

**Spiritual vegetarianism:
Identity in everyday life of Thai
non-traditional religious cult members**

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of university or other institution of higher learning.

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Ethics Approval

This research obtained ethics approval 12/145 from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on August 20, 2012.

Abstract

This thesis examines how the participants who are Thai and vegetarians integrate vegetarianism into their lives, and how they produce and maintain their vegetarian identity element. This video-ethnographic study was conducted in Thailand over the course of five months, with particular attention to three participants who are members of non-traditional religious cults in Thailand, where vegetarianism is a normal practice. Utilizing multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a), I conducted a micro analysis by teasing apart the participants' real-time interactions, investigating how different modes come to play together to make certain actions possible. The analysis also incorporates other data from observational notes, sociolinguistic interviews and photographs.

I discovered that the participants produced a *spiritual* vegetarian identity element in accordance with their religious belief. The participants produced multiple identity elements, including but not limited to their spiritual vegetarian identity element, at differentiated levels of the participants' attention/awareness. At the time of the study, my participants did not continuously produce their spiritual vegetarian identity element, and thus a spiritual vegetarian identity was not their most salient identity element. However, I found that vegetarianism plays a significant role in the participants' lives as they always produced their spiritual vegetarian identity element in connection with other identity elements. This results from the fact that these identity elements were developed within a religious context which was embedded in the historical body (Nishida, 1985) of the participants. Religion has exerted a substantial influence on many aspects of their lives and their resulting identity elements.

Chapter 1

Introduction: Vegetarianism, identity, and religious belief

1.1 The reasons I studied vegetarians in Thailand

I have been interested in healthy eating and vegetarianism for a long time. My mother, who is a very health-oriented and religious person, has had much influence on me. At home, my mother always prepares food using only organic vegetables and ingredients without additives. I have frequently accompanied my mother to shop for food at organic-labelled grocery stores. Although organic products cost more than non-organic ones, my mother is willing to pay more as she prioritizes a healthy lifestyle. The stores we frequent are a Santi-Asoke's green and vegetarian supermarket¹ and a royal project store², both of which are located in Bangkok. Besides these two stores, we can find some organic food and plant-based products at a few local stores in the area we live in. These stores are all run by Santi-Asoke members, and one of the store owners is

¹ Santi-Asoke is a non-traditional Buddhist cult in Thailand. The cult has outlined a sustainable lifestyle as guided by the core principle of meritism, an alternative approach to capitalism. The cult has established an intentional community called 'meritism society'. Santi-Asoke members practice vegetarianism, and farm organically for the consumption within their communities and sell the rest of their products to the society at their self-operated green and vegetarian supermarkets (more detail about the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult can be found in section 4.3.1).

² A royal project is a non-profit organization under a patronage of His Majesty the King of Thailand. The project was founded in 1969, aiming to promote a village-based agriculture among the hill tribes in the northern part of Thailand. Alternative crops were introduced to the hill tribes in substitute for opium plantations and in order to solve the problem of deforestation caused by shifting cultivation. The royal project stores sell organic products produced by their members.

Nimit (my first participant)³. In order to live a healthy lifestyle, my mother and I also grow some organic vegetables ourselves.

Besides eating organic food, my family has always been conscious about meat consumption. We have cut back our meat consumption as we rarely eat pork or chicken, have never cooked beef, and prefer to eat only fish. The major reason for our cutting back meat is that we believe that too much meat can contribute to diseases, and specifically cancers. Our reasoning is that the meat we consume today comes from animal industries that heavily use chemicals and hormones. Another reason is our religious practice and we observe the first Buddhist precept, which states that one should refrain from killing. For example, we do not eat beef because of this religious influence. We view cows as benevolent animals and believe that killing large animals contributes to negative karma. Therefore, we never kill animals or ask someone to kill them for us. Rather, we buy only butchered meat believing that this contributes to a lesser degree of bad karma.

My family occasionally practices vegetarianism. A vegetarian diet is my family's regular choice when we go out to eat. If within our area, we usually go to the vegetarian food store owned by my first participant, Nimit. When we go shopping in Bangkok either at the Santi-Asoke's green and vegetarian supermarket or the royal project store, we usually eat at a vegetarian food court that is operated by the Santi-Asoke cult and is located in the same area of their supermarket. The Santi-Asoke food store only prepares food with organic vegetables grown within their communities.

³ It was in his store where I conducted my initial site investigation in order to locate potential participants. Nimit volunteered to take part in my project and gave me permission to post my pamphlet in his store to attract other participants.

In addition, we practice vegetarianism during the nine-day vegetarian festival⁴ held every year around September-October. During that period of time, my mother practices vegetarianism for the entire period and only cooks vegetarian food.

Due to the influence of my family, and particularly of my mother, I have become interested in vegetarianism, which I view as both ethical and as a healthy lifestyle. Personally, I have always wanted to become a vegetarian, but I think that adopting a new lifestyle is especially challenging for someone who was born into a non-vegetarian family and has been raised a non-vegetarian. However, when I began reading about vegetarianism in Thai culture, I did not discover any research pertinent to my interest. Most available studies regarding vegetarianism in Thai culture were conducted in scientific areas concentrating on medical advancement. This study is therefore the product of my wish to gain more insight into this, to me, fascinating area.

1.2 The reasons I wanted to study vegetarians' identity production holistically

My curiosity about vegetarianism has led me to wonder how vegetarians balance their lifestyles. I believe that in order to understand how they balance their lives, I needed to investigate how vegetarians live their everyday lives. I felt that I needed to investigate their everyday life actions and practices, and with this rich empirical data, I would contribute to the understanding of multiple aspects in vegetarians' lives. The point was to gain insight into a vegetarian as an individual in a

⁴ The Nine-day vegetarian festival is observed every year during the ninth lunar month of the Chinese calendar (around September-October). This festival is widely observed by Thai Buddhists for the purposes of spiritual cleansing and merit-making. At this time, stores that sell vegetarian food are decorated with yellow flags displaying Chinese characters denoting 'vegetarianism.'

holistic way. Investigating vegetarians' actions and practices in everyday lives not only allowed me to see vegetarian identity features but also how these features are interrelated with other identities that vegetarians have adopted.

1.3 The reason that religion is important in my study

I have observed that most vegetarians (specifically full vegetarians) in Thai culture have adopted vegetarianism for religious reasons. Theravada Buddhism is practiced widely in Thailand and has the strongest impact on the roles people take in their lives. According to Theravada Buddhist teachings, Thai Buddhists are encouraged to observe the Five Precepts, seen as a moral guideline for living an ethical secular life. For a Thai Buddhist, vegetarianism connects to the first precept of not taking life and the belief in karma and in its karmic consequences. Killing is believed to result in a short life and bad health. In this way, religious belief is the most prevailing influence on vegetarians in Thailand.

Before I began my research project, I thought that vegetarianism was an ethical lifestyle rooted in religious belief. Thus, not to my surprise, my participants, who belong to non-traditional cults⁵ in Thailand, adopted their vegetarianism because of their religious belief. They observed the Five Buddhist's Precepts, and the first precept

⁵ These religious cults are the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult and I-Kuan-Tao cult. The Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult follow vegetarianism based on their own version of interpretation of Buddhist texts. Santi-Asoke view the first precept of not killing differently than Theravada Buddhists. While mainstream Buddhism says that Buddha never declared any strict dietary rule and vegetarianism is a personal choice not a requirement, the Santi-Asoke says that to consume meat implies the killing of animals. Consuming meat supports the killing.

Another cult is I-Kuan-Tao cult. I-Kuan-Tao claims itself to be a root of all world religions. It's teaching incorporates Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. Their form of vegetarianism (or to be more specific, veganism) is linked to the present Buddha's teaching about the first precept.

in particular. However, as I delved deeper I found that my participants' interpretation of the religious scripture, and particularly the first precept of not killing, is different from what most Theravada Buddhists in Thai culture conform to. For some of my participants, vegetarianism is connected to the ideas of final salvation and apocalypse. They practice vegetarianism not only for their moral perfection leading to nirvana but also for saving the lost souls of other sentient beings whom they view as having unawakened minds. Because of this, the vegetarian identity that my participants produce surpasses the definition of being ethical vegetarians. Through my study and analysis, I have determined that my participants are, in fact, spiritual vegetarians who have prioritized higher spiritual advancement.

1.4 The reason I conducted a video-ethnography

For my research, I conducted a video-ethnography with extensive fieldwork. My aim was to gain holistic insight into my participants' identity production in order to better understand how vegetarianism fits into their everyday lives. I view identity as something multiple, complex, and ever-changing that arises in a person's social interactions. I have drawn on Scollon's (1997, 2001) as well as Norris' (2002a, 2002b, 2008, 2011a) work, by proposing that all actions are identity-telling. In this view, whatever my participants did in their everyday lives, even a mundane action of interacting with customers or passers-by, with objects, or the built-in environment, produced their identities. What they do best informs who they are. My video-ethnographic project thus allowed me to access rich empirical data of my participants' actions and practices, providing material that reflects their everyday lives and lived identity.

1.5 The reason I used multimodal (inter)action analysis as my theoretical/methodological framework

In my study, my participants' identities come about through their multimodally-produced actions. I found that my participants often produced their actions through the combination of verbal and non-verbal modes. For example, they used the mode of spoken language in alignment with other non-verbal modes to produce their actions. At other times, they used only non-verbal modes in interaction and produced their identities through these non-linguistic modes. For example, one of my participants constructed his vegetarian identity element through his action of making vegetarian noodle soup, primarily using modes of object handling coordinated with hand/arm movement; or he produced his Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element by wearing the uniform of the cult he belongs to. By using a multimodal approach, I wanted to investigate how identity is produced through various modes, a question that empirically has not received much attention. For this reason, a multimodal approach was necessary in order to allow for a more integrated and holistic analysis of the actions and identities of my participants. A multimodal approach to data analysis allowed for deeper insights into my participants' identity production.

1.6 The reason I conducted sociolinguistics interviews

In addition to conducting a video-ethnography, I collected sociolinguistic interviews (Tannen, 1984; Norris, 2011a) during my study. I interviewed each of my participants at the beginning and at the end of my fieldwork. Through sociolinguistic interviews I was able to learn about my participants' thoughts and feelings toward

themselves, others, and their lives. For example, I was interested in their motivations for becoming vegetarians and wanted to learn what they thought about being vegetarians. I also wanted to find out how they saw themselves as vegetarians. Sociolinguistic interviews thus rendered a reflection of my participants' thoughts about their lives. This insight enabled a better understanding and a more holistic view of how my participants construct their identity.

1.7 Why mediated discourse theory was relevant for my study

Mediated discourse theory proposes three principles: the principle of social action, the principle of communication and the principle of history (Scollon, 1998, 2001). The first principle proposes to begin the analysis from a focus on social, mediated action. In my study, I have taken my participants' actions and practices in their everyday lives as my analytical focus. The second principle is the principle of communication. Scollon (2001) claimed that there always exists an inter-relationship between the multiple mediational means/cultural tools used by a social actor when performing an action (Wertsch, 1991, 1998). In my analysis, I illustrate throughout how my participants used multiple mediational means to make certain actions possible and thus to construct their identities in action. The third principle, the principle of history, is of particular relevance to my study. Specifically, it has guided the discussion of my findings (Chapter 8) where I located the interconnectedness between my participants' identities and their religious belief. Here in my study, my participants' actions and identities were deeply rooted in their religious belief, which I view as a long-term accumulative experience and an integral part of their historical body (Nishida, 1958).

The principle of history, just as the principle of communication and social action informed my theoretical focus throughout my research.

1.8 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is dedicated to an exploration of the everyday identity production of vegetarians in Thailand. These identity elements are considerably influenced by the religious beliefs imbued in the historical body of the participants. Here, I outline the thesis, which is made up of a total of nine chapters, providing a brief overview of each chapter.

Chapter 2 outlines a description of the research process. I begin with the aim of the study and the research questions that guided my thesis as well as a justification of data collection and data analysis methods. Aiming for a holistic investigation of identity production, I used video ethnography as a primary method of data collection and multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) as the methodological framework for my study. I also incorporated other methods of data collection and detail what types of data was collected through each method. Because this study involved participants, specific ethical consideration applied to my study. Here, three ethical principles were considered in particular: the principles of partnership, participation, and protection. The issues of participant recruitment are also addressed in this chapter, justifying why I focused my analysis on the three selected participants: Nimit, Duangpon, and Natakirt. Next, I outline the multimodal transcription conventions that I adopted, in order to be able to analyse the data, following Norris (2004, 2011a). In the final section of this chapter, I introduce my participants: Nimit, Duangpon, and Natakrit, based on the observational data from my fieldwork. The

background of each participant connects to examples given in Chapter 3 and the following analyses in chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8.

Chapter 3 examines the theoretical notions and methodological tools that have guided my study. I begin by outlining multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a, 2013) and its related methodological concepts. Mediated action, the unit of analysis (Wertsch, 1991, 1998), is theorized as three types: the higher-level action, the lower-level action and the frozen action (Norris, 2004, 2011a). Each action is made up of various communicative modes, either verbal or non-verbal; and these modes are structured differently. This chapter also explores the concept of the site of engagement (Scollon, 2001) where the actions I analyzed were produced. This concept is useful in my research for addressing how identity is produced in real-life contexts and circumstances. Then, I outline the methodological concept of levels of attention/awareness in connection with modal density. Here, I explain that a social actor constructs actions through differing degrees of modal density indicating the hierarchical degrees of attention/awareness the social actor pays to a certain action. This can be illustrated through the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Norris, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2011). In the following section, I outline aspects of interactional sociolinguistics (Tannen, 1984) that I used for my analysis of interviews. Here, I introduce some linguistic strategies used by my participants to construct their identity elements. Next, I outline the three principles of mediated discourse theory (Scollon, 2001) that informed my theoretical focus throughout my research. They are the principle of social action, the principle of communication and the principle of history. I focus particularly on the principle of history, a concept which guides the examination of the interconnectedness between

identity elements and religious belief viewed as an integral part of my participants' historical body (Nishida, 1958). Finally, I justify a methodological decision for using multimodal interaction analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) as my framework. I outline in brief different language-based approaches to identity production, including conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974); critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999); systemic functional analysis (Halliday, 1961, 1994), systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (O'Halloran, 2008, 2011, 2012) and social semiotics (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001). I demonstrate that the shift in the analytical focus from language (monomodal data) to multimodal interaction (multimodal data) allows for a holistic analysis of identity production in everyday life.

Chapter 4 examines the concept of identity that allows for a balanced view of identity production. The literature reviewed in this section is later examined against the empirical material analysed to discuss the findings (in Chapter 8). I begin with the theoretical notions of identity outlined by social and socio-cultural psychology and multimodality. I review Mead's (1934) *I-Me* concept revealing a dialectal relationship between the identity and history of an individual, and investigate Wertsch's (1991, 1998) socio-cultural approach to identity, noting that identity arises out of social interaction mediated by cultural tools. Next, I examine Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach viewing identity production as a form of impression management. The discussion in this chapter is an opportunity to address several research gaps. First, I point out that many of the approaches to identity view identity mainly through the lens of language alone. My multimodal approach, in contrast, focuses on real-time actions and offers a more holistic view of identity. Its contribution is to provide a way of analysing empirical elements of identity that usually are disregarded in typical

discussions of identity in social interactions. Second, I discuss the fact that action needs not be goal-directed to speak about identity. Many things people do simply arise and link to a person's historical body (Nishida, 1958; Scollon, 2001).

This chapter also examines identity production through the multimodal approach (Norris, 2011a; 2008) that I utilize in my thesis and introduces important methodological terms. In addition, I examine related literature on identity in the multimodal field. Finally, in the last part of the chapter, I examine religious belief and identity production, beginning with outlining the belief system of the Santi-Asoke Buddhist and the I-Kuan Tao cults to which my participants belong. Then, I review literature about identity and religiosity as it is relevant to my study. In this review, I found similar research gaps as addressed above, as most studies here too primarily viewed identity production through language alone. In the final section, I examine identity and vegetarianism where I introduce a form of vegetarianism outlined by the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult and I-Kuan-Tao cult; and review empirical studies examining vegetarianism and identity. This section also informs the discussion of the empirical data in chapters 5, 6, and 7. There I found differences between my participants and most vegetarians in these studies regarding a production of a positive self, a use of negotiation strategies, and a use of philosophical reasons for adopting vegetarianism. This further builds part of my discussion (Chapter 8).

In chapters 5, I offer an analysis of Nimit's identity production, using multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 20004, 2011a). Here, I examine three sites of engagement⁶: the site of engagement of conducting a workshop; the site of

⁶ The term will be defined later in this thesis.

engagement of delivering bean sprouts to the Santi-Asoke store; and the site of engagement of making vegetarian noodle soup. The analysis shows that Nimit produces multiple identity elements enacted at differentiated levels of his attention/awareness. These are an expert in organic bean sprout growing identity element, a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element, a sustainable farmer identity element, a successful business owner identity element, an owner of a food store identity element, and a vegetarian identity element. Regarding a vegetarian identity element, Nimit produced a vegetarian identity element through particularly salient mediational means: his organic bean sprouts.

In chapter 6, I examine Duangpon's identity construction produced through intersecting practices and mediational means within three sites of engagement. They are the site of engagement of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao Gods; the site of engagement of cooking vegetarian tofu spicy salad; and the site of engagement of cooking vegan chili dip. I illustrate how Duangpon, who is an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator, produces multiple identity elements at differentiated levels of attention/awareness determined by which modes are used and how they are used. These identity elements are: a spiritual mother identity element, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element, a vegan identity element, and a business owner identity element. Duangon's vegan identity element links to vegetarian food that she prepares every day both for sale in her vegetarian food store and for household consumption. Her integration of veganism into other practices such as her parenting practice, business practice, and religious practice is discussed later in chapter 8.

In chapter 7, I examine Natakrit's identity production within two sites of engagement: the site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the

ritual of establishing a Buddha hall; and the site of engagement of giving a dharma lecture at a dharma assembly. The analysis shows that Natakrit produces multiple identity elements through the interconnectedness of various modes, both verbal and non-verbal. As a result, these identity elements are enacted at differentiated levels of his attention/awareness as I elucidate through the methodological tool the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Norris, 2004, 2011a). Natakrit produces several identity elements, namely, the chosen one identity element, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element, and a vegan identity element. Being a vegan, Natakrit produces this identity element through the particularly salient mediational means of vegan food that his team prepares to accommodate the audience attending the dharmic functions. This food is prepared in accordance with the I-Kuan-Tao belief that any ingredient from animal origin as well as five pungent smelling herbs are excluded from the diet.

In Chapter 8, I base my discussion on the findings in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, intending to fill the research gaps I previously addressed in chapter 3 and 4. This discussion comprises two sections: a methodological discussion and a thematic discussion. In the methodological discussion, I argue that a multimodal approach and video-ethnography provide a more holistic analysis of identity production, as opposed to a language-based analysis. In the thematic section, I discuss three major points. First, I discuss how I examined identity as identity elements (Norris, 2004, 2008, 2011a). This view provides a useful discussion of my findings as I illustrate that my participants produce multiple identity elements simultaneously, including but not limited to their vegetarian/vegan identity element. Each of these identity elements makes up a larger whole, and is an integral part of a whole. Secondly, I propose that a

religious belief has a long-term effect on the actions and identity production of my participants and that this religious belief is an integral part of my participants' historical body. In order to illustrate this interconnectedness between my participants' identity elements and their religious belief, I slightly modified the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness originally devised by Norris (2005). I apply Norris' idea of back-to-front structuring and follow her allusion to historical body but extend this to religious belief based on my investigation. This graph illustrates how my participants' religious belief influences their phenomenally-produced identity elements. Using this graph, I discuss the interrelation between my participants' vegetarian/vegan identity element and their religious belief; and the interrelation between my participants' vegetarian/vegan identity element and other identity elements. Finally, I discuss that different identity elements take on different degrees of saliency. For Nimit, a sustainable farmer identity element is the most salient one. For Duangpon, it is an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element and for Natakrit, it is the chosen one identity element that took on most saliency.

Chapter 9 summarizes the entire thesis. I begin by restating the aim of my research and giving a summary of my findings. Then, I answer each research question that guided my study, beginning with answering the first question asking how my participants produced their simultaneous identity elements through the use of various communicative modes. The second question seeks to answer which identity elements my participants foreground, mid-ground, or background. The third question examines how my participants develop and maintain their vegetarian/vegan identity element and how their vegetarian/vegan identity element connects to other identity elements. The final question asks how religious belief is interconnected to my participants'

identity elements, and particularly their vegetarian/vegan identity element. Next, I reiterate the research gaps previously stated and address how to fill these gaps. Here I also discuss the limitations of the study that have constrained the generalizability of the findings. At the end of this chapter, I discuss how the analysis and the resulting findings gain trustworthiness through a variety of procedures and suggest possibilities for further study.

1.9 Conclusion

Above, I address my research interest in identity production of vegetarians in Thailand. I have long been interested in and impressed with vegetarianism and how vegetarians/vegans balance their lifestyle. Based on my observation, I found that religious belief has exerted much influence on vegetarianism in Thai culture. Above, I have offered a justification for conducting a video-ethnography and a multimodal analysis as allowing me to study identity holistically. Then, I justify the use of sociolinguistic interviews to uncover the participants' own understanding of their identity production. My aim here was to discover how vegetarians/vegans are able to develop and maintained their vegetarian/vegan lifestyle, and how religious belief influences my participants' identity element production, and their vegetarian/vegan identity element in particular.

Chapter 2

Research design: A video ethnography, multimodal transcription, and introduction of participants

In this chapter, I first outline the research process; then, I present the multimodal transcription conventions adopted from Norris (2004, 2011a), which I used to analyse filmed interactions of my participants; and finally, I provide some background of each participant analysed in this thesis.

2.1 Design of the study

This part is divided into four sections: first, I discuss the aim of the study which includes the intent of the researcher conducting this project. Here, I formulate my research questions that led me to embark on my ethnographic research project, justifying my method of data collection. Next, I discuss the types of data that I acquired. Then, I outline the ethical considerations that I applied to the study, including the principles of partnership, participation, and protection; the social and cultural sensitivity; and participant recruitment. In the final part, I offer a reason for why I chose to focus my analysis upon the selected three participants.

2.1.1 Aim of the study

With my research project I intended to discover how individuals integrate vegetarianism into their everyday life. I chose to study everyday identity production of individuals eating a vegetarian diet in order to understand the position and extent of their vegetarian identity element in relation to other identity elements. Through a video ethnography and a multimodal (inter)action analysis, I hoped to uncover this interrelationship of identity elements. In addition, through interviews, I hoped to discern how vegetarians were able to develop and maintain their vegetarian identity element. Furthermore, I intended to reveal how their religious belief influenced their identity elements, and particularly their vegetarian identity element. Thus, I answer the following research questions in the coming chapters:

1. How do participants produce simultaneous identity elements through the use of various communicative modes?
2. Which identity elements do participants foreground, mid-ground, or background?
3. How do the participants produce a vegetarian identity element in their everyday lives and how is it connected to other identity elements?
4. How does religious belief connect to the phenomenologically produced identity elements?

In order to collect data of the everyday (inter)actions that my participants engaged in, I employed an ethnographic method which I discuss in detail in the following section. Here, I also discuss the ethical considerations regarding recruitment of the participants for this study.

2.1.2 Data collection

The ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in Thailand over the course of five months. This research project was initially set out to explore vegetarianism and identity production of eight primary participants (four couples). These participants are vegetarians, but each of them has practiced a different form of vegetarianism. They are also the followers of non-traditional religious cults in Thailand. However, in my data analysis, I decided to particularly focus on three participants for reasons that I discuss at the end of section 2.2.

For data collection, each couple was asked to contribute one month of their time, during which I conducted my video-ethnography combined with participant observation and sociolinguistic interviews. Each method was utilized as described below, yielding three different types of data sets.

2.1.2.1 Video recording: Data set 1

During the fieldwork, I recorded ten hours of video of each couple's naturally occurring interactions, using a mini high-definition Flip-recorder. The total duration of video-data for the four couples thus came to forty hours. The videotaped interactions of the participants varied from participants acting alone; participants interacting with other people within their social network; or participants (inter)acting with the surrounding environment and objects within. They range from organizing dharmic functions (i.e. establishing Buddha halls and giving dharma lectures) to practicing their religion; from giving workshops/demonstrations for growing organic bean sprouts to shopping for green vegetarian products at a specific green supermarket; from family

prayer times to food preparation as a part of running a vegetarian food store; and from cooking vegetarian food to family dinner time.

I analyzed particularly representative samples from my data. Representative samples are those interactions that the participants performed often in their daily lives. These actions, as argued by Norris (2011a) give insight into identity production. I identified these representative samples as I logged the data, following multimodal transcription conventions developed by Norris (2004, 2011a). For this, I transferred the data from the cameras to data storage, organizing them into different folders. Next, I provided descriptions of these interactions based on my view where I described what was going on in the interaction including that which was left out by the cameras. I logged all of the information including the exact date, time, place, and participants interacting in the events.

2.1.2.2 Participant observation: Data set 2

In this study, I took the role of a participant-observer, engaging in a wide variety of interactions taken up by participants (individually or as a couple). At the beginning, I first tried to get to know who the participants were and learn how they lived their lives. My observation involved many participants who were labelled either as secondary participants or as incidental participants (discussed in detail in the ethics section 2.1.3). These other participants were those individuals who the primary participants interacted with. My early observations gave me insight into the participants' personal identity production in everyday life through the typical actions they engaged in. Overall, I observed the participants for about six to eight hours per day for one month, noting the following in my field notes:

- a) Naturally occurring interactions that the primary participants were engaged in on a daily basis, either acting alone, or interacting with secondary and incidental participants.
- b) Primary participants' thoughts and beliefs that I gathered based on the plethora of actions they performed and what they said about them.
- c) Primary participants' narratives that they shared with the researcher.

Data set 2 comprises field notes used to record the observational data that are salient; plus photographs, providing an additional visual data source for analysis. These observations guided my research.

2.1.2.3 Sociolinguistic interviews: Data set 3

I twice conducted a thirty-minute sociolinguistic interview with each of the primary participants: first, I interviewed the participants at the beginning of data collection; and then, I interviewed them again at the end of the data collection, yielding eight hours of interview data in all. Due to the use of loosely-structured interview questions (Appendix A.4), the participants were able to speak about whatever they wished on a given topic. For example, they discussed general information about their families, daily activities, religious beliefs, or their adoption of a vegetarian diet.

I also audio recorded natural occurring conversations that I had with the participants, as they sometimes shared parts of their personal stories. The conversations were recorded with a mini portable audio recorder that I kept with me at all times. The data was transcribed using the transcription methods outlined in

Tannen (1984) as discussed in Chapter 3, the interview and conversation transcripts were examined for relevant themes across the discourse as well as some linguistic features utilized by the participants.

My ethnographic study thus relies on data from fieldwork wherein a video camera and an audio recorder were important tools for data collection. But before embarking upon my research, I seriously engaged with ethical considerations.

2.1.3 Ethical consideration

My ethics approval (no.12/145) was given on 20 August 2012 by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee. The ethical questions I would like to highlight here are: 1) The principle of partnership, participation, and protection; 2) The issue of social and cultural sensitivity; and 3) Participant recruitment.

2.1.3.1 The principles of partnership, participation, and protection

I incorporated the principle of partnership into my project, aiming to establish mutual respect and benefit. On the one hand, I encouraged my participants to actively engage in the project by ensuring them that I would treat them with respect, regardless of individual differences. I was open about the purpose, potential impacts, and related information regarding the project, based on honourable acts and good faith towards each other. On the other hand, participants who agreed to take part in this study had to give their consent before I could start my data collection. They also made a decision about who I would approach as secondary and incidental participants.

Regarding the benefits that the participants would gain, the study evoked self-awareness and enhanced better understanding of their own practices through their active participation in the study, leading to personal growth and development.

According to the principle of participation, participants acted as co-researchers who shared their subjective experience with me. At their own request, participants could (and still can) view all the video footage, listen to audio data, read field notes that I took and view other related documents that contain their personal information. They received a copy of the thesis and other publications in which they were analysed.

For the principle of protection, the participants are protected from deceit, harm and coercion. Upon the first contact, I provided participants with a full description of the research in an information sheet and then they signed the consent form if they agreed to accept the invitation. I assured them that their participation was voluntary and that they were able to withdraw from the study at any time. This project involved no research elements such as an experimental setting, deception, exposure to any risk or harmful circumstances or coercion as it would have threatened the methodological backbone of the study.

In respect to privacy of the participants, the participants made their own decision regarding whether they wanted to be named by pseudonyms; and/or have their faces blurred or distorted in the publications, as they could decide and state their decision in the consent forms which they received before the research process began. In this project, all of my participants allowed me to use their real names and un-blurred images in the thesis and any other publications that may arise from the data.

Throughout, the participants took an active role as co-researchers who could make such decisions as: who else was included in the study; who and when I was able to record; when they wished to stop the recording; which information was recorded; when I came to the field sites; and when to access the field notes and watch the video or listen to the audio recordings. This helped minimize power imbalances inherent between participants and researcher.

In addition, I ensured that equality and respect to different cultural diversity was highly exhibited in all matters. As this study focused on members of religious communities to which I do not belong, I acted respectfully towards cultural diversity and abided by their ways of life as much as possible.

2.1.3.2 The issue of social and cultural sensitivity

This study involved participants in Thailand; since I am Thai myself and a take part in Thai culture, I had the ability to fully understand the meanings the participants ascribed to their interaction in accordance with their cultural beliefs and core practices. While neither a formal nor a prior consultation process had occurred, an informal consultation process did occur from the initial contact with participants; and a continuation of the informal consultation developed naturally throughout the entire period of the project. This made the participants feel safe and comfortable to share their personal information and experience, thus, resulting in the enrichment of outcomes of the study.

2.1.3.3 Participant recruitment

For this study, three types of participants were selected, based on the following criteria:

Primary participants included eight vegetarians (four couples) who are Thai, aged above 20, living in the provincial areas of Bangkok and Lopburi.

Secondary participants (adults and children or minors) included people who were part of the primary participants' social network (e.g. family members, relatives, friends, and colleagues). The secondary participants frequently interacted with the primary participants and their interactions with the primary participants contributed significantly to the production of identity. However, the number of secondary and incidental participants was not indicated in the first place as I did not know the networks of the participants until I began my fieldwork.

Incidental participants (adults and children or minors) were people who incidentally entered into the field of study, and in some way, their data was relevant to the identity production of the primary participants.

Although the interactions involved multiple participants, the main focus of the study was on the primary participants acting alone or interacting with each other or with secondary participants or incidental participants. All participants of any types had to give their consent prior to their engagement with the project.

According to the recruitment methods for the primary participants, I began by conducting a site investigation by visiting places involving vegetarian activities in Bangkok and Lopburi, located in the central part of Thailand. These sites were local

vegetarian restaurants, cafeterias, or grocery stores which sell vegetarian foods and products. Here, I approached the owners, consulting with them about the project and asking for their permission to place an advertisement for the project in their stores/restaurants to attract potential participants. The display showed the title of the project, my email address and telephone number. The potential participants who were interested in participating in this project could call or email me.

For the secondary participants, this group of participants were reached with the help of the primary participants. Since the research project focused on the primary participants, they were the ones who decided whom to approach to participate in the project as secondary participants.

For the incidental participants, in order to locate them, I enlisted the help of primary participants to engage with incidental participants. I first inquired if the potential incidental participants were of relevance to the primary participants and if the primary participants wished to include them.

Once the data collection finished, I had looked at my data and reconsidered the number of the participants I wished to analyse. Due to the nature of the research inquiry as well as the contribution the study would make, I chose to focus my analysis upon three particular participants.

2.1.4 A selection of particular participants for the analysis

These particular three participants are:

1. Nimit, a Thai male, a business owner of a vegetarian restaurant located in Lopburi province, an organic bean sprouts farmer, and a vegetarian belonging to the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult.
2. Duangpon, a mother of two children, a vegan, a business owner of a vegetarian restaurant in Bangkok, and a member of the I-Kuan-Tao cult.
3. Natakrit, a Thai male, serving in the Thai army, a vegan, and a member of the I-Kuan-Tao cult who holds the title 'jiangshi' (lecturer) within the sect.

The reasons I focused on these three participants for the analysis were: first and foremost, I intended to provide an in-depth analysis of identity production of my participants through the investigation of their interactions. Based on its exploratory orientation, ethnography, as defined by Greetz (1973) in concert with LeCompt & Goetz (1982), and Dourish (2001), provides a 'thick description' of personal lived experience in natural settings. For this, the study involved long-term fieldwork where I investigated in-depth the participants' personal experience, embedded in many different interactions within their social networks. This was necessary for me to be able to interpret each participant's identities produced through the performance of real-time, repetitive interactions as one participant alone contributed a large volume of data, and resultantly a well-developed and insightful chapter about one particular participant was developed with this data.

Second, although I immersed myself in long-term fieldwork in order to gain an in-depth understanding of all of my participants, the data quality contributed by each

of my participants was different in terms of its reliability and the amount of data contributed. This resulted from unanticipated and uncontrollable limitations that occurred during the data collection. Sometimes I was not allowed to observe the participants at their workplaces due to ethical considerations or when they went on a business trip far away from their homes. Additionally, participants had the right to make a decision about when and where they preferred to be studied, what kind of information they felt comfortable to share with me, or if they wanted their data to be destroyed, as I seriously considered their privacy. However, for this reason, I collected more data about some individuals, and I decided to focus my analysis on the three participants of whom I had collected the best data. They are Nimit, Duangpon, and Natakrit. The rich data obtained from observing their social interactions allowed for an analysis of breadth and depth of their identity production.

The video material needed specific treatment to be analysed. In section 2.2, I discuss transcription conventions that I used for analysing my multimodal data collected through video ethnography. This provides steps in transcribing multimodal data that comprises several communicative modes and how they reveal the unique relationship between elements of identity, contributing to an insight into multimodal identity production.

2.2 Transcription conventions of multimodal (inter)action analysis

In this thesis, I follow the transcription conventions of multimodal (inter)action analysis developed by Norris (2004, 2011a) for transcribing visual data of human interaction. Norris (2004) states that “The task of multimodal transcription is a task of translating the visual and audio aspects into some printable format” (p.64). She further explicates (2011a) that “...once the tapes are collected, the researcher can play and re-play the interactions in order to select representative samples and start transcribing” (p.79). In this approach, the process begins with the analyst choosing a certain aspect of the interaction they want to analyze and transcribing each mode separately, making up a modal transcript of each mode. The transcript of each mode is then combined into a single multimodal transcript.

For the mode of spoken language, Norris adopted other transcription conventions from Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (see Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974, p. 731-733) and Tannen (1984). Some transcription conventions/keys, which are used in these traditional transcription conventions, are kept. However, Norris (2004) added two additional conventions: first, time is displayed in minute, second and millisecond (or frame) (0.00.00) first at line beginnings and then added to all images that make up the transcript; and, second, a display of the intonation of the utterance transcribed is represented in form of a wave pattern, indicating the intonation of the utterance in the multimodal transcript.

Still following Norris (2004, 2011a), I added another aspect of transcribing spoken language that involves translation from one language to another. In the case of this thesis, I translated what my participants said from Thai into English. I included a

word-by-word translation (following what is uttered by the speakers in their original language regardless of its semantic function) in the transcript, and then offer a loose translation which makes sense to English speakers. The loose translation was placed into a textbox with highlighted colors in the multimodal transcript. The textbox was placed as close as possible to the actual utterance.

The modes of posture, gesture, and gaze are transcribed in similar ways (2004, 2011a) since they involve directional movement and are identifiable by shifting in position or direction. Every occurrence in postural, gestural, head, or gaze shifts is marked with exact time presented in 0.00.00 format (minute, second, millisecond/frame). I start with an initial still image of these modes allowing for a possible sequence of shifts to be noticeable. For posture and head movement, a shift usually appears as one-two shifts indicating a shift from one position to another position, allowing us to see a movement of the action. A shift can be illustrated by two snapshots that show the transition of the action. For gesture, it often consists of three phases: preparation phase, stroke and retraction. Gaze shift can be indicated by the direction of gaze from one point to another. In addition, for the mode of proxemics, transcribing starts with an initial still image of how the participant negotiates space with other(s) in interaction. Later, each change in proxemics behavior can be marked and noted by incorporating time as for other modes.

In the final step, a complete multimodal transcript comes about by collating all single modal transcripts together. Here, a multimodal transcript conveys interactional meaning of the complete moment of interaction produced within a site of engagement, through the interplay of these modes. At this point, the analyst adds arrows or numbers to indicate the direction and times of movement performed in each

mode. For example, I used an arrow to indicate the direction of gaze or posture; or a number of times the participants perform a beat gesture or head nod. A multimodal transcript, in sum, is a micro-level analysis of mediated actions that provides a rich description of human action and the sociocultural context (Norris, 2002a, 2002b). This way, multimodal transcription conventions are useful for the analysis of human interaction as they allow for an analysis beyond language

In section 2.3, I introduce the three participants that this thesis is based on. This observational data was acquired through fieldwork conducted in Thailand between November 2012 and March 2013.

2.3 Background of participants

I now introduce the three participants Nimit, Duangpon, and Natakrit, analyzed in this thesis by providing some personal data for each that I extracted from my extensive field notes. I begin with Nimit. He identifies himself as a Santi-Asoke cult member and is an organic bean sprouts farmer. He lives in Lopburi province. Next, I introduce Duangpon, who is a mother of two children. She operates a vegetarian restaurant in Bangkok in accordance with her religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao. Finally, I introduce Natakrit, who has dedicated his life to I-Kuan-Tao propagation.

2.3.1 Nimit: A Santi-Asoke cultivator

Nimit is Thai, 50 years old, and married. He practices Santi-Asoke Buddhism and has been a vegetarian for ten years in accordance with the teachings outlined by the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult. He has two daughters. The older one is at university and the younger one is in high school. Nimit takes care of his 80-year-old mother living with him and his family. The mother also is a Santi-Asoke cultivator and has practiced vegetarianism for over 30 years.

Nimit's family owns a vegetarian food store in Lopburi province (in the central region of Thailand), which is located in a three-story shop-house where downstairs is reserved for the food store and upstairs is a residence for his family and the workers. Besides vegetarian food, they sell health-oriented and environmentally-friendly products. All of the products are plant-based and manufactured by the Santi-Asoke communities. Apart from running a vegetarian food store, Nimit is a bean sprout farmer. He established an agricultural learning center for sustainable farming called

‘Ngok-ngam’. The center provides monthly public free workshops on organic bean sprout growing, using his root-cutting technique.

Below, I present some fieldnotes about Nimit that I took during participant observations between 25 December 2012 and 31 January 2013. I conducted participant observation at different sites including Nimit’s vegetarian food store; his farm; the Santi-Asoke supermarket in Bangkok; a local morning market; and an event titled ‘Home Loyalty Campaign’ hosted by DTAC telecommunication company in Bangkok.

Introducing Nimit

Nimit’s life is simple. His religious belief in the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult seems to have an immense influence on his life. He has adopted the values of right livelihood, emphasizing simplicity and moderation, as outlined by the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult. The cult has set the ‘right’ trend for economic practice regarded as meritism, as opposed to capitalism, which is consistent with the King of Thailand’s philosophy of a sufficient economy. These embedded values and beliefs are reflected in Nimit’s daily practices related to his vegetarian dietary choice, career path, business practice, parenting style, family life, personal health care, and relationships with others and the environment.

Nimit does not drink alcohol or go out at night. Instead, he is a morning person, going to bed around 8 pm and rising around 4 am. He starts his new day by waking up his workers, who work in the kitchen, as his store opens at 6 am. Then, he sweeps and picks up trash in the front area outside of his store and the public footpath that may be

littered by passers-by. Although collecting refuse on the public footpath is not his job, he is willing to do this unpaid and seemingly unimportant job for the sake of the community as a whole. This is also good exercise for him.

Around 4.30 am he goes to a local fresh market to buy some uncooked noodles and tofu for the food preparation in his store, while his wife and the workers prepare food in the kitchen for sale. After helping a little around the store, he goes to his farm, checking on his bean sprouts, packing bean sprouts for distribution, harvesting products (e.g bananas, watercress, papayas, mangoes, naturally grown vegetables and butterfly pea flower), and decorating his garden. These farm products are brought to the store for sale and for household consumption. He usually arrives home again before noon. Once he is at home, he either eats the food sold in his store that is already cooked, or he makes himself a small bowl of vegetarian noodle soup. Nimit does not eat much, he only eats once a day.

Nimit is well-known for his patented innovation of the root-cutting technique for growing organic bean sprouts. His expertise is based on practice-based learning through many mistakes. The motivation behind his discovery was his concern about his customers' health and safety as bean sprouts are the main ingredient of vegetarian noodle soup, and most sprouts available at the general local market are non-organic. These non-organic sprouts have been treated with hazardous bleach chemicals to whiten the naturally brown color of the sprouts' roots. Nimit's organic sprouts are not only used for food preparation to sell in his own store, but are also distributed to a few green supermarkets, targeting health-oriented upper middle class customers in Bangkok.

But Nimit has not always been a bean sprout farmer. At earlier times, he had been a successful construction business owner. Nimit's life changed dramatically after losing his construction business due to the economic recession in 1997, from having been wealthy to being destitute. It was at this point that he began to grow bean sprouts, and after only 2 years, Nimit was able to pay off his multi-million Baht debt from the loss of his construction business. His success as a bean sprout farmer is widespread. He has been invited as a guest speaker for workshops on sustainable farming and growing organic bean sprouts and to many television shows about career paths. He has been on front covers and covered stories of agriculture and farming magazines; has been a guest on agricultural radio programs; and has given exhibition displays at national agricultural events. Every week, the orders for his bean sprouts go beyond his production capacity. But he refuses to increase the production capacity as he thinks that money is not everything. True happiness comes from having a loving family and living life with moderation. Explicitly, Nimit does not take profit maximization as his business motto, rather he emphasizes instead the quality of the food and products served in his store. He enjoys life on the farm more than having to supervise his business, collecting money. This is also the reason that Nimit lets his wife take care of the food store, while he enjoys working on the farm.

Nimit is very content with his life and intends to contribute his knowledge and experience of growing bean sprouts using his root-cutting technique and sustainable farming to other people. He believes that his current success is coming from the heart of giving to others. Once a month he organizes a free workshop on growing organic sprouts at his farm. For example, he ran a free workshop on January 11, 2013; and on January 31, 2013 he was invited to give a demonstration on bean sprout growing, using

the root-cutting technique at the event titled 'Hometown Loyalty Campaign' hosted by the DTAC telecommunication company.

In regards to his family life, Nimit is the opinion leader of the family. With more creativity and a stronger personality than his wife, Nimit always is the one who initiates new ideas or new activities in the family. One time he initiated the idea of visiting a group of elders in his hometown to donate some food (a package that included bean sprouts, snacks, and an instant chocolate drink mix). The intention behind this is to teach everyone in his family the value of giving. He is the one who inspired his wife to become a vegetarian. Nimit's wife is quite reserved, a good follower; and she is subservient to her husband.

2.3.2 Duangpon: An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator

Duangpon is a 40-year old Thai married woman. She is a mother to two children, an 11 year old son and an 8 year old daughter. She is a cultivator of the I-Kuan-Tao cult and eight years ago has formally made a vow to be a strict vegetarian (a vegan) for the rest of her life, shortly after her receiving I-Kuan-Tao. She operates a self-service vegetarian restaurant that is located in a small blockhouse, serving pre-cooked vegetarian food. The third shop-house in this row of houses was turned into an I-Kuan-Tao public temple where she and her family worship.

Prior to her conversion to I-Kuan-Tao, she practiced Theravada Buddhism and made her living by selling freshly-cooked non-vegetarian food on a push cart. She felt that her life was miserable. Her life was full of problems: financial problems, problems with her responsibility for raising young children, and relationship problems between her and her husband. She was helplessly drawn deep into negative emotions of resentment and dissatisfaction until she was introduced to I-Kuan-Tao, for which she feels grateful. Seven months after her first initiation with I-Kuan-Tao, she decided to receive the dharma of I-Kuan-Tao, where she made the vow to become a vegan for life and at the same time dedicated herself to be a caretaker of the temple. The main responsibility of a caretaker of the temple is to give offering rituals to worship Gods on a regular basis.

Below, I offer some field notes that I took during participant observation between 1 March 2013 and 2 April 2013. I conducted participant observation primarily at Duangpon's home located within a three-story shop-house where she runs her vegetarian food store downstairs; and sometimes, I observed her during the family

prayer time in the I-Kuan-Tao shrine located in the third blockhouse from Duangpon's. At the beginning of the observation around week 1, it was the last week of school for the children. After that they were on a school holiday.

Introducing Duangpon

Duangpon is a mother of two children, a wife, a business woman and a vegan. Her life is centered on caring for her family and running her business, as guided by her belief and the teachings of the I-Kuan-Tao religious cult. Her daily routine from Monday to Friday falls into relatively the same pattern as she gets up at 4 am to work in the kitchen, runs her store from early morning from 6 am until evening at 7 pm, and engages in family prayer time in the evening after closing her store.

In the morning, by the time that she starts her work in the kitchen preparing food for sale, her husband who works as a chef in an Irish bar in Bangkok from 4 pm until 3 am, arrives at home and helps her with cooking. His duty includes running miscellaneous errands around the store such as going to buy something at the local market if needed, arranging plates and containers for the customers, preparing ingredients for cooking, and sometimes cooking some food. The groceries used in the store are not necessarily organic and are delivered by suppliers.

Duangpon started practicing veganism by being a non-full-fledged vegan after her conversion to the I-Kuan-Tao. Shortly after her conversion to I-Kuan-Tao, she decided to formally make a vow to become a full-fledged vegan for the rest of her life,

regarded as a ritual of Ching-Ko⁷, and at the same time was appointed by her I-Kuan-Tao masters to be a caretaker of the I-Kuan-Tao Buddha hall. She defines herself as a vegan although she consumes eggs and some of the five strongly smelling herbs⁸. This is, as she claims, due to the permission given by her spiritual mentor. She intends to become a strict vegan by reducing the consumption of the food that comes from animal origin, while the children are still permitted to consume eggs and milk.

Converting to I-Kuan-Tao has brought enormous change to her life and especially to her career as she changed from selling non-vegetarian food to vegetarian food. It was not easy for her at first because of the lack of cooking experience of vegetarian food. She struggled as she did not feel confident in her cooking skills. However, confidence in her cooking has progressively developed as she believes to be inspired by the heavenly deities. The food available at her store is labelled as lacto-ovo vegetarian as it contains eggs and some strongly smelling herbs such as garlic, shallot, and onion which are commonly used in Thai cuisine. The reason is that her customers belong to different groups (some of them are lacto-ovo vegetarians while some of them are not vegetarians but eat vegetarian food for health reasons).

As her spirituality is growing, her mind feels calm and her bad habits have been removed. The difficulties in life have been gradually changed to the better. For instance, improvements of her financial situation, her relationship with her husband and her elder son, have occurred. Her husband was previously inconsiderate to his family but he has finally given up his playboy life and has become a family man. They

⁷ Ching-ko refers to a ritual of formally becoming a vegan in I-Kuan-Tao cult.

⁸ The I-Kuan-Tao cult incorporates Chinese Buddhism into its practices. Vegetarianism that follows a Chinese Buddhist tradition rejects the use of five strong smelling and pungent plants: garlic, Chinese onion, chives, shallot, and leek, because these plants are considered to be stimulants of sexual craving.

have become more caring with each other. A troubled relationship between mother and son, who was disobedient, is now explained by the law of karma. She has realized her karmic affinity with her son through a spiritual dream, believing that once she was born as a man and her son was born as a pregnant woman who was then raped and murdered by her. The vengeful soul of the pregnant woman was believed to be reincarnated to be her son in his present life. Because of the consequence of a negative karmic bondage between them, this contributes to their troubled relationship. Realizing a karmic affinity between her and her son, she intends to pay off the karmic debt she owes her son by giving him love and forgiveness. There has been an improvement of their relationship as the boy gives more respect to his mother, has more discipline, and has improved his academic achievement. All of these happenings are believed to be the power of dharma inspired by the deities of I-Kuan-Tao.

According to her unyielding faith in the I-Kuan-Tao cult, Duangpon worships I-Kuan-Tao regularly. She intends to raise her children to be spiritually-rich people. The children are required to engage in family prayer time in the morning (with their father) and in the evening (with Duangpon), and together with the whole family during the weekends, or some times when her husband is off from work. Praying is intended for mindfulness training especially for the children as it is beneficial for their personality development and their study. She closely observes her children during prayer time. Sometimes, other people such as I-Kuan-Tao dharma relatives or the children next door are welcomed to attend the worship ritual. The children also practice veganism as they bring their own lunch to school. They are imparted with values such as responsibility, thoughtfulness, compassion to all beings and gratitude to their parents.

As an I-Kaun-Tao cultivator, Duangpon has committed herself to missionary work, dedicating her time and resources for dharma propagation. During the weekends, she leads people to receive Tao, pays a visit at the houses of newly converted cultivators, organizes dharma classes, attends a domestic Buddha hall opening ritual, and organizes semi-monthly and seasonal worship rituals at her Buddha shrine. She usually plays I-Kuan-Tao dharma music in her store and she sometimes sings along with the music. Duangpon decorates her shop with signs displaying dharma messages and vegetarian promotion messages, pictures of Guatama Buddha⁹, and the yellow flags displaying Chinese characters conveying 'vegetarianism'.

⁹ According to Buddhism, there have been many Buddhas descending to the human world to preach sentient beings to reach enlightenment. Gautama Buddha who had lived between 563 and 483 BC. was the most recent Buddha.

2.3.3 Natakrit: An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator

Natakrit is a Thai male, 54 years old, and married but has no children. He serves in the Thai Army as a commander of the patient care unit which is a unit of the army special warfare center located in Narai-Maharaj military camp in Lopburi province and, currently, holds the rank of lieutenant major. Natakrit and his wife belong to the I-Kuan-Tao religious cult where they made a vow to be vegans for the rest of their lives through the ritual of Ching-Ko in 1996.

With an unyielding faith in I-Kuan-Tao, they decided to donate their land to construct an I-Kuan-Tao Buddha hall. So, a huge I-Kuan-Tao's Buddha complex was constructed next to his house, consisting of a main Buddha hall that can house approximately five hundred people, resident halls for dharma relatives who attend the dharma functions that occasionally run for several days and a kitchen area where his staff prepares vegan food for the dharma relatives attending dharma functions. Because he has no children, he is able to devote most of his time and available resource for the cultivation of Tao, especially convincing others to receive Tao. Natakrit organizes several dharma functions, for example, a semi-monthly offering and worship in accordance with the lunar moon calendar, yearly dharma assemblies, weekly dharma classes, helping other dharma relatives with establishing Buddha halls in their homes, and recruiting new people to receive I-Kuan-Tao.

Natarkit contributed one month for data collection from 15 November to 20 December 2012. In the fieldwork, I participated in several activities, for example, the ritual of worshipping the holy deities, the ritual of a Buddha hall establishment, the dharma assemblies, joining his meal times (at home and in vegetarian restaurants),

and shopping (at supermarkets and a local market). I was introduced to many people within his religious network, mostly people who also belong to the I-Kuan-Tao cult.

Introducing Natakrit

Natakrit is a very religious person. He has purported himself to be a representative of the holy deities on special duty, i.e.: dharma propagation. Being chosen by the holy deities, the special duty, as he claims, is to save sentient beings' souls from being caught up in the cycle of reincarnation. Due to an impending doomsday in which time on earth is limited, sentient beings can attain sudden enlightenment by cultivating I-Kuan-Tao, which is believed to be the most direct and quickest spiritual path to final salvation. Even Gautama Buddha, as frequently cited by Natakrit, had spent a myriad lifetimes within a cycle of reincarnation, gradually cultivating virtues and perfections before his arrival at his final lifetime where he was born as a human, spending another six years cultivating moral perfection before he became enlightened. This Gautama Buddha's pathway is known as gradual enlightenment. I-Kuan-Tao, in contrast to any other pathways introduced by other belief systems, allows sentient beings to attain sudden enlightenment within one single lifetime (i.e: the present lifetime that the cultivators have received their dharma).

Believing that he is destined to serve the Holy Mother's will in saving other sentient beings, he prioritizes missionary work to encourage sentient beings, characteristically not enlightened and confined to the cycle of birth-death-rebirth, to

cultivate Tao. Besides donating his own money to build a public Buddha hall on his land, he spends his own money and available resources for dharma functions. For example, he feeds the dharma attendees with vegan food at no cost, provides them with transportation to join the dharma functions, and is responsible for all expenses related to the dharma functions held at his Buddha hall or at other locations. Natakrit emphasizes that material wealth can neither bring real happiness to his life nor be taken with him after his death. Rather, it is only the cultivation of spiritual wealth that nourishes his soul to attain nirvana.

With a strong personality, Natakrit has often taken on a leadership role. He is respected and honored by his dharma relatives to be the leader of the group as he is called by the title 'jaingshi' (in Chinese) which means 'a lecturer'. There is a hierarchy in authority within the I-Kuan-Tao cult as ranked from the highest to the lowest rank: senior masters (daozhang), initiators (dianchuan shi) who perform the opening mystic portal ritual, lecturers (jiangshi), caretakers of Buddha halls (tangzhu), assistant lecturers (jiangyuan), Dao business helpers (ban shi yuan), and ordinary sectarians. As jiangshi (lecturer), Natakrit is responsible for teaching ordinary cultivators dharma principles; and he also inspires them to cultivate moral perfection. During the fieldwork, I participated in four dharma functions organized by Natakrit and his dharma network (i.e. the rituals of establishing a Buddha hall were held three times at the homes of three individual dharma relatives, once on 29 November, 2012 and twice on 2 December, 2012; and one dharma assembly on 8 December, 2012). Natakrit assigned each of the dharma relatives on his team responsibilities: some were responsible for setting the altar; some were preparing fruits for an offering ritual; and some were preparing vegan food for the attendees after the ritual. In addition,

Natakrit himself gave the dharma orientation speech as well as dharma lectures to the people who attended the functions.

During the dharma functions, Natakrit often convinced his audience that his destiny to be chosen by the holy deities for dharma propagation is a mandate of heaven, and requires considerable devotion for the sake of all sentient beings, while he receives nothing in return. Thus, the audiences themselves should feel fortunate as they are granted with heavenly secrets that will lead them to enlightenment, under the clemency of The Holy Mother.

Being the chosen one requires not only a strong commitment to dharma work, but also the cultivation for moral perfection. Natakrit has practiced veganism for 17 years since he made a vow to become a vegan three years after he was first introduced to I-Kuan-Tao. Natakrit eats breakfast and dinner at home but for lunch, he usually eats at two vegetarian restaurants, either at the one owned by Nimit (the first participant) or the other owned by one of his dharma relatives. Sometimes he and his colleagues who are non-vegans/vegetarians have lunch together at non-vegetarian restaurants where he orders some vegan dishes such as stir-fried vegetable and papaya spicy salad.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the process of the study by beginning with the aim of the study that is to examine everyday identity production of vegetarians in Thailand. In accordance with this, the study asks four research questions involving how participants produce their identity elements multimodally and simultaneously; how vegetarianism features in their identity production; and how these identity elements connect to their religious beliefs. These questions will be answered in chapters 5, 6, 7; and in the discussion, chapter 8, in which I particularly elucidate an interconnectedness of identity elements and religious belief.

Next, I discussed the ethnographic methods of data collection, comprising of video ethnography, participant observation, and sociolinguistic interviews. Upon the completion of my data collection, I categorized the data into three sets, i.e. video data, observational data and interview data. In this chapter, I also included the ethical considerations that I applied to the study and followed these by the reasons why I selected three particular participants for my analysis.

Additionally, I outlined the multimodal transcription conventions that I adopted, following Norris (2004, 2011a). In this study, I added the aspect of transcribing spoken language that involves translation from one language to another as illustrated in Norris (2011), where she translated from German into English. Here, I translate from Thai into English. I include a word-by-word translation (following what is uttered by the speakers in their original language regardless of its semantic function) in the transcript, and, thereafter, offer a loose translation of Thai, making it closer to English in form and function.

In the final section, I introduced my participants based on my observational data in my fieldwork in Thailand. The background of participants provided knowledge about each of them and leads to a better understanding of how they produce their identity through everyday interactions. In the next chapter, I will discuss theory and methodology.

Chapter 3

Theory and methodological tools

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the theoretical notions and methodological tools employed in my thesis. I outline aspects of multimodal (inter)action analysis and interactional sociolinguistics and highlight the three principles of mediated discourse theory, which have guided my thinking. In the final section, I justify a methodological decision for taking multimodal interaction analytical framework by briefly outlining and comparing to other language-based approaches to identity production.

3.1 Multimodal (inter)action analysis

Multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2004b, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013) is an interdisciplinary framework that builds on mediated discourse theory (Scollon, 1998, 2001) as a primary antecedent. It also integrates some features of interactional sociolinguistics, a framework inspired by Goffman (1959, 1986) and developed by Gumperz (1982) and Tannen (1984), and social semiotics (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006; Van Leeuwen, 2005). Multimodal (inter)action analysis offers an integrative framework for a holistic analysis of multimodal mediated actions.

Scholars working in this field of multimodality are interested in how individuals express themselves through their concrete actions and how others respond to them (Norris, 2004). Multimodal (inter)action analysis begins its analysis with a micro analysis of mediated actions occurring at the site of engagement, or actual moments of interaction (Scollon, 1997, 2001; Jones, 2005, 2012) and with a specific focus on how various modes interplay in a given interaction. These mediated actions and social practices are based in the habitus of social actors (Scollon, 2001), essentially interlinking to the subtle larger-scales of sociocultural discourses. The notions of action, mediation and sites of engagement are central in this approach, and I now outline these in detail.

I first discuss the unit of analysis, the mediated action. While I will use the term mode in this section, I introduce the theoretical notion of mode after discussing the mediated action as the mediated action is essential in the definition of mode in multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2013). I then introduce the notion of mediational means, which is an essential component of the mediated action. Then, I delineate the site of engagement as my analytical element that helped me focus upon particular situations and happenings in my data. After that, I outline the theoretical notions of attention levels and modal density; and proceed with introducing the methodological tool called a modal density foreground-background continuum. Once I have discussed these notions, I discuss the importance of interactional sociolinguistics for the analysis of my data. I end the chapter by delving a little deeper into the theoretical principals of mediated discourse theory, which build an essential part in multimodal (inter)action analysis.

3.2 Mediated action: The unit of analysis

In Mediated discourse theory (Scollon, 1998, 2001), a mediated action is the departure point of any study. Particularly grounded in the theoretical concept of ‘mediation’ as conceptualized by Wertsch (1985, 1991, 1995, 1998), whose work is greatly influenced by Vygotsky (1978), Bakhtin (1986) and Burke (1969), an action is defined as ‘individual(s)-operating-with-mediational means’ (Wertsch, 1991, p. 96). The mediated action is also the central unit of analysis in Multimodal (inter)action analysis as this framework builds upon Scollon’s mediated discourse theory (1998, 2001).

Norris (2004) delineates mediated actions into lower-level, higher-level, and frozen actions in order to be able to better analyze multimodal (inter)action. A lower-level action is a mode’s smallest pragmatic meaning unit that is bracketed by a beginning and an end (Norris, 2004, 2011a, 2013; Pirini, 2014). For the mode of spoken language, an utterance with rising/falling tone of voice is a lower-level action while for the mode of gaze, it is a gaze shift. A lower-level action for the mode of posture is a postural shift; a complete gesture for the mode of gesture; a directional shift of head movement for the mode of head movement; and a step placed while moving from one place to another for the mode of walking. To constitute an action, the smallest pragmatic meaning units of each mode are strung together to form a chain of lower-level actions. For example, all utterances that are produced by a social actor in an interaction constitute a chain of lower-level actions of the mode of spoken language. Much in the same way, all gaze shifts performed by the social actor become a chain of lower-level actions; and all gesture units performed by the social actor constitute a chain of lower-level actions.



Figure 3.1: A chain of the lower-level action of the mode of spoken language.

In Figure 3.1, I illustrate the lower-level action of the mode of spoken language. Here, each utterance transcribed builds a lower-level action. As there are several utterances performed consecutively, we can see how these lower-level actions string together into chains. However, lower-level actions are never produced alone, but rather come together with other chains of lower-level actions, building a higher-level action.

The multiplicity of chains of lower-level actions thus constitutes a higher-level action that is bracketed by an opening and a closing of the action (Norris, 2004).



Figure 3.2: An opening and a closing of the higher-level action.

In my example (Figure 3.2), the higher-level action of giving a dharma orientation lecture begins with the preparation phase when the social actor puts his arms along his body. Next, he raises his left arm with his index finger pointing down to the ground, extending it into forward direction and making a larger circular motion. This action ends as he retracts his arm and returns to the rest position. Along with gesturing, the social actor orchestrates other communicative modes such as spoken language, facial expression, head movement, and body posture. Here, the higher-level action comes together through a multitude of lower-level actions, but not all actions are produced at the same time. Some actions are frozen in objects and the environment; it is these actions that Norris (2004) terms frozen actions.

Frozen actions usually are higher-level actions performed by a social actor at an earlier time and subsequently entailed in material objects (Norris, 2004, 2011a).



Figure 3.3: Bean sprouts as frozen action.

Figure 3.3 illustrates that bean sprouts can be viewed as a frozen action. Here, multiple higher-level actions performed at an earlier time are *frozen* in the sprouts themselves. These higher-level frozen actions include selecting mung bean seeds, soaking mung bean seeds, growing bean sprouts on gunny bags, watering bean sprouts, and harvesting mature bean sprouts. In this way, bean sprouts as a frozen action cannot exist without social actors having performed the action of growing them.

As all actions, lower-level, higher-level or frozen, are performed through the use of various modes, the theoretical notion of communicative modes is highly relevant for multimodal (inter)action analysis.

3.3 Communicative modes

According to Norris “all interactions are multimodal” (Norris, 2004, p.1) and are made up of a multiplicity of chained lower-level actions, drawing on various communicative modes. Communicative modes may be language, gaze, posture, gesture, print, music, furniture, or layout. In interactions, these modes are always intricately intertwined. These modes are structured differently and language is not necessarily given primacy in (inter)action as social actors do not only communicate through verbal behavior but rather incorporate other communicative modes such as gesture, gaze or posture in their interactions. These non-linguistic modes may take on a superordinate role in the interaction.

In multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) the term mode is defined as “a system of mediated action with regularities” (Norris, 2013, p. 156). Modes are perceived as a system of mediated action because they are constructed, adopted, and changed through actions (Norris, 2014). Multiple modes are always used in action in a complex way, and are culturally and historically situated. Norris (2004a, 2012) argues that communicative modes are not bound or static units.

Different modes carry different affordances and constraints that can shape actions in different ways, and allow us to take different kinds of actions. This is because each communicative mode has its own material property such as the audible materiality of the mode of language, the visible materiality of the mode of gesture, the enduring and visible materiality of the mode of print, or the extensively enduring, visible materiality of the mode of layout (Norris, 2004). Different modes, as argued by

Norris (2004, 2011b), organize meaning in different ways in accordance with how they are structured in interaction.

Spoken language though often conceived of as the most informative mode is merely a component of action (Norris, 2002a, 2004, 2011b). Language is generally structured sequentially and at times simultaneously by several social actors (Goffman, 1976, 1986; Tannen, 1984, 1993; Bateson, 1972). Proxemics (Hall, 1996) refers to how space is used between participants in order to negotiate interactional meaning: i.e. a relationship among them in terms of intimacy or power relation as such. Posture refers to body position of the participants in a given interaction, giving insight into the “involvement of participants with others” (Norris, 2004, p. 24). Posture can be analyzed through body position and postural direction (Dittman, 1987). Gaze refers to “the organization, direction, and intensity of looking.” By observing its pattern we find that gaze moves or swings back and forth rhythmically (Norris, 2004, p. 36). Gaze is often operated sequentially during conversations (Goodwin, 1981; Goodwin & Heritage, 1990).

Gesture, a mode that I analyze particularly in Chapter 7, is defined as “spontaneous movements of the arms or hands that often are closely synchronized with the flow of spoken language” (McNeill, 1992, p. 11). Gesture is a global-synthetic mode because the meanings produced through gesture must be understood as a whole (McNeill, 1992, Norris, 2011b). Gestures are classified into four types: 1) Iconic gestures refer to hand/arm movements used for mimicking and expressing objects or materials in the physical world (McNeill, 1992); 2) Metaphoric gestures are similar to iconic gestures in that they both contain pictorial content. However, metaphoric gestures typically mediate abstract notions or ideas, or mental images instead of

depicting concrete objects (Kendon, 1994, 2004; Norris, 2004); 3). Deictic gestures are generally understood as pointing gestures, indicating persons, objects, directions or locations in the physical world as well as imaginary referents (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2009; Norris 2004); 4) Beat gestures are described as the rhythmic movement of hands/arms in either an up/down or back/forth direction (McNeill, 1992), without conveying semantic content. Gesture may serve multiple functions: to repeat, accent, complement, regulate, substitute for or synchronize with verbal behavior. However, gesture can also be irrelevant to the verbal behavior (Ekman & Friesen, 1969; Efron, 1941; McNeill, 1992; Kendon, 1994).

Head movement can be organized in three directions: lateral, sagittal and rotational. Lateral head movement is tilting the head either towards the right or the left. Rotational head movement means shaking the head, while sagittal head movement is understood as head nod (Ekman & Friesen, 1969; Efron, 1941; Altorfer et al., 2000; Norris, 2004). These are conventional movements of the head, which are always coordinated with other modes during interaction. Music, like spoken language, is an auditory mode. When musicians play music, music is considered an embodied mode; and through music, their feeling, thought or perception is communicated. For the listener music is a disembodied mode, but they can always react to the music and incorporate the rhythm of the music into their embodied modes. Quite often, people hum along with the music that plays in the background or they perform beats in synchrony with the music they hear (Norris, 2004), which is something that I also found in my own data. The mode of layout (including furniture) is organized by functions. Layout constitutes the sociocultural environment that participants interact

within. Their interaction is always shaped by the mode of layout, and thus, this mode becomes highly relevant in my analysis.

