

Shi'a Community in Malang City as a Subaltern: Strategy to Celebrate Religious Freedom Amidst Sunni Domination

Johan Wahyudi

Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Brawijaya

Correspondence Email: Corresponding Author: johanwahyudi@ub.ac.id

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Abstract: *Everyone has the right to practice their religion and adhere to their beliefs. Unfortunately, minority sects such as the Shi'a community cannot celebrate their beliefs freely as citizens. They had to hide their identity as Shi'a congregations in order to prevent conflicts and to protect themselves and their families. Against this background, this article aims to examine the strategy of the Shi'a community in Malang City in exercising freedom of religion and belief as a minority religious group in the midst of the Sunni community. This study puts the Shi'a religious group in Malang City as a subaltern that is often discriminated against and excluded socially and politically. This study's data was gathered through interviews and a review of the literature. The selection of research informants was carried out through a purposive sampling technique. By using a qualitative approach with the case study method, this study finds at least three strategies developed by the Shi'a community in Malang City to practice their freedom of religion and belief, namely the Taqiyyah strategy, strengthening the congregation through Huseiniyah recitation, and teaching their children about two different versions of prayer.*

Keywords: *Shi'a, subaltern, Taqiyyah, freedom of religion and belief, Malang City*

Introduction

This study aims to examine the strategy of the Shi'a Muslim community in Malang City, East Java, Indonesia, in exercising freedom of religion and belief as a minority religious group in the midst of the majority Sunni religious residents. Numerous studies have shown that the Shi'a Muslim community in Southeast Asia and Indonesia in particular often experience discrimination and marginalization (Musa & Hui, 2017; Miichi & Kayane, 2019). The marginalization of the Shi'a community cannot be separated

from the global political context, changing national political dynamics, as well as the provisions governing minority religious groups in the local context of the area where the practice of violence against Shia minority groups occurs (Formichi, 2014; Rais, 2015). Over the past decade, the Shi'a religious groups, Ahmadiyya and Christian minorities in Indonesia, have always been the targets of religious extremism (Formichi, 2014).

In Indonesia, such discrimination and marginalization have long been endured by the Shi'a community.

Ironically, this happened systematically by both the government and civil society. The state has used the 1945 Constitution (called the *Undang-Undang Dasar 1945*) as the basis of the constitution to protect freedom of religion and belief as well as to protect all elements of society in Indonesia, including minority groups. In addition, the government has also made various efforts to protect and promote inter-religious harmony, although the results have not been satisfactory. Such attempts can be seen at least from the government's effort to build the theology of harmony since the 1970s, holding internal dialogues between religious communities, and encouraging the establishment of the Center for Religious Harmony (Pusat Kerukunan Umat Beragama) of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia and the Religious Harmony Forum (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama) in all provinces and districts or cities (Ubaidillah, 2017:12).

During the Suharto regime, historically, Shi'a Muslims were portrayed as disruptors of the country's social order (Formichi, 2014). Because of the New Order's concern about the effects of the Khomeini revolution (Sofjan, 2016), Shi'a groups were also considered part of a revolutionary movement that threatened the existence of the government. Even the Council of Indonesia Ulama (MUI), which at that time was commonly referred to as a semi-governmental institution, had issued a recommendation at the National Working Meeting on March 7, 1984 regarding an appeal for Muslims who understood *Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah* to always raise awareness of the entry of

understanding based on Shia teachings (Sofjan, 2013).

At the civil society level, the presence of the National Alliance of Anti-Shi'a (ANAS), for example, further adds to the list of groups that reject and spread negative sentiment towards the minority Shi'a groups. At first, the formation of ANAS was intended as an organized anti-Shi'a movement that made Shi'a the sole target of its campaign. According to Athian Ali, one of the founders of the *Forum Ulama Umat Indonesian* (FUUI), who later became the Chair of ANAS, the mission of forming ANAS included taking the necessary steps to prevent the spread of Shi'a and demanding the government to ban and cancel all permits from foundations, organizations, and institutions belonging to the Shi'a community (Syarif, 2018).

