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Article

Internally Displaced Persons and Informal Citizenship: Sampang Shiites' Struggle after Sectarian Violence

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Abstract

This article examines how the Sampang Shiite community in Madura, Indonesia, navigates structural exclusion and pursues citizenship rights following sectarian violence and forced displacement. It analyzes how clientelistic power relations involving political actors and religious leaders have constrained the community's recognition and repatriation. The article argues that, despite limited government support and persistent social and economic marginalization, informal networks enable displaced Shiites to exercise political agency, sustain their livelihoods, access healthcare and education, and participate in elections. Support from civil society organizations, religious institutions such as Muhammadiyah, and sympathetic local actors helps address gaps in formal institutional protection. The grassroots *People's Peace Charter*, initiated by former perpetrators of sectarian violence, further illustrates the potential of community-based initiatives to rebuild social relations and challenge established patterns of exclusion. However, these networks and initiatives have not overcome the structural barriers to repatriation and full social inclusion. The case demonstrates both the significance and the limitations of informal citizenship: informal networks facilitate everyday survival and create opportunities for reconciliation, but they cannot replace the state's responsibility to protect minority rights and ensure equal citizenship.

Keywords

Clientelism; grassroots reconciliation; informal citizenship; Sampang Shiites; sectarian violence

Introduction

Although national legislation and international conventions guarantee the protection of freedom of religion, freedom of expression, citizen security, property rights, and freedom of choice, the displaced Shia community of Sampang has faced prolonged challenges regarding

repatriation. While a small fraction of displaced individuals has managed to return through localized informal initiatives, the vast majority remain displaced. It has been nearly a decade since the displacement of this vulnerable group, and their collective right as internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their homes in Sampang, East Java, remains unfulfilled. After the sectarian attack on the Shiite community in Sampang, Indonesia, various reconciliation efforts have thus far failed to secure a safe and comprehensive return for the Shiites. Around 81 families, or 335 individuals, still remain displaced from their homes in Sampang (Muluk, 2017). They have been living in the Puspa Agro apartment complex—a long-term refugee camp in Sidoarjo, East Java, located approximately 127 km away from their hometown—since they were forcibly relocated.

There are various studies about the Sampang Shiites which explore violence, exclusion, conflict resolution, and the violation of human rights principles. Yet, their struggle and achievement of citizenship within contentious socio-political contexts remain understudied. This paper argues that entrenched clientelistic structures are the primary driver of the Shiites' eviction and the central obstacle to their repatriation.

However, amidst social and economic marginalization and the limited role of the government in fulfilling their basic rights in a refugee-like setting, the Sampang Shiites continue to navigate informal networks and mechanisms to claim their citizenship and maintain the hope of returning home. They manage to fulfill their basic rights, such as in education, livelihoods, and health, as well as political participation in general elections. Similarly, Jessica Soedirgo studied how the Ahmadiyah community utilizes clientelistic networks and informal institutions to help vulnerable groups gain the benefits and protections of citizenship in West Java (Soedirgo, 2018).

In addition, despite the power relations between the government, politicians, and religious leaders being continuously maintained to corner the Sampang Shiites and inhibit or deny their return, this hegemony is neither total nor monolithic. It has suffered a rift with the rise of supporters of the Sampang Shiites, both from within the government and civil society identifying as Sunni. This reinforces the sense of identity and determination of the Sampang Shiites to survive and return to their hometown. This article demonstrates that while supported by various parties, the Sampang Shiites have gradually gained legal status, political participation, and (limited) economic rights as citizens, yet as internal refugees and religious minorities, they still face profound difficulties in regaining social and cultural membership in Sampang. Consequently, they continue to encounter immense barriers in returning to their homeland and securing social and property rehabilitation.

Method

This qualitative research employs a single-case study design to investigate the dynamics of clientelism, informal citizenship, and protracted displacement among the Sampang Shia community. A qualitative approach was chosen because it provides a nuanced understanding of how marginalized religious minorities navigate informal institutions and claim citizenship rights within hostile local political structures.

