

Mantra Agama: Islamic Dialectics and Local Beliefs of The Suku Anak Dalam Jambi

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Abstract

This study examines the dialectics of local beliefs and religions in the form of mantras in the *Suku Anak Dalam* that are difficult to leave behind and are still practiced even though they have embraced their new religion (Islam). This research used a descriptive quality method by taking a location in the *Suku Anak Dalam* community in Pasir Putih Jambi Village. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation. This study aims to reveal the dialectic that occurs between the old beliefs of the *Suku Anak Dalam* and Islam in the mantras of their lives. The results of this study found that there was a dialectic between the old beliefs of the Jambi *Suku Anak Dalam* and Islam in the form of mantras in the procession of *besale*, *tasapo/teguran*, childbirth, and *ketulangan* by adding the sentence "basmalah" at the beginning of the mantra and the sentence "do'a" to ask Allah for protection at the end of the mantra.

Keywords: Dialectics; Religions; Beliefs; *Suku Anak Dalam*.

Introduction

Human behavior is driven by the power of the values it adheres to both from religious values and cultural values that are believed. With regard to belief systems, religion always dialogues with the local culture in which it is located. Although sometimes there is one that influences either religion or vice versa the local culture that is more dominant in human life, it is possible that both can play an important role in shaping a new culture due to the dialogue between religious values and local cultural values. In Geertz's opinion religion and culture, religion is a system of belief and culture as a rule by which man regulates his behavior, and it is summed up in symbols that man expresses (Syam, 2007).

This dialectic between religion and culture can be understood because every religion including Islam is inseparable from the reality of its existence. Islam is not a religion that is present in a cultural vacuum, Islam is present in a certain tribe by bringing a value system that blends with the local culture, this is seen as a dialectic of Islam and culture so that there is a cultural acculturation and Islam that merges with various cultures (Wahid, 2009). Therefore, Islam does not clash with local culture, but builds it into local wisdom with Islamic values (Pabajjah, 2020).

However, behind the elasticity of Islam in accepting local beliefs, and the openness of local beliefs in accepting Islam, it is also influenced by communities that find it difficult to abandon cultural customs that are ingrained as their identity. So that in the field there is a dialectic between the two, as only in the *Suku Anak Dalam* Jambi who have accepted Islam, have not completely abandoned their old beliefs (Observasi, 2018).

The *Suku Anak Dalam* community strongly maintains long-standing customs in decline and is a reference or guideline for their lives (Israhmat, 2016). Their old beliefs are still practiced to this day, one of which is the mantras present in memorial ceremonies, and the mantras that are believed to be recited daily. Such as daily mantras used for healing, anxiety relief and maintaining relationships between community members (Triana & Putri, 2022).

Some research on dialectics of religion, culture and local beliefs is very much found in various regions in Indonesia, especially between the Islamic religion (Ahad & Auliahadi, 2013; Al Qurtuby, 2020; Jubba, 2016; Pabajjah, 2020). Meanwhile, research on the religion of the *Orang Rimba* was also researched by (Mailinar & Nurdin, 2013) about the conception of the *Suku Anak Dalam* and Islam which is still mixed with the beliefs of their traditions such as besale and tahlinan, (Israhmat, 2016) about the *Suku Anak Dalam* belief system, and the intersection of Islamic spirituality with indigenous peoples (Supian & Muspawi, 2022). However, no one has seen the dialectic between the *Suku Anak Dalam* and Islam beliefs about mantras, especially the Jambi *Orang Rimba* community.

The Islamic religious life of the *Suku Anak Dalam* community in Jambi in recent years has developed quite well (Mailinar & Nurdin, 2013). Uniquely, some old cultures and beliefs such as animism and dynamism seem to be still practiced and seem difficult to leave behind. This study looks at the focus in revealing the dialectic of the old beliefs of the *Suku Anak Dalam* and Islam in the mantras of these animist and dynamist beliefs that they still hold and practice.

