” or “lived religion” using an approach starts from a very general idea of what religion is. It then opens up a very wide possibility of what religion really is by looking at the practices of religious people. This research concern examined how are spiritual practices, objects, conversations, and other experiences and concrete things color everyday life in recognizable religious or spiritual terms. (Ammerman, 2014; Mahmood, 2005; Tobin, 2011); Research with a “living religion” approach was carried out by conducting informal interviews with the Cisarua community, so it could uncover their problems that had been “muted” to solve social issues in the form of environmental damage.

## **D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Findings**

#### *One-Day Discussion With An Expert*

Argasunya Village, Harjamukti District, Cirebon, in which there is a Bendakerep village, is located at an altitude of about 600-1500 meters above sea level, the area of the Mount Ciremai Children’s National Park (TNGC), South Argasunya. The Bendakerep area is very vital because of its function as a water catchment area in Region III Cirebon, West Java Province. The Bendakerep area has a wealth of mineral resources with high economic value, such as sand, forest wood, plantation products, and others. This area contains cultural wealth in which there are 35 Kasepuhan community groups, “Kesepuhan Community of Cirebon Kidul.” The indigenous people of *Kesepuhan* are spread across four districts,

Cirebon Regency, Indramayu Regency, Majalengka Regency, Kuningan Regency, (CIAYUMAJAKUNING) West Java (Euis Thresnawaty, 2016).

Bendakerep area, upstream of the Mount Ciremai Watershed, flows as far as 1,047 km from the upstream region to the downstream in the Bay of Cirebon Port. Based on its topography, the area is dominated by forests, fields, plantations, settlements, and vacant land. However, unfortunately, part of the land is used as a sand mining area. Mining locations are scattered around the Bendakerep Islamic Boarding School area in Cirebon. Companies manage all mining sites (hotspots) as mining concession holders who are part of the sand mining business unit. Sand mining activities are not only carried out by companies but by illegal residents (Gurandils). The results of satellite imagery monitoring show the contours of landscapes that have been explored and exploited for sand mining activities.

In general, sand mining activities produce the mentality of miners being avaricious and greedy. This mentality is a consequence of the harsh and cruel world of miners who face death as they hunt for sand in chunks of rock and dug pits. This mining activity seriously impacts the ecosystem and socio-economy of the local community. It is apparent with many illegal sand mining hotspots scattered around. Based on this fact, there are some cases, such as the behavior of people who dump waste directly into excavated pits and into the Ciremai River, the main river around the mining area. This sand mining activity, seen from a social perspective, has shifted values in social-community relations whose conditions are appalling. The tradition of “*guyub*” that becomes characteristic of village communities is lost because it is triggered by fighting over land for mining. People are powerless (silently) to see this phenomenon, which according to them, is actually their environmental impact, directly or indirectly, as the cause of the socio-ecological crisis in the Bendakerep area, Cirebon.

People mute with the realities and facts of the field are finally brought into the dialogue about the sand mining activities that have been massively carried out in Bendakerep and the study of the scriptures (Qur'an) and Hadith. The dialogue (discussion) initiated by environmental activists by bringing in experts in the environmental field has opened the horizons and insights of the Bendakerep community about the impact of mining activities, both official and illegal, on environmental conservation and preservation efforts. The community is also invited to study the Qur'an and Hadith intensively, initiated by *Salafi pesantren* in Bendakerep.

*The studies of Environmental fiqh at Salafi Pesantren in Bendakerep*



According to its vision, *Salafi pesantren* in Bendakerep introduces and educates the public about agrarian and ecological reforms. The work of *Pesantren* Bendakerep synergizes with the surrounding community to make the community sovereign and empowered. This *pesantren* establishes itself as an Agroecological-based *pesantren* that synergizes agricultural activities by preserving the sustainability of the ecosystem. In the context of transforming the environment of the Bendakerep community in Cirebon, This *Pesantren* becomes a vehicle for environmental studies needed by the community.

