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INTRODUCTION

This essay seeks to critically evaluate the ecological legacy of Islam. Any assessment of Islamic environmental ethics has to be set against the historical geo-political and political issues of the 20th century, particularly as they have been a distraction away from or directly affected the environment and eco-systems in Islamic countries throughout the world. An examination of contemporary history shows that any concern for the environment is particularly recent beginning in late 1960's. Issues around gender, human rights, democracy, poverty and others have relegated environmental ethics to the margins. However, there has been significant consideration since the 1980s, beginning with an examination of Islam's sacred text, the Qur'an to show that Islam is a 'green religion.' This hermeneutic approach began with the concept of *khalifa* or stewardship found in the sacred text, the Qur'an which assigns humans a caretaker role toward the earth, nature and creation. The other area of consideration, scholarly discussion and crucially practice, is that of the centuries old concept of *hima* management system. Although this concept declined in 20th century, there has been a recent revival across the Islamic world. Whilst scriptural assent is the cornerstone of Islamic ethics, the adaptability of the *hima* tradition from examples discussed here show this approval can be of benefit rather than an obstacle to ecological progress. In conclusion this essay describes a developing focus within Islamic scholarship on the study of practice-the grassroots ecological practice, daily experiences and traditions of both traditional indigenous Muslim communities and recently created local communities—a lived eco-friendly ethic particular to these communities and their eco-systems but also Islamic.

ISLAM AND ECOLOGY IN CONTEXT

Throughout the 20th century, as Bagir and Martiam show environmental issues have been of marginal concern within the Islamic world with other issues taking priority.¹ As Foltz says, there has been 'greater interest in human-centered issues of justice than in the biosphere.'² Islamic scholars emphasise other recent often connected issues that have preoccupied Islamic nations at the expense of environmental concerns : for example, Ammar highlights how over half of the wars in the world currently are based in Islamic countries.³ Bagir and Martiam identify other political issues including democracy, human rights, and gender equality.⁴ Pollution, Ammar points out is a major problem in Islamic countries with the capital of Islam, Cairo being regularly cited as the second most polluted city in the world.⁵ Leading British Islamic scholar, Izzi Dien highlights corrupt political decision making that led the extreme ecological impact of the destruction of the Kuwaiti oil wells and deforestation in South East

¹ Zainal Abidin Bagir and Najiyah Martiam, *Islam :Norms and Practices* (2016)<<https://fore.yale.edu/World-Religions/Islam/Overview-Essay>> [accessed 11 July 2021]

² Richard C. Foltz, 'Islam', in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, ed. by Roger S. Gottlieb (Oxford: OUP 2006), pp. 207-219 (p. 213). <DOI:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195178722.003.0009> [accessed July 11th 2021].

³ Nawal Ammar, Islam and Deep Ecology, in *Deep Ecology and World Religions*, ed. By David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb (State University of New York, 2001), pp. 193-211 (p.193).

⁴ Bagir and Martiam, 'Islam: Norms and Practices', np.

⁵ Ammar, p.193.

Asia.⁶ Amin discusses how poverty is a traditional focus for those of the Islamic faith—a focus that can incorporate environmental concerns although the latter isn't the initial motivation.⁷ Foltz draws attention to another significant issue when he says that issues of social justice and man's relationship with God is of more concern than the environment for Muslims.⁸ Further, Foltz emphasises that the 'some of the most severe environmental problems in the world today are found in countries where the majority of inhabitants are Muslim,' suggesting the lack of any significant ecological ethic in the Islamic world.⁹

Bagir and Martiam argue that because of the above issues, 'it is clear that the issue of ecology does not occupy an important place yet.'¹⁰ As a result of all these issues in combination any Islamic concern for the environment, as Foltz notes emerged as a concern only recently, the focus of which has been mostly scholarly.¹¹ Foltz explains that the first Islamic scholar to apply an Islamic lens to the environmental concerns was the Iranian philosopher, Seyyed Hossien Nasr in a lecture at the University of Chicago in 1966.¹² Foltz explains that Nasr linked ecological crisis to a spiritual and moral decline.¹³ However, even after Nasr's lectures, Bagir and Martiam note that recognition of any environmental crisis wasn't apparent until the 1980's and 1990's.¹⁴ Murad provides an example of a significant moment for discourse regarding Islam and the environment in 1980, when Nasr became the first Muslim to be invited to present a Gifford Lecture at Edinburgh University.¹⁵ In addition, Amin highlights a conference on Islam and ecology in 1998, describing the event as a 'watershed moment in bringing together scholars from all over the Islamic world.'¹⁶ Subsequently, there have been a number of significant worldwide conferences at which Islam and the environment has been a central topic.¹⁷

For initiatives with a combination of the scholarly and practice, Bagir and Martiam cite the establishment by Islamic scholar, Fazlun Khalid of 'The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences' (IFEES) in the mid-1980s as a significant moment for Islamic ecology.¹⁸ In the last twenty years, IFEES have initiated a number of projects including the

⁶ M. Izzi Dien, *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*, (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2000), p. 18.

