

REVIEWING THE “OASE” (ORGANIZATION OF AHLULBAYT FOR SOCIAL-SUPPORT AND EDUCATION): ITS CREEDS, ITS ACTIVITIES, AND A DIFFERENT COLOR WITHIN INDONESIAN SHIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to discuss an Indonesian Shia movement called OASE (Organization of Ahlulbayt for Social-support and Education). Coordinated by Emilia Renita Az, OASE marks the unique movement of Shia women in Indonesia, along with the existing Shia representative organization in the country, such as IJABI (Ikatan Jama'ah Ahlul Bait Indonesia/The All-Indonesian Assembly of Ahlulbayt Associations) and ABI (Ahlul Bait Indonesia/Indonesian Ahlulbayt). Using the perspective of social-movement, this paper seeks to capture the origin of OASE, its basic creeds, and its contribution of social activities in the Indonesian public sphere. The three-fold layers (artifact, socio-fact, and mentifact) are used to explore its social works. The researcher's engagement with the leader of OASE in a depth-interview is the method to collect the data in addition to analyze several artifact including documents, photos, and posters. The research finds several important points, including the founding of OASE as the “child” of reformasi (post-new order Indonesia), the nature of Shia philanthropic activities as their spirit of social works through the lens of the mentioned three-fold layers, and the position of OASE among the other Indonesian Shia groups in the light of the international context of Shia marja'iyya.

Keywords: OASE, Indonesian Shia women, movement, new departure

INTRODUCTION

After the fall of New Order (*Orde Baru*), a term coined to identify the Soeharto regime, the second president of Indonesia (in office: 1968-1998), many turns of the dynamic of Indonesian Islam emerged both in discourse and movement. The euphoria of *reformasi* (reformation), a new period of Indonesian history, has opened up the doors for various expressions of Indonesian Islam to seize the opportunity to compete for the public sphere and popular supports. In the course of the aftermath of Soeharto's fall, Indonesian Islam varies at plenty of degrees; from the growth of liberal and progressive trends up to the awakening of the conservative and radical turns (Al Makin, 2017: 3-4; Bruinessen, 2013: 1; Hasan, 2005: 1).

During the period of 1970s-1980s under the president Soeharto known as the smiling general, Indonesian Islam was largely considered to have the smiling face with the hegemony of the open-minded discourse as it was influential in the universities, the Ministry of Religious Affair, and other main Muslim institutions (Bruinessen, 2013: 2). However, it also coincided with the New Order's political strategy to demarcate with the Islamist sentiment suspected to stand against the state (Al Makin, 2016: 3).

However, the development of moderate and liberal thoughts of Islam during the New Order was not in line with the total empowerment of minorities groups which are not officially recognized by the state. At that time, the state

policy through a ministerial directive, i.e. Minister of Home Affairs Directive No. 477/74054/BA.01.2/4683/95 issued on November 18, 1978, stated that there were five official religions in Indonesia; Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism (Yang, 2005: 1). The rest of religious communities outside these five are not guarded by the state. In this case, they were considered as spiritual cults (*aliran kepercayaan*), not religion (*agama*).

Another fact to be presented is that Islam varies greatly around the world and also in Indonesia. The aim of New Order to curb religious groups requires the homogenization of Islam as the dominant religion. The result is denomination of Sunni-Islam in Indonesia and the marginalization of the religious minority group within Islam itself. One of the representative minorities of Islamic groups in Indonesia are the Shias. During the New Order, there are at least three major Shia leaders who were banned by the government for propagating Shiasm; Muhammad Baqir al-Habsyi, Haidar Bagir, and Jalaluddin Rakhmat (Zulkifli, 2013: 37). Under the Soeharto regime, the Shias were considered as the anomalous group (Halimatussa'diyah, 2013: 148)

Along with the dawn of *reformasi*, the Shia groups started to increase distinctly after the fall of New Order. In the Post-New Order Indonesia, a number of Shia institutions continued to increase. In the comprehensive research on Indonesian Shias, Zulkifli concludes that up to the end of New Order, the Shias in Indonesia were the minority religious group, scattered throughout Indonesia. On the whole, they confined to urban areas but were not unified under a single socio-religious body. Entering the Post-New Order Indonesia, a prominent Shia leader in Indonesia, Jalaluddin Rakhmat and other intellectuals formed IJABI (*Ikatan Jama'ah Ahlul Bait Indonesia*), the first Shia mass organization which gained the legal recognition from government. It was declared on July 1, 2000 at its first national inauguration. Ten years later, ABI (*Ahlul Bait Indonesia*), an important Shia mass organization also started to emerge as the second largest Indonesian Shia

mass organization. Before IJABI, there were actually several Shia institutions emerged in Indonesia. Most of them are the institution of *da'wa*, such as YAPI (*Yayasan Pesantren Islam/ Islamic Boarding School Foundation*), in Bangil (established in 1976), MAHDI (*Majelis Ahlulbait di Indonesia/Council of the Ahlulbait in Indonesia*) in Pekalongan (established in 1990's), *Yayasan Muthahhari* in Bandung (established in 1988) and the similar institutions (Zulkifli, 2013: 200, 113).

In addition to IJABI and ABI, a Shia organization also started to establish in early 2000s, namely the OASE (Organization of Ahlul Bait for Social-support and Education). Founded by Emilia Renita in 2001, the organization engaged in social activities, human rights, advocacy, and education. In turn, this organization also collaborated with IJABI, as Emilia was pointed as general secretary of IJABI (2008-2012) and eventually became Jalaluddin Rakhmat's wife until their divorce in 2015 (IPAC Report, 2016: 5). Both has collaborated in working on a notable contemporary Shia book entitled *40 Masalah Syi'ah* (40 Shia Problems), a work written by Emilia Renita with Rakhmat as the editor (Renita, 2013). In addition to holding the position as the leader of IJABI, Jalaluddin Rakhmat also became the advisor of OASE (*penasehat OASE*) during several years before the divorce.

From the landscape of social movement and minority studies, OASE marks the significant field to be explored. Not only presenting the movement of a "multi-layered" minority, which is the exponent of a post-new, order religious expression, OASE has its own distinction in the course of general landscape of Indonesian Shias through several aspects. In addition to several women divisions of Shia organization such as *Fatimiyyah*, a women division of IJABI (Halimatusa'diyah, 2013), OASE is one of the organizations for Shia women in Indonesia. Their activities of social support and education are also necessarily significant in the study of Islamic philanthropy. Their existence and movements are also important as the representation of minority

groups in Post-New Order Indonesia. Finally, the contemporary dynamic of this organization designates the different color in Indonesian Shia, as it officially follows a different *marja'*, namely Ayatullah Sayyid Sadiq al-Shirazi, a cleric from Shirazis family, those known for their opposition to the current theocratic regime in Iran under the supreme leader Ayatullah Ali Khamenei (Matthiesen, 2013: 42) who is followed by vast majority of Indonesian Shias including IJABI and ABI.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly studies examining Indonesian Shias in Post-New Order Indonesia have been conducted by several researchers (Al-Makin 2017; Formichi 2014a; Formichi 2014b; Formichi 2015; Halimatusa'diyah 2013). The grand narration of these researches lies on the development of the Indonesian Shias in which local tradition of 'Alid piety, foreign orthodoxy after the Iranian Revolution, and anti-Shia movement are contested in shaping their identities.