The Bendakerep community in Cirebon, to voice their aspirations to survive environmental exploitation, are invited to study the Qur'an to strengthen their faith (theology). *Pesantren* teaches that environmental transformation must be strengthened by two factors: theology and local wisdom. Theological factors refer to religious texts that ask people to think critically in responding to the reality of life (Qur'an at al-Muddatsir/74:1-2 and ar-Rum/30:41), which is by *kyai* Atim (2022) is an affirmation of Islam *as rahmatan lil'alamin* (the mercy for the whole universe). Islam has designed a life system in such a way as stated in the Shahih Muslim Hadith No. 2904, Sunan Abi Daud Hadith no. 2671, and Qur'an at ar-Rahmân/95:10. The Hadith and verse teach that human has no right to exploit nature (the environment), but to use nature for the welfare of life as a form of embodiment of human's devotion to God. According to Samsi (00), God has emphasized that humans are not authorized to exploit arbitrarily because humans are not the essential owners of the environment, so Islam strongly opposes excessive attitudes in land use as stated in Qur'an at al-Gâsiyah:22 and Qur'an at al-Isrâ'/17:37-38. An attitude of going beyond the limits makes God does not like this attitude.

As explained by *kyai* in *pesantren*, scripture teaches humans to be sincere in contributing to planting to maintain the continuity of life of future generations of human beings. It requires the expansion of transcendent relations between humans and humans, humans with the creator, and humans with nature. As caliphs, humans are responsible for always taking care of the environment and getting orders from God not to damage the earth. Mutualistic and interdependent relationships are depicted between humans and nature, so each role becomes vital to maintain survival for both (Samsi, 2022). Environmental conditions describe the condition of one's faith so that the practice of environmental maintenance reflects the conditions and portraits of theology; in this context, *Kyai* attempts to 'plant' ideas to the community and students to understand the essence of the ecological movement built by *pesantren*.

People who were once silent now know that *fiqh* does not merely mean ritualistic knowledge but a transcendent meaning which is more universal. Prayer, fasting, and so on, which are called obligatory, must also be applied to an environment that is “obligatory” to be maintained and preserved as a religious obligation (duty) (Atim, 2020; Samsi, 2020). As Muslims, “ecology” must be interpreted and contextualized through binocular theology. As the realization of theology, the community and students have an obligation to maintain the closest environment starting from maintaining the home environment to other environments.

Second, *pesantren* teaches that the community upholds the principle of local wisdom about the conservation of forest resources, namely: (1) *leuweng titipan* (protected), (2) *leuweng cover* (reserve area), and (3) *leuweng garapan* (opened for agricultural land). This local wisdom has been initiated and maintained its commitment to the community’s welfare. The elders started this local wisdom by considering the futuristic content so that the balance of nature was maintained.

#### *Creative Steps of Pesantren in Handling the Ecological Crisis in Bendakerep, Cirebon*

The Bendakerep community in Cirebon is not only invited to discuss voicing “mute desires” and studying Environmental *fiqh*. They were invited to carry out environmental transformation driven by the *Salafi Pesantren* in Bendakerep. *Pesantren* has mapped two important things in developing *pesantren*, especially the maintenance of the surrounding environment. First, identifying strategic social issues in the southern area of Argasunya, including: (1) a change in the mindset of people who originally farmed into sand mine workers; (2) community control of very minimal land causes difficulties in farming and gardening; (3) the community’s limitations about knowledge in farming and their young people are not so interested in making them uncreative; (4) the condition of the Bendakerep community, which has long been farming and prosperous, became poor because it became a sand miner.

These four reasons make the people of Bendakerep Cirebon experience: (1) a consumptive culture and strengthen their poverty, (2) the ethics of local wisdom fade, (3) neglect of the children’s education, (4) are vulnerable to health due to the impact of waste that passes through community settlement channels, (5) slums and poor sanitation. Second, identifying the issues of the ecological crisis and its empowerment. People have been complaining about environmental crises, which include: (1) natural and environmental damage caused by sand mining around their area; (2) environmental pollution due to waste as an impact of sand mining flowing into rivers and rice fields and polluting water infiltration that irrigates residents’ wells; (3) experiencing a clean water crisis. The spirit voiced by the

*pesantren* through the charisma of *kyai*, Qur'an at al-Muddasir, emphasizes that society must move to solve every problem as a religious society. God has bestowed the ability to work upon humans through their skill of reasoning. God does not like permissiveness.

