

Thai Buddhism for Indonesian Elites*

Jesada Buaban**

Abstract

This paper focuses on the Thai Dhammayutta missionary (TDM)'s accessibility to political power through the National Buddhist Federation (Walubi) of Indonesia in the 1970s. It questions how did the Thai missionary monks, as a foreign group, develop relationships with Indonesian politicians and elites? And how did the Indonesian political context of assimilation policy pave the way for that? It was found that the TDM members have been used to support Indonesian government as found in the Thai history, those monks work in Indonesia not as ordinary missionaries but in the name of the Thai bureaucrats who carry official passports and supported by the Thai government and monarchy. When assimilation policy was reinforced by Suharto in the 1970s, religious organizations were forced to respond the government policy. This ultimately caused many conflicts between Buddhist native monks and politicians. While other Buddhist organizations withdraw and/or were forced to withdraw from Walubi, Thai monks decided to support the dictatorial government, which finally opened an opportunity for Thai Buddhism to play a vital role in Walubi and become one of popular Buddhist orders in Indonesia nowadays.

Keywords: assimilation policy, Buddhism, missionary, Walubi

Introduction

Indonesia is known as the most populous Muslim-majority country. Nevertheless, in order to assimilate the diverse population of this country, the government's policy emphasizes the *Pancasila* (five pillars), beginning with the first religious principle: *Ketuhanan yang Maha Esa*, Belief in the One and Only God (Benyamin, 2008, p. 223). Nevertheless, there only six religions, i.e. Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism are recognized by the

* This paper was edited from chapter 3 of the author's M.A. thesis, *Religious Mobility: The Propagation of Thai Theravada Buddhism in Indonesia* by Dhammayutta Missionaries (2017).

** He graduated M.A. in Southeast Asian Studies, Walailak University, Thailand. He is currently a student of Darmasiswa Program in Universitas Muhammadiyah Makassar, Indonesia. Email: jesada.tee@gmail.com

government. In the 2010 Indonesian census, 87.18% of Indonesians identified themselves as Muslim, 6.96% of Protestant, 2.91% of Catholic, 1.69% of Hindu, 0.72% of Buddhist, 0.05% of Confucian, 0.13% of other, and 0.38% of unstated or not asked (Penduduk Menurut Wilayah dan Agama yang Dianut Indonesia, 2010).

In order to unify the different groups of people based on their various beliefs, Indonesia does not support the main stream religion; rather, it mimics the western form of secular state (Densmoor, 2013, p. 8). However, it does not mean that all religious organizations maintain without the state's control. Conflicts among religious organizations themselves and conflicts with the state's policy are illustrated in this paper. More specifically, around 1,703,300 are Buddhists (Platzdasch, 2014, p. 4).¹ As reported by Bimas (Bimbingan Masyarakat Agama Buddha, the Office of Guidance for Buddhists in Department of Religious Affairs), there are 3,432 Buddhist temples in Indonesia, including of all types of Vihara (tempat ibadah) in every tradition; monks or religious leaders may not present in some of them (BimasBuddha, 2016).

Relationships between Buddhist organizations and Indonesian government in the 1970s have received attention in scholarly works such as Edij Juangari (2016), Husen Dhammahuto (2013), Oka Diputhera (2010), Leo Suryadinata (2005), and TIDGA (1996). However, these works failed to discuss some conflicts among those organizations and especially conflicts among Buddhist monks themselves. This paper argues that these conflicts paved the way for the growth of TDM.² It can be said that religio-political situations in Indonesia during 1969-1998 forced TDM members to seek status in Indonesian political arena by creating relationships with politicians and Indonesian

¹ The percentages of religious population in Indonesia provided by Platzdasch are different from those provided by the government. Platzdasch wrote that 86 per cent are Muslims, Protestants are 6%, Catholics are 3.5%, Hindu are 1.8%, Buddhists are 1%, and there are around 0.6 per cent whose religious beliefs are not clearly identified but assumedly consist of indigenous, syncretic and animist beliefs or *Kebatinan* (Platzdasch, 2014, p. 4).

² The term "growth" is sometimes problematic because it portrays the growing members of those who are religiously converted. This was a Christian traditional practice in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which missionaries must report the numbers of their new believers to the central organization. A difference can be found when Thai Buddhist missionaries only invite Indonesian Chinese to participate in their rituals and convince them in some new beliefs, but their old beliefs are not required to be abandoned. It means that while Indonesian Chinese become the members of Thai temples, they can also belong to many other religious organizations such as Mahayana temples, Tibetan temples, Chinese shrines, and even Christian churches. Therefore, the term "growth" here refers to the growing numbers of the Chinese who join and support TDM's activities regardless of conversion, and the growing numbers of Thai temples in Indonesian archipelagoes.

elites. At the same time, relationships with the Thai sides have not been ignored though they are separated by national borders.