Data were collected through a combination of primary in-depth interviews and extensive documentary analysis. Primary fieldwork and interviews were conducted with key actors and informants involved in the conflict and displacement process. These included Shia community leaders (such as Tajul Muluk and Iklil Al-Milal), local human rights activists from KontraS Surabaya and AMAN Indonesia, government officers from the Regional Disaster Management Agency of East Java Province (Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Daerah, BPBD), and local

grassroots figures involved in the peace initiatives. To complement primary interviews, secondary data were gathered from official institutional reports—including findings from the National Commission on Human Rights (Komnas HAM), East Java MUI fatwas, judicial court rulings, and civil society newsletters published between 2011 and 2017.

To ensure analytical rigor and factual accuracy, data verification was conducted through source triangulation, cross-referencing interview narratives with official government documentation, human rights reports, and secondary literature. Ethical considerations were carefully maintained to safeguard informant confidentiality and ensure sensitive statements regarding local political and religious dynamics were accurately represented.

Sectarian Conflict and Clientelism

The policy of forced relocation that subjected the Sampang Shiites to prolonged marginalization began with their eviction to the Puspa Agro flat in Sidoarjo on June 20, 2013. This forced displacement followed a series of communal sectarian attacks in Karang Gayam and Blu'uren villages, Sampang Regency, on August 26, 2012 (and earlier incidents in December 2011), which resulted in severe casualties, injuries, and the burning of dozens of Shia homes. Official investigative reports document that these attacks were not spontaneous outbursts of religious hatred, but rather the culmination of systematic escalation involving local vigilantes and mobs (Semendawai et al., 2013).

Generally, scholarship responds to this violence through three distinct lenses: a legal-human rights framework focusing on state omission and religious freedom violations; a conservative standpoint framing the conflict as a defense of traditional Madurese Islamic identity against heresy; and a cultural-relativistic view emphasizing deviance from local norms and obedience to traditional figures. However, these perspectives often overlook the underlying political economy of the region. This paper argues that the root cause of the Shia community's eviction lies in an entrenched clientelistic structure. Following Berenschot and van Klinken (2018) and Soedirgo (2018), clientelism in Sampang operates through a personalized network linking patrons (local bureaucrats and politicians), brokers (traditional clerics or *kyai* and religious organizations such as BASSRA and MUI), and clients (local strongmen or *bejingan*). Within this structure, the Shia community's independent religious practices and social reforms—such as reforming local commemoration rituals (*maulid*) and challenging informal administrative levies—threatened the authority and capital of traditional elites, prompting a coordinated campaign of exclusion backed by local state actors.

Empirical evidence from the region clearly demonstrates how this clientelistic machinery operated on the ground. According to Iklil Al-Milal and Tajul Muluk, Sampang Shiites figures, the nexus of 'three small local imperial institutions'—bureaucrats, religious leaders, and civilians—made the spreading rumors about Shiite as the heresy and escalate the conflict to sectarian violence. Frequently, civilians assisted certain religious leaders in collecting money to get spiritual legitimation, Politicians very considered Kyai as the huge social capital for election, and hence Kyai had so powerful bargain (Al-Milal, 2015).

Among the local government bureaucracy, Sampang Shiites were considered too involved and bothering the bureaucracy in civic administration. Shias Sampang often demanded that citizens have a marriage certificate. It was because the community easily performed marriage-divorce without a marriage certificate. In addition, there were also birth certificate problems that were rarely owned by residents, while it is important to take care of the educational waivers for their children (Al-Milal, 2015).

In the hamlet of Nangkernang, thugs or thieves were not very masterful. Residents of Sampang Shiites initiated the guarding posts in the village and theft could be minimized. Sampang Shiites also often protested the requirement of four to five million ransom money to return the stolen goods which were actually known by the village head [klebun] (Afdillah, 2016).