Environmental transformation as an embodiment of transformative ecotheology carried out by the community through the *Pesantren* Bendakerep initiative includes several things. First, human development is through the critical awareness of society. *Pesantren* invites community members to continuously build an attitude of humanism and preserve the environment as a place to live. Learning carried out by *Pesantren* is arranged so that students and community members can read intelligently phenomena that occur while remaining critical through "citizen" activities. This step of citizen is a joint program for solving every problem. This concept of citizen is similar to andragogy (education for adults); the community learns to find (inquiry) based on experience, mapping, deciding, doing, and evaluating each socio-ecological, and its environment.

Second, form the core cadres of nature guards and mountain communities. *Pesantren* and communities in this context form a core cadre of nature guardians in order to preserve the environment. The cadres were taken from former illegal miners who became students at the *pesantren*. They are guided gradually to be active in *pesantren* and can help *pesantren* in assisting the community in implementing *pesantren* programs. It is done by *pesantren* to have human resources who realize their identity as *caliph fi al-ardh* (Allah's caliph on earth).

Third, make an 'ulu-ulu (clean water sanitation) with the community. *Pesantren* and the community make 'ulu-ulu as a response to the need for clean water, as well as connecting *silaturahmi* (visiting each other) between communities. The bond of *silaturahmi* has been lost among the people because they are busy with sand mining activities. Since there has been an activity to make 'ulu-ulu, the community can cooperate and coordinate with *pesantren* to overcome ecological problems.

Fourth, provide education on organic farming. Organic farming education is one of the ways *pesantren* trains its students and community members to have skills in efforts to preserve the environment. Organic farming is a form of *pesantren* and the community's response to the crisis experienced so far. Farming organically has the quality of agricultural products, which is healthier than the use of chemicals; the soil is more fertile and can maintain the food chain. Farming organically is also a farming culture of the Bendakerep community that has been lost.

Fifth is utilizing agricultural land with the community; *Pesantren* and the community use abandoned land owned by PT. Perhutani, whose contract period has expired for farming. *Pesantren* and the community can develop an agricultural system based on *Kebun Talun* (a rotation system between mixed garden and tree plantation); Agroforestry by planting various garden crops (intercropping system) in the forest around the Islamic boarding school and the surrounding community. The operation of the *Kebun Talun* is essential because it complements the implementation of the sustainable agricultural model in line with customary wisdom. In addition, the community carried out a movement to organize farmers who were members of the Transformative Alliance of the People of Nanggung (AMANAT), who tried to find and restore generations of farmers who had been lost due to mining. There was an initiative of the “*Kebun Pekarangan*” (home gardening) movement, which was driven by mothers by utilizing yards for gardening, similar to the concept of urban farming in urban areas and home gardening activities.

The sixth is to form relationships between other groups/institutions with *Pesantren* that involve the community. So far, *pesantren* has publicly invited those who are motivated to participate in returning the lost generation and restoring the preservation of the Bendakerep area. The Cirebon Government, the Mining Advocacy Network NGO, and Science are collaborating with the *pesantren*.

