CHAPTER THREE

MAINLINE, THEME, AND SURFACE STRUCTURE

3.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to further analyze the structure of Phra Phayom's sermons with regard to theme, mainline, and surface structure. We will begin by establishing a theoretical definition of these terms as seen in the literature. Discussion will then turn to the ways those phenomena are marked or otherwise indicated in "typical" Phra Phayom sermons. Finally, the concept of theme as related to mainline will be discussed.

3.1 Mainline

The goal of a hortatory discourse is to, in some way, cause the listeners to behave in a certain manner (Lowe 1986:183, Longacre 1968:5, Suppharatyothin 1989:2). Everything in the discourse is geared toward that end. Nevertheless, most hortatory discourses will not merely give commands; there will almost inevitably be reasons for why the commands should be followed (e.g., they come from an authority source, they will help alleviate problems, the consequences of disobedience are undesirable, etc.) and examples of how the commands have or have not been followed by others.

In dealing with the actual generation of any text, Longacre states:

...for any language each type of text has a mainline of development and contains other materials which can be conceived of as encoding progressive degrees of departure from the mainline (1989a:414).

The mainline as Longacre defines it, is realized as storyline in narrative discourse, line of procedure in procedural discourse, line of exposition in expository discourse, and line of exhortation in hortatory discourse (1989a:414, 1989b:59, 121).

As mentioned by Longacre, above, surrounding this mainline are other materials which may or may not contribute to the progression of the discourse. For purposes of this thesis, these will be referred to as secondary and tertiary lines. Where Phra Phayom's sermons are concerned, secondary lines include stories, illustrations, lengthy anecdotes and the like which have some sort of direct relation to a main sermon theme. Tertiary lines will be defined as those parts of the discourse which do not seem to advance the mainline or any particular main theme; that seem, from a thematic point of view, nearly irrelevant to the greater portion of the text.

In narrative discourse, the mainline is considered to consist of a chronologically ordered sequence of events whose presence vitally advances the course of the story to a satisfactory outcome. Different languages mark mainline through various devices. English, for example, utilizes past tense verbs to indicate "on-line" material, while preterites and perfects carry out the same function in Biblical Hebrew (Longacre 1989b:61, 81). Less crucial story elements such as expectations, flash-backs, descriptions, etc., would be classified as "secondary information," and are often marked by irrealis.

With this in mind, Longacre asserts:

...within local spans of text an intersentential analysis can be carried out so that the sentences whose main verb(s)/clause(s) are of highest rank are structurally dominant in the local span and those of lower rank are structurally ancillary (1989a:415).

Thus, rankings of story material can be constructed that describe "bands," or levels, of crucial substance as illustrated in figure 8:

1. Primary storyline (S/Agent>S/Experience>S/Patient)
   2. Secondary storyline
      3. Routine (script-predictable action sequences)
         4. Backgrounded actions/events
            5. Backgrounded activities (durative)
               6. Setting (exposition)
                  7. Irrealis (negatives and modals)
                     8. Evaluations (author instructions)
                        9. Cohesive and thematic

Figure 8. Etic Bands of Salience in Narrative
(Reproduced from Longacre 1989a:443)

Previous works on hortatory discourse have linked mainline to commands.[1] Robert Brichoux, in reference to his and Austin Hale's "Some Characteristics of Hortatory Strategy in Subanun" (1977) states:

In our previous paper, we assumed that the exhortations in a hortatory discourse form the backbone of that discourse. My recent study confirms this....the commands are the macro-structure of the discourse. (Brichoux 1984: 80-81)

Such an analysis would thus place reasons, motivations, illustrations, and the like on lower bands of salience, as does Longacre in his study of information structures in Hebrew hortatory discourse (figure 9):

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[1] This dates back to Longacre, 1968.

Band 1: Primary line of Exhortation	1.1 Imperative (2p) 1.2 Cohortative (1p) 1.3 Jussive (3p)
Band 2: Secondary line of Exhortation	2.1 *al* + jussive/imperfect 2.2 Modal imperfect
Band 3: Results/Consequences (Motivation)	3.1 *w* (consecutive) perfect 3.2 *lo / pen* + imperfect 3.3 (Future) perfect
Band 4: Setting (Problem)	4.1 Perfect (of past events) 4.2 Participles 4.3 Nominal clauses

Figure 9. Verb Rank in Hortatory Discourse (Biblical Hebrew)
(Reproduced from Longacre (1989b:121))

3.2 Theme

Before endeavoring to create such a hierarchy for Thai hortatory discourse as it relates to Phra Phayom's sermons, it is necessary to discuss the concept of theme. In defining theme, Jones states (1977:1):

'Theme' has to do with the most important, or main, ideas of a text...Theme is like a main thread running through a text which may be strong and obvious, or may be obscured by other threads or broken in pieces and scattered throughout various portions.

