

# The Syiah Turmoil in a Sharia Soil: An Anthropological Study of Hidden Syiah Minority Entity in Contemporary Aceh

Al Chaidar Abdurrahman Puteh, Abidin Nurdin, T. Nazaruddin, Alfian Lukman

**Abstract:** *Syiah had ever been a major Islamic denomination in Aceh for centuries. This research is not only about how much classical Sharia rules can be a reference to resolve political problems of majority and minority division, but also to examine the power of sharia in protecting and marginalizing Syiah. Based mainly on classical Snouck Hurgronje ethnography, this study elaborates the former sharia as a living law in old Aceh and comparing it with recent legal pluralism of Aceh nowadays. With a spectacular growing of traditional Dayah (conservative Sunnism) in present politics, and the transnational Salafi Wahabism intrusion into Aceh, the position of Syiah is at the most tip of the edge in society. Achenese Syiah are now facing the hardest situation in this Syafii-dominated land and hardened with the rage of Wahabism. Syiah entity in Aceh is a hidden entity rather than a group, or community or as a society with definite criteria. As an entity, Syiah is something that exists as itself, as a subject or as an object, actually or potentially, concretely or abstractly, physically or not. It need not be of material existence. In particular, there are legal fictions which are usually regarded as Syiah entity. This study concludes that the fundamentalism of Syiah can be manifested in such a latent nuance of adaptive ideology and survive the life of ritual, tradition, and its millenarian believe even in the turbulent time.*

## I. LANDSCAPE OF PROBLEMS

Based on historical facts, it is believed that the Syiah were the first to enter Aceh. In Peureulak found the first Sultanate of Peureulak tombstones, Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah. He was the son of Muhammad bin Ja'far Sadiq (the teacher of Abu Hanifa who developed the Hanafi school) bin Muhammad Al Bagir bin Ali Zainal Abidin bin Sayyidina Husein. He was the descendant of Rasulullah Muhammad whose lineage was still very close to the *ahlul bait* of Syiah. In addition to material evidence in the form of tombstones engraved with Persian poems, we also saw some traditions of Acehnese society such as *Khanuri Hasan Husen* and *Assyura Day* celebrations and poems about the two greatest grandchildren of this Prophet and some other examples outlined in detail as evidence of Syiah relics in past time Aceh.

**Manuscript Received on December 22, 2018.**

**Al Chaidar Abdurrahman Puteh**, Department of Anthropology, Universitas Malikussaleh, Lhokseumawe, Aceh.

**Abidin Nurdin**, Department of Anthropology, Universitas Malikussaleh, Lhokseumawe, Aceh.

**T. Nazaruddin** Faculty of Law, Universitas Malikussaleh.

**Alfian Lukman** Department of Political Science, Universitas Malikussaleh.

Researches on the history of Syiah in Indonesia - and especially in Aceh - has been done by Hilmy Bakar Almascaty (2013) and Fakhriati (2014) and Rabbani (2013) also Duhuri (2016). Previously, a similar study also concerns the history that comes first in reference to the history of Syiah and its spaces investigated by Thabathaba'i and Husayn (1989), Azmi (1989), Abdul Hadi (2002), and T. Iskandar (2011). Almascaty's study looked more at Persian civilization and its influence on customs in Aceh [1]. Similarly, Wan Hussein Azmi concluded that in the 10th century AD migration of the most Persians to the archipelago Leran, Gresik, Siak (Inderapura, Riau), and to Pasai from Jawani at the time of reign of Jawani al-Qurdi, (913 AD) that later developed the Jawi alphabets [2].

Meanwhile, Fakhriati is much more in the research on the *Hikayat Hasan dan Husain* and *Hikayat Nur Muhammad* which is very colossal in Aceh history references which shows the strong influence of Syiah in Aceh since the first century of Hijriyah [3]. It is interesting to see many customs of Aceh which are actually Syiah customs that are socially politically institutionalized into the life of the Acehnese people. So far the studies on Aceh's customs have been limited to the esoteric side of it, yet see how the cultural roots are historic in the life of the people of Aceh comprehensively. Fakhriati's findings are reinforced by T. Iskandar that in the Acehnese society the Persian (Syiah) influence is quite thick in celebration of 10 Muharram (*asyura* porridge or *kanji asyura*).

This research will try to explore the millenarian aspects of the Syiah movement in Aceh. While Duhuri review about Sirajuddin Abbas book as guidance of *dayah* (traditional Islamic *pesantren* in Aceh). He critically analyzed the book *I'tiqad Ahlul-sunnah Wal-Jamaah* which has a very high position among traditional Islamic movements in Aceh. In fact, this book is a general guide in seeking justification for anarchist acts that occur between modernist and traditional Islamic groups [4].

