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### Online Waisak: Celebrating Discrimination of Indonesian Buddhists<sup>1</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

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This paper scrutinizes the Waisak celebrations in Indonesia. Ethnographic methodology was conducted by participating the national ritual in 2016 and observing the online live-streaming ceremonies arranged by various Buddhist groups in 2020. It sought to answer (1) how Indonesian government supports and oppresses religions, schools of Buddhism in particular, and (2) when the celebration had been moved to online platform, how the relationship between the state and religion go on. It found that (1) though the discourse of national unity becomes the theme of Waisak festival every year, the celebration does not reflect the unity of different Buddhist organizations as previously claimed. In contrast, the state's partiality has been marginalizing some Buddhist groups. (2) When the celebration had been moved to online platforms due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the state-supported ritual was canceled, which unintentionally allowed all Buddhist organizations to equally celebrate the Waisak in their personal ways. Religious discrimination was therefore increasing blurred, however, it still exists because religious groups are not free from the state's gaze, and they seem to perform rituals to satisfy the state policy. Thus, the online space is not separated from the offline world, they are the continuity of spaces used in different times.

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## **1. Introduction**

In practice, religious-based conflicts always parallel with the claim of being a symbol of peace. Therefore, the conflict between religions, or even among different sects of one religion itself, is a normal thing when different kinds of interpretations are represented. However, the conflict is more complicated when religious organizations involve with the state power. This eventually becomes problematic nowadays especially in the non-secular countries, including Indonesia. Waisak (internationally known as Vesak) is a case study discussed in this paper to portray relationships between religions and the Indonesian state. By comparing to the online-celebration arranged by different sects of Buddhism in 2020, their diverse identities had been shown when they have their own online-spaces to perform individuals' rituals, though it has some limitations.

In terms of the percentages of religious population, Bernhard Platzdasch wrote that Muslims are 86%, Protestants are 6%, Catholics are 3.5%, Hindus are 1.8%, Buddhists are 1%, and around 0.6 per cent whose religious beliefs are not clearly identified but assumedly consist of indigenous, syncretic and animist beliefs or *Kebatinan*. More specifically, around 1,703,300 are Buddhists (Platzdasch & Saravanamuttu, 2014, p. 4). Indonesia is known as a non-religious state in terms of not being announced the mainstream religion, but it is also not secular. Six religions namely, Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism, have been recognized and supported. In this regard, it is sometimes called a semi-secular state. However, this paper tends to call it non-secular state in the sense of the state's unfairness in supporting and controlling religious groups, which will be explained below. In consequence, an effort of religious organizations in generating relations with the state in order to stabilize their status is often seen. In so doing, some groups have been marginalized, while other groups are under the state patronage, as long as they still respond to the state policy.

An objective of this paper is to go further than what had been mentioned by Yulisan Yulianti (2017) and Rohman Saifullah (2018), who viewed the Waisak as a tool for social solidarity of Indonesian Buddhists as well as with other religious groups. Of course, such a

claim is partly true. Nonetheless, the Waisak celebration, I argue, has many senses of political power and conflicts among Buddhists themselves. The research question of this paper is that (1) how Indonesian government has been supporting and oppressing religions, especially various schools of Buddhism, and (2) through the Waisak celebration in both online and offline spaces, how the relationship between those state and religion go on, how have the Buddhist groups express or invent their ritual identities to respond the state policy.

Methodologically, participant-observations and in-depth-interviews based upon an anthropological way had been conducted in Waisak festival in Borobudur, Central Java, on May 16-22, 2016. I indeed had been conducting fieldwork in Jakarta, Bandung, and Medan, for three months before joining the Waisak celebration. Most informants were monks and laypeople from Theravada tradition. However, they could provide information about religio-politics as well as issues about other Buddhist organizations. I had an opportunity to be familiar with Mahayana monks and volunteers, who worked to prepare the Waisak ritual for four days. Notably, all interviews had not been formally arranged, it happened when we were working and during breaking times. Of course, the relationship has been going on by chatting through Facebook and WhatsApp. For Online Waisak, data had been gathered from watching all VDO Waisak celebrations conducted by various groups in May 2020, lived on Facebook Pages and/or YouTube Channels. Those collected data and some information from reviewing literature will be analyzed through the concept of invention of tradition and digital religion to portray the state's purpose in support and control religion in both offline and online spaces.

