

# Power and Ideological Relations of People Involved in the Development of a Thai Buddhist Temple: Reflecting on Narratives through Critical Discourse Analysis

Sutida Ngonkum<sup>a\*</sup>, Puttharak Prabnok<sup>a</sup> and Watcharapon Sirisuwilai<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Center for Research on Plurality in the Mekong Region  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Khon Kaen University  
Khon Kaen 40002, Thailand

\*Corresponding Author. Email: nsutid@kku.ac.th

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## Abstract

This research employed critical discourse analysis (CDA) in examining three narratives of a Thai Buddhist temple's development. The study examined the roles and views of people in Kranuan district, Khon Kaen province, Thailand in terms of their involvement in updating and renovating Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon. The ten participants of the study represented three groups of people in Buddhist religious society: one monastic, four devotees, and five general laypeople. They were asked to verbally narrate the topic, "the development of Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon" through which they presented their roles in and views of the process. The three-dimensional analytical framework of Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) was used to investigate the following dimensions: the text (dimension 1), discursive practice (dimension 2), and social practice (dimension 3); as well as to analyze the narratives. The analysis of dimension 1, language presented in the narratives revealed the roles and views of participants (in each group) regarding their involvement in the temple's development. Analysis of dimension 2 revealed power and ideological relations between the monastic and the two groups of secular people (devotees and general laypeople). Analysis of dimension 3 revealed overall relations of power and shared ideology in the Buddhist society studied.

**Keywords:** narrative inquiry, critical discourse analysis (CDA), power and ideological relations, social practice

## Introduction

Interdisciplinary approaches, especially those that bring social analysis into language studies, have recently been the focus of many research studies (Pennycook, 2010). One that is widely known is narrative inquiry, which is based on the premise that people understand or make sense of their lives through narrative (Bruner, 1990). Through their own stories, people present their personal identities. In fact, people narrate their stories in order to tell who they are and how they see things, as well as to describe their relationships with others in society (Bruner, 1990).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a key tool employed in narrative inquiry to examine how language relates to people and society (Jorgensen and Largacha-Martinez, 2014). Through CDA researchers examine real instances of social interaction in which the relationships between language, power, and ideology are hidden (Blommaert and Bulcaen, 2000). According to CDA scholars, language is a part of society as it is a social phenomenon. It is actually seen, "as discourse and as social practice" (Fairclough, 1989: 26) where hidden ideology is embedded. This ideology contributes to establishing and maintaining power relations. Fairclough (2003) maintains that ideology is embedded in language. And language is used to exercise power. Thus, since language is embedded with ideology, it contributes to establishing and maintaining power relations.

According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 272), "power relations are performed and constructed in and through discourse." In fact, language indexes and expresses power. A close analysis of language contributes to understanding power and ideology embedded in discourse (Kumaravadivelu, 1999). That is to say, in studying language, the researcher can see the power and hidden ideologies of a particular social context (Mooney and Evans, 2015).

This study employed the three dimensions of Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) as an analytical framework examining three narratives constructed out of verbal narrations from three groups of people who were involved in the development of Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon. The

objectives of this study were to investigate the following aspects of the wat's development: 1. the power relations among the participants, 2. the ideological relations among participants, 3. the extent to which participants' power and ideologies affected the temple's development.

Analysis of the first two dimensions was conducted to examine objectives 1 and 2. That is, by analyzing the first dimension, power relations among participants were reflected through their roles in improving the temple; in examining ideology relations among participants, their views of the temple's development were explored. Analysis of dimension 2 was conducted to examine power and ideological relations between the monastic and two groups of secular people (devotees and general laypeople). Analysis of dimension 3 was conducted to examine objective 3. To explain further, analysis of dimension 3 revealed overall relations of power and shared ideology in this Buddhist religious society.

### **Narrative Context**

Buddhist temples play an important role in Thailand; conventionally, they are places that sustain the integrity of Buddhist doctrines (Sasiwongsaroj et al., 2012). In addition, Buddhist temples have long been viewed as destinations for monks seeking a peaceful home to observe Buddhist doctrines and for people to seek spiritual comfort (Kusalasaya, 2005). It is no surprise that people living near temples can usually be seen involving themselves in most temple activities, including those with a developmental focus.

Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon is located in Kranuan district, Khon Kaen province. The temple occupies once-deserted land which changed when an itinerant monk, Luang Pho Suang (Venerable Father Suang), was invited to reside there permanently. The land was then transformed into a sublime place for all villagers to come and listen to the teachings of the esteemed monk (Phra Khru Wimolsarakit, 2010).

After a period of guidance by Luang Pho Suang, Luang Pho Sai (Venerable Father Sai) came to take his place. It was during this period

that this site was established as an official temple (Phra Khru Wimolsarakit, 2010). During his leadership at the temple, Luang Pho Sai contributed to both religious and temple developmental missions. At present, Phra Maha Pon, the current abbot, is working to continue the mission of his predecessor (Phra Khru Wimolsarakit, 2010).

This research, which employed narrative inquiry, explored social practices of Kranuan people who have been involved in the improvement of Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon. Buddhist studies scholarly works view a Buddhist temple as a society; people involved in this society are known as members of the society (Kusalasaya, 2005). The social practices investigated in the present study reflect aspects of power and ideological relations between members of the society as a whole. CDA was employed as an analytical tool, drawing on social practices as represented in the three narratives constructed by the ten participants, representing people from three groups of Buddhist society. By employing Fairclough's (1989, 1992, 1995) three dimensions, power and ideological relations among members of this society could be clearly exposed. To explore power relations, the study examined roles of the participants in developing the temple; to explore ideologies, the study examined their views.

### **Methodology**

#### **Narrative Construction**

In this qualitative narrative inquiry, the number of participants was decided by the researcher. As the researcher focused on investigating the issue of the temple's development, purposive sampling was employed to select multiple cases to illustrate the issue from ten people through different but relevant perspectives (Creswell and Poth, 2018). All of the individuals represent people who have experienced the temple's expansion and improvement.

Three narratives were constructed from the spoken narrations of the ten participants: one in the monastic group, four in the devotees' group, and five in the general laypeople's group (Kusalasaya, 2005).

All participants volunteered to provide spoken narrations. Prior to telling the story, participants in the three groups were given a spoken narration guiding statement, “Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon’s development.” The participants were asked to describe their roles in and attitudes toward their involvement in the temple’s development through a short, informal talk. The researcher spent two days conducting informal interviews with the participants (approximately 30 minutes with each participant). The data were audio recorded and later were transcribed. The transcribed data obtained from each participant were then constructed into a short narration. All short spoken narrations produced were rearranged into three narratives. To demonstrate credibility (validation of the constructed narratives), two experts were asked state consensual validation in which the disconfirming evidence and contrary interpretations were eliminated (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The two experts were Thai senior lecturers with expertise in language analysis. The three stories rearranged by the two experts were then cross-checked and the disconfirming evidence and different interpretations were eliminated so that the finalized versions of the three narratives were named and were ready to be analyzed. Narrative 1 was named “the monastic’s story,” narrative 2, “the devotees’ story,” and narrative 3, “the general laypeople’s story.”

### The Narratives

This section presents the three stories as told by the people in the three groups.

#### 1. The monastic’s story

The participating monastic was the current abbot of Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon, Phra Maha Pon. In his spoken narration, the abbot said that the temple had been renovated to conform to conventional Buddhist principles that prescribe three teaching methods: 1) teaching through literature, 2) teaching ethics, and 3) teaching morals. According to Buddhist studies, these three methods are to be applied to different monastic and secular groups (Kusalasaya, 2005). Literature is used to

pass on an overview of Buddhist teachings through stories of the Buddha (McDaniel, 2006). This method is appropriate for general laypeople who do not adhere to religious practices strictly. The teaching of ethics is used to convey more specific Buddhist teachings to religious devotees eager to observe religious practices (McDaniel, 2006). Moral teachings are used to convey advanced religious principles to monks and devotees who observe religious practices strictly (McDaniel, 2006).

Taking these three teaching methods into account, Luang Pho Sai, the former abbot, managed tasks related to improving the temple through two unwritten plans. Implementation of the three teaching methods was the main goal of the two plans. In the first plan, Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon was designed to be a place of religious practice for monks (morals) and devotees (ethics). To complete this first mission, Luang Pho Sai constructed the main *wihan* (assembly hall) for religious practices and ceremonies (Figure 1).



