

CHAPTER SIX

MEGASECTION ANATOMY

6.0 Introduction

In previous chapters, we have examined the structural nature of Phra Phayom's sermons, the role of theme and backbone, and mitigation. This chapter, then, will endeavor to tie all these together, presenting a clearer picture of how a Phra Phayom oration "works."

As mentioned earlier, megasections can be divided into smaller discourse units: sections, subsections, and paragraphs. Sections are composed of a group of thematically related paragraphs. Additional embedded groups of paragraphs that amplify, reiterate, illustrate, expand upon, or otherwise contribute to sections are termed subsections.

Megasections tend to be shorter towards the beginning of a Phra Phayom sermon than they are towards the end. This perhaps reflects the greater degree of conciseness found in the more formulaic introduction and stage divisions. As a sermon goes on, Phra Phayom seems to exercise a greater deal of freedom to improvise and otherwise talk about whatever happens to be on his mind at any given moment, occasionally needing to get things "back on track" with a resounding *Aw!*

6.1 Types of Information within Megasections

Individual paragraphs within a megasection can be classified by a variety of different means. For the purposes of this section, we will look at paragraph content type as a means of classification.

The following content types of paragraphs are observed in Phra Phayom's sermons:

Type	Description
Documentary	Real life or fictional stories.
Personal Documentary	Real life stories in which the speaker was involved.
Personal Comment	Thoughts or opinions explicitly linked to the speaker.
Declaration	Judgements declared without explicit linkage to the speaker.
Rhetorical Questions	Paragraphs consisting of a series of rhetorical questions.
Buddhist doctrine	Paragraphs containing explicit references to Buddhism, the Buddha himself, or the Buddha's teachings.
Definition	Paragraphs which explain key terms.
Commands	Paragraphs which contain explicit hortatory material.

Paragraphs about Buddhist doctrine are rarely found in sermon bodies, occurring mostly in sermon introductions and conclusions.¹ Similarly, definition paragraphs are rarely found outside of the introduction.

Rhetorical question paragraphs are spread unevenly throughout the megasections, while declaration paragraphs are generally found immediately before or after a documentary span. Command paragraphs are

¹In fact, were it not for the mid-range themes (chapter three) involving merit making, monks, temples, etc., one would have no idea that many portions of Phra Phayom's sermons had anything to do with Buddhism at all.

relatively rare and, as mentioned earlier, often make explicit commands not directly related to the main theme of the discourse.

As shown in figure 15, below, documentary and personal documentary paragraph types are far and away the most frequent content type, combining to occupy nearly 55% of the paragraphs of the body. They would probably take up more than 55% of the body's actual speaking time, inasmuch as some of these documentary paragraphs are quite long--some more than ten sentences--while other content types such as rhetorical question and command paragraphs rarely exceed four sentences.

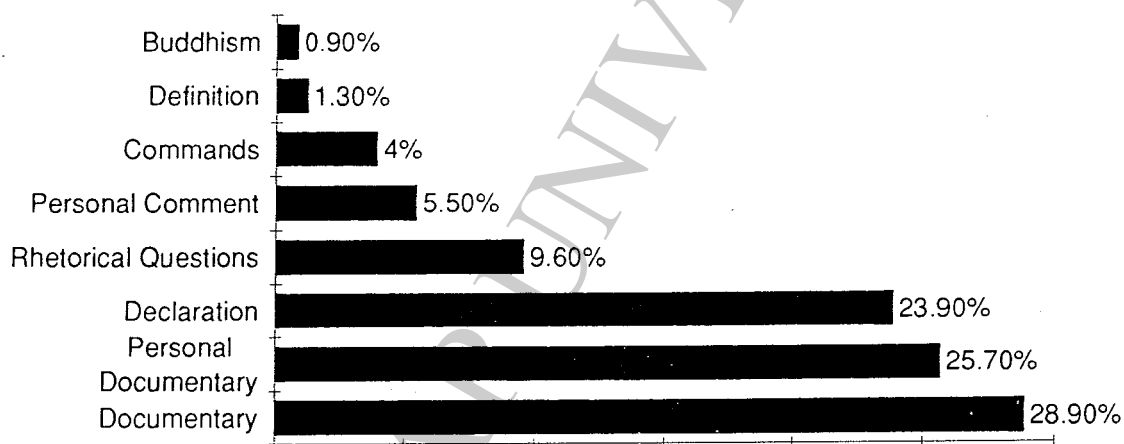


Figure 15. Percentage of Select Paragraph Content Types in Megasections #1-9 of "Solve Greed."

6.2 Megasection Breakdown

In this section, I will break down two megasections--numbers six and seven of "Solve Greed"-- into their component parts. These megasections are typical of those found in Phra Phayom's sermons, and the flow of theme

and mainline divergence in them strengthens the structural and thematic arguments presented in earlier chapters.

