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Kinship and Social Integration: Ethnographic Study of Shia and Sunni Alawiyin Relations in Palembang

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Abstract	This study aims to examine in depth the dynamics of social relations between the Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin groups in Palembang City. Despite differences in their schools of thought, these two groups are able to coexist without causing open conflict, a condition rarely studied in the literature on intra-community Muslim relations. The knowledge gap lies in the lack of understanding of how kinship ties function as a determining factor in reducing the potential for sectarian conflict. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving 12 purposively selected participants. Data collection techniques were carried out through participant observation and in-depth interviews, then analyzed using the ethnographic framework of Spradley and McCurdy. The results show that social relations between Shia and Sunni Alawiyin form associative and dissociative patterns. The associative pattern is reflected in the form of cooperation in the fields of trade, da'wah, and involvement in socio-religious activities. The dissociative pattern is characterized by limited failure that does not develop into open conflict. The most important factor in mitigating potential conflict is the strength of kinship ties (jama'ah) among the Alawiyin. Theoretically, these findings contribute to the study of social integration in pluralistic societies, while practically, they emphasize the importance of strengthening family and cultural solidarity in maintaining social harmony.
Keywords	Social Relations, Shia Alawiyin, Sunni Alawiyin

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1. INTRODUCTION

Palembang, the capital of South Sumatra Province, is a key center for the development of Islam in Indonesia. Historically, the city has been a meeting place for various Islamic traditions, particularly the Shattariyyah, Sammaniyah, and Alawiyin orders (Kurniawan et al., 2022; Seise, 2021). Among these, the Alawiyin hold a unique role, originating from the Hadhrami migrant community, who claim to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (Seise, 2018). The Alawiyin community has settled in Palembang since the Sultanate era, with their arrival peaking in the 18th and 19th centuries, primarily from the Hadramaut region of Yemen (Aljunied, 2013; Seise, 2018; Yatim, 1998). The Hadramaut scholarly tradition, inherited from the Shafi'i school of thought, Ash'ariyah theology, and al-Ghazali's Sufism, influences their religious practices to this day, making the Alawiyin of Palembang a crucial part of the transmission of Islamic religious authority in the archipelago (Fuadi et al., 2022; Mas'od & Noor, 2023).

Over time, a new dynamic emerged when a small Alawiyin community interacted with Shia teachings, particularly after the Iranian revolution in the late 1970s (Latief, 2008). This phenomenon was evident in the involvement of Alawiyin figures in Palembang who sent students to study in Iran and

the establishment of educational institutions that influenced these teachings (Zulkifli, 2009). As a result, the Alawiyin community affiliated with Shia (Alawiyin Shia) was born, which gave rise to differences of understanding with Sunni Alawiyin. These differences were particularly evident in the issue of the status of the Prophet's companions and the practice of temporary marriage (*mut'ah* marriage) (Helandri et al., 2023; Noor, 2014; Rumahuru, 2020). However, unlike cases in several countries such as Pakistan (Rafiq, 2014) and India (Sharma, 2016), which were marked by open sectarian conflict (Behuria, 2004; Finnbogason et al., 2019), the dynamics between Sunnis and Shias in Palembang did not escalate into violence. This indicates the existence of socio-cultural mechanisms capable of mitigating potential conflict and maintaining social relations between the two.

Several previous studies on Sunni-Shia relations in Indonesia have focused more on other regions, such as Manado (2021), Jepara (Sulaiman, 2017; Zahra & Ghufron, 2018), and general studies on the Shia movement in Indonesia (Zulkifli, 2009). These studies show a variety of interaction patterns—ranging from tolerance and civic integration to da'wah competition—but no study has yet focused on the Alawiyin community in Palembang. This community is unique because its identity is rooted in genealogical legitimacy (descent from the Prophet), classical scholarly traditions, and its connections to the transnational Hadhramaut network. This gap makes this research significant, as understanding Sunni-Shia relations in Palembang can inform academic discourse on intra-Islamic plurality while also providing practical contributions to efforts to strengthen tolerance in a pluralistic society.

