

The Globalization of Muslim Environmentalism

Richard C. Foltz, Concordia University

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[Introduction]

Islam is a religion that was born in the desert, and as such the first Muslims seem to have had a keen sense of the fragile balance that existed in the harsh ecosystem that made their lives possible. This awareness is abundantly reflected in the Qur'an, which contains many references to water and other vital natural resources and lays down clear guidelines for their conservation and equitable distribution.

The Islamic legal tradition, devised from the eighth to tenth centuries on the basis of the Qur'an and hadiths (reports about the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad), spells out in detail the divinely-prescribed parameters for the use of natural resources, including water, soil, air, plants and animals. As in the Qur'an, conservation and fair distribution are emphasized. Moreover, like everything in Creation, resources are seen foremost as belonging not to humans but to Allah, for whom humans are to hold nature in trust (*amāna*).

Humans and Nature in the Qur'an

The Qur'an presents natural phenomena as signs (*āyāt*) pointing to the existence of God (16:66, 41:53, 51:20-1, 88:17-20). The value of nature is therefore primarily symbolic. Scientific inquiry which aims to understand the workings of the universe thus constitutes, for Muslims, a sacred quest. Nature is perfectly proportioned and without any flaws (67:3), a reflection of the qualities of its Creator. It has a divinely ordained purpose (3:191, 21:16, 38:27) and is neither random nor meaningless. The "environment" is nothing less than God himself, since, according to the Qur'an, "whithersoever you turn there is the presence of God" (2:115).

Within the hierarchy of Creation, the Qur'an accords humans a special status, that of God's *khalīfa* (2:30, 6:165), which has been generally understood by Muslims to mean "vice-regent," thus one of stewardship or trust (*amānat*). Recently Idris has criticized this as a later interpretation, however, arguing that the original meaning of *khalīfa* was "successor"; according to this view, humans are not the "deputies of God" but simply the "successors to Adam."¹

Nevertheless, the Qur'an states that "all that is in the earth" has been subjected (*sakhhara*) to humans (22:65) and that "It is He who has created for you all things that are on earth" (2:29). Yet ultimately, it is God "in whose hands is the dominion of all things" (36:83; cf. 2:107, 24:42). And though humans are said to have been created "in the best of forms" (*fī ahsanī taqwīm*), the Qur'an goes on to caution that "Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is [a matter] greater than the creation of human beings: Yet most people understand not!" (40:57).

Humans are described in the Qur'an as being more like other beings than unlike them. All creation is said to worship God (22:18), even if their praise is not expressed in human language (17:44, 24:41-2). Non-human communities are said to be like human communities (6:38), and non-human animals are explicitly said to possess speech (27:16). Non-human animals are said to have received divine revelation, as when God instructs bees on how to make honeycombs and honey (16:68). The earth was created for the benefit of all living beings (*anām*), not for humans alone (55:10). In fact, the only significant difference between humans and other beings is that humans alone possess consciousness (*taqwā*), and are thus accountable for their actions.

Humans will accordingly be held accountable for any acts of wanton destruction committed against the earth (2:205, 7:85). Wastefulness and overconsumption are also prohibited (7:31), as is hoarding. Water, arguably the most vital natural resource, is to be kept as common property (54:28). Balance (*mīzan*) is to be maintained in all things, including, presumably, natural systems (13:8, 15:21, 25:2). Failure to do so, consequently, may be argued to be un-Islamic.

In the Hadiths

The Arabs to whom the Qur'an was revealed in the early seventh century CE had a long familiarity with the ecological constraints posed by their native desert environment. Reports about the words and deeds of Muhammad (*hadīths*) indicate that the Prophet of Islam possessed both an awareness of these constraints and a sensitivity to the duties of humans towards the rest of Creation.

Muhammad received the first of his revelations while meditating in a cave on a mountain outside of Mecca. Thus, as in the case of numerous other seminal religious figures, his insights came within the context of immersion in the natural world. Perhaps the most illuminating of the hadiths in this regard is the one which states, "The earth has been created for me as a mosque [i.e., as a place of worship], and as a means of purification" (*Sahīh Bukhārī*, 1:331). According to another hadith, Muhammad said, "The world is green and beautiful and Allah has appointed you His stewards over it."

