



## THE RELEVANCE OF QUR'ANIC ECOTHEOLOGY TO ḤIFẒ AL-BĪ'AH FROM A TAFSIR MAQĀŠIDĪ PERSPECTIVE

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between ecotheology in the Qur'an and the concept of ḥifẒ al-bī'ah (environmental preservation) through a maqāšidī exegetical approach. Amid the global ecological crisis, which is largely driven by human behavior, the maqāšidī approach to Qur'anic interpretation becomes particularly significant, as it goes beyond a purely textual analysis of Qur'anic verses to explore the broader objectives of Islamic law (maqāšid al-sharī'ah). This research employs a qualitative method based on library research, utilizing thematic analysis of selected Qur'anic verses, including Q. 7:56 (Al-A'rāf), Q. 2:205 (Al-Baqarah), Q. 11:61 (Hūd), and Q. 30:41 (Al-Rūm). The findings indicate that Islamic ecotheology has a strong relevance to the maqāšid al-sharī'ah, positioning environmental preservation as an integral component of the primary objectives of Islamic law. Accordingly, maqāšidī exegesis can serve as a constructive and solution-oriented approach for fostering ecological awareness among Muslims.

**Keywords:** Ecotheology; Hifz al-Bī'ah; Maqāšidī Exegesis; the Qur'an; Maqāšid al-Sharī'ah

### Introduction

The global environmental crisis has become a major concern in the twenty-first century. Deforestation, the depletion of freshwater sources, air and marine pollution, and the increasing intensity of natural disasters all indicate a severe state of ecological degradation. According to a World Bank report, approximately two-thirds of the world's population are projected to experience a clean water crisis by 2025 (Abubakar, 2025). Previous studies suggest that this ecological crisis is closely correlated with anthropocentric worldviews that marginalize nature, resulting in modern humanity's loss of existential awareness and understanding of the natural world, which has been subjected to continuous degradation. In this context, ecotheology has been proposed as a strategic

approach to addressing ecological crises in Indonesia, particularly through the mainstreaming of ecotheological values by religious leaders, Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), and educational institutions. It is further emphasized that human beings are the primary agents of environmental destruction and the occurrence of natural disasters, largely due to negligence and greed in the exploitation of natural resources (Suryani, 2025).

To date, the contribution of religion has often been regarded as insufficient in addressing the global environmental crisis. Religious messages related to environmental conservation have not always been articulated in a clear and systematic manner. Nevertheless, religious approaches remain highly significant in the Indonesian context, given that the majority of the population is Muslim (Burhanuddin, 2019). Ecotheology represents a religious perspective that seeks to reformulate theological understanding by reflecting upon religious teachings within an environmental framework (Jenkins et al., 2018). It serves as a discursive foundation for examining the relationship between human beings, nature, and God, in which God is conceived as the ultimate reality both the Immanent (*al-Bāṭin*) and the Manifest (*al-Zāhir*). Religiously conscious individuals perceive God primarily in His immanent dimension, whereas others tend to disregard the spiritual realm and focus solely on the manifest. Such perspectives fail to recognize that the visible realm is, in fact, a manifestation of the Divine reality (Wasil & Muizudin, 2023).

The concept of *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*, or environmental protection, plays a significant role within religious discourse, particularly in the Qur'an. The principles of *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* reflect Islamic teachings concerning human responsibility toward the Earth. This concept emphasizes the obligation to preserve and protect the environment, as *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* has increasingly been understood as a religious duty to safeguard nature, given that the environment constitutes the essential space for the continuity of life, especially human existence (Adhania, 2023). Environmental preservation (*ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*), as articulated by Abdul Mustaqim within the framework of *maqāṣidī* exegesis, should be incorporated as a crucial dimension of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Fundamentally, efforts to protect the environment originate from the preservation of the basic principles of human life that must be safeguarded, as they form the foundation of human welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) (Fauzan et al., 2020). This is because these fundamental objectives can only be realized when environmental sustainability is maintained. Consequently, if the environment is degraded and unhealthy, it becomes impossible to preserve religion, life, progeny, intellect, and property.

Contemporary Muslim thinkers such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and KH. Ali Yafie argue that environmental protection constitutes a new *maqāṣid* that should be incorporated into the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. This position is grounded in the fact that the sustainability of other objectives such as the preservation of life, property, intellect, and progeny largely depends on environmental conditions (Abd Rahman & Abidin, 2025). *Ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* represents an effort toward environmental conservation that is not merely technical in nature but also deeply spiritual. In Islamic thought, actions such as planting trees, avoiding pollution, and maintaining ecological balance are regarded as forms of social worship (*'ibādah ijtimā'iyah*).

