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## Revealing the Concept of Mother Earth in the Qur'an: A Thematic Tafsir Study and Its Theological and Practical Implications

Tita Yuliawati<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Alif Fathullah Azhar<sup>2</sup>, Ilzam Hubby Dzikrillah Alfani<sup>3</sup>, Mukhsin<sup>4</sup>, Asya Dwina Luthfia<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia ([titayuliawati99@gmail.com](mailto:titayuliawati99@gmail.com))

<sup>4</sup>Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al-Falah Cicalengka Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>5</sup>University of Edinburgh Scotland, United Kingdom

### ABSTRACT

*The global environmental crisis has heightened attention to the concept of Mother Earth across various disciplines, including religious studies. This study aims to analyze the interpretation of Qur'anic verses regarding the relationship between humans and nature and to explore how these interpretations can be articulated within the framework of the Mother Earth concept. The method used is a literature review with content analysis of classical (Ath-Thabari) and contemporary (Al-Munir) interpretations of key verses, namely Q.S. Hud [11]: 61, Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 57-58, and Q.S. Ar-Rum [30]: 41. The findings reveal that while the term Mother Earth is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, Islamic teachings present a comprehensive perspective on the human-nature relationship that resonates with the essence of this concept. The analyzed verses indicate humans' position as stewards and caretakers of the earth, the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature, and nature as a sign of God's power. This study concludes that the concept of Mother Earth aligns with the Qur'anic principles of environmental preservation and can serve as a practical foundation for equitable and wise environmental management and conservation efforts. The novelty of this research lies in integrating the concept of Mother Earth with Qur'anic interpretations, offering a new perspective on understanding the human-nature relationship within the context of Islam.*

Keywords: Concept; Implications; Mother Earth; Quran; Thematic Tafsir

### ABSTRAK

Krisis lingkungan global telah mendorong peningkatan perhatian terhadap konsep *Mother Earth* dalam berbagai disiplin ilmu, termasuk studi keagamaan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis interpretasi ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an mengenai relasi manusia dan alam serta mengeksplorasi bagaimana interpretasi ini dapat diartikulasikan dalam kerangka konsep *Mother Earth*. Metode yang digunakan adalah studi kepustakaan dengan analisis konten terhadap tafsir klasik (Ath-Thabari) dan kontemporer (Al-Munir) dari ayat-ayat kunci, yaitu Q.S. Hud [11]: 61, Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 57-58, dan Q.S. Ar-Rum [30]: 41. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meskipun istilah *Mother Earth* tidak eksplisit dalam Al-Qur'an, ajaran Islam menyajikan pandangan komprehensif tentang hubungan manusia dengan alam yang memiliki resonansi dengan esensi konsep tersebut. Ayat-ayat yang dianalisis mengindikasikan kedudukan manusia sebagai khalifah dan pemakmur bumi, adanya hubungan timbal balik antara manusia dan alam, serta alam sebagai tanda kekuasaan Allah. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa konsep *Mother Earth* sejalan dengan kandungan Al-Qur'an tentang pelestarian alam dan dapat menjadi landasan praktis bagi upaya pengelolaan dan pemeliharaan alam sekitar yang adil dan bijak. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada integrasi konsep *Mother Earth* dengan interpretasi ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an, memberikan perspektif baru dalam memahami hubungan manusia-alam dalam konteks Islam.

Kata Kunci: Al-Qur'an, Ibu Bumi; Implikasi; Tafsir Tematik

## Introduction

The decree of Allah SWT. in the creation of humans as *khalifah fil ardh* (stewards on earth) emphasizes their role in preserving and sustaining the planet.<sup>1</sup> Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 30 serves as the foundational basis for Islam's concern with the environment. Explicitly, this stewardship is rooted in Allah's will, granting humans the authority to harness (*taskhir*) natural resources and manage them according to their needs.<sup>2</sup> Nature willingly provides all its contents to sustain the lives of creatures dwelling on it. Over time, human civilization has experienced rapid progress across eras, facilitated by the diverse utilization of earth's resources. However, this development is accompanied by ecological threats that could, at any moment, destroy the very civilization built by humans. Natural disasters such as landslides, floods, and forest fires are common examples often experienced globally, including in Indonesia. The primary cause of these disasters is environmental degradation, largely attributed to human actions.<sup>3</sup>

Human exploitation of natural resources is often not accompanied by efforts to maintain or restore them. This clearly violates the natural role of humans as stewards tasked with safeguarding the earth for its sustainability, reflecting a moral and ethical crisis in humanity's relationship with the environment.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the low level of public awareness regarding environmental hygiene and conservation exacerbates the situation, posing significant risks to humanity's survival in the future.<sup>5</sup> On one hand, nature provides life-sustaining resources for all living beings, akin to a mother nurturing her child. A mother wholeheartedly cares for and nurtures her child to ensure optimal growth. For this reason, humans are entrusted by God to recognize the virtues of a mother and treat her with the utmost devotion.<sup>6</sup> In this context, nature similarly deserves attention and kindness from humans for its resources that support human life. Regarding the parallel functions of these two entities, the term Mother Earth has emerged and gained popularity among environmental activists concerned with ecological issues.

