

Polemic Happy Christmas and New Year in Makassar and Alternative Offer

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ABSTRACT

This research reviews the polemic of Muslims in Makassar regarding Christmas and New Year greetings. Furthermore, some proposed various alternative solutions. This research studies the living Quran, namely, how Islamic leaders understand the verses related to the theme. Data collection methods are documentation, focus group discussions, interviews, and observations. Data were analyzed with a qualitative approach. The analysis shows three main points. First, Muslim leaders in Makassar are categorized as having pros and cons in their views on Christmas and New Year greetings. Second, there is the thought of utilizing historical treasures called *taqiyya* as an alternative to multiculturalism. Shiites and Sunnis agree that there is *taqiyya*, but they differ in its application. It is at this level that sustainable and ethical dialogue is needed. Third, being united in terms of what is agreed upon and tolerant of differences are the rules for assembling unity and harmony in diversity. Therefore, continuous dialogue must be carried out with the obligation to uphold shared ethics.

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Introduction

Every year before Christmas, there is a polemic over the direction of wishing Muslims a Merry Christmas (Arib, 2016). The scholars do not differ in opinion regarding the Christmas greetings, except that there is no Sharia and *qath'i* argument for its prohibition. If some verses or hadiths explicitly state the prohibition of congratulating Christmas, the scholars would agree, and there would be no disagreement with the law (Arib, 2016; Aspandi, 2018). Another question is whether wishing Merry Christmas and participating in Christmas celebrations is an aspect of worship or muamalat? (Nurhadi, 2002). In this case, scholars and Muslims have different opinions. The difference is not only a matter of thought but touches on aspects of unity and brotherhood. It is common for verbal violence to appear in utterances of mutual blasphemy, rebuke, disbelief, and shirk. Verbal violence develops when there is an equal or louder response (Waterschoot et al.,

2023). Not infrequently, there is open opposition to social conflict, and in the end, it falls victim (Hefni et al., 2022).

The discussion was held in 2023 and initiated by the PCNU Board of Makassar City, MUI Makassar City, and the Ikhwan Tarekat al-Muhammadiyah al-Sanusiyah al-Idrisiyah Indonesia to discuss how to view and respond to the pro and contra of saying 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year' due to several the reasons, namely: 1) There was a response and criticism towards the installation of 'billboards' on one of the streets in Makassar City containing the greeting 'Merry Christmas' from the cooperation between PD INTI and NU Makassar City. 2) The emergence of various responses from internal Muslims led to a lively discussion. 3) NU management is the party responsible for the billboards being installed. Therefore, Rais Syuriah PCNU Makassar City and the Chairman of MUI Makassar City (AG. Dr. KH. Baharuddin HS, M.A.) consider it urgent to hold a meeting to discuss this problem so that there is no negating, blaming, slandering, disbelieving, or shirking others.

The discussion to welcome the beginning of 2023 was held on Sunday, 1 January 2023, at the Centre for Zawiyah Tarekat al-Muhammadiyah al-Sanusiyah al-Idrisiyah Indonesia (house of AG. Dr. KH. Baharuddin HS, MA.). He is also the Mursyid Taekat al-Muhammadiyah al-Sanusiyah al-Idrisiyah Indonesia, Mustasyar PBNU, and Chairman of MUI Makassar. The discussion presented several primary sources from scholars, academics, and mass organization figures. This was held to build shilatul fikri (scientific dialogue) regarding Christmas and New Year greetings. Factually, this is still a "ball rolling" that causes Muslims to attack each other. The discussion activity contains at least three meanings: an expression of gratitude and joy in welcoming 2023, as a gathering event, and as a momentum for scientific dialogue.

Various studies have shown that this problem is an old problem, but it is like a "ball that is still rolling". Some try to stop it, and some continue to herd and even attack until it becomes a 'wild ball,' which remains a bone of contention. Debate on social media also continues to colour social media status, especially in WhatsApp groups, Facebook, and other social media about saying "merry Christmas and a happy new year" (Zakreski, 2016).

Pastor Herlin Lebrina Kunu, S. Si Theologian - who took the interdisciplinary Islamic studies study program with a Concentration on Nusantara Islam -, stated in his research that the polemic on the ban on Christmas greetings is a hot topic every year, which reaps pros and cons (Kunu, 2020). This polemic is inseparable from the history of democracy in Indonesia. In the reform era, after the collapse of the New Order leadership in 1998, democracy gave freedom to the aspirations of groups and groups in the public sphere. Democracy is a facility for the development of Islamism in Indonesia. Islamist groups took the opportunity to organize forces on the public stage, where the contradictions of democratic principles, Islamic identity, and religious authority appear to

strengthen. Islam has changed to defend the interests and aspirations of more conservative Muslims, as seen from the various fatwas and *tausiyah* and the statements produced. Kunu reviews things from a political perspective by making democracy its instrument.

