# The Sunni-Shia Harmony and Conflict in Jepara (Central Java) and Sampang (Madura)

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Abstract. Shia Islam, in its early days, was a fringe and opposition movement in Sunni Islamic hegemony. After the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate, Shia grew and grew until the Shia sultanates stood with Iran as their main base. The Sunni-Shia conflict in the Middle East is historical. In this century, the Wahhabi-Salafi group has been most aggressive in preaching that Shia are heretical, infidel, and outside Islam. Even though international ulema conferences have emphasized that Shia is the same as Sunni, both are Muslims. The Indonesian Muslim community adheres to Sunni Islam. But the Indonesian nation, with its primary basis of Javanese and Minang culture, is open and accepting of differences. As for Madura, it is more closed. The research aims to produce a model of Sunni-Shia relations in Bangsri Jepara District (Central Java) and Omben Sampang District (Madura)-Expo facto research method. Sources of data are investigative reports of national media and scientific journals. The results of the research show that Sunni-Shia relations in Jepara are harmonious. The contributing factors were religious leaders and local community leaders accepting the presence of Shia, joint socio-religious activities, and the support of peace activists and Islamic organizations. Meanwhile Sunni-Shia relations in Sampang were terrible. Local Sunnis hinder Shia religious activities. They even burned mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and houses, thus driving the Shia people out of Madura. The causative factor was that the Ulama and local Islamic organizations rejected the presence of Shia, and the community obeyed the Ulama. Meanwhile, Shia residents are not accommodating to local cultures.

Keywords: harmony; conflict; Sunni-Shia relations; Jepara (Central Java); Sampang (Madura)

## 1. Introduction

Indonesian Muslims are Sunni Muslims who are different from Sunni Muslims in the Middle East. Indonesian Islam is friendly, moderate, inclusive, tolerant, peace-loving, harmonious, and respects diversity [1]. Islamic scholars and figures such as KH Ma'ruf Amin (current vice president), Yusuf Kala (previous vice president), Mahfud MD (Menkopolhukam), Said Aqil Siraj (Public Chair of PBNU), and Din Syamsuddin (General Chair of PP Muhammadiyah) confirmed the characteristics of inclusivism and moderatism of Indonesian Islam which are different from those of the Middle East [2]. NU and Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's two largest Islamic organizations, are the guardians of religious moderatism in Indonesia [3]. East-Central Sunni Islam, especially Wahhabism, is characterized as exclusive and anti-Shia [4,5]. The eight-year Gulf War between Iraq (led by Sunni Islam) and Iran (Shia Islam) in 1980-1988 strengthened the Sunni-Shia conflict in the Middle East. At that time, all the Gulf countries supported Iraq. Meanwhile, Iran is isolated, only supported by Syria and Shia Hezullah and Hamas organizations [6]. The introduction of the ideology of Wahhabism, which exalts conservative Arab Islamic culture to Indonesia, has contributed to the emergence of exclusive and intolerant groups who often accuse groups outside of them of being enemies, infidels and allowed to be fought [7]. Although there are regionally specific factors, the Sunni-Shia conflict in Indonesia is more of an extension of the Sunni-Shia conflict in the Middle East.

The presence of Shia in Indonesia, including in various parts of the world, is often associated with the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution under the leadership of Imam Khomeini. Even though the presence of Shia influence has existed since the early period of the spread of Islam in Indonesia in the 7th century AD. The historical evidence is artifacts and other historical objects as evidence for further research [8]. Even Shia was once the ruler of Aceh. The founder of the Peureulak Sultanate (Aceh) was Sultan Alaiddin Sayyid Maulana Abdul Aziz Syah, grandson of the fifth Shia Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir. He founded this sultanate on 1 Muharram 225 Hijriyah [9], or the IX century AD. Shia and Persian have been entrenched in Indonesian Islam. Husein Jayadiningrat mentions several Persian cultures in Indonesian culture, including how to spell the Koran, the commemoration of Ashura Day (10 Muharram) for the martyrdom of Hussain bin Ali (the third Shia Imam), and the similarity of the mystical teachings of Shaykh Siti Jenar with Sufi Hussain Al-Halaj [10]. Among the Shia, the Day of Ashura has a very sacred position and unforgettable historical value [11]. Imam Khomeini changed the Ashura ritual with a revolutionary movement towards positive development instead of being reactionary such as self-mutilation [12]. The Shia hold a 40-day convention centered on Karbala [13]. They, too, in this month of Muharram, donate their blood [14]. Asyura Day commemoration has become part of Indonesian culture. The Javanese people, including those living outside Java Island, preserve the Ashura tradition by making "Suro porridge" [15]. Helfrich et al. reported that in Sumatra in 1888, a Tābūt Festival was held [16], namely a ceremony commemorating the story of the heroism and death of Imam Husein bin Ali bin Abi Talib, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Until now, on 1-10 Muharran, the people of Bengkulu hold the Tabot Festival. Meanwhile, the Javanese in Bengkulu carry out the "Suroan" ritual [17]. In Indonesia, the Shia Imams are a lineage of tarekat, which the Sufis highly venerate [18,19]. Therefore, Indonesian Islam is Sunni Islam plus Shia culture [20].

