

## STATE FAILURE AND THE SUNNI-SHIA CONFLICT IN SAMPANG MADURA

**Akhmad Siddiq**

*Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya*

Email: a.siddiq@uinsby.ac.id

**Lely Shofa Imama**

*Institut Agama Islam Negeri Madura*

Email: lelyshofa@iainmadura.ac.id

**Muhammad Febriansyah**

*School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia*

Email: febrian@usm.my

**Muhamad Ali Hisyam**

*Universitas Turnojoyo Madura*

Email: hisyamhisyam@trunojoyo.ac.id

### ABSTRACT

*This paper attempts to explain the process of conflict reconciliation within the Sunni-Shia conflict in Sampang, Madura. The research tries to analyze the process and progress of the Sunni-Shia conflict through the discourse of state failure. It will not only figure out the discourse through political or security perspective, but also tries to view the failure and the weakness of the state from the conflict-transformation and social perspective. This research aims to look at how religious identity has been played within the process of conflict reconciliation and how the state failed to solve the Shia-Sunni conflict in Sampang. In doing so, the paper explains the history of Shia in Sampang Madura, the chronology of the conflict and its escalation, and the absence of the state within the long process of reconciliation.*

**Keywords:** State Failure; Conflict Reconciliation; Religious Identity; Sunni; Shia

### INTRODUCTION

After more than 10 years of awaiting moments at the refugee camp in Sidoarjo, in May 2023, around 265 Shia refugees were finally returned to their homeland in Sampang.<sup>1</sup> This is the second stage of the return of Shia refugees which is considered as the successful achievement of the local-government in

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20230504193301-20-945418/265-orang-eks-syiah-kembali-ke-sampang-setelah-10-tahun-mengungsi>

resolving Shia-Sunni conflict. The conflict has ever become an international appeal because to some extent it was identified as the conflict between two Muslim-majority-group representations in the world. The role of the state in managing and resolving the conflict has always been criticized and questioned in term of peace-building and conflict reconciliation, until the local regent of Sampang finally succeeded to make a religiously and culturally putative solution to return most of the refugees except for a few remaining people.

Besides the successful return of the refugees to their homeland, through the discourse of state failure and weakness this paper attempts to analyze the process and progress of the Sunni-Shia conflict reconciliation in Sampang. It attempts to explain (1) the history of the Shia community in Sampang, (2) the socio-religious conflict of Sunni-Shia in Sampang and its escalation, (3) the process of conflict reconciliation, and (4) the absence or weakness of the state-government during the conflict. This research aims to describe the process of conflict reconciliation of Sunni-Shia in Sampang through in-depth interview, observation, and literature or document research. The interviews documented in this paper include the past and current interviews in order to capture gradual progress concerning the conflict. In addition, the research also refers to the past and current news of the conflict published in the newspapers or investigation reports. This research is meant to follow what Geertz stated as a “thick description” method which involves a researcher to understand particular descriptions of social life through which broader cultural interpretation can be made (Geertz, 1973).

This paper refers to the discourse of “fragile state” and “weak state” that elucidate the government fail in organizing, controlling, and providing security among the citizen. It is known that peacemakers, activists, and intellectuals have been discussing and criticizing the absence of state in the process of conflict reconciliation for long time. In hand with civil society organization engaged in peacebuilding, development and human rights, peacemakers tried to improve governance structure, poverty reduction program, development, democratization and peacebuilding strategies (Fischer & Schmelzle, 2009).

The government, according to Ghani, has to accomplish several features of statehood to overcome weakness and fragility, such as (1) a legitimate monopoly on the means of violence, (2) administrative control, (3) sound management of public finances, (4) investment in human capital, (5) the creation of citizenship rights and duties, (6) provision of infrastructure, (7) market formation, (8) management of the assets of the state, (9) effective public borrowing, (10) maintenance of rule of law (Ghani et al., 2005).

Questions on whether a state has accomplished those principles or not remain

a challenging topic for evaluating and reckoning legitimate power. The case of Ahmadiyya and Shia group in Indonesia to some extent denotes the absence and failure of the government. Setara Institute stated that these two cases have become a real test for the Indonesian government relating to state presence, citizenship, and human-rights enforcement (Satriani et al., 2019). For more than a decade, the Shia refugees have been excluded from their homeland in Sampang and placed in a shelter in Sidoarjo. They were expelled from their homes and families in Madura, because of religious differences. This phenomenon is kind of social reflection on looking at religion-based violence that still occurs in Indonesia today. The government has gradually maintained several chains of approach to solve the conflict, but in the end, it needs a very long time to return the Shia refugees back to their homes.

### THE SHIA COMMUNITY IN SAMPANG

When Kiai Makmun, the founder of Shia community in Karang Gayam and Blu'uran Sampang, introduced the teaching of Shia for his family in Sampang, he reminded them to make the Shia teaching as an “exclusive” and “closed” ideology among them. He asserted not to teach and spread out the teaching to other people, especially the Madurese Sunni community, outside his family. He remarked the teaching of Shia as *hubb li ahl al-bayt* (loving the family and lineage of the Prophet Muhammad).<sup>2</sup> He considered not to use the term of Shia demonstratively because it could drive deep resistance and controversy among the Sunni muslim majority in Madura.