<sup>1</sup> Widia Duwi Putri and Ilzam Hubby Dzirkillah Alfani, "Eksistensi Manusia dan Keadilan Sosial Kemanusiaan Perspektif Tafsir Ruh Al-Ma'ani Al-Alusi," *Al-Munir: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 5, no. 2 (2023): 267–302.

<sup>2</sup> Khalif Muammar A Harris, "Prinsip-Prinsip Umum Falsafah Dan Etika Alam Sekitar Menurut Perspektif Islam," *TAFHIM: IKIM Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World* 15, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/https://tafhim.ikim.gov.my/index.php/tafhim/article/view/172/150>.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmad Fatoni, "Islam Dan Lingkungan Hidup," *Journal for Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2024).

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Farhan Akbar dan M Yunan Yusuf, "Interpretasi Tafsir Ekologi Dan Hakikat Kepemimpinan: Telaah QS. Ar-Rum : 41 Menggunakan Teori Maqashidu Syari'ah," *Attractive: Innovative Journal Education* 6, no. 2 (2024); Ilzam Hubby Dzirkillah Alfani, "Eksistensi Manusia Dan Keadilan Sosial Kemanusiaan Perspektif Tafsir Ruh Al-Ma'ani Al-Alusi," *El-Maqra': Tafsir, Hadis Dan Teologi* 3, no. 2 (2023): 46–57, <https://doi.org/elmaqra.v3i2.6318>.

<sup>5</sup> Muslim Djuned, "Relasi Manusia Dan Lingkungan Hidup Dalam Islam," *SINTHOP: Media Kajian Pendidikan, Agama, Sosial Dan Budaya* 2, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.22373/sinthop.v2i2.4080>.

<sup>6</sup> dkk Komariah Suwito, "Konsep Ibu Dan Anak Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis," *LEBAH* 17, no. 2 (2024).

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The narrative of Mother Earth, has existed in various cultural literatures worldwide. For instance, in ancient Greek tradition, the goddess Gaia is revered, while in Hindu tradition, the goddess Bhumi is recognized. Both cultures clearly use the term "Devi," derived from Sanskrit, meaning queen, female deity, noblewoman, or princess.<sup>7</sup> The global environmental crisis has heightened attention to the concept of Mother Earth across disciplines, including religious studies. While this term is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, Islamic teachings provide a comprehensive perspective on the human-nature relationship that aligns with the essence of this concept. The Qur'an, as the primary guide of Islamic teachings, contains numerous verses discussing the creation of the earth, humanity's role within it, and the obligation to preserve the environment.

Previous studies have explored various ecological aspects in Islam. For instance, Muslim Djuned's 2023 work, "*Relasi Manusia dan Lingkungan Hidup dalam Islam*" (*The Relationship Between Humans and the Environment in Islam*), highlights Islam's teachings on the mutualistic relationship between humans and the environment. It discusses environmental protection within Islamic law, encompassing environmental ethics, the concepts of *taskbir* and *khalifah*, and punishments for environmental destruction.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Maslani's 2023 study, "*Eco-Theology: Islamic Ethics and Environmental Transformation in Islamic Boarding Schools*," reveals how eco-theology has evolved to liberate communities from environmental and humanitarian crises. It emphasizes intensive Qur'anic and Hadith studies in Islamic boarding schools under the guidance of scholars, driven by actions to conserve the environment.<sup>9</sup> Another relevant study, "*Interpretasi Tafsir Ekologi dan Hakikat Kepemimpinan: Telaah Tafsir QS. Ar-Rum: 41 menggunakan teori Maqashidu Syariah*" (2024) by Muhammad Farhan Akbar, highlights the ecological values embedded in the *Maqashid al-Shariah* theory, which can serve as a foundation for environmental conservation. Ecological interpretation of the Qur'an also plays a significant role in addressing environmental issues, rooted in the Qur'an as a guide for humanity.<sup>10</sup>