A well-known hadith has Muhammad prohibiting his followers from wasting water, even when it is found in abundance and when it is used for a holy purpose such as ritual ablutions (*Musnad ibn Hanbal*, ii, 22). Muhammad also decreed that no more than an ankle-depth of water (i.e., sufficient for one season) could be taken for irrigation. Essential resources are to be common, not private property: "Muslims share alike in three things - water, pasture and fire" (*Mishkat al-Masābih*).

Numerous hadiths speak to Muhammad's concern for the interests of non-human animals. In regard to the killing of domestic animals for food he called for swift and conscientious slaughter with a sharp knife (*Sahīh Muslim*, 2/11, "Slaying," 10:739), and not to slaughter an animal within view of its kin. He forbade hunting for sport, and frequently reprimanded his followers for abusing or neglecting their camels and donkeys. He urged his followers to plant trees and cultivate land not only to provide food for humans, but for birds and other animals as well (*Sahīh Bukhārī* 3:513). In a hadith which is strikingly similar to a well-known rabbinical saying, Muhammad is reported as saying "When doomsday comes if someone has a palm shoot in his hand he should [still] plant it" (*Sunān al-Baīhaqī al-Kubrā*).

In Islamic Law

The legal corpus known as the *sharī'a*, codified by Islamic jurists during the Classical period (8th-10th centuries CE), was meant to be all-encompassing and thus includes aspects which could be said to deal with environmental protection and management of natural resources. The jurists applied the four principles of Qur'anic injunctions, the example of Muhammad as attested in the hadiths, analogical reasoning, and their own consensus of opinion, to the pre-existing customary practices of the Arabs and the Persians in particular, and to some extent of other Muslim peoples.

The aspect of *sharī'a* law with the most explicit environmental applications may be the institution of the protected zone (*harīm*), which prohibited the development of certain areas, mainly riverbanks, for purposes of protecting watersheds. A related institution is that of the preserve (*hima*), which usually entailed the protection of trees and wildlife. Some traditional *harīms* and *himas* still exist today, notably in Saudi Arabia, but they are much diminished from former times and continue to disappear. The legal texts go into some detail about the distribution of water resources, and also devote sections to the “bringing to life” (*ihyā*) of “dead” lands (*mawāt*), including the conditions and rights pertaining to one who engages in such “development.”

Islamic law also extends many legal protections to non-human animals, including the “right of thirst” (*haqq al-shurb*), which states that they cannot be denied drinking water (Qur'an 91:13). A thirteenth-century work by 'Izz al-din ibn 'Abd al-salam, *Qawā'id al-ahkām fī masālih al-anām* (*Rules for Judgment in the Cases of Living Beings*), includes what might be called in contemporary terms “an animals' bill of rights.” Among the provisions are that animals should be properly cared for, not overburdened, kept safe from harm, given clean shelter, and allowed to mate.

Although there is little in the classical legal corpus that could be explicitly categorized as environmental law, there exist within it several basic principles which could, if so interpreted, serve to mitigate the some of the main causes of global environmental degradation today. In particular one may cite the principles of minimizing damage, the primacy of collective over individual interests, and the giving of priority to the interests of the poor over those of the rich. While some contemporary Muslims - notably Mawil Izzī Dien and Uthman Llewellyn - have attempted to provide such interpretations, these have not yet found their way into the legal codes of any existing Muslim societies.

In Islamic Philosophy

From around the tenth century CE Muslim philosophers, familiar with Classical works, appear to have been the ones to coin the Arabic term *tabī'a* to represent the Latin and Greek equivalents *natura* and *physis*. (The word *tabī'a* does not appear in the Qur'an.) The derivatives *tab'* and *matbū'* may, on the other hand, have been the source of the Latin pairing *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*.² In Islamic philosophy the distinction between the Creator and Creation is represented by the terms *haqq* (lit., "Divine Truth") and *khalq*. The laws of the universe exist not in and of themselves but rather as expressions of the Divine will, understood in Aristotelian terms as the First Cause. There are no "secondary" causes; thus, what appear to be the laws of nature are merely the "habits" of created things, which God could alter if he chose. Miracles, accordingly, are seen simply as instances where God chooses to cause things to happen in other than their familiar, habitual manner.