Figure 1 The main *wihan*

The second unwritten plan was to position the temple as a place equipped to transmit Buddhist literature to general laypeople wanting to learn Buddhist doctrines informally. At the time, the main literature presented to the people concerned the Buddha’s life.

After Luang Pho Sai passed away, his disciple Phra Maha Pon took over as abbot and continued his master teacher's main purpose of educating monastics, devotees, and laypeople through the three teaching methods. The abbot has tried to incorporate Buddhist literature into his teachings and offer them to general laypeople who are not engrossed in Buddhist practices. In his teachings on ethics, he has encouraged people to behave in accordance with ethical principles. In terms of Buddhist morals, the abbot has led monks and laypeople to practice mindfulness strictly. In addition to these two developmental plans, the new abbot launched a third unwritten plan to convert the temple into a large theme park. In explaining this, he said:

It is natural that not all people are ready to strictly follow or learn advanced lessons on morality. By coming to this temple, people can at least learn basic Buddhist teachings through stories in the form of sculpture. However, if they prefer not to take part in any religious lesson at all, they can just come and relax (Phra Maha Pon [Pseudonym], 2020).

In turning the temple into a theme park providing both religious knowledge and entertainment, the abbot combined contemporary sculptures with those from Buddhist and Hindu literature (Figure 2).



Figure 2 Sculptures of the Buddha and various mythical beings at the theme park

Elaborating on his decision, the abbot said:

It is the temple's responsibility to provide a space so that everybody can learn Buddhist teachings as well as enjoy the green scenery and fantastic sculptures at the temple. I want anyone who comes to the temple with troubles to go back home with fewer worries. The temple needs to do its job in treating people with compassion (Phra Maha Pon [Pseudonym], 2020).

## 2. The devotees' story

In the eyes of the four devotees, Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon has long been a prominent spiritual landmark of Kranuan district. In this regard, Devotee 2 indicated that the temple occupies what was once inaccessible land. The very first monk to reside there was Luang Pho Suang. Under his guidance, the abandoned area became his meditation site. After Luang Pho Suang's time came to an end, Luang Pho Sai became the abbot. The four devotees described him as the pioneer builder of the temple's infrastructure. Elaborating on this point, Devotee 1 said:

He was the prime mover in developing the temple from a place of narrow religious practice and knowledge transmission to an open space where monks seeking mediation could reside and where secular members of society could endeavor to develop either mindfulness or a more decent life (Thongkum [Pseudonym], 2020).

All four devotees said that Luang Pho Sai taught both religious principles and secular knowledge to everyone. In giving people religious principles, he trained his devotees and laypeople to contribute or donate, since merit making is the fundamental practice of Theravada Buddhism (McDaniel, 2006). In giving secular knowledge, Luang Pho Sai urged his devotees and laypeople to work in a collaborative manner. This teamwork was apparent from Devotee 2's statement, "... the main *wihan* was built with contributions, either physical or financial, from all members of the community" (Somlee [Pseudonym], 2020).

Phra Maha Pon, the current abbot, has carried on with the two plans set by Luang Pho Sai as well as the third plan that he established himself. Elaborating on this, Devotee 4 pointed out:

Phra Maha Pon is not only continuing his teacher's developmental plans, but has also added another plan, creating a fun and educational area in the temple for the transmission of religious knowledge (Nui [Pseudonym], 2020).

The four devotees had a good impression of both abbots and felt positive about all temple tasks, especially those involving renovation. They agreed that the renovation has been a result of collaboration among all people in the community, with everyone making either physical or financial contributions. Financial donations have generally come from locals wanting to make merit. Devotees 3 and 4 proudly stated that the current abbot always gives everyone equal opportunity to make merit through financial donations. In line with this, Devotee 3 added, "He also does not permit us to put a donation box in the temple" (Ampai [Pseudonym], 2020).

