Aims and scope

Journal of Religion and Health is an international publication concerned with the creative partnership of psychology and religion/sprituality and the relationship between religion/spirituality and both mental and physical health. This multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary journal publishes peer-reviewed original contributions from scholars and professionals of all religious faiths. Articles may be clinical, statistical, theoretical, impressionistic, or anecdotal. Founded in 1961 by the Blanton-Peale Institute, which joins the perspectives of psychology and religion, *Journal of Religion and Health* explores the most contemporary modes of religious thought with particular emphasis on their relevance to current medical and psychological research.

Editors

Daftar Isi

ORIGINAL PAPER

The Narratives of Shia Madurese Displaced Women on Their Religious Identity and Gender Citizenship: A Study of Women and Shi'as in Indonesia

Rachmah Ida[1] · Muhammad Saud[2]

Abstract

This article explores expressions in how the local Shi'as Muslim women refugees define and interpret their religious identity and gender citizenship in post-authoritarian Indonesia. This article discusses the cases of Shias women from the Sampang Regency, East Java, Indonesia, in the aftermath of the 2012 conflict that made them internally displaced persons (IDPs, Indonesian: *pengungsi*). This study argues that religious identity and gender citizenship are constructed by these displaced Shias women concerning their belief as to what is considered 'true' in Islam, acquired from the 'Islamic traditions' of their local Islamic teacher (s). Their loyalty to a religious belief does not arise from any independent search for the 'true Islam' but rather from the doctrine of the teachers/spiritual leaders. Enforced loyalty to Shi'as in their everyday communal ritual practices has influenced the formation of these displaced women's religious identity as Shi'ias.

Keywords Shi'as women · Internally displaced persons (IDPs) · Women's narratives · Religious identity · Gender citizenship

Introduction

The phenomenon of sectarian and religious issues among displaced women is always a concern among scholars (Friedman 2018). On 8 August 2012, an anti-Shia mob set alight dozens of houses belonging to followers of Shia Islam in Karang

✉ Rachmah Ida
  Rachmah.ida@fisip.unair.ac.id

  Muhammad Saud
  Muhhammad.saud@gmail.com

1   Department of Communication, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia

2   Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Airlangga, Surabaya, Indonesia

Gayam village in the Sampang district, resulting in the deaths of two members and tens of injuries of the Shia adherents. Hundreds of people took part in the burning and destruction of Shia property in the village, including paddy fields and cattle. The Shi'as whose houses were burned were temporarily sheltered in the first school building in the village three days after the incident. Others were chased and killed by the same anti-Shia group. There were around 500 Shia in Sampang (*The Jakarta Post*, 27 August 2012). The displaced Shi'as were then given temporary shelter in the Sampang sports stadium for 2 weeks before being moved from Madura Island to public apartment units owned by the East Java provincial government in Jemundo, Sidoarjo Regency, which borders Surabaya, the capital city of East Java. At the time of publication, the 225 Shia victims of this clash still remain at these low-cost apartment units, with an uncertain future: whether they will be able to return to their home village or kept in that government's building by both the national government of Indonesia and the local government in East Java province remains to be seen.

The intra-faith conflict between the Sunni and Shia communities in Madura has been occurring for many years. The post-*reformasi* era has witnessed several immense conflicts and incidents between the Sunni and Shia on the Island. Madura is home to a majority Sunni population (more noticeably, followers of the *Ahlussunnah waljamaah*. Sampang is one of the districts on Madura Island with extremely dry weather conditions, and the inhabitants suffer from severe drought and poverty.

The 'hating Shia' conflict in Sampang in 2012 was initially triggered by the anger of an unidentified group of people and an internal family conflict of the Shi'i *kyai* (teacher of Islam) in Nankernang village. Public debates about Shi'ism continue to smoulder (see Azra 1995; Hasim 2012; Zulkifli 2013; Sofjan 2016). Following the 2012 Sampang incident, the debate surrounding the persistence of Shi'ism and sectarianism in Indonesia also remains unresolved: a dichotomy of views exists in Indonesian public and media discourse as to whether Shi`ism can be considered part of Islam. For conservative Sunni Muslim groups and the reactionary Islamic media, the Shi'i is decried as '*kafir*' (disbeliever), and Shi'ism as '*aliran sesat*' (deviant sect) or '*komunis baru*' (new communist[1]); thus, killing Shi`as is considered *halal* (permissible) and to constitute *jihad (*religiously condoned struggle*)*. The Indonesian Ulama Council (Indonesian: *MajelisUlama Indonesia*, MUI), dominated by Sunnis, certifies that Shi`sm is not Islam, although several MUI members identify as Shi`a.

Shi'a women in Sampang, like many Indonesian women living in remote parts of the archipelago, are mostly illiterate and speak little Indonesian. Many lower-class women and villagers in Indonesia remain uneducated and have minimal access to any potential economic activities in the public domains. According to OECD data from 2014, the participation rate of Indonesian women working outside the home was 53.4%, compared to men who reached 85%. The low level of women working outside the house in Indonesia is an ongoing dilemma for the nation state in attempts to increase and

---

[1] The paranoia of communism and the use of '*communist*' label in the Indonesian discourse has long been terrified construction and stigmatized, particularly during the Suharto's New Order era, and continue through present time. For more discussion on the paranoia about the resurgence of communism to a number of factor in the discourse of Indonesia (see, e.g. Anderson 1990; Heryanto 1999, 2006).

alleviate the social and economic conditions of women. Unquestionably, socio-economic conditions for women remain problematic in Indonesia.

Life experience for women in Indonesia was significantly influenced by the ideological agenda of Suharto's New Order regime, which associated women with wifehood and housewifery (e.g. Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis 1987; Sullivan 1994; Sears 1996; Suryakusuma 1996). As Robinson (2009) writes, the essential homogenizing of the New Order state ideology of gender roles throughout the archipelago has impacted on gender relations and the position of women in Indonesia. The idea of gender issues in Indonesia in the twenty-first century has been discussed widely in western and global affairs (Blackburn 2004; Nyhagen and Halsaa 2016). Moreover, the influence of ethnicity, and the associated Javanese and Islamic values, has reduced the role that women play in the domestic and public realms both in terms of power and potency (see, e.g. Brenner 1995, 1996; Hatley 1997; Sear 1996; Bennett 2005). Madurese women are a section of women who live in poverty, with strong Islamic and traditional ethnic values that determines their lack of power and unchallenged status in society. The conditions of the displaced Shi`as women of Madura reflect the general situation for uneducated and powerless village women.

