NEGOTIATING THE RESTORATION OF A BUDDHIST TEMPLE IN LOEI PROVINCE : A FOCUS ON CULTURAL CAPITAL

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Despite being a predominantly Buddhist country, Thailand faces an issue with abandoned temples, which have increasingly become a burden for the National Office of Buddhism to maintain. This situation also underscores the absence of monks in certain areas despite the need of local communities for their Buddhist ceremonies and merit-making. Previous attempts to address this problem have not been very successful, which highlighted the need for alternative solutions. This qualitative study investigates the successful implementation of a temple restoration project in Loei Province, which is an interesting case due to its strategic cultural adaptation in design and the fact that it was led by a group of monks without traditional sources of authority, such as monastic seniority or ecclesiastical titles. Despite lacking these traditional forms of authority, the monks were able to leverage their negotiation skills to secure community support and execute the project. Through non-participant observation and in-depth interviews with various stakeholders, including the team of four Buddhist monks leading the restoration project, monastic authorities, government representatives, community leaders, and lay participants in an ordination ceremony, the case was studied and analyzed using Michael Benoliel's framework of negotiation capitals, which provides a holistic approach to understanding efforts of negotiators. The findings revealed that the temple restoration project could be understood as a negotiation strategy, with the monks strategically utilizing their cultural capital to systematically design a project that resonated with the community and garnered widespread support.

INTRODUCTION

According to a nationwide survey conducted by the National Office of Buddhism in 2024, Thailand has a total of 43,718 temples with resident monks.[1] These temples are affiliated with one of the four primary Buddhist sects (nikayas) present in the country.[2] The Maha Nikaya sect maintains the largest presence, with 39,037 affiliated temples. The Dhammayuttika Nikaya sect follows with 4,641 temples. The Chinese Nikaya and Annam Nikaya maintain a considerably smaller presence, with 16 and 25 temples, respectively. It is important to note that this data encompasses only temples with resident monks.[3] All temples are subject to regulation under specific laws."

In Thailand, temples have the legal status of a legal person under Article 31 of the Sangha Act of 1962 (and amended (No. 4) of 2018), which states that "there are two types of temples: (1) temples that have obtained royal grant of Visungkhamasima (an official recognition as an actual monastery situated on a designated plot of land), and (2) monk residence.[4] Temples have the status of a legal person, and their abbots are the representatives of the temples in general affairs. Therefore, temples in Thailand are subject to the provisions of the law, whether it be the Civil and Commercial Code or other laws. In particular, the abbot, who is the representative of the temple and also has the status of an official under the Criminal Code, has the legal duty to carry out activities related to Buddhism through the temple.[5]

A report by the National Office of Buddhism in 2023 estimates a number of 5,388 temples exist nationwide that are abandoned, or lack resident monks.[6] An "abandoned temple" refers to a former temple that once possessed the complete legal status of a temple (i.e., a juristic person). However, due to various circumstances, it no longer has any resident monks, and its physical structures have deteriorated over time. Consequently, its legal status as a legal person has ceased. Nevertheless, there is still a possibility for it to regain the status of a functioning temple with resident monks in accordance with the provisions of the Ministry of Culture's Ministerial Regulation.[7]

Based on relevant legislation, two primary options exist for addressing abandoned temples: (1) temple cancellation or disestablishment and (2) restoration through the acquisition of resident monks.[8] Of these two options, temple cancellation seems straightforward, as the National Office of Buddhism can propose the cancellation to the Sangha Supreme Council for consideration, and if approved, the temple

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[1] National Office of Buddhism, Registered Temples, Accessed March 9, 2024, http://binfo.onab.go.th/Temple/Dashboard.aspx
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] *The Sangha Act of 1962 (and amended (No. 4) of 2018)*, Article 31, Thailand.
[5] Ibid.
[6] National Office of Buddhism, Central Data of Registered Religious Places and Temples Nationwide, Accessed March 9, 2024, https://www.onab.go.th/th/content/category/detail/id/9/iid/13915
[7] Banchayuth Anganawin, *Abandoned Temples and Common Property in Buddhism* (Nakhon Pathom: National Office of Buddhism, 2019), 4.
[8] Ministry of Culture, "Ministerial Regulation on the Establishment, Founding, Merging, Relocation, and Dissolution of Temples: On the Petition for the Royal Grant of Visungkhamasima and the Elevation of Abandoned Temples to Temples with Resident Monks B.E. 2559," *Royal Gazette* 134 (2016): 1-23.

can be disestablished. However, upgrading an abandoned temple to a temple with resident monks is more complex, as it requires certain conditions and reasons, such as the temple having been consecrated and having a clear title deed, being in a suitable condition to serve as a residence and ordination hall for monks and to conduct religious activities, having a sufficient number of local residents to support and maintain the temple, being located at least two kilometers away from any other temple, having at least six rai of land, and being able to accommodate at least four resident monks.[9]

The problem of abandoned temples poses a significant challenge for the Sangha (Buddhist monastic order) and state agencies in Thailand. According to Section 32bis of the Sangha Act of 1962 (and amended (No. 4) of 2018), in cases where a temple lacks resident monks and has not yet been officially disestablished, the National Office of Buddhism (NOB) assumes the responsibility of administering and maintaining the temple, including its land, assets, and properties. The maintenance of abandoned temples places a significant burden on the National Office of Buddhism. Moreover, abandoned temples reflect the lack of monks in certain areas where local communities need their presence for Buddhist rituals and merit-making activities.