The four devotees presented themselves as good devotees of the current abbot, apparently adhering to his suggestions. In their eyes, he played a prominent role in emphasizing developing the recreational area so that it would welcome all people, no matter what their reason for visiting. Devotee 1 explained, "The abbot usually leads development. For example, he designs the sculptures" (Thongkum [Pseudonym], 2020). It was pointed out that many devotees follow his commands obediently and without any comment. With pride in his role in construction, Devotee 2 said:

The abbot designs the project and we do our best to beautify the construction. We are really proud when visitors come and enjoy the attractive sculptures and buildings. It is partly a result of our hard work (Somlee [Pseudonym], 2020).

Overall, all four devotees saw that construction is occurring continuously at the temple, and is carried out with collaborative

assistance from the devotees in the form of physical and spiritual contributions and from general laypeople through financial contributions. Explaining this, Devotee 1 said,

Whenever people in Kranuan hear about any construction plans at the temple, they donate money to help complete the construction (Thongkum [Pseudonym], 2020).

### 3. General laypeople's story

While telling their story, all five general laypeople stated emphatically that Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon is at the heart of the community. Supporting this point, General Layperson 3 stated:

Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon is the landmark of Kranuan district. You cannot say that you know Kranuan very well if you haven't visited the temple (Khao [Pseudonym], 2020).

From the perspective of the five general laypeople, Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon has been developed by previous and current abbots, who have demonstrated strict Buddhist practices. Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon has also received financial and other forms of support from people living in Kranuan district. Exemplifying this financial support, General Layperson 1 stated that people in the district were happy to have the opportunity to donate money to support every developmental task of the temple. Although the temple has never sent out an official request for financial donations, people usually found out about the various projects by word of mouth. All five general laypeople said that they visited the temple only occasionally.

In terms of other forms of support, General Layperson 1 pointed out that "people in Kranuan district had donated their land to the temple to benefit the community" (Kai [Pseudonym], 2020). Supporting this point, General Layperson 5 reported that his family had donated a large piece of land to the temple.

All general laypeople in the study shared the opinion that Phra Maha Pon has been dedicated to working as an abbot who effectively manages all temple duties while at the same time leading renovation

tasks. They were also aware that the current abbot had been working very hard. General Layperson 2 said, “He speaks little, but practices a lot” (Somma [Pseudonym], 2020).

All five general laypeople were inclined to share the same idea that the abbot has been an important moral figure who performs his temple duties impeccably and also leads temple development. All of his development activities have received significant financial support from these general laypeople.

### Analyzing the Narratives

#### 1. Analytical framework: Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis

According to Fairclough (2010), CDA is a tool for uncovering relationships embedded in society. It works effectively in exploring how social relations are constructed through written and spoken texts (van Dijk, 2003).

Fairclough’s (1989, 1992, 1995) framework of three dimensions has been widely used to depict complex relationships in various societies. This framework includes three levels of analysis, that of the text (dimension 1), discursive practice (dimension 2), and social practice (dimension 3). The three dimensions on which the method is based are shown in Figure 3.

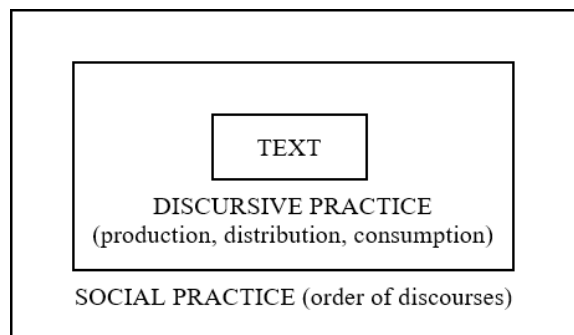


Figure 3 The three-dimensional analytical framework of Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995)

The three-dimensional analysis of Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) represented in Figure 1, can be described as follows.

Analysis of Dimension 1: For this dimension, researchers study the language structures produced in a text. This analysis of the text is based on Halliday’s (1985) systemic functional linguistics and the three domains of ideational, interpersonal, and textual analysis. Ideational functions are examined by analyzing transitivity, or a breakdown of the types of verbs involved in the interaction. Interpersonal functions are those of mood and modality. Finally, the textual domain involves a text’s thematic structures.

Analysis of Dimension 2: At this level, researchers analyze factors influencing how social actors interpret an event and how this process influences the production, distribution, transformation, and consumption of texts. The researcher interprets discursive practices in relation to events and the power relations between people in those events.