Significance of the Study

This study discusses the significance of religious identity among the displaced female Shias victims of the 2012 Sampang conflict concerning 'Islam', 'Shia', and 'internally displaced persons' (IDPs, Indonesian: *pengungsi*). These women are still coming to terms with what happened in the incident, and question what motivated their Sunni neighbours and relatives to commit hate crimes against the Shia. In their interviews, they talk about their perceptions of Islam, the Sunni, the Shia, and their citizenship as displaced women.

This study also explores how these women converted from Sunni to Shia Islam, and their present beliefs concerning what is considered 'true' Islam. Based on interviews conducted by the author with a group of young and mature female Shia *pengungsi* at the Jemundo government apartments, this study argues that religious identity (and citizenship) is constructed by these women concerning their beliefs about what is considered 'truth' and 'true' about Islam, based on the 'Islamic traditions' of their local *kyai* or *ustadz* (Islamic teacher). Their devotion to a religious belief does not come from any personal experience of searching for the 'true Islam', but rather from the doctrine of the *kyais*. Repeated and enforced loyalty to Shi`ism in their everyday communal ritual practices, such as regular dawn prayer and Thursday night congregation, has influenced the formation of these displaced women's religious identity as Shi`as.

Data Procedure

The method of this study is qualitative in nature and data collected through in-depth interviews and group discussions with young, middle-aged, and elderly displaced Shi`as women. The research tool 'interview guide' was prepared through

intensive literature and secondary data. The study was conducted in Madura 'Sampang Regency' East Java, Indonesia, and the informants of the study were women who belonged to the 'Shia community'. As such, women's religious voice should be heard and recognized as the existence in public life (Zarkov 2015). In this study, we examined the concept of citizenship interpreted and narrated by Shi`as women IDPs from Sampang by looking at how they negotiate their religious identity and their efforts for survival in daily post-conflict life, based far away from their land and cultural place of origins. The data were compiled and analysed through theoretical and practical lenses, whereas the results were analysed though thematic analysis, narrations and descriptive method.

Becoming Internally Displaced Community

Indonesian Islam is predominately Sunni, with Shi`ism virtually non-existent. There are two central Sunni Muslim organizations, the *Muhammadiyah* and the *NahdatulUlama*. These two institutions have guided and influenced Indonesian Muslims since the beginning of the nineteenth century. *Muhammadiyah*, founded in Yogyakarta, Central Java in 1912, is identified as a modernist or reformist, with more than twenty million followers (see Doorn-Harder 2006; Nakamura 2012).

Madura Island has a history of Islamic conservatism. The majority of Muslims in Madura identify with the Sunni *Ahlussunnah Waljamaah* (English: 'Adherents of the Sunnah and the community'). Shia Muslims are regarded with suspicion and rejected by some Sunnis on the island. The number of Shi`as in Madura, and Indonesia overall, is unknown.[2] This is due to fears of reprisal and the fact that the media in the country underreports incidents targeting the Shia in Indonesia. However, several villages in Madura openly identify as Shia settlements, including Sampang.

There were several different accounts of the Sampang 2012 Sunni-Shia conflict in circulation within the public discourse. According to a report issued by the *Aliansi Nasional Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (ANBTI), an NGO working on human rights issues in Indonesia, the conflict in Sampang was triggered by the anger of an anti-Shia group, who responded to the actions of a group of Shi`as students who were returning to their *pesantren* in Bangil.[3] These students reported to the local police that a group of Sunnis had prevented them from returning to the *pesantren*. On hearing of the incident, the anti-Shia group, from the Bluuran village in Karang Penang

---

[2] Bruinessen maintains that the Iran revolution in 1979 attracted young Indonesian Muslim scholars at that time and the movement of self-conversion to Shi`ism was started, which the number of Shi`as adherents reached tens of thousands by the end the nineteenthCentury (Bruinessen 2002: p. 11).

[3] The *pesantren* (boarding school) in the Bangil sub-district of Pasuruan, also known as the '*Kota Santri*' (religious city), which is identified as a Shia *pesantren*, was attacked and burned by an anti-Shia group in 2007. The group, called '*PemudaAhlussunahBangil*' (SunniBangil Youth) consisted of a hundred followers, who on 20 April 2007 gathered in the town square of Bangil after Friday prayer, and marched to the local Attorney General's office in Bangil to ban Shia as a sect, putting up banners con-

sub-regent (*Kecamatan*), came to Karang Gayam village in the Omben sub-regent and set it on fire (*The Jakarta Post*, 27 August 2012).

A second account of the conflict was reported by the Setara Institute, a human rights watchdog based in Jakarta, which claimed that the Sampang incident was 'a systematic attack', planned by the anti-Shia group a long time before the blaze. In addition, the Maarif Institute, an organization of young Muslim intellectuals founded by Achmad Syafii Maarif former chairman of Muhammadiyah organization, stated that the Sampang tragedy was not an intra-religious clash, but rather a criminal act against a minority group of a different faith. Meanwhile, the national police officer confirmed that the incident was incited by fighting between two brothers[4]:Tajul Muluk, the Shi`as *kyai/ustadz* in Karang Gayam, and Roisul Hukama, a former Shi`as who converted to Sunni Islam (Saragih 2012). Later, Tajul Muluk was sentenced by Sampang District Court in July 2012 and declared guilty of blaspheming Islam. According to *The Jakarta Post* (27 August 2012), Tajul Muluk, who runs a Shia *pesantren* in Sampang, was also accused of 'preaching to his followers that the Koran was not the original scripture and that the true version of the Holy Book would only be revealed to Imam Mahdi'. In a different report, *Kontras* (the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence), confirmed that the clash between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Sampang was not triggered by faith, but instead arose from competition between local elites. According to Kontras's investigation, the clash between these two communities resulted from competition between local personalities, namely that Sunni leaders felt intimidated by Tajul Muluk (*The Jakarta Post*, 18 June 2013).