Yet the relationship of the infinite (the Creator) to the finite (Creation) is neither entirely one of immanence (*tashbīh*) nor one of transcendence (*tanzīh*), since both extremes are incompatible with the ultimate oneness (*tawhīd*) of God. Neither can Creation be divine alongside the Creator, nor can there exist separate realities for each; either case would represent a kind of polytheism (*shirk*) unacceptable in Islam.

The Muslim philosophers largely followed the Greek model of the cosmos, which they understood to be spherical in shape and bounded by the stellar field. The planets, the Sun and the Moon occupy the middle layers, with the Earth constituting the center. The heavenly world (*al-'ālam al-ā'la*), though made up of ether in contrast to the lower world (*al-'ālam al-asfāl*) which is comprised of the four elements, shares with it the qualities of heat, cold, moistness and dryness and acts upon it accordingly. The earth's geography was most often understood in terms of the pre-Islamic Iranian divisions of seven concentric climes (*keshvars*), although the fourfold division of the Greeks and the ninefold version of the Indians were also known.

The Islamic philosophers affirm the position of humans near the top within the hierarchy of created beings, below angels but above other animals, plants, and minerals. Humans are the mediators between the heavenly and earthly realms and a major channel for divine grace. The human body, furthermore, is perceived as a microcosm of the universe, with specific parts of the body being identified with parts of the zodiac and thus subject to their influences.

The so-called Pure Brethren of Basra (*Ikhwān al-Safā*), in their tenth-century treatises collectively known as the *Rasā'il*, write that the study of nature offers proof of God: "Know that the perfect manufacturing of an object indicates the existence of a wise and perfect artisan even when he is veiled and inaccessible to sense perception. He who meditates upon botanical objects will of necessity know that the beings of this reign issue from a perfect artisan."³ For the Ikhwan, who considered themselves Pythagoreans, numbers were an important means of insight into the ordering of nature. In one section of their treatise the Ikhwan present a fictitious court

case in which non-human animals complain of their treatment by humans. Goodman has drawn attention to the similarity of ecological vision evoked in this tenth-century tract with that of contemporary ecologists.⁴ The Ikhwan were a marginal group, however, and their views should not be taken to represent the mainstream Islamic thought of their time.

In Sufism

Muslim mystics, known as Sufis, have tended to interpret Qur’anic references to the oneness of God (*tawhīd*) as indicating an underlying unity to all reality. The Andalusian mystic Muhyi al-din ibn ‘Arabi (1165-1240) described Creation in terms of “unity of being” (*wahdat al-wujūd*), an idea which won wide popularity among Sufis especially in South Asia where his work remains highly influential. Many mainstream Muslims have found this belief to verge dangerously close to pantheism, however; the seventeenth-century Indian Sufi teacher Shah Waliullah preferred the term “unity of witness” (*wahdat al-shuhūd*) as more clearly maintaining the distinction between Creator and Creation.

The Sufi notion of the “Complete Man” (*al-insān al-kāmil*), also elaborated by Ibn ‘Arabi, expands the conception of the human being as microcosm of the universe. For Sufis, cultivation of the individual is analogous to cultivation of the cosmos as a whole; thus, one’s personal spiritual development can affect the entire world.

To Sufis such as Jalal al-din Rumi (1207-1273), not just animals and plants but the entire universe of Creation is alive.⁵ “Earth and water and fire are His slaves,” he writes in the *Masnavī-yi ma‘navī*; “With you and me they are dead, but with God they are alive” (1.838). Nature also speaks, though only the mystics realize this: “The speech of water, the speech of the earth, and the speech of mud are apprehended by the sense of them that have hearts” (1.3279). The conversations of nature are indicative of affective relationships: “You yourself know what words the sun, in the sign of Aries, speaks to the plants and the date palms/You yourself, too, know what the limpid water is saying to the sweet herbs and the sapling” (6.1068-69). Moreover, the Sufis often employ the symbolism of love (*‘ishq*) to describe the relationship of mutual attraction between the Creator and his Creation. Yunus Emre, a thirteenth-century Turkish poet, composed the famous line, “We love all creation for the sake of its Creator.”