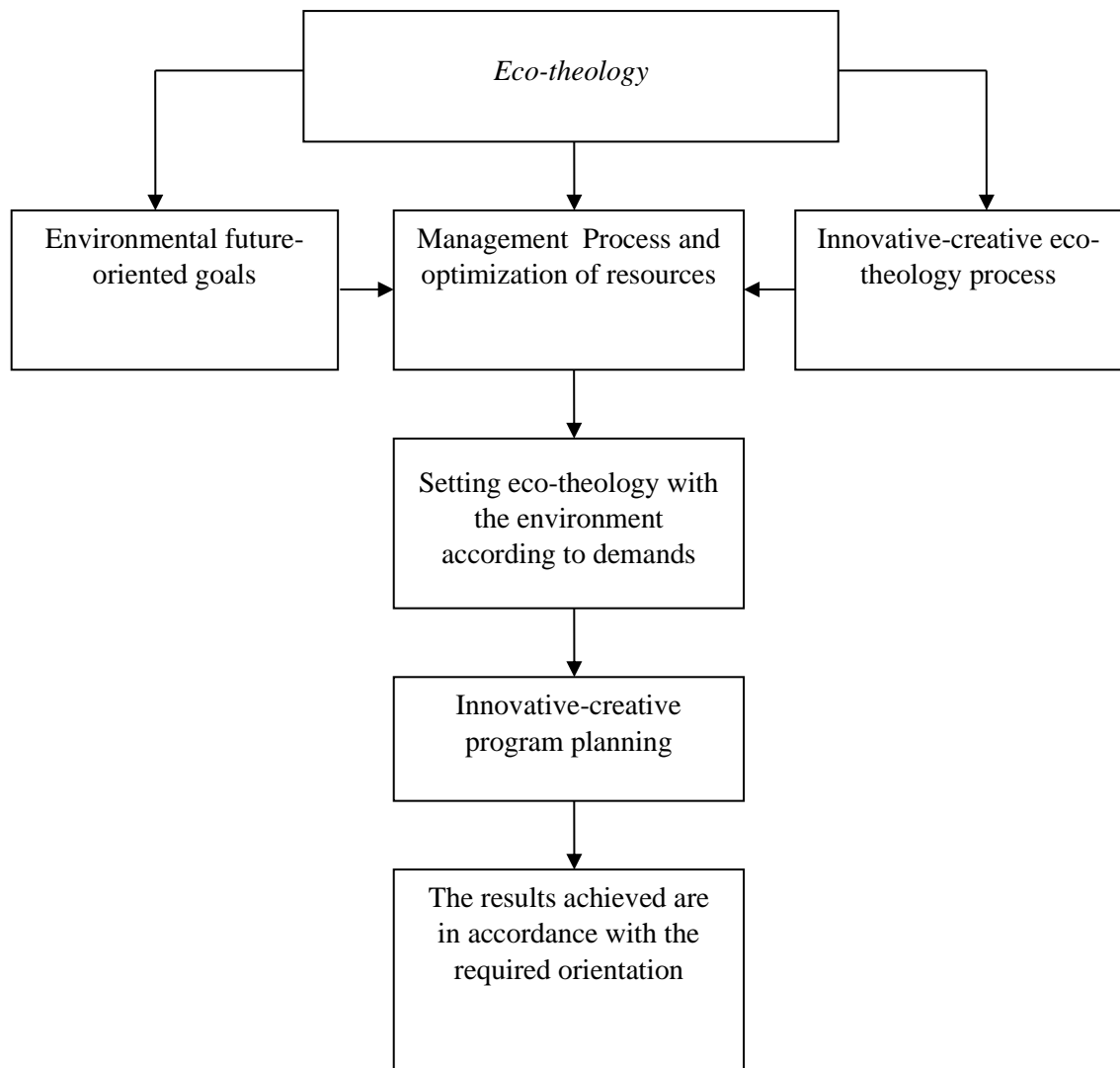
## **2. Discussion**

The current environmental crisis has reached a serious stage that threatens the existence of the planet earth and its inhabitants' lives. Various cases of environmental damage that occur both globally and nationally are rooted in human behavior that is not responsible for the environment. Humans are the main cause of environmental damage, especially life orientations that tend to be materialistic and hedonistic. The error of man's perspective or understanding of their environmental system contributes greatly to the current environmental damage. A dichotomous perspective that views nature as a separate part of humans and an anthropocentric understanding that considers that humans are the center of the natural system plays a significant role in environmental damage (Hoffman & Sandelands, 2005; Kumar & Kumar, 2008; Norton, 1984). This anthropocentric perspective has resulted in exploitative and irresponsible behavior towards preserving natural resources and the environment.

In addition, the notions of materialism, capitalism, and pragmatism with the means of science and technology have helped accelerate and exacerbate environmental damage globally and locally, including in our country. Efforts to save the environment have been

carried out by both the community and the government through awareness to the community and stakeholders (stakeholders), education and training, government regulations, laws, and law enforcement. Rescue through the use of science and technology and other programs has been widely carried out. However, the results of these efforts have not been as real as expected and have not been able to equal the rate of environmental damage that occurs.

