

The Cover of Religious Tolerance for Indonesian Society in Digital News Media and World Peace

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Abstract. *The face of religious tolerance is a form of society in Indonesia where people of different religions, cultures and ethnicities live together with each other. It is practised by the Indonesian people as a way of life and is enshrined as the foundation of the Indonesian state, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. It is always interesting, both as positive and negative news, for the media to cover the manifestation of religious tolerance. In the sociology of religion, it is possible to consider online media as a phenomenon of positive pluralism, as they show religious interaction in a multireligious, multiethnic and multiracial social setting. The news content presented to the public, whether designed by media teams or not, will influence each public perspective and direct the context of public thinking in seeing Buddhist monks performing the Thudong ritual by walking from Thailand to the Borobudur temple in Indonesia, so that the Indonesian people welcome them very enthusiastically and the monks can celebrate their Vesak day well. The approach of descriptive qualitative method of religious tolerance in the description of the face of religious tolerance in Indonesian society, especially in the commemoration of the implementation of the Thudong ritual performed by Buddhist monks and reported in the mass media.*

Keywords: *Multiculturalism, Tolerance, Thudong, Online Media, Buddhism*

Abstrak. *Wajah toleransi beragama adalah bentuk masyarakat di Indonesia di mana orang-orang dari berbagai agama, budaya, dan etnis hidup bersama satu sama lain. Hal ini dipraktikkan oleh masyarakat Indonesia sebagai cara hidup dan diabadikan sebagai dasar negara Indonesia, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika. Selalu menarik, baik sebagai berita positif maupun negatif, bagi media untuk meliput perwujudan toleransi beragama. Dalam sosiologi agama, media online dapat dianggap sebagai fenomena pluralisme yang positif, karena mereka menunjukkan interaksi keagamaan dalam lingkungan sosial yang multireligius, multi-etnis, dan multiras. Konten berita yang disajikan kepada publik, baik yang dirancang oleh tim media maupun tidak, akan mempengaruhi setiap perspektif publik dan mengarahkan konteks berpikir publik dalam melihat para biksu Buddha yang melakukan ritual Thudong dengan berjalan kaki dari Thailand menuju candi Borobudur di Indonesia, sehingga masyarakat Indonesia menyambutnya dengan sangat antusias dan para biksu dapat merayakan hari raya Waisak dengan baik. Pendekatan metode kualitatif deskriptif toleransi beragama dalam penggambaran wajah toleransi beragama di masyarakat Indonesia khususnya dalam peringatan pelaksanaan ritual Thudong yang dilakukan oleh para biksu Buddha dan diberitakan di media massa.*

Kata Kunci : *Multikulturalisme, Toleransi, Thudong, Media Daring, Budha*

Introduction

Multiculturalism is the term used to describe Indonesia, a large nation with a complex pluralism. Multiculturalism itself is a cultural policy that emphasises accepting religious, pluralistic and multicultural realities found in people's lives. Multiculturalism implies the recognition of the reality of cultural diversity, including traditional diversity and diversity of lifestyles or subcultures, and is often used to describe the unity of different ethnic communities in a country. In order to harmonise the life of the nation, the differences of multiculturalism require tolerance.

This tolerance is also felt by the Bhante, or Buddhist monks, who perform religious rituals on foot, or "thudong", a spiritual journey that this time took the Bhante thousands of kilometres from Thailand to Indonesia. As reported in Kompas News (2025), entitled Thudong 2025 Ritual Has Begun, 38 Monks Walk from Bangkok to Borobudur, the Bhante felt that they had been warmly welcomed and treated with tolerance by the Indonesian people along the route taken from Jakarta to Borobudur Temple. The attitude of tolerance between religious communities in Indonesia has a long history, and how this attitude was eventually enshrined in the Jakarta Charter and became the foundation of the Republic of Indonesia, Pancasila and the Indonesian state motto "**Bhinneka Tunggal Ika**", meaning Diversity yet Unity.

