

P-ISSN : 1412-6141

E-ISSN : 2548-7744

Jurnal

ADABIYAH

The Journal of Islamic Humanities

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**FAKULTAS ADAB DAN HUMANIORA
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI ALAUDDIN**



Theme: Islamic Humanities
VOLUME 26 ISSUE 1, January-June 2026

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This journal receives a national accreditation from Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education Republic of Indonesia, **Nomor: 177/E/KPT/2024** on October 15, 2024 with the **SINTA score: S2**.

The Journal has been published by the Faculty of Adab and Humanity of Alauddin State Islamic University, Makassar, since 1997 and has been online since 2016 with the main themes on Humanities and Islamic Studies with the emphasis on interdisciplinary and intertextuality approach.

This journal are published twice a year, on June and December. The themes related to Islamic Studies are textual studies, scriptural traditions, Islamic law, and theology; and those related to Humanities are language, literature, history, and culture.

The journal of Humanities and Islamic Studies will provide the online collection of articles from 1997 up to now. The most updated information can be found on the website.

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Islamic Eco-Theology in the Age of Climate Crisis: A Critical Reading of Ali Jum'ah's Environmental Thought

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Doi: [10.24252/jad.v26i1a2](https://doi.org/10.24252/jad.v26i1a2)

(Submitted: 02/01/2026, Accepted: 31/01/2026, Available Online: 03/02/2026)

Abstract

Numerous studies have examined ecological ethics from an Islamic perspective; however, Ali Jum'ah's thought, particularly his contributions to an epistemological and spiritual framework of ecology, has not yet received sufficient critical attention in the academic literature. This research examines the ecological thought of Sheikh Ali Jum'ah through content analysis of his book *al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifz 'Alayhā min Manẓūr al-Islāmī*. The research argues that Ali Jum'ah positions *mahabbah* (love) as the highest ethical form of the human–environment relationship, articulated through *tajallī* (divine manifestation in creation) and *jamāliyyah* (beauty as contemplative access). These concepts frame nature as a reflection of the *asmā' Allāh* and foster an affective bond between humans and the cosmos. This research contributes by conceptualizing *mahabbah* as a substantive ecological ethic and by identifying a shift from a normative fiqh-oriented approach toward a Sufi-based framework of cosmic ethics as a foundation for ecological sustainability in Islam.

Keywords: Islamic Ecotheology; Ali Jum'ah; Sufism; Environmental Ethics; Mahabbah; Climate Crisis

المخلص

تناولت دراسات عديدة الأخلاقيات البيئية من منظور إسلامي، غير أن فكر علي جمعة—ولا سيما إسهاماته في بناء إطار بيئي ذي طابع معرفي وروحي—لم يحظَ بعدُ باهتمام نقدي كافٍ في الأدبيات الأكاديمية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل التصور



البيئي للشيخ علي جمعة من خلال تحليل المحتوى لكتابه *البيئة وحفظها من منظور إسلامي*. وتبين الدراسة أنّ علي جمعة يؤسّس علاقة الإنسان بالبيئة على مفهوم المحبة بوصفها أعلى قيمة أخلاقية، وذلك من خلال مفهومي التجلي والجمالية بوصفهما مدخلين للتأمل. وتقدّم الطبيعة في هذا الإطار باعتبارها مرآة لأسماء الله الحسنى، بما يُنشئ رابطة وجدانية وروحية بين الإنسان والكون. وتسهم هذه المقالة في بلورة مفهوم المحبة بوصفه أخلاقاً بيئيةً جوهرية، وفي الكشف عن تحوّل إبستمولوجي من مقاربة فقهية معيارية إلى إطار صوفي قيمي يقوم على أخلاقيات كونية تُشكّل أساساً للاستدامة البيئية في الفكر الإسلامي..

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإيكولوجيا اللاهوتية الإسلامية؛ علي جمعة؛ التصوف؛ الأخلاق البيئية؛ المحبة؛ أزمة المناخ

Abstrak

Berbagai studi telah mengkaji etika ekologis dari perspektif Islam; namun pemikiran Ali Jum'ah, khususnya kontribusinya dalam membangun kerangka ekologi yang bersifat epistemologis dan spiritual belum memperoleh perhatian kritis yang memadai dalam literatur akademik. Penelitian ini mengkaji pemikiran ekologis Syekh Ali Jum'ah melalui analisis isi terhadap karyanya *al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifz 'Alayhā min Manẓūr al-Islāmī*. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa Ali Jum'ah menempatkan *mahabbah* (cinta) sebagai bentuk etika tertinggi dalam relasi manusia–lingkungan, yang dirumuskan melalui konsep *tajallī* (manifestasi ilahi dalam ciptaan) dan *jamāliyyah* (keindahan sebagai jalan kontemplasi). Kedua konsep ini memandang alam sebagai refleksi dari *asmā' Allah* serta menumbuhkan ikatan afektif antara manusia dan kosmos. Penelitian ini berkontribusi dengan mengonsepsikan *mahabbah* sebagai etika ekologis yang substantif serta mengidentifikasi pergeseran dari pendekatan normatif-legalistik (fiqh) menuju kerangka etika kosmik berbasis tasawuf sebagai landasan keberlanjutan ekologis dalam Islam.

Kata Kunci: Ekoteologi Islam; Ali Jum'ah; Tasawuf; Etika Lingkungan; *Mahabbah*; Krisis Iklim

How to Cite This Article: Darlis, Darlis, Nasaruddin Umar, Nur Arfiyah Febriyani, Muhammad Hariyadi, and Ahmad Arief. "Islamic Eco-Theology in the Age of Climate Crisis: A Critical Reading of Ali Jum'ah's Environmental Thought". *Jurnal Adabiyah* 26, no. 1 (February 1, 2026). Accessed February 3, 2026. <https://journal.uin-alauddin.ac.id/index.php/adabiyah/article/view/62969>.