Theme is closely related to, but not synonymous with, mainline. While the mainline serves to move the discourse along, theme helps to bind the discourse together--hence its classification alongside cohesion in Longacre's narrative salience chart (figure 8).

Additional insight into theme, mainline, and macrostructure is provided by van Dijk in his 1977 *Text and Context: Explorations in the Semantics and Pragmatics of Discourse*. Building on the observation that

some people seem to have a natural talent for writing summaries, abstracts, and the like, van Dijk endeavors to create what he terms "macrorules" for systematically reducing texts to smaller, more concise forms. The macrorules stipulate the types of information which may be generalized, integrated into other information, or deleted altogether (van Dijk 1977:144-164). For example, the sentence "There was a ball, a doll, a toy-car...lying around" could be reduced to "There were toys lying around" if the specific toys mentioned in the original play no prominent role in the rest of the story (van Dijk 1977:145). The logical extension from this is that the most important macrostructures of a text, along with their respective mainlines and main themes, may be summarized as much smaller units--what Burusphat calls "macropropositions" (1991:15). Reduced texts could then be reconstructed, if necessary, by inference from their macropropositions without loss of significant information.[2]

3.3 Application to Phra Phayom's sermons

As mentioned in chapter two, the body of a typical Phra Phayom sermon can be divided as follows:

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+megasections
+sections
±subsections
+paragraphs
+sentences
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[2]Stylistically, of course, a reconstructed text would probably differ from the original. The only significant information lost, however, would be what van Dijk terms "accidental information"--information that does not advance the main line (1977:144).

This section will argue that megasections represent distinct steps in the oration and that, as such, they can be reduced to macropropositions.

3.3.1 Why Megasections?

A fundamental assumption made in this section is that much of that process which we call linguistic competence is related to generative processes within the human mind--not to mere memory of an enormous number of sentences which can be strung together at random. Van Dijk and others have suggested that psychological studies into the ways that humans remember and recall information may show intuitive macrorules to be operating in all of our heads; that is, we compact information, keeping the main points in a prominent position while integrating, generalizing, or deleting the rest. A similarity to the concept of macrostructures will immediately be noticed.

Though there are people with photographic memories, and though some specially trained individuals like ancient Greek and Celtic bards memorized entire epics, most human beings would confess to possessing less-than-perfect memory devices. We will often be able to remember the highlights or main points of a university lecture, classic novel, or television program, but very rarely could anyone perfectly reproduce something listened to, read, or seen. Neeley states:

> When a reader is able to distinguish the backbone from support material, he is able to form a mental framework that enables him to comprehend the development of the discourse's theme and to recall the major points of the discourse later. Failure to make the distinction causes confusion of major and minor points, and often causes misinterpretation of illustrative or other supportive material because

its connection to the thematic point is missed, and causes inability to recall the development of the discourse (1987:4).

Similarly, very few politicians, corporate leaders, or teachers get in front of large crowds with their speeches completely memorized or written out. Rather, outlines are used--outlines that point to the main ideas of megasections (broad headings), sections (main points), subsections (subpoints), etc.

Phra Phayom points proudly to the fact that he has not read from the Buddhist scriptures or used even written outlines for his sermons for years. Rather, in the sermon "Taxi's Favorite," he ascribes his ability to speak for hours on end without any notes to the fact that the things he talks about are on his mind all the time.

Some non-Asians who speak Thai as a second language and have heard Phra Phayom preach have made comments like, "He's hard to follow." The reason for this is found in Neeley's quote, above: misinterpretation of major and minor points. In fact,

> Since we do not perceive intuitively the principles of discourse organization in another language in which we are not bilingual, explicit analysis of these discourses is necessary (Neeley 1987:2).

The key to comprehending the organization of a Phra Phayom sermon lies in understanding the nature of his macrostructures.

3.3.2 Megasections and Mainlines

Chapter two pointed out that the body of a Phra Phayom sermon is composed of megasections marked by the particle *Aw!*. In such situations, *Aw!* serves as the indication of a new "point of departure," the next step in

the oration's progress. This is illustrated in figure 7 which summarizes the information preceding and following all *Aw!* sentences.

In looking at figure 7 and the general flow of Phra Phayom's sermons it becomes obvious that it is the particle *Aw!* that truly moves the discourse along. For this reason, I have elected to designate such *Aw!* sentences the backbone, the mainline of typical Phra Phayom sermons.