It is important to first know something of the general nature of these two megasections. Megasection six begins talking about how giving a lot leads to receiving a lot and, in fact, contains only one paragraph which has the high-ranking theme 'greed/selfishness' in it. Rather, megasection six deals mostly with positive ways to overcome greed, mentioning themes like 'generosity,' 'offerings,' 'temples,' and 'monks' more times than any previous megasection.

Megasection seven is the longest megasection in "Solve Greed." 'Greed/selfishness' returns to the scene as a major megasection theme, dwarfed by only 'wealth, money'--the most frequent theme in the megasection.

Figure 16 contains propositional summaries of each paragraph and is marked in terms of thematic spans. That is, groups of paragraphs which have common themes (in conjunction with other features as indication of coherence) are divided into subsections, sections, and megasections. A section boundary will be considered to continue until there are distinct indications of a new section being formed. Subsections and subsubsections may progressively diverge from the section's theme since they are often entered through thematic digressions.

88. AW --It's strange when I think about it, but the more I give, the more I get. 89. I never thought the offerings at this temple would get so big	
"Receiving"	90. Here monks don't take turns receiving offerings for themselves 91. At other temples, they resell offerings time after time 92a. Here we open all offerings 92b. Monks are accountable for everything they use. 93. I give excess to poor temples 94. Places I've gone to by pick-up truck 95. I go to poor provinces, not Chiang Mai or Bangkok 96. In some temples offerings are stacked up everywhere, unused 97. I have thought about this since the beginning. 98. Dr. Somkiat made big offering for his active child [tertiary line] 99. Don't be proud of inactive children! [explicit command]
"OFFERINGS"	100. It's unbelievable, but the more I do, the more I get 101. I thought we'd be out of money by now, but people give generously 102. Social welfare gave 20 million [tertiary line] 103. I've decided to buy some more land 104. Now we will open an accelerated job training program "Share" 105. We need a giving person to head the program 106. There is a tendency to share that must be tapped 107. Recently I gave out many bamboo banks to help people share 108. I told people to put a baht a day in the banks. 109a. But some people are very bad. 109b. One man took a bank and proudly complained about monks throwing away offerings 110. But sometimes it's not the monks that are throwing away and sometimes they get too much, especially water 111. Laypeople have strange beliefs about 'water merit' because of General Senna. ----- 112. Laypeople give too much water and it soaks the monk's food 113. They have mistaken beliefs about General Senna. [tertiary line] 114. No monks chant that if you give water, you won't be thirsty--this merit is too narrow.
"IT KEEPS COMING"	
"TRAINING"	
"BAMBOO BANKS"	
"Merit Making"	
"problem offerings"	

115. AW! How does this fit together?--Pray just a little, to defeat greed
116. Pray a little--don't make monks wait shivering
117. Now here comes another thing that isn't as bad as greed.
- 118a. Democracy is not flourishing today
- 118b. This is because the people are greedy
119. We cannot go on not even trying to defeat greed. [implied command]
- 120a. I tried not accepting money
- 120b. It was suffering because I had received before
121. I turned down 100,000
122. The next year, received but gave all away
123. This even more suffering--unnatural
124. Working for free easier than working and then giving away salary
125. Now I am comfortable
126. In future have project for orphans
127. If someone is diligent, he will do well.
128. I will test with 4 rooms.
129. It gets rid of greed.
130. Wherever I go I talk about this project and even monks want to donate to help.
131. It's astonishing, the monks who donate sacrificially to help.
132. At least one other person is not greedy.
133. Now I am pleased with the Meo children living at this temple because they always return lost money.
134. There are still some ungreedy people among us.
135. The boy Chumpon who found baht 11 million and returned it because his mom and uncle taught him not to steal or be selfish
136. Some children are taught to be robbers.
137. Now greed is really ugly

"Denying Money"

"Orphan Project"

"Good Kids"

