

Customary Negotiation and Islamic Environmental Law: Human-Nature Relations in the Batak Angkola Community, South Tapanuli, Indonesia

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This research analyses the negotiation between Batak Angkola customary norms and Islamic environmental law in shaping human-nature relationships in South Tapanuli, North Sumatra, Indonesia. This research addresses the limited scholarship on how traditional values and Islamic teachings shape community-based environmental governance. The research employs a qualitative approach, drawing on phenomenological and ethnographic methods. Data were obtained through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with traditional leaders, religious leaders, and communities, and document analysis. The data were then analyzed thematically through the lens of *Fiqh al-Bi'ah* and Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction. This research shows that environmental conservation is achieved through the integration of Islamic values, such as *khaliḥah fī al-arḍ*, *amanah*,

the obligation to preserve the environment, and the prohibition of *fasād fi al-ard*, into the Batak Angkola customary system. The integration results in environmental governance through the protection of customary areas, community-based natural resource management, customary rituals, and environmental conflict resolution processes. The human-nature relationship is understood as reciprocal, placing humans as an integral part of the ecosystem and making them responsible for maintaining its balance. This research concludes that negotiations between customary law and *Fiqh al-Bi'ah* produce an ecological governance model that is adaptive, sustainable, and socially and religiously legitimate. Its novelty lies in formulating a normative negotiation model between social and religious legitimacy through *Fiqh al-Bi'ah*, explaining the construction of human–nature relationships to strengthen environmental governance based on local wisdom in Indonesia.

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis negosiasi antara norma adat Batak Angkola dan hukum lingkungan Islam dalam membentuk relasi manusia–alam pada masyarakat Batak Angkola di Tapanuli Selatan, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. Kajian ini berangkat dari terbatasnya penelitian yang menjelaskan bagaimana nilai-nilai adat dan ajaran Islam berinteraksi secara dinamis dalam membangun tata kelola lingkungan berbasis masyarakat. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi dan etnografi. Data diperoleh melalui observasi partisipatif, wawancara mendalam dengan tokoh adat, tokoh agama, dan masyarakat, serta studi dokumentasi, kemudian dianalisis secara tematik menggunakan perspektif *Fiqh al-Bi'ah* dan teori dekonstruksi Jacques Derrida. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pelestarian lingkungan dibangun melalui integrasi nilai-nilai Islam, seperti *khalifah fi al-ard*, *amānah*, kewajiban menjaga kelestarian lingkungan, dan larangan *fasād fi al-ard*, ke dalam sistem adat Batak Angkola. Integrasi tersebut melahirkan tata kelola lingkungan yang diwujudkan melalui perlindungan kawasan adat, pengelolaan sumber daya alam berbasis komunitas, ritual adat, serta mekanisme musyawarah dalam penyelesaian konflik lingkungan. Relasi manusia–alam dipahami sebagai hubungan timbal balik yang menempatkan manusia sebagai bagian integral dari ekosistem sekaligus bertanggung jawab menjaga keseimbangannya. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa negosiasi antara adat dan hukum lingkungan Islam menghasilkan model tata kelola ekologis yang adaptif, berkelanjutan, dan memiliki legitimasi sosial-keagamaan. Kebaruan penelitian terletak pada formulasi model negosiasi normatif antara adat Batak Angkola dan *Fiqh al-Bi'ah* yang menjelaskan konstruksi relasi manusia–alam sebagai dasar penguatan tata kelola lingkungan berbasis kearifan lokal di Indonesia.

Keywords: *Batak Angkola; fiqh al-Bi'ah; human-nature relations; Islamic environmental law; local wisdom.*

Introduction

Environmental degradation has emerged as a significant global challenge affecting human life and ecological sustainability (Ramadhan, 2025). Increasing exploitation of natural resources, deforestation, land conversion, and extractive industrial activities have transformed the relationship between humans and nature into a more exploitative and

anthropocentric pattern (Jannah, 2025). These forms of environmental exploitation are often justified in the name of economic development and human well-being. However, they simultaneously contribute to ecological degradation and environmental crises. Consequently, the ecological crisis increasingly threatens social, cultural, and economic life in Indonesian territory (Hulaify, 2019).

Humans are not just users of natural resources; they are also *khalifah fi al-ard*, or representatives on earth, with a moral responsibility to maintain environmental balance (Haris et al., 2025). Islamic legal principles of environmental protection, reflected in the prohibition of environmental destruction (*fasād fi al-ard*), emphasize sustainability, justice, and ecological responsibility within *fiqh al-bi'ah*. Therefore, environmental conservation is an ethical, social, and religious issue, not merely an ecological one (Widiastuty & Anwar, 2025).

Environmental conservation in Indonesia has a solid legal foundation established by Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management. This law regulates principles, instruments, and mechanisms for pollution prevention, damage management, and sustainable restoration of environmental functions (Wati, 2018). This regulation is enhanced by Law Number 18 of 2008 concerning Waste Management, which specifically regulates waste management through a reduction, handling, and reuse approach to support the realization of sustainable development (Medhika et al., 2022).

In addition, environmental conservation is supported by local knowledge systems upheld by indigenous peoples. These indigenous communities maintain ecological balance through customary norms, social institutions, and collective traditions, such as *siriaon* and *siluluton*, serving both as social control mechanisms and instruments of environmental conservation (Hamid et al., 2025). One such community is the Angkola Batak community in South Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. For the Batak Angkola people, land, forests, rivers, and various natural resources are vital not just as economic assets, but essential components of their social identity and cultural value systems, which they strive to preserve for future generations (Simamora et al., 2024).

