

The dynamics of Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia: a structural-functional perspective

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Abstract

Much research has been conducted on Sunni-Shia conflicts within the Muslim world. However, there is still limited research on integrating these two denominations. Conflict and integration, in theory, represent two distinct aspects of the same issue. This study aims to elucidate the process of Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia and the factors contributing to it, employing a structural-functionalist perspective. Additionally, it seeks to assess the potential for such integration. Through intensive library research on offline and online sources, the article uncovers three forms of Sunni-Shia integration: peaceful coexistence, accommodation, and cooperation. These outcomes stem from six interrelated factors: inclusive theology, the role of moderate actors, collective ritual practice, 'Alid piety, friendship and kinship, and social activity. These factors play important roles in shaping the prospects of Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia. While the inclusive theology, as the first factor, is normative and may produce normative integration aligned with the prevailing norms, the others are more functional and may elicit functional integration emerging from the functions in the society.

Banyak penelitian yang dilakukan mengenai konflik Sunni-Syiah di dunia Muslim, namun sedikit yang berfokus pada upaya integrasi kedua denominasi tersebut. Dalam teorinya, konflik dan integrasi merupakan dua sisi yang berbeda, namun saling terkait erat. Penelitian ini menjelaskan bagaimana

integrasi antara Sunni dan Syiah di Indonesia beserta faktor-faktor pendukungnya, serta mengevaluasi potensi keberhasilannya dipandang dari perspektif fungsional-struktural. Melalui kajian kepustakaan yang mendalam terhadap berbagai sumber, artikel ini mengidentifikasi tiga bentuk integrasi Sunni-Syiah, yaitu hidup berdampingan secara damai, akomodasi, dan kerjasama. Temuan tersebut berasal dari enam faktor yang saling terkait, yaitu teologi inklusif, peran aktor moderat, praktik ritual kolektif, kesalehan 'Alawy, hubungan pertemanan dan kekerabatan, serta aktivitas sosial. Faktor-faktor tersebut berperan penting dalam membentuk prospek integrasi Sunni-Syiah di Indonesia. Dalam hal ini, teologi inklusif sebagai faktor pertama, bersifat normatif dan berpotensi menghasilkan integrasi normatif sesuai norma yang berlaku. Sementara itu, faktor-faktor lainnya cenderung bersifat fungsional dan dapat menghasilkan integrasi fungsional berdasarkan fungsi dalam masyarakat.

Keywords: *Sunni, Shia, Integration, Structural-functional perspective.*

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Introduction

The Sunni-Shia relation in the world has in general revolved around two poles: the first is conflict or even takfir namely excommunication and 'heretification' of the other side whilst the second is rapprochement or integration (Bar, 2005). However, the Muslim world is still facing the problem of tension or even prolonged sectarian conflict between Shia and Sunnis. Muslims have long shackled to the ideological polarization box of Shia and Sunnis and it is almost impossible to get out of the box. The problem is indeed not the polarization itself but the tendency that sectarian conflicts and violence that have dominated the intra-Muslim relations. Strong scholarly consensus indicates that sectarian identities have been used by political actors to maximize their power and advantage, rather than the fundamentalist theory of "ancient hatred" as essentialists claim (Hashemi & Postel, 2017; Wehrey, 2017).

Several studies have investigated the Sunni-Shia conflicts. The conflicts are a consequence of many interrelated factors including ideology, politics, political economy, and social psychology. They also occur within international, national and local contexts. Which factor is the most significant depends on the context of place and time. In the case of the Middle East and South Asia, for instance, geopolitical factors are always significant, at least as a trigger for intolerance and sectarian violence (Buchler & Schulhofer-Wohl, 2021; Ali, 2020; Wagemakers, 2020). International dynamics and developments towards Shia influenced interpersonal relationship to a sense of acceptance and tolerance to Shia. Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia also has connections with geopolitical or international factors in combination with national politics, national religious development, and local contexts (Formichi, 2014) or even with personal interest (Kayane, 2020).

In addition to the prevalent research on sectarian disputes, there is a deficiency in interreligious discourse between Sunni and Shia within the Muslim community. Only eight out of 463 organizations (or 1.7 percent) have Shia-Sunni conversation as an official mandate and/or have had tangible programs targeted at fostering discussion across the Shia-Sunni divide, as shown by Krause, Svenson, and Larsson (2019). There are a hundred Christian-Jewish and a hundred Jewish-Muslim dialogue organizations, however the majority of organizations (173) are devoted to conversations between the Christian and Muslim communities.