Muslim leaders, clerics, and religious institutions have the authority to carry out orthodox politics to enforce good and forbid evil. One of the policies of the orthodoxy of religious scholars and religious institutions that have authority is the law prohibiting Christmas greetings. The polemic of Christmas greetings that developed at the national level also had a local resonance. Pastor Herlin Lebrina Kunu gave an example to the people in Hanura Village, Lampung, responding to the polemic on the ban on Christmas greetings. The interpersonal relations of the Muslim-Christian community in Hanura Village have changed. The biggest change affecting the Muslim-Christian community in Hanura Village is the development of *da'wah* on social media. The *Da'wah* of Islam on social media is growing increasingly massive. Social media is used as a *da'wah* opportunity for spreading religious teachings (Azlan, 2020). According to him, the development of social and religious movements through online *da'wah* can become a sacred space for conveying religious information with both good and bad impacts. He explained this by applying a qualitative descriptive analysis approach based on the theory of multiculturalism.

The social debate about the greeting of 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year' also occurs among Muslims, involving scholars, academics, and clerics in Makassar and South Sulawesi. The views of the figures regarding 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year' were divided. This study will focus more on three aspects: wishing Merry Christmas and New Year, attending Christmas events, and participating. How are the scholars' views in Makassar on Christmas greetings from Muslims? How are the views of Muslim scholars and scholars regarding Muslims attending Christmas events and participating in Christmas events?

To answer the questions, a discussion was held by presenting three categories of sources (pros, cons, and moderate). Their views are also classified for further accommodative understanding. Data collection was carried out by applying the Focus Group Discussion (FGD). It was applied by inviting key informants to discuss some of the concepts related to the data revealed, or can also answer some research questions. The purpose of the FGD is to explore specific problem, related to the topic discussed. Technique. This is used with the aim of avoiding wrong meaning from the researcher to the problem under study. FGD is used to draw conclusions on intersubjective meanings that are difficult to give meaning by the researcher because it is hindered by the encouragement of the subjectivity of the researcher (Paramita & Lusi, 2013). The researcher invited experts from scientists, academics, and Islamic mass organization figures in Makassar City to discuss polemics about Christmas and New Year greetings. It aims to listen to the intersubjective views of various informants.

Discussion

Scholars' Views on Happy Chrystmas and New Year

Augie Flaras proposes equal treatment and rights and respect and equality for everyone without exception. Related to that, Will Kymlicka said everyone has a legitimate interest in identity that must be treated fairly. The state is fully responsible for considering justice in a multicultural society. It was concluded that the polemic of Christmas greetings should not need to be an issue that continues to be debated. Recognition of Indonesia as a multicultural country is demonstrated through an attitude of acceptance and acknowledgment of differences (Kymlicka, 2002). For him, Indonesia's diversity should become a real identity to continue to strive for.

Similarly, Abdul Manan also examines the discourse on the fatwa of the clergy regarding Christmas celebrations. The title is not specific about the polemic of Christmas greetings, but the discussion says about the significant influence or temptation for Muslims when attending Christmas celebrations. In essence, the research says that there is a process of Christianization. Christians are suspected of using Christmas as part of their conversion strategy (Manan, 2016). The covert Christianization program is what most Muslims are most worried about. Based on saddu al-zari'ah (protecting negative things), that is one of the reasons for the prohibition of attending Christmas for Muslims (Widigdo & Hamid, 2018).

In addition, the news about Christmas greetings in Republika Online (Study of news content through Framing Analysis) written by Fathoni Shidqi concluded that there was an effort to frame Christmas greetings to direct readers to agree with statements/opinions that allow Christmas greetings. Then arrange and narrate the events in the news and tend not to be objective by not following the rules of the journalist's code of ethics (Shidqi, 2015). Of course, the problem lies in journalists' integrity and objectivity, which is really needed.

Another research was written in a journal by Siti Syuharoh, who wrote her views under 'Christmas Controversy'. In conclusion, Siti Syuharoh believed that Jesus was never born on December 25. Even though it is different from historical facts, on that date, Christians around the world celebrate it. For Christians, the birth of Jesus is commemorated not on the accuracy of the date, but the essence or core of each of these warnings can be realized in everyday life (Syuharoh et al., 2017). Some Muslims believe that Jesus is not God because he was born, while God (Allah) in Islam does not give birth and be born. Saying Merry Christmas means that Jesus (Prophet Isa) is not God but a prophet.

The book "Conservative Turn", Indonesian Islam in the Threat of Fundamentalism, written by Moch Nur Ichwan et al., explains the opening of a democratic space for freedom of aspirations and raises new identities in the public area, especially Islamic identity. The emergence of a new face of Islam that is more conservative in developing Islam in Indonesia. The role of religious leaders and

institutions is an essential focus in the changes being experienced (Ichwan, 2014). The spotlight is a reminder of the responsibility of religious leaders and religious institutions to guide society.

Rumadi Ahmad's book entitled 'Fatwa on Interreligious Relations in Indonesia'. This book describes the fatwas issued by religious institutions. One is the fatwa of the Tarjih Muhammadiyah Council regarding the prohibition of saying 'Merry Christmas' to Christians, which is recommended not to do. The Tarjih Council answered a question from 'Suara Muhammadiyah' regarding wishing a Merry Christmas by fully quoting the MUI fatwa, which stipulates that wishing a Merry Christmas is haram with the understanding that Muslims do not fall into the doubts and prohibitions of Allah, and to reject damage first rather than attract benefit. This fatwa is based on the hadith of the Prophet narrated by Muslims regarding what is lawful is clear and what is unlawful is clear, and between the two is a questionable issue that many people do not know (Ahmad, 2015). This view is based on the principle "preventing damage is prioritized over taking benefit" (*sadduz zari'ah*) (Jamaa, 2018).

