Conversion Within Islam: Becoming Shia in Majority Sunni in Indonesia

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Conversion Within Islam: Becoming Shia in Majority Sunni in Indonesia

Abstract

Since the Iranian Islamic revolution led by Imam Khomeini, Shia and its community have received a lot of attention as a research subject. In Indonesia, the theme of Shia studies is still mostly researched within the framework of a grand narrative, namely Shia as an institution, Shia as a political, Shia as a religious group and so on. Studies on Shia still view Shia as 'institutional Shia' while studies on how Shia is expressed in daily life or ' everyday/lived shia' have not received much attention.

This paper aims to examine how the phenomenon of conversion from Sunni-Shia in Indonesia. What underlies the choice to convert even with the consequence that conversion to Shia has the potential to cause psychological, economic, social and political tensions. This research was conducted in four cities in Indonesia, namely Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta and Makassar. These cities are used to represent Indonesia. these cities were also chosen because of the large Shia population in the urban area.

This study uses the theory of phenomenology and the concept of Bakhtin's dialogism as an analytical tool. The research use autoethnography as a research design. The method used in this approach is an in-depth interview and field observation. The results of the study show that there are at least four 'gates' which are the main arguments in their decision to convert from Sunni to Shia. These gates are 'philosophy', 'history', 'Irfan/Sufism', and '*fiqh* gates'. The typology of encounters through the four doors is a strong typology that I encountered in my research. most people who convert from Sunni to Shia usually pass through one or several gates that become milestones for their acceptance of Shia.

Key words: Religious Conversion, Sunni, Shia, Islam, Indonesia.

Abstrak

Sejak revolusi islam iran yang dipimpin oleh imam Khomeini, syiah dan komunitasnya mendapat cukup banyak perhatian sebagai subjek penelitian. Di Indonesia, tema-tema kajian syiah kebanyakan diteliti dalam kerangka narasi besar yaitu syiah sebagai sebuah institusi, syiah sebagai ideologi politik, syiah sebagai komunitas agama dan sebagainya. Kajian-kajian tersebut masih memandang syiah 'institusi' sementara kajian mengenai bagaimana dieksperikan dalam kehidupan sehari-hari masih belum banyak mendapat perhatian.

Tulisan ini bertujuan menelusui bagaimana fenomena konversi dari sunni ke syiah di Indonesia. Apa yang melatarbelakangi pilihan untuk melakukan konversi bahkan Ketika konsekuensinya konversi ke syiah berpotensi menimbulkan tegangan psikologis, ekonomi, sosial, dan politik. Penelitian dilaksanakan di empat kota yaitu kota Jakarta. Bandung, Yogyakarta, dan Makassar. Kota-kota tersebut digunakan untuk merepresentasi Indonesia. Kota-kota tersebut juga dipilih karena kebanyakan penganut syiah bermukim di daerah perkotaan.

Penelitian ini menggunakan teori fenomenologi dan konsep dialogisme Bakhtin sebagai pisau analasis. Desain penelitian menggunakan metode autoetnografi. Metode yang digunakan dalam pendekatan ini adalah wawancara mendalam dan observasi lapangan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat setidaknya empat pintu perjumpaan yang menjadi argumentasi utama keputusan para informan melakukan konversi. Pintu tersebut adalah filsafat, Sejarah, Irfan/sufism, dan fiqh. Tipologi tersebut merupak pola tipologi konversi yang ditemukan dalam penelitian. Kebanyakan orang yang konversi dari sunni ke syiah biasanya melewati satu atau beberapa pintu tersebut yang menjadi tonggak penerimaan mereka terhadap syiah.

Kata kunci: Konversi Beragama, Sunni, Syiah, Islam, Indonesia

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

It does not seem excessive to say that Islam in Indonesia has always been a field of contestation. As a contestation field, images of Islam in Indonesia are always defined and redefined, always in the construction and reconstruction process (Woodward, 2011). In short, Islam is a meaning that is always contested by certain political actors and interests. At least about five or six decades ago, Islam in Indonesia, especially in the eyes of academics, had a positive impression as a country where Islam existed in a 'friendly' face. Instead of being conservative like most Muslim countries, Islam in Indonesia is very thick with cultural acculturation that distinguishes it from most Islamic constructions in various countries (Geertz, 1971). Muslims in Indonesia also do not ask for rights or special treatment as the majority religion like for example Muslims in Malaysia (Sofjan, 2009).

Religious people in Indonesia are bound by a social contract called Pancasila which is recognized by all communities. Pancasila as a national political consensus guarantees religious freedom and equal rights to all Indonesian people (Suseno, 2013). Even for Indonesian Muslims, Pancasila is in no way contrary to Islam (Ismail, 1995). Indonesia at that time showed that Islam and democracy can coexist (Hughes, 2010). Indonesian society is seen as a society that is inherently tolerant because historically they have experienced and are accustomed to

differences and pluralism both in terms of culture, language, ethnicity, and religion. The positive image makes some academics consider that the future of Islam (especially in relation to democracy and religious tolerance) exists in Indonesia, rather than in the Middle East (Adeney-Risakotta, 2017, Ramage, 1995).

The positive impression of Islam in Indonesia is currently in a challenge. Indonesia is currently in a phase called by Martin van Bruinessen as 'conservative turn' (Bruinessen, 2013). After the fall of the new order regime, there was a trend towards an increase in radicalism and terrorist movements in Indonesia (Abuza, 2006). Various bombing incidents occurred in various parts of Indonesia such as the bombing incident on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2000, which occurred in several cities in Indonesia such as Medan, Bandung, Ciamis, and Mataram. This incident resulted in 16 fatalities and injured 96 others. Then on October 12, 2002, there was a bombing in Bali which killed 202 people who were mostly foreign tourists. The most recent is a bombing that targets three large churches in the city of Surabaya. The bombing of three churches in Surabaya occurred only six days after the riots broke out in Mako Brimob, East Jakarta which left five policemen dead[1].

In addition to bomb terror, the early days of *reformasi* were also marked by various incidents of violence and conflict in the name of religion which generally involved Muslim and Christian communities as happened in Poso, Central Sulawesi

[1] The data on the terrorist bombing incident in Indonesia is quoted from https://rappler.idntimes.com/sakinah-haniy/daftar-lini-masa-serangan-teroris-indonesia/full

and conflicts in Ambon, Maluku from 1999 to 2002. We might be able to argue that the conflict is full of political interests, but what seems hard to avoid is the seeds of hatred towards different communities consciously or unconsciously still being implanted so that even small triggers can make hatred towards 'the other' easily transform into a violent incident (Haryatmoko, 2010: 83).

The seeds of intolerance not only occur to non-Muslim communities but also to minority groups in Islam, especially towards the Ahmadiyya and Shia Islam (Sofjan, 2016 & 2016a). In fact, the attitude of intolerance and hatred towards minority Islamic groups in many cases according to Suseno (2013) tends to be stronger. This may be due to the fact that non-Muslim groups were identified from the start as groups that were completely different in identity from them, while minority Islamic groups were perceived as threatening them from within because they used the same articulation (Islam) even though in certain cases the minority group had different ideological and theological interpretation from the majority group. Islamic minority groups (especially Shia Islam) are seen as disrupting the domination and the status quo of the majority group.

The rise of conservative understanding in Indonesia is becoming increasingly massive and gaining momentum for its effective spread through the internet and social media. The development of information systems and technology allows people to connect with anyone and anywhere more easily. This also in a certain sense changes the dynamics of religious life. The development of information and technology allows one to easily access or watch the content of

Islamic *daʿwah* through various Youtube Channels, Facebook or WhatsApp group even when they do not intend to search and view the content.

However, the rise of religious conservatism in Indonesia seems vulnerable to be used to achieve certain political goals. We have witnessed the elements of religious conservatism not to elect non-Muslim leaders to be a massive campaign articulated in the Jakarta governor election in 2017 both through a series of actions on the streets of the capital (one of the most massive is known as movement 212) and through propaganda on social media. The incumbent governor candidate at the time, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) was finally defeated in the political contestation although the level of satisfaction with his government was quite high. Ahok was eventually sentenced to two years in prison for blasphemy.

Successfully dropping Ahok, the polarization of religious conservatism does not stop. They target larger prey, namely President Joko Widodo's administration. With the presidential election being held in 2019, reflecting on the victory in the Jakarta elections, religion remains the main issue used to defeat Jokowi who advanced as presidential candidates for the second period. Sectarian issues such as the identification of the party which supporting Jokowi as *ḥizb aš-šaiṭān*[2] (party of the devil) while the party which supports the opposition as a *hizb Allah* (party of God) was used to form the perception that Jokowi's government was

[2] All Arabic transliterations in this dissertation use standards from Brill's simple Arabic transliteration system, version 1.0, 14 december 2010, by Pim Rietbroek

a *ṭāġut* government[3]. Even though it seems excessive and out of context, such an argument seems to imagine the Election as a battlefield between the right *(haq)* and the wrong *(bathil)*.

The rise of religious conservatism also makes the life for Islamic minority groups became more difficult. Unfortunately, in many cases of discrimination, stigmatization, intolerance or even physical violence against minority Islamic groups, the state does not act effectively to protect the right to life and express the beliefs of minority groups which guaranteed in the state constitution. Even in some cases, the state plays an indirect (or even direct) role against intolerant actions against them. An example is a circular letter from the Ministry of Religion in December 1983 entitled *Hal Ikhwal Mengenai Golongan Syiah* (*Issues Regarding the Shia Group)* which essentially says that the Shia group is different from the Sunni group so it must be watched out because it has the potential to cause disruption in religious social life. Through the circular letter, apart from that in response to the government's fear of the widespread influence of Iran's Islamic revolution at the time, the Ministry of Religion as a representation of the state in the field of religion has stigmatized and discriminated against Shia groups.

Iran's Islamic revolution has indeed become an important time frame for the revival of the Shia movement in various places throughout the world. Iran's Islamic

[3] This argument was stated by Amin Rais. The full text can be read via this page https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20180413144201-32-290626/amien-rais-dikotomikan-partai-setan-dan-partai-allah

revolution made many people interested in studying Shiites and their thinkers. The works of Shia thinkers such as Muthahhari, Shariati, Khomeini and others suddenly became quite popular among young Indonesian Islamic intellectuals. In order to prevent the potential export of the Iranian revolution, various countries in Southeast Asia took preventive action, the Suharto regime in Indonesia built a narrative that Shia was something fundamentally different from the Sunni faith and traditions in Indonesia, the Indonesian neighbor Malaysia even went further by firmly prohibiting the existence of Shia in the country (Sofjan, 2019).

Since the reformasi era, Shia groups together with Ahmadiyah groups have indeed become a minority Islamic group that is most vulnerable to acts of intolerance and violence both physically and verbally. Just mention a few examples of violence against them, for example, in 2000 thousands of people attacked the Al-Hadi Islamic Boarding School in Pekalongan, the mob attack on YAPI Islamic boarding school in Pasuruan in mid-February 2011, attacks on Shia communities in Ternate in October 2012, a month later forced the dissolution of the Ashura commemoration by the Front of Islamic Defender (FPI) in Makassar. The most severe attack on the Shia community is probably in Sampang,Madura on August 26, 2012, which caused one person to die, dozens of them were seriously injured, dozens of their homes burned, and hundreds of others had to evacuate (Formichi, 2015: 20-21). The Sampang conflict, which has not been fully resolved to date, was actually triggered by a personal problem that escalated into a communal conflict.

This shows the sensitivity and vulnerability of the Sunni-Shia issue which has the potential to become a religious conflict in Indonesia (Achmad et al., 2019).

In addition to physical violence, minority Shia also often experience verbal violence and stigmatization. Various kinds of accusations and bad construction of this community are very easy to find either through social media networks (Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, etc.) or through other media. The issue that Shia is not Islam, Shia is the same as communism, immoral perpetrator (because of *mut'ah* or temporary marriage), eating priest's feces and so on is propaganda that is very commonly found[4]. Although it seems that such an argument is not entirely true, the intention of the propaganda is to build hostility and hatred towards this community regardless of whether it is true or not.

The tension between Sunni and Shia groups in Indonesia has recently increased. Although the existence of Shia Islam has been in Indonesia for a long time, the tension between the two groups in Indonesia can be said to be a fairly new phenomenon, perhaps it can be said to have only begun since the early 1980s in response to the success of the Iranian Islamic revolution. The success of the Islamic revolution attracted a lot of attention especially from young Indonesian intellectuals who wanted to know more about the ideology behind the revolution. This interest

[4] To see the accusations addressed to the Shia community can be read one of them through a book by Ayatollah Abu Talib Tajlil at-Tabrizi, 2005. *Spurious Arguments About the Shia.* Qum, Iran. Ansariyan Publication. Many books containing accusations against Shias have also been written in Indonesian, including a book written by Abu Khalid entitled *'Syiah, Ekspor Yahudi Yang Paling Mematikan"* (2017), a book written by Mamduh Farhan al-bukhairi entitled"*Gen Syiah: Sebuah Tinjauan sejarah, Penyimpangan Aqidah Dan Konspirasi Yahudi"* (2001).

by the Suharto government at that time and by some religious authorities was considered potentially threatening social stability and their status quo. Over time, the tension continued to heat up. If during the New Order period there was only verbal intimidation, then during the *reformasi* era, the intimidation went further to the level of physical intimidation (Formichi, 2015: 22).

The Sunni-Shia tension actually not a phenomenon that is typical of Indonesia. Anti-Shia phenomena also occur in several Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Pakistan and in several Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. Sunni-Shia relations throughout its history are indeed very difficult to escape from political contestation in seizing the meaning of Islam. Propaganda about the so-called "Shia revival", for example in various countries, especially in the Middle East (and possibly also in Southeast Asia) according to Terhalle, is part of a political strategy to create anxiety while reaffirming state authority and religious authority through common enemy creation. Terhalle views the so-called 'Shia revival' in fact not dominant especially in relation to the image that the spread of Shia is a systematic part of Iran's foreign policy efforts to hegemonize the world (Terhalle, 2007: 69).

This paper aims to examine how the phenomenon of conversion from Sunni to Shia in Indonesia. Until now there is no certain amount of population of the Shia community in Indonesia. But what might be said is that most of the population today (maybe 80-85%) is the result of conversions from various religious backgrounds

(especially Sunnis). Very few members of the Shia Islamic group in Indonesia, who from birth were already followers of the sect.

Academic texts on Shia in Indonesia especially those studied by Indonesian academics, are still very limited (Sofjan: 2013). From the limited number of studies throughout my search, there were almost no studies that gave the main focus to the conversion phenomenon. Maybe if it could be classified, the Shia study in my opinion still revolves around themes such as comparison of theological doctrines between Sunnis and Shia, studies of the thoughts of Shia thinkers and philosophers, studies and debates about the arrival history of Shia Islam in the archipelago, studies of the influence of Shia (or Persian in general) culture in many cultural practices or religious rituals in various regions in Indonesia, studies of textual literature which either implicitly and explicitly expresses aspects of Shia ideology and theology, studies of the strategy of the Shia group to gain recognition from the majority Islamic groups, studies of the existence of Shia groups and institutions, and the most is the studies of conflicts, stigmatization, discrimination, hostility, hate speech and intolerance practices against them. These studies, in my opinion, tend to see Shia as 'results', as a category that tends to be static and fix. I am not at all trying to build a negative argument against the classification of the research theme, but if the majority of Shia followers are people who convert to religion then there is a long 'process' of identity formation and negotiation that is absent in the study of Shia, namely how and why people want to convert to Shia, especially in a country like Indonesia where the images of Shia tend to be very bad in the eyes of most Muslims

in Indonesia. This condition presupposes that conversion to Shia is often heavy both sociologically and psychologically. Why does someone want to swap his position as part of the majority to become part of a minority group? What experiences change their religious perception?

The themes of studies on Shia in Indonesia are still mostly examined in the framework as big narratives. Shia as an institution, Shia as a political, Shia as a religious group and so on. The study of Shia still views Shia as 'institutional Shia', while the study of how Shia is expressed in everyday life or 'lived shia' still has not received much attention because it may be underestimated, not bombastic. This absence (experience of doing the religious conversion) is trying to be bridged in this research.

Before we go further, I think it is important for us to discuss the right terms to use in order to refer to the phenomenon of religious conversion. There are several terms that might be used to name the phenomenon of displacement or changes in religious understanding namely conversion, reversion, *ḥiğrah,* and *al- muṣtabṣirūn*. The first is the conversion term, this term according to Rambo (1993: 5) refers to a kind of call to leave 'evil' and interact with God through strong loyalty to certain beliefs. This understanding may be very thick with an understanding of the Abrahamic religious tradition. In Islam itself there are certain terms that are used to describe the level or quality of one's faith such as the term *kuffar* which is used to refer to people who reject the religion of God or people who are not grateful, then

the term *muslim* and *muʿmin* to describe people who are surrendered (by accepting religion (God) and trust these beliefs strongly).

Through such differentiation, a conversion event indicates a radical change to the beliefs, behaviors, and religious affiliation of people who convert. The change is a consequence of the shift from his/her old religious tradition to a new religious tradition. The term conversion if used in the context of 'displacement' in a religious tradition such as from Sunni to Shia has a sensitive impression because usually the term conversion is used to name a movement from one religion to another. But in the tradition of social sciences, the term conversion can be used in the context of displacement within a religious tradition. Rambo (1993: 13) calls this type of conversion with the term Institutional transition. Rambo himself argued that the conversion process was the product of the interaction between the aspirations, needs, and orientation of the person doing the conversion, the character of the group in which he converted, and the particular social matrix in which the conversion occurred (Rambo, 1993:7). In the context of the experience of conversion from Sunni to Shia Islam, according to one Shia follower whom I accompanied to discuss indicated that the term conversion for him was not a problem, because in some stages people who converted from Sunni to Shia felt a very striking difference both in terms of theological conception and ritual worship.

The second term that is usually used to refer to the changes in theological understanding is the reversion. The term religious reversion indicates a change in the way of looking at the religious understanding of people who convert. This

change can be caused due to certain conditions. This condition can be due to intense encounters with certain people and communities or it could be because of books that he reads or other things that lead him to a more complex horizon of understanding. With that understanding, reversion usually refers to the replacement of one particular religious position to a new position but still within one religious tradition. The encounter with a new perspective or horizon that makes a person reflect and ultimately change his ideological and theological position is usually a phenomenon commonly experienced by people who convert/revert from Sunni to Shia.

The third term is *ḥiğrah*. The term *ḥiğrah* in Islam actually refers to events when the prophet Muhammad left his homeland of Mecca to go to the city of Yastrib (Medina) to form a stronger and independent Islamic community due to the rejection and oppression of the Quraysh unbelievers in Mecca. In Indonesia, the term *ḥiğrah* is used to name changes in one's religiosity, from an 'ordinary ' religious life to a more pious person, from a position that is considered bad to be in a better position. The term *ḥiğrah* is very often used, for example, to describe women who did not hijab before and then decided to wear hijab or to describe former musicians who turned into preachers. The term *ḥiğrah* can be used in the context of the shift from Sunni to Shia because in my opinion usually people who change their beliefs must perceive their religious understanding at this time to be better, more objective, and most importantly reflecting a more 'true' understanding of Islam.

The fourth term is *al- muṣtabṣirūn.* For me, this term is interesting because the term is a way the people who make changes in his/her religious understanding to name the activities they do or at least the way certain Shia group name the people who have just entered their group (Sindawi, 2011). The term *al- muṣtabṣirūn* is used as a common term, especially in countries that speak Arabic. In Indonesia, this term seems not too familiar.

In his article entitled *Al- Muṣtabṣirūn, "Those Who Are Able To See The Light": Sunni Conversion to Twelver Shī'ism in Modern Times*, Sindawi explains the meaning of the word *Istibṣār* and *muṣtabṣir*. *Istibṣār* means visual acuity that makes people believe in the truth of certain faith. While *mustabṣhir* is a person who sees clearly so that he is able to distinguish between good and bad (Sindawi, 2011: 212). According to Sindawi, the word *muṣtabṣir* in the Shia tradition is used to name someone who left his previous beliefs and converted to Shia after he saw clearly the truth of this religious understanding (Sindawi, 2011: 212). So *Istibṣār* is a condition that someone needs so that he can convert, while the word *muṣtabṣir* refers to the person who converts.

Almost all of the terms that have been mentioned presuppose a similar impression, namely negation and perception that the understanding that is believed nowadays is better and ‘more true' compared to their past faith. Regarding the use of these terms, I actually want to use the term used by the Shia community in Indonesia to name the experience of those who make changes in religious understanding. But at this time I have not found it, and I hope to find this out as the

research process progresses. For now, I will use the term religious conversion. I choose this term because in the tradition of social sciences, the term conversion is a category used to refer to the phenomenon of change or displacement understanding and ideological/theological positions regardless of the type of conversion that is diverse. The second reason is that it reaches within certain limits of the Shia community as said by a Shia follower whom I invited to discuss that he and his community had no problem at all with the term. The acceptance of the conversion term was also shown by Nurlaila (2017: 13) in her research on Shia communities in Malaysia and Singapore.

The term conversion in various studies on conversion as far as my search is understood and juxtaposed with various terms that are considered to represent the event. Some call conversion as transformation and some call it as a transition. Meanwhile, in this study, the term religious conversion I understood in terms of 'religious changes'. I choose the term religious change because in my opinion the term religious transformation or religious transition does indeed reflect a change in religious position, but for me, the term gives the impression that what so called religious changes are quite rigid. As if, someone moved from one particular religious position to another religious position and no other position might be taken by the person who did the conversion. The term gives the impression of antagonistic positions. In short, for me, these terms do not give space to the dynamism and fluidity of the identity and religious experience of others. Everyone or community may have perceptions and standards for their religious identity. For example, what

the standard of a person can be said to be Shia? Can all religious groups that love the prophet's ahlulbait can be called Shia? If my way of thinking are influenced by philosophy and the way of thinking that is considered to be Shia, can I be called a Shia? Are all those who celebrate and empathize with the Karbala tragedy can be said to be Shia?

In a community that is perceived as Shia, there are some people or groups who say that they are Sunni-Shia. Or even there is an argument that they are not Shia and also not Sunni. Or people who call themselves Shia also have a way or term they use to name their beliefs. for example, there are Shia groups who prefer to call themselves *tasayyu, ahlulbait, husainiyah* and the like. In Indonesia, two large Shia-affiliated organizations, namely ABI and IJABI, also do not use the word 'syiah' but use the word 'ahlulbait'. So, there is construction and contestation of identity even in the Shia itself. We may be able to simplify and accuse that such arguments are only part of the *taqīyahh* strategy, but isn't that practice if done for a long time can also shape how they perceive themselves and perceive the way they see other communities and their relationships with these communities. In order to accommodate the dynamism and fluidity, I chose the term religious change to refer to the variety of events and the context of the conversion from Sunni to Shia.

Researching the religious experience of converting from Sunni to Shia in Indonesia is not an easy matter. These difficulties include the difficulty of getting information about the conversion process experienced by someone. Conversion from Sunni to Shia is a very personal experience so it is not something that is easily

shared with foreigners who come from outside their community (outsiders). Considering how Shia is perceived and constructed in a bad impression by the majority of Indonesian Sunni groups, it is very rare for Shia people to openly show their identity. Perhaps this is also one reason why there is no exact number of Shia populations in Indonesia. The Jakarta Islamic Cultural Center (ICC) has attempted to make an effort to record the Shia population in Indonesia by distributing questionnaires to various Shia clerics in Indonesia, but the attempt ultimately failed because none of the questionnaires distributed were returned to the implementing party (Zulkifli 2013: 292).

Most Shia member in Indonesia according to Zulkifli (2013) practice *taqīyah* to disguise their Shia identity. According to Alatas, *taqīyah* is a strategy of hiding beliefs before an enemy to avoid danger (Alatas 2002: 142). *Taqīyah* in the Shia faith is something that is permissible both to maintain the safety of individuals and groups, and to maintain unity and avoid conflict. The fact that there is a sense of hostility towards Shia groups in Indonesia, then expressing their identities openly is very likely to endanger themselves. For this reason, Shia people tend to be closed. However, a good and friendly approach to prospective respondents in my opinion, research on their conversion experience can be carried out.

This research was conducted in four cities in Indonesia, namely Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Makassar. These cities are used to represent Indonesia. these cities were also chosen because of the large Shia population in urban areas. According to some studies (Halimatusa'diyah, 2013, Sindawi, 2011: 211), most

Shia followers come from the middle class with good intellectual backgrounds and therefore have sufficient income. In addition, the main Shia institutions such as IJABI (Association of Ahlulbait Indonesia Jamaat), ABI (Ahlulbait Indonesia), Islamic Cultural Center (ICC) and other Shia affiliation institutions are also located in these cities.

B. Research Focus

The Shia group referred to in this research is the Shia Twelve Imams or also known as Shia *Imāmīyah*. This emphasis is important to differentiate it from other Shia denomination groups. As I have argued earlier that various studies on Shia are still being carried out in the perspective of Shia as a 'great narrative' (Shia as an institution, ideology, school of thought, political community) while research on Shia as a religious experience tends to still be absent, especially towards the Shia community in Indonesia. Departing from that argument, this research takes a research theme that focuses on conversion experiences (as religious experiences) into Shia (especially those carried out by people who were previously Sunni). This conversion theme includes a variety of conversion processes, their understanding of the Shia, as well as the ideological and theological positions they choose.

C. Research Question

This research as previously described will focus on the experience of conversion from Sunni Islam to Shia Islam in Indonesia. The main research question in the research can be described as follows.

1. Why did people converted from Sunni to Shia? This question may seem too broad, but this question is important and, in my opinion tends to get less attention in most of research about Shia groups. Not infrequently people who convert to Shia are considered merely as victims of brainwashing or indoctrination of certain parties, or they are converted only for certain purposes. Such perceptions in my opinion tend to reduce the agency and the subject of the person who converts. This question is also important for understanding the worldview of others who may be different from us and at the same time can be a door for better inter-religious relations. This question also presupposes a variety of reasons and motives for someone to convert, as well as their response to their 'new religiosity', and the possible social response to the conversion phenomena.
2. How does the conversion process occur? Are there certain social conditions or psychological conditions underlying the conversion event? Are there specific or unique religious experiences that are part of the conversion process both before and during the conversion process?
3. Does conversion change their behavior or even religious rituals or notWhat kind of social response did they receive due to their conversion?

D. Research Objective

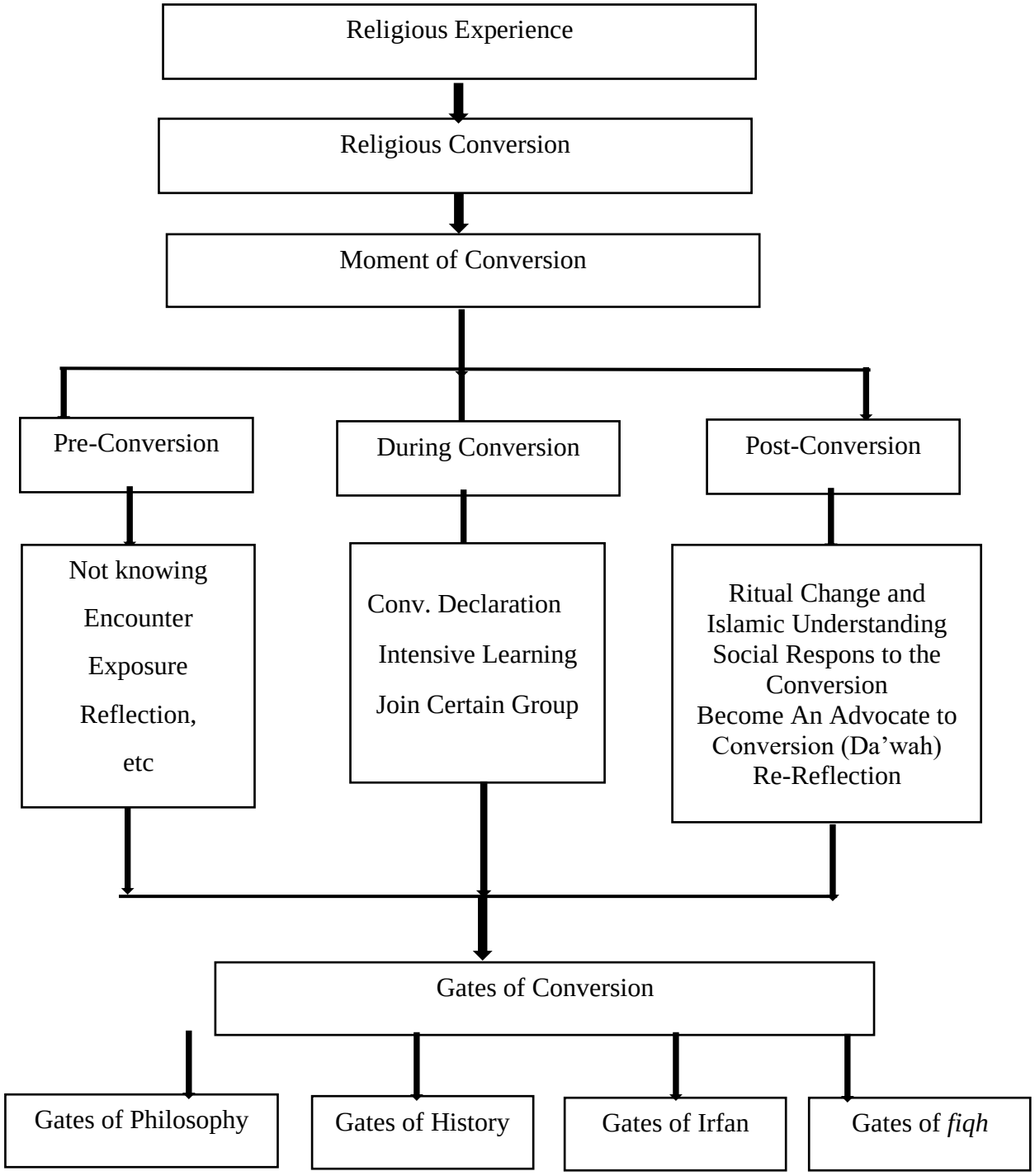
Based on the formulation of the research problem above, the research aims to:

1) Explore and explain why people want to convert from Sunni Islam to Islamic Shia. This section aims to find out the motives and causes of someone willing to do the religious conversion, even when the conversion will change their lives, the way they are perceived, the acceptance and treatment they will receive by being Shia. This study aims to encourage the creation of an understanding and recognition of the diversity of religious experiences that shape the worldview of each person.
2) Explore and explain how the conversion process experienced by someone. This section aims to find out the complexity and ongoing process from a conversion event. This section is also intended to see how various conversion processes and experiences from various people may be caused by differences in social conditions, different ways of encounter with theology and discourse about Shia, their perception of Shia itself, and the changes they feel both in terms of ideological changes or ritual changes that occur after conversion.

E. Chart of Research Mindset

Conversion in this study is assumed to occur through a series of events that underlie the religious conversion. In this study the conversion moment is divided into three, namely, pre-conversion, during conversion, and post-conversion. This conversion moment is used to see how complex the process of 'religious changes'

is. Conversion, if seen as a religious change, is born from a series of events starting from the condition of someone encountering with ' the potential religious teaching' which he/she will follow as new belief, then the process he/she commits to the new teaching (conversion), and various responses after the conversion occurs both from himself and from other people (the society) that might appear as a consequence of the conversion event. The pattern is only an assumption about a particular moment that might occur in a conversion event, this pattern is not intended to reduce the various conversion experiences. The following is a chart of research mindset.


Religious Experience
Religious Conversion
Moment of Conversion
Pre-Conversion
During Conversion
Post-Conversion
Not knowing
Encounter
Exposure
Reflection,
etc
Conv. Declaration
Intensive Learning
Join Certain Group
Ritual Change and Islamic Understanding
Social Respons to the Conversion
Become An Advocate to Conversion (Da'wah)
Re-Reflection
Gates of Conversion
Gates of Philosophy
Gates of History
Gates of Irfan
Gates of *fiqh*

F. Literature Review

As I mentioned earlier, most studies on Shia relate to themes such as comparison of theological doctrines between Sunnis and Shia (Shihab, 2007, Team of Authors of Sidogiri Islamic Boarding School, 2008, Team Ahlul Bait Indonesia (ABI), 2012), studies of Shia thinkers and philosophers (Basman. 2007, Jafar, 2017), studies and debates about the early history of the arrival of Shia Islam in the Archipelago and Southeast Asia (Aceh, 1977 & 1985, Azra, 2000 & 2013 Formichi & Feener, 2015, Marcinkowski, 2009).

Besides that, there also studies on the influence of Shia (or Persian in general) culture in many cultural practices or religious rituals in various regions of Indonesia (Marcinkowski, 2008, Yusuf, 2013 & 2013a), the study of literary texts that both implicitly and explicitly express aspects of Shia ideology and theology (Baroroh, 1976, Saenong, 2015, Mukherjee, 2015), studies on the strategy of the Shia group to gain recognition from the majority Islamic group, studies on the existence of Shia groups and institutions (Zulkifli, 2009 & 2013, Halimatusa'diyah, 2013),

The most common theme in Shia studies in Indonesia is related to the study of conflict, stigmatization, discrimination, hostility, the utterance of hatred and the practice of intolerance towards them (Akmaliah, 2015 & 2017, Afdillah, 2013, Hilmy**,** 2015, Syarif, 2017, Suseno, 2013, Formichi, 2014, Assyaukanie, 2009, Sofjan, 2016 & 2016a**)**. Indeed, there are several studies that specifically examine

the phenomenon of conversion to Shia (Lisnyansky, 2009, Binti Khalid, 2017) but that is very limited and not conducted by Indonesian academia.

Of the many works of literature on Shia studies, I chose two writings which will be used as a literature review in this study. *The Struggle Of The Shi'Is In Indonesia* by Zulkifli, and the thesis from Nurlaila Binti Khalid entitled *Understanding the Sunni-Shiate Transitions Among the First Generation Malay Shiates In Singapore.*

1. The Struggle of The Shi'is Community In Indonesia

The above subtitles may not be too much because Zulkifli's dissertation is one of the few serious studies on Shia in Indonesia. this research also discusses Shia in Indonesia quite broadly ranging from when the initial formation of Shia in Indonesia, its figures, theology and jurisprudence, its *daʿwah* activities, institutions that affiliated with Shia, publication of books and readings as an important element of spreading Shia influence, as well as the response of Sunni Indonesians to the existence of Shias Islam.

Apart from the debate over whether Shia has existed in Indonesia since the beginning of the entry of Islam in the archipelago (Aceh, 1977 & 1985) or has only been able to detect it after the victory of the Iranian revolution (Azra, 2000 & 2013), Zulkifli seems to take the middle ground by saying that the formation of Shia in Indonesia at least happened because of the role of three groups. The first group through the descendants of the Arabs as a result of the intensity of the interaction

between the Arabic Hadramaut with the people of the archipelago who reached its peak in the 19th century.

The second group was graduates of *hauzah ʿilmiyah* (Shia educational institutions) in Qum Iran who returned home and became an important figure in the spread of Shia. The graduates of *hauzah ʿilmiyah* Qum actually existed even before the Islamic revolution of Iranian, but the number of Indonesian students studying in Iran itself increased after the success of Iran's Islamic revolution. In a statement in 2020[5], the Indonesian foreign minister said there were around 400 Indonesian citizens in Iran who were dominated by students. Of course, this number is far from the nominal number of Indonesian students in other Islamic countries such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, but this number has increased compared to the initial phase of the Iranian Islamic revolution which only numbered dozens of students.

The last group is study groups from various campuses (especially secular campuses) in Indonesia who are interested in Iranian thinkers and Shia discourses. It cannot be denied that the Iranian revolution was instrumental in the emergence of this group (Zulkifli, 2009: 305), even their introduction to Shia discourse until finally deciding to convert began with their interest in the ideology that supported the Iranian revolution.

Sociologically, according to Zulkifli, Shia figures in Indonesia can be divided into two broad categories, namely the *ustadh* and intellectuals. *Ustadh* are

[5] https://www.google.com/amp/s/m.tribunnews.com/amp/nasional/2020/01/09/menlu-jumlah-wni-di-iran-lebih-dari-400-orang

usually people who are mostly educated in the field of religion in Shia religious educational institutions in Iran, while intellectuals are people who depart from a secular educational background or not specifically study religion like the *ustadh*. One of the most famous ustadh figure in the past was Husein Al-Habsyi, while for the present the role of the *ustadh* is usually played by Qum alumni, while the most famous Shia intellectual figure in Indonesia is probably Jalaluddin Rahmat who founded IJABI, an organization with the first Shia affiliation that the state recognized in 2000 (Zulkifli, 2009: 306).

As a minority group in the majority of Sunni Muslims, the Shia group carries out various strategies to gain recognition. The strategy is carried out both individually and institutionally. Zulkifli said that some of these strategies were through *daʿwah*, education, publications, and the formation of community organizations. The *daʿwah* strategy is carried out to introduce and give a broad understanding of what Shia is. but in their *daʿwah* activities the Shia preachers usually tend to avoid using the word Shia because of its negative connotations in Indonesian society, they prefer to use a more neutral word, namely Ahlulbait to name their groups and activities. In addition to *daʿwah*, education is an important tool in Shia efforts to gain recognition. Shia has several educational institutions both traditional and modern. Among Shia educational institutions are the YAPI *pesantren* in Bangil, East Java, the Al-Hadi *pesantren* in Pekalongan, Central Java, and the Motahhari school in Bandung, West Java. Shia dissemination is also carried out through Book publishing. Publication of books is an effective strategy because

unlike preaching and education that can only reach limited people, publications can reach a wider and more diverse reading community, both Sunni and Shia (Zulkifli, 2009: 306-308).

The efforts to get recognition were also carried out by establishing mass organizations. On July 1, 2000, at the Asia Afrika building in Bandung, IJABI was declared. IJABI was then headed by DR. KH. Jalaluddin Rakhmat, M.Sc (Chairman of the šūra Council) and Dr. Ir. Dimitri Mahayana, M.Eng (as Chairman of the *Tanfiḏīyah* council). Despite getting legality from the state, according to Zulkifli (2009: 308), IJABI lacks support from the internal Shia community, especially from the ustadh group for various reasons, either ideological, political and even personal reasons. This shows that the Shia identity in Indonesia is not one. In 2011 another Shia organization was established under the name Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI), which at the beginning was appointed Hassan Alaydrus as General Chairperson of the Ahlulbait Indonesia Central Board and Umar Shahab as Chairperson of the *Tanfiḏīyah* Council.

Even though IJABI and ABI affiliate themselves to Shia theology, as a religious organization they have differences. The differences between the two organizations have many dimensions, both in terms of thinking and spirituality, *daʿwah* strategies, to the backgrounds of the members of the two organizations. According to Umar Shahab, who is the former chairman of the ABI šūra council,

ABI is a Shia group dominated by "traditionalists", while IJABI is dominated by "modernists".[6]

The response of the majority of Sunnis to the existence of Shia in Indonesia is also diverse and complex, ranging from negative to moderate. Negative responses are shown by reformist Islamic groups such as Persis and al-Irsyad as well as figures and institutions that are associated with the two organizations. This negative response manifested in the form of banners or leaf lets containing bad statements about Shia, a series of seminars and meetings were also held to anticipate Shia while increasing awareness of this group, as well as efforts to ask state authorities to expressly prohibit the Shia. Other reformist Islamic groups namely Muhammadiyah tend to be moderate and have good relations with Shia figures. While the Nahdatul Ulama (NU) as the largest traditional Islamic organization is more moderate and accommodating. Instead of participating in the anti-Shia movement, NU focuses on strengthening Sunni doctrine against its followers. What is meant is NU's attitude as a religious organization and the attitude of NU elites towards Shia because at the grassroots level there are still various conflicts between the Shia community and religious groups who claim they come from the NU tradition. Some Muslim intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid, Abdurrahman Wahid, and M. Amien Rais were also moderate and even considered giving space to the development of Shia

[6] https://hidayatullah.com/berita/nasional/2011/06/16/50796/antara-syiah-tradisionalis-dan-modernis.html. Accessed May 30, 2023

in Indonesia, even in the Gusdur era, IJABI as a community organization affiliated with Shia was recognized (Zulkifli, 2009: 309).

The stigma and hostility shown by some Sunnis towards Shia made the majority of Shia followers practice *taqīyah*. In the practice of *taqīyah*, the management of information related to personal identity, institutions, and symbols that connote with Shia is not revealed. Ambiguous answers related to personal identity such as I am not Shia and not Sunni or I am *susi* (Sunni-Shia) are often used to obscure their identity. Other *taqīyah* strategies that are practiced are adaptation strategies. In the practice of adaptation, Shia members adjust or follow the rules (*fiqh*) of the Sunni majority. They usually practice Shafi'i *fiqh* in matters of worship and ritual, especially if the worship and rituals are carried out in public spaces (Zulkifli, 2009: 309).

2. Conversion to Shia in Various Places and Iran's Islamic Revolution

Since the early 1980s, interest in and conversion to Shia has been difficult to separate from the relationship and contribution of the Iranian Islamic revolution which made Shia better known to various religious groups and encouraged conversions to Shia in various places throughout the world. This argument is supported by various studies on conversion to Shia which state that admiration for the success of Iran's Islamic revolution and Shia figures is an important marker in many cases of conversion to Shia throughout the world.

The relationship between conversion to Shi'ism and enthusiasm for Iran's Islamic revolution is shown in Mara A. Leichtman's research entitled *Revolution, Modernity And (Trans) National Shi'i Islam: Rethinking Religious Conversion In Senegal* (Leichtman, 2009). Leichtman even argues that in the case of the conversion to Shiism that occurred in Senegal, admiration for the Islamic revolution and specifically towards the figure of the revolutionary leader, Imam Khomeini preceded interest in Shiism itself as a unique and distinct theological construct within Islam.

According to Leichtman, conversion to Shiaism is not only related to matters of a religious nature because the conversion to Shia Islam that occurred in Senegal was more or less the result of encounters with Lebanese and Iranian Shia people so that the event of conversion to Shia also presupposes a change in perspective on matters relating to social, economic and political problems. By converting to Shia, converts have alternative access to Islamic modernity which enables them to form economic relations with Lebanon and Iran through business relations between countries, scholarships to study in these countries, and financial assistance for their religious organizations. In the political field, admiration for revolutionaries and Shia figures was transformed into an intellectual movement. Shia converts in Senegal describe themselves as leaders of the intellectual movement and use their Islamic knowledge as a weapon to educate and modernize Senegalese society (Leichtman, 2009).

Conversion triggered by interest in Iran's Islamic Revolution was also demonstrated by Lisnyansky in his research entitled Tashayu (Conversion to Shiasm) in Central Asia and Russia (Lisnyansky, 2009). The phenomenon of conversion to Shia in Russia is a new phenomenon not only because Shia only gained momentum after Iran's Islamic revolution and its ideological war against Wahhabism, but also because Russia during the Soviet era implemented an anti-religious policy.

Different from most theses about conversion to Shia which was initiated by personal interest in the 'Shia aspect' that triggered the conversion event, conversion to Shia in Central Asia and Russia according to Lisnyansky's claims was initiated by Iranian missionaries and local organizations affiliated with and funded by Iran. In short, in Lisnyansky's view, conversion in Russia is a project promoted by Iran to protect their foreign agenda and interests.

Despite claiming that most Shia converts are not native Russians and that the majority of converts come from a Sunni background, most converts according to Lisnyansky do not realize that they have crossed the boundaries of their Sunni identity and converted to Shia. According to Lisnyansky, Shia preachers try to obscure Shia identity by referring to certain practices that are actually uniquely Shia as something normal in the universal Islamic identity.

Lisnyansky's claim that Shia converts in Russia are not aware that they have actually converted to Shia is a bit strange considering that Sunni and Shia are names that are very familiar in Islamic discourse, both of which are the two largest schools

of thought in Islam, where the Sunni population is much more dominant in terms of quantitative compared to Shia. As an identity, of course both have standards that differentiate one from another. To be called a Shia or Sunni, of course a person must accept and believe in unique things related to theological construction, fiqh practice, and so on. In the case of Shia- Sunnis, one of the fundamental differences between the two groups, for example, relates to the issue of Imamat and the justice of the Prophet's companions. Debates on these themes have been reproduced so continuously over the centuries that the claim that a Sunni has not necessarily converted to Shia has become difficult to accept.

3. Conversion from Sunni to Shia in Southeast Asia

According to Nurlaila Binti Khalid, the Islamic Revolution of Iran also attracted the attention of Muslims in Malaysia and Singapore to know more deeply about Shia. This fact gained strong resistance from the Sunni majority in Malaysia (Binti Khalid, 2017: 13). The condition of Shia Muslims in Malaysia is no better than its conditions in Indonesia, even in certain stages it can be said to be worse. In Indonesia, although it is often stigmatized and gets intolerant treatment, there is no explicit prohibition from the state against Shia. They have the same right before the law to carry out their beliefs and have the right to associate and form representative organizations.

This condition is different from Malaysia which identifies itself as a Sunni Muslim country. All religious practices related to the subject of faith, law, and morals must be carried out in Sunni ways. Therefore, Shia is a prohibited

organization and understanding of Islam (Ghazali, 2013: 177-178). Not only the prohibition against Shia, the government also banned books that were considered to contain doctrines and Shia propaganda. In 2012, Malaysia's Ministry of Internal Affairs banned several books that were considered to be a threat to Malaysian Sunni Muslims. The books are *Introduction to Islamic Sciences* (*Pengantar Ilmu-Ilmu Islam)* by Murtadha Mutahhari, Sunni and Shia Dialogs (*dialog Sunni-Syiah*) by Syarafuddin al-Musawi and *Tafsir Surah al-Fatihah* by Jalaluddin Rakhmat, *Tafsir al-Mizan: Peeling Spiritual Verses in the Qur'an* (*Tafsir al- Mizan: Mengupas Ayat-Ayat Roh Dalam Alquran*) by Tabataba'i, The Woman In the Eyes and the Heart of The Messenger of Allah *(Wanita di Mata dan Hati Rasulullah)* by Syariati and *finally I found the truth (Akhirnya Kutemukan Kebenaran)* by Muhammad Ali Tijani. All of those books are from Indonesia. (Ghazali, 2013: 180). The development of Shia is considered to affect the Sunni majority quo status or even Sunni leadership in Malaysia (Binti Khalid, 2017: 19).

Unlike Malaysia, the experience of Shia groups in Singapore is far better. Even though the Sunni-Shia tension clearly exists, the tension does not arrive at acts of violence or asks the authorities of the country to regard the Shia as a deviant sect. This cannot be separated from the fact that Singapore identifies their country as a secular state that guarantees the freedom of every faith to carry out their beliefs (Binti Khalid, 2017: 13).

The success of the Iranian revolution which attracted a lot of interest especially for young people to get to know Shia in Malaysia was seen as only an

ideological project of Iran to convert Sunni Muslims into Shia around the world. The people who converted to Shia were considered only victims of the Iranian ideological project (Binti Khalid, 2017: 19-20). Even though it was a popular argument propagated to fortify the Shia movement, such revelations contained excessive simplification and ignored the complexity and process of conversion. Simplification of conversion experience also shown by Nurlaila through the myth that converts are usually driven only by deviant sexual desires because the Shias allow the practice of mut'ah marriage and that conversion to Shia is not based on the intellectual framework and rational conception.

Of course, this statement is very untrue and does not depart from a true and deep understanding of mut'ah marriage as understood by the Shia people themselves (Halimatusa'diyah, 2013). The fact that the majority of those who are interested in conversion are young intellectual groups (Zulkifli, 2009) who are interested in the thinking of Iranian scholars and thinkers also refute claims that conversion to Shia is not rooted in rational and intellectual conception. In fact, intellectual anxiety is an important factor that usually lies in the conversion process to Shia Islam.

The focus of Nurlaila's research was on whether or not there was an active agent carried out by someone in the process he or she decided to convert. Nurlaila's research corrects popular images among Malaysian Muslims who say that the converts are mostly not active agents in their conversion process, and are only victims of ideological manipulation. In fact, according to Nurlaila based on the interviews she did showed that people who convert are very active both in practice

and in the interpretive process in the whole process of their conversion from Sunni to Shia.

My research study specifically takes a different dimension from the four above studies. This study focuses on exploring how the varied experiences of conversion from Sunni to Shia in Indonesia. The research is expected to bridge the gap in Shia research which still views Shia Islam as a 'result', while the process of receiving Shia as a religious ideology with all its complexity has not been given much attention. I think the study of 'process' and religious experience especially in the Shia context in indonesia is important, because most people who are considered or consider themselves Shia in Indonesia today are not Shia-born people, but are the result of a complex religious conversion process.

This research is intended to be carried out within the framework of inter-religious studies. the emphasis on religious experience is not only intended as an informative depiction of the complexity of religious experience, or simply as a phenomenon of religious psychology, but as an effort to understand (or even recognize) the world view of others to form a better relationships and dynamic religious life that is open to different ways of understanding the world. In the context of Sunni-Shia relations in Indonesia, understanding of the other is very important because there are still many people who perceive the Shia to be based only from propaganda which is not entirely true. The efforts of religious groups in Indonesia to understand Shia in a more balanced manner are still very minimal, so

that the relationship and religious interaction between Sunni-Shia also becomes more difficult. in addition, the Middle East (especially Syria) political conditions that made sectarian religious issues (sunni-shia) as political propaganda also sharpened the Sunni-Shia tension in various parts of the world, including Indonesia. the fact that sunni-shia have some differences in theological and ideological constructions is necessary, but this does not necessarily mean that they cannot coexist as communities, as members of society.