The Batak Angkola people will face increasingly complex ecological pressures due to deforestation, large-scale plantation expansion, extractive industrial activities, and

infrastructure development that transform indigenous peoples' living spaces into areas of economic production and exploitation (Nasution, 2023). The transformation of land use accelerates environmental degradation, triggers agrarian conflicts, weakens the ecological function of customary territories, and increases social tension within the community (Firdaus, 2023). The various agrarian conflicts in South Tapanuli Regency illustrate indigenous peoples' resistance to the conversion of customary land into industrial and commercial areas. This phenomenon confirms that for the Batak Angkola people, land is not merely an economic commodity; it is a vital aspect of their cultural identity, social existence, kinship system, and collective memory, all of which contribute to the sustainability of indigenous communities (Baringbing, 2017).

Agrarian conflict in South Tapanuli Regency reflects the increasing pressure on the Batak Angkola community's living space. One of the incidents occurred in Muara Manumpas Village, located in Muara Batang Toru District, South Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. During this event, dozens of residents were involved in a physical clash with a group of people suspected of being thugs, due to attempts to seize oil palm plantation land that the community had managed since 2014. The clash led to resident Hasundungan Siahaan being injured by physical violence. The conflict began when a group claimed ownership of land that had long been controlled and used by the community. This event shows that land tenure disputes relate not only to economic interests but also to indigenous peoples' rights to land, their identity, and sustainability (Harahap et al., 2025).

Similar conflicts also occurred across various areas of South Tapanuli due to the expansion of the plantation sector. Disputes between the community and companies, such as PT Maju Indo Raya (MIR), PT Samukti Karya Lestari (SKL), and PT Austindo Nusantara Jaya (ANJ) Agri Siais, have persisted for years without adequate resolution. In East Angkola and South Angkola Districts, South Tapanuli, North Sumatra, the community protested the expansion of plantation areas, the felling of productive crops owned by residents, and the control of areas believed to be customary land or other designated areas (APL). Various demonstrations carried out by the community often lead to physical clashes with the company's security forces and the criminalization of residents. This condition indicates that weak protection of indigenous peoples' rights has increased the potential for

social conflict and threatens the sustainability of the ecological functions of indigenous territories (Martial et al., 2023).

A notable conflict erupted between the people of Huta Raja Village, members of the Tondi Bersama Cooperative (KTB), and PT Samukti Karya Lestari (SKL). This dispute stemmed from the Partnership Pattern Oil Palm Plantation Development Cooperation Agreement, signed on November 13, 2008, allegedly to uphold the community's rights. The community assessed that the company had committed a default because it failed to distribute benefits in accordance with the agreement; hence, in January 2024, it again held a demonstration demanding the fulfillment of land rights and partnership benefits. The dispute then continued through a civil lawsuit at the Padang Sidempuan District Court with a claim value of hundreds of billions of Rupiah. This case shows that agrarian conflicts in South Tapanuli are not only about land ownership but also concern economic justice, legal certainty, and the protection of indigenous peoples' rights in partnership relations with corporations (Erwin, 2021).

Environmental pressure in South Tapanuli is reflected in the increasing frequency of ecological disasters. In November 2025, floods and landslides impacted at least eleven sub-districts in South Tapanuli Regency, causing casualties, damaging settlements, disrupting transportation, and displacing thousands of residents. The disaster shows the region's ecological vulnerability related to land use changes, reduced forest cover, and weakened environmental capacity. Additionally, rising agrarian conflicts and natural resource exploitation highlight spatial governance changes that ignore ecological functions, indigenous rights, and customary institutions that have traditionally upheld the balance between humans and nature (Karso & Wulandari, 2026).

Previous studies on indigenous ecological practices in Indonesia have generally focused on environmental anthropology, local wisdom, agrarian conflicts, and resistance movements. These studies highlight how indigenous peoples maintain ecological balance through traditions, kinship systems, and local conservation practices (Romario and Riyanto, 2024; Siregar, 2021). The others address the political and economic aspects of land conflicts, environmental degradation, and the expansion of extractive industries in customary territories (Harahap, 2015; Fitriana, 2021). In addition, the research of Islamic

environmental ethics has examined concepts such as *khalīfah fī al-ard*, *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*, and *fiqh al-bi'ah* as normative foundations for environmental conservation in Muslim societies.

Although various studies have discussed indigenous peoples' local wisdom in environmental conservation and the principles of Islamic environmental law, there is a notable lack of studies that explain how these two frameworks negotiate and influence one another. These interactions can shape the environmental governance systems within indigenous communities. Most previous research has tended to treat customary law and Islamic law as separate and independent systems, thereby limiting exploration of how their values can interact, adapt, and integrate in response to social change, economic pressures, and contemporary ecological crises (Darussalam et al., 2026).

This disparity between customary and Islamic environmental practice is increasingly evident within the Angkola Batak community in South Tapanuli, North Sumatra, Indonesia. This community is characterized by a strong customary institutional system known as *the Dalihan Na Tolu*, alongside various norms governing relationships among land, forests, rivers, and habitats. Concurrently, as a predominantly Muslim community, the Batak Angkola are influenced by the principles of Islamic environmental law, such as the concept of *khalīfah fī al-ard*, *amānah*, *mīzān*, *ihyā' al-mawāt*, the prohibition of *fasād fī al-ard*, and the orientation of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*. However, there has been little research on how these customary and Islamic norms interact, negotiate, and shape living *environmental law practices* in the Batak Angkola community.

