



Review article

Religion and Media: Anthropological study of religious behavior in the film “Little House on the Prairie”

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to describe the real relationship between religion and media through the content of a film. On the other side, it opens up opportunities for the development of anthropology. Human culture as an object of anthropology, especially in remote areas or isolated ethnic groups, which was previously difficult to reach through the presence of high-tech media, is now beginning to be revealed. Film is a means of delivering messages to the public and is quite effective. One of these images is reflected in the film Little House on the Prairie. a television program that Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) aired in the 1980s. Tells the story of a family living in a wooden house in a remote village with simple and basic living equipment. Meanwhile, it also reflects the religious behavior of a family that is obedient in carrying out religious orders. Literature study is the dominant data collection technique in this research and is a characteristic of the qualitative method. The results of this study found that the relationship between religion and the media can strengthen and develop other social sciences, especially social anthropology.

1. Introduction

Since prehistoric times until now, religion has been a central part of human experience and culture. Religion is considered to have existed in all ages and societies. Traditionally the term religion has been used to refer to all aspects of human relationship with the Divine or the transcendent who is greater than us, the source and end of all human life and values (Argyle:2000).

Recently, scholars have begun to understand religion as an activity and a way of life: the formation of different emotions; a distinctive custom, practice, or virtue; different goals, desires, desires, and commitments; different beliefs and ways of thinking, along with

different ways of living together “and a language to discuss” what they do and why. So, religion is concerned not only with the transcendent because it is “out there” but also immanent in our bodily lives, daily experiences, and practices. Some religious traditions such as Islam are considered to emphasize transcendence, while Eastern religions tend to emphasize immanence. Christianity emphasizes both: the transcendent God is also a God who can be found in and around us, seen in dramatic religious experiences as well as in the simple love of a child for his parents. Religion is multidimensional, and its complexity must be understood if evaluated properly. (Nelson, 2009: 3-4)

All religious communities, ordered their generations to study religion. It was deemed necessary for the survival of the people, or for the good of their souls. This is done through the study of sacred books (for example, studying Bible stories), teaching in myth and theology, and taking part in rituals. (Argyle, 2000: 13).

Some scholars argue that defining religion is impossible, or that it is such a huge undertaking that it cannot be attempted in a short book. Wulff suggests that 'a satisfactory definition (of religion) has been avoided by scholars to this day (Lowenthal: 2000), and Smith has pointed out that :noun religion” is not only unnecessary but inadequate for any genuine understanding of religion (Lowenthal: 2000). Brown spends many pages, more than 100, on the problem of defining religion, analyzing and measuring religion and its many parameters (Lowenthal:2000). Capps argues that the definitions of religion offered by leading scholars only reflect the personal biographies of these scholars. (Loewenthal, 2000: 2).

Religion is a very special kind of ideology, involving individuals in unique commitments, in the absence of evidence or rational argument, and in unique, real and imagined webs of relationships. The working definition of religion used here is a direct description of everyday religion as a system of belief in divine powers, and the practice of worship or other rituals directed at such powers. (Hallahmi and Argyle, 1997: 6)

Thouless states that what distinguishes religious individuals from others is that they believe that, there is a kind of spiritual world that demands our behavior, thoughts and feelings. And if we believe in the existence of an invisible world, then religion as a social institution for us is an intermediary between the invisible supernatural world and the visible world, humans and nature; but that institution, with the behavior attached to it, does not exist without belief in the supernatural. (Hallahmi and Argyle, 1997: 7)

Religion, through various disciplines, is defined in different perspectives: concretely, "the practice of those who profess to be religious"; abstractly, “a distinctive attitude to consciousness that has been altered by experience”; and metaphysically, "concern with the land and purpose of the world we call God". (Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott, 1999: 893) Religious behavior is an individual or group attitude or behavior that arises because of belief in God. Religiosity or religiosity can be measured through various dimensions. Being religious involves several different types of behavior, which may be measured as a dimension, the idea that a good measure of religiosity should incorporate some mutually agreed criteria. Glock and Stark identify five dimensions of religiosity, namely: the dimension of belief (religious belief), the dimension of worship or religious practice (religious practice), the dimension of experience (religious feeling), the dimension of

intellectual and religious knowledge (religious knowledge), and the dimension of application (religious effect). (Djameluddin and Suroso, 2005: 76-77; Hallahmi and Argyle, 1997: 40).