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CHAPTER II

THEORY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Theoretical Framework

Before going further into theoretical issues, it might be better if we look at how conversions are defined. oxforddictionaries.com defines conversion as the process of changing or causing something to change from one form to another[7]. Some experts also try to define the conversion. Snow & Machalek defined conversion as an experience that resulted in radical personal change. Nock defines conversion as a 'reorientation of the soul' which involves a change from one form of piety to another. Meanwhile, Rambo sees conversion as a process involving the aspirations, needs, orientation, and social matrix in which the conversion takes place (Rambo: 1993: 7).

There are several theoretical possibilities that can be used to explain the conversion phenomenon (Rambo, 1999). Conversion, for example, can be seen from the perspective of globalization theory (Barber, 2001, Huntington, 1996). The perspective of globalization considers that with the development of technology more or less rid of religious authority from the central position they once enjoyed, the revival of religion (and can also be applied in the context of conversion or affiliation to certain forms of religion) in this case is seen as an effort to resist the hegemony of globalization and capitalism.

[7] Taken from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/conversion

Conversion can also be seen from the perspective of postcolonial theory (Said, 1978, King, 2001). This theory can be regarded as a result of centuries of European colonialism. Colonialism is not just subjection but also presupposes a cultural encounter. Conversion to world religions can be seen as the of hegemony and interest by the ‘local people’ in colonizer powers and cultures. Postcolonial experience usually creates ambiguous relationships, where colonialism is hated but not infrequently there is admiration for their culture (including religion). Conversion to world religion cannot simply be seen as the hegemony of the colonial, because usually there is religious syncretism which gives birth to a completely new practice. Conversion can also be seen from the perspective of religious/spiritual theory. This theory in many traditions of social sciences tends to be considered trivial. However, this theory is still important because a person's conversion experience is usually shaped by myths, rituals, and symbols of a particular tradition. (Rambo, 1999: 264). Religion also has images of people who are 'safe' and 'misguided'. A very strong category, so that people will feel like to be in the group of 'safe people'.

In order to fulfill the research objectives and contribute to the inter-religious studies repertoire, the theories that will be used as analytical tools in research are theories that related and can help to understand more deeply the matters of religious experience, the process of formation and construction of self and community (Lived Experience) and theories that can help to create understanding and dialogue

between various perspectives and ways of interpreting the world between different people or communities to make a better inter-religious relation and understanding.

1. Lived Experience Study

One of the figures who contributed or could even be considered as one of the pioneers of the study of "subjective" experiences in the tradition of the human sciences which had previously been discredited by the tradition of positivistic sciences was William James. William James was born in New York City, New York, United States, on January 11, 1842. William James was a psychologist who was very prominent and even considered the father of American psychology during the turn of the 19th century to the 20th century when a cultural upheaval in the United States took place (Marty, 2004: 34). William James came from a family that was quite respected and well-established economically. Together with several friends who included George Santaya, Jhon Dewey, and prominent semiotic figure Charles Sanders Pierce, William James was regarded as a generation that built American philosophy. The thought and philosophy of William James was greatly influenced by the tradition of pragmatic philosophy, the pragmatic philosophical thought was very pronounced in psychological thinking developed by James William, known as functional psychology (Ivie, 2006: 117).

In contrast to many psychological thinkers who preceded or were contemporary with William James who tended to have negative impressions and attitudes towards religious traditions, William James actually behaved positively towards various forms of religious experience. We can see this in one of the books

which can be considered as William James's magnum opus, entitled *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* The book is a collection of lecture material delivered by professor William James when he was a guest lecturer at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland which lasted between 1901 and 1902. This book discusses very broad and varied topics, especially those relating to various aspects and forms of human religiosity experiences such as mystical experience, conversion, holiness experience and so on, which are mostly reviewed by James from a psychological perspective.

Religion and religious experience are two key terms in James's work (Bastaman, 2004: 23). However, William James seems to have his own definition and understanding of the religion that he uses in limiting the topic of the problem in his book. Next is William James's definition of religion:

> 'Religion, therefore, as i now ask you arbitrarily to take it, shall mean for us the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine. Since the relation may be either moral, physical, or ritual, it is evident that out of religion in the sense in which we take it, theologies, philosophies, and ecclesiastical organizations may secondarily grow' (James, 2009:27).

From this definition, we see that William James's understanding of religion more focused on religion from aspects of personal experience or individual religion that are often underestimated by many studies of religion. This is what was criticized by William James for the tradition of medical materialism in his time which reduced and discredited personal religious experience simply as 'excessive

mental tension is only about diathesis[8] as a result of deviant behavior various glands that are commonly studied physiology (James, 2004: 72). For James, medical materialism arguments are unreasonable, arbitrary and too generalizing. According to James, medical materialism has no physiological theory to explain the conditions of its favorite mind, which might be justified in it. The absence of theoretical arguments for reducing religious experience has become merely a physiological phenomenon, makes the arguments of medical materialism for James to be illogical and inconsistent. (James, 2004: 73-74).

Broadly speaking, William James divided religion into two categories, namely institutional religion and personal religion. Institutional religion according to James is a religious aspect that is related to worship and sacrifice, procedures carried out in dealing with the Divine, theology and ceremonies and religious organizations. Meanwhile, personal religion is the inner character of man himself, such as awareness, loneliness, helplessness, and a sense of incompleteness experienced by humans (James, 2004: 89-90). In short, institutional religion is religion as an organization, religion as an authority, a set of laws and rules can be said to be rigid. While personal religion is religion in terms of the unique experience that is felt by humans when they relates to the divine.

William James is more friendly towards personal religion or religion as a personal experience and even the overall theme in the book The Varieties of

[8] Diathesis is a state of the body that makes body tissues react extraordinary to certain external stimuli, which make one's tissues more sensitive to certain diseases (James, 2004: 72).

Religious Experience only addresses the theme of personal religion and ignores institutional religion. Religion according to James, should not be based on the doctrine of the church (or other religious authorities), but must be based on human religious experience (Ivie, 2006: 118). James argues that personal religion shows itself as more fundamental than theology and ecclesiasticalism. Religion, James continued, after experiencing establishment, lived above tradition (institutional religion), while personal religion was primordial because the founders of every religion such as Moses, Christ, Muhammad, Buddha and others initially gained their spiritual power from direct relations with the Divine.

As stated earlier, the topic of James's discussion was related to religious experience very diverse. But what will be my focus is James's discussion of religious conversion which became the center of the discussion in my research. James defines conversion as quoted below:

> "To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion, to gain an assurance, are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities" (James, 2009:145).

From this definition, we can see that conversion presupposes change both in terms of ways of thinking and how people act in conversion. That change comes through a crisis that changes his life's goals and interests. The person who is said to convert to religion "means ideas that previously existed at the edge of his

consciousness now occupy a central position, and that religious goals become the routine center of his energy (James, 2004: 290).

In analyzing the phenomenon of conversion experience, James gives many examples of experiences of people who carry out conversions in great detail from various documents and sources, but it is not the place here to re-show the examples given by James. According to James at first there were two things in the mind of the person who made the conversion. First, the sense of incompleteness or error that exists at the present time, the feeling of 'sinning' from which one wants to be free, and second, there is a new positive ideal concept that he wants to achieve (James, 2004: 303).

According to Starbuck as quoted by William James, there are two types of conversions, namely, type conversions due to willpower (volitional) and type of conversion through submission (self-surrender). The two types are instead conflicting, but are interconnected. In type through volition, regenarative change usually takes place slowly, and is realized from a gradual arrangement of a new set of moral and spiritual habits. When a person's willingness has been maximized to the maximum unity he seeks, so this is where the type of conversion through submission takes place. In other words, submission is absolutely necessary. In many cases of conversion according to Starbuck, relief will not come at all until the person who converts stops fighting the will of conversion, and makes an effort towards the direction he wants (James, 2004: 300-302).

James realized that religiosity experiences were diverse and not identical. The discourse about pluralism can be considered as his significant contribution to metaphysics, and in the psychological disciplines that James is involved in, Identity pluralism is a marker of his psychological thinking (Strout, 1971:149). For James, we cannot understand how it is possible for individuals who depart from different conditions and resources to have fully identical functions and tasks. No two people have problems that are completely identical, so we also can't provide identical problem solving. Everyone gets a certain part of facts and problems, and they must deal with it in a unique way that fits their context and needs (James, 2004: 622-623).

At present, we may easily underestimate and accuse James's argument as ordinary, but in his time such a pattern of thought can be said to be very progressive and revolutionary considering the dominance of idealistic thinking that developed during his lifetime. James acknowledges the unique circumstances that are very likely to exist in the context of different people, and James argues that the best attitude for others in assessing such diverse religious experiences is to tolerate them (James, 2004: 624). If we want to capture the essence of religion, then we must view feelings and behavior as more constant elements (James, 2004: 635).

William James criticizes the traditions of materialism and idealism which have a tendency to glorify certain orders, concepts, contexts and perspectives in seeing the world while negating and rejecting other worldviews, especially if they relate to aspects of religion and subjectivity (experience) that dominate the

dynamics of science at that time. James said that often "People who are called scientists are people who are very materialistic, at least throughout their time working in science. So that overall science opposes the opinion that calls for religion to be recognized its existence. And antipathy or negative attitudes towards religion echoed in all traditions of science in James's time, even in the science of religion itself (James, 2004: 626). The criticism of William James is still felt today where religion is often regarded as a marker of backwardness, irrationality, emotional, unproductive, and a number of other bad images. This makes religion tends to be marginalized and suppressed simply as something that can only appear in private space. Religion must not be much involved or exposed in the public sphere let alone be involved in socio-political space and government regulation for these reasons.

As a thinker, William James was a pragmatic thinker, something that is recognized by himself. James believes that the "pragmatic way of practicing religion is a deeper method. This method gives the body and soul to religion. This method allows it to claim that it has a number of characteristics from the realm of reality (James, 2004: 626). William James's pragmatism philosophy made him not see religion by orthodox thinking. Pragmatic thinking style made James reject institutional religion that tends to be closed. James said that the important influence of religion in everyday history and human life is something that is can not pragmatically negated or rejected (Budmen, 1957: 291). Religion has proven that it is useful for human life, because religion is productive and has a real effect on the

dimensions of human life. Question like does God really exist? How does He exist? What is God really? and other such questions were not of concern to William James and for him the question was irrelevant. For James, the purpose of religion is not God but human life itself, a wider, richer and more fulfilling life. Religious encouragement is love for life itself (James, 2004: 637).

William James's appreciation and his pragmatic philosophy in general towards personal religious experience and differences in identity and things that are the context for the formation of diverse and different identities opens the door to creating openness to recognize and respect the position of others, their particularity, and different worldviews. James said that the world of consciousness we experience today is only one of many worlds of consciousness that exist. Not only that, the other world of consciousness must also contain various experiences that give meaning to our lives (James, 2004: 648). If appreciation and tolerance for a different worldview have occurred, then dialogue between communities and identities which is different and diverse as offered by more recent theoretical concepts from William James theory to create understanding and acceptance of the others in order to create a better and quality life become more possible.

2. Bakhtin's Dialogism

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin was born on November 16, 1895 in Orel, a medium-sized town south of Moscow (Holquist, 2002:1). Bakhtin studied higher education at the University of St. Petersburg and in 1918, he left the university at the height of the Bolshevjk Revolution and settled in Vitebsk, where he worked as

a school teacher. He is also a prominent figure in The Bakhtin Circle, whose members are experts who combine formalist methods with ideological criticism in the study of language, discourse, aesthetics, and literature (Manshur, 2017: 236-237). Bakhtin is widely praised by people who receptive his thoughts, for example what was said by Todorov who called bahktin as 'the most important Soviet thinker in the area of the human sciences and the greatest literary theorist of the twentieth century', or Michael Holquist's statement which praised Bakhtin "as one of the leading thinkers of the 20th century "(de Man, 1983: 99).

Bagshaw (2103: 99) says that ‘Bakhtin’s work started in the fields of ethics and aesthetics, and continued by moving into the field of the history of literature, but his ideas have been claimed by writers to have applications in diverse corners of the humanities’. Bakhtin's tradition of thinking has inspired many cultural studies traditions which have developed afterwards, for example, the autoetography method described earlier also borrows the concept of Bakhtin dialogism as a method to be more open to different ideological positions.

Bakhtin's thought if we want to trace its roots, departs from the tradition of Marxism but in its development Bakhtin's theory moves towards the tradition of postmodernism thinking (Faruk, 2015: 213). According to Bakhtin (Faruk, 2015: 214) all ideological products are material objects, part of the practical reality that surrounds humans. Bahktin does recognize that ideological products have meanings and values, but these meanings and values can only manifest in the form of objects and material actions.

According to Bakhtin (Faruk, 2015: 218-219) natural sciences and human sciences are different. In the natural sciences, the object of study is an inanimate object which cannot reveal and communicate itself. While in the humanities, the object of study is not an object (inanimate object), but a subject that can express and communicate itself and thus study of humanities involves issues of reception and interpretation of other people's discourses. Because of the nature of such a subject, understanding the object can only be done with a form of dialogical understanding which includes assessment and response. Bahktin's argument can be seen as a criticism of the positivistic philosophical tradition which forces humanities studies to apply the method of natural science to be called 'academic' 'measurable', in short giving 'a sense of certainty'.

Dialogue or dialogism is an important term in Bakhtin's thinking. For bakhtin understanding of ‘self’ is dialogic, through relations with other. Dialogue is fundamental. Dialogue helps someone understand how relationships work, understanding about oneself can only happen and have meaning if placed in relation to the other. The relation between self / other is a relation of simultaneity. Simultaneity is related to a sense of similarity and difference in space and time. Bakhtin thinking indeed cannot be separated from the concepts of space and time (Holquist, 2002: 18).

Dialogism argues that all meanings are relative in the sense that meaning appears only as a result of the relationship between two people (bodies) that occupy simultaneous but different spaces. What is meant by the body can be in physical

form, but also can be a political body and a way of thinking (ideology). Bakhtin says that reality is always experienced, not only felt, from a certain position. Bakhtin understands position in kinetic terms as a situation, an event to be self (Holquist, 2002: 19). One can see things behind me that I cannot see, and I can see things behind him that he or she cannot see. According to Bakhtin (Holquist, 2002: 20), we both basically do the same thing, but from different places, even though we are on the same occasion, the event is different for each of us. Our place is different not only because our bodies occupy different positions outside, physical space, but also because we perceive the world and each other from different perspectives or point of view in space / time. So, at a very basic level, dialogism is a name not only for dualism, but for diversity needed in human perception (Holquist, 2002: 21).

Bakhtin respects and recognizes differences, even differences are a way of interpreting oneself. Humans are in fact different, and become valuable because of these differences. The concept of Bakhtin's dialogism provides an opportunity to appreciate more the position and perspective of others. for Bakhtin, existence events are "unified" events, because even if it happens on a unique site, these sites are never complete themselves. They are never in the sense of being alone. They need other people to have meaning. "Being" for Bakhtin then is, not just an event, but an event that is shared. Being is a simultaneity; it is always co-being (Holquist, 2002: 24).

Bakhtin built his dialogism theory from his research on language and literature. According to Bahktin (Faruk, 2015: 224), ‘each speech is oriented

towards a social horizon, composed of semantic and evaluative elements. Each speech falls into a type of discourse defined by a horizon. In the language there is no word that is neutral or does not belong to anyone. All languages are scattered, penetrated by intentions. Because of the consciousness that lives in it, language is not a system of abstract normative forms, but rather a concrete heterological opinion of the world. Each word shows traces of a profession, a genre, a particular human being, a certain time and generation.

Bakhtin criticized the tradition of linguistic studies developed by Saussure, Bakhtin diverting attention from the abstract system of language to the concrete speech of individuals in certain social contexts. Language must be seen as an inherently 'dialogical': language can be understood only in terms of an unavoidable orientation towards others (Eagelton, 1996: 101). The language of Bakhtin is not just a neutral sign system but a very diverse field of conflict of interest. For Bakhtin (Eagelton, 1996: 102), language is a field of ideological conflict, not a monolithic system; indeed signs are a very material ideological media, because without them there are no values or ideas that can exist. Bakhtin respects what can be called 'relative autonomy' of language, the fact that it cannot be reduced to a mere reflex of social interest; but he insisted that no language was not caught up in definite social relations, and that this social relationship in turn was part of a broader political, ideological and economic system. Words are 'multi-accent' and they are always the words of one particular human subject for another, and this practical context will form and shift its meaning. For Bakhtin (Eagelton, 1996: 106), all

languages, just because it is a matter of social practice, cannot be avoided through judgment. Words not only show objects but also imply attitudes towards them: the tone where you say 'give me the book' can indicate how you look at me, yourself, the book and our present situation.

According to Eagleton (1996:102), ‘Bakhtin's theory of language laid the foundation for a materialist theory of consciousness itself. Human consciousness *was* the subject's active, material, semiotic intercourse with others, not some sealed interior realm divorced from these relations; consciousness, like language, was both 'inside' and 'outside' the subject simultaneously. Language was not to be seen either as 'expression', 'reflection' or abstract system, but rather as a material means of production, whereby the material body of the sign was transformed through a process of social conflict and dialogue into meaning.

Bakhtin's dialogism concept will be used to encourage better understanding and dialogue among Sunni and Shia groups in Indonesia. as Bakhtin argued, appreciation of the others is only possible if we understand each other's position, uniqueness, similarities and differences. Deeper understanding, intense dialogue and interaction can open more understanding among Sunni and Shia groups, something that seems to have not been done much because of the pressure on the differences between the two groups as an antagonistic group.

B. Research Design and Method

1. Research Design

This study will use autoethnography as a research design. Autoethnography is an approach used in a study or writing that aims to describe and analyze systematically (graphy) an individual experience (auto) in order to understand a cultural experience (ethno). Autoethnographic research challenges the canon tradition that is common in how to conduct research and how to represent 'the others', autoethnography also opposes the view that a study must be as neutral as possible, autoethnography views research as something that is political from the very beginning, the realization that research is political is intended so that autoethnographic research can provide space for the voices or perspectives of minority groups which often marginalized by large narratives so that better life and social justice can be realized (Ellis et al., 2011).

The autoethnographic approach gives space to marginal narratives, marginal group narratives or even personal experiences which are often trivializing and considered as do not determine by the hegemony of universalism and dominant narratives. In the autoethnographic approach, marginal narratives and personal experiences are given opportunities to emerge and express their perspectives. Autoethnographic approach and analysis trying to trace how a person or community group knows, experiences, names, and interprets personal experiences and cultural experiences. Through the autoethnographic approach, experiences is used to connect between ourselves, others, culture, politics and social research itself.

Adams, Jones, and Ellys in their book entitled *Autoethnography* (2015) suggest that autoethnography is a research method that contains the following elements:

- "Uses a research's personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences.
- Acknowledge and value a researcher's relationships with others.
- Uses deep and careful reflection –typically referred to as "reflexivity"- to name and interrogate the intersection between self and society, the particular an the general, the personal and the politics.
- Shows 'people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles.
- Balances intellectual and methodological rigor, emotion, and creativity.
- Strive for social justice and make life better" (Adams, Jones, dan Ellys, 2015:2).

The development of the Autoethnographic approach might be said to be new in the tradition of the social sciences. Based on intellectual experience presented by Adam et al. (2015), autoenography only developed as an alternative method of research around the 1960s and 1970s. According to Adam et al, there are three interrelated things that contribute to the formation of Autoethnographic studies. All three are (1) changes in ideas about ideal research, which emerge an awareness of the limitations of 'scientific knowledge' which has an impact on the emergence of

appreciation for, personal narrative, story, the literary and the aesthetic, emotion, and the body. (2) increasing attention to issues related to ethics and politics in research and representation activities. (3) increasing awareness of the importance of social identity and identity politics.

2. Changes Perspective and Ideal Concepts about Social Research

In the positivistic tradition which has long dominated the research of social sciences, personal experience, storytelling, emotion, and the body tend to be considered 'feminine' and unpredictable, and therefore can be a barrier to producing an objective and rational research (Adam et al, 2015: 8). Positivistic tradition alienates aspects of human life such as emotions, body, and personal experience to the most peripheral places, whereas according to Carolyn Ellis these aspects are an integral part of a social research that is intertwined in the interactions of researchers with their participants.

Social research in the image of the positivistic tradition is directed to be able to produce a universal truth claim, have pretensions to create claims of stable and definite knowledge about the dynamics of human life and various aspects of their culture. The spirit of universalism in the positivistic tradition also makes local knowledge less appreciated so that social research often tends to be biased with a very hegemonic and dominant colonialist perspective. The researcher dominates the representation and interpretation of reality, culture, subject or community that he researches while the perspectives, emotions, and so on of the members of the community he researched are less well-placed (Adam et al., 2015: 9-10).

Critics towards the positivistic tradition make researchers in the human science trying to reformulate various approaches in social science research that are realistic, more honest and responsible in how they represent the community or personal experience of 'the others' by promoting dialogue, and respecting their particularity and personal experience. One of the many approaches or new perspectives in the research of social sciences is autoethnography.

3. Attention to Problem of Ethics and Politics

The positivistic research tradition as discussed has attempted to produce research that is neutral and value-free. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to take distance and as much as possible not stand in a certain political position in order to be 'neutral'. This positivistic philosophy was criticized by many newer traditions of thought such as postmodernism and postcolonialism. For these tradition of thought, there is no neutral position. Everyone has their own political position. Everyone, as long as he/she is part of a particular society, then the way he/she views, thinks, behaves, and acts will be greatly influenced by various things that shape him/her, whether it is education, social class, religion, culture, and so on.

Autoethnography as a form of criticism of the ways of traditional social research (positivistic) from the beginning realized the political position of a study and accommodated it. Even Autoethnographic research has chosen a clear and firm political position since the beginning because the aim of autoethnography is to give place to minority groups and communities whose voices and aspirations are rarely

heard and given a place. Dialogical ways are pursued with the aim of gaining a complex understanding of the others to create a better concept of community life.

Another issue that also gets autoethnographic attention is the issue of ethics. Traditional ethnography according to Adam et al (2015: 11) usually works as a documentary, ethnographic researchers enter into their field study (culture, society, community, etc.), make observations, engage in daily life and community activities that he/she researches, makes notes, and publish publications relating to the 'subject' he/she studies. The results of the publication or practice of representation carried out on the studied community are very rarely shared with the members of the community that being studied. So, there is power of authority and a way of representation dominated by traditional ethnographic researchers. This according to Adam, et al. (2015) Is an unethical practice.

Facing such ethics issues, Conquergood (in Adam et al., 2015: 14) offers a model of dialogue to be applied in ethnographic studies. The purpose of this dialogism model is to provide space for both researchers and the other (participant) to discuss, ask questions and debate each other's arguments. With dialogic model, it is expected to create respect for differences in experience, identity and culture. With the dialogism model, it is expected that the subjects involved in research (researchers and participants) can understand each other and recognize the possibility of their different perspectives, political positions, and world of view.

4. Awareness of the Importance of Social Identity and Politics of Identity

The concept of identity according to Chris Barker in his book Cultural Studies; Theory and Parctice (2005: 220) consists of self-identity and social identity. Self identity is a concept that we hold about ourselves, while the expectations and opinions of others towards us form what is called social identity. The meaning of being someone is entirely social and cultural. Therefore, identity is entirely a social product and is not present outside of representation and acculturation. In other words, affirmation of self-identity is always related to relations and recognition from other people and/or other groups. Stuart Hall (1996: 2) explains identity politics as the politics of location. This means that identity politics places individuals at certain locations (social reality) that have been deliberately constructed. In other words, identity politics is an understanding that individual identities are based on the place or position where the individual is placed (place-based identity).

Characteristics of identity politics refers to the construction of "differences", because the role of identity makes a person or group different from others, therefore identity politics is often also called politics of difference. Identity politics are defined as concepts and political movements whose focus is differences as their main political category. Besides identity politics is closely related to the idea of the suppression of social groups related to their identity based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and so on.

The spirit of autoethnography is to give place to the voices that are silenced to create a more democratic life for all groups of society. Autoethnography offers a

research method that accommodates personal experience, identity, relationships, and culture. Autoethnography provides space for us to understand how a particular social position and identity influences and shapes how one reads, writes, researches, and evaluates their experiences (Adam et al 2015: 17-18). Autoethnography is one method of research that recognizes the subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher‘s influence on their research rather than hiding it and saying such things do not exist (Ellis et al., 2011: 2).

Autoethnography might be categorized into what Paula Saukko calls 'new ethnography'. As an approach in human research "New Ethnography" strives to be more honest with lived experience of the other people. New ethnography emerged as a critique of positivistic ethnographic models which placed ethnographers very dominant in ways of representation, categorization, or even labeling certain subjects that they examined to support the theoretical framework or their projects without re-examining whether the subject they studied did perceive themselves as the traditional ethnographic researchers imagined (Saukko 2003: 55-56).

Departing from these criticisms, new ethnography tries to find a more just method of seeing how people see or perceive themselves and their world. Awareness that it is not possible to fully capture different life experiences objectively makes new ethnography use a phenomenological and poststructuralist approach as an analytical method to reflect to what extent our experience is the same and different from other people's experiences. The phenomenology tradition and poststructuralism are indeed very sharp in criticizing the positivism tradition in

the social sciences. So, new ethnography provides open space for dialogue between the perspective of the researcher and the perspective of the person being studied (Saukko 2003: 57). New Ethnography also develops study models and writing models that aim to be more honest with the emotional and bodily aspects of knowledge. In his book Saukko confers three main principles that characterize a new ethnographic study, namely: truthfulness of lived realities, critical self-reflection on one's own commitments, and attentiveness to multiple lived realities or voices (polyvocality) (Saukko 2003: 56).

In order for truthfulness to differ lived realities, the practice of new ethnographic research is often characterized by various research strategies, such as dialogue and collaboration. This is intended to increase the participants involvement in research processes and products. Saukko, for example, shows us the two kinds of positions of new ethnographic research conducted by Lather and Smithies that examine the experiences of women with HIV AIDs, while other studies are Ginsburg's study on women's perspectives on pro-life and pro-choice women related to the issue of abortion. Both studies show two different positions. Lather and Smithies take the position to advocate the voices, experiences and hopes of women with HIV AIDS and try to provide support and information to the society about women with these conditions along with all the complexity of their lives. Meanwhile, Ginsburg took a different position by trying to be more balanced, Ginsburg did not advocate for the interests of her research subjects. This is due to

the subject of Ginsburg research is related to two groups that have different views on a problem and involve a fairly strong political tension (Saukko, 2003: 58-62).

Another characteristic of the new ethnographic research mentioned by Saukko is self-reflexivity that aims to increase the awareness of researchers regarding the social and cultural conditions that shape the understanding and perspective of the people or society they studied that might be radically different from the social and cultural conditions. This is actually not something special that only new ethnography uses or initiates it, in traditional ethnography methods like this already exist that are intended to prevent possible biases by researchers. What's different is that new ethnography opposes the possibility that someone or researcher is not biased, new ethnography views self-reflexivity as a way of awareness of the position of researchers so that he can be open and accept perspectives and ways of understanding the world that are different from his perspective (Saukko, 2003: 62).

The last characteristic of autoethnographic research is polyvocality. Every study of personal experience must understand that lived experiences and realities are many and varied as Saukko pointed out in her research on the experience of anorexia (2008). Studying life experiences in various forms according to Saukko (2003: 65) can enrich new ethnography in two ways, namely (1) make researchers able to act more justly towards the reality under study, and explain it from the perspective of various stakeholders and interest groups involved in it, and can (2) compare several realities that may be different and conflicting. This is useful for overcoming the temptation to judge a particular experience as more 'true' than

others so that researchers can be more just but still consider their particularities. Furthermore, Saukko explained that polyvocality is not only related to the perspective of different individuals or groups, but all kinds of different experiences even in one group.

In relation to the use of the autoethnography method and the researcher's position and relationship with the research subjects or informants as assumed in an autoethnographic research, I need to emphasize that even though I also made a religious conversion from Sunni to Shia, most of the informants in this research are people who I didn't know them personally, so I didn't have any personal and emotional ties with the informants.

The process of conversion and 'spiritual enlightenment' that I experienced was completely individual and independent. I have never been involved with any particular Shia community, in fact there were very few Shia-affiliated communities that I knew of at the time I started this research. The intensity of my intimacy with various Shia communities only occurred during the research and they no longer acted closed and considered me as a complete outsider.

At the beginning of the research, my condition of not knowing and not having any relationship with most of the informants made it quite difficult for me to find informants who were willing to share their conversion experiences. However, I was able to overcome this problem thanks to the help of several informants and local Shia figures who bridged communication with various Shia communities so that the data collection and interview process could be carried out.

C. Method

This type of research is field research which carried out by qualitative research methods. The method used in this approach is an in-depth interview and field observation. This research uses lived experience and discourse This approach was chosen because the aspect of life experience is the focus of this research, namely on the experience of the subject/actor in relation to the power of discourse that works in their social environment. The research methodology described as follows:

1. Research location

This research was carried out in four cities in Indonesia, namely the cities of Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Makassar. These cities were chosen to represent the Shia population in Indonesia.

2. Data and the Sources of Data

The data in this study is information about the conversion experience from Sunni to Shia obtained from various sources. The data found were analyzed based on the theoretical approach and perspective used to find the aspects that are the focus of the research. The sources of data in this study are people or communities that convert from Sunni to Shia or certain institutions that play a role directly or indirectly in the conversion process.

3. Data Collection Techniques

To collect data, several methods are used, namely:

3.1. Observation

Observation is done to see factually the object under study. The intended observation is to observe the people who carry out 'religious conversion' from Sunni to Shia and in order to find out how the conversion process takes place, the social and psychological conditions that might lead to conversion, differences in religious understanding after conversion and responses they might receive after conversion. For problems responding to conversion events, observations will also be made of people who have relations with people who convert. Among the things observed in this study are ritual activities such as prayer gatherings (such as Kumail and *tawassul* prayers), ashura commemorations, as well as religious studies carried out by various Shia communities. Observations were carried out both online and by visiting these activities organized by various Shia communities in the city where this research was conducted.

3.2. Interview

Interviews in this study was conducted with research subjects consisting of people who have experience in converting from Sunni to Shia in the four cities that are the research locations namely the of Makassar, Bandung, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta. This method pretends to trace information as deeply as possible so that what is expected can be found. Interviews was conducted with informants from various backgrounds such as students, lecturers, employees, religious leaders, members of various types of organizations affiliated with Shia, and families of people who convert. Interviews was also conducted by considering the balance of the gender aspects of the respondents.

Interviews were conducted in mid-2019 to early 2020. Throughout the research, 100 people were interviewed, with around 20-25 informants in each research location. The selection of informants was based on consideration of the informants' religious background prior to conversion, education, and gender. Of 100 informants, 87 of them were men, and the other 13 were women.

3.3. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is carried out as a medium for mutual experiences and discussions among people who have carried out conversions from Sunni to Shia. FGDs were also conducted to shorten the interview time. To guide the FGD, a guide question was prepared. guide question intended as 'guidance' and are not rigid. Other questions are very likely to arise in the interview with respondents depending on the response or the answers they provide to find data about their religious experience that is unique, specific, and more in-depth. Considering the difficulty of gathering conversion perpetrators at the same time and in the same place, throughout this research the FGD was only carried out once, on January 17 2020 at ICC Jakarta, which was attended by 9 participants.

3.4. Documentation

Documentation is intended to collect data in the form of event records either in the form of writing, images, visualization data and so on.

4. Data Processing

The data that will be obtained from field research in the manner described in the research methodology (observation, interviews, FGD, and documentation)

will then be described to understand, interpret and explain the experience of conversion from Sunni to Shia in Indonesia.

D. Research Structure

This research consists of six chapters. Chapter I contains a discussion of the research background and literature review. Chapter II contains the theoretical framework, design, and research methods used in this dissertation. Chapter III discusses several themes including the roots of disputes and differences in Sunni and Shia religious constructions, the history of the existence of Shia groups in Indonesia, as well as the response of the government and various religious groups to the existence of Shia in Indonesia. Chapter IV discusses the experience of conversion from Sunni to Shia which is divided into four conversion gates, namely the gates of philosophy, history, Irfan/Sufism, and fiqh. Chapter V discusses the challenges faced by converts such as the resistance they may experience because of their Shia identity. This chapter also contains several controversial issues in Sunni-Shia relations, namely issues related to *taqīyah*, mut'ah marriage, and *wilāyatul faqīh*. Chapter VI contains the conclusion of the research.

CHAPTER III

SHIA IN INDONESIA AND ITS TENSIONS

A. Genealogy of Sunni-Shia Tensions

Before explaining the reasons underlying one's choices for conversion from Sunni to Shia, it is important for us to at least know the fundamental differences (both theological and political) between Sunni and Shia. This section is intended to explore the historical roots and genealogies of Sunni-Shia tensions. Changes or movements of religious understanding within the same religious tradition (intra-religious conversion) are usually not too problematic because they still share identities, symbols and rituals that are more or less the same, but this does not seem to be fully valid in the Sunni-Shia context, because there is a contestation of authority in defining and constructing 'the true islamic' concept. Knowing of these basic differences can provide a better understanding of why religious conversion from Sunni to Shia tends to be considered problematic, there is an impression that these two groups are contesting each other, even under certain circumstances sometimes negating each other.

I need to emphasize here that what I mean by Shia in this study is the Shia *iṭnā ʿašarīyah* (Twelfth Imam Shia) or also known as *Imāmīyah* or *Ǧaʿfarīyah*. This assertion in my opinion is important not only in order to distinguish it from other Shia groups such as the Shia *Zaidīyah* and Shia *Ismāʿilīyah* but also the fact that all informants in this study are adherents of the Shia *Iṭnā ʿAšarīyah*. Meanwhile, the

term Sunni referred to in this study is the dominant theological group in Islam that was built based on the theological construction of Abul Hasan Ali Ibn Ismail al-Ashari (Ash'ariyah) and Abu Mansur Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Maturidi (Maturidiyah) (Nasution, 2012). This Sunni group emerged as a response to another Sunni group, Mu'tazilah and Shia. In the development of history, Ash'ariyah theology then dominated the Sunni world and got rid of Mu'tazilah. Almost all groups who call themselves Sunni today are groups that make the Ash'ariyyah and Maturidiyah thought the foundation of their theological beliefs. In the field of law and daily religious rites, Sunni groups follow one of the four schools of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), namely the Hanafi school of thought, the Maliki school, the Shafi'i school, and the Hanbali school.

The tension and competition between Sunnis and Shias in Islam may be one of the tensions between religious groups that are intense, massive and have lasted for more than fourteen centuries and will still be an important instrument in determining the face of Islam in the future. To trace the tension genealogy between these two groups, we must go back to the early history of Islam especially after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 AD which is considered to be the initial period of Sunni-Shia tension (Hazleton, 2009). The discussion on history cannot be released to understand the tension of the two groups, because it is in the context of the differences that Sunni-Shia differences were formed, produced and reproduced throughout history to this day.

Sunnis and Shia are the two main theological groups with the largest number of adherents in Islam today. Some researchers give further categories based on differences in the preferences of certain aspects in Islam such as Sufism and Wahhabism (Stump, 2008). However, I did not use this category because both Sufism and Wahhabism are still forms of derivation from Sunnism. At present, the Sunni group is the majority group in Islam with around 85-90 percent of the total number of Muslims worldwide or around 1.4 billion of the total Muslim population according to the 2009 Pew Research Center data (Moore, 2015). Meanwhile, the rest are Shia followers ranging from 10-15 percent (Blanchard, 2009; Pinault, 2010). Because of their minority numbers, knowledge and research on Shia was very little known and given attention to western scholars until after the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979. The lack of research on Shia and their communities was partly due to the lack of encounters with Shia Islam, even the majority Sunnis are still many do not know Shia objectively, so the judgments about this group are often unbalanced. Because of the lack of knowledge and understanding of Islamic Shia both by scholars and by adherents of religion so that Vali Nasr came to name the Shia group in his famous book *'The Shia revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future'* as 'the other of Islam' (Nasr, 2007).

Sunni-Shia share many similarities and differences both theologically and politically. One of the main and central differences is the construction of Islamic leadership after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The word 'Shia' etymologically means a loyal follower or supporter. In terminology, Shia is defined

as a group of people who agree on something and share certain beliefs (al-Musawi, 1996). So, etymologically the word Shia is a neutral term used to name a group, but in its development, the use of the word Shia then becomes more synonymous to name a group that follows the prophet and the ahlulbait (Ali Bin Abi Talib and his descendants) both in terms of political support and as a source of legal and religious authority (Aslan, 2005).

Reza Aslan (2005) mentioned that the divisions of Muslims (Shia and Sunni) after Muhammad's death were caused by political contestation and not because of theological differences. However, it cannot be denied that disputes between the two groups involved both the political and theological aspects, regardless of whether the political and theological aspects had existed from the beginning, or theological differences emerged later as a consequence of differences in political understanding of how the *'ummah'* should be built.

The political and theological dimensions, for example, appear in the historical claims of the birth of the Shia group. In the Shia claim, the existence of this group has existed even since the time of the Prophet Muhammad was still alive, not merely as a response to the polemic of the succession of leadership after Muhammad's death (al-Musawi, 1996; Shadr, 2013). To support this claim, the Shia group refers to several hadiths of the prophets which among them say that 'Shia Ali are the ones who have won'. Some of the companions of the prophet who were considered to be the earliest Shia group Ali were Salman al-Farisi, Abu Dzar al-Gifari, Ammar bin Yasir, and Miqdad bin Amr (S. M. al-Musawi, 2009).

The main and most fundamental difference between Shia and Sunnis is polemic and contestation about who has the right to take over the leadership after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. The Shia assume that the prophet would not be indifferent to the future of the community (*ummah*) which he just initiated by not preparing prospective successors who will continue the ideals of the Islamic struggle. The notion that the heirs of the post-prophet leadership can be chosen by democratic deliberation is also rejected with the argument that such a thing has no strong foundation in Islam, and that the fact that the election of Abu Bakr in Saqifah was attended by only a small number of prophet friends according to the Shia reinforces their argument about the lack of historical roots in legitimating the election of the prophet's successor by way of deliberation. The absence of a standard way of choosing 'Islamic leaders' was also reflected in the way of the succession of leadership after the first Caliph which is done in a variety of ways. Umar bin Khattab was elected through the mandate of the first Caliph, while Usman bin Affan was chosen by a committee which consist of six people, while Ali bin Abi Talib was elected through the oath (*baiʿah*) of the people to him, Muawiyah took power after compromising with Hasan bin Ali, while Muawiyah also created a new pattern of leadership by passing down the sultanate to his son Yazid, who initiated a monarchical government in Islamic history (Shadr, 2013).

Sunnis and Shia do have different perspectives on the construction of Islamic leadership. Sunnis view Islamic leadership as profane. According to them Muhammad never specifically appointed the person who would succeed him.

Instead of appointing certain people as successors, Muhammad during his life built a strong community (*ummah*) and had bequeathed his principles (Syariati, 1985). For Sunnis, a leader or the caliph does not have to have a spiritual qualification or some kind of divine legitimacy like Muhammad, a caliph in the Sunni image is only a political leader whose job is to guarantee the sustainability of the religious life of the Muslim community while directing the political interests of Islam. To support this argument, Muhammad's words are often used that "my people will never agree in error" (Nasr, 2007).

The Shia view Islamic leadership in a different way. For Shia, Islamic leadership is not just a profane political case, but a divine case that includes leadership both political leadership and primarily spiritual. With such a perspective, Shia demand that post-Muhammad's Islamic leadership cannot be given randomly to individuals who do not meet certain qualities. For Shia, the post-Muhammad Islamic leadership is an exclusive right that is only possessed by Ahlulbait Muhammad (people of the household)[9]. Based on the perspective which considers that Islamic leadership is divine, the Shia rejects the legitimacy of the first three

[9] Ahlulbait is a term used to refer to the family of the prophet which is limited to Muhammad, his daughter Fatimah, his son-in-law and cousin Ali bin Abi Talib, and two sons of Ali and Fatimah, namely Hasan and Husain. The restriction of members included in ahlulbait is usually based on the hadith of the prophet known as the hadith Kisa '. This hadith exists in both Shia and Sunni literature such as in the collection of Sahih Muslim hadith which is an authoritative hadith book in the Sunni tradition. The Kisa hadith relates that the Prophet took a large wool cloth (kisa) and then invited Ali, Fatimah, Hasan, and Husayn to participate in the shade of the cloth and Muhammad said "Dear Allah! This is my ahlulbait, then a verse from the Surah 33:33 comes down ‘verily Allah wants to remove the stain from you oh ahlulbait and purify you as holy as possible. Quoted from htttp; // www.iranicaonline.org/article/al-e Aba-the family of the cloak.

caliphs which the Sunnis labeled the *Ḫulāfah ar-'Rašidūn* (The Rightly Guided). Shia argue that God cannot possibly entrust the fate of His religious future to ordinary people chosen by community members (Nasr, 2007).

Respect and obedience to the Ahlulbait of the prophet does indeed play an important role and even becomes the core of Shia theology. For Shia, obedience to ahlulbait is not just political support in the polemic of the succession of post-prophet leadership, but is the demand of Islamic theology itself based on the commands of the prophet himself to follow the ahlulbait after him (S. M. al-Musawi, 1994). In support of this argument, the Shia quoted a hadith known as the *ṯaqalain* hadith. The Hadith reads as below,

> "O people, bear in mind! It was near time for me to be called (by Allah SWT), and I will fulfill that call. Remember! I leave you two valuables. The first is the Book of Allah, in which there is light and guidance. The other is my Ahlulbait. I remind you, in the name of Allah, about my Ahlulbait! I remind you, in the name of Allah, about my Ahlulbait! I remind you, in the name of Allah, about my Ahlulbait (three times)" (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team, n.d., p. 5).

The above hadith is in the traditions of both Shia and Sunni traditions. This hadith is recorded in the *Kutub as-Sittah* (six hadith books) which are considered as authoritative hadith books in the Sunni tradition. According to Ibn Hajar Haitsami this hadith was narrated by more than 20 people so that it reached a degree of *mutawātir* hadith[10]. However, the Sunnis take another less popular version of this

[10] Mutawātir hadith is a hadith delivered by a large number of different people so that they are less likely to agree to lie about the content of the hadith.

hadith which says that the Prophet left two things namely the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Another argument that is usually used to legitimize the authority of ahlulbait in the Shia tradition is the *Safīnah* Hadith which says that "My Ahlulbait is like Noah's Ark. Whoever ascends into it survives, and whoever turns away from him perishes" (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team, n.d., p. 9)".

In contrast to Sunnis who assume that the Prophet never specifically appointed his successor, for the Shia the prophet has prepared a continuation and guardian of the prophetic tradition if one day he dies. According to Shia argument, the prophet has preached about who the successor is either explicitly or implicitly. And that person is his son-in-law and his own cousin, Ali bin Abi Talib.

The appointment and inauguration of Ali as a substitute for the Apostle in Shia arguments was conveyed on his way home after carrying out the *Wadaʿ Hağ* 'in a place between Mecca and Medina known as Ghadir Khumm. In that place, witnessed by thousands of friends of the prophet, the prophet led the prayer and preached that "Whoever I am as his/her leader (and more entitled to him/her than himself/herself) then Ali is his/her leader. "O Allah! Support those who support him, enemies of those who oppose him, help those who help him, and those who betray him are abandoned!" (Al-Ashifi, 2008: 18-19). In some traditions of the Shia community (including in Indonesia), Ali's inauguration at Ghadir Khumm is usually commemorated every year as Ghadir holiday *(Yaumul ġadīr)*.

Ahead of his death in sickness the prophet Muhammad, according to Shia beliefs, wanted to emphasize what he had conveyed in Ghadir Kum. In a tradition

known as the Thursday tragedy, it is said that the Prophet was about to deliver his last will by saying "give me a flat bone or paper and ink so that I can write a statement that will keep you from going astray after I leave." (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team: 311). The refusal of some of the Prophet's main friends, especially Umar bin Khattab, to give the paper and pen that the Prophet asked them to write his will and accuse the prophet of delirious because of his severe illness for the Shia was considered an effort that was planned to thwart Ali's succession because they knew that the prophet will testify about Ali's right as a leader of Islam after the prophet death.

In fact, Ali was not chosen to be the heir of the prophet. When Ali and other members of the *Banī Hāšim* (family clan of the Prophet) were still in mourning and taking care of the Prophet's funeral, a meeting was held in Saqifah and attended by a small number of friends chose Abu Bakr as the new Caliph. Immediately after knowing the results of the meeting, Ali and some members of the Bani Hasyim and some of the Prophet's friends refused to give *baiʿah* (a statement of loyalty) to Abu Bakr. Umar bin Khattab even had to threaten Ali and the *Banī Hāšim* to give his allegiance to Abu Bakr. Considering the benefit of the community (*ummah*), Ali finally gave his allegiance to Abu Bakr six months later. For Shia, Ali's allegiance to the first Caliph was proof that he knew and felt that the right of the caliphate was his absolute possession. Ali in the end did indeed hold the position of caliph, although he had to wait more than twenty-five years to get the position.

There are several reasons that are often put forward by both religious groups and academics to oppose the Shia argument about the absolute right of Ali bin Abi Talib as a Muslim leader post Muhammad. One argument that is even still often repeated until today is that Ali at that time was too young and inexperienced to be placed in a very important position as a Muslim leader. This argument is not entirely correct. Ali was probably young at that time - he was around thirty years old when Muhammad died, but Ali could not be said to be inexperienced. Ali was one of the first people to embrace Islam, during Muhammad's leadership in Medina, Ali acted as Muhammad's personal secretary, Ali also regularly became a substitute for the prophet if the prophet was not in Medina, Ali was a warlord and true warrior known as the lion of Allah (*Asadullah*), human king and so on. Another argument that strengthens Ali's right to Ali's leadership is the fact that Ali was not only supported by the Bani Hasyim clan but also supported by most Ansar groups represented by Bani Aws and Bani Khazraj, support for Ali was also given by the two main Quraish clans namely Banu Shams and Banu Abdul Manaf (Aslan, 2005:116).

Another important argument relating to Ali's qualification as Muhammad's successor is found in the prophetic tradition before the time of Prophet Muhammad. Giving leadership to the descendants or family is common in the prophetic tradition before Muhammad as the Prophet Abraham appointed his son Isaac and Ishmael as his heirs, as well as Isaac to Ya'qub, Moses to Aaron, David to Solomon and so on (Aslan, 2005:117). This position was even affirmed by Muhammad himself where he said that Ali's position in relations with himself was like the relationship between

the prophet Moses and the prophet Aaron, only there was no prophet after Muhammad (Tim Ahlul Bait Indonesia, 2012:136).

Not only differing views about who should be the heirs of Islamic leadership after the death of the prophet, Shia and Sunnis also differed views on the function of Islamic leaders. The concept of authority understood by Sunnis views Islamic leaders only as regulators of government administrators. Therefore, to be the ruler of an Islamic government does not require good spiritual and moral quality as long as the ruler can guarantee the stability and development of religious life. Religious affairs are given to religious scholars (the *ʿulamā*) and jurists. This concept of authority tends to be more egalitarian, because everyone has the opportunity to occupy the position of Islamic leader (Nasr, 2007:27-28).

The concept of Shia authority covers a broader dimension with the concept of Sunni authority which seems more secular. An Islamic leader in the Shia conception not only includes political leadership, but also includes spiritual leadership as well as Islamic legal authority. To become an Islamic leader requires moral quality, spiritual and divine legitimacy. For Shia, the duty as a Muslim leader is only the exclusive right of ahlulbait Muhammad. These different conceptions of leadership have an impact on the different theological principles that are typical of the Shia, namely the concept of *Imāmah*.

Islamic leaders according to Shia both in the time of Muhammad and afterwards were referred to as imams. Imam in the sense of Shia, is not like the Imam of *ṣālat*, the meaning of Imam in Shia covers a broader dimension. The

breadth of authority of a prophet's successor is reflected in the way Shia scholars define *Imāmah*. *Imāmah* according to them is a general responsibility for worldly and religious affairs. An imam as a prophet in the Shia conception cannot be chosen based on the decisions or conventions of a group of people, but is appointed based on the decree of God. The difference between a prophet and the imam after Muhammad lies in the conception that a prophet is appointed by God and has a direct relationship with God, while imams is appointed by a prophet based on orders from God (Mutahhari, 2012: 82-83).

An imam in the Shia conception is the guardian of the prophetic message. Prophethood indeed ended with the death of Muhammad, but the divine leadership through the *Imāmah* of the Ahlulbait prepared by Muhammad did not stop with the end of Muhammad's prophethood. According to Shia, Muhammad's prophetic phase which lasted for approximately twenty-three years was too short to be able to explain the law and information about Islam completely to all Muslims. Therefore, the prophet must have prepared someone or some people who get perfect knowledge about Islam to explain the teachings of Islam after the death of the prophet and those who are considered to get perfect knowledge about Islam from the prophet and prepared as guardians of religious affairs according to the Shia is Ali bin Abi Talib (Mutahhari, 2012: 83–84).

An Imam must be an expert in the field of religion, bearing in mind his duties as a source and reference of religious laws. The duty of the imam must be carried by someone who is not likely to make any mistakes. People who have such

qualities are called infallible (*maʿṣūm*). *Maʿṣūm* or Infallible literally meaning someone who is awake or guarded by the god of the potential to make mistakes (sins). The infallibility of an imam (like Ali ibn Abi Talib) is the same as the infallibility of a prophet. The Shia argue that it is impossible to imagine a prophet who sent and guided by God can do sin or mistakes and requires guidance from humans in carrying out their apostolic duties. If the *Imāmah* is to preserve the message of the Prophethood and explain the religion of God in detail, then an imam must be infallible as the infallibility of a prophet. (Mutahhari, 2012:88).

