

The Accomplishment of Da'wah in Integrating Islamic Value into the Cultural Orang Asli of Malaysia

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ABSTRAK: Kejayaan Dakwah (usaha dakwah Islam) dalam mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Islam ke dalam masyarakat Orang Asli Malaysia telah menjadi satu proses yang kompleks dan beransur-ansur. Ia bukan sahaja melibatkan penukaran agama, tetapi juga rundingan budaya, pembangunan sosio-ekonomi, dan penglibatan politik. Orang Asli, orang asli Semenanjung Malaysia, mewakili kumpulan yang pelbagai yang terdiri daripada pelbagai suku kaum dengan budaya, bahasa dan kepercayaan rohani yang berbeza. Berakar pada sejarah animisme dan tradisi nenek moyang, Orang Asli telah mengalami peningkatan transformasi agama dan budaya, khususnya melalui usaha dakwah Islam yang dikenali sebagai Dakwah. Kertas kerja ini meneroka pencapaian Dakwah dalam menyepadukan nilai-nilai Islam ke dalam fabrik budaya masyarakat Orang Asli, mengkaji kedua-dua tahap kejayaan dan cabaran yang mengiringi integrasi ini. Nilai-nilai keislaman yang diperkenalkan dalam kalangan Orang Asli telah membentuk tersendiri dan unik dengan menyepadukan nilai-nilai tersebut seperti prinsip-prinsip Islam (Tauhid: kepercayaan kepada keesaan Tuhan, Fitrah: fitrah semulajadi, Ubudiyah: kehambaan kepada Tuhan, Akhlak: akhlak dan pembangunan intelektual) telah menjadi asas dalam membentuk nilai-nilai keislaman di kalangan orang asli.

Kata kunci: Da'wah, Nilai Islamik, Orang Asli

ABSTRACT: The success of Da'wah (Islamic missionary efforts) in integrating Islamic values into the Orang Asli communities of Malaysia has been a complex and gradual process. It involves not just religious conversion, but also cultural negotiation, socio-economic development, and political engagement. The Orang Asli, the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, represent a diverse group comprising various tribes with distinct cultures, languages, and spiritual beliefs. Historically rooted in animism and ancestral traditions, the Orang Asli have experienced increasing religious and cultural transformations, particularly through Islamic missionary efforts known as Da'wah. This paper explores the accomplishment of Da'wah in integrating Islamic values into the cultural fabric of the Orang Asli community, examining both the extent of its success and the challenges that accompany this integration. The Islamic values introduced in Orang Asli have shaped a distinct and unique by integrating these values such as Islamic principles (Tawhid: belief in the oneness of God, Fitrah: natural disposition, Ubudiyah: servitude to God, Akhlaq: moral conduct and intellectual development) have become fundamental in shaping the Islamic values among orang asli.

Keywords: Da'wah, Islamic Value, Orang Asli

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of Da'wah among the Orang Asli reflects Malaysia's broader goal of religious outreach and national integration. While notable progress has been made, particularly through inclusive and developmental approaches, continued efforts must balance Islamic propagation with cultural sensitivity and indigenous rights. Only then can Da'wah efforts be both effective and ethical. The Orang Asli are the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, comprising three main groups: Negrito, Senoi, and Proto-Malay, each with their own customs, languages, and spiritual beliefs. The spread of Islam among them has been a gradual and strategic process, influenced by government policies, missionary organizations, and social development initiatives. During post-Independence Era (1957–1980s) the government started formalizing Islamic missionary work as part of national integration policies. Moreover, the government also established institutions like PERKIM (1960) and later JAKIM provided structure to Da'wah efforts. Currently, the government rapidly integrates the development approach by using Da'wah method often combined with socioeconomic aid (zakat, food and housing), educational support (islamic and secular) and medical assistance supported by community health projects. At the same time, the government supports the training of orang Asli Da'ie, and now orang asli being trained as religious teachers and leaders.

2. Accomplishment of Da'wah among Orang Asli

The accomplishment of Da'wah among the Orang Asli (indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia) involves various religious, social, and developmental efforts. These accomplishments can be examined across spiritual, educational, and community development domains.

Spiritual and Religious Accomplishments

- **Increase in Conversion Rates:**
Many Orang Asli communities have embraced Islam through structured da'wah efforts by organizations like JAKIM, PERKIM, and state religious departments.
- **Establishment of Surau and Mosques:**
Islamic missionary work has led to the construction of surau (prayer spaces) and mosques in Orang Asli villages, supporting continuous Islamic education and prayer.
- **Islamic Identity Formation:**
Converts are often given Islamic names, and efforts are made to inculcate Islamic values while being sensitive to Orang Asli cultural heritage.

The spiritual and religious accomplishments of da'wah among the Orang Asli include: A steady rise in Islamic conversions, Establishment of worship infrastructure, Increased religious knowledge and practice, Formation of a unique Orang Asli Muslim identity and Internal leadership through trained Orang Asli da'i. These achievements reflect not only the

success of da'wah efforts but also the importance of long-term spiritual development tailored to Orang Asli culture and values.

Educational Achievements

Da'wah efforts among the Orang Asli are not limited to religious conversion—they also play a vital role in enhancing educational access, literacy, and religious knowledge. These achievements help empower the community and support long-term spiritual and social development.

- **Introduction of Islamic Education:**
Islamic religious classes (*kelas fardu ain*), Qur'an reading, and moral teachings are often conducted, especially for children and youth.
- **Access to Formal Education:**
Through da'wah, education has been promoted as a tool of empowerment, encouraging Orang Asli children to attend government schools and Islamic learning centers.