In Kyais' view, Sampang Shiites were considered to change tradition. Kiyais were invited several times in the commemoration of the birth of Prophet Muhammad [maulid nabi] which was held in every house expensively, especially funding the preaching of Kyai at their homes. Iklil and Tajul regretted the number of people who held a mauled by mortgaging rice fields or borrowing money to loan sharks (Al-Milal, 2015). Tajul led the diversion of *maulid nabi* from the habit of conducting every house to the joint holding in a mosque. Besides the loss of cultural space and economic resources, many local Kyai did not like Tajul as a new religious figure because their charisma was rivaled and distorted (Afdillah, 2016). In addition, there is a new nickname for them, namely "Kyai Slabet" (*Slabet* means envelope to associate with greedy attitude) (Afdillah, 2016). Thus, the disruption of local economic resources and traditional religious authority transformed grassroots grievances into a potent fuel for clientelistic mobilization, framing social reforms as a direct threat to the dominance of religious brokers.

Before 2006, the direct tension between Sampang Shiites and the anti-Shiites groups did not happen and the local government did not involve in canceling Shiites' activities. Despite since 2004 Tajul Muluk's oppositions began to confront him in the limited meeting and accuse him of being heretical along with the fear of the opposition with the increased numbers of his follower, the open confrontation did not happen because of the charisma of Kyai Ma'mun, the father of Tajul Muluk, as a well-known honored figure. Kyai Ma'mun became a balancing force to neutralize the confrontation led by Kyai Karrar, the uncle of Tajul Muluk having disrespectful to Shiites when many of Tajul's oppositions were his loyal students ago. Tajul's shelter was lost when Kyai Ma'mun who was very old passed away in 2006. The riot almost happened when Tajul would hold Maulid with memorial tradition, after 40 days of the demise of the late Kyai Ma'mun, because there was a rumor that Tajul would invite 12 Shiite Ulema from Kuwait. Police secured the polarization but the Maulid was canceled. After Kyai Ma'mun passed away, Kyai Karrar more got vast support to reject Tajul Muluk and his Shiite in Sampang. Unfortunately, Rois Al-Hukama, the brother of Tajul Muluk defending Shiite many years ago, declares that he was not a Shiite member again. Internal conflict with Tajul Muluk in the dramatic, romantic love case was one of the causes, besides the competition of Kyai Ma'mun's inheritance with many land properties (Afdillah, 2016).

After Kyai Ma'mun passed away, Kyai Karrar more got vast support to reject Tajul Muluk and his Shiite in Sampang. Bringing the Shiite issue to the Association of Madurese Ulema Bonding (BASSRA), Kyai Karrar initiated some meetings asking about his Shiite assumed as the heresy, forcing him to return to Sunni, and suggesting the (regional) Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI) in Sampang to released fatwa about the heretical issue (Panggabean & Fauzi, 2015). Kyai Karrar, despite he is Tajul's uncle, was the most active, influential Kyai propagating the conversion or the eviction of Shiites. This illustrates how religious brokers successfully weaponized theological orthodoxies to consolidate their local authority while aligning their interests with regional power networks.

Because Kiyais are socially, culturally, and politically strong as "informal leaders" having religious authority beyond governmental authority in Sampang society, the local government including regent and vice-regent actively privilege and even support Kiyais' demand to convert or evict Sampang Shiites. The role of Kiyai as the primary intermediary person in gaining

political support for certain politicians is well known in Sampang or Madurese Society. With the strong and dense alliance of regional Kiyai like Association of Madurese Ulema Bonding (BASSRA), the Council of Indonesian Ulama (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI) Sampang, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Sampang that have a very big influence in the social and political arena, the local government cannot defend state neutrality. On 5 April 2011, regional leaders of Sampang governmental institutions initiated a mediation. Regent and Vice Regent of Sampang also participated with the head of the regional police office of East Java. The main figures, Tajul Muluk, and many Kiyais from NU and MUI participated as well. Rather than mediating, that meeting provided the arena of judgment for Shiites by religious figures justified by the government and apparatus (Semendawai et al., 2013).