The Shia belief in the immorality of imams by some sunni groups is seen as a sign of excessive appreciation of the prophet's ahlulbait to a degree which according to the Sunnis exceeds the limits of reasonableness (Shihab, 2007: 106). Accusations of excessive respect by the Shia community to ahlulbait actually have the same impression of the Sunni defense of some companions of the prophet from Shia criticism which is sometimes also excessive. Sunnis indeed do not believe - if they do not consider the concept of infallibility as a concept that does not make sense - and requires an Islamic leader to have perfect spiritual qualities, even some of the caliphs who were used as the main figures of Islamic leadership by the Sunnis and named as *rashidun* never claimed this kind of spiritual position and even on several occasions admitted that they made a mistake.

The different perspectives on the construction of Islamic leadership, the function of Islamic leadership, as well as the figures who should carry out this task after the death of Muhammad go further to the difference in understanding and

evaluation of the Companions of the Prophet[11]. Sunnis in general generalize the companions of the prophet as just people *(udūl)* and can be used as a source of reference on religious matters. Meanwhile the Shia were critical of some of the Companions of the Prophet. Shia at least divide the Companions into three groups, first, the group of companions who are always loyal to the Prophet, never violate and refute the Prophet's orders. Second, the group of companions of the prophet who had committed an act that showed less loyalty to the prophet. And finally, the group of the prophet's companions, who are hypocritical *(munāfiq)*. Shias say that their argument about the classification of the group of the Companions of the Prophet is based on the Qur'an and Hadith which are well recorded in the hadith traditions that are recognized by Sunnis and Shias (al-Habsyi, 1991: 13-16).

Polemics relating to views of the Prophet's companions including the Prophet's wife can be considered quite central in the tension of Sunni and Shia relations. Shia criticism of the companions especially towards Abu Bakr, Umar bin Khattab, and Aisha by some Sunni groups as an insult to religious symbols and is often used as an argument to justify the assumption of Shia heresy. It is undeniable that there are some Shia who label hateful feelings towards some of the Prophet's companions. Responding to this issue, one of the contemporary Shia *marğa* ʿ[12] who

[11] In general, what is referred to as the Prophet's Companions is Muslims in the time of the Prophet who lived and have met the Prophet Muhammad even though only once. This category is general regardless of the quality of the closeness and intensity of the encounter with the prophet Muhammad.

[12] *Marğa* ʿ 'was a *muğtahid* (scholars) that fatwas followed by Shias, especially in the field of Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh). Quoted from http://id.mobile.wikishia.net

are also Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei explicitly said that it is forbidden for a Shia follower to revile the Sunni symbols, especially the Prophet's companions and wives. Such a thing is considered not to bring goodness and instead exacerbates the tension between Sunnis and Shias (Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, 2014:106).

Another difference between Sunni and Shia is the difference in perspective on the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an. Sunnis argue that the Qur'an is *kalamullah* (the word of Allah), and therefore the Qur'an is eternal, not created. The eternal meaning of the Qur'an is the word contained in the Qur'an while the writing, ink, and paper are of course created. Sunni views of the eternal or *qadim* of the Qur'an are based on their view of the unity between the essence of God and his deeds. This concept is contrary to other Sunni groups, ie Mu'tazilah who consider that the Qur'an is a creature. Meanwhile, Shia, though sometimes considered to have the same views with Mu'tazilah, are concerned with the views of the Qur'an, Meanwhile, Shia, though sometimes considered to have a common view with Mu'tazilah regarding to the view of the Qur'an, has its own views. Shias argue that the Qur'an is the word of God, the God revelation revealed to the prophet Muhammad. Although it does not explicitly say whether the Qur'an in their view is a creature or not, but the Shia divide between the Essence of God and the deeds of God. The essence of God without debate is *qadim* or eternal, while the deeds of God such as talking, seeing, giving fortune do not require that the act must be embedded in the perpetrators. Even an action requires an object (Rizvi, n.d.).

Another thing that is often accused by some Sunni groups is the assumption that Shia followers generally assume that the Qur'an currently in the hands of Muslims is an incomplete or has changed in the form of addition or subtraction. In Indonesia, propaganda like this in order to affirm allegations of Shia heresy can easily be found. For example, this can be seen in a book entitled "Knowing and Being Wary of Shia Irregularities in Indonesia, (*Mengenal dan Mewaspadai Penyimpangan Syiah di Indonesia*)" which is claimed to have been written by the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Writer Team, which says that the Shia believe that the Qur'an is not original, even if there are Shia scholars who say that the Qur'an that is currently authentic, it is considered no more than the practice of the Shia *taqīyah* to hide their true beliefs (Tim Penulis MUI Pusat, 2013). In an effort to support the argument that the Shia believe in the non-authenticity of the Qur'an, they refer to the authoritative Shia hadith book, al-Kafi, written by a major Shia scholar named Muhammad bin Ya'qub al-Kulaini.

It is undeniable that there are Shia groups who hold this view, especially the Shia from the *Akhbari* tradition. But generalizing that all Shia groups believe in the non-authenticity of the Qur'an is something that can be considered excessive. Shia groups, especially the Shia scholars *itsna ashariyah* generally believe in the Qur'an's authenticity. The issue of *tahrīf* -the alteration of the Qur'an- contained in the Shia book is merely a record contained in the enxylopedi of their hadith, not the belief of the Shia group. Similar hadiths are actually found in Sunni hadith books, especially in *Ṣahīh* Bukhari and *Ṣahīh* Muslim which are the most authoritative

hadith books in the Sunni world. Facts on the ground also confirm that the Shias do not have a qur'an that is different from the majority of Muslims (Sunni) as can be seen from the qur'an existing and printed in Iran as a country with majority Shia population that is no different from the Qur'an printed in others Muslim country such as those printed in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and so on (Shihab, 2007; Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, 2014).

Another difference between Sunnis and Shia lies in the debate about the concepts of predestination *(jabarīyah)* and free will *(Qadarīyah)*. The debate about these concepts can be considered as one of the earliest theological debates in the realm of Islamic theology. The debate about predestination and free will includes at least two discussions, which are about human and second about God and the universe. The discussion on predestination and free will also cannot be separated from discussions on the concept of divine justice (Muthahhari, 2009: 15).

In connection with the discussion of predestination and free wiil sunni divided into two groups namely Ash'ari on one side and Mu'tazilah on the other. The Mu'tazilah group supports the idea of God's freedom and justice. They argue that justice is an independent nature. Because God is wise and just, every acts of God must follow the measure of justice. This concept is opposed by the Ash'ari group, for Ash'ari justice does not have a fixed essence beforehand so that it can be used as a measure for the acts of God. For the Ash'ari, justice is not a measure of God's actions, but God's actions are the measure for justice (Muthahhari, 2009: 17).

In Mu'tazilah's view, reason can independently perceive the good and the bad of an action. In Mu'tazilah's view, we clearly know that in essence every action is different from one another. Human reason can clearly distinguish between good and bad even without the help of *Ṣarīʿah*. The Ash'ari group expressly rejects Mu'tazilah's view. In their view, good and bad do not have the essence, good and bad are measured by *Ṣarīʿah*. An action is considered good because God commands it in the *Ṣarīʿah*, and vice versa, an action is considered bad because the *Ṣarīʿah* prohibits it (Muthahhari, 2009: 19).

Meanwhile the Shia have a unique view of the debate on predestination and free will. Based on opinions from their imams, the Shia group took the middle ground between the ash'ariah and Mu'tazilah debates by offering a concept known as *al-amr bainal amrain*. Shia believe that apart from religious orders in the *Ṣarīʿah*, there is an essence of good and bad in various actions. The deeds commanded by God are good because he is the source of all goodness, and what God forbids is bad. For example, the Shia say that God forbids stealing because stealing is bad, while in the Sunni view stealing is bad because Allah forbids it (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team, n.d: 807–808).

While in the discourse whether in acting humans are completely free as argued in Mu'tazilah's support of the concept of free will or whether humans are 'forced' as argued by Ash'ari predestination theology, the Shia take different attitudes from the two groups. According to Shia, human being has a choice whether he will follow the commands of God or even against him. In Shia arguments

freedom of action is a gift from God. The freedom of action possessed by humans is inseparable from God because it is God who gives freedom, strength, power, limbs, and everything else with which humans can carry out their actions but those human actions are not forced by God. Shia believe God gives the will and strength to humans, but frees humans to choose the actions they might take. At the same time, God sent a prophet to teach people what is right and what is wrong so that people will be rewarded for what they do. Shia believes, God does give freedom of action, but with God's almighty knowledge, He knows what human actions will be at different times in their lives (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team: 810).

Different perspectives on human freedom in acting lead to different conceptions of the promise of God in the hereafter. Regarding the promise of God in the hereafter, the Shia argues as follows,

> "Whatever God has promised as reward for a noble act, He will fulfill it. But whatever He has threatened as punishment for bad act, it is based on His decision. If He does this torture, it is based on His justice. But if He forgives him, according to His grace " (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team, n.d., p. 808).

The Shia perspective on God's promises goes against Mu'tazilah on one side and Ash'ariyyah on the other. Mu'tazilah says that it is obligatory for Allah to fulfill His threat too. He has no power to forgive. Ash'ariyyah on the other hand said that it is not obligatory for God to fulfill His promises of reward.

> "Even according to the Ash'ari if ever God wants to incorporate the prophets into hell, and Satan go to heaven it is not contrary to virtue,

> because there is no goodness or badness is inherent in every action. The emphasis of the concept of Ash'ariyah (Sunni) lies in the unlimited power of God and God is the main and only measure in assessing justice" (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team: 809).

Another difference between Sunni and Shia is related to ethos in living their religious life. The Sunni religious ethos is usually dominated by discourse about the jurisprudence (*fiqh*), about what can and what cannot be done by a Muslim. The centrality of *Ṣarīʿah* in the ethos of Sunni religiosity is affirmed and we can see it in the pattern of revival of religious movements in Indonesia. The new preachers who were famous through social media (for example, *Ustadh* Abdul Somad, *Ustadh* Adi Hidayat, and several other religious teachers) made *fiqh* and *ṣarīʿah* as the main content in their *daʿwah*. This religious ethos is different from the Shia religious ethic - at least conceptually - which has more to do with matters that are ritual, passion, and drama. The emphasis on these aspects, does not mean that the Shia do not care about aspects of *fiqh*. Shia practice their *fiqh* strictly, but the piety of a Shia is not only based on piety of the *Ṣarīʿah* only (Nasr, 2007:40).

Differences in religious ethos that are understood differently by Sunnis and Shia sometimes cause tension between adherents of the two schools. Many ritual practices are carried out by Shia groups such as grave pilgrimages, taking blessings from people who are considered sacred, the practice of *duʿā* and *tawassul*, and of course the Ashura's commemoration of the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali and some other rituals in the view of some Sunni groups as *bidʿah* (religious innovation) and

is a practice of heresy because these practices according to some Sunni groups do not have a clear basis in Islamic teachings.

Certainly, the most problematic of Shia ritual practices in a Sunni perspective and often the main trigger of tension between the two groups is the rituals of Ashura. Ashura -literally means the tenth day of the Muharram Month which is the first month in the Islamic calendar- is a ritual to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Husain, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and son of Ali bin Abi Talib along with dozens of his family in the Karbala desert in 680 AD by order of Yazid Bin Muawiyah, Sultan of the Umayyads at that time.

In Indonesia, the commemoration of Ashura Day is usually commemorated in an ambiguous impression by some Indonesian Sunni groups. Some commemorate Ashura as a month of sadness and ill-fated as the Shia group perceives Ashura even though it does not clearly associate it with Imam Husayn's martyrdom. The assumption that Ashura and Muharram in general as a month of sadness can be seen in many cultural practices of Indonesian people, for example, they usually do not want to do things related to a party such as a marriage in the month of Muharram because of the Muharram association as a month of sadness. Some cultural practices in Indonesia even clearly associate Ashura with the martyrdom of Imam Husayn such as the Tabot Festivals in Bengkulu and Tabuik in Pariaman, West Sumatra. Another understanding of Ashura which is prevalent in the understanding of Sunni groups, especially the Sunni community in Indonesia, sees Ashura as a month of salvation. In this understanding it is illustrated that

Ashura was the day when Noah's ark survived the flood, the safety of the prophet Ibrahim from the fire, the prophet Jacob's healing from blindness, and the safety of the prophet Jonah from the belly of the whale that swallowed it.

Ashura is a day when Shia loudly declare their identities, often carried out in extreme ways such as self-injury to live the sacrifice of Imam Husayn in Karbala even though some *marǧaʿs'* and Shia ʿ*ulamās* have forbidden such practices. For Shia, no ritual is more important than the commemoration of Ashura. At present, Ashura Rituals come in various forms and are acculturated with the culture of the place/country where the ritual is held. An Ashura ritual is usually full of spiritual symbols and passions - usually through the reading of prayers and poems - that are offered together. Ashura rituals also often become a place to renew their ties to their beliefs and groups. Remind them that the essence of religion is not work but faith (Nasr, 2007).

Central to the Ashura commemoration is of course Husayn and all his family members who were martyred in Karbala. For the Shia, Husain was not only a symbol of Shia teachings, which they considered a symbol of a true Islamic leader, but also an ideal model of a knight and courage against tyranny. Shia teachings are equated with their love for Husayn, where his death for the Shia was a dramatic form of experience. Husayn figures reside in the heartbeat of the love and loyalty of the Shia (Nasr, 2007, p. 30). His name and other Shia imams appear in many Shia practices of *duʿās*. we easily find *duʿās* that contain words like Ya Hussain!

Ya Ali! something that for most Sunni groups who do not understand the roots of Shia theology feels strange or even often considered a practice of heresy.

In the Sunni view, Karbala is only history, although that is a dark side in Islamic history. On the contrary to Shia, this is the beginning of thought that forms belief. Karbala illustrates the perfection of Shia teachings, namely dedication to the Imam as a belief and commitment in upholding justice, when dealing with cruelty or tyranny (Nasr, 2007, p. 34). The sacrifice and dedication of Imam Husayn in fighting tyranny and fighting for the spirit of Islam has even gone beyond the limits of the school and religion. Many figures have recognized the majesty and the glory of Imam Husayn, one of them is Antoine Bara, author of the book *'Imam Hussein in Christian Ideology',* said that Imam Husain does not only belong to the Shia and Islam but belongs to all humanity because Imam Husain is the conscience of religions and humanitarian principles. Another comment related to the figure of Imam Husain was directed by the famous Indian peace fighter, Mahatma Gandhi who stated 'that Husayn really taught me how to be a winner in a state of oppression'[13].

Commemoration of Ashura in its development is not only a moment of theological reflection, but often also a political momentum. Ashura Spirit is indeed a spirit of revolution that can be transformed into a spark of the spirit of revolution in every age. The best thing to describe how the resistance spirit of Husayn in

[13] quoted from https://geotimes.co.id/kolom/gandhi-

Karbala was transformed into a spirit of revolution of different times can be seen in the sermon of Ali Shariati where he said that bahwa Every place is Karbala, every day is Ashura (Tim Papyrus, 2013: 166). Ali Shariati's words changed the face of Ashura who was usually covered with sadness to be full of the spirit of resistance against tyrants. Although he did not have the chance to witness the Islamic Revolution of Iran, there is no doubt that Shariati's words relating to Ashura have pumped up the enthusiasm of his students and young people in general who participated in the Iranian revolution.

In Indonesia where the majority of Muslims are Sunni, almost every year there are protests and bans on the Ashura day commemoration plan either carried out by certain community groups or organizations or even more sadly done by local government authorities in various regions in Indonesia who are supposed to guard and guaranteeing its citizens can carry out their religious beliefs and practices. One of the events which is quite recent is the prohibition of Ashura commemoration by the Makassar city government through a circular letter of the city government number 400/402 / Kesra / ix / 2019 which contains an appeal to be aware of and anticipate the spread of Shia, especially through the Ashura commemoration in 1441 Hijri. To protect themselves from criticism, the circular goes further by arguing that the prohibition of Ashura is not a form of violation of religious freedom guaranteed by the Indonesian constitution because according to the circular letter, Ashura commemoration in particular and Shia teachings in general are a form of blasphemy against 'true Islamic teachings'.

What has been explained above is only a bit and if possible only an outline of the historical and political Sunni-Shia tension. For a more detailed explanation, I don't think this is the place. The description of the differences between Sunni and Shia in this paper is only intended to provide a context for why conversion to Shia especially in societies dominated by Sunni groups is often problematize. Sunni and Shia even in their smallest divisions are not a monolithic community that can be represented through a single narrative and merely involves disharmony between the two. In some places, Sunni and Shia communities live side by side in peace. However, yes, the Sunni-Shia tension and how it is resolved by related parties will still largely determine the future of Islam, including Islam in Indonesia.

B. Shia in Indonesia

The question of when the Shia teachings first existed in Indonesia has been the subject of much debate among historians and scholars. Some of them argued that the existence of Shia groups had existed for a long time and even became an inseparable part in the initial period of the entry of Islam in the archipelago, the idea that the existence of Shia had existed in the archipelago long before the Islamic revolution of Iran and even became the first Islamic sect to enter the archipelago was expressed by several scholars such as professor Abubakar Aceh (Aceh, 1985), Baroroh Baried, M Yunus Jamil, A Hasyim, Onggang Parlindungan, Sayyid Qudratullah Fatimi, and Agus Sunyoto (Assegaf, 2010, 2012; Hasymi, 1983; Sofjan, 2013; Zulkifli, 2009b).

The scholars argued that the Shia school came and had a wide influence on the spread of Islam in the archipelago before the arrival of Sunnis in the archipelago. Abubakar Aceh for example said that Islam first entered Indonesia through the territory of Aceh brought by Arab, Persian and Indian descendants who came from Gujarat (Aceh, 1985). Abubakar Aceh and scholars who support the idea of a Shia existence since the early Islamic period in the archipelago generally refer to the Perlak kingdom in Aceh as the origin of Shia existence as a religious and political community (Zulkifli, 2009b, p. 4).

Hasyimi for example claimed that Perlak became a Shia kingdom under the rule of Sultan Alaidin Sayyid Maulana Abdul Azis Shah, who ruled from 840 to 864. The existence of the Shia perlak kingdom received resistance from the Sunni community. The resistance of the Sunni community eventually made the kingdom of the Perlak divided into two kingdoms that each had their own king, the coastal areas became areas controlled by Shia, while the mountains became the Sunni kingdom. The attack and defeat of the Perlak kingdom against the Sriwijaya kingdom ended the existence of Perlak as a Shia kingdom (Zulkifli, 2009b, p. 4).

Other speculations relating to the existence of Shia since the early period of Islam in the archipelago are based on aspects of culture or even religious rites that are considered to contain ideological elements that are loaded with ideological influences that are typical of Shia way of thinking. Cultural traditions and religious rites that are considered to be a manifestation of a typical Shia identity are the celebration of Ashura to commemorate the martyrdom of the third Shia priest,

Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. In many parts of Indonesia, Ashura is commonly celebrated by both Shia and Sunni groups. Ashura tradition in Indonesia is known by different terms given the variety of local languages that are owned by tribes in Indonesia. In Bengkulu, the Ashura commemoration is known as Tabot, in Pariaman, this celebration is commonly known as Tabuik. In Java, the Ashura commemoration is usually celebrated by cooking porridge called *bubur suro*, a similar tradition is also found in South Sulawesi known as *peca 'sura / jepe' sura*. The tradition of Ashura celebrations in Indonesia is considered to have similarities with the celebration of *takziyah* in Iran.

Other attempts to trace the Shia since the early period of Islam in the archipelago through texts and literature that contain explicitly compliments or narratives of the life of ahlulbait. One of the texts used as a basis to show the influence of the Shia in the archipelago is the *Hikayat of Muhammad bin Hanafiyah. The Hikayat of Muhammad bin Hanafiyah* tells about the rebellion of Muhammad bin Hanafiyah who was the half-brother of Hasan and Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib against Yazid's government after the martyrdom of Husain and most of his family and companions in Karbala (Assegaf, 2012). A small number of early Shia followers even believed that Muhammad bin Hanafiyah was the promised figure of Imam Mahdi (Imran, 2014). *The Hikayat of Muhammad bin Hanafiyah* and the like in the archipelago literature according to Brakel as quoted by Zulkifli (Zulkifli, 2009b) shows the influence of Shia in the early period of Islam in Indonesia.

Another study that tried to trace the influence of Shia on Islam in the Malay-Indonesian literature was carried out by Baroroh Baried who examined 17 texts that were considered to contain elements of Shia influence. After examining the manuscripts, Baried concluded that the manuscripts were imperfect and fragmented data about Ali and his progeny. According to Baried, the fragmentation was not enough to be used as tangible evidence of the influence of the Shia on the spread of Islam in the early period of the existence of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian region (Zulkifli, 2009b: 7–8).

A different argument was conveyed by Wieringa who examined the Malay-Indonesian literary texts, especially the Hikayat Nur Muhammad manuscript. According to Wieringa the manuscript which is considered to have a strong Persian influence was produced in the early days of Islamic history in the archipelago. The literature, which was largely influenced by Shia ideology, was attractive to Malay people who had just embraced Islam. However, these manuscripts in their development experienced what Wieringa called as "a deshi'itization' especially in the nineteenth century phase (which was caused by the journey of Indonesian Muslims to the Middle East both for the benefit of performing the *Hağ* or other interests) The process of deshi'itization neutralizes the Shia influence in Malay-Indonesian literature. As an example of the result of deshi'itization'in Indonesian literary texts, Ali was still glorified but Umar bin Khattab was no longer described badly (Wieringa, 1996).

The second group of scholars relating to what Islamic groups are pioneering the spread of Islam in Indonesia firmly rejects the view that the first Islam that entered the archipelago was Shia Islam or Shia had a significant influence in the spread of Islam in the archipelago. This argument is supported by several scholars such as Hamka and Azumardy Azra. For Hamka and Azra, since the beginning of the existence of Islam, Sunnis have been the pioneers of the spread of Islam in the archipelago to eventually become the majority group of religion followed by Indonesian people.

Azra argues that there is not enough evidence to support claims about the significance of Shia influence in the early Islamic period in the archipelago. Even if there are some 'Shia' influences, according to Azra the influence is very shallow. For Azra, the Shia became a popular discourse in Indonesia only after the early 80s, as a response and interest from Indonesian Muslims towards the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran (Sofjan, 2013:.6).

Azra explained his criticism of the claims of Shia influence in the three domains of contestation. First, in the political field; second, in the field of literature: and third, in the field of practice of Islamic rituals. In the political field Azra denies the arguments of Yunus, Hasymi, and Parlindungan who claim there is a Shia existence as a political community, both specifically in Perlak and elsewhere. Azra's objection lies in the sources used by these academics to claim the existence of a Shia political community in the archipelago. According to Azra, the sources used by these writers are sources that cannot be verified. The source comes from

'traditional local historiography' which in many ways according to Azra is very problematic if it cannot be called just a legend. Azra also criticized the use or uptake of Persian words that were considered to show Shia influence. According to Azra, Persia could not necessarily be equated with Shi'ism, especially when at that time internationally Persia was not yet Shia. Persia only became Shia dominant when the Savafid dynasty came to power and made Shia the official religion of the kingdom, while claims of the existence of Shia political communuity in the archipelago long before the appearance of the Savafid dynasty in Persia (Sofjan, 2013: 8).

Meanwhile, responding to various religious rite practices that are considered to be representative of Shia ideology such as the Ashura celebrations or the tabot in Bengkulu and Pariaman, Azra argues that it does not have to mean that they convert to Shi'ism. Tabot celebrations in Bengkulu and Pariaman are not the same as *takziyah* celebrations in Iran. The celebration of *takziyah* is indeed very thick with the Shia religio-political ideology, a content which according to Azra is not found in the Tabot celebration. Other religious practices such as *shalawatan* and *tahlilan* which are also often associated with Shia according to Azra also do not show the influence of Shia. Instead of being related to typical Shia religious patterns, the *tahlilan* tradition is even more traceable as the remnants of pre-Islamic religious practices which were later Islamized (Sofjan, 2013:20).

According to Azra, religious rites such as *tahlilan* and *wiridan* are commonly practiced by Indonesian Muslim communities who practice Sufism. Indeed there are several arguments that state the closeness between Sufism and Shia

because Sufism usually also glorifies Shia Imams and makes these Imams as references in their *ṭarīqah* genealogy. However, Sufism is better known in the Sunni tradition. Even though they have similarities in various aspects, between Shia and Sufism there is a conceptual tension which relates to the concept of *Insān al-Kāmil* which is understood in a completely different perspective. The embodiment of *Insān al-Kāmil* in the Sufism tradition is usually known as *Qutb* while in Shia the embodiment of *Insān al-Kāmil* possessed by the imams. *Qutb* is the achievement of spiritual and leadership qualities that may be obtained by humans through certain *sulūk* practices. While the position of the imam is something that is exclusively limited to the ahlulbait (that is not all ahlulbait but only the twelve imams only). The Sufi submission to *qutb* is very different from the Shia loyalty to the Imams. So according to Azra, Sufis do not necessarily adhere to Shi'ism (Sofjan, 2013, p. 21). But, if it is associated with conversion, Sunni Muslims who understand Sufi are easier to convert to Shia due to the closeness of some religious concepts, especially respect for the shia's Imams.

My position in the debate about the existence of Shia in the two poles is to take the middle position. I do not support the argument about whether the Shia was the first Islamic community to enter and spread the Shia in Indonesia or whether the Perlak kingdom was a Shia kingdom because the data are still speculative. However, generalizing that the Shia did not contribute to the dynamics of Islam in Indonesia until after the Islamic revolution in Iran, I also thought it was unfair and

impressed to negate the role of the Shia in coloring Islam in the archipelago which has lasted for a long time.

Although it is speculative, it is very possible that the first generation of Islamic preachers from India, Persia, and several other Middle Eastern countries, not rule out the possibility that among them are adherents of Shia but instead of spreading Shia, they spread and preach the Shafi'i *fiqh* bearing in mind the enmity of the Umayyad and Abbasiyah dynasties against the Ahlulbait and its followers so that spreading Shia would not be politically advantageous. Such arguments have been put forward by Aceh (Aceh, 1985). The existence of Shia also in the Malay literary realm is recognized even by critics who reject the significance of Shia influence on early Islam in Indonesia such as Wieringa's argument about deshi‘itization. Deshi‘itization is not possible if there is no Shia existence. So regardless of how significant, massive, and intense the Shia had been in the archipelago long before the Islamic revolution of Iran.

The search for the existence of the Shia community in Indonesia is easier to trace if it began in the 19th century until the Iranian Islamic revolution as described in Zulkifli's study (Zulkifli, 2009b). Zulkifli classified the formation of Shia identity through the role of several groups, initiated by Arab descendants, and then continued by the Qum alumni group and several groups of young scholars at the time based in various universities in Indonesia.

The formation of the Shia community through the role of the Arab descendants, especially the sayyids began with a wave of migration of Arabs -

especially those who came from the Hadramaut - around the 19th century. These sayyids later became imams and preachers in Indonesia. Zulkifli mentions some clans of the Sayyid family such as al-Muhdar, Yahya, Shahab, al-Jufri, al-Haddad, and al-Saqqaf who are considered to have family members who adhere to the Shias even though some or maybe most of them still Sunnis adherents (Zulkifli, 2009b, p. 16).

He claims of some sayyid families adhering to Shia were rejected by some Sunnis. But according to Zulkifli, it is possible for the Sayyid family to practice *taqīyah*[14]. In public they carry out religious rites like most other people (in the context of Indonesia is Shafi'i *fiqh*), but they believe in the conception of Shia theology. I also met this in one of my interviews with leaders of the Sayyid family from the Assegaf clan in Maros district, South Sulawesi. According to the respondent who refused to be named, in his family's tradition, he was actually not familiar with Shia as a name and identity, but many of the practices and rites he referred to were close to Shia traditions such as the practice of *tawassul* to Shia imams. The tension of Sunni-Shia relations in Indonesia makes some of these practices currently only taught very strictly and are limited in the internal family because of fear of being seen or labeled as Shia. A family inheritance book that was

[14] *Taqīyah* is the practice of hiding Shia beliefs and identities because of situations and contexts that do not allow or even threaten.

shown to me written in lontarak[15] script and script also clearly mentions twelve Shia imams, including the Mahdi which is considered to be in the time of occultation.

Zulkifli mentions three main sayyid figures from different clans who are considered to have an important role in the formation of Shia in the Dutch East Indies. The first is Sayyid Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Muhdar. During his lifetime, Muhammad al-Muhdar was involved in various preaching activities in various places such as Surabaya, Bondowoso, Pekalongan, Bogor and Jakarta. One of the markers he is suspected of is Shia because of his criticism of *Ṣahīh* Bukhari which is the most authoritative hadith book in the Sunni tradition. Criticism of Bukhari or other *kutub as-sittah* (six books of hadith) is unusual in Sunnis, but is often found in Shia literature (Zulkifli, 2009b, pp. 17-18).

The second sayyid figure who was considered to be a Shia was Sayyid Ali bin Ahmad Shahab (1865-1944). He is a successful scholar, activist and trader. During his life, he was involved in education, religion, social and politics. He was one of the founders of *Jami'at Khai*r, the first Muslim organization in the Dutch East Indies which was founded in Jakarta in 1901. Ali Ahmad Shahab later became chairman of the *jami'at khair* in 1905 when the organization received recognition from the Dutch East Indies government. In connection with his activities to promote

[15] Lontarak script is a local script owned by the Bugis and Makassar tribes in South Sulawesi. Named lontarak because the letters are usually written on palm leaves that have been processed. A lontarak usually contains historical manuscripts relating to society, family members, figures, royal history, and so on.

Shia in Indonesia, according to Zulkifli's study there is no trace that he is promoting Shia publicly but only for internal family members (Zulkifli, 2009: 20).

The third sayyid figure is Sayyid Aqil bin Zainal Abidin (1870-1952) of the al-Jufri clan. He is an example of a sayyid figure who converted from Sunni to Shia Islam. His meetings with several Shia scholars such as Sayyid Abu Bakr bin ‘Abd al-Rahman bin Muhammad bin Shahab (1846-1922) and Muhammad bin Aqil bin Yahya (1863-1931) played an important role in his conversion to the Shias. After a number of years living abroad, he returned to Indonesia in 1921. He introduced Shia more openly which resulted in debates with several religious authority figures (Sunni) in Indonesia. As a result of his Shia promotion, he even received physical threats (Zulkifli, 2009: 20-21).

After Indonesian independence up to the era after the Islamic revolution of Iran, the sayyids continued to play a role in the formulation of Shia in Indonesia. Zulkifli mentioned at least three names. First is Sayyid Abdul Qa'dir Bafaqih from Jepara, Central Java, who converted to Shia after reading some books he received from Kuwait in 1974. He founded a boarding school called *Pesantren* Al-Khairat where he taught Shia and wrote several unpublished books. His activity caused a negative reaction from Sunni figures in the area (Zulkifli, 2009: 28).

The second figure is Sayyid Ahmad Al-Habsyi who once led the Ar-Riyadh Islamic Boarding School in Palembang, South Sumatra. He established intense contact with an Islamic organization in Tehran called the Muslim Brotherhood. Sayyid Al-Habsyi also sent his students who later became well-known Shia cleric

Umar Shahab and his brother Husein Shahab, to study in the cities of Qum respectively in 1974 and 1979 (Zulkifli, 2009: 29).

The third figure is Sayyid Husein Al-Habsyi who is the founder of YAPI (Yayasan Pesantren Islam, the Foundation of Islamic Boarding Schools) in Bangil in 1976 (Zulkifli, 2009: 29). He and his *pesantren* have a very big role in the spread of Shia in Indonesia. Given the importance of Husein al-Habsy's contribution in the spread of Shi'ism, all studies on the history of the existence of Shia in Indonesia are considered incomplete without mentioning his name (Assegaf, 2010). Al-habsy has connections with several *ʿulamā* and *husainiyah* in Iran. In 1982, he received a visit from the Iranian delegation at YAPI, including that delegation are the famous Shia cleric Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini, Ayatollah Masduqi and *ḥuǧǧatul Islām* Mahmudi. The results of this meeting agreed that *Hauzah ʿIlmiyya* in Qum was willing to receive 10 students from YAPI each year to study in Iran. The students sent included names such as Muhsin Labib, Ibrahim al Habsyi, Rusdi Alaydrus, Thoyyib Nafis, Mukhtar al Jufri, Umar Alatas, Ahmad Baragbah, Hasan Tono, Muhammad and Musam. These names are now considered to be contemporary Shia clerics in Indonesia.

The success of the Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979 had a very important role in the development of the next Shia in Indonesia. Iran's Islamic Revolution attracted the interest of young Indonesian intellectuals to know the ideology that underlies the revolution. This interest made students interested in studying directly in Iran. In the initial phases, Indonesian students studying at Qum were dominated

by Arab descendants. Actually, there is no definitive data on when Indonesian students start studying at Qum. Indonesian students in Qum existed even before the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution of Iranas acknowledged by Umar Shahab who said he studied at Qum in 1976 with seven other Indonesian students. The number increased significantly after the Islamic revolution of Iran (Zulkifli, 2009a).

In addition to arousing curiosity from Indonesian students, the Islamic Revolution of Iran also made the communication intensity between Indonesian Shia leaders with the authority of Shia clerics from Iran. In addition to the YAPI role mentioned earlier in sending Indonesian students to Qum, later graduates from Institutions considered to have strong affiliations with Shia such as the Mutahhari Foundation and al-Hadi were also selected to study at Qum. This correspondence was made possible through the influence of Shia intellectuals such as Jalaludin Rahmat and Haidar Bagir whose recommendations were acknowledged in Iran (Zulkifli, 2009b).

In Indonesia, the role of Qum alumni is very large and important in the Shia community. They established connections with the Shia followers through a series of *pengajian*, *duʿās* assemblies (for example, *duʿā* Kumail) both organized by Shia organizations and held independently. The important position of the Qum alumni was also recognized by one of the respondents in this study who converted to Shia around the early 80s. According to him, at the beginning of the conversion to Shia in the early 80s, there were many misconceptions about the concepts and practices of *fiqh* because of the lack of knowledge and sources of authoritative figures that

can be used as a reference to explain these problems. The arrival of Qum alumni gradually overcame the need for such authoritative figures, especially in matters of religious jurisprudence as well as religious rite leaders.

The success of the Iranian Islamic revolution not only appealed to the sayyids or alumni of the Qum who did specifically learn about religious issues in the perspective of Shia theology but also young intellectuals based on campus even though the interest in the Iranian revolution did not necessarily mean conversion to Shia. The group which also played an important role in the spread of Shia understanding after the Iranian revolution was study groups spread across various campuses in Indonesia both public and private universities. Even if based on quantity, this group is the most massive among Shia followers today.

Among the group of young intellectuals who converted to Shia after the Iranian Islamic revolution or even before the revolution, there were several well-known intellectual figures who played an important role in the development of Shia in Indonesia. Among these intellectual figures is perhaps the most significant and central is Jalaludin Rahmat who is a lecturer at Padjajaran University in Bandung (Zulkifli, 2009b) and is also a member of the Indonesian legislature through the PDIP party for the 2014-2019 period. In 1988, Jalaluddin Rahmat and several colleagues established the Mutahhari Foundation. This foundation currently focuses on the field of Education and manages four Education units from various levels, namely SMA Plus Muthahhari Bandung, Plus Mutahhari Middle School in Cicalengka Bandung, Bandung Bahtera Middle School, and Smart School

Mutahhari (SCM) Bandung which are at the Elementary School level (An-Nahidl), 2014, p. 121). This Educational Institution is actually not specifically a Shia Education Institution, but because Kang Jalal is Shia, this Foundation is often propagated to spread Shia teachings.

In addition to writing various books explaining Shia ideology, Jalaluddin Rahmat's central position can also be seen in terms of leadership. He is one of the pioneers in the establishment of the Jamaah Association Ahlulbait Indonesia (IJABI) in 2000, the first Shia organization to receive official recognition from the Indonesian government. In the initial period, IJABI was led by a duet of Prof.DR.KH.Jalaluddin Rakhmat, M.Sc (as Chairman of the šūra Council) and Dr. Ir. Dimitri Mahayana, M.Eng (as Chairman of *Tanfiḏīyah*/ executive). Quoted from its official website, IJABI has five main pillars of struggle namely Rational and Spiritual Islam, Non-Sectarianism and Moral Priority on Jurisprudence, Pluralist Islam, Islamic Madani, Defense of the *Mustaḍʿafīn*[16].

Since the early 1980s, the Shia have become an islamic school that has attracted the attention of students from various well-known campuses in Indonesia. Campuses in Bandung, Jakarta, Makassar have become important places in the spread of Islamic Shia. The students were interested in the progressive ideas of *ʿulamā* and Shia thinkers such as Khomainei, Murthada Mutahhari, Allamah Thabatbhai ', Ali Shariati and other Shia thinkers. In Bandung, some students,

[16] Quoted from http://www.ijabi.or.id/tentang-kami.html

especially from the Salman Mosque activist network from campuses such as ITB and and Padjadjaran University, converted to Shia (Zulkifli, 2009b, p. 42). In Makassar, Shia study and conversion began with a study group at Hasanuddin University (Unhas). The same pattern occurs at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta and many other campuses.

Besides Jalaluddin Rahmat, another important intellectual figure is Haidar Bagir. Haidar Bagir was born in Solo, February 20, 1957, he was an alumnus of Industrial Technology ITB 1982. He also briefly received his postgraduate education at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University, USA 1990-1992, and his Doctoral Program at the University of Indonesia (UI)[17]. While at ITB, Haidar Bagir was an activist at the Salman Mosque, he also became an editorial board of Reader, an Islamic student journal pioneered by Amar Haryono. Interest in the figure of Khomaeini according to Zulkifli (2009b: 42) made Haidar Bagir study and finally convert to Shia. In addition to engaging in intellectual activity and *da'wa*, in 1983, Haidar Bagir founded Mizan, a book publisher whose primary focus was on publishing Islamic books. Mizan translated and published a number of Shia scholars and writers. One of the Shia books that played an important role in the spread of Shi'ism that was published by Mizan was probably a book by A. Syarafuddin al-Musawi entitled *Dialog Sunni-Syiah* (Sunni-Shia Dialogue).

[17] https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haidar_Bagir

Other Shia intellectual figures from the generation after Jalaluddin Rahmat and Haidar who played important role in promoting Shia in Indonesia were figure such as Dimitri Mahayana (a lecturer at ITB and former chairman of IJABI), Hadi Swastio (a lecturer at the Communication College and former general secretary of IJABI), and Yusuf Bakhtiar (formerly a deputy chief of Mutahhari Senior High School and currently a political activist in the National Mandate Party founded by M. Amien Rais) and Miftah Fauzi Rahmat, son of Jalaluddin Rahmat who is also the headmaster of SMA plus Muthahari.

In the early days of the growing interest and conversion of Indonesian students to Shia ideology, it was dominated by students from secular campuses such as ITB, UNPAD, UI, UNHAS, and others. While for students who come from religious institutions such as UIN and IAIN, there are fewer conversion cases to Shia. But in later developments, as I have found from the background of the respondents involved in the research, many of them also came from Islamic campuses or even from *pesantren*. this is also caused by a network of student organizations such as HMI MPO which has branches in almost all universities in Indonesia that actively promote the Shia to prospective new members. It should be noted here, that when I mentioned the name of the HMI MPO or other Islamic student organizations it was not intended that the organization spread Shia or directly affiliated with Shia. It was only meant that some of the members had Shia ideology and tried to spread it within the organization. In the internal HMI MPO itself, the rejection of Shia is quite strong.

After the 2000s, the spread of Shia became more dynamic. The Shia movement is no longer limited to the campus environment alone or through organizations that have networks up to the national level. There are already many local communities or organizations either student-based organizations or foundations that are affiliated and promote Shia as ideological alternatives in Islam. In Makassar, for example, organizations such as Lentera and al-Muntazar, Rausyan Fikr, the Active Network of Islamic Philosophy (*Jaringan Aktifis Filsafat Islam*, JAKFI) conducted cadre and introduced various kinds of thoughts in Islam (especially and primary Shia) although they did not directly encourage people to convert to Shia.

The development of the Shia was further marked by the formation of another official national organization of the Shia community in 2010, Ahlulbait Indonesia (ABI). Quoted from the official website, ABI was formed by the initiation of three elements of the Shia community namely, the element of preacher or cleric who has dedicated himself to the propagation of Islam and the preaching of Ahlulbait, secondly, elements of Ahlulbait *daʿwah* foundations and institutions that have a focus on Islamic broadcasting work, specifically the Ahlulbait school, third, elements of activists and individuals who have the attention and enthusiasm to develop Ahlulbait *daʿwah*. At the beginning of December 2019, ABI had just held its third Mukhtamar, currently the Institute was led by Umar Shahab as Chair of the

ABI *Šūra* Council, Zahir Yahya as executive Chairman of the ABI, Ahmad Hidayat as Deputy General Chair, Sayyid Ali Ridho as Secretary General[18].

As a younger organization, ABI takes a different approach and characteristics from IJABI. According to Chiara Formichi, IJABI is more focused on obedience and knowledge about ahlulbait based on local understanding of what it means to be a "lover" from ahlulbait. With its slogan, prioritizing morals over *fiqh*, IJABI tried to negotiate identity between the practices of "Sunni" and "Shia". On the other hand, ABI is more committed to the practice and spread of *Ja'fari fiqh* and ritual forms that are consistent with the "orthodoxy" paradigm as embraced by *marğa*ʿ in the Islamic Republic of Iran, so that ABI seems to be a manifestation of community relations with the "central" religious authority and knowledge production (Formichi, 2014, p. 255).

In the midst of the polemic relating to the existence of Shia in Indonesia, ABI actively provided academic explanations about Shia theology to the Indonesian people both through book publishing, statements both in print and digital media. One of the books that has been published by ABI to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Shi'ism is a book entitled *"Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah Menurut Para Ulamanya yang Muktabar"*. In response to a book claimed to have been published and written by the MUI entitled *"Mengenal dan Mewaspadai Kesesatan Syiah di Indonesia"*, ABI responded by publishing a book entitled *Syiah Menurut*

[18] https://www.ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/berita/index.php/sejarah-ahlulbait-indonesia/

Syiah. In the political field, amid suspicions about the commitment and loyalty of Shia to the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia, especially with regard to the concept of *wilāyatul faqīh*, ABI issued a book entitled *'manifesto ABI'.* The contents of the manifesto book include the attitude and understanding of ABI related to the Islamic worldview, Pancasila, the idea of *shariaisation, ḫilāfah*, political Islam to development, social and geopolitical issues[19].

C. Government and Islamic Organizations Response to Shia in Indonesia

Lately, Sunni and Shia tension relationship heats up. In fact, the tension between Sunni-Shia in Indonesia is a phenomenon that has not long existed. it may have happened at the beginning of 1980. The Iranian Revolution appears to contribute to the increased tension of this relationship, the Iranian revolution made many young people of Indonesian Muslims became interested in learning about the revolution and the spirit of the Shia behind them. This phenomenon is considered to be extremely upsetting the status quo and the establishment of the dominant and majority Sunnis in Indonesia. Shia movement by some Sunni clerics seen more simply oriented to make the Sunnis into Shia. On the basis of this mindset especially coupled with doctrinal differences, the Sunni cleric in Indonesia did not show friendly attitude by always providing a warning that Muslims should not be dragged into the Shia sect (Rahman Zainuddin & M. Hamdan Basyar , 2000:95).

[19] https://www.ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/berita/index.php/s13-berita/ormas-ahlulbait-indonesia-meluncurkan-buku-manifesto-mengenal-gerakan-syiah/

Worries about the 'danger of' understanding of the Shia which considered to destabilize the religious life in the country is reflected in the circular letter the ministry of religion which contains an appeal relating to the existence of Shia in Indonesia. The letter was issued on December 5, 1983 under number D / BA.01 / 4865/1983[20]. The letter begins by explaining of what the Shia and sects in it. Shia teachings were also compared to the Sunni doctrine which according to the letter was completely different, the appeal of the letter even though not explicitly, but gave the impression that the Muslims should be wary of the Shia sect that is not growing rapidly in Indonesia.

A few months after the religious department published circular letter, the Indonesian *ʿUlamā* Council also issued a fatwa related to Shia. The fatwa was issued on Jumadil Akhir 1404 H./Maret 1984 M in the MUI national working meeting. MUI went a step further than the ministry of religious affairs, MUI expressly and explicitly urged to be wary of entry and growth of Shi'ism. In contrast to the Ministry of religion that does not have the authority to determine the 'misguided or not' of a religious group, ministry of religious affairs only regulates the regulation of religious life, while MUI identified himself as the holder of 'truth claims', the guard of 'purity' *ʿaqīdah* feels right to determine and give fatwa about whether or not a group consider as ‘heretic’.

[20] For reasons of length of the page, then the letter will be only attached. Which will be presented here only the essence and purpose of the circular letter.

In the fatwa, MUI explain the difference between Sunnis and Shia. The difference, according to MUI include:

1. Shia rejected Hadith is not narrated by Ahlubait, while Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah do not discriminate as long as it qualifies the science of hadith
2. Shia regard "Imam" was *maʿṣūm* (holy men), while Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah see him as a human being that can not escape from negligence (fault).
3. The Shia do not recognize *ijma* 'without an "Imam", while Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama' ah admit *Ijma* without requiring the participation of "Imam".
4. Shia perceive that upholding the leadership / governance (*Imāmah*) is included pillar of religion, while the Sunni (Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah) regard in terms of the public good with *imāmah* purpose is to guarantee and protect proselytizing and interests of the people.
5. Shia in general do not recognize the caliphate of Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, Umar Ibn al-Khatab, and Uthman, while Ahlus Sunnah wal Jama'ah acknowledge fourth *Ḫilāfah ar-'Rašidūn* (Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali bin Abi Talib)[21].

In addition to the circular of the ministry of religion and the MUI fatwa, on September 21, 1997 a National Seminar on Shi'ism was held at the Istiqlal Mosque. The seminar was opened by Hasan Basri, Chairman of MUI at the time. The seminar was also said to be attended by government officials, ABRI, MUI, leaders of Islamic organizations, Islamic leaders and the general public. The seminar invited several conclusions that:

1. Shia commit deviations and destruction of *Ahlussunah ʿaqīdah*.
2. According to Shia, the Qur'an is imperfect.
3. *Taqīyah* as manifesting other than what they broadcast and hide.
4. Shia hold that their hadith is conveyed by Ahlulbait.
5. Ahlulbait rejects Shia teachings.
6. Shia argue that their Imam is infallible,
7. Shia, in general, do not believe in the caliphate of Abubakar, Umar and Usman
8. *Imāmah* or leadership is a pillar of faith.

[21] Fatwa Council of Ulama Indonesia during the National Summit in Jumadil Akhir 1404 H./Maret 1984 M

9. Friday prayers are not required without the presence of the Imam al-Muntadzar.
10. The adhan of the Sunnis is different from the adhan of the Shia.
11. Shia justify *mut'ah* marriage.
12. Shia are proven to be criminals, traitors and terrorists.

Based on the conclusions mentioned above, the seminar proposed:

1. Urge the Indonesian government through The Attorney General's Office forbade Shia.
2. The government should cooperate with the Indonesian *ʿUlamā* Council and the Indonesian Ministry of Religion to ban the distribution of Shia books.
3. For the Minister of Justice to revoke the licenses of all Shia foundations such as:
   Yayasan Muthahhari Bandung
   Yayasan Al-Muntazhar Jakarta
   Yayasan Al-Jawad Bandung
   Yayasan Mulla Shadra Bogor
   Yayasan Pesantren YAPI Bangil
   Yayasan Al-Muhibbin Probolinggo
   Yayasan Pesantren Al-Hadi Pekalongan
4. Requesting the Minister of Information require all publishers to submit all of their published books for examination by the Central MUI.
5. For all organizations and educational institutions to be aware of Shi'ism.
6. Shia ideology is the *Kufr* and the community to be vigilant.
7. Urge all women to avoid Mut'ah marriage.
8. Mass media (print, electronic) and book publishers not to spread Shia.
9. Prohibit the spread of Shia by the Iranian Embassy (Hashem, 2014: VIII–IX).

Responding to the seminar, the Islamic Education Foundation (YAPI) which is one of the foundations affiliated with Shia ideology considers the results of this seminar to be responded to. The response was outlined in a book entitled '*Jawaban Lengkap Atas Seminar Sehari Tentang Syi'ah*' (Complete Answers to a Day Seminar on Shia) written by Omar Hashem in September 1997. This book has

been published many times and its title has been changed several times. The last edition was published by the publisher Rausyan Fikr in 2014 with the title *'Syiah, Ditolak, Syiah Dicari*' (Shia was rejected, Shia was sought) (Hashem, 2014).

After the attacks on the Shia community settlements in Sampang Madura on 29 December 2011, less than a month of the incident precisely on January 21, 2012 The MUI province of East Java issued a fatwa that more assertive than at the center MUI fatwa in the 1984. MUI East Java fatwa explicitly states that the Shia misguided and misleading.' In response to the Sampang case, central MUI issued a book titled '*Handbook MUI: Know and Be Careful Deviations Shia in Indonesia'*. Although not directly say that the Shia is heresy, but the title of the book-including its contents - has built the impression of 'apostasy' (deviations) the Shia. In response to the book, in that year, a lot of dissolution of the discussions, rituals that considered to be related to the understanding of Shia, but it is also a lot of propaganda in the form of leaflets, banners and such that essentially claimed that the Shia are not Muslims.