Modes are perceived of as an abstract notion but they become concretized through “social actors acting with or through mediational means” (Norris, 2013, p. 167).

3.4 Mediational means

Mediational means or cultural tools are classified as two types: 1) the physical/technological tools which refer to material objects in the world that enable certain actions; 2) psychological tools or symbolic artifacts such as language, various systems for counting, diagrams, maps, works of art, and all types of semiotic signs (Wertsch, 1985, 1998; O'Toole & de Abreu, 2005). Scollon (2001) rephrased the ten basic characteristics of mediational means, which had previously been developed by Wertsch (1991, 1998).

Scollon (2001) highlights a dialectical relationship between the material tools used in action and the psychological make-up of the social actor who appropriates the tools. This follows an ‘anti-reductionist fashion’ (Vygotsky, 1978) whereby a dialectical relationship is seen as an “unresolvable” (Scollon, 2001) or “irreducible” tension (Wertsch, 1991, 1998, 2005) due to certain affordances and constraints embodied in mediational means or cultural tools that enable certain actions.



Figure 3.4: Dialectic relationship between mediational means and a social actor.

In this example, the social actors are engaging in the higher-level action of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao gods, as the woman lights incense sticks with a candle at the altar. Here, the incense sticks as well as the candle are ascribed symbolic meanings as they are a part of the ritual. The moment these mediational means are used by a specific social actor, who is a member of the religious cult, during a worshipping ritual, they are seen as a means of expressing reverence to gods and an irreducible tension comes into play between the social actor and these mediational means.

Scollon (1998, 2001) stresses the socio-culturally historical aspect entailed in mediational means. Mediational means are considered to be social because they are regarded as the products of sociocultural evolution (Wertsch, 1991, Luria, 1981).

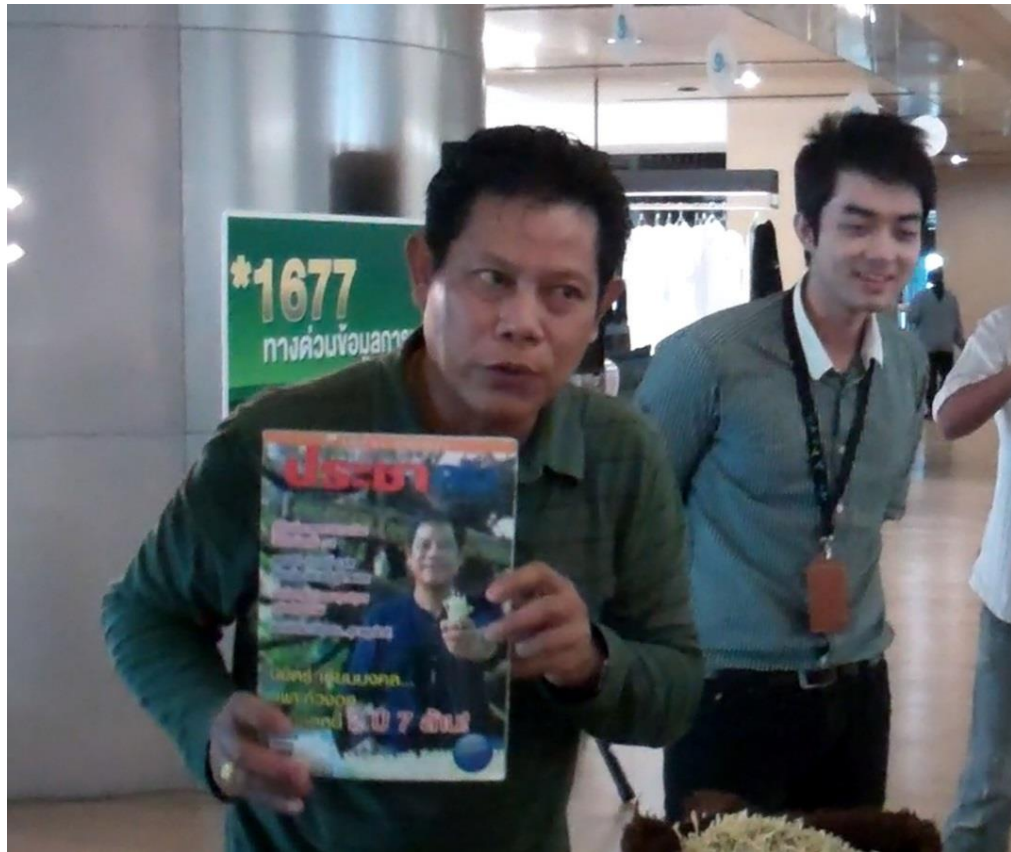


Figure 3.5: A magazine as mediational means.

In the example (Figure 3.5), a social actor shows a magazine to his audience during his showcasing of organic bean sprout growing. This is a career magazine that features job opportunities and inspirations for new career paths. Comparing this career magazine with other magazines, this magazine serves its own social functions.

Scollon (2001) highlights the fact that all kinds of mediational means inherit certain affordances and constraints in which particular tools can serve particular purposes or actions. Scollon uses the term “partially” to explain these particular characteristics of mediational means as he states that the mediational means “can never fit the action exactly” (Scollon, 2001, p.121). In transforming mediated actions, a

particular tool has its own characteristics: unique affordances which empower certain actions and at the same time constraints that limit certain actions.



Figure 3.6: The affordances and constraints of mediational means.

In the example above (Figure 3.6), the higher-level action of scooping food comes about through the social actor interacting with the spatulas. Here, the spatulas are used to mix or lift food as they have broad, flat blades with long handles, allowing the users to produce consistent strokes while mixing food. It can be said that spatulas are important kitchen utensils used for cooking. However, it may not be appropriate to use these spatulas as spoons due to their size and features.

Besides the above, Scollon (2001) states that mediational means are connective as they can link multi-purposed activities and multiple participants, depending on who uses them and how they are used.



Figure 3.7: Pre-cooked food sold in the vegetarian restaurant.

In Figure 3.7, I take pre-cooked vegetarian food prepared by the owner of the store for her customers as an example. Through interacting with food within this site of engagement of a vegetarian food store, different actions are produced by different

social actors engaging in the activities and serve different purposes. For the owner of the store, food is a part of her business practice as she makes her living by operating a vegetarian food store. So, she expects to trade her food for money. While the customers consume food in order to quench their desire for food and to live, and trade money for food. In this site of engagement, food as a mediational means serves multiple purposes as it is conceived of differently by different social actors with different social roles and responsibilities.

3.5 Site of engagement

Scollon (2001) defines a site of engagement as the “real time window that is opened through an intersection of social practices and mediational means/cultural tools that make that action the focal point of attention of the relevant participants” (p.4). Regarded as much more complex than physical space, a site of engagement illustrates a real-time moment when interactions among participants and/or with the built environment across complex, overlapping, multiple timescales and space converge (Scollon, 2005). Practices, in Scollon’s sense, are actions with a history or recurring actions such as religious practice. While each action is unique, the accumulation of unique actions eventually turns into a practice (Scollon, 2001). Figure 2.8 illustrates the site of engagement of giving a dharma lecture within which practices intersect.



Figure 3.8: A site of engagement of giving a dharma lecture.

The practices intersecting here, for example, are the religious practice and the practice of lecturing, both of which are interlinked with particular concrete mediational means. The religious practice is linked to the environment (i.e. a Buddha hall and the objects within such as the altar, fruits to offer Gods, or a picture of Buddha). The practice of lecturing is linked to the concrete mediational means of utterances and gestures, posture and head movements that the speaker performs, and also to the environment as the lecture is part of a ritual. Here, these practices are complexly overlapping across time and space.

Norris (2002c) redefined the site of engagement and Norris and Jones (2005) call it “The window which makes certain actions (lower or higher order) the more focused or less focused points of attention of participants” (p. 139) as Norris moved beyond only analyzing the focus of attention in her work, also incorporating

simultaneous actions performed by social actors in the mid- or background of their attention/awareness.

3.6 Levels of attention/awareness

In multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d, 2004, 2007, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013), the notion of attention/awareness is a crucial principle used for analyzing real-time, phenomenally-displayed interaction. Here, I first discuss how attention/awareness has been theorized; then I elucidate how attention/awareness is studied empirically through the notion of modal density; and after that, I illustrate the methodological tool that grew out of these theoretical notions, the modal density foreground-background continuum.

Attention and awareness are tightly intertwined albeit they have a slight difference in meaning. Chalmers (1996) notes that “We often say that someone is conscious of something precisely when they are paying attention to it; that is, when a significant portion of their cognitive resources is devoted to dealing with the relevant information” (p.27). For this, attention is seen to be a necessary precondition of awareness. Chalmers argues that conscious experience of mind is synonymous with the state of awareness of oneself and the environment as “conscious is always accompanied by awareness” (p. 222). Attention is thus described by a functional notion of consciousness or awareness as characterized by its role, not its psychological property. This way, focused attention can be “analyzed as a particularly high degree of awareness of an object or event” (p. 29).

There exists a closely-linked connection between a phenomenal and a psychological property of the human's mind. Chalmers (1996) notes "whenever a phenomenal property is instantiated, a corresponding psychological property is instantiated. Conscious experience does not occur in a vacuum" (p.27). This notion is taken up by multimodal (inter)action analysis with a focus on human interactions. Here, Norris (2004) points out that the phenomenon of mind is expressed through phenomenally-produced actions and that these actions can be studied. While we are incapable of discerning what is going on in a person's mind, such as a person's perceptions, feelings or thoughts, we can analyze an individual's actions. Norris (2004, 2011a) points out that individuals often engage in several higher-level actions simultaneously, and it is these simultaneous higher-level actions that are theorized to be attended to at different levels of attention/awareness by the individual. Levels of attention/awareness can be empirically discerned through the notion of modal density.

3.6.1 Modal density

The concept of modal density (Norris, 2004, 2004b, 2009, 2011a, 2011b; Pririni, 2013) has a strong association with the degrees of attention/awareness the social actors pay while engaging in a certain action at each different site of engagement (Jones, 2005, 2012; White, 2012). Often, the social actors engage in several higher-level actions simultaneously where they may be phenomenally highly aware of something that they are doing while at the same moment they may pay less attention to something else (White, 2010, 2012). According to this, the differing degrees of attention/awareness that a social actor gives to a certain higher-level action can be

delineated into three levels: foreground, mid-ground, and background (Norris, 2009; Pirini, 2014).

In interaction, social actors employ multiple modes to construct their (inter)actions in different ways. This led to the questioning of which and in what way communicative modes are used to construct actions. The answer can be found in the concept of modal density which is defined by Norris (2004) as “the modal intensity and/or modal complexity through which a higher-level action is constructed” (p.79). Modal density is determined by two implications: the degree of the intensity and the complexity that communicative modes carry. The higher degree of intensity or weight that a mode takes on in a certain interaction results in a higher modal density, whereas the modal complexity is justified by the complexity and intricacy between modes in use for the construction of actions (Norris, 2004, 2011b; White, 2010, 2012; Pirini, 2014).

The following are three ways which actions are constructed with high modal density (Norris, 2009, 2011a, 2011b):

1. A higher-level mediated action can be constructed through high modal density achieved through the intensity of a mode. Usually, the intensity of a mode is determined by the weight that a mode takes on in constructing action.
2. A higher-level mediated action can be constructed through high modal density achieved through the complexity of various modes that are intertwined.
3. A higher-level mediated action can be constructed through high modal

density achieved through the intensity plus modal complexity. This means multiple modes are intensely used and at the same time are intricately interwoven in interaction.

In multimodal (inter)action analysis, a higher-level action is foregrounded when a social actor focuses on the (inter)action (with other social actors or the built environment) with a high degree of awareness.

In Figure 3.9, I show a ritual of worshipping Gods attended by four social actors. I focus on a woman (wearing a white shirt) while she is teaching her two children, a boy in a blue shirt in a kowtowing position and a girl standing across from her, to perform a correct praying posture. In addition, a boy wearing a white shirt, in a kowtowing position next to her son, is a neighbor. At this moment, the woman pays focused attention to her son. Here, I illustrate this notion with one image. However, I would like to point out that this is only a demonstration of the theoretical notions and that I have arrived at this analysis of modal density using a much longer segment of (inter)action (Appendix B.1 transcribed from Video 1).

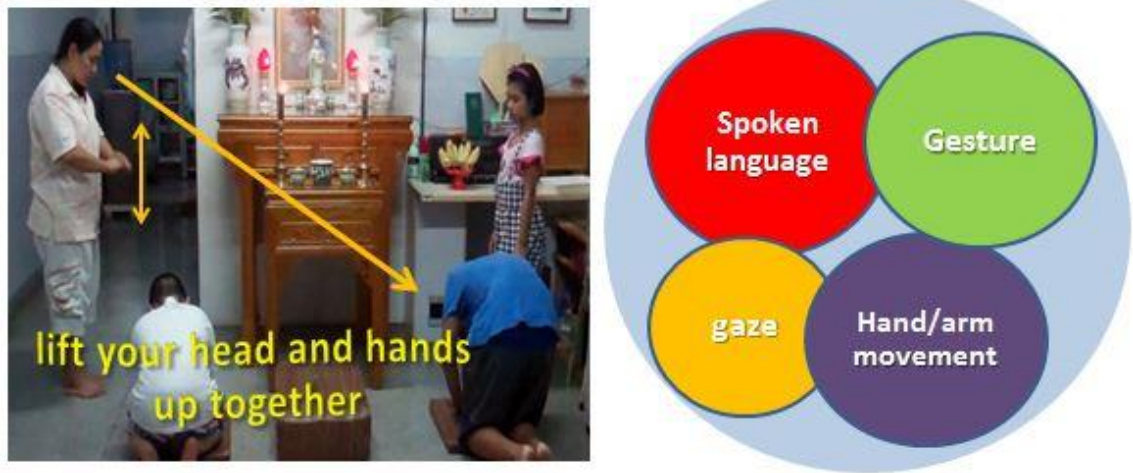


Figure 3.9: A woman foregrounds the interaction with her son in her attention/awareness.

The woman pays foregrounded attention to her son, which can be seen in the modal density that she displays: She uses the mode of spoken language, correcting her son's praying posture, telling him to coordinate his hand/arm movements with his head movements. Her language is produced in synchrony with iconic gestures as she clasps both her hands with palms facing down, moving them up and down three times in synchrony with her head movements in order to demonstrate to the boy the correct posture for kowtowing. Here, the woman's foregrounded attention can be discerned by her using high modal density achieved through the modes of spoken language aligning with gestures, hand/arm movements and gaze.

A social actor mid-grounds a higher-level action when a social actor reacts to and/or is aware of an (inter)action (with other social actors or the built environment) to some degree. It is in the mid-ground of one's attention when the higher-level action is attended to with a lesser degree of attention compared to the foregrounded higher-level action. In Figure 3.10, the woman that foregrounds the interaction with her son

(Figure 3.9), at the same time mid-grounds the interaction with her daughter who is standing on the right side of the altar.



Figure 3.10: The woman mid-grounds the interaction with her daughter in her attention/awareness

Thus, while the woman focuses upon her son, she mid-grounds her younger daughter, who is assigned the role of primary conductor of the ritual ceremony, calling for a step in the ritual. Here, the girl's presence and performance are monitored by the mother and the interaction is produced with medium modal density as she listens to her daughter's words (mode of spoken language), and employs the mode of proxemics (being aware of her daughter's position in the room).

A social actor backgrounds a higher-level action when the social actor pays little attention to the interaction (with other social actors or the environment) only minimally reacting to it. Thus, it is illustrated that a social actor can still be aware of a higher-level action even though they are paying very little attention to it. Figure 3.11 shows that the woman backgrounds the interaction with the boy from next door.



Figure 3.11: The woman backgrounds the interaction with the boy from next door in her attention/awareness.

The boy receives very little attention from the woman as she disregards his actions. However, the woman is aware of his presence as he is a part of the ritual. Her backgrounded attention/awareness is determined by the utilization of low modal density achieved through the mode of proxemics.

Thus, a social actor, when highly attending to something, is seen to have foregrounded that action. In contrast, if certain higher-level actions are given attention/awareness at some degree but lesser than that of focused action, these higher-level actions are seen to be constructed in the mid-ground of the social actor's attention/awareness. If certain higher-level actions receive little attention/awareness, these higher-level actions are viewed as being constructed in the background of the social actor's attention/awareness.

The concepts of attention/awareness and modal density are thus correlated because a level of attention/awareness can be identified by analyzing the modal make-up of a particular higher-level action (Norris, 2004, 2009, 2011a). Once analyzed, the

foregrounded, mid-grounded and/or backgrounded higher-level actions can be visualized by placing them onto the modal density foreground-background continuum.

3.6.2 Methodological tool: Modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness

Norris (2004, 2009, 2011a) developed a methodological tool called the “modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness” that helps illustrate how different higher-level actions are enacted simultaneously but at differentiated levels of attention/awareness. Figure 3.12 is an illustration of this methodological tool.

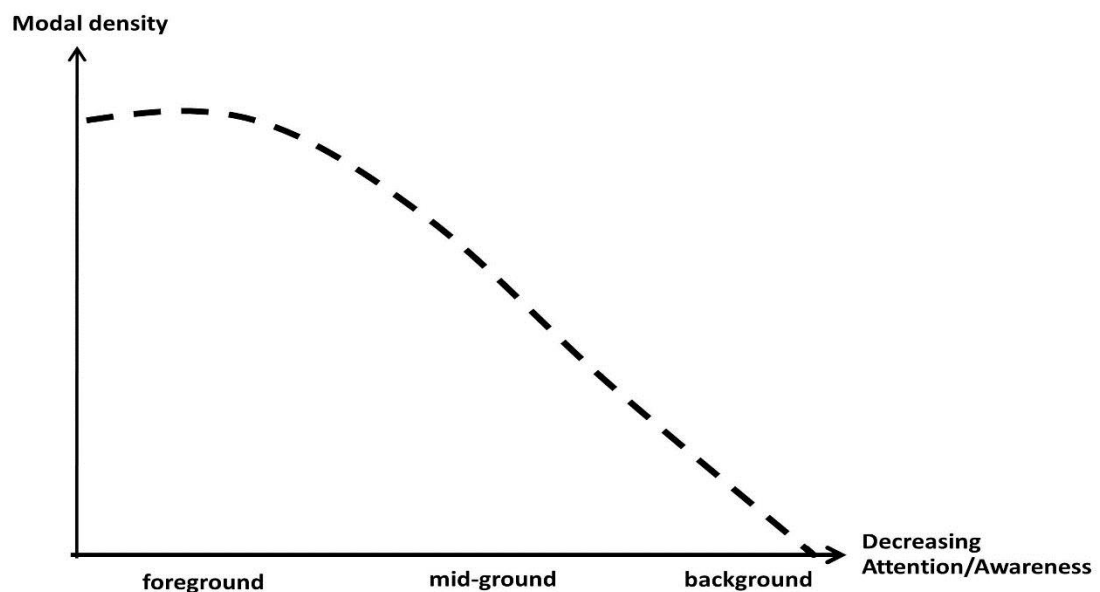


Figure 3.12: Modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (reproduced from Norris, 2004a: p. 99).

With this methodological tool, a differentiated degree of attention/awareness that the social actor pays to different higher-level actions while engaging in the (inter)action can be analyzed and visualized. When now revisiting the examples from

Figures 3.9, 3.10 and 3.11 discussed above, the various higher-level actions that the woman is performing simultaneously can be placed onto the modal density foreground-background continuum as demonstrated in Figure 3.13.

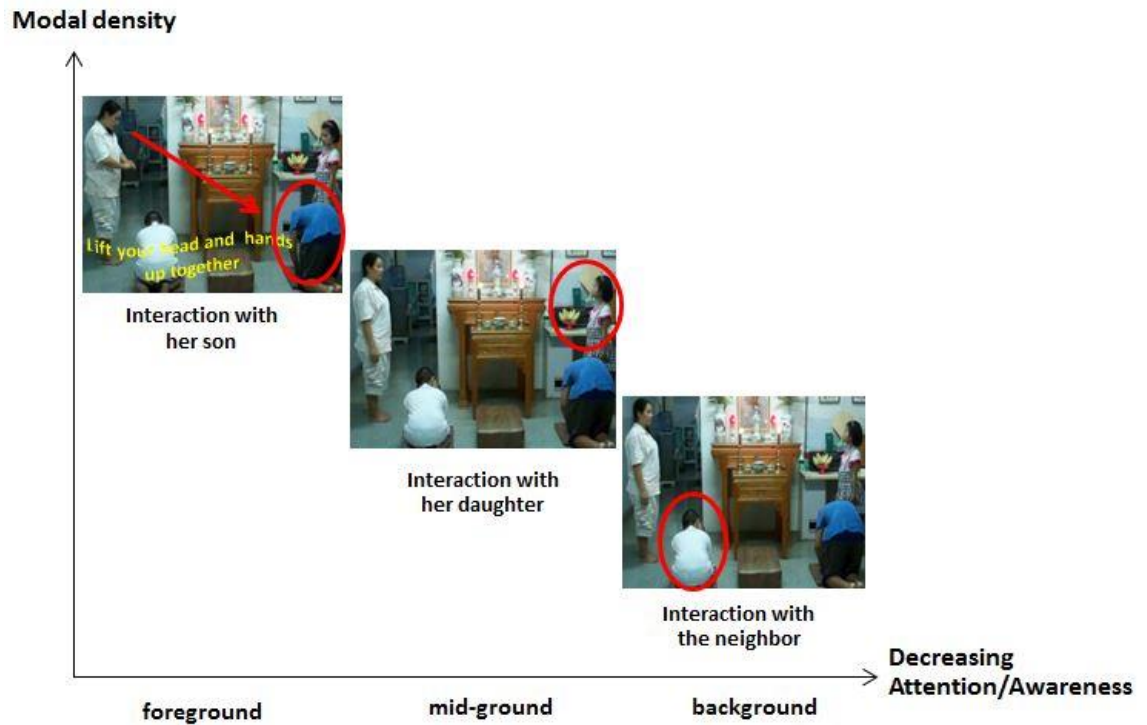


Figure 3.13: A modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness as discussed in Figures 3.9, 3.10, and 3.11.

This heuristic model allows the analysis of simultaneously performed higher-level actions. While this tool is of great importance to my work, I did not only record videos, but also conducted audio recorded interviews with the participants. In order to analyze these, I have looked towards discourse analysis and interactional sociolinguistics.

3.7 Discourse analysis: Interactional sociolinguistics

Enriched by contributions from diverse disciplinary perspectives, namely anthropology, sociology and linguistics, a basic assumption professed by interactional sociolinguistics lies in the fact that language, culture and the social are instantiated in social interaction. Discourse is seen as social interaction, or a face-to-face verbal exchange between groups of people of two or more interacting in their everyday lives (Gumperz, 1982; Tannen, 1984).

Tannen (1982, 1984; 1994; 1999; 2003; 2009) demonstrates that language contributes to the imputation of personal identity that is constantly negotiated through verbal exchanges. Identity of my participants is also revealed in the interview data, which I have analyzed using Tannen's (1984) analytic method. This method involves three steps: 1) Transcribing interview data into printable format; 2) Topic analysis and topic flow; and 3) Locating discourse strategies. During my analysis, I followed these steps, adopting them to analyze the interview data.

The first step begins once data collection is completed. Interview data is transcribed word-for-word representing what is said by the speakers. A transcript is set out in a format that each speaker's words are represented accurately and demonstrated in lines that are marked by a number put in a parenthesis. The utterances represented in each line are indicated by pause (in-breath) (Chafe, 1994) between utterances. Additionally, time in minutes/seconds (and when relevant millisecond or frame) is used to mark the beginning of the tape and when there is turn-taking between the interviewer and the interviewees (Norris, 2011a).

In this thesis, detailed linguistic cues namely intonation, overlap, or pause are not analyzed. This is due to the fact that the data collected for this study is in Thai language which is recognized as a tonal language that operates differently from English especially in terms of form and function of intonation. Thai has its own intonation system consisting of six tones, in which shifts in tonal contour contribute to semantic differences. In addition, overlap and pauses are not marked, since the data is acquired from sociolinguistic interviews which differ from face-to-face conversation in general. Thus, an investigation of overlap and pauses was not relevant to the focus of my study.

The second step involves topic analysis (Tannen, 1984, p.37-43). At this stage, all topics (or themes) in the interview session are identified. An accountability regarding the processes of topic identification and the flow of topics in the interview is based on the actual contribution from the participants. As pointed out by Tannen (1984), a decision on which topics or themes to be identified is supported by her compelling argument that “There is evidence in the data in the form of recurrent patterns. I do not base interpretation on phenomena that appear once but rather on phenomena that recur. Therefore, they are demonstrably motivated, not random” (p. 37). Topics or themes that are persistently distributed across interview data are identified and then categorized into meaningful patterns.

One pattern that strongly emerged from my data was that of repetition. Some repetitions included elements discussed by Tannen such as repetitions of themes/topics, personal pronouns, certain aspects of stories, words or phrases. Tannen (1987) claims that, since repetition serves to provide information focus, emphasis or intensification on certain aspects of language use, it carries over into a sense of self, or a personal identity.

The final stage involves identifying discourse strategies (Tannen, 1987, 1984; Gumperz, 1982) used in talk. These linguistically-based devices include the use of:

1. The above mentioned repetition (e.g. repeating personal pronouns, certain aspects of a narrative, words or phrases). In my data, repetition is used frequently as I illustrate in the interview example (Appendix C.1) where one of my participants purports himself as a social contributor by continuously emphasizing the concept of giving to others through the utilization of '*give*'; and again in the interview example (Appendix C.2), where he repeats how fortunate he feels to have met the founder and to be a follower of the cult he belongs to. In the interview example (Appendix C.3), I illustrate the use of repetition by another participant who highlighted her responsibility as a mother for grooming her child's spirituality regardless of her children's resistance to this strategy.

2. Comparison (e.g. analogy or metaphor). In the interview example (Appendix C.4), one of my participants 'Duangpon', used a *life-after-death degree* to describe her religious belief in an ephemeral concept of salvation. If in the material world, we have a *worldly academic degree* to represent a social standing, in the spiritual world we have a *life-after-death degree* obtained through the cultivation of morality.

3. Counter arguments (e.g. an opposed view against other belief systems). Participants in my data used counter arguments. For example one of my participants who is a practitioner of a religious cult expressed his opposed view toward another religious cult (Appendix C.2). Here, he compares the teaching approach towards spirituality of the two cults. In this way, he argues in favor of the cult he belongs to.

4. Figurative language (i.e. the use of language to give reality to imaginary concepts). The Interview example (Appendix C.5) shows how ephemeral religious concepts of Gods and heaven (or nirvana) are given pictorial content. According to the participant's perception, the holy deities are believed to exist and to be real even though they have no physical forms; and to have superiority over human beings. The holy deities here are visualized in form of *living enlightened souls*, as they are capable of *descending* from the heavenly realm in order to communicate with humans through the possession of the holy medium. For this, the spatial relationship between the heavenly realm and the world is defined through the use of the word *descend*. This clearly portrays that there exists a physical space of the holy heaven which is somewhere up above in a higher realm than the human world, and implies superiority of the holy deities.

5. Connotation (e.g. giving connotes happiness). A participant, Nimit, for example, connotes *giving* as an approach to spiritual well-being. *Giving* means more than a detachment of oneself from material wealth but it is associated to Nimit's religious belief in meritism. For this, the concept of *giving* contains positive connotation, implying the principles of moderation which are closely connected to the practice of selflessness in Buddhist belief. *Giving* is encouraged for a religious purpose as leading to spiritual attainment as Nimit highlights throughout his interview (Appendix C.1).

6. Intimidation strategy (e.g. instilling fear). In the Interview example (Appendix C.5), one of my participants, Natakrit, believes that I-Kuan-Tao is the correct and the quickest spiritual path to attain salvation. His claim is based on his faith and belief that the holy deities are of real existence, building upon his experience of direct contact

with the holy spirits through the possession of the holy medium known as *the three oracles* during a dharma assembly when he began to study I-Kuan-Tao. Here, he instills fear into the non-members of the cult, claiming that they will never attain nirvana if they choose to believe in the present Buddha who was only a human being and has never *descended* to the world to teach sentient beings.

All of these linguistic features give insight into the identity produced by the speakers as they convey their self-perception as well as attitudes and opinions towards other people, objects or concepts in the interviews that I collected. Interactional sociolinguistics is thus important for the analysis of my interview data. I utilize the framework as a way to analyze discourse, but link this language use to an overarching framework as suggested in mediated discourse analysis (Scollon, 1998, 2001), the last framework that I crucially draw upon in this thesis.

3.8 Mediated discourse analysis: Some essential theoretical notions

Mediated discourse analysis is a “discursive theory for human action” (Scollon, 2001, p. 1). Proposed by Scollon (1997, 1998, 1999, 2001) in the late 1990s, mediated discourse theory is an interdisciplinary approach, as mentioned in connection with multimodal (inter)action analysis in the beginning of this chapter, that shares several theoretical aspects with Vygotskian psychological cultural-historical theory (Vygotsky, 1978), activity theory and its sociocultural analysis of mediated action and mediational means (Wertsch, 1985, 1991, 1994, 1998), and critical discourse analysis (Wodak, 1996; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999). Mediated discourse theory aims at explicating the inextricable links between social actions and Discourses (with a capital ‘D’ as defined by Gee, 1990, 2005) as, “the ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions and clothes” (p. 142). It is from this vantage point that multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004) was developed. Scollon (1998), besides developing the theoretical tools discussed above, such as mediated actions, mediations, and sites of engagement, developed three principles, which guided my thinking throughout my data collection and analysis. These principles are the principle of social action, the principle of communication and the principle of history.

3.8.1 The principle of social action

The first principle states that all actions are social. Here, Scollon (1998) proposes that the mediated action should be considered as the departure point of an analysis. This opposes research traditions in linguistic fields such as critical discourse

analysis, which begins at the macro-level by focusing on large-scale social discourses (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) or interactional sociolinguistics which begins at a micro-level by focusing on the study of discourse/language (Gumperz, 1982; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982; Tannen, 1984). Scollon proposes that discourse is seen as “a kind of social action as well as upon discourse as a component of social action” (2001, p.6). Jones and Norris (2005a) simplify this by suggesting the notion of ‘discourse in action’ where discourse is seen to circulate in the social action. Here, the role of a social actor who takes a certain action is highlighted as meaning does not reside in the discourse itself but rather is ascribed to the action by a social actor. Without a social actor carrying out a particular action through the use of mediational means/cultural tools (Wertsch, 1985, 1991, 1995, 1998; Scollon, 1997, 1998, 2001; Norris, 2004, 2011a; Jones & Norris, 2005b), meaning can never be created. I use the mediated action as my unit of analysis as discussed in earlier parts of this chapter, and the principle of social action informed my thinking from design to analysis.

Scollon (1998, 2001) continues by suggesting that the theoretical notion of practice is best understood as a mediated action with a history (Scollon, 2001; Jones & Norris, 2005c). As Scollon argues, the accumulation of a practice occurs spontaneously, unconsciously and tacitly (Scollon, 2001; Scollon, 2005; Geenen, 2013). This is due to the fact that ‘social action is based in habitus’ (Scollon, 2001, p. 7). Here, Scollon aligns himself with Bourdieu (1977) and uses the notion of *habitus* defined as a collective result of an individual’s past experiences and cultural dispositions that makes possible various social practices. Scollon also aligns himself with Nishida (1958), using the term *historical body*, which is comprised of the individual and the material world through a dialectic relationship. He uses these terms, habitus and historical body,

interchangeably when referring to an individual's aggregate experience. Habitus, as Scollon argues, shapes individuals' actions and contributes to a possible sequence of actions as individuals tend to naturally produce the meaning of the world in accordance with their internalized historical body. This notion of habitus or historical body is relevant to my thesis as the participants in my study developed their identity elements through actions taken and this accumulated historical body is visible in their everyday actions that I analyze in this thesis.

Scollon (1998, 2001) further proposes that all social actions are constitutive of identity. The negotiation of new identities among individuals is produced through reproduction, imputation, contestation or recontextualization of actions. As a mediated action is inherent with communicative power that contributes to constructing a new course of action, a mediated action may thus create identity claims. Identity, Scollon (2001) claims, comes about through differentiating oneself from others based on a process of negotiation (Scollon, 2001; Jones & Norris, 2005b; Norris, 2005). In my thesis, for example, all of my participants are vegetarians but have appropriated different vegetarian practices depending on their religious beliefs. Some of them are strict vegetarians who take vegetarian practice as a means of attaining religious salvation, while another participant associates vegetarianism with the principle of moderation and sustainability. Through appropriating different vegetarian practices, each of them thus claims a unique vegetarian identity.

3.8.2 The principle of communication

The second principle is the principle of communication, claiming that communication is socially, culturally, and historically mediated. Here, building on

Wertsch (1991, 1998), the notion of mediation is highlighted. Embedded in mediated actions and social practice is the history that will “shape the action in essential ways” (Wertsch, 1991, p. 12). As mediational means are always multiple in mediated action, there always exists an inter-relationship between the cultural tools employed by a social actor when performing an action. These tools are organized in various ways in which some tools are preferred by the social actor and others are less preferred. This kind of tool preference is communicative in that it tells something about a social actor and the action that is being performed. For example, in Figure 3.6 above, where the woman uses long spatulas to lift and mix the vegetables in the wok, the spatulas are telling of the woman as a business owner. These messages are communicated by the long spatulas with long handles (not only but also) and by the quantity of food that she cooks to serve many customers. Additionally, these spatulas cannot be used in isolation to perform the action of cooking. There are always other mediational means involved such as the food, a wok, kitchen space, or here, the front of her store, and a stove.

3.8.3 The principle of history

The third principle is the principle of history. The emphasis here is that all communications are complexly produced with considerable interdiscursivity and intertextuality of discourses. These discourses, not necessarily relevant and even sometimes contradictory, are overlapping and are always shaped by one another (Scollon, 1999, 2000, 2001). Scollon borrows the concept of dialogicality developed by Bakhtin (1986) in elucidating the relationship between the self and other, as Bakhtin says that the utterance being uttered is half someone else’s and is never free from the

influence of others. There is no such thing as neutral or finalized utterances (Wertsch, 1991). Much in the same way, our actions are complex and unfinalizable as they are continually produced in a response to prior actions and, in turn, project a possible course of action toward the future (Scollon, 2001; de Saint-Georges, 2005). The principal of history, just as the principal of communication and social action informed my theoretical focus throughout my research.

3.9 A paradigm shift from language-based approaches to a multimodal (inter)action analytical approach

While there are a number of approaches to identity production in social science that I could have used in my thesis, for example, systemic functional analysis (Halliday, 1961, 1994), conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), critical discourse analysis (Choulkiaraki & Fairclough, 1999), or social semiotics (Kress & Van Leeuwen (2001, 2006), I utilized multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) because my focus is the analysis of interaction in everyday life, and, multimodal (inter)action analysis is a methodology for analyzing human interaction.

Multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) is an integrative framework that grew out of mediated discourse theory introduced by Scollon (2001) and was built on the concept of mediation (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991, 1999) and the dramaturgical approach (Goffman, 1959). With an explicit focus on mediated action, it is a social-actor-focused paradigm where the process of meaning-making arises in interaction through the use of multiple modes. While other approaches concentrate on examining identity through a language lens alone, multimodal (inter)action analysis,

encompasses all aspects of communication. This allows me to examine identity production in a more holistic way, and maybe most importantly, allows me access to my participants' historical body.

Conversation analysis, on the contrary, would only allow me to analyze natural conversation. And even though multimodality has begun to gain currency among conversation analysts as suggested in the work of Goodwin (2000) and also Mondada, (2006, 2007), much of the research and emphasis in conversation analysis is the moment-to-moment turn-taking by participants and the sequential development of these turns. Language is regarded as the departure point of the study and video recording is used as supplementary data for analyzing spoken language and/or turn-taking. Whereas in my study, I illustrated that the participants at some time produced their identities through non-verbal modes alone. For example, one participant produced his vegetarian identity element through the higher-level action of preparing a bowl of vegetarian noodle soup (Nimit in chapter 5). This action is accomplished by non-verbal modes such as object handing, hand and arm movement and gaze, but without spoken language. I also showed that the action of cooking vegetarian noodle soup, and with it a vegetarian identity element, links to a psychological aspect of the participant: his religious belief embedded in his historical body. Conversation analysis does not allow me to investigate the historical body of participants.

I did not consider critical discourse analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Wodak, 2003, 2004, 2012) because of the difference in research focus. Critical discourse analysis is a methodology that allows for an analysis of political ideologies and societal power structure and their relationship with language. It claims that the ideologies regarding social injustices such as racism and sexism are justified or

supported in language use while my focus is interaction in everyday life and how identity is constructed through these interactions.

I also did not consider using systemic functional analysis (Halliday, 1961, 1985), systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (O'Halloran, 2008, 2011, 2012) or social semiotics (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006), all of which are based on Halliday's work. Systemic functional analysis provides a methodological framework for the analysis of language as a social semiotic system with the intention of elucidating the functionality of language. According to Halliday, language serves three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual. Here, meaning is seen as a choice that is shaped by the meaning-makers who use the language for their functional purpose (Geenen, Norris, Makboon, 2015/in press).

Extended from Halliday's systemic functional analysis, O'Halloran (2008, 2001, 2012) introduced systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis which is a methodology for examining function and meaning of language use alongside other multimodal semiotic resources. Meaning is seen as a multimodal system, rather than a process of meaning-making (Jewitt, 2012). Moving toward multimodality, the methodology focuses on the micro-textual analysis of inter-semiotic relations within the multimodal texts through "bottom-up orientation" (O'Halloran, 2012, p. 141) where the metafunctional meaning of language can be connected to a larger social context and to culture (O'Halloran, 2011), giving richer analysis of language use in sociocultural contexts.

Kress and Van Leeuwen developed social semiotics, grounded in Hallidayan functional grammar, but, subsequently, have moved the field into multimodality by

offering new insight into the process of meaning-making across a range of semiotic resources (or modes) used by social actors in a given communicative event. Using a flexible notion of grammar, social semiotic regards the social context of use, foregrounding the examination of how the social actors use the resources available to them and what motivates their choices. The priority of language as the sole meaning-making mode was displaced by focusing on the multiple semiotic resources in a meaning-making process. However, the meaning-making process in both systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis (O'Halloran, 2008, 2011, 20112) and social semiotics (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006) is primarily text-image-oriented. In contrast, multimodal interaction analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) is a social actor-focused approach, where language is considered as one communicative mode and a component of action (Scollon, 2001; Norris & Jones, 2005).

The concept of mode in systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis and social semiotics, with the underlying structures of all modes deriving from a Hallidayan functional grammar (Geenen, Norris & Makboon, 2015), is defined as a system of representation with rules and regularities in which each mode serves to represent meaning (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, 2006). A mode in multimodal (inter)action analysis, on the other hand, is a purely theoretical notion that is defined as a system of mediated action (Norris, 2013). Multimodal (inter)action analysis claims that meaning does not reside in the modes and the objects themselves. Rather, meaning resides between the social actor, the mediational means and the socio-cultural others.

In my study, I illustrated that one of my participants produced his sustainable farmer identity element through the object which is analyzed as a frozen action (chapter 5). This object is the pictures of the King of Thailand hanging on the wall in his

farm shelter. Drawing on different perspectives, the social semiotician may see these pictures as multimodally constructed and focus their examination on how meaning is represented by each mode within the photo, while a multimodal (inter)action analyst sees the previously performed actions by a social actor of hanging these pictures up, and consequentially views these actions as entailed in the pictures. By doing so, these pictures are viewed as the frozen actions and can be connected to multiple practices and the religious belief embedded in the participant's historical body.

Examining identity production through a multimodal lens gives a much more holistic view of a social actor in action and, additionally, sheds new light on the connection between religious belief and vegetarianism in Thai culture.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a variety of theoretical notions and methodological tools that have guided my systematic thinking as well as my data collection; and provided a foundation to my analysis.

I began by outlining multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a, 2013) and its related methodological concepts. In this multimodal approach, the mediated action is given analytical focus and theorized as three types: the higher-level action, the lower-level action and the frozen action. Each action, it is theorized, is made up of various communicative modes that are intricately interplayed. I further examine the mediated action in connection with mediational means, highlighting that a mediated action cannot be analyzed in isolation from a social actor acting with/through mediational means, making an action possible (Wertsch, 1991, 1998). Next, I outlined the notion of site of engagement which is crucial to my analysis.

For analyzing real-time, phenomenally-displayed interaction, I outlined the methodological concept of levels of attention/awareness in connection with modal density. I have articulated that a social actor constructs actions through differing degrees of modal density, indicating the hierarchical degrees of attention/awareness the social actor pays to a certain action. Given that social actors engage in several (inter)actions simultaneously, I delineated the hierarchical production of actions enacted at differentiated levels of attention/awareness illustrated through a particular tool, the 'modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness' (Norris, 2004, 2011a). Besides the analytical framework for the analysis of visual data, I have reviewed an analytic method for my interview data following a sociolinguistic

interactional tradition (Tannen, 1984). Here, transcribing interview data, topic analysis, topic flow, and identifying discursive strategies were addressed.

Next, I outlined the three principles of mediated discourse theory (Scollon, 1998, 2001): the principle of social action, the principle of communication and the principle of history. The three principles of mediated discourse analysis provide the fundamental theoretical concepts that I relied on in my research.

In the last section, I provided my justification for taking a multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a). Here, I compared multimodal analytical approach to other language-based approaches: i.e. conversation analysis, critical Discourse analysis, systemic functional analysis, systemic functional multimodal discourse analysis, and social semiotic. I explicated why multimodal interaction analytical approach allows me to investigate identity production in a more holistic way.

This chapter outlined the theoretical and methodological backbone of my study highlighting that identity is produced through actions and practices, described as actions with a history (Scollon, 2001). The concept of history in particular helped guide the investigation of interconnectedness between phenomenally-produced higher-level actions and with them resulting identity elements and a religious belief imbued in the historical body of a social actor.

In the next chapter, I review theoretical and empirical literature on personal, religious, and vegetarian identity.

Chapter 4

Theory and empirical studies:

Identity, religious belief, and vegetarianism/veganism

Much contemporary research in social science has investigated identity, examining it from different perspectives and through different lenses. In this chapter, I first outline theoretical notions of identity that became relevant to my research, namely work in social and socio-cultural psychology, and multimodality. I then add some linked empirical work, shedding light upon identity. After that, I introduce the belief system of the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult and the I-Kuan Tao cult, as the participants in my study belong to either of these cults. This introduction is followed by a discussion of empirical work conducted on religion and identity. Following this, I briefly outline the theoretical ideas regarding vegetarianism; and I again follow the theoretical notions by highlighting some empirical studies examining vegetarianism and identity. Throughout, this chapter focuses on identity production, even though at times, specifically in the sections discussing the Buddhist cults and vegetarianism, I momentarily venture into a broader discussion. I only do this in order to highlight the notion of identity production necessary for my subsequent analysis chapters, Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8.

4.1 Identity: Theory

Regardless of the different theoretical and methodological underpinnings in this section, one distinct commonality among them is that identity is a sociocultural process (Mead, 1934; Hymes, 1974; Schiffrin, 1997; Gee, 2005; Wodak, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2012; Lawler, 2014; Tannen, 1982; 1993; Wertsch, 1991; Scollon, 1997, 2001; Norris, 2002a, 2004; 2007; 2008; 2011a; Bucholtz & Hall, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, Freese & Burke, 1994). In this respect, the traditional view of seeing identity as static, fixed, or not amendable is strongly contested. In all of these areas of research, identity is claimed to not be an innate property located within a person, but rather as something coming about through social relations. Identity, consequently, is characterized as fluid and constantly imputed, contested or changed (Scollon, 1997; Norris, 2011a).

Identity is “the psychological and the sociological make-up of a social actor” as defined by Norris (2011a, p. 1). Identity is socially constructed (Mead, 1934; Scollon, 1997, 2001; Giddens, 1994; Wodak, 2003, 2012), and establishing one’s identity means “the social positioning of self and other” (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005, p. 258). In the following sections, I first review different approaches to identity production namely social and socio-cultural psychology, and sociological; and multimodality approaches.

4.1.1 Social, socio-cultural psychology, and sociological approaches to identity

From a standpoint of social psychology initiated by Mead (1934), identity is closely linked to the concept of self. The concept of self is seen to constitute the personality or characteristics of an individual. For Mead, self is understood as a conscious experience of mind of the individual that begins to develop in social interaction through symbolic behavior or language. Mead strongly argues that the self “...is not something that exists first and then enters into relationship with others, but it is, so to speak, an eddy in the social current and so still a part of the current” (p. 83).

Mead’s concept of self is theorized as consisting of two parts: the *I* and the *Me*. The *I* is an individual’s behavioral reaction or conduct in response to the social situation in the present moment and this *I* arises in response to *Me*, the internalized sets of highly organized social experience of an individual. In other words, the *I* can be said to be acting like a spokesperson of an individual, and the *I* is shaped by the *Me*; or, the *I* acts as an acting figure of *me*, while *Me* entails cognitive aspects of an individual taking its form as memory image. However, the *I* will become the *me* of the next moment. While the *I* and the *Me* are thought of as separate processes in terms of how they come into being, they are interrelated and indispensable since they together constitute the self.

This concept of self is relevant to my study as it can shed some light on personal identity production as Mead reveals a dialect relationship between identity and history of an individual. Also, Mead highlights that identity is constructed through a

negotiated process called 'generalized other', describing how an individual identifies oneself with others in social interaction.

Apart from Mead, a perspective of the formation of identity can also be found in Wertsch (1989, 1991, 1995, 1998). He takes a socio cultural approach and employs the genetic method introduced by Vygotsky (1978) for the exploration of identity formation. Wertsch emphasizes the principle of mediation, noting that identity arises out of social interaction mediated by cultural tools. In his view, language/narrative is a form of action and the most significant (psychological) cultural tool for the development of a person's identity. Wertsch (2011) argues that narrative as mediational means carries with it certain affordances and constraints. As displayed in my data (Interview example Appendix C.3), one of my participants, a mother of two children, refers to a troubled relationship between her and her son. She believes that the troubled relationship is explained by the law of negative karmic affinity that has begun in their past lives. She has realized this through a spiritual dream. Here, the participant produces herself as a spiritual person as her perception is rooted in religious faith. From this perspective, narrative accounts of her histories are where identity arises.

In sum, psychologists and socio-cultural psychologists highlight that the formation of identity is a psychological phenomenon arising out of socio-culturally situated contexts. In this regard, language is at the core of the analysis of identity production. However, there are some research gaps that I found in the social and socio-cultural psychology traditions. The first research gap involves the primary focus on language as central for the investigation of identity. I would argue that individuals' higher-mental functioning where an individual's identity is formed is not necessarily

only accessible through language but rather this psychological phenomenon can be perceived in multimodal action, including verbal and non-verbal. I particularly would like to highlight the role of non-verbal modes such as the clothes they wear, the food they eat, their bodily movement, or their facial expression, as discussed in multimodality (Norris, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2011a, 2013). While they have thus far received relatively marginal attention in social psychology, they can give insight into interactional meanings, allowing for greater insights into identity construction. For example, in Example 4.1, I show how one of my participants produces his action of giving a dharma lecture utilizing multiple modes.



Figure 4.1: Participant orchestrating multiple modes during dharma session.

The participant produces his action through spoken language in synchrony with other non-verbal modes: i.e. deictic gesture, intense look, and leaning posture, as he is

trying to instill fear of karmic consequences into his audience. Here, non-verbal modes are given primacy as they add a high level of emphasis to the action.

Similarly, in Example 4.2, the participant bows before the holy altar and next to the seniors seated on the left of him before the dharma assembly.



Figure 4.2: The participant bows before the altar.

The participant expresses his reverence to the holy deities by bowing with his head lowering three times before the holy altar in the I-Kuan-Tao temple. This deep bow implies his submission to the power of the holy deities. Then, he turns 45 degree to his left, showing respect to the seniors, repeating the same posture but this time only once. Here, bowing conveys revered respect toward the people who are in a higher position than he is. In addition, objects within the I-Kuan-Tao temple (the altar with fruit offerings, statues of the Maitreya Buddha and other gods, the religious scriptures in Chinese, and the pictures of the founders of the cult) convey the holiness of the ritual.

Although language has been recognized as the most informative communicative mode that most people rely on, language cannot convey all meanings or work well in all circumstances, and at times does not take on a superordinate role in interaction. Furthermore, I argue that people sometimes do not mean what they say or do not say what they really mean (Jones & Norris, 2005a); language may actually be used to distort the reality. Thus, when a person tells a narrative about themselves, we are most likely to hear the perception of the speaker about himself and others. Approaching identity by embracing other elements (e.g. non-linguistic elements such as gesture, objects, or layouts) in tandem with language, I would argue, can give a more integrated view of identity.

Another research gap relates to how social interaction is termed as goal-directed activities (Wertsch, 1981). Here it is claimed that human identity is intentionally-produced as it derives from a purposeful action towards a desirable goal. However, I would argue in line with Norris (2011a) that human action is not always goal-directed. Intentionality is questionable as often people act without being aware of why they do certain things in certain ways, for example, why we talk the way we talk by uttering words in varied pitch. These actions are produced naturally but not necessarily intentionally, and can be linked to the notion of historical body (Scollon, 2001). Focusing only on goal-directed activities alone could limit our knowledge of how identity is produced. Goffman, coming from a sociological perspective, argued in a similar way, integrating the personal front as communicative.

4.1.2 Sociological perspective to identity

Goffman (1959) used the metaphor of theatre to portray the social interactions that individuals engage in their everyday lives. Based on a dramaturgical approach, the individual is seen as a performer on the stage whose role is plotted in advance, attempting to foster impressions in the audience. Likewise, a process of personal identity production is typified as a performance.

Goffman compares the imputation of identity to the concept of a social front which he labels as "that part of the individual's performance which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance" (p.22). In a stage drama, the social front takes place in front stage where the actor performs. The social front is made up of two parts: the setting and the personal front. The setting refers to the physical layout of a performance including the scenery, props and location. It is seen as a fixed element of place and time, thus, a performer is required to act in accordance with the given setting. The personal front refers to a performer's presence which is a combination of the performer's appearance and manner. Appearance informs social status of the performer: e.g. gender, age, occupation and personal commitment, whereas manner refers to how the performer plays the role assigned. This expressive character of the performer is then assumed by the audience. Thus, the individual acting upon a selected social front is viewed as having negotiated their identity with others, trying to impress them with their preferred definition given to the role or identity.

Many scholars have taken up this theoretical notion of identity production, but some are more relevant to my study as they also take a multimodal approach.

4.2 Empirical studies building upon the above theories

Norris (2011a) conducted a multimodal analysis of the identity production of two women living in Germany. Norris found that identities were always produced with other social actor(s), object(s), or the built-in environment; and multiple identity elements were constructed simultaneously but at differentiated levels of attention/awareness. This was demonstrated through the methodological tool called 'modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness' whereby the degree of attention/awareness was delineated into three levels of foreground, mid-ground and background. With this study, Norris argued that an individual produces multiple identity elements simultaneously. Here, in this study, Norris built on the notions of identity developed by Wertsch (1991, 1998) and Goffman (1959) in particular. But she also built upon the ideas of Mead (1934). I build upon Norris' study in my own work, using her notions and insights in my analysis Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Norris (2008) utilized Mead's (1934) notion of identity, drawing on his concepts of *I* and *Me*, investigating the formation of personal identity of two co-owners of a web design business. Here, she argued that the *I* identity refers to the phenomenal identity elements that were produced through phenomenally-displayed higher-level actions, and that these were shaped by the *Me* identity elements that are located in the historical body and are available in the psychological consciousness of the performer. She illustrated that the participants carried with them the *Me* identity elements and that these had an impact upon the performance of new *I* identity elements as could be analyzed through the utilization of pitch contours or body rhythm in motion. Arguing that the construction of the *I* identity elements was shaped by the *Me* identity elements, Norris began her analysis with Tanya and Lucy co-producing a friend

identity. I build upon the ideas developed in Norris' study and develop it further in Chapter 8. But other studies are also relevant in my analysis of identity production.

Jones (2007), for example, studied the individual and community identity of homosexual men in China. Identity of gays, a marginalized social group, has undergone many changes throughout the country's history and continues to change, largely due to the influence of older social and political discourses and more recent dominant ones. Jones conducted participant observation by focusing on how gay men talk about their sexual identity and community affiliation with the dominant discourses, aiming to understand how the emerging forms of gay identity and gay community affect their awareness of the threat of HIV among gays and how they appropriated safe sexual behavior. While my participants are not really marginalized, they are part of select religious groups.

Leander (2002) also is of interest, as he investigated the multimodal identity construction in classroom interaction, with a focus on how the identity was defined and stabilized through the mediation of multiple identity artifacts including a banner displayed in the classroom, descriptions of the Black community, embodied spaces, and represented home geography. According to Leander, identities were determined by the creation of identity artifacts, the way in which these artifacts were configured in relation to each other, and how they acted within social spaces. Identity production through artifacts is something that I also found in my own data.

Kusmierczyk (2013) investigated the identity elements in face-to-face job interviews that facilitated the first impression given off by the candidates to the interviewers. As argued by her, identity production is rooted in the principle of

impression management and these impressions were communicated multimodally. The first impression could influence the interviewers' evaluations of the candidates' assumed performance or suitability for the job, and thus affect the interviewers' decision of hiring. Kusmierczyk focused on multimodal identity production of her candidates during the initial stage of their job interview in which they were asked about their motivation behind their desire for the positions. The candidates were seen to negotiate their 'believable identity' of being a professional through background presentations and self-promotion styles during the initial contact with the interviewers. Particularly in Chapters 5 and 7, the participants in my thesis produce a believable identity for audiences, making Kusmierczyk's analysis relevant to my own work.

Matelau (2014) investigated Maori identity elements of two Maori women living in New Zealand drawing on multimodal interaction analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a). While she illustrated the vertical production of Maori identity elements of the participants, she also discussed the hierarchical attention/awareness levels that participants in her study utilized in everyday (inter)action. She showed in her study that a multimodal (inter)actional approach provides an integrative framework to a fine-grained analysis of identity production, allowing us to gain more insights into personal identity which is thought of as fluid, complex, and contestable.

4.3 Religious belief: Theoretical background

For all of the participants in my study, and for the three participants analyzed in this thesis in particular, religious belief is of great importance. I propose that the identities produced by the three participants are ingrained in their religious belief. A religious belief is an integral part of each participant's historical body (Scollon, 1998, 2001) that governs the ways in which an individual makes sense of the world, shapes their actions and, thus, structures their identities. The internalized religious beliefs embedded in the historical body that I discuss in this section are the religious beliefs in the Santi-Asoke Buddhist and the I-Kuan-Tao cults.

4.3.1 The Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult

The Santi-Asoke is seen as a controversial Buddhist sectarian movement in Thailand due to its unorthodox teaching. The cult was founded by the master monk Bhodirak, who refused to comply with mainstream monastic rules and orders for monks designed by the Thai state Buddhist Ecclesiastical Council as he criticized them for moral corruption (Essen, 2005, 2011; Heikkilä-Horn, 1997, 2010; Mackenzie, 2007; Satha-Anand, 1990). The cult declared its independence in 1975, but has not been acknowledged for its legal status by the Ecclesiastical Council.

In its unorthodox teaching, the Santi-Asoke introduced the core principle of 'meritism' ('bunniyom' in Thai), i.e.: anti-materialism. Meritism (Satha-Anand, 1990; Heikkilä-Horn, 1997) is consistent with the philosophy of a sufficient economy (Sungkhamanee, 2013; Bunnag, 2013; Pruetipibultham, 2010) introduced by the King Bhumibol of Thailand in 1997 during the country's major economic bubble and

provides a guideline for the right livelihood that promotes core values of sustainability and simplicity. The cult has established a network of sustainable communities known as the model of a 'bunniyom society' (merit-based society), which is a utopian society organized around the principle of 'meritism'. This bunniyom society encourages its members to enthusiastically cultivate their spiritual wealth rather than accumulating material goods. This is accomplished through sustainable living intended for the sustenance and balance of the four major elements: people, society, economy and the environment. Currently, there are twenty-four Santi-Asoke merit-based communities located in different areas across the country (Satstrup, 1999), all of which are based on the teaching of Buddha's Middle Path (or a path of moderation).

Meritism provides an alternative for Thai society's problems of social inequality and degradation of the environment caused by the adoption of a Western culture of consumerism. The root of consumerism is viewed to be based on human's greed, self-interest, materialism, competition and exploitation of natural resources (Lamberton, 2005; Kitiarsa, 2005; Essen, 2005, 2011). In accordance with a Buddhist perspective, greed, self-interest, materialism, competition, and exploitation of natural resources are seen as the cause of suffering (*dukka*) (Ross et al., 2007; Vyner, 2002). Originating from the cult's own version of the interpretation of Buddha dharma, meritism is a Buddhist way of living in which "dharma is woven into the fabric of lives" (Sangsuriyajan, 2011, p. 78).

Because the Santi-Asoke communities were among the few communities that were able to sustain their activities during the crisis, they are seen as a 'sufficient economy in action' (Sangsuriyajan, 2011, p. 78). The three principles of a sufficient economy are: 1) Moderation; 2) Reasonableness; and 3) Self-immunity

(Chaisumritchoke, 2007; Essen, 2011; Sangsuriyajan, 2011). The first ethic, moderation, shares the interconnectedness with the concept of sufficiency as it suggests moderate consumption of resources. The second ethic, reasonableness, is the ability to think and act with discretion. This includes an understanding of the full consequence of one's action. The third ethic, self-immunity, is the ability to withstand distress and implies resilience and adjustability to change. The teaching of the Middle Path is translated into practices embedded in this bunniyom society as it is also described as an intentional community (Sangsuriyajan, 2011; Essen 2005, 2011; Heikkilä-Horn, 1997; Sattrup, 1999), where the community members share common values of sustainable living and a modest lifestyle that is believed to be a means of empowering people to be self-reliant and to better contribute to society. Santi-Asoke members aspire to follow the unorthodox teachings and practices of the cult including a denial of worshipping Buddha images (as the cult opposes attachment to materiality), a practice of meditation through working, and strictly observing the Buddhist five precepts (Sattrup, 1999; Sangsuriyajan, 2011; Essen 2011; Heikkilä-Horn, 1997). They especially pay attention to the first precept of refraining from killing which is connected to their practice of vegetarianism (see 4.4.1). These beliefs and practices are ingrained in the principle of meritism.

The Santi-Asoke believe that a person, if equipped with 'paññā' (wisdom/intelligence), possesses "the ability to understand everything in its own nature" (Puntasen, 2007, p. 182). Based on 'paññā', it is believed that true happiness can be attained through peace and tranquility, not material acquisition. This idea of a Buddhist-inspired socioeconomic model of a bunniyom society is seen to be grounded in the right effort and action as driven by 'paññā'. Spiritual advancement is thus

merged with socioeconomic sustainability to empower individuals to be more self-reliant. As this belief is closely linked to living in moderation, it is deeply rooted in the Buddhist principle of The Middle Path.

However, the Santi-Asoke nevertheless do not refuse the accumulation of physical wealth and material goods as long as they are gained through the right dharmic norm. Wealth and material goods are here perceived as a positive result of meritorious karma and they are the foundation of spiritual attainment if used for spiritual investment such as for religious offering, rather than for self-satisfaction, and for moderate consumption in order to maintain a sustainable lifestyle.

Similar to the practices of the mainstream Buddhist tradition, the Santi-Asoke's well-adopted practices, though criticized as unorthodox, are embedded in the Buddhist fundamental belief in the accumulation of merit (or 'puñña' in Thai) (Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2007, 2009; Ariyabuddhiphongs & Jaiwong, (2010); Alarid & Wang, 2001, Kowalski, 2008; Ghose, 2007; Kaufman, 2005). Committing meritorious acts yields good results while dishonorable acts contribute to bad results according to Buddhist belief in the law of karma. Here meritism, as a guide of the right livelihood, is a means of merit-making that is implemented by putting dharma into action or practice, as embedded in a lifestyle of the bunniyom society model. Living in a bunniyom society, Santi-Asoke laypersons are encouraged to cultivate the values of living a meritorious life as embedded in five characteristics of the cult's members (Mackenzie, 2007). They are 1) Sacrificing time, work and possession; 2) Working hard; 3) Striving for self-reliance; 4) Being constructive and creative; and 5) Not taking advantage of others (Heikkilä-Horn, 1997, p. 122). Santi-Asoke members, strictly complying with Buddha's teaching, display the honorable characteristics of "consuming

little”, “working hard”, and “giving the rest to the society” (Essen, 2011, p. 68). In this way, the Santi-Asoke show how Buddhist basic activities which include dana (generosity/giving), sila (observance of the Five basic precepts: to abstain from killing, stealing, committing adultery, lying, and consuming alcohol), and bhavana (meditation) are lived. These activities suggest meritism’s version of the right livelihood referring to living a noble life guided by ‘chanda’ in Tripitaka (Payutto, 1994). ‘Chanda’ is described as a positive desire, and to be specific “a desire for enlightenment” (Essen, 2011, p. 70). The right desire (chanda) comes from the right thought, right effort and right action.

Referring to the practice of ‘consuming little’, Santi-Asoke members hold a strong view against overconsumption. Thus, they eat only one or two meals per day. Here, a practice of ‘consuming little’ implies the ethic of moderation and interdependency. Moderation is closely linked to Buddha’s Middle Path (Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2009; Essen, 2005), which means living a life neither too extravagant nor too frugal. As greed is viewed as a cause of human suffering (dukka) according to Buddha, Santi-Asoke’s laypersons are encouraged to avoid a wasteful lifestyle and at the same time they are taught to be content with what they have. Their need for materials is limited to the Buddhist’s four basic material needs for subsistence: food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. Consumption in moderation also applies to ecological sustainability as it contributes to minimizing adverse effects on the environment.

A reduction in consumption promotes the idea of interdependency, which stems from the Buddhist law of dependent origination (Falkenstrom, 2003; Payutto, 1994; Alarid et al., 2001). Interdependency refers to the harmonious relationship

between individuals, society, and the environment. As humans are dependent on nature, consumption at moderation helps sustain the environment. It also enhances the community's well-being and in the long run, future generations.

The second practice of meritism's right livelihood refers to the practice of 'hard working'. Santi-Asoke is seen as a sustainable community organized around the concept of self-sufficiency (Sattrup, 1999) or self-reliance (Essen, 2011). The laypersons work hard to support themselves as they grow their own organic rice and crops and produce their own natural goods and products, reflecting their motto, "eat what you grow and grow what you eat" (Sangsuriyajan, 2011, p. 80). The laypersons aspire to develop an agricultural society characterized as a simple and modest lifestyle (Mackenzie, 2007). While the country's mainstream economic policy is designed for capitalist-based industrial development, the Santi-Asoke, on the contrary, emphasize that agriculture fits the way of life for Thai culture in association with the country's tropical climate and environment. An organic agriculture is encouraged as part of the sustainable practice, incorporating the idea of "Three Professions to Save the Nation" (Essen, 2011, p. 69). This includes natural agriculture, chemical-free fertilizer, and waste management. Organic farming is promoted for the benefits of the members' health and the environment. Furthermore, hard-working is perceived as a form of 'open-eye meditation' or 'bhavana' (Heikkilä-Horn, 1997). The laypersons are encouraged to practice meditation through increasing concentration on working. This allows for mindfulness of their thoughts, speech, and actions.

The last practice of 'giving the rest to society' implies the ethics of moderation and interdependency. Giving or sharing with others is the practice of selflessness or 'anatta' as ingrained in Buddhism (De Zoysa, 2011; Dhiman, 2011; Falkenstrom, 2003;

Payutta, 1994). It means that individuals detach themselves from material wealth and place others ahead of themselves. Santi-Asoke Buddhists do not encourage money offerings for religious purpose, but rather feel that the easiest way of practicing 'dana' is through social contribution. For example, running their own vegetarian restaurants, running goodwill, green supermarkets that sell quality food at low prices and provide training in organic agro-farming at no cost. Thus, the Santi-Asoke promote collaboration between its members.

4.3.2 The I-Kuan-Tao cult

I-Kuan-Tao (also known as Yiguan Dao) is a fast-growing sectarian movement that originated in Mainland China that has flourished rapidly in Taiwan and is rapidly expanding worldwide (Lu, 2008). The I-Kuan-Tao cult claims that it is the root of all religions, philosophies, and schools of thought (Makboon, 2012). Thus, Jesus, Mohamed, Buddha, Lao Tzu, and Confucius are believed to have received a mandate of heaven from the supreme deity the 'Venerable Eternal Mother' to conduct salvation work. Purporting itself to be superior to other belief systems, the cult claims that it offers the 'correct and quickest' spiritual path to final salvation called 'sudden enlightenment'. With the Grace of the Venerable Eternal Mother, I-Kuan-Tao cultivators are regarded as being privileged for two reasons. Firstly, they are given the knowledge of The Three Noble Treasures through their ritual of receiving Tao (or I-Kuan-Tao); and secondly, they are offered redemption from sin as the deities sacrifice themselves to take seven out of ten parts of the believers' negative karma upon themselves. This way, the cultivators can attain sudden enlightenment, a quicker spiritual path to salvation compared to other religions (Lim, 2011; Makboon, 2012).

The cult merges the teachings and beliefs of three different great religions into one belief system: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Lu, 2008; Goossaert & Palmer, 2011; Rubinstein et al., 1994). Based on its own interpretation, the cult follows a Confucian tradition that emphasizes the idea of heaven and gods, ancestral worship reflecting the value of family, and the practice of burning incense and kowtowing in Gods' worshipping rituals or 'bai bai' in Chinese (Littilejohn, 2010). I-Kuan-Tao believers practice the cultivation of Taoism, whereby one's internal alchemy is cultivated through mindfulness. The teaching and practice of I-Kuan-Tao is also ingrained in the Buddhist belief of karma and merit, as associated with the concept of the cycle of reincarnation and the observance of the five precepts where its laypersons are urged to avoid killing other living beings, stealing, committing sexual misconduct, lying, and drinking alcohol. The core teachings and rituals of I-Kuan-Tao include: 1) The belief in the Venerable Eternal Mother (laomu), 2) The belief in millenarianism and Maitreya as a future messiah, 3) The salvation through the cultivation of Tao (or I-Kuan-Tao), and The Five Relationships.