A. Introduction

The ecological crisis hitting the world is the result of the separation of humans from ecology itself.^{1, 2} This problem cannot be separated from a larger problem, namely the problem of the relationship between religion and science. Scientists tend to ignore the spirit of religion as a basis for thought and action, also known as the epistemological and axiological basis. This separation results in human behavior that is exploitative, destructive, and indifferent to environmental conditions.³ Illegal logging is occurring in several areas. Irresponsible plundering of natural resources in industrial areas. This condition reflects a lack of emotional connection between humans and their environment. Humans only prioritize their own well-being, without considering the sustainability of the existing ecosystem.⁴ Apart from the separation that occurs, from an ecofeminist perspective,⁵ This fact illustrates the dominance of humans who position themselves as subjects with full power over nature.⁶ They view the universe as an inanimate entity that is free to be exploited.⁷ This paradigm not only results in violence against the environment, but also indirectly has a big impact on the lives of women as the parties who have the most contact with natural resources, such as water, air and other domestic needs.⁸

Many researchers, environmentalists, and religious scholars have responded to these ecological issues. Among the most vocal critics and authors of numerous works on ecological balance is Sayyed Hossein Nasr. Nasr stated that the global crisis is a

¹ A. K. H. Solihu, "Valuing Biodiversity: A Qur'anic Account," *International Journal of Environmental Science and Development* 5, no. 3 (2014): 244–50, <https://doi.org/10.7763/ijesd.2014.v5.486>.

² Serpil Oppermann, "Are We Really Interconnected Ecophilosophy and Quantum Theory from a Postmodern Perspective[699857]-996214," *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 16, no. October (2002): 51–64.

³ Muhammad Muinul Islam, "Towards a Green Earth: An Islamic Perspective," *Asian Affairs* 26, no. 4 (2004): 44–89.

⁴ Michele Bee and Maxime Desmarais-Tremblay, "The Birth of Homo Economicus: Methodological Debate on The Economic Agent from J. S. Mill to V. Pareto," *Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 45, no. 1 (2023): 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1053837221000535>.

⁵ Mary Mellor, "Green Politics: Ecofeminist, Ecofeminine or Ecomasculine?," *Environmental Politics* 1, no. 2 (1992): 229–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644019208414022>.

⁶ J. J. Johnson Leese, "Ecofaith: Reading Scripture in an Era of Ecological Crisis," *Religions* 10, no. 3 (2019): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10030154>.

⁷ Heather Eaton, "Women, Nature, Earth," *Religion, Ecology and Gender: East-West Perspectives*, Sigurd Bergmann, Yong-Bock Kim (Eds.) (Studies in Religion and the Environment/Studien Zur Religion Und Umwelt) Münster-Hamburg-Berlin-Wien-London-Zürich: LIT 2009, p. 7–22, 2009, 3–5.

⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Ecofeminism – The Challenge to Theology," *Deportate, Esuli, Profughe* 20, no. 1993 (2012): 22–33.

result of modernism, which has resulted in a spiritual depletion of humanity. Furthermore, a process of desacralization has occurred, leading to the exploitation of the ecology because of this paradigm. Therefore, Nasr offers ecological perspectives imbued with universal spirituality.⁹ Besides Nasr, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qardhawi is also a prolific scholar who wrote a book entitled "Ria'yatul Biah Fi Syariah Al-Islam". In general, Yusuf al-Qardhawi offers three major points. First, five basic principles of environmental ethics, namely the principle of respect for nature, the principle of responsibility, the principle of love and compassion, the principle of simplicity, and the principle of justice. Second, the concept of *hifdh al-bī'ah* is a medium for actualizing *kulliyāt al-khams*. Third, the *istiqrā'i manhaj* in defining *hifdh al-bī'ah* as part of the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is by finding the evidence of the *juz'iy* to then be connected or associated with the values of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, namely *kully*.¹⁰ Besides Qaradawi, Abdul Majid Umar an-Najjar was also a prominent figure in the field of ecology. In his book, *Qadhaya al-Bi'ah min Manzūr al-Islāmi*, An-Najjar outlines ecological issues and the solutions he offers. Broadly speaking, An-Najjar states that ecological issues are a matter of cultural and relational paradigms between humans and the universe.¹¹

This paper aims to complement the brilliant thoughts above by examining in depth the ecological thoughts of Sheikh Ali-Jumah, which were subsequently written by Ali Jum'ah. Ali Jum'ah is a great scholar of al-Azhar today who is not only respected among al-Azhar scholars, but also a reference for scholars worldwide on several fiqh issues and contemporary issues. Ali Jum'ah is a very productive scholar and has sensitivity to humanitarian issues. One of the issues that attracted his great attention was the issue of ecology. These thoughts are expressed in the book "*Al-Bī'ah wa al-Hifādz 'Alaiha min Manzūr al-Islāmī*." Studies on Ali Jum'ah's ecological thoughts have not been widely studied by researchers. The only writing that explores his ecological thoughts is Muhajirul Fadhli, Qanita Fithriyah.¹² This author shows that Sheikh Ali Jum'ah had five concepts that govern human interaction with the environment: *tawhid*, *fiqh*, *tasawwuf*, *taskhīr*, and *khalīfah*. These five concepts are solutions to ecological balance.¹³

Previous studies tend to treat Ali Jum'ah's ecological thought normatively or descriptively, without examining its epistemological shift and affective-spiritual

⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man* (London: Mandala Unwin Paperbacks, 1976).

¹⁰ Yusuf al-Qardhawi, *Ria'yatul Biah Fi Syariah Al-Islam*, 1st ed. (Kairo: Dar Asy-Syuruq, 2001).

¹¹ Abdul Majid Umar an-Najjar, *Qadhaya al-Biah min Manzūr al-Islamy*, (Qatar: Wizarah al-Auqaf wa Asy-Syuun al-Islamiy, 2004), 14.