Kiai Makmun has been interested in the teaching of Shia based on his admire to the religious leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatullah Khomeini. In 1980, when the Islamic Republic of Iran competed the Islamic revolution, Kiai Makmun read and studied several books and papers relating to the revolution and Khomeini's movement.<sup>3</sup> From this attention and curiosity, Kiai Makmun

<sup>2</sup> KH Ali Karrar, *interview*, 15/2/2013; Tajul Muluk, *interview*, 2/4/2019.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Haji wrote, “It has been suggested that many Shias in Indonesia were heavily influenced by the Iranian revolution in 1979, which is said to have contributed to their rise in population. There remains no consensus on the number of Shia Muslims in Indonesia. According to Muhammad Jawad Mughniyya, a Lebanese Shia scholar, the number of Shias in the country in 1979 numbered approximately one million. Andi Muhammad Assegaf, head of the Fatimah Foundation in Jakarta, cited the same number in 2003, whilst Dimitri Mahayana, former chairman of the national Shia organization, Ikatan Jamaah Ahlubait Indonesia (IJABI), estimated there were three million Shia Muslims in Indonesia. Regardless of the exact figure, it is certain that Shias constitute a very small proportion of Indonesia's total Muslim population. One of the main organizations that represent Shia Muslims in the country is IJABI, which is a national organization that was given legal status in 2000. IJABI has 14 provincials, 48 district and 25 sub-district branches, including offices in South Sumatra, West Java, and South Sulawesi. The organization has organized several short-term programs that are focused on religious education, career development, and youth empowerment, whilst

sent three of his children (Tajul Muluk, Roisul Hukama and Ummu Hani) to the Shia-affiliated Islamic Boarding School, Yayasan Pesantren Islam YAPI (YAPI),<sup>4</sup> Bangil, East Java.

Graduated from Pesantren YAPI, Tajul Muluk, one of Makmun's sons, continued his study to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1993 and resided under the fellowship of Sayyid Muhammad Alawi al-Maliki. During his study in Saudi Arabia, Tajul Muluk dealt with and read many books of Shia. He was indeed fascinated with Shia ideologies and doctrines.

In 1999, Tajul returned back to Sampang. Two years before his father's death, supported by people around him, Tajul Muluk built an Islamic Boarding School (Pondok Pesantren) and named it "Misbahul Huda". Along with his brother and sister—which are also the alumni from YAPI, he managed and developed this pesantren. Unlike his father, Tajul Muluk called the people around him to learn and practice the teaching of Shia. Tajul Muluk was known as low profile and humble leader. He succeeded to persuade and influence people around him into learning and practicing Shia. The followers of Tajul Muluk have been gradually increasing.

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT

There was no crucial tension between Sunni community—as majority—and Shia community in Karang Gayam and Blu'uran Sampang, at least during Kiai Makmun's life. The Madurese ulama and kiai (the local Muslim leader) respected Kiai Makmun and avoided to challenge or argue against him. The first tension between them happened in 2006, when Tajul Muluk and his followers initiated to conduct an Islamic festival of *Maulid Nabi* (birthday of the Prophet Muhammad). He supposed to invite Shia community from the outside city. This festival has also been performed to remember the 40<sup>th</sup> day of his father's death (Ahnaf et al., 2015). The Sunny community in Karang Gayam and other districts objected, resisted and threatened this festival. Along with the police and the local government of Sampang, Sunni community asked Tajul Muluk to cancel the festival and not to invite Shia community from

---

establishing autonomous institutions such as the Association of Indonesian Ahl al-Bayt Students, the Board for Advocacy and Development of Law and Human Rights and Ahl-al-Bayt Women." Read Muhammad Haji, *The Shia Muslims of Indonesia* (The Center for the Academic Shia Studies), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Located in Bangil, East Java, YAPI was established in June 21, 1976. Ustad Husein bin Abu Bakar al-Habsyi is the founder of this *pesantren*. He offered two cluster of Islamic boarding school: for male and female. Today, this pesantren formally has secondary and high school both for male and female, *Madrasah Diniyah* (Islamic School) in three classes: *mutawassit*, *tsanawi* and *tamhidi*, and *Hauzah*. <https://yapibangil.org/yayasan/> (accessed November 21, 2021).

outside village.

In Sunni Muslim view, Tajul has been trying to teach and spread a heretical teaching of Shia for Sunni people around him.<sup>5</sup> He and his followers were not only practicing Shia among themselves but also aiming at attracting and calling Sunni muslim to pursue. Tajul's approach, according to the Sunni muslim, has attacked Sunni feeling and its essential doctrine. Several Islamic organizations, such as *Badan Silaturahmi Ulama Madura* (BASSRA: the Association of the Madurese Ulama), MUI (the Council of Indonesian Ulama), and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) ulama, attempted to mediate the tension occurred between Shia community and Sunni people. Under supervision of the local police, Sunni ulama and Tajul Muluk discussed several points of ideological differences between Shia and Sunni. They aimed to have such agreement to solve the tension.