However, studies specifically examining the concept of Mother Earth in the Qur'anic context remain limited. This research seeks to fill this gap by analyzing Qur'anic verses related to the human-nature relationship and exploring how these interpretations can be articulated within the framework of the Mother Earth concept. The study will focus on analyzing key verses, namely Surah Hud [11]: 61, Al-A'raf [7]: 56-58, and Ar-Rum [30]: 41, through content analysis of classical and contemporary exegeses, including Tafsir At-Thabari and Tafsir Al-Munir. The research questions are: (1) Which Qur'anic verses indicate the concept of Mother Earth. (2) What are the theological implications of interpreting these verses for understanding the human-nature relationship. (3) What are the

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<sup>7</sup> Editor: Zahra Amin, *Alam Semesta Rumah Kita Isu Lingkungan Dalam Perspektif Mubadalah* (Cirebon: mubadalah.id, 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Muslim Djuned, "Relasi Manusia Dan Lingkungan Hidup Dalam Islam."

<sup>9</sup> Maslani, "Eco-Theology: Islamic Ethics and Environmental Transformation in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 12, no. 04 (2023): 1001–18.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Farhan Akbar dan M Yunan Yusuf, "Interpretasi Tafsir Ekologi Dan Hakikat Kepemimpinan: Telaah QS. Ar-Rum : 41 Menggunakan Teori Maqashidu Syari'ah."

practical implications of this understanding in the context of contemporary environmental conservation efforts.

This study aims to contribute significantly to the discourse on Islamic eco-theology and offer a new perspective on understanding the concept of Mother Earth from a Qur'anic standpoint. The findings are expected to serve as a foundation for developing an Islamic environmental ethic relevant to the current global ecological challenges.

This research is qualitative in nature, utilizing the library research method to collect and analyze data from various written sources such as books, research journals, and other reference materials relevant to the study.<sup>11</sup> The primary sources for this research are the Qur'an, Tafsir Ath Thabari, and Tafsir Al Munir, while the secondary sources include studies related to Islam and ecology. The research is descriptive-analytical, aiming to describe and analyze. The analysis focuses on understanding the interpretations of Ath Thabari and Wahbah Az-Zuhaili regarding verses related to the concept of Mother Earth, specifically limited to Q.S. Hud [11]: 61, Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 57-58, and Q.S. Ar-Rum [30]: 41.

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Verses on Mother Earth: The Perspectives of Ath-Thabari and Wahbah Az-Zuhaili

#### a. Q.S. Hud [11]: 61

وَالِى تَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا قَالَ يَاقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ هُوَ أَنشَأَكُم مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ وَاسْتَعْمَرَكُمْ فِيهَا فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لَهُ ثُمَّ تَوْبُوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي قَرِيبٌ مُّجِيبٌ

*“And to (the people of) Thamud, We sent their brother, Salih. He said: “O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. He is the One who created you from the earth (soil) and made you its cultivators. So seek His forgiveness and repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near (in His mercy) and responsive (to the supplications of His servants).”*

Ath-Thabari explains that the phrase "He who created you from the earth" refers to Allah's act of initiating the creation of the first human being (Adam) from soil, followed by the descendants who inhabit the earth. As for the phrase "and made you its cultivators," it means that humans are assigned to inhabit the earth during their lifetime. This explanation is based on two narrations from Ibn Amr and Al-Mutsanna, originating from Mujahid. In the narration from Ibn Amr, it is mentioned: Abu Ashim narrated from Isa, from Abi Najih, from Mujahid, regarding Allah's words, "and made you its cultivators," Mujahid explained, "He made you inhabitants and cultivators of it." Meanwhile, in the version from Al-Mutsanna via Abu Hudzaifah, from Shibl, from Ibn Abi Najih, from Mujahid, the same phrase was interpreted as "(the earth) makes you flourish."<sup>12</sup>

The narration from Ibn Amr emphasizes that humans are tasked with being cultivators of the earth, which includes the responsibility to care for and preserve the environment so it can continue to serve human needs. The earth provides abundant natural

<sup>11</sup> Wahyudin Darmalaksana, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Studi Pustaka Dan Studi Lapangan," *Pre-Print Digital Library UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung* 5 (2020).

<sup>12</sup> Abi Ja'far Muhammad Bin Jarir al-Thabary, *Tafsir Ath-Thabary* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1988).