Following the incident, the Indonesian Ulama Council (Indonesian: *Majelis-Ulama Indonesia*, MUI)'s East Java chapter issued a *fatwa* (No. 01/SKF-MUI/JTM/I/2012, dated 12 January 2012) stating that Shi'ism is a sect (*ajaran sesat*). In this case, the *fatwa* seems to be used as a justification for the allegation of those Shi`as in Sampang. The *fatwa* has been used as a basis for an allegation of blasphemy for Tajul Muluk and his Shia followers. Crouch (2012, 2013) has examined how the role of Indonesian Ulama`s fatwa has played significant influences in the legal system of Indonesia post-reformation era, particularly in the context of inter-religious conflicts and for the deviant of religious believers convicted on a blasphemy charge. In response to this *fatwa*, the East Java governor issued a policy

---

Footnote 3 (continued)

demning Shia Islam. This action was a response to the spreading of Shia Islam in Bangil and 'for its outrageous teachings and practices of contractual marriages', which were significant cases in Bangil at the time.

[4] According to the police officer, the tragedy of Sampang in 2012 was not a Sunni-Shia clash, but rather a family clash between TajulMuluk and RoisulHukama, who fought over a woman. Tajul and Roisul are both sons of KyaiMakmun, a former Shi'ite in Sampang who declared himself Shiite in the early 1980 s when he admired Khomeini of Iran. Tajul and Roisul were both raised as Shi'ites, taught by their father since primary school. It was rumoured that Roisulwas heart-broken after failing to marry a female *santri* (boarding school student) of *Misbahul Huda*, a Shia *pesantren* run by his brother, Tajul. Hurt by the rejection, Roisul declared himself no longer Shi'ite, claiming that he had converted to Sunni Islam. He then campaigned against Shia as an*aliransesat* (sect), while Tajul continued to be Shi'ite. Tajul was sentenced to five years by the court in 2012. (http://www.bbc.co.uk/indonesia/laporan_khusus/2013/08/130731_lapsus_syiah_sidoarjo_kilasbalik.shtml.

[no.55/2012] that regulates the supervision of religious activities and surveillance of religious sects in East Java. The involvement of the state and local government in the Sunni-Shia conflict, together with major religious groups such as *Nahdatul Ulama*, has significantly shaped the context of this intra-faith conflict (and associated collective violence). This response by local government state and major religious group (s) to the conflict and their stance vis-à-vis Shi`as communities seems to have become a model for the political approach to sectarianism and intra-faith conflict relationships in Indonesia (Formichi 2014; Schafer 2015). This appears to reflect Van Dijk's arguments that communal violence in Indonesia, particularly religious clashes, often involve military and social group, including political parties or social organizations that are closely affiliated with religious identities (Islam, for instance) and social class (Dijk 2002).

In July 2013, the East Java provincial government promised to provide restoration funds and rebuild the infrastructure destroyed in the 2012 incident. Although they committed approximately one trillion rupiahs (US$10,000,000), some *pengungsi* (IDPs) still wait to be resettled. The problem of people displaced and/or victimized by religious conflict has become a crucial political issue for both the local government of the East Java province and the Indonesian government in Jakarta. According to *Kontras*, the greatest problem for returning Sampang *pengungsi* has, in fact, been the inflexibility of the local (Sampang) government, rather than the Sunni majority in Sampang (*The Jakarta Post*, 18 June 2013).

Negotiating Life Post-Conflict

This section discusses the narratives of the Madurese displaced Shi`as women, survivors of communal violence in Sampang, intending to provide insight into their everyday experiences in negotiating survival, marginalization, and exclusion. In a group discussion with young, middle-aged and elderly displaced Shi`as women, the participants described their ordinary attempts to negotiate a hostile state, poverty, uncertain future, communal politics and public spaces given their religious and social identity as 'Muslim', 'Shia' and '*pengungsi'*. The complexity of their identity and agency emerges from their narratives, as does the nature of their negotiations, which challenge the rigidity of dominant discourses on issues of Muslim identity and citizenship in post-reformation Indonesia. Sidel (2008) notes, 'If under a centralized, closed, authoritarian regime claims of representation has been imposed and enforced from above, now under conditions of political openness and competition the hierarchies and boundaries of religious authority faced unprecedented uncertainties' (p. 31). These uncertainties generate anxiety for the displaced victims of intra-faith violence, in Madura and elsewhere in Indonesia, and call into question the safety of their religious identity in the future.

Initially, we talked about daily activities in their temporary accommodation, covering the 2 years since their resettlement from their village in Sampang. Therefore, none of the women was willing to start talking before NyaiT ajul started the conversation. Nyai Tajul said that life after the 2012 conflict had been hard for the

pengungsi (IDPs) in these low-cost government apartments. The *pengungsi*, however, remain composed, practising what they referred to as '*sabar*' (perseverance).

> Each person and our families here are persevering with our condition. We've been living in this unit for almost two years without any certainty from the government as to whether we can return home to the village or not…We still have a rice field, even smaller, and families left in the village, but we have to be patient in this separation […] We don't have our rights, our freedom has dispersed. We're looking to the government. Where's the government in our times of worry?

Nyai Tajul's narrative described how these displaced Shi'as women and other IDPs in the apartment block experienced impoverishment and marginalisation *vis-a-vis* community life. They continue to be unheard, unrecognized and unacknowledged by the Indonesian national government in Jakarta and the local government in Sampang. These women have come to acknowledge, from both the media and the NGOs that visit them, that the Sampang government has become a state institution, perpetuating 'violence' to the local Shia communities through expelling them from the area. Despite the rapid modernization and growth of political and religious pluralism, media has a diverse role in contemporary women's issues (Larsson 2016).