This study aims to describe and analyze the social relations between the Sunni Alawiyin and Shia Alawiyin communities in Palembang, focusing on the forms of social interaction. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of studies on intra-religious dynamics from a rarely explored local perspective. Practically, the results are expected to serve as a reference for religious leaders, local governments, and communities in formulating strategies for preventing sectarian conflict at the local level. Methodologically, this study employed a qualitative approach with a strategic case study. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with Sunni and Shia Alawiyin leaders, observations of religious activities, and the use of religious literature by both groups. The analysis was conducted using a theoretical framework of interreligious relations and social conflict, emphasizing the dimensions of interaction, identity negotiation, and the construction of religious discourse. Thus, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of how differences in sectarian beliefs are internalized, negotiated, and managed within the socio-religious context in Palembang.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine the dynamics of social relations between the Sunni and Shia Alawiyin communities in Palembang. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for exploring the experiences, perceptions, and practices of religious communities within their daily context. The technique used was purposive sampling, considering that participants were directly involved in the socio-religious activities of the Alawiyin community. The study involved 12 participants, consisting of heads of families, traders, business owners, and religious teachers from both Shia and Sunni Alawiyin communities. This number was considered sufficient for a qualitative case study because it allowed for data saturation to be achieved while providing a variety of in-depth perspectives. Selection criteria included: (1) self-identification as part of the Alawiyin community, whether Sunni or Shia; (2) active involvement in community activities; and (3) willingness to be an informant. Recruitment was conducted through internal community networks to build trust. While effective, the use of purposive sampling and internal referrals has

limitations, including the potential for homogeneity of views and selection bias. However, this strategy is considered most relevant in contexts sensitive to sectarian identity.

Data were collected using three main methods: 1) participant observation, where researchers attended religious events, interactions at markets, and community meetings. Field notes were taken using a structured protocol covering situations, actors, interactions, and emerging themes; 2) in-depth interviews, using open-ended guidelines on the topics of family relationships, business collaborations, religious activities, and inter-sectarian perceptions. Interviews lasted 60–90 minutes and were recorded with the participants' permission; and 3) document analysis, including local religious texts, organizational archives, and visual documentation. Data validity was strengthened through method triangulation (comparing observations, interviews, and documentation) and source triangulation (comparing Sunni and Shia perspectives). Discrepancies in information were resolved through follow-up interviews and closed-focus group discussions to clarify interpretations. Furthermore, data reduction was completed by selecting and categorizing information based on the characteristics of the studied problems. Afterward, at the data display stage, researchers determined the type and form of information to be presented narratively in the discussion section. In the final stage, namely conclusion drawing, the essential information on the study was presented at the end of the article (Milles & Huberman, 1986).

This research employed Spradley and McCurdy's (2004) framework on social relations, which distinguishes between associative processes (such as cooperation, accommodation, and assimilation) and dissociative processes (such as competition and conflict). The framework was not only used in designing interview instruments and observation guidelines but also operationalized in the coding and theme development process. During analysis, interview transcripts and field notes were coded deductively according to the associative and dissociative categories, while inductive coding was applied to capture emergent sub-themes within each category. For example, instances of collaborative trade or joint religious activities were coded under associative relations, whereas disputes over ritual practices were coded under dissociative relations. This systematic application ensured methodological coherence and provided a structured lens for interpreting the dynamics of Sunni and Shia Alawiyin relations in Palembang.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Forms of Social Relations between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin

a. *Social Relations in Family*

Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin all belong to one big family named *"jama'ah"*, a term used to distinguish them from non-Alawiyin societies. The Alawiyin communities in Palembang are classified into several names or clans, such as Assegaf, Shahab, Alkaf, Munawwar, and al-Idrus. Thus, there are several villages, such as Assegaf Village, Al-Munawwar Village, Alkaf Village, Sei-Bayas Village, and others which are divided into two large areas; Seberang Ilir and Seberang Ulu. Over time, these clans mixed through marital ties so that one clan member might live and settle in another clan's village. For example, a member of the Assegaf clan could live and own a house outside his or her village. The marriages carried out by the Alawiyin communities made their family members bigger. For example, Muhammad Shahab (80 years old) family had sons-in-law from three different clans, namely Bin Syekhbubakar, Alhabsyi, and Assegaf. As a result, his third generation (grandchildren) had different clan names yet came from one big family. Nonetheless, the large number of clans mixed in one family did not merely make them

follow the same school of thought. Some families had a father who was a member of Sunni while their son was a Shia, or the father was a Shia, but his son-in-law was a Sunni. Further illustrations are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Family members of Muhammad Shahab

Muhammad Shahab (80 years old)				
Child	**Sons-in-law**			
Umar *Shahab*	Ahmad *Assegaf*	Yahya *Al- Habsyi*	Ahmad *Shahab*	Haidar *Bin Syekhbubakar*
Grandchildren: Ali Shahab Taqi Shahab	**Grandchild:** Haidar Assegaf	**Grandchildren:** Ahmad Al- Habsyi Musa Al-Habsyi Muhsin Al- Habsyi	**Grandchildren:** Kamal Shahab Fakhri Shahab	**Grandchild:** Abbas *Bin Syekhbubakar*

Associative social relations within the Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin families could be noticed through their efforts to maintain fellowship and communication. They preferred preserving familial relations rather than questioning religious schools of thought. Hence, for example, the issue regarding schools of thought rarely arose in communication between family members of Husein Shahab (60 years old); based on interviews conducted by researchers (Shahab, 2020). In addition, dissociative social relations between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin did not happen for a long time. Discrepancies in religious views in the family of Muhammad Shahab, as mentioned above, never provoked disagreements or even conflicts, as what occurred in Sampang.