On the one hand, the Sunni Ulama wrote at least 22 indictments to prove crucial mistakes of Tajul Muluk,<sup>6</sup> on the other hand Tajul Muluk responded these indictments by reading several references of *kitab kuning* to explain and answer those prejudices. As a solution, Ulama of Sampang asked Tajul Muluk to sign in an agreement not to publicly teach and spread Shia teaching again.

In 2009, Tajul Muluk tried to conduct the same festival of *Maulid Nabi* which eventually created the same tension as well as in 2006. Tajul Muluk, according to the Madurese ulama, tended to disregard the agreement: he had been teaching Shia publicly. For a second time, the Madurese ulama (represented by the Council of Indonesian Ulama, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the Ministry of Religious Affairs) invited Tajul Muluk to a forum and asked him to sign an agreement. At least there are five points signed in that forum. First, Tajul Muluk should stop preaching, calling, and provoking others to learn and practice the Shia teaching. What he did, the Madurese ulama said, produced unfriendly condition among Sunni people. Second, Tajul Muluk has to stop planning to perform Shia ritual and festival in Sampang. Third, if the second agreement was disappointed, the ulama will register the case as a religious and civil circumstance. Forth, MUI, NU, the local division of the Ministry of Religious Affairs will observe and scrutinize Tajul's activities and his followers. Fifth, MUI, NU, and the Sunni ulama will manage and help the local government to build harmonious and peaceful condition in the grass root level.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> KH Ali Karrar, *interview*, 15/2/2013

<sup>6</sup> Adian Husaini, (2012), "Kisah Tujul Muluk dari Sampang", Catatan Akhir Pekan, Radio Dakta 107, <http://www.hidayatullah.com/kolom/catatan-akhir-pekan/read/2012/09/01/3822/kisah-tajul-muluk-dari-sampang.html> (accessed November 21, 2021).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

In 2011, tension between Shia community and Sunni majority happened in its physical appearance. Several houses of Shia community were burned and numbers of Shia members had been injured. The Sunni ulama insisted to separate Tajul Muluk with his followers and he was finally displaced to Malang. The ulama hindered to call Tajul followers back to the teaching of Sunni Islam. The pick of this tension happened in August, 2012. Tens of Shia houses were destroyed and burned by Sunni people. One of Shia followers was dead and many others were injured. The police that came lately to the area of conflict could not stop people anger. In the end, the local government evacuated the Shia community to Sport Centre in the city of Sampang.

### ESCALATION OF THE CONFLICT

Conflict between Sunni and Shia community in Sampang heightened steadily. The Sunni ulama and the people in Madura perceived that the present of Shia in Sampang could offend the purity of Sunni teaching. On the one hand, for Sunni people, Tajul Muluk has been assumed to intensionally call the people of Karang Gayam and Bluuran Sampang to learn and practice Shia ritual. On the other hand, Tajul and his followers insisted that the way they practiced Shia is a part of Islamic teaching. Furthermore, it was, according to them, supported by the principles of religious freedom. In June 2012, Tajul Muluk was jailed on charges of religious blasphemy.<sup>8</sup> Previously, he has been sentenced to two years in jail, but laterly after his appealing it was increased to four years.<sup>9</sup> In September 2012, the whole refugee of Shia community living in Sport Centre in Sampang were relocated into Rusunawa Jemundo, Sidoarjo, East Java. The vice governor of East Java at the time stated that “it is temporary action and they will be brought back soon to their homeland, when the situation is getting normal.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, until today the Shia refugees are still living at Rusunawa Jemundo.

The case of Tajul Muluk and his followers has increasingly become a very interesting topic relating to religious violence discourse. Media, intellectuals, and NGOs have been giving their support: psychologically and financially. Many NGOs gave their hand to accompany and manage their daily needs. Just to mention few of them were ABI (Indonesian Ahlul Bait), IJABI (the Association of Ahlul Bait Indonesia), Kontras, and CMARs. However, Sunni people has also influenced media, intellectuals, and NGOs to exclude and reject the existence of Tajul Muluk and his followers in Sampang.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/12/indonesia-jails-shia-cleric-blasphemy> (accessed November 21, 2021).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/34816/> (accessed November 21, 2021).

<sup>10</sup> Read <http://daerah.sindonews.com/read/670816/23/pengungsi-sampang-akan-di-relokasi-sementara-ke-rusunawa-1346996624>, (accessed November 21, 2021).

In this conflict, Sunni and Shia community seemed to use Islamic teaching as a cover of their standing position and “ideology”. Since for Marx ideology is “always something false, a distortion of the truth for the sake of social interest, a symbolic framework of the mind that legitimates the power and privileges of the dominant groups and sanctions the social evils inflicted on the people without access to power,”(Baum, 2001). It is logic that both Sunni and Shia community have been insisting that what they have done is an Islam-based practice and religiously true. In the idea of Pierre Bourdieu, Sunni and Shia people had been playing with their practical reason of action during the conflict (Pierre, 1998). It is a critique of suspicion which remind that there is always a distance between *practical reality* and *theoretical thought*. In other words, it is needed to examine the practical truth behind the reality of Sunni-Shia conflict. Bourdieu discerned that there are two kinds of truth which should be undoubtedly classified: the *lived truth of practice* and the *objective truth*.