According to the belief in the Venerable Eternal Mother (laomu), several deities are worshiped following Chinese traditional culture, but the supreme deity is the Venerable Eternal Mother herself, who is believed to be the creator of the world, of all mankind, and of all beings (Lim, 2011). Although it is called 'Mother', it is only an imaginary concept, whereby neither gender nor physical image is defined (Lu, 2008; Ter Haar, 1992). The belief in the Venerable Eternal Mother is associated with Xiantaindao, a heterodox movement encompassing a group of religions of Chinese origin which holds the belief of apocalypse, regarded as the 'White Lotus Teachings' or bailianjiao in Chinese (Ter Haar, 1992; Bosco, 1994; Overmyer, 1981; Chu, 1967;

Flower, 1976). In this regard, I-Kuan-Tao can be referred to as a 'White Lotus' sect which is literally a sub-tradition of the Xiantaindao movement.

Rooted in the White Lotus tradition, the belief in Maitreya as a future messiah is conceptualized in connection with the concept of millenarianism. According to I-Kuan-Tao, human history is divided into three cosmic eras (kalpa): the Green Sun Period, the Red Sun Period, and the White Sun Period (Bosco, 1994; Lu, 2008). Under the heavenly decree, three Buddhas descended to the human world on a holy mission to save the lost souls of human beings and to return them to their primary nature. Dipankara Buddha was in charge of a salvation mission during the Green Sun Period whereas Gautama Buddha presided over the salvation mission during the Red Sun Period. The White Sun Period is the current cosmic era which began in 1932 and is governed by Maitreya Buddha, in which the apocalypse is imminent. With this regard, humans are warned about an appalling apocalypse appearing in forms of an increasing number of calamities, including moral degeneration in humans. Saving the remaining 9.2 billion souls from the apocalypse to attain the final salvation is the holy mission of Maitreya Buddha.

The salvation is a means to end the cycle of birth-suffering-death-rebirth (samsara). However, the cult reinterpreted the belief of salvation as the reunion of one's primary soul with the Venerable Eternal Mother (laomu) living in the Heavenly Realm (litian). I-Kuan-Tao believers imagine that the cosmos consists of the Heavenly World or the Pure Land (litian) where the Holy Mother lives, the Spiritual World (qitian) which houses Saints or higher forms of spirits, and the Material World (xiangtian) or the planet earth (Lu, 2008; Lim, 2011; Bosco, 1994), i.e.: tripartite. The reincarnation of the souls to either the Spiritual World or the Material World does not

put an end to the cycle of reincarnation, but rather this cycle only ends for souls that have returned to their true nature and are reunited with the Holy Mother. In sum, salvation requires a purification of one's soul through the cultivation of Tao. This involves the ritual of receiving Tao, the ritual of daily worship, the practice of vegetarianism (or veganism), and a commitment to missionary work.

By receiving Tao, the receivers receive knowledge of The Three Noble Treasures. The first Noble Treasure involves the ritual of opening the mystic portal (xuanguan qiao) believed to be located between the two eyebrows (Lu, 2008). It is a proper exit for the soul to depart after one's death in order to return to the Heavenly World. The mystic portal must be pointed and opened by the holy masters, otherwise one's soul may depart the body through the body's five other orifices after death which will result in reincarnation (Makboon, 2012). The second Noble Treasure refers to the divine five-word mantra (koujue) as sacred codes to gain access to the holy land. The final Noble Treasure is the holy symbolic hand seal (hetong) performed by clasping two hands together by putting the right hand under the left hand (illustrated in Figure 4.1). The gesture is a reminder of being a child of the Heavenly Mother. The Three Noble Treasures are regarded as the quickest enlightenment path compared to other spiritual paths but they are a heavenly secret that cannot be made known to outsiders.



Figure 4.3: A gesture of 'hetong' symbolizes a child of the Venerable Eternal Mother.

During the initiation ceremony of receiving Tao, the names of the receivers of Tao are written on The Heavenly Dragon Scroll, a white piece of special paper containing words from heaven written in Chinese. This paper is then burnt with holy fire from the tip of a candle in front of the altar. By doing this, the receiver is acknowledged to be a family member of I-Kuan-Tao with their name registered in heaven in The Book of Life. This means that their souls will be saved from reincarnating in the Underworld Realm which houses a myriad of evil spirits (Lu, 2008). Receiving Tao also benefits the spirits of the receiver's ancestors of the same blood line living in the underworld as the receiver can transfer this merit to the ancestors, thus, saving their souls from the cycle of reincarnation.

The members aspire to the cultivation of I-Kuan-Tao through daily worship rituals to the holy deities, as a means of expressing reverence to Gods. The ritual is performed communally rather than individually. A primary conductor of the ceremony,

standing on the right side of the altar, announces the names of gods and saints to be worshipped in hierarchical order; while the secondary conductor of the ceremony, standing on the left side of the altar, counts out the numbers of kowtow for the worshippers (Bosco, 1994). The ritual of worshipping, as deeply rooted in the Chinese tradition, begins by offering incense as a symbol of heartfelt reverence to the Venerable Eternal Mother and other saints. The numbers of incense sticks and the position for each incense stick put in the incense pot are defined (Lu, 2008; Chen, 2009). Before presenting incense to the incense pot sitting on the altar, a worshipper is required to lift a bundle of incense to eyebrow level in order to show respect to the holy deities and then, using the left hand, puts the incense in an incense pot.

The worship ritual involves performing a kowtow, which is kneeling with the forehead touching the ground. The practice of kowtowing was originally a core practice in ancestral worship but its significance has been redefined by the cult in that it is used as a spiritual tool for self-reflectivity, leading to the cultivation for new habits (Lu, 2008). By means of kowtow, mindfulness is brought to one's thoughts, feeling and bodily sensation, allowing for a deep contemplation of one's past actions (Lin, 2006). The virtue of humility is cultivated as a natural consequence as one assumes a detachment of one's ego. In this sense, one's wisdom is to be activated that can create potential changes, for example, a change or removal of bad habits such as anger, arrogance, or greed. Furthermore, the worship ritual is conceived of as a form of moving meditation. Keeping awareness with the flow of bodily movement aims to recognize the ever-changing nature of all happenings around us (Lin, 2006, Lu, 2008).

I-Kuan-Tao encourages its laypersons to commit themselves to missionary work (Lu, 2008), which is regarded as a means of making merit. This does not mean that the

cultivators have to give up their secular affairs but rather that they are encouraged to keep the balance between holy affairs and worldly matter. However, they should put more focus on the religious life as they grow older or when they are not obligated to conduct their worldly business. The main purpose of pursuing missionary work is enlightening the minds of people so that they can achieve moral perfection. Pursuing missionary work usually involves leading people to receive Tao by recruiting neophytes, promoting veganism, attending/organizing dharma assemblies, giving dharma lectures, establishing Buddha halls in people's homes, and paying a visit to dharma relatives' houses. It is a means of merit making as it is held among cultivators that 'saving others is just saving selves' (Lu, 2008, p. 85).

Another aspect of I-Kuan-Tao is explained as 'The Five Basic Relationships' rooted in Confucianism (Chang, 2013; Angle, Slote & Chen, 2013). The principle stresses that everyone has been assigned social roles and duties to fulfill based on five types of relationships: 1) ruler and subject; 2) father and son; 3) elder brother and younger sister; 4) husband and wife; and 5) friend and friend (Littlejohn, 2010). These relationships, except for the last, deal with the concept of power relation as negotiated between, for example, man and woman, or the older and the younger. The superiors who have authority over the inferiors must give love and compassion to their inferiors, whereas the inferiors must treat their superiors with respect and obey in return.

4.3.3 Empirical studies on religion and identity

The study of religious belief and identity production has also resulted in a great amount of literature and identity is most often examined based upon language (interviews, narratives, or language use as examined in ethnographic studies) and in

affiliation with social categories such as role, gender, ethnicity, and race. Here, I review some of this literature.

Some studies on religious identity have focused on the verbal negotiation of identities such as Zackariasson (2014), who investigated how 21 Swedish teens involved in a Christian youth organization negotiated their religious identity with people outside of the religious environment (e.g. friends at school). Zackariasson employed ethnographic methods, focused group interviews and individual interviews. The findings showed that Swedish mainstream youth culture is more oriented towards secular life and the youths involved in a religious community are negatively perceived as too well-behaved, boring and even strange. While the religious identity was constructed in association with the Christian youth organization the influence of religious faith was visible through their defining themselves as young Christians. The participants devised various strategies, negotiating their religious identities with other youths at school. For example, they chose either to avoid mentioning their involvement with the church, or take a stand regardless of negative reaction from others, or redefine the existing categories.

Other studies have focused on minority's religious identity and psychological well-being. For example, Hopkins (2011) examined the religious faith-group identity among Muslim activists regarded as a minority in the UK. His purpose was to investigate how this group-based religious identity contributes to facilitating civic integration or social capital. The analysis drew on two perspectives: a social psychology approach namely self-categorization theory which examined how the participants verbally identified themselves with their social groups; and anthropological and sociological perspectives that highlighted that the socially-constituted identity cannot

be separated from the social context contingent upon the political, social and economic aspects. Hopkins found that Muslims are regarded as a minority group and are ascribed with a negative image as instantiated through, for instance, the concept of Islamophobia. This contributed to the experience of psychological depression and a development of a sense of powerlessness, which implied their need for social space that encouraged confident development of a positive sense of self and, resultantly, a development of social capital.

Yet other research has examined religious identity as national ideology. Sen & Wagner (2009) explored how ethnic identity of Indians in the Post-Gandhi era was established in connection to the religious Hindu fundamentalism called 'Hindutva'. Hindutva is regarded as a militant and politically inspired fundamentalism, proposing a Hindutva framework where religion was re-defined as a political ideology with no association with faith. The Hindutva movement aims to exert tremendous influence on the Indians' mindset as opposed to Gandhi's politics of non-violence. The analysis was based on in-depth interviews of 20 respondents of different religious backgrounds: i.e. Hindus and Muslims. The participants were shown visual material functioning as stimuli for a story-telling process. They found that religion as an ideological mindset has fomented the entire structure of a nationalist identity of Indians. This nationalist identity has a shared singular trait regardless of the differences in ethnicity between Hindus and Muslims.

Studies such as these are only marginally relevant to my thesis. However, through these I would like to illustrate the gap that exists around religious identities. This gap is three fold. First, the above studies only take into consideration the mode of language as their source of data, analysing only verbal interviews and representations.

Second, individuals who portray a religious identity through talk are frequently positioning themselves as a marginalized group. Third, the interconnectedness between religious identity and other identities is not addressed. However, there are also studies that are more relevant to my thesis even though they do not necessarily fill these three gaps either.

For example, the study conducted by Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman (2010) developed the idea of religion that fosters the production of a positive self. The study addressed an inextricable link between personal identity and a religious belief in ways that religion can promote individuals' well-being (i.e. religion-health link) and at the same time can be a basis for intergroup conflict (e.g. religious fundamentalism). Religion is regarded as an influential social network that provides a high level of support to its members and helps preserve positive self-esteem. They found the dual function: 1. As a social identity and a belief system, religiosity provides a guideline for moral conducts that govern a person's behavior and worldview; and 2. Rooted in high moral ground, a religious group can subsequently foster a sense of personal significance exceeding that of others belonging to different social groups. While this study addressed an inextricable link between personal identity and religious beliefs in ways that religion can promote individuals' well-being, I show in chapter 8 that the inextricable link between personal identity and religious beliefs can go much further than only establishing well-being or become a basis of conflict. However, as I show in chapter 6, I also found that a participant believes that religion is positive in every aspect of life; and in chapter 5, I illustrate that the high-ground of religion is real even in very similar religions as one of my participants compares his belief system with another.

Again, other studies focus on languages used in a religious context and in everyday life. These studies are highly relevant to my thesis as I found that the language in some of the religious contexts of my participants also differed from everyday language use. As an example, in chapter 6 I illustrate how one of my participants chanted in Chinese, a language she does not speak. Jaspal & Coyle (2010), for example, conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve second generation British- born South Asians (ages 18-24), who were Muslim, Sikh, or Hindu, with the purpose of exploring the influences of language in the construction of their religious identities. The study revealed that English was used in association with their British identity construction, their heritage language with their ethnic identity, and their liturgical language with their religious identity. In many cases, the participants considered the liturgical language as something holy in accordance with its connection to God, thus, as fundamental to the construction of their religious identities. Jaspal & Coyle found that the greater the importance a participant placed on their religious identity, the more likely they would view their heritage language as a lesser digression from the liturgical language. In addition to the sanctification of the liturgical language, many of the participants perceived that the liturgical language binds the religious community consisting of members with different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds together. However, most participants felt that the lack of linguistic competence in the liturgical language can cause feelings of decreased self-esteem and isolation, leading to the detachment from the religious group.

Chew (2014) conducted ethnographic fieldwork at three weekend Islamic classes (or madrasah) in Singapore where the religious curriculum designed for each of these classes was taught in Arabic, Malay, and English respectively. Chew explored

how religious identity is facilitated by the choice of liturgical languages as the most salient factor. The findings revealed that although English is an official language of Singapore, the religious class instructed in Arabic was intended to preserve all sacred Islamic traditions as it is taught in Arabic by the Arabic teachers with stern personality in Muslim's sacred mosque. The use of Arabic as a liturgical language informs a traditional religious identity. In contrast, a religious class conducted in Malay, taught by female teachers was held in a block house and was perceived as more relaxed. A more cultural-religious identity is constructed as associating with Malay ethnicity. For the religious class taught in English, the classroom atmosphere was viewed as more modernized as it incorporated more interactive learning techniques, colorful magazine format teaching materials providing a variety of learning activities, and the teachers and students dressing more stylishly. This reflects a civil religious identity.

Haque (2012) was concerned with how a multilingual repertoire and religious beliefs inform the identities of Indian second generation immigrants in Norway. The study focused on a 15 year old boy identified as RAF who moved from India to Norway at the age of 5. It was shown that the different languages and contexts in which they are used create an identity plurality. Urdu helps to serve his ethnic identity as his first language at his parents' insistence that they continue to speak Urdu at home. He also speaks Norwegian and English to communicate in the host culture. Norwegian and English were viewed as communication tools for daily life. Another language he spoke was Qur'anic Arabic, associated with his Islamic religious practices. The Qur'anic Arabic informs a strong sense of a religious identity although the informant felt that his lack of sufficient knowledge in Qur'anic Arabic has led him to feel identity stress.

While the above studies certainly relate to my thesis in that they discuss the role of religiosity on identity production, there is one study that is even more relevant. In this study, Hogg, Adelman & Blagg (2010) argue that religious identity can be labelled as an all-embracing master identity rooted in unyielding faith. Even though they are looking at feelings of uncertainty in relation to religious identity, I also found that identities for my participants could be viewed as an all-embracing-master identity rooted in unyielding faith. However, I go further in my work, particularly in chapter 8 where I propose a methodological tool to analyze this phenomenon.

Hogg, Adelman & Blagg (2010) examined identity production in relation to uncertainty-identity theory. They pointed out that religiosity was a group phenomenon deeply grounded in shared beliefs, attitudes, and values that exerted enduringly powerful influence on all aspects of a human's life (both secular and spiritual aspects). Religious identity can be labelled as an all-embracing master identity rooted in unyielding faith. Religion plays an important role in reducing human's feeling of uncertainty stemming from an experience of stress or anxiety or an exhilarating challenge that creates a sense of satisfaction; and thus leading individuals to feel powerless and uncertain about their future. The process of group identification is a very effective mechanism that helps alleviate self-uncertainty in individuals. The influence of the social group can structure a person's perception of who they are, how they should behave and what they can expect from others.

After reviewing these articles, I would argue that language, the one mode that is investigated in all of the literature, is important, but is unable to provide all aspects of personal identity. Based on the tenet that identity arises in social interaction, the individuals make claims about themselves through the social process of self-

identification with the social groups they belong to. This is based on the principle of otherness (Scollon, 2001) in which one's identity is realized and negotiated through differentiating oneself from others. A reflection of reality rendered in narratives is essentially grounded in one's perception towards oneself, others, and the happenings. Normally, the perception of self can be thought of as a form of an impression management as argued by Goffman (1959). So, this self-portrayal enacted through language alone can represent the reality about a person, however, not a whole. For this, I argue that we need to investigate identity through a multimodal lens which allows me to examine the construction of identity in action in a more holistic way, by integrating multiple sorts of data. I now turn to discuss the studies investigating vegetarian identity. The same is also true for these studies in which language is central to the analysis.

4.4 Vegetarianism: Theoretical background

Vegetarians are regarded as a social group with shared beliefs and practices that is oriented towards the championing of abstinence of meat consumption (Vegan Society, 2010; Hamilton, 1993; Ball et al., 1998; Spencer, 2000; Maurer, 2002; Meaning of vegetarianism, 2004; Deckers, 2009; Ruby, 2012; Evers, 2001). In general, vegetarianism refers to four types of dietary practice. There are semi-vegetarians or flexitarians who predominantly eat a plant-based diet but also eat meat occasionally; lacto-ovo-vegetarians who exclude animal flesh of any kind, but consume dairy and egg products; lacto-vegetarians who consume milk and dairy products but not eggs; and vegans who exclude all foods of animal origin (Ho-Pham et al., 2009, 2012; Rosen, 2011; Yasmin & Mavuso, 2009). The adoption of vegetarian practice varies in each vegetarian individual and, resultantly, can contribute to the construction of their identities.

One of my participants is a member of the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult; and two are members of the I-Kuan-Tao cult; and all are vegetarians. With their religious belief comes their belief in some form of vegetarianism. Because knowledge of the two cults and the cults' forms of vegetarianism is necessary to fully understand the participants' identity production, I review the vegetarian practices as outlined by the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult and the I-Kuan-Tao cult, next.

4.4.1 The Santi-Asoke and vegetarianism

The Santi-Asoke adhere to strict vegetarianism in order to observe the first precept (Essen, 2005, 2011; Heikkilä-Horn, 1997). The first precept of abstinence from

killing (the first sila) is based on the cult's own interpretation. A violation of the first precept as interpreted by the mainstream Theravada Buddhist tradition considers five factors: there is a living being, knowledge that the being is a living being, the intention of killing, the killing is executed, and the being dies (McLennan, 2000). The Santi-Asoke, on the contrary, hold that any direct action or supporting action to killing is wrong as it is driven by human's evil desire that causes suffering to other living beings. Therefore, this precept is violated, no matter if one commits the act of killing or if someone else kills on one's behalf.

Vegetarianism represents the interconnectedness between compassion, moderation, and sustainability. Freeing lives of animals is a form of cultivating 'dana' (giving /generosity) as it implies compassion. It also connects to the principles of moderation and sustainability corresponding to the first component of the Santi-Asoke's motto, 'to consume little'. Here, food should be consumed only for the purpose of maintaining one's body not to nourish one's desire rooted in self-interest or greed (Sattrup, 1999; Kaewthep, 2007; Essen, 2011; Freeman, 2010). In regard to sustainability, it is believed that animal farming produces adverse effects to the ecosystem that supports all forms of life. Given that the growing number of farm animals raised is driven by the demand for food, depletion and contamination of exhaustible environmental resources is thought to arise as a consequence (Saxena, 2011; Steinfeld, 2006). Therefore, the Santi-Asoke promote organic farming as it sustains the environment.

With organic farming practices, the Santi-Asoke promote living an organic life style (Sattrup, 1999; Kaewthep, 2007). The cult's members eat vegetables and fruits that are grown naturally and seasonally within their sustainable communities. They

also wear clothes that are made of natural fabric and are dyed with natural colors. The practice of organic farming aims to benefit its members' health and the environment which echoes the principle of meritism.

4.4.2 The I-Kuan Tao cult and vegetarianism

The cultivation of I-Kuan-Tao can be achieved by becoming a vegetarian (Lu, 2008; Lim, 2011, Goossaert & Palmer, 2011), and particularly a vegan, which is described as a strict vegetarian who refuses all products from animal origin. In accordance with the exertion of the influence of Chinese Buddhism, another additional restriction on the vegan diet is imposed: an exclusion of five strong smelling and pungent herbs namely garlic, Chinese onion, chives, shallot, and leek. These herbs are believed to stimulate sexual desire (Kembel, 2003; Vegetarian fare offered with a Buddhist twist, 2007), and thus are seen as one of the polluting elements of a human's mind and a hindrance to salvation (Harvey, 2000). Here, a vegan practice is developed in association with the belief in karma of killing entailed in the Buddha's teaching of the five precepts (Kowalski, 2008; Brazier, 2003; Flanagan, 2005). With this regard, taking lives of animals including eating their meat is immoral because it accumulates bad karma. For a higher spiritual development, I-Kuan-Tao cultivators are urged to formally become vegans by engaging in the ritual of taking a vegan vow known as 'Ching-Ko'. Veganism is a means of mitigating one's past karma and not creating new karmic bondage with any living beings. A vegan practice should be adopted only for spiritual reasons as it should be seen as a means of showing compassion towards all living beings; instead of following this practice for other reasons such as health reasons which is seen as rooted in self-interest instead of truly feeling sympathy for animals.

The cult places considerable emphasis on veganism whereby salvation can be attained through abstinence from meat (Lu, 2008). Because eating meat involves killing, it contributes to an impurity of one's soul and, thus, deters one's soul from returning to its primordial state. One way of persuading others to adopt a vegan practice is by instilling in them a fear of apocalypse rooted in the belief of the White Lotus sect (Lim, 2011). Here, the believers are persuaded to adopt a vegan practice because it is believed to help them escape from natural disaster, i.e.: the apocalypse.

In the following section, I review some literature on identity production in affiliation with vegetarianism as this is important for the analysis of my participants.

4.4.3 Empirical studies on vegetarianism and identity

As mentioned above, studies on vegetarianism and identity production are largely determined by language, viewed as social behaviors or a social practice. According to this, vegetarianism is understood as both practice and identity. Analyzing data collected from interviewing the respondents although claimed to be telling of their identity, it is only based on what the participants wish others to see in them and this might be far from who they actually are. It is reasonable to believe that people not only produce identity through language but they also produce identity in their everyday practices and interactions. They also give off their impression through non-verbal elements. These are, for example, the vegetarian food that they eat or the restaurants they go to. Embracing these elements when analyzing identity production, including language, allows for a better understanding of how personal identity is constructed holistically, as I show in my analysis chapters. Yet, the studies are nevertheless important to my thesis.

Some important work found that negotiation strategies that help the vegans live in a non-vegan world. For example, Greenerbaum (2012) explored how sixteen self-defined ethical vegans accommodated different strategies in order to negotiate their identity as authentically ethical vegans living in the non-vegan world. A vegan diet implied the ethical values such as compassion to animals, rather than being a functional food. The authenticity of their ethical vegan identity or 'pure veganism' was constructed by differentiating themselves from those vegans who became vegans for health reasons (e.g. for weight loss reasons). However, pure veganism was an impossible achievement in this non-vegan world due to a lack of alternatives in real circumstances. Thus, they determined to be pure vegans based on the pursuit of authenticity regardless of their actual achievement. If they were put in an impossible position and had to do something against the principle of veganism, they chose to neutralize the contradictions in their behaviors and ethics of being a vegan. For example, they wear leather shoes after a foot surgery; or consume some food that may contain honey (as in food or medicine) or fat derived from animals, or use animal-tested products. These products were labelled as the acceptable gray areas.

Similar to Greenerbaum (2012), Sneijder and Molder (2009) focused on negotiation strategy but this time on how vegans managed and created alternative identities in order to downplay and refute the negatively perceived identity of vegans as being deviants from a mainstream society. The negative inference of a vegan lifestyle was built on the perception of vegan practice as a complicated lifestyle particularly with regard to limited food choice, complicated food preparation, and the negative effects on health associated with nutrient and vitamin deficiencies. These vegans attempted to normalize their vegan identity by employing a variety of

discursive devices in order to redefine a vegan practice as 'being ordinary' and that maintaining a vegan diet was simple and even mundane, requiring no more effort than that of an individual of any other type of diet. In regard to health issues and nutrient deficiency, the participants normalized that routine supplements could simply be taken if needed. A variety of normalizing devices found in their responses included constructed immediacy, reference to mundane products, passive constructions, and minimizations.

Jabs et al. (2000) also examined negotiation strategies. They found that the vegetarian identity construction of participants correlated with personal food choices and dietary behaviors. Different labels of vegetarians described the strict vegan seen as the purest form of vegetarianism; lacto-ovo vegetarian; modified vegetarian; and Ornish follower. Vegetarian respondents whose eating behavior deviated from the normative vegetarian behavior (as inevitably eating non-vegetarian food in social function or due to cravings) strived to manage and maintain their vegetarian identity by employing impression management strategies of discounting and accounting. The strategy of discounting was employed when they chose to conform to non-vegetarian food behavior in order not to disrupt a social situation or threatening their internal self-definition as vegetarians. The strategies of accounts can be divided into justifications and excuses and was used when encountering unexpected situations. A justification was used when they admitted doing an act but believed that the act was not bad as it minimized social tension while an excuse was a socially acceptable way for an actor to acknowledge that the act was bad, but gave reasons why they did the act.

While these studies brought about important findings, I did not find any negotiation strategies employed by my participants similar to the ones found. My participants are embedded in vegetarian communities where vegetarianism is the norm. While the participants in the above studies were always situated as a marginalized group, my participants were in no way marginalized. Therefore, my thesis fills a gap in this vegetarianism identity research by also looking at what happens when vegetarianism is the mainstream in the community and one does not need to justify one's choices in that sense.

Little work has been conducted on philosophical reasoning for vegans where animal cruelty plays a particular role. For example, Fox and Ward (2008) conducted an online ethnographic study with 33 health vegetarians in VegForum. They found that the health reason was a major motivation for participants' adoption of vegetarian lifestyle. However, health and ethical reasons frequently overlapped. Once the health vegetarian practice was adopted, it was extended beyond the concerns over the materiality of physiology or biochemistry in that it linked to ideological and philosophical commitments. For example, they connected to notions of environmental concerns, animal cruelty, and industrialization. Here, the participants constructed their vegetarian identity due to their desire for a healthier lifestyle, for example, minimizing a risk of getting chronic diseases and other health problems. The health vegetarians were criticized by the ethical vegetarians as selfish.

Allen et al. (2000) also found philosophical reasoning in their study of vegan identity where individuals' identity was correlated with meat consumption choices, based on symbolic meaning ascribed to meat. Meat was symbolized in terms of domination. From the perspective of gender studies, red meat was associated with

masculinity and power, while non-meat diets were associated with femininity and lack of strength; and also a hierarchical domination in human-to-animal relationship. Two studies conducted with two groups, each consisting of a group of vegetarians and a group of omnivores, believing that their eating habits informed basic personality differences between vegetarians and omnivores. Results from both studies showed a distinction between omnivores and vegetarians. In general, the more a person was able to identify as a vegetarian, the more likely they were to reject authoritarianism and domination as part of their beliefs and identity, and, thus, meat symbolism was negatively evaluated. Additionally, vegetarians were more likely to value emotional states, intellectualism, and love. Conversely, omnivores were likelier to embrace self-control, logic, and equity.

The work in these studies relates to my thesis as my participants also have taken a philosophical view against animal cruelty. However, in my work this philosophical view stems from a religious point of view rather than an animal ethical point of view as purported by Fox and Ward (2008) and Allen et al. (2000). My participants are vegetarians because of their religious beliefs. Therefore, this thesis adds to the above literature extending the philosophical impact on vegetarianism.

My participants discussed their self-perception of being vegetarians in their interviews. Self-perception of vegetarianism was also studied by Lindquist (2013). She used a grounded theory approach and Goffman's deviance framework, looking at self-perception in her study of veganism. She found that in the United States the history of vegetarianism has its roots in the counter-culture movements of the 1960s with an association with hippies and radicals. Whereas America was seen as a meat-consumption society, vegetarians or vegans were viewed as deviant as they were

dedicated to healthy living and animal welfare. The participants often found ways to balance their social lives and eating as they tried to appear normal in the company of non-vegetarians, making others more at ease. This resulted in a conflict between their internal identity and social identity. The internal identity arose from self-perception of the vegetarians themselves as a way of living a healthy and ethical lifestyle while for the social identity they were judged by others and perceived as stigmatized individuals. Many vegetarians and vegans seek out virtual and physical communities where both identities can be positively supported.

Besides discussing self-perception of being vegetarian in interviews, my participants were very strongly influenced by the authority of scriptures. Similarly, Cherry (1999) found that punk vegans were highly influenced by the authority of the Vegan Society. The identity construction of punk and non-punk vegans in America is explored regarding their commitment to veganism and the influence of the social networks and culture they are embedded in. Keeping in line with the concept of Mead's '*I-Me*', she found that both groups of vegans were viewed as subcultures and defined their practice of veganism in a politicized way as they championed animal rights and environmental issues. However, the *Me* of the punk vegans was constructed in response to the organized set of shared attitudes within the punk community, rigidly following the standard definition of veganism termed by the most authoritative voices for vegan communities, the Vegan Society. They thus described themselves as strict vegans and militant vegans whose ideology is the attainment of enlightenment. In contrast, the non-punk vegans present veganism in individual terms creating subjective definitions of veganism. As they did not belong to any social group, the construction of their *Me* was affiliated with distant figures such as religious leaders or was based on

inspirations from books. Cherry used Mead to illustrate that punk vegans construct their identity based on the Vegan Society as authority.

While the studies outlined above were related to identity and specifically vegetarianism conducted in different cultures, I was unable to locate any studies regarding vegetarianism and identity production in Thai culture. Instead, I discovered that studies related to vegetarianism in Thailand were all conducted in science and mostly with an explicit focus on nutrition (Suwannuruks et al., 1990; Vudhivai, 1991; Supawan, et al., 1992; Tungtrongchitr et al., 1993; Prescott, 1993; Pongpaewa, 1994; Vinitketkumnuen, 1997; Wiwanitkit, Soogarun, & Suwamsaksri, 2004; Ruengsomwong et al., 2014), or related to medical research (Soogarun, Suwamsaksri & Wiwanitkit, 2003; Wiwanitkit, 2007a, 2007b). None of these studies are directly relevant to my thesis, as my focus is on how vegetarianism is integrated into identity and an individual's everyday life from a social science perspective.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed literature about identity production, primarily focusing on theoretical notions of identity outlined by social and socio-cultural psychology and multimodality. I particularly highlight Mead's (1934) concept of *I* and *Me*; Wertsch's (1991, 1998) dialect relationship of mediation and the higher-mental function; and Goffman's (1959) theatrical metaphor of identity as impression management. These concepts provide a foundation to the multimodal approach, which I use as my methodological framework. Following this, I have reviewed some work in multimodality, and particularly the ideas and insights of identity in (inter)action (Norris's, 2004, 2011a), on which I built my study.

Next, I extended my discussion of literature to an interrelationship between religiosity and identity where I introduced the belief system of the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult and the I-Kuan Tao cult, as the participants in my study belong to either of these cults. In addition, I have drawn connections to some empirical work conducted on religion and identity, largely focused on how it has been verbally articulated by respondents in various studies. This work highlighted the influence of religion on identity production, and of most importance to my own work allowed me to draw out the idea that religious identity can be perceived as an all-embracing master identity rooted in religious faith.

Following this, I briefly outlined the theoretical ideas regarding vegetarianism, and I discussed the propagated form of vegetarianism outlined by the Santi-Asoke and the I-Kuan-Tao cult. I then reviewed some empirical studies examining vegetarianism and identity based on the analysis of language. These studies suggested that different

kinds of discursive strategies are used in constructing a vegetarian identity such as negotiation strategy, philosophical reasoning, and expressions of self-perception. Some studies also found that religious belief shapes individuals' identity. These works in particular provide a basis for my study.

Throughout this chapter I have focused on identity production in connection with different approaches and notions that are relevant to my study. While these are connected to my own work, I also addressed some research gaps based on the review of these studies. I attempt to bridge these gaps in my analysis chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. In the next chapter, I begin with an examination of Nimit's identity element production

Chapter 5

Nimit's identity production

In this chapter, I analyze three sites of engagement to elucidate Nimit's primary multimodal and multiple identity production during my fieldwork. I particularly analyze video data and also incorporate sociolinguistic interviews, field notes, audio recordings of naturally occurring conversation, and photographs. The combination of different data sources provides a clearer picture of how Nimit's identity elements are constructed and allows for systematic triangulation.

Taking a mediated discourse and multimodal (interaction) analytical perspective, I utilize the mediated action as my unit of analysis. Here, I am particularly interested in the higher-level actions that Nimit produces in everyday life. In line with this theory, identity is communicated through actions taken; and all actions -- and with them all identity elements -- have a history,

By using multimodal (inter)action analysis as my primary framework, I tease apart simultaneously produced higher-level actions and the resulting identity elements through particular tools, especially through the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Norris, 2004, 2011a). I am particularly interested in the most salient identity elements that Nimit produced during my fieldwork. For this, I present the analyses of three sites of engagements, each of which is made up of intersecting practices and cultural tools. As Scollon (1998, 2001) theorizes a site of

engagement makes particular actions possible; and as Norris (2002c, 2011a) illustrates, these actions are more or less focused upon by the social actor performing them. Following Scollon (2001), I argue that each action is identity-telling. I begin my analysis by examining Nimit as he is holding a workshop. I then analyze Nimit while delivering his bean sprouts to the Santi-Asoke store; and after that, I analyze how Nimit makes vegetarian noodle soup for himself.

5.1 Site of engagement: Conducting a workshop

In this section, I analyze the site of engagement of conducting a workshop on organic bean sprouts farming. This workshop takes place at Nimit's farm called 'Ngok- Ngam' Agricultural Learning Center for Sustainable Farming, and this site of engagement is made up of religious practice intersecting with the practice of farming. Both of these more general practices, are made up of a multitude of smaller practices such as the practice of meritism, the practice of sustainable farming and the practice of organic farming. All of these intersecting practices connect to particular mediational means; and mediational means and intersecting practices make particular concrete higher-level actions more or less focused for Nimit during the moment transcribed in Figure 5.1. These higher-level actions are:

1. The higher-level action of conducting a workshop on organic bean sprout farming.
2. The higher-level frozen action of sustainable farming embedded in the mode of layout.
3. The higher-level frozen action of dressing embedded in Nimit's uniform of the Santi-Asoke religious cult.

Through these higher-level actions, Nimit simultaneously produces the following three identity elements:

1. An expert in organic farming identity element.
2. A sustainable farmer identity element.
3. A Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element.

As Nimit engages in the higher-level actions, paying different attention to each of them, he accordingly produces the resulting phenomenally perceivable identity elements at different levels of attention/awareness.

In Figure 5.1, I present Nimit explaining how to farm organic root-cutting bean sprouts. He lectures to various individuals and groups, including some of Nimit's returning students who see Nimit as their role model and earn their living as organic bean sprout farmers like their teacher. The workshop begins with a lecture session.



Figure 5.1: Nimit focuses on his expert in organic farming identity element.

Nimit wears a naturally-dyed blue cotton shirt, standing before a group of people attending the session. He holds a microphone in his left hand, while he moves

his right hand downwards. His primary focus is on encouraging his audiences to pursue their career path as organic bean sprout farmers. As illustrated in Images 2-4, a stream of gestures and postural shifts are co-produced with Nimit's utterance, 'คุณมาได้ตำราผมไป' (today you have come to gain the knowledge that I have), as he performs a deictic gesture in combination with beat gestures, pointing with his right index finger at his audiences, moving it up and down five times in quick succession. A few seconds later, he lowers his right arm, with spread fingers, moving it to the right and backward before vigorously swinging this arm upwards and over his head (as indicated by the arrow in Image 3). Nimit also coordinates this gesture with his posture, slightly leaning forward, giving emphasis to his utterance.

Next, Nimit focuses on how he gained his knowledge as he says that 'ผมลองถูกลองผิดกว่าจะได้' (I have learned a lot from my mistakes). He produces a deictic gesture and a beat gesture, pointing at the materials prepared for the demonstration in front of him, while simultaneously moving his right hand up and down six times, holding his posture slightly bent forward. In Image 6, we see Nimit referring to a person in his audience who is a former student who learned about Nimit's root-cutting technique from the Internet. Nimit's utterance 'น้องคนนี้เปิดอินเทอร์เน็ตดู' (while this guy got his information from the Internet) co-occurs with a deictic gesture pointing at his former student with his right index finger. Then, Nimit moves his right hand toward himself, almost like pointing six times to himself but with a loosely-held fist while uttering that 'มันข้อมูลจากผม' (this knowledge comes directly from me) (Image 7). As can be viewed in Images 8 and 9, Nimit encourages his audience to begin with what they are learning from him today, which is apparent in his utterance 'คุณได้ข้อมูลไปหมด' (today you will gain all the knowledge

that I have) that is co-produced with hand/arm movements as he quickly moves his right arm with his fingers spreading forward. Finally, he says ‘แล้วจะไปทำอะไร ลงมือทำลงมือปฏิบัติ’ (why give up so easily, you just need to get started) produced in conjunction with a beat gesture, where he moves his right fist nine times up and down. For the whole interaction, Nimit’s facial expression and his tone of voice are very assertive (see Video 2).

Through his higher-level action of conducting a workshop, an expert in organic farming identity element is foregrounded; a sustainable farmer identity element is produced in the mid-ground; and a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element is produced in the background of Nimit’s attention/awareness. While these identity elements all work together in real life, they can be teased apart through the use of the methodological tool of ‘modal density’ and placed accordingly onto the foreground-background continuum.

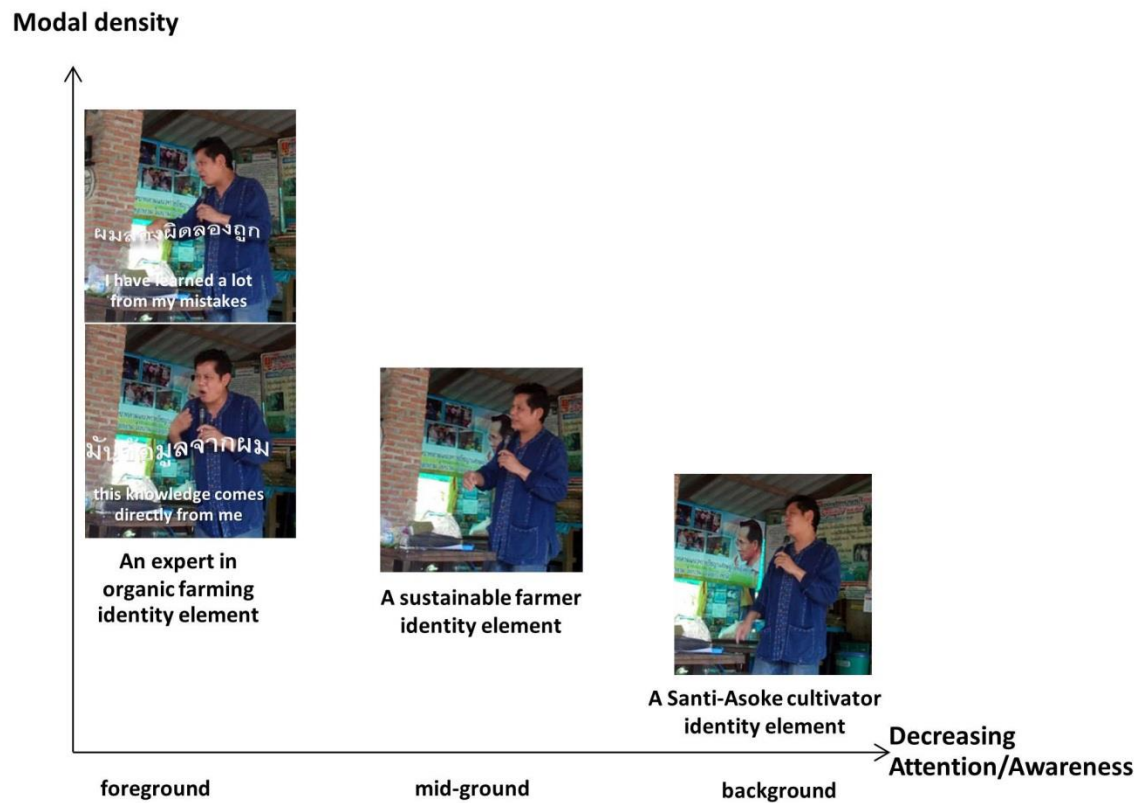


Figure 5.2: Nimit's identity element produced at the site of engagement of conducting a workshop as shown in Figure 5.1.

During the higher-level action of conducting a workshop, Nimit foregrounds his attention on telling the audience that he has developed knowledge of a root-cutting technique for growing organic bean sprouts through practice-based learning. In this higher-level action, an expert in organic farming identity element is constructed through the employment of high modal density achieved through the intensity of the mode of spoken language, which is complexly intertwined with the modes of gesture, posture, gaze, facial expression, proxemics, layout, and objects (materials prepared for demonstration).

Nimit demonstrates his expertise by emphasizing that he successfully developed the root-cutting technique through a great number of mistakes by claiming

‘มันข้อมูลจากผม’ (the knowledge comes directly from me) (Image 7). This utterance is produced in synchrony with a stream of gestures plus posture, facial expression and gaze. Image 5 shows Nimit pointing at the materials prepared for a demonstration, he performs a deictic gesture that is co-produced with beat gestures while speaking and pointing at himself (Image 7), conveying the importance of himself as the developer and the patentee of the root-cutting growing technique for organic bean sprouts. Besides spoken language and gesture, Nimit incorporates the mode of posture, leaning forward, gesturing and uttering together with an intense facial expression and direct gaze conveying the high intensity of his emotional involvement. Furthermore, this expert identity element is mediated by objects related to the demonstration of growing organic bean sprouts: mung bean seed, a round cut wire net, a gunny bag, and a black plastic bag.

In Images 2-4, Nimit communicates that the audience is fortunate to meet a *real expert* in organic bean sprout farming, and to directly gain knowledge from *him*. Their success, Nimit claims, lies within their reach, without having to struggle and only having to follow in the expert’s footsteps. Here, the expert in organic farming identity element is mediated primarily through spoken language produced in conjunction with a series of gestures, gaze and posture. Nimit, leaning his upper body forward, begins by performing a deictic gesture, referring to the audience, emphasizing the word ‘คุณ’ (you), positioning himself as the expert, giving knowledge to *them*. The deictic gesture is followed by an iconic gesture, vigorously swinging his arm over his head, illustrating the action of giving ‘all’ of his knowledge to the audience as he says ‘คุณมาได้ตำราผมไป’ (today you have come to learn the knowledge that I have).

In Image 11 he encourages the audience to start farming bean sprouts right away, by saying ‘ลงมือทำลงมือปฏิบัติ’ (you just need to get started). He utters these words with an intense tone of voice and simultaneously produces a beat gesture, vigorously moving his right fist up and down nine times (indicated by the red arrow in Image 11). Here, he displays his determination to motivate the audience. The modes of intense gaze and facial expression are also co-produced, conveying his confidence plus indicating high emotional involvement in the interaction. Finally, the mode of layout is of importance, as the workshop takes place at Nimit’s agricultural learning centre for sustainable farming. An expert identity element is thus foregrounded through Nimit’s employment of high modal density in producing the higher-level action of giving a workshop on organic root-cutting bean sprout growing.

While foregrounding his expert in organic farming identity element, he simultaneously produces a sustainable farmer identity element in the mid-ground of his attention/awareness. This sustainable farmer identity element is a career-linked identity element, produced through the employment of medium modal density of the modes of layout and objects (Figure 5.3 and 5.4). Although during this interaction of conducting a workshop on organic bean sprout farming, Nimit is focused on telling his audience how his knowledge of farming organic root-cutting bean sprouts was acquired, he is undoubtedly fully aware of himself as a sustainable farmer as this practice intersects at this site of engagement. An expert in organic farming identity element and a sustainable farmer identity element are closely linked as Nimit’s expertise in growing organic bean sprouts is embedded in the practice of farming. Therefore, the mode of layout plays a major role. The workshop takes place at Nimit’s farm where he works daily. For example, here he harvests mature bean sprouts,

waters sprouts, prepares a new crop or packages products for distribution (Figure 5.4). The farm is decorated with pictures of the King Bhumibol of Thailand who proposed the philosophy of a sufficiency economy which is consistent with the 'meritism' economy practiced by the Santi-Asoke. Also, mediational means such as organic bean sprouts, tools and equipment used for cultivating bean sprouts, are of importance in producing a sustainable farmer identity element. These mediational means are experienced by the audience attending the workshop. The mode of layout and the many objects within thus heavily inform Nimit's identity as a sustainable farmer.



Figure 5.3: Nimit harvests mature bean sprouts.



Figure 5.4: The layout of Nimit's agricultural learning center for sustainable farming with pictures of the King Bhumibol of Thailand. Nimit and his worker are packaging bean sprouts.

While the expert in organic farming identity element is produced in the foreground and the sustainable farmer identity element is produced in the mid-ground, Nimit also produces a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element in the background of his attention/awareness. A Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element is recognizable by his utilization of low modal density achieved through the intensity of the mode of clothing. Nimit purposefully wears a naturally-dyed blue shirt for this occasion (he normally wears clothing made from synthetic fabric). According to the Santi-Asoke tradition, the cultivators are encouraged to dress in a simple uniform, a dark blue peasant shirt and pants or long wrap skirt (for female cultivators) usually made of natural fabrics such as cotton or linen, conveying moderation and

sustainability, promoted as the core values of the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult. Thus, here Nimit's blue shirt mediates his Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element.

In this example, the foregrounded higher-level action and with it the foregrounded expert in organic farming identity element are produced through the use of the mode of spoken language intertwined with other modes. The mid-grounded and backgrounded higher-level actions and with them the sustainable farmer and the Santi-Asoke cultivator identity elements are primarily produced through non-verbal modes such as the mode of layout and the mediational means within, and the shirt that he is wearing. (A similar example is given in Appendix B.2, transcribed from Video 3).

Nimit associates his expertise with how he came to discover his knowledge of the root-cutting technique for growing organic bean sprouts. In his interview (Interview transcript 5.1), Nimit explicitly stresses his significance as an expert in organic farming through the use of his personal pronoun 'I'.

Interview transcript 5.1: Expertise through practice-based learning

- | | |
|-------|--|
| (623) | <p>วันนี้คนเชิญผมไปพูด</p> <p>today people invite I to speak</p> <p><i>today I was invited to be a guest speaker</i></p> |
| (624) | <p>ผมมีเรื่องพูดเต็มนะ</p> <p>I have story to speak very many</p> <p><i>I have got a lot of knowledge to share</i></p> |
| (625) | <p>เพราะผมเรียนด้วยตัวผมเอง</p> |

- because I experiment by myself
everything is coming from my direct experience
- (626) เรียนรู้ด้วยตัวเอง
 study by myself
it is learning by doing
- (627) ไม่ต้องมาอ่านหนังสือ
 no need come to read books
no need for schooling
- (628) แต่เรียนรู้ด้วยการปฏิบัติจริง
 but learn by practice really
it is a practice-based learning
-
*(the conversation moves to different topic from
 line
 210- 216)*
- (210) นิดเดียว
 simple
the core idea is simple
- (211) แต่กว่าจะคิดได้
 but before long will think it
but it took me so long to figure out
- (212) ไม่ใช่่ง่าย
 not easy
it is not that easy
- (213) ผมลองมาयेอะ

- (214) I tried very much
I have tried many things
 ลองผิดลองถูกมาเยอะ
- (215) learn wrong learn right many
learning from many mistakes
 พอดีผมทำ
- (216) because i tried
I kept trying
 ผมจึงได้เป็นคนแรกไง
- I so to be one first
so I was the first one (who came up with this innovation: researcher)

Nimit uses the personal pronoun 'I', six times to describe specific deeds related to his expertise in organic farming. He says (from the direct translation) 'people invite I to speak' (line 623); 'I have story to speak' (line 624); 'I experiment by myself' (line 625); 'I tried very much' (line 213); 'because I tried' (line 215); and, finally, 'I so to be one first' (line 216). The frequent use of 'I' reveals Nimit's explicit focused attention on himself. Here, the significance of himself as an expert in organic farming is emphasized as he describes himself as the pioneer of the root-cutting innovation for farming organic bean sprouts, based on his accumulative experience and knowledge, having gone through many mistakes.

A sustainable farmer identity element, as mid-grounded in Nimit's attention illustrated in the multimodal transcript (Figure 5.1) is also produced during the

line 294-302)

(294)

มนุษย์โลกเนี่ย

the world

the world

(295)

มันก็จะดับไปเรื่อย

going to deteriorate constantly

is heading toward physical and moral decay

(296)

มันก็จะหมดไปเรื่อย

deteriorate constantly

constantly

(297)

คนมันก็เสื่อม

human morality is decaying

human morality is decaying

(298)

จนธรรมชาติมันก็จะลงโทษให้พวกที่เสื่อม

nature will punish people have immorality

people who indulge immorality will be punished

by nature

(299)

คนที่อยู่ได้คือ

ones that can survive

ones who can survive

(300)

มันน้อยสั่นโศษ

have little desire

contend with what they have

(301)

พออยู่พอกิน

sufficient live sufficient eat

sufficient to live and to eat

(302)

ปลูกผักกิน

grow vegetables eat

growing vegetable for food

The mainstream economic ideal which is dominated by a capitalist ideology is contested by the philosophy of a sufficiency economy of the King. For him, the most praiseworthy way of living is to be an organic farmer, as Nimit points out twice (lines 577 and 302). While he positions himself as a sustainable farmer, promoting the concept of self-reliance (line 576) and simplicity (lines 300 and 301), he classifies others who apply different methods of farming, as non-sustainable. These non-sustainable farmers are blinded by ignorance (lines 578). Nimit also instils fear, claiming that others, who are not complying with the sustainable practice, will be punished by nature (line 298) and will have difficulty in life (line 580).

During the interview, Nimit also produces himself as a Santi-Asoke cultivator when he talks about their uniform. The uniform they wear (a dark blue peasant shirt and pants or long wrap skirt) symbolizes the values of moderation and sustainability and heavily informs a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element. Nimit uses the personal pronoun 'I' to emphasize that he is a Santi-Asoke cultivator.

Interview transcript 5.3: Identifying himself as a Santi-Asoke cultivator

- (179) ผมก็เปลี่ยนตัวเองนะ
I have changed myself
I have changed my lifestyle
- (180) จากการกินนะ
start from the eating way
starting with adopting vegetarian diet
- (181) ผมมาเรื่องการแต่งตัว
I come to dressing style
I have changed my dressing style
- (182) ผมมาสะพายย่าม
I come to use cloth bag
I wear a shoulder bag made of cloth,
- (183) ใส่เสื้อผ้าฮ่อม
wear 'mo-hom' shirt
wearing naturally plant-dye shirts
- (184) ใส่กางเกงขาก๊วย
wear loose pants
wearing loose pants
- (185) นี่ทำให้ผมเปลี่ยนอีก
this make me changed again
I have changed
- (186) ผมมาถึงจุดนี้

I come arrive point that

I have come to realize

(187)

เอ๊ะ เรายังสายเดียวกับใครกัน

well, I am the same santi-asoke follower

well, identifying myself as the 'santi-asoke' follower.

The sense of being a cultivator of the Santi-Asoke cult is manifested in the way Nimit describes himself. The pronoun 'I' is repeated six times in his utterances in order to describe his belief related to the Santi-Asoke's practice of dressing. About particular mediational means, he says 'ผมมาเรื่องการแต่งตัว' (I have changed my dressing style) (line 181); 'ผมมาสะพายย่าม' (I wear a shoulder bag made of cloth), 'ใส่เสื้อผ้าธรรมชาติ' (wearing naturally plant-dye shirts), 'ใส่กางเกงขาก๊วย' (wearing loose pants) (lines 182, 183, 184). Throughout, Nimit conveys his convergence, resulting in a sense of being and identity constructed, enacted and thus mediated through these mediational means before summing up his Santi-Asoke identity element (line 187).

The three identity elements analyzed here, 1. An expert in organic farming identity element; 2. A sustainable farmer identity element; and 3. A Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element are highly salient in Nimit's life and all of these were intertwined with each other and/or with other identity elements throughout my research. The next site of engagement, in which Nimit delivers bean sprouts, illustrates an example where two of the identity elements discussed above are combined with other identity elements.

5.2 Site of engagement: delivering bean sprouts

Every week, Nimit, accompanied by his wife, delivers his bean sprouts to the Santi-Asoke self-operated green supermarket located in the Santi-Asoke community in Bangkok.

In this site of engagement, again several practices and connected mediational means intersect. These are a business practice; a practice of farming; and a religious practice, and as outlined above, these practices are made up of smaller practices. Through these various intersecting practices and the connected cultural tools, Nimit produces particular higher-level actions simultaneously. This time, these higher-level actions are:

1. The higher-level action of placing packaged organic root-cutting bean sprouts in the refrigerator.
2. The higher-level frozen action of taking part in the Santi-Asoke store, embedded in the mode of layout.
3. The higher-level frozen action of farming, embedded in objects.
4. The higher-level action of shopping in the Santi-Asoke store with his wife.

Through these higher-level actions, Nimit simultaneously produces the following four identity elements:

1. A successful business owner identity element.
2. A sustainable farmer identity element.
3. A Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element.
4. A husband identity element.

Nimit again produces these identity elements on different levels of attention/awareness depending on how much attention he pays to perform each of the higher-level actions within the site of engagement.

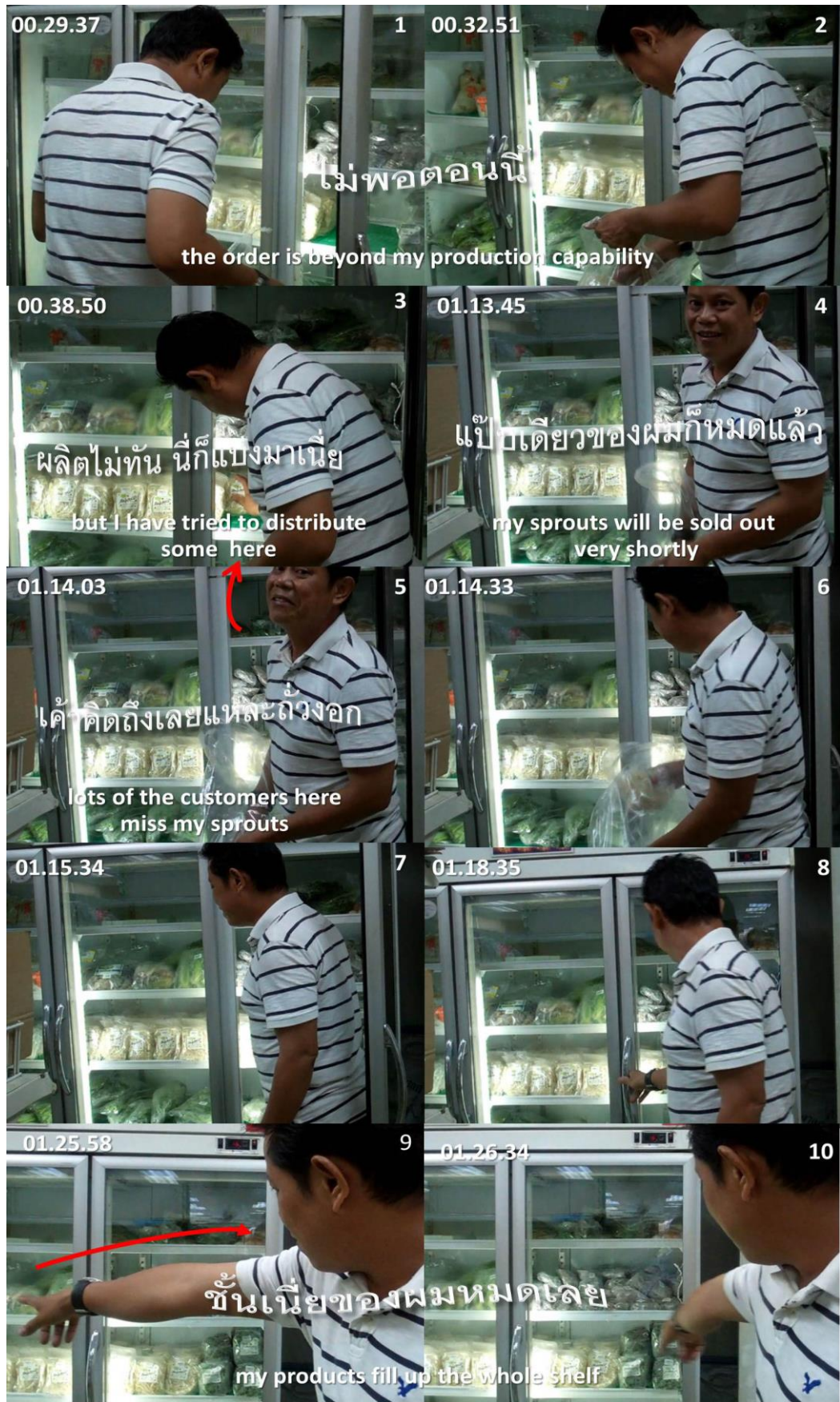


Figure 5.5: Nimit focuses on his successful business owner identity element.

As illustrated in Figure 5.5, while placing the product in the refrigerator inside the Santi-Asoke green supermarket, Nimit primarily utilizes the mode of object handling when opening the refrigerator, when taking his products out of the bag and placing them tidily on the shelf in the refrigerator. The mode of object handling is produced jointly with the mode of spoken language as he says “ไม่พอตอนนี้ ผลิตไม่ทัน นี่ก็แบ่งมาเนี่ย” (the order is beyond my production capability, but I have tried to distribute some here) (Images 1-6), speaking with the researcher¹⁰. In between 01.13.45-01.14.03 (Images 4-5), Nimit shifts his gaze from his products placed into the refrigerator to the researcher saying that ‘แป๊บเดียวของผมนะก็หมดแล้ว’ (my sprouts will be sold out very shortly), and then saying ‘เค้าคิดถึงเลยแหละจ้ะ’ (lots of customers here miss my sprouts) while moving his face up and raising his eyebrows (see Video 4).

In Images 6-10, Nimit faces the refrigerator, arranging his product. He then communicates with the researcher without turning his face, pointing his right index finger to the products which have already been placed into the refrigerator, moving his pointing finger from left to right saying ‘ชั้นนี้ของผมนะหมดเลย’ (my products fill up the whole shelf).

Within the site of engagement of delivering bean sprouts to the Santi-Asoke’s self-operated green supermarket, multiple identity elements are produced through several higher-level actions constructed at differentiated attention levels. In Figure 5.5, Nimit’s attention is focused on talking to the researcher about how his bean sprouts

¹⁰ Here, and throughout my fieldwork, Nimit (and the other participants) always also produced a participant identity element with me, the researcher. However, in my study I am interested in those identity elements that he (they) also produce/s when no researcher is present. I assured this to be the case by only analysing those sites of engagements and those actions that he (they) take/s on a regular basis.

have become a high-demand product among customers. By doing so, a successful business owner identity element is produced, while a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element and a sustainable farmer identity element are enacted in the mid-ground of Nimit's attention/awareness as I demonstrate in the following modal density foreground-background continuum (Figure 5.6).

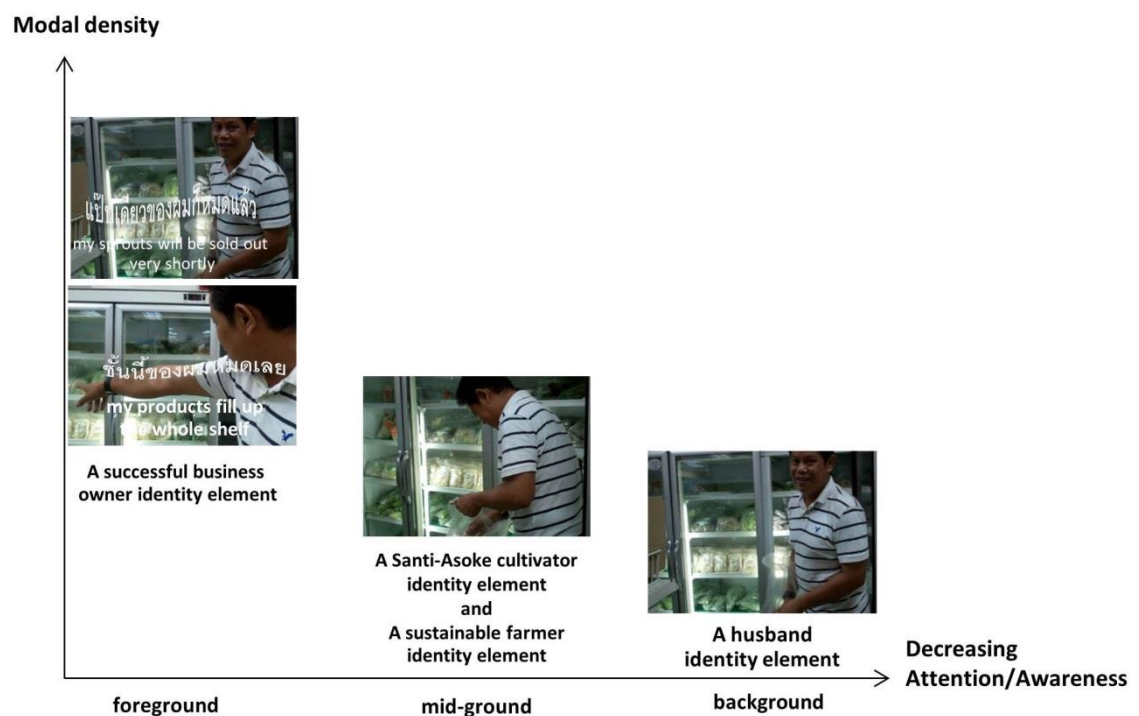


Figure 5.6: Nimit's identity elements produced at the site of engagement of delivering bean sprouts illustrated in Figure 5.5.

Through the utilization of high modal density, achieved through the intensity of the mode of spoken language, gesture and object handling, a successful business owner identity element is primarily produced as Nimit foregrounds his attention on telling the researcher about the high demand for his bean sprouts that outnumbers his limited production capability while placing his bean sprouts onto the refrigerator shelf.

As he is communicating with the researcher, his intended message is focused on the popularity of his product.

Through the higher-level action of placing his packaged organic bean sprouts into the refrigerator in the Santi-Asoke's self-operated vegetarian and health-oriented supermarket, a successful business owner identity element is primarily mediated by his utterance as he says that 'แป๊บเดียวของผมนะหมดแล้ว' (my sprouts will be sold out shortly) and 'ไม่พอตอนนี้ผลิตไม่ทัน นี่ก็แบ่งมาเนี่ย' (the order is beyond my production capability, but I have tried to distribute some here). The spoken language is co-produced with the mode of object handling as he is placing his products onto the shelf in the refrigerator (Images 1-5). Nimit conveys that his sprouts are of good quality and in high-demand as they are usually sold out quickly. The management of distribution needs to be well-organized since his production capability is limited, and his bean sprouts are not only distributed to the Santi-Asoke supermarket, but also to a few supermarkets in Bangkok targeting upper middle class customers who are health-oriented and have high purchasing power. In Images 9-10, Nimit performs a deictic gesture, pointing at his product occupying the whole shelf in the refrigerator, moving from the left to the right while saying that 'ชั้นนี้ของผมนะหมดเลย' (my products fill up the whole shelf). The deictic gesture is used to indicate the 'space' that he is provided by the store's management team to place his products. One whole shelf of the refrigerator is filled up with only his products, conveying the popularity of his bean sprouts.

Along with a successful business owner identity element produced in the foreground of Nimit's attention/awareness, a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element and a sustainable farmer identity element are simultaneously constructed in the mid-

ground of his attention/awareness since he regularly delivers sprouts to the Santi-Asoke community in Bangkok. Here, a sustainable farmer and a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element are constructed through medium modal density achieved through the intensity of the mode of object handling (with Nimit holding packaged organic bean sprouts that are delivered) and layout (the Santi-Asoke green supermarket) (Figure 5.7 below). Based on the meritism policy, the supermarket targets the members of its own Santi-Asoke communities and public at large. All the products sold here are produced, grown and manufactured within the Santi-Asoke community or by the cult's followers; all are organic; and sold at the lowest cost possible.

Nimit also produces a husband identity element with his wife in the background of his attention as he is accompanied by her to the store. While Nimit comes here to deliver his bean sprouts and place them in the refrigerator in the fresh food section, his wife is in another section shopping for organic plant-based products (e.g. herbal shampoos, soaps, detergent, food seasoning, and dried food) to sell in their store (Figure 5.7). Here (Figure 5.5), Nimit's husband identity element is produced through low modal density achieved through the mode of proxemics as Nimit is aware of his wife's presence.



Figure 5.7: Nimit and his wife buy organic plant-based products at the Santi-Asoke supermarket in Bangkok to sell in their own vegetarian food store.

As illustrated in the multimodal transcripts 5.5, multiple identity elements are constructed through several phenomenally displayed higher-level actions, constructed within this site of engagement. Nimit produces a successful business owner identity element in the foreground of his attention; a sustainable farmer identity element and a Santi-Asoke identity element in the mid-ground; and a husband identity element in the background.

As in the previous example (section 5.1), Nimit produces the foregrounded higher-level action and his successful business owner identity element through the primacy of the mode of spoken language intertwined with other multiple modes; and he produces the mid-grounded and backgrounded identity elements through the use of non-verbal modes. A similar example is also given in Appendix B.3 (transcribed from

Video 5). These identity elements are also instantiated in the following excerpts of the semi-structured interview.

A successful business owner identity element is produced through the verbal choice Nimit uses to convey the meaning of being successful. Noticing that Nimit explicitly defines his success as related to his financial status of being free of debt.