In addition to the above fatwas that did directly address the Shia, On November 6, 2007 Indonesian *ʿUlamā* Council (MUI) Center issued a Fatwa about 10 Criteria deviant sect as guidelines for the identification of a deviant sect, and guidance offered in the closing *Rakernas* MUI at Sari Pan Pacific Hotel, Jl MH Thamrin, Jakarta, Tuesday (06/11/2007), namely:

1. Denying pillars of Faith & Five Pillars of Islam

2. Acknowledge and or follow the *ʿaqīdah* which does not match the arguments of *Ṣarīʿah* (Quran and Sunnah)
3. Convinced revelation after Al-Quran
4. Denying & authenticity or truth of the Qur'an
5. interpretation of the Qur'an that are unfounded rules of interpretation
6. Denying standing Hadith of the Prophet as a source of Islamic teachings
7. Harassing or demeaning the Prophet
8. Denying the Prophet Muhammad as the last Prophet and Messenger
9. Changing, adding and reducing points of worship that have been set by the *shar'iah*, such as Haj is not to the House, not pray 5 times a day
10. infidel Muslims without the proposition of *ṣarīʿah*, such consider infidel Muslims simply because it was not his group.

The manufacture of criteria for 'apostasy' that seem to be constructed to establish the claim 'apostasy' Shia. How not, many of these categories is a discourse that is used to attack the Shia community. Categories such as rejection pillars of Iman and Islam, Denying & authenticity or truth of the Qur'an, denying standing Hadith of the Prophet as a source of Islamic teachings is the same category as it appears in the MUI fatwas regarding the Shia.

Circular letter of Religious Affairs who impressed in favor of a particular standard to confirm that the position of the person / group is never the same in dealing with power. Although it is ironic, because Indonesia is not a country that is based on religion. The state constitution also guarantees that every citizen were entitled to practice their religion and belief respectively. Although in practice, the state is still weak in ensuring the rights of minorities. In many religious conflicts, both intrareligious and interreligiuos, impressed the state cannot protect the rights of minorities, for example, a group that claims to certain Islamic organizations can easily dissolve ritual or specific discussions only because the discussion and the

rituals they deem incompatible with standard values that they consider to be the 'truth'.

Sunni-Shia tension relationships in Indonesia seems not to be eased in the near future, given the uncertain political situation in the Middle East, especially in Syria and the hegemonic battle between Iran and Saudi Arabia. In the era of digital communication such as we are experiencing today, propaganda becomes easier and massive, yet again if given the fact the increase in radicalism in various places in the world. Pressure against excessive identity politics also gives the role that makes the resolution becomes more difficult and complex. it takes maturity to accept a different kind, doesn't Indonesia always have a slogan *bhinneka tuggal ika* (unity in diversity)?

CHAPTER IV

GATES OF CONVERSION

This section will describe the diverse of personal experiences of the informants from various backgrounds, gender, age, level of education, and occupation about how they met Shia discourse, the reason behind their decision to do a 'religious conversion' from Sunni to Shia Islam, as well as the challenges they faced during the process of getting to know, study and after deciding to convert to Shia.

Before further discussing the experiences of the informants in converting from Sunni to Shia Islam, I feel it is important for us to fully determine the terms we will use to name this phenomenon. At the beginning of this article, I have mentioned several possible terms that can be used, including the terms conversion, reversion, *ḥiğrah*, and *al- muṣtabṣirūn*. Because this is an intra-religion conversion, there are a number of more specific terms commonly used to name this kind of phenomena, for example the term *Institutional Transtition* (Rambo, 1993, p. 13), *'denomination switching*' (Taylor, 1999, p. 38), and *denominational conversion* (Hegazi, 2009).

At the beginning of this article, I postpone to give a fixed term for the phenomenon of religious conversion from Sunni to Shia because I want to know the perspectives of informants and give them the opportunity to assess, define, and

name their conversion experience. From my discussions with informants, most of them did not agree to label their religious experiences with the term conversion.

For them, the term conversion is very thick with the impression of moving from one religion to another that fully shares different things and concepts. While Sunni and Shia in many ways share the same principles, values, and religious identity as a Muslim. Religious conversion from Sunni to Shia is also not marked by specific celebrations which mark a dramatic moment of someone considered valid to do the conversion both in symbolic form and in the form of rites. There are no events such as rebaptizing, to be a Shia one does not need to recite the *šahādah* because the worshiped god, prophet, and holy book remain the same with the Sunni muslim. The main worship services such as praying five times a day, fasting in the month of Ramadan, zakat, *hağ* are also the same[22]. As for the addition of the *Asyhadu Anna Aliyan Waliyullah* sentence (I testify that Ali ibn Abi Talib is the guardian of Allah) after the *šahādah* sentences[23] is not mandatory, the sentence can exist or not, and does not reduce the quality of one's Islam.

However, there are a small number of informants who feel that their experience at some stage does feel like a full conversion, due to differences in

[22] of course there are different perspectives or interpretations of these concepts, differences in the manner in which various kinds of worship are carried out between the two groups, but basically both Sunni and Shia share and believe in all principles and obligatory worship in Islam.

[23] The Shahada is a statement of full acceptance of Islam and all the accompanying rules. The text of the shahada is as follows, "*I testify that no god is worshiped except Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah*". Shia followers usually add the shahada statement with the *sentence wa asyhadu anna aliyan waliyullah/ hujjatullah* (I testify that Ali ibn Abi Talib is the guardian of Allah/ the proof of Allah. This statement is also contained in the call for prayer (*adzan*) in Shia circles.

understanding of the concept of *ʿaqīdah*, differences in the manner of carrying out various worship and rituals (*fiqh* or Islamic jurispudence), or even differences in political views they feel when they have become Shia compared to when they were Sunni.

One informant[24] named Andika who was a fresh graduate from a private university in Makassar and was an activist of the Islamic Student Association (Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam/ HMI) when I asked to name his conversion experience said that if he had to define or name what he felt when he decided to believe in Shia *ʿaqīdah*, then he considers that the term enlightenment is more appropriate to describe his experience than the term conversion.

> "I feel more fitting to call it enlightenment, because before I felt departed from a very dogmatic construction of understanding certain religions or teachings, then with the presence of a new breakthrough in the area of knowledge I no longer view religion as in such a blind way. The process of enlightenment I mean is inseparable indeed ... there are things that are difficult to express, citing muthahhari talking about guidance there are three stages that must be passed. Outwardly he can see the truth but he ignores, some have arrived at his rationality, he has found the truth in knowledge but there are things that are existential that cannot be intervened by others, namely the heart. The highest achievement of a human being is when faith has reached his heart. (interview with Andika on February 8, 2020).

[24] All informants involved in this research have signed a statement of willingness to be identified in a limited manner in this dissertation. Considering that the Sunni-Shia issue tends to be sensitive in Indonesia, then for security reasons and requests from most informants who requested that their personal information not be clearly stated, then most of the personal identities of the informants in this study will be disguised.

Another respondent who works as a lecturer at a state university in Makassar, South Sulawesi and is a doctor alumni of the Bogor Agricultural Institute (IPB) said that his religious conversion experience is not like a change in religious identity that is impressed in terms of conversion, he felt his conversion experience was more like an improvement in the quality of religious understanding. Conversion to Shia makes him feel that his Islamic understanding becomes clearer and more firm than his Islamic understanding before conversion, especially in the discourses that are the source of disputes between the two groups.

> "The term conversion if I look at it from Sunni to Shia is somewhat inappropriate, because Sunni and Shia within the scope of Indonesia in my opinion there is no fundamental difference. In my opinion, the conversion from Sunni to Shia only gives accentuations. Give a clearer emphasis. One example is the concept of *Imāmah*, even in Sunni there is also the concept of *Imāmah*, it's just that in Sunni it is still limited as the concept. If we compare the concept of Sunni *Imāmah* with the concept of Shia *Imāmah*, the Shia give a reference to who is entitled to the position of *Imāmah*. If we assume that they both have the container, the *Imāmah* glass in Sunni and Shia is available, but Sunni only gives an empty space, that glass is all. in Shia not only the glass but also the water. That's what I call accentuation. I don't see that as a problem". (interview withn Husnul Yaqin on August 29, 2019).

A different term was given by an informant named Gunawan, a private employee in Jakarta. Gunawan is around 50 years old, and has been converting to Shia since he was a student at the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) in the 1980s. According to Gunawan, there are no dramatic personal experience in his religious conversion process. He defines the experience of converting to Shia as an

evolutionary process, as a process of learning that is very long and continuous, trial and error, until in the end he is fully convinced by the Shia teaching.

> "My conversion experience might be more accurately termed evolution, the change was gradual and very slow, so I felt no significant psychological tension. So, when fully embracing the teachings of ahlulbait it feels very easy because my beliefs are already complete in this teaching. There is absolutely no burden. I just need to change my clothes, change my religious identity. With family, I'm 100 percent open, no problem. My son is Shia, my brother is Shia, almost all in my family are Shia, the rest is Nahdatul Ulama (NU) background. But just like that, we're used to differences" (interview with Gunawan on March 3, 2020).

From several perspectives of the informants in assessing and evaluating their personal experiences in converting from Sunni to Shia, we can see that for most informants in this study, conversion is a process that is always sustainable, growing, changing, and participatory. Most conversions from Sunni to Shia are not the result of a single moment like a spiritual experience of seeing the light and 'divine truth' through a dramatic event. The conversion from Sunni to Shia is a series of elaborative and evaluative processes of various religious concepts and understandings that they believed when they were Sunni, and they felt that the Shia's arguments on these matters more represented their religious feelings and rationality.

Another thing that can also be seen from the way they describe their conversion process is that most informants view their personal conversion experiences as improving the quality of their religious understanding. They do not negate the religious (Sunni) identity they once believed. They still think that Sunnis

are still brothers in the faith in Islam, although of course there is an assumption that for them Shia are more spiritual, more authentic, because such feelings are central and important, especially in the case of intra-religious conversion.

Considering the diversity of the terms that might be used as well as the understanding of the informants were also diverse, so I chose to continue to use the term religious conversion as a technical and academic term that I would use to describe the event of changing one's identity from Sunni to Shia. The choice of this term may seem too general, but in my opinion it is still easier to use and understand in order to describe the complexity of one's journey of religious conversion from Sunni to Shia.

Considering that this research uses an autoethnographic method which affirms things that are sometimes considered subjective elements in the positivistic scientific tradition such as the use of personal experience, recognizing personal relationships between researchers and informants, and using deep and careful reflection to name and interrogate the intersection between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the politics, So, to clarify my position regarding the conversion experience from Sunni to Shia, I must also admit that I have also experienced a moment of conversion.

Personally, I come from a fairly strong Sunni Islamic tradition considering that I spent around 6 years studying at a traditional Islamic boarding school from junior high school (*ṯanawīyah*) to high school (*ʿĀliyah*). when studying at the Islamic boarding school, I remember there was a learning subject about the

comparison of schools of thought and theology in Islam, among the Islamic denominations discussed was Shia Islamic theology, but the intention of the learning subject seemed to be to affirm the basis of Sunni theology which was formed by Maturidi and Ash'ari.

The encounter with Shia discourse more objectively occurred in 2014 when I researched my master's thesis on the An-Nadzir congregation community in Gowa district, South Sulawesi. In that research, I concluded that what united the An-Nadzir congregation, most of whom came from various regions in Indonesia to form an independent community in Gowa, was Messianic hope. They consider that their community is preparing for the arrival of Imam Mahdi, the messiah of the end times.

Even though the An-Nadzir congregation builds a narrative that they are neither Sunni nor Shia to form their own unique political identity, in many of their *fiqh* practices they have closeness or similarities to Shia *fiqh*, such as in the *fiqh* of daily prayer and fasting during Ramadan. Not only do they have similarities in the *fiqh* of worship, but their construction of the figure of al-Mahdi is also close to Shia beliefs. Like the Shia, the An-Nadzir congregation also believes that Imam Mahdi was born in 255 AH/869 AD and is currently in a period of occultation. The difference between the construction of Shia Mahdism and An-Nadzir lies in the construction of the occultation experienced by the imam, An-Nadzir modifies the narrative about the Imam Mahdi's occultism so that it becomes a narrative that is unique to An-Nadzir. an-Nadzir, include local narratives and figures in their construction of al-Mahdi and conception of Islamic eschatology, for example, they

claim that the imam mahdi once rose in the personal form of the DI/TII figure kahar Muzakkar and then disappeared again, then appeared in the person of the founder of an-Nadzir, namely Syamsuri Majid, and then experienced another occultation.

The centrality of the concept of an-nadzir Mahdism made me have to research how the narrative about al-Mahdi is understood by various Islamic groups. The discourse about Al-Mahdi in the Sunni tradition is not something central, while in the Shia it is an inseparable part of their theological construction. Because of this thesis research, I ended up coming into contact with the thoughts of Shia intellectuals, especially in themes surrounding theology and the construction of Islamic history in the understanding of Shia adherents.

The encounter with the Shia Islamic perspective, which at that time was something new for me, was enough to shake up the establishment of the theological understanding that I believed in at that time, especially on issues surrounding theological construction and Islamic history. Most of the issues that drive my conversion will be discussed in the explanation section of the informant's conversion experience so I feel they will not be mentioned in detail here.

During the process of 'theological anxiety' that I experienced, I carried out independent research about Shia teachings through several writings of Shia intellectuals and clerics, among the figures who greatly influenced my conversion decision was Syafruddin al-Musawi, especially his book entitled Nights in Peshawar, apart from al-Musawi, I also admire Mutahahri's work on the concept of

divine justice, and Baqir Sadr's writings on the polemic of Islamic leadership after the Prophet Muhammad.

In contrast to the experiences of several people who became informants for this research who knew Shia through their involvement in a particular organization or community, my conversion experience was completely independent and individual. During the process of spiritual unrest, I did not engage in any interaction with any Shia-affiliated community, nor did I have any kind of spiritual *musyid* who directing or propagating Shia theology to me.

In an effort to describe the unique personal experiences that experienced by the informants, I try to classify their personal experiences into several categories based on their acknowledgment about what things they think made an important and vital contribution to their decision to become adherents of Islamic Shia. I would later refer to this category as the 'gates' to their introduction to Shia discourse, which was one of the main reasons the informants accepted and believed in the Shia as their new way of understanding Islam. During the field research and discussion process with the informants I found at least four 'gates' that were the main argument in their decision to convert from Sunni to Shia. These gates are 'gate of philosophy', 'gate of Islamic history', 'gate of Irfan/sufism', and 'gate of *fiqh*' (Islamic jurisprudence).

The use of the term 'gate' as a term to describe the spiritual experience of the informants of this study is in line with how the figure of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib who was a central figure - of course after the prophet Muhammad - in *the ʿaqīdah*

of the Shia was described as 'the door of knowledge' or the door to wisdom. In a narration of the hadith that is well known in both the Shia and Sunni traditions it is said that the Prophet said that "I (Muhammad) am the city of knowledge, while Ali is the door, so whoever wants to enter the city, then he must enter through the door (As-Suyuthi, 2001, p. 197).

The typology of encounters through these four gates is a strong typology that I encountered in this research. I need to emphasize that this categorization does not intend to generalize the experience of everyone in his/her encounter with the Shia teaching to be limited to the four gates. Of course, there are many other potential 'gates' that may be experienced by people in relation to the process they choose to convert to Shia, for example, someone encounter with Shia can occur through matters relating to personal feelings, relationships, and other personal considerations.

Maybe there are people who initially know Shia because their partner (girlfriend/wife) is a Shia follower, maybe there are people who know Shia because one time he or she accidentally joined a Shia study group that he did not know before that the study group was directly or indirectly affiliated with Shia teachings. Maybe someone started his/her acquaintance with Shia discourse through books, or through links sent in various social media, then he/she searched for information about Shia in more detail, or maybe someone might even start introducing and converting to Shia instead from hatred and various accusations against Shia.

In addition to the potential for encounters with Shia discourse that I have mentioned, there are certainly many other ways that a person might experience in his/her encounter with Shia discourse, but the more personal category is not discussed or considered specifically as a 'gate' to conversion from Sunni to Shia. These personal matters certainly have an important role in the introduction or even the decision to convert to Shia, but however, in my opinion, Sunni and Shia as a construction of religious identity consist of various concepts, ways of thinking, worldviews and practices which is more or less different from each other, so there is a need to rational reasons that become the basis for a person's decision to convert, especially considering the social consequences that a person may experience when choosing to be Shia.

Considering this is an internal conversion in the same religion, in my view, to be able to make someone steady or feel compelled to decide to do the conversion, then a discourse tool is needed that can make him/her question and doubt the 'truth' of the established religious discourse that he/she previously believed. Therefore, logical and philosophical arguments are needed to explain and convince potential converters about various teaching concepts or negative issues about Shia that they may have heard before. These rational arguments must be able to show the distinctive differences between Sunni and Shia and the claims about the significance of these differences on the quality of one's Islam. The rational explanations and arguments complement the personal encounter experiences that someone might have experienced in their conversion process and the four 'gates'

that I have mentioned become the main arguments in the personal experiences of the informants that they conveyed to me.

I need to emphasize that the things expressed by the informants in this research in particular relating to the concept of Shia beliefs both concerning matters of *ʿaqīdah*, Islamic law, and so on only represent their personal understanding which is of course subjective and in not represents the official and authoritative concept of the Shia, if what is called an official and established concept of Shia indeed exists. I think this is important to emphasize at the outset to avoid the assumption of various parties that the things said by the informants are not in line with the 'official concept' in the Shia.

Another thing that I feel needs to be emphasized also is the 'standard' assessment used in assessing whether a person converts or merely experiences encounters with the understanding of Shia Islam but does not change his/her ideological and theological position to become Shia. Is it possible for a person to be categorized as a Shia simply because he admires the work of Shia philosophers and thinkers such as Mulla Sadra, Khomaieni, Mutahhari, Ali Shariati or other Shia thinkers? Or can someone be categorized to believe in *ʿaqīdah* of shia just because they practice some rites of worship that are in harmony with the Shia *fiqh* such as the procedures for daily prayer and fasting? Or is someone called a Shia because

he/she celebrates certain events that are considered identical with Shia such as the celebration of Ashura or the commemoration of the day of Quds?[25].

What is used as a standard of evaluation to identify one's acceptance and markers of conversion from Sunni to Shia must be something more specific and something unique and distinctive that reflects Shia ideology or *ʿaqīdah*. Liking the thoughts of Sha thinkers or scholars does not require a person to adopt a Shia understanding, so does the practice of worship, most of the Shia *fiqh* practices can be found it's equivalent in the four schools of *fiqh* that are recognized by the Sunni community, as well as the commemoration of certain events which could be commemorated in a meaning completely different from the Shia understanding of the event, for example, the interpretation that Ashura is a symbol of resistance to tyranny, or even Ashura as a day of salvation rather than as a day of sadness as understood by the Shias.

What is distinctive, unique or can even be said to be authentic from the Shia is primarily their belief in *Imāmah* or leadership rights as guardians of Muhammad's teachings after his death. Even the Shia *Zaidīyah* group which is considered to be the Shia sect closest to its teachings with the Sunnis especially because their moderate views on the two caliphs (Abu Bakr and Umar) remain categorized as a

[25] World Quds Day is a demonstration aimed at supporting the struggle of the Palestinian people and condemning the Israeli occupation of them. World Quds Day is usually celebrated on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan. Since it was initiated by Imam Khomaeni and Iran in 1979, the commemoration of world quds day is often accused by various groups of being an Iranian and Shia effort to win the sympathy of Sunni groups.

Shia community because of their beliefs about *Imāmah*. The centrality of the *Imāmah* doctrine as the main demarcation of Sunni and Shia was also expressed by informants in this study when asked what the fundamental differences between Sunni and Shia are in their view. Although there are a small number of informants who mention *fiqh*, aspects of the rationality of the teachings, and other matters, but most of the informants mentioned the understanding of the concept of *Imāmah* as the main difference.

The following are excerpts from statements from two informants about their views on the main differences between Shia and Sunni. The first excerpt is from an interview with Jalaluddin Rahmat, one of the national Shia figures and initiator of the organization called *Ikatan Jamaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia* which was the first Shia organization to gain recognition from the state. The second excerpt from an interview with an informant named Sabara, who is a researcher of religion and tolerance, he also served as chairman of IJABI Makassar.

> In my opinion, a lot of people turn into Shia if the encounter of the discourse comes to unique Shia characteristics, for example about the concept that the heir to leadership after the prophet was Imam Ali bin Abi Talib. Or for example, the Shia's view of the Prophet's companions. That's unique Shia).
>
> The standard to be called Shia? To answer that we need to ask what is the demarcation between Sunni and Shia. That is a testament, a recognition that the Messenger of Allah bequeathed his successor is Ali bin Abi Talib. That confession already required him to be Shia. There is even more, namely the recognition that Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib was more important than the other companions of the Prophet. But this is too broad, and this is actually not typical Shia. Because if this is used as a standard, then it could be that almost all

> groups of taricates will be categorized as Shia (Interview with Jalaluddin Rahmat on March 1, 2020).

It is not only the majority of informants who are already insider parts of the Shia who view that understanding the concept of *Imāmah* is a fundamental difference between the two denominations, but this view is also affirmed by some Sunni scholars an clerics in Indonesia. This can be seen for example in a dialogue that was held in Tanjungbalai, Karimun Regency, Riau Islands Province on May 25, 2014. Present at the dialogue were the Regent of Karimun, the Chairperson of the DPRD Karimun, the Chairperson of the Riau Islands province MUI and various other representatives of social and religious organizations. The dialogue was carried out as a response to the massive spread of the book *'Mengenal dan Mewaspadai Penyimpangan Syi'ah di Indonesia'*. Representing the Sunni scholars were Muhammad Idrus Ramli and Misbah Munir, while the Shia were represented by Dr. Muhammad Babul Ulum and Sayyid Hussein Shahab. In one part of the dialogue, Sunni representatives affirmed that *Imāmah* is a fundamental difference between the two groups, even according to the sunni speakers, the concept of *Imāmah* influences all Shia teachings, because the doctrines of the *Imāmah*, the pillars of Iman and Islam in Shia construction differ from the Ahlussunnah, *Imāmah* impacts on the way shia views the problem of islamic history and so on[26].

Most informants in this study prefer to use the term 'ahlulbait lover' compared to the term Shia or *tasayyu*. Officially recognized Shia organizations such

[26] Complete dialogue between Sunnah and Shia in Karimun Regency can be seen on the youtube page below https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r12_Atyn0lg&pbjreload=101

as the Association of Indonesian Ahlul Bait Jamaah (IJABI) and Ahlul Bait Indonesia (ABI) and also other foundations and organization affiliated with Shia do not use the term Shia as the official name of their institutions and foundations. Usually, they prefer to use the word ahlulbait or to use the names of figures of Shia saints or thinkers such as Fatimah az-Zahra, Motahhari and others.

That is at least possible due to two main things. The first possibility, to avoid confrontation it is not necessary with the majority of Sunni Muslim communities in Indonesia. The use of the word Shia certainly has the potential to offend the sensitivity of the majority of Indonesian Muslims who are Sunni and cause friction that can hamper their *daʿwah* and agenda. In contrast to the Shia term, the term ahlulbait is a word with a more neutral impression because Shia and Sunni both glorify the Prophet's ahlulbait even though they interpret it in quite different definitions and understandings.

The second possibility is that the word Shia itself, according to some informants, is interpreted as a word that demands a lot of moral qualities and attitudes which is heavy enough to be fulfilled by people who want to bear the term, so they prefer to use the term 'lover of ahlulbait' to describe their loyalty to Shia ideology. One depiction of the qualities that must be possessed by a Shia can be seen from a hadith attributed to Imam Ja'far Ash-Sadiq (the sixth Imam in the Shia Itsna Ashariyah tradition) who said "Our Shia are *waraʾ* (keep away from committing sins) and diligent workers, they are people of faith and trustworthiness, *zuhd* and worship experts, always performing fifty-one *rakaʿāts* of prayer a day and

night, people who are awake at night and fast during the day. They perform the pilgrimage to *Baitul Haram* and keep themselves from everything that is unlawful (haram)" (Al-Ashifi, 2008, p. 46). Most of the informants also said that they felt that they were not qualified to hold the status of 'Shia' because they were not very commensurate with the big names, sacrifices and loyalty of those who held the status of Ali's Shi'i in the past such as the figure of Salman al-Farisi, Abu Dhar al-Ghifari, Ammar bin Yasir, Miqdad bin Amr, and so on.

Certainly, people or groups who do not like the Shia theology will easily accuse that the argument about using the term 'ahlulbait' lover is only part of the Shia *taqīyah* in order to cover up their true identity. Such accusations may contain the truth that Shias want to disguise their identities, but such arguments tend to view *taqīyah* in an entirely negative impression and are often formed from unsubstantiated arguments, claiming that they know exactly the character of the Shia, and that the motivations of the Shias are always evil. Whereas, *taqīyah* both conceptually and practically covers a very complex issue rather than just a matter of covering up the identity of Shia adherents. Considering of the central issue of *taqīyah*, discussion of *taqīyah* -especially as practiced by informants- will be discussed specifically in other parts of this paper.

Although most informants prefer to use the term 'ahlulbait' lover or other terms that are considered to be more neutral, in this study, the term 'Shia' will be used because the word 'Shia' presupposes a theological position that is different from the Sunni in the diverse treasures of Islamic history and thought. I think it is

more appropriate to use the words Shia and Sunni as a comparison to explain a change and move from a certain theological position to another theological position and identity which is the main marker in an event of religious conversion.

A. Gate of Islamic Philosophy/ Rational Thinking

What I mean by the gate of islamic philosophy/rational thinking in the case of conversion from Sunni to Shia is a form of encounter with Shia discourse – and it is one of the main reasons some informants decide to convert into Shia- experienced by informants involving matters relating to problematization various theological concepts or Islamic *ʿaqīdah* such as the idea of *Imāmah* (leadership), interpretation of prophetic concepts, construction of the concept of divine justice and various other Islamic discourses which were previously established concepts or concepts that were taken for granted while they were still Sunni as representations of the 'common' understanding of Islam.

In addition to the problematization of understanding the construction of certain theological concepts, also included in the category of encounter through philosophical/rational gate is informant's interest in the character of religious behavior that is considered identical or typical with the Shia community identity in Indonesia, for example, inclusive religious behavior and prioritizing rational aspects in its religious arguments that lead someone to convert into shia.

Shia and philosophy are often claimed to have an intimate relationship with one another. Shia and Islamic philosophy seem to be features that cannot be

separated from Shia theological thought and culture. Indeed, it seems that philosophy has more space in Shia culture than in Sunni culture. The fact that most Islamic philosophers are Shia is often used as an argument in support of claims about the close relationship between Shi'ism and philosophy. In the introduction to a book written and published by Ahlul Bait Indonesia (ABI) entitled *''Buku Putih Mazhab Syiah Menurut Para Ulamanya Yang Muktabar (The White Book of Shia Schools According to Its Respected ʿUlamā)'* also implicitly also states the intimacy of Shia with philosophy by mentioning the names of several Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and several other Shia intellectuals in the past who have been instrumental in Islamic realms (Tim Ahlul Bait Indonesia, 2012, p. 3). According to Leaman (Leaman, 2016a, p. 5), one of the arguments that most often arises to explain the claim of the closeness between Shia and philosophy is the fact that most of the previous Islamic philosophers came from a Persian background, which is an area with majority of its population adhering Shia since the Safawi dynasty made Shia Islam as the official state religion around the sixteenth century.

The discussion about the relationship between philosophy and Islam in the past, whose implications are still felt today, has indeed become a hotly debated discourse, especially in the world of Sunni Islam. Abu Hamid Al-Gazali, known as the *ḥuğğatul Islām* (the proof of Islam) is one of the Sunni authoritative intellectuals who initiated a systematically criticism towards philosophy and Islamic philosophers at that time such as Ibn Sina and al-Farabi through his book entitled *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (the incoherence of the philoshoper) (Al-Gazali, 2015).

Several decades after al-Gazali died, al-Gazali's criticism against philosophy in *Tahafut Al-Falsifah* was later also criticized by Ibn Rusyd who was also known as Averroes in his book entitled *Tahafut At-Tahafut* (the incoherence of the incoherence) (Ibnu Rusyd, 2004).

In his criticism, Gazali accuses that people who are involved in philosophy tend to underestimate or insult the Islamic sharia, philosophers are also considered to propagate *bidʿah* (religious innovation) or even to a certain extent encouraging people to disbelief 'islamic teaching' which according to Gazali is caused by their admiration for philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and others. In his criticism of philosophy, al-Gazali covered twenty themes related to what al-Gazali called as the form of contradiction and inconsistency in the thinking of philosophers, especially in the fields of physics and metaphysics (Al-Gazali, 2015).

In the history of Islamic thought, it seems that al-Gazali's criticism through *tahafut al-falasifah* has more place and influence in the Islamic world than the various objections related to his accusations against philosophy. Some academics have even said that philosophy in the Islamic world (sunni) has never really risen after al-Gazali's criticism (Leaman, 2016a). Sulayman Dunya in his introduction to the Indonesian edition of the book *Tahafut Al-Falasifah* said that the book actually cannot be considered to represent Al-Gazali's thoughts comprehensively because the book was written at a time when al-Gazali was still experiencing what he called mild skepticism and had not get spiritual enlightenment which he eventually got through the enlightenment of Sufism (Dunya, 2015).

The book *Tahafut al-Falasifah* according to Dunya was written when al-Gazali 'tried to get a high social position and reputation. Through this book, al-Gazali defended the *maḏhab* which could give all the social prestige, not defending the right school essentially. At the time when this book was written Gazali, Sunni followers were trying to narrow the movement of the muktazilah and philosophers groups but did not have figures who had sufficient capability to reject the arguments of the philosophers. Al-Gazali took the opportunity and this book has made him very famous ” (Dunya, 2015).

Al-Gazali’s arguments and attacks (and several other figures) against philosophy have become a reproduced discourse to show hostility towards philosophy which is considered by certain Muslim groups as a door to infidelity through exaltation of reason which has the potential to violate the purity of Islamic teachings that have been brought by the prophet. The haters of philosophy go even further than al-Gazali by claiming that philosophy is forbidden in Islamic law. In Indonesia, propaganda about the prohibition of philosophy - sometimes they do not provide an explanation of what they mean by philosophy - is very easy to find and has even been viral on social media.

However, opposition to philosophy is not uniquely Sunni. Sunni is a community name that is too broad to be generalized into a single narrative in their attitude and assessment of a certain discourse/problem. In the Sunni world, there are also many intellectuals who defend philosophy. Meanwhile, when compared to

Shia, philosophy has received more space and respect in the Shia world both in the Shia community in Persia and elsewhere in the past until today (Leaman, 2001).

In the Shia tradition, philosophy is still used enthusiastically by many Shia intellectuals and is still a common part of the learning curriculum for Islamic studies in Shia institutions (Leaman, 2016a). Although there is some kind of connection between Shia and philosophy, according to Leaman there is no essential relationship between Shia and philosophy apart from the fact that most Islamic philosophers have a Shia or Persian background. Leaman rejects the argument that labels that there is such a thing called Shia philosophy, because the Shia philosophers do not specialize in discussing Shia theology or their work is devoted to Shia readers only, but they discuss various Islamic themes in general and for readers from various backgrounds of school and belief (Leaman, 2016b).

Then how can the discourse of Islamic thought or "Islamic philosophy" lead informants to convert? Before discussing the problem of Islamic thought or theology which is the reason the respondents made the conversion, I would like to first describe how the informant's experience of knowing Islamic thought discourse from a Shia perspective for the first time. From the various experiences of informants that I have encountered, some of the encounters with the discourse of Shia Islamic thought come from a conscious process of intellectual exploration and spiritual search, but also many of the informants' encounters happened accidentally.

The encounter or introduction of the informants involved in this research with Shia discourse or theology is more or less in line with what is expressed by

Sabara in one of his research result on the dynamics of the Shia movement among students from various universities in the city of Makassar, South Sulawesi. Sabara said there were four categories of Muslim students in Makassar on their journey to know Shia (Sabara, 2012).

First, the informants got to know Shia through books about Shia that are widely circulated in Indonesia. Apart from the debate about when the existence of Shia in Indonesia actually started, but after the Iranian Islamic revolution which became a momentum for Shia Islam to be recognized again as an Islamic identity that was different from Sunnis, one of the domains that is the focus of the media of Shia preaching is through the publication of books to explain to Indonesian public about Shia ideology related to the foundations of belief, Islamic jurisprudence, philosophy, the construction of their understanding of Islamic history and so on.

The effort to publish 'Shia books' is considered effective in disseminating the Shia faith because preaching through books can reach a wider and more diverse public. Preaching through books also has less potential to cause resistance or horizontal conflict than preaching mediated by gathering people like '*pengajian'* (direct preaching attended by number of people) because books are more individual in nature.

Among the Shia books that had a lot of influence in changing the perspectives of informants were books written by Shia figures and thinkers such as Sayyid Syafaruddin al-Musawi, Muhammad Tijani, Imam Khomaeini, Ali Syariati, Murtada Motahhari, Mulla Sadra and others. In addition to the international figure

of the Shia, People who are considered to be Shia leaders in Indonesia are also actively preaching through books such as Jalaludin Rahmat, Haidar Bagir, Hasan Abu Ammar, and so on. Shia official institutions such as the Ahlulbait Indonesia organization are also active in publishing books to answer various accusations against Shia in Indonesia.

One book that perhaps needs special mention is the book written by Tijani entitled *Akhirnya Kutemukan Kebenaran.* This book is a bit special because it is often the initial reading that encourages many conversions to Shia in Indonesia. In addition, the Tijani conversion experience described in the book can be considered a form of conversion to Shiism through the door of philosophy.

The Book *Akhirnya Kutemukan Kebenaran (*in the english version this book entitled *Then I Was Guided)* can be said as a biography about the real experience of the writer (Dr. Muhammad at-Tijani) who came from the strong Sunni tradition and encounter Shia discourse in a different perspective from his previous understanding and knowledge of the Shia. I call it a new perspective because as Tijani said he understood Shia only from what was conveyed by Sunnis and mostly in the form of propaganda about Shia heresy. His encounter with Shia gave him a different horizon than he had known. He had the opportunity to see Shia as understood by the member of Shia themselves. The encounter eventually made Tijani conduct a comparative study to find a better understanding of Islam, especially for himself. That experience was what Tijani wrote through his book.

Although it may not be written in the framework for academic purposes, Tijani's book, in my opinion, is important because of the influence of the book on the conversion process from Sunni to Shia. Tijani's book, most of them may have been read by people who want or in the early process of conversions. The popularity of the book *Akhirnya Kutemukan Kebenaran* may be one of them can be seen from the many efforts to refute the book that was scattered on the internet from groups who claim themselves to be Sunni. The book is interesting because of its flowing language style and the claim that Tijani is a religious figure (Sunni) in Tunisia and he very understands the Sunni theology so that he has the competence to compare Sunni and Shia doctrine in a fair and balanced manner.

Tijani grew up in a family of devout Sunni Muslims. His family is a follower of the Tijaniah congregation and follows the Maliki School. The name Tijani was taken from the founder of the congregation. The Tijaniah Congregation is widespread in Maghribi, Jazair, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan and Egypt (Tijani, 2010: 6). At the age of ten Tijani had memorized all verses of the Qur'an. At the age of 18, he made the pilgrimage, after returning from *Hağ* he actively propagated the Wahhabist teachings through the teachings he managed. In those days he forbade people to kiss graves or wipe the wood of grave because he considered it to be an act of shirk to Allah (Tijani, 2010: 9).

Tijani's journey found a spiritual experience when he traveled to Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and several other Middle Eastern countries. On his travel on the ship from Egypt to Beirut, he became acquainted with a student from Iraq who

had following Shia school and was taking a doctoral program at al-Azhar University. Although initially having a bad prejudice against the person, but the argumentation and moral goodness has shown by his new Shia comrade lured Tijani, he finally agreed to his friend's invitation to visit Iraq. A visit that will give Tijani a new spiritual experience.

The experience of meeting and interacting directly with the Shia members slowly corrected suspicion and prejudice against the Shia he had previously believed. As long as the interaction was amazed by the morality of the Shia family he met, for Tijani, those whom he had accused of being apostates were more likely to maintain Islamic morals than he did (Tijani, 2010: 24). In Iraq, Tijani made a pilgrimage to the tomb of Sheikh Abdul Kadir Jailani[27], to the tomb of Imam Musa al-Kasim[28], the tomb of Imam Ali, and the tomb of Imam Husain in Karbala[29].

While in Iraq, Tijani met with famous Shia scholars. In the city of Najaf, he met Sayed al-Khui, while in Kufa he met Sayed Muhammad Baqir Sadr. The two *ʿulamā*s are *marğa ʿ*[30] for Shia people. During that time, he discusses with the Shia scholars, Tijani asked many questions about his prejudice against Shia which was answered in a way that he thought was very logical and rational accompanied by

[27] A Sufi figure who is very well known in the Sunni tradition, he is considered as the leader of the Sufis.
[28] Seventh Imam in the belief of the Shia Itsna Asyariyah.
[29] First Imam in the belief of the Shia Itsna Asyariyah. According to Shia, Imam Ali who was supposed to be the leader of the Muslims after the death of the Prophet. This claim according to the Shia is based on the *naqli* (sacred text) argument which is very clear.
[30] *Marğa ʿ* 'is an expert on religion and jurisprudence (*muğtahid*) of Islam whose fatwa is followed and used as a reference in their daily problem by Shia people

naqli (sacred text) argument that amazed Tijani. This creates a sense of confusion and doubts in Tijani. Through this encounter, he seemed to be forced to correct his previous Islamic understanding, while the logic and rationality of the Shia clerics which fascinated him also can not simply he refused.

When he has returned to his homeland after performing *ʿumrah*, Tijani intends to do research to compare the two perspectives on Islam (Sunni and Shia). The research for Tijani is part of an effort to find 'truth'. For Tijani, it is impossible in a problem to have two kinds of truth. Knowing the sensitivity of this issue and his desire not to get caught up in the fanaticism of a school, Tijani applies several considerations in his efforts to find the 'truth'. Through these considerations, he wants to show his position which he claims is neutral. Consideration or approach used is the right principle (logic) that is correct by using the arguments agreed upon by both parties and consideration of common sense. The following is what Tijani said related to his comparative efforts against Shia and Sunni understandings of Islam.

> "I promised myself when I began to study this long and complicated problem to merely adhere to the authentic hadith agreed upon by the Sunnah and Shia. I will ignore every hadith that is only held by one school and rejected by others. In a fair way like this, I will be able to distance myself from all kinds of emotional influences, fanatical attitudes (*taʿaṣṣub)* of schools or disputes between nations and nations "(Tijani, 2010: 77-78).

Among the themes examined by Tijani is the position of the companions of the Prophet after the death of the Prophet. This theme is indeed one of the things that are very central in Sunni-Shia disputes. Sunnis and Shia do have different

positions in viewing the companions after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunni glorifies the prophet companions without exception, while Shia is critical by saying that not all of the Prophet's companions were faithful after his death. Another theme examined by Tijani relates to the problem of the *wilāyah* or Ali's leadership rights. The theme of *Imāmah* is also very central in Sunni-Shia disputes. Even the theme of *Imāmah* is considered to be the root of all Sunni-Shia theological differences. For Shia, *Imāmah* (Islamic leadership) is part of the *ʿaqīdah* which has been clarified in many of the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, while Sunnis consider it not part of the faith. The issue of *Imāmah* in Sunni's view is a matter of *ummah* (society) who are not regulated in religion specifically. Unfortunately, this dispute will not be specifically discussed in this paper. After years of serious research, Tijani came to what he called 'truth'. He firmly chose Shia as a new faith without the slightest doubt. He chose Sayyid al-Khui as his *marǧaʿ taqlīd*.

The conversion process conducted by Tijani shows how a pattern in which a person converts from Sunni to Shia after he meets and interacts with the Shia member. Tijani's knowledge of Shia before converting as acknowledged by himself is largely prejudice that is not entirely true and is largely an indoctrination and stigma that is instilled and taboo to talk about. the encounter with the Shia community corrected the image he had before and had the opportunity to verify the image.

The experience of Tijani's conversion was so famous among people being in the process of converting to Shia, at least in Indonesia. Tijani's book entitled

"*Akhirnya Kutemukan Kebenaran*" is a reference for many people who want to know the basic differences between Sunni and Shia theology so that the book directly or indirectly contributes to a person's decision to convert to Shia.. Tijani's book is not only popular among the Indonesian Shia community, but this book along with Syafruddin al-Musawi's book entitled "*Dialog Sunni- Syiah"* and several other books are also the main reading of the Shia community in Malaysia (Sofjan & Universitas Gadjah Mada, 2013)

Tijani's experience is influential among people who are in the process of conversion because the image that he is a person who has a good understanding of Sunnis (memorized all of the Quran, memorized many hadiths, taught in many teaching meetings) before conversion to Shia, the conversion is a result of contemplation and comparative accompanied by the arguments which he said was accepted by both parties, his opportunity to visit Shia sites in Iraq, as well as his interaction with the Shia authoritative clerics, an experience that was not possessed by most of the people who convert to Shia.

The second possibility that informants could experience as their way of encounter with Shia was through Shia ceremonial activities / rituals that were often carried out openly, such as commemoration of Ashura, *arbaīn, al- ġadīr*, and other rituals which were even often carried out on campus or other public spaces. The first encounter of potential converts with Shia discourse through rituals such as Ashura and others ritual which leads to someone's curiosity to dig deeper information about Shia from the Shia source itself or from more 'neutral' sources is

quite common in the conversion process from sunni to shia. This may be due to the fact that the Shia rites they encountered contained ideological narratives that were quite strange or they rarely got from various Islamic communities that they had previously encountered.

Apart from the fact that the Shia rite itself, especially those related to historical events, is full of ideological content that is unique to Shia, the introduction of a potential convert through participation in a Shia rite is usually due to the content of the lecture delivered at this activity. In every activity of the Shia rite such as Ashura, it is usually accompanied by a lecture presented by Shia preachers who usually explain the meaning behind the rite or emphasize on the obligation to obey and follow the prophet and his ahlulbait in general.

The ideological content contained in the Shia rites often causes the implementation of the rites to be blocked, disturbed, or even repressively dissolved by various intolerant groups against the Shia. Unfortunately, in many acts of intolerance cases towards the Shia community, the state is often absent in guaranteeing the right of Shia citizens to practice their faith which is guaranteed in the state constitution. Even worse, in some cases, state institutions have become perpetrators of discrimination and acts of intolerance on the grounds of maintaining harmony or even on the grounds of maintaining "true Islamic teachings".

One example case where the state or its institutions are perpetrators of discrimination and acts of intolerance against Shia followers is a circular letter issued by the Makassar City Government ahead of the commemoration of Ashura

in 2019. The circular letter numbered 400/402/Kesra/IX/2019 consists of three points which are 1. Appealed to the public to be vigilant so as not to be influenced by Shia ideology and teachings (especially in commemorating Ashura) 2. Does not provide an opportunity for the spread of Shia ideology which is very likely to cause public unrest which could threaten the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. 3. Appealing to act firmly in dealing with deviant sects, because this does not include as religious freedom but blasphemy.

In the logic of the letter, the teachings and rituals of Shia worship are something dangerous, threatening the unity of religious communities in Indonesia. The Makassar city government circular went further by alleging that the Shia were not one of the Islamic groups that had existed since the early period of the existence of Islam but were a form of religious blasphemy of the "true teachings of Islam" in Indonesia. Negative images and constructs are still a phenomenon experienced by non-mainstream Islamic groups such as Shia and Ahmadiyah. In the Shia context, it is usual that the initial encounter of people who convert to Shia came from negative information about Shia that they get which they verify through various sources. Encounter with better information about Shia or with their community actually makes them Shia.

The third possibility that many informants encountered in their process of getting to know Shia was through study forums or had participated in intellectual activities carried out by Shia institutions such as IJABI and ABI. In the context of the city of Makassar, which is the place for Sabara's research, he mentioned several

institutions and foundations that are considered to be affiliated with Shia, including the al-Islah Foundation, Lentera, LSII, LDSI al-Muntazhar, Shadra Foundation, Mafatihul Jinan Foundation, ash-Shodiq Foundation, Rausyan Fikr Foundation and el-Hurr Foundation (Sabara, 2012).

One of the characteristics of study forums organized by various Shia institutions is the emphasis on philosophical aspects and rational discourse in building religious arguments. This is, for example, shown by Musriadi in his research on Makassar State University students. According to Musriadi, students who have undergone cadre training through IJABI have experienced a paradigm shift in thinking and intellectual enlightenment. According to him, intellectual enlightenment is reflected in religious patterns which are no longer merely accepting doctrinal teachings (given), but rather in a dialectical process of thought that creates inclusive religious patterns (Musriadi, 2015).

In Jogjakarta, one of the institutions that are considered to have a strong affiliation with the Shia is the Rausyan Fikr Institute. Rausyan Fikr itself on several occasions rejected the claim that they were spreading Shia teachings directly, this was also strengthened by the admission of several people who had participated in the Rausyan fikr Jogja program or the Mutahhari Islamic boarding school managed by Rausyan Fikr. they said that there was no intervention or direction to become shia while they were studying at Rausyan Fikr, some of the Rausyan alumni I met admitted that they were still sunni and had not converted to become shia followers.

The main focus of Rausyan Fikr programs is on the study of Sufism, Islamic mysticism, and Islamic philosophy from Iranian intellectual figures such as Ali Shariati, Baqir Sadr, Mulla Sadra, Murtada Motahhari, Imam Khomeini and so on. Of course, it cannot be denied that there are some people who decide to convert to Shia after participating in the philosophy study program at Rausyan Fikr. In many cases that I have encountered, actually people who take philosophy classes specifically in Rausyan Fikr already have initial information about shia, Rausyan is only a means of deepening their knowledge and the process of their introduction to shia,

Fourth, the informants' encounter with Shia discourses is experienced through interactions with their college friends who adhere to Shia. Perhaps between the initial encounters with the Shia discourse that have been mentioned, this pattern of encounters is the 'least intellectual' pattern because this encounter is caused by emotional closeness to someone who has already known Shia, be it a spouse, sibling, parent, or friends. Of course, what I mean by not being too intellectual is just the initial introduction. As a major decision in one's life, the religious conversion from Sunni to Shia certainly requires a rational and strong argumentation which leads someone to have a strong desire to convert from a majority and an established Sunni to become a minority and vulnerable Shia adherents in various social dynamics in Indonesia.

Conversion through the ‘gate of philosophy’ can be said to be a form of conversion that demands an active search from the potential convert in finding a

strong and rational reason before he/she reaches an unstoppable desire to convert. One form of conversion from Sunni to Shia which I categorize as a form of conversion through the gate of philosophy is conversion caused by admiration for Shia intellectuals or scholars and their work. I have encountered this pattern of conversion from the experience and recognition of several informants in this study. This conversion pattern, for example, was expressed by Ahmad, one of the research informants who experienced a more in-depth encounter with Shia theology when attending a philosophy study program at Rausyan Fikr Jogjakarta.

> My conversion experience is just ordinary. There was no tension in me to accept this truth. the time I needed from seeing it for the first time and then deciding to follow this faith only took one day. This may be due to my admiration for his philosophical figures, especially the writer of the book of *Falsafatuna*, Baqir Sadr. I just think that with the height of reason of the philosophers I admire, their theological choices must be closer to the truth. that simple. And over time, it feels like it only strengthens my simple choice earlier. My choice is actually to follow the logic of *fiqh*, *muqallids* follow *muğtahids* (Interview with Ahmad on August 5, 2019).

Conversion through the gate of philosophy is usually experienced by 'potential converts' who are actively involved in various Islamic philosophy study forums, study groups that discuss Shia intellectual thought, or have access to various books related to Shia. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration if the phenomenon of conversion from Sunni to Shia is considered a phenomenon of urban society. This claim is also confirmed by various studies such as by Halimatusa'diyah in Indonesia (Halimatusa’diyah, 2013) and Leichtman's research on shia conversion in Senegal (Leichtman, 2009) which states that most people who

convert to Shia are people who come from among the the middle class who are well educated 'and well paid.

Conversion through the gate of philosophy as a phenomenon of urban society is not surprising because the access to Islamic philosophical discourse in the form of discussion communities or study groups, both affiliated with certain universities or independent study groups outside campus, and access to books that discuss Shia matters are easier to be found in big cities.

The background of the educated middle class who mostly converts through the gate of philosophy is not only due to access to more affordable knowledge resources but also because the articulation or argumentation bases built through the conversion gate of philosophy are mostly in the form of complex academic arguments and quite complicated so that they are not easily understood by various society in general.

Due to the characteristics of the conversion of Shia at the 'gate of philosophy' that uses academic narratives, one of the media that plays a large role in a person's journey to convert is various study groups. Apart from going through institutions and foundations that are affiliated with Shia or specialized in the study of shi’ism discourse, the introduction of Shia discourse has also been carried out by several institutions that have no direct affiliation with Shia theology. One of organizations that have an important role in someone encountering and their conversion process to Shia Islam in various cities are some cadres of the Islamic Student Association (HMI).