The attitude of tolerance arising from the plurality and diversity of Indonesian society, which has led to the inevitable phenomenon of pluralism. Quoting Rahman and Setia (2021), in a multicultural society, pluralism is the most important social capital of a society. Of course, this is after the same efforts of understanding have been made so as not to cause controversy in each religious group. The notion of pluralism will come into conflict with religious teachings if it is constructed in direct opposition to a particular religion. Every religion has different rituals, and it is a form of blasphemy to combine sacred religious practices with the rituals of other faiths, although both are claimed as sacred.

According to (O'Collins & Farrugia, 2003) in their book *A Concise Dictionary Of Theology*, pluralism involves a physiological perspective that does not describe personal principles and beliefs. In general, pluralism is an understanding that recognises the existence of differences in the lives of people of different ethnicities, groups, religions, customs and lifestyles.

The media itself showed the journey of the 38 Buddhist monks with a similar tone, not only the mass media but also the electronic media, the micro-blogging and even the social media. Media and globalisation are interrelated social systems that influence each other, according to Shoemaker and Reese (2014). Both of them form a complex global social system that allows for social interactions between societies that are becoming more and more connected to each other. Mass media play a role in promoting culture and feelings in society, as seen in Kompas.id (2025).

Since Indonesia has a Muslim majority, the conditions of tolerance in social society presented or shown by the mass media indirectly reflect the form of tolerance from the life of Islamic society in Indonesia. The issue of diversity in the Indonesian context is directly proportional to the diversity of Indonesian society, according to Sampean (2018). The dimension of diversity is described from the direction of the local community to the direction of the national community.

This is inversely proportional to the negative news about Indonesia that circulates abroad, where Indonesia is seen as a country with many religious problems, as evidenced by the many terrorists that come from Indonesia, so that this opinion is extensively written in the mass media, highlighting Indonesia as a place of different interactions and conflicts that overlap between Islam and other religions that are considered minorities in Indonesia. According to Wawan, who was one of the monks who took part in the Thudong ritual, the monks were very impressed by the tolerance of the Indonesian people, where tolerance was very high in comparison to other countries he had passed. From the beginning of the escort action, spending personal money,

medicines, providing food and drinks for the monks, the face of tolerance of the Indonesian people is shown.

We can see in several online news mass media websites such as CNN (Westcott, 2017) or ("212 Action Dispersed, Medan Merdeka Barat Road Reopened," 2020), CNBC ("Muslim Groups in Malaysia, Indonesia Boycott Starbucks Over LGBTQ Support," 2017), or The Diplomat (Arman, 2022) that show news or articles that are less positive towards the state of pluralism in Indonesia as a country with the largest proportion of Muslim citizens. The content context of tolerance towards cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia is less highlighted as a strength, but presented in an atmosphere of Indonesia full of conflict between Muslims and other religions. In contrast to the news that was mostly shown during the moment of the Bhante or Buddhist monks who performed the Thudong ritual with a total of 32 people to celebrate Vesak Day at the Borobudur temple in Central Java, Indonesia was presented positively and the context of pluralism was refreshed among the various news conflicts that existed.

These actions are social phenomena called sociological phenomena where it is built from these social symptoms that contain social control and glue and Islamic social reality so that it is the main task of Islamic sociology. Islamic sociology itself is closely related to the relationship between Islam and non-Islam, Islam and local wisdom, and Islam as a theological phenomenon reality, all called religious sociology. According to Yusuf Wibisono (2020) in his book *Sociology of Religious*, one of the most important things in relation to sociology of religious is to study the foundations of religious social relations and the limits of human rationality in understanding it.

Method

In the writing of this research paper, the method used in this research paper is qualitative type through the use of literature study method. The data from the literature study will be taken from books,

journals, proceedings, articles, and news articles related to the history, traditions, religious activities and current issues related to Vesak Day, Thudong, Pluralism, Buddhist Monk's Journey and Social Tolerances.

The collection of data in this research is done using various techniques of data collection, including the search for scholarly literature which is used in the analysis of literature studies from various authentic sources. The literature review method searches for primary data sources using keywords and conducts content analysis relevant to the research area and domain.

