



Islamic Law and Peace: Conflict Prevention Among *Suku Anak Dalam* in Jambi

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Abstract

This article explores methods of proselytization directed at the *Suku Anak Dalam* (SAD), an indigenous ethnic group residing in Bukit Dua Belas, Jambi, Indonesia, by employing principles of conflict prevention. The study adopts the concept of *maqasid al-syariah* as a moderate approach tailored to the unique characteristics of the *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe. The research methodology is literature-based, serving as the primary source of data collection. The findings highlight two significant points. First, the *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe firmly holds their beliefs and traditions as the foundation of their way of life, making community development and empowerment challenging but feasible. This is demonstrated by several individuals from the tribe who have attained education and embraced Islam. Second, conflicts involving *Suku Anak Dalam* tribes and surrounding communities predominantly center on agrarian disputes, although the potential for interfaith conflicts cannot be entirely dismissed. Conflict prevention strategies grounded in the *maqasid al-syariah* framework developed by Muhammad Thahir bin 'Ashur and Jasser Auda are crucial to addressing these issues. This approach fosters peace, harmony, and coexistence among diverse religious communities. The study recommends cultivating Maqasid al-Shariah values as a foundation for peacebuilding and conflict mitigation in interfaith contexts.

Keywords: *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe, Tolerance, Conflict prevention, *Maqasid al-syari'ah*.

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Introduction

The dynamics of religious tolerance are often eroded by acts of intolerance conducted in the name of religion. As a result, religious contestation becomes the root cause of weakened cultural harmony, leading to an uncontrolled and alarming degradation of humanity. In reality, religion and culture are inherently interconnected and almost inseparable. Historically, religion recognizes the vertical relationship between humans and God and represents self-awareness in recognizing human dignity and worth. Thus, religion fosters societal integration through harmony, order, and security (Lukman, 2019). This assumption aligns with Habib Ali Al Jufri's statement, which emphasized that concern for humanity should precede religiosity (*al-insaniyah qabla al-tadayyun*). At the

same time, religion often ignites seeds of conflict between individuals or groups. However, such contestation is natural, considering competition is a fundamental human trait (Murtadlo, 2021).

Whether explicitly acknowledged or not, it is an incontrovertible fact that Indonesia is a multicultural nation cultivated within a rich and diverse cultural and religious heritage. Unity in Diversity through *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* sufficiently represents the cultural diversity spread throughout the country. However, this comes with the considerable challenge of maintaining the values of tolerance to safeguard peace and human welfare while avoiding various forms of social, cultural, or even religious conflicts (A. Muhammad et al., 2022). Jambi is a prime example of a province inhabited by various ethnic groups and cultures, such as Malay, Minangkabau, Javanese, Batak, Banjar, and Bugis. However, the majority of Jambi's population belongs to the Malay ethnic group, which has its distinct cultural characteristics. Unlike the Javanese, Madurese, or Sundanese ethnicities, the Malay ethnic group does not inherit a flexible linguistic culture but deeply embodies religious values, making religion the fundamental basis of Malay culture. A Malay proverb states, "*adat besanding syara', syara' besandi kitabullah*", which means custom aligns with Islamic law, and Islamic law aligns with the Quran. Another proverb emphasizes, "*Melayu adalah Islam, Islam adalah Melayu, jika suku melayu tidak beragama Islam, maka me-nya hilang tinggal layunya*" means Malay is Islam, Islam is Malay; if a Malay does not practice Islam, it loses its essence, leaving only its appearance.

If one were to measure religious fervor, the Malay ethnic group would undoubtedly stand at the forefront, reflecting their deep-rooted religious fanaticism. For the Malays, religion is the foundational principle in fostering social life and maintaining order. This intense religious fervor, which may be perceived as excessive by some, has been ingrained in them by their ancestors. Religion and its comprehensive values significantly influence the culture and traditions of its adherents. However, history notes that some segments of the Malay ethnic group remain underdeveloped and marginalized. Although their historical origins are not definitively established, their existence has attracted considerable attention from various social organizations and religious institutions seeking to empower them. This small community is known as the *Suku Anak Dalam* (Ahat & Auliahadi, 2018).