This paper is organized into four parts: (1) Development of TDM in Indonesia, discussing the beginning period of Thai missionary monks in Indonesia and some relationships with the native organization, (2) Assimilation Policy, elucidating the political context of Indonesia in Suharto's period that all religious organizations and Indonesian Chinese were intervened by the government, the National Buddhist Federation or *Walubi* has been established, in which the Thai monks began to play an important role in *Walubi*, and (3) Conclusion, restating all main points in brief. Documentary research and ethnographic methodology were adopted in this research project.

Development of TDM in Indonesia

The first group of TDM monks arrived Indonesia in 1969 by the invitation of Jinarakkhita, an Indonesian Chinese monk, who visited the TDM's founder in 1968 and promised to support the TDM's mission by providing residences and daily food (Edij, 2016, p. 273). The first group of TDM consisted of four monks. Phrakhupalad Atthacariyanukit (Win Vijjano) was the leader. The other three monks were Phrakrupalad Sambibadviriyacariya (Bunreing Punnyajoto), Phramaha Prataen Khemadassi and Phramaha Sujeep Khemacaro. It is crucial to note that all four missionaries were products of the first training program arranged by The Institute of Dhammaduta Going Abroad (TIDGA). In 2018, about 50 TDMs were working in Indonesia. Bhante Wongsin, in Vipassana Graha Bandung, was a leader, who had Bhante Weerasin as a secretary, Bhante Kamsai, in Buddha Metta Arama Jakarta, was a vice chairman. A total of 25 temples have been built in several regions. Buddhometta Arama in Jakarta and Vipassana Graha in Bandung are main temples functioning as TDM administrative centers. Each temple consists of around 8 TDMs (as well as Indonesian monks), while other temples consist of few TDM members.

TDMs in Indonesia are strongly linked to Wat Bowornnives Vihara in Bangkok through various aspects. Bhante Win, the first TDM leader, Bhante Wongsin, the second, and Bhante Kamsai, the vice chairman are not ordinary missionaries, but were also approved as high ranking monks by the king. In addition, all TDM members legitimately belong to TIDGA, which is supported by the Supreme Sangha Organization and Thai government. Official passports are provided to every TDM.

Therefore, TDM's status should not be considered as ordinary tourists but as the officials of Thai state.³

Also, missionary works of TDMs in Indonesia was related to the native groups of Buddhist organizations. Two organizations will be mentioned here. Sangha Agung Indonesia (SAGIN) was developed from the Fellowship of Laymen and Laywomen Indonesia (Persaudaraan Upasaka Upasika Indonesia: PUUI) that was established in 1955 by Jinarakkhita. This particular organization played an important role in supporting TDMs in the very beginning period. Sangha Theravada Indonesia (STI) was initiated in 1976 by Indonesian Theravada monks who received ordination in Thailand under the assistance of Bhante Win. Thai monks were invited to give a sermon in the temples of SAGIN and STI and vice versa. However, these relationships have been changing when the policy of assimilation was re-emphasized by Suharto during the 1970s-1990s, which TDM began to access the political arena and its status has consequently been changed from the assistance of STI into the leader of Theravada groups approved by Indonesian government.

Assimilation Policy and TDM

Assimilation policy had been reinforced to all Indonesians, but this paper will emphasize the Chinese only who were forced to change their identities. A Dual Nationality Treaty had been conducted between China and Indonesia to resolve the question of the nationality of ethnic Chinese in Indonesia in 1955. China accepted that ethnic Chinese descent could renounce their Chinese nationality, at the same time, must adopt the Indonesian nationality. In exchange, Chinese schools were free to operate. In addition, newspapers and magazines could publish in Chinese language, and Chinese festivals such as New Year (Imlek) were allowed to celebrate in the public sphere. (Brown, 2003, p. 196). Nevertheless, these rights had however been removed in Suharto's regime, after the Gestapu Movement in the late 1965 in which the Communist Party Indonesia (Parti

³Though the official passport does not gain any privilege in many western countries, it is quite beneficial in Indonesia, where bureaucrats are admired. TDM members always use it to negotiate with Indonesian officials as well as ordinary villagers. In Purwakarta, a new temple named Kebun Persahabatan (Friendship Garden) was initiated in 2005 and protested by the Muslim locals. TDM members invited the village leader, villagers, policemen, as well as *Imam* (the leader of Muslims who plays religious role in the village) to negotiate. The meeting began with lunch provided by TDM, followed by some intensive discussion. The TDM started by introducing themselves and showing their official passports to support their official status as having a close relationship with the Thai embassy and Indonesian government. They added that due to their status, policemen and security from Jakarta are always provided whenever requested. TDM comforted their audiences that buildings symbolizing Buddhism, such as the chanting hall (Uposatha), Buddha images, and pagoda, would not be constructed. Therefore, the garden should be considered as a resort rather than a religious place. Finally, the villagers agreed with their garden and asked for some working positions for the locals.