I need to emphasize that when I mention the name of HMI organization, what I mean does not mean that HMI is institutionally promoting or advocating Shia theology, but cadres of the organization who are interested in Shia and are personally active in introducing Shia theology and thoughts to other members in the organization body. As a student organization, HMI can be said to focus on social and intellectual movements. The elaboration of Islamic thought carried out by HMI has never focused on one particular school of thought, but all types of Islamic thought are given space to be discussed.

The openness to these various types of thinking has made Shia thinkers and philosophers also gain a place and are considered attractive, especially in the times after the Iranian Islamic revolution when the Shia identity was not yet an identity that was too taboo to be discussed as it is today, especially in various academic forums. The role of HMI cadres in the effort to introduce Shia actually is not a new discourse, this is also mentioned in Zulkifli's research (Zulkifli, 2009) which states that there are several HMI members who are trying to make the organization a forum to promote Shia. According to Zulkifli, these efforts gave birth to pro-shia and anti-shia inside the HMI.

The indirect role of HMI in introducing various discourses of Islamic thought including Shia discourse is also confirmed by the confession of several research informants who said that their initial encounter with Shia was obtained when they were involved as members of HMI through various forums to study various intellectual discourses and Islamic thought.

Encounter with Shia while being an HMI activist, for example, expressed by one of the informants named Andika who graduated from a private university in the city of Makassar and was the chairman of the HMI commissariat at his campus. According to his confession, his conversion journey can be considered quite self-sufficient, HMI's role is only limited to introducing him to books written by Shia-based authors.

> I can say that the conversion journey that I have experienced is the result of intellectual activity through books and organizations, especially at HMI which introduces that there is a teaching/study that discusses aspects of rationality. That's how I started to get interested and search independently. Understanding the Basic Values of the Struggle (*Nilai Dasar Perjuangan/NDP*) of HMI cannot be separated from the influence of Mutahhari's thoughts. I think the spirit described by Mutahhari fits the religious spirit I'm looking for (interview with Andika on February 8, 2020).

According to Andika's confession, at the beginning of his interest in the Shia discourse, he got a lot of negative views about the Shia, which generally allege that the Shia are a deviant sect. Even the books that he reads are also questioned just because the author is a Shia. These negative views were initially quite psychologically disturbing, but after he did some research and verification, he found that most of the accusations were not based on data but merely prejudice or even propaganda of certain people.

> The first time I found out that what I was learning was a Shia book instead of someone else, how come you read that book? It's Shia, especially when I read Jalaluddin Rahmat's books. But the more I was detained, the more I became interested in reading Shia books. And perhaps due to a lack of reading and experience, I didn't find my

> concerns better answered as well as Mutahhari or Jalaluddin Rahmat did (interview Andika on February 8, 2020).

Andika's conversion experience changed many ways of his religious views. One of them is his perspective on women. According to him, the change in perspective was caused by various readings and lectures by Ustadh Safwan, the manager of the Rausyan Fikr Islamic boarding school, Yogyakarta. ‘It is not said to be noble someone who does not appreciate women' as he said when describing his general view of women.

Actually, the glorification of women is not something unique to the Shia, but is commonly found in many sacred texts, both in the Qur’an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad and is not a central issue that is the subject of debate between the two groups. The difference between Sunni and Shia lies only in the glorified historical figures. The Shia group for example made the figures of Fatimah az-Zahra and Zainab al-Kubra the daughters of Ali bin and Fatimah because of their courage in protecting Husain's family after the Karbala tragedy, especially protecting her nephew, Ali Zainal Abidin, the successor of *Imāmah* after the murder of his father, Husain bin Ali.

Meanwhile, the Sunni group in addition to of course glorifying Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet, who is mentioned in the holy text by the prophet as the best example of women of all time with Maryam bint Imran (mother of the Prophet Jesus/Jesus), Asiyah wife of Pharaoh, Khadijah bint Khuwailid, they also glorifying Aisha bint Abu Bakr. Aisyah's example is not only because of her position as an

ummul muʿminīn because she is one of the wives of the Prophet, but also because of her intellect and her big role in the chain of transmission of the prophet's hadith. Aisyah is the woman who has narrated the most hadiths, and is even included in the list of prophet's companions who have narrated the most hadiths of the prophet Muhammad.

Another thing that attracted Andika to Shia was its theological foundation (pillars of faith) which incorporated the concept of divine justice as the foundation of faith. According to Andika, it is not said to be religious, an unfair person. Andika's interest in this concept can actually be guessed through his admiration for the figure of the Shia cleric Murtadha Mutahhari who wrote a special book related to the theme of divine justice. In general, the discussion in the concept of divine justice relates to the classical debate in the history of Islamic thought on whether human beings in their actions have free will as seen in the argumentative tendencies put forward by the Sunni Muktazilah, or whether human beings do not have free will over their actions (predestination) as seen in the argumentative tendency of the Sunni Ash'ariyah.

The Shia themselves took the middle path in the debate by triggering the concept of *al-amru bainal amrain* or "things between two things"(Muthahhari, 2009, p. 31). According to Shia theology, humans have freedom in their actions but are not independent. In relation to this concept, Tabataba'i explains that human actions through God's will occur in a series of complete causes, one of which is human free choices (Thabathaba'i, 1989a, p. 153). According to some Shia

scholars, God has knowledge of human actions, but He does not force people to act in a certain way. by believing that humans have free choices, then God's reward in the form of rewards and sins for every human action becomes more meaningful (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team, n.d.).

A distinctive concept of Shia theology that also appeals to Andika is *Imāmah*. In his view, the separation of Sunni and Shia is caused by differences in political views (*imāmah*). Andika was interested in why the Shia made *Imāmah* one of the foundations of belief. As a former student activist, Andika has no problem with the concept of Shia *Imāmah* which is thick with the cult of the individual towards the Imams. According to him, the leadership authority of the people (*ummah*) is needed as long as the leadership authority is used as a tool for upholding justice and is not used as a power to oppress the community.

Of course, Andika's view of *Imāmah* is a subjective view and does not represent the views of many other Shia adherents. This view may be the result of his personal elaboration or because of his lack of understanding of the concept of *Imāmah*. I say that, because for many Shias the right to leadership of Ali bin Abi Talib is not merely a matter of political power, but is a divine mandate that has been explicitly conveyed by the prophet on various occasions.

The experience of conversion due to interest in the theological arguments of the Shia school which is considered to offer an intellectual dimension and diversity of discourse compared to religious patterns that only dwell on the issue of the dimensions of Islamic law that are displayed rigidly is also experienced by an

informant named Irfan. Irfan is currently working as a lecturer at a private university in the city of Makassar. Similar to Andika's experience, the process of introduction and interest to the shia school that experienced by Irfan until he decided to convert also occurred when he was actively involved as a member of HMI at his alamamater university.

> My encounter with Shia was through reading. I remember the first book I read entitled "Ringkassan Logika Muslim (A summary of Muslim Logic)' written by Hasan Abu Ammar whose author was known as a Shia figure. When I was studying at Makassar State University, he was invited and I attended his seminar. He said that whatever the teachings of a religion, if it fights for humanity, I will follow it, so from there I was interested in learning about Shia, and things related to Shia. That happened to me when I was actively involved as a member of the Islamic Student Association (HMI) (interview with Irfan on February 3, 2020).

The encounter with Shia theology has made Irfan interested in studying religion in depth. Interest in studying religion according to his confession was a new thing for him because before meeting the Shia community, the religious groups that he found were exclusive communities and tended to only focus on discussing the legal dimensions and observance of personal rites while matters relating to philosophical and social discourse from a religious perspective did not receive much attention.

Irfan's interest in Shia prompted him to read more books about Shia and seek out Shia communities outside HMI. In the early phases, Irfan's concern was more on the themes of religious foundations as believed by the Shia schools such as the theme of monotheism (*tauhīd*) and God's justice to find out what was

different from his previous faith. The search phase, according to Irfan, lasted for approximately two years. In the search phase, Irfan did not consider himself to have converted to Shia because the rites of worship that he practiced still fully followed the Sunni jurisprudence, namely the jurisprudence of the Shafi'i school.

The moment that is considered a sign of conversion to Shia by Irfan is when he feels that he can no longer distrust Shia as a true belief for himself and there is a strong urge to carry out religious orders or obligations using Shia jurisprudence. For Irfan to be a Shia, it is not enough to just agree with Shia way of thoughts, according to him, to be a complete Shia adherent is to also practice the jurisprudence of the Shia schools.

At the beginning of the conversion period, Irfan sometimes personally felt that he was different from other Muslims because worship practices such as praying and fasting were carried out in the Shia school a little differently from the way he performed these prayers before he converted to Shia. This feeling may arise because the practice of worship with shafi'i *fiqh* that he has practiced for so long has been very firmly planted in his consciousness, so drastic changes in worship procedures are not easily accepted. This had made him in a certain sense question his Shia creed. This was exacerbated by the information he received about Shia from people or groups who did not like Shia and portraying Shias in bad narratives, for example as a deviant group in Islam, also sometimes burdened him psychologically. However, as time went on and his efforts in the process of studying the Shia school more deeply, he was finally able to overcome the problem.

> At first, there was a strange feeling when practicing Shia jurisprudence because the worship was slightly different from what I understood and practiced before. However, I overcome that by continuing to study, reading books, discussing, asking the *ustadh* who I think has more understanding about it. And I conclude that the practice actually has good roots in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Another reason why I feel confident choosing to become a Shia is because the more I search, read the references, I find that the Shia are not what their haters describe (interview with Irfan on February 8, 2020).

The experience of conversion through the 'door of philosophy' was also experienced by a young lecturer at a public university in Makassar named Rusdi. When the interview for this research was conducted with him, he was still in the stage of completing his postgraduate studies at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta. According to Rusdi, before his conversion to Shia, he could not identify for sure whether he was fully Sunni or not, because the religious understanding he previously held was given and dogmatic, just following the religious way that was believed by his family and environment. Meanwhile, his journey of conversion he describes as an intellectual pursuit and enlightenment.

Prior to his conversion to Shia, while studying at the undergraduate level, Rusdi was actively studying Islam through various internal and external campus institutions such as the Campus *Daʿwah* Institute, KAMMI (Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union), Wahdah Islamiyah and HMI. Rusdi's acquaintance with Shia occurred when he was active as an HMI member, either through a study theme or by a member of HMI who adheres to Shia Islam. The interest in Shia he met at

HMI made Rusdi look for study groups and institutions specifically affiliated with Shia theology.

Rusdi finally studied intensively at one of the Islamic philosophy study institutions in Makassar called the Lentera Foundation which focused on discussing various themes of Islamic philosophy, especially from Shia Islamic thinkers. In addition to studying at the Lentera Foundation, in order to study Shia in greater depth, he also participated in a cadre process organized by the Association of Indonesian Ahlulbait Jamaah (IJABI) of South Sulawesi province. After a process for approximately two years of study he finally decided to convert and follow Shia jurisprudence in carrying out the rites of worship.

According to Rusdi, his interest in Shia was caused by the discussion of religious themes in the Shia community that he met discussed more philosophically and religious discourse in the Shia community is richer. While in the non-Shia community where he studied, the discussion of Islamic themes discussed was more about legal aspects or rites which were presented theologically and dogmatically, because philosophical perspectives in discussing religious discourses were often considered un-Islamic or even considered as a deviant point of view in interpreting religious discourse.

> I really like religious studies that are based on philosophical studies, which in other institutions such as Wahdah, they mostly talk about hadith, I think we are not too free to explore, for example, the question of why we should pray, why should we follow the prophet. The question is considered to have been completed in the Institutions, it is taken for granted dogmatically. While in the study of Islamic philosophy we can find answers and discussions about it. And I think

> that religion must use logic. Because religious people must be reasonable too. While in Shia, it is learned why we believe there is only one god (discussion on monotheism), why we have to worship, if we worship God it means we have to follow the prophet, and so on until the problem of the *wilāyah* of the ahlulbait. It is explained logically both according to historical data and based on the verses of the Qur'an (interview with Rusdi on February 18, 2020).

The next informant who shared his conversion experience was Sabara. He is a researcher at the Makassar Religious Research and Development Center, the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. He has also served as chairman of IJABI South Sulawesi. As a researcher and also the main administrator of the ahlulbait organization, according to Sabara, the spread and *daʿwah* of Shia in Makassar City and South Sulawesi Province in general is somewhat different from other regions in Indonesia. The difference is that there is no *habāib* variable that plays an important role as an 'agent' or important figure in the spread of *daʿwah* in Shia in Makassar.

The encounters of 'potential converts' with the *daʿwah* of Shia Islam, especially after the Islamic revolution in Iran, were mostly initiated by the intellectual community, mostly based in universities. Because it is based on an intellectual community, most people who convert from Sunni to Shia are students who are interested in Shia philosophical thought and the spirit of the Shia revolutionary movement which is reflected in the Islamic revolution of Iran under the command of Imam Khomaeni. In the case of interest in Shia among students in Makassar which started around the end of the 80s or early 90s, the background of the university from which the converting students came from was from secular

campuses, while in Islamic universities, the phenomenon of student conversion from universities with religious backgrounds only developed in the early decades of the 2000s.

Because the focus of interest in Shia is more in terms of philosophical discourse and the revolutionary spirit which is considered richer than the Islamic tradition that has been encountered or understood by the early converts, the consideration of *fiqh* as the reason for conversion does not play a significant role in the decision to convert. Not only was it not a major consideration, there were several research informants who converted in the early 90s saying that during the early years their conversion, they only followed Shia conceptually (*ʿaqīdah*) but in the realm of worship they still followed Shafi'i jurisprudence.

This condition is due to the fact that in the early 90s period, the debate about Sunni and Shia that developed among students was more in the realm of thought and philosophy. At that time there were also very few authoritative figures who could be used as references in *fiqh* problems because *fiqh* was a study that demanded mastery of many traditional 'tool sciences' such as *nahwu* and *shoraf*. It was only in the early 2000s that this problem was slightly bridged through qum or other *hauzah* alumni who had returned to Indonesia and interacted with various ahlulbait communities in Indonesia.

Sabara's conversion journey began around the early 2000s when he was still listed as a student at the State Islamic University Alauddin Makassar. Sabara himself actually comes from the Nahdatul Ulama family background, but at the

beginning of college he was active in the Muhammadiyah Student Organization. His encounter with the Shia was through a meeting with a Shia Islamic study group. Before his conversion to Shia, he was very fond of the study and discussion of philosophy. His fondness for philosophy had made him experience a crisis of faith. At that time, he thought that religion and philosophy were two paradoxical things. The notion that religion and philosophy are polar opposites that are difficult to reconcile changed when he studied Islamic philosophy from Shia scholars and intellectuals such as Mutahhari or Mullah Sadra. In the thought of Shia Islamic philosophers`, Sabara found the connection between philosophy and Islamic theology in general.

In the early days of his conversion, he had experienced a kind of psychological tension because there were differences both conceptually and practically from the understanding of the Sunni theology that he previously adhered to with the concepts he got in Shia theology. Among these psychological tensions, for example, because of his background which departs from the Muhammadiyah tradition which is anti-superstitious, *bidʿah* and *churofat*[31], so that the doctrine of *tabarruk* to certain people or objects that are considered sacred which is common in the Shia tradition and also in the Sunni Islamic tradition of Nahdatul Ulama (NU) in Indonesia takes time to be accepted.

[31] In Indonesian the words tahayyul, bidʿah, and chorafat are often abbreviated as TBC. The acronym is usually intended not only as an abbreviation, but also associated with Tuberculosis which is dangerous for the body. So these three things are considered a dangerous virus for the purity of one's Islamic faith.

Another thing that also causes psychological tension according to Sabara is the historical doctrine which is paradoxical to the understanding of Islamic history that he previously believed in. The paradox of the construction of the Sunni and Shia versions of Islamic history is psychologically disturbing because it relates to the postulates of truth and authority that he previously believed.

However, the discussion of the connection between conversion and the problem of construction of Islamic history will be discussed further in a special discussion in this paper. Even though he admits to experiencing some kind of psychological tension, it is not considered as a dramatic psychological tension which is often depicted in various testimonies of conversions from one religion to another. According to Sabara, this psychological tension is overcome by acting and studying rationally and honestly against various theological arguments from both Sunni and Shia.

The theological concept that Sabara considers as deeply correcting his previous understanding of Islam as well as being one of the main causes of his decision to convert to Shia Islam is the concept of the *Imāmah* of Ahlulbait as the inheritor and guardian of the prophetic tradition after the Prophet Muhammad. The acknowledgment that the Messenger of Allah has willed his successor to be Ali Bin Abi Talib according to Sabara is something that is unique to the Shia and is a sign that someone has accepted the foundation of the Shia faith.

The emphasis on the confession of the ahlulbait *Imāmah* in its unique sense is intended to distinguish it from other arguments, such as the argument that Ali is

more important than other companions cannot be considered a sign of Shiism because such arguments are common in the world of Sufism and are not Shia-specific.

I also found examples of other arguments in the research process, for example, there were some informants who said that 'My thoughts are Shia but my worship practices are Sunni. This can have a double meaning, namely that it is true that his/her practice of worship is still Sunni or that the practice of Shia jurisprudence is only carried out in his/her private space. This is usually a problem faced by Shia researchers because respondents tend to limit themselves to sharing information about their Shia identity because showing their Shia identity sometimes makes a person likely to experience social threats both in daily social interactions, careers, and so on.

The next informant who did the conversion was named Mahyudi. Currently he is domiciled in Jakarta. His encounter with Shia theology occurred when he was an undergraduate student in the early 90s. Introduction to Shia discourse is generally experienced through reading books written by Shia writers such as Mutahhari, Baqir Sadr, Khomaeni, Sadra, Tijani, and other Shia writers.

Deep curiosity about the ahlulbait school led him to study in Iran. His departure to Iran was not only intended for the purpose of studying for his master's degree but also in order to verify the accusations against shia that were made outside. However, according to Mahyudi, he does not want to be trapped in negative accusations addressed to the Shia, because according to him it is just a waste of time

and useless. For Mahyudi, everyone embraces Islam with different qualities. These different qualities are because everyone's understanding of Islam is built with a different epistemology.

Mahyudi chose to become a Shia through the gate of philosophy because philosophical discourse is considered to cover more substantive themes and is slightly free from sensitive issues of Sunni-Shia identity so that religious discourse that is based on rational and philosophical arguments is more acceptable to people from various backgrounds.

Mahyudi even criticized the behavior of some Shias who, according to him, have a weak understanding of the epistemology of the Shia school, so that sometimes they want to appear that they are the most correct. This was due to their introduction and acceptance of the Shia school through Islamic jurisprudence and considered it the most correct practice. Whereas differences in views regarding Islamic jurisprudence are commonplace, even within the Shia itself there are so many differences in various Islamic jurisprudence issues.

> We, in preaching Islam, must be based on epistemological knowledge that is in accordance with the nature of the knowledge of the people we convey. And it doesn't just revolve around regulation, it's halal and haram. There is a scope that can be accepted by everyone, that's why I chose philosophy. When rational building becomes the foundation, we can discuss with anyone. Meanwhile, for *fiqh*, we will be co-opted, even though *fiqh* is flexible, but for many people it is made rigid (interview with Mahyudi on December 16, 2019).

The encounter and interest in Shia through the gate of philosophy was also experienced by an informant named Aqsan, a young lawyer who is currently

starting his career in Jakarta. The encounter with the Shia has actually been experienced since he was a teenager but at that time he did not understand what Sunni and Shia were and what the ideological and practical differences were between the two.

His encounter with Shia in his youth was introduced by his cousin through videos about the Iranian Islamic Revolution. Aqsan's family background comes from the *habāib* family. According to Aqsan's confession, within his extended family there are indeed some people who are Shias. But his parents, especially his mother, were very resistant to Shia.

His second encounter with the shia happened when he was studying for undergraduate. The encounter with the Shia in college was experienced in a negative and positive sense. He got a negative sense from various information scattered on social media about Shia who were described for example as insulting the wife and companions of the Prophet, perpetrators of immoral acts (because they allowed mut'ah) and so on. He also got a negative sense about Shia from his social environment, for example the bad comments he got when people who did not have a deep understanding of Shia saw him reading Ali Shariati's or Mutahhari's book and commented that the book should not be read just because the authors are a Shia.

Meanwhile, he found a positive sense of Shia in several study institutions where he studied. Institutions or organizations that have been occupied by Aqsan to learn about Shia in depth include HMI, Lentera Foundation in Makassar, Rausyan fikr in Jogjakarta. So, according to Aqsan, his introduction and conversion

to Shia is a combination of autodidact search because of his interest in studying Islamic philosophy which led him to read the thoughts of Shia philosophers and his interaction with various institutions close to Shia discourse.

The time lag between his interest and his decision to convert is quite long. The long time was not caused by doubts about Shia theology, but rather because of internal resistance in his family so he felt the need to protect his family's feelings by refraining from converting. It was only when he continued his master's studies and he lived apart from his family that the desire for conversion became unstoppable.

After the conversion, Aqsan underwent a change in religious understanding. The change in religious understanding occurred both in terms of *uṣūl* and in the *furūʿ* area. According to Aqsan, the most striking difference between Sunnis and Shias relates to the issue of the post-prophet divine authority. While the Sunnis consider that there is no divine authority after the prophet, the Shia consider that this authority still exists through certain individuals of the Imams of the Ahlulbait even though their position is not as a prophet like the prophet Muhammad.

The difference in perspective on the existence of divine authority between the two schools also resulted in the development of traditional Islamic sciences such as *fiqh* and *uṣūl fiqh*. Even accordingnce of *fiqh* and *uṣūl l fiqh* first developed in the Sunni world because the need for interpretation and explanation related to Sharia law was more urgent because of the absence of an authoritative source. While such a need did not occur in the Shia world until the twelfth Imam's

occultation, because sharia and religious issues always referred to their imam who were considered to hold divine authority in answering religious problems (Shadr, n.d., p. 16).

Personally and subjectively, Aqsan assumes that the theological arguments offered by the Shia are more rational and he feels more comfortable. Aqsan, for example, gives an example of an argument that is considered more rational in relation to the perception of prophethood. According to Aqsan, his understanding of the prophet Muhammad changed 180 degrees after becoming a Shia, for example the issue of infallibility. The depth and majesty of the figure of the prophet is more pronounced in the Shia.

The next informant was a doctor in Bandung named Emy. Her encounter with the Shia is quite different from that of most other informants who are personally active in seeking information or learning about Shia either self-taught or through certain study groups. According to Emy, her encounter with the Shia is more accurately described as an accidental encounter.

Before meeting with the Shia community, Emy was actively looking for a *taʿlīm* group to get some kind of religious guidance on the life problems that she was faced at that time. However, from the various *taʿlīm* groups that she attended, she felt that she did not find any enlightenment because the assembly was mostly based on the case that something was permissible or not. In short, their discussion rests on a rigid view of Islamic jurisprudence.

In the midst of boredom with the rigid religious discourses offered by the *taʿlīm* groups she had met, one of her family members invited her to attend a *taʿlīm* organized by a *habīb* who was a Shia. The impression she got from the *habīb* was that he was a charismatic figure who was able to communicate proportionally with various people's characters so that someone did not feel taught or even considered stupid. After some time attended *taʿlīm* in the Shia community, she felt that the Shia community was different from the *taʿlīm* groups she had met. According to Emy, the discourse discussed in the Shia community is broad. Not only about haram, halal, *bidʿah*, infidel, misguided. Emy feels that Shia people are inclusive and not allergic to differences.

Emy's interest in Shia is because in her point of view the emphasis of Shia teachings is love and she has confirmed this through her long experience of encounters and interactions with the Shia community. Emy described her conversion as an achievement. For her, Shia is a high station. In Shia teachings she felt she had found the answers of traditions such as the pilgrimage to the grave, the *tawassul* that he used to do without having any arguments against it. For Emy, Shia teachings are very logical, human, and flexible so that religion does not seem like something difficult. After studying Shia for about 6 months, Emy firmly decided to convert to Shia both in terms of *ʿaqīdah* and Islamic jurisprudence.

Emy criticized the rise of public interest in the theme of religious piety, especially among urban communities through the phenomenon of *'ḥiğrah'* which he considered did not make many people became a better person in their social

interactions after their *ḥiğrah* process due to rigid religious understanding (especially in the discourse of Islamic jurisprudence) and not infrequently consider their interpretation as the most correct understanding of Islam.

> I think like this, Islam with its love, should make a Muslim become an advanced human being, not be trapped in an unproductive debate. Should be *rahmatan lil alamin.* Now there are many phenomena of people doing *'ḥiğrah*', but in fact after the proses of *'ḥiğrah'* they become exclusive individuals, smile is limited, resign as employees. Feeling as the most right person or group, then what's the difference with the devil? (interview with Emy on January 5, 2020).

The emphasis on promoting good morals which is required of an Indonesian Shia Muslim seems to be the strategy of the Shia community in dealing with the majority of Indonesian Sunnis. The emphasis on morality, for example, is very explicit in the jargon 'put morality above *fiqh*' (Rahmat, 2007) popularized by Jalaluddin Rahmat and the IJABI organization he founded. What is meant by morality here is that a Shia Muslim is required not to act exclusively and be intolerant of the various Islamic understandings that exist in society. In the field of *fiqh*, for example, Shia Muslims especially those affiliated with IJABI, are recommended not to impose their understanding and practice of religious *fiqh*, especially when in public spaces to avoid unproductive conflicts and debates with various Indonesian Sunni Muslim communities.

In Islamic discourse, the Indonesian Shia community always tries to put forward the message of Muslim unity (*uḫuwah Islāmiyah*) and *taqrīb* (attempt to find common ground) between Sunni and Shia theology by emphasizing that the similarities between Sunni and Shia are more than the differences between the two

as a strategy to maintain personal and community existence. The Shia community usually tends to avoid discussing sensitive discourses in Sunni-Shia relations, for example, discourses related to symbolic figures in the view of Sunni Muslims such as the companions of the Prophet, especially the 3 caliphs before Ali and the wives of the Prophet Muhammad, especially Aisyah and Hafsah.

The message of unity and *taqrīb,* for example, can be traced on IJABI and ABI social media (youtube, facebook, etc.) which were uploaded a lot, especially during the covid 19 pandemic where physical meetings were mostly replaced with visual gatherings. These messages do not only appear in ordinary seminars or routine studies, but the messages even appear in typical Shia celebrations such as the commemoration of *wilādah* (birth) and *šahādah* (death) of holy humans (prophets and their ahlulbait) and also in commemoration of ashura and *arbaīn*.

Jalaluddin rahmat himself, who was considered one of Indonesia's Shia leaders in the last years before he died from the covid 19 virus, specifically made a serial study related to *maqāṣid as-ṣarīʿah* (*ṣarīʿah* goals) on the JRTV youtube channel. After his death, the study of *maqāṣid as-ṣarīʿah* was continued by kang Jalal's son, namely *Ustadh* Miftah Rahmat. This is interesting to me because based on information from one of the shia community i've ever met, the theme of *maqāṣid as-ṣarīʿah* is not very popular in the Shia world, the discussion of *maqāṣid as-ṣarīʿah* is more widely known in the Sunni world.

The discussion of *maqāṣid as-ṣarīʿah* itself usually involves the universal purpose of an Islamic law. In the view of the proponents of *maqāṣid as-ṣarīʿah*,

God through the prophet establishes laws to bring *maslahah* (benefits) to humans, and specifically to safeguard five important elements in human life, namely: religion, life, reason, progeny, and property (Duderija, 2014, p. 3). Subjectively, I assume that there are several intentions of Jalaluddin Rahmat to conduct a *maqāṣid as-ṣarīʿah* study. First, to present a *fiqh* discourse from a more substantive perspective amid the dominance of Islamic discourse that focuses on rigidity about how Islamic jurisprudence should be carried out so that many people who are *fiqh* oriented think that their way of worship is the most correct and blame worship practices that are different from with them. Second, the study of *maqāṣid as-ṣarīʿah* is one of his many efforts in realizing *taqrīb* between Sunni-Shia in Indonesia.

In addition to the field of religious discourse, the emphasis on good morals in the social interactions of a Shia Muslim is also displayed in various other fields. In the social field, for example, the Shia community is usually active in providing material and financial assistance to members and groups of poor communities, both in urban and rural areas, In the field of education, the Shia community usually opens inclusive schools and educational institutions by not imposing Shia theology on their students who are affiliated with Sunni theology. Introduction to Shia theology is usually carried out through a comparative approach to schools of thought in Islam. The various efforts of the Shia community to be able to blend in with the majority of Sunnis as part of Indonesian citizens can easily be accused of being a form of *taqīyah* by anti-Shia people or communities (Zulkifli, 2013).

Efforts to blend in and avoid strained relations with the majority of Indonesian Sunnis can also be seen from the way the Shia community names themselves or their community. In Indonesia, no associations or foundations affiliated with Shia theology name themselves by explicitly mentioning the word 'Shia'. Compared to the word Shia which has a negative connotation for some Sunni Muslims, the Shia community prefers to use a more neutral word, for example the word 'ahlulbait' or a word that still has the spirit or 'taste of the Shia'. Socio-politically, the name ahlulbait is considered more acceptable by the sunni group because not a single Muslim explicitly states that he/she does not love the ahlulbait of the prophet. Meanwhile, the word 'Shia' gives the impression of a binary opposition, and does not help in the relations of the Shia community with their Sunni brothers and builds the impression of distance with them.

The experience of conversion through the gate of philosophy was also expressed by a private employee named Gunawan who currently lives in Jakarta. Gunawan can be categorized as the first generation who converted to Shia after the Islamic revolution in Iran. The journey of Gunawan's conversion process began in 1982 when he was still a student at one of the leading universities in Bandung.

Since a student, Gunawan has been very fond of reading various philosophical books and the works of political Islamic thinkers from various schools of thought. From the side of Sunni thinkers, Gunawan reads the political thoughts of Abu al-A'la al-Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, Rashid Ridho, and so on. While from a Shia thinker, he likes to read the works of Murtadha Mutahhari, Ali Shariati and of course Imam

Khomeni as the pioneer of the Islamic revolution in Iran which according to Gunawan at that time was loved by various circles of students, not only those who were affiliated with Shia because Khomeni was considered one of the Islamic progressive figures against tyrannical rulers.

The fondness for various characters of thought makes Gunawan not allergic to a school's identity so that his encounter with Shia ideology does not depart from stigma or negative information about Shia as is currently widely spread on social media. According to Gunawan, in the early 80s there was no significant tension related to Sunni-Shia identity because the basis of the discourse that was developed based on the discourse of thought offered, not based on identity sentiment (whether based on sharia law or other matters) or hatred between the two schools. So according to Gunawan, discussing *Imāmah* and *ḫilāfah* in the public sphere is considered normal, just like discussing whether smoking is *haram* or not. At that time, the view of Shia was also normal, just as NU people viewed Muhammadiyah and vice versa.

> There was no psychological tension at the time I converted. First, maybe because we are in our comfort zone, we discuss the thoughts of certain figures, we don't enter the *fiqh* zone. So, we talk about Shia to friends or anyone we feel comfortable with. We used to discuss *Imāmah* openly, there was no problem. But when we discuss how to pray, *ḫumus*, marriages, especially mut'ah marriages, the social tension will definitely be high. If we talk about the basic ones (philosophical roots of Islamic theology) there is no problem. Even the discussion of *ʿaqīdah* has no problem except when it is formulated into pillars of faith. So, the tension is at the *fiqh* discussion level, but try at a more philosophical level, there is never any tension (Interview with Gunawan March 3, 2020).

After converting and believing in Shia, Gunawan experienced a kind of change in theological understanding. Of course, that kind of thing is normal in a conversion event. In fact, it is what is needed to be able to move from one theological position to another. In the process of the conversion journey, the theological discourses and arguments became the basis for conversion to Shia after studying and comparing various theological arguments from various schools of thought. In Gunawan's view, this Ash'ari theology has many what Gunawan calls as conceptual loopholes, for example the concept of God's body (jism) which is not explicitly rejected by Ash'ari theology. Meanwhile, according to Gunawan Shia theology firmly rejects the concept of God's jism, and that God is not the same as something, God is the source of absolute goodness and perfection. Clear.

The concept of whether God has jism or not has indeed become one of the debates in the realm of theology or *tauhīd* in Islam. The debate is caused by differences in interpretations of sacred texts, both those originating from the Qur'an and hadith, which implicitly or explicitly describe God as having a body such as having hands, eyes, calves, and so on.

The Wahhabis, who tend to interpret sacred texts literally justify or believe that God is a physical entity as described in the *ẓāhir* of the Qur'an verse (the lexical meaning of the text) and that God sits on a throne called the *Arsy* by referring to several verses of the Qur'an such as QS: 7:4, QS: 10:3, QS: 13:2, QS: 20:5, QS, 25:59, QS, 32:4, QS, 57:4.

Meanwhile, the Ash'ariyyah group (followers of Abu Hasan Ash'ari) which includes the majority of Sunnis, does not interpret the words face, hands and feet of God contained in the Qur'an and hadith as physical organs, but they do not explicitly reject the impression that God has a jism instead they simply say, "we don't know how (bi la kaif) to avoid the impression of *tašbīh* (likening God to something)' which is clearly forbidden to be attributed to God in Islam (Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project Team, n.d., p. 805).

Shia theology meanwhile decisively rejects such belief in Allah. The Shia believe that Allah does not have a face, hands, feet, and all other physical attributes. As for the verses of the Qur'an which give the impression that Allah has physical attributes cannot be understood lexically but must be interpreted metaphorically. This Shia belief, for example, can be seen in the work of Muhammad bin Ali bin Husain bin Musa bin Babawaih Qommi or better known as Shaykh Shaduq, a prominent Shia scholar and author of the Book of *Man La Yahdhuruhu al-Faqih*, one of the four important books of hadith *(Kutub Arba'ah)* in the Shia school besides the book of *al-Kafi*, *Tahdzib al-Ahkam*, *al-Istibshar*. The following is an excerpt of how the Shia believe in Allah, which is quoted from the book *A Shia Creed* by Shaykh Shaduq.

> "Know that our belief concerning *tauhīd* is that Allah is One, and Absolutely Unique. There is naught like unto Him; He is prior; He never was, and never will be, but the Hearing and the Seeing One; the Omniscient; the Wise; the Living; the everlasting; the Mighty; the Holy; the Knowing One; the Powerful; the Self-Sufficient. He cannot be described by His Essence; His Body: His Form; or by His Accidental

> Qualities. Nor in term of length, breadth, surface, weight, lightness, quiescence, motion, place, or time. He trascends all the attributes of His creatures; He is beyond both the limitations of transcendence and of immanence" (Musa bin Babawaih Qommi, 1999, p. 67).

Back to the experience of Gunawan's conversion, according to him, there is no special moment that marks that he has converted to Shia. His acceptance of the Shia faith took place gradually and through a long process. The changes in theological understanding took place gradually and very slowly. This long process helps Gunawan eliminate potential psychological tensions that may be experienced due to the conversion process from one belief to another. So, when he fully embraced Shia teachings, according to him it was very easy because his belief and belief were complete in these teachings.

Psychological tensions, whether large or small in scale, caused by religious conversions may indeed be experienced by converts, as I also found in the confessions of several research informants. In the case of the conversion from Sunni to Shia, the psychological tension is partly due to differences in theological concepts and even more so the differences in ritual practices that exist in their new beliefs compared to religious understandings before their conversion that have been established in their consciousness. However, for many converts, the traces of religious understanding and knowledge that had been established prior to the conversion were not immediately lost due to conversion. It takes a process and time to form awareness of this completely new religious understanding. Like the concept of identity, conversion as an identity formation is a never-ending process.

One of the long processes that Gunawan goes through in his acceptance of the Shia faith is the time gap between his belief in the 'truth' of Shia theology and his choice to follow Shia Jurisprudence which takes a very long time. According to Gunawan, he has been a Shia since the early 80s but did not fully practice the Shia Jurisprudence until 2010. This time gap is because in the early days of conversion, Gunawan was more interested in the philosophical dimensions of Shia theology and the thoughts of Shia figures so that he felt that *fiqh* was not something substantive.

> In my generation, which is now aged between 50-60 years, it may be the same pattern, they believe Shia is the right one but the practice of *fiqh*, the practice of formal worship does not follow the *fiqh* of ahlulbait. That's a perspective that is either incomplete or they see that what is called substance is not *fiqh*. The view at that time was like that, so praying was praying. The problem is that we see that the practice of *fiqh* is very diverse in Islam, including Shia itself (Interview with Gunawan on March 3, 2020).

Gunawan even criticized the religious phenomenon that is developing in Indonesia today. According to Gunawan, compared to the era of the 1980s, currently religious discourse has decreased in quality because religious discourse is more dominated by technical issues in carrying out religious rites. While there is very little religious discourse that discusses the substance of how to become a religious human being, about social injustice, about how became a person that brings benefit to fellow humans and the universe. All the time, we only debate about whether it is permissible to celebrate *maulid* or not, whether it is permissible to say Merry Christmas or not, the law of *tahlilan*, and so on.

Even more sadly, for some religious groups, the *fiqh* views of certain schools that they profess are not infrequently claimed to be the sole truth in carrying out Islamic law. Such views in most cases do not help in maintaining religious harmony between Muslims in Indonesia. For example, the concept of Islam Nusantara by Nahadatul Ulama (NU), which is one of the largest moderate Muslim organizations in Indonesia, is considered un-Islamic according to the interpretation of some groups, especially by those who are *fiqh* oriented.

In their view, *fiqh* becomes rigid, giving the impression that religion is something scary and intolerant. even though *fiqh* itself is an interpretation product from a certain *muğtahid* regardless of the sacred texts (Qur'an and hadith) which are used as references. The difference in the concept of *fiqh* is something that is common in any school of of thought in Islam.

> Our religious discourse or social discourse has decreased in quality. Let me give an example. From my time, about 20-25 years ago, there have been discussions of *Imāmah* and *ḫilāfah*, discussions about Indonesia or Islam, Islamic economics or Pancasila economics. There was a seminar at ITB between 86 or 87 which presented Jalaluddin Rahmat and Nurcholis Majid as speakers, on stage it was not like people want to debate, they are of the same thought, towards Indonesian Islam. Now our religious discussion is only about pants, how is religion that is said to be universal, encourage love for the universe, but what is taken care of is only the question of whether the pants should be *isbal*[32] or not, their God may be a tailor. haha. Even if there is a text like that, we just accept it, there's no need to argue it fiercely. The prophet when teaching people in different ways to convert to Islam. Some are just told not to lie, some don't steal. It's simple but substantial. The prophet did not teach people to convert to Islam with orders, for example, don't eat with

[32]Isbal simply means lengthening the garment to below the ankles.

> your left hand and such. This is not only technical, but also not necessarily true (Interview with Gunawan on March 3, 2020).

The process of studying Shia that Gunawan has taken is self-taught, there is no community that he regularly uses as a source of reference or media in an effort to explore matters related to Shia. Gunawan's process of studying Shia is mediated through books and in recent years he has used electronic media, especially YouTube. In Gunawan's view, learning through YouTube is interesting, he describes learning religion through YouTube as evolution, because the process is like trial and error to find out which one we deserve to follow, even though according to Gunawan, even the error actually gives something.

Another informant who converted because of his interest in Shia theology which is considered to have a more critical and rational dimension is an informant who we will call Usman. Usman is a businessman from the *habāib* family (one of the familiar names in Indonesia for the descendants of the prophet) who currently lives in Jakarta. Among the *habāib* themselves, especially in the Jakarta area, there are actually several Shia *habāib* communities that have existed long before the Iranian Islamic revolution. However, Usman himself does not come from a Shia *habāib* family, because he comes from the city of Makassar which can be said to have no *habāib* community base as the main instrument for spreading Shia *daʿwah* like several other cities in Indonesia.

Usman's encounter with the Shia was mediated through his brother, who had previously become a Shia adherent and introduced the Shia to his siblings. As a

convert in the early 80s, the process of Usman's interest and decision towards Shia cannot be separated from the effects of the Islamic revolution which was considered interesting and unique by young intellectuals at that time. The Iranian Islamic Revolution personally shook him and made him feel like he was experiencing a kind of revolution of thought in viewing the Islamic world.

Since the encounter with Shia cannot be separated from the Iranian revolution, from the very beginning of the encounter, Usman did not understand Shia in a nomative dogmatic framework as merely a different concept from Sunni theology or as a 'true' interpretation of Islam. In addition to information through his brother, the process of getting to know Shia is experienced through books by Shia thinkers. In the early days of the process he learned about Shia, all the books on Shia that he read were books on the thoughts and philosophy of Shia figures. Usman was fascinated by the intellectual ideas of Shia thinkers which he found interesting. Through the Shia thinkers Usman felt like seeing a new face of Islam that was different from what he had witnessed or assumed. Islam becomes more beautiful, more rational.

> Our conversion process doesn't go through an overly stressful chapter of historical conflict, we are struck by an intellectually interesting idea. Islam suddenly looks more attractive, more beautiful. The matter of *fiqh* is late. So, the substance first. That's why we really don't need to conflict with our traditional environment if we experience this transformation, because it's more of an intellectual, spiritual transformation. We also don't need to be different from them. We can stay close, because we know that they are not ready to accept our differences or enlightenment. We can still hold on to the position they know for so long. The problem is

> that we insist on imposing our religious understanding on others. (Interview with Gunawan on January 16, 2020).

Conversion through the door of philosophy by Usman is considered to help him in acting and placing himself in a diverse society and not infrequently considers Shia as a deviant and misleading group. According to Usman, substantively, Sunnis and Shias have more similarities than differences. But the differences are always highlighted by certain groups for political and identity purposes. Compared to rigid *fiqh* discourses, religious discourses based on philosophy, thought, or the substance of religion itself are considered to have more potential to bridge relations between schools of thought in Islam, especially Sunni-Shia relations.

Because the entrance to conversion is through philosophy, the element of 'flirty' is not too experienced by Usman, not as big as people who convert because of *fiqh* oriented, or who convert through debate. The 'flirty' referred to here is the strong desire felt by a convert to spread the his/her new belief in to his friends, family, or those closest to him/her. Psychologically, it is normal for a person to feel that he has found a 'new truth' and wants to convince the people around him of that 'truth'. However, sometimes the way of conveying the new belief creates problems for various reasons, including perhaps because the way a newly converted person conveys his new belief is offensive to the old belief, such as attacking symbols or ritual practices and so on.

Usman gave an example of delivering Shia *daʿwah* which he considers to take a different way in books that are often used as references by potential converts. The first is a polite and non-offensive discussion between the two scholars in Syarifuddin al-Musawi's *Al- Murāğaʿāt* book, while the second book, Tijani's book, takes a more dramatic way of delivery or maybe even at a certain level can be considered provocative, although according to Usman, Tijani's works have become wiser after that.

The next informant who converts from Sunni to Shia through the 'gate of philosophy' is the informant who we will call Akmal. Akmal is currently domiciled in Jakarta, he worked as Deputy Director for Research and Education at the Islamic Cultural Center (ICC) and was a director at the Sadra International Institute. He took his undergraduate education in the city of Samarinda, East Kalimantan, then he went to study in Iran and completed his education at the undergraduate and master levels there.

Prior to the conversion, Akmal claimed to be affiliated with Muhammadiyah. He was even one of the founders of Muhammadiyah in Iran. Regarding the two largest religious affiliations in Indonesia, namely Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, I found an interesting fact about the encounter of people affiliated with both of them with Shia discourse which resulted in an event of religious conversion. So far, in many academic texts or testimonies from several figures, it is often said that the traditions and rituals that are identical with NU Muslims such as *shalawatan, maulidan, tahlilan*

and so on have a close relationship with the practice of rites in Shia theology. However, based on the experience of doing this research, I found the fact that people who are affiliated with Muhammadiyah are more receptive to shia (in the sense of deciding to convert to shia personally), than those who are affiliated with NU.

In an effort to explain this phenomenon, I assume that it is easier for people affiliated with Muhammadiyah to decide to convert to Shia when they have believed in the foundations of the Shia faith, among others, due to the absence of special and deep bonds with figures who are considered as 'individual cults' as is common in the NU tradition, especially in the *pesantren* tradition affiliated with NU. In the *pesantren* tradition, there is usually a figure who is considered an 'individual cult' on which students or alumni rely on their sources of knowledge, or even in matters related to political economy activities. Actually, the flexibility of people affiliated with Muhammadiyah in accepting Islamic thought does not only apply to Shia, but also other sects in Islam, such as Wahhabis, Salafis, and so on.

Back to Akmal's conversion experience, his encounter with the Shia occurred when he was studying at one of the universities in the city of Samarinda. At that time, according to Akmal's confession, he really enjoyed learning things related to religion. In Samarinda, Akmal joined the Tablighi Jamaat community and even became the leader of the Tablighi Jamaat at his university. Apart from being in the Tablighi Jamaat, Akmal also actively

studies various sects of Islamic thought such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Salafi, subscribes to Sabili Magazine, Hidayatullah, Al-waris Bulletin published by the Iranian Cultural Consulate which conveys the message of Imam Khomeini, Mutahhari, and others.

The momentum of Akmal's encounter with the Shia or more precisely the Shia community occurred by accident. At one time he was doing *ḫurūj* in a mosque which has become the distinctive identity of the Tablighi congregation. In the activity there was a lecture session filled by a cleric from Saudi alumni, in his lecture the cleric discussed the family of the Prophet Muhammad such as Abu Talib, the Prophet's grandfather, the Prophet's father and mother who were considered infidels by the Ustadh. The cleric's explanation was argued argumentatively according to Akmal by only a construction worker who was working on the construction of the mosque, which Akmal later found out that the person was a Shia.

> During the discussion session, the worker asked, if the prophet's parents were infidels, could it be possible that the prophet was born from the womb of an infidel, his seed from the sperm of a disbeliever, while the apostle came from a holy lineage, how is that possible? The *ustadh* could not answer. *Ustadh* said that Ibrahim's father was an infidel, the worker replied that the meaning of the verse of the Qur'an was not the biological father of the prophet Abraham, because of the tradition of the people at that time, the person who took care of him was called the father, *yaa abata*[33],then if we follow the prophetic genealogy, most of the prophets' fathers were also prophets, on average, the prophet muhammad's father was a descendant of the prophet as well, the prophet Muhammad was descended from the prophet Abraham with several intermediaries.

[33] Refers to QS 16:45

> Maybe there were no prophets in the time when Muhammad's parents lived, but they still practiced the teachings of the abrahamic religion. The ustadh was confused. Regarding Abu Talib, who is considered an infidel, the Ustadh who is an alumni of Medina for 25 years cannot answer. Abu Talib was said to be a disbeliever even though he helped the Prophet's struggle, was ostracized and suffered for the sake of helping the Prophet's *daʿwah*, how could he be said to be an infidel. while Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan's father who was hostile to Islam, who harassed the prophet, was considered a Muslim. This is a hadith and the explanation is political, said the worker. For 80 years Ali bin Abi Talib was insulted on the Friday pulpit and in Sunni hadiths. The ustadh said, are you a shia? He's very emotional. be careful with shia, said the ustadh. Can you speak Arabic? If you talk to me in Arabic only. Diverting the substance of the problem that he could not answer, he invited the Arabic language. To demonstrate his authority as a cleric. The next day the Friday sermon contained insults against the Shia. (Interview with Akmal on January 16, 2020).

Through the encounter with the construction worker, Akmal became interested because he found the person's argument interesting, and also the ritual practice was quite different from what he had seen and understood. This encounter made Akmal interested in studying Shia. For months he spent a lot of time reading Shia books which ultimately led him to firmly choose Shia as his new Islamic path.

> In the last six months of my three years in Samarinda, I reread many books. Every week I go alone to my uncle's villa. I brought the books of Husain Nasr, Mutahhari, Shariati, Jalaluddin Rahmat, I reread the *Tsumma Ihtadaitu* and *Murāğaʿāt* books 2-3 times. I never leave my room except for congregational prayers. That books is amazing. *Murāğaʿāt* is more affected in terms of authority because it is a dialogue between Shia scholars and Sunni scholars. Although another book from Syarifuddin al-Musawi entitled *Layali Peshawar* is better in terms of content. I also read many books related to the stories of *mustabsir* such as, *Limadza Ikhtartu Madzhaba Ahlulbait* by Muhammad Mar'i al-Amin al-Antaki,

> *Laqad syayya'ani al-Husayn as*. by Idris al-Husaini, *Wa Rakibtu as-Safīnah* by Marwan Khalifah, and so on (Interview with the informant on January 16, 2020).

The theme that made Akmal interested in Shia was related to the theme of Islamic leadership. According to Akmal, this theme had been thought about before he even knew Shia. According to Akmal, it has always been in his mind that Muslims must have a leader, there must be someone who holds the position as caliph or imam, followed by many people. But throughout Akmal's search, he felt that he could not find an adequate answer regarding the problem of Islamic leadership, both politically and spiritually. Akmal feels that he has found the answer to the problem of Islamic leadership in Shia teachings, which indeed makes the issue of leadership one of the main postulates of their theology.

> I also dialogue with Catholics, they have the concept of spiritual leadership. In the hierarchy of leadership, at the top they have a pope as the leader of the world's Catholics. How come Islam doesn't have one, while there is a hadith that said whoever dies and doesn't know the imam of his time, then he dies like the death of the *jahilīyah* people[34]. Then who is our Imam today? (Interview with Akmal on January 16, 2020).

The encounter with the Shia made Akmal realize that many crucial questions in religion, especially in the Tablighi Jamaat community which he had used as a religious reference, could not be answered satisfactorily.