From another perspective, academic engagement and research on ecological issues

particularly within religious studies remain relatively limited (Mustaqim, 2017). Both field-based and literature-based studies are essential for formulating viable responses to the ecological crisis. Moreover, research that connects the interpretation of religious texts with environmental concerns is necessary to provide a solid theological foundation for environmental management and to support concrete actions aimed at preventing environmental degradation, thereby mitigating the risk of more severe ecological damage and disasters (Muhaemin et al., 2025). Therefore, in the contemporary era, the formulation of ecotheological concepts and *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* has become an imperative, as it offers ethical and theological contributions on how human beings may fulfill their mission of communication and harmonious coexistence with nature as their shared habitat.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study is expected to contribute to the development of Qur'anic exegesis that is responsive to contemporary needs, thereby benefiting both academic audiences and the wider public in understanding the critical importance of environmental preservation for the sustainability of the universe. Through this understanding, it is anticipated that human beings will refrain from indiscriminate exploitation of animals, plants, and other living beings. In light of these concerns, this study seeks to position Qur'anic ecotheology and *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* as viable solutions to ecological challenges within the context of Indonesia's religious society.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative library research approach. Primary data are derived from the Qur'an, particularly verses related to environmental issues, such as Q. 7:56 (Al-A'rāf), Q. 2:205 (Al-Baqarah), Q. 11:61 (Hūd), and Q. 30:41 (Al-Rūm). Secondary data consist of Qur'anic commentaries, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant literature addressing ecotheology and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Data analysis is conducted using a *maqāṣidī* exegetical approach, namely a thematic and conceptual method that examines the objectives and intents of Islamic law through a contextual interpretation of Qur'anic verses. The analytical procedures include: (1) determining the research theme, (2) collecting relevant Qur'anic verses, (3) analyzing the linguistic and historical contexts of the verses, and (4) drawing conclusions based on the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

## Funding and Discussion

### Tafsir Maqasidi and Ecotheology

The term *maqāṣidī* exegesis (*tafsīr maqāṣidī*) consists of two words, namely *tafsīr* and *maqāṣidī*. Linguistically, *tafsīr* is the verbal noun (*ism al-maṣdar*) of the verb *fassara-yufassiru-tafsīran*, which means to explain, elucidate, and make explicit meanings in a rational and coherent manner (Drajat, 2017). Meanwhile, *maqāṣidī* exegesis has been defined by several scholars, among whom is Wasfi 'Asyur Abu Zaid. He defines *maqāṣidī* exegesis as a mode of Qur'anic interpretation that seeks to uncover the rational meanings and diverse objectives revolving around the Qur'an both general and particular while clarifying how these meanings and objectives may be utilized to realize human welfare (*maṣlahah*) (Rifqi & Thahir, 2019).

In order to ensure that *maqāṣidī* exegesis does not deviate toward either extreme literalism or excessive subjectivism, it is necessary to apply specific principles at both

theoretical and practical levels. One of the fundamental principles is the proper determination of maqāṣid through a sound methodological process. According to Ibn Ashur, the identification of maqāṣid should be carried out through inductive reasoning (*istiqrā'*), which involves a comprehensive examination of Islamic law in its various dimensions. This inductive method includes, first, the analysis of legal rulings whose underlying rationales are known, through the approach of *masālik al-'illah* (the identification of effective causes).

This requires examining multiple legal texts that share the same effective cause until one becomes confident that the identified 'illah represents the intended objective (*maqṣad*) of the Lawgiver. Such objectives may be inferred from textual indications within the Qur'an, while also allowing for their manifestation beyond the explicit wording of the text. In addition, maqāṣid may be established through *mutawātir* prophetic traditions, whether *mutawātir ma'nawī* transmitted through the collective testimony of the Companions regarding the Prophet's teachings or *mutawātir 'amalī*, derived from repeated observations of the Prophet's practices as witnessed individually by the Companions.

Another essential principle concerns the qualifications of the maqāṣidī exegete. A *mufassir* engaged in maqāṣidī interpretation must possess a strong command of the Arabic language, both in its literary dimensions and practical usage; demonstrate deep engagement with the Qur'an and a commitment to living in accordance with its teachings; actively practice, teach, and strive based on the Qur'an; and draw inspiration from the spirit and overarching objectives of the Qur'an when addressing contemporary issues faced by the Muslim community.