For the best of my knowledge on the specific study of the OASE, I found at least two representative works. The notable one is that of Zulkifli in his dissertation entitled *The Struggle of the Shias in Indonesia*. In one chapter entitled "Da'wa", he mentions the movement of OASE, in several passages, as one of Indonesian Shia women institution involved in religious education for the poor by providing *kelas akhlaq* (class of morality), awarding scholarship to the children of poor families, and other social activities (Zulkifli, 2013: 135). In addition to its short discussion, this study does not represent a specific and comprehensive review of the OASE. Another work to be taken into consideration is IPAC Report No. 27 entitled "The Anti-Shia Movement in Indonesia". This work contains the valuable information about the identity of the founder and her career in the context of Indonesian Shia movement, including the growing militancy of Shiasm presented by OASE (IPAC Report No. 27, 2016: 5). This paper can be seen as the further study on the OASE following the similar matrix

applied in the later article, with the depth analysis on social movement and the matter of *marja'iyya* as the point of difference.

RESEARCH METHOD

Concerning the methodological issues, this paper seeks to review the OASE through several frameworks. Using the interpretative analysis conducted from the social-movement, my aim is to explain the origin of OASE and its social activities in the public sphere as the representation of the minority group. It also deals with explaining the creeds embraced by the OASE as the ideological foundation of the organization. In addition, it is particularly interesting to place the OASE in the context of Indonesian Shias in one hand, and analyzing the organization in the light of international context of Shia *marja'iyya* in the other hand.

This study seeks to analyze the facts of a religious movement in the threefold layers; artifact, socio-fact, and mentifact, three terms borrowed from Julian Huxley, a British evolutionary biologist, which are integrated into socio-historical studies. Artifact is simply the things made and formed by people, including various cultural items. Socio fact elucidates how people come together and for what purposes, while menti fact is what people think and believe regarding something (Kartodirdjo, 2013).

The depth-interview is the method used to collect the material related to the purpose of this research, in addition to a bibliographical study from a number of relevant books and journals carried out to analyze the data. The main sources of this study is the researcher's engagement in depth-interview and informal conversation with the leader of OASE, Emilia Renita and several members of the organization, in addition to collecting and analyzing OASE's database in the form of documents, photos, posters, and other artifacts. In order to place the OASE within the big family of Indonesian Shias, attention is also paid to perceptions of the other representative Indonesian Shia organization regarding the movement of OASE.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Nature and Origin of OASE

OASE (Organization of Ahlul Bait for Social-support and Education) was established in 2000, the same year with IJABI's declaration, as an organization for Shia women. Coordinated by Emilia Renita, OASE is one of the Indonesian Shia organization that made the important contribution in Shia-borrowing Zulkifli's term-social *da'wa* activities. The movement of Indonesian Shia *da'wa* (religious propaganda) according to his research, can be classified into three types; *tabligh* (preaching), *ta'lim* (teaching, training, and courses), and social *da'wa* (Zulkifli, 2013: 128, 135). The phrase "social-support and education" marks the major concern of the organization's purpose in social services and educational field.

The vision and mission of OASE as mentioned below (Lestanto 2017; Oaseimamalitv.or.id, 2017b) reflects the nature of its creed and movements:

a) Vision:

Menyampaikan Islam yang menjadi Rahmat bagi seluruh alam (Rahmatan lil Alamin) dalam rangka menyambut Imam Al Ashr Waz Zamaan Afs ('Ajjalallahu Farajahu al-Syarif).

(To convey Islam that is the mercy for the world in order to welcome the imam of age and time – may Allah hastens his majest re-appearance)

b) Mission:

Memberikan karya nyata dan bersiteguh menegakkan keadilan, membela masyarakat tertindas, dan menebar kasih ke seluruh alam dengan senantiasa mengedepankan koridor dan kaidah-kaidah hukum yang aberlaku di indonesia

(Providing concrete work and striving to uphold justice, defending oppressed society, and spreading love throughout the world by continuing to put forward the corridor and the rules of law applicable in Indonesia)

The Shia identity of this organization is reflected in the passage "to welcome *Imam Al-'Ashr Waz Zaman afs*", namely the final Imam of the Twelve Imams as taught by the Imamate or Twelve Shia; al-Mahdi al-Muntazhar who, according to their messianic creed, will emerge to bring the ultimate justice and peace throughout the world. The movements of OASE which concern in social-support, including social service, advocacy among oppressed minorities, human right, and other activities are theologically derived, to mention a few, from this messianic creed and other Shia principal doctrines, in addition to the fact that they are part and representative of the oppressed minority group in Indonesian context, particularly during the New Order. This is confirmed by Sachedina's thesis that this kind of belief has also become an inspiration for social movements against political repression (Sachedina, 1981: 182).

OASE emerged as the result of the euphoria of *reformasi* in post-New Order Indonesia, as well as IJABI and other Shia mass organization. During the regime of Soeharto, they were considered as an anomalous group who are limited in performing their religious expressions. According to its founder, OASE emerged as the religiously-motivated movement in order to make the Shia real to work for the people (Renita, 2017).

The founder and current coordinator, Emilia Renita Az was born in Jakarta, 1973 to a Palembangese Father and a mother of German-descent. Born into an educated family, Emilia was not a Shia at first. Her father was a pious and god-fearing Sunni-Muslim with moderate tendencies, while her mother was a *mu'allaf* from German ancestry. She was born into a family with culturally diverse backgrounds, including ethnicity and religion. Her truth-seeking journey began when she studied at United States in 1991. In the beginning, he was less interested in studying Islam, for he saw only the anomalies

to be found within its adherents (Renita, 2017).

Touched by her father's advice and encouragement for his children to be more aware in religious learning, Emilia started to study Islam and to fulfill her quest to find the straight path. Just like someone who is looking for self-identity, Emilia started to think freely concerning several religious questions even a sensitive one like that of salvation of the non-Muslim in hereafter and other eschatological issues. She intensively asked the Islamic clerics to solve her problems. During the study in United States, she has approximately 100 religious questions to be solved and several discussions have been carried out with various *ulama*. At first, he was not satisfied with the answers of some scholars related to her questions that were quite "wild", until finally she found a satisfaction, both intellectually and spiritually, in the teachings of the Shia School (Renita, 2017).