¹² Muhajirul Fadhli and Qanita Fithriyah, "Upaya Meningkatkan Kesadaran Ekologis Dalam Perspektif Ali Jum'ah," *Jurnal Al-Hikmah* 19, no. 01 (2021): 77–95, <https://doi.org/10.35719/alhikmah.v19i01.46>.

¹³ Fadhli and Fithriyah.

construction of human–nature relations. This research fills that gap by examining the construction of harmonious relations advocated by Ali Jum'ah. Based on that, this paper will focus on answering the following academic questions: How does Ali Jum'ah conceptualize the relationship between Islamic theology and ecological responsibility in the context of the contemporary climate crisis, and in what ways does his framework contribute to strengthening ecological awareness and promoting practical environmental ethics in contemporary Muslim society?

Briefly, this paper begins with an introduction, followed by a literature review of ecology from the perspectives of scientists and scholars. In the next section, the author presents Ali Jum'ah's biography and his thinking. Afterward, the main points of his ecological thinking are critically examined, concluding with a conclusion.

B. Research Method

This research uses a qualitative library research design focusing on textual sources¹⁴ related to Ali Jum'ah's ecological thought. The primary data consist of Ali Jum'ah's major *al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifādz 'Alayhā min Manzūr al-Islāmī*, which explicitly formulates a shift from a normative fiqh-oriented approach toward a Sufi-based framework of cosmic ethics as a foundation for ecological sustainability in Islam. Secondary sources include scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles that critically examine and contextualize Ali Jum'ah's ecological framework within broader debates on Islamic theology, Sufism, and contemporary environmental ethics. In addition, the research draws on Ali Jum'ah's writings regularly published on his official Facebook account, which serves as an authoritative extension of his scholarly voice. As a contemporary public intellectual, Ali Jum'ah uses digital platforms to articulate, contextualize, and develop his theological and ethical views in response to current social and ecological issues, making these texts a valid and valuable source for qualitative content analysis in line with established practices in digital humanities and religious studies¹⁵

The data were collected through purposive textual sampling by selecting written materials that present significant relevance to the objectives of this research. All textual data were systematically documented using close reading and note-taking techniques to identify key concepts, arguments, and discursive strategies employed by Ali Jum'ah.

¹⁴ David Crowther and Linne Marie Lauesen, "Qualitative Methods," *Handbook of Research Methods in Corporate Social Responsibility*, 2017, 225–29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414006296344>.

¹⁵ Frank Martin Belz and Weânke Baumbach, "Netnography as a Method of Lead User Identification," *Creativity and Innovation Management* 19, no. 3 (2010): 304–13, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8691.2010.00571.x>.

Data analysis in this research applies critical content analysis combined with a phenomenological reading approach.¹⁶ The analytical procedure begins with identifying conceptual statements in the primary text that explicate ecological framework such as *mahabbah*, *tajalli*, *jamāliyah*, *mīzān*, and *amānah* to *khalīfah* followed by classifying these ideas into thematic clusters that reflect Ali Jum'ah's ecological epistemology. The interpretive process then synthesizes these thematic concepts to construct a coherent understanding of Ali Jum'ah's Sufi-based framework of cosmic ethics as a foundation for ecological sustainability.

Trustworthiness of the research is ensured through theoretical triangulation by comparing interpretations of the primary data with authoritative secondary literature that engages similar themes. Dependability is maintained through a consistent analytical procedure from data collection to interpretive synthesis, while confirmability is reinforced through transparent citation of textual evidence. Transferability is achieved by providing detailed explanation of conceptual findings, allowing future studies to build upon the analytical framework developed here.

C. Results and Discussion

This section presents the main findings of the research on the construction of Sheikh Ali Jum'ah's ecological thought as stated in *al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifẓ 'Alayhā min Manẓūr al-Islāmī*, then discusses it in the context of the discourse of ecological awareness and the contemporary climate crisis. The results of the analysis indicate several key concepts that form the foundation of environmental ethics in Ali Jum'ah's thought, ranging from theological foundations to Sufi orientations that emphasize the spiritual depth of humans in interacting with nature. These concepts are then interpreted and linked to Islamic ecotheological theories and global ecological challenges, thus demonstrating the relevance and contribution of Ali Jum'ah's thought in strengthening the ecological awareness of contemporary Muslim society.¹⁷

¹⁶ Ruth Wodak, "Complex Texts: Analysing, Understanding, Explaining and Interpreting Meanings," *Discourse Studies* 13, no. 5 (2011): 623–33, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445611412745>.

¹⁷ Ali Jum'ah's full name is Abu Ubādah Nūr al-Dīn Ali bin Jum'ah bin Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab bin Sālim bin Abdullah bin Sulaimān, Al-Azhari al-Shafī'ī. He was born in the city of Bani Suef, Monday April 1371 AH / 3 March 1952 AD. His thoughts are always contextualized to contemporary issues. Sheikh Ali Jum'ah re-established the old tradition of teaching religion at the al-Azhar Mosque since 1990. In 2003, Sheikh Ali reformed Dar al-Ifta as a modern institution with a fatwa council and a system of checks and balances. Sheikh Ali Jum'ah digitized the institution, making it easier for people worldwide to access fatwa products openly. Ali Jum'ah's ecological thoughts are recorded in the book "*al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifẓ 'Alayhā min Manẓūr al-Islāmī*." This book was born from Sheikh Ali Jum'ah's concern about the increasing environmental damage in the Arab world and the Islamic world in general, especially due to unregulated industrialization, massive urbanization, air and water pollution, and the degradation of society's ethical values in treating nature. Therefore, this book offers a more philosophical and spiritual approach by emphasizing the relationship between beauty (*jamāl*), divine manifestation in creation (*tajallī*), and love (*mahabbah*) between humans and nature. This approach reflects Ali Jum'ah's vision that the ecological crisis is a spiritual crisis that requires a reconstruction of human awareness of