Based on relevant research, it can be seen that there are two important causes of the problem of abandoned temples: (1) the number of monks is decreasing, and (2) new temples are continuously being built while old temples have been abandoned. First, Channarong Boonoon's research report examined statistical data from 1999 to 2006 and identified a decline in the total number of monks and novices.[10] A subsequent investigation spanning 2007 to 2010 revealed a slight increase in the number of monks, but a more significant decrease in the number of novices. [11] A comparison of data from 1999 to 2010 showed a national total of 365,140 monks and novices in 1999 (267,300 monks and 97,840 novices). By 2010, the national total of monks and novices had decreased to 349,627 (281,168 monks and 68,459 novices). While the number of monks increased by 13,868 (5.18%), the number of novices decreased by 29,281 (30%). This represents an overall decrease of 15,513 monks and novices (4.24%) between 1999 and 2010. Notably, the downward trend in the number of monks and novices has persisted.[12] Furthermore, the National Office of Buddhism implemented a new survey criterion in 2019, excluding temporary monks and novices. This new criterion ensures that only novices ordained for at least one rainy season are counted. This change resulted in a national total of 252,851 monks and novices in 2019, reflecting a decrease of 96,776 novices compared to 2010.[13]

Second, data from the National Office of Buddhism reveals a consistent increase in the number of temples in Thailand between 2004 and 2012. From 40,717 temples in 2004, the number rose to 43,810 in 2012, marking a rise of 3,093 temples in just nine years. This translates to an average annual increase

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Channarong Boonoon, "The decline in monk population and its impacts on the future of Buddhism," *Journal of Buddhist Studies Chulalongkorn University* 18 (2011): 15 and 17-18.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] National Office of Buddhism, Basic Information of Buddhism, Accessed March 9, 2024, https://www.onab.go.th/th/content/category/detail/id/1278/iid/41503

of 344 temples.[14] However, this growth in temple numbers contrasts with the ongoing issue of abandoned temples. One reason is that while the process of building a new temple can be complex, the procedures involved in restoring abandoned temples are even more difficult. Research by Banchayuth Anganawin indicates that an average of 1-2 temples per month are registered as abandoned with the National Office of Buddhism, translating to roughly 10-20 abandoned temples per year. Disestablishment rates, where land is reclaimed from the state, are significantly lower. The disestablishments average only 1-2 temples annually, with some years seeing none at all.[15] An analysis of this data reveals a concerning trend. While disestablishments and construction of new temples occur, the number of abandoned temples continues to grow at a significantly faster rate. This suggests that current measures to address the problem of abandoned temples are insufficient.

Despite the prevalence of abandoned temples in Thailand, there is a surprising lack of research on the topic, particularly in terms of effective solutions. While Thanwuttha Thaisuntad[16] conducted research on the abandoned temples in the northern region, Ratchanee Charoennon et al.[17] and Punya Tepsing and Kettawa Boonprakarn[18] studied the situation in the northeastern and the southern regions consecutively. In the northern region, most abandoned temples are located in communities where only pagodas remain. Land use has shifted significantly, with former temple grounds now used as schools or rented to private entities. Surrounding housesincrease. Since the temple lands have been repurposed for other uses by the local communities, restoration as functioning temples might be difficult. However, the research suggests the possibility of restoration for conservation purposes. This could involve zoning management, enhancing the site's prestige, and connecting it to modern contexts. The proposed solution prioritizes historical preservation over reviving active worship, focusing on historical importance as a potential funding tool. While funding details are lacking, the researcher suggests restoring the area as a historical site.

In the northeastern region, the abandoned temples have a higher potential for restoration as functioning temples due to their non-historical designation. The proposed solution, establishing a working committee from the provincial to village level, lacks specifics on its implementation. In the southern region, while public understanding attributes temple abandonment primarily to the unrest, additional factors were identified, such as inappropriate monk behavior and short-term residencies. It was recommended that a religious organization be established to oversee monk conduct, screen incoming monks, and encourage long-term residency.

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[14] Thai Publica, Statistics showed three hundred more temples each year. The religion's heyday? Accessed March 9, 2024, https://thaipublica.org/2013/12/monastery-institution-2/

[15] Banchayuth Anganawin, *Abandoned Temples and Common Property in Buddhism* (Nakhon Pathom: National Office of Buddhism, 2019), 1.