In its early days, namely, several years after the death of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, Shia Islam was a fringe movement and opposition to Sunni Islamic hegemony. After the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate, Shia grew and grew until the Shia sultanates stood with Iran as their main base. Shia and Sunni conflicts are based on power motives, not religious ones. This rivalry was represented by the regimes of the Bani Umayyads based in Damascus and the Bani Hasyim based in Basrah, each of which received support from the Arabs and Persians. Then, both parties drew

political conflicts into religious issues to legitimize and gain sympathy [21]. The Sunni-Shia conflict in the Middle East is an ethnic and historical conflict between Arabs and Persians, as seen in the 1988-1998 Iraq-Iran War [6]. In this century, Saudi Arabia, with its Wahhabi-Salafi community, has aggressively preached Shia as heretical, infidel, and outside of Islam [4,5].

International ulema conferences emphasize that Shia is the same as Sunni, and both are Muslims. The 2004 Amman Treatise, resulting from the World Scholars Conference, calls for tolerance and unity within the Muslim community. The conference, attended by 200 Ulama from 50 countries, raised the issue of "who is a Muslim, the issue of takfir (accusing someone as infidel), and the grounds related to issuing a fatwa." The treatise contains three chapters. First, the recognition of 8 schools of thought and various another Islamic knowledge: Sunni Hanafi, Sunni Hanbali, Sunni Maliki, Sunni Shafi'i, Shia Ja'fari, Shia Zaydi, 'Ibadi, and Zahiri. The treatise also prohibits the mention of infidels for followers of the teachings of `Ash'ary, genuine Tasawwuf, and true Salafi. Second, the Prohibition of calling Muslims infidels whose teachings are acknowledged. Third, this regulation is stated as a basic condition for determining other fatwas, intended to prevent the issuance of inappropriate fatwas [22]. The Al-Azhar International Conference in Egypt (27-28 January 2020) produced many formulations regarding the renewal of Islamic thought. There were 29 formulas read by the supreme leader of al-Azhar, Grand Sheikh Prof. Ahmed Thayyib, at the conference's closing. The conference was attended by Muslim scholars, leaders, and scholars from 41 countries. Present from Indonesia, Prof. Quraish Shihab, Prof. Din Syamsuddin, TGB Muhammad Zainul Majdi, and Head of Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ) Muchlis M Hanafi. "The conference was motivated by the need to present moderate Islamic views during various problems that have arisen lately. This view is necessary to show that Islamic teachings align with the dynamics of community development," emphasized Muchlis M. Hanafi [23]. One of the articles prohibits accusing fellow Muslims of being kafir (infidel) by emphasizing, "If the person accused of being infidel has 99 characteristics of disbelief but still has one characteristic of Islam, then that person must be determined as a Muslim" [24,25]. Because the basic principle of Islam is tolerance, respecting other religions and beliefs that are different [26].