⁷ Adnan Z. Amin, 'Preface to Islam and Ecology' in *Islam and Ecology*, ed. by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. xxxii-xxxv. (p. xxxii)

⁸ Richard C. Foltz, 'Introduction', in *Islam and Ecology*, ed. by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003) pp. xxviii-xliii (p. xxxix).

⁹ Foltz, p. 214.

¹⁰ Bagir and Martiam, 'Islam: Norms and Practices.' np.

¹¹ Foltz, 'Islam', p. 208.

¹² Foltz, 'Islam. 208.

¹³ Foltz 'Islam' p.208.

¹⁴ Bagir and Martiam, 'Islam: Norms and Practices', np.

¹⁵ Munjad M. Murad, 'Islamic Environmental Stewardship: Nature and Science in the Light of Islamic Philosophy.' *Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Columbia University*, (2010), 145-164 (p.145) < doi/10.7916/D8GQ6X2Z>

¹⁶ Amin, p. xxxii.

¹⁷ Amin, p. xxxiv.

¹⁸ Bagir and Martiam, 'Islam: Norms and Practices.' np.

‘greening’ of mosques which included a focus on creating gardens, the recycling of waste, and installation of solar panels at mosques.

Despite these recent practical examples, Bagir and Martiam point out that initial debate over the last few decades around environmental concerns has been an academic one, looking to the canonical source of Islam, the Qur’an, for proof that Islam has been or has continues to be a ‘green religion.’¹⁹ As Ozdemir explains the Qur’an is the source of all knowledge of the cosmos and is the foundational basis of for all Muslims and the Islamic world’s primary authority.²⁰ As Foltz says: ‘for an idea to achieve anything approaching universal acceptance by Muslims as Islamic, it must be convincingly demonstrated that it derives from, or is at least compatible with, the principles laid down in the Qur’an and the *Sunna*.’²¹

Foltz notes that this mining of the tradition for a positive environmental method may have been prompted by Lynn White’s lecture and subsequent article, ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’, in 1967.²² As Bagir & Martiam show, the response from Islamic scholars was defensive mirroring the apologia response to White from the Christian scholars who examined the Bible for an environmental ethic to refute White’s assertion that Christianity was entirely culpable for contemporary ecological crisis.²³ White argued that the Biblical origin story of Genesis, showed that Christianity was underpinned by a relationship to nature that was one of domination and exploitation and had resulted in the ecological crisis of the 20th century.²⁴ However, Islamic scholars such as Bagir and Martiam turned to the Islamic origin story contained in the Qur’an.²⁵ As Bagir & Martiam illustrate, the concept central to all discussions an ecological ethic in the Quran begin with the concept of *khalifa*.²⁶

KHALIFA AND STEWARDSHIP

Foltz citing Islamic scholars draws on the following passage in the Qur’an: ‘I am setting on the earth a vice-regent [khilafa]’ in verses 2.30, and the second reference Foltz makes to the Qur’an is: ‘It is he who has made you his vice-regent on earth’, verses 6.165.²⁷ Also, Foltz quotes from a hadith, ‘verily, this world is sweet and appealing, and Allah placed you as vice-regents therein; he will see what you do.’²⁸ Bagir and Martiam expand upon this describing vice-regents as ‘stewards.’²⁹ Dien adds that this role is that of a ‘caretaker.’³⁰ This caretaker

¹⁹ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices*.’ np.

²⁰ Ibrahim Ozdemir, ‘Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective’ in *Islam and Ecology*, ed. by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003) pp. 2-29 (p.2)

²¹ Foltz, ‘Islam.’ 209.

²² Foltz, ‘Islam’ p. 208.

²³ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices*.’ np.