The *Suku Anak Dalam* is an ethnic group demographically classified as a minority and recognized as an isolated and marginalized indigenous community. They are located in the Jambi province, specifically in districts such as Sarolangun, Batanghari, Tebo, Bungo, and several areas in South Sumatra province, Indonesia. The *Suku Anak Dalam* generally lives in groups, and their daily activities differ significantly from those of the surrounding communities. Several studies have been found that are related to the *Suku Anak Dalam*. For instance, a study titled "Local Culture and Islamic Education: A Case Study of the *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe in Jambi," by Muhammad Ridho, concluded that their environmental conservation practices reflect a profound love for preserving and protecting forests. These practices align with the principles found in the Quran regarding environmental stewardship. This study emphasized the environmental conservation culture of the *Suku Anak Dalam* and its resonance with Quranic messages on the preservation of nature.

Another related study entitled "Social Conflicts Among the *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe (Orang Rimba) in Jambi Province" by Wandu, published in the *Simulacra* journal,

employed a qualitative methodology to explore conflicts over the utilization of natural resources. The study aimed to understand the underlying motives behind these social conflicts (Wandi, 2019). Another study focused on transmitting cultural values among the *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe in Air Hitam, Sarolangun, and Jambi. This research analyzed the inherited values embedded in their culture, encompassing individual, social, and patriotism (Hajri & Indrawadi, 2021). However, these studies mentioned previously did not address or engage in a dialogue about the conflicts and peace-building efforts involving people of the *Suku Anak Dalam* as adherents of animistic beliefs, particularly concerning the Muslim majority in the region. Therefore, this article seeks to delve deeper into the social dynamics of the *Suku Anak Dalam* in Jambi and proposes a method of Islamic proselytization through conflict prevention. This approach will utilize the principles of Maqasid al-Shariah as a framework for fostering peace and understanding.

Method

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with several key informants. These informants were individuals who had directly observed the activities of the *Suku Anak Dalam* in Bukit Dua Belas National Park. The key informants included people who deeply understood the social issues faced by the *Suku Anak Dalam* or *Orang Rimba* (people of the jungle). The analysis in this study employed a qualitative-descriptive technique aimed at developing a comprehensive understanding. This approach contextualizes the research subjects within causal relationships, while an empathetic approach was utilized to understand the issues from the perspective of the individuals involved (Husna & Thohir, 2020).

Result and Discussion

Social and Religious Portrait of Suku Anak Dalam

The history of the *Suku Anak Dalam* (also known as *Orang Rimba*) remains enigmatic, as there are no reliable sources about their origins. Two main theories attempt to explain their ancestry. The first suggests that they are descendants of Malay villagers from Jambi who fled into the forest during colonial times to escape attacks by invaders. The second theory posits that they originated from the Minangkabau people, specifically from Pagaruyung in West Sumatra. Furthermore, linguistic similarities, lineage, and the prohibition of matrilineal marriages characteristic of Minangkabau culture also support this assumption. Some accounts claim that the people of *Suku Anak Dalam* have existed since prehistoric times. Known for their unique beliefs and lifestyle, they differ significantly from modern societies, living in groups and relying on the forest as their primary habitat (Yanto, 2019).

The *Suku Anak Dalam* deeply loves nature and relies entirely on its existence for its livelihood. They perceive the forest as unclaimed land that anyone can utilize. However, they become furious when outsiders exploit the forests they inhabit, as they are highly protective of and committed to preserving the forest. The staple foods of the *Suku Anak Dalam* include cassava, upland rice, sweet potatoes, bananas, and sugarcane. Consequently, their primary occupations are farming and shifting cultivation. They have two specific areas designated for agriculture: *sesap* (tapping), used for staple crops, and *belukar* (scrub), designated for planting fruits (Pratama, 2023).

The life of the *Suku Anak Dalam* is organized into small groups led by family heads and more prominent clans headed by a Tumenggung (customary leader). Each clan is

typically governed by a Tumenggung, who holds the highest authority within their hierarchical social structure. The hierarchy also includes roles such as Depati, Menti, Mangku, Anak Dalam, Debalang, Batin, and Tengganas/Tenggani. Like any organization, this structure ensures the division of responsibilities and fosters a democratic way of life.

In the Bukit Dua Belas forest of Sarolangun, 13 *Suku Anak Dalam* groups fall under the leadership of four Tumenggungs: Tumenggung Grip, Tumenggung Nangkus, Tumenggung Bepayung, and Tumenggung Afrisal. Below the Tumenggung, the Depati serves as a deputy, and the Pemangku (stakeholder) oversees smaller groups of people in the tribe. Despite their life in the wilderness, their daily activities are regulated by a robust system of customary laws. While these laws are unwritten, they are deeply respected and upheld by the entire community. Customary laws dictate various aspects of life, including marriage proposals and ceremonies, bathing in rivers, hunting, honey collection, and other activities. Each of these activities is governed by specific ethical guidelines that must be followed. This adherence to customary laws reflects the *Suku Anak Dalam*'s commitment to maintaining order and respect within their community (Hambali, 2019).