Research findings indicate that social relations within Alawiyin families in Palembang, whether Sunni or Shia, emphasize kinship rather than differences in religious affiliation. Genealogical ties through intermarriage between clans such as Assegaf, Shahab, Alhabsyi, Bin Syekhbubakar, and others expand the family network, ensuring that differing religious affiliations do not become a barrier to maintaining social harmony. The case of Muhammad Shahab's family demonstrates that despite variations in religious affiliation between generations and between in-laws, no serious conflict arises. This aligns with Spradley and McCurdy's (2004) perspective on social relations, stating that the structure of interaction within society is often built on complementary social roles, rather than solely on differences in religious identity or ideology. Thus, Alawiyin families reinforce the principle that social cohesion is prioritized over differences in religious understanding.

Furthermore, the emerging relationship patterns can be categorized as associative social relations, which involve efforts to maintain communication and strengthen brotherhood despite potential differences that could lead to dissociation. Spradley and McCurdy emphasize that social relations within human groups can be understood through the "cultural scene," which displays how social actors interact within the context of specific values and norms. In the case of the Alawiyin, kinship values (*jama'ah*) function as integrative norms that can mitigate potential conflict arising from differences in school of thought, thus maintaining the family as a harmonious social unit (McCurdy et al., 2004). This finding suggests that kinship-based social mechanisms are more powerful in maintaining group solidarity than doctrinal factors that have the potential to divide.

b. Social Relations in Business and Profession

In the context of this research, business and professional relations were the social relations between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin associated with various types of business activities and jobs they carried out. For the Alawiyin community members in Palembang, either in Seberang Ulu or Seberang Ilir regions, their trading centers were *Pasar 16 Ilir*, *Pasar Kuto*, *Pasar Plaju*, and *Pasar Hero*; in order from the largest to the smallest. Besides, they also had their trade businesses done in front of their houses, roadside kiosks, and even on online platforms.

Based on observations, the number of Sunni Alawiyin members who ran trading businesses was more than that of Shia Alawiyin. Their types of business included household consumer goods and other necessities such as fabrics, school uniforms, restaurants, properties, and Umrah and Hajj travel agencies. Furthermore, various kinds of professions, such as teachers or *ustadz*, civil servants, office employees, and doctors, were also discovered by researchers. However, some members of the Shia Alawiyin had been running their businesses and professions for a long time.

Almost all members of the Sunni Alawiyin provided the same answer to the questions considering their association with the Shia Alawiyin. For Sunni Alawiyin, their business activities with Shia Alawiyin were normal. They often worked together to build property, pay debts for goods, or receive other services based on mutual trust and ties with fellow Alawiyin family members. "Business is business" seemed to be their slogan in this form of relationship (Syihabudin, 2020; Umar,, 2020; Syafiq, 2020; Zen, 2020).

This social relation could also be confirmed through the existence of the "H. Abuk" restaurant owned by a Shia Alawiyin member named Abdullah Shahab (82 years old). It was founded in 1985 and has always been visited by the Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin communities. They were often seen getting together and talking about business. Some members of the Sunni Alawiyin even used the catering services of this restaurant for their party events (Shahab, 2020; Alkaf, 2020).

Another piece of evidence was the considerable number of Hajj and Umrah travel agencies, both managed by Sunni Alawiyin and Shia Alawiyin. There were at least several Hajj and Umrah travel agencies, such as "Ar-Raudoh", "Arofah", "Tan'im", and "Naja Tour". Of these, "Ar-Raudoh" belonged to the Shia Alawiyin and could be considered the most successful. According to Faris Al-Idrus (42 years old), almost all Alawiyin community members who left for Hajj or Umrah using their services were satisfied. Even if there were rumors that their agency was spreading Shia teachings, members of the Sunni Alawiyin were there to defend them. Furthermore, as stated by Faris, they always held a recitation of Ratib Haddad *wirid* with other pilgrims in "Ar-Raudoh" (Al-Idrus, 2020). This fact suggested that social relations between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin could be established because of the same beliefs and needs.