Interview transcript 5.4: A debt-free business owner

- (482) ชีวิตนี้ผมบอกครอบครัวเลย
this life I tell family
I question my family
- (483) มีที่ไหนในจังหวัดลพบุรี
have where in province lopburi
is there any business in our province
- (484) ร้านอย่างนี้
store like this
just a food store like us
- (485) มีคนมากินเยอะๆ อย่างนี้
have customers come eat many
that is so popular like our store
- (486) วันหนึ่งเราจะได้ไม่รู้เท่าไร
each day I make how much don't know
we make lots of money each day
-
(the conversation moves to different topic)

from line 754- 765)

(754)

ผมบอกเลยทุกวันนี้

I tell you today

I am saying that today

(755)

ตอนนี้ผมไม่มีหนี้เลยซักบาท

now I no debt zero baht

I am debt-free

(756) 00.38.50 researcher

จากที่เคยวิกฤตเลย

from used to be crisis

after hit by the crisis

(760) 00.38.52 Nimit

ใช้ๆ หลายล้าน

true multi-million baht

for multi-million baht

(761)

มีหนี้หลายล้าน

multi-million baht

multi-million baht

(762)

วันนี้ผมไม่มีหนี้เลยซักบาท

today I no have debt zero baht

today I have zero debt

(763)

ผมก็สบายแล้วชีวิต

I happy my life

my life is happy

(764)

แล้วเราไม่มีหนี้แล้ว

because I no have debt

because I'm free of debt

(765)

เราจะเอาอะไรล่ะ

I want what else

it is more than enough

An indebtedness for 'multi-million Baht' (lines 760 and 761) is perceived as causing great hardship. Here, a 'debt-free life' is signified as success and success is associated with happiness. A debt-free life brings true happiness to him and his family as stressed twice through his utterances, 'ผมก็สบายแล้วชีวิต' (my life is happy) (line 763) and 'เราจะเอาอะไรล่ะ' (it is more than enough) (line 765). Emphasizing that happiness in life denotes a 'life without debt'. Nimit refers to his life situation after his multi-million Baht debt was successfully paid off within two years, as he repeats three times that, 'ตอนนี้ผมไม่มีหนี้เลยซักบาท' (I am debt-free) (line 755), 'วันนี้ผมไม่มีหนี้เลยซักบาท' (today I have zero debt) (line 762) and 'แล้วเราไม่มีหนี้แล้ว' (because I'm free of debt) (line 764). Through the association between success and debtlessness as manifested in these utterances, a successful business owner identity element is produced.

A Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element is developed through a meritism philosophy. During the interview, he devises a counter-statement to strengthen his identity as a Santi-Asoke cultivator by referring to Dhamakaya, another Buddhist cult that incorporates business practice into its teaching approach to spirituality.

Interview transcript 5.5: Difference between the Santi-Asoke and the
Dhamakaya.

- (41) 00.02.00 nimit ยกตัวอย่างธรรมกายเนี่ย

for example dhamakaya cult

dhamakaya cult, for example
- (42) ธรรมกายนะ

dhamakaya cult

dhamakaya cult
- (43) พวกนั้นต้องใช้เงินนะ

they must use money

money is used as a means of merit-making
- (44) ฟุ่มเฟือย

wasting money

money is wasted
- (45) ไม่สมณะ

no simplicity

not emphasizing simplicity
- (46) แต่สอนให้คนเป็นคนดี

although teach people to be people good

though they teach their followers to be a good person,
- (47) แต่เป็นแนวพุทธแบบธุรกิจ

but are buddhism approach business

- (48) *they are business-oriented buddhist cult*
ธุรกิจเชิงพุทธ
business approach buddhism
a business-oriented buddhist cult
- (49) *but for santi-asoke*
แต่ขอโศกนึ่ง
in contrast to santi-asoke cult
- (50) *emphasize frugality*
ให้มัธยัสถ์ ให้ประหยัด
we emphasize frugality
- (51) *to economical*
ให้อุดหนุน
to be economical

Perceived as a commercial Buddhist cult as manifested in his utterances twice (lines 41 and 42), Dhamakaya cult is negatively characterized as he says ‘พวกนั้นต้องใช้เงินนะ’ (money is used as a means of merit-making) (line 43), ‘ฟุ่มเฟือย’ (money is wasted) (line 44), ‘ไม่สมถะ’ (not emphasizing simplicity) (in line 45). A donation of money or materials is understood as a form of merit-making. On the contrary, the Santi-Asoke’s approach to spirituality is guided by the principle of meritism which is seen as a means of the right livelihood emphasizing an economical way of life (lines 50 and 51). This connects to his organic bean sprout farming, as it represents an economic ideal of meritism for the Santi-Asoke. From this, a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity is constructed.

Nimit advocates that he lives a moderate lifestyle, which can be seen through frequent repetitions of the word ‘moderation’, referring to noble figures who teach about the principles of sustainability and moderation, and the use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ to emphasize his identity as a sustainable farmer.

Interview transcript 5.6: Living a life of moderation.

- (93) 00.04.41 nimit ก็พอเพียง
moderation
moderation
- (94) เพราะว่าวันนี้เราไม่มีกิเลส
because today I no have desire
today I am not driven by desire
- (95) เรายุ่ด้วยความพอประมาณ
I am living our life at moderation
I live life with moderation
- (96) มัชฌิมาเดินทางสายกลาง
‘majjhima paṭipada’ the middle path
applying the principle of middle path
- (97) คือพอประมาณ
which means moderation
which means moderation
- (98) เรายุ่ด้วยความพอประมาณ
I live with moderation

living a moderate life

(99)

อยู่ตามแนวที่ในหลวงบอก

live follow approach that king tells

as inspired by the king's philosophy

(100)

ก็เหมือนพระพุทเจ้าได้บอก

like buddha told

the same way buddha warned us

(101)

เตือนมนุษย์ที่ยังมืดอยู่นะ

warned human beings who still clouded mind

warned human beings who were clouded with

wrong view

(102)

ผมจะเล่าให้ฟัง

I want refer to

I want to refer to

(103)

พูดคำเดียวเลยคือคำว่า ‘พอประมาณ’

say one word that is moderation

one keyword ‘moderation’

(104)

มีเหตุผล

reasonableness

reasonableness

(105)

มีภูมิคุ้มกัน

self-immunity

self-immunity

(106)

แค่นี้เอง

that is all

that is all

The belief in the Middle Way as a path of moderation, as taught by Buddha (lines 100 and 101), is manifested throughout his utterances, and is consistent with the King's philosophy of a sufficiency economy that highlights Buddha's Middle Way (line 99). The concept of moderation shares much with sustainable practice, which is believed to be attainable through the elimination of one's desire, as manifested in his utterance in line 94 that 'because today I no have desire'. Perceiving that his present life is meritorious, he repeats the word 'moderation' in his utterances five times (lines 93, 95, 97, 98, and 103). He speaks from his viewpoint, using the personal pronoun 'I' four times (lines 94, 95, 98, 102) in order to emphasize that he applies the ethics of moderation to his life, thus, establishing his sense of being a sustainable farmer and his affiliation to the belief and practices of the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult that incorporates the King's philosophy of a sufficiency economy.

5.3 Site of engagement: Making vegetarian noodle soup

After working on his farm, Nimit comes home to his three-story shop-house and eats his first and only meal of the day. He makes himself a bowl of vegetarian noodle soup as he has been a vegetarian for almost ten years. In this site of engagement, intersected practices are interlinked and linked to multiple mediational means. These practices are: a vegetarian practice and a business practice. At this time, the following higher-level actions are produced through these practices:

1. The higher-level action of making vegetarian noodle soup.
2. The higher-level frozen action of using space and objects embedded in the mode of layout.

Through these higher-level actions, Nimit hierarchically produces the following two identity elements

1. A vegetarian identity element.
2. An owner of vegetarian food store identity element.

Here, he foregrounds cooking vegetarian noodle soup whereas he is paying less attention to other higher-level actions as I show in the following Figure 5.8.



Figure 5.8: Nimit focuses on his vegetarian identity element.

Nimit begins the higher-level action of cooking vegetarian noodle soup by cooking the uncooked noodles in a pot of boiling water. He uses his left hand to take some uncooked fresh noodles from a container and places them into a strainer that he is holding with his right hand. Next, he slightly moves the strainer up and down four times in order to cook the noodles in the boiling water as seen in Image 3. Then, he lifts the strainer to drain them, resting the strainer on the edge of the pot. In Images 5-7, we see how Nimit shifts the strainer to his left hand, slightly turning his body to the left to grab some fresh bean sprouts with his right hand before dropping them into the strainer basket with the cooked noodles. Next, he switches the strainer again, now holding it with his right hand, then he drops it into the boiling pot, slightly moving it up and down twice, before pouring the cooked noodles and bean sprouts into a bowl that he has picked up with his left hand. As illustrated in Images 10-12, Nimit puts the strainer down before he adds some vegetarian broth to the noodle bowl, using a ladle (see Video 6).

Through the higher-level of action of making vegetarian noodle soup within this site of engagement, a vegetarian identity element is produced in the foreground of Nimit's attention/awareness. Simultaneously a business owner identity element is produced in the mid-ground of his attention primarily through the mode of layout as shown in Figure 5.9.

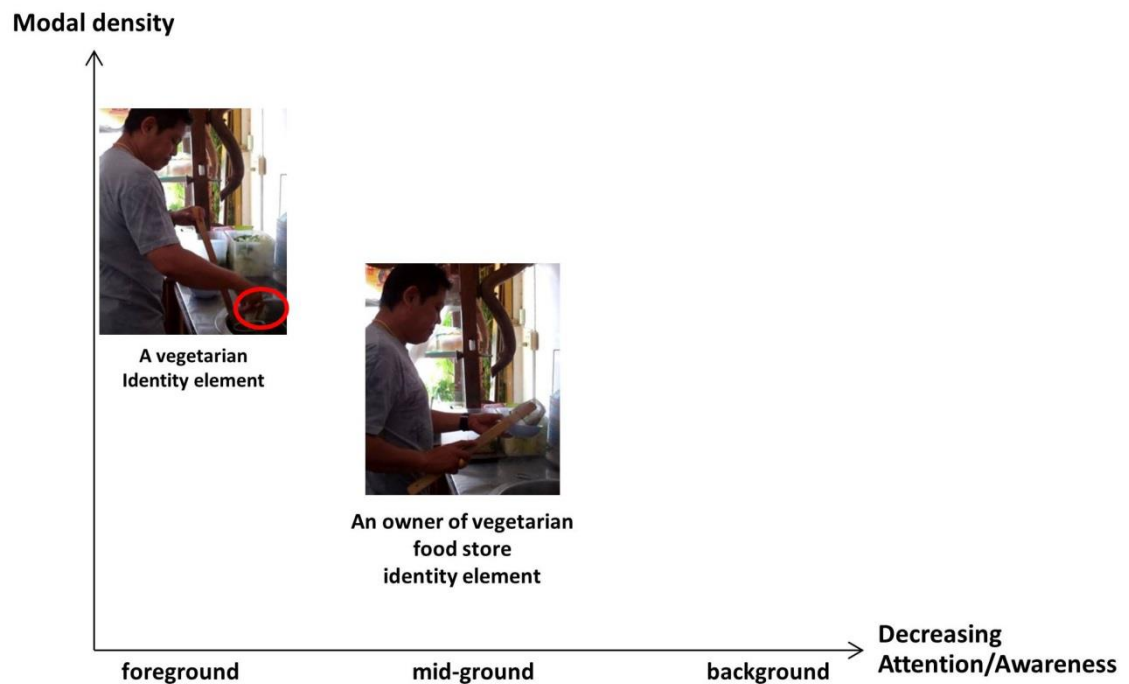


Figure 5.9: Nimit's identity elements produced at the site of engagement of making vegetarian noodle soup as shown in Figure 5.8.

As illustrated in Figure 5.9, Nimit foregrounds his vegetarian identity element. This is demonstrated through the high modal density that he uses in order to perform the higher-level action of cooking vegetarian noodle soup. The high modal density is achieved through the intensity of the mode of object handling as Nimit interacts with mediational means (such as a strainer, a ladle, a bowl, bean sprouts, uncooked noodles) while cooking the noodles. The bean sprouts are particularly salient as they are embedded in Nimit's vegetarian practice, business practice, and sustainable practice.

As Nimit foregrounds a vegetarian identity element while preparing vegetarian noodle soup for himself, he simultaneously mid-grounds a business owner identity element since the (inter)action takes place in his own food store. As the owner of the

vegetarian food store, Nimit has and continues to display power and authority in the store. He permits himself to make noodle soup in the noodle stall in front of the store and serves himself any choices of pre-cooked food contained in food containers placed in the food stall (Figure 5.10). Here, an owner of vegetarian food store identity element is constructed through medium modal density achieved through intensity of the mode of object handling while preparing vegetarian noodle soup, and the mode of layout together with the objects within as he uses the space, moves around freely within the store and the area that the customers are not allowed in (such as the kitchen area in front of the store) and uses kitchen utensils for cooking.



Figure 5.10: Nimit helps himself to some food, displaying his authority as the owner of the store.

In this example, the foregrounded vegetarian identity element is produced through the interconnectedness of non-verbal modes as is the mid-grounded business owner identity element. Identity elements such as these in this naturally occurring (inter)action are only possible to analyze through the use of multimodal (inter)action analysis. The fact that a vegetarian identity element is salient can also be seen in the interview data. In the interview data, I found that the construction of a vegetarian identity element is closely linked to the first Buddhist precept, as interpreted by the Santi-Asoke, of not killing any living beings. The practice of vegetarianism is conceptualized as a means of merit-making.

Interview transcript 5.7: The first precept and vegetarianism

- (78) พ่อกับแม่ให้ขายมังสวิรัต
dad and mom told to sell vegetarian food
my parents encouraged me to sell vegetarian food
- (79) แล้วเรายังไปซื้ออาหารกินนี่
so I still go out buy food to eat?
and I still ate outside?
- (80) ตายเลย อาหารมันมีอยู่แล้วนี่
not right, food already have
that is not right, there was food in my store
- (81) เราก็จำเป็นต้องกิน
so I need to eat my food
so I need to eat my food
- (82) พอกินปุ๊บเนี่ยก็เลย

- when eat start
when I started adopting a new diet
- (83) ทบทวนหลายอย่าง
 realize many things
I came to realize many things
-
(the conversation moves to different topic from line 90-106)
- (90) อาหารมังสวิรัตินี้มันสามารถช่วย
 vegetarian food is benevolent to
vegetarian food is benevolent to
- (91) มนุษย์ได้จริงๆ
 humans' lives indeed
humans' lives
- (92) ช่วยคนได้จริงๆ
 save humans' lives can indeed
can really save humans' lives
- (93) ในเรื่องของศีลนะ
 about precepts
regarding the precepts
- (94) ศีลข้อที่ 1 เนี่ย
 the precept first
the first precept
- (95) คือห้ามฆ่าสัตว์
 is not kill animals

- that is refraining from killing*
- (96) ถ้าเราไม่ฆ่า
if I not kill
if I don't kill
- (97) และมาปรุงอาหารให้กับ
and come to cook
and we cook
- (98) ผู้มาบริโภคของเรา
for customers my
for our customers
- (99) มันก็เป็นบุญแล้วละนะ
it is merit already
it means merit
- (100) หนึ่งไม่ฆ่าแล้ว
first not kill
first, we don't kill
- (101) คนมากินก็ได้บุญ
people come to eat gain merit also
people who eat it will also gain merit
- (102) เราก็ได้ตั้งค้ด้วย คิดอย่างนั้น
I will get money think that way
my business can be maintained
- (103) แล้วตัวเราละ

- and myself
and what about me
- (104) ขวนค้ำมากิน
 convince others to come eat
I convince other people to eat vegetarian food
- (105) ถ้าเราไม่กินเนี่ย
 if I not eat this
but if I myself don't eat it
- (106) จะได้หรือ
 could it possible then?
could it be possible?

Merit is an accumulative result of good deeds performed bodily, verbally and mentally; and is believed to lead the doers towards their spiritual attainment. For Nimit, vegetarianism connotes spirituality as it implies the first Buddhist precept of refraining from killing other living beings. Here, the topic about the first Buddhist precept is raised four times (lines 94, 95, 96, and 100) and the significance of the observation of the first precept is emphasized twice in his utterances that vegetarian food is benevolent to humans' lives indeed (lines 90, 91, and 92). Nimit illustrates the connection between a meritorious deed and merit, as conveyed through his utterances that 'มันก็เป็นบุญแล้วละหนึ่งไม่ฆ่าแล้ว' (it means merit, first, we don't kill) (lines 99 and 100), 'คนมากินก็ได้บุญ' (people who eat it will also gain merit) (line 101), and in lines 105 -106 where he confirms his decision for adopting a vegetarian practice using conditional

sentence ‘ถ้าเราไม่กินเนี่ยจะได้หรือ’ (but if I myself don’t eat it, could it be possible?). Thus, a vegetarian identity element is rooted in the religious belief of the Santi-Asoke.

While preparing vegetarian noodle soup for himself, an owner of vegetarian food store identity element is produced in the mid-ground of his attention/awareness. This identity element also comes about in the interview where his utterances convey his responsibility in his store.

Interview transcript 5.8: Nimit’s responsibility in his store.

- | | | |
|-------|----------------|---|
| (600) | 00.31.40 nimit | <p>ผมจะไป</p> <p>I will go to</p> <p><i>I go to</i></p> |
| (601) | | <p>จ่ายตลาดให้เขาก่อน</p> <p>morning market place for my wife</p> <p><i>the marketplace to buy some groceries</i></p> |
| (602) | | <p>จะถามว่าเขาขาดอะไร</p> <p>will ask her need what</p> <p><i>I ask my wife what she needs</i></p> |
| (603) | | <p>ผมจะตื่นเรียกเด็กทุกคน</p> <p>I wake up call workers every</p> <p><i>I wake all my workers up</i></p> |
| (604) | | <p>สี่ครึ่ง</p> <p>4.30 am</p> <p><i>around 4.30 am</i></p> |

- (605) ผมเป็นคนเรียกทุกคนเลย
I am who wake everybody
it is I who wakes them up
- (613) ตอนเช้าขึ้นมาพอจ่ายตลาดเสร็จ
morning when shop at market finish
coming back from the morning market
- (614) ผมก็ไปกวาดลานแถวหน้าบ้าน
I sweep front area of my store
I sweep rubbish in front of my store
- (615) ทำความสะอาด
clean the front area
keeping the front area clean
- (616) ผมบอกหน้าที่พวกนี้ไม่ค่อยมีใครทำ
I say this cleaning job not many people want to do
I say not many people are willing to do a cleaning job
- (617) นอกจากผม
except me
except me
- (618) แต่ผมน่าจะชอบทำ
but me I like doing dustman job
I am happy with doing a dustman's job
- (619) เวลาคนมากิน

- when customers come eat
if when the customers finished
- (620) จะให้ผมมาเก็บตังค์นี้
and ask me to collect money
and I was asked collect money from them
- (621) ผมไม่ชอบ
I don't like
I don't like it
-
(the conversation moves to different topic from lines 630-639)
- (630) พอหน้าบ้านเสร็จ
finish front area house
when I finished cleaning the front
- (631) ดูข้างในเรียบร้อย
check inside clean
I check that the inside is clean
- (632) ก็ไปถนน
continue sweep to the road
I continue sweeping rubbish on the road
- (633) กวาดไปถึงมุมโน้นนะ
sweep floor to there end of road
from my store to there to the end of the road
- (634) ที่คิดที่จะกวาด
I think to clean

- the reason I did it*
- (635) หนึ่งผมได้ออกกำลังกาย
- first I get exercise
- first, I want to get some exercise*
- (636) สองผมคิดอย่างนี้
- second, I think this
- second, I want to*
- (637) ถ้าลูกค้าเรามาเจอ
- if customers happen to see
- impress my customers*
- (638) ข้างทางมันสกปรกเนี่ย
- road is unsanitary very
- if the road to my store looks unsanitary*
- (639) เขาคงไม่อยากจอด
- they probably not want to park
- they wouldn't want to park their cars*

Being the owner of a vegetarian food store brings with it many responsibilities, ranging from small to more significant tasks. For example, Nimit's daily activities start by waking up his workers so that they begin working in the kitchen and prepare food for sales (lines 603 - 605); going to the local morning market to buy some groceries for the store (line 601); cleaning inside and in front of the store (lines 614 - 615); sweeping the road and collecting rubbish outside of his store (lines 632 - 633); and sometimes collecting money from the customers, even though this is not a type of responsibility

that he likes (lines 620-621). In order to keep his business going, the hygienic environment of the food store is prioritized as he is willing to do a dustman's job (line 618), indicating that it really is another person's job. In this interview segment, a business owner identity element is produced by Nimit talking about the duties of a business owner.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I analyzed three multimodal transcripts aiming at elucidating Nimit's identity production at the phenomenological level. Drawing on multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a), I demonstrated that the phenomenally-displayed higher-level actions are multimodally constructed at differentiated levels of attention/awareness, and, thus, multiple identity elements are enacted hierarchically in the foreground, mid-ground, and the background of Nimit's attention/awareness. A level of attention/awareness is determined throughout the notion of modal density which refers to how much weight each mode of communication takes on when an individual performs a higher-level action.

Three sites of engagement are examined: The site of engagement of conducting a workshop on organic bean sprout farming, the site of engagement of delivering bean sprouts to the Santi-Asoke's self-operated green supermarket, and the site of engagement of making vegetarian noodle soup. Each time multiple intersecting higher-level actions constitute these sites of engagement; and each time Nimit produced multiple identity elements concurrently. Here, I have analyzed sites of engagement in which Nimit produced the most salient identity elements that he constructed during my fieldwork. These are: 1. An expert in organic farming identity element; 2. A sustainable farmer identity element; 3. A Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element; 4. A successful business owner identity element; 5. An owner of vegetarian food store identity element; and 6. A vegetarian identity element. Certainly, Nimit also produced other identity elements during the fieldwork (such as a social contributor identity element and a spiritual father identity) but these were produced much less frequently.

While I teased apart the various identity elements produced at a site of engagement, it is often the case that various simultaneously produced identity elements are constructed in part through the same modes (Norris, 2009). Modes, such as the bean sprouts themselves become highly relevant modes, taking part in the production of almost all of the identity elements analyzed here.

Using a mediated discourse theoretical approach, I analyzed the real-time actions, but also pointed to the practices or action with a history (Scollon, 2001). Mediation means (such as the blue shirt 'Mo-hom' that Nimit wears when giving a workshop) are here analyzed by using a multimodal (inter)action analytical approach and viewed as frozen action. In this way, I wish to emphasize the social actor's active engagement with the mediational means such as bean sprouts, vegetarian food, the cult's uniform 'Mo-hom' shirt, materials prepared for demonstration during the workshop, and the picture of the King of Thailand at Nimit's farm.

With relation to mediational means, I elucidate Nimit's vegetarian identity that is produced through food during his practice of being a vegetarian. Here, food and particularly the bean sprouts he puts into his vegetarian noodles and pre-cooked food in his vegetarian food store are among the most salient mediational means that informs his vegetarian identity element, carrying within itself a history.

As can be seen throughout this chapter, Nimit belongs to a religious group called the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult and many of his practices are influenced by his religious belief. Consequently, the identity elements enacted at the phenomenological level are produced within a religious context, which I will discuss in detail in chapter 8. I now move on to the analysis of my second participant, Duangpon's identity.

Chapter 6

Duangpon's identity production

In this chapter, my analytical focus is on a micro analysis of Duangpon's higher-level actions produced through multiple intersecting practices within three sites of engagement. By using the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Norris, 2004, 2011a), I tease apart Duangpon's simultaneously produced identity elements.

Here, I begin by examining the site of engagement of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao Gods where Duangpon grooms her children's spirituality. I then investigate the site of engagement of cooking vegetarian tofu spicy salad and, finally, I examine the site of engagement of cooking vegan chili dip. The multimodal construction of the phenomenological identity elements that Duangpon produces are illustrated based on multimodal transcripts, fieldnotes, semi-structured interview transcripts, naturally occurring conversation transcripts, and photographs, when relevant.

6.1 Site of engagement: Worshipping I-Kuan-Tao Gods.

In this site of engagement, Duangpon and her children engage in family prayer time in the evening. Daily worship has become a part of the family activities. There are four people engaged in this interaction: Duangpon, her son (the boy in a blue t-shirt), her daughter standing on her left side (but she is not visible in the transcript), and a little girl, who is her neighbor next door standing on her right side (a girl in a pink dress). The son is assigned the role of primary conductor of the ritual ceremony who calls out the steps for the ritual while the rest are the worshipers.

Three primary practices are intersecting within this site of engagement: a parenting practice, a religious practice, and a practice of being an adult. Each of these practices is made up of multiple intersecting higher-level actions through which identity elements come about. The higher-level actions I analyze here are:

1. The higher-level action of interacting with her son.
2. The higher-level action of interacting with her daughter.
3. The higher-level action of worshipping to I-Kuan-Tao Gods.
4. The higher-level action of interacting with the girl, who is a next door neighbor.

Through these higher-level actions produced during this site of engagement, Duangpon produces the following simultaneous identity elements:

1. A spiritual mother identity element with her son.
2. A spiritual mother identity element with her daughter.
3. An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element.

4. A neighbor identity element with the girl living next door.

In Figure 6.1, I illustrate how Duangpon produces these particularly salient identity elements concurrently.



Figure 6.1: Duangpon focuses on her spiritual mother identity with her son.

All higher-level actions occurring within the site of engagement of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao's Gods take place at the I-Kuan-Tao temple situated in the third shophouse from Duangpon's residence. During the daily worship of I-Kuan-Tao Gods, her son plays the primary conductor of the ceremony by standing on the right-hand side of the altar, bowing down in the standing position, whereas Duangpon as a worshiper stands before the altar, lighting incense sticks with her right hand (Image 1). She directs her son's posture through her utterances 'ช้าๆ ไค้งมากๆ' (bend your head and bow down more, and do it more slowly) without turning to him. In Images 2-6, the boy as a primary conductor of the ritual mistakenly calls out a wrong step for Duangpon who is presenting the incense sticks to the holy deities, saying 'จ้าวเซียง' (jao-shien). She stands in an upright posture holding incense sticks with both hands, closing her eyes, immediately corrects the boy's mistake by telling him 'หวาน' (wan). She continues instructing the boy about mindfulness as she says, 'ต้องตั้งยืนตรงให้สง่า แล้วจิตมัน...' (you need to stand upright with a dignified look, then your mind will...). She does not finish the sentence, but carries on gesturing by rotating her right hand inwards twice.

In Images 7-9 Duangpon gazes at her son while warning him not to be driven by anger, with the utterances 'หลับตา อย่ามองตาขวาง เริ่มมีอารมณ์แล้ว' (close your eyes, don't give me that look. see! you start losing your temper). She accuses the boy of not being mindful during the ritual and that his mind is focused on his computer games. For this, she raises her right hand with her pointing finger and says 'เพราะจิตเราห่วงที่เกมส์' (this is because your mind is more occupied with the computer games). The next minute (Image 10) the boy resumes the ritual and repeats the same mistake by saying 'จ้าว' (jao) instead of 'หวาน' (wan). This time she immediately turns her face towards the boy

in order to correct it as she emphasizes, ‘หวาน’ (wan), while she moves both hands back to holding incense sticks. In Image 11, she kneels down onto the prayer cushion in front of the altar, raising both hands holding the incense sticks up to her shoulder, but gazing at the boy. She reminds the boy that he should use a softer tone of voice as she says, ‘อย่าเสียงหนักแน่น เสียงแบบเขาเรื่องนะ’ (beware of your harsh tone of voice). In Image 12, she offers an incense stick in the incense pot using her left hand while carrying on teaching the boy to mind his behaviour saying ‘มีความอ่อนน้อมถ่อมตนหน่อย’ (be more humble and respectful) (see Video 7).

Multiple identities are constructed at differentiated attention/awareness levels through the utilization of different modes as demonstrated in Figure 6.2. A spiritual mother identity element (with her son) is foregrounded whereas a spiritual mother identity element (with her daughter) and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element are simultaneously constructed in the mid-ground of her attention/awareness. In the background of her attention/awareness, Duangpon (co)produces a neighbour identity element with the little girl who lives next door.

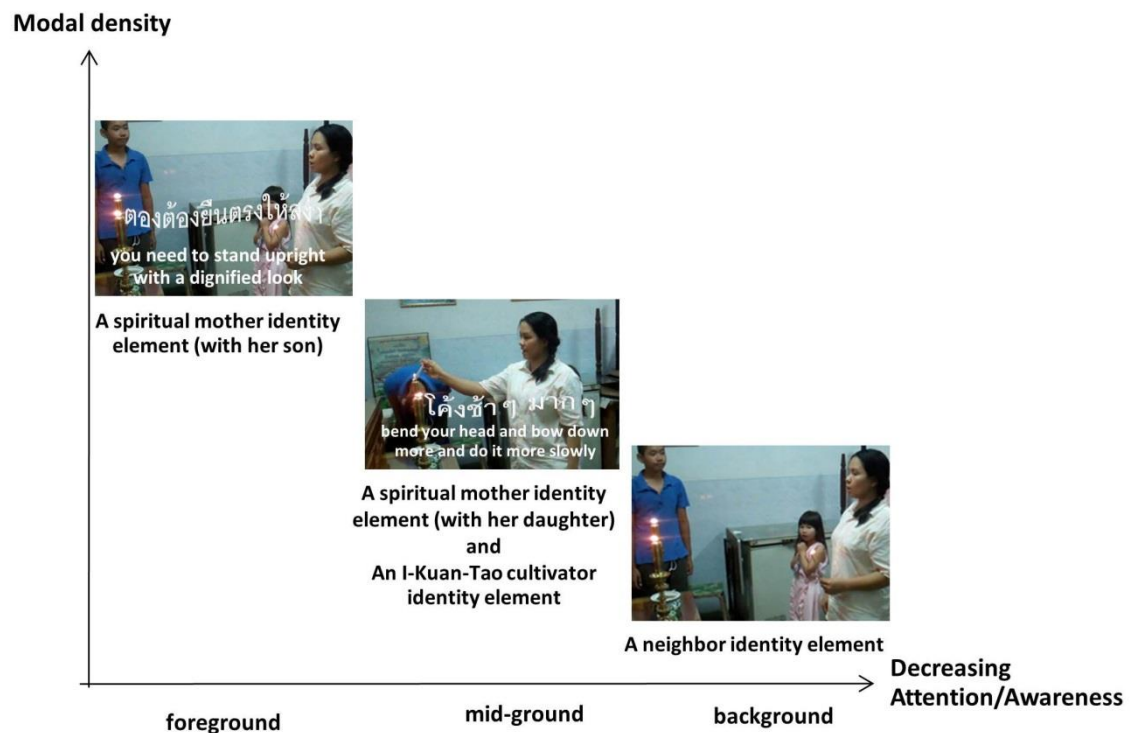


Figure 6.2: Duangpon's identity elements produced at the site of engagement of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao Gods as shown in Figure 6.1.

Throughout the entire period of the family prayer time, Duangpon's focused attention is on grooming her son's spirituality as seen through the way she closely monitors, directs, and educates him about the correct posture for praying and mindfulness. By doing so, she produces a spiritual mother identity through the employment of high modal density, achieved through the intensity of the modes of spoken language, gaze, and gesture.

In Image 1 of Figure 6.1, a spiritual mother identity element is apparent through spoken language when the boy is asked by his mother to express his humbleness and heartfelt reverence to Gods by lowering his head more while bowing. Furthermore, in Image 3, Duangpon still concentrates on directing her son's posture in prayer as she asks him to be mindful. The modes of posture and facial expression are

focused on alongside with spoken language as she utters ‘ต้องตั้งยืนตรงให้สง่า’ (you need to stand upright with a dignified look) while she keeps her torso upright, which is the appropriate standing position while praying. In Image 2, Duangpon focuses on educating her son to call out the right step during worshipping as she corrects the boy when he mistakenly says a wrong chant ‘จ้าว’ (jao) instead of the correct one of ‘หวาน’ (wan). As the boy repeats the same mistake (Image 10), she rapidly turns her face to her son and corrects him.

In Images 7-9, Duangpon foregrounds her attention on warning the boy to gain more control over his frustration as she perceives that the boy’s reaction conveys aggression toward her. Here, an imperative utterance ‘หลับตา อย่ามองตาขวาง เริ่มมีอารมณ์แล้ว’ (close your eyes, don’t give me that look, see! you start losing your temper) is performed with direct gaze. She then verbally blames the boy for focusing his mind on computer games instead of concentrating on worshipping. The utterance is produced in combination with a deictic gesture with her right index finger pointing up when referring to the computer game that the boy was playing before the time of daily worship, emphasizing that his mind is somewhere else and not at the worship. In Images 11 and 12, she expresses her frustration over the boy’s negative reaction through using an imperative utterance ‘อย่าเสียงหนักแน่น เสียงเขาเรื่องนะ มีความอ่อนน้อมถ่อมตนหน่อย’ (beware of your harsh tone of voice, be humble and respectful) which is produced jointly with her gaze towards the boy.

In the mid-ground of her attention, a spiritual mother identity element is constructed through the employment of medium modal density, achieved through the mode of proxemics as Daungpon is fully aware of her daughter’s presence, standing on

her left, indicating that she is a part of the ritual. Though with lesser attention, the daughter is trained to be a morally upright person through family prayer time viewed as a part of spiritual grooming.

Duangpon also produces an I-Kuan-Tao identity element with her children in the mid-ground of her attention. As a caretaker of the temple, she is responsible for daily worship. The medium modal density achieved through the modes of posture, object handling, layout and the objects within are complexly intertwined, constructing an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element. The mode of posture is mediated through kneeling, bowing and standing with dignity and total respect to Gods before the altar. The mode of object handling, holding and offering incenses to the Gods with her left hand, which is believed to be the hand of goodness in accordance with I-Kuan-Tao belief. The mode of layout refers to the I-Kuan-Tao temple, symbolized as a 'House of God' where the ritual takes place. The holy setting of the temple consists of several interlinked mediational means: A photo of Maitreya Buddha (who is believed to be the future Buddha of this era after the present Gautama Buddha) on the wall above the altar; an altar consisting of the statue of Yue Hui Bhodisattva (Bodhisattva of Moon and Wisdom in Chinese belief), the candles, flower vases, the incense sticks, incense pot and tea cups for the offering ritual; the prayer cushions; and the photos of different Gods on the wall of the temple. This sacred environment produces an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element.

In the background of her attention, Duangpon constructs a neighbour identity element with the little girl living next door constructed through low modal density achieved through the modes of proxemics as they are next to each other. She pays

marginal attention to the girl as she is not monitored. No matter what she does is completely ignored (Image 7 where the girl can freely move her body).

In this example, the multimodal construction of the foregrounded higher-level action and with it the foregrounded spiritual mother identity element (with her son) is produced through the primacy of the mode of spoken language intertwined with other non-verbal modes such as gaze and gesture. At the same time the mid-grounded spiritual mother identity element (with her daughter) is primarily produced through the mode of proxemics while the back-grounded I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is achieved through the modes of posture and the I-Kuan-Tao temple where the ritual takes place. A similar example is given in Appendix B.1 (transcribed from Video 1).

6.2 Site of engagement: Cooking vegetarian spicy tofu salad.

Duangpon makes a living by running a self-service food store serving pre-cooked vegetarian food in Bangkok. An array of pre-cooked vegetarian food is prepared daily in the morning as the store is open from 5.30 am until 7 pm. The kitchen area where the food is freshly prepared is located in the front of the store, allowing the customers to see the cooking process. In this example, Duangpon's daughter offers to help her with mixing ingredients and seasoning spicy tofu salad. Here, Duangpon teaches the girl how to mindfully stir the food using spatulas.

This site of engagement is made up of four converging practices interlinked with mediational means: a parenting practice, a business practice, a religious practice, and a vegan practice. Duangpon produces multiple higher-level actions through these practices and thus claims her identity elements through the following phenomenally-displayed higher-level actions:

1. The higher-level action of teaching her daughter how to mindfully cook vegetarian food.
2. The higher-level action of owning the business.
3. The higher-level frozen action of decorating the store.
4. The higher-level frozen action of cooking vegetarian food

The identity elements that are produced simultaneously within this site of engagement are:

1. A spiritual mother identity element.
2. A business owner identity element.

3. An I-kuan-Tao cultivator identity element.
4. A vegan identity element.

I next elucidate how these particularly salient identity elements are produced through multiple higher-level actions within this site of engagement.



Figure 6.3: Duangpon focuses on her spiritual mother identity with her daughter.

During summer break, the daughter sometimes offers to help with the cooking or doing miscellaneous tasks around the store. In this example, the girl has offered to help mix the ingredients of a spicy tofu salad with spatulas. In Images 1-3, the girl tries to scoop up the food from the bottom of the wok by holding the spatulas with both hands when Duangpon comes to observe her and starts to instruct her on how to stir the food with the spatulas. She starts with a demonstration by taking the spatulas from the girl, holding them in each of her hands, whilst uttering ‘เอาจิตเป็นหนึ่ง’ (you need to be focused). Next, she skilfully scoops the food with the spatulas from the bottom of the wok, moving along her hands/arms upward before dropping the food back into the wok. She repeats this action six times. The demonstration is carried out to teach the girl about mindfulness of the task at hand as Duangpon says “ไม่เห็นยุ่งยากเลย เธอทำให้มันหนักไปเอง’ (it is not that difficult at all, you feel it is heavy—it is all in your mind). In Images 7-12, the girl is encouraged to practice, following her mother’s instruction. As the daughter begins to scoop the food, Duangpon adjusts the girl’s hand position, moving the girl’s hands that are placed at the end of the handle to the middle part of the handle while saying ‘ต่ำหน่อย’ (lower your hands down a bit). She also emphasizes the significance of being mindful at the present moment as she says, ‘จิตเธอต้องไปอยู่ที่ตะหลิว มันจะมีพลัง’ (focus your mind on the spatulas and you will feel the power of your mind).

Figure 6.4 illustrates how Duangpon produces different identity elements at differentiated levels of attention/awareness through the production of several real-time higher-level actions within the site of engagement of cooking vegetarian spicy tofu salad. Focusing on teaching her daughter how to mindfully cook vegetarian food, a spiritual mother identity element is foregrounded, whereas a business owner

identity element is produced in the mid-ground of her attention/awareness. In the background of Duangpon's attention/awareness, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element and a vegan identity element are simultaneously constructed (Video 8).

Modal density

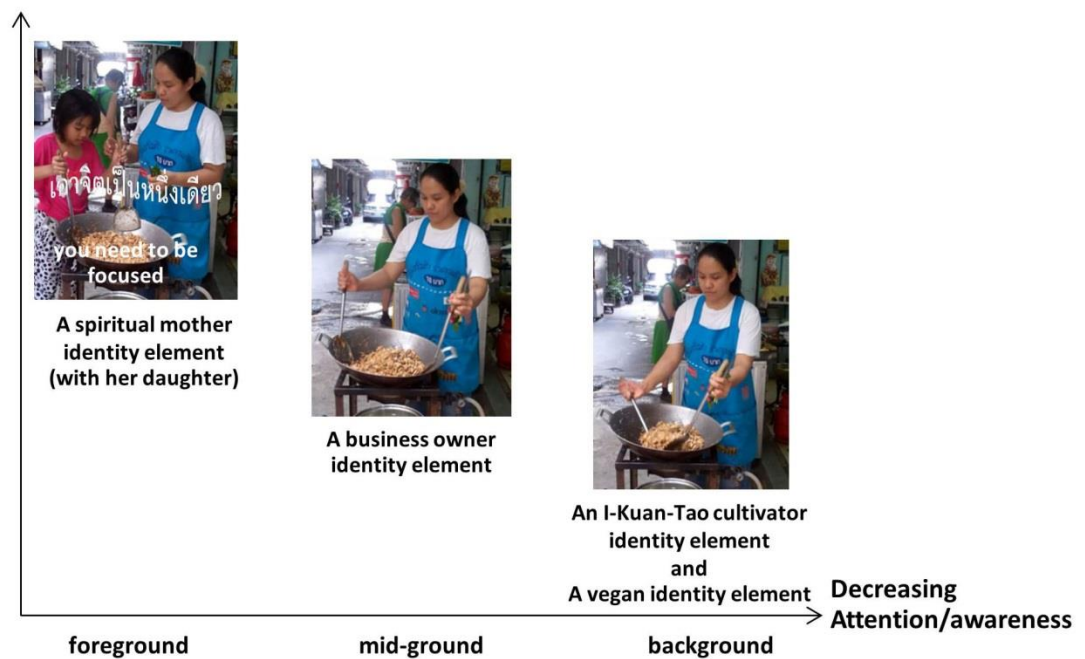


Figure 6.4: Duangpon's identity elements produced at the site of engagement of cooking vegetarian spicy tofu salad as shown in Figure 6.3.

Duangpon foregrounds her attention on teaching her daughter how to mindfully cook vegetarian food. Clearly, her real focused attention is on the cultivation of mindfulness in her younger daughter through cooking, which is viewed as a form of moving meditation and not on teaching her daughter how to cook. Here, Duangpon emphasizes that the body may go through continuous movements but the mind can be focused on the task at hand. By doing so, a spiritual mother identity element is produced through high modal density which is achieved through the orchestration of

multiple modes of communication: the modes of object handling (as Duangpon scoops her food with spatulas), spoken language, hand/arm movement, and gaze.

As a part of grooming the child's spirituality, Duangpon attempts to cultivate mindfulness in her daughter through the present task at hand. In Images 2-7, she begins teaching her daughter about mindfulness through spoken language, saying 'เอาจิตเป็นหนึ่งเดียว' (you need to be focused). Next, she utilizes the mode of object handling when she takes the spatulas from her daughter's hands to hold them in each of her own hands and starts scooping up the food six times. She consistently gazes at the task before her indicating her full concentration on her bodily movement of cooking food. In image 7, she says again that 'มันไม่ได้ยุ่งเลย เธอทำให้มันหนักไปเอง' (it is not that difficult at all. you feel it is heavy-it is all in your mind).

Duangpon allows her daughter to practice mindfully scooping up food with the spatulas while standing next to her, observing and adjusting her daughter's hands (Images 9-11), before saying 'จิตเธอต้องไปอยู่ที่ตะหลิว มันจะมีพลัง' (focus your mind on the spatulas and you will feel the power of your mind) (Image 12). Through this training, the girl's mind is conscious of her bodily movement while scooping up food. It is believed that only the well-trained mind contributes to the nurturing of consciousness that gives an individual the ability to make things happen. In this way, Duangpon is producing a spiritual mother identity element by embracing a spiritual approach of parenting (a similar example is given in Appendix B.4 transcribed from Video 9).

At a differentiated level of attention, a business owner identity element is enacted in the mid-ground of Duangpon's attention/awareness. Running a vegan food store is Duangpon's daily routine which involves food preparation, including this

vegetarian spicy tofu salad, and serving customers. A business owner identity element is a career-linked identity element produced through the utilization of medium modal density of the modes of object handling coordinated with hand/arm movement (holding spatulas for scooping food), layout (Duangpon's vegetarian food store) and vegetarian food (the spicy tofu salad), and dress (the apron that Duangpon wears).

In the background of Duangpon's attention/awareness, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element and a vegan identity element are constructed in relation to one another in accordance with the I-Kuan-Tao religious belief. Most I-Kuan-Tao followers are vegetarians as they regard vegetarianism, and particularly veganism, to imply the principle of compassion. Also, running a vegetarian food store is a way to promote the principle of compassion. These two identity elements are co-produced through the employment of low modal density achieved through the modes of layout (Duangpon's vegetarian food store) equipped with objects including pre-cooked vegetarian food for sale, the square flags in yellow color displaying a Chinese character in red conveying 'veganism' (Figure 6.5); the long, narrow, yellow rectangular flag displaying Thai words, 'หนึ่งมือกินเจหมื่นชีวิตรอดตาย' (one vegetarian meal saves ten thousand lives of living beings) (Figure 6.5); a sign displaying dharma messages (Figure 6.6, left); a sign displaying the message about the benefit of vegetarian food (Figure 6.6, right); and the pictures of Buddha and saints in the Chinese Buddhist tradition.



Figure 6.5: Square, yellow flags displaying a Chinese characters in red denoting ‘veganism’ and a long, narrow, square yellow flag displaying the message that ‘หนึ่งมื้อกินเจหมื่นชีวิตรอดตาย’ (one vegetarian meal can save ten thousand lives of living beings) decorate the front area of the food store.

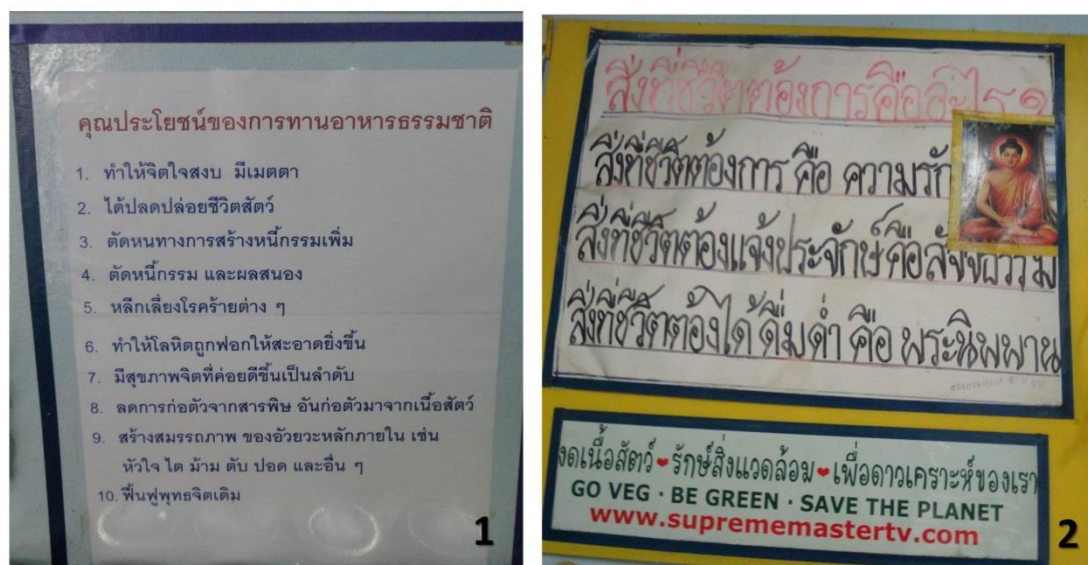


Figure 6.6: Sign 1 displaying messages about the ‘benefits of consuming a natural diet’ and sign 2 displaying dharma messages about the ‘principle of compassion to living beings’.

As previously shown in section 6.1, Duangpon again produces the foregrounded spiritual mother identity element multimodally through the modes of object handling in synchrony with spoken language, hand/arm movement, and gaze; and the mid-grounded business owner identity element is constructed through the interconnectedness of non-verbal modes such as object handling coordinated with hand/arm movements, layout, vegetarian food, and dress.

In addition, the backgrounded I-Kuan-Tao cultivator and vegan identity elements are primarily produced through the higher-level frozen actions of decorating the store with religiously-related decorations entailed in the mode of layout and objects, and through the mode of food.

The fact that a spiritual mother identity element is particularly salient can also be seen in the interview data. The following Interview transcript 6.1 illustrates Duangpon's attitude towards her daughter, highlighting herself as a spiritual mother. By the Grace of the holy deities, the daughter is believed to be a special girl due to her spiritual maturity.

Interview transcript 6.1: A spiritual mother identity with her daughter.

- (22) เกี่ยวกรรมน้อยที่สุด
involved with karmic bondage less
her soul has been involved with less karmic bondage
- (23) พลอยไม่ค่อยได้กินอะไรดีๆหรอก
ploy¹¹ not eat food good
she wasn't fed with good food
- (24) กินข้าวกับแม็กกี้
ate rice and maggy soy sauce
sometimes with rice and maggy soy sauce
- (25) กินข้าวกับกล้วย
rice and bananas
or rice with bananas
- (26) กินน้ำข้าว
with milk rice

¹¹ Ploy is Duangpon's daughter's nickname.

- or rice milk*
- (27) กินข้าวต้มเปื่อยๆ
- ate rice boiled very soft
- or soft-boiled rice*
- (28) พลอยนี่เบียดเบียนเนื้อสัตว์น้อยมาก
- she torture animals very hardly
- she has hardly been involved with animal torturing*
- (29) นับตัวได้เลย
- count numbers of suffered animals
- I dare you count the numbers of animals suffered by her*
- (30) ตั้งแต่นท้อง
- since she in my womb
- from the moment she was conceived*
- (55) แปดเดือนเขาก็เดินแล้วนะ
- eight months she started walking
- she started to walk when she was only 8 months old*
-
- (the conversation moves to different topic from lines 46 – 54)*
- (46) พี่ว่าเด็กคนนี้มาแบบแปลก
- I think girl this different
- I think this girl is special*

(47)

และเด็กคนนี้ก็มีสัมผัส

girl this has intuition

she has an intuition

(48)

และเขาชอบนั่งวิปัสสนา

she likes sitting meditation

and she is fond of meditation

(49)

ตอนเล็กๆ เขาชอบนั่งสมาธิ

when little she liked sitting meditation

when she was little she liked sitting meditation

(50)

เป็นเด็กที่ไม่วุ่นวาย

is a girl not violent

she is a very calm kid

(51)

เป็นเด็กที่พูดน้อย

is a girl talks little

talks very little

(52)

คำพูดของเขาเหมือนเป็นผู้ใหญ่ทุกคำพูด

word her like adult every

she speaks like an adult

(53)

และก็พูดชัด

and is pronunciation clear

her pronunciation is clear

(54)

พัฒนาการเร็วกว่าพี่ชายเขามาก

development faster more than elder brother very

- her development is much faster than her brother
- (the conversation moves to different topic from line 127-130)
- (127) ตั้งแต่เล็กแล้วนะ
- since she was little
- since she was little
- (128) เขาเข้ารับธรรมเนีย
- when she received dharma
- when she received dharma
- (129) เขาเหมือนกับเห็นอะไรเยอะแยะ
- she was like sense many things we did not see
- I think she was capable of sensing paranormal events
- (130) เขาจะมีอะไรพิเศษของเขา
- she has what special power
- she possesses special power
- (the conversation moves to different topic from lines 198-203)
- (198) คนทั้งโรงเรียน
- students for whole school
- among other students at your school
- (199) มีลูกเพียงสองคนที่กินเจ
- you only two eat vegetarian
- only you two are vegetarians

- (200) ลูกคิดดูเบื้องบนเมตตาเราแค่ไหน
 you think how gods give compassion to you
don't you think that you have been blessed by gods
- (201) ให้โอกาสเราเป็นตัวแทนธรรมะ
 give you chance to be representative dharma
you are meant to be the representatives for dharma
- (202) คนแรกและคนเดียวในโรงเรียน
 you first one and only one in school
you are the first and the only ones in the school
- (203) คนเดียวในห้อง
 only one in classroom
the only one in your class

The girl is believed to have attained a higher spiritual level as demonstrated in the characteristics of a spiritual person. For example, the girl is believed to have a sixth sense (lines 47, 129, and 130); the natural tendency of her soul towards spirituality as she is fond of meditation practice (lines 48 and 49); displaying an adult personality such as her emotional stability (lines 50 and 51) and her ability to have a mature conversation (line 52); and having a more advanced physical development (line 53). As indicated in line 23, Duangpon's belief takes deep root in the law of karma that contributes to a life condition of an individual. For this, the girl's soul is believed to have collective good karma as it has hardly been polluted by negative karmic bondage

associated with animal cruelty (lines 22-30) and to be given a chance to be an I-Kuan-Tao dharma representative (line 201) as associated with her destiny to be raised as a vegetarian (lines 199, 202, 203). A spiritual mother identity is thus created.

During the interview, Duangpon also produces herself as an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator as she frequently refers to the significance of meditation viewed as a means for spiritual nourishment. It is believed that right thought, speech and action are influenced by the right mind. Thus, I-Kuan-Tao cultivators are encouraged to closely observe the phenomenon of their mind from moment-to-moment, which is called the practice of moving meditation.

Interview transcript 6.2: Practicing I-Kuan-Tao through mindful cooking.

- | | |
|-------|--|
| (455) | <p>พี่เชื่อว่า</p> <p>I believe that</p> <p><i>I believe that</i></p> |
| (456) | <p>เพราะเราเริ่มมีสติ</p> <p>because I start to have mindfulness</p> <p><i>it is a result from mindfulness training</i></p> |
| (457) | <p>เจริญภาวนาจิตวิญญาณของเรา</p> <p>observing mind my</p> <p><i>observing my mind</i></p> |
| (458) | <p>ด้วยจิตที่รัก</p> <p>with good mind love what I am doing</p> <p><i>with positive attitudes toward what I am doing</i></p> |

- (459) เอาใจใส่ในการทำอาหาร
put mind into cooking
concentrating on cooking
- (460) แต่ก่อนที่เราทำไม่อร่อย
before I cook not good
my previous cooking was bad
- (461) เพราะเราเหม่อลอย
because I mind go all over
because my mind was always somewhere
- (462) ใจของเรามันไม่เป็นหนึ่ง
mind my not become one
I wasn't focused on what I was doing
- (463) ใจของเรามันฟุ้งซ่าน
my mind was so muddled
my mind was so muddled
- (464) ใจของเรามันคิดไปก่อน
mind my think ahead
I was too concerned
- (465) อยู่กับอนาคตมาก
stay with future a lot
about the unknown future
- (466) เหมือนเรากำลังจะตั้งท่าขาย
seem like I was selling food

just like while I was selling food

(467)

เราคิดแล้วจะมีคนกินไหมว่า

I worried that would have customers eat my food

*became worried if I would get customers to eat
my food*

(468)

จะมีสภาวะจิตอย่างนั้น

would have state of mind like that

that was the state of my mind at that time

(469)

จิตของเราจะฟุ้งซ่าน

my mind was all over the place

my mind was all over the place

(470)

จิตมันเลยไม่ได้อยู่กับปัจจุบัน

my mind not focus on present moment

my mind wasn't focused on the present moment

(471)

การปรุงแต่งกับข้าวมันเลยไม่อร่อย

so cooking food was not tasty

so my cooking wasn't tasty

(472)

จิตเราผัดก็ผัด

my mind knew that I stir-fry

though I knew that I was cooking

(473)

ไม่ถึงกับนิ่งมากมาย

but not that very focused mind

my mind was still mixed up

- (474) เราเริ่มรู้ว่า
I start to know that
I have come to learn that
- (475) เวลาทำอะไรทำเป็นเรื่องๆ
when doing something just do one thing
I should concentrate on one thing at time
- (476) ทำเป็นหน้าๆ เป็นงานๆไป
do one thing one job
on what I was actually doing at time
- (477) ทุกอย่างมันจะออกมาเพอร์เฟ็ค
everything will come out perfect
the task will be carried out successfully

Duangpon bases her argument on the belief that mindfulness contributes to the practice of cooking. In lines 460 and 471, she claims that her cooking was not very impressive until she began to practice mindfulness while cooking, leading to the improvement of her cooking skills and the taste of her food (lines 475-477). Since the I-Kuan-Tao cult encourages the cultivators to look inward to where thought arises, meditation is employed as a spiritual tool to increase awareness of one's own thought, speech, and bodily action. For Duangpon, meditation is a means of practicing I-Kuan-Tao. In this perspective, a well-trained mind is believed to create a tremendous impact on the psychological plane as her focus and concentration on the task at hand is enhanced (lines 456-457), and, therefore, confidence is built and work productivity is

papaya salad

(88)

พอเราเรียนธรรมะ

when I studied dharma

when I studied dharma

(89)

เราารู้เลยว่ามันเป็นอาหารยักษ์

I knew now it was food of giants

I learned that this is a food of creature like giants

.....

*(the conversation moves to different topic from
lines 691-697)*

(691)

แต่มันต้องใช้ความอดทน

it requires patience

it requires patience

(692)

8 ปี จะ 8 ปี

8 years almost 8 years

8 years almost 8 years

(693)

ตั้งแต่เริ่มเรามีสัญญากับตัวเอง

ever since I have promised to myself

ever since I have promised to myself

(694)

สัญญะเท่านั้นที่จะคุ้มครองเรา

promise only will protect me

you are blessed if you keep your word

(695)

สัญญะเท่านั้นที่จะให้โอกาสเรา

promise only will give opportunities me

*keeping promises leads me to valuable
opportunities*

(696) แล้วก็ความศรัทธา

and faith

and faith

(697) ในสัจจะของเรา

in promise of us

in what you have promised

..... *(the conversation moves to different topic from
lines 834-837)*

(834) บางคนก็กินแค่ให้สุขภาพแข็งแรง

some people eat only for healthy

*some people go vegetarian only for health
reasons*

(835) นั่นเป็นผลพลอยได้อย่างหนึ่ง

that is benefit another

that is another benefit

(836) นั่นก็ยังแปลว่าเรายังเห็นแก่ตัว

but it means that we are selfish

but it means that we are still selfish for ourselves

(837) อานิสงค์มันน้อยมากเลยนะ

the karmic consequence is marginal

the positive karmic consequence is marginal

In the interview, Duangpon expresses that she adopted veganism in accordance with her religious belief in the I-Kuan-Tao cult (line 88). She uses a metaphor that evokes a negative meaning of non-vegan food as a ‘เรารู้เลยว่ามันเป็นอาหารยักษ์’ (I learned that this is a food of creature like giants) (line 89), or her belief that if an individual adopts veganism for health reasons, this implies selfishness and not compassion, as it only serves an individual’s own interest (lines 836-837). Emphasizing that she has to be faithful to what she has promised is the most important thing of becoming a vegan as it implies a wholehearted religious belief (lines 693-695). In the next example analyzed, Duangpon again is cooking.

6. 3 Site of engagement: Cooking vegan chili dip.

In this section I analyse the the site of engagement of cooking vegan chili dip. Duangpon focuses her attention/awareness on the higher-level of action of cooking the vegan chili dip as she seasons the dip with sugar while she sings along with dharma music. The preparation of vegetarian food for sale is part of her daily routine. Within this site, the following primary practices and their connected mediational means intersect: business practice, religious practice, and vegan practice. These practices make the following three higher-level actions possible:

1. The higher-level action of cooking the vegan chili dip for sale in her store.

The higher-level action of singing along with an I-Kuan-Tao's dharma song.

2. The higher-level action of cooking vegan chili dip for household consumption.

Through these higher-level actions, Duangpon produces the identity elements of:

1. A business owner identity element.
2. An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element.
3. A vegan identity element.

I illustrate through Figure 6.7 Duangpon's identity production within this site of engagement.



Figure 6.7: Duangpon focuses on her business owner identity element.

The higher-level of action of cooking a vegetarian chili dip is a part of Duangpon's daily routine of being a business owner of a vegetarian food store. While she prepares this food in the morning in her store, she, as usual, plays dharma music of the I-Kuan-Tao cult from a CD player in her store. As illustrated in Images 1 and 2, when she seasons the vegetarian chili dip with sugar and stirs it quickly to mix with the ladle in her right hand, she sings along the dharma song being played. She starts singing with the final phrase of the song 'ใจจริง' (with all the faith). In Images 3-4, she sings 'ยึดทำในสิ่งเที่ยงแท้และตนเชื่อมั่น' (committing only good deeds and carrying on this spiritual path with confident faith), consistently mixing the chili dip with the ladle. In Image 3, she quickly looks once to the front area of the store and back to the task at hand, consistently stirring the dip. Next, she moves to the front area of the store carrying the chili dip pot with her while stirring the dip (Image 4). In Image 5, she is standing at the front area of the store, stirring the chili dip, singing 'มีธรรมเคียงข้าง เดินทางอย่างเข้าใจกัน' (carrying on the spiritual journey, relying upon dharma). She stops at this line and places the pot down on the table (Image 6) (see Video 10).

In Figure 6.8, the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness displays how these multiple identity elements are enacted through different higher-level actions produced within the site of engagement of cooking vegetarian chili dip. A business owner identity element is foregrounded, while a vegan identity element and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element are constructed in the mid-ground of Duangpon's attention.

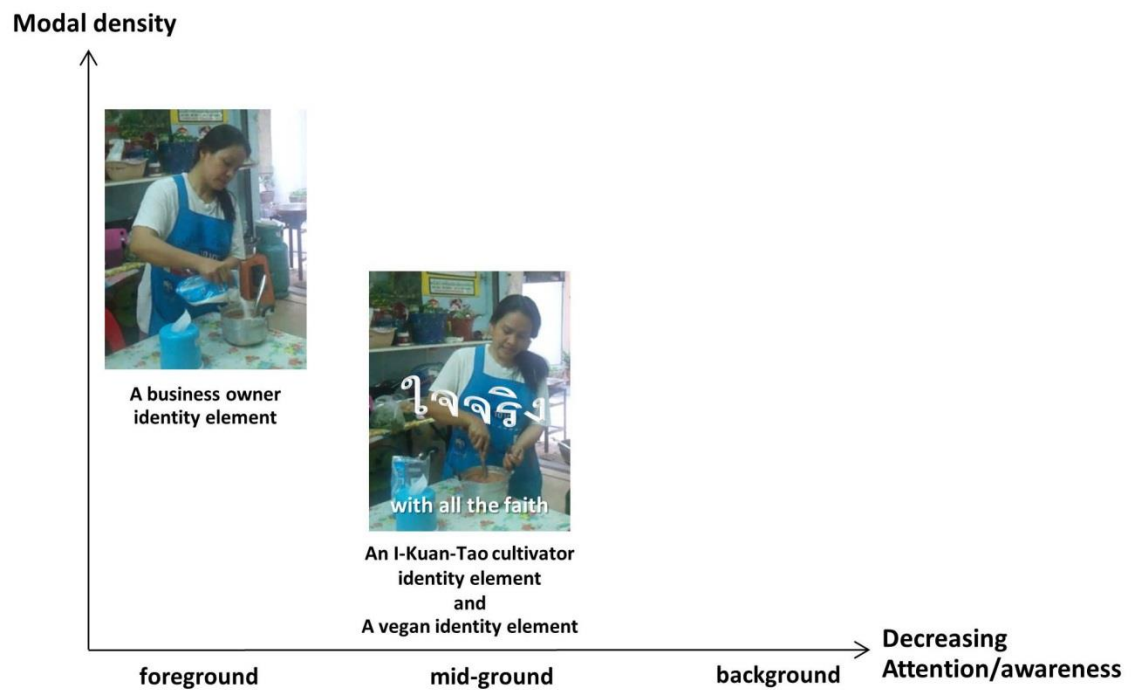


Figure 6.8: Duangpon's identity elements produced at the site of engagement of cooking vegan chili dip as shown in Figure 6.7.

Within the site of engagement of cooking vegan chili dip, Duangpon pays her differentiated attention to different things at the same time. By doing so, she constructs multiple identity elements. In the foreground of her attention, a business owner identity element is constructed since cooking vegetarian chili dip is given primary focus. In the mid-ground of her attention, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element and a vegan identity element are simultaneously produced.

In the foreground of Duangpon's attention/awareness, she concentrates on seasoning and stirring the vegan chili dip with sugar which she makes primarily for sale. Here, a business owner identity element is produced through the employment of high modal density achieved through the intensity of the mode of object handling that is produced in coordination with hand/arm movements as she pours sugar into the pot using both of her hands: mixing sugar in the vegetarian chili dip using the ladle held in

her right hand, while the pot is held down with her left hand. She pays full attention to cooking the vegetarian chili dip based on her consistency with the action of stirring the dip. Even when she looks towards the front area of her store (Image 3) or when she walks to the front area of the store (Images 4 and 5), her focus is on stirring the dip. Also her intense gaze at the task before her indicates her concentration on cooking the vegetarian chili dip.

In the mid-ground of Duangpon's attention/awareness, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is simultaneously produced through medium modal density achieved through the modes of music. Duangpon mid-grounds the I-Kuan-Tao dharma music being played out loud inside her store as she sings along while mixing sugar into the vegetarian chili dip (Images 2-5). She neither starts singing from the beginning of the song, but starts singing with the phrase 'โถ่โถ่' (with all the faith), nor does she sing until the end of the song. However, through her singing a part of the song, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is produced.

Another identity element that is produced in the mid-ground of Duangpon's attention/awareness is a vegan identity element. As an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator, Duangpon has practiced veganism for eight years after she made a vow to become a vegan for the rest of her life. Every day she eats the food that she cooks for sale in her store. Here, a vegan identity element is produced through the employment of medium modal density achieved through the intensity of the modes of object handling and hand/arm movements (as Duangpon stirs sugar into the vegetarian chili dip) and also the mode of object which is the vegan food that she cooks and eats.

In this example, the foregrounded higher-level action and with it the foregrounded business owner identity element is produced through the intensity of the mode of object handling. Duangpon produces the mid-grounded I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity elements primarily through the modes of music while a vegan identity element is produced through non-verbal modes of object handling coordinating with hand/arm movements.

During the interview (Interview transcript 6.4), a business owner identity element is also produced within a religious context of her belief in I-Kuan-Tao associated with veganism. Believing that a practice of veganism implies the principle of compassion, she gave up selling non-vegetarian food as she bases her decision of her career path on her religious belief. (Note: In this example, a pronoun 'we' is used to refer to 'I').

Interview transcript 6.4: Selling vegetarian food as an ethical career path.