Unlike the above-mentioned focus on dissociated sectarian relations, this article aims to explain factors contributing to the Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia in the framework of proposing a sustainable Sunni-Shia dialogue. This paper is based on library research using both offline and online sources. All data collected were analyzed qualitatively using a structural functionalist framework to explain the Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia to obtain a thorough comprehension of the phenomenon.

Sunni-Shia integration

There are at least three forms of integration between Sunni and Shia in Indonesia, like in other places in the world, which may occur at local and national contexts. The first is peaceful coexistence. The Sunni-Shia relations in Bangsri, Jepara, Central Java, can probably become a model of sectarian religious integration in Indonesia because of its harmonious and peaceful coexistence. As described by Sulaiman, in Bangsri, the Sunni-Shia relations are harmonious and peaceful. Both have mutual understanding of each other's differences, both in beliefs and practices. Instead, they choose to establish harmonious social life. In matters of worship, they tolerate and respect each other, but in social affairs, they are united and participate in social activities such as *gotong royong* (mutual assistance). Even in case of death, both Sunni and Shia usually carry out the process of burying the body and perform the funeral prayer together. In addition, they perform *tablilan* or prayer together for the dead and the prayer leader is Shia when the dead is Shia and vice versa. They also work together in building houses of worship from both sides (Sulaiman, 2017: 21).

Thus, there are no problems between Sunni and Shia communities in matters of worship because each community has its own place of worship. In this area, each community has its own place of worship such as a mosque or prayer room. Therefore, they carry out prayers and religious learning in their respective mosques/prayer rooms and perform Friday prayers in their own mosques. However, there are some Sunnis and Shia who join together in performing worship, especially Friday prayers (Sulaiman, 2017: 33).

Such a situation does not only take place in Bangsri, but peaceful coexistence between Sunni and Shia also characterizes other local communities in Pekalongan, Semarang, Bodowoso, Jember, and others. It seems that the peaceful coexistence in the local context occurs based on shared ideal norms they uphold. There has been mutual understanding and respect among members of both sectarian groups. In other words, there has been inclusive

dialogue regarding “intersubjective norms of mutual recognition” (Tully, 2004: 85) among them.

Second is accommodation. In Indonesia several prominent Muslim intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005), K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009), Ahmad Syafii Maarif (1935-2022), K.H. Hasyim Muzadi (1944-2017), Azyumardi Azra (1955-2022), K.H. Said Aqil Sirodj, and M. Din Syamsuddin have accommodative attitude and practice regarding the existence of Shia in Indonesia even though They have come under fire for allegedly creating the conditions for Shi'ism to proliferate and flourish throughout the nation. These figures have facilitated and provided room for prominent Shia figures such as Jalaluddin Rakhmat (1949-2022) in their social, religious, and intellectual activities such as seminars, conferences, religious gatherings, and scientific meetings. Nurcholsih Madjid, for instance, invited him to deliver lectures or speech in his regular religious gathering at Paramadina.

The most significant contribution of Gus Dur's accommodative action with respect to the Shia in Indonesia is the government's recognition of the national Shia organization, IJABI (Ikatan Jamaah Ahlulbait Indonesia), in 2000 when he was the president of Indonesia. The leaders of the Shia community came to the realization that Gus Dur's presidency presents them with the greatest chance to pursue national prominence. In order for the Shia to exist and to engage in social, educational, and missionary endeavors under the banner of their organization, legal recognition is crucial. Gus Dur is not the only one who supports the creation of the national Shia organization; Amien Rais and Nurcholish Madjid also do. Both, for instance, agreed to attend the second national conference of IJABI on 27-29 February 2004 but only Nurcholish Madjid came and became a speaker before hundreds of Shia who came from diverse regions in the country.

Gus Dur played a major role in the advancement of Islamic rapprochement not only in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) but also in Indonesia in

general. Widiyanto describes his evaluative practical dimension from his strategy and preference to make some practical decisions “to advance the progressivism and moderatism in this [traditional] organization” (Widiyanto, 2021: 44). Long before he became president, in 1993, Gus Dur gave the Forum Silaturrahmi Ahlul Bait, a Shi'a organization, permission to celebrate Ashura at the Al-Munawwarah Mosque in Ciganjur, which is close to his home. He gave the commemoration's opening statement on this particular occasion. Gus Dur frequently affirms that the presence of the Shia should not be regarded as an enemy, but even the Sunni should learn from the Shia regarding the philosophical tradition (Mastuki, 1999:63-64).