Apart from ANAS, another important actor that played a role in spreading anti-Shia sentiment was the Council of Young Intellectual Ulama of Indonesia (MIUMI). MIUMI's anti-Shi'a sentiment was carried out through the information on their website, at the same time supporting the ideology of radical groups (Makin, 2017). Previously, the anti-Shi'a sentiment was carried out by the Indonesian Islamic Da'wah Council (DDII), which has been actively campaigning against Shi'a since the 1980s (Latief, 2008). The anti-Shia does not only manifest in acts of violence as experienced by the Shi'a Muslim community in Sampang (Kontras Surabaya, 2012; Dzulkarnain, 2013; Afdillah, 2013; Syarif, 2018), but also in the form of discourse expressed through seminars, book publication, and sermons filled with hatred and exclusion (Syarif et

al., 2017).

In general, Shi'a religious groups in Indonesia are categorized as subalterns, who are often discriminated against and excluded socially and politically from society. In the book *Dinamika Syiah di Indonesia* (2017) edited by Ubaidillah, it is clear how various reactions and efforts were made to prevent the development of Shia in Indonesia. Various forms of framing in anti-Shi'a activism can at least be grouped into three aspects: religious, social, and political. The essence of the anti-Shi'a framing is that first, Shi'ism is a cult and misguided; second, because Indonesia is considered a Sunni country, the presence of Shi'a is a source of conflict; third, Shi'a is a threat to the state. Unfortunately, the anti-Shi'a framing was followed by efforts to mobilize resources to block the development of Shi'a in Indonesia. The targets are individuals, institutions, and activities of Shi'a Muslim groups (Zulkifli, 2017).

This study seeks to find out how the struggle for the identity of the Shi'a religious groups in Malang City is living a social life with ideologies and beliefs that are different from the beliefs of the majority of religious groups. Furthermore, this study is expected to provide insight into the dynamics of religious and belief freedom, which, in fact, has not been freely enjoyed by all elements of society. They must hide their identities as followers of the Shi'a faith in order to prevent conflicts and to protect themselves and their families. In fact, the right to freedom of religion and belief is the right of all Indonesian citizens guaranteed by the government through the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia (Hasim, 2012).

Method

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method in order to acquire adequate knowledge about the object under study. Data was collected through interviews and literature studies. The selection of research informants was carried out through a purposive sampling technique. The technique of collecting data through interviews was carried out to seek information verbally related to how the followers of the Shi'a community in Malang City celebrate their freedom of religion and belief privately in the midst of the Sunni community. The informants selected in this study were Ustadz Mukhtar Lutfi as one of the administrators of the East Java Ahlul Bait Indonesia (ABI) Regional Leadership Council, Ustadz Abdillah Baabud, Chair of the East Java Ahlul Bait Indonesia (ABI) Regional Leadership Council, and Ustadzah ED as one of the family sector administrators, Indonesian Muslimah Ahlulbait National Leaders (MAI). Meanwhile, a documentation study was conducted to determine available data regarding the dynamics of the Shi'a group in various regions. Data analysis was carried out by means of descriptive-qualitative. This study is significant in presenting the struggle of the Shi'a minority group to maintain its existence amid the dominance of the religious ideological discourse of the majority group. The data from this study were then analyzed using descriptive techniques and an interactive analysis model, which consists of four flows of activities: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

Result and Discussion

Subaltern and the Struggle for Existence

In order to examine how the Shi'a community struggles for existence, this study places the Shi'a religious community in Malang as subaltern. Literally, subaltern is often defined as subordinate. Antonio Gramsci initially introduced the term philosophically when talking about the inferior group moved by the power of the mainstream, especially the state. The subaltern referred to in this context is the farmer group (Morton, 2008; Widayanti, 2009). By Spivak (1988), this concept was later developed and re-offered in relation to postcolonial studies, which tried to explain the relationship of identity, which was never neutral. According to Spivak, there is always a position in the construction of identity that involves social relations between the dominant and the dominated. In any social context, there are always unequal relationships related to issues of gender, social class, ethnicity, religion, and also age groups, which means one group does not have equal access to another. As further explained by Spivak (1988), the subaltern is also related to those who socially get stereotypical labels and stereotypes because of their characteristics that are considered different or outside the standards applied by society (Udasmoro, 2010). On the other hand, subalternation occurs when there are conditions of injustice (Hartiningsih and Pambudy, 2009). Borrowing from Spivak's logic, the injustice referred to can, for example, be found in those who have been excluded or even the targets of hatred by some dominant groups as a consequence of differences in religious

ideology.