Researchers see that the *Suku Anak Dalam* acceptance of Islam does not completely abandon their old customs and beliefs. But accepting Islam by still holding to the hereditary customs they have long held, and this certainly affects their religious way of embracing Islam. This is reflected in the spell spells they use. Like

some of the old spells in the *besale* ritual, the procession of childbirth and others still remain in their lives.

Based on the description above, it can be seen that the *Suku Anak Dalam* belief has been widely carried out but this study wants to reveal how the *Suku Anak Dalam* mantra ritual was not abandoned even though they had converted to Islam. From here the author is interested in revealing what mantras the *Suku Anak Dalam* still use in their lives, how their beliefs are, and how the dialectic that occurs between the *Suku Anak Dalam* culture and Islam as their new religion.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative (field research) approach that is descriptive. This research is focused on investigations regarding the *Suku Anak Dalam*. In this study, the researcher is the main instrument in reducing the data and information needed in the study, the data in this study was collected from the *Suku Anak Dalam* Community of Pasir Putih Jambi Village, including Temenggung, Deputy Temenggung, *Suku Anak Dalam* Religious Supervisor, and several people from the *Suku Anak Dalam* community. The data is then collected through observation, interviews, and documentation (Moleong, 2007). Observations in this study were carried out by going directly to the field and directly reviewing the *Suku Anak Dalam*. Researchers conduct interviews openly and in depth with informants who have been determined by the researcher. Researchers also dig up information from library sources needed in this study, then the data is verified first (Helaluddin, 2019).

Geneology of the *Suku Anak Dalam* Pasir Putih

Suku Anak Dalam (SAD), *Orang rimba*, Kubu, and Sanak are some of the nicknames that are familiarly attributed to one of the remote tribes in Jambi Province (Muchlis et al., 2016). Tribes are unique and may look "strange" when viewed from the development of today's 'crazy' world of digitization. The *Orang Rimba* still lived in a primitive way, dressed only with loincloths (bark panties), survived by concocting (hunting), and had their own local beliefs (indigineous religion).

The *Suku Anak Dalam* live nomadically and move around, therefore this tribe is divided and spread across several regencies in Jambi Province including Sarolangun, Batanghari, Tebo, Muaro Bungo, and Muaro Jambi (Munawir, 1975). The origin of the *Suku Anak Dalam* has a long history and has not received much research attention before the last two decades. So the geneology of this group

cannot be 'ascertained' validly because it has several versions. The first scholar's attention to the *Suku Anak Dalam* was the research of Muntholib Soetomo in his dissertation in 1995 which stated that the *Suku Anak Dalam* he called the "Orang Rimba" was a Malau people who got lost in the forest and then chose to live there (Manurung, 2013).

Another version states that the *Suku Anak Dalam* originated from the Pagaruyung community with the theory of similarities in language and customs of the Minangkabau people. This theory is reinforced by the 2014 WARSI data and the arguments presented by Fuad Muchlis 2016. The jungle people who came from Pagaruyung are descendants of Bujang Perantau and Putri Kelumpang. They were messengers from the kingdoms of Sumatra who were lost and eventually chose to stay in the forest. Fuad also mentioned that another data is that the *Suku Anak Dalam* came from the Sriwijaya Kingdom who saved themselves in the forest from attacks by other royal troops (Muchlis et al., 2016).

However, the above data are only conjectures that are not absolute validity because there is no definitive evidence of shahih either historical or research records that can be proven valid. Moreover, the data above refer to the kingdoms of the Sultanate of West Sumatra, the Sultanate of West Sumatra and the Sultanate of Jambi which have historical records as kingdoms and sultanates of civilization that were the center of civilization at that time. Both in writing and introduction in script. Meanwhile, if you look at the data in the field, it shows that most of the *Suku Anak Dalam* are retarded people in technology and education..

The origin of their ancestors based on the area of forest where they lived in Jambi Province can be traced to, among others: The *Suku Anak Dalam* who settled on the Makekal River came from the descendants of the Malays from the land of Garo which originated from Buah Gelumpang. The *Orang Rimba* in the western region of Jambi Province, precisely Sarolangun and Bangko, come from Musi Rawas, South Sumatra. Meanwhile, the *Suku Anak Dalam* located in the Pasir Putih Village area come from the Kuamang Kuning Rimbo Bujang area of Jambi Province, which is believed to be from West Sumatra. (Takiddin, 2014).