1. Towards an Ecological Civilization

The Ecological civilization¹⁸ generally refers to a form of civilization that places ecological sustainability as the foundation of values, social structure, and direction of development.¹⁹ This civilization is built on the awareness that the climate crisis, depletion of natural resources, and environmental degradation are not merely technical problems, but a civilizational crisis born from an anthropocentric worldview and excessive consumption patterns.²⁰ In ecological civilization, the human-nature relationship is understood as an interdependent relationship that demands an ethic of responsibility, balance, and justice between generations.²¹ It rejects the paradigm of exploitation and replaces it with a paradigm of harmony, conservation, and respect for ecosystem integrity. Therefore, ecological civilization is not merely an environmental idea, but a vision of civilization that integrates science, spirituality, economics, and morality to maintain the continuity of life on earth.²²

Within this framework, Ali Jum'ah offers a unique contribution through an Islamic ecotheological approach that emphasizes tawhid, the mandate of the caliph, and the maqāsid al-sharī'ah as the foundations of ecological civilization. For him, nature is part of the divine order that must be respected, thus destroying it is a form of *fasād* prohibited by religion. By expanding the maqāsid to *hifz al-bī'ah*, he asserts that protecting the environment is equivalent to protecting life itself. Ali Jum'ah also critiques modern civilization based on excessive consumption (*isrāf*) and proposes a simple lifestyle and ecological justice as prerequisites for sustainability. The Prophet's Sunnah, such as water conservation, fauna protection, and natural area conservation, serves as a practical model for the Islamic ecological civilization he conceived. Thus,

its position as a caliph and a creature living in cosmic symphony with all creation. See: Mamat Salamet Burhanuddin and Noer Diana Kholida, "Ali Jum'Ah Approach on Qur'Anic Maqāsidī Exegesis; a Study of Al-Nibrās Fī Tafsīr Al-Qur'Ān," *MUŞHAF Jurnal Tafsir Berwawasan Keindonesiaan* 1, no. 2 (2021): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.33650/mushaf.v1i2.2043>.

¹⁸ Wei Zhang, Hulin Li, and Xuebing An, "Ecological Civilization Construction Is the Fundamental Way to Develop Low-Carbon Economy," *Energy Procedia* 5 (2011): 839–43, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.egypro.2011.03.148>.

¹⁹ Arran Gare, "Ecological Civilization: What Is It and Why It Should Be the Goal of Humanity," *Culture of Sustainability* 27, no. November (2021): 8–23, <https://doi.org/10.7402/CDS.27.001>.

²⁰ Niklas Werner Weins et al., "Ecological Civilization in the Making: The 'Construction' of China's Climate-Forestry Nexus," *Environmental Sociology* 9, no. 1 (2022): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23251042.2022.2124623>.

²¹ Kuan Wang and Lu Zhang, "The Impact of Ecological Civilization Theory on University Students' Pro-Environmental Behavior: An Application of Knowledge-Attitude-Practice Theoretical Model," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12, no. December (2021): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.681409>.

²² Fred Magdoff, "Ecological Civilization," *Monthly Review* 62, no. 8 (2011): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.14452/MR-062-08-2011-01_1.

Ali Jum'ah's ideas provide theological, ethical, and practical foundations for the formation of an ecological civilization that is resilient in the face of the global climate crisis.

In this context, Sheikh Ali Jum'ah emphasized that Islamic civilization pays great attention to ecological interests.

الحَضَارَةُ الْإِسْلَامِيَّةُ رَأَيْنَا فِيهَا حَضَارَةً تَعْتَنِي بِالْأَكْوَانِ، وَتَرْأَفُ بِالْحَيَوَانِ حَتَّى إِنَّهَا تُنْثِي مَسَاقِي لِلكِلَابِ، فَلَمْ تَقْتَصِرِ الْمَسْأَلَةُ عَلَى رِعَايَةِ الْإِنْسَانِ وَاحْتِرَامِهِ، بَلْ وَصَلَتْ إِلَى رِعَايَةِ الْكِلَابِ.²³

"Islamic civilization, in our opinion, is one that pays attention to the universe (macrocosm), cares for animals, and even provides drinking fountains for dogs. Civilization not only safeguards the existence and dignity of humans but also safeguards the interests of dogs."

Islamic civilization is highly holistic and universal. It prioritizes not only the interests of humans themselves, but also the interests of the entire ecosystem without exception. This demonstrates how Islam's teachings are both lofty on one hand and deeply grounded on the other. "Highly grounded" in the sense that all human actions must be based on sincerity and devotion to God, while simultaneously always considering their impact on the sustainability and well-being of all living beings on this earth.

In this context, Sheikh Ali Jum'ah possesses a brilliant perspective on environmental (ecological) issues by reformulating several fundamental concepts of ecology, encompassing definitions and re-understanding of key terms, such as the concept of caliph and the relationship between humans and nature. He argues that ecology encompasses not only all creatures and natural phenomena surrounding humans, but also that humans themselves are a crucial part of ecology.²⁴ Ecological sustainability is highly dependent on humans. Human spiritual, intellectual, and physical crises are among the greatest ecological disasters.²⁵ At this level, the paradigm developed by Ali Jum'ah is anthropocentric. Humans are positioned as substantively more special than others. However, in the context of ecofeminism, this view is considered a gateway to environmental exploitation.²⁶ Ecofeminist activists argue that hierarchical thinking will lead to superiority and exploitation. This concern is

²³ Ali Jum'ah, "al-Hadarah al-Islamiyah Hadharatun ta'tani bi al-akwan wa al-Hayawan" <https://www.facebook.com/100044635230186/posts/pfbid02hB8LVNqrZsxfGo7pfXfYoFKczpnWcv8vWkNroYooy5hgpSQfc1nKQRmxxbPatwPI/>, accessed on, 27/09/2022.

²⁴ Ali Jum'ah, *Al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifadz 'Alaiha min Manzur al-Islamy*, (Kairo: al-Wabil aS-Sayyib, 2009), 9.