Kommunis Indonesia: PKI) was cleansed up. That is because the Chinese were seen closely associated with the PKI (Boden, 2007, p. 522).

Post-independent Indonesia led by Sukarno strongly promoted national unification and solidarity. *Pancasila* was therefore initiated as the state ideology. The period of 1949-1956 has become the era of liberal democracy, which parliamentary government was established. However, Sukarno claimed that democratic administrations did not fit Indonesian cultures. In 1957, he then proclaimed “Guided Democracy” that gave the president broader authority that brought about political stability. Many scholars claimed that the main aim of Sukarno was actually to intensify his personal power and the power of local elites (Neher, 2000, p. 106 and Schwarz, 1994, p. 80). In addition, by the 1960s, the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) was the biggest party in Southeast Asia in terms of members (Yazid, 2014, pp. 1-3). Sukarno’s efforts to speed up the land reforms based on the communist idea frightened those who possessed the land and threatened the social position of Muslim clerics (Schwarz, 1994, p. 74).

In 1965, internal struggle in Indonesia between the Communist-socialist and Democratic-capitalist led to the coup, called Gestapu (Gerakan September Tiga Puluh) or the 30th September Movement. Lieutenant Colonel Untung, the leader of Gestapu, launched the movement to overthrow Sukarno’s government, and later composed of forty-five members to take over the government’s task. However, the movement was too weak. It therefore broke down within two days due to the attack of the military under General Suharto (Boden, 2007, p. 513). This phenomenon changed Indonesian politics from the “Old Order” administration of Sukarno with its alleged Communist influence, to the “New Order” under Suharto. However, Suharto always claimed that Gestapu was supported by the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI). Besides the change of political regime, Gestapu can be claimed as a starting point that changed the forms of religious organizations in Indonesia, especially Buddhism as mentioned in this research project.

The coming of Suharto later led to the mass killing of an estimated 500,000 members and supporters of the pro-Peking Indonesian Communist Party. This genocide also extended to the considerable non-communist Chinese community. After the effective control over Indonesia, Suharto banned the PKI, arrested pro-Sukarno officials, ended Indonesia’s close relationship with China, and rejoined the United Nations. Moreover, the confrontation with Malaysia was ended in 1966. This became the first step of Indonesia in improving relationships with Democratic capitalist countries. In August 1967, Indonesia and some other capitalist states in Southeast Asia agreed to form the Association

of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which was strongly supported by Western countries, Great Britain, and Japan (Pohlman, 2004, p. 3).

Besides the mass killing, assimilation policy was another political strategy adopted by Suharto since 1966. This led to the implementation of the assimilation program, in which the Chinese cultures and social practices in the public sphere were restricted. However, speaking Mandarin at home was not prohibited (Aizawa, 2011, pp. 52-58). According to Nobuhiro Aizawa, the most important objective of Suharto was not only to unify various groups of people into the Indonesian state, but also to ban all elements that might become a source of strong political opposition and turmoil. In July 1966, the Chinese language schools were closed and the Chinese names must adopt Indonesian-sounding names. In 1967, the presidium cabinet of Suharto referred to the Chinese as problematic (Masala Cina). However, the implementation of the regulation not definitive, but depended on the local authority. In consequence, the Chinese in different areas were treated differently (Susanto, 2011, p. 69).

As a result, differentiating Chinese Indonesians from the Chinese in China helped to prevent the intervention of China in Indonesian politics (Aizawa, 2011, p. 62). In terms of governmental organization, the Communication Body of Organizing National Unity (Badan Komunikasi Penhayatan Kesatuan Bangsa: BAKOM) was initiated in 1977 by Suharto to control and assimilate the Chinese (Aizawa, 2011, p. 47).⁴

I do not argue that the coming of TDMs in Indonesian in 1969 was encouraged by the assimilation policy of Indonesia. However, it cannot be denied that the TDM members, who are under the Thai government and the monarchy's patronages, gained various advantages from the Indonesian government at that period. The TDM's figure involved with the Thai monarchy indicates some sense of the anti-communist ideology. That is because Thailand is one of the Southeast Asian countries that successfully defeat communism by assimilation, nationalism, Buddhism and monarchy. Visiting the Thai monasteries in Indonesia of Her Royal Highness Princess Sirindhorn, which were also welcome and accompanied by Indonesian authorities, implied that the Thai missionary work in Indonesia is not only a religious issue, but also referred to the international relationship between these two countries. Suharto's support of building a Theravada monastery in Jakarta in 1981, and the establishments of the National Buddhist Federations in two periods in 1978

⁴ In fact, Sukarno also established the Institute for the Promotion of National Unity (Lambaga Pengkajian Kesatuan Bangsa: LPKB) in 1963 for the purpose of creating access for the government to the Chinese Indonesian community and vice versa. Both institutes in both periods were chaired by Sindhunata, a former navy major.

and 1998 that made Thai monks access to the high position in the committee board, are elaborate examples for this claim that will be discussed below.