Analysis of Dimension 3: The third level is that of social practice. Analysis of social practices investigates what is happening in a particular social framework. This level of analysis offers a picture of society in its entirety, as researchers examine power relations and ideologies that facilitate practices in society as a whole (Harvey, 1996).

This study analyzed three narratives generated on the topic, “Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon ’s development.” Each narrative was examined via analysis of dimensions 1, 2, and 3. The following section elaborates on how the three-dimensional analytical framework was used to analyze each narrative.

#### 2. Analytical process

In deploying Fairclough’s (1989, 1992, 1995) three dimensions to synergize the three narratives produced by the ten participants, divided into the monastic, devotees, and general laypeople, analyses were carried out at the word, text, and norm level. Figure 4 presents the analytical process of CDA.

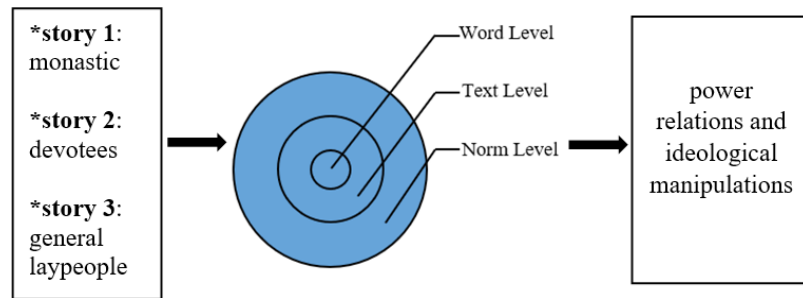


Figure 4 The analytical process of CDA

## Findings

### Analysis of Dimension 1: Word Level

Analysis of this dimension was achieved by examining the words and expressions that participants used in their narratives. Their lexical choices and use of various expressions helped to reveal their roles and worldviews.

#### 1. Lexicons and expressions reflecting roles in temple development

##### Monastic

Data from story 1 revealed that Phra Maha Pon presented himself as being the main one responsible for all tasks of temple development.

Data clearly indicated the abbot's authoritative role as the abbot of the highest rank. His narrative related a role for himself that carried a high level of responsibility in managing the temple. Discussing this role, he said:

It is the temple's responsibility to provide a space so that everybody can learn Buddhist teachings as well as enjoy the green scenery and fantastic sculptures at the temple. I want anyone who comes to the temple with troubles to be able to go back home with fewer worries (Phra Maha Pon [Pseudonym], 2020).

The abbot used the expression, "the temple's responsibility" to represent his responsibility to look after people who come to take refuge at the temple. He also explained that in welcoming everybody to the

temple, he gave equal care to people with diverse reasons for visiting. Also, in using the words "learn" and "enjoy" the abbot clearly identified himself as the person responsible for the temple in terms of three facets: 1) making it an open space for monks to practice Buddhist morals, 2) promoting it as a place for devotees and laypeople to observe ethics and fundamental Buddhist teachings, and 3) offering it as an educational and fun area for anyone who comes simply to enjoy being there.

##### Devotees

Data showed that the four participants presented themselves as good followers of the abbot, adhering to his instructions. In general, the participants believed that in order to be good devotees, they had to strictly follow the abbot's instructions. For example, in mentioning the abbot's role in developmental tasks related to the temple, Devotee 2 used the expression, "The abbot designs the project and we do our best to beautify the construction" (Somlee [Pseudonym], 2020). This clearly reflects a leader and follower relationship between the abbot and his devotees.

##### General Laypeople

Data indicated two roles general laypeople fulfilled in terms of temple development. Their first role was as outsiders who occasionally observed the temple's activities, including those related to temple development. General Layperson 1's statement, "I visit the temple now and then. Sometimes I go there to attend a special ceremony" (Kai [Pseudonym], 2020) reflects a distant relationship between general laypeople and the temple.

The laypeople's second role was that of contributors to the temple's renovation. Despite seeing themselves as outside observers who have not committed themselves to any temple projects, the five general laypeople explained that they have happily given money to support temple activities, especially those related to its development.

#### 2. Lexicons and expressions reflecting views on temple development

##### Monastic

In analyzing story 1, data revealed that the current abbot presented a positive understanding of his actions related to temple

development. Examples from the data illustrate two facets of the abbot's positive attitude.