²⁴ Lynn White Jr, ‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis’, *Science*, 155.3767 (1967) pp. 1203-1207 (p.) < DOI: 10.1126/science.155.3767.1203> [accessed July 24th 2021]

²⁵ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices*.’ np.

²⁶ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices*.’ np.

²⁷ Foltz, ‘Islam’, p. 209.

²⁸ Foltz, ‘Islam’, p. 209.

²⁹ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices*.’ np.

³⁰ Dien, p. 74.

role, Khalid explains is set in the context that the ‘real owner of the natural world’ is God.³¹ Khalid quotes : ‘He appointed us his *Khalifs* (stewards) on earth...so He could test you regarding what He has given you.’³² Dein explores this role further saying : ‘with the prospect of human responsibility with the expectation that this honour isn’t misused.’³³ As we see from the quote from the Qur’an above from Foltz, Muslims will be judged in the after-life for the misuse of nature. Khalid comments on the implications for an environmental ethic contained within the *khalifa* role: ‘This situates us in the arena of a moral relationship with the rest of creation which demands both self-restraint as a control over greed and an awareness of others.’³⁴

Bagir & Martiam describe this stewardship role as ‘special position in creation.’³⁵ Ozdemir explains that whilst the role positions humans at the top of an hierarchy, accusations of anthropocentrism don’t take the message of the Qur’an in context, in which although man is above the non-human, humans do not own nature.³⁶ Bagir & Martiam also address the issue of anthropocentrism in the origin story, describing this special position in creation for humans to gain from at the expense of the non-human, dismissing this kind of anthropocentrism as ‘largely benign’.³⁷ As Foltz suggests in this comment, the non-human is considered equals: ‘The Qur’an states that “there is not an animal in the earth, nor a flying creature on two wings, but they are peoples like unto you.”’³⁸ For Bagir and Martiam, humans and the non-human, as seen above, are on an equal footing, the difference being one in relation to God, the non-human submits naturally to God and humans have free will and don’t automatically submit.³⁹

Furthermore, Khalid explains some of the various laws relating to *khalifa* role present Qur’an from a more practical perspective, laws which include: ‘the right to benefit from natural resources is a right held in common’ and ‘there should be no damage or infliction of damage bearing in mind future users.’⁴⁰ This can be read as humans being responsible not just for present and future humans but also the non-human—as Dein explains this God given trust is a responsibility toward every ‘generation of creature-past, present or future.’⁴¹ Ozdemir translates the moral imperatives of vice-regency using contemporary ecological language, explaining that ‘biodiversity and the richness of the ecosystem is a result of God’s creation and His will; therefore, the ecosystem should be respected and maintained’ suggesting interpretations of the *khalifa* role can be applied contemporary problems.⁴² For Ozdemir

³¹ Fazlun Khalid, ‘The HIMA system’, *‘International Workshop: Towards an Implementation Strategy for the Human Integrated Management. Ed by Majda Khalil Suleiman.’* Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, (2013) , p 1-254 (p. 238) < <https://sacrednaturalsites.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/HIMAProceedings.pdf> > [accessed August 20th 2021]

³² Khalid, ‘The HIMA system’ p. 239.

³³ Dein, p.74.

³⁴ Khalid, ‘The HIMA systems’. 239.

³⁵ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

³⁶ Ozdemir, ‘Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective’ p. 25.

³⁷ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

³⁸ Foltz, p. 210.

³⁹ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np

⁴⁰ Khalid, p.239-240.

⁴¹ Dien, p.74.

⁴² Ozdemir, ‘Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective’ p. 28.

comes to the conclusion that the ‘an environmental ethic is the logical outcome of a Qur’anic understanding of nature and humankind’ based on the concept of *khalifa*, however the success of this stewardship role has been questioned by other Islamic scholars.⁴³

A FAILURE OF STEWARDSHIP?

Nasr explains that it is human destiny to fulfil the role of God’s vice-regent and as a consequence protect the natural order.⁴⁴ In a ‘true’ Islamic society, political leaders would act out ecologically sound policies that are enshrined in Islamic law and transgressors would be punished.⁴⁵ However, Nasr is critical of Islamic countries who follow a Western model of society, one that separates nature from the Divine. For Nasr, a pure Islamic society is an eco-literate one, where the fault lies is with the influence of dominant Western values, not with the Islamic classical texts. As Nasr says, a worldview that values the human over the Divine.⁴⁶ For Nasr, the obstacles to Muslims following the canonical principles are external—namely, modernity and modern science and technology, controlled by Western powers and accepted by Islamic countries.⁴⁷