Regarding the anti-Shiite narrative, on 23 July 2012, about one month after the first sectarian violence, the regional level of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) in East Java released a fatwa (the product of Islamic law made by the Islamic authority outside the court) about the heresy of Shiite doctrine. Before that, MUI in Sampang with all of MUI in East Java, except MUI in Bondowoso, released a fatwa about Shiite and its anger as the heresy (Afdillah, 2016). Surprisingly, the Governor of East Java, on 23 July 2012, released government regulation delegating MUI to measure the criteria of heresy, and, as such, supported fatwa MUI about Shiite in Sampang. Moreover, that fatwa was a source of National Court in Sampang to legitimate judgment on 11 Juli 2012 that Tajul Muluk, as the leader of Shiite in Sampang, was proven for contravening Blasphemy law. Despite Tajul Muluk being in jail, about one month after the judgment, on 26 August 2012, the second sectarian violence against Shiites in Sampang exploded.

Because of the powerful tie between brokers and patrons; Kiyais alliance and local and regional government, 20 June 2013, finally the force can evict Sampang Shiites by relocating them to Sidoarjo. With the alliance of religious leaders within BASSRA, Kyai Karrar, led the forceful relocation of Shiites on 23 June 2013 when the relocation led by Vice Regent of Sampang was so hard to be executed. Moreover, before the relocation, MUI in Sampang collected thousands of signatures of Madurese society for the petition to reject Shiites and support the eviction. Various intimidations and terrors emerged, such as BASSRA's ultimatum to end Shiite proselytization and teaching by various non-state and state institutions in Sampang, like from MUI, BASSRA, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Sampang, Ministry of Religious Affairs Sampang, and Institute of Coordination for Monitoring the School of Belief (BAKORPAKEM) (Panggabean & Fauzi, 2015) with 32 accusations of heretical aspects of Shiite (26 October 2009), the vigilante mob intimidation making Tajul secured by Police (27 Juli 2010), and the order for Tajul to make a statement that he would not practice Shiite teaching again for the public safety (26 October 2010) (Semendawai et al., 2013).

Finally, based on the instruction of the Minister of Political, Legal and Security Affairs and the Governor of East Java with the coordination of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, about 168 Sampang Shiites were relocated by the Sampang Government to the Puspa Agro Sidoarjo apartment using three trucks and two police buses and escorted by three patrol cars. Previously, Sampang Shiite people rejected the relocation and did not want to be moved from the Sampang Sports Hall as the temporary refugee camp. Tajul was currently imprisoned in a case of religious blasphemy reported by his assailants. Iklil during the forced relocation was lying sick and had fainted. He was forced to move on a stretcher and planned to be taken to the hospital, but apparently, he was transferred to the Puspa Agro flat, Sidoarjo.

The Religious Minister in that period, Surya Dharma Ali, obtained the presidential

mandate, followed the dominative clientelistic allegiance and localized the Sampang conflict by giving reconciliation control to the Madurese Kiyais. He pressed the displaced Shiites to go to Hajj Dormitory, Pondok Gede, East Jakarta to 'equate perceptions' with Kiyais and 'be trained' with the knowledge of living in harmony before their homes would be re-built. According to Surya Dharma Ali, Kiyais better understand the culture, the characteristics of the Sampang community, and should be given more room for 'solving' the problem at the local level. Nevertheless, he seems to only replace the word "repentance" (pertaubatan) required by Kiyai with more subtle words such as "enlightenment" and "perceptual equations". He does not regard the Sampang conflict as a Sunni and Shiites conflict that exists in Islam, but as a matter of "blasphemy" (Dhyatmika, 2013).

Each level of government often says that they have no capacity to solve the case, yet actually they are reluctant to move against anti-Shiites Kiyais as the brokers. The new Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Saifuddin instead entirely hand over the Sampang case to the regional government with just coordinating without political willingness for bridging direct reconciliation equally. While at the regional level, the provincial government of East Java and the district government of Sampang expressed their inability to handle the current rejection of Shiite refugees by conservative, intolerant groups. Besides, the regional government is only able to fulfill 'secular' needs for Shiite refugees, such as shelter, administration, and subsidy, despite in practice there are still many shortcomings. This barrier coercing faith conversion becomes one of the biggest obstacles to reconciliation. The government seems reluctant to handle the power of intolerant groups that negate the identity of Shiite refugees (Faizal, 2017). Ultimately, the state's abdication of its protective duty demonstrates how political patrons prioritized electoral expediency and accommodation of local brokers over constitutional neutrality.