First, the data showed that the abbot expressed a high level of enthusiasm when he discussed carrying out the three unwritten development plans. He portrayed himself as actively working on the two plans established by the previous abbot. In narrative 1, the abbot expressed his full responsibility in these missions, stating it was "...the temple's responsibility to provide a space where everybody can learn Buddhist teachings as well as enjoy the green scenery and fantastic sculptures at the temple" (Phra Maha Pon [Pseudonym], 2020).

In launching the third plan, the abbot wanted people to benefit from visiting the temple for purposes other than religious practice. His statement, "I want anyone who comes to the temple with troubles to go back home with fewer worries" (Phra Maha Pon [Pseudonym], 2020) reflects his strong determination to complete the third development plan.

The second facet of the abbot's positive view of the temple's development can be seen in his belief that any hardship he experienced in completing this mission would bring benefit to people. This belief was highlighted when he said, "...They can just come and relax with all these trees and attractive modern sculptures" (Phra Maha Pon [Pseudonym], 2020).

### **Devotees**

Data from story 2 revealed that all four devotees had a positive view of their role in developing the temple. There were two facets to their positivity.

First, their positive views were reflected in the active support they gave the abbot in all of the temple's development tasks. In expressing their heartfelt support for the abbot, Devotee 1 explained, "The abbot designs projects and we carry out the construction" (Thongkum [Pseudonym], 2020).

Not only did the devotees see themselves as the ones who gave the most physical and spiritual support; they also seemed to be very proud of their role in developing the temple. Devotee 2 said, "We do our best to beautify the construction. We are really proud when visitors

come and enjoy the attractive sculptures and buildings," (Somlee [Pseudonym], 2020) clearly describing a feeling of honor in relation to their role.

The devotees' positive views of temple development can also be seen in that they attributed the success of all of the temple's developmental tasks to the various forms of assistance offered by both themselves and general laypeople. For example, three devotees (1, 3, and 4) said, "Whenever people in Kranuan hear about any construction plans at the temple, they donate money to help complete the construction" (Thongkum, Ampai, and Nui [Pseudonyms], 2020).

### **General Laypeople**

The data revealed that compared to the devotees, the five general laypeople were merely observers of the developmental tasks. Nevertheless, they all perceived the renovation as a good thing. Three examples confirm the positive views of the five general laypeople, the first being when they stated proudly that although they were not involved in all of the tasks related to development, they gave support whenever they could. Two of them (General Laypeople 3 and 4) used the expression, "I donated some money to support the temple construction" (Khao and Amnuay [Pseudonyms], 2020).

Another example reflecting the general laypeople's positive views of the temple's development was that they all said that they were happy to be a part of it. They saw that the temple, which has been developed continuously, has become the landmark of Kranuan district and said they were very proud. They said, "You can't say that you know Kranuan if you haven't been to Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon" (Khao and Dang [Pseudonyms], 2020). The third example of the general laypeople's positive views was that they were all aware of the abbot's hard work and the time he had dedicated to updating and improving the temple. This is confirmed in the expression they used to describe the abbot: "He speaks little, but accomplishes a lot" (Sommai and Khao [Pseudonyms], 2020).



### **Analysis of Dimension 2: Text Level**

To analyze dimension 2, the texts (the three narratives as a whole) were examined in terms of how they structured and stipulated social relations among the different members of this Buddhist society. This showed how the power and ideologies of members in one group were related to those in other groups. Specifically, this text-level analysis helped illuminate the monastic's power and ideology in relation to those of the devotees and general laypeople.

#### **1. Monastic roles and views**

The data clearly presented the abbot as being in charge of all temple activities and leading development policy and tasks. The data illustrated the extent of Phra Maha Pon's leading role, clarifying that he carried out the main responsibilities of managing the temple. This finding is consistent with Phra Maha Somchai Dhammavaro's (2016) comment about the roles and responsibilities of abbots in managing Buddhist temples in Thailand. In presenting his own role as leader and developer of the temple, Phra Maha Pon showed that he saw himself as a prominent agent in charge of all temple development plans and tasks. This is in line with Parnwell and Seeger (2008), who explain that monks in contemporary Thailand carry out new activities that are appropriate for modern Thai laypeople. In terms of the abbot's views, the study demonstrates the high level of enthusiasm he expressed about carrying out all of his duties, without showing any signs of weariness.