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resources that humans can use to fulfill their needs for food, clothing, and shelter, each with its unique characteristics across the world. This underscores humanity's function as stewards, a role that should be implemented through gratitude, which manifests in attention to environmental preservation and natural harmony by preventing any form of destruction. On the other hand, the narration from Al-Mutsanna provides a perspective more aligned with the essence of the Mother Earth concept, where nature is viewed as the provider of resources. The phrase "makes you flourish" highlights nature's position as a subject and owner of everything that sustains human life and growth over time. This suggests that nature provides definite benefits to humans, whereas humans are not guaranteed to reciprocate. In other words, nature can exist independently without relying on humans, while humans cannot survive without nature.<sup>13</sup>

Wahbah Az-Zuhaili interprets the phrase *wa ista'marakum fiba* ("and made you its cultivators") as Allah assigning humanity to cultivate the earth through agriculture, industry, construction, and the utilization of minerals and resources. Humanity's role in fulfilling these responsibilities is a rational proof of the existence of the Creator, Allah, the All-Wise. He determines the capacity of each of His creations and grants humans guidance, intellect, and strength as tools to act and work in managing the earth. This verse also emphasizes Allah's oneness, making Him the only one worthy of worship. Therefore, Allah commands humans to seek forgiveness from Him for their sins, such as idolatry and disobedience, and to repent by abandoning past sins with a firm resolution not to repeat them. Allah is indeed very near to His servants, answering the prayers of those who sincerely call upon Him with His grace and mercy, as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:186), which affirms Allah's closeness to His servants.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, Az-Zuhaili expounds on the jurisprudential (fiqh) rulings derived from this verse. The disbelief and denial of Allah's greatness and the commands of His messenger by the Thamud people stemmed from their desires to prioritize the traditions of their ancestors, which were far from divine values. Despite Prophet Salih being one of their own, he consistently presented clear and logical arguments for the obligation to worship Allah and affirm His oneness, appealing to their conscience through the wisdom of creation and humanity's role as cultivators of the earth.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the command to seek forgiveness (*istighfar*) for sins and to repent from wrongdoings is a key to having prayers answered quickly because Allah is near, Merciful, and the One who grants all supplications. The word *al-ardh* (the earth) used in the verse as the origin of human creation essentially means "earth." However, a deeper interpretation reveals that this refers to the essence of soil as the primary material used by Allah to create Prophet Adam and as a fundamental element of the earth.

This highlights the unique relationship between humans and the earth in terms of creation and responsibility. This perspective emphasizes Allah's role as the Creator and

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<sup>13</sup> Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Ath-Thabari*, Trans. Oleh Absan Askan, Vol. 20, 26 Vol (Jakarta: Pustaka Azzam, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Wahbah Az-Zuhaili; Penerjemah: Abdul Hayyie al Kattani, dkk., *Tafsir Al-Munir Jilid 11* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Wahbah Az-Zuhaili; Penerjemah: Abdul Hayyie al Kattani, dkk.

assigns humans the task of cultivating the earth rather than portraying the earth as a personified entity.

**b. Q.S. Ar Rum [30]: 41**

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea due to what the hands of humans have earned, so that Allah may let them taste part of the consequences of their deeds, that they might return to the right path."

Ath-Thabari explains that corruption on land and sea is caused by humans committing acts prohibited by Allah. There are differing perspectives on the phrase, "Corruption has appeared on land and sea." Some commentators interpret the word *al-barr* as referring to deserts or wilderness, while *al-bahr* refers to towns, cities, or villages with water sources like rivers and lakes. Mujahid, one of the commentators, supports this view, stating, "By Allah, *al-bahr* is not the sea (ocean); rather, it refers to all lands containing water."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Ikrimah asserts, "In my view, it is not the sea but every area with water sources." Regarding the types of corruption caused by humans, commentators also offer various interpretations.<sup>17</sup> For instance, Mujahid states that *al-fasad fil barr* refers to people killing one another, while *al-fasad fil bahr* refers to piracy or hijacking boats.<sup>18</sup> This view is supported by other commentators, such as Ibn Abi Najih. On the other hand, Athiyyah opines that the corruption includes reduced rainfall, resulting in water scarcity. This interpretation aligns with modern phenomena, where drastic climate changes affect the quality and quantity of rainfall.

Wahbah Az-Zuhaili provides a broader explanation, stating that corruption on earth can take the form of chaos, deviation, an abundance of evils, a lack of benefits, poor agricultural yields, famine, drought, and widespread death. According to him, all these forms of corruption stem from human sins, disobedience, and transgressions, including disbelief, injustice, violations of dignity, opposition to religion, ignoring the presence of Allah both in private and public, and other moral breaches. These calamities are divine punishments for humanity's wrongdoing, serving as lessons to awaken their awareness, repentance, and self-correction. Allah says in another verse, "And We tested them with both good and bad (circumstances) so that they might return (to the truth)."<sup>19</sup>

From a jurisprudential perspective, Az-Zuhaili concludes that natural disasters like famine, drought, and food shortages are consequences of human corruption, particularly widespread idolatry and immorality. He interprets land (*al-barr*) and sea (*al-bahr*) in their conventional sense, as opposed to Ath-Thabari's view that *al-barr* refers to forests and deserts, and *al-bahr* to cities or villages with water sources. Although this etymological

<sup>16</sup> Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Ath-Thabari*, Trans. Oleh Ahsan Askan, Vol. 20, 26 Vol.