Though the country during Suharto's period was not a military dictatorship in the official term, it has been widely accepted that the military continued to play a vital role in Indonesian politics until the end of the New Order (Brown, 2003, p. 200). *Pancasila* has been re-emphasized in order to prevent communism, Islam, and assimilate various groups of people into Indonesian citizenship (Hoon, 2006, p. 151).⁵ The assimilation policy led to the state's intervention in religious affairs. Buddhism among the Chinese groups was an example. As asserted by Suryadinata, Indonesian Chinese were forced to mention their religion in identity cards. Confucianism was canceled from the list of recognized religions in 1979, and the Chinese were forced to identify with one of the other provided religious choices. Many of them identified themselves as Buddhists (Suryadinata, 1998, p. 9).

Not only had the Chinese become victims of Suharto's assimilation policy, but all people who can be identified as politically leftist. For instance, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, one of Indonesia's greatest writers in the post-war, was imprisoned or exiled more than ten years on the grounds that he was accused of a communist. In addition, all his writings were banned until 1998. More interestingly, beside communists, Islam was also repressed by the government. One of the slogans promoted by government during the 1970s and 1980s was "Beware the dangers of the Extreme Left and the Extreme Right." While the Extreme Left referred to communism, the latter referred to a form of Islam (Brown, 2003, p. 201).

As has been widely noted, Suharto's assimilation policy was employed to absorb different ethnic groups to Indonesian national citizenships in which identities must be based upon *Pancasila*. Many groups of minorities, especially Chinese, were discriminated against by this policy (Hoon, 2006, p. 149). In order to affirm the state's stability, SARA or *Suku* (ethnicity), *Agama* (Religion), *Ras*

⁵ Not only Suharto that emphasized Pancasila, Jokowi is also the same. He tested Muslim pupils' ability in recitation of Pancasila when he visited the event of Maulid Ajang Maulid at Pekalongan Jawa Tengah. See more details at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NFDmaTVrtm0> (Jokowi Uji Kemampuan Santri (Presiden Jokowi kembali Tertawa Lepas) by CNN Indonesia (Retrieved on January 8 , 2017)

In 1992, in March 1 at Jakarta, 200,000 members of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) celebrated its sixty-sixth anniversary. NU's General Chairman, Abdurrahman Wahid emphasized that *Pancasila* is the state ideology, not Islam. It is also the most effective way to emphasize NU's nationalist ideology (Ramage, 1997, p. iv).

(race), and *Antar Golongan* (interclass), must be under the government's control. These elements must be imagined and reconstructed within homogeneous *Pancasila* (Hoon, 2006, p. 151). It means that, in that particular period, Indonesian Chinese were allowed to expend their own wealth, which helped to expend the national economics as well; meanwhile, their culture, language, politics, and so forth were marginalized and erased (Heryanto, 1998, p. 326 and Setijadi, 2016, p. 4).

In addition, when TDM members were invited to Indonesia by the Chinese group led by Jinarakkhita, their entry was not denied by the government. Moreover, President Suharto himself also occasionally gave some financial support to TDM. For instance, in 1981, Bhante Win and Bhante Sombat were constructing a new temple called "Jakarta Dhammacakka Jaya" (now has been transferred to the Sangha Theravada Indonesia or STI). Bhante Win advertised this project in the newspaper. This news ultimately attracted Suharto, General Soeprapto (the governor of Jakarta) and Munawir Syadzali (the Minister of Religious Affairs) to donate their personal money (TIDGA, 1996, p. 23). Indeed, TDM temples in Indonesia have always been visited by the Thai royal family members. Those accessions are also prepared and accompanied by both Thai and Indonesian bureaucrats. In effect, the Thai monarchy helps create connections between Thai missionary and Indonesian government. Simply put, to support the Thai missionary of Indonesian state is a way to increase the relationship with Thailand.

Though Vihara Jakarta Dhammacakka Jaya was partly supported by Thai people, most of its architectures are in Javanese,⁶ which is different from other previous Buddhist temples that mostly show the Chinese arts. During its construction, the Princess of Thailand, Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, visited Indonesia as a state guest in 1984. She also visited this temple and suggested, when was asked about the Buddha image, that the Buddha statue should refer to the Borobudur temple's version (Vihara Jakarta Dhammacakka Jaya, 2011, p. 18). Finally, the Buddha image was soon built in Thailand in April, 1985 at Wat Bowornives Vihara, with the support of king Bhumipol, and was sent to Indonesia.

It clearly shows that the coming of TDMs during the assimilation policy helped to reduce the Chinese-ness and replaced it with Thai and Javanese traditions. Assimilation policy had been emphasized throughout Suharto's government. For example, according to his speech in 1985, all

⁶ For Suryadinata, building the new temple with the less-Chinese architecture was considered as the Indonesianization of Klentang (Chinese shires). It means that all Buddhist organizations in Suharto's regime, must respond to the state's assimilation policy (Suryadinata, 2014, p. 32).

social, religious and political organizations must adopt *Pancasila* as their philosophical basis, meaning organizations that refused this policy would be banned by the government (Ramage, 1997, p. ii).