#### **2. The devotees' roles and views**

The data pointed to the main role of all four devotees: that of being good religious followers who engage actively in all of the temple's development tasks as assigned by the abbot. It could be interpreted from the data that all of the devotees showed full respect to the abbot. This is in line with McDaniel's (2006) description of good devotees, whose conventional roles and responsibilities involve giving their support to respected monks.

In addition to their outlook on their own role as Buddhist followers, the four devotees also showed positive opinions of the temple's development. The devotees expressed their views through their

enthusiasm when talking about how they took part in developmental tasks. Also, their positive views were reflected through the active support they gave the abbot. Seeing themselves as the ones who gave the most physical and spiritual support, they seemed to be very proud of the part they played in the temple's renovation. Most importantly, their positive views were manifested through their claims that all tasks were completed with the collaboration of all people in Kranuan district.

#### **3. General laypeople's roles and views**

Analysis of the data showed that the five general laypeople regarded themselves as distant observers and contributors to the temple, who occasionally joined religious activities. However, they often donated money or items. This is consistent with Parnwell and Seeger's (2008) statement that, conventionally, laypeople offer things such as food and other items to monks and temples at their own convenience.

Data also revealed that all five general laypeople had positive views of their involvement in the temple's development, as seen in how they enthusiastically supported the tasks updating and improving it through their roles as observers and contributors.

### **Analysis of Dimension 3: Norm Level**

As illustrated above, word-level analysis reflected the roles and views of people involved in the updating and improving the temple; text level analysis clearly reflected their power and ideological relations. To further understand such relations in the social context, analysis of norms was carried out. Through a norm level analysis, a major phenomenon – power relations and ideology embedded in social practice – was uncovered.

To elaborate, Phra Maha Pon presented himself as the leading actor in this religious society. He described himself as an authoritative abbot responsible for all temple duties and as a prime developer, managing the developmental plans and tasks. As a result of his leadership, Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon has become a conventional temple, a center to observe religious practices, and an educative and fun space for people in general.

The role of followers in Buddhist society was shown to be fulfilled by the devotees and general laypeople. This representation of their main role is in line with Parnwell and Seeger (2008), who explain that the underlying relationship between monks and laypeople in societies that practice Buddhism is one of open-hearted giving. Laypeople supply food, medicine, and robes; and monks give spiritual support, blessings, and teachings (Parnwell and Seeger, 2008).

Although the devotees and general laypeople shared the same main role, the two groups exhibited different levels of allegiance to Buddhism. Illustrating this, the data analysis indicated that the devotees were close followers of the abbot, acting in response to his requests. This supports Phra Maha Somchai Dhammavaro's (2016) comment that devotees hold the traditional role of religious followers. They also fulfill this role wholeheartedly by taking refuge in the Buddha through the Dharma (Buddhist principles) and Sangha (monkhood) (Kusalasaya, 2005). The general laypeople, by contrast, had a rather distant relationship with the abbot. In summary, the data clearly present the social practices within this Buddhist society as hierarchical in nature. The analysis shows that the abbot fulfilled his roles through authoritative action, which he took in dealing with the devotees and general laypeople in order to complete temple tasks. This is consistent with Kusalasaya (2005), who states that for many years, monks had handled many of Thailand's social services, including health care, education, and moral training. The subjects in this study depicted the monk as the most powerful social actor in this religious society.

The data analysis revealed that participants from all three groups, the monastic, the devotees, and the general laypeople, had positive views of their involvement in the temple's improvement. According to van Dijk (1998), the shared positive views of societal members may reflect their shared ideology, where ideology forms the shared socio-cognitive foundations of social groups and their social practices.

## Discussion

The social practices of the society surrounding Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon are presented in this section through the interpretation of the three dimensions of data analysis.

### Interpretation of Data Analysis in Dimension 1

The data analysis showed that lexical choices and expressions used by the participants clearly reflected their roles and views of Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon's development.