As IDPs (*pengungsi*), and represented by Nyai Tajul as the 'Shia women's leader,' these Shia women questioned where they should go to seek justice and protection. Due to religious discrimination and threats, women are dealt with injustice and insecurity (Walker and Galvin 2018). Women were not convinced that the local government of Sampang was an institution that provided advice and protection. Indeed, they suspected it of actually committing evil towards its citizens, as the Shi'as IDPs had heard of the Sampang local authorities stating in the local media that it could not allow them to return to their hometown unless they converted to Sunni Islam. As Hedman's (2008) study on Indonesian displaced persons noted, IDPs, whether as a result of ethnic or religious violence, notably struggle to fight for their status of citizenship and face hardship as they are expelled or excluded from their local place and community. Moreover, it appeared that local and national government involvement in the violence reflected a lack of responsiveness, if not open hostility, towards the affected Sampang Shia communities. Their increased marginalization is paralleled by the consolidation of mainstream conservative Sunni ideology, foregrounded by the issue of citizenship for the Shia communities in Indonesia.

The daily life of these victims of Sunni-Shia violence is a complex experience of survival, as IDPs, women, and members of families and the community in the temporary settlement. These women are seeking accountability, justice, and protection, and continue to negotiate their survival, marginalization and exclusion in a post-conflict situation by adapting to their uncertain situation and accepting their fate (described, by them, as destiny). Being displaced is an overwhelming situation for them, especially given their uncertain future. One woman, Marti, tries to express her feelings as a *pengungsi*:

I am worried about my future destiny. Why? Because I have sisters and brothers to look after and send to a regular school, either a *Pondok* (Islamic boarding school) or a *madrasah* (Islamic secondary school),[5] not like a temporary school in this place [refugee apartment, red] […], I am wondering whom I should ask for protection and the responsibility of providing me with a job and schooling for my siblings. […] If I were still living in the village, I could work in my parent's field, and I sell anything from the field to get money for my siblings' school fees. Although I have just got a job peeling out coconut shells from people in the market nearby, my siblings cannot go far from this place to find a regular school […] I, like many other displaced persons here, feel the same: where is the care of the government for us? The government is the institution that should think of the children's education in this place. We're all waiting for the government's willingness to care for us.

Shia IDPs feel desperation about government policies. However, they are unable to take any action except to surrender to the decisions made by the political authorities and local Sampang elites. Daniel and Knudsen (1995) explain how the displaced person or refugee face such situations: 'The set of events that triggers a person's decision to become a refugee is the radical disjunction between this person's familiar *way-of-being* in the world and a new reality of the sociopolitical circumstances that not only threatens that way-of-being but also forces one to *see* the world differently' (Daniel and Knudsen 1995, p. 1). This is how the situation in Sampang areas where the Shia IDPs felt discrimination from the government policies.

The case of intra-faith conflict needs to be carefully discussed and resolved. The former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has failed to provide any consistent and definite resolution for internally displaced persons (IDPs), except by giving a monthly allowance of 750,000 rupiahs (US$75) to every family to cover food and other expenses, and a unit to stay in. The intra-faith conflict has become an ongoing task for the Indonesian government. Particularly under Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, it tended to be vague concerning the Shia-Sunni conflict in Sampang, and this attitude reflects its political ambiguity. On the one hand, the government appears to support the position of the Sunni majority in opposing the Shia by delaying to issue any policy or regulation to protect the Shi`as IDPs.

On the other hand, it seems open to accepting the Shi`as and Shi'a Islam in Indonesia to reassure the demands of pluralist movements in the country. This ambiguity displayed by the government because of finding any resolution for intra/interfaith conflict has long been problematic, given the political circumstances in Indonesia. Hedman (2008) considers this a typical political attitude of the Indonesian authorities in responding to religious conflict in the country, for instance, interfaith clashes in Poso, Central Sulawesi, that have never been entirely resolved.

---

[5] It is common for Madurese Muslim families to send their children for schooling to a *pondokpesantren* (an Islamic boarding school) and/or *madrasah* (Islamic school) rather than to government or private local schools. Many teenagers and young people in Madura have left their villages to go to such schools in Java or as far as Arab countries to study Islam and the Qur'an. For many Madurese families, studying Islam and the Qur'an is more important than other studies (i.e. acquiring secular knowledge). Therefore, children as young as 7 (first year of primary school) are sent away from Madura Island to a *pondokpesantren*.

The Shia displaced women are used to speaking for formal identity and citizenship. Even they call the term '*rakyat*' (people) to represent themselves as citizens of both Indonesia and the Sampang District. Thus, this concept of citizenship could be found when they talked about fate (*nasib*) or dignity, justice (*keadilan*), future (*masa depan*) and the responsibility (*tanggungjawab*) of the state institutions towards them. Therefore, the studies from Hedman (2008):5 argues that in the discourse of displaced persons, the question of recognition has become 'increasingly embedded within the dominant national discourse (state religion, national culture) and state practices'.

These women *pengungsi* experience a sense of neglect and exclusion when seeking a resolution to their problems in their post-conflictual situation. Some of them, especially the young women and teenagers, have started, for their own survival, to live more 'normal' lives in the temporary settlement. Therefore, they have few options to just to pass the time, some seek jobs as coconut shell peelers, and while the female teenagers go to a Pondok pesantren in YAPI (one of the leading Shia boarding schools in Bangil, about an hour's drive from the Jemundo settlement in Sidoarjo). These women feel uncertain about their future. Their situation and experience have required them to make various strategic adjustments to cope with their profound uncertainties about life, culture, and trust between the generations. 'When a community has little to put its trust in the present and the future, an essentialized (but lost) "culture" is summoned to compensate for the absence of a trust-driven cultural life' (Daniel and Knudsen 1995, p. 7).

While these women find themselves economically and socially vulnerable, with their male family members mostly incapacitated, they at the same time need to negotiate compensation from authorities, medical aid, and work their way through the various mechanisms of law and order to safeguard their property and family. As a consequence, they have to abandon the traditional practice of exclusion to work outside the house (as fish-cleaners or coconut shell peelers in the local market) and negotiate public spaces and institutions by leaving the settlement to study.