This paper has been organized into four parts. (1) Introduction: provides backgrounds, previous scholarly works, research questions, conceptual framework, as well as methodology. (2) Religions under Non-Secular State: elucidates the government's policy upon its religious groups to reflect the discrimination conducted in each period. Three main groups of Buddhist organizations; Sangha Agung Indonesia (SAGIN), Thai Dhammayutta Missionary (TDM), and Sangha Theravada Indonesia (STI), are specified, while other Buddhist groups are partially referred to. This part also discusses how they struggle to seek the new sponsors, initiate relations with local politicians, and claim their authenticities. (3) Waisak in Offline and Online Platforms: demonstrates the various ways of Waisak celebrations performed by each group. It

also the new faces of Buddhism represented on the internet and the Buddhist behaviors in consuming religion in new media. Finally, (4) Conclusion and Suggestion: restates my argument briefly and discusses some possibilities for the future research.

## **2. Religions under Non-secular State**

This section discussed two parts of the state policy adopted in various times. The first part focuses on other religions such as Islam and Confucianism. Meanwhile the second part portrayed the developments of Buddhist organizations under the state's control through the newly-founded national office, Walubi. The state's partiality in this part reveals discriminations conducted through various policies and supports.

### **2.1 Islam and Confucianism**

As already mentioned, Indonesia is not a secular country. Believing in the Supreme God (Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa) is the main theme in defining the religions' status. This meaning refers to "tawhid" or monotheism, which could satisfy the Muslims who preferred an Islamic state at that time (Ropi, 2017, p. 74). As a result, non-theistic religions such as Buddhism and Confucianism have to reinterpret their religions to worship God. Adi Buddha, in the Mahayana/Vajrayana tradition, meant "the Primordial Buddha," has been used as God in Buddhism (Kimura, 2003, p. 64). Meanwhile "Tao" or "Ultimate Truth" became God of Confucianism. Unfortunately, the Chinese identity was later claimed to be involved with the Communist Party (PKI) by Suharto, the second president. Therefore, Confucianism was canceled from the state's recognized religion in 1979 and the Confucians were forced to convert to Buddhism and Christianity. Of course, those who still maintained in Confucianism had to be discriminated by denying their marriage registration, for example (Abalahin, 2018, pp. 119-120).

During that particular period, many Chinese shrines (klenteng) had been evolved into non-Chinese identity, the Chinese name of Klenteng was replaced by the Pali and Sanskrit word of Vihara for example. In addition, Theravada Buddhism from Thailand, which has been sent and supported by the Thai government, had been growing till

successfully originated the Sangha Theravada Indonesia organization (STI) in the 1980s. It can be said that the coming of Thai Theravada was welcome because it helped to reduce the Chinese-ness, on the one hand. The Thai missionary work, which is supported by the Thai state, can be seen as another international relationship tool among these two countries, which facilitates the stability of Thai monks in Indonesia, on the other hand.

Not only religions of the minorities, Islam itself also have many organizations. It is roughly separated into two movements namely; Muhammadiyah, non-governmental organization founded in 1912, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), government-supported organization established in 1926. While the first movement is viewed as a little bit extreme religious institute, the government supports the second one, also the majority, on the grounds that it may help to preserve Indonesian cultures from Islamization of the first group (Ramage, 1997, p. iv). Notably, most of the Indonesian politicians such as Abdurrahman Wahid (the fourth president) and Ma'ruf Amin (current vice president) are from NU. It does not mean that the members of Muhammadiyah have no rights for such positions, but NU is the majority. Moreover, Islamic Universities of Muhammadiyah are categorized as Private Universities, while the NU's Universities named UIN are Public Universities, which are supported by the government.