Dien echoes Nasr’s observation relating to the failure of stewardship when he says: ‘Islam claims to be an environmentally aware religion, but many Muslims tend to consider only their material needs upon which they justify all forms of environmental misuse, abuse and exploitation.’⁴⁸ One of the issues here might be that given levels of poverty in the Muslim world; long term environmental considerations may be secondary to short term survival. Khalid was faced with this issue on a practical level when working with the indigenous Islamic people of Zanzibar to prevent ecological destructive fishing practices: ‘Given the choice between alleviating hunger and long term conservation, people cannot be expected to choose other than the former option.’⁴⁹ However, Khalid qualifies the role of poverty influencing Islamic behaviours by describing what he sees as a schizoid society nominally attached to Islam but also wedded to consumerism.⁵⁰ Khalid shows rural poverty in Islamic countries presents a challenge to an environmental ethic.

Whilst recognising the pressure of an Islamic communities need to address poverty, Khalid is forthright in his criticism when he says: ‘As God’s stewards...we have not just neglected our

⁴³ Ozdemir, ‘Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective’ p. 28.

⁴⁴ Marjorie Hope and James Young, ‘Islam and Ecology,’ *Crosscurrents*, <<http://www.crosscurrents.org/islamecology.htm>> [accessed 14 July 2021]

⁴⁵ Hope and Young, ‘Islam and Ecology’, np.

⁴⁶ Hope and Young, ‘Islam and Ecology’, np.

⁴⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, ‘Islam, the Contemporary Islamic World, and the Environmental Crisis’ in *Islam and Ecology*, ed. by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny and Azizan Baharuddin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003) pp. 2-29 (p.2)

⁴⁸ Dein, p. 19.

⁴⁹ IFEES, ‘The application of Islamic environmental ethics to promote marine conservation in Zanzibar’ <<https://www.ifees.org.uk/projects/islam-biodiversity/zanzibar/>> [accessed July 24th, 2021]

⁵⁰ Khalid, ‘The HIMA System’, p. 250.

responsibilities...we have mounted an assault into the bosom of nature that we shelter in... we have broken the basic codes governing caring, sharing and conservation.’⁵¹

Throughout these critiques, there is a recognition that both the influence of the West and their materialistic value and Muslims in their contemporary behavior are equally at fault. Dien continues on this theme, quoting, Nasr : a *khalifa* who no longer follows God’s way is the most dangerous creatures on Earth.⁵² For Murad, the eco-crisis cannot be mitigated without Muslims-and other faiths-addressing their spiritual crisis by turning to God.’⁵³

Khalid makes a comment that echoes this necessity to turn not just to God and the observation that the failure is not one of Islamic religion itself but of not respecting the khalifa role : “One could say with a reasonable degree of certainty that the environmental problems we see today would not have arisen in a society ordered in accord with Islamic principles because its world view "defined limits to human behaviour and contained excess.”⁵⁴

Khalid’s interest is how to reverse this failure stewardship with reference to the sacred texts, the Qur’an but also the Sunnah of the Prophet --which finds written expression in the hadith—and how to put in practice, sustainable Islamic solutions to ecological problems.

⁵⁵One central example of a practical ecological ethic, Khalid emphasises as a truly Islamic environmental ethic is the Islamic tradition of *hima* found in the hadith. ⁵⁶

HIMA: AN ISLAMIC ECOLOGICAL LEGACY

As Haq comments, the hadith is the collected writings of the Prophet, Muhammad, the content of which supplement the sacred text of the Qur’an and the life of Muhammad operating as a required and essential role model. ⁵⁷ Haq describes the hadiths as ‘God’s Way’ translated into a viable body of concrete codes of action and laws’; crucially an authenticated hadith was legally binding.’⁵⁸ Throughout the corpus of the hadith there are references to the natural environment and what we may call environmental ethics, however as Haq notes translating the Hadith into an ‘isolated and independent ecological concern is not to be found here.’⁵⁹ Whilst there are laws relating to land management, water supply, and animal husbandry, Haq notes these are of a general nature --any specific concern is a contemporary

⁵¹ Fazlun Khalid, ‘The Tree and The Forest’, *Paper submitted to the Fourth Klingenthal Symposium, Goethe Foundation*, Strasbourg, 22-26 September 1999. Available at:<<https://ifees.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/1999-the-tree-and-the-forest-an-islamic-perspective.pdf>>(accessed August 11 2021].