An interview with Temenggung *Suku Anak Dalam* Pasir Putih said that the origin told from their descendants came from Kuamang Kuning Rimbo Bujang Village, Tebo Regency. Because of the characteristics of those who lived sedentary in the

forest, they finally settled in the pelepat area after the death of the first Temenggung, namely the parents of Heri (current Temenggung). Interestingly, the *Suku Anak Dalam* community in Pasir Putih Pelepat, Bungo Regency, initially lived in the forest nomadically then decided to coexist with rural communities on the edge of the forest (Heri, 2018).

Responding to this, in 2012 the state through the local government offered housing in the form of houses to those located in Pasir Putih Village (Sungai Kelukup) so that the government could channel its attention to them both educationally, socially, and economically which for the *Suku Anak Dalam* felt increasingly western to survive in the forest by concocting because natural resources were no longer what they used to be. The lifestyle of the *Suku Anak Dalam* who closed themselves off from civilization had an impact on the low civilization of their lives (Muji, 2018).

Traditionally the *Suku Anak Dalam* inherited the trust of their ancestors. They believe that the spirits of the ancestors and the gods live around them as protectors in life. They also believe there is a force beyond them that encompasses nature. Ancestral gods and spirits that must be honored with rituals that have been regulated in their customary laws because they are believed to bring blessings of goodness and happiness. On the other hand, if this custom is not implemented, it can cause great sadness, disaster, and even dismay for their survival (Supian & Muspawi, 2022).

In religious theory this belief is called animism and dynamism. In practice, the implementation of the belief system can be seen from the implementation of many rituals in their lives such as in important processions of life such as childbirth, marriage, seeking sustenance, rejecting reinforcements, to death processions. They believe that behind this real world lies the world and the power of supernatural beings. There are supernatural powers that play a role behind the real world that ordinary powers cannot reach (Samiwae, 2018).

The *Suku Anak Dalam* of Pasir Putih Village who have converted to Islam actually have a belief that they already have deep beliefs about the concept of divinity, that Allah SWT is the God who created the universe, there is no ally for Him and Allah is the Power that dominates all nature (Nur, 2018). They also say the

religion adopted by them today i.e. Islam forbids them to eat animals that are illegitimate e.g. pigs and dogs.

The *Suku Anak Dalam* community in Pasir Putih Village also considers the rules in Islam to be in accordance with the social regulations and customs they practice. Islam is also considered to teach the obligation to establish good relations between each other and peace with the surrounding community (Bujang, 2018). From this it can be understood that the *Suku Anak Dalam* Pasir Putih Jambi has embraced Islam and knows God in its aqidah, but nevertheless still does not fully understand the teachings of Islam with evidence of their inability to read the Qur'an and practice worship in Islam.

Dynamics of *Suku Anak Dalam* Local Beliefs

Moving from one belief to another requires determination and strong reasoning. Because belief (religion) is a sensitive one, the dogma is the most powerful in influencing human behavior. According to Thomas Swan, the psychological reason for the conversion of religion is partly because he is attracted to the "gifts" offered by his new religion. The gift in question can be security, the promise of future happiness, a sense of moral truth, and something that is believed to have a way to develop ideally (Ahad & Auliahadi, 2013).

One's search for god is another side of conversion to religion or belief. Not many people convert because of this. The other side of the lot is life that provides guarantees on the necessities of life, such as social, political, economic, and inner psychic needs. Usually a new person in a faith will be well received, welcomed, and facilitated his religious life and given assistance in his social life. However, conversion also has a negative effect because it means abandoning old beliefs that will deal with family, friends, and even communities that feel betrayed.