It is odd to find that Indonesia provides the national budget to the Ministry of Religious Affairs much more than the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Education. According to the 2020 national budget, IDR 127.4 trillion was given to the Ministry of Defense, 120.2 to the Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing, 90 to Indonesian National Police (Polri), 65.1 to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, 57.4 to the Ministry of Public Health trillion, and 35.7 to the Ministry of Education and Culture (Fauzia, 2019). This clearly shows the power of religions, especially Islam, in Indonesia. However, most of the budget has been used to support Islamic education, more than 90,000 pesantren and madrasah schools, in which curricula based on both religious and secular subjects (The House of Representatives of The Republic of Indonesia, 2019). While some parts of the budget are provided to other state's recognized religions.

## **2.2 Buddhist Organization under Government Oversight**

Regarding to Buddhist organizations, (1) Sangha Agung Indonesia (SAGIN), (2) Thai Dhammayutta Missionary (TDM), and (3) Sangha Theravada Indonesia are main monastic groups to be discussed here. Historically, SAGIN started from the ordination of Ashin Jinarakkhita, an Indonesian Chinese who got ordination of Samanera in Chan Buddhism, then went to Myanmar to ordain as a Theravada monk in 1953. Two years later, after coming to Indonesia, he established the Fellowship of Laymen and Laywomen Indonesia (Persaudaraan Upasaka Upasaka Indonesia: PUUI) in order to encourage laypeople to work as monks due to the lacking of monks at that time. In 1960, the Vajrayana tradition was added, and it is also known as “Buddhayana” or the vehicle of the Buddha, which includes all Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana together. This monastic organization was formed in the name of Sangha Agung Indonesia (SAGIN) in 1974. Nowadays, it is also known as Indonesian Family of Buddhayana (Keluarga Buddhayana Indonesia: KBI).

Thai Dhammayutta Missionary (TDM) is a group of monks imported from Thailand in 1966 (Juangari, 2016, p. 273). At the beginning, they worked as assistants of SAGIN monks. Unavoidably, they were able to support and facilitate Indonesian men to ordain in Thailand. Those candidates, with the support of TDM, could ordain in Wat Bowornnives Vihara, Bangkok, and some of them also graduated Pali and Buddhist degrees from Mahamakut Buddhist University. The problem occurred when a number of TDM and Indonesian monks (ordained from Bangkok) increased. Dhammayutta monks from Wat Bowornnives are normally strict in their monastic codes ultimately cannot join the ritual (*patimokkha*) with monks from different traditions, including Ashin Jinarakkhita from Buddhayana. As a result, the emergence of Sangha Theravada Indonesia (STI), referring to Indonesian monks in the Thai Dhammayutta lineage, has been initiated in 1976. Nowadays, about 50 TDM members are working in Indonesia, while 94 STI monks also have their own temples and run their activities separately from TDM.

In order to control all religious groups, Suharto encouraged the Ministry of Religious Affairs to initiate the national office of each religion, in which the government can easily control. The Indonesian Federation of Buddhist Trustees or *Perwalian Umat Buddha*

Indonesia (Walubi) was therefore established in 1978. In 1987, Niciren Syosyu Indonesia (NSI), one of Buddhist organizations, was excluded from Walubi on the grounds that its teaching was not based on Tripitaka, meaning it was not real Buddhism, in the government's eye (Dhammahuto, 2013, p. 44).

In 1992, the congress voted Siti Hartati Murdaya as the chair of Board of trustees. The relationship between Hartati and Suharto is broadly known. Notably, SAGIN was accused of heresy and eventually expelled from Walubi on the ground that its traditions were syncretic and pro-Chinese (Dhammahuto, 2013, p. 44). One of the main reasons that STI was not expelled because its tradition is not based on the Chinese but on Thai Theravada (Wat Bowornnives Vihara), and STI temple's architecture was considered as Javanese culture. However, all Sangha organization agreed to go out from Walubi, which finally led to the collapse of Walubi in 1998.