²⁵ Ali Jum'ah, *Al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifadz 'Alaiha min Manzur al-Islamy*, 9.

²⁶ Karen J Warren, Jim I M Cheney, and Jim I M Cheney, "Feminism Ecological and Ecosystem," *Hypatia* 6, no. 1 (2001): 179–97.

understandable given that, in social reality, several instances of violence against women and the earth itself are the result of patriarchal cultural dominance.²⁷

In contrast to the criticisms of ecofeminist activists, Ali Jum'ah firmly states that the superiority and privileges that humans possess over other creatures are in no way a justification for exploitation and superiority. With the concept of the caliphate, humans should embrace this superiority as a responsibility to preserve the environment. Ali Jum'ah emphasized this in another source:

سَيَادَةُ الْإِنْسَانِ عَلَى الْكَوْنِ سَيَادَةُ انْتِدَابٍ، وَلَيْسَتْ سَيَادَةً تَمْلِكُ وَتَسْلُطُ مُطْلَقًا، فَإِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ قَائِمٌ بِمَا يَقُومُ بِهِ الْمُوَكَّلُ مِنَ الْحِفْظِ وَالرِّعَايَةِ، وَذَلِكَ مَفْهُومُ الْخِلَافَةِ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ الْإِسْلَامُ..²⁸

“Human sovereignty over the universe is a trust, not absolute ownership. Humans function as representatives to protect and care for nature. This is the essence of the caliphate in Islam.”

Ali Jum'ah's statement is emphatic that human sovereignty is a consequence of a greater responsibility, namely maintaining ecological balance. Thus, Ali Jum'ah explains that the concept of caliphate is not intended to legitimize power but rather is a reward for the caliphate's functioning according to its provisions. In other words, humans who cause damage are essentially unworthy of being called caliphs.

2. Humanization of Nature: From Material Object to Partner of Civilization

The philosophical concept underlying the coexistence of humans and the environment is the question of the relationship between humans, the universe, and God. As is commonly known, everyone agrees that God is the absolute being upon whom all creatures depend and rely. Meanwhile, humans and the universe are two forms of existence equal before God, each with its own duties in accordance with its natural disposition. In relation to efforts to establish ecological balance, Sheikh Ali Jum'ah formulated three forms of hierarchical relationships, from the lowest to the most ideal.

*“The relationship between humans (Muslims) and the earth consists of three forms; the lowest is known as at-tashhir which is material in nature, secondly; known as at-tafakkur wa al-i'tibār which is rational in nature, and thirdly; known as al-mahabbah wa al-ulfah which is spiritual in nature, and this level is the highest.”*²⁹

²⁷ G. Gaard, “New Directions for Ecofeminism: Toward a More Feminist Ecocriticism,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 17, no. 4 (2010): 643–65, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isq108>.

²⁸ Ali Jum'ah, “Sayadat al-Insan Ala al-Kauni Siyadatun Intidab”, <https://www.facebook.com/100044635230186/posts/pfbid02okhz1VtQHsQq1NFkRB64dcQiBWBD25DKjXSfiWsbPAzKMcDc2ZPDBqJFKRquPdZKl/>, accessed on 27/09/2022.

²⁹ Ali Jum'ah, *Al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifadz 'Alaiha min Manzur al-Islamy*, 41.

Firstly, the concept of *taskhīr* which is a material relation. Humans have the sovereignty to utilize natural resources proportionally for human well-being and environmental sustainability.³⁰ This relationship is the lowest level. It's for ordinary people who benefit from all natural resources materially, both for housing and for daily consumption needs.³¹ According to Ali Jum'ah, this position also received legitimacy from the text of the Quran that this universe has been subjugated by Allah for the benefit of humans.³² However, the concept of *taskhīr* is closely related to the concept of caliph. This means that humans gain legitimate sovereignty over other creatures (the universe) by maximally fulfilling their caliphate function.³³

In this context, Ali Jum'ah's view essentially depicts the lowest level of human-environment relations, not the ideal level in the context of ecological justice. This level clearly demonstrates the material nature of the relationship. The relationship between humans and the environment is at the most superficial level, namely, purely material (physical) interests. At this level, the dominant paradigm is anthropocentrism, which places humans in control. Furthermore, this position indicates a low level of spirituality. Humans tend to think only of their own well-being rather than the well-being of the environment. In Sayyid Hossen Nasr's view, the ecological damage caused by modern humans is a result of the depletion of human spirituality and the loss of the sacredness of the universe.³⁴

Secondly, contemplation (*tafakkur*); a relationship related to reason (al-aql). This level lies in the middle, between the material *taskhīr* and the spiritual *mahabbah*. The relationship of contemplation, besides demonstrating a material relationship, also proposes the spiritual realm. This level is legitimized by several Quranic verses that encourage humanity to think and meditate to gain an understanding of the reality of life in other creatures.³⁵ Ali Jum'ah further stated that the process of contemplation serves at least two important purposes. First, it serves to realize God's greatness through His divine verses. The earth, the heavens, and everything within them are God's creatures, reflecting His names. Unveiling these secrets can only be achieved through deep contemplation and reflection on God's creation. Second, contemplation is one of the

³⁰ Ali Jum'ah, *Al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifadz 'Alaiha min Manzur al-Islamy*, 35

³¹ Reflita Reflita, "Eksplorasi Alam Dan Perusakan Lingkungan (Istibath Hukum Atas Ayat-Ayat Lingkungan)," *Substantia* 17, no. 2 (2015): 147–58, <https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/substantia/article/view/4101>.

³² Ali Jum'ah, *Al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifadz 'Alaiha min Manzur al-Islamy*, 35

³³ Mona Feise-Nasr, "Islam and Ecology," *Religion and Development* 2, no. 1 (2023): 155–61, <https://doi.org/10.30965/27507955-20230021>.

³⁴ Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*.