Besides the TDM's adaptability to respond to assimilation policy, local organizations also aptly supported the government's policy. On January 14, 1974, the Hindu-Buddhist Societies Guides Customs held a meeting between other Sangha organizations and Maha Sangha Indonesia, this was chaired by Jinarakkhita. It ultimately led to the merging of those Sangha organizations into Sangha Agung Indonesia (SAGIN), in which each monk can carry out his/her different monastic codes (Vinaya), but stay in the same temple. Sangha Agung Indonesia currently contains about 150 monks and nuns from Theravada, Mahayana, and Tantrayana. In this stage, it should not be perceived that SAGIN happened due to the open-mindedness of Jinarakkhita as claimed by many scholars, but it was also from the government's force through the Hindu-Buddhist Societies Guides Customs. However, both positive and negative relations between Indonesian government and Buddhist organizations can be observed through the establishment of Walubi or the central Buddhist organization initiated by the government to merge all Buddhist groups under the government's control.

These clerical organizations have been sanctioned by Suharto's government, under which all religious institutes (as well as political parties) must be adapted corresponding to the assimilation policy. In this stage, the National Buddhist Federation (Walubi), which is directly belonged and controlled by the government, has been initiated.

Old Walubi

This section elucidates Old and New Walubi, in order to point out how TDM responded to the government's policy, and how TDM was accepted by the government to play an important role in Walubi. As has been discussed, in order to make sure that all Buddhist organizations did not go against the government's policy, Suharto, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, started to form a National Buddhist Federation (Perwalian Umat Buddha Indonesia: Walubi).

In 1978, the Minister of Religious Affairs, Alamsyah Ratu Perwiranegara, held a meeting with the leadership of all assemblies and Sangha organizations in Indonesia. In this meeting, all schools of Buddhism were recommended to base their doctrines on the belief of the One and Only God according to the state's ideology, *Pancasila*. In the end, the meeting established the Federation of Buddhist Trustees Indonesia or **Perwalian Umat Buddha Indonesia (Walubi)** in Jogjakarta. It

consisted of three monastic Sangha organizations and seven lay Buddhist assemblies. The three monastic organizations were (1) Sangha Theravada Indonesia (STI) (which included TDM at that time), (2) Sangha Mahayana Indonesia (SMI), and (3) Sangha Agung Indonesia (SAGIN). The seven lay Buddhist assemblies were (1) Assembly of the Buddhist Nichiren Syosyu Indonesia, (2) Assembly of Mahayana Buddhism Indonesia, (3) Assembly of Dharmaduta Kasogatan, (4) Assembly of the Priest of Buddha Dhamma Indonesia (Mapanbudhi), (5) the Buddha Maitreya Priest Indonesia (Mapanbumi), (6) Indonesia Assembly Chaplain Tridharma, and (7) the Scholars of Buddhism Indonesia (MUABI), which was later renamed the Indonesian Buddhayana Council or Majelis Buddhayana Indonesia (MBI). At that time, Walubi was chaired by Suparto from the Mapanbudhi organization. However, the Sangha institutions were still chaired by Jinarakkhita from SAGIN.

In 1979, Walubi again arranged a workshop to align the teachings of Buddhism with Indonesia's national principles. Three agreements among Buddhists were issued: (1) belief in God (Adi Buddha),⁷ (2) Buddha Gotama as Prophet, and (3) Tripitaka of the Pali and Sanskrit Canons are religious scriptures. In addition, Buddhists were encouraged to learn other Buddhist schools. Meanwhile, each member must abstain from actions that could undermine the unity. Then, the first Walubi congress was held on 8-11 July 1986 to confirm the Buddhist code of ethics as above-mentioned. The congress also elected the Chairman. Bhante Girirakkhita (from SAGIN) was voted and his Deputy was Drs. Aggi Tjetje. Consequently, Niciren Syosyu Indonesia (NSI) was excluded from Walubi in the following year on the ground that its teaching was not based on Tripitaka (Husen, 2013, p. 44).

Another conflict occurred when Walubi arranged the second congress in 1992. Committees still voted for Girirakkhita as a Chairperson, while Drs. Budi Setiawan (Director of Buddhist Society, Ministry of Religious Affairs) was chosen as General Secretary. The congress also chose Dra. Siti Hartati Murdaya as chair of Board of Trustees. As has been widely noted, Hartati Murdaya could access this position due to the support of many elites, one of whom was Suharto himself. However,

⁷ Indonesian scholars explain characteristics of Adi Buddha's as without origin (Tanpa awal), without disappearance (Tanpa akhir), unlimited (Tak terbatas), unchanged (Tanpa perubahan), Omniscient (Maha tahu), self-existence (Ada sendiri). This kind of explanation is also found in a book "Tanya Jawab Perihal Agama Buddha" or "Questions and Answers about Buddhism." In practice, Mahayanists greet their audients before giving a sermon that Namu Sanghyang Adi Buddhaya, Namu Buddhaya, Bodhisttvaya Mahasttvaya (Respect to Sanghyang Adi Buddha, Buddha, Buddha-to-be, and great beings) (Vihara Buddha Warman, 1999, p. 1).