The third is cooperation. There have been various forms of cooperation between Sunnis and Shia in Indonesia, either at international, national, organizational, or individual level. The initiative to carry out cooperation may come from Sunni or Shia side. But Iranian-sponsored organization, *Majma'at-jahani baraye taqrib-e bein-e mazahab-e eslami* (The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought) presently led by Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Taskhiri (1944-2020) is very active in promoting cooperation and integration among Sunnis and Shia (Brunner, 2004; Buchta, 2001). The group has arranged programs for Sunni Muslims to study Islam in the *hawza ilmiyya of Qum* and called conferences with the apparent goal of fostering harmony between Sunni and Shia Muslims. Through this organization, many Indonesian ulama, intellectuals, and activists were invited to visit Iran for a short period of time, while others took a short course program of Islamic learning. Upon their return to Indonesia, they do not convert to Shi'ism but they generally express their positive views on Shia practices and development in Iran. Representatives of the organization also had an opportunity to meet the ulama and intellectual in Indonesia at MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah. There were several seminars carried out in the framework of cooperation between these organizations. One of them was the conference of Sunni-Shia ulama held in Bogor, 3-4 April 2007.

It was organized by NU and Muhammadiyah with the support from the government to protect Muslims from friction (Zulkifli 2014a).

Cooperation is also held between the existing Shia organizations, namely IJABI and ABI (Ahlubait Indonesia), and Sunni organizations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah. The Shia organizations also cooperate with Islamic universities and institutions in the country. The most common activity is a seminar or dialogue between Sunnis and Shia. Shia figures in Indonesia have established good connections with prominent moderate Muslim intellectuals and ulama. The connection and communication are very instrumental in maintaining integration between Sunnis and Shia. Therefore, it is not without reason that the chairman of ABI and his colleagues visited the chairman of NU and Muhammadiyah soon after founding the new Shia organization in 2011. Similarly, at almost all-important activities renowned moderate figures are invited to deliver speech or present their views. Communication will contribute to a mutual understanding of each other's way of understanding their beliefs and practicing rituals as well as textual and logical reasons behind the understanding. Then, differences may only be understood by a dialogue. In addition, Sunni and Shia meeting and dialogue have been sponsored by Islamic Cultural Centre, an Iranian-sponsored centre for Islamic propagation and publication. On 2 December 2011, for instance, the seminar on the *Tabot* tradition was held by the ICC, ICAS (Islamic College of Advanced Studies), and State College for Islamic Studies in Bengkulu. In the field of education ICAS has cooperated with Paramadina University in Jakarta, State Islamic University of Bandung and State Islamic University of Makassar in running both undergraduate and graduate programs (Zulkifli, 2014a).

The establishment of the Jakarta branch of ICAS (Islamic College of Advanced Studies based in London, UK) in 2003 was based on the Memorandum of Understanding between the representative of ICAS London Ali Movahhedi and the then Rector of Paramadina University Nurcholish

Madjid signed on 29 July 2002. The memorandum to run an MA program in Islamic philosophy and Islamic mysticism was then legalized by the Directorate General of Islamic Education (then named Directorate General of Islamic Institutional Establishment), the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Later, the Islamic higher educational institution was known as Islamic College Jakarta. Cooperation in the field of education was then extended to other universities in Indonesia such as UIN Sunan Gunungdjati Bandung, UIN Alauddin Makassar, and Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta. A note should be made that the Islamic College Jakarta cooperated with UIN Alauddin Makassar in running a doctoral program in Islamic philosophy in which a prominent Shia scholar Jalaluddin Rakhmat (1949-2022) was enrolled in 2012 and completed the graduate program in 2015 (Zulkifli, 2014).

Islamic Cultural Center in Jakarta (formerly Al-Huda Islamic Center) founded in 1998 also cooperated with social-religious organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah, the Council of Indonesian Ulama, and several universities such as UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, UIN Sunan Kalidjaga, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, UIN Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, UIN Purwokerto, Universitas Indonesia, Universitas Gadjahmada, Universitas Hasanuddin Makassar, Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, and Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang. In these universities the so-called Iranian Corner is established to provide information and literature related to Iranian society, culture, and Shi'ism.