Nowadays, Syiah has been in a turmoil in Aceh despite its historical contributions for Aceh in the glory of the past. The Acehnese welcomed the Anti-Shia National Alliance Declaration on April 20, 2014 in Bandung and soon spread to Aceh. That the teachings of Syiah according to the belief of the ummah of Islam is a distorted understanding of the Qur'an and As Sunnah. Leaders of



Islamic organizations, *pesantren* and *harakah* lodges incorporated in the Anti-Syiah National Alliance agreed to affirm the commitment and determination that: (1) making the National Alliance of Anti-Syiah institutions as a forum of *da'wah amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*; (2) maximizing preventive, anticipatory and proactive efforts to defend and protect the *ummah* from various efforts of *aqidah* and *syariah* apostasy committed by the Syiah group in Indonesia; (3) establish *ukhuwah Islamiyyah* with various organizations and *da'wah* movement in Indonesia to be wary and prevent the development of Syiah heresy, (4) urge the government to immediately mel charter of dissemination of Syiah and teachings and revoke the permission of all organizations, foundations, and institutions associated with the teachings of Syiah throughout Indonesia.

## II. NOTES ON METHODOLOGY

In order to reach the reseach abjectives and significances, the method employed in this research changed from a merely simple ethnography into a wider type of ethnography which combines netnography, participant-observation method, and spacial analysis methode. This research is expected to be useful as a means of early detection of religious conflicts in Aceh which is very likely to happen. In Indonesia, Sunni-Syiah conflicts are not based on power conflicts, but some people misunderstand in receiving information about theology about theology. In addition, the past regime also contributed to the emergence of Sunni-Syiah conflict.

This study also used social mapping techniques. This study will first observe the Syiah community in Aceh. Data are collected from various parties and competent sources. Furthermore, observations will be seen from non-Shia circles who respond to the Syiah presence in Aceh. This type of research uses a qualitative paradigm. The approach of this research is religious research as a social phenomenon. The unit of analysis in this study was a response or reaction given by mass organizations outside Syiah to Syiah. In this focus, the pattern and foundation of the response of CSOs to the Shias in Aceh. Shia was chosen as the focus of this research because of the following arguments: *Firstly*, Syiah is a transnational religious group. Syiah followers spread in many Islamic countries. *Secondly*, Syiah in the context of Indonesia is a minority group compared to Sunni followers. As a state of law, Indonesia is obliged to protect minority groups, either by the state or by mainstream groups, the Sunnis. *Thirdly*, this Syiah religious group or movement inherently has conflicting elements that trigger clashes among fellow believers. Observation of these symptoms needs to be done by researchers to get a more holistic picture of Syiah in Aceh.

## III. SYIAH IN CLASICAL SHARIA RULE OF ACEH

History records as affirmed by Abubakar Aceh that the first Islamic empire in Southeast Asia is in Pereulak (Eastern Aceh), the first sultanate was a Syiah adherent of Sultan Alaidin Sayyid Maulana Abdul Aziz Syah (1161-1186 AD) geneology continued to Prophet Muhammad SAW, namely Sayyid Abdul Aziz bin Ali bin Mukhtabar al-baqir bin Ali Muhammad Zainal Abidin bin Husayn al-shahid bin Fatimah of the Prophet Muhammad Shalallahu 'alaihi

wasallam [13]. Then to the kingdom of Samudra Pasai reported by Ibn Battuta during a visit to the area in meet with two great scholars from Persia namely al-Qadhi Amir Sayyid al-Syirazi and Faqih Tajuddin al-Isfahani (Saby, 1995). There is also the tomb of Na'ina Hisamuddin bin Na'ina Amin (1225 AD) around the relic written sya'ir poet Persia Sa'di (1292 AD).