On the other hand, the rise in deforestation, plantation expansion, extractive industries, infrastructure development, agrarian conflicts, and the increasing frequency of floods and landslides in South Tapanuli indicate that environmental protection mechanisms relying on state regulations are insufficient to address the complex ecological issues at the local level. Many environmental policies still focus on administrative and legal-formal approaches, while customary institutional capacity and Islamic legal values as community-based environmental management mechanisms have not been optimally integrated into environmental governance.

In this research, the integration of Islamic ecological teachings, such as the concept of *khalīfah fī al-ard*, the obligation to preserve the environment, and the prohibition of

fasād fī al-ard, is understood as the internalised traditional principles of Batak Angkola for regulating human relations with nature. From the perspective of *Fiqh al-Bī'ah*, this integration represents a collective responsibility for ecological balance (*ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*) within the framework of *maqāṣid al-syari'ah*. Therefore, the human-nature relationship is viewed as a reciprocal relationship with humans as *ḫalīfah* responsible for sustaining the environment.

In addition, to analyse these relationships, it should apply Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction to dismantle the binary assumptions that have shaped the understanding of law and the environment. This includes the dichotomy between customary and sharia, traditional and modern, as well as the separation of humans from nature. Derrida's perspective suggests that meaning is not singular and final; rather, it is continually shaped by relationships, social contexts, and interpretive processes (Latif et al., 2023). Therefore, this research approaches Batak Angkola customary law and Islamic environmental law not as opposing normative systems, but as two legal traditions that engage, adapt, and negotiate to influence environmental governance.

This research employs a descriptive approach to show that the environmental conservation practices of the Batak Angkola community arise from a dynamic interplay of customary values, Islamic teachings, and the local socio-ecological context, rather than from a single legal system. Deconstruction reveals how the meaning of land, forests, rivers, and the environment is redefined through the fusion of local wisdom and the principles of *Fiqh al-Bī'ah*. Thus, Jacques Derrida's Deconstruction theory serves as a valuable framework for understanding the negotiation of meaning, leading to a model of human-natural relationships that is dialogical, contextual, and oriented towards ecological justice.

This research focuses on the negotiation process between Batak Angkola customary law and Islamic environmental law in shaping human-nature relations amid modernization and exploitation of natural resources. This research examines how the two value systems support, adapt to, or conflict with each other in environmental management practices, and how their interaction leads to sustainable and equitable environmental governance models that align with Indonesia's legal framework.

Method

This research employs a qualitative research design (Andoni et al., 2026) combining phenomenological and ethnographic approaches to analyze the negotiation process between customary law and Islamic environmental law in shaping human-nature relations in the Angkola Batak community in Sanggapati, East Angkola District, South Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The phenomenological approach helps understand lived *experiences* and the construction of community meaning towards environmental conservation, customary practices, and Islamic ecological values (Daland & Walmann Hidle, 2016). While the ethnographic approach delves into social practices, customary institutions, kinship systems, and environmental governance in daily life (Kango & Tungkagi, 2026). The field research took place from June 2024 to February 2025 in Sanggapati, East Angkola District, South Tapanuli Regency. This site was chosen for its unique adherence to customary-based conservation practices amid ecological challenges, including deforestation, agrarian conflicts, and natural resource expansion (Syatar et al., 2025). Data were collected through participatory observation for approximately 120 hours and semi-structured in-depth interviews with eight informants: indigenous leaders, religious leaders, indigenous youth, local government officials, and community members affected by agrarian conflicts. The research also included documentation studies of relevant laws, customary laws, government archives, agrarian conflict reports, environmental policies, statistical data, and literature on legal pluralism, *Fiqh al-Bī'ah*, and the ecological wisdom of the Batak Angkola community (Nasution, 2023). Data analysis utilises thematic analysis, involving data reduction, coding, and theme identification, while ensuring credibility through source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking (Mustofa, 2025). The analysis examines how Islamic ecological values, including *ḵhalīfah fī al-ard*, *amānah*, *mīzān*, and the prohibition of *fasād fī al-ard*, interact with Batak Angkola customs to create an environmental governance that promotes ecological sustainability amid development and social change (Thahir, 2024).

Externalization of environmental values in the Batak Angkola community

Externalisation is the process individuals and groups transforming their values, beliefs, and experiences into real actions that shape social reality (Ma'krufi, Nurbayani and Wahyuni,

2024). In the Batak Angkola community, environmental conservation values originate from the collective experience of people who coexist with nature for several generations (Sormin, 2023). The long relationship with forests, rivers, soils, and springs forms local *ecological knowledge* which is then expressed through customs, social norms, rituals, and daily habits. This externalization makes environmental conservation a living social practice rather than just a normative concept (Muliati et al., 2025).

The first form of externalization appears in the community's interpretation of forests as a space that serves both ecological and cultural functions. Forests are regarded as a source of water, a place for various creatures to live, a buffer for agricultural activities, and integral to the community's identity (Wahdini, Jubba and Kamsi, 2025). Therefore, the use of forest products is carried out on a limited basis as needed, not for unlimited exploitation (Purwanto, 2025). In the Batak Angkola community, several taboos have developed to protect certain trees, preserve spring water source, and prevent land clearing that might disturb the balance of nature. The practice is not only based on economic considerations but also on the understanding that forest destruction directly affects the community's social life. This value shows that the externalization of the environment has influenced conservation ethics, which are inherited through indigenous experience and education (Nasution, 2024).

The management of water resources, particularly rivers and springs, is vital to communal life. Therefore, their usage is governed by collective norms. The community develops a shared understanding that prohibits polluting rivers, disposing of waste improperly, and engaging in activities that reduce water quality (Hasibuan, 2026). The rule stems from empirical experience that agricultural sustainability, household needs, and social life are highly dependent on the availability of clean water. These experiences shape common norms, which gain legitimacy through customary law. Therefore, water management reflects the ecological awareness of the Batak Angkola community (Mulyanti, 2022).