⁵² Dien, p. 76.

⁵³ Murad, ‘Islamic Environmental Stewardship: Nature and Science in the Light of Islamic Philosophy’, p. 147.

⁵⁴ Khalid, ‘The HIMA System’, p. 250.

⁵⁵ Khalid, ‘The HIMA system’ p.239.

⁵⁶ Khalid, ‘The HIMA system’ p. 238.

⁵⁷ Normanul S. Haq, ‘Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction’, *Daedalus*, 130.4 (2001). 141-179 (p.163) <<https://www.amacad.org/publication/islam-and-ecology-toward-retrieval-and-reconstruction>> [accessed July 2021]

⁵⁸ Haq,’ ‘Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction’, p.148.

⁵⁹ Haq, ‘Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction,’ p. 149.

development concern.⁶⁰ However this positive, contemporary concern finds expression in the revival of the tradition of land management *hima*.⁶¹

Hima clearly represents a traditional legacy of Islamic environmental practice as Mangunjaya and McKay note, *hima* sites have been existence for 1,500 years.⁶² Dein describes *hima* as meaning ‘forbidden’, referring to a pre-Islamic practice whereby areas of land reserved by powerful lords as hedge against problems caused by drought.⁶³ Gari traces the history of *hima* noting that its original secular model was exploitative but a transformation took place with the arrival of Islam, *hima* were established for the benefit of the local community.’⁶⁴ Gari notes that the *hima* system was application was diverse including management of water resources, land management, pastureland, beekeeping, forestry and woodland. ⁶⁵As Dien says *hima* is ‘a clear form of environmental conservation’ underpinned by Islamic law, noting that *hima* allows for the existence of animal reserves but also reserves for flora, fauna, bird species, marine life, and animals that are considered endangered.’⁶⁶

In terms of an strong Islamic ecological legacy, Gari states citing Llewelyn that ‘few systems of protected areas are known that have a history to comparable in length with traditional *hima*.’⁶⁷Further, these systems weren’t confined to rural or nomadic areas but also were established near urban areas—perhaps providing an interesting model for ‘greening’ today’s suburban environments.⁶⁸ Gari traces this long and complex history of the *hima* system, from early Islam, through the Middle Ages and up to the present day, one, including examples in Jordan, Syria, Yemen and Saudi Arabia of land management, rainwater run-off, management of forestry, pastureland. ⁶⁹ Within this system, local councils were established to oversee aspects of management and to impose fines or other penalties.⁷⁰ Gari describes how the system declined from the 1950’s in countries giving the examples of Saudi Arabia, with *hima* reducing from 3000 to four Ministry managed *hima* by 1990, and only a dozen, local run community projects. ⁷¹The *hima* sites were replaced with a national park system, the result being ecological destruction, plant loss, deforestation, and uncontrolled hunting. ⁷²With decline of *hima* saw governments possessing rangelands abdicating control over usage,

⁶⁰ Haq ‘Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction, p. 149.

⁶¹ Haq, ‘Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction, p. 149.

⁶² Fachruddin Majeri Mangunjaya and Jeanne Elizabeth McKay, ‘Reviving an Islamic Approach for Environmental Conservation in Indonesia,’ *Worldviews*, 16.3 (2012), pp.286-305 (p. 298)< <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43809780>>[accessed August 21st 2021]

⁶³ Dein, p. 43.

⁶⁴ Lutfallah Gari, ‘A History of the Ḥimā Conservation System’, *Environment and History*, 12.2 (2006), pp. 213-228, (p. 213) < <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20723574>>[accessed August 11, 2021]

⁶⁵ Gari,’ ‘A History of the Ḥimā Conservation System’, p.215.

⁶⁶ Dien, p.42.

⁶⁷ Gari,’ ‘A History of the Ḥimā Conservation System’, p.217.

⁶⁸ Gari,’ ‘A History of the Ḥimā Conservation System’, p.217.

⁶⁹ Gari,’ ‘A History of the Ḥimā Conservation System’, p.219.

⁷⁰ Gari,’ ‘A History of the Ḥimā Conservation System’ p. 220.

⁷¹ Gari,’ ‘A History of the Ḥimā Conservation System’ p. 220.