Providing a bunch of literature and information pertaining to Iran, this 'corner' has increasingly become a window for Indonesian students to have a look at contemporary Iranian culture, including its religious tradition and political system. The availability of Islamic literature written by Iranian scholars at the Iranian Corner is also believed to have contributed to the development of students' knowledge on Shi'a tradition (Latief, 2008: 300-301).

An organization assembling both Sunni and Shia in Indonesia is called MUHSIN (Majlis Ukhuwah Sunni Syiah Indonesia, Council of Indonesian Sunni and Shia Brotherhood) which was established on 20 May 2011. It was initiated by the consultative chairman of IJABI, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, and a section head of Dewan Masjid Indonesia (Council of Indonesian Mosque), Daud Poliradja, for the purpose of rapprochement and establishment of equal and harmonious cooperation between the two Islamic denominations by carrying out activities for public good and Islamic victory. In its declaration, the council intends: first, to abolish the long lasting fractions and enemy between Muslims; second, to flourish relationship in mutual respect and love; third, to communicate dialogically between Sunnis and Shia in order to achieve mutual understanding; fourth, to create cooperation between them and between different religious adherents in order to demonstrate Islam as mercy fall all creatures; and, fifth, to make mosque as the centre for Islamic ecumenism and civilization (Zulkifli, 2014a).

Integrative factors

There are several interrelated factors contributing to creating integration and rapprochement between Sunni and Shia in Indonesia. First is inclusive theology. Inclusive theology from both Sunni and Shia figures are crucial to create harmony between the two groups. This may even be considered as prerequisite of mutual understanding and cooperation and this theology is generally upheld by prominent moderate figures from both groups. The inclusive theology usually refers to the renowned inclusive fatwa and views from the renowned international ulama and figures, Sunni or Shia. The most popular is Mahmud Shaltut's fatwa. Mahmud Shaltut's fatwa which was issued on 9 July 1959 is frequently used by both Shia and Sunni figures in support of their opinions with regard to Sunni-Shia dialogues. The main part of the fatwa (I follow Brunner's translation [2004: 289-290]) is read:

1. Islam does not oblige any of its adherents to be affiliated with a specific madhhab. Rather, we say: Every Muslim has, first of all, the right to follow any of the legal schools that have been properly handed down and whose rules in their specific (legal) effects are laid down in writing. A person who follows one of these schools is entitled to turn to any other without being subjected to reproach.
2. In the sense of the religious law of Islam (*shar‘an*), it is allowed to perform the divine service (*ta‘abbud*) in accordance with the rite of the *Ja‘fariyya*, which is known as Shi‘a imamiyya, in the same way as in accordance with all schools of the Sunnis.

Another inclusive theology was established in 2005 where two hundreds of Muslim scholars from all around the world were assembled and produced the so-called Amman Message. From Indonesia, among the signers are K.H. Hasyim Muzadi (then chairman of NU) and M. Din Syamsuddin (chairman of Muhammadiyah). In the Amman Message, Shi‘ism is recognised among eight madhhab in Islam and, therefore, it is forbidden to declare it apostasy. Today, the Amman Message is more frequently used than the above Shaltut’s fatwa. The message has declared the Three Points of Amman Message which read:

1. Whosoever is an adherent to one of the four Sunni schools (*Mathabib*) of Islamic jurisprudence (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi‘i and Hanbali), the two Shia schools of Islamic jurisprudence (Ja‘fari and Zaydi), the Ibadi school of Islamic jurisprudence and the Thahiri school of Islamic jurisprudence, is a Muslim. Declaring that person an apostate is impossible and impermissible. Verily his (or her) blood, honour, and property are inviolable. Moreover, in accordance with the Shaykh Al-Azhar’s fatwa, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare whosoever subscribes to the Ash‘ari creed or whoever practices real Tasawwuf (Sufism) an apostate. Likewise, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare whosoever subscribes to true Salafi thought an apostate. Equally, it is neither possible nor permissible to declare as apostates any group of Muslims who believes in God, Glorified and Exalted be He, and His Messenger (may peace and blessings be upon him) and the pillars of faith, and acknowledges the five pillars of Islam, and does not deny any necessarily self-evident tenet of religion.
2. There exists more in common between the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence than there is difference between them. The adherents to the eight schools of Islamic jurisprudence are in agreement as regards the