Research findings show that social relations in business and professional settings between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin in Palembang are pragmatic and collaborative. Differences in sectarian beliefs do not hinder economic interactions, as kinship and trust predominate in shaping relationships. This is reflected in trade practices at Pasar 16 Ilir and Pasar Kuto, as well as in family businesses like the "H. Abuk" restaurant owned by Shia Alawiyin, which serves as a gathering place for Sunni Alawiyin. Even in religious services, such as Hajj and Umrah agencies, these relationships are harmonious. The success of the "Ar-Raudoh" travel agency, owned by Shia Alawiyin and which continues to receive support from Sunni Alawiyin, despite concerns about the spread of Islam, demonstrates that economic needs and congregational solidarity outweigh ideological differences.

According to Spradley and McCurdy's (2004) theory of social relations, interactions within society must be understood through "cultural scenes," which demonstrate how values and norms guide actions. In the context of the Alawiyin of Palembang, business and professions become arenas of social relations that form associative patterns, as cooperation, mutual trust, and kinship bonds serve as integrative norms. The principle of "business is business" held by the Sunni Alawiyin demonstrates that they place economic relations in an instrumental realm, not tied to sectarianism, but to collective needs and an ethic of trust. Thus, this phenomenon affirms that the Alawiyin social structure is more supported by values of togetherness and family networks than by doctrinal barriers.

c. Social Relations in Religious Ceremonies

Religious ceremonies referred to in this form of relationship were various religious activities carried out by the Alawiyin communities as traditions such as *Maulid Nabi* (commemoration of the Prophet's birthday), *haul*, *tahlil*, or marriage contract. Sometimes, those whole traditions were done at once. For example, the marriage contract event often began with the recitation of *yasin*, *tahlil*, *maulid*, or even *haul*. Additionally, the *haul* of a religious scholar's death was followed by a marriage contract and ceremony. The observations and interviews illustrated how social relations occurred in this aspect. Wedding ceremonies were the most frequently attended events by the members of Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin because these activities could be benefitted as an opportunity to meet and stay in touch. Thus, it might be ascertained that the ceremonies were lively. According to researchers' observations, some members of Shia Alawiyin sat with Sunni Alawiyin in a row, making them constantly engaged in one serious conversation. In this regard, business opportunities became a recurring topic of their discussion. Researchers assumed that they might have the same profession and business, preventing their talks from leading to the issues on religious schools of thought.

Dissociative social relations in marriage can also be seen in wedding plans that are canceled, even though the proposal and dowry have been completed. Typically, if both partners have agreed to marry, and even their parents have approved of their child's choice, this is not the case for siblings or uncles. Their reluctance is usually due to concerns that their child will be "influenced" by Shia teachings. This issue then makes the Shia Habib's family (especially the mother) anxious about their daughter's future in finding a partner (Fatimah, 2020). Apart from weddings, many events commemorated the death of *ulama* in Palembang, such as the *haul* of Sheikh Alwi, Sheikh Muhammad Bin Syekhbubakar, Sheikh Alwi Bahsin, and others. Dissociative social relations emerged during the *haul* of Sheikh Alwi, in which a member of Shia Alawiyin came from Java island to attend the invitation of the committee to give a religious lecture on *Ahlu Bait*, but turned out to receive a contradictive response from the Sunni Alawiyin. Likewise, in the *haul* of an *ulama* of Sunni named Sheikh Muhammad Bin Sheikhbubakar, some Sunni Alawiyin also spoke provocatively about Shia.

However, the opposition between Shia and Sunni at the *haul* events did not trigger any intense conflict between individuals or groups. Additionally, there were no accusations of "heretical" directed at anyone. Such disagreements were inclined to appear as distinctions in ideology and religious views, mainly since Shia teachings were considered misleading by the members of Sunni Alawiyin. Likewise, this concern was often conveyed by the *ustadz* or Islamic scholars of the Sunni Alawiyin at religious events attended by many people. In religious

celebrations, such as the Prophet's birthday, the Hajj, or weddings, associative relationships are more prominent than dissociative ones. Opposition to Shia is directed at its teachings, not individuals or groups. Although there are some cases where differences in family views arise, kinship ties between them actually minimize the potential for conflict.