[34] This hadith is quite well known in both the Sunni and Shia worlds with a slight difference in wording. However, the content of this hadith is interpreted differently by the two groups, the Shia believe that the word imam in the hadith refers to the significance of the *Imāmah* of the Ahlul Bait. While the Sunnis understand that the word imam refers to any Islamic leader who leads a Muslim country.

According to Akmal, the Tablighi Jamaat tends to be defensive by emphasizing personal piety and avoiding complicated discussions such as controversial events in Islamic history or conceptual debates concerning *ʿaqīdah* and sharia.

According to Akmal, the difference between Sunni and Shia is one of them in terms of worship. In Shia, when people know religion, the imposition of the *Ṣarīʿah* commandment is when they are mature and have reason. In Akmal's view, Akil or the rational dimension of religion in Sunnis is less emphasized, so that people tend to think of things related to religion as something that is taken for granted. The deepening, appreciation, and internalization of each worship in the Sunni world is considered to have received less rational explanation. So, the spiritual aspect is dry. While in Shia, people's reasoning in religion is really being tested. According to Akmal, the Shia reasoning is based on a rational approach. Don't just follow along.

The notion that Sunni theology is 'dry' and less critical, especially with regard to the concept of spiritual leadership, was also expressed by several research informants. One of the informants who also had this assumption was an informant named Dito. Of course, this view is a view based on reasoning and the informant's experience of personal encounters with the two schools of thought, and is not intended to generalize to the entire Sunni world which of course has its own dynamics and complexities.

According to Dito, regarding the concept of Islamic leadership, Sunnis only wear the robe of *Imāmah* to accelerate the movement, but do not give 'spirit' to the concept. Sunnis only take the form of *Imāmah*, whether it be in the form of a caliphate, *daulah*, Islamic state, etc. In these forms what is emphasized is the obedience of a Muslim to ū*lil amri* which is usually attached to the holder of power in a government area.

According to Dito, the concept of ū*lil amri* (those who have authority) in the Sunni world that he personally knows does not have a deep spiritual meaning, because the concept of a leader can be attached to anyone without him having divine qualities or even if the leader figure is stupid, tyrant, sinner, evil and so on. Whereas in the Qur'an Surah An-Nisa' verse 59, the command of obedience to ū*lil amri* is equated or not distinguished from the command of obedience to the messenger of Allah, so that anyone who is referred to as ū*lil amri* should have extraordinary spiritual, moral, and wisdom qualities so that the demands of obedience to ū*lil amri* can be juxtaposed with obedience to the messenger of Allah.

As we know, the Shia have a concept and interpretation of Islamic leadership after the Prophet that is unique and different from most other Islamic groups, especially with the concept of leadership in the Sunni image in general. This concept has even become the religious foundation of the Shia group which is manifested in their concept of *Imāmah*. Regarding the interpretation of Surah An-Nisa verse 59, the Shia also have their own

interpretation. According to the Shia interpretation as seen for example in the description of Allamah Tabathabai in his book Tafsir al-Mizan which says that an ū*lil amri* whose obedience to him is juxtaposed with obedience to the Messenger of Allah must be a person who has *ismah* (free from mistakes and sins both in his words and actions). With the demand that an ū*lil amri* must be free from sin and error, the only possibility is that a group of people can be referred to as ū*lil amri* according to Thabathabai and the majority of Shia scholars are only the priests of ahlulbait. (Thabathabai, n.d., p. 280).

In connection with the issue of the infallibility of the prophet or the depiction of the prophet as a perfect human figure also triggers the conversion to Shia. This was experienced by a research informant named Jiwa. According to Jiwa, the figure of the prophet Muhammad as the noblest human person is more pronounced in the Shia than the Sunni. In strengthening his argument, Jiwa compares the personal description of Jesus and the prophet Muhammad as commonly understood by their followers. In Jiwa's view, there is a different quality of depiction between the prophet Muhammad and Jesus, where the quality of the narrative depiction of the figure of the prophet Muhammad is considered to be less representative of the figure who is perceived as the most perfect human being.

> When Jesus was baptized, Gabriel was in the form of a dove and the atmosphere became calm, peaceful. Meanwhile, when Muhammad received revelations, he was described as frightened. Jesus is depicted curing a disease, while the prophet Muhammad turned away when a blind man came to him. Muhammad is called the

> perfect role model *(uswah hasanah*), but he is described as erring in many ways, only being infallible in receiving revelation. (Interview with Jiwa on January 6, 2020).

What is conveyed by Jiwa in the interview excerpt is closely related to the understanding of the interpretation of the sura Abasa, especially in the first verses of the surah. Sunnis and Shias do have contradictory views regarding the interpretation of the first verses of Surah Abasa which tells about a person who turns away when a blind person comes to him. In general, Sunni *mufassir* believe that the one who turned away from a blind man was the prophet Muhammad. It is said that at that time the Prophet was having a meeting with the rulers of Quraysh when a blind man named Abdullah bin Ummi Maktum came to the Prophet and asked for advice. Because he was serving the nobles of Quraysh who were expected to convert to Islam, the prophet did not like the presence of Ummi Maktum and made a sour face and turned away from him so that he was rebuked by Allah swt (Ar-Razi, 1971, p. 55; Ath-thabari, 2007, p. 159).

Meanwhile, in general, the Shia believe that the person who is turning away from the verse is not a prophet but someone else. Shia *mufassir* argues that these verses do not directly and clearly indicate that the person being referred to is the prophet Muhammad. In addition, the Shia commentators argue that such behavior when attributed to the prophet Muhammad contradicts the description of the prophet in another verse that was revealed before Surah Abasa which describes the prophet as having a great character

(Qur'an 68:4). The behavior of being surly and caring about people based on their worldly status is also a despicable behavior that is not logical to be carried out by the best prophet and apostle ever sent by God.

Actually, there are more informants who do conversions through the door of philosophy that I interviewed during the research process, but not all of them can be displayed in the research data analysis due to considerations of writing efficiency and because there are several informants who have similar patterns in their conversion process, so I assume they will only repeat more or less the same narrative. However, I need to emphasize that this is not intended to reduce or generalize the uniqueness and authenticity of the conversion experience of the informants involved in this research, which of course have their own characteristics.

Finally, in my personal opinion, the gate of philosophy is the most important door in the conversion process from Sunni to Shia Islam without ignoring the significance of other conversion gates. The gate of philosophy becomes very fundamental because it is through that door that the basis of rational argumentation is formed, formulated, and established. Through the door of philosophy, ideological commitment and identity are also implanted in the consciousness of the converts. The ideological commitment and awareness of Shia identity forms an image of how a converts should be a Muslim and a Shia in particular.

Conversion through the gate of philosophy can be said to be something that is quite dominant in an event of conversion from Sunni to Shia. Jalaluddin Rahmat, who I interviewed, agreed with this argumentation. In Jalaluddin Rahmat's assumption, about 80 percent of the Shia conversion events are conversions through the gate of philosophy, or in Jalaluddin Rahmat's terms, cognitive conversions. According to Jalaluddin, it is very rare for conversions to Shia events to be caused by affective considerations.

Rational or philosophical arguments that become the basis of conversion can be considered as something unique in Shia conversion when compared to most other religious conversion events, especially in the context of internal conversion within one religion. The dominant conversion events found in this study are more in the form of active searches by potential converts and based on the assumption that the content of religious teachings offered is rational and meets intellectual standards. It is very rare that the events of religious conversion from Sunni to Shia found in the research depart from psychological problems because of certain problems that a person experiences in his life, or because of certain supernatural events. In short, the impression of dramatic events which are usually assumed to be inherent in various narratives of religious conversion is not often found in the case of conversions from Sunni to Shia in Indonesia.

If viewed from a sociological perspective in viewing a religious conversion event, the phenomenon of conversion to Shia is closer to the

contemporary paradigm view than the classical paradigm in viewing a religious conversion event. In the classical paradigm, religious conversion events are considered to be emotional, passive, dramatic self-transformation occurs, and takes place suddenly. Meanwhile, the contemporary paradigm views a religious conversion event as occurring through an intellectual or rational process, involving an active search from the potential converts, taking place gradually, ongoing process, and everyone's experience is a unique and different (Hood et al., 2009, pp. 213–217).

In the case of conversion to Shia in Indonesia, there are almost no conversion events due to certain political interests as shown in the case of conversion from Islam to Christianity after 1965 carried out by Muslims affiliated with the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) (Humaedi, 2017). In fact, in many cases, conversion to Shia actually worsens the political and sociological position of converts in the midst of the majority of Sunni Muslims in Indonesia.

The significance of philosophical arguments in internal conversion events such as from Sunni to Shia Islam can be understood, because to be able to move from one position of belief to another but still within the same religious identity, a strong enough argument is needed to give confidence to potential converts that the new belief position is not only different but represents a 'true', more authentic, more rational interpretation compared to the theological position previously held by potential converts.

Because the pattern is intellectual conversion based on rational arguments, Shia *daʿwah* usually targets certain circles from the middle class, especially in terms of education level. This can be seen from the character of Shia *daʿwah* which is usually based on study group circles or through the translation of Shia books. Because it requires rational argumentation and the use of academic language is sometimes unavoidable in an effort to show the differences in the Shia and Sunni arguments both conceptually and practically, so many people who convert to shia usually only keep their conversion experiences to themselves or they only share these experiences with limited people/groups who are considered to be able to understand their conversion experiences both psychologically and rationally.

In this study, there are many respondents who still hide the fact that they have converted to Shia from their parents, relatives or family in general because they feel that they are unable to convey what Shia is in simple language or assume that these people do not have the competence to understand their decision to convert.

Aside from being a basis for argumentation to build an ideological understanding of Shia theology, for many Shia adherents, philosophical discourse is also an effective *daʿwah* strategy. Religious discourse based on philosophical discourse is considered more acceptable by various groups because the emphasis on philosophical theology lies in the substance of the teachings, not on the technical performance of the rites which practice may vary greatly. Emphasis on the area of substance of religious teachings is considered as being able to lead various groups

and schools of thought in Islam, especially Sunnis and Shias, to reach *kalimatun sawā'* (meeting point) or what is termed by Laclau as a chain of equivalents (Laclau, 2005).

From the explanation that I have described earlier, we can also see that conversion through the door of philosophy can occur either self-taught or through the initiation of certain people or groups who actively promote Shia to potential converts. Self-taught searches can be through books or potential converts to obtain information about Shia from various media and sources. What is meant by information about Shia is all things about Shia that are considered interesting, both those depicted in positive and negative narratives, because even negative narratives can make a person convert if he conducts a deeper verification and finds the fact that Shia is not like what is described by it's haters.

In self-taught conversions, potential converts do not need encouragement from other people to believe in Shia. Meanwhile, if they later decide to look for a learning community, this is usually done in order to affirm their beliefs and learn more deeply about the new belief or it is done for technical reasons such as looking for prayer communities and so on.

Meanwhile, conversions initiated by people or communities usually occur through various organizations and foundations that focus on introducing Shia theology and thought, although the decision to convert is a personal decision and not forced. One of the interesting characteristics of conversion through community initiation is that they usually have a distinctive narrative that indicates that the

particular community focuses on various dimensions of Shiism, whether they focus on philosophical, jurisprudential, moral, cultural and other aspects.

As explained earlier that most of the people who convert through the gate of philosophy are well-educated groups, but also most of them, especially those involved in this research, have never studied Islam in depth in educational units such as traditional *pesantren*, there are even some who claim to be does not have a well-understood theological view. In short, in terms of Islamic knowledge they can be categorized as laymen. The absence of an established theological understanding doctrine is quite helpful in the smooth process of their acceptance of Shia theology which they consider rational and philosophical.

This is different from the conversion experience of people who have a well-established religious understanding as in some cases of conversion to Shia by several *pesantren* alumni in this study. According to the confession of several respondents who came from the *pesantren* tradition, they experienced more intense psychological tension, especially with matters related to Islamic jurisprudence. However, traces of understanding and practicality of previously believed rites were not lost after their conversion. This tension made some respondents need more time between accepting Shia conceptually and practicing it in rituals of worship. However, there are also some respondents who come from the *pesantren* tradition who do not experience psychological tension, for them, Shia rational arguments are sufficient, differences in rites are considered normal as well as such differences are common in the Sunni tradition.

B. Gate of Islamic History

On Facebook, I joined a Facebook group called the Shia Discussion Group which consisted of people who interested in the discourse of Shi'ism (because not all members of the group were Shias). One time, there was a post from one of the group members who had a joke nuance that was interesting to me regarding the Sunni and Shia position on the problems of Islamic history, of course the contents of the post are very laden with Shia ideology. The post said that most people or groups have a weakness or fear of something. The mighty Batman is weak against krypton, a scary vampire is weak to sunlight, while the Sunnis are afraid or weak to the "truth" of Islamic history.

These joke posts can be a potrait of how central the problematics and dynamics of various historical events in the development of Islam are central themes and are one of the main propaganda that causes someone to doubt the construction of their Sunni theology and ultimately this is the main reason that person choose Shia as their new belief.

There is an impression that the problem of Islamic history, especially if it is related to historical defects in the phase of Islamic development involving several central figures of the Prophet Muhammad’s companions, is quite taboo to be discussed in the intellectual realm and sunni theology. This is because the companions of the prophet are generally considered to represent the so-called golden generation of Islam in the sunni faith. The idealization of the era of the Prophet and his companions which was often propagated by Sunni preachers gained

its` theological legitimacy through the words of the prophet Muhammad who said that the best human generation is my age, then after, and after[35].

Construction and interpretation related to Islamic history, especially involving the figure of the Prophet's companions after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, may be said to be the most dramatic episode in the conversion process from Sunni to Shia or even in Sunni-Shia relations in general. Because it involves figures who are considered special in a certain sense (not to say sacred), historical events are very difficult to simply be interpreted as past events. Some events in Islamic history are very thick with ideologically charged interpretations or contain sect sentiment.

Just as the Shia consider their imams as postulates and sources of post-prophet religious authority, the Sunnis also seem to make the companions of the prophet a religious postulate, although not to the same degree as the Shia's understanding of their imams. So, apart from things that are conceptual theology, the difference between Sunni and Shia also lies in the source of post-prophet religious authority. This difference is often failed to be understood by many Shia critics who criticize Shia but within the standards of Sunnism.

[35] The full text of the hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari is as follows "The best people are the people who live in my time (my generation) then the people after them then the people after them. Then there will come a people whose testimony one of them precedes his oath and his oath precedes his testimony". Hadiths with similar texts that emphasize the superiority of the three early generations of Islam are also found in various hadith books such as in Sahih Muslim, Tirmidhi, Sunan Ahmad and others. quoted from http://carihadis.com/Shahih_Bukhari/2458

Although the Sunnis do not consider the companions of the Prophet to be infallible as the Shias perceive their Imams, the Sunni defense, especially in the theme of the wisdom of the Prophet's Companions, is part of the religious symbol of the Sunni group (Imran, 2016, p. 16). Criticism of a certain personality or behavior of the Prophet's companions will be considered as an attack on Islam itself, especially if those who are criticized are directed at the main companions such as Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman, or Aisha.

One of the criticisms often labeled of the Shia community is that they go too far in glorifying the ahlulbait with their belief that the figure of the ahlulbait imams is infallible and a source of post -prophetic divine authority. Such criticism was countered by some research informants who argued that although Sunnis do not believe that companions are infallible, their blind glorification and anti-criticism attitude towards the figure of companions is also the same as the Shias' attitude towards ahlulbait, while the divine legitimacy and superiority of ahlulbait are clearer. mentioned in the sacred texts of both the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet.

The understanding of Islamic history, especially those related to the figure of the Prophet's companions in the Sunni world, is generally constructed in an idealistic and romantic sense. This idealistic construction may be carried out in order to fulfill the tendency that the era of the Companions is the golden era as stated in the hadith. In fact, if we want to be more honest and objective, the era of the companions of the prophet not only contained brilliant achievements, but it was

also an era of history filled with blood, intrigue, and power struggles that often use religious narratives as a tool to fulfill the desires of worldly power.

Because the Companions are considered postulates, the main source of 'true' Islamic understanding and considered that they are all fair people, there is an impression that the companions of the Prophet should not be criticized, even though the prophet's companions and history itself are not sacred things that cannot be criticized. If the prophet alone can be considered to have made a mistake, then of course his companions have a greater potential to make mistakes. If the companions of the prophet are generally defined as people who have met the Prophet, of course all those who have met the prophet have various personal qualities and it is difficult to generalize into a single quality.

Arguments like this are not unique to Shia, this kind of impression is also often found from Muslim researchers who want to be objective and not get caught up in the sentiments of schools of thought such as Faraq Fouda and Hasan Bin Farhan Al-Maliky (Fouda, 2012). But of course, taking a critical position on Islamic history can easily be accused of being Shia, Mu'tazilite, orientalist, infidel and many other labels.

The significance of the problem of Islamic history is not only related to the problem of interpretation of various events, more than that, historical events in many ways become the source of an ideological doctrine formed based on the interpretation of the meaning of a particular event. Not only the formation of a theological conceptual framework, the issue of Islamic jurisprudence is also built

through historical events such as the words, deeds, or approval of the prophet on a certain matter which became the absolute source of Islamic Jurisprudence after the holy book of the Qur'an.

History is an important instrument in the construction of all religions, including Islam. History is never just an empty past event, through history humans learn and develop to create a better human civilization in the future. In the context of Islam itself, the Qur'an, which is the holy book of Muslims, contains many parts of history in it, both related to the stories of the previous prophets, the stories before the time of the Prophet Muhammad and events that occurred during the time of the Prophet.

The second authoritative source after the Qur'an, namely hadith cannot be separated from history because hadith is related to history both in terms of its content and the complex chain of narrations involving many people from across generations. So, not only in order to understand the Sunni-Shia relationship, historical understanding plays an important role, understanding Islam cannot be understood without involving history, even one's understanding of Islam is a product of history. however, when it comes to the Sunni-Shia issue, this is probably the most dramatic, if not tragic episode that has been going on for centuries to date. The relationship between the two is very likely to determine the face of Islam in the future.

In the context of Sunni-Shia differences, it is also very difficult to discuss them without involving their interpretation of Islamic history. In fact, the difference

between the two is largely due to their different political positions in interpreting Islamic history, especially events involving the prophet's ahlulbait and the prophet's companions. Therefore, it may be important for us to know what events can be considered as the historical roots of the differences between the two groups and also become the main consideration for potential converts in their decision to convert to Shia.

Some of these events are the Ghadir khum incident, the tragedy of Thursday where the Prophet asked for pen and ink to write his last will but was not given by the Companions, the attack on the house of Ali and Fatimah to force the Prophet's family to acknowledge and pledge allegiance to the caliphate of Abu Bakr, the events of the Land of Fadaq, and of course its culmination was the massacre of Husain bin Ali and his family in the fields of Karbala by the forces of Yazid bin Muawiyah.

Shia does have a construction and interpretation of Islamic history that is different from the understanding of most Sunni groups. The interpretation of the Shia related to several historical events, especially those that occurred after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and involving the ahlulbait by many of the research informants, became an important marker in changing their theological understanding and impacted on the decision to perform a religious convertion.

The Shia's distinctive interpretation of Islamic history has shaken their minds and their faith. The Shia perspective on Islamic history undermines the historical dogma that has been established in their beliefs. The Shia perspective on

Islamic history gives potential converts a different fact about Islamic history that they rarely find in historical education taught in schools, not even in recitations, or if mentioned, these facts seem to be refined to maintain the authority of the Prophet's companions.

In general, the most shocking historical fact is the assumption that ahlulbait received oppression after the death of the prophet. Starting from the struggle for the right to caliphate which according to the Shia should be handed over to Ali bin Abi Talib, based on clear arguments contained in the hadith traditions of both Sunni and Shia. Then after the rights to the caliphate were taken, the houses of Ali and Fatimah were surrounded to force them to pledge allegiance to the caliphate of Abu Bakr. This incident caused the miscarriage of the baby Fatimah was carrying and according to the Shia this incident was one of the causes of Fatimah's death just a few months after the Prophet's death.

In addition, Abu Bakr and Umar also seized the Land of Fadak with the argument that the Prophet did not leave an inheritance after he died, an argument that according to Fatimah contradicts the Qur'an where a child has the right to receive an inheritance from his father and vice versa (Shadr, 2014). throughout the rest of Fatimah's life after the incident, she never reconciled with the two. During the reign of the Umayyads, hatred of the ahlulbait was also continuously reproduced with the dynasty ordering to berate Ali in the pulpits of the Friday sermon.

The most dramatic of the episodes of tyranny against the prophet's ahlulbait is of course the episode of the war of Karbala or perhaps more accurately called the

massacre of Karbala because al-Husayn was only accompanied by women and children and no more than 72 adult men to deal with thousands of Yazid bin Muawiyah soldiers (Ash-Shadr, 1996). al-Husayn and his followers were left to thirst before being brutally massacred, and they were massacred by those who professed to believe in the religion brought by his grandfather, the Prophet Muhammad. Throughout human history, the event of Karbala is one of the most ironic crimes against humanity.

These events shake the faith because on the other hand, theologically, regardless of their conception of post-prophet divine authority, a Muslim, both Sunni and Shia, is required to love the prophet's ahlulbait as a religious obligation. If loving ahlulbait is an obligation ordered by religion, then how can there be a Muslim who can hurt Fatima, a figure who is believed to be the role model of the best woman of all time, a person whom the prophet Muhammad said 'Fatimah is a part of me who hurts her hurts me, whoever makes her happy means to make me happy.

How could Ali be abused in the pulpit of the Friday sermon when he was the first man to believe in the religion brought by Muhammad, he was willing to risk his life by sleeping in the Prophet's mattress on the occasion of the *ḥiğrah*, a hero in various wars, a person whom the Qur'an calls loved by Allah and his apostles, the person who the prophet said you are from me and I from you, the person who the prophet said to him, you are by my side like the position of Harun on the side of Musa, it's just that there is no prophet after me. In addition, the

Prophet said that no one loves you (Ali) except the believer, and does not hate you except the hypocrite. How could a Muslim hurt and kill Hasan and Husayn who were the favorite grandsons of the Prophet, the two people whom the Prophet called the princes of the youth of heaven.

An encounter with a different perspective on Islamic history or even for some potential converts is a completely new historical knowledge that they have never known before making them question their theological position. In a Focus Group Discussion that I conducted with several converts at the Islamic Cultural Center (ICC) Jakarta, a participant said that when he was faced with historical facts that showed the oppression of the prophet's ahlulbait, especially the Karbala tragedy, he felt he had no other choice, for him in the tragedy of Karbala, then there are only two choices, namely with al-Husayn or with the killer of al-Husain.

Conversion due to new knowledge or a critical perspective on history is something unique in the internal conversion from Sunni to Shia. This conversion pattern does not only occur or be experienced by the informants of this study but also experienced by converts to Shia in other places. In a report on the phenomenon of conversion to Shia that occurred in Brussels, Imane Lackar said that conversion to Shia was not understood as a theological change by the perpetrators, but was seen as a way of returning to the true roots of Islam (i.e. to the Qur'an and the ahlulbait of the Prophet). Conversion is the result of a critical view of history, many respondents feel that so far they have lived in a lie of Islamic history, moreover,

historical constructions and interpretations tend to be more shaped to strengthen the hegemony and interests of the ruling group.

Conversion to Shia through the door of History which forms a new awareness regarding the construction of Islamic History is not a phenomenon unique to Sunni-Shia conversions in Indonesia but something that commonly occurs in Sunni-Shia conversions throughout the world. For example, such a phenomenon can be seen in the conversion narrative described by Idris-Alhusaini in his book *Karena Imam Husain Aku Syiah*.

The conversion experience from Sunni to Shia written by Idris al-Husaini in his book *Karena Imam Husain Aku Syiah* (Because Imam Husain I became Shia*)* shows dimensions that are a bit different from the experience of conversion of Tijani. These differences can be seen from at least two things, first, namely how their process met with Shia discourse until they finally decided to convert, and second, the way they presented the conversion experience in their respective works.

Tijani corrected his understanding of Shia after he met and interacted directly and intensely with Shia members. While al-Husaini corrected his understanding of Shia after he read Shia books especially those relating to Islamic history. Al-Husaini is like getting an alternative horizon from the history of Islam which he thinks seems to be covered up and laden with lies. In connection with the way of presentation, Tijani focuses on his spiritual experience along with a series of events that accompany the process, in short, Tijani's focus is himself. While al-Husaini did not focus on himself because his tendency did not tell about his spiritual

experience of conversion, but wanted to show defects and manipulative practices in Islamic history. Although focusing on history, al-Husaini's speech is not the same as most history books that pretend to position themselves as 'neutral'. Instead of taking a 'neutral' attitude, al-Husaini's style of speech is full of emotional expression and language that tends to be provocative. Husaini focused his research on historical aspects, something he considered central in understanding Islam today. In fact, according to Husaini, history is a very important element and cannot be separated in almost all Islamic traditions. Husaini argued that the problems of *ʿaqīdah*, law, and Islamic culture that we have today all reach our time through the method of transmission (al-Husaini, 2008: 21).

The debates about history in Islam can be said to be something sensitive. It is assumed that there are roots in the disputes between Islamic groups, especially Sunnis and Shia. Husaini sneered at the thought that said history could not be 'sued' or the assumption that leveraging history was not revolutionary, for him history is not god and not taboo to talk about. Talking about Islamic history requires discussion about Sunni-Shia. This discussion in the view of al-Husaini is important because Islamic unity is impossible without an attempt to understanding each other (al-Husaini, 2008: 27). Most the hostile attitude towards Shia is the result of a priori, ignorance, and lack of understanding of this community. This attitude arises because of admiration of certain schools so that it prevents openness to understand other schools. Al-Husaini said that no group has ever experienced suffering, humiliation as felt by Ahlulbait (family of prophets) and Shia. In the Shia context,

understanding this group tends to be more difficult than all other schools in Islam because there is a kind of strong fortress built to prevent understanding of this group and systematic prejudice, so people tend to hate and fear before even meeting and learning about Shia. Therefore, according to Husaini the talk about Sunni and Shia is very important to remove slander and lies (al-Husaini, 2008: 31).

In his research, al-Husaini explored various themes. Among them is the accusation that Shia is not Islam but Iranian Zoroastrianism who wears the Islamic robe. For al-Husaini, the accusation was baseless because the Shia had existed even long before the Persians converted to Islam. If Shia have a relationship with Persia, then where are the Persians in the war of Jamal, Shiffin, Nahrawan, and Karbala? 'Persians only became Muslims majority during the Safawiyah dynasty (al-Husaini, 2008: 31). The Shia Imams were all Ahlulbait who were Arabs, in contrast to the majority of Sunni priests who were Persians, such as Abu Hanifah, Imam Nasa-i, Turmuzi, Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Majah, ar-Razi, Imam al-Ghazali, and others.

Husaini's objections to Islamic history are like most books written by Shia authors relating to the issue of the companions of the Prophet. According to Husaini, not all companions of the Prophet were just, loyal, and obeying the prophet even in the time of the prophet Muhammad was still alive and especially after his death. From the historical facts that exist, the generalization that the Prophet's companions were all fair was nothing but an attempt to obscure the oppression and humiliation committed against the Ahlulbait. Husaini, for example, shows how the companions of the Prophet, even the elite, such as Abubakar and Umar did not obey

when the prophet ordering them into the battlefield under the command of a young man named Usamah bin Zaid. This rejection is known as Thursday's tragedy. Also when in a state of increasingly severe illness and the prophet asked the companions to be given paper and pen so that he could write a message so that they would not get lost after the death of the prophet, but the Prophet's companions even said that the prophet delirious. Another theme discussed by Husaini is how some companions conspired to foil Ali as the successor to the prophet who had appointed him in a place called Ghadir Kumm. Also about the battle of Shiffin, the battle of Jamal, the conspiracy of the assassination of Imam Hasan, which is known as the year of *ğamāʿah* (unity), and the massacre of Imam Husain in Karbala. In addition to historical events, in this book Husaini also discusses several issues of Shia theology such as the concept of *Imāmah* and *Imāmīyah* beliefs. However, this paper is not a place to discuss these issues in detail.

After conducting research related to the history of Islam, al-Husaini came to the conclusion that the Shia were 'true' Islam and converted into Shia. He argued that all Shia teachings were connected and preserved intact to the Messenger of Allah through the hands of the holy Ahlulbait. There are no *fiqh* rules and worship that are created and raised from sheer lust. Here is what Al-Husaini himself said.

> "After busy searching, I finally found the conclusion that the Ahlulbait figures were the most appropriate person to follow. There is nothing in the history of Islam which states that the figures of Ahlulbait had studied under the guidance of ordinary people. But what is available is that they are the teachers for Sunni scholars. The people who are inclined and subject to the interests of leaders and rulers are more silent, keep secrets,

> and submit to the thoughts of the majority of the people for the stability of the country "(al-Husaini, 2008: 74).

Now let's see how the arguments put forward by the informants who decided to do the conversion through the door of history. Again, I emphasize that a person who performs a conversion may go through various gates, whether contained in the classification of the four conversion gates mentioned in the study or because of other considerations. Moreover, the classification of conversion gates is not meant to give the impression that they are something completely different and not connected to each other.

The first informant was a woman activist named Ana. Ana comes from a family background affiliated with Muhammadiyah. According to Ana, her father was one of the Muhammadiyah leaders in her hometown. Since high school, Ana has been interested in religious discourse and activities, she is an active member of Muhammadiyah students. Her encounter with the Shia discourse occurred when she participated in cadre activities at HMI. The encounter through HMI led her to study Shia more deeply and intensively in various organizations and study groups in the city of Makassar which are theologically affiliated with Shia.

At the beginning of her encounter with the Shia, as someone who already has a fairly well-established theological doctrine as a Muhammadiyah cadre, she was quite resistant to the discourse of shia she encountered. however, she was still interested in learning it because she found a lot of discourse about Shia heresy in various media. Ana wants to verify the allegations. As long as he studies Shia, he

claims that there is nothing strange or deviant from Shia theology, everything is built on a framework of rationality and is based on the Qur'an and Hadith, the two main references of every Muslim. As long as she studies Shia, she claims that there is nothing strange or deviant from Shia theology, everything is built on a framework of rationality and is based on the Qur'an and Hadith, the two main references of every Muslim. Although indeed the standard of what is called hadith with all its complexities is understood differently by the two groups.

> I am interested because many condemn the Shia as a heretical group. In my opinion, what is wrong? I find that one of the roots of Sunni Shia differences lies in their different historical problems, and indeed the politicization of post-prophet history is very strong and has an impact on our perspective today. In my opinion, the Companions don't care about the prophet, about religion, they only care about power. (Interview with Ana on November 10, 2019).

Ana's faith became shaky in the Islamic doctrines she had previously believed in when she learned the facts and perspectives of Muslim history especially in relation to Muslims 'treatment of the Prophet's holy family after the Prophet's death. The succession of post -prophetic leadership in Saqifah that did not involve the ahlulbait and was done so quickly even before the prophet's body was buried when the Muslims were not in a threatened condition either internally or externally, the attack on the house of Ali and Fatimah to force the prophet's family to pledge allegiance to the new caliph, The attackers even injured Fatimah and caused her to lose the fetus she was carrying, the rebellion against Ali's caliphate by some famous companions in Islam, insults against Ali during most of the Umayyad rule, the

martyrdom of Hasan and Husain are facts -and the complex interpretations and understandings that accompany these events- which tends to be new to Ana.

Ana feels that the narrative about the oppression of ahlulbait tends to be refined, covered up, or wants to be removed from the memory and understanding of Muslims in order to maintain the authority of companion and the construction that they are fair people. This impression arises because according to Ana, these historical facts are not popularly known by most Muslims because this perspective does not appear in the curriculum of Islamic history education, in lectures, even in academic narratives. In Ana's view, all of these media tend to serve mainstream understanding of Islamic history and stay in the comfort zone by portraying Islamic history only from the good and heroic side.

As I mentioned earlier that the discussion of conversion to Shia through the door of history must be very difficult to avoid discussing the subjects involved in these historical events, including the companions of the Prophet who in some senses are regarded as one of the religious 'symbols' by various Sunni groups. The views about the companions of the prophet expressed in the research are the personal opinions of research informants and do not represent the views of certain institutions or the Shia community in general.

I call the Companions of the prophets religious symbols because they are not only part of what is constructed as one of the best eras after the prophet based on hadiths that are claimed to be from the prophet, moreover, for the sunni group they are a source of religious authority. Considerations or interpretations of the

Prophet's companions on various religious issues, especially in the realm of *Ṣarīʿah,* are often considered as an authoritative religious interpretations. Like the Shias with their Imams, the Sunnis are accustomed to narratives that glorify the figures of the Prophet's companions, such as Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman, Ali, Aisyah, Abu Hurairah and others.

The encounter with the Shia perspective which tends to be critical of the behavior of several personal companions of the Prophet in various historical events, both those that occurred while the Prophet was still alive and afterward, was considered quite psychologically shocking for many informants, especially in the early phases of their conversion journey. figures who were previously firmly regarded as idols and fair figures, then that understanding is faced with facts and perspectives that are contradictory to what they have believed so far. This can be seen, for example, in the excerpt of an interview with one of the research respondents below.

> One of the most different between Sunnis and Shias is the postulates of companions. I want to call it that. The companions of the prophet are postulates. Suddenly it was deconstructed that the companions of the prophet were not postulates. I want to use a more epistemological term, the companions of the prophet are like the human community in general, some are intelligent, some are good, some are not, some are stupid and so on. So, relativizing the companions in the end, and narrowing the absolutism of authority as the continuation and guardian of the prophetic tradition only to the ahlulbait. In that process there must be a struggle, not only a rational struggle, but also an emotional one. Because the companions of the prophet used to be our idols, so there must be psychological tension. (Interview with Sabara on September 23, 2020).

Encounter with a Shia historical perspective related to the behavior of some of the prophet's companions, if potential converts accept the Shia argument about the Prophet's companions and convert to Shia for that reason -of course with other reinforcing reasons- will make them desacralize the so-called companions of the prophet whom they previously regarded as idols and the main *muğtahid*s in interpreting religious matters.

Unlike the Sunnis who consider all the Companions to be fair and in a certain sense considered something sacred, for the Shia, if the Companions are defined as all those who have met the Prophet even once, then there is absolutely nothing that shows the privilege or sacredness of the so-called companions of the prophet from that definition. The companions of the prophet as well as all people from all ages, there are those who are fair figures, some are *fāsiq*, hypocrites, and so on. The degree of a companion of the prophet like other people is judged by what they do.

The tension that arises because of the conversion through the door of history is not only a potential psychological tension or inner conflict experienced by the converts, but there is also a potential sociological tension caused by their new belief in the construction of Islamic history. In many accusations that lead to misguidance or disbelief of the Shia group, one of the arguments that is continuously reproduced all the time is that the Shia abused the personality of Aisha, the Prophet's wife, and abused the personalities of *Ashyaihain*, Abu Bakr and Umar Bin Khattab.

Regardless of whether the accusations are true or not, one of the most felt intentions from the reproduction of the discourse is that there is a production of hatred against Shia among Muslim laymen even without them feeling the need to verify or study Shia in depth. The discourse exploits the emotions of Sunnis by creating the impression that their religious symbols are being tainted by their haters.

Responding to such accusations, Syafruddin al-Musawi, a Shia cleric who is also the author of the book *Al- Murāğaʿāt* which is a popular book read by most of the converts to Shia in Indonesia, said that there is no point in answering whether it is true or not the Shia insulting the companions of the Prophet (especially Abu Bakr and Umar) because it will not bring any results, because the Sunni group will not believe that not all Shia groups practice insulting the two companions of the Prophet.

But even if the Shia berate the two companions for what they have done, can this be used as a proof that the Shia have disbelieved and have left Islam? According to al-Musawi, this cannot be used as a basis for claiming that the Shia are infidels, because the issue of prophet's companions is not part of the foundation of faith to be called a Muslim. In addition, the practice of insulting each other was carried out among the companions themselves, even in front of the prophet himself and none of them claimed to be infidels just because of the practice of insulting each other (al-Musawi, 2002, p. 72).

Discourse about Shia abuse against the Prophet's companions is not only a psychological burden in the conversion process or a sociological burden after

conversion both individually and communally, but the issue becomes a burden in efforts to unite Sunni-Shia relations globally and in Indonesia in particular. This makes in many Sunni societies, it is difficult for the Shia group to get recognition even to simply live side by side regardless of their differences both theologically and politically, because their existence is often considered a threat by the majority group.

The problem of interpretation and differences in political positions in viewing the companions of the Prophet may be said to be a big gap in any attempt to find common ground in the relations of the two largest groups in Islam. in the course of history, when the two groups have been established as a theological framework or perspective, the discourse is actually no longer just a political difference but also a theological difference, especially as an authoritative source in religion. This has been going on for centuries and is still a burden to be borne by adherents of the two schools of thought.

In fact, there have been various attempts by moderate groups of the two schools of thought to bridge the gap, for example, the Shia group who is worried about the reproduction of hatred between the two groups which is considered an unproductive discourse and does not help in Sunni-Shia relations and efforts to unite Muslims ask for a fatwa to sayyid Ali Khameneints of the two schools of thought, Iran's highest spiritual leader who is also one of the *marǧaʿ* in the Shia *Imāmīyah*. In response to this, as I quoted from the Ahlulbait Indonesia website saying that a Shia Muslim is expected not to insult other people's religious symbols,

including in this case criticism leads to insults directed either at the Prophet's wife (especially Aisyah bint Abu Bakr) and the Prophet's companions. (especially, the first three caliphs).

> It is forbidden to insult the (glorified) symbols of our brethren in religion, the sunni, in the form of accusations against the wife of the Prophet. with things that injure his honor, even this action is forbidden to the wives of the prophets, especially the head of the prophets, namely the noblest Apostle *("Fatwa Resmi Syi'ah Terhadap Simbol Ahlussunnah," 2017)*.

The feeling of carrying the burden of the history of past feuds, for example, was also expressed by an informant named Andito. Andito's decision to convert to Shia was very much influenced by his encounter with the Shia version of Islamic history perspective through various books he read when he was in college. The Shia historical perspective, according to his admission, changed the understanding of Islamic history that he had believed in and considered an established concept.

> My experience of religious knowledge started when I was studying at IKIP Bandung. I was active in the Salman mosque from 92 to 96. In 1995, I began to feel anxious, especially regarding the problem of Islamic history. I remember the book that changed me was the book Targedi Saqifah by Omar Hashem. My standard Islamic historical perspective is dismantled there (Interview with Andito on January 16, 2020).

Similar to Ali *Ṣarīʿah*ti's books in the field of political sociology, books by Murtadha Mutahhari, Baqir Sadr, or Hossein Nasr in the fields of theology and philosophy, Ohashem's books, especially on historical themes, as mentioned by Andito are popular books which is widely read by Shia convert in Indonesia. The content of Hashem's book about Saqifah itself contains various kinds of sensitive

themes and is not widely known by the layman of Sunni Muslims because in some of the contents of the book it is different from the understanding they accept dogmatically.

Among these contents, as can be guessed from the title of the book, contains a narrative about the succession of post-prophet leadership which was carried out unilaterally and hastily, 'protests' from Ali bin Abi Talib for approximately 24 years either directly or indirectly against the leadership of the three caliphs that Ali considered snatch what is his right. In addition to the narration about the Saqifah incident, the book explains how Aisyah's personal hatred for Fatima and Ali, criticism of Abu Hurairah who is considered to have narrated many false hadiths in order to serve her personal interests and the Umayyad rulers (Muawiyah), criticism of the views of justice of all friends which in fact the behavior of many friends that are contrary to the Qur'an and *ṣarīʿah* law, such as drinking liquor, wasting *baitul māl*, killing other companions, changing the prophet's law and so on (Hashem, 2004).

I mention the content of this book solely to show the potential psychological tension that ordinary Sunni readers may experience, especially since Shia history books usually use authoritative Sunni sources such as the Bukhari and Muslim hadith, the Tarih Tabari book which is quite authoritative in matters of Islamic history, and the work of other prominent Sunni scholars to show readers that their arguments are not fabricated and have a valid basis. I will not detail this historical

event because I don't think this is the place to explain it because this paper is not intended to be a critical study of Islamic history.

Even though the conversion to Shia was through the door of history, Andito, who when this paper was written was a member of the central board of Ahlul Bait Indonesia, did not like the practice of blaspheming against the personal companions of the Prophet. To be critical of the behavior of some of the Prophet's companions, is not the same as blaspheming, which is accompanied by hatred. The behavior of blaspheming the Prophet's companions will hurt the feelings of their Sunni Muslim brothers and only worsen relations between the two schools of thought. According to Andito, such practices also do not help Shia *daʿwah* in Indonesia.

> Why many people convert do not to Shia even when they argumentatively admire Shia theology? According to my friends, they don't like figures like Abubakar or Umar being blasphemed. Why do the blasphemous traditions continue to be celebrated, even though they are anti-muawiyah, anti-yazid, anti-abbasiyah.
> My wife is a former Wahhabis. in her point of view, if the classification is clear, many of her friends have become shia. There is an impression as if you are a Shia you have to berate the companions of the Prophet. it seems to be made a tradition, a thing that I don't think is necessary. The consequences are fatal. (Interview with Andito on January 16, 2020).

The next informant who converted through the door of history was Idham. He is currently domiciled in Jakarta. In terms of educational background, he completed his undergraduate education at Hasanuddin University, Makassar in the decade of the 90s. After converting to Shia, he was interested in studying Shia in more depth by continuing his studies in Iran and completing his master's degree there. Currently he manages *Hauzah* Imam Rida which is under the supervision of ICC Jakarta.

While related to the background of religious understanding he had before his conversion, Idham felt just like most other Muslims, he did not feel part of a particular religious affiliation. Indeed, if we are honest, for many ordinary Muslims in Indonesia and even around the world, they only know that they are Muslims, perform prayers, fast, and other *Ṣarīʿah* commands, meanwhile they do not know what categorization is called Sunni, Shia, and so on.

According to Idham, one of the important markers in his conversion journey to Shia was the reading of historical narratives related to the prophet's ahlulbait, especially the figure of the prophet's favorite daughter, Fatimah Az-Zahra. Idham greatly admired the figure of the Prophet's daughter, and when he discovered the fact that the Prophet's daughter was oppressed and treated unfairly by some of the Prophet's companions, this shocked him and drastically changed his perspective on the concept of the companions of the prophet which he previously believed that the so-called companions of the prophet were a group of just people.

The inner shock due to encounters with different Islamic historical narratives peaked when Idham arrived at the saddest and ironic episode of Islamic history, namely the massacre of Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib and his family in the field of Karbala.

> At that time, I still accepted the concept of *Ḫulāfah ar-'Rašidūn* until the discussion about Sayyidah Fatimah Azzahra arrived. I and Fatimah Azzahra have personal experiences, inwardly. I used to have a college friend whose name was Fatimah Azzahra, she didn't wear a headscarf, but every time her name was mentioned during attendance, there was a special pleasure. In the book 'The Night in Peshawar' there is a discussion about Fatima, the tragedy of the fetus, about fadaq, there is

> a tremendous emotional outburst knowing the caliph's treatment of Fatima, after that, there is no more acceptance of the three caliphs (Interview with the informant on January 22, 2020).

The inner shock due to encounters with different Islamic historical narratives peaked when Idham arrived at the saddest and ironic episode of Islamic history, namely the massacre of Husain bin Ali bin Abi Talib and his family in the field of Karbala. How could the prophet's favorite grandson be slaughtered horribly by people who profess to believe in the religion brought by his grandfather. Karbala according to Idham, marks the peak of oppression of ahlulbait just for the sake of worldly power.

> My search continues, at that time I did not know the Karbala incident. Karbala is the peak of my shock about the problem of Islamic history. At the boarding school at that time I shouted, when this history is true, where are the people who silenced this history, why are people blind to history. Why is it known by so few people? (Interview with Idham on January 22, 2020).

Idham's claim that there was some kind of attempt to silence history is understandable, because the narrative of the oppression of ahlulbait is something that is unpopular in the knowledge of most ordinary Muslims. Idham's claim that there was some kind of attempt to silence history is understandable, because the narrative of the oppression of ahlulbait is something that is unpopular in the knowledge of most ordinary Muslims. Even if the narration about the Saqifah incident, the fetal event, Fadak, the Jamal war, the Shiffin war, insults against Ali on the Friday pulpit and Karbala reach their ears, usually it has been accompanied by alibis and arguments that are constructed to make the perpetrators of oppression

against ahlulbait not look too guilty or at least say that it is a political issue between them, and we have no right to judge the conflict that occurred between the companions of the prophet.

Especially with regard to the event of Karbala, it seems to have an important position in historical dialectic for the Shia. It is not only an event of the past, but also a spirit of the future. It is part of theology as well as eschatology. Therefore, the Ashura commemoration is solemnly commemorated by the Shia community every year, either by making a parade on the street or attending a mourning ceremony. the celebration is not just to perpetuate hatred against the killers of al-Husayn but to internalize the spirit of what Imam Husayn was fighting for. Imam Husayn is a manifestation of the struggle against oppression and injustice, Ashura is considered an encounter where both evil and kindness find their highest form (Tim Abatasya, n.d.).

Shia's critical attitude towards anyone who is considered to show hostility towards the prophet and his ahlulbait actually has a basis in their theological construction. In Shia theology, there is a concept called *tabarrī*. In simple terms, *tabarrī* can be interpreted as an act of getting away from something that is considered bad. Actually, this concept is generally found in almost all Islamic groups because the basis of this concept can be found in various verses of the Qur'an, but in Shia theology, the concept of *tabarrī* is distinctive because it is the opposite of *tawallī* or submission to the prophet or his successors. If obedience to the prophet or imam is an obligation, then being hostile to or dissociating from those

who are hostile to the prophet and the imams is also an obligation that is required of a Shia follower. The practice of *tabarrī* can be explicitly found in various Shia prayers such as the *tawassu*l prayer or the Ashura pilgrimage prayer where it is clear that a Shia Muslim declares to be dissociate from those who oppress al-Husain and his followers in Karbala.

The encounter or conversion to Shia through the gate of history is usually very thick with the emotional aspect of potential converts where they meet a historical perspective that is contrary to the ideal concept that has been imagined. The encounters with new historical facts or perspectives make some people feel that they have been living in a lie of history, a history that is constructed to serve the interests of certain groups, a historical construction that is covered up, distorted, dogmatic and anti-criticism. The emotional side of the conversion through the 'gate of history", for example, can be seen from the statements of several research informants below.

> Get to know Shia through HMI. But there is no compulsion to choose. More to the search itself. My encounters have more to do with historical literature. I researched the Shia for about a year, only then I could determine that this was my propensity. I call it 'my propensity' because I'm still not 100 percent sure, I'm still learning. The entrance is through reading the history of Islam. *Fiqh* is not a big consideration in my conversion process. (Interview with the informant on December 16, 2019).

> My introduction to Shia was through the door of history. I once took part in a historical study package, in fact it was the most inspiring for me and had caused confusion in me. it turns out that there is a historical deviation from what we usually hear and teach in mainstream educational institutions, it turns out that there is another version (Shia

> version) which I think is more rational than the previous one. (Interview with the informant on January 13, 2020).
>
> One of the aspects that influenced my conversion decision the most was the issue of Islamic history, particularly with regard to the celebration of Ashura. In my opinion, there is a disconnect and closure of Islamic history regarding the martyrdom of Imam Husain (Interview with the informant on February 3, 2020).

Like conversion through the gate of philosophy, conversion to Shia through the gate of history is something unique to the Shia. The view that Islamic leadership is something that is the absolute right of ahlulbait and a critical view of the companions of the prophet is something that distinguishes the Shia from most Islamic groups, especially with the Sunnis as the majority group embraced by most Muslims around the world. Acceptance of these two things is an important sign that someone has converted and accepted Shia as their new Islamic identity. The argument about the important role of Islamic philosophy and history in a conversion event to Shia was also shared by Jalaluddin Rahmat in an interview I conducted with him.

> In my opinion, what turns people into Shia a lot is if the discourse reaches unique Shia characteristics, for example regarding the concept that the recipient of the will as the successor of the prophet is Imam Ali. The Shia view of the companions of the Prophet. That's uniquely Shia. Most access to it is through history, therefore the Sunnis try to prevent history from being studied. History books should be shunned (interview with Jalaluddin Rahmat on January 12, 2020).

However, the gate of history usually cannot be separated from the gate of philosophy, the two gates presuppose each other. The door of history is usually used to spark awareness of potential converts that something is not in line with ‘the

idealistic conceptions' of the Qur'an and Sunnah in historical dialectics and the way Islam 'should' be constructed. However, the gate of history is not enough to convince someone to convert, it must be accompanied by rational explanations, distinctive theological concepts, and the formation of ideologies which are usually formulated through the gate of philosophy.

C. The gate of Irfan/Sufism

I need to emphasize that what I call Irfan's gate in the process of converting from Sunni to Shia has its own meaning which may be slightly different from the general understanding of what is called Irfan or Sufism. What is categorized as conversion through the gate of Irfan in this study is the process of initial encounter with Shia discourse that does not go through the complexity of philosophical and rational arguments as reflected in the door of conversion either through philosophy, history and *fiqh*.

In the Irfan's gate, the encounter with the Shia occurs through limited subjective experience, it can be in the form of a supernatural experience with things leading to an initial awareness of Shia as something different from the religious understanding he/she knows. In this study several kinds of supernatural experiences expressed by informants such as dreams of meeting certain characters, sixth sense abilities, certain mystical experiences with spiritual teachers, or even certain feelings that arise when reading Shia prayers such as Kumail's prayer and so on.