Environmental values are also externalized through *the Dalihan Na Tolu* kinship system. Although *Dalihan Na Tolu* is known as a system of regulating social relations, its implementation extends to regulating collective responsibility for the environment. Each aspect of kinship has an obligation to maintain common interests, including land use,

customary area management, and environmental conflict resolution. Research on *Dalihan Na Tolu* shows that society is the most dominant factor in internalizing moral values, with an influence of about 70% through interactions among family, community, schools, and the government. The data demonstrate that indigenous peoples serve as the primary conduit for passing on environmental values from one generation to the next (Siregar & Syafnan, 2025).

The externalization of environmental values is achieved through various customary practices (known as *poda*) passed down orally. One example is the concept of *Poda Na Lima*, which emphasizes the importance of maintaining the cleanliness of the soul, body, clothes, home, and surrounding environment. Although initially understood as a set of guidelines for life, these values have evolved into the basis of society's ecological behavior. Environmental cleanliness is considered an essential aspect of personal hygiene and the harmony of life. Research on the Batak Angkola community shows that the value of *"Paia Pakaranganmu"*, which means "clean your environment". It represents a form of local wisdom that remains relevant in fostering environmental awareness in modern society (Azizan & Lubis, 2026).

Harahap, a traditional leader in Sanggapati, states that:

"The values of environmental conservation in the Batak Angkola community are inherited from generation to generation through families, customary institutions, and religious leaders. According to him, forests, rivers, springs, and agricultural land are seen as mandates that must be maintained together. This value is realised through customary advice, village deliberations, rules governing the use of natural resources, and prohibitions on all actions that could damage the environmental balance" (Harahap, 2025).

The values of environmental conservation within the Batak Angkola community are formed through externalization, in which ecological values and knowledge are inherited through families, customary institutions, and religious leaders (Asliah, 2025). This process fosters a collective awareness that forests, rivers, springs, and land are mandates that must be taken care of together. These values are then manifested in various social practices, including customary advice, village deliberations, rules on the use of natural resources, and prohibitions on actions that damage the environment.

Table 1. Forms of Externalization of Environmental Values in the Angkola Batak Community

No.	Forms of Externalization	Actors Who Played the Role	Implementation in Community Life
1	Inheritance of environmental values	Family	Parents teach the importance of protecting forests, rivers, springs, and farmland from an early age
2	Customary advice	Traditional figures	Delivery of advice and customary values on the obligation to maintain the balance of nature
3	Village deliberation	Indigenous and community institutions	Joint decision-making on the management and protection of natural resources
4	Integration of religious values	Religious Figures	Delivery of teachings on human trust as guardians of nature in lectures and studies
5	Rules for the use of natural resources	Customary institutions	Regulating the procedures for the use of forests, rivers, and land so as not to damage the ecological balance
6	Customary prohibition (<i>pamali</i>)	Traditional and community leaders	Prohibition of indiscriminately cutting down trees, polluting rivers, or damaging areas considered important
7	Social role model	Traditional leaders, religious leaders, and communities	Direct application of eco-friendly behaviour in daily life
8	Customary-based education	Families and indigenous communities	Conveying ecological values through traditions, stories, and cultural practices

Source: results of interviews and analysis of researchers (2025).

From a customary law perspective, incorporating environmental values establishes rules that bind communities collectively. Customary norms regulate limits on the use of natural resources, prohibitions on damaging certain areas, obligations to preserve water resources, and the imposition of social sanctions for violations. Under the living law theory, the rule

gains legitimacy not from the state but from community acceptance. The effectiveness of customary law lies precisely in the high level of social compliance, as these norms are integral to cultural identity. Therefore, the externalization of environmental values produces habits and forms a customary legal system that functions as an instrument of conservation (Armansyah et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, under Indonesian law, Article 18B paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia recognizes the existence of customary law communities and their traditional rights. In addition, Article 28H, paragraph (1), guarantees every citizen's rights to a good and healthy environment. Additionally, Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management recognizes the principle of local wisdom as one of the bases for implementing environmental protection. This shows that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between state law and customary law in preserving the environment. The externalization of the environmental values of the Batak Angkola community thus gained social, cultural, and legal legitimacy.

From the perspective of *fiqh bi'ah*, the externalization of environmental values reflects the implementation of human mandate as a caliph on earth (Jaafar et al., 2026). The Qur'an affirms that humans are responsible for the prosperity of the earth (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30), prohibit causing harm after Allah has restored it (QS. Al-A'raf [7]:56) and warns that damage on land and sea is a consequence of human actions (QS. Ar-Rum [30]:41). These values align with the practice of the Batak Angkola community which regards nature as a trust that must be maintained for the common good. In the study of *fiqh bi'ah*, the behaviour of protecting forests, rivers, and land is the implementation of the principle of *ḥifẓ al-bi'ah* (environmental protection), which is closely related to the goals of sharia (*maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*) (Itmam et al., 2025). This especially includes the protection of lives, property, and the sustainability of generations (Mulyanti, 2022).

In addition, externalizing environmental values beyond the formation of norms also contributes to the ecological identity of the Batak Angkola community (Suratno, 2022). Individuals raised in indigenous environments gain first-hand experience regarding their treatment of nature through their family, indigenous leaders, and social activities. This process fosters the understanding that protecting the environment is a moral, social, and

religious obligation. Awareness plays a crucial role in influencing people's adherence to environmental rules, as it is often driven more by social control than by formal government oversight. In other words, the main strength of environmental conservation lies in the internalization of values that were previously externalized in social practices (Naiborhu et al., 2025).