Research findings indicate that social relations in religious ceremonies within the Alawiyin community in Palembang have two dimensions: associative and dissociative. The associative dimension is evident in various religious celebrations such as the Prophet's Birthday (*Maulid Nabi*), the Hajj (*haul*), *tahlil* (religious remembrance), and marriage contracts, which serve as meeting spaces for Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin. These events not only strengthen kinship ties but also serve as a means of expanding social and economic networks, for example, through business discussions during wedding gatherings. On the other hand, the dissociative dimension arises when wedding plans are canceled due to concerns that one party will be influenced by Shia teachings, or when differences in Islamic schools of thought become the subject of satire during the Hajj (celebration) of ulama (Islamic scholars). However, this dissociative dimension does not lead to open conflict, but rather to symbolic tensions based on differing religious views. Within the theoretical framework of Spradley and McCurdy (2004), this interaction pattern can be understood through the concept of "cultural scene," which is how a society constructs meaning and rules within a specific cultural context. In the case of the Alawiyin, kinship values (*jama'ah*) and religious traditions serve as integrative norms that maintain harmony despite ideological differences. Social relations in religious ceremonies are predominantly associative due to their orientation toward togetherness and friendship, while dissociative forms only emerge occasionally in specific contexts without disrupting the core social structure. Thus, social cohesion is maintained because cultural norms of kinship outweigh theological differences.

d.   Social Relations in Da'wah and Religious Teaching

Majelis taklim, or religious studies in the Alawiyin community in Palembang, were developing quite rapidly. For the last ten years, many Sunni Alawiyin members who returned from studying in Hadramaut, Yemen, had been actively involved in those Islamic religious studies. Their *da'wah* (proselytizing) and religious teachings were usually focused on morals and worship instead of a specific science discussion. Their delivery system was a monologue or lecture, except for *fiqh* issues in which dialogue or questions were rarely asked. This generally accepted method aimed to convey the message of teachings in the books of scholars, especially those who were members of the Ahlu Sunnah. The Shia Alawiyin in Palembang did not have any *majelis taklim* or a specific place to carry out their religious studies as what Sunni Alawiyin did. They also did not have a mosque that functioned as a study place. Consequently, their religious studies were generally accomplished in a member's house, which was in the form of a prayer assembly along with the delivery of religious materials. The need to possess a place to be used as a center for Shia Islamic studies and more extensive religious activities made one member donate the land for building construction. As a result, members of the Shia Alawiyin could openly hold commemorations of the Prophet's Birthday or *Maulid Nabi*, birthdays and deaths of religious leaders, and other events. There was an interesting fact regarding this condition. If there were *ustadz* or members of the Shia Alawiyin who came from outside of Palembang City, they took that opportunity to hold a *majelis taklim* or religious studies to strengthen their beliefs and deepen their comprehension of Shia.

Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin acknowledged that for the past few years, no *majelis taklim* belonging to Sunni Alawiyin had denounced the religious teachings of Shia. It was understandable because most of them made morals and worship the themes of their studies. Furthermore, there was no *ustadz* or religious leaders of the Sunni Alawiyin who specifically addressed the Shia teachings in their presentations. Apart from the fact that they did not know the Shia teachings in detail, their activities usually began after the *Maghrib* prayer, so the Sunni Alawiyin community preferred to focus on their predetermined discussion themes. The number of Sunni Alawiyin members attending the religious studies was quite large, although they were often mixed with non-Alawiyin communities in some places. According to Muhajir, a member of the Shia Alawiyin, their limited numbers made them barely seen in the Sunni Alawiyin's *majelis taklim* (Muhajir, 2020). For this reason, the implementation of religious studies among Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin did not lead to disagreement. Even if there was any, it was usually temporal to preserve the faith of Sunni Alawiyin.

Research findings indicate that social relations within the context of the Alawiyin community's religious study groups in Palembang emphasize cohesion and tolerance over differences in sectarianism. Sunni Alawiyin have a more established system of religious study, centered in mosques and a monologue-based method of delivery, while Shia Alawiyin are more limited, typically holding religious study sessions in members' homes or at a dedicated site. Despite limited facilities within the Shia community, this does not lead to open conflict. The fact that Sunni Alawiyin religious teachers rarely mention Shia doctrine in their studies suggests a social mechanism for maintaining harmony and focusing on universal themes such as morality and worship. Thus, the religious study space serves as a medium for strengthening social cohesion within and between Alawiyin groups.From the perspective of Spradley and McCurdy's (2004) social relations theory, this phenomenon can be understood through the concept of "cultural scene," namely how social interactions are governed by mutually agreed-upon cultural norms, values, and practices. The majelis taklim (Islamic study groups) function as a social relational arena that fosters associative interactions through strengthening religious values, fostering friendships, and cross-group communication. While there is potential for dissociation, such as concerns about the influence of Shia teachings, this does not escalate into conflict because the primary focus remains on strengthening morals and worship. Thus, the majelis taklim serves as a medium for social integration, reflecting the principle that community solidarity prevails over theological differences.