So, what I mean by Irfan/sufism's gate does not mean that the informants I include in this conversion gate category have to be involved in a particular sufism

tradition or group. By naming it as Irfan/sufism's gate is also not meant to claim that Sufism has a special affinity with Shiism nor that Sufism internalizes certain values of Shia teachings so that Sufism adherents can easily convert to Shia because of certain similarities in the construction of their Islamic understanding. The term Irfan/sufism's gate in this study is used to describe the unique experience of the informants which in some cases may be considered not to meet the standards of rational argument, but this experience has paved the way for them to know more deeply about Shia.

Indeed, there are some studies and researchers who claim the closeness or similarity of religious style between Sufism and Shia as if the two are identical and interrelated especially because Shia imams are also glorified by Sufists (Al-Shaibi, 1991; Halim, 2015; Nasr, 1970). In fact, sometimes Sufism is considered as a potential meeting point that can overcome or transcend the sectarian identity of Sunni and Shia without negating the distinctive identity of the two groups. This potential is mainly based on the fact that both Sunnis and Shias respect the prophet's ahlulbait even though they have different levels of ideological understanding in interpreting the position of ahlulbait in their religion. Respect for ahlulbait or what Formichi termed "Alid Piety is manifest in many Muslim traditions, especially in Southeast Asia, where the majority of the population is Sunni Islam. (Zulkifli, 2016)

Perhaps apart from the prophet Muhammad himself, there is no other figure in Islamic history who has become a source of controversy and debate among Islamic groups. The debate over the figure of Ali relates to many dimensions and

levels, from politics, history, to issues of theology and metaphysics. For the Shia group, Ali is a continuation of the prophetic tradition that the prophet himself had prophesied on several occasions. Ali was a source of authority after the death of the Prophet Muhammad both in the spiritual and governmental realms. Meanwhile, although Sufi groups do not view Ali as an authority in temporal matters (politics and government), Sufi groups recognize Ali's position as a spiritual authority. In the Sufi world, Ali is an important and central figure, almost all Sufi orders genealogically stem from him except the Naqsyabandiyyah order which traces their chain of Sufism through Abu Bakar Siddiq, however the Naqsyabandiyyah themselves still claim their connection to Ali through Jafar Sadiq, the sixth Shia imam[36].

Although considered to have a close relationship, in the view of Hossein Nasr the comparison between Shiism and Sufism is a complex and complicated relationship because 'we are not dealing with the same level or dimension of Islam'. According to Nasr, Islam has exoteric (*ẓāhir)* and esoteric *(bātin)* dimensions that represent what he calls the 'vertical structure of revelation'. On the other hand, Islam is also divided into at least Sunni and Shia which can be said to represent the 'horizontal structure of Islam'. (Nasr, 1970)

Sufism itself is an inner and esoteric dimension of Islam that has its roots in the Qur'an and the practice of the life of the prophet, according to Nasr, Sufism or

[36] quoted from https://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/vol5-n3-4/tasawwuf-meeting-point-tashayyu-and-tasannun-sayyid-wahid-akhtar/tasawwuf. Accessed 30 August 2023

ṭarīqah is a subtle aspect and sometimes difficult to understand in depth from the outside, but the understanding of Sufism is manifested in many traditions and civilizations of Islamic societies throughout the world (Nasr, 2000).

Furthermore, Nasr said that the thick esoteric dimension in Sufism is also manifested in Shia theology both aesthetically and exoteric. Due to the similarity of several religious conceptions, Sufism is often accused of adopting or assimilating some Shia concepts into their religious understanding (Nasr, 1970). Certain Islamic groups especially those affiliated with Wahhabism theology are not happy with the adoption or assimilation of Sufism with some Shia concepts because Sufism usually claims that they are Sunnis, especially in the orientation of the school of *fiqh* they adhere (Al-Shaibi, 1991)

One of the concepts of Sufism which is considered to have a close relationship with the conception of Shia theology is the concept of *walāyah*. The concept of *walāyah* is a fundamental principle in the religious understanding of the two groups although there are differences in ideological and functional understanding of what they call as *walāyah* (Halim, 2015). In simple terms, *walāyah* is the idea of the continuation of divine authority after the death of the prophet Muhammad. According to Al-Shaibi, the Sufism concept of *walāyah* has similarities with the Shia concept of *Imāmah*, and their reference to divine authority after Muhammad is also closely related to the figure of Ali ibn Abi Talib. The fact that the existence of Shia precedes the existence of Sufism, in Al-Shaibi's view, it

is Sufism that borrows the theological concept of Shia to be formulated into a new concept that is unique to Sufis (Al-Shaibi, 1991).

Although they have similarities, the concepts of *walāyah* and *imāmah* have differences that show their ideological differences and ultimately differ in the construction of their identities, especially in terms of the image of who can achieve the function as a post-prophet divine authority. In the Sufi concept, what is called *walī qutb* is an open position that can be achieved by everyone in certain ways. Meanwhile, the position of the Imam in the Shia concept of *Imāmah* is not something that is open to everyone or can be achieved by undergoing certain personal training.

This difference when taken in the context of conversion to Shia brings certain consequences, although I previously said that people with a background in understanding Sufism can usually undergo a smoother conversion process because the cult tradition of ahlulbait imams is not something strange to them, however, because Sufism's understanding of the Shia ahlulbait imams is ideologically different from Shia understanding, involvement in Sufism is not enough to lead someone to Shia conversion, another explanation is needed that can lead them to be able to accept Shia ideology, usually conversion through gate of Irfan is complemented by argumentative explanation through the ‘gates of philosophy and history’.

The experience of converting to Shia initiated by a 'supernatural' experience is not unique to the phenomenon of Shia conversion in Indonesia. Even in general,

in many conversion testimonies in various religious communities, Spiritual enlightenment is often used as the main narrative in religious conversion testimonials. Even though it is highly subjective, the use of narratives related to supernatural experiences implicitly gives the impression, at least for people who experience or believe in such supernatural spiritual experiences, that the truth of the religion one converts chooses is confirmed by 'god' or His representative.

One of the conversions to Shia that was triggered by a supernatural experience was once experienced by a former Sunni scholar in Egypt named Sheikh Hassan Shehata. In his confession published on a website[37],Shehata said that his conversion to Shia cannot be separated from his experience of meeting the prophet Muhammad and some of the prophet's companions in dreams. In his dream, he was ordered to follow Ali bin Talib.

This dream was taken seriously by Shehata, he then conducted an academic study to compare the doctrines of the two groups. In 1996, he then publicly declared his Shia and even challenged the Egyptian Sunni clerics to debate. His preaching activities after his conversion to Shia were considered disturbing, so he was imprisoned and exiled for some time. In 2013, a mob attacked her house and killed Shehata and 3 other people, an event that is hard to let go as a consequence of her choice to become a Shia follower.

[37] https://al-mostabserin.com/english/6133

The experience of getting to know Shia through dreams was also experienced by one of the informants in this study. The informant's name was Erwin. Erwin himself comes from a strong Islamic boarding school education background. He has even taken religious education in the city of Medina, Saudi Arabia, from secondary education to undergraduate level. According to Erwin, his knowledge of Shias before experiencing supernatural experiences was very dogmatic and biased due to the Wahhabi educational background he received where he studied religion in Medina.

His understanding of Shia gradually changed after he had a dream. In the dream, Erwin saw himself at a recitation where he saw a teacher he respected was filling out a recitation with someone who looked like a charismatic cleric. After the event, he saw himself approaching his *abuya* (teacher) and chatting. By his teacher, Erwin was told to greet and follow the religious ideology of this charismatic old figure. When Erwin shook hands and kissed the charismatic cleric's hand, he felt a very fragrant smell. When he woke up he still felt the scent of the hands of the charismatic figure he met in his dream. Later he learned that the figure he met in his dream was Imam Khomeini, the leader of the Iranian Islamic revolution.

> Theologically, I can say that what shaped my religious understanding was Wahhabism because I spent decades studying religion in the city of Medina. Once upon a time I dreamed that I met a teacher whom I respect very much. The teacher is dead. I call him Abuya. In the dream, I saw us attending the assembly of an Imam Khomaeni. At that time, I did not know who Imam Khomaeni was. After the *taʿlīm*, my *abuya* was ordered to follow Imam Khomaeni, I then kissed his hand and I felt a sweet fragrance until I woke up. starting from there I then established myself to research Shia objectively, and I came to the conclusion that Shia is a

> rational teaching that is in accordance with the sunnah of the Prophet and their teachings continued through the ahlulbait priests to the Messenger of Allah. The conclusion of my independent research led me to convert to Shia. (Interview with Erwin on September 25, 2020).

This dream experience made Erwin re-examine Shia ideology and doctrine more objectively by setting aside any ideological sentiments so that he could come to a clear conclusion regarding the Shia school of thought, after several months of independent research he was steadily converting to Shia. The conversion process and his religious identity are only known by his closest family and socially he performs *taqīyah* considering his position as a preacher in the city where he lives.

The supernatural experience that led to the belief to convert was also experienced by Ayesh, a private employee who works as an interior designer in the city of Bandung. Unlike previous informants, Ayesh's supernatural experiences have nothing to do with dreams. Ayesh's knowledge of Shia actually started when he was very young, namely when he was still at the junior high school level. This was because Ayesh's parents had already converted to Shia, but in that phase Ayesh did not yet believe in Shia as the theological choice that she made, even then she felt confused because what she witnessed at her home was different from the doctrine she received at school which is affiliated with one of the Islamic political parties in Indonesia.

According to Ayesh's confession, since childhood she had a kind of sixth sense ability to see supernatural beings, she felt that she was always attached by certain supernatural beings. One of her experiences with meeting supernatural

beings was that at one time Ayesh claimed to have been visited by a figure she called her ancestor. To this figure, Ayesh asked about the truth of Shia, which her ancestor answered by saying that if Ayesh was convinced of his theological choice, then she could continue, because religious practice in the Shia way was also what was practiced in the days of her ancestor's life. The moment of meeting with the ancestors became one of the important milestones in his determination to believe in Shia as the ideology and religious practice she chose.

Regarding claims about the ability to see supernatural things, Ayesh feels that after her conversion to Shia, she has more control over this ability than before her conversion. According to Ayesh, having uncontrolled supernatural abilities is very tiring psychologically. Of course, the ability to control supernatural abilities is not necessarily related to one's Shia identity.

Another supernatural event that Ayesh experienced during his conversion process was a mystical experience that she experienced several times when attending the birth commemoration or the *šahādah* of ahlulbait, especially Fatimah. According to Ayesh, since becoming a Shia, she not only feels that she loves the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt, rather she felt that the ahlul bayt prophet reciprocated her love.

The experience of conversion through Irfan's door was also experienced by an informant named Risyad. Risyad is an entrepreneur who lives in the city of Bandung, before converting to Shia, he and his extended family claim to be affiliated with NU religiously. Since high school, Risyad has been interested in

studying *kanuragan*. Kanuragan is a martial art that usually includes or related to the supernatural/spiritual dimension. When Risyad felt he was at the peak of knowledge about *kanuragan*, he and some of his friends did not feel they had found spiritual peace. According to Risyad, some of his friends even converted to Hinduism or Buddhism because they felt that they did not get detailed explanations about human technology in Islam.

> I also wanted to convert. But I feel that Islam is still perfect, I just haven't found the answer yet. What should I do, I have to keep learning. And if we look at it from our cultural narrative in Indonesia, the most powerful is Waliyullah. There is no story that Waliyullah loses. In fact, it is always described that their struggles always bear fruit of glory. So, I have to learn *waliyullah* knowledge. I looked for answers about it to various Islamic groups. I come from an NU background, but in order to find answers to this anxiety, I studied at various Islamic organizations, one of which I studied at the 'Islamic unity' organization (PERSIS). I was yelled at, accused of polytheism. I studied at Muhammadiyah, directly at the *pesantren*. But Muhammadiyah talks about *siyāsah* (politics). but I see that in Muhammadiyah when it comes to culture, metaphysics, that cannot be answered. If this is the highest achievement, why can't I find an answer? I got stressed and fell ill. On the one hand I didn't find an answer, on the other hand I didn't want to change religions. (Interview with Risyad on January 11, 2020).

The phases in which the Risyad felt spiritually empty lasted for years. Even in that phase, he admitted that he stopped performing religious rituals such as prayer because he felt he did not find value in these rites. Risyad's phase of religious indecision ended when he met someone named *Habīb* Alwi bin Muhammad Assegaf who he thought could fill the void of spiritual understanding he had been looking for. For Risyad, Shia theological arguments, including Shia mysticism, are the answer to the theological doubts he has been experiencing all this time.

> One time, a friend suggested meeting someone at Cicadas. My friend said that person was still young. cicadas are known as thugs' area. I said, sorry bro, I've been everywhere from the mountains to remote areas, looking for teachers whose beards are white, I don't even follow them, especially teachers who are still young, especially in the middle of town anyway. But I still go there lazily. I entered, greeted, my friend was there. But I still go there lazily. I entered, greeted, my friend was there. *Habīb* alwi bin Muhammad Assegaf, as I witnessed at that time, looked still young, wore a shirt, didn't wear a sarong or ustadh-style accessories. Physically, he is thin and tall enough for Indonesians. Incidentally at that time there were still guests. I'm being nonchalant. I thought what am I doing here. After the guests left, *Habīb* then said, "Your name is Risyad bin fulan bin fulan, he mentioned my genealogy." you have this knowledge and so on, mentioned one by one. The good ones is this and this, the others please throw away. I was immediately amazed. How could he know. *Habīb* said, try to stand up, less than a second I was lifted, even though my body is big while he is thin. he put me down slowly, he gave me a drink to calm me down, then he said this is imam Ali's knowledge. There is nothing more powerful than Imam Ali. Wow, this is interesting to me. (Interview with Risyad on January 11, 2020).

The meeting with *Habīb* Alwi amazed Risyad, he felt like he had found a spring in the middle of the desert. He decided to stay and study with *Habīb* Alwi, for several months at *Habīb* Alwi's place, Risyad admitted that he learned many things, starting from issues of *fiqh*, metaphysics and so on. After a month of studying Shia, Risyad firmly decided to convert to become a Shia follower.

According to Risyad, before converting to Shia, he had known Shia even with limited knowledge and in a certain sense a biased understanding because of one-sided sources of information. After deciding to convert and continuing to study Shia in greater depth he was able to negate the stigma he often heard about Shia. According to Risyad, the Shias did not think that Ali was a prophet at all, or that God's revelation should have been given to Ali bin Talib, in the Shia community he

also felt that the theme of Islamic morality and unity was prioritized, in contrast to the accusation that Shias were a radical community that he had heard before.

Habīb Alwi Assegaf is considered one of the Shia figures in West Java, especially in the city of Bandung. Apart from IJABI and the Muthahari Foundation which used to be managed by Jalaludin Rahmat, the *Habīb* Alwi Assegaf Assembly is often the center of activities for the Shia community in Bandung. In 2016 and 2018 the place was attacked by intolerant groups related to the banning of the Ashura commemoration (Humaini, 2019).

During his conversion journey, Risyad experienced what he called a spiritual moment. That moment occurred when he first read the *tawassul* prayer. While chanting the names of the 14 holy men one by one, Risyad cried with emotion and happiness. He felt that he had found what he had been looking for. In the understanding of Risyad, holy humans are a link in the chain of knowledge about God. The humans who because of their existence are the cause of God creating the universe. At that moment, Risyad said that his body was shaking violently, as if he was unable to contain all the emotions he was feeling at that moment.

Simply put, *tawassul* means intermediary. Practically speaking, *tawassul* is usually done when praying to Allah by including the name of the prophet Muhammad or other people who are considered to have piety on the side of God so that the prayer has more potential to be answered. The *tawassul* prayer itself has indeed become one of the themes of worship debated by several Islamic groups. Sunni and Shia both know *tawassul* and many of the followers of both groups

practice the *tawassul* prayer. Especially for the Shia community, the *tawassul* prayer is usually held on Tuesday night.

Even though it is a common practice, there are also some groups, such as the Wahhabis, who think that only *tawassul* is allowed using good deeds. In the Wahhabi faith, praying to someone, especially if that person has died, is considered an act of shirk, even if the person used as a medium for *tawassul* is the Prophet Muhammad. Of course, this argument is rejected by groups that accept the practice of *tawassul*. For them, praying through someone or something in praying to God does not mean worshiping something or that person.

Another informant who converted through the gate which I categorize as conversion through the gate of Irfan is an informant named Idham. Idham's encounter with Shia began when he was still undergoing his vocational studies at the Ujung Pandang State Polytechnic. The conversion decision and deep interest in Shia made him decide to study Shia deeply in Iran, where he completed his undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Idham currently is the leader of *Hauzah* Imam Ridha Jakarta.

Although, I categorize it as conversion through Irfan's gate, it is different from previous informants, the experience of Idham conversion is not at all related to mystical or supernatural experiences, but also the trigger for the conversion of Idham also does not depart from matters of an intellectual nature regarding differences in theological construction or the problematization of the construction

of Islamic history. According to Idham, the conversion process is purely related to things that are lived experience.

The trigger for the conversion began when at one point Idham was invited by his friends to attend a Friday night prayer meeting at a place in the city of Makassar around 2000. In the Shia tradition this assembly is usually known as the Kumail prayer. The Kumail prayer in Shia history is considered the prayer of the prophet Khidir which Imam Ali bin Abi Talib taught to his friend named Kumail bin Ziyad. This prayer is recommended to be read on the night of *Nisyfu Sha'ban* and every Friday night.

In fact, the practice of dhikr and collective prayer is not something new for Idham, because he comes from a family background of Sufi activists who have introduced the practice of *ḍikr* and *ṭarīqah*, especially the Naqsyabandiyah and Halawatiyah *ṭarīqahs* which are quite famous in Idham's hometown. However, at the moment when he attended the prayer meeting, Idham felt that he was having a different kind of experience. Idham witnessed that many of the prayer participants were crying. When he read carefully, living the meaning of the text of the prayer, his heart was touched and his tears fell without him realizing it. At that time, he had no idea that it was a Shia prayer.

Idham feels that the text of Kumail's prayer is very strong, as if the narration and diction choices contained in it seem to have been created not by ordinary humans, but by someone who has deep knowledge about God. For Idham, Kumail's prayer is not like most prayers which contain narratives of partial human interests,

in Kumail's prayer it is as if human existence is nothing, only the existence of God. The Kumail Prayer is a form of pure acknowledgment and servitude of humans who are weak, despicable and helpless before God, who is perfect.

The experience of participating in the *kumailan* assembly shook Idham's heart, but he still felt doubts that this experience was only caused by certain conditions, therefore Idham felt the need to experience such an experience once again to convince himself, he felt he needed affirmation. So around Ramadan in 2001, he bought the prayer book. Before reading it, he set a standard for himself that if he could get to the mood like the one he experienced when he first joined the prayer service, crying with immense pleasure, then he promised that whatever school, whatever teaching behind this, he would accept. If such conditions occur again, for the Idham the prayer is sufficient proof that the teaching behind it is something true.

On the first Friday night of Ramadan, Idham read the prayer alone, he was worried that the experience he had previously had was only the emotional impact of many people because the prayer was done in congregation. When he read the prayer, from the beginning to the end of the prayer, he kept crying. According to his promise to himself, he accepted Shia teachings.

After his acceptance, he then began to seek intellectual justification for Shia to complement his belief in Shia theology. He read many Shia books, one of the things that shook him the most was Syafruddin Al-Musawi's book entitled Nights in Peshawar. Apart from self-taught learning through books, Idham also

participated in a study community in Makassar which at the time presented the figure of Shia Hasan Abu Ammar. In the study group, Idham learned various things about Shia both from the point of view of *fiqh*, philosophy, and Irfan and so on.

Unlike the experiences of most of the informants in this study, which required a certain amount of time from the moment of conversion to practicing Shia *fiqh* as a consequence of conversion, Idham admitted that he did not need time because he was very sure of his choice and all the consequences that came with it. Indeed, at the beginning he still did it partially because of his lack of access and knowledge of the details of Shia *fiqh*, especially in the implementation of rituals such as prayer and so on. When performing prayers with Shia *fiqh*, according to Idham, he also feels emotions that he cannot express in words. Such religious experiences had never been experienced by Idham during his Sunni period.

As someone who comes from a family background of Sufism activists, Idham feels that after the conversion his perspective on Islamic mysticism has slightly changed. Prior to the conversion, he understood sharia as a rite that far from inner values. In short, in his previous religious understanding there was a strong dichotomy between what is called sharia and what is called *ṭarīqah*, as if the *Ṣarīʿah* were just daily rituals while a deep understanding of the essence of religion was found in the *ṭarīqah*.

In shia according to Idham, there is no such extreme dichotomy, *ṭarīqah* is *fiqh* itself. The sharia in question is everything that brings a servant closer to God, the path of self-purification (*tazkiyatun nafs*) is inherent in *fiqh* itself. Idham

analogizes that between *fiqh* and *maʿrīfat* such as onions where what is called onion skin is the onion itself. In fact, such an argument is not unique to Shia. The view of Sufism that has developed in the Sunni tradition also does not deny the significance of the *Ṣarīʿah* in achieving what is known as understanding about God. indeed, in practice, there are still groups of people who think that *fiqh* and *ṭarīqah* are two separate things and that one of them is more important or superior than the other.

D. Gate of Islamic Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*)

One of the gate of encounter or acquaintance with Shia discourse that a person may experience in his/her spiritual quest process until he/she finally decides to become a Shia adherent is through the gate of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). In this study, there are actually not many respondents who decide to convert to Shia because of *fiqh* considerations. Most of the respondents claimed that their initial interest in Shia and their main consideration in the conversion process was based more on the philosophical or theological arguments of Shia that entered their hearts and minds, as well as the problem of Islamic history where according to respondents that the ahlulbait of the prophet and their followers were a group that was oppressed *(mustaḍʿafīn)* by the Islamic rulers *(mustakbirīn),* whereas the prophet ordered to love and follow the ahlulbait imams and even to align them with the holy book of the Qur'an as contained in various hadiths about the virtues of ahlulbait, especially *ṯaqalain* hadiths and *Safīnah* hadiths.

The interest of the majority of respondents to Shia Islam Jurisprudence or also known as *fiqh* ja'fari (referring to the sixth Shia imam) only strengthened after

the problems of theology and ideology of Shia had really they considered complete or they had fully faith in them. So, in most cases, their interest in Shia *fiqh* is a result of their current Shia faith. Many of the people who converted to Shia, in the early days of conversion, they still used sunni *fiqh* - in Indonesia, the dominant sunni *fiqh* used is *fiqh* Shafi'i - for various reasons.

These reasons are usually related to issues of comfort and safety, both regarding the security of themselves and their communities. because the shia *fiqh*, especially in the practice of daily worship such as the five daily prayers, is quite different from the practice of the Shafi'i Jurisprudence which is commonly known in Indonesia, thus allowing the potential for hostile responses to emerge against them, both from people who do not know Shia deeply or from groups of intolerance to Shia. Due to the reasons for bad image construction regarding Shia in Indonesia, which continuously be reproduced and propagated by several intolerant groups. Hence, most of the followers of Shia usually hiding their Islamic identity or commonly known as *taqīyah* (dissimulation), it will be very difficult to find Shia followers practicing their *fiqh* openly in public spaces, their *fiqh* practice is only carried out in their private space, or in their community in a limited and exclusive manner.

Apart from security reasons, the Shia community also does not display their *fiqh* practices in public spaces in order to maintain unity and avoid potential conflicts due to differences in *fiqh* practices. This is in line with the recommendation of the former Ijabi shura council Jalaluddin Rahmat to prioritize

morals above *fiqh* in order to maintain religious harmony amidst the majority of Sunni followers in Indonesia (Rahmat, 2007).

Another reason why the gate of *fiqh* is not the main argument in the conversion process to Shia is because most of the Shia *fiqh* can be found in its equivalent in the four standard schools of *fiqh* (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools) that are recognized in the Sunni world. The similarities and differences between shia *fiqh* and sunni *fiqh* are something that is normal, as in the four of Sunni schools of thought often agree or disagree in viewing a particular product of Islamic law. All *fiqh* schools, both Sunni and Shia, claim that each of their *ijtihād* regarding certain religious rules based on the holy book of the Qur'an and the hadiths of the Prophet as the main reference for making a religious law stipulation.

Similarities or differences in viewing a certain sharia law are born from the complexity of understanding, interpretation, and reference sources that a *muğtahid* has or chooses in formulating a religious sharia law. A sharia law which is even very clear about its obligations or prohibitions, still causes different views of *fiqh*. For example, fasting in Ramadan, can give birth to dozens of different *fiqh* products. Not a single school in Islam rejects the obligation to fast in the month of Ramadan, but they still have different views on matters relating to the implementation of fasting. For example, the interpretation of when it is time for dawn and when it is time to break the fast, about the obligatory conditions for fasting, things that invalidate the fast, and so on.

Fiqh or *maḏhab* - in Shia the term *maḏhab* is not very familiar but the term may be paralleled by the term *marǧaʿ* - can be said to be something that is subjective in nature. Most of *fiqh* products are something that is *dhanni* (conjecture) not *qath'i* (definite), because *fiqh* is the result of *ijtihād* or the earnest and careful efforts of a *muǧtahid*[38] in interpreting in detail God's commands that were conveyed through the prophet Muhammad. As a product of the interpretation from a certain *muǧtahid* or faqih, a *fiqh* product cannot be separated from the values of subjectivity. The fact that *fiqh* is *dhanni* and subjective made it not the dominant gateway in one's decision to convert to Shia.

Another argument about why *fiqh* is not dominant as a gateway for conversion is due to the limited access of potential converts to figures who are considered to understand and master the field, this limitation is especially experienced by people who convert to Shia during the early 1980s to early 2000s or the times when the penetration of the digital world was not as massive as what we see today.

In the early phase of the wave of conversion to Shia in Indonesia in the early 80s, most of the converts admitted that they had limited access to Shia *fiqh* discourse and knowledge due to the lack of credible resources that could be used as references in various *fiqh* issues. at present, this can be overcome as many Qum

[38] *Muǧtahid* in terms of terminology means a person who is an expert in the field of fiqh and has the ability to perform istinbat (inference) of sharia laws based on sources that are recognized, trusted, and reliable. Quoted from https://id.wikishia.net/view/Mujtahid

alumni or other Shia *hauzah* have returned to Indonesia and created community nodes for ahlulbait lovers in various cities in Indonesia. These *hauzah* alumni are usually one of the sources for Shia followers to access knowledge about Shia Islamic Jurisprudence (Zulkifli, 2009, p. 27).

With the openness of the information system which is currently accessible to almost all circles, Shia *daʿwah* is also experiencing development by utilizing digital platforms, Unlike in the early 80s to 2000s where Shia *daʿwah* was more focused on the circle of community studies and publishing of Shia books, nowadays, Shia *daʿwah*, like *daʿwah* carried out by various religious communities, has begun to penetrate the realm of social media to reach their communities in various places.

For example, on the youtube platform there are a lot of channels that are created as a means of Shia preaching. These media include a YouTube channel called Kupas Tuntas, Safinah TV, Kautsar Media, al Hurr Tv, Ahlulbait Indonesia Tv, Abbaz TV, SyiahIndonesiadotnet, Anshoru Sunnah, Karimah Ahlulbait, ICC Jakarta, Al Qurba Tv, Itrah Institute official, Coffee TV, JRTV, Misykat Tv, Sahara TV, Chanel arguments, Majulah Ijabi, Maula TV, Al Kisa Channel and so on.

These channels cover various themes ranging from discussions of *ʿaqīdah* and philosophy, discussions of *fiqh*, to discussions related to the dynamics of social issues and political views of several Shia groups. Some of these channels are also usually used as a means of carrying out various online celebration rites or commemorations of major holidays in the Shia faith especially during the COVID-

19 pandemic (such as commemorations for Ashura, *wilādah, and šahādah*). Apart from being a means of education for internal members, due to the nature of social media that is open to anyone, Some channels also focus on explaining the Shia faith to outsiders and responding to various accusations or negative images attached to Shia which are also propagated through social media platforms by anti-Shia groups.

However, there are also some people in this study who convert through *fiqh* issues even though they are not as dominant as conversions through the doors of philosophy and history. This is understandable because the concept of *fiqh* and its practice can be said to be the second layer of faith. *Fiqh* is a form of proof of faith. It is impossible for a person to perform prayers, pay zakat, or other *ṣarīʿah* orders if he/she does not believe in Islam. It's the same with Shia *fiqh*, why practice Shia *fiqh* if you don't believe it's theological concepts?

So, in the experience of most of the informants who converted to Shia in this study, the practice of *fiqh* is a consequence of their Shia faith and the feeling that their conversion is only perfect by also practicing Shia *fiqh*, it is not enough to just agree on the theological concept. However, apart from being a theological consequence, there are also some people who are converted due to *fiqh* arguments or problems, but the number is very limited. This is because *fiqh* can be considered as an exclusive discourse that not all Muslims have access to understand the complexity of how a sharia law product is determined by a *muğtahid* from a particular school of thought.

To be able to understand in depth the complexity of a *fiqh* discourse, one is required to master many traditional Islamic sciences such as Arabic and its grammar, *uṣūl fiqh* and so on. Usually, people who convert purely for reasons of *fiqh* in this study are people who have studied at an Islamic boarding school or *hauzah*, so they have at least a basic knowledge of traditional Islamic sciences. Once again, not many Shia converts in this study or even Indonesian Shia adherents in general have sufficient competence to simply understand the complexities of *fiqh*. This research also does not focus on certain categories of informants because the focus of the research is their experience of doing conversions. In fact, in my experience interviewing informants who have good *fiqh* knowledge, they tend to be more normative and their arguments seem like reading a textbook.

Although there are not many conversion events that make *fiqh* the main consideration, it does not mean that *fiqh* does not have an important role. Even for some people, the urgency of *fiqh* is the same as the urgency of theology itself, and that the two things are like two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated. For many converts, practicing Shia *fiqh* is one of the main indicators of seriousness in undergoing the conversion process and is a sign of their loyalty to the Shia faith.

As I mentioned earlier, those who convert converts with *fiqh* arguments as the main reason are usually people who have basic *pesantren* education or *hauzah*. One of the conversion events due to *fiqh* arguments was carried out by a person named Ahmad Marzuki Amin. Marzuki's conversion journey is recorded on the https://aqaed.com/ site. The website contains various experiences of conversion to

Shia by people from various countries and religious identities. Marzuki is an alumnus of the Bangil Islamic Boarding School, an Islamic educational institution affiliated with Shia. After completing his studies in Bangil, he continued his religious education in Syria and Iran.

In his conversion argument, Marzuki claims that based on his personal investigations he found that Shia Islamic jurisprudence more rational, authentic and has a stronger foundation from authoritative sources. One of the islamic jurisprudence themes raised by Marzuki is the question of whether prostration in prayer should be performed on the ground or a prayer mat/carpet. According to Marzuki, prostration in prayer is better done on the ground than otherwise, and the practice is what the Prophet and his ahlulbait exemplified, the evidence that shows the command to prostrate on the ground is even found in the books of Sunni hadith, although the practice of prostration on the ground is not a common practice in Sunni's jurisprudence.

As I mentioned earlier, *fiqh* is something that is speculative. *Fiqh* is not a product of the 'sky' that is free from errors, it is a product of the interpretation of scholars or *muğtahids* based on certain rules. As a product of interpretation, differences are normal and even necessary. Differences in *fiqh* do not only occur in different religious identity groups such as Sunni and Shia, but differences are also found in the same religious identity group, as we find many differences in the construction of sharia law in various Sunni schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'I, Hanbali), or even the difference is very likely to occur within one school,

such as in the Shafi'i school, where many Shafi'I interpreters differ on a certain *ṣarīʿah* construction.

Although arguments about speculative *fiqh* construction are views commonly accepted by most Muslims, immaturity in accepting the differences in their respective *fiqh* practices is often found in various Muslim communities. This immaturity does not only occur among ordinary Muslims, but also even by some of its scholars. Differences in *fiqh* understanding of a certain rite practice are often the cause of acts of intolerance such as accusing a certain practice of being heretical (religious innovation) or even disbelieving a different *fiqh* practice or understanding.

If within a group of the same religious identity there can be conflicts due to differences in *fiqh*, then of course we can imagine how the discourse of differences in *fiqh* is used to attack or attach certain labels to Shia groups. Yes, the difference in *fiqh* is one of the discourses that is widely used to attack the Shia. *fiqh* discourses such as different shia prayer procedures, combining two prayer times without having to be a traveler, *mut'ah* marriage, *taqīyah*, adhan, and other *fiqh* practices are themes that are easily found in various hate speeches against the Shia community.

The theme of prostration on the ground raised by Marzuki is also one of the quite controversial themes in the *fiqh* differences construction between Sunni and Shia groups. Shia *fiqh* does think that prostration must be done on the ground or something that grows from it. In practice, Shia adherents usually use *turbah* (a kind

of compacted soil) derived from Karbala soil or other places that are considered sacred. Because of this practice the Shia community is often accused of worshiping the ground instead of worshiping God.

Of course, such accusations seem exaggerated, because prostration on the ground is different from prostration to the ground. And that the practice of prostration on the ground is the way commanded and exemplified by the prophet. Jafar Subhani, a Shia scholar and *marǧaʿ taqlīd* by quoting various hadiths said that there were several phases of the Prophet's orders regarding how to prostrate which is the most important position in the prayer movement. The first phase is the obligation to prostrate on the ground and there is no relief to prostrate on the other. In the second phase, there is relief to prostrate on something that grows from the ground. In addition to these two phases there is no other order except that there is a relief that allows prostration on clothes if there is ailments or emergencies such as hot conditions that do not allow a person to prostrate on the ground (Subhani, 1999). So according to Subhani, the practice of prostration on the ground is a practice in accordance with the guidance of the prophet and not a religious innovation fabricated by the Shias.

The practice of carrying a *turbah* for prayer is performed by Shia only for the sake of efficiency in the performance of worship and as an effort to ensure that they prostrate on the ground which is believed to be pure or clean. As for why Shia adherents make Karbala land their favorite *turbah*, I got an interesting answer from a research informant who said that 'If let's say the commandment to prostrate on the

ground is obligatory, then do you think you would prefer to prostrate on land taken from the land of the mosque or land taken from the location of prostitution? I think you would prefer to prostrate on a more noble ground'.

The next informant who converts through the door of *fiqh* is someone name Jiwa. His introduction to Shia was initiated by his cousin who converted to Shia first. His cousin introduced Shia to him through *fiqh* issues, specifically regarding the issue of ablution. At first, Jiwa who had a background in religious education in a *pesantren* admitted that he was quite resistant to the discourse conveyed by his cousin, because it was contrary to what he believed and practiced. However, the arguments put forward to him related to the theme of *fiqh*, especially those related to ablution, made Jiwa interested. He then studied the theme independently, and concluded that the Shia argument was very logical and based on clearly valid sources. This conclusion made him feel that he could no longer deny Shia argumentatively and finally decided to convert.

The issue of ablution has indeed become one of the *fiqh* practices that have sharp differences between Sunnis and Shias. The difference in *fiqh* becomes important for many people because belief in a particular practice is usually accompanied by a belief that the practice is more authentic than other practices. In Shia jurisprudence, ablution consists of two washes and two wiping, namely washing the face and hands and wiping the head and both feet as clearly stated in

the Qur'an Q.S almaidah 5: 6[39] and many hadiths (Subhani, 1999). Meanwhile, most of the Sunni Jurisprudence consider that the feet must also be washed as the face and hands are washed. Some also argue that washing the feet includes the act of wiping in them and that washing the feet is considered closer to prudence.

Several informants who have a fairly good understanding of *fiqh* commented on the differences in ablution practices. Of course, these arguments are subjective arguments and biased Shia ideology that they profess. According to them, the Qur'an uses two different verbs, namely the words 'to wash' and ‘to wipe’. Each word has its own essence, we cannot say that the word ‘wash’ is the same as or includes the essence of the word ‘wipe’. If we do that, it's like we are equating the words stroking and clawing, even though they are different even though in practice they seem to have similarities. stroking usually aims to provide comfort, while clawing aims to hurt.

Although *fiqh* is not a dominant consideration in conversion decisions, as I have said before, for its adherents, the practice of *fiqh* in any school usually gives a feeling that their ritual practice is more authentic, more sunnah than the *fiqh* practice of other groups. This also happened in the Shia community that I met. For example, some research informants with sarcastic language described their sunniness in the

[39] O believers! When you rise up for Salah (prayer), wash your faces and your hands as far as the elbows, wipe your heads with wet hands and wash your feet to the ankles. If we pay attention, this transliteration represents the Sunni belief that the feet must be washed, in contrast to the transliteration of the Shia version that I quoted from almizan.org which translates the verse as follows: “O you who believe! When you rise up to prayer, wash yourfaces and your hands as far as the elbows, and wipe a part ofyour heads and your feet to the ankles.

past as the time when they were still ablution by wasting water to cynically accuse the ablution method of most Sunni schools of being wasteful in the use of water because it seems that there is no different and strict treatment. in the practice of wiping the head and feet in ablution.

This research is not in the context of providing an assessment of the *fiqh* practices believed by the informants or other *fiqh* practices that very diverse in the Islamic world. The issue of ablution discussed here relates to the personal feelings and judgments of the informants that made them convert to Shia. Differences in the practice of ablution are very complex issues that could be due to differences in sources of hadith references, differences in reading methods (from the point of view of *nahwu*) to verses about the obligation to perform ablution from verses of the Qur'an and so on. Each of these practices has its own arguments, which are not the subject of the discussion of this paper.

Back to the conversion experience experienced Jiwa, the decision to convert and practice Shia *fiqh* is not an easy decision for him to make. Traces of Sunni knowledge that had previously been established in his religious understanding and consciousness could not be immediately replaced by Shia *fiqh* arguments even though he felt that the Shia *fiqh* explanation he considered was more rational.

The psychological tension was partly due to the significant difference in many religious rite practices in the beliefs of the two groups. A sudden change in ritual practice is very likely to make the person experiencing it feel strange with the practice stemming from the new faith because he had previously performed the

same rite for a long period of time but with a different procedure. In addition to psychological tension, the potential for tension is also very likely to occur sociologically because most of the Muslim community in Indonesia are not familiar with the practice of different Islamic rites. Not only against the practice of Shia rites, but in some cases, they are also unfamiliar with the practice of Sunni *fiqh* other than the *fiqh* of the Shafi'i school. Fear of getting discriminatory treatment or even persecution makes many Shia people not feel comfortable practicing their *fiqh* in public spaces.

> In my experience, it's hard to get into the practice of Shia *fiqh* and conversion in general. But logically I've really received it. Luckily there are relatives and neighborhood to help. There are psychological moments such as fear, anxiety, loneliness. I also had doubts about the truth of the Shia, until I arrived at a condition where rationally, I felt it was no longer possible to deny this 'truth'. (Interview with Jiwa on January 6, 2020).

What is experienced by Jiwa is also felt by many converts to Shia in Indonesia. For many converts to Shia, there is usually a long gap between conversion or acceptance of Shia conceptually (*ʿaqīdah*) and their acceptance of practicing Shia practically in daily rituals (*fiqh*). In addition to the common assumption that *fiqh* is the second layer after *ʿaqīdah* in a process of accepting a certain faith, there are also various arguments presented by converts in response to their acceptance process of the practice of Shia *fiqh*.

The reasons were partly because *fiqh* was not the main consideration for their conversion journey, and *fiqh* did not become a dominant discourse even within the Shia community itself. This is usually experienced by converts in the early 80's

to 90's who mostly knew Shia through their interest in Iran's Islamic revolution. As a fairly new idea in Indonesia at the time, of course, interest in Shia was more focused on the conceptual and ideological framework that distinguished it from the general understanding of Islam (Sunni).

Such an experience, for example, was experienced by Gunawan who converted to Shia in the 80s. At the beginning of the conversion, the issue of *fiqh* did not attract attention. For Gunawan, interest in Shia in his conversion experience cannot be separated from his fascination with the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the thoughts of Shia philosophers which he considers to offer something different from the religious dogma he has encountered so far. According to Gunawan, the thought of the Shia philosophers is a reflection of Shia theology which is based on the rationality of reason which is in line with the guidance of the Qur'an, the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams of the Ahlulbait.

After believing in this Shia faith for many years, then an interest in studying Shia *fiqh* emerged in Gunawan. So, the choice to practice *fiqh* is a consequence of the Shia faith that he has firmly believed in. For Gunawan, he feels that his conversion journey will not be complete if he only accepts Shia theological concepts while he does not practice its *fiqh* teachings. According to Gunawan, between *ʿaqīdah* and *fiqh* is an inseparable unity, *ʿaqīdah* is a statement of faith, while *fiqh* is a proof of the pledge of faith.

> I have been converted to Shia since 1984. But fully practicing Shia *fiqh* was only in 2010. But for prayer, even though the movement is still Sunni, the practice is already Shia, *ẓuhr*, asr, maghrib isya and that is

> open, my friends are used to it. the choice to practice Shia *fiqh* Maybe because of getting old, the belief in the Shia faith becomes unstoppable, this is authentic, so, I feel I can't continue to be a part-time Shia. Even now, it's not fully 100 percent because in public places we can't practice Shia *fiqh* as openly as that, but at the office, I practice Shia *fiqh*.
> I am self-taught through books and for the past 7 years I have watched lectures on youtube. Learning through YouTube is interesting, it's also like evolution itself, because we are like trial and error to find out which one we deserve to follow, even though the error actually gives something. Even though from the other side, the error should not be like that if according to the true teachings of ahlulbait, for example, we should not threaten and so on. (Interview with gunawan on March 3, 2020).

Another argument put forward by some research informants is why converts usually take longer time to accept and practice Shia *fiqh* is caused by a bad impression that is constructed related to some Shia *fiqh* practices such as mut'ah, praying on *turbah* and so on. For some converts, the negative image of Shia *fiqh* gives a certain psychological burden. This psychological burden can be in the form of a strange feeling because they are not used to the practice of Shia rituals that are different from the practice of *fiqh* that converts used to believe.

For many converts, it takes more time to understand the arguments behind these different Shia *fiqh* practices. For example, a convert stated that he needed time to study and believe in Shia *fiqh* regarding the obligation to perform Friday prayers.

I departed from the *pesantren* tradition, there is an established dogma of *fiqh* that I understand. For example, the problem of Friday prayers, I used to study *uṣūl fiqh* at the Islamic boarding school. There is a rule that says that the imperative sentence indicates an obligation. So, if we look at the verse of the Qur'an about Friday prayers using *fi'il amr* (command sentences), then suddenly I met with the

discourse that Friday prayers are not obligatory. At the beginning of the conversion journey, it had made me doubt. However, I overcome this by exploring the basis of the Shia *fiqh* argument.

Indeed, the issue of Friday prayers is one of the discourses on differences in *fiqh* that is often used to attack the Shia. Unlike Sunni groups who generally believe in the absolute obligation of Friday prayer as long as the conditions for its implementation are met, In Shia *fiqh*, Friday prayers are also obligatory during the time of the Imam's presence, but after the occultation of the Imam, there are at least three laws relating to Friday prayers.

The first group said that the law of performing Friday prayers during the time of the Imam's occultation was haram. This group believes that the presence of an infallible imam is a valid condition for performing Friday prayers. the second group said that the law of carrying out Friday prayers during the Imam's occultation was *wājib taʿyīni*[40] if the legal requirements were met even without the presence of an infallible imam. The majority of these two groups of opinion were discoursed by previous Shia *fiqh* experts.

Meanwhile, the third group said that the law of carrying out Friday prayers during the imam's occultation is *wājib taḫyīri*. This opinion is the view shared by

[40] The *Wājib taʿyīni* relates to certain practices that are obligatory on a mukallaf and he cannot replace them with other practices. For example daily prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and the like. In addition to *wājib taʿyīni*, there are also other criteria called *wājib taḫyīri*. *Wājib taḫyīri* is a condition in which a mukallaf is asked to perform one of two or more practices. Examples such as kaffarah (fines) for breaking the fast without conditions justified by sharia in the month of Ramadan. the person who does that must choose to do one of three things, namely freeing slaves, feeding sixty poor people or fasting for sixty days. (Amini, 2008: 150).

most of the contemporary *marǧaʿ taqlīd*, including Imam Khomeini, Ayatullah Khui, Ayatullah Araki, Ayatullah Tabrizi, Ayatullah Sistani, and Ayatullah Makarim Shirazi. Since this view is held by contemporary Shia scholars, this practice is also widely followed by Shia converts in Indonesia. In this view, on Friday at the time of *ẓuhr* one can choose between performing the *ẓuhr* prayer or the Friday prayer[41].

But that kind of doubt is not experienced by all the Shia converts that I meet. Some converts I met said that they did not experience the psychological tension due to differences in *fiqh* practices at all. According to them, such tensions have been resolved when they rationally accept Shia ideology through the door of philosophy. When they decide to believe in Shia ideologically, the problem of changing *fiqh* practices they think is just like a 'change of clothes'.

Even if there are psychological tensions experienced in *fiqh* issues, it is not due to their doubts about the concept of Shia *fiqh* but rather how they can express these *fiqh* practices in public spaces proportionally so that they do not cause rejection or even social conflict given the narrative of hatred against Shia that still very strong in Indonesia's Sunni majority society. For some people, the anxiety is not only how they place their Shia identity in the social space but also even in their private sphere because they are not yet fully open about their identity to their family, be it their spouse, sibling, or parents. The following are excerpts of interviews from

[41] Quoted from https://id.wikishia.net/view/Ayat_Salat_Jumat

several respondents regarding how they still feel insecure to express their Shia identity in the realm of *fiqh*, both in public and private spaces.

> The psychological tension that I experienced after accepting Shia was no longer related to whether I doubted certain *fiqh* practices, but rather to the conditions for carrying out that *fiqh* under certain circumstances. For example, I want to pray in a place that is not my private area, there is a fear of friends or other people knowing my identity and being exposed while issues related to Shia are quite sensitive in the environment I live(Interview with the informant on January 27, 2020).
>
> .
>
> There are certain psychological tensions that I experience especially with regard to *fiqh*. But for me, in *fiqh*, when it comes to social contexts, there are advantages and disadvantages. Therefore, consideration of benefits must be prioritized. There is also a problem when Shia is sued in public, in mosques for example. People's perception of Shia is also disturbing. (Interview with the informant on January 26, 2020).
>
> I haven't fully implemented Shia *fiqh*, I'm still partisan. there are still some considerations. Both internal and external. But I think it's only a matter of time because this urge (belief in Shia both in *ʿaqīdah* and *fiqh*) is getting bigger as time goes on, moreover what i used to hear Often accused against Shia, it turns out that this is not the case. (Interview with the informant on November 18, 2019).
>
> I just got married, and my wife does not know the teachings of ahlulbait, currently I am still hiding this identity from my wife. Even when I pray, I usually lock the door because my wife's family comes from a certain Islamic tradition. I am afraid that there will be internal tension in my new family if they find out my shia identity, I am still slowly trying to introduce my theological position to my wife. (Interview with the informant on November 14, 2019).

Fortunately, the Shia belief usually does not rigidly demand its followers to apply Shia *fiqh*, especially if they are in a condition or in public space that is not friendly to their Shia identity, which if they practice Shia *fiqh* could potentially endanger their safety. In such conditions, usually Shia adherents will do *taqīyah* by

following the *fiqh* practice commonly believed by the majority group (for example by practicing Shafi'i *fiqh*).

Although the practice of *taqīyah* is negatively constructed by Shia outsiders, according to Shia, *taqīyah* has a religious argumentation base, both from the Qur'an and from the prophet and the Shia imams. In this case, *taqīyah* becomes a kind of compromise and dynamic aspect in Shia theology so that unnecessary conflicts due to immaturity in responding to different religious interpretations can be avoided. Through the practice of *taqīyah*, the Shia community maintains their existence amidst the narratives of hatred and hostility that have been addressed to them for centuries in Islamic history.

As I stated earlier that *fiqh* and theology are two sides of a coin that cannot be separated, many Shia converts consider that the implementation of *fiqh* -of course by taking into account the social context in which a person lives - is a sign of a person's complete acceptance of the Shia faith. If Shia *fiqh* is proof of love and loyalty to ahlulbait, how can someone claim love for something but not prove it in concrete terms?

As the most material thing among other conversion gates, the most visible change that can be identified from a Shia convert is when they decide to apply Shia *fiqh* in matters related to *Ṣarīʿah* commands such as rituals of worship and construction of what can or can't be done according to the guidance of the *Ṣarīʿah* based on the *fiqh* construction that a person believes in (halal/haram). Changes in

the area of worship rites, for example, differences in prayer procedures, ablution procedures, Ramadan fasting, *ẖumus,* and so on.

In terms that are not directly related to the ritual of worship, the changes experienced by a convert who chooses to practice Shia *fiqh* can be in the form of constructing halal-haram food that can be consumed by a Shia Muslim. In some respects, the construction of Shia *fiqh* regarding halal food is slightly different from that of the majority of Sunni *fiqh*. For example, the majority of Sunni *fiqh* believe that all types of fish and marine animals are lawful to eat. In general, this argument is based on the verses of the Qur'an (5:96)[42] and several hadiths of the prophet that show the permissibility of consuming fish and other marine animals, either alive-because they were caught-or have become carrion-dead by themselves-[43].