SAGIN and MBI were accused of heresy and eventually expelled from Walubi on the ground that their traditions were syncretic and pro-Chinese, which did not respond to the government's assimilation policy (Ditthisampanno, 2015; Husen, 2013, p. 44). One of the main reasons that STI was not expelled because its tradition is based on Thai Theravada (Wat Bowornnives Vihara), and STI temple's architecture was considered as Javanese culture. However, in order to maintain relationships with other clerical organizations, STI also decided to withdraw from Walubi.

New Walubi

The loss of Sangha organizations and some internal conflicts finally led to the collapse of *Walubi* in 1998, the time of the change of the government regimes. However, in the same year, the new Buddhist Federation named *Perwakilan Umat Buddha Indonesia* (also abbreviated as Walubi) was formed on 20 August by the support of Jusuf Habibie's government. It was led by Dra. Hartati Murdaya. It consists of various Buddhist organizations except STI, SMI, and SAGIN. Thai Dhammayutta missionaries (TDM) split from STI and joined Walubi by the invitation of Hartati, and this became a main reason why TDM has been playing an important role in Walubi in comparison to other native clerical organizations.

Later, Sangha Theravada Indonesia (STI), Sangha Mahayana Indonesia (SMI) and Sangha Agung Indonesia (SAGIN) formed a competing Sangha association named Konferensi Agung Sangha Indonesia (KASI) on 14 November 1998. Its aims were to escape from the Walubi's control and free monks from internal conflicts reportedly caused by the structure of Walubi. However, although KASI is a Sangha organization, its administrators still consist of both monks and lay devotees. More recently, KASI has collapsed. Sangha Mahayana Indonesia (SMI) is included in Walubi, while Sangha Theravada Indonesia (STI) and Sangha Agung Indonesia (SAGIN) split from KASI and organize their own institutes without participating in Walubi.

The relationship between TDMs and Hartati Murdaya Poo is an outstanding case of TDM's networks in political platforms. Hartati, who had close relationships with Suharto, as well as with many politicians through shared economic interests, was proposed to become a Walubi's chairman in 1998. The conflict between Walubi and Sangha organizations, especially STI, had consequently affected the relationship between TDM and STI. Actually, the relationship between TDM and STI was already sensitive even before this. As mentioned earlier, the STI members were developed under the TDM's support. Thus, TDM could be considered as STI's father who gave them birth, though the TDM status was later reduced to that of assistants included under STI's administration. After Hartati was appointed as Walubi's president, some Sangha organizations were excluded.

Hartati then turned her attention, due to the lack of a Sangha organization, to TDM and finally asked Bhante Win to participate in Walubi.

Since this stage, the TDM's role has been changed from that of the STI's assistants to being a separate organization, Missionary from Thailand, which directly belongs to Walubi. Not only has it become a separate organization in Walubi, but TDM has become the most important Sangha organization in Indonesia even more than local Mahayana and Buddhayana organizations. TDM leaders become part of the Walubi committee who takes part in religious policy determinations. Nowadays, Bhante Wongsin, TDM's leader, is the Deputy Coordinator of Walubi's Board of Management, while Hartati Murdaya is the Chairman, and Dhyana-vira Mahasthavira, a monk from Sangha Mahayana Indonesia, became the Coordinator of Clerical Department (Vidyaka Sabha) (Oka Diputhera, 2010, p. 66). Notably, monks from Sangha Mahayana Indonesia just re-entered Walubi about a decade ago. However, Bhante Wongsin has become the one who gives a keynote speech as a representative of all Buddhist associations in the Hari Waisak celebration held at Borobudur, which is always opened by the Indonesian President.

Bhante Win's decision to accept Hartati's request in 1998 opened many opportunities to TDM. One of them is that the status of Thai missionary is officially granted by the government. Actually, close relationships between TDM and Hartati had been developing before that. A big house in Jakarta was offered by Hartati to be used as a TDM's main temple since 1977 (TIDGA, 2006, p. 12). This house is recently known as Buddha Metta Arama (BMA), located in Terusan Lembang Rd. D-59, central Jakarta. In return, the title "Visakha Maha-Upasika" was granted to Hartati in order to appreciation of her support, implying that she was a great Buddhist donor. Buddha Metta Arama, the first temple of TDM, is located in central Jakarta in the village of Indonesian military and officials. Currently, a copy of household registration of BMA is still identified with Hartati's name. It cannot be officially offered to TDM members because that particular area is the military's homes, which is also near the Masjid Agung Sunda Kepala, Buddhist temples are not allowed to be built. As a result, BMA, as Hartati's property, can continue its religious activities.