e. Social Relations in Communication and Association

Based on interviews with Syafiq (50 years old), Hadi (45 years old), and Abubakar (55 years old), they admitted that Shia teachings were not a dominant topic of their communication. However, it was usually just a short response to a lecture by a religious scholar, a viral thing on social media, or an event related to the day of *Ashura*. Nevertheless, although it was not dominant, the issues on Shia were always related to the Prophet's companions, *mut'ah* marriage, or *taqiyah*. Such a circumstance was because almost all members of Sunni Alawiyin did not know for sure about the issues they were discussing (Shahab, 2020). Such a circumstance was because almost all members of Sunni Alawiyin did not know for sure about the issues they were discussing. Instead of talking about *mut'ah* marriage, for example, their conversations somewhat led to the matters of polygamy. Eventually, their discussions would lead to one conclusion: an invitation to

return to ancestral teachings. Consequently, the Shia issues implicated in communication among the members of Sunni Alawiyin did not make them understand more about Shia. Instead, they justified Shia communities as individuals deviating from their ancestral path. Even worse, there was an assumption that the members of Shia were "heretical", so they needed to be prayed for. The previously discussed condition did not affect the behaviors of members of Sunni Alawiyin who had friendly or kinship relations with the Shia Alawiyin. Most Sunni Alawiyin members assumed that Shia Alawiyin were still their relatives, and their choice of faith was entirely their right.

However, critical findings regarding dissociative aspects in their communication relations generally indicated a change in attitudes. The information obtained from Fatinah (42 years old) revealed that there were Sunni Alawiyin families who advised their children to beware of Shia Alawiyin. Such an attitude did not only emerge in non-formal communication but also in the formal context of schools and other non-formal educational institutions. It somehow affected the child's communication relations, making the children of Sunni Alawiyin ask their friends in the Shia Alawiyin community about their parents' religious views. Not all assumptions that Shia was heretical triggered the dissociative relations in the communication and association of the Alawiyin communities. For those having family ties, the notion of Shia being heretical did not result in any communication problems because such jokes and accusations were not always taken seriously. There were even many Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin community members who became close friends that would like to argue and discuss many issues.

Research findings indicate that issues related to Shia teachings are not a dominant topic in the daily communication of the Alawiyin community in Palembang. Conversations about Shia teachings typically arise only incidentally, for example, in response to religious teachers' sermons, viral social media issues, or the commemoration of Ashura. However, these discussions tend to be superficial because most Sunni Alawiyin lack a deep understanding of Shia teachings. The topic of mut'ah, for example, is often equated with polygamy and leads to the conclusion that a return to "ancestral teachings" is necessary. This reinforces the stereotype that Shia are deviant or even heretical, and therefore require "prayer." However, this attitude does not necessarily disrupt social relationships in the context of kinship and friendship; many Suni members maintain good relationships with Shia relatives or friends. From the perspective of Spradley and McCurdy's (2004) social relations theory, this pattern indicates the coexistence of associative and dissociative relationship dynamics. Associative relationships are seen when family ties and friendships overcome ideological differences, while dissociative relationships emerge through stigma or parental advice for children to distance themselves from Shia. However, in accordance with the concept of cultural scene, social interactions within the Alawiyin community remain governed by kinship norms that serve as a counterbalance, preventing differences in sectarianism from escalating into open conflict. Thus, communication within the Alawiyin community reflects the local culture's way of managing identity tensions through humor, prayer, or advice without disrupting the underlying social structure.

3.2. Important Factors in Social Relations between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin

In this subchapter, the study will focus on examining the factors influencing social relations within the Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin communities. This description of these factors is based on an

analysis of facts obtained through observations and interviews regarding associative and dissociative social relations among the Alawiyin.

1) *Family Ties*

Even though many Shia Alawiyin members lived in Sunni Alawiyin neighborhoods, they did not feel like a minority. Because any member of the Alawiyin communities would consider themselves part of a big family of Alawiyin or *jama'ah*, a term referring to the consequence that they belong to one large and interrelated group, either based on close or distant kinship relations. The family lineage that could be traced through a sort of family tree, even up to the fifth generation (grandchildren, children, fathers, grandfathers, and great- grandparents), was almost thoroughly known by many members of the Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin. For example, in Palembang, the term *misan* or *mindo*[7] denotes the bond between individuals as the *jama'ah*, which has always been the cause of the absence of dissociative social relations. The family ties of Alawiyin communities were apparent in various social activities, one of which was marriage. In every wedding ceremony, *misan* or *mindo* of the bride and groom's family would try to attend and help. They usually came with their children to be introduced to their uncles, *misan*, or other *mindo*. Thus, it was typical for marriages to be established between *misan* or *mindo*, making their social relations stronger. In addition, business relations as the *jama'ah* could be an example of the significance of family ties between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin. The preference to choose business partners from fellow *jama'ah* was based on mutual trust and the common good. Even though there were business disputes among the community members, it was hardly ever for an issue to get processed in court.