After performing *hajj* (Islamic pilgrimage) at that time, the study for exploring Islam and the Shia world was more intensive, until she studied the history of Islam and found several unfinished "anomalies". After nine years of seeking, she converted to Shia or Shia? In 1999, a year before the establishment of OASE. She even called herself as the *mu'allaf* (a convert) in the big family of *Ahlul Bait's* lovers (Renita, 2013: 13). As the price to pay, she has to go through the hard times, facing plenty of obstacles, and finally lost her previous existence. By her converting to Shia, she lost the previous status and even some family recognitions. In her being lost of everything, she founded the OASE in 2000, an organization established to love the *mustaq'afin*. Emilia and team concerned in educational activities of teaching the poor, awarding to the poor family, and similar educational activities.

Concerning the origin of OASE, Emilia states as follows:

The establishment of OASE is the concrete manifestation of Imam's sayings (*sabda Imam*). One of the basic tenets of the Shia teachings is the belief in 12 infallible imams (*al-ma'shumin*) who are the descendants of Imam 'Ali through

Sayyidah Fatimah al-Zahra. The Prophet Muhammad said: whoever made me a leader, then 'Ali is the leader. In this case, Imam 'Ali said that "I am the father of the poor and needy (*abū al-fuqārā' wa al-masākīn*)". This means that the followers of Imam 'Ali are obliged to serve the poor and the needy. OASE is the manifestation of this service (Renita, 2017).

In this regard, OASE was established based on a devotion to the Twelver Shiasm as a religiously inspired philanthropic movement engaged in social support and education. It also marks the double significant; the awakening of the minority group to express their religious expression and the women engagement in public sphere. The origin of OASE is quite unique; it is formed as a concrete manifestation of some principal doctrines of the Shiasm performed by the women who has just converted to Shiasm. The obedience of a woman who has just finished the quest for the truth and ended up in the Shia household, has given birth to a unique minority movement in Post-New Order Indonesia.

Institutional and Ideological Construction

Figure 1

The Current Logo of OASE



Source: <https://oaseimamalitv.or.id>

Having established based on the Twelver Shiasm, OASE particularly declares itself as the representative office (*kantor perwakilan resmi*) of Grand Ayatullah Sayyid Sadiq Husaini al-Shirazi in Jakarta, Indonesia (Renita, 2017; Oaseimamalitv.or.id, 2017a). The members of the organization are the followers of Ayatullah Sadiq Husaini al-Shirazi (born 1360 H/1942), an 'Iraqi Shia *marja'* who currently resides in Qum. In addition to Ayatullah Ali Khamanei, the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatullah Sadiq Husaini al-Shirazi is one of the international leading Shia *marja'* followed by several Indonesian Shia. What seems interesting is that OASE is the one

and only women-headed official representative office of Grand Ayatullah Sadiq Husaini al-Shirazi throughout the world. For this reason, the Grand Ayatullah himself has treated this branch with special attention and care (Renita, 2017).

OASE also has the institutional statute and organizational structure including the coordinator, secretary-general (*sekjen*), and members. Up to present day, it is considered as a Shia small organization in Jakarta consists of about 25 official members (Lestanto, 2017). Although it mainly has a domestic institutional coverage in Jakarta, OASE also has representative offices in Malaysia and Singapore. Due to the unfortunate circumstances, OASE doesn't seek to expand its organizational coverage throughout Indonesia.

The major tenet of OASE is the engagement in empowering the oppressed (*mustaḍ'afīn*) which is one of the most important doctrines in Shia tradition. The serious attention paid by the Shia, in general, to *mustaḍ'afīn* is to be found either in their discourse and movements. In agreement with OASE, one of the IJABI's five pillars as well as its vision, is defending the oppressed (*pembelaan terhadap mustaḍ'afīn*). In Islamic Republic of Iran, Sya'ban 15th, which is believed to be the birthday of Imam Mahdi, al-Muntazhar, is an official holiday and is called the "World Day of the Oppressed". As cited by Zulkifli, Jalaluddin Rakhmat also noted this doctrine as an alternative to existing Islamic thought that attract people from Indonesian universities in 1980s to be sympathetic to Shiasm. The notion of *mustaḍ'afīn* in Islam is similar to some concepts composed by "the left" to whom many academics paid the attention at that time, such as "plight of the oppressed" or "pedagogy of the oppressed" (Zulkifli, 2013: 46). The empowerment of the oppressed has a close relationship with the messianic doctrine concerning the coming of Imam Mahdi to restore the absolute justice throughout the world and to liberate the oppressed as it has already been mentioned.

In relation to the state, OASE fully supports the Unitary State of Republic of Indonesia (*Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia/NKRI*) with *Pancasila* (five principles) as its national ideology, the 1945 constitution as the basic of the government, and *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) as national motto. OASE is a representative of the Indonesian Shia group that doesn't refer to the Islamic Republic of Iran which emphasizes the importance of the *wilāyat-al fāqih* within the political system of a country. As it mainly refers to Ayatollah Sadiq Husaini al-Shirazi, it can be said that the major shade of OASE is Iraqi Shia, not Iranian one. The examination of OASE's Shia identity in relation to the other Indonesian Shias will be mentioned in next session.

To promote and socialize the activities of the organization, OASE has also utilized the social media including Facebook fan page (<https://www.facebook.com/OASE-the-Organization-of-Ahlulbayt-for-Socialsupport-and-Education-131987153621933/>) and recently develops the official website (<https://oaseimamalitv.or.id/>). All of the important OASE's activities are well-documented digitally in the facebook fanpage.

OASE on Philanthropy

Although belonging to a small organization and representative minority, OASE's concrete works on advocacy of the oppressed groups and its contribution of social services are worthy of attention. Most if not all of OASE's activities are carried out at certain times coincide with the important days known in the Shia tradition. These days divided into two categories; happy days and days of mourning. The former including *wilādah* (birthday commemoration) of some holy figures in Shia creed such as *Wilādah 'Ali*, *Wilādah Fatima Zahra*, *Wilādah Mahdi al-Muntazhar*, and so on. The later coincides with the *syahadah* (martydoom) of these figures (Lestanto, 2017).

In addition to the belief in prophet-hood, the Shias positioned *imāmah* as one of their major creed. They believe that the Prophet Muhammad

appointed twelve successors and said: "The successors (*khulāfa'*) after me will be twelve". For them, Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima and the twelve Imams, has underlined a complete plan for a good life. They provide a complete constitution for a virtuous life and are role models for mankind for all times and in all their affairs (Shirazi, 2008). Based on this creed, they recognize the birth and death of these *imams* as the sacred times to be commemorated.