Islamic ecotheology, emphasizing moral values, has shown its role in solving humanitarian problems, such as environmental damage (Abdillah, 2010; Ahmed, 1994). Theology in Islam has shifted from merely the interests of God to concern for humanitarian problems (Berger, 1991; Bisri, 2011; Latief, 2013). When associated with the environment, theology is derived from the realm of praxis, seeing the relationship between the environment and the creator. The environment includes the biophysical environment, humans, and other living beings. This effort to explore the spiritual value of Islamic ecology is an enrichment of the treasures of Islamic prophetic ecology to offer alternative ecological concepts (transformative ecology).



**Figure 1 Ecotheology Model**

The Bendakerep community in Cirebon, which for a long time was ‘silent’ in the conditions of a damaged environment and had a broad impact on social humanity, began to realize the importance of this eco-theology after being invited to dialogue in a discussion forum. They actually want to get out of the chaos because they are marginalized people and accept the condition as something given. People have only realized that they do not want to live in conditions that make them difficult and are opposed to human rights. The eco-theology taught by Islam is a dialectical process between Islamic religious spiritual values and ecological values, which Nasr called ecological moral theory, whose dialectic process is carried out through the internalization stage, objectification, and the stage of externalization. The Bendakerep community in Cirebon are members of the environmental care community group. The ecological meaning reflected in society can be seen in individuals and strong farmer groups. Farmers understand the complexity of the ecological problems that occur, having witnessed the condition of the damaged forests around their

dwellings. Through the interaction between *kyai* and society, the process of transformation of meanings of environmental problems, and theological constructions possessed by *kyai*, is disseminated through the general community recitation forum. This is where the transformation process of the meaning of ecotheology (ecological theology) occurs based on the meaning of *kyai*. This condition shows a portrait of the ecological meaning carried out by the actors in *pesantren* Bendakerep, depending on the process of the meaning of *kyai*. *Kyai*'s individual reflection on the meaning of ecology became a theological foundation for the students and community to be involved in the movement.

Environmental transformation through ecotheology initiated by *Pesantren* Bendakerep for the Bendakerep community in Cirebon shows that environmental meaning is based on: (1) cultural factors that influence the process of interpreting Islam and its teachings, and (2) leadership factors and educational patterns, the interpretation of the *kyai* is interpreted as a single interpretation, and becomes a common understanding for those involved in the *pesantren* movement. The theological construction of *Pesantren* has been in line with the theory of moral ecology stated by Nasr, that in order to make peace with the earth (nature), a person must make peace with the sky as a spiritual order. The reality shows that the rapid development of modern science and technology has resulted in the secularization of the cosmos. The secularization of the cosmos has separated humans from their environment. The desacralization and secularization of the cosmos over the centuries made humans develop a personality of the conquest of nature, causing a serious environmental crisis. This theory at once collapses the theory of determinism, the theory of possibilism, and the theory of cultural ecology, that humans and the environment influence each other. In fact, the theory of moral ecology requires man to follow God's system, and it is practiced by the Agroecological *Pesantren* and the surrounding community to save the earth.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

Based on the descriptions that have been postulated above, it can be concluded that the experience of the Bendakerep community and the community's cultural traditions are important resources for articulating the practical theology of liberation in Bendakerep, Cirebon. That is a concrete strategy for action that can bring hope and transformation in the lives of the community of Bendakerep Cirebon, which has survived environmental exploitation. It can be seen from their ability to get out of the environmental crisis. Environmental transformation (preservation) efforts in Bendakerep Cirebon are oriented towards two things: identifying strategic issues of social crisis and identifying problems of

ecological crisis and their empowerment. The empowerment of the ecological crisis is carried out through (1) building awareness of the critical community so they think intelligently and critically of all actions that harm life, such as arbitrarily exploiting the land, (2) forming a core cadre of nature guards and mountain communities with militants, (3) through the spirit of togetherness to develop clean water sanitation, (4) providing education and training on environmentally friendly organic farming management, (5) utilizing unused agricultural land by planting various types of garden crops through the farming system based on *kebun talun* and (6) partnering with stakeholders in building *pesantren* and environmental conservation.

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