Informal Citizenship and the Struggle for Justice

Thinking beyond formal state institutions and mechanisms is crucial to understand how marginalized populations claim citizenship when official channels fail them. Informal networks play a significant role in enabling marginalized groups to access rights and services when formal state institutions are unresponsive or inaccessible. Berenschot and van Klinken (2018) argue that such networks should be understood as a constitutive dimension of citizenship rather than simply as deviations from formal institutional arrangements. In contentious environments where state institutions perpetrate cultural disrespect and economic maldistribution (Stokke, 2017), the cultivation of personal connections and informal mechanisms becomes an imperative strategy for securing daily survival and basic social justice. In the case of Sampang Shiites, this perspective helps explain how personal connections, civil society organizations, and supportive public officials facilitated access to economic opportunities, health care, education, social assistance, and political participation during displacement. These forms of assistance, however, should not be understood as equivalent to the full realization of citizenship rights, as informal mechanisms address immediate needs while leaving structural barriers unresolved.

1. Economic Survival and Livelihoods

Although the right of Sampang Shiites as internally displaced people to return home is important, the everyday hardship they face involves securing basic survival needs, such as economic income, health, and education, which are only meagerly fulfilled by the government. Forced relocation to the Puspa Agro apartment complex in Sidoarjo stripped the Sampang Shiites of their traditional agricultural livelihoods as rural farmers. Working as a manual coconut peeler has finally become the choice of most refugees to meet the daily needs of families that have not

been met only with government subsidies (Rp. 709.000,-/month/family). This work was initiated with officials of the Regional Disaster Management Agency (Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Daerah, BPBD)who accompanied them in the flat. Through this job, some refugees were even able to repay the purchase of a motor. Sampang Shiites need to seek additional income to finance the education of children and other needs. Unfortunately, there is a complete lack of government role in providing jobs to replace their former livelihoods as farmers in their villages. On their own initiative, some Sampang Shiites also worked in factories or raised fish and livestock in the yard of the Puspa Agro flats. In addition, three or four young Sampang Shiites earned a living by selling satay.

This shift from subsistence farming to informal urban labor illustrates how marginalized citizens generate alternative economic spaces outside state provision. In the absence of state-sponsored economic rehabilitation, the refugees exercised economic agency through informal arrangements with field-level bureaucrats and local actors. This reliance on informal economic strategies demonstrates a key facet of informal citizenship: when formal socio-economic rights are neglected by the state, marginalized groups assert their right to subsistence by embedding themselves within informal market networks.

2. *Access to Healthcare and Education*

Displaced refugees also faced severe administrative barriers when seeking healthcare and education due to the loss of essential identity documents destroyed during the sectarian violence. According to Bayu, an officer of the Regional Disaster Management Agency (Badan Penanggulangan Bencana Daerah, BPBD), access to healthcare was a particularly serious concern for the refugees. Sampang Shiites seeking medical treatment had encountered difficulties obtaining care at Dr. Soetomo General Hospital in Surabaya. Despite BPBD officials explaining that they were acting on the Governor's instructions, the refugees continued to face barriers to hospital services. In one incident, a BPBD official reportedly broke the glass of the hospital's service counter after an emergency patient had waited from morning until 2 a.m. without receiving treatment. The incident prompted the hospital's president director to intervene.

In response to delays by the Sidoarjo Health Office, BPBD officials contacted the Muhammadiyah Central Board, which arranged free healthcare for the refugees at Muhammadiyah Siti Khodijah Hospital in Gurah, Kediri, and Muhammadiyah Lamongan Hospital. These arrangements helped address barriers associated with government hospital requirements for Public Health Insurance Cards (Jaminan Kesehatan Masyarakat, Jamkesmas), which had been destroyed during the violence.