This decision is not totally without precedent in the literature. It has been shown that other languages also use particles to indicate prominence. Brichoux (1984:99) found the particle *ki* to be a marker "whose occurrence highlights the theme of the discourse" in Subanun hortatory discourse. Similarly, Neeley (1987:26) claims that the Koine Greek used in the Biblical book of Hebrews (an essentially hortatory discourse) indicates backbone by one of the following particles: *oun, diatouto, hothen, ara,* and *dio* .

The argument for *Aw!* marking backbone is strengthened by native speaker intuition as related to the functions of summary and paraphrase. A group of college students agreed to listen to "Wealth" and "Solve Greed." They did not know at the time that they would be asked to summarize either of those sermons, nor had they been told to be "on the lookout" for *Aw!* or any other discourse structures. Nevertheless, their responses closely follow those of the macrostructure outline:

(14)   Student summary of "Solve Greed"

We, when we have life, must throw away our greed and greediness in order to have lively life--meaning that we have happiness in living in society. Having only greed and greediness will trouble society. There will only be killing all the time. When we throw away greed we will have hearts that are holy and know how to help others. The

givers will have happiness, and will get good things in return--more than they give.

(15) Student summary of "Solve Greed"

Humans are greedy, but it is up to individuals how they deal with it. We should not be selfish and we should give and receive so that our lives will be happy. Because if you know how to give something to others you will not be greedy.

(16) Student summary of "Wealth"[3]

We people should have both material wealth and wealth of personhood. Wealth of personhood involves belief in dealing with unwholesome thoughts and the religious commandments, various truths being the source. These will lead to good actions. And material wealth comprises rings, money, gems, gold, and what not. We people desire to have a lot of wealth and it causes us to have unwholesome thoughts and to loose our wealth of personhood. Thus, we should get rid of unwholesome thoughts and try to increase our wealth of personhood more and more. If we have wealth of personhood we will not have to seek a lot of material wealth. It will cause us to have many possessions. For example, Phra Phayom has thrown away his unwholesome thoughts and possessions in his search for wealth of personhood. But now people have given him much in the way of material wealth. He will help many people in the future and be happy himself.

In making this assessment, I am not wholly rejecting the idea that mainline in hortatory discourse is marked by commands. Indeed, were one to look at the megasection outline from the standpoint of mitigation, one could find some sort of implicit command at virtually every megasection break. This is demonstrated in figure 10: [4]

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[3]Although an *Aw!* chart for "Wealth" is not included in this thesis, the student's efforts closely parallel the sermon's *Aw!* - designated mainline.
[4]For futher discussion of mitigation, see chapter four.

	MAINLINE SENTENCE (New Point of Departure)	IMPLICIT COMMAND	COMMENT
MEGASEC. #1	"For that reason, what could be done to make people live in the world in a manner that reduces their greed?"	Do something to reduce the greed in your life!	Generic "people" represents mitigation from "you." Rhetorical question=declaration.
MEGASEC. #2	"Now we can see that many people in Supanburi Province do not have lively life. Why is this?"	Do not be like the people of Supanburi!	Negative evaluation of Supanburi people makes emulation undesirable.
MEGASEC. #3	"Thus, at this time, what are we in the process of needing to cut out [of our lives]? Greed."	Cut greed out of your life!	"We" represents mitigation from "you." Rhetorical question=declaration.
MEGASEC. #4	"At this time Thai society and we ourselves need to watch carefully lest we become victims of--Ay--being controlled by greed."	(Explicit Command)	Explicit command with slight mitigation--"Thai society" and "we ourselves" in place of "you."
MEGASEC. #5	"Are we agreed that we are beginning to see?"	Agree with me!	"We" represents mitigation from "you." Rhetorical Question=declaration
MEGASEC. #6	"It's strange when I think about it, but the more I give, the more I get."	Give more!	Positive evaluation of Phra Phayom's actions makes emulation desirable.
MEGASEC. #7	"How does this all fit together? The next time you make merit, don't pray for a long time. Pray a little--to overcome greed."	(Explicit Command)	Explicit command--directed towards "you."
MEGASEC. #8	"We must clean up things every day."	Clean yourself up every day!	"We" represents mitigation from "you."
MEGASEC. #9	"Whatever the case, if we people release these three root sins and allow them to grow and flourish in our country...[we will have problems]"	Do not release the three root sins!	"We people" represents mitigation from "you." Conditional clause.

Figure 10. Mitigated Commands at Megasection Boundaries in "Solve Greed."