The government and Indonesia's largest Islamic organizations have never misled and banned Shia. Said Aqil Siraj, Chairman of PBNU, Shia, and Sunni, both Muslims. There are no Islamic universities anywhere that Shia are heretical. "Wahhabis who are hard on themselves classify Shia as not heretical" [27]. Din Syamsuddin, former chairman of PP Muhammadiyah, said Sunni and Shia are both Muslims because they are still in the creed circle. Shia and Sunni certainly have their advantages and disadvantages. Both of these must be addressed by prioritizing mutual respect and tolerance for one another. The emergence of the two schools of thought said Din, after the death of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, could be seen as a critical view in interpreting Islam. Therefore, according to him, it does not need to be contested [28]. Secretary of PP Muhammadiyah Abdul Mu'thi, Secretary of PP Muhammadiyah, said Shia's teachings were not heretical and asked MUI not to issue heretical fatwas against Shia. Kiai Siraj was wary of the existence of a Wahhabi movement that wanted to destroy the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia through the issue of pitting Suni-Shia in Indonesia. He further asked that Muslims should learn from the Middle East, where Sunni-Shia conflicts resulted in hurting people. Not only that, but the bloody conflict also occurred in ancient times. Let history record it, and the present generation need not follow the

Sunni-Shia conflict [29]. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) has never issued a heretical fatwa against Shia [30].

But the Salafis, borrowing the term Risale Amman, are not genuine, building hate speech by saying that Shia is infidels and outside of Islam. Several regional heads, administrators of Islamic organizations, and regional Islamic organizations have misled Shia, including NU, MUI, and Basra (Madura Ulama Gathering Board) of Sampang Regency (Madura).[31] The East Java MUI is the only MUI that denounces Shia as a deviant sect [32].

The primary basis of Indonesian culture is Javanese and Minang, who are open and accept differences. The Madurese culture is more closed. It is suspected that Sunni Madurese violence against Shia, from 2011 until now, is because they reject differences. Meanwhile, Sunni-Shia relations in Jepara are harmonious. Allegedly because the people of Jepara, who have Javanese culture, are more open and accept differences. The research aims to produce a model of Sunni-Shia relations in Bangsri Jepara District (Central Java) and Omben Sampang District (Madura).

## 2. Method

This research uses the expos facto method. Data sources are news on Sunni-Shia relations in Sampang and Jepara in national online media (websites) and journal articles.

Website news we reviewed:

- a. https://nasional.tempo.co
- b. https://www.kompasiana.com
- c. https://republica.co.id
- d. https://news.detik.com
- e. http://www.bbc.com
- f. https://5news.co.id
- g. https://www.benarnews.org
- h. https://www.ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id

The journal articles we used as study material were those that analyzed Sunni-Shia relations in Sampang (Madura) and Jepara (Central Java).

## 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Existence of Shia in Sampang (Madura)

Sampang is one of four regencies on Madura Island. The other three districts are Sumenep, Pamekasan, and Bangkalan. Madura Island is the Province of East Java.

The 2017 East Java BPS recorded a population of 3,873,184 million people on the island of Madura [33]. But the Madurese ethnic group also dominates the "horseshoe" area (the

eastern area of East Java starting from the eastern part of Pasuruan, Probolinggo, Lumajang, Jember, Situbondo, Bondowoso, to Banyuwangi) [34]. Madurese ethnicity has several characteristics, among others. First, having a tough and robust character maintains self-esteem. For them, "Lebbi is good pote tollang, atembang pote mata" (better to die than be ashamed). Clurit is their traditional weapon of pride. When their self-esteem is stepped on, or they feel unfairly treated, they dare to do anything, even to kill. Second, they are very obedient to the Kiai. Although the thugs are Madurese, they still respect their kyai very much [35]. The LontarMadura website rejects the mention of a tough character. What is correct is firm, although, in its implementation, it is sometimes excessive so that it shifts into violence. The shift occurs when there are conditions that shape it. The most vigorous socio-cultural situation is when the Madurese feel their reputation has been insulted. Carok (with sickles) for Madurese individual and family responsibility in returning social or religious institutions to their original state after being damaged by other people through acts that humiliated and humiliated them [36,37].

Was the violence by the Sampang residents against the Shia community an expression of Madurese culture, or were there other factors?