(758) แต่ทุกคนก็มานั่งคิดด้วยตัวของเราเองว่า
I have come to realize by myself
I have come to realize by myself

(759) เราก็เห็นแก่ตัว
we selfish
about how selfish we are

(760) เพื่อที่จะทำยังไงก็ได้ที่มันขายได้แล้วได้เงินเยอะๆ
for do everything that can earn money a lot
we all do everything we can to earn money

- (761) มันจะมาทางผิดศีลธรรมหรือไม่ผิดศีลธรรม
whether it is immoral or moral job
regardless of morality
- (762) เราไม่สนใจฉันคิดว่าเป็นอาชีพบริสุทธิ์
we not care we thought it was job legal
we just did not care as I thought this was a legal job
- (763) เพราะเราได้มาเห็นหลังความตายของพวกเขา
because we came to see after death of animals
because we only saw these animals after they were killed
- (764) เราเห็นแต่ตอนที่เขาชำแหละออกมาแล้วนะ
we saw when meat was already cut
we used to buy only meat that was already cut up
-
(the conversation moves to different topic from line 821-824)
- (821) สำหรับพี่
for me
for me
- (822) พอเริ่มทำอย่างนี้ได้ 8 ปีเนี่ย
have start vegan for 8 years
having been a vegan for 8 years
- (823) มันเริ่มได้คำตอบที่เราเห็นแก่ตัวจังเลย
start to receive answer that we were selfish

makes me realize about how selfish we were

(824)

เพื่อให้ครอบครัวตัวเองมีเงิน

for make our family have money

all I wanted was money for my family

Before her conversion to I-Kuan-Tao, she did not realize that selling meat means supporting animal cruelty because she never really understood the process of butchering animals and processing their meat for sale (lines 763-764). Regardless of how and where meat comes from, most people think that they do not contribute to animal cruelty (line 762). Here, she challenges what is viewed as 'right' or 'legal' based on the worldly point of view, which is not necessarily viewed as 'ethical' in regard to spirituality. Running a non-vegetarian food store for example, is regarded as an unethical career because it inevitably involves a cycle of animal torturing, whether directly or indirectly. To kill animals for food is rooted in selfishness as she says twice in this interview (lines 759 and 823). Thus, a business owner identity element is constructed corresponding to the principle of veganism promoted by I-Kuan-Tao.

In the following Interview transcript 6.5, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is stressed when she talks about listening to I-Kuan-Tao dharma music while working in the store. She compares the function of one's mind to a computer, using a metaphor to explain her idea.

Interview transcript 6.5: Spiritual nourishment through dharma music.

(570) 00.25.03 researcher เวลาทำงานเห็นฟังเพลงธรรมะตลอด

while working saw you listen to music dharma
always?

*you always listen to dharma songs while you are
working?*

(571) 00.25.04 duangpon ต้องฟัง

must listen

I have to listen

(572) ต้องร้อง

must sing

I have to sing along

(573) เพราะว่า

because

because

(574) พระธรรมสั่งสอนพุทฺธจิตใจ

dharma teaches my soul

the dharma songs help nourish my soul

(575) ก็ต้องพูดด้วยตัวเอง

so must speak by myself

I have to sing to myself in order to teach myself

(576) เพราะเราต้องการเลี้ยงจิตวิญญาณของเรา

because I want to nurture soul my

- because I want to nurture my soul*
- (577) แต่ถ้ักรัองเพลงที่เก้ัยวกรรม
- if I sing songs that create karmic bondage*
- if I sing worldly songs*
- (578) เพลงท้ัวไปท้ัเป็นทางโลก
- song general about worldly stories*
- songs that were written based on worldly stories*
- (579) จ้ันรักผ้ัวเธอ
- 'I love your husband'*
- involving common themes like 'I love your husband'*
- (580) เธอรักผ้ัวจ้ัน
- 'you love my husband'*
- 'you love my husband'*
- (581) มีก็กมีก็กอะไรรอย่างนี้
- 'have flirt many people like that'*
- 'or me flirting around'*
- (582) แอบชอบแฟนเพื่อน
- 'secretly crush on lover of my friend'*
- 'me having a crush on my friend's lover'*
- (583) มันก็จ้ะจินตนาการไปตามจิตวิญญาณของเรา
- mind will imagine following soul*
- your mind will be influenced by this music*

- (584) ปลูกฝังสิ่งนี้ไปในคอมพิวเตอร์ของเรา

give input in computer your

*you are giving your mind (computer) negative
input*
- (585) ในจิตของเรา

into mind of your

plant it into your mind
- (586) จิตของเราเปรียบเหมือนคอมพิวเตอร์

mind your compared to computer

your mind is comparable to a computer
- (587) ที่สามารถรับเรื่องราวทั้งหลาย

can store stories all

it can store huge data
- (588) แต่ถ้าเรารับแล้ว

if we accept it

if you listen to those songs
- (589) เราเอามาวิเคราะห์ให้เป็นศีลธรรม

we take it analyze use dharma

and analyze them using dharma approach
- (590) โอเคไม่ผิดบาป

it is fine, not wrong

it is fine, not wrong

Here, a computer metaphor is used to explain how an individuals' mind functions (lines 586-587). Like a computer, our mind is seen as huge data storage; and as one that can be programed and re-programed (lines 583-585). Worldly music, Duangpon claims, does not contain constructive messages as it is based on concepts such as sexual misconduct (lines 579-582), whilst dharma music is regarded as more spiritual. She emphasizes twice that it is very essential to listen and to sing dharma songs (lines 571-572) in order to nourish her spirituality (lines 574-576). However, worldly music is acceptable if it is used constructively, for example, if it gets the listeners to think about the reality of life (lines 588-590).

In Interview transcript 6.6, Duangpon tells her story of becoming a vegan. The underlying motivation behind it lies in her belief in the law of karma as promoted by I-Kuan-Tao. Here, she describes an animal mistreatment using analogy.

Interview transcript 6.6: Motivation behind adoption of veganism.

- (702) ที่ฟังการกินตรงนี้
I was really inspired eating vegan
I was really inspired to go vegan
- (703) เพราะอนุตรธรรม
because of i-kuan-tao
because of i-kuan-tao
- (704) มันสอนให้เราไม่เหมือนตรงอื่น
the teaching of this cult is different from others
they teach us not like other cults

- (705) คือเขาบอกว่า
in that
in that
- (706) ถ้ากินอย่างนี้แล้ว
if eat like this
if you adopt veganism,
- (707) จะหยุดเหตุผลกรรมได้
will terminate result of karma
your karmic bondage will be terminated
-
*(the conversation moves to different topic from
line 714-721)*
- (714) พอเราเห็นภาพ
when we see clip
when I was shown the clip
- (715) ที่เขาเอามาชำมาหั่น
people take animals to kill and cut up
animals were killed and cut into pieces
- (716) ตอนแรกที่เห็นภาพที่เขาหั่นกบหั่นปลา
when see pictures they cut frogs cut fish
when I saw frogs or fish was chopped up
- (717) เพราะว่าจิตเรายังไม่บริสุทธิ์พอ
because mind my not yet pure
because our mind was clouded with ignorance

- (718) ที่จะไม่คิดถึงหัวอกเขา
not think of feeling of animals
we didn't feel compassionate to those living beings
- (719) เพราะเรากินจนชิน
because we eat until used to it
because we are used to a meat-eating culture
- (720) เราฆ่าจนชิน
we kill until used to it
killing animals for meat is common
- (721) เราทำจนเป็นเรื่องชิน
we do it that used to it
killing is an acceptable thing
-
(the conversation moves to different topic from line 721-739)
- (732) แต่พอเรามาเรียนตรงอนุตรธรรม
when studies i-kuan-tao dharma
when I studied i-kuan-tao dharma
- (733) เขาสอนว่า
they taught that
I was taught that
- (734) เกล็ดปลาเนี่ยเหมือนกับ
scales fish are like
removing scales from the fish

- (735) ถอดเล็บเราเนอะ
removing nails our
is like removing your nails
- (736) เล็บเราเจ็บไหม
nails your, does it hurt?
if it is your nail, does it hurt?
- (737) ปลามันทรมาน
fish must feel painful
the fish must be feeling painful
- (738) มันดิ้นไปๆๆ
they move
they struggle trying to escape
- (739) มันโดนขูดเกล็ดนะ
fish are remove scales
when their scales are removed

Duangpon's vegan identity element is constructed within the religious context of I-Kuan-Tao (lines 703 and 732). She was inspired by I-Kuan-Tao's distinctive belief system, especially the teaching of the principle of veganism. She was convinced that one's spirituality will be purified if one is practicing veganism as she says 'จะหยุดเหตุผลกรรมได้' (your karmic bondage will be terminated) (line 707). Her compassion toward animals grew after she was shown video clips about animal slaughter. However, believing that a meat-eating culture has become an ingrained habit of humans (lines 791-793), she encourages others to be more thoughtful by putting themselves in the

position of those suffering animals. So, she explains that the pain that fish must have felt when their scales were removed is analogous to the pain we may experience if our nails are removed (lines 734-739). A vegan identity element is thus produced based on her belief in vegan practice as outlined by I-Kuan-Tao.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter provides a multimodal analysis of Duangpon's identity production at three sites of engagements that are made up of overlapping practices and multiple intersecting higher-level actions. These sites of engagement are: worshipping I-Kuan-Tao Gods; cooking vegetarian spicy tofu salad; and cooking vegan chili dip. Within these sites of engagement, Duangpon produces particularly salient identity elements: 1. A spiritual mother identity element; 2. An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element; 3. A vegan identity element; and 4. A business owner identity element. Duangpon also produced other identity elements during my fieldwork (such as a neighbor identity element as she interacts with the boy and the girl living next door during the site of engagement of worshipping to I-Kuan-Tao's gods). But these and other different identity elements were not as salient as the ones outlined here.

Through the notion of modal density (Norris, 2004, 2011a), I delineated the simultaneous production of multiple identity elements with a particular focus on how modes came together, constructing each action. Since Duangpon can only focus on a specific action at time while paying less attention to other actions, each of her identity element is hierarchically produced in the foreground, mid-ground or background of her attention/awareness. I have illustrated how Duangpon produces particularly salient identity elements through the use of various modes and with mediational means. For example, Duangpon produces a vegan identity element through the food she cooks in her store; she produces a business owner identity element through her vegetarian food store and the objects within; and she produces an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element through the I-Kuan-Tao temple and objects within.).

In this study, Duangpon constructs her vegan identity element primarily through the mediational means of vegetarian food that she cooks for sale in her store. According to I-Kuan-Tao belief, a vegan diet must be free from any product coming from animal origin including eggs, milk, or dairy products. In addition, it cannot contain any strongly pungent herbs such as garlics, onions or shallots. However, Duangpon claims, due to the permission given to her by her spiritual mentor, she still uses these herbs in her cooking, and Duangpon and her family members eat this food as well.

In the next chapter, I examine the identity production of my third participant, Natakrit who also practices I-Kuan-Tao.

Chapter 7

Natakrit's identity production

In this chapter, I provide the analysis of Natakrit's identity production within two sites of engagement where Natakrit engages in a multitude of simultaneously produced higher-level actions. Keeping in line with Scollon (2001) as he noted that all actions are identity-telling, I tease apart Natakrit's multiple identity elements produced simultaneously through these higher-level actions, employing the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Norris, 2004, 2011a).

The two sites of engagements that I examine in this chapter both are I-Kuan-Tao dharma events. They are the site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall; and the site of engagement of giving a dharma lecture at a dharma assembly.

7.1 Site of engagement: Giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall

I begin with the multimodal transcript (Figure 7.1) displaying the site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall. Natakrit, as a 'jiangshi' (a lecturer in I-Kuan-hem Tao) and a leader of the group, supervises a ritual rehearsal and organizes the work flow as he assigns his staff responsibilities. Some of the staff members prepare fruits for offering while others manage the altar setting; others are in charge of showing videos about animal cruelty while some work in the kitchen preparing vegan food for the attendants after the ritual. Before the ritual is performed by the senior master of the cult, Natakrit gives a dharma lecture to the audience, convincing them to receive I-Kuan-Tao.

During the dharma orientation lecture, and particularly when Natakrit claims himself to be *chosen* by the holy deities for the special duty of leading sentient beings to receive Tao, Natakrit foregrounds himself as 'the chosen one' which implies his superiority to others. Within this site of engagement, two primary intersecting practices are a religious practice and a practice of lecturing. These two primary practices comprise many smaller practices such as a practice of offering fruits to Gods, a practice of opening the mystic portal, and a practice of giving a dharma lecture about a belief in apocalypse. These practices are also intersecting with particular mediational means and through the intersection of these practices and mediational means come about particular higher-level actions that I analyze here:

1. The higher-level action of purporting himself as the chosen one.
2. The higher-level action of propagating I-Kuan-Tao.

The identity elements that Natakrit produces through these higher-level actions are:

1. The chosen one identity element.
2. An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element.

In this chapter, I show throughout that Natakrit foregrounds his particularly salient ‘*chosen one*’ identity element, which is deeply rooted in his religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao. Believing that everything regarding I-Kuan-Tao is real, Natakrit trusts that Gods have made him more special than others by choosing him to be their representative for dharma propagation. For example, he says during an interview ‘*พี่เป็นคนที่ดีที่สิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ท่านเลือกเอาไว้ เป็นเมล็ดพันธุ์ เลือกเอาไว้ให้ช่วยเผยแผ่ธรรมะ*’ (*I am so grateful to be the chosen one, I see myself as a seed of virtue, selected for dharma propagation*) (Interview transcript 7.1, lines 412-414). Being chosen for dharma propagation, implies that he is superior to ordinary human beings and that he has the power to save others as illustrated in his interview in line 422 ‘*เราสามารถช่วยเวไนยสัตว์ได้*’ (*I was meant to make a great contribution to all creatures, saving their souls*). Through his superiority he knows what others are incapable of knowing. For Natakrit, the existence of Gods, saints, heaven, hell, and other religious concepts are *real*.

Natakrit’s chosen one identity element is developed through his unshakable faith in I-Kuan-Tao’s Gods and their teachings. Due to his faith, he bought land and built a large Buddha hall on it. There, he sponsors dharma classes on the weekends

and dharma assemblies every year. Natakrit has taken an I-Kuan-Tao religious practice as part of his daily routine for the past 17 years since his conversion to I-Kuan-Tao; Twice a day, he worships Gods, he offers tea to the Gods, and he lives on a strictly vegan diet. Natakrit believes that his life, as he lives it, is Gods' plan.

Natakrit persistently produced himself as the chosen one during my observation in the field including in the moment I analyze in the following transcript (Figure 7.1). However, each multimodal transcript represents only one small moment that makes up the whole site of engagement. Here, I begin with the site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture. Natakrit claims that his 'special duty' to help save the souls of sentient beings from the apocalypse is assigned to him by the holy deities.



Figure 7.1: Natatkrit focuses on the chosen one identity element.

At the beginning of the orientation lecture, Natakrit, standing before his audience, insinuates fear of the impending doomsday whereby the human race will come to a terrible end. In Images 1-2, his left arm is raised as he points his index finger in alignment with his utterances ‘อย่าลืม 10 คนตาย 7 เหลือ 3’ (keep in mind that if there are 10 people, 3 out of 10 will be saved). Then, he lowers his arm to a middle position while he continues with ‘ผมบอกเอาไว้ล่วงหน้า’ (I’m telling you this is going to happen). In Image 3, Natakrit slightly leans forward nodding twice as he says ‘สิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์เป็นคุณ’ (it’s the holy deities) before raising both hands up to chest level and moving them up and down three times in synchrony with his utterances ‘ให้มาช่วย’ (who order me to help save you) (Image 4) and then moves his hands back to a rest position and straightens his torso (Image 5). In Images 6-7, he leans forward while raising both hands up to chest level with palms facing inward, pointing to himself twice, asking the question ‘ถ้าถามว่าฉันเอง’ (do I really want), before he moves his hands down to a rest position, finishing the question ‘อยากมาช่วยไหม’ (to be here?). Next, Natakrit refers to his salary as he again raises both hands with palms facing inward, pointing to his chest as he says ‘ทำงานเดือนหนึ่ง’ (each month); he drops both hands down to a middle position as he continues his utterances ‘ห้าหมื่นหกหมื่นบาท’ (I earn around fifty-sixty thousands baht) (Images 8-9). In Images 10-11, his hands are raised again with palms facing inward to his chest as he utters ‘นอนอยู่บ้านสบายๆ’ (I can live with that money staying home), before putting his hands down to the sides of his body while uttering ‘ไม่ต้องมาหรรอก’ (no need to bother myself to be here). In the final Image (12), Natakrit opens his palms, moving his arms outwardly from the sides of his body saying ‘เงินเดือนก็ไม่ได้’ (I have got no pay), before he twice swings both arms up in a circle, where the first swing is performed when he

utters ‘น้ำมันก็ต้องจ่าย’ (but I have to pay for my gas) and the second swing is produced jointly with his utterances ‘ข้าวต้องหา’ (and my food) (see Video 11).

This shows that Natakrit perceives himself as somebody who is selected by the holy deities for dharma propagation. Through the utilization of multiple communicative modes: spoken language, gesture, posture, head nod, and facial expression, the chosen one identity element is enacted in the foreground of his attention. Simultaneously, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is produced in the mid-ground of his attention as illustrated in Figure 7.2

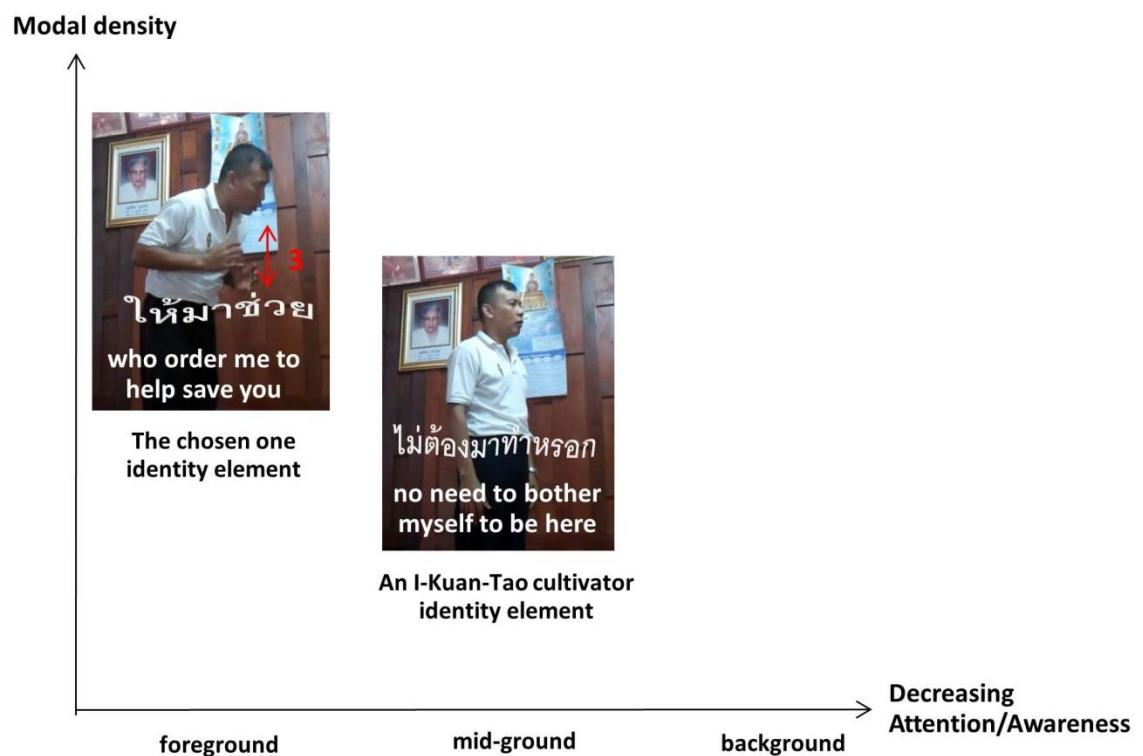


Figure 7.2: Natakrit's identity elements produced at the site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall as shown in Figure 7.1.

Here, Natakrit foregrounds his attention on purporting himself as the chosen one, claiming that it is a mandate of heaven to help save sentient beings from an

imminent doomsday. This identity element is foregrounded as the higher-level action of portraying himself as the chosen one is produced with high modal density, which is achieved through the intensity plus complexity of the modes of spoken language, gesture, posture, facial expression and head movement. When Natakrit says ‘สิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์เป็นคนให้มาช่วย’ (the holy deities order me to help save you) (Images 3-4), he emphasizes the words *send*, *come*, and *help* with three beat gestures; his posture (leaning forwards conveying assertiveness), his facial expression (looking intently and confidently), and his head movement (nodding twice) all illustrate his belief in being the one chosen and sent by the deities to save others.

His belief that he has been destined to this special duty is connected to the belief of an apocalypse (Images 1-2). Natakrit uses an intimidation strategy trying to convince his audience to cultivate I-Kuan-Tao as he warns them ‘อย่าลืม 10 คนตาย 7 เหลือ 3’ (keep in mind that if there are 10 people, 3 out of 10 will be saved) and ‘ผมบอกเอาไว้ล่วงหน้า’ (I’m telling you this is going to happen). Being the chosen one, Natakrit is privileged, as he is allowed to know the imminent future of the world coming to an end, whereby the human race will be diminished. His belief in an apocalypse is here constructed as *real*. The utterances are accentuated through a warning gesture as he is pointing his left index finger upwards (Image 1), strengthening his identity as the chosen one.

The importance of himself as the chosen one is strongly conveyed through his utterances that are spoken with an intense tone, claiming that he is doing this for the sake of others. His speech is produced in combination with a stream of gesture and forceful facial expression. A deictic gesture that is enhanced with a beat gesture

(Images 6-10) is used to emphasize the fact that there was no need for him to put burden onto himself, if not *chosen* by gods for this special duty. Again, in Image 12, his significance as a special person is aggressively highlighted as he claims that he receives nothing in return for serving Gods' will. This is conveyed through iconic gestures as he opens his palms outwardly from the side of his body before he twice swings both arms up in a circle, emphasizing his utterances, conveying the concept of *nothing*. This implies a strong devotion and dedication to the special role assigned, thus, differentiating himself from others because he is the chosen one (Also see: Appendix E.1 the journal article).

Natakrit simultaneously produces an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element through the higher-level action of propagating I-Kuan-Tao's apocalyptic teaching. An I-Kuan-Tao identity element is seen here as a part of missionary work of being an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator and a 'jiangshi' (a lecturer). As he mid-grounds propagating a belief in apocalypse, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is enacted through the utilization of medium modal density. This is achieved through the modes of spoken language, gesture, posture, facial expression and head movement.

In this example, Natakrit similarly produces his chosen one identity element and his I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element: He produces both through the interconnectedness of verbal and non-verbal modes, that is through spoken language aligning with gesture, posture, facial expression, head movement, the Buddha hall and the objects within where the ritual takes place. Natakrit produces these identity elements through different higher-level actions, but at differentiated levels of attention. By using a modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Norris, 2004a, 2011a), I am able to tease these two identity

elements apart, considering the theoretical notions of modal density and attention/awareness levels; and then determine which higher-level actions are more or less focused, leading to how Natakrit's identity elements are produced simultaneously at different levels of attention/awareness. A similar example is also given in Appendix B.5 (transcribed from Video 12).

Figure 7.3 shows the moment in between 02.04.08 to 02.43.05 within the same site of engagement as the previous example (Figure 7.1). Several primary practices are intersecting: a religious practice, a practice of lecturing; and a vegan practice. These more general practices are made up of smaller practices: a practice of worshipping Gods, a practice of establishing a Buddha hall, a practice of offering fruit, a practice of lecturing on veganism, and a practice of eating vegan food. These practices are intersecting with particular mediational means, resulting in three particular higher-level actions that I analyze here:

1. The higher-level action of propagating veganism.
2. The higher-level action of doing missionary work.
3. The higher-level action of eating vegan food.

The three identity elements that Natakrit produces here are:

1. The chosen one identity element.
2. An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element.
3. A vegan identity element.

Now, I elucidate through the multimodal transcript 7.3 how Natakrit produces these particularly salient identity elements within this site of engagement.



Figure 7.3: Natakrit focuses on 'the chosen one' identity element.

According to his religious belief, Natakrit focuses on presenting himself as the *chosen one* while lecturing his audience about the concept of veganism. He attempts to convince his audience to become vegan in order to stop creating new karmic affinity with other animals. He stands in front of the audience, with his back turned to the Buddha altar. He begins by saying that 'หนึ่งชีวิตรอดตายเพราะกินเจหนึ่งมื้อ' (one animal's life is

saved by eating one vegan meal) (Image 1). As he utters these words, he simultaneously points his left index finger upwards, moving it up and down and slightly forward six times. Next, he turns his palms up and positions them at chest level in synchrony with spoken language as he says ‘สัตว์เดรัจฉานจะโมทนาให้’ (those animals will rejoice with your merit). In Images 3-4 where he still holds his palms close to one another at chest level, he turns his palms facing down before moving them apart and slightly to the side at a lower angle, saying ‘ภัยพิบัติก็จะห่างไป’ (imminent disasters will be alleviated). He continues to say ‘ถ้าเขายังทำแบบนี้ และเป็นอย่างนี้’ (but if you continue doing like this, doing what you are doing) and gestures, moving his hands with extended fingers up to waist level, palms facing toward one another before slightly moving them up and down in unison, from the left to the right four times (Images 5-6). Then, he waves his left hand in a left-right direction eleven times in synchrony with his utterances ‘ไม่ต้องโอดโอยไม่ต้องร้องขอเจรจาเจ้ากรรมนายเวร’ (no pleading for life, no negotiation with your karmic creditors). In Image 8, Natakrit says ‘พระอาจารย์ได้คุกเข่าขอกรรมนายเวร’ (the holy masters have kneeled down on your behalf asking for mercy from them) as he is turning his torso slightly to the left and backwards and moves his hands, palms facing toward one another positioned at waist level and with the extended fingers slightly pointing downward. He then forms a hand seal by clasping both hands together before drawing them up to face level saying ‘ให้ศิษย์ได้บำเพ็ญธรรมะก่อน’ (to allow you for a chance for spiritual cultivation) (Image 9). In Images 10-11, he unclasps his hands, opens his palms facing up with fingers slightly curling inward, positioned at shoulder height toward the right and with his posture slightly leaning forwards. Then, he simultaneously moves his hands up and down five times and from the right to the left while saying ‘แล้วพอมีบุญกุศลก็เอาไปใช้เขา’ (when enough

merit is accumulated, it can be transferred to your karmic creditors for forgiveness). Finally, in Image 12, he points his left index finger to the audience and with a forceful look as he says ‘แต่ถ้าเรายังสร้างหนี้เวรกรรม เป็นกรรมของใครของมัน’ (if you are still not aware of it, you are responsible for your own karma) (see Video 13).

In Figure 7.6, I illustrate that the chosen one identity element is constructed in the foreground of his attention/awareness while an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element and a vegan identity element are mid-grounded. These identity elements are constructed through the phenomenally displayed higher-level actions that come together but are teased apart using the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness. The chosen one identity element is developed in accordance with Natakrit’s belief that he has embraced a ‘special power’ to discern something as real that for others is viewed as supernatural. He produces this identity element through the higher-level action of propagating veganism, lecturing that veganism helps break off new karmic affinity. He utilizes multiple communicative modes but most salient are those of spoken language and gesture to convey his idea. Simultaneously, Natakrit mid-grounds his I-Kuan-Tao cultivator and vegan identity elements.

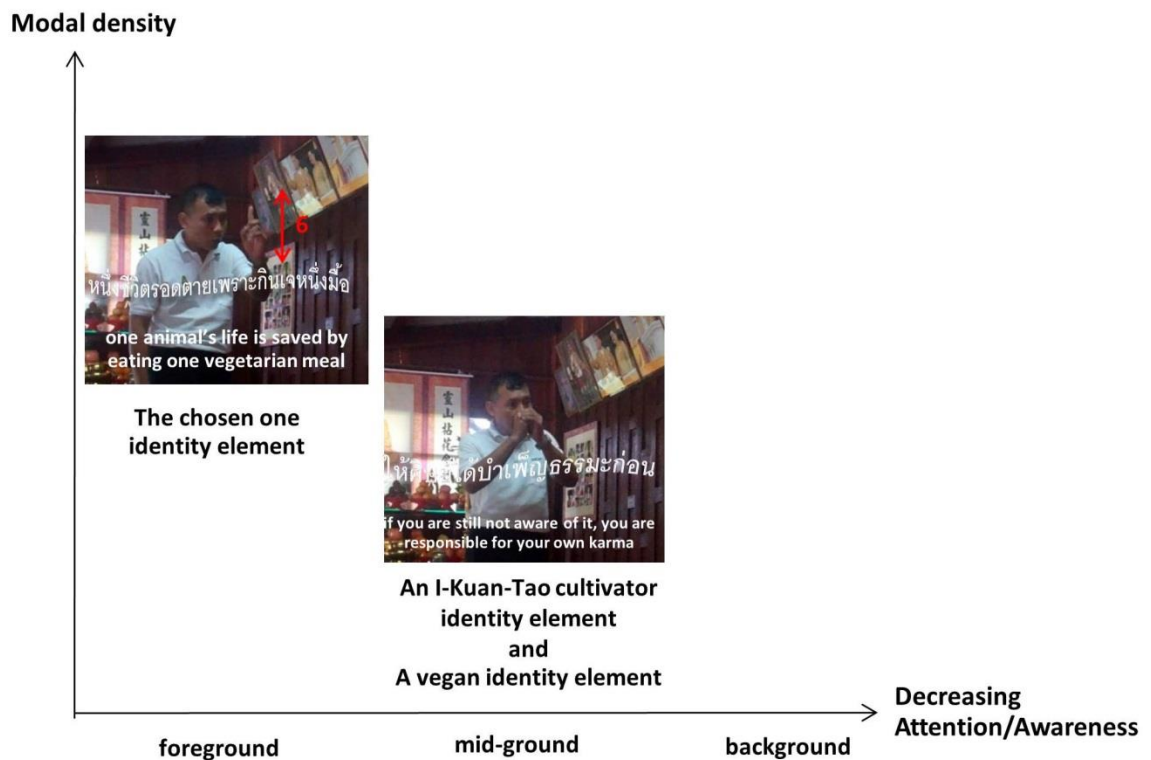


Figure 7.4: Natakrit's identity elements produced at the site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall as shown in Figure 7.3.

Believing that he is superior and that he has been given special power by Gods in order to save other sentient beings, the chosen one identity element is developed. This time, Natakrit foregrounds his attention on instilling a fear of the karmic consequences of eating (and thus) killing animals in his audience. He portrays his knowledge of vengeful souls of the killed animals as the chosen one as he lectures on karmic creditors, merit transfer, and an impending apocalypse. Believing that he is *chosen* to help people, Natakrit conveys these religious concepts, giving them reality through multiple communicative modes and the employment of high modal density achieved through the intensity of spoken language and gestures. Specifically, his use of gestures illustrates the reality of the religious concepts that he discusses.

Given his superiority to ordinary human beings, Natakrit knows the truth about how karma works and urges his audience to cultivate good karma. One way to do this is through veganism. He stresses at the beginning (Images 2-4) that good karmic consequences result from a practice of veganism as forgiveness will be given by the karmic creditors (the animals killed for food). The reason, as Natakrit promotes, is eating only one vegan meal means merit-making because one life of an animal is saved. A word ‘หนึ่ง’ (one) referring to ‘หนึ่งชีวิต’ (one life) and ‘หนึ่งมื้อ’ (one vegan meal) in his utterance is given pictorial content through the use of iconic gesture: He raises his left index finger, conveying the quantity of one (vegetarian meal and one life) and then moves it up and down six times, producing six beat gestures, giving intensive emphasis to the words spoken (Image 1).

Another positive result of eating a vegan diet, as highlighted by Natakrit, is that a person who is a vegan will not be affected by the imminent apocalypse, as he says ‘ภัยพิบัติก็จะห่างไป’ (imminent disasters will be alleviated). This is because the animals will rejoice with the merit a vegan gains from abstinence of killing and it is this merit that protects them. Here, spoken language is produced in synchrony with iconic gesture (Images 3-4), denoting a sense of alleviation of an impending threat.

A little later, Natakrit uses another intimidation strategy while he attempts to convince his audience to become vegan as it is the *special duty* of the *chosen one* to save sentient beings. Natakrit, with a forceful manner, tells the audience that they are responsible for their own karma if they do not convert to veganism. He uses spoken language in synchrony with an iconic gesture of waving his hand eleven times, conveying a negative meaning, emphasizing the word “ไม่” (no) as he says “ไม่ต้องโอดโดยไม

ต้องร้องขอเจรจาเจ้ากรรมนายเวร’ (no pleading for life, no negotiation with your karmic creditors) (Image 7). Then, as shown in Image 12, Natakrit points to the audience while saying ‘แต่ถ้าเรายังสร้างหนี้เวรกรรม เป็นกรรมของใครของมัน’ (if you are still not aware of it, you are responsible for your own karma). A pointing index finger, here, denotes his authority over the audience, illustrating his superiority.

Natakrit further tries to convince his audience that I-Kuan-Tao cultivators are privileged. He claims that their karma involved with the cycle of animal torturing, either directly or indirectly, cannot be mitigated or forgiven unless they cultivate I-Kuan-Tao. Besides spoken language, Natakrit particularly uses gestures, which are sometimes used in an iconic way demonstrating his deep faith in I-Kuan-Tao and the religious concepts as real. For example (Images 8-9), Natakrit gives reality to the holy deities by emphasizing their actions of beseeching for mercy, using a deictic gesture; and performs ‘hetong’ (Image 9), a symbolic hand seal of I-Kuan-Tao, using an iconic gesture as his hands are clenched in a raised position, denoting the cultivation of good deeds. This merit, as claimed by Natakrit (the chosen one), can be transferred to the karmic creditors in order to ask for their forgiveness (Images 10-11). Here, the concept of *merit* is given materiality as Natakrit visualizes it using a metaphoric gesture of open palms facing up with fingers slightly curled inward, as if he was holding *merit* in his hands (Image 10). Natakrit then depicts the motion of transferring merit to karmic creditors in the same manner as somebody handing something to someone, here utilizing a metaphoric gesture co-produced with a beat gesture.

In the mid-ground of his attention/awareness, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is produced during the dharma orientation lecture as he propagates

veganism. Natakrit, as a 'jiangshi' (a religious lecturer) and the leader of the group, initiates this dharmic function as part of missionary work. Here, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is produced through medium modal density achieved through the modes of spoken language alongside with gestures, posture and facial expression. But more importantly, a domestic Buddha hall where the dharma lecture takes place and the objects within highly inform his identity element of I-Kuan-Tao cultivator.

Still in the mid-ground of his attention/awareness, Natakrit produces his vegan identity element through the higher-level action of eating vegan food. While this may be less obvious than the other two identity elements, the multimodal transcript analyzed here (Figure 7.3) represents only one specific moment in the site of engagement. This site of engagement is made up of multiple intersecting primary practices in which one of these practices is a vegan practice. Based on the observational data (as discussed in chapter 4, section 4.3), the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall begins with giving a dharma lecture. This is followed by the senior members leading everyone to worship Gods to establish the Buddha hall. Once the ritual is finished, everyone is invited to have lunch together, where only vegan food is served (as illustrated in Figure 7.5).



Figure 7.5: Natakrit eats vegan food for lunch after the ritual depicted in Figure 7.3

Within this site of engagement, Natakrit gives a dharma lecture because he is a 'jiangshi' (a religious lecturer of the I-Kuan-Tao cult). According to I-Kuan-Tao, a practice of veganism is mandatory for a 'jiangshi'. For this, the chosen one identity element and the vegan identity element become relevant, and his teaching about veganism is based upon his experience of practicing veganism for religious purposes for about 17 years. Natakrit, therefore, produces the higher-level action of eating vegan, and with it, his vegan identity element, through the employment of medium modal density achieved through non-verbal modes: gesture and body posture. Natakrit also uses particular mediational means to produce his vegan identity elements such as vegan food that he eats after the session (Figure 7.5). (A similar example is also given in Appendix B. 6 transcribed from Video 14).

7.2 Site of engagement of giving a dharma lecture at dharma assemblies

The dharma assemblies were held from 8 to 9 December 2012 at the Buddha hall built by Natakrit. Natakrit assigned other lecturers on his team with the topics for their dharma lectures: i.e. A moral conduct for I-Kuan-Tao cultivators in the I-Kuan-Tao temple; I-Kuan-Tao's ten commandments; I-Kuan-Tao and veganism; and Religiosity and dharma. Natakrit himself chose the topic about the benefits of cultivating I-Kuan-Tao, where he convinces his audience that the spiritual pathway outlined by I-Kuan-Tao can lead everyone to final salvation. This topic comprises a belief in the ultimate spiritual goal of I-Kuan-Tao (a merging of one's soul with The Venerable Eternal Mother in the heavenly realm) which one can achieve if one has knowledge about a holy secret. The lecture deals with ephemeral concepts, which, for Natakrit, are real as he has been given 'special power' by the deities to discern what for others is supernatural. A lecturer who is eligible to lecture on this topic requires dharma seniority and deep understanding about the I-Kuan-Tao practice. This topic allows Natakrit to force his audience to receive I-Kuan-Tao dharma. Natakrit strives to succeed in convincing people to receive dharma because this means the fulfilment of his role and special duty to save them.

During his lecture, Natakrit shows a slide presentation about the cycle of reincarnation on a wide screen projector located on his right side (it is out of view in Figure 7.9). He explains to his audience that I-Kuan-Tao is the most direct and quickest spiritual path to enlightenment.

The site of engagement is made up of two intersecting practices: a religious practice and a practice of lecturing. These primary practices, again, are made up of

multiple smaller practices such as a practice of worshipping Gods, a practice of offering fruit, or a practice of giving a dharma lecture. These practices intersect with particular mediational means, making particularly salient higher-level actions possible. The higher-level actions that I analyse here are:

1. The higher-level action of preaching I-Kuan-Tao.
2. The higher-level action of convincing his audience to receive dharma.

Two particularly salient identity elements come about through these higher-level actions. They are:

1. An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element.
2. The chosen one identity element.

Natakrit produces these identity elements on different levels of attention/awareness.

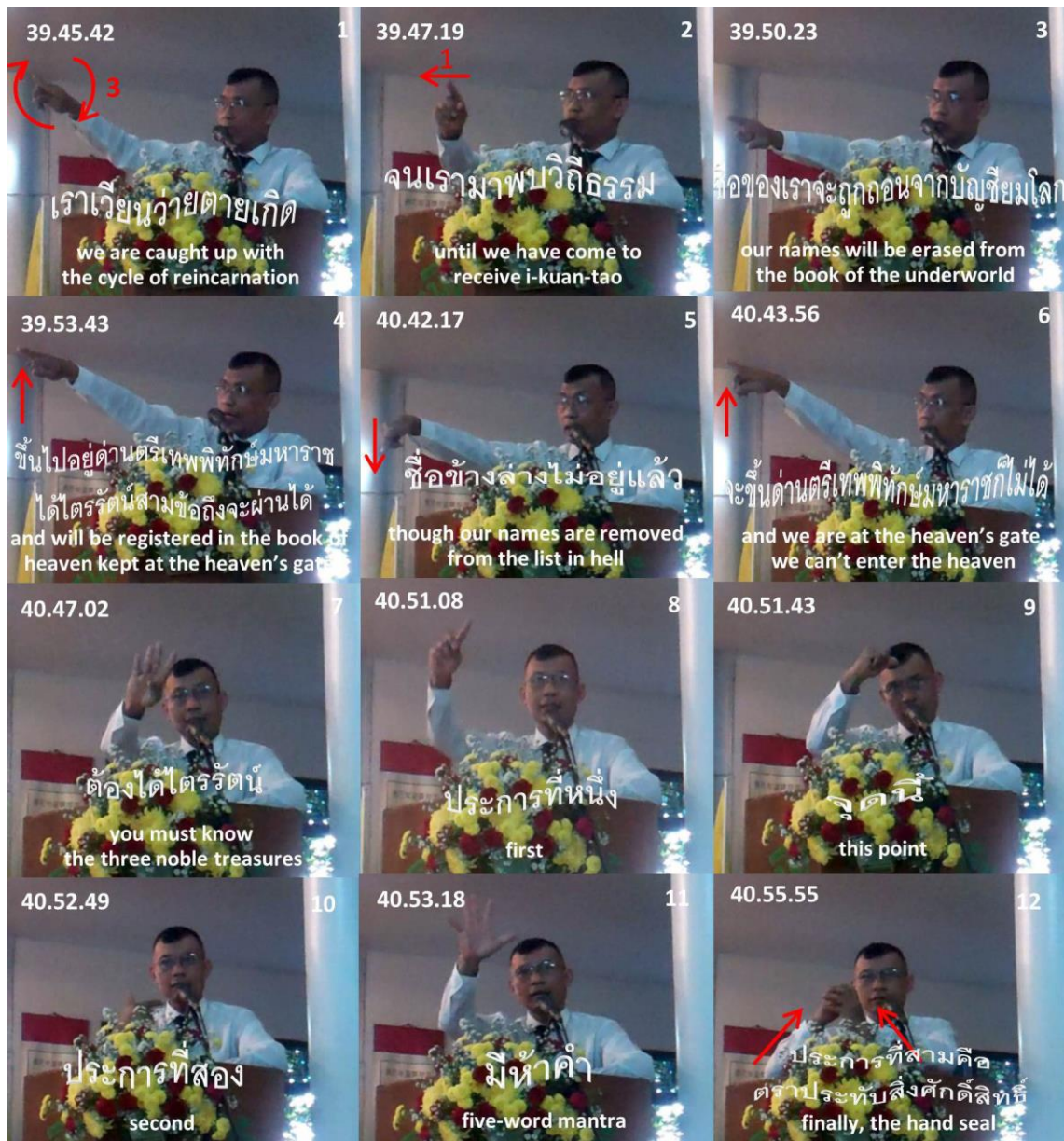


Figure 7.6: Natakrit focuses on the I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element.

Natakrit foregrounds the higher-level action of preaching I-Kuan-Tao, where he tries to convince his audience that I-Kuan-Tao can lead to sudden enlightenment. During his dharma lecture, Natakrit shows a slide presentation which presents a diagram of a tripartite cosmos conceived by the cult in relation to the belief of the transmigration (Figure 7.7).

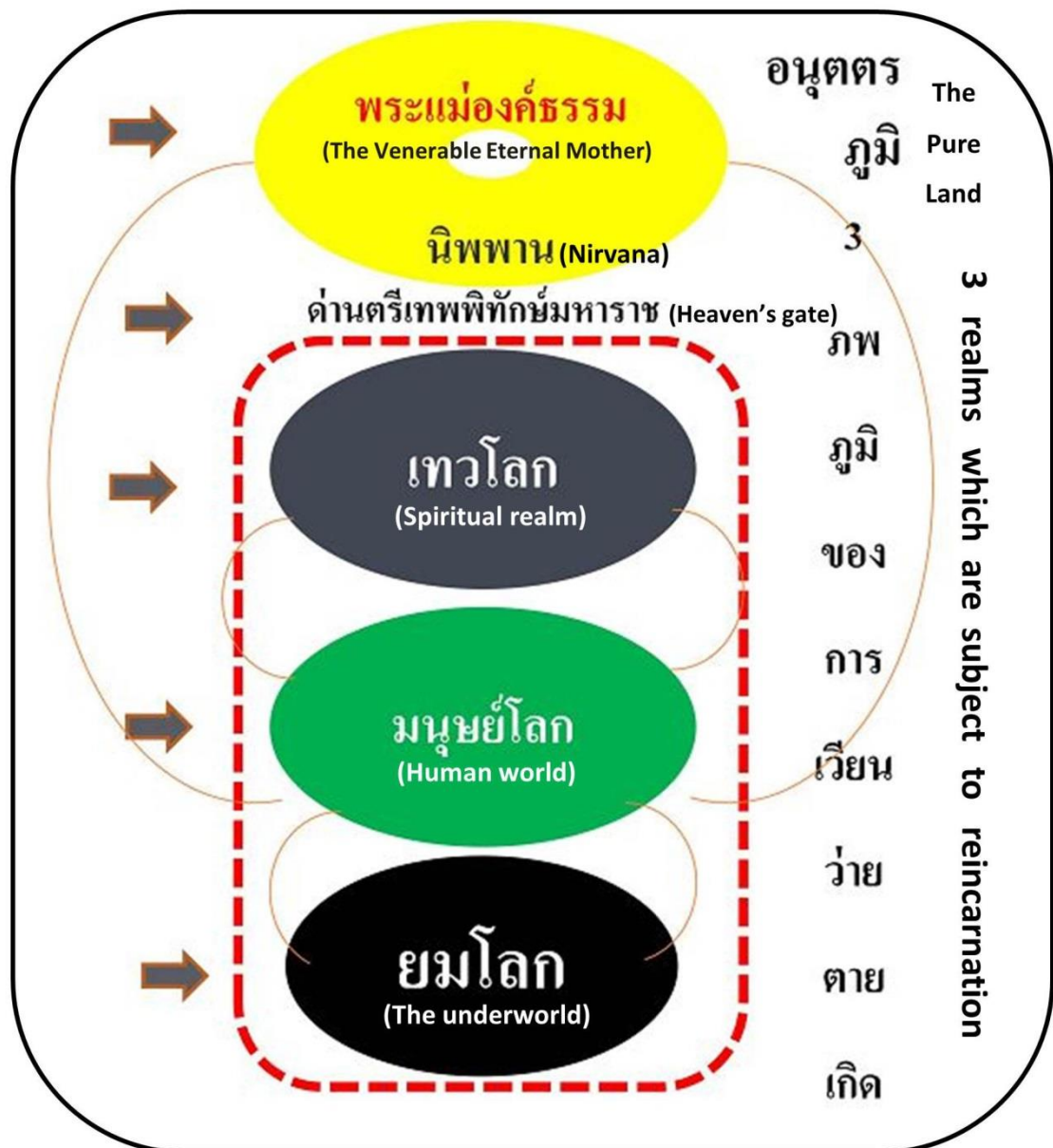


Figure 7.7: A diagram presenting the cosmos as conceived by the I-Kuan-Tao cult.¹²

Displayed in hierarchical order, the heavenly realm (or nirvana) where The Venerable Eternal Mother lives (top) is separated from the three lower realms: the spiritual realm, the material world and the underworld. Situated in-between the heavenly realm and the rest is a heaven's gate guarded by Three Gods of Death.

¹² This diagram is presented to the audience during the dharma lecture at dharma assemblies. The diagram was originally described in Thai and an English translation is added by the researcher.

Reincarnation in either the spiritual or human world is subject to the cycle of birth-death-rebirth as indicated by the red arrows. The material world, in accordance with the belief of traditional Chinese sectarianism, consists of the human world and the underworld, which is the realm of the dead. Here, Natakrit shows these four separated realms (Figure 7.7), in order to facilitate an understanding in his audience.

Natakrit refers to his PowerPoint presentation during the dharma assemblies (Figure 7.6, Images 1-6). He turns at a slight angle towards the right (the position of the PowerPoint), his index finger is pointing at the diagram of the four realms displayed and his gaze follows the direction of his index finger. Natakrit is standing at the podium and begins his talk by referring to transmigration, which is a major hindrance that keeps sentient beings from enlightenment. Aligning with his talk as he says ‘เราเวียนว่ายตายเกิด’ (we are caught up with the cycle of reincarnation), he visualizes the ‘cycle of reincarnation’ through gesture, raising his extended right hand at a 45 degree angle with an index finger pointing at eye level before making a circular motion three times (Image 1). He then retracts his right hand halfway with his index finger slightly pointing up and forwards as he says ‘จนเรามาพบวิถีธรรม’ (until we receive I-Kuan-Tao) (Image 2). He continues speaking ‘ชื่อของเราจะถูกถอนจากบัญชียมโลก’ (our names will be erased from the book of the underworld), his right arm is extending forward until it reaches full extension held at shoulder level, and his index finger is pointing to the right (the direction of his arm) (Image 3). In Image 4, his right arm is raised (at a 45 degree angle to his body) with the index finger pointing and his gaze is following his index finger, as he says ‘ขึ้นไปอยู่ด้านตรีเทพพิทักษ์มหाराช ได้ไตรรัตน์สามข้อถึงจะผ่านได้’ (and will be registered in the book of heaven kept at the heaven’s gate). Abruptly, he then lowers his arm to shoulder height with an

index finger pointing downward as he refers to the underworld realm ‘ชื่อข้างล่างไม่อยู่แล้ว’ (though our names are removed from the list in hell) (Image 5). Then (Image 6), he moves his arm up and to the same post stroke hold as in Image 4 with his index finger pointing upward as he utters ‘จะขึ้นด่านเทพพิทักษ์มหาราชก็ไม่ได้’ (and we are at the heaven’s gate, we can’t enter the heaven).

In Images 7-12, Natakrit shifts his attention to his audience, facing them. He says ‘ต้องได้ไตรรัตน์’ (you must know the three noble treasures) as he raises his right arm slightly above his head and with three fingers straight (Image 7) (Natakrit actually spreads his four fingers, but with his middle finger and ring finger close together, seemingly used to represent ‘one’. For this, he is seen to represent the concept of The Three Noble Treasures using three fingers: an index finger; the attached middle and ring fingers; and a little finger). Then, he folds his fingers inward except his index finger, which is pointing up over his head as he says ‘ประการที่หนึ่ง’ (first). Next, he points at the spot located in-between his two eyebrows using his thumb while saying ‘จุดนี้’ (this point) (Image 9) before pointing at his mouth, using his index finger as he utters ‘ประการที่สอง’ (second) (Image 10). He raises his right arm up above his head with spread fingers, indicating five, while saying ‘ห้าคำ’ (five-word mantra) (Image 11). Finally, he brings his hands together, holding them in a clenched and raised position as he says ‘ประการที่สามคือตราประทับสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์’ (finally, the hand seal) (Image 12) (see Video 15).

Here, multiple identity elements are constructed through the interconnection between verbal and non-verbal modes; and through the interlinked mediational means (the PowerPoint presentation). In the foreground of Natakrit’s attention, an I-Kuan-Tao

cultivator identity element is produced through high modal density, achieved through the intensity of spoken language aligning with gesture, including other non-verbal modes such as gaze, facial expression, layout and object within. In the mid-ground, the chosen one identity element is enacted through the employment of medium modal density achieved through intensity of modes of spoken language and facial expression.

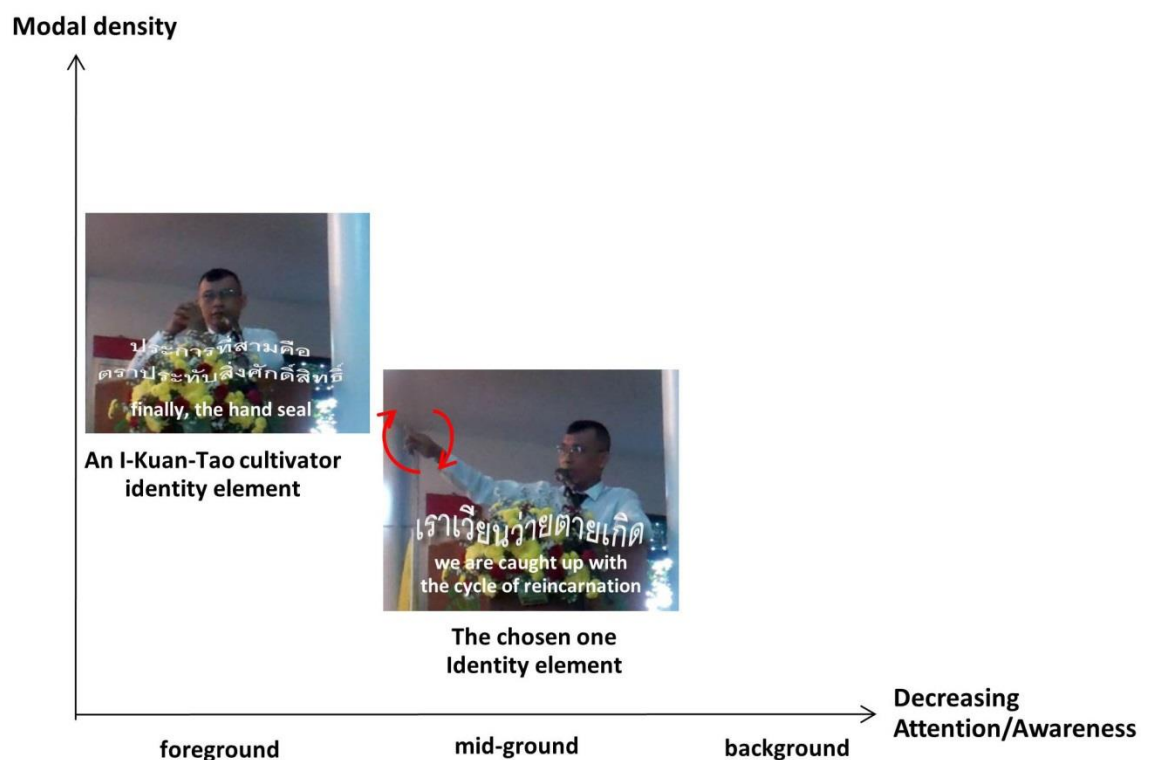


Figure 7.8: Natakrit's identity elements produced at the site of engagement of giving a dharma lecture at a dharma assembly as shown in Figure 7.6.

Preaching I-Kuan-Tao at dharma assembly is a part of a missionary work, taking place in Natakrit's I-Kuan-Tao Buddha hall. During the higher-level action of preaching I-Kuan-Tao, Natakrit focuses on lecturing on sudden enlightenment, using the PowerPoint as teaching material (Figure 7.7). Natakrit preaches that the cycle of reincarnation is the major hindrance to enlightenment and confidently affirms that I-Kuan-Tao enables all sentient beings to attain sudden enlightenment if one is able to

recognize and repeat *The Three Noble Treasures* correctly. He conveys this message by using a deictic gesture combined with a metaphoric gesture, and aligned with his utterances, referring to the hierarchical position of four realms: i.e.: the heavenly realm (nirvana), believed to be the residence of The Venerable Eternal Mother placed above; and the three other realms: the spiritual realm, the human world, and the underworld are placed in a lower position (Figure 7.7). He gives a pictorial content to the ephemeral concept of reincarnation when he produces a circular motion three times (metaphoric gesture) whilst uttering ‘เราเวียนว่ายตายเกิด’ (we are caught up with the cycle of reincarnation) (Image 1). Natakrit stresses that individuals can only reach spiritual enlightenment by cultivating I-Kuan-Tao despite alternate practices. He points to the underground as he preaches that ‘ชื่อข้างล่างไม่อยู่แล้ว’ (though our names are removed from the list in hell) (Image 5) and then points to the heaven’s gate saying ‘ขึ้นด่านเทพพิทักษ์มหาราชก็ไม่ได้’ (and we are at the heaven’s gate, we can’t enter the heaven) (Image 6).

Natakrit highlights the importance of The Three Noble Treasures, using an iconic gesture combined with a deictic gesture to emphasize the words spoken. He begins by pointing his index finger up indicating the first Noble Treasure (Image 8) and follows this with a deictic gesture where he points with his right thumb to the spot believed to be a location of a mystic portal (Image 9). Next, he indicates the second Noble Treasure, the five-word mantra, by pointing his right index finger to his mouth (Image 10). As this mantra contains five words, Natakrit spreads his five fingers, illustrating the number five (iconic gesture) (Image 11). I-Kuan-Tao cultivators are encouraged to remember it by heart and should be able to repeat this mantra when it is needed (for example, praying this mantra in times of trouble is supposed to protect

the cultivators from any danger) Finally, he conveys the last Noble Treasure by clenching his hands to form a heavenly gesture called 'hetong'.

Natakrit mid-grounds the higher-level action of convincing his audience to receive dharma, and with it, the chosen one identity element. He constructs the chosen one identity element through medium modal density, achieved through the modes of intensity of spoken language and a forceful facial expression. The chosen one identity element is constructed in relation to an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity because the ultimate goal of preaching is to influence them to believe in and convert to I-Kuan-Tao, which is the fulfilment of his role as the chosen one.

In this example, Natakrit simultaneously produces an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element in the foreground of his attention, where he is preaching I-Kuan-Tao to his audience, while producing the chosen one identity element in the mid-ground of his attention as he convinces his audience to convert to I-Kuan-Tao. For an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element, the mode of gesture is intertwined with spoken language, and also aligns with other non-verbal modes and mediational means; whereas the chosen one identity element is produced primarily through the intensity of the modes. These identity elements are both highly relevant as even though Natakrit foregrounds preaching I-Kuan-Tao, he preaches (in particular this topic) because it is his special duty as the chosen one to save others.

Natakrit also produces the identity elements illustrated above through his talk in the sociolinguistic interviews. He produces an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element most of the time in the mid-ground of his attention/awareness (Figure 7.1 and 7.3) and sometimes in the foreground of his attention/awareness (Figure 7.6). He committed

himself to missionary work in order to lead people to receive dharma of I-Kuan-Tao. This kind of missionary work is viewed by I-Kuan-Tao cultivators as a means for cultivating a true self. This kind of work contributes to the most meritorious karmic consequences, even greater, as Natakrit states below (lines 302-303), than building a seven-tiered pagoda.

Interview transcript 7.1: Commitment to leading people to receive I-Kuan-Tao.

- (295) ก็พยายามเอาบุญกุศลที่ทำในขณะที่มีชีวิตอยู่
will try take merit accumulate while living a life
I try to accumulate merit while I am still alive
- (296) ในขณะที่ก่อนที่จะถึงวันตาย
before I die
before I die
- (297) เอาบุญกุศลทั้งหมดนี้
take merit accumulate all this
accumulate all good karma I have cultivated
- (298) ไม่ว่าจะเป็นช่วยเวไนยสัตว์ก็ดี
from saving sentient beings
from saving sentient beings' lost souls
- (299) สวดมนต์ไหว้พระก็ดี
praying to the holy deities
praying to the holy deities
- (300) พุทธธรรมะให้ญาติโยมฟังก็ดี

- talking dharma to people
giving dharma talks to people.
- (301) ถือว่าธรรมะ
 dharma propagation
dharma propagation
- (302) การให้ธรรมะชนะการให้ทั้งปวง
 giving dharma surpasses all kinds of giving
giving dharma surpasses all kinds of giving
- (303) และเป็นการให้ที่สูงที่สุดเพราะ
 it is the giving most meritorious
it is the most meritorious form of giving
- (304) ให้อาหารใครวันหนึ่งก็ผุพัง
 if give a house someone, a house will decay
if you give someone a house, it is impermanent
- (305) ให้อาหารการกินวันหนึ่งเขาก็หิวอีก
 if you give someone food, they will get hungry
 again
*if you give someone food, they will get hungry
 again*
- (306) แต่ให้ธรรมะ
 but if you give dharma
if you enlighten their minds with dharma,
- (307) เป็นความรู้ที่ติดกับจิตวิญญาณเขาไปตลอดชีวิตหลายภพ

หลายชาติ

this knowledge will attach with their souls many
lives

dharma will attach to their souls forever

.....

*(the conversation moves to different topic from
lines 403-404)*

(403)

การรับธรรมะ

receiving tao

receiving tao

(404)

ยิ่งกว่าการสร้างพระเจดีย์ 7 ชั้น

is far more than building pagoda seven-tiered

is far more than building a seven-tiered pagoda

An ultimate goal of I-Kuan-Tao is the cultivation of spiritual wealth. Spiritual wealth is more important than an accumulation of materiality, which in contrast can merely bring worldly happiness and success. Compared to any forms of offering, Natakrit believes that inspiring people to convert to I-Kuan-Tao is the most meritorious form of offering as he says ‘การให้ธรรมะชนะการให้ทั้งปวง’(giving dharma surpasses all kinds of giving) (line 302) and ‘และเป็นการให้ที่สูงที่สุดเพราะ’ (it is the most meritorious form of giving) (line 303) and its consequence is much greater than building a seven-tiered pagoda (line 404), an architectural structure designed to serve religious functions or a place that houses relics or sacred writings (line 404). According to Natakrit, merit gained through building a seven-tiered pagoda, though believed to be considerable, does not lead to true happiness. Seeking happiness through materiality is characterized as

impermanent. Natakrit illustrates this impermanency through comparison: “ให้บ้านเขาวันหนึ่งก็ผุพัง” (if you give someone a house, it is impermanent) (line 304) and “ให้อาหารการกินวันหนึ่งเขาก็หิวอีก” (if you give someone food, they will get hungry again) (line 305). In contrast, giving dharma by inspiring other people to cultivate goodness from the inside leads to the accumulation of true wealth, a spiritual wealth that is eternal (line 307). Natakrit explains that dharma cultivation can be achieved in different ways. For example, one can cultivate dharma by saving sentient beings (line 298), worshipping Gods (line 299), or propagating dharma (line 300). The intention of propagating dharma is to enlighten the minds of people and return them to the state of benevolence. Attaching himself to missionary work, thus, brings about his identity element of an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator. While the I-Kuan Tao identity element is a very important identity element for Natakrit, an even more important identity element of his is the chosen one identity element.

Natakrit produces the chosen one identity element in an interview, when he shares his personal belief that he has been *chosen* by Gods to be their *representative* who will help save the sentient beings from worldly suffering (lines 412 and 417 in the interview transcript 7.2 below).

Interview transcript 7.2: Being the holy representative.

(410) 00.12.39 natakrit แต่เมื่อเรา...

but when I

but I....

(411) ได้รับความเมตตาจากสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์

receive mercy from the holy deities

am so grateful, under the grace of the holy deities

(412)

พี่เป็นคนโชคดีที่สิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ท่านเลือกเอาไว้

I am a person grateful that holy deities choose

I am so grateful to be the chosen one

(413)

เป็นเมล็ดพันธุ์

to be a seed

I see myself as a seed of virtue

(414)

เลือกเอาไว้เพื่อให้ช่วยเผยแผ่ธรรมะ

choose to help propagate dharma

selected for dharma propagation

(415)

เลือกเอาไว้ที่จะเป็นสะพานเชื่อมระหว่างโลกมนุษย์

choose to be a bridge connecting world human

I serve as a bridge to connect the human world

(416)

กับเทวโลกมนุษย์โลก

with heavenly realm

with the heavenly realm

(417)

จึงทำให้เจ้าทำงานแทนฟ้าเบื้องบน

I ask to work for the holy deities up there

I have been destined to serve the holy deities' wills

(418)

เมื่อเรากำหนดกฎเกณฑ์ว่า

when holy deities decide

I believe that it is my destiny

- (419) ฟ้าเบื้องบนจะประทานพรให้เจ้า

they will bless to you

I will be rewarded by the holy heaven
- (420) เมื่อเจ้าได้ช่วยงานฟ้าเบื้องบน

when I help work of holy deities up there

with my dedication to serve the holy deities' wills
- (421) เจ้าก็ได้รับพรจากเบื้องบน

I will receive blessing from heaven

I will be blessed
- (422) เราสามารถอุทิศช่วยเวไนยสัตว์ได้

I can save all sentient beings

I was meant to make a great contribution to all creatures, saving their souls
- (423) เราไม่มีบารมีธรรม

I don't have dharmic power

under the grace of all deities,
- (424) บารมีธรรมเกิดจากเบื้องบนประทานให้

my power happen because holy deities bless me

I have been blessed with strength and power to save others
- (425) มาประทับประคองอยู่ด้านหลังด้านหลังเรา

the deities support me at my back

the deities always give me spiritual supports

.....

*(the conversation moves to different topic from
lines 714-722)*

(714) 00.25.29

และตอนนี้อยู่ดะไรต้องระวัง

now way something must be cautious

now I have to be cautious of what I have to say

(715)

ระวังมาก

cautious very

very cautious with my words as they are powerful

(716)

พูดให้ตายมันก็ตาย

say it die it will die

if I say 'die', it will come true

(717)

พูดให้ฝนตกมันก็ตก

say it will rain it will rain

if I say rain, it will rain

(718)

พูดแล้งมันก็แล้ง

say it will be barren it will be barren

if I say the land will be barren, it will be

(719)

เอาเหอะเร็วๆนี้แหละ

let's prove it, very soon

let's prove it, I am telling you that

(720)

เร็วๆนี้แหละ

very soon rain

very soon it will be raining

(721)

แล้วหนักด้วยนะ

and very heavy I tell you

it will be raining very heavy

(722)

ไม่ใช่ธรรมดา

not normal phenomenon

it is not a normal phenomenon

Natakrit assumes a position of being superior to others because of his belief that Gods choose him to be their *representative* for dharma propagation. He further believes that they gave him special powers to enlighten the minds of others (line 424). Believing that he is the *chosen one* (line 412), and with a *special duty* to save the souls of sentient beings (line 422), Natakrit uses metaphor to accentuate his role as the chosen one. For example, he claims to be a *bridge* that connects the human world with the heavenly realm (line 415) and a *seed of virtue* for dharma propagation (line 413). He also believes that with the power given by Gods, his word is so powerful that it can dictate reality (lines 717-718) and that he can use it to bless or curse someone (line 716 and 719-720). Being the chosen one depicts the hierarchical position between the holy deities, himself, and other sentient beings living on earth, which are understood as the unawakened beings suffering from the cycle of birth-death-rebirth.

In his interview, Natakrit also constructs a vegan identity element within the religious contexts as explicated in the following excerpt (Example 7.3).

Interview transcript 7.3: Vegetarianism ends the cycle of reincarnation.

- (126) เราต้องการยุติ
I want to end
I want to transcend
- (127) การเกิดการตาย
this cycle of birth-death-rebirth
this cycle of birth-death-rebirth
- (128) ที่ไม่เกี่ยวกรรมและผูกพันกับใครอีกแล้ว
no more karmic affinity with anyone anymore
no more karmic affinity with anyone anymore
- (129) ในชาตินี้
in this lifetime
in this lifetime
- (130) ภพนี้
in this world
in this world
- (131) ถือว่าเป็นชาติสุดท้ายของเราที่จะเกิดกายเป็นมนุษย์
this is going to be my last life to be born as a
human being
this is going to be my last life to be born as a
human being
- (132) และจะขอบำเพ็ญให้สำเร็จ
will dedicate cultivate for enlightenment

- will dedicate my whole life to enlightenment*
- (133) โดยที่จะไม่เกี่ยวกรรมกับสัตว์
- no more karmic affinity with any living beings*
- no more karmic affinity with any living beings*
- *(the conversation moves to a different topic from*
lines 514-531)
- (514) ที่เราตั้งปณิธานชิงไขวนี้
- when you make a vow 'ching-ko'*
- when you make a vow 'ching-ko'*
- (515) ฟาเบื่องบนเนี่ย
- holy heaven*
- holy heaven*
- (516) เจ้าจะแตกต่างจากมนุษย์ทั่วไป
- you different from people in general*
- you'll become special*
- (517) ในขณะที่เจ้ากินเจนี้
- once you eat vegetarian*
- once you eat vegetarian*
- (518) สิ่งใดที่ทำโนไปคำขอสาสน์นาคราชนี้
- with your name filled in the heavenly dragon*
scroll paper
- with your name filled in the heavenly dragon scroll*
paper
- (519) เทวดา

the holy deities

the holy deities

(520) หรือท่านท้าวพยายมนี่

I mean the god of death

I mean the god of death

(521) จะจับลิ้นของท่านดึงออกมา

will pull your tongue out

will pull your tongue out

(522) แล้วเอาตราของฟ้าเนี่ย

and use holy seal

and make a holy seal

(523) ประทับลงไปบนลิ้นของท่าน

on your tongue

onto it

(524) ท่านกินอะไรก็อร่อย

you eat whatever is tasty

you will feel that whatever you eat is tasty

(525) เชื่อไหม?

believe that?

do you believe that?