Table 1. The Dates of Birth and Death of The Fourteen Infallible *Imam*

No	Name	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Location of Grave
1	Prophet Muhammad	17 Rabi' al-Awwal	28 Safar	Medina
2	Fatima al-Zahra	20 Jumada al-Tsani	3 Jumada al-Tsani	Medina
3	Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib, Amir al-Mu'minin	13 Rajab	21 Ramadhan	Najaf, Iraq
4	Imam Hasan bin 'Ali, al-Mujtaba	15 Ramadhan	7 Safar	Medina
5	Imam Husain bin 'Ali, Sayyid al-Syuhada	3 Sya'ban	10 Muharram	Karbala, Iraq
6	Imam 'Ali bin Husain, al-Sajjad	15 Jumada al-Awwal	25 Muharam	Medina
7	Imam Muhammad bin 'Ali al-Baqir	3 Safar	7 Dzu al-Hijjah	Medina
8	Imam Jafar bin Muhammad al-Sadiq	17 Rabi' al-Awwal	25 Syawwal	Medina
9	Imam Musa bin Ja'far al-Kazim	7 Safar	25 Rajab	Kadimiyyah, Iraq
10	Imam 'Ali bin Musa al-Rida	11 Dzu al-Qa'dah	30 Safar	Khurasan, Iran
11	Imam Muhammad bin 'Ali a-Jawwad	10 Rajab	30 Dzu al-Qa'dah	Kadimiyyah, Iraq
12	Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Hadi	2 Rajab	3 Rajab	Samarra, Iraq

13	Imam Hasan bin 'Ali al-'Askari	10 Rabi' al-Tsani	8 Rabi' al-Awwal	Samara, Iraq
14	Imam Muhammad bin Hasan al-Mahdi	15 Sya'ban	Alive and in occultation	-

Source: Sayyid Sadiq al-Shirazi's, *The Shia and Their Beliefs*, 2008.

The list above becomes the basic for an "official annual calendar" for OASE to perform a series of their activities. In happy days, the usual activities are food distribution, forum of scientific studies such as seminars or conferences, while in the sad day, in addition to the condolence ceremony; they also provide the social services in order to commemorate the concerned figure in such a unique way. Below is a partial categorization of OASE activities carried out within these important days.

1. Social Services

In Hilman Latief's research, several civic organizations are rapidly growing in the aftermath of Soeharto's fall, appearing in the different ways; NGOs focusing on community development projects as ethnic-based mass organizations supporting political institutions and as religion-based paramilitary groups focusing on the imposition of religiously inspired public norms, while the others have appeared as voluntary welfare associations attempting to offer an alternative to the state's role in fulfilling social needs (Latief, 2016: 270).

Among the massive presence of the later type, several minority groups began to appear in the public sphere, marking the dawn of their visibilities in a previously imprisoned public space. Indonesian Shias are the representative minorities in this elucidation. Their appearance in public activities marked a new phase of their fate in this increasingly democratic country. Philanthropic movements to fulfill social supports became one of the major tenets of this type of organization.

Being a representative movement of this type, one of the main activities held by OASE is the social support with its various forms. One of

recent social services held by OASE in 2017 is the “sharing *iftār* campaign” by providing *Dapur Umum Ramadhan* (Public Kitchen of Ramadhan) that shares at least 100 free *iftār* (evening meal when Muslims end daily Ramadhan fast) packets for the poor every day.

Figure 2

“Sharing *Ifthar* Campaign” Brochure



Source: OASE's Archive

Figure 3

Sharing Free *Ifthar*



Source: OASE's Archive

The main target of “share free *iftār* campaign”, and almost all of OASE social activities, is the slum areas and poor settlements. In addition, the packages are also distributed to homeless people living on the streets in Jakarta. Another example is distributing food packages to the children in order to commemorate the birthday (*wilādah*) of Sayyidah Fatimah al-Zahra in 20 Jumada al-Tsani 1438 H (21 March 2017).

Figure 4

Sharing The Food Packages to The Poor Children



Source: OASE's archive

Figure 5

Packing the Foods for Poor Children



Source: OASE's archive

The engagement in social services with the special days known in Shia tradition has become the major work of OASE. Most of these special days coincide with the commemoration of the birthday or the death (martyrdom/*syahadah*) of the holy figures in Shia tradition and become the annual agenda of OASE. Inspired by the Shia teachings, Emilia, the coordinator and founder explains the major tenet of these religiously-inspired social services; “without discrimination, we see all humans as objects of reverence, that’s what we got from Imam ‘Ali, the father of the poor and orphans” (Renita, 2017).

2. Education, Advocacy, and Human Right

The particular work held by the OASE is also concerned in educational supports. In early times, they involved in establishing the education for the poor by providing *kelas akhlak* (classes in morality) in several schools in Jakarta. Besides, it also provided various forms of training for the poor in Jakarta and other places (Zulkifli, 2013).

The curriculum that has been taught ranges from morality (*akhlak*) to civic education (Lestanto, 2017).

One of the most notable attainments in educational support performed by OASE is the establishment of the first *hawza* (Shia seminary) in Jakarta, namely the "Hawza of Sayyida Zainab or Hawza Zainabiyya". It officially opened on December 16, 2015, following the directives of the Grand Ayatollah Sayed Sadiq Husseini Shirazi.

Figure 6

Learning Activities in *Hawza Zainabiyya*, Jakarta



Source: OASE's Archive and <http://shiawaves.com/english/world/2091-first-hawza-established-in-the-capital-of-indonesia>

The *Hawza* is a branch from the *Hawza* of Syria, which was established by Ayatullah Sayid Hassan al-Shirazi, as it has assigned its same curriculum to be taught in Indonesia. Through its lessons, the *Hawza Zainabiyya* of Indonesia aims to spread the pure teachings of *Ahlulbayt*, along with their virtues, rituals, rights and oppressions. The *Hawza* currently provides courses in jurisprudence, theology, Quranic sciences, history and hadith. Recently, the management of *Hawza* is submitted to other parties and no longer under the direct auspices of OASE (English.shirazi. ir., 2017; Renita, 2017; Lestanto, 2017).