In the current Islamic and patriarchal environment, Madurese women are expected to assume domestic responsibilities, rather than earn money and contribute towards the family income. Some unmarried Madurese women and widows, or those from poor families, are forced to work outside the house to support the family, mainly in the informal sectors, such as trading in the traditional market or, occasionally, as domestic workers. Besides, having to confront and negotiate with the local security personnel (a SWATT-like police organization, known as *Brimob*) stationed in their apartment, and the East Java government civil personnel that authorized the unit, there is another compelling reason for women to leave the house, while male refugees remain in their units.

It is not necessarily the case that these Shia Madurese women, secluded and quiet in their patriarchal Muslim Madurese tradition, never actually went outside their homes before the conflict. Some of them worked outside the home, frequented the market, and public institutions; women left their homes to carry out tasks for their menfolk and families without male protection or company. For the elderly Shia women, the most worrying situation is the uncertain governmental policy towards IDPs. The elderly women when the researchers spoke with were concerned about

whether they would be returning to their village in Madura, or whether they would be living permanently in the government apartments. One of the elderly, Sunah (age 60) tries to describe her feelings:

> I am worried whether we [*pengungsi*] will have to pay for this unit or whether it will be given to us outright by the government. If I could choose, I'd rather go back to our village. I still have a vegetable field from my parents to look after. Before the conflict, I used to sell chilies, tomatoes, and even tobacco leaves grown from our field. Here I do nothing, except talking to neighbours or reciting the Qur'an. […] I follow Shia because of *Ustadz* [Muslim teacher/ preacher] Tajul Muluk, who is Shia. I would be happy if our families in the village could receive us back home. We left our belongings in the village, and we have nothing here, except mattresses and (small gas) burners to cook our meals. I am sad actually, but cannot do anything here. Where can we ask about our future?

As survivors of religious violence, these Shia women remain voiceless and silent about their future. Like several other Muslim women, they seem unable to negotiate with determination in their search for justice, compensation, and the survival and livelihood of their families and community in their temporary settlement (Rajan et al. 2013). There is a hope that women from this marginalised community are thus continually struggling to be recognized by the state institutions. Predominantly poor and illiterate, the village women are often silent, even in hard times during or following inter/intra-faith conflict, and this weakens their position when bargaining for state justice and accountability.

Being Shi'a: The Politics of Difference

The researchers spoke to a woman who converted from Sunnism to Shi`ism in the mid-2000s, some between 2004 and 2006, while others only began their transition in 2008. These women were aware of three different forms of conversion. Some were introduced to Shi'a Islam by their parents who had been taught by Kyai Tajul Muluk and his father. Others converted to Shi'i because of marriage; many women in Indonesia follow their husband's belief and religion. Finally, some converted because their parents sent them to study in the *pesantren* of Kyai Tajul Muluk. This latter group had also been recommended by Kyai Tajul to continue their studies in the YAPI *Pondok pesantren* (an Islamic boarding school with a strong affiliation to Qum Shia in Iran) in Bangil, where Kyai Tajul graduated before continuing his studies at a university in Saudi Arabia.

Nyai Tajul, a wife of the Tajul, mentioned that she was introduced to Shi'ism when she was married to Tajul; in her hometown, Malang District, her family remains Sunni. Nyai Tajul also told us that Kyai Tajul's mother, who also lives in the apartment unit, continues to adhere to Sunni Islam, remaining consistent in her Sunni beliefs even though her husband was the first *kyai/ustadz* in the village, and introduced Shi`a Islam to the Muslim villagers. The researcher met the mother and

spoke to her briefly through an interpreter, as she cannot talk to Indonesian or Javanese, and speaks Madurese with a strong local accent:

> I didn't know when my husband got the picture of Khomeini [Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of Iran's revolution in 1979, red] from his friend, who just came back after working from Arab (Middle East). It was in the 1980s, I reckon … I couldn't remember exactly. His friend recounted that Khomeini won the fight for Islam in Iran and so on … I couldn't remember what he said. Since then, my husband appeared very interested in the story of Khomeini from his friend. He put up the picture of Khomeini on the wall and gave another view to our children: Muluk, Roisul, and Ikhil. I didn't know that Khomeini was Shia. […] During his life, my husband taught what he believed was the right Islam in his masjid (small mosque) and pesantren. He said Khomeini showed the 'true Islam' that we had to believe in the Prophet Muhammad's family that is Imam Ali,[6] who had been selected by the Prophet as his forerunner… I didn't know if that was considered as Shia.

> […] Why I stick to Sunni because I don't see any difference between Sunni and Shia, though I know the way my husband prayed and his followers pray was quite different from Sunni. I know the Shi`as pray without crossing arms on chest (locally termed 'sedekap'), but I don't, and no problem, we're still Muslim, because we perform prayer. I do my praying merely to gain the blessing of Allah, not for humans. […] I was living with my son, Roisul,[7] before the conflict, but he expelled me from his home when he entered into conflict with his brother.

Tajul's mother holds the view regarding the refugees and her Shi`a sons that the true values of Islam are perceived differently by the individual according to his/her knowledge of Islam. She has consistently maintained her Sunni identity, as she does not see the difference between Sunni and Shia. Meanwhile, her husband followed Shi`a Islam because he admired Khomeini's movement in the Iranian revolution. Her husband then continued his search for Shi`a Islam at YAPI *pesantren* and sent his sons, Roisul and Tajul, there to deepen their studies on Shi'a Islam. Coming back from YAPI in the mid-1980s, her husband continued to teach Shi`a ideology to his *Jamaah* (members) in his *masjid*.

Maryam (age 15) and Siti (age 10) are both students of Shi'a Islam in the YAPI *pesantren*. Maryam is from the village of Karang Gayam, and Siti is from Bluuran, a neighbouring village, in the Omben sub-district of Sampang. These two girls live with Shia families in the temporary apartment unit, far away from their parents and siblings, who are Sunni and remained in the village. These girls had not seen their

---

[6] Ali ibn Abi Thalib, Muhammad's cousin and later became his son-in-law, and considered by the Sunni as one of the Prophet's companions. Ali is received more admired and very well-liked by majorly Shia adherents compared to other three caliphs of Muhammad's companions like Abu Bakr, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, and Uthman ibn Affan.