Suharto's regime was also collapsed in that year. However, the new Buddhist federation named Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia (also abbreviated as Walubi) was formed in August by the support of Jusuf Habibie's government. It was also led by Hartati Murdaya. It consists of various Buddhist organizations except Sangha Theravada Indonesia (STI), Sangha Mahayana Indonesia (SMI), and Sangha Agung Indonesia (SAGIN) (Diputhera, 2010, p. 66). Interestingly, TDM later split from STI and joined Walubi by Hartati's invitation of. This became a main reason why TDM has been playing an important role in Walubi until now. In this regard, TDM can be seen as the betrayer to native monastic orders, but it needs to be understood that TDM has been working in Indonesia not as missionary only, but also a tool of international relationships between two countries. It is difficult to deny if they are requested by the government on the one hand. As foreigners, an acceptance of such an invitation can also stabilize their status in the new land, on the other hand.

According to an interview with Bhante Cittamano (pseudonym), an anti-Walubi monk in Jakarta in April 2016, he cannot accept the wrong teaching of some religious organizations in Walubi, such as Nichiren and Maitreya. "Their origins were not authenticated by the standardized organization. In contrast to Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, which are confirmed by the World Buddhist Sangha Council in 1967, in Sri Lanka." Sumano also

added that “the native Sangha should be in the highest hierarchy of Walubi, not laypeople, because the native Sangha’s mission is to protect Buddhism. But those who currently play an important role in Walubi are monks from other countries.” In Sumano’s perspective, it clearly shows that Walubi was established for personal interests. This is a conflict among Buddhist organizations that have been unequally supported by the government, also caused by the different views in religious perspective but cannot be spoken out, in order to preserve the national unity.

Some relationships and conflicts among different Buddhist organizations as well as discriminations adopted by the government upon religious groups had been demonstrated. The next part will employ the Waisak celebration as an example to analyze the state’s supports and marginalization of some Buddhist groups. Moreover, the state’s gaze can also be seen in both offline and online spaces.

### **3. Waisak in Offline and Online Platforms**

Waisak (Vesak) was officially recognized by the United Nations became as an international public holiday on 15 December 1999 (United Nation, 1999). However, Theravada countries have been celebrating before that. It is hold to celebrate the three important events; the birth, full awakening, and the passing away, of Gautama Buddha. Reportedly, In Indonesia, Waisak celebration was held at Borobudur for the first time in the modern era on 20 May 1932, hosted by the Theosophical Society (Brown, 2004, p. 51). In 1956, Buddhists also arranged in the global Waisak celebration, Buddha Jayanti, to commemorate 2500 years of the Buddha’s death. Waisak becomes a national holiday in Indonesia in 1983 based on the Presidential Decree No. 3/1983.

#### **3.1 Waisak in Offline Platform**

This paper argues that Waisak Festival at Borobudur actually signifies some conflicts between the government and Buddhist organizations. SAGIN and STI still operate their separate organization and celebrate Waisak in their own places. Candi Pawon and Candi Sewu in Java have been used as places to arrange the Waisak of SAGIN monks and devotees.

While Candu Borobudur and Candi Mendut are used to celebrate the national Waisak, led by TDM and supported by the Indonesian government. Sadly, many thousands of Buddhists around Indonesia celebrate Waisak Festival in Candi Mendut without the participation of STI members, though the Mendut monastery of STI is also there. In order to promote tourism (Wonderful Indonesia Campaign), Waisak is also conducted by bringing Holy Water from Umbut Jumprit (Temanggung, Central Java), bringing Holy Fire from Mrapan (Grobogan, Central Java) and performing a march of Buddhists from Candi Mendut to Borobudur, totally three kilometers.

The ceremony is opened by Indonesian President and the leader of Walubi. A monk, may be shown as a Buddhist symbol, is also chosen to play a role of keynote speaker in the name of all Buddhists. Interestingly, Ven. Wongsin, the leader of TDM, is often chosen. Notably, in 2016, Bhante Sri Pannavaro from STI was invited by Walubi to play that role. This can be seen as a compromise of Walubi with native Sangha organizations. However, the rituals arranged in Mendut and Borobudur are based on (Thai) Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana only, while Nichiren and Maitreya, known as lay-Buddhist organizations, play the role of facilitator. Though Walubi (or even Buddhayana) always claim that it opens for all Buddhist sects, in practice, only Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana have opportunities to express their rituals in the public sphere. The national Waisak is an example.