Advocacy in certain cases, particularly those relating to the displacement of minority rights in Indonesia, is also the important agenda held by Emilia and her team. The majority of these advocacies concerned with the struggle for the

rights of minorities to express their existence and expression in the public sphere and at the same time is shackled under the pressure of majority. For instance, OASE is actively involved in the advocacy of several Churches that are forcibly closed. One of representative activities is the advocacy for GKI (*Gereja Kristen Indonesia*/Indonesian Christian Church) Yasmin, a Protestant Christian church in Bogor, Indonesia, under the auspices of the Indonesian Christian Church based in Jakarta, which since 2010 was sealed by the government of Bogor. The advocacy was also strived for HKBP (*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan*/Batak Christian Protestant Church) Filadelfia, which for the last 13 years has been closed by the Bekasi government. OASE's involvement in the advocacy of these cases is mainly motivated by the awareness of being involved in the same caravan as minority group in Indonesia, in addition to the spirit of freedom and liberation against any political and social repressions as it is derived from the Shia teachings (Lestanto, 2017).

For this reason, to reinforce the institutional strengthening and to perform the advocacy of several cases, OASE also maintains the ability of structural procedures of the legal aid (*bantuan hukum*), among other things, by providing and participating in several forums and trainings, including OASE's leader participation as the facilitator in *Kalabahu* (*Karya Latihan Bantuan Hukum*/Training for the Legal Aid), a series of activities that have been carried out by Jakarta Legal Aid Institute (*Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*/LBH Jakarta) since 1970. *Kalabahu* is a place and access for those who wish to dedicate themselves to engage in legal aid works for the society. The society referred to in this case is the poor and oppressed society who are unable to access to legal assistance due to the inequality of the structure (bantuanhukum.or.id, 2017). The sharpening of administrative and legal procedures in the matter of positive laws, particularly in the legal aid, is required to maintain their resilience and to support the similar groups, in confronting several cases related to their marginality in the society.

Figure 7
Emilia Renita in *Kalabahu*
(Karya Latihan Bantuan Hukum) 2016



Source: OASE's Archive

Thus, on many occasions, there has been a lot of controversy emerging over them as a minority group dealing with other religious groups representing the wings of the majority. Most of these cases are ranging from closing the houses of worship, curbing the religious expression and the other persecutions in a lot of terms. The hard challenge for Indonesian Shias and other minorities in general actually proceeds from the movement of homogenization of Islam in Indonesia, under which the spirit of purification, Sunni orthodoxy, and radicalization, establish each movement (Al-Makin, 2017: 5-8).

OASE's activities in the struggle of Human Right (HAM/*Hak Asasi Manusia*) are also notable to be mentioned. Emilia, the coordinator, is one of the Human Rights activists who has been actively engaging in several important forums related to promoting Human Rights, either as participant or speaker. The most notable of these including several forums such as United Nation of Human Rights Council (UNHRC), an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe (Ohchr.org, 2017). In addition, she is a frequent speaker in several seminars and conferences, among which the most representative is her participation as the speaker in "The International Conference of Freedom of Religion or Belief in South East Asia" in Thailand.

The nature of the awareness to uphold the human rights within the OASE's members has

basically a religious character, that is, the Shia teaching itself. One of the inspirations for the human rights struggle among the Shias is the teachings listed in a famous book attributed to Imam Ali Zainul 'Abidin bin Husain al-Sajjad (the fourth Imam of the Shias) entitled *Risalah al-Huquq* (Treatise on Rights) containing fifty rights that cannot evade in any circumstances (Imam 'Ali bin Husein, 2002: 566; Qabanji, 2002).

Figure 8

Brochure of the OASE's International Seminar of Interfaith Related to Imam al-Sajjad's Treatise as the Islamic Source for Human Rights



Source: OASE's archive

3. Reciting *al-Faraj's* Prayer on the Road and '*Asyura's* Alms for the Poor: The Nature of "Shia Philanthropy"

The emerging of OASE marks the visibility of a minority religious movement in public activities with the form of welfare and or charitable association. Ranging from social services, education, advocacy, human rights activity – as it has already been mentioned – these social acts are one of the manifestations of the Shia creed embodied in a religiously-derived social meaning. When asked about the motivation of the movement, they lastly refer to one tradition on which the major Shia creeds was based; "Imam Ali was the father of the poor and needy (*Abu al-Fuqara wa al-Masakin*)" (Renita, 2017). From this, emerged the tenet of Shia creed and its derivations in multi-layered dimensions, namely the service to the poor and the oppressed.

Through examining OASE's social services, one can see a representation of the so-called "Shia Philanthropy"; volunteering long hours in face-to-face works assisting the poor with a religious motivation derived from the teaching of their infallible Imams (*al-ma'sumin*). Philanthropy and charitable services for the

public good, are universal phenomenon found in various historical periods and in different traditions and civilizations. As cited by Fauzia, McChesney states that for the first and foremost, philanthropy in Islamic tradition is understood as the “believer’s moral obligation to do good work on God’s behalf” (Fauzia, 2008: 28). Shortly speaking, philanthropy is regarded by Muslims as a form of worship and considered as one of the central tenets of Islam.

The nature of Islamic philanthropy lies on the linkage between two major domains; faith and community. Based on Alterman and Hunter’s words, in the Islamic conception, humans are linked to each other through their obligations to God. A charitable act is therefore neither merely an act of faith nor an act of community. It is the building of community through faith, and the building of faith through the deepening of community (Alterman and Hunter, 2004: 3). The dual significance employed in Islamic philanthropy underlies all philanthropic activities of Muslims with varying degrees based on their diverse traditions.

Talking into detail, the manifestation of Islamic philanthropy is very diverse in design and inner structure, although it basically stands on the same canopy as already mentioned. Shia philanthropy in this case contains some elements that are unique and different from other Islamic philanthropic activities. While it is essentially the same as the social services empowering of the poor, motivations behind the outer structure may vary greatly according to their respective landscapes in viewing the nature of the philanthropy itself.

The Shia landscape in performing philanthropic activities is basically derived from their devotion to the teachings of the infallible Imams. Throughout a series of their activities, the spirit and teachings of the Imams will always exist as the inspiration and religious motivation in realizing every philanthropic matter. Let us apply this view in examining one of their social activities, namely the distribution of food packages to homeless people sleeping by the roadside.

The major tenet of this social service at the first place, namely the “inward structure”, is the total devotion to Imam ‘Ali bin Abi Thalib, who is identified by the Shias in general as “the Father of the poor” (*Abū al-Fuqarā’ wa al-Masākin*). From this emerged the forces for doing the public good regardless their *mazhab* even religion. In addition, at the second place, Imam al-Mahdi, the twelfth Shia infallible Imams who is currently believed in the greater occultation (*ghaybah kubra*), is also presence in establishing the creed foundation of the awareness for charity and the “outward appearance” of the philanthropic activities. This is demonstrated by one section of the above philanthropic ritual, in which the members of the OASE recited *al-faraj* prayer on the road, on the sidelines of the distribution of food packages to the homeless people.