### 3.2 The Beginning of Shia's Presence in Sampang

Kontras (Commission for Missing Persons and Acts of Violence) via Tempo Surabaya reported on the beginning of Shia's presence in Sampang, as follows:

- In the early 1980s, Kiai Makmun, a Sunni cleric in Karang Gayam Sampang village, received news from his friends in Iran about the Islamic revolution in Iran. The success of the clergy led by Ayatollah Khomeini toppled the monarchist Shah Reza Pahlevi and became a source of inspiration for Kiai Makmun. But because most Muslim clerics and Madurese Muslims were fanatical followers of Sunni Islam, Kiai Makmun studied Shia secretly by reading books sent by his friends from Iran.
- In 1983, after believing in Shia, Kiai Makmun sent his three sons: Iklil al-Milal, Tajul Muluk, Roisul Hukama, and a daughter, Ummi Hani, to the Shia YAPI Islamic Boarding School (Islamic Boarding School Foundation) in Bangil, Pasuruan Regency.
- In 1991, Tajul Muluk graduated from YAPI Middle School and returned to Sampang.
- In 1993, Tajul Muluk left for Saudi Arabia to study at the Sayyid Muhammad Al-Maliki Islamic Boarding School. Due to financial constraints, his school stopped. But Muluk persisted in living in Saudi Arabia as a worker.
- In 1999, Tajul Muluk returned from Saudi Arabia to live in Karang Gayam Village, where his father lived. Kiai Makmun's family and the local community welcomed him happily [38].

## **3.3 Sunni-Shia Conflict in Sampang**

In 2004 some residents of Karang Gayam Village, who were also students of Kiai Makmun, donated a plot of land to construct the Shia Islamic Boarding School, named the Misbahul Huda Islamic Boarding School. The teacher at this pesantren is Tajul Muluk, along with all of his fellow YAPI alums. Unlike his father, who preached secretly, Tajul Muluk preached openly and openly. Tajul's attitude is egalitarian, outgoing, light-handed, and agile, and he refuses to pay for any of his lectures, making Muluk a respected young Kiai. In just three years, hundreds of residents of Karang Gayam and Blu'uren (neighboring villages) villages became loyal followers of the Shia and disciples of Muluk. The beginning of the conflict and violence against Shia residents in Sampang is as follows:

- In early 2004, Muluk's preaching received a negative response from local clerics, including Ali Karrar Shinhaji, a relative of Kiai Makmun (leader of the Darut Tauhid Islamic Boarding School, Pamekasan Regency, Madura). In a meeting with Muluk and his brothers, Shinhaji rejected Muluk's da'wah activities. To him, Shia was a heretical sect. The other clerics in Sampang held the same attitude. But then, they were not open against Muluk's preaching because they still respected Kiai Makmun, Muluk's father.
- June 2004 Kiai Makmun died. The local clerics boldly rejected the spread of Shia by Kiai Makmun's children. Intimidation and violence against the Shia community have frequently occurred since then [38].
- In January 2012, NU, MUI, and Sampang Regency Basra declared Shia a deviant sect [26]. East Java MUI also issued a fatwa contained in decision no. Kep-01/SKF-MUI/JTM/I/2012 regarding the heresy of Shia teachings [32].
- In April 2012, armed with a fatwa from the MUI and regional Islamic organizations, the Sampang District Court sentenced Ustad Tajul Muluk to 2 years in prison on blasphemy charges [39].
- Sunday, 26 August 2012, was the peak of violence. Armed with the MUI fatwa and regional Islamic organizations, local Sunnis burned 37 houses, threw stones and sharp weapons, and fought, which resulted in one death and dozens of injuries among Shia residents [38].
- Police officers are powerless to prevent this from happening. In the afternoon, at 18.30 WIB, some Shia residents were evacuated by the police at the Sampang Sports Hall. Hundreds of other Shiites hid around their homes in the forest and rice fields. The total number of victims who have been evacuated is 155 people, and there are still around 300-400 victims who have not been evacuated. One person died, namely Muhammad Khosim (50), and one seriously injured, namely Tohir (45), was brought to the Sampang Hospital [38,39].