Inside the boundary of cultural or social capital, religious capital occurs as a dominant domain whereby the agents occupy to achieve a benefit in the social fields. Religious tasks are occasionally deemed as a medium of exploitation masked in the name of God, in the name of religion. Religious symbols are permanently treated as one of *euphemism's* instruments to gain benefits for the agents (Pierre, 1998). Euphemism denotes a tactful action that veils the main interest behind the “exterior” reality.

Sunni and Shia community have been standing on their own needs and interests, without considering what the others need. Arguing that religious freedom (including for conducting Shia festival in Sampang) and equality of being Indonesian citizen, Shia community tend to push the government to make a significant decision to bring them back to their homeland. In doing so, some NGOs have been supporting this effort and urged the government to encourage Shia community as a victim of violence. While Sunni community in Sampang argued that the existence of Shia is heretic and avoidable. According to BASSRA, there are at least ten points of Shia (Tajul Muluk) deviations: (1) reducing the five pillars of Islam and the six pillar of Iman; (2) believing in heretical doctrine outside *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jamaah*; (3) believing in the revelation after the Quran; (4) distrusting the authenticity of the Quran; (5) interpreting the Qur'an based on non-authoritative basis; (6) unbelieving the Prophet Muhammad sayings (*hadith*); (7) harassing some of the prophets; (8) denying the position of the Prophet Muhammad as the last prophet; (9) reducing and adding basic rituals on Islam; and (10) accusing other Moslem as infidel without any reason.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *As-Sunnah Magazine*, sixth edition, Edisi 06/Tahun X/1427H/2006 (Surakarta: Yayasan Lajnah Istiqomah).

To empower Sunni movement for avoiding Shia community in Sampang (and East Java in general), in September 2013 BASSRA called Madurese ulama to declare a Sunni-affiliated body called FAAS (Front Anti Aliran Sesat/The Anti Deviant-School Front).<sup>12</sup> The main goal of this organization is to clean up and sterilize East Java from religiously heretical and deviant sects.

The Sunni and Shia community in Sampang have been strengthening their religious position by taking Islam as a legitimating idea and doctrine. They realized that such social acts and movements require religious legitimation where Muslim leader or Islamic constitution can provide it (Hasenclever & Rittberger, 2000). In this context, religious identity has been played as a *blocking factor* to solve the conflict.

Appleby described relational logic between religion and violence in three level of understanding: *strong religion*, *weak religion*, and *pathological religion*. Strong religion means that there is a close and inseparable relation which binds the notion of violence with religious conviction. It is appealing that Appleby start his point of view by naming religion. It shows that he concerns with religious value and implicitly considers violence as an outside influence or effect of understanding religion. In this point, people believe that religious teaching is socially constructed and imaginatively created without any direct relation to the reality (Appleby, 2012). Referring to Mircea Eliade, people suppose religion as “the sacred” which orders and regulates some circumstances, including violence. Religion has been fundamentally placed as a basis of cruelty and violence (Eliade, 1078).

The *weak religion* assumes that religion is likely seen as subordinate reason compared with other factors: politics, economy, culture, prestige, etc. This perspective excludes religion as main source in some explanations of conflict. Different from the first, people in this level perceive religion as a “weak” because it could be simply and easily illuminated from the arena of violence. The objective measure on analyzing causes of violence in this point is not constantly religion. However, religion cannot be totally excluded from violence consideration because it clearly is a piece of human experiences (Appleby, 2012). And the third is ambiguous relationship between religion and violence. Appleby entitles this level of understanding as “pathological religion”.

To solve this fundamental perspective, it is necessary to recognize Hans Kung’s idea that violence and peace begin in the mind of men. Accordingly, we should basically construct and build the idea of peace instead of cultivating the idea of war in violence (Kung, 1991). However, to solve the conflict and increase

---

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.koranmadura.com/2013/09/30/deklarasi-syiah-menyimpang/> (accessed November 21, 2021).

the idea of peace building require a long process of conflict reconciliation and social network.

### CONFLICT RECONCILIATION AND STATE FAILURE

In 2012, being part of the National Reconciliation Team of Sunni-Shia conflict in Sampang, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya announced a center to support data collection, research, and observation. At the time, the central government—alongside with local bodies—has made some strategic plans to solve the conflict. What the center has been doing is to continue, evaluate, and strengthen the plans. The center eventually invited Sunni community for sharing and discussing the basic needs and their standing points of the conflict. They also invited Shia community to share and discuss the same thing: what they feel, experience, and expect relating to the conflict reconciliation. In the end, the center invited both of Sunni and Shia people in one forum to discuss and solve of the conflict. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs have also engaged in the forum.<sup>13</sup>

There was no significant agreement acknowledged by these two groups at that forum. Both insisted to stand with their basic need and interest, and their position of how to solve the problem. They insisted to argue and maintain their ideological position and keep their political, economic, and cultural aims. There were too many considerations that affect the process of conflict reconciliation. Moreover, the conflict has been seen as a part of trans-national issues between the global Shia (especially of the Islamic Republic of Iran) and the Sunni-Wahabi (represented by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia).<sup>14</sup>