In addition, the book 'Ulama Politics and National Narratives' Fragmentation of Religious Authorization in Indonesian Cities' was written by Noorhaidi Hasan et al., which describes the position of Ulama and their acceptance of the concept of the nation-state in Indonesian cities (Nurhadi, 2002). The emergence of issues of public benefit and Islamic intervention into public discussion. The research examined the role of Islamic scholars grouped against the idea of a nation-state seen from seven characteristics: progressive, inclusive, moderate, conservative, exclusive, radical, and extreme. Another method used to measure the clergy's attitude towards the nation-state uses the four-dimensional concept: pro-system, anti-violence, tolerance, and pro-citizenship. This book was written to map the views of scholars from various social, political, and religious backgrounds on the concept of the nation-state (Ichwan & Yunus, 2019).

Fatwas on Christmas was issued due to the debate over the presence of a Muslim at Christmas celebrations. Some scholars believe that the celebration of Christmas can be a strong temptation for Muslims to participate in the celebration. They found that scholars have different views on Islamic teachings regarding wishing Christians a Merry Christmas. The first group believes it is not permissible to wish Christians a Merry Christmas, while the second group believes Muslims are allowed to attend and wish them a Merry Christmas. Historically, the Muslim world has responded to the existence and rituals of Christmas celebrations by celebrating the Prophet's birthday. Some scholars want to prove that Christmas celebrations are *bid'ah* for Muslims (Manan, 2016).

This fatwa is based on *saddu zari'ah* (protecting against harmful effects) considerations or approaches. They are, namely, preventing apostasy for Muslims (*hifz din*). On that basis, some scholars forbid saying Merry Christmas and happy holidays of other religions. These scholars are Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Taimiyah, Utsaimin, and some Syafi'iyah scholars. While the scholars who allow

it are Yusuf al-Qaradhawy, Ali Jum'ah, Wahbah Zuhaili, and others. Each scholar mentions the arguments that support their respective opinions. In the current context, the view of scholars who allow greetings of Merry Christmas and other religious holidays is better. It supports benefits, especially in multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries (Bahri, 2016).

Some existing research and literature generally show that there are pros and cons. The debate intensified when Muslims joined the Christmas procession. Based on reality, it is not just a matter of congratulating Christmas and New Year, but what is more important is how the public understands various alternative views that are more acceptable. It could be that alternative views will face intense challenges but instead provide better solutions. For example, utilizing historical treasures called "*taqiyya*". Even though *taqiyya* is often considered a Shi'a doctrine, it can become an alternative in multicultural religions and beliefs. In other words, *taqiyya* is understood in line with the problems or challenges faced so that *taqiyya* as a teaching that emerged in the past remains functional and relevant in the present. Several studies related to this theme do not raise *taqiyya* as an offer in responding to a similar matter, especially in the context of the phenomenon in Makassar. Even though *taqiyya* is acknowledged as part of Islamic thought, both Shia and Sunni. The difference is that Shias view *taqiyya* as an Islamic doctrine whereas Sunnis use it as an alternative solution.

Muslim Figures' View on Merry Christmas and New Year in Makassar

Based on the views raised in the discussions about Christmas Day 2022-12-3, Dr. KH. Baharuddin HS, M.A. noted several aspects related to Christmas and greetings 2023. Factors include the background of the debate, the foundation, wishing a Happy Miladiyah New Year, wishing Merry Christmas, attending Christmas invitations, and participating in rituals and Christmas services.

The emergence of various kinds of responses from various parties which caused the discussion to widen. As the party responsible for the billboards being installed, as a form of responsibility, he sees the need to hold a meeting to exchange ideas, so that there is no wrong attitude of blaming each other, let alone slandering each other, and making fun of each other. The arguments used as a reference for expressing his views, both in various capacities and as personal opinions, namely:

1. ولبثوا في كهفهم ثلاثمائة سنين وازدادوا تسعا (الكهف : 25)
2. وسلام عليه يوم ولد ويوم يموت ويوم يبعث حيا (مريم : 15)
3. والسلام علي يوم ولدت ويوم أموت ويوم أبعث حيا (مريم : 33)
4. لقد كفر الذين قالوا أن الله هو المسيح ابن مريم (المائدة : 72)
5. لقد كفر الذين قالوا أن الله ثالث ثلاثة (المائدة : 73)
6. إن الذين كفروا من أهل الكتاب والمشركين في نار جهنم (البينة : 6)

Against these arguments, he explained his views on the practice of wishing a Happy Miladiyah/AD New Year. First, some people do not allow, or even forbid, Happy Miladiyah New Year because the Miladiyah Year belongs to other religions, not the Islamic New Year, because the Islamic year belongs to the Hijriyah. It is unacceptable because no evidence forbids it, nor is there any argument stipulating that the miladiyah year belongs to another religion. So, that year or calendar, whether miladiyah or hijriyah, belongs to Allah and all of us.

In Q.S. Al-Kahf verse 25, when Allah tells the length of Ashabul Kahf's sleep in the cave, Allah mentions the number of the Syamsiyah year for the first time, which is then called the Miladiyah / AD year, which is 300 years. Allah mentions 309 years, which is equivalent to calculating the qamariyah year. The context of this mention was long before the birth of Prophet Isa., the Qur'an already used the Syamsiyah calendar system and the Qamariyah calendar system. The incident of Ashabul Kahf's sleep was told long before Prophet Isa's birth.