The problem, however, in saying that every explicit or implicit command is mainline arises from the sheer length of Phra Phayom's sermons. After all, "Solve Greed" contains 242 distinct paragraphs, while the hortatory texts studied for the aforementioned articles in *Studies in Philippine Linguistics* range in length from 18 to 70 sentences! Too, some of Phra Phayom's harshest command forms (see chapter 4) are found in areas of the sermons which seem dramatically non-related to the main theme(s). A carefully edited, macropropositioned version of his sermons would probably conform to the exhortation=mainline rule, but it would naturally prove difficult to reconstruct from such an arrangement the substance of the sermon itself--all the "accidental information" (van Dijk 1977:144). After all, these sermons are intended to communicate with and change the behavior of ordinary Thai people, and the support information utilized within each macrostructure seems to be arranged more by associational than propositional logic (see chapter 6).

Secondary information in Phra Phayom's sermons serves to illustrate or otherwise support the mainline. Secondary information encompasses stories, personal anecdotes, declarations, rhetorical questions, explanations, and even commands that have a direct relationship to the major theme(s) of the discourse.

Tertiary information is here defined as information which does not have any clear relationship to the major theme(s) of the discourse. For example, in talking about "lostness"--one of the three root sins (a major theme) mentioned in the sermon "Solve Greed," Phra Phayom digresses from talking about transvestites to criticizing a female gun-for-hire to giving a

lengthy diatribe against cigarettes. The cigarette sermonette contains virtually zero information that is relevant to the main themes of the larger discourse. When Phra Phayom finishes saying everything he wants to say about cigarettes, he gives a hearty *Aw!* and begins talking about the root sins again.

Such tertiary wanderings are frequent, and often precede a megasection boundary--a fact which lends more support to the claim that *Aw!* keeps the discourse moving in the way it is intended to go.

Nevertheless, there remains the question of how secondary and tertiary information could be distinguished quantitatively. How could a determination between secondary and tertiary material be made in a non-subjective manner?

The answer lies with the concept of theme. As mentioned above, theme acts as a cohesive force throughout a discourse, holding the whole together. Theme is contained in but by no means confined by a text's mainline. In fact, in the context of Phra Phayom's sermons, theme extends considerably beyond the mainline to that vast expanse of secondary information which supports the mainline.

Still, any given text can contain more than one theme. Indeed, a monothematic text would be the exception rather than the rule. Incidental themes are woven in and around a handful of main themes--themes which occur throughout the discourse and thus serve to both advance the mainline and give cohesion to the discourse as a whole.

How, then, can one theme be deemed important, another less so? In the context of Phra Phayom's sermons, two criteria are applicable: distance

between the first and last occurrences of the theme, and the number of times that theme occurs in the interim.

3.3.3 Theme as a Function of Frequency and Distribution

A fundamental assumption made in this section is that the frequency with which a theme is mentioned in a text will serve as a guide to the importance of that theme relative to other themes and the discourse as a whole. It follows, then, that a formula could be devised to determine this relative strength.

In approaching this question we will once again take a detailed look at the sermon "Solve Greed."

As mentioned in the introduction (see 1.4), the fundamental unit analyzed in this study is the paragraph. As mentioned in chapter two (see 2.2), this study has involved dividing entire Phra Phayom sermons into their respective discourse units--megasections, sections, paragraphs, etc.--in an endeavor to better comprehend the overall nature of the texts.

In seeking the themes of "Solve Greed," I went through each paragraph of the sermon listing the words which appeared explicitly or through ellipsis in the subject and object slots of each sentence. In some cases, other parts of speech (adjectives, adverbs, verbs) that had a particular prominence were also included. This yielded some 238 paragraph-level themes. This listing was then graphed out on the span chart shown in appendix E.[5]

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[5] This chart shows when each theme was initially introduced ('new information'), all occurrences of that theme throughout the remainder of the discourse, and the total number of times that a theme is mentioned. Certain rhetorical devices such as the particle *na:ʔ3*, rhetorical questions, etc. were also listed (see chapter 5).

While such a chart gives a visual idea of how relevant a certain theme would appear to be to "Solve Greed," it does not sufficiently disclose any quantitative material on how a theme like Buddhism, mentioned six times over the course of 223 paragraphs, might be of greater relevance than one like cigarettes, mentioned twenty-two times but over the course of only forty-six paragraphs.

In an effort to statistically ascertain a more precise measure of thematic relevance, the following formula was devised and applied to the sixty-seven themes which occur more than four times in "Solve Greed":[6]

$$f=(n/N)r$$

Where f=frequency
  n=number of actual occurrences
  N=number of possible occurrences (total number
     of paragraphs in the discourse)
  r=range of occurrences (number of paragraphs
     between first, last occurrence)

Application of this formula provided theme rankings as shown in table 1 for "Solve Greed."