Furthermore, maqāṣidī exegesis prioritizes the original and textual objectives of the Qur'an, particularly in cases where an apparent tension arises between textual maqāṣid and other derived objectives. In the interpretive process, the general objectives (*al-maqāṣid al-'āmmah*) of the Qur'an are given precedence over more specific or subsidiary objectives. Finally, maqāṣidī interpretation requires demonstrating coherence and harmony between words, verses, chapters, and the Qur'an as a unified whole, thereby ensuring an integrative and holistic understanding of the divine message.

Ecotheology is composed of two distinct terms, namely ecology and theology. Etymologically, the term ecology derives from the Greek words *oikos*, meaning household or dwelling place, and *logos*, meaning knowledge or science. The term was first introduced by Ernst Haeckel, a biologist, in the mid-1860s. Terminologically, ecology is understood according to environmental scholars and observers as the scientific study of the relationships between living organisms and their environment (Abidin & Muhammad, 2020). Meanwhile, theology, as defined in the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian Dictionary), refers to knowledge of divinity, encompassing discussions on the attributes of God, the foundations of belief in God and religion, and is primarily grounded in sacred scriptures.

Ecotheological concepts are articulated in the Qur'an through various terms, including *al-'ālamīn* (all species or all realms), *al-samā'* (the cosmos or space-time), *al-arḍ* (the earth), and *al-bī'ah* (the environment). The term *al-'ālamīn* appears in the Qur'an

seventy-one times and, when examined closely, its usage particularly when combined with prepositions consistently denotes the universe or all species. This is evident from its contextual usage, which extends beyond human beings to encompass all forms of existence (Ahmad, 2020). Ecotheology thus maintains that the relationship between human beings, nature, and God is integral and inseparable. Humans are not merely consumers of natural resources but are entrusted as stewards (*khulafā'*) bearing a divine mandate. Consequently, environmental destruction constitutes not only an ethical failure but also a denial of theological responsibility.

### **Analyzing Qur'anic Verses within the Framework of Maqāṣidī Exegesis**

The Qur'an contains numerous verses related to this theme; however, this study focuses on a limited selection of relevant passages. Q. 7:56 (Al-A'rāf) explicitly emphasizes the prohibition of causing corruption on the earth after God has set it in order. This verse indicates that ecological balance constitutes a divine gift that must be preserved. From a maqāṣidī exegetical perspective, this verse is understood as an exhortation to cultivate ecological awareness as an integral component of faith (Mustaqim, 2017). Within the framework of maqāṣidī interpretation, the verse reflects a core value of the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, namely the preservation and promotion of public welfare (*maṣlaḥah 'āmmah*), particularly in the form of *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* (environmental protection), which represents a crucial aspect of human responsibility as God's stewards (*khulafā'*) on earth (Sutrisno, 2017).

Maqāṣidī thought emphasizes that Islamic law is not solely concerned with regulating ritual acts of worship but also aims to ensure that human life unfolds in harmony with the natural environment. Environmental protection is regarded as part of the complementary objectives (*taḥsīniyyāt*) that support the realization of the primary maqāṣid, such as *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (the preservation of life) and *ḥifẓ al-māl* (the protection of property). When the environment is degraded as a result of human greed, both life and property are inevitably placed at risk. Accordingly, a maqāṣidī interpretation of Q. 7:56 (Al-A'rāf) offers a profound perspective on the necessity of maintaining balance between humanity and the universe, as well as avoiding actions that lead to environmental destruction. This perspective carries significant implications for human life, particularly in the context of environmental sustainability.

Q. 2:205 (Al-Baqarah) depicts an individual who causes destruction on the earth by annihilating crops and livestock, while simultaneously claiming to act righteously. This portrayal reflects a form of ecological hypocrisy that is increasingly evident in contemporary contexts, where environmental exploitation is often justified under the guise of development. From a maqāṣidī perspective, the prohibition of corruption (*fasād*) in this verse represents a violation of the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. The verse describes a hypocrite who appears virtuous in the presence of the Prophet but, once in a position of influence, spreads corruption (*fasād*) on earth.

The notion of *fasād* is further explicated through the destruction of crops (*ḥarth*) and livestock (*nasl*), which symbolize the foundations of economic life and ecological sustainability. Such actions stand in clear opposition to the objectives of Islamic law, particularly *ḥifẓ al-māl*, as crops and livestock constitute valuable forms of wealth; *ḥifẓ al-*

nasl, since the destruction of both human and animal progeny leads to generational collapse; and ḥifẓ al-bī'ah, as ecological degradation is fundamentally rejected by the Shari'ah.