Results and Discussion

The approach of the sociology of religion itself is cited by Yusuf Wibisono (2020), this phenomenon began to develop in the late 19th century until now and is expressed as a treatise on religion in the modern world. This is from Durkheim in "The Elementary Form Of the Religious Life" states that the sociology of religion is used to study the fundamental things of a religious activity, where forms that are structural basis and foundation and to place the origin of the creation of concepts of thought or fundamental categories and in basic categories such as time, space and social cause of birth. This phenomenon finally attracted the attention of experts to study it, Bryan Turner, Goddjin & W. Goddjin, Hendropuspito, Joachim Wach, even Dadang Kahmad used the sociology of religion as a model of religious interaction with social structures and cultural aspects other than culture.

The occurrence underlined by the mass media in the field of sociology of religion is called religious interaction in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious social space. The interaction that produced the social conflicts can be questioned by the media. This was not the case when the Thudong was carried out by 38 Buddhist monks on their way to Borobudur Temple to commemorate the Buddhist Vesak holiday at the end of their journey. At that

point in time, the issue of conflict was invisible and shown by positive acceptance of the Indonesian people demonstrating a form of tolerance among the Indonesian people.

In Oetzel, Littlejohn & Foss (2017), Pierre Bourdieu, a French sociologist, developed the theory of cultural production or cultural production theory, which pays attention to how the main and alternative media produce content and how they affect the social culture. The transmission of mass media in shaping the news has impact and tends to shape personal and social ideologies according to the sector and purpose of the media, and the level of capital and autonomy of the media. Bourdieu's theory was developed by Hesmondhalgh that the mass production of a message or news that is most important is the audience and this is what makes it interesting that many mass media produce news or messages based on the theory of the impact of mass communication, namely hypodermic needle theory, spiral model, agenda setting theory and media framing theory.

Religious interaction in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-religious social environment is the phenomenon highlighted by the mass media within the framework of sociology of religion. This interaction is full of social conflicts whose issues can be addressed by the media. This was not the case when the Thudong was performed by 32 Buddhist monks on their way to the Borobudur temple to celebrate the Buddhist Vesak holiday at the end of their journey. The conflict remained out of sight and the positive mood of the Indonesian public showed a form of tolerance in the pluralistic society of Indonesia.

The content of news presented to the public will have an impact on the perspective of each community and the context of their thinking within a larger social system. News or content contained in various mass media, whether transmitted electronically or through social networks, highlights certain values, whether designed by media teams or corporations to change public opinion.

According to Melvin DeFleur in McQuail & Deuze (2019), culture norms is one of the theories of mass communication used by the media in the design of messages delivered to the public in order to highlight a value in society in order to gain greater feelings, whether positive or negative. It cannot be denied that the messages contained in the mass media in the raising of the news of the Buddhist monks' journey are loaded with a certain agenda in the spreading of the message of social tolerance among the news which is full of social or political conflicts today.

The issue of pluralism in Indonesian society is an interesting issue to be raised by the national mass media, as well as the international mass media. Tolerance in pluralism is an issue classified as mass media hegemony, as stated by Shoemaker & Reese (2014), especially national mass media. The news coverage of pluralism can be an enhancement of the image or good image of the Indonesian state. A condition that is desired by the ruling elite, the political elite, and even the market also wants an image to become a viral news. Other stakeholders, such as the business or private sector, need benefits such as tolerance in diversity that can increase investment and the economy, in addition to the social benefits of a society that can maintain integrity and a sense of mutual protection.

The concept of pluralism, or plurality and tolerance among people, is the concept that underpins the Indonesian state and the teachings of Islam as taught by the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Both also underlie the implementation of social norms for the people of Indonesia. An extraordinary thought of Indonesia's founding fathers is full of messages, both positively disseminated to support the state's purpose and inspire citizens to uphold the social norms contained in the state motto. The same variety of messages seen from the other side becomes an opportunity to be used in various other agendas according to the interests of communication by using the media, both of which are used by the mass media in doing their job. McQuail (2020) argues in the

message structure, organization and capabilities of new media in mass media that mass media often raise public interests in their news, although this is a form of public pressure in today's digital age. But the mass media were not established solely to serve the public interest, some claim, by raising issues according to the purpose of the establishment of the media, ranging from religion, culture, politics, or just professional jargon that is actually nothing more than generating business profits from the establishment of the media.

