

(UNIT 4) Islam and the Environment

Of the three major Abrahamic faiths, it is perhaps Islam that has been least explored in terms of its ecological potential. Indeed, as is acknowledged in one or two of the readings for this unit, the topic of the environment is routinely neglected in contemporary discussion of the role and place of Islam in the 21st century. With that said, ecology is certainly not as marginal a concern for Muslims as it was twenty or thirty years ago, and an increasing number of attempts have been made to articulate a positive environmental ethic that is rooted in the normative sources of Islam. The aim of this unit, then, is to examine the principles and themes at the heart of Islamic responses to the modern environmental crisis and to consider recent efforts to 'green' the rituals and practices of adherents of the world's second largest religion.

Questions to Consider

- 1) What, according to the different authors, are some of the teachings and principles around which an Islamic environmental ethic can be constructed? Which do you think are the most helpful and why?
- 2) What are some of the barriers to an Islamic environmental ethic? To what extent does Islamic anthropocentrism negate the claims of Islamic environmentalism?
- 3) To what extent do you agree with Bagir and Martiam that greater attention should be paid to the living traditions and practices of believers as opposed to simply the ways in which the primary normative sources support the idea of Islam as an ecologically-oriented religion?
- 4) Looking at some of the links under 'Additional Resources' on the Moodle page, what are some of the ways in which Muslims have sought to 'green' their religious practices? Do you think these efforts go far enough?
- 5) Watch the short interview with Fazlun Khalid, founder of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences ('A Green Jihad – Pioneering Islamic Environmentalism//Fazlun Khalid// Very Important Things'). What do you make of Khalid's claim that Islam is a 'very green' religion?