Thus, the externalization of environmental values in the Batak Angkola community shows that nature conservation is the result of a social construction shaped by the interplay of ecological experiences, belief systems, customary laws, and religious values. This value gains legitimacy through Indonesia's positive law, which recognizes the existence of customary law communities and the importance of local wisdom in environmental protection (Mukti & Sobirov, 2023). The integration of customary norms, state law, and *fiqh bi'ah* demonstrates that environmental conservation has not only an ecological but also a legal, cultural, and spiritual dimension. Therefore, the environmental conservation model of the Batak Angkola community can be seen as a form of *community-based environmental governance* that has great potential to support sustainable development and strengthen conservation policies in Indonesia (Setiadi et al., 2025).

Objectification of Islamic customary and environmental values

Objectification is values, beliefs, and practices that are initially the result of human actions and then institutionalised so that they are seen as an objective reality and bind all members of society. In the Batak Angkola community, objectification occurs when the values of environmental preservation, born from living with nature, are no longer understood as individual choices but become customary norms, social institutions, and moral guidelines that must be followed. Through this process, the protection of forests, rivers, land, and natural resources gains strong social legitimacy because it is seen as part of the community's collective identity (Elianasari, 2024).

In addition, environmental values in the Batak Angkola community are evident in the formation of various customary institutions that regulate the sustainable use of natural resources. Provisions regarding the prohibition of destroying forest areas, protecting springs, limiting tree felling, and avoiding river pollution are no longer seen as moral

recommendations, but have become customary norms that have binding power (Humaidi, Hariyanto and Azizah, 2024). Violations of these norms receive social sanctions and customary sanctions because they are considered to disturb the balance of relations between humans, society, and nature. The objectification of Islamic customary and environmental values in the Batak Angkola community can be identified through various forms of institutionalization of norms that govern human relations with the environment (Lubis, 2020). These forms of objectification are presented in the following table:

Table 2. Objectification of Islamic Traditional Values and Environment in the Angkola Batak Community

No	Form of Objectification	Institutions/Actors	Impact on Environmental Conservation
1	Institutionalization of customary values	Customary institutions	Creating compliance with environmental conservation norms.
2	Institutionalization of Islamic values	Religious Figures	Strengthening religious awareness in preserving nature.
3	Customary deliberation	Traditional leaders, religious leaders, and communities	Build collective legitimacy in environmental management.
4	Rules for the use of natural resources	Customary institutions	Ensuring the wise and sustainable use of natural resources.
5	Customary and religious prohibitions	Traditional and religious leaders.	Prevent environmental damage and maintain ecosystem balance.

Source: *Authors' elaboration based on field interviews with Bapak Siregar (Religious Leader), field observations, and qualitative analysis (2025).*

This objectification is further strengthened through the *dalihan na tolu* kinship system, which is the foundation of the Batak Angkola community's life. Values related to cooperation,

deliberation, collective responsibility, and respect for common interests not only govern human relations but also become the basis for environmental management. Every decision regarding land use, natural resource dispute resolution, and the implementation of activities that affect the environment is generally made within the framework of customary deliberation (Siregar, 2022).

In addition, environmental values are transmitted through the inheritance of traditional wisdom (*poda*) and oral traditions that are passed down from one generation to the next. Values such as maintaining environmental cleanliness, protecting nature, respecting water sources, and using natural resources in a sustainable manner are taught through families, traditional leaders, and community social activities. Through the process of inheritance, ecological values gain cultural legitimacy, becoming accepted as social truths that do not require constant justification. In Berger and Luckmann's theory, this condition suggests that social reality has undergone objectification because it is understood as something that "should be" (taken for granted reality) (Ikhsan, 2026).

Siregar, a religious leader in Sanggapati, East Angkola District, South Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, informed that:

"Traditional values and Islamic teachings on environmental conservation have become norms recognized and adhered to by the community. The obligation to protect forests, rivers, and water sources is understood as part of religious responsibility and customary obligations. These values are institutionalized through studies, religious guidance, customary deliberations, and common rules that guide the community in using natural resources wisely and avoiding actions that damage the environment" (Siregar, 2025).

Traditional values and Islamic teachings on environmental conservation have been reduced to objects. This means the values originally inherited become collective social norms with binding power. The institutionalization of values through recitation, religious advice, customary deliberation, and common rules makes environmental conservation a behavioral guideline recognized by the community (Hasibuan, 2026). In this process, the obligation to protect forests, rivers, and water sources is no longer seen as an individual choice but rather as a shared responsibility, grounded in Islamic customs and teachings.

In addition, Nasution, one of the people in Sanggapati, East Angkola District, South Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, explained that:

“Floods that have occurred in recent years are influenced by changes in environmental conditions in the upstream area of the Batang Toru Watershed. According to him, the clearing of forests for industrial plantation forests (HTI), the construction of hydroelectric power plants (hydropower plants), and gold mining activities have reduced the carrying capacity of the environment and accelerated the occurrence of floods. He explained that reduced forest cover decreases soil absorption, while changes in landscapes and mining activities increase water runoff and river sedimentation. As a result, rivers are no longer able to accommodate high water discharges during rainfall events, so flooding is more frequent and has a greater impact on communities along the river” (Nasution, 2025).