⁷² Gari,’ ‘A History of the Ḥimā Conservation System’, p.220.

resulting in poor maintenance of ‘the land and its resources.’⁷³ However, interest in *hima* has seen a revival recently leading to the establishment of hima tradition in Islamic countries with both a hima tradition and those without one.⁷⁴

Abraham describes the successful pilot institution of Al Hima at Bani-Hasham in Jordan. The key to Al hima, according to Abraham is its flexibility and specificity to a bio-region.

⁷⁵Abraham says that Al hima is a way of ‘going about things’ –an adaptable system or framework for management that can be used in various and differing locations of different eco-systems, that once declared has scriptural assent and a basis in Islamic law.⁷⁶

STEWARDSHIP IN PRACTICE TODAY

Fazlun Khalid has been in initiated projects to establish hima in Islamic countries. Khalid emphasizes the ‘flexibility and adaptability’ that underpins the hima system and makes it relevant to today.⁷⁷ Along with other examples of Islamic scholars mentioned above, Khalid draws on the sacred texts to propose an ecological ethic and embedded in the *hima* concept. Khalid says : ‘We have in the past twenty or so years laying down the foundations upon which Islamic conservation practices could be built directly from the Qur’an and which would make sense for us in the present day.’⁷⁸

CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES OF HIMA

1. TANZANIA

An initiative by IFEES provides a hima case study of marine conservation work, IFEES in alliance with Western NGO’s such as the U.S. based CARE International, created a marine conservation project in Zanzibar to deal with overfishing and reduce the illegal fishing practice which has led to the depletion of fish stocks and destruction of marine eco-system.⁷⁹ However, when Western conservation methods were insufficient, an Islamic stewardship ethic was applied, found superior, and a hima designation approved.⁸⁰ In addition the authors note, as part of the *hima* project, IFEES established an on-going education system to promote sustainable practices.⁸¹

2. KENYA

Another recent initiative showing the adaptability of *hima* has been established in Kenya in which a European conservation organisation Global One, and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, with funding from the government of Norway, worked together to provide a

⁷³ Gari, ‘A History of the Hima Conservation System’, p.220.

⁷⁴ Mangunjaya and McKay, ‘Reviving an Islamic Approach for Environmental Conservation in Indonesia’, p. 298.

⁷⁵ Abraham, ‘Ecologist Special Report: The Al Hima Revival, np.

⁷⁶ Abraham, ‘Ecologist Special Report: The Al Hima Revival, np.

⁷⁷ Khalid, ‘The HIMA system’, p.238.

⁷⁸ Khalid, ‘The HIMA system’, p.247.

⁷⁹ IFEES, ‘The application of Islamic environmental ethics to promote marine’ np.

⁸⁰ IFEES, ‘The application of Islamic environmental ethics to promote marine’ np.

⁸¹ IFEES, ‘The application of Islamic environmental ethics to promote marine’ np.

manual for Muslim farmers.⁸² The result was the manual, ‘Islamic Farming’ aimed at the large population of Muslims of Sub-Saharan Africa. Islamic scholars and clerics contributed a theological underpinning to the manual based on the Islamic canon.⁸³ The *hima* system as described by the authors has parallels with ancient Islamic systems with non-Islamic farming methods such as permaculture.⁸⁴ Throughout the manual scriptural approval is claimed by the authors to both Islamic and non-Islamic methods of farming : for example, agroforestry is justified as a form of continuous alms or charity’, shown by this quote: ‘the Prophet said ‘If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as a charitable gift...’⁸⁵

Similarly, beekeeping is encouraged and validated by sacred text: ‘Honey is a remedy for every illness and the Qur’an is a remedy for all illness of the mind, therefore I recommend to you both remedies, the Qur’an and honey.’⁸⁶ Whilst this shows how inextricably linked the canon and the environment ethics are—it also shows how one can devise an ethic around a creative reading of the canon—as Haq says, classical scholars view the Qur’an as not so much as a doctrinal textbook but ‘more valuably as a rich and subtle stimulus to religious imagination.’⁸⁷ This allows for flexibility in developing environmental ethics, assessing existing practice or creating new practices. The key theme here is the adaptability of *hima* as expressed by Khalid.⁸⁸

HIMA IN INDONESIA.