Therefore, this verse constitutes a maqāṣidī foundation for preserving maṣlaḥah (public welfare) and preventing maṣadah (harm). Within the maqāṣid framework, safeguarding the earth and promoting the common good represent core missions of the Shari'ah. Maqāṣidī exegesis positions this verse as a clear prohibition against actions that undermine the objectives of Islamic law, particularly those that lead to environmental destruction.

Q. 11:61 (Hūd) contains a divine call to the people of Thamūd to cultivate and prosper the earth (isti'mār al-arḍ) rather than corrupt it. This verse serves as a constructive normative foundation for humanity to utilize natural resources wisely and responsibly. From a maqāṣidī interpretive perspective, prospering the earth does not merely signify industrialization or economic growth. When development results in destruction (fasād), it fundamentally contradicts the maqāṣid al-shari'ah. Environmental exploitation stands in opposition to ḥifẓ al-bī'ah, while social inequality contradicts ḥifẓ al-nafs (the preservation of life) and ḥifẓ al-māl (the protection of property).

Within maqāṣidī exegesis, Q. 11:61 emphasizes that cultivating the earth is a direct command from God rather than an optional endeavor. Such activity must be grounded in tawhīd, justice, and moral responsibility. Just and sustainable development is therefore an integral part of the objectives of Islamic law, not merely a worldly concern. Human beings are thus called to become agents of cultivation and prosperity, not agents of destruction.

Q. 30:41 (Al-Rūm) states that corruption has appeared on land and sea as a consequence of human actions. From a maqāṣidī exegetical perspective, this verse functions as a warning that calls for human reflection and self-correction regarding behaviors that lead to environmental degradation. Within the framework of maqāṣidī interpretation, the primary objective of this verse is to emphasize awareness of the consequences of human conduct that result in damage to the earth and the seas. It further underscores human responsibility to manage the earth and its resources in a just and ethical manner, as environmental destruction is understood as the outcome of actions that deviate from religious teachings and moral values.

This verse is closely related to several dimensions of the maqāṣid al-shari'ah, particularly ḥifẓ al-arḍ (the preservation of the earth and the environment), which highlights the obligation to protect and sustain the earth and its resources, and ḥifẓ al-nafs (the preservation of life), as environmental degradation directly threatens human safety and well-being (Al Banna & Rosyidah, 2025). The verse affirms that environmental damage arises from human behavior rather than from destiny alone. God does not impose immediate and total punishment; instead, He reveals the consequences of some human actions as an early warning, indicating that divine mercy continues to provide opportunities for repentance and transformation (Karimullah, 2024).

The ultimate purpose of this warning is to prompt humanity to “return” that is, to return to a just and balanced order of life grounded in the values of tawhīd, responsibility, and ethical stewardship of natural resources. By understanding this verse through a maqāṣidī exegetical lens, ecological awareness can be strengthened, reinforcing the

imperative of human responsibility in managing the earth and its resources wisely while avoiding actions that lead to further degradation of both land and sea.

### **Ecotheology and Ḥifẓ al-Bī'ah: Exploring Their Contemporary Relevance**

Ecotheology in the Qur'an refers to a conceptual framework through which the relationship between human beings and the environment is understood within the dimensions of faith and piety (Febriani, 2017). Meanwhile, ḥifẓ al-bī'ah literally means "environmental preservation" and, within the framework of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (the objectives of Islamic law), constitutes an effort to safeguard the sustainability of God's creation (Johar et al., 2021). Both ecotheology and ḥifẓ al-bī'ah emphasize the importance of maintaining balance between humanity and nature, while underscoring human responsibility in managing natural resources and protecting the environment.

Several Qur'anic verses highlight the imperative of environmental preservation, such as Q. 7:56 (Al-A'rāf), which prohibits corruption on the earth; Q. 2:205 (Al-Baqarah), which condemns the destruction of crops and livestock; Q. 11:61 (Hūd), which calls upon humanity to cultivate and prosper the earth; and Q. 30:41 (Al-Rūm), which states that environmental degradation is a consequence of human actions. These verses provide both theological and ethical foundations for fostering environmental awareness in Islam. Accordingly, Qur'anic ecotheology offers a solid theological basis for ḥifẓ al-bī'ah as a normative religious obligation. Environmental preservation thus represents a form of spiritual, social, and ecological responsibility entrusted to human beings as God's stewards (khulafā') on earth. This understanding is essential in encouraging collective awareness among Muslims to actively contribute to environmental conservation for the sustainability of both present and future generations.