Many Sufi tales, such as those found in the works of Rumi, Attar, and others, include animal characters, though these are almost always stand-ins for human characteristics associated with particular species. Non-human animals are seen as occupying a level below humans and the “animal soul” of the philosophers is equated by the Sufis with the “lower self” (*nafs*), or one’s own baser instincts which along the path of spiritual development one strives to overcome.

Contemporary Islamic Environmental Ethics

While it is important not to romanticize the past - Muslims, like people of all cultures, have not always followed the spirit or the letter of their sacred laws - it would appear from the above that pre-modern Islamic societies possessed something that might be considered in contemporary terms as having constituted an environmental ethic. And while one may likewise remain skeptical of arguments that Western imperialism alone is to blame for the erosion of traditional norms throughout the Muslim world, it does seem to be the case that traditional Islamic directives enjoining care and restraint in regard to the use of resources have become less apparent in the modern period.

In short, not only are Muslim societies today *not* models of environmental consciousness, in many cases they provide examples of the worst sorts of environmentally-destructive lifestyles and development policies. Many of the most severely degraded environments in the world today are those in which Muslims constitute a majority of the population. While overall per capita consumption and pollution rates are generally less than in Western industrial societies, Muslim countries mostly suffer from acute environmental problems connected with poverty, overpopulation, and outmoded technologies.

Unfortunately, it is also true that Muslim societies today are faced with so many severe problems of all kinds - political, social, and economic - that environmental protection often seems at best a secondary concern. Few Muslims have yet come around to the way of thinking expressed by Stanford biologist Paul Ehrlich, when he stated that “the environmental crisis is the playing field on which all other problems are played out,” or the popular environmentalist image in which the various human struggles going on in the world today are like “fighting over deck chairs on the Titanic.” We are so preoccupied with dealing with the threats approaching us head-on that we fail to notice what is happening under our feet.

To be fair, Westerners too have been extremely slow to recognize the severity of the threat posed by global environmental degradation. This is more true than ever today, as the government of the United States of America, the world’s number one polluter, holds ever more firmly to a Pollyanna-esque notion that environmental concerns are overstated and trumped by the unrivaled importance of permanent economic growth. It seems significant that in March 2005, the publication of the so-called “Millennium Ecosystem Assessment”⁶ in which a five-year study by 1,360 scientists from 95 countries concluded that human activities have severely compromised two-thirds of the earth’s ecosystems in only the past fifty years, made front page headlines in Europe and elsewhere in the world but was almost completely ignored by the mainstream media in the US.⁷

The US is the world’s richest country, and environmental degradation is typically less worrisome to the rich who can mostly shield themselves from its effects, than it is to the poor who suffer from environmental problems most immediately and most severely. In the developing world the environmental crisis is often experienced most profoundly by rural women, who are the primary users of natural resources (and whose husbands may

quite disconnected by comparison, away working in urban factories). At the same time rural women tend to be the most disempowered members of traditional societies, thus the least able to react to the crisis.

Ironically the United States, while remaining the world's major agent of environmental destruction as well as the leading proponent of unsustainable economic policies and practices, is also the original home of environmentalism in its modern sense. Environmental consciousness, in its contemporary form, emerged in the late nineteenth century among Americans such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Theodore Roosevelt. Revisionist philosophies which placed humans within and not above natural systems were articulated by Americans such as Aldo Leopold in the 1940s and Edward Abbey in the 1970s. Contemporary environmentalism, as exported to the rest of the world, is thus largely an American product.

This point has not gone unnoticed by environmentalists elsewhere. In a 1989 article in the US-based journal *Environmental Ethics*, Indian sociologist Ramachandra Guha argued that whatever its inherent merits, an environmentalism derived within the particular history and culture of North America cannot simply be applied as a one-size-fits-all model to the rest of the world. The attempt to do so - seen in such examples as the creation of national parks from which human inhabitants are forcibly expelled - too often constitutes a "direct transfer of resources from the poor to the rich."⁸

It hardly comes as a surprise, then, that environmentalist policies and initiatives in the Muslim world are often seen as merely another example of Western imperialism, an attempt by foreigners, foreign interests, or foreign puppets to meddle in the affairs of Muslim communities for purposes of exploitation and control. It would seem that under such circumstances, environmentalism in Muslim societies would have to develop in an indigenously-derived form seen as locally-relevant, if it hopes to take root and flourish. Unfortunately examples of home-grown environmentalism are not yet easy to find in the Muslim world, though they are not non-existent.