According to Sunni ulama in Madura, the relocation of Shia refugee at Rusunawa Jemundo has been perceived as the best solution. Shia community would not welcome come back to their homeland, unless they re-embrace Sunni teachings.<sup>15</sup> While for the Shia community they have their it is their right to come back because they deserve to return back to their home without any considerations, including ideological shifting.<sup>16</sup>

The conflict between Sunni and Shia community in Sampang is multifaceted. It emerged not only because of theological differences but also because of socio-cultural, political, economic, and personal issues. The family crisis between Tajul Muluk and his brother, Rois, was revealed as a trigger of this conflict. At the beginning, Rois is a skillful assistant of Tajul that is always supports the

---

<sup>13</sup> These activities were conducted during the end of 2013 until the midst of 2014.

<sup>14</sup> KH. Lailurrahman, *interview*, 7/5/2015.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Ikilil, *interview*, 20/10/2014.

teachings and practices of Shia. Personal tension between these two brothers drove Rois to break out from Shia community (Afdillah, 2013). Eventually, Rois transformed himself from the believer of Shia (Tajul Muluk's follower) to the hater of Tajul.

The center for Peacebuilding of UIN Sunan Ampel proposed some recommendations to the Ministry of Religious Affairs (as a leading sector) for intensifying and solving the conflict. The center insisted that returning back the Shia refugee back home is the only solution. However, the center suggested at least four stages that must be accomplished. First, building a deeply understanding among two groups especially on how to deal with cultural and religious differences. Second, if the first step was completed, the government has to rebuild destroyed houses of the Shia community and replace them back in the homeland. This process could be implemented gradually. Third, relocating and scaling the conflict. The government must prevent other groups (the third parties) not to involve into the conflict. Forth, conducting the process of trauma healing for the victim and empowering their life skill (CPB, 2013).

Besides the long process of the conflict reconciliation, until today the Shia refugees has been still wedged and immovable at the Rusunawa, Sidoarjo. The hopes of returning back home remains unfeasible. Tajul Muluk said that relocation to another land such as Sumatera or Kalimantan will not solve the conflict. He insisted that the only resolution is returning the Shia community back home.<sup>17</sup> Papers, researches, and recommendations concerning the Sunni-Shia conflict in Sampang have been published and discussed within last five years<sup>18</sup> but the process of reconciliation and returning back the refugees to the home-land seem to be "going nowhere".

In 2014, when Joko Widodo was inaugurated as a new promising president of Indonesia, hopes, expectations, and conflict resolutions emerged. Many individuals and organizations expected that the conflict of Sunni-Syiah Sampang, that has been going on for years, can be presently solved. In fact,

---

<sup>17</sup> Tajul Muluk, interview, 2/4/2019.

<sup>18</sup> Just to mention a few of them: Syukron Mahbub, "Konflik dan Kekerasan Sunni-Syiah Sampang Prespektif Kultur Kekerasan dan Hak Asasi Manusia (Conflicts and Violence Of Sunni-Syiah Sampang Prespective Of Violence Cultures and Human Rights)," *Voice Justisia: Jurnal Hukum dan Keadilan*, Volume 2, Nomor 1, Maret (2018): 92-101; Cahyo Pamungkas, "Mencari Bentuk Rekonsiliasi Intra-Agama: Analisis terhadap Pengungsi Syiah Sampang dan Ahmadiyah Mataram (Looking for Intra-Religious Forms of Reconciliation: An Analysis on Shia and Ahmadiyya Refugees in Sampang and Mataram)," *Epsiteme: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman*, Vol 13, No 1 (2018): 113-147. <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2018.13.1.113-147>; Nasrullah Ainul Yaqin, "Menagih Hak Beragama Muslim Ahmadiyah dan Syiah Sampang dalam Perspektif Nalar Maqâsidi," *Religi: Jurnal Studi Agama-agama*, Vol 16, No 2 (2020): 208-227, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14421/rejusta.2020.1602-05>.

the conflict has still prevailed throughout Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to Joko Widodo's era. More than 260 persons of Shia community are still living in the refugee camp at Rusunawa Sidoarjo, approximately 150 km from their homeland. They are separated from their houses, their land, their family, and their past. Religious conflict disconnected them away from their families and brothers, the Sunni communities. Political, economic, and cultural interest has also taken part of in this conflict.

There are many obstacles which surface on dealing with the conflict reconciliation process. Among them is the power relation contested by two different religious identities, Sunni and Shia, in Karang Gayam and Blu'uran Sampang. Religious identity becomes a *euphimical* term that conceals a really-contested interest within the two groups. In addition, the absence of the government for mediation and conflict reconciliation has continuously happened.<sup>19</sup> Siti Hanifah stated that the way how conflict resolution within Sunni-Shia conflict has been performed shows the weak of the government role in protecting freedom of religion and belief in Indonesia.<sup>20</sup>

Referring to Call's classification of three different gaps on describing "failed state", the Sunni-Shia conflict articulates at least two different gaps: security gap and legitimacy gap. The first gap elucidates the weakness of the state to establish a minimal level of national security within its territory and to solve the social conflict which happens between different religious, ethnic, or racial groups. The second, the legitimacy gap, denotes a significant rejection of society toward an established authority. This kind of social denunciation could create social opponent of the government which eventually undermine the legitimacy of the governing body (Call, 2011). The third gap is the capacity gap that represents the lack of the state capacity to provide minimal public needs and services (Call, 2011).