[16] Thanwuttha Thaisuntad, *Abandoned Monasteries: Problem and Opportunity for the Chiang Mai's Ancient City* (Prae, Thailand: Maejo University, 2012).

[17] Ratchanee Charoennon, et al., "A Study of the Situation of Deserted Buddhist Temples in the Northeastern Region of Thailand," *Chophayom Journal* 28 (2017): 194–200.

[18] Punya Tepsing and Kettawa Boonprakarn, "Causes of Thai temple condition change in three southern border provinces in 2004-2017," *Parichart Journal* 33 (2020): 89-106

From what has been discussed so far, it can be seen that most of the proposed solutions for addressing the problem of abandoned temples involve assigning responsibilities to other relevant agencies or suggesting the establishment of new agencies to take responsibility. However, these are only broad proposals and lack clear and detailed guidelines for implementation. In contrast, there has been a significant concrete effort to address abandoned temples through the "Revitalizing Abandoned Temples" project by Wat Phra Dhammakaya, which aimed to recruit individuals for ordination and subsequent placement in these temples across Thailand.[19] While well-intentioned, this approach has encountered implementation challenges. Notably, monks sent to abandoned temples may not be readily accepted by local communities, as their presence was not a product of community demand. This lack of local support can lead to conflict and ultimately result in the monks leaving to establish new temples, further exacerbating the issue.

This research argues that such challenges stem from an insufficient understanding of the problem. Abandoned temples represent more than just a lack of resident monks; they are a complex and multifaceted issue. The top-down approach, such as the one used by Wat Phra Dhammakaya, proves to be ineffective and highlights the need for local support through community involvement. Consequently, merely ordaining individuals and placing them in abandoned temples is not a sustainable solution. Seeking a better solution, the researcher discovered a successful group of monks that has expanded its network across various provinces, including Bueng Kan, Mukdahan, Amnat Charoen, and Loei Provinces. Their primary objective is to address the issue of abandoned temples within communities. One key strategy involves recruiting individuals from the community to ordain as monks within the project. Benefitting from the support of families, relatives, and the broader community, these ordinations fostered acceptance from the outset. Furthermore, the newly ordained monks remained within the community temple after ordination, which further strengthened the bond between the temples and the community and drew ongoing support from the community.

The researcher contends that successful outcomes hinge on collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including community representatives, the monastic authority, and state agencies. The monks in this group do not have monastic seniority, an administrative position in the temple, or an ecclesiastical title. Therefore, it will be shown below that their negotiation skill is an essential part of this collaboration building. Moreover, when this study was conducted between March and October 2020, a project to restore Wat Aranyawasi Temple in Loei Province was in development and implementation. The project design demonstrated a clever adaptation to the local culture. The researcher determined that Michael Benoliel's framework of negotiation capitals[20] was an appropriate method for examining the initiative. While the framework encompasses cognitive, emotional, and social elements in addition to cultural aspects, this paper specifically examines the utilization of cultural capital, which includes understanding cultural nuances and communicating effectively in a culturally appropriate way. The investigation into negotiation capitals, especially cultural capital, as a tool for addressing abandoned temples offers a novel and actionable approach to this complex issue. The relevant agencies can learn from the study results and use them as a model for finding ways to solve problems in the future.

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[19] Patthanathorn Tantivechayanon, "Buddhist Methods Develop Ruined Temples in Thailand to be Brilliant Temples," *Journal of MCU Social Development (JMSD)* 1 (2016): 9-19.

[20] Michael Benoliel, "Building Negotiation Capital," *Asia Management Insights* 4 (2017): 54–60.

To summarize, previous research has primarily focused on the causes of temple abandonment, with recommended solutions such as zoning management, the formation of working committees from provincial to village levels, and the appointment of a religious organization to oversee monk conduct and encourage long-term residency. However, these solutions have not yet been implemented, which leaves a research gap on successful temple restoration cases. Specifically, there is a lack of research on successful temple restoration through the efforts of monks in collaboration with involved parties. This research aims to demonstrate the importance of collaboration between monks, communities, and authorities in successful temple restoration projects, with a particular focus on the use of negotiation capital as a foundation for the project leader's successful collaboration with the other parties. Importantly, the findings should highlight the key roles of cultural capital in the successful negotiation that contributed to the project's success. Therefore, the main research question is: How did the successful group of monks utilize the cultural capital to design a temple restoration project as a negotiation strategy and secure collaboration from other parties? The focus is on understanding the specific ways in which cultural capital was leveraged to create an effective negotiation strategy or a planned approach used to achieve a goal through negotiation that resulted in successful collaboration for temple restoration. By analyzing a successful temple restoration project, this research seeks to draw attention to the overlooked role of negation and reflect a model that related organizations can use in future restoration efforts.