The integration of customary rules and ethics fosters strong solidarity among the members of the *Suku Anak Dalam*. This solidarity reflects their communal life's core values and efforts to preserve the environment. These practices are rooted in their adherence to traditional principles encapsulated in the saying, "hidup beranyam kuaw, bekambang kijang, bekerbau rusa, rumah (sudung) beatap sikai, badinding banir, belantai tanah yang berkelambu resam, suko bejenang, bebatin bapanghulu". This philosophy signifies prohibitions and restrictions, such as avoiding permanent housing except for those with natural leaf roofing, using forest leaves for their dwellings, abstaining from livestock farming, and refraining from cultivating certain crops.

In the Air Hitam region of Sarolangun, the tribe's people hold strong theological beliefs in the existence of God and their revered deities. Most adhere to animism and dynamism, which involves believing in spirits inhabiting natural objects like large trees, stones, rivers, mountains, and similar entities. Polytheism also plays a significant role in their belief system, as they recognize the protective powers of their deities. (Hambali et al., 2019).

In their earthly existence, the people of the *Suku Anak Dalam* believe in the authority of deities (Bahelo in their native language, which means "dewo" or "deity") who influence their lives. Beyond acknowledging a supreme ruler of the universe, they believe in the supernatural powers of various deities. While they recognize over 100 deities, only 8 to 10 are closely connected to their daily lives. These include the Tiger God (Rimau), Cat God, Huluaye God, Spirit God, Disease God, Elephant God, Rice God, Pangolin God, Honey God, and Sky God. These deities are integral to their worldview and cultural practices.

Theistic belief is fundamental to the worldview of the *Suku Anak Dalam*, forming the core of their understanding of the presence of God. They believe in the existence of a spiritual world and supernatural powers but do not assign specific labels to these beliefs. While the tribe recognizes the deities as entities that provide blessings, protection from disasters, and various powers, they do not regard these deities as the gods they worship. Instead, the deities are seen as mediators and intermediaries to God. They also believe that their God is the same worshipped by Muslims, with the primary differences lying in ritual practices. Among those who have converted to Islam, there is a belief that their

ancestors were once Muslims. This perception is supported by their traditional chants and mantras, which often incorporate Islamic phrases such as Bismillah or Assalamu'alaikum and include references to Allah and the Prophet Muhammad. These mantras, referred to as jampi, blend traditional practices with elements of the Islamic faith (Taza, 2023).

An example of an incantation is the Pagar Gerak Bangun, which begins:

“Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, gajah putih seberang laut, susang aku susang belalai, susang gading susang jantung, susang perut susang hati, susang limpa aku, kutegakkan sumpah Allah, kubertindak seperti Muhammad, Allah pelindungku, Muhammad di sampingku, kami masuk dalam kelambu Rasulullah, karena karunia Allah tidak boleh engkau melanggar, tidak boleh engkau mencuri harta orang, tidak boleh engkau menyakiti atau bertindak curang, dengan Allah sebagai pelindungku, aku berdiri tegak seperti gunung. Tidak boleh engkau mencuri harta orang, tidak boleh engkau merusak harta orang, kami masuk dalam kelambu Rasulullah, karena kasih sayang Allah.”

It means “In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. The white elephant across the sea, my troubles are the elephant's trunk, my troubles are the tusks, my troubles are the heart, my troubles are the stomach, my troubles are the soul, my troubles are my spleen. I uphold the oath of Allah; I act like Muhammad. Allah is my protector, and Muhammad is by my side. We enter the veil of the Messenger of Allah. By Allah's grace, you are forbidden to violate; you are forbidden to steal the property of others, and you are forbidden to harm or act deceitfully. With Allah as my protector, I stand firm like a mountain. You are forbidden to steal the property of others, and you are forbidden to destroy the property of others. We enter the veil of the Messenger of Allah, by the mercy of Allah”.

Despite the integration of Islamic elements into their practices, the isolation of tribe has led to a gradual erosion of their knowledge of Islam. This limited exposure and understanding have contributed to their disconnection from broader Islamic teachings. (Andiopenta, 2022). In addition, when people of the *Suku Anak Dalam* from Bukit Dua Belas climb the sialang tree to harvest sialang (wild honey), they recite a chant as a form of respect and a signal of permission to the spirit believed to own the honey. The chant states, “Assalamu'alaikum, dahan jerambang, o.. dahan jerambang bagi kelalu, o.. aku nduk lalu, ke balai panjang, balai panjanglah, pelupo lamun, lupu lamo tinggal, betiang satu bekeliling, o.. adik oi...”. Means “Peace be upon you, branch of jerambang, oh... branch of jerambang for the crossing, oh... I wish to pass to the long hall, the long hall it is, forgetting briefly, leaving long-forgotten memories, one pillar surrounded, oh... dear sibling, oh...”.