[7] Roisul is Kyai's Tajul younger brother who was Shi'i, then converted to Sunni because of the influence of the elite Sunni *kyais* in his area.

families for 3 years. They were sent by their parent to study Islam at Kyai Tajul's small *pesantren* in KarangGayam, without being aware of the time that the *pesantren* was identified as Shia. Maryam was 11 years old; she began her studies there and soon became used to studying Islam from a Shia perspective and engaging with Shia religious practices. She converted from Sunni to Shia Islam without any self-declaration of her religious identity.

> My parents sent me to Kyai Tajul Muluk's pesantren before I reached the age of 12. It was in 2006 when I studied with the Kyai, then I knew about Shia, and I've been Shi'a since… When I was 13 years old, Kyai sent me to YAPI Pondok pesantren, and I am still studying there now. […] My parents and my family are Sunni. I was Sunni when my parents sent me to Kyai Tajul Muluk. My parents didn't know the difference between Sunni and Shia. For them, studying at the Pondok[8] was more important than not going to school. My parents later found out that the pesantren is identified as Shia and they knew that I am Shi'i after the first Sunni-Shia conflict there in 2008 and the latest in 2012. They actually have no problem with my being Shi'i, but only that 'those Sunni' (Sunni hardliner mobs who set fire to the village) do not allow me to come home to see my parents. […] Being a Shi`a, I feel good. I know what is true and wrong in Islam. Shi'as believe that Imam Ali is the right imam after Rosul (Prophet Muhammad) because he was chosen by Allah through his father-in-law, the Prophet. As a Shi`a, and I know other Shi'as, we do not deny the existence of Imam Abu Bakr (first caliph) and the other three caliphates of the Prophet's companions. Abu Bakr was chosen by humans, not by Allah and the Prophet, so we should believe in the Prophet's family rather than in personal choice. This is what the people [her refers here to the Sunni] wrongly think of Shia (Maryam, age 15).

> I am Shi'a because my teacher Kyai Tajul Muluk is Shia. I was studying at another pesantren before I was moved by my parents to Kyai Tajul. I was 8 years old when I was sent to Kyai Tajul's. I enjoyed studying (in the new school) because my teacher in my old pesantren was not good enough…Now, I am studying in a madrasah (Islamic government school) near this place. […] I don't have parents, I've been separated from my parents since the conflict (in 2012) because I was a Mondok (boarder) at Kyai Tajul's place. So, when everyone was moved out after them [Sunni mobs] burned houses in the village, I had to move out of the village. I just followed the people at the time. I live with other families in this place. I haven't seen my parents since the conflict (Siti, age 10)

Unlike Maryam, who has come to understand the differences between Sunni and Shia Islam, Siti does not seem confident about her religious identity. She became

---

[8] *Pondok* means *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) is for many Madurese Muslim families perceive as 'school'. The Madurese perceive that sending their children to *pondok/pesantren* are more important than send them to common (secular) school(s).

a Shi'a not because of any conscious decision to convert, but because she has only known Shia Islam as a consequence of Sunni village/community condemnation of Kyai Tajul. Siti did not understand the distinction made by Shia women (and Kyai Tajul) between what they call 'the true Islam' (Shia) and 'wrong Islam' (Sunni). Siti did not have the opportunity to declare her religious identity when studying at Kyai Tajul's *pesantren* before the conflict. In August 2012, Siti recognized her identity as Shia when she became a displaced person. Although Siti is young to be involved in such orthodox or ideological considerations of Sunni and/or Shia values, she is an example of how a Madurese woman, at a young age, is forced by the power of culture to be a devout Muslim, seeing Islam, in terms of values and as the way of life, as more important than the acquisition of 'secular' knowledge provided in public or private schools. For many Madurese children, mastering the recitation of the Qur'an is more important than displaying ability for secular/common subjects such as maths or science. Children who can blindly recite all the Quranic (holy) verses will be the pride of their parents in their local neighbourhood or community.

The case of Maryam and Siti is very different from those of the middle-aged women in the refugee apartments. The researchers spoke to a group after they performed *sholat maghrib* (evening prayer) in one unit. The six middle-aged women were silent and stared to spoke to them, looking at each other and not responding to our attempts to begin a conversation. We thought that maybe they did not speak Indonesian or Javanese, and therefore did not know how to start talking. We then asked our interpreter to introduce us to these women. After an introduction in Madurese, one woman began to speak in very limited Indonesian, followed by the others. They actually understood a little Indonesian but found it difficult to talk. In their own words, these elderly women confessed that they became Shi'a when they started attending Kyai Tajul Muluk's mosque as members (*Jamaah*) in around 2006. These women and their families then learned about Shi'i Islam from the Kyai. The Kyai's teachings concerning whose Imam(s) in Islam they have to follow then influenced them as Muslims to convert. These elderly women consider Shi'ism as the right choice because it follows the family of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). These women do not see a significant difference between Sunni and Shia Islam. According to them, they are both Islam, differing only slightly in their *imam*(s) and the teachings of these *imam* (s).

> I've persisted in being a Shi`a because I've been taught the right Islam. I believe in the Prophet's family because they are selected by Allah and not by people. I don't want to convert to Sunni [Islam] as people in Sampang ask us to. I was a Muslim. I am a Muslim. Why should I convert again? I have stated the '*Shahadat*' (the sentences stated to convert into Muslim) every day. (Mar'ah, age 52)

> Shia is the right religion. I've been taught Shia by Kyai Tajul, and I follow him. His teaching is right. We should follow the Prophet Muhammad's family. We take Imam Ali as the true caliph, not Abu Bakar […] As Shi'a, I don't see things differently. I am still Muslim. (Munah, 52).