Probably the credit for first beginning to think about the environmental crisis in Islamic terms should go to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, an Iranian-American academic who has been preoccupied with the effects of human activities on natural systems since before Rachel Carson, during his student days in Massachusetts during the 1950s when he would trace Thoreau's footsteps around Walden Pond.⁹ A historian of philosophy and science, Nasr was struck by how much had changed since Thoreau's time, and began to feel that there was a marked difference between Islamic science, in which the pursuit of understanding nature was seen as a sacred undertaking, a way of better knowing the mind of God, and the de-sacralized scientific approach of the post-Enlightenment West in which nature was seen as mechanical, devoid of life or inherent meaning, and existing only to serve human ends.

Nasr spelled out this distinction in his book *Science and Civilization in Islam* and other works, even preceding by several months Lynn White, Jr.'s famous critique of human exceptionalism in Western religions, a 1967 paper titled "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,"¹⁰ with a similar argument in a lecture series Nasr gave at the University of Chicago in the

summer of 1966.¹¹ Over the past four decades Nasr has continued to describe the environmental crisis as one that originates as a crisis of values; his works are cited widely by Muslim environmentalists, and as a representative authority by Westerners seeking to include “the Islamic perspective” in discussions on the environment.

The main shortcoming of Nasr’s contribution has been that he has always written predominantly for a Western audience of non-Muslims, serving first and foremost as an apologist for Islam. Those Muslims who have read him, have almost always read him in English, as his works have been little translated into Arabic or even his own native Persian. His case exemplifies the paradox that, even among Muslims seeking to derive an environmentalism from within their own tradition, the initial impetus and context is often the West.

The first specifically Islamic treatise on environmental protection, composed by a team of Islamic scholars in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in 1983, was commissioned by a Swiss-based environmental organization, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN).¹² The resulting tract, which consisted of only thirty pages of text, was very poorly distributed, and its authors have since acknowledged that their efforts to have its findings adopted by policy-makers in Muslim countries have largely failed.

A second effort to articulate Islam-based environmental values came at the instigation of another Western organization, the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). The WWF organized a symposium in Assisi, Italy in 1986 on environmental values in world religions, to which a Muslim representative was invited and who composed a one-page statement on Islam and the environment.¹³ Later, the WWF expanded their project to commission short edited books of articles on religion and the environment, one book for each major religion. To edit the Islam volume they approached Fazlun Khalid, a British Muslim of Ceylonese origin who had developed a strong interest in environmental issues through reading the works of Nasr and a number of Western environmentalists.

The WWF volume edited by Khalid and published in 1992 under the title *Islam and Ecology*, contained a half dozen brief essays by practicing Muslims which took note of Islamic teachings on the environment and offered explanations for the environmental crisis based on such things as Islamic critiques of the global economy (which, being based on the taking of interest and the unlimited creation of credit, they claimed as fundamentally un-Islamic).¹⁴ Again, this little book was poorly circulated - though it has since been issued in Turkish and Indonesian translations - and was known and used mainly by Western environmentalists as a statement of “the Islamic position” on environmental protection.

The most sophisticated attempt yet to discuss environmental values through the lens of the world’s religious systems was undertaken in the late 1990s by two professors at Bucknell University, Mary Evelyn Tucker (a specialist in Confucianism) and her husband John Grim (an expert on Native Americans). Tucker and Grim obtained funding from a variety of sources which enabled them to organize a series of ten international conferences on

religion and ecology, which were held at Harvard University Divinity School from 1996 through 1998. For the Islam conference, which occurred in May 1998, Grim sought out the organizational assistance of Fazlun Khalid, who drew on his growing international network of Muslims concerned with the environment to come up with a list of participants.