Figure 9

Reciting *al-Faraj* Prayer on The Street among The Poor



Source: OASE’s archive

Two Among Many Versions of *al-Faraj* Prayer

إلهي عَظُمَ الْبَلَاءُ، وَبَرِحَ الْخَفَاءُ، وَأَنْكَشَفَ الْغِطَاءُ، وَأَنْقَطَعَ الرَّجَاءُ، وَضَاقَتِ
الْأَرْضُ، وَمُنِعَتِ السَّمَاءُ وَأَنْتَ الْمُسْتَعَانُ وَإِلَيْكَ الْمُسْتَكِي وَعَلَيْكَ الْمَعْوَلُ
فِي الشَّدَةِ وَالرَّخَاءِ، اللَّهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، أُولِي الْأَمْرِ الَّذِينَ
فَرَضْتَ عَلَيْنَا طَاعَتَهُمْ، وَعَرَفْتَنَا بِذَلِكَ مَنْزِلَتَهُمْ فَفَرِّجْ عَنَّا بِحَقِّهِمْ فَرَجاً
عَاجِلاً قَرِيباً كَلِمَحِ الْبَصْرِ أَوْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ، يَا مُحَمَّدُ يَا عَلِيُّ يَا عَلِيُّ يَا مُحَمَّدُ
إِكْفِيَانِي فَإِنَّكُمَا كَافِيَانِ، وَالنُّصْرَانِي فَإِنَّكُمَا نَاصِرَانِ يَا مَوْلَانَا يَا صَاحِبَ الرِّمَانِ،
الْعَوْتُ الْعَوْتُ الْعَوْتُ، أَدْرِكْنِي أَدْرِكْنِي أَدْرِكْنِي الْعَجَلُ الْعَجَلُ الْعَجَلُ

O my Lord! The calamity has aggravated; the absence prolonged. The curtain of modesty has been lifted; hope has been curtailed; The earth has been narrow; and sky has been denied. And

You are the One from whom help is sought and complaints are made. And in You we trust in the times of difficulty. O Allah! Send blessings upon Muhammad (S) and the progeny of Muhammad (S), he possessors of authority whose obedience you have enjoined upon us and by that made us aware of their position. Then make open for us, by their truth, an immediate opening, immediate as a wink or sooner O Muhammad! O 'Ali! O 'Ali! O Muhammad! Suffice me both of you as both of you are sufficient. Help me—two of you—for you are my helpers, O our Master, O Master of the Time! Help! Help! Rescue me! Rescue me! Rescue me! Hasten, hasten, hasten

اللهم كُنْ لَوْلِيكَ الْحُجَّةَ بْنَ الْحَسَنِ صَلَواتِكَ عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَى آبائِهِ فِي هَذِهِ السَّاعَةِ
وَفِي كُلِّ سَاعَةٍ وَلِيًّا وَحَافِظًا وَقَائِدًا وَ ناصراً وَدَلِيلاً وَ عَيْناً حَتَّى تُسْكِنَهُ أَرْضَكَ
طَوْعاً وَكَمْتَعَهُ فِيهَا طَوِيلاً

O Allah, be, for Your representative, the hujjah (proof), son of alHasan, your blessings be on him and his forefathers, in this hour and in every hour, a guardian, a protector, a leader, a helper, a proof, and an eye. until You make him live on the earth, in obedience (to You), and cause him to live in it for a long time.

Al-Faraj prayer (*du'ā al-Faraj*) is a well-known prayer in Shia tradition, which aims to hasten *al-faraj* (the appearance of al-Mahdi), rejecting the reinforcements, and turning down the persecutions. As stated previously, the messianic doctrine of the coming of Imam al-Mahdi to restore the ultimate justice throughout the world has become the major tenet of Shia creed foundation which inspired various social movements, including social services and other charitable activities.

Another representative sample employed in examining the nature of Shia philanthropy is the 'Āsyura's alms for the poor. 'Āsyura, the tenth day of *muharram* in Islamic calendar marks the commemoration of the events of 680 AD (61 H) and the battle of Karbala, the seventh-century battle field death of Imam Husain (Pinault, 1992: 4-5). Annual programs have been arranged by all Shia groups throughout the world in commemoration

of 'Āsyura. For those who consider Imam Husain as the third infallible Imam, the successors of the prophet, 'Āsyura, the day he was murdered in Karbala by Yazid's army, is one of the saddest and most important moment in Shia tradition, while the Sunni view the 'Āsyura as the day in which Moses and his followers were saved from Fir'aun (Pharaoh).

The massacre of Hussain and a small group of his followers was commemorated by the Shias with passion and sorrow. His martyrdom contributed to the establishment of the Shia identity and their religious conscience. This event creates the mourning liturgies and annual lamentation as the main agenda in the Shia calendar. As stated by Nanji and Daftary, the events of Karbala are commemorated globally, wherever Twelver Shia communities can be found. The gathering places at which such events take place are known as Husayniyya, which consist of extensive, decorated, and adorned places with images that recall the tragedy (Nanji and Daftary, 2007: 231).

However, in the extensive research on the passion of the 'Āsyura, Aghaie comes to the conclusion that the symbols and rituals of 'Āsyura have evolved over time and have meant different things to different people (Aghaie, 2007: 111). Various vernacularized traditions have been established in this commemoration, from the *matam* tradition (suffering and cutting the body with knives or chains) as the Muharram liturgies and supervised communal expressions of grief in acts of self-mortification in the Indian city of Hyderabad (Pinault, 1992) to the symbolism of the antimonarchy discourse of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 (Aghaie, 2007: 113).

Through OASE's presentation, it is not exaggeration to say that the symbolism of 'Āsyura has also transformed into the philanthropic course in special appearance. This is reflected in the annual program conducted by OASE in commemorating 'Āsyura. One representative example is the agenda for 'Āsyura in 2013:

Table 2. OASE's *Āsyura* Program in 2013

No	Date	Agenda
1	1-13 Muharram/5-17 November	distributing free foods to Ibn Sabil for Imam Husain and his family who travel from Mecca to Karbala
2	Starts 7 Muharram/11 November	distributing 70.000 bottles of water for Imam Husain and his family and Sahabah who started being stopped from having water

Source: OASE's archive

The above agenda shows that the series of activities in *Āsyura* commemoration held by OASE in 2013 are entirely inspired by the chronological matrix of the historical narrative of Imam Husayn's tragedy in Karbala. In this case, they seek to recall the cosmogonic drama of Imam Husain's suffering to be commemorated in philanthropic manifestations. Again, the presence of the Imams is always central in every charitable activity of OASE and the Shias in general.