I've never thought that Sunni and Shia were different, but the people (Sunnis) in our village see us as different. They see us as '*kafir*' (disbeliever) and '*haram*' (prohibited). If we brought rice to them, they would throw it away, and if the rice was picked by the chooks, they said the chooks had to be killed because the chooks picked our '*haram*' rice. Any meal given by Shia families was *haram*. They (the Sunnis) don't want to perform *sholat jamaah* (communal praying) with Shi`as. Even if Shi'as came to visit their house, the Sunnis would clean the place where we sat.[9] … We are patient with their treatment. That's why we are Shi'a, because we are patient, although they (the Sunnis) don't like us.

Culture and religion are relatively difficult to distinguish from a sociological perspective (Contractor 2012:57). The two terms overlap and influence social constructs. The different perceptions of Sunni and Shia among the conflicting parties in Sampang are caused by the overlap in perception between culture (tradition, practice) and 'authentic' religious containment. It is this perception of different practices, traditions, and versions of Islamic culture that have created the gap between the Sunni and Shia communities here. Moreover, politics among the *kyais* in Sampang have influenced attitudes in those impoverished communities, especially in respect to the role played by certain Sunni *kyais* in provoking the attacks on the Shia`s *kyai* and his followers, enflaming the Sunni-Shia conflict in the village in Sampang.

Muslims in Indonesia, these women rarely become adherents of Shia or Sunni Islam out of self-determination. Moreover, it is important to note that the local Islamic teacher (*kyai* or *ustadz*) in rural Indonesia, particularly on Madura Island, where Muslims are the majority, can play a very influential role in determining the religious identity of the people. Thus, Shia women in Sampang follow what the *kyai* or the *ustadz* understands to be their religious identity. These Shia`s IDPs (*pengungsi*) reject the conditions imposed by the Sampang local authorities and the group of conservative Sunni *kyais* and *ustadzs* who urge them to convert to Sunni upon their return home. They want to return home without any conditions of the coerced conversion. The reintegration of displaced people into post-conflict communities seems to be crucial to the continuing stability in the post-conflict area. Duncan (2008) states that the problems and challenges of displacement do not automatically end once people have gone home or move out of the refugee camps. Instead, he says (2008, 230), 'The failure to fully reintegrate the formerly displaced into post-conflict communities can sow the seeds for future violence as perceived wrongs and injustices mount and rekindle old animosities or create new once (not necessarily based on religious differences)'. This description could apply to the current situation in Sampang.

---

[9] Robert R. Jay (1963) wrote about a conflict in a Javanese village in the 1950 s. Jay saw Javanese villagers with different beliefs, between syncretism and Muslim orthodox, showing controversy attitudes. The villagers from syncretism neighbourhoods were reluctant to pass along the roads through orthodox neighbourhoods, and vice versa. Dijk (2002) argues that, in local community conflict situations in Indonesia, "a sphere is delineated into which outsiders are not allowed to intrude" (p. 289).

Such women are an exception in getting involved in political talk of this kind, which for many village women would be considered uncommon in cultural life in the village, and Indonesia at large. However, Nyai Tajul Muluk, as the 'leader' of the displaced Shia women, is exceptional in this respect. She not only fights strongly for her Shi'ite identity, but she has also attempted to speak out and tell outsider (s) that the Sunni elites (the *kyais*) have an unspoken political conspiracy against the followers of Shi`ism, and more evidently, are competing with her husband, Kyai Tajul, to gain more influence with the local Muslim communities in the area.

According to the leaders of the Shia displaced community (Tajul's older brother Ikhil, Nyai Tajul, and several young Shia activists living in the temporary settlement), the Sunni elites of Sampang district, in a drive to obscure their political and economic interests, had campaigned to the public in Sampang and beyond that Muslims who were not followers of Sunni Islam should be classified as not belonging to the true Islamic community, both at a local and national level and could even be regarded as *kafir* (unbelievers) or apostates. The conversation with Nyai Tajul Muluk and some Shia displaced women indicates that village women could speak up about the political issues once their existence as citizens is acknowledged.

Conclusion

The Sampang Shi`a displaced women have doubly reinterpreted and contesting their religious identity in the contemporary politics of Indonesia. As IDPs, they continue to not have a voice, and they, along with the challenges to their religious identity, are not recognized by the government institutions. Although these women have attempted to challenge marginalisation by seeking to find work and accessing the market and public spaces to find medication for their children and parents, their efforts are perceived as merely assuming responsibility for their menfolk, who have been incapacitated by the post-conflictual circumstances. Some of these Shia displaced women have challenged the patriarchal culture by choosing their own faith and identity, although they are not always sure about their choice. Some of these women converted to Shi`ism not as a result of parental wishes, as would be the case in a traditional Muslim community, but because of the influence of the *kyai* or *ustadz*, and the *pesantren* of thought they were exposed to during the formation of their religious identity. Shi`ism, for them, is ubiquitous, and thus, their faith becomes a source of strength and doctrinal support that helps them face their post-conflictual struggles.

Practical Implications

The study reflects the diverse voices of the Shia women who inform the stories, indicating not only the importance of religious identity for these women but also their feelings about citizenship in contemporary Indonesian democracy. These women have been seeking justice and acknowledgment, and for both local and national government to take responsibility for their situation. However, they have not found a clear answer, and thus, their future remains uncertain. These women have not only

experienced marginalisation by the government but complete neglect of their existence and 'destiny' as citizens of their country.

The current study focused the women and their religious identity discourse in the Indonesian community. The governmental policy at the micro- and macro-level should be progressive to handle women's religious cases. The research presented here also addressed the strengths of women' capabilities, and their religious rights need to specify and elaborated.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest regarding this study.

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee.