It is essential to understand that ḥifẓ al-bī'ah refers to the protection and preservation of the environment. Within the framework of the five essential interests (al-ḍarūriyyāt), one of the primary objectives is the preservation of life (ḥifẓ al-nafs) (Khuluq & Asmuni, 2024). Every individual is obliged to safeguard their own life, and the protection of human existence occupies a central position immediately after the preservation of religion (Hamim, 2024). Consequently, protecting nature and the environment (ḥifẓ al-bī'ah) is equivalent to safeguarding the continuity of life itself. Environmental preservation is therefore not merely a moral recommendation but constitutes a religious obligation (wājib), as environmental degradation directly threatens human survival and well-being.

Ḥifẓ al-bī'ah is also integral to the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, or the primary objectives of Islamic law. These objectives consist of five fundamental principles: ḥifẓ al-dīn (the preservation of religion), ḥifẓ al-nafs (the preservation of life), ḥifẓ al-'aql (the preservation of intellect), ḥifẓ al-nasl (the preservation of progeny), and ḥifẓ al-māl (the preservation of property). Environmental preservation is directly connected to all of these objectives. First, ḥifẓ al-nafs is upheld through a clean and healthy environment that sustains human life and health. Second, ḥifẓ al-nasl is ensured through environmental sustainability, which secures the survival of future generations. Third, ḥifẓ al-māl is realized by protecting natural resources as valuable assets that must not be wasted or destroyed. Fourth, ḥifẓ al-dīn is reinforced by Islamic teachings that prohibit corruption (fasād) and command

human beings to act as stewards (khulafā') of the earth.

Accordingly, environmental destruction constitutes a violation of the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, whereas environmental preservation represents a concrete manifestation of obedience to God's commands and the fulfillment of the divine trust (amānah). For this reason, ḥifẓ al-bī'ah emerges as a normative religious obligation (wājib shar'ī) for every Muslim. Qur'anic ecotheology is a theological inquiry that examines the relationship between God, humanity, and the universe from a Qur'anic perspective. It positions nature as an integral component of the divine order, possessing not only utilitarian value but also profound spiritual and symbolic significance.

Within this framework, nature is understood as āyāt kawniyyah (cosmic signs of God's power) that must be respected, protected, and not subjected to destruction, as environmental degradation threatens human life and undermines the continuity of nature as a divine trust. Consequently, ḥifẓ al-bī'ah is inseparable from the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah, while Qur'anic ecotheology provides a comprehensive normative, spiritual, and ethical foundation that firmly affirms this obligation.

## Conclusions

The increasingly alarming global environmental crisis is largely the result of irresponsible human behavior toward nature. Ecological degradation such as deforestation, pollution, and clean water scarcity indicates a profound deficiency in ethical and spiritual awareness in environmental governance. In this context, ecotheology, as a religious approach to environmental issues, emerges as a strategic solution, particularly in Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim. This approach positions human beings as stewards (khulafā') entrusted with maintaining balance among God, nature, and all living beings.

Ḥifẓ al-bī'ah, as one of the objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharī'ah), needs to be mainstreamed within Islamic theological discourse. Through a maqāṣidī exegetical approach, Qur'anic verses such as Q. 7:56 (Al-A'rāf), Q. 2:205 (Al-Baqarah), Q. 11:61 (Hūd), and Q. 30:41 (Al-Rūm) provide a normative foundation affirming that environmental preservation constitutes an essential element of public welfare (maṣlahah 'āmmah) and a form of spiritual responsibility. Environmental degradation is therefore understood not merely as a technical or ecological problem, but also as a violation of the fundamental objectives of the Sharī'ah.

This study demonstrates that ecotheology and ḥifẓ al-bī'ah are not only relevant in addressing contemporary environmental crises, but also contribute significantly to the development of a contextual and solution-oriented Qur'anic exegesis. Accordingly, the integration of ecotheological values into education, religious preaching (da'wah), and public policy is essential for fostering a sustainable and just social order. Through this integration, human beings are expected to return to their primordial role (fiṭrah) as guardians of the earth, rather than its destroyers.

## Conflict of Interest

The manuscript author has absolutely no financial or non-financial conflict of interest regarding the subject matter or material discussed in this manuscript.

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