2) *Paradigm of Thought*

Most Sunni Alawiyin religious scholars in Palembang considered that they had to uphold their ancestors' religious principles. On various occasions, such foundations were conveyed to the society so that they would keep following the ancestral creeds and stay away from those who were different. The teachings of the *Salaf* (predecessors) for the Sunni Alawiyin were employed as an ideology bounding their religious patterns. Consequently, leaving the teachings of *Salaf* was regarded being deviant and heretical. Therefore, any member of Sunni Alawiyin would seek to become a follower of their ancestors who were believed to be on the path of *thariqat al-Alawiyah*, a religious method or model of the Alawiyin scholars. Hence, anyone coming out of the *Salaf* teachings was considered to leave the *thariqah*. This paradigm of thinking ultimately became the rationale of Sunni Alawiyin community members, that Shia teachings were not the same as *Salaf*. Likewise, almost all Sunni Alawiyin religious leaders advised their followers to stay away from and not be influenced by the Shia. Since it was conveyed on numerous occasions, without considering the actual substance of the issues, any Shia teachings they discovered would automatically be judged as a misleading attempt.

The same condition was also uncovered in the paradigm of thinking of Shia Alawiyin, which was considered Iran-oriented. As alumni of the *hauzah* of Qum, Iran, almost all religious leaders and followers of the Shia Alawiyin made Iran the center of their spirituality. For the Shia Alawiyin, although their ancestors came from Hadramaut with a well-known scholar named Sheikh Ahmad al-Muhajir, many others settled and were buried in Iran, including Imam Ali al-Ridha. Meanwhile, Imam Musa al-Kazhim and Imam Muhammad al- Jawad were buried in Iraq, a region having Shia as the majority. The Shia Alawiyin in Palembang also felt very close to the teachings of their ancestors, which were different from the Sunni Alawiyin who considered their ancestors to be the *ajdad* (forefathers) who became the religious leaders in their time, such as Sheikh Abdullah al-Haddad, Sheikh Abubakar

al-Idrus, Sheikh Abubakar al-Sakran, and others. Meanwhile, for the Shia Alawiyin, their predecessors were the *Ahlul Bait*, including Imam Hasan and Imam Hussein (grandson of the Prophet Muhammad), Imam Ja'far Shadiq, Imam Muhammad al-Bagir, and others. In the presumption of Shia Alawiyin, the Sunni Alawiyin community members were unwilling to comprehend the teachings of the *Ahlul Bait*, their ancestors. The thinking paradigm of these two religious schools of thought resulted in a diverse understanding of the meaning of "following" the *Salaf*. This situation became the basis for the idea that dissociative social relations between them were inclined to lead to the issues of religious teachings instead of the sources.

3) *Friendship and Intellectual Relations*

The Sunni Alawiyin followed quite several prominent *ulama* (religious scholars). Furthermore, there was an interrelated network of friendships, which was dominated by similarities in educational institutions and the teachers who taught them. For instance, Umar Abdul Aziz, the caretaker of the "Rubath al-Muhibbin" Islamic boarding school, and Hamid al-Habsyi, who managed the "al-Riyadh" Islamic boarding school. Their friendship networks grew from the "al-Riyadh" boarding school until their education in Makkah. Furthermore, in the same generation as the two above, Naqib Bin Syekhbubakar, who managed an Islamic boarding school in Bekasi, and Ahmad Novel Alkaf (d.2020) as the caretaker of the "Darul Habib" Islamic boarding school in Sukabumi. Both were also alumni of the "al-Riyadh" in Palembang. Afterward, the four of them built a friendship and intellectual network, beginning with the same teachers, namely Ahmad al-Habsyi ("al- Riyadh") and Muhammad al-Maliki (Makkah). Furthermore, Naqib and Ahmad Novel became crucial references for the Sunni Alawiyin in Palembang regarding the teachings and traditions of the *Salaf* scholars. The network of friends of the Sunni Alawiyin scholars was also in contact with that of Shia Alawiyin. In a similar category as the four names above, there were two brothers named Umar Shahab and Husein Shahab, who were also graduates of the "al-Riyadh" Islamic boarding school. They were students of Sheikh Ahmad al-Habsyi, who became the first generation of learners sent to study in Iran. Thus, it depicted that Sunni Alawiyin scholars also had a network of friends and intellectuals similar to Shia Alawiyin.