References

Anderson, B. (1990). *Language and power*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
Azra, A. (1995). Syiah di Indonesia: antara mitos dan realitas. *Jurnal Ullumul Quran, VI*(4), 20–25.
Bennett, L. R. (2005). *Women, Islam, and modernity: Single women, sexuality and reproductive health in contemporary Indonesia*. London: Routledge Curzon.
Blackburn, S. (2004). *Women and the State in Modern Indonesia*. London: Cambridge University Press.
Brenner, S A. (1995). Why women rule the roost:rethinking Javanese ideologies of gender and self-control. In: A. Ong & M. G. Peletz (Eds.), *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Politics in Southeast Asia* (pp. 19–50). Berkeley: University of California Press.
Brenner, S. A. (1996). Reconstructing self and society: Javanese muslim women and 'the veil'. *American Ethnologist, 23*(4), 673–697.
Bruinessen, M. V. (2002). Genealogies of islamic radicalism in post-Suharto Indonesia. *South East Asia Research., 10*(2), 1–28.
Contractor, S. (2012). *Muslim women in Britain: De-mystifying the Muslimah*. Oxon: Routledge.
Crouch, M. (2012). *Indonesia's blasphemy law: bleak outlook for minority religions. Asia Pacific Bulettin. No. 146*. East-West Centre: Washington DC.
Crouch, M. (2013). *Law and religion in Indonesia: Conflic and the Courts in West Java*. London: Routledge.
Daniel, E. V., & Knudsen, J. C. (Eds.). (1995). *Introduction. Mistrusting Refugees* (pp. 1–12). California: University of California Press.
Dijk, K. V. (2002). The good, the Bad and the ugly explaining the unexplainable: amuk massa in Indonesia. In F. Colombijn & J. T. Lindbald (Eds.), *Roots of violence in Indonesia* (pp. 277–298). Leiden: KITLV Press.
Doorn-Harder, P. (2006). *Women shaping Islam: Reading the Qur'an in Indonesia*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Duncan, C. R. (2008). Where do we go from here? The politics of ending displacement in post-conflict North Maluku. In E.-L. E. Hedman (Ed.), *Conflict, violence, and displacement in Indonesia* (pp. 207–230). Cornell Southeast Asia Program: Ithaca.

Formichi, C. (2014). Violence, sectarianism, and the politics of religion: articulation of anti-Shi'a discourse in Indonesia, *Indonesia*. No. 98, pp. 1–27

Friedman, S. S. (2018). Cosmopolitanism, religion, diaspora: Kwame Anthony appiah and contemporary muslim women's writing. *New Literary History, 49*(2), 199–225.

Hasim, M. (2012). Syiah: Sejarah Timbul dan Perkembangannya di Indonesia (Shia: Its Histroy and Development in Indonesia). *Jurnal Analisa, 19*(2), 147–158.

Hatley, B. (1997). Nation, 'tradition' and constructions of the feminine in Indonesian national literature. In W. Schiller & B. J. Martin-Schiller (Eds.), *Imagining Indonesia: Cultural politics and national identity* (pp. 90–120). Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies.

Hedman, E. E. (2008). Introduction: dynamics of displacement in Indonesia. In E. E. Hedman (Ed.), *Conflict, violence, and displacement in Indonesia* (pp. 3–28). New Cornell Southeast Asia Program: Ithaca.

Heryanto, A. (1999). Where communism never dies: violence, trauma, and narration in the last cold war capitalist authoritarian state. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 2*(2), 147–177.

Heryanto, A. (2006). *State terrorism and political identity in Indonesia: fatally belonging*. London: Routledge.

Jay, R. R. (1963). *Religion and Politics in Rural Central Java*. New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies (Cultural Report Series 12).

Larsson, G. (2016). *Muslims and the new media: Historical and contemporary debates*. London: Routledge.

Nakamura, M. (2012). *The crescent arises from the banyan tree: A study of the Muhammadiyah movement in Central Javanese Town c. 1910s–2010, (Second* (Enlarged ed.). Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

Nyhagen, L., & Halsaa, B. (2016). *Religion, gender, and citizenship: Women of faith, gender equality and feminism*. New York: Palgrave McMillan.

Rajan, D., Deepa, D., & Lalita, K. (2013). 'Bahar Nikalna': muslim women negotiate post-conflict life. In F. Azim (Ed.), *Islam, Culture and Women in Asia: Complex Terrains*. London: Routledge.

Robinson, K. (2009). *Gender, Islam and democracy in Indonesia*. Oxon: Routledge.

Saragih, B. BT. (2012). "Police arrest 8 in Sampang masacree." *The Jakarta Post*, August 27.

Schafer, S. (2015). Renegotiating Indonesian secularismthrough debates on Ahmadiyya and Shia. *Philosophy and Social Criticism, 41*(4–5), 497–508.

Sear, L. J. (1996). Introduction. Fragile identities: deconstructing women and Indonesia. In L. J. Sears (Ed.), *Fantisizing the feminine in Indonesia* (pp. 1–44). London: Duke University Press.

Sidel, J. T. (2008). The manifold meanings of displacement: explaining inter-religious violence, 1999–2001. In E. E. Hedman (Ed.), *Conflict, violence, and displacement in Indonesia*. Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Program.

Sofjan, D. (2016). Minoritization and criminalization of Shiah Islam in Indonesia. *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, 39*(2), 29–44.

Sullivan, N. (1994). *Masters and managers: A Study of gender relations in urban java*. NSW: Allen and Unwin.

Suryakusuma, J. (1996). The state and sexuality in new order Indonesia. In L. J. Sears (Ed.), *Fantasizing the feminine in Indonesia* (pp. 92–119). London: Duke University Press.

Walker, R., & Galvin, T. (2018). Labels, victims, and insecurity: an exploration of the lived realities of migrant women who sell sex in South Africa. *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal, 3*(2), 277–292.

Djajadiningrat-Nieuwenhuis, M. (1987). Ibuism and priyayization: path to power?. In: E. Locher-Scholten, & A. Niehof (Eds.), *Indonesian Women in Focus: Past and Present Notions*. (pp. 43–51)Providence: Foris.

"2 dead in Sunni-Shiite mayhem in Madura." *The Jakarta Post*, August 27.

"Sampang Sunnis: 'No problem with Shiites." *The Jakarta Post*, June 18.

Zarkov, D. (2015). Reflecting on faith and feminism. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 22*(1), 3–6.

Zulkifli. (2013). *The struggle of the Shi'is in Indonesia*. Canberra: ANU Press.