Currently, new Walubi consists of thirteen organizations namely, (1) Majelis Pandita Buddha Maitreya Indonesia (MAPANBUMI), (2) Majelis Umat Buddha Theravada Indonesia (MAJUBUTHI), this organization is chaired by TDM, (3) Yayasan Pandita Sabha Buddha Dharma Indonesia (YPSBDI), (4) Majelis Agama Buddha Tantrayana Zhen Fo Zong Kasogatan Indonesia (ZHEN FO ZONG KASOGATAN), (5) Majelis Rohaniawan Tridharma Indonesia (MARTRISIA), (6) Majelis Agama Mahayana Buddhis Indonesia (MAHABUDHI), (7) Parisadha Buddha Dharma

Nichiren Syblyu Indonesia (PBDNSI), (8) Majelis Agama Buddha Tantrayana Satya Buddha Indonesia (MADHATANTRI), (9) Lembaga Keagamaan Buddha Indonesia (LKBI), (10) Majelis Agama Buddha Tantrayana Indonesia (MAJABUDTI), (11) Majelis Umat Buddha Mahayana Indonesia (MAJUBUMI), (12) Majelis Agama Buddha Mahayana Indonesia (MAJABUMI), and (13) Majelis Agama Buddha Mahanikaya Indonesia (MBMI).

The last organization belongs to Dhammakaya from Thailand. It was approved in 2016. According to interviews with Bhante Prida and Bhante Weerasin in 2016, Dhammakaya can actually be included in MAJUBUTHI because its tradition is also Theravada, but TDM rejected this application. This refusal can be linked to the situation in Thailand, where Dhammayutta tradition also denies Dhammakaya's ways of teaching and activities. As I mentioned above, TDM members are not separated from the Thai Sangha though they are working abroad, many decisions must respond to the Thai Sangha's policy.

After joining the new Walubi of TDM, relationships between TDM and STI has also been decreasing. They seem to separately run their own organizations. Moreover, Vihara Jakarta Dhammacakka Jaya is now not available for Thai monks, but STI members only. Phramaha Sompong and his friends informed me that they were denied after asking for staying there for two days with the reason that STI and Thai monks have the different practices (beda aturan). In fact, relationships between TDM and STI were tied by Bhante Win (1923-2006), a teacher of STI members, and the late 19th Thai Supreme Patriarch, Charern Suvaddhano (1913-2013), the preceptor of many STI members. It is therefore normal to find that when those important monks died, connections between TDM and STI would gradually reduce.

Conclusion

A lot had happened between 1969 and 2018. For example, especially under Suharto, assimilation and nationalization efforts had impended directly on all religious and ethnic organizations. This became especially evident in the late 1970s. In 1978, Buddhists were forced to re-register on a recognized national religion, in 1979 Chinese Confucianism was removed from the list of recognized religions, and in the period 1978-1979, all Buddhist associations in Indonesia were forced to join an umbrella organization, called Walubi, which then took the lead in reformatting and regulating the ways that these organizations would conform to the state religious policies and state administration of the late Suharto period. Accidentally or intentionally, TDM members have

been sent to work in Indonesia while assimilation policy was reinforced. Thai Buddhism was more desirable than Chinese tradition. Vihara Jakarta Dhammacakka Jaya is the elaborate example of the coordination among Indonesian government, Chinese elites, Thai monarchy and TDM members.

With the fall of Suharto in 1998, Walubi immediately fragmented. But the organization quickly recovered. While many native Buddhist organizations withdraw and/or were forced to withdraw from Walubi, the close relation between TDM leaders and Walubi leaders that effectively gave TDM greater status and recognition in Indonesia than even many indigenously founded and run organizations. The coming of TDMs since 1969 had been beneficial for Suharto's government, in which assimilation policy was reinforced. TDM was chosen by Indonesian politicians and elites to run the national Buddhist organization, Walubi. This case clearly shows that Thai monks could also be used to support Indonesian government to assimilate minorities as found in Thailand in the 1950s.

References

- Aizawa, N. (2011). Assimilation, differentiation, and depoliticization: Chinese Indonesians and the Ministry of Home Affairs in Suharto's Indonesia. In M. Dieleman, J. Koning and P. Post (Eds.), *Chinese Indonesians and regime change*. (pp. 47-64). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Benyamin, F. (2008). *Public religion and the Pancasila-based state of Indonesia: An ethical and sociological analysis*. NY: Peter Lang.
- Beatty, A. (2003). *Varieties of Javanese religion: An anthropological account*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. BimasBuddha [Office of Guidance for Buddhists in Indonesia]. (2016). *Portal sistem informasi data Bimas Buddha [Gateway System of Information about the Office of Guidance for Buddhists]*. Retrieved from http://bimasbuddha.kemenag.go.id/portal_data/
- Boden, R. (2007). The Gestapu events of 1965 in Indonesia: New evidence from Russian and German archives. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde [Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia]*, 163(4), 507-528.
- Brown, C. (2003). *A short history of Indonesia: The unlikely nation?*. Singapore: South Wind Productions.