basic principles of Islam. All believe in Allah (God), Glorified and Exalted be He, the One and the Unique; that the Noble Qur'an is the Revealed Word of God; and that our master Muhammad, may blessings and peace be upon him, is a Prophet and Messenger unto all mankind. All are in agreement about the five pillars of Islam: the two testaments of faith (shahadatayn); the ritual prayer (salat); almsgiving (zakat); fasting the month of Ramadan (sawm), and the Hajj to the sacred house of God (in Mecca). All are also in agreement about the foundations of belief: belief in Allah (God), His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, and in the Day of Judgment, in Divine Providence in good and in evil. Disagreements between the 'ulama (scholars) of the eight schools of Islamic jurisprudence are only with respect to the ancillary branches of religion (furu') and not as regards the principles and fundamentals (usul) [of the religion of Islam]. Disagreement with respect to the ancillary branches of religion (*furu'*) is a mercy. Long ago it was said that variance in opinion among the 'ulama (scholars) "is a good affair".

3. Acknowledgement of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence (Mathahib) within Islam means adhering to a fundamental methodology in the issuance of fatwas: no one may issue a fatwa without the requisite personal qualifications which each school of Islamic jurisprudence determines [for its own adherents]. No one may issue a fatwa without adhering to the methodology of the schools of Islamic jurisprudence. No one may claim to do unlimited Ijtihad and create a new school of Islamic jurisprudence or to issue unacceptable fatwas that take Muslims out of the principles and certainties of the Shari'ah and what has been established in respect of its schools of jurisprudence (www.ammannmessage.com accessed 13 September 2012).

Furthermore, a prominent figure among Shia ulama who strived for the unity between Sunnis and Shia was the late Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah (1935-2010) who forbade the cursing and slandering of the Prophet's companions known in Sunnism as the rightly Guided Caliphs (Abubakar, Umar, Uthman) and his wives. This is a very radical view since this act has been very common among Shia and is legitimize by Shia scholars. This has also become a polemical dispute between Sunnis and Shia throughout history and he broke this long tradition. Excerpt from an interview on 8 March 2008 is read:

Q: What is your stand regarding the issue of cursing and slandering the companions, including Abubakr, Umar and Aisha?

A: Personally, I forbid the act of slandering and cursing any companion whom Allah had mentioned in the following Ayah: “Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; you will see them bowing down, prostrating themselves, seeking grace from Allah and pleasure,” (48:29), at a time we set aside the issue of the Imamate and Caliphate, for which we have other considerations. As for the issue of cursing, I have always deemed it forbidden for any Muslim, and I state in all the relevant religious inquiries I receive that it is forbidden to curse and slander any companion including the Caliphs. I reiterate the words of Imam Ali (a) which he said while he was on his way to Siffin and heard some of the People of Iraq cursing and slandering the People of Sham, so he told them: “I dislike you starting to abuse them, but if you describe their deeds and recount their situations that would be a better mode of speaking and a more convincing way of arguing. Instead of abusing them you should say: ‘O Allah! Save our blood and their blood, produce reconciliation between us and them, and lead them out of their misguidance so that he who is ignorant of the truth may know it, and he who inclines towards rebellion and revolt may turn away from it.’” Actually, this text is found in the book *Nahj al-Balaghah* (At-Taqrīb: Journal of Islamic Unity 2010:143-144).

The current Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also issued a decree to prohibit every Shia to insult Aisha, the wife of Prophet Muhammad as well as figures and symbols honored by Sunni. In response to a question on religious matters, he stated:

Insulting figures and symbols celebrated by Sunni brethren, including the wife of the Prophet of Islam [Aisha] is prohibited. This includes the wives of all prophets, particularly the master of all prophets Muhammad (May God’s greetings be upon him and his household) Disrespecting the pure wives of the Prophet (pbuh) should be avoided. The Prophet’s (pbuh) wives are all respectable; anyone who insults any of them has insulted the Prophet. I resolutely declare this offensive. The commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (pbuh) treated her eminence Aisha in such a respectful manner. He treated a woman, who had come to fight against him, with the utmost respect because she was the Prophet’s wife; otherwise, the Commander of the Faithful (as) would not stand on a ceremony with anyone: hence, no such disrespect should ever occur. (<https://english.khamenei.ir/news/3905/Ayatollah-Khamenei-s-fatwa-Insulting-the-Mother-of-the-Faithful> accessed 27 December 2023).