METHODS

This qualitative research aimed to study the negotiation capital used by the above-mentioned group of monks, which has successfully collaborated with involved parties and launched temple-restoration projects in Bueng Kan, Mukdahan, Amnat Charoen, and Loei Provinces. Wat Aranyawasi Temple in Loei Province was selected as the study site because it was the area where the project had just been implemented at the time of the study. Data were collected between March and October 2020 through the method of non-participatory observation and in-depth interviews with the following informants:

Project Leadership: The temple restoration project is led by a team of four Buddhist monks: a project leader, a deputy project leader, and two additional members.

Monastic Authority: Senior monks hold administrative positions, including the Ecclesiastical Provincial Governor, the Ecclesiastical District Officer, and the Ecclesiastical Sub-district Head.

Government Representatives: Government officials involved in the project include the Director of the Provincial Branch of the National Office of Buddhism, the village headman, and his assistant.

Community Representatives: Two community leaders from the Kok Thong sub-district, Mueang district, and Loei province, are also involved in the project.

Lay Participants: three persons who participated in the Buddhist ordination under the temple restoration project and still remained in monkhood.

The in-depth interview guidelines consisted of two main sets of questions. The first set was designed to collect data from a team of four Buddhist monks. It covered topics such as their views and analysis of the situation, their problem-solving and project design processes, identification of related stakeholders

and contact channels, emotional regulation, and negotiation strategies with these stakeholders. The second set of questions was directed at the remaining informants and focused on their perception of the team of four Buddhist monks, their motivation for participating in the project, and their modes of support and participation. These questions aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the negotiation strategy and the perspectives of those involved. Data triangulation was conducted based on these multiple data sources to ensure the credibility and validity of findings.

The data were analyzed using the process of content analysis proposed by Satu Elo and Helvi Kyngäs,[21] which consists of three phases: preparation, organization, and reporting. In the preparation phase, the interview data were transcribed and divided into sections based on the in-depth interview questions. In the organization phase, the data were analyzed and grouped. This resulted in the emergence of thematic groups, which represented the three phases of temple restoration: initial analysis, design, and implementation. In the reporting phase, details in each phrase were described along with an analysis through Michael Benoliel's framework to show how the monks used negotiation capital to develop the temple restoration project. As the study's primary focus was on cultural capital, the data related to this capital were prioritized, while data related to other capitals were present to provide a background for making sense of the utilization of the cultural capital.

Michael Benoliel's framework of negotiation capital was chosen because it was designed to overcome the pitfall of the modern approach to understanding negotiation, which overemphasizes the logical and rational aspects of negotiators. Apart from cognitive capital (efficiently processing information, designing strategies, and making sound decisions under pressure), it covers emotional capital (reading emotions in others and managing one's own for composure), social capital (building strong relationships, establishing trust, and maintaining a positive reputation), and cultural capital (understanding cultural nuances and communicating effectively in a culturally appropriate way).[22] According to Rob Grace[23] and Raju Sira Mahalingappa Guru[24], Michael Benoliel's expanded scope of the negotiator's required capabilities is a significant contribution to the study and training in the field of negotiation. It offers a holistic perspective on what capabilities negotiators need to handle the challenges and complexities of negotiation situations. Therefore, the framework is suitable for analyzing how the monks at Wat Aranyawasi Temple navigated negotiations under limitations within complex situations to secure collaboration from diverse parties.

[21] Satu Elo and Helvi Kyngäs, "The Qualitative Content Analysis Process," *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 62 (2008): 109. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04569.x

[22] Michael Benoliel, "Building Negotiation Capital," *Asia Management Insights* 4, (2017): 54–60.

[23] Rob Grace, "The Humanitarian as Negotiator: Developing Capacity Across the Aid Sector," *Negotiation Journal* 36 (2020): 13-41. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12307

[24] Raju Sira Mahalingappa Guru, *Negotiating Access to Health Care for Populations Affected by Conflict* (Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2021).

RESULTS

Following Carrie Menkel-Meadow,[25] Russell Korobkin indicated two broad negotiation paradigms. The first is the adversarial paradigm, which perceives negotiation as a competition or conflict aimed at maximizing victory over the other party. This paradigm is often explained using game theory. The second is the problem-solving paradigm, which views negotiation as a collaborative process to mutually address needs or objectives. This paradigm emphasizes cooperation and mutual benefit over competition and victory. Negotiation tactics and strategies can make sense when the paradigms under which they operate are identified.[26] This study, which aimed to address the problem of abandoned temples, operated under the problem-solving paradigm of negotiation. To explain the successful group of monks' development of a negotiation strategy to work with involved parties for the implementation of their temple restoration project, Michael Benoliel's framework of negotiation capital was utilized. This framework helped to shed light on the various resources employed by the monks to build collaborations and achieve their goals.