The arrival of Islam to Aceh, known leader named Sahir, such as Sahir Poli, Sahir Nuwi or Sahir Duli. In the old Aceh saga, the title of Sahir is often called Shah. For example, Sahir Nuwi read Shah Nuwi, Sahir Poli read Syahir Poli and so on. This Syahir word is more or less equivalent to the word Ampon Tuwanku in Malay tradition in Malaysia. The etimology of the word *shir* or *sahir*, originated from a noble family in the Persian region, and beyond. So the daughter of the Persian King who after his land was captured by Umar Ibnul-Khatlab, was taken captive and brought to Medina, originally named Sahir Banu. After being released by Ali bin Abi Thaleb, Sahir Banu married Ali's son Husen. While two other Sahir Banu sisters became Abubakar's son-in-law and son-in-law Umar Ibnul Khattab. Later the name of the son-in-law of Ali turned into Shahna Banu, and in the recitation of Hikayat Hasan Husen, the name was called Shari Banon, who became the wife of Sayyidina Husen bin Ali. Husen martyred killed by Yazid bin Muawiyah in Karbala on 10 Muharram. Sahir Banu or Syari Banon widowed while raising his son Ali Zainal Abidin, who is often called Imam as-Sajad, for always like to prostrate (to pray, *shalat*) [5].

The Syiah influence can also be witnessed on the headstone of Sultan Malikussaleh (w1297 AD). This gravestone tombstone features a crown shape with leaf and flower motifs arranged at its apex so as to form the crown of the roof top. This sculpture style on the tombstone resembles Persian rugs [6].

Wisdom words contained on the headstone can then be found in *Kitab Diwan al-Iman Ali* Published by Beirut, Lebanon. 150 years later the same words were found on the headstone of Sultan Mansur Shah bin Muzaffar Shah in Malacca (1477 AD) and Sultan Abdul Jamil in Pahang (d.1511 AD) [7].

According to research conducted by Taqiuddin Muhammad on the cultural traces of the gravestone sites in Samudra pasai, it can be concluded that the Syiah influence is strong enough that there has been a Syiah community or at least a cleric originating from Persia in the 13th century CE. The tombstone site is; (1) Ibnu Khaddijah (w. 696 H/1297 M) located in Kecamatan Ulim, Samudra Aceh Utara; *khaddijah* in Persian means *Syaikh* or teacher (2) The tombstone of Nur Khatun Umar (w. 805 H/1403 M), in Kuta Krueng, Samudra Aceh Utara, khatun means lady or mistress; (3) The tombstone of Na'ina Husamuddin bin Na'ina Amin (w. 823 H/1420 M) located in Gampong Pie, Samudra, Aceh Utara. The word of *Na'ina* also from Persian; (4) The tombstone of Ash-Sadrul Ajal Khawwajah Muhammad bin Sulaiman (w. 845 H/1442 M), *Ash-Sadrul Ajal* in Persian language also means an influential figure; (5) The tombstone of Khawwajah Tajuddin bin Ibrahim (w. 857 H/1453 M), the word Khawajjah usually used in tarikat



Naqsyabandiyah means teacher; (6) The tombstone of Mir Hasan (w. 910 H/1505 M), *mir* in Persian means prince (amir), those three tombstones found in Kuta Krueng, Samudra, North Aceh [8].

#### IV. SYIAH IN CONTEMPORARY ACEH

With a spectacular growing of traditional *Dayah* (conservative Sunnism) in present politics, and the fast growing of transnational Salafi Wahabism intrusion into Aceh, the position of Syiah is at the most tip of the edge in society. Those who embraced or converted Syiah are living scatteredly all over Aceh by a unique ideo-syncretic way of survival. Achenese Syiah are now facing hardest situation in this Syafii-dominated land and hardened with the rage of Wahabism. Syiah entity in Aceh is a hidden entity rather than a group, or community or as a society with definite criteria. As an entity, Syiah is something that exists as itself, as a subject or as an object, actually or potentially, concretely or abstractly, physically or not. It need not be of material existence. In particular, there are legal fictions which are usually regarded as Syiah entity.

At the end of the first century of Hijri, in Aceh there was also a Syiah school [9]. Hasbi Amiruddin reinforces this opinion which explains that in 800 AD Muslim groups from Persia (also Arabs) ran at Bandar Pereulak, East Aceh. Similarly Yusny Saby and Zainuddin reported that around the 14th century AD in Pasai there have been scholars from Persia who carried out the Islamization process of al-Qadhi Amir Sayyid al-Syirazi and Faqih Tajuddin al-Isfahani. Even according to Ibn Battuta (1377 AD) when visiting Pasai for 15 days he met the two scholars and visited the palace of Sultan Malik al-Zahir [10].