³⁵ QS.Fushshilat: 53; al-Baqarah: 164; QS. Abasa: 24-32

entrances to knowledge.³⁶ In epistemology, one source of knowledge is the reality that exists beyond humans. The greatest reality that exists beyond humans is the universe.³⁷

In this context, contemplation (*tafakkur*) of nature serves not only as scientific research but also as a process of strengthening spirituality. By doing *tafakkur* essentially lead one to ecological awareness through the revelation of new realities about the macrocosm (*al-afāq*) and microcosm (*al-anfus*).³⁸ However, the relationship formed at the level of contemplation, from Ali Jum'ah's perspective, still positions humans as the exploring subject and nature as the object. It is at this level that a fundamental difference is seen with ecofeminist activists who are highly critical of this hierarchical relationship and state that hierarchical relationships are the starting point for violence and human exploitation of the universe.³⁹

The last and highest level is a relationship of love and affection (*mahabbah*).⁴⁰ The relationship between humans and the environment is spiritual, not merely about material interests. At this level, humans and the environment have developed a mutual affection.⁴¹ With a profound human awareness of the essence of themselves, their environment, and their relationship with God, a sense of continuity arises between the two. Humans realize that all of God's creation in this universe are brothers and sisters and equal creatures before God. They possess souls, just like humans. They live according to their natural state, and all glorify God Almighty.⁴² In Gregg Braden's language, humans are fully aware that the universe is a series of interconnected systems that are governed by a great power called The Divine Matrix, which is a container that holds the universe, a bridge that connects everything, and a mirror that shows us what we have created.⁴³

³⁶ Ali Jum'ah, *Al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifadz 'Alaiha min Manzur al-Islamy*, 87-88

³⁷ Desri Ari Enghariano, "Tafakkur Dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal El-Qanuniy: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Kesyariahan Dan Pranata Sosial* 5, no. 1 (2019): 134–48, <https://doi.org/10.24952/el-qonuniy.v5i1.1769>.

³⁸ Zamroni Ishaq and Ihsan Maulana Hamid, "Konsep Dan Metode Tadabbur Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Ummul Qura: Jurnal Institut Pesantren Sunan Drajat (INSUD) Lamongan* 16, no. 2 (2021): 132–41, <https://doi.org/10.55352/uq.v16i2.535>.

³⁹ Greta Gaard, "Ecofeminism and Climate Change," *Women's Studies International Forum* 49 (2015): 20–33, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.02.004>.

⁴⁰ Haryadi Sarjono and Heppy Yohanes, "Asketisme Dalam Perspektif Kristen Sebuah Pengantar," *Ritornera - Jurnal Teologi Pentakosta Indonesia* 2, no. 3 (2022): 20–22, <https://doi.org/10.54403/rjtpi.v2i3.51>.

⁴¹ William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*, 1983.

⁴² Ali Jum'ah, *Al-Bi'ah wa al-Hifadz 'Alaiha min Manzur al-Islamy*, 17.

⁴³ Gregg Braden, *The Devine Matrix; Menyingkap Rahasia Semesta*, Cet. III (Banten: Javanica, 2022), 40

This awareness demonstrates that humans have reached a very high spiritual level, not only an awareness of the universal spirituality that exists but also the ability to feel and communicate spiritually with other creatures, such as animals, plants, and even rocks. Humans can feel the sadness, joy, and anger of birds, trees, and even rocks, such as mountains. At the same time, these creatures are also able to respond to humans in their own language. This condition occurred and was experienced by the prophets and saints of God. Several historical facts record this reality. Humans have penetrated the vast spiritual reality. Humans have shed their material humanity and entered the immaterial realm. This stage represents the highest level of spirituality achieved by humans. Their position has demonstrated their level as spiritual beings.⁴⁴

Thus, these three relational shifts mark a profound ecological transformation: from instrumentality to ethical–spiritual engagement, from domination to partnership, and ultimately from materialism to *mahabbah* as the highest form of the human–nature relationship. Unlike deep ecology (Naess),⁴⁵ land ethics (Aldo Leopold),⁴⁶ ecofeminism,⁴⁷ or anthropocentric sustainability frameworks, *mahabbah* is neither biocentric nor purely relational. It is rooted in a theocentric cosmology, where ecological care emerges from love for creation as a locus of divine manifestation, grounding environmental ethics in spiritual intimacy rather than moral obligation alone. Consequently, *mahabbah* offers a transformative ethical response to the climate crisis by reorienting human behavior from exploitative consumption toward loving responsibility grounded in spiritual accountability and cosmic solidarity.

3. Natural Spirituality towards Ecological Balance

Natural spirituality, in this framework, is understood as an ethical–spiritual orientation toward nature that remains firmly grounded in Ash‘arī theology, which upholds God’s absolute transcendence (*tanzīh*) while affirming divine signs (*āyāt*) manifested within creation. Rather than sacralizing nature or endorsing notions of ontological union, this form of spirituality cultivates *mahabbah* as a relational ethic that nurtures reverence, care, and responsibility toward the natural world as a trust (*amānah*). Ecological balance thus emerges not from attributing intrinsic sacredness to nature, but from recognizing it as a locus of divine wisdom and beauty (*jamāliyyah*) that invites contemplation without compromising theological boundaries. By maintaining the Creator–creation distinction central to Ash‘arī creed, natural

⁴⁴ Ahmad Munji, “TAUHID DAN ETIKA LINGKUNGAN: Telaah Atas Pemikiran Ibn ‘Arabī,” *Jurnal THEOLOGIA* 25, no. 2 (2016): 279–300, <https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2014.25.2.398>.

⁴⁵ Arne Næss and George Sessions, “Basic Principles of Deep Ecology,” *Ecophilosophy* VI, no. January (1984): 5–7.

⁴⁶ Roberta L. Millstein, “Debunking Myths about Aldo Leopold’s Land Ethic,” *Biological Conservation* 217 (2018): 391–96, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2017.11.027>.