(526) ท่านพูดธรรมะอะไรคนก็เชื่อ

you speak dharma whatever people will believe

when you speak dharma, your words are

persuasive

- (527) แต่ถ้ายาบาไดลิ้นของท่านปากท่านยังเปื้อนเลือดอยู่
 but if as long as tongue your mouth your dirty
 with blood
*but as long as your tongue is contaminated by
 blood of flesh*
- (528) ท่านไม่ต้องมาชวนใคร
 you don't try to convince others
you don't try to convince others
- (529) ไม่มีใครเขาเชื่อท่าน
 no one will believe you
no one will believe you
- (530) พูดไปให้ตาย
 you speak until you die
no matter how hard you try
- (531) น้ำไหลไฟดับก็ไม่มีใครเชื่อ
 no one will believe you
no one will believe you

As stated earlier, Natakrit believes that he is the *chosen one*, characterized as someone who has been endowed with special power by the holy deities. The special power, as he claims, means an ability to convince other people's minds (line 526). In order to have that power, Natakrit has to achieve moral perfection and one way of doing this is through adopting a vegan practice. Here, the practice of veganism is associated with the power of the God of Death (line 520), whom Natakrit perceives as

real. Natakrit believes that the God of Death blesses people who refrain from eating meat with power to influence other peoples' minds because the tongues of vegans are stamped with a holy seal (lines 519-523). Natakrit again illustrates his belief that he is superior to others, but this time because of the power granted by the holy deities resulting from practicing veganism (line 516), underlining this by saying 'ท่านพูดธรรมะอะไรคนก็เชื่อ' (when you speak dharma, your words are persuasive) (line 526). He contrasts this, claiming four times that the words uttered by somebody who eats animal flesh will never be powerful (lines 528-531).

Natakrit thus presumes that practicing veganism is a meritorious means to terminate the vicious cycle of negative karmic affinity (especially with the animals, lines 126-128 and 133). Based on his belief, a karmic consequence of practicing veganism is substantial as it enables him to transcend the cycle of reincarnation within this present lifetime (line 131), voicing that 'ถือว่าเป็นชาติสุดท้ายของเราที่จะเกิดกายเป็นมนุษย์' (this is going to be my last life to be born as a human being).

7.3 Conclusion

This chapter provides an analysis of Natakrit's identity elements produced in everyday life interactions. Here, I examined two sites of engagements: 1. Giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall; and 2. Giving a dharma lecture at dharma assemblies. Each site of engagement is made up of overlapping practice, interlinked with mediational means, resulting in multiple intersecting higher-level actions. Within these sites of engagement, Natakrit produces particularly salient identity elements. These are: 1. The chosen one identity element; 2. An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element; and 3. A vegan identity element. Natakrit produces these identity elements through simultaneously produced higher-level actions that are more or less focused. I illustrate how Natakrit produces his identity elements through the interconnectedness between verbal or non-verbal modes and with mediational means (PowerPoint presentation Figure 7.7).

Regarding a vegan identity element, Natakrit has maintained his vegan practice for 17 years, longer than any of my participants in this study. He integrates veganism into his daily life as well as into his religious practice as I illustrated in the analysis of Natakrit giving a dharma lecture. During the dharmic event, Natakrit produces his vegan identity element based on his experience of practicing veganism and through the mediational means of vegan food that his staff prepares for everyone who attends the ritual. This vegan food is prepared in accordance with some restrictions imposed by the I-Kuan-Tao cult. This is an exclusion of any products of animal origin and five strongly smelling pungent herbs.

As can be seen throughout this chapter, Natakrit has identified himself with the I-Kuan Tao religious group and he adheres to the practices outlined by the cult. Consequently, he produces his vegan identity element as well as his other identity elements in connection with his faith in I-Kuan-Tao. All of the identity elements that he produces are related to one another, and I will discuss the relationships of identity elements in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

A discussion: Identity, religious belief, and vegetarianism

This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the findings in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Previously, in chapter 3 and 4, I addressed some research gaps that I found, and in this chapter I offer a discussion through which I hope to fill these research gaps. This discussion falls into two sections: a methodological discussion and a thematic discussion. In the methodological discussion, I argue that a multimodal approach allows us to gain a better understanding of identity production. Drawing on mediated action, a multimodal analysis offers a holistic investigation of identity elements by moving beyond language. In the thematic discussion, I propose three major points. The first point is that an identity element needs to be viewed as fluid, and each identity element is viewed as a whole and is also part of a larger whole (Norris, 2005, 2008, 2011a) (section 8.1). Here, my argument is based on the simultaneous identity element production of my participants by drawing on multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a), as opposed to a language-based approach which favors an examination of, for example, religious identity in isolation (Hogg et al., 2010). The second point of discussion is that religious belief is an integral part of my participants' long-term historical body and influences their identity production (section 8.2). I illustrate the interconnectedness between religious belief and my participants' identity elements through the methodological tool, the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Norris, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2011a), which I modified

by adding the notion of historical body (Nishida, 1958). With this modified continuum, I show that religious belief structures the identity elements of my participants produced within the sites of engagement (section 8.2.1, 8.2.2, and 8.2.3).

In section 8.3, I discuss the influence of religious belief on the production of my participants' vegetarian/vegan identity element. I illustrate that religiosity fosters a sense of personal significance in my participants. According to this positive self-perception, my participants always position themselves as having higher moral standing than those who belong to other social groups. The final point of my discussion involves saliency of an identity element (section 8.4). The graph (section 8.2) allows me here to see which identity element(s) my participants continuously kept over time. For this, continuity informs saliency of an identity element.

8.1 An all-embracing identity rooted in religious belief: A discussion

As shown in chapter 5, 6, and 7, my participants, Nimit, Duangpon, and Natakrit, produced particularly salient identity elements during the fieldwork. Nimit's most salient identity elements were: An expert in organic farming identity element; a sustainable farmer identity element; a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element; a successful business owner identity element; a vegetarian identity element; and an owner of a vegetarian food store identity element. Nimit also produced other identity elements during the fieldwork such as a social contributor identity element (see Appendix B.3) and a spiritual father identity element, however, these identity elements were not as salient during my fieldwork as the ones discussed in chapter 5. Duangpon's most salient identity elements were: A spiritual mother identity element; an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element; a vegan identity element; and a business owner identity element. In addition, Duangpon produced other identity elements that were not as salient as the identity elements discussed in chapter 6, such as a neighbor identity element and a wife identity element. Natakrit's most salient identity elements were: The chosen one identity element; an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element; and a vegan identity element. Besides the identity elements discussed in chapter 7, he also produced less salient identity elements during the fieldwork such as a husband identity element and a professional identity element.

In my study, I found that all participants identified themselves as belonging to non-traditional religious cults, and that their identity elements are structured by these religious beliefs. Here, I argue that these religious beliefs have exerted an enduringly

powerful influence on all aspects of the participants' lives, both on their secular and their spiritual lives.

Hogg, Adelman & Blagg (2010) claim that religious identity can be labelled as an *all-embracing master identity*, rooted in unyielding faith. Drawing their analysis from narrative/interview of their participants, they focus their examination on religious identity in isolation, and argue that religiosity builds this all-embracing master identity. Their analysis is language-based, focusing them on the examination of persistent themes across the interview, where the interview is always the focus of attention of participants and researchers alike. In their study, modes other than language are not taken into consideration. Because of this sole attention to language and a central analysis of only the focused-upon identity, their study can only give us a partial picture, not a holistic picture of identity. In addition, interviews only reflect self-perception of the participants. In my study, I examine 'identity-in-action', studying identity as it is performed moment by moment. This view allows for the investigation of how various dimensions of identity, even contradictory ones, come together.

For this analysis, I conducted an ethnographic study with extensive fieldwork resulting in multiple sets of data: video ethnographic data, observational data, and sociolinguistic interview data. By triangulating these different data sets, I moved toward a more holistic analysis of identity production. I have used a multimodal approach, taking an abundance of communicative modes into consideration, where language is viewed as one mode and as a component of action. As illustrated in my video data, my participants engaged in several higher-level actions simultaneously, resulting in the production of multiple identity elements through the verbal and non-verbal modes. While language-based studies always and *only* allow us to examine

identity elements in isolation (Hogg, et al. 2010), I conducted a video-ethnography and utilized multimodal (inter)action analysis as my theoretical and methodological framework. This framework enabled me to see how my participants produced multiple identity elements simultaneously at differentiated levels of their attention/awareness and how these identity elements connect to one another. Here, each identity element is viewed as fluid and contestable. Each identity element makes up a whole, and each identity elements also is part of a larger whole (Norris, 2011a). With an explicit focus on mediated action, and to be specific, the higher-level actions within sites of engagement, I was able to discern the complexity of actions and my participants' enacted identity production. This multimodal approach gives a more integrated and holistic view of an individual's identity production, which is based on the theoretical notion that all actions are identity-telling (Scollon, 2001). However, similar to Hogg et al. (2010), I also found that religiosity has a strong impact on identity production. I argue that its influence can be displayed in the plethora of the phenomenally-produced higher-level-actions. The participants' religious belief is enduringly powerful and a part of their historical body.

8.2 Historical body and the modal density foreground-background

continuum of attention/awareness: A discussion

In chapters 5, 6 and 7, I illustrated how my participants produce their identity elements through actively engaging in several phenomenally produced higher-level actions within sites of engagement, using the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness developed by Norris (2004, 2011a) (Figure 8.1)

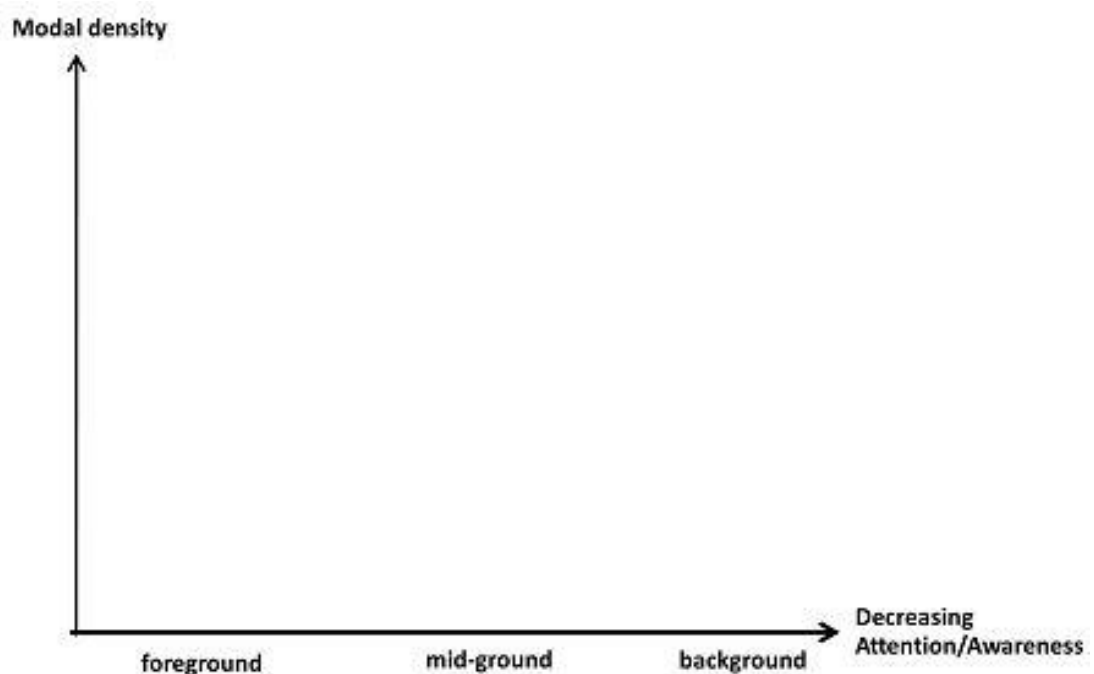


Figure 8.1: The modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (reproduced from Norris, 2004, p.99).

With this methodological tool, I showed that my participants' higher-level actions and their identity elements are constructed simultaneously, although, at differentiated levels of attention/awareness. Delineating identity elements as produced in the foreground, mid-ground or background of attention/awareness connects to the methodological concept of modal density as related to how my

participants utilized modes in different ways to construct their actions. This continuum allowed me to analyze that identity elements are multiple and hierarchically produced, rather than identity being a cohesive whole; and to illustrate that identity is fluid rather than fixed.

In my study, I also found that my participants' identity elements stemmed from their religious belief as they adhered to their cults' ideology and worldview, and thus conformed to the outlined teachings. Religious belief, I argue, comes about as a collective result of past experiences, and is an integral part of my participants' historical body (Nishida, 1958). My participants' historical body is visible through their everyday life actions, as Scollon (2001) pointed out that "social action is based in habitus (Bourdieu, 1977)" (p. 7); or, the historical body has a direct impact on their actions, whether they are aware of its influence or not, as it is weaved into their actions (Norris, 2008). I propose that the historical bodies of my participants, and specifically, their religious beliefs have shaped their actions and contributed to the production of their identity elements.

Habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) is generally understood as the history of an individual. This history is central to analyses across a range of disciplines such as sociocultural anthropology (Hanks, 1995, 1999), linguistic anthropology (Blommaert, 2008, 2010, 2013), sociolinguistics (Buckholtz & Hall, 2005) or variationist linguistics (Eckert, 2008). These approaches invest their prime interest in language use and the historical embeddedness of language. The social formation of speakers, i.e. the use of language in certain ways and the use of embodied expression of gesture and posture in alignment with spoken discourse, are viewed to be contingent on historical and socio-cultural contexts. Hanks (1995) used the term habitus in a study on history and

ethnography of Yucatec Maya language spoken by indigenous people of the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico. Hanks analyzed Yucatec Mayan's linguistic forms and speech processes in relation with their sociocultural contexts, which informed the colonial formation of Yucatan and New Spain. Similarly, Blommaert (2008, 2010, 2013) provided a historical and patterned understanding of real language use in daily life context, and, specifically, in the study of his own neighborhood in Antwerp, Belgium. He developed an applied ethnopoetics for a study of texts (such as multilingual signs) perceived as linguistic landscapes. These signs, according to Blommaert, inform extraordinarily complex histories of place, delineated through the concept of superdiversity. Therefore, the choice of language used in a particular sign, seen as a particular linguistic landscape, says something about the socio-historical context of the place.

A sociolinguist, Eckert (1989, 2000, 2008) is also influenced by Bordieu's (1977) local practice, using a linguistic-anthropological approach for the study of linguistic variation. She argues that meanings for linguistic variables are not fixed, but instead can change depending on the context in which they are used. Eckert explains that the

meaning is based in ideologies about what the locality is about, what kinds of people live there and what activities, beliefs, and practices make it what it is [...] Local identity claims are about what it means to be from 'here' as opposed to some identified 'there' (p. 462).

In addition, the notion of habitus is connected to identity construction, specifically through the process of authentication (Buckholtz & Hall, 2005). According to Buckholtz and Hall, identity can be "in part habitual and less than fully conscious" (p.585). They

illustrate this through the discursive process of authentication by which a social actor makes the claim of himself based on their perception, taking deep root in the speakers' worldview. I illustrated in my thesis through the interview transcripts, for example in chapter 5, that Nimit made the claim that he was an expert in bean sprout farming by telling me his story about how he became a bean sprout farmer. He referred to the economic recession in 1997, how he came to develop a root-cutting technique, and how he became well-known for his innovation. Or, in chapter 7, I illustrated how Natakrit made the claim that he was chosen by Gods for special duty on saving the lost souls of sentient beings. Natakrit told me about his decision to become a vegan for the rest of his life and also spoke about his dedication for dharma propagation. Authentication is here, discursively verified and connected to historical body of the speakers.

The notions of historical body (Nishida, 1958) and habitus (Bordieu, 1977) are similar. Historical body, a notion used in multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011), however, goes much deeper and is more complex than the notion of habitus based on language studies. Here, I investigated the notion of historical body through my participants' everyday life interactions. As perceptible through actions, the notion of historical body embraces all social dimensions of the social actor. Language is certainly a part of historical body, but language and action may sometimes converge, while at other times, they may diverge and be contradictory.

In my thesis, I investigated the notion of historical body as embedded in action, allowing for a fairly holistic view of my participants. Here, I build upon the ideas of memory influencing identity production as described by Norris (2005, 2008) where she built upon Mead's (1934) concept of *I* and *Me* as well as Nishida (1958), Bourdieu

(1978) and Scollon (2001). Norris (2008) explores prior actions and identity in connection with the psychological side of identity elements and illustrates their influence on the construction of *I* and *Me*. Here, the *Me* identity is understood as a memory of prior actions performed by social actors, located in the social psychological mind of the social actor. It demonstrates how the *Me* shapes the construction of the *I* identity elements. I illustrate her devised methodological tool, the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness, in Figure 8.2.

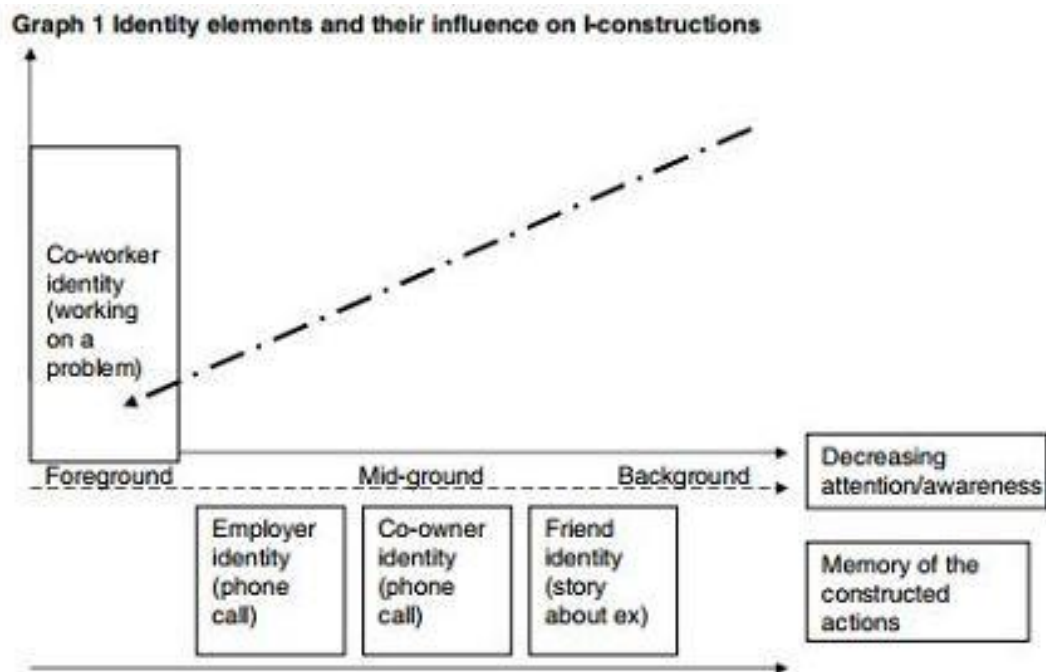


Figure 8.2: Identity elements and their influence on I-constructions (Norris, 2008, p. 144).

Here, Norris applied the concept of *I - Me* identity to identity production in way of memory of the prior higher-level actions performed by a social actor. She illustrated this notion in this graph using the arrow that shows there is a structuring from back to front. The *Me* identity (or a person's memory in Norris's sense) has a short-term effect on the construction of new *I* identity element production and a short time-lag between

the construction of the *I* and the *Me* becomes apparent. In her example above, she shows that the social actor's focused co-worker identity element, or the *I*, is influenced by previous identities and actions, or what can be called the *Me* identity. Each of these identities shapes the identity elements that follow it. Here, the friend identity element, situated in the background, influences the co-owner identity element, and the co-owner identity element then influences the actor's employer identity element. All of these identity elements in the memory influence the current co-worker identity element.

While Norris (2008) showed that there is a short-term effect (memory or *Me*) onto current actions and resulting identity production (the current *I*), I discovered that there is a long-term effect of religious belief onto the actions and identity production of my participants. I apply her idea of back-to-front structuring demonstrated in the graph above (Figure 8.2) and follow her allusion to historical body in the graph below (Figure 8.3) (Norris, 2005) but extend this to religious belief based on my investigation. The methodological tool in Norris (2005) allows us to illustrate the long-term historical body.

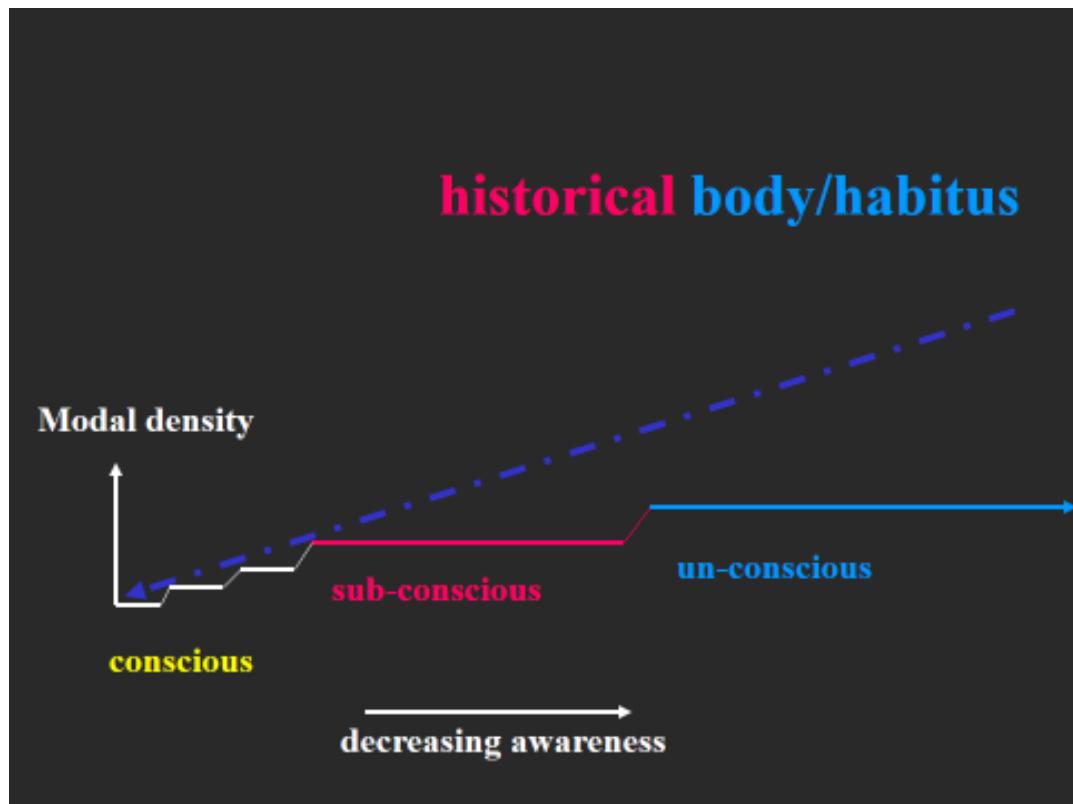


Figure 8.3: Historical body situated in the background of the continuum (Norris, 2005).

Here, I propose that religious belief is an integral part of the long-term historical body of my participants and that it can be analyzed with an extended modal density foreground-background continuum. With this extended methodological tool, I attempt to elucidate the inextricable link between my participants' identity elements produced at the phenomenological level and their religious belief, which I view as an integral part of the participants' historical bodies.

In methodological terms, I have applied the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness that was devised by Norris (2004) in my previous chapters and now modify the graph proposed by Norris (2005), where she illustrated the continuum in psychological terms. The methodological tool developed in Norris (2005, 2008) illustrates the back-to-front structuring of actions and identity

elements (Figure 8.2 and 8.3). I propose to include the notion of religious belief, which I view as an integral part of the long-term historical body (see Figure 8.4 below) to Norris' originally devised methodological tool (Figure 8.1).

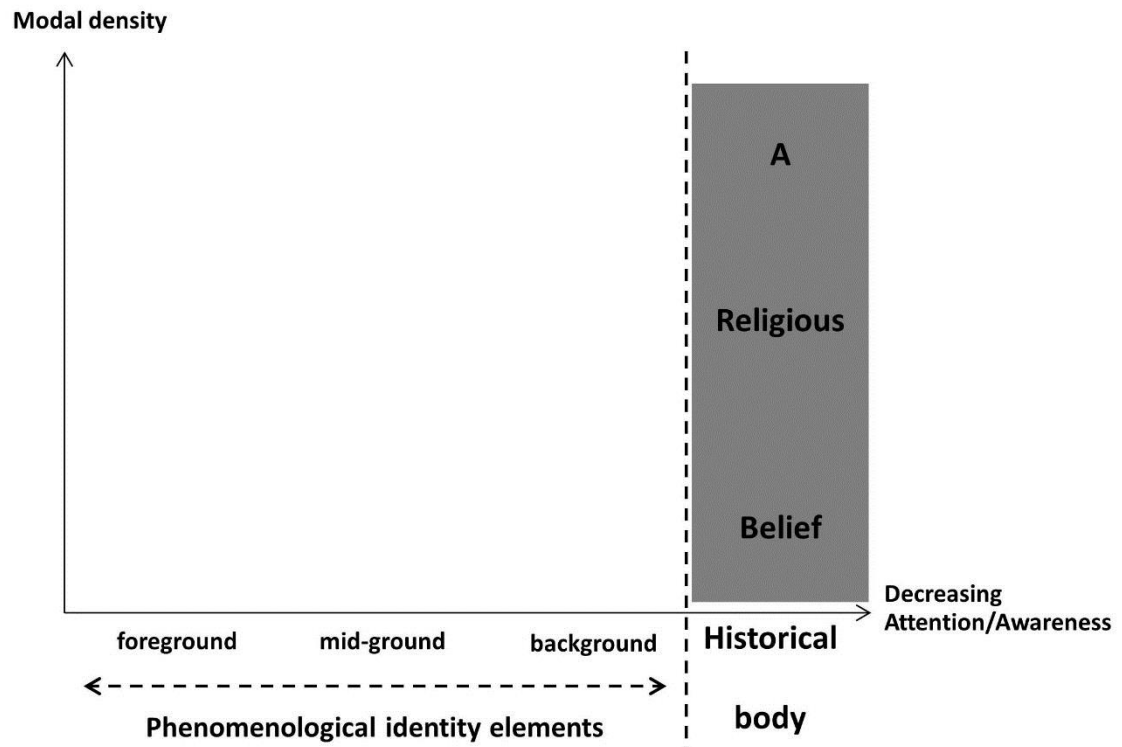


Figure 8.4: The modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness with religious belief as an integral part of the historical body.

Here with Figure 8.4, I have included the notion of religious belief to the back of the continuum. According to Norris (2008), “When we now look at the very next moment in interaction, we find that this interaction is again influenced, and to some degree structured, by the preceding interactions; and the identity construction is influenced by the prior identity constructions” (p. 143). Here, she discusses the back-to-front structuring that she encountered in her study. This back-to-front structuring allows me to better elucidate an interconnectedness between my participants’ actions

and their resulting identity elements constructed at various levels of attention/awareness with their religious belief embedded in their historical bodies.

As discussed in detail throughout my thesis, social actors can engage in multiple higher-level actions simultaneously. However, they may pay more or less attention to particular higher-level actions, depending on the situation. The foreground of the continuum displays a social actor's focused attention on the higher-level action entailing high modal density. The mid-ground and the background of their attention, respectively, display decreasing degrees of a social actor's attention on the higher-level actions constructed through medium and low modal density. The higher degree of modal density the social actors use to construct their actions, the more their actions are phenomenally perceptible. The notion of historical body as outlined by Nishida (1958), Bourdieu (1977), and Scollon (2001), however, is a notion related to the psychological mind of the social actors. The influence of the historical body may not be phenomenally perceptible by itself unless it can be realized through analyzing the phenomenally displayed higher-level actions (Norris, 2005, 2008).

Using the modified methodological tool, I next give examples of my participants, illustrating how religious belief influences their identity production. Here, I illustrate the interconnectedness between these identity elements although each of them is produced at various levels of attention. This is because my participants produce their identity elements in religious terms.

8.2.1 An example of Nimit's identity production: Site of engagement of conducting a workshop

In this section, I illustrate how Nimit's identity elements are immensely influenced by his religious belief in the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult. I revisit the site of engagement of conducting a workshop, where Nimit produces three particularly salient identity elements: an expert in organic farming; a sustainable farmer; and a Santi-Asoke cultivator.

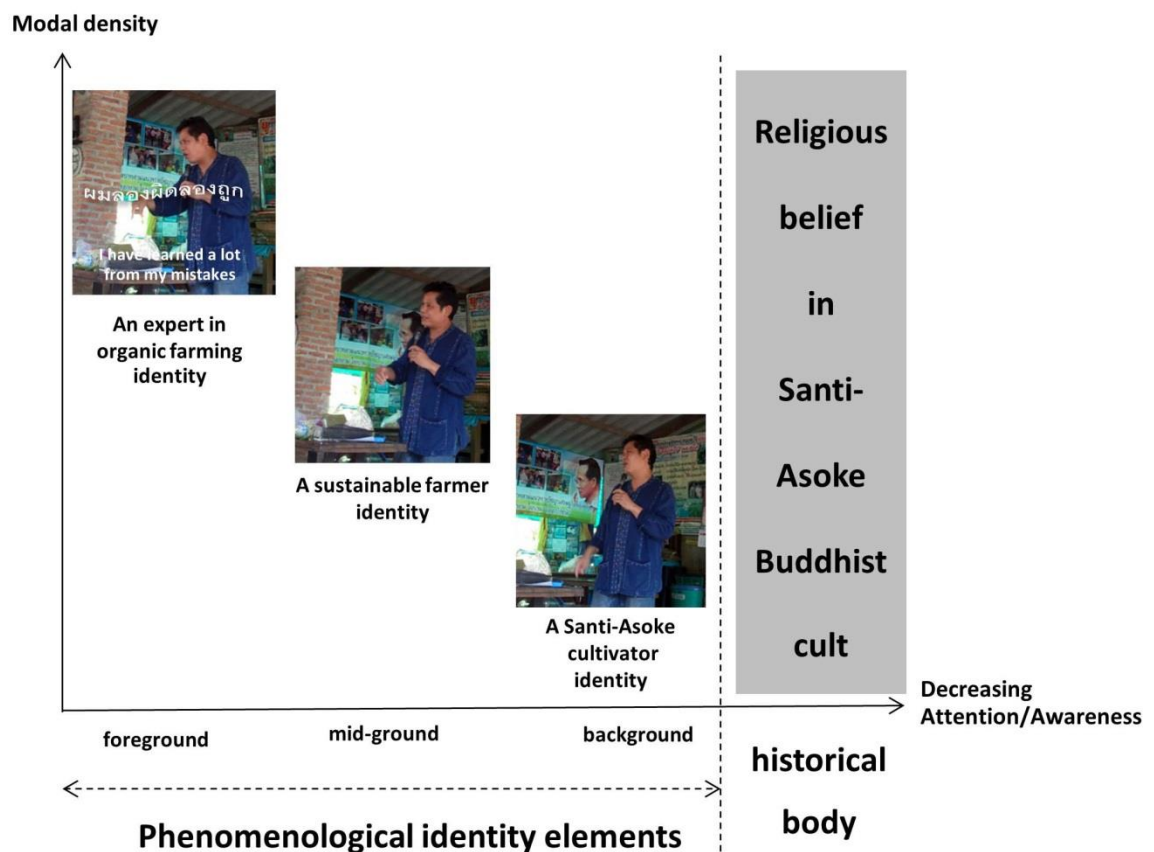


Figure 8.5: Nimit's identity elements influenced by his religious belief in Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult.

Because Nimit has subscribed to the worldview of the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult, his higher-level action of conducting a workshop on organic bean sprouts farming

and his foregrounded expert in organic farming identity element are rooted in the core principle of meritism of the right livelihood. Being an expert in organic farming is guided by the 'right desire' (chanda), viewed not only as a means of producing food but also as an ethical lifestyle with simplicity and peace.

Nimit's religious belief in the Santi-Asoke influences his mid-grounded sustainable farmer identity element, growing organic bean sprouts. A farmer in the Santi-Asoke's perspective is the most meritorious career option because it promotes a traditional way of living with simplicity and modesty, and within a harmonious human-nature relationship. Displaying himself as a sustainable farmer, Nimit never uses chemicals on his bean sprouts or other crops on his farm.

In the background of Nimit's attention/awareness, he produced a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element through the uniform that he wears. This simple and unadorned uniform of the Santi-Asoke reflects an economical way of life that is closely linked to the ethic of moderation and self-sufficiency: It also implies the detachment from worldly desire which is fundamental to the higher state of mind. The Santi-Asoke believe that an individual only has four basic material needs for subsistence: food, clothing, shelter, and medicine; which is a basic teaching of Buddhism. For this, the Santi-Asoke encourage their laypersons to wear a plain uniform, reflecting the value of moderation. Through this form of dress, the Santi-Asoke motivate their laypersons to cultivate spiritual wealth rather than physical appearance and an extravagant lifestyle.

As I have illustrated through the use of the modal density foreground-background of attention/awareness in which I have added the religious belief of the

Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult, Nimit has taken on the Santi-Asoke's teaching about mertism and has produced his multiple identity elements in connection with his belief.

Next, I provide an example of Duangpon, who has been practicing I-Kuan-Tao for eight years and has conformed to the practices that the cult teaches.

8.2.2 An example of Duangpon's identity production: Site of engagement of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao Gods

In this section, I argue that Duangpon's religious belief has played a major role in her identity production. Duangpon believes that religion is positive in every aspect of her life. Here, I re-examine the site of engagement of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao Gods whereby Duanpon produces three simultaneous identity elements: a spiritual mother with her son; a spiritual mother with her daughter; and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator.

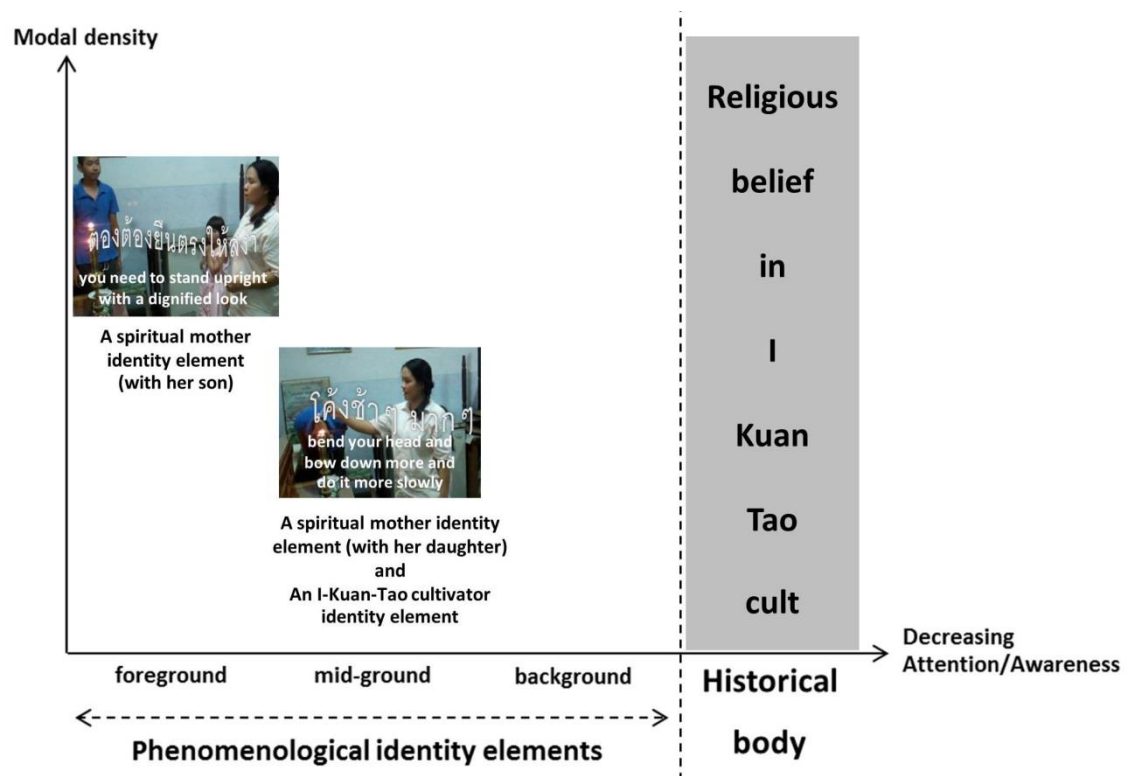


Figure 8.6: Duangpon's identity elements influenced by her religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao.

While producing a spiritual mother identity element with her son in the foreground and with her daughter in the mid-ground of her attention/awareness, Duangpon displays her belief in I-Kuan-Tao's spiritual approach of self-reflection arising through awareness training. Duangpon wishes to train the minds of her children, believing that this will lead to the activation of wisdom and the cultivation of new habits, specifically the habit of humility, which is regarded as a characteristic of a great cultivator's mind. She also adheres to family values rooted in Confucianism. She believes that during the worship ritual, the awareness of thoughts, feeling and bodily sensation are heightened and that discipline is cultivated in the children. Duangpon thus sees the worship ritual as a spiritual tool to cultivate moral perfection in her children.

Duangpon's mid-grounded I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is established in accordance with her unyielding faith in I-Kuan-Tao. As Duangpon devotes herself to the cultivation of I-Kuan-Tao, she fulfills her responsibility as a caretaker of the shrine by strictly complying with the rules and performing the rituals of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao's deities on a daily basis. She strictly follows the well-defined procedures of the worship ritual by beginning with the practice of burning incense and a series of kowtowing. Putting her mind at peace and calming her energy signify her great sincerity and total respect to the holy deities. We can say that the belief in I-Kuan-Tao has exerted an immense influence on her actions and her identity element production.

In the example above, I addressed an inextricable link between Duangpon's identity elements and her religious belief in I-Kuan Tao. This is seen in her parenting while interacting with her children and in the example particularly with her son and her religious practice. Next I illustrate how religious belief influences Natakrit's identity production. Natakrit has also identified himself as a cultivator of I-Kuan-Tao cult and has practiced I-Kuan-Tao for seventeen years.

8.2.3 An example of Natakrit's identity production: Site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall.

In this example, I illustrate that Natakrit also produces his identity elements in accordance with his religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao. I revisit the site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall, where he produced three particularly salient identity elements: the chosen one; an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator; and a vegan. His religious belief in the I-Kuan-Tao cult has been

internalized as an integral part of his historical body and is perceptible in the production of his identity elements.

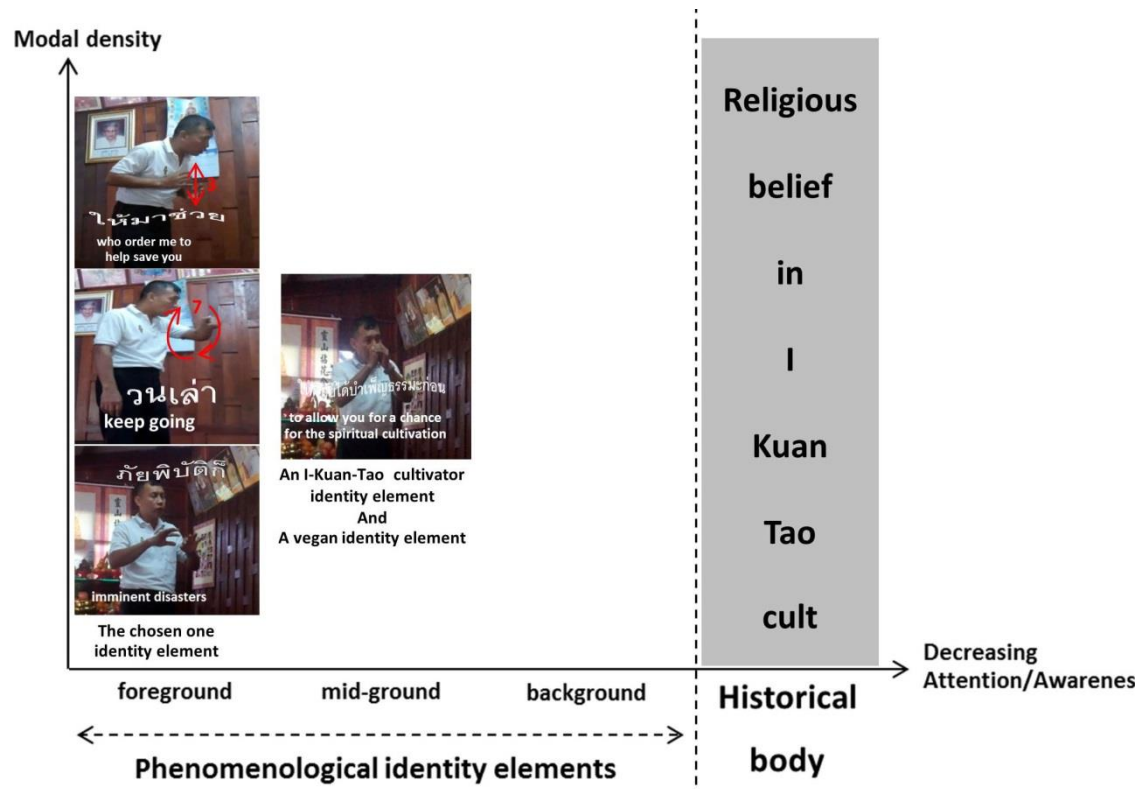


Figure 8.7: Natakrit's identity elements influenced by his religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao.

Natakrit produces the chosen one identity element based upon his belief that he has been chosen by I-Kuan-Tao's Gods to save sentient beings from the apocalypse. The chosen one's special duty is to convince others to receive I-Kuan-Tao dharma and cultivate moral perfection in order to attain enlightenment before the approach of a doomsday. According to I-Kuan Tao, sudden enlightenment can be achieved if one has knowledge of The Three Noble Treasures of I-Kuan-Tao through the initiation ritual of Tao. Natakrit's religious belief is strongly displayed in his identity element of the chosen one.

Natakrit constructs an I-Kaun-Tao cultivator identity element in connection with the belief that all I-Kuan-Tao cultivators should prioritize missionary work by propagating I-Kuan-Tao dharma. Realizing that he is a jiangshi (a lecturer in the I-Kuan-Tao cult), Natakrit has committed himself to propagating I-Kuan-Tao dharma, resulting in his identity element production of I-Kuan-Tao cultivator.

Next, I provide some examples of vegetarian/vegan identity element production of my participants. With a similarly modified graph as I used in the previous section, I now illustrate that the participants' religious belief structures their vegetarian/vegan identity elements.

8.3 Vegetarianism/veganism and religiosity: A discussion

Throughout the thesis, I have shown that my participants identify themselves as vegetarian/vegan. My participants have been practicing vegetarianism/veganism for some time. For example, Nimit has been a vegetarian for ten years ever since he began following the teachings outlined by the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult. He also runs a vegetarian food store guided by the principle of meritism. For him, facilitating the eating of vegetarian food signifies merit-making. Duangpon has practiced veganism for eight years and went through the ritual called 'Ching-ko', which means making a vow to become a vegan for the rest of her life, after her conversion to I-Kuan-Tao. She has a strong desire to promote vegetarianism and has changed her business from selling non-vegetarian food to selling vegetarian food. Natakrit, also an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator who made the vow to be a vegan for the rest of his life, has practiced veganism for seventeen years. Natakrit has dedicated his life to propagating dharma and at every I-Kuan-Tao dharmic function, he gives a lecture on veganism. All my participants are embedded in non-traditional religious communities where vegetarian/vegan practices are the norm.

Different religious cults outline different forms of vegetarianism. For example, the Santi-Asoke's vegetarianism highlights the observance of the first Buddhist's precept (one should not kill other living beings). This is based on the cult's own interpretation of the first precept, extending it to all activities that directly or indirectly involve killing. Practicing the first precept as here interpreted, the Santi-Asoke claim that abstinence from meat contributes to a wholesome mind due to the resulting harmony among all living beings. Santi-Asoke's vegetarianism connects to the concept

of moderation as one of the Santi-Asoke's mottos is 'to consume little'. The Santi-Asoke reject a joy of food consumption and instead, highlight spiritual advancement. They see food as one of the basic material needs for sustaining a human's life, arguing that food should be consumed to maintain one's body not to nourish one's desire. Besides the principle of moderation, Santi-Asoke's vegetarianism also promotes the consumption of organic food, originating from their principle of living a sustainable life. The Santi-Asoke have no restrictions such as some strong smelling herbs, eggs, or dairy products and this is where the Santi-Asoke differ from the I-Kaun Tao and their form of vegetarianism.

I-Kuan-Tao cultivators are encouraged to practice veganism. I-Kuan-Tao's belief in veganism is similar to the Santi-Asoke's belief in vegetarianism, except for I-Kuan Tao the sole purpose of veganism is spiritual nourishment based in the belief of breaking free from karmic affinity. According to this belief, I-Kuan-Tao cultivators refuse all food that comes from animal origin (including eggs or dairy products) as well as five strongly smelling herbs, believed to be sexual stimulants. The I-Kuan-Tao do not concern themselves with the concepts of organic farming or sustainable living. This is where the I-Kuan Tao differ from the Santi-Asoke.

While there is a difference in the practices of vegetarianism/veganism between the cults, I found that my participants, no matter which cult they belong to, produce their vegetarian/vegan identity elements in accordance with their religious belief. As discussed in section 8.1, I proposed that religious belief should be viewed as an integral part of a person's long-term historical body. In my study, I also found philosophical reasoning based on animal cruelty to be a motivation for my participants' adoption for vegetarianism/veganism, except the philosophical view regarding animal cruelty

displayed by my participants has a deeper meaning than that found in previous studies (Fox & Ward, 2008). Fox & Ward (2008) and Allen et al. (2000) found in their studies of vegans/vegetarians that the motivations behind adopting the vegan or vegetarian practices were influenced by philosophical reasoning related to animal cruelty. Fox & Ward (2008) pointed out that although the major reasons for their participants' adoption of vegetarianism frequently appeared to be overlapped with ethical reasons, the primal motivation of their participants was actually a health concern. I found in my study that a philosophical view regarding animal cruelty came about because of, and is clearly connected to, the participants' religious context. Compassion for animals in religious terms connects to the teaching of the first of the Buddhist Five Precepts (one should refrain from any act of killing) on the one hand, and the law of karma on the other hand. My participants believe that compassion toward animals can promote animal welfare. However, they prioritize attainment of the higher spiritual goal of nirvana and purification of souls through treating animals with kindness.

Rather than religious belief, Allen et al.'s (2000) participants developed their vegan identity based on symbolic meaning that they ascribed to meat. In their study, meat was symbolized in terms of domination and related to a negative concept of masculinity and power. From a gender perspective, a meat diet connoted male dominance, while a non-meat diet signified femininity. According to Allen et al. (2008), they also found that meat consumption informed basic personality differences between vegetarians and non-vegetarians. While vegetarians were viewed as compassionate and intellectual, meat consumers were viewed as authoritative. Here, Allen et al. (2000) found philosophical reasoning in their study of vegan identity, but they discuss their participants' vegetarianism/veganism practices associated with a

negative concept of masculinity and power, based on a gender perspective and authoritarianism.

Although my participants take a philosophical view in adopting their vegetarian/vegan practice, they never view or connect vegetarianism/veganism to worldly concepts such as gender or authoritarian ideologies. Rather, they ascribe meaning to meat consumption in spiritual terms such as selfishness or greed, which, according to their teachings, stems from a polluted mind. Even though one of my participants, Duangpon (chapter 6), said once in her interview that non-vegan food is the food of a giant (a mystical creature with merciless personality in Eastern philosophy), connoting a negative meaning, she associated it with religiosity as it was taught by her religious mentor. Thus, for my participants, the ultimate goal of practicing vegetarianism/veganism is the attainment of nirvana and not a calling for justice or equality.

Besides their philosophical reasoning for adopting vegetarian/vegan practices, my participants adhere to their religious communities and conform to the outlined teachings. Similarly, Cherry (1999) found that punk vegans described themselves as ethical vegans. Their vegan identity was constructed in response to an organized set of shared attitudes within the punk community, rigidly following the standard definition of veganism determined by the most authoritative voice for vegan communities, the Vegan Society. According to the Vegan Society, veganism is described as “a way of living which seeks to exclude, as far as is possible and practicable, all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing or any other purpose” (Vegan Society, 2014). Labelling themselves as ethical vegans is based on this definition of veganism and only opposes animal cruelty as a main ideology. In her study, Cherry

(1999) found that punk vegans were highly influenced by the authority of the Vegan Society. I also discovered that my participants were very strongly influenced by authority.

In my study, I found that the scriptures: the teachings outlined by the Santi-Asoke and the I-Kuan-Tao cults are the authorities. As I have shown throughout my thesis, my participants' commitment to vegetarianism/veganism is influenced by the religious groups that they are embedded in. Within their religious communities, vegetarianism/veganism is a normative practice that all the cultivators of the cults aspire to. Even though the forms of vegetarianism/veganism outlined by the two cults that my participants belong to share some commonalities with the definition given by the Vegan Society in regard to animal cruelty, the notion of treating animals with compassion extends to religiosity and the cultivation of good karma in order to attain enlightenment. While the participants in my study could be labelled ethical vegetarians/vegans, I would argue that they are in fact spiritual vegetarians/vegans because their vegetarian/vegan practices are deeply connected with their faith.

My participants are embedded in vegetarian/vegan communities where vegetarianism/veganism is the norm. However, many studies reveal that vegetarians/vegans are judged by others and that vegetarians/vegans are marginalized groups (Greenerbaum, 2012; Sneijder & Molder, 2009). In these studies, vegetarians and vegans also perceive themselves as building marginal groups, leading to the production of a negative vegetarian/vegan identity. Greenerbaum (2012), for example, found that the participants, who were ethical vegans, used different strategies in order to negotiate their identity as authentically ethical vegans living in a non-vegan world. These participants found pure veganism an impossibility to achieve due to a lack of

alternatives in real circumstances in this non-vegan world. Similarly, Sneijder & Molder (2009) pointed out that their participants used negotiation strategies to manage and create alternative identities in order to refute a deviant perception by the mainstream society. The negative inference of a vegan lifestyle is built on a view that vegan practice is a complicated lifestyle. A negative image of vegetarians/vegans is also addressed by Jabs et al. (2000) and Lindquist (2013) who found that vegetarians chose to conform to non-vegetarian food behavior in order not to disrupt social situations and to try to appear normal in the company of non-vegetarians. This resulted in a conflict between their internal identities and their social identities. While the actual identity arises from self-perception of being vegetarians living a healthy and ethical lifestyle, the social identity is judged by others and vegetarians are perceived as stigmatized individuals.

In contrast, my participants neither view vegetarian/vegan practices as a complicated lifestyle that is full of restrictions, nor do they see themselves as part of a marginalized group in their culture. Instead, my participants perceive themselves as being morally superior to others who have a different religious view. Because my participants adopt their vegetarian and vegan practices based on religiosity, being a vegetarian or a vegan entails acquiring a higher moral standing. This high moral standing based on faith is reflected in their vegetarian/vegan identity element production. I also found that the religious groups, the Santi-Asoke Buddhist and the I-Kuan-Tao cults, are regarded as influential social networks that provide a high level of support to cultivators (such as my participants) and help them preserve their self-esteem.

Positive support from the religious communities that my participants are embedded in thus helps foster their positive self-perception; and I would like to claim, that their religiosity influences their actions and the construction of their vegetarian/vegan identity elements. For example, Nimit (chapter 5) expresses his good fortune of having been introduced to and having become a member of the Santi-Asoke cult. He also views himself as fortunate for having met the founder of the cult. In addition, Nimit portrays himself and his family as living a moral life that is guided by the principle of meritism. The principle of meritism entails practicing vegetarianism. For Nimit, meritism comprises his career as an organic/sustainable farmer and business owner of a vegetarian food store. He perceives that vegetarian food is spiritual food as he says ‘vegetarian food is benevolent to humans’ lives indeed’ (see interview example 5.7 lines 90, 91, and 92) and ‘people come to eat gain merit also’ (line 101). Here, Nimit produces a positive vegetarian identity element in connection with his religious belief in the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult.

In chapter 6, I showed that my participant, Duangpon, believes that religion is positive in every aspect of her life and that I-Kuan-Tao makes her life as well as her children’s lives better in every way. As a mother of two children, Duangpon focuses on parenting her children by nurturing their spirituality. She actively encourages her children to fully embrace their destiny of being I-Kuan-Tao cultivators, which means that the children are encouraged to adopt a vegan lifestyle. She continuously builds a sense of pride in her children by telling them that they are representatives of dharma, which makes them different from, and better than, other children at school. Being vegan here, is not at all viewed as socially deviant. Rather, it is viewed as being more virtuous than others.

Natakrit (chapter 7), also a member of I-Kuan-Tao, implies a higher moral standing much in the same way as, and even stronger than, Duangpon. Natakrit claims that he has been chosen by the holy deities of I-Kuan-Tao for the special duty of saving sentient beings. He does not perceive himself to be a deviant from mainstream culture even though I-Kuan-Tao is viewed as an unorthodox cult in Thailand. In contrast, Natakrit expresses his dedication to serve Gods' will by committing himself to the propagation of veganism (as seen in multimodal transcript 7.3 chapter 7). Natakrit perceives himself to be morally superior to others, not only because he has been chosen by the deities, but also and especially because he is a vegan. In accordance with his religious belief, Natakrit often uses intimation strategies, trying to force other people to adopt veganism. He bases his intimidation strategies on horrifying religious concepts such as karmic creditors or the apocalypse. Natakrit perceives that veganism can lead to moral perfection and attainment of spirituality. He produces his positive identity element of being a vegan that is guided by the teaching outlined the I-Kuan-Tao cult.

Based on my participants' unyielding religious faith and their attachment to their religious groups, I argue that my participants have positioned themselves as having a higher moral standing exceeding that of others belonging to other belief systems. Thus, religious belief has a strong impact on my participants' vegetarian/vegan identity elements produced at the time of the study. Next, I illustrate this inextricable link between vegetarian/vegan identity element production and religious beliefs with the extended methodological tool, the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Figure 8.1) to which I have added the

notion of historical body (Figure 8.4). Here, I give an example for each one of my participants, Nimit, Duangpon and Natakrit, respectively.

8.3.1 An example of Nimit's vegetarian identity production: Site of engagement of making vegetarian noodle soup.

In this section, I revisit the site of engagement of making vegetarian noodle soup where Nimit produces two identity elements: a vegetarian identity element and a business owner identity element. With an extended modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness, I now illustrate an inextricable link between Nimit's vegetarian identity element and his internalized religious belief in the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult.

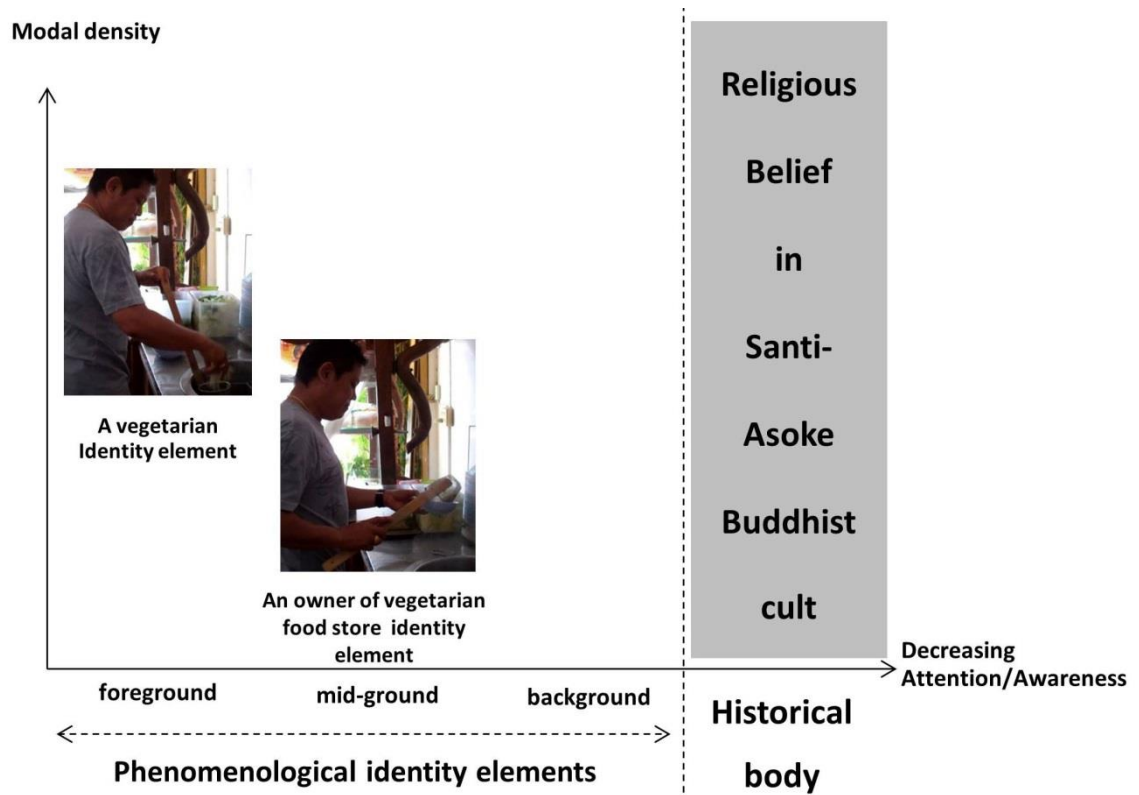


Figure 8.8: Nimit's vegetarian identity element influenced by his religious belief in the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult.

Nimit has adopted vegetarianism for spiritual reasons associated with the fundamental Buddhist activities of *dana*, *sila*, and *bhavana*. He constructs a vegetarian identity element in accordance with the Santi-Asoke's interpretation of the Buddhist first precept of abstaining from killing (*the first sila*). According to mainstream Theravada Buddhism, a violation of the first precept involves five factors: there is a living being, knowledge that the being is a living being, the intention of killing, the killing is executed, and the being dies. On the contrary, the Santi-Asoke believe that the involvement in any killing directly or indirectly is wrong. For them, this precept is violated, no matter if one commits the act of killing or if someone else kills on one's behalf. Buying processed meat, for example, is unethical because it means supporting the killing of the animal for food.

Vegetarianism for the Santi-Asoke represents the interconnectedness between compassion, moderation, and sustainability. The practice of vegetarianism is a means of showing compassion through the act of '*dana*' (giving / generosity) by freeing the lives of living beings. It also implies moderation and sustainability corresponding to the first component of the Santi-Asoke's motto, 'to consume little'. Vegetarianism requires mindfulness (*bhavana*) of ones' actions, preventing the cultivator from being controlled by a worldly desire rooted in self-interest or greed. In regard to sustainability, the Santi-Asoke believe that animal farming produces adverse effects on the ecosystem that support all forms of life (such as depletion and contamination of environmental resources). Therefore, the Santi-Asoke promote organic farming as it sustains the environment.

As mentioned earlier, Nimit's vegetarian identity element also relates to his business owner identity element. He perceives that the vegetarian food store's form

of merit-making is twofold: Firstly, promoting vegetarianism is a meritorious act by observing the first Buddhist precept; it connects to '*dana*' (giving / generosity) based on providing others with good things (life); and implies '*bhavana*' or a higher mental development ingrained in right thought, right speech, and right action. According to his belief, his customers also gain merit by eating vegetarian food. Secondly, promoting well-being in individuals is merit-making. From a Buddhist view, health is perceived as the most precious thing that provides a basic asset for the cultivation of prolific spirituality (Mackenzie, 2007). The Santi-Asoke build a Buddhist community that prioritizes individuals' wholesomeness. This belief states that a sound body is fundamental to a sound mind and connects to the value of work since individuals who are physically strong and healthy are more productive and contribute more to society.

Next, I illustrate an interconnectedness between Duangpon's vegan identity element and her religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao; Duangpon is also a spiritual vegan.

8.3.2 An example of Duangpon's vegan identity production: Site of engagement of cooking vegan chili dip

Here, I re-examine the site of engagement of cooking vegan chili dip, whereby three identity elements are constructed: a business owner; an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator; and a vegan. Although I focus my discussion on Duangpon's vegan identity element, I elucidate the interrelationship between her vegan identity element and the other identity elements because they are all interrelated and produced within the religious context of I-Kuan-Tao.

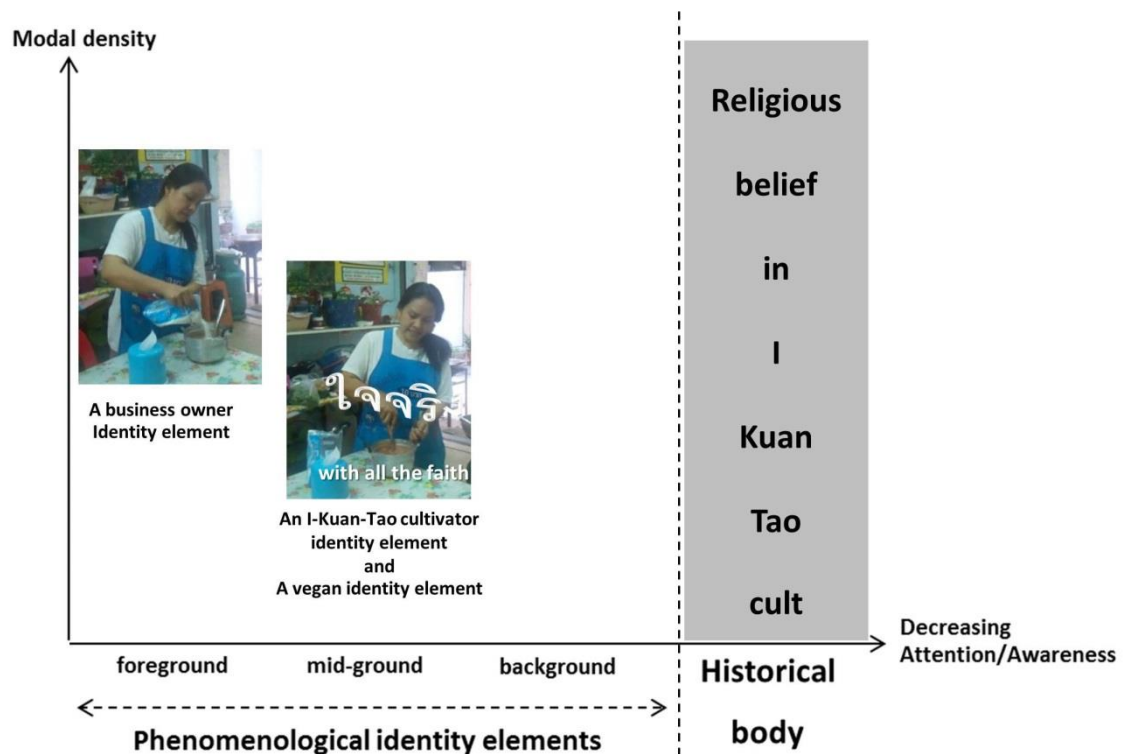


Figure 8.9: Duangpon's vegan identity element influenced by her religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao.

In Figure 8.10, Duangpon produces her vegan identity element in accordance with her belief in I-Kuan-Tao, believing that a vegan diet is spiritual food. I-Kuan-Tao outlines that veganism is a spiritual means of purifying the soul to return to its primordial state. According to I-Kuan-Tao, karma bondage from killing animals or even consuming animals is a major hindrance to nirvana. Influenced by her religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao, Duangpon made a commitment to become a vegan for the rest of her life (through the ritual called Ching-Ko). She has practiced veganism for eight years. Duangpon has also taken on the responsibility of caretaker of the I-Kuan-Tao shrine close to her house. One of the most important requirements of being a caretaker of the shrine is that the cultivator must practice veganism.

Influenced by her faith in I-Kuan-Tao, Duangpon's vegan identity element has a strong connection with her business owner identity element. Duangpon changed her career path from selling non-vegetarian food to selling vegetarian food, and every day Duangpon and her family members eat the food that she cooks for sale in the store. For Duangpon, running a vegetarian food store is an honoring business. Through this business, other people are motivated to eat vegetarian food, which means they observe the Buddhist first precept. As outlined by I-Kuan-Tao, an individual's past karma can be mitigated and new karmic affinity can be terminated through vegan practice. Running a vegetarian food store is thus conceived of as missionary work as it allows the virtue of compassion to be cultivated in the mind of others. Inspiring other people to commit good deeds multiplies an individual's merit accumulation, reflected in the saying of the cult that 'saving others is just saving selves' (Lu, 2008, p. 85).

By adhering to the religious cult and conforming to its moral conduct and practices, Duangpon produces her vegan identity element for spiritual reasons. The way Duangpon raises her children (to become vegans and I-Kaun-Tao cultivators) and her vegan practice itself are heavily informed by her religious belief. The Influence of religious belief is also reflected in her career as a business owner of a vegetarian food store and how she wishes others to be as good as she is by eating vegan food.

Next, I illustrate that Natakrit's practices of veganism and his vegan identity are also developed in accordance with his unyielding faith in I-Kuan-Tao. I illustrate through my extended continuum (Figure 8.4) how his religious belief influences his vegan identity.