In terms of wishing Merry Christmas, he first explained his views with a linguistic approach. Christmas is an absorption from the Portuguese language, which means birth. If translated into Arabic, Christmas means Mawlid. So, if someone wants to congratulate the Prophet Isa's birthday, that's okay. And vice versa, if someone wants to commemorate the Prophet Muhammad's Christmas, that is not a problem because it is only a matter of language. There were no orders and prohibitions to say "Merry Christmas". Based on that, the law is permissible (permissible). In the Qur'an, Allah gives examples of congratulations to His two prophets, the Prophet Yahya and the Prophet Isa. To Prophet Yahya, Allah said:

وسلام عليه يوم ولد ويوم يموت ويوم يبعث حيا (مريم: 15)

To Prophet Isa, Allah said:

والسلام علي يوم ولدت ويوم أموت ويوم أبعث حيا (مريم: 33)

If this is not allowed, we can also not wish our friends of other religions happy birthdays. He agreed with what was conveyed by Prof. Dr. Muammar Bakri, M.Ag. (General Secretary of the MUI Sulsel) "By saying Merry Christmas, I will be more convinced that Isa is not God, because God was not born." The power of Christmas greetings will not be able to shake the power of the Shahada sentence, which is the basis of one's Islam, because our Prophet guarantees that his people who say "LAA ILAAHA ILLA ALLAH" will enter heaven. Therefore, this issue is considered final. There are two opinions, some forbid (even shirk) those who say it, and the second opinion allows and does not interfere with the faith and will not lead to polytheism.

Regarding the law of attending and participating in Christmas rituals. For those who are forbidden to say Merry Christmas, it is even more prohibited to attend the Christmas ritual, especially if you are following the procession carrying out the ritual. However, some parties allow

attending invitations with the condition that they do not participate in the ritual procession of their worship. It is the same as the view that states Islam prohibits its followers from imitating behavior that is part of certain religious rituals outside of Islam or wearing other religious symbols (Arib, 2016).

Furthermore, KH. Baharudddin stated his personal opinion. "Maybe it's a little more advanced than that opinion or even more backward. It's up to the assessment of the discussion participants briefly. For me, saying Christmas, attending, and participating in the Christmas ritual procession is fine. It won't even interfere with the creed, as long as you don't believe that what they are doing is worship, but it is only a ceremonial event, the same as when we celebrate the Prophet's birthday. It is ceremonial, not worship."

He further advanced several clarification arguments. "To explain this matter, is what they are doing worship? We must first know what the definition of worship is. Worship is Allah's provision in the form of revelations conveyed to His prophets or His apostles. The prophets and apostles convey them to their people to obey and carry out. So, what they did, such as singing, blowing candles, and so on, was exemplified by Prophet Isa. If there is an example from Prophet Isa, it is a revelation (religion of Samawy). However, the ritual was their creation if the Prophet Isa had never performed it. In other words, it is wadh'i religion, or we say it is ordinary culture and tradition because that culture has nothing to do with mahdhah worship. So, attending a cultural event is called a ceremonial one, and it will not damage the faith. Muslims who believe that what they are doing is worship is a big mistake because they believe as they believe. However, those who attend must be careful, lest their presence cause misunderstanding for those who do not understand, or cause slander, even though it does not interfere with the faith."

Prof. Dr. H. Ahmad M. Sewang, M.A. (Chairman of the IMMIM DPP), argues that Merry Christmas and New Year, greetings are not a problem. As for participating in the worship process, this is the same opinion as Prof. Hasyim Aidid, M.A., which is not tolerated. Prof. Hasyim Aidid disagreed with congratulating Christmas, which was the same as agreeing. He is of the view that these words are closer to hypocrisy, disbelief, and polytheism. He also disagreed with Anshor, who entered the church praying in it. Have to be careful. He stated that it differed from Prof. Dr. H.M. Quraish Shihab, M.A.

Hasyim Aidid's view is more in line with the MUI fatwa, which forbids Muslims from attending Christmas celebrations signed by Syukri Gazali and Mas'udi. Meanwhile, Prof. Ahmad M. Sewang agreed to wish me a Merry Christmas but disagreed if a Muslim participated in a worship procession at a Christmas event. According to him, this is no longer the area of muamalah but worship. In the worship, Islam limits it, as understood from Surah al-Kafirun, unlike the case with Hamka (Manan, 2016), which forbids Muslims from attending Christmas celebrations (Qodir &

Singh, 2021). Christians believe that Christmas is the birthday celebration of the "son of God," which is considered the embodiment of their God. Furthermore, he emphasized that it was the belief that Christians and Muslims had their views.