The ideological dimension or belief (religious belief) refers to the level of one's belief or faith in the truth of religious teachings, especially to religious teachings that are fundamental and dogmatic. For example, someone believes in angels, heaven, hell and others. Dimensions of religious practice (religious practice). It is a ritualistic or worship dimension, namely the extent to which a person carries out his religious ritual obligations. For example, prayer, mass and so on. Experiential or experience (religious feeling) is the dimension of experience, showing the religious feelings experienced by individuals. This dimension relates to the experience gained and felt by individuals while carrying out the religious teachings they believe in. For example, closeness to God, the power of prayer, gratitude and others. Intellectual and religious knowledge is a dimension of a person's level of knowledge of religious teachings based on scriptures, and other works of the Prophet or religious experts. Finally, the consequence or application/practice (religious effect) of this dimension reveals the behavior of a person who is motivated by religious teachings in his daily life. This behavior is more of a horizontal relationship, namely human relations with others, and the surrounding environment. (Djameluddin and Suroso, 2005: 78).

2. Literature Review

Religion is a person's attitude or behavior associated with religious knowledge. Praying, for example, is an example of religious behavior. Prayer, defined as 'sincerely asking or giving thanks to God or the object of worship'. Prayer is often regarded as the most distinctive and distinctive 'Religion' of all activities related to religion. (Loewenthal, 2000: 27). Psychologically, daily religious rituals including prayer are the most frequently mentioned religious methods for dealing with stress and are widely believed to be beneficial and can also be a solution to all worldly problems. The experience of praying has aspects including: behavioral aspects. Prayer can involve behavioral preparation, such as solitude from worldly distractions, choosing a clean and sacred place, seeking like-minded friends, as well as preparing the body and posture to face a certain direction, standing, sitting, bending, kneeling or other types of special movements such as dancing.

The term "media" refers to all of the discourse technologies that engulf public and private life today. John McHale identified the media used in activism as "publications, letters, mass media, internet, interpersonal contact, meetings, telephone calls, demonstrations (including speeches, testimonies, banners, disruptive tactics, and slogans), and other media (Stout, 2006: 242) Public opinion, today can be witnessed not only the spread of the televangelical format in the Pentecostal-charismatic movement in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, but also the deliberate and skillful adoption of various electronic and digital media such as: cassettes, radio , videos, television, and the Internet and the formats and styles associated with these media, by Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, or indigenous religious movements. It seems, as the New York Times article dated May 16, 2002, aptly put it, at the start of the millennium. Third, we cannot but realize that the presence of "religious technology", at the same time, reminds people, for example, of the

excellence of the Passion of the Christ yes Mel Gibson, and the revival of religious gardens around the world, religion has also featured prominently in cinematography and other forms of entertainment. (Meyer and Moors, 2006: 1).

Talking about how religion is related to film (cinema) is not new, but there have been many previous studies that have analyzed it, for example the book written by Rachel Dwyer with the title *Filming The Gods, Religion and Indian Cinema* in 2006. In the book, Dwyer explains that the title It was inspired by D.G.'s 'Biblical' film. 'Dadasaheb' Phalke, 'father of Indian cinema', the first fully Indian filmmaker (Raja Harischandra, 1913), Phalke achieved his goal when he founded the first Indian film genre, 'mythological', creating a direct link between religion and cinema in India that endures to today. Shooting the Gods, contextualizing Indian films first, before creating other religious genres and then questioning secular ideas, for nearly a century of cultural production in Indian cinema. These are topics that scholars have largely ignored, despite their profound implications for the study of cinema and religion, and beyond other ideological fields.

Filming the Gods explores the relationship between film and religion, not only as a history of religious cinema, but as a way of examining the Indian religious imagination as it manifests in this dominant form of public culture. Indian cinema, more than any other medium, including newspapers and novels (as Benedict Anderson (1991) suggested, print media is one of the main prerequisites for imagining a national community), through its wide range of dissemination It conveys the imagination of the Indian nation. In other media, especially recorded music, radio, television, magazines, etc., consumption across countries and diasporas and beyond film moments. While the size of the Indian film industry is extraordinary, it is even more interesting to create a public culture for "ordinary people" that displays Indian cultural values and qualities of "Indianness" on a daily basis, through a combination of tradition and tradition. Familiarity. modern and national. Indian cinema presents what Ashish Rajadhyaksha (1987) calls 'neo-traditionalism'. (Dwyer, 2006: 1).