8.3.3 An example of Natakrit's vegan identity element: Site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall.

Here, I revisit the site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall where Natakrit produces his vegan identity element in the mid-ground of his attention/awareness. Illustrated through the extended modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness, Natakrit's vegan identity element is influenced by I-Kuan Tao and interrelated with other identity elements produced simultaneously.

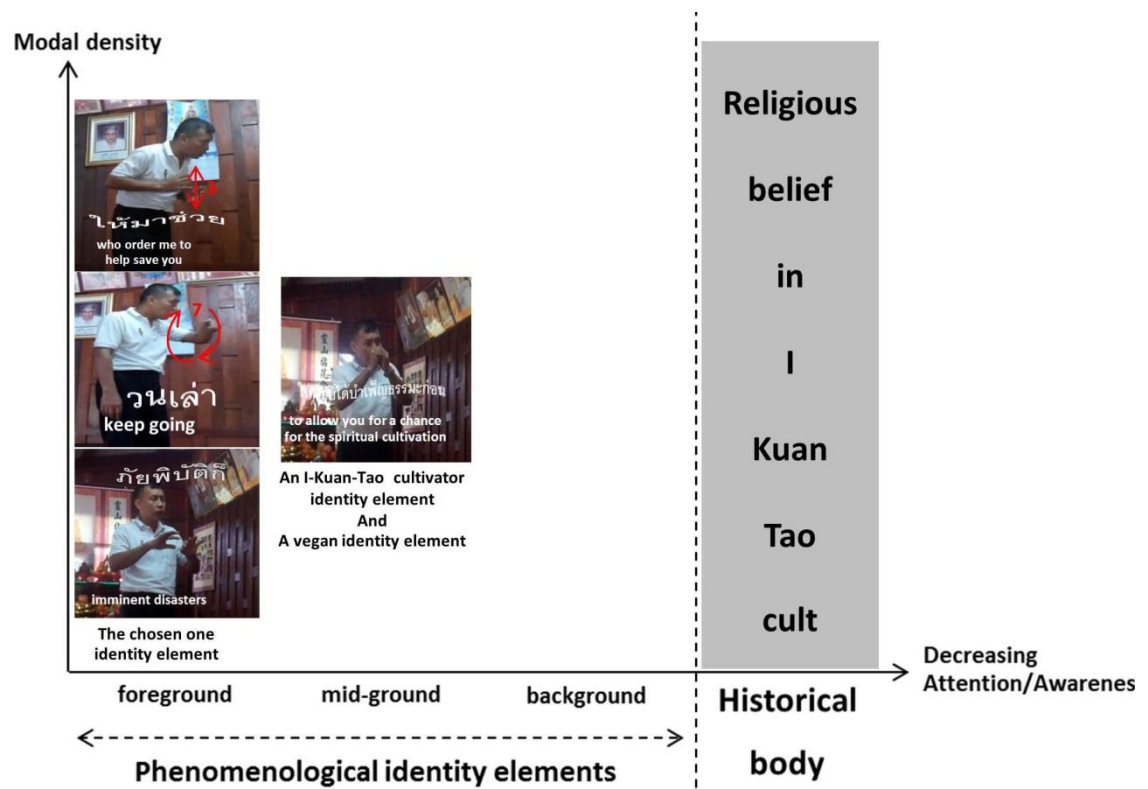


Figure 8.10: Natakrit's vegan identity element influenced by his religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao.

As discussed earlier, Natakrit has adopted a vegan practice for spiritual reasons. His vegan identity element is strongly influenced by his religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao, which outlines that one should refrain from taking the life of all living beings, which is associated with the Buddhist's first precept. I-Kuan-Tao teaches that veganism is a means of growing compassion in the mind, resulting in purification of the soul. I-Kuan Tao also outlines that one can break free from negative karmic affinity with their karmic creditors (animals killed for food) and can finally transcend the cycle of reincarnation. For a higher spiritual development, I-Kuan-Tao cultivators are urged to formally become vegans by engaging in the ritual of making a vegan vow known as 'Ching-Ko'.

Natakrit constructs a vegan identity element in connection with the chosen one identity element. Veganism implies compassion which is regarded as a characteristic of a great cultivator's mind. Being a representative of the holy deities, the chosen one has to be morally perfect. The chosen one is a special person who is given power by the holy deities to save other sentient beings. For this, the chosen one must be perfectly qualified, which means he must practice veganism.

In the next section, I discuss the saliency of identity elements of my participants. I illustrate through graphs how different identity elements take on different of saliency.

8.4 A saliency of identity element: The interconnectedness between identity elements

In this section, I discuss saliency of identity elements that my participants produced at the time of the study. As previously illustrated in chapter 5, 6, and 7, my participants produced their multiple identity elements through several higher-level actions they performed simultaneously. These phenomenally-produced identity elements take on different levels of saliency even though they can be shifted in and out of focus at any time. This is pointed out by Norris (2011a), who states “...we find that social actors more often focus on particular identity elements than on others; and we also find that a social actor keeps some identity elements continuously on some level of their attention/awareness” (p. 233). Saliency of an identity element comes about when a social actor particularly focuses on the identity element or when they continuously produce it over time (Norris, 2011a). More importantly, Norris (2011a, p. 233) points out that the most salient identity elements are not necessarily produced in the foreground of attention/awareness. Identity elements can also be most salient when they are situated in the mid-ground or the background of the social actor’s attention/awareness as long as they are sustained over time on some level of attention/awareness.

Next, I give the examples of my participants’ identity production, illustrating through the modified methodological tool how saliency of identity may be determined.

8.4.1 Saliency of Nimit's identity

In the following example, I illustrate the most salient identity elements Nimit produced at the time of the study. Here, I re-visit all sites of engagement in chapter 5: The site of engagement of conducting a workshop; the site of engagement of delivering bean sprouts; and the site of engagement of making vegetarian noodle soup. In the following Figure 8.11, I show that Nimit's identity elements produced within three sites of engagement take on different level of saliency.

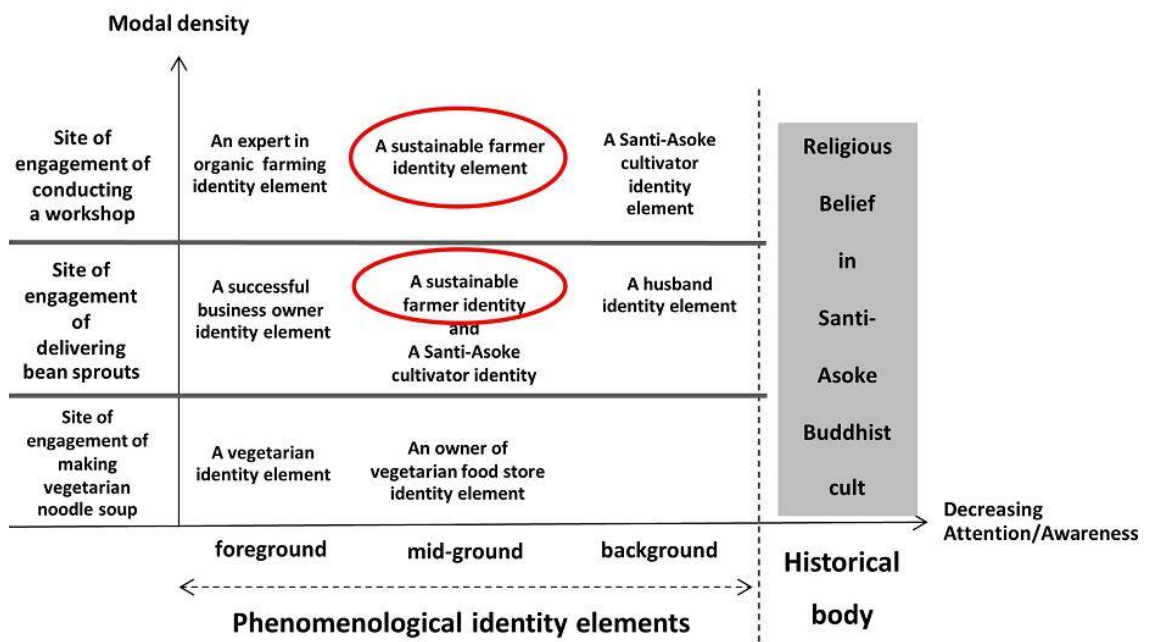


Figure 8.11: Nimit's sustainable farmer identity element as the most salient identity element at the time of the study.

Here, as discussed in detail in chapter 5 (section 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3), Nimit produced multiple identity elements simultaneously and constantly shifted his focus to different identity elements. Nimit, for example, foregrounded an expert in organic farming identity element (during the site of engagement of conducting a workshop)

and at some other times, he foregrounded a successful business owner identity element (during the site of engagement of delivering bean sprouts) or a vegetarian identity element (during the site of engagement of making a vegetarian noodle soup). In the mid-ground of Nimit's attention/awareness, Nimit's business owner identity element as well as his Santi-Asoke cultivator appeared once; and a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element was also produced once in the background of Nimit's attention/awareness. In the background of his attention/awareness, he only produced a husband identity element with his wife once when he delivered his bean sprouts at the Santi-Asoke self-operated green supermarket in Bangkok. The identity elements I illustrated above take on some levels of saliency but over a short period of time as they come and go quickly.

While other identity elements outlined above were often shifted in and out, a sustainable farmer identity element seemed to be more sustained over time than others. Even when compared with a Santi-Asoke identity element, Nimit has always produced a sustainable farmer identity element, and I argue that a sustainable farmer identity element is stronger than a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element. The reason is that Nimit produced a sustainable farmer identity element twice through medium modal density whereas he produced a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element one time through medium modal density and at the other time through low modal density. This makes a sustainable farmer identity element more salient; and the most salient identity element in chapter 5.

Besides the three examples from the sites of engagement I examined in this thesis, Nimit often portrayed himself as a sustainable farmer throughout my fieldwork. Nimit's main daily activities happened around his farm, ranging from farming bean

sprouts to lecturing about organic farming to other people who were interested in his root-cutting growing technique for bean sprouts and visited his farm (see Appendix D.1). Sometimes, he showcased his organic bean sprouts growing technique which was a part of the hometown loyalty campaign organized by the second largest telecommunication company in Thailand (see Appendix D.2). One time during my fieldwork, he gave an interview to an agricultural radio program about growing organic bean sprouts. At home (which is part of a food store and a shop that sells green products), Nimit sometimes prepared new sets of equipment for bean sprout farming (see Appendix D.3) and gave advice about fertilizer use in organic farming to the customers (see Appendix D.4). Therefore, the sustainable farmer identity element, which is more sustained than any other identity elements by Nimit is produced as his most salient identity element.

The representative samples I illustrated here and in chapter 5, just as each of the samples that I collected throughout my fieldwork show that Nimit produced a sustainable farmer identity element as the most salient identity element.

Next, I give an example of Duangpon's identity production where I illustrate that Duangpon's I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is the most salient identity element.

8.4.2 Saliency of Duangpon's identity element

I re-visit the three sites of engagement that I analyzed in chapter 6 (section 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3). They are the site of engagement of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao Gods; the site of engagement of cooking vegetarian spicy tofu salad; and the site of engagement

of cooking vegan chili dip. Although the identity elements produced within these sites of engagement are religiously-related, Duangpon has adopted her I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element over a long duration. Thus, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is Duangpon's most sustained identity element at the time of the study.

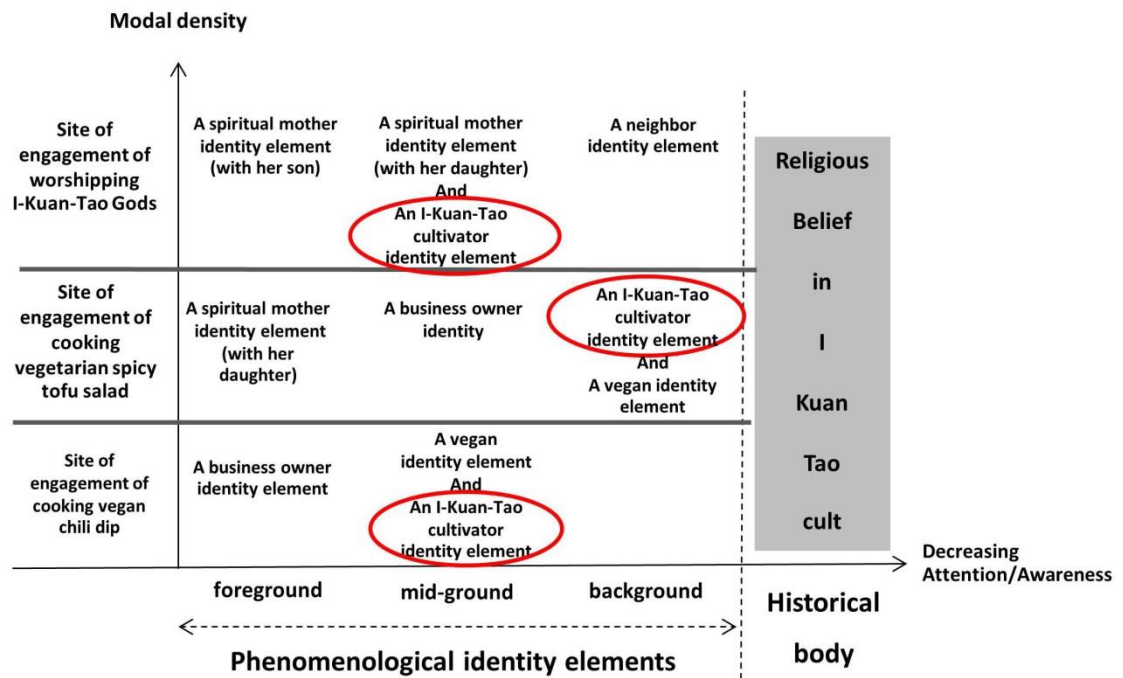


Figure 8.12: Duangpon's I-Kuan-Tao cultivator as the most salient identity element at the time of the study.

Duangpon produced various identity elements within different sites of engagement examined in this thesis and these identity elements were structured by her religious belief, which was viewed as an integral part of her historical body. As the production of Duangpon's identity elements was situationally-grounded, Duangpon focused on different identity elements. She foregrounded higher-level actions that differed from one site of engagement to another. For example, one time Duangpon focused on the higher-level action of interacting with her son within the site of engagement of worshipping I-Kaun-Tao Gods, resulting in the production of a spiritual

mother identity element. At some other time, Duangpon focused her attention/awareness on interacting with her daughter and co-produced a spiritual mother identity element. Her identity elements, displaying high modal density, shifted in and out of focus and were not continuously produced over time. Even the identity element of business owner that Duangpon produced twice, once within the site of engagement of cooking vegan chili dip and the other time within the site of engagement of cooking vegetarian spicy tofu salad, was shifted between the foreground and the mid-ground of her attention/awareness. Similar to a business owner identity element, Duangpon produced a vegan identity element one time through medium modal density and the other through low modal density.

The identity elements discussed above were more or less salient as they were produced on some levels of her attention/awareness, but they were not as strong as her I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element. As can be seen in Figure 8.12, Duangpon produced an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element continuously on some levels of her attention/awareness within the three sites of engagement examined in chapter 6. This makes the I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element more sustained than other identity elements.

Duangpon sustained an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element over time as could also be seen throughout my observational data. Duangpon practiced I-Kuan-Tao by worshipping I-Kuan-Tao's Gods every day. At different times, Duangpon attended the worship ritual with other I-Kuan-Tao cultivators who were a part of her religious network. On the weekend, it was a family praying time where everybody in her family attended the ritual (see Appendix D.5). Or sometimes, Duangpon engaged in the worship ritual with other I-Kuan-Tao cultivators (see Appendix D.6). Besides, Duangpon

spent most of her time working in her vegetarian food store cooking vegetarian food for sale and playing I-Kuan-Tao dharma music. She usually had her first meal of the day after 9 am when her store was not as crowded as in the morning during 6 am-9 am. While Duangpon produced multiple identity elements throughout the fieldwork, she always produced her Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element on some level of her attention/awareness. Therefore, an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is Duangpon's most salient identity element.

I illustrated that all the representative samples I showed here and in chapter 6, just as all the samples that I collected throughout my fieldwork, show that an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element is the most salient identity element that Duangpon produced over time.

Next, I illustrate that Natakrit's most salient identity element is the chosen one identity element. I argue again that saliency of identity element can be determined by a degree of modal density an identity element entails as well as by the continuity an identity element has over time.

8.4.3 Saliency of Natakrit's identity element

In this section, I re-examine two sites of engagement: giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture during the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall and giving a dharma lecture at dharma assembly. The chosen one identity element is the strongest identity element among other identity elements even though Natakrit shifted the chosen one identity element between the foreground and mid-ground of his attention/awareness.

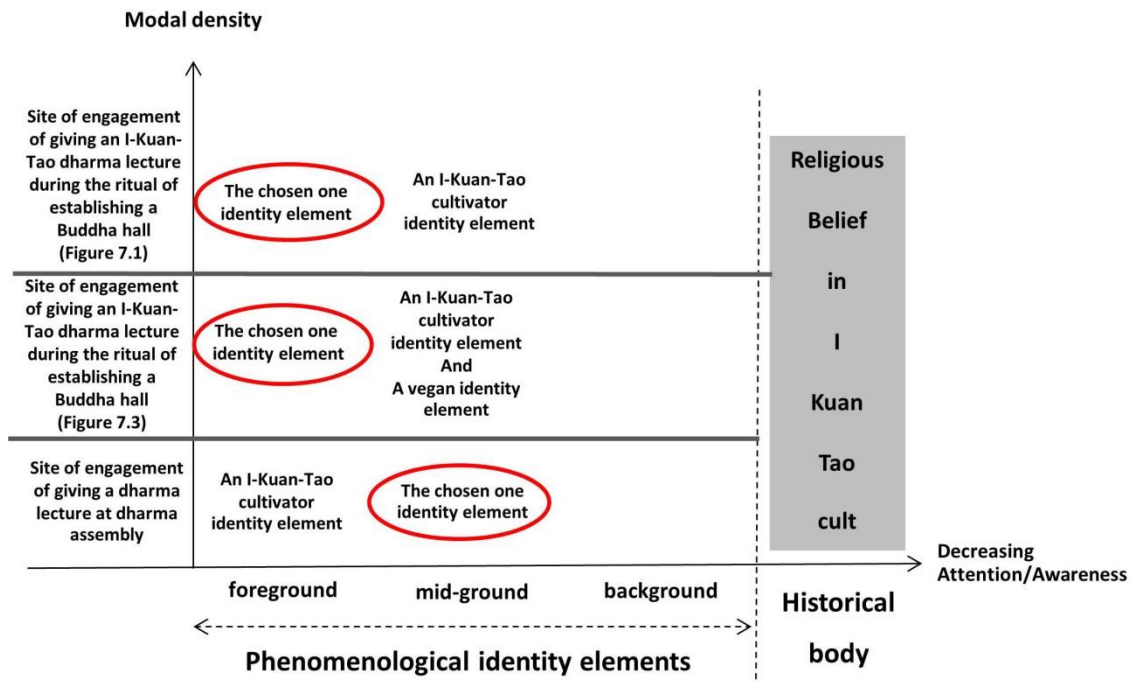


Figure 8.13: Natakrit's chosen one identity element as the most salient identity element produced at the time of the study.

Natakrit produced three particularly salient identity elements within the two sites of engagement I examined in chapter 7. Among these identity elements, the chosen one identity element was the most salient one. The chosen one identity element was consistently sustained over long duration and it often was produced with high modal density. As can be seen throughout the sites of engagement analyzed in this thesis, the chosen one identity element and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element always were produced together. Natakrit twice produced the chosen one identity element through high modal density (as seen twice in Figure 7.2 and 7.4) and once through medium modal density (Figure 7.8), while he twice kept an I-Kaun-Tao cultivator identity element in the mid-ground and only once produced it in the foreground of his attention/awareness.

Besides the examples given above, Natakrit often produced the chosen one identity element over time during my fieldwork. Believing that he was the chosen one, he thought that he had to maintain his moral perfection and commit himself to missionary work. Being the chosen one displayed a high moral ground, Natakrit worshiped Gods everyday where he performed a hundred kowtows during each session (see Appendix D.7). Natakrit believed this was a means of expressing his deepest sincerity to the Gods for the power they gave him; and with that power he was made superior to others. During some other times, especially in dharmic functions, Natakrit took on a supervisor role. He supervised a rehearsal of the holy ritual (see Appendix D.8), gave lectures on I-Kuan-Tao dharma to the audience and convinced others to convert to the I-Kuan-Tao cult using intimidation strategies, especially when picturing the apocalypse.

Through the representative samples outlined above and in chapter 7, and each of the samples I collected during my fieldwork show that Natakrit continuously kept the chosen one identity element on some level of his attention/awareness. Resultantly, the chosen one identity element was the most salient identity element for Natakrit at the time of the study.

8.5 Conclusion

I began my discussion with the methodological gaps I found in the studies of identity production drawing on language as a unit of analysis. As opposed to language-based studies on identity, I take multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) as my framework wherein the mediated action is the unit of analysis. Because I conducted an ethnographic study analyzing multiple sets of data, I was able to examine identity production holistically. Taking this multimodal approach, I viewed an identity element as ever-changing and as a part of a larger whole (Norris, 2011a). Identity elements can be examined holistically and in relation to other identity elements, rather than examining identity in isolation, when conducting only a language-based analysis (Hansell & Ajirotutu, 1982; Heller, 1982; Salamone, 1986; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995; Povey, Wellens, & Conner, 2001; Evers, 2001; Carmichael, 2002; Pallotta, 2005; Hammack, 2008; Fox. & Ward, 2008; Bartoli & Gillem, 2008; Chenoweth, 2009; Cloud, 2009; Cooks, 2009; Handman, 2009; Kouega, Jean-Paul, 2008; Sen & Wagner, 2009; Hogg et al., 2010; Jaspal & Coyle, 2010; Reichert & Ravitch, 2010; Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman, 2010; Hopkins, 2011; Haque, 2012; Kiser, 2013; Novic, 2013; Stiles, 2013; Brubaker, 2014; Chew, 2014; Schnabel & Hjerm, 2014; Young, 2014). By revisiting the analyses of chapters 5, 6, and 7, I illustrated the fluidity of identity elements by showing that my participants often shifted their focus.

Then, I provided a thematic discussion where I proposed that religious belief has an enduringly powerful influence on the entire structure of my participants' actions and their identity production. Here, I viewed religious belief as an integral part of a person's long-term historical body. In order to elucidate the interconnectedness

between religious belief and identity elements, I applied the methodological tool, the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Norris, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2011a) and this time *modified* Norris' (2005, 2008) originally-devised graphs by adding the notion of historical body (Nishida, 1958) to the graph in Norris (2004) (section 8.2). With this modified tool, I illustrated through the examples in section 8.2.1, 8.2.2, and 8.2.3 that the historical body is always situated in the background of a person's consciousness. Their historical body influenced my participants' identity element production at the phenomenological level. I also illustrated that these identity elements were interrelated as they were all produced within the religious context. For example, Nimit's expert in organic bean sprout farming identity element was interrelated with his sustainable farmer identity element because his expertise in bean sprout farming was developed through his sustainable farming practices; and both, Nimit's expert in organic bean sprout farming identity element and his sustainable farmer identity element, were structured by his religious belief.

I presented the long-term effect of religious belief that governs the way my participants act in the world. This is specifically relevant in regard to their vegetarian/vegan practices, resulting in their vegetarian/vegan identity element (section 8.3). I illustrated throughout that religiosity contributed to my participants' sense of personal significance that they had a higher moral standing, exceeding that of others belonging to different social groups. My participants reflected their positive self-perception through their vegetarian/vegan identity elements (section 8.3.1, 8.3.2, and 8.3.3).

The final point of the discussion involves saliency of an identity element. Using the modified graph, I argue that my participants produced particularly salient identity element(s) on some levels of their attention/level (section 8.4). Through the given examples I showed in section 8.4.1, 8.4.2, and 8.4.3, I found that some identity elements had more continuity than the others as my participants had produced these over time, while some of the identity elements had shifted. These sustained identity elements, I argued, inform saliency.

In the next chapter, I summarize my thesis, and I answer in detail the research questions that have guided my study. Then, I address some limitations and I provide further directions for the study of identity production.

Chapter 9

Conclusion: Identity, religious belief, and vegetarianism

Motivated by my curiosity about vegetarianism and how vegetarians develop and maintain their lifestyle and the realization that such a study had not been conducted before, I decided to immerse myself in ethnographic fieldwork in order to observe how vegetarians in Thai culture live their lives, and in particular, when they eat vegetarian food. I wished to understand both the position and the extent of their vegetarian identity element *in relation* to other identity elements. While other researchers have investigated vegetarian/vegan identity, they always and *only* examined a vegetarian or vegan identity in isolation.

9.1 Holistic approach to identity production

Since other researchers investigated vegetarian identity construction only in isolation, without taking other identity elements into consideration, I approached the study of identity holistically by utilising multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) as my approach.

In my view, individuals are unique and composed of varying qualities that constitute their identities; and as stated by Scollon (1997, 2001), each action is identity-telling. My collected visual ethnographic data is rich, and the resulting study is

empirical. Immersing myself in ethnographic fieldwork, I was able to observe many aspects about my participants regarding how they live their lives. Being a part of their daily lives, I observed who they interact with, the places they go to eat lunch or buy food, the food they eat, how they cook, how they treat animals, and also how they think about different issues. All of these aspects are repetitively patterned, phenomenally and naturally produced, and may individually be of little significance yet have interactional meaning and inform who my participants are. Approaching identity through interviews or questionnaires *only* would limit the understanding of identity production because interviews only represent the respondents' own views about who they are.

9.2 A production of multiple identity elements

Before I began my research, my knowledge about my participants and their identity production was limited. I started my first day in the field focusing on my participants' vegetarian/vegan practice. However, the more I became immersed in the field and became a part of my participants' lives, the more I learned that vegetarianism/veganism is only a part of their lives. In fact, they engaged in countless activities at the same time, including but not limited to activities about eating vegetarian/vegan food. I have seen them work on the farm, talk to their partners and their children, associate with their colleagues, go for business trips, shop at the local market or deliver their products. Using a multimodal approach, I was able to examine how my participants' different identity elements developed in connection with other identity elements. I illustrated in Chapter 5, 6 and 7 how my participants' identity is

made up of multiple identity elements, one of which is their vegetarian/vegan identity element.

Next, I re-iterate how I answered research questions 1 and 2, illustrating how my participants produce their simultaneous identity elements through the use of various communicative modes and how they hierarchically produce these identity elements.

Research question 1: *How do participants produce simultaneous identity elements through the use of various communicative modes?*

Research question 2: *Which identity elements do participants foreground, mid-ground, or background?*

I answered research questions 1 and 2 in chapters 5, 6, and 7, where I showed how my participants used multiple modes to construct their (inter)actions in different ways. I delineated their resulting identity production through the modal density foreground-background continuum of attention/awareness (Norris, 2004, 2011a).

Through the examination of the sites of engagement as illustrated in chapters 5, 6, and 7, I found that my participants constantly shift their focus from one certain higher-level action to another. Resultantly, they also shifted their identity elements produced through these higher-level actions between the foreground and the mid-ground or the mid-ground and the background of their attention/awareness. My participants used high modal density to construct their focused higher-level actions and with them the foregrounded identity elements. Nimit, for example focused on the higher-level action of giving a workshop to his audience through a combination of spoken language with non-verbal modes (gesture, posture, gaze, facial expression,

proxemics, layout, and objects). This resulted in the production of an expert in organic farming identity element. In much the same way, Duangpon, foregrounded the higher-level action of interacting with her son, using high modal density achieved through the intensity of the modes of spoken language, gaze, and gesture, resulting in a spiritual mother identity element. Natakrit foregrounded the higher-level action of purporting himself as the chosen one and with it the chosen one identity element, using the modes of spoken language, gesture, posture, facial expression and head movement.

My participants produced their mid-grounded identity elements through the higher-level actions entailing a medium modal density. Nimit, for example, constructed two identity elements simultaneously in the mid-ground of his attention/awareness: a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element and a sustainable farmer identity element. While a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element was produced through the higher-level frozen action of taking part in the Santi-Asoke store (embedded in the mode of layout), he produced a sustainable farmer identity element through the higher-level frozen action of farming, embedded in the bean sprouts. Duangpon also produced two identity elements in her mid-grounded attention/awareness at the site of engagement of cooking vegan chili dip. Here, she produced both a vegan identity element and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element. While she constructed an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element through the mode of music, she constructed her vegan identity element through the modes of object handling and hand/arm movements, linked to the mediational means of vegan food that she cooked and ate. Natakrit produced an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element and a vegan identity element in the mid-ground of his attention/awareness at the site of engagement of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma lecture at the ritual of establishing a Buddha hall. An I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity

element was produced through the modes of spoken language alongside non-verbal modes such as gestures, posture, facial expression, and layout. Simultaneously, Natakrit produced his vegan identity element through particular mediational means of the vegan food that he eats. While my participants always produced multiple identity elements, each participant also displayed a particularly salient identity element.

Nimit always produced his sustainable farmer identity element in the mid-ground of his attention/awareness. Working on the farm was part of Nimit's everyday life and this identity element of sustainable farmer is a career-linked identity element. Throughout my fieldwork, Nimit most frequently produced his sustainable farmer identity element (section 8.4 Figure 8.11), making this his most salient identity element at the time of the study.

Duangpon always produces an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element, either in the mid-ground or in the background of her attention/awareness. This indicates that Duangpon was often aware of herself as an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator. Throughout my fieldwork, Duangpon continuously kept her I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element on some level of her attention/awareness, making an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element her most salient identity element (section 8.4 Figure 8.12).

Natakrit always produced the chosen one identity element, which was almost always situated either in the foreground or mid-ground of his attention/awareness. Throughout my fieldwork, Natakrit always focused on doing missionary work as he was actively involved in several dharmic events. Natakrit most frequently produced his chosen one identity element making this his most salient identity element at the time of the study (section 8.4 Figure 8.13).

Next, I reiterate my research question 3, examining how my participants integrate their vegetarianism into their everyday lives. By using multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a), I discovered that my participants do not produce their vegetarian/vegan identity element in isolation, but rather, they produce a vegetarian/vegan identity element in relation to other identity elements.

9.3 Production of a vegetarian identity element in everyday life

I was interested in my participants' vegetarian/vegan identity element in particular and now recapitulate how I answered research question 3.

Research question 3: *How do the participants produce a vegetarian identity element in their everyday lives and how is it connected to other identity elements?*

Not surprisingly, my participants produced their vegetarian/vegan identity element in connection with the mediational means of food. Nevertheless, although my participants adopted vegetarianism/veganism a long time ago, they did not continuously produce their vegetarian/vegan identity element. This, however, does not mean that vegetarianism/veganism is not important in their lives. Rather, I found that my participants highly integrated their vegetarianism/veganism into their lives and their vegetarian/vegan identity element often comes into play in connection with other identity elements.

I discussed in chapters 2, 5 and 8 that Nimit adopted vegetarianism for spiritual reasons. A construction of his vegetarian identity element was closely linked to the

first Buddhist precept, as interpreted by the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult, of not killing any living beings (Interview transcript 5.7). Nimit aspires to observe the first precept, including other precepts. This way, he conceptualizes vegetarianism as a means of merit-making. Nimit's vegetarian identity element is also connected to other identity elements. His vegetarian identity element is connected to his Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element because vegetarianism is the norm for Santi-Asoke's followers. His vegetarian identity element is also connected to a sustainable farmer identity element as Nimit grows organic bean sprouts as food supply for others and he himself prepares his food with the organic bean sprouts that he farms (Figure 5.8). In addition, a vegetarian identity element is strongly connected to an owner of a vegetarian food store identity element since running a vegetarian food store is believed to be a form of merit-making by promoting vegetarianism.

I showed in chapters 2, 6, and 8 that Duangpon also practiced veganism because of her unyielding faith in I-Kuan-Tao. She believes that veganism implies such virtues as love, compassion, and kindness to other living beings. Practicing veganism for health reasons, in Duangpon's view, is rooted in selfishness. Duangpon integrated veganism into her everyday life and produced her vegan identity element in connection with other identity elements. As a spiritual mother, she raises her children to become vegans, feeding them with food she cooks for sale in her store and consistently fostering their pride of being vegan (Interview transcript 6.1). A vegan identity element was also connected to her I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element and her business owner identity element. This is because veganism is practiced by most I-Kuan-Tao cultivators and veganism can be promoted by selling vegetarian food.

I discussed throughout chapter 7 that Natakrit integrated veganism into his everyday life. Natakrit not only practiced veganism, but he was also strongly determined to promote veganism. This is part of Natakrit's missionary work. A vegan identity element is connected to the chosen one identity element and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element. Throughout my fieldwork, Natakrit frequently purported himself as the chosen one while lecturing on veganism, convincing others to convert to I-Kuan-Tao. His lectures were based on his experience of practicing veganism for seventeen years (Figure 7.4). Natakrit frequently used intimidation strategies by referring to I-Kuan-Tao scriptures in which one who practices veganism will be saved from the apocalypse (Figure 7.3). In addition, Natakrit connected veganism to the God of Death. He taught that one who adopts veganism will be blessed by the God of Death (Interview transcript 7.3).

I illustrated throughout that vegetarianism/veganism plays a significant role in my participants' lives and that vegetarianism/veganism is interconnected with other identity elements. In the following section, I now restate research question 4 through which I investigated an interconnectedness between my participants' simultaneously produced identity elements and their religious belief.

9.4 Connection between identity elements and religious belief

Here, I answer research question 4 by drawing on my fieldwork data. I illustrated throughout chapter 8 that the notion of historical body (Nishida, 1958) is a useful one when examining religious belief and that it can be manifested in real-time actions and the resulting identity elements.

Research question 4: *How does religious belief connect to the phenomenologically produced identity elements?*

I discovered that religious belief is the most pervasive force that governs my participants' actions and their identity elements, and suggest that religious belief can be viewed as an integral part of the long-term historical body of a participant. Historical body, as defined by Scollon (2001), aligning himself with Bourdieu's (1977) habitus and Nishida's (1958) historical body, is described as the collective result of an individual's past experiences and cultural dispositions that make possible various social practices. Adding the historical body to the foreground-background continuum (Norris, 2005) (Chapter 8, section 8.2), I illustrated that religious belief influenced my participants' actions and resulting identity element production.

While conducting a workshop on organic bean sprouts farming, Nimit produced an expert in organic farming identity element, a sustainable farmer identity element, and a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element in accordance with the core principle of meritism of the right livelihood. Being an expert in organic farming is guided by the 'right desire' (chanda), viewed not only as a means of producing food but also as an ethical lifestyle with simplicity and peace. Being a farmer in the Santi-Asoke's perspective is the most meritorious career option because it promotes a sustainable lifestyle. An expert in organic farming identity element as well as a sustainable farmer identity element are tightly connected to the Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element, reflecting an economical way of life guided by the ethic of moderation and self-sufficiency.

Duangpon's religious belief has played a major role in her identity production. For example, she produced a spiritual mother identity element with her children, displaying her belief in I-Kuan-Tao's spiritual approach of self-reflection arising through awareness training. Being a mother, Duangpon adopted a spiritual approach as a means for cultivating moral characteristics of mind in her children. She also produced her I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element in accordance with her unyielding faith in I-Kuan-Tao. Attaching herself to the cultivation of I-Kuan-Tao, she fulfilled her responsibility as a caretaker of the shrine by strictly complying with the rules and performing the rituals of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao's deities on a daily basis.

Natakrit also produced his identity elements in connection with his religious belief in I-Kuan-Tao. He produced the chosen one identity element based on his belief that he has been chosen by I-Kuan-Tao's Gods to save sentient beings from the apocalypse. Natakrit, as the chosen one, performed the special duty of convincing others to receive I-Kuan-Tao dharma and cultivate moral perfection in order to attain enlightenment before the advent of the apocalypse. Natakrit also constructed an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element, engaging predominantly in I-Kuan-Tao dharma propagation. According to the I-Kuan-Tao cult, the cultivators should prioritize missionary work. In addition, Natakrit produced a vegan identity element in association with the teaching of the Buddhist's first precept that one should refrain from taking the life of all living beings. He also believed that veganism leads to a purification of the soul, resulting in final salvation.

I addressed above an inextricable link between my participants' identity elements and their religious belief, viewed as an integral part of their historical body. A religious belief is embedded and becomes apparent in my participants' actions as well

as their identity element production. Utilizing the modified methodological tool, I could better elucidate an interconnectedness between my participants' actions and religious beliefs situated in the background of the graph. This back-to-front structuring (Norris, 2005, 2008) illustrates that my participants' actions and with them their identity elements, either produced in the foreground, mid-ground, or background of their attention/awareness, are structured by their religious belief embedded in their historical bodies.

However, while conducting my research, I also experienced some limitations that constrained my study. In the next section, I discuss these limitations.

9.5 Limitations

The first limitation I experienced in this study involved the limited scope of the study that particularly focused on examining identity production of vegetarians/vegans who belong to the two specific non-traditional religious cults in Thai culture. I have discovered that all of my participants' vegetarian practice stems from their religious beliefs outlined by their cults, where vegetarianism is the norm and is viewed as a spiritual means for attaining nirvana. This contributed to their identity production of what I termed *spiritual vegetarians*. However, there are other vegetarians in Thai culture, who practice vegetarianism for other reasons. Their reasons for becoming vegetarians vary and may be for health, ethical, or spiritual reasons. Based on different forms of vegetarian practice and motivation for adopting vegetarianism, these vegetarians may have assigned different views and meanings toward vegetarianism. Resultantly, this may contribute to the production of their vegetarian identity element, including other identity element, in a different way from my participants.

The second limitation is time. Ethnography is a method that heavily relies on fieldwork data. Initially, I intended to study eight participants over the course of five months, where each of them would be studied for two weeks. Finally, after I finished my data collection, came back to New Zealand, and started analyzing my data, I decided to focus on three particular participants (justification in chapter 2 section 2.1.4). At some points during data analysis, I felt that it would have been better if I could have stayed longer in the field, observing these selected three participants over a longer term. If I had been able to do what I wished for, I could have collected more data about each of them, which, I believe, might have contributed to even deeper knowledge about their identity production.

The third limitation involves the ethical consideration, and specifically, the principle of privacy. According to the nature of ethnographic study and the aim of my study, I intended to collect rich data about my participants' everyday lives as much as I could. My participants were very cooperative. They allowed me to observe them and participate in most of their activities in their everyday lives. However, they still wanted to keep some aspects of their lives private. For example, they did not allow me to observe them at their workplaces or in their private family zones, but only allowed me into specific areas of their residences. Or they did not allow me to participate in some of their activities (such as accompanying them to deliver their products, or accompanying them to meetings with their friends). Although I always tried to collect as much data as I could, I carefully considered and respected my participants' privacy. However, because of this, I did not have access to all of their activities, which likely limited my understanding of their identity production to some extent.

The final limitation is related to managing devices such as cameras, particularly in regards to their placement or their re-adjustment. Most of my fieldwork was conducted at my participants' residences. The residences of each one of my participants varied in terms of space and condition. Some of my participants live in private houses, either having much or little space. Others live in shop houses, where some areas are reserved for business. These conditions in the settings affected my video-ethnography. Sometimes, I found it difficult to video record in very confined space (for example, in a very small kitchen area) since I was unable to set up my cameras properly. At other times, I filmed my participants' interaction in their stores, which were crowded with customers, and I felt that I had to be considerate to them by not causing any trouble to their customers. All of these issues limited my data collection. However, while there were these limitations, I worked with and through these when I collected my data, and I have new ideas of where I would like to take this study into vegetarian identity in Thai culture, next.

Next, I discuss how the analysis and the resulting findings gain trustworthiness through a variety of procedures.

9.6 Warranting the analysis

Each interpretive claim that I made in my analysis is supported by a variety of procedures, enhancing the warrant of each claim. These procedures include triangulation, asking participants to evaluate pattern descriptions, having different analysts examine the same data, and searching for disconfirming evidence and counter-interpretations. (AERA, 2006: 11).

The first procedure that establishes a warrant for my claims involves a systematic triangulation. My study is data-driven as it draws on multiple sources of data that were collected by using different methods during extensive fieldwork. My findings originated from how my participants interacted with other social actors, objects, and the built-in environment. For example, my second participant, Duangpon, lived a spiritual life and tried to groom her children to be spiritually-rich persons as I demonstrated in my analysis of the site of engagement of worshipping I-Kuan-Tao's Gods (chapter 6). But my findings also connected to interviews, where my participants said something about themselves. For example, Nimit said that he was an expert in organic bean sprout farming as he developed the root-cutting technique through many mistakes (chapter 5) or Natakrit claimed that he was chosen to be the representative of the holy deities to conduct salvation work and was endowed with special power to save the souls of the sentient beings (chapter 7). At times, my interpretive claims were supported by photographs taken during the ethnographic fieldwork.

The second procedure involved asking my participants to evaluate pattern descriptions. In order to do this, my participants and I often discussed the data during the fieldwork. Immersing myself into the field allowed me opportunities to frequently

interact with my participants and hence facilitated the exchange of data that confirmed my interpretation. The third procedure involved the way in which I had different analysts examine the same data as I presented my data to my supervisors and my PhD colleagues (independently and collaboratively) at the multimodal research center at Auckland University of Technology; or I presented the data to other university staff and faculty members during data presentation sessions organized by the center as well as at workshops and at international conferences.

The fourth procedure of warranting was searching for disconfirming evidence and counter-interpretations during the fieldwork. Extensive fieldwork allowed me to investigate in-depth what my participants did in their everyday life which, in turn, allowed me to either confirm or disconfirm my interpretations. For example, I illustrated that Nimit produced his Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element through the frozen actions embedded in his cult's uniform (chapter 5). I discovered that Nimit wears this uniform on special occasions, i.e. a workshop on organic bean sprout farming, whereas he normally wears outfits made from synthetic fabric.

Additionally, my study primarily relied on video ethnography which represents a fairly holistic aspect about my participants' interactions in everyday life. Actions are highly informative in themselves and they tell a more complete story than any other types of data. Video data is self-evident, more durable, and can be accessed at any time. Due to all of the above, I believe that my study demonstrates a high degree of validity as it is strongly justified based on these warranting procedures.

Next I suggest future directions for the study of identity in relation of vegetarianism in Thai culture, but from different perspectives.

9.7 Future direction

While this study only offers an analysis of identity production of vegetarians belonging to two specific non-traditional religious cults in Thai culture, the investigation of identity production in relation to vegetarianism needs to be extended to other vegetarian individuals who do not belong to these particular religious cults. Vegetarians in Thai culture certainly adopt different forms of vegetarian practice and integrate their vegetarianism into their lives in relation to their views and definition assigned to their kinds of vegetarianism. In my future research, I would like to study vegetarians adopting different lifestyle as this will lead to a deeper understanding about how they create their interactional meanings and produce their identity elements. This will lead to further fruitful research outcomes, advancing the knowledge about identity production in regard to vegetarianism in Thai culture.

Such a further study should entail a longer ethnography, focusing from the start on only three participants. Since individuals are unique and composed of varying qualities that constitute their identities, a longer term study will enable me to immerse myself deeper into the field, allowing for even richer data collection. Certainly, some constraints regarding the research setting as discussed in the previous section have to always be expected while conducting the fieldwork. However, with an extended period of time of the study, there will be more opportunity to work through some of these issues. For example, one could arrange the placement of a mountable camera on the participants' bodies some of the time. This would allow the researcher to gain access to otherwise unavailable data. Such considerations will enhance data collection in future research.

9.8 Concluding remarks: Identity, religious belief, and vegetarianism

This study provides the first ethnographic and multimodal contribution to the study of identity production of vegetarians/vegans in Thai culture. My study offers a fairly holistic view of individual vegetarians' lives and their identity production, drawing on their everyday life interactions. My thesis not only provides an understanding about vegetarian/vegan identity, but illustrates the interrelationship between vegetarian/vegan identity elements with other identity elements.

I also have articulated throughout that there is an inextricable link between vegetarianism in Thai culture and religiosity. A religious belief permeates every aspect of my participants' lives, resulting in their actions and with them identity element production, including but not limited to their vegetarian/vegan identity. My study has broadened perspectives of identity production whereby human (inter)action is taken as a unit of analysis. Drawing upon multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) as my approach, allowed me to keep all aspects of the social actors' (inter)actions alive.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics documentation

Appendix A.1: Ethics approval letter



MEMORANDUM

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

To: Sigrid Norris
 From: Rosemary Godbold, Executive Secretary, AUTEC
 Date: 20 August 2012
 Subject: Ethics Application Number **12/145 Identity in action: Identity production of vegan couples in Thailand.**

Dear Sigrid

Thank you for providing written evidence as requested. I am pleased to advise that it satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) at their meeting on 23 July 2012 and I have approved your ethics application. This delegated approval is made in accordance with section 5.3.2.3 of AUTEC's *Applying for Ethics Approval: Guidelines and Procedures* and is subject to endorsement by AUTEC at its meeting on 10 September 2012.

Your ethics application is approved for a period of three years until 20 August 2015.

I advise that as part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 20 August 2015;
- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 20 August 2015 or on completion of the project, whichever comes sooner;

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are reminded that, as applicant, you are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

Please note that AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to make the arrangements necessary to obtain this. Also, if your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply within that jurisdiction.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, we ask that you use the application number and study title in all written and verbal correspondence with us. Should you have any further enquiries regarding this matter, you are welcome to contact me by email at ethics@aut.ac.nz or by telephone on 921 9999 at extension 6902. Alternatively you may contact your AUTEC Faculty Representative (a list with contact details may be found in the Ethics Knowledge Base at <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/research-ethics/ethics>).

On behalf of AUTECH and myself, I wish you success with your research and look forward to reading about it in your reports.

Yours sincerely

Dr Rosemary Godbold

Executive Secretary

Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Boonyalakha Makboon makboonb@yahoo.com

Appendix A.2: Participant information sheet (primary)

Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

Primary Participants



Date Information Sheet Produced:

1 November 2012

Project Title

Identity in action : identity production of Thai vegan couples.

An Invitation

I am Boonyalakha Makboon and currently, I am a Ph.D student in Communication Studies at Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, New Zealand. I would like to invite you to participate in a research project.

This research is my Ph.D. thesis and my role in this project is as a primary researcher. I am exploring how Thai vegan couples produce their identity as vegans in everyday life.

I would like to study you and your spouse about how your vegan identity is being produced through your everyday practices and interactions. For this, I will have to follow you around in order to collect the data through an observation, video and audio recording, photo taking, interview, and fieldnote taking while you are engaging in your daily activities. During the study, I would like to ask you to let me observe you for 6-8 hours per day for 1 month.

Your participation in this project is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time or any reason without any adverse consequences. Please read the details below and feel free to ask me any questions you would like to know. And please note that I will be responsible for all my expenses (e.g. food or travelling, and so on) during the entire period of the observation.

What is the purpose of this research?

This is an academic research project. The purpose of this study is to investigate how identity of a person who is vegan is being constructed.

I will write me PhD thesis on these data. The data collected here may also later be used for further academic purposes as followed:

✓ Conference papers: I intend to attend academic conferences and will present papers about this project.

✓ Journal articles: the data will be used for writing academic articles and could possibly get published in academic journals.

✓ Book: I intend to write books which will include data of this study.

✓ Book chapter: I intend to write a book chapter which will include data of the study.

✓ Online publications: all academic works aforementioned will also be published online, for example in online journals, or any academic websites.

Visual and audio data will be downloaded to an external hard drive; and stored securely and with high confidentiality in the lockable cabinet in the supervisor's office at the university, separated from where the consent forms will be kept.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

Vegan practice is varied across cultures based on cultural values and belief systems. In Thai culture, the way of being a vegan is different from ones in other cultures. And this can be observed through practices and interactions that one vegan may take in everyday life, and this will yield a striking outcome of how your vegan identity is being constructed.

What will happen in this research?

I would like to ask you to contribute your time for 1 month for the data collection as explained in the following details:

1. During week 1-2, I would like to follow you in order to observe your daily activities and practice. This will include the time when you are at home and when you go out doing your business. During those times, I would like to sometimes take photograph, audio tape you and take notes of what is important.
2. During week 3-4, I would like to follow you; and sometimes I will video and audio tape you, take photograph, and take field notes on your daily interactions.
3. I would like to interview you twice, at the beginning and once at the end of the session; and the interviews will be audio taped.

What are the discomforts and risks?

You might experience some psychological discomfort; or embarrassment as the entire research study will involve your life. At some points, you might face unpleasant

experiences of having me intruded into your life, or you might feel uncomfortable with some questions being asked during an interview, and might not want to communicate with me about the psychological discomfort that you might be experiencing.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

I will treat you with great respect:

✓ prior to the beginning of each session of the observational process, I will consult with you in regard to where and when you prefer the observation to be conducted. It is your decision whether you would like to schedule, reschedule or cancel the session, or during the observational process, whether to begin, pause or continue the session. The researcher will work out a weekly schedule of four weeks with you so that you can make weekly arrangements.

✓ If you feel any discomforts or have encountered any unpleasant experiences, you can choose to have that part of the recording deleted, or discontinue your participation at any time without any adverse consequences. If you choose to withdraw, all data collected will be destroyed.

✓ To protect you from being exposed to any risks and harms, I will not use any identifiable information including your voice or your images in publications without your consent.

✓ If you feel any discomfort or if you wish to withdraw, but you feel uncomfortable to notify the researcher by yourself, you can also talk to or discuss it with an independent third party, Mrs.Ratchanok Suansrida, an Assistant Professor in Communication Studies at Thepsatri Rajabhat University, Lopburi, Thailand. She will be willing to listen to you and help you with any of your concerns in regard to the project. Please see below for her contact details:

Assistant Professor Ratchanok Suansrida
Communication Studies, Thepsatri Rajabhat University
Lopburi Province, Thailand
(Ph) (66) 081 948 0599
Email: suanratchanok@yahoo.com

What are the benefits?

I am hoping that you will be as curious about the results of this project as I am. You can learn so much about yourself; the way you have never thought of since this type of research would lead you to the process of self-reflexiveness meanwhile the wider community will be educated more about veganism. At your own request, you can view all the video footage, clips and other related documents that contain your personal

information and you can have a copy of the publications (e.g., thesis, articles, conference papers, books, book chapter) and/or the data.

How will my privacy be protected?

- ✓ Your real name to be referred to in the final report and in any publications will be pseudonyms unless you have given the researcher your permission to use your real names.
- ✓ Your images will be blurred or distorted if you do not wish your self-identification to be recognizable.
- ✓ All personal information will be kept highly confidential for 10 years. No one except the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information and research data. Data will be stored in a lockable cabinet in the supervisor's office at the university and be destroyed after 10 years.
- ✓ Again, you can change your mind at any time about how you would like your personal information as well as your images to be managed in publications. Please note that your participation is purely voluntary and will be explicitly mentioned as parts of the consent form.
- ✓ I will strictly comply with AUTECH ethical protocols.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

I would like you to contribute some of your time, about 4 weeks for participant observation and video/audio recording and about 30-45 minutes for the interview; and your patience with me when I am following you and video taping you. However, you do not need to change anything in your life for me. I am interested in what you do.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

If you agree to accept my invitation, you can do it right now by signing your name in the consent form. If you need more time to consider it, you will be given one week to think; and please contact me if you are interested.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

If you are willing to take part in this project, I will be asking you to complete a consent form which lists in detail your rights as a participant.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Once the thesis and other publications are published, you will receive a copy of it.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor (see the contact details below).

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary, AUTECH, Dr Rosemary Godbold, rosemary.godbold@aut.ac.nz , (64) 921 9999 ext 6902.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Boonyalakha Makboon

Ph: (64) 021 139 6641 (New Zealand)

Ph: (66) 081 685 9683 (Thailand)

Email: makboonb@yahoo.com

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Associate Professor Sigrid Norris (Auckland University of Technology)

ph: (64) 09 921 9999 ext. 6262

email: sigrid.norris@aut.ac.nz

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *type the date final ethics approval was granted*, AUTECH Reference number *type the reference number*.

Appendix A.3: Consent form (primary participant)

Appendix F

Consent Form

Primary Participants



Project title: Identity in action: identity production of vegan couples in Thailand.

Project Supervisor: Associate Professor Sigrid Norris

Researcher: Boonyalakha Makboon

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I permit the researcher to use the visual data (including video/audio footage and photograph stills) that I have provided and that are part of this project and/or any drawings from them and any other reproductions or adaptations from them, either complete or in part, alone or in conjunction with any wording and/or drawings solely and exclusively for (a) the researcher's thesis; (b) conference papers; (c) journal articles; (d) books; and (e) book chapter.
- ☐ I understand that data including video/audio footage and photograph stills will be first used for academic purposes only and will not be published in any form outside of this project without my written permission.
- ☐ I understand that any copyright material created by the video and/or audio and/or photographic sessions is deemed to be owned by the researcher and that I do not own copyright of any of the visual data.

- ☐ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.
- ☐ In the final report and any publications including thesis, conference papers, journal articles, books, book chapters and/or online publications:
- ☐ I would like my face to be blurred in publications (please tick one):
Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I would like my voice distorted (please tick one):
Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I would like my real name to be used in publications (please tick one):
Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I would like you to use the same fictitious name for the interview as for my video:
Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I would like you to use only a number for my interview and not use my fictitious name that you will use for the video: Yes ☐ No ☐
- ☐ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes ☐
No ☐
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research as primary participant.

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference number type the AUTEK reference number

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form

Appendix A.4: Sociolinguistic Interviews

In this ethnographic study, I conducted two thirty-minute sociocultural interview sessions with each participant: one at the beginning and another at the end of the fieldwork. Prior to the fieldwork, I prepared questions for both sessions that I intended to ask my participants based on my limited knowledge about my participants and information acquired through the site investigation in Thailand. Resultantly, I formulated the initial interview questions as followed

First set of interview questions (at the beginning)

1. The adoption of vegetarian/vegan practice
 - 1.1 At what age did you choose vegetarianism/ veganism?
 - 1.2 What was your reason for going vegetarian/vegan?
 - 1.3 Did you struggle in trying to live a vegetarian/vegan lifestyle?
2. Philosophical aspects and beliefs of vegetarian/vegan practice.
 - 2.1 How does vegetarianism/veganism fit with your belief? (view toward moral/ethical, health and nutrition consideration)
 - 2.2 What does it mean to be a vegetarian/vegan?
 - 2.3 What role does vegetarianism/veganism play in your life?
3. Their practice of vegetarianism/ veganism
 - 3.1 What practices do you do on a daily basis that are related to vegetarianism/veganism?

- 3.2 Who does all of the cooking? Where do you buy your vegan food?
- 3.3 Do you have a vegan social network?

Second set of interview questions (at the end)

1. Personal experience of becoming vegan

- 1.1 How did you become vegans as a couple? (who influenced you? And how did you react to that change?)
- 1.2 How has your life changed?
- 1.3 How does your vegan practice effect members in your close network?

2. Social issues concerning veganism

- 2.1 What do you think about the vegan movement in Thailand?
- 2.2 What are possible effects on society that practicing veganism may produce?

I conducted my first interview session with each of my participants during the first week of my participant observation, using the pre-formulated interview questions (the first set of interview questions) addressed above. Then, I conducted the second interview session once I finished my fieldwork. Arriving at this stage, however, I experienced that the more I immersed myself into the field, the more understanding about each participants' everyday life interactions I had. For this, the multimodal data led me to re-formulate my second set of interview questions. Without having

conducted the video-ethnographic study, I would have never thought of asking these questions.

I newly formulated sets of questions for each participant, based on my multimodal data. The following are the interview questions I asked each of my participants at the end of the study.

Interview questions for Nimit

1. How did you become interested in organic bean sprout farming?
 - 1.1 What did you do for a living before becoming a bean sprout farmer?
 - 1.2 Where did you learn how to farm bean sprouts and how did you discover teaching root-cutting bean sprout growing?
 - 1.3 How did you find the market for your bean sprouts?
2. What was your motivation for selling vegetarian food?
 - 2.1 What is your business philosophy?
 - 2.2 Where did you find the food supply for your store?
3. As a Santi-Asoke cultivator, what is your view about vegetarianism since there is no diet restriction according to the Buddha's teaching?
 - 3.1 Why did you eat only one meal per day?
 - 3.2 How do you stay healthy?
 - 3.3 How did you raise your children? Do you want them to become vegetarian?
 - 3.4 When you eat outside in other non-vegetarian restaurants, what

do you order?

3.5 Do you still eat eggs or any dairy product?

4. How do you practice Santi-Asoke? Do you meditate?
5. How do you apply the principle of moderation to your life?
6. What do you do or eat when you are engaged in social functions (party or meeting with friends)?

Interview questions for Duangpon

1. How do you intend to raise your children?
 - 1.1 Why do you make them attend a family prayer time everyday?
 - 1.2 What would you do if sometimes they can be so resistant to your request?
 - 1.3 Do you take them with you for any dharmic events you engage in?
 - 1.4 How did you encourage them to become a vegan? Do they feel discriminated from the other kids at school?
 - 1.5 What do they eat at school? or when they join the school activities such as boy scout/girl scout camping where they have to share food with other kids?
 - 1.6 What do you allow them to eat when you take them to the non-vegan food places like KFC or McDonald?
2. As you told me that I-Kuan-Tao promotes a strict veganism, why do you still consume some food that comes from the animal origin (eggs or milk)?
 - 2.1 Why do you still use some garlic and shallots in your cooking?

- 2.2 Do you have any health problems because of veganism?
- 2.3 How did you get your husband to be involved in I-Kuan-Tao and veganism?
- 3. Why did you change your career from selling non-vegetarian food to vegetarian food?
 - 3.1 Where did you learn how to cook vegetarian food?
 - 3.2 Where do you buy the food supply for your store?

Interview questions for Natakrit

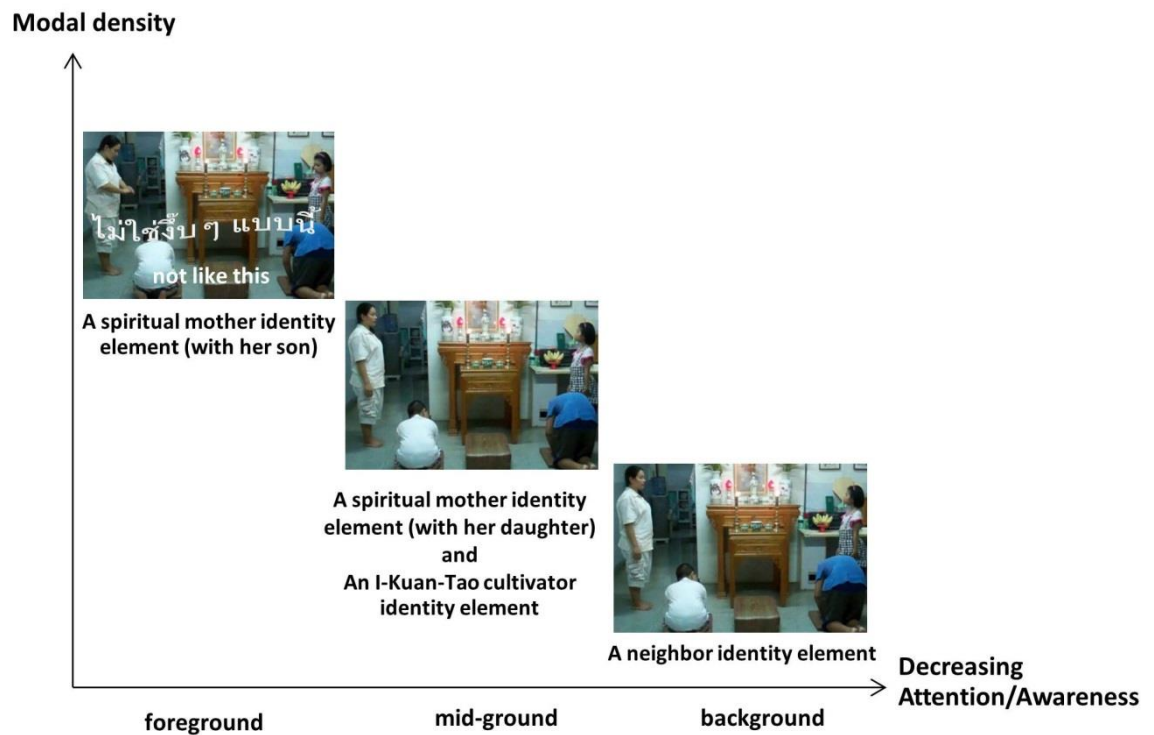
- 1. How did you become acquainted with the I-Kuan-Tao cult?
 - 1.1 Do you identify yourself as a Buddhist?
 - 1.2 In your view, is I-Kuan-Tao a religion?
 - 1.3 Do you truly believe that you are able to reach Nirvana within this present lifetime, following the I-Kuan-Tao and Maitreya Buddha?
 - 1.4 Do you believe in Gautama Buddha's teaching?
 - 1.5 Do you do sitting or walking meditation as outlined by Gautama Buddha?
 - 1.6 Do you get any financial supports from someone or somewhere else to arrange your missionary work?
 - 1.7 Do you understand all the I-Kuan-Tao texts and mantra (as they are written in Chinese)? How do you communicate with the senior leaders of the cult?

2. Why did you decide to go through the 'Ching-Ko' ritual and become a vegan for the rest of your life?
 - 2.1 Where do you buy your food?
 - 2.2 What were the reasons for not consuming any product from animal origin (eggs or milk)?
 - 2.3 Do you find it difficult to maintain your social life with other people (colleagues at the army camp) if they have different diet preference?
 - 2.4 What did you eat when you were on a special mission assigned by the Army?
 - 2.5 How do you take care of your health? Is there any problems related to your health?

Appendix B: Multimodal transcripts

**Appendix B.1: Duangpon produces her spiritual mother identity
element (with her son)**

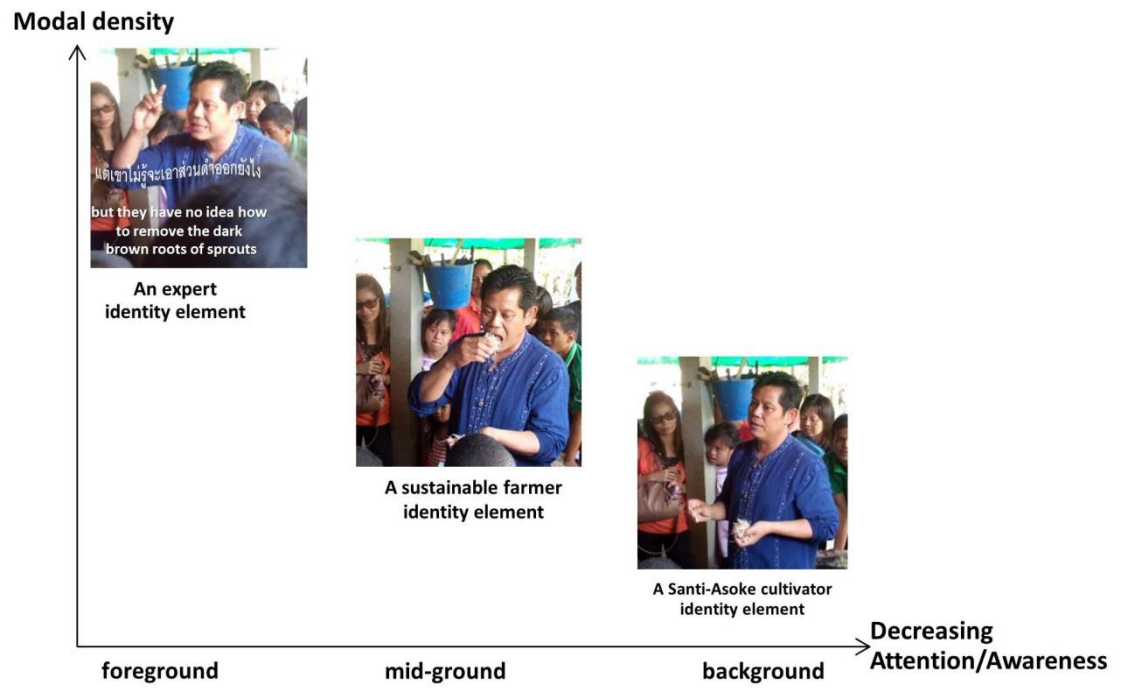




Duangpon produces a spiritual mother identity element (with her son) in the foreground of her attention; a spiritual mother identity element (with her daughter) and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element in the mid-ground of her attention; and a neighbour identity element with the boy living in the neighbourhood in the background of her attention.

Appendix B.2: Nimit produces his expert in organic farming identity



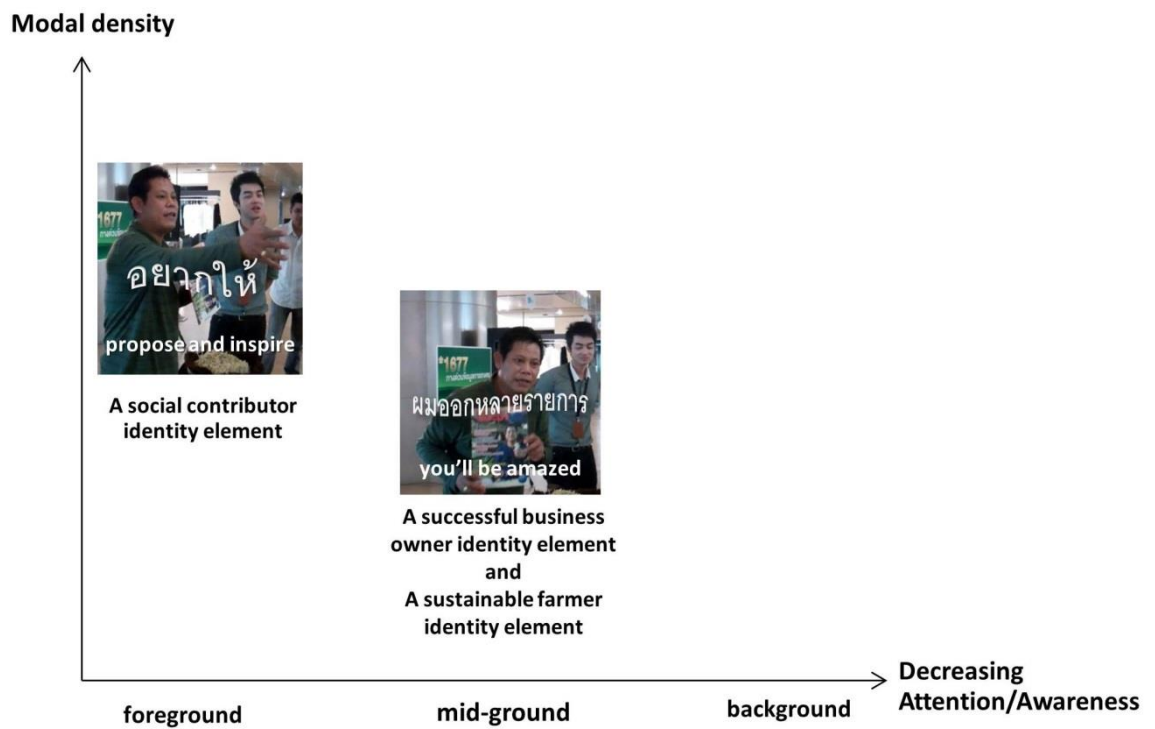


Nimit produces an expert in organic farming identity element in his foregrounded attention, and a sustainable farmer identity element in his mid-grounded attention and a Santi-Asoke cultivator identity element in his background attention.