Negotiation capitals denote the diverse assets negotiators employ to attain their desired goals. In Michael Benoliel's framework, these capitals are categorized into four groups: cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural. Cognitive capital pertains to a negotiator's comprehension and insight into the situation, while emotional capital involves their adeptness in managing and expressing emotions. Social capital encompasses the relationships and networks available to negotiators, whereas cultural capital encompasses the shared values, beliefs, and norms impacting negotiations. By harnessing these various forms of negotiation capital, negotiators can enhance their likelihood of success and cultivate more fruitful relationships with other involved parties.[27] It is undeniable that the group of monks – henceforth referred to as the working group – leveraged various forms of capital to achieve their goal of temple restoration. As cultural capital formed the basis for designing the restoration project, the following account highlights their strategic employment of cultural capital while their utilization of other capitals remained implicit. However, the implications of utilizing other capitals will be elucidated in the background as well. The working group's cognitive capital is evident in their methodical process, which commenced with an initial analysis and project design phase. Moreover, their social capital played a pivotal role throughout, as the working process and project implementation hinged upon it. Without established social networks, neither the planning nor execution would have been feasible. The collaboration among the different categories of negotiation capitals is represented in the following diagram.
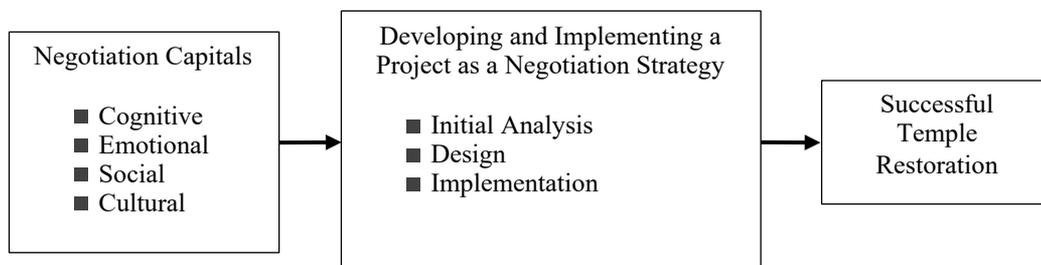

Figure 1: Diagram Outlining the Development Process for a Temple Restoration Project

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[25] Carrie Menkel-Meadow, "Toward another view of legal negotiation: The structure of problem solving," *Ucla L. Rev.* 31 (1983): 754-842.

[26] Russell Korobkin, *Negotiation Theory and Strategy* (Aspen Publishing, 2024), 12.

[27] Michael Benoliel, "Building Negotiation Capital," *Asia Management Insights* 4 (2017): 54–60.

Initial Analysis

Because it lacks a royal grant of Visungamasima, Wat Aranyawasi Temple is classified as a monk residence. The history of this temple can be traced back to 1932 when Venerable Luangpu Chan came to this area and asked villagers to build cells for monks to practice meditation. After his death for a while, Venerable Luangpu Don came to reside here and had a crematorium constructed to serve the villagers. When he passed away, the temple was deserted until 1997 when Venerable Phra Maha Veerachit Chittasilo was invited to reside at the temple. Under his initiation, a pavilion was constructed for the purpose of organizing rituals and ceremonies. In 2010, he left the temple and returned to his hometown in Maha Sarakham Province. Consequently, the temple was without monk for a year. In 2011, Venerable Phra Adhikara Thawatchai Thuptimprai became an abbot but left the temple after less than a year because of scarcity and inconvenience at the temple. Then, Venerable Phra Adhikara Chaisiri Kittisopano became an abbot, but he left monkhood in 2012. Lacking any resident monk, it became an abandoned temple again. When the temple is deserted, community members faced direct impacts. For example, they cannot offer alms and make merit, which are Buddhists' common practices. When they need to organize a funeral, they have to invite monks from another temple, which is not convenient.

When the working group visited the area, it conducted a survey by through conversation with the community leaders and found that efforts had been made before to restore the temple through acquisition of resident monks. The method that the community used was to invite passing-by monks to stay in the temple. Even though some monks accepted the invitation, they eventually left the temple because of three main reasons. First, the dwellings within the temple had decayed, and the facilities inside the temple were in poor condition. Second, financial and material support from laypersons were inadequate. Third, for those monks who exhibited exemplary conduct in adherence to the Buddhist monastic precepts, devotees from their hometowns visited the temple and implored them to return and serve their communities.

Later, the community considered a new method to acquire resident monks. Believing that the financial aspect was the deciding factor, the community aimed to provide services and products at the temple that catered to the animistic and superstitious beliefs held by the laity such as amulet selling, fortune telling, lucky rituals, or averting rituals. The revenues could be utilized for renovating the dwellings and facilities, as well as procuring essential supplies. However, the plan had never been implemented because it was seen to deviate from the proper Buddhist path. The working group here observed a continued commitment to core Buddhist principles among community members alongside the popular blending of Buddhist and non-Buddhist beliefs.