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[6]As mentioned above, there are a total of 238 paragraph level themes in "Solve Greed." The majority of these occur one to three times, and are thus of questionable significance--van Dijk's "accidental information." Their exclusion from these calculations helps to offset the possibility that a very minor theme occurring only in, say, the first and last paragraphs of the sermon be perceived as a high-ranking theme. The content of the themes mentioned more than four times seemed to be of greater relevance to the discourse as a whole.

THEME	n	r	f	THEME	n	r	f
I...	78	233	75	cigarettes	22	46	4.2
greed/greediness/selfish	48	232	46	give out	18	56	4.2
wealth/money	42	219	38	other's possessions	5	203	4.2
They...	29	225	27	liveliness	4	239	4
people	28	225	26	work	7	118	3.4
We...	28	216	25	airplane crash	6	128	3.2
temple	22	220	20	accident	4	182	3
now	22	198	18	rotten	6	117	2.9
kill/death	19	217	17	collect	4	155	2.6
layperson	24	171	17	grandmother/old woman	4	133	2.2
generous/helpful/merciful	17	214	15	suffering	11	44	2
child/siblings	21	161	14	lostness	7	66	1.9
monks	17	199	14	sometimes	5	82	1.7
make merit	14	190	11	preaching	5	77	1.6
life	11	242	11	corpse	7	55	1.6
root sin(s)	11	242	11	heart	4	79	1.3
wife/woman/mother	14	190	11	teach	4	79	1.3
anger/hate/cruel	10	232	9.6	strength	4	81	1.3
father/husband/man	12	188	9.3	Supan people	7	37	1.1
good	10	223	9.2	freshness	6	41	1
(make) offerings	17	120	8.4	pray	4	57	0.9
cut&clear	10	201	8.3	addicted	5	39	0.8
dhamma	8	239	7.9	think about	8	21	0.7
news/newspapers	9	161	6	control	4	42	0.7
Thai people/society/Thailand	7	194	5.6	oppress	4	42	0.7
fighting	8	166	5.5	disorder	5	24	0.5
Buddhism/Buddhists/Buddha	6	223	5.5	bad/evil	4	31	0.5
progress	5	241	5	spot	4	12	0.2
today	5	236	4.9	every day	4	12	0.2
believe	8	145	4.8	sadness	5	7	0.1
some people	8	145	4.8	accept	6	4	0.1
taxi	6	191	4.7	transvestites	6	4	0.1
unwholesome thought	5	221	4.6	tapes	4	6	0.1
strange/unbelievable/mystery	10	104	4.3				

Table 1. Theme Rankings for "Solve Greed"

The thematic information shown here can be further divided in terms of band. It is numerically obvious that "greed" and the closely related "wealth" are the main themes of this sermon (Phra Phayom's self-references being used more in autobiographical illustrations). It is nevertheless interesting to note the nature of the themes which are found in what might be termed mid-range frequency. Themes like root sins, offerings, dhamma, Buddhism, belief, unwholesome thoughts, and merit making all are related to that pool of assumed common knowledge or collective consciousness of Thai Buddhism. There is no need to tell people that they should make merit, or that they should do this or that if they make merit, but rather that they should do such and such *when* they make merit. Similarly, the prominence of "monks" in the illustrative material; there is no need to explain what a monk is or how he should behave--it is assumed common knowledge. The numerous examples involving family members in various problematic situations build on traditional Thai social values and recent news reports familiar to the audience.

This assumed common knowledge forms the canvas which Phra Phayom paints on. It gives authority to his declarations, linking them with the higher power of Buddhism. It makes the sermon relevant to those beliefs and practices which have been instilled in the listeners since birth, linking Buddhist doctrine to everyday situations.

Other mid-range themes include terms like death, anger/hate/cruelty, cut and clean, etc. These are related to the mainline in that they reflect various consequences or required responses to greed.

As shown in table 1, some low-range themes are mentioned more often than some mid-range themes. Nevertheless, the fact that their range is limited makes them fall short in the calculations performed above. They are often unrelated to the mainline, having been entered through the digressions which lead Phra Phayom into tertiary material.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has asserted that mainline (being defined as that set of elements that move a discourse forward) in Phra Phayom's sermons is composed of a series of mitigated commands marked by *Aw!* or *Aw la!* Each occurrence of *Aw!* also provides a distinct "point of departure" dividing previous material and the next major point of the oration. Additional information in the discourse can be classified as secondary or tertiary material.

Attention has also been given to the relationship between theme and mainline. It has been stated that thematic relevance can be understood in terms of frequency as related to density. In the immediate context, high, middle, and low range themes for "Solve Greed" were demonstrated.