Regarding Merry Christmas greetings, Dr. K.H. Kaswad Sartono, M.Ag. (Chairman of Tanfiziyyah PC NU Makassar City), He has become his attitude to wish you a Merry Christmas because he sees this as a muamalah space and a form of ukhuwah wathaniyah. He stated that Christmas and New Year greetings belong to the area of muamalah, not creed and worship, so that is permissible. He quoted Surah Maryam 33. He added that Christmas greetings were in the framework of brotherhood among the nation's children. He quoted Surah al-Hujurat 13. In addition, he quoted surah Maryam verse 33. When quoting sura at-Taubah verse 113, it's just that he connected this verse with Allah's rebuke to the Prophet Abraham, who asked for forgiveness from his biological father. In this case, he does not show any evidence or literature that explains the reasons for the nuzul of this verse. Scholars explain that the reason for this revelation of the verse is not related to the Prophet Abraham and his father but to Allah's prohibition on the Prophet Muhammad. to beg forgiveness of his uncle, Abu Talib (al-Mubarakfuri, 2018).

Al-Quran is not only guidance for Muslims but guidance for all humankind (Q.S. al-Baqarah/2: 185). The Qur'an is universal and prioritizes humanity. The word An-Nas refers to humans as social beings interacting with each other from various cultures, languages, ethnicities, nations, and religions (Ali et al., 2019). Even the attitude of prioritizing humanity is a guide that is in line with the Qur'an (Al-Jufri, 2022; Sav, 2019).

Kaswad Sartono sees Christmas greetings as a logical consequence of diversity and diversity. The diversity of religions recognized by the state, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, has become the pride of the nation's life until now. The historical background of the arrival of religions in Indonesia is based on empathy because it sees the relationship between religion and local beliefs. After all, this word does not merely recognize differences and beliefs but accepts these differences in everyday life (Agung, 2017).

Kaswad Sartono admitted that he did his Christmas greetings as an official from the Ministry of Religion, namely the Head of the Akku Bureau of UIN Alauddin. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Religion is the ministry of all religions in Indonesia. Diversity is a necessity regulated in Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, Pancasila Belief in One Almighty God. Belief in One Almighty God is the meeting point of all religious communities in Indonesia after Muslims accepted the abolishment of several words in the first precepts of Pancasila in the Jakarta Charter, namely "Belief in One Supreme God with the Obligation to Implement Islamic Sharia for Its Adherents." To respect the diversity and differences of religions and beliefs, Muslims accept to issue the word "...with the Obligation to Implement Islamic Shari'a for Its Adherents". Ada believes that due to the abolition,

Muslims have lost their constitutional rights to carry out Islamic law properly and calmly (Yenuri, 2021).

Unlike the case with Dr. KH. Amirullah Amri, M.A., he criticized and even disagreed according to his "feelings" but did not present an argument and analysis regarding the impermissibility of saying Merry Christmas. He does not separate the dimensions of sharia, creed, muamalat, and worship. The Christmas greeting is an acknowledgment of the truth of Christmas. He also criticized the case of Anshor youths holding prayer services at the church.

KH confirmed Amirullah's opinion about the Christmas greetings. Baharuddin, wishing me a Merry Christmas is the same as a Happy Mawlid. By wishing Merry Christmas for the birth of Jesus (Isa as.), it further emphasizes that Jesus is not God because he was born, and there is a birthday. In contrast, God (Allah) in Islam did not give birth and was not born. He agreed and praised Prof.'s opinion. Dr. KH. Muammar, M.A (Sekum MUI Sulsel).

The opinion of K.H. Amirullah Amri is related to Anshor, who held prayers at the church that went too far and could not be tolerated because, for him, the name of the Prophet Muhammad did not deserve to be called in church. Prof. Hashim Aidid reinforced it. He recounted his experience when he led the Anshor Youth, that he led to guard the church but only from outside the church and did not enter into it. Moreover, praying in it was shirk and blasphemy.

Against this, Dr. KH. Afifuddin, L.c., M.A. stated there is no problem people agree or disagree with Merry Christmas greetings, but it does not need to be published. Moreover, a preacher can lead to the fanaticism that triggers social conflict. He then exemplifies the excellent views and attitudes of AGH. Much. Nur and KH. The US Harisah, while still alive, never said Merry Christmas and Happy New Year because they considered it unnecessary and unnecessary. It is enough for them to allow the followers of other religions to practice their religion according to their beliefs. KH. Harisah closed the an-Nahdlah Islamic Boarding School's recitations on the night and Christmas day and ensured that no party would disturb the Christian services, including the students. Regarding the case of Anshor youths who entered the church to hold Salawat, according to KH. Afifuddin is only an "offside" case if it's a ball game. It cannot be generalized as the overall views and attitudes of NU An-Nadir La Yu'tabar (rare cases cannot be used as a justification).

Unlike the attitude and position of Prof. Qasim Mathar, he declared himself a defender against all opinions, both pro and con, regarding Merry Christmas greetings and attending Christmas. He stated that he would spend the rest of his life defending everything. He stated that there was no point in debating this issue, even if it was "skanuku lotong" (as small as a mole), let alone being in conflict over this issue. It just takes time and energy to discuss it. Finally, we are left behind in building civilization. However, in the end, he was also of the opinion that there is a historical treasure called taqiyyaa, present in the activities of other religions and does not express belief in

humans but has complete faith in God.

Taqiyya as an Alternative Offer

In Islamic history, there is a historical treasure called *taqiyya*, both as a doctrine and strategy. Prof. Qasim Mathar offers *siyasat taqiyya* as an alternative to addressing the diversity of religions and beliefs in Indonesia. While directing his gaze to Prof. Dr. Ahmad M. Sewang, Prof. Qasim Mathar mentions *taqiyya* as a treasure of Islamic history. He sees this problem must be revealed by Muslim historians like Prof. Ahmad M. Sewang, M.A., as an alternative concept in addressing the diversity of religions and beliefs in Indonesia.