The working group had launched a successful project of temple restoration at Bueng Kan Province, in which new monastic members were recruited from the local community. Therefore, the working group proposed this option of recruitment to the leaders and other members of community. However, it faced resistance as many men in the community could not bear the costs associated with becoming and remaining in monkhood. Apart from the high cost of traditional ordination ceremony, the pressures of financial obligations and caring for their families and farms made it difficult for many men to become a monk, despite their deep personal desire.

In order to restore the temple, the working group wanted to recruit community members as new monastic members. However, those men in the community did not want to bear the costs, and yet still harbored a desire to be ordained. Consequently, a situation for negotiation arose. According to Russell Korobkin, negotiation is an interactive process between two or more parties who have different interests, what to achieve certain goals that they alone could not obtain and, therefore, try to coordinate and collaborate with each other in order to achieve their goals. In this process, they may have to make trade-offs and concessions.[28]

People in the area still held the belief and value in the utmost merit of repaying one's parents which is considered indispensable for Thai men, that is, to ordain as a Buddhist monk upon reaching 20 years of age or older. Conversations with community members revealed that many men wished they could ordain if given the opportunity. The demands of daily life and the financial burden of the ordination ceremony made it difficult for them to fulfill the tradition. The desire for ordination gave the working group a starting point in drawing up a negotiation plan. The negotiation was not to be conducted via direct communication with them but through a project whose offers would allow these men to make acceptable trade-offs.

Design

The working group conceived a strategic plan to organize an event with short-term ordination as part of it. After the event, some of the newly ordained monks might decide not to disrobe themselves as was the case in previous short-term ordination projects that the working group had organized elsewhere. Consequently, these remaining monks would become resident monks, thereby restoring the temple. Designing the event that would function as a negotiation strategy, the working group drew upon the cultural wealth in the local area. It was found that a significant local tradition called "Bun Jak Khao" ("offering rice to make merit) was still practiced.

The local tradition of 'Bun Jak Khao' is observed within one to three years of after death. This ceremony offers merit to the deceased and serves as a grand display of respect and love. Ordination by the deceased's sons or grandsons is part of the merit making. Beyond its religious purpose, Bun Jak Khao is often a costly affair. It functions not only as a large-scale merit-making event but also as a way for families to showcase their social standing, honor the deceased, and demonstrate their enduring love and respect. Hiring performers for entertainment is not uncommon, which further adds to the expense. Bun Jak Khao is considered a necessary social obligation. Failure to perform the ceremony can lead to negative community judgments regarding the family's commitment to the deceased. However, because of the significant financial burden, many community members were still unable to fulfill the obligation. For some of them, it was not performed even after the period of three years.

The working group considered that the event should be designed to include Bun Jak Khao as its main component. Thereby, the working group proposed a community-based Bun Jak Khao event, replacing individual family ceremonies. This would allow participation for everyone who hasn't yet held their own

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[28] Russell Korobkin, *Negotiation Theory and Strategy* (Aspen Publishing, 2024), 1.

ceremony. To conform with Buddhist principles, the ceremony would be modest and simple. In addition, the ceremony's inclusion of ordination also provided an opportunity for other men seeking to become monks to fulfill their merit-making intentions towards their parents. The working group designed the event to allow even more participants.

As a result, the event was designed to take nine days. It began with ordination ceremonies on the first day. Over the next seven days, chanting and meditation sessions were held in the mornings. The afternoons were reserved for a lecture series delivered by representatives from various government agencies. In the evenings, Dhamma talks were offered. The culmination came on the ninth day with a merit-making ceremony following the simplified Bun Jak Khao tradition. The event was named "Dhamma Practice on Mindfulness of Death (Buddhist-inspired Bun Jak Khao)." The term "mindfulness of death" serves a dual purpose. It not only reminded participants of Buddhist teachings on mortality but also connected directly to the Bun Jak Khao ceremony. Meanwhile, the term "Buddhist-inspired" emphasized the ceremony's adherence to Buddhist principles of simplicity and modesty in place of the traditional extravagant practice.

Implementation

The project could attract 64 people, with 60 being adults. to participate in the ordination since the event featured conditions that allowed them to reach an acceptable trade-off. The event design offered a streamlined Bun Jak Khao and ordination ceremony, eliminating the need for families to shoulder the burden of traditional extravagance. This simplified approach allowed these men to fulfill their lifelong aspirations of becoming monks while honoring their families and ancestors through merit-making. As most of them were rubber farmers, a common occupation in the area, participating required a commitment of nine days, which meant missing only one cycle of tapping and selling their rubber, a process that typically occurred every ten days for these farmers. The slight income loss from participating was negligible compared to the significant expense they would incur if they had to organize the ceremony themselves.