The Shi'a religious minority group is categorized as a subaltern group because it is always considered a heretical and misleading group, dangerous to national stability and is often the target of isolation, hatred, humiliation, and physical violence. Groups that are marginalized from the public sphere and unable to voice their conditions as a result of the strong hegemony of the dominant group are not far from our view. The strong ideological discourse of the dominant group makes subaltern communities like Shi'a experience hardship in celebrating freedom of religion and belief in the public sphere and are always in a subordinate position (Wahyudi, 2015). The practice of marginalization and subalternation usually manifests itself in a complex form, such as in a state of being able to speak but no one wants to listen (War'i, 2016). Even if someone listens, it does not automatically mean that the existence of the Shi'a group can be openly accepted by the dominant social groups. Syarif's study results (2018) against one of the Shi'a groups in Indonesia, namely the Indonesian Association of the Jamaah Ahlul Bait (IJABI), found that although the legality of IJABI has been recognized by the state, Sunni groups still consider the existence of Shi'a a threat to society.

The concept of the subaltern was applied in this study by contextualizing it in the narrative of religious identity. The conception of subaltern is also used to analyze the struggle of the Shi'a Muslim group in Malang City to maintain its existence. The Shi'a Muslim group in Malang City does not experience the same treatment as the Shi'a community in

Sampang. However, they do not dare to openly celebrate their freedom and religious practices. The Shia community chooses to carry out a variety of strategies so that the organization is still able to maintain its existence. Therefore, this study understands the Shi'a Muslim group as a *subaltern*. Furthermore, this study also uses several concepts relevant to identity politics.

Defining Religious Freedom or Belief

Freedom of religion and belief is a fundamental right for every human being. According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the American Convention on Human Rights (ACHR), and the Concluding Document of the Vienna Meeting of Representatives of the CSCE Participating States, at least eight elements become the normative core of human rights to freedom of religion and belief. From the eight elements, there are two important things that are considered relevant to the discussion here; (1) *internal freedom*, where everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (including the freedom of everyone to own, adhere to, defend, or change religions or beliefs); and (2) *external freedom*, where everyone has freedom, either individually or collectively (Lindholm, et al., 2010).

According to the normative framework above, freedom of religion or belief is the most important human right. Therefore, international legal instruments guarantee these basic rights for every citizen (OHCHR, 2000). Meanwhile, religious freedom is defined as a person's or group of people's fundamental rights

guaranteed by the constitution and international law to believe, adhere to, and even change religions and beliefs, defend them, and practice them individually or collectively in a private space or in public (M Djafar, 2020). Although later independence was understood as the freedom to celebrate freedom of religion and belief in the private and public spheres, the fact is that freedom of religion and belief is only enjoyed and celebrated freely by adherents of the majority religious ideology. Meanwhile, minority religious communities celebrate their freedom in private spaces.

In fact, legal guarantees of freedom to practice worship or religious manifestations are guaranteed by the constitution and laws in force in Indonesia as well as various international instruments. In the constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, the right to worship is guaranteed through Article 29 Paragraph 2, which reads: "*The state guarantees the freedom of every citizen to embrace his or her own religion and to worship according to his or her religion and belief.*" In 2000, amendments to the constitution again reinforced the guarantee of the right to worship in Article 28E (1) of the 1945 Constitution, which states that "*Everyone has the right to embrace a religion and worship according to his religion, choose education and teaching, choose a job, choose citizenship, choose a place to live in the territory of the country, and leave it and have the right to return*" (Yonesta in Djafar, et al., 2016). Although freedom of religion and belief is guaranteed by the constitution, the Shi'a Muslim community of Malang City is still afraid of expressing this constitutional right freely and prefers to have the

strategy of secretly celebrating their beliefs in a private space.

Understanding Shi'a through Tracking Theological Confession

In fact, there are Shi'a communities throughout the Islamic world, and there is not a single Islamic country that defines Shi'a as a heretical sect. Their freedom to perform pilgrimage and umrah to Mecca and Medina shows that they are considered part of the Muslim community. In addition, as evidenced by their participation in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Rabithah Al-'Alam Al-Islami, the Organization of the Islamic World Parliaments (PUIC), Majma 'Taqrib, Tajammu' Ulama 'Al-Muslimin, and the Declaration of Makkah 14-August 15, 2012 at the Extraordinary OIC Summit in the City of Makkah Al Mukarramah, is authentic proof that they are considered an inseparable part of Islam. Furthermore, the affirmation that the Shi'a community is part of Islam can be found in various declarations of world Muslim scholars, such as the Amman Declaration, the Makkah Declaration, and the Fatwa of Al-Azhar Al-Syarif. Several scholars of Ahlus Sunnah and Al-Azhar shaykhs, such as Shaykh Mahmud Saltut, Shaykh Muhammad Al-Ghazali, and Shaykh Abu Zahrah, and countless other great scholars of Ahlus Sunnah, clearly state that Shi'a is a part of Islam and the brother of Ahlus Sunnah. Shi'a Islamic kingdoms, such as the Fatimid dynasty, Idrisiyyah, Buwahyi, and even the Shi'a Islamic kingdoms in the archipelago, such as Perlak, have also become an inseparable part of the history of Islamic civilization (TIM ABI, 2012).