As Mangunjaya and McKay note *hima* projects aren’t limited to Islamic countries with a tradition of *hima* but also relevant to Islamic countries without a *hima* tradition: ‘the concept of *hima* did not emerge in the teachings of Islam in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. For this reason, many Islamic activists have begun to impart the ‘spirit’ of environmental protections based on these old traditions of Islam.’⁸⁹ Similarly, the Kenyan toolkit combines *hima* with non-Islamic forms of conservation and agronomy, the potential success of the project is underpinned by just such a creative reading of the Qur’an as described by Haq as ‘not so much as a doctrinal textbook but “more valuably as a rich and subtle stimulus to religious imagination.”’⁹⁰ However as Koch explains there are obstacles to a *hima* system, for example lack of advocates within Islamic political power, a tension between locals knowing how to manage *hima* efficiently and regional, national policy makers.⁹¹

⁸² Dr. Husna Ahmad, ‘Islamic Farming: A Toolkit for Conservation Farming’ (2010), 1-59 (p.3)< <https://globalone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Islamic-Farming-Toolkit.pdf>> [accessed July 24 2021].

⁸³ Ahmad, ‘Islamic Farming: A Toolkit for Conservation Farming’ p.5.

⁸⁴ Ahmad, ‘Islamic Farming: A Toolkit for Conservation Farming’ p.13.

⁸⁵ Ahmad, ‘Islamic Farming: A Toolkit for Conservation Farming’ p.54.

⁸⁶ Ahmad, ‘Islamic Farming: A Toolkit for Conservation Farming’ p.56

⁸⁷ Haq, ‘Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction’, p.

⁸⁸ Khalid, Khalid, ‘The HIMA system’, p.238.

⁸⁹ Mangunjaya and McKay, ‘Reviving an Islamic Approach for Environmental Conservation in Indonesia’, (p. 298)

⁹⁰ Haq, ‘Islam and Ecology: Toward Retrieval and Reconstruction’, p.

⁹¹ Sebastian Klos, ‘The Concept of Al Hima,’ *Wana Institute Fact Sheet*, (nd) (np.) http://wanainstitute.org/sites/default/files/fact_sheets/HIMA.pdf[accessed 23 July 2021]

Whilst hima system emerged many centuries ago and as a tradition it is one that is embedded in Islamic law and canonical approval, recent scholarship has looked at non-hima lived experience of indigenous people in Indonesia who are both embedded in their eco-system and devout Muslims which scholars below can add to the ecological legacy of Islam.

A LIVED EXPERIENCE OF ISLAMIC ECOLOGICAL ETHICS

Bagir and Martiam provide the example of a blend of Islam and animism practiced by a small indigenous forest dwelling community, the Ammatoan community of Sulawesi, Indonesia.⁹² As Maarif says, the Ammatoan community pre-dates Islam but their way of life combines Islam and indigenous cosmologies.⁹³ Maarif states that their methods of conservation are religious.⁹⁴ Bagir and Martiam note the similarities between Ammatoan cosmologies and animism in that Ammatoans see manifestations of nature in the ‘mountains, birds, stars, trees’ as having ‘personhood’.⁹⁵ Further, Bagir and Martiam point out that Ammatoan beliefs and rituals of worshipping, spirits living in trees and rocks for example, whilst they did not emerge from the sacred canon they are nevertheless Qur’anic if viewed on broad, flexible interpretation of the literature.⁹⁶ For Bagir and Martiam this is significant because it supposes a way of being Muslim in an animistic way and suggests Islam might be able to incorporate other Islamic lived experiences.⁹⁷

Bagir and Martiam also describe Muslim practice in a recent farm community in Java at Bumi Langit which combines permaculture with existing local practices and emphasizes harmony between human and the non-human.⁹⁸ The founder, Iskandar Waworuntu, Bagir and Martiam point out sees ‘true khalifa as one who isn’t given the role by right, but as a privilege that must be earned.’⁹⁹ As Bagir and Martiam state—‘for him, being an environmentalist is the most ethical way of being Muslim.’¹⁰⁰

Foltz describes another creative example of Islamic environmental ethic in practice in a non-Muslim country giving the example of Eleanor Finnegan’s Sufi farms where small scale farming has ‘helped to create and maintain religious identities, foster community, and nurture spirituality.’¹⁰¹ Here theological affirmations –e.g. that non-human creatures are Muslim, or the understanding of tawhid as creation’s interconnectedness—are lived daily experiences.¹⁰² Bagir and Martiam highlight these lived experience of *khalifa* are as equally valuable as any universal ethic derived from doctrine noting that Islam and ecology ‘does not pay sufficient attention to practices’ that is to focus not on ‘what Muslims say’-a scholarly

⁹² Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

⁹³ Samsul Maarif, ‘Ammatoan Indigenous Religion and Forest Conservation’, *Worldviews*, (2015), pp 144-160 (p.145) < www.jstor.org/stable/43809528. Accessed 23 Aug. 2021>

⁹⁴ Samsul Maarif, ‘Ammatoan Indigenous Religion and Forest Conservation’, p.146.