The second generation of the *ulama* of Sunni Alawiyin was also associated with the previous four names. They learned at Hadramaut under the supervision of Sheikh Umar Hafiz (Habib Umar). Among them, Mahdi Shahab and Syukri Shahab were the ones who gave lectures more often. Some second-generation Sunni Alawiyin scholars also delivered the lectures outside Palembang. At certain moments, they came to Palembang and were frequently asked to give religious lectures. Unlike the Sunni Alawiyin, the second generation of Shia Alawiyin, who continued his education in Iran, was Muhsin Zein Shahab. He had no intellectual network with previous Sunni Alawiyin scholars. Besides the limited number, there were no Shia Islamic boarding schools in Palembang. As a result, the teacher-student relationship in the second-generation Shia Alawiyin did not appear in this factor.

In social relations, the network of friends and intellectuals of Sunni Alawiyin scholars was perceived as a contributing factor, precisely in a dissociative nature. The strong teacher- student solidarity of the Sunni Alawiyin could always be witnessed in religious ceremonies such as the commemoration of the Prophet's Birthday or *Maulid Nabi* and the *haul* of the death of a religious scholar. On this occasion, the theme of "returning to the ancestral teachings" would likely be conveyed. Hence, the friendship and intellectual relations between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin did not exist in their second generation, as presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Friendship and Intellectual Relations between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin

	Ahmad Al-Habsyi (teacher)	
	Shia Alawiyin	**Sunni Alawiyin**
	Iran	Makkah
Generation I	Umar Shahab	Umar Abdul Aziz
	Husein Shahab	Ahmad Novel Alkaf Hamid Syekhbubakar
Generation II	Muhsin Bin Shahab *(Qum, Iran)*	Mahdi Shahab Syukri Shahab *(Hadramaut)*

4) *Mass Media*

The mass media that was found to be the dominant factor in the social relations of Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin was the mobile messaging platform known as *WhatsApp (WA)*. It was accessed by almost all members of Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin. In this regard, many posts about Shia and Sunni, whether in the form of images or videos (including *YouTube*), could spread quickly through this platform. Even though it had become a dominant public consumption, it was common for *YouTube* videos about Shia issues to appear from some old posts instead of new ones. Several *YouTube* videos containing Habib Rizieq's lectures on Shia could be used as relevant examples. If Sunni Alawiyin posted the video, the content was likely about criticisms against Shia. However, if it came to Shia Alawiyin, the footage appeared to show Habib Rizieq's neutral view of Shia. Likewise, during the celebration of *Ashura* day, *YouTube* videos being reposted repeatedly were inclined to show the scenes of chest beatings carried out by the followers of Shia. As a dominant element, *WhatsApp* could affect the social relations of Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin, either associative or dissociative. In addition to being a medium for disseminating information within the family regarding the death of relatives or invitations to celebrations, issues and news also spread rapidly without limits through this platform, making negative stigma against Shia would always appear constantly; regardless of the fact whether it coincided with a certain momentum or not.

4. CONCLUSION

The social relations between Shia Alawiyin and Sunni Alawiyin in Palembang were associative and dissociative. In its associative nature, social relations were taken place in various forms of cooperation, either through trades or celebrations and social activities. Meanwhile, in its dissociative essence, the social relations were in the form of limited disputes and contradictions. The bond as one family (*jama'ah*) held by the members of Alawiyin communities became the most crucial factor in maintaining social relations and reducing open conflicts. In addition, the paradigm of thinking about the teachings of the ancestors (*Salaf*), the network of friends and intellectuals of the scholars (*ustadz*), as well as the mass media (*WhatsApp*) played a vital role in the development of associative and dissociative social relations. Furthermore, the present study proved that differences in religious teachings did not always lead to open conflicts, especially if there were established kinship and familial ties.

The findings of this study contribute theoretically to the understanding of intra-religious relations by showing that sectarian differences do not inevitably lead to conflict when strong kinship ties and shared cultural values are present. This provides an alternative perspective to conflict theory by

emphasizing integration mechanisms within religious subgroups. Practically, the results suggest that community leaders, religious organizations, and local governments can strengthen harmony by fostering kinship networks, promoting inter-sect cooperation, and facilitating inclusive community activities. Nevertheless, this study has limitations, particularly the small sample size and its focus on the Alawiyin community in Palembang, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research could adopt a comparative approach across different regions or Muslim communities, expand the sample size, and integrate quantitative methods to enrich the analysis and provide broader evidence on patterns of intra-religious social relations.

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