Based on the interview with Jo Wilson and Henri Suprpto ((pseudonyms), volunteers of the Waisak festival in 2016, Maiteya, in their opinion, is not Buddhism, because Maitreya followers do not practice the Gautama Buddha's teaching, they already move to the new Buddha's period. However, Maitreya and Nichiren have close relationships with Walubi, so they are active in all activities to respond to state policy. In 2018, The Union of Indonesian Buddhists (Persatuan Umat Buddha Indonesia: Permabudhi) has been initiated by consisting of eight Buddhist schools namely Mahayana, Theravada, Vajrayana, Tri Dharma, Nichiren, Buddhayana, Maitreya, and Tzu Chi. It is also run by the Indonesian Buddhist Youths (Generasi Muda Buddhis Indonesia: GEMABUDHI). According to the chairperson, Arief Harsono (also director of Maitreya) mentioned that by 2020, Permabudhi will be completely established in all 34 provinces of Indonesia (Detakriau, 2019). The purpose of this new organization is to unify

all Buddhist groups by arranging the secular activities such as academic seminars. Though this particular organization is considered as non-governmental, the opening ceremony was opened by the president. It means that all religious organizations in Indonesia are probably not free from the state's gaze. Not only because the government tries to control every space, religious organizations themselves also want to tie relations with the state power. Therefore, it is not odd to find that those organizations aim to promote the unity without discussing the unfair and discriminative policies of the government.

Yulisan Yulianti (2017) and Rohman (2018) viewed the Waisak festival as a tool for social solidarity. On this occasion, according to them, Muslim also supports and helps Buddhists by preparing some food and setting the material objects for Waisak ceremony, similarly to Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and some other Islamic ceremonies, that Buddhists also help Muslims to prepare, in terms of some material objects (Rohman, 2018, p. 140). Based upon Yulianti's observation, the themes of Waisak of every group always portray the harmony or religious tolerance that have been mixed with nationalism. In 2010, the theme of SAGIN was "Waisak's Full Awareness Reviving Spiritual Values and Nationalism," while in 2016, the national Waisak by Walubi themed "Love Keeping Diversity." In 2020, STI announced the theme "True Brotherhood is the Foundation of National Integrity," and SAGIN mentioned "Introspection and Tolerance Maintaining Nation's Harmony," for examples.

This paper argues that such a theme as well as the ways to celebrate the national Waisak as already explained cannot portray peace as we often claim. The function of ritual, based on Emile Durkheim, can promote social solidarity. Nonetheless, the discourse behind solidarity is actually to overlook the current conflict. Simply put, we have to perform rituals to unify different people, ideas, and beliefs, instead of discussing the fair benefit allocation. I think that Durkheim's concept of social solidarity or cohesion has been used by many scholars in social sciences until we forget to consider the weakness of solidarity that the state power, for example, adopts to assimilate or unify different groups of people. Durkheim himself disagreed with a nationalist writing of Treitschke on the grounds that it is not good if the state violates other individuals in the name of solidarity (Malczewski, 2018, p. 50). This clearly shows that though Durkheim emphasizes in social aspect, it does not mean

that he denies individuals in some senses. Altruistic suicide, which is conducted when social cohesion is too strong and people are overwhelmed by society, is an example of imbalance of social solidarity (Durkheim, 2002, p.175).

According to Eric Hobsbom's idea, Waisak may reflect more political. The invention of tradition does not necessarily happen because the old tradition is no longer available, but it may not respond to the new purpose, which may refer to the patriotism, nationalism, and so forth. Therefore, the new form of ritual and tradition may be needed (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2012, pp. 8-11). Notably, there is nothing wrong with the conflict as long as it does not lead to the crime. However, religious states always try to avoid it by the "discourse of unity" in order to create the new moral conduct by being quiet on the unfair supports and discrimination conducted by the government.