It is difficult to give up the whole identity that has been inherent in life, as is the custom, ritual, and procession that is carried out every day, even if it has received a new belief that is different from the previous belief. The main point of belief may have shifted completely, but the small beliefs that have accompanied it so far may not necessarily be left unattended. History can be seen from the meeting of Islam and Hindu Buddhism in Indonesia. Many of the traditional rituals and processions that today later cultivated and assimilated by Islam, such as offerings, mantras, and other customs that come into contact with syncretism (Mohd Mokhtar & Sa'ari, 2016).

When the *Suku Anak Dalam* have accepted Islam, there are some dynamics that occur in the establishment of laws in their lives. Laws in the ordinances of dress, food, worship, marriage, inheritance, and rituals in their cultural customs that may be contrary to the beliefs of *aqidah* in Islam. This dynamic of conversion also occurred in the *Orang Rimba* in Jambi, some of these communities moved from animism (local religion) which they had always believed in Islam. The reason for this move is basically the same as the theory above, but it has another uniqueness, namely that the religion (belief) they have always believed in is not an official religion in this country.

One of the reasons for the *Suku Anak Dalam* in Jambi to convert was so that they could have a better life, living more prosperously than before, living only in the forest with limited food, clothing, and shelter. In addition, their existence as social beings in previous religions is also difficult to recognize. According to one of the *Suku Anak Dalam*, Yusuf said that his reason for accepting Islam was so that he would get the status of a citizen in the form of an Identity Card (KTP). One reason that is difficult to accept in a democratic country that provides recognition, justice, and welfare for all its people as stated in Pancasila.

Yusuf further said that other reasons are to live more decently, be able to get an education, get a health facility, have a vehicle, and technology. Survival by gathering (hunting) is already very difficult to do in the midst of rampant land clearing for oil palm plantations. It is not uncommon for the forest that they have always called home to feel looted and in conflict with companies that they do not have the power to fight because of the lack of knowledge / education (Yusuf, 2018).

The interesting part behind the reason for the conversion of the *Suku Anak Dalam* is that they accepted Islam of their own accord and without coercion from anyone and any party. Their acceptance of this new religion was purely of their own accord. Whereas when considering how the *Suku Anak Dalam* hold their beliefs that are very strong and thick in every aspect of their lives, and even their identity is certainly very hard to leave (Kulup, 2018).

Kulup, one of the *Suku Anak Dalam* who have embraced Islam in the author's interview, recounted his reason for converting because he viewed that the teachings of Islam that reached them were in accordance with the process of daily life, and were not contained in the teachings of Islam that was contrary to the good they

believed in the previous belief, there were no bad actions or threats to their safety in living.

The similarity of teachings in the local beliefs of the *Suku Anak Dalam* is also conveyed by the Foreskins in their daily lives often uttering the phrase "Allah", the expression of the word when something out of control is often spoken spontaneously which is allegedly influenced by the intersection of their association with the Muslim community. So that when they accepted Islam, the *Suku Anak Dalam* no longer felt awkward with the rituals and activities of the teachings of the Islamic religion.

The high moderation and tolerance of Islam is a very important part of the process of accepting the *Suku Anak Dalam* to believe that Islam does not threaten their lives. No nation of any kind can easily change and abandon its customs. Islam in this section has proven it in history both in several countries of the world, to the ethnic groups in Indonesia in the process of assimilation and acculturation with culture and customs.

People who have accepted Islam can still carry out their old customs and culture as long as they do not conflict with aqidah (the basic teachings of Islam). Aqidah here is tawhid, which is the belief in a single God, the essential pillar of faith. Customs and culture in the implementation of other humanitarian ceremonies such as clothing, and food that fall into the halal category in Islam can still be carried out.

Islam in the Mantras of *Suku Anak Dalam* Medicine

A religion cannot be separated from the reality in which it is located, the religion and the reality of the customs and culture in which it was born entrusting a dialogue that dynamically lasts over time. It continues to evolve along with human behavior in religion. One of them is Islam, during its spread in Indonesia, it came into contact with several beliefs such as animism, dynamism, singkritism, to previous religious beliefs such as Hinduism and Buddhism.