Figure 10

Preparing 70,000 Bottled Waters to be Shared



Source: OASE's archive

Not only limited to the mentifact and sociofact degrees, this pattern also appears in the artifact levels. At the outward appearance, all symbols and objects in these activities are also in line with the matrix of Imam Husein suffering. The design of the bottled water cover clearly affirms this impression:

Figure 11

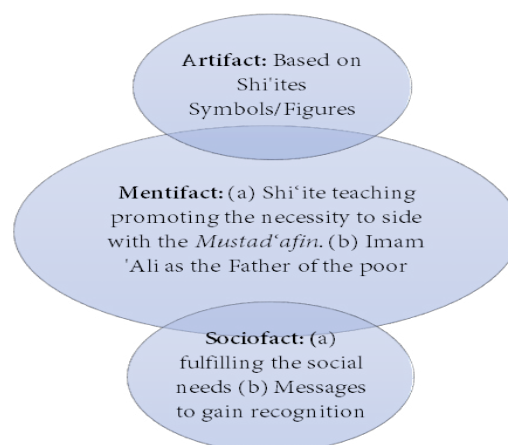
The Design of The Bottled Water Cover Illustrating The Massacre of Imam Husain in Karbala with The Arrows Piercing His Body



Source: OASE's Archive

Also from this artifact, one can detect the missionary account through reading the *'Ashura* message written on the cover; *ingatlah al-Husain as., cucu Rasul saw yang dibantai tanpa setetes air* (remember Husain as., the Prophet's grandson who was massacred without a drop of water). Concerning this activity, Zulkifli's notion of social *da'wa* is highly relevant. He elaborates the social *da'wa* of the Indonesian Shias as an implementation of the Shia teaching promoting the necessity to be side by side with the *mustad'afin* (the oppressed). *Da'wa* has a significant meaning for the Shias in Indonesia with the purpose of gaining recognition as a community and a *mazhab*. As the broader idea, *da'wa* means "the propagation of Islam not only by preaching and publications, but also by deeds and activities in all areas of social life" (Zulkifli, 2013: 113).

Based on the above explanation, the pattern of Shia Philanthropy with special reference of the OASE can be drawn as follows:



At the heart of the matter, the famous Shia

teaching which frequently found in their sources; the service to the poor and the oppressed (*mustad'fîn*), with Imam 'Ali as the father of the poor and the needy (*abū al-fuqarā' wa al-masākin*), has above all become the foundational creed. In the level of "sociofact", in addition to the awareness of fulfilling the social needs, the purposes of gaining recognition appear due to their marginality as the minority group wishing to present themselves as a whole – not *via* the other group's presentation – to the public sphere in order to walk side by side, being a part of the big family of Indonesian muslim within all the existing diversity (based on Renita, 2017). The combination of both has finally manifested in such a unique social activities which contribute to the dynamics of philanthropy in Indonesia.

On *Marja'iyya*; a Different Color within Indonesian Shia Groups?

In accordance with the recent developments, there are reasons to believe that the existence of OASE also reflects a new color within Indonesian Shia. As it previously associated with IJABI (*Ikatan Jama'ah Ahlul Bait Indonesia/The All-Indonesian Assembly of Ahlulbayt Associations*), the distinguishing element of OASE compared to other Shia groups in Indonesia lies on the matter of *marja'*. For the last two centuries, religious authority in Shiasm has been known as *marja'iyya*, literally means "the source of imitation" and figuratively describes "the position of a living Shia supreme legal authority", those who possess the exclusive authority to interpret shari'a (Khalaji, 2006: 1). According to the representative of Indonesian Shia, the relationship between the Shia followers and their *marja* is consultative, it is not binding and is not mandatory (Tim Ahlul Bait Indonesia, 2014: 337). During the occultation of Imam al-Mahdi, the *maraji'* are the representatives of him. The major Indonesian Shia civic organizations, including IJABI and ABI, follow the Iranian authority under the supreme leader Grand Ayatullah Ali Khamanei, the successor of Ayatullah Khomreini (d. 1989), while the OASE refers to Grand

Ayatullah Sadiq Husain Shirazi as their *marja'*.

The facts to be employed are the internal diversity within the Shias themselves. There are two large axes that are the source of Shia *followers* around the world, Najaf in Iraq and Qum in Iran. Both places are the main source that gave birth to the scholarly tradition with *hawzah*-style. The former was established over centuries ago, while the latter has just been established for five decades or at least a century ago. The Iranian axis appeared with its mystical and philosophical character, while the Arabian axis (Iraq and its surroundings) is more orthodox (Tim Ahlul Bait Indonesia, 2014: 340). Through the case of OASE, we find out that Indonesian Shias are not monolithic, but rather pluralistic and show such a heterogeneous character. Both Iranian and Arabian (Iraqi) schools, have their respective places in Indonesia. The relevant issue to be explored is that sectarianism within Shiasm itself is closely related to polemics at the geopolitical level.

Born on the 20th of August, 1942 in the Holy City of Karbala, Iraq, Ayatullah Sadiq Husain al-Shirazi is a prominent Shia *marja'* who lived in Qum. He was born into "Shiraziyyun family", an honorable and revered family, and a family well known for their knowledge, sacrifice and leadership (Shirazi.ir. 2017b). His old brother, Ayatullah Muhammad al-Shirazi (1928-2001 AD), was the supervisor of the "Message Movement" created in the midst of 1960 AD – lately changed its name with "Islamic Organization Action" in 1979 – which purpose is to fight the 'Iraqi regime and replace it by an Islamic state. Being threatened by the movement of this aggressive organization, in 1971, Ba'thist reign under Saddam, decided to exile Ayatullah Muhammad al-Shirazi outside Irak (Cesari, 2014: 150).

Some researchers identify these movements simply as the *Shirazis*, as a transnational Shia movement. Along with Hizbullah and al-Da'wa, the *Shirazis* considered as one of three main trends of political Islam amongst Arab Shias (Matthiesen, 2013: 39, 44). After the death of the movement's

spiritual leader, Ayatullah Muhammad al-Shirazi, in 2001, the *Shirazi* movement split into followers of the *marji'yya* of his brother, Ayatullah Sadiq al-Shirazi, and followers of the *marji'yya* of his nephew Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi al-Mudarrisi. While Sadiq al-Shirazi vowed to continue in the footsteps of his brother, and adopted an increasingly non-confrontational approach toward the Gulf governments, the more politically minded decided to follow the *marji'yya* of Muhammad Taqi al-Mudarrisi and his brother Hadi al-Mudarrisi, which started to be called the *mudarrisiyya* by its followers (Matthiesen, 2013: 39-40).