The Harvard conferences, perhaps to be expected of an initial foray into a new field, provided mixed results. At the Islam conference it was hard not to feel that many of the participants were less interested in saving the environment than they were in taking advantage of an all-expense paid trip to Harvard. In their presentations many referred to the environment only passingly, some not at all. Though other axes were ground, no hard questions were asked about the treatment of the environment in contemporary Muslim societies, and all problems were blamed on Western interference, Western values, and the erosion of traditional Islamic norms. The dominant theme of the conference was that Islam provides everything necessary for the appropriate management of natural resources, and that if Islam were widely and properly practiced then there would be no environmental crisis to talk about. Issues such as human population control, lifestyles of overconsumption, and animal rights, when briefly raised were loudly dismissed out of hand by certain vocal participants and not revisited.

Nevertheless, a number of genuinely committed Muslim environmentalists did attend the conference, even if their voices were not prominently heard there. The event at least resulted in both the publication of an edited book, like its predecessor titled *Islam and Ecology* but at 584 pages much more extensive,¹⁵ and in the strengthening of a global network of Muslim environmentalists which continues to expand today. Among them can be counted in addition to Fazlun Khalid, Uthman Abd al-Rahman Llewellyn, an American convert who has spent many years working as an environmental consultant for the government of Saudi Arabia; Turkish theology professor İbrahim Özdemir, author of several books on environmental ethics and now Undersecretary of Education for the Turkish government; Safei El-Din Hamed, professor of landscape architecture at Texas Tech and former consultant to the Egyptian government and the World Bank; and Mohammad Aslam Parvaiz, founder-director of the Islamic Foundation for Science and Environment in Delhi. Özdemir has since arranged for a Turkish translation of the Harvard *Islam and Ecology* volume, while Parvaiz has commissioned an Urdu version for use in the Islamic seminaries of India. Another longtime Islamic environmentalist, Iraqi-born law professor Mawil Izzi Dien, who did not attend the conference but who submitted a paper for the published proceedings, has been attempting to establish a Centre for Islam and Ecology at the University of Wales. (Izzi Dien contributed to the 1983 Jeddah tract, and is the author of the first book-length treatment of Islam and the environment, titled *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*, which was published in 2000.¹⁶)

By far the most significant efforts in disseminating an Islamic ethic of the environment on a global scale have been by Fazlun Khalid. Beginning with the establishment of the organization he founded in the early 1990s, the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES),

based in Birmingham, England, this former British civil servant has spent the last decade of his retirement endlessly traveling around the world conducting environmental education seminars in Muslim communities from Saudi Arabia to Indonesia.¹⁷ A project conducted by Khalid among the Muslim fishermen on the East African island of Zanzibar was described by BBC News in early 2005 as a remarkable success.¹⁸

Such efforts by practicing Muslims who happen to be environmentalists and therefore seek to articulate their environmentalism in Islamic terms, may be weighed against initiatives in countries where the environmentalists concerned just happen to be Muslims.¹⁹ The international environmental organizations WWF and IUCN, for example, both have offices in a number of Muslim countries. (The IUCN Karachi office is the largest in the developing world).

As might be expected, organizations that are Western in their origins, outlook, and approach, are likely to attempt projects which reflect their Western orientation. Equally predictably, their successes have been mixed, when they have not - as in IUCN Pakistan's attempt to enlist Pathan religious scholars in teaching environmental ethics in religious schools - been acknowledged failures. One significant aspect of the constraints faced by international environmental organizations operating in Muslim countries, is that they tend necessarily to be grant-driven. That is to say, because they rely heavily on grants to carry out their works, they must devise projects which may reflect more the interests of granting agencies than they do the actual needs of the societies in question.²⁰

An exception to this phenomenon can be found in Iran, where NGOs are severely restricted in their ability to solicit or obtain external funding because of a longstanding US-led economic embargo. As a result, environmental organizations in Iran have emerged in a context of independence and localism. Indeed, Iran would seem to offer the most successful example in the world today of a truly home-grown environmentalism.²¹

Civil society in Iran benefited greatly from the election of reformist president Mohammad Khatami in 1997. Since then, over two hundred new environmental organizations have been officially recognized by the Iranian government. The government of the Islamic Republic itself has promoted an environmentalist rhetoric which is among the most sophisticated and progressive in the world, even explicitly calling for an Islamic approach to environmental ethics, although its rhetoric has not been backed up by action in many cases.