From *Filming The Gods*, turn to another study written by James Y. Trammell with the title *Watching Movies in the Name of the Lord: Thoughts on Analyzing Christian Film Criticism*. Christian film critique reveals the role of religion in the way media use and interpret. Relies on textual analysis comparing film reviews of two prominent but diametrically opposed Christian film critics--fundamentalists Christian Movieguide and post-evangelical Jeffrey Overstreet. The article analyzes the similarities in their approaches to Christian criticism to better understand how religious beliefs in general, and Christian beliefs in particular, influence media use and interpretation. Through this paper Trammell identifies three main themes of Christian criticism: Emphasizing the affective power of film, exploring film walking as an exercise in understanding a worldview, and discussing standards of production excellence, and argues that Christian criticism is distinguished in part by its emphasis on film as a transformative experience. (Trammel, 2012: 113-126).

Other research: Benjamin Sampson, *Marketing Miracles: The Modern Intersection of Hollywood and Christian Film Cultures*. This article examines contemporary methods of Hollywood marketing to Christian audiences since the late 1990s. In particular,

Hollywood uses a two-pronged approach to marketing certain studio films: first, it develops apparently traditional marketing campaigns to reach the widest possible audience; second, it creates a more hidden but still highly focused campaign, specifically for a Christian audience. The second approach explicitly marketed mainstream secular films as having spiritual reasons to support church audiences. This type of advertising attempts to turn narrative entertainment into a ministry of internal church growth and external church evangelism. Marketing these films as a ministry also allows studios to use alternative exhibition models, such as encouraging churches to buy ticket blocks or even buying theaters for propaganda purposes. These strategies also reveal Hollywood's highly concentrated and dependent relationship with Christian filmmaking, since most of these marketing methods were actually developed by Christian filmmakers who promote overtly religious films to a religious audience. While Hollywood has generally shied away from producing overtly Christian films, they have completely adopted a Christian marketing methodology. (Sampson, 2014: 33-44).

Further research: Jim Y. Trammell, entitled: "I Pray We Won't Let This Moment Pass Us By": Christian Concert Films and Numinous Experiences. This article analyzes the Christian concert film *Live in Miami: Welcome to the Aftermath*, to investigate how the mass media evoke unpleasant experiences. Using a framework, which locates technological determinism in the theory of religious encounters, this analysis explores how Christian concert films create a numinous experience through shooting composition, editing, and content selection. This article argues that the technology and aesthetics of mass media can create expectations of religious gatherings and challenge the use of mass media to produce religious experiences. (Trammell, 2016: 210-222).

The four studies above all explain the relationship between religion and the media, namely the mass media in the form of films. This relationship is the point of similarity in this research, while the difference lies in several things, among them, with *Filming The Gods* written by Dwyer. The book tells about films with Indian cultural settings, while this research tells about films produced by America, so they have the same formal object, but different material objects, and this is what distinguishes it from the other three studies.

3. Religion and Media Relations

Linking religion to the media focuses on a few important examples. For example, ultra-Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews successfully marketed their literature based on claims of "authenticity" and tradition, while ultra-Orthodox Sephardim took over pirate radio to reach others. The latter presents itself in a very different style, based on popular culture, as an alternative to more text-oriented secular and Ashkenazi institutions. Elsewhere, other religious groups are realizing the potential of broadcasting to spread their message. (Meyer and Moore, 2006: 2).

Over time, struggles between religious groups in post-apartheid South Africa have shown the emergence of new forms of identity politics based on religious affiliation. Public figures such as Sharif Haidara, leader of Mali's charismatic Muslim movement, turned to video and audio sermons, while in Turkey, theology professor Yasar Nuri ztürk popularized "secular Muslims" by giving regular speeches on TV talk shows

concept appeared. Tapes that are not played on "major media" but circulate on popular networks can also have a profound impact on the formation of new, faith-based identities. In Egypt, there are sermons that popularize a particular combination of personal and political virtues that the Islamic revival movement uses to promote itself. At the same time, state television has recognized the importance of religion, which has entered the commercial realm in shows such as Ramadan Jigsaw. (Meyer and Moors, 2006: 2).

Heidi Campbell further argues that different religious groups negotiate complex relationships with new media technologies related to their histories and beliefs. This requires further engagement of postcolonial studies and new media studies to address religious racialization as a new form of cultural and political exclusion and emerging critiques of the multi-layered digital divide. To this end, it examines the relationship between post-school, post-colonial and digital cultural debates in Europe, particularly the Netherlands, with a focus on how religion or religious practice is lived, expressed and implemented online. (Braidotti, Blaagaard, Graauw & Midden, 2014: 154).