After successfully climbing and locating the honey on the tree, to signal those waiting below that they have found the honey and to reduce their wait time, the climber recites another chant: “Mandi di mano idak ingin hati menolak lesung batu hati, siapa tidak ingin susu menolak dalam baju, adik, oi...” it means “Where can one bathe without the heart refusing the stone mortar of emotions? Who would not want milk beneath the garment? Oh, dear sibling, oh...” (Faruq, 2023). Beyond these practices, the people of *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe preserve various cultural traditions and local wisdom, such as the traditions of Melangun, Bahela, Temalam, and communal planting ceremonies.

Melangun is a tradition of the forest community that requires them to leave their residence whenever a member falls ill or dies. They believe that if a sick person does not recover, their forest has been cursed, prompting them to move far away. The sick individual is left alone in the forest. Similarly, if someone dies, the community leaves their dwelling to escape the sorrowful memories associated with the place. Of the four tribes in the Bukit Dua Belas area, only one, led by Tumenggung Afrizal, has declared their conversion to Islam. Meanwhile, the other three tribes uphold their traditional beliefs and cultural practices. Additionally, some people of the tribe have reportedly embraced Christianity.

An Inclusive Policy: Conflict Prevention and Maqashid al-Syariah Approach

The diverse entities of ethnicity, religion, and race inevitably create potential for conflict due to the intersection of power dynamics, such as inter-religious, inter-ethnic, and inter-racial conflicts. These conflicts often arise from acts of intolerance, which frequently manifest as attempts to impose one's thoughts, ideologies, religions, or actions onto others. Usually, such behavior stems from believing that one's views or actions are the sole truth. In contrast, the perspectives, ideologies, religions, or actions of "the other" are excluded from their awareness as subjects capable of holding a valid truth (Muhammad, 2021). Historically, conflicts involving the people of the *Suku Anak Dalam* who live in the Bukit Dua Belas area have primarily stemmed from competition over natural resources in the hills of Jambi Province. These conflicts include both horizontal and vertical disputes. As a result, they have expressed anger and frustration over destroying forests and trees in protected areas, which they regard as sacred. Violations of their beliefs often lead to demands for reparations or customary fines imposed on the offenders (Wandi, 2019).

The escalation of conflict intensifies when outsiders in the village refuse to pay the customary fines imposed by the *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe. These conflicts, characterized as small-scale social disputes, typically involve small groups and revolve around issues of forest resource access. Territorial claims by groups are often employed as tools to secure access for their members while simultaneously blocking others from utilizing the same areas (Ahat & Auliahadi, 2019).

Among the numerous conflicts occurring in the territory of the *Suku Anak Dalam*, none have been directly linked to religious disputes, whether involving the Orang Rimba or the surrounding Muslim communities. Most conflicts stem from agrarian disputes. While not explicitly stated, such disputes could escalate into inter-ethnic conflicts, where religious symbols, labels, and sensitivities are leveraged to strengthen group solidarity, potentially leading to heightened aggression and brutality on both sides. Furthermore, social conflicts with religious undertones may arise from mismanagement or improper engagement during efforts to mentor and empower the *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe (Ismail, 2017). Therefore, preventive measures are essential for individuals and organizations intending to foster and support the *Suku Anak Dalam*.

There is universal agreement that harmony, tolerance, and inter-religious coexistence in Indonesia are crucial and strategic aspects of societal cohesion (Syam, 2005). Without tolerance and harmony, interfaith relations become fragile and vulnerable to intervention, potentially leading to social-political instability, a scenario undesirable for any segment of society (Alwi et al., 2024).

Peace, in essence, is deeply embedded in the lives of the *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe. Despite their reputation for being primitive and conservative, internal conflicts are almost nonexistent among them, thanks to their solidarity and commitment to their beliefs and culture. However, the absolute risk lies in external conflicts, which pose significant potential for escalation. To address this, exploring more profound messages of peace is imperative to navigate the differences in beliefs among the tribe members and ensure peace evolves from a mere idea into a sustainable and meaningful future for them. The *maqashid al-syariah* approach, with its adaptability and development, offers a framework capable of meeting the needs of the *Suku Anak Dalam* or Orang Rimba in preserving the humanity, peace, and harmony they have cultivated. This is especially critical when their beliefs and practices intersect with those of differing religious communities.