In order to support my claim, more examples should be added. It should also be questioned that why religious rituals have to respond to the state policy or nationalism. If religious freedom is promoted, why the traditions of Maitreya, Nichiren, and some other minority groups cannot be expressed? It clearly shows that only Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana (also only groups that belong to Walubi) will be guaranteed as the real Buddhism and have rights to express their identities, while others are marginalized as the volunteers and participants. The ritual in Candi Mendut was hosted by Thai Theravada monks, of course, the scene was set with Theravada identities, while Candi Borobudur was by Mahayana and signified Mahayana identities. In both places, monks from those three traditions only played roles in every ritual. Therefore, religio-politics can be witnessed. The next part portrays some identities of each groups expressed in online-Waisak rituals and the analysis on those phenomena.

### **3.2 Waisak in Online Platform**

In May 2020, Waisak in Indonesia has been moved to the Internet world in order to prevent the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the pictures of unity can also be seen in Facebook Pages of their organizations by distributing material objects to the poor who were affected by the lockdown campaign. Notably, the online and offline lives are not separated as the real and unreal worlds as often mentioned. It is because people normally spend their

lives in both spaces, while both of them are considered as equally real. This means that we sometimes begin relationships in the online space and use the offline time to join some activities and vice versa (Dawson & Cowan, 2004, p. 12). Briefly, if there is a conflict in the offline world, it is common to find that the conflict will continue even in the online platform. That is because these two worlds are interconnected.

In the 1990s and 2000s, issues on religion and the Internet were mostly about how was religion reproduced and represented in cyberspace (MacWilliams, 2004; Marcotte, 2010). Nowadays, scholarly works in digital religion move to focus on how religious actors negotiate and created relationships in multiple spheres in both online and offline (Lövheim & Campbell, 2017, p. 5). However, it cannot be denied that the Internet has a democratizing effect in terms of every religious movement can use the online platform to spread their religious ideas and rituals (Dawson & Henneby, 2004, p. 168). In fact, it is partly true because though people have the new online space, but it is not free from the state's gaze. Online-Waisak in Indonesia is the excellent case to confirm this claim. It does not necessarily mean that the government force Buddhist organizations to practice in the single way, but Buddhist groups themselves seemed to satisfy the state by performing the appropriate rituals according to the state's expectation.

It would be started with Maitreya. As already mentioned, the doctrine of Maitreya or Yiguan Dao is different from the mainstream Buddhism; Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajryana, which based their beliefs on the Tripitaka. Maitreya believes that this era is the time of Maitrya Buddha, not Gautama, therefore, the teaching is also totally different. Maitreya did not celebrate the Waisak to commemorate the previous Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death, meanwhile its everyday-worshipped Buddha is also the new one, Maitreya, who has the smiling face and fat body. However, having adapted in religious countries like Indonesia and Thailand, Maitreya movements always have to put the Gautama Buddha image in their temples in order to be accepted as a group of Buddhism. If we use the state's criteria of religion based upon the narrow definition; religion must have God, prophet (Gautama Buddha for Buddhism), and scripture (Tripitaka), of course, Maitreya is not counted as a religion. This case clearly shows the complexity of religio-politics of Indonesia, while Maitreya has to accommodate for its survival.

Maitreya (indeed also Nichiren sect) is very active in facilitating the celebration of Waisak in Borobudur every year. However, its ritual is not conducted in the public sphere, because in many Buddhists' opinion, it is a heretical doctrine. Interestingly, during the Covid-19 pandemic of May 2020, it also conducted a live-streaming VDO on YouTube to celebrate the Waisak festival in Maha Vihara Maiteya in Medan. On this occasion, people have an opportunity to watch its ritual, which was conducted in Mandarin (this is the universal practice of Maitreya around the world) and some Bahasa Indonesia in the part of blessing the Indonesian state (Maha Vihara Maitreya, 2020). Similarly, Nichiren had an opportunity to broadcast their ritual, chanting *nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, on YouTube with the theme of "Dharma Awareness Increasing Social Awareness" (Metrotvnews, 2020). As already mentioned, Maitreya and Nichiren are in fact not recognized in the sense of real Buddhism, they therefore choose to generate relationships with the VIP in Walubi and politicians to stabilize their status. One of the tools to be accepted, as also conducted by new religious movements around the world, is to promote social welfare by distributing material objects to the poor.