Community Development

Da'wah among the Orang Asli extends beyond spiritual matters, playing a major role in uplifting their quality of life through integrated and holistic community development. This approach helps ensure that religious outreach is supported by tangible improvements in daily living.

- **Improved Living Standards:**
Da'wah is often paired with humanitarian programs – providing clean water, food aid, healthcare access, and housing improvements.
- **Skills and Economic Empowerment:**
Some Islamic NGOs provide vocational training, farming assistance, and entrepreneurship programs to uplift Orang Asli communities economically.

Integration into the Muslim Ummah

Da'wah efforts among the Orang Asli do not stop at conversion—they also emphasize social and spiritual inclusion within the broader Muslim community (*ummah*). This integration is essential for strengthening identity, support systems, and unity.

- **Social Inclusion:**
Converts are often welcomed into broader Muslim communities, participating in communal events like Ramadan programs, Friday prayers, and Islamic celebrations.
- **Support Networks:**
New Muslim support groups provide emotional, spiritual, and material assistance to Orang Asli converts.

3. Challenges in Cultural Integration

While many Orang Asli have embraced Islam through da'wah efforts, the process of cultural integration into the broader Muslim community is complex and often faces significant hurdles. These challenges are both internal (within Orang Asli communities) and external (from the wider society).

Cultural Displacement and Identity Tensions

Despite conversions, many Orang Asli still retain aspects of their indigenous worldview and cultural practices, leading to a hybrid identity. This sometimes causes tension between traditional practices and Islamic orthodoxy, especially when certain rituals are deemed un-Islamic. Critics argue that rapid Islamization risks eroding the cultural heritage and identity of the Orang Asli, leading to a form of religious and cultural assimilation rather than integration.

Forced or Induced Conversions

There have been concerns regarding the voluntariness of some conversions. In certain cases, Orang Asli individuals report feeling pressured to convert due to the promise of material benefits or to gain access to state resources. This raises ethical questions about the authenticity of the conversions and whether true integration of Islamic values has occurred at the spiritual or only surface level.

Legal and Bureaucratic Complications

The Syariah legal system in Malaysia complicates religious freedom for the Orang Asli. Once registered as Muslim, it becomes legally difficult to revert to indigenous beliefs. This has led to conflicts over burial rights, marriage registration, and custody cases, which can undermine the trust between missionary efforts and indigenous communities.

4. Islamic Values among Orang Asli Community

The Islamic values introduced to the Orang Asli community have shaped a distinct and unique identity by integrating core Islamic principles. Values such as *Tawhid* (belief in the oneness of God), *Fitrah* (natural disposition), *Ubudiyyah* (servitude to God), *Akhlaq* (moral conduct), and intellectual development have become fundamental in shaping the Islamic identity and worldview of the Orang Asli. The introduction of Islamic values has significantly impacted the Orang Asli community by reshaping their worldview and guiding their spiritual and social development. The concept of *Tawhid* (belief in the oneness of God) instills a strong sense of divine unity and purpose, leading to a shift from animistic beliefs to a monotheistic understanding of existence. *Fitrah* (natural disposition) reinforces the idea that all humans are born with an innate inclination toward truth and righteousness, thus aligning the Orang Asli's traditional values with Islamic teachings in a natural and harmonious way. *Ubudiyyah* (servitude to God) fosters a life of devotion, encouraging acts of worship, discipline, and submission to divine commandments, which helps shape ethical and responsible behavior within the community. Through *Akhlaq* (moral conduct), individuals are guided to embody virtues such as honesty, humility, and respect, enhancing social harmony and interpersonal relationships. Additionally, emphasis on intellectual development promotes a culture of learning and self-improvement, empowering the Orang Asli with knowledge and critical thinking skills essential for both religious understanding and socio-economic progress. Together, these values form a comprehensive framework that contributes to the spiritual, moral, and intellectual transformation of the Orang Asli as part of the broader Muslim ummah.

The core Islamic principles introduced to the Orang Asli include:

- **Tawhid:** Belief in the Oneness of God, which forms the foundation of Islamic faith and shapes their spiritual outlook.
- **Fitrah:** The natural disposition of human beings toward truth and goodness, emphasizing the purity of the soul and innate inclination towards Islam.
- **Ubudiyyah:** Servitude and submission to God, encouraging acts of worship and obedience as a way of life.
- **Akhlaq:** Moral conduct that guides interpersonal behavior, emphasizing values such as honesty, compassion, and justice.
- **Intellectual development:** Encouragement of knowledge-seeking and critical thinking as a means to understand religion and the world.

Conclusion

Da'wah has achieved measurable success in introducing Islamic values to the Orang Asli, particularly through inclusive outreach, social development, and religious education. However, the integration is most successful where it is conducted with cultural sensitivity and respect for indigenous identity. The true accomplishment of Da'wah lies not only in the number of converts but in the ability to nurture a harmonious coexistence between Islamic principles and Orang Asli cultural heritage. Sustainable integration requires ongoing dialogue, mutual respect, and policies that uphold both religious teachings and indigenous rights. The successful integration of Islamic values among the Orang Asli has led to profound spiritual, moral, and intellectual transformation within their communities. Core principles such as *Tawhid*, *Fitrah*, *Ubudiyah*, *Akhlaq*, and intellectual development have not only aligned their way of life with Islamic teachings but also fostered a stronger sense of identity, purpose, and community cohesion. This success reflects the adaptability and universality of Islam, as well as the effectiveness of da'wah efforts in nurturing a meaningful and sustainable Islamic way of life among indigenous populations.

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