Historically, the Shi'a Fatimid

dynasty was the founder of Al-Azhar, which is the oldest and most prominent Islamic university in the Islamic world. On the other hand, since the beginning of the entry of Islam into Indonesia, it has been accompanied by the existence of Shi'a. This is, for example, recognized by national historians in various books of Indonesian national history, namely a number of Shi'a traditions, such as the ark, *Saman dance*, and *Suro*, as an integral part of the culture and identity of the Indonesian nation. In Indonesian *pesantren*, several books by Shi'a scholars, such as Al-Syaukani's *Nayl Al-Awthar*, Al-Syaukani's *Subûl Al-Salam*, and Al-Shan'ani's are also being taught. At the same time, there are numerous scholars of interpretation, such as *Fiqih*, *Kalam*, *Nahwu*, and *Sharaf*, who are referred to by scholars of Ahlus Sunnah and vice versa. In Shi'a, the traditions narrated by Ahlus Sunnah are called *muwatstsqaqah*, as mentioned in the book *Al-Mîzân fî Al-Tafsir Al-Qur'ân* by Allamah Tabathaba'i (TIM ABI, 2012).

Meanwhile, in the Indonesian context, for example, in the 2007 inter-madzhah approach declaration held in Bogor, representatives of NU and Muhammadiyah agreed to have Shi'a as one of the schools of thought in Islam. KH Hasyim Muzadi, who at that time was the Chair of the PBNU and at the same time was Indonesia's representative in the Amman Declaration in 2005, and KH Said Agil Siradj (the current Chairman of the PBNU), mentioned Shi'a as part of Islamic teachings, the same as Sunni teachings. The view of Muhammadiyah is also the same. This was reflected by some of its important figures, such as Din Syamsuddin (former chairman of PP Muhammadiyah),

who said there was no difference between Sunni and Shia. Amien Rais, also a former chairman of PP Muhammadiyah, viewed that Sunnis and Shia were legitimate schools of thought in Islam. Another former chairman of PP Muhammadiyah, Ahmad Syafii Maarif, specifically said that Shi'a should be considered as the fifth mazhab within Islam (Al Hadar, 2015). Thus, the theological existence of Shi'a is basically no problem, and it is a part of Islam. Nevertheless, in the context of freedom and belief in Indonesia, the Shi'a school remains a polemic and even the target of misdirection, propaganda, etc. The existence of the Shi'a group is recognized by several Islamic religious institutions in Indonesia but not by others. This stems from the concern that the Shi'a sect is growing in Indonesia due to its longstanding tradition (Ubaidillah, 2017). In addition, the anti-Shi'ism factor on the basis of stigma-based religion (Syarif et al., 2017), which has often been carried out by groups opposing the presence of the Shi'a, also perpetuates anti-Shia propaganda.

The Overview of Shi'a Community in Malang City

This chapter will describe the profile of the Shi'a Muslim community in Malang City, East Java, since this group was present and how the dynamics of this group's existence in Malang City changed. This chapter also presents the profiles of the Shi'a community in the other districts in East Java as a comparison to get different strategies in exercising freedom of religion and belief as a minority community. As it is known, the existence of Shi'a ideology and doctrine in Malang is closely related to the establishment of YAPI (Al Ma'hadul Islami Education

Foundation) in Bangil, Pasuruan City. The development of Shi'a understanding and teachings in Malang was also supported by the existence of Habib Husein Al Habsyi's son-in-law in Malang City. Shi'a followers expand, especially in areas where Arab descent dominates in terms of numbers, although the residents of this Arab village also have heterogeneity in terms of sects, such as Salafi, Wahabi, Shi'a and Sunni. As for the profession, the Shi'a followers who prefer to be called Ahlul Bait have various professions, such as businessmen, civil servants, and others. But in their daily lives, they don't reveal their identity as Shi'a followers and choose to practice taqiyah. The taqiyah they do is more about how to convey the truth based on the ability of those who receive it (Ulum & Siswoyo in Ubaidillah (ed.), 2017).