Syiahism is one of the sects in Islam which believes that the most entitled to be the Imam of the Muslims after the death of Prophet Muhammad, is the family of the Prophet (ahlul bait). In this case, Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib (the Prophet's uncle) and Ali bin Abi Talib (the cousin and the son-in-law of the Prophet) along with his descendants. When re-traced its history, then the birth of sect in Islam can be classified into two streams. *First*, the political school, and the *second*, the theological school [11]. Ideologically and politically, the Syiah concept of Imamah gained various reactions from Sunni Islam who constitute the majority in Indonesia. This reaction travels along the continuum line along which two extreme poles. The total rejection of Syiah views and thoughts as reflected by the attitude of Sunni scholars is very apparent, especially with the MUI (Indonesian Ulama Council) decision which among other things prohibits the implementation of Syiah schools in this country [12].

#### V. THE POWER OF SHARIA IN ACEH

The aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami rendered Aceh as being more than 30 years imprisoned by the social-political conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the government of the Republic of Indonesia which subsequently ended peacefully by the so-called MoU in Helsinki 2005. When the process of reconstruction and

rehabilitation in Aceh invites almost all nations and countries in any part of the world to contribute to assist Aceh. At the time after the tsunami quite a lot of countries came to help Aceh, whether Muslim from Middle East, or Christian, or other religions such as China and Japan. Similarly, those who have the same belief and flow as well as there are different streams like the Syiah group. In several areas such as North Aceh, Pidie Jaya, Bireuen there are communities conducting activities such as Syiah celebrations (ritual) [13].

Whereas the people of Aceh as adherents of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah strongly rejected the presence of ahlul bayt community. The form of rejection can be seen in three things, namely; *firstly*, The *fatwa* of the Majelis Permusyawaratan Ulama (MPU) which asserts that the Syiah is a heretic. According to the results musyawarah decision MPU and the Provincial Government, 14 *aliran* (sects, cults) were considered heretical and forbidden to recruit followers. They also have to stop all activities that smell misleading. There are 14 cults banned: Millata Abraham (origin Bireuen), Darul Arqam (Banda Aceh), the Doctrine of Faith Abidin (Sabang), Aliran Syiah (Aceh), Teachings Muhammad Ilyas bin Yusuf (Aceh), tarikat Haji Ibrahim Bonjol (Central Aceh), Jama'at Qu'ran Hadist (Aceh Utara), Qadian Ahmadiyah Teachings (Aceh). Then, pengajians Abdul Majid Abdullah (East Aceh), the Doctrine of the Faith Lubis (SUAK Lamata, District Teupah Selatan, Simeulue), tarikat Mufarridiyah (Aceh), the Doctrine Ahmad Arifin (Southeast Aceh), Doctrine Makrifatullah (Banda Aceh), and pengajians Al -Qur'an and Hadist (Simpang Ulim and Madat District, East Aceh). It is based on a fatwa MPU No. 4 of 2007 on guidelines for the identification of a cult which contains 13 kinds of one is to believe or follow the aqidah which does not correspond to *Ahlus-Sunnah I'tiqad wal jama'ah*.

*Secondly*, qanun (local legislation) which states that the aqidah adopted by the people of Aceh is *ahlussunnah wal jamaah*. Qanun Islamic Shariah Principles number 8 year 2014 explained that aqidah adopted in Aceh is aqidah of *ahlussunnah wal jamaah* Based on Al-Quran and As-Sunnah which became religious beliefs embraced by a person and became the basis of all forms of activities, attitudes, views, and grip one's life. Furthermore, in Article (11); (1) Every Moslem person in Aceh shall be obliged to be Islamic in accordance with Al-Quran and As-Sunnah in soul and behavior; (2) Aqidah Islamiyah as referred to in paragraph (1) is Aqidah Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah (Sunni); (3) Aceh Government and Regency/City Government together with the community is obliged to plant, build and strengthen aqidah to every Muslim since very early age; (4) The community obligation as referred to in paragraph (3) shall be in every parent / guardian of the family member.

*Thirdly*, Rejection in the form of parades and demonstrations which became known as "Parade Aswaja". In a parade of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah people carry posters and banners that read; "Reject Syiah in Aceh", "Wahabi, Salafi Go from this soil of Aceh". In addition, the people in this parade demanded to stop all Syiah, Wahabi, Salafi and Communist activities against the Syafii school and the aqidah Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah.



The action was led by PWNU Aceh, the Dayah Ulama Association (HUDA, Himpunan Ulama Dayah Aceh), the Ulama Council of Nanggroe Aceh (MUNA, Majelis Ulama Nanggroe Aceh), Rabithah Thaliban Aceh (RTA), Inshafuddin, FPI Aceh (Front Pembela Islam Aceh).