Framing is the process of organising a news story or other type of media message, including how a story is structured and organised. The way a story is framed provides clues about how to understand the content being covered. Framing identifies important issues and informs how audiences understand them. In fact, framing is seen as a natural way to understand how second-order agenda setting takes place. Media framing emphasises certain aspects of an issue and draws attention to them. The concept of framing has been closely associated with agenda setting for many years, as mentioned above. However, it now has enough literature to stand on its own as a field of study. Indeed, many believe that framing is not as closely related to agenda setting as previously thought and may indicate that other processes are at work.

Careful and thorough planning to craft news with positive impact so that the resulting effects can be easily accepted by individuals or communities as listeners or other mass media that also highlight the form of pluralism of Indonesian citizens. Agenda Setting in Baran & Davis' (2009) book is also one that can be immediately used by media crews in concocting messages. It can be used as half-baked content material that can be tailored to the needs of corporate elites, political elites or other parties to shape public opinion in society. Shoemaker & Reese (2014) also mention that the role of the mass media in the social system is one of political economy, citing the views of Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott, who say that one role of the mass media is legitimacy through the production of false consciousness, carried out to serve

the interests of the class that owns and controls the media, While the other role is seen as hegemony, with Shoemaker and Reese quoting Gitlin that mass media are understood as an important cultural tool but have relative autonomy, so that media institutions perform this hegemonic function by continuing to produce a cohesive ideology as a unifying force, a set of values and norms that are meaningful.

Looking at the other side of the news, tolerance and pluralism in terms of religion is a picture that is exclusively described and taught by every religious doctrine in Indonesia. In Islam itself, tolerance and pluralism in society are found in various verses of the Holy Quran, for the clearest command of tolerance is written in the 60th Surah Al-Mumtahanah verse 8 and pluralism in the 49th Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13. That in Islam itself, tolerance in a plural society is a teaching taught in Islam to maintain the goodness, security and welfare of Muslims and other religious communities. However, Sudarma (2014) makes a different argument where there are several factors that contradict Shoemaker & Reese's opinion, namely interest or interest factor and power change factor, one of which is interest factor. The interest factor here can be interpreted into two things, namely interest or interest and the attractiveness of the news in question or interest so that there is an element of need on the part of media owners or other parties who can have an influence on the mass media.

Yasraf A. Piliang and Henry Subiakto have a view that is in line with Sudarma in his book, when talking about the media, it cannot be denied that the mass media itself has economic and power interests behind the form of ownership or freedom of the mass media in writing news to the public. Although the interest factor is an inseparable concept from the form of the mass media, the next factor is the change of power. Sudarma was also critical of the current form of social change in society, which is raising the concept of public

consciousness in influencing the form of news and the sovereignty of journalism in the conceptualisation and delivery of news.

An analysis of online news content presenting positive news about the face of Indonesian society's tolerance of pluralism or religious diversity in Indonesia, and highlighting the attitude of the Muslim community in welcoming the presence of Bhante, trying to perform the religious rituals they believe in to welcome and celebrate the Buddhist Vesak Day. The news content can be seen to be carefully crafted to help market the social and environmental conditions of the Indonesian state, which are particularly conducive to followers of religions other than Islam. Agenda Setting, Hypodermic Needle and Media Framing theories have been used by the media, either media conglomerates or journalists, in packaging the positive news, which has a very good impact on business actors and the Indonesian government. The Indonesian government can use this news as a promotional medium in various fields, such as social, investment or tourism, all of which have great goals in terms of international economy and politics.

Conclusion

The conclusion that can be seen is that the agenda setting and framing done by these media, both print mass media and online mass media, finally shows a message or news that raises the issue of Indonesian citizens having good tolerance among religious communities so that the 38 Thudong, Bante or monks can perform their religious rituals in full with solemnity. This is due to the many Indonesian citizens who are always offering encouragement and support so that they can finally arrive in safety and be able to carry out their Vesak day at the Borobudur Temple in Central Java in a proper manner.

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