Second is the role of moderate actors. As Widiyanto (2021) has emphasized, the rapprochement efforts were supported or even initiated by intellectual figures of NU and Muhammadiyah as well as others. In many occasions did the late Nurcholish Madjid show his sympathy and support to Shia. In a seminar of 1988, for instance, in his response to Ibrahim Hosen's statement that the Shia has its own Quran, the late Nurcholish Madjid came to the fore with the Quran printed in Iran containing Khomeini's introductory note, showing it to the audience while affirming that it is exactly the same as the Quran belonging to the Sunni. It is emphasized that everyone must have an objective and scientific attitude towards Shi'ism. For him, it is clear that the accusation of the existence of the distinctive Shia Quran is false (Madjid, 1989: 15). Furthermore, in Nurcholish Madjid's moderate view, the existence of Shia should not be seen as a religious or political issue but as a historical and social reality in the Muslim society (Madjid, 1989: 6). Both will gain mutual benefits if they are integrated. Since Shia has advanced the philosophical intellectual tradition which tended to stagnate in Sunnism, the Sunni can learn from the Shia and develop the field of philosophy if both established open intellectual interaction (Madjid, 1989: 15-16).

On the Sunni-Shia relation, Nurcholish Madjid emphasizes the need for respect and understanding amongst all parties. Everyone should be able to acknowledge one another's existence within the context of equality and brotherhood. Additionally, he restates his opinion that it is imperative to cultivate a non-sectarian mindset since the Prophet Muhammad modeled such a mindset, and the non-sectarian spirit is consistent with the meaning of the Quranic term "hanif," which refers to Abraham's monotheistic religion (QS 6:161) as the hanif religion (Madjid 1995: 687-688). He writes:

So once again, the division of human being into groups, like Sunni and Shia, is genuine, natural and unavoidable because [it] is a product of historical process that may not be erased. What is not natural, not genuine, and not accord with basic human character (*fitra*) is when

someone or a group claims their own absolute truth, then immediately forces his or her will and view on others. This is *shirk*, polytheism, which is unforgivable by God (Madjid, 1989: 19).

Gus Dur's moderate attitude towards Shia is a part of his tolerance to all minority groups in the country. In many ways he protects the position of the Shia that was strongly opposed by the majority of Muslim leaders including NU members. He stresses more on the sustainability of the Sunni community itself than on the accusation and attack on the Shia group. In a dialogue with two representatives of Al-Bayyinat Foundation in 1993, Gus Dur gave advice to the Al-Bayyinat representatives to have an objective attitude and to carry out a dialogue with such Shia leaders as Jalaluddin Rakhmat (1949-2022). In response to Al-Bayyinat's request of his support, Wahid suggested to have dialogue with Shia figures and write to refute the falsity of Shi'ism.

With regard to the Sunni-Shia divide, Gus Dur, in his attempt to protect the Shia, sees some cultural aspects of Shi'ism that are practiced by NU so that to a certain extent NU is cultural Shi'ism. According to Wahid referring to a prayer of adoration widely practiced among NU members, NU shows loving devotion to the *ahl al-bayt* comprising five people: the Prophet Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hassan and Husayn, a similar conception comprehended by the Shia. The supplication reads: *li kbamsatun ufji biha har al-waba' al-batima, al-Mustafa wa al-Murtada wa ibnabuma wa Fatima* (I have five persons with whom I extinguish the 'heat' of crushing disease, the Prophet, Ali, Hasan, Husayn, and Fatima). For him, to take such a Shia view is natural as the Shia also adopted many aspects of the Sunni tradition. What is important is that NU does not take the Shia doctrine (Mastuki, 1999: 185-186).

Greg Barton points out four reasons for Gus Dur's support of the Shia. First, he by nature tends to help wronged and oppressed minorities. Second, he opposes anything that impinges freedom of faith and principle. Third, for him, all Muslim intellectuals can profitably delve the Shia scholarship because it

contains an on-going tradition of *ijtihad* and metaphysical philosophy. Fourth, he argues that many of NU rituals and approaches to Sufism are rooted in the Persian Shi'ism, and therefore the NU scholars are suggested to understand Shia Islam in order that they can understand the nature of Sunni Indonesian Islamic traditionalism (Barton, 2002: 174).