Environmentalism in Iran is seen most tangibly in the proliferation of environmental NGOs, many of which, such as the Green Front of Iran (GFI), have been remarkably effective in raising public awareness and carrying out environmental protection campaigns. And while the government continues to be seen by most Iranians as all talk and no action, Iranian environmentalists at least enjoy the theoretical support of the Islamic state.

While Iran's home-grown environmentalism seems to hold unique promise in the Muslim world today as proof that indigenous, non-Western

models can indeed succeed, paradoxically the conditions of enforced independence which gave rise to Iran's unique environmental movement are little appreciated by most Iranians, who are eager to overcome their twenty-five years of forced isolation and climb aboard the juggernaut of economic globalization. With Iran's entry into the WTO newly on the table for discussion and a new reactionary president for whom environmentalism seems a lesser priority than taunting the West, the future independence of Iranian environmentalism may be in question.

In conclusion, a plurality of models currently exists for environmentalism across the Muslim world. Unfortunately, none yet appears up to the task of reducing the momentum of ecologically-devastating modernity, which continues its headlong plunge toward global catastrophe. But if there is any hope at all for the world's environmental movements to play a role in slowing the present destructive trends and steering human society towards more just and sustainable alternatives, the planet's 1.2 billion Muslims demonstrably have cultural resources to draw upon which are both compatible with their traditions and hold promise for meeting emerging needs.

Notes

- 1 Jafar Sheikh Idris, "Is Man the Viceregent of God?" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 1/1 (1990): 99-110.
- 2 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, rev. ed. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993 [1964]): 9.
- 3 Quoted in Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, p. 45
- 4 Lenn Evan Goodman, tr., *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn: A Tenth-Century Ecological Fable of the Pure Brethren of Basra* (Boston: Twayne, 1978): 5-6.
- 5 L. Clarke, "The Universe Alive: Nature in the Philosophy of Jalal al-Din Rumi," in Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin, *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003): 39-65.
- 6 The report can be viewed online at <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx>.
- 7 Tim Radford, "Two-Thirds of the World's Resources Used up," *The Guardian* (30 March 2005); Jean-Marcel Bougereau, "Question de Survie," *Le Nouvel Observateur* (1 April 2005). Perhaps the most visible notice in the US appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor*: Mark Clayton, "Life on Tired Earth," *The Christian Science Monitor* (1 April 2005).
- 8 Ramachandra Guha, "Radical Environmentalism: A Third World Critique," *Environmental Ethics* 11/1 (1989): 75.
- 9 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam, the Contemporary Islamic World, and the Environmental Crisis," in Foltz, et al., eds., *Islam and Ecology*, p. 85.
- 10 Lynn White, Jr, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-7.
- 11 These lectures were later published as *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London, 1967).
- 12 Abou Bakr Ahmed Ba Kader, Abdul Latif Tawfik El Shirazy Al Sabagh, Mohamed Al Sayyed Al Glenid, and Mawil Y. Izzie Deen, *Islamic Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Environment* (Gland, Switzerland: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources), 1983.
- 13 Abdullah Omar Nasif, "The Muslim Declaration of Nature," *Environmental Policy and Law* 17/1 (1987): 47.
- 14 Fazlun Khalid and Joanne O'Brien, eds., *Islam and Ecology* (New York: Cassell, 1992).
- 15 Foltz, et al., eds., *Islam and Ecology*.
- 16 Mawil Y. Izzie Dien, *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 2000).
- 17 See the organization's website at www.ifees.org.
- 18 Daniel Dickenson, "Eco-Islam Hits Zanzibar Fishermen," *BBC News* (17 February 2005).
- 19 See the country reports in Richard C. Foltz, ed., *Environmentalism in the Muslim World* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2005).
- 20 I owe this observation to Syamak Moattari, founder-director of the Green Front of Iran.
- 21 Richard C. Foltz, "Iran," in Foltz, ed., *Environmentalism in the Muslim World*, pp. 11-23.