- Brown, I. (2004). The revival of Buddhism in modern Indonesia. In M. Ramsted (Ed.), *Hinduism in modern Indonesia: A minority religion between local, national and global interests*. (pp. 45-55). London, England: Routledge Curzon.
- Diputhera, O. (2010). *Agama Buddha berkembang di Indonesia [The development of Buddhism in Indonesia]*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Okaberseri Arya Suryacandra.
- Ditthisampanno Bhikkhu. (2015). Buddhism in Indonesia, past and present. A paper presented in the International Conference on Buddhism in Australia. Retrieved from http://www.buddhismandaustralia.com/ba/index.php/Buddhism_in_Indonesia,_Past_and_Present_by_Ven._Ditthisampanno.
- Edij Juangari. (2016). *Menabur benih Dharma di Nusantara: Riwayat singkat Y.A.MNS Ashin Jinarakkhita* [Sow the seed of Dharma in the nation: A short biography of Ven. Ashin Jinarakkhita]. Jakarta, Indonesia: Karaniya.
- Heryanto, A. (1998). Rape, race, and reporting. In A. Budiman, B. Hatley and Kingsbury (Eds.), *Reformasi: Crisis and change in Indonesia*. (pp. 299-334). Clayton, United Kingdom: Monash Asia Institute.
- Hoon, Chang Yau. (2006). Assimilation, multiculturalism, hybridity: The dilemmas of ethnic Chinese in post-Suharto Indonesia. *Asian Ethnicity*, 7(2), 149-166.
- Husen Dhammahuto. (2013). *The Buddhist monks' roles in propagating Buddhism in Indonesia*. (Master's Thesis, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand). Platzdasch, B., (Ed.). (2014). *Religious diversity in Muslim-majority states in Southeast Asia: Area of toleration and conflict*. Singapore: ISEAS.
- Pohlman, A. (2004). *Women and the Indonesian killings of 1956-1966: Gender variables and possible directions for research*. A paper presented to the 15th Biennial conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia in Canberra, Australia.
- Ramage, D. E. (1997). *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam, and the ideology of tolerance*. NY: Routledge.
- Ramstedt, M. (Eds.). (2004). *Hinduism in modern Indonesia: A minority religion between local, national and global interests*. London, England: Routledge.

- Schwarz, A. (1994). *A Nation in waiting: Indonesia in the 1990s*. Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Setijadi, C. (2016). Ethnic Chinese in contemporary Indonesia: Changing identity politics and the paradox of Sinification. *ISEAS Yusof Ishak Institute, 12*, 1-11.
- Susanto, A. (2011). Diversity in compliance: Yogyakarta Chinese and the New Order assimilation policy. In M. Dieleman, J. Koning, and P. Post (Eds.), *Chinese Indonesians and Regime Change*. (pp. 65-92). Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.
- Suryadinata, L. (Ed.). (1998). State and minority religions in contemporary Indonesia: Recent government policy towards Confucianism, Tridharma and Buddhism in nation-state, identity and religion in Southeast Asia. *Singapore Society of Asian Studies, 5-23*.
- Suryadinata, L. (Ed.). (2005). Buddhism and Confucianism in contemporary Indonesia: Recent developments. In T. Lindsey and H. Pausacker (Eds.), *Chinese Indonesians: Remembering, distorting, forgetting*. (pp. 77-94). Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- The Institute for Dhammaduta Bhikkhus Going Abroad (TIDGA). (2006). *In memory of Bhante Win, Phra Rajvarajariya Win Vijjano*, [Computer File]. [n.p.: n.p.] (in Thai). สำนักฝึกอบรมพระธรรมทูตไปต่างประเทศคณะธรรมยุต. (2549). *หนังสืออนุสรณ์ภัณฑวิญญู พระราชวรจารย์ วิญญู วิชชาโน*. [แฟ้มข้อมูล]. [ม.ป.ท.: ม.ป.พ.].
- Vihara Buddha Warman. (1999). *Tanya Jawab Perihal Agama Buddha and Paritta Suci [Questions and Answers about Buddhism and Buddhist Chantings]*. Padang, Indonesia. [n.p.].
- Vihara Jakarta Dhammacakka Jaya. (2011). *Vihara Jakarta Dhammacakka Jaya: A Journey*. Jakarta, Indonesia: Vihara Jakarta Dhammacakka Jaya.
- Yazid, M. N. M. (2014). The Indonesian coup September 1965: A discussion from bipolarity structure. *Asian Social Science, 10(6)*, 1-6.