Islam in Indonesia proves that a religion cannot be separated from the reality of existing customs and cultures. Between the two gives birth to creativity, dialogue, and dialectics so that they influence each other. Indonesian Islam is different from Islam in its birthplace, in the Middle East, in the West, and even in Asia. So that Islam is easier to accept and has distinctive characteristics in each region. Customs, Cultures, and even beliefs in the form of old local cultures are also manifested in new

traditions assimilated in Islam without hurting each other between the two, both the Islamic religion itself and the teachings of previous beliefs.

In animism and dynamism one of the familiar in its rituals is the mantra. Mantras are sentences that are spoken with a certain rhythm for the purpose of bringing about a change to something spiritually proclaimed. Historically mantra is a form of old poetry and is referred to as the oldest poem in Indonesia. The practice of mantras can be found in the culture of tribal communities in Indonesia.

Rituals in the White Sands Orang Dalam Tribe community in which mantras have a vital role in the implementation of rituals in their lives, among others, in terms of medicine. Medicine in medicine has not been able to reach society as a whole, only those who live in urban areas and have money are able to enjoy health facilities. Meanwhile, fringe society depends on nature, and belief in something beyond its ability as a human being. Medicine in the White Sands Inner Child Tribe there are several mantra rituals that are carried out including:

1. *Basale*

Basale is a traditional tradition of the *Orang Rimba* which has been carried out for generations approximately three derivatives. *Basale* is performed in a ritual to plead with the Almighty to heal those who are sick from the evil spirits that plague them (Mailinar & Nurdin, 2013). These evil spirits are believed to reside in the souls of the sick. In addition to the plea for the recovery of sick people, the *besale* ritual is also carried out as a form of gratitude after being given healing.

The souls of the sick in the *Orang Rimba* faith reside evil spirits that must be cleansed through ritual ceremonies. The evil spirits that reside in the souls of men are a form of anger that if not performed the ritual offerings, there will be a greater amount of wrath in the form of a greater catastrophe. The *besale* ritual is a form of plea for mercy to keep the catastrophe away so that a balance relationship will be created between the living soul and the spirit soul in the supernatural realm.

Pelaksanaan *basale* telah menjadi tradisi turun temurun *Suku Anak Dalam*. Namun kemudian di komunitas *Suku Anak Dalam* Pasir Putih, sebagian yang telah memeluk agama Islam sudah jarang dilaksanakan. Dalam pengakuannya, mereka memahami bahwa dalam pelaksanaan *basale* terdapat unsur yang dilarang dalam keyakinan Islam yang disebut dengan syirik. Memohon pertolongan kepada

sesuatu selain kepada Tuhan (Allah), adalah bentuk penghianatan/ menduakan tuhan.

In addition to the awareness of the understanding that believing in gods is forbidden in Islam, the White Sands Inner Tribe is also built on the realization that the medium of modern medicine through nurses and doctors is also more economical than carrying out besale ceremonies which are weighed using relatively equal or even greater costs.

2. *Demam Tasapo/ teguran*

In treating the sick *Suku Anak Dalam* have a local culture derived from their beliefs with mantras recited on turmeric and some other herb leaves in the form of rambutan leaves, *bungo rayo*, which are soaked with water and then rubbed on the faces of people who are sick or have a hot fever. In addition, they also drank water from the root bath and then recited the spell, namely: "*apo bae lah kalu kamu tasapo aku ubek dengan ubek tasapo hedak sembuhlah*" (Nur, 2018).

This method of treatment is still carried out today and is also assisted by the treatment of doctors or midwives. Uniquely, the mantras recited earlier were supplemented by readings taught by their new religion Islam such as the recitation of "basmalah" at the beginning of the mantra, and added do'a to Allah at the end after the fever of reprimand/tesapo ritual was performed.

3. Pregnant

Getting pregnant or conceiving takes approximately nine minutes until the child is born into the world. During pregnancy, several bad possibilities can occur at any time, falls that result in bleeding, and miscarriages. In certain communities can be found medicinal rituals and believed recipes. In the *Suku Anak Dalam* who believe in seloko as a guide to life (customary laws) as a basis for making decisions, the mantras to anticipate and treat this pregnancy procession must be read so that the baby is born safely, healthily and perfectly without any flaws.