At least two organizations that serve as forums for Shi'a groups to maintain their existence as well as become common homes for many of their followers. The two organizations, namely the Indonesian Shi'a Community (Ahlulbait Indonesia/ABI) and the All-Indonesian Assembly of Ahl al-Bayt Association (Ikatan Jamaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia/IJABI). According to the records of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Malang City, the organizations that became a forum for Shi'a groups such as ABI and IJABI were initially less active in East Java, especially in Malang. IJABI's inactivity is more due to internal factors. Meanwhile, the ABI organizational structure in Malang Raya (Malang City and Malang Regency) has officially been formed since 2015. However, the Indonesian Shi'a Community (Ahlulbait Indonesia/ABI) Malang City as a mass organization engaged in the field of

da'wah, studies, social, cultural, and Islamic economics has only been legally recognized after being registered with the National Unity and Politics Agency of Malang City with a registered certificate (SKT) number 01.00.00/034/D.IV.1/III/2016 dated 29 March 2016 as well as the recommendation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs number Dt.II.II.II.II.2/PW.08/271/2015_22.12.2015 and 220/10/LK HAL/VI/2017_9.06.2017 with the management, namely Muhammad Choiruman as chairman and Agus Merdeka as the secretary of Ahlulbait Indonesia Malang City.

Meanwhile, at the East Java Province level, ABI has been established since 2010, and the first East Java chairman was Ustadz Mukhtar Lutfi. After that, the management of the East Java Regional/Provincial Leadership Councils of ABI was led by Ustadz Abdillah Baabud, who was the grandson of Habib Husein Al-Habsyi Bangil. As for the management of the ABI Central Executive Board, the Deputy Chairperson is held by Ustadz Ahmad Hidayat, the Secretary General is Sayyid Ali Ridho, the Deputy Secretary General is Arif Ambari, and the ABI Chairperson is Ustadz Zahir Yahya (Interview with Ustadz ML, December 30, 2020). If we look at the distribution of ABI and IJABI members in Malang Raya, it can generally be mapped that the settlements or complexes that are predominantly inhabited by Arab descent are closer to the ABI organization, while those who tend to be members of the IJABI organization are generally non-Arab Shi'a followers, although there are also those who are of

Arab descent (Ulum & Siswoyo in Ubaidillah (ed.), 2017).

While in Bangil itself, which was one of the starting points for the initial spread of Shi'a in Indonesia with the presence of Habib Husein Al-Habsyi (Founder of the YAPI Bangil Islamic Boarding School), the struggle for the existence of the Shi'a group was more dynamic than what happened in Malang. At first, the Shi'a groups preached secretly and used a taqiyah face. While the object of da'wah is more exclusive to the internals of the Habaib family and those who are still related to the Habib Husein Al-Habsyi family, Meanwhile, the community around the Shi'a group uses a social approach, including through education, which has recently become an educational institution that has received a positive response from the community, such as YAPI Putra Islamic Boarding School, YAPI Putri Islamic Boarding School, Al-Abrar Kindergarten, and SDI Mutiara Ilmu. Until recently, in its development, the Shi'a group came into conflict with the Sunni community in 1993 and then in 2003 (Isya, 2018). Although conditions in Bangil are relatively unstable like in the conflict in previous years, Shi'a groups are still rejected from carrying out their religious rituals (*Merdeka.com*, 1/4/2016).

The Political Struggle of Shi'a as Subaltern Group in Malang City

This chapter elucidates the political struggle of the subaltern group of the Shi'a community in Malang City in exercising their freedom of religion and belief even though it is carried out privately, like the expression of the beliefs of the Sunni majority Muslim in East Java. What are the

strategies chosen to express their freedom and how do these choices have an impact on the sustainability of their identity among the majority of the people in the Sunni sect? Shi'a followers in general, as well as Shi'a congregations in Malang City, chose various strategies to practice and express their faith in the Sunni majority community, where most of their activities remain hidden. Some of their strategies are as follows:

Taqiyyah: One Strategy, Two Functions

Shi'a scholars divide *taqiyyah* in terms of its objectives into two parts, namely *taqiyyah makhafatiah*: *taqiyyah* for fear of danger, and *taqiyyah mudaratiah*: *taqiyyah* that is aimed at protecting the feelings of people who are different from it in the context of maintaining good relations between families or different people to avoid slander that can upset the community and for the realization of Muslim unity (TIM ABI, 2012). According to Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani, the Qur'an allows a Muslim to hide his belief if the consequence of such disclosure is loss of life and threat of property. *Taqiyyah* is not only justified in religion, but the need for the safety of the soul is a form of human intelligence and wisdom. At the same time, preserving honor and property and preserving life are one's religious duties. As a result, in situations where expressing one's beliefs may endanger one's life, the decision to practice *taqiyyah* may be justified (Sobhani, 2001).