The explanation shows that changes in land use and the exploitation of natural resources have reduced the environment's carrying capacity in the upstream area of the Batang Toru watershed. Forest clearings, infrastructure development, and mining activities reduce the soil's water-holding capacity and increase river runoff and sedimentation, thereby increasing the risk of flooding (Iriawan et al., 2026). This condition indicates that the imbalance between the use of natural resources and environmental conservation efforts has directly affected ecological vulnerability and people's lives. Therefore, sustainable environmental management through the synergy of government policies, customary values, and Islamic environmental principles is crucial to restoring the ecological function of the Batang Toru watershed.

The objectification of Islamic customary and environmental values in the Batak Angkola community shows that the principles of environmental conservation have been transformed into social norms that have customary, religious, and legal legitimacy (Nurwahida, 2025). Based on *Fiqh al-Bī'ah* perspective, the obligation to preserve nature is part of the responsibility of humans as *khālīfah fī al-arḍ* to prosper the earth (*i'mār al-arḍ*) and prevent damage (*fasād fī al-arḍ*). This value aligns with the principle of *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*, which prohibits causing harm to humans and the environment (Nisa, 2026).

While from the perspective of Islamic law, environmental protection is an essential aspect of the purpose of the shari'a (*maqāṣid al-syarī'ah*), especially in protecting the soul (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), and the preservation of life, which are all prerequisites for achieving the common good (*maṣlaḥah*) (Hasibuan, et al., 2025). Meanwhile, in Indonesia's positive law, the objectification of these values aligns with the principles of sustainable development and environmental protection as stipulated in Law Number 32 of 2009 on

Environmental Protection and Management. This law mandates that everyone preserve environmental functions and prevent pollution and environmental damage. Therefore, the institutionalization of values through customs, Islamic teachings, and laws creates a system of norms that reinforce each other in realizing environmental governance that is fair, sustainable, and focused on the benefit of the community (Assaad et al., 2022).

Internalization of ecological ethics across generations

Internalization is a process in which values, norms, and social realities that have been objectified are reabsorbed by individuals, becoming integral to their awareness, identity, and behavioral guidelines in daily life. In the Batak Angkola community, the internalization of ecological ethics occurs through the primary socialization within the family and secondary socialization through traditional institutions, religious leaders, education, and community life. As a result, the values of environmental conservation are understood not just as customary rules, but also as moral beliefs that shape individual behavior from an early age (Hariwiyanti & Ruja, 2022).

The family is the first institution that plays a role in internalizing ecological ethics. Parents and indigenous elders teach their children about the importance of maintaining environmental cleanliness, respecting water sources, using forest products wisely, and avoiding destructive behavior. The learning process is carried out through example, folklore, advice (*poda*), and direct involvement of children in agricultural activities, land management, and social activities (Astari et al., 2024).

The internalization process is strengthened through the *traditional institutions of Dalihan Na Tolu*, which serve as the foundation of the Batak Angkola community's social relations. This kinship system teaches the values of mutual respect, collective responsibility, deliberation, and cooperation, applied to human relations and environmental management. Through customary activities, the community learns how to use natural resources as common interests and for the sustainability of future generations (Priyono & Siregar, 2021).

Hasibuan, one of the community leaders in Sanggapati, East Angkola District, South Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, stated that:

“The ethics of protecting the environment are a significant value instilled from an early age. Children learn to respect forests, rivers, springs, and agricultural land through their parents’ example, customary advice, religious activities, and direct involvement in community activities. These values gradually create an awareness that preserving the environment is not just a customary or religious obligation, but a personal responsibility that must be passed on to the next generation” (Hasibuan, 2025).

In addition to the family and customary institutions, religious leaders have a significant role in internalizing environmental ethics through Islamic teachings. Da’wah, recitation, and religious education are the ways for explaining if protecting the environment is an aspect of worship and a manifestation of human responsibility as a caliph on earth. These values are enhanced by the verses of the Qur’an, such as QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30 on the human caliphate, QS. Al-A’raf [7]:56 of the prohibition of doing damage on earth, and QS. Ar-Rum [30]:41 on warning environmental damage is the result of destructive behavior. The integration of traditional and religious education leads environmental ethics to be understood not as a stand-alone norm but as a moral and religious obligation to be practiced in daily life (Aritonang, 2024).

To provide a clearer overview, the process of internalizing ecological ethics across generations in the Batak Angkola community is presented in the form of a chart as follows:

Figure 1. A Model of Internalisation of Cross-Generational Ecological Ethics in Environmental Conservation of the Batak Angkola Community



Source: *Processed by the author based on the results of interviews, field observations, documentation, and researcher analysis (2025).*

The internalization of cross-generational ecological ethics in the Batak Angkola community shows that environmental conservation has evolved from mere compliance with customary norms to a deep-seated moral, religious, and legal awareness embedded in the community's social identity. According to *fiqh al-bi'ah*, this process reflects the appreciation of human beings as *khalifah fi al-ard* with the responsibility to prosper the earth

(*isti'mār al-arḍ*), maintain balance (*mīzān*), and prevent damage (*fasād fī al-arḍ*). This aligns with the principle of no harm (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*) and prioritizing harm prevention (*dar'u al-mafāsīd muqaddam 'alā jalb al-maṣāliḥ*) (Nair et al., 2026). At the same time, the internalization realizes the purpose of *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* through the protection of the soul (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), heredity (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and the sustainability of life, hence categorizing traditional values supporting environmental conservation as '*urf ṣaḥiḥ*' (valid local custom) within shari'a (Ramadani, 2026).