An interview with one of the *Suku Anak Dalam* Communities in Pasir Putih Village, Mak Nur, he said:

"Kalu ado diantaro kami hamil dan tajatuh mako bacaan ritualnyo tu *darah putih darah asal mampat darah ibu bapom berkat illahillah*" (Nur, 2018).

If one of the *Suku Anak Dalam* Community is pregnant and she falls or is bleeding then the mantra "*darah putih darah asal mampat darah ibu bapom berkat*"

illahillah". This mantra was recited with the intention of getting the bleeding to stop. When she wants to give birth, the mother is accompanied by a shaman who has taken care of the mother from the beginning. The shaman casts spells so that the baby brother can be born smoothly and safely. Another mantra if the mother is difficult to give birth then it is recited "*anyak-anyok sek, tolung tolung, tolung-tolung anak awak nak melahirkan tolung, ngejan-ngejan nampak kepalak budak ngejan*". The purpose of this ritual is to be facilitated when giving birth (Gaek, 2018).

4. *Ketulangan*

"Ketulangan" is a term for a person who is pierced by a thorn or fishbone while eating. Uniquely in treating this, instead of being treated directly to the mouth or throat by drinking plenty of water, or swallowing hot clenched rice, bananas, or bread in large quantities, in the hope that the fish bones can be released and swallowed properly, the *Suku Anak Dalam* overcome it with mantra readings.

*Bismillah hirohmanirohim
Ikan pitak ikan pituk
Ketigo jahilulah
Nang melintang nang mujur
Hak lalulah
Aminn kata Muhammad, Maqbul Kata Allah.*

The word in this mantra is a connotation, seen in "*Nang melintang nang mujur*" and "*Hak lalulah*" which means that transverse or efficacious fish bones can be removed by reciting this spell. The word symbol is found in the lyrics "*Ikan pitak ikan pituk*" the word fish already describes animals. The language used is colloquial, namely Malay, the opening and closing of mantras using basmalah, while the content uses colloquial language, not using the hadith of Prophet Muhammad SAW or from verses of the Quran

The interaction between local beliefs and religion (Islam) in the *Suku Anak Dalam* when viewed from its coexistence in theory is the same as what is called syncretism. Kraft mentions syncretism as mixing religious thought and activity with the same goal of combining religion and culture. In this situation of merging beliefs and religions as long as it does not pollute the concept of divinity of his religion, he becomes a positive because it maintains from division (Mohd Mokhtar & Sa'ari, 2016). Some of the fusions of mantras in *Orang Rimba* life with Islamic teachings

show a unique dialectic. Their old belief mantras are combined with the addition of basmalah readings, sholawat, and do'a of protection to Allah Almighty.

Conclusion

The *Suku Anak Dalam* beliefs that have been carried out for generations are inherent as an identity that is difficult to completely abandon even though they have believed in the teachings of Islam as a new religion. Some traditions that are considered not to undermine their new beliefs are still carried out in the process of cultural assimilation and acculturation which indeed Islam has a long history in this regard. Mantras in some life rituals such as *basale*, demam *tasapo/teguran*, childbirth procession, and *ketulangan* show a dialectic between Islam and local beliefs that gave birth to a new tradition in the life of the *Suku Anak Dalam*.

This research holds the view that local belief systems are attached to a community that is difficult to leave behind even though they already have new beliefs. In addition, Islam is known to have elastic teachings so that it can be assimilated and acculturated in every existing culture without injuring the core teachings or aqidah. Then this research certainly has limitations that only focus on mantras in the beliefs of the Jambi Children's Tribe. So is the selection of informants whose spectrum is limited. Further research is therefore needed taking into account the representation of informants from various backgrounds. Thus, it is hoped to get a more complete and in-depth portrait of the dialectic of the beliefs and religions of the *Orang Rimba* in Jambi.

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