Other Muslim intellectuals expressed their sympathy and support to Shia, particularly in response to the accusation of Shi'ism and the sectarian violence in Sampang and other places. M. Din Syamsuddin suggests that dialogue is the best and most appropriate way to solve the differences between religious currents within the Muslim society. In K.H. Said Aqil Sirodj's view: "the teaching of Shi'ism is not false but a part of Islamic orthodoxy like Sunnism. At any universities in the world, none considers Shi'ism false" (<http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2012/01/27/173379960/Said-Aqil-syiah-tidak-sesat> accessed 27 September 2012). Similarly, a renowned intellectual Azyumardi Azra has emphasized: "The Shia is an integral part of Muslim community, and there is no principal and fundamental difference between Sunnism and Shi'ism, except in terms of political leadership" (<http://www.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/islam-nusantara/12/01/27/lyg7c7-azyumardi-azra-tidak-diperlukan-fatwa-sesat-syiah> accessed 24 September 2012). Therefore, he suggests that the fatwa on the illegitimacy and falsity of Shi'ism is not necessary because it will destroy Islamic ecumenism in Indonesia.

Quraish Shihab (2007) emphasizes the urgency of Islamic unity between Sunni and Shia while arguing that it is not possible to negate and abolish the existence of Shi'ism and Sunnism in the Muslim community. But both must have mutual understanding and respect in order to free themselves from misunderstanding and misconception, and establish Islamic ecumenism and cooperation. His mission to write the book is to create the unity of the Islamic

community and harmonious relationship among different adherents of denomination in Islam.

Third is collective ritual practice. Another significant factor contributing to integration between Sunnis and Shia is their participation in rituals together, either mandatory ritual like congregational Prayer or various kinds of commemoration like Ashura (the commemoration of Husayn's death). Inclusive verdicts of both Sunni and Shia ulama on the validity of Prayers behind the imam of other denomination are of importance. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has issued a fatwa for a Shia on the validity of prayer behind a Sunni prayer leader (Tim ABI, 2012: 94). As Sulaiman has pointed out, some Sunnis and Shia in Bangsri Jepara perform public rituals together, especially Friday prayers (Sulaiman, 2017: 33). Performing congregational prayers in the same prayer places is essential in creating mutual understanding between adherents of different denomination.

Fourth is 'Alid piety which is understood as specific religious attitudes and practices associated with loyalism to Ali, the fourth caliph in Sunnism and the first Imam in Shi'ism, and his descendants regardless of sectarian affiliation (Hodgson, 2002: 182). It describes the pre-sectarian pious practices before the sectarian identity of Sunni and Shia was institutionalized in the modern conception (before 9th century) as it is generally understood in the present day. Popularized in Southeast Asia by Feener and Formichi (2015), the concept transcends the Sunni and Shia identities. It is almost synonymous with the loving devotion to the People of the House (*ahl al-bayt*) expressed in the form of religious piety but it is not concerned with theological doctrines, obligatory rituals such as Five daily Prayers, fasting, religious alms, and the hajj, and political domains. The expression of Alid piety has become popular religious and cultural tradition in Muslim Southeast Asia (Zulkifli, 2016).

As Gus Dur suggested, to a certain extent, NU is cultural Shi'ism because of many popular NU traditions are very similar to Shia tradition. The loving

devotion the prophet and the People of the House is expressed in the form of popular prayers because it is believed to protect people from hellfire torment. The prayer reads: *li kbamsatun ufī biba bar al-waba' al-hatima, al-Mustafa wa al-Murtada wa ibnahuma wa Fatima* (I have five persons with whom I extinguish the 'heat' of crushing disease, the Prophet, Ali, Hasan, Husayn, and Fatima). Even among the Sundanese of West Java the prayer is recited for healing from illness (Maryam, 2012: 172-173).

The practice of Sufism and tarekat (Sufi order) is also close to the concept of Alid piety because Sufism which is the inner dimension of Islam tends to transcend Sunnism and Shi'ism. Both Sufism and Shi'ism are part of Islamic orthodoxy but they exist in different ways and on different levels. "The esoteric dimension of Islam, which in the Sunni climate is almost totally connected in one way or another with Sufism, colours the whole structure of Shi'ism in both its esoteric and even exoteric aspect" (Nasr, 1970: 230). In addition, most spiritual genealogies of tarekat which develop in Indonesia such as Qadiriyya, Qadiriyya-Naqshabandiyya, Samaniyyah, and Shattariyya are connected with Ali bin Abi Talib and other Shia Imams.