Based on the MUI, NU, and Basra fatwas of Sampang Regency, which were reinforced by the East Java MUI Fatwa, the Shia minority was finally forced to leave their hometown, which the local government placed in Sidoarjo Regency, outside Madura. From 2012 to 2020, they still live in refugee camps because the local government still adheres to the Shia fatwa as heretical [40]. Research findings, the anti-Shia movement by the Salafis, HTI, FPI, and NU is not just a theological movement. They have a more extensive agenda, namely, to challenge religious authority and local power, dominated by moderate Muslim groups, as happened in Bondowoso, East Java [41]. Or by national and local combined anti-Shia forces, as happened in Yogyakarta [42]. Or the negative spillover effect of the Middle East Sunni-Shia conflict geopolitics [43]. In the case of Sampang, these findings appear to be incorrect. If connected with the local Madurese culture, the presence of the Shia makes the self-esteem of the Sunnis feel trampled. They consider Shia residents to disturb the local religious order. Because of their obedience to the Ulama, the people also resorted to violence and drove the Shia people out of Madura.

### 3.4 Presence of Shia in Jepara (Central Java)

Javanese Islam cannot be separated from Walisongo. They built Javanese society as moderate and tolerant Muslims [44]. Sunni-Shia harmony in Jepara is in line with Walisongo's Islamic model.

Unlike in Sampang (Madura), the Shia in Jepara live in harmony and harmony amidst the Sunni Muslim majority. They live in this area peacefully, carry out their worship peacefully in Shia mosques and prayer rooms, hold recitations in the Shia Ta'lim Assembly, and even Shia people also safely build prayer rooms, mosques, and Islamic boarding schools.

Early in its history, Ustaz Abdul Ghadir Bafaqih from Tuban married a woman from Candi Village. Bafaqih studied in Hadramaut, Yemen. In 1974, Bafaqih received many books from Kuwait published by Darut Tauhid. Armed with that book, he talked a lot about Shia. At its peak, in 1982, Bafaqih declared Shia and founded the Al-Khairat Islamic Boarding School. Santri were initially Sunni children and Shia sympathizers. Later, some students became Shia, and some remained Sunni (NU or Muhammadiyah). Since then, the Shiites in Candi Village have developed. Santrinya spread from various regions. The news about the existence of a Shia pesantren also spread. In 1992 Ustad Bafaqih was old and sickly, so the activities of the pesantren decreased, and in 1993 he passed away. The pesantren also stopped because there were no cadres ready to lead the pesantren [45].

In 1999, or six years later, several students of Ustad Bafaqih founded the Darut Taqrib Islamic Foundation in Krapyak Village. They don't want Shia in Jepara to be a memory. In addition, many Ahlul Bait – the designation for Shia adherents – had returned to study from Qum University, Iran. They then established the Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School on an area of less than 1 hectare. The Pesantren building consists of a mosque, pavilion, and student dormitories. Apart from supervising Islamic boarding schools, Shia also formed

various forums such as Fatimiyyah (recitations for mothers), Zainabiyyah (recitations for young women), and the Ahlul Bait Youth Scientific Forum (Firab). In the social field, Shia has a Community Care Association.

In 2012 Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School had 40 students. They come from Jepara, East Java, and Lampung. Some only study religion at this pesantren, and some attend school [45].

In this area, the relationship between Sunni Islam and Shia Islam runs harmoniously, harmoniously, and peacefully, especially in social matters. Both parties are mutually aware and understand that there are differences in worship and belief, but they do not want to widen the gap in that difference. They choose to establish social life and or together. In matters of worship, they care for and respect each other, and in the context of humanity, they join together, such as environmental cooperation. When a death occurs among residents, followers of Sunni Islam and Shia Islam bury the bodies and perform funeral prayers together. More than that, they also keep together with tahlil or pray for people who have died [46].