SAGIN performed the Waisak through live-streaming YouTube as well. Notably, Waisak in Indonesia is normally not celebrated for a single day, but for a month (Bulan Waisak: in Bahasa Indonesia). SAGIN is a good example among Buddhist groups to perform it throughout May. Its nationalist theme of Waisak in 2020 is "Introspective and Tolerance Maintaining the Nation Harmony." Notably, the national Waisak in Borobudur is not participated by SAGIN and STI. SAGIN arranges it in Candi Pawon and Candi Sewu, Java, and Candi Muara Takus, Pekanbaru, while STI celebrates in their temples. However, the number of views on YouTube of SAGIN, named Buddhayana TV, seems to be much more than other Buddhist groups.

SAGIN invited the diverse speakers each night, monks, nuns, (from all traditions), as well as laypeople. The program started with a short chanting, mostly in Pali, a 5-minute meditation, and then followed by an hour-long sermon. Interestingly, on the live-streaming VDO of Waisak Day on 7 May 2020, SAGIN also broadcasted a session talked by Fachrul Razi, the Minister of Religious Affairs (Buddhayana TV, 2020). It is important to note that though some organizations may choose to run outside the Walubi, they still have to register as a

recognized organization within the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Therefore, to satisfy the state's policy is still needed. In terms of donations, the live-streaming YouTube still help all religious groups to seek for donations. SAGIN in Jakarta has shown the QR code for scanning, while SAGIN in Medan, Pubbarama Buddhist Center, provided the running-text of the donors' names on screen. This is similar to the virtual pilgrimage in the sense that people can consume religious experiences online and the donation box is also available there (MacWilliams, 2004, p. 227).

STI celebrated the online-Waisak with the theme of "True Brotherhood is the Foundation of National Integrity." Of course, a short talk by Fachrul Razi, the Minister of Religious Affairs was also broadcasted. The most interesting thing is the VDO record of Chanting Tipitaka Ritual in 2019. Most of the STI speakers were monks, as often seen in many Theravada groups (Mompost Sangsia, 2020). Notably, STI does not join the national Waisak in Borobudur. However, it seems to emphasize the Asalha Puja arranged in Candi Mendut, Pawon, and Borobudur. The Minister of Religious Affairs and the governor of Central Java were also invited. This celebration is quite huge like Waisak of Walubi. Its main function is to arrange the chanting of Pali-Tipitaka. In this regard, the claim of Theravada authenticity in terms of promoting the (real) Buddha's teaching is much more intensive than Waisak that has been host by Thai Dhammayutta monks.

TDM or Thai Dhammayutta Missionary seemed not to be active on YouTube as found in other groups. In addition, it may have no the Waisak theme. Ven. Kamsai Sumano always conducts Facebook-Live every day in the morning (Bhante Kamsai, 2020). However, in this month, the frequency of live-streaming increased especially at night. Probably, because Kamsai plays an important role in Walubi and his relations with Indonesian state is already tied through the Thai Embassy, so there is no burden to express (Indonesian) nationalism and to respond to the government policy at the same level as conducted by other groups. Moreover, TDM can be counted as the same organization with Walubi, as a result, the Waisak broadcasted by Walubi may be enough. The Waisak theme of Walubi this year is "The Benefits of Waisak Momentum is to Advance Buddha Dharma and Development of Awareness, Enlightenment and Wisdom." Of course, it portrays the religious sense without nationalism as found in other groups.