In the history of Muslim society, Shi'a groups have often been a minority in the global Islamic community, most of whom live under regimes that are hostile to their beliefs. The only wise course that

must be taken so that they will avoid the worst risk from the authorities is to avoid expressing their faith. So, *taqiyyah* is basically a historical product that is supported textually and by rational evidence (Enayat, 2005). In the Indonesian context, textual and rational evidence is also used by Shi'a groups to support their *taqiyyah* practices. This cannot be separated from the position of *taqiyyah* as a very important strategy to build their identity in the context of interaction with the majority of Sunnis in Indonesia (Zulkifli, 2013). In another study, Hair (2014), for example, mentions *taqiyyah* as a communication strategy to avoid isolation from the majority and dominant society. Furthermore, Hair identified three categories of practice *taqiyyah* by Shia adherents, namely; safe looking category, the hardcore category, and the moderate category. The three categories created by Hair are more about how to standardize security in places of worship and how to standardize in identifying people who have negative sentiments towards Shi'a.

Specifically, Ustadz Mukhtar Lutfy explained that *taqiyyah* does not mean hypocrisy or part of a lie. *Taqiyyah* is carried out when there is a threat to protect oneself and *taqiyyah* to avoid greater difficulties so that the people are not confused. In addition, *taqiyyah* is also carried out to avoid friction with other worshipers. However, the ABI daily board is not allowed to take *taqiyah*. They are asked to always reveal their Shi'a identity and must always be ready when asked by anyone regarding their belief. Another important aspect is that the ABI daily board is also asked to always socialize with the community. According to Ustadz Mukhtar Lutfi, Imam Syafii, as one of the

priests who became a figure of the Sunni group, is very close to the Shi'a, especially in cultural aspects such as istighosah, tawasul, grave pilgrimages, and others (Interview, 30/12/2020). Therefore, *taqiyah* is often perceived as negative, but actually is not in fact. *Taqiyah* has a dual function, which can be a strategy for the Shi'a group to maintain its existence.

Strengthening Ustadz Mukhtar Lutfi's explanation, Chairman of East Java Regional/Provincial Leadership Councils of ABI Habib Abdillah Baabud stated that the *taqiyah* is currently less relevant for Shi'a citizens in their relationships with other groups. This is because the massive wave of digitalisation and information technology has caused everything to become more open. Everyone can find out what the Ahlulbait congregation is doing and can access reading sources about Shi'a. Shi'a and Sunnis are different only in the aspect of the belief in the divine caliphate. *Khilafah ilahiyyah* means that the leaders of mankind from the time of the prophet Adam to the Day of Resurrection are all chosen by Allah. Rejection of Shi'a ideology has at least two causes; Shi'a teachings are not fully understood and, secondly; flood of slander due to a lack of literacy (Interview with Ustadz Abdillah Baabud, 21/2/2021).

Currently, jamaah ahlulbait no longer cover up their beliefs because, in addition to being recognized by the state, various accusations against them are also countered through written clarification in the form of manifestos. The final views and beliefs of Ahlulbait on various issues and phenomena, both domestic and global, are clearly conveyed in the manifesto. With the presence of the manifesto, the ABI

organization in particular has publicly declared its identity, so that concerns and prejudices based on suspicion and hatred of Ahlulbait people in Indonesia are no longer relevant (Dewan Syura Ahlulbait Indonesia, 2019). On the other hand, although some Ahlulbait leaders are often invited in their capacity as preachers at numerous religious events, they never preach the Shi'a teachings they believe in. Because amidst many attacks of slander and hoaxes against Shia beliefs, the preachers from ABI have never touched on the religious content they conveyed related to Shi'a teachings. The preachers talk more about morals and general issues that are universally believed in Islam, both by Sunnis and Shi'a (Interview with Ustadz Abdillah Baabud, 21/2/2021).