The current abbot was shown to carry the main role with powerful authority, taking charge of the duties of temple head as well as those related to being its prime developer. All of these duties were carried out with a positive outlook.

The four devotees were portrayed in the role of conscientious religious followers trying their best to fulfill their duties. These devotees also carried out their tasks with a positive attitude toward the goals of each developmental task.

General laypeople were shown to be both outsiders and contributors. As outsiders, they did not adhere to all tasks led by the abbot but joined when they could. Fulfilling their role as contributors, they made donations to any tasks requiring financial support. Having positive views of all tasks related to development, the general laypeople felt happy and fulfilled every time they donated money. They also saw the abbot as a diligent agent in completing each developmental task, and thanks to that development, the temple was seen as a landmark of Kranuan district. As Kranuan people, they were very proud.

### Interpretation of Data Analysis in Dimension 2

Data analysis of dimension 2 aimed to depict the overall relationships of participants from the three groups in terms of their roles and views in developing Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon. Data illustrating the roles and views of the abbot positioned him as a societal leader with a sense of authority. The data also showed that the abbot carried on his role with a positive understanding of it.

In addition, analysis reveals that devotees and general laypeople had a clear, hierarchical relationship with the abbot. The abbot was the powerful leader to whom devotees and general laypeople looked for delegating tasks. Although functioning at different levels in subordinate roles, both the devotees and general laypeople supported the temple's developmental tasks in their own way. This is in line with subordinates' conventional roles and responsibilities toward their respected monk. In this regard, the relationship between devotees and Buddhist monks is one of respect (McDaniel, 2006). At their own convenience, general laypeople make offerings, such as food, medicine, and other items, to monks and temples (Parnwell and Seeger, 2008).

Data indicated that both the devotees and general laypeople exhibited positive views of taking part in temple tasks. This can be concluded from their enthusiastic help in completing tasks, their financial contributions, and their attempts to facilitate the abbot's work.

### **Interpretation of Data Analysis in Dimension 3**

Norm level analysis of the data (dimension 3) discerned a clear presentation of the social practices carried out among people involved in updating and improving Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon. It is evident that this Buddhist society carries out social practices in a hierarchical fashion with power relations maintained through shared ideology.

The data analysis shows that the abbot exercised power by taking the lead in completing each task at Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon. His demands of both the devotees and general laypeople were met, as the people in these two groups considered themselves subordinate to him. Although the two groups exhibited different levels of devotion in their relationship with the abbot, they wholeheartedly positioned themselves as followers of Buddhism. This is consistent with numerous Buddhist studies scholars who describe the underlying relationships between people and monks in Buddhist societies in terms of open-hearted giving (Parnwell and Seeger, 2008), despite being hierarchical in nature (Kusalasaya, 2005).

The norm-level analysis also reveals a shared ideology among the people involved in Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon's development. This shared ideology could be explained through Wodak's (2001) elaboration about ideology in CDA. In doing so, she suggested that, for CDA, ideology is a type of everyday belief. That is to say in daily discussion, "certain ideas arise more commonly than others. Frequently, people with diverse backgrounds and interests may find themselves thinking alike" (p. 8). The data depicts all members of this Buddhist society as having positive attitudes toward all tasks in the temple's development. The positive view is theoretically seen as adhering to one strong ideology of the society (Van Dijk, 1998).

### **Conclusion**

Fairclough's (1989, 1992, 1995) three levels of analysis helped to succinctly elaborate the clear interconnectivity of power and ideology existing among people in the society that was studied.

Analysis at the word level reflected the power and ideologies of the people in each group through their linguistic choices. Analysis at the text level indicated the clear power relations between the Buddhist abbot and his religious followers. Most importantly, these relations occur under their shared ideology. Analysis at the norm level distinctly showed strong social practices, where the leader holds and exercises his power to complete the temple's development missions. At the same time, Buddhist followers, through their diverse degrees of subordination, made their best effort to complete the tasks assigned by the societal leader. As the leader and religious followers share the same ideology toward all tasks and duties, the temple's development mission was achieved through the collaboration of these three societal groups.

To this end, the study has shed light on how an analysis of language could yield a clear picture of the interaction of a hidden ideology that shapes power relations between members of society, in this case that of Wat Phuttha Chai Mongkhon.

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## Interviews

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