<sup>17</sup> Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari.

<sup>18</sup> Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari.

<sup>19</sup> Wahbah Az-Zuhaili; Penerjemah: Abdul Hayyie al Kattani, dkk., *Tafsir Al-Mumir Jilid 11*. Baca Q.S. Al-A'raf [7]: 168.

interpretation is valid, given that Arabs often referred to urban areas as *al-bibaar*, Az-Zuhaili emphasizes that the corruption on earth leads to worldly destruction and divine punishment. These worldly afflictions, caused by the actions of some individuals, serve as a reminder for humanity to repent, turn back to Allah SWT, and engage in righteous deeds to preserve the earth and its environment.<sup>20</sup>

c. Q.S. Al Araf [7]: 57-58

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَقْلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقِّتُهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ  
فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ كَذَلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتَى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

*"And it is He who sends the winds as glad tidings before His mercy (rain). Then, when the winds carry heavy clouds, We drive them to a lifeless land, and We send down rain upon it, bringing forth various kinds of fruits by means of that rain. Thus will We resurrect the dead, so that you may take heed."*

وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خَبثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِدًا كَذَلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ  
لِقَوْمٍ يَشْكُرُونَ

*"And the good land—its plants grow abundant by the permission of Allah. But the land that is bad—its plants grow only stunted (dry and withered). Thus do We repeat the signs of Our greatness for those who give thanks."*

Ath-Thabari explains that the word *النَّشْرُ* in Arabic means a wind that blows gently and contains clouds. The Arabs call all good winds by the word *النَّشْرُ*. Whereas the words of Allah: 'Before the arrival of His mercy,' means that the wind comes before the rain (Allah's mercy). The phrase *جَاءَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ* is used by the Arabs to express something that happens in the future. The meaning of *رَحْمَتِهِ* in this verse is rain. The full explanation of the meaning of verse 57, as stated by As-Suddi, is: 'When Allah sends the wind, the clouds come from the east and the west between the angles of heaven and earth, then the clouds and the blowing wind meet each other. Allah then opens the doors of the heavens so that water flows into the clouds and rains down on the earth. The word *رَحْمَتِهِ* here is rain.'<sup>21</sup>

Ath-Thabari's interpretation of verse 58 is that good quality soil is very fertile and the water is fresh. Plants will emerge when Allah sends rain and breathes life into them with His permission. The plants and trees are able to produce fresh fruit. Whereas bad soil is infertile, dry, and the water is salty so that it cannot grow plants except of poor quality. In fact, this verse contains a parable between believers and disbelievers, and is further explained by Ath-Thabari that Allah shows the signs of His greatness through the phenomena of the universe one by one. Allah shows sign after sign, examples, and examples for people who are grateful for His bounty on them, namely guidance. A fertile land where good crops grow is a parable for those who believe. Whereas the dry, barren land where nothing but bad crops grow is a parable of the disbelievers.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Wahbah Az-Zuhaili; Penerjemah: Abdul Hayyie al Kattani, dkk.

<sup>21</sup> Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Ath-Thabari*, Trans. Oleh Absan Askan, Vol. 20, 26 Vol.

<sup>22</sup> Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari.

Az-Zuhaili explains in his interpretation that when Allah explains His power as the creator of the universe, He is the One who is the Almighty in controlling the wind and clouds to lower the most important source of sustenance for mankind, namely rain. Rain will grow plants that are useful for the life of creatures on earth. Rain is the source of the goodness that appears on earth, namely fertile vegetation. This verse also hints at the comparison of believers and disbelievers, as well as Allah's power to revive the dead on the Day of Judgement as He revives the barren earth with rainwater.<sup>23</sup>

Regarding the wisdom and content of the verse, Az-Zuhaili revealed that Allah is the owner and regulator of sustenance. He manages the wind, the clouds, and sends down rain from which plants and trees grow and produce fruits to be enjoyed by living beings, both humans and animals. The process of rainwater precipitation also shows evidence of the power and strength of Allah, the All-Wise. From the process of rain, Allah grows plants from the soil that can be taken as a lesson regarding the process of resurrection of humans who have died on the last day. Allah also makes the characteristics of fertile and barren land as a parable of two human characters, namely believing and disbelieving in Allah's guidance (Al-Qur'an). In addition, Allah always repeats the signs of His greatness to His grateful servants because they always take lessons from His bounty.<sup>24</sup>