Inaccessibility of aid and lack of job drive the Shia refugees in Rusunawa Sidoarjo to look further for their future. It is not easy for them to survive through difficult life in the refugee camps. Khoiri and Chamankhah described that there are at least three approaches performed by the Shia refugees to survive. First is reducing their daily expenses, second is having an alternative subsystem of working as coconut shelling labor, farming the surrounding land, and raising goats and chickens, third is getting financial support from the government or persons or certain organization (Khoiri & Chamankhah, 2021).

---

<sup>19</sup> KH Nurut Tamam, *interview*, 26/5/2015.

<sup>20</sup> Raja Eben Lumbanrau, "Ratusan Pengungsi Syiah Sampang Dibiaat Menjadi Suni di Tengah Keinginan Pulang Kampung: Pemerintah Dituding Mengalahkan Minoritas Demi Keinginan Mayoritas," <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-54550918> (accessed 11/12/2021).

In November 5, 2020, more than 270 Shia refugees pledged allegiance to re-embracing Sunni teaching. They read the pledge in Kota Sampang in front of the Madurese Ulama, witnessed by the local leader and the local government.<sup>21</sup> Tajul Muluk, the Shia refugee leader, expressed his hope for having all Shia refugees back to their homeland in Sampang. Even though, he realized that the process will be challenging because it involves the local ulama, the local government, and the national bodies.<sup>22</sup> Slamet Mulyono, director of Center for Peacebuilding UIN Sunan Ampel, expressed his doubts on political attention behind the process of conflict reconciliation. According to him, the government seems to be captured by a political concern in making a certain policy.<sup>23</sup>

The efforts of returning Shia refugee back to their home require stronger political-will from the (local and central) government. Although Miichi argued that in Jokowi's era the government has made a gradual change compared to Yudhoyono's period through "empowering refugees by providing assistance for the institutionalisation of their rights," but the fact shows that the state body failed to guarantee Shia refugee's right to return back to their homeland (Mijchi & Kayane, 2019).

In his article, "The Politics of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: The Shi'a Response to the Sampang Incidents of 2011–12", Miichi criticized President Yudhoyono for doing nothing with regard to Sunni-Shia conflict in Sampang. He stated that many of reconciliation plans initiated by the Reconciliation Tema (lead by Abd A'la) and the housing project (promised by the Ministry of Public Housing) were poorly executed. It differs from Jokowi's approach to the conflict which provided assistance to facilitate infrastructure and institutional arrangement for Shia refugee's rights. According to Miichi, this political act was made because of advocating activism directed by pluralist activists that possibly influenced the Jokowi's administration (Mijchi & Kayane, 2019).

In fact, what Miichi said as "gradual change" in Jokowi's era has not reached a final goal of the conflict reconciliation intended by the Shia refugees. Their hope of being returned bac home could not been easily achieved yet. Although Jokowi's government has a longer time (from 2014 to 2024) to solve the conflict compared to Yudhoyono which only obtained two years of reigns (from its appearance in 2012 to 2014), it does not successfully build effective and productive connection with the local Sunni ulama in Sampang. In addition, the absence of the government during this conflict has become a point of criticism. Faiq, from *Solidaritas untuk Anti Kekerasan* (Solidarity for Anti-

<sup>21</sup> <https://news.detik.com/bbc-world/d-5242909/pengungsi-syiah-sampang-dibaiat-jadi-suni-di-tengah-keinginan-pulang-kampung> (accessed 11/12/2021).

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-54550918> (accessed November 19, 2021)

<sup>23</sup> Slamet Mulyono, *Interview*, November 20, 2021.

Voelence), stated “We strongly demand the head of the Indonesian National Police to conduct an internal evaluation of the failure of the Sampang Police to ensure a sense of security for Shia congregations. We ask the National Police Chief to instruct the Sampang Police Chief to handle this incident quickly and professionally.”<sup>24</sup> In line with this critics, KontraS Surabaya concluded that “the Sampang Regional Government, including the police, do not have the perspective that every citizen has the right to have a belief, religion and worship according to their religion and belief, and the government is obliged to carry out legal and political protection of this right as regulated in the 1945 Constitution, Law no. 12 2005 concerning the ratification of the ICCPR, and Law Number 39 of 2009 about human rights. The right to believe is a right that cannot be reduced or eliminated under any circumstances.”<sup>25</sup>

Another example of having state security as a source of insecurity could be more precisely taken from the case of Papua. Anderson wrote that in Papua “as the rest of Indonesia, security forces are often more concern with income generation than security” (Anderson, 2015). However, he argued that the state failure in regard with Papua is not an intentional result of the government policy but a result of “morass of policy failures over time, aggravated by limitations to state capacity and competence.”<sup>26</sup> The case of Sunni-Shia in Sampang has comparatively the same problem concerning the absence of the government, where the state is not fully present to solve the problem. The conflict requires more “personal connections” and “cultural approaches” to bridge the local government, the local ulama, and other socio-political bodies in the region (Mijchi & Kayane, 2019).