Educational services also remained inadequate. According to Sampang Shiite refugees and BPBD officials, the Sidoarjo Education Office was slow to fulfill the educational needs of the refugees' children. Teachers assigned to teach at the Puspa Agro flats were reportedly insufficiently committed to their duties. To address these shortcomings, activists from the Center for Marginalized Communities, a local NGO in Surabaya, organized weekly teaching sessions for the children. Activists from the Surabaya branch of the Indonesian National Student Movement (Gerakan Mahasiswa Nasional Indonesia, GMNI) also provided instruction for mothers and older residents who could not speak Bahasa Indonesia, continuing this support for up to six months.

These health and educational interventions illustrate how informal citizenship operated through personal networks, institutional mediation, and cooperation between state and non-state actors. Rather than accessing welfare services solely through formal administrative procedures,

the refugees relied on connections among frontline government officials, civil society organizations, and religious institutions such as Muhammadiyah. These networks helped address immediate service gaps, although they did not necessarily resolve the structural barriers that prevented the refugees from fully exercising their rights as citizens.

3. *Political Participation and Social Assistance*

Beyond daily welfare, the refugees actively negotiated their political inclusion and administrative support. BPBD also attempted at helping Sampang Shiites to gain political participation rights in the 2014 Indonesian presidential election. After coordinating with the Regional Election Commission [Komisi Pemilihan Umum/KPU], finally, Sampang Shiites could be included in the additional voter's list in Sidoarjo. However, because the election was held outside the Puspa Agro flat, BPBD hired two 'rabbit trains' [kereta kelinci] to transport hundreds of Shia Muslims to the polls. Furthermore, regarding administrative assistance, Sampang Shiites faced a sudden termination of their monthly Rp. 709,000 subsidy by the Sampang Regency Government between January and March 2017, as revealed by Rudi, chairman of the National Unity and Politics Board [Badan Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik/Bakesbangpol], during a Human Rights Festival report. Through advocacy and communication facilitated by Tajul Muluk, AMAN Indonesia, and KontraS Surabaya during national human rights congresses.

Tajul Muluk was not actually invited to the gathering of stakeholders to listen to the victims of intolerance and discrimination from various regions, such as Ahmadiyah, Gafatar, indigenous religions, and others. Only elements of Bakesbangpol Sampang and Ahlul Bait Indonesia (ABI) were invited to represent Sampang Shiites. However, at the initiative of AMAN, ABI, and Kontras Surabaya, Tajul Muluk was sent to attend the event attended by Minister of Religious Affairs Lukman Hakim Syaefuddin, Indonesian Police Head Gen. Tito Karnavian, and Komnas HAM Chairman Imdadun Rahmat. When talking with Tajul Muluk on the sidelines of the event, Rudi said that he would attempt to reinstate the subsidy. In addition to securing the subsidy, this forum provided an opportunity for Tajul Muluk to affirm the persistence of internal refugees to return home, countering rumors that they preferred living in the deteriorating Puspa Agro flat.

These political and administrative negotiations demonstrate that informal citizenship is not merely passive survival, but an active claiming of political membership. By utilizing informal transport mechanisms to exercise their constitutional franchise and leveraging civil society platforms to demand administrative accountability, the refugees resisted total political exclusion through pragmatic improvisations.

4. *Grassroots Reconciliation and the Limits of Informal Networks*

Efforts to secure recognition and social inclusion for Sampang Shiites also revealed a shift in allegiance among some brokers from *bejingan* (civilians from the local blater or informal strongmen network) and community members who had previously supported or participated in the persecution of the Shiite community. This shift suggests that personal relationships disrupted by sectarian violence could be restored and mobilized to support grassroots reconciliation. Such initiatives emerged amid the inability of formal state institutions and established reconciliation efforts to overcome the local power relations associated with clientelism.

On 23 September 2013, at approximately 4:00 p.m. Western Indonesian Time (WIB), around 50 residents of Blu'uren and Karang Gayam villages visited the Sampang Shiite refugees at the Puspa Agro flats in Sidoarjo. They apologized for the violence and expressed their willingness to reconcile. The meeting resulted in the People's Peace Charter, an agreement between former

perpetrators of sectarian violence and Sampang Shiite refugees. The participants expressed their desire to end the conflict, respect one another's religious beliefs, and preserve their respective cultural traditions. The initiative was reportedly driven by Sunni villagers who recognized that the conflict was linked not only to religious differences but also to elite interests.