The advantage of rainwater compared to groundwater is that it contains more nutrients that are needed by plants. Rainwater irrigation has been shown to increase plant photosynthesis and accelerate the process of organic matter accumulation. Thus, rainwater has a very important value for life, especially in igniting plant growth even in previously barren land. This verse is a sign that Allah has a special method for the life process of His creatures even though they have done various damages on earth.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Theological Implications of the Mother Earth Concept: The Status of the Relationship between Man and Nature

### a. Humans as *Khalifatullah Fil Ardh* and Prosperers of the Earth

The meaning of *khalifatullah fil ardh* does not mean ruler (dominion over) the earth because this tends to put humans superior to the environment or other creatures. The disparity between the meaning of *Khalifatullah fil ardh* in Islam and the secular concept is the view that leadership is absolutely human and free from divine values. Thus, the meaning of *khalifatullah fil ardh* is not a value free concept that positions humans as kings who can do as they please. This concept is not only anthropocentric (humans are the centre of control), but also anthroposophical (looking at the great aspect, namely God) and anthropocosmic (humans are part of nature).<sup>26</sup> So that humans have a noble responsibility

<sup>23</sup> Wahbah Az-Zuhaili; Penerjemah: Abdul Hayyie al Kattani, dkk., *Tafsir Al-Munir Jilid 4* (Jakarta: Gema Insani, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Wahbah Az-Zuhaili; Penerjemah: Abdul Hayyie al Kattani, dkk.

<sup>25</sup> Yeti Dahliana Alviansyah Zein, "Analisis Tafsir Ekologis Keistimewaan Air Hujan Dalam QS. Al-A'raf Ayat 57," *Nuansa XVI*, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>26</sup> Mudhofir Abdullah, *Al Qur'an Dan Konservasi Lingkungan Argumen Konservasi Lingkungan Sebagai Tujuan Tertinggi Syariah* (Jakarta: Dian Rakyat, 2010).

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as God's representatives on earth to prosper and preserve nature and protect it from destruction.

### **b. Causal Relationship between Human and Nature**

The existence of a causal relationship between humans and nature will be proven by the situation and condition of nature itself. Kindness towards nature will bring other kindnesses, while damage will bring disaster. Nature will not remain silent and allow humans to take the resources it contains arbitrarily without repaying them. Indeed, the retribution that nature gives to humans does not only target the perpetrators of natural destruction, but can befall anyone who is not even involved in the negative exploitation of nature. The theological relationship between humans and nature is ethical-strategic in nature, and if one of them is damaged, the relationship will also be damaged.<sup>27</sup>

### **c. Nature is a Sign of God's Power**

Nature is organically placed with God's power because it is a manifestation of His presence. Although clearly distinct, God's sacredness flows in the preservation of nature. Anyone who destroys nature and neglects its preservation is defying monotheism and *kufr* (disbelief in God) because he does not love the natural world as a proof of God's favour. This is in line with Izutsu's philological analysis of the word *kufr* in relation to God's favour: 'covering' or "to cover to ignore knowingly the benefits which one has received". A synonym for this word is 'to be unthankful'.<sup>28</sup> Yet in Q.S. Ibrahim [14]: 7, Allah explicitly threatens that disbelief will be rewarded with punishment that can be felt immediately in this world and in the hereafter.

## **3. Practical Implications of the Mother Earth Concept: Human Attitudes towards Nature**

### **a. Ihsan: An Important Principle for Caliphs**

The caliph identity that humans bear is inseparable from the quality of God's creation. God says that He has moulded man (*insan*) as the best creation (*ahsani taqwim* Q.S. At-Tin [95]: 4. In addition, the word *insan* according to Quraish Shihab is rooted in the word *uns* which means harmonious and benign physically and spiritually.<sup>29</sup> Harmonisation in both aspects is what should make humans, as caliphs, to always do good (*ihsan*) to anyone as another manifestation of identity, namely *ahsan taqwim*. Thus, the identity as *khalifah* and *ahsan taqwim* can go hand in hand and benefit anyone and anything, including the nature that is the setting for human life.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ridlo Andini, "Konservasi Lingkungan Berbasis Ekologi Integral Perspektif Al-Qur'an" (Institut PTIQ Jakarta, 2022).

<sup>28</sup> Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> Abdul Wahid dan Hilman Ismail Firdaus, "Hakikat Manusia Dalam Al-Qur'an: Kajian Tafsir Tematik," *Jurnal Kewarganegaraan* 6, no. 2 (2022): 4706–16.