Nonetheless, the live-streaming YouTube of Walubi is interesting. The VIP guests such as Andi Sumangerukka (rector of Indonesian Army Commando XIV) and Ida Panglingsir Agung Putra Sukahet (chairperson of the Religious Harmony Forum of Indonesia) were invited to give a short greeting. It was then followed by the talks of Ven. Kamsai, Mahabhiksu Dutavira Sthavira, Bhikhsuni Zhi Shuan (in English), and Ven. Jue Cheng (Fo Guang Shan Malaysia, also in English). The talks of these monks and nuns were from records that had been broadcasted on Metro (national) TV in early morning. Then, it continued with the talks of a Dhammakaya monk, then Ven. Tai Situ Rinpoche (Vajrayana monk who speaks English but directed to Indonesian Buddhists), and Ven. Atichagaro (DPP Walubi, 2020). It can be said that Walubi's program is the most diverse channel under the reason that it always claims to promote diversity on the one hand, while the native monastic groups are not included in Walubi on the other hand. However, the leaders of Maitreya, Nichiren, as well as other lay-religious organizations were not invited.

Notably, the state's gaze does not necessarily mean that the state forms a center to check people's behavior in using the internet for their religious purposes. It can also refer to the fear that people know in common sense that what kind of expression will be safe. Nonetheless, the case of Indonesia clearly shows the lack of freedom in expressing one religious identity that is not recognized by mainstream religions, which ultimately can be interpreted as blasphemy. To prison Ibu Meiliana in Medan due to her condemning the loud sound of Muslim pray in 2018 (Damanik, 2018), the state's force to shut down at least eighteen churches in 2011, and banning the Ahmadiyah mosques in 2013 (Christian Solidarity Worldwide [CSW], 2014), due to their heresy, are often referred to. Interestingly, the national security (keamanan) in Indonesian law refers to social order and eventually limits the freedom of expression (Bagir et al., 2020, p. 49). In addition, the Ministry of Religious Affairs actively encourages religious institutions to provide guidance on being responsible in using Internet and social media. So, the government officially declares the importance in maintaining social order that "there is no absolute freedom of speech" ("Tidak mutlak kebebasannya untuk berbicara atau beropini") (Epafras et al., 2019, pp. 226-227). In this respect, all religious groups in Indonesia seem to realize their limitation and try not to break the social order, which is

narrowly issued by the government.

Not surprisingly, all Buddhist organizations, including the anti-Walubi groups, have to express their loyalty to Indonesian nationalism till their identities of rituals as well as opinions are limited. This phenomenon happens not only in the offline world, but also in online platforms, because those two spaces are counted as public spheres. To sum up, though they are not directly commanded by the state, they seem to know and perform what are really needed by the government.

#### **4. Conclusion and Suggestion**

The Indonesian state's partiality in supporting and controlling of religions leads to the conflict among religions as well as different sects themselves. Conflicts here do not necessarily mean physical harms or destroying others' properties, but refer to the state power that support some groups and marginalize other groups. As a result, many religious groups have no an opportunity to perform their rituals in the public sphere, in addition, their belief must be adapted in order to be recognized by the state. This kind of power unavoidably causes the conflict among religious groups who are treated unfairly. However, the non-secular government seems to solve the problem by promoting the "discourse of national unity," rather than reviewing its religious policy.

Waisak is an excellent example that can portray the discrimination of the government on different Buddhist groups. Selected rituals performed in the national Waisak, mainly based on Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, seem to be legitimated as the state's approval, and has been reproduced in the name of religious tolerance and unity. When Waisak has been moved to the online platform, it sounds like every group has equal rights in performing their rituals, which can be called disruption of the Internet. However, they are not free from the state's gaze, contents represented on the live-streaming Facebook and YouTube are therefore designed to respond to the government's need. The different levels of nationalism are good examples. All Indonesian Buddhist organizations are expected to be loyal to the nation. Their religious activities such as, talk shows, public sermons, social activities, and so forth have

always been arranged in the theme of nationalism. Simply put, Waisak is one of many tools performed to avoid the discussion about various unfair policies and supports by the government.

The future research should go deeper in financial budgets that the government provides to each religion, especially in Walubi itself, in order to clarify discriminations in the name of the non-secular state. This kind of unfair benefit allocation and unequal accessibility to power may become the main cause of the conflict among religious groups. In addition, some concrete policies announced by the government to control Buddhist organizations should be mentioned (if any), parallel with many other religious cases, in order to confirm why many groups of Buddhists seem to keep silent and express loyalty to the state rather than confidently perform their identities.

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