⁹⁵ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

⁹⁶ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

⁹⁷ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

⁹⁸ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

⁹⁹ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

¹⁰⁰ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

¹⁰¹ Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

¹⁰² Bagir and Martiam, ‘*Islam: Norms and Practices.*’ np.

reading of texts-but on 'what they do'-ecological practice.¹⁰³As Finnegan says local context is paramount and is critical of scholarship that seeks a universal ethic : 'Studies of Islam and ecology that present textual resources removed from contexts as a source for developing Islamic environmental ethics are also limiting the diversity of the Islamic tradition and the rich meanings of these texts.'¹⁰⁴ Bagir and Martiam commenting on Finnegan's activism comments : 'what needs to be explored is not (only) the consistency and coherence of an idea with canonical sources but how Muslim communities develop, justify and defend eco-friendly practices, and form their ideas about Islam and ecology through their practices.'¹⁰⁵

The importance of examples of practice as discussed by Bagir and Martiam above is that an examination of lived experience shows how differing ecological lifestyle across a wide variety of eco-systems that comprise the Islamic world- one that is in harmony with the natural world and deeply religious can help develop an Islamic environmental ethics of place. For Bagir and Martiam, the importance of including the practices of religious Islamic communities is that it may provide a model for an Islamic ecological ethos that takes a broad contextual view of the ecological legacy of Islam by looking at both traditional indigenous practices and newly created Islamic farm communities to inform future projects and action across the Islamic world.¹⁰⁶

CONCLUSION

Recent scholarship concerning Islam and ecology has focused on the Qur'an for evidence of an environmental ethic. For many scholars the Qur'an is unequivocally an ecological oriented text and therefore religion. Central to this claim is the concept of *khalifa* or stewardship and the caretaker role defined as given to man by God whose injunction is not to abuse this responsibility. A devout Muslim is one who doesn't misuse or do harm to the earth but lives in balance and harmony with Creation: nature is sacred, protecting and conserving it is an act of devotion. Despite this, Islamic countries have found prior, competing concerns to one addressing ecological concerns as Islamic countries are beset with other chiefly poverty and social justice. Recent wars have had a significant negative environmental impact on Islamic countries, particularly those of the Middle East at the same time as distracting governments from addressing the environmental problems. At the same time, those involved in debate around ecological issues recognize that despite the Qur'an and the hadith providing an ecological model, Muslims themselves have turned away from the teaching and adopted either consumerist values of the West or have done so out of expediency born of the need to subsist. However, this essay argues that in recent years, there has emerged a focus on ecology

¹⁰³ Bagir and Martiam, '*Islam :Norms and Practices.*' np.

¹⁰⁴ Eleanor Daly Finnegan, 'Hijra and Homegrown Agriculture: Farming Among American Muslims', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Florida, 2011) p. 247.<
http://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/uf/e0/04/32/43/00001/finnegan_e.pdf>[accessed August 21, 2021.

¹⁰⁵ Bagir and Martiam, '*Islam: Norms and Practices,*' np.

¹⁰⁶ Bagir and Martiam, '*Islam: Norms and Practices,*' np.

that moves it from the margins to a growing area of both discourse practice. One of the main legacies of Islam in ecological terms is the centuries old system of hima that has legal basis, a system that is being applied to suit modern contexts. Hima provides a flexible system, one which can incorporate both traditional indigenous methods and Western methods of conservation. Further, recent *hima* initiatives show its adaptability to in a variety of contexts in Islamic countries with a tradition of hima and those without. Drawbacks to hima projects is that they are often funded by Western organisations rather than governments which prevents any systemic adoption. Despite this there is encouraging research being undertaken into Islamic traditions, particularly the indigenous people of Indonesia. Furthermore, examining the diverse lived practice of a religious and ecological lifestyle of Islamic farms communities in Western countries, ones that have derived their values from practice and everyday experiences that may provide instructive to the Islamic world in general regarding how to live a sustainable yet devout lifestyle. Whilst Islamic environmental concerns face a real challenge to external and domestic challenges, there is hopeful emerging a flexible and adaptable approaches to mitigating ecologic crisis drawing on the legacy of the scripture and lessons taken from lived experience of Islamic communities.

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