Meanwhile, the mediated presence of religion in the public sphere is constitutive and based on political activism, especially identity politics or the politics of difference. Modern religion refuses to be tied to distinct areas of religion as imagined in the modern sense of society, which is divided into separate areas, and seems to be mixed with politics and sometimes violent political action. Nation-states around the world are faced with significant problems in trying to control religion and its inclusion in the imagination of nation-driven states. Particularly relevant is the relationship between religion and new forms of electronic mediation in the context of the rise of the network society. (Meyer and Moors, 2006: 2).

The relationship between religion, media and public sphere can be seen from religious studies and film studies. For example, it can be seen in Indian cinema, which is manifested by creating an ideal world through individuals, families and communities. The films not only feature literal representations of religions (Hinduism, Islam), religious communities and beliefs, but are also based on the broader concerns of adat and society which can be said to be religious, but loose in other respects. These concerns cross the boundaries of regional and religious communities. Thus it can be said to shape the views and beliefs of India which then reach beyond the artificial boundaries and limited imagination of the nation to the diaspora, and to people who are not from India such as Pakistan, Africa, Asia and parts of Europe. (Dwyer, 2006: 3).

The influence of nation-states on the media has declined dramatically in recent times, as new transnational relationships emerge between people and as technology enables new areas of discussion between communities that transcend political boundaries. This is especially true of religion because, despite efforts by secularists to keep religion out of state control, global religious movements are seen emerging using new media such as Islamic websites or American evangelical television networks. (Dwyer, 2006:3).

4. Method

In this study, we used qualitative research methods. In this case, we listen, observe and analyze each episode in the Little House series. After that we discuss it using related

references. Research objectives in this study is revealing the true relationship between religion and media through film as its content. Literature study, as the dominant data collection technique in this research, and is a characteristic of the qualitative method.

5. Result and discussion

• Result

The study of film is one of several ways in which contemporary debates about religion and secularism have captured the wider imagination to meaningfully question the term. If you want to study imagination in an Indian context, the best place to start is film, as it not only presents public images and symbols to the audience, but is also consumed by the audience. Of course, not everyone watches movies, but movies are an important measure of not only how a nation sees itself, but also how a society sees itself and others. The Indian film industry itself has always had a mixed community of different regions and religions, and as directors, writers and stars, the production of these shows has not been defined by any particular community, although arguably different communities dominated the industry at different times. (Dwyer, 2006:3).

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Unlike India, the religious public that emerged in pre-modern and modern Japan, some religious traditions have persisted in Japanese history for centuries (Buddhism in the Tokugawa era) or decades (Shinto after the Meiji Restoration until 1945). New religions and various forms of Christianity have often played opposing roles in times of freedom, acting as anti-publics or reduced to so-called "social enclaves" or "ritual niches" in times of intense persecution. However, as discussed below, even religious minorities can sometimes find a place in the dominant public sphere, serving—rather than challenging—established political authority and social order. (Wert and Newmark, 2017: 174).

• Discussion

Little House on the Prairie is a television series that was broadcast by Television of the Republic of Indonesia (TVRI) in the 80s. The film stars Michael Landon as Patriarch Charles Ingalls, playing the father, and Melissa Gilbert as Laura Ingalls as the second child. The rest of the cast includes: Karen Grassle as Caroline Inggalls, who plays the mother, Melissa Sue Anderson as Mary Inggalls as the first child, Sedney Greenbush as Carry Inggalls as the third child, Victor French as Isaiah Edward as the pastor, and others. The film series consists of 205 episodes, directed by Michael London himself.

Released on March 30, 1974 to March 21, 1983 for 9 years. Set in California (United States) with NBC (National Broadcasting Company) as the production house. Blanche Hanalis as screenwriter. (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0071759/>) . Some of the stories in this film are based on the true story of Laura Ingalls Wilder as the author of a very popular book. Born in 1867, Wilder is best known for his semi-autobiographical novel *Little House on the Preirie* -- a series published between 1932 and 1943. (<https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/majalah-44610728>) . Initially, it was a literary work in the form of a youth novel, which was later loved not only by teenagers, but by many families, such as in Indonesia.