In 2002, years after the economic crisis attacked several countries in Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, Wanandi questioned whether Indonesia a failed or not in his article, “Indonesia: A Failed State?” He wrote that Indonesia is not a failed state but it becomes weak. One of the measurements he used to look at is regional conflicts. According to him, “regional conflicts are the most visible sign of the breakdown of the central government's authority, and no clear strategy to overcome these problems seems to exist” (Wanandi, 2002). By looking at religious conflicts happening among the Indonesian people, someone could remark on how the presence or absence of the state reflected within society.

In this regard, it is not easy to deal with the conflict and make a peaceful

---

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/serangan-atas-kelompok-syiah-di-sampang-tuai-kecamatan/1496881.html>. (accessed November 19, 2021)

<sup>25</sup> KontraS, “Laporan Investigasi dan Pemantauan Kasus Syi'ah Sampang,” Surabaya, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

agreement between Sunni and Shia refugees. This research acknowledges at least two attentions that should be considered as a state-failure condition. First, not all the Shia refugees have been returned back home, although most of them are re-embraced the Sunni teachings in 2020. Second, as a minority group in Indonesia, Shia community has still been placed in a fragile pot which could be broken up when the social or political tension emerge. Third, it should be noted that the successful return of the Shia refugees to their hometowns in Sampang was not the result of structured government work, but rather due to the personal initiative of the local head and the intensives of the local government. The long-lasting efforts of the central government as the representation of the state, for approximately 10 years, did not have much impact on solving the Sunni-Shia problem in Sampang.

Referring to Goldstone, we should look at two general qualities that remain stability of the state: effectiveness and legitimacy. The first reflects how the state function its authority to provide security, promote economic growth, and deliver social services. The second reflects whether state action is perceived by elite and lay people as “just” and “reasonable” in term of prevailing social norms (Goldstone, 2008). The state’s delay to resolve the Sunni-Shiite conflict in Sampang can be examined from these two perspectives. On the one hand, the state did not make effective efforts to resolve the problem, on the other hand, the government’s efforts are considered unjust and unreasonable in developing a conflict solution to the Sunni-Shiite conflict in Sampang.

The initiative to take preventive measures in resolving Sunni-Shiite conflicts should be politically taken by the state. Krasner asserts that conflict prevention must become a routine element of policymaking. He wrote that “anticipating, averting, and responding to conflict require a greater, more comprehensive level of planning and organization” (Krasner & Pascual, 2005).

Alissa Wahid, national director of Gusdurian, said, “favoritism and majoritarianism are getting stronger in Indonesia. The government is not doing enough to enforce the constitution, and more and more conflicts are being solved by local agreements, which often represent the interests of the majority.”<sup>27</sup> The Wahid’s statement is kind of general criticism for the central government that has no serious attention to solve the conflict. The initiative to solve the problem arose from the Sampang regent, the local government, who is dealing the conflict through religious and cultural approaches. This local strategy flourished the agreement between Sunni and Shia in Sampang to build a better relation in the future.

<sup>27</sup> Office of International Religious Freedom, “2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Indonesia,” May 12, 2021. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/indonesia/> (accessed November 19, 2021).

## CONCLUSION

Conflict reconciliation between Sunni and Shia in Sampang has stunned several phases from its emergence in 2012 to our present life. This reconciliation touched convincing attentions from governmental (such as the Ministry of Religious Affair, the Ministry of Public Housing, and the Ministry of Social Affairs) and non-governmental organizations (such as ABI, IJABI, BASSRA, CMARs, and KontraS) as well as grasped broadly social networks in its processes. Recommendations were produced to solve and end the conflict which to some extent reduced the escalation of conflict gradually. However, the lack of returning back Shia refugees to their home signified the difficult process of that reconciliation.

This research found that the absence of the state in this conflict has become one of the most socially criticized-elements which hinder the process of reconciliation. Peace activists and NGOs look into the absence of the state involvement within the process of reconciliation. Questions of political tenace of the government during the process of arose as a public discourse conversed among the parties involved in the conflict. It means that the government has not succeeded yet in resolving the conflict profoundly. In the case of Sunni-Shia Sampang, the keywords of the conflict reconciliation depend on local agreements or individual networks between Sunni, Shia, and the local power. However, the local government of Sampang have finally succeeded to commence an agreement between Sunni and the Shia refugees: the later signed an ideological agreement, a theological pact, to revert to their old belief as Sunni Muslims.

This study limits itself to discuss the escalation of the conflict, the resolution process, and the failure of the state on addressing the root causes of the Sunni-Shiite conflict in Sampang. However, this research has limitations in revealing the network of non-governmental organizations that are also engaged in the context of resolving the Sunni-Shiite conflict in Sampang. This topic could be another interesting research, at least to clarify the process of conflict resolution and non-governmental parties intensively involved in resolving the conflict.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Afdillah, M. (2013). *Dari Masjid ke Panggung Politik*. Yogyakarta: Thesis. Gadjah Mada University.
- Ahnaf, M. I., et al. (2015). *Politik Lokal dan Konflik Keagamaan*. Yogyakarta: Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies.