The *maqashid al-syariah* has developed to include preserving religion, emphasizing that individuals' beliefs should not be interfered with or forcibly changed. Instead, these beliefs should be respected and preserved as part of the rich diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and religions. Ibn 'Ashur expanded on this idea, reinterpreting the preservation of religion to include the freedom of belief or the freedom to express one's faith in contemporary contexts ('Asyur, 2018). He identified three fundamental freedoms essential to social interaction. The first is the freedom of belief, which supports interfaith dialogue through various means, such as life dialogues, social activities, theological discussions, and joint prayers. This approach facilitates engagement with communities like the *Suku Anak Dalam* tribe, fostering understanding and empowerment while reducing the risk of conflict. The second is the freedom of opinion, which should be facilitated by educators or mentors working with the *Suku Anak Dalam*. This ensures they can advocate for their rights, including the right to voice aspirations, access education, and participate in development efforts. The third is the freedom of expression, encompassing private and public domains. Privately, it includes performing religious rituals, such as using the forest as sacred land (*tanah bedewo-dewo*) for worship. Publicly, it involves engaging in cultural traditions, customary practices, and livelihoods like hunting. However, it is important to note that these freedoms are not absolute; they must respect the rights and freedoms of others. Therefore, while freedom is an inherent aspect of life, any limitation or violation constitutes an injustice (Sonafist, 2023).

Building on these tendencies, it is unsurprising that Jasser Auda reconstructed the paradigm of *maqashid al-syariah*, which had traditionally been understood within a conventional framework, to evolve within a contemporary context (Auda, 2015)(Bayyah, n.d.). Considering the aspirations of modern scholars, the focus of *maqashid*, which once emphasized protection (*hifz*), has shifted towards development (*tanmiyah*) (Zaprul Khan, 2020).

The principle of protecting religion (*hifz al-din*) relates to safeguarding and preserving the right of the *Suku Anak Dalam* members to practice their beliefs and worship according to their faith. This principle embodies the guarantee of religious harmony while being grounded in the freedom of belief (*hurriyat al-i'tiqad*), enabling a peaceful and harmonious religious life. From this principle also emerges the Islamic concept of tolerance (*tasamuh*) among followers of different religions, as emphasized in verses such as Surah Al-Kaafirun (109:1–6), Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256), and Surah Al-Kahf (18:29).

Furthermore, this principle protects and preserves human life by affirming *Suku Anak Dalam* members' right to life. It underscores the idea that every human has the right

to live, sustain their life, and improve their quality of life. Every individual has the right to live in peace, security, and prosperity, physically and spiritually, and to receive protection from any threat. Within this principle lies the *Suku Anak Dalam's* right to freedom of opinion, the right to choose their residence within the forest, and the right to uphold their customs and cultural practices. These rights ensure the preservation of their unique identity while safeguarding their fundamental human dignity.

Conclusion

The *Suku Anak Dalam* is an Indigenous community that lives in the heart of the forest, maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature while preserving the forest as their home and source of livelihood. A significant aspect of their life is their belief system, rooted in animism and dynamism. However, it is said that their ancestors were adherents of Islam, as reflected in some of their chants and mantras, which incorporate elements of Islamic teachings. This belief system highlights their values of harmony and solidarity, where they honor their deities and ancestral spirits as intermediaries with God. The dynamics of conflict involving the people of the tribe present unique challenges. These conflicts mainly arise from disputes over the use of natural resources and demands for customary fines when sacred areas are violated. Addressing these conflicts requires a thoughtful approach, with dialogue emerging as a relevant strategy to maintain interfaith harmony. Interreligious dialogue and respect for the beliefs of the *Suku Anak Dalam* can foster cooperation and mutual understanding. As an implementation of the earlier principles, applying the preservation of religion (*hifz al-din*) as a foundation for promoting peace among the people of the *Suku Anak Dalam* is a prudent decision. These principles uphold the freedom of belief and protect religious diversity, providing a basis for achieving harmony and peace. Protecting religion serves as the cornerstone for creating a peaceful coexistence. Overall, the *Suku Anak Dalam*, as an indigenous ethnic group, represents a unique community with distinct beliefs, cultures, and ways of life. It is crucial for stakeholders, including researchers, government authorities, and NGOs, to respect, protect, and strengthen the sustainability of their existence through inclusive, dialogic, and universally peaceful approaches.

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