The annual commemoration of Ashura and Mawlid (the prophet Muhammad's birthday) are two popular religious traditions widely practiced by both Sunni and Shia. The Ashura commemoration in Jakarta or elsewhere in Indonesia are usually attended by both Sunni and Shia adherents and this creates the sense of commune among them. Even the celebration of tabut, local adaptation of Ashura ritual, in Bengkulu and Pariaman, West Sumatera, is performed by individuals free from sectarian affiliation because the ritual no longer contains Shia theological elements. The ritual has belonged to the local community and become an important means for the social harmony in the region. Another popular commemoration is mawlid with certain ritual and religious tradition. The celebration is always associated with the reading of Barzanji. The origin of this tradition was carried out by Salahuddin al-Ayyubi

who attempted to revitalize its celebration which had begun during the Fatimid Dynasty in Egypt (Kaptein 1994). The aim is to raise the spirit of jihad and unity of Islamic armies against their enemies. Al-Ayyubi then held a competition to write the life history and praise of the Prophet Muhammad and the book *Mawlid al-Barzanji*, which contains his life history in the form of prose and poetry and written by Sheikh Ja'far bin Hasan bin Abdul Karim al-Barzanji (a scholar born in Medina 1690-1766) was the winner. Since then, Al-Ayyubi has been considered the initiator of the celebration of the mawlid. The celebration together with the book *Mawlid al-Barzanji* then spread to all over the world (Mansur, 2017). Both Sunni and Shia commemorate the religious traditions together or separately in their own mosques or prayer places.

Fifth is friendship and kinship. Several prominent Muslim intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005), K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid (1940-2009), Ahmad Syafii Maarif (1935-2022), Azyumardi Azra (1955-2022), and M. Din Syamsuddin had friendship and good relationship with some famous Shia figures like Jalaluddin Rakhmat (1949-2022). Similarly, scholars of younger generation from both Islamic groups have good connections with each other. The same hold true for several kyai and important figures in Bangsri. Many of them were students of Abdul Qadir Bafaqih (1900-1993), the most important Shia figure who first spread Shi'ism in the area. In addition, people and important figures such kyai and religious teachers from both groups are relatives, both by kinship and marriage. It stated that Sunni-Shia harmony occurs not only in social and religious activities but also in kinship and marriage relations. Sunni-Shia relations do not only occur in social religious activities and social activities, but also in marital relations. In Bondowoso the marriage between Sunni and Shia couples is a common phenomenon especially among the Arab descendant community and the families have never had disputes and tensions despite the sectarian differences (Musdhalifah 2022: 144). In Bangsri, "it is not uncommon for one house to have blood ties from different religious

groups/streams. This kind of harmony is supported by the kinship system of local community” (Sulaiman, 2017: 34).

Sixth is social activity which is carried out by Sunni and Shia to provide assistances for communities regardless of their religious and sectarian affiliations. This is very important to establish integration between Sunni and Shia. Material assistance, blood donation, mass circumcision, and gotong-royong (mutual assistance) carried out either along with or apart from the commemoration of Islamic rituals will create mutual understanding between them. This may become more successful for the laity than meeting or seminar that only touches elite level (Zulkifli, 2013). In Bangsri, for instance, both communities have cultural tradition of gotong-royong in diverse aspects of social and religious life such as the building of mosque, the celebration of Islamic holy days, and the maintenance of surrounding environment (Sulaiman, 2017).

To sum up, all factors are interrelated. Whilst the first factor, inclusive theology is normative and may produce normative integration, others tend to be functional and may produce functional integration. But from a structural functionalist approach in all factors are functional in the construction and maintenance of Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia.

Conclusion

From previous discussion, the study concludes that the Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia at least comprises peaceful coexistence, accommodation, and cooperation, which occur at local and national levels. From a structural-functional perspective, this is a result of inclusive theology, the role of moderate actors, the collective ritual practice, ‘Alid piety, friendship and kinship, and social activity. These six factors are important in determining the prospects for Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia. All the six factors are interconnected. Inclusive theology, as the first factor, is normative, and it may

produce normative integration. Meanwhile, the rests tend to be functional and may elicit functional integration. However, from a structural functionalist approach, all factors are functional in constructing and maintaining Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia. There may be other important elements that can be considered to have contributed to producing sustainable Sunni-Shia integration in Indonesia, such as legal factors and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' religious moderation project that should be considered in future research on Sunni-Shia relations.

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