<sup>30</sup> Muhlasin Muhlasin, "Konsep Manusia Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Idarotuna* 1, no. 2 (2019): 126–40.

Allah has indeed provided nature and everything it contains in the form of animals, plants, and crops for humans to utilise in order to live prosperously. Baca Q.S. Hud [11]: 61. However, the authority to utilise nature does not necessarily justify every action taken by humans to be arbitrary towards it. Humans need to be fair and wise towards nature by only taking resources according to their needs and not leaving damage afterwards. The attitude of *ihsan* needs to be prioritised as the principle of all activities related to taking natural resources so that it does not lead to exploitative actions. According to Al-Qusyairi, *ihsan* is doing justice accompanied by scientific competence.<sup>31</sup> In interaction with nature, humans must utilise the results of their scientific work to care for and preserve nature as it was created. All forms of destructive actions that cause damage to nature to the point of negative consequences are a logical consequence of the loss of human awareness and justice towards the surrounding environment. It is naive if the place where humans live and can get prosperity in it is left without any special attention to care for it.

#### **b. Nature Conservation Efforts in Indonesia**

The nature of human beings who love to do damage has been feared by the angels when they first heard the word of God who wanted to create Adam (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 30). However, Allah has denied the angels' concerns and then provided special provisions by teaching humans “*al-asma*” (names of things) which He did not teach to angels (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 31). Mujahid said that *al-asma* here is *ismun kulli syai*’ (names of everything) that can be utilised by humans in their lives.<sup>32</sup> *Al-Asma*’ or these names can also be interpreted as human competence in learning various things by utilising visual (vision) and audio (hearing) skills to produce a special understanding.<sup>33</sup> In the context of earth management, humans should use their senses to formulate effective, efficient and constructive earth management strategies. Ideally, humans utilise all the potential that has been given by God to maintain environmental sustainability, not destroy it. Ironically, the earth's condition has gradually deteriorated and started to become sickly, causing natural disasters that threaten the existence of living things in it.

According to the 2023 Environmental Review report released by the Indonesian Forum for the Environment (WALHI), in the span of 2015-2022 there has been an increase in the number of ecological disasters that have always adversely affected the community and claimed lives. WALHI noted that there were 27,660 disasters in the span of 8 years, with an average of 3,457.5 disasters each year. The highest number of disasters occurred in 2021 with 5,402 and the lowest in 2015 with 1,694. These events affected + 42 million people, including 10,191 dead or missing victims, with the highest number of cases of 6,240

<sup>31</sup> Fadlurrahman Nurul Tsalis, Lauhan Achda Sarjana, “Konsep Ihsan Menurut Para Mufassir Al-Qur’an Dan Hubungannya Dengan Pendidikan,” *INNOVATIVE: Journal of Social Science Research* 3, no. 2 (2023): 1288–1300.

<sup>32</sup> Abu Ja’far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Ath-Thabari, Trans. Oleh Ahsan Askan, Vol. 20, 26 Vol.*

<sup>33</sup> Ahmad Izzan dan Neni Nuraeni, “Media Pembelajaran Perspektif Al-Qur’an Surah Al-Baqarah Ayat 31,” *MASAGI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 02, no. 02 (2023).

missing/dead in 2018.<sup>34</sup> The majority of these disasters were in the form of floods, landslides, forest and land fires (karhutla), and so on. WALHI highlights that these disasters are often the result of human activities, such as oil palm plantations, timber, mining, and oil and gas whose existence causes the surrounding natural ecosystem to be disturbed and damaged. This is proof of the truth of QS. Ar-Rum verse 41 that has been discussed.

Although there are specific state regulations related to preventive efforts such as Law no. 24 of 2007 on Disaster Management, disasters that occur during a time span above 90% are classified as 'ecological disasters' which are not recognised in the regulation. WALHI states that this has the potential to eliminate the government's seriousness in dealing with every disaster that occurs. In addition, the exploitation of crops that is increasingly massive because it has the permission of the rulers actually opens up opportunities for worse natural damage in the future. In fact, the government has the power to prevent negative impacts due to climate change and environmental conditions that may occur. If this continues without any accommodating environmental conservation efforts, it is not an impossibility that natural conditions will be increasingly eroded by their natural image.