- Anderson, B. (2015). *Papua's Insecurity: State Failure in the Indonesian Periphery*. Hawaii: East-West Center.
- Appleby, R. S. (2012). Religious Violence: The Strong, the Weak, and the Pathological. *Practical Manners*. Spring. Issue 5: 1-25.
- Baum, G. (2001). *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading on Sociology*. Toronto: Paulist Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical Reason on the Theory of Action*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Call, C. T. (2011). Beyond the 'Failed State': Toward Conceptual Alternatives. *European Journal of International Relations*. Vol. 17. No. 2: 303-326.
- Eliade, M. (1987). *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Florida: Harcourt Inc.
- Fischer, M. & Schmelzle, B.(ed.). (2009). *Building Peace in the Absence of State: Challenging the Discourse of State Failure*. Berlin: Berghof Research Center.
- Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Culture*. New York: Basic Books.
- Ghani, A. et al. (2005). *Closing the Sovereignty Gap: An Approach to State-Building*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Goldstone, J. A. (2008). Pathways to State Failure. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25. No. 4: 285–96. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275148>.
- Haji, M. *The Shia Muslims of Indonesia*. The Center for the Academic Shia Studies.
- Hasenclever, A., & Rittberger, V. (2000). Does Religion Make a Diference? Theoretical Approach to the Impact of Faith on Political Conflict. *Millenium Journal of International Studies*. Vol 29. No 3: 641-674. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03058298000290031401>.
- Khoiri, M. A., & Chamankhah, L. (2021). *Survival Mechanism of The Shia Community Post-Shia–Sunni Sampang Conflict in 2012*. *Al-Mada: Jurnal Agama Sosisal dan Budaya*. Vol. 4 No 2: 240-251. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31538/almada.v4i2.1248>.
- KontraS. (2012). *Laporan Investigasi dan Pemantauan Kasus Syi'ah Sampang*. Surabaya: Laporan Penelitian.
- Krasner, S. D., & Pascual, C. (2005). Addressing State Failure. *Foreign Affairs* 84. No. 4: 153–63. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20034427>.

- Kung, H. (1991). *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*. New York: Crossroad.
- Mahbub, S. (2018). Konflik dan Kekerasan Sunni-Syiah Sampang Prespektif Kultur Kekerasan dan Hak Asasi Manusia. *Voice Justisia: Jurnal Hukum dan Keadilan*. Volume 2. Nomor 1. Maret: 92-101.
- Miichi, K., & Kayane, Y. (2019). The Politics of Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: The Shi'a Response to the Sampang Incidents of 2011–12. *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and-National Studies of Southeast Asia*: 1–14. doi:10.1017/trn.2019.12.
- Pamungkas, C. (2018). Mencari Bentuk Rekonsiliasi Intra-Agama: Analisis terhadap Pengungsi Syiah Sampang dan Ahmadiyah Mataram. *Episiteme: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman*, Vol 13, No 1: 113-147. <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2018.13.1.113-147>.
- Satriani, S., et al. (2019). Policy Brief: Memulihkan Hak Pengungsi Ahmadiyah dan Syiah. *Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace*.
- Wanandi, J. (2002). Indonesia: A Failed State? *The Washington Quarterly*, 25:3: 135-146. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/01636600260046299>
- Yaqin, N. A. (2020). Menagih Hak Beragama Muslim Ahmadiyah dan Syiah Sampang dalam Perspektif Nalar Maqâ idi. *Religi: Jurnal Studi Agama-agama*. Vol. 16. No. 2: 208-227. <https://doi.org/10.14421/rejusta.2020.1602-05>.

#### INTERNET SOURCES

- <http://daerah.sindonews.com/read/670816/23/pengungsi-sampang-akan-di-relokasi- sementara-ke-rusunawa-1346996624> (accessed November 21, 2021).
- <http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/34816/> (accessed November 21, 2021).
- <http://www.hidayatullah.com/kolom/catatan-akhir-pekan/read/2012/09/01/3822/kisah-tajul-muluk-dari-sampang.html> (accessed November 21, 2021).
- <http://www.koranmadura.com/2013/09/30/deklarasi-syiah-menyimpang/> (accessed November 21, 2021).
- <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jul/12/indonesia-jails-shia-cleric-blasphemy> (accessed November 21, 2021).

<https://news.detik.com/bbc-world/d-5242909/pengungsi-syiah-sampang-dibaiat-jadi-suni-di-tengah-keinginan-pulang-kampung> (accessed November 21, 2021).

<https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-54550918> (accessed November 21, 2021).

<https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/serangan-atas-kelompok-syiah-di-sampang-tuai-kecamatan/1496881.html>. (accessed November 19, 2021).

<https://news.detik.com/bbc-world/d-5242909/pengungsi-syiah-sampang-dibaiat-jadi-suni-di-tengah-keinginan-pulang-kampung> (accessed November 11, 2021).

<https://yapibangil.org/yayasan/> (accessed November 21, 2021).

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/indonesia/> (accessed November 19, 2021).