<p>138. I have seen many cases people who are too greedy.</p> <p>139. Old, well off woman trampled during rush for charity products from foundation</p> <p>140. Merchant who wanted to buy all of the temple's cheap food for the poor</p> <p>141. Greedy monks, laypeople, and politicians are all rotten</p> <p>142. Voters are rotten because they vote out of greed--sell their votes</p>	<p>"Greedy People"</p>
<p>143. Now I want us to support the Children's Foundation for suffering children</p> <p>144. If you see an abused child, report it [EXPLICIT COMMAND]</p> <p>145. Merit child cared for, then abused, by prison warden.</p> <p>146. Fighting father poured acid on 3 year old</p> <p>147. I don't know what is happening--this kind of cruelty is normal.</p> <p>148. People in airplane crash had suffered already--people shouldn't have gone and taken their things</p> <p>149. People shouldn't take things of accident victims.</p> <p>150. People like painful sports like professional wrestling and it is cruel</p> <p>151. Teach your kids to help crickets that fall in the toilet</p> <p>152. We should teach them to be helpful</p> <p>153. They shouldn't flush and flush till gone--it is cruel</p> <p>154. Some people never think of helping things in the toilet.</p> <p>155. I help crickets because I am not cruel, but even doing this is not enough</p> <p>155a. Just now someone has come without a taxi fare</p>	<p>"GREED IS UGLY"</p>
<p>"CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION"</p>	<p>"Child Abuse"</p>
<p>156. Now I can't bear to read the newspapers because it is all rotten, as are some of the people who come here.</p> <p>157. A woman fights with husband and comes here but doesn't</p>	<p>"cruelty"</p> <p>cruel cases</p> <p>un-cruel-ing kids</p>

"EMPLOYMENT PROJECT"

have money for taxi
158. After I read that news, I couldn't bear all the rottenness--the news of the 13 year old girl who killed herself because she could not find a job.

159. So I made a public relations push that people in hardship could come here and I would pay the taxi fare

"Come Free"

160. And they come here to work
161. If they want to go back, o.k.
162. One man couldn't go back or he would be killed--so I gave him 500 B. to go south

163. Now we must help people like this [EXPLICIT COMMAND]

163a. Now people kill each other over minor things--even children killing fathers and vice-versa.

"KILLING"

164. Every day there are stories of cruelty, like the movie about mother-in-laws tormenting their daughter-in-laws.

"Unhappy People"

165. A crazy layman called to ask if it was a big sin to kill just one person.

166. So we must cut and clean out the root sins.

167. Now the worst thing about Thai people is their greed.

"WORST PROBLEM"

168. If we clean out things, the root sins will not be born

169. At temple, people still steal bags

"Greedy People" 170. At dharma camps, children steal from each other

171. This generation is abnormally greedy.

172. AW! AW LA! Our group must clean things out every day.

Figure 16. Span Chart of Megasections Six and Seven of "Solve Greed."

The analysis presented in figure 16 shows several points of interest. As mentioned earlier (see 2.2), change of time is used as a highly dependable indicator of paragraph boundaries. Similarly, where sections and subsections are concerned, we can clearly observe that time markers are used extensively and seemingly pivotally where section boundaries are concerned. The words *diaw*⁴ *ni*:³ and *to:n* *ni*:³, both meaning 'now,' seem to be powerful markers in this respect, acting like lower level *Aw!* s.

Another seemingly high-powered section marker is the first person singular pronoun *'a:ta'1ma:*. Only a monk can refer to himself with this term. Thus, when used, it brings with it definite connotations of authority and power.² Due to the nature of Thai ellipsis, *'a:ta'1ma:* generally will remain in the subject slot until another subject is explicitly stipulated and thus often marks a personal documentary or personal comment.

It is also interesting to note the parallelisms with which Phra Phayom's documentaries (embedded narratives) are often introduced. In 110-112, for example, divergence is made from talk of water merit to General Senna, back to water merit, and then back again to General Senna. Similarly, in 156-159 a topic (not wanting to read the newspapers because of having read one particularly pitiful story) is temporarily interrupted by a personal documentary (the story of a woman showing up penniless at Phra Phayom's temple because of a fight with her husband); the story resumes afterwards, with much the same wording as it was introduced with. I have observed this type of introduction--interruption--continuation formula in

²In the English translations found in appendix A, *'a:ta'1ma:* is rendered "I (Rev.)."

operation in a number of Phra Phayom's short, real-life embedded narratives.

Tertiary information, as discussed earlier (see chapter 3), is clearly illustrated in the series 90-91. Here, the digression follows an associational path from large donors, to Dr. Somkiat's donation, to Dr. Somkiat's active/naughty child, to active/naughty children in general.

The nature of these digressions, and of the overall flow of each megasection as a whole, would seem to indicate associational, rather than logical, sermon organization. The megasection boundaries themselves are sedentary, being intimately linked to text macrostructures. Much of the material within each megasection, however, seems to be generated from or inspired by the immediately preceding material; a word or phrase at the end of one paragraph might bring to mind a series of associated images that, in turn, are used in guiding the development of new paragraphs.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the content and mechanics of the megasections which comprise the body of Phra Phayom's sermons. It has been shown that more than 55% of an average sermon body is spent storytelling, those stories being derived from recent news items and Phra Phayom's own experiences. Next, the flow of a typical macrosection was demonstrated through the use of a span chart. It was observed that the organization of these macrosections seems to follow associational rather than propositional logic.