Taqiyya is one of the Shia sacred doctrines, a central issue that cannot be separated from the Shia sect itself because this doctrine is more attached to the sect than other sects. However, some Sunni scholars admit its existence in Islam. Viewed from a Shia perspective, *Taqiyya* is defined as concealing beliefs and beliefs when personal safety, family, property, and religious honor are in a state of threat due to pressure from the enemy (Wahyudi, 2022). This doctrine has reference precedents in Islam. *Taqiyya* was used when dealing with unbelievers at the time of the Prophet, so the Qur'an revealed verses (Arizan, 2017).

According to Imam Khomeini - as quoted from the book *Sunnah Shia Hand in Hand!* Is it possible? Prof. H. M. Quraish Shihab stated it is unfair to adhere to *taqiyya* regarding everything small and big. *Taqiyya* is prescribed (religiously taught) to protect the souls and souls of others about the details of the law. Meanwhile, if the issue concerns the danger to Islam, there is no way to practice *taqiyya*. Suppose the condition of *taqiyya* makes someone among us have to join the group of rulers. In that case, he is obliged to avoid that even if the evasion results in his killing, unless it is included in forming a strategy for good and victory for Islam and Muslims (Shihab, 2007).

The Shia group believes that *taqiyya* is not the same as *nifaq*. The two are contradictory in terms of function, form, and meaning. *Taqiyya* is the attitude of hiding belief and showing disbelief, while hypocrisy (*nifaq*) is hiding disbelief and showing belief (Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, 2014). The Shia scholars have divided *taqiyya* into two parts. First, *taqiyya makhafatiyyah*, namely *taqiyya*, because of fear of danger. Second, *taqiyya mudharatiyyah*, namely *taqiyya*, aimed to protect the feelings of people who are different from them, to establish good relations between families or other people, and to avoid slander that can unsettle the community or for the realization of Muslim unity (Tim Ahlulbait Indonesia, 2014).

The opinion of Prof. Qasim Mathr is closer to *taqiyya mudharatiyyah* for the context of Makassar in particular and Indonesia in general. He suggested that *taqiyya siyasat* be used as an alternative concept. *Taqiyya* is a treasure of Islamic history which finds its relevance again with pluralism, like in Indonesia. Because diversity is an undeniable sociological fact, *taqiyah* is a

Quranic concept that should not be forgotten. Theoretically, the assumptions in genetic structural theory see that the general and specific interpretation tendencies regarding Sunni-Shia theological verses cannot separate from the socio-historical context of the commentators. Sholihat put forward all of the findings in his research that the more the ideas from several specific ideological figures are taken in an interpretation, the closer and liquefy the two sides of ideology that have been considered opposite (Sholihat, 2022). In this context, an open dialogue is needed to listen to and understand each other.

Although the doctrine of *taqiyyaa* is better known in Shi'a Islam, Sunni Ulama acknowledges the existence of *taqiyyaa* in Islam (the Quran). Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi, in his commentary, Tafsir al-Maraghi, in understanding the true meaning of *taqiyyaa* practice based on Q.S. Ali Imran verse 28, which carries the intention that it is permissible to perform *taqiyyaa* if in an emergency, namely to protect oneself and the Islamic religion from damage done by infidels. As for muamalat, or siding with disbelievers in friendship jahiliyyah, family affairs, and leadership issues, it is prohibited in religion. It is because Muslims are required to maintain morals as a believer so as not to get carried away with the nature and character of unbelievers. They need to be more partial or friendly with believers themselves, which is better for maintaining the harmony of Islamic beliefs. As for if it turns out that taking sides and being friends with disbelievers contains goodness for the believers, then that is permissible, as the Prophet Muhammad SAW did. It allied with the Bani Khuza'ah, even though they were still in their polytheism. This view sees *taqiyyaa* as a strategy for responding to differences in religion and belief.

If believers are worried that damage will occur if they side with unbelievers, then taking precautions or *Taqiyya* tactics is permissible because rejecting damage (mafsadah) takes precedence over reaping benefits (*Dar' al-Mafasid Muqaddamun 'ala Jalb al-mashalih*). According to Ahmad Mustafa al-Maraghi, scholars have agreed that *taqiyyaa* is permissible when someone says or does something contrary to the truth to prevent danger from enemies, such as those related to life, honor, or property. Whoever says the words "*Kufr*" under pressure and coercion while he is trying to protect himself from being killed and his heart remains calm in faith will not become a disbeliever, and his actions will be forgiven (Al-Maraghi, 1986). So, *taqiyyaa* aims to protect the soul and religion that are in line with maqasid sharia.

As the story of Ammar bin Yassir in Q.S. An-Nahl verse 106, when he was forced to say the 'sentence of kufr' his heart remained calm in doing so, as well as the story of a companion of the Prophet who was forgiven when Musailamah interrogated him: "Don't you testify that I am the Messenger of Allah?" The friend who was forced to answer, "Yes." Then, Musailamah let him live. However, a friend who Musailamah also asked the same question had responded to, "I am deaf" three times. Finally, he was killed. This news reached Rasulullah SAW. Then he said: "As for the

person who was killed, he has passed with his belief and honesty, so he is happy. And the other, he received mercy from Allah so that there was no longer a burden for him (Al-Maraghi, 1986). The Prophet appreciated both of them.