The event drew a large crowd as these 64 persons were joined by their families and relatives. It was especially massive on the first and last days. The event began with a grand procession on the first day. Vehicles adorned with colorful decorations carried the individuals preparing for ordination to the temple, where they would undergo the ordination ceremony. Many participants were eager to be part of this momentous occasion and brought their own vehicles to join the procession, which created a truly spectacular scene.

The event culminated in a simplified Bun Jak Khao ceremony, focusing on its core elements. Attendees brought rice and food offerings to make merit for their deceased loved ones and ancestors. Some participants brought relics to the ceremony. Unlike more elaborate celebrations, this event excluded alcohol, partying, gambling, and performances. In addition to the newly ordained monks, all monks from the sub-district monasteries were invited to accommodate the sizable number of merit-making participants. The ceremony attracted people from neighboring communities. Many had long wished to organize a similar event in their own areas but lacked the resources to do so. This ceremony offered a welcome opportunity to participate in a Bun Jak Khao ritual.

After the event concluded, many disrobed and returned to lay life, tending to their families and farms. However, a number of monks chose to remain in the monastic order. Most of them were unencumbered by secular responsibilities. Having previously lacked the opportunity for ordination, they had embraced the event as a chance to experience monkhood. Finding fulfillment in the monastic way of life, they decided to continue on this spiritual path. Due to limited accommodations at Wat Aranyawasi Temple, only three could take up residence there. The others sought residency at temples in neighboring communities. However, the number of monks was sufficient to complete the restoration of Wat Aranyawasi Temple.

The limited accommodation available in the temple raises a significant concern regarding how to ensure the continued presence of monks in the temple. The sustainability of temple restoration efforts is a significant challenge, with the physical condition and limited space of Wat Aranyawasi Temple being a major concern. The decay of the monks' dwellings and poor condition of the temple facilities, such as unreliable water and electricity supply, have contributed to the high turnover rate of monks residing in the temple. These issues highlight the need for an additional approach to temple restoration that addresses the physical infrastructure.

After the first implementation of the project, the event was launched again in response to the request from the community members. There were 77 men who participated in the ordination. The photos of the second event are shown below.

Figure 2: Attha Parikara (Buddhist Monk's Eight Necessities) for those who participated in the ordination ceremony. Photo by author.

Figure 3: Naaks or men who were shaved and prepared to receive die ordination. Photo by author.

Figure 4: Newly ordained monks attending a lecture. Photo by author.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Unlike Pierre Bourdieu's explanation of cultural capital as personal cultivation[29], Michael Benoliel's concept of cultural capital is understood as "the negotiator's ability to understand the nuances of the stated and unstated values and norms of different cultures".[30] As shown in the analysis, the working group adapted the available cultural resources, especially from the local customs and beliefs, the design of their temple restoration project. Thereby, a key aspect of the above-mentioned ability is made clear as an ability of negotiators to strategically utilize cultural resources or assets in their negotiations to achieve their desired outcomes. These three aspects — cultivation, ability to understand culture, and cultural resources — are interrelated. The abilities to understand cultural nuances and utilize cultural resources are predicated on personal familiarity with and exposure to the culture in question[31]. This point brings to mind the fact that the monks in the working group had a shared cultural background with the local community, which offers an explanation why they could adapt and yet still retain the cultural and spiritual significance of the Bun Jak Khao ceremony.

As Rob Grace[32] and Raju Sira Mahalingappa Guru[33] indicated, negotiators are required to leverage all forms of capital when they navigate real-world negotiation settings. Therefore, although the presentation of the above findings prioritizes the role of cultural capital, its interplay with other forms of capital must be acknowledged in the background. The monks in the working group demonstrated an abundance of cognitive capital as they skillfully devised all of the strategies. These monks possessed strong social capital, not solely due to their monastic status, but also because of their virtuous characteristics. That is, they strictly adhered to Buddhist disciplines, demonstrated sincere devotion to restoring the temple, and sought to benefit the community without any expectation of financial or other types of gain. Their virtues

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[29] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), 244.

[30] Michael Benoliel, "Building Negotiation Capital," *Asia Management Insights* 4 (2017): 57.

[31] Scott Davies and Jessica Rizk, "The Three Generations of Cultural Capital Research: A Narrative Review," *Review of Educational Research* 88 (2018): 338-339. http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/0034654317748423

[32] Rob Grace, "The Humanitarian as Negotiator: Developing Capacity Across the Aid Sector," *Negotiation Journal* 36 (2020): 24. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12307

[33] Raju Sira Mahalingappa Guru, *Negotiating Access to Health Care for Populations Affected by Conflict* (Chr. Michelsen Institute, 2021), 9-10.

also included the emotional capital, which kept them calm and patients in coordinating with various parties. Due to the trust generated by the monks' strong social and emotional capitals, government officials were enthusiastic in providing full support, and community members held them in high regard, which was one of the factors contributing to the large number of people who participated in the event. The impressive number of men who had registered for the ordination, in turn, drew support from high-ranking monks, who then agreed to preside over the ceremony. This further increased the community's trust in the working group and therefore strengthened their social capital. Therefore, as a whole, this study confirms the relevance and applicability of Benoliel's holistic framework of negotiation capitals.