Meanwhile, Shia *fiqh* categorizes fish into at least two types, namely scaly and non-scaly fish. According to most of the *marǧaʿ taqlīd*, the type of fish that can be consumed by Shia adherents is only fish (breathing with gills) which has scales, while fish that do not have scales are forbidden to be consumed. In the case of halal food for consumption, it seems that Shia *fiqh* has a close relationship with the kosher concept in Jewish belief. Therefore, when a person converts to Shia and applies Shia *fiqh* as a religious guide, they will avoid consuming foods such as

[42] It is lawful for you to hunt and eat seafood, as a provision for you and for travellers. But hunting on land is forbidden to you while on pilgrimage. Be mindful of Allah to Whom you all will be gathered. (quoted from https://www.alim.org/quran/compare/surah/5/96)
[43] quoted from https://www.halalmui.org/mui14/main/detail/hukum-mengkonsumsi-daging-hiu

catfish, squid, crabs and all types of non-scaled fish which they previously considered halal to be consumed prior to their conversion.

In addition to being a reference to matters relating to the implementation of Islamic law, conversion and the choice to practice Shia *fiqh* in some of the experiences of informants also influenced their consideration of their life choices. for example, some unmarried shia converts told me that they will choose a fellow shia to be their partner, or if the partner is not a shia, then at least they will inform their potential husband/wife about their theological position as Shia adherents so that they do not have to hide their beliefs in their private sphere and avoid potential conflicts from an early age. In cases like this, female adherents usually face more potential pressure and stigma than male Shia adherents.

That's the explanation of the typology of conversion experiences from Sunni to Shia found in this research. As I stated at the beginning of this article, the typology of conversion gates is not intended to generalize the potential encounters with Shias that a Shia convert might experience outside of the four conversion triggers mentioned in the research. Of course, there are many things that might trigger people's interest in something, as well as the discourse on conversion, there are many possible conversion doors other than conversion through the doors of philosophy, history, Sufism, or *fiqh*. Likewise, the division of this typology is also not intended to simplify the complexity of the experience that converts may experience, conversion is a big narrative that cannot be simplified in a single narrative.

All these narratives about the journey of conversion can give us a better understanding of a person's choice to make Shia their religious belief and the arguments or perspectives they provide in supporting the choice of religious conversion. Better understanding of other people's perspective on an issue is not only important in our efforts to understand other people more rationally but also important in understanding ourselves as a distinct 'body', and its relation to other 'bodies' in complex social interactions.

As Bakhtin stated, respect for others is only possible if we understand each other's position, uniqueness, similarities, and differences. After creating a good understanding of the positions, similarities, and differences between one group and another, dialogue can be created. In Sunni-Shia relations in Indonesia, Shia can be considered as a representation of the other. The other in Bakhtin's dialogism theory is needed because the self is never able to see itself as a whole without the other's contribution in helping to express the whole self (Munawwar Manshur, 2017, p. 239).

In the concept of Bahktin dialogism, difference is something that is valued and even a way to interpret and understand oneself. Every human being is different, and they are unique because of that difference. Understanding Shia does not mean that a person is led to agree with Shia arguments, but by understanding Shia besides knowing their ideological position, we can also understand the ideological position that we believe in. By knowing the differences in positions, we can respect each other and coexist peacefully in our own unique positions.

CHAPTER V

CONVERSION AND ITS CHALLENGES.

The discussion of conversion to Sunni to Shia in this research assumes that the conversion process experienced by a person goes through at least three phases, namely pre-conversion, during-conversion, and post-conversion. Although not mentioned explicitly, the previous chapter has included two conversion phases, namely pre-conversion and during-conversion. In the previous chapter, the informants' family background, education, and work were explained before their conversion to Shia. It has also been described in the previous chapter how each informant met with Shia, the struggles they experienced in their conversion journey, and what segmentation was important in their view that became the trigger for their conversion to Shia.

This section will highlight the experience of the informants after the conversion, whether there has been a change in them both internally and externally. The internal changes that I mean can be in the form of changes in religious, political views, as well as views and ritual practices caused by their new identity as Shia adherents. While external changes are the response of other people both at the family level and in the larger social space towards their conversion to Shia. Is there a certain resistance or response they receive when other people know their identity and how they solve the problem. Internal changes as a consequence of conversion will not be discussed again because its has been included in the discussion of the

conversion process, this chapter will only focus on discussing the responses received by converts from outsiders who know their Shia identity.

This chapter will also discuss the subjective views of converts regarding certain themes which are quite controversial in Sunni-Shia relations both ideologically and practically. I emphasize that the arguments of the converts are subjective because their arguments do not represent any Shia institution and it is possible that their arguments contradict *marǧaʿ* fatwas or certain Shia institutions because these themes are related to religious fatwas and political fatwas, which are mostly binding on the Shia community.

The theme that I mean is controversial is the views of converts regarding the issues of *taqīyah*, mut'ah marriage, and the concept of *wilāyatul faqīh*. The emphasis on subjectivity is also due to the discussion of these themes not only related to their response to these concepts but also related to their personal experiences dealing with these issues.

With regard to the treatment received by converts after the conversion found in this study is very diverse because the conditions and social context faced by each convert also vary. There are many converts who do not declare their conversion even to those closest to them such as their parents, spouse or siblings. They consider that the conversion declaration does not produce any benefit, it may even have the potential to cause unnecessary tension. They keep their Shia identity only for themselves and the community circle who already know their Shia identity. in the practice of worship rites that have differences with the practice of the Sunni

majority, they did it in secret, there was even an informant who stated that he locked the bedroom door during prayer for fear of being seen by his wife, while he did not have the courage to be honest with his wife regarding his Shia identity.

There were also informants who conveyed their Shia identity to their families but did not receive significant resistance because their families did not know what Shia was and negative information about Shia. In fact, according to the confessions of several informants, there were some of their families who were happy with the changes they saw in the informants after their conversion, whether the change was in the form of an opinion that the informant had become a better person, or changes in religious views, for example before the conversion the informants considered a particular religious and cultural practice as heresy and then after the conversion they became more open to the practice of assimilation between religion and culture.

From this narrative, we can conclude that the decision to share conversion experiences depends on the social context that each of them personally faces. It is the informants who assess and assume what kind of impact they will receive if their Shia identity is known even by a small group such as a family. Therefore, the considerations for each convert may be different, as well as the position and modality that each convert has. There are informants who face the context of an open social circle and do not mind their religious identity, but there are also who face rejection or even attack in any form because of their conversion.

However, there were also many informants who faced strong resistance from their family or social environment when they were known to be Shia adherents. For example, what happened to Aqsan who came from the *Habāib* family from the Rumi clan. His mother was very resistant to things related to Shia, he was even forbidden by his mother to mingle with his family who were also from among the *habāib* who were indicated as Shia adherents. According to Aqsan, his mother's worries are not only related to the notion that Shia teachings deviate, but also the social challenges that might be caused by Aqsan's conversions, for example being ostracized from the family because of the Shia identity that Aqsan adheres to.

An informan named Ana had a similar experience, when her father, who was a Muhammadiyah figure in his city, found out about her Shia identity, her father was in shock. She was accused of following heretical teachings. She was subjected to physical and verbal abuse. He was stoned, kicked out and told to go to Iran. According to her father, only Iran is a place for Shias. However, with persistent efforts, Ana still tries to explain and dialogue with her father. He gave all her Shia books to her father, until then her father could understand her choice to convert to Shia.

Those are just a few of the resistance experiences of the closest people as a challenges that converts might face. It would be very convoluted if I had to reveal every convert's experience in detail. I feel it is necessary to mention the response of the closest person or family because family is part of a person's private space,

something that shares many things and time with informants so that interaction with them becomes difficult to avoid.

Hiding personal identity from the closest people or family for a long period of time can be something that is psychologically heavy, because even in his own private space he feels insecure and cannot express himself freely. In the context of conversion to Shia, this can be even more difficult because conversion to a new belief usually requires a change in behavior whether directly related to the ritual or not. For example, a convert who is married and has children may be able to hide the practical rituals of daily worship from his partner, but how will he deal with, for example, the issue of food because there are types of food that are considered halal by Sunnis but are considered haram by Shias. How, for example, does he deal with the issue of his children's religious education and other technical issues that are still related to his new religious ideology.

Apart from resistance in the private sphere (family), converts also experience certain social resistance or treatment as a challenges of their conversion to Shia, some forms of treatment that are commonly encountered are hate speech, whether in the form of accusations of disbelief, perpetrators of mut'ah, worshipers of cemeteries and so on. Apart from hate speech, there were also informants who experienced discriminatory treatment, especially those who were in a lower position in the structure of power relations. For example, the confession of an informant who claimed to be intimidated by his lecturer who knew his religious identity.

Another form of social treatment received by informants is the claim of limiting their space for movement in public spaces. Several informants claimed that because of their Shia identity there were attempts to prevent them from speaking in public spaces to give lectures, seminars and other discussion forums. It's as if they are considered to be Shia missionaries and try to propagate Shia to anyone. Of course, the most severe social treatment is physical attacks directed either at individuals or the Shia community. As an example of the potential social treatment that converts will receive, below is an excerpt from my interview with an informant named Nasir, he was the head of IJABI and ABI in his hometown.

> My conversion is well known to my environment, I was even the Chair of ABI and IJABI here. There is a scenario that works to get in my way. In the past, when I returned home, I was always asked to be the khatib and priest for the Friday prayers. Since 2009, I have never been given such an opportunity again. but that's the consequence that I have to face. In fact, not only did I experience verbal intimidation, but even physically. (Interview with the informant on October 28, 2019).

Apart from the potential for various bad social treatments that might be received by converts, especially individually, I think we also have to be balanced, certain treatments don't come without cause, of course the way converts place themselves in a sensitive social space also has a role in whatever social treatment is received. Subjectively, I see that there are still some unscrupulous converts who are too 'flirty' with their Shia identity.

Despite certain discriminatory attitudes, the Shia community in general still socialize with their Sunni brethren and rarely attempt to initiate sectarian matters, unless asked or exercised their right of reply. They regard their Sunni brothers as

partners at least as fellow citizens. In their view, this is a manifestation of the teachings of Imam Ali who said that whoever is not your brother in faith, they are your brother in humanity. In the fatwas of the great Shia *marǧaʿ* there is also no call to stay away from the Sunni community, but to respect and glorify fellow Muslims. The essence of Imam Ali's words in terms of the Indonesian Sunni community, especially among the NU group, is known as *uḫuwah Islāmīyah waṭanīyah, and insānīyah.*

A. *Taqīyah*

Lexically, *taqīyah* comes from the word wa-qa-ya which means to hide, guard, or keep away from[44]. While technically, *taqīyah* is a term used to name the practice of hiding one's religious identity either in its entirety or only hiding certain religious practices when in a condition that may or is certain to pose a danger caused by the presence of forces opposing religious identity or certain religious practices (Thabathaba'i, 1989b, p. 259).

Even though there is no word *taqīyah* directly in the Qur'an, the concept is considered to have legitimacy in the Qur'an, namely in surah 3:28 which reads 'Believers should not take disbelievers as guardians instead of the believers and whoever does so will have nothing to hope for from Allah unless it is a precaution against their tyranny'[45], Another legitimacy of *taqīyah* comes from the Quran 16:106 which reads 'Whoever disbelieves in Allah after their belief—not those who

[44] Quted from Dikutip dari https://id.wikishia.net/view/Taqiyyah
[45] https://quran.com/3?startingVerse=28

are forced while their hearts are firm in faith'[46].According to Sunni and Shia interpretations, this verse refers to the companion of the Prophet Ammar bin Yasir who pretended to leave Islam because of the persecution that the infidel Qurays committed against him (Virani, 2011, p. 101).

According to Qusthan Firdaus, there are two constitutive elements of the *taqīyah* concept, namely religious dissimulation and persecution. Religious dissimulation is carried out in order to protect life if someone believes that his life, honor, property is in danger if his religious identity is known. Dissimulation refers to hiding certain characters, feelings, thoughts or actions in order to prevent these things from being known by others. This action was taken to avoid persecution in the form of oppression, ill-treatment, hostility and so on (Firdaus, 2016, p. 2).

From this explanation, we get the impression or assumption that *taqīyah* can only be done when someone is in a state of danger. Of course, what is referred to as a dangerous condition is something that is subjective and has the potential to cause debate, especially with regard to the extent to which a condition can be considered dangerous. According to Tabataba'i, the practice of *taqīyah* can be justified if there is a definite danger that threatens the life of a person or his family, has the potential to lose the honor of himself or his family, the danger of losing one's property so that he is unable to support himself and his family (Thabathaba'i, 1989b, p. 262).

[46] https://quran.com/16?startingVerse=106

Some scholars argue that *taqīyah* has a close meaning to piety. For example, such an argument was put forward by Rizvi who said that *taqīyah* literally means to safeguard; to defend; to fear; piety (Rizvi, 1992). The impression that *taqīyah* has a similar or close meaning to *taqwa* (piety) is also implicitly mentioned by Thabatabai in his tafsir al-Mizan when he comments on Surah Ali Imran verse 28 of the Koran[47]. In the arguments of these scholars, the words *"tattaqu"* and *"toqat"* contained in QS 3:28 which are the *naqli* argument for the permissibility of practicing *taqīyah* have the same root words as the word *taqīyah* (Dalkilic, 2007, p. 188).

In this view, fear and avoidance form the basis of both *taqīyah* and *taqwa*. However, *taqīyah* and piety as different words are not completely the same both in terms of meaning and practice. *Taqwa* is fear and obedience to God's power by keeping oneself from carrying out all God's prohibitions and carrying out His commands. Meanwhile, *taqīyah* is the condition of accepting the superiority of a certain power in order to protect a person or community from potential dangers that might be caused by that superior power. And not only maintaining one's honor, more broadly *taqīyah* is even a practice of maintaining one's faith itself (Dalkilic, 2007, p. 189).

Taqīyah must also be distinguished from hypocrisy. Although it looks like the same practice because it hides identity. But the two are different, hypocrisy on

[47] https://almizan.org/vol/5/212-229 page 203. Accessed August 16, 2023.

the one hand is the practice of pretending to show one's faith, on the other hand *taqīyah* is the practice of concealing one's faith under the presumption of certain potential dangers. According to Firdaus, *taqīyah* and hypocrisy are different because hypocrisy means deliberately promoting falsehood as truth, while *taqīyah* is related to the idea of hiding, not deceiving (Firdaus, 2016).

In Islam, *taqīyah* is a practice that is closely related to the Shia community because throughout history it has often been a minority group that has been oppressed or persecuted so that they are sometimes forced to hide their Shia identity. Several studies (Ulya, 2021; Virani, 2011) also affirm the practice of *taqīyah* by Shia groups in various places and social contexts as an acceptance strategy or cultural strategy in order to maintain their existence.

Even though it is often associated as something uniquely Shia, *taqīyah* in general is a concept that is recognized and practiced by Muslims in general, both Shia and Sunni, especially if *taqīyah* is understood as an effort to save oneself from potential danger because avoiding danger is a natural urge for every human being. Several Sunni scholars have expressed the permissibility of performing *taqīyah* under certain conditions, such as the opinion of Sayyid Qutub in his tafsir book *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an* which states that *taqīyah* is a *rukhsah* that is justified in the Islamic religion if it is in the context of maintaining personal safety (Nur Muhammad et al., 2021, p. 97).

In this study the practice of *taqīyah* was also commonly carried out by many informants. They hide their Shia identity from others or even from their families.

They will not share their Shia identity even when asked whether they are Shia or not if they consider that disclosing their identity will only cause potential harm.

If usually the practice of *taqīyah* is portrayed as a strategy for the Shia minority to protect themselves or their community from potential threats, I found interesting arguments even though these arguments are not something entirely new. In their argument, *taqīyah* is not just maintaining personal and community safety, but *taqīyah* is carried out in order to protect something bigger, namely the unity and harmony of religious communities in Indonesia. The practice of *taqīyah* is also considered as part of an effort to bring the Shia and Sunni communities closer together. For some informants, *taqīyah* is also used as a *daʿwah* strategy. They try to introduce the teachings of ahlulbait without getting stuck in technical language that is too identical with Shia.

In the understanding of several informants, *taqīyah* is not only related to political issues but also to issues of Islamic law. for them, *taqīyah* is a change from one particular law to another due to the particular context one encounters. In Islam, changing a legal provision due to context or an emergency is commonplace. For example, prayer is invalid without ablution, but in certain conditions such as illness, prayer can be performed without ablution by changing the obligation of ablution to tayammum. or another example, pork under normal conditions is forbidden to eat, but under forced circumstances that threaten survival and there is no other choice, then under these conditions, and only under these conditions, pork becomes halal for consumption. The practice of *taqīyah* In the context of religious *fiqh*, for

example in the practice of prayer, in Shia *fiqh*, praying by crossing your arms as is the practice of the Shafi'I *fiqh* prayer is something that invalidates the prayer, but in the context of *taqīyah*, this becomes permissible.

As a strategy to maintain existence, *taqīyah* may be seen as beneficial to the Shia community, but in the long process, *taqīyah* can be detrimental to the community itself. With the practice of *taqīyah* carried out over a long period of time and through several generations, their Shia identity and awareness may have been eroded by time so that religious understanding or religious practice between one generation and another may also be different. This is for example experienced by residents in Cikoang, Takalar Regency, who are considered to be the pioneers of the existence of Shia and Islam in general in South Sulawesi. By outsiders they are considered Shia adherents, but by Shia adherents they are considered to no longer represent true Shia identity. They are in a cultural realm that Homi Bhabha calls in between space.

B. Mut'ah marriage

Mut'ah marriage is perhaps one of the most controversial themes in Sunni-Shia relations throughout history. Not only because of differences in interpretation and sources related to whether or not mut'ah marriage is permissible according to Islamic law, but also because the practice of mut'ah is often accompanied by discourse that leads to accusations or even slander. On social media we can easily find issues that the practice of Shia mut'ah is the same as adultery, that a Shia

woman can do mut'ah several times a day because there is no iddah[48] in mut'ah, or even that a person can do mut'ah with another man's wife or even his own family.

In Shia *fiqh* there are two types of marriage whose legality is recognized, namely temporal marriage (*mut'ah*) and permanent marriage (*dāim*). The main difference between these two types of marriage lies in the time period of the marriage. in a permanent marriage, the marriage ends with divorce, while in a mut'ah marriage the marriage ends when the agreed period ends without having to go through *ṭālaq*.

Sunni authorities consider that mut'ah marriage was permissible during a certain period of time during the time of the Prophet but later the practice of this kind of marriage has been completely outlawed. Meanwhile, Shias argue that Mut'ah marriage was never prohibited by the Prophet after he allowed it, to prove this claim, Shias cite many hadiths from Shia and Sunni hadiths (Murata, 2001).

Legitimacy regarding the permissibility of mut'ah marriage according to Shia is found in the Qur'an surah 4:24 which reads as follows 'Also 'forbidden are' married women—except ˹female˺ captives in your possession.1 This is Allah's commandment to you. Lawful to you are all beyond these—as long as you seek them with your wealth in a legal marriage, not in fornication. Give those you have consummated marriage with their due dowries. It is permissible to be mutually gracious regarding the set dowry'.

[48] A certain period of time that must be passed by a woman who has separated from her husband, whether due to divorce or death, until she can remarry.

In the Sunni argument, this verse has been deleted by another verse so that the permissibility of mut'ah marriage is null and void. In Islam, the cancellation of a certain law with a new legal provision is known as *nāsḥ*. Among the verses that are considered to have annulled the permissibility of mut'ah marriage is the Qur'an surah 23:1-7. According to Tabataba'I, the opinion that this verse cancels the permissibility of mut'ah marriage is not in accordance with the rules of Nasikh Mansukh because the verses in sura 23 were revealed first, namely before the Prophet migrated to Medina or is known as the *makkiyah* verse while the verse about mut'ah is a *madaniyah* verse. It is impossible for *makkiyah* verses to cancel *(nasikh) madaniyah* verses (Thabathaba'i, 1993).

There is also an argument that mut'ah has been banned through the hadith. There are many hadiths related to mut'ah and some of these hadiths contradict each other, some allow and some forbid. One of the most controversial is the sermon Umar bin Khattab who said 'Two mut'ah had been practiced in the time of the Prophet (ie marriage mut'ah and mut'ah *hağ*), but I forbid both and would punish anyone who did it' (Murata, 2001, p. 102).

We know that the Shia position is that the Prophet permitted mut'ah and never prohibited it until the end of his life. The Shia argument in answering the hadith states that if Umar prohibits mut'ah as his personal *ijtihād* then the prohibition has no basis because it contradicts the al-qur'an and hadith. Umar's words also cannot be based on the prophet because the hadith text itself admits that the practice of mut'ah was carried out and recognized at the time of the prophet

(some texts also say during the time of the first caliph) and that Umar attributed this prohibition to himself (Murata, 2001, p. 106).

Of course one can easily suspect that the Shia's rejection of this hadith is due to their dislike of Umar, even though the hadith regarding the prohibition of mut'ah also originates from the narration of Ali bin Abi Talib, the Shia imam who said that 'indeed the prophet Allah has prohibited mut'ah and eat meat from donkeys that are reared on the day of the battle of Khaibar (Murata, 2001, p. 111)

In the Shia view, this hadith is inauthentic because all Muslims agree that mut'ah is permissible in the year Mecca was conquered. So how could Ali claim that mut'ah was forbidden during the khaibar war which took place three years before the conquest of Mecca? According to the Shia, this inauthenticity can also be seen from the many words of their imams and companions of the Prophet which indicate that mut'ah was permitted until Umar banned it. One of the most famous is Ali's statement that 'If Umar does not prohibit mut'ah then no one will commit adultery except the unjust person'(Murata, 2001, p. 115).

The arguments that have been shown previously are only a small part of the complexity of the debate regarding mut'ah marriage. There are many other details not mentioned in this dissertation. If you want to explore the complexity of the arguments about mut'ah marriage, you can refer to the following sources (Murata, 2001; Thabathaba'i, 1989b, 1993). The position of this dissertation only provides an overview of the Sunni-Shia differences regarding mut'ah marriage. The emphasis of the writing is not on the complexity of the debate about the status of mut'ah in

Islamic law, but on how the converts' personal views and experiences deal with the practice of mut'ah and other issues accompanying the mut'ah discourse.

For Shias, Mut'ah is a sociological dimension of Islamic teachings. Mut'ah is the answer to many problems related to human needs for sexual relations. Permanent marriage, which is commonly known and practiced in almost all religions and cultures, is not fully able to overcome human sexual urges. In various places there are still many practices of adultery and free sex. Ratification of mut'ah (of course with various conditions) in Islamic law, according to Tabataba'I, minimizes the possibility of crimes due to human desires which, if not channeled through the way of *ṣarīʿah*, will present themselves in various ways that are more dangerous outside the *ṣarīʿah* structure.

If in Islam sexuality is only permitted in the context of marriage, then in fact there are many people who, due to certain circumstances, be it for economic reasons, health, work, so that they cannot or cannot carry out permanent marriages, where usually the main goal is not just fulfilling sexuality but also building household, build a family. So, is there no sharia solution for such conditions? According to Shia, mut'ah is a solution offered by Islamic law.

Mut'ah is not only related to fulfilling sexual needs, but it is also a form of self-preservation *(tazkiyatun nafs*) from potential sins. Mut'ah also gives a stronger position at least conceptually towards women, because issues of dowry, time period, and things that are permitted and not permitted in a mut'ah agreement are given to the power of the woman. All marriages, including mut'ah marriages,

legalize sexual intercourse, but this can become unlawful if a mut'ah marriage agreement agrees that sexual relations are not permitted during the mut'ah marriage period. As an example case, several informants stated that they did mut'ah during the period of exploring and introducing them to their respective partners before moving on to permanent marriage, but during the mut'ah period they agreed that there should be no sexual intercourse.

Regardless of the conceptual debate, as a practice, mut'ah is not without criticism, even from internal Shia followers. For example, this was conveyed by an informant named Arik who claimed to have had a traumatic experience related to practice in the Shia circle where she used to be. She emphasized that her traumatic experience had nothing to do with mut'ah conceptually, but only related to persons. According to Arik, the practice of mut'ah is often simplified or even use religious rhetoric to facilitate mut'ah.

A similar view of the practice of mut'ah marriage is made easy or even politicized was also conveyed by an informant named Ana based on facts that he saw in his Shia community circle. According to Ana, in one of the Shia communities where she was once and most of the members were students, there were many practices of mut'ah. Ana felt uncomfortable with that practice. In Ana's view, the mut'ah practice that Ana witnessed was not in accordance with the context of Indonesian culture.

According to Ana, the argument that mut'ah marriage is carried out to avoid slander (adultery) is inappropriate because the practice of mut'ah which is made

easy also has the potential to cause many other social problems. In the practice of such mut'ah, it is the women who are disadvantaged because it is so easy for them to marry and leave. In his view, the practice of mut’ah which is made easy even without the urging of certain emergency conditions does not at all describe the morality of the ahlulbait teachings.

In the discourse and practice of mut'ah in Indonesia, women have the potential to experience greater pressure because they are faced with the politicization of religious discourse which is dominated by men and the local culture which still tends to be patriarchal. This is in line with the experience of a respondent named Lisma. According to her, being Shia must be prepared to face many challenges, especially for women, there is a lot of stigmatization both externally and internally, especially with regard to the issue of mut'ah. Externally, we are considered as perpetrators of mut'ah, internally there are also many behaviors which sometimes for certain people can be considered as acts of intimidation towards women.

From Lisma's experience, she said that she had been invited to do mut'ah two or three times but she refused. Because she was starting to feel disturbed, Lisma complained to her teacher, and he was very angry. Lisma argued that as a woman she experienced double discrimination, first as a minority sect, while internally she also sometimes felt that she was placed in a disadvantageous position, especially with regard to the issue of mut'ah, there was a label that she was considered disobedient if she refused the practice of mut'ah.

Of all the criticisms about mut'ah conveyed by converts, I see that there is one similarity, that is, the practice of mut'ah occurs within one particular community or study circle and is limited and does not involve Shia people randomly. Because of the proneness to deviations that may occur in the practice of mut'ah, some Shia authorities exacerbate the requirements that must be met or even do not recommend the practice of mut'ah marriage given the Indonesian context which is not used to such practices (Muhajir & Kamil, 2021). The practice of mut'ah marriage which is made easy does not help in building a positive image of Shia adherents in Indonesia. However, the cases mentioned do not represent the practice of mut'ah in general in Indonesia.

All legal products, even God's laws in the form of religious law, are prone to being politicized. Someone who understands the law must know the loopholes to play legal products. For example, so that those who want to avoid paying zakat, then he can circumvent the law of the obligation to pay zakat by lending the property until the amount is no longer sufficient to limit the assets for which zakat is obligatory. in the perception of the *Ṣarīʿah* this action does not violate, but the intention to avoid the obligation to pay zakat cannot be called a good moral behavior.

C. *Wilāyatul faqīh*

On July 19 2017 a religious organization called Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) was officially disbanded and had its legal status revoked by the Indonesian government. According to the government, one of the reasons for the dissolution of

HTI was because HTI activities were indicated to be contrary to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. HTI's aspiration to establish an Islamic caliphate state to replace a democratic government system which they claim is a *ṭāġut* form of government is considered a threat to public security and order, endangering the integrity of the unitary state of the republic of Indonesia.

One of the discourses within Shia that can be considered to have similarities to the ideals of an HTI-style Islamic caliphate state is the issue of *wilāyatul faqīh*. If the concept and perception of the Shia community towards *wilāyatul faqīh* is the same as HTI's understanding of the caliphate, then the Shia community may also be considered a threat to the existence of the state. Moreover, the Shia community is prone to being considered to have a special affiliation with the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is not impossible, the Shia community is suspected as a tool to instill Iranian hegemony and influence in various countries, especially countries with Muslim majority populations.

Wilāyatul faqīh itself is a term popularized by Imam Khomeini long before the Iranian Islamic Revolution. however, Komeini was not the first to proclaim the idea of *wilāyatul faqīh*. A century before Khomeini's discussion of the role of *fiqh* experts in governing the state was conveyed by another Shia scholar Molla Ahmad Naraqi using the term *al-saltanah al-shar'ıyah*.(Akhavi, 1996; Matsunaga, 2009).

According to Khomeini, *wilāyatul faqīh* has a foundation in Islamic theology. Khomeini's theory of Islamic government places a *walī al-faqīh* as chief executive in Islamic government. moreover, He gave *walī al-faqīh* divine authority

which according to Khomeini that authority came from the Prophet and the Infallible Imams because the *ʿulamā* were the inheritors of the prophets and imams who carried out their role during the period of occultation (Wimberly, 2015)

In his summary of *wilāyatul faqīh*, Matsunaga (Matsunaga, 2009) said that in Khomeini's conception of *wilāyatul faqīh* Islamic divine laws were deemed to require formulation in the form of a state and a ruler who obtained a divine mandate. Without a state and rulers who receive divine mandates, the supremacy of God's law cannot be upheld optimally so that the interests of Muslims can potentially be disrupted.

The Islamic state envisioned by Khomeini Is a state based solely on divine law. In order to become a ruler or *walī al-faqīh*, at least two main qualifications must be met, namely knowledge of divine law and justice. Good morality and avoiding sins both big and small are included in the category of justice. Since no figure was appointed during the period of occultation of the twelfth Imam, God's mandate (al-*wilāyah*) became the right of just jurists. As the ruler of an Islamic state, in Khomeini's view there is no difference between just jurists, on the one hand, and Prophets and Imams, on the other; the jurists had all that the Prophets and Imams had for government and politics (Matsunaga, 2009).

Within the Shia *ʿulamā*, the conception of how the role that the *ʿulamā* or jurists should take is quite diverse. Several Shia *ʿulamā* have views that are at odds with the concept of *wilāyatul faqīh* as interpreted by Imam Khomeini. Among those who disagreed with Khomeini's interpretation was Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim al-

Khu'I, a prominent *ʿulamā* and *marǧaʿ taqlīd* who became a reference for many Shia communities around the world. According to ayatollah Khui, After examining all the arguments and evidence usually put forward in support of the general *wilāyah* (the authority of jurists over people in public matters), he stated that none of them, either individually or collectively, which conclusively proves that the authority of a jurist can extend to regulating the general *wilāyah*. Ayatollah 'Ali al-Sistani, a disciple of Ayatullah Khu'i thought similar but stated that if a faqih wants to have authority in state administration, he must obtain the general approval of the people (Mavani, 2011).

Mavani note (Mavani, 2011, p. 807) that other figures such as Ayatullah Husayn 'Ali Montazeri, Yusef Saanei, Mohsen Kadivar, Bayat Zanjani, Kazemeyni Boroujerdi, Mojtaba Shabestari, and Mehdi Karrubi have also pointed out the differences and tensions between the *wilāyatul faqīh* model promoted by Imam Khomeini and the model adopted by Imam the first was the shia, 'Ali bin Abi Talib who considered himself the successor appointed by the Prophet in both worldly and religious areas. However, he is under no obligation to become caliph or to seek that position by force as long as people do not appoint him *(baiʿah)* voluntarily. This gives the impression that the positions of imam and caliph are different, the imam is appointed by divine decree to the office of *imāmah*, and his mandate covers religious and spiritual areas but the powers of an imam can extend to governmental and political areas if the people voluntarily give their consent.

As with other discussions that may relate to theological concepts or ideological positions of a particular institution, it should be remembered that the interpretation of the *wilāyatul faqīh* presented here does not represent the theological and ideological views of any Shia institution, but only the personal interpretation of informants.

Broadly speaking, the perception of the Indonesian Shia community on the issue of *wilāyatul faqīh* is divided into two views, on the one hand there are those who argue that *wilāyatul faqīh*, especially in the context of the nation state, is only a political *ijtihād* of Imam Khomeini and is limited in the Iranian context so that it is not something that must be followed. While on the other hand there are also those who argue that *wilāyatul faqīh* is a religious issue that must be followed, this group considers that *wilāyatul faqīh* is a derivation of the concepts of *marğaʿīyah* and *imāmah*.

When viewed from religious affiliation, groups who think that *wilāyatul faqīh* is a derivation of the concept of *imāmah* are usually groups affiliated with the Ahlulbait Indonesia organization, while the view that *wilāyatul faqīh* is the political *ijtihād* of Imam Khomeini is usually affiliated with the IJABI organization following the understanding of their former leader Jalaluddin Rahmat regarding with the issue of *wilāyatul faqīh*.

In my interview with Jalaluddin Rahmat, he said that *wilāyatul faqīh* was Imam Khomeini's political *ijtihād* in interpreting the role that *fiqh* experts should take during the period of the imam's occultation. According to Jalal, there had

always been debates among the Shias themselves about the role of the faqihs or even the role of the imam himself. Are they only leaders in religious matters or are they also leaders in the political matters of the *ummah*? Some Shia scholars, as shown by Imam Khomeini, believe that the role of the *ʿulamā* includes both of these roles, namely, as a reference in matters of religious law as well as a reference in other social issues, including government and politics.

Another opinion says that the imam and in this case also means the faqih who is considered as a substitute for the infallible imam during the period of occultation only plays a role as a spiritual leader in religious matters. Jalal admits he is among those who believe in this opinion. In Jalal's argument, Imam Ali was only a leader in religious matters even though he had been a caliph. Jalal argued that if imam Ali was assigned to *wilāyah ammah* then imam Ali failed. Even when people came to him to pledge allegiance to him and said we would make you caliph, Imam Ali said that 'power to me is not more valuable than the straps of my sandals. I only want to be your leader if you choose me voluntarily'. So, if the task as a government leader is an obligation and a will from the prophet and God, then Imam Ali should immediately take the offer, not reject it because rejecting the prophet's will is a sin.

According to Jalal, some of the scholars did not attribute the *wilāyah ammah* (government and politics) to the imams. Because the imams continue the tradition of the prophets, and the *wilāyah ammah* is not an obligation for the prophet. many prophets who are not leaders of the state. Only a few of them are government leaders

such as Prophet Solomon, David, Yusuf. Likewise with the Shia imams, of the twelve imams, only imam Ali bin Abi Thalib and Hasan Bin Ali in a short period of time were both religious and government leaders.

As I have said, there are also several informants who think that *wilāyatul faqīh* has religious ties as a form of derivation from *imāmah*. If Shia Muslims are required to obey the Prophet and Imams in both religious and political edicts, then of course they are also required to obey the faqih in these matters because the faqihs are substitutes for infallible imams during the time of occultation. However, they also do not deny the fact that as a concept, *wilāyatul faqīh* is a product of subjective interpretation so that differences of opinion are unavoidable.

The view that *wilāyatul faqīh* is a derivation of *imāmah* was conveyed by an informant named Idham, but for Idham someone who does not see *wilāyatul faqīh* as a form of manifestation of *imāmah* does not mean that he is against *imāmah*. *Imāmah* is something universal, while *wilāyatul faqīh* is a particular form. A similar view was put forward by Husnul Yaqin who believed that conceptually *wilāyatul faqīh* was born from the *marğaʿīyah* concept, while the *marğaʿīyah* concept came from the *imāmah* concept. According to Husnul, initially the *marğaʿīyah* did not have a political affiliation, but after being conceptualized by Imam Khomaini it became a political affiliation. Even though it is considered a conception that has theological roots, *wilāyatul faqīh* can only be realized through the approval of the people. In Husnul's view, this enriches democracy, especially in the Iranian context. one of the weaknesses of democracy is being able to elect stupid

people, when stupid people are elected people will definitely go astray, Imam Khomeini enriches democracy with the faqih area so that stupid people are impossible to choose.

Theologically, some informants understood the establishment of the *wilāyatul faqīh* government as an attempt to prepare for the return of their messianic figure, Imam Mahdi. Such a view was conveyed by Akmal, according to him during the time of the messiah's occultation, the Shia community could not just act passively, they had to prepare a red carpet for the establishment of the al-Mahdi government. This empty space was seen by Imam Khomeini as something that had to be filled through the establishment of a *wilāyatul faqīh* government. According to Akmal, as a *mukallaf*, the loyalty of a Shia to Imam Mahdi is shown by following the fatwa of *marğaʿ taqlīd*. in the context of government, loyalty is shown by loyalty to the *walī al-faqīh* as the supreme leader during the occult period.

Even though it has the impression of being transnational and trying to create a pan-Islamic system of government. However, for the Indonesian Shia community, the concept of *wilāyatul faqīh* does not conflict with the concept of the nation state, because *wilāyatul faqīh* respects the territorial boundaries of the state and that it can only exist with the consent of the majority of the citizens of a country. They gave an example that if *wilāyatul faqīh* as envisioned by Imam Khomeini is a must, then of course, Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain have more potential to implement it because quantitatively, the Shia community is quite dominant in these countries. The fact is

that they do not apply *wilāyatul faqīh* because there is no approval from the majority of the community members.

Regarding the political fatwa as a form of loyalty to the *walī al-faqīh*, they argued that the *walī al-faqīh's* political fatwa did not conflict with the interests of other countries outside Iran and that Ali Khamenei as the current *walī al-faqīh* had noted that each region had its own political sovereignty, which not only respected but prohibited from doing anything that has the potential to cause a conflict of interest with the system that applies in the governments of their respective countries.

In order to answer potential suspicions or even baseless accusations related to the commitment of the Shia community to the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia both from other religious communities and government institutions because of the *wilāyatul faqīh* issue, the Ahlul Bait organization issued a book entitled ABI manifesto. Quoting the arguments of Muhsin Labib, a member of the ABI shura council who said that Abi's manifesto was an open statement that the Indonesian Shia community was committed to being loyal and defending the unitary state of the republic of Indonesia as the final form of a social contract of state institutions (which is binding theologically and jurisprudentially), the community Shia vowed to stand at the forefront in an effort to protect and defend God's gift called Indonesia[49].

[49] Quoted from https://www.ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/berita/index.php/s13-berita/mengapa-manifesto

In order to ensure that their commitment to loyalty, several informants gave interesting interpretations even though it seemed like an apologetic rhetorical argument related to Pancasila, the ideological pillar of the Indonesian state. For example, an informant named Gunawan said that in his view Pancasila was composed by people who are cosmopolitan, people who are sophisticated, understand philosophy very well, and are in contact with big ideas. Pancasila is very shia when viewed from its sequence, from divinity to justice. According to Gunawan, the fourth precept of Pancasila is in line with the concept of *Imāmah*. Pancasila is considered as a very transcendent concept. So if people don't understand philosophical thinking, they will definitely suspect that the concept of Pancasila was adopted solely from Hinduism.

The interpretation that the fourth precept of Pancasila is in line with the concept of *Imāmah* was also conveyed by Husnul, according to him from a linguistic point of view the fourth precept of Pancasila is rather difficult to understand. Democracy led by the wisdom *(khidmat)*, who is *khidmat*? in Husnul's understanding, "*khidmat* comes from Persian, because if the word is taken from Arabic it should sound '*hikmah*'. In the discourse of Islamic philosophy, wisdom (*hikmah*) is philosophy.

Furthermore, Husnul argued that the word *khidmat* itself when personified is a philosopher or scholar or intellectual. From there then this fourth precept can be understood. Because the people are led by *khidmat, khidmat* is the clergy, the clergy are faqih, in representative deliberations, this is democracy implemented by

Imam Khomeni in Iran. So, the fourth precept is that Indonesia doesn't apply it, instead Iran applies it. In this case, it can be said that Iran borrowed the concept of Indonesian Pancasila.

According to Husnul, Pancasila is the concept of Islamic theodemocracy which is influenced by ahlulbait theology. The theodemocratic concept is reflected in every precept. The first precept, belief in one and only God comes from the concept of monotheism and *maʿrīfatullah*. The second precept comes from the concept of *Insān al-Kāmil* or infallible man. After divinity and infallible human beings exist, then national unity will be realized as contained in the third precept. After unity is realized, then *wilāyatul faqīh* can be realized. It is impossible for Imam Khomeini to implement the faqih area if he does not take a referendum, the referendum is proof that it is a union to collectively agree on the concept of the *wilāyatul faqīh*. After the *wilāyatul faqīh* is formed, only then can social justice be created. This is the ahlulbait doctrine.

The interpretation of Pancasila as conveyed by several informants may not sound familiar to most Indonesian people, but as a discourse, Pancasila is a field of contestation of meaning, each person or community has its own interpretation according to their own understanding and interests. All the arguments presented by the Shia community, both from groups who believe in *wilāyatul faqīh* as purely political invention and have nothing to do with certain religious concepts or groups who believe that *wilāyatul faqīh* is a mandate and a consequence of the concept of

imāmah, are constructed by the Shia community to emphasize their loyalty to Indonesia, to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the basis of the state.

The Indonesian Shia community seems to want to convince the majority of Indonesian Muslims, especially government institutions, that they do not have the tendency or aspiration to form a pan-Islamic government like the HTI organization or other similar organizations so that they don't need to be suspicious. Even if there is an impression of idealization of the concept of *wilāyatul faqīh*, it must be through the free will, awareness and approval of the majority of the people, not through pressure or coercion from certain groups. above all, the religious conversion that most of the Indonesian Shia community underwent was a spiritual journey, not to succeed a particular political tendency.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The conversion experienced by everyone who undergoes a process of religious conversion regardless of whether it is inter-religious or intra-religious conversion is a unique experience. Everyone may experience different experiences because the context, problems, social position, and so on that are faced by each individual are also very diverse. This variety of conditions has given rise to various narratives of conversion. There are people whose conversion process went smoothly without hindrance, but not a few whose conversion journey was quite dramatic. There is a conversion process that begins or causes certain psychological and sociological tensions, but there are also many converts who do not go through such a process. The experience of conversion as a part of the formation of religious identity is an ongoing process, it is always being constructed and reconstructed. What convert believes today may change in the future.

After analyzing the conversion process experienced by the subjects of this research, I can conclude that the Sunni-Shia conversion pattern in Indonesia is an active conversion which requires potential converts to actively seek knowledge and other information regarding their interest in Shia. This is not surprising, considering that information about Shia is not widely known and can be accessed in depth by most Indonesian Muslims, especially those who do not live in urban Indonesian cities and are used to information with complex academic narratives. For many

Indonesian Muslims, information about the existence of an Islamic denomination called Shia is new knowledge for them. In the personal experience and knowledge of most Indonesian Muslims, especially those who live in rural areas with low levels of education, the religious affiliation they know is limited to whether a person's Islamic affiliation is connected to Muhammadiyah or NU.

The active participation of potential converts in their efforts to understand Shia in depth until their decision to adopt it as their new Islamic faith is also reflected in the conversion typology which in this research I call as ‘the gate of conversion. The four conversion gates explained previously illustrate that the conversion process requires an active search for potential converts whether it is done independently or through the help of certain communities where potential converts are involved as members or supporters.

The first gate, namely the gate of philosophy or theology, becomes a place where potential converts question their Sunni faith, which is often given in nature. Through the gate of philosophy, a person's theological conception is criticized, tested, reconstructed and established. Conversion usually occurs when potential converts accept theological conceptions that are typical of Shia such as the concept of *imāmah* or post-prophetic Islamic leadership. In the Indonesian context, the gate of philosophy also includes how Shia theological arguments are felt by potential converts to provide more discursive space and are open to academic and philosophical reasoning.

Post-Islamic revolution in Iran, Shia *daʿwah* in Indonesia is more focused on the door of philosophy because usually Shia *daʿwah* is mostly carried out through translations of books by Shia Muslim philosophers, theologians and scholars. The interest of potential converts through the door of this philosophy cannot be separated from the effects of Iran's Islamic revolution. This revolution was considered interesting because it was based on an Islamic spirit, so it attracted the attention of the young generation of Indonesian Muslims. Islam is an alternative revolutionary movement besides Marxism and all its derivatives.

Because of its philosophical style which usually uses a more academic and complicated variety of language, the Sunni-Shia conversion phenomenon can be said to be an urban phenomenon involving groups of students, lecturers and other intellectual communities. or this reason, many people who convert to Shia do not try to invite their parents or other family members to also become Shia followers because they feel they do not have a way of conveying things that can be understood simply and clearly by their relatives.

The second gate, namely the gate of Islamic history, is closely related to the first gate. Through the gate of history, historical events are used to affirm theological concepts constructed through the gate of philosophy. The gate of History is a dramatic episode for potential converts because they are given a new perspective on Islamic history which has been different from their understanding, especially how the Ahlulbait were oppressed by Islamic authorities even though Allah and the Apostle explicitly ordered to love them and make them a religious

reference after the Prophet. Historical construction is also dramatic because it involves important figures such as ahlulbait, the prophet's wife, and the prophet's companions who are religious symbols for both groups but with different or even contradictory conceptions of understanding. The difference in construction regarding these figures has even become one of the main causes of the Sunni-Shia conflict that has been going on for centuries and is the main obstacle to reconciliation between the two groups.

The third gate, namely the Irfan gate, involves subjective supernatural experiences such as dreams or encounters with supernatural things. Narratives like this are common in almost all conversion stories of every religion. Considering my argument that Shia conversion in Indonesia is more cognitive than affective, this kind of conversion pattern is rarely found in Sunni-Shia conversions in Indonesia. This gate also includes conversion to Shia through the Sufistic path, Sufis and Shia do have some conceptual closeness, Sufis also respect the Ahlulbayt and recognize the spiritual authority of the Imams of the Ahlulbait, but do not have the same ideology as the Shia in viewing the role of the Ahlulbait al Bayt as spiritual authority and government as understood by the Shia through the concept of *imāmah*. Therefore, usually a conversion through the gate Irfan is usually not enough to encourage someone to convert. encounter with Shia discourse through Irfan's door will only lead someone to the decision to convert if he is equipped with ideological tools which is found in the doors of philosophy and history.

The fourth gate, namely the gate of *fiqh*, is related to arguments about how the implementation of a worship practice should be carried out based on the procedures exemplified by the prophet, especially obligatory rites such as five daily prayers, fasting, and so on. Even though *fiqh* is usually considered the second layer after *ʿaqīdah*, for followers of a school of thought, they will consider the way they carry out a ritual practice to be more authentic than other methods. Compared to other conversion gates, this gate also does not trigger many potential converts because for many potential converts, changes in their *fiqh* practices are only a consequence that comes after they accept the Shia faith.

William James' view of being open to various personal religious experiences to be used as research subjects in the field of social sciences contributes to enriching the understanding and analysis of various religious phenomena which originate from diverse and different subjective experiences such as the phenomenon of conversion, Apart from that, respect for the aspect of subjectivity as an object of scientific research can also be very helpful in opening up discussion space between various different groups so as to create openness to appreciate the position of others, particularities, and their different world views.

Considering that James lived in an era dominated by positivistic scholarship, James' attitude can be considered very progressive in his era, which often considered subjective matters such as personal experience as not sufficient to meet the 'standard' to call research related to personal experience something scientific. However, James's view of the process experienced by a potential convert, such as

the feeling of guilt that begins a conversion event, may no longer be sufficient and completely contextual in explaining contemporary conversion phenomena, something which also seems to apply to Rambo's theory of the conversion process which states that conversion consists of seven stages: context, crisis, quest, encounter, interaction, commitment, and consequences. Both represent an old view of the conversion phenomenon that no longer seems capable of explaining more recent conversion phenomena.

The phenomenological approach which recommends postponing all initial prejudices towards a research subject is very relevant in efforts to describe the relationship between Sunnis and Shia because in many cases information about the two is often based on certain framings and unverified subjective assumptions. By postponing and eliminating prejudice we can be more objective and be fair to any assessment that we will place on both groups.

Meanwhile, Bakhtin's concept of dialogism can be very helpful in building a conceptual framework for a new direction in Sunni-Shia relations because in Bakhtin's dialogism, subjectivity and the uniqueness of positions are all recognized. Through his concept of Dialogism, Bakhtin encourages interest groups to live in co-existence without any party losing their unique identity as the price that must be paid to be able to live co-existentially. Sunnis retain their Sunni identity, as do Shia. Differences are an inevitability that humans must face both individually and communally, therefore the desire to understand each other and dialogue is

important, something that actually has strong argumentative roots in Islam and was once put into practice by the prophet Muhammad during the Hudaibiyah agreement.

For many Sunni-Shia converts, their conversion experience is not only a spiritual moment but also a moment of intellectual enlightenment. Conversion to Shia is considered as an increase in the quality of religious understanding and awareness because previously their religious identity was only given, something they received naturally from their family or environment. It's normal for someone who determines a certain theological choice as their belief, they will assume that their choice is the best, but their choice to convert does not mean that it demeans Sunni especially many converts who do not have an established understanding of the complexities of Sunni theological construction.

Religious conversion from Sunni to Shia is very likely to cause potential social or even political tensions, especially in countries with a Sunni majority. Religious conversions to Shia in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Sudan and so on have sparked suspicions that the conversion was an Iranian missionary activity especially if the Sunni-Shia issue was potrayed in the frame of political competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

In the context of inter-religious life in Indonesia, especially with regard to relations between Sunni and Shia groups, the relationship between the two in my subjective view has progressed slightly with no significant physical conflict since the Sampang tragedy in 2012. This is also due to the richer and more varied sources of religious understanding one can access, so that cheap provocations may not be

reacted to. However, Sunni-Shia relations in Indonesia are still in the 'alert' status. Therefore, active participation from both groups is needed to maintain a harmonious relationship by avoiding things that can cause unnecessary conflict, for example by not insulting what is considered a sacred religious symbol or certain theological conceptions believed by one group. The government's role is also very important in mitigating potential conflicts between the two groups.

Finally, it is hoped that the narratives of the various events of the Sunni to Shia conversion presented in this study can be a source of information regarding the converts' arguments regarding the reasons behind their choice to convert to Shia. By being open to listening from others regarding their perspectives on something, understanding between religious groups is more likely to be realized and ultimately contribute to creating a freedom and better religious harmony.

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