The reconciliation initiative developed amid a deadlock over the conditions imposed by local religious and social elites, particularly demands for the Shiites to repent, and the government's reluctance to take affirmative action to secure their recognition and rights. By initiating reconciliation independently, the villagers sought to overcome these obstacles. Following the meeting, participants attempted to persuade other residents in their home villages to support the reintegration and repatriation of the displaced Shiite community. Although some residents remained opposed, the account indicates that support for reconciliation had grown among the local population. Mat Safi, identified in the account as a *tojing* (a civilian follower or henchman within the local blater network) who had played a leading role in the 2012 attack on Sampang Shiites, also reportedly became an active advocate of their reintegration.

Despite this local initiative, the prospects for reconciliation remained constrained by the limited support provided by government authorities and resistance from intolerant groups. Nur Tamam, chairman of the Lembaga Persatuan Umat Islam (Institute for Islamic Unity) in Pamekasan and a kyai at Al Hamidi Islamic Boarding School, Pamekasan, participated in facilitating the reconciliation. He argued that, with government support, villagers would be willing to travel to the relocation site to participate in reconciliation and even accompany the refugees back to their home villages. His account highlights the gap between the willingness of some community members to pursue reconciliation and the limited institutional support available to translate that willingness into action.

The initiative also encountered direct resistance. During and after the reconciliation process, the group reportedly faced disturbances, while members of an intolerant group attempted to prevent signatories from maintaining their commitment to the agreement. Those who had facilitated the reconciliation were allegedly taken to meet an intolerant kyai and pressured to withdraw their signatures from the peace charter. These interventions undermined the agreement and demonstrated the vulnerability of grassroots initiatives when confronted by actors seeking to preserve existing patterns of exclusion.

The national government's response further complicated the process. Surya Dharma Ali, who was Minister of Religious Affairs at the time, questioned the reconciliation initiative on the grounds that it had not involved local government officials and religious scholars. He also reportedly accused the parties involved of exploiting the conflict. This response raises questions about the relationship between locally initiated reconciliation and official recognition: rather than serving as a mechanism to support the agreement, the demand for broader institutional involvement risked weakening an initiative that had emerged in response to the perceived limitations of formal reconciliation efforts.

Taken together, these events illustrate both the potential and the limits of informal networks in restoring social relations after sectarian violence. Personal ties and community initiatives created opportunities for dialogue, acknowledgment of past violence, and potential reintegration. However, these efforts could not independently overcome resistance from influential local actors or secure the institutional support needed to facilitate repatriation. The case therefore suggests that grassroots reconciliation can help rebuild social relationships, but its capacity to produce durable inclusion remains limited when formal institutions fail to protect the

process and address the political and social structures sustaining exclusion.

The experience of Sampang Shiites illustrates both the value and the limitations of informal networks in securing social and economic well-being amid displacement and religious exclusion. Although these networks facilitate access to essential services and support everyday survival, they cannot overcome structural barriers to recognition, equality, and repatriation. Informal citizenship thus serves as an important means of coping with institutional exclusion, but it cannot replace the state's responsibility to protect citizens' rights and ensure their equal inclusion.

Conclusion

The experience of Sampang Shiites demonstrates that state authorities and local religious leaders, particularly kyai, held diverse positions toward the Shiite community. Recognizing these differences is essential for understanding how marginalized groups navigate local power structures and identify potential allies within non-monolithic elite networks. Informal networks played a crucial role in helping Sampang Shiites access essential services, sustain their livelihoods, and pursue grassroots reconciliation. Support from civil society and religious organizations, including Muhammadiyah, helped address severe gaps in formal institutional support. However, entrenched clientelistic power structures and limited government intervention continued to constrain full legal recognition and repatriation. These findings highlight both the value and the limitations of informal citizenship. Although informal networks facilitate everyday survival and create opportunities for reconciliation, they cannot overcome structural exclusion or guarantee equal citizenship. Informal networks are therefore vital for navigating institutional exclusion, but they cannot replace the state's constitutional responsibility to protect citizens' rights and ensure their equal inclusion.

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