From a positive legal perspective, the ecological awareness of the community is outlined in Article 28H paragraph (1) and Article 33 paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia and Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, which places community participation and local wisdom as the main instruments of sustainable development. Thus, the internalization of ecological values results in compliance that does not depend on customary sanctions or state law but is formed from the belief that protecting the environment is a religious mandate, a cultural responsibility, and a constitutional obligation. This condition confirms that the sustainability of environmental conservation in the Batak Angkola community rests on a solid integration between customs, *fiqh al-bi'ah*, Islamic law, and national law, thus an ecological ethical system is formed that is able to transform values into collective behavior that is oriented towards the benefit and sustainability of intergenerations (Wahyuliana et al., 2026).

Integrating Islamic customs and environmental values in community-based environmental governance

The integration of Batak Angkola customary law and Islamic environmental values serves as an important foundation in building *community-based environmental governance* (Sayfullah, 2025). The governance places the community as the object of environmental policy and the main subject possessing ecological knowledge, social norms, and moral responsibility in maintaining the sustainability of natural resources. In the Batak Angkola community, the practice of environmental conservation develops through a long interaction between customs, religion, and people's experiences. Therefore, integrating the two value systems

creates a more adaptive, participatory, and sustainable environmental protection mechanism than an approach relying solely on formal regulation (Hutagalung et al., 2024).

Sociologically, the social construction theory of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann explains that environmental values are developed through externalization, institutionalized through objectification, and finally internalized into collective consciousness (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). In the Batak Angkola community, the processes of the social construction take place simultaneously through customary institutions, *the Dalihan Na Tolu kinship system*, family education, and religious teaching. As a result, protecting forests, rivers, soils, and water sources is now regarded as an administrative obligation, but as a cultural identity and part of the community's religious responsibility (Firmando, 2021).

Meanwhile, according to customary law, nature is understood as part of social life that must be passed on to the next generation in a sustainable manner. Customary norms limit the exploitation of natural resources by prohibiting the destruction of forests, pollution of rivers, and overexploitation of land. This provision represents a form of *living law* gaining legitimacy through community compliance. The effectiveness of customary law lies in its ability to create collective awareness, not solely through the threat of sanctions. Therefore, customary law is an important instrument in realizing environmental governance based on community participation (Hamid et al., 2024).

Environmental values in Islam align with the principles of Batak Angkola customary law (Idris et al., 2022). The Qur'an affirms that humans were created as a caliph on earth (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30) bearing the responsibility of prospering the earth (Lubis, Has and Has, 2021), maintaining balance (*mīzān*), and avoiding damage (QS. Al-A'raf [7]:56; QS. Ar-Rum [30]:41). In the context of *fiqh bi'ah*, humans are regarded as trustees of Allah, obliged to manage natural resources fairly, proportionately, and sustainably. This shared substance shows that the integration of customs and Islam is a mutually reinforcing process rather than one of conflict (Jaafar et al., 2026).

Environmental conservation is directly related to the protection of the soul (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*), the protection of property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), the protection of offspring (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and the protection of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*). Sustainable forests ensure the availability of water and food, clean rivers maintain public health, while productive land ensures the sustainability

of the family's economy. Therefore, environmental conservation realizes *maṣlaḥah 'āmmah*, the main goal of Islamic sharia (Iqbal et al., 2026).

In the context of national law, the integration of customs and Islamic values is regulated by Article 18B paragraph (2), 28H paragraph (1), and 33 paragraph (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945. This provision is emphasized in Law Number 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management, which recognizes local wisdom as one of its principles. Therefore, state law does not negate the existence of customary law, but rather provides space for indigenous peoples to participate in environmental management in accordance with developing local values.

The relationship between Batak Angkola customary law and Islamic environmental values (*Fiqh al-Bi'ah*) should be understood as a dynamic interplay rather than a simple correspondence. Applying Derrida's theory of deconstruction, customary and religious norms continuously reinterpret one another. Ecological values in Batak Angkola customs emphasize viewing nature as ancestral heritage, regulating resource use through communal deliberation, enforcing prohibitions (*pamali*), and promoting collective participation in protecting forests, rivers, springs, and agricultural land. These values evolve as they interact with Islamic principles such as stewardship (*khalīfah fī al-ard*), trust (*al-amānah*), balanced utilization (*isti'mār al-ard*), the prohibition of corruption (*fasād fī al-ard*), and the legal maxim of causing no harm (*lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār*), alongside the objectives of *maqāṣid al-shari'ah*. From a deconstructive perspective, the binary opposition between customary and Islamic law becomes unstable because both traditions mutually reinforce and reconstruct ecological ethics within the social practices of the Batak Angkola community. This interaction produces a flexible and adaptive model of environmental governance in which environmental stewardship is legitimized simultaneously through customary authority, religious teachings, communal consensus, and shared responsibility. Creating a participatory and sustainable framework for environmental conservation remains responsive to evolving ecological and social challenges.

Implementing community-based environmental governance requires collaboration among government, customary institutions, religious leaders, academics, and local communities. The government acts as a regulator and facilitator, while customary institutions sustain local norms. Religious leaders strengthen moral legitimacy through

Islamic teachings, while the community takes a central role in environmental conservation. The collaboration embodies the principles of good environmental governance, prioritizing participation, accountability, transparency, and sustainability.

In the Batak Angkola community, the *Dalihan Na Tolu* system may be developed as a local institution for environmental management. The value of deliberation, cooperation, collective responsibility, and respect for kinship relationships is vital social capital for resolving environmental conflicts, carrying out forest rehabilitation, protecting spring water sources, and drafting agreements to manage natural resources. This condition shows that customary institutions can serve as effective environmental management institutions because they gain direct legitimacy from the community (Harahap et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, the principles of *fiqh bi'ah* further strengthen the ethical dimension of environmental governance. The rule of *lā ḍarar wa lā ḍirār* affirms that any activity causing damage to the environment is a prohibited, as it endangers both human life and other creatures. Similarly, the principle of *dar'u al-mafāsīd muqaddam 'alā jalb al-maṣāliḥ* states that the prevention of damage should take precedence over the pursuit of short-term economic benefits. These two principles provide a normative basis for sustainability-oriented development (Harahap, et al., 2025).