Appendix B.3: Nimit produces his successful business owner identity element



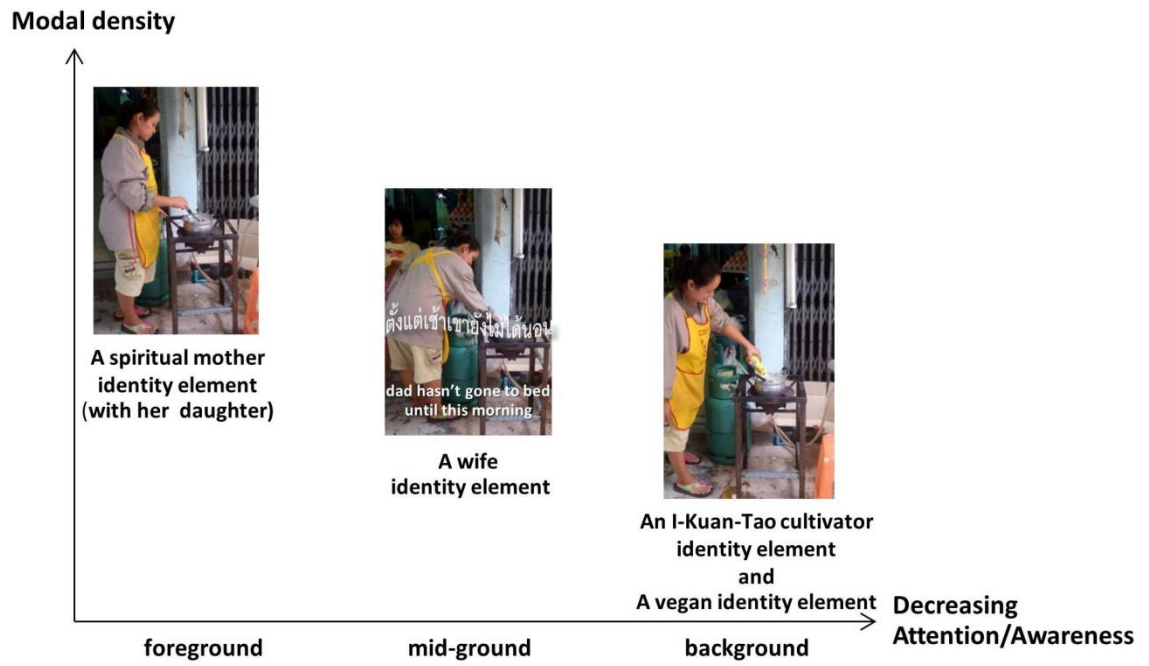
(Note: in Image 5, 'soo-laew-roy' 'sen-tang-setti' and 'kid-dee-mee-nguen' are the names of the career-oriented television talk show programs in Thailand).



Nimit produces a successful business owner identity element in his foregrounded attention and a sustainable farmer identity element in his mid-grounded attention.

**Appendix B.4: Duangpon produces a spiritual mother identity element
(with her daughter)**

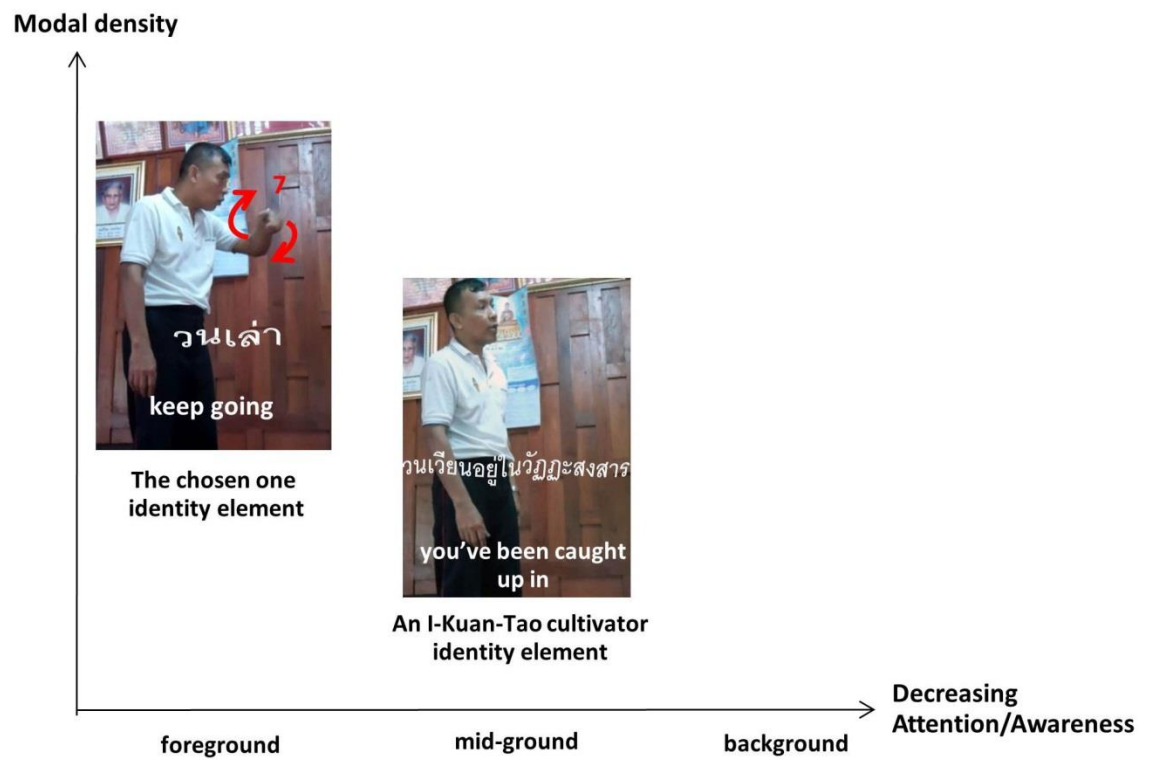




Duangpon produces a spiritual identity element (with her daughter) in the foreground of her attention; a wife identity in the mid-ground of her attention; and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element and a vegan identity element in the background of her attention.

Appendix B.5: Natakrit produces the chosen one identity element





Natakrit produces the chosen one identity element in the foreground of his attention and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element in the mid-ground of his attention.

Appendix B.6: Natakrit produces the chosen one identity element





Natakrit produces the chosen one identity element in the foreground of his attention and an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator identity element in the mid-ground of his attention.

Appendix C: Interview transcripts

Appendix C.1: Being a social contributor

- (606) ผมบอกกับแฟนผมตลอดทุกวันนี้
I told with my wife always today
I keep telling my wife that today
- (607) เรามีความสุขมากนะ
we have happiness very much
we are very happy
- (608) สุขที่ได้ให้
happy that to give
happiness comes from giving
- (609) ให้คนอื่น
give to other people
giving to others
- (610) คือเราไม่ได้เอานะ
we not take
we are not here to take
- (611) เราให้อย่างเดียว
we give only
but we are here to give
- (612) ชีวิตผมแทบจะไม่ได้เอาเลยนะ
life my hardly not take at all
all my whole life, I have hardly been a taker
-
(the conversation moves to different topic from line 482- 486)
- (721) ผมบอกกับแฟนผมและครอบครัวตลอด
I tell with my wife and family always
I always tell my wife and my family
- (722) สอนให้ชาวบ้านผมบอกตลอด
teach to locals I tell always
teach local people
- (723) เขียนหนังสือในตำราผมก็เขียนบอกตลอด

- write in book my always
I also write in my books
- (724) ว่าผมไม่เคยตั้งเป้าเอาปัจจัยเป็นตัวนำเลย
 I never set goal take money as priority
that I have never prioritized money
- (725) ในชีวิตผม
 in life my
for my entire life
- (726) เพราะที่ผมเคยจน
 because I used to destitute
because I used to be destitute
- (727) เคยรวย
 used to wealthy
to be wealthy
- (728) แต่ชีวิตที่จะอยู่ได้
 but life can survive
to be able to survive
- (729) ณ วันที่เราเจอวิกฤต
 in day we face crisis
during a time of crisis
- (730) คือโอกาสที่เราได้ให้คนอื่นแหละ
 is to we giving others
we need to give
- (731) ให้สิ่งดี
 give good things
give good things to others

Appendix C.2: Nimit's faith in the Santi-Asoke Buddhist cult

- (227) ได้มาเจอกับท่าน
have come to meet with 'bodhirak'
to meet 'bodhirak'
- (228) เหมือนเจอพระพุทธเจ้า
like meet the buddha
it's like meeting the buddha
- (229) ไม่ใช่ว่างมายนะ
not that credulous
I am not credulous
- (230) โชคดีแล้ว
fortunate already
I feel fortunate
- (231) ชาตินี้ได้เจอในหลวง
this life have meet the king
to be the people of our king,
- (232) ผมโชคดีได้เจอพระที่ปฏิบัติจริง
lucky have meet monk who practice dharma really
I am fortunate to meet the revered monk with dharma practices
- (233) ได้เจอในชาตินี้ไง
have meet in lifetime this
to meet both of them in this lifetime
- (234) น้อยคนที่ได้เจอ
a few people have meet
how many people have been blessed with this chance
.....
the conversation moves to different topic from line 35-39)
- (34) 00.01.36 nimit ผมว่าคนในสังคมทำไม่ได้หรอก
I say people in society do can not
I would say other people who are not like us

- (35) ทำอย่างโศกไม่ได้หรอก
do what like asoke people not
are unable to do what we asoke are doing
- (36) ผมว่าผมโชคดีนะ
I think I am very lucky
I would say that I am very lucky
- (37) ที่ได้มาเจอโศก
to have meet with santi-asoke cult
to be introduced to santi-asoke cult
- (38) ถ้าผมไปเจอสำนักอื่น
if I have meet other cults
if I have followed other cults
- (39) ผมไม่ได้แบบนี้หรอก
I not possible have like this
I wouldn't have been who I am today

Appendix C.3: A spiritual mother with her son

- (133) แต่น้องตอมาเพื่อทวงจริงๆ
he came to ask for karmic debt really
he was here to ask me to pay him off the karmic debt I owed him
- (134) แต่เราได้สวดมนต์บ่อยๆ
but I can only pray often
all I can do is pray
- (135) ได้ขอขมากรรมไง
ask for forgiveness karma
ask for forgiveness from him
-
(the conversation moves to different topic from lines 245-256)
- (245) และปีนี้น้องตอเริ่ม
this year my elder son starts to
recently, my son's development is improving
- (246) มีสมาธิดีนะ
have concentration good
he is more concentrated on his study
- (247) เริ่มอ่านหนังสือเป็น
start to read book improve
more improvement on his reading
- (248) เขียนหนังสืออดทนมาก
writing patient very
more patience with writing
- (249) ไหว้พระได้มากขึ้นเห็นไหม
praying more endure you see?
with praying, don't' you see?
- (250) ถ้าน้องได้มาเห็นเขา
it you met him before

- (251) *if you met him before*
ตอนที่เขายังไม่พัฒนาระดับนี้
when he was yet not develop at level this
when he wasn't the person who he is right now
- (252) *that time he yet not humble*
he was more aggressive
- (253) 00.10.11researcher พี่น้อยพาเขาสวดมนต์ให้พระตั้งแต่ที่ขอบคะ
you initiated him pray when at age?
since when you have encouraged him to pray?
- (254) 00.10.13duangpon ก็ตั้งแต่รับธรรมะนั้นก็เป็นเรื่องเป็นราว 7 ปี
since receive dharma serious 7 years
since we received dharma 7 years ago
- (255) *but strict more just this past 2 years*
but I have been more strict for the past 2
- (256) ให้เข้าเย็น
pray morning-evening
he is required to pray in the morning and in the evening
- *(the conversation moves to different topic from line 267-278)*
- (267) มันเป็นกุศโลบายเราอย่างหนึ่ง
it is strategy my one thing
it is one of my strategies I am using with my kids
- (268) ตอนแรกเขาก็ไม่ชอบ
first time they not like it
they were resistant in the first place
- (269) ไม่ชอบทำเหมือนกัน
not like to do it
not happy with it
- (270) แรกๆเขาก็ดี๊ด๊า

- first time they uncomfortable
they were uncomfortable
 (271) แต่พอทำจนชิน
- but when do it until used to
but once their habits are formed
 (272) เขาต้องไปทำนะ
- they feel have to do it
they feel like they have to do it
 (273) เขาก็ชินนะ
- they become used to
they got used to it
 (274) ตอนแรกเขาก็อึดอัดนะ
- first time they not that happy
they were not happy around the first time
 (275) รำคาญ
- felt annoyed
they felt so annoyed
 (276) อยากรเป็นอิสระ
- want to be free
they wanted to be themselves

Appendix C.4: Sacred vs secular lives

- (299) ทำไมหาเงินหากันจัง
why look for money so much
why people prioritize money
- (300) ทั้งที่ตายแล้วก็เอาไปไม่ได้ซักบาท
even though when dead cannot take just a baht
knowing that they can bring nothing with them after death
- (301) ทำไมเราขยันๆ
why we work hard?
why we work hard for money?
- (302) แต่การที่มาเจริญสติ
but with mind-training
regardless of our mind-training
- (303) ภาวนาจิตวิญญาณของเราบ้าง
nurture spirituality our
nurturing our spirituality
- (304) หรือคิดแต่สิ่งดีๆบ้าง
or think of good things
or have the right thinking
- (305) หรือพูดสิ่งดีๆบ้าง
or say good things
or the right speech
- (306) ทำไมเราไม่ฝึกวินัยเรา
why we not practice discipline our
why don't we practice ourselves
- (307) กับสมัยก่อนเราพูดเพ้อเจ้อเพื่อฝัน
before we talk over non-sense
we like talking over non-sense stuff
- (308) แต่เรื่องที่จะสร้างอนาคตบนโลกใบนี้

- story about building future on the world
daydreaming about the future of this material world
- (309) กับเจามาเพื่อฝันในเรื่อง
 compare we fantasize about
why don't we fantasize about
- (310) หลังความตายบ้างไม่ได้หรือ
 after death life can't we?
life after death?
- (311) พี่ว่ามันเป็นอะไรที่
 I think it is something
I think it is something
- (312) ทำทายเรากว่า
 challenging us more
challenging for us to think
- (313) มันเป็นปริญญาแห่งการหลุดพ้น
 it is a degree of salvation
it is a degree of salvation
- (314) เราวิ่งหาแต่ปริญญาที่อยู่บนโลกมนุษย์
 but we run seek for degree on world humans
but we are seeking for worldly degrees
- (315) ไข่เลี้ยงกายสังขาร
 for feed our physical body
for nurturing our physical body
- (316) มีหน้ามีตาในตระกูลเรา
 gaining face and family name our
being recognized as an important figure in society

Appendix C.5: Proving Gods' existence

- (541) ลงมาคุยกันอย่างนี้เลย
descended to talk like this
the holy deities descended to the world
- (542) เดินคุยกันอย่างนี้เลย
walked and talked like this
they walked around the class talking to the audiences
- (543) จะจ๊ะ
face face
face to face.
-
(the conversation moves to different topic from line 988-993)
- (988) แต่ในขณะที่ศักดิ์สิทธิ์เมตตาให้คุณมีโอกาสได้รับรู้ก่อน
but while deities mercy to you have chance to know truth
before others
*with the clemency of the holy heaven, you are told the
right path to salvation before others*
- (989) จุดเกิดตายอยู่ตรงเนี่ย
point of birth and death is right here
a mystic portal
- (990) แล้วคุณสร้างบุญกุศลเอา
then you accumulate merit
then you must keep on accumulating merit
- (991) เอาตรงนี้เป็นทางเดิน
take this path follow
always remember this mystic portal
- (992) เป็นประตูของคุณไป
is doorway of you
remember this mystic portal
- (993) เราชี้ให้ประตูนั้น
เราชี้ให้ประตูนั้น

- we point this doorway
that has been pointed and opened
 *(the conversation moves to different topic from line 1001-1021)*
- (1001) แล้วสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ก็ว่า
 holy deities promise that
you are promised by the holy deities that
- (1002) ทางที่ไปทางนี้แหละคือทางที่
 path way this is the path that
the spiritual path that you are told
- (1003) สำคัญสูงสุดของมนุษย์แล้ว
 most important of human beings
is the most important path of human beings
- (1004) สิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์บอกไม่ได้บอกเองนะ
 heaven told this not I told
the truth has been disclosed by the heaven not me
- (1005) จะเชื่อสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์หรือจะเชื่อคนก็แล้วแต่
 will believe holy deities or believe humans up to you
should you believe the holy deities or human being?
- (1006) ถ้าไปวัดก็ยังเชื่อคนอยู่
 if go to temple means still believe man's words
if you still practice your religion in the temple, you choose
 to trust a man's words.
- (1012) พระพุทธเจ้าไม่ได้ลงมาประทับ
 buddha not descend possess holy medium
buddha has never descended through the holy medium
- (1013) แต่พระพุทธเจ้าให้พระธรรมคำสอนไว้เป็นตัวอย่าง
 but he gave dharma in scripture
only his teaching was left to us
- (1014) แต่เรากำลังเดินทางตามบรรพบุรุษ
 but now we are following our ancestors

- but now we are following our ancestors*
- (1015) ที่ไปแล้วกลับมาบอก
 who have gone and descended to tell
who have attained nirvana and descended to the world to save us.
- (1016) มันแตกต่างกันตรงนี้
 it is different this point
this is the point we are different from other religions
- (1017) อาศัยร่างสามคุณประทับญาณ
 through the bodies of three holy oracles
through the holy mediums called three oracles
- (1018) แล้วนำโองการสวรรค์ลงมาบอกยังโลกมนุษย์
 who take holy messages down to tell world
the holy messages are transmitted to human
- (1019) นี่คือนั่นที่กัคำสอนของพระพุทธร
 this is record of teaching of awaken buddhas
they are the holy words of the awaken buddhas
- (1020) สรรพตำราทั้งหลายแหล่
 all texts and scriptures
while all religious texts or scriptures
- (1021) จึงเป็นหนทางในการชี้ทางให้เท่านั้น
 only guideline showing pathway only
can only give you a guideline.

Appendix D

Photographs of my participants in the fieldwork

Appendix D.1: Nimit gives a lecture on bean sprout farming to visitors at his farm



Appendix D.2: Nimit showcases his organic bean sprouts growing technique



Appendix D.3: Nimit prepares new sets of equipment for bean sprout farming



Appendix D.4: Nimit gives advice about fertilizer use in organic farming to the customer

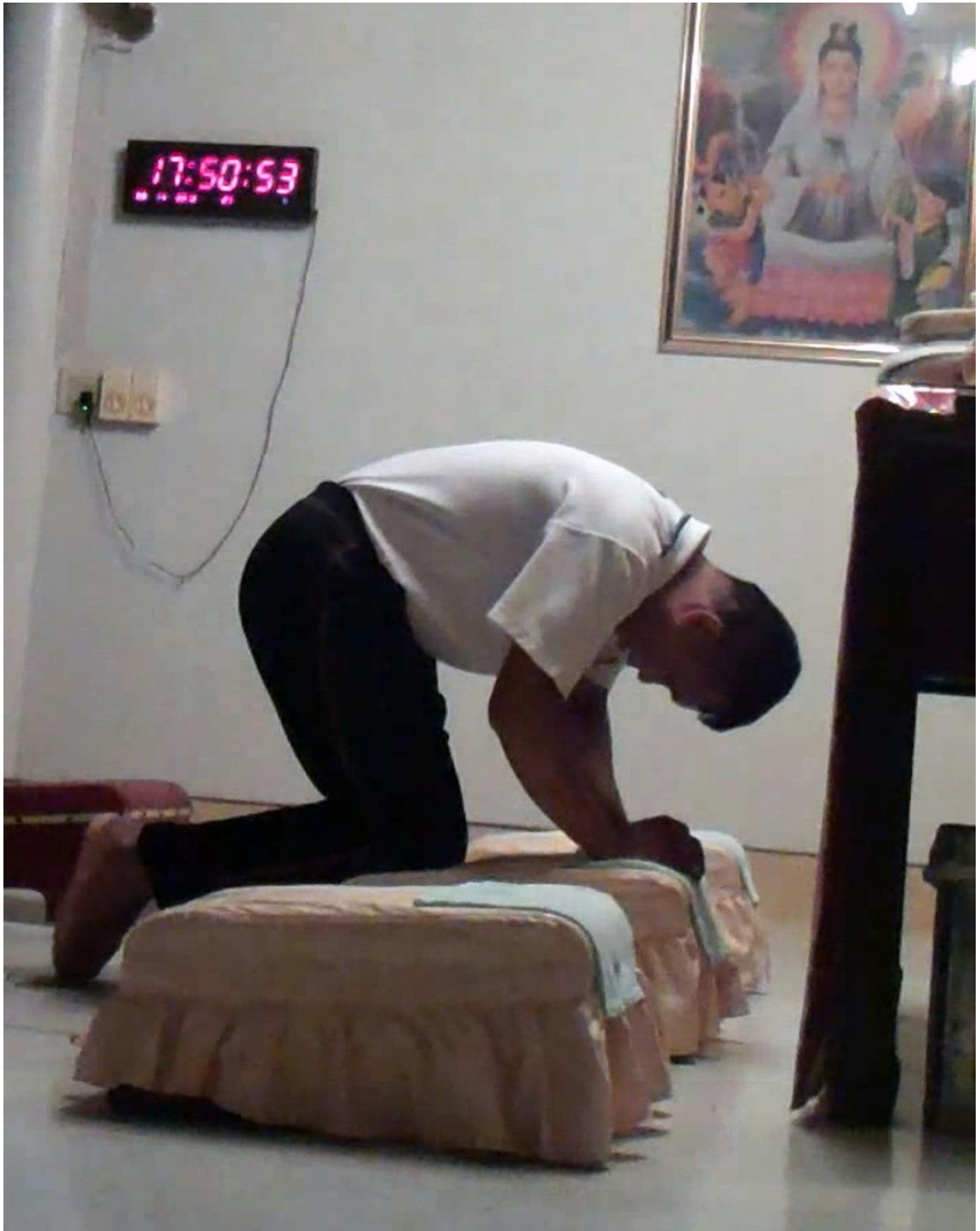


Appendix D.5: Duangpon's family praying time

Appendix D.6: Duangpon's praying time with other I-Kuan-Tao cultivators



Appendix D.7: Natakrit performs a hundred kowtows during his daily worship



Appendix D.8: Natakrit supervises a rehearsal of the holy ritual

Appendix E: Journal article “The ‘Chosen One’: Depicting Religious Belief through Gestures”

multimodal
communication

The ‘Chosen One’: Depicting religious belief through gestures

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abstract

In this article, I analyze gestures produced during a dharma orientation lecture. The dharma orientation lectures are a part of the I-Kuan-Tao cult in Thailand. The analysis undertaken draws on multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) providing the description of the interaction through multimodal transcripts of how different types of gesture simultaneously interplay with other modes in creating meaning. I begin with a frame analysis (Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993) of the interview transcript, where the primary participant consistently positions himself as ‘the chosen one’. Next, I analyse how the ‘chosen one’ uses different types of gestures to convey such ephemeral religious concepts as the ‘cycle of reincarnation’, ‘soul’, and ‘nirvana’ during the I-Kuan-Tao dharma orientation lecture. I demonstrate that gestures utilized by the participant, namely deictic, iconic, metaphoric and beat gesture (McNeill, 1992; Kendon, 2004) show the participant’s belief that he is ‘the chosen one’.

key words

Religious belief, gesture, multimodality

introduction

This article examines how the participant, Natakrit, conveys his religious belief in the I-Kuan- Tao cult to his audiences through bodily gesture. With the analytical focus on gesture, the analysis focuses upon a video excerpt of the participant, who is Thai and an I-Kuan- Tao cultivator, while engaging in the practice of giving a dharma orientation lecture on the I-Kuan- Tao religious cult to the audience invited to the session. In this interaction, the participant communicates to his audience through spoken language about the significance of the I-Kuan- Tao practice in relation to the belief in karma and nirvana (enlightenment). In an attempt to convince his audiences of the ephemeral religious concepts 'cycle of reincarnation', 'soul', and 'nirvana', he utilizes deictic, iconic, metaphoric and beat gesture as an integral part of his higher-level action of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma orientation. Through his gestures, he gives reality to these abstract religious concepts. I illustrate that for him, these religious concepts are real as they are given space and physical form in imagery displayed through motion and gesture, alongside his speech. The perceived reality is rooted in the inner belief that he is 'the chosen one', the one selected to serve gods' will to save all sentient beings from worldly suffering.

The ethnographic data collection involved participant observation, sociolinguistic interviews and video recording. I begin with a brief frame analysis (Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993) of the interview transcript in which Natakrit's self-positioning can be understood through the analysis of the spoken discourse. As a result, the 'chosen one' emerges as the primary frame. The participant, as 'the chosen one' assumes that he has been revealed with the most direct and fastest spiritual path to nirvana and his work is meant to be enlightening the minds of people in returning to the state of benevolence. The 'chosen one' frame can be ostensibly reflected through the way the bodily gestures have been orchestrated to produce the meaning of the ephemeral religious concepts mentioned previously while engaging in the practice of giving the dharma orientation lecture on the I-Kuan-Tao cult. The analysis illustrates how these abstract religious concepts are visualized as real through a combination of gestures.

The data comes from I-Kuan-Tao dharma initiation ceremonies, which are held in different locations throughout the Lopburi province in Thailand. It is believed that an I-Kuan-Tao cultivation can lead sentient beings to enlightenment faster than all other spiritual paths, as the cultivators will be graciously granted with heavenly decree and a chance for the three noble treasures to be revealed (i.e. the sacred codes to gain access to the holy land of nirvana). Attaining nirvana allows the sentient beings to break free of the cycle of reincarnation.

theoretical background

gestures as visible action

Gesture is defined as “spontaneous movements of the arms or hands that often are closely synchronized with the flow of spoken language” (McNeill, 1992, p. 11). Gesture is regarded to serve multiple functions: to repeat, accent, complement, regulate, substitute for or synchronize with verbal behavior. However, sometimes, gesture can be irrelevant to the verbal behavior. As McNeill (1992) notes, ‘gestures do convey meanings and their expressiveness is not necessarily inferior to that of language. If one knows how to read them the gestures can convey meanings no less than language’ (p.19).

Gesture is a global-synthetic mode because the meanings produced through gesture must be understood as a whole—by considering the whole instead of analyzing the segmentations of structure, like in language (McNeill, 1992). Describing gesture as a global mode refers to the relationship of the individual component parts to the whole. In gesture, the whole determines the meaning of the parts as the parts have no independent meanings in isolation, while gesture’s synthetic property refers to the fact that gestures can combine many meanings. Also, gesture is symbolic as it represents something other than itself.

As McNeill (1992, p. 11) notes, ‘gestures exhibit images that cannot always be expressed in speech’. Sometimes gestures that co-occur with spoken language and refer to the same event can display different messages from what is conveyed through language. Quite often, people are unaware of expressing their inner thoughts as well as their understanding of the world through the use of their gestures. An individual’s inner mental processes and/or their points of view towards particular events can be visible through fleeting, through gestural actions.

types of gesture

Gestures refer to the arm or hand movements that can co-occur alongside spoken language and they can be classified into four types: iconic, metaphoric, deictic, and beat gestures. Each of which contains different underlying properties, functions and relations to language.

Iconic gesture refers to arm/hand movement used for mimicking and expressing the pre-existing and full formed objects or materials in the physical world. It depicts a close relationship between the pictorial content of the gestural action and the semantic content of spoken language (McNeill, 1992; Kendon, 1994)) as it is a visual representation of referentials. Iconic gestures can mediate the description of concrete objects or events.

The Metaphoric gesture is similar to iconic gesture in that they both contain pictorial content. However, metaphoric gestures typically mediate abstract notions or ideas instead of depicting concrete objects (Norris, 2004). Thus, the image, abstract concept or a metaphor mediated by this gesture type is given physical shape and form. It can represent a mental image which is depicted through the ways in which motion and space are established.

Deictic gesture is generally understood as a pointing gesture. With the extended index finger pointing at something, it indicates persons, objects, directions or location in the physical world. Such gestures may also indicate imaginary referents such as events in the past or the future, or abstract notions as if they had physical location in reality (Jaworski and Thurlow, 2009; Norris 2004).

Beat gesture is described as the rhythmic movement of hands/arms in either an up/down or back/forth direction. The movements of hands/arms are very short and quick, producing only two movement phases of either up/down or in/out (McNeill, 1992). Beat gestures differ from iconic or metaphoric gesture in that they do not convey semantic content. Rather, beat gesture often emphasizes the significance of words or phrases being uttered.

Moving beyond the original and widely applied categories of gestures, gestures can be multifunctional as they can be co-produced simultaneously. McNeill (2005) proposes that gestures are multifaceted as their properties and functions are blended and overlapped in one and the same gesture. For example, a deictic gesture pointing at a location can be used to refer to a metaphoric notion, or a metaphoric gesture representing an abstract notion can be used iconically. Sometimes, a beat gesture is seen as having metaphoric content recognized as a 'metaphorical beat gesture' (Casasanto, 2008). Gestures rarely fit comfortably into any one category.

multimodal (inter)action analysis:

analytical framework

Multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a), takes the mediated action (Scolion, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2007; Wertsch, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1998) as the ecological unit of analysis and enables the analyst to focus on the multiple modes of communication through which interaction occurs. Actions can be defined as three types: lower-level action, higher-level action, and frozen action. Lower-level actions are the smallest units of meaning of communicative modes. The mode of language, for example, is uttered by a speaker in utterances with rising/falling tone of voice, conveying meanings. With the mode of gaze, either random gaze, direct or indirect gaze, enables us to indicate a level of attention or interest or wonder a social actor has in interaction; or shifting gaze that communicates turn-taking. These smaller units of actions are woven together to build a multiplicity chain of lower-level actions that contributes to a higher-level action that is bracketed by an opening and a closing of the action.

Frozen actions cannot exist without social actors having done something, because they are higher-level actions performed by social actors at an earlier time before the action is being analyzed and subsequently entailed in material objects. The historical body of the frozen action can be traced to the intersected moment where social actors come into contact with mediational means to perform certain actions (Norris, 2011a).

Multimodal (Inter)action Analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a) takes all social interactions to be multimodal by nature in that they comprise multiple chains of lower-level actions, each drawing on different modes, serving as the smallest unit of meaning (Jones & Norris, 2005). Because any higher-level action cannot be performed without any of these modes, a higher-level action can be understood in detail through the analysis of the interconnection of multiple chains of lower-level-actions that make one higher-level-action possible.

The representative samples of the video excerpts have been transcribed using the transcription conventions of multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a). The visual and audio aspects are translated and presented into a textual format that allows the visualization of how multiple modes intricately interplay simultaneously to produce a higher-level action.

frame analysis of spoken discourse

The theoretical basis of frame analysis is originally attributed to Bateson (1955) who studied how monkeys playing together interpreted what was going on in the interaction based on the 'frame of interpretation' created in the given interaction. Bateson demonstrated that the communicative message can only be understood by the reference to the metamessage or the situated context. This notion of frame was then taken up by Goffman (1956) in his book 'The representation of self in everyday life' that takes a face-to-face interaction as the analytical focus (Tannen, 1993). He suggests that social interactions can be compared with 'a performance of a play'. In a given interaction or as 'a dramatic performance', a social actor viewed as an active social agent, attempts to act according to the social expectation and the understanding of the interactions in order to negotiate their personal relationships with others.

Depending on the situation, a person engaging in a give-and-take interaction with other social actor(s) or with the environment will unconsciously manufacture multiple 'life frames', which are defined as the sets of social expectations about what kinds of expressions will be made and how they should be perceived. Frames are created in interaction as based on an individual's prior experience (Tannen, 1993, Tannen & Wallat, 1993). They represent how we make sense of the world as the social frames developed "provide background understanding of events that incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effort of an intelligence, a live agency, the chief one being the human being" (Goffman, 1986, p. 22). The most basic framework which takes an experience or event and makes it more meaningful is recognized as a primary frame. A primary frame can be examined through themes that persist across time and then determining how those themes are constructed as frames (Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993).

analysis and discussion

The data presented below is part of a larger video ethnography, and includes representative data pieces from sociolinguistic interviews and video excerpts from the religious practice of giving an I-Kuan-Tao dharma orientation lecture in Thailand. The analysis begins with the interview transcripts using a frame analysis (Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993) to identify the primary frame; and then demonstrates through multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a), how the primary frame comes to play a part in producing actions through the use of gestures along with other modes.

However, before I present the analysis, it is necessary to give some background about the participant, Natakrit. In particular, I will give some background of his religious belief as it will help establish a more thorough understanding of his social interaction and his use of gestures. Natakrit has identified himself as both a Buddhist and an I-Kuan-Tao practitioner, even though the two beliefs contradict in some religious aspects, especially the aspect related to the concepts of life after death and nirvana. However, he refers to the I-Kuan-Tao cult as the representation of the ideal of harmonious connections with all religions. It is the source of everything as it is the essence and the spiritual truth behind all religions, philosophies, and schools of thought. Therefore, for Natakrit, whether to name himself a Buddhist or an I-Kuan-Tao cultivator does not make any difference -- if one understands all religions as deriving from the same origin—I-Kuan-Tao is the essence that unifies all with the one.

frame analysis of the interview transcripts

A sociolinguistic interview was conducted twice: once at the beginning of the fieldwork and once at the end of the fieldwork, for 30 minutes for each interview session. The analysis will show the development of 'the chosen one frame' as the primary frame in relation to how the ephemeral concepts of the 'cycle of reincarnation', 'soul', and 'nirvana' are represented during the dharma session.

religious belief of being 'the Chosen One'

as a primary frame

Illustrated through a frame analysis (Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993) of the interview transcripts, the primary participant consistently positions himself as 'the chosen one'. Through the following excerpts, I illustrate how the 'chosen one' frame comes about.

example 1: being the holy representative

- (410) 00.12.39 natakrit แต่เมื่อเรา...
but I....
- (411) ได้รับความเมตตาจากสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์
am so grateful, under the grace of gods
- (412) พี่เป็นคน โชคดีที่สิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ท่านเลือกเอาไว้
I am so grateful to be the chosen one.
- (413) เป็นเมล็ดพันธุ์
I see myself as a seed of virtue
- (414) เลือกเอาไว้ที่ช่วยเผยแพร่วรรณะ
selected for dharma propagation.
- (415) เลือกเอาไว้ที่จะเป็นสะพานเชื่อมระหว่างโลกมนุษย์
I serve as a bridge to connect the human world
- (416) กับเทวโลกมนุษย์โลก
with the heavenly realm.
- (417) จึงใช้ให้เจ้าทำงานแทนฟ้าเบื้องบน
I have been destined to serve the holy deities' wills.
- (418) เมื่อเรากำหนดกฎเกณฑ์ว่า
I believe that it is my destiny.
- (419) ฟ้าเบื้องบนจะประทานพรให้เจ้า
I will be rewarded by the holy heaven.
- (420) เมื่อเจ้าได้ช่วยงานฟ้าเบื้องบน
with my dedication to serve gods' wills
- (421) เจ้าก็ได้รับพรจากเบื้องบน
I will be blessed.
- (422) เราสามารถช่วยเวไนยสัตว์ได้
I was meant to make a great contribution to all creatures,
saving their souls.
- (423) เราไม่มีบารมีธรรม
under the grace of all deities,
- (424) บารมีธรรมเกิดจากเบื้องบนประทานให้
I have been blessed with strength and power to save others.
- (425) มาประทับประคองอยู่ด้านข้างด้านหลังเรา
deities always give me spiritual supports.

In this excerpt, Natakrit is sharing his personal belief that he has been ‘chosen’ by gods to be their ‘representative’ who will help save the sentient beings from worldly suffering— specifically from being caught up in the cycle of reincarnation, which is seen as a major hindrance to nirvana. This analysis goes into details of how ‘the chosen one’ frame is developed.

Perceiving that he is the ‘representative’ of Gods adds emphasis to Natakrit’s belief that he is ‘the chosen one’ as it can be depicted through his utterances ‘พี่เป็นคน โชคดีที่สิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์ ท่านเลือกเอาไว้’ (*I am so grateful to be the chosen one*) and ‘จึงทำให้เจ้าทำงานแทนฟ้าเบื้องบน’ (*I have been destined to serve the holy deities’ wills*). He perceives that he is selected to be ‘เป็น เมล็ดพันธุ์’ (*a seed of virtue*) that is ‘chosen’ by gods to embrace this special power; and with this special power given by Gods, he is made a key figure for dharma propagation as is depicted when he says ‘เราสามารถช่วยเวไนยสัตว์ได้’ (*I was meant to make a great contribution to all creatures, saving their souls*). However, it can be implied that this constructs a hierarchical relationship between him and the gods. He puts himself in a lower position than Gods, as the Gods make him more special than any others with the powers they give him; and with this power he can help save all sentient beings. Being ‘the chosen one’ also signifies that he is a privileged person as he is selected by the gods to be their representative for dharma propagation and for this, he is superior to any other sentient beings in that he is capable of enlightening the minds of others.

Natakrit makes a claim of himself to be a ‘สะพานเชื่อมระหว่างโลกมนุษย์กับเทวโลก’ (*a bridge to connect the human world with the heavenly realm*) and ‘เป็นเมล็ดพันธุ์’ (*a seed of virtue*) as a metaphor to emphasize his role as ‘the chosen one’, a special being. This again depicts the hierarchical position between the gods, himself, and other sentient beings living on earth, which are understood as the unawakened beings suffering from the cycle of birth-death- rebirth.

Natakrit illustrates the hierarchical relationships between the gods, himself, and the sentient beings as gods are positioned (by him) as superior entities with non-negotiable power and with great compassion. When he says ‘ความเมตตาจากสิ่งศักดิ์สิทธิ์’ (*under the grace of gods*) or ‘มาประทับพระองค์อยู่ด้านข้างด้านหลังเรา’ (*deities always give me spiritual supports*), it implies his absolute respect to the superiority of gods. Again, as displayed through his remarks that ‘บารมีธรรมเกิดจากเบื้องบนประทานให้’ (*I have been blessed with strength and power to save others*), it is implied that the power he is possessed with does not come directly from him, but rather, it is subject to gods’ will to decide who to be blessed with this special power of knowing the holy secret: the most direct and the quickest spiritual path to nirvana.

This following interview transcript (Example 2) illustrates the participant’s perception as being superior to other sentient beings. This shows how the participant has come to construct his reality of the world.

example 2: being the holy representative

- (714) 00.25.29 natakrit และตอนนี้พูดอะไรต้องระวัง
now I have to be cautious of what I have to say
- (715) ระวังมาก
very cautious with my words as they are powerful
- (716) พูดให้ตายมันก็ตาย
if I say 'die', it will come true.
- (717) พูดให้ฝนตกมันก็ตก
if I say rain, it will rain.
- (718) พูดแล้งมันก็แล้ง
if I say the land will be barren, it will be.
- (719) เอาเหอะเร็วขึ้นแหละ
let's prove it, I am telling you that
- (720) เร็วขึ้นแหละ
very soon it will be raining
- (721) แล้วหนักด้วยนะ
it will be raining very heavy.
- (722) ไม่ใช่ธรรมดา
it is not normal phenomenon

Being 'the chosen one' assumes a position of being superior to others. As it is depicted when he says 'และตอนนี้พูดอะไรต้องระวัง' (*now I have to be cautious of what I have to say*) or 'ระวังมาก' (*very cautious with my words as they are powerful*), he assumes that his word is so powerful that it can dictate reality and it can be used to bless or curse someone. Perceiving that his words are so powerful because of being 'the chosen one', he is capable of dictating realistic events when he says 'พูดให้ตายมันก็ตาย' (*if I say 'die', it will come true*), 'พูดให้ฝนตกมันก็ตก' (*if I say rain, it will rain*), or 'พูดแล้งมันก็แล้ง' (*if I say the land will be barren, it will be*). He also has the power of premonition in that he knows what may come in the future when he says 'เอาเหอะเร็วขึ้นแหละ' (*let's prove it, I am telling you that*), 'เร็วขึ้นแหละ' (*very soon it will be raining*). This inadvertently asks the question: How would he know what he knows if not because he is 'the chosen one'?

As having been ‘chosen’ for a purpose, Natakrit has committed himself to serve the Gods’ will in helping the sentient beings achieve nirvana. In the following excerpt (Example 3), Natakrit assertively perceives that he knows what ordinary sentient beings will never come to know unless they are chosen by Gods. Natakrit’s belief as ‘the chosen one’ can be seen in the following:

example 3: being nirvana mentor

(1079) เรามีวิธีการที่ทำไมให้เขาไปถึงจุดตรงนั้น

I know how to get there

(1080) ส่งเสริมเขาติดเทอร์โบเลย

and how to speed up their journey, like installing a turbo engine that

(1081) ให้เขารู้ธรรมะเลย

when they know dharma, it will enhance their speed to nirvana.

Evidently, through the following statements made by him ‘เรามีวิธีการที่ทำไมให้เขาไปถึงจุดตรงนั้น’ (*I know how to get there*) and ‘ส่งเสริมเขาติดเทอร์โบเลย’ (*and how to speed up their journey, like installing a turbo engine that...*), it can be implied that Natakrit perceives himself as a holy entity who is ‘chosen’ on purpose to be disclosed with the holy secrets: the spiritual path to achieve the ultimate truth of nirvana. This implies a special duty, which evolves from the belief that he has been chosen over other sentient beings. He portrays that nirvana is no longer ‘a nearly-impossible ideal’ in that any sentient beings, if they only follow his footsteps, will be guided and can break-free from the cycle of reincarnation. Metaphorically, referring to I-Kuan-Tao practice as ‘ส่งเสริมเขาติดเทอร์โบเลย’ (*like installing a turbo engine*) it is implied that ‘nirvana’, which was once understood to be attained through self-reliance and demanding great hardship based on a Buddhist’s view, can be achieved easily through I-Kuan-Tao practice.

In the following example (Example 4), Natakrit depicts that achieving nirvana is no longer perceived as demanding a great perseverance and is no longer beyond the human’s capability to be attained. Any ordinary sentient being, if only receiving I-Kuan-Tao, is capable of attaining nirvana within a single lifetime. However, it is only by the grace of Gods that everyone will be told the spiritual path to nirvana as illustrated in Example 4.

example 4: being nirvana mentor

- (1228) ผ่อนผันให้เจ้า 7 ส่วน
i-kuan-tao cultivators are privileged as gods will take 7 out of
 10 *parts of your karma upon them*
- (1229) อีก 3 ส่วนให้เจ้าบำเพ็ญปฏิบัติ
and you repay the rest of 3 through the cultivation of goods.
- (1230) เรื่อยระยะเวลาทางที่เจ้าจะเดิน 10 ก้าว
it is like you actually you've got 10 walking steps to go on
- (1231) เราให้เจ้าเดิน 3 ก้าวก็สำเร็จแล้ว
but the deities help you to get there within 3 walking steps instead of making 10 steps

Because 'he knows that he knows', Natakrit portrays that a spiritual journey to nirvana can be attainable in just one single lifetime but it has to be through the help of the Gods showing you the way. Metaphorically, Natakrit depicts the way the Gods 'ผ่อนผันให้เจ้า 7 ส่วนอีก 3 ส่วนให้เจ้าบำเพ็ญปฏิบัติ' (*taking 7 out of 10 parts of their karma away and leave with you the rest of 3 parts*) to the attainment of nirvana as being attainable 'เราให้เจ้าเดิน 3 ก้าวก็สำเร็จแล้ว' (*within 3 walking steps*). The positive messages are analogous to the notion of nirvana. However, the quickest path to nirvana can be attained only by the grace of Gods. In this way, Gods are represented as the entities with clemency and superior power.

Within the broader frame of being 'the chosen one', Natakrit extensively refers to the concepts of 'Gods', 'soul', 'cycle of reincarnation', and 'nirvana'. These abstract notions are given reality in relevance to the notion of the chosenness. These religious concepts are extensively referred to in the eastern religions such as Buddhism and the I-Kuan-Tao cult as their relationships are interrelated. According to a Theravade Buddhist perspective, the soul is portrayed as the incorporeal and is subject to reincarnation. When one's soul attains nirvana, it means having attained 'the state of nothingness'. It requires a profound understanding of the reality behind the connection between mind and body through the practice of mediation. This Theravade Buddhist's view may seem to contrast with the teaching of I-Kuan-Tao which is influenced by Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in some aspects as demonstrated in detail in the following interview excerpt.

In this excerpt, Natakrit as 'the chosen one' proves that holy Gods are of real existence by referring to his past experience of having attended the ritual of the holy medium possession by the Gods held at the Dharma Assembly. Speaking of Natakrit's direct experience of having 'a face-to-face conversation with Gods', Gods are depicted as supreme beings who have no physical forms as they require the holy medium to house

their enlightened souls while communicating with humans. However, Gods are of tangible existence as they can be visualized in form of 'living enlightened souls' and they can 'ลงมา' (*descend*) from the nirvana land to the world anytime they wish to. The enlightened souls, according to I-Kuan-Tao belief, is somewhat assumed to be different from the ones in a Theravade Buddhist perspective in terms of the state of being. The enlightened souls in a Theravade Buddhist's view are thought of as in a 'neutral state of being' or a 'state of nothingness' or 'nirvana'.

The spatial relationship between nirvana perceived as the heavenly realm and the human world can be implied when Natakrit uses the word 'ลงมา' (*descend*) which clearly portrays that there exists a physical space of nirvana which is somewhere up above in a higher realm than the human world. When sentient beings have attained nirvana, their souls are led to be with the Gods up in a heavenly realm; while the Gods 'ลงมา' (*descend*) to the world to preach to the sentient beings. Certainly, this implies the boundary between heaven and the world. According to an I-Kuan-Tao perspective, nirvana is understood as to attain the heavenly realm, whereas Buddhism describes this concept as attaining a 'state of nothingness or nonexistence'. Moreover, we can assume the great compassion of the Gods for a human as Natakrit since he states 'ก็ทำหน้าเดินไป' (*I had face-to-face interaction with gods!*).

Through the frame analysis, it is clear that Natakrit constructs a particular reality about himself and the world around him based on his strong religious belief and an unshakable faith in I-Kuan-Tao. In my observation during fieldwork and throughout data collection, Natakrit produced the 'chosen one' frame as his major frame. Next I will demonstrate through multimodal (inter)action analysis (Norris, 2004, 2011a), how his belief as 'the chosen one' is expressed in multiple modes, but particularly through gesture.

example 5: proving Gods' existence

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| (541) | ลงมาคุยกันอย่างนี้เลย
<i>I had a face-to-face interaction with the holy deities who descended to the world</i> |
| (542) | เดินคุยกันอย่างนี้เลย
<i>possessing in the holy medium's body, walking around the class and talking to the audiences</i> |
| (543) | จะจะ
<i>face to face.</i> |
| (544) 00.18.18 researcher | เคยสัมผัส?
<i>did you feel gods?</i> |
| (545) 00.18.19 natakrit | ก็ทำหน้าเดินไป
<i>I had face-to-face interaction with gods!</i> |

the analysis of multimodal transcripts

Below, I illustrate the Natakrit's use of different types of gestures in order to mediate the abstract religious notions of the 'cycle of reincarnation', 'soul', and 'nirvana' through the analysis of the video excerpts. Here, the images of abstraction of these religious concepts have the interconnectedness with 'the chosen one' frame that has been developed based on Natakrit's religious belief.

using metaphoric and deictic gestures iconically

In these following examples (Figure 1), the participant is producing the higher-level action of giving the dharma lecture in which he refers to abstract religious notions like 'the cycle of reincarnation' and 'soul'. I begin with the analysis of Figure 1 where the concept of the cycle of reincarnation is visualized through his gesture.

In this excerpt, Natakrit tries to convince his audience that the cycle of reincarnation prevents them from enlightenment. He claims that through I-Kuan-Tao practice, the cycle of reincarnation will end as they will be revealed with the three noble treasures of I-Kuan-Tao; and that they will be asked to repeat them correctly before they can enter nirvana. Interestingly, metaphoric gestures as McNeill (1992) proposes are used to represent abstract ideas such as the one here, used to convey the concept of the 'cycle of reincarnation'. In addition, he produces this gesture in combination with deictic gestures. However, both metaphoric and deictic gestures are used iconically, thus, representing that the concept of the cycle of reincarnation is real and that Natakrit as 'the chosen one' knows what it is like.

Here, Natakrit produces this higher-level action through multiple communicative modes but most salient are those of spoken language and gesture. He uses his gesture to represent the concept of the cycle of reincarnation by making a circular motion seven times. The gesture begins with its preparation phase when Natakrit puts his arms along his body as illustrated in Figure 1 image 1 when he utters 'วนเวียนอยู่ในวัฏฏะสงสาร' (*you have been caught up in....*). Then followed by his index finger on the left hand pointing down to the ground, he raises up his left arm and starts to make a larger circular motion by extending his left arm into the forward direction as seen in Figure 1 image 2 and followed by image 3 where he says 'วนอยู่ในอ่าง' (*caught up in the cycle of reincarnation*) and 'วนอยู่อย่างนี้' (*keep going*) with his body slightly bending forwards towards his audience. The arm stroke reaches its full extension before it is followed by the retraction phase with his index pointing down and returning to the rest position. He produces a circular motion through his gesture seven times along with the utterances with his index finger always pointing down while making a circular motion.

Considering the gestures utilized (Figure 1), Natakrit uses metaphoric gesture iconically in order to describe an abstract concept of the 'cycle of reincarnation' as real. According to McNeill (1992), the similarity of the metaphoric and iconic gesture is that they have pictorial content. While a metaphoric gesture is used to represent the abstract notion, an iconic gesture is used to mimic the shape or form of objects that exists in the physical world.



Figure 1: A concept of the cycle of reincarnation displayed through metaphoric and deictic gesture that are both used iconically.

However, for Natakrit who has positioned himself as ‘the chosen one’ based on his strong religious belief, the cycle of reincarnation is real. Here, he is seen to give these concepts reality through metaphoric gestures produced jointly with the deictic gestures by depicting them iconically. Regardless of the underlying properties of each gestural type, both are

used to visualize the ephemeral concept of the cyclic of reincarnation as if it is real. This can also be seen in how Natakrit orchestrates a range of communicative modes such as facial expression, head movement, and body posture. Particularly when he says 'วนแล้ว วนเล่า' (*just like this, keep going*) illustrated in image 5 and 6, his head together with his body posture lean forwards while his facial expression is assertive. These modes of communication are used in conjunction with his spoken language and gestural behaviors in order to add emphasis to the meanings conveyed.

As Kendon (2004) and McNeill (1992) note, knowingly or not, humans inform one another about their intentions, interests, feeling and ideas through visible bodily action. Therefore, thoughts and gestures can be linked and thought can sometimes be read through gesture. Here, Natakrit has developed his perception of being 'the chosen one' on the basis of his unshakable faith in his religious belief. The data suggests that 'he knows that he knows' because he is 'the chosen one'. Assuming that 'he knows that he knows', he also tries to instill fear in his audience by making use of a negative communication strategy in describing a story about being caught up in the cycle of reincarnation. As seen in Figure 1, image 2-7, the way he keeps repeating 'วนอยู่อย่างนี้ วนแล้ววนเล่า' (*keep going, and going, just like this*) signifies an endless cycle of human suffering.

Natakrit also depicts the hierarchical relationship between heaven (or nirvana) and the earth through the co-produced deictic gesture, his index finger pointing down when referring to the cycle of reincarnation. An index finger pointing down signifies the location of the human world (whereas the heaven is signified with the gesture of an index finger pointing up, shown in Figure 3). The human world is seen as an unpleasant place to live and as a place where one is reborn over and over as human or another sentient being at a different time.

using metaphoric and beat gesture iconically

Figure 2 shows Natakrit visualizing the concept of 'soul' in connection with the concept of the 'cycle of reincarnation' through metaphoric gestures that are occasionally co-produced with beat gesture.

In this example, Natakrit is mentioning the abstract notion of 'soul' during his higher-level action of giving a dharma lecture on the I-Kuan-Tao cult. He connects the concept of soul to the concept of the cycle of reincarnation as a soul was originally created by the Lord of All Beings. It was pure until it overtook the body of a sentient being and it is conditioned by the karmic rule. Similar to Figure 1, Natakrit visualizes the concept of soul through metaphoric gestures that are occasionally overlapped with beat gesture. Both metaphoric and beat gestures are used iconically.



Figure 2: A concept of soul displayed through metaphoric and beat gestures, both used iconically.

In Figure 2, spoken language is accompanied with a stream of gestures to give physical reality to the ephemeral concept of 'soul'. Natakrit in his preparation phase holds his hands together at his waist. He then refers to soul as he says 'วิญญาณจะลงมาจุดเมื่อไหร่' (*when a soul takes over a body*) in synchrony with his hands moving up in separation, facing upward with parallel fingers set apart as to mimic the shape of souls, based on the way he perceives them, as illustrated in Figure 2 image 2. In the meantime, he moves his holding hands slightly up and down (beat gesture) to emphasize his utterance. In image 3, he talks about the origin of soul, uttering that 'วิญญาณมาจากเบื้องบน.' (*soul comes from heaven and is created by the lord of all beings*). He takes his hand, positioned at the waist in the preparation phase, and begins his stroke by raising his left arm with the hand in a holding position (image 3), in synchrony with his posture turning at a slight angle to the left. Next, followed by the retraction phase (image 4), Natakrit holds his left hand at chest level, his body slightly bending forwards as he says 'เป็นธาตุธรรมแท้' (*it is dharma itself*). In image 5, as Natakrit utters 'มาอยู่ในช้าง ม้า วัว' (*souls take over living beings like elephants, horses, cows*), he produces three beat gestures with his left hand in a holding position, moving it up and down and from left to the right. Each beat movement is produced when each single word: elephant, horse, and cow is being uttered. Finally, in the rest position, his hands are again together and placed at the waist level as illustrated in the final image.

This example shown in Figure 2 demonstrates the close link between the inner thoughts of Natakrit and his expression produced through the visible gestures in alignment with other communicative modes. Natakrit is seen as a religious person and a strong believer in I-Kuan-Tao, whose expression of the inner thoughts and ideas is grounded in his religious belief and his self-portrayal of being 'the chosen one'. This accounts for how the process of his perceived reality towards the concept of 'soul' is constructed. Again, drawing on frame analysis (Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993), Natakrit assumes that he is 'the chosen one', and he insists that souls do exist and that they are created by The Lord of all Beings in the heavenly realm. By utilizing the 'metaphoric gesture iconically', he gives reality to the ephemeral concept of 'soul'. In doing so, he demonstrates this belief to his audience by mimicking the physical form of a soul through his gestural action of holding up his hand with his fingers parallel. The hands, thus depict the shape and the size of a soul as something of a round shape and with a similar size of an actual heart organ, and not as a heart in a metaphorical sense (see Figure 2, image 2, 3, 4, 5). Through the use of metaphoric gesture performed iconically, 'soul', which is commonly understood as intangible matter, is visualized as real and concrete.

There is also the co-occurrence of metaphoric gesture and beat gesture in this interaction as illustrated in Figure 2 image 5. These beat gestures are performed while Natakrit utters 'elephants', 'horses', and 'cows'. Here, Natakrit blends the metaphoric gesture that is used iconically with the beat gestures, moving his 'holding' hand up and down three times, from the left to the right. Since beat gestures do not carry any meaning, they add emphasis to what is being said, and to what is being gestured (the soul) as real. According to Natakrit's religious belief of I-Kuan-Tao, the concept of 'soul' is of great significance and perceived as real as it is enmeshed with other religious concepts such as the cycle of reincarnation and nirvana.

Besides the modes of gesture and spoken language, Natakrit incorporates other communicative modes to produce his higher-level action of conveying the meaning of 'soul': he uses the modes of posture, gaze, and facial expression. As illustrated in Figure 2 image 2, 4, and 5, the communicative modes of posture, gaze and facial expression intricately interplay with spoken language and gesture. For example, the mode of posture is of significance as Natakrit slightly leans his body forwards in order to emphasize what he is uttering as demonstrated in image 2 when he asks 'วิญญาณลงมาจุติเมื่อไหร่' (*when a soul takes over a body*) and in image 5 when he says 'มาอยู่ในร่างม้า วัว' (*a soul takes over living beings like elephants, horses, cows*). He produces a forceful facial expression and directs his gaze at his audience. The mode of posture also portrays the hierarchical relationship between gods and sentient beings when he states that the heavenly realm is located up there and is believed to be a better place (much better than the world) to live. He signifies this through his posture when he turns at a slight angle to the left and backwards, with his arm rising up above his head in order to imply heaven as 'the holiest and the highest place'.

The interconnection of communicative modes that are simultaneously co-produced gives emphasis to the interaction, leading to understand Natakrit's considerable effort to convince his audiences that the 'soul' is real and of great importance.

using deictic gesture to point to a ‘real’ location

In the final multimodal transcript (Figure 3), Natakrit refers to the concept of ‘nirvana’ that he uses interchangeably with the concept of ‘heaven’. The concept of nirvana is associated with the concept of a ‘soul’ and the ‘cycle of reincarnation’. He believes that, if a person is revealed with the ‘Three Noble Treasures of I-Kuan-Tao’ and the mystic portal (a place between a person’s two eyes) is opened by an ordained master of I-Kuan-Tao cult, that person will ascend straight to heaven without having to endure the indefinite cycle of rebirth. Demonstrated in the multimodal transcript in Figure 3, Natakrit produces a deictic gesture to indicate the location of the heavenly realm and the world that he views as ‘real’. Again, this is based on his perceived reality of being ‘the chosen one’ that is mediated by his religious belief.

In Figure 3 images 1 and 2, Natakrit is standing, directly gazing at his audience. He slightly leans forwards when he utters a question ‘ท่านจะ’ (*where would....*), and followed by ‘ไปทางไหน’ (*you go?*) when he begins to point up with his right index finger. While extending his right arm with the index finger pointing up, his gaze follows the direction of his index finger as it is pointing up and he says ‘ไปนั้น’ (*up there to heaven?*) illustrated in image 3. Next, as depicted in image 5, he moves his right arm down with his head bending downward when he utters ‘หรือ’ (*or*) before he switches to his left hand with an index pointing down and utters ‘ไปนี้’ (*down here?*). Finally in image 6, his body is upright again while he says ‘กลับมาเวียนว่าย ตายเกิด’ (*subject to reincarnation*) in synchrony with his gaze staring at his audience.

As earlier (Figures 1 and 2), Natakrit embodies the ‘the chosen one’ frame in Figure 3. He perceives nirvana, as illustrated through the frame analysis above, as real and interchangeable with the heavenly realm. He insists that the holy deities ‘ลงมา’ (*descend*) from ‘up there’ (‘nirvana’) to preach to humans. This implies that there is actually ‘a place’. His deictic gesture is here used to indicate the spatial locations of both heaven (as it is literal for him) and the human world. Further, it portrays the hierarchical position of heaven and the world. As McNeill (1992) notes, deictic gestures refer to objects or locations in the physical world or in conceptual space. However, identifying himself as ‘the chosen one’, I argue that Natakrit perceives heaven or nirvana as a literal realm where the Lord of all Being of the entire universe and all holy deities live. This place is located “up there” because Gods have to ‘ลงมา’ (*descend*) from there. The spatial location of nirvana is represented through the pointing that is performed with his utterances, and particularly with the use of place deixis ‘นั้น’ (*there*) as illustrated in image 3 and ‘นี้’ (*here*) as to convey the human world as illustrated in image 5. Therefore, I conclude that Natakrit, as ‘the chosen one’, uses the deictic gesture to refer to nirvana that, by him, is understood as a literal realm.

Again, we find that the interaction is produced through various modes of communication in conjunction with spoken language and gestures. All of these modes intricately interplay in the higher-level action of giving a dharma orientation lecture to add emphasis, to supplement the spoken language, or to visualize imaginary, and to give ephemeral concepts reality.



Figure 3: A concept of nirvana through deictic gesture 'pointing to a *rea*/location'.

When Natakrit slightly leans forwards, directing his forceful gaze at his audiences while questioning them ‘ท่านจะไปทางไหน?’ (*where would you go?*), he, in a forceful manner, attempts to keep the audiences’ attention. He insinuates fear of the consequences of an endless reincarnation, as a cycle of reincarnation is considered to cause suffering and prevent people from attaining nirvana. With a direct gaze and a forceful look, the audiences can understand that they are being asked a rhetorical question and are expected to give the answer which the person who is asking wants to hear. Implicitly, Natakrit positions himself to be superior to the audience, as he is chosen by the Gods.

conclusion

This article explicated the analysis of gestures produced by Natakrit ‘the chosen one’ during an I-Kuan-Tao dharma orientation lecture to the attendants who were invited. Alongside spoken language, he utilized various types of gestures: namely metaphoric gestures, deictic gestures, iconic gestures, and beat gestures in order to discuss and represent the ephemeral religious concepts of the cycle of reincarnation, soul, and nirvana.

Through the frame analysis, I have shown that ‘the chosen one’ frame persistently emerges across time in the interview transcripts and is Natakrit’s most prominent frame. Being ‘the chosen one’ implies that Natakrit is a privileged entity who was meant to serve Gods’ greatest mission in saving all sentient beings from suffering. Natakrit willingly embraces his destiny of being chosen by the Gods, as he perceives that he is offered the greatest opportunity to cultivate the most meritorious acts of being human. Throughout my observation in fieldwork, Natakrit produced himself in the ‘chosen one’ frame as instantiated on the basis of his religious belief in the I-Kuan-Tao cult, throughout the dharma orientation lectures.

The multimodal analysis shows how gestures simultaneously interplayed with other modes to create meaning. I found two particularly significant notions: 1) the gestures that Natakrit produces are blended in terms of their properties and functions; and 2) they are used iconically. The first notion shows how two gesture-types can be co-produced together (Figure 1). In Figure 1, the concept of the cycle of reincarnation is illustrated through metaphoric gestures mingled with deictic gesture; whereas in Figure 2, the concept of soul is conveyed through a metaphoric gesture that is co-produced with beat gesture. Finally, in Figure 3, the concept of nirvana is visualized through a deictic gesture pointing to the locations that he views as real. The combined gestures, however, do not transform themselves into a larger or more complex gesture as they are non-combinatoric (McNeill, 1992). This is because each gesture is already in itself a complete expression of meaning. Therefore, when a metaphoric gestures is co-produced with deictic gestures to illustrate the notion of the cycle of reincarnation (as illustrated in Figure 1), or when metaphoric gestures are co-produced with beat gestures to represent the concept of soul (as illustrated in Figure 2), a major function of these gestures is to add emphasis to language as well as to mediate Natakrit’s religious belief as being ‘the chosen one’.

The second notion involves how gestures are depicted iconically in relation to the primary frame of being 'the chosen one'. The primary frame of 'the chosen one' is developed on the basis of Natakrit's religious belief in the I-Kuan-Tao cult. According to the primary frame of 'the chosen one', the perception immensely influences Natakrit's reality of the world. This is visible in his actions as shown in the visual data illustrated in the multimodal transcripts along with the interview data. In Figure 1, the concept of the cycle of reincarnation is illustrated through a metaphoric gesture combined with a deictic gesture, but in an iconic way. Natakrit produces a circular motion seven times with his arm while pointing down in order to visualize the characteristic of the endless process of rebirth. The forceful facial expression, his direct gaze and the leaning-forward posture are relevant to his gestural actions as that they add emphasis to the interaction.

In Figure 2, Natakrit is shown to convey the concept of soul. The abstract notion of soul is performed iconically through a metaphoric gesture that is co-produced with a beat gesture. His perceived soul is created by the Gods and comes from heaven and is of a somewhat round shape, similar to the actual shape of a heart organ. The reality of the 'soul' is manifested by how he mimics the physical form of the soul with his metaphoric holding gesture. Beat gestures are co-produced with the metaphoric gesture to add emphasis to the utterances. Attempting to be persuasive, Natakrit incorporates other modes during the interaction to strengthen the power of his communication, such as a forceful facial expression, staring gazes, and a bending posture towards his audiences.

In Figure 3, Natakrit depicts 'nirvana' through a deictic gesture that is used as an iconic gesture. Because Natakrit perceives that he is meant to know everything that other ordinary sentient beings do not, he attempts to convince the audience that nirvana is a literal heaven beyond the cycle of reincarnation and is attainable by anyone practicing I-Kuan-Tao cult within one single lifetime. Nirvana is represented as a literal heavenly realm up above in the sky and he distinguishes the heavenly realm from the suffering world through his pointing which is produced in alignment with other communicative modes such as spoken language (deixis 'up there', 'down here'), posture (leaning forwards towards his audience), gaze (staring at his audiences while questioning them), and facial expression (forceful look). Implicitly, the spatial relationship between the heavenly realm and the human world is portrayed through his deictic gesture that is used iconically. This demonstrates that the visible bodily gestures mediate the inner thought of Natakrit, who positions himself as 'the chosen one'.

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