Strengthening Jamaah through Activities in *Huseiniyah*

Huseiniyah is a term used to refer to schools or centers of religious studies in Iran, where Iranian graduate students usually start their activities by establishing a kind of *Huseiniyah*, or study clubs, which intensively study the thoughts of *Khomeini*, *Shariati*, *Murtadha Mutahhari*, *Husein Thabataba'i*, *Mullah Sadra*, and others (Sofjan, 2013). According to Assegaf (2012), *Huseiniyah* is technically a term that refers to a place where the Shi'a community gathers to hold religious ceremonies or rituals. This place is distinguished by mosques that have a higher level of sacredness than *Huseiniyah*. This is intended to maintain the sanctity of the mosque, while *Huseiniyah* resembles a room whose sacred level is not as high as a mosque, according to the Shi'a fiqh. In the Indonesian context, almost every Shi'a

foundation has their own center for organizing activities, such as those used for daily Islamic teaching.

The name *Huseiniyah* is taken from the name of one of the imams in the Shi'a faith, Imam Husein. From the descendants of the prophet Muhammad SAW to the Mahdi, the one who is often commemorated is Imam Husein. According to Sholikhin (2009), Husein became the most important imam for the Shi'a community after the tragedy in Kufa. Meanwhile, in Islamic history, the Kufa event is known as an unlucky event in which Husein died tragically at the hands of the troops of Yazid bin Mu'awiyah, the ruler of the Umayyads based in Damascus. Husein's death was seen as proof that his struggle was in order to fight injustice and uphold justice for the people of Kufa.

Huseiniyah is also owned by the Shi'a community of Malang city. The recitation that is routinely carried out by the DPD ABI Malang City management has been relatively well-managed, so that there is a general recitation, a special recitation for mothers called Fatimiah (this is similar to what is in Muhammadiyah called Aisyiah), the OASIS (Organization of Students), there are young women called Zainabiyyah, and a madrasah diniyah (Madin) specifically for children (Interview with Ustadz Mukhtar Lutfi, 30/12/2020). Each activity has its own theme. However, similar to the majelis taklim often carried out by the Sunni community, the spirit of activities in *Huseiniyah* are also carried out to strengthen the foundation of belief of the Shi'a community.

In the case of Shi'a in Malang City, *Huseiniyah* also means a gathering place for Shi'a congregants to strengthen the

aqidah for their congregation in a housing project whose developer is one of the Shi'a members. Although the housing is intended for the public, there are also those who come from other religions, such as Christianity and Hinduism, who also have houses in the housing complex. There are two house plots prepared for the sake of strengthening the faith of the Shi'a community of Malang City. According to Ustadz Abdillah Baabud, *Huseiniyah* is a kind of multi-purpose building that is used for various activities, such as meetings, study, worship, tadarrus, celebrating religious holidays, anniversaries, birthdays of the prophet and the priest, even social activities (Interview, 21/2/2021).

Huseiniyah has become a place as well as an effort to localize themselves so that the Ahlulbait people can carry out all their activities calmly. Although it must be admitted that the internal activities of Ahlulbait are centralized in *Huseiniyah*. Because various differences in terms of worship between Sunni and Shi'a congregations will have the potential to trigger misunderstandings for both of them if the ahlulbait congregation performs the Shi'a version of worship in public mosques or places of worship that are dominated by congregations from the Sunni community. *Huseiniyah* is one of the strategic choices that can be carried out by the Malang City Shi'a group in carrying out their religious rituals. So far, the choice of this strategy is still relatively safe for the Shi'a community in their relationship with Sunni groups in Malang City and East Java. This means that by localizing oneself in *Huseiniyah*, the potential for misunderstanding between Sunni and Shi'a Muslims can be relatively minimized.

Teaching Children Two Versions of Prayer

As children of Shi'a followers, they will feel and find many differences between what their parents believe and teach at home and what the teacher teaches at school. Therefore, one of the ways that Shi'a groups carry out their expressions of belief is to teach two versions of prayer to their children. This is done in a forum called Madrasah Diniyah (MADIN), which is specifically for children. This forum was carried out as an anticipatory step for their children so that they would not become victims of *bullying* at school due to differences in prayer methods with the majority of students who have Sunni beliefs. According to Ustadz Mukhtar Lutfi, this was done as part of an effort to prepare children of Shi'a beliefs to be able to adapt to conditions in the environment outside their community (Interview with Ustadz Mukhtar Lutfi, 30/12/2020).