### c. Mother Earth: Nature is Mother

Historically, the term mother earth is relatively recent and has only become widely known due to the intervention of the United Nations (UN). The UN campaigned for the nature conservation movement by analogising nature's dedication as a mother. This is because humans and the earth have a very close bond like a child and a mother.<sup>35</sup> Besides the rich variety of living resources provided for human needs, the earth is the main component of the human physique itself (Q.S. Al-Mu'minun [23]: 12). In Islam, the earth (land) is the basic material of human creation from which Allah constructs it into semen, a clot of blood, a foetus, until it is given life and born into the world. Quoting this sentence, the relationship between humans and the earth should uphold the principle of sustainable mutualism.

The Qur'an itself does not openly mention the similarities between the earth and the mother. The Qur'an only describes the struggle of a mother who conceives, gives birth, to wean a child with love and the baby gets these benefits for his future life. Similarly, the Qur'an's description of nature provides all the needs of its creatures and facilitates humans as its managers to do anything that can sustain the needs of life. This similarity of function then becomes the conceptual reason for the term mother earth. So, nature should be treated with honour and respect like a human being who is devoted to a mother who has contributed to his existence in this world.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> dkk. Abdul Ghofar, *Tinjauan Lingkungan Hidup WALHI 2023: Terdepan Di Luar Lintasan* (Jakarta: Eksekutif Nasional Walhi, 2023).

<sup>35</sup> Atssania Zahroh dan Mimi Suhayati, "Qur'anic Ecofeminism: The Solution for Environmental Crisis," *AL-'Allamah: Journal of Scriptures and Ulama Studies* 1, no. 1 (2024): 31–43.

<sup>36</sup> Nur Hayati, "Konsep Pendidikan Islam Dalam QS Luqman 12-19," *Aqidab-Ta: Jurnal Ilmu Aqidab* 3, no. 1 (2017): 48–58.

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Good deeds and respect for the honour of the mother will bring great pleasure and reward from Allah. Filial piety to one's parents, especially one's mother, is one of the keys to the pleasures of this world and the hereafter, and its virtue is positioned after obedience to Allah.<sup>37</sup> The obligation of filial piety is also compulsory, and if it is not fulfilled, it will result in a sin, the consequences of which will not only be borne in the hereafter, but will also be hastened in this world. However, this concept of filial piety is not for negative things that are against religion and cause damage in society.<sup>38</sup> If nature is aligned with the mother, then the act of affection by caring for, maintaining, and preserving it is also worth a high reward in His sight. Nature may also hold things that are harmful to humans, just like parents who may be unkind to their children. Dangerous natural conditions such as wild animals that will threaten human safety if disturbed or natural gas that is dangerous if exposed, can certainly be found in various natural places. It's just that it can be anticipated if humans are not too greedy to control every natural area that is still natural and pure.

It is fitting that the concept of mother earth is continuously echoed in order to ignite the awareness of those in positions of power over the establishment of regulations on nature conservation. It should also raise the awareness of individuals who believe in the existence of God as the creator of the universe to always be in the corridor of environmental conservation. Religious and community leaders should also pay more intense attention to their followers regarding the urgency of preserving the surrounding nature whose existence is increasingly alarming from time to time. Thus, mother earth will always give her love and affection to living beings in the future.

## Conclusion

The existence of the concept of mother earth is not yet widely known among the general public, especially among Muslims who are always guided by the Koran as the main reference for their activities. In fact, there are verses in several surahs of the Qur'an such as Hud [11]: 61, Al-A'raf [7]: 57-58, and Ar-Rum [30]: 41 which show a similar meaning to the basic conceptual mother earth. Because humans have a close relationship with nature, namely as caliphs and prosperity of the earth. The combination of Ath-Thabari's classical interpretation and Az-Zuhaili's contemporary interpretation produces an understanding that nature and its contents which provide benefits to humans, act like a mother who grows her child. A mother who has contributed to her child deserves adequate love and affection, as well as nature which provides its resources deserves a similar response. The principle of reciprocal relations is an attitude of *ihsan* that upholds justice and benevolence. So far, the arbitrary extraction of natural resources has caused significant ecological disasters and had negative consequences for humans. Doing damage on earth means the same as disobeying a mother. Thus, the concept of mother earth is no longer a view that only enriches the

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<sup>37</sup> Achmad Suhaili, "Memahami Konsep Al-Qur'an Tentang Birrul Walidain: Kewajiban Dan Penghormatan Kepada Orangtua Dalam Islam," *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadist* 06, no. 02 (2023): 243–57.

<sup>38</sup> Dedi Prayoga Harneli, Irfan Saputra, "Birrul Walidain Menurut Perspektif Hadis," *Al-Manar: Jurnal Kajian Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 09, no. 02 (2023): 105–15.

knowledge of religion and the environment, but is a practical basis for efforts to manage and maintain the natural environment in a fair and wise manner.[]

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