

Spirituality and Sustainability

EXPERIENCES OF
THE INTERNATIONAL
ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

Edited by
Abdul Rashid Moten

With a foreword by Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak,
Rector, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)



IIUM



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IIUM
Press



KUALA LUMPUR 2020
World Book Capital

Gombak • 2020

First Print, 2020
© IIUM Press, IIUM

IIUM Press is a member of the Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia - MAPIM
(Malaysian Scholarly Publishing Council)
Persatuan Penerbit Buku Malaysia - MABOPA
(Malaysian Book Publishers Association)
No. of Member - 201905

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Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

SPIRITUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY : EXPERIENCES OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA / Edited

by: Abdul Rashid Moten
ISBN 978-967-491-048-8

1. Sustainable development--Religious aspects--Islam.
 2. Maqasid (Islamic law).
 3. Education, Higher--Activity programs--Malaysia.
 4. Government publications--Malaysia.
- I. Abdul Rashid Moten.
338.927088297.

Published in Malaysia by
IIUM Press
International Islamic University Malaysia
P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur

Printed in Malaysia by
Reka Cetak Sdn. Bhd.
No. 12 & 14, Jalan Jemuju Empat 16/13D
Seksyen 16, 40200 Shah Alam
Selangor Darul Ehsan.

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CHAPTER 8

The IIUM River of Life Flagship Project

Ma'an Al Khatib &
'Atiah Abdullah Sidek

Rivers are the backbone of human civilisation. The main campus of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) at Gombak and its campus in Kuantan are characterised by rivers flowing through their terrains with several ponds along the rivers (Figure 8.1). Besides creating natural splendours and unique scenic beauties on campus with all the aquatic lives, the flowing river of Sungai Pusu and its tributaries, Batang Sungai Pusu and Anak Sungai Pusu in Gombak campus, and Sungai Talam and Sungai Pinang in Kuantan campus constitute a source of learning and inspiration for the members of the IIUM.



Figure 8.1: A river flows through the IIUM Main Campus.

River of Life Project from *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah* and SDGs perspectives

The river of life project is well aligned with *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Allāh (SWT) blessed this universe with the wonderful grace of balance and equilibrium. For instance, the earth was created in a state of natural equilibrium so that man may discover some of its forms and express them as laws of nature. The synergy and symbiosis in nature happen both at microscopic and macroscopic levels. Both are intricate as well as breathtakingly astounding. Carbon dioxide, for example, is generated through several natural processes, including respiration, in which oxygen is consumed. At the same time, trees consume large amounts of carbon dioxide via daylight photosynthesis to produce oxygen. In this way, the amounts of carbon dioxide and oxygen are kept at an optimal balance to sustain life on earth. On the contrary, since the era of the first industrial revolution, the pace of industrial activities has been on the rise. Industrial effluents and motor vehicles have negatively affected the environmental balance, and in turn led to what is known today as climate change, where global warming being one of its most ruinous episodes.

Rivers are one of the most important natural sources of water. In their natural condition, they are able to sustain balance and equilibrium through self-neutralisation. However, rivers are also not spared from pollution. Assuming that bodies of running water are capable of self-counterbalance as they have been performing in their natural healthy state, there have been continuous dumping of industrial wastes, sewage discharges and garbage in rivers due to human negligence and greed. However, loading rivers with pollution beyond their capacity led to an imbalance in their state of equilibrium. Rivers receive more than they can equalize. They have become heavily polluted to alarmingly dangerous levels. In addition, illegal loggings, deforestations, clear cutting of lands and levelling of hills for developments result in heavy silting of rivers and lakes. Apart from causing floods affecting life on land, heavy silting affects the quality of fresh water, which in turn affects the quality of life under water. The Qur'ān describes human mishandling of natural resources that lead to environmental pollution in general, and the pollution of rivers, in particular, as acts of corruption (*fasād*). The Qur'ān (30:41) states: "Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned." From an Islamic perspective, irresponsible human behaviour towards the environment contradicts the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, which aims to achieve the five elements of preservations: religion (*al-dīn*), life (*al-nafs*), mind (*al-'aql*), offspring (*al-nasl*) and wealth (*al-māl*). As water is one of

Allāh (SWT)'s great blessings on man, preservation of rivers is considered as a fulfilment of the principles of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.

Rivers are one of the main sources of water. Civilizations were established by river banks as life cannot be sustained without water. Islam emphasises the preservation of water in general. Water is mentioned in the Qur'ān in relation to life, humans, animals and plants. The water cycle is often described in detail in the Qur'ān. The various sources of water (rivers, springs, rain, through rocks, etc.) and the means of keeping it (in rocks and underground reservoirs) are also highlighted. According to Islam, water is the basis of life on earth. The Qur'ān (21:30) declares, "And we made of water everything alive." Water is considered a national property; no single person or entity can control it and deprive people of having their supply of water. In a narration, the Prophet (SAW) reportedly emphasised the partnership of people in three things: water, pastures and fire.

Pastures refer to crops in general and fire could refer to energy in our contemporary terminology. Based on this, Islam prohibits the act of wasting water. It is reported in Sunan Ibn Majah that Prophet Mohammed (SAW) saw one of his companions taking ablution preparing for prayers. The Prophet told him not to be wasteful in the use of water. The man then asked him, is there wastage in using water? The prophet replied, "Do not waste water even if you were at a running stream" (Al-Qazwini, 2007: 425).

This is a clear indication of how much emphasis Islam lays on the conservation of water. Polluting rivers results in negatively affecting one of the most important water resources, which goes against *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. Polluted rivers affect life and resources (wealth), which may as well affect the healthy functioning of the intellect and the health of generations of life (progeny). There is no doubt that contaminated rivers pose a threat to one of the most important national resources and could put a nation on the risk of facing shortage of water. It also poses as a health hazard resulting in illnesses and diseases for humans and animals, and the quality of plants. Once pollutants enter food chains, the negative effects are widespread, affecting generations.

Allāh (SWT) has made nature subservient to humans who are the *khulafāhs* (vicegerents) on earth. This helps humans to carry out their vicegerency. They may harness natural resources including water and rivers in manners that

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[The text in this section is extremely faint and illegible. It appears to be a list of names and possibly affiliations of contributors, but the details cannot be discerned.]

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Spirituality and Sustainability

EXPERIENCES OF

THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

The International Islamic University Malaysia has, since 2018, redoubled its struggle to restore its wisdom, strengths, and dignity and promote comprehensive excellence. Hence, the University adopted the United Nations' sustainable development agenda as a complement to the University's vision and mission of Islamisation, Integration, Internationalisation and Comprehensive Excellence.

The book explains the ways in which the SDGs will provide a new strategy to apply the concept of Islamisation, which has long been the foundation of the IIUM. Consequently, the university's operations and facilities have been adjusted so that they become mediums in applying and showcasing a lifestyle that is sustainable. Everything in the university i.e. the curricular and extra-curricular courses, the research activities, and everyday operations in administrative offices and other places are geared towards sustainable development in line with the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Elements of sustainability are integrated in every aspect of the university's administration and, indeed, in teaching, research and community engagement. Consequently, the IIUM has adopted "Humanising Higher Education through maqāṣid al-sharī'ah and SDGs" as its official strategic mission.

ABDUL RASHID MOTEN served as Senior Professor in Political Science at the International Islamic University Malaysia. Currently, he is Guest Writer at IIUM, and has published 24 books and monographs and contributed more than 200 articles to peer-reviewed journals and encyclopedias.

ISBN: 978-967-491-048-8



0 780674 010488

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