⁴⁷ Jennifer L. Lawrence et al., “Feminist Approaches to Environmental Politics,” *Contemporary Political Theory* 24, no. 1 (2025): 81–97, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-024-00707-y>.

spirituality offers a theologically coherent pathway toward ecological balance, where environmental responsibility is rooted in love, accountability, and spiritual consciousness rather than metaphysical fusion or romanticized sacralization of nature.

It is therefore crucial to emphasize that the concept of universal spirituality articulated through the *mahabbah* relationship does not imply universal sacredness. Ali Jum'ah explicitly rejects universal sacredness, which he regards as incompatible with the Azhari–Ash'arī creed. According to him, the sacralization of nature inevitably leads to the doctrines of *ḥulūl* and *ittiḥād*, both of which suggest an ontological fusion between God and creation and thus contradict core Islamic theology. As Ali Jum'ah asserts:

وَهُنَاكَ فَارِقٌ بَيْنَ الْمَخْلُوقِ وَالْخَالِقِ، فَهَذِهِ الْمَفَارِقَةُ مَنَعَتْ أَنْ يُعْتَقَدَ الْإِنْسَانُ قَدَاسَةَ الْأَكْوَانِ، وَمَنَعَتْ أَنْ يُعْتَقَدَ الْإِنْسَانُ الْخُلُولَ وَالِاتِّحَادَ، وَأَنْ يُعْتَقَدَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ هُنَاكَ إِلَهٌ آخَرُ يُشَارِكُ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى مُلْكُهُ فِي هَذَا الْكَوْنِ وَمَا وَرَاءَ هَذَا الْكَوْنِ، وَالْمَفَارِقَةُ هُنَا مَعْنَاهَا أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ حَالًا فِي الْكَوْنِ وَلَا فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْهُ، وَلِذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ هُنَاكَ جُزْءٌ إِلَهِيٌّ فِي هَذَا الْعَالَمِ؛ لِأَنَّ الْحَقَّ سُبْحَانَهُ مُنَزَّهٌ، وَلَا يَطْرَأُ عَلَى ذَاتِهِ الْمُقَدَّسَةِ تَجَزُّؤٌ.^{٤٨}

“There is a distinction between creatures and the Creator. This distinction prohibits anything that contradicts the universal essence and the concepts of hulul and ittiḥād. Humans should believe that God does not share His power in this world or in the metaphysical realm. This distinction also means that God does not reside in the universe, and nature is not part of it. Because God is pure beyond all that. His Most Holy Essence is far from all forms of parts.”

Historically, the concepts of *ḥulūl* and *ittiḥād* are associated with philosophical Sufism, most notably popularized by al-Ḥallāj, whose views were deemed to deviate from orthodox Islamic belief. In response to this theological tension, Ali Jum'ah advances an alternative ecological spirituality centered on *tajallī* (divine manifestation), rather than ontological union. For Ali Jum'ah, authentic faith entails an awareness of God's presence behind all existence without collapsing the Creator–creation distinction:

⁴⁸ Ali Jum'ah, “*al-Hadārah al-Islamiyah Hadharatun ta'tani bi al-akwan wa al-Hayawan*” <https://www.facebook.com/100044635230186/posts/pfbid02hB8LVNqrZsxgfGo7pfXfYoFKczpnWcv8vWkNroYooy5hgpSQfc1nKQRmxxbPatwPl/>, accessed on, 27/09/2022.

آمن الإنسان عندنا أيضا بالتجلي الإلهي، وبأن الله - سبحانه وتعالى - وراء كل شيء يجعل الإنسان مستحضرا لله في كل شيء، في كل سكون، في كل حركة⁴⁹

“The concept of divine tajalli is the human belief that He is behind everything... Humans present God in everything, both in silence and in movement.”

The concept of *tajallī* has also been central in Islamic theosophy, particularly in the works of Ibn ‘Arabī and Mullā Ṣadrā.⁵⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr similarly understands *tajallī ilāhī* as the substance of *tawhīd*, interpreting the *shahādah* as affirming that no reality exists independently of the Absolute Reality. Despite differences in emphasis and terminology, Nasr’s interpretation aligns with Ali Jum’ah’s view, as both articulate a high level of *ihsān*—a state of spiritual awareness in which all existence is perceived as a sign of God.⁵¹ Despite differing emphases and language, Nasr’s concepts of *tajalli* and *tauhid* (theology) above align with Ali Jum’ah’s view. Both concepts demonstrate a very high level of *ihsān* (the awareness of God). This awareness within oneself that everything that exists is a sign (a sign of God’s presence).⁵²

Such awareness provides a powerful foundation for ecological balance. Recognizing the spiritual dimension of the universe enables humans to perceive their interconnectedness with other beings, forming an ecological unity characterized by interdependence and mutual care. This vision sharply contrasts with anthropocentric paradigms that position humans as the dominant center of the cosmos.⁵³ It seems that, at this level, the ecological concept offered by Sheikh Ali Jum’ah is starting to align with ecofeminist views.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ali Jum’ah, “*al-Hadarah al-Islamiyah Hadharatun ta’tani bi al-akwan wa al-Hayawan*” <https://www.facebook.com/100044635230186/posts/pfbid02hB8LVNqrZsxfGo7pfXfYoFKczpnWcv8vWkNroYooy5hgpSQfc1nKQRmxxbPatwPl/>, accessed on, 27/09/2022.

⁵⁰ Silvio S.S. Scatolini, “From Spiritual Ecology to Balanced Spiritual Ecosystems,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 2 (2022): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i2.7202>.

⁵¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Doktrin-Doktrin Kosmologi Islam; Pokok-Pokok Filosofinya*, diterjemahkan dari An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines oleh Muhammad Muhibuddin, (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2022), 27.

⁵² Husain Heriyanto, “Filsafat Holisme-Ekologis” (Jakarta: Program Studi Ilmu Filsafat Program Pascasarjana Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Indonesia, 2002).