The power of Islamic law in Aceh is tremendous. The door to the implementation of Shariah Islam in Aceh through Law No. 44 in 1999. Islamic legalization through Sharia regulation in public area, however, has indicated that Islam performs expressively in Aceh.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Aceh is absolutely belongs to mazhab Syafi'i, so do not be surprised if the love of Imam Syafi'i contribute to the entire Aceh society and therefore Syiah had been uneasy spreading the teaching here. It's a kind of ideological rejection or theological refusal towards the Syiah in Aceh. This form of rejection can be seen in three ways; *Firstly*, through the fatwa of the MPU which asserts that the Shi'a is a heresy; *Secondly*, the Qanun of Islamic Sharia Principles which reinforce that the aqidah adopted by the people of Aceh is ahlussunnah wal jamaah as opposed to the aqidah Ahlul Bayt; *Thirdly*, the "parade of aswaja" of community demonstrations that reject the Syiah. This study departs from the phenomenal development of the Shi'a school of thought in Aceh which is relatively phenomenal. From the discourse mentioned above it can be explained that although the Islamic Kingdom of Pereulak and the Kingdom of Samudera Pasai is affected by the Ahlul Bayt school but not the majority and can be broken completely the period of Aceh Darussalam Kingdom with its character Iskandar Muda.

## Acknowledgement

This research would not have been possible without sincere assistance from Nanda Amalia, Prof. Abdul Hadi Arifin, Prof. Apridar Abdurrahman, Prof. Jamaluddin Abdullah Yasin, Teuku Achyarsyah, Dr. Hilmy Bakar Almascaty who had provided essential review and thought contributions. We would also like to thank Asrianda, Salahuddin, Muktaruddin Husen, Mawardi Marwan, Safwatul Rizal, Sayuti Nur, Rasyidah, Mak Cek Erna, Kak Nah (even now we don't know her real name), also to Ibu Nurhayati for her various supports very meaningful for the completion of this research.

## REFERENCES

1. Hilmy Bakar Almascaty, 2013, Relasi Persia Dan Nusantara Pada Awal Islamisasi: Sebuah Kajian Awal Pengaruh Persia dalam Politik Aceh, Media Syari'ah, Vol. XV, No. 1 Januari-Juni.
2. Wan Hussen Azmi, 1989, Islam di Aceh: Masuk dan Berkembangnya pada Abad ke 16 in Ali Hasjmy, Sejarah Masuk dan Berkembangnya Islam di Indonesia, al-Ma'arif, Bandung.
3. Fakhriati, 2014, Pengaruh Syiah Dalam Kehidupan Masyarakat Aceh (Refleksi atas Naskah Hikayat Hasan Husain dan Nur Muhammad), Jurnal Analisis, Vol. 11, No. 2 Tahun 2014, pp. 421-446.

4. Saifuddin Duhri, 2016, The Text of Conservatism: The Role of Abbas' Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah in Underpinning Acehese Current Religious Violence, Studi Islamika, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 29-54.
5. Hasballah M. Saad, 2009, Syiah Aceh, Serambi Indonesia, 22 Pebruari.
6. Kautsar Azhari Noer, 2002. Arsitektur, in Taufik Abdullah (editor), Ensiklopedi Tematis Islam, Jilid 7, Ichtiar Baru Van Hoeve, Jakarta.
7. Teuku Ibrahim Alfian, 2005, Wajah Aceh dalam Lintasan Sejarah, Gadjah Mada Universitas Press, Yogyakarta.
8. Taqiyuddin Muhammad, 2013, Jejak Kebudayaan Persia di Kawasan Tinggalan Sejarah Samudera Pasai, in Jurnal Media Syariah, Vol XV, No. 1, Januari-Juni Tahun, pp. 37-39.
9. Muhammad Husain Haekal, 2008, Sejarah Hidup Muhammad, PT. Pustaka Litera Antar Nusa, Jakarta.
10. Hasbi Amiruddin, 2003, Ulama Dayah: Pengawal Agama Masyarakat Aceh, Nadiya Foundation, Lhokseumawe.
11. Ira M. Lapidus, 2003, Sejarah Sosial Umat Islam, translated by Ghufuran A. Mas'adi, Bagian Kesatu dan Dua, Cet. III, PT. Raja Grafindo Persada, Jakarta.
12. Sahilun A. Nasir, 2010, Pemikiran Kalam (Teologi Islam) Sejarah, Ajaran, dan Perkembangan, Cet. I, Rajawali Pers, Jakarta.
13. Kamaruzzaman Bustamam-Ahmad, 2016, Memahami Potensi Radikalisme dan Teorisme di Aceh, Bandar Publishing, Banda Aceh.