Synopsis The adventure continues for Laura Ingalls and her family as they leave their small home in the Big Woods of Wisconsin and head to Kansas. They traveled for days in covered wagons until they found the best place to build a small house in the middle of the meadow. After finding a suitable place, they immediately planted and plow, hunted wild ducks and turkeys, and gathered grass for their cattle. Indeed, sometimes starting the first life is very difficult, but Laura and her family work hard to support daily life, which in the end their family is always happy with their new simple home. In the film, much of each episode showing the multitude of religious behaviors, such as praying 'before bed or before meal, the princesses always do so with their parents' guidance, even closing their eyes when praying' was also the zodiac behavior of the Lowenthal's concept (Lowenthal:2000). Equilibrium behavior is part of the religious system, and it is one of the elements of culture according to Kluckhohn's opinion, in his book *Elements of Culture*. Meanwhile, the culture itself is part of the anthropology study.

A small house made of wood, in front of the house there is a river with clear water, river water to meet the needs of their family life, as well as a place for fishing and a place to relax. The house still uses oil lamps at night, equipped with a heating stove in winter. Next to the house there is a cow coop and a chicken coop. From the cattle they produce milk for them to drink, and from the hens, to produce eggs which they sell every morning to the shop. The money from the sale of eggs is spent on buying basic daily needs such as sugar, tea and flour.

The happiness of the Ingalls/Laura family is supported by several factors, apart from working hard, in their family life they always love each other, help each other, and one side that is quite important, Laura's family is a religious family. In each episode, the presence of Isaiah Edward who acts as a pastor, as well as his Sunday school is always presented. When Sunday came, Laura and her brother, father, mother and sister, together went to church in their horse-drawn carriage. The clothes they wear are also very distinctive, especially for women, Laura and her sister and brother, wear clothes of the same fashion and color-light blue, with a round headgear with lace trim around it. These clothes are not used in everyday life, and are only worn specifically for church on Sundays. This is a form of respect for the religion they believe in. Arriving at the church they sat listening to the preacher's sermon and prayed fervently, also singing hymns.

After the event in the church room, the congregation greeted the pastor and went outside, in the churchyard they greeted each other, the children played happily, jumped and ran. The atmosphere is warm and uplifting. Perhaps this message is one of the ones

presented by the filmmakers, in a religious atmosphere, creating warmth, kinship and joy.

In addition to going to church, religious observance is carried out by the Ingalls family in daily life. Before eating, before going to bed, they used to pray. With both hands clasped in front of the chest, sentences are said for goodness, for yourself, for others and the environment, sometimes done with your head down and closing your eyes. Behaviors such as, going to church, loving each other, offering prayers, are part of religious behavior. So called because the behavior is closely related to the belief in the existence of something beyond reason or non-material.

Religious behavior can be seen clearly in the life of the Ingalls family above. Indeed, Religion and religious practices have existed throughout human history, and persist to this day in every corner of the world. (Volland, 2009: 1). Unfortunately, there are still many places of human life, which were previously difficult to reach, so their whereabouts are also difficult to identify, this is one of the inhibiting factors in anthropological studies. But over time, thanks to the tenacity of humans, especially in the field of technology, they were finally able to present the media. Through this medium, human life, even if it is in the wilderness, or even hidden in caves, can then be traced and known, including the life in the field of religion.

Religion and media seem to be getting more and more connected as people move further into the twenty-first century. Through the media, many contemporary religions and spiritualities are known. Important events and icons seem to appear with increasing frequency. a growing number of television and film depictions of gothic, horror, science fiction, magic, mystery, conventional religion and spirituality, and controversies about the existence of religion -of various kinds- in the media. In essence, the realm of religion and the media can no longer be separated easily. (Hoover, 2006: 1).

Little House on the Prairie is a film that depicts human life in a remote village. A village with a natural natural setting, a river flows with clear water, people's houses are far apart, there is a large area of land available for farming, far from the hustle and bustle of the city atmosphere. To fulfill daily needs, it is obtained through farming and farming, raising livestock and sometimes hunting for animals in the forest. Like the Ingalls family who did this for their survival.

6. Conclusion

Film is one of the media that conveys a message that is quite powerful. It is also a representation of the life of a community or ethnic group. In fact, many film stories are based on true stories, such as Little House on the Prairie. With the arrival of this film to the small screen, with a very wide range, it gives a breath of fresh air to anthropological studies, to be more developed. The obstacles faced now can be relatively resolved with the discovery of various media technologies. Film as part of mass media, apart from functioning as a means of entertainment, message delivery and propaganda, through this research another function is obtained, namely the development of social science, in this case anthropology.

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