Although, this is included in religious rituals because there are things that apply only at certain times, not permanently or routinely, in an emergency. Not from the main points of religion that must be followed forever (Al-Maraghi, 1986). Therefore, it is obligatory for a believer to migrate from a place where he is afraid to reveal his religion and is forced to do *taqiyyaa*. As for things included in perfection, the believer should not be afraid and afraid of facing the reproaches of disbelievers who denounce faith in Allah, as understood from Q.S. Ali Imran verse 175.

Referring to Sayyid Qutb's view in his commentary book, *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an*, *taqiyyaa* is a *rukhsah* justified in Islam solely to protect oneself from people who have feared a country or at a certain time. However, it is only for self-preservation in verbal speech, not in the form of heart and charity (Quthb, 2001). Ibn 'Abbas said: "*Taqiyya* 'self-preservation strategy' is not with charity, but *taqiyya* is only with speech".

Based on the view, the permissible *taqiyyaa* is not by establishing affection between a believer and an infidel. Those disbelievers will not be pleased if Allah's book is used as a decision-maker for legal matters and life. Allah forbids Muslims to take disbelievers as close friends or guardians due to differences in faith and life practices. Therefore, the *taqiyyaa* permitted by sharia is not by helping disbelievers with real practice in a specific form on behalf of *taqiyyaa*. Muslims are not allowed to do any trick in the name of Allah and religion (Quthb, 2001). The problem is a matter of conscience, a point of *taqwa*, so this matter contains a warning to the believers against the torment of Allah SWT. and gives awareness to the believers that Allah always knows what is in the hearts of His servants as the word of Allah SWT. in the letter Ali Imran verse 29.

From the perspective of Shia al-'Allamah, Nizamuddin Hassan al-Qummi, in his commentary, *Tafsir al-Qummi*, is of the view that *taqiyyaa* is a *rukhsah* that is justified to Muslims who, when faced with cruelty and persecution by an unjust government, he says that if a man from the polytheists wrongs Muslims, so Muslims must show affection and submit to his orders, but on condition that they hide their faith and turn away from them if there is room and opportunity to turn away. As for the justified *taqiyyaa*, it is *taqiyyaa* in a *zahir* manner, verbally but not mentally or *qalb*. As long as his heart remains calm when he says it, the act is not sinful, as directed by Q.S. An-Nahl: 106 (an-Naisaburi, 1996).

According to al-Qummi, practicing *taqiyyaa* does not only apply to polytheists, but also to fellow Muslims. If you are in an unjust Muslim government, you must use *taqiyyaa* and deception to protect yourself and your property. Again, *taqiyyaa*, in this context, is a tactic or strategy. It is also similar to the Sunni view, as emphasized by Prof. Qasim Mathar in a discussion held on 1

January 2023 in Makassar. It is not without any underlying evidence, but there is a hadith as contained in a hadith narrated by Imam at-Tirmidhi: "Whoever is killed defending his property is a martyr" (HR At-Tirmidhi). As most Shia Imams agreed, the hadith narrated from al-Hasan: "*Taqiyya* applies until the Day of Judgment (an-Naisaburi, 1996)." Because of the Shia view, *taqiyya* is not just a strategy but also a religious doctrine.

At a practical level, Ulya pointed out in her research report, which was later published in a scientific journal, stating that, according to the Shia community in Banjaran Village, for example, *Taqiyya* is refraining from revealing her Shia identity. They implement it, both in matters of worship and social interaction issues, when they are forced to. Apart from being an expression of obedience, *taqiyya* is a strategy for survival and belief, as well as adapting so that its existence is accepted and does not disturb society in general. This is where the practice of *taqiyya* attaches religious values as well as social values, as well as economic values. These values strengthen harmony and tolerance in Banjaran Village, Bangsri District, Jepara Regency (Ulya, 2021).

According to Dr. KH. Baharuddin, whatever they (Christians) do, even though they call it worship, it's not right because Allah in Q.S. Al-Bayyinah verse 6 confirms the disbelief of the People of the Book and the polytheists and will be put into the hell of *Jahannam*. The rituals of worship they perform are invalid and will not be accepted by Allah because they are disbelievers, while disbelievers will not accept their deeds.

He advanced the *naqli* argument by referring to the word of Allah in Q.S. Al-Maidah: 72-73 regarding the disbelief of those who say that Isa Ibnu Allah, as well as those who say that Allah is the Trinity. However, if there is a stronger argument, K.H. Baharuddin will accept it. All prophets and apostles are one package, continuity in conveying messages to the people and their holy books. When people's thinking was still low, they were given basic scriptures such as the Torah. They were given different lessons when their way of thinking increased a bit. Allah sent down the Bible through Prophet Isa. When the ummah entered the era of developed knowledge, Allah sent the Prophet Muhammad. with his holy book, the Quran, to complement the previous holy books. All prophets are Muslims, and all the teachings conveyed are the religion of Islam. Allah's Word in Surah Al-Hajj: 78 and S. Ali Imran: 67.