Strengthening environmental governance is closely linked to the process of ecological education across generations. Customary values and *fiqh bi'ah* should be transmitted through families, schools, customary institutions, *taklim* assemblies, and community organizations to create a generation with ecological awareness, social concern, and moral responsibility for the environment (Khodori and Sakilah, 2026). The education represents a long-term investment in preserving the social and ecological system of the Angkola Batak community (Al Fadil, 2025).

On the other hand, modernization, industrial expansion, land-use changes, and economic development pose significant challenges to the sustainability of customary values and environmental ethics. This shift has the potential to weaken the effectiveness of customary law unless it is balanced by revitalizing customary institutions and by strengthening environmental education grounded in religious values. Therefore, a collaborative strategy is necessary to integrate economic development with environmental conservation through a

community-based approach (Evita, 2025).

Local governments play a strategic role in strengthening the integration of customary law and state law. This can be achieved by officially recognizing customary law communities, drafting regional regulations that accommodate local wisdom, and involving indigenous leaders in the planning and monitoring of environmental policies. This step will increase the policy's legitimacy while strengthening community participation in maintaining the sustainability of natural resources (Turmuzi, 2025).

The integration of Islamic customs and environmental values aligns with the principles of sustainable development and legal pluralism. State law provides legal certainty, customary law builds social legitimacy, while Islamic law presents moral and spiritual legitimacy. The synergy of the three legal systems leads to more effective, fair, and common benefit-oriented environmental governance (Hermansyah, 2026).

Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction provides insight into the relationship between customary law and Islamic environmental values. Instead of viewing them as opposing systems or in a hierarchical relationship, they are seen as a social text open to reinterpretation considering the dynamics of space, time, and societal needs (Derrida, 1990). Deconstruction challenges the binary opposition that places customary law as a local norm and Islamic law as a universal norm, as both actually construct meaning in the practice of environmental governance of the Batak Angkola community. Customary values regarding the protection of forests, rivers, and natural resources gain new legitimacy through the principles of *fiqh al-bi'ah*, such as *isti'mār al-arḍ* (prospering the earth), *mīzān* (balance), and the prohibition of *fasād fi al-arḍ* (destruction on the earth). Additionally, Islamic teachings are implemented through customary institutions living in society. Therefore, the concept of environmental conservation emerges not only from customs or religion, but also from a process of negotiation, dialogue, and reconstruction. This perspective shows that community-based environmental governance results from a deconstruction of the centralistic legal paradigm, towards a pluralistic, participatory, and contextual legal model.

Indonesia's positive law, especially Law Number 32 of 2009 concerning Environmental Protection and Management, provides a space for integration that recognizes local wisdom and community participation in environmental protection. Therefore, the integration of

customs, Islamic environmental values, and national law does not merely result in the coexistence of norms but rather forms a new paradigm of environmental governance that removes the dichotomy between state law, customary law, and religious law. Through a deconstructive reading, environmental conservation is regarded as an ethical practice being produced through the interaction of knowledge and value systems. This interplay creates an adaptive, ecologically just, and sustainability-oriented model of environmental governance that is responsive to future generations.

The integration of Batak Angkola customs and Islamic environmental values shows that effective environmental protection relies not only on formal regulations but also on the strength of social capital, adherence to customary law, the internalization of religious values, and active community participation. The integration fosters community-based environmental governance that maintains a balance among ecological, social, economic, cultural, and spiritual interests. Therefore, strengthening customary institutions, implementing the principles of *fiqh bi'ah*, legally recognizing local wisdom, and fostering collaboration among the government, traditional leaders, religious leaders, academics, and the community are essential prerequisites for achieving sustainable and equitable environmental management for the Batak Angkola community.

Conclusion

The Batak Angkola community in Sanggapati, East Angkola District, South Tapanuli Regency, North Sumatra, cultivates a human-nature relationship through a dynamic negotiation of customary norms, Islamic environmental law principles, and positive Indonesian laws. This collaboration has established an integrative, adaptive, and sustainable environmental management system. Local wisdom governs the regulation of forest areas, spring water sources, agricultural land, and rivers, imposing customary sanctions and viewing environmental conservation as an ecological, moral, social, and spiritual obligation. Islamic values, such as *kehalifah fi al-ard*, *amanah*, *islah*, and the prohibition of performing *fasad fi al-ard*, reinforce the normative legitimacy of conservation practices. While according to *Fiqh al-Bi'ah*, the practice represents benefit-oriented environmental protection (*maṣlaḥah*). This research also shows that the environmental management system of the Batak Angkola

community aligns with the principles of positive Indonesian law, especially sustainable development, community participation, prevention of environmental damage, and recognition of customary law communities as guaranteed in Article 18B paragraph (2), Article 28H paragraph (1), Article 33 paragraph (3), and paragraph (4) of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in 1945 and accommodated in Law Number 32 of 2009 on Environmental Protection and Management. This research also shows that the relationship among customary law, Islamic law, and state law is not a hierarchical dichotomy or a binary opposition, but a network of continually negotiated meanings that respond to social changes and ecological challenges. Therefore, this research emphasises that the synergy of the three legal regimes forms a model of legal pluralism strengthening the effectiveness of community-based environmental protection, serving as environmental policies rooted in local wisdom and supportive of sustainable development.

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