He was a spiritual master of the Movement of Vanguard Missionaries (MVM). With Ayatullah al-Khomeini, Ayatullah Muhammad al-Shirazi, at the first place was initially one of the important figures in the Iran's Islamic Republic and had a good relation with Khomeini. Al-Shirazi the cadres of the MVM moved to Iran. Political theory of Muhammad al-Shirazi and the MVM was quite close to Khomeini's notion of *wilayat al-faqih* (the guardianship of the jurisprudent), although al-Shirazi favored the theory that not a single cleric, but a council of scholars should govern the Islamic State (*ḥukūmat al-fuqahā'/syuruṭ al-fuqahā'*) (Matthiesen, 2010: 182).

The trial of strength developed between him and Ayatullah Khomeini. Relations between him and Khomeini deteriorated in the early 1980s. He also continued to compete with Khomeini for the post of *marja' al-taqlid* (Matthiesen, 2010: 183). Ayatullah Muhammad al-Shirazi, a politicised *marja'* who wasn't sparing in his criticism of several aspect of Iranian domestic and foreign policy and who considered himself as a *marja'* whose standard perfectly matched that of Khomeini, was typically a kind of independent politico-religious activist. The Shirazis transnational network was definitely set aside in the framework of the final settling of score between Iranian pragmatics and radicals hay in 1986, following the Iranian-contra affair, the secret arms deal between Iran and the United States. Headed by Rafsanjani, the pragmatics eliminated the radicals who have

been the Shiraziyyin main supporters (Louer, 2008: 231).

Since the days of al-Rafsanjani and Grand Ayatullah Ali Khamanei, the Shirazi movement has also slowly been weakened by their policies. In this case, many Shirazi followers are under state custody. Not only in political matters, the disputes between the two sides also occurred in religious course. The representative example is that of *taṭbir* (acts of mourning performed by several Shias dedicated to the suffering of Imam Husain). Ayatullah Ali Khamanei, the current supreme leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, forbids to practice *taṭbir* and considers it at wrongful and self-damage act and also a fabricated tradition (Mervin, 2007: 146; English.khamanei.ir, 2017), while Ayatullah Sadiq al-Shirazi says that the ritual of *taṭbir* (*Qama Zani*) is *ḥalāl* and *mustaḥab* (Mervin, 2007: 146; English.shirazi.ir, 2017c).

Since it was established in 2001, OASE had from very beginning referred to Ayatullah al-Shirazi in several consultative matters, although not as an official representative. When the organization was associated with IJABI in several activities, OASE, together with IJABI, referred to Ayatullah Sayyid Husein Fadlullah as *marja'*. After Husein Fadlullah died, there was a difference of opinion between the two; IJABI tends to Ayatollah Ali Khamanei, the supreme leader of Iran, whereas OASE chose Ayatullah al-Shirazi. After completely became the independent, OASE officially became the official representative office of Ayatullah Sadiq al-Shirazi.

By choosing this path, OASE has to pay the price of being ostracized by other Indonesian Shias groups. While the major Shia civic organization like IJABI and ABI are the "followers" of Ayatullah Khamanei, OASE stands at the opposite *marja'yya*, due to the polemics between Khamanei and al-Shirazi. The negative images began to emerge when OASE as the representative office of Ayatullah al-Shirazi in Indonesia, associated with Syekh al-Tawhidi, one of al-Shirazi's followers in Australia who is known as the extreme Shia figure. In fact,

according to Emilia, al-Tawhidi himself cannot be fully considered as a representation of Ayatullah al-Shirazi. For her, it is a great error, if there is someone who claims Ayatullah al-Shirazi is the extremist Shia *marja'*, based on a blind referencing to al-Tawhidi (Renita, 2017). In this case, the appearing of OASE and its negative image in front of another Shia groups, has also reflected the transcending disputes from the Near East in one side, and the diversity within the Shias, in the other hand.

Since the last three years, it must be recognized that OASE's development entered a new direction. This is because ideologically and institutionally, OASE has become independent and is no longer oriented to any IJABI. The affiliation with al-Tawhidi also gives its own color to this organization. It can be said that the character of Shia conservatism is getting stronger in OASE. Since its departure from IJABI, OASE's role in disseminating Shia doctrines has dominantly become the "Indonesian spokesman" for Ayatullah al-Shirazi. The facebook fanpage and OASE's official website (oaseimamality.or.id) contain many Shiraziyyin material and are directly connected to Al-Marjaeyat TV, the official video-sharing of Ayatullah al-Shirazi. The sectarian platform seems to be stronger in the course of Indonesian Shias.

Figure 12

OASE's facebook fanpage shares Al-Marjaeyat



TV

Source: <https://web.facebook.com/OASE-the-Organization-of-Ahlulbayt-for-Social-support-and-Education-131987153621933/>

Finally, in the context of Indonesian Islam, Emilia and her OASE, can be regarded as the multi-layered minority; the minority group (followers of al-Shirazi) within a minority religious group (the Shias) in Indonesia. Yet, what seems to be the important thing is the fact that OASE was one of the early pioneers of Shia women organization to rise in Post-Soeharto Era. Fortunately, in this increasingly democratic country, they can perform as the visible minority in the public sphere and carry out their religious expression, as do other religious groups, although not entirely free, due to the facts that there are still much opposition from the majority, especially from the conservative groups whose mission is to homogenize Indonesian Islam. One of their strengths to survive is their equality before the law. By developing legal aid capabilities, minority groups like OASE can withstand the existing oligarchy.

CONCLUSION

As a multi-layered minority, OASE becomes one of the representatives of the Indonesian Shia organizations. Their public activities consist of philanthropy, social services, education, advocacy, and the struggle for the human rights, with the spirit of Shia teachings. The deep exploration on these activities ends with the unique findings presenting the presence of the Shia elements in every single units of their activities. The emergence of OASE also marked a departure within the Indonesian Shias by their decision to be the followers of Ayatullah al-Shirazi, who is politically the opponent of Ayatullah Khamanei, a figure who became the *marja'* for the vast majority of Indonesian Shias. The existence of OASE with all its activities in the public sphere shows that in the course of post-New Order Indonesia, the Shia groups have shifted from invisible minority to the visible one. Under the protection of democracy, they have been starting to make a distinction for their existence marked by the emergence of official Shia platform. The equality before the law is the legal guide for the freedom of religious expression within the minority groups like OASE.

In the context of Indonesian Shia studies, these findings show at least several contemporary dynamics. In general, the activities performed by OASE indicate the current circumstances of Indonesian Islam, in which the freedom of religious expression can be felt by a multi-layered minority group. The philanthropic activities of OASE and its unique characters have also indicated the growing of religiously-inspired philanthropic movement. In addition, the findings of this research lead to the elementary argumentation on how the trans-national movement and geo-political landscape influence the dynamic of Indonesian Shias in the Post-New Order Indonesia.

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