In this context, he made an analogy, "if you compare a religion that is practiced other than Islam brought by the Prophet Muhammad, it is the same as spending money that was valid during the time of President Sukarno. Indeed, no one will accept it because it has expired. So, the religion embraced by Jews and Christians is a religion that has passed. However, this is not intended to be presented publicly, let alone in front of adherents of other faiths. Because if that happens, it will only cause a social uproar.

Prof. M. Qasim Mathar also responded to one thing: the cancellation of other religions after

Islam came, which was brought by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. According to him, there is no firm argument from the Qur'an or Sahih hadith, which states the cancellation of the previous religions. Dr. KH. Baharuddin clarified that what still applies are universal teachings such as justice, goodness (*al-khair*), and other universal teachings that still apply. As for the Prophets and Apostles and the holy books of the Samawi religion, they are continuity as a whole. The pinnacle of perfection is Islam based on the word of Allah, verse 3 sura al-Maidah. He is developing Islamic inclusive thological thinking (Barsihannor, 2019).

The essential thing they show is maintaining brotherhood as the mainstream of Islamic teachings, which must be prioritized before differences (Hefni & Ahmadi, 2022). The discussion was held apart from exchanging views on the theme. It was also intended to educate people on responding to the diversity of opinion as an alternative, not black-and-white doctrine. Maintaining the *ukhuwah* of fellow human beings (*ukhuwah insaniyah*) and fellow children of the nation (*ukhuwah wathaniyah*) is a fundamental teaching (*ushuliyah*) in Islam (Sayed, 2022). At that level, the Muslims agreed without differences of opinion. Meanwhile, if Muslims say Merry Christmas to Christians, it is part (*furu'*) and *ikhtilaf*. Prioritizing what is *ushul* over what is *furu'* is a rule that scholars agree upon theoretically but is still often different in practice.

Findings

Previous research raised several phenomena and cases to describe polemics about Merry Christmas and New Year greetings without offering alternative solutions that could be accepted by various parties. This study departs from a study of this phenomenon in Makassar City by offering several alternatives contained in Islamic teachings themselves. This study led to several findings. First, the debate about the Merry Christmas and New Year greetings law is a *furu'* issue and not a *ushul* issue. Unity in *ushul* issues and tolerance in *furu'* and *khilafiyah* issues is the middle way in a multicultural society. It is a principle that IMMIM has long adhered to since its establishment until now. Practically, it has led and mediated cross-organizational dialogues and sects to build community unity and tolerance of diversity.

Second, the debate about Merry Christmas and New Year greetings is a classic issue that is still controversial, whether it is included in worship and faith or muamalah. For those who see it as worship and creed, they forbid it. As for those who view it as a muamalat, they allow it. Saying Merry Christmas and Happy New Year shows tolerance. Merry Christmas means admitting that Jesus is not God because he was born. For those who don't say it, it's not a problem as long as it doesn't cause problems and disturbances, which also shows tolerance. Even though it is classic, it is still relevant to be discussed because it continues to be debated by Muslims internally. This is not intended to impose a certain understanding, but aims to provide enlightenment and tolerance in understanding and responding to it.

Third, *taqiyyaa* is a treasure of history that can be an alternative. *Taqiyya* is an attitude of hiding one's faith to protect one's soul and religion and to maintain harmony in diversity. *Taqiyya* is not hypocrisy (*nifaq*), because *nifaq* is the opposite, hiding disbelief, even for evil purposes. There are differences in the placement and use of *taqiyyaa*; some use it as *rukhsah*, which means it applies in an emergency. In contrast, others argue that *taqiyyaa* is applied without being *rukhsah*. *Taqiyya* is known and acknowledged for its existence in Islamic teachings, both Shia and Sunni, so it is found in discussions in Shia and Sunni literature. Shia places it as a doctrine that has existed and been applied throughout the ages. Whereas Sunnis generally recognize it as a *rukhsah* (dispensation).

Fourth, in dialogue about differences, especially greeting Merry Christmas and New Year, an absolute requirement, namely the ethics of exchange, is needed. Ethics is the 'gateway' to entering the debate forum. Without an agreement to maintain ethics, the dialogue should be abolished until there is agreement to maintain ethics together. Agreeing to remain different is better than having an unethical dialogue of 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year', even with the best and most ethical *cara*. It is understood from the instructions of QS. An-Nahl verse 125.

Conclusion

Discussions or debates about the attitudes of Muslims towards Christmas and New Year greetings are categorized into pros and cons: First, Muslims wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Second, for Muslims attending Christmas events, it is more controversial than wishing them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Third, in the case of Muslims, they participate in worship processions as well. Some are jealous of the Muslims who take part in the celebration. Against this problem, the concept of *taqiyyaa* is offered as an alternative. *Taqiyya* can be seen in two positions, namely as a doctrine and a strategy. *Taqiyya* as a doctrine and strategy can be used as an alternative in addressing the diversity of opinions to maintain unity, tolerance, and harmony. Islamic figures in Makassar realize that diversity is destiny, while unity is a choice. For Muslims who believe that Christmas greetings or attending Christmas do not interfere with their faith, there is no problem doing so. For those who are worried that their faith will be disrupted, there is no compulsion to do so. This difference requires mutual respect to create harmony and tolerance. Unity in terms of agreement and tolerance of differences is a pattern of addressing diversity. If you want to have a dialogue on this issue, all parties must maintain ethics.

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