The requirement for multiple negotiation capital indicates the necessity of negotiating with various parties. The temple restoration project, initially introduced as a strategic tool to secure community member participation in the ordination, is not just an individual negotiation deal between the working group and community members. Instead, it is the outcome of what David A. Lax and James Sebenius refer to as a "negotiation campaign." In complex negotiation scenarios, this concept offers a broader perspective to identify interconnected smaller deals that collectively contribute to the negotiation's overall goals.[34] Before the event could take place, the working group had to engage in negotiation processes with diverse parties, including community leaders, monastic authorities, and government officials. By adopting the negotiation campaign framework for further study, the complex situation of negotiation can be thoroughly explored and better understood.

In this study, the phenomenon of "negotiation cognizance gap" as termed by Rob Grace[35] was observed. That is, the working group did not realize that what they had been doing was negotiation. Only upon the analysis, their project design was revealed to be a form of the negotiation strategy. The phenomenon can be observed in the scholarship of engaged Buddhism, and Buddhism and development. While main emphasis is on Buddhist monks and laity's application of Buddhist philosophy and values to mobilize social movement to support, for instance, poverty reduction, peace building, and environmentalism,[36] this study shows that an analysis of the movements through the lens of negotiation and negotiation capitals can prove promising. Specific research questions can be as follows. Given that engaged Buddhism constitutes a form of social movement that requires negotiation, collaboration, and collective action, how do leaders, key actors, and change agents within Buddhist social movements utilize negotiation capitals to mobilize and implement their engaged Buddhist projects? Especially, given that Thai culture and customs are profoundly shaped by Buddhism, how do the key figures in the Thai engaged Buddhist movements leverage cultural capital to enhance their negotiation effectiveness?

Take as an example Susan Darlington's influential study on the Thai ecology monks' innovation of tree ordination ceremony, which "…the monks did not claim to be fully ordaining the tree, as that status

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[34] David A. Lax and James K. Sebenius, "From Single Deals to Negotiation Campaigns," *Harvard Business School NOM Unit Working Paper*, no. 12-046 (Harvard Business School, 2011), 3.

[35] Rob Grace, "The Humanitarian as Negotiator: Developing Capacity Across the Aid Sector," *Negotiation Journal* 36 (2020): 17. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/nejo.12307

[36] Sallie B. King, Socially Engaged Buddhism (University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 1-2 and Sallie B. King, "Mindfulness, Compassion and Skillful Means in Engaged Buddhism," *Mindfulness* 14 (2023): 2516-2517. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12671-022-01847-1

is reserved for humans only. The ceremony was used symbolically to remind people that nature should be treated as equal with humans…".[37] Its findings present re-interpretation of Buddhist philosophy and ethics through the environmentalist lens, the symbolic use of Buddhist rituals and symbols, and the organization of tree ordination ceremony. If the practice of tree ordination is further analyzed as a negotiation strategy for mobilizing support in ecological conservation projects, a new perspective from the negotiation capitals leveraged by the ecology monks in their dealings with villagers and government officials should shed new light on her already-rich analysis. For example, a particularly intriguing aspect is how the Buddhist custom of ordination, which is extensively practiced in Thailand, serves as cultural capital that the ecology monks utilized to develop their tree ordination project. This strategy demonstrates the innovative ways in which the monks leverage the cultural capital to promote environmental conservation and engage local communities in their efforts. By framing their project within the context of a widely respected cultural practice, the monks were able to develop the negotiation strategy to effectively garner support.

Resource mobilization theory is a prominent sociological framework used to study social movements. Engaged Buddhist movements, being a type of social movement, can also be analyzed using this theory. For instance, Patiphat Anuraktham's study of Venerable Wichit Dhammachito's development of the Santibhavan Project of Palliative Care Residence for Monks[38] demonstrates the applicability of resource mobilization theory to engaged Buddhist movements. Moreover, as explained above, the study of this kind of project can be further enriched by incorporating Michael Benoliel's theory of negotiation capitals. This suggests the potential for developing a research framework that combines both resource mobilization and negotiation capital theories to study engaged Buddhism more comprehensively. By doing so, scholars can gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay of resources, negotiation strategies, and cultural contexts that shape engaged Buddhist movements.

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[37] Darlington, "The Ordination of a Tree: The Buddhist Ecology Movement in Thailand," Ethnology (1998): 9. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3773845

[38] Patiphat Anuraktham, "Resource Mobilization for Palliative and Hospice Care of Buddhist Monks: A Case of Santibhavan Project of Palliative Care Residence for Monks, Thailand," *The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society* 14 (2023): 71-84.

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