Furthermore, Ustadz Mukhtar said that one of the lessons taught in madrasah diniyah is how to interact outside the Shi'a community. So that children can know when to pray in the way that is in school (externally) by praying at home (internal). This is taught in order to anticipate any friction that might occur if their children practice prayer rituals that are different from those commonly practiced in schools. Meanwhile, at the same time, the children did not really understand that there are theological differences in Islam which have consequences for the understanding of fiqh that is believed by each school (religious sect) in Islam. Another important point is that the Shi'a community is a minority group within a

minority. So far, the Shi'a community is still experiencing stereotypes and stigmatization in the form of misdirection and disbelief (Sofjan, 2016), which often has an impact on physical attacks on Shi'a residents. That is why Shi'a children are taught strategies to carry out the teachings that their parents believe are taught in the madrasah diniyah (Interview with Ustadz Mukhtar Lutfi, 30/12/2020).

According to Ustadzah ED, the National Leader of Muslimah Ahlulbait Indonesia, madrasah diniyah is basically a need for parents from Ahlulbait circles to teach their children the teachings of Ahlulbait, especially about stories, messages, and the wealth of prayers that are intended for Ahlulbait children. It also includes how to interact with other children who are outside of Ahlulbait so that tolerance is maintained. Departing from these needs, the madrasah diniyah for *Ahlulbait* children was formed. In terms of implementation time, it varies between regions depending on the situation and needs. Because not all parents have the ability to teach and have in-depth knowledge related to *Ahlulbait* teachings. On that basis, Muslimah Ahlulbait then prepares the guidance, materials, to conduct training for MADIN'S teachers. The establishment of madrasah diniyah of Ahlulbait, although it is not in the form of a formal school like schools in general, this MADIN is still made neat with the existence of a management structure and a principal of the school (Interview with Ustadzah ED, 23/2/2021).

Referring to Ustadzah ED, in madrasah diniyah of Ahlulbait there are five materials taught, namely; Al-Qur'an, Morals, Fiqh (mazhab ahlulbait), History,

and Aqidah (which, for example, does not stop only at prophecy, but there are additions to Imamat). In the context of teaching children, it is not done doctrinally but starts with the concept of critical thinking. Ahlulbait children in aqidah have been invited to think and ask questions about God through observation and looking at sensory examples according to their level, from pre-level (ages 4-5 years in kindergarten) to the sixth level (children around the age of 11-13 years). The teaching is not only about God, the understanding of the prophet is also taught through this MADIN. According to the ahlulbait, the prophet isn't just a messenger of God who is taken for granted. They also question why the prophet was sent and how important it is for an Imam to be a leader after the prophet died (Interview, 23/2/2021).

Particularly in the aspect of prayer, for example, ahlulbait children do receive instruction so that they can adapt to their school environment in order to avoid potential friction for the realization of tolerance between fellow children of the nation, because many ahlulbait children also go to public schools. Thus, basically, the existence of MADIN for the families of the Shi'a group is a means to strengthen the ideology of Ahlulbait as well as a strategy for celebrating freedom of religion and belief for the children of Ahlulbait. As ahlulbait followers, ABI administrators provide various ways for their children to adapt to their surroundings, including teaching the ahlulbait version of prayer and the version outside the ahlulbait environment.

Conclusion

Freedom of religion and belief is a human right that is owned by every person and group, including the Shi'a minority religious group in Malang City. The Shi'a community in Malang City celebrates their freedom privately. They must work out a strategy by hiding their identity as followers of the Shi'a faith in order to prevent conflicts and maintain the safety of themselves and their families. As a subaltern group that is prone to discrimination and social exclusion, the Shi'a religious group in Malang City carries out various strategies in order to maintain their religious identity. There are several strategies implemented by the Shi'a religious group in Malang City, including; *Taqiyyah*, strengthening the congregation through activities in *Huseiniyah*, and teaching their children two versions of prayer (a version of prayer for *Ahlulbait* followers) and a version of prayer outside the *Ahlulbait* environment. So far, the various tactics chosen by the Shi'a community of Malang City have effectively prevented discrimination. At the same time, these various tactics show that behind the practice of discrimination and subordination that often afflicts the Shi'a community lies the practice of power working through discourse, both by the state and dominant civil society groups. Hence, the state must be able to stand neutrally as a guardian of all identity groups in society. At the same time, the space for dialogue between various elements of the nation to enrich mutual understanding must also be facilitated by the state. Thus, no more identity groups feel insecure in exercising their citizenship rights.

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