⁵³ M Abdul Somad, Risris Hari Nugraha, and Muhamad Parhan, “ALI JUM ’ AH SUFISTIC THINKING AND ITS RELEVANCE ON ISLAMIC EDUCATION (PAI) IN HIGHER EDUCATION on Saudi Arabia ’ s Youth Political Culture Millennials (Al-Rawashdeh , 2014). The Chinese Intellectual Wing Wah Law Has Proven That Globalization Has Supp” 24, no. 2 (2021): 238–54.

⁵⁴ Carol J. Adams & Lori Gruen (Ed.), *Ecofemism: Feminist Intersection with Other Animal & The Earth*, Bloomsbury Academic, vol. 1999, 2022.

Within the global theoretical discourse on ecology, Sheikh Ali Jum'ah's ecological thought can be read as a significant dialogical intervention between classical Islamic theology, particularly the Ash'arī-Azharī tradition, and contemporary environmental ethics that are often dominated by anthropocentric or cosmological spiritual frameworks. His concept of *tajallī ilāhī* offers a model of ecological spirituality that cultivates ethical and affective responsibility toward nature without collapsing into the sacralization of nature or ontological fusion characteristic of deep ecology and radical eco-spirituality. Critically, however, Ali Jum'ah's approach also encounters limitations in global ecological dialogue, as its strong grounding in *tanzīh* may constrain engagement with more politically and structurally oriented ecological critiques, such as those advanced by ecofeminism and political ecology, which emphasize power, inequality, and systemic environmental exploitation.

Moreover, while *mahabbah* and *tajallī* provide a profound spiritual-ethical foundation for ecological awareness, the framework requires further elaboration at the level of concrete social praxis to avoid remaining primarily contemplative and individualistic. Thus, Ali Jum'ah's ecological vision occupies a moderate-critical position in global theoretical debates: it offers a theological corrective to pantheistic ecological spiritualities while simultaneously challenging modern environmental discourse to reintegrate transcendence, even as it calls for further critical development to address the full complexity of the contemporary ecological crisis.

D. Conclusion

Ali Jum'ah's ecological thinking has made a significant contribution to ecological balance. Ali Jum'ah constructed a relationship based on *mahabbah* (love) between humans and the environment. This loving relationship not only demonstrates compassion for the environment but also for humans and oneself. Humans are a vital part of ecology. This means that committing violence against the environment is tantamount to committing violence against humans themselves. Conversely, the destruction of human spirituality will have a significant impact on environmental balance. Ali Jum'ah's *mahabbah* relationship was constructed through two main foundations: the concepts of *tajallī* (manifestation) and *jamāliyah* (beauty). These two foundations lead humans to ecological awareness, which is reflected in the creation of a sense of connection with the environment. Ultimately, the *mahabbah* relationship advocated by Ali Jum'ah confirms that Ali Jum'ah's ecological thinking reveals a different side of his character. His ecological thinking is strongly influenced by Sufism rather than the normative fiqh that has been inherent in his educational background.

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Example in footnotes:

¹Mircea Eliade (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 8 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), h. 18.

²Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: One World Publications, 1991), h. 190.

³Syeikh Ja’far Subhānī, *Mafāhim Al-Qur’ān* (Beirut: Mu’assasah Al-Tarīkh Al-’Arabī, 2010), Juz 5, h. 231.

⁴Syeikh Ja'far Subhānī, *Maḥālim Al-Qur'ān*, h. 8-9.

Example in bibliography:

Subhānī, Syeikh Ja'far. *Maḥālim Al-Qur'ān*. Beirut: Mu'assasah Al-Tarīkh Al-'Arabī, 2010.

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Detail informations of the footnotes:

1. Holy book

Al-Qur'ān, Al-Baqarah/2: 185.

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2. Qur'anic translation

¹Departemen Agama RI, *al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya* (Jakarta: Darus Sunnah, 2005), h. 55.

3. Book

¹Muḥammad 'Ajjaj al-Khaṭīb, *Uṣl al-Ḥadīth: 'Ulumuh wa Muṣṭalahuh* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1989), h. 57.

4. Translation Books

¹Toshihiko Izutsu, *Relasi Tuhan dan Manusia: Pendekatan Semantik terhadap al-Qur'an*, terj. Agus Fahri Husein dkk (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2003), h. 14.

5. Voluminous book

¹Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir b. 'Ashur, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Vol. 25 (Tunisia: Dār al-Suḥūn, 2009), h. 76.

¹Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukharī, *al-Jam' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1999), h. 77.

6. Article in book

¹Sahiron Syamsuddin, "Metode Intratekstualitas Muhammad Shahrur dalam Penafsiran al-Qur'an" dalam Abdul Mustaqim dan Sahiron Syamsuddin (eds.), *Studi al-Qur'an Kontemporer: Wacana Baru Berbagai Metodologi Tafsir* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2002), h. 139.

7. Article in encyclopaedia

¹M. Th. Houtsma, "Kufr" dalam A. J. Wensinck, et al. (ed.), *First Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. 6 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987), h. 244.

8. Article in journal

¹Muhammad Adlin Sila, "The Festivity of *Maulid Nabi* in Cikoang, South Sulawesi: Between Remembering and Exaggerating the Spirit of Prophet", *Studia Islamika* 8, no. 3 (2001): h. 9.

9. Article in mass media

¹Masdar F. Mas'udi, "Hubungan Agama dan Negara", *Kompas*, 7 Agustus 2002.

10. Article in Internet

¹Muhammad Shaḥrūr, “Reading the Religious Teks: a New Approach” dalam [http://www.shahrour.org/25 Februari 2010/diakses 5 Juni 2010](http://www.shahrour.org/25%20Februari%202010/diakses%205%20Juni%202010).

11. Thesis or dissertation

¹Syahrudin Usman, “*Kinerja Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam pada SMAN dan SMKN Kota Makassar*”, *Disertasi* (Makassar: PPs UIN Alauddin, 2010), h. 200.

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