October 2019 The NGO "Jalin Damai and Gusdurian" Jepara Regency took advantage of the momentum of Santri Day by bringing together the Darut Taqrib (Shia) Islamic Boarding School and the Hasyim Asyari Bangsri (Sunni) Islamic Boarding School. The goal is for Sunni-Shia to open up to each other so that inclusiveness is not exclusivity. The event consisted of a book review, Shia and Indonesian Nationalism, by Fathur Rahman, Lecturer at NU University (UNISNU) Jepara. Then the Maghrib prayer in the congregation of Sunni-Shia. After that, the commemoration of Maulud Nabi and the main participants was 100 students from Darut Taqrib Islamic Boarding School and Hasyim Asyari Islamic Boarding School. According to the peace activist, the event with the theme 'Message of Peace from Islamic Boarding Schools' is a pilot so that it can open up opportunities for even better meetings in the future. In the end, we hope to bring together many groups to make new friends and gain new knowledge. We can learn a lot more from each other. Meanwhile, the representative from the Hasyim Asyari Islamic Boarding School, Gus Nung (KH Nuruddin Amin), who is also the deputy leader of the Jepara Regency DPRD, in his remarks expressed his joy because if we want true tolerance, we must interact directly in everyday life. "I support and appreciate this activity. I hope the established relationship is more substantive, not just pleasantries," he said [47,48].

Harmonious Sunni-Shia relations in Jepara Regency because the local Sunni Ulama accepts Shia's presence, local Shia residents are good at establishing good social ties with the Sunni majority, strong support from peace activists such as Gusdurian and Islamic organizations (NU and MUI) in Jepara Regency. The Jepara Shia can interact socially openly with the Sunni majority in joint religious activities and National commemorations. Together they held a tahlilan (death prayer), commemorated the Maulud Nabi, and visited the graves) [49]. Sunni-Shia harmony at the national level occurs in Azerbaijan. 95% of the country's population is Muslim, consisting of 75% Shia and 25% Sunni. The two schools of thought have lived in harmony since hundreds of years ago. Muslim leaders maintain this harmonious relationship, among other things, through Friday prayers together at the Heydar Mosque, the largest and most proud mosque in Azerbaijan. Friday, priests take turns. These religious and national leaders have always maintained harmonious Sunni-Shia relations. Even building harmonious relations with Jews and Christians [50,51].

# 4. Conclusion

Javanese Islam cannot be separated from Walisongo. They built Javanese society as moderate and tolerant Muslims. Sunni-Shia harmony in Jepara is in line with Walisongo's Islamic model.

Sunni-Shia relations in Jepara are harmonious. They live together peacefully. The contributing factors were the local Sunni Ulama and Islamic Boarding School, which is in the same village, receiving the presence of Shia, joint socio-religious activities, and support from peace activists "Jalin Damai and Gusdurian" and from Islamic organizations, especially NU and MUI, Jepara Regency. The Jepara Shia can interact socially openly with the Sunni majority in joint religious activities and National commemorations. They jointly perform tahlilan (death prayers), commemorate Maulud Nabi, and visit graves.

Meanwhile, Sunni-Shia relations in Sampang Regency (Madura) were terrible. Local Sunni clerics and mass organizations rejected Shia's presence. They obstruct the Shia religious activities. They even burned mosques, Islamic boarding schools, and houses of Shia residents. Then based on the MUI, NU, and Basra fatwas of Sampang Regency, which were reinforced by the East Java MUI Fatwa, the Shia minority was finally forced to leave their hometown, which the local government placed in Sidoarjo Regency, outside Madura. From 2012 to 2020, they still lived in refugee camps because the local government still adhered to the regional MUI fatwa that Shia is heretical.

Previous findings about violence against the Shia minority seem to be inaccurate in the case of Sampang. First, the anti-Shia movement by the Salafis, with HTI, FPI, and regional NU, is not just a theological movement. They have a more extensive agenda: to challenge religious authority and local power, which moderate Muslim groups, such as the case in Bondowoso, East Java, dominate. Second, anti-Shia forces combined nationally and locally, as in Yogyakarta, and third, the negative geopolitical spillover effect of the Middle East Sunni-Shia conflict. We did not find these three factors in the case of Sampang. It seems that the violence of the Sampang Sunnis against the Shia minority is more due to the exclusivism of the Ulama, Islamic organizations, and the local Muslim community. They saw Shia's presence as a disturbance to the religious and cultural order of the people of Sampang. With the cultural capital of "carok", they eventually committed violence against the Shia people and drove them out of the Madura area.

On the other hand, the local Shia people, even though they are native Madurese, seem to be carrying out cultural resistance. First, the Shia preach openly, even though the local community is a militant Sunni Muslim. Secondly, they held the Maulud Nabi commemoration at the mosque, even though the local tradition commemorated Maulud Nabi in people's homes.

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